Acres Of Opportunity
MURRAY COUNTY
EST. 1857
MINNESOTA

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

2016

Updated by: The Murray County Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee
With Assistance from: The Southwest Regional Development Commission
Adopted: December 27, 2016
Amended: _____, 2025

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PURPOSE

The County has a responsibility to protect its cultural, economic, and natural environments. Because of this, the Murray County Comprehensive Plan will identify goals, objectives, policies, and implementation strategies designed to appropriately reflect the needs of the County's citizens and natural environment. This plan will emphasize the importance of proper planning ensuring that decisions made are best for the citizens of the County as well as the environment.

2016 & 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Bill Post – 2016
Bob Sandhurst – 2016
Brian Hamilton – 2016 & 2024
Burend Cuperus – 2016 & 2024
Craig Bangasser – 2016
Jamie Thomazin – 2016
Jason Schreier – 2016 & 2024
Dave Dorpinghaus – 2016
Leroy Reese – 2024
Marlin Pieske – 2024
Mona Henkels – 2024
Kevin Wynia – 2024
Larry Dahl – 2016
Pam Schreier – 2016 & 2024
Ralph Knapp – 2016
Ryan Verlinde – 2016 & 2024
Todd Miller – 2016 & 2024
Tom Hey – 2016 & 2024
Kevin Vickerman – 2016
Annette Fiedler – 2024
Deb Horne – 2024
Sheila Holland – 2024
Trevor Humphrey – 2024
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Duane Spartz – 2016 & 2024
Doug Stewart – 2016
Keith Hakeneis – 2016 & 2024
Roger Steinman – 2016
Gary Runkle – 2016
Troy Wehking – 2016
Dale Bergman – 2016
Gary Hogan – 2024
Jason Kirchner – 2024
Josh Onken – 2024
Dustin Carlson – 2024

2016 AGENCY REPREPRESENTATIVES

Cathi Fouchi - Minnesota DNR Planning
Becky Balk - Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Marcy Barritt - Murray County Assessor
Jon Bloemendaal - Murray County Ag & Solid Waste
Jean Christoffels- Murray County Planning & Zoning
Randy Groves - Murray County Highway Department
Amy Rucker - Murray County Economic Development
Randy Hukriede - Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Craig Christensen - Murray County SWCD
Chris Hansen - Murray County Water Resources
Heath Landsman - Murray County Emergency Management
Janet Timmerman - Murray County Historical Museum
Dominic Jones - Red Rock Rural Water
Jason Overby - Lincoln-Pipestone Rural Water
Robert Nielsen - Minnesota Department of Health
Lindsey Knutson - Minnesota Department of Transportation
Annette Fiedler - Southwest Regional Development Comm.

2024 AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

Scott Roemhildt – MnDNR
Patrice Bailey – Mn Department of Ag
Roseann Schauer – MnDNR Parks & Rec
Mark Hanson – Mn Pollution Control Agency
Tracy Schnell - MnDOT
Chad Benda – Murray County Assessor
Jon Bloemendaal – Murray County Ag & Solid Waste
Jean Christoffels – Murray County Zoning
Carl Nyquist, Murray County Emergency Management
Sarah Soderholm – Murray County Environmental Tech
Craig Christensen, Murray SWCD
Randy Groves, Murray County Highway Engineer
Justine Wettschreck – Murray County EDA
Ann Muecke – Murray County Historical Museum
Amanda Strommer, Mn Department of Health
Jason Overby – Lincoln-Pipestone Rural Water
Lance Wheeler – Lincoln-Pipestone Rural Water
Dominic Jones – Red Rock Rural Water
Aaron Meyer – Minnesota Rural Water Association
Chris Webb – Southwest RDC
Kim Murphy – Southwest RDC

MURRAY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS 2016 & 2024

First District	Second District	Third District	Fourth District	Fifth District
James Jens (2016) Molly Malone (2024)	Robert Moline (2016) Lori Gunnink (2024)	Gerald Magnus (2016) Dennis Welgraven (2024)	Glenn "Corky" Kluis (2016) Jackie Meier (2024)	Dave Thiner (2016 & 2024)

The following is a list of the plan's chapters and the several key issues that were considered during the Committee meetings. Each of the following sections gives a brief overview of the issues facing the County in relation to that element.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND HOUSING

The demographics and housing section of this plan is intended to provide background on people living within Murray County. This information helps decision makers and citizens understand current conditions, evaluate proposals, and formulate policies to improve the community.

Housing is typically provided within the incorporated cities where municipal services are available. However, there remain substantial numbers of rural farm and non-farm home sites in Murray County's townships. The County has an on-going interest in promoting safe and affordable housing.

Key Issues

Decreasing population
Aging of population
Housing stock: age, condition, availability, safe and affordable
Limited long-term care and day care facilities

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The economic base of Murray County provides jobs and income that fuel local prosperity. Economic development, then, is essential to growing the economic base of agriculture, manufacturing and exported services in a sustainable manner. It is vital for the County to ensure that its own ability to provide infrastructure and services is closely coordinated with current and future growth.

One of the main themes found within the Economic Development chapter is the retention and expansion of businesses already operating within the County, as well as continued pursuit of new businesses.

Key Issues
Murray County Economic Development Authority Work Program
Diversifying agricultural economy
Marketing and funding of the County's tourism features
Broadband infrastructure
Renewable energy

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL FACILITIES

Historic and cultural facilities occupy unique and special places in our landscape. People are beginning to understand that these structures or sites are non-renewable and once they are gone, they are not coming back. This Comprehensive Plan places an importance on designating, protecting, and preserving historic buildings and places. Each of Murray County's communities expresses a unique character, a distinguishing sense of place.

The Murray County Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee has about two dozen members representing cities, townships, and organizations throughout Murray County.

From April 2016 to September 2016, the Planning Advisory Committee met to develop the first draft for an update of the Comprehensive Plan, which was originally adopted by the Murray County Board of Commissioner in 1972, subsequently updated in 2002 and 2007. The Planning Advisory Committee recommended this Comprehensive Plan update for approval to the County Planning and Zoning Commission on October 4, 2016. The County Planning Commission reviewed the document and recommended adoption of the update to the Murray County Board of Commissioners on November 17, 2016. Final adoption of the update Plan was granted on December 27, 2016, by the Murray County Board of Commissioners.

In 2016, the Advisory Committee was identified and called to review and revise the Plan. Every Committee member had the opportunity to provide ideas and suggest changes at each one of these meetings. In addition, a Citizens survey was initiated to obtain input from Murray County Citizens on their ideas and visions for the future of the County. That input was reviewed by the Planning Advisory committee and helped shape the Comprehensive Plan update.

In 2024, coordination for the development, review, and update of this Comprehensive Plan was substantial. Members of the County's cities and townships came together to provide feedback and direction to those within the County government. In addition, various state agencies such as Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Department of Natural Resources provided feedback and information. It is imperative that cooperation and coordination between the various levels of government continue. The 2024 amendments to the Plan were recommended for approval to the County Planning and Zoning Commission on July 29, 2024. The County Planning Commission reviewed the document and recommended adoption of the updates to the Murray County Board of Commissioners on _____. Final adoption of the Plan update was granted on _____, by the Murray County Board of Commissioners.

ISSUES CONCERNING DEMOGRAPHICS AND HOUSING WITHIN MURRAY COUNTY

There are several demographic concerns facing Murray County

- Population loss
- Increased older population
- Increased median age in many townships
- Limited housing stock
- Limited long-term care and day care facilities

The population has continually decreased in every U.S. Census since 1950. Adding to this concern is the fact that the loss in population is typically the younger citizens and younger families. This contributes to the problem of the County's population being made up of predominantly older citizens. Census 2010 figures show Murray County's population at 8,725 people, a loss of 440 from the 2000 Census.

Rural housing issues coincide with the aging population issue. We see the aging population remaining in their homes longer and fewer homes available for younger families. The ability of homeowners to maintain the quality of housing also tends to decrease as the homeowner ages. In addition, there is often times a lack of new or rehabilitated housing (owned / rental) in rural areas and the existing rental housing stock is typically of poor quality.

The future of Murray County is not all problems as the County does possess various strengths in terms of demographics and housing and there are features that the County could develop and enhance. However, there are circumstances that it should be concerned about such as those listed above.

CURRENT DATA ON MURRAY COUNTY POPULATION

General Population Trends

Murray County is a small rural county with a reported 2010 Census population of 8,725 people. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates Murray County's 2014 population declined to 8,475. If we take a larger look around the region, we see how difficult the past few decades have been on local population and housing. Murray County has experienced the largest decline in population since 1970 of any counties in Region 8 (-30.2%)[1] and has the highest median age of 46.8 years.

For the last half of the twentieth century, the population of Murray County steadily declined. However, from 1990 to 2010, the numbers show a slower rate of decline (Table 2-1). Table 2-2 and Figure 2.1 illustrate the overall decline in population, and they also show that the decline is largely due to rural population loss. Note that the County's municipalities did not show a large decrease from the 1950 population numbers until 1990.

The population trends for 2020 show a decline in total population; greatest losses were in the townships, while population in the municipalities have seen a slower reduction.

[1] Minnesota Economic Development Region 8 includes all the counties adjacent to Murray County, including Cottonwood, Lincoln, Lyon, Jackson, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood and Rock counties. It is the designated service area of the Southwest Regional Development Commission.

Table 2-1. Population of Counties in Region 8, 1970 – 2020

County	1970	1980	1970-1980	1990	1980-1990	2000	1990-2000	2010	2000-2010	2020	2010-2020	1970-2020
Cottonwood	14,887	14,854	-0.2%	12,694	-14.5%	12,167	-4.15%	11,687	-3.9%	11,915	1.9%	-20.0%
Jackson	14,352	13,690	-4.6%	11,677	-14.7%	11,268	-3.5%	10,266	-8.9%	10,067	-1.5%	-29.9%
Lincoln	8,143	8,207	.8%	6,890	-16.0%	6,429	-6.69%	5,896	-8.3%	5,511	-6.5%	-32.3%
Lyon	24,273	25,207	3.8%	24,789	-1.7%	25,425	2.57%	25,857	1.7%	25,379	-2.0%	4.5%
Murray	12,508	11,507	-8.0%	9,660	-16.1%	9,165	-5.12%	8,725	-4.8%	8,060	-7.6%	-35.6%
Nobles	23,208	21,840	-5.9%	20,098	-8.0%	20,832	3.65%	21,378	2.6%	22,473	5.1%	-3.2%
Pipestone	12,791	11,690	-8.6%	10,491	-10.3%	9,895	-5.68%	9,596	-3.0%	9,219	-3.9%	-27.9%
Redwood	20,024	19,341	-3.4%	17,254	-10.8%	16,815	-2.54%	16,059	-4.5%	15,348	-4.4%	-23.3%
Rock	11,346	10,703	-5.7%	9,806	-8.4%	9,721	-0.87%	9,687	-0.3%	9,853	1.7%	-13.2%
Region	143,502	139,019	-3.1%	125,349	-9.8%	123,717	-1.30%	121,161	-2.1%	118,008	-2.6%	-17.8%
Minnesota	3,806,103	4,075,907	7.7%	4,375,099	7.3%	4,919,479	12.44%	5,303,925	7.8%	5,801,759	9.3%	52.4%

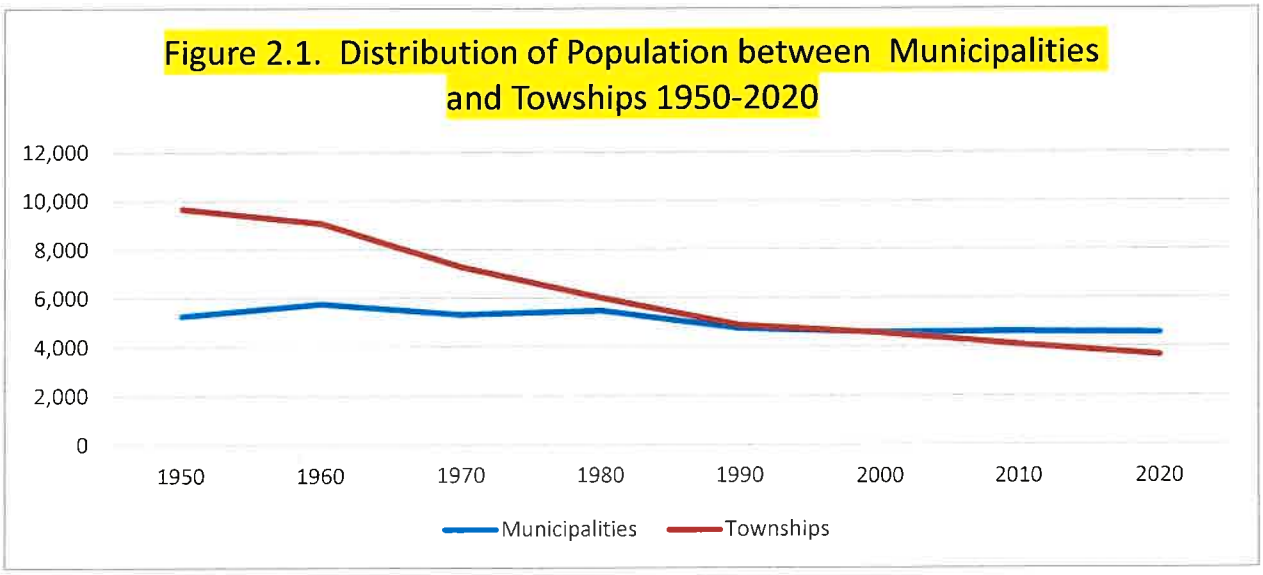
*2020 US Census

Table 2-2. Distribution of Population between Municipalities and Townships 1950 – 2020

Murray County	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Municipalities	5,266	5,768	5,328	5,484	4,759	4,593	4,627	4,571
Townships	9,674	9,087	7,284	6,023	4,901	4,572	4,098	3,672
Total	**14,940**	**14,855**	**12,612**	**11,507**	**9,660**	**9,165**	**8,725**	**8,243**

*2020 US Census

Figure 2-1. Distribution of Population between Municipalities and Townships 1950 – 2020



Source: U.S. Census, 1950 – 2010, Minnesota State Demographic Center

Population decline in rural areas can be attributed to several factors. For Murray County, these factors deal with the overall changes in the agricultural industry. The fluctuation in the real price farmers receive for the commodities they sell decreased, but the amount of labor that the agricultural industry used to support has largely declined during the last half of the twentieth century.

Despite these negative long-term trends, the first half of the 1990's did see some stabilization in total population numbers. During that time, the agriculture industry was experiencing better times, and the County has been able to take advantage of the development of permanent housing adjacent to the County's lakes, most notably in the Lake Shetek/Sarah area. These areas provide attractive amenities that help to both retain and attract residents to Murray County. However, these lake areas must be developed in a sustainable manner.

Population by Age

Use of age cohorts can identify trends and assist in identification of trends. Figure 2-2 and Table 2-3 displays how the age of the County has progressed over the last 40 years.

Figure 2-2. Population Pyramid 2000 vs. 2022 Estimate

Murray Co. is the 75th largest of the 87 counties in the state. Its population decreased over the past decade, ranking as the 81st fastest growing in the state from 2010 to 2022. Murray Co.'s population has an older median age than the state and a larger percentage of people aged 65 years and older. The population is aging, especially as the Baby Boom generation moves through the population pyramid (see Figure 1).

Table 1. Population by Age Group, 2022

	Number	Percent
Under 5 years	420	5.2%
5-14 years	1,010	12.5%
15-24 years	893	11.1%
25-34 years	671	8.3%
35-44 years	874	10.8%
45-54 years	875	10.9%
55-64 years	1,227	15.2%
65-74 years	1,124	13.9%
75-84 years	622	7.7%
85 years & over	344	4.3%
Total Population	**8,060**	**100.0%**

Source: Census Population Estimates, 2018-2022 ACS

Figure 1. Population Pyramid, 2000-2022

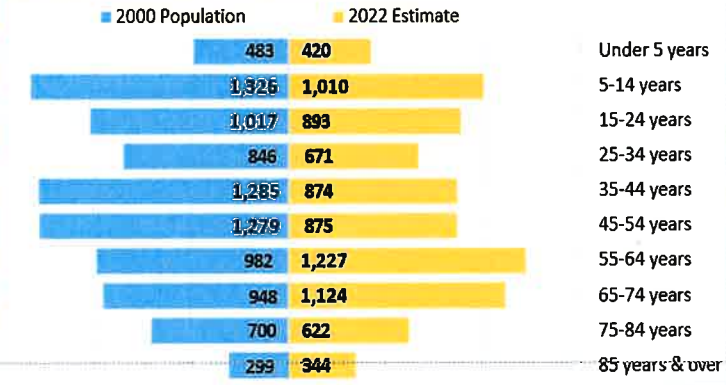


Table 2-3. Population by Age Cohort, 1980 – 2020

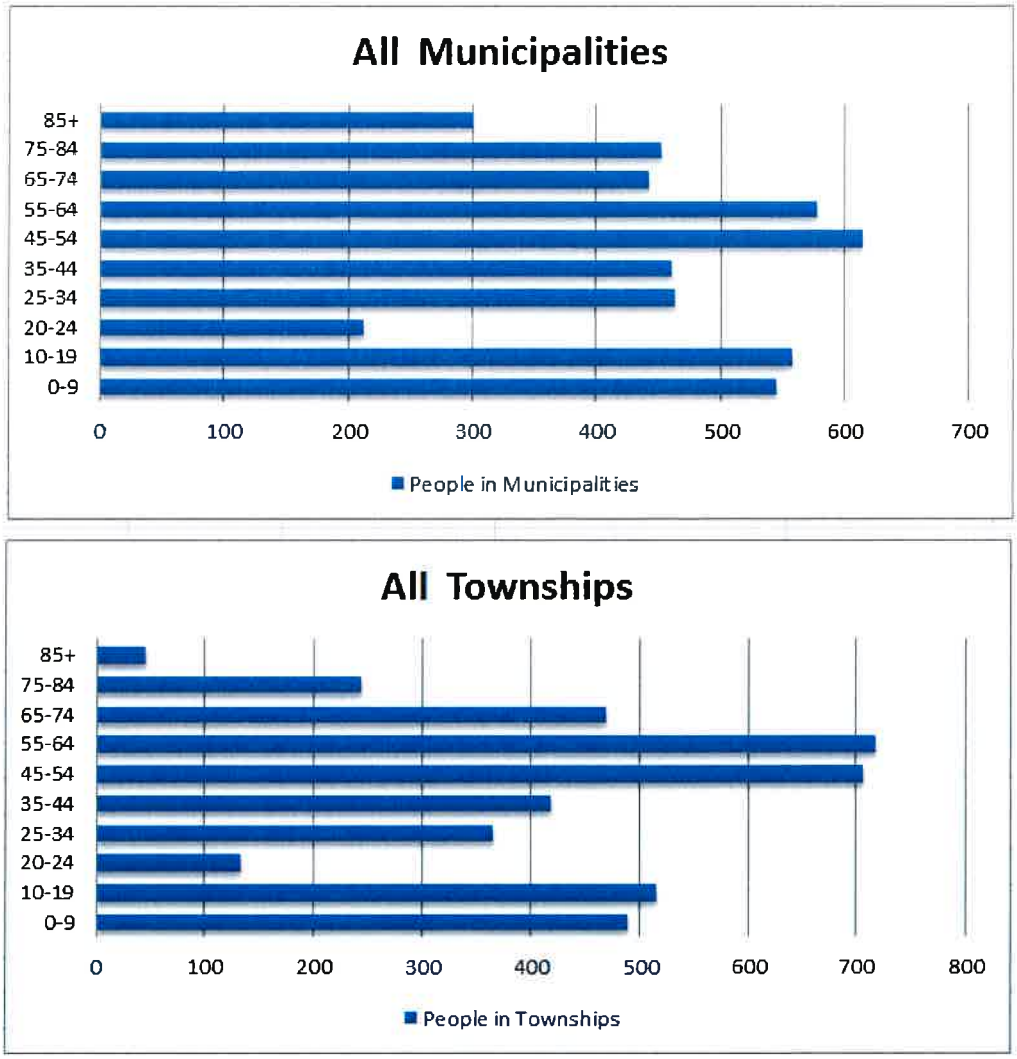
Age Group	1980 Population	1980 % of Total	1990 Population	1990 % of Total	2000 Population	2000 % of Total	2010 Population	2010 % of Total	2020 Population	2020 % of Total	1980 – 2020 % Change
0-9	1,761	15.30%	1,401	14.50%	1,094	11.94%	1,033	11.84%	893	10.9%	-49%
10-19	2,134	18.55%	1,422	14.72%	1,384	15.10%	1,073	12.30%	1,054	12.9%	-50%
20-24	741	6.44%	390	4.04%	348	3.80%	345	3.95%	408	5%	-45%
25-34	1,509	13.11%	1,161	12.02%	846	9.23%	829	9.50%	680	8.3%	-55%
35-44	1,020	8.86%	1,272	13.17%	1,285	14.02%	879	10.07%	886	10.8%	-13%
45-54	1,213	10.54%	929	9.62%	1,279	13.96%	1,321	15.14%	887	10.8%	-27%
55-64	1,318	11.45%	1,094	11.33%	982	10.71%	1,294	14.83%	1,244	15.2%	-5.5%
65-74	1,024	8.90%	1,091	11.29%	948	10.34%	911	10.44%	1,139	13.9%	11%
75-84	601	5.22%	668	6.92%	700	7.64%	694	7.95%	630	7.7%	5%
85+	186	1.62%	232	2.40%	299	3.26%	346	3.97%	349	4.3%	85%
Total	11,507	100.00%	9,660	100.00%	9,165	100.00%	8,725	100.00%	8,179	100.00%	-29%
Summary											
0-19	3,895	33.85%	2,823	29.22%	2,478	27.04%	2,106	24.14%	1,947	24%	-50%
20-34	2,250	19.55%	1,551	16.06%	1,194	13.03%	1,174	13.46%	1,088	13%	-52%
35-64	2,531	22.00%	2,023	20.94%	2,261	24.67%	2,615	29.97%	3,017	37%	19%
65+	1,811	15.74%	1,991	20.61%	1,941	21.24%	1,951	22.36%	2,127	26%	17.5%

*2020 US Census

The previous two figures show that the county's population is declining and at the same time getting older. While there is some stabilization in the 35-44 age category, overall, the trends point in the same direction. The county continues to experience population decline and efforts in the county need to focus on ways to stabilize the population.

The age trees illustrate the growing elderly population within Murray County and the overall age condition. Figure 2-3 illustrates that the elderly population is higher in the County's municipalities, and it is generally lower in the townships.

Figure 2-3. Age Trees of Murray County by Age Cohort, 2010



Source: U.S. Census 2010

Median Age

According to the US Census, the average median age for the County in 1980 was 32, in 2000 it was 42.4, by 2010 it was 46.8 and 2020 46.7 (Table 2-4). In 1980, the median age in 17 of the 20 townships and 3 of the 9 municipalities were below the County median age. By 2000, 12 of the townships and zero municipalities were below the median age. In 2020, 6 townships (Chanarambie, Des Moines River, Dovray, Iona, Lowville and Skandia) and 4 municipalities (Chandler, Fulda, Iona, and Slayton) were below the median age.

Table 2-4. Median Age for Political Subdivisions, 1980 – 2020

Political Subdivision	1980	1990	1980-1990 %Change	2000	1990-2000 %Change	2010	2000-2010 %Change	2020	2010-2020 %Change	1980-2020 %Change
Avoca	33.8	40.4	19.50%	44	8.9%	44.1	0.2%	54.8	24%	62%
Chandler	29.7	38.3	28.90%	42.7	11.5%	41	-4.0%	41.8	2%	41%
Currie	32.3	37.3	15.50%	49.3	32.2%	53.3	8.1%	64.1	20%	98%
Dovray	49.5	46	-7.00%	54.5	18.5%	59.5	9.2%	67.3	13%	36%
Fulda	39.2	43.1	9.90%	43.8	1.6%	46.8	6.8%	44.6	-5%	14%
Hadley	27.9	37	32.60%	47.9	29.5%	56.2	17.3%	57.1	1.5%	54%
Iona	36.3	37.1	2.20%	43.5	17.3%	51.6	18.6%	41.5	-20%	14%
Lake Wilson	30.9	41.5	34.30%	44.4	7.0%	51.2	15.3%	54.8	7%	77%
Slayton	37.5	45.1	20.30%	44.9	-0.4%	43.5	-3.1%	40.3	-7%	7.5%
Political Subdivision	**1980**	**1990**	**1980-1990 %Change**	**2000**	**1990-2000 %Change**	**2010**	**2000-2010 %Change**	**2020**	**2010-2020 %Change**	**1980-2020 %Change**
Belfast Twp	25.9	30.7	18.50%	36.1	17.6%	45.4	25.8%	57.8	27%	123%
Bondin Twp	29	33.7	16.20%	38.7	14.8%	45.9	18.6%	49.5	8%	71%
Cameron Twp	27.3	31.7	16.10%	35.3	11.4%	38.4	8.8%	48.5	26%	78%
Chanarambie Twp	26.8	35.2	31.30%	35.8	1.7%	42.3	18.2%	42.8	1%	60%
DesMoines River Twp	27.9	40.1	43.70%	44	9.7%	52.5	19.3%	33.4	-36%	19%
Dovray Twp	33.3	42.4	27.30%	46.5	9.7%	45.3	-2.6%	42.5	-5.5%	28%
Ellsborough Twp	30	33.3	11.00%	36.8	10.5%	46.4	26.1%	56.4	22%	88%
Fenton Twp	29.8	35.2	18.10%	39.6	12.5%	45.8	15.7%	63.6	39%	113%
Holly Twp	30	35	16.60%	38	8.6%	48.5	27.6%	59.4	22%	98%
Iona Twp	27.8	32.6	17.30%	34.1	4.6%	40.5	18.8%	39.6	-2%	41%
Lake Sarah Twp	29.9	40.8	36.50%	47.7	16.9%	53.9	13.0%	59.8	11%	100%
Leeds Twp	27.9	34.8	24.70%	34.8	0.0%	44.2	27.0%	52.4	19%	87%
Lime Lake Twp	31.8	34.2	7.50%	38.2	11.7%	49.3	29.1%	53.8	9%	68%
Lowville Twp	28.3	32.9	16.30%	37.2	13.1%	39.3	5.6%	38.4	-2%	36%
Mason Twp	31	37.6	21.30%	46	22.3%	49.3	7.2%	60.4	23%	95%
Moulton Twp	27.3	28.4	4.0%	34	19.7%	35.5	4.4%	39.9	12%	46%
Murray Twp	24.8	35.3	42.30%	45.5	28.9%	47.3	4.0%	47.5	0%	92%
Shetek Twp	30	39.4	31.30%	46.1	17.0%	55.1	19.5%	53.9	-2%	80%
Skandia Twp	30	32.2	7.30%	40.3	25.2%	36.5	-9.4%	29.8	-18%	0%
Slayton Twp	27.7	33.4	20.60%	42.1	26.0%	51.1	21.4%	59.5	15%	115%
Murray County	32	38.3	19.70%	42.4	10.7%	46.8	10.4%	46.7	0%	45%
Region 8	32.2	36.9	14.60%	39.9	8.1%	40.5	1.5%	-	-	-
Minnesota	29.2	32.5	11.30%	35.4	8.9%	37.4	5.6%	39.0	5%	34%

Source: U.S. Census, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020

All Murray County townships increased in median age between 1980 and 2000. In 1980, all townships with the exception of Dovray were under the County Median Age. In 1990, 16 of the townships were under the Murray County Median Age, and in the year 2000, 14 townships median age population was less than the County Median Age. The 2010 Census identified 5 townships where the median age in their townships was less than the County Median Age. However, in 2010, four of the townships passed the median age of 50 (Figure 2-4) and three others were approaching the median age of 50: Lime Lake, Mason and Holly (Table 2-4). In 2020, 14 townships passed the median age of the county.

Overall, Murray County increased from a median age of 32 in 1980 to a median age of 46.8 in 2010. During this same time frame, the Region 8 median age was 32.2 in 1980 and 40.5 in 2010 and the State median age was 29.2 in 1980 and 37.4 in 2010. Murray County is following the State trend toward a more elderly population, only at a much higher rate. The 2020 median age numbers show that Murray County held mostly steady to the 2020 median age, whereas the State median age increased, lessening the gap between.

Township Population

Historically, the majority of the townships experienced a significant population decline, (Table 2-5). The greatest loss for most was from 1980 to 1990, the total township population dropping from 6,023 to 4,901, a loss of 1,122. In 2000; four townships experienced either minor change to a growth in population (Leeds (-1), Ellsborough (9), Shetek (54), and Lake Sarah (59). From 2000 to 2010, there were five townships that experienced single digit loss to double digit gain (Lowville (-6), Belfast (-3), Skandia (-1), Mason (15), and Lake Sarah (45). Then from 2010 to 2020, only two townships realized a gain Des Moines River (6) and Shetek (11), all other township lost population from -2 (Iona) to -48 (Skandia).

Table 2-5. Township Population 1980 – 2020

Township	1980	1990	1980-1990 Gain or Loss	2000	1990 – 2000 Gain or Loss	2010	2000-2010 Gain or Loss	2020	2010-2020 Gain or Loss	1980-2020 Gain or Loss
Belfast	295	214	-81	195	-19	195	-3	163	-32	-132
Bondin	404	366	-38	335	-31	268	-67	228	-40	-176
Cameron	240	194	-46	151	-43	137	-14	121	-16	-119
Chanarambie	311	238	-73	223	-15	206	-17	195	-11	-116
Des Moines River	293	213	-80	185	-31	133	-49	139	6	-154
Dovray	276	217	-59	167	-50	152	-15	132	-20	-144
Ellsborough	274	189	-85	198	9	145	-53	139	-6	-135
Fenton	295	241	-54	209	-32	177	-32	143	-34	-152
Holly	278	186	-62	172	-14	127	-45	98	-29	-180
Iona	294	276	-16	195	-81	163	-32	161	-2	-133
Lake Sara	305	289	-16	348	59	393	45	280	-13	-25
Leeds	285	239	-46	238	-1	210	-28	187	-23	-98
Lime Lake	281	209	-72	225	16	181	-44	172	-9	-109
Lowville	282	212	-70	175	-37	169	-6	159	-10	-123
Mason	344	297	-47	284	-13	299	15	282	-17	-62
Moulton	312	261	-51	242	-19	206	-36	193	-13	-119
Murray	295	221	-74	204	-17	177	-27	171	-6	-124
Shetek	300	259	-41	313	54	296	-17	307	11	7
Skandia	244	195	-52	173	-19	172	-1	124	-48	-120
Slayton	445	388	-57	343	-45	295	-48	271	-24	-174
All Townships	6,023	4,901	-1,122	4,572	-329	4,098	-474	3,665	-433	-2358

*2020 US Census

Lake Sarah and Shetek Townships feature recreational lakes and have both permanent and seasonal lake homes. This would explain the more stable population and gain in population as well as the increase in median age above 50 for retirement homes. This is also where a large portion of the Murray County housing development has taken place during the last several years. The majority of all townships did not lose as much population from 1990 to 2000 and 2000 to 2010 as they did from 1980 – 1990. Des Moines River, Ellsborough and Holly Townships however lost large numbers during the time frames. Figure 2-5 illustrates this information.

Municipality Population

All Murray County municipalities lost population from 1980 to 1990, as seen in Table 2-6. The City of Iona lost the highest percentage of its citizens (36.29%) while the City of Slayton lost the largest number of people (273). From 1990 to 2000, these municipality numbers decreased again but at a reduced rate. Average decreases for all municipalities went from a 9.71% loss from 1980 to 1990 to a 2.46% loss from 1990 to 2000. From 1990 to 2000, the cities of Dovray, Fulda, and Iona increased in population while the cities of Avoca, Hadley, Lake Wilson and Slayton all had reduced rates of loss. The cities of Chandler and Currie had increased rates of population loss during this time. From 2000 to 2010, there was an overall increase in municipality population of 34, with increases in Slayton, Fulda, Currie and Avoca. With the 2020 census numbers, the municipality populations dropped from -5 (Hadley) to -121 (Slayton); a total decrease of 913 from 1980 to 2020.

Table 2-6. Municipality Population, 1980 – 2020

City	1980	1990	1980-1990 Gain or Loss	2000	1990-2000 Gain or Loss	2010	2000-2010 Gain or Loss	2022	2010-2020 Gain or Loss	1980 – 2020 Gain or Loss
Avoca	201	150	-51	146	-4	147	1	114	-33	-87
Chandler	344	316	-28	276	-40	270	-6	282	12	-62
Currie	359	303	-56	225	-78	233	8	223	-10	-136
Dovray	87	60	-27	67	7	57	-10	58	1	-29
Fulda	1,308	1,212	-96	1,283	71	1,318	35	1,381	63	73
Hadley	137	94	-43	81	-13	61	-20	56	-5	-57
Iona	248	158	-90	173	15	137	-36	171	34	-77
Lake Wilson	380	319	-61	270	-49	251	-19	254	3	-126
Slayton	2,420	2,147	-273	2,072	-75	2,153	81	2,032	-121	-388
All Municipalities	5,484	4,759	-725	4593	-166	4,627	34	4,571	-56	-913

Source: U.S. Census, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020

Murray County Migration

Americans tend to move from one place to another. The 2000 US Census indicated the greatest number of new residents had come from Nobles, Lyon or Cottonwood Counties and the greatest out migration were to Lyon, Nobles and Pipestone Counties; and the largest metropolitan destination was to Minnehaha County, South Dakota.

The US Census 2009-2013 American Community Survey indicates the largest net increase was from Jackson, Lyon and Hennepin Counties in Minnesota; the largest net out bound migration from Murray County was to Blue Earth Co, MN, Pennington Co, SD, and St Louis Co, MN. This data also indicated that there was a total net increase from migration of 19 residents.

Population by Household

Table 2-7 shows population in households, number of households, and persons per household in Murray County for the years spanning 1970 through 2020 (the US Census defines household as "including all of the people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence"). There

was a slight increase in the number of households from 1970 to 1980. During this same time period, the County lost population in households. This is best explained by a national trend of smaller families, households without children, an increase in teen parenting, and an increase in the rate of divorce. From 1990 and 2000, Murray County lost both population within households and total households. This is most attributable to the overall population loss in all rural areas and was not unique to only Murray County. The trend in population loss continued until 2010, but the decrease in all categories was less.

Table 2-7. Population by Household for Murray County, 1970 – 2020

				1970-1990		1990-2000		2000-2010		2010-2020
	1970	1980	1990	Change	2000	Change	2010	Change	2020	Change
Pop in Households	12,340	11,345	9,506	-26.60%	9,004	-5.28%	8,562	-4.9%	8,179	-4.5%
Households	3,718	4,038	3,758	1.10%	3,722	-0.96%	3,717	-0.1%	3,532	-5%
Persons Per Household	3.32	2.81	2.53	-23.80%	2.42	-4.35%	2.3	-5.0%	2.28	-0.9%

Source: U.S. Census, 1970 – 2020

Table 2-8. Municipalities and Townships, Persons Per Household, 1970 – 2020

	Municipalities						Townships					
Year	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Population in HH	5,086	4,727	4,605	4,432	4,464	4,571	7,254	3,936	4,901	4,572	4,098	3,665
Households	1,806	2,114	2,058	2,008	2,058	1,952	1,912	1,875	1,617	1,714	1,714	1,580
Persons Per HH	2.83	2.24	2.31	2.19	2.31	2.26	3.82	2.1	2.89	2.7	2.47	2.13

Source: U.S. Census: 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020

Municipalities in Murray County experienced an increase in households from the 1970's to the 1980's, similar to that of the County overall (Table 2-8). From 1980 through 2000, the municipalities show a small but continual loss in the number of households. This trend reversed in the 2010 Census where the population in households, household number and persons per household increased. The townships, however, steadily lost households from 1970 through 1990. According to the 2000 Census, the townships showed a small increase in households but lost a significant number of people in households. The Census 2000 numbers also show a loss in the number of people per household for the County's townships, going from 2.89 in 1990 to 2.7 in 2000. A large difference between the municipalities and the townships is the number of persons per household. According to the 2010 Census, the townships again began to lose population in households, the number of households as well as persons per households.

The average household size of cities was 2.19 in 2000, potentially a result of retiring farm families (with no children living at home) moving into established communities; however, it did increase in 2010 to 2.31. While the 2010 persons per household decreased in the County, it was higher in the townships than in the municipalities. The higher persons per household in the County's townships are potentially due to younger families, with children, moving into the homes vacated by retired farmers. These acreages, with their larger yards and quiet open spaces are often attractive to younger families raising their children.

Population Projections

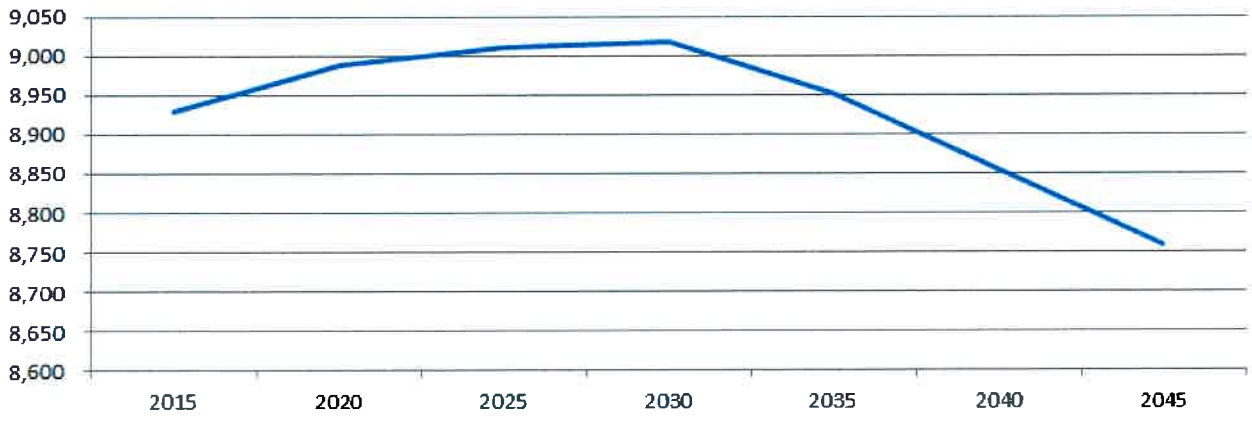
The Minnesota Demographic Center provides population projections for Counties based on various factors, such as birth and death rates, migration, and the American Community Survey. Table 2-9 and Figure 2-6 provide a view of the population projection for Murray County. These projects indicate decreases over the long run. The loss is attributed to higher death rates than birth rates and out migration to South Dakota and other counties in Greater Minnesota.

Table 2-9. Population Projection, 2015 – 2060

	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	2060
Murray County	8,928	8,987	7,937	7,674	7,377	7,050	8,758	6,354	5,664
Southwest Region	120,758	122,957	115,380	113,851	111,732	109,074	131,432	102,707	95,844
Minnesota	5,497,933	5,677,582	5,804,400	5,923,535	6,016,749	6,082,629	6,121,397	6,139,681	6,149,081

*2020 US Census

Figure 2-6. Minnesota State Demographers Population Projection, 2015 – 2045



Source Minnesota Demographic Center

Table 2-11a and Figure 2-8a. Population Profile and Minority Population

COUNTY PROFILE — **Murray Co.**

Murray Co.'s population was becoming more racially diverse over time. Since 2011, the county's white population declined, but the number of people of other races increased (see Table 4).

Figure 3. Population by Race, 2022

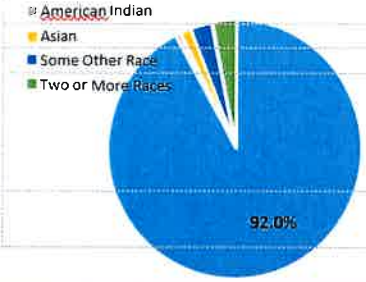


Table 4. Race and Hispanic Origin, 2022	Murray Co. Number	Murray Co. Percent	Murray Co. Change from 2011-2022	Minnesota Percent	Minnesota Change from 2011-2022
Total	**8,170**	**100.0%**	*-6.4%*	**100.0%**	*7.9%*
White	7,516	92.0%	*-10.9%*	79.7%	*-0.4%*
Black or African American	47	0.6%	*291.7%*	6.7%	*44.3%*
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	0.0%	*-90.5%*	0.9%	*-10.2%*
Asian or Other Pac. Islanders	117	1.4%	*51.9%*	5.1%	*37.1%*
Some Other Race	224	2.7%	*121.8%*	2.3%	*84.7%*
Two or More Races	264	3.2%	*234.2%*	5.3%	*159.6%*
Hispanic or Latino origin	380	4.7%	*75.1%*	5.7%	*34.6%*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey

Murray County's population was becoming more racially diverse over time. Since 2011, the county's white population declined, but the number of people of other races increased.

In 2020, Murray County had a total population of 8,179. It was 91.5% White, 4.7% Hispanic, 2.0% multiracial, 1.3% Asian, 0.3% Black and 0.2% Native American / Other.

White	7,483	91.5%
Hispanic	382	4.7%
Multiracial	164	2.0%
Asian	105	1.3%
Black	26	0.3%
Native American/Other	19	0.2%

Source: 2020 Census

Table 2-13. Age of Housing Stock, Pre 1940 – 2020

Year Built	Total Units	Percent of Total
<1940	1,205	27.3%
1940 – 1959	867	19.6%
1960 – 1969	473	10.7%
1970 - 1979	550	12.4%
1980 – 1989	348	7.9%
1990 – 1999	451	10.2%
2000 – 2009	335	7.6%
2010 – 2019	183	4.1%
>2020	6	0.1%
Total	**4,418**	

*2020 US Census

Housing Unit Trends

Table 2-14 illustrates the housing trends from 1980 - 2010 for Murray County as well as the rest of the Counties in Region 8. There was a total of 52,831 housing units in Region 8 in 1980 and the number of housing units climbed to 53,716 by 2010. The total housing units decreased to 51,540 in 1990 and increased in 2000 & 2010. Region 8 experienced a 1.68% increase in housing units from 1990 to 2010.

For Murray County, the total number of housing units decreased from 1980-90 by 1.46%, following the Regional trend, it again decreased between 1990 and 2000 by 5.51% and increased in the following decade by 4.57%. Overall, the percent change from 1990 – 2010 was a decrease by 2.63%.

Table 2-14. Housing Unit Trends for Region 8 Counties, 1980 – 2010

	Total Units				Percent Change each decade			Percent Change
County	**1980**	**1990**	**2000**	**2010**	**1990**	**2000**	**2010**	**1990-2010**
Cottonwood	5,804	5,495	5,376	5,412	-5.32%	-2.17%	0.67%	-6.75%
Jackson	5,525	5,121	5,092	4,990	-7.31%	-0.57%	-2.00%	-9.68%
Lincoln	3,298	3,050	3,043	3,108	-7.52%	-0.23%	2.14%	-5.76%
Lyon	9,196	9,675	10,298	11,098	5.21%	6.44%	7.77%	20.68%
Murray	4,679	4,611	4,357	4,556	-1.45%	-5.51%	4.57%	-2.63%
Nobles	8,212	8,094	8,465	8,535	-1.44%	4.58%	0.83%	3.93%
Pipestone	4,636	4,387	4,434	4,483	-5.37%	1.07%	1.11%	-3.30%
Redwood	7,386	7,144	7,230	7,272	-3.28%	1.20%	0.58%	-1.54%
Rock	4,095	3,963	4,137	4,262	-3.22%	4.39%	3.02%	4.08%
Region 8	**52,831**	**51,540**	**52,432**	**53,716**	**-2.44%**	**1.73%**	**2.45%**	**1.68%**

Source: U.S. Census

The 1980 U.S. Census reported that Murray County had a total of 445 vacant units, as shown in Table 2-17. This number continually increased in 1990 to 853, decreased to 635 in the year 2000, and by 2010 increased to 839. In 1990, the Census Bureau began to separate owner and renter vacant housing units.

So, the combined percentages of this new data are higher than the actual vacant units year round. This is because these numbers include unoccupied housing units for sale as well as housing for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Table 2-17. Vacancy Status, 1980 – 2010

	Total Number Vacant				Percent Vacant			
County	**1980**	**1990**	**2000**	**2010**	**1980**	**1990**	**2000**	**2010**
Cottonwood	318	435	459	555	5.80%	8.59%	8.54%	10.25%
Jackson	379	561	536	561	7.59%	12.30%	10.53%	11.24%
Lincoln	324	346	390	534	11.06%	12.79%	12.82%	17.18%
Lyon	512	602	583	871	5.89%	6.63%	5.66%	7.85%
Murray	445	853	635	839	11.02%	22.69%	14.57%	18.42%
Nobles	383	411	526	589	4.90%	5.34%	6.21%	6.90%
Pipestone	278	309	365	429	6.38%	7.57%	8.23%	9.57%
Redwood	523	590	556	692	7.64%	9.00%	7.69%	9.52%
Rock	239	209	294	344	6.19%	5.56%	7.11%	8.07%
Region 8	**3,401**	**4,316**	**4,344**	**5414**	**6.94%**	**9.15%**	**8.29%**	**10.08%**

Source: U.S. Census

Housing Value

Table 2-18 shows the value of specified owner-occupied housing units and includes only one-family houses on less than 10 acres, without a business or medical office on the property. The value is the Census respondent's estimate of how much the property (house & lot, mobile home & lot, or condominium unit) would sell for if it were for sale. In 2000, Murray County's median home value of $50,900 was a fraction of Minnesota's figure of $122,500. There is no data available for 2010.

Table 2-18. Value of Specified Owner-Occupied Units, 1980 – 2020

	1980	1990	2000	2020
<$50,000	1,409	1,398	1,063	360
$50,000 - $99,000	315	384	787	551
$100,000 - $149,000	15	22	202	383
$150,000 - $199,000	2	5	54	522
$200,000 +	1	1	60	1,095
Median Dollars	$30,600	$30,400	$50,900	$163,500

*2020 US Census

Low housing prices may not encourage new construction, but they also provide a benefit to first-time homeowners and people on fixed incomes. The 2007 Housing Study stated, "the moderately priced homes in the Murray County Cities provide an excellent opportunity to promote home ownership..." The study estimated 2007 median home values for each city in the County, ranging from $20,600 in Avoca to $70,530 in Slayton and $196,313 in the Lakes Area. There has been a large increase in the value of homes in the county and throughout the country.

Contract Rent

Contract rent is defined as the monthly rent agreed to or contracted. Specified renter-occupied housing units paying cash rent includes all renter-occupied housing units except one-family homes on 10 or more acres. There were another 80 households where no cash rent was reported (Table 2-19). Over one-third of rental units were reported at less than $250 rent in 2000, compared to only 14% in Minnesota overall. Over half of all units statewide reported rents in excess of $500 a month.

Table 2-19. Contract Rents, 1980 – 2020

	1980	1990	2000	2020
<$250	383	389	174	77
$250 - $499	12	60	161	314
$500 +	0	0	101	79
Median Dollars	$97	$156	$373	$697

*2020 US Census

The 2007 Housing Study pointed out that there may be pent-up demand for rental units, particularly due to poor condition of some existing rental units. Murray County has addressed some of these issues with successful Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) projects for housing rehabilitation. The Study recommended a need for a modest new general occupancy rental housing project in the cities of Chandler, Fulda and Slayton, a subsidized project in Fulda, and Senior Citizen rental projects in Fulda and Slayton. There is no data available for 2010. The 2020 data indicates that the median dollar for contract rent increased to close to $700.

Special Housing Facilities

Table 2-20 identifies multiple family and group housing facilities in Murray County, with the number of units provided. The facility types that make up this housing infrastructure include: Assisted Living, Subsidized Rental, Congregate, and Market Rate Rental.

Murray County should support the provision of adequate facilities for the County's aging population, especially in accommodations that serve a medical need. These needs include nursing homes, elderly housing, boarding and lodging, and special boarding care facilities.

Table 2-20. Multiple Family and Group Housing Facilities, Within Murray County

Name	Type of Housing	Number of Units	Type of Subsidy	Available To
Basswood Apartments Slayton, MN	Subsidized Rental	8	Rural Development	General Occupancy
Centennial Apartments Fulda, MN	Subsidized Rental	16	Section 8/ Rural Dev.	62 years+ income eligibility
Halter Place Slayton, MN	Subsidized/ Market Rate	12	Rural Development	General Occupancy
Heritage Apartments Fulda, MN	Subsidized Rental	6	Rural Development	General Occupancy
Broadway Estates Lake Wilson, MN	Market Rate	4	SWMHP	General Occupancy
Lakeside Apartments Currie, MN	Market Rate	5	SWMHP	General Occupancy
Lindenwood Assisted Living Slayton, MN	Assisted living	16	Medicare	General Occupancy
Mapleview Estates Fulda, MN	Congregate	24	N/A	55 years and Over
Southgate Apartments Slayton, MN	Subsidized/ Market Rate	63	Section 8	General Occ. income eligibility
Sunrise Terrace Slayton, MN	Assisted living/ Congregate	20	N/A	55 and older Private Pay
Village Apartments of Slayton Slayton, MN	Market Rate Rental	12	N/A	General Occupancy
Village Townhouses Chandler, MN	Subsidized Rental	8	Section 8	General Occ. income eligibility
Westside Apartments Slayton, MN	Subsidized Rental	24	Section 8/ Rural Dev.	62+, disabled handicapped, income eligibility

Source: Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership 2014; Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging – May 2007

The Minnesota Housing Partnership (MHP) has developed a profile for Murray County using County and State data on housing affordability as well as important housing trends that impact people of all ages. Key items learned from this 2012 profile[2] are "about 261 owner and 104 renter households pay at least half their income for housing, a level considered unaffordable." In Murray County, renter income has fallen 15% since 1999 with the median renter income at $26,076. MHP has identified that in 2012, in order to afford rent and utilities for a safe, modest two-bedroom apartment at fair market monthly rent of $583, a worker in Murray County would need to make $11.21 / hour at 40 hours per week. A typical renter in the County earns $8 per hour; and at minimum wage, 1 and ½ full time jobs are needed. The profile identifies that there are constrained rental options because there is a growing demand for rentals with a limited supply of aging rental stock.

In 2011, the median home sales process was $77,775 and from 2005 to 2011 there were 83 foreclosures, of which 13 occurred in 2011. Home process dropped as a result of the foreclosure crisis which left 18% of Minnesota mortgage holders owing more than their homes were worth.

MHP updated the Murray County Profile in 2023 with 2021 data. Key information are: there are 3440 Households in the County; 17% or 583 were renter households in 2021, the median rent was $658, an increase of 3% over 5 years. Fifty-four percent of the rentals were built prior to 1970. There were 2857 owner households, with 62% of the homes built before 1970. The median home value was $150,800, an increase of 27% over the past 5 years. There were 558 "cost burdened" households in the county in 2021. Cost burdened means 30% or more of the household income is spent on housing costs.[1] Extremely low-income households earn under $30,190 annually. There were 195 households in this category, there were 135 affordable / available homes and a shortage of 60 homes for extremely low-income households.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are widely considered a good option for communities to diversify their housing stock. ADUs provide another avenue to offset the most severe drop in the number of skilled-nursing beds since 2005; one of Murray County's skilled-nursing bed facilities was closed in 2019. In addition, Murray County, like other rural areas, are struggling with the shortage of child care spots, and ADUs may be a solution. Murray County needs to support the changing needs of residents, where ADUs may provide a home for a loved one in need of care; and/or create a space for a caregiver to stay.

[2]Minnesota Housing Partnership 2012 Profile of Murray County
http://www.mhponline.org/images//stories/docs/research/countyprofiles/2012/Murray.pdf

[1] Minnesota Housing Partnership 2023 County Profile of Murray County https://mphonline.org/wp-content/uploads/Murray.pdf

Strengths in Economic Development

While the development of business and industry remains competitive in both Murray County and the southwest region of Minnesota as a whole, the County does have features that can help make it attractive to these types of businesses.

- Recreation (Natural Resources)
- Overall Quality of Life
- Existing Health Care Facilities
- Educated and Available Workforce
- Room for Growth
- Abundance of Wind
- Agriculture
- Longevity / maturity of businesses
- Lower cost of Living

Weaknesses in Economic Development

Potential weaknesses exist for Murray County and include the following:

- Distance from Interstate 90
- Lack of a Rail Line
- County's Location (Greater Minnesota)
- Lack of Lodging
- Shortage of Childcare
- Lack of information of development tools
- Lower Wages
- Aging active farm operators
- Dependence on ag – lack of diversity
- Lack of modern housing options
- Shortage of affordable Housing
- Lack of single fam rental housing
- Water – quantity and quality
- No lots or building ready for business commercial
- Aging business owners

Opportunities for Economic Development

As the County advances into the future, there are several aspects of economic development that the County can look to build upon and include:

- Promotion of Business, Industry, and Tourism
- Increase Technological Positions (Telecommunications)
- Energy Development (Wind, Biomass, Solar, Renewable, etc.)
- Addition or construction of new tourism facilities
- Succession Planning
- Working with other communities
- Recreation – tourism
- Diverse agriculture, livestock
- Availability for improved drinking water in rural areas

Threats to Economic Development

There are factors that can have the potential to limit the development of industry and business within Murray County. Some of these threats include:

- Lack of Funds
- Lack of Young Farmers
- Population Decline
- High Energy Costs
- Aging Population
- Retired folks leave for cities or south
- Volatility of Ag Markets
- Lack of Diversity
- Private/Public access for improved infrastructure for utilities (water, wastewater, power, communications, etc) for the county

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN MURRAY COUNTY

While the Murray County economy continues to remain heavily dependent upon agriculture, the nation has seen large changes in the agriculture industry as a whole. Increased specialization and a loss of small and medium scale farmers continue to occur throughout the Cornbelt. Production continues to increase as new farming techniques are employed, higher technology seed varieties are used, and farmers from other parts of the world have placed more land into production – agriculture is a global market. Production, weather, as well as speculation have increased the highly variable agricultural economy. Large increases in production often outpace demand for the goods produced. These changes create many challenges for many of the residents of Murray County since its citizens are so heavily tied to agriculture.

Economic Base Theory

Economic base theory has been developed based on research demonstrating that the local economy can be divided into two very general sectors: 1) a basic (or non-local) sector or 2) a non-basic (or local) sector.

Basic Sector: This sector is made up of local businesses which provide goods or services to a larger market, in return for income which is then circulated in the local economy. For example, Finley Engineering in Murray County is involved in the telecommunications industry. Finley Engineering is involved with: Telephone System Engineering, Electrical Power Engineering, CATV Engineering, Fiber Optics, Records, Computer Aided Drafting, and Right-Of-Way Services.

Finley Engineering builds and sells their products to companies and countries located throughout the world. Their business is dependent almost entirely upon exporting their services to non-local firms. Manufacturing and local resource-oriented firms are usually considered to be basic sector firms because their fortunes depend largely upon non-local factors and because they usually export their goods.

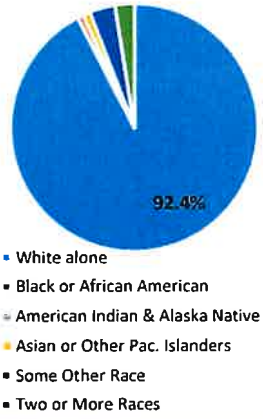
Non-basic Sector: The non-basic sector, in contrast, is composed of those firms that depend largely upon local business conditions. For example, a local grocery store sells its goods to local households, businesses, and individuals. Its clientele is locally based and, therefore, its products are consumed locally. Almost all local services (like drycleaners, restaurants, and drug stores) are identified as non-basic because they depend almost entirely on local factors.

Table 3-5. Employment Characteristics, 2022 ACS

Table 7. Employment Characteristics, 2022	Murray Co.			Minnesota		Labor Force by Gender	
	In Labor Force (available workers)	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Male	Female
Total Labor Force	4,157	62.7%	3.0%	68.7%	4.0%	2,227	1,928
16 to 19 years	228	56.0%	17.6%	53.0%	9.8%	103	125
20 to 24 years	355	87.0%	2.0%	83.1%	6.7%	188	167
25 to 44 years	1,392	88.9%	1.7%	88.8%	3.5%	762	630
45 to 54 years	782	88.2%	2.6%	87.8%	2.9%	393	389
55 to 64 years	898	72.2%	2.9%	72.8%	3.1%	473	425
65 to 74 years	417	36.6%	1.4%	27.6%	3.3%	250	167
75 years & over	83	8.5%	0.0%	6.6%	3.2%	58	25
Employment Characteristics by Race & Hispanic Origin							
White alone	3,842	62.1%	2.7%	67.8%	3.4%		
Black or African American	32	97.0%	0.0%	71.5%	8.7%		
American Indian & Alaska Native	0	0.0%	0.0%	57.6%	11.9%		
Asian or Other Pac. Islanders	39	41.1%	12.8%	73.9%	3.6%		
Some Other Race	138	79.8%	10.1%	76.1%	6.1%		
Two or More Races	105	73.9%	0.0%	74.3%	6.6%		
Hispanic or Latino	256	86.2%	5.5%	77.0%	6.3%		
Employment Characteristics by Disability, 20 to 64 years							
With Any Disability, 20 to 64 years	183	50.8%	10.9%	54.4%	10.2%		
Employment Characteristics by Educational Attainment, 25 to 64 years							
Population, 25 to 64 years	3,072	83.1%	2.3%	84.4%	3.3%		
Less than H.S. Diploma	232	79.7%	2.5%	67.2%	4.6%		
H.S. Diploma or Equivalent	914	82.6%	0.8%	76.8%	2.5%		
Some College or Assoc. Degree	1,154	82.8%	2.2%	85.1%	3.6%		
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	772	85.2%	0.9%	90.3%	2.0%		

Source: 2018-2022 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Figure 9. Labor Force by Race, 2022



In a June 2015 DEED report called "One-to-One" and a March 2016 report titled "Help Wanted", Southwest Minnesota has a high number of job openings with a low number of job vacancies. During the 4th quarter of 2014 there were more job vacancies than available workers, creating a very competitive labor market in the 23 county SW Minnesota DEED region. The report concluded that Southwest Minnesota has a one-to – one ratio of job seekers to job vacancies (Figure 3-1) and was reinforced by the 2016 report for a 1:1 ratio of job seekers and job vacancies (Figure 3-2).

Murray County is also experiencing a tight labor market with businesses expanding their search for workers, modifying their requirements and potentially increasing wages to attract workers. As the economy continues to expand and the labor market continues to contract, employers may find it hard to compete for available workers.

Figure 3-3. Southwest Minnesota Industry Employment Statistics, Q2 2005 – Q2 2014

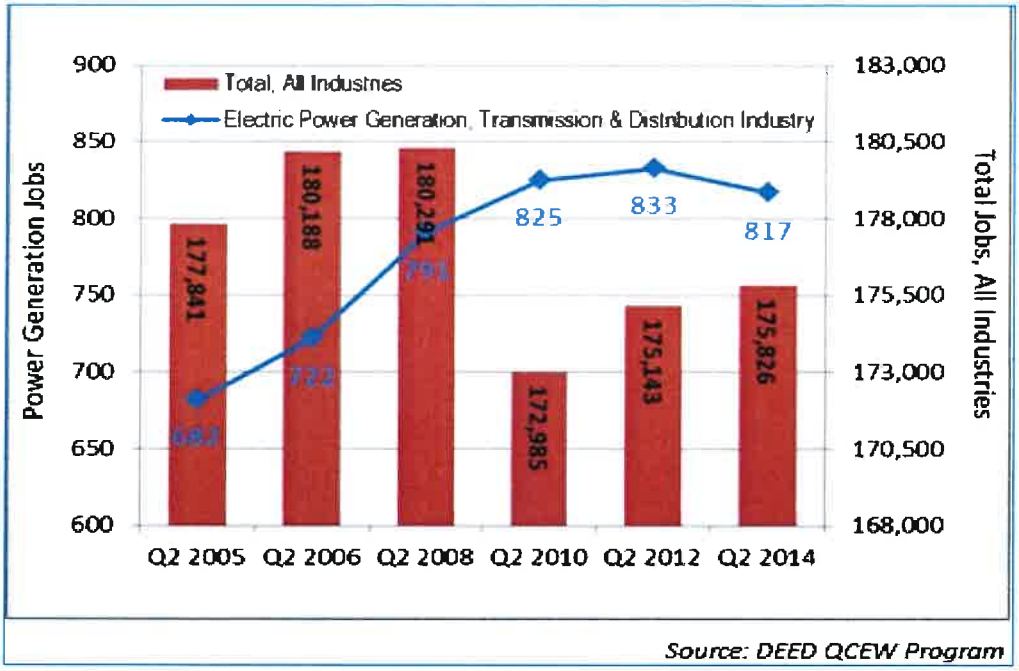
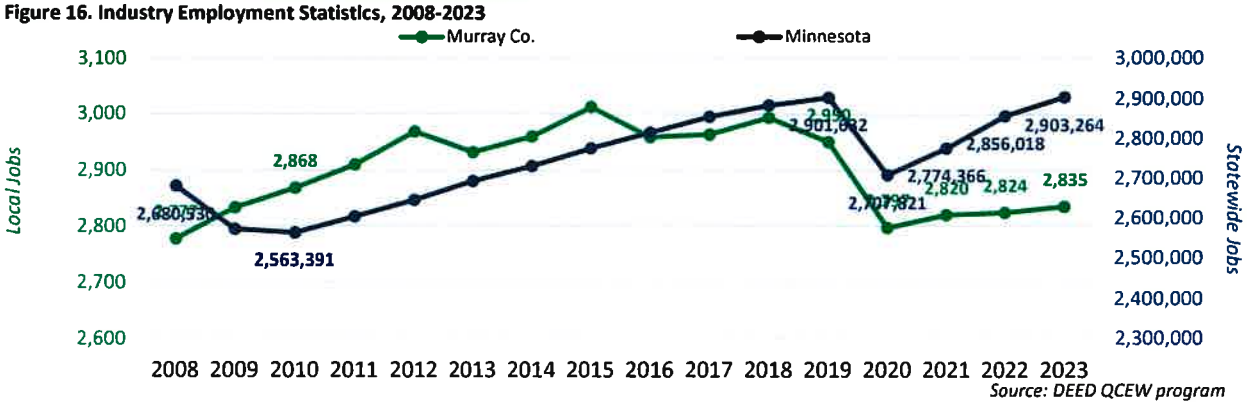


Figure 3-3a. Industry Employment Statistics, 2008-2023

Coming out of the pandemic recession, after gaining jobs over the past year, Murray Co. had the 73rd largest economy of the 87 counties in the state. Murray Co. was the 59th fastest growing in the past year and the 67th fastest growing since 2019. From 2019 to 2023, employment in Murray Co. is still down from the pandemic recession.

333	business establishments	**$46,797**	annual average wage
2,835	jobs	**$132,669,003**	total industry payroll
Job change, 2019-2023	*-115 jobs, -3.9% decline*		

Figure 16. Industry Employment Statistics, 2008-2023



This sector has the opportunity for replacement openings and job growth with high wages and a range of career opportunities that will require technical skills. Data from DEED's Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) program, indicate that nine of the top 10 occupations in the industry earn median wages above $45,000 per year (Table 3-7). The data from DEED provides an indicator of projected jobs (growth and loss) as well as the education and training requirements.

Table 3-13. Comparative County Income Levels, 2014

County	Per Capita Income 2014	2014 Median Household Income	2014 Median Family Income
Cottonwood	$24,275	$47,350	$55,330
Jackson	$27,942	$50,907	$64,217
Lincoln	$25,764	$49,122	$63,719
Lyon	$27,787	$51,182	$70,910
Murray	$29,107	$53,426	$67,482
Nobles	$23,068	$50,340	$59,781
Pipestone	$25,102	$46.800	$57,618
Redwood	$26,119	$47,999	$61,854
Rock	$25,586	$48,403	$61,853

Source: US Census data quick facts

According to the 2014 data, Murray County has the highest Per Capita Income (2014 data) and the highest Median Household Income in the nine county region (Table 3-13). The 2014 Median Family Income is the second highest in the nine county region at $67,482. However, the Census information indicates that 9.6 % of the people in the County are in poverty.

Table 3-14 represents the family yearly cost, worker hourly wage and family monthly costs in 2020 for Murray County and Minnesota. This data indicates that the yearly cost of living for a family is less in Murray County than it is for other areas of the State. The hourly wage required to make ends meet is $18.04. The cost of food, health care and transportation are comparable in monthly costs, albeit slightly above; however, monthly costs for child care, housing, and taxes are significantly less than all of Minnesota. This does indicate that the cost of living in Murray County is less than in other areas of the State. Keep in mind that according to the 2012 Minnesota Housing Partnership Profile of Murray County indicated 261 owner and 104 renter households paid at least half their income for housing. While the income in Table 2-12 is favorable, we do have residents who earn less than what is considered needed to cover the cost of living.

Table 3-14. Family Yearly Cost, Worker Hourly Wage, and Family Monthly Costs, 2020

	Family Yearly Cost of Living	Hourly Wage Required	Monthly Costs						
			Child Care	Food	Health Care	Housing	Trans-portation	Other	Taxes
Murray Co.	$56,281	$18.04	$279	$965	$576	$853	$1,053	$435	$529
Minnesota	$67,320	$21.58	$544	$955	$574	$1,285	$977	$536	$739

Agriculture

Table 3-15. Census of Agriculture, 2012/2022			*State Rank (of 87)*	*Change in Market Value, 2007-2012*
	Number of Farms	Market Value of Products Sold		
Murray Co.	895 / 789*	$365,471,000 / $451,948,000	*24 / 27*	*54.1%*
State of Minnesota	74,542 / 65,531	$21,280,184,000 / $28,482,097,000		*61.5%*
* Census of Agriculture - 2022 *Source: 2012 Census of Agriculture*				

The economy of Murray County remains heavily dependent on agriculture. As mentioned in other parts of the plan, this dependence is a result of large amounts of prime farmland within the County. While this resource has benefited the County, compatible development is also encouraged to diversify the economy.

Agriculture no longer supports as many jobs as it once did. At the beginning of the 19th century, farmers were heavily dependent on horses and hired hands for producing a crop. As technology advanced, tractors replaced the horse and various other forms of equipment and technological advances replaced the need for hired farm hands. Table 3-15 identifies that Murray County ranked 24 out of 87 counties in agriculture, and the change in market value of products sold from 2007 to 2012 as +54.1 %, and from 2012 to 2022 +34%.

Table 3-16 illustrates the number of farms by acre ranges. The size ranges appear to increase and contract over the years. Interestingly the average size of farms in 1997 was 459 acres and decreased in 2002 and 2007, but increased to 456 acres in the 2012 Census of Agriculture. In addition, the number of acres in farms has fluctuated between the 1997 and 2012 Census of Agriculture likely because of land going into and out of the various farm programs.

Table 3-16 Number of Farms and size 2002 to 2022

	2002	2007	2012	2022
Number of Farms between 1 - 9.9 Acres	20	50	57	62
Number of Farms between 10 - 49.9 Acres	172	209	128	133
Number of Farms between 50 - 179 Acres	176	223	262	204
Number of Farms between 180 - 499 Acres	246	248	170	163
Number of Farms between 500 - 999 Acres	184	166	146	131
Number of Farms between 1000 - 1999 Acres	100	106	97	96*
*Number of Farms over 2000 Acres	13	21	35	N/A *
Number of Farms under 179 Acres	368	482	447	399
Number of Farms between 180 - 999 Acres	430	414	316	294
Number of Farms over 1000 Acres	113	127	132	96
Number of Farms	911	1,023	895	789
Land in Farms	407,488 a	428,869 a	407,919 a	351,476 a
Average size of Farm	447 a	419 a	456 a	455 a

Source: US Census of Agriculture

Bioenergy – trees, crops, and ag and forestry wastes that make fuels, chemicals, and electricity can be used as a replacement to fossil fuels.

Methane to Electricity – Farmers are discovering the value from capturing the methane produced from animal manure and converting it to electricity. Some early reports claim that methane capture can save the farmer money relative to the amount of manure produced. Scale of economy is a serious factor for making this method profitable.

Power Production – Crops, woody plants, and cellulose residue can be co-fired in coal plants in order to produce electricity, thereby reducing the amount of coal burned and reducing overall pollutants from fossil fuels.

Value Added Production

Value-added production is gaining popularity in the United States and Minnesota has been a pioneer in this area. As of March 2016, Minnesota produced more ethanol than any other State except for Iowa, Nebraska and Illinois (Renewable Fuels Association). Nationwide, 14 % of corn grown is used for ethanol, still less than the amount of corn exports, according to USDA Economic Research Service (ERS). Bio-diesel (using soy bean oil as a component of diesel fuel) is also now being produced in Southwest Minnesota. Both of these types of value-added production plants, if built in Murray County, could give an increased demand to locally grown agricultural commodities, resulting in increased prices for farmers. Careful research and planning is required before the decision to build one of these plants is granted. There are many issues to be resolved. Top concerns remain:

- Industrial-scale water quantity and quality issues
- Competition for both the grain that the plant will require and for the markets that the final product will require

After pros and cons concerning value added processing facilities are weighed, it may be more strategic for Murray County to focus on creating value in the agricultural products that it produces through manufacturing and branding premium agricultural products rather than seeking volume processing of undifferentiated commodities.

Hemp

The primary value-added opportunity for industrial hemp includes: food, fiber, CBD, fuel, and feed. Industrial hemp contains no more than 0.3 percent delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and is grown for industrial, non-drug purposes. The crop lends itself for use in a large variety of products including, but not limited to, agricultural, textiles, automotive parts, furniture, food and beverages, paper, construction materials and personal care items.

Cannabis

Minnesota law was established by the State Legislature in 2023 and was updated in 2024 to allow adult-use cannabis. The law allows for different types of business licenses, including, but not limited to: growing or cultivating, manufacturing, retailing, and wholesaling. The County may adopt reasonable restrictions on time, place, and manner of cannabis business operations to protect the public safety and welfare.

Table 3-20 Quantity and Value of Sales of Livestock in Murray County, 2022

	Quantity 2022	sales ($1,000) 2022
Hogs and Pigs	205,046	$104,413
Cattle and calves	53,015	$74,114
Milk From Cows		$17,141
Sheep, Lambs, & Goats (all)	3,361 754	$712 ***

* Includes sheep and goats, D – data withheld to avoid data for individual operations. Source: 2022 Census of Agriculture

According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, Crops account for 56% of total agricultural product sales and livestock (primarily Cattle/Calves, Milk from Cows, Hogs and pigs) account for 44%. It should also be noted that 84% of farms have internet access.

Summary

The agricultural industry will continue to face challenges adapting to global economic trends. Agriculture will also continue to be the dominant use of land in Murray County, and Southwest Minnesota, for the foreseeable future.

Tourism

Within Murray County, there are many features that can be used to attract tourists from other parts of the State and Country. The County has an important history that dates back to the times of European settlement and the conflicts that arose with the Native Americans living in the area. Murray County can take advantage of these special areas by investing money in the promotion and marketing of them to potential visitors. In addition, Murray County possesses many attractive lakes and a rich history surrounding historically significant areas. Although the Murray County population continues to decline, it does have the potential to capitalize on its various attractive features.

The County has several possibilities in terms of promoting tourism:

- Constructing a multi-use trail from Pipestone, through Murray County, to Walnut Grove (Casey Jones Trail)
- Research possible birding site potential along the Minnesota River Valley Birding Trail
- Explore the potential for building partnerships to look at developing a Prairie Coteau or Des Moines River Birding Trail.
- Adequate lodging in specific locations for visitors

The County does possess a great deal of site-seeing areas such as areas and trails around Lake Shetek, various birding sites, and multiple trails. However, tourism in Murray County is not limited to sightseeing features; it can also be generated through the excellent recreation and hunting opportunities as well. Within Murray County, pheasant hunting, fishing, ice fishing, duck hunting, and deer hunting all have great potential.

advantage of its wind resources by continuing its efforts in transforming the County from a fossil fuel burning, carbon dioxide producing member of the State of Minnesota, to a County that relies more heavily on clean, renewable energy. This way, energy sources such as wind power and solar can become an export industry for Murray County.

Renewable energy within the region has the continued potential to provide an abundant amount of economic opportunity. In addition, renewable energy generation through wind and solar power production is continuing to help diversify the economy of Murray County. The direct effects of wind and solar power generation are seen through the spending of wages received from the local energy-producing industry as well as the easement payments made to County landowners, and the production tax generated from the energy produced. The development of locally owned cooperatives to distribute the generated electricity could maximize the local benefit of the ensuing renewable energy development.

While there are positive aspects to power generation, some view aspects as negative. Some citizens do not view large wind turbines or solar farms as aesthetically pleasing and many do not want to live near them. Wind towers can also have negative impacts on a surrounding area's wildlife populations. While avian monitoring studies at the existing Buffalo Ridge wind farms have not found significant numbers of birds killed by turbines, they have found a number of migrating bats that have been killed by them. Impacts to wildlife and native plant communities can be reduced by careful attention to micro-siting issues such as not locating them: Near native prairie, between wetlands, and near bird flight lines.

Solar currently comes in three modes, solar photovoltaic, thermal – air heat, and thermal- hot water. As a power alternative, solar has also grown in attractiveness to reduce energy consumption as well as to export the power. Solar photovoltaic is the generation of electricity and can be used on site or placed on the distribution system. An example of a larger solar array is the 2 MW Slayton solar farm, where the power generated goes to the distribution system to be used locally. The large solar facilities will likely be located near access points to the transmission system (substations). Due to the potential of generating more runoff concentrated at the base of the panels, care should be taken with relationships to water erosion as well as in shoreland areas. Depending on the need, any of the three solar technologies can be used on site to reduce the need for traditional energy sources.

Other known renewable energy resources include geothermal (used onsite to reduce traditional heating and cooling energy use and costs) as well as biomass. As technologies develop, one can expect other renewable energy opportunities to be developed and the County should research these opportunities as they become viable, including, but not limited to: Green Hydrogen, Electric Vehicles and Electric Charging Stations, Sustainable Aviation Fuel, Natural Gas Peaking Plants, Bio-digester, and Battery Energy Storage Systems.

Future of Economic Development

Technology and diversification are two words describing the future for economic development. Technology is required in persuading high tech industries to enter a given area. Murray County can strengthen its economic base by increasing its technology, growth and training its workforce for modern computer applications, and finding niche businesses. Diversification results in finding new products to produce using the resources Murray County already possesses. The County already has the potential to expand its renewable energy market through the production of wind, solar, biomass, ethanol, and other renewable energy production.

Strengths in the County's Historic and Cultural Facilities

- State Park (Trail, Dakota Conflict)
- Recreation (Lakes, County Parks, End-O-Line Park and Museum, Trails, etc.)
- Museum (Historical Societies)
- Well researched archaeological Sites- Bear Lake, Buffalo Ridge, Shetek area, Big Slough
- County and Community Events & Festivals
- Churches
- Schools, and some country school's buildings exist

Weaknesses in the County's Historic and Cultural Facilities

- No/Few incentives to retain and rehabilitate historic structures
- Economic Impact (no visible return on dollars spent)

Opportunities for the County's Historic and Cultural Facilities

- Use different forms of marketing on a regular basis (newspapers, website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, tourism magazines, periodicals, ads, new programs (Dinehart Lunchbox Lecture)
- Collaborative Marketing between area historic places and museums and State associations to draw visitors to attractions in the area
- New Impact study done by the U of MN Extension Office.
- Make Enhancements to the County's Website
- The more effective use of Website is being addressed through two new websites for the End O Line Park and the Museum. The Historical Society now funds and runs its own website which will allow it more freedom to advertise, sell items on-line, and get input from users.
- Develop a Countywide plan to address loss of historic properties.
- Casey Jones Corridor

Threats facing the County's Historic and Cultural Facilities

- Access to funding.
- Out Migration of Younger People, increasing older population that leaves in winter. Fewer residents have bond to past.
- Lack of Focus on what the County Already Possesses
- High price for ag land reduces incentive for preservation of historic rural structures, early tree claims, silos, etc.
- Lack of understanding of processes to save, renovate or preserve historic structures that are privately held.

Presently, the County is fortunate that generally there is an adequate supply of ground water to meet current needs. There are, however, portions of the County's available and practical ground water resources that are generally unpalatable for human consumption. Groundwater in Murray County, as in most of southwest Minnesota, has a very high mineral content. Iron and manganese regularly exceed recommended standards in the deeper aquifers of the County, but this is not necessarily true of the shallower aquifers. In addition, bacteria and nitrate contaminations of ground water supplies have the potential to be a concern in the rural portions of the County. Since contaminated water cannot be used for human consumption without treatment, the availability of drinking water may be further decreased unless adequate measures to protect ground water quality are initiated. As such, a wellhead protection plan or Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA), required buffer strips, and shoreland development, will all be further discussed.

Murray County has a relative abundance of high-quality wildlife habitat for an otherwise agriculturally dominated area. There are many small wetlands that still remain and are scattered throughout the County. Plus, there is a relatively large base of public lands that will also be identified within this chapter.

Parks and Recreation

In today's society, an increasing variety of parks and recreational uses exist and are being demanded by the public. In fact, the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) dated 2014-2018 (and 2020-2024 update) is to connect everyone to the outdoors so they can create experiences that inspire a legacy of stewardship for the natural world, and they provide fun, outdoor recreational opportunities that strengthen families, friendships, health and spirit, now and into the future. This is coupled with other initiatives: Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails Commission – created to foster the planning and development of a regional parks and trail system; the State Health Improvement Program (SHIP) which promotes healthier active communities; Safe Routes to School which encourages children to become more active by walking and riding their bikes to school. Benefits not only include a more active lifestyle, but outdoor recreation facilities also encourage tourism.

The County's function in this area is to enhance the condition of natural resource-based parks and recreational activities in the County and to identify ways to preserve these resources. The County parks and trails should be developed to complement the parks and open space opportunities supported by other providers, such as State Parks and municipal parks.

The demand for outdoor recreation and education opportunities and for the preservation of open space is bright. National trends for recreation activities illustrate the general public's interest and participation in outdoor activities. However, there is an increasing degree of specialization to these trends. It is important for Murray County to continue to support a wide variety of recreation opportunities such as camping, birding, hunting, fishing, and trail use activities that not only include running, hiking, and biking, but also involve trail uses for ATV's, snowmobiles, and horses.

- Provide guidance and support to the County's communities for the protection of remaining high value natural areas and green space, including those areas of limited scientific value but of local importance.
- Protect the supply and quality of ground water through a coordinated approach of public education and community involvement.
- Continue to monitor water quality. Increase the amount of testing done to the County's lakes while increasing coordination and cooperation between those performing the tests to avoid duplication of effort. Use information gathered to assess the performance of water quality preservation methods and to determine areas that are safe or unsafe for swimming, fishing, etc.
- Provide direction for long-term investment of local resources in public open space (i.e. parks).
- Provide guidance for other County Plans, such as the County Water Plan, Parks Plan, EDA work plan, and highway improvement plans.

CONSERVATION, PARKS, AND OPENS SPACE ISSUES FOR MURRAY COUNTY

In terms of Conservation, Parks, and Open Spaces, there have been aspects and developments that have occurred as a result of the comprehensive plan completed in 1972. However, there were initiatives started through that plan that for one reason or another, were not carried through. This chapter will identify more areas to utilize, and it will also take a look back at proposed developments that were not enacted in the old plan and make recommendations as to whether or not these actions should be reconsidered.

Murray County has a variety of strengths in parks and conservation. The County should look to its strengths first for advantage. Throughout development of this plan, the Murray County Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee considered recommendations that will help to positively affect the County's resources in the future. These recommendations are outlined below and further discussed throughout the body of the chapter.

Strengths

- County Lakes
- County Parks
- Wildlife Areas
- Lake Shetek State Park
- The Buffalo Ridge
- Diversified areas throughout the County
- CRP/RIM/CREP Lands
- Public and Private Campgrounds
- Remnant Habitat (Privately Owned)
- Presence of Casey Jones State Trail and other trails in the county
- Snowmobile Trail
- Buffer
- Murray Soil & Water Conservation District
- Multiple Planning Efforts in Water Planning

Weaknesses

- Poor water quality in most lakes
- Tax Structure (Townships losing funds but not responsibility)
- Lack of shower and restroom facilities at certain parks
- Habitat degradation and fragmentation
- Lack of adequate parking facilities in the lake areas

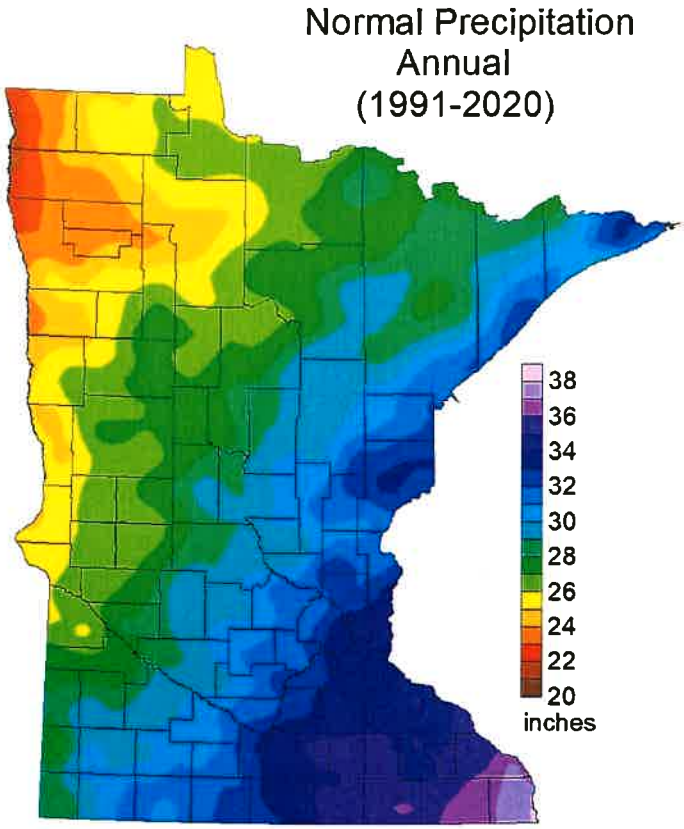
Opportunities

- Coordination between Township/County/Community leadership
- Opportunities for targeted conservation zones
- Income generation from County parks
- Develop/extend the Casey Jones Trail (supports core background of all trails)
- Coordinate with Park Board and EDA
- Legacy dollars
- Trails
- Coordination to ensure habitat quality in order to increase game bird numbers
- Pursue regional designation of parks to seek additional funding

Threats

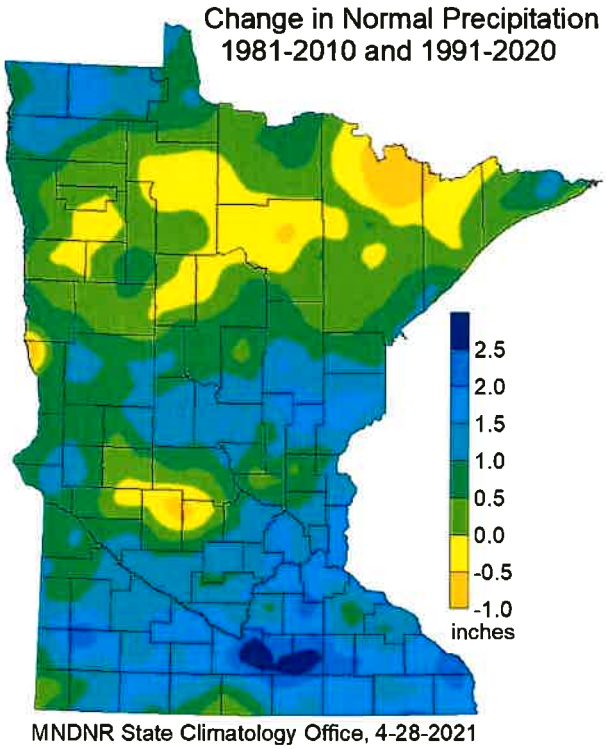
- Expanding drainage posing negative downstream effects
- No funding for access to conservation areas due to tax structure
- Poorly designed drainage ditch crossings of County and township roads
- Invasive Species
- Changing climatic events
- Impaired waters
- The governing of park/recreation lands is becoming too much and is having a negative impact on tax revenues (some parks do not provide enough revenue to support respective infrastructure)
- Conflicts between landowners
- Less opportunities for young farmers to get established due to CRP/RIM/CREP programs

Figure 5-1a Minnesota Normal Precipitation 1991-2020



DNR State Climatology Office, April 16, 2021

Figure 5-1b Minnesota Change in Normal Precipitation 1981-2010 and 1991-2020



MNDNR State Climatology Office, 4-28-2021

is when warm temps lead to accelerated decomposition of plants and algae in the water and the dissolved oxygen falls too low to support fish populations). Sources of increased nutrients in lakes include: municipal sewage discharge, leaching from septic tanks, feedlot runoff, applying excessive amounts of nitrogen and phosphorous to cropland, erosion of nutrient rich soil, improper manure disposal, and finally, the over fertilization of residential lawns. Pollutants have the potential to interchange between land, lake, and ground water, affecting drinking water or industrial water quality, as well as fishing, recreation, and human health.

Murray County has made progress and now has sewered communities around the vast majority of the lakes, and there should be little concern of municipal sewage or failing septic systems discharging into the lakes.

A second threat to the Murray County waters is Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS), which is addressed in the AIS Plan. Each year, Murray County approves an AIS prevention plan based on funding the State of Minnesota allocated to combat aquatic invasive species in the state's waterways. The AIS Plan typically focuses on educating the public, and assessing threats to water bodies in the county.

Table 5-4 Shoreland Classification

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT LAKES

Lake	Location (Twp.)	Lake	Location (Twp.)
Talcott Lake	Belfast	Long Lake	Lake Sarah
Klinkers Marsh	Cameron	Maria	Lake Sarah
Nelsons Marsh	Cameron	Manson Marsh	Murray
Louisa	Des Moines River	Smith	Murray
Silver	Des Moines River	Buffalo Lake	Murray/Dovray
Buffalo	Dovray	Armstrong	Shetek
Dovray Marsh	Dovray	Bloody	Shetek
Julia	Dovray	Fox	Shetek
Hjermstads Lake	Ellsborough	Freemont	Shetek
Lange Marsh	Ellsborough	Robbins Marsh	Shetek
Currant	Ellsborough/Skandia	Round	Shetek
Corabelle	Iona	Webster Slough	Shetek
N. Badger	Iona	Park Lake	Shetek/Murray
S. Badger	Iona	Clear	Shetek/Sarah
Willow	Iona	Iron	Skandia

Source: Murray County Environmental Services

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT LAKES

Lake	Location (Twp.)
Fulda (1 & 2)	Bondin
Lime (both east and west of TH59)	Lime Lake
Sarah	Lake Sarah
Shetek	Shetek/Sarah/Mason/Murray
Wilson	Chanarambie

Source: DNR Waters Division

The filling of lakes by gradual sedimentation or soil erosion is also of concern. Eroded soils move into surface waters including wetlands, lakes, and rivers contributing to degraded water quality, which in turn, reduces the amount of sunlight that can reach aquatic plants. As a result, the aquatic plants are reduced and the nutrients that would have been used up by those plants are released and become available to support nuisance (unwanted) algae growth. In addition, soil particles carry nutrients such as phosphorus, which further contributes to nutrient loading in lakes and rivers. Other contaminants such as agricultural chemicals are also carried into surface waters through soil erosion. Finally, the basic public values of the impacted basins are jeopardized as they become silted in at accelerated rates. Lakes and wetlands can be literally filled in by erosion. The principle means of reclaiming these valued water bodies would be the extremely expensive and ecologically disruptive process of dredging. Further discussion on water quality can be found in the DWSMA section of this chapter.

Public Water Access

There are 32 public water accesses in Murray County. The public water accesses in Murray County are either a trailer access or by carry-in. Murray County owns / operates nine of the accesses: Corabelle, Currant Lake, Fulda First Lake, Lime Lake, Lake Sarah (2), and Lake Shetek (2). The following lakes are inadequately served by public accesses: Lake Louisa, Summit Lake, Fremont Lake, and Long Lake

The Inlet

This Plan has identified the Inlet as a body of water that should be preserved from urban development but open to some form of development that utilizes the area's natural and aesthetic beauty. Using zoning to allow a use that will preserve a large portion of the natural areas around the Inlet such as a park, camp, or campground (i.e. conservation lands) will be in the County's best interest. This type of development will not only preserve the water quality within the Inlet, but it will also help maintain water quality in Lake Shetek, and the Des Moines River.

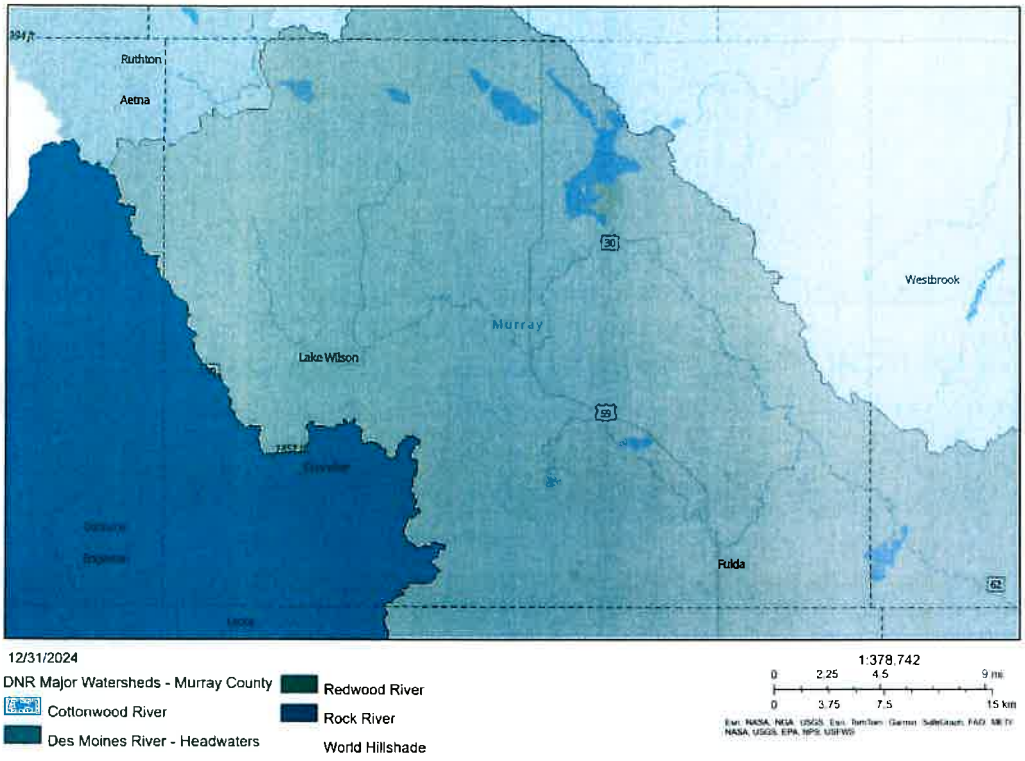
Water Quality Improvements

Surface waters within Murray County have been degraded by nutrients and sediment, however these surface waters will continue to be used primarily as recreational uses. Water-based recreation will likely decrease if degradation of the County's surface water continues, with a negative effect on tourism, economic development, property values, jobs, the quality of life, and population trends.

The Murray County Water Management Plan promotes surface water quality improvements and supports construction of water retention structures to slow runoff, to keep soil, fertilizer, and pesticides on the land.

Murray County is a partner with other local units of government participating in watershed management planning programs for four major watersheds shown in Figure 5-4: Des Moines River; Missouri River; Redwood River; and Cottonwood-Middle Minnesota.

Figure 5-4 Murray County Major Watersheds



The Federal Clean Water Act requires states to adopt water quality standards. A water body is considered "impaired" or polluted if it fails to meet these standards. The Act requires the State to conduct a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study to identify point and non-point sources of each of these pollutants. MPCA and other agencies are working to reduce impairments in these waters. In 2024[5], the State listed the following water bodies in Murray County as impaired waters:

Table 5-5 2024 Impaired waters, Murray County

Buffalo	Willow Creek	County Ditch #20	Lake Sarah
Lime Creek	Des Moines River	Lake Shetek	Beaver Creek
Devils Run	Lime Lake	Fox Lake	Lake Corabelle
Currant Lake	Chanarambie Creek	Bloody Lake	JD #20 A - Plum Creek
Jack Creek - North Branch	Lower Lake Sarah Outlet	Lake Shetek Inlet	Chanarambie Creek - North Branch

Source: MPCA

Significantly reducing sedimentation and non-point pollutants can be accomplished by using conservation measures that help to slow or eliminate runoff entering the County's lakes and streams. By installing proper management practices, non-point pollution can be adequately addressed by combining management techniques with control activities on the land and through the construction of various structures. The following are some potentially available practices that are both visible and physical:

- *Streambank Stabilization* - Riprap or willow plantings or a combination of both.
- *Riparian Buffers* – Planting of appropriate permanent vegetation along the banks of streams and waterways.
- *Critical Area Seeding* – Planting of grasses in areas with erosion problems such as within agriculture fields in areas that are prone to gullying.
- *Wetland Protection, Preservation, and Restoration* – Wetlands are excellent in not only preventing erosion but supply functional habitat as well.
- *Suspended Ag Practices* – Taking poor or marginal farmland out of production and restoring native plant communities and wetlands.
- *Terraces* – Shaping the land to change the slope to slow runoff across the landscape.
- *Tillage System* – Use of no-till or minimum till to plant crops versus conventional plowing methods.
- *Managed Grazing* – Placing fencing to control the movement of livestock. A producer could fence off a steam bank or create small paddocks in a large pasture to control grazing and inhibit livestock from entering the lakes.

[5] The 2024 list of impaired waters was updated April 2024
https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/minnesotas-impaired-waters-list

Table 5-7 County Park Facilities

Park	Acres	Boat	Dock	Picnic	Restroom	Swimming	Camping	Playground
Corabelle	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Forman Acres	1	Yes	Yes					
Lake Sarah East	1.6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes
Sundquist at Lake Sarah West	12.97	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lime Lake*(west of Avoca)	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	
Marsh's Landing*	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Seven Mile Lake*	10+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Swenson* (east side of Currant Lake)	13.53	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes and disc golf
End-O-Line Railroad Park and Museum **	15				Yes			Yes

* Park and natural areas subject to permanent land use requirements through grant agreements. In addition to the Murray County Parks, the Avoca City Park, Chandler City Park, Slayton tennis courts and Lake Shetek State Park have received grant funds and have permanent land use requirements.

** Original manually operated turntable, authentically restored or reconstructed buildings, trailhead for the 6-mile segment of the Casey Jones trail, Veterans Memorial, gift shop and interpretative center, native American center. Future expansion limited due to floodplain. Consider seeking Regional designation from the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails Council.

Development Plans for County Trails

The Southwest Minnesota Regional Trails Plan (2000) identified recent studies that show the use of outdoor trail systems is on the rise. According to a 1990 Harris poll, it was estimated that 73 % of adults in the US walked outdoors, most notably for exercise. It is also believed that local economies receive stimulation when communities respond to the needs of trail users. Murray County should encourage the development of trails and trail heads within its borders, as well as trail connections with those of neighboring counties.

Potential Trailheads have been identified in the Regional Trails Plan, (* is an existing trail head) including:

- Chandler
- Corabelle County Park
- End-O Line Park (Currie)*
- Forman Acres County Park
- Fulda
- Lake Sarah East County Park
- Lake Sarah West County Park
- Lake Shetek State Park*
- Lake Wilson*
- Lime Lake County Park
- Marsh's Landing
- Seven Mile Lake County Park
- Slayton
- Swenson County Park
- Valhalla Island on Lake Shetek

Murray County has two segments of the Casey Jones Trail: Lake Shetek/End-O-Line (paved) and a segment by the community of Lake Wilson (unpaved).

Casey Jones Trail

The Casey Jones Trail was one of the first State trails authorized by the State of Minnesota when State Trail legislation was passed in the late 1960s. The longest segment is 12 miles of former railroad grade between the city of Pipestone and the Pipestone/Murray county line. The eight mile segment from Pipestone to County Road 67 is paved. The next two miles leading into the town of Woodstock have a graded gravel surface, and the remaining two miles have an unmaintained, natural surface. A second, small, natural-surfaced segment runs west one and one-half miles from the city of Lake Wilson. The third portion of the trail is a six mile, paved loop between Lake Shetek State Park and the city of Currie. This segment connects End-O-Line Park with the Lake Shetek State Park and goes by Smith Lake, Shetek Monument, Wildlife Area and the dam at the beginning of the Des Moines River. The Casey Jones Trail connects tall grass prairie, wooded ravines, and Lake Shetek.

The following are *potential* future trail developments for Murray County:

Casey Jones Trail

In 2005, DNR prepared a new State Trail Master Plan for completion of the Casey Jones Trail. This plan examined five multiple-use trail segments: Split Rock Creek State Park to Pipestone, Pipestone to Lake Wilson, Lake Wilson to Slayton, Slayton to Lake Shetek State Park (including the End-o-Line trail), and Lake Shetek State Park to Walnut Grove. In 2002, the State trail was legislatively extended on the south to Luverne and to the north to connect with the Minnesota

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC FALILITIES ISSUES FOR MURRAY COUNTY

Infrastructure and public facilities include much of the core infrastructure that residents and businesses rely on. Infrastructure and public facilities cover many areas, from public owned buildings and facilities to other infrastructure needs for County residents, businesses and visitors. These facilities include energy (distribution and transmission power lines, pipelines, heating fuels, solar, wind, and as well as newer technology for vehicles such as electric charging stations); sewer and water (ISTS and private wells to centralized sewer systems and public water supplies); communications (broadband, cell phone, emergency communications); the transportation system (roads, bridges, aeronautics, and transit); as well as publicly owned buildings and facilities. The Murray County Comprehensive Planning Committee identified both current and future infrastructure that would be beneficial to the County to include in this Plan.

Strengths

- Capital Improvement Plan for parks and all County Facilities
- Road network in place
- Very good Emergency Management Services
- Coordination between County and Townships for Road Maintenance Agreements
- Two Rural Water Systems within the County

Weaknesses

- Poor water quality in most lakes
- Tax Structure (Townships losing funds but not responsibility)
- No rail or interstate
- Farming in ROW
- Township roads are 3-5 ton
- Lack of communication between units of governmental entities
- Habitat degradation and fragmentation
- Funding for all roads
- Need for good quality drinking water in unserved rural areas and communities

Opportunities

- Broadband and telecommunications
- Slayton future annexation to airport
- Power generation
- Expansion of rural water
- Road agreement for Townships and County
- Better maintenance of high-volume township roads during peak seasons
- Satellite Emergency Management Services in lake areas
- Electric charging stations
- Light Manufacturing

Threats

- Expanding drainage posing negative downstream effects
- Continued loss, degradation and fragmentation of habitat/conservation areas
- Poorly designed drainage ditch crossings of County and township roads
- Invasive Species
- Impaired waters
- Rural Water expansion and gravel mining
- The governing of park/recreation lands is becoming too much and is having a negative impact on tax revenues (some parks do not provide enough revenue to support respective infrastructure)
- Conflicts between landowners
- Roads and bridges deteriorate due to volume and weight of usage
- Buffer enforcement on drainage ditches

PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES

County Buildings

There are many buildings owned by the County. Some of these are listed and described:

- Courts Building
- County Government Center
- County Hospital
- County Fairgrounds
- Murray County Highway Dept. (old and new)
- Recycling Building
- Dinehart -Holt House
- Health & Human Services
- Professional (Old DAC) Building
- Sanitary Landfill Building
- County Park facilities
- Museum

Murray County Office Facilities - Over the last couple of decades, Murray County's population has continued to decrease but the number of people employed by Murray County government has remained fairly stable. Murray County government is carried out in the Government Center Building and the Courts Building, both located in Slayton. The Courts Building was built in 1974 and the Government Center Building was built in 1981. These two facilities represent the foundation of Murray County Government. The traditional County Government Offices are located in the Government Center building. The court administration activities as well as the law enforcement services occupy most of the Courts Building.

It is important for the Murray County government facilities to provide public offices that are accessible and responsive to the public's needs and that are sufficient in size and flexibility to enable staff to carry out their functions. In addition, it is important for Murray County to continue to work closely with local fire departments and rescue squads to ensure adequate safety for the public. Fire District and First Responder coverage area changes from time to time; the most recent maps of each are located on the Murray County website. The 2016 first responder coverage map shows no coverage in all or parts of 15 of the 20 townships; however, the entire County is covered by ambulance service.

Murray County Maintenance Facilities - Through timely maintenance of the County's highways and parks, systems are preserved for their maximum use and the safety of users is enhanced. Both the Highway Department and the Parks Department operate central maintenance shops for major service and repairs (both are located in Slayton). In addition, the Highway Department also has one satellite shop located in Currie. In 2024, Murray County constructed a new Highway Department on the west side of Slayton on Highway 30.

Murray County Historical Society and Museum - Since 1972, the Murray County Historical Society has been stationed at its present location 2480 – 29th Street, Slayton. In 2007, the County also acquired the historic Dinehart-Holt House east of the Government Center. The historical society's goal is to not only continually expand its museum of historical artifacts, but to educate the general public as to the important and exciting history of Murray County. The Historical Society sponsors a "free museum devoted to local and regional history". At the museum, you can see early radios and phonographs, genealogical records and a library, Indian artifacts, glassware, old style furniture, and much more.

Library Facilities - Murray County does not operate its own library, but several exist within the various municipalities. The Slayton Public Library and the Fulda Memorial Library are part of the Plum Creek Library System and benefits everyone through a variety of services and programs. In addition to being able to check out books and magazines, the facilities have access to the Internet, Slayton has computer work stations.

Medical Facilities

Hospitals and Nursing Homes - The Murray County Medical Center (MCMC) has brought together the publicly owned Memorial Hospital and Clinic in Slayton under management of Sioux Falls-based Sanford Health System. MCMC has been designated a Level IV Trauma Hospital by the State of Minnesota. The Medical Center Ambulance Service, currently based at the County's Professional Building on Broadway in Slayton, is also part of the MCMC Operations. The Medical Center has been looking at different options to locate Ambulance Service at the main campus on Trunk Highway 30. There are two medical clinics in Fulda.

Sunrise Terrace, a County-owned assisted living facility, is attached directly to the MCMC facility with twenty apartments.

Murray County has one nursing home: Maple Lawn Nursing Home, Inc. has 62 beds and is located in Fulda. While not owned by the public, the nursing home provides important services to the public. The former Golden Living Center nursing home that was located in the City of Slayton, with its 60 beds, was closed in 2019 and the structure demolished.

Health and Human Services Building - Lincoln Lyon Murray Pipestone (LLMP) Public Health, Lincoln Lyon Murray Human Services, Western Mental Health, and RSVP are located in the Health and Human Services Building constructed in 2008 on Maple Road in Slayton. The Murray County Public Health Nurses provide such services as: Immunization, Disease Investigation, Health Promotion Activities, and School Nursing.

Chiropractors, Dentists and Optometrists - Within Murray County, there are three chiropractors currently in private practice, two dentists and one optometrist.

Education Facilities

Although there are 9 different school districts that have jurisdiction within Murray County, only two districts, Fulda and Murray County Central, have public school facilities operating within the County.

Trends for Murray County school enrollment levels are presented in the Demographics and Housing Chapter.

Even though Murray County is not directly responsible for operating and governing educational facilities that are located within Murray County, the County is directly affected by the efficiency of the overall system. County authorities, as well as residents, should work cooperatively in order to provide a high quality education system. This system should place a priority on providing the opportunity for all children to obtain a high level of education. The opportunities should emphasize education at the elementary, secondary, and post high school levels.

Parks and Recreation

The Murray County Fairgrounds are located south of the Courthouse and Murray County Central high school in Slayton. A number of historic and modern buildings are located on the fairgrounds, as well as a dirt auto race track and horse arena. The wooden grandstands at the race track were demolished in 2007, and replaced by modern bleachers, restrooms and food service area.

The other parks, recreational facilities and trails within Murray County are addressed within the Conservation, Parks, and Open Spaces chapter.

Infrastructure

Water Supply and Management - Murray County does not have an overabundance in high quality water. Residential, agricultural, and industrial demand placed on the water supply in the County is substantial, relative to capacity of available aquifers. Some of the County's highest water yielding aquifers are shallow, which means that they are the most vulnerable to pollution. Murray County adopted ordinance regulations as of January 2020 pertaining to a Wellhead Protection Overlay District to restrict polluting land uses above these aquifers.

Generally, well depths throughout the County have the potential to become more of a concern. Some communities have wells that are located within areas of very high susceptibility to groundwater contamination. Ground water in Murray County, as in most of southwestern Minnesota, also has a very high mineral content. Iron and Manganese concentrations regularly exceed recommended standards. In addition, much of Murray County groundwater has high concentrations of sulfate and dissolved solids. This poses a problem for farmers who have livestock drinking large amounts of this water. It also forces municipalities within the County to treat water supplies in order to meet Minnesota Department of Health drinking water quality standards. Since water recharge in these shallow wells can occur in a matter of hours, they are extremely vulnerable to pollutants that may result from inappropriate land use. However, this is where the water supplies are, so these wells cannot be abandoned. Action should be taken to aid in the protection of these wells from potential contamination.

The Lincoln-Pipestone Rural Water System currently provides water to the west side and southwestern corner of the County while the Red Rock Rural Water System provides water to the eastern side of the County plus service to parts of Lake Shetek and Lake Sarah. This leaves a large area within Murray County that is not serviced by a rural water system. Red Rock Rural water completed testing of wells in Des Moines River Township to be able to extend access to rural water service to more residents, and in 2024, began construction of a water treatment facility for their Lindstrom expansion project. The availability of good quality and quantity potable water is important for Murray County and is often a key driver to economic growth and sustainability for rural industry as well as its residents.

Policies and strategies regarding economic development, with respect to water intensive industry, will have to be considered with the limited available water resources. In cases of severe drought, the Water Appropriations Law says that agricultural processing industries take priority over non-agricultural industries. Users of less than 10,000 gallons per day (gpd) are defined as small users and have a higher priority than industries using more than 10,000 gpd, regardless of use. This means local officials will need to take into account the needs of all existing industries and the ability of the current water reserves to support them before encouraging the development of more water intensive industries.

Wastewater Treatment Facilities - Within Murray County, ten communities currently have wastewater treatment facilities including: Chandler, Lake Wilson, Slayton - Hadley, Fulda, Currie – Lake Shetek, Avoca-Iona, and Lime Creek.

Avoca and Iona

The communities of Avoca and Iona worked together to upgrade their systems from on-site septic systems to a centralized sewer system. The communities worked together to apply to the United States Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Program and DEED's Small Cities Program for funding for the project. Each community constructed a collection system and then share a treatment facility between the two communities.

Lake Shetek

The Shetek Area Water and Sewer District was established as a public water and sewer system under Minnesota Statutes, with the intention to construct wastewater collection facilities in The Lakes area. The District covers 38.5 square miles and has constructed sewer lines around areas of Lake Shetek, Fox Lake, Bloody Lake, and Lake Sarah, with wastewater treated through an Interconnection Agreement with the City of Currie.

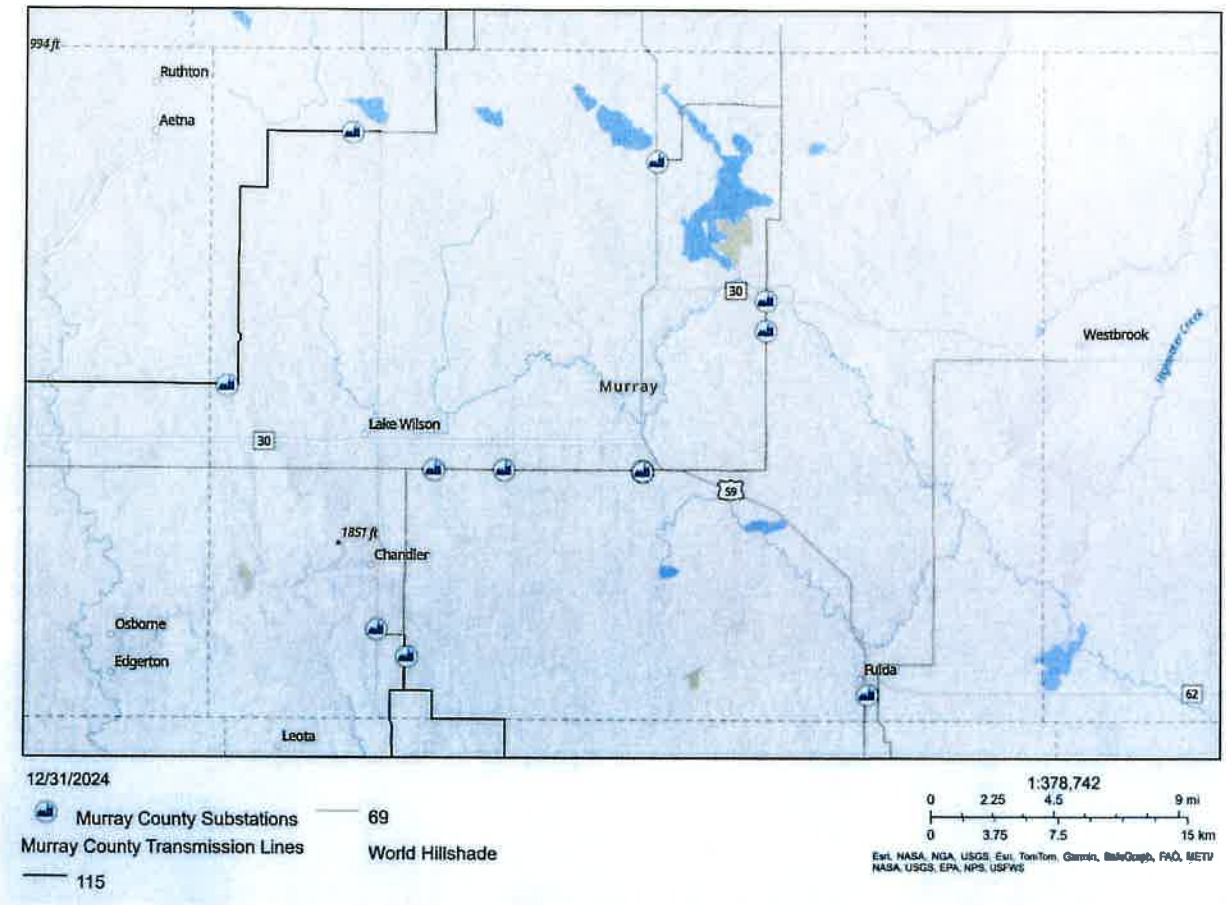
Hadley

After research into several non-traditional solutions to community septic treatment solutions, the communities decided the best course of action was to connect to the City of Slayton wastewater treatment facility.

Lime Creek

In 2011, the village of Lime Creek, consisting of 9 homes and one elevator, with funding assistance through the Clean Water Fund, installed a cluster mound system to address their septic system needs.

Figure 6-1a. Electric Transmission lines and substations, 2024



- Coordinate with County Departments and other jurisdictions to promote the health safety and welfare of the Murray County Transportation System.
    - Tools to enable this may include:
        - Adoption of Complete Streets Policy and Implementation,
        - Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan,
        - Use of the Development Agreement for large development projects in and near Murray County that are likely to affect land use and the road network,
        - Active Living and Safe Routes to School Planning and Implementation,
        - Highway Safety Plan

The Five-Year Road and Bridge Plan is posted on the Murray County website.

In 2023, the Lime Lake Dam Walking Bridge was removed at the time that the Lime Lake Dam was replaced with rock arch rapids. Similarly, the Lake Sarah Dam was removed in 2024 and also replaced with rock arch rapids.

After receiving funding from the Minnesota Legislature, Murray County is moving forward with widening and raising the three dikes on Lake Shetek. This project is scheduled to be completed in 2025 and will include the addition of walking trails on both sides of the roadway.

Trail Development

Trails planning within and for Murray County is fully covered in the Conservation, Parks, and Open Space Chapter.

Weaknesses in Land Use

- Decreased number of farmers, number of rural residences, and total population
- Decreases in population have made it difficult for smaller communities and some townships to survive low density population
- Lack of railway, interstate, and higher education facilities
- Lack of tree dump/yard waste in the Lakes areas

Opportunities for Land Use

Murray County has several possibilities in regards to its use of the land, these include:

- Quality Lake Development
- Tourism
- Renewable Energy Development
- Industrial and Economic Development
- Cropland
- Livestock Production
- Water Retention
- Increased habitat areas
- Bedroom communities
- Recreation Development Various uses for trails (ATV's, horses, hiking, snowmobile, etc.), fishing, and hunting
- Room for increased campsite areas
- Buffer strips more attractive to landowners through incentive programs
- Housing and Lodging Development
- Better Planning & Management within the County
- Increased storage opportunities within the lake areas
- Dual use of CRP land for renewable energy
- Facilities for Tourism (ie. Parking for boat launches)
- Wellhead Protection

Threats in Land Use

While Murray County has many opportunities to continue to grow in the 21st century, there are issues that must be addressed, they include:

- Improper development of the County's lakes
- Potential for poor water quality and quantity
- Struggle for smaller communities and townships to survive and operate
- Declining population
- Conflicts between governmental entities in urban growth areas

Figure 7-2a. Average permits per year in Township 2013-2023

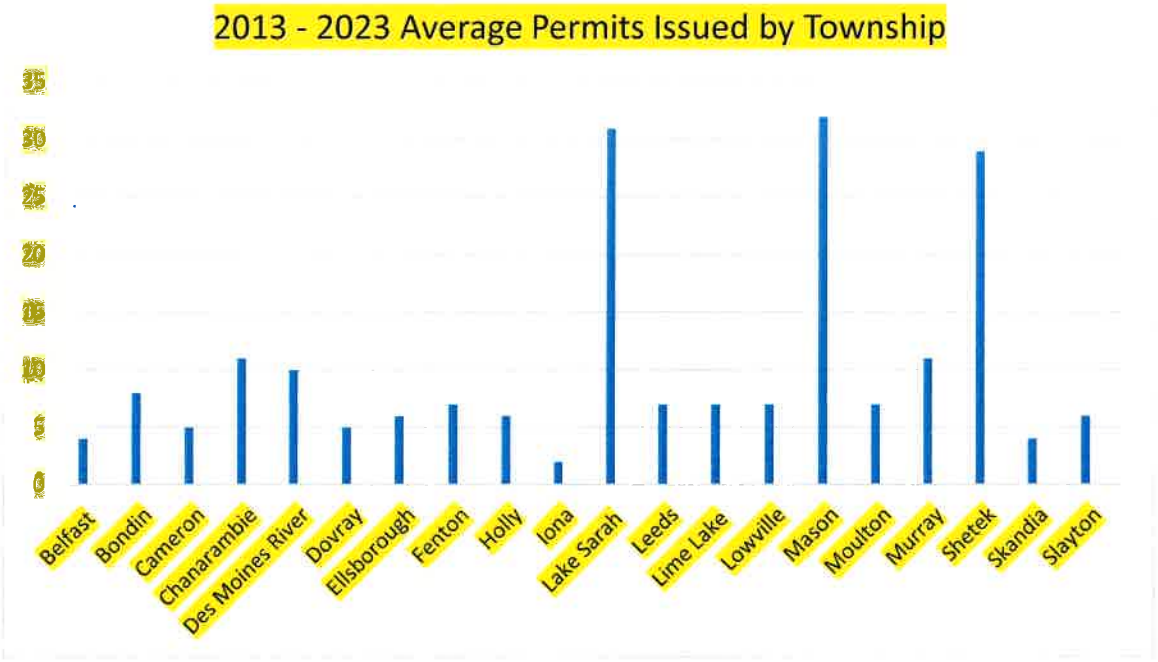


Figure 7-2a shows the average permits issued per year per Township from 2013-2023. The three highest number of permits issued were in Lake Sarah, Mason and Shetek – these townships are home to lakes Sarah and Shetek.

Table 7- 2a. Murray County Building Permit Summary 2013-2023

	2013-2016	2017-2020	2021-2023	Average/yr
Ag Buildings (Non-livestock)				
New	306	182	196	68.5
Expansion	36	24	22	8.2
Livestock Buildings				
New	58	30	23	11.1
Expansion	14	15	4	3.3
Homes - Ag				
New/Replacement	27	16	19	6.2
Expansion	66	35	28	12.9
Homes/Cabins - Lakes				
New/Replacement	34	49	58	14.1
Expansion	68	57	60	18.5
Total Permits	609	408	410	142.7

Source: Murray County Environmental Office

Comparing Tables 7-2 and 7-2a, the average number of new agricultural buildings has decreased whereas the number of expansion or improvements has increased. In addition the number of livestock buildings, both new and expansions, has decreased. For homes, the County has seen a slight increase in new lake homes/cabins, however, expansions in the same category saw a more substantial increase.

to incorporated areas within the County, potentially 2nd, 3rd and 4th tier development on Lake Shetek (the presence of infrastructure is essential for any new development), rural portions of Lime Lake, areas along Plum Creek, lands adjacent to Beaver Creek, or lands adjacent to the Des Moines River.

New Housing Trends. Recent legislation, housing development activities in nearby counties, and housing trends have occurred since the last plan update. The following housing options should be considered for incorporation into the Murray County ordinance update:

Temporary Family Health Care Dwellings. 2016 legislation was passed with an opt out feature for local units of government. Murray County chose an opt out because they believe there are areas within the County that may be appropriate for siting these types of dwellings, however, they want to be able to address health, safety, and general welfare standards, and will consider addressing Temporary Family Health Care Dwellings in ordinance updates.

Tiny Homes. The County will consider tiny homes as they update their ordinance to ensure that the health, safety, and general welfare of Murray County citizens are addressed.

Housing to accommodate agricultural workers. The County may consider amending the ordinance to permit housing to accommodate agricultural operations, while ensuring appropriate public or private infrastructure is in place to support it.

Another housing option to consider is Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), which is an affordable and flexible housing option that meets the needs of older adults and young families alike. ADUs make use of existing infrastructure and provides a way to expand and diversify housing options. An ADU is a small residence that shares a single-family lot with a larger, primary dwelling, that can provide housing for: a hired caregiver; rental income to homeowners; option for tenants seeking small, affordably priced rental housing; help older residents remain independent and "age in place"; and enable family members to reside on the same property while having their own living spaces.

Conservation Development

Conservation Development patterns which cluster housing is another effective means Murray County could pursue in encouraging "smart growth" practices within its borders. In Conservation Development, several home sites are grouped together or "clustered" in a rural setting. These clusters typically have smaller lots and fewer roads, they are condensed for services, and they retain a sense of openness, often featuring protected open space as a development amenity.

Low Impact Development (LID), for example, is a conservation design technique being promoted by watershed management organizations in Minnesota. LID is a process intended to manage stormwater by replicating natural filtration features of a site's pre-development hydrology. Conservation Development and LID projects both rely on creative street and lot design, with runoff typically retained to minimize impervious surfaces and create attractive building sites.

Some farmers obtain supplemental employment within the municipalities and some even move off the farm entirely (either due to employment change or retirement). The rural farmhouse sites they leave behind become in danger of being abandoned and converted to cropland.

Murray County has been and will most likely continue to be dominated by agriculture. As such, urban development should generally take a secondary role to agriculture in all areas except those that are legitimately required for such development. As mentioned in the Housing Development Section, appropriate urban development lands are found within or adjacent to established developments or along paved highways.

Since rural county land uses are generally agricultural, the County should encourage Best Management Practices (BMP's) for erosion control and the County should also encourage the installation of buffers and grass/legume strips in order to protect waterways. The County should pursue a combination of enforcement and incentive programs to ensure that public waters are adequately buffered.

With the new cannabis law established by the Minnesota State Legislature in 2023, Murray County will need to develop land use ordinance regulations to address the different types of business licenses and activities associated with cannabis and hemp products, placing reasonable restrictions on time, place, and manner of operations. In addition, the county will need to address how they will oversee the Temporary Cannabis Events.

Energy Facilities and Infrastructure

The collection of energy through renewable energy production requires a large amount of rural land. However, this form of producing energy is a sustainable form of "green" energy that will benefit more than just Murray County. Safety, health, and aesthetic issues should be considered when siting energy facilities and associated infrastructure, including Battery Energy Storage Systems and any other new renewable energy technology. Studies show that the most compatible land use adjacent to wind farms is agricultural land uses, solar farms require 5-7 acres per MW. The following examples should be considered when siting energy facilities and infrastructure:

- Encourage development at adequate distances from roads due to safety and road construction concerns
- Avoid placement of turbines within known bird flight lines
- Utilize MnDOT Glare Analysis tool solar facility proposals in the airport influence area
- Encourage the development of buffer zones around wind farms
- Native prairie impacts
- Impact of placement of turbines between wetland areas
- Appropriate setbacks from homes
- Placement and impacts to overlay districts.
- Potential health and safety impacts as a result of placement of an energy facility and its facilities

"Development Agreement", an agreement that helps the County and township with many of the road, bridge, and land use issues that come into play with a large renewable energy development.

Solar. Murray County initially adopted standards for wind energy in the Zoning Ordinance in 2001, which were repealed in 2009 when a stand-alone Wind Energy Ordinance was adopted for the ease of amending wind standards without opening the entire zoning ordinance. Following an inquiry for a possible solar development in the County in early 2010, the Commissioners directed the Planning Commission to research the impacts of solar and amend the Wind Energy Ordinance to include not only solar, but also any future renewable energy facilities. At the time, the only ground mounted solar farm in Minnesota was located at St. John's University in Stearns County; a 400 kV Solar Farm with tracking solar arrays on the university grounds. Using Stearns' solar ordinance standards as a template, the Planning Commission recommended the Wind Energy Ordinance be renamed to the Renewable Energy Ordinance, and included standards for solar and other renewables. The amendments were adopted in November, 2010, and an application for the Slayton Solar Farm was received in March, 2011.

Slayton Solar is a 2 MW farm located on 19 acres of land on the southwest side of Slayton, just outside the city's municipal boundaries, and within the same section of land as the Slayton Airport. Power generated through the fixed tilt arrays at this facility is fed into the substation across the road that services the City of Slayton. At the time of installation, the Slayton Solar Farm was the largest ground-mounted solar farm in the State of Minnesota.

State statute states that the State permits energy facilities 50 MW and larger (with the exception of wind). There has been interest in solar development in Murray County, and the MISO queue is monitored periodically to help identify any projects that are undergoing the required studies for transmission. Likely areas for the development of large solar facilities would be near substations. Construction and operation of multiple 1 MW community solar gardens has occurred in the county within the last five years. However, in 2023, the Minnesota Legislature increased the maximum size of community solar gardens from 1 MW to 5 MW. A large 150 MW Solar Farm will start construction in 2025, that includes a battery component (Battery Energy Storage System – BESS), and will be located east of State Highway 91 and south of State Highway 30.

Substations and transmission lines are an important part of energy infrastructure, both in transmitting generated power from the renewable energy facilities and for transmitting power to individual users on the farm and in town. System providers must plan ahead to maximize their effectiveness while being sensitive to other current and future users of the land they cross. New substations and transmission lines must follow sometimes overlapping established County, State and Federal rules and regulations. There may be instances where the County will ask providers to take additional steps to safeguard public health and safety, such as burying transmission lines to avoid hazards from ice and wind storms. Conflicts can be best avoided if project developers work closely and early on with the County Zoning Office and County Highway Engineer.

Goals, **Objectives** and Policies (*Land Use Policies*) selected by consensus as outlined below:

A. DEMOGRAPHICS AND HOUSING

A.1 Population is stabilized

Retain and increase County population.

A.1a Encourage provision of adequate and affordable daycare (all ages).

A.1b Consider the needs of families and young adults for employment and recreation.

A.1c Support initiatives for first time homebuyers.

A.1d Support initiatives for high-speed internet access.

A.2 Aging Population Has a High Quality of Life

Prepare for increasing proportion of population of retirement age.

A.2a Encourage provision of adequate and affordable services for aging population.

A.2b Consider the needs of aging for accessible facilities, transit and housing.

A.2c Development proposals should explain how they meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

A.2d Support more housing for seniors, including more rental properties.

A.3 Affordable Housing is Available in Quality and Quantity to Meet Local Needs

Facilitate new housing and housing rehabilitation and improvement.

A.3a Encourage County EDA to include housing issues in their workplan.

A.3b Encourage improvements that eliminate health and safety issues.

A.3c Encourage energy efficiency and consider incentives for alternative energy systems.

A.3d Review best practices from other units of government, such as incentives.

A. 3e Consider allowing workforce housing for agricultural uses.

A.3f Consider the implementation of ADU's to be utilized on rural properties for temporary use.

B. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

B.1 Agricultural Economy is Strengthened and Diversified

Facilitate value-added agricultural processing where practical.

B.1a Work with County EDA.

B.2 Murray County is Attractive to Tourism

Provide opportunities for tourist-oriented economic activity.

B.2a Encourage County EDA to include tourism issues in their workplan.

B.2b Development proposals should minimize impacts on tourist destinations and natural resources.

B.2c Consider developing a county-wide Tourist-oriented Destination Plan.

B.3 There is a Supportive Environment for Sustainable Development

Facilitate entrepreneurial job creation and existing business retention & expansion.

B.3a Work with County EDA.

B.3b Support the development of broadband infrastructure.

B.3c Support energy efficiency and use of renewable energy.

B.3d Consider renewable energy siting locations, encouraging greater setback from municipalities.

C. HISTORIC AND CULTURAL FACILITIES

C.1 Historic Structures and Outstanding Archeological Sites are Preserved, Maintained, and Used to Enhance and Reinforce Community Identity

Attract visitors and vacationers to Murray County from other areas.

C.1a Work with County EDA, County Museum, County Parks Dept. and State Park.

C.1b Inventory and evaluate all historically significant buildings, structures and sites within the County.

C.2 Historic and Cultural Facilities are Supported and Improved

Preserve and appropriately develop culturally significant resources.

C.2a Development proposals should minimize impacts on historic and cultural facilities.

C.2b Develop a communications plan.

D. CONSERVATION, PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

D.1 Natural Resource Base and Environmentally Sensitive Lands Are Protected

Encourage wise use of land, water, wooded areas, native vegetation, agricultural areas, scenic areas, and significant historic and archaeological sites.

D.1a Delineate land use districts based on land types.

D.1b Support acquisition and restoration of wetland areas to be preserved for groundwater recharge, surface water conservation, recreation, and wildlife.

D.1c Discourage new development in Shoreland areas, unless specifically designated in this plan.

D.1d Encourage Low Impact Development and conservation design to preserve natural resources.

D.1e Support Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) buyout of properties.

D.2 Ground and Surface Water is Protected and Preserved

Implement and update the County Water Plan

D.2a Prevent further degradation of stream and lake water quality.

D.2b Assure long-term quality and quantity of groundwater supplies by restoration, preservation, and improvement projects.

D.2c Prevent soil erosion through comprehensive drainage management.

D.2d Support the Minnesota State Buffer Law.

D.2e Support development and implementation of One Watershed Plans.

D.3 Murray County Residents Have a System of Parks and Open Spaces that Protect Important Natural, Historic and/or Cultural Areas and Landscapes.

Improve and protect parks and open spaces.

D.3a Development proposals should address impacts on parks and open space.

D.3b Maintain a systematic Capital Improvements Plan and Facilities Plan for the County Parks System.

D.3c Encourage development of linked, multi-use trails and natural areas.

E. INFRASTRUCTURE AND COUNTY FACILITIES

E.1 County Infrastructure and Facilities are maintained.

Adequately and effectively provide for needs of County residents and businesses.

E.1a Maintain a systematic Capital Improvements Plan and Facilities Plan for all County buildings and sites.

E.1b Work with local units of government, including schools, townships and cities, to provide accessible public facilities.

E.2 Technology is Available and Used by Residents, Businesses and Local Government

Promote availability to local citizens.

E.2a Consider provisions in zoning for electric and communications facilities.

E.2b Encourage utilities to bury electric and communications lines to improve public safety.

E.2c Support County staff training and equipment in technology to provide improved services to elected officials and the public.

E.3 Drinking Water, Wastewater and Solid Waste Disposal Needs are Met

Comply with State and Federal rules and regulations

E.3a Restrict potential sources of pollution in DWSMAs.

E.3b Support communities seeking funding for appropriate local sewer/water provision.

E.3c Continue to support and enforce State rules for sewage collection and treatment.

E.3d Enforce County regulations regarding failing and non-conforming on-site sewage treatment systems.

E.3e Support recycling and proper management of solid waste.

E.3f Support the enforcement of the MPCA Closed landfill program through the Closed Landfill Overlay District.

E.3g Support the efforts of rural water systems to locate and maintain sources of good quality and quantity drinking water.

E.3h Support a waste to energy facility in Southwest Minnesota.

E.3i Encourage education and proper disposal of pharmaceuticals.

E.4 An Adequate Transportation System is Provided Composed of Highways, Increased Public Transit and Aviation.

Maintain and improve access to services.

E.4a Work with County Highway Department on Transportation Capital Improvements Plans and road maintenance policies, to assure maintenance of existing County and Township roads and bridges.

E.4b Consider provisions for review of public access, streets and roads by County Engineer in zoning and subdivision ordinances.

E.4c Implement access management systems to improve safety and efficiency of State highways, preserve community character and protect public investment.

E.4d Encourage development near existing transportation corridors.

E.4e Discourage cul-de-sac and long dead-end roads to preserve public safety.

E.4f Encourage conservation development.

E.4g Support provision of public bus and volunteer driver program service.

E.4h Work with public airports to ensure compliance with State and Federal safety regulations and protect public investments in the aviation system.

E.4i Support Townships as they develop and implement road maintenance policies.

E.5 A safe transportation network for all users

Provide for a safe and compliant transportation system through Best Practices.

E.5a Develop, adopt, and implement best practices such as Complete Streets, ADA Transition Plan, and Highway Safety Plan to ensure safety and accessibility of all transportation users.

E.5b Support other jurisdictions planning efforts that address pedestrian and bicycle movement, such as Community Active Living Planning and implementation and Safe Routes to School Planning and implementation.

E.5c Support local projects by having the county act as the fiscal agent for state and federal grants.

E.5d Support the development of storm shelters at public and private campgrounds.

F. LAND USE

F.1 Agricultural Land is preserved for crop and livestock production

Protect agricultural land.

F.1a Review and update feedlot ordinances to promote agricultural activities, while protecting natural resources and neighboring residences.

F.1b Promote Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs).

F.1c Discourage rural residential development that will restrict animal agriculture.

F.2 Natural Resources are conserved in balance with Agriculture and Urban Development

Protect wildlife habitat, watersheds and aquifer recharge areas.

F.2a Promote land use practices that protect soil and water quality, particularly in DWSMA.

F.2b Develop zoning standards for Low-Impact Development and conservation design land use techniques.

F.2c Discourage rural residential development that would impact natural resources.

F.3 Energy Facilities and Renewable Energy

Provide a monetary benefit to County residents while minimizing negative impacts to natural resources and local residents.

F.3a Revise the County Energy Ordinance for small-scale distributed power generation systems to reflect renewable energy technologies.

F.3b Support local review of energy and renewable energy projects.

F.3c Energy and renewable energy projects should address all impacts on natural resources and existing residences.

F.3d Encourage projects under State review to meet local development standards.

F.3e Encourage deployment of energy technologies, such as electric charging stations to serve the County and visitors.

F.3f Encourage dual use of the land for solar energy projects.

F.4 New Development Occurs within Municipalities and Designated Areas as Specified in the Land Use Plan

Balance costs and benefits of development outside incorporated areas.

F.4a Work with cities and townships to develop future development plans and orderly annexation agreements within a one-mile buffer around municipal boundaries.

F.4b Support development where appropriate, and where adequate public or private infrastructure can be obtained.

F.4c Support residential development within existing cities.

F.4d Development proposals should address all impacts on public services, including estimated emergency response times.

F.4e Encourage rural residential development in limited areas using conservation design.

F.4f Implement elements of the Development Agreement as appropriate, to address any negative impacts to land use and the transportation network.

F.5 Decision-makers, residents and investors have clear, understandable and usable policies, rules and regulations for development

Demonstrate continual improvement in development policies and procedures.

F.5a Regularly review and update zoning, subdivision, and renewable energy ordinances.

F.5b Regularly review and update the County All-Hazards Mitigation Plan.

F.5c Regularly review and update the Comprehensive Plan.

F.5d Provide and participate in professional training for planning and development.

F.5e Adequately support enforcement of all local regulations and ordinances.

F.5f Implement Cooperative Planning and Zoning as appropriate.

F.5g Support the joint Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment to have consistent understanding and enforcement of land use issues.

F.5h Support the establishment of a Remote Fire Station in the Lakes area.

F.5i Support researching the ability to create taxing districts for Emergency Medical Services (EMS).