



City of Bellechester

Comprehensive Plan 2015

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Bellechester Comprehensive Plan provides direction in making decisions about the community's future growth. The narrative sections and supporting graphics within this plan provide direction for solving existing problems and dealing with future change. Plan implementation involves the conversion of the strategies into measures of action.

The Bellechester Comprehensive Plan will be implemented in a number of ways. Actual implementation of the plan is accomplished on a daily basis by City personnel and on a regular basis by the decisions that are made by the City Council. It is the responsibility of the City to implement this plan upon adoption.

WHY HAVE A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A Comprehensive Plan is primarily a guide for planning within a City. It is the City's official statement used to guide development, redevelopment, and preservation of the city. It sets forth policies, plans, and programs governing land use, transportation, community facilities, and services. Zoning is based on the Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, Comprehensive Plans lay the framework for growth management, addressing strategies that may help control encroachment of future development. A number of states require a Comprehensive Plan as a matter of law. Minnesota does not require one, per Minnesota Statute §462.353, but many Minnesota cities have chosen to prepare one to guide their development. There are two major functions of a Comprehensive Plan. First, a Comprehensive Plan is physical documentation of what a community wants from their City. It states goals, objectives, and a vision of what the community may be. Second, the Plan serves as a guide to decision making in the community. The document offers legal protections to the City from future unfavorable development.

DEFINITION OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AS DEFINED BY MN STATE STATUTES

MN State Statutes §462.352 DEFINITIONS subd. 5 COMPREHENSIVE MUNICIPAL PLAN

""Comprehensive municipal plan" means a compilation of policy statements, goals, standards, and maps for guiding the physical, social and economic development, both private and public, of the municipality and its environs, and

may include, but is not limited to, the following: statements of policies, goals, standards, a land use plan, including proposed densities for development, a community facilities plan, a transportation plan, and recommendations for plan execution. A comprehensive plan represents the planning agency's recommendations for the future development of the community."

THE PURPOSE OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- Include citizen participation into future planning processes.
- Develop lands wisely so they can serve citizens more effectively and provide public services with less cost, thus creating a more secure tax base.
- Serve as a legal foundation for zoning and subdivision ordinances.
- To protect the City from incompatible land uses.

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

The Bellechester City Council decided that it was necessary to obtain a guiding document to help protect and plan for the future of the City. The City reached out to the Urban and Regional Studies department at Minnesota State University-Mankato to contract for a Comprehensive Plan to be written by graduate students in their final year of study.

The first step in the process was for the project team to meet with the City Clerk, Lisa Redepenning, to discuss a timeline, project expectations, and community goals. The project team gained further understanding of the City and their needs by visiting Bellechester and attending the September 9, 2015 City Council Meeting. From these interactions, the project team decided that the following sections needed to be included in the comprehensive plan:

- Community Context
- Land Use
- Housing
- Economic Development

- Public and Safety Services
- Water, Wastewater and Stormwater
- Transportation
- Parks and Open Space

Community engagement is a large component of the comprehensive planning process. The document should be a guide for, and a reflection of, the people who live in the community. A full understanding of the residents' wants, needs, and concerns is imperative to the creation of a successful Comprehensive Plan. On September 25, 2015 a community survey, developed by the project team, was delivered to each household in Bellechester within their monthly utility bill. Residents had until October 14, 2015 to fill out and return the surveys. The second step in the community engagement process was to hold a public involvement meeting. That meeting was held at the Bellechester Community Center, on October 14, 2015. Residents were encouraged to bring their completed surveys to this meeting. Attendees were asked what their vision is for the City of Bellechester, looking toward the future.

The project team took the input they received from the community engagement process, as well as input from interactions with City staff and the City Council to put together the three main components that should be addressed in each section of the Comprehensive Plan:

1. Existing conditions
2. Public input
3. Goals & Policies

The project team worked to create a quality inventory of existing conditions, as they relate to each section. They then incorporated pertinent public and Council input into each of the corresponding sections, and used that to form the goals for that section. The final step in the comprehensive planning process was to present goals and policies to the City as possible options or steps they can take in order to accomplish the goals that the City and residents have. These policies are recommendations; it is the responsibility of the City to implement the potential policies presented.

II. COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The city of Bellechester is located in southeastern Minnesota nestled between US Highway 52 and US Highway 63, approximately thirty-five miles north of Rochester. The Bellechester area was settled by approximately fifty families between the years of 1852 and 1862. In 1909, clay was discovered approximately one half mile east of the northern part of Bellechester, which provided a boost to the community. The village was incorporated in October of 1955. The city limits include a total of 0.31 square miles of area, consisting entirely of land.

ENVIRONMENT

FLOOD PLAIN

According to FEMA, there are no floodplains located within the City of Bellechester. Below is the FEMA Floodplain Map of Bellechester and the surrounding area.



FIGURE 2.1 FEMA Flood Map

Source: FEMA

WATERSHED

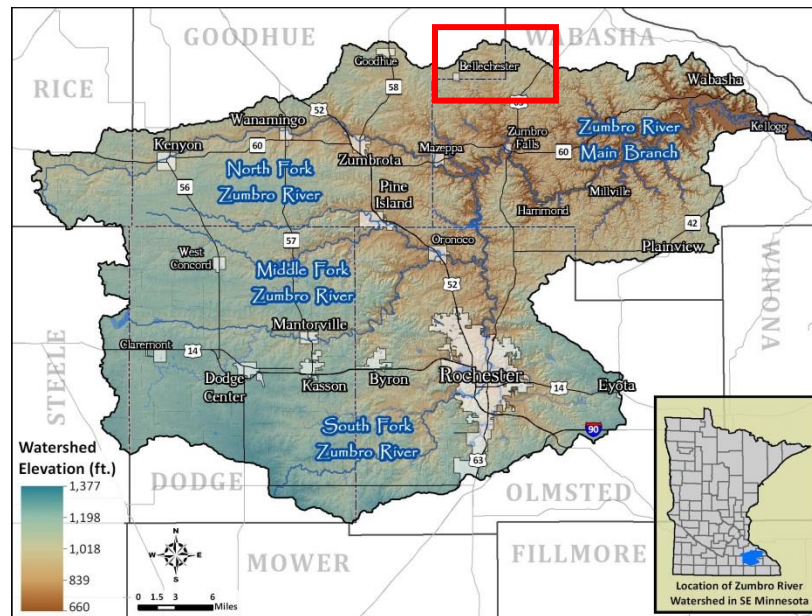


FIGURE 2.2 Zumbro Watershed District

Source: Zumbro Watershed Partnership

Bellechester is located at the very north portion of the Zumbro watershed. The Zumbro watershed encompasses over 900,000 acres of agricultural and urban lands that drain into the three forks of the Zumbro River before joining the Mississippi River at Kellogg, MN.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Through the community engagement process, it was uncovered that the residents and leaders of Bellechester are very concerned about the possibility of a feedlot locating near Bellechester. The community feels as though that would be a great public nuisance. Through investigation of possible ways to prevent a feedlot from locating near the City, several environmental factors presented themselves.

Karst

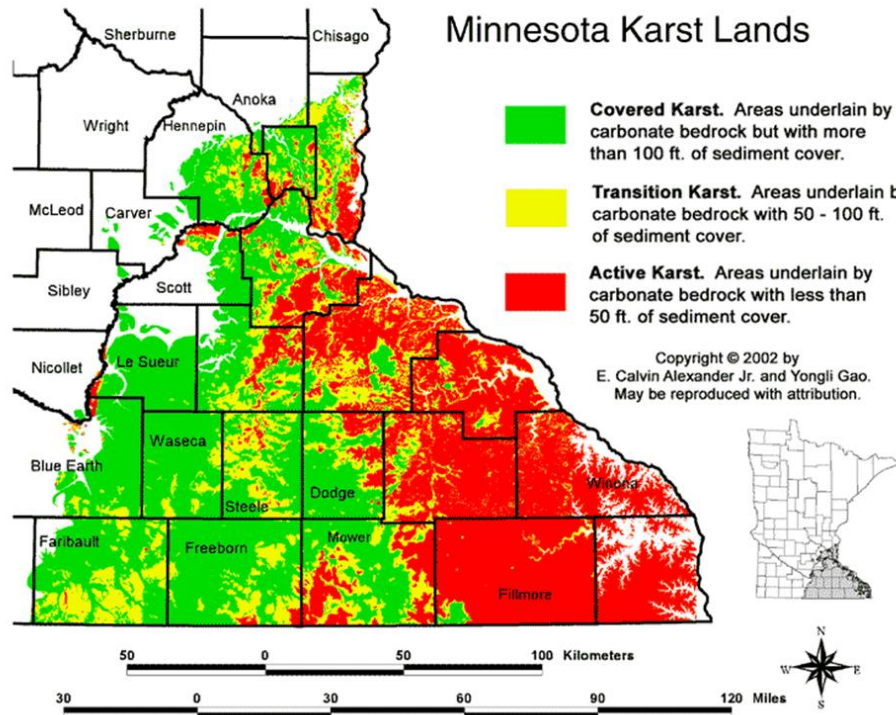


FIGURE 2.3 Karst Topography, Southern MN
Source: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

It is worth noting that the Bellechester area contains active karst topography under the surface. Karst is soluble and vulnerable to pollution. Ordinarily, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency considers areas of karst topography to be unfavorable for uses that traditionally produce pollution, such as feed lots. Any change to existing feedlots, or applications for new feedlots, are required to go through a process in which the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture evaluate issues concerning public health.

Ground Water

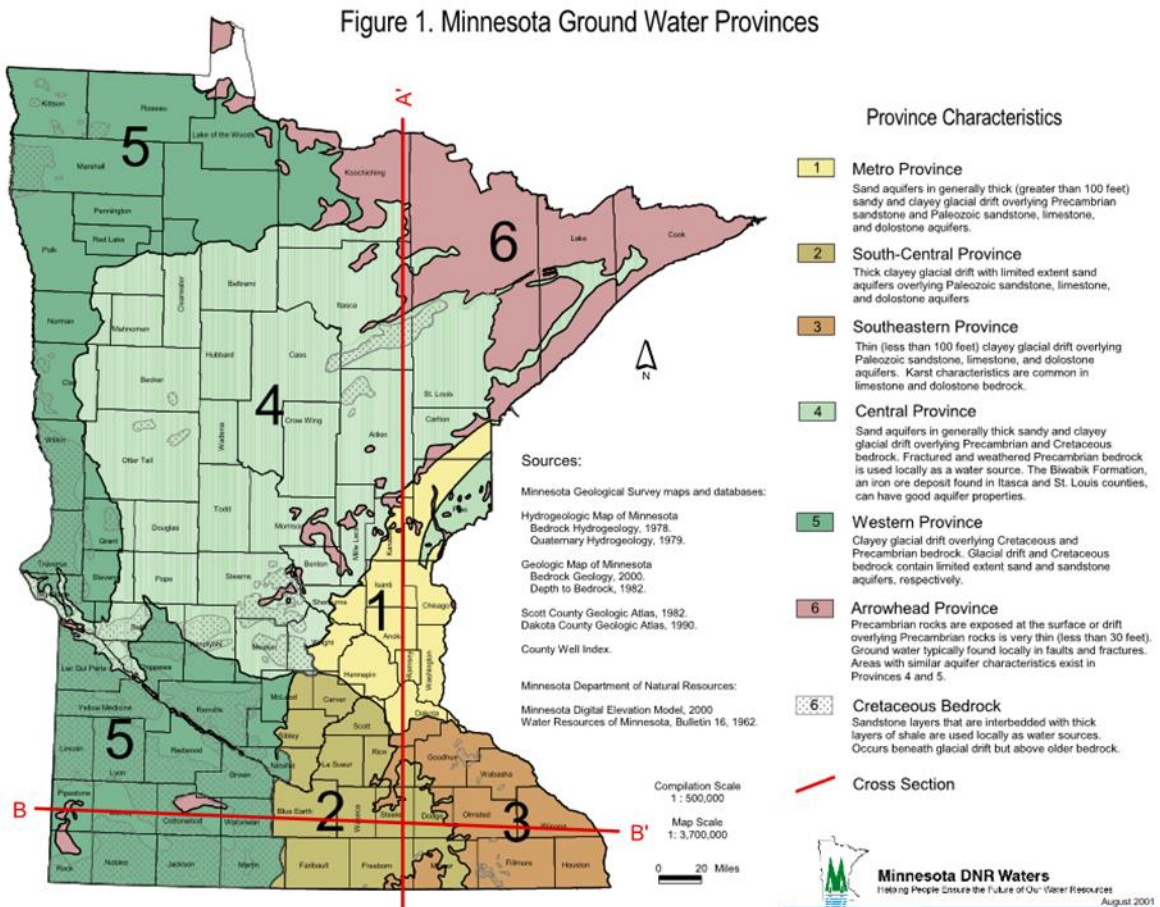


FIGURE 2.4 Minnesota Ground Water Provinces
Source: Minnesota DNR

Bellechester is located in the Southeastern Ground Water Province, where there are likely water sources hidden underground. This factor would also likely mean denial of a new or expanded feedlot plan.

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION

Over the past several decades, Bellechester's population has remained relatively stable. The population peaked in 1980 at 220 residents. Immediately following that peak, the population decreased to only 110 residents in 1990. Following that significant decrease, the population rebounded and has remained very stable in the decades following, 2000 to 2014. The Minnesota State Demographer's Office estimated the population of Bellechester to be 168 residents in the year 2014. Between the years of 1960 and 2010 the City of Bellechester has seen an average rate of growth of 5.4%. This change is reflected in our estimate for Bellechester's population in the year 2020. **FIGURE 2.4** and **TABLE 2.1** show the change in population numbers since 1960.

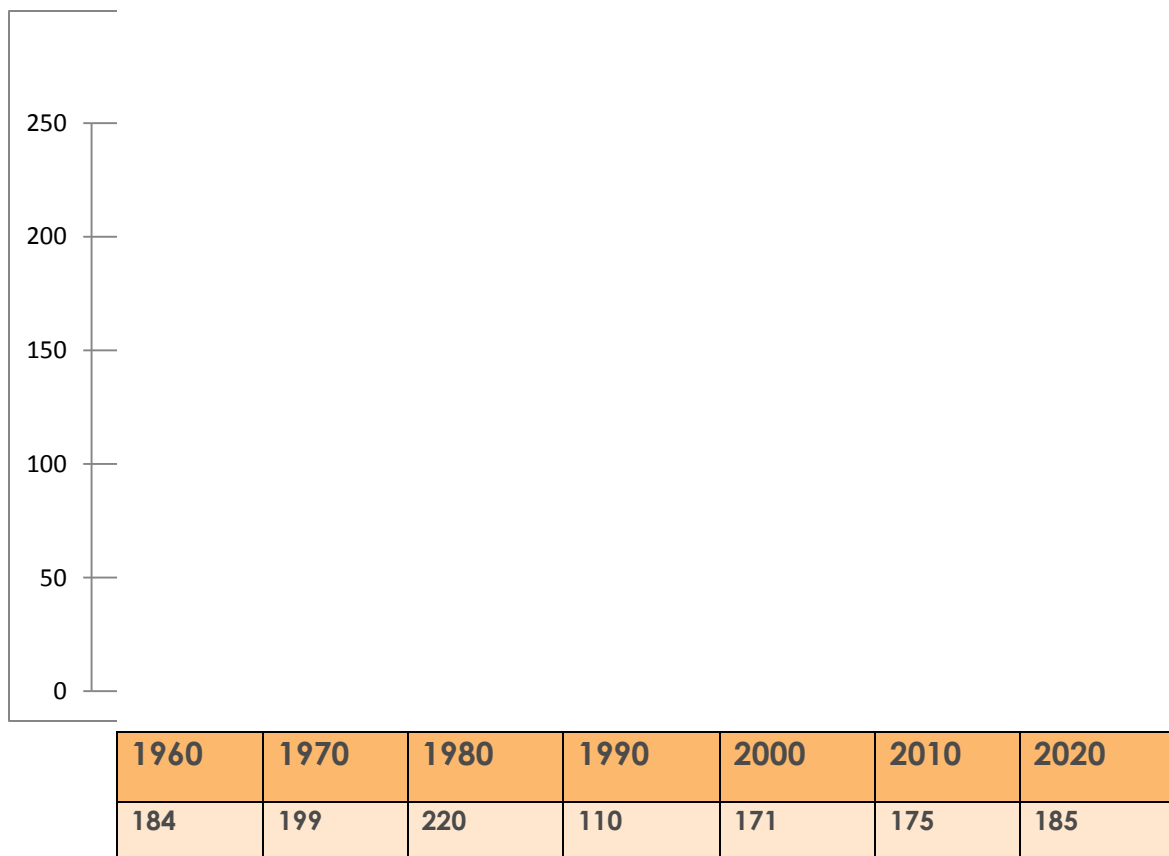


FIGURE 2.5 & TABLE 2.1: Population Change

Sources: US Census (1960-2010), Projection for 2020 based on 1960-2010 Census data.

The demographic make-up of the City has remained very stable over time. However, household size has increased slightly from 2000 to 2010, which is

attributed to a larger share of family households (53.8% of all households in 2000 to 62.7% in 2010), which tend to have more people residing in them.

The share of senior households has increased from 2000 to the 2010. Senior householders accounted for 14.1% of households in 2000, and 16% in 2010. 26.9% of all households in 2000 were home to a senior, and that percentage increased to 32% in 2010. This indicates an aging population within the City of Bellechester. Currently seniors make up 17.1% of the total population.

Households by Age of Householder

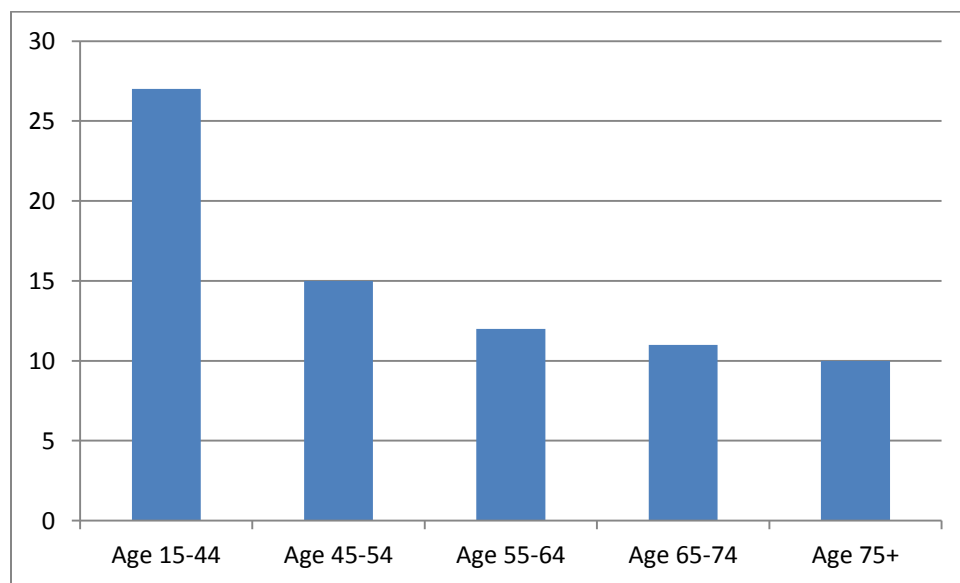


FIGURE 2.6: Household Breakdown by Age of Householder
Source: 2010 Census

Bellechester's families are primarily older families, with grown or no children. Only 34% of households include children under the age of 18. The median age has remained almost identical, with 37.4 years in 2000 to 37.5 years in 2010. **FIGURE 2.7** highlights the age make-up of the population in Bellechester.

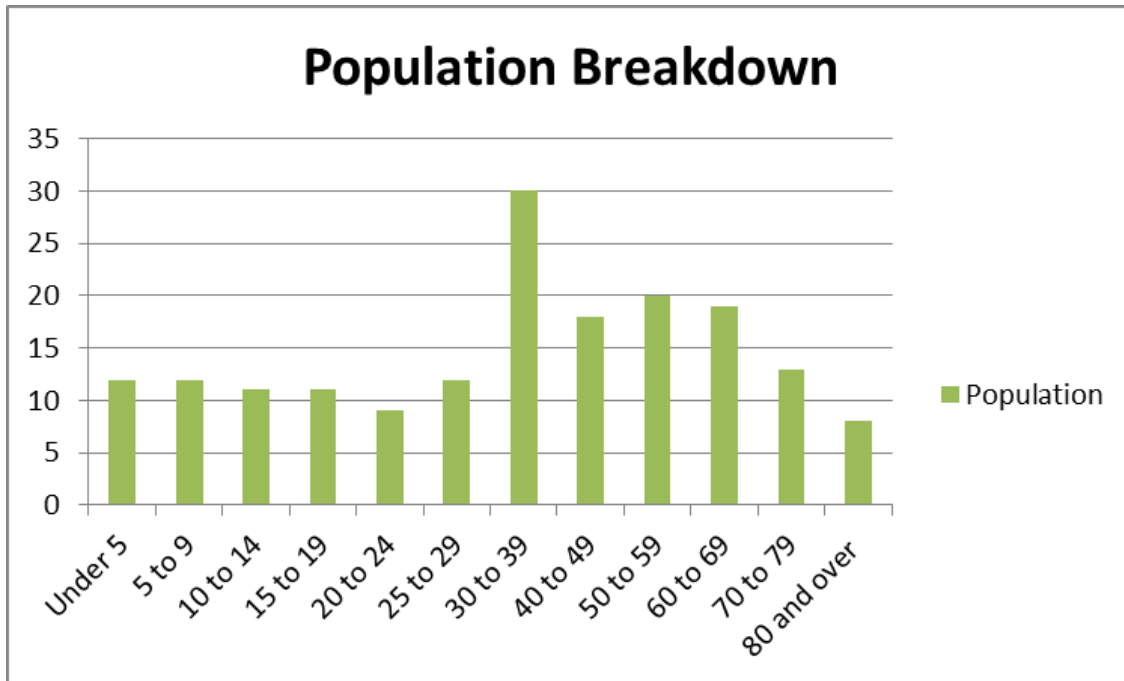


FIGURE 2.7 Population Breakdown by Age
 Source: Census 2010

65% of Bellechester's residents are in the working- age range, of age 15-64. There was a 1.9% increase between 2000 and 2010. That same percentage was used to estimate the 2020 working-age population. The change over time is illustrated in the table below.

Working-Age (15-64) People		
2000 Census	2010 Census	2020 Estimate
108	110	112

TABLE 2.2: Working Age Population
 Sources: 2000 Census, 2010 Census, calculated estimates for 2020

RACE

With regard to race, the City of Bellechester is 89% white, and 11% Hispanic. The Hispanic population has increased substantially since 2000, when it comprised about 1.7% of the total population.

Racial Breakdown

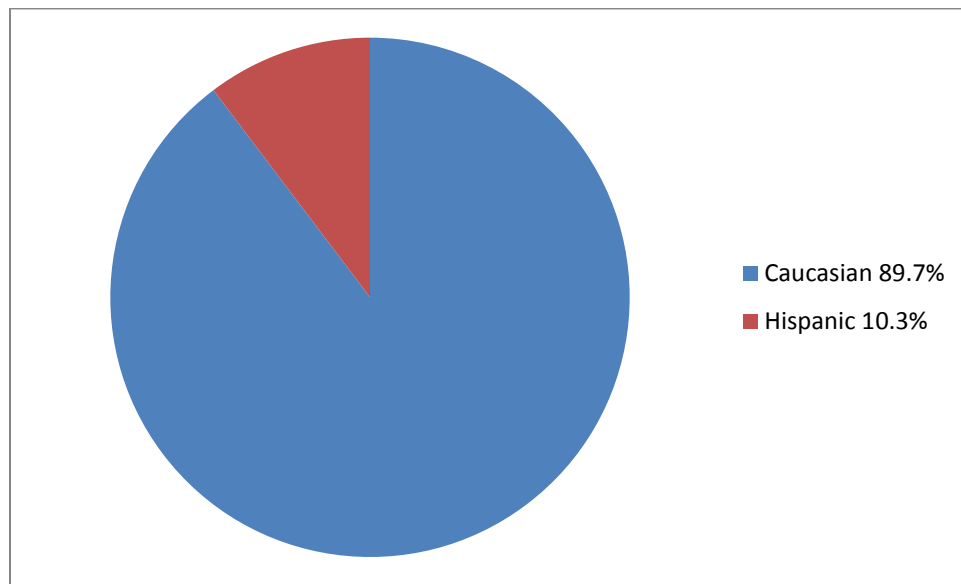


FIGURE 2.8: Racial Makeup of Bellechester
Source: 2010 Census

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Household income has also increased over time, although not fast enough to keep up with inflation. Median household income in 2000 was \$33,333, compared with \$41,250 today (according to the 2012 American Community Survey). The median household income in the City of Bellechester is significantly less than the state average, which is \$59,836.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Since 2000, educational attainment has increased. 88.6% of residents have obtained their high school diploma, a 5.5% increase from 2000.

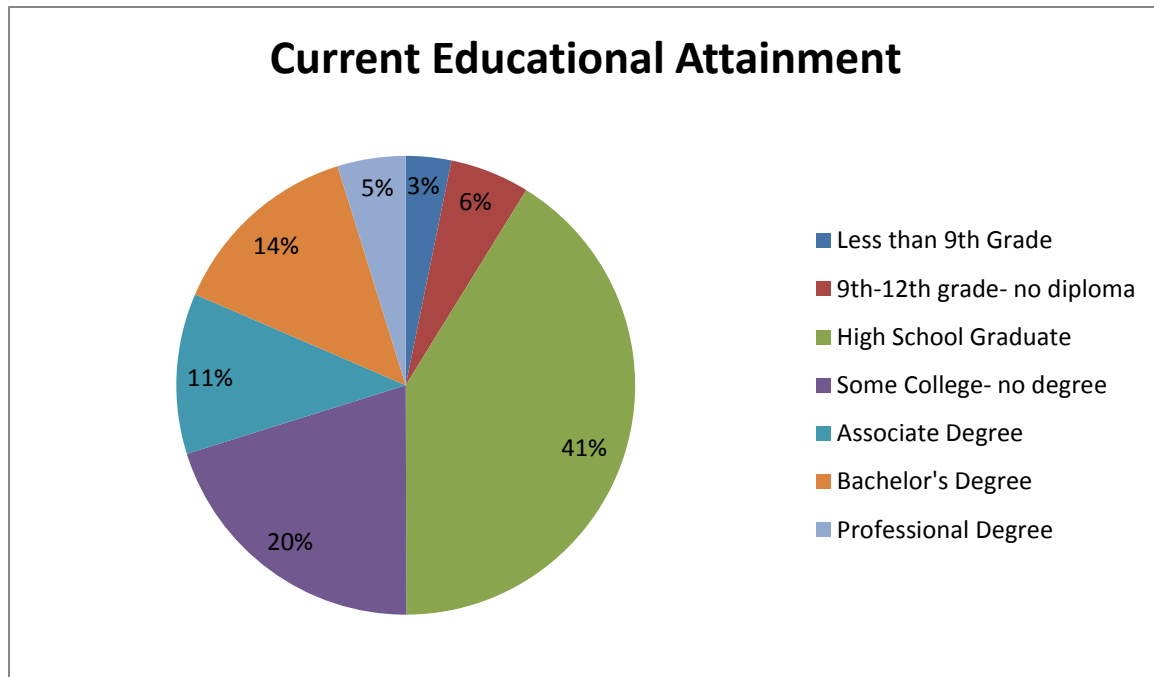


FIGURE 2.9 Current Educational Attainment
 Source: 2010 Census

III. THE COMMUNITY'S VISION

The City of Bellechester is a place where its residents can enjoy a quiet, country lifestyle. The City embraces the natural landscape within and surrounding it. It is a safe, friendly place where the residents feel a strong sense of community. Looking to the future, the residents wish to retain the small-town character of the City, and preserve their special way of life. The people of Bellechester acknowledge that smart and productive future growth will be an asset to the community in the years to come.

IV. LAND USE

This chapter describes existing land use patterns in Bellechester, and it sets forth a plan for future land use that is consistent with the City's vision. The Land Use Plan guides City Staff, the City Council, property owners, developers, and other interested parties in decisions relating to the type, location, and density of future land use in the community. It also serves as the foundation for updating the City's Zoning Map, Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, and other implementation tools.

LAND USE BACKGROUND

Bellechester is a small community located in Goodhue County and Wabasha County along County Road 16. The community was established in the mid 1850's, and in 1862 a donation of forty acres was given to Bellechester for the construction of a church. This constituted the first official land used of the City. In 1871 the first commercial business was created, in the form of a general store and saloon. In 1909 clay was discovered in the northern part of the city which created a boost in the diversification of land uses within the City, and brought a stop on the Chicago Great Western Railway. This created the distinction between New Bellechester (New Town) and Belle Chester (Old Town). This was the beginning of real land use in the city that is now present day Bellechester.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

COMMERCIAL/BUSINESS

The existing commercial/business land use in the City of Bellechester is concentrated in and around Great Western Ave. and Main Street. These businesses include a large mill, an auto mechanic shop, a small neighborhood bar, and First Farmers and Merchants Bank.

RESIDENTIAL

Residential land use in Bellechester is made up of single-family and mobile homes. There are two areas within Bellechester that are zoned for residential use (see current Land Use map). Presently, there are seventy-six residential units

within the City. There are currently two vacant residential lots located within the city.

AGRICULTURE

Approximately half of the city is zoned for agricultural use, as indicated on the Current Land Use Map (**Figure 4.1**). This is primarily used as farm land with the exception to the zoned portion between Great Western Avenue and County Road 16. This parcel of agricultural land is unused space.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

The city of Bellechester currently has one park. It is located in the northeast part of the city between Great Western Avenue and Red Wing Avenue. The park consists of a playground, a ball field, a picnic shelter, and open space. The park and open space land use consists of two acres of land total.

City of Bellechester Land Use Map

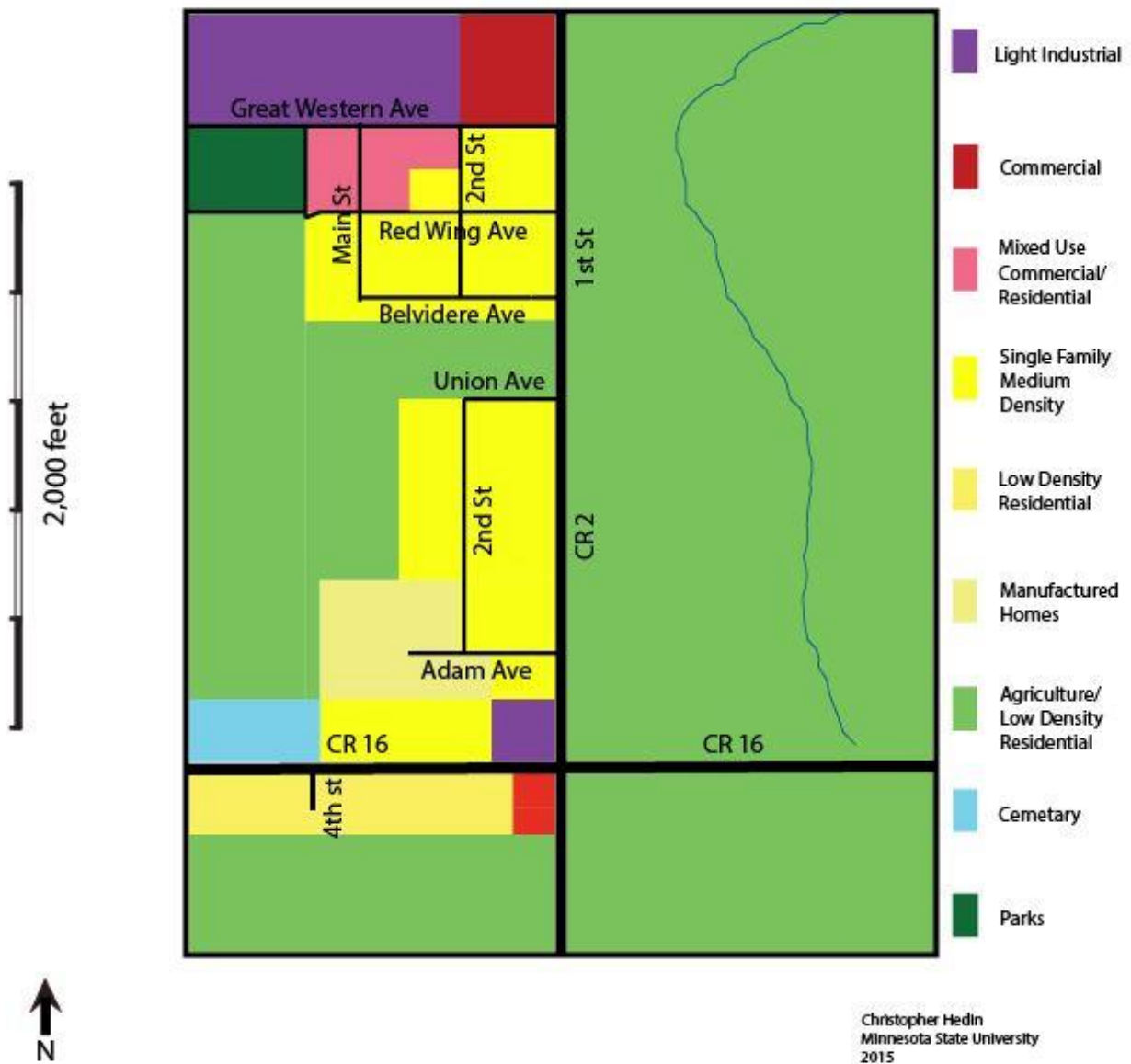


FIGURE 4.1: Current Land Use Map

City of Bellechester Proposed Future Land Use Map

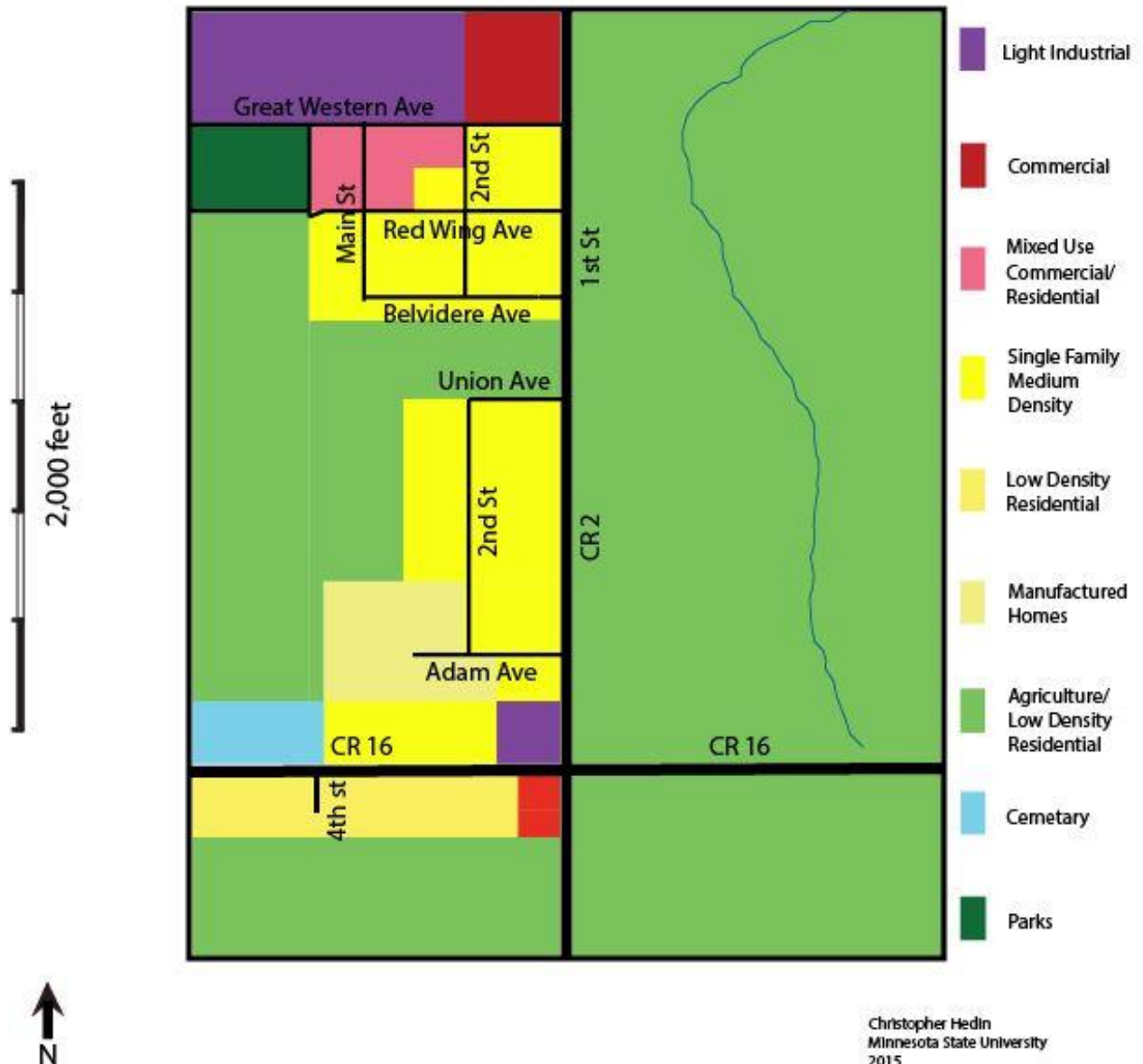


FIGURE 4.2: Future Land Use Map

PUBLIC INPUT

Overall, the residents of Bellechester would like to maintain the small-town character of the City, but are supportive of improvements. The residents expressed a need to improve the aesthetics of the City, in terms of exterior storage and improvements of blighted properties. Another need is to improve zoning so that any new or re-development that occurs within the City does so within the proper areas for the type of land use.

GOALS & POLICIES

Goal 4.1:

Consider prevention efforts to avoid haphazard development, and guide future development into the proper zoning districts through zoning regulation.

Policies:

- Evaluate the City's zoning districts to more clearly define where the City's land uses presently are and will be in the future.
 - Use the Future Land Use map from this plan to guide to the best location for each of these specific zoning districts.
 - Ensure that any new or re-development occurs in the proper zoning district.
- Consider adopting an official zoning map.

Goal 4.2:

Improve the overall aesthetics of the community (exterior storage, deteriorating buildings, compatible land uses, etc.)

Policies:

- Consider reviewing the City's Land Use Ordinances to bring them into consistency with this Plan.
 - Existing non-conforming uses should be grandfathered in, allowing them to continue operating in their present state.
- Consider implementing performance standards that are more inclusive of the exterior storage that is presently not permitted by the Ordinance. This

can be achieved through various methods of screening, including fencing or landscaping, to promote harmony between neighbors.

- Explore ways to implement a program to enforce the City's codes actively.
- Consider hosting an annual meeting at City Hall to address the public's concerns regarding aesthetics.

Goal 4.3:

Protect Bellechester from undesirable development in the areas immediately surrounding it

Policies:

- Recommend passing a subdivision ordinance within the City and including areas immediately beyond City limits, where statutory authority exists.
 - A Subdivision Ordinance is the tool that is recommended to give the City a say in any development within two miles of its borders. Any development would need to be approved by the City in order to proceed. This Subdivision Ordinance will be backed by this plan, and is a legally defensible document.
 - **MN State Statutes 462.358 Subd. 1a. OFFICIAL CONTROLS: SUBDIVISION REGULATION; DEDICATION.**
*"Authority: To protect and promote the public health, safety, and general welfare, to provide for the orderly, economic, and safe development of land, to preserve agricultural lands, to promote the availability of housing affordable to persons and families of all income levels, and to facilitate adequate provision for transportation, water, sewage, storm drainage, schools, parks, playgrounds, and other public services and facilities, a municipality may by ordinance adopt subdivision regulations establishing standards, requirements, and procedures for the review and approval or disapproval of subdivisions. The regulations may contain varied provisions respecting, and be made applicable only to, certain classes or kinds of subdivisions. The regulations shall be uniform for each class or kind of subdivision.
A municipality may by resolution extend the application of its subdivision regulations to unincorporated territory located within*



two miles of its limits in any direction but not in a town which has adopted subdivision regulations; provided that where two or more noncontiguous municipalities have boundaries less than four miles apart, each is authorized to control the subdivision of land equal distance from its boundaries within this area."

V. HOUSING

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The city of Bellechester has a diverse variety of housing. The single-family homes in general are structurally sound. This is a pleasing asset to the City, since nearly half of the houses in the city were built prior to 1960. The small majority of newer homes built after 1960 are also in good structural condition and are of a variety of type and size. The mix of historic homes surrounded by newer homes is typical in small cities. The variety of housing types compliments the character of the City.

GENERAL INDICATORS

2014 Housing by Types	
Single Family Units	58
Multiple Family Units	3
Mobile Homes	13
Total Units	74

TABLE 5.1 Housing Types
Source: 2010 Census

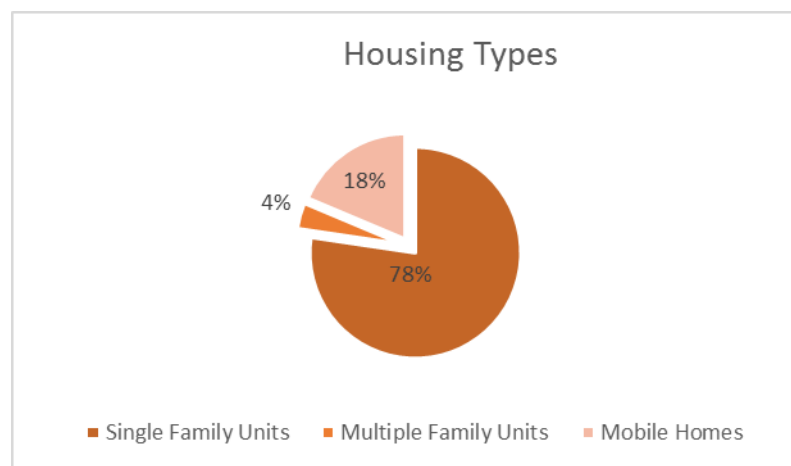


FIGURE: 5.2
Source: Edina Realty

Bellechester's number of housing units have remained constant since 2010. As of 2015, Bellechester's median home value is \$118,900 (Source: Edina Realty).

AGE OF HOUSING STOCK

Age of Housing								
Year Built	Bellechester		Goodhue County		Wabasha County		Minnesota	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1939 or Earlier	36	39.1%	5,349	26.4%	2,539	25.9%	427,919	18.4%
1940 to 1949	0	0.0%	740	3.7%	517	5.2%	120,227	5.2%
1950 to 1959	5	5.4%	1,780	8.8%	723	7.2%	249,187	10.7%
1960 to 1969	8	8.7%	1,948	9.6%	845	8.5%	235,409	10.1%
1970 to 1979	25	27.2%	3,508	17.3%	1,592	15.9%	378,637	16.3%
1980 to 1989	2	2.2%	2,063	10.2%	976	9.8%	303,204	13.0%
1990 to 1999	6	6.5%	2,483	12.4%	1,412	14.1%	315,505	13.6%
2000 or Later	10	10.9%	2,369	11.7%	1,319	13.9%	297,860	12.8%
Median	1966		1970		1970		1970	
Total	78	100%	20,240	100%	9,995	100%	2,327,948	100%

TABLE 5.3: Age of Housing

Source: 2010 Census

RENTAL HOUSING AND AFFORDABILITY INDICATORS

Assessing the provision of rental housing and housing affordability are two areas that all communities must address. These interrelated components can help a community determine if the City is providing adequate life cycle housing ranging from those individuals just starting out to seniors for a retirement home. Viable communities offer an array of housing alternatives to meet community needs.

More specifically, the Rental Housing and Affordability Indicators section examines things such as the degree of owner-occupied versus rental housing, rent levels, and housing expenditure as a percentage of household income. Taken as a whole, the aforementioned factors offer insight into affordable housing, opportunities for home ownership, and the potential for life cycle housing with the community.

Ownership Characteristics								
Type	Bellechester		Goodhue County		Wabasha County		Minnesota	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Occupied	75	94.9%	18,711	92.3%	8,882	88.8%	2,085,917	89.6%
Owner	64	81.0%	14,435	77.1%	7,203	81.6%	1,548,127	74.2%
Renter	11	13.9%	4,276	22.9%	1,619	18.4%	537,790	25.8%
Vacant	4	5.1%	1,557	7.7%	1,175	11.8%	242,031	10.4%
Total	79	100%	20,268	100%	9,997	100%	2,327,948	100%

TABLE 5.4: Ownership Characteristics

Source: 2010 Census

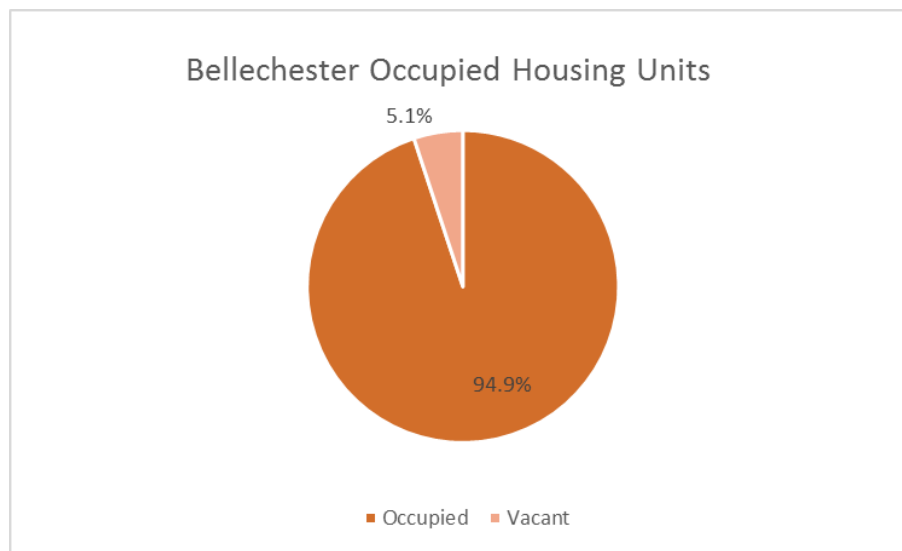


FIGURE 5.3: Occupied/Vacant Housing Units

Source: City of Bellechester

Gross Rent								
	Bellechester		Wabasha County		Goodhue County		Minnesota	
Gross Rent	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Less than \$100	0	0.0%	32	2.4%	87	2.2%	14,272	2.6%
\$100 to \$299	0	0.0%	75	5.6%	148	3.7%	26,769	4.9%
\$300 to \$499	1	0.1%	238	17.7%	874	21.7%	53,423	9.7%
\$500 to \$749	10	90.9%	463	34.5%	1,204	29.9%	133,875	24.3%
\$750 +	0	0.0%	535	39.8%	1,711	42.5%	322,948	58.6%
No Cash Rent	0	0.0%	224	16.7%	228	0.1%	27,673	0.1%
2010 Median Rent	\$535		\$681		\$648		\$819	

TABLE 5.5: Gross Rent

Source: 2010 Census

PUBLIC INPUT

The citizens and City officials in Bellechester would like to see more single-family detached housing units and townhome units. They expressed that any future housing development should occur in residential districts. Furthermore, all future housing development should be considered when services (water, sewer, and etc.) are available.

GOALS & POLICIES

Goal 5.1:

Ensure affordable and diverse housing stock to meet a wide-range of community needs.

Policies:

- Consider adopting a subdivision ordinance that applies to Bellechester and two miles surrounding City limits.
- Explore working with the city's public works and engineering staff to ensure adequate infrastructure for future developments.
- Consider supporting relationships with public, private, and non-profit organizations that can assist Bellechester with Housing issues.
- Encourage public-private partnerships to expand affordable housing opportunities.
- Encourage that all new development occurs within the proper zoning districts.
- Encourage methods and funding options to promote future housing opportunities.

Goal 5.2:

Create a high-quality environment in all residential neighborhoods

Policies:

- Consider enacting the necessary ordinances to ensure the continued maintenance of the housing stock.

- Explore methods and funding options to promote improvement of the existing housing stock.
- Explore developing minimum landscaping and design standards, including the use of tree and indigenous plantings.
- Examine zoning and other regulations to ensure that all standards are met.

VI. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A fundamental element in expanding the city budget is accomplished through Economic Development. Through fees and taxes driven by local business, the city is able to acquire resources to pay for services and amenities used by its citizens. Economic Development in its namesake is responsible for retention and expansion of local businesses. Whether a municipality is anticipating growth in population and size, or foresees stagnation in these areas, a healthy local business climate is essential. Therefore, local business development and growth should always be fostered.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Two questions should be addressed in assessing the health of the local business climate. They are: Where are our citizens spending their money? And, how much money is local business collecting from non- residents?

The following is a list of Bellechester businesses, how many are full time employees (FTE) v. part time (PTE) and how many are from Bellechester (BC).

Business	FTE	PTE	BC
G.B. Feed and Supply	1	2	1
Majerus Garage	10	0	5
Bellechester Tavern	0	4	4
First Farmers and Merchants Bank	0	3	0
City Government	0	10	9
Poncelet Metals	2	0	0
AG Partners	1	0	0
Totals: 7	14	19	19

This table provides some important information:

- Business is not well diversified.
- Common goods such as fuel, groceries, hardware, health products are purchased elsewhere.
- 53% of the employment is only part time.
- 42% of Bellechester households derive at least part of their income from local business.

- 53% of paid income is provided to households outside of Bellechester.

The present status suggests there is opportunity to improve the current business climate.

SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH AND EXPANSION GOALS

Currently business is not clustered in a single defined district. Commerce that is clustered in one area of the city offers consumers convenience and encourages patronage of multiple businesses. Bellechester has a unique historic business district that can benefit the business climate through restoration or replacement of historic buildings. Owners of buildings and land in the Central Business District should be encouraged to develop additional retail space and aesthetic improvements that may attract new businesses and consumers. The return in revenue for improvement expenditures by public or private sources can be reinvested in additional projects that foster economic growth.

Small Business growth and diversification within the city limits will provide economic strength to the community and a stronger budget to provide more services and amenities. Small Business development aid is available from many sources, each offering new and changing services. Some sources of aid for small businesses include:

- Grants
- Loans
- Revolving loan programs
- Free small business educational programs

PUBLIC INPUT

Citizen input revealed a strong desire to increase local commerce. Survey responses showed residents favor a healthier business environment as a source convenience and revenue for the city. Overwhelmingly, public input revealed a desire to have a convenience store located within the City.

GOALS & POLICIES

Goal 6.1:

Develop an easily identifiable business district.

Policies:

- Consider redevelopment or improvement of properties that currently occupy the historic business district.
- Explore strategies to allow future businesses to occupy space along Great Western Avenue.

Goal 6.2:

Maximize the potential success of small businesses.

Policy:

- Explore the idea of developing a monthly newsletter that profiles small businesses and also includes information on the following sources of grants, loans, and small business education programs:
 - The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
 - Small Business Administration
 - Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation
 - Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
 - Goodhue County Economic Development Authority
 - Wabasha County Economic Development Authority
 - Small Business Development Center at Southeast Technical and Community College
 - Minnesota Historical Society

Goal 6.3:

Attract new business development and consumers to Bellechester.

Policies:

- Explore aesthetic and retail space improvements to the business district.

- Identify and encourage the development of specific business types that would be successful in Bellechester.
- Develop a welcoming business district that customers can easily locate.
- Identify resources unique to Bellechester that can be used to leverage business development.

Goal 6.4:

Foster long term expansion, retention and growth of local commerce.

Policies:

- Consider developing a Capital Improvement Plan to include readying land for new business, housing developments, historic preservation/renewal and infrastructure improvement.
- Explore revenue sources for Capital Improvement Projects, including municipal bonds, a variety of grants, land dedication fees from developers, and new options as they evolve.
- Evaluate the benefit of becoming a member of the League of Minnesota Cities.

VII. PUBLIC AND SAFETY SERVICES

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The City of Bellechester in its current state has many contracts for most public works and safety services. All of the garbage, recycling, ambulance, fire, police, telecommunications, electric and snow removal services are provided by other communities or private companies. Also, propane is the fuel source within the community, as there is no infrastructure for natural gas.

Facilities	Contract Holder	Amount
Snow Removal	Majerus Garage	\$6,000
Garbage Removal	Countryside Disposal	\$16,000
Police Services	Goodhue County	5 month contract/\$5,300
Fire Services	Goodhue Community Fire Truck Association	\$1,440
Ambulance Services	Zumbrota Area Ambulance Association	\$525
Total Budget Amount		\$29,265

TABLE 7.1: Public safety & services contracts

Currently, there is no plan to expand any of the services throughout the community, due to budgetary concerns. However, the City does see a need to expand all services as the community grows, which would allow the budget to expand.

PUBLIC INPUT

Public concern about safety services was centered around safety training and the possibility for public officials to be certified in CPR, or for the City to obtain a defibrillator. Bellechester's residents and leaders acknowledge that they will need to consider expansion of these services if growth warrants it.

GOALS & POLICIES

Goal 7.1:

Provide services to protect the health and welfare of the residents of Bellechester.

Policies:

- Explore the possibility of purchasing a defibrillator to be centrally located in town.
- Consider increasing public and safety services when it is warranted by potential future growth.
- Consider funding annual safety training for City employees and purchase needed safety equipment over the next two to three years.
- Explore the feasibility of purchasing the City's own public works/safety equipment.

Goal 7.2:

Collaborate with surrounding government bodies to provide the level of service that residents need and expect.

Policies:

- Investigate the potential need to update current contracts for all public and safety services.
- Explore the possibility of expanding funding for safety contracts, as budget allows.

VIII. WATER, WASTEWATER & STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Water and sewer service have been considered a basic service of municipalities for generations. This infrastructure plays a major role in providing for the health & welfare of citizens in the community. Stormwater facilities too, are often part of the utility infrastructure provided by a city. In the past, stormwater systems consisted of open ditches or enclosed underground sewers that often led directly to a natural river or lake. With the recognition that these direct systems greatly contributed to the decline in water quality, communities began utilizing "pipe to pond" type systems which collected and held stormwater for longer infiltration periods. Now, more of this "grey infrastructure" is being replaced with "green" methods that seek to more naturally integrate stormwater management into individual sites, using methods that mimic natural processes.

Currently, the capacity of the wastewater system is identified as a sufficient facility in the community. However, growth around the City will cause a need for the facility to be expanded to a high capacity sewer system. This would allow for growth and development of all sectors, including industrial which historically is a job producing sector.

Bellechester's sanitary sewer system was built in the early 1970's with eight inch clay pipe. It is completely gravity fed to 3 stabilization ponds of about 2 acres each. The pond system was reconstructed in 1992 after a failure in Pond 2 due to the fact that Bellechester is in the karst region of the state. The ponds were built to handle an average of 26,000 gallons per day. Influx on an average day is 15,000 gallons at this time. According to the as-builts, the storm sewer does not feed into the collection system. Due to the age of the collection system, Bellechester is beginning to see the signs of old age and will need to begin rehabbing the system in the near future.

Sewage and Waste Water Costs	Amount
Operating Budget	\$15,509.99
Debt Service Principle	\$70,802.55
Interest	\$1,387.01
Total Amount	\$87,699.55

TABLE 8.1: Sewage and Water Costs

A maintenance policy is in place; it is largely driven by the insurance program the facility uses, through the League of Minnesota Cities. The Policy also drives the cleaning or camera inspection of the sewer collection system as the budget allows. These policies and practices allow Bellechester to remain ahead of any problems or issues that may come along in the future.

No specific improvements are planned to date for the system. It will take growth to drive improvements. However, as the system continues to age, it will be important to track dates of additions and replacement or major repairs to system.

There are no water storage tanks or fire hydrants.

WATER SYSTEM MAP

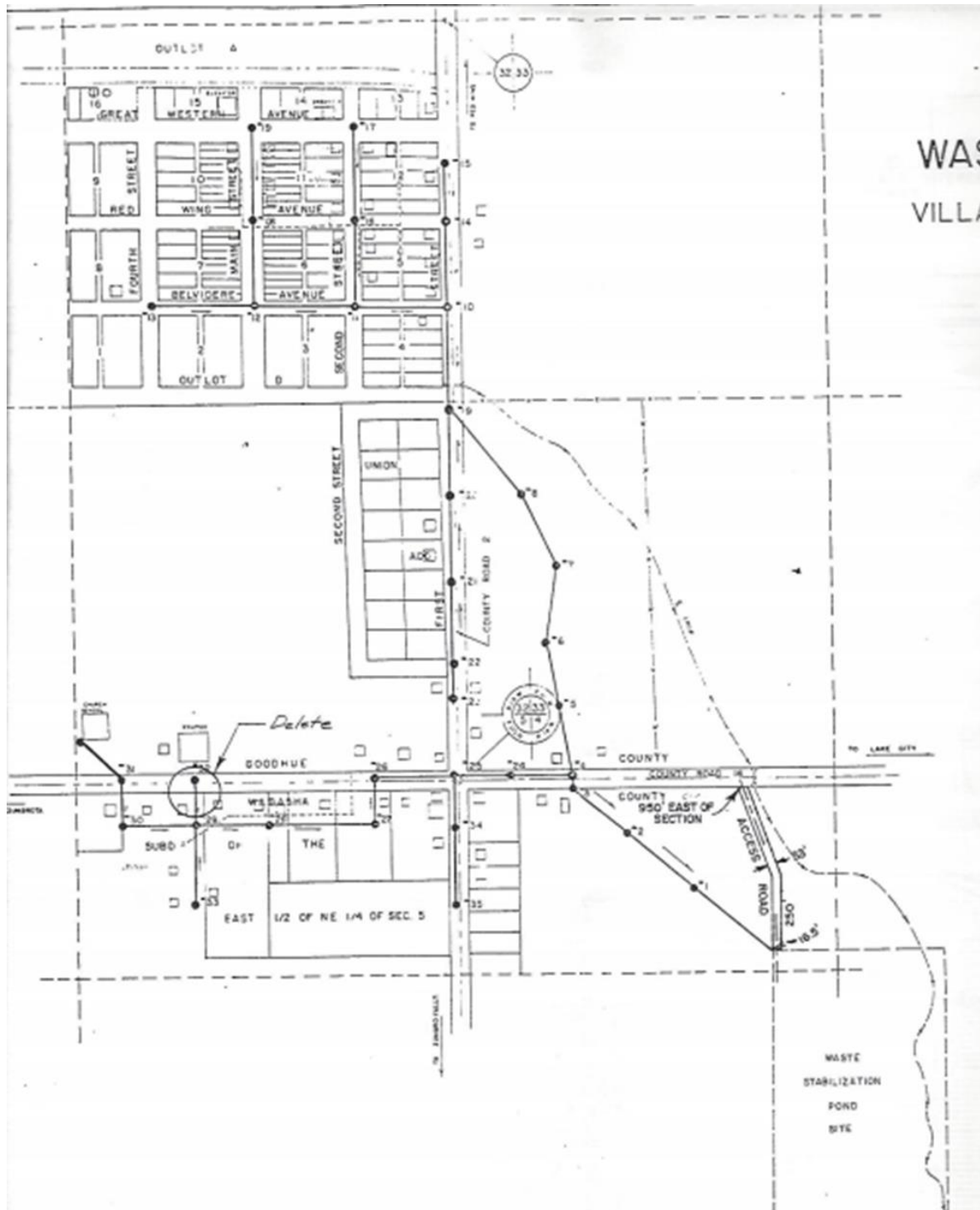


FIGURE 8.1: Water System Map
Source: City of Bellechester

PUBLIC INPUT

Public Concern about water, wastewater and stormwater revolves around the safety of the drinking water and the need for expansion of the facilities when development occurs.

GOALS & POLICIES

Goal 8.1:

Maintain Bellechester's current infrastructure.

Policies:

- Consider implementing a capital improvement plan. An in-depth explanation of a capital improvement plan can be found in Section VI-Economic Development of this plan.
 - Determine need for sanitary, water, and storm sewer replacement by inspecting to determine conditions periodically.

Goal 8.2:

Expand services when it is deemed necessary depending on potential future growth.

Policies:

- Expand infrastructure and facilities as needed.
- Explore implementation of connection fees for new development, paid by the potential developer.

IX. PARKS & OPEN SPACE

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The city of Bellechester has one park located on the northwest side of town. It is a very important recreational aspect of the City. This park consists of a ball field, a playground, and a shelter that can be rented, with approximately two acres of surrounding open space.

Parks give communities an essential identity and appeal. Well-maintained, accessible parks and recreation facilities are key elements of a strong, safe, family-friendly community. The park provides a place for learning, fun, and relaxation no matter what the age or ability.

NEARBY COMMUNITIES

Parks and recreational facilities in nearby communities are accessible to Bellechester residents. For example, Rosie Park is located in Goodhue at 410 4th Street. It includes ball fields, a community pool, a playground, a sand volleyball court, and picnic shelters. The City of Goodhue has several; Heritage Park and Cranston Heights Park which offer similar amenities to Rosie Park.

Zumbrota also has a recreational facility called Cover Bridge Park. It is located just a short drive west on County Road 16 and then south on Highway 58. Bellechester residents can enjoy this historical park which includes the only remaining covered bridge in the state. Cover Bridge Park also boasts 80 acres, camping facilities, trails, including Pioneer Trail that connects Goodhue and Redwing, ball fields, volleyball courts, horseshoe pits, ice rinks, picnic shelters, a playground, and swimming pool.

GOALS & POLICIES

Goal 9.1I:

Maintain the current park and playground in Bellechester.

Policies:

- Consider creating a maintenance check-list.
- Possibly develop a group of volunteers to assist with maintenance.

Goal 9.2:

Create and develop a walking trail around the existing park.

Policies:

- Explore grant sources such, as the Legacy Grant, for trail and maintenance funding.
- Consider creating a multi year funding source for future trails (set aside monies each year until the funds are sufficient).

Goal 9.3:

Coordinate connecting bike, snowmobile and walking trails with surrounding communities/counties.

Policy:

- Consider contacting Goodue and Wabasha County regarding joining trail systems.

X. TRANSPORTATION

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Bellechester has unique transportation concerns within the City. Automobile traffic is limited and there are few streets within the city limits. These streets lack traffic control devices or signage. Two county roads intersect within the city limits; these are maintained by the county and are not major thoroughways. The rural location allows the utilization of all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles as an alternate means of transportation. There are club sponsored snowmobile trails that pass through the City, along county roads and abandoned rail lines. The small size of the city does not require motorized vehicles for most intra-city transit.

County Roads are subject to regular inspection by both Goodhue and Wabasha Counties. Repairs are made on an as-needed basis. There are no current road construction projects planned by either county that would affect the Bellechester area.

PUBLIC INPUT

Pedestrian and bicycle safety was identified by the public as an area in need of improvement. Specifically, bicycle pathways and safe foot travel as a means of transit are public concerns. City street maintenance was also identified as an area concern.

MAP OF BELLECHESTER'S ROADS

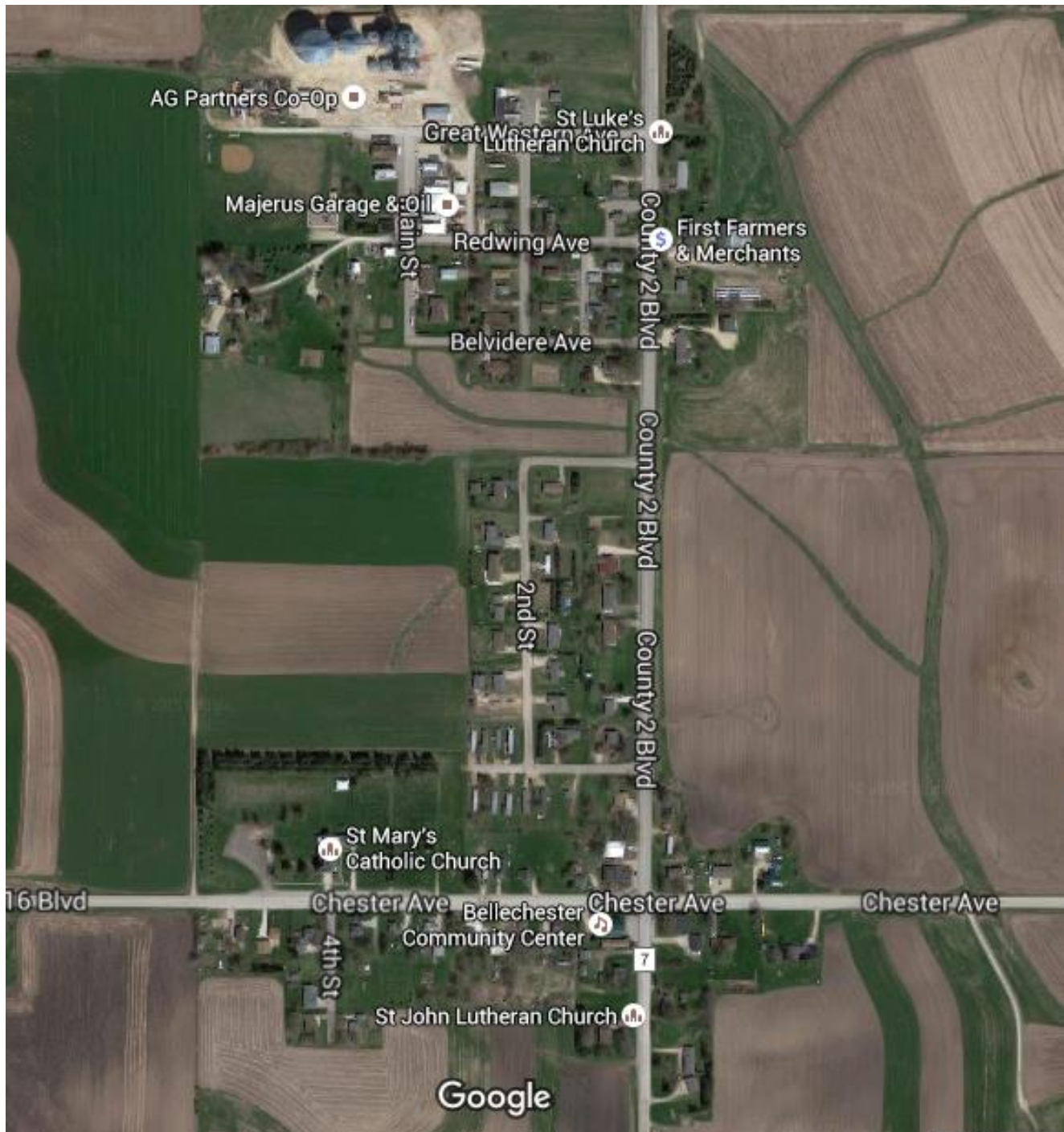


FIGURE 10.1: Bellechester Road Map
Source: Google Maps

GOALS & POLICIES

Goal 10.1:

Develop safe and accessible means to support pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

Policies:

- Explore the possibility of installing traffic control signs at intersections.
- Evaluate the safety benefits of marking public and commercial parking spaces to provide a space for pedestrians to pass in front of automobiles instead of behind them.
- Explore marking crosswalks to promote safe pedestrian crossing.
- Evaluate the need for lighting at intersections.
- Consider sidewalk installation.
- Explore integrating Transportation issues with Parks and Recreation in the development of a safe and accessible walking and bicycling trail system.

XI. CONCLUSION

Without a specific course of action, it is difficult to achieve the goals and aspirations of any plan. Previous chapters of this document provide the baseline information for understanding the community and the determined goals for the community's future. The goals explain what the community wants to accomplish; what the desired outcome is. The policies presented offer options on how Bellechester can achieve the goals. This chapter outlines the process to work toward achieving those goals.

The following diagram illustrates the process of community assessment and planning (the top two boxes), followed by the ongoing process of establishing appropriate tasks, carrying these out and continuous re-assessment and follow through of actions.

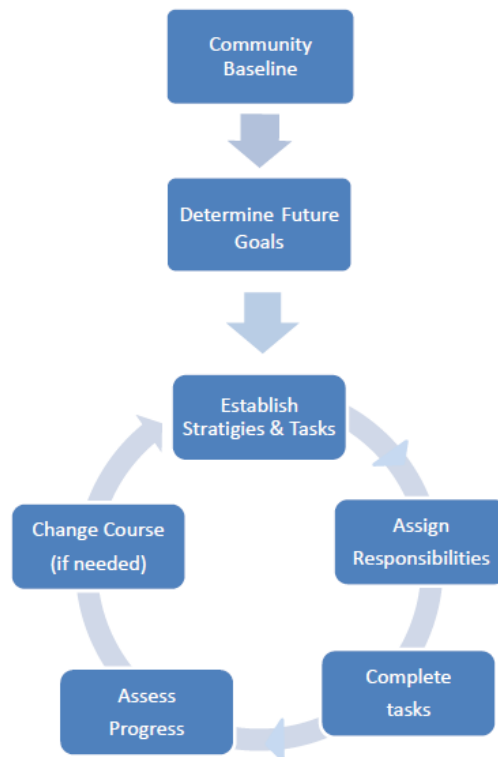


FIGURE 11.1: Implementation Flowchart

The Comprehensive Plan achieves the first three steps of this diagram. The following four steps are the implementation of the plan and are the responsibility of the City Council to carry out into the coming years. The four suggested steps are subject to annual examination and revision so that the City can be flexible in the use of its resources.

CITY OF BELLECHESTER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN APPENDIX

RESIDENT SURVEY RESULTS

FLIPCHART NOTES (COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT MEETING)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BEFORE/AFTER IMAGES

Bellechester Comprehensive Plan Resident Survey

TOTAL RESPONSES RECEIVED: 11

*(*This is not a statistically accurate representation of the population of Bellechester)*

1. Select three of the following that mean the most to you:

- 9 respondents selected: Clean, safe drinking water
- 8 respondents selected: Healthy environment
- 6 respondents selected: Safe & prepared community
- 3 respondents selected: Equity & justice
- 2 respondents selected: Sustainable environment
- 2 respondent selected: Quality, responsive City Services
- 1 respondent selected: Access to quality of life amenities
- 1 respondent selected: Sense of place
- 1 respondent selected: Mobility & connectivity options

2. What is one thing you would change about Bellechester?

- 5 respondents (45%) selected: Code enforcement
- 4 respondents (36%) selected: Local economy
- 1 respondent (9%) selected: Recreation
- 1 respondent (9%) selected: Planning and land uses
- 0 respondents selected: Crime
- 0 respondents selected: Natural environment
- 0 respondents selected: Cost of living
- 0 respondents selected: Diversity

3. The City of Bellechester does an adequate job of enforcing property maintenance ordinances?

- 2 respondents (19%) selected: Yes

9 respondents (81%) selected: No

4. Public services offered should be increased in the City of Bellechester..

5 respondents (50%) selected: Agree

5 respondents (50%) selected: Disagree

5. The City of Bellechester should encourage more development..

8 respondents (73%) selected: Agree

3 respondents (27%) selected: Disagree

6. The City of Bellechester should attempt to annex more land outside of the city's borders to protect the character of the city..

4 respondents (40%) selected: Yes

6 respondents (60%) selected: No

7. I'm satisfied with the availability of Police/EMS/Fire in Bellechester

9 respondents (90%) selected: Agree

1 respondent (10%) selected: Disagree

8. I would like to see more small business development and local availability of goods

9 respondents (81%) selected: Agree

2 respondents (19%) selected: Disagree

9. Do you have any concerns about development on the fringe of the city limits?

- "Leaving and having room to grow"
- "Feed lots coming in too close to the City is a concern"
- "Only farm land"
- "None"
- "Yes, mainly large agriculture"
- "Cannot maintain what we have now (like streets)"
- "No"
- "Yes- any development should not produce waste or pollution that requires material storage on site. No large feedlots."

- "Keep residential and business areas separate"

10. Are you satisfied with the look and feel of the downtown area of Bellechester? Why or why not?

- "Would like to see junk ordinance enforced"
- "It is fine for a rural community"
- "Would like to see some improvement in property appearance"
- "We do not have a downtown"
- "No, our local garage has vehicles all over the streets. Not only in front of his business, but other people's businesses as well."
- "Yes"
- "No, too much junk"
- "No"
- "There is some building issues to be addressed, such as run down exteriors."
- "No, need to clean up and fix streets. No real "downtown" area."

11. What is the most important aspect of life in Bellechester for you?

- "Small town feel"
- "Safety, rural area"
- "Small town, rural feel"
- "Friendly neighbors"
- "That it is not a big city"
- "The small town atmosphere and friendliness of the people"
- "Quiet"

12. Please leave any comments or concerns you have that you would like considered in the comprehensive planning process:

- "Bike/walking trail needed, healthy exercise opportunities, safe, need to develop defibrillation & EMS, only development needed is a gas station"
- "Would like to see some business development- like a grocery store, gas station, and maybe a restaurant"

- “The City is a mess, it needs to be cleaned up so that it is inviting to people. Bellechester will never grow until we change to the way it used to be when people took pride in their property. Just look at the ball field, nobody could use it because you can hardly get down there because of all the junk cars parked in the street. And if you do get down there you couldn't play because the Mayor's garage has made it a junk yard. We need to get back to the inviting small town so we can get young couples to move in, otherwise Bellechester will not survive.”
- “Clean up the junk, cars, etc.”
- “Would like to see local businesses advertise for their services and products. Would like to see must-have items more available- gas, milk, bread”

Flipchart Notes

Community Involvement Meeting 10/14/15

Vision/Strategies

- Allowed growth (annexation)
- Plan for Residential, Commercial and Industrial Zoning
- A plan for maintaining current infrastructure
- Maintain the same or a better level of service
- Attract new residents/businesses
- Strategy for working with nearby governments
- Opportunities for outdoor exercise (trails/sidewalks on the outskirts of the community)
- Increased EMS- no defibrillator in town
- Be more consistent overall (enforcement, codes, design standards)
- Plan for new development- solid zoning

Land Use

- Protect Bellechester from potential feedlot- through annexation?
- "Can't stop progress"- they like how small Bellechester is, but acknowledge that growth is inevitable. They just want a solid plan for when that happens
- Considering annexation
 - Utility concerns- how would expansion of facilities be funded?

Housing

- Single-family residential
- Townhomes for the elderly
- Concerns:
 - Mismatched development
 - Code enforcement- community is split on wanting it and not wanting it
 - Dilapidated homes

Public Services

- Need to be able to provide for growth

Economic Development

- Most residents would support a convenience store
- Concern isn't with making growth happen, it is more to have a plan and ability for growth to happen in a way that makes sense

Economic Development Images



