

# 1: INTRODUCTION

The management and review of the county’s development patterns, land uses, transportation network, natural resources, and other county-wide systems are imperative to maintaining the character and quality of life in Nicollet County. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to serve as a decision-making tool for county residents, stakeholders, staff, and elected and appointed officials regarding development throughout Nicollet County. Property owners should reference this document for a review of existing conditions and the county’s defined goals and policies for future growth and development. Appointed and elected officials will refer to this document regularly as decisions are made to update zoning ordinances, modify regulations, and guide policy change. Overall, the plan is intended to assist the county with decision-making that supports its desired vision for the next 20 years. The plan update supports the county’s overall mission, vision, and core values. Regular review and updates of the plan should be completed to ensure that the plan continues to support these efforts.

### NICOLLET COUNTY MISSION

Providing efficient services with innovation and accountability.

### NICOLLET COUNTY VISION

Setting the standard for providing superior and efficient county government services through leadership, accountability, and innovation to a growing and diverse society.

### NICOLLET COUNTY CORE VALUES

<b>Integrity</b>	Our decisions and actions display a consistent commitment to moral and ethical values.
<b>Accountability</b>	To account for our activities, accept responsibility for them, and to disclose the results in a transparent manner.
<b>Leadership</b>	Having a vision, sharing that vision, and inspiring others to support our vision while creating their own.
<b>Innovation</b>	Our transformation of an idea to a service that creates value.
<b>Efficiency</b>	Our ability to do things well, successfully, and without waste.

## Purpose of a Comprehensive Plan

Minnesota Statutes Section 394.21 provides Minnesota counties with the authority to carry out county planning and zoning activities for the purpose of promoting health, safety, morals, and general welfare. A Comprehensive Plan serves as the basis for official controls, including land use ordinances and official maps. The Comprehensive Plan defines goals and policies that can be used to inform updates to the county’s land use tools and how those tools are implemented.

While Minnesota Statutes Section 394.23 requires the completion of a Comprehensive Plan to inform land use and zoning decisions, the required content of the plan is limited to a discussion of land use recommendations and a review of existing natural resources. The county has the opportunity to include long-range planning and policy development for any other systems that may provide additional resources for the county’s long-range decision-making. This may include elements such as transportation and parks and trails.

## **Comprehensive Plan Update Process**

There are no statutory requirements that dictate the timing or schedule for Comprehensive Plan updates for Nicollet County. However, regular plan updates provide an opportunity to ensure that policies and recommendations respond to current trends and public input. This Comprehensive Plan is an update to the county’s 1985 Land Use Plan. The update process was guided by a Project Management Team (“PMT”) comprised of county stakeholders. Public engagement was used throughout the planning process to understand the public’s vision and goals for the future of Nicollet County.

### **Project Management Team**

The PMT was the guiding body behind the Comprehensive Plan update. The group was made up of individuals that represented different topic and geographic areas (e.g., agriculture, cities, and townships), and provided varying opinions. PMT members were tasked with reviewing deliverables, guiding the development of goals and recommendations, and promoting public engagement activities.

### **Public Engagement Activities**

The goals defined in the Comprehensive Plan were updated in response to public input received during the planning process. Four targeted engagement activities were utilized to inform the development of the plan. A summary of input received from these four events is included in Appendix A.

<p><b>Online Community Survey</b></p>	<p>An online community survey was used in the early phases of the process to collect input from the public regarding issues and opportunities for the future of Nicollet County. The survey questions were aimed at the county, along with targeted questions for each of the plan’s four elements. Input gathered throughout this exercise was used to inform the update of the plan’s goals and recommendations.</p>
<p><b>Early Public Open Houses</b></p>	<p>Three public open houses were also held early in the planning process to introduce the community to the Comprehensive Plan update, and to gather initial input about the future of the county. Each open house included a presentation with an overview of the planning process, followed by group tabletop exercises that collected feedback about the desired future direction of the county, directly from residents. The information gathered at these meetings was also used to inform the update of the plan’s goals and recommendations.</p>
<p><b>Focus Groups</b></p>	<p>Focus groups were used midway through the planning process to gather additional information, and to test ideas and recommendations specific to each plan element. A total of three focus groups were held – Land Use, Transportation, and Parks and Trails/Natural Resources. A defined list of stakeholders was invited to participate in each focus group. The information gathered during the focus group meetings was used to refine the plan analysis, recommendations, and implementation actions.</p>
<p><b>Public Plan Review and Board Adoption</b></p>	<p>Due to the unforeseen Covid-19 pandemic, Nicollet County moved forward with a public review process of the Final Comprehensive Plan that included a public hearing with the Planning and Zoning Commission and the County Board, respectively. Following the completion of the Final-Draft Comprehensive Plan.</p>



## Chapter 4 – Land Use

This chapter is the first of the plan elements within the Comprehensive Plan. Existing land use tools and regulations are discussed throughout the chapter, followed by recommendations and considerations for future land use decisions. As updates are made to the county’s land use tools, this chapter should be referenced to ensure that decisions align with the county’s long-range vision.

## Chapter 5 – Transportation

This chapter provides a review of existing conditions within the county’s roadway system and future considerations. The chapter is not intended to serve as a complete transportation plan, but includes a review of transportation elements that should be considered in developing a county transportation plan.

## Chapter 6 – Natural Resources

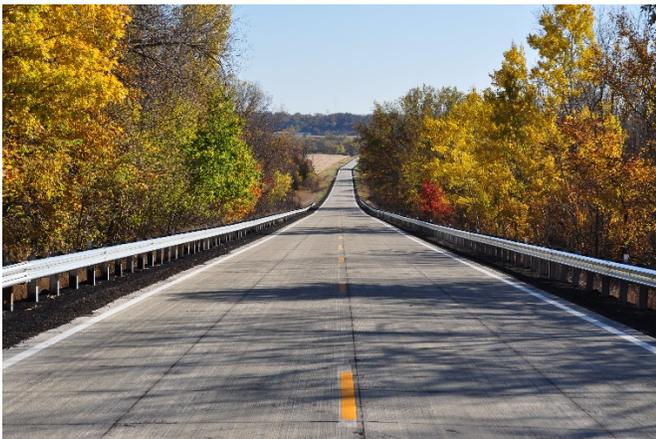
This chapter provides an overview of existing natural resources within Nicollet County. These elements are an important part of the county’s fabric and quality of life. This chapter reviews existing resources that are available for recreational use and that contribute to the character of Nicollet County, along with the use of these resources for services. Drinking water, aggregate mining, productive soils, and renewable energy are all examples of uses of these natural resources that must be balanced with preservation efforts.

## Chapter 7 – Parks and Trails

This chapter is the final plan element chapter. Like natural resources, the county’s parks and trails system contributes to the quality of life and character of Nicollet County. This chapter highlights existing facilities that provide recreational and natural uses in the county.

## Chapter 8 – Implementation

The final chapter of the Comprehensive Plan provides a summary of the potential actions that can be completed to implement the plan. These activities range from the continuation of current practices, to the development of follow up studies. This chapter should be referred to on a regular basis to identify tasks that can help the county make progress towards its goals.



*Nicollet County Transportation System*



*Nicollet County Natural Resources System*