



Kanabec County

Comprehensive Plan

2050
Navigating
Our Future



KANABEC
COUNTY
Minnesota

February 2022



Office of the
County Coordinator
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Proceedings of the County Board

State of Minnesota
County of Kanabec
Office of the County Coordinator
Mora, Kanabec County, Minnesota
Minutes of the County Board Held: February 1, 2022

Action #16 – Dennis McNally introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption:

Resolution #16 – 2-1-22

RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE KANABEC COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

WHEREAS, the proposed Kanabec County Comprehensive Plan is a tool that provides a process for establishing a common set of goals and policies for addressing the land use and development issues for the County and is intended to guide the future growth and development of Kanabec County in a manner that conforms with existing plans and complies with other applicable planning statutes; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Kanabec County Comprehensive Plan reflects a community planning process conducted in 2021-2022 involving elected officials, appointed officials, community organizations, the public at large, and other stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, on December 20, 2021 and January 24, 2022 the Kanabec County Planning Commission conducted public hearings on the proposed Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Kanabec County Planning Commission considered the proposed Comprehensive Plan and all public comments, and thereafter submitted its recommendation to the Kanabec County Board of Commissioners; and

WHEREAS the Kanabec County Planning Commission has recommended a revised Comprehensive Plan for adoption, and

BE IT RESOLVED that the Kanabec County Board of Commissioners hereby ordains that the following Kanabec County Comprehensive Plan be adopted immediately and is effective as of the date of this resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Kanabec County Comprehensive Plan supersedes the 2002 Comprehensive Plan.

The motion for the adoption of the foregoing Resolution was duly seconded by Rick Mattson and upon a vote being taken thereon, the following voted:

IN FAVOR THEREOF: Les Nielsen, Rick Mattson, Dennis McNally

OPPOSED: Craig Smith

ABSTAIN: None

whereupon the resolution was declared duly passed and adopted.

Certification

I, the undersigned, being the duly appointed recording officer of the County of Kanabec, State of Minnesota, certify that the information above has been carefully compared with the original records of Board of Commissioners, Kanabec County, Minnesota, those records being in my custody and on file in the Coordinator's Office, and is a true and correct copy of these minutes and that the same has not been amended or rescinded and is in full force and effect.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto placed my hand and signature: Certified this 1st day of February, 2022.

Kris McNally, Board Clerk



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Prepared by HKGi



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Chapter 1 Introduction

The Kanabec County Comprehensive Plan has been developed to guide current actions and policy to influence the future of Kanabec County. This Plan is the second formally adopted County Comprehensive Plan. The first Plan was adopted in 2002. This update acknowledges the past, current and anticipated growth and development trends confronting Kanabec County; and has been developed in an effort to proactively manage these changes. The Kanabec County Comprehensive Plan consists of four chapters:

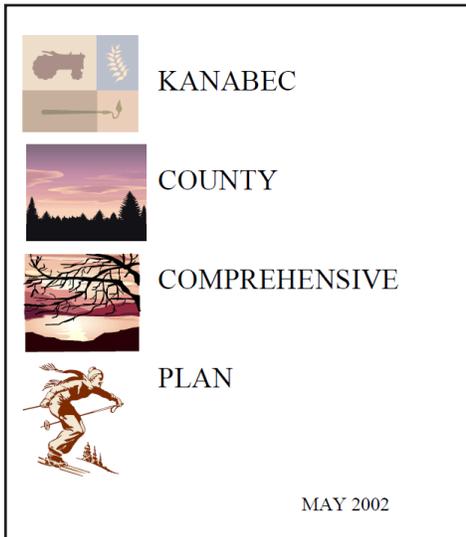
- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Existing Conditions & Trends
- Chapter 3: Focus Areas
- Chapter 4: Implementation

The Comprehensive Plan should be viewed as a growth management and economic development tool, which provides the necessary guidance to address current and future trends in the County. It should be used by the County and its local partners (townships and cities) when making informed decisions about land uses, economic

Legislative Authority

Minnesota counties are given authority to plan for and manage development within their jurisdictions under Minnesota Statutes 394.21 to 394.37. The County Planning Enabling Act states that county boards in Minnesota “shall have the power and authority to prepare and adopt by ordinance, a comprehensive plan.” The purpose of the plan being to provide a means for “promoting the health, safety, morals, and welfare of the community.” This Plan provides a process for establishing a common set of goals and policies for addressing the land use and development issues for the County.

The Comprehensive Plan, when adopted by the County Board, becomes the basis for official controls adopted under the provisions of Minnesota Statutes Sections 394.21 to 394.37. Official controls here refer to township zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations and other environmental management ordinances.



2002 Kanabec County Comprehensive Plan

The first Comprehensive Plan was adopted in May of 2002 as a policy guide for managing growth and development in Kanabec County. Components of this plan were used or modified to create the 2021 Comprehensive Plan that now looks out to the year 2050.

development initiatives, infrastructure needs, and natural resource protection. The Plan should be revised and updated periodically (every 5 to 10 years) to revisit trends, policy direction, and the Plan’s implementation.

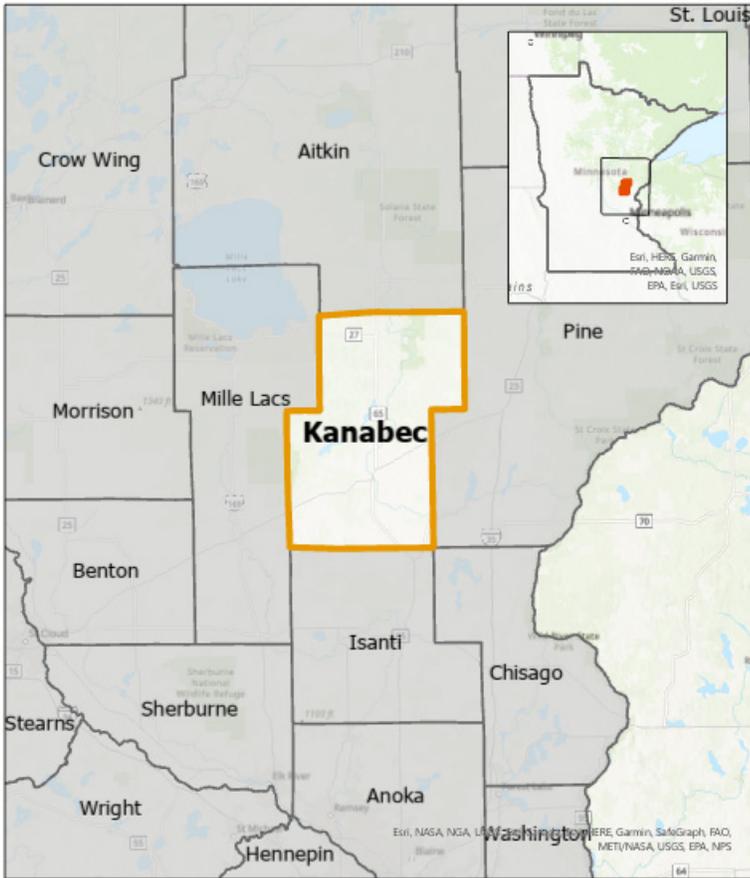
Purpose of the Plan

The primary role played by the Comprehensive Plan is to serve as a statement reflecting the desired direction and vision for future development occurring in Kanabec County, and a strategic pathway for how that vision can be reached. It should reflect the unique character of the County, established and emerging trends, infrastructure needs, environmental and natural resource protection, and build upon County strengths.

While intended to guide change, this Plan should remain flexible to respond to the changing needs, conditions and trends of the County. This is a critical step in the planning process. Thus, future decisions should be evaluated against the vision, goals and policies laid out in the Comprehensive Plan. Some decisions will align well, while others may not. This could quite possibly lead to changes to the vision or the plan. These proposals will trigger the community planning process, which should engage community members and stakeholders on updates to the plan.

The Comprehensive Plan can help:

- Conserve important natural resources and community character
- Create the opportunity for residents to participate in guiding the community’s future
- Identify issues, stay ahead of trends, and accommodate change
- Guide and manage economic development
- Ensure more efficient and cost-effective infrastructure and public services
- Provide an opportunity to consider the future implications of today’s decisions
- Protect property rights and values



Location

Kanabec County is located in east central Minnesota. Mora, the County seat, is located in the south-central part of the County, and is approximately 60 miles north of the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. Other incorporated cities include, Grasston, Ogilvie, and Quamba. The County has a total area of approximately 522 square miles.



Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee Members

- Dennis McNally, County Board
- Teresa Wickeham, Environmental Services
- Ryan Carda, Environmental Services
- Chad Gramentz, County Engineer
- Kris McNally, County Coordinator
- Heidi Steinmetz, EDA Director
- Garret D'Aigle, Chamber of Commerce
- Kim Johnson, SWCD Board
- Doug Sabinash, Planning Commission
- Allen Schnack, District 1 Township Rep.
- Bruce Berg, District 3 Township Rep.
- Ken Mattson, District 4 Township Rep.
- Dan Nowling, District 5 Township Rep.
- Kyle Shepard, City Rep. (Mora)
- Roger Johnson, Lake Association Rep. (Lewis Lake)
- Bill Olen, Agriculture Community
- Chad Barnick, Agriculture Community

The Planning Process

The planning process took place over the course of six months starting in July of 2021 and was led by a Project Team (Environmental Services Department staff and the consultant team). Many of the engagement activities focused on updates to the Plan's goals and policies, while finding opportunities to better understand the County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) (see Figure 1). A summary of the Plan's engagement activities are listed below.



Pop-Up Events

- County staff collected feedback and shared project information to visitors at the County Fair (July 2021).
- An information kiosk and SWOT questionnaire was set up at the Kanabec Government Center during the duration of the project.



Newsletters & Mailings

- Regular mailings were sent to the Cities and Townships informing them on how to provide feedback (e.g., online and scheduled listing sessions).
- A newsletter add was published in the Kanabec County Times to promote the project and its website (September 2021).



Online Engagement

A project website was created to solicit feedback and promote the project. The project website included an "ideas wall" that allowed people to post their ideas and suggestions about the County's future. Nearly 200 unique users visited the project website between July and October of 2021.



Township Listening Sessions

- The County held two Township Listening Sessions to engage Town Board members from all 15 townships. The purpose of these meetings were to discuss emerging trends and draft materials. It was also an opportunity to truly listen to Town Board members on what they see as the primary issues and concerns of their communities.



Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC)

- The CPAC included representation from various communities (agricultural and lake associations) and commissions to help guide the planning process. The CPAC helped established the Plan's goals, policies, and Focus Areas.



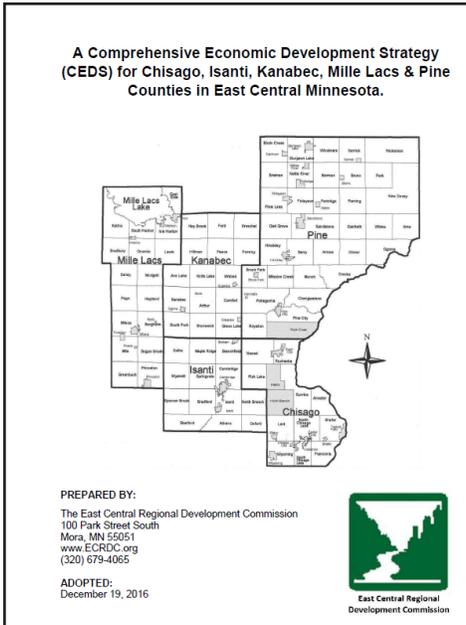
Kanabec County Fair 2021 Photo Credit: Kanabec County Times

Figure 1. Common Themes from the Public Engagement Process

County Strengths	County Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government (Townships) • Natural Resources • Schools • Health Care options • Community Events • Its People 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of regional parks/ recreational opportunities • Limited broadband • County image pertaining to taxes and junk yards • Lack of affordable/workforce housing & higher paying jobs • Consistent zoning regulations
County Opportunities	County Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and expand the Economic Development Authority (EDA) • Create a regional park and trail system • Welcome new residents and support work-from-home lifestyles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declining population • Aging population • Loss in farming (land and number of farmers) • County/township relationship

Past Planning Efforts

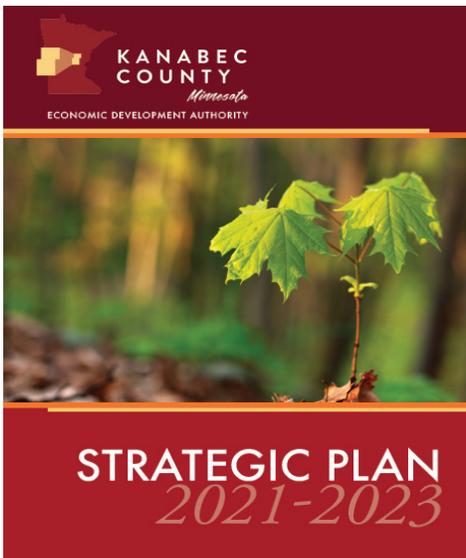
The Comprehensive Plan is part of a network of plans that review current conditions and guide future decision making for Kanabec County and the wider region. These plans were leveraged to help inform this Plan's existing conditions, focus areas, goals, and policies. These plans should be viewed as complimentary and supplementary to the 2021 Kanabec County Comprehensive Plan.



Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs & Pine Counties in East Central Minnesota

This strategic plan was written by The East Central Regional Development Commission for the five county 7E economic development region (Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, and Pine County). This document takes a “10,000 foot view” of the five-county region from an economic development perspective. The document details current economic conditions, catalogs the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and suggests opportunities to capitalize on the strengths and opportunities and mitigate the region’s weaknesses and threats.

The document takes into account and integrates, where appropriate, other planning efforts effecting the region including, but not limited to the DevelopMN document that was developed by the Minnesota Association of Development Organizations (MADO).



Kanabec County Economic Development Authority Strategic Plan 2021-2023

This document provides an overview of Kanabec County EDA’s strategic plan and work for the next three years. This strategic plan is the culmination of a planning process that began in March 2021. The planning confirmed the EDA’s mission and objectives, provided new strategic directions, and established action steps and outcomes to advance the strategic directions.

The Plan’s strategic direction is focused on the following:

1. Promoting & Building Our Business Community
2. Developing and Expanding Broadband Availability
3. Connecting Businesses to Training Resources
4. Supporting Child Care Growth Opportunities
5. Coordinating & Advocating for Housing

The Kanabec County Water Plan (2016)

The purpose of Kanabec County's Comprehensive Local Water Plan is to identify existing and potential challenges or opportunities for the protection, management, and development of water resources in the area; and to develop and implement an action plan that will serve to protect the County's water resources. This plan hopes to integrate local initiatives with existing state and federal water related programs and funding sources to develop the most effective management solutions.

5 Year Highway Construction Improvement Program Plan

Each year the Kanabec County Public Works Director presents a plan to the Kanabec County Board of Commissioners that includes highway construction projects for the next five years. A project's scope and/or timeline may be adjusted due to factors like funding, environmental permitting, etc. This Plan does not include general maintenance activities, such as graveling roads and crack sealing.

Kanabec County Strategic Child Care Supply Plan

Kanabec County was selected by First Children's Finance to receive community consultation around the supply of child care. Generous funding for this work was provided by the Minnesota Department of Human Services. As a recipient, Kanabec County participated in a process that included:

- A community planning meeting,
- Identification of SMART goals to increase high quality child care slots,
- Planning support, facilitation, technical assistance, and financial modeling assistance from First Children's Finance, and
- A Strategic Child Care Supply Plan that guides the Kanabec County Team in efforts to increase its supply of high quality child care.

This Plan is intended to address the child care shortage in Kanabec County and to develop strategies to increase the number of high quality child care slots available.

Robust Broadband Network Feasibility Study (2012)

Commissioned by the Kanabec Broadband Initiative (KBI) to determine options for increasing broadband connectivity within the County with the understanding that improved broadband communications is an important component to remain competitive in a global environment.

The feasibility study was being updated during the Comprehensive Plan update. Please reference the County's most recent Broadband Feasibility Study for more information.

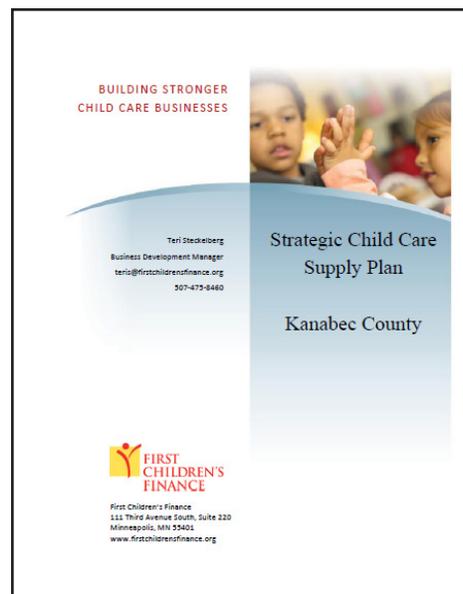
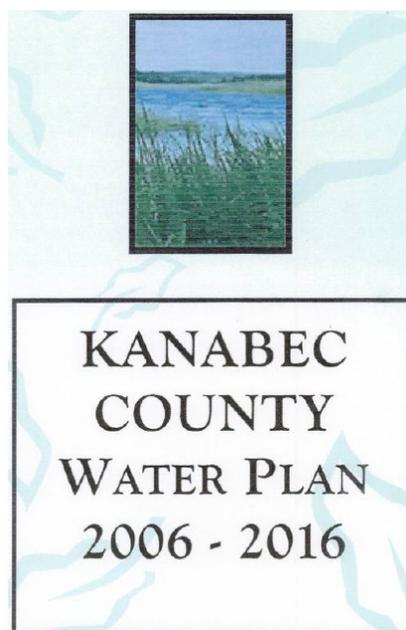




Photo Credit: Kanabec County Historical Society

History & Local Context

In order to make conscientious recommendations and decisions about the current trajectory of the County it is important to look back and recognize the of the history of the area and the impact that history has on the present situation.

The Beginning

Kanabec County had its start during the last ice age some 7,000 years ago when the last great ice sheet receded from this area, leaving the land covered with glacial drift up to a hundred feet thick in spots. This drift eventually transformed itself into the soil structure of the county. This newly re-emerged landscape eventually developed into the lush old-growth forests America's indigenous peoples found here. Thousands of years later according to the earliest identified recorded accounts, it is thought that two French fur traders, Radisson and Groseillier, together with a large band of Huron and Ottawa Indians, spent the winter of 1659-1660 on Knife Lake, north of present-day Mora.

Our Name

The County bears a name given by William H.C. Folsom of Taylor's Falls, who proposed its formation in a legislative bill to the State Senate in 1858. Kanabec (Ka-Nay'-Bec) is the Ojibwe word for snake. The name evidently was chosen because it was also the Ojibwe word for the winding river, which traverses the county from north to south. This bill, set the stage for the organization of the county in 1859; the year after Minnesota became a state. Prior to 1849, Kanabec was part of St. Croix County, Wisconsin. Then until 1852 it was part of Ramsey County, then until 1854 it was part of Chisago County, and then until its organization in 1859 it was part of Pine County.

County Seat

Brunswick served as the first county seat of Kanabec County. The village was then located about two miles northeast of its present site, situated at the Millet Rapids on the Snake River. A two- room log building was built to house the county records.

Brunswick remained as county seat until 1882, when a vote was taken and the county seat was transferred to the newly platted Village of Mora, and a new courthouse and jail were built there. Up to 1882, Kanabec County had remained attached to Pine County for judicial purposes. In 1882, the first term of court was held at Brunswick, and in 1884, the second term of court was held in Mora with F.M. Crosby, Judge; S.E. Tallman, Clerk; and C.E. Williams, Sheriff.

Early Settlements

Mora was platted by Myron R. Kent in 1882. It was named at the suggestion of Isreal Israelson, a settler then living near Lewis Lake, who mentioned to Mr. Kent that it would be nice if he named the new village after his hometown in Mora, in Dalama, Sweden. Accounts of the early days of Mora suggest that it enjoyed “boon” times almost immediately, being situated on the new railroad, and in a great position to serve as supplier to all the logging camps still existing at the time.

Industry

Logging was Kanabec County’s first industry; starting back in 1837. In that year, vast tracts of land, including what was to become Kanabec County, were obtained in a treaty with the Ojibwe Indians, being purchased from them for about 1/3 cents per acre. The treaty called for the government to make payments to the Ojibwe for the next twenty years. When the treaty was ratified by Congress logging began in earnest.

From the 1850’s throughout the next half-century, the logging industry flourished in Central and Northern Minnesota. In Kanabec County, the logging companies built dams on rivers and streams, including the Snake, Knife, Ann, Groundhouse and others to build up a large enough head of water to float cut logs through these waterways. In the latter stages of the timber harvest, the O’Neal Brothers overcame the lack of negotiable streams in that area by building a logging railroad from Knife Lake northwestward almost to Isle, enabling them to bring logs down to Knife Lake, where they would travel down the aforementioned waterways.

Once the timber was harvested, the logging companies had no further interest in the territory, and moved on. Land companies followed in their wake, relying on cheap prices and extravagant claims to entice settlers, such as calling Kanabec County “the land of the big red clover.” Settlers did come, and gradually the land was cleared and built up the agricultural base that still exists in the county today. Potatoes became the county’s first cash crop. Warehouses sprang up to buy, store and ship the vegetable to markets. In Grasston a starch factory was built to handle surplus produce, much of the processed starch going to the garment industry in the East.



Photo Credit: Kanabec County Historical Society



Photo Credit: Kanabec County Historical Society



Kanabec County's natural resources are among the defining features of the County.

Forests, lakes, wetlands, mining, and brushlands make up over 50% of the land use in Kanabec County.

A majority of the elements of the Plan relate directly or indirectly to land use, that is, all factors mentioned in this plan have impacts on either the existing land use or future land use of the County. As such it is important to have an understanding of current land use patterns.

Today's Landscape

Forestlands account for 42.5% of the total county area, and dominates the northern and western portion of the County. Scattered woodlots are found throughout the County and can be generally associated with home sites making up the majority of the rural residential development.

Pasture and open land account for 19.9% of the county's area, this category includes open and pasture lands not specifically cultivated. A lesser amount of rural residential development also currently occurs on these lands. Cultivated lands make up 20% of land use and are defined as lands which have been recently tilled or shows evidence of a recent harvest. The remainder of the County's land is divided among wetland, open water, and other rural residential development.





Chapter 2 Existing Conditions & Trends

This chapter of the Plan highlights some of the demographic, social and economic trends that will likely shape Kanabec County's future in the coming years. These trends may have an enormous impact on land use patterns, local economy, and character of the county. In that respect, these trends should be monitored over time by the County to determine their short- and long-term impacts to the area. More importantly, they should be reflected upon when making future decisions about the County to ensure we are meeting the needs of present generations, while adapting to changes in populations (demographics) and the economy. Recognizing these trends as part of the decision making process will help make the County a stronger place to live, work, and play.

The following section provides a snapshot of trends that may influence the County's future.

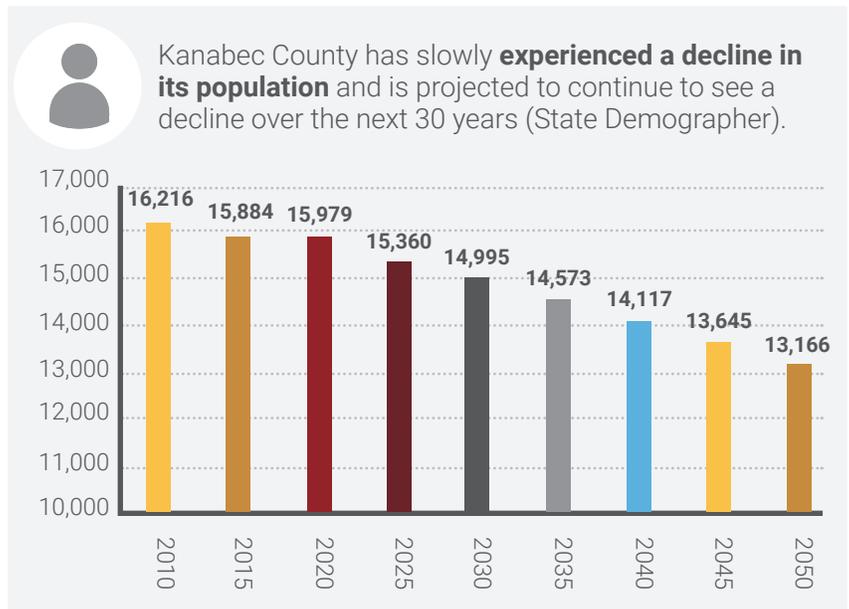
Statewide Trends

The following statistics are credited and provided by the State Demographer.

- **Population:** Minnesota is anticipated to gain 1.1 million new residents between 2018 and 2070; however, increasing urbanization will lead to a declining population in more than two-thirds of Minnesota's counties.
- **Diversity:** Communities of Color are driving our state's population growth and, as such, addressing racial and ethnic disparities will become imperative for the prosperity and quality of life for all Minnesotans.
- **Aging:** The share of Minnesota's population aged 85 and above is expected to more than double in the next 35 years – from 120,000 to over 270,000.
 - » Infrastructure for transportation, care giving, health care, and social support will be vital to maintaining quality of life for the increasing number of aging adults
 - » In the next decade, children aged 0 to 14 will be outnumbered by retirees aged 65 and above for the first time in Minnesota's history. In total, Minnesotans of retirement age and above numbered 889,511 in 2018 - an increase of 136,492 in the short half-decade since 2013. This number is expected to exceed 1.26 million in the next 20 years.
- **Employment:** Workforce shortages and job vacancies in Greater Minnesota are a mounting trend. Since 2005, the number of job vacancies has doubled in every region in Minnesota. This trend is related in part to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also due to longer term systemic trends such as stagnate economic growth, an aging workforce heading toward retirement, and fewer young people to replace them

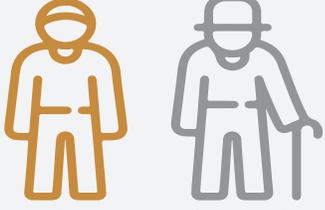
Kanabec County Trends

- **Population:** The share of older residents is increasing and the population over all is on the decline. In Kanabec County 78% of the population is over the age of 18 and 20% is over the age of 65. The number of people over the age of 65 will continue to grow over the next decade as the "baby boom" population ages in place.



- **Households:** There are approximately 6,439 households in Kanabec County and 4,358 families with an average household size of 2.89. Household sizes have stayed relatively the same since 2010.
- **Farming:** The number of farms and the share of land use devoted to farming in the County is decreasing. The 2017 Census of Agriculture reported 624 farms in Kanabec County and in 2007 the Census reported 701 farms. During this time period, the amount of land in farms dropped by 23,108 acres.
- **Employment:** The work available tends to be lower paying jobs that encourage people to pursue employment outside of the county. Within Kanabec County there are 4,910 jobs. Most of these jobs are in the retail (18%), manufacturing (16%) or health care and social assistance sector (8%). 52% of the County's residents work outside of the County and have on average a 30-minute commute (2019 Census est.). The median household income in Kanabec County is \$57,163. The median household income in 2010 was \$51,836 (2019 Census est.). The statewide median household income is \$70,306.
- **Broadband:** Work from home and hybrid working alternatives were already on the rise but the trend was expedited by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The rise in work from home also served to intensify the connection between broadband access and economic growth. In Kanabec County only 76% of households have a broadband internet subscription. These households are primarily located in cities (Mora, Ogilvie, and Grasston). A large area of Kanabec County (90%), including townships and rural areas, are undeserved or unserved by broadband Internet (2019 Census est. and MN DEED).

78% --- 20%



78% of Kanabec County's population is over the age of 18 and **20%** is over the age of 65. The number of people over the age of 65 will continue to grow over the next decade as the "baby boom" population ages in place.



-77 Farms

The **2017 Census** of Agriculture reported **624 farms** in Kanabec County and in **2007** the Census reported **701 farms**. During this time period, **the amount of land in farms dropped by 23,108 acres.**



Kanabec County is home to 4,910 jobs. Most of these jobs are in the **retail (18%), manufacturing (16%) or health care and social assistance sector (8%).** 52% of the County's residents work outside of the County and have on **average a 30 minute commute** (2019 Census est.).



76% of households in Kanabec County **have a broadband internet subscription.** These households are primarily located in cities (Mora, Ogilvie, and Grasston). However, **a large area of Kanabec County (90%), including townships and rural areas, are undeserved or unserved** by broadband Internet (2019 Census est. and MN DEED).

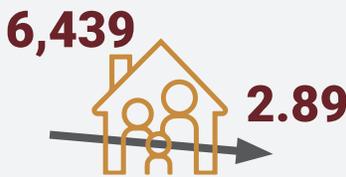
General Trends

There are also other wider trends being seen throughout the county and across the nation that are likely to have an effect on land use in Kanabec County which should be kept in consideration.

- **Industrial Trends:** Warehousing is becoming even more of a thriving industry with the shift to e-commerce, as well as a related boom in manufacturing.. Thus, there is a growing demand for land to accommodate industrial and manufacturing uses, in addition to workers. National labor shortages have impacted the pace in which businesses can expand.
- **Work from Home:** As more workers work from home, the demand for office space square footage is decreasing, and 1 in 4 Americans (26%) are assumed to be working from home and for the foreseeable future.
- **Housing:** The nation is experiencing a housing shortage. Apartment demand is on the rise and more modular housing options are becoming increasingly common to control construction costs. People are also looking for ways to accommodate life changes or make additional income through the increased construction of and interest in accessory dwelling units.



The **median household income** in Kanabec County is **\$57,163**. The **median household income** in 2010 was **\$51,836** (2019 Census est.).



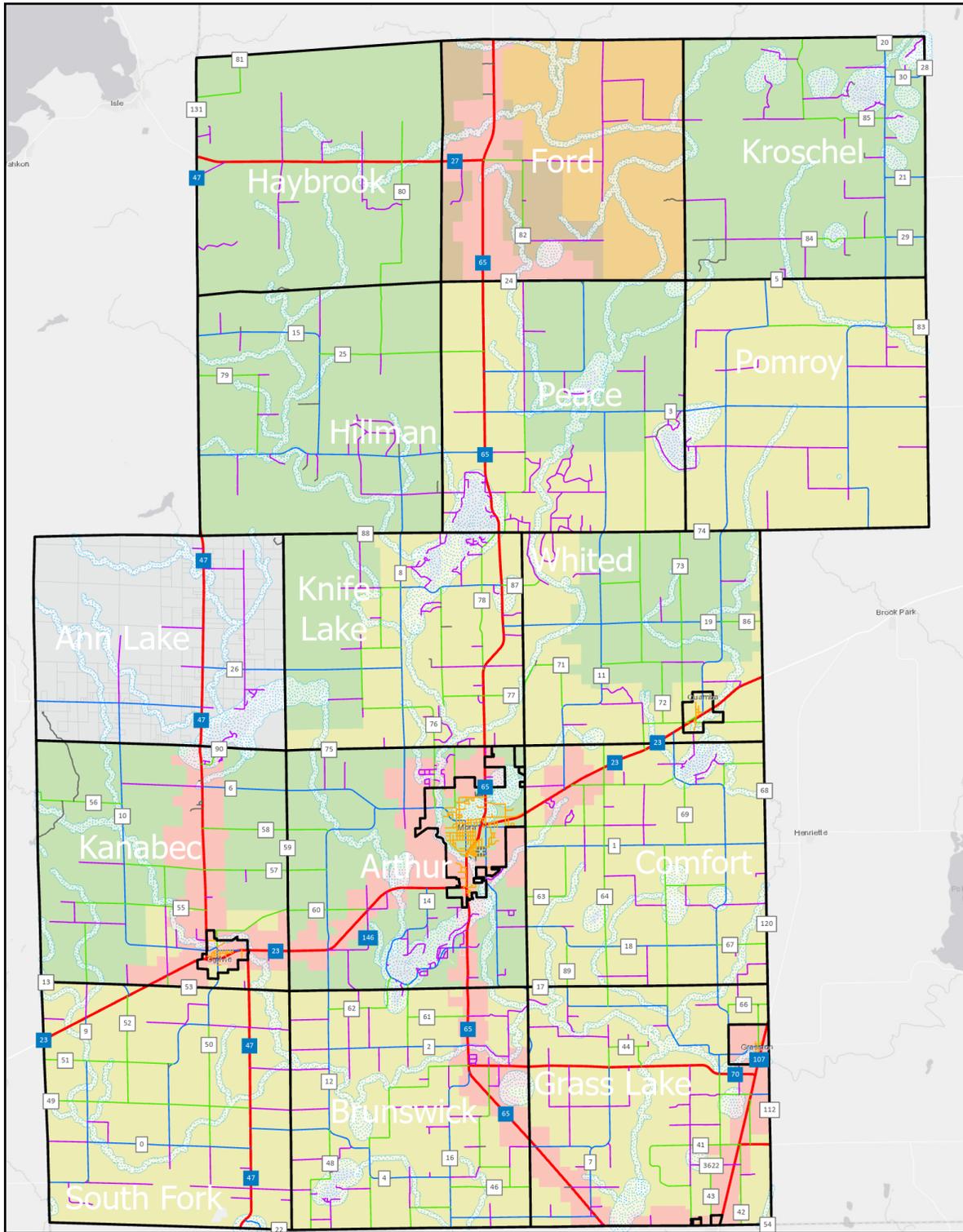
There are approximately **6,439 households** in Kanabec County and **4,358 families**. The **average household size is 2.89**. The number of households and family size has stayed relatively the same since 2010; however, **the number of families (2010: 4,507) has decreased over the last 10 years** (2019 Census est.).



Chapter 3

Focus Areas

The Comprehensive Plan's Focus Areas are intended to capture community supported initiatives for the County to work towards over the next 25 years. Each Focus Area includes a vision statement and a set of goals and policies. The vision represents the overall direction of the Focus Area. The goals are generalized statements, while the policies are more specific in helping achieve the vision and goals.



- Generalized Zoning Districts by Township**
- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Parcels (No Zoning Currently) | County Shoreland Zone |
| Agricultural/Open Space | Roads |
| Agricultural & Rural Residential | State Highway |
| Rural Residential (R-1) | County State Aid Highway (CSAH) |
| Rural Residential (R-2) | County Road |
| Highway Commercial/Business/Industrial | Township Road |
| | Municipal Road |
| | Other Roads |

Figure 2. Generalized Zoning Districts by Township



**Kanabec County 2050
Comprehensive Plan**
Navigating Our Future



The map was produced by using available GIS data sets provided by the County and State.

Zoning & Enforcement

The overarching vision for this focus area is to achieve greater consistency in the use of zoning regulations across all jurisdictions (county, city and township) to positively enhance the experience and image of our community.



Existing Conditions

The County's official controls include ordinances (e.g., shoreland and floodplain), fiscal devices and public programs that are established to carry out the Comprehensive Plan's goals and policies. The townships who have zoning authority play a large role in implementing the Comprehensive Plan's goals and policies that pertain to land uses. Of the fifteen townships within the County, fourteen have adopted township zoning (see Figure 2). At this time, Ann Lake Township has no land use regulations other than those implemented by the County.

In comparing the fourteen township ordinances, there is much similarity in the type of land uses allowed and activities regulated

Table 1. Summary of Township Ordinances

Township	Districts			Residential Densities (Units/Acre)			Minimum Lot Size (Acres)				
	Agriculture/ Open Space	Agriculture/ Residential	Commercial	1/40	2/40	3/40	1	2	5	10	20
Ann Lake	No Zoning in Place										
Arthur	*	*	*				*	*			
Brunswick		*	*			*		*			
Comfort		*			*						*
Ford		*	*		*				*		
Grass Lake		*	*		*				*		
Haybrook		*									*
Hillman		*			*			*			
Kanabec	*	*	*	*	*		*	*			
Knife Lake	*	*						*			
Kroschel	*			*	*						*
Peace	*	*							*	*	
Pomroy		*			*			*			
Southfork		*			*		*				
Whited	*	*							*		



across the townships. The greatest difference between the townships' ordinances relates to the density of residential development (see Table 1). Residential uses are primarily controlled through density requirements, access requirements, and minimum lot sizes. Eight townships limit the number of residences allowed per one-quarter of one-quarter section of land. These maximum densities range from one to three residences per quarter/quarter section. Six townships have provisions that limit density by requiring lot frontage on existing roads, guiding development to areas where roads exist. Three townships rely on establishing minimum lot sizes from two to ten acres as the primary residential development provision. Arthur Township, which is located around the City of Mora, is most urban in nature, allowing residential development on one and two acre lots.

Commercial and industrial uses are managed in the unincorporated areas (e.g., townships) either as permitted uses in specific districts or by Conditional Use Permits (CUPs). Arthur, Brunswick, Comfort, Ford, Grass Lake and Kanabec Townships provide commercial and industrial districts adjacent to major transportation corridors. The remainder of the townships allow for commercial and industrial uses through a CUP, except for Ann Lake, Haybrook and Southfork Township, which have not adopted specific regulations to manage these uses.

Many of the townships' ordinances contain general provisions for the protection of water resources, requirements for public road frontage, and regulating nuisances. Nearly all of the townships' ordinances regulate the storage or disposal of materials in order to mitigate pollution or a CUP is required if there is some potential for pollution. Land reclamation (grading and filling) is regulated in all of the townships with the exception of Ann Lake, through a CUP or other regulations to prevent erosion. Those townships also require a CUP for mining activities, allowing them to control operation, drainage, and reclamation for each site.

Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision regulations have been adopted by the County and Ford and Arthur Township, while others may have some form of lot requirements. The County's subdivision ordinance has been in effect since 1985 and regulates the subdivision of land, establishes standards for streets, utility easements, and other issues related to land development. The County's Subdivision Ordinance generally applies to the division of a tract of land into two or more lots or parcels of less than five acres, or any division of a parcel where a new road is required. The County's ordinance applies to the unincorporated area of the county.

Issues and Opportunities

Kanabec County is in a unique position to balance new ways of managing and enforcing zoning regulations (see sidebar) at a county-wide level. However, this can be a point of contention between the County and Townships. This contention is recognized by the Minnesota Association of Townships and noted in their 2020 Manual on Town Government:

Under current law, a town can choose to enact zoning ordinances that only address certain aspects of land use and rely on the county zoning ordinance to address other issues. Some counties disagree with this approach and believe zoning should be an all-or-nothing proposition for towns. However, a town is authorized to adopt general zoning regulations regardless of whether a county gives its support and there is no statute or court decision in support of the all-or-nothing approach.

The County does not have a zoning ordinance and has explored a county-wide approach to zoning, similar to 80+ counties across the State of Minnesota. This approach should be viewed as an opportunity to create greater continuity in land use decisions and provides some benefits (see sidebar) to the townships. Implementing this initiative will require a separate planning process and stronger coordination with the townships to reach a consensus and approach to county-wide zoning. Achieving this goal may take several years to coordinate and will not be pursued by the County in the immediate future, but may be re-evaluated in the long-term (5 to 10 years). Short-term initiatives should focus on county-wide ordinances that help improve the County's image, especially those that address public nuisances.

Most of the public nuisances discussed throughout the planning process focused on those that negatively impact the County's image. Public nuisance complaints in the county are typically related to outdoor storage. For example, a large number of vehicles or personal items being stored outside can have a negative impact on the community's image and pose public health/safety risks. Some townships are struggling to enforce the abatement of a public nuisance once it is discovered or do not have ordinances in place to support enforcement. Peace Township recently adopted a public nuisance ordinance in July of 2021 and should be viewed as a model for others to follow. In the meantime, there is support in working towards county-wide ordinances that address public nuisances.

Zoning Regulations Definition

Zoning regulations are usually developed in the form of a zoning ordinance, which is the text specifying land use of specific blocks and even individual lots. Zoning regulations include specifications regarding lot size and density. The zoning ordinance is the formal categorization of land-use policies applicable to land within a community and sets the legal framework for land use decisions. Zoning regulations also define setbacks and are used to set limitations on building in flood plains and wetlands. The zoning ordinance often contains a subdivision ordinance that prescribes the process for subdividing a property.

Countywide Zoning Ordinance Benefits

The benefits in building a county-wide approach to zoning include:

- Helps eliminate township administration and legal enforcement costs. Cost savings can be passed on to other township priorities, such as roadway maintenance and weed management.
- Provides residents full-time county resources and services that offer the same level of land use regulations across multiple areas of the county.
- Offers a consistent administration process for implementing zoning regulations that adhere to common goals in retaining our rural character.
- Creates continuity in land use decisions and expectations for developments.

Goals

1. Coordinate and collaborate with the townships in an effort to bring consistent zoning regulations and enforcement across the County.
2. Achieve voluntary compliance with reported code and ordinance violations.
3. Ensure properties are well-kept to enhance the overall image of our County as a whole.

Policies

1. The County will provide for the administrative enforcement of ordinances (e.g., Shoreland Ordinance #5 and Floodplain Ordinance #9) and regulations adopted by Kanabec County.
2. The County will establish ordinances and regulations that benefit the County as a whole.
3. The County will investigate and act on all reported and verified County ordinance violations.
4. The County will prioritize the most serious violations before the less serious violations are addressed –regardless of the order in which complaints are received.
5. The County supports local land use controls that buffer (e.g., setbacks) residential neighborhoods from incompatible land uses.
6. The County will improve it's subdivision ordinance to consider access management guidelines.

Growth Management

The overarching vision for this focus area is to preserve the County's rural character and agrarian economic lifestyles, while strengthening opportunities for residential and business growth.



Existing Conditions

After several years of slow growth, the population of the County is in decline and this pattern is expected to continue. The State Demographer has projected the County to experience a decline in population from 15,979 in 2020 to 13,166 by 2060. The Economic Development Region (EDR 7E), which is comprised of Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine County will also experience the highest levels of population decline compared to other parts of the State (166,590 to 159,547). The population change for the County is projected to be between -20% to -10%. As the County's population declines, the population will also grow older. The County's oldest residents (85 years and above) are expected to double as a proportion of the total population from 2% to 4% in the next 40 years.

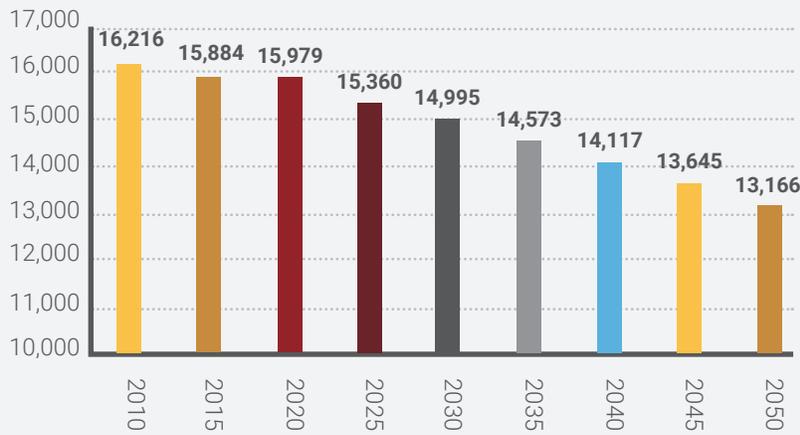
The population trend noted above have notable effects on many segments of the community. One of the hardest hit areas has been the farming community. The County has experienced a 12% decrease in the total number of farms and 19% decrease in acres farmed between 2007 and 2017 (Census of Agriculture). Additionally, the average size of farms has decreased by 6% from 202 to 190 acres. These trends are being experienced by many communities as younger generations are choosing not to take over the family farm. It has also become more difficult to find farmhand help with a declining population.

Work opportunities have also shifted significantly and in ways that impact where people choose to live and do business. A global shift towards remote or flexible work options has accelerated due to the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic. As a result, more people are working from home and have the flexibility to choose where they live and not be tied to locations where work is available. A small portion of the County's population (5%) worked from home between 2015 and 2019. It is assumed this number has grown based on today's circumstances and that a percent of those who live in the County and work outside of the County (52%) are now working remotely.

There has also been speculation that more people are moving to the County to be closer to nature due to this new found flexibility in work location. The number of new residents moving to the County as a result of this flexibility is unknown at this time.



Kanabec County has slowly **experienced a decline in its population** and is projected to continue to see a decline over the next 40 years (State Demographer).



Issues and Opportunities

Population projections suggest a decline (e.g., smaller household sizes and an aging population), but should not hamper the importance of land use planning. Growth should be viewed as an opportunity and be planned accordingly. Growth will depend on a number of market conditions (e.g., available land for sale and demand for second/vacation homes) and a shift in demographic trends. Growth may also occur given the County’s proximity to the Twin Cities.

A challenge of land use planning is balancing what a community desires with what the market place will bear

(Wants vs. Needs). Public involvement helped understand a desired identity or a set of values that affirmed the County’s identity as it relates to land use planning. That identity is a County that embraces a “rural character” through a rich history of family farms and agrarian economic lifestyles, but supports growth from an economic development perspective (e.g., tourism, more high paying jobs and services).

Preserving an agrarian economic lifestyle through farming is much harder to do in today’s market. Current trends have shown a steady decline in the number of people living and farming in the County. These trends are being experienced by others throughout the region. Other market trends suggest homeowners are also seeking housing in rural communities where land is more affordable, while still having the convenience of being in proximity to the Twin Cities. These trends can result in an increase in property values. From a farming standpoint, these land use changes begin to affect the industry. Farmland becomes more fragmented and services (e.g., movement of goods) are impacted. In turn farms opt to sell and capitalize on the market and develop their land. With an increase in property values, selling tends to be the most viable option and a source of retirement income for farmers.

These trends pose land use questions for the rural-urban fringe communities. If farmers are opting to sell, land becomes harder to purchase with the increase in property value. This emphasizes the importance of having the appropriate amount of land guided for specific uses. In this case, the townships have an obligation to plan accordingly and determine how much land should be guided for larger developments (residential and commercial) if and when the market picks up. Supplying the appropriate amount of land for a specific use (commercial or higher density residential), will ensure there is enough land to accommodate the market. The zoning districts that have been established by the townships (see Figure 2) collectively provide ample opportunities for commercial and industrial development. The cities (Mora, Ogilvie and Grasston) also provide ample opportunity for infill development.

However the townships choose to develop, it should reflect the County's rural character and economic development initiatives to attract new residents and businesses. To achieve this objective, the County encourages the Townships to embrace smart growth strategies and sustainable land use practices (see sidebar). According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), "communities of all sizes across the country are using creative strategies to develop in ways that preserve natural lands and critical environmental areas, protect water and air quality, and reuse already-developed land." Examples of these types of communities that embrace smart growth strategies:

- Conserve resources by reinvesting in existing infrastructure and rehabilitating historic buildings.
- Design neighborhoods that have homes near shops, offices, schools, houses of worship, parks, and other amenities, communities give residents and visitors the option of walking, bicycling, taking public transportation, or driving as they go about their business.
- Provide a range of different housing types that make it possible for senior citizens to stay in their neighborhoods as they age, young people to afford their first home, and families at all stages in between to find a safe, attractive home they can afford.
- Enhance neighborhoods and involve residents in development decisions.
- Create business opportunities and strengthen the local tax base to be economically competitive.

Goals

1. Ensure the efficient provision of infrastructure, protection of the environment, and land use compatibility with adjacent development.
2. Guide the form and location of future growth to strengthen existing land use patterns.
3. Encourage adherence to the growth management policies of surrounding municipalities.
4. Encourage new development to locate within, or within reasonable proximity to, public facilities and services.

Putting Smart Growth to Work in Rural Communities (by the EPA)

This publication is designed to provide rural decision-makers with a resource for balancing competing goals while creating more vibrant, communities. It is intended to show how smart growth approaches can be adapted and applied in the rural context, particularly in times of change.

The three goals are:

1. Support the rural landscape by creating an economic climate that enhances the viability of working lands and conserves natural lands.
2. Help existing places thrive by taking care of assets and investments such as downtowns, Main Streets, existing infrastructure, and places that the community values.
3. Create great new places by building vibrant, enduring neighborhoods and communities that people, especially young people, don't want to leave.

Strategies and policy tools supporting each of these three goals according to the EPA, "will provide some practical direction for rural communities that want to ensure that economic opportunity and growth meet the needs of new and current residents and businesses without fundamentally altering the community character."

Sustainable Land Use Patterns

No matter what type of subdivision occurs, it is important to consider where homes should be located, as this will inform the pattern of the newly created parcels. Homes should be sited to reduce the impacts on agriculture, natural resources, and to preserve the rural character of the County. This also improves the marketability of homes for people who are looking to move to a rural area. Examples of good site design take into account the following:

- Working Lands: Homes should be sited to preserve high quality farmland and habitat. This can be achieved by take into account soil conditions.
- Agricultural Buffers: Agriculture is an important part of the County's economy and rural character, but it is highly vulnerable to conflicts with residential uses. To help mitigate these conflicts, homes should be sited accordingly to minimize their exposure to potential noises, smells, and sounds from agricultural activities.
- Natural Resource Buffers: Homes should be set back from water (rivers, lakes, streams, wetlands) and bluffs and erodible soils. Homes should also be located outside of floodplains and drainage ways. This can be achieved by doing a thorough review of the site's natural features and flood zone maps.
- View Sheds: Homes should be located in areas that minimize their visibility from roads, particularly highly traveled roads. Similarly, homes should not dominate the views from public waters such as lakes and rivers. Protecting view sheds help retain the rural character, while not obstructing other peoples views of the natural environment.

Policies

1. The County supports land uses patterns (see sidebar) that preserve critical lands, maintain neighborhood character, prevent sprawl, and provide efficient delivery of services.
2. The County supports developments that foster a quality-built environment worth living in, working in, and visiting.
3. The County supports developments that adhere to access management guidelines and best practices that elevates roadway safety as a priority.
4. The County supports the preservation of agricultural areas and activities, including prime farmlands and soils.
5. The County will implement capital improvement plans that provide for long-term, cost-effective provision of public services and facilities that support areas where development should be encouraged.
6. The County will implement the following to manage development that has a potential impact on the environment:
 - a) Shoreland management regulations as an overlay district to provisions found in existing township ordinances which manage development in rural portions of the County.
 - b) Flood plain regulations as an overlay district to provisions found in existing township ordinances which manage development in the rural portions of the County.
 - c) On-site sewage treatment regulations for existing and future development in the County, consistent with the standards and recommendations of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.
 - d) Wetland Conservation Act regulations consistent with state statutes.
 - e) The Kanabec County Solid Waste Management Plan consistent with state statutes.
 - f) The Kanabec County Water Plan as this process and program recommendations impact land use development activities.
 - g) The Minnesota Environmental Policy Act consistent with state statutes.
 - h) The Kanabec County Subdivision/Platting Ordinance.

Economic Development

The overarching vision for this focus area is to create jobs and enhance our community's tax base by helping existing and new businesses thrive.



Existing Conditions

Kanabec County made a conscious decision to bolster its economic development activity by creating the Kanabec County Economic Development Authority (EDA) in 2015. The EDA's primary goal is to help existing and new businesses thrive in Kanabec County. The EDA's Strategic Plan (2021 – 2023) provides more information regarding its efforts in the following areas:

1. Promoting & Building Our Business Community
2. Developing & Expanding Broadband Availability
3. Connecting Businesses to Training Resources
4. Supporting Child Care Growth Opportunities
5. Coordinating & Advocating for Housing

The EDA and its partners are facing challenges in today's economy to attract and retain residents and businesses. Many rural communities are facing similar challenges that stem from labor shortages, declining populations, affordable housing shortages, and the inability to provide amenities (e.g., quality parks and reliable internet) at the level needed to attract new residents and businesses.

Development that has occurred recently in the County has included city owned industrial park sites in Mora and Braham, as well as new housing development which has tended to prioritize vacation homes (Kanabec County EDA Strategic Plan). Recent housing studies prepared for Mora have also determined there is a lack of available adequate and affordable workforce housing options, which places limitations on population growth opportunities.

Table 3 provides more information about some of the County's economic characteristics compared to the region and state. General findings include:

- Kanabec County's unemployment rate (3.6%) is comparable to the State and region.
- Kanabec County's largest concentration of jobs are located in Mora and primarily linked to the health care & social assistance industry (26.1%). The second largest industry in the County is manufacturing (13.5%), followed by construction (10.9%) and retail trade (9.9%) (see Table 2).
- Kanabec County is experiencing a higher level of persons in poverty compared to the State and region.
- Kanabec County's has a similar percent of people with a high school graduation rate (90%) compared to the State and region, but a lower number of people with a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Kanabec County's broadband services primarily serve those located in Mora, where the majority of the population resides. A larger number of people do not have reliable internet service.
- Kanabec County will experience one of the highest rates of population decline in the State by 2050.
- Kanabec County has experienced a significant lost in the number of farms and acreage being farmed between 2007 and 2017.

Table 2. Number of Jobs in Kanabec County (2019)

Industry	Number of Employees	Percent of Total
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining:	268	3.4%
Construction	852	10.9%
Manufacturing	1,057	13.5%
Wholesale trade	115	1.5%
Retail trade	772	9.9%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities:	399	5.1%
Information	76	1.0%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing:	334	4.3%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	373	4.8%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance:	2,041	26.1%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services:	680	8.7%
Other services, except public administration	460	5.9%
Public administration	409	5.2%

Table 3. Regional Statistics and Characteristics

County	Existing Population (2020)	Projected Population 2040	Projected Population % Change over 20 years	Unemployment Rate (2020)	Median income (2020)	Persons in Poverty Percent (2020)
Kanabec	16,032	14,995	-6%	3.6%	\$57,163	10.1%
Benton	41,379	44,603	8%	3.9%	\$57,715	8.6%
Chisago	56,621	58,603	4%	3.1%	\$83,464	6.2%
Isanti	41,135	43,117	5%	3.4%	\$74,616	6.9%
Mille Lacs	26,459	24,680	-7%	4.0%	\$56,135	11.4%
Pine	28,876	26,680	-8%	3.7%	\$53,422	11.6%
Minnesota	5,706,494	6,288,522	10%	3.4%	\$71,306	9.0%

County	High School Graduation Rate (2020)	Bachelor's Degree or Higher Rate (2020)	Households with Broadband Subscription (2020)	% Change in Acres of Farmland (2007 – 2017)	Agriculture- % Change in # of Farms (2007 – 2017)
Kanabec	90.2%	14.7%	76.1%	-16%	-11%
Benton	91.7%	23.6%	83.1%	0%	-5%
Chisago	94.6%	21.5%	86.0%	5%	-12%
Isanti	92.5%	18.5%	82.7%	1%	-7%
Mille Lacs	89.8%	14.7%	77.5%	-23%	-13%
Pine	90.4%	14.9%	74.2%	5%	-11%
Minnesota	93.1%	36.1%	84.8%	-5%	-15%

Issues and Opportunities

Kanabec County, as part of the 7E region (Benton, Chisago, Isanti, Mille Lacs, and Pine County), plays a role in providing great locations and places for businesses to succeed. Retaining, attracting, and growing businesses within Kanabec County enables the region to be competitive and prosperous in the global economy.

Kanabec County's economy has been closely tied to agrarian economic lifestyle and many businesses have thrived in this environment. Over time, larger retail and commercial uses have located in other parts of the region including North Branch, Cambridge, and to a larger extent the suburban communities located in the Twin Cities. These retail and commercial uses (e.g., big box stores) tend to draw a larger customer base from greater distances, leaving smaller towns struggling to find their retail and commercial niche. Retail and commercial uses that tend to thrive in smaller towns focus on services and goods that meet every day needs of the community (e.g., convenience stores, grocery stores, and implement stores).

While the County has a vested interest in attracting additional business to the area, it also recognizes that not all business opportunities will affect the area equally and the importance of courting businesses that will serve the people of the County best. Currently, many of the opportunities for work within the County provide insufficient compensation or other non-monetary incentives for residents to stay in the County for work or to attract outsiders to the area for work. The County needs businesses that are able to pay a living wage and whose presence adds value to the community in multiple ways.

There are opportunities to draw light manufacturing and industrial uses to the area as this industry continues to grow. Many businesses are seeking locations that can provide large lots (5 to 20 acres, and upwards of 50+ acres), tax incentives, access to municipal services, and convenient access to transportation systems (e.g., rail and highways). They are also looking for amenities that contribute to a higher-quality of life for their employees (e.g., affordable housing, parks and schools). Examples of County amenities that should be promoted to prospective businesses include:

- **Human Capital:** Human capital is one of the County's greatest assets. People from the County come from a wide array of backgrounds, experiences and education and are bright, skilled, and resilient.
- **Schools:** The County is located in 6 school districts (Mora #332, Ogilvie #333, Braham #314, Isle #473, Hinkley-Finlayson #2165, and East Central #2580) and has two public school systems, Mora Public Schools and Ogilvie Public Schools. It also has the Welia Center which is a collaboration between

Welia Health and Mora Public Schools to serve the needs of students with physical education, after-school sports practices and tournaments.

- **Health Services:** Welia Health is located in Mora and recognized as a leading provider of healthcare services in East-Central Minnesota.

- **Attractions & Events:** Kanabec County is home to a number of well-known events, including the largest cross-country ski race in Minnesota (Vasaloppet USA). Other well known attractions and events include the Nordic Center, Ogilvie Raceway, Ogilvie Museum, Ann River Winery, Beer Club Brewing, Sapsucker Farms, Mora Music in the Park, Paradise Theater, and the Kanabec History Center. Other attractions include natural areas such as the Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), Snake River, Knife Lake, Ann Lake, and Fish Lake. These amenities should be viewed as opportunities to promote tourism within the County.



Vasaloppet 2021 Photo Credit: Kanabec County Times

Strengthening the County's economic prosperity also requires a commitment to new ideas, while addressing community needs to allow individuals to thrive in the County. Many of these needs, if addressed, will improve the quality of life for residents and serve as incentives for businesses to locate in the County.

- **Child Care Services:** While not directly a function of the County, child care is an essential service that the County has a vested interest in. High quality child care services keep children safe and healthy, while their guardians are at work. Many businesses recognize the importance of having an adequate supply of child care services to meet the needs of their employers. A childcare supply Demand Gap Analysis for Kanabec County (2019) shows a shortage range of 208 to 441 slots for children birth to 5 with all available parents in the workforce. Of those slots roughly 19% are needed for infants and toddlers.
- **Home Businesses:** Most of the townships support home business through a Conditional Use Permit (CUP). Typical home businesses in the County include "cottage" type industries or services, ranging from woodworking, cabinetry, contractor yards, and small repair shops. As these businesses prosper, they may outgrow the home business and seek to expand their services by relocating. CUPs who choose to expand



Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

ADUs are being explored across the country as a means to addressing family needs as well as housing affordability and availability challenges. ADUs can address lifecycle housing needs as people can age in place and families are able to provide independent housing that is less expensive than what could be obtained in a senior living facility. Generally, ADUs have been preferred in existing residential neighborhoods as they expand housing options without significantly altering the character of the existing neighborhood. Where rentals are allowed, homeowners are also able to earn income that can pay other household expenses.

should be encouraged to locate in areas that create identifiable commercial nodes. Clustering businesses at key nodes can help generate stronger economic prosperity for rural parts of the County, while providing a centralized location for commerce.

- **Workforce Housing:** Developing housing that fits the needs of existing community members should be prioritized in order to improve quality of life and increase stability. If more middle level housing is built to fill in the “missing middle (e.g., town homes, duplexes, and apartments)” it could attract more business and provide current residents and new comers more appealing and realistic options.
- **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU):** Townships and cities may use ADUs as an option to help expand housing options for extended families. An ADU is a self-contained residential unit with its own living room, kitchen, and bathroom. ADUs are permanent installations that are legally part of a larger property that includes a standard single-family house. This housing is designed to be flexible to meet family needs, and can generate rental income for the homeowners.
- **Recreational Opportunities:** Parks are often cited as people’s favorite places. They are the places people go to have fun, relax, and play. Whether it’s a place to fish, take a quiet walk through the woods, or ski, a high-quality park and trail system has something for all ages and abilities. Local parks, trails, public lands, and natural wildlife areas should be viewed as an important asset that plays a role in attracting and retaining residents and businesses (see Focus Area: Natural Resources for more information).
- **Reliable Internet:** Reliable internet (broadband) plays a critical role from an economic development perspective. Without reliable internet, businesses cannot operate efficiently on a day-to-day basis. It is important these needs are met to support businesses and residents (see Focus Area: County Assets more information).

Goals

1. Encourage and promote economic development initiatives and capital investments that help retain, expand, and attract new businesses that will be an asset to the community.
2. Assist and encourage economic growth and job creation across all sectors of the County, by expanding and diversifying job opportunities and income growth.
3. Encourage and promote the development of a range of housing types in order to achieve a stable and diversified population and community.

Policies

1. The County will support the Kanabec County Economic Development Authority's (EDA) Strategic Plan on behalf of the County's interest in continued job development and increased tax base.
2. The County will coordinate strategic investments with land developments that create jobs and diversify the County's housing stock.
3. The County will support rural businesses that are compatible with agricultural environments and rural residential neighborhoods.
4. The County supports accessory uses that do not create a nuisance or alter the primary use of the property, building, or zoning district.



County Assets

The overarching vision for this focus area is to maintain and enhance the County’s assets in a fiscally responsible manner to help support economic development activities and improve quality of life for residents.

Existing Conditions

County assets are defined in the Comprehensive Plan as transportation systems, County services, and broadband internet (public or privately owned). Each of these assets were identified as important elements that help make a county a great place to live, work, and play.

Natural Resource Assets
 Kanabec County is home to so much natural beauty. Its natural features and landscapes are some of the County's greatest assets and are cherished by all.
 These assets are discussed in more detail starting on page 45.

Transportation Systems

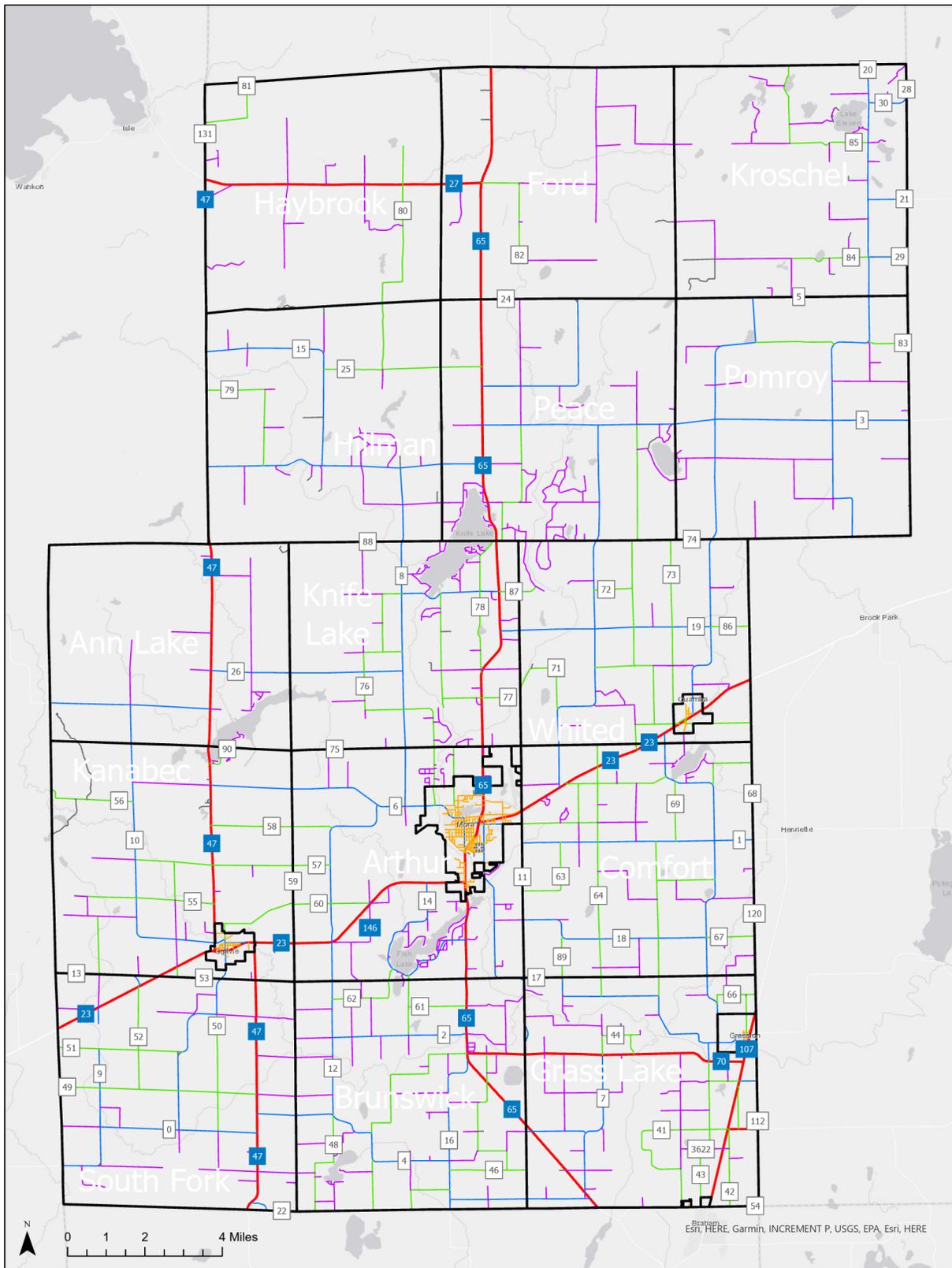
The County contains many infrastructural features (e.g., roadways, an airport, rail lines, and bridges) that greatly benefit residents and businesses of the area and those passing through (see Figure 3). The transportation system is managed and maintained by various agencies (see Table 4). This system serves a number of functions (see sidebar on next page) and is largely supported by the State Highway system, which connects the County to nearby metropolitan areas, including the Twin Cities, St. Cloud, and Duluth.

The transportation system is also comprised of other modes of transportation that support a variety of people’s needs and the County’s economy.

- Mora Municipal Airport: The airport is owned and operated by the City of Mora and is open to the public. The airport averages 41 aircraft operations per day (in 2017).
- Railroads: The Burlington Northern Railroad runs parallel with Highway 107 and passes through the County. The St. Croix Valley Railroad previously served the Mora Industrial Park and is now abandoned.
- Public Transit Bus Service: This is bus service in Kanabec and Mille Lacs Counties. Mora/Ogilvie, Milaca and Princeton areas have daily service. The northern part of the service area has access to a weekly shopping route.
- Common Carrier Program (Non-Emergency Medical Transportation): This program utilizes volunteers using their personal vehicles to drive residents of Kanabec County who have no way to get to medical and other necessary appointments.

Table 4. Miles of Road in Kanabec County

Roadway Agency	Miles	Percent
Cities	64	4%
Kanabec County	853	49%
Private (other than Railroad)	13	1%
MnDOT	186	11%
State Park, Forest, or Reservation Agency	5	0%
Township	605	35%
Total	1,726	100%



- Roads**
- State Highway
 - County State Aid Highway (CSAH)
 - County Road
 - Township Road
 - Municipal Road
 - Other Roads

The map was produced by using available GIS data sets provided by the County and State.

Figure 3. Transportation System

Functional Classification

The U.S. Department of Transportation identifies a functional classification system for all highways, roads, and streets according to the character of service that they provide. The classification of streets and roads in each County is periodically updated by the State to maintain consistency with city boundary changes and functional changes in streets. The classification system serves as a basis for determining future priorities, funding distributions, and jurisdiction over certain roadways.

Kanabec County's Functional Classification System is depicted in Figure 4 and summarized below.

- **Principal Arterial:** The principal arterial system contains facilities that place an emphasis on land access and provide a high degree of traffic mobility.
- **Minor Arterial:** The minor arterial system includes facilities that place more emphasis on land access and offering lower levels of traffic mobility than a principal arterial roadway.
- **Collector:** The municipal collector system includes those streets that collect traffic from the municipal service system and connect to other systems.
- **Local Street System:** The local street system serves primarily to provide direct access to abutting land and access to higher order systems. These streets offer the lowest level of mobility and through traffic movements are possible, but often deliberately discouraged.

County Services

Kanabec County is home to several facilities enjoyed and used by the public, including the Kanabec County Government Center. It is also home to numerous local institutions, recreational and municipal facilities and services. Each of these facilities does its part in providing the necessary services to support residents in the County and beyond. Some of the County's functions and services are highlighted below:

- **County Assessor:** The Assessor's Office is responsible for estimating the market value and determining the classification of all real and personal property located in Kanabec County for ad valorem tax purposes.
- **County Sheriff:** The mission of the Kanabec County Sheriff's Office is to protect and serve the people of Kanabec County with professionalism and integrity.
- **Environmental Services:** The Environmental Services Department oversees policies and ordinance pertaining to floodplain management, platting and subdivisions, septic regulations and permitting, shoreland zoning, solid waste management, and water resources.
- **Family Services:** Kanabec County Family Services assists with services for persons with chemical dependency, developmental disabilities, mental health, child support, child and adult protection, financial assistance and more.
- **Public Works/Highway:** The Highway Department manages and delivers County transportation infrastructure and services. Their overall objective is to provide safe and well-maintained roads.
- **Public Health:** The Public Health Department's mission is to promote a healthy and safe community for those who live, work, learn and play in Kanabec County. This is achieved through various public health programs and initiatives.
- **Veteran Services:** Kanabec County Veteran Services provides professional, caring and quality assistance to veterans and their dependents. They assist in obtaining benefits through local, County, State and Federal programs. They work as advocates with the US Department of Veterans Affairs, MN Department of Veterans Affairs and nationally chartered service organizations to ensure that veterans and dependents receive the benefits they are entitled to.

Broadband Internet

Kanabec County has a digital divide between the residents of Mora and Ogilvie and the remainder of the rural residents of the County. In 2012, a broadband feasibility study was commissioned by the Kanabec Broadband Initiative (KBI) to better understand these gaps and discover solutions and partnerships to help reduce these gaps. At the time of this study, only 23% of the County's residents had access to competitive broadband services. The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (MnDEED) has continued to track under served areas in Kanabec County. These gaps are depicted in Figure 5 and summarized in Table 5.

Issues and Opportunities

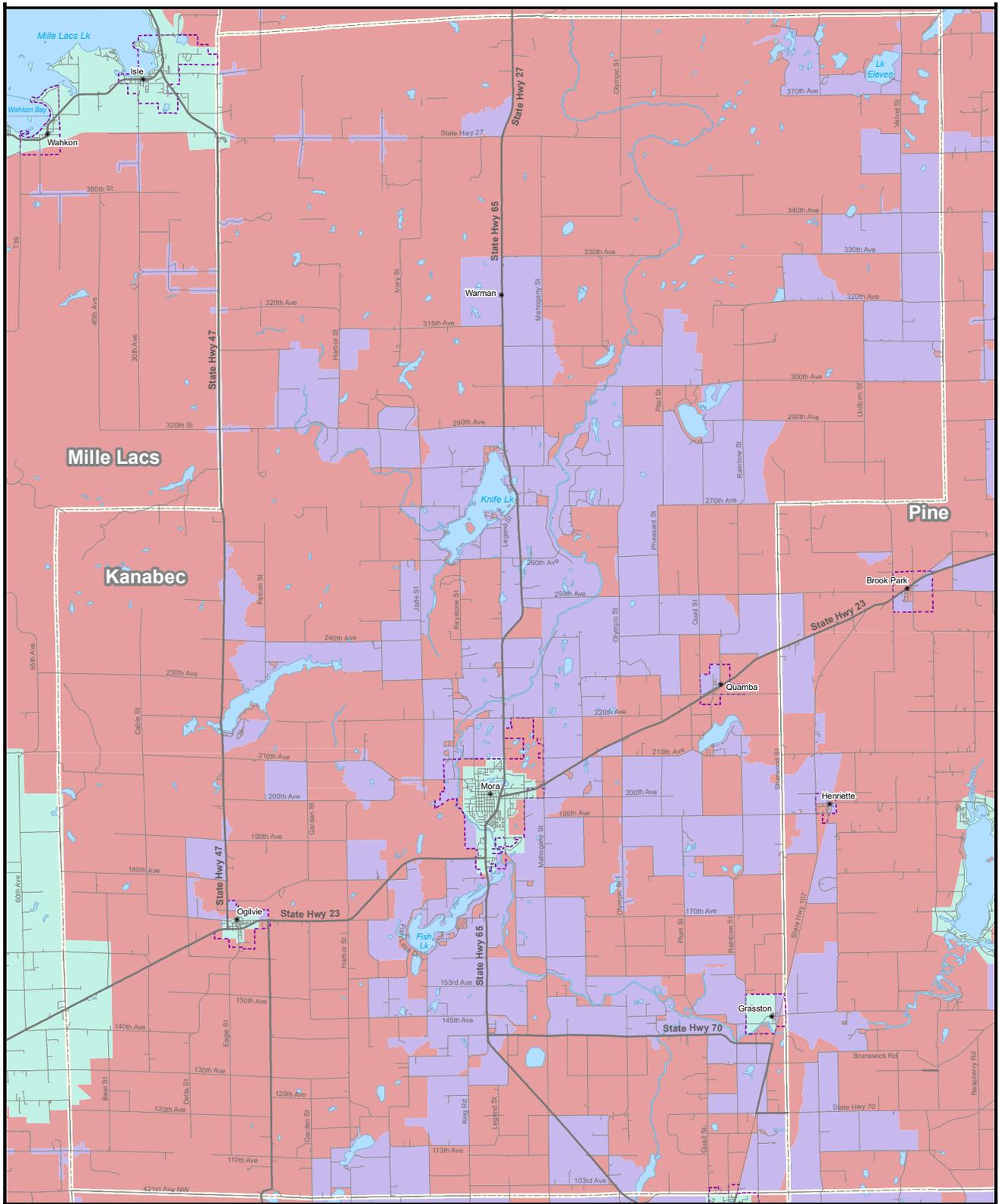
County assets and services are an investment in the future for individuals, families and businesses, as well as an investment in the continued attractiveness and viability of the County. However, many agencies today are faced with difficult decisions in prioritizing needs with limited resources.

Transportation Systems

County assets such as roadways, bridges, culverts, and ditches are expensive and difficult to maintain with consistent issues of aging infrastructure, rising costs of materials, and declining revenue streams. Many local agencies are reconsidering the costs and benefits of continuing to maintain assets throughout their entire system, and if other approaches (e.g., reverting pavement surfaces to gravel, extending maintenance schedules, and exploring new maintenance techniques to extend the life of the asset) should be explored to better balance needs with available resources. These challenges are also being faced at the township level, as they work to maintain 35% of the roads in the County.

Table 5. 2021 Broadband Internet Service in Kanabec County

	Unserved	Underserved	Served
Acres	244,198.8	91,640.6	5,713.6
Percentage of Acres	71%	27%	2%



- Interstate
- US Road
- Local Road
- Municipal Boundary
- County Boundary
- ~ Water
- Wireline Broadband of at Least 100M/20M
- Underserved Area
(Wireline Broadband of at Least 25M/3M but less than 100M/20M)
- Unserved Area
(No Wireline Broadband of at Least 25M/3M)

Figure 5. Broadband Service Inventory
(Source: MNDEED)

System Preservation Strategies

- **Crack Filling:** Crack filling is a common practice applied to asphalt when cracks are wider than 3/8 inches. Crack sealing is a flexible latex product that is pumped into large cracks to help prevent water intrusion and damage to the subgrade. Crack filling should be viewed as a short-term preventive maintenance technique.
- **Thin Overlay:** An overlay consists of a thin layer of asphalt that is applied to the top of the surface. Thin overlays can be a costly technique, but are used to extend the service life by 5 to 10 years of the pavement and improve ride quality.
- **Mill & Overlay:** A mill and overlay is also a common technique for major rehabilitation/reconstruction projects. This techniques helps build structural capacity by milling the existing pavement and adding a new layer of asphalt. A mill and overlay can help extend the life of the road by 10 to 15 years or restart its surface life, depending on the roads structural base and the depth of the mill and overlay.
- **Slurry Seal:** A slurry seal is a preventative maintenance procedure that provides a protective surface to the existing asphalt. More advance applications are known as micro surfacing. This treatment includes a blend of oil and small aggregate that is applied to the road (1/8 inch).. This treatment can last approximately 3 to 5 years, while a micro surfacing treatment can last more than 7 years.

Maintaining the existing transportation system should be viewed as a priority before pursuing larger investments that look at expending the network. For example, the County has a vested interest in expanding Highway 65 north of Cambridge from two lanes to four lanes to improve safety conditions and create economic development opportunities along the corridor. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is planning for investments to Highway 65 in Kanabec County over the next 10 years. These investments will likely include safety improvements and the reconstruction of portions of the road, but do not include plans to expand the road to four lanes. Demonstrating the need for a four-lane road will require a larger level of effort and coordination by the County and its local partners. This typically requires a study that demonstrates the transportation need and economic benefit. Elevating the project as a priority will also require political support (e.g., letters of support and resolutions) and a financial commitment.

Other long-term transportation initiatives include the Northern Lights Express (NLX). NLX is a proposed high speed passenger rail project that would provide rail service between Minneapolis and Duluth, passing through Kanabec County. If constructed, NLX will operate on approximately 152 miles of existing BNSF rail corridor. The project has not been funded and should continue to be monitored and viewed as long-term priority project for the County.

Exploring new revenue sources will allow the County to address its short-term (e.g., system preservation needs) and long-term transportation goals (e.g., Highway 65 expansion). Increasing the wheelage tax or implementing a local transportation sales tax under State Statute (Minnesota State Statue 297A.993) are some of the available options. In July of 2013 the Kanabec County Board of Commissioners imposed a \$10 wheelage tax on certain motor vehicles in accordance with State Statute 163.051.

Additionally, there are new maintenance techniques (see sidebar) that can extend the life-cycle of an asset. For example, new maintenance techniques for roadway surfaces can provide longer service life and higher traffic volume thresholds, resulting in more stable road maintenance costs.

County Services

The planning for County services typically falls outside of the comprehensive planning process. However, the Comprehensive Plans' Focus Areas can be a source of guidance and direction when developing department plans. Areas that do fall within the purview of this Plan include:

- **Economic Development Authority:** Many of the goals expressed throughout this Plan are directly tied to economic development initiatives. Expanding the EDA (resources and staffing) to help achieve these goals and implement the EDA's Strategic Plan should be viewed as a priority.
- **Family Services:** On the issue of the lack of childcare services, the County has the opportunity to facilitate the creation of environments that support healthy brain development for young children to enhance early learning. This can be done in a number of direct and indirect ways. The County should support the development of new facilities by identifying and promoting subsidies and funding sources, or the creation of other financial incentives. The County can also identify policies that support alternative variety of childcare models including child care pods between families, and facilities with dual license. Increasing support for existing providers through grants, trainings, mentorships/support network, workforce development for childcare will also be pivotal. As the County's population gets older, the future retirement of current providers will create an additional burden on this system. In general, there should be an increase in County wide advocacy for child care services to attract and retain families.
- **Solid Waste Management:** Many people are concerned with the rising cost of waste management, the potential environmental impacts of land disposal, long term waste abatement solutions, changes in waste management policies in neighboring states, and our need for success in achieving waste reduction and recycling goals set by the State of Minnesota. There are opportunities to address these concerns though increased focus on waste management and reduction.

Broadband Internet

Reliable and affordable internet (wireless or broadband) plays a fundamental role in economic activity. More importantly, access to high-speed internet is vital for attracting and retaining businesses. It also helps support a larger population of workers choosing to telecommute from home and serves as a catalyst in fostering entrepreneurship and small business growth in rural parts of the County.

Internet connectivity acts as a catalyst for rural prosperity by enabling efficient, modern communications between rural households, County services, schools, and health care facilities. The benefits are far reaching, which have been recognized not only at a national level, but also at the state. It is a state goal that no later than 2022, all Minnesota businesses and homes have access to high-speed broadband that provides minimum download speeds of at least 25 megabits per second and minimum upload speeds of at least three megabits per second; and no later than 2026, all Minnesota businesses and homes have access to at least one provider of broadband with download speeds of at least 100 megabits per second and upload speeds of at least 20 megabits per second.

During this planning process, the County was updating its Broadband Feasibility Study. The study should be used as a resource in guiding future decisions regarding broadband. Providing reliable internet to all in the County should be viewed as a high priority.

Goals

1. Preserve and enhance existing County assets and services to maximize their impact and accessibility.
2. Maintain and strengthen the transportation system to ensure that it promotes the safety, mobility, and access of all users.
3. Deploy fast and reliable internet technologies across the whole County that are equitable, affordable, and take advantage of existing infrastructure assets.

Policies

1. The County will strive to maintain existing County assets in good condition and provide high-quality services to its residents and businesses.
2. The County will embrace best practices and access management guidelines.
3. The County will actively pursue opportunities to increase broadband access for all households in the area.

Natural Resources

The overarching vision for this focus area is to preserve and protect our natural resources for current residents and future generations.



Existing Conditions

Kanabec County is home to so much natural beauty. Its natural features and landscapes are some of the County's greatest assets and are cherished by all. These features are summarized below and depicted in Figure 6.

Water Features

The County's landscape is comprised of 105 protected water features, totaling approximately 6,200 acres. One of the most iconic water features includes the Snake River. The Snake River begins in Aitkin County and stretches South East to the St. Croix River. Its formation has created some of the most sought after rapids for kayakers. From Silver Star Road to County Road 3, the upper Snake is dotted with rapids and falls ranging from Class I-IV, depending on water levels. From Mora to Pine City, the river is gentler with very few rapids. Below Cross Lake, the pace picks up again and the river shoots through a series of Class I-III rapids and pools, dropping 136 feet in its last 12 miles (source MnDNR).

The County is also known for its lakes, wetlands, and streams. Land around many of these features have developed over time, attracting year-round and seasonal residents. Protecting and improving these pristine features are a fundamental goal for many agencies and organizations throughout the County. Some of their roles and responsibilities are summarized below.

- **Kanabec County Environmental Services:** The Environmental Services Department administers Ordinance #5, Management of Shoreland. Shoreland is defined as land located within 1,000 feet from the ordinary high water level of a lake, pond, or flowage, and 300 feet from a river or stream. The County requires building site permits within the regulated shorelands of the County. Building permits are approved based on compliance with the ordinance.

The Wetland Conservation Act is also administered by Environmental Services with oversight provided by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). Enforcement of the act is provided by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) conservation officers and other peace officers. In general, the Wetland Conservation Act regulates development activities (e.g., grading, filling and draining) that may impact wetlands.



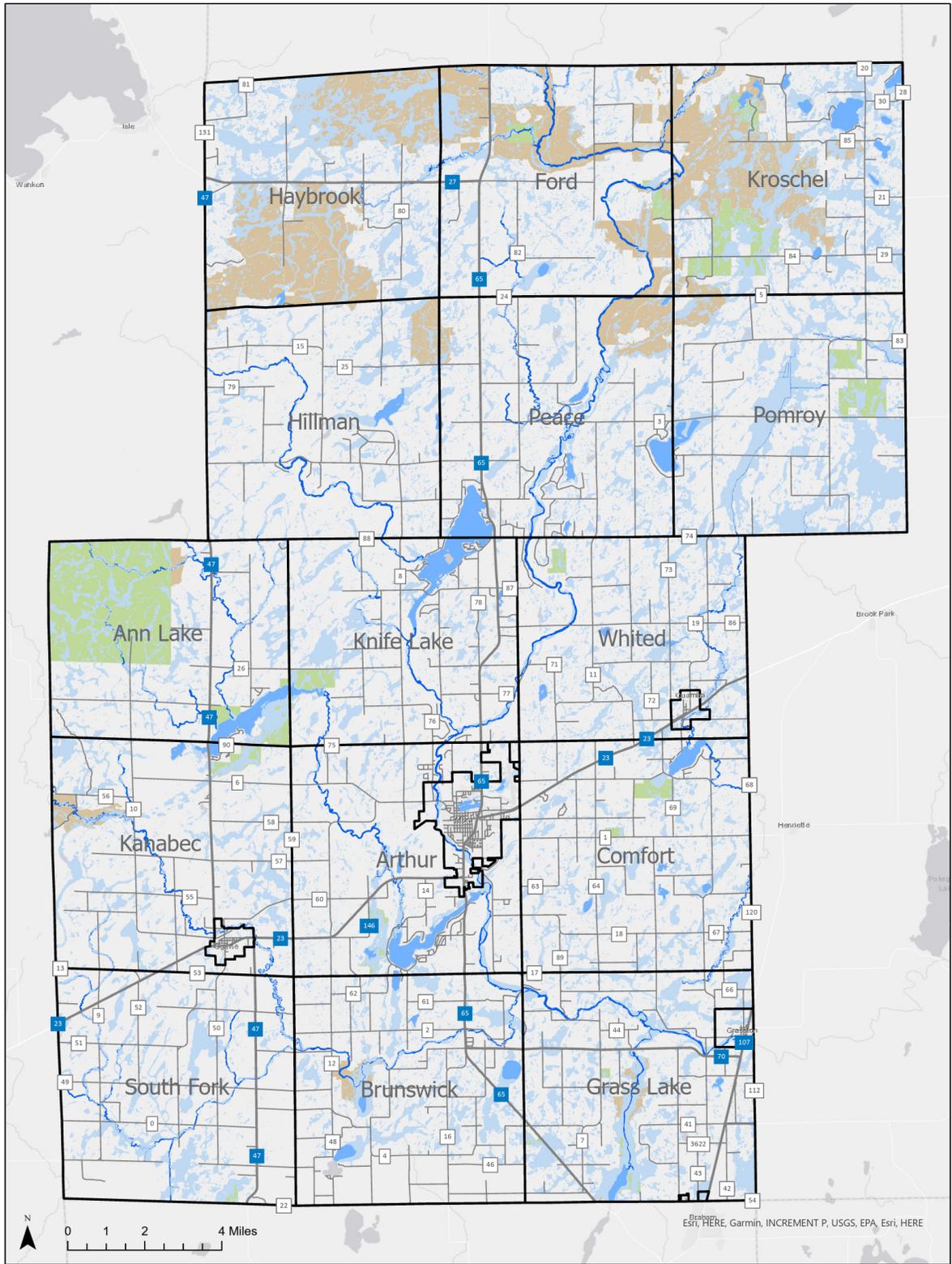


Figure 6. Natural Resources

The map was produced by using available GIS data sets provided by the County and State.



- **Kanabec Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD):** The SWCD is a local government organization serving the residents and landowners of Kanabec County. They are governed by an elected 5-member Board of Supervisors. The SWCD is dedicated to promoting the wise and use of our land and water related resources; to work with and empower landowners and groups on conservation options; work in partnership with other agencies; educate the public, provide technical assistance, administer state programs and serve as a county wide soil and water conservation and natural resource information and referral center.
- **Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR):** The BWSR's mission is to improve and protect Minnesota's water and soil resources by working in partnership with local organizations and private landowners. Core functions include implementing the state's soil and water conservation policy, comprehensive local water management, and the Wetland Conservation Act as it relates to the 41.7 million acres of private land in Minnesota.
- **Lake Associations:** Lake Associations are typically a volunteer organization comprised of members who own land on or near a lake. The associations work to maintain, protect, and improve the quality of a lake, its fisheries, and its watershed. Several of the Lake Associations in the County are working towards the control of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS).
- **Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR):** The MnDNR is dedicated to protecting and managing land, water, fish, and wildlife. As it pertains to water, the MnDNR administers permits and programs associated with the construction of wells, groundwater management, and invasive water species.
- **Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA):** The MPCA is a state agency committed to ensuring that every Minnesotan has healthy air, lands, clean water, and a better climate. Through the authority of state and federal statutes and guidelines, the Agency focuses on preventing and reducing the pollution of air, land, and water, and leads Minnesota's efforts to protect against the devastating effects of climate change.
- **Snake River Watershed Management Board:** The Board is comprised of Aitkin, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine Counties as a non-regulatory joint powers organization. Its goal is to cooperatively implement the County water plans (soon to be watershed plans) to protect and enhance the water and land resources within the Snake River Watershed.

Forests

In the early 1900s approximately 80% of Kanabec County was forested. Presently, the amount of forested land is about 45%, nearly half of what it was 100 years ago. Much of the southern part of the County was covered formerly with White Pine forests. Many of those forested areas are gone due to logging and are now used for agricultural purposes. The northern half of the County however is still heavily forested. Much of the regrowth has been mainly Aspen.

Groundwater

The County has two primary aquifers, a surficial sand-plain aquifer which is of greater importance due to its large quantity of water, potential for development, and susceptibility to contamination and a bedrock sandstone aquifer (Mount Simon-Hinckley). Ground water from these aquifers drains to the Ann, Groundhouse, Knife, and Snake Rivers.

The County has three major watersheds within its boundaries. They are the Rum River, Snake River, and Kettle River watersheds. Due to the majority of the County lying in the Snake River Watershed, it is the highest priority for management. The Rum River watershed would be second due to the heavy agricultural use.

Wildlife Management Areas (WMA)

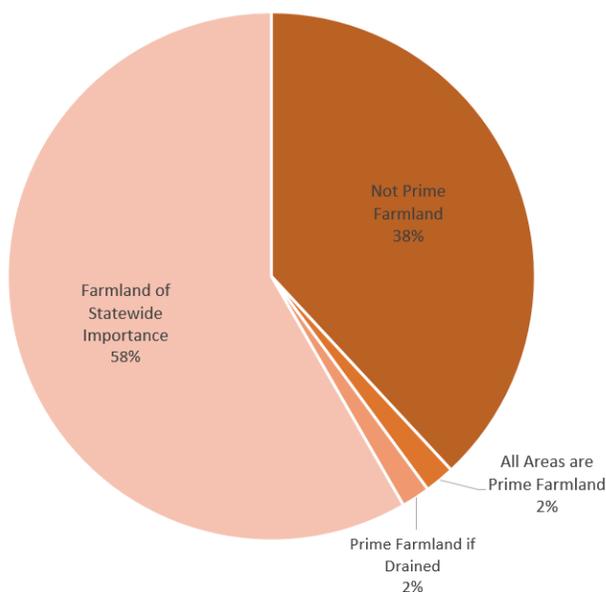
There are 15 WMA that fall fully or partially within the County. Wildlife management areas (WMAs) are part of Minnesota's outdoor recreation system and are established to protect those lands and waters that have a high potential for wildlife production, public hunting, trapping, fishing, and other compatible recreational uses. They are the backbone to DNR's wildlife management efforts in Minnesota and are key to:

- Protecting wildlife habitat for future generations.
- Providing citizens with opportunities for hunting, fishing and wildlife watching.
- Promoting important wildlife-based tourism in the state.

Soils

Prime farmland soils are defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as "soils that are best suited for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. These are soils that produce the highest yields with minimal inputs of energy and economic resources, and farming these soils results in the least damage to the environment. Table 6 highlights Kanabec County's farmland soils within the County.

Table 6. Kanabec County Farmland Classification



Aggregate

Large portions of aggregate resources can be found throughout the County. High quality aggregate areas may consist of sand and gravel and crushed stone. Most of the highest quality aggregate in these areas are used for construction purposes, such as the manufacturing of concrete or asphalt. Aggregates of lower quality are used for fill, base-course for roads, and for a variety of other purposes.

Issues and Opportunities

There is a vast range of challenges in protecting and preserving our natural resources for future generations. This next section highlights some of those challenges and the opportunities that can be embraced to ensure our natural resources come first in our land use decisions.

Aggregate Resources & Mining

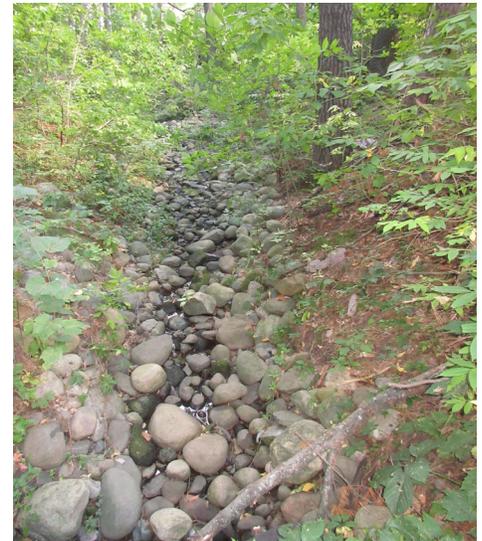
Aggregate resources in the region, particularly in the Twins Cities are rapidly diminishing. The County recognizes these trends and the growing demand for mining operations in the area. There is a desire to preserve these resources, while reclaiming extracted sites to higher end uses.

Climate Change & Adaptation

As communities adjust to increasingly extreme weather events, stress on public facilities, and higher costs of services, there is growing need to not only plan for these events, but also to reduce the impacts through conscious climate adaptation and mitigation. The County and its local partners should embrace strategies and best practices towards becoming a more and resilient County. Many of these strategies and best practices are promoted through Minnesota Green Step Cities. Minnesota GreenStep Cities is a voluntary challenge, assistance and recognition program to help cities achieve their sustainability and quality-of-life goals. The City of Braham is recognized as a GreenStep City for its commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and being more energy efficient.

Conservation Design

Development can impact our natural resources and agricultural lands negatively, if it isn't done in a manner. Encouraging developments to embrace conservation design techniques help enhance land development and resource conservation opportunities. This approach encourages residential development to conserve the agricultural and environmental resources. This is achieved by locating dwelling units on low value agricultural sites, while preserving portions of the development site that have conservation value.



Open Space Corridors

Parks and trails are an essential amenity that positively impact the health of the community. The benefits of being outside are broad-ranging and important to one's quality of life. Most of the area's recreational opportunities reside in the WMAs or at the local level where playgrounds and play fields exist (e.g., schools and city parks). The County does not own any parks or trails.

The County should promote its outdoor recreational amenities via open space corridors. This can be achieved as part of the development review process (at the county and township level). Open space corridors should use native vegetation and best management practices to improve good water quality and ecosystem health, while allowing plants and animals to thrive in a functioning ecosystem. Figure 6 starts to depict where some of these open space corridors may reside. Open space corridors may also provide local opportunities to incorporate trails (by land or water) that lead to destinations (local parks, regional parks, local trails, downtowns, and schools).

Promoting existing outdoor recreational amenities and open space corridors can bring a wealth of opportunities in bolstering the local and regional economy. The Snake River and Vasaloppet (largest cross-country ski race in Minnesota) should be viewed as starting point in helping formalize open space corridors for canoeing and cross country skiing.

Water Quality

Water knows no jurisdictional boundaries and as such, it is necessary for all communities to take a watershed approach to managing stormwater systems. Kanabec County's is working with the Minnesota Board of Water and Soils Resources (BWSR) to develop "One Watershed, One Plan" for multiple parts of the County. The purpose of the One Watershed, One Plan program is to develop a comprehensive watershed management plans that:

- Align local water planning purposes and procedures under State Statute on watershed boundaries to create a systematic, watershed-wide, science-based approach to watershed management.
- Acknowledge and build off existing local government structure, water plan services, and local capacity.
- Incorporate and make use of data and information, including watershed restoration and protection strategies.
- Solicit input and engage experts from agencies, citizens, and stakeholder groups; focus on implementation of prioritized and targeted actions capable of achieving measurable progress.
- Serve as a substitute for a comprehensive plan, local water management plan, or watershed management plan.

Communities in Kanabec County should also be concerned about periodic flooding and prohibiting the building of structures that would likely be damaged by those periodic flooding events. The County has adopted ordinances regarding flood plain and shoreland zoning (see sidebar).

The County's should first focus on maintaining the quality of water resources and then, as time goes on, to work to improve the water quality through various measures. Improved water quality will be the result of the State, County, Townships, and Cities working together to implement a number of best management practices for its residents, lake users, and those who seek to develop or redevelop properties.

Goals

1. Strive to maintain and improve the quality of the County's natural resources, while finding opportunities to develop additional public open spaces.
2. Enhance relationships and work in collaboration with partner agencies charged with managing systems related to water quality and natural resources.
3. Retain dedication to water management regulations administered by the State of Minnesota.
4. Sustain and enhance resource productivity, while improving the environmental qualities and aesthetics of Kanabec County.
5. Assure the availability of sand and gravel aggregate deposits for both public and private use into the future without detracting from recreational and amenity values and protecting water quality.

Kanabec County Floodplain Ordinance #9

The legislature of the State of Minnesota has, in Minnesota Statutes Chapter 104, delegated the responsibility to local government units to adopt regulations designed to minimize flood losses. The flood hazard areas of Kanabec County, Minnesota, are subject to periodic inundation which results in potential loss of life, loss of property, health and safety hazards, disruption of commerce and governmental protection and relief, and impairment of the tax base, all of which adversely affect the public health, safety, and general welfare.

It is the purpose of this Ordinance to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare and to minimize those losses described in Section 1.21 by provisions contained herein.

Kanabec County Shoreland Ordinance #5

Kanabec County's Shoreland Management Ordinance requires building site permits within the regulated shorelands of the county and applies to all unincorporated shorelands. Generally, the township zoning ordinances recognize that shoreland management regulations are implemented by Kanabec County. Several townships have specific zoning provisions that apply to shoreland areas within their township.

Policies

1. The County will collaborate with partner agencies to deliver practical education and research to residents and business on ways to conserve our natural resources.
2. The County will collaborate with partners, farmers, residents and business owners to reduce point source and nonpoint source pollutants to improve and protect water quality throughout the County and beyond.
3. The County discourages structural development from occurring on soils that exhibit any of the following limitations:
 - a) Slope in excess of twelve percent
 - b) Wetlands, peat or muck areas
 - c) Areas where bedrock is within six feet of soil surface
 - d) High water tables
 - e) Soils subject to severe wind or water erosion
 - f) Soils of low permeability
4. The County will actively pursue opportunities to improve the quality of water sources and continue to follow best practices as indicated by the State of Minnesota including:
 - a) Maintaining Shoreland Management Regulations consistent with State of Minnesota statutes.
 - b) Continue to implement flood plain management programs consistent with the State of Minnesota statutes.
 - c) Continue to implement on-site sewage treatment system design standards consistent with State of Minnesota rules and statutes.
 - d) Continue to collaborate with the Kanabec SWCD in efforts to restore and protect good water quality throughout the County.
5. The County will continue to collaborate with partners in the coordination of planning and implementation activities from the Kanabec County Water Plan and consider the Plan's recommendations when making land use decisions.



Chapter 4

Implementation

The intent of this chapter is to advance the Focus Areas' goals and policies. To be most effective, the Plan must serve both long term and near-term needs of the county. Implementing the Comprehensive Plan will also require a collective effort between Kanabec County staff and the various boards and commissions that advise the County and are impacted by its actions.

It is also important to recognize the Plan as a living document, providing the flexibility to adapt to unforeseen changes. Changes may include shifts in the local or economy, demographic shifts, technological advances, and political decisions that prompt the need to adjust and redirect stated goals and policies. On a smaller scale, individual property owner decisions (or needs) also force change. Small incremental changes must be carefully evaluated relative to the County's overall vision for the Focus Areas.



Action Steps

This section presents a number of near term and longer-term action steps that together have the potential to positively shape growth and change in the County. Since resources are limited, it is unrealistic to assume that the County can undertake all of them simultaneously. It will be necessary to focus on those that have the greatest potential to accomplish the Plan's goals or those that most directly address the stated needs of the community at a particular time.

The following action steps are in no particular order.

Near-Term Action Steps (0 to 5 Years)

- Conduct regular reviews of the Comprehensive Plan every 2 to 5 years to ensure that it remains relevant and in line with County priorities; and that County decision making remains in line with the Comprehensive Plan's goals and policies. This can be achieved by using a set of indicators (see page 56)
- Invest time and resources into improving the relationship between the County and the townships. This can be done principally by setting up quarterly land use planning meetings to establish clear lines of communication and build trust.
- The Comprehensive Plan has recognized some of the challenges the County is facing as it pertains to a declining population and other socioeconomic trends. These trends will have a significant impact on the local economy and how people thrive within the county. In that respect, the County should continue to support the Kanabec County Economic Development Authority (EDA) by expanding its resources (e.g., staffing) to help implement its Strategic Plan, while working to build a stronger economy through business retention and attraction.
- Advancing broadband infrastructure should be viewed as an immediate need, but may take several years to realize from a programming and investment standpoint. As noted throughout this Plan, the County is in the process of updating its Broadband Feasibility study. Once this Plan is adopted, its recommendations should be considered and prioritized for immediate action.



- Building stronger County and Township relationships needs to be prioritized in an effort to help advance the County's Comprehensive Plan. This can be achieved by continuing the Township Listening Sessions that were embraced as part of the planning process. Collectively, the group can help track and monitor a list of indicators (see page 56) to measure the successes of the county. A stronger County/Township relationship will be pivotal to making progress when implementing this Plan's goals and policies.

Long-Term Action Steps (5 to 10+ Years)

- The State Highways (Hwy. 23, 47, 65 and 107) that traverse through the County are the main arteries that move people, goods and services throughout the County. As part of this Plan's update, Highway 65 was a focus of discussion. Expanding Highway 65 is viewed by some as a catalyst to jump start economic development initiatives and improve the corridor's safety and mobility. Demonstrating this benefit will require a corridor study. The County should rekindle the Highway 65 Corridor Coalition in an effort to help advance a corridor study that looks at the benefits of expanding the two-lane highway to a four-lane freeway north of Cambridge.
- Re-evaluate zoning relations between the County and Townships and public nuisances.
- Every ten years the Comprehensive Plan should be updated. The County should actively plan for these updates and begin the public engagement process well in advance.

Indicators

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes a number of trends that may influence the County's future. Some of these trends may impact the County more strongly than others, while some may never transpire. Either way, these trends need to be considered and reflected upon when making future decisions about the County.

In an effort to help monitor these trends, a list of indicators have been developed. These indicators will help the County to monitor different situations to better understand and predict trends and their impact on the County. Over time, they will serve as data points to help develop strategic plans and capital improvement programs for the County regarding land use decision, economic development initiatives, infrastructure needs, and natural resource protection.

- **Land Use Efficiency**
 - » Density of new residential developments and loss of agricultural acres to development
 - » Location and zoning classification of new development
- **Zoning and Enforcement**
 - » Number of requests for ordinance enforcement from townships
 - » Number of complaints received related to nuisance
- **Economic Development (Employment)**
 - » Number of active farms by type and size
 - » Number of new businesses developed in the community
 - » Number of new jobs created and the average salary of those jobs
 - » Vacancy rates of commercial and industrial space
 - » Unemployment rates
 - » Valuation trends of commercial and industrial businesses
 - » Size of local/regional labor force
 - » Ratio of jobs in the County to the number of housing units
 - » Number of active mines by size and reclaimed sites
- **Broadband**
 - » Number of residents and demographics of residents with access to broadband
 - » Number of inquiries/comments about broadband service received
 - » Available telecommunication providers and options for establishing Internet connections county wide
 - » Potential service costs to residents
- **Transportation**
 - » Number of crashes and severity rate
 - » Number of roadway reconstruction/expansion miles
 - » Number of trail miles constructed
 - » Average Daily Traffic (ADT) volumes
 - » Number of county ditches (miles) and culverts repaired
- **Housing**
 - » Number of new housing units built
 - » Number of real estate transactions of owner-occupied housing
 - » Vacancy rates
 - » Number of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
- **Natural Resources**
 - » Water quality of key lakes and the Snake River
 - » Volume of waste generated per capita
 - » Percent of waste stream recycled per capita
 - » Per capita usage of water by land use
 - » Changes to natural land cover (e.g., cutting of forested areas)
 - » Number of land acres dedicated to parks or open space/natural resource protection

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KANABEC
COUNTY

Minnesota