

MILLS COUNTY

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



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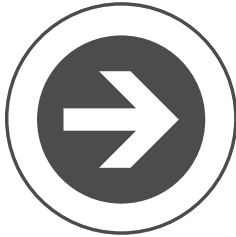
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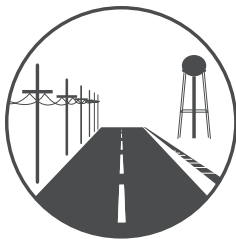
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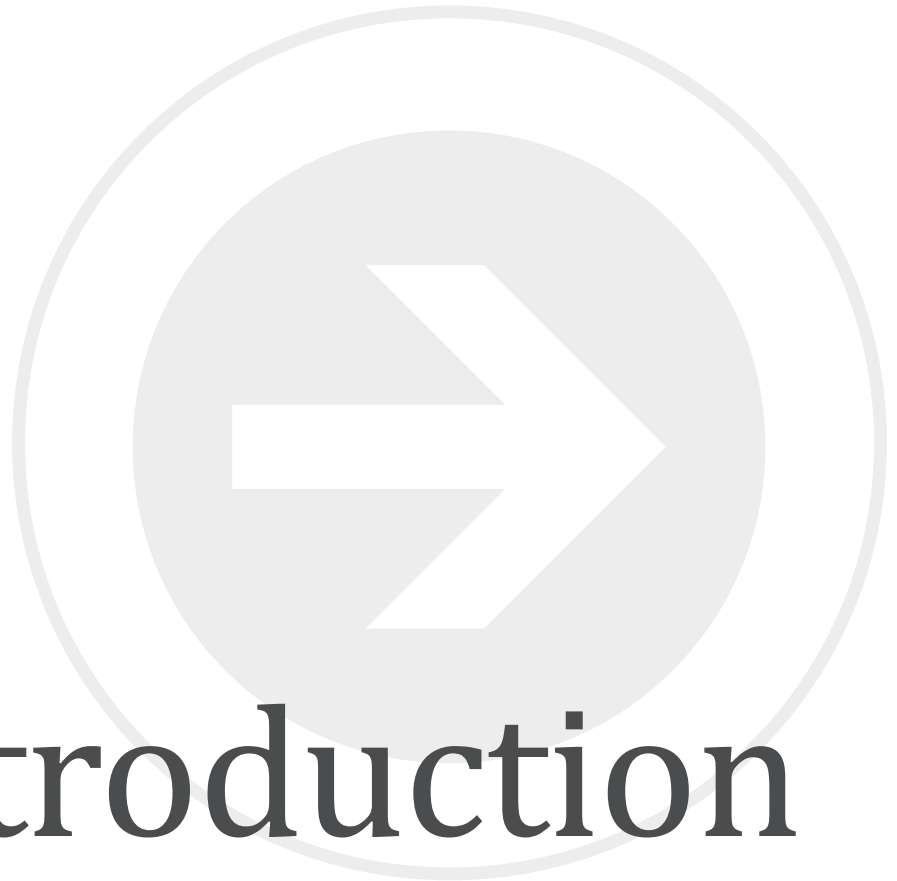
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Introduction

1

MILLS COUNTY

[section 1.1]

COUNTY OVERVIEW

This document is intended to manage the pace, location, and impacts of growth and development and reflects a basic philosophy of Mills County. The cross-jurisdictional nature of population growth issues (e.g., land use, transportation, natural resource preservation, community services) can be guided and shaped to everyone's benefit through cooperative working relationships among the County's stakeholders and decision makers.

Mills County, Iowa includes 446.5 square miles of rich agricultural land, rolling Loess Hills, and river valley in the southwest part of the state. Its seven communities include Glenwood, the largest community and County seat, Emerson, Hastings, Henderson, Malvern, Pacific Junction, Silver City, the unincorporated towns of Mineola and Strahan, and a portion of Tabor.

While agriculture continues to dominate the economy, Mills County is increasingly influenced by growth from the Council Bluffs/Omaha metropolitan area. Reflecting this impact, the County's population grew by 14% from 1990 through 2010 from 13,202 to 15,059, respectively. Most of this growth took place in the western part of the County, in the direction towards the metropolitan area. However, a slight decline of 2.1% , or a loss of 228 people, between 2010 and 2015 indicates Mills County faces a variety of important issues related to its status as a rural county on the edge of urban growth.

The Loess Hills are a unique environmental feature that is found only along the western edge of Iowa and parts of China. The hills began forming approximately 18,000 years ago once glaciers began melting and northwesterly winds started blowing silt along the eastern bank of the Missouri River. The buildup of soil creates bluffs that are characterized by steep slopes overlooking the Missouri River Valley. The significance of the Loess Hills has been well documented. Today, the Loess Hills offer an attractive rural environment that encourages residential development. As development escalates, the Loess Hills become increasingly suburban, threatening this unique ecology.



The special environment of the unique Loess Hills creates additional challenges and opportunities. This Comprehensive Plan is designed to help define the character of County growth, recommend policies to preserve vital environmental resources, commercial growth, and agricultural lands, and minimize conflicts caused by development in rural areas.

Basic Principles

The Comprehensive Plan for Mills County is based on the following basic principles:

- The planning jurisdiction of Mills County contains unique environmental resources and features that should be recognized and preserved. These features include the Loess Hills, the scenic Missouri River and Nishnabotna River valleys, numerous creeks and streams, and prime agricultural lands.
- Planning efforts should recognize that agriculture and agricultural related industries and services will continue to be the primary economic priority for Mills County. Agriculture will continue to be the County's primary land use and economic activity. As such, planning policy should recognize the primacy of this sector and explore opportunities to strengthen it.
- Land use planning in Mills County should integrate the needs of development and the need for resource and open space conservation. Development pressures within the County have grown as residents of the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area seek the County's uncrowded, scenic rural setting. However, unmanaged development erodes the very nature of the rural landscape that new residents seek. The County Plan should promote development patterns that accommodate appropriate development while preserving the rural character of the land.
- Policies and practices should promote new development and investment throughout the County.



[section 1.2]

THE PURPOSE OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Comprehensive plans are created to promote orderly growth for all jurisdictions. The Mills County Comprehensive Plan Update focuses on the County's jurisdiction but involves each of its seven communities. Mills County leadership realizes future opportunities exist and want to protect its environmental and agricultural assets while growing employment centers across the County.

The comprehensive plan serves as a guideline to the County and decision makers. The public document's intention is to assist as a "road map" for future development locations and proper investments. It can also be used for educational purposes and informing future decision makers and interested stakeholders.

This comprehensive plan creates a framework to support the County's endeavor to accomplish its goals, objectives, and policies formulated during this process. The ultimate goal of any comprehensive plan is to ensure the well-being of Mills County residents. Promoting economic development has become a larger goal as the population continues to increase and commute to neighboring counties for employment. Over the past twenty years, Mills County has become less of a "bedroom" community and moved towards a diverse economy seeking major employers, new retail centers, and recreation opportunities of their own.

The comprehensive plan provides the legal basis for the establishment of zoning and subdivision regulations to implement the plan. The document reports on the following topics: population, land use, transportation, housing, economic development, community facilities, and public utilities. The information contained within this document is important to consider and review because it is part of an interlocking dynamic as one characteristic of the County can shift the County's overall equation.

In order to remain fiscally sustainable in the long-term, the County's goal is to create the best scenarios for the general public and its tax base. The County must strategically place large ticket investments where more development is predetermined. These investments need to have higher densities to pay for the initial cost as well as long-term maintenance. Planned growth improves the County's services, resources, and creates an integrated, seamless network that develops over time as communities eventually merge together. Mills County will need to collaborate with the communities and utility providers to develop mutually beneficial development that maximize all participants' investments.



[section 1.3]

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

Comprehensive planning begins with data collection. The collected data establish a “snapshot” of the past and present County conditions. Further analysis provides the basis for developing forecasts for future land-use demands.

The second planning process is the development of general goals and policies, based upon the issues facing the County. Public input and focus groups are brought together to walk through strengths and weaknesses of the community. These sessions establish practical guidelines for improving existing conditions and managing future growth.

This document begins to take shape with the collected data and collaborative vision. Text, graphics and tables explain and display the desires of the County. The drafts are designed to identify, assess, and create actions and policies in the disciplines of population, land use, transportation, housing, economic development, community facilities, and utilities. The finalized vision and recommendations are developed, edited, and changed through multiple meetings with the steering committee.

The final phase is creating the step-by-step guideline. It establishes a broad range of development policies and programs required to implement the Plan.

This process identifies the tools, methods, and programs necessary to carry out the recommendations. Nevertheless, implementation of the development policies contained within the comprehensive plan is dependent upon the adoption of the plan by the governing body. After adoption, continued effort is necessary to achieve these goals by current and future leadership, whether elected or appointed.

Overall, this Comprehensive Plan records where Mills County has been, where it is now, and where it likely will be in the next ten years or so. The comprehensive plan is an information and management tool for County officials and community leaders to use in their decision making process when considering future developments. The comprehensive plan is not a static document; it should evolve as changes in the land-use, population, or local economy occur during the planning period.

This information is the basis for Mills County’s evolution as it achieves its physical, social, and economic goals. This Plan was prepared under the direction of the Mills County Planning Commission and the zoning office, with the assistance and participation of the Mills County Board of Supervisors and citizens of Mills County. The expected time for achieving goals, programs, and developments identified in this process is ten to twenty years. However, the County should review the Plan annually and update the document every ten years, or when an identified pressing need arises. Updating the comprehensive plan will allow the County to incorporate new ideas, opportunities and unexpected developments from the previous update.



Through periodic monitoring, the County can adapt and adjust to change at the local level. Having the ability to adapt to socio-economic change allows the County to maintain an effective comprehensive plan for the future, to enhance the quality of life, and to maintain the standard of living for all residents.

Public Participation

In order to gain the input of Mills County stakeholders, the consulting team conducted focus group meetings, held one-on-one interviews with critical stakeholders, and held a well-attended public workshop meeting with approximately 50 attendees. The cities and County also participated as part of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC). The full list of CAC members can be found in the preface of this Plan (page 3). The following is an overview of the primary public participation events with the public and the CAC. The results of these discussions are detailed in the Envision section of each respective chapter of the document.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Mills County Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was organized to help provide greater insight into the development of the County-wide Plan. Staff and subject matter experts from across Mills County and the region participated in five meetings throughout the process.

MEETING 1

The CAC Profile meeting was held on September 8, 2016. The purpose of this meeting was to understand the characteristics of Mills County, including its population, demographics as well as the County's current social and economic conditions.

MEETING 2

The CAC Envision meeting was held on November 10, 2016. The committee completed a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis and reviewed input from the October 13, 2016, town hall meeting.

MEETING 3

The CAC Achieve meeting was held on December 8, 2016. The purpose of this meeting was to prioritize issues and opportunities that will guide future growth and development of the County.

MEETING 4

The CAC Implementation meeting was held April 18, 2017. This meeting discussed and refined the goals and policies of the Plan.



MEETING 5: DATE

The final CAC meeting was held on June 8, 2017. The discussion addressed finalizing the Plan as well as the future land use map.

Public Participation

Input of Mills County residents was gathered through focus groups, one-on-one interviews with influential stakeholders, a town hall meeting, and an elected and appointed officials meeting. The results of these discussions are detailed in the Envision section of each respective chapter of the document.

Town Hall

The consultant team conducted a town hall meeting on October 13, 2016, at the Malvern Library. Interactive station exhibits were on display with County staff and members of the consulting team available to solicit input and answer questions. Attendees were free to discuss their thoughts and ask questions relating to the areas of land use and growth, economic development, housing, as well as parks, trails, and recreation areas.

Community Focus Groups

The consultant team facilitated six focus group meetings on October 13, 2016, October 27, 2016, and November 1, 2016, at the Mills County Engineers Building. The group topics included infrastructure and facilities, housing, natural resources, economic development, small business, and schools. Those invited to participate in these groups are directly involved in each sector.

Elected and Appointed Officials Meeting

On February 16, 2017, the consultant team conducted a meeting with the specific focus of gathering information from elected and appointed officials as well as utility representatives and the public at the Glenwood Community Schools Auditorium. The purpose of the meeting was to obtain additional input from local community members who are directly involved in planning and zoning. Meeting summary can be found in Attachment A.

Online Forums

Online participation can effectively cast a wider net of who is willing and able to participate in a planning process. The MySidewalk platform is an online town hall forum. This site allowed the consulting team to interact and engage public input regarding questions and polls relating directly to the comprehensive plan. Users can interact with each other, and by “liking” comments and ideas, the top ideas are easily identified.

Expanding the MySidewalk poll questions to a more traditional survey format utilizing the Survey Monkey platform allowed the consulting team to target specific stakeholders throughout the County for direct input into the process. These direct invitations yielded a higher response rate and further diversified the input taken into account in the policies set forth in this Plan.



[section 1.4]

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPONENTS

The Iowa Smart Planning Act prescribes the inclusion of various elements in any comprehensive plan. Those elements have been translated into individual chapters and are organized using the following format:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter considers demographic data and identifies trends, including demographic, housing, socio-economic trends, and future population projections. Projections and forecasts are useful tools in planning for the future; however, these tools are informed estimates and may change due to unforeseen factors.

Chapter 2: County Facilities & Services

This chapter highlights the current facilities and services available to the residents of Mills County as well as identifies future needs.

Chapter 3: Utilities & Infrastructure

This chapter focuses on strategies to ensure adequate public and private utilities and supporting infrastructure are available to serve current and future residents of Mills County. This section covers water, solid waste, gas, and electric utilities and services needed to manage the direction of future growth.

This chapter also provides the basic framework for development of the Mills County transportation system through the year 2040. Elements in this chapter include US Highway 59, Interstate 29 and the recently realigned and expanded US Highway 34.

Chapter 4: Environmental Resources & Recreation

This chapter focuses on the efforts directed at the protection of water and natural resources while supporting the agricultural economy and providing recreation amenities throughout Mills County.

Chapter 5: Housing

This chapter focuses on the housing needs of the County including single-family and rental housing options. Rural residential housing is highly desirable in Mills County, but access to services and the protection of prime farmland and environmentally sensitive areas must be taken into consideration when siting future housing subdivisions.

Chapter 6: Economic Development

This chapter focuses on the strategies to ensure that Mills County develops in an economically sustainable manner and to ensure that growth is matched with the County's ability to provide infrastructure and services.



Chapter 7: Land Use

Chapter 7 helps to guide future residential development, commercial and industrial activity, and zoning within the Mills County’s regulatory boundaries. This section also identifies the most ideal growth strategy that protects the agricultural and environmental integrity of Mills County while allowing growth to continue. A high level of cooperation among local jurisdictions is key to the success of this approach.

Chapter 8: Goals & Implementation

The Goals & Implementation chapter is the primary tool for implementing the goals of the County. This chapter identifies the action steps that are necessary to achieve the community’s envisioned goals.

IOWA SMART PLANNING PRINCIPLES & ELEMENTS

The Iowa State Legislature passed the “Iowa Smart Planning Act” in Spring 2010. As part of the response to the 2008 flooding throughout the state, cities were encouraged to develop comprehensive plans that follow the ten Smart Planning principles as a best practice. Furthermore, the bill also included thirteen elements or topics that should be considered when developing a plan. The planning process took into consideration these principles and each chapter addresses one or more of the prescribed planning elements outlined below. Additional information on the Iowa Smart Planning Act can be found in the Appendices of this Plan.

Smart Planning Principles:

- Collaboration
- Efficiency, Transparency and Consistency
- Occupational Diversity
- Revitalization
- Housing Diversity
- Community Character
- Natural Resources
- Agricultural Protection
- Sustainable Design
- Transportation Diversity

Comprehensive Plan Elements:

- Public Participation
- Issues and Opportunities
- Land Use
- Housing
- Public Infrastructure and Utilities
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Agricultural and Natural Resources
- Community Facilities
- Community Character
- Hazards
- Intergovernmental Collaboration
- Implementation





Plan Framework

The Mills County Comprehensive Plan was developed with the inclusion of a number of other communities and governmental entities. It was important that plans in surrounding areas were taken into consideration as the Mills County Plan was developed. The entities included in the development of this Plan are outlined below:

Metropolitan Area Planning Agency

The Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) is a regional council of governments serving eastern Nebraska and western Iowa. MAPA currently serves five counties, 38 towns, 19 special purpose governmental entities and one city council. The purpose of this metropolitan planning organization is to coordinate among government officials from their five county jurisdiction to address mutual and overlapping issues specifically related to transportation, economic growth and development, air quality, solid and hazardous waste, energy and data.

In 2014, MAPA adopted Heartland 2050; a long-term regional vision plan and document for the greater Omaha and Council Bluffs metro region. This was a two-state, eight-county effort and was meant to guide community leaders to assist in decision-making that will affect the area for years to come.

Four land use allocation scenarios were created to better understand the impacts of development. The public was engaged and encouraged to provide their feedback on the scenario they most preferred. Once all the public input was collected, MAPA and its team of consultants created a Vision Scenario that tried to bring together the best parts of each of the four growth scenarios. The Vision Scenario projected limited growth for Mills County. Projected growth is primarily located in the areas within and surrounding Glenwood.

Cities

Each community's corporate limits and extraterritorial jurisdiction play a role in how Mills County will develop in the future. Inter-local agreements should be made between communities to establish mutually agreed upon patterns of growth. These agreements are important for communities to plan for and strategically invest in future growth. It is also a way for communities to "protect" their future growth corridors before the areas are formally placed within their jurisdiction.

As Mills County's elected officials continue to work on future sites for economic development and protecting each corridor for future investment, these decisions will impact the County and its communities. Cities have a legal right to extend their jurisdiction from their corporate boundaries. Therefore, annexation policies of incorporated areas are very important to Mills County as annexation by cities reduce the size of the County's jurisdiction and as a result, moves investments from one jurisdiction to another.



The incorporated cities within the County include:

- Glenwood was incorporated in 1857;
- Malvern was incorporated in 1872;
- Emerson was incorporated in 1875;
- Hastings was incorporated in 1879;
- Pacific Junction was incorporated in 1882;
- Silver City incorporated in 1883; and
- Henderson was incorporated in 1893.

School Districts

There are six school districts with jurisdiction in Mills County. Glenwood Community Schools and East Mills Community Schools cover a majority of the County along with small portions of Fremont-Mills Community Schools, Shenandoah Community Schools, Treynor Community Schools, and Lewis Central Community School Districts. Maps and descriptions of the school districts can be found in Chapter 2 (Facilities and Services) of this Plan.



History

The earliest known settlers of Mills County were the Earth Lodge Indians who lived in earth covered dwellings in the slopes of the Loess Hills around 900 AD. Later, various tribes, including the Pottawattamie Indians, moved to the area before settlers pioneered to the west in the early 1800s. One of the first identified pioneers is Henry Allis, who was a missionary to the Pawnees. Other settlers, including Colonel Peter A. Sarpy, moved to Mills County as westward trading with the Indians escalated.

In 1846, Mormons traveled west from Illinois and settled Rushville, which was later known as Coonsville and now Glenwood. Further settlement occurred as pioneers moved to the area primarily to obtain land. Under the Pre-emption Act of 1841, land could be purchased for a dollar and a quarter an acre after the farmer had cultivated it for one year. Mills County began to form following the general election of 1851 and was named in honor of Lieutenant Fredrick Mills, a young officer who was killed in the Mexican-American War. Mills County's population sustained growth as settlement continued. Under the Homestead Act of 1862, farmers owned the land after working it for five years. Later, under the Timber Culture Act of 1873, 160 acres could be claimed after trees were planted on one-fourth of the acreage.

Today, the land is dominated by agriculture production, but in recent years, residential housing has continued to grow in the areas between Glenwood and the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area. Traditionally, Mills County has not had much industry or large employers.

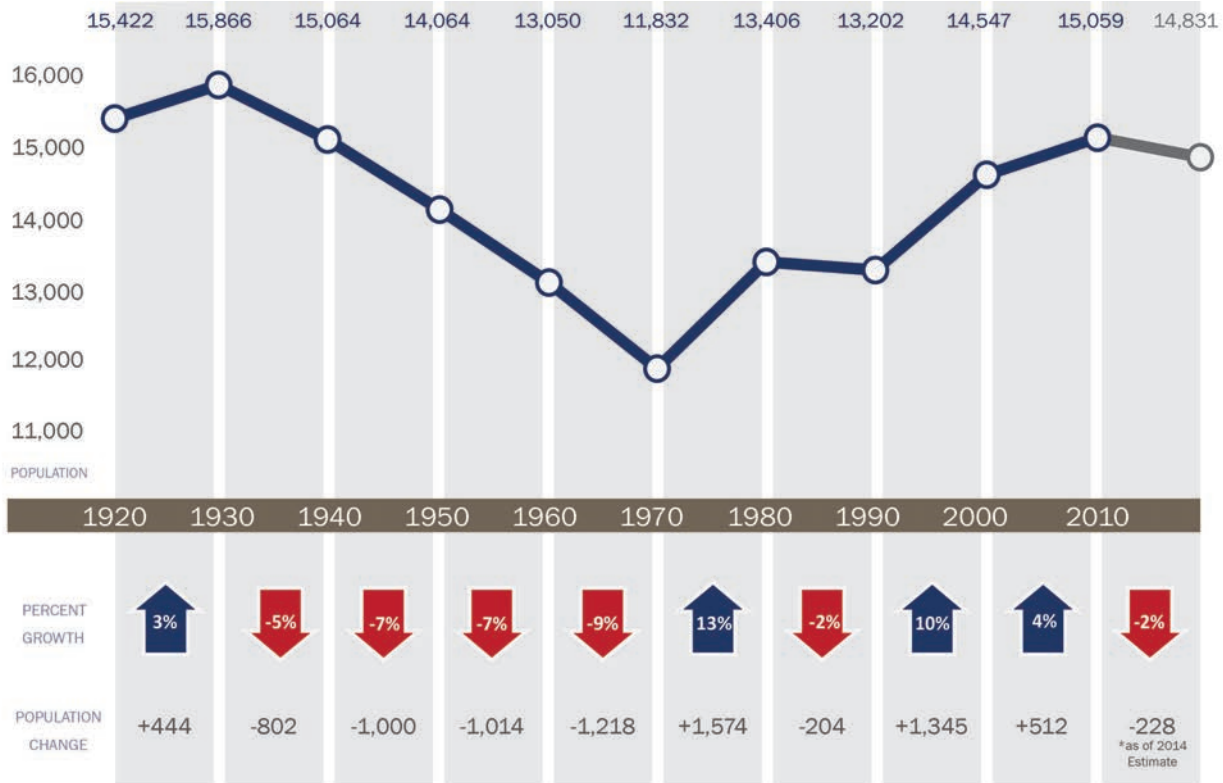
Historic Population

During the first half of the twentieth century, Mills County saw its population peak to 15,866 people in 1930 and then declined to its low point in 1970 with 11,832, nearly a 25% drop in overall population. The 1970s brought renewed interest to development in Mills County as people started seeing the opportunity to live in a scenic, rural setting while still having access to the Omaha metropolitan area. The County exhibited net growth of nearly 25% over the next 45 years, seeing its highest population growth during the 1970s and 1990s (see Figure 1).

Table 1 highlights the population trends of the incorporated areas of Mills County from 1970 through 2010. While most communities saw a net decline during this period, Glenwood saw a net 19.2% increase. Much of Glenwood's growth can be attributed to its designation as the County seat and historic population center of Mills County, as well as the access to the burgeoning Omaha metropolitan area via the US 34 Highway which connects to Interstate 29.



Figure 1 **Historical Population**



Source: US Census (1920-2010)
American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014)

Table 1 **Population: Mills County Growth vs Cities' Growth**

Population by Area	Historic Population Growth/Decline					Population Change (%)			
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Mills County	11,832	13,406	13,202	14,547	15,059	13.3%	-1.5%	10.2%	3.5%
Emerson	484	502	476	480	438	3.7%	-5.2%	0.8%	-8.8%
Glenwood	4,421	5,280	4,571	5,358	5,269	19.4%	-13.4%	17.2%	-1.7%
Hastings	229	215	187	214	152	-6.1%	-13.0%	14.4%	-29.0%
Henderson	211	236	206	171	185	11.8%	-12.7%	-17.0%	8.2%
Malvern	1,158	1,244	1,210	1,256	1,142	7.4%	-2.7%	3.8%	-9.1%
Pacific Junction	505	511	548	507	471	1.2%	7.2%	-7.5%	-7.1%
Silver City	272	291	252	259	245	7.0%	-13.4%	2.8%	-5.4%
Tabor	957	1,088	957	993	1,040	13.7%	-12.0%	3.8%	4.7%

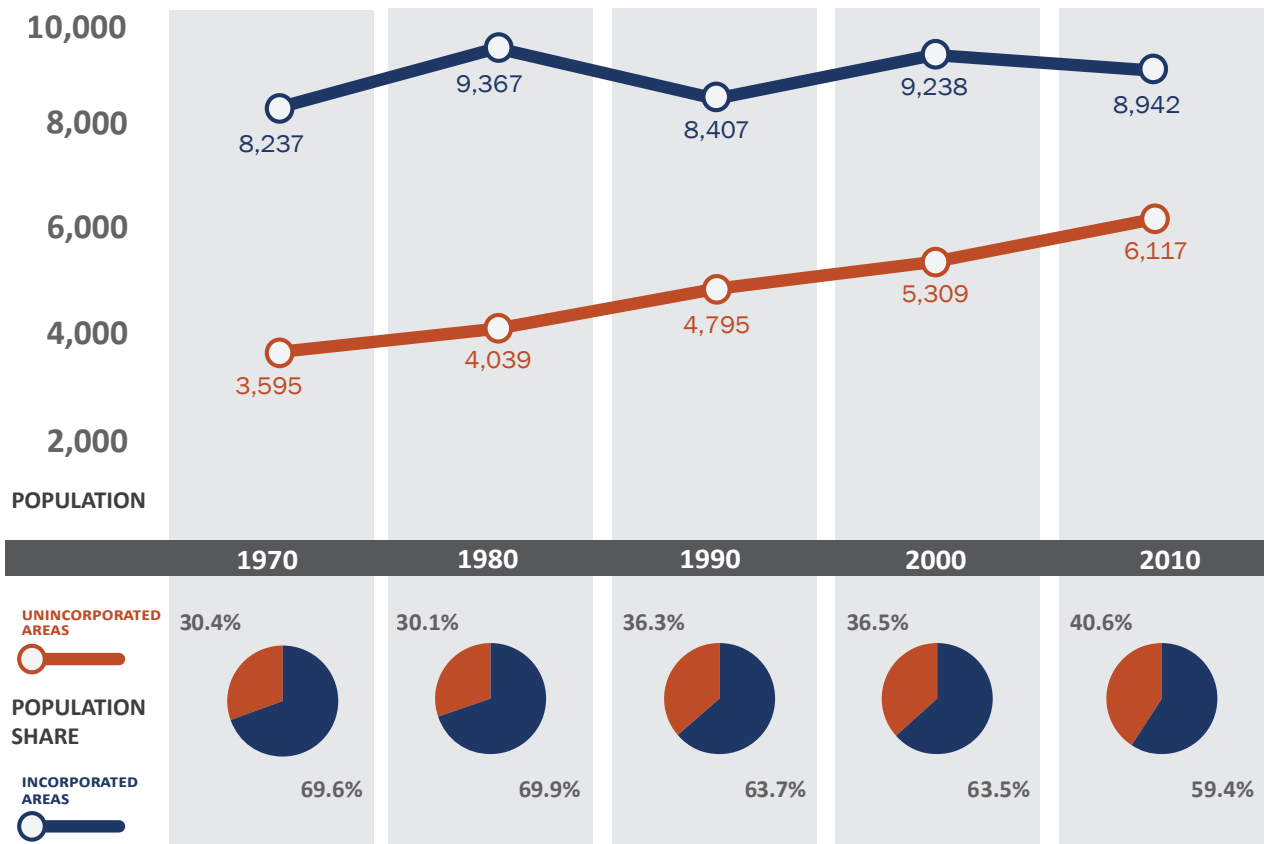
Source: US Census (1970-2010)



Figure 2 shows the breakdown between the population change of the unincorporated areas of Mills County versus incorporated communities. The population split between the incorporated and unincorporated areas was consistently 30% rural and 70% urban through the 1980s. However, rural growth continued through the 1980s while the incorporated areas declined by nearly 10%. This shifted the population share to 36% rural residents and 64% urban residents.

Both the rural and urban areas continued to see population grow through the 1990s to the 2000 Census, but the 2010 Census showed that incorporated areas saw a slight decline of 3.2% while the rural, unincorporated population saw a 15% increase over that same period. This resulted in a population split further expanding the rural population's share to nearly 41% and reducing the incorporated, urban population to nearly 59%.

Figure 2 **Historical Population Comparison**



Source: US Census (1970-2010)

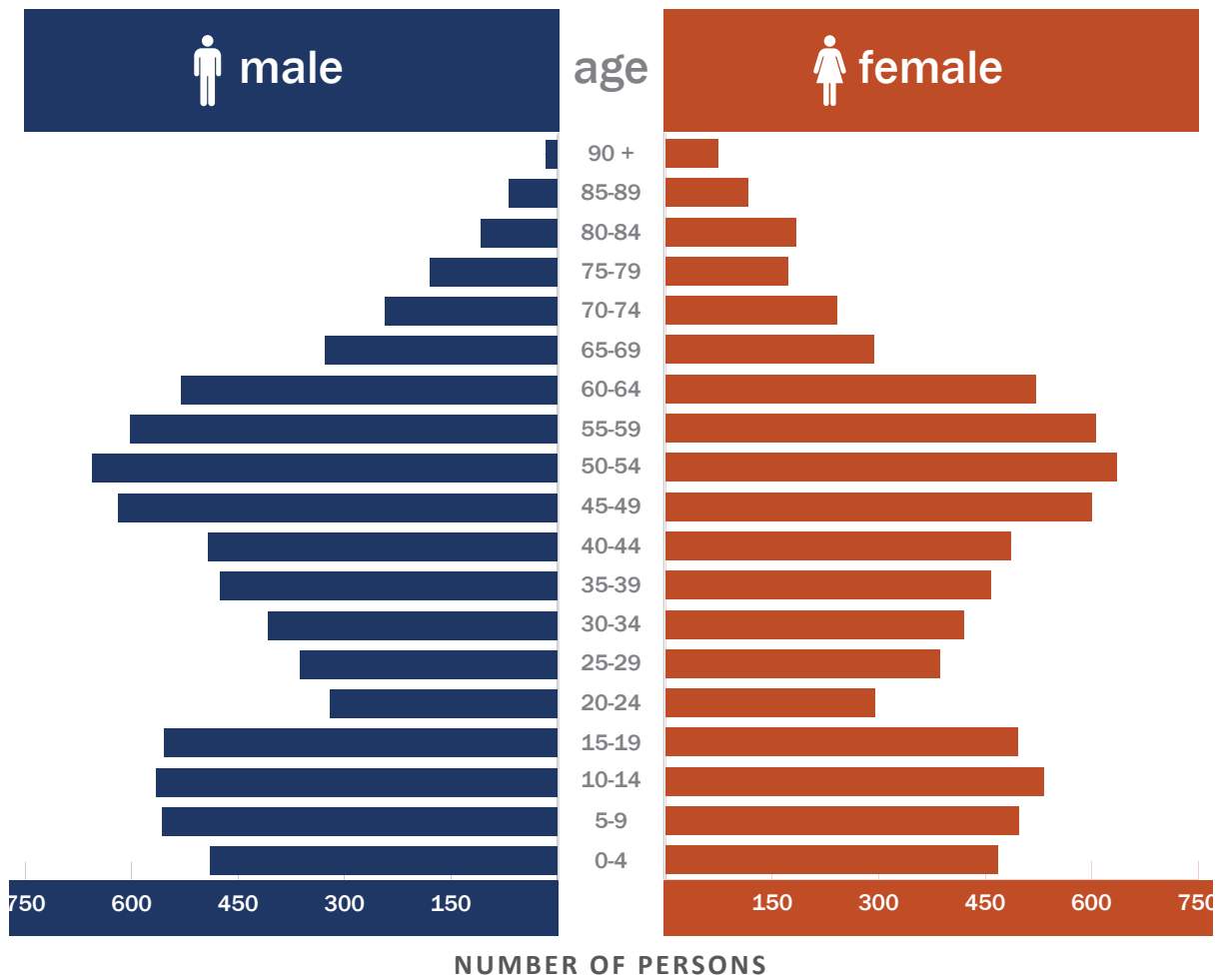


Age Characteristics

While population trends illustrate where and how much growth occurred, another research method analyzes age groups to determine the County’s population composition. The U.S. Census typically combines populations within five-year increments which are called Age Cohorts. These cohorts simplify the complex process of compiling population data and provide a snapshot of the age groups within communities.

Figure 3 depicts a young and growing population with cohorts of people ages 0-4, 5-9, 10-14, and 15-19 making up a large segment of the population. The second largest population group is 45-64, known as the mid-to-late career employment sector. Continuing up the age scale we can see a sharp drop-off of people 65 years and older. In other words, career-oriented families who tend to have children later in life (30 years and older) are attracted to Mills County for its rural, single-family housing while the older generation (65 years and older) may not have the amenities or housing options they desire to stay in Mills County.

Figure 3 **Population Cohort Pyramid**



Source: US Census (2010)



Researching previous age cohorts as they age is one way to apply the data on current composition of a population. When looking for patterns in population change, this breakdown can show what age groups have lost or gained population. Table 2 shows a ten year progression from the previous census (2000) to the current (2010).

The largest gains were seen in the 20-49 age groups and under 5 years of age. Again, this reinforces the idea that Mills County is attracting families with young children. The loss of students 10-19 from 2000 as they age into their 20s is to be expected as many will seek further education opportunities not currently available in Mills County. Lastly, the 60-64 age group begins the population decline due to out migration and death.

Table 2 **Cohort Migration Analysis (2000, 2010)**

2000		2010		
"Then"	Population	"Now"	Population	Gain/Loss
Under 5 years	923	10 to 14 years	1,098	19.0%
5 to 9 years	1,112	15 to 19 years	1,050	-5.6%
10 to 14 years	1,145	20 to 24 years	615	-46.3%
15 to 19 years	1,100	25 to 29 years	749	-31.9%
20 to 24 years	629	30 to 34 years	828	31.6%
25 to 29 years	779	35 to 39 years	933	19.8%
30 to 34 years	891	40 to 44 years	978	9.8%
35 to 39 years	1,174	45 to 49 years	1,220	3.9%
40 to 44 years	1,249	50 to 54 years	1,292	3.4%
45 to 49 years	1,182	55 to 59 years	1,208	2.2%
50 to 54 years	1,117	60 to 64 years	1,052	-5.8%
55 to 59 years	770	65 to 69 years	620	-19.5%
60 to 64 years	640	70 to 74 years	484	-24.4%
65 to 69 years	498	75 to 79 years	352	-29.3%
70 to 74 years	454	80 to 84 years	292	-35.7%
75 to 79 years	358	85+ Years	185	-48.3%

Source: US Census Bureau (2000, 2010)



Population Forecasts

Population projections help identify the pace of growth for the County and inform infrastructure considerations to accommodate this increase in population. Without this estimate, the County, as well as private utility service providers, will not be able to accurately budget for future system needs. These proactive measures also inform the general public of where to be strategic with infrastructure investments to promote the growth of Mills County.

Historic Population Trends Projections

The Historic Population Trends Projections display the County's growth as if it were to repeat past events of long-term growth. Longer growth periods create projections that ignore the peaks and valleys of recurring building cycles and population growth. Table 3 shows Mills County's estimated annual growth from 1970 to 2010 as the low projection set at 0.68% that represents the baseline of the past forty years. However, annual growth rates have declined in the past 10 years to 0.35% (2000 to 2010). Over the next twenty-five years the 40-year or "high" projection estimates population of 18,464 or additional 3,405 people. However, the 10-year or "low" trend estimate of 16,733 which equals an additional 1,674 people.

Table 3 **Population Projections: Historic Population Trends**

Year	40-Year Trend (1970-2010)		10-Year Trend (2000-2010)	
	Annual Rate 0.68%	Population Change	Annual Rate 0.35%	Population Change
2015	15,579	520	15,326	267
2020	16,118	538	15,598	272
2025	16,675	557	15,874	276
2030	17,251	576	16,155	281
2035	17,847	596	16,442	286
2040	18,464	617	16,733	291
TOTAL		3,404		1,673

Source: US Census Bureau (1970-2010)



Other Recent Studies & Resources

Numerous studies have been conducted in the Omaha metropolitan area that have established their own population projection figures. The reliability of these population projections depends on the continuation of past growth trends. Each of these studies are based on historical growth patterns and the composition of the current population. The following is a brief list of these studies and their projection estimates for Mills County, shown in Table 4 below:

- The Iowa State Data Center provides population projections benchmarked by the 2010 Decennial Census from Woods and Poole Economics, Inc., an experienced independent firm that specializes in long-term County economic and demographic projections. Woods & Poole has been making County projections since 1983. The study estimated an annual growth of 0.73% which equates to an increase of nearly 3,672 people by 2040.
- Heartland 2050 was a regional visioning effort for the eight-county Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan area encouraging collaboration across jurisdictions to reduce redundancies and identify opportunities to leverage assets and save taxpayer dollars. The study estimated an annual growth rate of 0.08% which equates to a modest increase of 366 people by 2040.
- Offutt Air Force Base Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) was a process designed to identify and determine ways to enhance compatible land uses and growth management practices in communities close to active military installations, such as Offutt AFB. The JLUS study estimated an annual growth rate of 0.98% which equates to an additional 5,135 people by 2040.

Table 4 **Population Projections: Other Studies & Resources**

Year	Woods & Poole Estimates		Heartland 2050		JLUS	
	Annual Rate 0.73%	Population Change	Annual Rate 0.08%	Population Change	Annual Rate 0.98%	Population Change
2015	15,617	558	15,119	60	15,814	755
2020	16,195	578	15,180	61	16,606	793
2025	16,795	600	15,241	61	17,439	832
2030	17,417	622	15,302	61	18,313	874
2035	18,062	645	15,363	61	19,231	918
2040	18,731	669	15,425	62	20,194	964
TOTAL		3,672		366		5,135

Source: Woods & Poole Economics (2009)
Heartland 2050/Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (2015)
Offutt Airforce Base Joint Land Use Study (2015)



Racial and Ethnic Characteristics

While part of the Omaha metropolitan area, Mills County continues to be a very non-diverse population. The 2000 US Census reported Mills County having 98% “white” residents, however, these figures change slightly by the 2010 Census which shows Mills County with 97.2% “white” residents. With that said, there were slight gains in diversity between the 2000 and 2010 Census. The Hispanic or Latino population went from 179 people in 2000, or 1.2% of the overall population, to 359 people in 2010, or 2.4% of the overall population. Much of this growth in diversity can be attributed to the significant expansion in employment opportunities in and around Mills County.

Table 5 **Population by Race & Ethnicity, 2000-2010**

Race	2000 Pop.	% Change 1990- 2000	% of County	2010 Pop.	% Change 2000- 2010	% of County
White, not Hispanic	14,251	8.7%	98.0%	14,639	2.7%	97.2%
Black	41	86.4%	0.3%	57	39.0%	0.4%
American Indian and Alaskan Native	39	39.3%	0.3%	49	25.6%	0.3%
Asian and Pacific Islander	44	158.8%	0.3%	65	47.7%	0.4%
Other, not Hispanic	52	108.0%	0.4%	84	61.5%	0.6%
Two or more races	120	NA	0.8%	165	37.5%	1.1%
TOTAL	14,547		100.0%	15,059		100.0%
Hispanic or Latino	179	148.6%	1.2%	359	100.6%	2.4%

Source: US Census Bureau (2000, 2010)



Education & Income Levels

Educational attainment, defined as the highest degree or level of schooling completed by an individual, is a variable used when assessing a community or region's labor force potential. According to the 2014 American Community Survey, the County's population age 25 and older reported that 93.7% of the population had attained a high school level education, which slightly exceeds both the Omaha metro (90.9%), as well as the state (91.3%). Approximately 24.4% of this same group of people attained a college level education (bachelor's degree or higher), compared to 33.4% of the overall Omaha metro population and 26.4% of the state population.

The highest rates of education attainment reside in Glenwood and Malvern in addition to Mineola, an unincorporated community. Higher education attainment is an indicator of higher income levels and a greater ability to choose where to live. With that in mind, these three communities with higher educational attainment could be identified as "communities of choice" or highly desirable places to live.

Table 6 **Highest Level of Educational Attainment: City Comparison (2014)**

City/Area	High School	Some College	Associates	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate/ Professional
Emerson	53.7%	21.5%	7.7%	7.7%	2.5%
Glenwood	40.6%	23.5%	7.0%	13.9%	7.2%
Hastings	59.2%	13.3%	8.3%	7.5%	2.5%
Henderson	55.8%	18.3%	16.7%	2.5%	1.7%
Malvern	34.3%	25.4%	10.3%	15.0%	6.6%
Mineola CDP*	18.4%	39.8%	0.0%	18.4%	12.6%
Pacific Junction	39.9%	24.5%	11.4%	7.3%	0.7%
Tabor	36.3%	28.3%	10.0%	13.7%	3.5%
Mills County	36.2%	24.3%	8.8%	16.5%	7.9%
Omaha-Council Bluffs MSA	25.0%	24.2%	8.3%	22.3%	11.1%
Iowa	32.5%	21.6%	10.8%	18.0%	8.4%

Source: American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014)

*Census Designated Place



Household Income & Poverty

Education rates correlate with Mills County's median income data. Glenwood and Malvern both exceed the state of Iowa's figures for median income for all households, although no community exceeds the median income of the Omaha metro. However, the family median household income for Mills County exceeds both the Omaha Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and the state of Iowa figures. Again, Glenwood and Malvern lead the County for highest family median income which could be attributed to these communities' higher educational attainment and greater access to higher wage employment centers in and around Mills County. More economic analysis and employment data for Mills County is discussed in Chapter 7 (Economic Development).

Table 7 **Median Household Income: Total & Family (2014)**

City/Area	Median HH Income	Family Median HH Income
Emerson	\$51,765	\$57,143
Glenwood	\$62,824	\$76,094
Hastings	\$26,750	\$27,125
Henderson	\$34,000	\$40,000
Malvern	\$62,440	\$76,731
Mineola CDP	\$43,792	\$63,750
Pacific Junction	\$39,375	\$43,438
Tabor	\$51,875	\$66,429
Mills County	\$57,357	\$79,870
Omaha Metro	\$65,160	\$72,754
Iowa	\$52,716	\$66,829

Source: American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014)



The measure of poverty is another determining factor in housing affordability. Prior to 2010, the US Census's official poverty threshold, or poverty line, was calculated as three times the cost of a minimum food diet in current prices. Today, it is classified as the cost to cover basic needs- food, clothing, shelter, and utilities. As more people fall below the poverty line, more services will be needed to help these groups of people.

Table 8 below references that the number of persons in poverty decreased 7.8% between 2000 and 2014, accounting for 7.9% of the overall Mills County population in 2000 and 7.1% in 2014. Note, the largest declines occurred in all age groups under 24 years old which accounted for 47.9% of persons in poverty in 2000 as compared to 34.2% in 2014. The largest increases in poverty occurred in the ranges of persons 25 to 74 years old, with exception to those individuals in the 35 to 44 cohort, as well as those 75 years and older, which both saw declines in these totals. While the overall poverty figures decreased, the number of adults in poverty has increased during this period, and Mills County will need to determine how to best provide services and affordable housing options to accommodate this segment of the population.

Table 8 **Household Poverty by Age of Residents (2000, 2014)**

Age Group	Persons in Poverty - 2000		Persons in Poverty - 2014	
	Number	Percent (%) of Age Group	Number	Percent (%) of Age Group
Under 5 years	116	12.5%	102	10.6%
5 years	12	6.4%	19	8.3%
6 to 11 years	138	9.7%	61	5.2%
12 to 14 years	63	9.8%	48	6.7%
15 to 17 years	86	12.3%	40	5.5%
18 to 24 years	136	13.6%	93	10.9%
25 to 34 years	127	7.5%	152	9.6%
35 to 44 years	156	6.4%	107	5.6%
45 to 54 years	90	3.9%	119	4.7%
55 to 64 years	98	7.0%	158	7.0%
65 to 74 years	46	4.9%	126	11.4%
75 years and over	83	9.4%	36	3.9%
All Ages	1,151	7.9%	1,061	7.1%

Source: US Census (2000)
American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014)



The family make up also plays a key role in poverty. For instance, 104 households or 5.8% of all families with children under the age of 18 live in poverty. When considering married couple families with children in poverty this segment only accounts for 2.9% or 39 families. The third portion of this population is families with female head of household (no husband present) and children present have 60 families or 20.5% of their group's households in poverty. This stark difference shows a real need for resources and affordable housing options to address the issues faced by this population.

Table 9 **Poverty by Family Type (2014)**

Family Type	Number Below Poverty Level	Percent Below Poverty Level (%)
All families	182	4.6%
With related children under 18 years	104	5.8%
Married couple families	111	3.3%
With related children under 18 years	39	2.9%
Families with female householder, no husband present	60	17.7%
With related children under 18 years	60	20.5%

Source: American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014)

Table 10 **Household Poverty by Race & Hispanic/Latino Origin (2014)**

Race & Hispanic/Latino Origin	Number Below Poverty Level	Percent Below Poverty Level (%)
All People	1,061	7.2%
One race	995	6.9%
White	974	6.8%
Black or African American	21	28.4%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0	0.0%
Asian	0	0.0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	-
Some other race	0	0.0%
Two or more races	66	24.4%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	6	1.6%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	968	7.0%

Source: American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014)

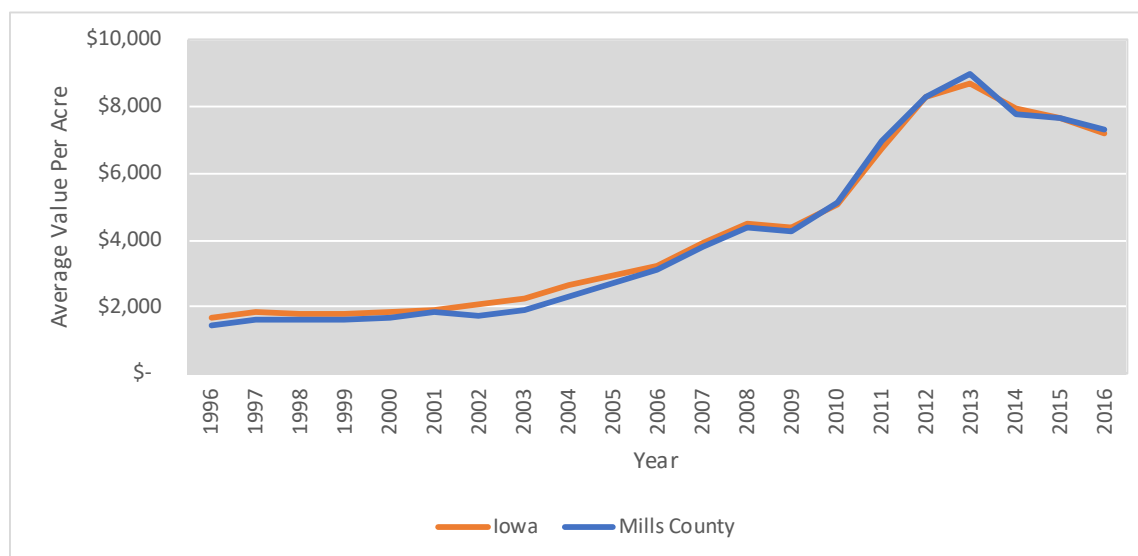


Race and ethnicity is also a key indicator as a metric of poverty. Mills County has relatively low rates of poverty with 7.2% of the population compared to the state of Iowa which has a rate of 12.6% of the population in poverty. Even though Caucasian or white households make up the largest share of impoverished households with 974 or 6.8% of their population, people of color are impacted at higher rates. For instance, Black or African American households only make up 0.5% of all households, but one in four is in poverty.

Land Values

Over the last decade, increases in land values have had a significant effect on growth throughout the Midwest. As farm commodity prices increased, so did the value of land. The ability to acquire land is necessary for all elements of this Comprehensive Plan. Since 1941, Iowa State University has sponsored an annual survey to track changes in farmland value. The survey is intended to provide information on general land value trends, geographical land price relationships, and factors influencing the Iowa land market. The survey is based on reports by licensed real estate brokers, farm managers, appraisers, agricultural lenders, County assessors, and selected individuals considered to be knowledgeable of land market conditions. Figure 4 below illustrates land values for both Mills County and the state of Iowa since 1996. Both values follow a similar trend, growth from 2004 through 2013 followed by some decline.

Figure 4 **Farmland Value Trends**



Source: Iowa State University Extension



Chapter Recap

The following bullets are key takeaways from the profile of Mills County:

- Mills County experienced 25% net population growth since 1970.
- All communities saw a net decline since 1970 except Glenwood which saw 19.2% net population growth during this period.
- Unincorporated area population nearly doubled since 1970 while the incorporated areas only saw a 8.6% net growth.
- The largest age groups were 0-19 and 45-64 years old.
- All population projection estimates predict modest growth over the next 25 years from as few as 366 people (Heartland 2050) to 5,135 additional residents (JLUS).
- Mills County population is primarily white at 97.2% (2010).
- However, there has been an increase of minority group population in the past decade especially with Hispanic/Latino population growing from 1.2% of the overall population in 2000 to 2.4% in 2010.
- The highest levels of educational attainment and median household incomes are found in Glenwood and Malvern.
- Poverty rates in Mills County are relatively low across all household types with exception to female householders with children (20.5%) and Black or African American households (28.4%).



Chapter 2

Facilities & Services

- 2.1 Profile
- 2.2 Envision
- 2.3 Achieve
- 2.4 Implement

#



Facilities & Services

[section 2.1]

PROFILE

This section will establish current capacities of the public facilities and services available to residents of Mills County. In order to determine whether the capacity is adequate, an evaluation of the current capacities, demands, and accepted standards will be needed. The established benchmarks, in conjunction with public input of future desires, will be used to create long-term goals for expanding and improving these services.

County Buildings

Mills County Courthouse

The Mills County Courthouse is located at 418 Sharp Street on Glenwood's town square. The courthouse is home to several County offices including: County Auditor, County Treasurer, County Recorder, County Assessor, County Attorney, Emergency Management Agency, 911 Communications, and State Clerk of District Court.

The current courthouse was built in 1959 as a replacement for the 1857 brick structure. The original cost of the structure was \$320,000, the equivalent of \$2.6 million adjusted to 2016. A metal hipped roof and roof dormers were later added to the building giving it more of a Post-modern appearance. In 2013 the building was upgraded to be handicap accessible and also added offices and storage space.

Figure 5 Mills County Courthouse





Public Health Agency/Glenwood Resource Center

This facility is located at 212 Independence Street in Glenwood. The Public Health Agency and Glenwood Resource Center is home to Public Health Nursing, Parents As Teachers, Family Centered Services, and Environmental Services. In addition, the Veterans Affairs and General Relief offices are located at this site.

Secondary Roads Facility

This facility is located at 403 Railroad Avenue in Glenwood. It is home to the County Engineer and Secondary Roads staff as well as the Building & Zoning office, Economic Development Department, and the Information Technology department that includes GIS and mapping. The building was expanded in 2016 to create additional conference room and office space. An additional 4.5 acres have also been purchased adjacent to the site for future growth.

Law Enforcement Center

This facility is located at 600 Industrial Road in Glenwood. On August 7, 2012 Mills County voters approved a referendum to build the Law Enforcement Center adjacent to the Mills County Secondary Roads facility. Construction of the new facility was completed in the fall of 2014. The new facility houses the administrative offices for the Mills County Sheriff's Department and a 24-bed jail with capacity to add six additional beds if needed.

E911 Communications Center

The Mills County 911 Communications Center consists of nine dedicated personnel providing a support role for operational public safety agencies within Mills County. The 911 Communications Division plays a critical role in the delivery of Police, Fire and Medical services within Mills County. Map 1 on the following page displays the nine fire districts operating in Mills County.

The Mills County Communications Center is the public safety answering point (PSAP) for all of Mills County and receives calls and dispatches public safety services for the following towns:

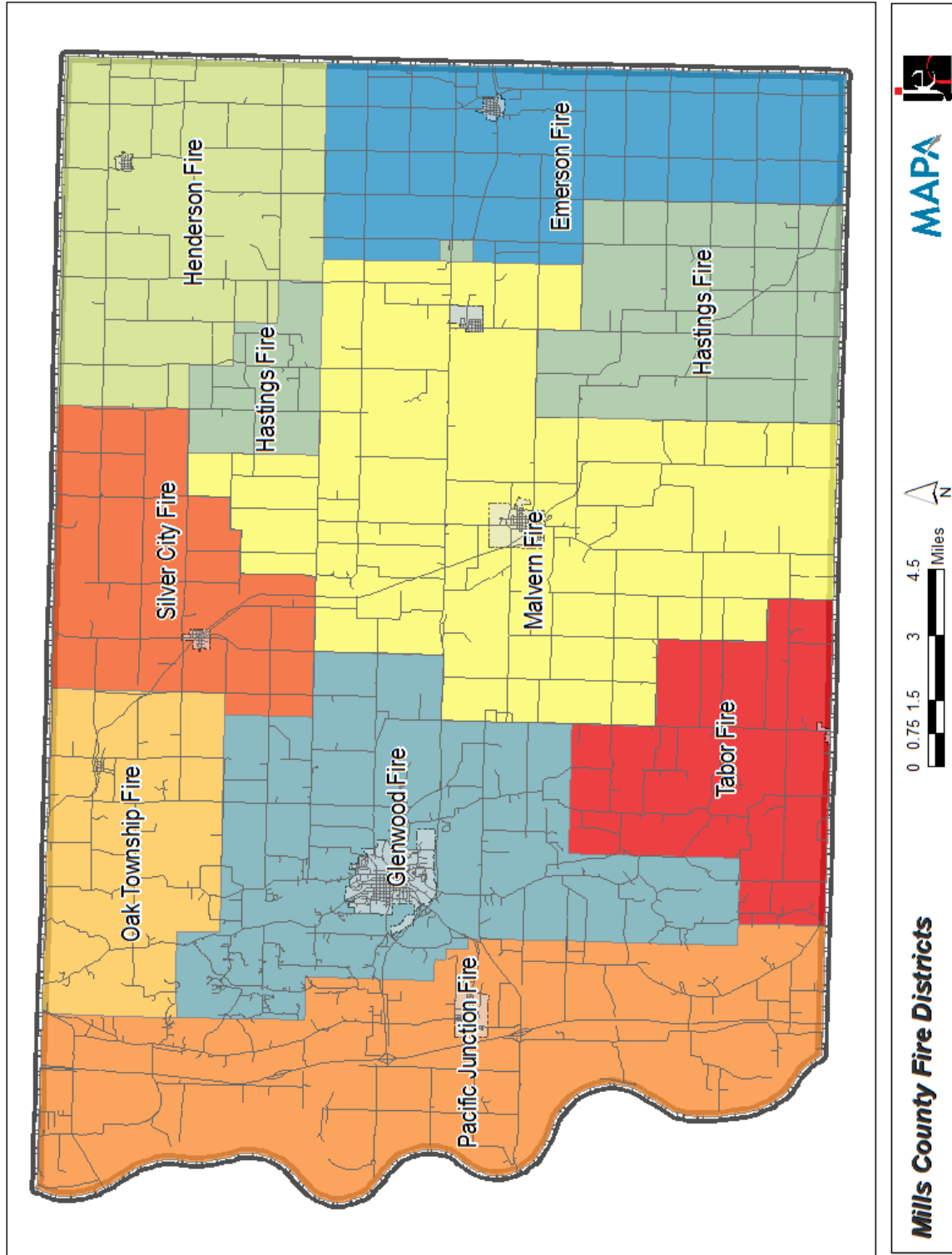
- Emerson
- Glenwood
- Hastings
- Henderson
- Malvern
- Mineola
- Pacific Junction
- Silver City
- Strahan

The Mills County 911 Communications Center dispatchers provide service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They are highly trained and committed professionals who assist citizens by evaluating each call and respond based on the information given to them.



Mills County Fire Districts

Map 1





Community School Districts

Mills County is primarily served by Glenwood Community School District (CSD) and East Mills CSD, plus parts of Lewis Central CSD, Treynor CSD, Shenandoah CSD, and Fremont-Mills CSD. As of May 2015, there were 2,493 students enrolled in Mills County. Table 11 provides the estimated enrollment by building for Mills County community schools and Map 2 shows the district boundaries. Glenwood Community Schools has the newest facility, a \$21 million high school, which is 10 years old.

Table 11 **Primary & Secondary Schools**

School District	Location	Enrollment
Glenwood Senior High School	Glenwood, IA	603
Glenwood Middle School	Glenwood, IA	464
Northeast Elementary School	Glenwood, IA	535
West Elementary School	Glenwood, IA	412
East Mills Jr/Sr High School	Malvern, IA	218
East Mills Elementary School	Hastings, IA	261
Total		2,493

Source: Iowa Department of Education (2015)

Post-Secondary Schools

Mills County's location within the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area provides many excellent post-secondary schools. Depending on a person's location within Mills County, many of these facilities are within a 30-mile commute. In addition to the institutions listed, there are a number of vocational schools located in the metro that concentrate in certain areas of expertise.

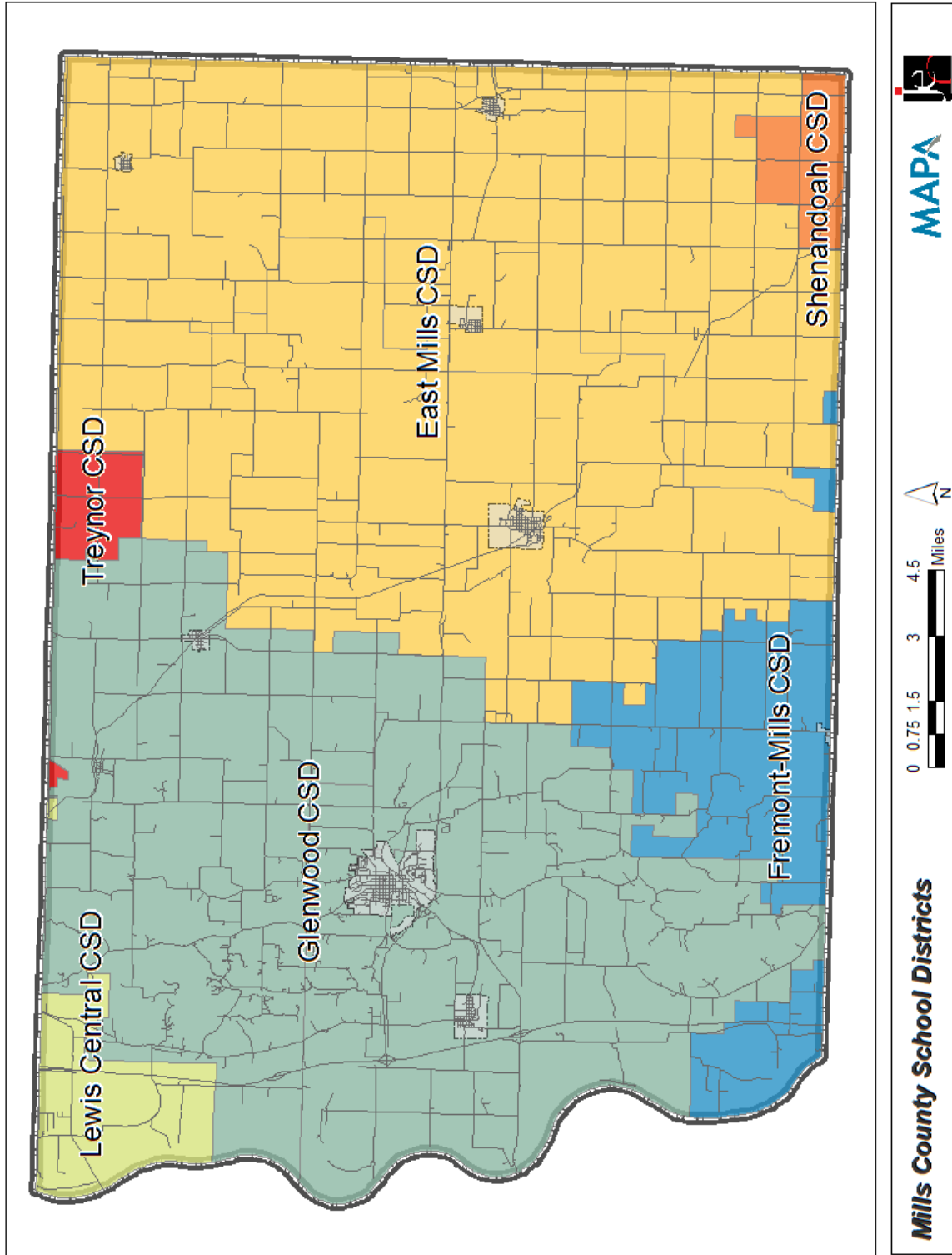
Table 12 **Post-Secondary Schools**

Institution	Location	Total Enrollment (2014-15)
University of Nebraska - Omaha	Omaha, NE	18,191
Creighton University	Omaha, NE	9,363
Metro Community College	Multiple Locations	26,388
Iowa Western Community College	Council Bluffs, IA	6,472
College of Saint Mary's	Omaha, NE	1,190
Grace University	Omaha, NE	647
Bellevue University	Bellevue, NE	12,801
Clarkson College	Omaha, NE	864
University of Nebraska Medical Center	Omaha, NE	3,975
Nebraska Christian College	Omaha, NE	149
Nebraska Methodist College	Omaha, NE	1,188



Mills County Community School Districts (CSD)

Map 2



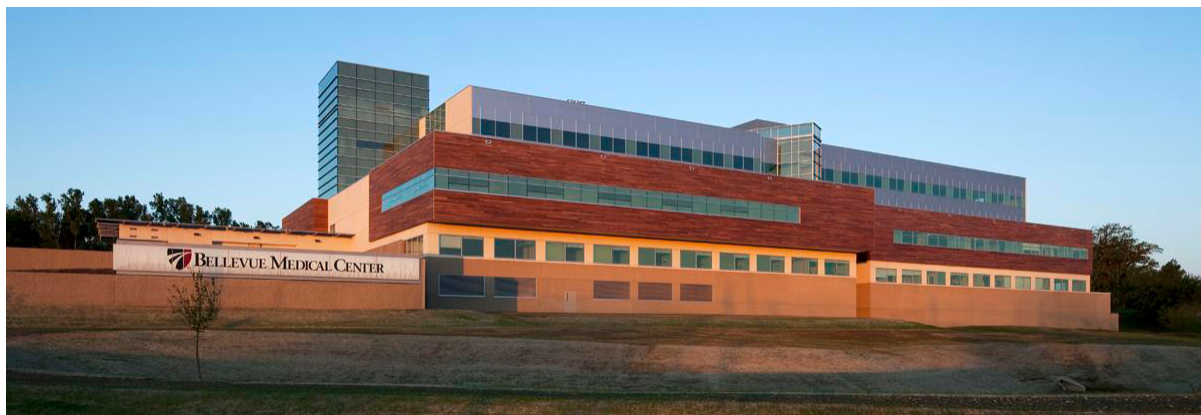


Healthcare Facilities

Mills County does not have a full service hospital, however, there are many health clinics located in Glenwood as well as one in Malvern. Below is a list of the nearest hospital facilities for Mills County residents:

- Nebraska Medicine – Bellevue
- Montgomery County Memorial Hospital - Red Oak
- CHI Health Alegent Creighton Clinic Cardiology - Shenandoah
- CHI Health Mercy- Council Bluffs
- Jennie Edmundson Hospital - Council Bluffs

Figure 6 **Nebraska Medicine- Bellevue**





[section 2.2]

ENVISION

Community facilities are the direct extension of local government to the quality of life of residents. By providing and maintaining quality services, Mills County can meet the needs of its residents. The Envision section of the planning process is the formal means for public participation into the Mills County Comprehensive Plan. To better understand the strengths and weaknesses of Mills County's facilities and services, we asked for community and stakeholder input to provide an assessment as well as new ideas.

Focus Group Meeting

Six focus groups were convened by the consultants to gather input on strengths and challenges surrounding the major themes addressed in the County's Comprehensive Plan. There was not a specific focus group for facilities and services of the County, but the following comments related to that theme were noted during the group sessions for infrastructure, natural resources, and schools.

- Facilities are new – new courthouse addition, jail, planning office, conservation building – unlikely anything new in the near future
- Community Building in Malvern is a regional facility
- The only senior and assisted living facilities in the County are in Glenwood
- Current needs in mental health services
- Adult and child day care are lacking; facilities primarily in Council Bluffs and Omaha
- Daycare is expensive and there are few in-home care providers
- Waiting lists are not uncommon for daycares and preschools
- Physical therapy is available in Glenwood
- County has a strong public health program
- Public transportation SWITA (Southwest Iowa Transit Agency) cannot meet the demand
- There is a shortage of indoor walking facilities in the County; YMCA, schools are options
- Transportation to and from school and extracurricular activities is not adequate for all students
- There are quality recreational amenities and extracurricular activities for youth in the County, however, at risk youth have difficulty affording fees to participate in many activities
- Facilities are in generally good condition, but some schools will need to expand at some point
- Schools with 450-500 students are ideal



- Surprisingly small percentage of students do not have internet access outside of school
- There are likely not enough opportunities for students that do not attend a four-year college after graduation
- There is not enough housing for new teachers; affordability is an issue as well
- The County's tax rate is higher than many other counties in Iowa
- Turnover of teachers at the secondary level is more prevalent than in K-8 – many secondary teachers teach to coach and leave for bigger opportunities

Town Hall Meeting

Though there was not a facilities and services station at the town hall meeting, attendees made a few comments related to the theme via questionnaire handouts, aerial maps, and land use maps.

- Need to support industrial growth
- Wabash Trace- priority one for hard surface

SWOT Analysis

Attendees were asked at a Community Advisory Committee meeting to participate in a SWOT analysis, which is an identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats relevant to the entire County. The following are the results of the SWOT analysis specific to facilities and services. Many of the items cross one or more focus areas of the Comprehensive Plan.

Strengths

- Low crime and safe communities
- Quality local schools
- Active community leaders and volunteers
- Transportation network
- Quality local doctors and clinics

Weaknesses

- No hospital in the County
- Inadequate child and elder care
- No public transportation other than SWITA
- Emergency response time is slow depending on location
- No access to emergency medical care
- Community apathy/volunteer fatigue – a few volunteers doing too much



Opportunities

- Expansion of Glen Haven Home - Nursing facility
- Awareness of community activities and volunteer opportunities
- Community Building in Malvern

Threats

- Possibility of closing Glenwood Resource Center
- Loss of programs from volunteer fatigue and lack of new volunteers
- Possibility of school closures due to aging facilities
- Lack of care facilities and resources for vulnerable adults

Elected and Appointed Officials Meeting

The consultants facilitated a meeting of elected and appointed officials, stakeholders, and citizens of Mills County regarding the Comprehensive Plan update. Meeting participants were asked 21 multiple-choice questions related to the themes addressed in the plan. Responses were aggregated in real time and presented to attendees anonymously. The questions and subsequent results were intended to gather further detail and context to information previously noted, and to generate additional discussion on topics of most importance to the County. The following are questions and results related to facilities and services.

Which would you say should be the biggest priority related to services?

- Telecommunications [53%]
- Enhance electrical capacity to facilitate development [32%]
- Reliable emergency response times [13%]
- Transit opportunities for vulnerable populations [0%]
- Access to quality and affordable adult care providers [0%]
- Access to quality and affordable child care providers [0%]
- Rail service [3%]
- Access to convenient healthcare services [0%]
- Airfields [0%]



[section 2.3]

ACHIEVE

The Achieve section provides a summary of the previous sections and starts to identify priorities needed for future growth and development. Through the planning process, it became apparent that the County's buildings and facilities are in generally good condition and sufficient for the existing needs of residents, and it is unlikely that any major improvements or upgrades will be required in the near future. School facilities in the County are also in good condition, though it may be inevitable that some schools will need to expand at some point. Mills County residents do have access to quality local medical providers and facilities, but there is the disadvantage of not having a hospital or emergency care directly in the County. Not unlike most communities, Mills County does experience some overall disadvantages related to facilities and services that County officials and stakeholders may wish to address, including inadequate child and elder care facilities/services and limited public transportation options. Furthermore, it has been noted often throughout the planning process that a priority should be placed on improving telecommunications and enhancing electrical capacity, though this is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

PROFILE

ENVISION

ACHIEVE

IMPLEMENT



[section 2.4]

IMPLEMENT

Considering the findings of the previous sections, the Implement section offers guidance on how to manage future growth and development of the County. Here we outline the goals, policies, and action steps for Facilities and Services. Policies and action steps give more detail and describe the activities needed to achieve the desired goals of the County. Policies are part of the value system linking goals with action steps, and they define the broader goals with more detailed descriptions. The adopted action steps synthesize the information from the existing profile of the County and public input from the visioning component of the Comprehensive Plan. Action steps are a means to achieve the goals established by the community and they imply a clear commitment to Mills County's future development.

Goal:

Mills County will annually evaluate the existing facilities and services to determine the necessity for upgrades and improvements to provide adequate services to its citizens.

Policies:

- Explore options for improvements to telecommunications throughout the County.
- Manage capital expenses efficiently by developing long range plans and a capital improvement plan.
- Enhance public safety services.
- Review services for aging population.

Action Items:

- Identify and promote a transportation service to facilitate better mobility for elderly residents.
- Create and bi-annually update facilities study to determine the needs and opportunities of all County buildings, roads and bridges.
- Utilize a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).
- Coordinate community and County services to provide reliable emergency response times for fire, law enforcement, and rescue.
- Partner with regional service providers.
- Enhance public safety communications



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Chapter 3

Utilities & Infrastructure

- 3.1 Profile
- 3.2 Envision
- 3.3 Achieve
- 3.4 Implement

#



3

Utilities & Infrastructure

[section 3.1]

PROFILE

This chapter's focus is on public and private utility services – storm sewer, water, sanitary sewer, solid waste, gas, telecommunications, and electric – as well as the transportation networks that serve residences and businesses of Mills County. The location, quality, capacity, and planned improvements to infrastructure will have tremendous influence over the pattern of future development. This chapter begins with an inventory of existing utilities, services and infrastructure provided by city, County, and regional systems and private service providers. The latter half of the chapter will focus on the specific policies needed to guide the future County investments in infrastructure and its role in promoting development.

In this section, we evaluate the ability of the County to meet existing and future demands while determining the level of utilities and infrastructure that will need to be provided. The analyses of existing utilities and infrastructure as well as future demand are contained in this section. Utilities and infrastructure provided by both the County and other providers are considered.

There have been water quality issues throughout the rural areas of the County. This is a challenge for municipal and rural water systems and private property owners in providing quality drinking water.

Solid Waste

Solid waste, recyclable materials, and yard waste collection in Mills County is currently provided on a free market system. All other collection services for residential solid waste, recyclable materials, and yard waste are provided by private haulers under separate arrangements with each household. Apartment complexes and commercial and industrial establishments contract directly with private haulers for collection services as well. For privately provided collection services, the cost for the selected services is set by the service provider.



Electric

MidAmerican Energy Company is the County’s primary electricity provider. MidAmerican is an energy company based in Des Moines, Iowa with a service area that covers nearly two-thirds of the state, as well as portions of Illinois, Nebraska, and South Dakota. Southwest Iowa Regional Electrical Cooperative serves areas south of Emerson.

Natural Gas

MidAmerican Energy Company and Black Hills Energy are the two main natural gas providers in Mills County. Black Hills Energy, headquartered out of Rapid City, South Dakota, provides service to the western most parts of the County while MidAmerican Energy provides service throughout the County. Both have capability to service a majority of Mills County.

Telecommunications

The future of rural counties and their communities is dependent on providing good, high speed internet to homes and businesses. More and more people have the option to telecommute or work from home via an internet connection, and without this service Mills County may lose out on potential residents and new employees. Below is a list of the current telecommunication providers servicing Mills County.

Telecommunications Providers (2017)
AT&T
Century Link
Chat Mobility
Howard's High Speed Inc.
Mediacom
Omni Tel
PointeNet
Spiral Communications
Sprint
US Cellular
Verizon
Western Iowa Networks

Although there are numerous providers within the County, deficiencies in both access and speed are found throughout and require improvement as the County continues to grow.



Water & Wastewater Services

Water and sewer services are critical to the overall implementation of the future land use plan. Growth demands for residential and economic development purposes will require extension of municipal services as well as the ability to establish services on site.

Municipal Water Providers

There are several municipal water providers throughout the County:

Glenwood Municipal Utilities provides water to the City of Glenwood, City of Pacific Junction, the I-29/Hwy 34 Interchange, Lake Ohana subdivision, as well as rural areas in-between.

The communities of Emerson, Hastings, Henderson, Malvern, and Silver City each have municipal systems that provide water for their individual communities.

Southwest Regional Water District

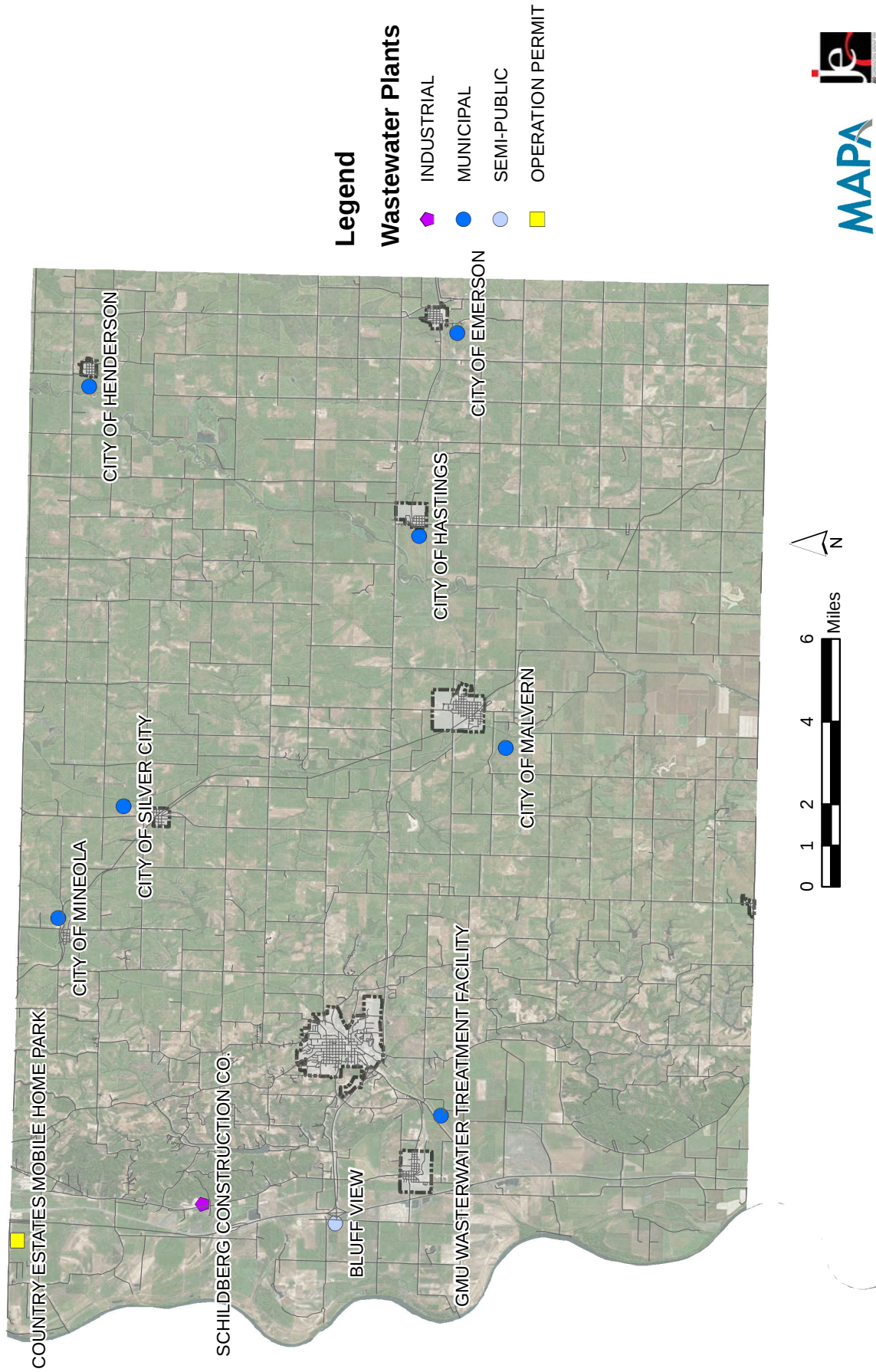
The Southwest Regional Water District provides safe treated public drinking water to rural residents and communities in southwest Iowa. The District is currently comprised of all, or portions of Fremont, Mills, Montgomery, Page, and Taylor Counties in Iowa and Nodaway and Atchinson Counties in Missouri. At the end of 2014, there were approximately 910 miles of distribution system pipeline serving 1,970 benefit users.

The west part of the Southwest Regional Water District system is served with water from the City of Red Oak. This is a groundwater source located within the Dakota aquifer. The S.W. Regional Water District has three water booster pumping stations [total pumping capacity 1,480 GPM] to pump water to four elevated water towers located in the five county regional area. The four elevated water towers have a total capacity of 1.3 million gallons and provide the water pressure hydraulics for the entire system.

Wastewater Providers

Mills County residents residing in communities are served by municipal wastewater treatment plants, identified as dark blue circles on Map 3. In addition, there are rural wastewater treatment facilities located in the western side of the County serving residents and businesses outside the municipal service areas, identified as light blue circles and yellow squares on the map.

Map 3 Wastewater Facilities- By Permit Type





Transportation

The transportation system within Mills County needs to continue to evolve with the future growth and development of the County. In order to encourage growth in Mills County, the transportation network needs to provide greater mobility and connectivity across modes of transportation. This section will examine the County's existing system and propose transportation policy to serve existing and future development.

Federal Functional Classifications

The functional classification is the process which categorizes streets and highways into classes, according to the character of service they are intended to provide (see Map 4 on page 55). The federal functional classifications include:

Interstate

A divided, limited access facility with no direct land access and no at-grade crossing or intersections. Interstates are intended to provide the highest degree of mobility serving higher traffic volumes and longer trip lengths.

Other Freeway & Expressway

Provide high degree of mobility, similar to Interstates. However, freeways provide access only at grade-separated interchanges, while expressways also provide limited at-grade access to intersecting major streets.

Principal/Minor Arterial

Collect and distribute traffic flow through urban areas and between major destinations. Principal arterials carry a high share of urban travel, and focus on movement as the primary function, not necessarily localized access.

Major Collector

Provide for land access and traffic circulation within and between residential neighborhoods and commercial and industry areas, as well as distribute traffic movements from these areas to arterial streets. Collectors do not typically accommodate long through trips and are not continuous for long distances.

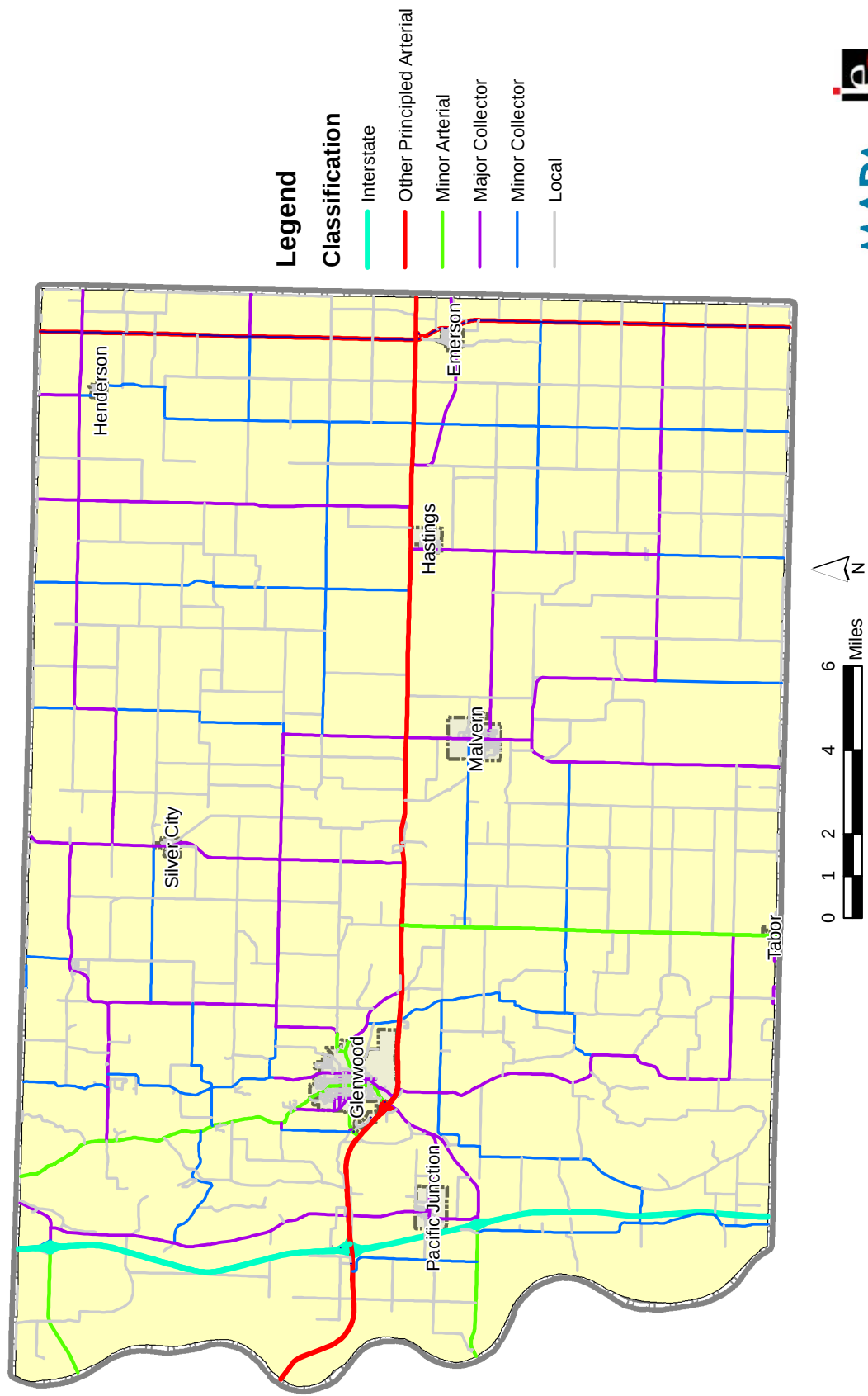
Minor Collector

Similar to major collector but have more land access, slower speed limits, and lower traffic volumes.

Local Road

Offer the lowest level of mobility and highest level of local property access. Local streets typically make up the largest percentage of street mileage and provide direct access to adjacent land uses.

Map 4 Federal Functional Classifications (2015)



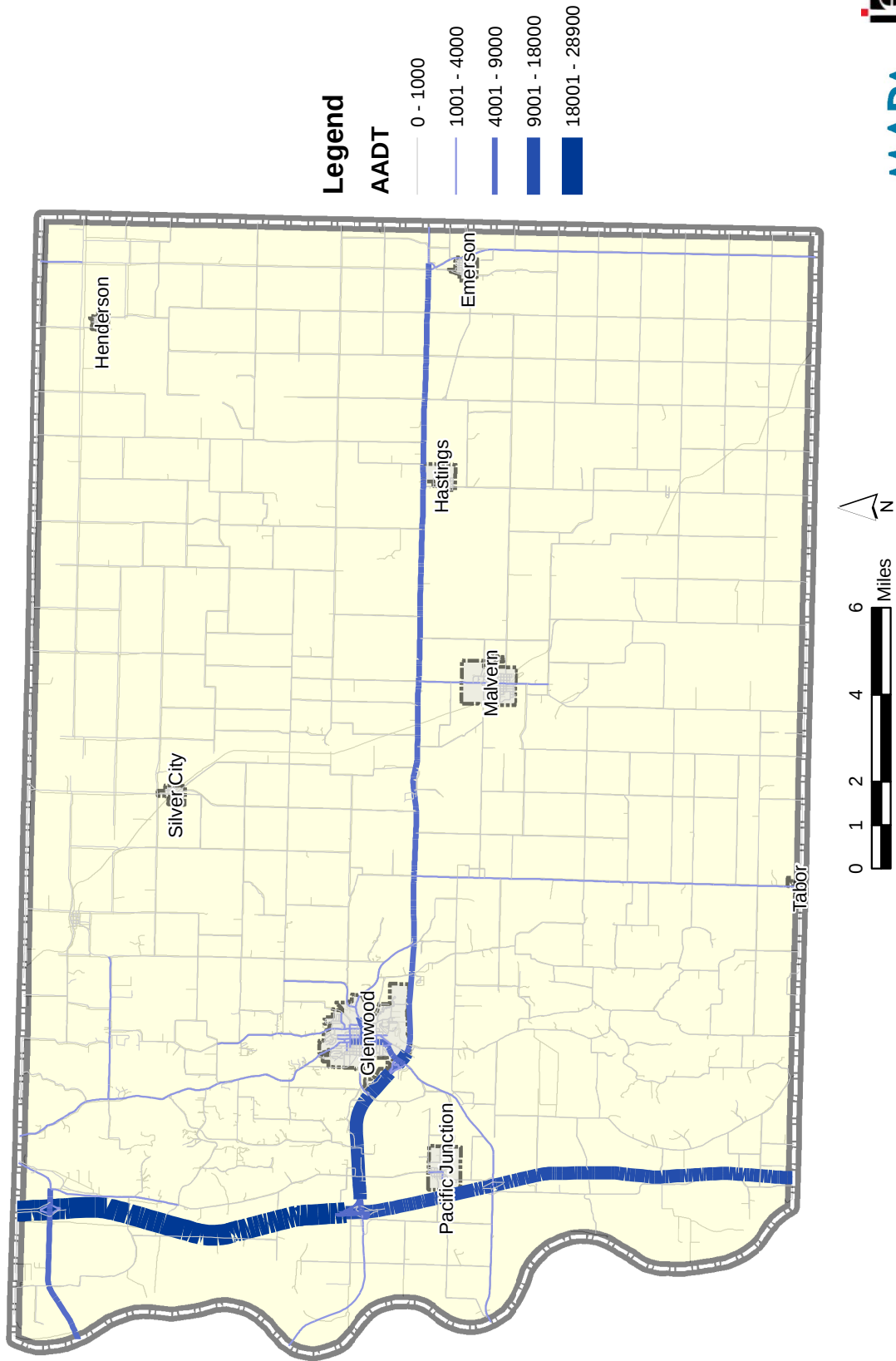


Traffic Volumes

Traffic counts for existing conditions in 2014 for Mills County are provided by Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA). The states of Nebraska and Iowa both have traffic counting sites that count vehicles on a continuous basis, for all 365 days of the year, in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area. These counters, called Automatic Traffic Recorders (ATRs), provide an excellent source of traffic data. There is only one ATR within Mills County, located on I-29 four miles south of the US 34 junction. During the time frame of 2012-2015, this ATR recorded an increase of 4.14% vehicles which was just above the average growth rate of 2.93% for all ATRs in the metro.

The Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) also provides the annual average daily traffic (AADT) counts for all roads across Mills County. In general, AADT is calculated by using a counting device to track vehicles passing a point or segment of a road in both directions divided and then multiplying that total by the number of days in the year. The state conducts this study every four years. Map 5 on the following page displays the AADT count for 2012. The highest level of traffic is on I-29 north of the US Highway 34 interchange. The second highest level of traffic is on I-29 south of this interchange as well as east-west traffic on US Highway 34. Note, this data was collected prior to the opening of the US Highway 34 bridge so additional traffic along this new road is expected to increase these AADT numbers in the next traffic count. AADT data is updated annually by the IDOT and can be referenced for the most current counts.

Map 5 Annual Average Daily Traffic (2012)





Bridges

The Federal Highway Administration maintains a database, the National Bridge Inventory (NBI), with information on all public highway bridges in the United States that are greater than 20 feet in length. Using National Bridge Inspection Standards, bridge inspectors visually assess and record up to 116 standards for the NBI. Within the database are condition ratings of the primary components of a bridge - the deck, superstructure, and substructure - that provide an overall characterization of the general condition of a bridge. The condition ratings, along with structural assessments of the clearances, approach roadway alignment, deck geometry, and load carrying capacity are used to determine the sufficiency of a bridge. An insufficient bridge is categorized in one of two ways: Structurally Deficient and Functionally Deficient.

Structurally Deficient

A bridge is considered structurally deficient if the deck, superstructure, substructure, or culvert is rated at or below “poor” condition (0 to 4 on the NBI Rating Scale). A bridge can also be classified as structurally deficient if load-carrying capacity is significantly below current design standards, or the adequacy of the waterway opening provided is determined to be extremely insufficient to the point of causing intolerable roadway traffic interruptions. A structurally deficient bridge, when left open to traffic, typically requires significant maintenance and repair to remain in service and eventual rehabilitation or replacement to address deficiencies. To remain in service, structurally deficient bridges are often posted with weight limits to restrict the gross weight of vehicles using the bridges to less than the maximum weight typically allowed by statute.

Functionally Obsolete

A bridge is considered functionally obsolete if the geometry of the roadway no longer meets current minimum design standards for width or vertical clearance classifications. A functionally obsolete or structurally deficient classification does not mean that a bridge is unsafe. If a bridge meets the criteria to be classified as both structurally deficient and functionally obsolete, it is identified only as structurally deficient, because structural deficiencies are considered more critical. Table 13 shows the number of structurally deficient and functionally obsolete bridges the County owns and maintains. Of the 217 bridges owned by Mills County, 45 have an insufficient rating, 41 bridges are structurally deficient and 4 are functionally obsolete (see Map 6 on page 59).

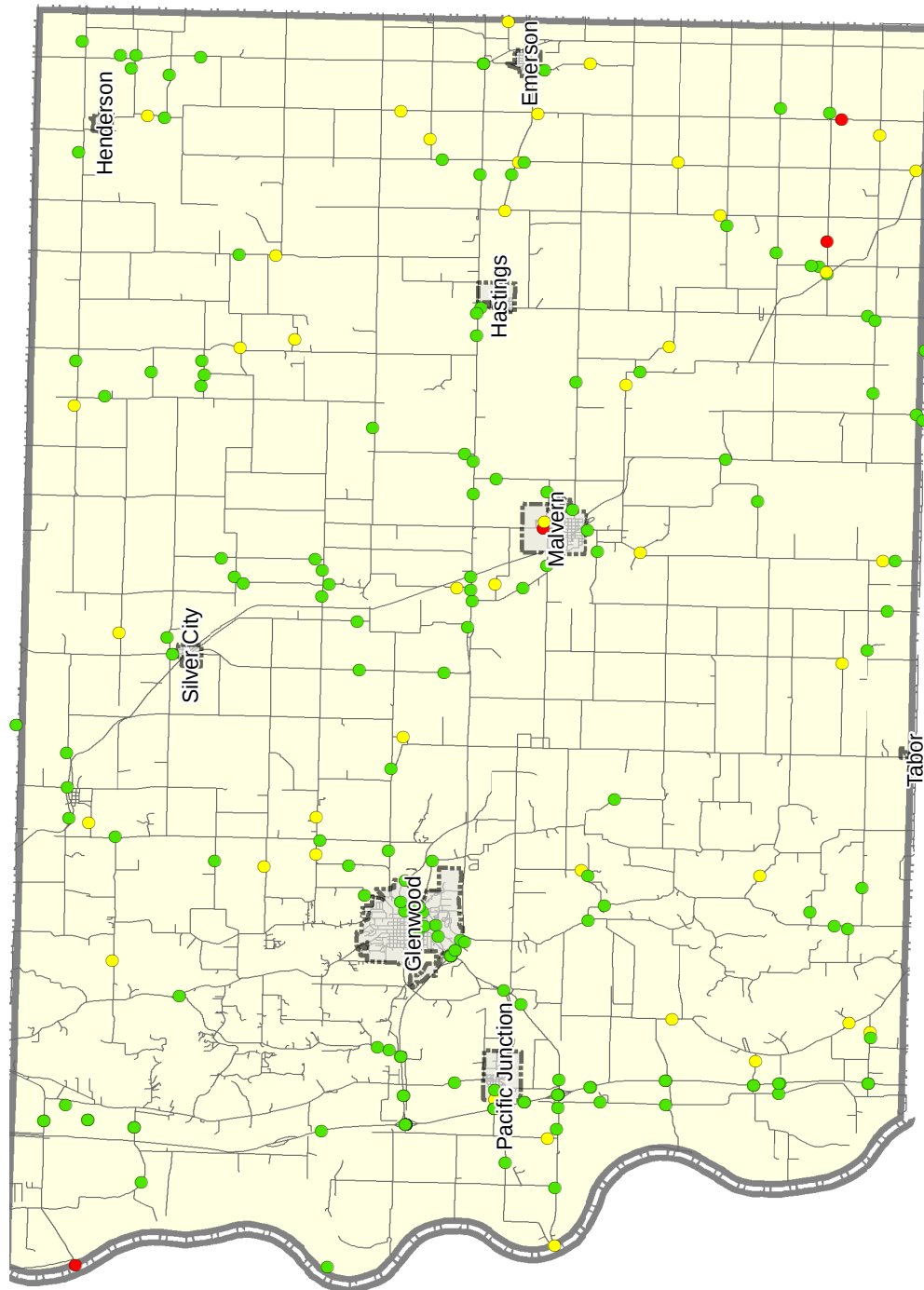
Table 13 **Insufficient Bridges in Mills County**

Status	Number of Bridges	% of Total
Structurally Deficient	41	19%
Functionally Obsolete	4	2%
Not Deficient	172	79%

Source: Iowa Department of Transportation (2015)

Map 6 Bridge Status in Mills County

Map 6



Legend

Bridge Conditions

- Not Deficient
- Structurally Deficient
- Functionally Obsolete





Railroad

Mills County is currently served by two major railroads both owned by Burlington Northern and Santa Fe (BNSF). One of these major lines runs north-south along the I-29 corridor and the other runs east-west generally following the US Highway 34. These lines connect at a junction on the southwest side of Pacific Junction.

In addition, Amtrak, the national rail operator for intercity passenger service, operates one long-distance train through Mills County, called the California Zephyr. It uses the east-west BNSF track and travels from Chicago to the San Francisco Bay Area, with the nearest Amtrak stations in Creston, IA and Omaha, NE.

Public Transit

Rural transit services are provided by the Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA). Transportation is available for all residents in Mills County as well as Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Montgomery, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby Counties. These services operate as an on-call service for a variety of needs including, but not limited to, medical appointments, shopping, work, and school.

SWITA also provides transportation to and from preschool or school for students who live in Glenwood, but are not served by the Glenwood School Bus System. This includes scheduled early dismissal days and weather related schedule changes. The cost is two dollars per ride per child.

Air Service

There is currently no airport located in Mills County. Eppley Airfield, located north of downtown Omaha, is the primary public air service that is used by Mills County residents. The airfield currently serves eight commercial carriers: Alaska Airlines, Allegiant Air, American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Frontier Airlines, Southwest Airlines, United Airlines, and US Airways. In addition to this major airfield, Council Bluffs, Red Oak Municipal and Shenandoah Municipal airfields are the closest non-commercial airports for Mills County residents.

Council Bluffs Airport

Council Bluffs Airport is a general aviation airport located on the eastern side of Council Bluffs. An operator provides fuel, maintenance, aircraft rental, chartered flights, and pilot training.



Regional Planning Affiliation 18 (RPA-18)

The Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) has designated 18 Regional Planning Affiliations (RPAs) that provide for regional transportation planning outside the urbanized areas. RPA-18 is comprised of Harrison, Mills, Shelby, and the non-urbanized portion of Pottawattamie County in Southwest Iowa. The Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) serves as the administrator for RPA-18 and provides professional and planning services for communities within the region.

The main activities of RPA-18 include the development and maintenance of the RPA's Long Range Transportation Plan, the Regional Transportation and Improvement Plan (TIP), and other Iowa DOT requirements. The RPA-18 Board has separate Policy and Technical Committees, comprised of representatives from each county (Harrison, Mills, Pottawattamie and Shelby), each city with a population greater than 5,000 (currently the cities of Glenwood and Harlan in Shelby County) and other key transportation stakeholders.

Long Range Transportation Plan 2035

The RPA-18 is comprised of a network of roads, trails, transit, barge and rail facilities that allow people and goods to move within and through the area. These systems provide the basis of a multi-modal transportation system to be built upon and expanded, as needed, to fulfill the vision of the RPA-18.

Identifying the needs of a multimodal transportation system over a long period of time is a required step in maintaining and expanding the transportation system to accommodate current and future needs. This report serves as a framework for addressing these needs and achieving a transportation system that is functional, safe and efficient.

One major product of the Long Range Transportation Plan is a list of projects considered a top priority across the four counties. Table 14 on the following page highlights the Primary and Secondary Highway System improvements identified as high priority projects for Mills County. The table also includes the time frame in which they would like it implemented, whether its currently funded through the Regional TIP, and the projected cost.



Table 14 Primary & Secondary Highway System Improvements: Mills County

Project	Type of Improvement	Time Frame	RTIP	Projected Cost
Primary Highway Systems				
US-59 - at US-34, 0.8 miles north of Emerson	Bridge deck overlay	1 to 5 Years	X	\$253,000
US-34: Missouri River N of Plattsmouth, NE (State Share)	Bridge Washing	1 to 5 Years	X	\$25,000
US-34: Missouri River to I-29 (State Share)	Pavement Rehab/ Erosion Control	1 to 5 Years	X	\$858,000
I-29: Rest Area N of US 34 (NB)	Rest Area Improvement	1 to 5 Years	X	\$3,150,000
Secondary Highway Systems				
Bunge Ave: From I-29 to Wabash	Overlay	1-2 years		TBD
190th Street: BNSF tracks west of Pacific Junction	Construct Overpass	1-2 years		\$7,700,000
Kidd Road	Pavement	1-2 years		--
In the City of Glenwood, RAILROAD AVE: Sewer Lift Station S 0.2 MI	Pavement Rehab/Widen	1 to 5 Years		\$297,000
In the City of Glenwood, S VINE ST: From Nuckolls Street to Alley	Pavement Rehab/ Subdrains	1 to 5 Years		\$731,000
H-20 - Section 06-72-42	PCC patching	1 to 5 Years		\$125,000
L-31 - Section 29-73-43	Edge drain	1 to 5 Years		\$100,000
Pacific Junction Railroad Crossing Grading - Section 30-72-43	Grading	1 to 5 Years		\$40,000
225th St: From 6th Street North to 221st Street	Grade and Pave	1 to 5 Years	X	\$600,000
Sivers Rd: From Fairview Drive to gravel portion of 240th Street	Grade and Pave	1 to 5 Years	X	\$500,000
L-35: From Glenwood City Limits to County Line	Pavement Rehab	1 to 5 Years	X	\$2,000,000
Sources: RPA-18 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan Mills County Engineer				



[section 3.2]

ENVISION

Utilities and infrastructure are necessary for any new growth in the County. By providing and maintaining quality utilities and infrastructure, Mills County can meet the needs of its residents, the business community, and those looking to develop. The Envision section of the planning process is the formal means for public participation in the Mills County Comprehensive Plan. To better understand the strengths and weaknesses of Mills County's utilities and infrastructure, we asked for community and stakeholder input to provide an assessment as well as new ideas.

Focus Group Meetings

Stakeholders in the County provided input on strengths and challenges surrounding utilities and infrastructure. The following comments were noted during the utilities and infrastructure focus group, but some comments from the natural resources session are included as well.

- Walkability around Glenwood elementary and middle schools is an obstacle; also a problem in rural communities – Department of Public Health completed a walkability study
- Electrical connectivity to areas prime for development is an obstacle; MidAmerican will extend the infrastructure once a major user commits to developing in the County
- Natural gas is a challenge; the County needs a larger user to acquire more capacity
- There is a want for rural water
- Cell and internet coverage and reliability are poor, especially in rural and eastern portions of the County; connection is not strong enough for telecommuting
- There have been water quality testing issues with nitrates and bacteria in rural areas and in some cities – Hastings is an example; free testing is offered by the Department of Public Health
- Water quality is as important as quantity
- The County landfill is becoming more of a problem; becoming an unnatural landform and could be high in mercury
- Make maintenance of roads equal across the County; some developments have paved roads whereas others have gravel

Big Ideas

- Complete streets policies for the County and all cities; add bike lanes and more walking areas
- Recertification of Missouri River levee



Town Hall Meeting

Though there was not a utilities and infrastructure station at the town hall meeting, attendees made a few comments related to the theme via questionnaire handouts, aerial maps, and land use maps.

- Need to support industrial development

SWOT Analysis

The following are the results of the SWOT analysis specific to utilities and infrastructure.

Strengths

- Transportation network

Weaknesses

- No rural water
- Gaps in infrastructure: not enough paved county roads, too many roads to maintain, no utility connection to developable areas
- Inadequate internet and cell coverage
- Poor walkability in areas and no complete streets policies

Opportunities

- Glenwood has adequate water supply for future growth both rural and incorporated
- Lane expansion of Highway 34

Threats

- Increasing cost of infrastructure with a stagnant tax base
- Inability to recertify Missouri River levee

Elected and Appointed Officials Meeting

The following are questions and results from the elected and appointed officials meeting related to utilities and infrastructure.

Which of the following infrastructure areas do you feel have deficiencies or opportunities for improvement?

- Telecommunications [37%]
- Water [29%]
- Transportation [12%]
- Electrical [12%]
- Sanitary Sewer [4%]
- Storm Drainage [4%]
- Gas [3%]
- Other participant comments:
 - Water service besides a well is desirable



- Electricity is a real need; currently unable to get large amounts of power to US Highway 34

Which would you say should be the biggest priority related to infrastructure and utilities?

- A. Telecommunications [34%]
- Conditions and Maintenance of Roads [24%]
- Water Extensions [16%]
- Availability of Quality Water [16%]
- Complete Streets Policies for County and Communities [6%]
- Sanitary Sewer Extensions [4%]
- Safe Walkability [1%]



[section 3.3]

ACHIEVE

The Achieve section provides a summary of previous sections and starts to identify priorities for future growth and development. Extensions of utilities and infrastructure are essential for community growth and will shape the type and location of future development. Unlike many single jurisdictions, utilities for County-wide areas are provided by a combination of private and public vendors that have varying degrees of service and capacity. For instance, telecommunication services in Mills County are offered by 10+ different providers and deficiencies in both access and speed are noted across the entire County. Mills County must also build and maintain a safe and efficient transportation network of varying functional classifications spanning thousands of miles. In short, there are a variety of utility customers with different needs that must be accommodated across a broad geographic area.

The buildup and maintenance of quality and reliable infrastructure is an ongoing task of Mills County, and while the road transportation network of the County has generally been cited as a strength, there are several areas that will require evaluation and investment to ensure future growth and development opportunities. Utility connectivity, specifically electrical and gas, to areas identified for commercial and industrial development is an issue that has been addressed numerous times throughout this planning process. Utility providers are not inclined to extend infrastructure connection or capacity to potentially developable areas without a firm commitment of development. Cellular and internet coverage and reliability have also been noted as being inadequate, especially in the more eastern and rural areas of the County. This is problematic as telecommuting has become a more accepted practice in the modern workforce. During a survey of elected and appointed officials, telecommunications was selected as the biggest priority regarding County utilities and infrastructure, and it was also identified as the area with the greatest deficiencies or opportunities for improvement.

Water quality and accessibility have also been issues addressed during the comprehensive plan update. Six municipal water utilities provide water to the seven incorporated cities of Mills County. The bulk of water in the unincorporated County is obtained via groundwater wells. Rural water service is a strong desire among many residents and stakeholders, which is largely driven by quality testing issues related to high levels of nitrates and bacteria.

Transportation Plan

Transportation Relationships to Land Uses

The Future Transportation Plan is the collective result of the intentions and predictions of how Mills County will develop areas for county investment. The Future Land Use is the basis for developing the future transportation network in Mills County. The success and viability of development in Mills County is dependent on the connectivity of land uses both in the County and on a regional basis.



Commercial

Commercial uses and activities are most sensitive to accessibility since their survival often depends upon the ease with which potential customers can identify and access their location. The availability of convenient parking is also a concern and demand of potential customers. Therefore, commercial land uses are generally located along transportation corridors, key intersections, and clustered within a business district. Clustering commercial uses is an advantage, allowing for traffic control, shared parking, and pedestrian connectivity.

Residential

Residential uses are very sensitive to traffic patterns. Commercial and industrial traffic should not travel through residential areas in order to access their destination. In residential areas, speeds are slower, and roads are typically narrower to encourage safer driving habits. Pedestrian safety is a priority when planning transportation routes through residential areas.

Industrial

Industrial uses are highly dependent on transportation access. While visibility is not as critical for an industrial business, such uses often need access to more specialized transportation facilities such as railroad lines, highways, and reinforced roadways built for heavy truck traffic. Surrounding land uses must not be adversely affected by the heavy-duty and intense traffic circulation of service and delivery vehicles.

Public

Public uses, such as local and County offices and parks, also require efficient and clear access routes. The public should be able to locate and utilize public services and facilities without difficulty. Facilities such as schools, community centers, and regional parks may generate significant traffic loads, especially during events, and need to be located near arterial streets. Trail and pedestrian accessibility to these public uses is also very important. Trails should be a consideration and designated to connect such uses to residential areas.

Future Street Classifications

Streets are classified based upon the function they serve. Roads in Mills County fall under the following classifications: Interstate, Other Principal Arterial, Minor Arterial, Major Collector, and Minor Collector. Utilizing street classifications allows a community to examine its transportation system and identify weaknesses. Using a hierarchical classification system, street facilities and improvements can be planned to address existing and future transportation needs as well as influence land use patterns.



[section 3.4]

IMPLEMENT

Considering the findings of the previous sections, the Implement section offers guidance on how to manage future growth and development of the County. Here we outline goals, policies, and action steps for utilities and infrastructure. Policies and action steps give more detail and describe the activities needed to achieve the desired goals of the County. Policies are part of the value system linking goals with action steps, and they define the broader goals with more detailed descriptions. The adopted action steps synthesize the information from the existing profile of the County and public input from the visioning component of the Comprehensive Plan. Action steps are a means to achieve the goals established by the community and they imply a clear commitment to Mills County's future development.

Goal:

Infrastructure investments shall be implemented in a cost-effective manner that simultaneously manages growth consistent to the Mills County Comprehensive Plan and provides quality service to residents.

Policies:

- Coordinate utility improvements and extensions with communities.
- Maintain transportation infrastructure that enhances the safe and efficient movement of people, goods, and services.
- Plan, program and implement cost effective, safe and efficient infrastructure and public facilities system within the rural area.
- Improve water quality and quantity throughout the County.

Action Items:

- Create 5-year CIP to manage capital expenses efficiently while coordinating and implementing infrastructure projects to be completed at the same time.
- Encourage new development adjacent to existing development through policies on infrastructure extensions and subdivision regulations.
- Evaluate innovative engineering for efficient infrastructure opportunities for new development.
- Work with local communities, state and federal agencies, and rural water districts to identify and implement a prioritized improvement plan to provide a quality water system for all residents.
- Explore the potential to serve portions of the County with potable water with a rural water district.

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Chapter 4

Environmental Resources & Recreation

- 4.1 Profile
- 4.2 Envision
- 4.3 Achieve
- 4.4 Implement

#



4 Environmental Resources & Recreation

A basic principle of this land use plan for the Mills County planning jurisdiction is the need to establish a balance between environmental values and reasonable development demands. A corollary to this principle is matching development policy to environmental attributes, placing a value on conserving the region's most important natural resources and assets. This section identifies these vital assets. Overlaying these resource maps establishes specific development policy districts that will ultimately guide land use decisions and project design.

[section 4.1]

PROFILE

Mills County is in a part of Iowa covered by deep loess, generally sloping to the southwest and west. The landscape is characterized mainly by flood plains and terraces along rivers, steep bluffs, and valley slopes and ridges in the uplands. Elevation ranges from about 1,350 feet above sea level on the steep hills northwest of Glenwood to 950 feet in an area in the southwestern corner of the County along the Missouri River.

Surface water of the County is in the Missouri River watershed. Silver Creek runs southward and discharges into the West Nishnabotna River, which flows south-westerly into the Missouri River. Keg Creek and Waubonsie Creek collect water from the uplands in the western areas of the County. Surface water is also collected by Indian Creek, Farm Creek, Mud Creek, Mule Creek, Pony Creek, Little Creek, and Waubonsie Creek.

Loess Hills

The Loess Hills are one of Iowa's top significant natural regions and deemed so for the fact that this feature of concentrated loess is known to exist in only two places in the entire world: western Iowa and Shaanxi, China, although they no longer retain their original characteristic due to human and natural activities. The Loess Hills rise 200 feet above the flat plains forming a narrow band running north-south 200 miles along the Missouri River. The steep angles and sharp bluffs on the western side of the Loess Hills are in sharp contrast to the flat rectangular cropfields within the floodplains of the of the Missouri River.



Loess (pronounced “luss”), is German for loose or crumbly in reference to the consistency of the soil which is made up of gritty, lightweight, porous material composed of tightly packed grains of quartz, feldspar, mica, and other minerals. Loess is the source of most of the rich agricultural soils throughout the U.S. and around the world. However, the Loess Hills of Mills County and throughout western Iowa are unusual due to the extreme thickness of the loess layers and the intricately carved terrain.

Ecoregions

Ecoregions denote areas of general similarity in ecosystems and in the type, quality, and quantity of environmental resources. An ecoregion is identified through patterns and composition of both biological and physical characteristics, including geology, physiography, vegetation, climate, soils, land use, wildlife, and hydrology.

The interactions and relative importance of each of these components varies between ecoregions, creating a unique ecosystem within each region. See Map 7 for the ecoregions represented in Mills County.

Ecoregion 47d : Missouri Alluvial Plain

The Missouri Alluvial Plain is part of the large, wide, flat alluvial plain found in five neighboring states. Surrounded by bluffs capped with deep loess, the historic island-studded meandering river channel has been stabilized and narrowed to manage discharge and to promote navigation and agriculture. The deep silty and clayey alluvial soils support extensive cropland agriculture. Most of the oak-hickory forest, floodplain forest, and tallgrass prairie have been removed due to conversion to cropland, although some wetlands are being restored.

Ecoregion 47e : Steeply Rolling Loess Prairies

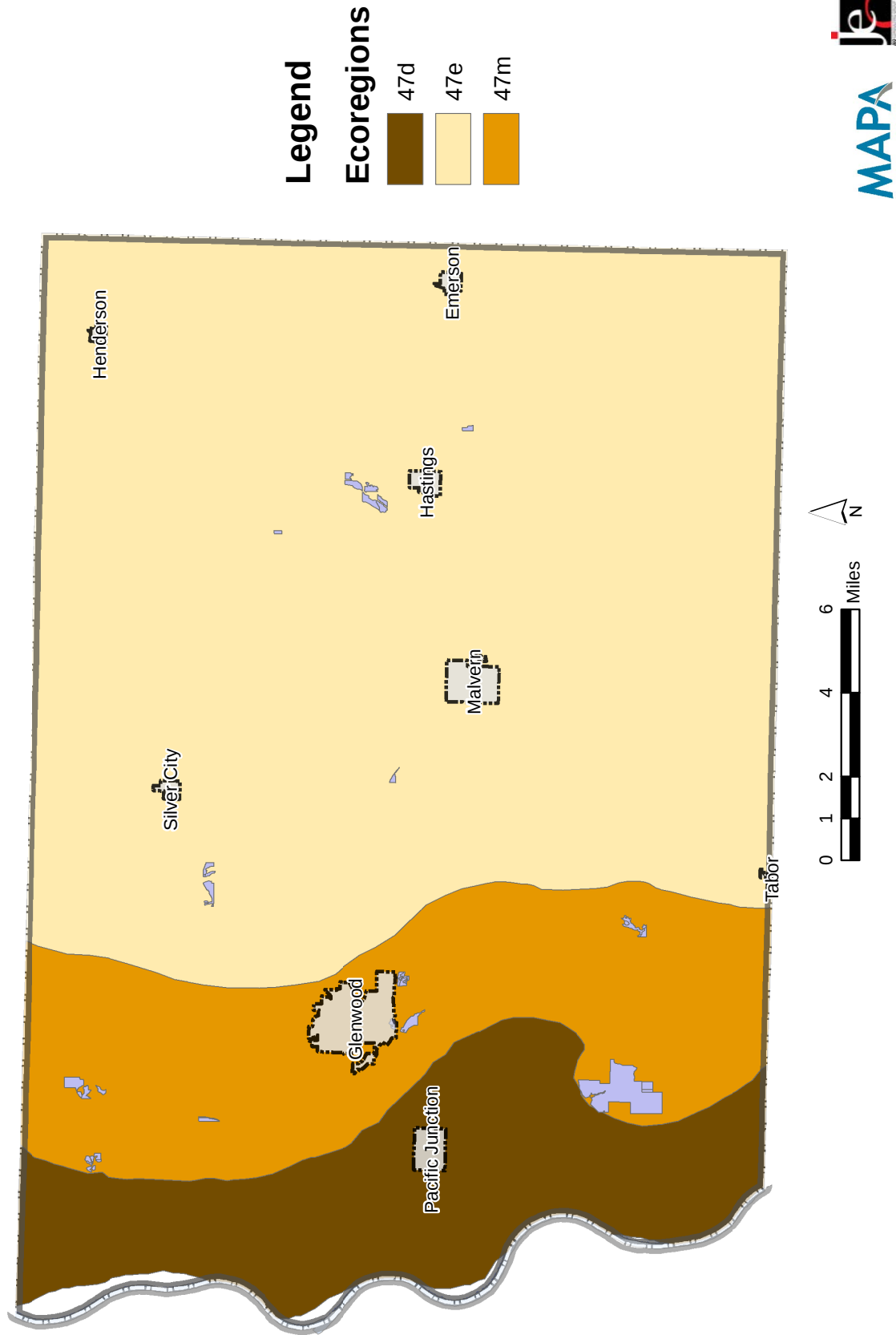
Rolling hills with thick loess deposits and underlying glacial till distinguish the Steeply Rolling Loess Prairies ecoregion from the flat Missouri Alluvial Plain to the west. Land clearing has promoted vast sheet erosion and gulying and consequent re-deposition of loess in the valley bottoms. Potential natural vegetation is tallgrass prairie with woodland in narrow valleys and stream reaches. Most of the region is prime farmland and cropland is extensive.

Ecoregion 47m : Western Loess Hills

The Western Loess Hills ecoregion extends south from Iowa and covers only a small area in northwestern Missouri. The deep loess-dominated hills have greater relief and a higher drainage density than the Steeply Rolling Loess Prairies to the east. The more irregular topography and erosive, silty soils contributed to a mixed land use with less cropland and more pasture and woodland than neighboring regions. The flora of this region is mixed, with shortgrass and mixed-grass prairie and rare xeric species on south and west-facing slopes, and bur-oak woodland and tallgrass prairie on cooler, moister slopes.



Map 7 **Ecoregions of Mills County**





Agricultural Profile

An agricultural profile enables a county to understand the influence of agriculture on its economy. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture tracks statistics every five years in the period between each decennial census and provided much of the data used to perform the following analysis.

Mills County's rich soil and flat landscape have provided the right environment for Mills County to become a highly productive agricultural economy. And while the County has historically been farmland, the current downward trend of land dedicated to farming activity indicates a shift towards higher yields on less farm land planted. Some of this new non-agricultural activity can be attributed to an increased interest in rural residential developments.

Figure 7 shows the trends of Mills County farmland. An agricultural census is created every five years which allows selected characteristics from 2012 to be compared with the previous four agricultural census years. In 1992, 77.0% of Mills County was identified as potential cropland compared to just 64.6% in the 2012 census. This means more land is being set aside for other purposes from conservation to rural residential development. With that said, the share of land identified as cropland harvested has continued to increase from 87.0% in 1992 to 95.9% in 2012.

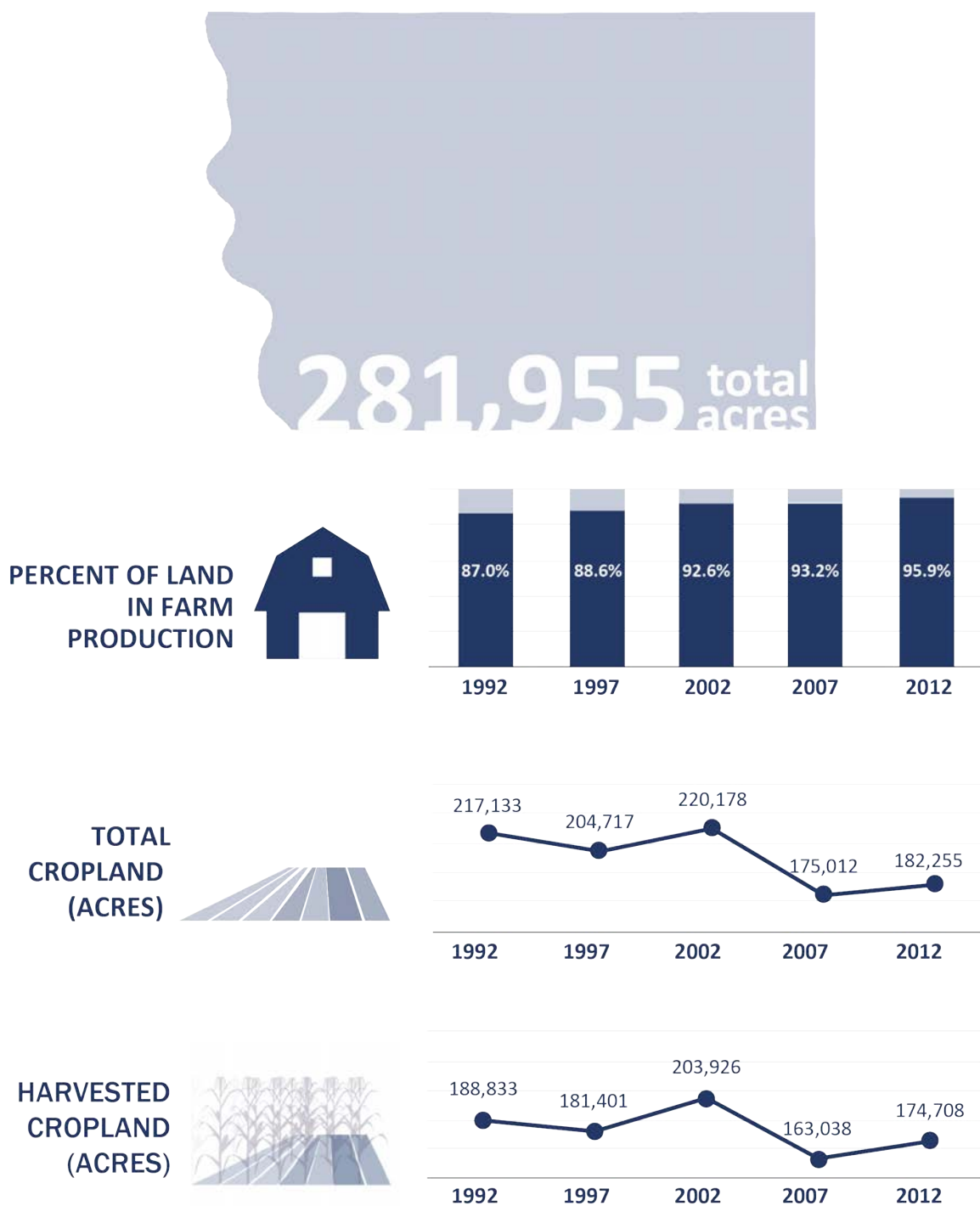
Cropland Trends

The growth of the ethanol industry and international demand for commodities like soybeans and corn has helped bring about a resurgence of the agriculture economy within the past decade.

Mills County has seen its growth concentrated in these markets with increased acreage predominantly dedicated to corn for grain production. Corn bushel harvests hit an all time high of 11.4 million bushels in 2007 and then slightly declined 2.7% in 2012 to 11.1 million bushels. Soybeans, on the other hand, have seen a 21% decline in bushel yields from 3.8 million bushels in 1992 to 2.9 million bushels 2012. As referenced earlier, agricultural censuses alternate collecting data in even and odd years that reflect the reports given as farmers rotate between soybeans and corn (See Figure 8 on page 77).



Figure 7 **Agricultural Trends**



Source: USDA Agricultural Census (1992, 1997, 2002, 2012)



Figure 8 Cropland Trends

	1997	2002	Change '97 - '02	2007	Change '02 - '07	2012	Change '07 - '12	Change '97-'12	
CORN FOR GRAIN									
Farms	348	312	-10.3%	277	-11.2%	266	-4.0%	-23.6%	▼
Acres	87,047	101,144	16.2%	81,644	-19.3%	89,569	9.7%	2.9%	▲
Bushels	11,355,107	11,020,630	-3.0%	11,447,572	3.9%	11,136,995	-2.7%	-1.9%	▼
CORN FOR SILAGE									
Farms	10	13	30.0%	2	-84.6%	4	100.0%	-60.0%	▼
Acres	267	302	13.1%	(D)	-	46	-	-82.8%	▼
Tons	4,120	2,680	-35.0%	(D)	-	998	-	-75.8%	▼
SOYBEANS FOR BEANS									
Farms	369	31	-91.6%	260	738.7%	276	6.2%	-25.2%	▼
Acres	89,756	96,158	7.1%	77,070	-19.9%	81,270	5.4%	-9.5%	▼
Bushels	3,761,142	3,646,368	-3.1%	3,594,963	-1.4%	2,971,838	-17.3%	-21.0%	▼
FORAGE									
Farms	192	173	-9.9%	143	-17.3%	127	-11.2%	-33.9%	▼
Acres	5,470	5,960	9.0%	4,739	-20.5%	3,669	-22.6%	-32.9%	▼
Bushels	15,654	13,528	-13.6%	12,216	-9.7%	9,467	-22.5%	-39.5%	▼
WHEAT FOR GRAIN									
Farms	14	6	-57.1%	6	0.0%	3	-50.0%	-78.6%	▼
Acres	588	266	-54.8%	242	-9.0%	44	-81.8%	-92.5%	▼
Bushels	19,193	13,843	-27.9%	10,566	-23.7%	1,713	-83.8%	-91.1%	▼

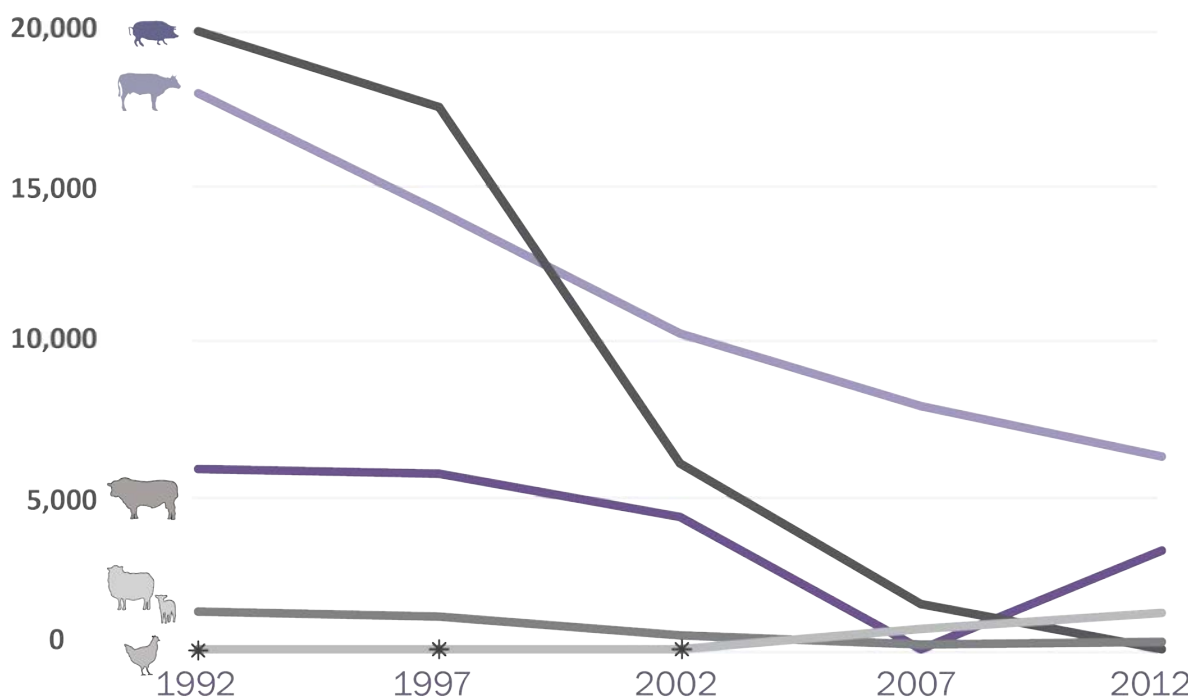
Source: USDA Agricultural Census (1992, 1997, 2002, 2012)



Livestock Trends

Figure 9 indicates that cattle and calves are the primary livestock animals raised in Mills County as of the 2012 Census of Agriculture. However, inventory has sharply declined by 56% from the most recent high of 14,175 head in 1997. All other reported livestock (milk cows, sheep, and chickens) do not represent a significant inventory in the County. Hog inventory peaked in 1992. With 17,545 animals in 1997 Mills County dropped nearly 66% in 2002 to 6,013 head, 76% in 2007 to 1,461, and no inventory was reported in 2012.

Figure 9 Livestock Trends: Head of Livestock



2012 INVENTORIES		
1	CATTLE / CALVES	6,236 heads
2	BEEF COWS	3,192 heads
3	CHICKENS (BROILERS/MEAT TYPE)	1,175 heads
4	SHEEP/LAMB	240 heads
5	HOGS/PIGS	*

* No inventory calculated during study period.

Source: 1997-2012 Censuses of Agriculture

Source: USDA Agricultural Census (1992, 1997, 2002, 2012)



Recreational Sites

Mills County is full of great recreational parks, both county and state. Wildlife management areas (WMA) also provide additional recreational opportunities. Only basic public use facilities such as parking lots and boat ramps are provided by WMA's. Portions of these areas may be designated as refuge and restrictions are placed on certain uses that may interfere with management goals and objectives.

Below is a list of parks and WMAs in Mills County:

- Folsom WMA is located in the northwest part of the County along the westside of 195th Street (L31). The Department of Natural Resources manages the 100-acre area that offers hunting of waterfowl.
- Glenwood Archaeological State Preserve & Foothills Park, located directly south of Highway 34 on Levi Road, covers 906 acres and has 107 recorded archaeological sites. The park offers paved trails for running, hiking, biking and wildlife observation although patrons must not impair the integrity of the site.
- Keg Lake WMA is located in the southwest part of the County along the eastside of 195th Street (L31). The Department of Natural Resources manages the 104-acre area that offers hunting of waterfowl.
- Nettleman Island WMA is a wildlife refuge located southwest of Pacific Junction in the Missouri River floodplain. The area covers 1,200 acres and offers hunting.
- Willow Slough is located in the northeast part to the County along the West Nishnabotna River and east of 370th Street (County Road M16). The Department of Natural Resources manages the area. The area is 597 acres consisting of 1/3 marsh and 2/3 prairie. Timber, waterfowl, pheasant, rabbits, squirrels, and deer flourish in this area.
- Indian Creek Greenbelt Area is a 17-acre site located a half mile south of Emerson along Indian Creek. The area serves as a greenbelt to Indian Creek and as an outdoor classroom to students.
- Kenny Wood is a 20-acre woodland located at the intersection of Jagger Road and 255th Street. The land was donated to the Mills County Conservation board in 2012 and provides activities like mushroom hunting, hiking, and nature and bird watching.
- Mile Hill Lake/Scenic Overlook is located directly south of Highway 34 and west of Glenwood. The park has 39 acres of wildlife area, which offers fishing, hunting, interpretative signs, and an observation area overlooking a 10-acre pond. A boat launch and dock are also available.
- Pony Creek Park is located in the northwest part of the County, two miles north of Highway 34 on Deacon Road. The 53-acre park offers camping, hiking, picnicking, and fishing next to an 82-acre pond that allows fishing, canoeing, and kayaking. A National Historic Landmark, the Davis Oriole Earthlodge site, is also located in the park.



- Ray Thomas Wildlife Refuge, a 90-acre site located in the northeast part of the County along the eastside of 350th Street (County Road L66) consists of 49 acres of bottomland timber, 23 acres of restored prairie and 12.5-acres of agricultural land. There is also a small pioneer cemetery adjacent to the mowed parking lot and informational kiosk.
- West Oak Forest is a 308-acre site located in the northwest part of the County along the eastside of 195th Street (County Road L31). West Oak Forest is a unique natural area that is encased in the Loess Hills, and is a great place for hiking, photography, bird watching, nature viewing, prairie enthusiasts, and nature lovers in general.
- Glenwood Lake Park is a 45-acre site located on the eastern edge of Glenwood. Glenwood Lake Park offers a variety of recreational amenities. It is home to a 750 seat amphitheater. In addition to multiple athletic facilities the park contains a playground and trails. Also located in the park is Mills County Historical Museum.
- The Nature Conservancy and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has purchased the historic Green Hill Farm/Ranch. Which is 506 acres and is located in the NE corner of Mills County. The land is located next to Folsom Point and is separated by 221st street. This large tract of lands primary focus will be conservation and habitat minded for many generations to come.

Figure 10 **Pony Creek Park, Entrance**





Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities

Trails accommodating bicycle and pedestrians have become a key indicator of a high quality of life. Below is a brief overview of the existing major trails within Mills County:

Wabash Trace Nature Trail

This former railroad runs across Mills County through Mineola, Silver City, Malvern, and Strahan. Its total length is 63 miles from Council Bluffs in the north to Blanchard on the Missouri border. The Wabash is mostly crushed limestone with some paved sections, and is open to bicycling, walking, and running/jogging. One of the most popular events in southwest Iowa, the Taco Ride, takes place on the Wabash from Council Bluffs to Mineola, when the weather and trail allow.

Mills County Conservation

Several parks in the County offer hiking trails open to the public during regular park hours.

Glenwood Archaeological State Preserve Trail

The Glenwood Archaeological State Preserve is located at the intersection of US Hwy 34 and Levi Road, just east of Glenwood. The Preserve is a low impact recreation area, meaning that no public activity can impair the integrity of the site. The site hosts 1.7 miles of multi-use trails ready for running, hiking, biking and wildlife observation. Aside from the archaeological sites within the property, one can also find forest, oak savanna, native prairie, restored prairie and agricultural grounds on the site.

West Nishnabotna River

The West Nishnabotna River runs north to south in the eastern part of the County and is currently being studied for water trail designation in Mills County. Ramps were added at Hutchings Avenue and Lambert Avenue in 2015, allowing canoe and kayak access.

Map 8 shows the existing trails and shared-use paths.

Proposed Trail Plan

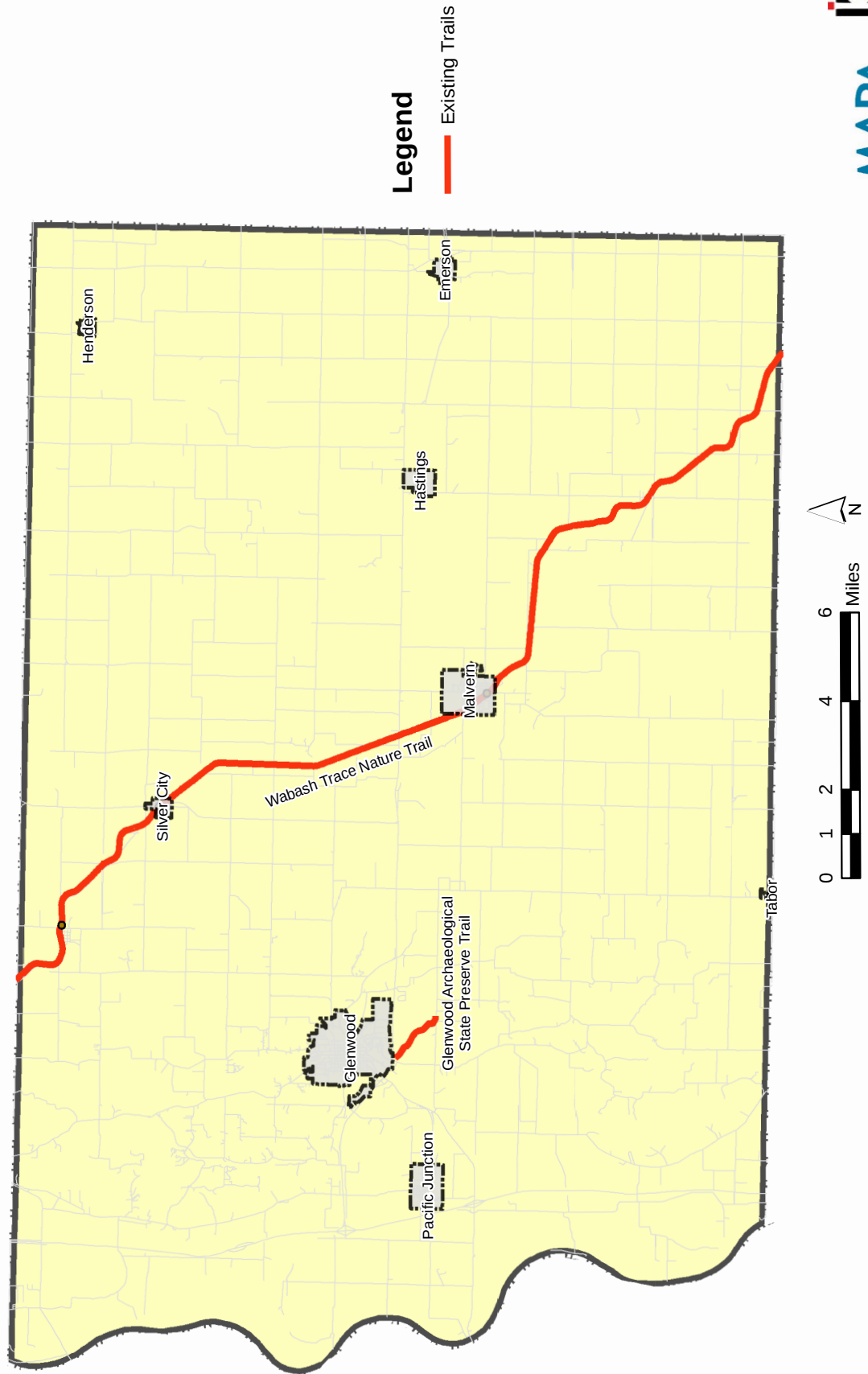
Planning for the Mills County trails began in 2012 as part of the County's Community Transformation Grant administered through Mills County Public Health. With help from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program, several public meetings were held throughout Mills County to determine preferred routes of multi-use (hard- and soft-surface) trails. A formal Board of Directors was formed in late 2014 comprised of Mills County residents and business owners to take public input and develop a unified, County-wide trail system plan.

See the proposed hard-surface trails and soft-surface trails on Map 9.

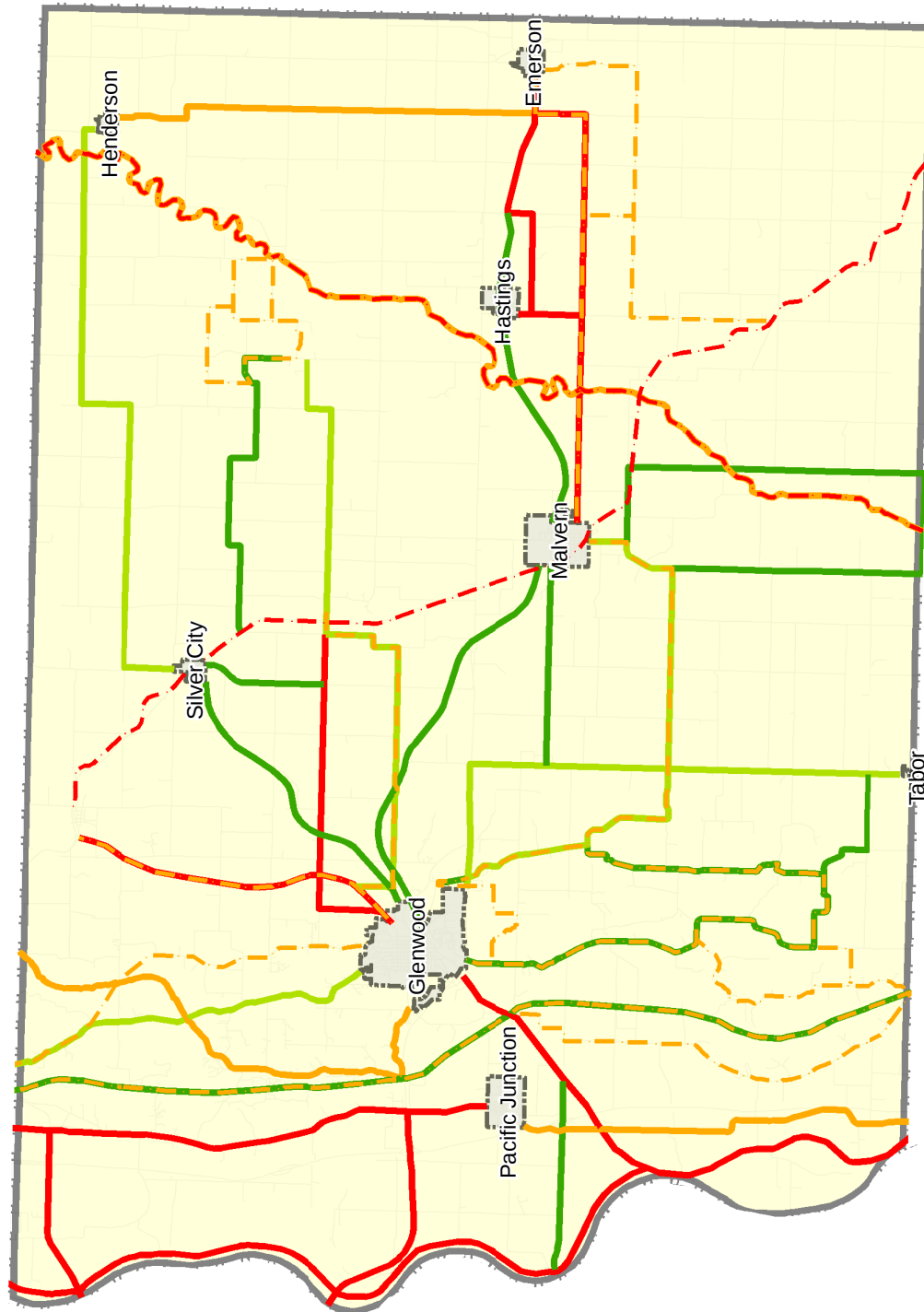


Existing Trails

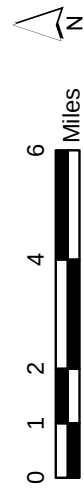
Map 8



Map 9 Proposed Trails- Hard-Surface & Soft-Surface



- Legend**
- SURFACE TYPE**
- Hard Surface**
- Priority 1 (Red solid line)
 - Priority 2 (Orange solid line)
 - Priority 3 (Light Green solid line)
 - Priority 4 (Dark Green solid line)
- Soft Surface**
- Priority 1 (Red dashed line)
 - Priority 2 (Orange dashed line)
 - Priority 3 (Light Green dashed line)
 - Priority 4 (Dark Green dashed line)





[section 4.2]

ENVISION

Quality recreational opportunities can help a community grow and prosper. To better understand the qualities of the County's recreational opportunities, resident and stakeholder input was sought to provide a baseline of conditions as well as new ideas.

Focus Group Meeting

Stakeholders in the County provided input on strengths and challenges regarding environmental resources and recreation. Below are the group's comments.

- Development should occur in areas that maximize investment
- Concern over possible incompatible uses (e.g. increasing residential development in rural areas)
- Acreage property owners do not always understand the needs/characteristics of neighboring rural farmers (e.g. hog confinement facilities and application of manure)
- Non-rural residents need a better understanding of what "rural" means
- Absentee landowners can be unaware of potential nuisances on their property
- Attendance at the County fair and other ag-based events is declining; the rural character of the County is receding as more rural land is converted to residential use
- Invasive trees and other plant life are creating a greater risk for wild fires
 - There is no burning in the Loess Hills and there is a fear of fire hazard in dry years
- The County needs to preserve "what we have"
- The Loess Hills is a unique feature of the County and should be protected
- "Where are the boundaries for Loess Hills preservation?"
 - Need to identify "Loess Hills Corridor"
- The federal government is focused on acquiring property in the floodplain; locals should have more control of what can be done in and around the floodplain
- The Missouri River levee is problematic; FEMA requires re-certification but no public funds are available to make necessary improvements

Big Ideas

- Identification of farm-to-market connections
- Address water run-off issues in the Waubonsie watershed



- Floating on the Nishnabotna River is an opportunity for tourism/economic development
- More public recreational ground in the Loess Hills (e.g. public hunting ground)
- An effort should be made to re-introduce native vegetation

Town Hall Meeting

At the town hall meeting in Malvern, attendees were invited to answer a brief questionnaire related to parks, trails, and recreational areas. Attendees could also write comments or suggestions on the questionnaire form or on large aerial and land use maps.

- The Loess Hills was largely identified as a natural resource that should be protected by the County. Floodplains, ponds, lakes, rivers, and creeks were also identified as natural resources to be protected
- Regarding the County's role in protecting open space, respondents preferred protection of natural resources and conservation of open land, followed by a framework for limited development in conservation areas
- Respondents agreed that working to enhance existing recreational opportunities (e.g. camp grounds for the Wabash Trace or cabins for Pony Creek) should be a County priority
- A majority of respondents agreed that trails are great and should be a County priority, but several felt that trails are a nice amenity but not a priority
- Other comments regarding parks, trails, and recreational areas:
 - County shooting complex
 - Connect existing trails to Glenwood
 - Fully utilize park land, expand park recreational activities, expand Pony Creek Park
 - Cabins and camp grounds on Wabash Trace
 - More bike and walking trails
 - Equestrian trails
 - Paved trails
 - Wabash Trace- priority one for hard surface

SWOT Analysis

The following are the results of the SWOT analysis specific to environmental resources and recreation. Many of the items cross one or more focus areas of the Comprehensive Plan.

Strengths

- Natural, recreational and scenic resources (e.g. Loess Hills, Wabash Trace)

Weaknesses

- No weaknesses noted for environmental resources and recreation



Opportunities

- Mills County Food Council – farm-to-market/farm-to-schools
- Building on historical, natural and recreational resources
- Mills County Trails Committee
- County museums in Emerson and Glenwood

Threats

- No threats noted for environmental resources and recreation

Elected and Appointed Officials Meeting

The following are questions and results from the elected and appointed officials meeting related to environmental resources and recreation.

Which would you say should be the biggest priority related to natural resources and recreation?

- Missouri River levee recertification [25%]
- County trails maintenance and expansion [18%]
- Expand and enhance recreational opportunities [15%]
- Preservation of agricultural land and identity [13%]
- Expand hunting and outdoor recreational opportunities [12%]
- Loess Hills Preservation [6%]
- Expand water and wastewater to reduce impact on watersheds [6%]
- Public recreational access in Loess Hills [3%]
- Issues related to erosion and runoff [1%]
- Reintroduction of native vegetation [1%]



[section 4.3]

ACHIEVE

The Achieve section provides a summary of previous sections and starts to identify priorities for future growth and development. Mills County benefits from an abundance of rich agricultural land and natural resources, most notably the Loess Hills. Participants in this comprehensive planning process have often pointed to the County's strong agricultural heritage and rural quality of life. Concerns have been addressed regarding the gradual conversion of agricultural land to uses that may be incompatible with the traditionally rural way of life. Mills County is in a unique position in that it is a predominantly rural county connected to an increasingly growing urban area. The cultural, natural and scenic attributes of Mills County no doubt make it attractive to those seeking a more rural lifestyle with access to urban amenities. Such demand will gradually change the landscape and character in some portions of the County, which will require careful planning and coordination among landowners and stakeholders to ensure a balance between need/demand for development and conserving the natural landforms and features that largely define the County.

Preserving the unique features of the Loess Hills and expanding on county-wide natural and recreational resources have also been notably referenced throughout the planning process. The County enjoys a variety of quality state and county recreational parks, and local trails – biking, walking, and others – offer cultural and social opportunities that supplement the County's character and quality of life. One prominent trail and recreational asset of the County is the Wabash Trace. The County should consider capitalizing on this asset to the greatest extent practicable to attract visitors to the scenic limestone trail, communities, and events the trail traverses. Other recreational parks in Mills County, such as Pony Creek Park, are local and regional assets that if expanded or enhanced could further benefit the County, its residents, and visitors.

Perhaps the most pressing issue of environmental resources in Mills County involves the Missouri River levee. The lack of FEMA accreditation as a result of the 2011 Missouri River flood has burdened County residents and property owners who were not obligated to purchase flood insurance prior to the flood. FEMA will not recertify the levee, even though it effectively held back floodwaters for several consecutive months. To date there are no federal or state financial resources available to assist the County with engineering studies or repairs necessary to obtain FEMA accreditation.



[section 4.4]

IMPLEMENT

Considering the findings of the previous sections, the Implement section offers guidance on how to manage future growth and development of the County. Here we outline the goals, policies, and action steps for Environmental Resources and Recreation. Policies and action steps give more detail and describe the activities needed to achieve the desired goals of the County. Policies are part of the value system linking goals with action steps, and they define the broader goals with more detailed descriptions. The adopted action steps synthesize the information from the existing profile of the County and public input from the visioning component of the Comprehensive Plan. Action steps are a means to achieve the goals established by the community and they imply a clear commitment to Mills County's future development.

Goal:

Protect, conserve, and utilize natural resources and critical environmental areas throughout Mills County.

Policies:

- Partner with municipalities and other entities to coordinate and help implement the Mills County Trails Plan.
- Utilize recreational, cultural, and special event venues or amenities throughout the County to further promote recreation and tourism-based economic development.
- Future developments should be constructed while maintaining natural topographical features, drainage ways, and tree cover.
- Future developments should be designed and constructed in a manner which minimize stormwater runoff erosion issues.
- Provide recreational opportunities and facilities for all age ranges. This includes review of existing facilities and programming, as well as developing new opportunities.

Action Items:

- Enforce floodplain zoning district to protect sensitive and prioritized lands within the Mills County zoning jurisdiction.
- Discourage development in the floodplain through zoning regulations and enforcement.
- Amend Subdivision Regulations to minimize grading and erosion where possible to protect the unique and valued topography as well as drainage patterns.
- Work with IHSEM and FEMA for updated mapping of local rivers and streams.
- Recertify Missouri River levee system to protect property.



- Expand and enhance recreational opportunities including: water trails, RV parks, hunting, and more.
- Support county-wide trails maintenance and expansion.
- Implement the West Nishnabotna Watershed project.



Chapter 5

Housing

- 5.1 Profile
- 5.2 Envision
- 5.3 Achieve
- 5.4 Implement

#



Housing 5

PROFILE

As part of the growing Omaha metropolitan area, there is a great opportunity to grow Mills County's housing market through expanded variety and price points to meet the needs of its current and potential residents. Families with young children have been one of the fastest growing groups of people to move to the County, which requires expanding housing options. There is also a need for housing to accommodate the aging population groups like the Baby Boomer population. This section discusses past and present housing figures for Mills County to help identify future housing needs through an analysis of household characteristics, housing types, and housing values within the County.



[section 5.1]

Housing Stock Characteristics

Depicted in Figure 11, the American Community Survey estimates identify nearly a third of Mills County owner occupied housing has been built since 1990. The next third was built between 1970 and 1990 and the last third was built prior to 1960. Rental housing, on the other hand, has only seen minimal growth since 1990 (15.8% of housing units) with a majority of renter occupied housing units being built in the 1960s through 1970s (42.7% of housing units). Older homes typically have greater maintenance issues and are less energy efficient than newer homes.

Figure 11 Mills County Year Structure Built

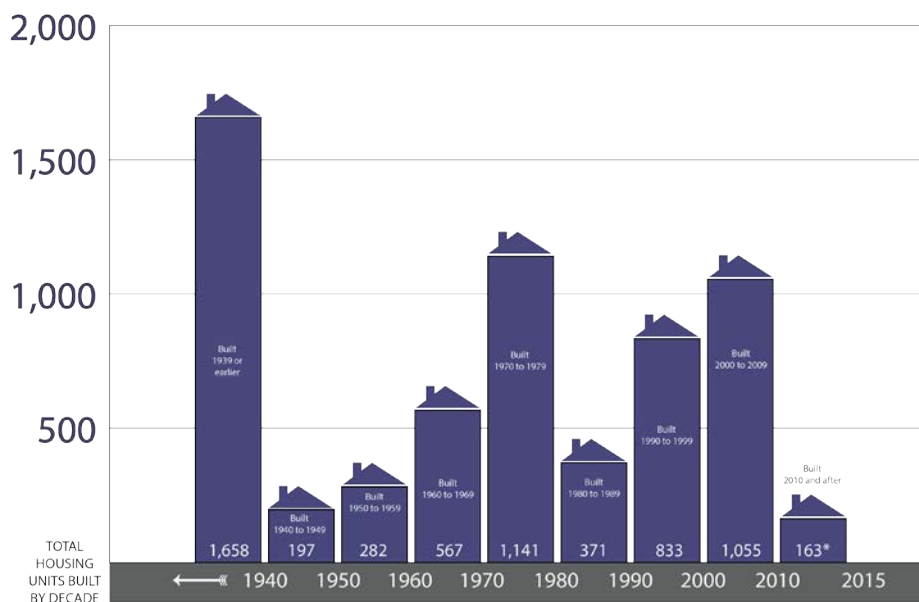


Table 15 on the following page takes a closer look at housing trends for Mills County from 1990 through 2014. Most notably, the average household size has steadily decreased over the past 24 years. This can be explained as family households with children under 18 have dropped from 37.6% of the overall household total in 1990 to 31.1% in 2014. Furthermore, the share of family households slightly declined along with the average family household size, from 3.09 in 1990 (Census) to 3.0 in 2014 (ACS). This indicates the household growth between 1990 and 2014 was likely made up of families with fewer children and couples without children.



Table 15 Housing Trends by Households (1990-2014)

Households	1990	2000	2014
County Population	13,202	14,547	15,059
Total Households	4,693	5,324	5,605
Persons in Households	12,358	13,847	14,451
Persons per Households	2.63	2.60	2.58
Family Households	3,513	3,938	4,093
Family Household Percentage	74.9%	74.0%	73.0%
Family Average Size	3.09	3.04	3.00
Family with own children under 18	1,764	1,852	1,743
Married with own children under 18	1,443	1,419	1,261

Source: US Census (1990, 2000)
American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014)

Table 16 continues this analysis by looking at the change in housing type from 1990 to 2014. Steady growth in single-family housing units has helped it retain its rank as the largest housing type. During this time period, single-family units held 78.3% of the housing in 1990, 76.8% in 2000 and 77.6% in 2014. Multifamily housing units declined over this period with nearly 9.6% in 1990 and only 5.1% in 2014. Mobile home units also saw a dramatic decline from 11.4% of the housing share in 1990 to 4.6% in 2010.

The rate of homeownership steadily increased over this period from 74.8% to 83.0%. Much of this can be attributed to the housing boom experienced in the late 1990s up to the Great Recession in 2009. Favorable interest rates and lending practices provided the opportunity to expand the single-family housing market to a broader demographic.

Table 16 **Housing Trends by Type (1990-2014)**

Households	1990	2000	2014
Total Housing Units	5,004	5,671	6,107
Single-family	3,920	4,360	4,739
Duplex/Multiple Family	478	426	314
Mobile Home	568	528	286
Boats, RV, Van, etc.	38	10	9
Occupied Housing Units	4,665	5,324	5,348
Owner-occupied Units	3,488	4,235	4,438
Renter-occupied Units	1,177	1,089	910
Vacant Housing Units	339	347	759
Owner-occupied vacancy rate	1.1%	2.3%	2.5%
Renter-occupied vacancy rate	5.8%	5.1%	13.3%

Source: US Census (1990, 2000)
American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014)

Figure 12 exhibits the value of owner-occupied units in all of Mills County (2014). Approximately 49.4% of the housing units were valued at less than \$150,000, and the overall median home value of the housing units was \$151,700. A traditional 30-year mortgage with 20% down and 4.0% interest rate would calculate a mortgage of \$580, plus approximately \$350 for property taxes. Assuming housing costs account for 30% of a homeowner's income, homeownership of a \$151,700 home would require a monthly income of \$3,100 or an annual income of \$37,200.



Figure 12 Value of Owner Occupied Units

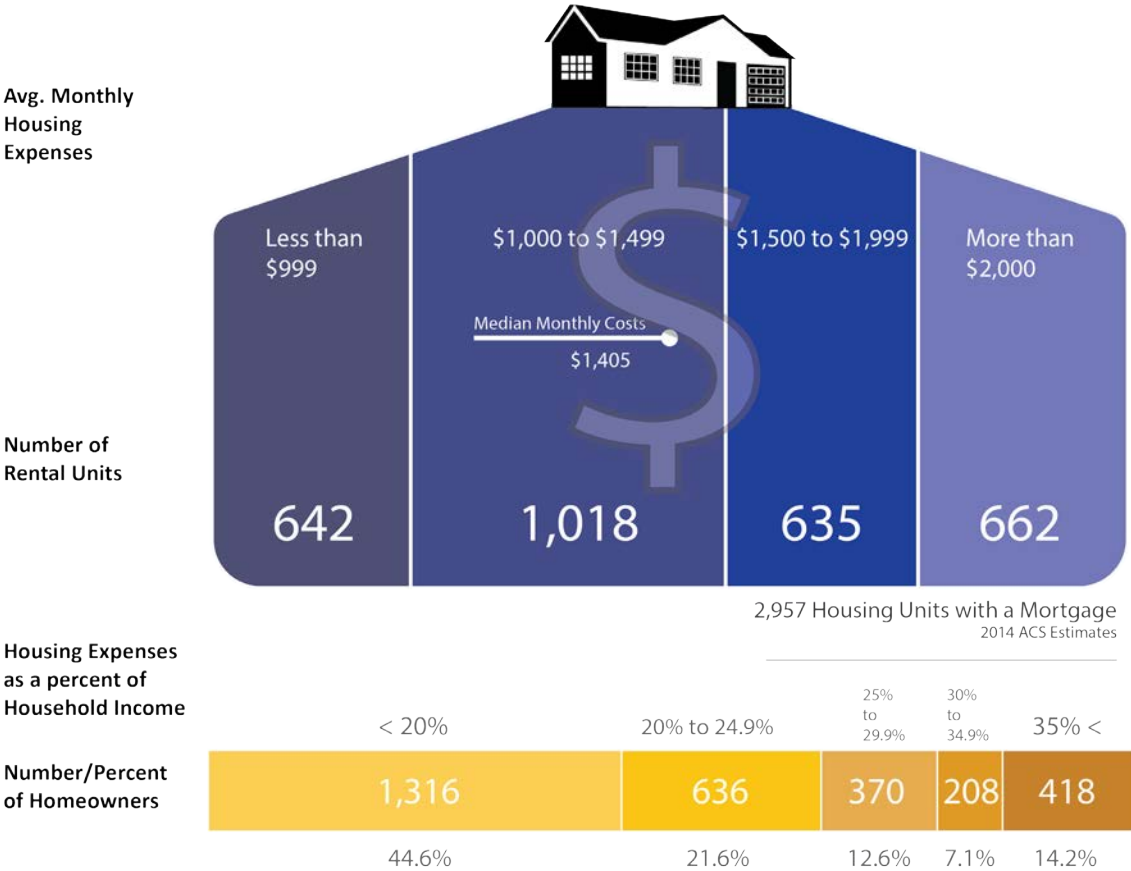


Source: American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014)



Figure 13 below illustrates a breakdown of the monthly cost of home ownership in Mills County for households paying a mortgage. These expenses include cost of the mortgage, taxes, insurance and utilities. Nearly 22% of owner-occupied households pay less than \$1,000 a month in housing expenses while just over one third pay between \$1,000 and \$1,500. The remaining 44% pay over \$1,500 a month. The bar with varying shades of yellow breaks down the cost burden to these homeowners. Of important note, nearly 45% of homeowners pay less than 20% of their income towards housing expenses while only 21.3% of households are paying at least 30% of their income towards housing expenses which is classified as a “cost burden”.

Figure 13 Gross Monthly Expenses: Owner Occupied (ACS 2014)



Source: American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014)



To help make a comparison, Table 17 below identifies the median home value, total housing units, and percent of cost burden households for counties across the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area. Mills County is third among the median home values behind Washington County and Sarpy County, but the lowest for cost burden among its peer counties.

Table 17 **County Comparison: Owner- Occupied Costs (ACS 2014)**

Place	Median Home Value	Total Units	Cost Burden
Mills County	\$151,700	4,438	21.3%
Pottawattamie County	\$124,500	25,658	26.1%
Washington County	\$173,500	6,217	27.6%
Cass County	\$148,300	7,849	26.8%
Douglas County	\$143,300	127,777	26.6%
Sarpy County	\$162,100	42,508	22.0%
State of Iowa	\$126,300	1,348,151	22.5%

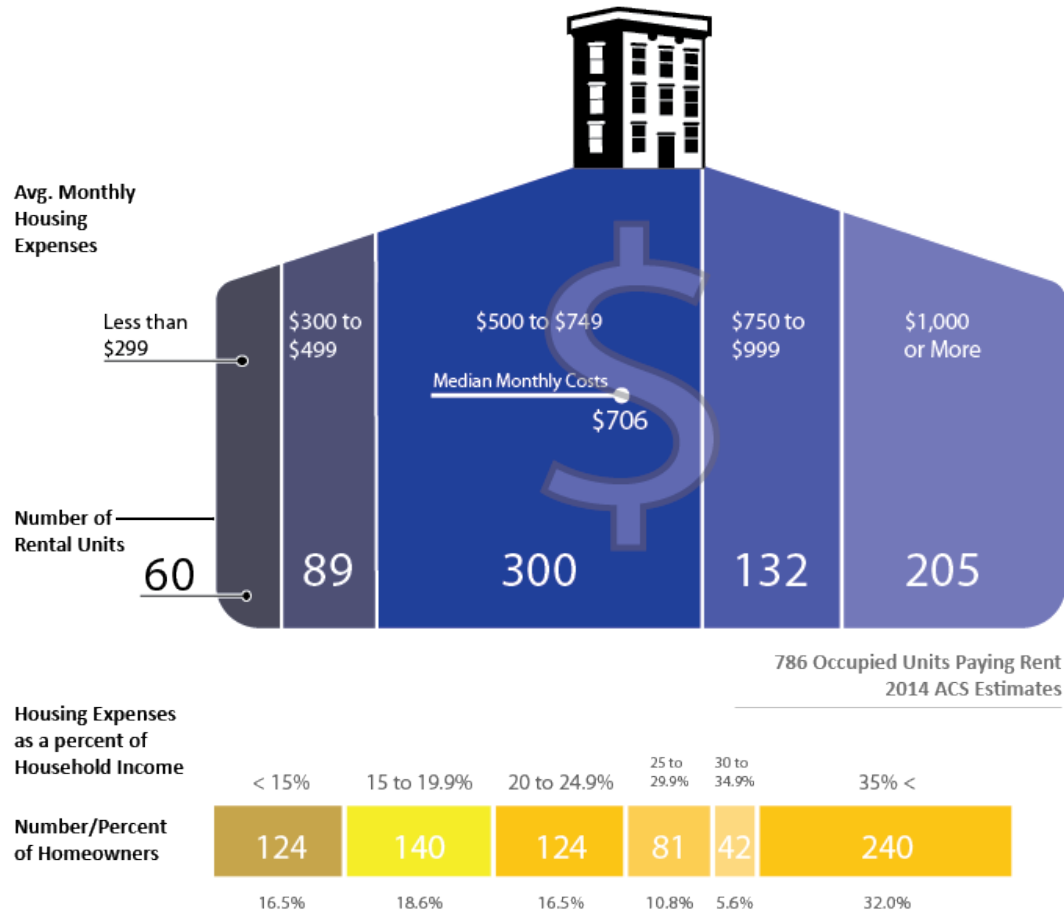
Source: American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014)

Figure 14 on the following page breaks down the monthly cost of renter households in Mills County. These expenses include cost of the monthly rent, insurance and utilities. Nearly 19% of renter households pay less than \$500 a month in housing expenses while over 38% pay between \$500 and \$750. The remaining renters pay over between \$750 and \$1,000 (16.7%) and more than \$1,000 a month in housing expenses (26.1%). Again, the bar with varying shades of yellow breaks down the cost burden to these renter households. Nearly 35.1% of renters pay less than 20% of their income towards housing expenses while 37.6% of households are paying at least 30% of their income towards housing expenses which is classified as a “cost burden”.

Table 18 on the following page provides the same metro County comparison as was done for owner-occupied housing. Mills County is again tied for third with Pottawattamie County for highest median renter costs behind Douglas County and Sarpy County. Renters with a cost burden, or paying more than 30% of their income towards rental housing expenses, is the second lowest among its peer counties.



Figure 14 Gross Monthly Expenses: Renter Occupied (ACS 2014)



Source: American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014)

Table 18 County Comparison: Owner- Renter Costs (ACS 2014)

Place	Median Monthly Renter Costs	Total Units	Cost Burden
Mills County	\$758	786	37.6%
Pottawattamie County	\$758	10,486	46.0%
Washington County	\$695	1,356	36.4%
Cass County	\$748	1,810	41.0%
Douglas County	\$808	76,875	48.3%
Sarpy County	\$863	17,917	40.0%
State of Iowa	\$689	324,469	45.1%

Source: American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014)



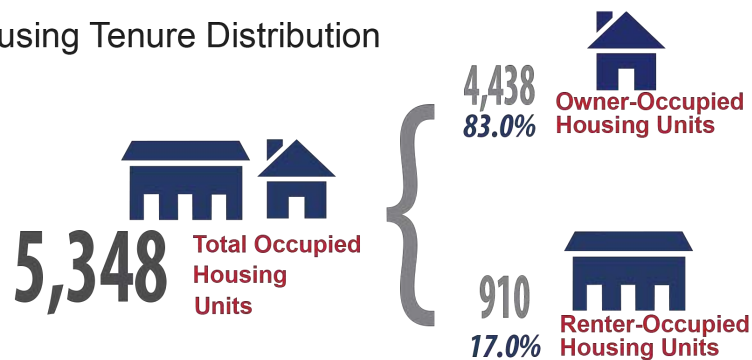
Housing Forecast

The number of housing units required to serve Mills County's projected population growth is calculated based off the current occupancy rate for each form of housing tenure. Owner-occupied and renter-occupied units make up the forms of housing utilization, or tenure. The ratio of owner to renter units, combined with the average household size for each form of tenure equate to the total number of owner and renter housing units required to serve Mills County's projected population. These projections utilize the Woods and Poole projection (depicted in Table 4 on page 26) since it is the most moderate of the projections.

In order to facilitate the growth demands of the 2035 projected population, 754 owner-occupied units and over 164 renter-occupied units must be constructed over the next 20 years.

Figure 15 **Household Projections (2020-2035)**

2014 Housing Tenure Distribution



Projected Housing Needs by Tenure

Year	Projected Population	Owner-Occupied New Demand	Renter-Occupied New Demand
2020	16,195	178	39
2025	16,795	185	40
2030	17,417	192	42
2035	18,062	199	43
TOTAL CHANGE	3,003*	754	164

* Total Change in population is calculated from the 2010 population of 15,059

Source: Data used to calculate this forecast was collected from the US Census (1990-2010)



[section 5.2]

ENVISION

Any community seeking to grow must be aware of current housing conditions and invest in housing stock to ensure adequate supply is available to meet market demands and accommodate the local workforce. Growth of the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro and its proximity to Mills County have generated opportunities for housing development that will likely change the landscape and overall composition of the County in the coming years and decades. The Envision section of this chapter captures citizen and stakeholder input regarding the County's current housing conditions, trends, and strengths and challenges.

Focus Group Meetings

Stakeholders in the County provided input on strengths and challenges regarding housing in the County and communities. Below are the group's comments.

- Location is great!
- Developers could do private roads 10 years ago but the County now requires paved roads
- Restriction of parcel splitting is a hindrance; Subdivision regulations make it difficult to split lots
- Housing construction is at half the rate it was in 2008
- New housing in the County could include townhomes
- Multi-family housing sounds like a good idea but new apartment rental rates may be too high
- The Building Department sees people in Glenwood upgrading to new homes in the country
- 30% or so of renters are on assistance; Southern Iowa Regional Housing Authority (SIRHA) helps with rent
- City v. rural property taxes are a consideration for residents, but not the deciding factor
- The market is steady – real estate is selling fairly well
- There are not enough platted parcels within the County available to sell
- There is demand/interest in neighboring communities; Malvern has homes for sale but they need work
- Some rental properties are in good shape but others need help
- Rental property maintenance is owner dependent; rental inspections are not generally done by the County
- There is a demand for larger lots (8-10 acres)
- Ideal subdivision is 1.5-2 acres; Western Hills is a good example
- New teachers need affordable housing options
- Baby Boomers and Millennials have very different needs; some Boomers are buying for the first time



- There are currently no community housing rehab programs available
- Working on community character can better attract new residents
- Commutes are much better now with the US 34 bridge
- Offutt Air Force Base employees are a big clientele for realtors
- Prospective residents looking for more unique (i.e. look and feel) subdivisions
- Lack of rural water is stopping some development; water quality is a big issue, especially east of Glenwood

Big Ideas

- Change parcel split allowance – three splits in 40 acres

Town Hall Meeting

At the town hall meeting in Malvern, attendees were invited to answer a brief questionnaire related to housing. Attendees could also write comments or suggestions on the questionnaire form or on large aerial and land use maps.

- Single-family housing is the most needed housing type, followed by townhomes and condos
- The majority of respondents preferred new housing growth be focused in the cities and non-residential be in the unincorporated areas of the County
- Respondents preferred cluster housing with one house per 3/4 acre with avoidance of natural resources such as dense tree cover, drainage ways, or ridge lines where municipal utility connections are available. The second preference was rural residential acreages on lots of around 10 acres.
- Other comments regarding housing:
 - More market price single-family housing on the eastern side of the County
 - Townhomes and condos for elderly residents
 - Use annexation when necessary
 - Potential for apartments in Glenwood
 - Develop townhomes/condos near or within cities
 - Build subdivisions in proximity to major highways
 - More housing options for retirees
 - More rural development options throughout the County
 - Housing growth should be focused in small communities too
 - Assisted living/retirement homes should be focused within city limits
 - New rental properties should be affordable
 - Assisted living options for the high functioning developmentally disabled



SWOT Analysis

The following are the results of the SWOT analysis specific to housing.

Strengths

- Proximity to the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro
- Available land for development
- Availability of housing on the County's west side

Weaknesses

- No rural water
- Inadequate housing on the County's east side

Opportunities

- Glenwood has an adequate water supply for future growth both rural and incorporated
- Potential for residential development along US Highway 34

Threats

- Lack of care resources and facilities for vulnerable adults

Elected and Appointed Officials Meeting

The following are questions and results from the elected and appointed officials meeting related to housing.

What types of housing do you believe are needed in the unincorporated area of the County?

- 1-2.5 acre parcel located in a subdivision [53%]
- 2.5-5 acre parcel located in a subdivision [16%]
- 5+ acre parcel not located in a subdivision [16%]
- None, new housing should be in the cities [8%]
- Other [8%]

When considering housing within the incorporated areas of the County, what type of single-family housing do you believe is needed?

- Small lots [43%]
- Large lots [14%]
- Acreages [19%]
- Infill [24%]

Again, when considering housing within the incorporated areas of the County, what type of multi-family housing do you believe is needed?

- Owner Occupied [58%]
- Rental [42%]



What is the optimal population growth scenario for Mills County moving forward? (based on 2015 population and household size estimates)

- Rapid = 112 houses (2% growth rate) per year [36%]
- Moderate = 56 houses (1% growth rate) per year [31%]
- Steady = 28 houses (.5% growth rate) per year [31%]
- Decline in population [3%]

Which would you say should be the biggest priority related to housing?

- County regulation/permit refinement [24%]
- Lot sizes in subdivisions [18%]
- Quality and affordable starter homes [14%]
- Issues related to splitting lots [12%]
- Housing options for retirees and the elderly [9%]
- New single-family acreages in rural areas [9%]
- Avoidance of incompatible land uses [8%]
- Multi-family housing options [3%]
- Housing in eastern Mills County [2%]
- Rehabilitation programs for existing housing [2%]

Other participant comments:

- Cost of infrastructure is high due to regulations/requirements
- Hard to get a return on investment
- Allow more splits before becoming a major subdivision
- Driveway and road regulations are a big challenge
- If regulations were a bit more relaxed, everyone would be busier (e.g. builders, zoning department, schools, etc.)



[section 5.3]

ACHIEVE

The Achieve section provides a summary of previous sections and starts to identify priorities for future growth and development. Single-family detached housing is the dominant housing type in Mills County and it will continue to be the dominant type for years to come. Nearly a third of Mills County's owner occupied housing stock has been built since 1990 when the County began to experience a housing boom that lasted until the Great Recession in 2009 and has waned since. The downturn of the economy likely contributed to the slowdown in housing construction, however, it has been noted throughout the planning process that County subdivision regulations unintentionally created obstacles for residential development. County officials and housing stakeholders should work together to ensure that local ordinances and regulations foster desirable growth that meets market demands yet promotes orderly growth and conserves resources.

Coinciding with recent housing trends, the average family household size incrementally decreased since the 1990s, which indicates that household growth was likely made up of families with fewer children and couples without children. Although the shrinking size of households drives demand for new housing, it is important to note the size of family households as this trend has repercussions on future natural population growth and school enrollment. Looking approximately two decades into the future, or through the recommended life of this Plan update, 755 owner occupied units and 164 renter occupied units will need to be constructed, assuming the County grows as projected.

Mills County benefits from an optimal location and natural and recreational resources that make the County an attractive place to live and raise families. There is a general sentiment that Mills County possesses the "best of both worlds" – a rural, small town quality of life with access to big city services and amenities. Data and trends show that Mills County is a bedroom community, and recent housing demand and development suggest that designation will continue in the long-term – the completion of the US 34 bridge has made commutes even more convenient. Generally speaking, the current preferred housing type in the County is single-family units on lots of 2 to 3 acres in rural subdivisions. There is also demand for homes on larger lots of 5 to 10 acres. An obstacle to rural acreages and subdivisions is water; there is no rural water in the County and water quality testing in some areas has detected higher than normal levels of bacteria and nitrates.

Though single-family housing is the most needed and in demand type, there may be a need for attached housing such as condos and townhomes. In time, the County will need housing options to accommodate an increasing elder population that does not or cannot maintain a large detached home. Attached housing in cities may even be preferable to empty nesters or those simply looking to downsize. Multifamily housing has accounted for a lesser proportion of total housing over the last three decades. If any new multifamily units are built in Mills County, such development will most likely occur in Glenwood.



Housing affordability and quality will be indicators worth monitoring, especially in terms of attracting and retaining younger talent, notably teachers. There is housing demand in the incorporated cities but many homes are older and require maintenance. The County, perhaps in conjunction with cities, may look to develop a housing rehabilitation program to not only improve and modernize older housing stock, but to also enhance local appearance and character.



[section 5.4]

IMPLEMENT

Considering the findings of the previous sections, the Implement section offers guidance on how to manage future growth and development of the County. Here we outline the goals, policies, and action steps for Housing. Policies and action steps give more detail and describe the activities needed to achieve the desired goals of the County. Policies are part of the value system linking goals with action steps, and they define the broader goals with more detailed descriptions. The adopted action steps synthesize the information from the existing profile of the County and public input from the visioning component of the Comprehensive Plan. Action steps are a means to achieve the goals established by the community and they imply a clear commitment to Mills County's future development.

Goal:

Mills County will promote a broad range of housing choices, and ensure the existing housing stock in the community is maintained to fit the needs of existing and future residents.

Policies:

- Along with single-family housing, encourage the development of housing choices to fit retirees and the elderly.
- Ensure that Mills County, along with local jurisdictions within, provide diverse options in relation to lot size, density, and type for residential development.
- Strive to improve substandard conditions in rural Mills County by providing a planned program for clean-up and reuse of deteriorated areas.
- Promote entry level and young family housing opportunities.

Action Items:

- Establish an annual review and modification process of zoning districts and regulations to encourage both development and redevelopment activities for housing.
- Utilize Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) and Southwest Iowa Housing Trust Funds (SWIHTF) to access Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Iowa Finance Authority funding for housing rehabilitation and development.
- Enforce existing nuisance ordinances directed at maintaining personal property to keep housing units in good condition and as not to detract from the overall aesthetic quality of Mills County.
- Market and recruit developers for the construction of new elderly housing in or adjacent to cities.
- Pursue infrastructure development or improvements that support new housing.



Chapter 6

Economic Development

- 6.1 Profile
- 6.2 Envision
- 6.3 Achieve
- 6.4 Implement

#



Economic Development

[section 6.1]

PROFILE

Mills County's inclusion in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area gives the County and its incorporated communities economic advantages that few other rural counties in Iowa can claim. The availability of developable land with direct access to major interstates, highways and rail lines makes Mills County an ideal location for the development of logistics and other light industrial businesses. The following data was collected to understand the County's past setting in the greater employment markets, current activity, and to discover its needs and opportunities.

Current Labor Characteristics

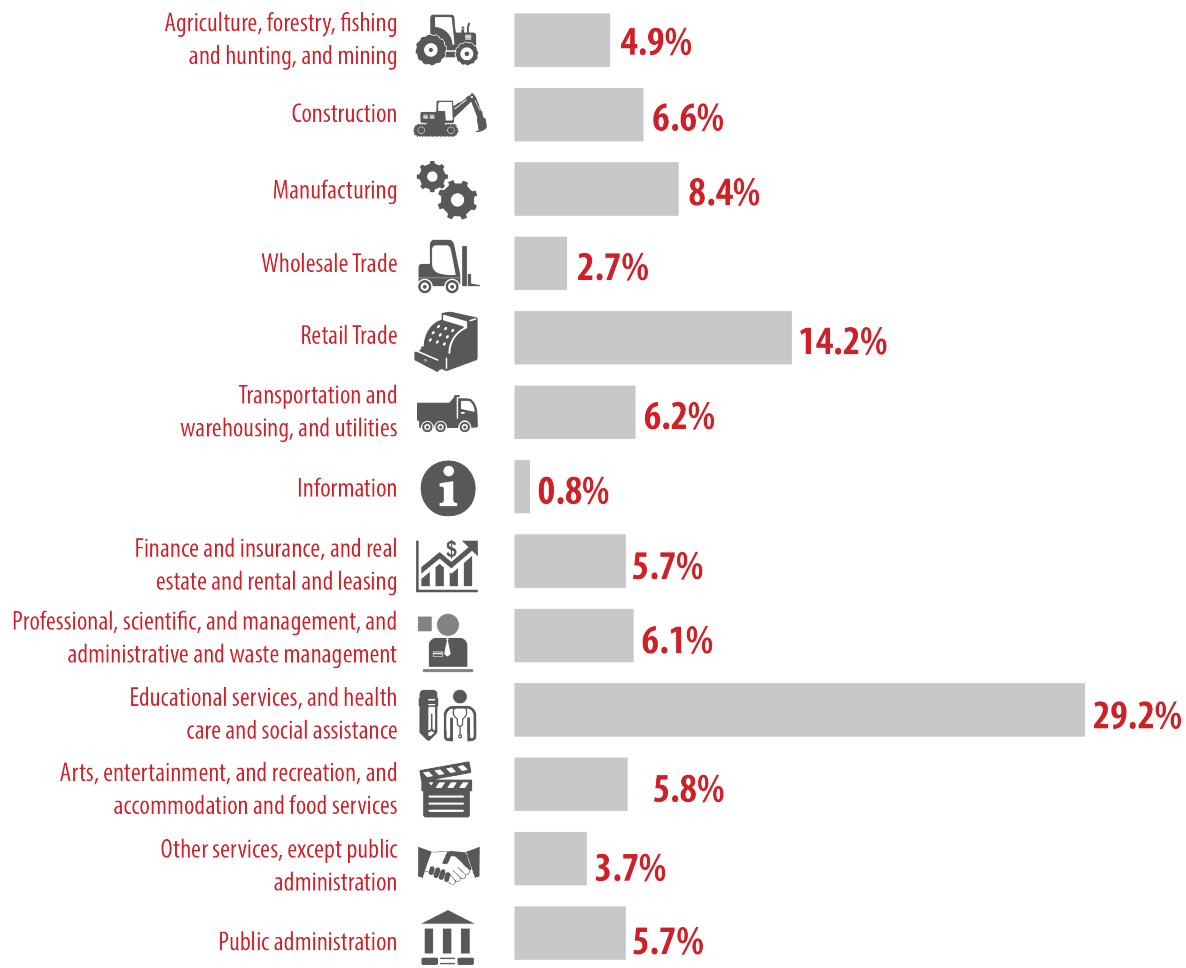
A better understanding of the labor force will lead to a better understanding of Mills County's economy as a whole. Employment for Mills County is very much integrated into the larger Omaha economy. While residents of Mills County have diverse employment sectors, many are dependent on the opportunities available in job centers within Omaha, Council Bluffs, Bellevue and other cities across the metro.



Labor Force

The top three sectors by industry type- Education/Health (29.2%), Retail Trade (14.2%), and Manufacturing (8.4%) account for over half of all jobs held by residents of Mills County (see Figure 16 below). According to the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS) Five-Year Estimates, the three sectors with the lowest employment numbers include the Other Services (3.7%), Wholesale Trade (2.7%), and Information (0.8%).

Figure 16 **Labor Force Characteristics by Industry (2014)**



American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014)

Table 19 compares Mills County labor force by industry across the Omaha-Council Bluffs MSA and the state of Iowa. The percentage breakdown of these sectors is similar with some exceptions as you move down the list. Professional services accounts for 6.1% of Mills County employment. This is lagging behind the Omaha MSA for which it accounts for 10.8% of its employment and the statewide share of 7.1%. This trend also follows the arts and entertainment sector as well as the finance, insurance and real estate sectors. The state of Iowa has a strong tradition in the agriculture sector so there is no surprise Mills County also has a similar share of its residents working in this industry.



Table 19 Labor Force Characteristics by Industry Comparison (2014)

Industry	Mills County	Omaha MSA	State of Iowa
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	29.2%	23.9%	24.3%
Retail trade	14.2%	11.6%	11.7%
Manufacturing	8.4%	8.7%	14.9%
Construction	6.6%	6.7%	6.1%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	6.2%	5.7%	4.6%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	6.1%	10.8%	7.1%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	5.8%	8.5%	7.4%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	5.7%	9.7%	7.6%
Public administration	5.7%	3.9%	3.3%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	4.9%	1.3%	4.0%
Other services, except public administration	3.7%	4.2%	4.3%
Wholesale trade	2.7%	2.8%	2.9%
Information	0.8%	2.4%	1.8%

Source: American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014)

The largest industry for Mills County is educational services, health care, and social assistance. This is attributed to the Glenwood Resource Center and community schools. The relative strength of the public administration sector in Mills County is another outlier among the Omaha MSA and state of Iowa. Much of this employment can be attributed to the Offutt Air Force Base located just across the Missouri River, south of Bellevue, NE. There are a number of families that choose to live in rural Mills County for its natural amenities and affordable housing options, and then have a short commute which has only gotten better with the recent opening of the US Highway 34 bridge and road expansion project.

Table 20 and Figure 17 provide further analysis of the labor market by occupation. Nearly a third of Mills County residents have jobs in the management, business, and science and art occupations with 32.8% of the labor force. This share of employed residents is slightly less than both the overall Omaha metro labor market as well as the state of Iowa totals. The service occupation is an outlier for Mills County as its share (22.2%) is substantially higher than that of both the Omaha MSA (16.4%) and the state of Iowa (16.5%). This occupation includes healthcare support, protective services, food preparation and serving, building and grounds cleaning/maintenance, and personal care.

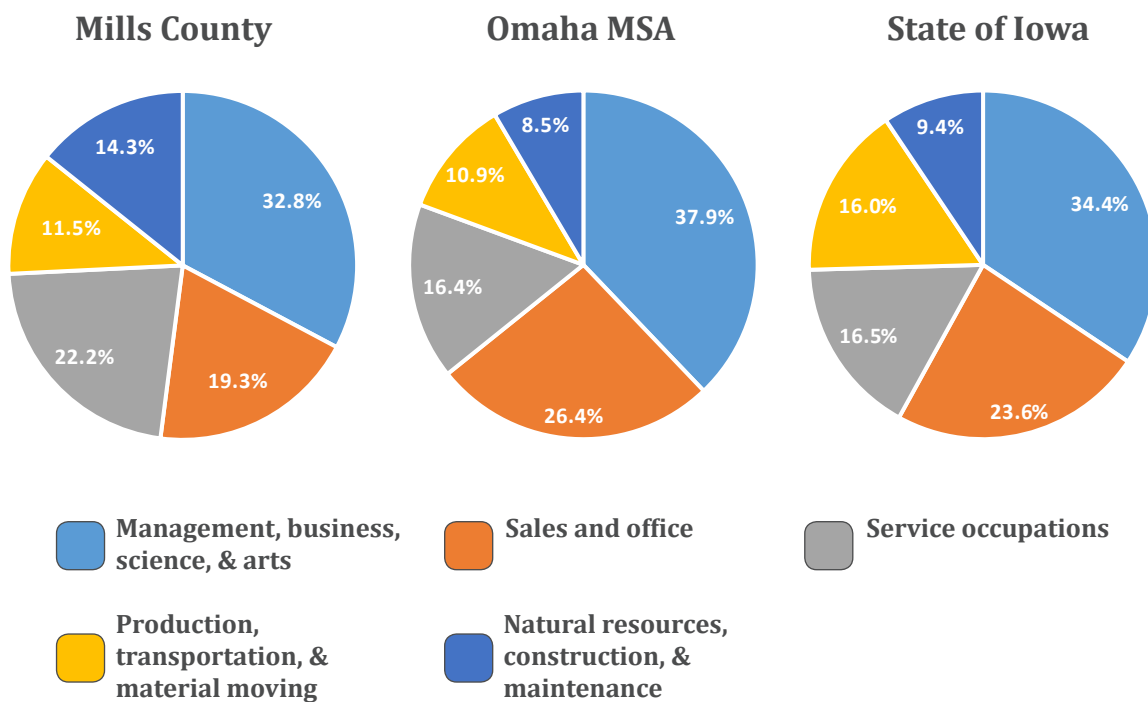


Table 20 Labor Force Characteristics by Occupation (2014)

OCCUPATION	Number	Percent
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	2,374	32.8%
Sales and office occupations	1,396	19.3%
Service occupations	1,604	22.2%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	834	11.5%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	1,032	14.3%
TOTAL	7,240	100.0%

Source: American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014)

Figure 17 Labor Force Characteristics by Occupation Comparison (2014)



Source: American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014)

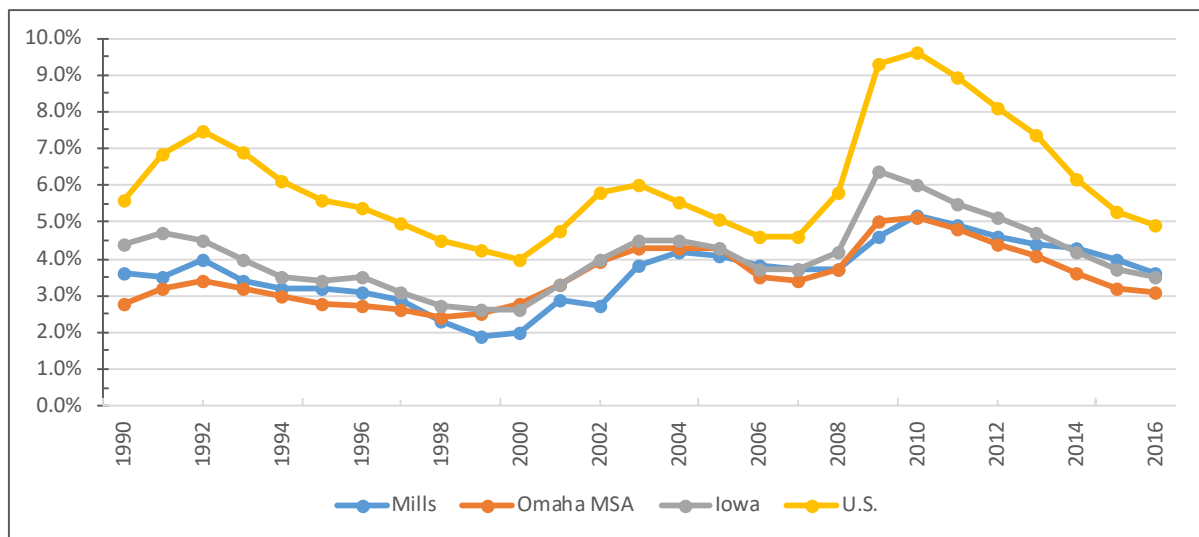


Unemployment Rates

Unemployment rates in Mills County have consistently remained below state and US levels. During the Great Recession, Mills County experienced a slight increase in its unemployment rate peaking at only 5.2%. This was much less than the national labor market which saw a peak of 9.6%. The recovery period returned Mills County, the Omaha MSA, the state of Iowa, and the national labor market down to more stable rates which indicates a strong labor market.

While low unemployment rates are good for the overall economy, too low of unemployment rates is seen as an indicator of not enough qualified applicants. Future employers may see this as a negative which could impact Mills County's ability to attract new businesses to the County.

Figure 18 Unemployment Rate Comparison (1990-2016)



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016)

Organizations & Activities

Mills County Economic Development Foundation

The Mills County Economic Development Foundation, Inc. (MCEDF) assists new and existing businesses with information for location, relocation, expansion, and retention. They maintain a database of available properties to respond to inquiries and work to get vacated and underutilized properties occupied. Their vision provides a foundation on which all economic development activities are based with each community's desired future in mind. MCEDF also collaborates its marketing efforts with Advance Southwest Iowa Corporation (Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County, Mills County and Harrison County - ASWIC), a region established as a participating partner with the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA), Iowa Western Community College (IWCC), MidAmerican Energy, Black Hills Energy and other utility partners that serve Mills County and the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce.



I-29/Highway 34 Corridor Master Plan (2011)

Mills County completed a Corridor Master Plan for the area at the interchange of I-29 and US Highway 34. With the construction of a new Missouri River bridge and realignment of Highway 34, Mills County recognized the excellent opportunity for new development along the I-29 and Highway 34 corridors and immediate area. This master plan helps guide the development potential for this area of the County.

A Master Plan is one of the most important investments the County can make, particularly within high growth areas. The Plan set the overall strategy for current and future development of this area. In the case of Mills County, the Plan was developed prior to the construction of the US Highway 34 bridge and realignment to help the County avoid costly mistakes, such as inefficient uses of assets and infrastructure and conflicting land uses. This unique planning opportunity allowed the County to be proactive in developing and protecting one of the “gateways” into Mills County.

The resulting product was a master plan that included:

- Site visualizations such as conceptual layouts (Figure 19) and perspective renderings (Figure 20) to be used as marketing materials to promote the site, complete with buildings, roadways, landscaping and mock buildings;
- A Corridor Overlay Zoning District with specific rules and regulations; and
- Minimum design standards for the master planned area that includes design criteria such as building materials, landscaping, and lighting.

Rail Study (2014)

Rail access is a very useful asset to attract employers. The Interstate 29 Rail Infrastructure Suitability Study was done to determine suitable rail access connection points to the existing rail system to construct a new rail access into southern Pottawattamie County and northern Mills County. Three main development areas were identified and should continue to be considered for future feasibility.

Other Activities

Mills County Economic Development Foundation is currently working with other areas in the County for new development. These areas include Highway 370/I-29 and US 34/315th Street. Both areas are undergoing planning efforts to accommodate new commercial and industrial growth.



Figure 19 Conceptual Site Plan Layout (2011)





Figure 20 Conceptual Perspective Rendering (2011)





[section 6.2]

ENVISION

The economic conditions and opportunities for development in a community have direct associations with overall growth and quality of life. Mills County's economy has been and will continue to be predominantly agriculture-centered, though the County will no doubt see continued influence by growth from the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro. Proximity to the metro area presents both challenges and opportunities, many of which are noted in the Envision section of this chapter.

Focus Group Meeting

Stakeholders in the County provided input on strengths and challenges regarding economic development and small business in the County. Below are the groups' comments.

- Northern Mills County near I-29 is an area that is likely prime for development
- Electrical power will be an issue in the near future
 - Utilities want to see development before an investment is made, but the County cannot entice developers until there is electricity in place
 - Estimated \$15-28 million to build power
- Internet needs to be more accessible
- There are not enough lodging amenities
- Too many administrative/procedural rules make development challenging
- There is a lack of promotion for businesses
 - Signage regulations are too restrictive; travelers have little idea what amenities are available when passing through
- More business ventures can support the larger industries/sectors of the Omaha-Council Bluffs region
- The County needs to increase its tax base
- Levee issues around 34 bridge could limit successful development in the area
- Need to focus on both the eastern and western sides of the County
- Need to have more high school-to-workforce programs
- Subdivision regulations impede private development
- Difficult to compete with Omaha incentives (e.g. TIF)
- There is too much focus on attracting businesses too big for the County (major employer attraction v. small business development)
 - There is a perception that the County is providing tax incentives to attract big businesses; small business would like incentives as well
- Glenwood is a bedroom community, despite what others might think or say
- Small businesses should conform to the characteristics of the County's population



- A business owner is more likely to be successful in the service sector rather than retail
- It is too easy/convenient to shop in Omaha-Council Bluffs
 - Need a plan “to convince locals to stay home and not go to Omaha”
- Small businesses are more service oriented
 - “How do we keep a nice restaurant?”
- Property taxes hurt small businesses
- It is difficult to compete with the high wages offered in Omaha/Bellevue/Council Bluffs
- The zoning is difficult both in and around Glenwood
- There has never been a game plan for the future of the County – Who are we?
 - Malvern has been very proactive about making community improvements and establishing an identity
- Mills County represents the “best of both worlds” (i.e. urban and rural)
- The County could benefit from more destination events
- Difficult to retain people for employment
- Consolidation of farm-based operations and facilities is putting a financial strain on farmers; more travel time and gas is required to sell grain and do business

Big Ideas

- There should be greater focus on natural and historical attributes of the County
 - Lewis & Clark
 - Native Americans
- There needs to be a review on Board of Adjustment fees and policies
- Addition of “Plug and Play” parks
- Bring in “relationship industries”
 - Need to support companies in the immediate area
- Develop north in the County and go south
- More accessible internet
- Reassess zoning
- There needs to be a “footprint” for small businesses
- The County needs to be strategic about where subdivisions are developed



Town Hall Meeting

At the town hall meeting in Malvern, attendees were invited to answer a brief questionnaire related to economic development. Attendees could also write comments or suggestions on the questionnaire form or on large aerial and land use maps.

- Commercial and industrial areas along I-29 and US 34 are the preferred locations for new development, followed by areas within or adjacent to city limits
- Respondents would prefer to see more industrial development in the County, followed by commercial
- Respondents equally indicated that the County's role in new development should be to build new infrastructure to encourage and promote growth, and permit and monitor new developer-installed infrastructure
- Respondents indicated that the County's economic development efforts should be focused on small local business, followed by large employers (100+)
- Other comments regarding economic development:
 - County would benefit from two or three businesses with 50-100+ employees
 - Help support towns near Highway 34
 - The County should focus development efforts on a healthy mix of targeted clusters, new housing

SWOT Analysis

The following are the results of the SWOT analysis specific to Economic Development.

Strengths

- Proximity to the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro – close to jobs, workforce, hospitals, entertainment, transportation corridors
- Available land for development
- No dirty industries
- Solid agricultural base
- Presence of successful small businesses with longevity in the community

Weaknesses

- Proximity to the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro – difficult for small businesses to compete
- Poor tax base – lack of commercial businesses
- Gaps in infrastructure: no utility connection in developable areas
- Inadequate internet and cell coverage
- Changing agriculture economy (fewer Ag jobs and facilities, loss of Ag land)
- Lack of job opportunities overall, specifically in the eastern half of the County
- Not enough lodging options for visitors



Opportunities

- Marketing the County's strengths, both internally and externally
- Glenwood has an adequate water supply for future growth beyond future growth areas
- Potential to accommodate bed and breakfasts via ordinance
- Development opportunities along the I-29 corridor and US 34
- Potential for development and local employment opportunities along Bunge Ave and major transportation corridors
- Cities annexing land to increase tax base
- Expansion of Glen Haven
- Social media as a means to promote the County

Threats

- Possibility of the Glenwood Resource Center closing
- Competition with surrounding areas for residents and businesses
- Increasing cost of infrastructure with a stagnant tax base
- Inability to recertify the Missouri River levee
- Possibility of a future agricultural recession – impacts to local charities, schools and the overall economy

Elected and Appointed Officials Meeting

The following are questions and results from the elected and appointed officials meeting related to Economic Development.

How would you characterize job growth in Mills County?

- Not fast enough [70%]
- Non-existent [27%]
- Just right [3%]
- Too fast [0%]

What has been the biggest barrier to economic development in the County?

- Regulatory restrictions [32%]
- Infrastructure availability [22%]
- Cost of infrastructure to site [16%]
- Overall site development costs [14%]
- Availability of Land [11%]
- Floodplain and grading costs [5%]
- Roadway access [0%]
- Other [0%]



Which of the following areas should be the focus for economic development?

- Commercial development [35%]
- Residential development [31%]
- Industrial development [22%]
- Community development [8%]
- Tourism [1%]
- Parks and recreation [1%]
- Other [1%]

As the County looks to encourage new industrial and/or commercial development, geographically where should that focus be?

- I-29 and Hwy 34 [43%]
- I-29 and Hwy 370 [20%]
- Hwy 34 north of Malvern [17%]
- Glenwood or adjacent areas [17%]
- Other [3%]

Which would you say should be the biggest priority related to economic development?

- Business attraction [22%]
- Utility expansion to accommodate development [20%]
- Housing (single and multi-family) [19%]
- Support for small business and entrepreneurship [15%]
- Issues related to taxes and incentives [11%]
- Business retention [9%]
- Employment opportunities for high school graduates [3%]
- Amenities and tourism related to natural and historical assets [0%]
- Lodging amenities [1%]
- Destination events to spur tourism [0%]



[section 6.3]

ACHIEVE

The Achieve section provides a summary of previous sections and starts to identify priorities for future growth and development. Mills County's economy has been and will continue to be rooted in agriculture, however, the economic landscape has changed. Fewer workers are required in the industry due to technology and innovation and many local ag-related facilities have closed or consolidated operations. The largest overall job industry in Mills County today is educational services, health care, and social assistance, which is tied to the Glenwood Resource Center and public schools. The proximity to Offutt Air Force Base gives Mills County a larger share in the public administration industry than most peer counties. Not unlike the state of Iowa and much of the Midwest, Mills County has typically experienced low unemployment compared to the national average, even during the Great Recession when national unemployment hovered around 10 percent. The County's typically low unemployment can have the unfortunate side effect of being unable to attract new businesses.

The nearness of Mills County to Omaha and Council Bluffs can be characterized as both a strength and a weakness. As a "bedroom community," Mills County's workforce largely commutes outside the County to Omaha, Council Bluffs, Bellevue, and other cities in the metro. Many of those commuters choose to shop for goods and services in the urban area they travel to and from, and as a result, Mills County has a scarcity in non-service oriented commercial businesses, which has certainly affected the County tax base. Employers in the County also have difficulty competing with higher wages that are offered in the larger cities. However, this is not to suggest that Mills County lacks successful businesses with longevity in the community. The County can most certainly capitalize on its proximity to the metro by fostering businesses that supplement existing industries/sectors of the Omaha-Council Bluffs area.

Although many residents work outside the County, there is a growing capability in today's workforce for employees to work from home – or "telecommute". One advantage of telecommuting is that it gives an employee more freedom to choose where one wishes to live. Fast and reliable internet is also more of an essential element to quality public education across all grade levels. Deficiencies related to internet service have been noted throughout the Plan update. In order for Mills County to be an attractive and viable location for employers and employees, an emphasis will need to be made to close the broadband gaps that currently exist.

Mills County benefits from availability of developable land with direct access to major interstates, highways and rail lines. A recent boon to the County involved the opening of the US 34 bridge that crosses the Missouri River into Nebraska. The I-29 and US 34 interchange will be a key site for economic activity and development potential. Unfortunately, developable land near I-29 is in a state of flux as the Missouri River levee lacks accreditation from FEMA. The cost to conduct an engineering study and complete any necessary repairs is prohibitive. This obstacle will remain a priority in the County until a financial solution is determined. Another obstacle identified throughout this planning process is utility connectivity to areas of the County considered prime for development.



The cost to extend and expand electricity and gas to probable commercial and industrial sites is too much for the County to bear, and utility providers will not act until there is commitment from a major user.

Mills County provides many opportunities to those looking to do business or run a business. However, many have shared the sentiment that the County currently lacks an identity and perhaps is not capitalizing or marketing its strengths to the greatest extent possible. This is something for County officials, stakeholders and the public to consider when determining strategies to diversify the local economy and expand the County tax base. Developable shovel ready sites, with infrastructure in place, are a priority and the County will continue to work with utility providers and FEMA to address these obstacles.

[section 6.4]

IMPLEMENT

Considering the findings of the previous sections, the Implement section offers guidance on how to manage future growth and development of the County. Here we outline to goals, policies, and action steps for Economic Development. Policies and action steps give more detail and describe the activities needed to achieve the desired goals of the County. Policies are part of the value system linking goals with action steps, and they define the broader goals with more detailed descriptions. The adopted action steps synthesize the information from the existing profile of the County and public input from the visioning component of the Comprehensive Plan. Action steps are a means to achieve the goals established by the community and they imply a clear commitment to Mills County's future development.

Goal:

To improve the long-term economic sustainability of Mills County through an economic development agenda focused on job creation, job retention, and tax base enhancements enriching the quality of life for all citizens of the County.

Policies:

- Identify and pursue infrastructure improvements to support economic development and job growth along the major corridors in the County.
- Minimize land use conflicts that would impede commercial and industrial growth in areas planned for those uses.
- Provide opportunities and incentives for development that will encourage economic stability and strengthen the overall tax base of the County.
- Identify space/locations for new commercial and/or industrial businesses through the land use plan.
- Recruit additional businesses and implement the I-29 and Highway 34 master plan.
- Support existing Mills County businesses and workforce.
- Partner with state and regional agencies that support economic development



activities.

Action Items:

- Partner with local and regional utility providers to install new services for the marketability and support of commercial and industrial sites.
- Continue to promote Mills County economic development opportunities with Advance Southwest Iowa Corporation.
- Identify and prioritize land adjacent to the cities for commercial and/or industrial businesses that can be served with public utilities and infrastructure.
- Continue to work with Mills County Economic Development Board to attract and retain business.
- Use tax increment financing and urban revitalization incentives where applicable.
- Promote development at Interstate 29 interchanges that provide services to highway traffic and regional rural areas within the County.
- Encourage development of local businesses at strategic locations along highway corridors adjacent to communities.
- Improve telecommunications infrastructure throughout the County so that internet is not a barrier to companies of any size or home based businesses.
- Promote new housing to support the economic development efforts.
- Encourage tourism and special event facilities that attract visitors to Mills County.



Chapter 7

Land Use & Growth Management

- 7.1 Profile
- 7.2 Envision
- 7.3 Achieve
- 7.4 Implement

#



7

Land Use & Growth Management

[section 7.1]

PROFILE

Evaluating the land uses that currently exist is an important piece of updating the Comprehensive Plan. In order to promote and plan for future development in Mills County, the first step is to take account of the existing form and amount of land presently used to serve the needs of the population. The analysis of land uses including location, size and characteristics are important in understanding the pattern of development, past land use trends and other significant factors shaping the existing layout of the County. This analysis is essential to the preparation of both future land use which impacts transportation improvements and the expansion of certain utilities.

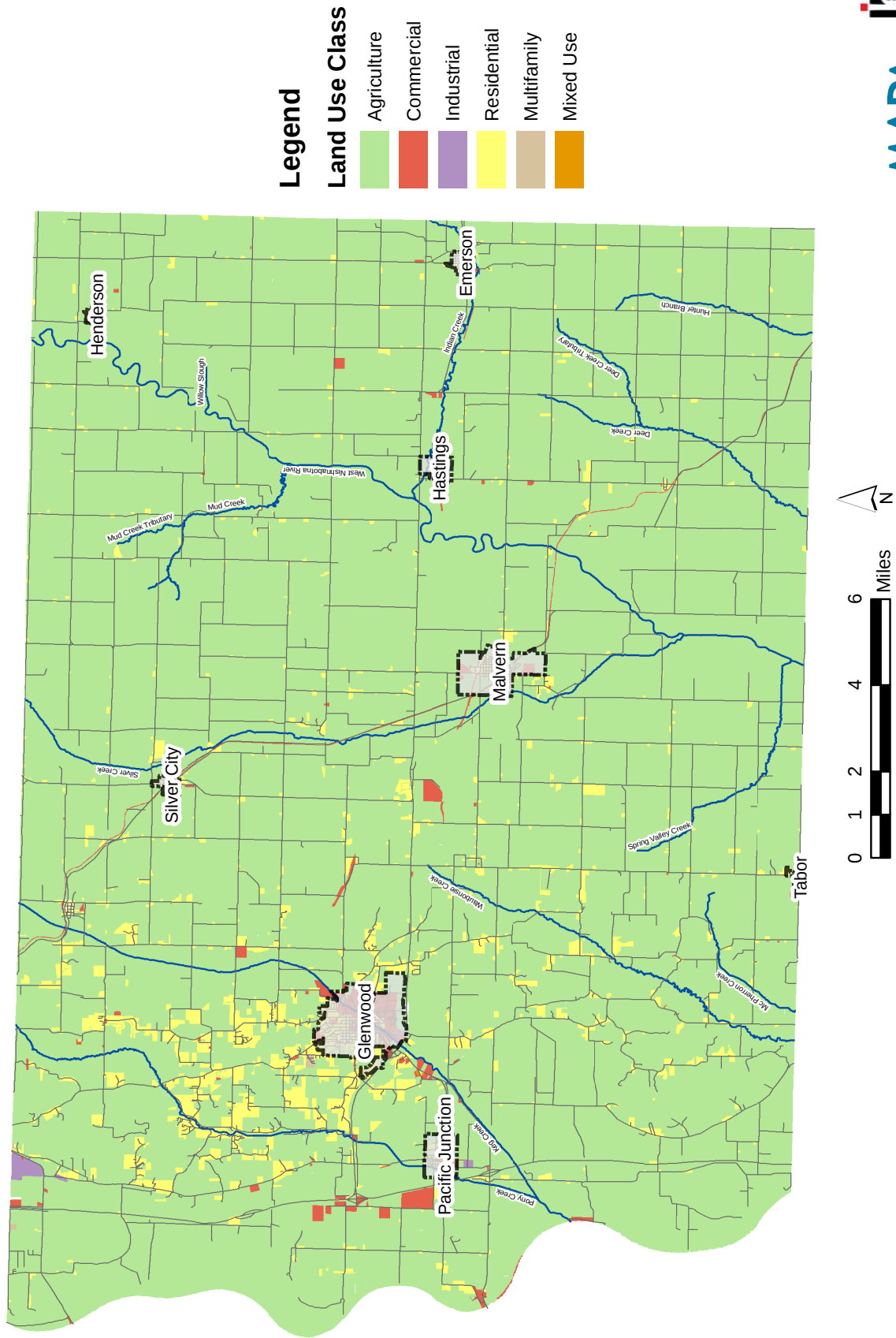
Existing Land Use

The key to developing a future land use plan is to gain a full understanding of the current situation on the ground. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software was used to conduct a land use inventory to map the current development pattern across Mills County. Map 10, titled “Existing Land Use (2016),” uses 6 different categories to classify each land use type.

The land use pattern in the unincorporated area is primarily classified as Agricultural/Undeveloped, accounting for 95.5% the County’s unincorporated land. Most of the larger farms are located in the central and eastern portions as a sizable amount of the western portion of the County includes the Loess Hills and floodplain along the Missouri River.

Parcels classified as residential account for the second highest use of unincorporated land in Mills County making up only 3.8%. Of these residential parcels, 90.9% or 1,870 are classified single-family residential with a mean parcel size of four acres in size. The map shows a majority of the single-family housing is located in the western portion of the County within and adjacent to the Loess Hills and the City of Glenwood with some residential parcels near Silver City and Malvern. Mobile homes make up the next primary residence type. They account for 5.9% or 240 parcels which are spread throughout the western portion of the County similar to single-family residential parcels. Commercial (0.6%) and Industrial (0.1%) parcels make up the remaining unincorporated areas of the County.

Map 10 Existing Land Use (2016)





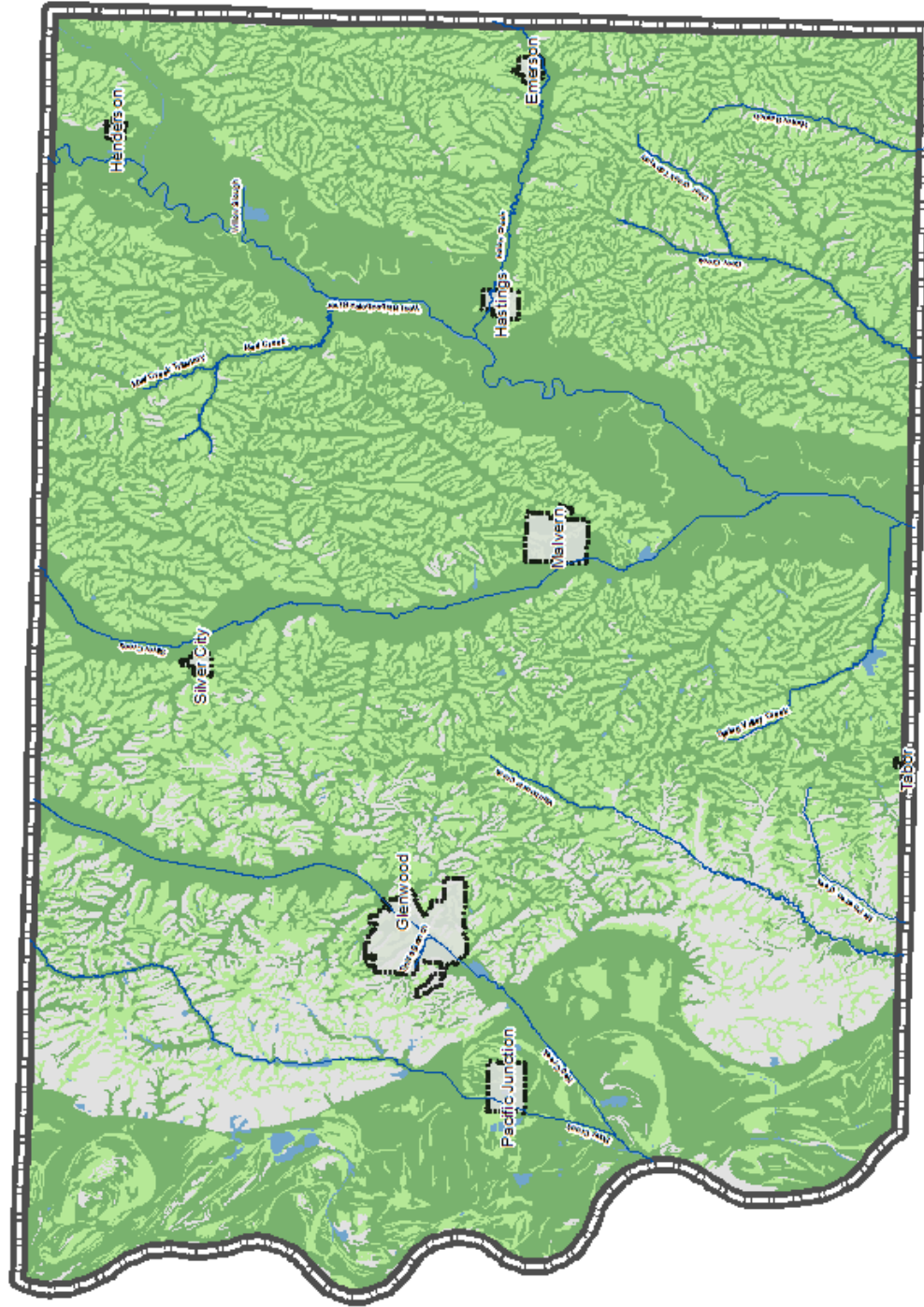
Prime Farmland

Prime farmland is the land that is best suited for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to economically produce a sustained high yield of crops when it is treated and managed using acceptable farming methods. Prime farmland produces the highest yields with minimal inputs of energy and economic resources, and farming it results in the least damage to the environment. The land has a favorable growing season and temperature. It is not excessively erodible or saturated with water for long periods and is not frequently flooded during the growing season. Slopes in these areas range from zero to six percent.

Map 11 on the following page identifies prime farmland in nearly all parts of Mills County. These areas can be found throughout the County, but are most densely located outside the floodplain and hydric soil areas associated with the rivers and streams. About 145,000 acres, or about 50 percent of the County's total acreage, meets the requirements for USDA prime farmland. Another third of the County is designated as farmland of statewide significance which means it does not meet the USDA qualifications, but is still high yielding cropland.

USDA Prime Farmland Designation

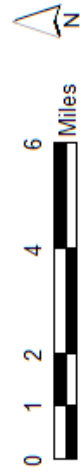
Map 11



Legend

USDA Classification

- Prime
- Statewide
- Local
- Water



PROFILE

ENVISION

ACHIEVE

IMPLEMENT



Landcover & Vegetation

Vegetation displays the location of major tracts of trees and brushy areas within Mills County. The largest tracts of forestland are on the bluffs along the Missouri River. Other wooded tracts occur as irregularly shaped areas and narrow bands along streams and rivers, as strips in upland drainage ways, and as narrow areas on steep banks along streams. The two main forest cover types are oak-hickory and bottomland hardwoods. See map 13 on page 134.

Steep Slopes

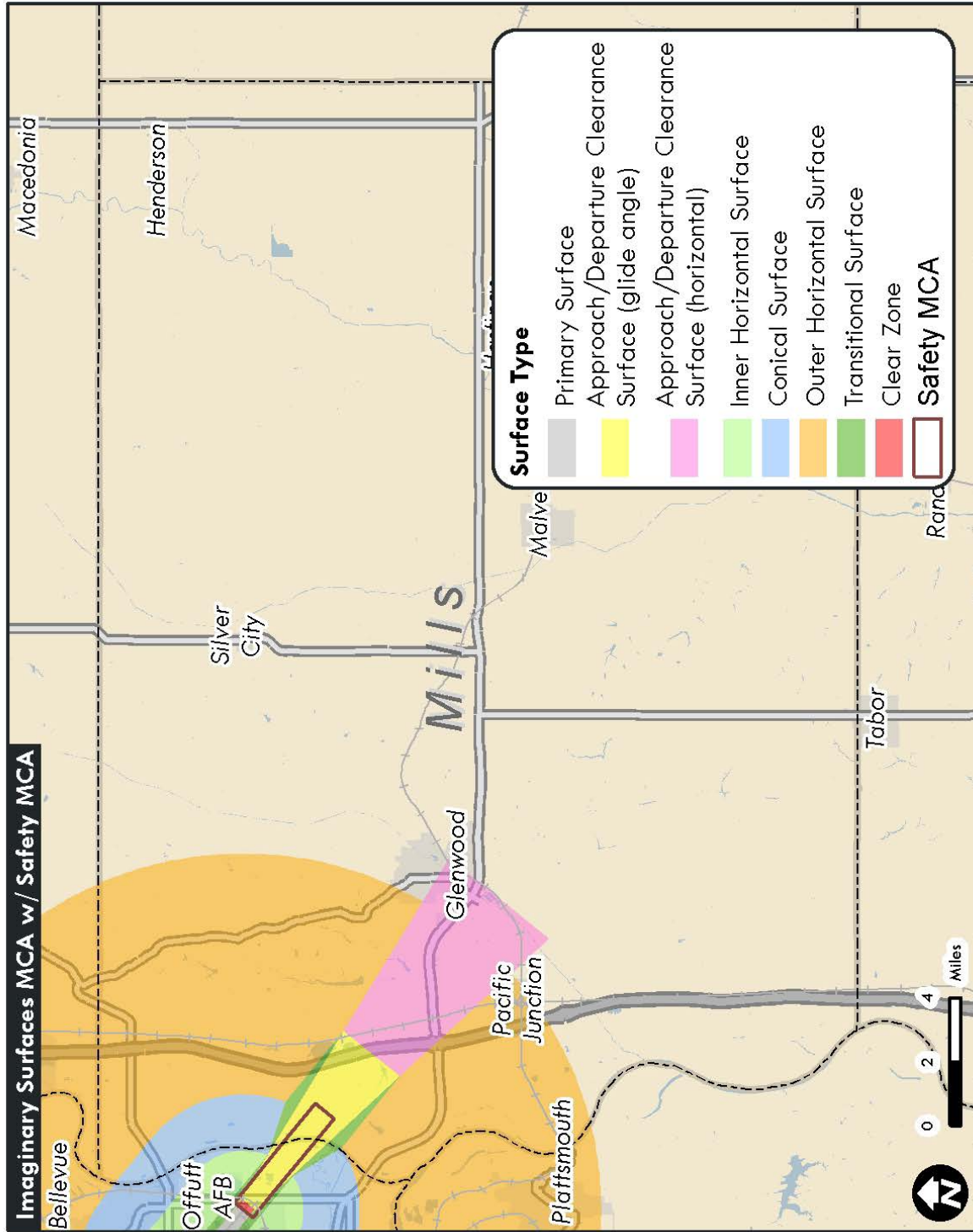
While much of Mills County shares the flat plains characteristic most associated with Iowa farmland, there are areas of the County that exhibit steep slopes. Slopes in excess of nine percent are predominately located along the Missouri River and part of the Loess Hill formations. These slopes are considered very susceptible to erosion. Land-altering activities should generally be avoided or developed with consideration to drainage and topography. See map 14 on page 135.

Military Compatibility Areas

Offutt Air Force base located in Bellevue, NE has a flight path over Mills County. Offutt is a large regional employer which impacts Mills County. The Offutt Joint Land Use Study, completed in 2015, is a cooperative land use planning effort conducted as a joint venture between Offutt, surrounding jurisdictions, state, and federal agencies, and other affected stakeholders. The goal is to reduce potential conflicts between military installations and surrounding areas while accommodating new growth and economic development, sustaining economic vitality, protecting public health and safety, and protecting the operational missions of the installation. It is the County's intent to work with Offutt Air Force base for the benefit of both. See map 12 on page 133.



Map 12 JLUS

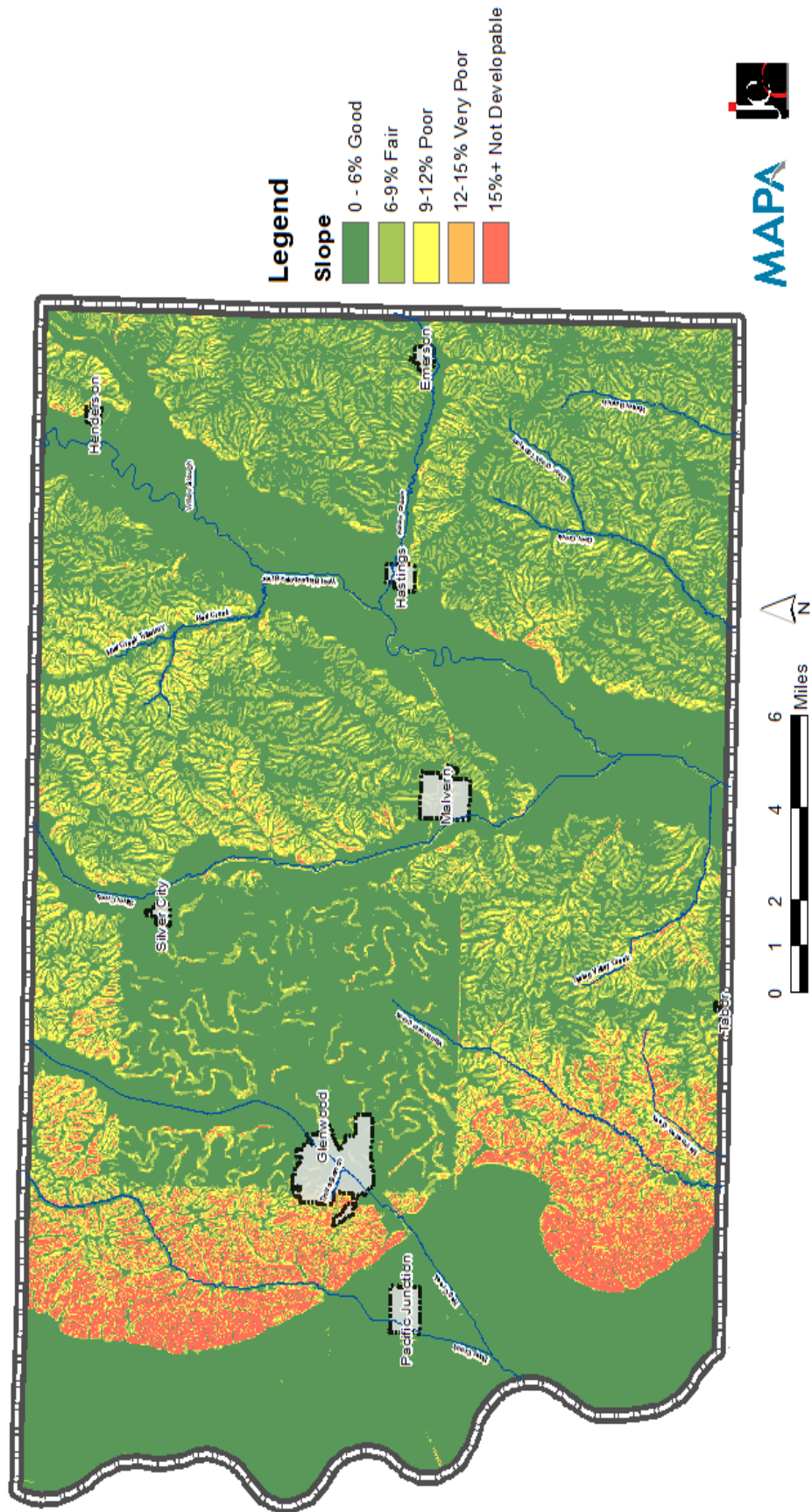




Map 13 **Landcover**



Map 14 Steep Slopes



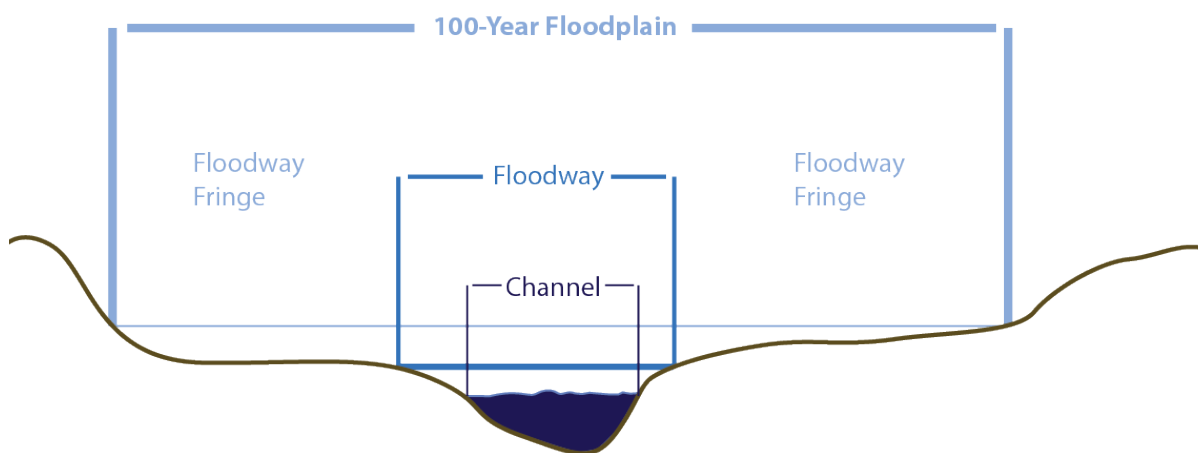


Floodplains

Flood hazard areas represent another set of environmental issues that needs to be addressed when siting future development. As shown in the floodplain diagram (Figure 21), floodplains include the channel, the floodway, and the floodway fringe. The floodway includes the main channel of a stream or river and the area which handles the additional flows during times of flooding. The floodway fringe is the relatively flat area adjacent to the floodway. Fringe area includes the total area engulfed by flood waters plus an additional 25% of the regulatory base flood discharge. The floodway fringe, when combined with the floodway, is known as the 100-year floodplain. Other floodplains can consist of a 10-year, 50-year, and 500-year storm event.

The 100-year floodplain represents an area that has a 1% chance of flooding every year or 100% chance of flooding at least once in a 100-year period. These areas that will be inundated with water during the 100-year frequency storm event are considered high risk and future development should avoid these sites when possible. Contemporary floodplain regulations require elevation of finished floor levels one foot above the 100-year flood level. Most of the land along the Missouri River corridor, Nishnabotna River corridor, Keg Creek, Indian Creek, and Silver Creek corridors are designated as 100-year floodplain (see Map 15).

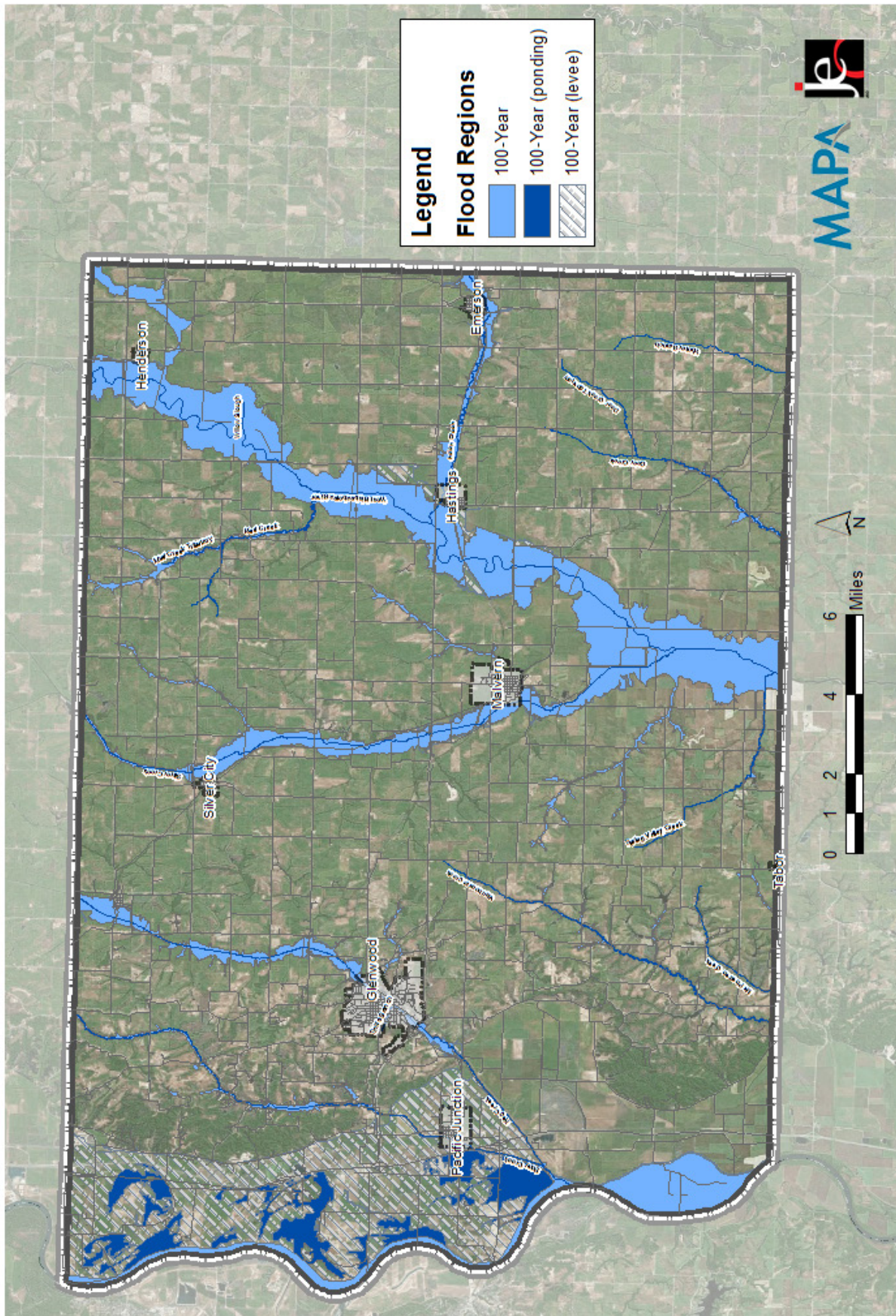
Figure 21 **Floodplain Diagram**



Levees

New guidelines for flood insurance maps put in place by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in August 2005 require levees sponsors to prove their levees meet the certification standards. Mills County contains miles of levees which protect it from the Missouri River, Pony Creek, and Keg Creek. FEMA is requiring these levees to be re-accredited, which would prove the protection they provide is adequate. Without accreditation insurance rates will rise. The economic impact of having unaccredited levees could be significant. Anticipated development along the Interstate 29 corridor, especially at the I-29/ US 34 interchange, could be placed in the floodplain. This is a major priority for the County.

Map 15 100-Year Floodplain Designation





[section 7.2]

ENVISION

Mills County is positioned to see continued development in the coming decades. Scenic lands and the prospect of a rural lifestyle appeal to a large segment of individuals and families looking to live in less densely populated areas of the metro. Agriculture is the dominant land use in Mills County and will likely continue to be even as more rural lots are subdivided for residential housing. Preserving the natural and scenic assets of the County while providing residential opportunities for new residents will require balance between County leaders and stakeholders.

Focus Group Meeting

Though there was no focus group specifically for land use and growth management, the topic was discussed in virtually all six of the focus group meetings the consultants facilitated. Below are comments that came out of those group discussions.

- The County is a good location for those looking to locate outside the city
- Residential development should occur in areas that make sense
- Acreage development is incompatible with surrounding agricultural land
- Loess Hills should be protected
- Farm/agricultural characteristics of the County are waning
- High taxes, regulations, zoning, fees, etc. hinder development

Big Ideas

- There needs to be a review on Board of Adjustment fees and policies
- Develop north in the County and go south
- Change parcel split allowance – three splits in 40 acres
- Reassess zoning
- The County needs to be strategic about where growth occurs

Town Hall Meeting

At the town hall meeting in Malvern, attendees were invited to answer a brief questionnaire related to land use. Attendees could also write comments or suggestions on the questionnaire form or on large aerial and land use maps.

- Commercial and industrial along 1-29 and US 34 are the preferred locations for new development, followed by areas within or adjacent to city limits
- The Loess Hills was largely identified as an area that should be protected by the County
- Regarding the County's role in protecting open space, respondents preferred protection of natural resources and conservation of open land, followed by a framework for limited development in conservation areas



SWOT Analysis

Though no comments were made directly related to land use during the SWOT analysis, some items were noted regarding development trends and County regulations that may affect land use decisions and overall growth management in the County. Below are the primary takeaways.

- There is a strong desire to preserve the Loess Hills and agricultural lands, however, there is an increasing market demand for acreages and subdivisions in rural areas
- County regulations for building and zoning have been characterized as restrictive to development, specifically residential housing

Elected and Appointed Officials Meeting

The following are questions and results from the elected and appointed officials meeting related to land use, growth and development.

Building and land use regulations as they currently exist in Mills County have _____?

- Hindered development [74%]
- Created well planned communities [21%]
- Have had little to no impact on new development [5%]

Which regulation has had the greatest negative impact?

- Subdivision [16%]
- Zoning [8%]
- Building permit [5%]
- Signage [3%]
- All of the above [65%]
- None [3%]
- Other [0%]

Which regulation has had the greatest positive impact?

- Zoning [21%]
- Building permit [10%]
- Subdivision [0%]
- Signage [0%]
- All of the above [10%]
- None [54%]
- Other [5%]

Is there a specific type of use affected more than others?

- Housing [82%]
- Commercial [11%]
- Industrial [5%]
- Other [3%]



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[section 7.3]

ACHIEVE

The Achieve section provides a summary of the previous sections and starts to identify priorities needed for future growth and development. Land Use and Growth Management identify how and where the County will grow and develop. As a consideration, it provides land use compatibility that ensures that land uses do not create conflict. Land use of the County has not changed in many material ways from previous land use plans. However, Mills County is open and receptive to new development, including commercial and industrial growth. The County's vision for expanded commercial and industrial uses is reflected in the Future Land Use Plan.

Future Land Use Plan

The Future Land Use component focuses on the development of the unincorporated areas of Mills County. The existing land use conditions and analysis were covered in the previous Profile section/chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

Comprehensive plans generally project into a 20 year time period, with Future Land Use as an important component of the document. Future Land Use resembles the desires, wishes, and collective ideas of participating citizens. The Future Land Use Map (Map 16) resembles those intentions with a long-range view and will be used as a guide for best land use choices. Variables and unforeseen changes may alter this map.

The Future Land Use Plan was established to promote compatible and complimentary development. As growth occurs in Mills County, the Future Land Use Plan should be evaluated and updated to take advantage of additional opportunities for development that may benefit the County.

The Future Land Use Plan assists Mills County in determining the type, direction, and timing of future growth. The criteria established in the Plan reflect the following:

- The current use of land within the County
- The desired types of growth, including location of growth
- Physical characteristics, as well as strengths and constraints of future growth
- Current population and economic trends affecting the County

The Future Land Use designations are based upon Mills County's current land uses within the desired intentions of the County. Future Land Use Plans apply a best-use strategy that includes natural and man-made limitations. A simple example is identifying the floodplain boundaries and using this land with low impact uses, like agricultural, open space, or park designations.

Mills County utilizes nine general land use categories to define different use types and characteristics. These categories have been chosen to reflect the basic use and intensity to which land in the County's jurisdiction are proposed to be developed. While the categories define land uses, they are intended to do so in a very general way; these land use categories are the basis for the zoning districts, but they are not the same, as zoning districts may be appropriate in a single land use category.



The Future Land Use Categories include:

- Agriculture
- Agricultural Residential
- Convenience Commercial
- Corridor Overlay District
- Highway Commercial
- Industrial
- Loess Hills
- Incorporated Area
- Village

Future Land Use Categories

Agriculture

The Agriculture land use promotes agriculture uses such as crop and animal production. A wide range of agriculture activity is encouraged in these areas, and although opportunities for other uses will exist, incompatible land uses should be avoided.

Agricultural Residential

The Agricultural Residential land use is intended to accommodate continued agricultural uses while allowing for residential acreages with lower intensity land uses. This designation is applied to determine that the land is best suited as productive farmland and less than ideal for County infrastructure and improvements. As current conditions provide, these less demanding land uses are best served by individual septic and water wells. Characteristics of the Agricultural Residential category include:

- Location of agricultural residential land is found surrounding the outer limits of contiguous urban land use and is typically less accessible to the transportation network.
- Accessory buildings are at a larger scale than in residential districts.
- Uses within this area include agricultural uses (with the exception of livestock feeding operations), wineries, single-family residential, parks and recreation, open space, and associated accessory uses.

Convenience Commercial

The Convenience Commercial land use is intended for commercial facilities that serve the needs of local and regional markets. Permitted commercial and office uses are generally compatible with nearby residential areas, with development standards designed to minimize the effects of traffic and operation characteristics. Convenience Commercial districts are appropriate at major intersections or at the periphery of a community.

Corridor Overlay District

The Corridor Overlay District land use is intended to establish alternative land development requirements within specific areas that require special attention, such as environmentally sensitive areas or rapidly developing strip corridors. The overlay is superimposed over conventional zoning districts.



Highway Commercial

The Highway Commercial land use includes major road corridors in rural areas that attract high quality commercial and industrial development. This district should allow commercial uses and limited industrial uses.

Industrial

The Industrial land use area focuses on the light industrial designation. Location is important, as proximity to major streets and highways can help ensure heavy traffic avoids residential areas and prominent pedestrian activity centers. Careful consideration shall be given before designation of any industrial uses so as not to encroach upon, or conflict with, less intensive uses, or detract from important new corridors.

The Industrial land use area is intended to accommodate smaller, less intensive industrial uses. Characteristics of the Industrial designation include:

- Locations that cater to the specific needs of the user, including adequate water, sewer, and electrical capacity, proximity to major transportation routes, and lot sizes necessary to accommodate initial development and potential future expansions.
- Significant landscaping and buffering should be used to screen industrial uses from view of adjacent, non-industrial land uses as well as transportation and view corridors.
- The design and exterior surface treatments should reinforce existing development patterns of neighboring improved areas.
- In newly developing areas, design themes should strengthen the overall image of the development consistent with the character of Mills County.
- Strict control over signage, landscaping, and design is necessary for site design to provide adequate buffer from adjacent land uses and transportation corridors.
- Uses within these areas include warehousing, distribution, manufacturing, assembly, production companies, employment centers, self-storage facilities, etc.

Loess Hills

The Loess Hills land use recognizes the importance of the fragile and unique landform of the Loess Hills and the demand for residential development within the area. The concept of conservation development encourages preservation of areas that are environmentally sensitive or have scenic significance.

Incorporated Area

The Incorporated Area land use designation represents the municipal geographies of incorporated cities that exist outside the jurisdiction of a county. There are seven incorporated cities in Mills County.

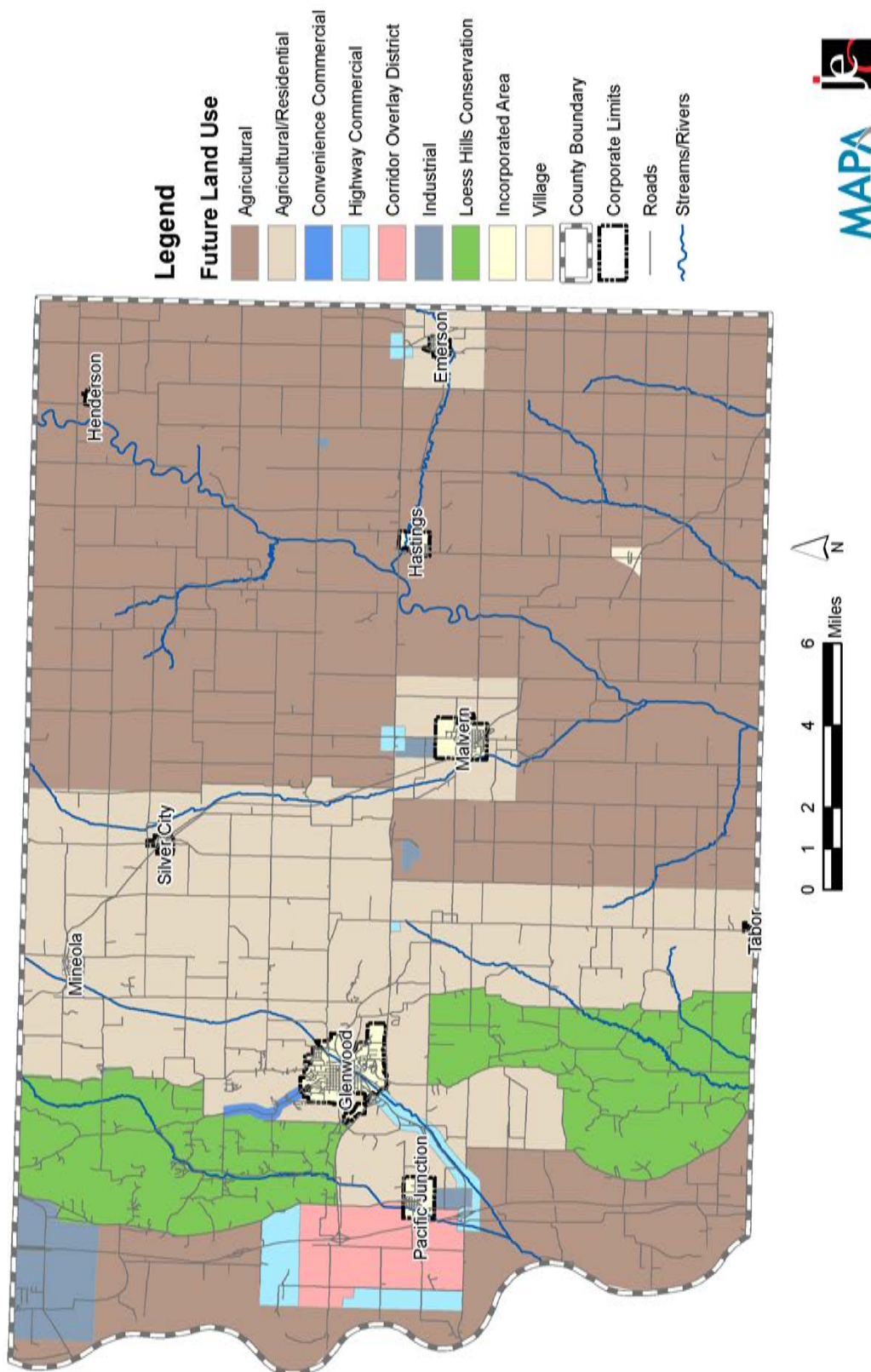
Village

The Village land use is intended to provide for residential and commercial development



in existing, long-standing rural unincorporated villages. These areas generally include single-family detached and attached dwellings on relatively large lots, sometimes with supporting community facilities. The Village land use is appropriate to Mineola and Strahan.

Map 16
Future Land Use





[section 7.4]

IMPLEMENT

Considering the findings of the previous sections, the Implement section offers guidance on how to manage future growth and development of the County. Here we outline the goals, policies, and action steps for Land Use and Growth Management. Policies and action steps give more detail and describe the activities needed to achieve the desired goals of the County. Policies are part of the value system linking goals with action steps, and they define the broader goals with more detailed descriptions. The adopted action steps synthesize the information from the existing profile of the County and public input from the visioning component of the Comprehensive Plan. Action steps are a means to achieve the goals established by the community and they imply a clear commitment to Mills County's future development.

Goal:

Mills County will utilize the Comprehensive Plan to identify areas for implementation of appropriate zoning and subdivision regulations to facilitate responsible growth and development.

Policies:

- Implement the County-wide land use pattern that ensures compatible and complementary relationships between land uses and jurisdictions.
- Promote land use development within the zoning jurisdictions and municipalities.
- Develop a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to properly plan and budget for public improvements to support growth in the areas identified on the future land use map.
- Development should be designed in a manner that identifies the infrastructure of adjacent development and provides continuation and connectivity of those facilities throughout the immediate area.
- Coordinate with Offutt Air Force Base Community Planning Office to preserve the Military Compatibility Area Overlay District.

Action Items:

- Analyze and amend zoning regulations to reflect desired density requirements that facilitate population growth capacity while considering preservation of sensitive and prioritized lands.
- Continue to enforce the Loess Hills Conservation Development District to protect the sensitive Loess Hills.
 - Provide no development incentives in this District.
 - Limit public improvements in this District to those that exist today.
 - All development in the District shall require net grading.
- Review the adjacent community land uses for compatibility on all proposed zone changes. Use 28E Agreements where appropriate.



- Locate commercial and/or industrial development in areas of the County that have adequate infrastructure present and do not infringe on residences.
- Adopt building codes and zoning ordinances in partnership with the Joint Land Use Study and Offutt Air Force Base.

Goal:

Support the continued viability of Offutt Air Force Base through the reduction, elimination or mitigation of present and/or future land use compatibility issues.

Policies:

- Incorporate JLUS goals, policies, and actions applicable to Mills County in the Comprehensive Plan Amendment to assure that land use regulations and decisions are carried out in ways that diminish existing conflicts and avoid creating new ones.

Action Items:

- Follow and comply with federal standards within the Noise and Safety Military Compatibility Areas and Critical Parcel Area as outlined in the 2015 Offutt Air Force Base Joint Land Use Study, depicted in Map 12 on page 133.
- Provide Offutt Air Force Base personnel with advance notification of proposed or pending development applications within the Military Compatibility Overlay District as outlined in the 2015 Offutt Air Force Base Joint Land Use Study Final Report and collaborate with Offutt Air Force Base in regards to the timing, nature and extent of planned Capital Facilities which may have positive or negative impacts on the Air Force Base's mission and/or operations.
- Coordinate with Offutt Air Force Base with regard to the timely review and comment on the form and substance of the Mills County Comprehensive Plan.
- Continue to collaborate with leadership of Offutt Air Force Base through joint meetings, discussion and applicable forums.



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Chapter 8

Goals & Objectives

8.1	Introduction	#
8.2	Goals, Policies, and Action Steps	#
8.3	Implementation Tools	#
8.4	Plan Maintenance	#
8.5	Achieving the Plan - Phasing	#



Goals & Objectives

[section 8.1]

INTRODUCTION

This chapter pulls all the goals and policies outlined within this Plan to form actionable short-term strategies and projects that are important to the people of Mills County that contribute to the County's long-term growth and development. Here we identify the action steps necessary to implement the County's goals.

Implementation refers to the policies and actions that have been identified to carry out the vision of this Comprehensive Plan update. It includes actions designed to improve the long range planning process, strengthen links between the Plan and capital improvement budgeting, establish a process reporting system to monitor the progress and schedule for updating and amending the Plan in the future.

The success of this Comprehensive Plan update is contingent on the implementation of the goals and policies identified in this section. While the role of the Planning and Zoning Commission is to ensure the orderly growth of the County by adherence to the Comprehensive Plan, it is up to the stakeholders in Mills County to champion the projects envisioned to the implementation of it. What happens with the Plan, how it is used in day-to-day decision making, and the extent to which it is followed over time will all influence the success of the Plan. This Plan is a living guidance document meant to reflect the current and future vision of the County as it evolves. It is not the end of the planning process, but the beginning of a coordinated effort to direct growth and development in ways that are important to the citizens of Mills County.

[section 8.2]

GOALS, POLICIES, & ACTION STEPS

Here we outline the goals, policies, and action steps for the entire Comprehensive Plan. Objectives and action steps give more detail and describe the activities needed to achieve the desired goals of the County. Policies are part of the value system linking goals with action steps and they define the broader goals with more detailed descriptions. The adopted action steps synthesize the information from the existing profile of the County and the public input from the visioning component of this Comprehensive Plan. Action steps are a means to achieve the goals established by the County and they imply a clear commitment to Mills County's future development.



FACILITIES & SERVICES

Goal:

Mills County will annually evaluate the existing facilities and services to determine the necessity for upgrades and improvements to provide adequate services to its citizens.

Policies:

- Explore options for improvements to telecommunications throughout the County.
- Manage capital expenses efficiently by developing long range plans and a capital improvement plan.
- Enhance public safety services.
- Review services for aging population.

Action Items:

- Identify and promote a transportation service to facilitate better mobility for elderly residents.
- Create and bi-annually update facilities study to determine the needs and opportunities of all County buildings, roads and bridges.
- Utilize a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).
- Coordinate community and County services to provide reliable emergency response times for fire, law enforcement, and rescue.
- Partner with regional service providers.

UTILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

Goal:

Infrastructure investments shall be implemented in a cost-effective manner that simultaneously manages growth consistent to the Mills County Comprehensive Plan and provides quality service to residents.

Policies:

- Coordinate utility improvements and extensions with communities.
- Maintain transportation infrastructure that enhances the safe and efficient movement of people, goods, and services.
- Plan, program and implement cost effective, safe and efficient infrastructure and public facilities system within the rural area.
- Improve water quality and quantity throughout the County.

Action Items:

- Create 5-year CIP to manage capital expenses efficiently while coordinating and implementing infrastructure projects to be completed at the same time.
- Encourage new development adjacent to existing development through policies on infrastructure extensions and subdivision regulations.



- Evaluate innovative engineering for efficient infrastructure opportunities for new development.
- Work with local communities, state and federal agencies, and rural water districts to identify and implement a prioritized improvement plan to provide a quality water system for all residents.
- Explore the potential to serve portions of the County with potable water with a rural water district.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES & RECREATION

Goal:

Protect, conserve, and utilize natural resources and critical environmental areas throughout Mills County.

Policies:

- Partner with municipalities and other entities to coordinate and help implement the Mills County Trails Plan.
- Utilize recreational, cultural, and special event venues or amenities throughout the County to further promote recreation and tourism-based economic development.
- Future developments should be constructed while maintaining natural topographical features, drainage ways, and tree cover.
- Future developments should be designed and constructed in a manner which minimize stormwater runoff erosion issues.
- Provide recreational opportunities and facilities for all age ranges. This includes review of existing facilities and programming, as well as developing new opportunities.

Action Items:

- Enforce floodplain zoning district to protect sensitive and prioritized lands within the Mills County zoning jurisdiction.
- Discourage development in the floodplain through zoning regulations and enforcement.
- Amend Subdivision Regulations to minimize grading and erosion where possible to protect the unique and valued topography as well as drainage patterns.
- Work with IHSEM and FEMA for updated mapping of local rivers and streams.
- Recertify Missouri River levee system to protect property.
- Expand and enhance recreational opportunities including: water trails, RV parks, hunting, and more.
- Support county-wide trails maintenance and expansion.
- Implement the West Nishnabotna Watershed project.



HOUSING

Goal:

Mills County will promote a broad range of housing choices, and ensure the existing housing stock in the community is maintained to fit the needs of existing and future residents.

Policies:

- Along with single-family housing, encourage the development of housing choices to fit retirees and the elderly.
- Ensure that Mills County, along with local jurisdictions within, provide diverse options in relation to lot size, density, and type for residential development.
- Strive to improve substandard conditions in rural Mills County by providing a planned program for clean-up and reuse of deteriorated areas.
- Promote entry level and young family housing opportunities.

Action Items:

- Establish an annual review and modification process of zoning districts and regulations to encourage both development and redevelopment activities for housing.
- Utilize Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) and Southwest Iowa Housing Trust Funds (SWIHTF) to access Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Iowa Finance Authority funding for housing rehabilitation and development.
- Enforce existing nuisance ordinances directed at maintaining personal property to keep housing units in good condition and as not to detract from the overall aesthetic quality of Mills County.
- Market and recruit developers for the construction of new elderly housing in or adjacent to cities.
- Pursue infrastructure development or improvements that support new housing.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal:

To improve the long-term economic sustainability of Mills County through an economic development agenda focused on job creation, job retention, and tax base enhancements enriching the quality of life for all citizens of the County.

Policies:

- Identify and pursue infrastructure improvements to support economic development and job growth along the major corridors in the County.
- Minimize land use conflicts that would impede commercial and industrial growth in areas planned for those uses.
- Provide opportunities and incentives for development that will encourage economic stability and strengthen the overall tax base of the County.



- Identify space/locations for new commercial and/or industrial businesses throughout the land use plan.
- Recruit additional businesses and implement the I-29 and Highway 34 master plan.
- Support existing Mills County businesses and workforce.
- Partner with state and regional agencies that support economic development activities.

Action Items:

- Partner with local and regional utility providers to install new services for the marketability and support of commercial and industrial sites.
- Continue to promote Mills County economic development opportunities with Advance Southwest Iowa Corporation.
- Identify and prioritize land adjacent to the cities for commercial and/or industrial businesses that can be served with public utilities and infrastructure.
- Continue to work with Mills County Economic Development Board to attract and retain business.
- Use tax increment and urban revitalization incentives where applicable.
- Promote development at Interstate 29 interchanges that provide services to highway traffic and regional rural areas within the County.
- Encourage development of local businesses at strategic locations along highway corridors adjacent to communities.
- Improve telecommunications infrastructure throughout the County so that internet is not a barrier to companies of any size or home based businesses.
- Promote new housing to support the economic development efforts.
- Encourage enhanced tourism and special event facilities that attracts additional visitors to Mills County.

LAND USE & GROWTH MANAGEMENT**Goal:**

Mills County will utilize the Comprehensive Plan to identify areas for implementation of appropriate zoning and subdivision regulations to facilitate responsible growth and development.

Policies:

- Implement the County-wide land use pattern that ensures compatible and complementary relationships between land uses and jurisdictions.
- Promote land use development within the zoning jurisdictions and municipalities.
- Develop a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to properly plan and budget for public improvements to support growth in the areas identified on the future land use map.



- Development should be designed in a manner that identifies the infrastructure of adjacent development and provides continuation and connectivity of those facilities throughout the immediate area.
- Coordinate with Offutt Air Force Base Community Planning Office to preserve the Military Compatibility Area Overlay District.

Action Items:

- Analyze and amend zoning regulations to reflect desired density requirements that facilitate population growth capacity while considering preservation of sensitive and prioritized lands.
- Continue to enforce the Loess Hills Conservation Development District to protect the sensitive Loess Hills.
 - Provide no development incentives in this District.
 - Limit public improvements in this District to those that exist today.
 - All development in the District shall require net grading.
- Review the adjacent community land uses for compatibility on all proposed zone changes. Use 28E Agreements where appropriate.
- Locate commercial and/or industrial development in areas of the community that have adequate infrastructure present and do not infringe on residences.
- Adopt building codes and zoning ordinances in partnership with the JLUS and Offutt Air Force Base.

Goal:

Support the continued viability of Offutt Air Force Base through the reduction, elimination or mitigation of present and/or future land use compatibility issues.

Policies:

- Incorporate JLUS goals, policies, and actions applicable to Mills County in the Comprehensive Plan Amendment to assure that land use regulations and decisions are carried out in ways that diminish existing conflicts and avoid creating new ones.

Action Items:

- Follow and comply with federal standards within the Noise and Safety Military Compatibility Areas and Critical Parcel Area as outlined in the 2015 Offutt Air Force Base Joint Land Use Study. Depicted in Map 12 on page 133.
- Provide Offutt Airforce Base personnel with advance notification of proposed or pending development applications within the Military Compatibility Overlay District as outlined in the 2015 Offutt Air Force Base Joint Land Use Study Final Report and collaborate with Offutt Air Force Base in regards to the timing, nature and extent of planned Capital Facilities which may have positive or negative impacts on the Air Force Base's mission and/or operations.



- Coordinate with Offutt Air Force Base with regard to the timely review and comment on the form and substance of the Mills County Comprehensive Plan.
- Continue to collaborate with leadership and Offutt Air Force Base through joint meetings, discussion and applicable forums.

IMPLEMENTATION, EVALUATION, AND REVIEW

Goal:

Mills County will facilitate efforts for future review and updating of the Mills County Comprehensive Plan and its supporting documents through continuous public participation.

Policies:

- Annually review the Mills County Comprehensive Plan to ensure the document remains current and relevant.
- Continually recruit and educate residents for service on the Mills County Planning Commission and other County bodies as needed.
- Utilize state and regional partners for implementation of the vision documented in the Comprehensive Plan.

Action Items:

- Establish an annual review process of the Mills County Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision Regulations.
- Adjust the policies in the Comprehensive Plan as necessary based upon new opportunities and the citizens' desires.
- Develop an ongoing educational program relating to community planning and development issues so that residents are informed about planning decisions and become more familiar with any new developments within and surrounding the community.
- Actively participate in the Advance Southwest Iowa Corporation, Greater Omaha Chamber, Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA), and the Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC).

[section 8.3]

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

The steps toward each goal in a comprehensive plan require the use of several tools and mechanisms in order to be obtained, realized, and sustained. Mills County will need to continually develop its own set of implementation tools and strategies, recognizing that each has unique strengths and weaknesses. Implementation strategies can be separated into several tool categories and programs, each with its distinct characteristics that make them suitable for specific goals and circumstances.

Support Programs

Three programs will play a vital role in the success of the comprehensive plan



implementation. These programs are:

Capital Improvements Financing

A capital improvements plan provides an annual predictable investment plan that uses a one to six year horizon to schedule and fund projects integral to the plan's implementation.

Zoning Regulations

Zoning regulations update zoning districts and regulations, which may include design guidelines, to reflect the development goals of the comprehensive plan update to allow the County to provide direction for future growth.

Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision regulations establish criteria for environmental impact regulations and the division of land into building areas and public improvements. Implementing infrastructure investments is a primary function of subdivision regulations.

Public Education

In addition to the identified programs, broad public support and involvement is crucial to the successful development and implementation of any broad-based policy or program. If adequate public support is to be developed, a program including and educating County residents and stakeholders is paramount. Political leadership of Mills County should strive to implement and utilize public engagement by creating an educational process on land use and development issues. The County should make the comprehensive plan and development regulations available online. Ongoing education and promotion will be an important factor in sustaining interest and motivation from community members.

Some of the policies of the comprehensive plan cannot be achieved unless the actions of public private partnerships can be leveraged. Frequently, constraints prevent organizations from collaborating effectively (i.e. financial resources, legal authority, excess regulation, etc.). Efforts should be made to identify and bridge these gaps with open communication, cooperation, and realization that issues at hand could benefit the health, safety, and general welfare of the residents and business community of Mills County.

Special Studies and Plans

Additional studies and plans can be helpful to further explore and define a vision of a certain area, corridor, or development site. Conducting studies and corresponding decisions as opportunities and challenges arise can ensure that investments are made in accordance with the comprehensive plan. It is also important to update these studies/plans as needed. Some examples of additional planning efforts that can further develop ideas expressed in the plan include:

- Housing Master Plan
- Facilities Management Plan
- Site Development Plans
- Blight and Substandard Determination Studies



Land Use Suitability

One over-arching goal of the comprehensive plan is to guide development and the development community by:

- Describing the relationship between land uses
- Minimizing land use conflicts between neighboring parcels
- Establishing criteria or design standards new development must meet
- Creating consistent characteristics with each land use district

Land Use Transition

Development projects should provide, if needed, screening, buffers, or additional setback requirements when located next to existing uses. Screening or buffers may be plant material, earthen berms, fencing, or a combination of the listed. Boundaries between land uses are done along streets, alleys, natural features (streams, railroads, etc.) and lot lines whenever possible. This can be done through zoning ordinances.

[section 8.4]

PLAN MAINTENANCE

The Comprehensive Plan Update is the County's collective vision, yet change is inevitable. Major technologies and new community needs will arise during the planning period, which were not foreseen during the plan's development. Jobs, housing, transportation, and goods and services will evolve over time. The amendment process to the Comprehensive Plan must accommodate and help manage the inevitable change in a way that best promotes, and does not compromise, the County's core values, health and well-being. The plan amendment process must be an open and fair process, utilizing sound planning, economic, social and ecological principals.

If new significant development opportunities arise which impact several elements of the plan, and are determined to be of importance, a plan amendment may be proposed and considered separately from the annual review and other proposed plan amendments. The Board of Supervisors or Planning and Zoning Commission shall compile a list of proposed amendments received during a year in preparation for a report to provide pertinent information on each proposal, and recommend action on the proposed amendments. The comprehensive plan amendment process should adhere to the adoption process specified by Iowa Code and should provide for organized participation and involvement of interested citizens and stakeholders.

Since this plan is a living, breathing document, it needs to be monitored for continued relevancy. Although the plan uses a 20-year planning time period, intervening time points should be utilized to measure progress toward long-term goals, to make adjustments based on changed conditions or preferences, and to provide short and midterm guidance for land use decisions. In doing so, the ultimate planning time period will move as well, constantly evolving to keep the plan current and relevant.



Approximately every five years, the Comprehensive Plan should undergo a major update. Five years is recommended as the appropriate time interval for major updates for several reasons:

- More frequent updates creates a burden on County staff and resources.
- Less frequent updates risks the relevancy of the plan.
- Finally, federal census data is available every decade, making a five-year review period the midpoint between census updates.

The common elements of a five-year update include reviewing and extending growth projections, reviewing County-wide goals, and analyzing amendments.

Annual Review of Plan

A relevant, up to date plan is critical to its on-going planning success. To maintain the confidence and buy-in of both the public and private sectors, and to incorporate updates, the plan must stay current. An annual review should occur when the Comprehensive Plan Citizen Advisory Committee, Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Supervisors, residents, and County staff are able to review the plan and recommend necessary changes.

After adoption of the comprehensive plan, opportunities should be provided to identify any changes in conditions that would impact elements or policies of the plan. The annual review process needs to involve regularly monitoring trends and changes in the local, regional, state, and federal landscape. Such trends and changes may include changes in development activity and use, trends in development regulation amendments, and changes in planning and zoning law. At the beginning of each year at the annual review, a report should be prepared by the Comprehensive Plan Citizen Advisory Committee and/or the Planning Commission that provides information and recommendations on whether the plan is current in respect to population and economic changes, and if the recommended policies are still valid for the County and its long-term growth.

The Planning and Zoning Commission should hold a public hearing on this report to:

- Provide citizens or developers with an opportunity to comment and/or present possible changes to the plan;
- Identify any changes in the status of projects or action items called for in the plan; and
- Bring forth any issues, or identify any changes in conditions which may impact the validity of the plan.

If the Commission finds major policy issues or major changes in basic assumptions or conditions have arisen which could necessitate revisions to the plan, they should recommend changes or further study of those changes.



Conditions of Plan Amendment

Comprehensive Plan amendment procedures are necessary to determine what constitutes conformity or non-conformity with the plan. It is impossible to set hard and fast rules for such decisions but consistent criteria should be used when making this determination. The following criteria are recommended:

- A request for increases in residential density or non-residential floor area in excess of the guidelines established in the plan.
- Land use request involving major differences from those shown in the plan.
- Requests for variations or changes in the alignment of designated roadways should be considered in conformity if the continuity of the roadway is maintained, the alignment does not result in traffic safety issues or reductions in needed capacity, does not constrain the proper development of contiguous properties, and does not conflict with or preempt other planned uses or facilities.
- Requests to deviate from plan-specific requirements such as open space and traffic reduction measures generally should not be permitted in order to ensure equitable treatment of all property owners and to avoid arbitrary decisions which would undermine the legal foundation of the plan.
- The final criteria must always be whether the request, whatever its nature, will set a precedent for cumulative changes which are not consistent with the plan. Therefore, in those instances when the implications of the request are not easily observed or detected, a request for a plan amendment should be required.

Evaluating Plan Developments

The interpretation of the plan should be comprised of a continuous and related series of analyses, with references to the goals and objectives/policies, the overall land use plan, and specific land use policies. Moreover, when considering specific proposed developments, interpretation of the plan should include a thorough review of all sections of the plan.

If a development proposal is not consistently supported by the Comprehensive Plan, serious consideration should be given to making modifications to the proposal, or the following criteria should be used to determine if a comprehensive plan amendment would be justified:

- The character of the adjacent parcels
- The zoning and uses on nearby properties
- The suitability of the property for the uses allowed under the current zoning designation
- The type and extent of positive or negative impact that may affect adjacent properties, or the County at large, if the request is approved
- The impact of the proposal on public utilities and facilities
- The length of time that the subject and adjacent properties have been utilized for their current uses



- The benefits of the proposal to the public health, safety, and welfare compared to the hardship imposed on the applicant if the request is not allowed
- Comparison between the plan and the proposed change regarding the relative conformance to the goals and objectives/policies
- Consideration of professional staff recommendations

[section 8.5]

ACHIEVING THE PLAN – PHASING

Various recommendations are suggested as part of the implementation process for Mills County. These recommendations are based upon public input, staff input, observations, and experience. Such recommended actions are classified as immediate, short-term, long-term, and continuing. These actions are only recommendations and may change annually.

Immediate Recommendations

- Identify land appropriate for commercial and industrial uses that is adjacent to cities and can be served with public utilities and infrastructure.
- Explore opportunities to market Mills County and promote special events and attractions.
- Establish an annual review process of the Mills County Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision Regulations.
- Pursue independent senior housing options.
- Work to adopt a brand or promotional message for the County.

Short-Term Recommendations

- Utilize a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).
- Explore the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and other incentives where appropriate.
- Market and recruit developers for the construction of new housing for seniors.
- Work with internet and cellular service providers to identify solutions to improve coverage throughout the County.
- Continue to work with utility providers and seek alternatives to finance enhancement and expansion of electricity and gas to sites ideal for commercial and industrial development.

Long-Term Recommendations

- Recertify the Missouri River levee.
- Prepare a feasibility study to develop rural water service.
- Seek funding and partners to establish a housing rehabilitation and development program.
- Implement the West Nishnabotna Watershed project to improve drainage and mitigate soil runoff and erosion.



- Promote businesses that serve current and expected clientele of the County.
- Recruit businesses that support major industries and clusters in the Omaha-Council Bluffs area.
- Establish a program to encourage entrepreneurial development and networking.

Continuing Recommendations

- Discourage intensive development in flood prone areas.
- Continue to support County trails initiatives and promote trail enhancement and expansion where appropriate.
- Explore options to enhance County parks and recreational areas.
- Educate residents on community planning and development issues and recruit volunteers to serve on County boards and committees.
- Utilize cooperative service agreements as appropriate to share resources and reduce redundancies.
- Actively participate in the Advance Southwest Iowa Corporation, Greater Omaha Chamber, Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA), and the Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC).



Appendix

Pages 159 - 175



Appendix

Mills County Comprehensive Plan Update

February 16, 2017

Elected and Appointed Officials Meeting

Meeting Summary

On Thursday, February 16, 2017, JEO and MAPA facilitated a meeting of elected and appointed officials, stakeholders, and citizens of Mills County regarding the county's current comprehensive plan update. Thirty-nine participants attended the meeting that was held at Glenwood Community High School. Holly Jackson of Mills County Building and Zoning opened the meeting and introduced JEO and MAPA staff in attendance. Lynn Dittmer of JEO presented on recent county demographics and trends, the comprehensive planning process and a plan's relationship to zoning, and the status of the county's current plan update. Grant Anderson of MAPA introduced participants to the Turning Point Technology clickers used to answer survey questions. Twenty-one questions were asked of attendees related to the following themes: natural resources and recreation, infrastructure and utilities, housing, economic development and growth, and services. The questions asked were meant to solicit feedback on comments and information noted in previous planning meetings, and generate further discussion on any issues that have not been addressed to date.

Input from this meeting will be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for review.

Also attached to this document are:

Attachment A - Meeting sign-in sheet

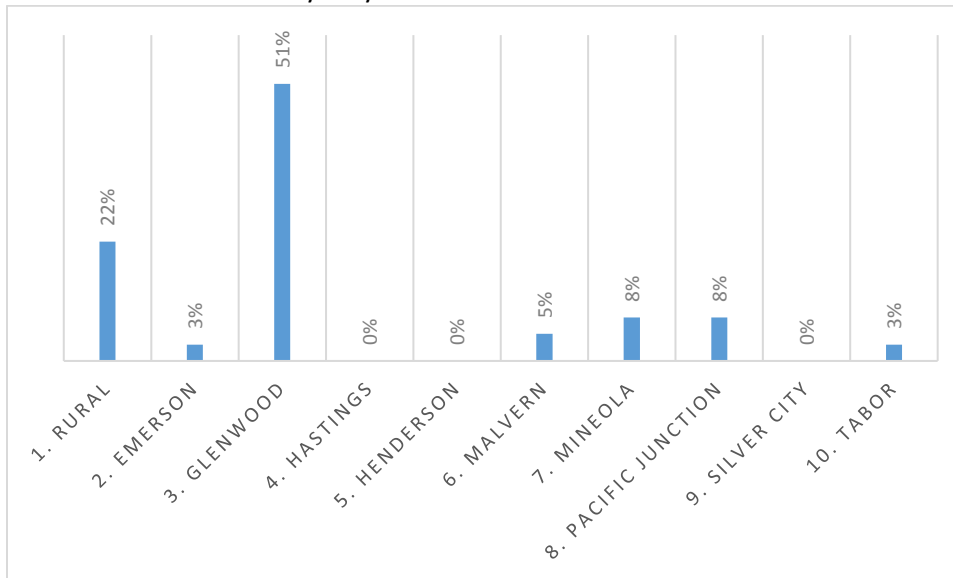
Attachment B - Additional written comments

Survey Questions

Participant comments have been included, by question.

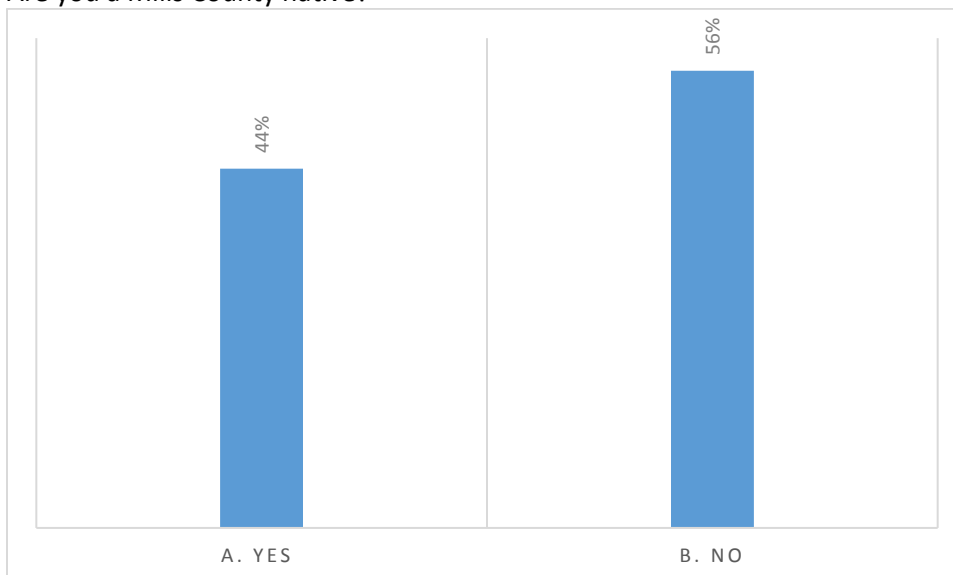
Question #1:

What area of Mills County do you call home?



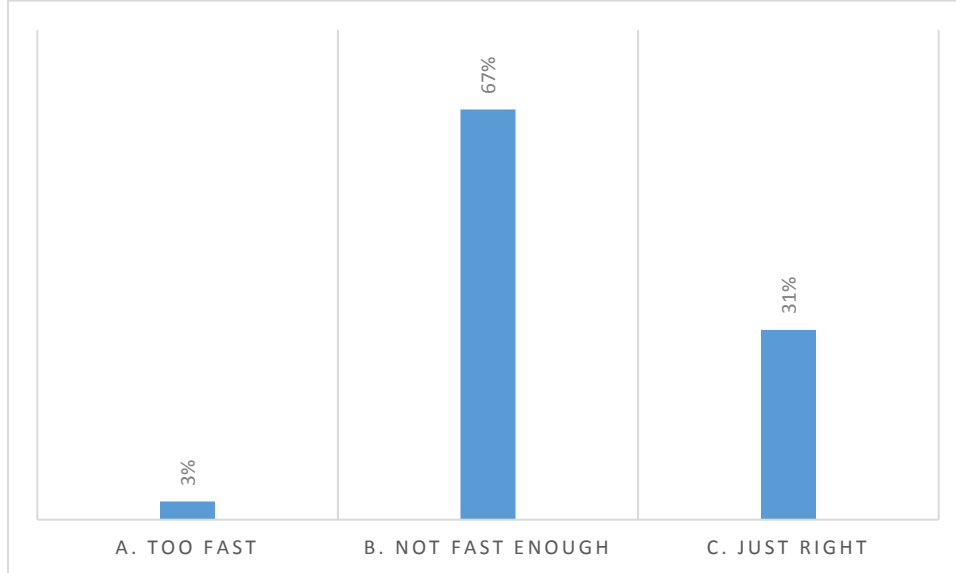
Question #2:

Are you a Mills County native?



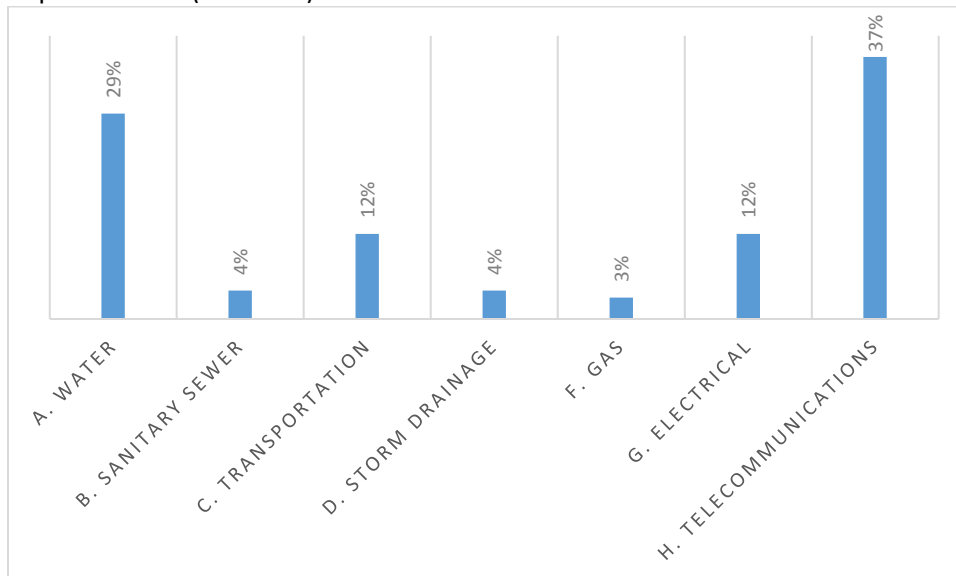
Question #3:

How would you characterize growth in Mills County?



Question #4:

Which of the following infrastructure areas do you feel have deficiencies or opportunities for improvement? (choose 2)

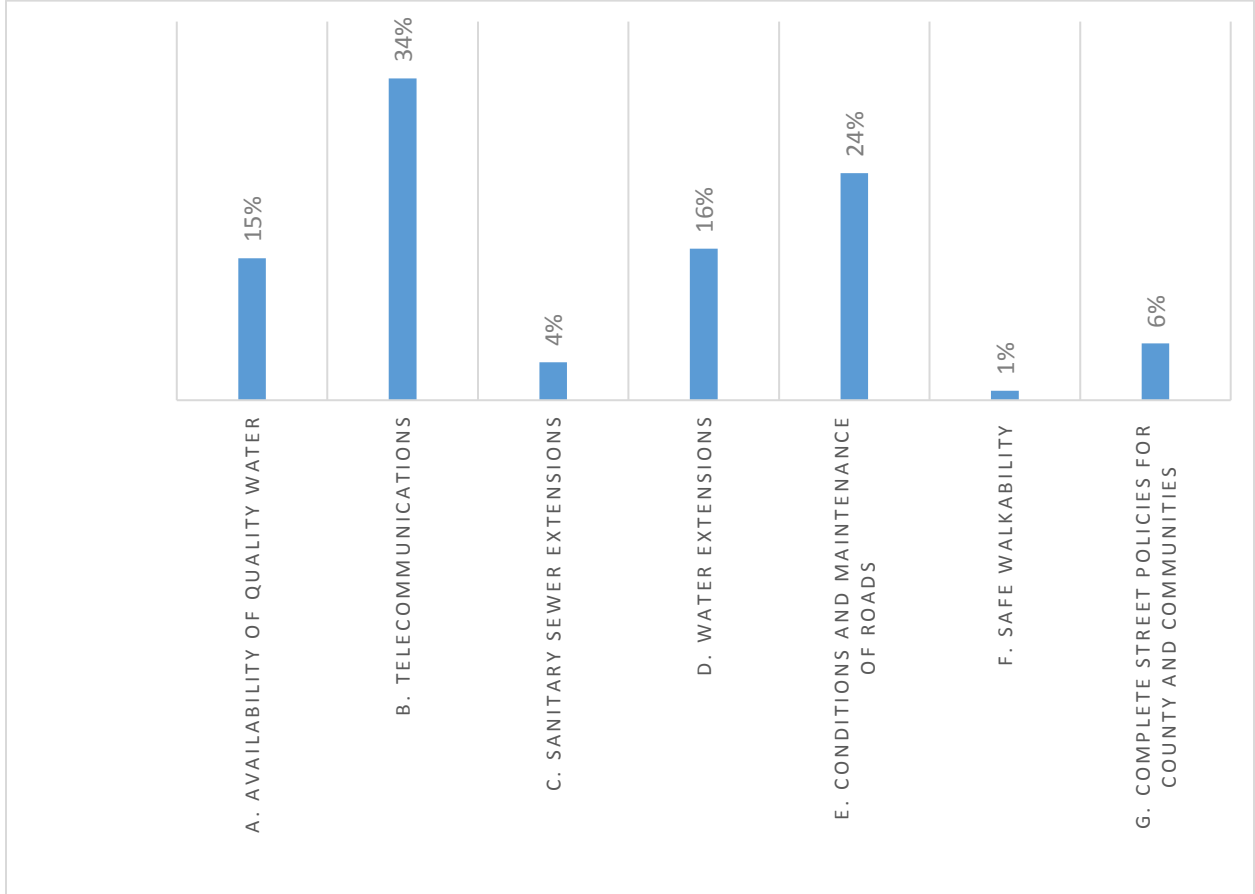


Participant comments:

- Water service besides a well is desired
- Electricity is a real need – currently unable to get large amounts of power to Hwy 34/I-29

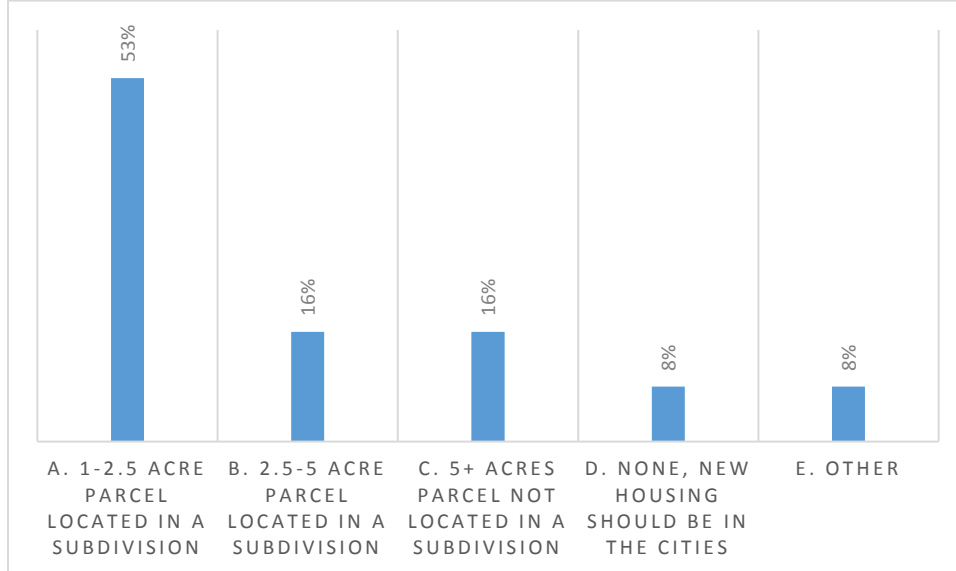
Question #5:

Which would you say should be the biggest priority related to infrastructure and utilities? (choose 2)



Question #6:

What types of housing do you believe are needed in the unincorporated area of the County?

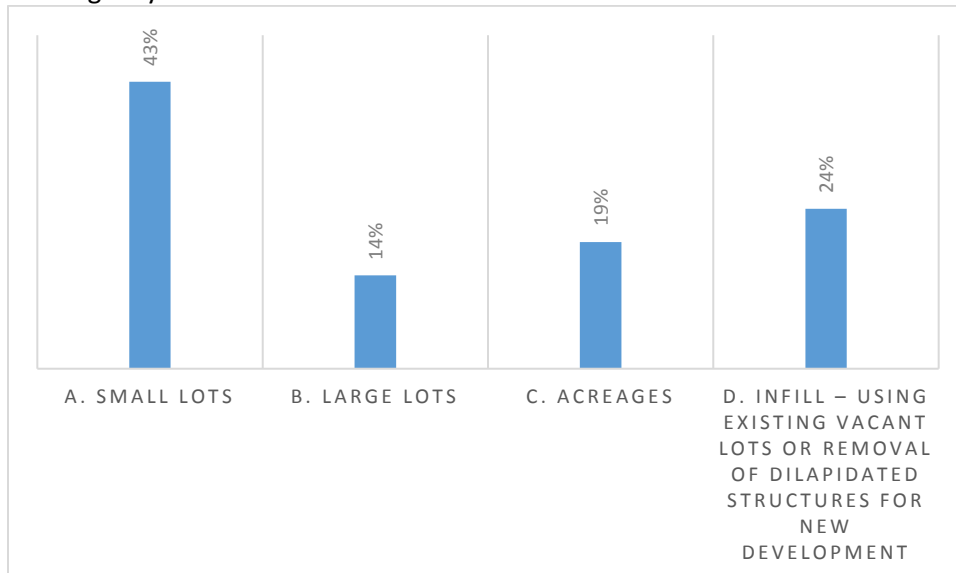


Participant comments:

- What about non subdivided? Farmers want to split
- Hearing a need for less than an acre as well as 5+ acres
- Is water and sewer included in the outline questions? That makes a big difference

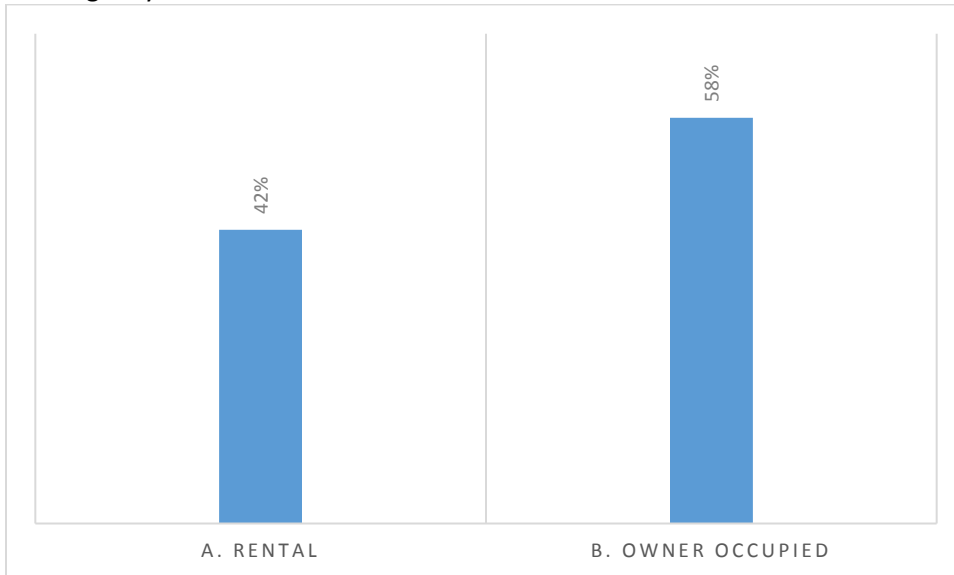
Question #7:

When considering housing within the incorporated areas of the County, what type of single family housing do you believe are needed?



Question #8:

Again, when considering housing within the incorporated areas of the County, what type of multi-family housing do you believe is needed?

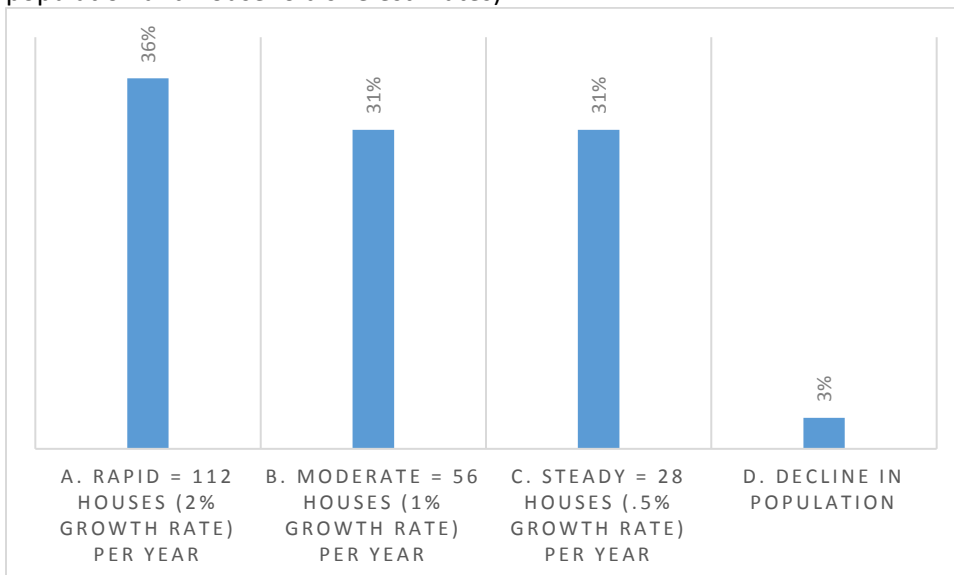


Participant comments:

- Several noted a gap/need in senior housing although the group as a whole was not particularly vocal on this

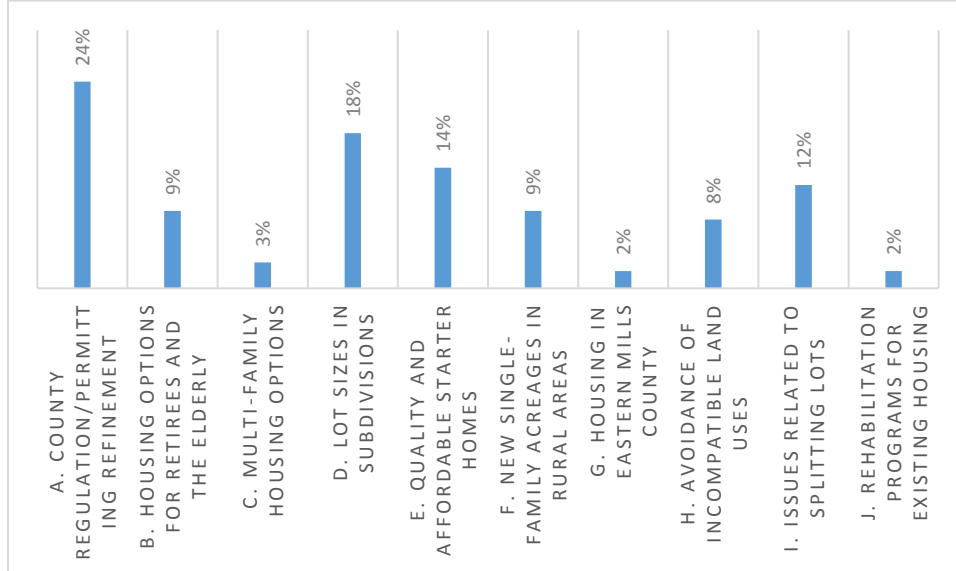
Question #9:

What is the optimal population growth scenario for Mills County moving forward? (based on 2015 population and household size estimates)



Question #10:

Which would you say should be the biggest priority related to housing? (choose 2)

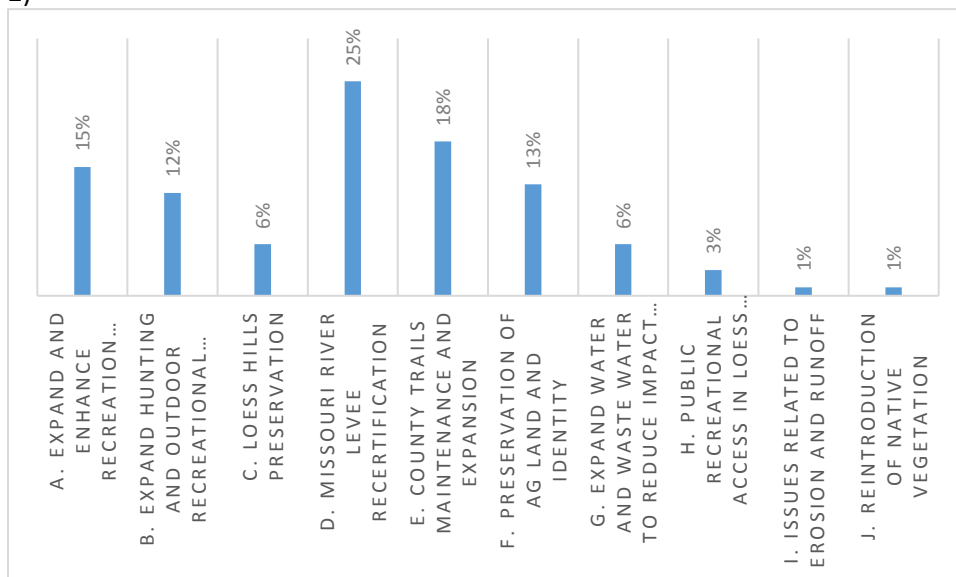


Participant comments:

- Cost of infrastructure is high due to regulations/requirements
- Hard to get return on investment
- Allow more splits before becoming a major subdivision
- Splits of 40 acres
- Driveway and private road regulations are a big challenge
- If regulations were a bit more relaxed, everyone would be busier – schools, builders, zoning department, etc.

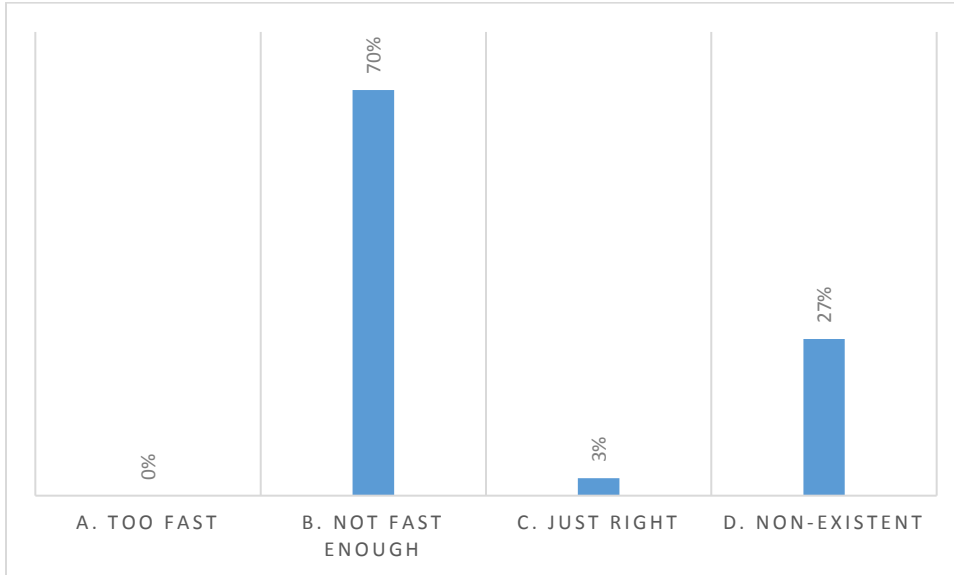
Question #11:

Which would you say should be the biggest priority related to natural resources and recreation? (choose 2)



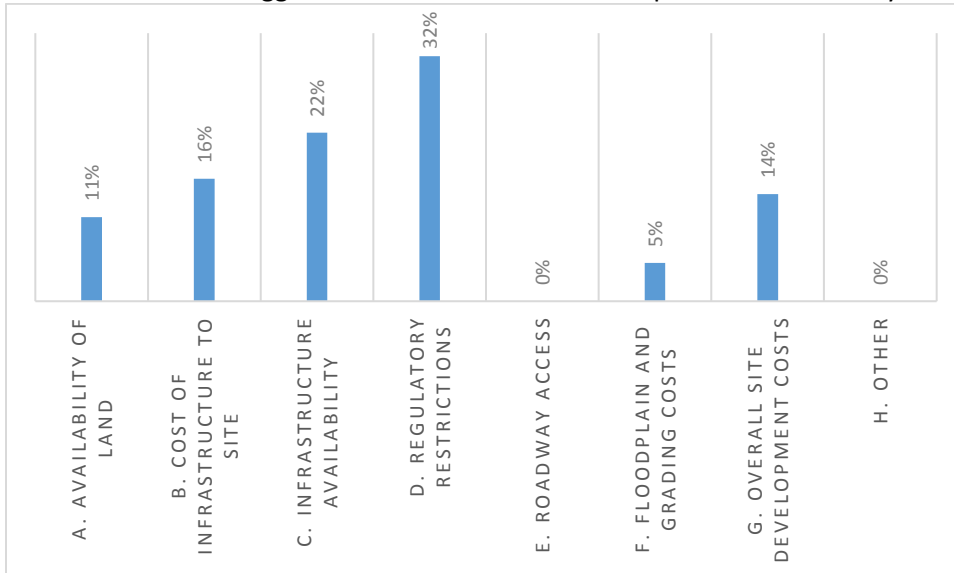
Question #12:

How would you characterize job growth in Mills County?



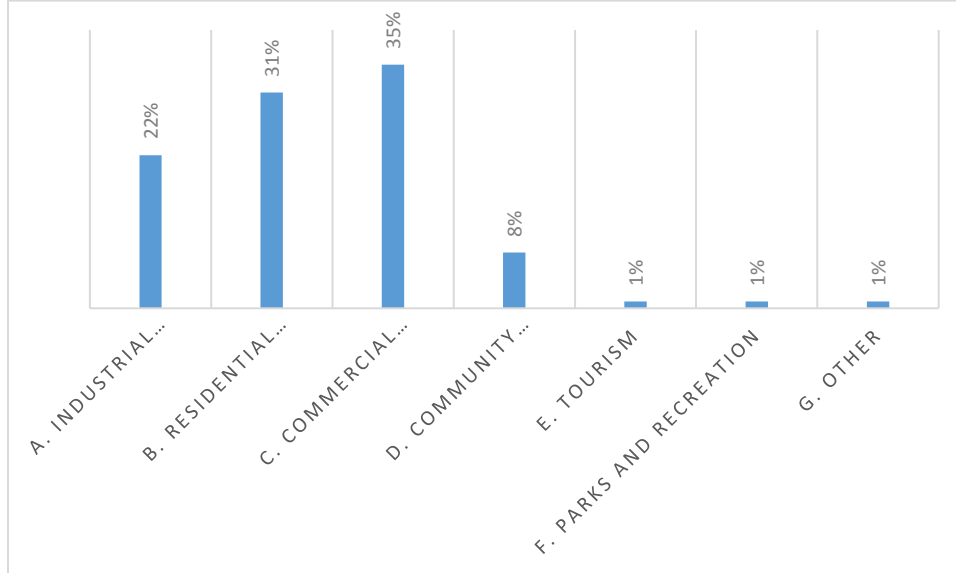
Question #13:

What has been the biggest barrier to economic development in the County?



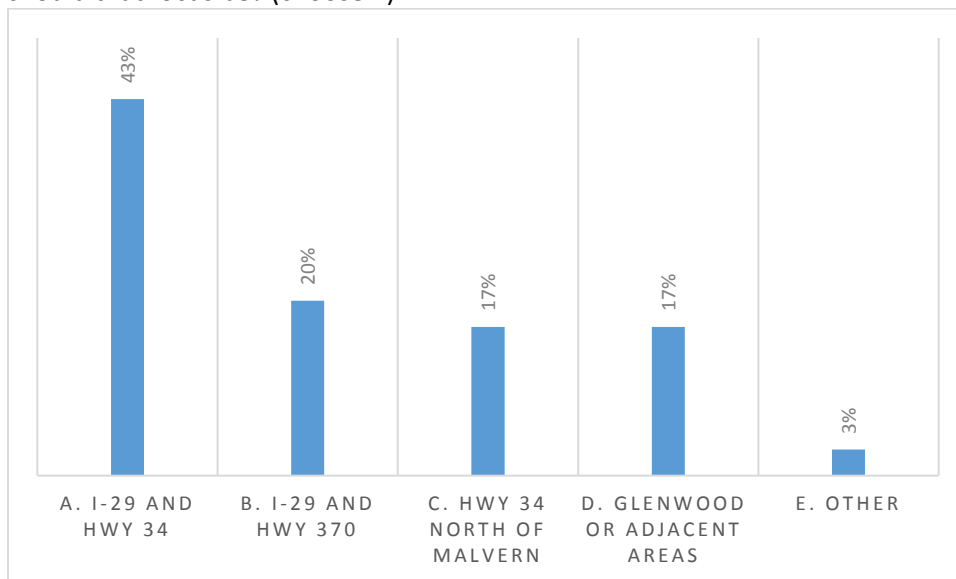
Question #14:

Which of the following areas should be the focus for economic development? (choose 2)



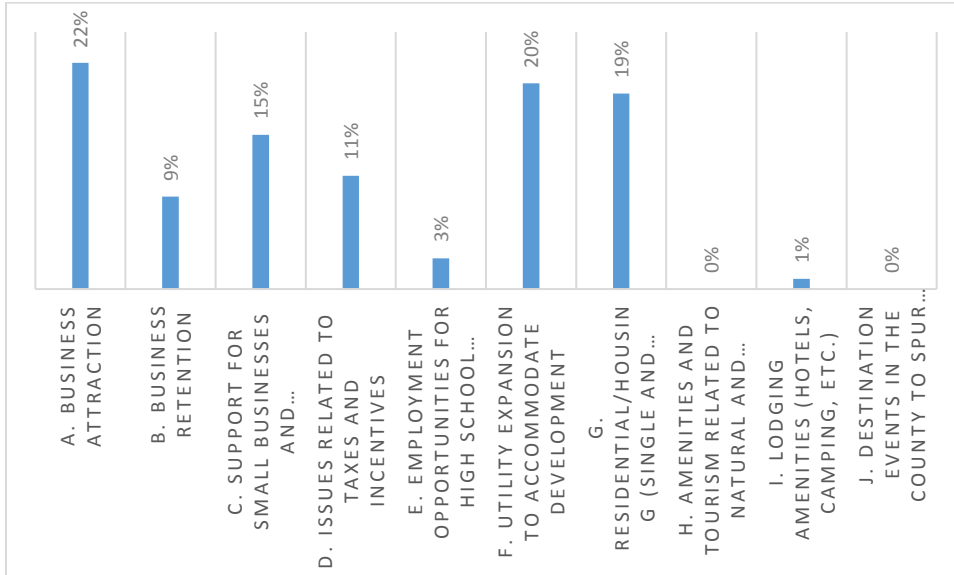
Question #15:

As the County looks to encourage new industrial and/or commercial development, geographically where should that focus be? (choose 2)



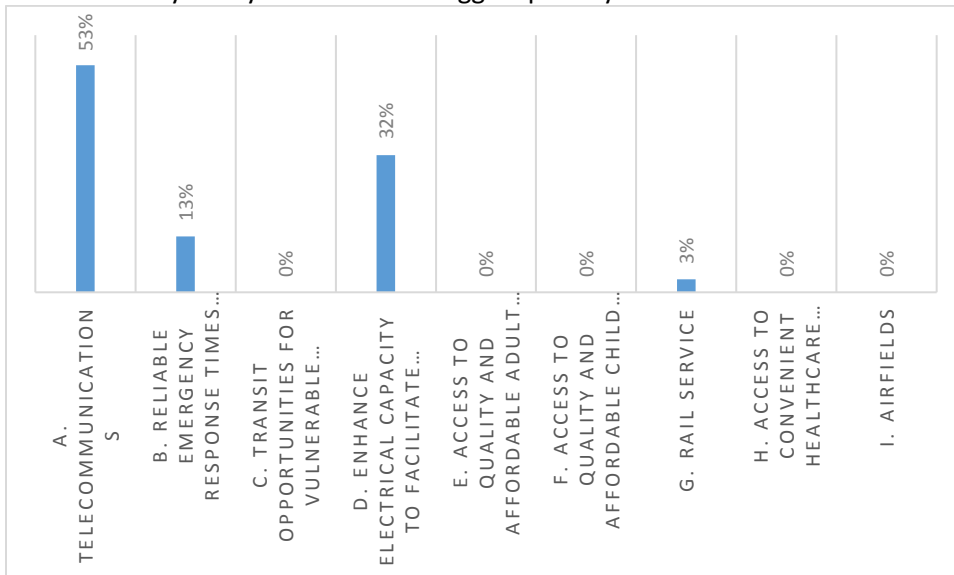
Question #16:

Which would you say should be the biggest priority related to economic development? (choose 2)



Question #17:

Which would you say should be the biggest priority related to services?

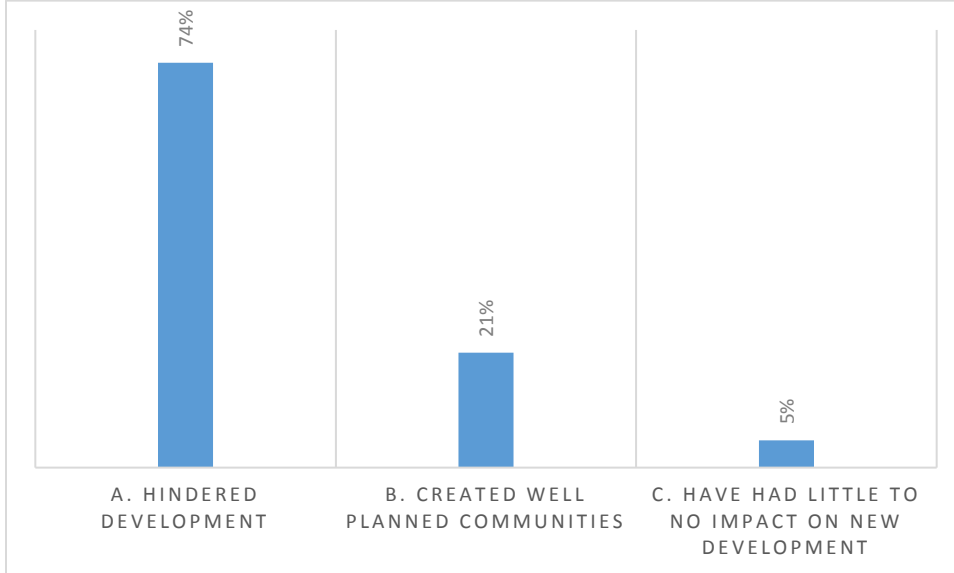


Participant comments:

- No mention of water?

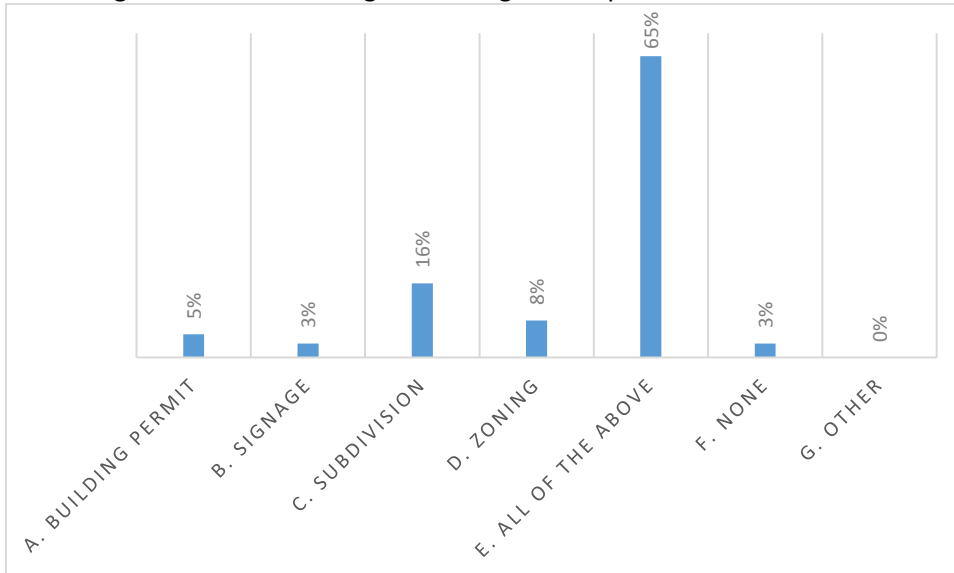
Question #18:

Building and land use regulations as they currently exist in Mills County have _____?



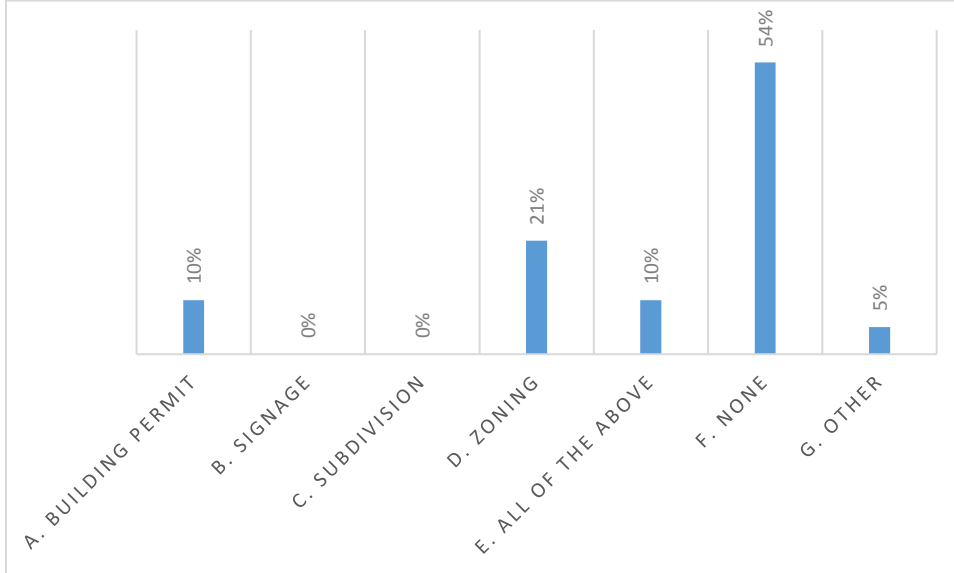
Question #19:

Which regulation has had the greatest negative impact?



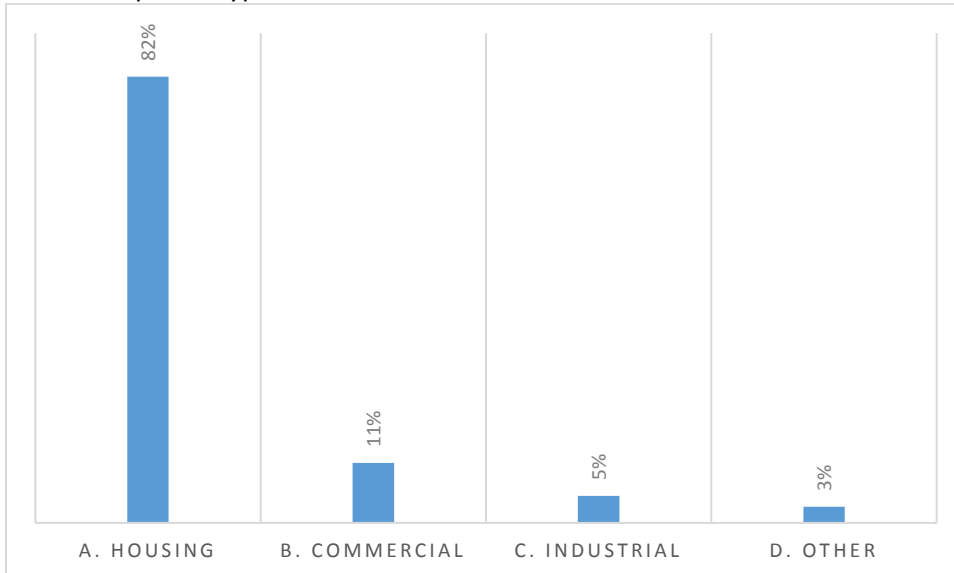
Question #20:

Which regulation has had the greatest positive impact?



Question #21:

Is there a specific type of use affected more than others?



Participant comments:

- Housing is the main interface with regulations and the biggest type of development in the County
- There has been some industrial and commercial development with no real complaints

Final Comments

The group was asked for final comments and questions. The following comments were heard:

- Get back to growing – sustained residential growth – relax the regulations
- Driveway and infrastructure regulations are the two top regulation concerns
- Consider what Pottawattamie County did with their urban transitional – ½ mile ETJ for all communities (except Council Bluffs who has a 2 mile 28E Agreement with the County)

Mills County Comprehensive Plan
Elected & Appointed Officials Meeting
February 16, 2017
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY- THANK YOU!




Omaha - Council Bluffs
Metropolitan Area
Planning Agency

Connect. Plan. Thrive.

NAME	TITLE	Group Affiliation	ADDRESS Street #, Street Name, City, Zip	PHONE	EMAIL
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Please Sign In!

Mills County Comprehensive Plan
Elected & Appointed Officials Meeting
February 16, 2017
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Omaha - Council Bluffs
Metropolitan Area
Planning Agency

Connect. Plan. Thrive.

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					1st Farmington Real Estate Comm

Please Sign In!

Mills County Comprehensive Plan
Elected & Appointed Officials Meeting
February 16, 2017
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Omaha - Council Bluffs
Metropolitan Area
Planning Agency

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Dave R		"	5111 S 243 St 51574	712-520-8899	d6lvu23@hotmail.com
Nate Lincoln		MCEDF	214 Hickory Ridge Lane 51534	712-242-7571	Lincoln.ned@gmail.com
Mark Lincoln		MCEDF	58646 Hilman Road 51574	712-527-0118	Lincoln.farmhome@aol.com
Sami Preston	City Clerk	City of Tabor	626 main Street, Tabor 51653	712-629-2295	tabcityhall@gmail.com
Dan McIntosh	Co. Board/Zone	COUNTY	403 FAMILION AVE		dmintosh@missouri.gov
Libby Linney	Farmer		60922 180 th St	712-310-8212	
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Bob Hughes	Real Estate		58854 221 st C.R. Glenwood	402-690-1100	bob@jimhughesrealestate.com
Dennis Lind	Trust Dir	M.P. Levee	18031 KERRICK Ave. PS. 1A	402-679-1764	Linddennis@charter.net
Matthew Wells		N. Lane		712-521-4844	matt.wells@universityofillinois.com

Please Sign In!



Noted changes since 1987:

1987 – 2002, Mills County acreage neighborhoods with interior roads

Inglewood Lane (Todd Wright)
Hopp Subdivision, Grace Circle (Darrell Hopp)
Grand View Heights, 243rd Street (Todd Wright)
Park Place Acres (Jim Hughes)
Glenview Acres (Jim Hughes)
Western Hills (Elison VanPelt)
Mystic Meadows, Coral Lane (Frank Moran)
Northern Acres, Galaxy Court (Mark Hughes)
Broadmoore Estates (Gary Kruse)
Country Oaks Subdivision, Burr Oak Circle (Elison Van Pelt)
Waubonise Woods, Edson Road (Erica Rasmussen)
Hunters Glen, Emerald Lane (Rich Gotschall)
West Oak Estates, Abbey Road (Eric Osterloh)
Scenic Hideaway Sub, 221st Street (Jason Harper)
Woodlands, Henton Drive (tom Delashmutt)
Country View Estates, Jasmin Lane (Gary Johnson)
Woodlawn Subdivision, Hambsch Lane (Jeff Evans)
Cambridge Estates, Falcon Lane (John Sheldon)
Oak Corner Estates, 221st Circle (Larry O'Rourke)

2003 – 2017, Mills County acreage neighborhoods with interior roads

Cedar Hills (Mark Hughes)
Lake Ohana (Craig Nakamoto)
Spring Ridge Ranch, Bella Circle, 5 lots (Jim Hughes)
Woodfield Subdivision (Ed Cambridge)
Willow Park Acres, Mayfield Circle (Jim Hughes)

Items to consider if Mills County and the schools would like to see growth again

- Allow private roads again
- Reduce minimum number of acres per lot. Reduce Ag Residential district and Loess Hills District to a minimum of 1.25 to 1.5 acre lots
- Relax the conservation development verbiage in the Comprehensive Plan. It sounds great, but there's a smaller market for it in Mills County.
- Length between driveways allowed on County roads are too restrictive
- Allow more splits than 2 on an existing 40 acre parcel with driveways off the county road before it's considered a subdivision in the Ag Residential and the Loess Hills District

Are there issues, concerns, opportunities or ideas you would like to share regarding growth and county viability that were not discussed tonight?

- Utility Capability to development
 - Cost
 - Who pays
- Levy accreditation
 - Red Herring
- I would like to see grant Opportunities for crediting development & community preservation
- I have approximately 100 acres adjacent to Glenwood, If I developed it the interest rates are too low for me to reinvest the profit. I don't need the risk at my age.
- I developed a 19 lot subdivision and it was difficult to compete against the Higher organization. I hired them to sale the houses I built and they were selling their own homes before mine.
- Growth is needed before rules because there is a sudden decrease in: schools, jobs, taxes
- No, I feel this was a very good meeting

What one thing would you change in Mills County if you had a "magic wand"?

Regulations

- Ease up on rules & regulations for new subdivisions & housing!
- Relax requirements to spur residential housing in Glenwood area
- Lessen Zoning

Development

- That Mills County would consider the growth of development North of Tabor. These residents would travel through the Glenwood area on the way to the Metro so both communities would benefit.
 - Tabor City Council would be interested in this discussion when the time is right
- Brining in new families who can help provide a higher tax base
- Demolish and clean up a lot of run down houses in Emerson. The ability to turn the areas into new housing opportunities.
- I would like to more specialty stores and small businesses

Other

- I have been in the town for 21 years. I am not pointing a finger at the county just our city. I wished we had a better relation. I am working on that. This is a bad fault with our city i.e. (only a few) that stops progress.
- Flatten some of the hills
- I would like to see more affordable recreation available for families & children