



City of
Blue Earth

“the earth so rich the city grows”

Vision of the City 2030

Blue Earth Comprehensive Plan

August 19, 2019

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Amending the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan tries to anticipate the future of Blue Earth. Some conditions will be addressed by the Plan; other changes may be unexpected or even beyond the scope of the Plan. Responding to these changes may require amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan should not be amended capriciously. The care that was given to the creation of this plan must also be applied to any amendment.

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan may take several forms:

- Changes in the map or categories of the Land Use element.
- Changes in other elements of the Plan.
- Plans and other studies that become part of the comprehensive plan.
- Updating of entire sections of the Plan.
- Revisions related to major geographic sections of the community.

Amendments to the Plan may originate from the Planning Commission, City Council or another party with a vested interest in effected property. Adoption of amendments, however, can only be accomplished by City Council resolution. All amendments are subject to the same public hearing and three-fifths vote requirements as the adoption of the original plan. Council initiated amendments, however, may not be adopted until the Council has received a recommendation from the Planning Commission, or until 60 days have elapsed from the date of submission to the Planning Commission.

Modifying Land Use Controls

State Law requires that the Comprehensive Plan contain guidelines for the timing and sequence of the adoption of official controls necessary to ensure planned, orderly, and staged development and redevelopment consistent with the land use plan. Official controls may include ordinances establishing zoning, subdivision controls, site plan regulations, sanitary codes, building codes and official maps.

Zoning Regulations

State Law views zoning regulations as a critical tool for implementing the Comprehensive Plan. Minnesota Statutes, Section 462.356 states: "...the planning agency [Planning Commission] shall study and propose to the governing body [City Council] reasonable and practicable means for putting the plan or sections of the plan into effect. Subject to the limitations of the following sections, such means include, but are not limited to, zoning regulations, for the subdivision of land, an official map..." The City has adopted zoning regulations (Chapter 9 of the

City Code) for the purpose of carrying out the policies and goals of the land use element of the Comprehensive Plan. The application of zoning districts and the specific regulations must support the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. Adopting an updated Comprehensive Plan should immediately be followed by a review and modification of the zoning ordinance.

In a broader sense, this review of the zoning ordinance should examine the following items

- The regulations for each zoning district should be reviewed to determine if they fit with the intent of the Comprehensive Plan. Zoning districts should be examined in relationship to land use designations. Changes in zoning districts will be needed to match zoning with land use.
- Rezone property to a zoning district compatible with a land use plan category.
- Develop an interim strategy to address current use situations as they relate to long term objectives. It is essential, however, to remember that zoning regulations control the use of land. If Blue Earth chooses a strategy that does not immediately create consistency, then the City must have a clear strategy for when changes are made.
- Keep current zoning in place until such time as the use terminates or redevelopment is initiated.

Nonconforming Uses

Changes in zoning districts may create nonconforming uses. Such uses occur when the existing land use is not allowed within the zoning district. In most cases, when these situations arise as the result of a new Comprehensive Plan, the goal is not to influence an immediate change in property use. Instead, the objective is to guide future investments to achieve the outcomes desired by the Comprehensive Plan.

A review of the zoning regulations will provide the context for an evaluation of the nonconforming provisions. This evaluation, in turn, may point to Ordinance changes that will assist in the reasonable transition of nonconforming land uses.

Subdivision Regulations

While the land use plan has direct implications for zoning, the Comprehensive Plan does not have comparable effects on the land subdivision and platting regulations. Changes in these regulations are not required for the immediate adoption of the Plan.

Project Evaluation

In adopting the Comprehensive Plan, the City of Blue Earth makes a commitment to use the Plan as a means of evaluating a variety of private and public projects. This evaluation requires using a series of questions to consider the merits of a project:

- Is the project consistent with the land use plan?
- Does the project move Blue Earth towards its vision for the future?
- Is the project consistent with the policies contained in the Plan?

A negative answer to one or more of these questions may illustrate flaws in the proposed project. These flaws may be fundamental and require denial of the project, but modifications to the project that bring it into compliance with the Comprehensive Plan may be possible. Negative answers to the questions listed above might, however, point to a need to amend the Plan (see amending the Plan). In such situations in which a noncompliant project underscores a potential flaw in the Plan, then the project should be approved and an effort to properly amend the Plan should be initiated. Repeated failures to amend the Plan in order to allow worthy projects to move forward will eventually render the Comprehensive Plan useless.

What is a Project?

To apply this process, it is helpful to define a “project.” This definition has both practical and legal considerations. For the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan, the following items are considered projects:

- Platting of land for private development
- Rezoning of property
- Acquisition and disposition of public lands
- Construction of public improvements
- Provision of financial assistance to private development

The discussion that follows examines each type of project in greater detail.

Platting

The Land Subdivision and Platting Regulations of the City Code do not specifically require consistency with the Comprehensive Plan as a prerequisite for approving a preliminary and final plat. The regulations do tie back to the Comprehensive Plan for certain aspects of subdivision design, such as streets and parks.

Rezoning

Rezoning that changes the use of a parcel should not be undertaken without corresponding changes to the Land Use chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan and the zoning regulations act in concert to manage land use. The City's current zoning regulations do not specifically require the City Council or Planning Commission to consider relevant provisions of the Comprehensive Plan as part of the review of proposed amendments to zoning regulations.

Acquisition and Disposition of Public Lands

According to State Law (M.S. Section 462.356, Subd. 2), publicly owned land within the City cannot be acquired or disposed of until the Planning Commission has reviewed the proposal and reported in writing to the City Council as to the compliance of the proposed action with the Comprehensive Plan. The City Council may, by resolution adopted by two-thirds vote, dispense with this requirement when it finds that the proposed acquisition or disposal of real property has no relationship to the Comprehensive Plan.

Construction of Public Improvements

The Comprehensive Plan guides capital improvements by all political subdivisions. No capital improvements shall be authorized by the City (and its subordinate units) or any other political subdivision having jurisdiction within Blue Earth until the Planning Commission has reviewed the proposal and reported in writing to the City Council as to the compliance of the proposed action with the Comprehensive Plan (M.S. Section 462.356, Subd. 2). As with land transactions, this requirement can be dispensed by Council resolution if the capital improvement has no relationship to the Comprehensive Plan.

Provision of Financial Assistance

Tax increment financing and tax abatement are the only finance tools formally tied to the Comprehensive Plan. State Law requires that the City find that a TIF plan conforms to the Comprehensive Plan. As a matter of policy, similar evaluation should apply to other forms of public financial assistance. In agreeing to provide financial assistance to private development, it is reasonable that the City Council determines that the development furthers the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.

Chapter 2: Community Context

The future Blue Earth will be built on the foundation of the community as it exists today. This section describes the key characteristics of Blue Earth and its population. This understanding of the community provides an essential context for updating the Comprehensive Plan:

- How many people will live in Blue Earth in 2027? In 2037?
- Will the characteristics of the population be different from today?
- What type of housing will be needed?
- Where will people work?
- What goods and services will be needed, desired and viable?
- How do these characteristics influence land use, streets and parks in Blue Earth?

Location

Blue Earth's location serves as an important part of the context for the Comprehensive Plan. Blue Earth sits at the intersection of U.S. Highway 169 and Interstate 90, about two hours south of the Twin Cities metro area. The location and supporting highway system create a larger marketplace for goods, services and jobs. Blue Earth was built at the confluence of the two branches of the Blue Earth River. The river valley provides natural beauty and open development possibilities.

Historical Setting

Faribault County was established by the Territorial Legislature February 20, 1855. Two months later Moses Sailor arrived and settled in the Blue Earth River area, becoming the first permanent settler in Faribault County.

In February of 1856, the following year, James Wakefield, Henry Constrains, Spier Spencer, and Samuel Hibler struck out from Shakopee, Minnesota to stake out and plat a town site in the wilderness. The men arrived at a site along the Blue Earth River and staked out a site in the north half of section 17, township 102, and range 27, the site of the City of Blue Earth. Wakefield and Spencer returned to Shakopee and worked at getting the territorial legislature to approve an act organizing Faribault County. Blue Earth City, founded by the four men and located between the forks of the Blue Earth River was declared to be the temporary County Seat. Three of the four men (Spencer did not return), and other residents of the County, received commissions from the legislature to serve as County Commissioners, Sheriff, and Justice of the Peace. By April of 1856 settlers and provisions had begun to arrive in the new town.

The original town site staked out by the four men was 320 acres. A number of expansions occurred over the years. The City was organized for civil purposes as early as October 1858 and was actually incorporated twice. The first incorporation occurred in 1872 but the original charter proved to be too ineffective. The City was then re-incorporated in 1879.

The first manufacturing plant was a brick factory run by Captain J. B. Gillit. The first newspaper published in the County was issued in April, 1861. The first school district in Blue Earth was organized in 1859 with the first school building being completed in 1861. As early as 1857, local officials recognized the need for rail service. They made seven attempts to get a rail line to serve the City before they were successful. In October, 1879 the first train entered the City of Blue Earth.

The earliest fire brigade was founded in 1876. A volunteer group, calling themselves the Hose Company Number 1, was organized in 1890 and has evolved into the Blue Earth Fire Department. The police department was organized in 1899 with a police chief and one patrolman. Public ownership of utilities began prior to 1890 when residents contributed to the establishment of a central well for water services. In 1893, O. J. Clark began providing direct current energy to a limited number of people on a limited basis. Residents purchased Clark's operation making it a public utility.

The earliest hospital indicated in public records was the home of Dr. G. I. Smart in 1886. Dr. F. N. Hunt's home became the second hospital in 1893. In addition, manufacturing plants have been the City's economic driving force. These included the Blue Earth Flour Mill Company, the Blue Earth Canning Company, and the Blue Earth Rendering Company, just to name a few.

Geographic Features

Topography

A variety of topographic features are found in and around the City of Blue Earth. The character of the present land surface is the result of prehistoric glacial ice action and the resulting erosional action of water runoff. Elevations within the City vary by about only 40' with the lowest elevations being along the Blue Earth River and the East Fork of the Blue Earth River. These two rivers have a tremendous impact upon development patterns of the City. A great deal of the area within the City and adjacent to the City falls within the floodplain area of the Blue Earth River and the East Fork of the Blue Earth River, and is, therefore, a limiting factor for development and any extension of city services.

Soils

A wide variety of soils types are found in the City of Blue Earth. Surface materials are chiefly glacial deposits (drift) from the continental glaciers. Glacial drift is composed mainly of glacial till which is characterized by a matrix of sand, silt, and clay, with scattered pebbles, cobbles, and boulders. The deposits of this surface material varies in Faribault County from 50' to 250'. The variation is due to the erosional action of water during the retreat of the glaciers.

Groundwater

Groundwater is plentiful in this part of Faribault County. There are three consolidated bedrock aquifers underlying the County. Water is classified as “very hard” by the geologic survey. However, the quality of the groundwater is good.

The consolidated bedrock aquifers used for water supplies in this part of the 2,000 square mile basin which is called the Twin City Basin. It is the most important source of water in the State. The bedrock aquifers providing the most reliable source of water, both in terms of quality and quantity, are the St. Peter, Jordan, and the Ironston-Galesville formations and the St. Simon formation. The Prairie du Chien aquifer has good quality water in areas which are buried deep enough to protect it from contamination

Wetlands

A variety of wetlands are found along the Blue Earth River and the East Branch of the Blue Earth River. They are typically located in the floodway and the flood fringe. Referring to the copy of the national wetlands inventory map from the Department of Natural Resources shows large areas of wetlands west and northwest of the fairgrounds. National and State guidelines exist for the filling and re-creation of replacement wetlands.

Surface Water

The Blue Earth River, which flanks the City of Blue Earth on the west and the East Fork of the Blue Earth River, which flanks the City of Blue Earth on the east, are the dominant surface water feature in Blue Earth. Both water bodies are protected streams, as designated by the MN DNR, and are classified as agricultural streams. Standards exist regulating development along these streams 300' on either side of the ordinary high water mark. More stringent development standards exist by the floodway and flood fringe portion of these streams. As can be seen on the flood plain maps, portions of these rivers are flanked by extremely wide floodways and flood fringe areas.

Chapter 3: Land Use

Introduction

Land use forms the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan. The type, location and relationships of land uses shape the physical appearance of Blue Earth, the social interaction of its residents and the long-term economic sustainability of the community.

The Land Use chapter of the Comprehensive Plan describes the desired pattern of development for the community. Every parcel of property, both public and private, is placed into a specific land use category. This land use plan depicts use types, intensities and locations of current and future development in Blue Earth.

The Land Use chapter seeks to reinforce desirable land use patterns, identify places where change is needed and guide the form and location for future land use changes. The Land Use chapter of the Comprehensive Plan consists of the following components:

- The Future Land Use Plan shows the land use allowed for all property within the city as well as around the current city limits of Blue Earth.
- The Land Use Categories provide a description of the type and intensity of development intended for each element of the Future Land Use Plan.
- A set of goals and policies explains more about the objectives the community seeks to achieve in implementing the Land Use Plan.
- The land use plan for certain Focus Areas within Blue Earth requires additional explanation.

Taken together, these components form the land use plan for Blue Earth.

Goals and Policies

The Land Use Plan for Blue Earth involves more than a map. The Land Use Plan shows the desired pattern of development in Blue Earth. Additional explanation is required to more clearly understand the community objectives represented by the Land Use Plan. These objectives form the goals and policies described in this section.

Goals and policies provide additional description of the outcomes sought by Blue Earth through the Land Use Plan Map. These goals and policies are intended to provide guidance to the City and to property owners in evaluating land use decisions.

The 1997 Comprehensive Plan contained a vision statement for land use. The elements of this vision statement have continued relevance for the Comprehensive Plan. The vision statement is

restated in the updated Comprehensive Plan as goals for land use. A second section included specific “Land Use Goals, Objectives and Policies”. This section contained a mixture of goals, supporting explanation and recommended actions.

The updated 2019 Comprehensive Plan builds on the vision and goals that have guided land use planning in Blue Earth. The approach taken in the Plan update was to:

- Keep goals and policies that have continued relevance.
- Update goals and policies that fit the issues facing Blue Earth over the life of this Comprehensive Plan.
- Add new goals and policies to address issues not contemplated in the previous plan.
- Make the list of goals and policies more concise and usable.

The following section contains the land use goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

Goal 1: Maintain a city that is aesthetically pleasing, environmentally sound and functional.

- 1.1 Maintain and create a positive, unique identity and physical image for Blue Earth with emphasis on its history, original layout and pedestrian scale.
- 1.2 Preserve historic buildings and other physical characteristics that define Blue Earth’s heritage.
- 1.3 Protect the integrity of the original plat.
- 1.4 Use planning, land use regulations, site plan review, and the design of public improvements to act as a responsible steward of the environment and protect waterways, floodplains, wetlands, unique environmental areas, steep slopes, and the wooded hilltops and ridgelines.
- 1.5 Look for ways to use parks, trails and other public uses as a means of protecting riverfronts, wetlands, wooded areas, and other environmentally important areas.
- 1.6 Use landscaping generously to soften the appearance of streets, parking lots and non-residential buildings.
- 1.7 Use subdivision regulations and site plan review to ensure quality design of residential, commercial, industrial and multiple-family plans
- 1.8 Work with Faribault County and adjacent townships to promote development patterns and land use plans for areas surrounding Blue Earth that are consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

- 1.9 Encourage the maintenance of and reinvestment in existing property to retain community character and to prevent the creation and spread of blight.

Goal 2: Create and maintain quality places to live.

- 2.1 Encourage new projects to incorporate elements of the original Blue Earth plat development pattern, such as grid streets, block size, alleys and garages off of alleys.
- 2.2 Require sidewalks on both sides of streets in new subdivisions.
- 2.3 Allow different types of housing in neighborhood locations thereby avoiding the concentration of similar residential uses in one area.
- 2.4 Develop residential neighborhoods that are attractive and sustainable.
- 2.5 Provide a supply of housing for a wide range of needs and incomes.
- 2.6 Promote an adequate supply of housing options for seniors, single persons and families that do not want or cannot afford the typical single family home.
- 2.7 Encourage the maintenance of and reinvestment in existing homes.
- 2.8 Locate high density housing at appropriate locations throughout the City rather than cluster them in a single location. These locations should be compatible with adjacent land uses and the supporting street system.

Goal 3: Create an economically vital and sustainable community.

- 3.1 Promote the creation of jobs to attract people to Blue Earth providing demand for housing, markets for goods and services, and students for the school system.
- 3.2 Promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses.
- 3.3 Provide new areas for a wide range of new industrial development.
- 3.4 Attract investment that creates a diverse and expanding property tax base and supply of customers for the municipal utility system.
- 3.5 Retain and attract businesses that provide goods and services needed by Blue Earth residents and businesses.
- 3.6 Provide functional, efficient and attractive locations for long-term industrial and commercial investment that are supported by street and utility systems and compatible with adjacent land uses.

- 3.7 Attract visitors to Blue Earth as a means of expanding the market for local businesses.

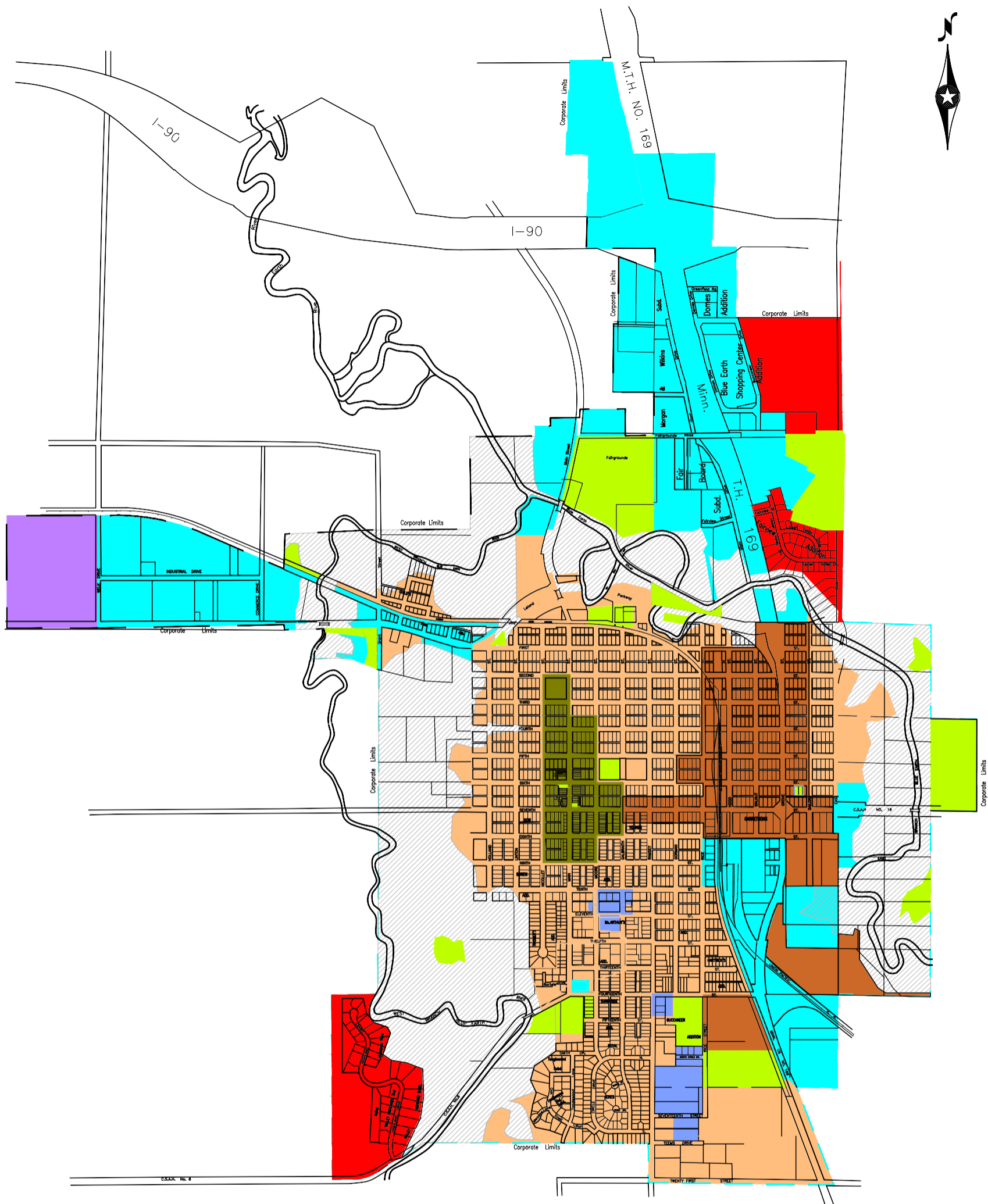
Goal 4: Encourage the continuing evolution of Downtown to a vital and sustainable mixture of commercial, residential and civic uses.

- 4.1 Retain the historical character and identity of Downtown.
- 4.2 Allow additional housing in the Downtown area as a means of expanding the market for Downtown businesses and as a source of new investment.
- 4.3 Keep the primary civic functions of the community located in the Downtown area to attract people to this area.
- 4.4 Use civic investments and community events to make Downtown the primary gathering place for Blue Earth.

Land Use Map

The Land Use Plan Map (shown below) shows the desired land use for all property in and around Blue Earth. The land use plan depicted in this map builds on the previous community planning in Blue Earth. The majority of land use designations are the same as in the 1997 version of the Comprehensive Plan. Changes in the land use plan map come from three basic factors: (1) development occurred in a manner different than expectations in 1997, (2) anticipated needs for future development capacity, and (3) changes in the City's planning approach from 1997.

The Map is only one piece of the land use plan for Blue Earth. The other parts of the Land Use chapter of the Comprehensive Plan work with this map to explain the intent and objectives for future land use. Further, this map lays the foundation for land use controls that are used by the City to implement the Comprehensive Plan.



ZONING DISTRICTS

	R1	RESIDENTIAL		FP	FLOOD PLAIN
	R2	RESIDENTIAL		AG	AGRICULTURAL
	R3	RESIDENTIAL		PUD	PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT
	B-1	GENERAL BUSINESS		CBD	CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
	G-1	GENERAL INDUSTRY		HB1-1	HIGHWAY BUSINESS LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
				SBI	SMALL BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY DISTRICT



BOLTON & MENK, INC.
Consulting Engineers & Surveyors
MANKATO, MN FAIRMONT, MN SLEEPY EYE, MN BURNSVILLE, MN WILLMAR, MN
CHASKA, MN RAMSEY, MN MAPLEWOOD, MN BAXTER, MN ROCHESTER, MN
AMES, IA SPENCER, IA DES MOINES, IA FARGO, ND

CITY OF BLUE EARTH, MINNESOTA ZONING MAP

JUNE, 2018

FIGURE NO.1

Land Use Categories

The Land Use Plan Map uses a set of specific categories to guide land use in Blue Earth. One element missing from the 1997 Comprehensive Plan was a description of the land use categories shown in the Land Use Plan. The ability to use the Comprehensive Plan as an effective land use management tool requires a definition of each land use. These definitions provide a common understanding of the basic characteristics of each category used in the Land Use Plan.

Category Descriptions

The Land Use Plan consists of the following categories:

- R1 Residential
- R2 Residential
- R3 Residential
- General Business
- General Industry
- Flood Plain
- Agriculture
- Planned Unit Development
- Central Business District
- Highway Business Light Industrial

The following sections described the characteristics for each of these land use categories.

Residential (R1): The major purpose of this district is to allow the continuation of existing residential development and infilling of existing lots in the older residential areas of the City where central sewer and water systems are available.

Suburban Residential Districts (R2): The major purpose of this district is to allow for a medium density residential development in outlying areas of the City which are served by central sewer and water systems.

Residential (R3): Placeholder for future residential development.

General Business (BI): The General Business District is intended to provide a district that will allow general retail and commercial uses to serve existing population.

General Industry (GI): The GI District is intended to provide for general industrial and adult uses not suitable for location in areas of relative close proximity to non-industrial or residential development.

Flood Plain (FP): The Plan shows the approximate area of properties currently located within the flood plain. This aspect of the Land Use Plan map is included as a reference.

Agricultural (AG): Agricultural Preservation areas are established for the purpose of preserving, promoting, maintaining, and enhancing the use of land for commercial agricultural purposes, to prevent scattered and leap-frog non-farm growth, to protect expenditures for such public services as roads and maintenance, police and fire protection, and schools.

Planned Unit Development (PUD): This land use category denotes land used for multiple same style dwellings such as townhomes and duplexes.

Central Business District (CBD): The Central Business District is intended to provide for the general retail shopping and service business development and use on the compact building lots located in the traditional and historic downtown area within the city. The applicable development regulations within the Central Business District shall permit high density commercial and office development.

Highway Business and Light Industrial (HBLI): a Highway Business and Light Industrial is intended to provide for larger commercial business and enterprises and industrial uses that may suitably be located in areas of relatively close proximity to residential development. As such, businesses and industries that pose problems of air pollution, noise, vibrations, etc. will be restricted from HBLI Districts.

Focus Areas

Downtown: The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the importance Downtown to the future of Blue Earth. The term “Central Business” does not reflect the nature of Downtown. It will continue to evolve away from the central business district and towards a mixture of retail, service, office, public, and residential uses. The Comprehensive Plan anticipates that the City will use zoning, subdivision, historic preservation and other regulations to create a vital and sustainable mixed use district. The City may find that changes in existing zoning regulations are needed to properly manage land use in the Downtown. An alternative would be to create a new mixed use zoning district, specifically designed to meet the needs of Downtown Land uses.

Infill: Infill lots play a significant role in maintaining the image of the City. The existing housing stock is very diverse in Blue Earth, and with the diversity comes some houses that are very old

and in rough condition. These houses are demolished when seen fit by the City, and the in turn leaves a vacant lot. The development of these empty infill lots are crucial to having an attractive City for homebuyers.

Industrial Parks: The City of Blue Earth has two industrial parks located on the west and north end of town. The west industrial park has been completely filled and has seen good success. Attention has been brought to the north business park as it currently as of June 2019 the business park has two businesses and two open lots available. Future plans include filling those empty lots and in addition expanding the park into the adjacent farmland and attracting businesses.

Northeast: The City has constructed a brand-new housing development on the northeast side of town. There will be an emphasis on senior living and townhomes in this area which will help diversify the housing stock.

169 Corridor: This area of the City is important in terms of Blue Earth's economy. The traffic that goes through this area plays a significant role in the customer base for businesses located along highway 169. Continued focus needs to be applied to make sure there are no vacant buildings along the corridor and that businesses are able to capture revenue.

Chapter 4: Housing

Introduction:

The housing plan is developed to address the housing needs and concerns of the Blue Earth Community. This housing plan is intended to serve as a guide, ensuring the availability of resources and a vision that will preserve the community as a safe, convenient, comfortable, attractive and affordable place to live.

1. Housing Goals: The following are the City of Blue Earth's goals relative to housing:

- a. To preserve and enhance the quality of residential neighborhoods and the housing stock.
- b. To ensure access to financial resources for housing maintenance and improvement needs.
- c. To maintain the existing supply of affordable housing in the community.
- d. To ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing for the elderly.
- e. To target and redevelop physically deteriorated neighborhoods.

2. Housing Policies: It is the policy of the City of Blue Earth to:

- a. Encourage redevelopment of deteriorating or nonconforming housing units and promote rehabilitation of aging structures.
- b. Encourage new housing development on underutilized, undeveloped or skipped over lots within existing developed neighborhoods that is consistent with the style and type of housing in the surrounding neighborhood.
- c. Encourage a mixture of residential and commercial development on both sides of Highway 169 that integrate housing with public, retail, office and commercial uses.
- d. Encourage and promote redevelopment projects that will add to the diversity (both in terms of housing styles and price ranges) of Blue Earth's housing supply, creating more lifecycle housing opportunities.
- e. Periodically review zoning ordinance provisions and other regulatory tools to ensure they do not restrict infill or redevelopment to the point of creating barriers to developing affordable housing (these regulations include minimum floor areas, minimum lot sizes and standards, garage stall requirements, permit fees and others).

- f. Protect the integrity and long-term viability of residential neighborhoods and eliminate land use conflicts through code enforcement and redevelopment.
- g. Participate in low interest loan programs to assist low to moderate-income homeowners with housing maintenance and home improvements.
- h. Work with the Blue Earth HRA and other nonprofit affordable housing providers to maintain, and improve the quality of, the affordable housing supply in Blue Earth.
- i. Encourage collaborative efforts between adjacent communities, Faribault County, and the State of Minnesota in addressing the region's affordable housing needs.
- j. Support infrastructure improvements that contribute to a strong and healthy neighborhood identity.

Inventory



Crescent Apartments: A federally subsidized and City-operated apartment building located just one block off Main Street in beautiful downtown Blue Earth. Crescent Apartments provides an affordable, safe, and convenient housing option in a beautiful neighborhood setting. Rent at Crescent Apartments is determined by a resident's income.

Northeast Housing Development: A recently constructed housing development with 17 lots available for residential construction. The area will be marketed toward seniors and young people looking for first time homes. The City will consider building spec houses to aid in the development of this area.



Housing Occupancy:

In the 7-year span from 2010 to 2017, Blue Earth's number of owner-occupied units decreased by 32. Increases occurred in renter occupied units, 162, and vacant units decreased by 134. Renting is becoming more popular in Blue Earth and is a possible housing strategy to take advantage of when looking at what to do with vacant units. As mentioned above, it is important that some houses are available in order to encourage new growth within the city, and Blue Earth has more than enough vacant units to do so.

	2010	2015 Estimates	2017
Owner Occupied	1,044	1,021	1,012
Renter Occupied	409	484	571
Vacant	185	74	51
Totals	1,638	1579	1634

U.S Census Bureau "American Factfinder"

Status of Vacant Housing:

In the 10-year span from 2000 to 2010, Blue Earth's vacant number of homes for rent increased in every category. Filling these vacancies is the easiest solution to bring more people into the City of Blue Earth to replace the population that has left throughout the years.

	2000	2010
For Rent	44	60
For Sale	34	50
Seasonal	14	17
Other Vacancies	37	58
Total	129	185

U.S Census Bureau "American Factfinder"

Conditions: 2014 Study

A total of 385 houses in Blue Earth needed minor repair as of 2014. The city will focus on encouraging vacant unit owners to make repairs, thus increasing their value and making them more appealing to home buyers. This is a good method to bring more homeowners to Blue Earth.

Housing Conditions Update: 2017

In August of 2017, the city conducted a housing survey to highlight houses that need repairs or demolition to upkeep the city's image. The focus of the evaluation is on single family units and vacant houses. Housing units were assessed based on the conditions of the foundation, roofing, siding, windows, and doors. The survey was completed, and city will have a general idea of where to focus its efforts for rehabilitation programs and demolition.

Minor Repair houses are judged to be generally in good condition and require less extensive repair, such as one major improvement. Houses in this condition category will generally be good candidates for rehabilitation programs because they are in a salable price range and are economically feasible to repair. Sound houses are judged to be in good 'move in' condition. Sound houses may contain minor code violations and still be considered sound.

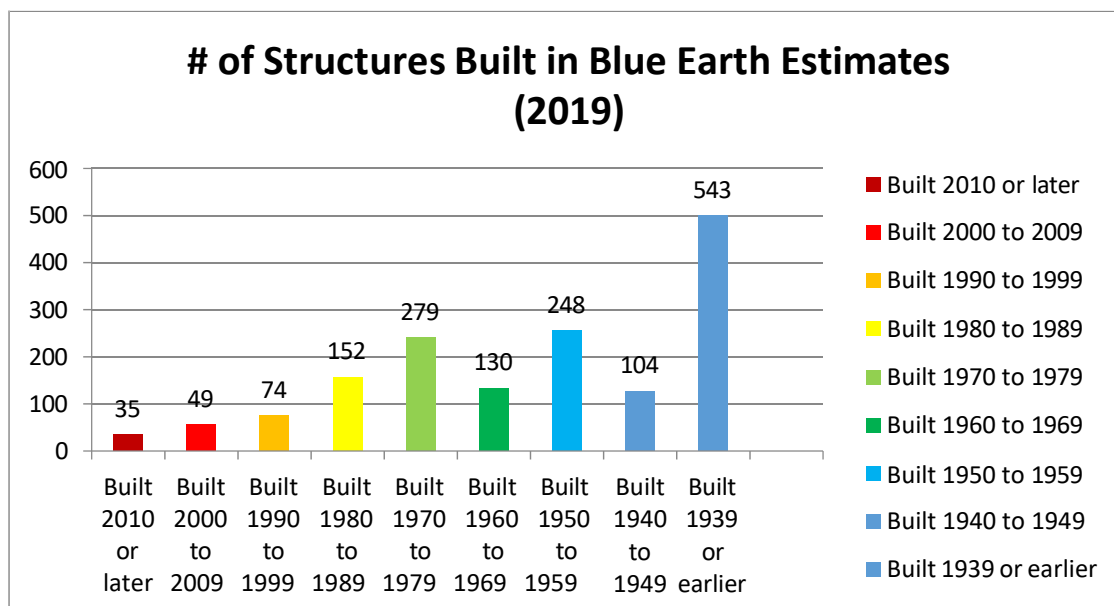
Table 22 Windshield Survey Condition Estimate - 2019					
	Sound	Minor Repair	Major Repair	Dilapidated	Total
Neighborhood #1	35/38.9%	41/45.6%	14/15.5%	0	90
Neighborhood #2	104/39.7%	106/40.5%	43/16.4%	9/3.4%	262
Total	139/39.5%	147/41.8%	57/16.2%	9/2.5%	352

Source: Community Partners Research, Inc.

- ▶ Approximately 42% of the houses in two of the City's oldest neighborhoods need minor repair and 16% need major repair.
- ▶ Approximately 40% are sound, with no required improvements.
- ▶ Nine houses are dilapidated and possibly beyond repair.
- ▶ As part of the 2014 Study, these two neighborhoods were also surveyed. The condition of the housing stock has improved in these two neighborhoods. The number of houses needing major repair has been reduced by 21 houses and the number of dilapidated houses has been reduced by three houses from 2014 to 2019.

Conditions

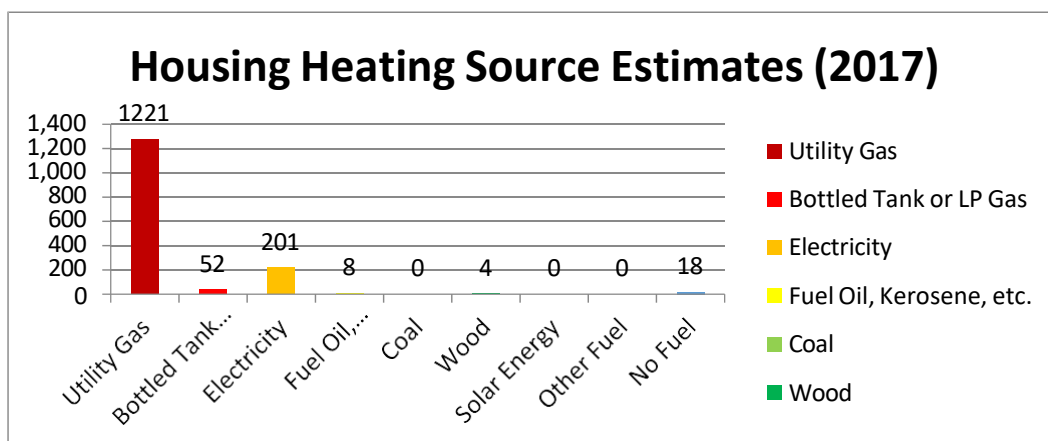
Only 275 out of 1,579 houses were built after 1980. This is approximately 17%, which means that Blue Earth consists of mostly older buildings. The 543 structures that were built 1939 or earlier should be targeted for renovations to increase the appeal and function of the city.



U.S. Census Bureau "American Factfinder"

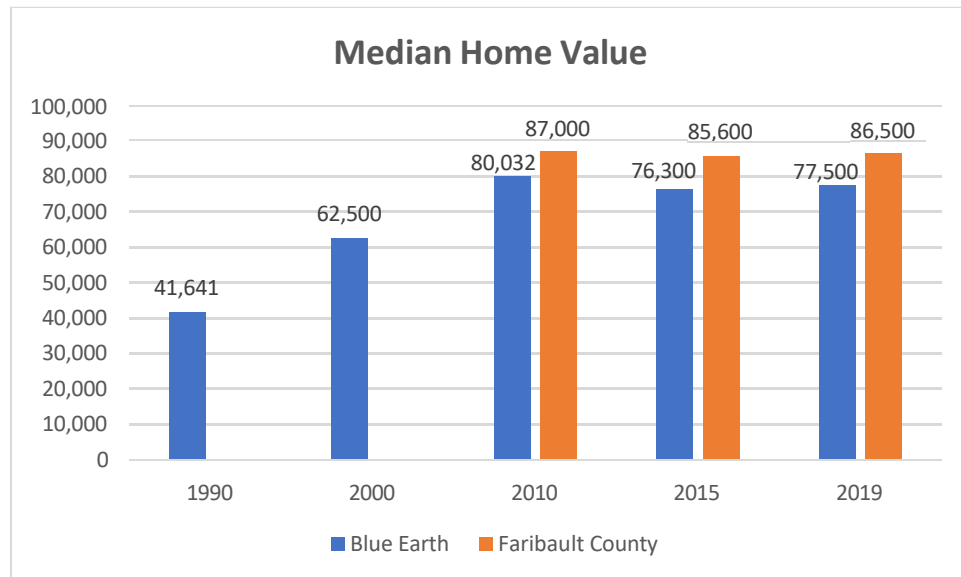
Utilities

In 2017, approximately 82% of households' method for heating was natural gas. CenterPoint Energy supplies the community and works with the local utility to coordinate replacement of lines. 31 households use wood, fuel oil, or no fuel. Looking forward, it will be key to modernize these housing units to attract newcomers to the community.



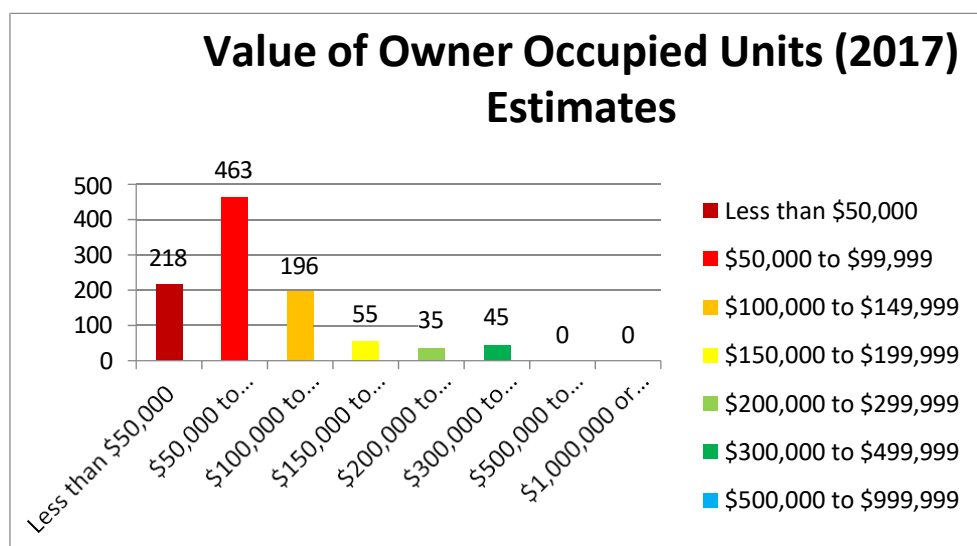
Value

Blue Earth has seen major increases in median housing values. From 1990 to 2000 it increased by \$21,000, and from 2000 to 2010 it increased another \$17,500. This is a good sign when looking to encourage growth within the city.



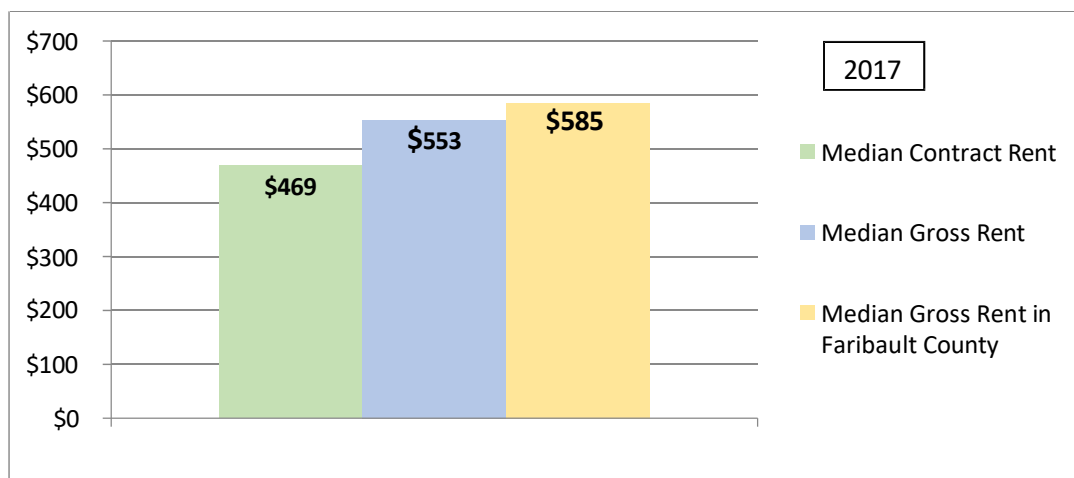
U.S. Census Bureau "American Factfinder"

Blue Earth has a housing stock that is currently very affordable at under \$100,000 of value. When planning for new subdivisions it should be determined if there needs to be higher value housing to expand the housing inventory. It also needs to be determined if the lower valued houses are deteriorating. While it is important to have affordable housing, it is even more important that the housing look presentable and well maintained to attract new residents.



Rental Market

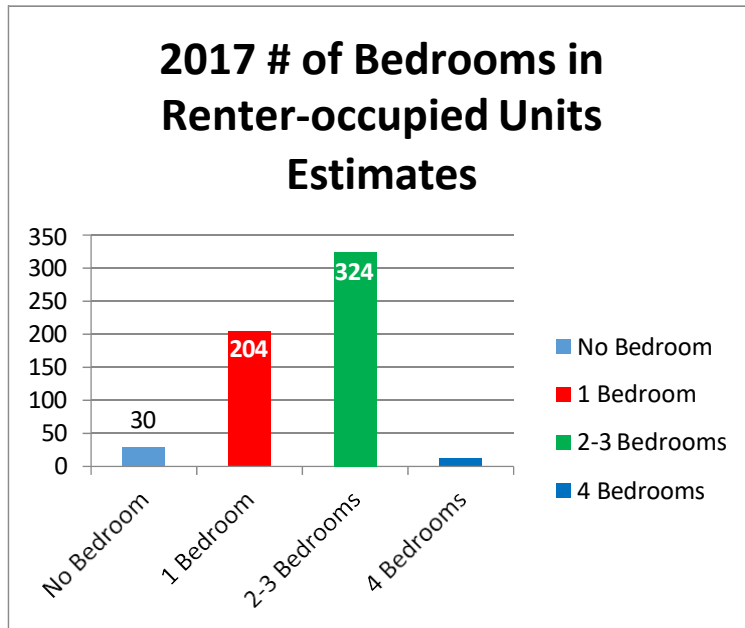
The median amount of rent being asked for vacant units in Faribault County, \$585, is higher than the median contract rent, \$553, in Blue Earth. Looking forward, the city needs to utilize the gap between these rent prices to attract more people to Blue Earth and build a rental base based on a lower average rent.



The 2019 Housing Study Update found the following gross rent range from a telephone survey:

Unit Type	Gross Rent Range
Efficiency	\$475
One-Bedroom	\$425-\$645
Two-Bedroom	\$550-\$775
Three-Bedroom	\$850-900
Four-Bedroom	\$950-\$1400

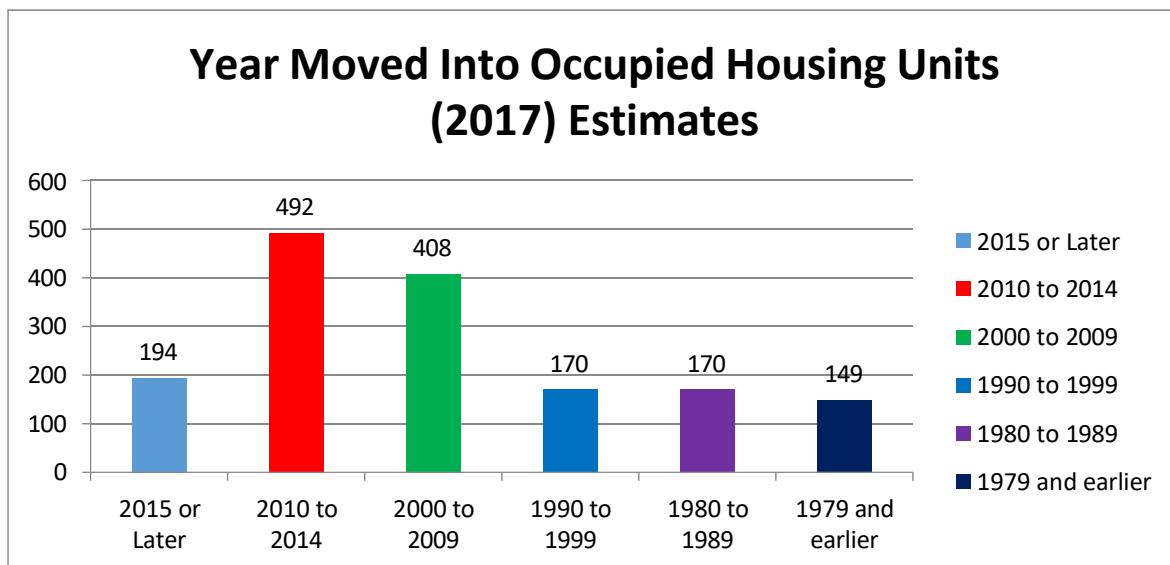
A large portion of the rentals in Blue Earth are 1 and 2 person bedrooms, and the city must promote these in order to establish a rental base. Looking forward, if the city constructs new rentals it must be careful to consider the number of rooms, as larger rentals are harder to fill. Many people renting do not have a family and are not looking for multiple bedroom rentals.



U.S. Census Bureau "American Factfinder"

Trends

Although Blue Earth is slowly declining in population, there has been an increase in people moving into occupied housing units by each decade. Blue Earth needs to capitalize on this statistic by focusing on home ownership opportunities that are attractive to a younger generation. The goal being that the city can retain young homeowners and subsequently begin to grow the population again.



Strengths/Barriers for Housing Development:

The following strengths for the community were identified through statistical data, local interviews, research and on-site review of the local housing stock.

Increasingly diverse housing stock: The City has a good mix of housing options, including rental housing units for both lower income and market rate households. The City also has town houses, twin homes, and senior with services facilities.

Commuters: More than 1,400 employees are commuting into Blue Earth daily for work. These commuters are a potential market for future housing construction.

Desirable Location for seniors and retirees: Blue Earth is an attractive community for seniors as a retirement location. As the providers for the area's health, retail and government services, the city has amenities that are attractive for seniors as they age.

Interstate 90: Blue Earth is located on Interstate 90, which gives residents easy access to several regional and population centers.

The following are identified as barriers or limitations that hinder or prevent certain housing activities in the City of Blue Earth:

Age and condition of the housing stock: While the existing housing stock is affordable, some of the housing needs improvements to meet expectations of potential buyers.

Population and household growth: Historical data indicates that the City is not expected to add a significant number of people or households over the next several years.

Commercial/retail options: Blue Earth has a limited number of commercial and retail opportunities when compared to other cities in the immediate region.

Value gap deters new owner-occupied construction: The median priced home in Blue Earth is estimated at \$77,000. This is well below the comparable cost for new housing construction, which will generally be above \$150,000 for a stick-built home with commonly expected amenities. This creates a value gap between new construction and existing homes which can be a disincentive for any type speculative building and can also deter customized construction, unless the owner is willing to accept a potential loss on their investment. The value gap also makes it difficult to secure financing for new home construction.

Recommendations:

The city should promote the development/conversion of more affordable rental units. Building renovations and conversion projects would be a practical way of doing this. Downtown buildings and single-family homes are the best targets for rehabilitation projects with rental use in mind. A mixed-use rental housing/commercial project could create a more active and vibrant downtown.

The City of Blue Earth has many older houses that range from needing minor repairs to major repairs. The city has already taken the initiative of conducting a housing survey that highlights homes that may be an eyesore in the community. The data that was gathered from the survey will be essential to follow through with rehabilitation programs to encourage home ownership and prevent substandard homes from becoming eyesores and turning into rental properties.

The city should consider involving employers as partners in addressing Blue Earth's housing needs. Employer involvement can include direct assistance to their employees such as a grant, loan, forgivable loan, deferred loan, down payment assistance, or loan guarantee. Employers may be more favorable in helping employees if it contributes to an overall city project.

To promote home ownership the city needs to utilize agencies that assist and promote home ownership with agencies such as Minnesota Valley Action Council and USDA Rural Development. In coordination with other Faribault County Cities, the city should also explore the possibility of obtaining specific program set asides for home ownership programs from the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency.

The City of Blue Earth should also promote new housing construction to accommodate the shifting demographics that will result in more seniors looking for low maintenance housing such as town homes, as well as the increasing options for the 35-44-year-old age range who will be looking for trade-up homes.

Blue Earth needs to understand the current trends that are happening in the present day and adjust this comprehensive plan as these trends change.

Looking Forward:

Future projects that the city has already started are:

- The largest current project that is underway is the construction of a new subdivision and townhomes located in the northeast area of the city. Blue Earth's approach to developing new homes are to market them towards seniors who are nearing retirement, and younger first-time homeowners.
- In addition, the HRA is pursuing a townhome development on property it owns on 14th Street. The plan for this property would include at least 2 fourplexes.

Chapter 5: Economic Development

Introduction

Blue Earth enjoys a durable economy due in large part to major employers such as Aerospace Systems, Kerry Ingredients, and Seneca Foods. Manufacturers are drawn to Blue Earth for its location and local workforce quality. The elements of this Comprehensive Plan, particularly Land Use and Street System, will be important in accomplishing economic development objectives. Fully developed industrial parcels must be available when a prospective business demonstrates interest. Utilities and streets must be adequately available, and sites must have access to rail. There must also be sites available to accommodate different kinds of new housing developments.

The Economic Development Chapter describes how Blue Earth will remain attractive to high quality and skilled manufacturing, while maintaining adequate professional services to sustain the community and surrounding area. Further, it will discuss ideas for productive growth in all areas of the economic community, and for offering a variety of employment opportunities for all age ranges in the region. Employee quality will be increasingly important as Blue Earth competes in the international marketplace.

Economic Development Goals, Objectives and Policies

The Economic Development Plan includes a set of objectives and policies to guide decisions and regulations toward the goal of promoting the growth of well-paying jobs and steady expansion of the local economy.

Goal 1: Attract new, high quality, skilled manufacturing and retain existing employers in an effort to sustain the community and the surrounding area.

1.1 Education: Produce a labor force with superior skills that enable them to compete effectively in the state, national and global economies. This would be accomplished by supporting very high-quality local school systems from grades K-12.

1.2 Job Training: Encourage, partner with and support regional vocational-technical colleges and the Minnesota university system to tailor their curricula to meet the future needs of industry.

1.3 Information Technologies: Encourage and support the development of an up-to-date information gathering and distribution system through libraries and other outlets that utilize state-of-the-art information technology. Encourage providers of high speed Internet access to stay current with technologies related to the availability of broadband access to the Internet.

1.4 Available Industrial Sites: Assure that there is always an adequate supply of fully developed industrial sites with some that have access to railroad service. Currently there are two industrial parks located on the west and north side of Blue Earth.

1.5 Incentives: Maintain and provide financing tools and incentives as allowed by local, state and federal laws.

1.6 Relationships with Business Leaders: Develop and maintain a business retention program as well as other programs that encourage a working relationship between business and local government.

Goal 2: Promote steady growth in all sectors of the economy and offer a variety of employment opportunities for people in the area.

2.1 Land Use Planning: Ensure that there is properly zoned property available for future industrial, commercial and residential developments.

2.2 Industrial Parks: Industrial parks will be fully served with municipal utilities and improved streets of substantial size in order to accommodate different sized industries, including some sites served by railroad.

2.3 Downtown: A viable, attractive, downtown that would be both the heart of the community and tourist friendly. To help achieve this vision, make public investments in the downtown area as needed to maintain a pedestrian and tourist friendly atmosphere. Maintain design guidelines that protect the historic nature of existing buildings in the Downtown Historic District. Provide incentives to owners of buildings in the Downtown Historic District that encourage historic renovations of store fronts and rehabilitation of upper level housing areas.

2.4 Housing: Provide sufficient, available and affordable housing that allows working families to support the expansion of the labor force. One effort is currently under construction on the northeast side of Blue Earth. Additional interest in downtown apartment space should be explored as the 3 sisters project progresses.

2.5 Utilities: Provide sufficient utility capacity to accommodate commercial and industrial expansion at rates that are at, or lower, than state wide averages.

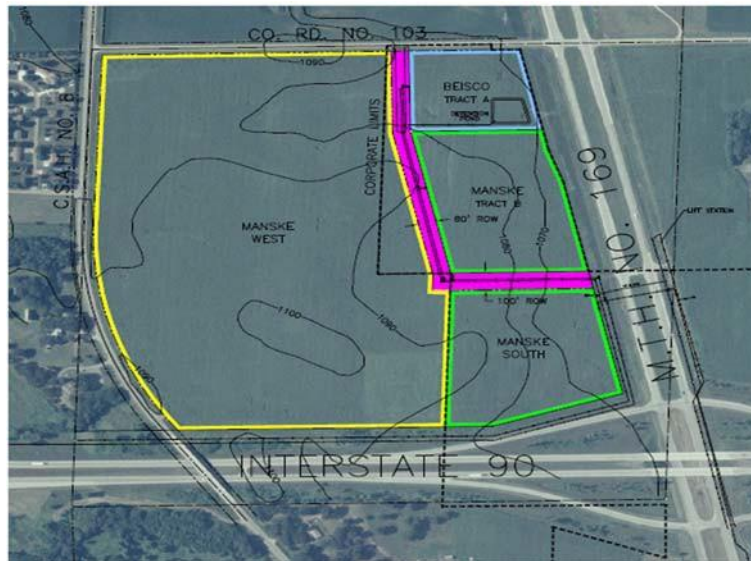
2.6 Economic Development Efforts: The City of Blue Earth will continue its financial and staff support of local economic development efforts.

2.7 Economic Development Authority: Support the City's Economic Development Authority and housing initiatives that provide programs for those not adequately served by private development.

2.8 New Industries: Utilize Federal, State and local funding to attract new business and industry.

2.9 Communications: The City of Blue Earth will communicate on an ongoing basis with interested community organizations and businesses regarding economic development issues. The City will place additional emphasis on working cooperatively with other area communities and various levels of government. The City will communicate and coordinate activities with both state and national business consortiums as well as state and federal development agencies.

Inventory:



Golden Spike Business Park: A city-owned park located directly off Highway 169 and Interstate 90 in Blue Earth. Available land can be subdivided to suit prospective buyer's needs. Highway exposure is still available. There is a total of 46.95 acres available. The park is in the Highway Business-Light Industrial District (HBLI). Flexible zoning requirements include outside storage if properly screened and steel-built structures.



West Industrial Park: An 80-acre industrial park with eleven enterprises, the larger of which include Kerry Ingredients, Aerospace Systems, Tafco Equipment Company, and Winnebago Manufacturing Company. The industrial park has all utilities, railroad access and is in the City's Tax Increment Financing district.

Financial Tools

The Economic Development Authority (EDA) of the City of Blue Earth administers programs to assist new and expanding businesses.

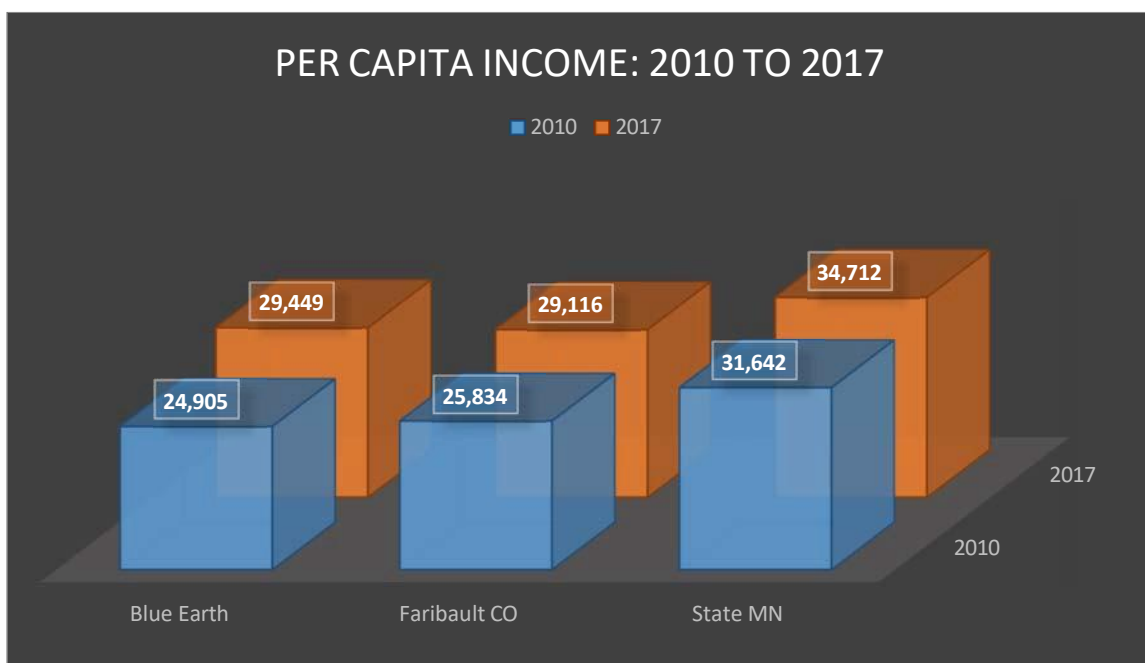
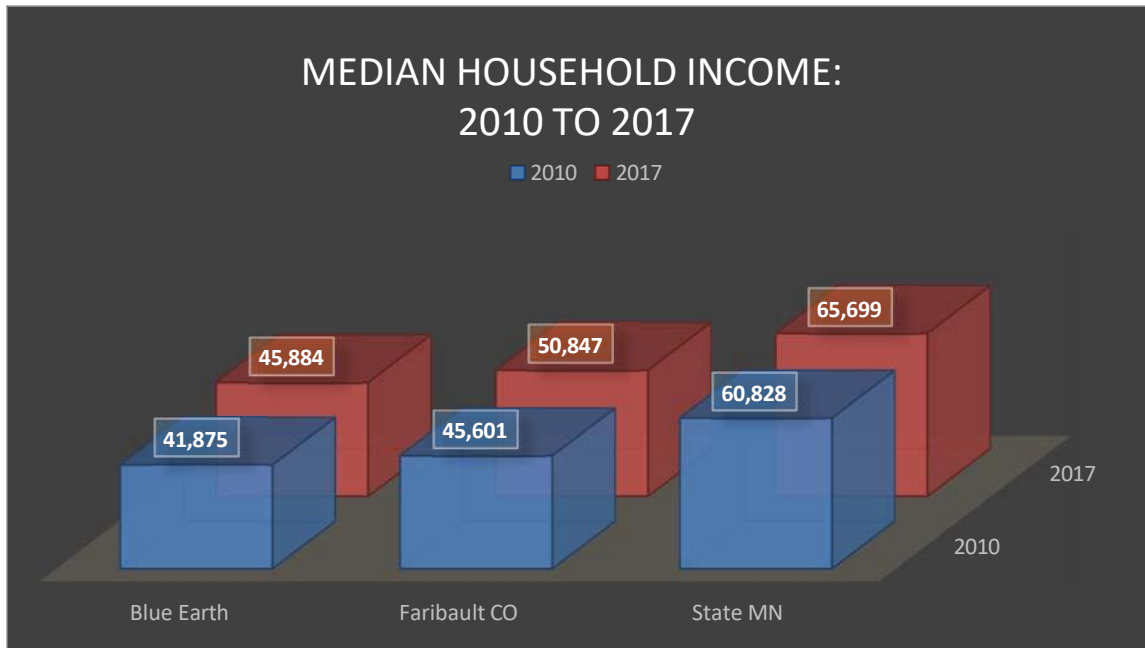
Tax Increment Financing: The primary development finance tool available to Minnesota cities. Through TIF, the property taxes created by new development or redevelopment are captured and used to finance activities needed to encourage the development. (Minnesota Statutes, Section 469.174 through 469.179)

Gap Financing- Revolving Loan Fund: Provides assistance to local business within the municipal boundaries. Eligible projects include working capital, inventory, machinery and equipment, and building renovations or expansions and land purchase. The purpose of this fund is to provide capital for new and existing business expansion, retain or expand employment, expand the tax base and encourage new business investment in the community. It is fully intended that all funds repaid to the EDA Revolving Loan Fund by any borrower be re-loaned to other business for additional expansion and economic development projects within the City.

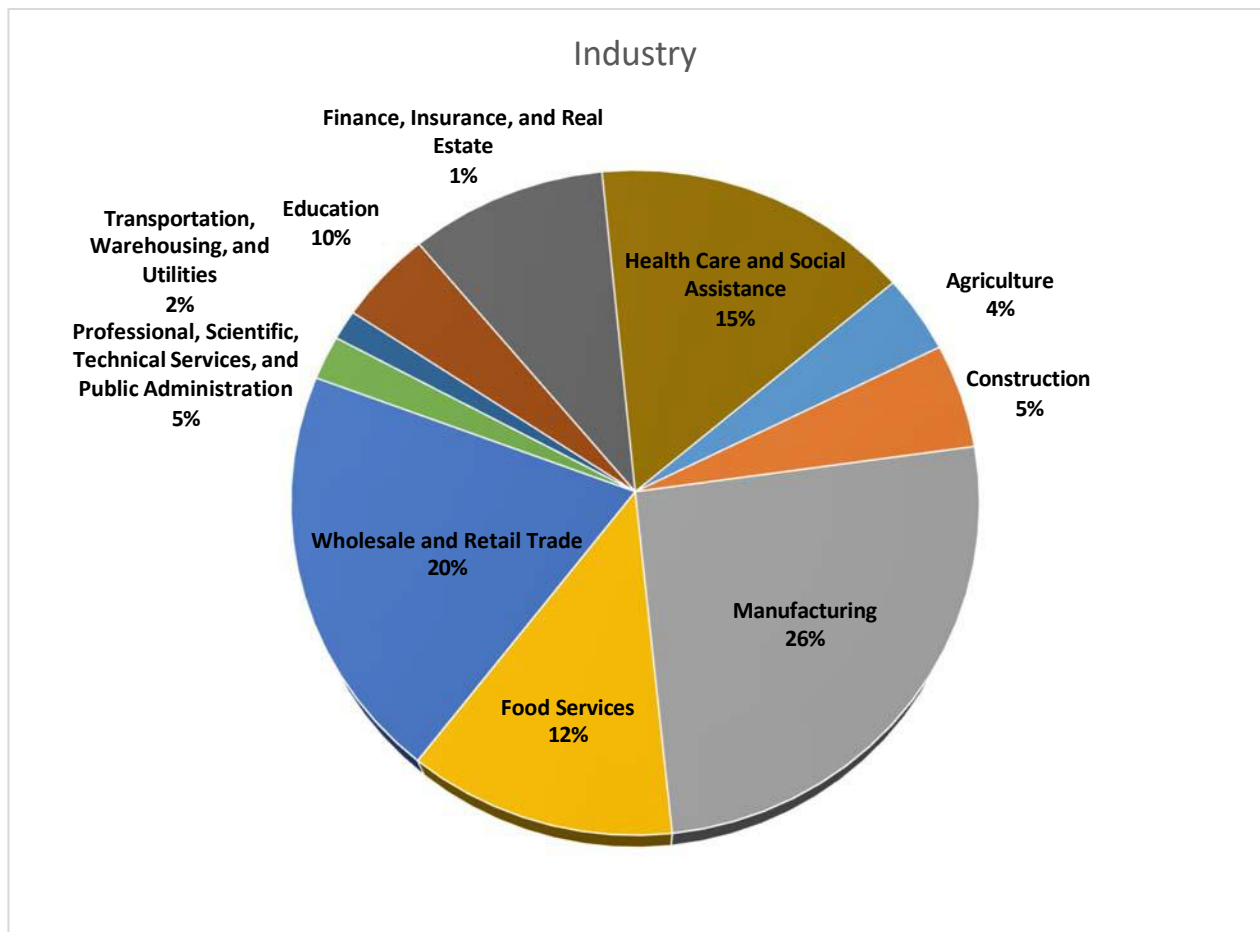
Tax Abatement: An alternative to TIF. Tax abatement allows a city, town, county, or school district to abate all or a portion of its property tax on a parcel of property for economic development purposes.

Grant Programs: Cities can leverage funding from various grant programs to help take on economic development initiatives.

Blue Earth Economy



Blue Earth’s Top Industries Employed (Age 16 years and over)



“U.S Census Bureau “American Factfinder”

Blue Earth’s largest employment sector is currently manufacturing. This is an important sector to continue future investments in because it will need to remain consistent to retain its workforce. Wholesale and Retail Trade competed with the previous sector in the past for the

largest employer and has also seen tremendous growth in the last five years. It will be critical to adapt to a workforce in the future that places a larger emphasis on retail, while still maintaining a focus on manufacturing.

Major Employers

Although the economy of the surrounding area is reliant on agriculture and related business and industries, the City serves as a center for retail trade, medical care, education and smaller industries. This City's diverse economic base, evident in the list of the City's major employers, has provided steady growth and stability.

<u>Employer</u>	<u>Product/Service</u>	<u>Employment</u>
Independent School District		
No. 2860 (Blue Earth)	Public Education	250
United Hospital District – Blue Earth	Medical/Surgical Hospital	235
Seneca Foods Corporation	Canned Fruits and Vegetables	245
St. Luke’s Lutheran Care Center	Skilled Nursing Care Facilities	210
Kerry Ingredients Incorporated	Cereal/Breakfast Foods	200 ^(a)
Aerospace Systems, Inc.	Household Audio & Video Equipment	210
City of Blue Earth	City Government	113 ^(b)
Tafco Equipment Company	Farm Machinery & Equipment	65
Express Diagnostics	Medical Testing & Equipment	62
Blue Earth Valley Communications	Telephone Communications	100
Darling International Inc.	Prepared Feeds	45
Winnebago Manufacturing Company	Welding Repair	40
Compeer Financial Services	Agricultural Lending	22 ^(a)

^(a) Data as of April 2014; most recent information available.

^(b) Includes full-time, part-time and seasonal employees.

Source: *This does not purport to be a comprehensive list and is based on a July 2015 telephone survey of individual employers. Some employers do not respond to inquiries.*

Labor Force Data

	Annual Average				September
	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2017</u>
Labor Force:					
Faribault County	7,793	7,513	7,420	7,340	7,320
State of Minnesota	2,954,948	2,965,675	2,974,102	3,029,136	3,058,352
Unemployment Rate:					
Faribault County	5.8%	5.4%	5.1%	4.2%	4.1
State of Minnesota	5.6	4.9	4.1	3.6	3.8

Source: *Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development,*
<http://www.positivelyminnesota.com>. 2017 data are preliminary.

Commuting

Commute Modes of Transportation (2017)	
Car, truck or van- drove alone	79.9%
Car, truck or van- carpool	12%
Walked	5.7%
Other means	1.1%
Worked at Home	1.3%
Mean travel time to work (Minutes)	11.1

Recent Developments

Industrial Parks

The City has an 80-acre industrial park with eleven enterprises, the larger of which include Kerry Ingredients, Aerospace Systems, Tafco Equipment Company, and Winnebago Manufacturing Company. The industrial park has all utilities, railroad access and is in the City's Tax Increment Financing district. The City completed the construction of a new 43.6-acre industrial park at the intersection of Interstate 90 and State Highway 169 in the spring of 2015 which includes additional land owned by the City EDA that is potential for future development.

Financial Institutions*

Financial services are provided for City residents by First Bank Blue Earth, which had total deposits of \$199,584,000 as of March 31, 2019 (most recent information available). In addition, one branch of Wells Fargo Bank National Association, and CCF Bank are located within the City.

* This does not purport to be a comprehensive list.

Source: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, <http://www2.fdic.gov/idas/main.asp>.

Future Objectives

1. Development of a spec building or preparing a shovel ready development site by the EDA in the Golden Spike Business Park.
2. The EDA, in conjunction with other local groups, need to devise strategies to market the City of Blue Earth and the surrounding area for tourism possibilities. The natural resources of the area along with a trail system, historically significant sites, Green Giant Museum, the fair and fairgrounds, and agriculturally based tours can all serve as a tourist destination for the area.
3. The City should investigate ways to provide aid to institutions and business enterprises in the community that are seeking to fill labor needs. Recruitment efforts should be comprehensive and not limited to the following listing. Current identified shortages of professional skills include:
 - a. Dentists;

- b. Accountants;
 - c. Information Technology professionals;
 - d. Teachers;
 - e. Welders;
 - f. Medically trained professionals;
 - g. Veterinarians;
 - h. Orthodontists
-
- 4. Developing a succession plan that allows city employees to obtain a broader perspective and understanding of how the city operates. This allows for identifying and developing new leaders who can take on vacant roles.
 - 5. Develop a succession plan that provides the transfer of knowledge, management capacity and social capital to local businesses as transfers of ownership and leadership occur.
 - 6. Understanding and identifying reasons for past population and economic trends, while creating and marketing ideas to show positive trends for the future.
 - 7. Identify and pursue ways to market the City as a destination for business relocation and entrepreneurial endeavors.
 - 8. Encourage Blue Earth Area alumni to live and work in the area after high school or college graduation by forming connections between students, local businesses and the community at large.
 - 9. Find and encourage entrepreneurs within the community using the Rural Entrepreneurial Venture (REV) model.

Chapter 6: Street System

The street system is an essential aspect of community development in Blue Earth. Historically, the layout and character of city streets was one of the fundamental factors shaping the development of Blue Earth. The street system continues to play a key role in the form and function of the community. Streets provide access to property and the ability for land to develop. Commercial and industrial land uses rely on this access to conduct business. Streets allow people to move throughout the community. The physical design of streets influences the character of residential neighborhoods and commercial districts.

The street system is not solely about vehicular movement. Pedestrian and other forms of non-vehicular travel must also be considered in planning for the future of Blue Earth.

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan describes how Blue Earth will maintain a functional, efficient, and safe street system. The update of the Street System Plan is based on the current system and the future land use plan. No projections of future traffic and street operation were made in conjunction with the update. The Street System Plan consists of three elements:

- Goals and Policies
- Existing System
- Future System Plan

Goals and Policies

The Street System Plan includes a set of goals and policies to guide decisions and regulations that will implement this Plan.

Goal 1: Create a system of streets that provides for convenient and safe movement within and across the community.

1.1 Adopt and follow a functional classification of roadways that coordinates roadway use and roadway design

1.2 Establish a system of collector and arterial streets that serve as the primary traffic corridors.

1.3 Establish a system of local streets, sidewalks and trails that allow people of all ages to walk or bicycle easily without having to travel on primary traffic corridors.

1.4 Plan and preserve rights-of-way for future collector street corridors in developing areas.

1.5 Work with Faribault County and the State to implement the Street System Plan.

1.6 Provide for the safe and efficient movement of vehicular traffic across the DM&E rail lines at locations across the community.

Goal 2: Coordinate the street system with the land use plan.

2.1 Review proposed site plans and plats to ensure the street design and capacity matches the development and related transportation demands.

2.2 Apply streets designs that help achieve the objectives of the Land Use Plan while providing adequate traffic flow and safety across and around the community.

2.3 Design and construct streets that allow for the efficient removal of snow and other maintenance activities.

2.4 Ensure that all developed areas have adequate access for public safety services.

2.5 Attempt to emulate the grid pattern of the older parts of the City when possible.

2.6 Create an interconnected system of streets that avoid the use of cul-de-sacs when possible.

Goal 3: Provide right-of-way and road widths that are sufficient to meet the needs of each street.

3.1 Consider the following elements in planning for the construction of new streets and the construction of existing streets:

- Drive lanes (2-4)
- Dedicated turn lanes
- On-street parking and/or bike lane
- Center median
- Grass boulevard with trees
- Sidewalk or trail

3.2 Use Land Platting and Subdivision Regulations and public improvement policies to implement the Street System Plan.

3.3 Work with Faribault County and the State to achieve local design objectives in projects undertaken by other jurisdictions.

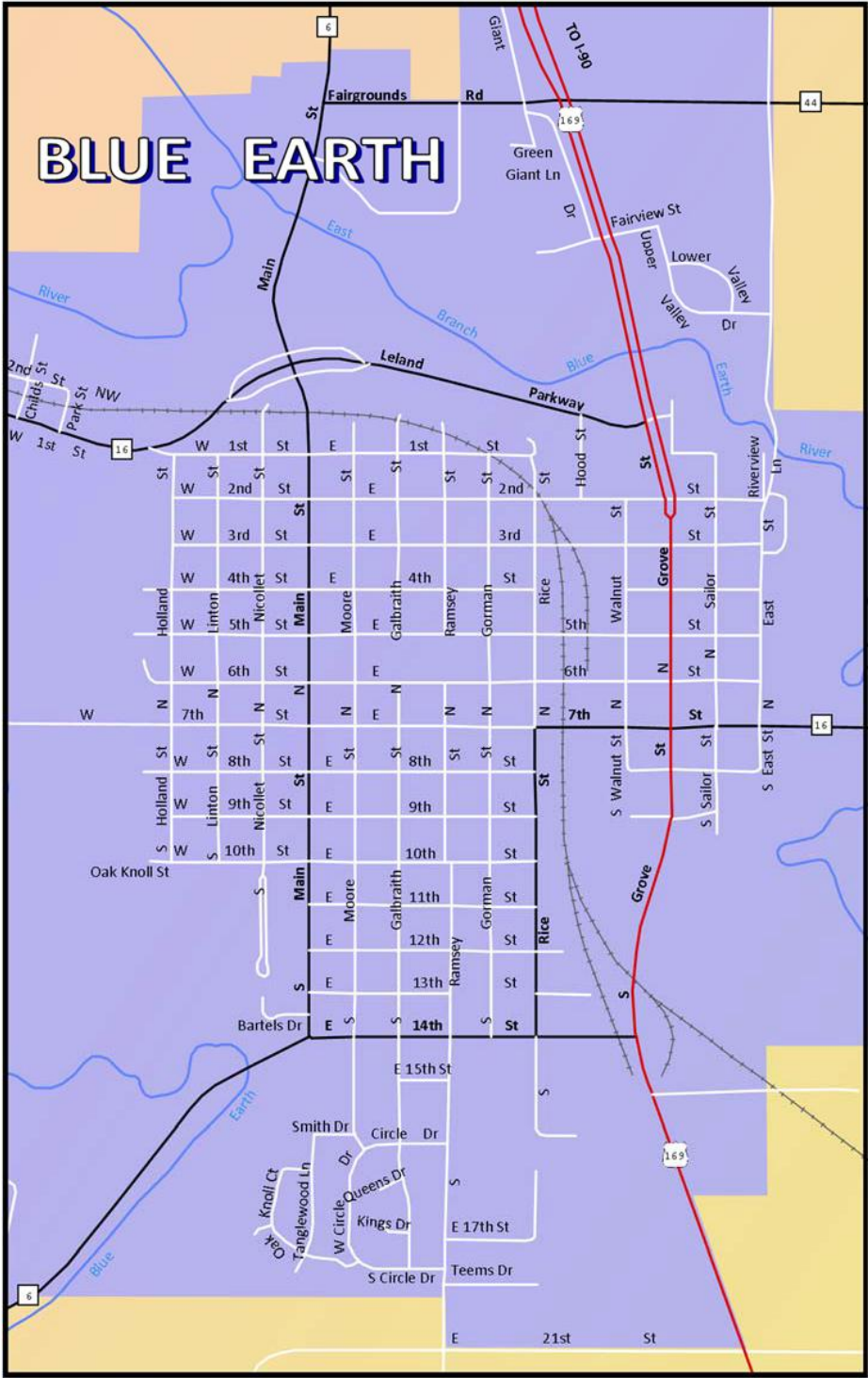
Goal 4: Provide and maintain good quality street surfaces.

- 4.1 Establish and follow a program of street reconstruction and repair throughout the City.
- 4.2 Establish policies for the equitable sharing of costs and the levy of special assessments for street reconstruction.
- 4.3 Coordinate the activities of City departments, public and private utilities, and other governmental jurisdictions to avoid untimely street and utility construction and reconstruction projects.

Goal 5: Enhance the existing network of pedestrian and bicyclist routes through the City

- 5.1 Establish and follow a written policy and plan for the location and financing of sidewalks.
- 5.2 Sidewalks will be installed along both sides of Collector and Arterial streets by either the land developer or the City.
- 5.3 Sidewalks will be installed on both sides of local streets connecting or providing access to other neighborhoods, public or quasi-public facilities, commercial and industrial areas.
- 5.4 The City will construct sidewalks as part of street reconstruction projects.
- 5.5 Residential sidewalks will be separated from the curb by a boulevard sufficiently wide to accommodate trees as they mature.
- 5.6 Sidewalks on Collector and Local Streets shall be built at the expense of the developer or owner unless the street is built as a municipal project, in which case the City will build them and assess the cost as part of the project. Sidewalks installed in existing developed areas will follow the same financing procedure.
- 5.7 The development and implementation of plans for sidewalk improvements should be coordinated with current and future trails as described in the Parks and Trails chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

Existing System (2019)



List of Seal Coated Streets

Light Duty -3 Tons/Axel Streets

August 4, 2017

East/West Streets

- 1) pt Street from Main to Rice (4 blocks) and east of Hwy 169 (1 ½ blocks)
- 2} 2nd Street east of Hwy 169 (2 blocks}
- 3) 3rd Street from Main to Rice (4 blocks), RR tracks to Walnut Street (1 block) and east of Hwy 169 (2 Blocks)
- 4) 4th Street from Galbraith to Rice Street (3 blocks) and east of Hwy 169 (2 blocks)
- 5) 5th Street from Holland, including the dead end west of Holland, to Nicollet (2 ½ blocks) and east of Hwy 169 (2 blocks)
- 6) 6th Street from Holland, including the dead end west of Holland, to Nicollet (2 ½ blocks) and east of Hwy 169 (2 blocks}
- 7) 7th Street from the township road gravel west of Holland to Nicollet (2 ½ blocks}
- 8) 8th Street from Holland, including the dead end west of Holland, to Moore Street (4 ½ blocks}
- 9) 9th Street from Holland to Nicollet Street (2 blocks) and from Main Street to Rice Street (5 blocks). Another 1 block area abutting Seneca west of Hwy 169 (1 block)
- 10) 10th Street from Holland, including the dead end west of Holland to Main Street (3 blocks)
- 11) 12th Street dead end east of S Rice Street (1 block)
- 12) 13th Street from Main Street to Ramsey Street (3 blocks) and the dead end east of S Rice Street (1 block}
- 13) 17th Street from Ramsey to Rice (2 Blocks)
- 14} Teems Drive (2 blocks}

North/South Streets

- 1) Childs Street/Childs addition from Leland Parkway to dead end (2 ½ blocks)
- 2} Grant Street (2 blocks}
- 3) Linton Street from 1st Street to 10th Street (9 blocks)
- 4) Nicollet street dead end north of 1st Street (1 block) and S Nicollet dead end south of 10th Street (2 blocks}
- 5) Moore Street from 1st street, including dead end north of pt Street, to 4th Street (3 ½ blocks) and from 12th street to 14th Street (2 blocks}
- 6) Galbraith Street from 1st street, including dead end north of pt Street to 5th Street (4 ½ blocks)
- 7) Ramsey Street from pt street to 5th street (4 blocks)
- 8) Gorman Street from 1st street to 7th street (6 blocks)
- 9) Rice Street Stub North, 1 block located north of 2nd Street, 2nd street to 7th Street (S blocks) and south of 14th street to 17th Street (3 blocks}
- 10} Hood Street from Leland Parkway to 2nd street (2 blocks)
- 11) Walnut street from 2nd street to 6th Street (4 blocks)
- 12) Sailor street from 1st street, including dead end north of 1st street, to 7th Street (6 ½ blocks) and south of 8th Street to dead end (1 ½ blocks}

**Street Improvement Program
Blue Earth, Minnesota**

Preliminary Estimated Utility & Street Improvement Costs

August-19

Year	Street Segment	Water	Sewer	Storm	Street		Totals
					Assess	Levy	
2020	Sailor Street - 3rd Street to 7th Street (Incl. 4th, 5th & 6th) (10 blocks)	\$ 464,000	\$ 344,000	\$ 108,000	\$ 411,000	\$ 959,000	\$ 2,286,000
2020	Faribault CSAH 16 - Leland Parkway, Childs to T.H. 169	\$ 201,500		\$ 106,000			\$ 307,500
2020	Bartels Drive, North East Street, Ramsey (6th to 7th) M&O				\$ 35,200	\$ 82,300	\$ 117,500
	Subtotal	\$ 665,500	\$ 344,000	\$ 214,000	\$ 446,200	\$ 1,041,300	\$ 2,711,000
2021	10th Street - Main to Holland	\$ 160,000	\$ 133,000	\$ 85,000	\$ 129,000	\$ 301,000	\$ 808,000
2021	Walnut/Third Street - 2nd to 6th/N. Walnut to Hood	\$ 212,000	\$ 265,000	\$ 340,000	\$ 198,900	\$ 464,100	\$ 1,480,000
2021	Giant Drive Frontage Road and Ezzy Street (Pending LRIP)	\$ 55,000					\$ 603,500
2021	SRTS Project					\$ 296,000	\$ 296,000
	Subtotal	\$ 267,000	\$ 265,000	\$ 340,000	\$ 198,900	\$ 760,100	\$ 3,187,500
2022	1st Street - Main Street to Gorman Street	\$ 159,000	\$ 73,000	\$ 54,000	\$ 166,350	\$ 388,150	\$ 840,500
2022	North Gorman - 1st Street to 7th Street	\$ 48,000	\$ 48,000	\$ 85,000	\$ 248,400	\$ 579,600	\$ 1,009,000
2022	Rice Street - 2nd Street to 7th Street	\$ 340,000	\$ 179,000	\$ 81,000	\$ 199,500	\$ 465,500	\$ 1,265,000
2022	Nicollet Street - 10th to Cul-de-Sac	\$ 158,000	\$ 132,000	\$ 104,000	\$ 97,200	\$ 226,800	\$ 718,000
	Subtotal	\$ 546,000	\$ 359,000	\$ 270,000	\$ 545,100	\$ 1,271,900	\$ 3,832,500
2023	Linton Street - 1st to 4th Street	\$ 159,000	\$ 159,000	\$ 81,000	\$ 133,200	\$ 310,800	\$ 843,000
2023	Seventh Street - West of Holland to Nicollet (9-Ton Design)	\$ 106,000	\$ 106,000	\$ 27,000	\$ 159,000	\$ 371,000	\$ 769,000
2023	4th Street - Galbraith to Rice Street	\$ 159,000	\$ 189,000	\$ 81,000	\$ 115,200	\$ 268,800	\$ 813,000
2023	3rd Street - Main to Rice Street	\$ 239,000	\$ 167,000	\$ 127,000	\$ 207,000	\$ 483,000	\$ 1,223,000
	Subtotal	\$ 504,000	\$ 462,000	\$ 235,000	\$ 481,200	\$ 1,122,800	\$ 3,648,000
2024	Ramsey - 7th to 21st (Mill & Overlay)				\$ 111,300	\$ 259,700	\$ 371,000
2024	Linton Street - 4th Street to 10th Street	\$ 318,000	\$ 162,500	\$ 155,000	\$ 266,400	\$ 621,600	\$ 1,523,500
2024	Rice/17th Street - 14th to 17th/Ramsey to Rice (Pending Funding)	\$ 10,000	\$ 70,000	\$ 64,000		\$ 1,115,000	\$ 1,259,000
	Subtotal	\$ 328,000	\$ 232,500	\$ 219,000	\$ 377,700	\$ 1,996,300	\$ 3,153,500
					2020-2024 Total		\$16,532,500

Future System Plan

Complete Streets Policy: A transportation network approach that considers the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, motorists, commercial and emergency vehicles, hereby referred to as all users. The goal of complete streets is a transportation system that is accessible, equitable and adapted to serve the needs of individuals regardless of how they choose to travel. This Policy will help guide decision makers in planning, designing and constructing transportation networks to reasonably accommodate all anticipated users.

Safe Routes to School Program: An MnDOT program that combines the expertise of multiple state agencies together with national and local partners to provide the resources needed to support walking and biking to school. SRTS programs improve safety, reduce traffic and improve air quality near schools. The City of Blue Earth will primarily focus on adding trail, sidewalk and crossing improvements.

Chapter 7: Utilities

The City of Blue Earth and Blue Earth Light and Water are responsible for the maintenance and operation of various community utilities systems. The City has the typical underground municipal systems consisting of sanitary sewers, water mains and storm sewers that not only support sound urban development, but also help guide it. As a result, the extension of major trunk lines must be made strategically so that land investment can occur in the desired locations in a timely manner, but also so that public expenditures are minimized.

Since 1895, the City of Blue Earth, has owned and operated a public utilities system. This system provides electricity, water, and waste water treatment to City residents and businesses. Blue Earth continues to strive for a system that is environmentally sound, technologically current, efficient and expandable with competitive rates and operated in a progressive, fiscally responsible manner. The City will communicate effectively with other groups and government bodies, and actively participate in local economic development efforts.

Goals, Objectives and Policies

The Utility System Plan, in conjunction with the Land Use Plan, promotes a rational process for making these investments and operating the entire system in an economical manner.

Goal 1: Maintain a public utility system that will continue to be City owned, environmentally sound, technologically current, efficient, and expandable.

1.1 Ownership: Continue to retain municipal ownership of utilities.

1.2 Networking: Maintain strong relationships with the City's wholesale providers of utility services. Evaluate the cost to purchase power and investigate partnerships with other utility suppliers.

1.3 Environmental Protection: Utilize technologically current systems and operating procedures to help protect the natural chemistry and physical quality of surface and ground water as well as provide clean, pure drinking water. Meet or exceed state and/or federal requirements for sewage effluent and comply with other pollution standards.

Goal 2: Operate the public utility system in a progressive, fiscally responsible manner so as to remain economically competitive.

2.1 Fringe Growth: Encourage, through collaborative efforts, fringe growth in a planned, sequential manner and pattern. Maximize the use of existing utility systems through the designation of planned development areas and establish written assessment deferral policies for these areas.

2.2 Operations: Continually upgrade and improve the quality and operational efforts of the City, its staff, equipment, utility systems and procedures through educational programs and effective communication.

2.3 Storm Water Runoff: Reduce capital and maintenance expenditures where practical by controlling excessive volumes and rates of storm water runoff through industrial development.

2.4 Rates: On an ongoing basis, secure information on the rates charged by other utility companies to assure that Blue Earth's rates are competitive.

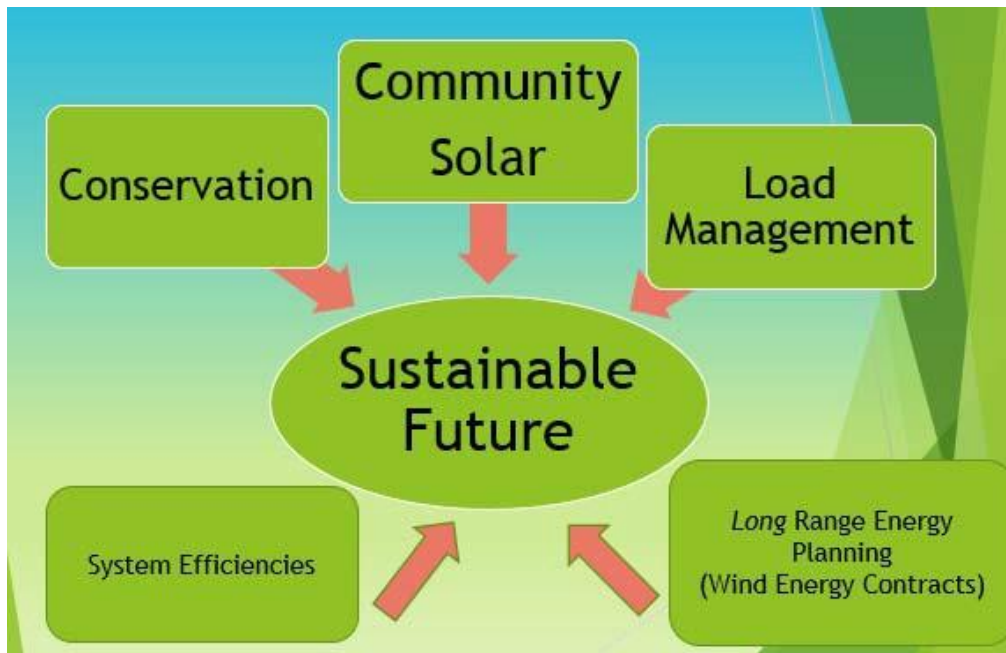
2.5 Capital Improvements Program: Maintain a current and viable Capital Improvements Plan for all City utility systems, which will be consistent with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

Goal 3: Communicate effectively with other groups and government bodies, and actively participate in local economic development efforts.

3.1 Planning: Periodically meet with other interest groups and governmental bodies to assure that emerging development needs are being addressed in and around the Blue Earth area.

3.2 Economic Development: In collaboration with local economic development organizations, utilize municipal utilities to attract residential, commercial and industrial development.

3.3 Opportunities: The City will pursue unique opportunities and enterprising programs which are beneficial to their customers and the City.



Waste Water Treatment

Blue Earth City Council voted to move forward with a \$7.3 million dollar renovation for the city's water treatment facility in June of 2017. The City applied and was approved for a loan through the federal Public Financing Authority to cover the cost of the project. In the past the wastewater treatment plant has already had several issues with equipment failures, and the council has voiced concerns of future problems.

2013/2015 Energy Reconciliation Data

Energy Description	2013 Energy Reconciliation		2015 Energy Reconciliation	
	Kwh	%	Kwh	%
Purchased Gen	60,925,299	100%	57,519,431	100%
Total Billed	57,933,896	95.09%	55,617,614	96.69%
Internal Use	637,372.5	1.05%	591,918	1.03%
Total Metered	58,571,268.5	96.14%	56,209,532	97.72%
Line Loss	2,354,031	3.86%	1,309,899	2.28%



Actual Savings
3.86% to 2.28% – 1.58%

Blue Earth Electric

The City of Blue Earth continues to pursue options in regards to flexible utility options looking towards the future. In 2017 The City installed a new solar energy source for the use of its customers. The solar garden is part of the R4 Solar project powered by Central Municipal Power, which supplies energy to six other Minnesota Cities.

Purchasing solar energy tends to be more expensive than other alternatives. However, with this project, not only can users produce more reusable energy that helps the environment. But they can also earn back some of the money used to purchase panels, through its production and energy market price.

Conservation Efforts

Year (2014-2016)	Commercial, Residential and Industrial kwh	Utility Transformer Upgrades kwh	LED Street lights kwh	Rebates
Total	2,110,222	245,623	39,607	\$105,482.49

Projects and Rebates

28 Commercial and Industrial rebates

- Lighting Controls
- Chillers
- VFD's
- AC units

Blue Earth Water

The City of Blue Earth continues to look towards modernizing all of its water connections looking towards the future. As the City continues to redo streets there will be an emphasis on making new water connections to building that need to be updated. Combining the work on water lines with street work will be beneficial in that it will all be one project.

Chapter 8: Parks and Trails

Mission Statement

In pursuit of achieving a higher quality of life the Blue Earth City Council Parks and Recreation Subcommittee's mission is to ensure maintenance of existing parks and recreational facilities, to establish priorities and oversee new park, trail and recreational development and to support promotions of recreational attractions available in Blue Earth.

Introduction

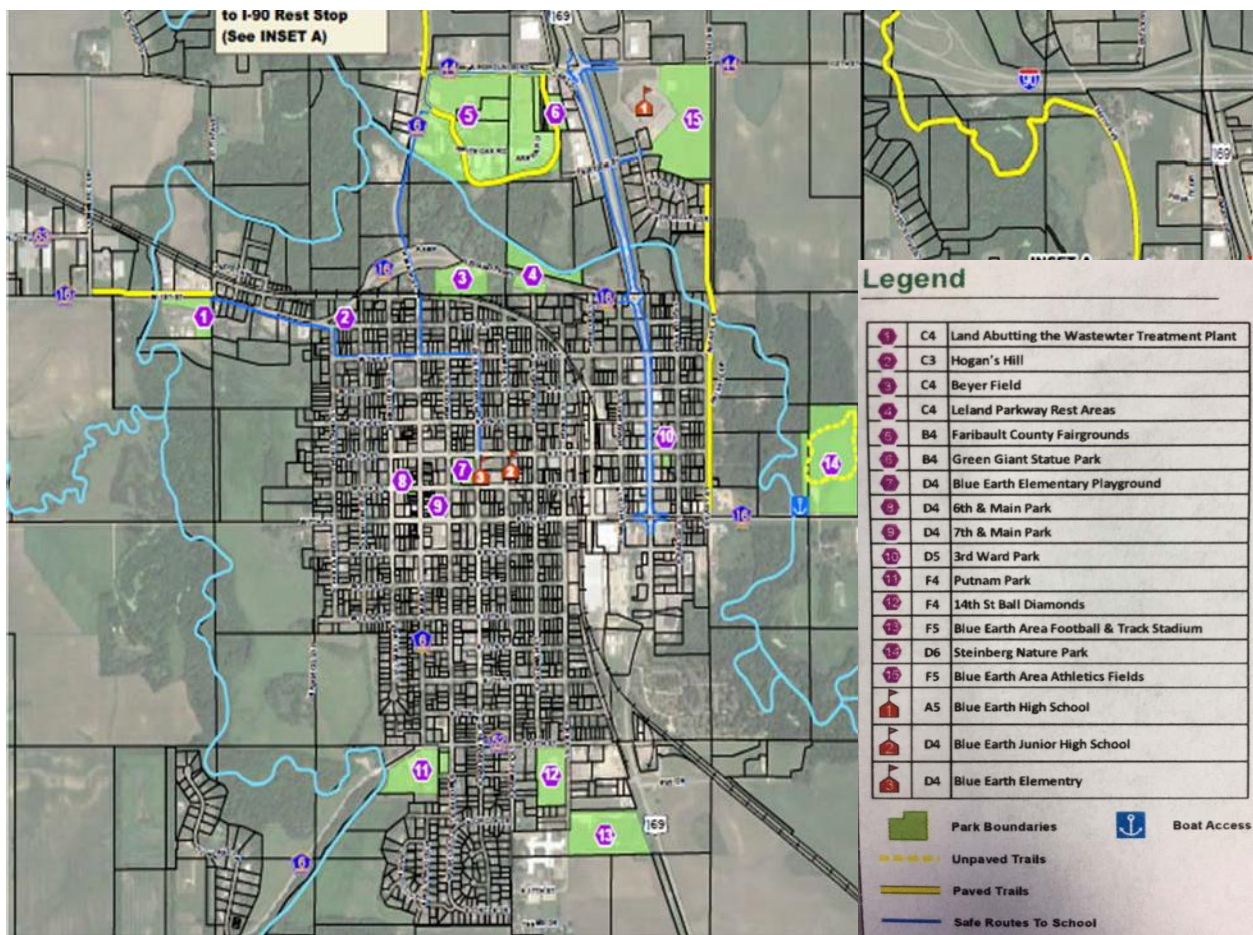
Blue Earth was fortunate to have founders with a vision and a deep interest in parks when they organized the city in 1858. This vision provided Blue Earth with land dedicated for public parks in a uniform pattern across the City. There continues to be a strong interest in outdoor recreation; the population recognizes that recreational interests are changing somewhat and that the system should keep pace. The Parks chapter of this Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2019 based on the 1997 Comprehensive Plan. It includes an evaluation of the current park and recreation system, more detailed park and facility standards, a trail plan, future park needs, park renovation and facility priorities.

Park Inventory

1. 7th & Main Park (Lot 1, Block 4 Young's Addition),
2. 6th & Main Park (Lots 26,27,28, &29 A.L. 95),
3. Faribault County Fairgrounds,
4. Green Giant Park (Block 1, Fairboard Addition),
5. 3rd Ward Park (Lots 2 & 3, A.L.83),
6. Putnam Park,
7. Beyer Field,
8. 14th St. Ball Diamonds (Outlot A, Buccaneer Add.),
9. Leland Parkway Rest Areas (city property abutting Leland Parkway between Main & Hood Streets)

10. Land abutting the Wastewater Treatment Plant not enclosed by fence.
11. Steinberg Park
12. Blue Earth High School Athletic Fields
13. Blue Earth Elementary Playground
14. Wilson Field

Existing Parks and Trails Map



Goals and Policies

The following section describes the goals and policies for the Blue Earth park system.

Goal 1: Ensure that residents in each neighborhood have easy access to a park.

1.1 Land Acquisition: The City will acquire land for parks in emerging neighborhoods prior to or concurrent with private land development. The approximate location of proposed new parks is shown on the Land Use Plan and Park and Trail Plan. Land will be acquired by direct purchase and through dedication at the time of platting.

1.2 Sidewalks and Trails: The sidewalk and trail systems will maintain access to and between parks and public facilities. All residents should be within walking distance of a neighborhood park, which is considered to be four blocks (1/3 of a mile).

1.3 Sharing of Facilities: The City will communicate with local school systems to avoid the duplication of programs and facilities. Existing public and quasi-public facilities (such as Faribault County Fairgrounds) will be utilized for recreation programs to minimize capital expenditures.

Goal 2: Provide a range of community-scale and neighborhood-scale activities through the overall park system.

2.1 Passive Recreation: Increased emphasis will be given to nature preservation and passive recreation (picnicking, sitting, scenic views and nature study).

2.3 Four Seasons of Activities: With continued emphasis on year round activities, the City will continue to consider and pursue recreational ideas for all seasons of the year.

Goal 3: Continue to build a system of interconnected trails and sidewalks through the City for pedestrians and bicyclists.

3.1 Trails: Blue Earth offers a variety of walking and biking trails that are a part of the parks and recreational system. While maintaining the current trail system, the city will consider and pursue options to better the trails by connecting, creating, and extending them to offer a greater variety of options for recreation.

3.2 Sidewalks: Sidewalks conditions were evaluated by surveying as of 2016 and recorded. The city will continue to pursue sidewalk maintenance where needed. Additional sidewalks will be constructed where best fit to consider the safety of pedestrians.

3.3 County Roads: Blue Earth will encourage Faribault County to build paved shoulders along all of their roads outside the City.

Goal 4: Use public regulation or land ownership to protect special natural features, but not at the expense of the neighborhood park system.

4.1 Floodways and Floodplains: Blue Earth will continue to protect, through its zoning powers, a system of open space in river floodplains.

4.2 Blue Earth River: Additional land should be acquired along the Blue Earth River for trails and passive recreation.

4.3 Tree Preservation: The City will study and adopt regulations to protect significant woodlands.

4.4 Wetlands: The City will explore ways to enhance protection and management of wetlands and storm water ponding areas.

Goal 5: Maintain high quality park facilities in an efficient manner.

5.1 Role of the Park System: The City regards parks, trails and sidewalks not merely as amenities but also as necessary elements in its effort to increase and protect the quality of residential development, fiscal health and private economic development.

5.2 Participation: Citizen participation will be encouraged in all stages of the planning and design of parks.

5.3 Other Organizations: The City will continue its cooperative relationship with Blue Earth school systems, and local civic organizations in the planning, design and funding of park system improvements and recreation programs.

5.4 Appearance: Parks should be attractive and reflect the community of Blue Earth. Emphasis will continue to be placed on having parks that are clean, neat and well maintained. The appearance of the parks will be improved through landscaping and signage.

5.5 Special Needs: The needs of an aging population and the physically handicapped will be considered when designing park facilities. The City will follow the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

5.6 Coordination: The Park and Recreation Commission will be given an opportunity to review and comment on all major subdivisions prior to Planning Commission review.

5.7 Land Use Planning: Parks may be used as a transitional land use between different types of development that are not complementary such as single-family housing and commercial development.

Park Descriptions

7th and Main: A small scale park of around 2,000 square feet, and located in the center of the old downtown. This park features a bench for sitting and an open lawn for leisure.

6th and Main Park: Slightly larger than 7th and main but still located in the center of the old downtown. The 6,600 square foot park features a gazebo and several benches to use.

Fairbault County Fairgrounds: Located right on North Main Street. The Fairgrounds offer ball fields, a walking/biking trail, camping and bathrooms. There is also a fitness center that is run by the City of Blue Earth. The campground has 4 tent sites and 9 electrical sites with full hookups. There is a fee of \$20.00 per night for the electrical sites and \$10.00 per night for the tent sites. *(This is a change from previous years)*. The City allows a maximum of five consecutive nights of camping at the campground unless prior arrangements have been made. There is a \$5.00 charge for waste tank dumping. A payment box is located at the site.

Green Giant Park: Located on the north end of town, this park perhaps is the most popular attraction Blue Earth has to offer. It is home to the Green Giant Statue and the future museum for the statue as well. Whether it be tourists stopping by off the highway or people from other countries, the future development of this park will be crucial looking towards the future.

3rd Ward Park: This neighborhood park along 5th street is roughly 20,000 square feet. It features playground equipment and plenty of open space for activities and leisure.

Hogan's Hill: This spot of land is not officially recognized, but is used for sledding in the winter.

Putnam Park: Located on the south end of Main St and roughly nine acres. Putnam park offers a great variety of opportunities for the residents. The features include a swimming pool that offers lap swimming and a waterslide, six tennis courts that will have pickle ball lines added in the summer of 2017, disc golf course, a playground, picnic shelter, and plenty of open space for activities.

Beyer Field: Located on the north side of town on Leland parkway, Beyer field is mainly used for winter recreation. The park is close to a total of three acres and features an ice rink with a warming house and a hill for sledding.

14th Street Ball Diamonds: This Park is a total of around three acres and is located on the south end of town. The park includes three softball fields and a playground.

Land abutting the Wastewater Treatment Plant: Open land awaiting future proposals.

Leland Parkway Rest Areas: A nature park located just to the east of Beyer field. This park has plenty of open room for recreation and leisure.

Steinberg Park: Located 1/4 mile east of Blue Earth on County Road 16. The 33 acre park provides a natural setting for visitors to enjoy native prairie plants, river views, woodlands, birding and natural habitat. The Steinberg Nature Park has a picnic shelter with a restroom, outer woods trail/picnic area and a 1/2 mile crushed limestone trail that is accessible for all users. Shelter reservations are \$50 for the day and are taken at City Hall

Blue Earth High School Athletic Fields: Located on the grounds of Blue Earth High school. This park features one softball field in addition to a football field.

Blue Earth Elementary Playground: This park is located on the grounds of the Blue Earth Elementary school. The features in this park include five tennis courts, playground equipment, paved asphalt area, and open grass for activities.

Wilson Field: Located in the southeast of town along highway 169. This sports complex includes a football field along with areas for track & field.

Dog Parks: Recently established in the 700 Block of East 2nd Street and the 200 Block of West 14th Street to provide a place where dogs can run freely off-leash and socialize with other dogs.

Parks and Trails System Recommendations

Park Maintenance Blue Earth's park system is largely developed. Maintenance, cleanliness and safety of the parks and recreation facilities is a key to user satisfaction. The parks should be maintained at a level equal to or better than their current level of upkeep. This will also mean regularly scheduled investment in and renovation of parks when facilities are worn out or no longer meet public needs.

Trails, Lanes, and Routes Blue Earth offers a variety of trails and paths and are low maintenance, but still require care. It is in the best interest of the city to look towards the future in expanding their trail system and creating connections with the current trails and paths.

Natural Resources

Wetlands – Wetlands are important to natural water recharge areas and diverse habitats. The edges of wetlands should be buffered by natural vegetation. Boardwalks and sensitively designed trails can bring people into wetland areas to experience wildlife and aquatic plants. Protection and management of wetlands (i.e., to prevent siltation) is important to long-term health.

Floodplain – The Blue Earth River can have large seasonal and storm event floods extend well beyond the normal water level. These floodplain areas should be protected from development and can be pleasing recreation and open space lands. Trails, canoe and boat launches can provide access and recreation opportunities.

Tree Preservation –Blue Earth’s urban tree canopy and natural woodlands are great assets to the community. They provide beauty, shade, wind protection and wildlife habitat. Woodlands should be protected from clear cutting through policy or ordinance in order to help preserve the wooded character of the city and the neighborhoods. Tree planting should occur when the character of a development site is materially changed.

Invasive Species Management – Blue Earth like many Minnesota communities is affected by invasive species. A long-term focused management strategy should be put in place. The first step is to identify threatened high quality natural areas and to address feasible removal on these key areas first. Removal can be time and labor intensive, so a volunteer program can sometimes be an effective tool to fight invasive species.

Green Practices and Sustainability – The Blue Earth Department can be a leader in sustainable practices in their role as stewards of the city’s public lands. This can be achieved through such practices energy conserving and environmentally sensitive park design and the judicious use of pesticides and herbicides. The Parks Department can lead by example and also incorporate green practices, sustainable landscaping, and wise water use into its recreation programming. It can also promote walking and bicycling to encourage active healthy lifestyles and alternative forms of transportation.

Community Education

Blue Earth is proud to offer a broad range of activities, lessons, and opportunities through its Community Education program. The program offers year round chances for both kids and adults to get out and enjoy their favorite activities. The programs offered play a vital role in engaging the younger population throughout the summer.

Capital Improvement Plan

As part of the implementation of the plan for parks, trails and recreation facilities the City should adopt a capital improvements plan. A capital improvement plan (CIP) is a five-year plan that is prepared annually and lists proposed projects that ought to be completed to address needs and deficiencies anticipated within the subsequent five years. That list should be based upon a review of the system facilities in conjunction with the Plan goals, objectives and policies, and anticipated growth and development. Projects are ranked in priority, based upon need and readiness for construction.

Future Projects/Developments

The City of Blue Earth will continue to look towards future opportunities and possibilities with its park and trails system. Having attractive parks and trails that are well maintained will be key in attracting and retaining citizens to the community.

The most significant development was the construction of the Green Giant Museum at the Green Giant Park in 2018. This museum expanded the already existing park and draws thousands of tourists to Blue Earth every year.

The City is also looking into the possibility of constructing a soccer field at the Fairgrounds Park. The benefits of having a soccer field are that it is low maintenance once constructed. Adding this feature to the City will also be beneficial because it will attract more residents to Leland Park and perhaps individuals from outside of the City as well.

The Waterpark at Putnam Park is one of the more popular attractions in Blue Earth, and has seen steady use during the summer. The waterpark currently has two waterslides. The addition of the second waterslide in 2019 will further attract people to the waterpark and spark more interest in the park.

Blue Earth is beginning the process of developing houses in the northeast part of the city just north of the high school. There is a possibility of putting a trail around the water feature that currently resides next to the future development. There are also the possibilities of stocking the pond with fish, which will allow for another fishing spot within the city. Additionally, another park is planned to be added as part of the development. This will serve as a great amenity for the residents on the north end of town.