



Grundy County Comprehensive Plan

April 2014

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PREFACE

The Grundy County Comprehensive Plan is an articulation of community-driven goals and objectives. Over the past several months, the comprehensive planning process has engaged Grundy County residents and businesses through a variety of interactive tools to identify issues, opportunities, and values related to land use, transportation, the environment, and community facilities. Their input formed the basis of this Plan, and the development of the Plan's four guiding principles.

The Framework Plan's four guiding principles are the four most important ideas and influences that guide development in Grundy County over the next 10 to 20 years. The principles should be the foundation of all future County planning efforts, and the Plan's more detailed recommendations aim to achieve one or more of these principles. Over the next 10 to 20 years, the County should preserve its rural character, support economic growth and development, sustain its environment and history, and coordinate closely with municipalities.

Preserve

Grundy County is a predominantly agricultural community. Even as industry and commerce has developed around the Illinois River and I & M Canal in the northern third of the County, the landscape is still defined by large expanses of productive farmland. To the extent possible, all new residential and commercial growth should be steered into either municipalities or contiguous areas. The Plan recognizes this and aims to preserve the rural character through managed growth and development policies.

Compete

Grundy County is poised for the continued growth of industry and commerce. Its high level of access to highways, water, and rail, as well as its location on the edge of the Chicago region, make it the next frontier for economic development. The Plan sets a course for economic and transportation development that will maximize the return on infrastructure investment, balance industry and agriculture, and provide the foundation for well-paying professional jobs.

Sustain

Grundy County contains many environmental and ecological assets. The Illinois River is a significant recreational and commercial waterway, and the I & M Canal is the historic catalyst for much of the development in the northern portion of the County. Elsewhere in the County, the Mazon Creek Fossil Beds and former coal mining areas provide the basis for recreation and eco-based redevelopment. The Plan strives to build upon Grundy County's heritage by preserving important ecological characteristics and encouraging growth and development that complement historic assets.

Coordinate

Grundy County is a mosaic of communities woven together by the rural fabric of the County. The Plan recognizes this and aims to preserve the unique character of each community by coordinating the type and design of future development with local goals and objectives, and by partnering with local municipalities on important land use decisions.



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THE GRUNDY COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SERVES AS THE OFFICIAL POLICY, LAND USE, AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDE FOR COUNTY GOVERNMENT.

1.0

INTRODUCTION

Grundy County's new Comprehensive Plan sets a community vision for the County's future over the next 10 to 20 years and lays the foundation for responsible growth and development. The Plan establishes a blueprint for the County's agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial areas, and provides a series of land use and public policy recommendations that can help the County achieve its mission of "preserve, compete, sustain, and coordinate."

PURPOSE & SCOPE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Grundy County Comprehensive Plan serves as the official policy, land use, and development guide for County government. The Plan will assist elected officials, County staff, and key stakeholders in developing and implementing new policies and regulations, capital investments, and strategies.

Chapters 50 and 55 of the State of Illinois Compiled Statutes (ILCS) provide counties with the legal authority to regulate land use within their jurisdiction and to adopt a plans with related policies and objectives. Grundy County's official planning jurisdiction is the portion of the County that lies outside the corporate limits of cities, villages, and incorporated towns with municipal zoning ordinances in effect.

The Plan addresses a wide range of issues including transportation, environmental features, flood mitigation, growth management, community facilities, infrastructure, and land use. However, the scope of each is limited to: (1) physical areas within the County's legal planning jurisdiction; (2) services provided by the County government; (3) regulatory actions or issues that fall under the County's statutory authority; (4) services or facilities that cross municipal boundaries or serve multiple jurisdictions; and (5) regional issues. The Plan does not evaluate or propose recommendations relating to land use, facilities, or policies within incorporated communities.



FLOODING & PLAN FUNDING

Between September 13, 2008 and October 5, 2008, Grundy County experienced widespread flooding due to the effects of Hurricane Ike. The Illinois state-wide average precipitation during September 2008 was 7.98 inches, the third wettest September on record. As a result, flash flooding or significant flooding was reported across Grundy County, causing street closures, basement flooding, and the rising of rivers, creeks, and streams. For example, the Illinois River crested at 24.84 feet along Morris, nearly 3.5 times its current crest of 7.7 feet (based on April 5, 2013). In some cases, such as in the Ravine Woods apartment complex in Morris, residents were evacuated. September 2008 reports indicated that within Grundy County, 8 structures experienced major damage, 51 structures encountered minor damage, and 24 structures were “affected.” FEMA issued a multi-county disaster declaration on October 3, 2008 (DR# 1800), providing more than \$69 million in federal disaster assistance for affected residents in Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, LaSalle, Peoria, Will, and Woodford Counties.

In response to this flooding, the US Congress passed the “Consolidated Security Disaster Assistance and Continuing Appropriations Act of 2009.” This law, among other things, provided the State of Illinois with funding for disaster relief, recovery, and prevention.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) used funds from the law to develop a special grant called the Ike Planning Program (IKE-PLP). These grants can be used by counties and municipalities to develop comprehensive plans that address stormwater management, flood mitigation, and disaster mitigation, as well as economic development, housing, and infrastructure. Grundy County was awarded a \$250,000 planning grant under IKE-PLP, with \$125,000 allocated for a new comprehensive plan and \$125,000 for a drainage district study.

PLANNING PROCESS

The Grundy County Comprehensive Plan is the product of a multi-phased, community-driven process. The process included:

- ▶ Initial and continued community outreach, including traditional workshops, one-on-one interviews, and web-based tools, in order to engage elected officials, residents, businesses, and key stakeholders;
- ▶ An analysis of existing conditions, including characteristics observed through field reconnaissance, data collected from a variety of sources, past County and municipal plans, the Unified Development Ordinance Code, external studies, and more;
- ▶ Community visioning to identify the desired future and long-term goals of Grundy County;
- ▶ The development of plan goals, objectives, and recommendations that describe policies or actions that can help enact the community’s vision;
- ▶ The public review of a draft Comprehensive Plan; and
- ▶ The formal adoption of the Comprehensive Plan as the official policy document for Grundy County.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

This document is organized into nine sections. Sections 1-3 provide an existing conditions assessment and seek to answer the first critical question in plan-making, “Where are we now?” The goals, objectives, and vision provide in Section 4 answers the question of “Where do we want to go?”, and the detailed Plans found in sections 5-9 provide answers to “How will we get there?”

Section 1: Introduction

This section presents an introduction to the Comprehensive Plan, with a description of the Plan’s purpose and scope, and overview of the planning process, and the organization of the report.

Section 2: Community Outreach

This section presents a summary of the input received through a variety of engagement tools, including workshops, one-on-one interviews, and web-based tools such as sMap and surveys.

Section 3: Community Profile

This section describes the state of Grundy County, including its history, past plans and studies, existing land use, current zoning, and projected demographics and market potential. It also catalogues and assesses community facilities, transportation networks, open space, recreational sites, and environmental features.

Section 4: Vision, Goals, & Objectives

This section contains the Plan’s goals and objectives for a variety of relevant categories. It establishes the overall “vision” for the County, and provides specific objectives and recommendations to bring about desired changes or enhancements.

Section 5: Land Use & Development Framework Plan

The Land Use and Development Framework Plan identifies the appropriate land uses and development areas for Grundy County over the next 10 to 20 years. It presents a flexible and balanced approach that will assist County officials in managing new population and job growth, while simultaneously protecting and enhancing the County’s rural heritage and natural environment.

Section 6: Transportation & Mobility Plan

The Transportation and Mobility Plan provides recommendations and strategies that ensure the County's transportation network is of high quality, and can safely and efficiently move vehicles and pedestrians throughout the County and its regional destinations.

Section 7: Community Facilities & Infrastructure Plan

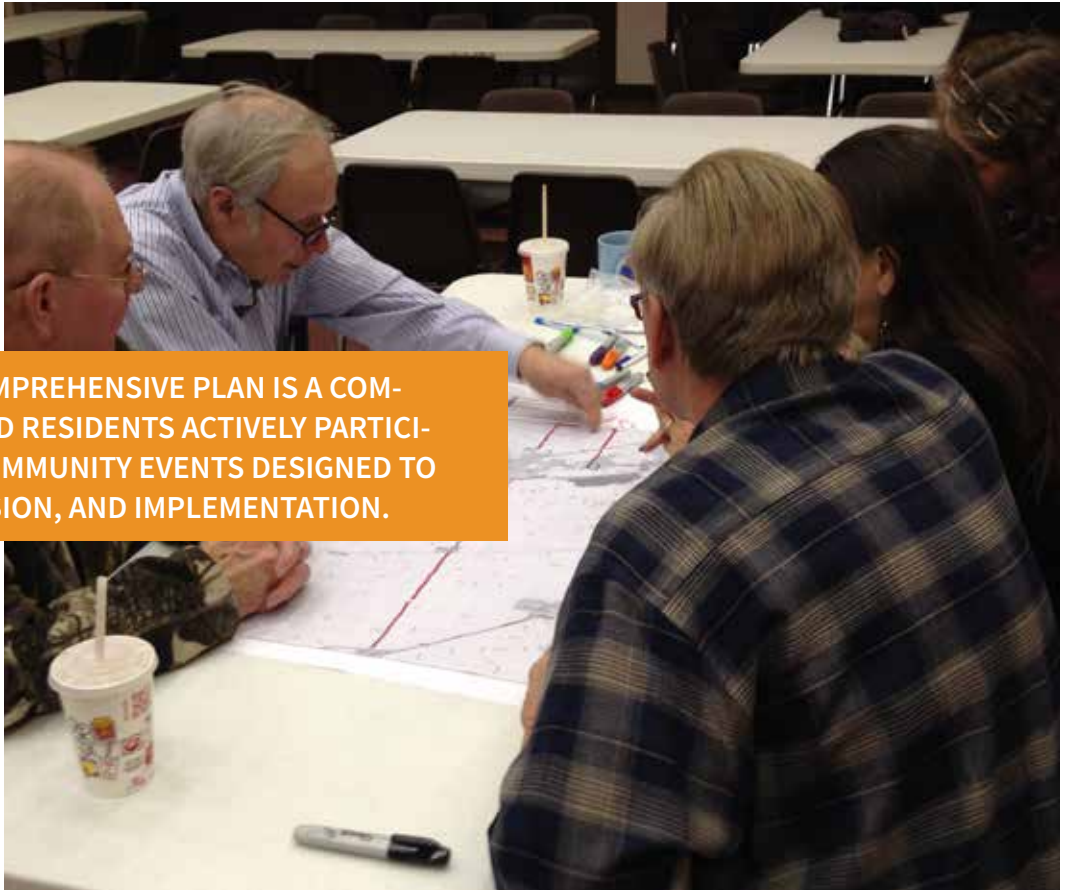
The Community Facilities and Infrastructure Plan provides a framework for coordinating, supporting, and enhancing community facilities and services within Grundy County. The section presents recommendations to help ensure that high-quality facilities and services are available throughout the County.

Section 8: Parks, Open Spaces, & Environmental Features Plan

The Parks, Open Spaces, and Environmental Features Plan protects, supports, and enhances natural amenities and open spaces within Grundy County. It seeks to preserve the County's scenic, rural setting for future generations, while also providing a diversity of exciting recreational opportunities that can help the County attract new residents, businesses, and tourists.

Section 9: Implementation Plan

The section presents specific actions that the County should undertake, as well as potential funding sources, as it implements the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.



THE GRUNDY COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IS A COMMUNITY DRIVEN PLAN, AND RESIDENTS ACTIVELY PARTICIPATED IN A VARIETY OF COMMUNITY EVENTS DESIGNED TO SHAPE ITS DIRECTION, VISION, AND IMPLEMENTATION.

2.0

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Grundy County Comprehensive Plan is a community-driven plan, and the planning process actively sought input from a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including residents, business and property owners, community service providers, elected/appointed officials, and County staff. A variety of outreach efforts were used to gather feedback regarding existing conditions, local issues and needs, and the aspirations of County residents. Outreach was used to promote a sense of community and foster stewardship for the plan by underscoring that participants' voices were heard and that their ideas influenced the shape of the plan.

This section summarizes the community outreach efforts that were completed during the planning process and identifies the issues the Comprehensive Plan addresses. The following activities were conducted as major components of the outreach process:

- ▶ Community Workshop
- ▶ Business Workshops
- ▶ Municipality Workshop
- ▶ Key Person Interviews
- ▶ Project Website
- ▶ On-line Surveys
- ▶ sMap On-line Mapping Tool
- ▶ Visioning Workshop



The Plan's user-friendly website afforded residents the opportunity to review Plan documents, receive updates, and map their own planning suggestions through sMap, a social mapping application.

PROJECT WEBSITE

A project website was created in order to provide a single source for all information related to the Comprehensive Plan process. The website contains project information and updates, meeting notices, and downloadable copies of draft documents for the duration of the process. In order to provide convenient and comprehensive information, the project website is accessed through a link on the County's home page.

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS & ON-LINE OUTREACH

Community Workshop

A community workshop was held on Monday, December 9th, 2013 with residents of Grundy County. The intent of the workshop was to identify "big picture" issues, challenges, and assets in all aspects of the local quality of life. Approximately 12 residents attended and participated in the community workshop, providing the County with opinions and insight in regards to the County's Comprehensive Plan.

Business Workshops

The business workshops were held on Monday, December 9th, 2013, and Wednesday, January 22nd, 2014 in order to gain insights and opinions from the community's business owners and operators. Approximately 15 people attended the workshops, representing a wide range of local and regional businesses in Grundy County.

Key Person Interviews

In addition to larger group workshops, the planning team conducted a series of one-on-one interviews with stakeholders who have specific insights or unique perspectives about various aspects of the County. Eleven interviews were conducted and covered a broad range of topics, including economic development, transportation and transit, housing development, infrastructure, public policy, and others.

On-line Questionnaires

On-line questionnaires were posted on the project website and publicized by the County. The questionnaires were specifically designed to solicit input from both residents and business owners. The questionnaires supplemented face-to-face community outreach efforts, and are not intended to be a scientific survey instrument. 35 residents and 15 business owners completed on-line questionnaires.

sMap On-line Mapping Tool

sMap is a social mapping application developed by Houseal Lavigne Associates in order to allow residents and businesses to actively take part in the planning process. Participants were able to create their own map of issues and opportunities, including annotations that provide specific ideas about desired characteristics of County. However, participation on sMap was low, and results are not summarized in this report.

Visioning Workshop

A Land Use Committee visioning workshop was held on Wednesday, January 22nd, 2014. While the workshop was open to the public, no residents attended. As a result, members of the County's Land Use Committee worked in small groups to establish a visionary concepts that will guide development of the Comprehensive Plan.



Four outreach workshops were held between December 2013 and January 2014.

Outreach Results

These outreach efforts resulted in broad set of input from residents, businesses, elected officials, service providers, and others. The following paragraphs summarize the prevalent themes that emerged, and are categorized into eleven distinct categories that articulate the concerns, hopes, and aspirations of County residents. (The Municipality Workshop is summarized separately later in this section since it reflects input gathered from stakeholders not within the County's planning jurisdiction.)

The eleven (11) categories are as follows:

- ▶ Residential Growth
- ▶ Business & Commercial Areas
- ▶ Industrial Areas
- ▶ Roads & Transportation
- ▶ Local Government, Taxes, & Funding
- ▶ Education & Youth
- ▶ Infrastructure & Utilities
- ▶ Character & Identity
- ▶ Environment
- ▶ Economic Development & Employment
- ▶ Healthcare

Residential Growth

A number of issues were identified by residents concerned with residential growth and development. Many participants feel that slow residential growth could impact the economic well-being of the County. Many residents want to grow, but want to retain a “small town feel.” Others would like to ensure that residential growth remains in or adjacent to municipalities.

Business & Commercial Areas

The business and commercial areas of Grundy County present many challenges and strengths, as identified by residents and business owners and operators. While a number of people feel that Grundy County has some fantastic traditional downtowns within its municipalities, others feel that there are still opportunities to increase the tax base. Members of the community see a potential for retail recruitment and commercial growth, although recent growth has been slow. Many see a lack of choices in retail, food, entertainment, and shopping within the County, and others have identified nodes for potential business and commercial growth such as Brisbin Road and Reed Road.

Industrial Areas

A number of business owners and operators, as well as community members, feel that Grundy County is industry-friendly. They also note that there is good industrial zoning and great resources for rail and energy. On the other hand, there is still room for improvement. Comments point to a desire to better leverage the Economic Development Project Areas (EDPA) as a tool to attract industry and create an advantage for Grundy County over surrounding areas.

Roads & Transportation

Several opportunities for improvement and areas of strength were identified related to the roads and transportation system throughout Grundy County. An area of concern for many business and community members includes IL Route 47, with comments desiring an additional lane or added turn lanes, as well as general issues with bad traffic on the road. Others discussed the importance of upgrading some roads to accommodate industrial truck traffic in key portions of the County.

The location of Grundy County in respect to multi-modal transportation opportunities and its proximity to the City of Chicago is a huge asset for many Grundy County residents. Specific corridors which are seen as assets for good regional connectivity include I-80 and IL Route 47. Additionally, Grundy County's Morris Municipal Airport and extensive rail access are perceived as assets.

Local Government

A number of responses in online questionnaires and public workshops identified opportunities where the County, and/or government in general, could improve. Residents and businesses have identified a desire for government entities to collaborate and create a cohesive vision for the County. Other comments identify a desire address taxation policies, including property taxes, M & E taxes, and the overall tax structure. Residents and business owners have also suggested the review of the government budgets, with the desire to release budget information for public viewing in order to increase the government transparency and strengthen the trusting relationship with County residents and businesses.

There is a desire to seek more outside grants and funding sources for local projects. Additionally, some residents and business owners feel that County development regulations are too demanding and restrictive. Although these are all items which present an opportunity for improvement within Grundy County, many feel there are strong relationships among residents, businesses, County government, and municipalities.

Education & Youth

Educational and youth resources within Grundy County represent both opportunities for improvement and strengths to build upon. While many residents and business owners applaud the school services provided by districts within Grundy County, many have identified the desire for a 4-year university within the County in order to develop a professional local workforce. Other items identified a need for more youth facilities including after-school facilities and places for extracurricular activities.

Infrastructure & Utilities

Participants consider infrastructure and utilities to be a key factor in the County's long-term development. Many residents and businesses identified the need to address how utilities reach new development. Opinion include the controlled overall investment in infrastructure in order to maintain fiscal stability, as well as focused investment in infrastructure that would support key economic development areas.

Character & Identity

Overall, residents and businesses presented a large list of assets related to the character and identity of Grundy County. These include a strong sense of community, a safe place to live and raise a family, and a fantastic rural character. However, several people discussed the distinct differences in character between the northern and southern portions of the County. Several residents have concerns that continued growth could result in a loss of the County's small town charm.



Grundy County residents shared their vision for the County's future land use through an interactive planning workshop held in January 2014.

Environment

The Illinois River, I & M Canal, state parks, and preserves were identified as important aspects of the County's environment. Generally, residents would like to see the County proactively preserve these elements as development occurs. Residents and businesses are concerned about flooding throughout the County and the added impacts of urban development.

Economic Development & Employment

Participants identified a number of assets and challenges related to County economic development. The most often mentioned topic is the County's Machinery and Equipment (M & E) Tax. Many fear the tax is costing the County opportunities to capture additional industrial and manufacturing development. The local workforce and Grundy Economic Development Council (GEDC) was identified as a major asset for the County. However, many feel there needs to be better coordination between education and local industries so that the County can produce both a labor-based workforce and a professional-based workforce.

Healthcare

Overall, the healthcare opportunities available to residents are viewed as high quality. Opportunities for improvement include more affordable options, with the desire to find grants and outside funding sources related to mental health. Additionally, some community members would like to see more recreational facilities within Grundy County.

MUNICIPALITY WORKSHOP SUMMARY

A municipality workshop was held on Wednesday, January 22nd, 2014 to engage and solicit input from the municipal representatives within Grundy County. Approximately eight individuals attended and participated in the workshop. The comments provided are summarized below according to the following categories:

- ▶ Development
- ▶ Government, Taxes, & Funding
- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Economic Development & Employment
- ▶ Healthcare & Public Safety
- ▶ Identity & Character
- ▶ Safety
- ▶ Other Strengths & Assets

Development

Participants discussed several concerns related to future development, including growth management and expansion, the availability of senior housing, and the need to preserve agriculture within Grundy County.

Government, Taxes, & Funding

Concerns and issues related to government and taxes includes the impact of the M & E Tax, as well as the overall revenue structure of the County. Additionally, municipal representatives are concerned with the impacts of County planning on local development. Municipalities would like to see more service-oriented leadership, as well as more cooperative planning efforts between the county and the municipalities.

Transportation

Participants identified a need to evaluate and improve the public transportation system within the County, as well as a desire to improve the efficiency of IL Route 47. Many participants see great strength in the transportation system of Grundy, including the access to major interstates and roadways, its proximity to Chicago, and its large array of transportation options that includes roads, highways, rail, river, and air. These are advantages for Grundy County municipalities, and they would like to see these assets maintained and built upon.



Elected and appointed officials from the County's cities and villages met in January 2014 to provide guidance and input on the drafting of the new Comprehensive Plan

At the Municipality Workshop, local leaders shared their ideas and recommendations on a variety of topics, including transportation, economic development, and public safety



Economic Development/Employment

Though participants noted high unemployment rates and a need for more robust economic development, they also identified many local assets. Municipal representatives see a great workforce within Grundy County and feel that industry provides a significant number of employment opportunities for County residents. However, they feel the rate of employment should be higher, especially in high-paying professional jobs.

Healthcare & Public Safety

Healthcare access in Grundy County is an asset for many individuals, although it can see some general opportunities for improvement. Some feel that while the quality and level of service provided by healthcare providers in Grundy is fantastic, they would like to see more community recreation facilities. Some municipal workshop participants identified issues related to public safety, including the presence of drug trafficking and the level of fire and emergency medical services.

Identity & Character

The identity and character of Grundy County is loved by its municipal representatives. They identified several defining characteristics, including the people who live in and serve the County, the high level of teamwork seen throughout the community, and its small town feel and character.

Other Strengths and Assets

There were a variety of assets identified by municipal workshop participants which do not fit into the categories above, but should be considered during plan development. These include the existing youth and education facilities, important environmental features such as the Illinois River, State Parks, natural/recreational amenities, and quality infrastructure and utilities.



THE COMMUNITY PROFILE IS THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH THE PLAN'S RECOMMENDATIONS ARE BUILT.

3.0

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Long-range visioning and planning is founded upon an understanding of where the community is today. This chapter includes analysis of current conditions in Grundy County, including a summary of the community's history, existing plans and studies, current zoning regulations, existing land use patterns, demographics, and development potential. It also includes an assessment of the County's transportation network, community facilities, and parks, open spaces, and environmental features.

The Community Profile is the foundation upon which the Plan's recommendation are built. It is organized into the following sub-sections:

- ▶ 3.1 Regional Setting & History
- ▶ 3.2 Past Plans & Studies
- ▶ 3.3 Current Zoning & Development Controls
- ▶ 3.4 Existing Land Use
- ▶ 3.5 Demographic & Market Assessment
- ▶ 3.6 Transportation & Mobility
- ▶ 3.7 Community Facilities & Infrastructure
- ▶ 3.8 Parks, Open Spaces, & Environmental Features

A view of Morris, the County seat, from the air

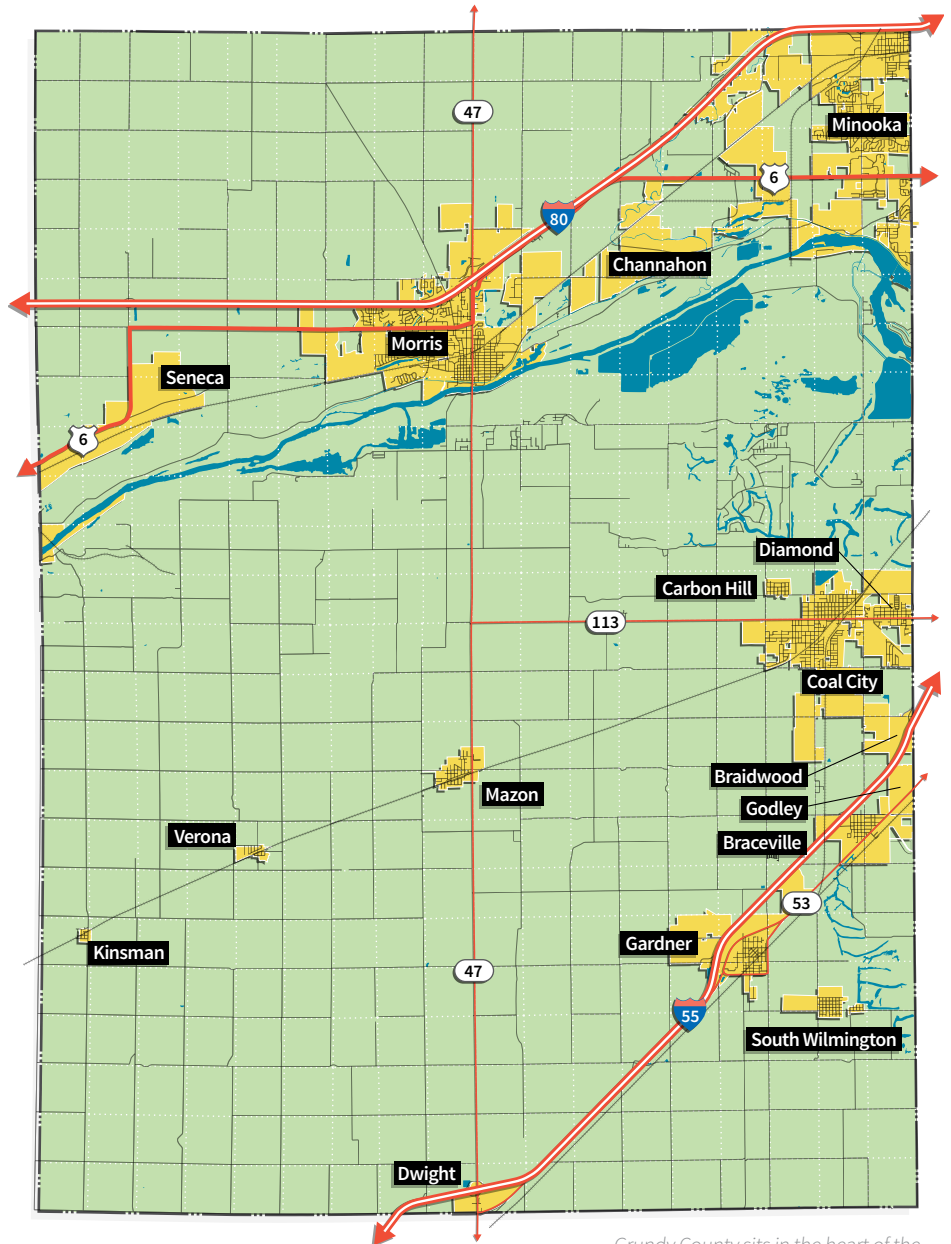


Flickr - Kent Lund

3.1

Regional Setting & History

The County is best known for its small-town feel, natural beauty, and peaceful atmosphere. Primarily rural in nature, 78% of the County's 432 square miles are used for farming. Morris is the County seat, and offers residents and visitors access to the Illinois River and a historic downtown. Grundy County boasts six state park sites, including the I & M Canal State Trail and the Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area. These areas offer thousands of acres for outdoor exploration, fishing, hunting, biking, and more. However, the County is at the fringe of regional growth, and has experienced development over the last 20 years that suggests a change in the County's role within the region. Increased industrial development and logistics in the northern portion of the County demonstrate the area's market for new development, while the remainder of the County remain primarily agricultural.



Grundy County sits in the heart of the Midwest, 50 miles southwest of Chicago. It contains 16 municipalities and is home to 51,054 people.

REGIONAL SETTING

Grundy County is a part of the Chicago metropolitan area and sits approximately 50 miles southwest of Chicago. It is bordered by Kendall County to the north, LaSalle County to the west, Livingston County to the south, and Will and Kankakee Counties to the east. The County contains 16 municipalities, and as of 2013, 51,054 people call Grundy County home.

The County benefits from a strategic regional location, including regional connections provided by I-55, I-80, and US Route 6. The 332 mile Illinois River is formed near Channahon in the northeastern part of the County, linking the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico.



Flickr - Kenneth Spencer



en:Wikipedia - Chris Light

HISTORY

Prior to the arrival of the first European settlers in 1831, Grundy County was home to Native Americans of the Potawatomie tribe. Originally, the land was a part of LaSalle County, with the county seat and closest commercial services more than a dozen miles away in Ottawa. This was seen as too far to travel by horse or foot, both by those living in present day Grundy County and those traveling westward from Joliet.

A band of concerned citizens, led by William E. Armstrong, petitioned the Illinois General Assembly in the winter of 1840-1841 to create a new county between Joliet and Ottawa. On February 17, 1841, the Assembly authorized the creation of Grundy County. It was named after Felix Grundy, considered the “greatest criminal lawyer Tennessee ever had” and deeply admired by Mr. Armstrong.

America’s economic expansion and westward migration led to a demand for easier transportation of raw materials and goods. In 1830, surveying for a new Illinois & Michigan (I&M) Canal began that would help link the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. The Illinois River, a key link in the waterway system, transformed Morris into a hub for construction workers and immigrants, as well as numerous grain elevators and warehouses. The I & M Canal was completed in 1848, and Morris was considered the largest in-land shipping port for corn in the world.

The canal’s completion was an impressive feat, but usage waned over time due to an expanding railroad network and the opening of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal in 1900. In 1933, the I & M Canal was closed to traffic. Since then, the canal has been used for recreational purposes and has been adapted into a state trail.

Over the course of the twentieth century, Grundy County was home to agricultural and mining operations. Mining began in the 1860s and continued until 1974, with a focus on underground, shaft, and surface strip mining. Between 2000 and 2010, the population grew by 33% from 37,535 to 50,063. This is the largest expansion in County history since 1860. Today, the economy includes a variety of industries. While 78% of the County’s land is used for agriculture, the County also consists of a regional hospital, manufacturing and distribution operations, and large scale energy production.

3.2



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Past Plans & Studies

This section contains a review of past plans and regulations adopted by Grundy County and its municipalities. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the value of these plans and regulations, and aims to build upon them as a component to the vision for the community.

MUNICIPAL PLANS (2006-2010)

Seven Grundy County municipalities made their current comprehensive plans available: Braceville (2006), Channahon (2008), Coal City (2007), Diamond (2010), Mazon (2007), Morris (2010), and Seneca (2008). These studies have been reviewed to ensure that the Comprehensive Plan consider compatible zoning at jurisdictional boundaries, informs the Plan's policies and recommendations, and promotes general inter-governmental planning cooperation.

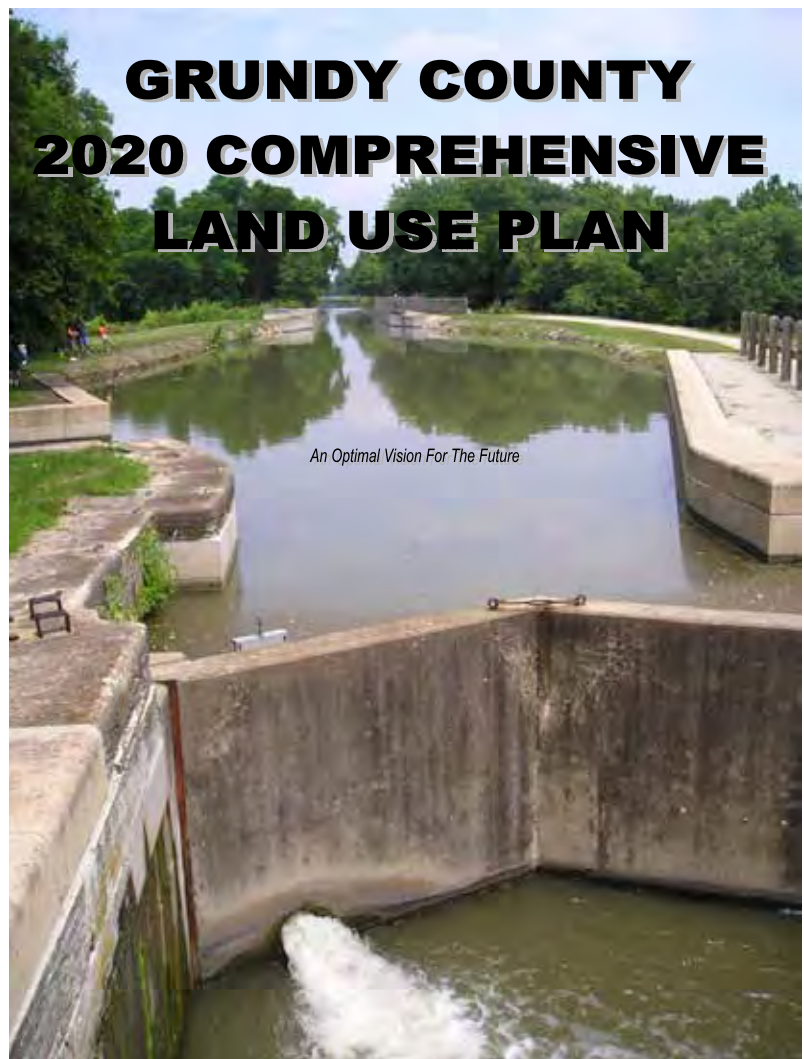
GRUNDY COUNTY 2020 COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN (2005)

The Grundy County 2020 Comprehensive Land Use Plan was approved by the County in the fall of 2005. Prior to this plan, the last County comprehensive plan was passed in 1967, although it was updated and revised incrementally.

The Plan is divided into three main sections: “Background for Planning,” which includes the County’s history, demographic trends, and existing land use pattern; “The Land Use Plan,” outlining a planning framework, land use strategy, and land use plan; and “Implementation of the Plan,” specifying zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, the development of a farmland and open space preservation program.

The Plan signaled a shift in County policy with regards to land use and development. Prior land use plans prioritized development of large expanses of land and “pro-growth” policies. While the Plan recognizes Grundy County’s need to grow, it also proposes “carefully measured sustainable growth and development” policies that protect agricultural land, community identity, and natural resources from unnecessary sprawl. The Plan focuses land classification and policies around three places: (1) primary centers, or larger municipalities, (2) rural centers, or smaller municipalities, and (3) agricultural/environmental protection areas. It also stresses the need for greenbelts and further recreational areas such as open space and trails.

*Grundy County 2020
Comprehensive Land Use Plan*





Flickr - Earl B. Shumaker

GRUNDY COUNTY MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL NATURAL HAZARDS MITIGATION PLAN (2013)

The Grundy County Multi-Jurisdictional Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan was adopted in 2013, with 11 different governments participating: Braceville, Coal City, Diamond, Dwight, Grundy County, Mazon, Minooka, Morris, Seneca, South Wilmington, and Verona. The plan was financed through a grant issued from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The process included community outreach through public meetings and a community survey.

The plan guides participating jurisdictions in policy actions that can be implemented to reduce loss of life and property from natural disasters such as severe storms, tornados, winter storms, drought, extreme temperatures, floods, and earthquakes. It also included a risk assessment of each of the County's municipalities, assessing their vulnerability to each category of natural disaster.

STATE OF ILLINOIS NATURAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN (2013)

The 2013 State of Illinois Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan is the State's official policy document for natural disaster assessment and prevention. The document assesses the State's susceptibility to natural disasters, proposes hazard mitigation strategies, and highlights avenues of intergovernmental cooperation in the event of a disaster.

The Plan assigns a natural hazard rating to each Illinois County based on historical frequency and probability, vulnerability, severity of impact, and population. From most dangerous to least, their rating scale is: "severe," "high," "elevated," "guarded," and "low."

This report upgraded Grundy County's flood hazard rating to "high" from the County's previous 2010 status of "elevated." The County's severe storms hazard rating remained at "severe."

GRUNDY COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR 2011-2016 (2011)

The Grundy County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for 2011-2016 was passed by the Grundy County Board in July 2011. Authorship was led by the Grundy County Economic Development Council, a not-for-profit organization that fosters economic partnerships between business, labor, community, and education sectors. The document serves as the County's official economic development guide.

The Plan contains five main sections: (1) a County profile, noting key demographic, labor force, education, and economic development statistics and trends; (2) a SWOT matrix highlighting the County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; (3) goals, objectives, and strategies; (4) a list of strategic projects, programs, and activities; and (5) performance measures to track and evaluate progress.

The Plan focuses on five goals to help bolster economic development in Grundy County:

- ▶ Goal #1: Expand and maintain existing infrastructure to capitalize on geographic advantages.
- ▶ Goal #2: Target specific industries in which Grundy County has a competitive advantage to promote job growth and retention.
- ▶ Goal #3: Partner with member governments, industry, and agencies to provide planning and funding advisement.
- ▶ Goal #4: Enhance current workforce development and educational opportunities.
- ▶ Goal #5: Promote tourism in Grundy County.

GRUNDY COUNTY TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES PLAN (2013)

The Grundy County Transportation Priorities Plan was issued by the County and the Grundy County Economic Development Council in 2013. Though it is not a capital improvement program or set of proposed recommendations, it is the County's first comprehensive and strategic set of transportation priorities. A multi-modal focus is applied, with investments categorized based on roads, air, rail, and water.

Six goals were identified to help bolster the County's transportation enhancement and investment:

- ▶ Goal #1: Demonstrate to elected officials and policy makers the need for a high level of state and federal priority for Grundy County transportation planning and projects.
- ▶ Goal #2: Serve as a repository for transportation priorities in Grundy County.
- ▶ Goal #3: Create transparent priorities and goals that are easily visible to the residents of Grundy County and the region in the interest of encouraging input and collaboration.
- ▶ Goal #4: Raise awareness of existing and planned projects among municipal and county leaders to promote collaborative efforts across local governmental agencies.
- ▶ Goal #5: Actively seek to include all external projects affecting Grundy County, including those at the state, federal, and local levels.
- ▶ Goal #6: Develop a mechanism for prioritizing the management and development of current and future transportation projects affecting Grundy County.



GRUNDY COUNTY GREENBELT AND GREENWAY PLAN (2005)

The Grundy County Greenbelt and Greenway Plan was authored by Reginald Arkell, a graduate student at the University of Illinois who assisted the County in the drafting of their 2005 Comprehensive Master Plan. The study focuses on three main elements: (1) the development of strategic greenbelts around municipalities in order to constrain urban sprawl; (2) the implementation of a greenway to facilitate biking, hiking, and walking between municipalities and recreational opportunities; and (3) a study of sustainability's health and financial benefits.

3.3



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Current Zoning & Development Controls

Zoning codes are used to regulate the built environment and ensure public health, safety, and general community welfare. Zoning regulations for Grundy County are included as part of the County's larger Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE

Adopted in 2010, the Unified Development Ordinance seeks to regulate growth and development in Grundy County. The UDO simplified previous zoning regulations, reducing the number of zoning classifications from twelve to seven. The overarching goal of the seven zoning districts is to preserve the rural and agricultural nature of Grundy County.

The UDO seeks conformity with the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, preservation and enhancement of the County's rural character, and protection of County residents' quality of life. Regulations within the UDO encourage development near established municipalities, preventing sprawl and reducing the demand on County infrastructure.

AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

Agricultural (A)

The Agricultural zoning district designates farming related activities as the primary use. It restricts residential uses where it interferes with agricultural activities, while permitting agriculture, farmsteads, and single family homes.

Agricultural Residential (AR)

The Agricultural Residential designation permits more intense residential uses of land, while still maintaining the County's rural character. Residential development is permitted where land may not be well-suited for agricultural purposes. AR also permits most activities allowed in A, but prohibits intensive agriculture.

RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

Planned Residential (PR)

The purpose of the PR zoning designation is to balance residential development with the County's rural character. It allows for new master planned developments so long as they are compatible with the County's goals to prevent sprawl and promote well-planned residential communities. Land may be designated as PR and approved as a conservation to prevent annexation of agricultural land.

Residential (R)

The residential zoning designation permits single family homes and agricultural uses. Attached single family and multi-family housing requires administrative review and special use allowances, respectively. R supplants the R-1, R-2, R-3, and R-R zoning designations. However, it provides that owners in previously designated zoning districts are not required to seek variances to improve homes that were built before the adoption of zoning regulations.

NONRESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

Commercial General (CG)

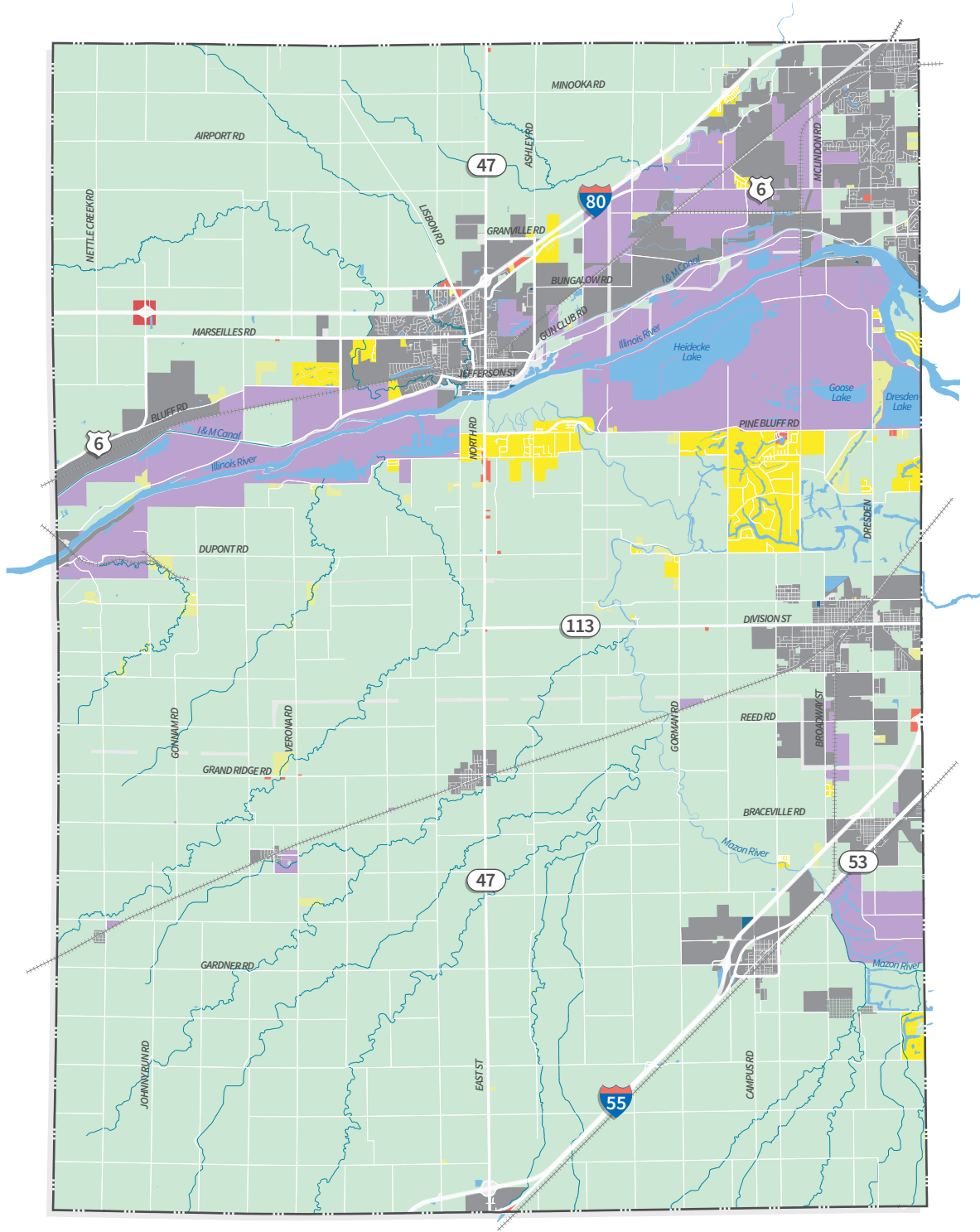
The Commercial General zoning district is an umbrella category for commercial uses. It allows for a wide range of commercial activity, but is characterized by an auto-oriented character, generally located off of major highways and arterial roads.

Commercial Interchange (CI)

The Commercial Interchange designation is solely for interchanges along I-55 and I-80. It accommodates development that caters to the needs of motorists. Uses include gas stations, truck stops, restaurants, and hotels. However, while this zone is characterized by large parking lots, care should be taken to provide landscaped buffers to "project a noncommercial character."

Industrial Districts (I)

The Industrial District includes both light and heavy industrial uses. Although uses within this district are generally considered a nuisance, the district is aimed to protect land that benefits from essential access to rail and water transportation. Industrial designations also require open spaces and stormwater management on-site as well as landscape buffers.



Current Zoning

Context

- Grundy County
- Incorporated Municipalities
- Rivers, Streams, & Lakes

Zoning Districts

- Agricultural
- Agricultural Residential
- Residential

- Commercial General
- Commercial Interchange

- Industrial
- Jurisdictional Discrepancy

3.4



Flickr - Earl R. Shumaker

Existing Land Use

The existing land use pattern in Grundy County is reflective of one of the primary issues the County faces – balancing industrial and commercial growth in the northern portion of the County with the predominantly rural character in the southern portion. This section describes the characteristics of existing land use throughout the County based on the following designations.

AGRICULTURE

Agricultural land is the dominant land use throughout the County. These are areas with cultivated fields actively used for raising crops, livestock, and other farming-related activities.



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RESIDENTIAL

Rural Residential

Rural residential homes make up the majority of residential land uses on County land. They consist of single family homes on large lots and are adjacent to agricultural land and/or open space areas. These typically are not part of a planned subdivision, but rather have been developed individually over time.

Single Family Residential

Single family residences are the second most common residential use throughout the County. Single family homes differ from rural residential in that they are on smaller lots, and generally part of a platted subdivision.

Single Family Attached

Townhomes, duplexes, and triplexes are included in the single family attached land use designation. These homes are generally one to two stories, stacked horizontally so that units share at least one wall, and provide individual access to each unit from the outside. Several single family attached homes can be found along Highway 6 between Morris and Channahon.

Multi-Family

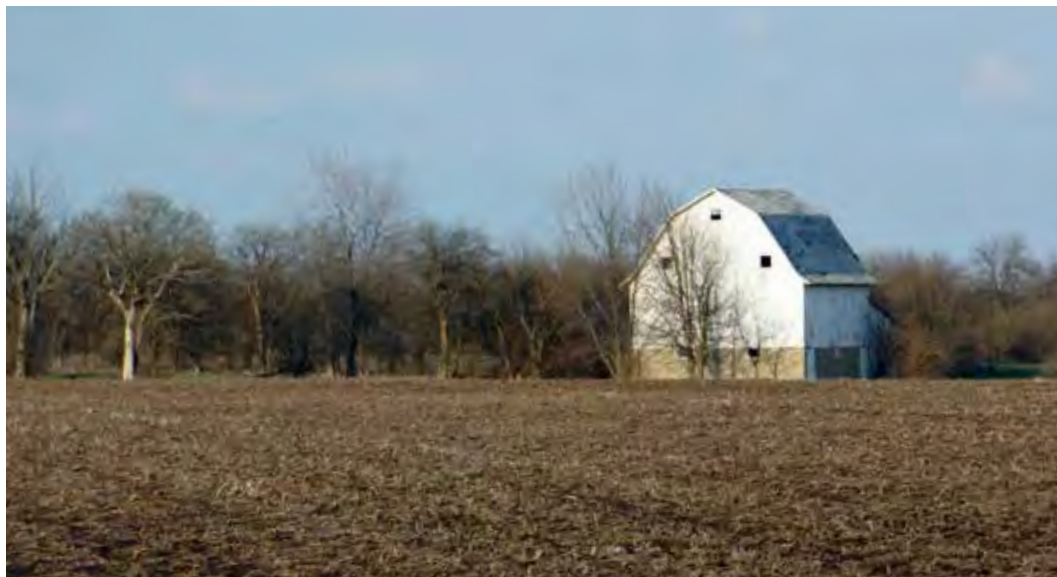
Multi-family housing includes apartments and condominiums. They are characterized by having multiple units, usually stacked vertically and attached horizontally, with common hallways and other amenities. There are few multi-family buildings in the unincorporated County, with most being located off US Route 6 between Morris and Channahon.

Mobile Homes

There are two areas within the County that house mobile homes. Mobile homes contain all necessary plumbing, heating, air conditioning, and electrical systems, are designed to be used with or without permanent foundations, and are transportable in one or more sections. Mobile home land uses occur adjacent to Route 6 and Tabler Road and just north of I-55 between Braceville and Gardner.



Grundy County is home to a diverse range of land uses, including agricultural, residential, and commercial.



Flickr - Kent B. Shumaker



COMMERCIAL

Commercial land uses make up a relatively small portion of Grundy County land use. The commercial land use designation includes neighborhood, corridor, and regional commercial areas. These can be retail establishments, restaurants, offices, and personal service businesses.

INDUSTRIAL

Light Industrial

Light industrial uses involve the manufacturing, processing, storage, and distribution of goods and materials that may have a limited effect on surrounding areas.

Heavy Industrial

Heavy industrial uses are generally larger scale and may include the processing of chemicals and plastics, refineries, mining, and industrial machinery. These uses can have visual, noise, or environmental impacts on adjacent areas. The County's heavy industrial areas generally occur near the Illinois River.

OPEN SPACE/ UNDEVELOPED

The Open Space/Undeveloped land use designation includes land that is not currently developed or being used for agricultural purposes. These areas include parcels with significant topography or natural features, areas formerly mined or used for industry, and lots platted for residential or commercial uses, but not yet developed. The Open Space/Undeveloped land use also includes parks and wildlife preserves, such as the Mazonia State Fish and Wildlife Preserve and the Goose Lake Prairie Nature Reserve.

PUBLIC/SEMI-PUBLIC

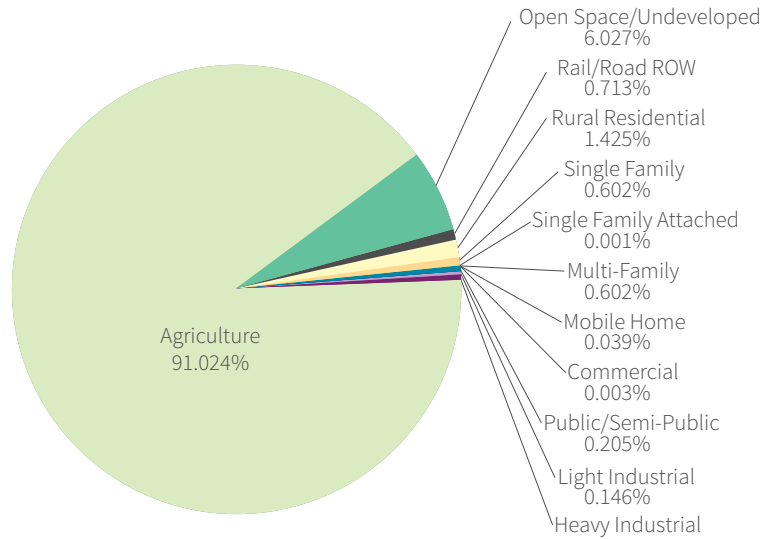
Public/Semi-Public uses include governmental, educational, religious, and other institutional uses. Several churches, cemeteries, and County department buildings are spread across the agricultural landscape. The Grundy County Municipal Airport and Fairgrounds are also considered Public/Semi-Public uses.

LAND USE SUMMARY

Relevant conclusions regarding existing land use include the following:

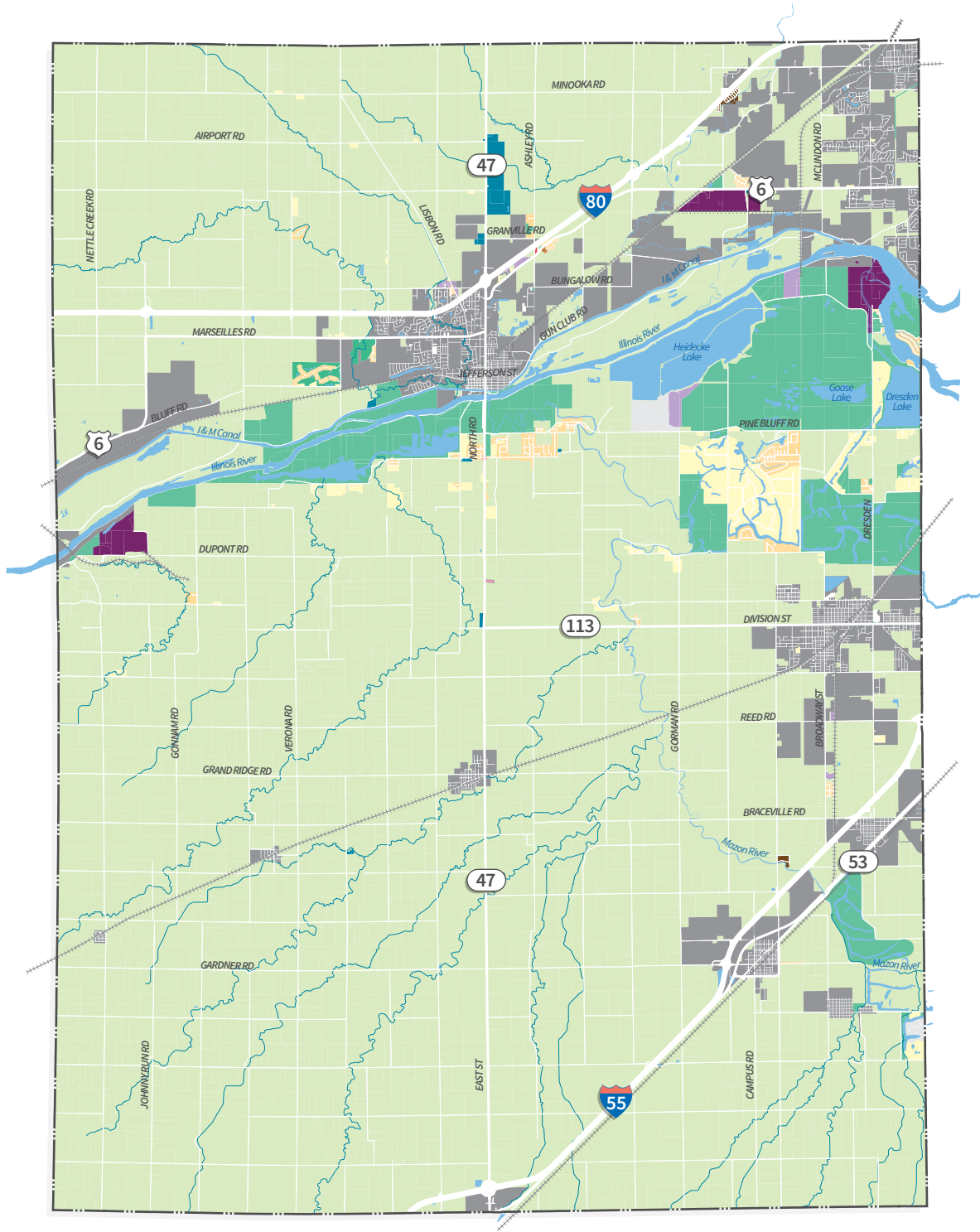
- ▶ Commercial and industrial development is most prominent in the northeastern portion of the County along the Illinois River, I-80, and rail infrastructure. Future development in this area will be dependent upon the County's ability to sustain and expand services to support commercial and industrial growth.
- ▶ Agricultural areas continue up to municipal boundaries, creating a distinct edge between developed and undeveloped areas.
- ▶ Several large parks and natural preserves create large green areas around which development has occurred.
- ▶ Rural commercial development is generally concentrated along IL Route 47 and US Route 6, implying that these are the areas with the highest likelihood of future commercial development.

LAND USE CHART
Grundy County



LAND USE TABLE

Land Use	Parcels	Acres	%
Rural Residential	708	3484.64	1.425%
Single Family	2025	1472.82	0.602%
Single Family Attached	3	1.39	0.001%
Multi-Family	3	94.37	0.039%
Mobile Home	4	7.40	0.003%
Commercial	8	7.40	0.003%
Public/Semi-Public	21	501.12	0.205%
Light Industrial	33	357.80	0.146%
Heavy Industrial	29	1286.66	0.526%
Agriculture	6178	222636.69	91.024%
Open Space/Undeveloped	240	14740.82	6.027%
Rail/Road ROW	348	1743.79	0.713%
Total County Land Use	9600	244591.11	100.000%



Existing Land Use

Context

- Grundy County
- Incorporated Municipalities
- Rivers, Streams, & Lakes

Existing Land Use

- Agriculture
- Rural Residential
- Single-Family Detached
- Single-Family Attached
- Multi-Family
- Mobile Home
- Commercial
- Light Industrial
- Heavy Industrial
- Public/Semi-Public
- Utility
- Vacant
- Parks, Open Space & Undeveloped

3.5



Demographic & Market Profile

An analysis of Grundy County's demographic trends and market conditions was conducted to help further inform the planning process. This data-driven analysis focuses on 5 key areas: (1) demographics; (2) employment; (3) housing; (4) the retail market; and (5) industrial market. Each section will note current trends, make future projections, and explain the relevant market implications.

Data for this study were obtained from the U.S. Census, the 2008-2012 American Community Survey, the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), local stakeholders such as the Grundy County Economic Development Council, and ESRI Business Analyst, a nationally recognized provider of business and market data. Based on the data available from these sources, the analysis in this section reflects the entire County, including incorporated areas.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Grundy County is simultaneously both a part of the Chicago metropolitan area and fairly rural in nature. To best capture that nuance, Grundy County's data were compared to two other nearby Counties: (1) Livingston, which is not in the Chicago metropolitan area and is smaller in size, and (2) DeKalb County, which is in the Chicago metropolitan area and is larger in size. This diversity of comparison will allow Grundy County to be appropriately analyzed from different perspectives.

Population

Population growth is slowing compared to the last decade, but Grundy County is still growing at a faster rate than Livingston and DeKalb Counties. After expanding by 33% between 2000 and 2010, Grundy County's population will grow at a much slower rate over the next decade. Between 2010 and 2018, the population is expected to grow by 5% from 50,063 to 52,572 people. However, Grundy County is growing at a faster rate than the counties of Livingston (-1.49%) and DeKalb (+1.47%).

Race & Ethnicity

The population is becoming more diverse. The County's population is majority white (as defined by the U.S. Census), however, between 2010 and 2018, the white share of the population is projected to decline by 5.3%, from 93.7% to 88.4%. By 2018, roughly 1 in 10 County residents will identify as being of Hispanic ethnicity. Livingston and DeKalb Counties are experiencing similar trends.

DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY GRUNDY, LIVINGSTON, & DEKALB COUNTIES (2010, 2013, 2018)

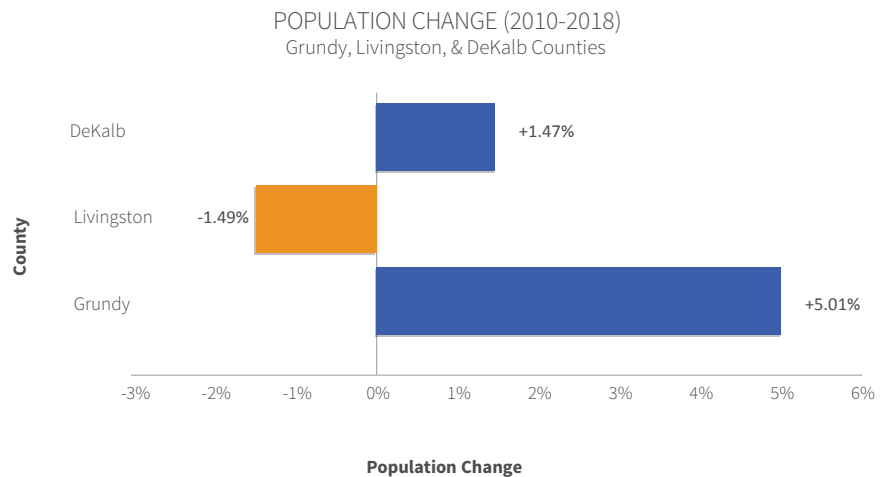
GRUNDY COUNTY					
	2010	2013	2018	Projected Change 2010 - 2018	
Population	50,063	51,054	52,572	+2,509	(+5.01%)
Households	18,546	18,860	19,324	+778	(+4.19%)
Average Household Size	2.69	2.69	2.71	+0.02	(+0.74%)
Median Age	36.0	36.6	37.2	+1.20	(+3.33%)
Median Household Income	\$60,632*	\$63,006	\$76,737	+\$16,105	(+26.56%)

LIVINGSTON COUNTY					
	2010	2013	2018	Projected Change 2010 - 2018	
Population	38,950	38,722	38,369	-581	(-1.49%)
Households	14,613	14,581	14,486	-127	(-0.87%)
Average Household Size	2.43	2.43	2.41	-0.02	(-0.82%)
Median Age	40.8	41.0	41.3	+0.50	(+1.23%)
Median Household Income	\$51,608*	\$50,996	\$55,014	+\$3,406	(+6.60%)

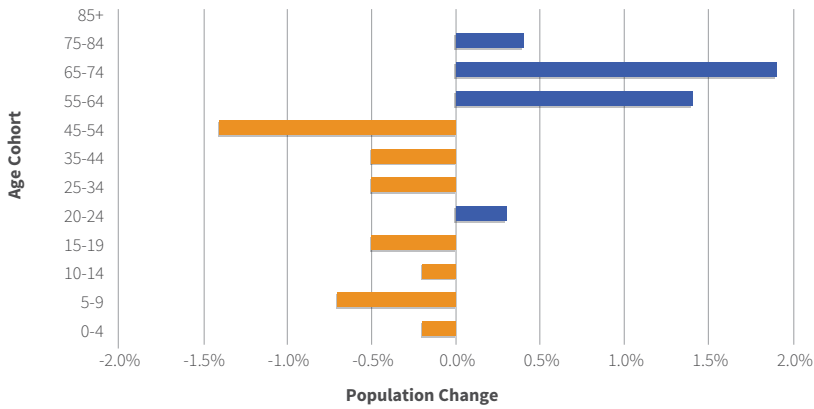
DEKALB COUNTY					
	2010	2013	2018	Projected Change 2010 - 2018	
Population	105,160	105,856	106,701	+1,541	(+1.47%)
Households	38,484	38,799	39,139	+655	(+1.70%)
Average Household Size	2.56	2.56	2.56	0	(0%)
Median Age	29.4	30.1	31.2	+1.8	(+6.12%)
Median Household Income	\$50,883*	\$56,114	\$66,705	+\$15,822	(+31.09%)

*Estimated using the 2008-2012 American Community Survey, adjusted for inflation

Sources: U.S. Census; 2008-2012 American Community Survey; ESRI Business Analyst; Housecall Lavigne Associates



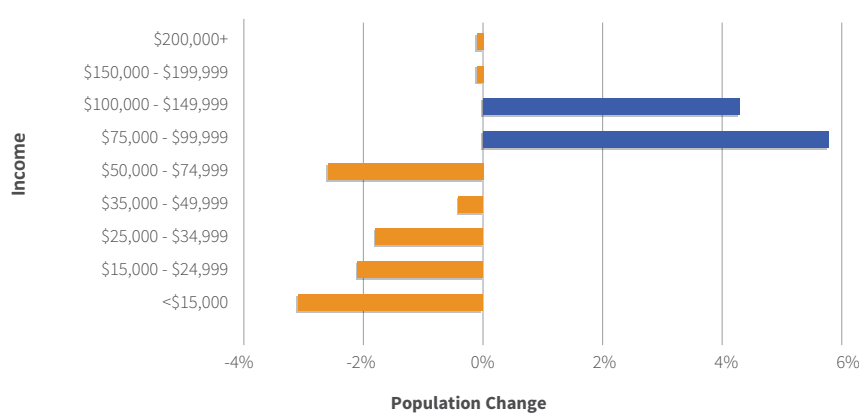
PROJECTED POPULATION CHANGE BY AGE (2010-2018)
Grundy County



Age

The population is aging. The median age of a Grundy County resident will rise from 36 years in 2010 to 37.2 years in 2018, an increase of 3.33%. Grundy County remain younger, however, than Livingston County but older than DeKalb County. Age cohorts gaining in share of the overall Grundy County population between 2010 and 2018 are projected to be 20-24, 55-64, 65-74, and 75-84. Losses were consolidated among younger cohorts.

PROJECTED CHANGE BY INCOME (2010-2018)
Grundy County



Income

The population is becoming wealthier. The median household income in Grundy County is projected to grow by an estimated 26.6% between 2010 and 2018 to \$76,737. This marks an increase of \$16,105 over 8 years. Based on median household income, Grundy County is currently wealthier than both Livingston and DeKalb Counties, and is projected to remain so into 2018. The County's 8.6% poverty rate is lower than both Livingston (10.8%) and DeKalb (16.9%).

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (25+ YEARS OF AGE) GRUNDY, LIVINGSTON, & DEKALB COUNTIES (2008-2012 AVERAGE)

	GRUNDY	LIVINGSTON	DEKALB
<9th Grade	2.6%	4.5%	3.1%
9th - 12th Grade, No Diploma	6.3%	10.7%	5.8%
High School Graduate	36.8%	40.3%	28.6%
Some College, No Degree	27.5%	23.5%	24.4%
Associate's Degree	7.7%	7.3%	9.1%
Bachelor's Degree	13.4%	9.1%	18.2%
Graduate or Professional Degree	5.7%	4.7%	10.8%

Educational Attainment

Roughly 1 in 5 County residents holds a bachelor's degree or higher. The 2008-2012 American Community Survey estimates that 19.1% of County residents has a bachelor's degree or higher. The County's educational attainment is higher than Livingston County (13.8%), but lower than DeKalb County (29.0%), which is the location of Northern Illinois University.

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey; Houseal Lavigne Associates

EMPLOYMENT

Total Employment

The number of primary jobs rose between 2002 and 2011. While the County experienced primary job growth in only 4 out of the 9 years between 2003 and 2011, 2011 employment levels were higher than 2002 by nearly 1,000 jobs.

The County is experiencing high, but declining, unemployment. The County's November 2013 unemployment rate stands at 8.3%, higher than both Livingston (8.0%) and DeKalb (6.9%) Counties. This is a significant decline from a high of 14.4% in January of 2011.

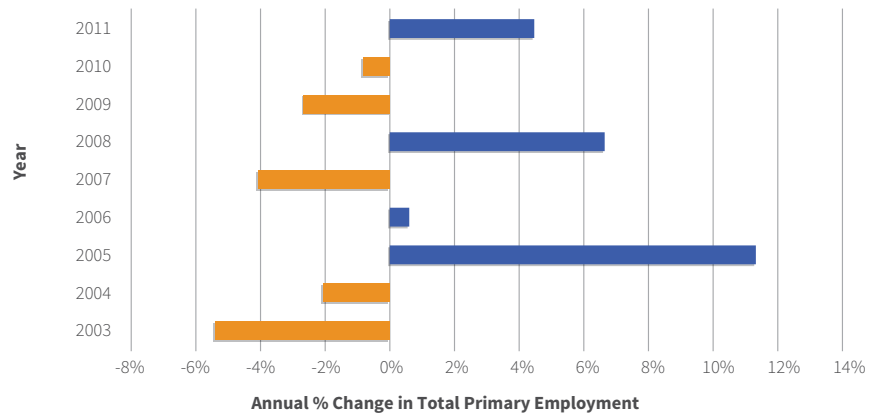
Job growth is projected. The State of Illinois' Department of Economic Security (IDES) estimates that the Workforce Investment Area (WIA) #11, comprised of Grundy, Livingston, and Kankakee Counties, will gain 8,515 jobs between 2010 and 2020. Applying Grundy County's current share of total WIA jobs to the anticipated economic expansion, it can be projected that the County could gain 1,765 jobs by 2020.

Employment by Industry

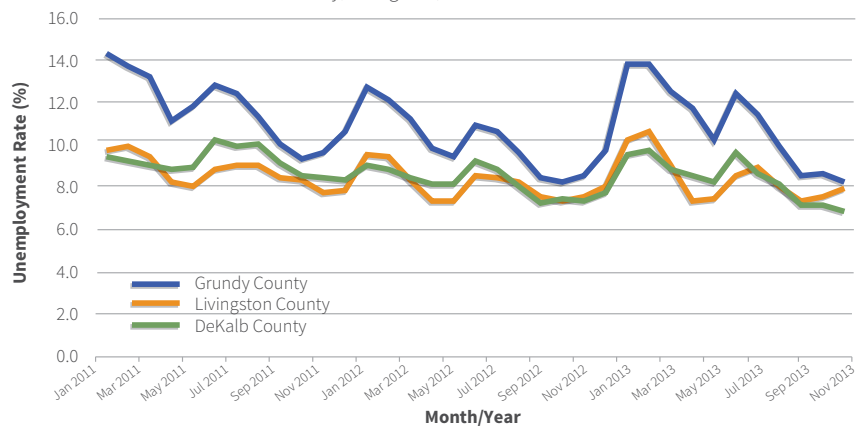
The County's economic base is diverse and not dominated by any single industry. Based on 2013 primary employment data, no single industry dominates Grundy County. The largest employer in the County, by industry, is retail trade, employing 1,917 people or 13.3% of all workers. Other significant industries include educational services (1,825 jobs or 12.6%), manufacturing (1,290 jobs or 11.0%), construction (1,169 jobs or 8.1%), and healthcare and social assistance (1,135 jobs or 7.9%).

IDES data projects that the top five growth industries in Grundy County between 2010 and 2020 could be: educational services (+511 jobs); accommodation and food services (+260 jobs); healthcare and social assistance (+249 jobs); transportation, warehousing, and utilities (+239 jobs); and retail trade (+115 jobs).

ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT CHANGE (2002-2011)
Grundy County



UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (2011-2013)
Grundy, Livingston, & DeKalb Counties



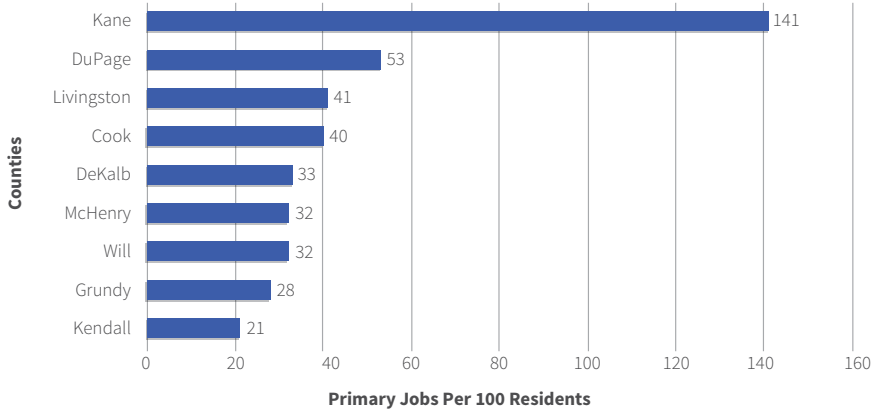
EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS BY INDUSTRY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA (WIA) #11 (2010 - 2020)

Industry (NAICS Code)	EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY (2010)			PROJECTED GROWTH (2010 - 2020)	
	WIA #11	Grundy County	Local Share	WIA #11	Grundy County
Industry (NAICS Code)	78,273	16,224	20.7%	8,515	1,765
Accommodation & Food Svcs.	5,758	1,467	25.5%	1,019	260
Administrative & Support & Waste Mgmt.	2,342	250	10.7%	603	64
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	790	174	22.0%	-2	0
Construction	3,368	1,689	50.1%	140	70
Educational Services, Public & Private	8,724	2,080	23.8%	2,143	511
Finance & Insurance	3,562	393	11.0%	862	95
Health Care & Social Assistance	13,065	2,197	16.8%	1,478	249
Information	3,077	196	6.4%	18	1
Manufacturing	7,837	1,311	16.7%	70	12
Mgmt. of Companies & Enterprises	227	8	3.5%	32	1
Natural Resources & Mining	89	64	71.7%	6	4
Other Services	3,160	452	14.3%	152	22
Professional, Scientific, & Tech. Services	1,485	405	27.3%	339	92
Government/Public Administration	5,380	703	13.1%	115	15
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	644	172	26.7%	143	38
Retail Trade	9,633	1,872	19.4%	591	115
Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities	5,951	2,431	40.8%	584	239
Wholesale Trade	3,182	360	11.3%	220	25

WIA #11 includes Grundy, Livingston, and Kankakee Counties.

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security; Houseal Lavigne Associates

EMPLOYMENT RATIO (2013)
Chicago-Area Counties

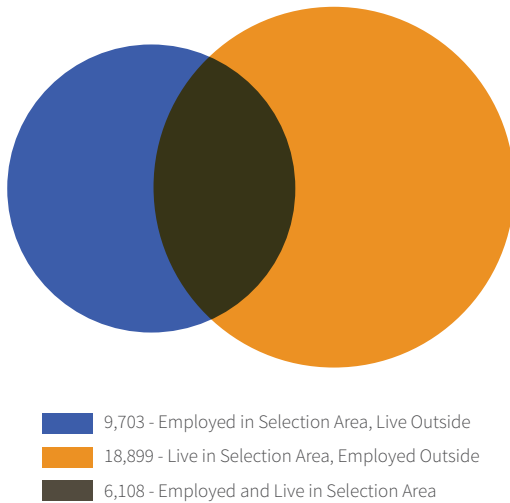


Jobs Ratio

Grundy County has 28 jobs for every 100 residents. This primary employment ratio, 0.28, is higher than Kendall County (0.21), but lower than Will (0.32), McHenry (0.32), DeKalb (0.33), Cook (0.40), Livingston (0.41), DuPage (0.53), and Kane (1.41).

On any given day, more residents work outside the County than work inside the County. In 2011, 18,899 Grundy County residents left the County daily to work elsewhere. This is more than the number of non-County residents commuting into the County for work (9,703) and the number of County residents working inside the County (6,108) combined.

INFLOW/OUTFLOW JOBS COUNT 2011
Grundy County



Major County Employers

Grundy County is home to a number of regional employers from a variety of industries, including manufacturing, retail, construction, energy, and medicine. The County's largest employer is Morris Hospital, employing an estimated 1,000 workers. Other large employers of note include the Exelon-Dresden Station (850 jobs), LyondellBasell (400 jobs), "D" Construction (350 jobs), and Wal-Mart (347 jobs).

10 LARGEST EMPLOYERS GRUNDY COUNTY (2013)

Name	Product/Service	Employees
Morris Hospital	Medical	1,000
Exelon - Dresden Station	Electricity	850
LyondellBasell	Polymer Resins	400
"D" Construction	Construction	350
Wal-Mart	Retail	347
Costco	Distribution	260
Jewel-Osco	Retail	250
Minooka CCSD 201	Public Education	210
Chicago Aerosol	Manufacturing	200
ITW Filtration	Plastic Filters	190

Source: Grundy County Economic Development Council; Houseal Lavigne Associates

HOUSING

This section provides an overview of the housing market in Grundy County, including a discussion of housing type, occupancy, age, and value, as well as trends in housing sales and building permit issuances.

HOUSING SUMMARY GRUNDY COUNTY (2010, 2008-2012 AVERAGE)

Total Housing Units	19,919	100.0%
Owner Occupied	13,691	68.7%
Renter Occupied	4,296	21.6%
Vacant	1,932	9.7%
POPULATION BY TENURE		
Population	49,809	100%
Owner Occupied	38,997	78.3%
Renter Occupied	10,812	21.7%
TYPE OF HOUSING UNITS		
Total Housing Units	19,919	100.0%
Single Family, Detached	13,558	68.1%
Single Family, Attached	2,387	12.0%
Two Units/Duplex	325	1.6%
Multi-Family	2,589	13.0%
3-19 Units	2,083	10.5%
20+ Units	506	2.5%
Mobile Home	1,060	5.3%

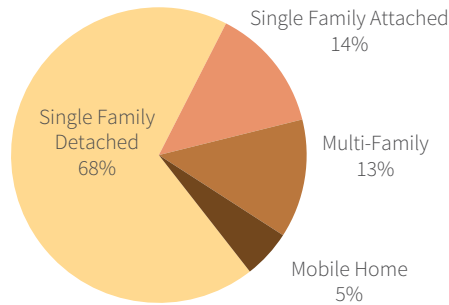
NUMBER OF BEDROOMS		
Total Housing Units	19,919	100.0%
Studio	162	0.8%
1 Bedroom	1,300	6.5%
2 Bedrooms	5,106	25.6%
3 Bedrooms	9,092	45.6%
4 Bedrooms	3,593	18.0%
5+ Bedrooms	666	3.3%

OTHER INFORMATION	
Median Home Value	\$186,500
Median Monthly Rent	\$889
Median Number of Total Rooms	5.8
Households With 2+ Vehicles	66.5%

This chart blends data from both the 2010 U.S. Census & the 2008-2012 American Community Survey Average

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey; U.S. Census; ESRI Business Analyst; Houseal Lavigne Associates

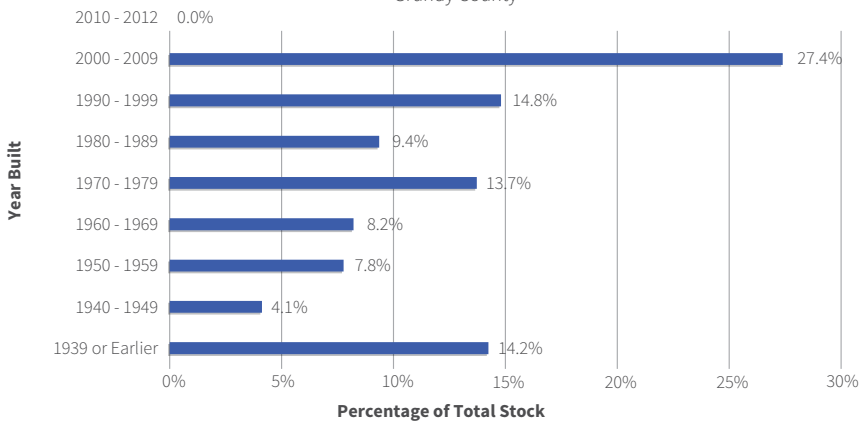
HOUSING UNIT BY TYPE (2008-2012 Avg.)
Grundy County



Profile

The County's typical housing unit is an owner-occupied, single-family home with three bedrooms or less. Of the County's estimated 19,919 units, 68.7% are owner occupied, 21.6% renter occupied, and 9.7% vacant. Nearly 7 in 10 of all units are single-family detached homes, with the remainder of the stock comprised of single family attached homes (12%), duplexes (1.6%), multi-family (13%), and mobile homes (5.3%). 78.6% of all housing units contain three bedrooms or less.

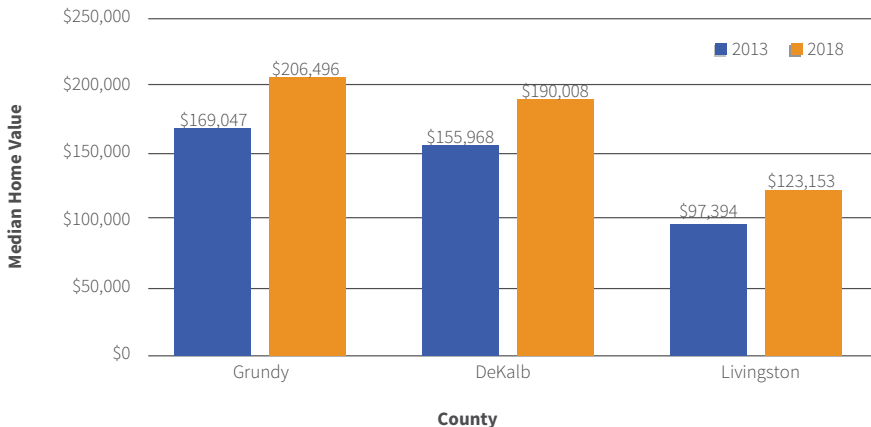
HOUSING AGE (2008-2012 Avg.)
Grundy County



Age

The County has a healthy mixture of old and new homes. The County experienced a housing boom between 2000 and 2009, and houses constructed during this period compose 27.4% of the entire stock. However, while more than half (51.6%) of the housing stock was constructed after 1980, one in four homes was built prior to 1950 and one in seven before 1939.

MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2013, 2018)
Grundy, DeKalb, & Livingston Counties



Value

Grundy County home values are higher than DeKalb and Livingston Counties and are projected to rise. In 2013, the median home value in Grundy County was \$169,047, higher than both DeKalb County (\$155,968) and Livingston County (\$97,394). 2018 estimates project that the median home value in the County will rise by 22.2% to \$206,496, higher than both other counties.

Building Permits & Sales

New residential building permits declined significantly between 2002 and 2012, however, recent levels are higher than DeKalb and Livingston Counties. In 2002, 318 new building permits were issued in Grundy County, lower than DeKalb (601 permits) but higher than Livingston (91 permits). The height of permit issuance in Grundy County was 2004, when 893 permits were issued. Due to the economic downturn permit numbers have declined since 2009, and in 2012, only 70 permits were issued.

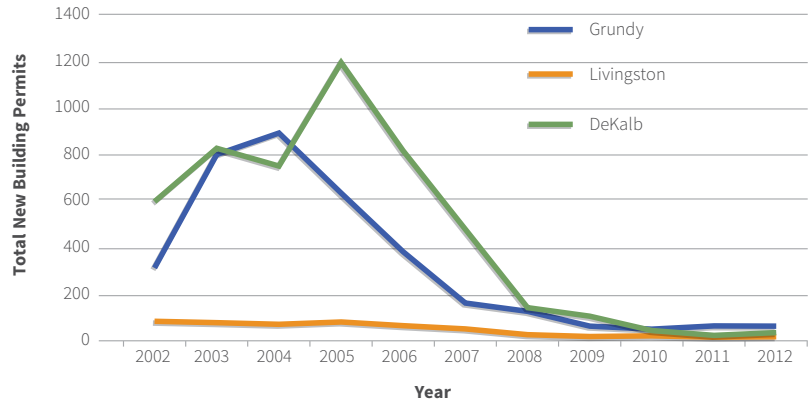
Additionally, the median home sales price in Grundy County has fluctuated widely between 2004 and 2013. Based on October sales data from Zillow, the median sales price declined between 2011 and 2013, from \$185,000 to \$156,000, however, it remains higher than the low of 2010 (\$150,000).

Housing Market Implications

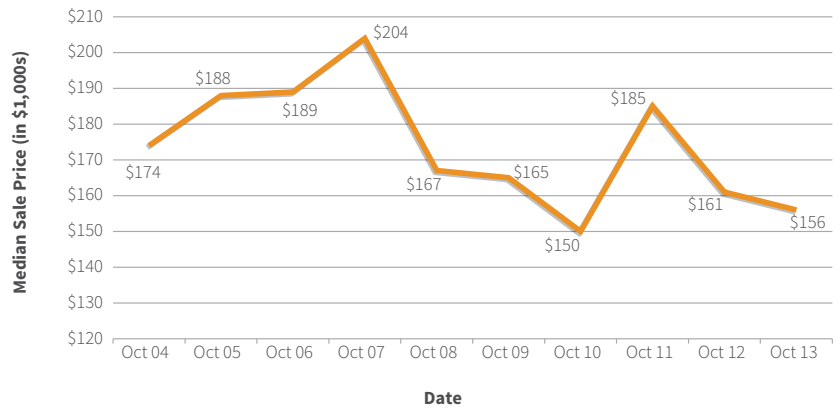
The County's population is projected to grow by 5% between 2010, from 50,063 to 52,572 people. Similarly, data from the Illinois Department of Economic Security (IDES) suggests that the County could gain 1,765 jobs between 2010 and 2020. This anticipated residential and primary job growth may translate into a need for additional quality housing units, depending on the specific growth locations within the County and their respective housing stock.

The County is also aging. The median age is estimated to rise by 3.33% between 2010 and 2018, and the majority of age cohorts gaining in share of total population are 55 years and older. The availability and quality of affordable housing units should be monitored, and the County should work with developers to ensure seniors are able to either "age in place" or obtain housing that meets their unique needs, such as apartments or senior housing.

NEW RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS (2002-2012)
Grundy, Livingston, & DeKalb Counties



OCTOBER MEDIAN HOME SALES PRICE (2004-2013)
Grundy County



RETAIL GAP ANALYSIS PROFILE GRUNDY COUNTY (2013)

DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Population	51,054
Households	18,860
Median Disposable Income	\$50,518
Per Capita Income	\$28,395

RETAIL GAP - SUMMARY (\$M)

Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	\$74.03
Total Retail Trade	\$68.51
Total Food & Drink	\$5.52

RETAIL GAP - DETAILED (\$M)

Industry Group	Retail Gap (\$M)	Potential ¹
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	\$61.99	154,981
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	\$4.24	10,597
Furniture Stores	\$1.18	2,949
Home Furnishings Stores	\$3.06	7,648
Electronics & Appliance Stores	\$9.09	22,715
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	(\$7.62)	(19,053)
Building Material and Supplies Dealers	(\$8.24)	(20,606)
Lawn and Garden Equipment and Supplies Stores	\$0.62	1,553
Food & Beverage Stores	\$46.90	117,261
Grocery Stores	\$50.40	125,995
Specialty Food Stores	\$1.47	3,673
Beer, Wine, and Liquor Stores	(\$4.96)	(12,407)
Health & Personal Care Stores	(\$52.70)	(131,762)
Gasoline Stations	(\$23.51)	(58,774)
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	\$25.63	64,070
Clothing Stores	\$18.32	45,811
Shoe Stores	\$3.74	9,355
Jewelry, Luggage, and Leather Goods Stores	\$3.56	8,904
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, and Music Stores	\$9.49	23,729
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instrument Stores	\$7.23	18,071
Book, Periodical, and Music Stores	\$2.26	5,658
General Merchandise Stores	(\$44.42)	(111,060)
Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	\$31.71	79,272
Other General Merchandise Stores	(\$76.13)	(190,332)
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$4.96	12,396
Florists	(\$0.17)	(415)
Office Supplies, Stationery, and Gift Stores	\$1.15	2,864
Used Merchandise Stores	(\$0.53)	(1,326)
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$4.51	11,272
Nonstore Retailers	\$34.47	86,168
Food Services & Drinking Places	\$5.52	13,811
Full-Service Restaurants	\$11.88	29,692
Limited-Service Eating Places	(\$4.35)	(10,863)
Special Food Services	\$2.43	6,070
Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	(\$4.44)	(11,088)

¹ Potential based on an average annual sales per-square-foot of \$400.

Source: ESRI Business Analyst ; Houseal Lavigne Associates

RETAIL MARKET

This section focuses on regional demand and highlights potential opportunities for retail growth in Grundy County.

A County-wide retail gap analysis has been performed to simply present an overview of retail opportunities at the aggregate level. It should not be used, for example, to drive retail development at a local level. Specific market assessments would need to be conducted individually for each of the County's 16 municipalities, based on the unique locations of their existing or desired commercial areas.

Retail Gap Analysis

Grundy County's retail market potential has been assessed through a comparison of supply and demand ("gap analysis") within County jurisdictional boundaries. An overview of these findings is detailed in the accompanying chart.

A "gap analysis" compares aggregate consumer spending (demand) to aggregate retail sales (supply) within a given industry group and drive time. When demand is greater than supply, "leakage" exists, suggesting that residents are spending dollars outside of the measured area. Accordingly, industries with leakage are potential opportunities for growth, as local demand for these goods and services already exists but is unmet by existing supply. Leakage is noted on the accompanying charts as a positive number in green.

Conversely, when supply outweighs demand, a "surplus" exists. This means that retail sales are greater than consumer spending, and that the market is saturated with customers from both within and outside the drive time window. Surplus is depicted on the accompanying charts as a negative number in red.

The potential for retail and commercial development at any given location is influenced by many factors, including local and regional demand for goods and services, the health of commercial districts, the location of surrounding commercial nodes, and the consumer spending patterns of the area's population.



Retail Market Implications

The retail market in Grundy County is undersupplied by \$74.03 million: \$68.51 million in retail trade and \$5.52 million in food & drinking establishments. This translates into nearly \$4,000 per household in lost revenue for the Grundy County economy.

Annual sales-per-square-foot can be utilized to equate consumer expenditures to a preliminary indication of development potential. While sales-per-square-foot revenues vary by individual retailer and industry sources, general assumptions of supportable square footage can be made by using a benchmark average. A generally accepted range for national retailers is \$200 to \$400 per-square-foot.

The use of a per-square-foot amount on the higher end of this range allows for a more conservative approach so as not to overstate retail potential. As shown in the accompanying "Retail Gap Analysis Profile" table, when a per-square-foot amount of \$400 is applied, demand is effectively translated to a potential number of square feet that could be supported within Grundy County. Again, this is not intended to demonstrate market support in any particular location, but rather to provide an indication of retail supply and demand within the county.



INDUSTRIAL

The Chicago-area industrial market is classified into several subareas. Grundy County is located within the “I-80/Joliet Corridor” market, which also contains the Joliet, Ottawa, Shorewood, Tinley Park, and Shorewood areas. The corridor is known for its distribution focus, and it is bordered on the east by the “South Cook” and “I-57 Will Corridor” areas, on the north by “I-88 Corridor” and the “I-55 Corridor,” and the west by the “DeKalb County” and “I-39 Corridor/Rockford” areas.

Economic Development Project Areas

The industrial market is particularly important in Grundy County due to the creation of two Economic Development Project Areas (EDPAs) in unincorporated land. The EDPAs are sites prioritized for industrial economic development and offer incentives to prospective businesses, such as a negotiated property tax bill and/or reimbursements for public works construction, relocation costs, job training, and more. EDPAs were created to offset the negative impact of the County’s unique “Machine and Equipment Tax,” which taxes large industrial equipment as property. They are authorized by state legislation.

There are two EDPA areas in the County: (1) EDPA #1, a 12,000 acre site just south of I-80, roughly from Minooka to Morris, and (2) a 2,000 acre EDPA #2 site south of Morris, adjacent to the Illinois and Mazon Rivers.

Market Trends & Potential

According to analyses conducted by NAI Hiffman in the third quarter of 2013, the corridor contains 620 industrial buildings. Overall industrial vacancies in the market have declined fairly steadily, from a high of 20.7% in the second quarter of 2009 to roughly 10% in the third quarter of 2013. This translates into 6,940,097 square feet of available space. Two of the corridor’s largest blocks of available space are located in Minooka, with a combined 1.3 million in available square feet.

Recent industrial growth in the “I-80/Joliet Corridor” has translated into positive net absorption rates. One recent large investment was a 365,359 expansion by Electrolux in Minooka. The corridor is viewed as having potential for further industrial growth given its positive recovery, the sizable amount of available space, and recent upticks in national manufacturing and distribution levels.

3.6



Dwight Fire Department - Room

Community Facilities & Infrastructure

Community facilities provide the services and amenities that support local quality of life. This section outlines and describes the key service providers in Grundy County, with a focus on facilities and infrastructure utilized for county governance, public safety, health, education, and library services.

The following text outlines and briefly summarizes key community facilities in those fields, including those used by the 19 departments of Grundy County Government, 14 fire protection districts and departments, 21 school districts, the Morris Hospital, and 4 library districts.

GRUNDY COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The Grundy County government provides a variety of services to residents, including transportation, law enforcement, animal control, road maintenance, and disease control. Its 19 different departments operate out of combination of six facilities in and around Morris. The information below details County activities at these locations and provides information on the services provided by County departments.

Administration Building

The Grundy County Administration building is located at 1320 Union Street in Morris. It houses eight County departments, including the Administration Department, Office of the Coroner, Education Department, Emergency Management Agency, Human Resources Department, Land Use Department, Public Health Department, and Technology Department. The building is also used as a warming center during winter months for residents needing heat or shelter.

Courthouse

The Grundy County Courthouse is located at 111 East Washington Street in downtown Morris. Constructed in 1913, the structure replaced an older courthouse built in 1856. The Courthouse hears civil and criminal cases from the Thirteen Judicial Circuit and hosts the 65-person County jail, holding individuals awaiting trial or serving sentences up to 1 year.

The building provides space to eight County departments, including the Office of the Circuit Clerk, Office of the County Clerk & Recorder, Office of the Public Defender, the Office of the Supervisor of Assessments, Office of the State's Attorney, Office of the Treasurer, the Probation Department, and the Sheriff's Department.

Highway Department

The Highway Department services the 135 miles of roads and 39 bridges under County jurisdiction. It conducts its operations from three locations; 245 North IL Route 47 in Morris, 310 East Dupont Road in Morris, and Lowery Road and North Dwight Road south of Morris. The Department is planning on two facility changes. It would like to re-locate both salt storage from the Lowery/Dwight Roads location and cold storage from the DuPont Road location to the IL Route 47 facility.

Animal Control Department

The Animal Control Department operates a facility at 310 East Dupont Road south of Morris. The Department enforces laws on pets, registers cats and dogs, and provides for abandoned, abused, or lost animals in Grundy County.

Grundy Transit System

The Grundy Transit System (GTS) offers demand-response public transportation for County residents. Approximately 10,000 rides are provided each year by its fleet of four shuttle buses. GTS currently shares office space at the Grundy County Highway Building at 245 North IL Route in Morris, with its contracted service provider, Illinois Central School Bus, operating out of a private location at 804 North Street in Mazon. Both locations do not have sufficient room for expansion and the GTS has no plans for renovation at either facility.

To meet rising demand, the GTS is purchasing 5 more buses and will be building a "bus barn" behind the Animal Control facility at 310 East DuPont Road. Eventually, the GTS hopes to add office space at this facility. The GTS's top priority is to obtain steady sources of local, state, and/or federal funding to ensure operational stability. (For additional information, see the following section, 3.7 Transportation & Mobility).

PUBLIC SAFETY

This section lists and describes the Sheriff's Department and each of Grundy County's fourteen fire districts and departments. Nine of the territorial districts are based in Grundy County, with the remaining five providing coverage from their facilities in neighboring LaSalle, Livingston, Kankakee, or Will Counties. Multiple districts expressed concern over funding due to declining tax revenues.

Sheriff's Department

The Sheriff's Department patrols the unincorporated areas of Grundy County, as well as several municipalities that have contracts for service. The Department also provides Courthouse security and administers the County Jail. In addition to operations in the County Courthouse, the County Sheriff's Department maintains a second facility nearby at 111 East Illinois Street in Morris. The Department has no plans to renovate their spaces at either location or expand to a new facility.

Allen Township Volunteer Fire Protection District

The Allen Township Volunteer Fire Protection District is located in LaSalle County at 102 S. Lincoln Street in Ransom. It provides fire coverage to a small portion of the County's southwestern corner.

Braceville Fire Department

The Braceville Fire Department sits at 102 S. Mitchell Street in Braceville. They face water supply and distribution issues, and report low water pressure from fire hydrants. The District holds a fire insurance rating of 8.

Braidwood Fire Protection District

The Braidwood Fire Protection District is located in Will County at 275 W. Main Street in Braidwood. The District reports that they have no issues with their current size or location, and that they have no plans to renovate or add to their existing facility. However, over the next 3-10 years, they may purchase new property to increase response times to the Grundy County portion of their district. They hold a fire insurance rating of 6.

Coal City Fire Protection District

The Coal City Fire Department operates out of two facilities: 35 S. DeWitt Place and 1455 S. Berta Road in Coal City. Renovations are planned at the Coal City location, and the Department is also looking to create additional office space and sleeping quarters. Their water supply and distribution system is considered inadequate, as they have recently fought two major fires and exhausted their water supply on both occasions. To address the described deficiencies in the various water distribution systems, the communities of Coal City and Diamond are inter-connecting their water systems to provide additional fire flow capability within all three communities. Diamond will also be utilizing dry hydrants, where appropriate.

Dwight Fire Protection District

The Dwight Fire Protection District is located in Livingston County at 111 S. Prairie Avenue in Dwight. They provide fire protection to residents in the southwestern corner of Grundy County. The Department reports no issues with their facilities or their water supply and distribution systems. They maintain a fire insurance rating of 5.

Gardner Fire Protection District

The Gardner Fire Protection District facility sits at 206 Depot Street in Gardner. No other information about the district was available.

Mazon Community Fire Department

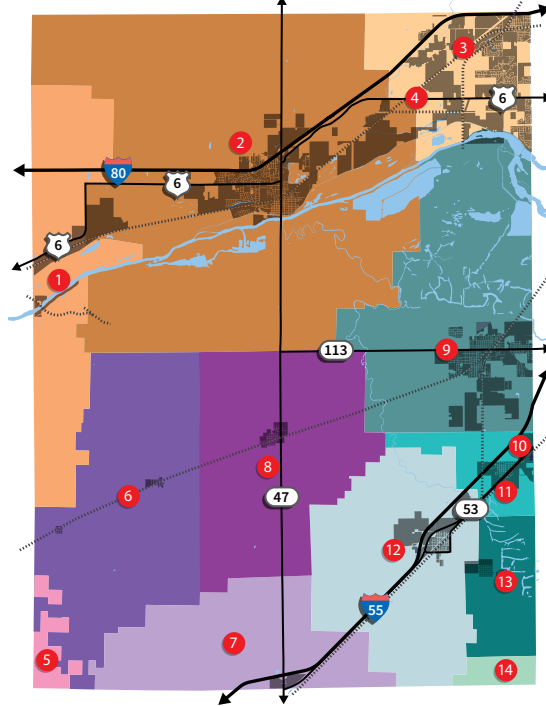
The Mazon Community Fire Department facility sits at 700 Park Street in Mazon. Representatives from the Department indicate that their water supply and distribution is adequate for fighting fires, and that they are content with the size and location of their facilities. Accordingly, the Department has no plans to renovate their facilities, however, within the next 3-10 years, they foresee upgrading their equipment.

Minooka Fire Department

The Minooka Fire Department operates out of two facilities; 7901 E. Minooka Road in Minooka and 28200 E. US Route 6 in Channahon. They report no issues with the size or locations of their existing stations, however, the District does not have water and sewer service at the Channahon location. While no plans exist to renovate current facilities, the District does envision the construction of additional fire stations, depending on growth and funding.



Fire Protection Districts



Fire Protection Districts

- 1) Seneca F.D., 2) Morris F.D., 3) Minooka F.D., 4) Equistar F.D., 5) Allen F.D., 6) Verona/Kinsman F.D., 7) Dwight F.D., 8) Mazon F.D., 9) Coal City F.D., 10) Braidwood F.D., 11) Braceville F.D., 12) Gardner F.D., 13) South Wilmington F.D., 14) Reddick F.D.

Morris Fire Protection and Ambulance District

The Morris Fire Protection and Ambulance District conducts operations out of four facilities in Morris: “Station #1” at 121 W. Main Street; “Station #2” at 2301 Ashton Road; 220 Wauponsee Street; and 775 Gore Road. It is staffed by 45 part-time firefighters and 18 full-time EMS providers. District officials expressed concern over the location of their fire stations, and may add one new facility somewhere in the northeastern portion of their District in the next 5-10 years. They also plan to renovate the Wauponsee Street location in the next 7-10 years. The District reports no issues with their water supply and distribution systems, and holds a fire insurance rating of 4.

Seneca Fire Protection and Ambulance District

Facilities for the Seneca Fire Protection and Ambulance District are located in LaSalle County at 121 W. Armour Street and 305 N. Cash Street, both in Seneca. The District reports that they have no plans to add on to either facility, however, the Cash Street location is currently being renovated. Water supply and distribution is considered inadequate.

Verona-Kinsman Fire District

The Verona-Kinsman Fire District operates out of 405 Division Street in Verona. The District services residents in parts of the southwestern portion of the County.

Reddick Fire Protection District

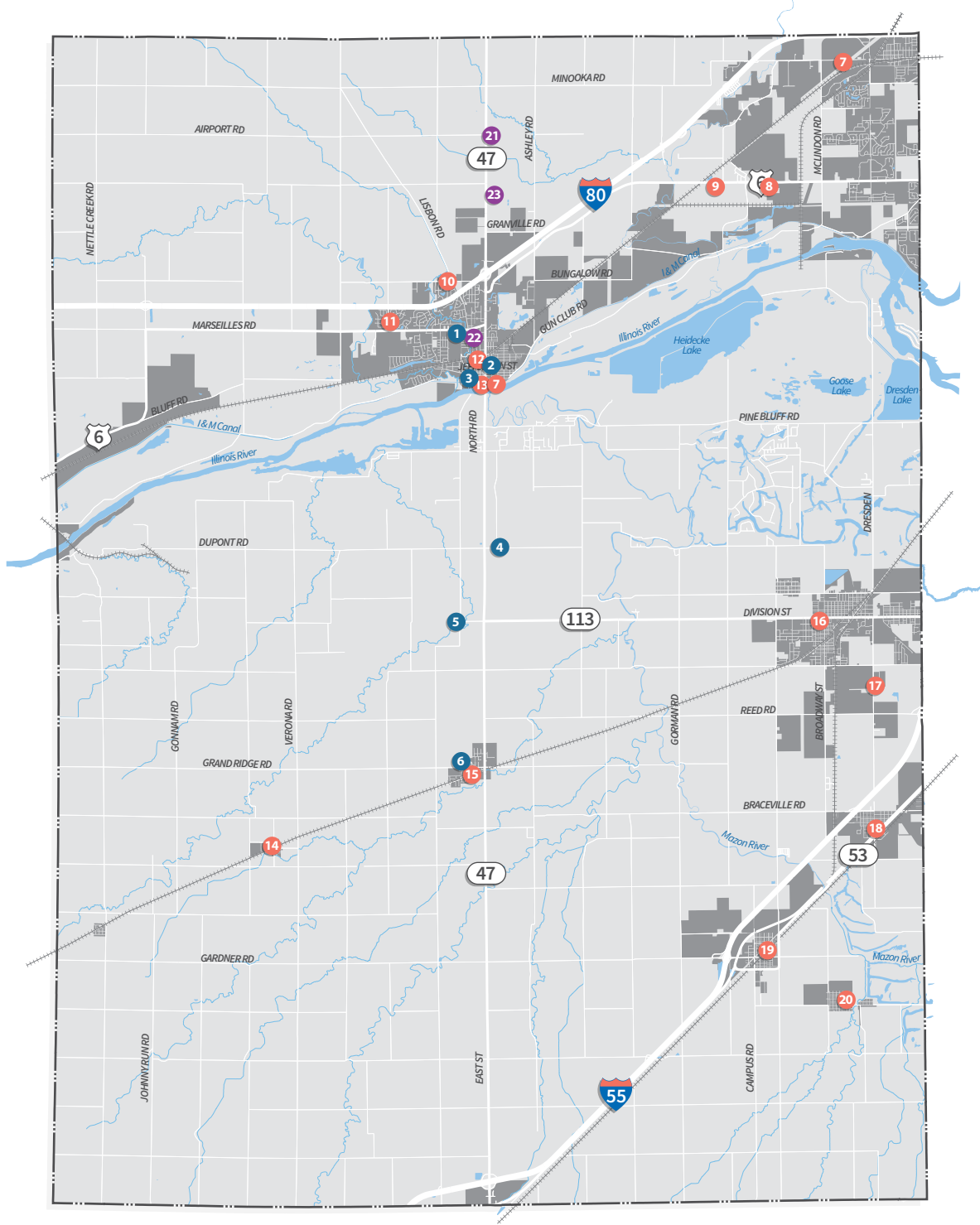
The Reddick Fire Protection District facility is located in Kankakee County at 108 S. Wabash Avenue in Reddick. The District protects residents in the southeastern corner of Grundy County.

Equistar Fire Department

The Equistar Fire Department oversees fire protection for the Lyondell Chemical Company’s Equistar facility just east of Morris, which manufactures petrochemicals. The Department’s facility is located at 8805 North Tabler Road and is tasked with protecting the site, which contains approximately 400 employees and spans nearly 900 acres.

South Wilmington Volunteer Fire Department

The South Wilmington Volunteer Fire Department sits at 330 Lake Street in South Wilmington. It provides fire coverage to a southeastern portion of Grundy County.



Government & Public Safety Facilities

Government Facilities

- 1 County Administration Building
- 2 County Highway Dept. / Grundy County Transit / 911 Call Center
- 3 County Courthouse

- 4 County Animal Control Dept. / County Highway Department
- 5 Illinois Central School Bus / Grundy Transit System

Public Safety Facilities

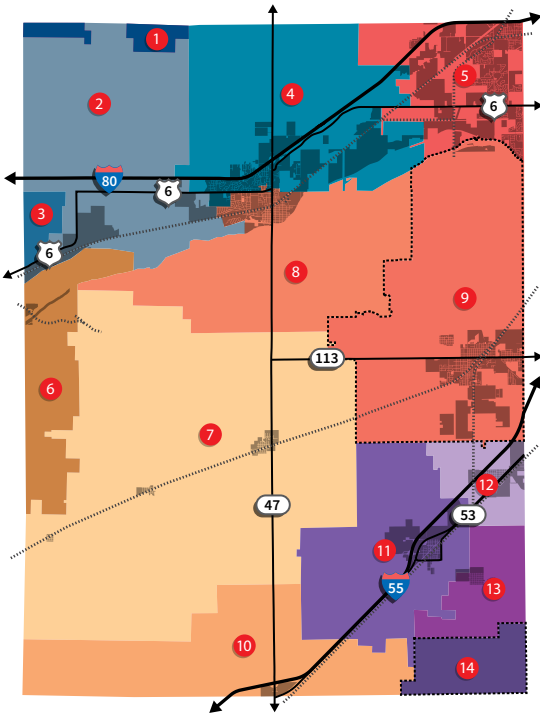
- 6 County Sheriff's Department
- 7 Minooka Fire District
- 8 Minooka Fire District
- 9 Equistar Fire Department
- 10 Morris Fire Protection & Ambulance District
- 11 Morris Fire Protection & Ambulance District
- 12 Morris Fire Protection & Ambulance District
- 13 Morris Fire Protection & Ambulance District

- 14 Verona-Kinsman Fire Department
- 15 Mazon Fire District
- 16 Coal City Fire Department
- 17 Coal City Fire Department
- 18 Braceville Fire Department
- 19 Gardner Fire Protection District
- 20 South Wilmington Volunteer Fire Department

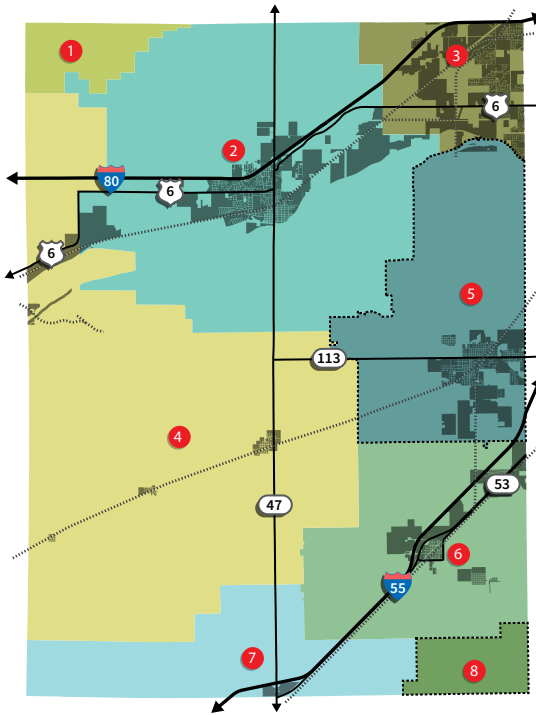
Other Facilities

- 21 Morris Municipal Airport - Morris Municipal Airport - James R. Washburn Field
- 22 Morris Hospital
- 23 Grundy County Fairgrounds

Grade School Districts



High School Districts



Grade School Districts

- 1) Lisbon D-90, 2) Nettle Creek D-24, 3) Milton Pope D-210, 4) Saratoga D-60, 5) Minooka D201, 6) Seneca D-170, 7) Mazon D-2, 8) Morris D-54, 9) Coal City D-Unit 1, 10) Dwight D-232, 11) Gardner D-72, 12) Braceville D-75, 13) South Wilmington D-74, 14) Herscher D-Unit 2H

High School Districts

- 1) Newark D108, 2) Morris D101, 3) Minooka D111, 4) Seneca D160, 5) Coal City Unit 1, 6) Gardner/S. Wilmington D073, 7) Dwight D203, 8) Herscher Unit 2

EDUCATION

Twenty-one school districts provide education to children in Grundy County. These include twelve grade school districts, six high school districts, and three school districts with both grade and high school services. Some school districts are self-contained in Grundy County, while others span across County lines into neighboring Livingston, LaSalle, Kendall, Kankakee, and Will Counties. Accordingly, some Grundy County residents are educated in facilities outside of Grundy County and vice versa.

In total, these twenty-one districts operate thirty-nine facilities and educate approximately 17,000 students. School officials generally expressed concern over declining funding levels and, in some cases, too rapid of enrollment growth.

The following table lists every school district serving Grundy residents, the schools composing each district and their respective locations, 2013-2014 enrollment numbers for each school, and, when provided by a district representative, an assessment of existing facilities and other relevant information.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

DISTRICT	SCHOOL OR FACILITY	LOCATION	IN GRUNDY COUNTY	ENROLLMENT*	REPORTED FACILITY CONDITION
HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICTS (6)					
Dwight Township High School District #230	Dwight High School	801 S. Franklin Street, Dwight, IL 60420	No	275	--
Gardner South Wilmington High School District #73	Gardner South Wilmington High School	500 E. Main Street, Gardner, IL 60424	Yes	196	In need of some improvement; under-capacity; no renovations or expansions planned
Minooka Community High School District #111	Minooka Community High School	301 S. Wabena Avenue, Minooka, IL 60447	Yes	2,537	--
Morris Community High School District #101	Morris Community High School	1000 Union Street, Morris, IL 60450	Yes	916	In need of some improvement; under-capacity; no renovations or expansions planned
Newark Community High School District #18	Newark Community High School	413 Chicago Road, Newark, IL 60541	No	183	--
Seneca Township High School District #160	Seneca High School	307 E Scott St, Seneca, IL 61360	No	457	--
BOTH GRADE & HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICTS (3)					
Coal City Community Unit School District #1	Coal City Elementary School	300 N. Broadway Street, Coal City, IL 60416	Yes	308	Excellent condition; under-capacity; no renovations or expansions planned; enrollment projected to increase
	Coal City Middle School	500 S. Carbon Hill Road, Coal City, IL 60416	Yes	487	
	Coal City High School	655 W. Division Street, Coal City, IL 60416	Yes	604	
	Coal City Intermediate School	305 E. Division Street, Coal City, IL 60416	Yes	326	
	Coal City Early Childhood Center	755 S. Carbon Hill Road, Coal City, IL 60416	Yes	339	
	District Office	100 S. Baima, Coal City, IL 60416	Yes	--	
Hirscher Community School District #2	Bonfield Grade School	522 E. Smith Street, Bonfield, IL 60913	No	268	--
	Herscher Intermediate School	391 N. Main Street, Herscher, IL 60941	No	385	
	Limestone Middle School	963 N. 5000W Road, Kankakee, IL 60901	No	595	
	Herscher High School	501 N. Main Street, Herscher, IL 60941	No	606	
Grundy County Special Education Cooperative	Grundy County Special Education Cooperative	725 N. School Street, Morris, IL 60450	Yes	28	--
GRADE SCHOOL DISTRICTS (12)					
Braceville School District #75	Braceville Elementary School	209 Mitchell Street Braceville, IL 60407	Yes	158	--
Dwight Common School District #232	Dwight Grade School	801 S. Columbia Street Dwight, IL 60420	No	602	--
Gardner Grade School District #72C	Gardner Grade School	598 N. Elm Street Gardner, IL 60424	Yes	205	Excellent condition; under-capacity; no plans to renovate or expand facility
Lisbon Community Consolidated School District #90	Lisbon Grade School	127 S. Canal Street, Newark, IL	No	121	--
Mazon-Verona-Kinsman (MVK) Elementary School District #2C	MVK Elementary School	1013 North Street Mazon, IL 60444	Yes	160	In need of some improvement; under-capacity; renovations planned
	MVK Middle School	513 8th Street Mazon, IL 60444	Yes	164	--
Miller Township Community Consolidated School District #210	Milton Pope Elementary School	3197 E. 28th Road Marseilles, IL 61341	No	215	--
Minooka Community Consolidated School District #201	Minooka Junior High School	333 W. McEvilly Road Minooka, IL 60447	Yes	872	Excellent condition; at-capacity; district enrollment projected to increase; no renovations or expansions planned, only routine maintenance
	Minooka Intermediate School	321 W. McEvilly Road Minooka, IL 60447	Yes	900	
	Minooka Elementary School	400 W. Coady Drive Minooka, IL 60447	Yes	480	
	Minooka Primary Center	305 W. Church Street Minooka, IL 60447	Yes	423	
	Aux Sable Elementary School	1004 Misty Creek Drive Minooka, IL 60447	Yes	519	
	Jones Elementary School	800 Barberry Way Joliet, IL 60431	No	486	
	Walnut Trails Elementary School	310 Wynstone Drive, Shorewood, IL 60404	No	476	
Morris School District #54	White Oak Elementary School	2001 Dupont Avenue, Morris, IL 60450	Yes	826	In need of some improvement; under-capacity; renovations planned for Shabbona Middle School; no expansions planned
	Shabbona Middle School	725 School Street, Morris, IL 60450	Yes	367	
	District Office	54 White Oak, Drive, Morris, IL 60450	Yes	--	
Nettle Creek Community Consolidated School District #24C	Nettle Creek Elementary School	8820 Scott School Road, Morris, IL 60450	Yes	86	In need of some improvement; under-capacity; no renovations or expansions planned
Saratoga Community Consolidated School District #60C	Saratoga Elementary School	4040 N. Division Street, Morris, IL 60450	Yes	777	Excellent condition; at-capacity; enrollment projected to increase; may construct a new kitchen or cafeteria in 3-10 years; concerns over IL Route 47 semi traffic
Seneca Community Consolidated School District #170	Seneca Grade School (North Campus [PK-4th Grades])	174 Oak Street, Seneca, IL 61360	No	224	--
	Seneca Grade School (South Campus [5-8th Grades])	174 Oak Street, Seneca, IL 61360	No	229	
South Wilmington Community Consolidated School District #74	South Wilmington Grade School	375 5th Avenue, South Wilmington, IL 60474	Yes	97	Under-capacity; no renovations or expansions planned; enrollment projected to increase

* Enrollment includes students housed in Pre-K-12 services, where provided.

HEALTH

Morris Hospital

The 89-bed Morris Hospital is located at 150 W. High Street and services residents of Grundy County and parts of Will, LaSalle, Livingston, and Kendall Counties. In addition to the main hospital campus in Morris, the organization also provides medical treatment at the Diagnostic & Rehabilitative Center, the Radiation Therapy Center, the Morris Hospital Ridge Road Campus, and at Healthcare Centers in Braidwood, Channahon, Dwight, Gardner, Marseilles, Minooka, Morris, and Newark. In total, the organization employs 950 people, including a medical staff of more than 200 physicians.

Health Department

The Grundy County Health Department has the primary responsibility for preserving, protecting, and promoting public health. Operating out of the Administration Building at 1320 Union Street in Morris, it aims to prevent disease and disability, and focuses resources on food sanitation, potable water supplies, sewage disposal, control of disease, and preventative care.

County Health officials recently presented the County Facility Committee with a plan to improve patient flow within the Health Department. This proposed plan could improve safety and security, cross train employees, implement a billing component, and increase space for other services. According to County Health Staff, if such a plan comes to fruition down the road, relocation to a separate facility with more space may be necessary, contingent upon funding and demand levels for services.

LIBRARIES

Grundy County residents are served by four library districts, each providing unique educational offerings and community meeting spaces. All four libraries offer interlibrary loan services and have reciprocity agreements with other facilities. Library officials generally expressed a desire for greater space and resources, as well as better public transportation offerings to their respective locations.

Coal City Public Library District

The Coal City Public Library District hosts two facilities in Coal City: the Main Library at 85 N. Garfield Street, and a Library Annex at 70 N. Irving Street. The main building was constructed in 1992 and contains 15,628 square feet of space. While library officials indicate no plans to renovate or expand existing operations, they report they have outgrown their facilities and that public parking is an issue.

Fossil Ridge Public Library

The Fossil Ridge Public Library sits at 386 W Kennedy Road in Braidwood. Although located in Will County, the library's service district extends into the eastern part of Grundy County. The library was originally built in 1983, with a new addition completed in 1989.

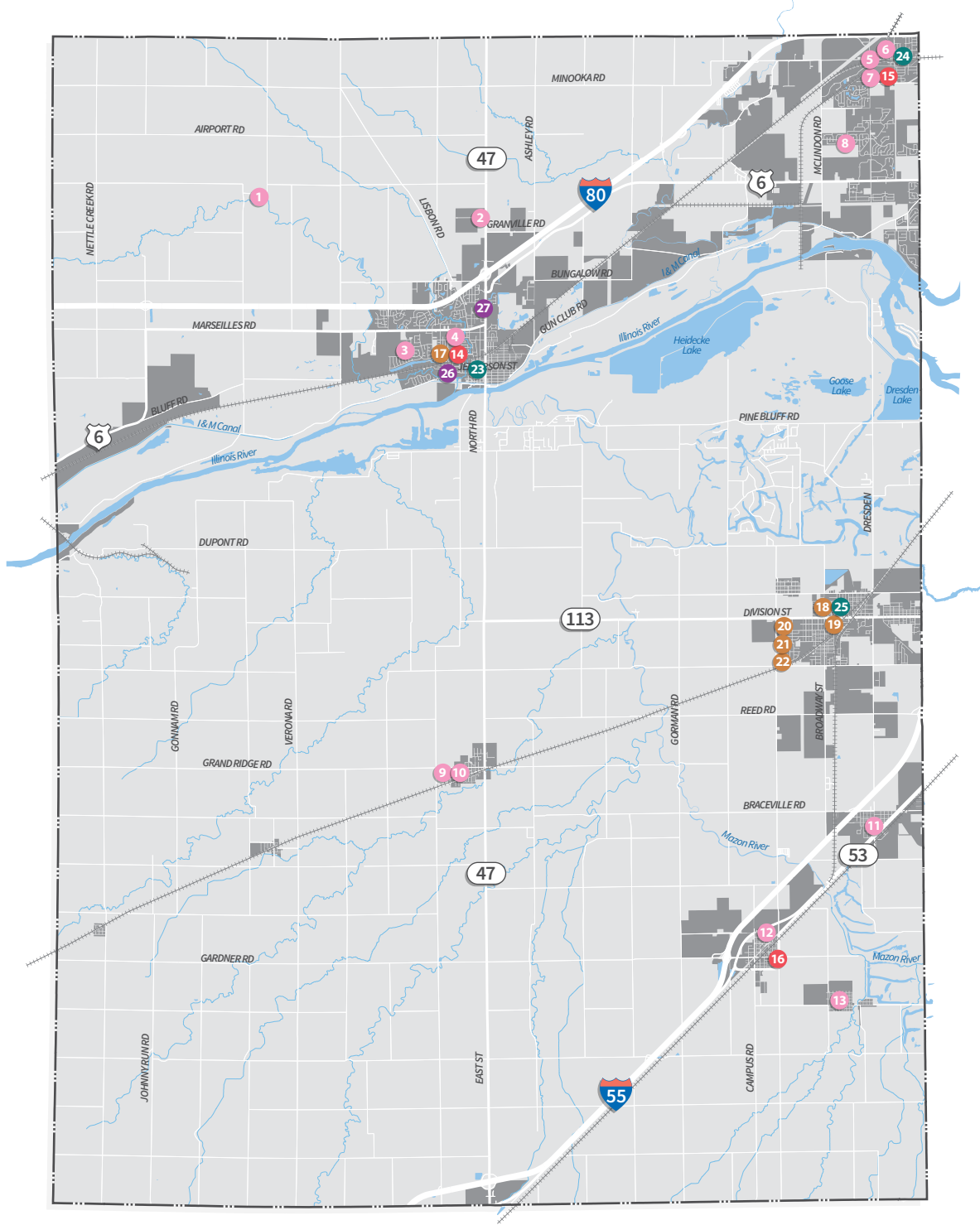
Morris Area Public Library

The Morris Area Public Library is located at 604 Liberty Street in Morris. Founded in 1913, today it services approximately 18,500 people and has extensive collection of more than 60,000 items. The building was originally completed in April 1971, with a 15,000 square foot addition to the north end of the structure finished in 1993. The Library reports that it has no plans to renovate existing facilities.

Three Rivers Public Library District

The Three Rivers Public Library District was founded in 1976 and encompasses 62 miles in Will, Grundy, and Kendall Counties. It operates two facilities: the Main Library, built in 1981, at 2507 W. Channon Drive in Channahon, and a Minooka Branch located at 109 N. Waben Avenue in Minooka.

Library officials indicate that the size of both buildings is inadequate for existing demand, however, no major projects or improvements are expected over the next ten years. Staff also notes parking issues at the Minooka location.



Educational Facilities

Grade School District

- 1 Nettle Creek Elementary School
- 2 Saratoga Elementary School
- 3 District Office & White Oak Elementary School
- 4 Shabbona Middle School
- 5 Minooka Intermediate School
- 6 Minooka Primary Center

- 7 Minooka Junior High School
- 8 Aux Sable Elementary School
- 9 MVK Middle School
- 10 MVK Elementary School
- 11 Braceville Elementary School
- 12 Gardner Grade School
- 13 South Wilmington Grade School

High School District

- 14 Morris Community High School
- 15 Minooka Community High School
- 16 Gardner South Wilmington High School

Grade School & High School District

- 17 Grundy County Special Education Cooperative
- 18 Coal City Elementary School
- 19 Coal City Intermediate School
- 20 Coal City High School
- 21 Coal City Middle School
- 22 Coal City Early Childhood Center

Library District Facilities

- 23 Morris Area Public Library
- 24 Three Rivers Public Library - Minooka Branch
- 25 Coal City Public Library

Other

- 26 Grundy Area Vocational Center
- 27 Morris Education Center

3.7



Transportation & Mobility

Grundy County's transportation system consists of a network of roadways, truck routes, public transit, railways, air transportation, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. This section describes the key characteristics that will guide Comprehensive Plan recommendations, goals and objectives to be developed in subsequent phases of the process.

ROADWAYS

Regional and County roadway systems are commonly defined by jurisdiction and functional classification. This section describes the County's roadway system based on these designations, as well as other functional characteristics that demonstrate local mobility patterns.

Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction defines the entity that finances construction and maintenance of the facilities within the public right-of-way. Whoever holds jurisdiction over a segment of roadway generally dictates important design and functional characteristics, including right-of-way width, access management, traffic control, cross-section dimensions, and others. The roadway network serving Grundy County is governed by several jurisdictional entities, including the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Grundy County Highway Department, 16 townships road districts, and 12 incorporated communities.

Interstate Highways (IDOT)

Two interstates traverse Grundy County; I-80 and I-55. I-80 is a transcontinental east-west highway that extends from Fort Lee, New Jersey to San Francisco, California. It extends for approximately 20 miles across the northern part of Grundy County with interchanges at Ridge Road (Minooka), Brisbin Road, IL 47 (Morris), and Seneca Road. I-55 is a north-south highway that connects Chicago, Illinois with St. Louis, Missouri. It extends for approximately 15 miles across the southeast corner of Grundy County with interchanges at Reed Road (Braidwood), Gardner Road (Gardner), and IL 47 (Dwight). Both interstates are under IDOT jurisdiction.

U.S. & Illinois State Highways (IDOT)

U.S. Route 6 is the only U.S. state highway in Grundy County, extending across the northern part of the county from the Will County line at Minooka through Morris to the LaSalle County line near Seneca. There are four Illinois state highways in Grundy County including Routes 47, 113, 53, and 17. IL 47 is the principal north-south artery through Grundy County providing the only bridge crossing of the Illinois River. It extends across the county from the Kendall County line south through Morris and Mazon to the Livingston County line at Dwight. IL 113 extends from I-55, just east of the Will County line, west through Diamond and Coal City to IL 47. IL 53 extends across the southeast corner of Grundy County from Godley through Braceville to Gardner. IL 17 extends approximately ½-mile along the Grundy-Kankakee County line where it then continues east into Kankakee County and south then west into Livingston County. The U.S. and Illinois state routes are all under IDOT jurisdiction.

Grundy County Highways

There are over 25 county highways in the Grundy County highway system consisting of approximately 135 miles of roads and 39 bridges. These county highways are maintained by the Grundy County Highway Department and connect many of the interstate, U.S. and Illinois state highways in the county with the local communities, rural areas and adjacent county highway systems.

Township & Municipal Roads

There are 696 miles of township roads in Grundy County and 142 township bridges. These roadways are primarily located outside of the corporate limits of the county's 12 communities. Township roads are maintained by the township road districts and provide basic access in the rural areas of the county. Roadways within the 12 incorporated communities that are not under IDOT or Grundy County jurisdiction are maintained by the local municipalities.



FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION GRUNDY COUNTY ROADS

Functional Classification	Miles
Interstate	
Rural	21.10
Urban	14.08
Other Principal Arterial	
Rural	16.49
Urban	7.58
Minor Arterial	
Rural	10.67
Urban	36.04
Major Collector	
Rural	98.89
Urban	26.30
Minor Collector	
Rural	43.00
Urban	0.00
Local	
Rural	555.53
Urban	158.07
Total All Systems	987.75

Source: Illinois Highway and Street Mileage Statistics, 2012, IDOT Office of Planning and Programming

Functional Classification

Functional classification is the grouping of various types of roadways by the function they provide in the overall system. In general, roadways have two basic functions: to provide mobility and to provide land access. IDOT utilizes six different classifications for roadways in Grundy County, which are divided into Urban and Rural categories. These classifications include Interstates, Other Principal Arterials, Minor Arterials, Major Collectors, Minor Collectors, and Local Roads. Each classification serves as a collecting/distributing facility for the next higher classification in the system. This hierarchy of roadways defines the intended use of the roadway and the desired design elements, including right-of-way, road capacity, travel speed, access controls, traffic signal spacing, and parking controls.

Interstates

Freeways provide the highest degree of mobility, with access limited to grade-separated interchanges to preserve capacity for high volumes of traffic and high travel speeds. Interstates in Grundy County include I-80 and I-55.

Arterials

Principal arterials are intended to provide a high degree of mobility and function as the primary travel routes through urbanized areas. In Grundy County, these arterials include some of the US and Illinois state routes. Minor arterials augment the principal arterials by accommodating somewhat shorter trips with less stringent access controls. In Grundy County, these arterials include some of the US and Illinois state routes, Grundy County highways, and major municipal streets.

Collectors

The collector system is designed to support the arterial network and is subdivided into major and minor designations. Collector roads consist of medium-capacity, medium volume streets that have limited continuity and serve to link higher level arterials with the lower level local streets. Collectors provide some direct land access but to a more limited degree than local streets. In Grundy County these collectors include some of the US and Illinois state highways, Grundy County highways, township roads and municipal streets.

Local Streets

Local streets provide direct land access and are accessed from arterial and collector roads. Trip lengths on local streets are typically short and volumes and speeds are typically low. All remaining roads in Grundy County not designated as one of the classification described above are classified as local streets.

GRUNDY COUNTY ROADS WITH ADT VOLUMES GREATER THAN 10,000

Roadway	Vehicles per day
I-80	28,100 - 45,700
I-55	18,200 - 24,800
IL 47	3,400 - 29,000
US 6	3,200 - 15,100
IL 113	5,100 - 11,300
Ridge Road	950 - 16,800
Pine Bluff Road	4,200 - 6,700
Minooka Road/Mondamin Street	125 - 6,300
Lisbin Road	850 - 5,300
Wabena Avenue	2,250 - 5,800
McEvelly Road	5,200 - 6,200
Broadway Road	1,900 - 7,800

Source: Illinois Department of Transportation, 2011 and 2012 traffic counts

Truck Routes

Posted truck routes are typically roadways that provide continuous regional travel and are designed to support heavy commercial traffic while avoiding residential areas. IDOT has established a Designated State Truck Route System that consists of two classifications of roadways (Class I and II) with specific design standards and maximum legal vehicle dimensions and loaded weights. In Grundy County, these truck routes include I-80, I-55, US 6, IL 47 and IL 113. Grundy County has also established a secondary, non-posted, locally-maintained truck route system to access local businesses and industrial areas from the State truck route system. These local truck routes are maintained by Grundy County or the municipalities of Morris, Minooka or Coal City and are classified as local Class II or Class III truck routes.

COMMUTE-TO-WORK TRAVEL MODES GRUNDY COUNTY RESIDENTS

Travel Mode	Residents	Proportion
Drove alone (car, truck, or van)	19,597	85.4%
Carpooled (car, truck, or van)	1,813	7.9%
Public transportation	207	0.9%
Walked	344	1.5%
Bicycle	46	0.2%
Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means	184	0.8%
Worked at home	757	3.3%
Total	22,948	100%

Source: US Census Bureau 2008-2012 American Community Survey

Traffic Volumes

The major travel corridors in Grundy County carry the highest volumes of traffic. Interstates generally carry higher volumes than other roadway classifications, but there are a few sections of US 6 and IL 47 that carry volumes greater than the section of I-55 that passes through Grundy County. The accompanying table summarizes the roadways with average daily traffic volumes (24-hour, bi-directional) in excess of 5,000 vehicles per day.

Commute to Work

There are approximately 23,000 working residents of Grundy County, of which approximately 44.5 percent work within Grundy County. The vast majority of these residents travel to work alone by private automobile. Commute times range from less than 10 minutes to more than one hour with the mean travel time to work being 29 minutes.

TRUCK ROUTES

State Truck Route System

Class I Facility: I-80, I-55

Class II Facility: US 6, IL 47, IL 113

Local Truck Route System

Class II Facility: Illinois Ave (0.325 mi W of IL 47 to IL 47), Morris

Minooka Rd (Tabler Rd to Ridge Rd), Minooka

Twin Rail Dr (Cul-de-sac to Ridge Rd), Minooka

Broadway Rd (IL 113 to Spring Rd), Coal City

Class III Facility: Braceville Rd (Mitchell St to IL 129), Grundy County

Braceville Rd (Tynan Rd to Mitchell St), Grundy County

Broadway Rd (Braceville Rd to Spring Rd), Grundy County

DuPont Rd (Gonnarn Rd to IL 47), Grundy County

Grand Ridge Rd (LaSalle County line to Tynan Rd), Grundy County

Gardner Rd (IL 47 to LaSalle County line), Grundy County

Kinsman Rd (Gardner Rd to Grand Ridge Rd), Grundy County

Old Stage Rd (Saratoga Rd to 0.4 mi E of Saratoga Rd), Grundy County

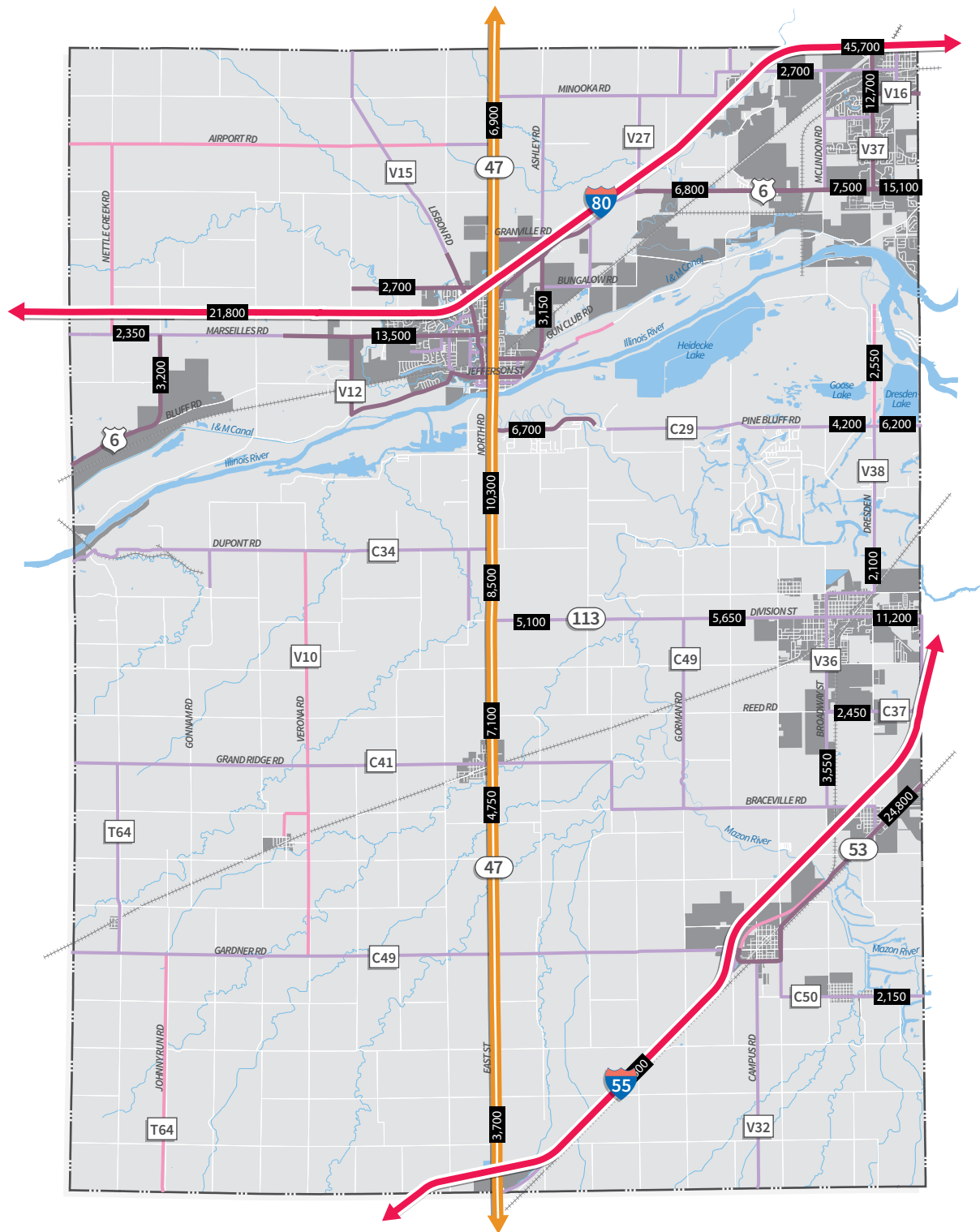
Pine Bluff Rd (IL 47 to Will Rd), Grundy County

Ridge Rd (US 6 to I-80), Grundy County

Reed Rd (Broadway Rd to Will Rd), Grundy County

Saratoga Rd Rd (Old Stage Rd to US 6), Grundy County

Tynan Rd (Grand Ridge Rd to Braceville Rd), Grundy County



Roadway Classification

Context

- Grundy County
- Incorporated Municipalities
- Rivers, Streams, & Lakes

Functional Classification

- Interstates
- Principal Arterials
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Average Daily Traffic
US Interstate

Jurisdiction

- Interstate Highway
- U.S. State Highway
- IL State Highway
- Grundy County Highway

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Freight Rail

Grundy County is serviced by four mainline freight-moving railroads.

Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railway (BNSF)

The BNSF railway extends in a southwest-northeast direction across Grundy County, running through Verona, Mazon, and Coal City as it continues east to the BNSF Logistics Park Chicago in Elwood. The double-track rail line carries approximately 37-61 freight trains per day through Grundy County and serves local industries in Coal City and Mazon. There are 28 grade crossings along the BNSF railway in Grundy County.

CSX Railroad (CSXT)

The CSXT railroad extends in a southwest-northeast direction across Grundy County running through the communities of Morris and Minooka. The single-track rail line carries approximately 9 freight trains per day through Grundy County and serves local industries including Equistar Chemicals, Kinder Morgan, A&R Logistics, North American Stainless, and Stockdale Block Systems. A spur line extends from the CSXT mainline to the Martin Sulfur Services plant in Seneca and across the Illinois River to the Orica Nitrogen plant on DuPont Road. There are 17 grade crossings and two grade-separated crossings of the CSXT in Grundy County.

Union Pacific Railroad (UP)

There are two single-track UP lines that extend through Grundy County. The mainline runs parallel to IL 53 and cuts across the southeast corner of the county. It travels through the communities of Gardner, Braceville and Godley, and continues east to the Joliet Intermodal Terminal, Joliet Union Station and City of Chicago. This line carries approximately 8 trains per day through Grundy County and there are 12 grade crossings and two grade-separated crossings of the line in the County. The second UP line runs southwest from the Joliet Intermodal Terminal to Coal City where it continues south to merge with the mainline between Braceville and Gardner. This rail line presently carries approximately three trains per day but will be more heavily utilized upon completion of the Union Pacific's planned 285-acre logistics park to be built in Coal City at the southwest corner of Reed Road and Broadway Road. There are six grade crossings of this line and one grade-separated crossing in the County.

Canadian National Railroad (CN)

The CN railroad extends into Grundy County in a north-south path through Minooka and across the Illinois River to Goose Lake. This single-track rail line carries approximately 4 freight trains per day into the County and has spur lines serving local industries such as Aux Sable Liquid Products, Akzo Nobel Chemicals, Reichhold Chemicals, and the Dresden power generating station. There are eight grade crossings and two grade-separated crossings of the CN in Grundy County.



Passenger Rail

There is presently no commuter rail service or inter-city passenger rail service in Grundy County. The nearest Metra commuter rail service to the greater Chicago area is located to the east in Joliet (Rock Island District Line and Heritage Corridor Line) and to the north in Aurora (BNSF Railway Line).

An initiative is underway to bring commuter rail service or another form of regional transportation service to Grundy and LaSalle County. With assistance from the Illinois Department of Transportation, the initiative kicked off in 2002 with the formation of the Illinois Valley Commuter Rail Steering Committee, made up of representatives from the municipalities of Channahon, Joliet, LaSalle, Marseilles, Minooka, Morris, North Utica, Ottawa, Peru, and Seneca, and the Boards of LaSalle and Grundy counties. The Committee led a Phase I study, known as the Illinois Valley Commuter Rail Feasibility Study, which concluded that commuter rail service along the Illinois Railway was feasible although not eligible to compete against other projects funded by the Federal Transit Administration's New Starts program in more densely populated areas.

A Phase II study (Illinois Valley Corridor Comprehensive Transportation Study) has received Federal funding and is underway to evaluate potential transportation service options between these communities. This study will have an expanded study area that includes the City of Aurora and the CSXT rail line, and will also analyze other service modes such as express bus service. These initiatives are consistent with the long range plans of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), which envisions a Metra service extension along the Rock Island District Line from its current terminus in Joliet to Minooka and beyond.

The nearest inter-city Amtrak service is available to the south in Dwight. There are currently eight Amtrak trains per day (four in each direction) that stop at the Dwight station providing daily service between Chicago and St. Louis on the Lincoln Service route. An additional two trains (one in each direction) operate daily from the Joliet and Pontiac stations with service between Chicago and St. Louis on the Texas Eagle route, which continues south to Longview, Texas. The Illinois Department of Transportation has embarked on a Federally-funded high speed rail initiative to upgrade the Chicago-St. Louis Amtrak corridor for 110 mph service. The segment between Dwight and Pontiac has already been completed and the full length of the route is scheduled for completion in 2017.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Public transit service in Grundy County is provided by the Grundy Transit System (GTS), which is a Federal- and State-funded public transportation system that is available to all Grundy County residents. GTS is a demand-responsive, dial-a-ride service that provides curb-to-curb service. The GTS operates a fleet of shuttle buses with 12-14 seat capacities, all of which are ADA-compliant and equipped with wheelchair lifts.

The GTS service area covers all of Grundy County and also has regular stops in Joliet at Joliet Junior College (main campus), Louis Joliet Mall, Joliet Union Station, the Illinois Department of Employment Services, the Social Security office, and the Department of Human Services. Service hours are Monday-Friday from 6:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. and 24-hour advance reservations are required. Rides cost \$3.00 each way within Grundy County and \$4.00 each way outside of the County. Discounted multi-ride passes are also available for purchase. There are presently no fixed-route, regularly-scheduled public transit services or inter-city bus services operating in the County.

COMMERCIAL AIR TRANSPORTATION

The nearest regularly scheduled airline passenger service to Grundy County is located in Chicago at O'Hare International Airport and Midway International Airport, in Bloomington-Normal at the Central Illinois Regional Airport, in Rockford at the Chicago Rockford International Airport, and in Peoria at the Peoria International Airport. The Morris Municipal-James R. Washburn Field Airport offers public, local general aviation services in Grundy County. Private general aviation facilities are located at the Dwight Airport in Dwight and the Curanda Airport in Verona. Private heliports are located at the Morris Hospital, Exelon Dresden Power Station, and the Howard Heliport in Seneca.

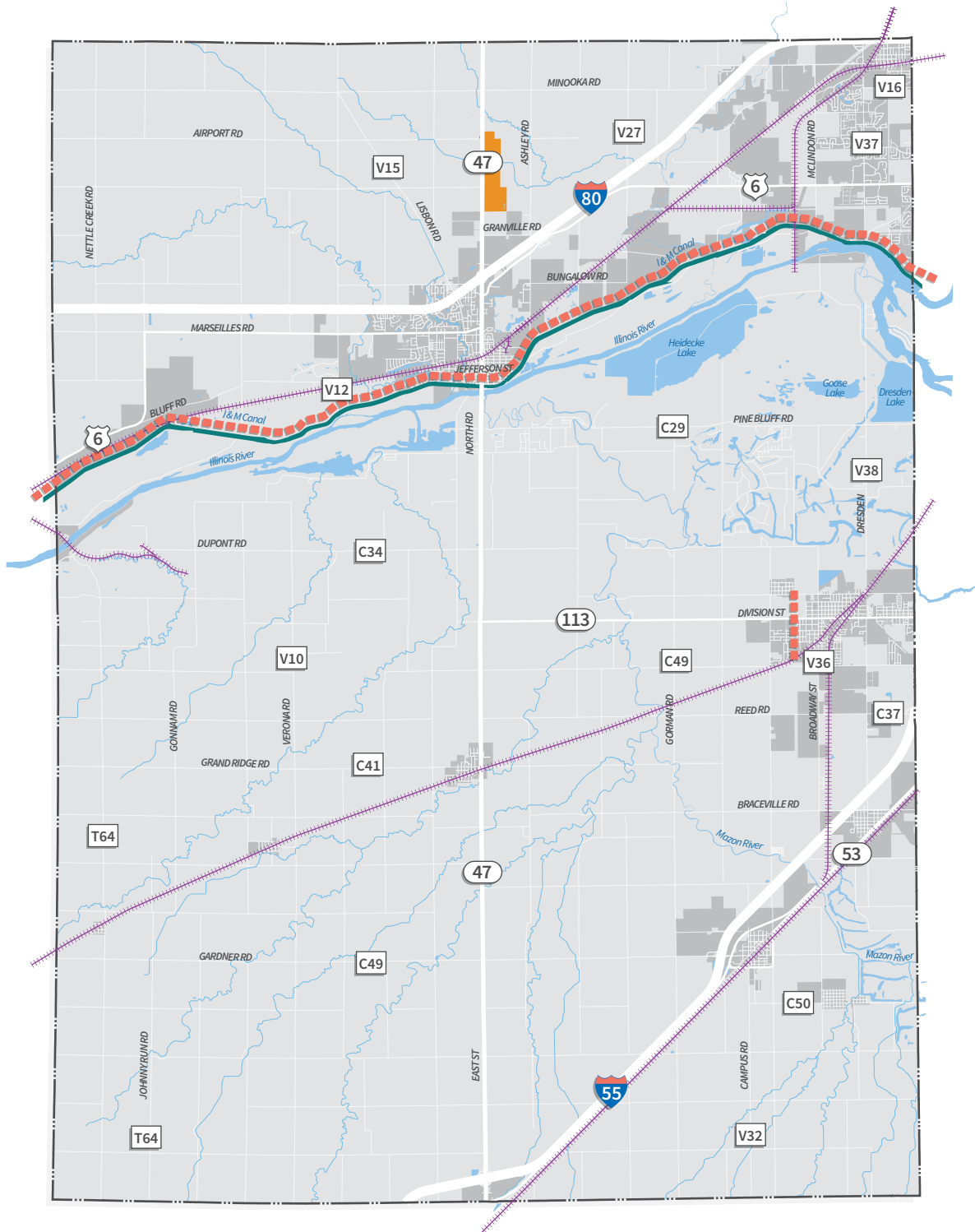
RIVER TRAVEL

The Illinois River is an integral part of the national waterway system and remains a vital travel route for commerce to and from Grundy County. It is formed by the confluence of the Kankakee River and Des Plaines River south of Minooka and bisects Grundy County from east to west. There is currently only one roadway bridge crossing of the Illinois River in Grundy County, at IL 47 in Morris. Barges carry grain, sand, dry-bulk materials, coal, petroleum, chemicals, steel and forest products, and other goods to and from the Chicago area and points further west. Major terminals along the Illinois River in Grundy County are primarily located in the Morris area at the Material Service Corporation's Yard 34 dock, Morris grain elevator docks (ADM/Growmark, Cargill, Continental Grain), and docks serving Vulcan Materials, Equistar Chemicals, Reichhold Chemicals, and the Dresden power generating station. The Illinois River is also used by pleasure craft and for other recreational purposes.

BICYCLE TRAIL SYSTEM

There are currently two bicycle trails within Grundy County, including the Illinois and Michigan (I&M) Canal State Trail, which is a component of the 500-mile Grand Illinois Trail, and the Tippleway bike path in Coal City. IDOT's Official Bicycle Map identifies several roadways in Grundy County as suitable for bicycling, including portions of many of the Grundy County highways and township roads, including Old Stage Road, Cemetery Road, Sherrill Road, Airport Road, Dellos Road, Ashton Road, Brown Road, Middle Road, Pioneer Road, Gorman Road, Hadden Road, Kinsman Road, Jugtown Road, McArdle Road, Grinter Road, and Livingston Road, among others. The US and IL state routes and many sections of the Grundy County and township roadway system are either not recommended for bicycling or have ride-with-caution advisories due to narrow shoulders and high travel speeds.

A cohesive and comprehensive bicycle trail system is needed in Grundy County to connect communities, parks, schools, subdivisions, commercial corridors, and train stations. The system should align with the developing bicycle trail systems of the adjoining counties (Kendall, Will, Kankakee, Livingston, LaSalle) and prioritize connections between Grundy County's State parks and natural areas, including Gebhard Woods State Park, Channahon State Park, Des Plaines Fish & Wildlife Area, Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area, Heidecke Lake State Fish & Wildlife Area, I&M Canal State Trail, Mazonia State Fish & Wildlife Area, and William G. Stratton State Park.



Multi-Modal Network

Context

- Grundy County
- Incorporated Municipalities
- Rivers, Streams, & Lakes

Multi-Modal Network

- Illinois Michigan Canal
- Railroad
- Bike Trail
- Airport

3.8



Grundy County Chamber of Commerce – Canal People

Parks, Open Spaces, & Environmental Features

Parks, open spaces, and environmental features are an important part of community life. Parks provide opportunities for social activity, physical exercise, and interaction with nature. The presence of rivers, forests, prairies, and lakes play a significant role in increasing quality of life, strengthening biodiversity, and supporting a healthy lifestyle. This section describes the important open spaces and natural features of Grundy County.

PARKS & OPEN SPACE

State Parks & Open Space

The State of Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR) maintains six sites in Grundy County, including two state parks, two fish & wildlife areas, one natural area, and one trail. These sites offer access to hundreds of acres of amenities, including boating, fishing, fossil exploration, wildlife viewing, hiking, and more.

Gebhard Woods State Park

Gebhard Woods State Park is a 30-acre park in Morris bordered by the I & M Canal and Nettle Creek. The park is staffed year-round and considered one of the state's most popular parks. Visitors can enjoy an extensive variety of wildflowers and trees, including walnut, oak, ash, maple, sycamore, hawthorn, cottonwood, wilder ginger, violets, and bluebells. The site is also home to wildlife, including beavers, minks, ducks, and herons. The park allows camping, fishing, hiking, and canoeing.

Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area

The Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area is a dedicated nature preserve located one mile southwest of where the Kankakee and Des Plaines rivers meet. This natural area's mandate is to protect a portion of the Illinois's native prairie land, which once covered nearly 60% of the state. The area also contains a variety of ponds and marshes, seven miles of trails, and nesting habitats for endangered and threatened bird species. Picnicking and hiking are allowed.

Heidecke Lake State Fish & Wildlife Area

The 2,000 acre Heidecke Lake State Fish & Wildlife Area sits southeast of Morris, just north of the Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area. Originally built in 1978 as a cooling lake for a nearby power plant, the lake and its environs are a prime spot for outdoor recreation. Visitors can fish, boat/canoe, hike, and hunt.

Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail

The Illinois & Michigan (I & M) Canal State Trail offers visitors a mixture of both history and nature. The canal was completed in 1848 at a cost of \$6.5 million, providing the first complete water route from the east coast to the Gulf of Mexico. It was closed in 1933 and redeveloped for recreational opportunities, including a 61.5 mile trail starting in Channahon in the east and ending near LaSalle, IL in the west. The trail connects between numerous historic sites and state parks. Fishing, hiking/biking, picnicking, camping, and snowmobiling are permitted on or along the trail.

Mazonia State Fish & Wildlife Area

The 1,017 acre Mazonia State Fish & Wildlife Area is located three miles southeast of Braidwood. It contains grassland, bushy draws, woodland cover, and Braidwood Lake. The lake is owned by Commonwealth Edison and serves as a cooling lake, however, a long-term lease agreement with the State allows access by the general public. The area is well known for sport fishing and fossil excavation, and the state fossil, the Tully Monster, was discovered on site. Boating, fishing, hunting, and hiking are allowed.

William G. Stratton State Park

The William G. Stratton State Park sits along the banks of the Illinois River in downtown Morris. Developed in 1958 to increase boat access to the Illinois River, it contains four public boat launching ramps as well as a jet-ski launching area. The site's northern boundary is the I & M Canal, permitting easy access for park visitors to sixty-one miles of trail. Guests can boat, picnic, and hike.

Local Parks

Local parks within Grundy County are operated and maintained by either municipalities (such as the City of Morris's Parks & Recreation Department and the Village of Coal City's Maintenance Department), or park districts (such as the Channahon or Godley Park Districts.) In all known cases, the park service areas of these operations are either coterminous, or nearly coterminous, with municipal boundaries. As a result, these parks are not included in this analysis since they aim to serve residents in incorporated communities rather than the County.

Other Open Spaces

Grundy County Agricultural District Fairgrounds

The Grundy County Fair moved from Mazon to its current location, just north of Morris, in 1971. Among other things, the site contains an exhibition hall, offices, a commercial building, a horse arena, and a one-third mile paved oval named the "Grundy County Speedway," which hosts car racing on Friday and Saturday evenings. The site is used every summer for the Grundy County Fair and offers food, livestock competitions, food, fireworks, a carnival midway, and other family activities.

Short Pioneer Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve

The Short Pioneer Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve is a small nature preserve containing Short Cemetery. It is located just north of Coal City and contains a dry-mesic sand prairie. Native grasses include little and big blue-stems, Indian grass, and porcupine grass. It is owned by the Oak Ridge Cemetery Association.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Topography

The County lies in the Kankakee Plain and the land is relatively flat, with no significant change in elevation. The highest point in the County sits in the northwestern corner, with an elevation of about 700 feet above sea level. The lowest point is 510 feet below sea level, and is located at intersection of the western County line and the Illinois River.

Soil & Agriculture

Grundy County's soil is extremely fertile and agriculture is the County's predominant land use. According to the 2007 U.S. Department of Commerce Agricultural Census, more than 215,474 acres of County land (78% of all land) were used by 450 different farms for agriculture. This yielded \$110,560,000 in receipts. The latest numbers for Grundy County will be highlighted in 2014 Agricultural Census, slated for release in February 2014.

Waterways

Illinois River

Arguably the County's most important natural asset, the 332 mile Illinois River is formed at the confluence of the Kankakee and DesPlaines Rivers in eastern Grundy County. Its major tributaries include the Des Plaines, Fox, Kankakee, Vermilion, Mackinaw, Sangamon, Spoon and La Moine rivers.

The river flows through the County from its northeastern corner, between Channahon and Coal City, towards Seneca. It then flows further westward until the St. Louis-area, where it joins Mississippi River. Because the Illinois River helps to connect the Great Lakes with the Gulf of Mexico, it is integral in domestic and international shipping. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers oversees its maintenance and operations.

According to the Department of Natural Resources, the Illinois River's primary pollution problems are metals; contaminated sediments; hydrologic/habitat alterations; and nutrients, siltation, and suspended solids attributed to agriculture.

Mazon River

The Mazon River, formerly known as the Mazon Creek, is a tributary of the Illinois River. The river area is considered one of the best locations for fossil finding, as it is home to more than 300 fossilized animal species and 200 fossilized plants.

**MUNICIPAL
FLOOD RISK
GRUNDY COUNTY**

MUNICIPALITY	RANKING
Braceville	Moderate
Carbon Hill	Low
Channahon	Low
Coal City	Low
Diamond	Moderate
Dwight	Low
East Brooklyn	High
Gardner	Low
Godley	Low
Kinsman	Low/Moderate
Mazon	Low/Moderate
Minooka	Low
Morris	Low
South Wilmington	Moderate
Seneca	Low
Verona	Moderate

Floodplains

The vast majority of the County's floodplains are located along the Illinois River, its tributaries, and other waterways, although floodplains exist in some municipalities. While Grundy County has encountered flooding issues, its proportion of floodplains to total land (estimated at between 0-9%) is on par with neighboring counties such as Livingston and Kankakee (both 0-9%) and is lower than Will (10-19%).

Past Flooding Incidents

Between January 1981 and May 2013, the County has experienced six federal disaster declarations related to flooding:

- ▶ December 1982 – FEMA DR# 674
- ▶ February to April 1985 – FEMA DR# 735
- ▶ July 1996 – FEMA DR# 1129
- ▶ August 2007 – FEMA DR# 1729
- ▶ September/October 2008 – FEMA DR# 1800
- ▶ July 2013 – FEMA DR# 4116

State of Illinois Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (2013)

The 2013 State of Illinois Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan assigns a natural hazard rating to each Illinois County based on historical frequency and probability, vulnerability, severity of impact, and population. From most dangerous to least, their rating scale is: “severe,” “high,” “elevated,” “guarded,” and “low.”

In 2013, the report upgraded Grundy County's flood hazard rating to “high” from the County's previous 2010 status of “elevated.” The County's severe storms hazard rating remained at “severe.” Potential flood losses for Grundy County, based on a 100-year flood, were estimated between \$80 million and \$160 million.

Grundy County Multi-Jurisdictional Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan (2013)

The County issued a Multi-Jurisdictional Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan in 2013 to assess and prepare for natural disasters. Based on data obtained in the 2010 State of Illinois Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, the plan's steering committee ranked the individual flood risk for each Grundy County municipality. Their ranking system was “low risk,” “moderate risk,” or “high risk.” Their findings were:

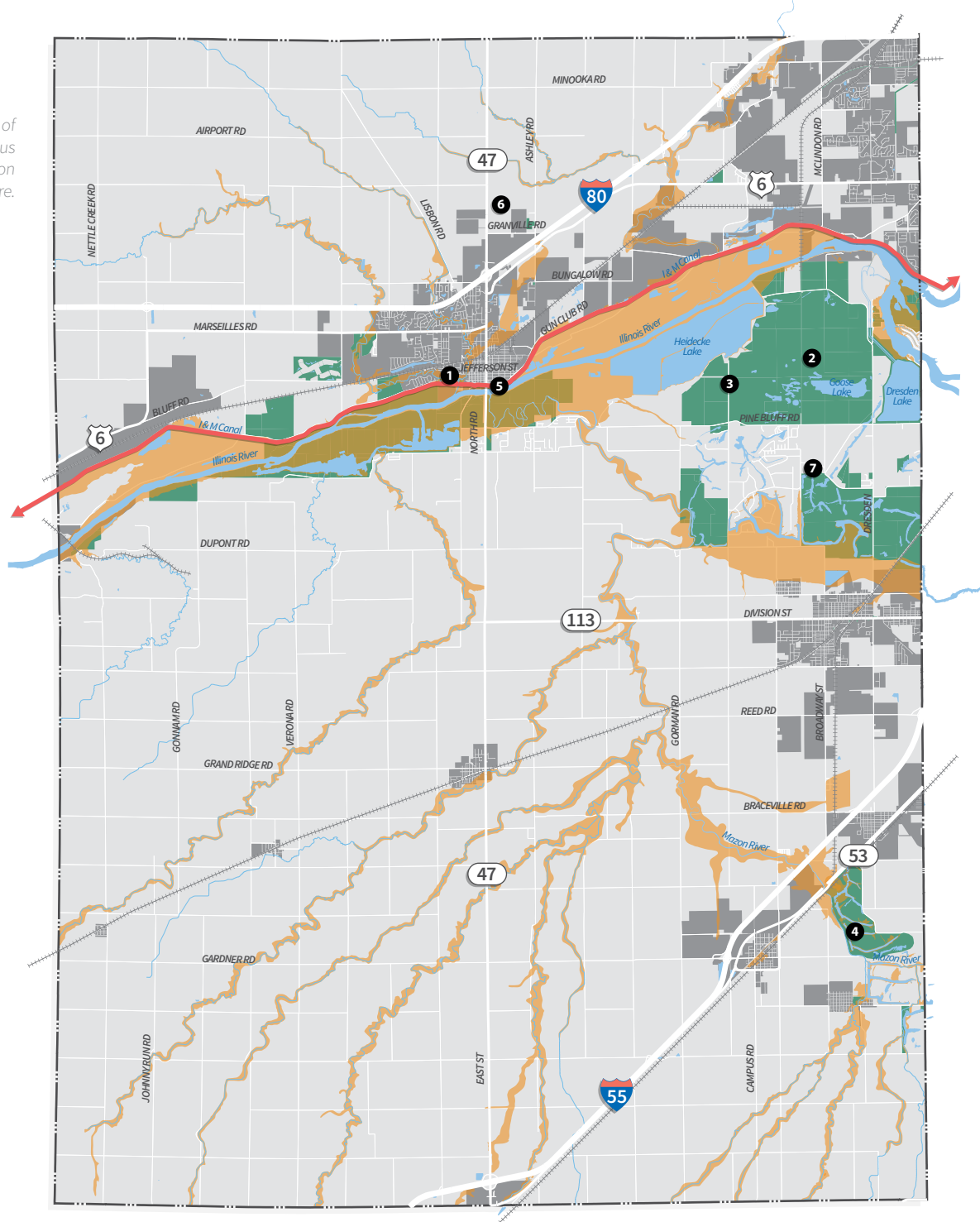
Grundy County Environment & Resource Conservation Office

The Environment & Resource Conservation Office in the Grundy County Land Use Department is the lead agency in implementation of the County Solid Waste Management Plan. Funded by landfill fees from the City of Morris, the Department aims to protect natural resources; increase recycling, reuse, and composting; decrease waste generation; and insure the timely development of needed facilities and programs. It is playing an increasingly important role in protecting the local environment from pollution and irresponsible resource usage.



Flickr - Kenneth Spencer

The County contains a diversity of natural features, offering numerous opportunities for outdoor recreation and interaction with nature.



Parks, Open Spaces, & Environmental Features

Context

- Grundy County
- Incorporated Municipalities
- Rivers, Streams, & Lakes

Environmental Features

- Parks & Open Space
- Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail
- Floodplain

Park Facilities

- 1** Gebhard Woods State Park
- 2** Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area
- 3** Heidecke Lake State Fish & Wildlife Area
- 4** Mazonia State Fish & Wildlife Area
- 5** William G. Stratton State Park
- 6** Grundy County Agricultural District Fairgrounds
- 7** Short Pioneer Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve



Flickr - Oscar Shen

THE VISION, GOALS, & OBJECTIVES ESTABLISH A DIRECTION FOR WHAT THE GRUNDY COUNTY COMMUNITY SEEKS TO ACCOMPLISH.

4.0

VISION, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

This section of the Grundy County Comprehensive Plan includes the Vision, Goals and Objectives that establish the context for subsequent recommendations. These are the result of input from the County officials, County staff, workshops held with residents, businesses and municipal leaders, key person interviews, and technical analysis by the consulting team. Together, the Vision, Goals and Objectives establish a direction for what the Grundy County community wants to accomplish through its new Comprehensive Plan and the policies and regulations designed to implement the Plan.



VISION

The Vision is a narrative written in retrospect to describe desired characteristics of 10 to 15 years after the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan. It is designed to touch upon the broad set of characteristics that may impact quality of life for residents and businesses.

In 2030, Grundy County...

Grundy County is truly representative of its Midwestern heritage. It is both a thriving center for industry and commerce, and a rural community with a strong connection to agriculture and nature. It is a community unified by a desire to retain its collective identity, and a mosaic of unique and distinct towns that carry forth their own histories. The County has successfully balanced its agrarian heritage with the opportunities provided by being the emerging frontier of development for the Chicago region.

Since the adoption of the 2014 Comprehensive Plan, the most dramatic growth has occurred in the northern portion of the County. Interstate 80, the Illinois River, and the I & M Canal form the spine for industry and commerce. Manufacturers and corporate offices take advantage of the County's water-based freight, interstate highway access, and high-tech infrastructure to support business development and employment. Upgrades to the Morris Municipal Airport have made it a port of entry for industry leaders from around the nation.

New job opportunities have resulted in growing communities and increased commercial development. Schools throughout the County provide quality education that prepares residents for quality jobs. Minooka, Morris, Channahon, Coal City, and Diamond have experienced the development of housing that accommodates professionals. Commercial goods and services are provided along US 6 and IL 47. All of this growth has been accommodated by improvements to roadways, community services, and parks.

Natural areas exist throughout Grundy County and provide the connection between residents and the community's heritage. The Illinois River and I & M Canal provide a continuous thread through the growing northern portion of the County and are a source of education for young students to learn about the history of the community. In the fastest growing areas, the County has proactively reserved open space areas to ensure long-term access to recreation and nature. These reserves complement the already rich State Park and nature preserve system.

The County has utilized its approach to open space and nature not only as an educational and recreational opportunity for its citizens, but also as a means of addressing flooding that used to threaten some residents and businesses. Throughout the County, development effectively manages stormwater and returns it to the ground for natural filtration. This has reduced the impact of major storms and resulted in healthy and thriving green spaces.

The southern portion of the County continues to be a leader in agricultural production. With some of the best farmland in the Midwest, farmers have implemented emerging technologies, demonstrating that Grundy County remains a leader in innovation for all industries. Communities like Mazon, Gardner, Dwight, and Braceville dot the rural landscape, providing the small-town oases that offer goods and services in attractive communities.

Over the past two decades, Grundy County has demonstrated the ability to successfully combine growth and small-town character. This balance of heritage and innovation is what has made Grundy County a place where families and businesses want to be.



Photo - February 2018

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The Goals and Objectives provide the framework for planning recommendations, policies, and future projects and actions.

- ▶ Goals describe end situations toward which planning efforts should be directed. They are broad and long-range and, although they may never be fully attained, they represent an end to be sought.
- ▶ Objectives describe more specific actions that should be undertaken in order to advance toward the overall goals. They may include policies, strategies, actions or projects, and provide specific guidelines for planning action.

The Goals & Objectives are presented for the following categories:

- ▶ Growth Management
- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Commercial Development
- ▶ Industry & Employment
- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Community Facilities
- ▶ Environment & Open Space
- ▶ Image and Identity
- ▶ Government

Growth Management

Goal: *Support new commercial, industrial, and residential growth that balances the desire for economic development with Grundy County's predominantly small-town and rural heritage.*

Objectives:

- ▶ Coordinate land use policies, zoning and subdivision regulations, and investment in infrastructure to focus new growth in or adjacent to incorporated areas easily served by infrastructure and envisioned for growth by local municipalities.
- ▶ Focus public investment in infrastructure and transportation in areas envisioned for industrial and economic development.
- ▶ Identify and preserve critical natural areas through coordination with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the use of County development regulations.
- ▶ Utilize zoning and subdivision regulations to preserve prime farmland for agricultural uses.
- ▶ Coordinate County development regulations with municipal zoning in areas near incorporated boundaries to ensure that local plans can be implemented.
- ▶ Continue to assess the likely impacts of proposed regional development and transportation initiatives, including the Illiana Expressway, high-speed rail, commuter rail, and nearby intermodal development, on development throughout the County. Align development regulations and capital improvements to maximize the potential benefits of such initiatives.



Housing

Goal: Ensure that residential development in Grundy County capitalizes on and preserves the community's rural character while providing housing choice that allows residents to remain in the County as they age.

Objectives:

- ▶ Work with local municipalities to meet County-wide demand for various types of housing, accommodating development in the unincorporated County that helps meet demand and is compatible with the desired rural character of the community.
- ▶ Review and amend the zoning ordinance to require appropriate buffers between residential development and commercial and industrial uses.
- ▶ Consistently enforce residential maintenance codes, and consider amending maintenance standards to require a higher level of maintenance in highly visible areas of the County.
- ▶ Continue to permit and encourage residential cluster development that allows housing to be concentrated on one portion of a site in order to preserve open space and natural features on another portion of the site.

Commercial Development

Goal: Capitalize on opportunities for commercial development that expand the County's tax base and support existing and emerging industrial and office activities.

Objectives:

- ▶ Coordinate with municipalities to provide infrastructure to priority commercial development areas that may be annexed as growth occurs.
- ▶ Amend County zoning regulations to include commercial site planning and circulation standards that preserve adequate right-of-way and provide the opportunity for frontage roads and well-connected internal street networks along the IL 47 and US 6 corridors.
- ▶ Work with municipalities and the Grundy County Economic Development Commission to attract commercial and hospitality uses that support industrial and office uses.
- ▶ Consider and plan for the potential long-term benefits of the Morris Municipal Airport as a gateway for professional and corporate air traffic.



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Industry & Employment

Goal: Build upon Grundy County's multi-modal infrastructure and locational advantages to expand industry and employment opportunities in key portions of the County.

Objectives:

- ▶ Work with utility companies and local industry to provide high-quality and reliable infrastructure, including water, energy, transportation, and telecommunications, to priority industrial and economic development areas.
- ▶ Continue to use County incentives in an attempt to offset the Machinery and Equipment (M & E) Tax.
- ▶ Continue to advocate for the revocation of the County M & E Tax.
- ▶ Continue to utilize existing Economic Development Project Areas (EDPA's) as a way of promoting development and job growth, providing incentives to attract industry, and focusing growth around well-planned infrastructure.
- ▶ Prioritize the US 6 corridor as a focal point for industrial growth that capitalizes on existing infrastructure and a high level of access to highways, rail, and water-based transportation.

Transportation

Goal: Continue to build a layered transportation network that enhances mobility for residents, supports economic development, and increases Grundy County's standing in the Greater Chicago region.

Objectives:

- ▶ Ensure that adequate funding is made available to implement regular County roadway maintenance and anticipated capital improvements.
- ▶ Work with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to implement the expansion or extension of critical roadways, including IL 47, US 6, and Highway 113, as growth occurs.
- ▶ Continue to advocate for a higher level of state and federal funding to support the existing Grundy County Transit service and expand the fleet to serve additional trips.
- ▶ Coordinate with IDOT and local municipalities to preserve adequate right-of-way to accommodate trail segments that would enhance local non-motorized mobility.
- ▶ Coordinate with municipalities to plan for supporting or connecting transportation infrastructure (i.e. parking, local transit, etc.) to complement potential high-speed rail or commuter rail initiatives.
- ▶ Identify an appropriate location for and implement another Illinois River crossing that would serve Morris, Minooka, and areas south of the river.
- ▶ Coordinate with IDOT to preserve right-of-way along key state and County roadways and near designated intersections that may require expansion as growth occurs and traffic counts increase.
- ▶ Coordinate with the City of Morris to implement improvements or expansions to the Morris Municipal Airport that would support local development.
- ▶ Work with the Army Corps of Engineers to ensure that the Illinois River and I & M Canal corridor remain well-maintained and attractive transportation and recreational amenities.



Community Facilities

Goal: *Work with local districts and other partners to ensure that residents receive comprehensive and high-quality services that support them from early childhood through old age.*

Objectives:

- ▶ Promote coordination among the many school, library, and fire protection districts in the County to ensure residents and businesses receive high quality services in an efficient and cost effective manner.
- ▶ Share information regarding population and demographics with service providers and municipalities to support potential changes in the services, facilities, and district boundaries.
- ▶ Coordinate with service providers to better understand their long-term facility needs, and utilize land use policies and development regulations to reserve land in new growth areas to assure they can be properly served.
- ▶ Work with the Grundy County Sheriff's Department and local Fire Protection Districts to identify potential physical barriers that inhibit responsiveness (i.e. rivers, rail corridors, etc.) and develop strategies or capital improvements to improve connectivity.
- ▶ Work with the Grundy County Economic Development Council and local industry leaders to attract a higher education institution to Grundy County.

Environment & Open Space

Goal: *Preserve the unique historic and environmental characteristics of Grundy County, ensure appropriate hazard mitigation and stormwater management, and provide access to recreation and open spaces in order to foster healthy living for residents.*

Objectives:

- ▶ Preserve and reinforce public access to the Illinois River and I & M Canal corridor through natural reserves, public parks, and trails that connect to surrounding development.
- ▶ Adopt and enforce the County-wide Stormwater Ordinance that is currently being drafted.
- ▶ Continue to encourage cluster development that preserves sensitive environmental areas and protects development from the impacts of flooding.
- ▶ Identify land use and development thresholds that would warrant the creation of a County Forest Preserve District to ensure that valuable open space is preserved as growth occurs.
- ▶ Review and amend the County's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to ensure that adequate natural buffers are provided along rivers and streams, especially for intensive industrial land uses.
- ▶ Continue to explore opportunities for the generation of alternative energy through geothermal, solar, and wind resources.
- ▶ Celebrate existing historic resources in the County, such as the Mazon Creek Fossil Beds, and work with the State of Illinois to identify and register other important historic resources.



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Image & Identity

Goal: Celebrate and market Grundy County's appeal as a community of both progress and small-town character, and recognize the unique character of the individual places that help define that appeal.

Objectives:

- ▶ Utilize development regulations, strategic infrastructure investment, and coordination with local municipalities to maintain the clear delineation between developed portions of the County and rural areas that define the community's small-town character.
- ▶ Implement a County-wide gateway and wayfinding program that would include attractive signage installed at key entry points (i.e. interstate exits, entry points along IL 47 and US 6, and at the Morris Municipal Airport) and directional signs that would guide visitors to destinations throughout the County and in local municipalities.
- ▶ Build upon local historic resources, including the I & M Canal, Mazon Creek Fossil Beds, museums, and others, to support tourism and education.
- ▶ Implement a regional marketing campaign that highlights the County's assets and opportunities for new residents, businesses, and institutions.

Government

Goal: Ensure that the County's policies, regulations, and fiscal practices support the vision articulated by the community through on-going communication and collaboration with residents, businesses, municipalities, local forms of government, and others.

Objectives:

- ▶ Amend the County's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), capital improvement programs, and other policies to align with and implement the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan.
- ▶ Maintain open dialogue with local municipalities to conduct coordinated planning and assess the impacts of County planning initiatives on incorporated communities.
- ▶ Review and amend the County's taxation structure, including the Machinery and Equipment (M & E) Tax, to encourage desired types of development while maintaining a balanced fiscal approach.
- ▶ Amend development regulations to require high quality and attractive development on IL 47, US 6, and interchange areas, while minimizing such regulations in other less visible portions of the County.
- ▶ Utilize multi-media networks and resources, including web-based social media, local newspapers and television stations, homeowners associations, religious institutions, etc., to maintain open communication with residents and businesses regarding on-going initiatives and community planning.



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THE LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN SUPPORTS NEW RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL, AND INDUSTRIAL GROWTH THAT BALANCES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WITH THE COUNTY'S PREDOMINANTLY SMALL-TOWN AND RURAL HERITAGE.

5.0

LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN

In this Chapter:

- ▶ Growth & Development Context
- ▶ Land Use Categories
- ▶ Land Use & Development Policies

The Land Use and Development Framework Plan identifies the appropriate land uses and development areas for Grundy County over the next 10 to 20 years. The Framework Plan recognizes the vast size and diversity of Grundy County and presents a flexible and balanced approach that will assist County officials in managing new population and job growth, while simultaneously protecting and enhancing the County's rural heritage and natural environment.

This Framework Plan is guided by four core principles – preserve, compete, sustain, and coordinate – and will help the County prioritize its land, resources, and infrastructure investment in order to minimize costs and maximize benefits. To that end, the Framework Plan recommends directing most new residential and retail growth into existing municipal boundaries and contiguous “managed growth areas,” and focusing County land, resources, and infrastructure on agricultural preservation, open space protection, and the development of thriving office and industrial areas that can create new employment and investment opportunities.

This chapter is organized into four sections: (1) *Four Core Principles*, outlining the Framework Plan's guiding ideas and influences; (2) *Growth & Development Context*, providing the necessary legal and demographic background information; (3) *Land Use Categories*, describing the County's nine future land use categories; and (4) *Land Use and Development Policies*, containing land use and public policy recommendations related to growth management, residential uses, and commercial, office, and industrial uses.

FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Preserve

Grundy County is a predominantly agricultural community, and the Land Use & Development Framework aims to preserve the County's rural character through managed growth and development policies.

Compete

Grundy County is well positioned for continued industrial and commercial growth, given its multi-modal access and strategic location. The Land Use & Development Framework Plan will protect agricultural land while advancing new cutting-edge industries, provide the foundation for well-paying jobs, and drive new infrastructure investment in key growth areas.

Sustain

Grundy County offers a wealth of environmental assets, such as the Illinois River, the I & M Canal, and the Mazon Creek Fossil Beds. The Land Use & Development Plan protects and enhances these assets, and encourages sustainable development by directing new growth into limited Municipal Growth Areas.

Coordinate

The County's unincorporated land use and development should be closely coordinated with the County's 16 municipalities, particularly in Municipal Growth Areas. The Plan recognizes the necessity of partnering with local governments in County-wide planning efforts.

GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

The background information included in this section provides the context for the Framework Plan's land use categories and policy recommendations.

Legal Authority

Understanding the legal planning and zoning authority of governmental entities within Grundy County clearly establishes the respective roles and responsibilities of each party within this Framework Plan.

The Grundy County government has the legal authority to both *plan* and *zone* the entire county, outside the limits of cities, villages, and incorporated towns which have in effect municipal zoning ordinances (55 ILCS 5/5-14001 and 55 ILCS 5/5-12007, respectively).

At the same time, incorporated municipalities have the legal authority to *plan* for up to 1.5 contiguous miles from their jurisdictional boundary (called the "Extra Territorial Jurisdiction," or "ETJ"), except where that area conflicts with existing municipal boundaries, boundary agreements, or a pre-established ETJs from other municipalities (65 ILCS 5/11-12-5). This encourages municipal foresight by helping to establish long term land use visions for areas that may be eventually annexed. In Counties that have not passed a zoning ordinance, municipalities may both *plan* and *zone* in this 1.5 mile unincorporated area. In Counties with a zoning ordinance, municipalities may protest any proposed County zoning within the 1.5 mile unincorporated area, however, they can be overruled by a three-fourths vote of the County Board.

Grundy County has a zoning ordinance in effect, and accordingly, its *planning* and *zoning* areas overlap with municipal *planning* areas in the 1.5 mile ETJs. The County's land use and zoning frequently do not align with municipal planned land uses within the ETJs. The Framework Plan sets the stage for the County and its municipalities to align their long-term land use planning and zoning.

Population Trends

A short overview of historical and projected population trends within Grundy County helps to better assess current and future land use needs.

Grundy County's population grew by 33.4% between 2000 and 2010, from 37,535 people to 50,063. This growth was greater than expected in the County's 2005 Comprehensive Plan, which estimated only 42,558 residents in 2010. Between 1980 and 2010, the County's population increased by 63.7%.

The County's 2013 population is estimated at 51,054 residents. By 2018, Grundy County is expected to add 1,518 residents, an increase of 3.0%. While this growth is slower than experienced in the past, the Framework Plan provides flexibility to respond to a variety of population growth scenarios.

GRUNDY COUNTY POPULATION (1970-2018)

Year	Population	% Increase
1970	22,350	18.9%
1980	30,582	15.1%
1990	32,337	5.7%
2000	37,535	16.1%
2010	50,063	33.4%
2013*	51,054	2.0%
2018*	52,572	3.0%

*Denotes projection



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LAND USE CATEGORIES

The Land Use & Development Plan includes nine different land use categories for Grundy County. Land use designations describe the primary land use and development intensity of parcels under County jurisdiction, and provides the foundation for zoning. The zoning code is a regulatory tool used to implement land use policies. In that way, County subdivision and zoning should be amended to reflect the Land Use & Development Framework Plan.

Agricultural

The Agricultural land use category protects Grundy County’s rural heritage by safeguarding its fertile farmland from non-agricultural uses and development. This land use is characterized by high concentrations of “prime farmland,” as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture, as well as a scenic rural landscape.

Areas designated as Agricultural are primarily intended for cultivation of the land, production of crops, and raising of livestock. Scattered and isolated residential properties (“agricultural residential”) coexist alongside the farmland. However, they are limited in scale and complementary to agricultural uses. Development not linked to agricultural or agricultural residential purposes should not be permitted, and new facilities supporting agricultural operations should preserve open spaces and environmental features, including existing wooded areas, waterways and wetlands, and natural topography.

The northwestern, southwestern, and southeastern quadrants of Grundy County are mostly classified as Agricultural Preservation, given their consistently high soil quality, high agricultural output, and lack of encroachment from other types of development.

County Neighborhoods

The County Neighborhoods land use category comprises concentrated residential subdivisions and neighborhoods that are not near or contiguous to existing municipal boundaries. In some cases, they may be “master-planned” subdivisions with a somewhat suburban feel, and in others they may be neighborhoods that developed more naturally over time, with varying styles and sizes. Large lot, single-family detached homes are the predominant housing type, and are typically found concentrated in a rural or scenic setting.

County Neighborhoods are not connected to municipal infrastructure and utilities. Streets typically do not have curb and gutter, and homes are served by wells for water and septic systems for sanitation. In master planned neighborhoods, wells and septic systems may be shared by homes within the subdivision.



Managed Growth Areas

The Managed Growth Area is a comprehensive land use designation comprising all land uses found within 0.5 miles of any municipal boundary. Each of Grundy County's 16 municipalities has a distinctly unique Managed Growth Area, and this typology is unique because it is defined by location and not a single land use. The Managed Growth Area does not seek to describe or recommend specific land use patterns within its 0.5 mile area, as they will be determined by the unique market demands and local planning of each of the County's 16 municipalities. Instead, it functions as a tool to prevent uncontrolled growth and ensure prudent development.

Given contiguity with incorporated areas and existing municipal infrastructure, this typology should be the primary location of any future growth in unincorporated areas. While some structures in the managed growth areas may currently have private water and septic systems in this areas, they may eventually connect to municipal infrastructure. Closely coordinated planning between the County and local municipalities is necessary as this land use sits within the 1.5 mile extra-territorial planning jurisdiction of municipalities and should be annexed if new development occurs.

For more detailed information on this land use category, please see this chapter's **Land Use & Development Policies**.

Commercial

The Commercial land use category provides for the daily needs of residents and visitors, and may include, but is not limited to, convenience stores, gas stations, restaurants, and small retail activities. The vast majority of commercial development in Grundy County is found in municipalities. However, several small auto-oriented nodes at key interchanges and intersections in unincorporated land can provide commercial activity targeted at travelers and residents. Examples of these areas include the I-80 and Seneca Road interchange, the I-80 and Brisbin Road Interchange, and the IL Route 47 and IL Route 113 intersection.

Development within the commercial land use areas should be small-scale and reflect the rural character of the surroundings and minimize impacts on adjacent agricultural and residential areas.

Office/Industrial Park

The Office/Industrial Park land use category accommodates a range of future office, business park, and light industrial uses, and can be found on the map in the northeastern portion of the County, just east of IL Route 47 and north of I-80. This "office hub" seeks to leverage multi-modal proximity to the Morris Municipal Airport and I-80 for economic development, and is suitable for a variety of operations, including logistics and distribution, research and development, light manufacturing, and tech industry applications. These areas can provide significant employment opportunities, tax revenue generation, and if developed properly, can help establish a positive community image.



Heavy Industrial

The Heavy Industrial land use category allows for intense industrial uses capable of generating excessive noise, traffic, odor, and other nuisances. Uses include larger factories with chimneys, cooling towers, storage tanks, and furnaces, as well as businesses requiring significant areas dedicated to the storage of materials or whose operations are performed in the open-air. Given their ability to impact property values and quality of life in residential and commercial areas, Heavy Industrial areas are generally isolated and buffered from other types of development.

Heavy Industrial land uses are primarily found near the Illinois River and in the northeastern quadrant of the County. Some of the County's largest employers are located in these areas, such as the 953-acre Exelon Dresden nuclear power generating station and the 900-acre LyondellBasell petrochemical manufacturing plant.

Much of the County's Heavy Industrial land use also has the added benefit of being in one of two Economic Development Project Areas (EDPAs). These two special economic areas were created by the state legislature to help offset the County's "machinery and equipment tax," and permit companies to negotiate their tax bills, freeze tax assessments, and obtain reimbursements for a variety of costs including infrastructure construction, relocation, and job training.

Parks & Open Space

The Parks & Open Space land use category protects and enhances parks, open spaces, natural areas, and other important natural features such as rivers, streams, wetlands, and wooded areas. These areas can either be publicly or privately owned, but are found mostly in the northern half of the County.

Grundy County contains numerous ecological and natural assets, including the Illinois River, the I & M Canal, and seven state parks and natural sites. The Parks & Open Space land use seeks to protect these areas from development, incompatible uses, and contamination, and creates a network of active and passive green spaces along the Illinois River and I & M Canal.

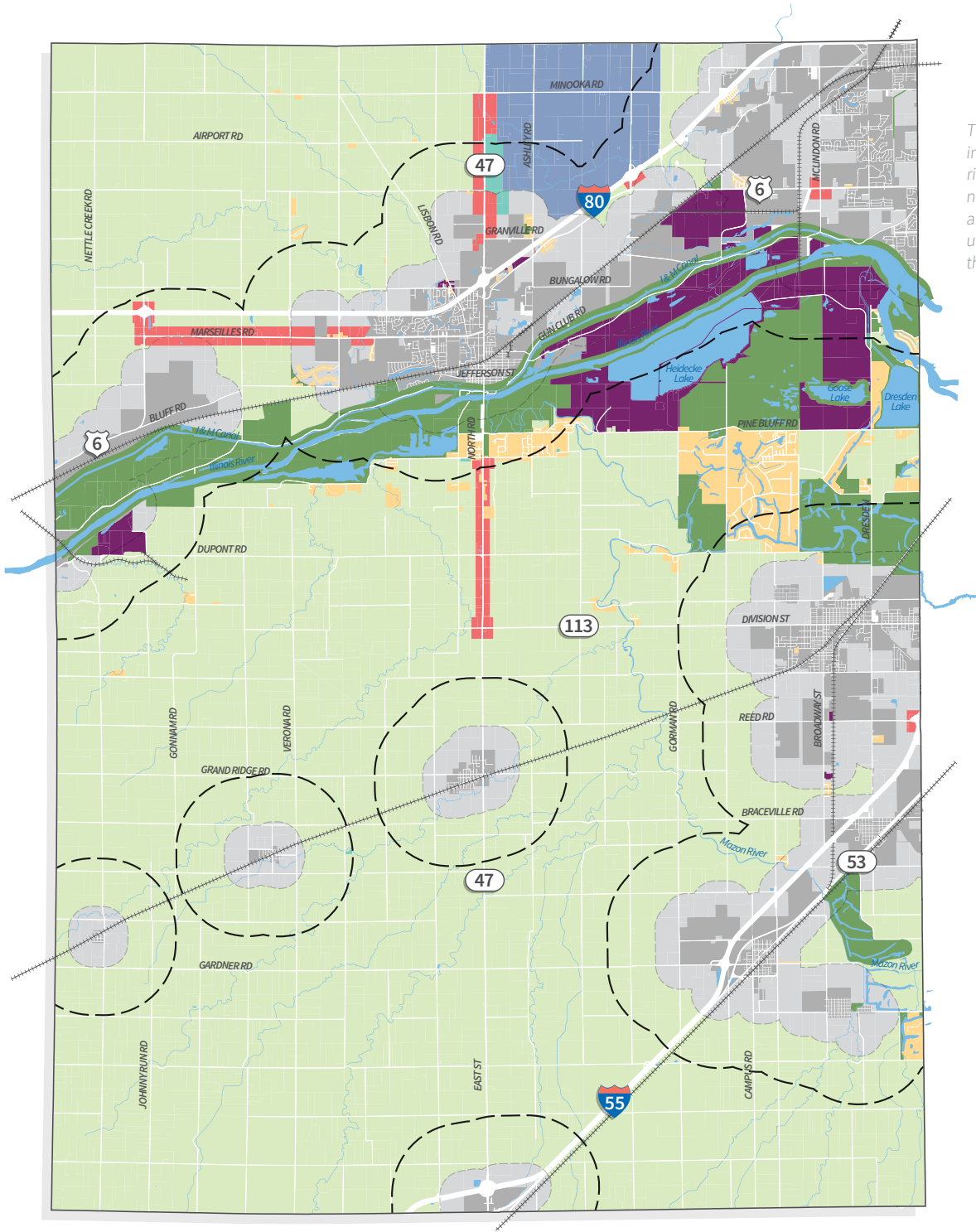
Public & Semi-Public

The Public & Semi-Public land use category includes community facilities and institutional uses that help define Grundy County's quality of life. It includes both public facilities (e.g. governmental offices, libraries, and school), as well as private facilities or not-for-profit facilities such as religious institutions.

Most community facilities and institutional uses in Grundy County are found within municipalities. However, the Nettle Creek Elementary School, the Coal City Baptist Church, Grundy County Animal Control Department, and Grundy County Highway Department are located in unincorporated areas.

Rail & Utilities

Rail and utility land use category represents rights-of-way and facilities that accommodate critical infrastructure, including rail transportation, water treatment, electricity substations, cell towers, and power lines.



The Land Use & Development Plan includes nine different land use categories for Grundy County. Land use designations describe the primary land use and development intensity of parcels under County jurisdiction, and provides the foundation for zoning

Land Use Framework Plan

Context

- Grundy County
- 1.5 Mile Planning Jurisdiction (ETJ)
- Incorporated Municipalities

Land Use

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Agricultural | Office/Industrial Park |
| County | Heavy Industrial |
| Neighborhoods | Parks & Open Space |
| Managed Growth Areas | Public & Semi-Public |
| Commercial | Rail & Utilities |



LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

The following recommendations outline the County's land use and development philosophy, and will assist County officials in promoting smart and coordinated growth that can simultaneously stimulate economic development and also protect its rural heritage.

Growth Management Policies

Partner with municipalities to implement managed growth areas.

Managed growth areas are unincorporated areas where any new residential and commercial development should be concentrated. The managed growth area includes an outer growth boundary that directs new development inward, closer to municipalities where they can be positioned for annexation and connection to municipal infrastructure and utilities. This reduces sprawl and leap frog development, preserves agricultural land and open spaces, and promotes infrastructure coordination and savings.

This Framework's land use map has identified a preliminary managed growth area of 0.5 miles, which is uniformly applied from the boundaries of each of the County's 16 municipalities. While this is only one-third of a municipality's extraterritorial jurisdiction of 1.5 miles, it is a sensible starting point given the relatively limited population growth the County is projected to experience over the next several years.

The County should partner with each municipality to tailor the exact size and boundary of their managed growth area to local needs and projections. The arrangement would essentially function as a "boundary agreement" between the County and the municipality. Ultimately, the ability of the County and each of its 16 municipalities to mutually agree upon a long-term growth boundary will ensure prudent land use and infrastructure planning, and reduce the likelihood of any potential future land conflicts.



Align County land use and zoning within managed growth areas, as necessary, to reflect uses desired by municipalities.

Even if a long-term growth area is agreed upon by the County and a municipality, its establishment does not directly translate into new development within the boundary. Within unincorporated managed growth areas, the County still retains legal zoning and development authority. Currently, the majority of land in the proposed managed growth areas is utilized for agriculture. Because limited population growth is projected in the short term, this existing County zoning designation will act as a buffer against unnecessary expansion within the boundary itself.

However, if growth occurs or is expected, the County should partner with municipalities to change County land use and zoning within these areas to align with the uses desired by municipalities, taking into account the jurisdiction established by boundary agreements between municipalities or annexation agreements between a municipality and private property owners. This will help ease the transition from unincorporation to annexation.

Protect the County's agricultural heritage without negatively impacting development opportunities.

According to the US Department of Agriculture, over 85% of the County's land base is "prime farmland," or highly productive and fertile farmland. Farming and agriculture has formed the core of Grundy's economy and culture since it was established in 1841 and agricultural preservation should continue to be a top priority at the County level.

Moving forward, the County should prevent the premature conversion of all agricultural land and open space, and promote its continued agricultural use until it is either no longer feasible or desired.



Identify, preserve, and enhance natural areas.

Grundy County's natural amenities consist of a wide and unique range of open spaces, parks, rural landscapes, rivers, waterways and prairies. The County should continue to enhance accessibility to and preservation of these areas through a variety of policies, partnerships, zoning and development regulations, and infrastructure improvements.

First, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administers seven State parks and natural sites throughout the County, such as Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area and the I & M Canal. The County should continue to support the DNR's operations and ensure that the County infrastructure in-and-around these sites is of a high quality and well-maintained.

Secondly, several of Grundy County's natural and recreational amenities are in close proximity to land zoned by the County for industrial uses and supported through the County's Economic Development Project Area (EDPA) designation. The County should ensure that the natural beauty of these areas is protected over the long-term, and that their character is not negatively impacted by nearby industrial uses. This may include extensive buffering or a transition of certain locations to a land use that can better preserve its natural setting.

Lastly, the Illinois River and the I & M Canal are some of Grundy County's most important natural treasures. The County should work with the DNR, local municipalities, land owners, and environmental stakeholders to convert unused or available land on both banks of the Illinois River to permanent parkland or open space.

More detailed information on these recommendations can be found in the ***Parks, Open Spaces, and Environmental Features*** chapter.



Residential Land Use Policies

The Residential Land Use Framework outlines policies and recommendations relating to the County's residential areas.

Direct new residential growth into municipalities and their managed growth areas.

Grundy County should continue to position itself as a thriving center for industry and commerce. At the same time, however, the County must safeguard its rural feel from unnecessary sprawl and costly infrastructure expansion. To this end, the County should use a combination of zoning, land use policies, subdivision regulations, and infrastructure investment to focus new growth in or adjacent to incorporated areas easily served by infrastructure and envisioned for growth by local municipalities.

For example, the County should continue its policy of not providing water, sewer, and street infrastructure in unincorporated areas. This not only reduces County capital costs, but also incentivizes residential growth into municipalities where local governments can provide these services, or into managed growth areas, which can be connected to municipal infrastructure through service agreements or annexation.

As economic development drives demand for new residential development in the County, and when housing cannot be accommodated in incorporated areas or managed growth areas, the County should encourage residential cluster development that allows housing to be concentrated on one portion of a site in order to preserve open space and natural features on the other portion.



Work with municipalities to meet County-wide demand for various types of housing, accommodating development in unincorporated managed growth areas when necessary.

Grundy County should continue to contain to a wide range of housing choices at a variety of price points, including single family, townhome, duplex, and multifamily options. While municipalities should take the lead in offering and providing a diversity of housing options, the County government can play a supportive role to ensure the needs of residents are being met.

In addition to monitoring the supply of market-rate housing units, the County should also work with local governments and the Grundy County Housing Authority, which assists the disabled and the elderly, to ensure that senior and affordable housing demand is met. To the extent necessary, the County should position land within unincorporated managed growth areas for residential developments that can satisfy unmet demand.

Review and amend the zoning ordinance to require appropriate buffers between residential development and industrial uses.

Several residential areas in unincorporated Grundy County are located near vacant, industrially-zoned parcels, such as along Pine Bluff Road. While these industrially-zoned parcels are currently unused, the County should ensure that any future industrial expansion adjacent to residential areas is properly buffered to protect against industrial nuisance. Additionally, some of the County's industrial land uses could impact neighborhoods in incorporated areas such as Morris or Minooka. To the extent necessary, the County should require the use of setbacks, buffering, and screening, including berms, fencing, and landscaping.

Consistently enforce residential maintenance codes and consider amending standards to require a higher level of maintenance in highly visible areas of the County.

Maintaining residential properties is important to protect property values and preserve the character and desirability of Grundy County's residential areas. Title 6, Chapter 1, Section 2-G of the Grundy County Code of Ordinances adopts and modifies the 2009 edition of the International Property Maintenance Code that establishes minimum standards for upkeep and appearance. The recent economic recession and associated number of foreclosures has drawn attention to the impacts a neglected or distressed home can have on other properties. The County should review its existing property maintenance code and assess whether vacancy or property appearance issues in visible areas of the County merit higher standards and/or additional enforcement.



Commercial, Office, & Industrial Land Use Policies

The Commercial, Office, & Industrial Use Framework outlines policies and recommendations relating to the County's economic growth areas.

Establish commercial nodes at strategic locations along the County's transportation network.

Most new commercial development should occur in incorporated areas, as they have a higher density of consumers and possess existing infrastructure that can be built upon. However, commercial growth opportunities should also develop at several strategic nodes in unincorporated areas, with possible expansion outward over time into a more corridor-style of development.

These commercial nodes sit at the prominent intersections of state highways, interstates, major employers, and other important assets, and include:

- ▶ The I-80 and Seneca Road interchange;
- ▶ The I-80 and Brisbin Road interchange;
- ▶ The I-55 and Reed Road interchange;
- ▶ The intersection of North Road and Southmor Road;
- ▶ The intersection of IL Route 47 and IL Route 113; and
- ▶ The intersection of US Route 6 and McLinden Road.

While these commercial areas will likely be relatively low-density and smaller in scale, they will be able to provide goods and services to both County residents, regional travelers, and commuters. As the County continues to expand and develop its office and industrial base, it should partner with municipalities and the Grundy County Economic Development Council to attract further commercial and hospitality uses that support the industrial and office uses.



Identify priority commercial development areas within managed growth areas and coordinate infrastructure improvements with municipalities.

As commercial nodes begin to emerge in managed growth areas, the County should work closely with municipalities to ensure that development patterns are aligned with the growth plans and local vision of each respective municipality. It is important that the County and municipalities engage in constant communication about growth in these areas, as the County retains legal authority for zoning and development but municipalities have the authority to plan for these areas as well as annex them at some future point.

The County, as a policy, does not provide utility or infrastructure services to unincorporated residential or commercial areas. Accordingly, all priority commercial areas within managed growth areas should be positioned for connection to the municipal infrastructure network, either through service agreements or annexation.

Amend County zoning regulations to include commercial and industrial site planning and circulation standards that preserve adequate right-of-way and provide the opportunity for frontage roads and well-connected internal street networks along the IL Route 47 and US Route 6.

IL Route 47 and US Route 6 are two of Grundy County's busiest roads, with average daily traffic counts between 10,300 and 15,100 vehicles. They are the County's primary east/west and north/south roadways and are connectors between the County's municipalities and key commercial and industrial areas. Much of the County's future office, retail, and industrial development is projected to occur near or along these roadways, which are proximate to the Morris Municipal Airport and Illinois River. This economic expansion could translate into traffic congestion and disjointed roadway networks unless proper land use and transportation planning precautions are taken.

To increase roadway efficiency and safety, the County should amend its zoning regulations to include site planning and circulation standards that preserve adequate right-of-way and provide space for frontage roads and well-connected internal street networks. This provides the foundation for signalized traffic stops and pedestrian crossings, and ensures that access between local land uses provided by the roadway network is safe, orderly, and efficient.



Leverage Grundy County’s multi-modal transportation network to create a new Office/Industrial Park area near the Morris Municipal Airport.

The Morris Municipal Airport, which is owned and operated by the City of Morris, is located just two miles north of Morris in unincorporated land. The airport’s hard surfaced and lighted runway is 5,008 feet long and 75 feet wide, and the site contains hangar spaces for 66 aircraft as well as corporate hangar facilities. Given the airport’s proximity to Morris, the Chicagoland region, and easy access to IL Route 47, I-80, and US Route 6, the airport could become a port of entry for professional and corporate staff and operations.

The unincorporated area around the airport is well positioned to become an “office hub” for a variety of businesses and operations able to capitalize on airport and intermodal access. Uses could include logistics and distribution, research and development, light manufacturing, tech industry applications, and more. Ultimately, these new office uses should occur in a variety of settings, ranging from business parks to more separate, self-contained facilities.

The County should work closely with the Grundy County Economic Development Council to transition and market some of the land around the airport towards office uses, as warranted. The County should play a leading role in ensuring these areas are well supported by the necessary infrastructure, such as roadway and utility connections, and should consider the use of a variety of incentives to promote this new development.

Continue to advocate for the revocation of the “Machinery & Equipment Tax,” and use County incentives to offset its effects.

Grundy County’s “Machinery and Equipment Tax,” commonly referred to as the “M & E Tax,” assesses industrial machinery and equipment as “real property,” or as if it were real estate. This tax is unique to Grundy County, and according to the Grundy County Economic Development Council, “creates a financial disincentive” for industrial companies with heavy machinery and equipment.

Prior to 1979, local governments and school districts in Illinois taxed “personal property,” or items that are not fixed in place such as cars, boats, or household items. Included in this tax were industrial machinery and equipment, which provided the County government with significant revenue due to the presence of several large industrial facilities.

The Illinois General Assembly abolished personal property taxes through the passage of the “Freeze Act” in January 1979. Prior to this change, however, Grundy County shifted the taxing classification of industrial machinery and equipment from “personal property,” which was expected to soon be outlawed, to “real property,” which would be permitted. The County did this to protect the revenue it received under the old taxing framework.

To alter this taxing structure, State law would have to be changed to allow the County to reclassify assessments and join the State’s Personal Property Tax Replacement Fund (PPTRF), which is a State program that allocates funding to Counties to offset their losses as a result of the 1979 reclassification, and several previous proposed changes have been unsuccessful.



However, the County has been able to offset some of the burden of the M&E Tax through the creation of Economic Development Project Areas (EDPAs). EDPAs are state-authorized zones where a company can negotiate their tax bill, freeze tax assessments, and acquire reimbursements for certain expenses, such as construction costs or job training. The County currently contains two EDPAs in the northeastern quadrant of the County:

- ▶ EDPA 1, a 12,000 acre zone with assessment levels frozen at 2006 values, and roughly bordered by the Illinois River on the south, N. Ashley Road on the west, US Route 6 and I-80 on the north, and N. McLinden Road on the east; and
- ▶ EDPA 2, a 2,000 acre zone with assessment levels frozen at 2012 values, and roughly bordered by the Illinois River on the north and E. Pine Bluff Road on the south, and most parcels clustered around the southwest portion of Heidecke Lake.

The County should continue working with the Illinois General Assembly to revoke the M&E Tax, and in the meantime, maximize the benefits of the EDPAs and other incentives to mitigate its effects.

Focus County investment into unincorporated areas positioned for industrial growth, especially along the US Route 6 corridor.

The County is well situated for economic growth and expansion due to its robust multi-modal infrastructure and locational advantage in the Chicagoland region. This position is further strengthened by the creation of two EDPA zones in the County's northeastern quadrant, which incentivize industrial development by freezing tax assessments, negotiating tax bills, and reimbursing costs such as infrastructure construction and job training. These two areas are proximate to I-80, IL Route 47, US Route 6, IL Route 113, and the Illinois River, as well as two of Grundy County's largest employers, the Exelon Dresden nuclear power generating station and the LyondellBasell petrochemical manufacturing plant, employing 850 and 400 people, respectively.

While the County should direct most residential and commercial growth into municipalities and managed growth areas, the County should actively promote industrial development and expansion within targeted unincorporated areas, particularly within EDPA boundaries. This may include investing in high quality transportation infrastructure to assist in the movement of goods, as well as working with utility companies and local industry to provide high-quality and reliable infrastructure, including water, energy, and telecommunications to these priority industrial growth areas.



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THE TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY PLAN ENVISIONS A LAYERED TRANSPORTATION NETWORK THAT ENHANCES MOBILITY OF RESIDENTS, ENCOURAGES ECONOMIC GROWTH, AND INCREASES THE COUNTY'S STANDING IN THE CHICAGO REGION.

6.0

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY PLAN

In this Chapter:

- ▶ Roadway Improvements
- ▶ Bike Trails
- ▶ River Travel
- ▶ Rail Transportation Enhancements
- ▶ Public Transit Service Upgrades
- ▶ Commercial Air Transportation Service Improvements

The Transportation & Mobility Plan identifies the priority transportation improvements essential to fulfilling the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan and ensuring that Grundy County's transportation system is safe, efficient, well-balanced, and supports the core principles of the Land Use and Development Framework Plan. As a well-balanced system, it should accommodate both motorized and non-motorized modes of travel, have continuity throughout the County, and be strategically connected with the regional highway and public transit systems serving the Chicago metropolitan area.

The Transportation & Mobility Plan addresses the County's most important transportation needs and identifies projects of regional and local significance that are needed to address near-term and anticipated long-term issues. The projects are organized into four categories, including roadways, rail transportation, public transit, air transportation, river travel, and bicycle facilities.

FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Preserve

The Transportation & Mobility Plan coordinates all development with the Land Use & Development Framework to ensure that transportation expansions protect the County's scenic open spaces and natural areas.

Compete

A robust multi-modal infrastructure network, with strong linkages to rail, interstates, air, and waterways, will catalyze new investment and create new jobs for Grundy County residents.

Sustain

The Plan encourages the development and expansion of infrastructure that can help reduce pollution and dependence on fossil fuels, such as County-wide bike paths, public transportation options, and regional commuter rail.

Coordinate

An efficient and competitive multi-modal infrastructure network requires close coordination with the County's sixteen municipalities and the State. All new major transportation developments should be undertaken through a multi-lateral partnership that aligns resources and planning efforts.

ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS

The roadway system must be regularly maintained and strategically improved to serve development growth areas, support industrial truck traffic, maintain efficient traffic operations, and disperse traffic broadly across the County. The priority roadway improvements in Grundy County address the issues related to interstate capacity and access, arterial corridor capacity, network continuity, bridge reconstruction, new truck routes, and the incorporation of Complete Street policies.

Several of the projects are on facilities that are not controlled by Grundy County. As such, the County will endeavor to collaborate with Federal, State, regional and local agencies, as well as the governments of the adjoining Counties, to implement the projects by advocating for funding, preserving right-of-way, and coordinating engineering and construction.

Interstate Highways

The Transportation Plan includes capacity improvements to the two interstate highways serving Grundy County, I-80 and I-55, as well as new interchange projects to increase access to these highways from Grundy County. Both of the interstates are recommended to be widened by an additional lane in each direction in the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's Go To 2040 Regional Comprehensive Plan, and IDOT has initiated the Phase I preliminary engineering and environmental study for the I-80 widening project, which is scheduled to be completed in 2015. However, the project limits for both projects end at the Grundy County line. The traffic volumes carried by these interstate highways through Grundy County continues to grow and the percentage of truck traffic has increased as well with the advent of nearby intermodal facilities in Will County, the development of a network of warehouse/distribution centers in northeastern Grundy County, and the construction of a new I-80 interchange at Brisbin Road. The County

should monitor traffic growth on I-80 and I-55, and work with IDOT to fund the design of a future extension of these highway widening projects, when volumes justify such measures.

Access to the interstate system is limited in Grundy County to three interchanges along I-80 (Ridge Road, Brisbin Road, IL 47) and I-55 (Reed Road, Gardner Road, IL 47). The spacing between these interchanges ranges from 3.5 to 7 miles. Additional interstate access is envisioned by the City of Morris at I-80/Saratoga Road and the Village of Coal City near Berta Road/Braceville Road, both of which could stimulate commercial and/or highway-oriented development.

Long-range plans for the Chicago region include the development of the Illiana Expressway, a new east-west regional highway that will extend across southern Will County from I-55 near Wilmington to I-65 in Indiana. This facility would provide Grundy County residents and businesses an alternate travel route to using I-80, a direct link to the proposed South Suburban Airport, and improved access to the intermodal facilities in Will County. It is also projected to generate population and employment growth in eastern Grundy County, along with the economic benefits that go with it. The major roadways in eastern Grundy County that would feed into the Illiana (i.e., Pine Bluff Road, IL 113) would likely experience significant increases in volume due to development growth and increases in through traffic. Volume impacts would affect IL 47 as well. The implications of this additional volume will require further study in order to preserve adequate right-of-way for anticipated improvements to these roadways.



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Recommendations

The County should support further expansion and strengthening of the area's interstate highway network. Specifically, the County should:

- ▶ Remain involved in IDOT's current I-80 Phase I engineering and environmental study for the widening between US 30 and Ridge Road to review design options into Minooka.
- ▶ Monitor I-80 traffic growth west of Ridge Road and work with IDOT to fund the design of a future extension of highway widening to IL 47 when volumes justify such measures.
- ▶ Work with Morris to advocate for a new I-80 interchange at Saratoga Road.
- ▶ Support the I-55 IDOT widening and bridge repair project programmed in FY 2014-2019 Highway Improvement Program from 1.5-miles south of IL 47 to 1.2-miles north of IL 47 at Dwight.
- ▶ Monitor I-55 traffic growth south of Wilmington exit (IL 129) and work with IDOT to fund the design of a future extension of the CMAP highway widening project to IL 47 when volumes justify such measures.
- ▶ Work with Coal City and Braceville to advocate for a new I-55 interchange at Berta Road near Braceville Road. This interchange was proposed in the Village of Coal City's 2007 Comprehensive Plan.
- ▶ Advocate for the development of the Illiana Expressway as a freeway or a tollway.
- ▶ Pursue further study on the impact of the Illinia Expressway to IL 47 and key east-west highways (i.e., Pine Bluff Road, IL 113).

US & Illinois State Highways

Traffic growth on the interstate system will carry onto the US and IL state highways in Grundy County to reach the County's population and employment centers, creating the need for capacity improvements on these roadways as well. IDOT has jurisdiction over these roadways and improvements to some of these facilities have been programmed in IDOT's FY 2014-2019 Highway Improvement Program.

US 6 is primarily a two-lane roadway through Grundy County. It has become the primary commercial and industrial corridor between Morris and Minooka and will convey a substantial portion of the traffic generated by future development around the new Brisbin Road interchange. The segment of US 6 to the west of IL 47 in Morris is already congested and carries traffic volumes nearing capacity for a two-lane roadway.

IL 47 is a major traffic artery in the region and the backbone of the Grundy County roadway system extending the full length of the County from north to south, interchanging with both I-80 and I-55, and providing the County's only bridge crossing of the Illinois River. It is also a primary commercial corridor through Morris, Mazon and Dwight. IL 47 is a four-lane roadway through Morris but tapers down to two lanes north of I-80 and south of Southmor Road. Traffic volumes along IL 47 to the north of I-80 have steadily increased with development growth in Grundy and Kendall counties to levels where IDOT has completed engineering design studies and will begin construction on the widening of the roadway. Similar studies will eventually be warranted for the southern section of IL 47 as well.

IL 113 is a major east-west connector route for through traffic between I-55 and IL 47 and primary commercial artery through the growing communities of Diamond and Coal City. Truck traffic comprises approximately 10 percent of the volume on the roadway and conditions through these communities have become congested with traffic levels approaching capacity for a two-lane roadway. The grade crossings of the BNSF and UP railroads in Coal City contribute to the congestion, and delays will increase in the future with additional train traffic from the nearby intermodal facilities in Will County and the planned Inland Logistics Park.

Recommendations

The County should:

- ▶ Coordinate with IDOT and Morris on funding final design and construction of the US Route 6 widening to 4 lanes from IL 47 west to Saratoga Road. Phase I engineering has already been completed.
- ▶ Monitor US Route 6 traffic volumes and development growth between IL 47 and Ridge Road and pursue capacity improvements (turn lanes, new signals, widening) with IDOT when justified.
- ▶ Coordinate with IDOT on programmed IL 47 widening project from 0.6-miles north of I-80 to Sherrill Road.
- ▶ Collaborate with Morris, Mazon and Dwight on development setback standards along IL 47.
- ▶ Monitor traffic volumes and development growth along IL 47 south of Southmor Road and pursue capacity improvements (turn lanes, new signals, widening) with IDOT when justified.
- ▶ Coordinate with IDOT, Coal City and Diamond on funding engineering studies for the IL 113 widening to 4 lanes from I-55 to Carbon Hill Road, including intersection capacity improvements and signalization.
- ▶ Engage IDOT, BNSF, UP and Coal City in studying grade separation options for the grade crossings along IL 113.

Grundy County Highways

Traffic growth on both the interstate and state highway system will impact traffic conditions on the County highway system as well, which is the primary road network serving all corners of Grundy County. Several of the County highways have been programmed for improvement as part of IDOT's Highway Improvement Program (FY 2014-2019) or Grundy County's Road and Bridge Construction Plan (FY 2014-2017). Other County highways have been studied based on anticipated long-term development growth on adjoining properties and resulting road design and right-of-way needs. As traffic volumes increase on these roadways, along with the potential expansion of trucking activities, these roadways will require capacity improvements as well, including widening, auxiliary lanes, and traffic signal controls.

Recommendations

The County should:

- ▶ Coordinate with IDOT on programmed widening project along Ridge Road from Minooka Road/ Mondamin Street to McEvelly Road, including CN viaduct reconstruction and bicycle/pedestrian facilities.
- ▶ Manage programmed Ridge Road widening from McEvelly Road south to US 6.
- ▶ Engage with IDOT, CSXT and Minooka in studying grade separation options for the CSXT grade crossing along Ridge Road.
- ▶ Manage programmed widening along Brisbin Road from North Road to Sherrill Road.

- ▶ Coordinate with Kendall County on developing a continuous north-south alignment along Brisbin Road with Grove Road.
- ▶ Manage programmed widening along Dupont Road from Gonnam Road to Dunn Road.
- ▶ Manage programmed realignment along DuPont from Dunn Road to Kinsman Road.
- ▶ Manage programmed reconstruction along Kankakee Road from Goodfarm Road to Stonewall Road.
- ▶ Monitor traffic volumes and development growth along Reed Road from I-55 west to Broadway Road and pursue capacity improvements when justified.
- ▶ Explore jurisdictional transfer of Reed Road from Broadway Road west to IL 47.
- ▶ Monitor traffic volumes and development growth along Broadway Road from North Street in Coal City south to Braceville Road and pursue capacity improvements when justified.
- ▶ Monitor traffic volumes and development growth along Pine Bluff Road from IL 47 to Will County line and pursue capacity improvements when justified.
- ▶ Monitor traffic volumes and development growth along Saratoga Road from US 6 to Old Stage Road and pursue capacity improvements when justified.

River Crossings, Road Extensions & Realignments

Grundy County is fortunate to have a relatively continuous east-west roadway grid across the County, but there is only one cross-county north-south roadway (IL 47), which also provides the only bridge crossing of the Illinois River. The nearest river crossings serving Grundy County are 12 miles to the east on I-55 in Will County and 10 miles to the west on IL 170 in Seneca. This creates a major barrier to travel between the north and south side of the County and funnels a substantial volume of through traffic onto IL 47 through downtown Morris. A new river crossing in the eastern portion of the County would be beneficial to local travel between the population centers in Minooka, Channahon, Coal City, and Diamond.

Recommendations

The roadway grid in Grundy County developed along the township section lines. In some areas of the County the grid is broken by waterways, drainage basins and natural areas, while in other areas there are breaks in the grid spanned only by agricultural land. Further, along the County lines, several of the local roadways are misaligned with those on the opposite side. As development occurs in these areas, there may be opportunities to complete the grid, realign roadways, and develop key linkages to improve local circulation.

Specifically, the County should work to:

- ▶ Study new river crossing options in eastern portion of County, potentially in the vicinity of Ridge Road and Collins Road
- ▶ Extend the following roads:
 - ▶ Sherrill Road (Roods Road-LaSalle Road, Townhouse Road-Lisbon Road)
 - ▶ Whitman Road (Ashley Road-Brisbin Road)
 - ▶ Tynan Road-Campbell Road
 - ▶ Nelson Road-Hoge Road
 - ▶ Duck Pond Road-Carper Road
- ▶ Re-align intersections in the following areas:
 - ▶ Along the LaSalle County Line (Minooka Road, Airport Road, Hoge Road, Stavanger Road, Waupecan Road, Mine Road, Ransom Road, Goodfarm Road, Livingston Road)
 - ▶ Along the Livingston County Line (LaSalle Road, Kinsman Road, Swell Road, Buffalo Road, Verona Road, Horton Road, Dwight Road, Storm Road, Reddick Road)
 - ▶ Along the Kendall County Line (Ashley Road)
 - ▶ Along the Will County Line (Duck Pond Road)
 - ▶ Along the Kankakee County Line (Goodfarm Road, Stonewall Road)
 - ▶ At Johnny Run Road at Goodfarm Road
 - ▶ At Buffalo Road at Goodfarm Road

Bridge Reconstruction

Over time, the traffic loads absorbed by the County's roadway bridges take their toll and the structures must be replaced. Several of these structures have been programmed for improvement as part of IDOT's Highway Improvement Program (FY 2014-2019) or Grundy County's Road and Bridge Construction Plan (FY 2014-2017).

Recommendations

The County should support the following bridge reconstruction projects:

- ▶ Lisbin Road over I-80
- ▶ Minooka Road over I-80
- ▶ Spring Road over Mazon River
- ▶ Nettle School Road over O'Brien Run
- ▶ Kinsman Road over Armstrong Run
- ▶ Indian Trail Road over Hog Run
- ▶ Greer Road over Bills Run
- ▶ Dwight Road over Waupecan Creek
- ▶ Lowery Road over Waupecan Creek
- ▶ Grand Ridge Road over Johnny Run
- ▶ Braceville Road over Mazon River
- ▶ Goodfarm Road over Murray Sluice
- ▶ Scully Road over Murray Sluice
- ▶ Livingston Road over West Fork of Mazon River

Complete Streets

As roadway improvement projects are proposed in Grundy County, consideration should be given to incorporating Complete Streets elements into the design to enable the facilities to more safely accommodate all roadway users, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit riders of all ages and physical abilities. Complete Streets promote alternative modes of travel and reduce reliance on the automobile, particularly for short-distance trips, and they contribute to more walkable and livable communities. The characteristics of a complete street must relate to the context of the roadway and will be different in urban and rural areas. Features can include sidewalks or multi-use paths, crosswalks, accessible pedestrian signals, bike lanes or paved shoulders, curb extensions, and traffic calming elements such as roundabouts, narrow travel lanes, on-street parking, and landscaped medians.

Recommendations

The County should develop a Complete Streets policy ordinance to incorporate safety and access features for non-motorized modes of travel into future roadway design projects.

New Truck Routes

While the County's truck routes are intended to support heavier loads associated with commercial traffic, several of these routes pass through commercial districts and adjoining residential subdivisions. The noise and vibration generated by truck traffic can be troubling to residents and business owners and alternative truck routes should be explored, where feasible, to distribute truck traffic more evenly and potentially bypass residential and commercial areas.

One such opportunity exists on McClindon Road in the Minooka area. McClindon Road provides a direct route to the I-80 interchange at Ridge Road, via Granger Way, and runs parallel to Ridge Road, a local Class II truck route that abuts several residential subdivisions. The reconstruction of McClindon Road would provide an alternate route for truck traffic traveling between the US 6 corridor and the I-80 interchange at Ridge Road and relieve Minooka Road and Ridge Road of some of the commercial traffic-carrying burden.

Recommendations

The County should coordinate with Minooka on the reconstruction of McClindon Road (US 6-Minooka Road) and as a local Class II truck route.



RAIL TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS

Freight Rail

There are seven Class I freight railroads operating in the United States and four of them traverse Grundy County (CSXT, UP, CN, BNSF), providing a valuable service to many of the County's industries. Future growth is expected in the transportation, logistics and warehousing industries, which will increase demand for rail transport services. Railroads are a key component of sustainable growth and development in the County, resulting in lower demand for fossil fuels, reduced air emissions and traffic congestion, and lower impacts on roadway facilities and adjoining land uses when compared with long-haul trucking as a means of moving freight.

In recent years, railroad companies in the Chicago region have developed intermodal facilities that utilize cargo containers that can be easily transferred between rail cars and trucks for delivery to nearby warehouse/distribution centers and end destinations. The success of these intermodal facilities, particularly those along freight lines in adjoining Will County, has increased rail volumes into the Chicago region and sparked interest in similar facilities in Grundy County due to its proximity to these railroads. The Inland Logistics Port, a 285-acre rail-served industrial park located at the southwest corner of Reed Road and Broadway Road in Coal City, will be the first such facility to be constructed in Grundy County. This port will provide manifest, bulk and transload cargo service to the Chicago area and upper Midwest market.

Recommendations

The County should pursue additional rail-based development opportunities to leverage its railroad assets and the Chicago region's access to national and international ports. As freight activity increases along these rail lines, delays to vehicular traffic will increase proportionally due to the abundance of railroad grade crossings throughout the County. To mitigate these delays, this Comprehensive Plan recommends the grade separation of three of the County's major higher-volume roadways:

- ▶ IL 113/BNSF & CSXT in Coal City
- ▶ Reed Road/UP in Coal City
- ▶ Ridge Road/CSXT in Minooka

Passenger Rail

Passenger service in Grundy County was provided in the past on the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad (now the CSXT line) and on two electric interurban lines (the Chicago, Ottawa, and Peoria Electric Railway and the Fox and Illinois Union Railway). The service on the interurban lines ended in the 1930's and service on the "Rock Island" ceased in 1978. As the population of Grundy County continues to increase and new jobs continue to be created, there will be a growing demand for alternative commuter linkages to the Chicago metropolitan area, as well as more efficient Amtrak inter-city rail service to Chicago, Springfield, and St. Louis.

As a founding member of the Illinois Valley Commuter Rail Steering Committee, Grundy County has been actively pursuing regional transportation service options that would better connect the County to the Chicago region. The County participated in the Phase I study that concluded that commuter rail service was feasible along the Illinois Railway from Joliet west to LaSalle/Peru, and is currently participating in the Phase II study (Illinois Valley Corridor Comprehensive Transportation Study) that has been expanded to include the City of Aurora and the CSXT rail line as well



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as evaluating other modes of regional transportation service such as express bus routes. These initiatives would build off the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's recommendation to extend commuter rail service along the Metra Rock Island District Line from its current terminus in Joliet to Minooka, a project included in CMAP's Go To 2040 Regional Comprehensive Plan.

The extension of commuter rail service into Grundy County would provide a particular economic benefit to the City of Morris and Village of Minooka. The new service would require the renovation of existing train stations or construction of new stations, and would present an opportunity to develop a transit-oriented environment around the stations. Transit-oriented developments (TODs) are compact, high-density, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use projects that reduce automobile dependency and create vibrant living communities that are walkable to transportation, shopping and/or civic services.

The current population in Grundy County and adjacent LaSalle County may not be sufficient to generate ridership levels that would justify the cost investment for commuter rail service. As such, connections to Metra service in Joliet, or potentially Minooka, may initially need to be provided with express bus service and park-n-ride stations until ridership levels demonstrate that higher-capacity service is warranted. Some benefits of TOD projects can be achieved around park-n-ride stations just as they can around commuter rail stations.

Grundy County will soon benefit from IDOT's federally-funded high-speed rail initiative to upgrade the inter-city Amtrak service in the Chicago-St. Louis corridor for 110 mph operations. The high-speed service will be accessible to Grundy County residents just over the County line at the Dwight station and at Joliet Union Station. Substantial upgrades have been made, and continue to be made, to the railroad right-of-way in advance of this express service. Ultimately, the full scope of improvements will include track replacement, construction of parallel mainline tracks, enhanced signals and grade crossing warning systems, fencing, and new train stations and platforms. The segment between Dwight and Pontiac has already been completed and the full length of the route is scheduled for completion in 2017. The route is part of the Midwest High-Speed Rail network that will eventually provide upgraded passenger rail service from Chicago to Milwaukee, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Detroit, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Louisville, Cincinnati and Kansas City.

Recommendations

Grundy County should continue to study and advocate for commuter rail service extension from Joliet to LaSalle/Peru with stops in Minooka and Morris, potentially initiated as express bus service with park-n-ride facilities. The County should also continue to collaborate with IDOT on Amtrak high-speed track enhancements through Grundy County for the Chicago-St. Louis service with nearby stops in Joliet and Dwight.

PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICE UPGRADES

Grundy County was the third fastest growing county in the State of Illinois between 2000 and 2010. In the decade that the Grundy Transit System (GTS) has been in existence it has provided a valuable public transit service to County residents. As additional funding has been obtained in recent years, service levels have been improved by expanding the service fleet and extending service hours, resulting in annual ridership levels that have quadrupled since 2009.

While population and employment levels in the County may still not be quite sufficient to support regularly-scheduled, fixed-route bus service, the continued pursuit of additional funding, at the Federal, State and local levels, will enable the GTS to purchase additional vehicles, extend weekday service hours further into the evening, offer weekend service, and expand the service area to reach the future Amtrak high-speed rail service in Dwight (Livingston County), which is closer for many Grundy County residents than traveling to Joliet. Continued growth in the County's resident population combined with increasing demand for GTS services may enable the County, in the long term, to initiate a hybrid approach that includes both demand response and fixed-route service.

In addition to local public transit service, the County should advocate with private service providers (Greyhound, Burlington Trailways, etc.) to bring inter-city bus service to Grundy County. These services presently pass through the County without stopping en-route to Chicago and other destinations.

Recommendations

As demand merits, the Grundy Transit System should work to extend its weekday service hours into the evening, initiate a weekend service, expand its service area to Dwight to coordinate with Amtrak high-speed rail service (Chicago-St. Louis), and purchase additional vehicles to accommodate increased demand for service. The County should also advocate for service stops in Grundy County on Greyhound, Burlington Trailways or other similar bus lines.

COMMERCIAL AIR TRANSPORTATION SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

The Morris Municipal-James R. Washburn Field Airport, which is the only public airfield in Grundy County, has become a major economic engine for the County. The facility supports more than 48,000 aircraft operations (takeoffs and landings) annually and the number of aircraft based at the airport, now around 65, has been increasing. Major airport upgrades have been programmed by the Illinois Department of Transportation in the FY 2014-2017 Airport Improvement Program ensuring surplus capacity for the foreseeable future. Other near-term improvements are needed to modernize the airport, improve efficiency of aircraft operation, and upgrade important navigational safety features. Longer term plans envision the airport becoming a Class II airport, providing scheduled operations of small air carrier aircraft and unscheduled operations of larger (30+ passenger) air carrier aircraft, which would require an additional series of improvements.

Recommendations

The County should support the expansion of the Morris Municipal Airport by working with the City of Morris, State of Illinois and Federal Aviation Administration to enable the airport to implement required near-term improvements and achieve its long-term vision. The airport's needs are broken down into short-term and long-term needs, and are listed below.

Short Term

- ▶ IDOT Programmed Improvements
- ▶ Extension of 5,000' x 75' main north-south runway (18 36) to 5,500 feet
- ▶ Expansion of the parking lot and landside facilities
- ▶ Construction of a parallel taxiway
- ▶ Installation of navigational aids and precision approach path indicator (PAPI) lighting
- ▶ Updated lighting and signage

Long Term

- ▶ Widening (to 100') and overlay of the main runway to support larger aircraft
- ▶ Construction of 4,000' x 75' east-west cross runway
- ▶ Rerouting of Ashley Road on east side of airport to accommodate new runway
- ▶ Construct a new east-west airport entrance road on Ashley Road at Whitman Road
- ▶ Development of new terminal building, corporate storage hangers, multi-unit hangers, and Fixed Base Operator (FBO) maintenance building



Flickr - Kenneth Spencer II, River near Morris

BIKE TRAILS

The County's existing trail network is comprised of the I & M Canal State Trail and Tippleway bike path. Moving forward, the County's trail system should be expanded, with emphasis on connecting the County's many State parks and natural areas.

The need for developing alternative means of travel is important in light of dwindling fossil fuel resources, population and employment growth, and environmental concerns. An expanded bicycle network will not only encourage travel to the State parks and natural areas for recreational purposes, but also facilitate bicycling and walking to employment centers, civic institutions, schools, and the business districts of the County's municipalities. Using these alternative modes of travel for short-distance trips will provide a variety of benefits for County residents, including reduced traffic congestion, improved air quality, and the physical benefits of a healthier lifestyle.

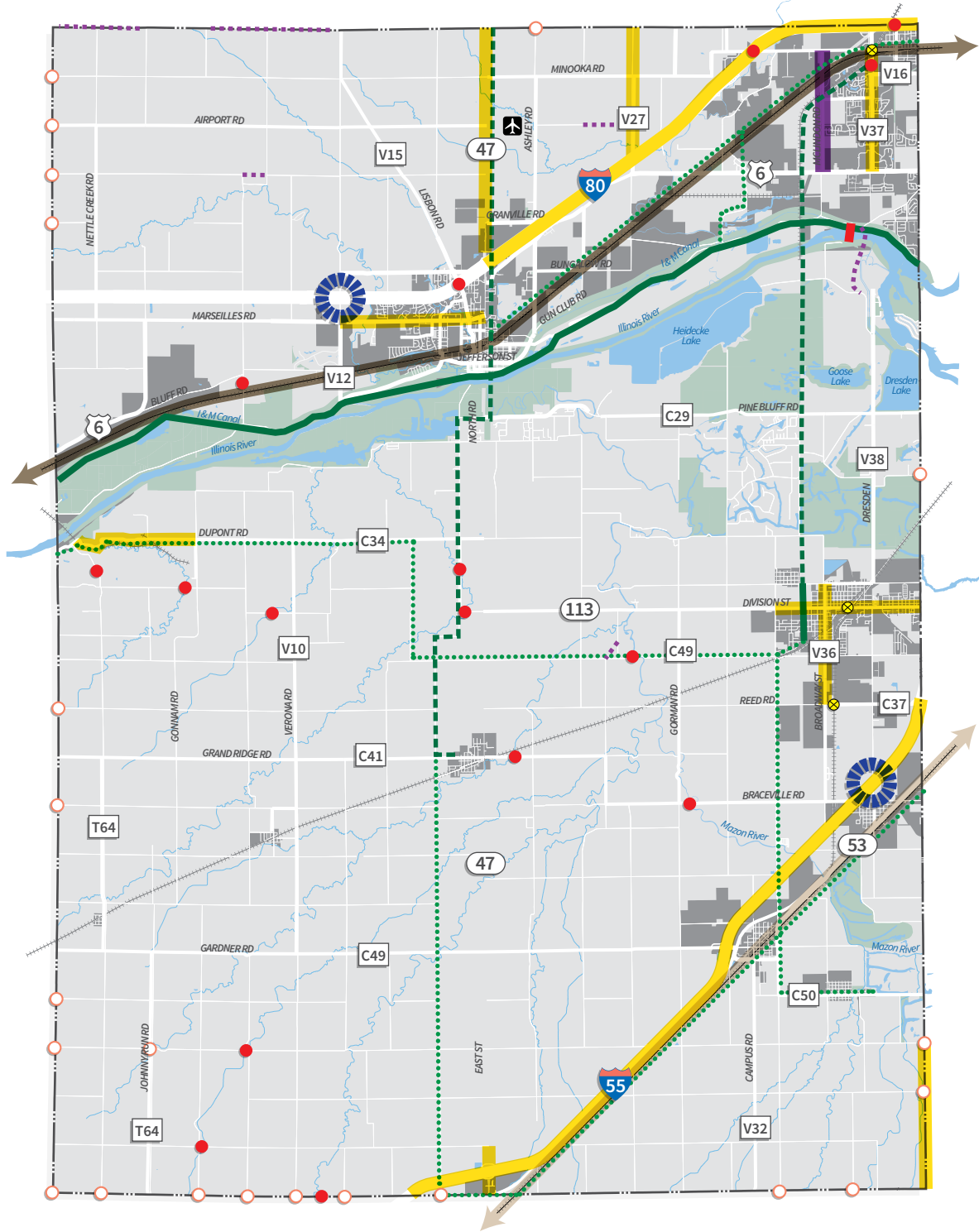
However, this Plan recognizes that the primary purpose of a County-wide trail system would be recreational, given the expansive and rural nature of the County. Accordingly, a more detailed description of the proposed bicycle trail system can be found in Chapter 8: Parks, Open Spaces, & Environmental Features. That chapter identifies several priority locations throughout the County and its municipalities where bicycle facilities may be feasible. These are preliminary and conceptual locations that require further study with respect to feasibility, ownership, safety issues, design, and funding. For the purposes of this chapter, the Transportation Plan shows the locations of existing, proposed short-term, and proposed long-term trails.

RIVER TRAVEL

The ability to deliver an efficient movement of freight and other goods on the Illinois River (between the Chicago area and markets along the Mississippi River, and ultimately the Gulf of Mexico) has historically provided strategic benefits for Grundy County's economy, particularly its agricultural sector. Maintaining this efficiency will require significant public and private investment to upgrade the 80-year old lock system, utilize and upgrade existing dock facilities, and develop new dock areas. The seven locks on the Illinois River each have a length of 600 feet, which is insufficient to accommodate current river traffic demands, creating delays that impact travel further downstream. Existing dock facilities are not fully-utilized and there are prime riverfront opportunity areas to develop new docking facilities.

Recommendations

The County should support the creation of a modern lock system, which will allow for more efficient freight passage and encourage greater river commerce. The County should also support upgrades to existing private dock areas in western Grundy County near Seneca, as well as the development of new docking facilities in Grundy County's Economic Development Project Area #2 (EDPA 2), a 2,000-acre zone on the Illinois River surrounding Heidecke Lake, and near Seneca.



Transportation Plan

Context

- Grundy County
- Incorporated Municipalities
- Rivers, Streams, & Lakes

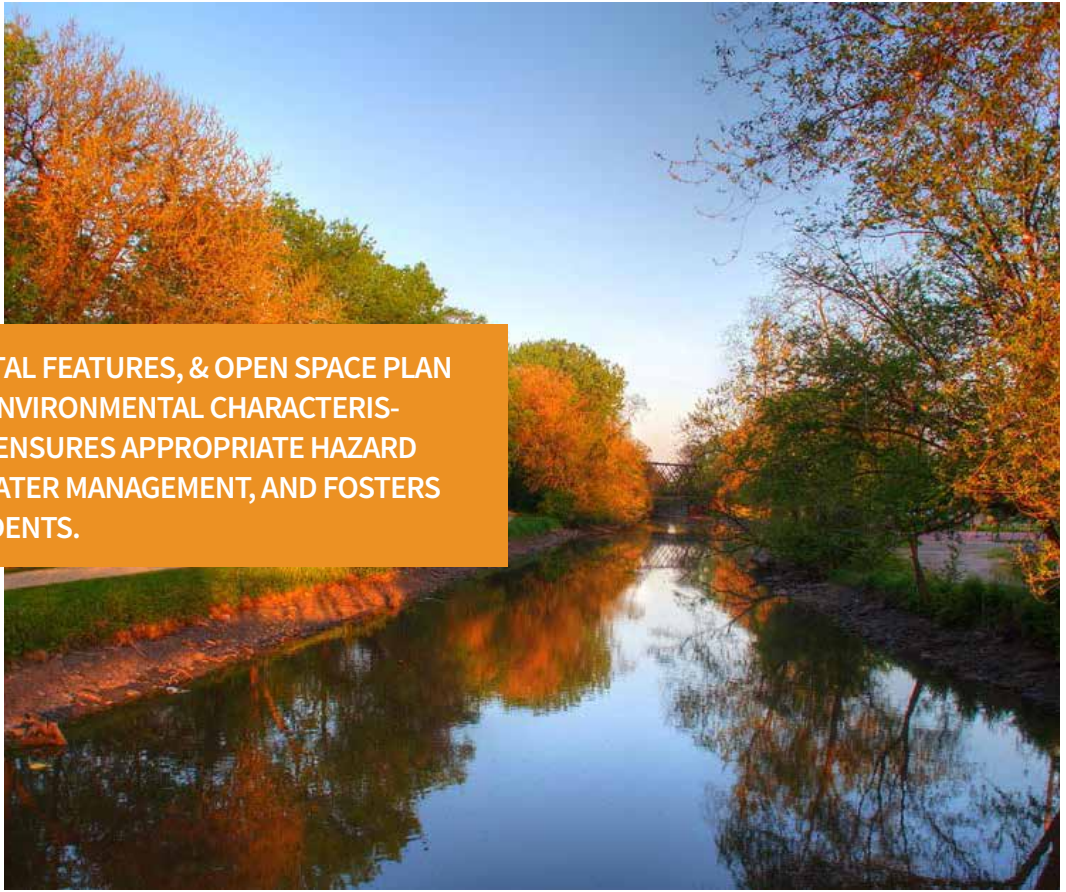
Roadway Improvements

- Bridge Replacement
- Airport Improvements
- New Interstate Interchange
- Intersection Realignments
- Railroad Grade Separation
- Lock System Upgrades

- Roadway Capacity Improvements
- New Truck Route
- New Road Connections/ River Crossings
- Existing Multi-use Trails
- Proposed Short-term Multi-use Trails
- Proposed Long-term Multi-use Trails
- Amtrak High Speed Rail Upgrades
- Commuter Rail Extension

Jurisdiction

- Interstate Highway
- U.S. State Highway
- IL State Highway
- Grundy County Highway



Flickr - Kenneth Spencer

THE PARKS, ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES, & OPEN SPACE PLAN PRESERVES THE UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF GRUNDY COUNTY, ENSURES APPROPRIATE HAZARD MITIGATION AND STORMWATER MANAGEMENT, AND FOSTERS HEALTHY LIVING FOR RESIDENTS.

7.0

PARKS, OPEN SPACE, & ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

In this Chapter:

- ▶ Parks & Open Spaces, including state, county, and local offerings
- ▶ Trails
- ▶ Soils & Topography
- ▶ Water, including waterways, wetlands, aquifers, and floodplains
- ▶ Wildlife & Endangered Species
- ▶ Wind

The Parks, Open Spaces, & Environmental Features Plan provides the framework for protecting, supporting, and enhancing natural amenities and open spaces within Grundy County. These features are important parts of community life and County character. Parks provide opportunities for social activity, recreation, and interaction with nature. Waterways, forests, prairies, and lakes beautifies the landscape and strengthen biodiversity and support healthy lifestyles.

It is important to note that Grundy County does not currently own or maintain parks and open space. Rather, they are managed by the State of Illinois, local park districts or municipal departments, or private entities. To that end, the policies provided in this chapter are intended to facilitate land use decisions that safeguard environmentally sensitive areas and open spaces maintained by others in order to provide amenities that can be enjoyed for generations to come.

FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Preserve

Grundy County's landscape is defined by large expanses of productive farmland, beautiful waterways and wetlands, and six quality state park sites. This Plan preserves the County's scenic, rural setting for future generations.

Compete

Ensuring a clean and safe environment, while providing a diversity of exciting recreational opportunities, positions the County to attract new residents, businesses, and tourists. Additionally, a quality system of parks and open spaces will facilitate scientific learning at a young age, and support the educational development of the County's youth.

Sustain

Safeguarding the County's environment from overdevelopment and pollution is a top priority of this Plan. By facilitating sustainable growth practices, supporting wind power generation, and implementing green infrastructure to mitigate flooding, Grundy County can become one of the greenest counties in Illinois.

Coordinate

The Plan recognizes that a sustainable, competitive County can only be achieved by working hand-in-hand with local municipalities. Partnering with other governments and harnessing resources for the collective good can lead to the successful long-term protection of the County's natural character.

PARKS & OPEN SPACES

State Parks & Open Space

The State of Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR) maintains six sites in Grundy County, including two state parks, two fish & wildlife areas, one natural area, and one trail. These sites offer access to hundreds of acres of amenities, including boating, fishing, fossil exploration, wildlife viewing, hiking, and more.

The following list inventories existing State open spaces in Grundy County. A full description of these spaces can be found in Chapter 3, Section 8 of this document.

- ▶ Gebhard Woods State Park in Morris near the I & M Canal and Nettle Creek
- ▶ The Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area located one mile southwest of where the Kankakee and Des Plaines Rivers meet
- ▶ Heidicke Lake State Fish & Wildlife Area southeast of Morris and just north of the Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area
- ▶ The Illinois & Michigan (I & M) Canal State Trail running for 61.5 miles from Channahon to LaSalle, Illinois, and connecting several other state parks
- ▶ The Mazonia State Fish & Wildlife Area located three miles southeast of Braidwood
- ▶ The William G. Stratton State Park located along the banks of the Illinois River in downtown Morris

Recommendations

Grundy County's role in relation to the six state parks is one of support. The County should assist and promote the Illinois DNR in their mission to provide regional parkland and recreational opportunities and protect threatened environmental areas. The DNR is the only provider of regional parkland, and the County should continue to strengthen communication and partnership with the DNR to ensure their sites are accessible to residents and are supported by County policies and infrastructure. Specifically, the County should:

- ▶ Coordinate all changes in zoning, land use, and development regulations with the DNR when the proposed changes are proximate to or could impact any of the six state park locations. Consistent dialogue and information sharing will ensure that possible conflicts or incompatible uses can either be avoided or mitigated.
- ▶ Require adequate buffering and setbacks for any sites that abut or are proximate to the six state park locations. This is especially of concern near Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area and Heidecke Lake State Fish & Wildlife Area, where these natural areas sit next to parcels designated for industrial uses.
- ▶ Ensure that the natural character of the sites and their surroundings are preserved in the light of new development and increased traffic in the two Economic Development Project Areas (EDPAs).
- ▶ Support contiguous expansion, if appropriate, of the park sites through public land transfers or the facilitation of private land donations.
- ▶ Highlight existing historic resources in the County, such as the Mazon Creek Fossil Beds, and work with the State of Illinois to identify and register other important historic resources and areas.
- ▶ Provide well-maintained County infrastructure that permits easy resident access to the park sites, especially key roadways such as CH C29, CH V38, CH C28, CH C41, CH V41, CH C50, and CH V34, among others.
- ▶ Promote the sites and their natural and recreational offerings in County marketing materials and promotions.



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Local Parks & Open Spaces

Local parks within Grundy County are operated and maintained by either municipalities or park districts. Providers at the local level include:

- ▶ Village of Dwight Public Works Department
- ▶ Godley Park District
- ▶ Braidwood Park District
- ▶ Village of Coal City Maintenance Department
- ▶ City of Morris Parks and Recreation Department
- ▶ Village of Diamond Public Works Department
- ▶ Channahon Park District
- ▶ Village of Minooka

In addition to the parks and open space providers listed above, public schools often include recreational amenities open to the public. In all known cases, the park service areas of these operations are either coterminous, or nearly coterminous, with municipal boundaries. Generally, however, residents who live in unincorporated Grundy County can have access to park facilities and programs located in municipal or district boundaries, albeit at a higher direct cost to the user.

Recommendations

Local parks fall under the jurisdiction of municipalities, park districts, or school districts. As a result, the County should play an advocacy, support, and coordinating role on behalf of and between the various park districts and departments. Specifically, the County should:

- ▶ Coordinate with key stakeholders, such as the Community Foundation and park districts and departments, to ensure that current offerings of parkland and open space meet the needs of both current and future populations.
- ▶ Partner with municipalities to identify and designate areas within Municipal Growth Areas for potential usage as future municipal parkland, contingent upon annexation. These areas should be strategically located near projected pockets of growth, contain desired natural characteristics, and/or serve to protect environmentally sensitive areas or species (e.g. wetlands, forests, waterways, and native species).
- ▶ Work closely with the Greater Joliet YMCA to identify a site for a new facility in Grundy County that would host a fitness center and health and wellness center.
- ▶ Leverage the expertise of the Grundy County Public Health Department for local programming and promotion of healthy activities and behaviors.
- ▶ In parts of the County well-served by municipal parks and recreation (e.g. soccer or softball leagues), work to ensure that residents from unincorporated areas are able to participate, understanding that they might have higher fees due to the lack of tax payments.
- ▶ In parts of the County not well-served by municipal parks and recreation, advocate for the creation of parkland, where appropriate, or work with existing school districts to provide or expand similar offerings.



Other Parks & Open Spaces

The County government does not currently manage or maintain any parkland or open space. However, there are several sites in unincorporated County land.

The following list inventories existing other parks and open spaces in Grundy County.

- ▶ The Grundy County Agricultural District Fairgrounds, located just north of Morris, has hosted the Grundy County Fair since 1971 and includes several seasonal uses.
- ▶ The Short Pioneer Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve is located just north of Coal City and includes a small nature preserve containing Short Cemetery.
- ▶ The Morris Country Club is a private facility established in 1924 and offers a 6,000-yard 18-hole golf course for its members. The club is located just west of Morris, along US Route 6.
- ▶ The Nettle Creek Country Club is located just southwest of the Morris Country Club, south of US Route 6 and west of Saratoga Road. The club is built around a 6,500-yard course with 18 holes.
- ▶ The Coal City Area Recreation Club #1 is a private camping and recreation area established from abandoned strip mines. It is 1,480 acres in size and located north of Coal City. Other private recreation organizations providing outdoor space are the CECO Recreation Club and the South Wilmington Firemen's Beach & Park Club.

Recommendations

As previously noted, the County government does not currently administer any parkland or recreation facilities. However, throughout the outreach process, County residents have expressed a desire for additional outdoor spaces. In a resident survey issued through the Comprehensive Plan's website, 68.8% of respondents listed "parks and open space" as a type of new development that they would like to see -- the second highest response behind restaurants but ahead of retail and new housing.



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The County should continue its role of supporting the services provided by others at the state and local levels. However, as service gaps are identified or as new population growth occurs, the County should assess whether it is necessary to provide park services. Specifically, the County should:

- ▶ In the short-term, form a “County Parks Advisory Board” composed of County officials and stakeholders. The Board could bring together the various parks providers within Grundy County to collectively evaluate current needs, partnership opportunities, service gaps, and assess the need for County support.
- ▶ Require all new development within the County Neighborhoods or Managed Growth Area land use designations to provide neighborhood parks and pedestrian walkways. South
- ▶ Over the long-term, evaluate the need for designated parkland and protected open spaces at the County level. This system could take a variety of forms and functions, depending on the needs and resources of the County at that time. It could be recreationally focused, such as a County Parks Department, or environmentally focused, such as a County Conservation District or County Forest Preserve that protects land from development. A Conservation District or Forest Preserve can also provide limited recreational opportunities, such as hiking. The County should identify land use and development thresholds that could trigger creation of such a system.
- ▶ Coordinate any potential transfer of unincorporated land from agricultural uses to parks/open space with the Grundy County Soil & Conservation District and the appropriate Drainage District.



TRAILS

There are currently two bicycle trails within Grundy County, including the Illinois and Michigan (I&M) Canal State Trail, which is a component of the 500-mile Grand Illinois Trail, and the Tippleway bike path in Coal City. IDOT's Official Bicycle Map identifies several County highways and township roads as suitable for bicycling, including Old Stage Road, Cemetery Road, Sherrill Road, Airport Road, Dellos Road, Ashton Road, Brown Road, Middle Road, Pioneer Road, Gorman Road, Hadden Road, Kinsman Road, Jugtown Road, McArdle Road, Grinter Road, and Livingston Road, among others. The US and IL state routes and many sections of the Grundy County and township roadway system are either not recommended for bicycling or have ride-with-caution advisories.

This Plan envisions investment in expanding the County's existing trail system, with emphasis on connecting the County's many State parks and natural areas. The system presented in this chapter is based on a scaled-back and modified version of the Grundy County Greenbelt and Greenway Plan (2005) and recognizes that an incremental approach may be more feasible. It would consist of expanding the existing trail network – the I & M Canal State Trail and Tippleway bike path – to create a more comprehensive bike network across the County. The system would connect with the existing and future bicycle networks of Grundy County's municipalities and extend to the County lines to ultimately align with the developing trail systems of the adjoining counties (Kendall, Will, Kankakee, Livingston, LaSalle).

Several priority locations through and between the County's urbanized areas where bicycle facilities may be feasible have been identified in this Plan. Due to the higher traffic volumes and speeds along the major roadways in the County's unincorporated areas, the ideal bicycle facility would be a trail or pathway that is physically separated from the roadway. These could be located within a parkway on the back side of the curb (urban alignment), on the opposite side of a roadway ditch (rural alignment), or along greenways, utility corridor, and abandoned or active rail corridors. Within the municipalities where speeds are lower and rights-of-way are more limited, the facilities may consist of bicycle routes, shared- or marked-lanes, and paved shoulders.



Source – Grundy County Chamber of Commerce, 2014

Potential Trail Locations

In addition to the existing trail segments, the following locations should be considered for short- or long-term trail improvements, based on their ability to link to existing segments, connect population centers with important destinations, and utilize available or easily acquired right-of-way. The locations of these recommended trails is conceptual and will require further study with respect to land ownership, easement rights, design, and safety parameters.

Short-Term Opportunities

- ▶ IL 47 (northern segment) – As part of a long-term vision for a north-south bike corridor that would connect Kendall County to Livingston County, this north-south segment would provide access between the Kendall County line and Mazon. Construction of the trail north of County Highway 29 could coincide with development and infrastructure improvements envisioned as part of IL 47's long-term opportunities. The segment would provide connections to the I & M Canal State Trail, Gebhard Woods State Park, William G. Stratton State Park, and the Grundy County Fairgrounds. South of Illinois River bridge, path would shift west on Pine Bluff Road then south on Dwight Road.
- ▶ CN Railroad – This north-south trail along unused right-of-way would serve as an extension of the Tippleway Bike Trail north of Carbon Hill. The first phase of the improvement would run north from Carbon Hill to the Goose Lake Prairie Preserve and I & M Canal. The second phase of improvements would continue north to Minooka.



Long-Term Opportunities

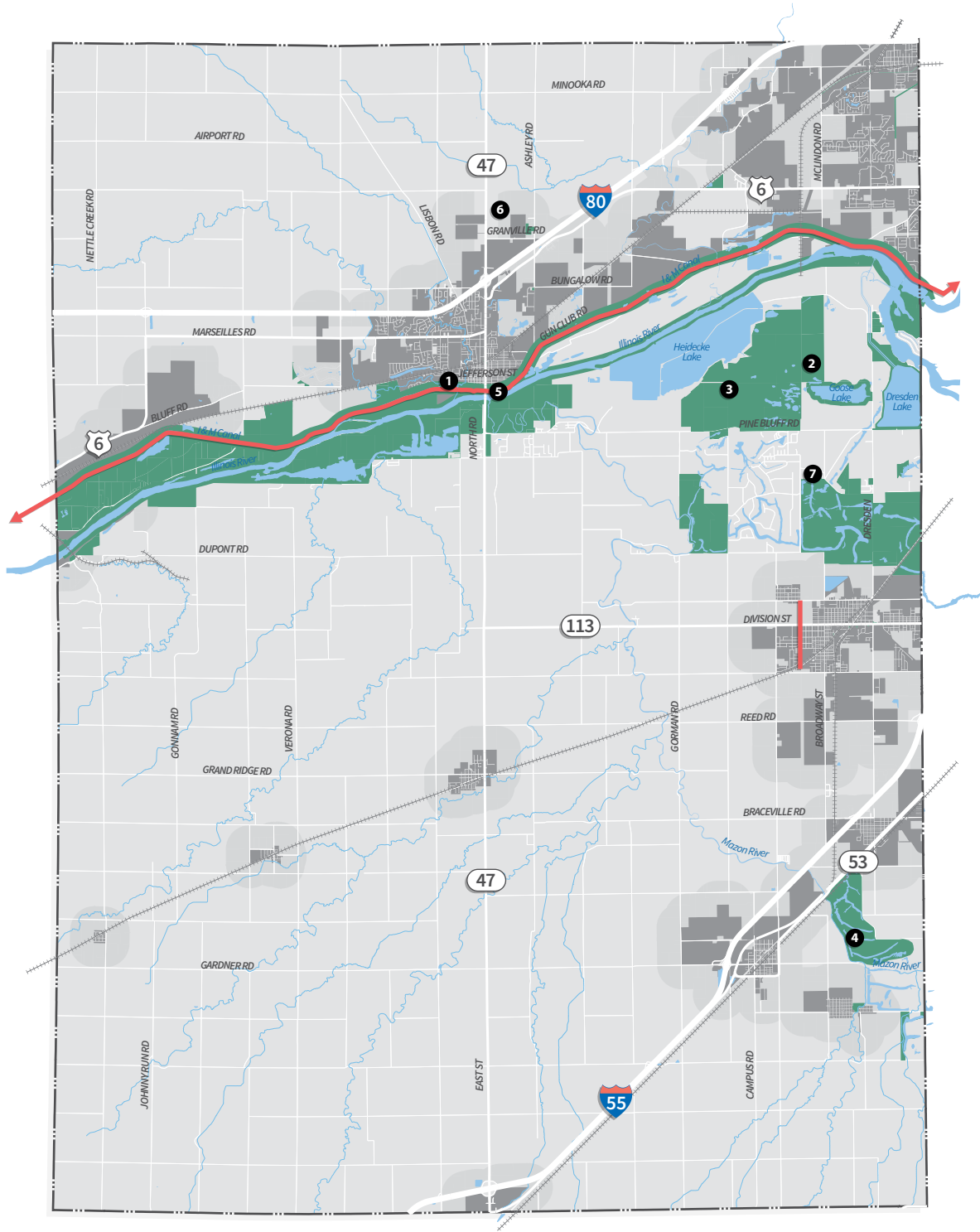
- ▶ IL 47 (southern segment) – This north-south bicycle facility would build upon the short-term opportunity described above and extend south to the Livingston County line. The Trail would provide access to Dwight via Dwight Road and East Road.
- ▶ CSX Railroad – This east-west trail along the vacant right-of-way of a former second rail track (if track not replaced for future commuter rail service) would connect downtown areas of Morris (IL 47 path) and Minooka and industrial employment centers in between.
- ▶ Cemetery Road – This east-west bike route would extend from Armstrong Street/I&M Canal State Trail in Morris to the CSX trail via Tabler Road industrial area.
- ▶ Carbon Hill Road – This north-south trail would utilize Covey Lane as an extension of the Tippleway Bike Trail through Coal City. The trail would then continue south along Carbon Hill Road, which includes an existing grade-separated crossing of I-55. The trail would continue east on Rice Road to provide access to Gardner and South Wilmington.
- ▶ Diamond-Seneca – This east-west route would follow IL 113 from Diamond west through Coal City to CN trail, continuing west along Spring Road to Baker Road, north to DuPont Road, and west to the Village of Seneca. Connection to the planned IL 47 path.
- ▶ Old Route 66 – This northeast-southwest path would follow IL 129 and run parallel to I-55 and the Union Pacific Railroad from Godley through Braceville and Gardner to Dwight, with connections to the planned IL 47 and CN Railroad trails.

Recommendations

A cohesive and comprehensive bicycle trail system would provide recreational and health benefits to residents of Grundy County. This system should align with the developing bicycle trail systems of the adjoining counties and prioritize connections between Grundy County's State parks and natural areas. Specifically, the County should:

- ▶ Support municipalities as they develop bike trails and lanes within their jurisdictions, and to the extent necessary, permit extensions into contiguous areas within the Municipal Growth Areas positioned for eventual annexation.
- ▶ Serve as a coordinating body between the State of Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR), municipalities, and relevant stakeholder groups in order to align existing pieces of biking infrastructure and identify avenues for cooperation in the future, including new ordinances, infrastructure, policies, and grants.
- ▶ Promote the County's existing trails in County marketing materials and promotions.

Work with the DNR, neighboring counties, municipalities and relevant stakeholders to identify, plan, and develop new trail routes that can maximize recreation and tourism within Grundy County.



Parks & Open Space

Context

- Grundy County
- Incorporated Municipalities
- Rivers, Streams, & Lakes

Environmental Features

- Parks & Open Space
- Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail

Park Facilities

- 1** Gebhard Woods State Park
- 2** Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area
- 3** Heidecke Lake State Fish & Wildlife Area
- 4** Mazonia State Fish & Wildlife Area
- 5** William G. Stratton State Park
- 6** Grundy County Agricultural District Fairgrounds
- 7** Short Pioneer Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve



SOIL & TOPOGRAPHY

The County lies in the Kankakee Plain and the land is relatively flat, with no significant change in elevation. The highest point in the County sits in the northwestern corner, with an elevation of about 700 feet above sea level. The lowest point is 510 feet above sea level, and is located at the intersection of the western County line and the Illinois River.

Grundy County's soil is extremely fertile. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, over 85% of the County's land base is prime farmland. Prime farmland is defined by the federal government as "land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and is available for these uses. The soils are of the highest quality and can economically produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods." The criteria for identifying prime soils includes: an adequate moisture content, a specific soil temperature range, a pH level between 4.5 and 8.4 in the rooting zone, low potential for flooding; low risk to wind and water erosion; minimum permeability rates, and low rock fragment content. The vast majority of the County is prime farmland, with the northwestern and southwestern quadrants almost entirely prime farmland, and slightly lower concentrations in the northeastern and southeastern quadrants.

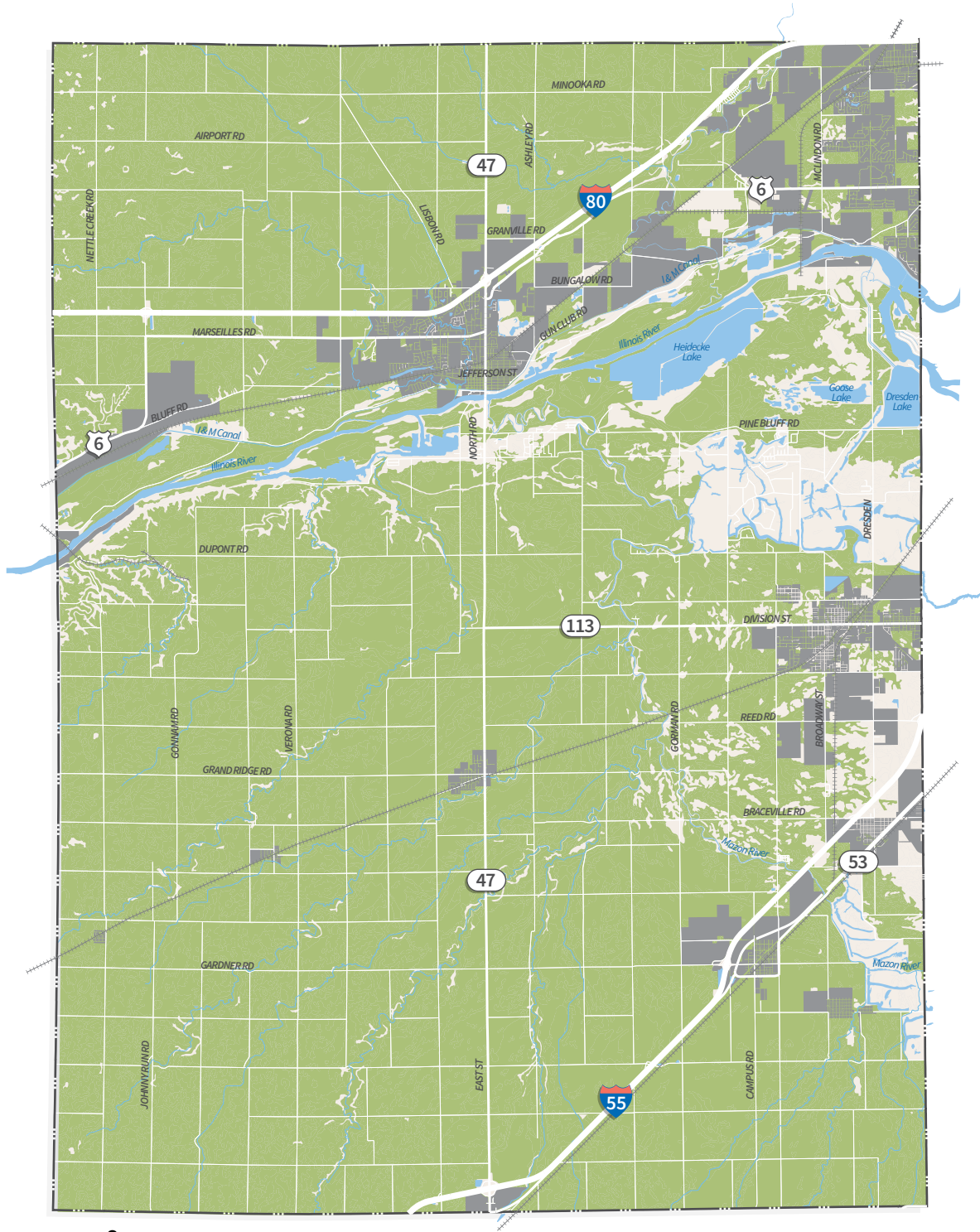
Due to the quality of the soil, agriculture is the County's predominant land use. According to the 2007 U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Census, more than 215,474 acres of County land (78% of all land) were used by 450 different farms for agriculture. This yielded \$110,560,000 in receipts.

The soil is made up of several different types. Cataloguing the various types and locations of soils throughout the County should help manage new development by identifying locations where it is desirable and where it should be prohibited, and protecting the County's valuable agricultural assets and potential.

Recommendations

Protecting the County's prime soil from overdevelopment and erosion should be top priorities. Specifically, the County should:

- ▶ Develop and implement agreements with municipalities that identify appropriate growth areas in order to reduce sprawl and preserve prime farmland from development.
- ▶ Within the Municipal Growth Area land use areas, prioritize to the extent possible non-prime farmland for development over prime farmland.
- ▶ Recognize and support agriculture as an economic and cultural priority throughout the County.
- ▶ Educate the public about the importance of agricultural preservation.
- ▶ Coordinate farmland preservation with general open space preservation efforts.
- ▶ Leverage the resources, data, and expertise of the Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for future policymaking and soil conservation programming.
- ▶ Strengthen existing partnership with the Grundy County Soil & Water Conservation District in order to reduce soil loss and protect water quality in unincorporated areas.
- ▶ Minimize the amount of impervious surface to reduce flooding and soil erosion. (For more detailed information, please see the Flooding section of this chapter).



Prime Farmland

Context

-  Grundy County
-  Incorporated Municipalities
-  Rivers, Streams, & Lakes

Soils

-  Prime Soil for Farmland
-  Non Prime Soil for Farmland



WATER

This section provides an overview of the County's water ecology and a series of policy recommendations relating to rivers, streams and creeks; wetlands; aquifers; and flooding and storm management.

Rivers, Streams, & Creeks

Grundy County's waterways include the Illinois River, the Mazon River, and three creeks. Almost all of the County drains into the Illinois River. A more detailed description of these waterways can be found in Chapter 3, Section 8 of this document.

Illinois River

The 332-mile Illinois River flows through the County from its northeastern corner, between Channahon and Coal City, towards Seneca, then continues southwest towards St. Louis and into the Mississippi River. It is maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and is integral to shipping. Portions of the Illinois River are listed on the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 303(d) List of Impaired Waters.

Mazon River

The Mazon River is a tributary of the Illinois River and is home to more than 300 fossilized animal species and 200 fossilized plants. Portions of the Mazon River are listed on the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 303(d) List of Impaired Waters due to the presence of mercury, fecal coliform, and polychlorinated biphenyls.

Creeks

Three creeks drain directly in the Illinois River. Aux Sable and Nettle Creeks drain the northern portion of the County, and the Waupecan Creek drains the southwestern portion. Part of the Aux Sable Creek is currently listed on the EPA's List of Impaired Waters due to the presence of fecal coliform bacteria.

Wetlands

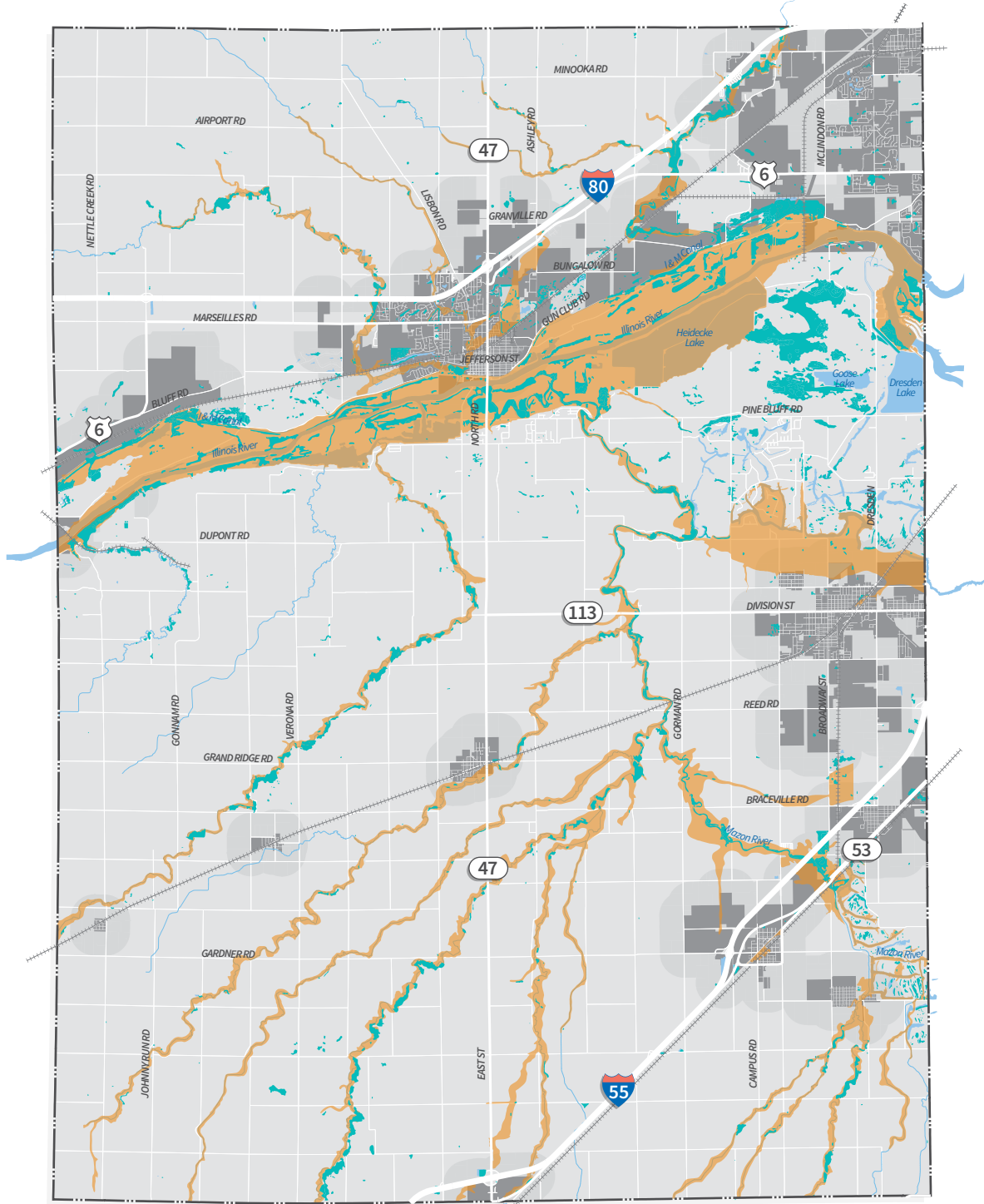
Wetlands, according to the federal government, are "those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support...a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas." The types of wetlands vary greatly due to differences in soil, vegetation, topography, climate, hydrology, water chemistry, and other factors.

If properly maintained and preserved, wetlands can provide numerous benefits to Grundy County. They can filter water from impurities, recycle nutrients, capture rainwater and melting snow, and act as a safe habitat for plants, fish, and an array of wildlife. Wetlands can also help to beautify and diversify the existing landscape. The County's wetlands are predominantly along waterways, with higher concentrations in the northeastern and northwestern quadrants.

Morris Wetland Bank

The Morris Wetland Bank was established by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to restore wetlands in advance of unavoidable losses from highway projects. Under the federal Clean Water Act and state Interagency Wetland Policy Act of 1989, all IDOT construction must demonstrate that all measures were taken to avoid or minimize impacts to wetlands. Unavoidable impacts are offset through "wetland mitigation," or the creation or restoration of wetlands elsewhere.

The bank is restoring more than a hundred acres of unincorporated land south of the Illinois River and east of IL Route 47 through preservation and the planting of native species and shrubs. The end goal is transformation of the land into a contiguous tract of natural floodplain forest. As of the last obtainable monitoring report (2012), a total of 7,630 had been planted in 11 different wetlands within the area. The site is continually monitored by the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS), and ownership of the site was transferred in 2009 from IDOT to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR).



Wetlands & Floodplain

Context

-  Grundy County
-  Incorporated Municipalities
-  Rivers, Streams, & Lakes

Waterways

-  Wetlands
-  Floodplain

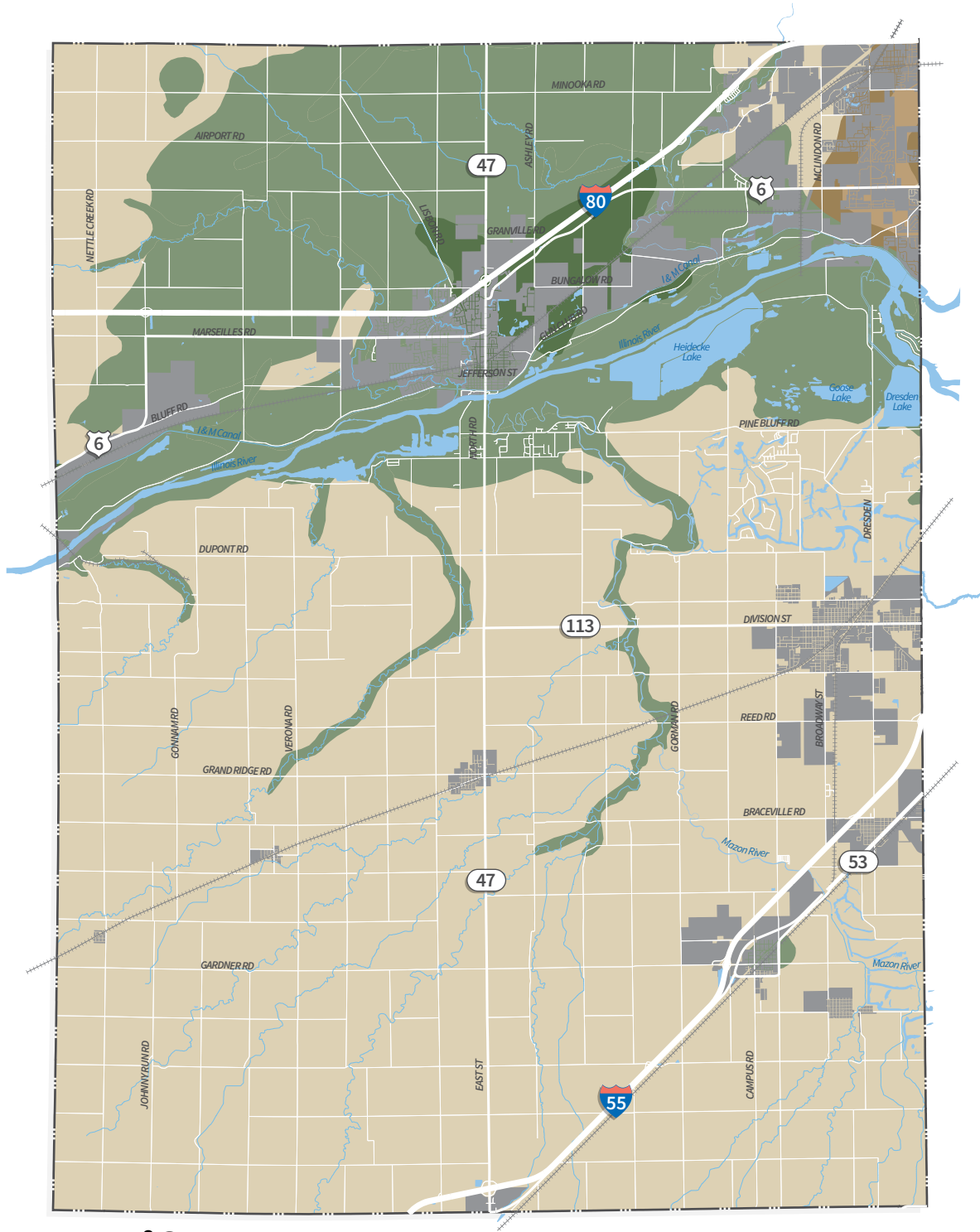


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Aquifers

Aquifers are underground layers of rock that hold water. They act as reservoirs, collecting water from rain and melting snow. The water in an aquifer can be accessed by those above ground through either natural springs or the drilling of wells. If an aquifer is used at a faster rate than can be replenished by nature, they can dry up. Additionally, aquifers can become contaminated through pollution that occurs on surface water or soil and trickles down.

Within Grundy County's unincorporated areas, homes and businesses are required to provide their own water and septic services, and different parts of the County have varying access to aquifers. The southwestern and southeastern portion have access to major rock aquifers less than 300 feet from the surface. The northwestern and northeastern quadrants are primarily served by potential aquifers closer to the surface (50 feet), with portions also containing major sand and gravel, major rock aquifers less than 500 feet, and major rock aquifers greater than 500 feet.



Aquifers

Context

- Grundy County
- Incorporated Municipalities
- Rivers, Streams, & Lakes

Aquifers

- Major Sand & Gravel
- Potential Aquifers less than 50 feet
- Major Rock Aquifers less than 300 feet
- Major Rock Aquifers less than 500 feet
- Major Rock Aquifers greater than 500 feet <math>< 2500 \text{ mg/L TDS}</math>



Flooding & Stormwater Management

Floodplains

Floodplains are any areas of land that are susceptible to being overcome from floodwaters in the event of a 100-year flood. In other words, during any given year, there is a one-percent chance (1 in 100) that the area will be flooded.

The vast majority of the County’s floodplains are located along the Illinois River, its tributaries, and other waterways, although floodplains exist in some municipalities. While Grundy County has experienced flooding, its proportion of floodplains to total land (estimated at between 0-9%) is on par with neighboring counties such as Livingston and Kankakee (both 0-9%) and is lower than Will (10-19%).

Past Flooding Incidents

Between January 1981 and May 2013, the County has experienced six federal disaster declarations related to flooding:

- ▶ December 1982 – FEMA DR# 674
- ▶ February to April 1985 – FEMA DR# 735
- ▶ July 1996 – FEMA DR# 1129
- ▶ August 2007 – FEMA DR# 1729
- ▶ October 2008 – FEMA DR# 1800
- ▶ May 2013 – FEMA DR# 4116

Hazard Assessment

State of Illinois Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (2013)

The 2013 State of Illinois Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan assigns a natural hazard rating to each Illinois County based on historical frequency and probability, vulnerability, severity of impact, and population. From most dangerous to least, their rating scale is: “severe,” “high,” “elevated,” “guarded,” and “low.”

In 2013, the report upgraded Grundy County’s flood hazard rating to “high” from the County’s previous 2010 status of “elevated.” The County’s severe storms hazard rating remained at “severe.” Potential flood losses for Grundy County, based on a 100-year flood, were estimated between \$80 million and \$160 million.

Grundy County Multi-Jurisdictional Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan (2013)

The County issued a Multi-Jurisdictional Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan in 2013 to assess and prepare for natural disasters. Based on data obtained in the 2010 State of Illinois Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, the plan’s steering committee ranked the individual flood risk for each Grundy County municipality. Their ranking system was “low risk,” “moderate risk,” or “high risk.” Their findings were:

HAZARD ASSESSMENT

Municipality	Ranking
Braceville	Moderate
Carbon Hill	Low
Channahon	Low
Coal City	Low
Diamond	Moderate
Dwight	Low
East Brooklyn	High
Gardner	Low
Godley	Low
Kinsman	Low/Moderate
Mazon	Low/Moderate
Minooka	Low
Morris	Low
South Wilmington	Moderate
Seneca	Low
Verona	Moderate



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Drainage Districts

Drainage districts are state-authorized districts that construct, maintain, and repair drains and levees, and engage in other drainage or levee work for agricultural, sanitary or mining purposes (70 ILCS 605/3-1 to 605/12-24). The Districts provide a critical service to the vitality of agricultural production in Grundy County. Without these Districts, local farmland that was drained to support agriculture could revert back into unproductive lowlands and swamplands. If the drainage districts were not present, floods would be more severe as adequate drainage outlets would not be available. This would likely cause more roadways to flood, more homes to be impacted and greater long-term economic impact.

Claypool and Maine Township Regional Stormwater Drainage Study (2014)

The Claypool and Maine Township Regional Stormwater Drainage Study was conducted in parallel with the development of the Grundy County Comprehensive Plan under a State IKE-PLP grant. The ditches of both districts are important conveyances for the County, and they provide sanitary sewer and storm water drainage for Braidwood, Carbon Hill, Coal City, Diamond, and a small area of Wilmington, as well as for several agricultural lands, conservation areas, and recreational clubs.

Key Findings

Results “indicate that the Claypool and Maine Township Ditches likely overtop the channel banks during heavy rainfall events causing overbank flooding,” and the Study supports concerns noted by public officials such as ditch capacity limitations and increases in runoff volume.

Recommendations provided in the Drainage Study include:

- ▶ Improving conveyance through key culverts.
- ▶ Providing storage within the watershed in key areas to attenuate peak flow rates.
- ▶ Restricting future development to a release rate no greater than 0.15 cubic feet per square/acre.
- ▶ Coordinating with local agencies, railroads, municipalities and others to assess the impacts of other systems.
- ▶ Expanding the analysis to nearby watershed areas
- ▶ Modeling the impacts of other nearby land features and development characteristics.
- ▶ Collaborating with Will County, Grundy County, and Drainage Districts to create a comprehensive watershed plan.

Comprehensive Plan Recommendations

- ▶ Review and amend the County’s Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to ensure that adequate natural buffers are provided along rivers and streams, especially for intensive industrial and agricultural land uses. Non-point source pollutants, such as pesticides and fertilizers, degrade waterways, threaten water quality, and endanger the health of aquatic species. Streams should be buffered from the pollutants often found in surface water run-off. According to the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, a properly installed agricultural buffer can remove up to 50% or more of nutrients and pesticides and up to 75% or more of sediments that would otherwise be washed into waterways.
- ▶ Promote education of and compliance with federal regulations regarding herbicides and pesticides in order to reduce river and waterway contamination.

- ▶ The County should, whenever possible, seek to protect streams and creeks through permanent methods such as conservation easements, nature preserve dedication, and/or public acquisition. The County should also consider the use of tax abatements, special variances, or other incentives to encourage private property owners to implement creek preservation efforts. Participation by local farmers in conservation programs should also be encouraged. Waterway protection is an important tool in agricultural areas like Grundy County, especially when used as part of a comprehensive set of environmentally-friendly agriculture practices.
- ▶ Enhance cooperation and communication between the County and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Grundy County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the US Army Corps of Engineers in order to increase protection of the Illinois River, tributaries, and watersheds.
- ▶ Prevent new development, whenever possible, from encroaching upon or negatively impacting environmentally sensitive waterways, floodplains, wetlands, aquatic habitats, or native riparian vegetation.
- ▶ Preserve and reinforce public access to the Illinois River through natural reserves, parks, and trails that connect to the surrounding development. The County should work with stakeholders and private property owners to identify and apply for federal funds in various conservation and preservation programs. The County should also promote the preservation of native trees and vegetation on private property. This could be done through the offering of tax abatements, special variances, or other incentives for planting native trees and using native planting materials in landscaping.
- ▶ Support the protection and expansion of the Morris Wetland Bank, and work with the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) and Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to ensure the site is safeguarded from incompatible uses, contamination, and other nuisances.
- ▶ Work with municipalities to evaluate and implement local water conservation programs and pursue creation of a County-wide wellhead protection plan, in coordination with local municipalities.
- ▶ Evaluate impacts of new developments on groundwater and existing well systems and ensure all proposed unincorporated developments are compatible with the existing hydrology of the County.
- ▶ Consider amending the zoning code to include a “wetland overlay district.” This designation would prevent the draining of wetlands and potential contamination by requiring new development to be built away from any shoreline or wetland.
- ▶ Promote the usage of bio-swales, drainage basins, and other naturalization techniques to minimize flooding and water run-off.
- ▶ Implement the recommendations of the Claypool and Maine Township Regional Stormwater Drainage Study.
- ▶ Adopt and enforce the County-wide Stormwater Ordinance that is currently being drafted.
- ▶ Continue to encourage cluster development that preserves sensitive environmental areas and protects development from the impacts of flooding.
- ▶ Promote the use of advanced stormwater management and agricultural practices, particularly best management practices that protect surface waters.
- ▶ Continue to update and implement the recommendations provided in the Grundy County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazards Mitigation Plan.

ENDANGERED & THREATENED SPECIES GRUNDY COUNTY (2013)

Common Name	Endangered (E) Threatened (T)	Last Observed
Ear-leafed Foxglove	T	1943
Bunchflower	T	1944
Lake Sturgeon	E	1966
Bigeye Shiner	E	1968
Wild Blue Larkspur	T	1971
Forked Aster	T	1975
Upland Sandpiper	E	1980
Osprey	E	1986
Ironcolor Shiner	T	1986
Spectaclecase	E	1987
Elephant Ear	T	1987
Sheepnose	E	1987
Loggerhead Shrike	E	1988
Drooping Sedge	T	1989
Loggerhead Shrike	E	1989
Bulrush	T	1989
Mississippi Kite	T	1990
American Bittern	E	1991
Common Moorhen	E	1991
Regal Fritillary	T	1991
Narrow-leaved Sundew	T	1994
King Rail	E	1994
Grass Pink Orchid	E	1997
Slender Sandwort	T	1997
Gray Bat	E	2000
False Mallow	E	2001
Green Trillium	E	2002

Common Name	Endangered (E) Threatened (T)	Last Observed
Northern Harrier	E	2002
Wolf's Bluegrass	E	2003
Spike	T	2003
Cypress Minnow	E	2004
Arrowwood	T	2004
Redveined Prairie Leafhopper	T	2004
Queen-of-the-Prairie	E	2005
Greater Redhorse	E	2005
Cerulean Warbler	T	2007
Slippershell	T	2007
Ebonysshell	T	2008
Blazing Star	T	2009
Buffalo Clover	T	2009
Blanding's Turtle	E	2009
Butterfly	T	2011
Black Sandshell	T	2011
Ornate Box Turtle	T	2011
Ear-loafed Foxglove	T	2011
Bewick's Wren	E	2012
Pallid Shiner	E	2012
Least Bittern	T	2012
River Redhorse	T	2012
Blacknose Shiner	E	2012
Eryngium Stem Borer	E	2012
Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid	E	2012
Indiana Bat	E	2013

WILDLIFE & ENDANGERED SPECIES

The State of Illinois Department of Natural Resources' mission is to protect, restore, manage, and promote the responsible use of native flora and fauna, natural communities, wildlife habitats, and ecosystems and ensure for future generations the greatest social, environmental, and economic benefits that can only be provided by healthy ecosystems. The DNR monitors endangered and threatened species and lists their status on the Illinois Natural Heritage Database, with the end goal of recovering the species and delisting it from endangered status. Additionally, the database includes the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) and a list of Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) protected lands.

Within Grundy County, 53 species are listed as either endangered or threatened. The chart below provides the name of such species and their status, as well as the last time they were observed in the County.

Recommendations

- ▶ Work with the DNR and wildlife advocacy groups to ensure that land use and zoning changes will not unreasonably or negatively impact natural habitats, especially as they relate to endangered species.
- ▶ Consult the Illinois Natural Heritage Database to determine whether an intended development includes locations of endangered or threatened species or exceptional natural features.
- ▶ Evaluate the need for protected open spaces at the County level, such as a County Conservation District or County Forest Preserve, which could help sustain natural flora and fauna.



WIND

Wind is often overlooked as a natural resource. Grundy County has regular wind patterns that, when combined with the agricultural nature of the County, make it attractive for wind farm development. Average wind power across the County ranges between 200 and 400 w/m², with “w/m²” being a measure of wind power density in watts. The windiest portions of the County are the northwestern and southwestern quadrants.

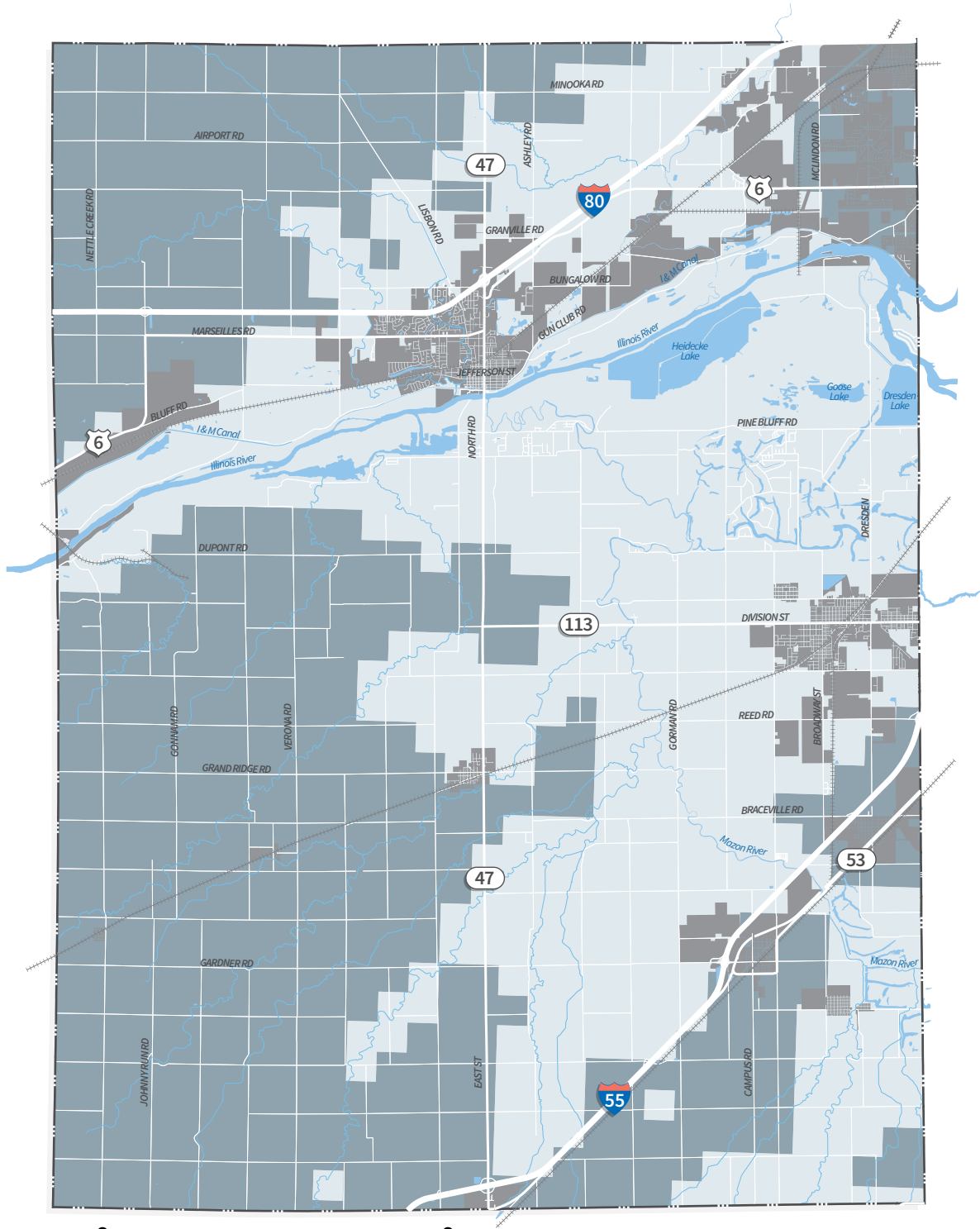
Wind Farms

The County is home to two wind farms in the southwestern quadrant. The Top Crop I Wind Farm spans Grundy, Livingston, and LaSalle Counties and is comprised of 68 wind turbines. The 102 megawatts of power it provides is enough to power nearly 28,000 homes, and the wind power generated is sold both to Commonwealth Edison and on the regional wholesale power market.

The Top Crop II Wind Farm is located entirely in Grundy County, and contains 132 wind turbines generating 198 megawatts of power. It delivers enough power for 54,000 homes, and is the fourth largest windfarm by capacity in Illinois, as of 2012.

Recommendations

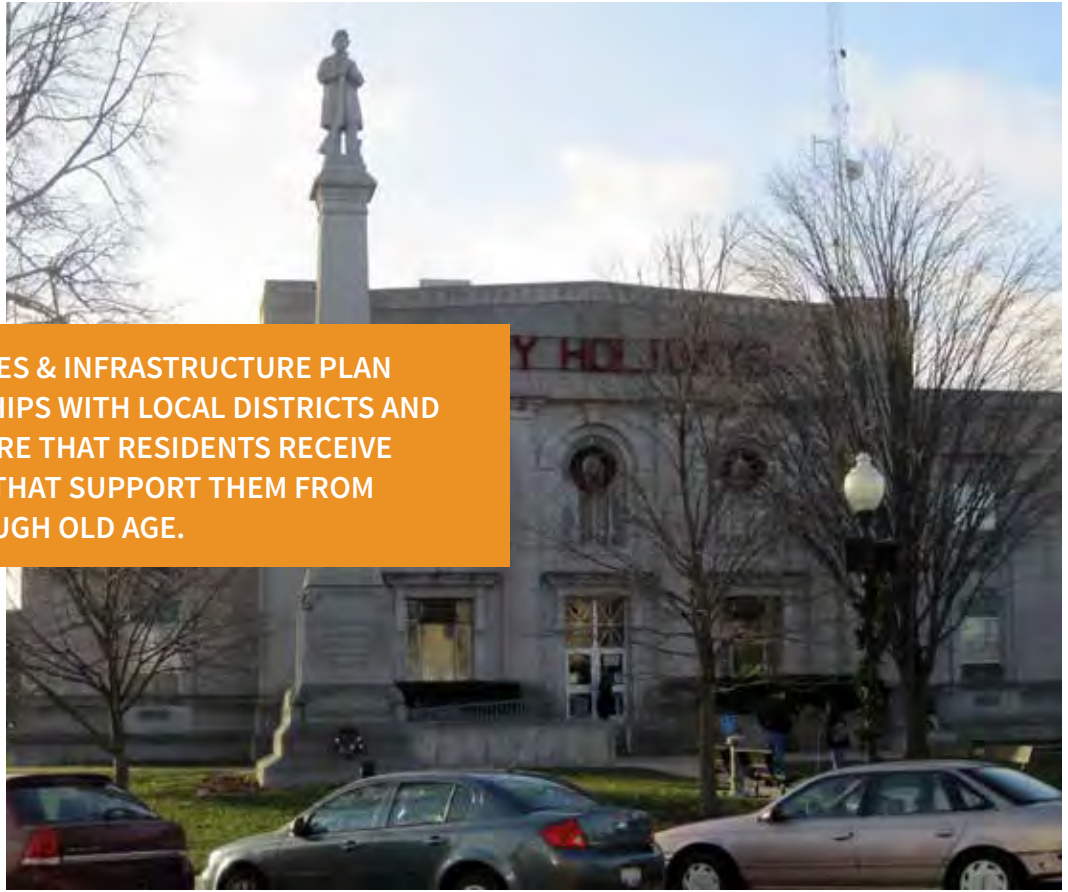
- ▶ Review and amend, as necessary, the County’s Unified Development Ordinance to ensure maximum benefit for wind farming in designated areas, while also mitigating any negative impacts due to sound, visual, or light pollution.
- ▶ Prohibit wind farms in Municipal Growth Areas and along major roadway corridors.
- ▶ Shift the “special use” of wind farms in industrially zoned areas to a “prohibited use,” given the proximity of industrial areas to incorporated municipalities and state parks.



Wind Power Density

- Context**
- Grundy County
 - Incorporated Municipalities
 - Rivers, Streams, & Lakes

- Wind Power Density (W/m²)**
- 200-300 W/m²
 - 300-400 W/m²



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THE COMMUNITY FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN ENCOURAGES PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL DISTRICTS AND MUNICIPALITIES TO ENSURE THAT RESIDENTS RECEIVE HIGH-QUALITY SERVICES THAT SUPPORT THEM FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH OLD AGE.

8.0

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

In this Chapter:

- ▶ County Government facilities
- ▶ Public Safety facilities
- ▶ Educational facilities
- ▶ Library facilities
- ▶ Health facilities

The Community Facilities & Infrastructure Plan provides a framework for coordinating, supporting, and enhancing community facilities and services within Grundy County. Grundy County is a great place to live because of the dedication of its various governmental and non-profit entities that provide quality and necessary services to residents. This chapter highlights Grundy County's community facilities and presents recommendations to help ensure that high-quality facilities and services are available throughout the County.

Many of the community facilities and service enjoyed by County residents or businesses are provided by entities outside of the County government. To this end, this chapter provides policies and actions that the County government should undertake, typically in a supportive, coordinating, or advocacy role. It is not intended to replace or supersede goals and policies of other agencies or local municipalities. Ultimately, this chapter's recommendations underscore the need to continually partner with municipalities, service districts, and other stakeholders to ensure the needs of all County residents are met.

FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Preserve

The Community Facilities & Infrastructure Plan advocates for the development of community facilities in municipal areas, thus preserving the County's farmland and scenic open spaces.

Compete

Enhanced educational offerings, such as the development of a four year college or the strengthening of library services, positions the County's youth to more successfully compete and achieve success in the global economy. Additionally, new residents, businesses, and investment will be attracted to Grundy County through the development of quality community facilities and infrastructure.

Sustain

Sustainable policies and practices at the County level, such as controlled growth and energy efficiency in community facilities, will not only protect the environment, but save taxpayer dollars.

Coordinate

The quality and efficiency of Grundy County's community services, facilities, and infrastructure depends on the ability of governments to work together and cooperate on a bold, regionally-focused agenda that recognizes shared interests and goals, while also respecting autonomy.

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The Grundy County government is comprised of nineteen distinct departments that provide a variety of services to residents, including road maintenance, public safety, animal control, public health, and transportation. The departments are:

- ▶ Administration
- ▶ Animal Control
- ▶ Assessor
- ▶ Circuit Clerk
- ▶ Coroner
- ▶ County Clerk & Recorder
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Emergency Management
- ▶ Health
- ▶ Highway
- ▶ Human Resources
- ▶ Land Use
- ▶ Probation
- ▶ Public Defender
- ▶ Sheriff's Department
- ▶ State's Attorney
- ▶ Technology
- ▶ Treasurer
- ▶ Transit

Facilities

The County's nineteen departments operate out of six facilities in and around Morris. They include:

- ▶ Grundy County Administration Building (1320 Union Street in Morris)
- ▶ Grundy County Courthouse (111 E. Washington Street in Morris)
- ▶ Grundy County Highway Department / Grundy County System (245 N. IL Route 47 in Morris)
- ▶ Animal Control Department (310 E. Dupont Road in unincorporated land)
- ▶ Grundy County Highway Department (Lowery & N. Dwight Roads in unincorporated land)
- ▶ Illinois Central School Bus / Grundy Transit System (804 North Street in Mazon).

For more information about these facilities can be found in **Chapter 3.6** of this document.

Sustainability

The Grundy County government should commit to becoming more sustainable, both in its day-to-day operations and long-term planning and policies. According to the US Department of Environmental Protection, sustainability "creates and maintains the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony, that permit fulfilling the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations. Sustainability is important to making sure that we have, and will continue to have, the water, materials, and resources to protect human health and our environment."

The County government can enact a wide range of policies and practices that embrace sustainable principles, preserve the environment, and reduce pollution and waste. They include adopting an energy efficiency and conservation policy for government facilities; implementing sustainable purchasing requirements for new equipment; enacting Municipal Growth Areas that limit sprawl and safeguard from its impacts; working with local schools to integrate sustainability related discussions or field trips into curricula; and/or integrating sustainable alternatives and regulations into the zoning code related to green building design, stormwater management, and alternative energy production.

If developed appropriately, sustainable practices not only help preserve the environment, but also save taxpayer dollars. The creation of the Grundy County Environmental & Resource Conservation Office and their issuance of a "Green Guide" signals a willingness to transform the County into a regional environmental leader.



Recommendations

Throughout this document, there are several recommendations for County government that relate to this chapter. However, the recommendations below build upon those provided in other chapters, and also provide actions as they relate to County facility locations, operational issues, sustainable practices, and daily governance issues. Specifically, the County should:

- ▶ Create a long-term sustainability plan that will lay out the County's approach to resource conservation, green energy, and sustainable practices.
- ▶ Promote recycling and composting at the municipal and County-wide levels.
- ▶ Explore alternative energy opportunities for the County's fleet of vehicles, including the Grundy County Transit system fleet
- ▶ Ensure that the location of existing County facilities meets the operational needs of County staff and constituents. When a new County facility is to be developed, a site should be selected that is in a location that is both feasible and contextually appropriate, depending on the facility's purpose and service population.
- ▶ Coordinate the development or expansion of all County facilities with municipalities in order to maximize service delivery and locational efficiency and to minimize any negative impacts on transportation networks or nearby residential areas.
- ▶ Develop and follow a long-term capital improvement plan that lays out the appropriate maintenance schedule and estimated improvement costs for all County facilities.
- ▶ Share County information regarding population and demographics with service providers and municipalities to support potential changes in the services, facilities, and district boundaries.
- ▶ Ensure all County facilities are accessible to those with disabilities.
- ▶ Coordinate with service providers to better understand their long-term facility needs and utilize land use policies and development regulations to reserve land in new growth areas to assure they can be properly served.
- ▶ Increase transparency in County Government by embracing social media, developing a more-user friendly website, and utilizing best practices in customer-oriented governance.
- ▶ Utilize multi-media networks and resources, including web-based social media, local newspapers and television stations, homeowners associations, religious institutions, etc. to maintain open communication with residents and businesses regarding on-going initiatives and community planning.
- ▶ Align County infrastructure planning with economic development priorities outlined in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.
- ▶ Promote coordination among the many school, library, and fire protection districts in the County to ensure residents and businesses receive high quality services in an efficient and cost-effective manner.
- ▶ Maintain open dialogue with local municipalities in order to ensure coordinated planning and the reduction of duplicative efforts.
- ▶ Ensure the County government's financial stability through the development of a multi-year budgeting process, long-term capital improvement plan, and revenue generation estimator that can help prepare for a range of receipt levels.

COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE

Generally, the County's position on infrastructure is to 1) require development in unincorporated areas to rely on individual water and septic service and not utilize County infrastructure, and 2) coordinate with local communities to focus more intensive development in areas that can be served by municipal infrastructure. However, the community's interest in economic development that would provide increased tax revenue and employment may require County investment in new infrastructure.

Recommendations

In order to meet the County's goals for long-term economic development, elected officials and staff will be responsible for aligning policies, capital improvements, financial resources, incentives, and other tools. The following recommendations identify ways that infrastructure investment can be coordinated with these efforts in order to attain the County's vision as it relates to a number of relevant issues.

- ▶ Identify focused areas for employment-based office and industrial development, such as certain portions of the designated Economic Development Project Areas (EDPA's) or properties around the Morris Municipal Airport, and ensure that appropriate infrastructure systems are planned for.
- ▶ Coordinate with municipalities to determine excess capacities in their systems that could accommodate development in unincorporated areas.
- ▶ Establish necessary easements or acquire land that supports the development of infrastructure facilities or corridors.
- ▶ Work with utility providers to determine energy and telecommunications needs for various desired industries.
- ▶ Assess the viability of green infrastructure systems that would minimize the required capacity of facilities that clean and manage stormwater.
- ▶ Work closely with the Army Corps of Engineers to monitor and improve the conditions of the Illinois River that support shipping and distribution.
- ▶ Coordinate infrastructure improvements with anticipated roadway projects, especially along strategic corridors like IL 47, US 6, and Brisbin Road.



Dwight Fire Department - Fire Truck

PUBLIC SAFETY

Police & Fire

Grundy County residents are provided with police and fire protection by a variety of districts and departments. The County's central law enforcement provider is the Grundy County Sheriff's Department, which patrols unincorporated areas as well as several municipalities that have contracts for service. In municipalities without contracts for service, a local police force delivers public safety services.

Fourteen different fire departments or districts provide fire protection to Grundy County residents. Nine of these departments or districts are located within the County's borders, with the remaining five operating from facilities in neighboring LaSalle, Livingston, Kankakee, and Will Counties. Fire protection providers include:

- ▶ Allen Township Volunteer Fire Protection District
- ▶ Braceville Fire Department
- ▶ Braidwood Fire Protection District
- ▶ Coal City Fire Protection District
- ▶ Dwight Fire Protection District
- ▶ Gardner Fire Protection District
- ▶ Mazon Community Fire Department
- ▶ Minooka Fire Department
- ▶ Morris Fire Protection and Ambulance District
- ▶ Reddick Fire Protection District
- ▶ South Wilmington Volunteer Fire Department
- ▶ Seneca Fire Protection and Ambulance District
- ▶ Verona-Kinsman Fire District
- ▶ Equistar Fire Department

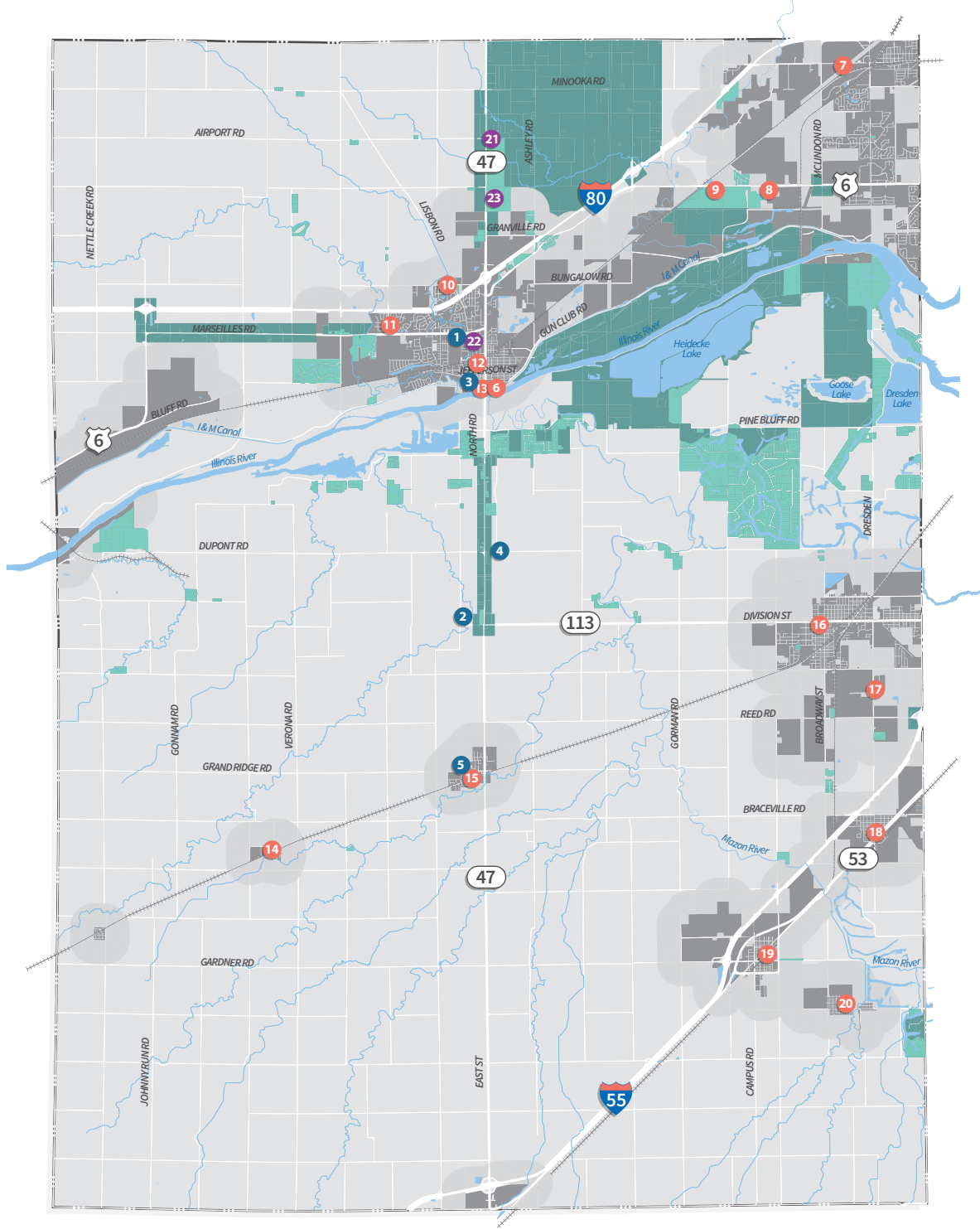
Facilities

The County's fourteen fire protection districts operate out of twenty-one different facilities of varying size and quality. More detailed information on these facilities can be found in **Chapter 3.6** of this document.

Recommendations

It is important that essential public services that affect the health and safety of Grundy County residents are properly planned and coordinated. Specifically, the County should:

- ▶ Work with the Sheriff's Department and local fire protection districts to identify potential physical barriers that inhibit responsiveness and develop strategies or capital improvements that improve connectivity.
 - ▶ Coordinate all future residential planning efforts within unincorporated areas with the appropriate fire district or department. This will ensure that the district is able to plan appropriately for any future growth provide proper staffing and facilities.
 - ▶ Assess the specific needs to emerging local industry to determine if they require unique fire or police protection services, and work with local employers to support the funding of those services.
 - ▶ Continually assess service gaps and align fire protection jurisdictions with changing County needs, based on population growth or decline.
- ▶ Coordinate all County-wide emergency planning efforts, such as flooding or tornado relief, with local districts and departments.
 - ▶ Support the development of new public safety facilities in unincorporated areas if they enhance responsiveness or service quality to County residents.
 - ▶ Coordinate transportation infrastructure improvements with affected public safety entities.
 - ▶ Promote communication between fire departments and districts to ensure that all new facilities provide efficient response, reduce any service gaps or overlapping jurisdictions, and improve ISO insurance classifications.



Community Facilities Plan: Government & Public Safety Facilities

- | Growth Areas | Government Facilities | Public Safety Facilities | Other Facilities |
|---|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Existing Development Areas ■ Future Development Areas ■ Managed Growth Areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 County Administration Building 2 County Highway Dept. / Grundy County Transit / 911 Call Center 3 County Courthouse 4 County Animal Control Dept. / County Highway Department 5 Illinois Central School Bus / Grundy Transit System | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 County Sheriff's Department 7 Minooka Fire District 8 Minooka Fire District 9 Equistar Fire Department 10 11 Morris Fire Protection & Ambulance District 12 13 Morris Fire Protection & Ambulance District | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14 Verona-Kinsman Fire Department 15 Mazon Fire District 16 17 Coal City Fire Department 18 Braceville Fire Department 19 Gardner Fire Protection District 20 South Wilmington Volunteer Fire Department |
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21 Morris Municipal Airport - Morris Municipal Airport - James R. Washburn Field 22 Morris Hospital 23 Grundy County Fairgrounds |

EDUCATION

Primary & Secondary Education

K-12 education in Grundy County is provided by twenty-one different school districts: twelve grade school districts, 6 high school districts, and 3 districts with both grade school and high school offerings. Some of these districts are self-contained within Grundy County, while others extend across County lines into neighboring Livingston, LaSalle, Kendall, Kankakee, and Will Counties. The twenty-one districts are:

- ▶ Dwight Township High School District #230
- ▶ Gardner South Wilmington High School District #73
- ▶ Minooka Community High School District #111
- ▶ Morris Community High School District #101
- ▶ Newark Community High School District #18
- ▶ Seneca Township High School District #160
- ▶ Coal City Community Unit School District #1
- ▶ Hirscher Community School District #2
- ▶ Grundy County Special Education Cooperative
- ▶ Braceville School District #75
- ▶ Dwight Common School District #232
- ▶ Gardner Grade School District #72C
- ▶ Lisbon Community Consolidated School District #90

- ▶ Mazon-Verona-Kinsman Elementary School District #2C
- ▶ Miller Township Community Consolidated School District #210
- ▶ Minooka Community Consolidated School District #201
- ▶ Morris School District #54
- ▶ Nettle Creek Community Consolidated School District #24C
- ▶ Saratoga Community Consolidated School District #60C
- ▶ Seneca Community Consolidated School District #170
- ▶ South Wilmington Community Consolidated School District #74

A County map with the jurisdictional boundaries of each school district can be found in **Chapter 3.6** of this document.

Facilities

Aggregately, these districts educate roughly 17,000 students in thirty-nine different facilities. In some cases, Grundy County residents are educated in facilities outside of the County; in others, neighboring County residents are educated in facilities within Grundy County. A complete list of all thirty-nine facilities, as well as their reported conditions, can be found in Chapter 3 Section 6 of this document.

High School students looking to begin a career in vocational trades, such as cosmetology and welding, can take classes during their junior and senior years at the Grundy Area Vocational Center in Morris.

Demographics

Demographic projections summarized in Chapter 3 Section 5 of this document indicate that Grundy County will become more diverse over the next five to ten years. By 2018, roughly 10% of Grundy County residents are expected to identify as being of Hispanic ethnicity. In other communities where this shift has already occurred, education providers have faced challenges related to servicing students with unique language needs or cultural expectations. The County should work with local school districts to anticipate this change in demographics and establish programs and services that respond to language and cultural barriers between teachers, students, and parents.

Growth & Funding Issues

Throughout the planning outreach process, Grundy County residents and stakeholders routinely expressed pride in their school districts. Local schools were reported to be excellent, with dedicated teachers providing quality education in a safe environment. However, growth and funding issues continue to be significant hurdles for the County's schools moving forward.

Between 2000 and 2010, Grundy County grew by 33.4%, from 37,535 to 50,063 residents. Many of these new residents were families with children. This rapid growth, according to District Superintendents surveyed during the planning process, required some districts to begin immediate facility improvements and expansions that resulted in a fair amount of long-term debt.

Districts also noted that low impact fees and declining or stagnant home values has resulted in financial strain, as the majority of school funding in Illinois comes from local property taxes. Many districts reported that the cost of educating new pupils continues to rise in the face of declining or stagnant property tax receipts and limited state funding. A policy debate is currently underway within the County regarding a 1% sales tax increase that would help pay for school infrastructure improvements.

Higher Education

Grundy County does not currently contain its own two- or four-year college or university. Most of the County falls within the Joliet Community College District, which provides the Joliet Junior College facility in Joliet. A small western portion of the County is covered by the Illinois Valley Community College District, which offers the Illinois Valley Community College in Oglesby.

Facilities

Grundy County contains only one higher education facility. In 2001, Joliet Junior College opened a satellite campus in Morris, the Morris Education Center. Currently, it only offers a limited number of classes for college credit. The Morris Education Center is a 4,900 square foot facility that was opened in 2001 and is a satellite location of the Joliet Junior College in Joliet. It sits at 1715 North Division Street in Morris, and contains a state-of-the-art computer lab and three semi-Smart classrooms. Programming includes for-credit college courses, General Education Development (GED) courses, and English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. Currently, the Center offers only a limited number of classes for college credit towards an associate's degree.

Developing a College or University in Grundy County

Grundy County has the lowest college attainment level of any of the Chicago metropolitan area counties. At 19.1%, it is less than half that of DuPage County (45.9%) and nearly 10% less than DeKalb County, the county with the next closest level of college attainment.

High school graduation rates within Grundy County are on par with that of other counties. Thus, the low college attainment rate may be attributed to a lack of higher education offerings within Grundy County. Residents report that local high school graduates either move away to attend college elsewhere (and do not return) or decide to stay and not pursue college given a lack of local options.

With an economy that is global in nature and increasingly requires a college degree, the County's low attainment rate, if left unchanged, could pose a roadblock to further economic growth and expansion. Additionally, private sector employers within the County have indicated that their existing workforce is aging, and that a significant portion is expected to retire within the next 10 years. Without a qualified workforce, these jobs will either remain unfilled or be filled by non-County residents.

To this end, Grundy County officials have made developing an institution of higher-education within the County a high priority. In the 2011-2016 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, the document called for "foster[ing] relationships with regional 4-year institutions," specifically "discuss[ing] potential satellite campuses with regional universities in Grundy County" and "promot[ing] and utiliz[ing] existing Joliet Junior College partnerships with Southern Illinois and Illinois State Universities." This Comprehensive Plan endorses that goal, and recognizes the need of the County to support and potentially position its land for the development of such a location.

COLLEGE ATTAINMENT (25+ YEARS OF AGE) CHICAGO METROPOLITAN AREA COUNTIES (2008-2012 AVG.)

County	Percent with a Bachelors Degree or Higher
DuPage County	45.9%
Lake County	41.8%
Cook County	34.3%
Kendall County	34.2%
McHenry County	32.5%
Will County	32.1%
Kane County	31.9%
DeKalb County	29.0%
Grundy County	19.1%

Source: American Community Survey 2008-2012

Recommendations

Grundy County's role with regard to grade schools, high schools, and a potential higher education institution is one of support, partnership, and advocacy. To support and provide for educational needs of Grundy County, and to ensure that schools remain a valued asset for the community, the County should:

- ▶ Work with the Grundy County Economic Development Council and local industry leaders to attract a higher education institution to Grundy County. Any such development would likely occur within one of the County's municipalities and more intensive population centers. However, to the extent necessary, the County should work with municipalities and a future higher education provider to position unincorporated land for development of a new campus.
- ▶ Support consolidation of school districts, provided that any such a merger would increase educational quality for the County's children, save taxpayer dollars, and not unduly burden residents in any way.
- ▶ Ensure that the needs of any educational facilities located in unincorporated areas are being properly met. While the facility's structure would be maintained and funded by the school district, the County should ensure that the transportation network providing access to the school are safe and of a high quality. Currently, only one educational facility, Nettle Creek Elementary School, is located in the unincorporated portion of the County.
- ▶ Advocate for increased educational partnerships between the County's schools and the County's major employers. Potential linkages could include: mentoring, summer internships, school trips to local employers, integrated school curricula, and networking opportunities. This ensures students are aware of career paths within the County, as well as the skills necessary to obtain those jobs.
- ▶ Encourage any new school facility to locate within existing municipal boundaries. If the appropriate land cannot be secured within municipalities, the County should work with municipalities to re-zone land within the contiguous Municipal Growth Areas for such development.
- ▶ Coordinate all future residential planning efforts in unincorporated areas with the appropriate school district(s). This will ensure that the district is able to plan appropriately for any future enrollment growth, and provide proper staffing and facilities.
- ▶ Work with local school districts to identify demographic trends that may require new approaches to services or programs based on language or cultural needs.
- ▶ To the extent possible, work with school districts to identify new revenue streams or fee structures that can ensure adequate funding levels and quality infrastructure.

LIBRARIES

Districts & Facilities

Four library districts provide Grundy County residents with library services and educational programming. These four districts operate a total of six facilities, with three facilities located within Grundy County and three facilities sited outside of County lines. The County's library providers include:

- ▶ Coal City Public Library District
- ▶ Fossil Ridge Public Library
- ▶ Morris Area Public Library
- ▶ Three Rivers Public Library District

Throughout the outreach process, library officials routinely expressed a desire for greater space and resources, as well as better public transportation options to their locations. More information on these facilities, locations, and services can be found in **Chapter 3.6** of this document.

Recommendations

The County should work with the respective library providers to ensure that they have enough capacity to serve all current and potential future residents. Additionally, the Grundy Transit System should partner with libraries to actively publicize their transit services and ensure that youth, adults without vehicles, and the elderly are able to access library facilities safely and efficiently. The County should also work with libraries to identify and mitigate service gaps (e.g. areas where County residents are not a part of a library district) to ensure that all those who want to pursue learning and continuing education are able to do so.

HEALTH

Providers & Facilities

The County's largest health provider is the 89-bed Morris Hospital, located in Morris. In addition to its main campus, the organization also provides medical services in a variety of other centers throughout Grundy County and neighboring counties, including Braidwood, Channahon, Dwight, Gardner, Marseilles, Minooka, Morris, and Newark. The Grundy County Health Department also provides some limited public health and individual healthcare services, focusing on disease and disability prevention, food sanitation, potable water, sewage disposal, and preventative medicine. The Riverside Clinic in Coal City also provides medical services to County residents, including general care, audiology, neurosurgery, and a variety of diagnostic services.

More information on these facilities, locations, and services can be found in **Chapter 3.6** of this document.

Recommendations

The County should continue to work with healthcare providers to ensure they remain in the community and provide high-quality medical services. In addition, the County should work with other organizations to seek appropriate locations for specialized facilities and services for senior citizens, youth, and disadvantaged populations. The County should also ensure that the County Health Department's facilities are appropriately located and provide the necessary staffing and infrastructure for the medical and health services they provide.

IN MANY WAYS, THE PLANNING PROCESS HAS JUST BEGUN. ADOPTION OF THE NEW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN BEGINS A MUCH LONGER JOURNEY OF IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN'S RECOMMENDATIONS.

9.0



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

In this Chapter:

- ▶ Plan Administration
- ▶ Economic Development
- ▶ Parks and Open Space
- ▶ Transportation

The Comprehensive Plan sets forth a road map for growth and development within the County and acts as a “playbook” for County officials, staff, and local partners. It represents considerable effort on the part of the County staff, elected officials, community leaders, businesses and residents. However, in many ways, the planning process has just begun. Adoption of the new Comprehensive Plan is only the first step on a much longer journey of implementing the recommendations of the Plan. To assist the County in attaining its vision, this chapter identifies a series of policies or strategies aimed at implementation.

PLAN ADMINISTRATION

Plan administration involves the way the County uses the Comprehensive Plan to shape regulations, capital improvements, actions of County staff, and relationships with other entities in order to attain its vision. It also reinforces the importance of using the Plan as a reference for all decisions, and updating it regularly to reflect emerging opportunities and priorities.

Use the Plan on a Day-to-Day Basis

The Comprehensive Plan should become the County's official policy guide for land use, development, and community improvement. It is essential that the Plan be adopted and then be used on a day-to-day basis by County officials, boards, and staff to review and evaluate all proposals for improvement and development within the community in the years ahead.

Grundy County should provide a link to the Plan on the County's website and set aside several copies of the Plan for the general public to view in the County Administration Building. County staff should also meet with relevant Department heads and local municipal leaders to explain the key findings and goals of the Comprehensive Plan. Copies should be shared with the leaders of various municipalities and districts, such as fire, parks, and schools.

To further educate the public about the plan, the County should:

- ▶ Make copies of the Plan available on-line for free and provide hard copies at the County Administration Building for purchase;
- ▶ Provide assistance to the public in explaining the Plan and its relationship to private and public development projects and other proposals, as appropriate;
- ▶ Assist the County Board in the day-to-day administration, interpretation and application of the Plan;
- ▶ Maintain a list of current possible amendments, issues or needs which may be a subject of change, addition, or deletion from the Comprehensive Plan;
- ▶ Draft a summary document that includes key recommendations that can be distributed to residents, developers, businesses, and other interested parties, and;
- ▶ Coordinate Plan implementation with local municipal officials.

Update the Unified Development Ordinance & Other Regulations

The Comprehensive Plan is not a regulatory document. However, it should be used to inform decisions related to development regulations and approval. Zoning is an important tool for implementing planning policy. It establishes the types of uses allowed on specific properties, and prescribes the overall character and intensity of development to be permitted. Adoption of the new Comprehensive Plan should be followed by a review and update of the County's various development controls including zoning, signage, subdivision ordinances, stormwater ordinance, and other related codes and ordinances. It is essential that all development controls be consistent with and complement the new Comprehensive Plan.

Develop a Capital Improvements Program

Grundy County's financial resources will always be limited, and public dollars must be spent wisely. Following approval of the Comprehensive Plan, the County should develop a Capital Improvements Program (CIP). A CIP is a comprehensive schedule of prioritized improvement projects, typically extending over a five-year period. In creating a CIP, the County can ensure that it appropriately implements the recommendations of both the Comprehensive Plan, the Transportation Priorities Plan, and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). As the County continues to invest in infrastructure to support the Economic Development Project Areas (EDPAs), a Capital Improvements Plan will become increasingly important.

A CIP typically schedules the implementation of a range of specific projects, particularly the upgrading of County facilities and roadways. A CIP also assigns priorities to identified projects and includes cost estimates and potential funding sources. As the County develops and implements its own Capital Improvement Plan, County staff should coordinate with municipalities, service districts, and other community facility providers to ensure investment is occurring in a logical and strategic manner. The CIP should be regularly updated in conjunction with updates to the Comprehensive Plan.

Develop a Detailed Action Program

The Comprehensive Plan covers a broad range of issues and actions. As such, it cannot include the detail necessary for each department or employee to understand their role in implementing the Plan. As a follow up to the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, each department should develop a detailed action plan that describes specific steps for implementing individual recommendations, the parties responsible, potential partners, level of priority, timeline, and any potential costs or funding sources. This, in conjunction with annual updates to the Capital Improvement Plan, will provide the guidance to ensure that short-term actions lead to long-term implementation.

Update the Plan on a Regular Basis

The Comprehensive Plan is a living document. The Plan should be adapted as necessary as the County successfully completes recommendations, new issues emerge, or community priorities change. The County should regularly review the plan every three to five years. Ideally, this should dovetail with the preparation of the County's budget and Capital Improvements Program.

Enhance Communication with the Public

Implementing the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan requires the support and participation of municipalities and the broader Grundy County community. Successfully communicating with municipal officials, residents, businesses, and property owners should be a priority of the County.

The County should prepare an executive summary of the new Comprehensive Plan, post it on the County website, and distribute it in the community. This document should include the Land Use Map, goals and objectives, as well as other key takeaways. It is imperative that all municipalities, businesses, and property owners be familiar with the Plan's major recommendations and its "vision" for the future.

Additional techniques for responding promptly to public questions and concerns regarding planning should be developed. For example, the County might consider developing a regular newsletter keeping the public abreast of planning issues.

Promote Cooperation with Municipalities & Key Stakeholders

The Comprehensive Plan identifies many policy areas where coordination is necessary between the County and its sixteen municipalities. One important issue requiring cooperation is zoning and development within Municipal Growth Areas. The Comprehensive Plan identifies general policies for these areas, but specific parcel-by-parcel zoning and development regulations should be established by the County in close coordination with local municipalities. County staff should regularly meet with representatives from area communities to discuss implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, and to best align County and municipal policies, to the extent possible.

Coordinating Strategies & Approaches with Municipalities

There are a number of local incentives available and administered through each individual municipality in the County. Local incentives include such things as Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Special Service Areas (SSA), local sales and property tax abatements and site improvement programs. While those incentives apply to projects or initiatives within the respective cities and villages, the County can also partner with and assist in incentivizing development within municipalities as well as unincorporated areas. Where appropriate, Grundy County should take an active role in ensuring that all actions, whether municipal or county, ensure the strength of the entire region, not just selected areas.

Partner Organizations

Grundy County is home to an impressive array of non-profits and community groups that can help play a vital role in implementing the Comprehensive Plan. Rather than duplicating efforts, the County should continue to partner with and support these organizations to achieve the shared goals of the County. When seeking to implement the recommendations contained in this Plan, the County should utilize the resources provided by these partner organizations.

Grundy County Economic Development Council

The Grundy County Economic Development Council is a not-for-profit formed in 1994 that fosters relationships between businesses, labor, community, and education sectors to provide a strong and successful business environment within Grundy County. They play a lead role in helping County officials devise and implement economic development policies, and serve as the primary resource for business information, such as demographics, incentives, and property listings.

Community Foundation of Grundy County

The Community Foundation of Grundy County was created in 1999 and was originally named the Morris Community Foundation. Its initial goal was to look at issues that local governments and charities could not or would not address. Over the past decade, the Foundation has grown immensely, from a volunteer organization with no paid staff to a staffed organization with nearly \$5 million in assets.

The Foundation does not administer its own direct service programs (e.g. running a homeless shelter, implementing disaster relief), but instead identifies community issues, brings together stakeholders to address them, and issues small grants to organizations throughout the community. The Foundation also oversees a half-a-million dollar endowment that benefits such organizations as the Morris Hospital, Morris Area Public Library, Morris Family YMCA, and various religious, music, and youth organizations.

Upper Illinois River Valley Development Authority (UIRVDA)

The Upper Illinois River Valley Development Authority (UIRVDA) is a general development agency serving the Counties of Grundy, Bureau, Kane, Kendall, LaSalle, Marshall, McHenry and Putnam. The UIRVDA can issue ten- to thirty-year Taxable Revenue Bonds to any commercial, industrial, transportation, or recreational project that is not eligible for tax-exempt financing. Proceeds from the bonds can be used to purchase land, buildings, and equipment or to construct new or renovate existing facilities.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION

One of the major goals of the Comprehensive Plan is to position the County and its workforce to compete and succeed in the global economy. Throughout the document, the Plan has identified a wide range of strategies and policies that can increase business growth and economic investment. This section highlights some of the key overarching policies and potential resources and funding for implementation.

Enhance Workforce Development

Grundy County's higher educational attainment rates are the lowest of all Chicago metropolitan area counties. To help residents increase obtainment of a college degree, the Plan recommends workforce development programming and working with the Grundy County Economic Development Council and local industry leaders to attract a higher education institution to Grundy County. This would also serve to provide a local source of employment and internships for businesses locating to the County and its municipalities.

Attract a Higher Education Provider

Currently, the only higher education facility within Grundy County is Joliet Junior College's Morris Education Center. The presence of academic institutions not only provides a means of improving the quality of life of area residents, it also further enhances workforce development initiatives. The County should work with the leadership of area colleges and universities to explore the potential of bringing a satellite facility or campus to the County. This could involve the creation of a task force consisting of county and municipal leaders as well as members of the business community.

Strengthening County Incentives & Infrastructure

The Plan recommends specifically focusing County resources on attracting and retaining development in and around the Economic Development Project Areas (EDPAs), Morris Municipal Airport, and a proposed new office and light industrial district. This can be achieved through a combination of business incentive programs, as well as a strengthening of the infrastructure needed to operate industrial or commercial enterprises.

County Economic Development Programs and Resources

The following highlights programs and resources that are or could be utilized by the County to further facilitate economic development opportunities.

Economic Development Project Areas (EDPA)

An Economic Development Project Area (EDPA) can be utilized to attract new industrial development and also help existing businesses expand. EDPA's are specifically designed to lower the cost of doing business including assistance with construction cost, relocation expenses, property tax, job training, site preparation and infrastructure. The County currently has two EDPA Zones. EDPA 1 consists of over 12,000 acres of land and is situated within the communities of Minooka, Channahon and Morris. EDPA 2 is approximately 2,000 acres and is located just south of EDPA 1.

Property Tax Abatement

Both existing and prospective businesses can apply for three years of property tax abatement to offset expenses and facilitate investment. Eligible companies can receive an abatement of up to 75% during the first fully assessed tax year, 50% the second year and 25% the third year to start a new project or expand an existing business. Grundy County also offers a four and five-year property tax abatement at 50% each year to companies deemed as "high impact" or having a significant positive impacts on the area's economy, including job creation.

Job Training Programs

The Grundy County Economic Development Council also has a number of programs designed to assist companies that create or increase employment opportunities. Companies can access a state-funded program for the training and retraining of an existing workforce available through Joliet Junior College Institute for Economic Technology.

State Economic Development Programs & Resources

The State of Illinois offers many programs and funding sources designed to attract and retain business and jobs in the State. These include financing assistance, loans, tax credits, grants, and job training. Some of the programs that enhance or complement County and local economic development efforts are outlined below. This is not intended to detail all programs available, but rather highlight those that may be utilized to incentivize economic development in the County and its municipalities.

State of Illinois EDGE Tax Credit Program

The State of Illinois EDGE (Economic Development for a Growing Economy) program is designed to offer a special tax incentive to encourage companies to locate or expand operations in Illinois when there is active consideration of a competing location in another State. The program can provide tax credits to qualifying companies, equal to the amount of state income taxes withheld from the salaries of employees in the newly created jobs. The non-refundable credits can be used against corporate income taxes to be paid over a period not to exceed 10 years. To qualify a company must provide documentation that attests to the fact of competition among a competing state, and agree to make an investment of at least \$5 million in capital improvements and create a minimum of 25 new full time jobs in Illinois.

State of Illinois Employer Training Investment Program

The State of Illinois Employer Training Investment Program (ETIP) helps keep Illinois workers' skills in pace with new technologies and business practices, which, in turn, helps businesses increase productivity, reduce costs, improve quality and boost competitiveness. ETIP grants can reimburse new or expanding companies for up to 50 percent of the cost of training their employees. Trainees must be employed by the company prior to implementation of the training program. Instructors may be plant workers, public educators, private consultants, or others possessing the required expertise.

Industrial Revenue Bonds

The Illinois Finance Authority (IFA) issues tax-exempt Industrial Development Revenue Bonds (IRB's) on behalf of manufacturing companies to finance the acquisition of fixed assets including land, buildings and equipment. Bond proceeds may be used for new construction or renovation, as well as the purchase of new equipment.

Illinois Small Business Job Creation Tax Credit

The Illinois Small Business Job Creation Tax Credit provides a tax credit for employers who hire new, full-time Illinois employees. Employers can begin claiming the credit after the job has been maintained for a year.

Business Development Public Infrastructure Program (BDPIP)

The BDPIP program is designed to provide grants to units of local government for public improvements on behalf of businesses undertaking a major expansion or relocation project that will result in substantial private investment and the creation and/or retention of a large amount of Illinois jobs. The infrastructure improvements must be made for public benefit and on public property and must directly result in the creation or retention of private sector jobs. The local government must demonstrate clear need for financial assistance to undertake the improvements. Grant eligibility and amounts are determined by the amount of investment and job creation or retention involved.

Community Development Assistance Program for Economic Development (CDAP-ED)

The CDAP-ED program is a federally funded program that is designed to provide grants to units of local government for economic development activities related to business retention and or expansion opportunities. The program is targeted to assist low-to-moderate income people by creating job opportunities and improving the quality of their living environment. Local governments qualifying to receive grant funds can then make these funds available in the form of loans to businesses locating or expanding in the area. Grant funds may also be used for improvements to public infrastructure that directly support a specific economic development project.

Illinois Department of Agriculture AgriFIRST Grant Program

A large percentage of undeveloped land within the County is agricultural. The AgriFIRST program is designed to provide grants to persons and agribusinesses for the purpose of developing projects that enhance the value of agricultural products or expand agribusiness in Illinois. Grant funds can be used for such things as technical assistance, feasibility studies/competitive assessments and consulting or productivity services and construction related activities.

Large Business Development Program (LBDP)

The LBDP program is designed to provide grants to businesses undertaking a major expansion or relocation project that will result in substantial private investment and the creation and/or retention of a large number of jobs. Funds available through the program may be used by large businesses for bondable business activities, including financing the purchase of land or buildings, building construction or renovation, and certain types of machinery and equipment. Grant eligibility and amounts are determined by the amount of investment and job creation or retention involved.

IDOT Economic Development Program (EDP)

Administered through the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the EDP program is designed to provide state assistance to local governments for highway improvements and access to new or expanding industrial distribution and tourism development projects. The state may provide up to 50 percent matching funds for eligible public roadway related construction and engineering items. Projects involving private roadways, retail development, office parks, government facilities, and schools/universities are not eligible for funding.

PARKS & OPEN SPACE IMPLEMENTATION

The County should encourage municipalities to expand existing local park facilities if they do not adequately meet the needs of residents. Over the long-term, the County should evaluate the need for designated parkland and protected open spaces at the County level. This system could take a variety of forms and functions, depending on the needs and resources of the County at that time. It could be recreationally focused, such as a County Parks Department, or environmentally focused, such as a County Conservation District or County Forest Preserve that protects land from development. Regardless of the ultimate approach, if any, the following resources should be considered to assist with the development and maintenance of an open space system.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) administers several grants-in-aid programs to help counties, municipalities, service districts, and other local agencies provide public outdoor recreation areas and protect open space. The programs operate on a cost reimbursement basis to a government or not-for-profit organization. Local governments can receive one grant per program per year, with no restriction on the number of local governments that can be funded for a given location. IDNR Grants include: Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD); Boat Access Area Development (BAAD); the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF); and the Illinois Trails Grants Program.

OSLAD

The OSLAD program awards up to 50% of project costs up to a maximum of \$750,000 for acquisition and \$400,000 for development/renovation of such recreational facilities such as playgrounds, outdoor nature interpretive areas, campgrounds and fishing piers, park roads and paths, and beaches. IDNR administers five grant programs to provide financial assistance for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of trails that are used for public recreation uses.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

LWCF grants are available to counties, municipalities, and school districts to be used for outdoor recreation projects. Projects require a 55% match. All funded projects are taken under perpetuity by the National Park Service and must only be used for outdoor recreational purposes.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

The Recreational Trails Program is a federally funded grant program for trail-related land acquisition, development, or restoration. The grants are awarded based on the results of a competitive scoring process and the application's suitability under MAP-21. A minimum 20% match is required by the applicant. Grants are to be used for motorized or non-motorized trail development, renovation, and/or preservation. All projects must be maintained for 25 years. Eligible applicants include municipalities, counties, schools, non-profits, and for-profit businesses.

Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Stewardship Program (NRCS – CSP)

The County should seek to protect streams and creeks through permanent methods such as conservation easements, nature preserve dedication, and/or public acquisition. While incentives such as tax abatements can be used, the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) offered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can be an effective tool in promoting conservation and securing areas for preservation.

The CSP is a voluntary program that encourages agricultural property owners to undertake conservation activities and expand or improve upon resource management. CSP participants are reimbursed through annual or supplemental payments for a wide range of enhancements. Some of the more typical enhancements used to establish preserved areas include riparian buffers, filter strips, prairie restoration, and forest buffers.

TRANSPORTATION IMPLEMENTATION

Access to efficient and high-quality major roadways is a key operational factor for residents and existing and potential users of the Economic Development Project Areas. The County should continue to pursue improvements to major County roads and enhance connections to interstates, and continue to implement recommended transportation policies found in the 2011-2016 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and 2013 Transportation Priorities Plan.

MAP-21

In July 2012, President Obama signed the “Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century” (MAP-21) bill into law. This two-year transportation reauthorization bill replaces the “Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users” (SAFETEA-LU), which expired in September 2009. The goal of MAP-21 is to modernize and reform the current transportation system to help create jobs, accelerate economic recovery, and build a foundation for long-term prosperity.

The following discussion summarizes grant programs covered under MAP-21 that could be utilized by the County to make enhancements to local transportation infrastructure, including roads, bridges, sidewalks, and trails.

Safe Routes to School

The SRTS program has provided funding for the planning, design, and construction of infrastructure related projects that will substantially improve the ability of students to walk and bike to school, including:

- ▶ Sidewalk improvements;
- ▶ Traffic calming and speed reduction improvements;
- ▶ Pedestrian and bicycle-crossing improvements;
- ▶ On-street bicycle facilities;
- ▶ Off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities;
- ▶ Secure bicycle parking facilities; and
- ▶ Traffic diversion improvements in the vicinity of schools.

Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP)

The Illinois Department of Transportation administers the ITEP and has funded projects including bicycle and pedestrian facilities, streetscaping, landscaping, historic preservation, and projects that control or remove outdoor advertising. In the past federal reimbursement has been available for up to 50 % of the costs of right-of-way and easement acquisition and 80% of the cost for preliminary engineering, utility relocations, construction engineering, and construction costs.

Surface Transportation Program (STP)

In the past, these funds have been allocated to coordinating regional councils, typically a Council of Mayors, to be used for all roadway and roadway related items. The urbanized parts of Grundy County are included in the Will County Council of Mayors. Projects in this funding category have required a local sponsor and have been selected based on, among other factors, a ranking scale that takes into account the regional benefits provided by the project among other factors.

STP funds have been used to fund a variety of project types including roadway rehabilitation, reconstruction, and restoration; widening and adding lanes; intersection improvements; traffic signal improvements; and green infrastructure funding.

IDOT Rail Freight Program (RFP)

Administered through the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the RFP program is designed to provide capital assistance to communities, railroads and shippers to preserve and improve rail freight service in Illinois. The primary role of the program is to facilitate investments in rail service by serving as a link between interested parties and channeling government funds to projects that achieve statewide economic development. IDOT will generally provide low interest loans to finance rail improvements and, in some cases, provide grants. The focus is on projects with the greatest potential for improving access to markets and maintaining transportation cost savings, and where state participation will leverage private investments to foster permanent solutions to rail service problems. A benefit/cost ratio is used to evaluate potential rail freight projects.