



# GRUNDY COUNTY 2020 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

*An Optimal Vision For The Future*

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS  
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# GRUNDY COUNTY 2020 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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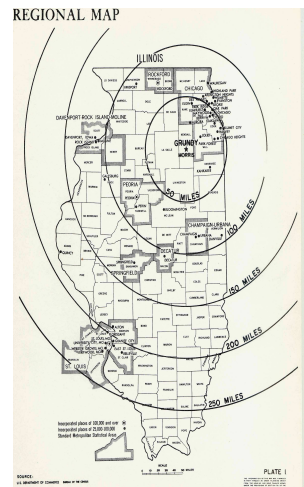
# 2020 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GRUNDY COUNTY, ILLINOIS

## PART I - BACKGROUND FOR PLANNING

### REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Grundy County is located in the northeastern quarter of the state, approximately 50 miles to the southwest of the Chicago central business district (CBD) and approximately 75 miles to the northeast of Peoria. The county has an area of about 430 square miles and, according to the United States Bureau of the Census (Census Bureau), a 2000 population of 37,535 and an estimated population of 39,528 in 2003. The county seat and largest city, Morris, had a 2000 population of 11,928 which grew to an estimated 12,352 by 2003.

The location of the county in relation to the Chicago metropolitan statistical area (MSA) has important implications for the general pattern and trend of development and also strongly influences its socio-economic profile. One such effect is the rapid growth in suburban development particularly in the northeastern portion of the county where commuting times to Chicago are lowest. In addition, the county's relative location to the Aurora/DuPage and the Joliet-Shorewood/Will County growth areas further adds to commuting opportunities for county residents. Such commuter driven development is echoed in the other four counties contiguous with the Chicago MSA namely, Boone, DeKalb, Kendall and Kankakee. While such development has undoubtedly altered the character of some localities within Grundy County, much of the area has retained its rural nature with agriculture as the dominant land use and economic sector.



One of the challenges now facing Grundy County is, therefore, to balance the needs of the expanding urban population with those of the rural community, and to create a balance amongst residential, business and industrial growth. The county can achieve this balance through the use of appropriate strategic land use planning policies to guide rational development into the 21st century.

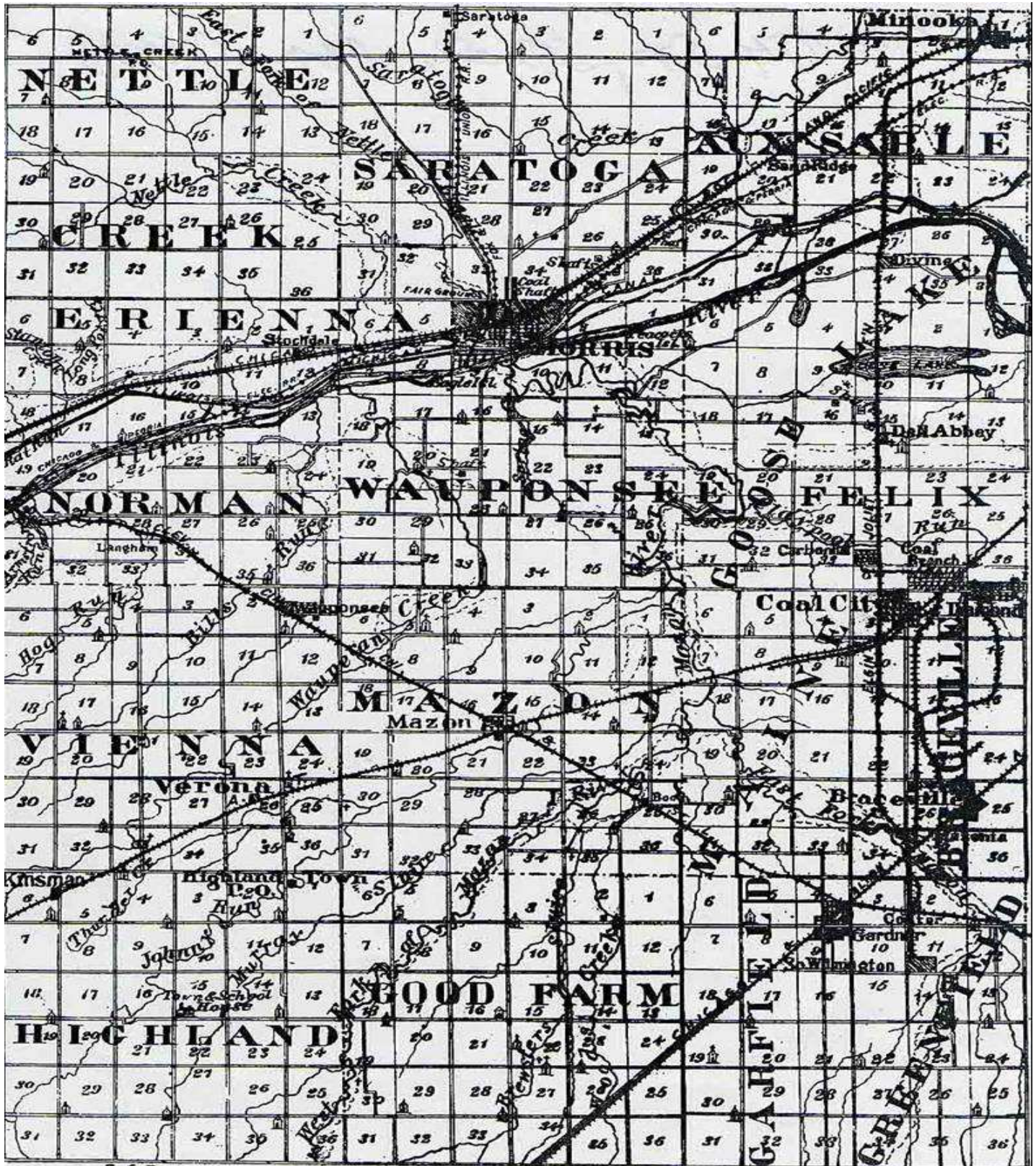
### HISTORY OF THE COUNTY

#### GENERAL

The majority of the following historical information was obtained from: *This is Grundy County, Its History From Beginning to 1968*, by Helen Stine Ullrich, published by the Grundy County Board of Supervisors with the Rogers Printing Company, Dixon, IL 1968; and the *Grundy County Centennial 1841-1941* program from 1941. *Figure 1* is a map of Grundy County depicting its townships, sections, and other features as they appeared in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



FIGURE 1 – Map of Grundy County, Illinois





Dr. Preston Bradley stated, “If we want a great future, we must bring to the present a great past.” A primary component of good planning is creating a sense of place and preserving community character. The information below does not give full justification to the extensive history of Grundy County. Rather, it is presented as a basis to recognize and preserve the history of the area for land use planning purposes. *Grundy County Landmarks*, published in 1981 and updated in 1997 by the Grundy County Historical Society, provides an abundant inventory of historical features and structures.

When the first European settlers came to the area in 1831 they found it to be inhabited by members of the Potawatomie tribe, who were lead by their chiefs, Shabbona and Wauponsee. Shabbona fought against the Americans with the British in the War of 1812 but changed his allegiance soon after. He became a legendary friend of early settlers after he warned them of danger relating to the uprising of Black Hawk who was hostile to settlers.

The area that became Grundy was previously part of LaSalle County. Many residents in the area that is now Grundy felt that the county seat of Ottawa was geographically too distant. It was difficult for them to maintain sufficient and timely communications in order to insure their political and personal interests were represented adequately. It was also thought that the distance between Ottawa and Joliet was excessive for purposes of commerce and that a town should be established between them. Those supporting a new county were organized by William E. Armstrong who presented a signed petition to the Illinois General Assembly in the winter of 1840-41. The governor approved a bill creating Grundy County on February 17, 1841. Two days later a similar bill was approved resulting in the creation of Kendall County from land within LaSalle County. Mr. Armstrong was a great admirer of Felix Grundy who was perhaps the best criminal attorney the state of Tennessee had ever known. The influence of Mr. Armstrong resulted in naming the county after this attorney. Felix Grundy is not known to have ever had any other relationship to the area.

The Mazon River and Aux Sable, Nettle, and Waupecan Creeks all flow into the Illinois River which is the drainage basin for all of Grundy County. The Illinois River divides the northern one-half of the county. Glaciations in the area resulted in the gently rolling prairie and rich soil composed of black and brown loam. This topography accounts for more than two-thirds of the county. Grundy County is perhaps best known for its Mazon River fossils, which are one of the richest collections of Carboniferous Articulates known to exist. Much of Grundy County had contained an extensive seam of coal averaging three feet thick and varying from 30-160 feet before most of it was removed by shaft and strip-mining operations over the last 150 years.

The necessity of establishing a waterway for commerce between the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico became apparent soon after the early European pioneers arrived. Construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal (I&M Canal) quickly became the main concern as transportation by barge was much cheaper than by wagon. The area was populated by an array of people with diverse nationalities as they were originally attracted by canal construction jobs. It followed that the county seat would be located along this waterway. Survey for the canal began in 1830, its construction was completed in 1848, and the first boat sailed on April 23, 1848. Work on the canal continued up to 1870 to “rip-rap” shores that had been damaged by traffic in its early years. Numerous warehouses and grain elevators were constructed along the canal in Morris, as it was the only town in the area.

At one time, Morris claimed to be the largest inland corn-shipping port in the world. Although the canal was used until the late 1930's, some accounts identify 1914 as a more realistic end to its legitimate use. The heyday of the canal only lasted about ten years as construction of railroads slowly sealed its fate. In fact, completion of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal in 1900 rendered the I&M Canal unprofitable. Finally, the project of canalizing the upper Illinois River in preparation for its opening to traffic in 1933 resulted in the official end of I&M Canal traffic.

Braceville, Coal City, Carbon Hill, Clark City, Harrisonville, Suffernville, East Brooklyn, Central City, Godley, Richmond, Sandtown, Ramsay, Eileen, and Diamond were all coal mining towns at various times during the late 1800's and early 1900's. By the 1920's, numerous shafts and mines were depleted after a peak of 1,200 employed in mining. However, by 1928, strip mining occurred on the eastern edge of Grundy County with new and larger equipment operated by firms such as the Northern Illinois Coal Company. Gooselake and Felix Townships became the center of operations. By 1952, the amount of land previously mined for coal covered thirty-four square miles in Grundy County.

## **TOWNSHIPS**

The following information is a brief historical synopsis of each of the 17 townships in Grundy County.

### **AUX SABLE TOWNSHIP**

The first non-Indian settler, Salmon Rutherford, came to Aux Sable Township in 1833. He subsequently built an inn where a stage coach line stopped at a settlement he called Dresden. The township grew rapidly and a post office was opened there. However, establishment of railroads that bypassed the town of Dresden resulted in its abandonment. The majority of business and public concerns moved to the Village of Minooka, a stop on the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad (CRI&P). Minooka was laid out in 1852 and incorporated in 1869. A devastating fire destroyed most of the town's business area in 1870. The Dresden Island lock and dam was later constructed on the Illinois River by the state as part of the Deep Waterway project. Landmarks include the I&M Locks and Aqueduct built in 1847 and Gatekeeper's House; Dresden Heights and Dresden Village Site; and the Aux Sable Methodist Episcopal Church built in 1878.



## **BRACEVILLE TOWNSHIP**

The township was first settled by non-Indians near the area of Sulphur Springs in 1833 when Dr. L.S. Robbins and a group of his associates arrived. The first supervisor was B.R. Doud who came in 1848 and named the township after his previous home of Braceville, Ohio. The area prospered for many years from the thousands of tons of coal obtained from shaft mines during the period of about 1870-1910. Coal City became the predominant city but Braceville, Godley and Central City, were all active coal-mining towns. The Wilmington Coal Company platted Coal City on the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad (AT&SF) in 1875. The populations of most, if not all, of the towns dropped significantly when mine production diminished. However, shaft mining continued in later years.

## **ERIENNA TOWNSHIP**

The first non-native resident of Erienna Township was possibly Columbus Pinney who opened an inn called “Castle Danger” in 1836, in an area that became the town of Clarkson. This town was considered as a location for the county seat, however, Morris was selected when it was known as Grundyville. Construction of the I&M Canal resulted in abandonment of Clarkson. For many years, large herds of sheep were unloaded and reloaded at a stop known as Stockdale along the CRI&P Railroad. The stop primarily consisted of stock barns where the sheep could be watered, fed and rested as they were transported to markets out east. The Chicago and Illinois Valley Railway (later known as the Chicago, Ottawa and Peoria Electric Railway) operated an interurban line through the county and township during the early portion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until its abandonment in 1934. It provided passenger service from Princeton to Joliet (with connections to Chicago) stopping at all towns in between and at numerous road crossings. It paralleled the CRI&P line to the south and the I&M Canal to the north. The Old Stage Road was the first main east-west artery and also paralleled the aforementioned routes.

## **FELIX TOWNSHIP**

As with the county, the township is named for Felix Grundy. Coal was discovered here by Canadian trapper, Peter Lampsett, who sold it to local blacksmiths. Early white settlers founded the town of Kankakee City between the Kankakee and Des Plaines Rivers. It has long since been abandoned. The extraction of coal, first by shaft method and then by strip mining, was the leading industry in the township for many years. This resulted in the villages of Carbon Hill, Diamond, Eileen, and Suffernville. A devastating mine accident in Diamond killed 80 miners. A monument nearby the former mine commemorates the disaster.

## **GARFIELD TOWNSHIP**

The township was formed in 1902 after it split apart from Greenfield Township. Garfield Township’s land use has historically been farming with the exception of the Village of Gardner. The village, incorporated in 1867, was named after Henry A. Gardner who was the chief engineer for the construction of the Chicago and Alton Railroad [later known as the Gulf, Mobile and Ohio Railroad (GM&O) and now known as the Union Pacific Railroad (UP)]. The Kankakee and Seneca Railroad had existed in the northwest portion of the township before the line was abandoned. The village

flourished when the Gardner coal shaft began mining operations. Henry Sampson, who was born in Gardner, patented the railroad crossing gate in 1936.

### **GOODFARM TOWNSHIP**

Settlement of the township by Europeans began when James McKeen moved here in 1841. Beginning in about 1850, a surge of immigrants came from Germany. The native Germans ultimately comprised about one-half or more of the township population. The township had a good supply of woodlands that were harvested. Since there has never been a trading center in Goodfarm Township, residents patronize various towns in the county and Dwight to the south.

### **GOOSE LAKE TOWNSHIP**

Felix Township was subdivided in 1897 resulting in the creation of Goose Lake Township. Flocks of wild geese historically gathered at Goose Lake, hence the township's name. Beginning in 1853, drain tile and pottery were manufactured in the area due to the abundance of wet clay in the ground. A settlement by the name of Jugtown was built, however, it was abandoned due to shipping difficulties. Fire brick was subsequently manufactured in the township for many years. Mazon Creek fossils of pre-historic animal and plant life obtained from Goose Lake and Wauponsee Townships are world-renowned. Landmarks include Goose Island State Park; strip mines that have been turned to public and private recreation areas; the Kankakee City site that was platted in 1834 but never built; and the Dresden Island Lock and Dam.

### **GREENFIELD TOWNSHIP**

The township was named for Thomas M. Green who was a large landowner in the area. One of the first known non-native settlers was Nelson La Force who came to the area in 1848. Coal was discovered there soon after. South Wilmington incorporated in 1899 and was named so named by suggestion of the Wilmington Coal Company. The town was almost named for General Lawton who was an officer in the Spanish American War. The township historically contained abundant coal that was mined for many years. The closing of mines by 1925 resulted in a sharp population reduction in the township and South Wilmington. Mining did continue in the township on a smaller scale.

### **HIGHLAND TOWNSHIP**

The highest elevation point in the county is located in the southwestern area known as Highland Township. James Martin of Indiana was the first non-Indian settler. Significant settlement did not occur until about 1857 when more than forty families came from Ottawa. The township has always been sparsely populated. The sole railroad station in the township is in the village of Kinsman which was founded in 1866 under the name of Mitchell.

### **MAINE TOWNSHIP**

Maine Township was created upon separation of its land from Braceville Township in 1898. The division occurred after residents were unable to agree upon community affairs and the choice of representatives. The township was named after the Maine Battleship that was destroyed at the



beginning of the Spanish-American War. Sulphur Springs was the site of the first non-Indian settlement in 1833. An attempt was made to create a spa where sulphur and mineral water was available from a spring. An old cabin built by John Cragg in 1835 was known as an underground railway station that reportedly aided more than 100 slaves escaping to the north during the Civil War. Gorman Station on the AT&SF Railroad was a primary grain shipping point for many years. Corn has traditionally been the staple crop in addition to beans and oats.

## **MAZON TOWNSHIP**

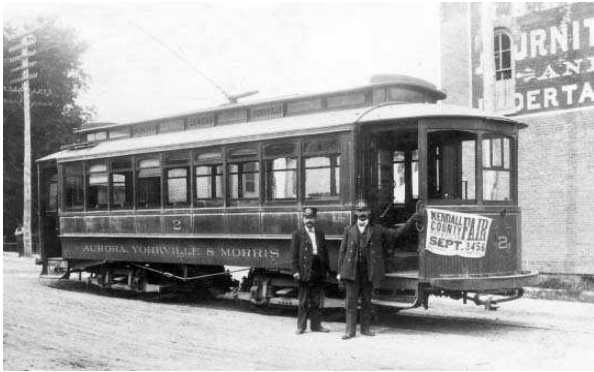
Mazon Township, located in the south-central area of the county, was first settled in 1833 by non-natives when A.K. Owen came from New York. A town by the name of Mazonville, derived from the Indian word nettle, was platted by Charles Houston in 1845 along the old Bloomington-Chicago Trail. The population gradually shifted to the northwest with development of the railroad through nearby Centerville. In 1876, the village was renamed Mazon incorporating Centerville and Mazonville together. Mazon has historically been a key grain shipment center. Mazon was at the crossing of two railroads for years before abandonment of the Kankakee and Seneca Railroad. The Grundy County Fair was organized in 1906 and operated in Mazon for many years. The county's noted Percheron and Belgian horses were showcased at the fair during this time.

## **MORRIS TOWN AND TOWNSHIP**

The Township of Morris was created in 1849. When Grundy County was established in 1841, legislation required that the county seat be sited adjacent to the I&M Canal on property owned by the canal. A total of three commissioners were named, three on behalf of the county and three representing interests of the canal. These commissioners were responsible for determining the location of the county seat. They were deadlocked in the decision whether to locate it where Morris is now or at the area known as Clarkson two miles to the west. The deciding vote was cast by Isaac N. Morris who was empowered as a canal commissioner in 1842. The City of Morris grew rapidly after completion of the canal in 1848 and subsequently became incorporated in 1850. Construction of the original courthouse was completed in 1842. A new stone building took its place at the same location in 1856. The third and present courthouse replaced this building after its construction at the same location in 1913. Other landmarks include the Soldier's Monument, erected at the courthouse in 1890; an Indian pole known to have existed before 1700, placed at the courthouse; Evergreen Cemetery, established 1853; Geghard Woods State Park, established 1934; William G. Stratton State Park; and the wide waters of the I&M Canal created as a barge turning basin.

Morris initially was a grouping of homes and businesses along Canal Street, which later was named Illinois Street. With the arrival of the CRI&P Railroad in 1851 a solid stretch of businesses was formed along Liberty Street to the north. Subsequent growth in Morris concentrated to the east and west of this thoroughfare. The Fox and Illinois Union Railway interurban line, which operated between Morris and Yorkville from about 1913-1938, entered Morris from Saratoga Township on Lisbon Street. It passed under the CRI&P Railroad and led south on Liberty Street to Washington Street and west to the end of the line at the Commercial Hotel. Connections could be made with the Chicago, Ottawa and Peoria Electric Railway.

Manufacturing became an important component of commerce in Morris with up to one-half of its residents supported by the city's industries up to World War II. The earliest of these industries included the P.P. Chapin Brickyard, est. 1842; the Patrick Hynds Blacksmith Shop, est. 1844; Morris Plow Factory, est. 1857; and the Sherwood Furniture Company, est. 1873. A succession of paper and boxboard companies also located in the city including the Morris Paper Mills, est. 1915, which became the largest industry by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. A number of other sizeable industries came and went during this time such as the Woelfel Leather Company, Northwestern Corporation, and Western Foundry. The Morris Coal and Mining Company was also a substantial employer.



## **NETTLE CREEK TOWNSHIP**

The first European settler in Nettle Creek was William Hoge of Virginia in 1829. He, along with his brother Samuel, constructed the first county schoolhouse in 1833. William Hoge also founded the first sawmill, which was in use for about ten years. Landmarks include the Nettle Creek Town Hall and Highway Garage built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; Nettle Creek Road Cemetery, established in the 1840s; and the Joseph Cluster Round Barn, built in 1905.

## **NORMAN TOWNSHIP**

One of the early settlers in the township was Henry Norman who arrived in 1839. His son Thomas J. Norman became the first township supervisor. A significant feature of the township is Devil's Mound which is a unique elevation believed to have originated from the Mound Builder's period. It is a circular mound of unknown origin about 200 feet in diameter and 75 feet in height. Situated at the base of a small bayou, it is an evident feature of the landscape that people come from miles around to see. Corn and beans historically have been the primary crops in the township. Livestock raised in Norman Township largely consisted of pigs but has also included a small number of cattle and high-grade horses. A significant industry nearby in LaSalle County was the Seneca Shipyards, which built the Landing Ship Tanks (LST's) used in World War II. DuPont de Nemours Co. in Norman Township made explosives for years and employed hundreds of residents.

## **SARATOGA TOWNSHIP**

The township was named after Saratoga, New York, from which early settlers Joshua and Phillip Collins and Alexander Peacock emigrated in about 1844. Many Norwegians soon followed from LaSalle County. The Fox and Illinois Union Railway interurban line operated from north to south between Yorkville and Morris through the township. Passenger service operated on the line until

1931 and consisted of five daily roundtrips. It took about one hour to travel the 20-mile route. Freight traffic primarily consisted of servicing grain elevators along the line until 1938. The Grundy County Rod and Gun Club, which is involved in various outdoor activities, came to the township in 1958. Saratoga Township has historically been agricultural and did not have a municipality within its borders until Morris annexed land there in more recent years.

## **VIENNA TOWNSHIP**

An area within the township known as Paver's Grove was settled for farming by Edwin Shaw and Sheldon Bartholomew in 1833. This area later came to be known as Hartford's Grove, a famous picnic ground. Justin Renne was another early settler who came with his family via one of the first packet boats on the I&M Canal in 1848. The Village of Verona was platted in 1877 after completion of the Chicago, Pekin, and Southwestern Railroad (bought out by the AT&SF Railroad) the previous year. During about 1922-1930, the Verona Coal Mine operated about one-half mile north of town. The mine provided jobs for 350 men and extracted 2,000 tons of coal daily. A slope mine later operated for about eight years. The population of Verona swelled to about 1,000 during the heyday of coal mining but subsequently shrank to 200 or less. The Village of Wauponsee Station was established upon completion of the Kankakee & Seneca Railroad in 1882. Abandonment of this railroad resulted in the decline of the town.

## **WAUPONSEE TOWNSHIP**

The township was named after the Pottawatomie war chief, Wauponsie. The southern border of the Wisconsin glacier that had covered much of the Midwest was located at the terminal moraine ridge within the township. The first white settler in the township and in the county overall was William Marquis who built a home near the river in 1828. A sawmill was constructed on the Waupecan Creek in 1836 by George W. Armstrong. He also opened the first store in the county there. In 1843, a school was constructed in the township. A funeral for the Pottawatomie chief Shabbona was held here in 1859. Grundy County's only wooden covered bridge was the Pine Bluff Bridge in Wauponsee Township, which was replaced in 1911.

# **POPULATION**

## **GENERAL NUMERICAL TRENDS**

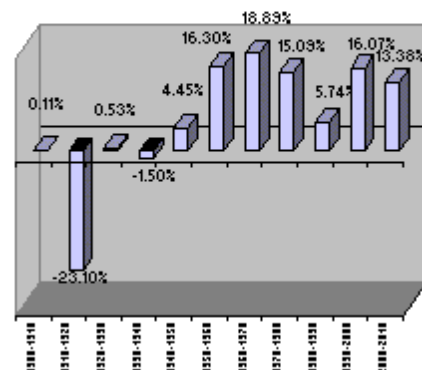
Census Bureau population figures for 1990 to 2000, and a projection for 2010, are illustrated in *Table 1* and *Figure 2*. The 2000 decennial census counted a total of 2,419,293 residents in Illinois with 37,535 in Grundy County. Grundy's residents live in the 38<sup>th</sup> most populous county and comprise approximately 0.30% of the state's total population. Recovering from population losses and slow growth in the first half of the 1900's, Grundy County's population has been steadily increasing since 1940 - 1950. Since 1950, with the exception of 1980 - 1990, Grundy County has seen growth rates above 15%. Census Bureau figures show that the population of Grundy County grew by about 16% from 1990 to 2000. This is the highest rate of growth in the county since 1960 - 1970, when the population increased by almost 19%.

Grundy County's population growth rate from 1990 to 2000 made it the 11th fastest growing county in the state during this time. Census Bureau growth estimates from 2000 to 2003 showed a total increase of about 5%. Estimates project continued growth in the county from 2000 - 2010. During this time, Census Bureau figures project Grundy County's population to grow by more than 13% to 42,558 residents. This is a slightly lower rate than experienced from 1990 - 2000.

**TABLE 1 - 1900 to 2000 Population and Projections to 2010, Grundy County**

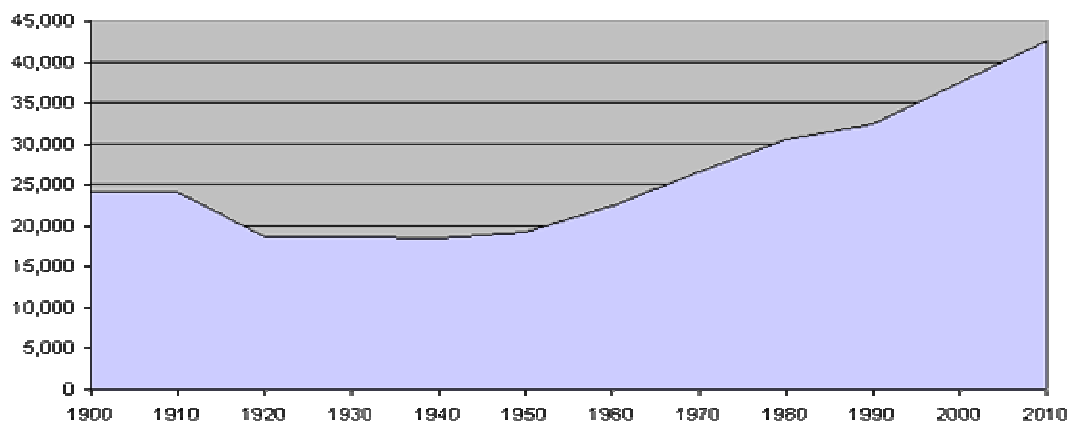
Grundy County Population	
Source: Illinois Population Trends, 1997 Edition; U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, GEDC Projections	
1900	24,136
1910	24,162
1920	18,580
1930	18,678
1940	18,398
1950	19,217
1960	22,350
1970	26,572
1980	30,582
1990	32,337
2000	37,535
2010	42,558

**Grundy County Population Change, 1900 - 2010**



**FIGURE 2 – Grundy County Population, 1900-2010**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
**Grundy County Population, 1900 - 2010**



## COMPARISON WITH SURROUNDING COUNTIES

All of the counties surrounding Grundy experienced population growth since 1990, according to Census Bureau figures illustrated in *Figure 3*. The new residents to the six-county area numbered 177,833, increasing the combined population of Grundy, Kankakee, Kendall, LaSalle, Livingston,



and Will counties to 849,365, a growth rate of more than 26%. Census Bureau land area and population density figures for 2000 are provided in *Table 2*.

From 1990 to 2000, Grundy County has added 5,198 new residents. This growth rate of about 16% ranks third in the region, after only Will and Kendall counties. Will County's growth of about 41% and Kendall County's growth of about 38% place them not only as the second and third fastest growing counties in Illinois, but also among the top 10% percent in the nation. Will County experienced the 37<sup>th</sup> largest increase in the nation in terms of actual residential growth.

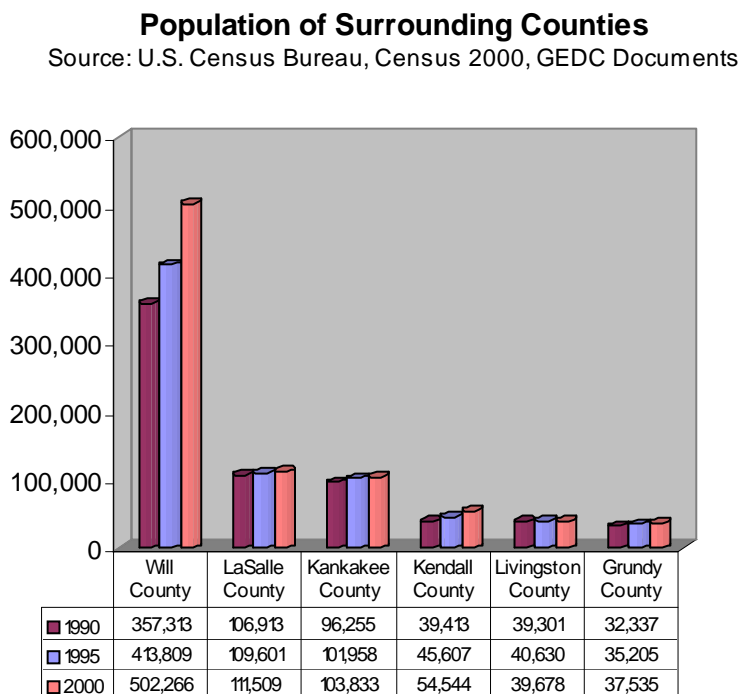


Grundy County stands to benefit from its proximity to two such rapidly growing counties. Grundy County's residents can partake in the employment, industrial, retail, and other opportunities that often accompany such rapid expansion. It is unlikely that the coming years will bring significantly slowed growth to Will and Kendall counties. Therefore, as these areas continue to expand, it is likely that growth will further penetrate Grundy County's boundaries.

**TABLE 2 – Area and Population Density, Grundy/Surrounding Counties, 2000**

Area and Population Density, 2000				
Source: U. S. Census Bureau				
Area in Square Miles				
	Total Area	Land Area	Water Area	Population Density (Persons per Square Mile of Land Area)
Livingston County	1,045.43	1,043.76	1.67	38.00
<b>Grundy County</b>	<b>430.42</b>	<b>419.90</b>	<b>10.52</b>	<b>89.40</b>
LaSalle County	1,148.04	1,134.92	13.12	98.30
Kankakee County	681.44	676.75	4.70	153.40
Kendall County	322.67	320.58	2.09	170.10
Will County	849.39	836.94	12.45	600.10
<b>State of Illinois</b>	<b>57,914.38</b>	<b>55,583.58</b>	<b>2,330.79</b>	<b>223.40</b>

**FIGURE 3 – Population of Grundy and Surrounding Counties (1990, 1995, 2000)**



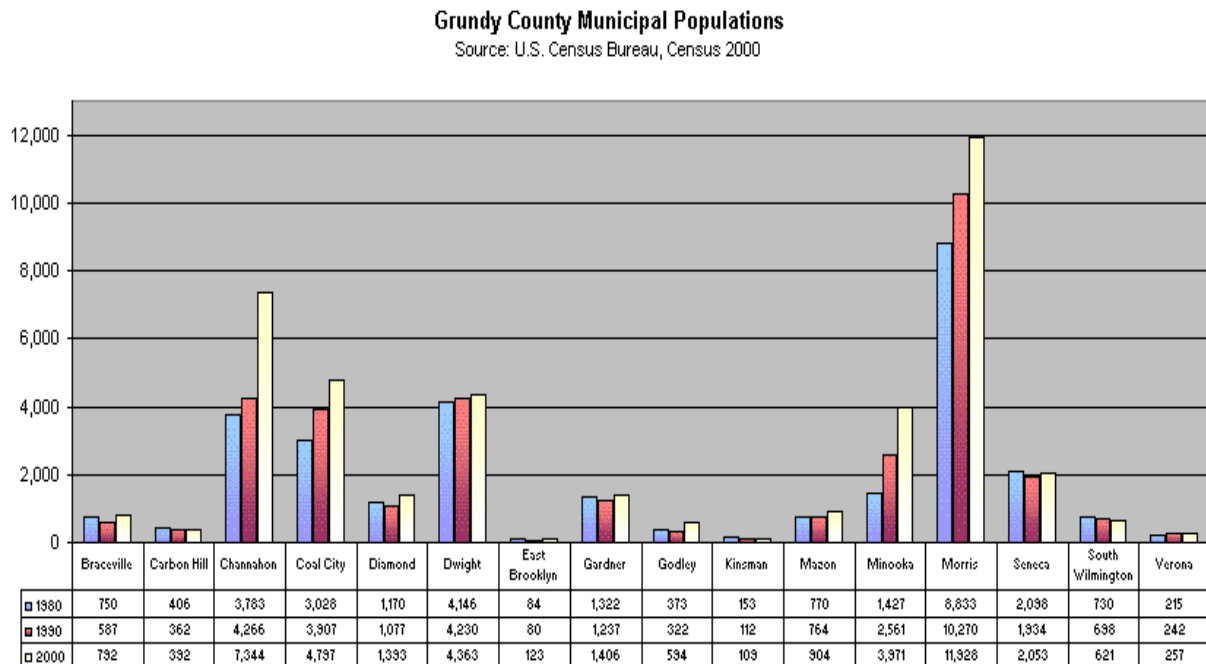
Census Bureau figures illustrated in *Figure 4* show population changes for Grundy County municipalities from 1980 to 2000. The Village of Godley experienced the fastest growth of the Grundy County municipalities, increasing its population by 84.47% from 1990-2000. The Village of Channahon placed second in the county, growing by 72.15%. The Village of Minooka, at 55.06%, had the third highest growth rate in Grundy County during this time. Since 1980, the Village of Minooka's population has increased by 178.28%.

In terms of actual growth, Channahon, Minooka, and Morris added the greatest numbers of new residents from 1990 – 2000: Channahon grew by 3,078; Minooka added 2,544 new residents; and Morris' population increased by 1,658.

Only the villages of Kinsman and South Wilmington saw their populations decrease from 1990 to 2000. Both of these villages also experienced declining populations during 1980 to 1990.

The villages of Braceville, Diamond, and Gardner all suffered population losses from 1980 - 1990. Yet, in the last decade their numbers have all increased to surpass their 1980 populations.

**FIGURE 4 – Grundy County Municipal Populations, 2000**



## AGE AND GENDER

Census Bureau statistics illustrated in *Table 3* shows Grundy County's population by age for 2000. All but three age cohorts experienced growth from 1990 - 2000. The most rapid growth occurred among the 35+ population. As a result, the county's median age rose to 36.3, slightly older than that of 1990. The three age cohorts to lose population in the last ten years were those aged 25 - 29, 30 - 34, and 65 - 69. These groups likely include students, young college-educated professionals seeking employment opportunities not available in Grundy County, and recent retirees looking for a change of scenery.

As the 35+ population continues to grow in prominence, the county will begin to feel the effect. As this population finds employment and moves into the county, they will likely bring with them a greater number of school-aged children. Grundy County's municipalities must respond by having school systems capable of providing a quality education to a larger number of students and sufficient recreational opportunities for youth.

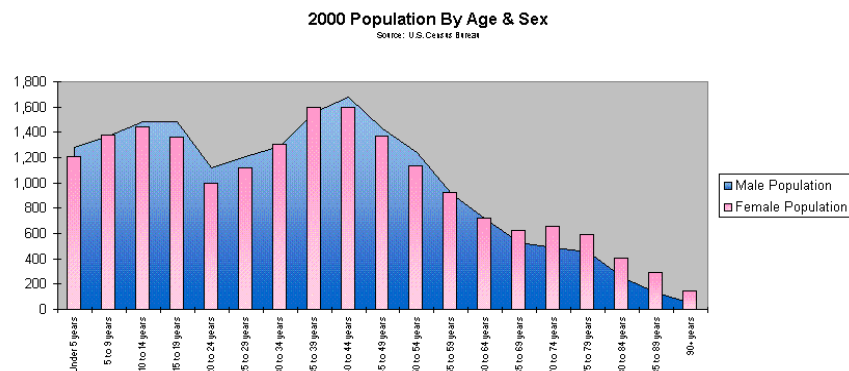
The growth in the 85+ population is among the highest in the county. As this age group continues to grow, the services available to the elder population, such as health care, assisted living facilities, and recreational opportunities, must be evaluated to determine whether they are adequate and appropriate.

With much of the population growth coming from those in the heart of their working years, it is important for Grundy County to maintain a solid employment base. In providing ample and well-paying employment opportunities to its residents, Grundy County is fortifying its growth potential for years to come.

**TABLE 3 – Grundy County Population by Age, 2000**

Population By Age			
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000			
	Total	Percent	% Growth from 1990
Total Population	37,535	100.00%	16.07%
Under 5 years	2,493	6.64%	6.13%
5 to 9 years	2,751	7.33%	6.22%
10 to 14 years	2,928	7.80%	16.24%
15 to 19 years	2,843	7.57%	21.39%
20 to 24 years	2,113	5.63%	6.07%
25 to 29 years	2,321	6.18%	-8.62%
30 to 34 years	2,591	6.90%	-6.77%
35 to 39 years	3,154	8.40%	20.75%
40 to 44 years	3,279	8.74%	38.88%
45 to 49 years	2,798	7.45%	48.75%
50 to 54 years	2,376	6.33%	52.70%
55 to 59 years	1,844	4.91%	41.19%
60 to 64 years	1,437	3.83%	7.32%
65 to 69 years	1,148	3.06%	-13.68%
70 to 74 years	1,144	3.05%	13.38%
75 to 79 years	1,040	2.77%	17.91%
80 to 84 years	658	1.75%	24.86%
85 + years	617	1.64%	45.86%
Median Age (Years)			
	Overall	Men	Women
	36.3	35.4	37.2

Census Bureau statistics illustrated in *Figure 5* show Grundy County's population by age and gender for 2000. The overall gendered composition of Grundy County's population is fairly equitable at 49.7% male and 50.3% female. However, in many of the under 30 cohorts, males are represented in greater numbers than females. The disparity of gender becomes greatest in the 65+ group, where females significantly outnumber males. As a result, the median age of female Grundy County residents is 37.2 years, compared to 35.4 years for male residents.

**FIGURE 5 – Grundy County Population by Age & Sex, 2000**



# HOUSING

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Census Bureau statistics illustrated in *Table 4* show **urban populations** and corresponding number of households for the municipalities in Grundy County for 2000. Census Bureau statistics illustrated in *Table 5* shows the total number of households (**rural and urban**) in Grundy County from 1980 to 2000. The total number of households has risen from 10,770 in 1980 to 14,300 in 2000. From 1980 to 1990, the increase in total households was 1,209 or 11.2%, while the increase from 1990 to 2000 was 2,321 or 19.4%. Small, rather than large, households are more common in terms of number of occupants. In 2000, the two-person household was most frequently reported, accounting for about one-third of the county's occupied housing units. Nearly another one-quarter of households had only one person while the remaining households had three or more persons. A high percentage of one or two person households may represent a more transient population. Larger households with children, elderly parents, or other relatives all living under one roof, often will establish a more permanent residence in a community.

**TABLE 4 - Population and Households in Cities and Villages, Grundy County, 2000**

	2000 POPULATION	HOUSEHOLDS	AVERAGE H.H. SIZE
Braceville	792	300	2.64
Carbon Hill	362	157	1.53
Channahon	109	30	3.63
Coal City	4,797	1,958	1.94
Diamond	1,393	597	2.33
East Brooklyn	123	51	2.41
Gardner	1,406	580	2.42
Godley	49	17	2.88
Kinsman	109	50	2.18
Mazon	904	359	2.52
Minooka	2,583	886	2.92
Morris	11,928	5,084	2.35
Seneca	2,053	744	2.76
South Wilmington	621	287	2.16
Verona	257	92	2.79
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27,486</b>	<b>11,192</b>	<b>2.46</b>

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census

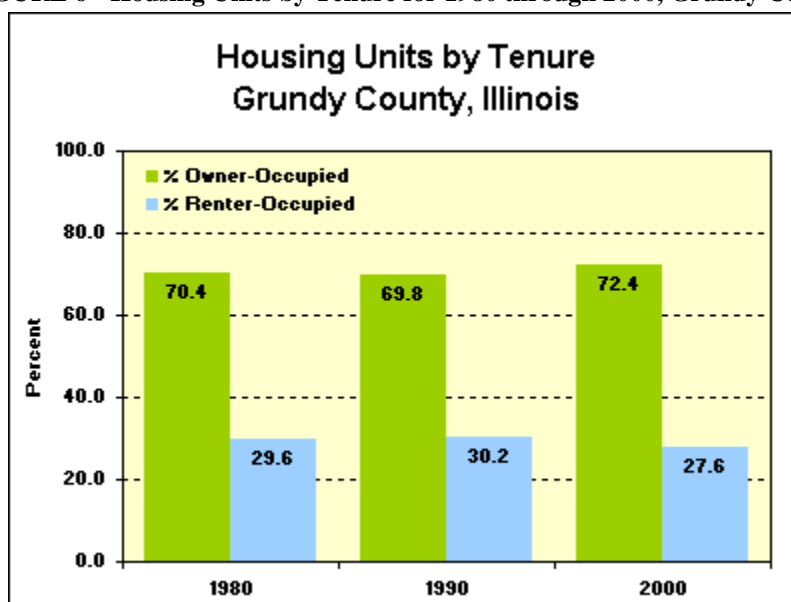
**TABLE 5 - Demographic Characteristics – Persons per Household (1980-2000)**

Household Size	1980	1990	2000	Change 1980-1990		Change 1990-2000	
				Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total households	10,770	11,979	14,300	1,209	11.2	2,321	19.4
1 person	2,132	2,737	3,356	605	28.4	619	22.6
2 persons	3,347	3,777	4,810	430	12.8	1,033	27.3
3 - 4 persons	3,795	4,156	4,658	361	9.5	502	12.1
5 or more persons	1,496	1,309	1,476	-187	-12.5	167	12.8
Persons per household (Mean)	2.82	2.54	2.60				

## TENANCY, STRUCTURAL, AND FINANCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Information from the Census Bureau in *Table 6* and *Figure 6* provides data of the county's housing stock by tenure. In the year 2000, Grundy County had 15,040 housing units of which 14,293 or about 95% were available. The number of occupied housing units that year is up 19.32% over 1990's total. The percentage of owner occupied housing units may also lend some insight into determining the permanence of residents. The 2000 owner occupancy rate for households of 72.4% has not only increased over the 1990 level of 69.8% but also exceeds the state's average of 67.3%. Slightly over one-quarter of Grundy County's households are occupied by renters. The high percentage of owner occupied households could be reflective of lower mortgage interest rates and those with higher incomes moving into the county. As Grundy County's population continues to grow, it is likely that many of the area's new residents will look to purchase their home and establish permanence in the county.

**FIGURE 6 - Housing Units by Tenure for 1980 through 2000, Grundy County**



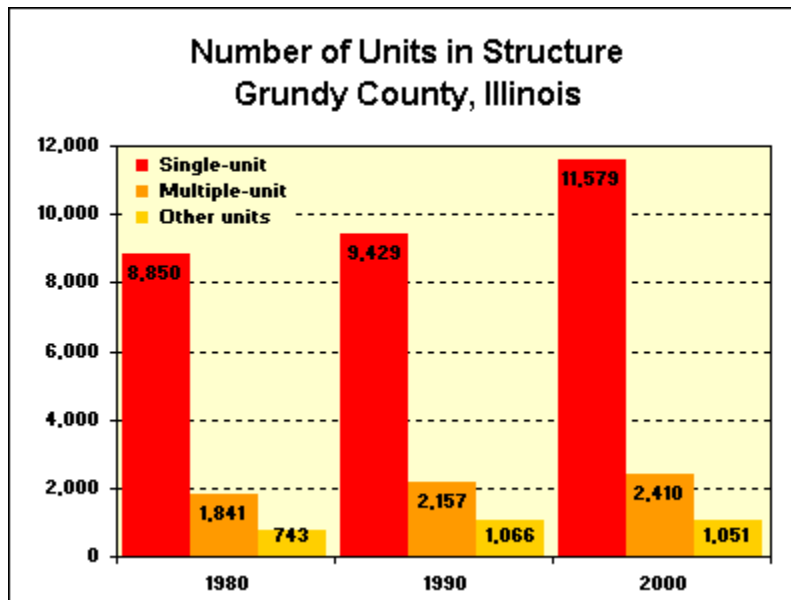
**TABLE 6 - Housing Units by Tenure for 1980 through 2000, Grundy County**

Grundy County, Illinois	1980	1990	2000	1980-1990	1990-2000	1980-2000
Housing Units:	11,420	12,652	15,040	10.8%	18.9%	31.7%
Occupied Housing Units:	10,770	11,979	14,293	11.2%	19.3%	32.7%
Vacant Housing Units:	650	673	747	3.5%	11.0%	14.9%
Occupied Housing Units:	10,770	11,979	14,293	11.2%	19.3%	32.7%
Owner-occupied unit:	7,577	8,364	10,349	10.4%	23.7%	36.6%
Renter-occupied unit:	3,193	3,615	3,944	13.2%	9.1%	23.5%
% Owner-Occupied	70.4	69.8	72.4			
% Renter-Occupied	29.6	30.2	27.6			

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau.

Information from the Census Bureau in *Table 7* and *Figure 7* show the number of housing units in structure (by building) with a separate category that includes mobile homes. From 1990 to 2000, the number of *one-unit, attached* (i.e., town homes, duplexes) housing structures continued to increase dramatically by more than 200% similar to the rate over the previous decade. From 1990 to 2000, the rate at which total single-unit housing increased was 22.8%, a significant rate increase over the previous decade. In contrast, the total number of multiple-unit housing increased by only 11.7%, a rate drop of about 5.5% from the previous decade. From 1980 to 1990, the number of mobile homes increased significantly by 43.5% but remained relatively stagnant from 1990 to 2000.

**FIGURE 7 - Number of Housing Units for 1980 - 2000, Grundy County**  
**Grundy County, Illinois**



**TABLE 7 - Number of Housing Units for 1980 through 2000, Grundy County**

Grundy County, Illinois	1980	1990	2000	1980-1990	1990-2000	1980-2000
Total housing units	11,434	12,652	15,040	10.7%	18.9%	31.5%
1-unit, detached	8,780	9,194	10,860	4.7%	18.1%	23.7%
1-unit, attached	70	235	719	235.7%	206.0%	927.1%
2 units	546	519	502	-4.9%	-3.3%	-8.1%
3 or 4 units	363	467	674	28.7%	44.3%	85.7%
5 or more units	932	1,171	1,234	25.6%	5.4%	32.4%
Mobile home, boat, RV, van, etc.	743	1,066	1,051	43.5%	-1.4%	41.5%
Total housing units	11,434	12,652	15,040	10.7%	18.9%	31.5%
Single-unit	8,850	9,429	11,579	6.5%	22.8%	30.8%
Multiple-unit	1,841	2,157	2,410	17.2%	11.7%	30.9%
Other units	743	1,066	1,051	43.5%	-1.4%	41.5%

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau.

Information from the Census Bureau in *Table 8* shows selected housing characteristics (owned and rented) for Grundy and surrounding counties in 2000. The percent change in number of housing units between 1980 and 1990 has risen significantly for all of the counties shown. The number of units in Grundy County has increased by 30.4% whereas Livingston only went up about 7.0%. Will County experienced the greatest growth in housing units with a 59.0% rise. All six counties have comparable proportions of owner occupied housing ranging from 69.4% in Kankakee to 84.1% in Kendall. Grundy County ranked just above Kankakee County at 72.4%. The median home value for 2000 is wide-ranging with Livingston County the lowest at \$79,700 and Kendall County the highest at \$154,900. Grundy County had the third highest median home value at \$128,600 amongst the areas depicted. The median rent in Grundy County was third highest out of the six at \$508 per month, close to the highest monthly rent value of \$638 in Kendall and significantly higher than the lowest rate in Livingston at \$364 per month.

**TABLE 8 - Selected Housing Unit Characteristics, Grundy/Surrounding Counties, 2000**

County	Percent Change 1990-2000	Owner Occupied 2000	Median Value 2000	Median Contract Rent
<b>Grundy</b>	<b>30.4%</b>	<b>72.4%</b>	<b>\$128,600</b>	<b>\$508</b>
Kankakee	19.0%	69.4%	\$99,200	\$443
Kendall	48.8%	84.1%	\$154,900	\$638
La Salle	13.4%	75.0%	\$87,000	\$379
Livingston	7.0%	74.1%	\$79,700	\$364
Will	59.0%	74.1%	\$154,300	\$554

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census

*Figure 8* depicts the number of residential building permits issued throughout all of Grundy County including the municipalities. During the 1970's, housing stock in Grundy County increased by 2,958 units or 40%. Growth slowed in the 1980's with only 2,093 housing units added. More than [INSERT]% of the housing stock was built prior to 1970 and about [INSERT]% was built prior to 1940. The ten year period of the 1990's saw more than 4,000 housing units constructed. However, about three-fourths of these units were built during the first half of this period. The number of housing units constructed per year during this decade peaked at almost 600 in 1994. Since then, the numbers have ranged from a low of about 230 in the year 2000 and a high of about 400 in 2002.

**FIGURE 8 – Residential Building Permits, Grundy County (1990-2002), Source: GEDC**

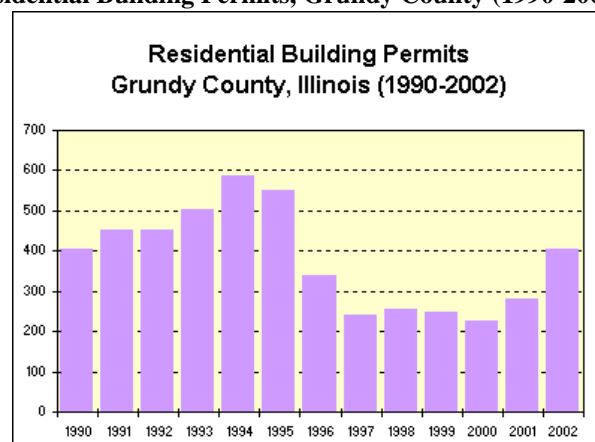
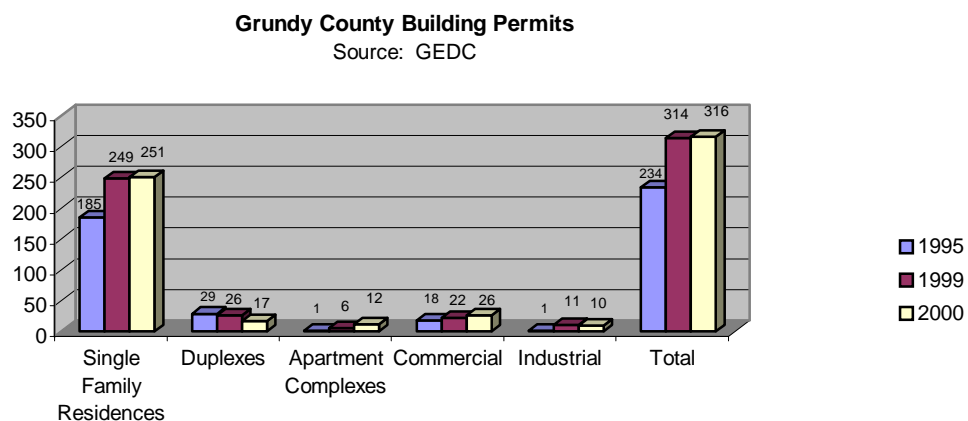




Figure 9 depicts the number of building permits issued by structure in Grundy County and its municipalities for selected years. The source of the data is the Grundy County Economic Development Council (GEDC). The number of overall permits issued for each of the years 1999 and 2000 has exceeded that of 1995 by more than 34%. Single-family residences continue to be the predominant buildings constructed. However, increases in apartment complexes in addition to commercial and industrial structures have realized increased building rates.



**FIGURE 9 – Grundy County Building Permits Issued by Structure for Selected Years** (Source: G.E.D.C.)



Building permit activity by structure for Grundy County and its municipalities for 2003 is depicted in GEDC statistics in *Table 9*. The number of single-family residence permits issued in 2003 more than doubled the number issued in 2000. Of note is the significant number of permits issued in 2003 for multiple unit buildings, which includes duplexes, town homes and apartments. Permit activity for commercial and industrial structures remained relatively stable for 2003 compared to the previous years shown in *Figure 9*.

**TABLE 9 - Building Permits Issued by Structure for Grundy County in 2003** (Source: G.E.D.C.)

Community	Single-Family Residence	Multiple Unit Buildings (Number of Units)	Commercial	Industrial
Braceville (done thru county)	0	0	0	0
Carbon Hill	11	0	0	0
Channahon (Grundy Co.)	68	63	2	0
Coal City	12	4	2	0
Diamond	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dwight (Grundy Co.)	0	0	0	0
East Brooklyn	0	0	0	0
Gardner	4	0	0	0
Kinsman	0	0	0	0
Mazon	14	0	0	0
Minooka (Grundy Co.)	304	Duplex 136 3&4 Units 44 5+ Units 21	2	1
Morris	97	18	8	3
Seneca (Grundy Co.)	0	0	0	0
South Wilmington	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Verona	0	0	0	0
Unincorporated Grundy Co.	73	0	13	2
<b>Total Grundy County</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>6</b>

The above analysis of housing units and building permits issued indicates that Grundy County possesses a healthy housing supply with a variety of dwelling units. The surge in housing construction in addition to the moderate median value and relatively high median monthly rent suggest a strong demand for housing in Grundy County.

## ECONOMY

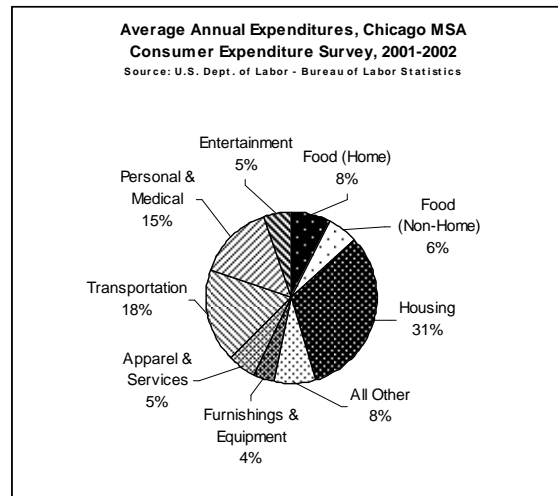
Before providing an analysis of specific aspects of the economy of the county, it is first necessary to introduce the concept of the economic base. As a general rule, this includes gathering all relevant information regarding those activities that are the primary economic components in a community. Such activities are those that provide the core employment and income around which the remainder of the economy circulates. The economic base of a community may include agricultural and/or industrial concerns. However, income generated from retail and other service activities will also enhance the overall local economy. Cultural, historical and geographical factors are all important influences in the precise composition of the economic base and the relative representation of its constituent elements.

### HOUSEHOLD CONSUMER EXPENDITURES

Census Bureau figures for 2000 show that median household income in Grundy County is almost \$52,000. The average mortgage for a Grundy County homeowner in 2000 was almost \$1,150, or about 22% of total gross household income. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer

Expenditures Survey (CES) in 2001-2002 for the Chicago MSA, households had the following annual average expenses: housing (includes mortgage, rent, utilities)(31%); transportation (18%); personal (including insurance and retirement) and medical (15%); food (14%); apparel and services (5%); entertainment (5%); furnishings and equipment (4%); and other (8%) [Figure 10]. Comparable Bureau of Labor statistics show that housing costs in 1962 for Grundy County residents was 24.1% of household expenditures. These figures reflect that county residents now allocate a much higher percentage of their spending for housing costs. This leaves less money for other expenses.

**FIGURE 10 – Average Annual Expenditures, Chicago MSA, 2001-2002**



The 18% of household expenditures spent on transportation in the Chicago MSA noted above is far beyond what average American households have spent in the past. According to a July 2003 Special Report by the Surface Transportation Policy Project, the proportion of household budgets allocated for transportation in the United States was under 10% prior to 1935 before growing to about 14% in 1960, and the current level in 1972. As might be expected, these increases corresponded with the drop in public transport use and the rise of sprawl development. The 2001-2002 CES reported that only about one-half of Americans have the option to use transit. Further, almost one-half of typical household transportation costs go for just the purchase of vehicles. Most of the remaining transportation budget comprises costs for vehicle operating expenses (fuel, oil, maintenance, repairs, etc.). The total amount of personal vehicle expenses for the average American household is more than \$7,233 per year or about 95% of total transportation expenditures.

According to *Issue Briefs*, a recent publication of the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, an average of about \$1,280 was spent per year by American commuters who travel to and from work by personal vehicle in 1999. Those who commuted by public transit spent only \$765 per year, an annual savings of \$515 per year. Other Census Bureau figures for 2000 specific to Grundy County show that about 84% of commuters are traveling alone by private vehicle. About 13% of the commuters are carpooling while only about 3% were taking transit. The number walking or taking a bicycle to and from work was almost zero. These figures are specifically for work related travel which comprises only about 15% of all trips. The majority of the remaining trips are typically for running errands to the store. Taking into account these non-work trips, the potential household savings for using available transit can amount to thousands of dollars per year.

Census Bureau estimates for 2000 state that about 2,000 Grundy County residents, or about 5.3% of the population were living in poverty (approximately less than \$10,000 household income). In addition, 637 county households or 4.5% do not have any vehicle available, while 4,072 county households or 28.5% have only one vehicle. CES figures show that, nationally, when household income drops below \$14,000, the amount spent on transportation approaches 40% after taxes.

## INDUSTRIAL BASE

In the western world, the industrial base usually accounts for the largest proportion of an area's wealth and toward the general prosperity of its inhabitants in the form of both net income and employment. It is the industrial base through activities such as the manufacturing of goods that acts as the bedrock for economic growth and technological advancement. The success of a particular area's industrial economy, such as Grundy County's, depends largely upon its ability to retain and attract a work force with the requisite skills and abilities to perform the functions involved in the various stages of production of goods and services. Census Bureau statistics in *Table 10* illustrate Grundy County's employment distribution by class of worker for 2000. The majority of employed residents (83.4%) in Grundy County work in the private sector. The remainder is self employed or work for public or semi-public agencies.

**TABLE 10 – Employment Distribution by Class of Worker in Grundy County, 2000**

TYPE OF WORKER	EMPLOYED PERSONS	PERCENT
Private Wage and Salary Workers	15,489	83.4%
Government Workers	1,938	10.4%
Self-employed	1,031	5.6%
Unpaid Family	109	0.6%
TOTAL	18,567	100%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Statistics from the Illinois Economic Information and Analysis Division (IDES) are illustrated in *Table 11*. The figures show Grundy County's employment by industry from 1988 to 2000 and projections for 2010. Since 1988, the composition of Grundy County's employment has changed. Wholesale and retail trade, which was staffed by nearly one-quarter of all employees in Grundy County in the late 1980s, has given way to the service industry, currently the most prominent. The rise of the service industry has been strong and quick, having grown by 60% in the ten years from 1988 to 1998. It is expected to rise another 22% by 2008.

In 1988, almost two-thirds of Grundy County's employees worked in either services; wholesale and retail trade; or transportation, communication, and utilities. The proportion of employment in these sectors has increased steadily through the year 2000. Although their positions have changed, these top three employment sectors of the late 1980s remain the top three today and in the future. By the year 2010, they are expected to employ almost 75% of the total workforce.

While Grundy County will undoubtedly welcome the increased employment opportunities and additional services made available to its residents, growth in the services and wholesale/retail trade industry sectors is not without consequence. The services and wholesale/retail trade sectors

traditionally offer lower hourly wages to their employees and are often plagued with high turnover rates. Consequently, the average weekly earnings of employees, which stood at \$801 in March 2000, will likely decline and lessen the value of Grundy County's jobs unless the area is able to attract higher paying positions.

Although it employs only a small percentage of the workforce, the construction sector has seen strong growth since 1988. Increasing population and employment opportunities in Grundy County has helped the construction sector grow by nearly 80% since 1988. It is likely that the demand for construction will remain high with the population growth projected for Grundy County.

**TABLE 11 – Grundy County Employment by Industry**

Industry Employment as a Percentage of the Total Workforce				
Source: Economic Information and Analysis Division, IDES				
Industry Name	1988 Employment	1996 Employment	2000 Employment	2010 Employment (Projected)
Services	20.14%	25.47%	35.87%	39.22%
Wholesale and Retail Trade	23.34%	19.85%	19.57%	19.17%
Transportation, Communications, & Utilities	21.39%	19.15%	16.08%	14.96%
Manufacturing	18.47%	15.83%	9.84%	8.82%
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing	4.82%	7.00%	5.39%	4.98%
Construction	2.91%	3.98%	5.73%	5.73%
Government	4.48%	5.37%	4.60%	4.44%
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	4.24%	3.13%	2.70%	2.51%
Mining	0.21%	0.22%	0.21%	0.17%

Labor force numbers tend to follow population trends. As Grundy County's population has increased, so has its labor force. *Table 12* depicts IDES total employment figures for Grundy and surrounding counties for selected recent years. Over the ten years from 1991 - 2001, Grundy County's labor force increased almost 11%. While the annual numbers generally continue to incline, monthly employment statistics show a great deal of volatility during short-term periods. During the one-year period of January 2001 to January 2002, Grundy County's labor force ranged from a low of 18,714 in October 2001 to a high of 19,616 in January 2001.

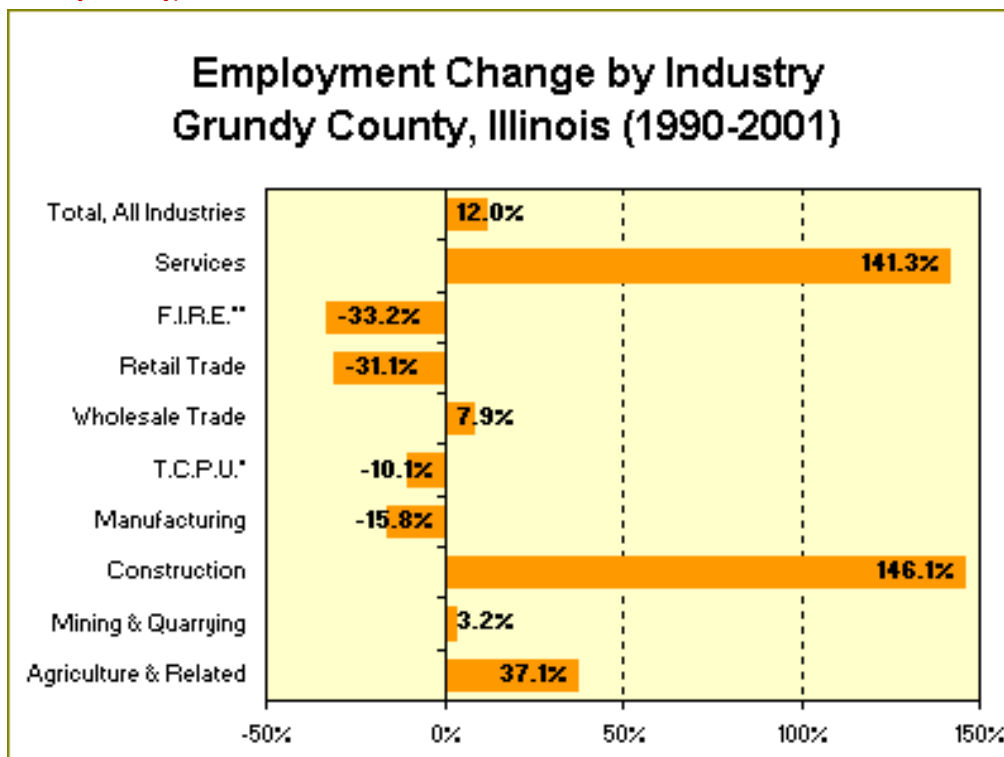
The reasons for such volatility could be many. The local labor force tends to be higher in the summer months of June, July, and August, and the winter months of January and February. These times coincide with breaks on many college campuses, and the area's returning students may be looking for short-term employment. Seasonal employment may also offer an explanation. Farmers may look to hire additional help to work in the fields. During the busy holiday season, many stores offer temporary, seasonal employment to accommodate increased business. Some construction projects must wait out the cold winter until the more favorable weather of the spring and summer months allow work to continue.



**TABLE 12 – Total Employment for Grundy and Surrounding Counties, 1991-2001**

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security						
	1991	1996	1999	2000	2001	% Change 1991 – 2001
Will County	191,369	225,375	250,123	252,514	252,026	31.70%
LaSalle County	51,716	54,431	57,699	56,396	57,297	10.79%
Kankakee County	48,922	52,292	52,484	52,664	52,868	8.07%
Kendall County	22,554	26,954	30,126	30,395	30,338	34.51%
Livingston County	19,221	19,377	20,720	20,534	20,464	6.47%
<b>Grundy County</b>	<b>17,279</b>	<b>18,378</b>	<b>19,248</b>	<b>19,320</b>	<b>19,174</b>	<b>10.97%</b>

Figure 10 depicts the percentage employment change by industry in Grundy County for 1990 to 2001 according to the IDES. Table 13 breaks down the actual employment numbers for each of these years by job category. Overall, the data show significant employment increase in the services, construction, and agricultural related jobs. Areas where employment has decreased substantially are finance, insurance and real estate; retail trade; manufacturing; and transportation, communications and utilities.

**FIGURE 10 – Employment Change by Industry for Grundy County (1990-2001)****Grundy County, Illinois**

**TABLE 13 – Employment by Industry for Grundy County 1990-2001**

YEAR	Farming & Related	Mining & Quarrying	Construction	Manufacturing	T.C.P.U.*
1990	35	31	358	1,901	2,914
1991	53	33	347	1,771	2,370
1992	64	19	607	2,642	2,488
1993	51	16	905	2,449	2,452
1994	48	14	843	2,607	2,506
1995	58	29	471	2,184	2,522
1996	72	30	440	2,150	2,596
1997	87	27	489	2,217	2,604
1998	110	27	507	2,086	2,429
1999	115	37	619	1,774	2,456
2000	130	38	753	1,709	2,566
2001	48	32	881	1,601	2,620
YEAR	Wholesale Trade	Retail Trade	F.I.R.E.**	Services	Total, All Industries
1990	390	2,619	759	1,681	10,688
1991	389	2,714	353	1,683	9,713
1992	421	2,537	372	1,837	10,987
1993	401	2,576	505	2,238	11,593
1994	410	2,537	445	2,155	11,565
1995	395	2,696	443	2,075	10,873
1996	333	2,339	412	2,252	10,624
1997	322	2,261	428	2,424	10,859
1998	346	2,318	387	3,034	11,244
1999	438	2,665	405	2,921	11,430
2000	501	2,708	430	3,241	12,076
2001	421	1,804	507	4,057	11,971

\* Transportation, Communications and Public Utilities

\*\* Finance, Insurance and Real Estate

SOURCE: Illinois Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information Unit.



Table 14 presents employment in Grundy County by SIC code for 2002 according to Dun and Bradstreet. Employment in schools and educational services comprises about one-quarter of the total. Other categories with significant employment include industrial organic chemicals; eating places; and heavy construction.

**TABLE 14 – Grundy County Employment by SIC Code for 2002****Grundy County, Illinois**

SIC CODE	INDUSTRY	EMPLOYEES
8211	Elementary & secondary schools	1,121
2869	Industrial organic chemicals, nec	850
5812	Eating places	780
1629	Heavy construction, nec	759
8299	Schools & educational services, nec	543
5411	Grocery stores	379
7381	Detective & armored car services	252
5541	Gasoline service stations	248
9111	Executive offices	245
0115	Corn production	244
5311	Department stores	206
1521	Single-family housing construction	203
2631	Paperboard mills	200
4911	Electric services	193
7389	Business services, nec	177

SOURCE: Dun &amp; Bradstreet, Inc., 2002.

IDES figures in *Table 15* present employment totals by company in Grundy County for 2003. Exelon is the largest employer in the county. The second largest employer and top educational related entity is the Minook C.U.S.D. #201. The third largest employer is Newberg/Perini-Stone & Webster.

**TABLE 15 - Major Employers for Grundy County in 2003****Grundy County, Illinois**

COMPANY NAME	PRODUCT/SERVICE	EMPLOYEES
Exelon	Energy distribution	1,550
Minook C.U.S.D. #201	Public (K-12) schools	1,490
Newberg/Perini-Stone & Webster	Power plant construction	1,130
Burns International Security	Security services	750
Morris Hospital	Health care	580
Equistar	Industrial organic chemicals	560
Wal-Mart Store #844	General merchandise store	500
County of Grundy	County government	340
Alcoa	Fabricated metal products	280
Coal City C.U.S.D. #1	Public (K-12) schools	259
Illinois Tool Works	Injection molded plastics products	190
Smurfit Stone Corp.	Corrugated boxes	180
Midwest Generation (Morris Station)	Electric power generation	170
Reichold Chemical	Polyesters	160
Akzo Chemicals America	Industrial organic chemicals	140

SOURCE: Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, 2003.

Information from IDES in *Table 16* below depicts Grundy County employment by industry in 2000 and the projected increases in terms of total numbers and percentages for 2010. The number of miscellaneous business service jobs is expected to grow by 689 or more than 50%, by far the largest of all categories. The next three highest employment categories, health services, educational services, and restaurants, are all predicted to increase their number of jobs substantially.

**TABLE 16 - Industry Employment Statistics for 2000 and Projected for 2010**

**Grundy County, Illinois**

INDUSTRY	2000	2010	NUMBER	PERCENT
Miscellaneous Business Services	1,278	1,966	689	53.90
Health Services	1,105	1,330	225	20.36
Educational Services	1,419	1,615	196	13.83
Eating and Drinking Places	1,007	1,167	159	15.83
Special Trade Contractors	524	596	73	13.86
Engineering, Accounting, and Management Services	199	260	61	30.72
Trucking and Warehousing	298	346	48	15.99
Agricultural Services	120	166	46	38.63
Amusement and Recreation, Excluding Motion Pictures	264	310	46	17.23
Automobile and Recreational Vehicles	476	515	39	8.21

SOURCE: Labor Market Information Unit, Illinois Department of Employment Security.



*Table 17* depicts employment commuting patterns for Grundy County residents and for those working in the county according to 2003 figures from the IDES. Perhaps most significant is the fact that 9,362 Grundy County residents are working in nearby counties while only 5,894 are coming from adjacent areas to work in Grundy County. These data clearly show that there is not enough work in Grundy County to support the employment needs of its population. However, this is not surprising given the substantial residential growth in the far northeast corner of the county in recent years. The close proximity of this area to various transportation corridors provides convenient access to the more developed areas of the Chicago metropolitan area. In 2003, about one-half of Grundy residents with jobs stay within the county to work. Approximately one-third commuted to Will County. The remaining Grundy residents are primarily commuting to other surrounding counties, led by Cook (6%), Du Page (4%), La Salle (3%).

**TABLE 17 - Residence County to Workplace County Commuting Patterns, 2003****Grundy County, Illinois**

Persons Living in Grundy County and Commuting to:	Persons
Grundy County, IL	8,884
Will County, IL	5,869
Cook County, IL	1,123
DuPage County, IL	765
LaSalle County, IL	571
Kane County, IL	296
Kendall County, IL	98
Kankakee County, IL	180
Other Illinois counties	414
Other States	46
Foreign destinations	--
Total Worker Outflow	18,246
Persons Working in Grundy County and Commuting from:	Persons
Grundy County, IL	8,884
Will County, IL	2,702
LaSalle County, WI	1,131
Cook County, IL	533
Kendall County, IL	299
DuPage County, IL	260
Kankakee County, IL	202
Kane County, IL	51
Other Illinois counties	502
Other States	214
Foreign destinations	--
Total Worker Inflow	14,778

SOURCE: Illinois Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information Unit, 2003.

**COMMERCIAL BASE**

*Table 18* displays the distribution of retail sales in Grundy County by category for the years 1999, 2000, and 2001 according to the Illinois Department of Revenue. The total sales tax collected is reflective of the total sales of goods and services occurring within Grundy County. Growth in the county's total sales tax receipts has been strong in recent years, with a 28% increase from Fiscal (FY) 1999 - FY2000 and another 25% increase from FY2000 - FY2001. Since Fiscal FY2000, the sector generating the highest amount of sales taxes has changed. In prior fiscal years, most sales tax revenues came from the Automotive and Filling Stations group. In FY2001, the Agriculture and All Others group, a miscellaneous, catch-all category became the new leader. This category accounted for nearly one-third of all sales tax receipts in Grundy County. With the services industry in Grundy County growing more rapidly than any other industry sector, the diverse range of services classified within the Agriculture and All Others group is undoubtedly responsible for its increased prominence.

Together, the Agriculture and All Others Group and the Automotive and Filling Stations Group have accounted for more than 50% of total tax receipts for the most recent two years depicted. The next largest category, General Merchandise, has seen its percentage of tax receipts drop from about 15% in 1999 to 11% in 2001. The forth largest category, Furniture/Household/Radio, has seen its



percentage of total tax receipts rise substantially from about 3% in 1999 to almost 10% in 2001. All other categories have remained relatively stable during the years depicted. While this includes manufacturing, it should be noted that this category had experienced total tax receipts several times above the years depicted in *Table 18* during a number of years in the 1980s and 1990s. The subsequent drop was predominantly due to a period of significant manufacturing restructuring involving the loss of a large number of businesses unable to compete effectively.

**TABLE 18 – Total Sales Tax Receipts for Grundy County, 1999-2001**

Total Sales Tax Receipts											
Total for Grundy County											
Source: Illinois Department of Revenue											
Fiscal Year	General Merchandise	Food	Drinking & Eating Places	Apparel	Furniture & H. H. & Radio	Lumber, Bldg., & Hardware	Automotive & Fill. Stations	Drugs & Misc. Retail	Agriculture & All Others	Manufacture	Total Tax Receipts
1999	\$3,004,967	\$1,192,922	\$2,384,261	\$238,538	\$555,642	\$1,283,548	\$6,333,809	\$1,224,603	\$3,532,986	\$969,760	\$20,721,036
	14.50%	5.76%	11.51%	1.15%	2.68%	6.19%	30.57%	5.91%	17.05%	4.68%	100.00%
2000	\$3,394,879	\$1,260,864	\$2,587,860	\$213,632	\$1,949,648	\$1,262,447	\$7,603,473	\$1,295,744	\$6,366,860	\$667,415	\$26,602,821
	12.76%	4.74%	9.73%	0.80%	7.33%	4.75%	28.58%	4.87%	23.93%	2.51%	100.00%
2001	\$3,659,097	\$1,234,026	\$2,551,386	\$215,002	\$3,137,214	\$1,493,255	\$6,865,200	\$2,550,626	\$10,602,400	\$854,113	\$33,162,318
	11.03%	3.72%	7.69%	0.65%	9.46%	4.50%	20.70%	7.69%	31.97%	2.58%	100.00%

\* Fiscal Year runs from July 1 - June 30.

## INCOME CHARACTERISTICS

The disposable income of the resident population is an important element of any attempt to understand commercial economic activity in a geographical area. *Table 19* presents median household income for Grundy and surrounding counties according to the Census Bureau. Grundy County's median household income remained relatively stagnant from 1998 to 2000 and did not keep pace with the rising state average. However, Grundy County remains among the counties with the highest income levels for 1998. About \$16,000 separates Grundy County from Du Page County, the county with the state's highest median household income.



**TABLE 19 – Median Household Income, Grundy/Surrounding Counties, 1998-2000**

Median Household Income				
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau				
	1998	% of 1998 State Median Household Income	2000	% of 2000 State Median Household Income
Kendall County	\$63,020	146.1%	\$64,625	138.7%
Will County	\$57,156	132.5%	\$62,238	133.6%
<b>Grundy County</b>	<b>\$52,469</b>	<b>121.6%</b>	<b>\$51,719</b>	<b>111.0%</b>
<b>State of Illinois</b>	<b>\$43,141</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>\$46,590</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Livingston County	\$42,255	98.0%	\$41,342	88.74%
LaSalle County	\$38,933	90.3%	\$40,308	86.52%
Kankakee County	\$38,294	88.8%	\$41,532	89.14%

Table 20 and Table 21 depict Per Capita Personal Income (PCPI) and Total Personal Income (TPI), respectively, for Grundy County during the years of 1989, 1994 and 1999 according to the Census Bureau. TPI is a measure of wealth of those persons *residing*, but not necessarily working in a county. TPI includes the earnings (wages/salaries, proprietors' income, and other labor income); passive income (dividends, interest, and rent); and transfer payments (Social Security, Medicare, veteran's benefits, welfare payments, etc.) received by the residents of Grundy County. PCPI measures the wealth of a county on a per person basis. A county's PCPI is calculated by dividing the TPI by the total population. In 1999, the population of Grundy County was 37,181.

Income levels in Grundy County outpaced population growth, allowing it to improve its state ranking in terms of PCPI in each of the three years reported, moving from ninth in the state in 1989 to fifth in 1999. During this ten year span, Grundy County's PCPI growth of 4.3% was the highest in the region. Additionally, Grundy County was the only regional county to increase its PCPI by at least \$10,000 during this time.

With an average annual growth rate of 5.9%, Grundy County's TPI increased by 77.65% from 1989 - 1999. Kendall County, with an average rate of 7.5%, and Will County, with an average rate of 7.0%, were the two counties in the region to grow more quickly than Grundy in terms of TPI.

**TABLE 20 – Per Capita Personal Income, Grundy/Surrounding Counties, 1989-1999**

Per Capita Personal Income							
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census							
	1989	State Rank	1994	State Rank	1999	Rank in State	Average Annual Growth Rate
<b>Grundy County</b>	<b>\$19,050</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>\$23,324</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>\$29,081</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4.3</b>
Kendall County	\$19,112	7	\$23,174	8	\$28,848	7	4.2
Will County	\$18,388	11	\$22,162	14	\$26,483	19	3.7
Livingston County	\$16,047	31	\$20,374	25	\$23,988	31	4.1
LaSalle County	\$15,752	34	\$19,380	32	\$23,715	34	4.2
Kankakee County	\$15,427	41	\$19,175	36	\$23,256	43	4.2

**TABLE 21 – Total Personal Income, Grundy/Surrounding Counties, 1989-1999**

Total Personal Income (\$000)							
Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis							
	1989	Rank in State	1994	Rank in State	1999	Rank in State	Average Annual Growth Rate
Will County	\$6,454,347	4	\$8,852,337	4	\$12,669,462	4	7.0
LaSalle County	\$1,677,106	17	\$2,110,213	17	\$2,614,517	17	4.5
Kankakee County	\$1,474,987	18	\$1,939,849	18	\$2,388,907	18	5.4
Kendall County	\$747,876	29	\$1,018,207	26	\$1,547,934	22	7.5
<b>Grundy County</b>	<b>\$608,655</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>\$808,660</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>\$1,081,273</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>5.9</b>
Livingston County	\$632,327	32	\$816,220	33	\$950,841	34	4.2

## EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Table 22 depicts educational levels for Grundy County residents 25 years and older according to Census Bureau statistics for 1990 and 2000. A higher percentage of Grundy County's residents are receiving higher levels of education in 2000 than in 1990. Nearly 87% in 2000 had completed high school compared to about 79% in 1990

**TABLE 22 – Education Levels for Grundy County, 1990-2000**

Education Levels (25+)		
Source: U.S. Census Bureau		
	1990	2000
Less than High School	21.0%	13.1%
High School Graduate (includes equivalency)	40.6%	38.9%
Some College, no degree	25.9%	26.3%
Associate Degree	-	6.5%
College Degree	8.6%	10.9%
Graduate Degree	3.9%	4.3%

According to Census Bureau figures for 2000 depicted in Table 23, the percentage of those persons 25 and older in Grundy County without a high school diploma is second lowest amongst the six counties shown, and more than 5% less than Illinois as a whole. The percentage of those in Grundy County enrolling in college courses and obtaining an associate degree is similar or above the other counties shown and the state overall. However, the percentage of those in Grundy County who go on to obtain bachelor's degrees and graduate degrees is either comparable to or lower than the other counties shown and lower than in Illinois.

A low participation rate in higher education may hinder the opportunities available to members of a community. An area with an educated population can diversify its economic base by attracting a wide variety of business and industry due to its well-qualified workforce.

By diversifying the opportunities available to its residents, Grundy County may encourage growth while reversing the negative population trends among some age cohorts. A large number of 20 - 35 year olds leave Grundy County. A wider range of employment opportunities may allow members of these groups to return to the area after completing their degree programs rather than relocating to find a position in their field of interest.

**TABLE 23 - Education Levels for Grundy and Surrounding Counties, 2000 (25+ population)**

COUNTY	< THAN HIGH SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE	SOME COLLEGE (no degree)	ASSOCIATE DEGREE	BACHELOR'S DEGREE	GRADUATE DEGREE
<b>GRUNDY</b>	<b>13.1%</b>	<b>38.9%</b>	<b>26.3%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>10.9%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>
Will	13.1%	29.1%	25.1%	7.2%	17.8%	7.7%
La Salle	18.6%	38.6%	22.6%	6.9%	9.0%	4.3%
Kendall	10.1%	30.1%	26.2%	8.4%	18.0%	7.2%
Kankakee	20.2%	35.8%	22.8%	6.3%	9.4%	5.6%
Livingston	21.9%	41.2%	19.0%	5.2%	8.7%	4.0%
Illinois	18.6%	27.7%	21.6%	6.1%	16.5%	9.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 24 depicts average Grundy County high school sizes in recent years according to statistics from the Illinois School Report Cards (ISRC). For 2001, the class sizes have been favorable about the same or lower than the state average.

**TABLE 24 – Average Class Size, Grundy County High Schools, 1995-2001**

Average Class Size			
Source: 1995, 1998, 2001 Illinois School Report Cards			
	1995	1998	2001
G.S.W. Twp. H.S.	14.4	14.5	12.8
Minooka Comm. H.S.	20.0	-	14.4
Seneca H.S.	15.8	-	14.6
Dwight H.S.	-	-	15.1
<b>Illinois State Avg.</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>18.2</b>
Morris Comm. H.S.	29.8	20.3	20.0
Coal City H.S.	21.7	19.5	22.0

Table 25 shows the student-teacher ratio for Grundy County High Schools during selected years according to statistics from the ISRC. By employing additional teachers to accommodate increasing enrollments, Grundy County schools are keeping their average class size and student-teacher ratios low. Despite increasing the number of their teachers, Morris Community High School and Coal City High School consistently report average class sizes higher than the state's average. Likewise, Morris Community High School and Minooka Community High School, the area's two largest schools, find it difficult to maintain student - teacher ratios lower than the state average.

**TABLE 25 – Student – Teacher Ratio for Grundy County High Schools, 1995-2001**

Student - Teacher Ratio			
Source: 1995, 1998, 2001 Illinois School Report Cards			
	1995	1998	2001
G.S.W. Twp. H.S.	14.4 : 1	12.9 : 1	10.9 : 1
Seneca H.S.	11.5 : 1	11.6 : 1	12.6 : 1
Dwight H.S.		15.9 : 1	15.1 : 1
Coal City H.S.	16.1 : 1	15.8 : 1	16.9 : 1
Morris Comm. H.S.	19.5 : 1	18.7 : 1	18.0 : 1
Minooka Comm. H.S.	19.3 : 1	21.9 : 1	18.0 : 1
<b>Illinois State Avg.</b>	<b>18.2 : 1</b>	<b>18.5 : 1</b>	<b>18.0 : 1</b>

Table 26 and Table 27 depict the graduation rate and dropout rate for Grundy County high schools according to statistics from the ISRC. Grundy County high schools continually outperform the state's average in graduation rates and dropout rates. In 2001, all area high schools together graduated at least 85% of the senior class.

With student enrollments on the increase, low dropout rates and high graduation rates equal more persons with high school diplomas. This means that a higher percentage of the population meets what is often considered to be the minimum educational requirement for employment or the pursuit of higher education at either a community college or a four-year institution.

**TABLE 26 – Graduation Rate for Grundy County High Schools, 1995-2001**

Graduation Rate			
Source: 1995, 1998, 2001 Illinois School Report Cards			
	1995	1998	2001
Seneca H.S.	97.2%		92.1%
Dwight H.S.			91.9%
Minooka Com. H.S.	92.6%	89.1%	90.8%
Coal City H.S.	83.9%	88.0%	89.9%
G.S.W. Twp. H.S.	91.7%	85.5%	88.1%
Morris Com. H.S.	95.3%		85.6%
<b>Illinois State Avg.</b>	<b>80.7%</b>	<b>81.8%</b>	<b>83.2%</b>

**TABLE 27 - Dropout Rate for Grundy County High Schools, 1995-2001**

Dropout Rate			
Source: 1995, 1998, 2001 Illinois School Report Cards			
	1995	1998	2001
Dwight H.S.		3.6%	1.2%
G.S.W. Twp. H.S.	2.1%	1.6%	1.6%
Seneca H.S.	1.5%	2.7%	2.2%
Coal City H.S.	2.7%	3.6%	2.5%
Morris Com. H.S.	5.1%	4.0%	3.4%
Minooka Com. H.S.	2.0%	3.7%	3.9%
<b>Illinois State Avg.</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>6.2%</b>	<b>5.8%</b>



Table 28 shows the attendance rate for Grundy County high schools in recent years according to the ISRC. The attendance rates have fluctuated over the academic years but remain between 94% and 96%. All of the schools report attendance rates close to or higher than the state's average, suggesting that truancy is not a problem in Grundy County.

**TABLE 28 – Attendance Rates for Grundy County High Schools, 1995-2001**

Attendance Rate			
Source: 1995, 1998, 2001 Illinois School Report Cards			
	1995	1998	2001
Coal City H.S.	94.6%	95.2%	95.5%
Seneca H.S.	97.3%	95.2%	95.4%
Minooka Com. H.S.	94.2%	95.1%	95.0%
Morris Com. H.S.	94.7%	95.6%	94.3%
G.S.W. Twp. H.S.	96.4%	95.6%	94.0%
<b>Illinois State Avg.</b>	<b>93.4%</b>	<b>93.9%</b>	<b>93.7%</b>
Dwight H.S.		95.0%	93.3%

Table 29 depicts average expenditure per high school student for Grundy County according to the ISRC. Although both the operating and instructional expenditure per student varies greatly in area schools, most have continually increased their expenditures in these areas. For the 1999-2000 academic year, Seneca High School reports the highest expenditures in both categories while Morris Community High School reports the lowest. Seneca's operating expenditure of \$14,586 is nearly 210% greater than that of Morris. Likewise, Seneca's instructional expenditure of \$7,138 is 184% greater.

**TABLE 29 – Expenditure per Student for Grundy County High School, 1993-2000**

Expenditure per Student					
Source: 1995, 1998, 2000 Illinois School Report Cards					
	1993-4 Operating	1997-8 Operating	1999-00 Operating	1997-8 Instructional	1999-00 Instructional
Seneca H.S.	\$11,220	\$13,651	\$14,586		\$7,138
Dwight H.S.			\$8,929		\$4,732
G.S.W. Twp. H.S.	\$6,250	\$7,346	\$8,549	\$3,645	\$4,406
<b>Illinois State Avg.</b>	<b>\$5,705</b>	<b>\$6,281</b>	<b>\$7,146</b>	<b>\$3,747</b>	<b>\$4,291</b>
Coal City H.S.	\$5,432	\$6,527	\$6,821	\$3,749	\$3,981
Minooka Com. H.S.	\$6,216	\$6,685	\$6,904		\$3,900
Morris Com. H. S.	\$6,593	\$6,252	\$6,952	\$3,254	\$3,879

## AGRICULTURAL BASE

Grundy County's agricultural base remains central to the county's economic and cultural life. Farming is by far the largest single land use, accounting for approximately [INSERT]% of all land within the county. As such it plays a key role in the social activity within the county. The overwhelming dominance of agriculture as a land use owes much to the quality of the land base with over 85% being prime agricultural land (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1980). Included in the land base are the majority of the county's natural resources including wetlands, watercourses, aquifer recharge areas, wooded areas, steep slopes, mineral resources, prairie remnants, and wildlife habitats. As an export industry, agriculture drives a whole set of secondary economic activities and, in so doing, contributes significantly to the overall economic well being of the county. A full definition of prime farmland is located in *Appendix I*.

USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2002 Census of Agriculture (Census of Agriculture), figures depicted in *Table 30* show Grundy County with 56 fewer farms than in 1997, a decline of 12.1%. This continues the trend from 1992 to 1997 when 73 farms at a rate of 13.1% were lost. Interestingly, statistics from the same survey depicted in *Table 31* show Grundy County gained 12,015 acres of farmland or an increase of 6.0% from 1997 to 2002. This reverses the previous trend from 1992 to 1997 when Grundy County experienced a loss of 24,054 acres of farmland or a 10.7% decline. Grundy County's 2002 increase in total farmland acreage was the best showing for agricultural land in the six-county contiguous region.

**TABLE 30 – Number of Farms for Grundy/Surrounding Counties, 1997-2002**

Number of Farms			
Source: 2002 Census of Agriculture, USDA			
	1997	2002	% Change
Will County	910	830	-8.8%
<b>Grundy County</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>-12.1%</b>
Kendall County	441	412	-6.6%
Livingston County	1,380	1,330	-3.6%
Kankakee County	831	722	-13.1%
LaSalle County	1,581	1,478	-6.5%

**TABLE 31 – Land in Farms (Acres) for Grundy/Surrounding Counties, 1997-2002**

Land in Farms (Acres)			
Source: 2002 Census of Agriculture, USDA			
	1997	2002	% Change
<b>Grundy County</b>	<b>201,452</b>	<b>213,467</b>	<b>+6.0%</b>
Will County	293,526	265,490	-9.6%
Kendall County	167,486	168,082	+0.4%
LaSalle County	587,676	579,141	-1.5%
Livingston County	613,645	636,406	+3.7%
Kankakee County	351,567	347,161	-1.3%

2002 Census of Agriculture, figures depicted in *Table 32* show Grundy County with 9,744 additional cropland acres than in 1997, an increase of 5.1%. Interestingly, this reverses the trend from 1992 to 1997 when 22,177 cropland acres at a rate of 10.4% were lost. Statistics from the same survey depicted in *Table 33* show that the average acreage of Grundy County farms increased dramatically by 89 acres, an increase of more than 20% from 1997 to 2002. This is significantly higher than the previous trend from 1992 to 1997 when Grundy County experienced a slight increase of 12 acres or 2.8% per farm. The most recent acreage increase is significantly above that in the other counties shown. As fewer persons choose the profession of farming, it is likely that many will sell their farmland to another farmer, thus causing the average size of farms to increase. This trend has been seen in each of the six counties in the region.

**TABLE 32 – Total Cropland (Acres) for Grundy/Surrounding Counties, 1997-2002**

Total Cropland (Acres)			
Source: 2002 Census of Agriculture			
	1997	2002	% Change
Will County	275,264	253,270	-8.0%
<b>Grundy County</b>	<b>190,381</b>	<b>200,125</b>	<b>+5.1%</b>
Kendall County	158,447	161,129	-1.7%
LaSalle County	552,479	546,471	-1.1%
Livingston County	589,348	611,929	+3.8%
Kankakee County	338,259	333,821	-1.3%

**TABLE 33 – Average Size of Farm (Acres) for Grundy/Surrounding Counties, 1997-2002**

Average Size of Farm (Acres)			
Source: 2002 Census of Agriculture			
	1997	2002	% Change
Kankakee County	423	481	+13.7%
Livingston County	445	479	+7.6%
Kendall County	380	408	+7.4%
Will County	323	320	-0.9%
<b>Grundy County</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>+20.4%</b>
LaSalle County	372	392	+5.4%

2002 Census of Agriculture figures in *Table 34* and *Table 35* depict the total amount of corn and soybeans harvested, respectively, in Grundy and surrounding counties for 1997 and 2002. Corn and soybeans continue to be the region's most important crops. Previous statistics showed that corn production declined in each of the six counties in the region from 1992 to 1997. Although Grundy County's decline of 24.8% in 1997 was the area's largest, corn production stabilized and increased in the county by more than 6% in 2002. This was the area's only significant increase for corn. Grundy County realized a similar percentage increase in soybean production in 1997 and again in 2002. The overall change in soybean production between these years for the six-county area was mixed.

As Will and Kendall counties continue their rapid expansion, the areas of Grundy bordering these counties are seeing some of the county's fastest growth. The southern and western areas of Grundy County remain largely dependent on agriculture, and development does not match that of the northeastern part of the county.

**TABLE 34 – Corn Production for Grundy/Surrounding Counties, 1997-2002**

Corn Harvested for Grain or Seed (Bushels)			
Source: 2002 Census of Agriculture			
	1997	2002	% Change
<b>Grundy County</b>	<b>12,207,482</b>	<b>12,978,158</b>	<b>+6.3%</b>
Kendall County	9,489,578	9,249,545	-2.5%
Livingston County*	34,870,878	40,236,835	-15.4%
LaSalle County**	35,521,124	36,257,115	+2.1%
Will County	17,027,338	12,621,361	-25.9%
Kankakee County	22,428,064	21,852,334	-2.6%

\* Livingston County ranked 7th in the nation in 1997, ranked 5th in the nation in 1992.

\*\* LaSalle County ranked 6th in the nation in 1997 and in 1992.

**TABLE 35 – Soybean Production for Grundy/Surrounding Counties, 1997-2002**

Soybeans Harvested for Beans (Bushels)			
Source: 2002 Census of Agriculture			
	1997	2002	% Change
Kankakee County	5,652,965	5,931,087	+4.92%
LaSalle County**	10,910,329	10,825,823	-0.08%
<b>Grundy County</b>	<b>3,691,171</b>	<b>3,908,890</b>	<b>+5.90%</b>
Kendall County	2,713,864	2,671,927	-1.55%
Livingston County*	12,369,959	13,643,323	+10.29%
Will County	4,605,280	4,136,996	-10.17%

\* Livingston County ranked 3rd in the nation in 1997, ranked 2nd in the nation in 1992.

\*\* LaSalle County ranked 5th in the nation in 1997 and in 1992.

2002 Census of Agriculture figures in *Table 36* and *Table 37* show the total amount of agricultural products sold and the average amount sold per farm, respectively, in Grundy and surrounding counties for 1997 and 2002. The total market value of agricultural products sold over this period dropped in Grundy County by about 12%. This was comparable to the contiguous counties with the exception of Kendall which remained relatively stable and Will which dropped by about 23%. The average market value of agricultural products sold in Grundy County remained quite stable over the period as compared to the surrounding counties. Changes in these other counties were mixed.

**TABLE 36 – Market Value of Agricultural Products sold for Grundy/Surrounding Counties, 1997-2002**

Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold (\$1,000)			
Source: 2002 Census of Agriculture			
	1997	2002	% Change
Kankakee County	\$132,882	\$119,960	-9.72%
Livingston County	\$213,643	\$183,266	-14.22%
Kendall County	\$58,758	\$58,131	-1.07%
Will County	\$107,129	\$82,221	-23.25%
LaSalle County	\$183,148	\$161,703	-11.71%
<b>Grundy County*</b>	<b>\$59,864</b>	<b>\$52,765</b>	<b>-11.86%</b>

\*In 1997, Grundy County ranked 63rd in the state and 1,002 in the nation.

**TABLE 37 – Market Value/Agricultural Products Sold for Grundy, Surrounding Counties (Avg. Per Farm), 1997-2002**

Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold, Average per Farm			
Source: 2002 Census of Agriculture			
	1997	2002	% Change
Kankakee County	\$159,906	\$166,150	+3.90%
Livingston County	\$154,814	\$137,794	+10.99%
Kendall County	\$133,238	\$141,094	+5.90%
<b>Grundy County</b>	<b>\$127,933</b>	<b>\$129,643</b>	<b>+1.34%</b>
Will County	\$115,843	\$99,062	-14.49%
LaSalle County	\$183,148	\$109,407	-40.26%

2002 Census of Agriculture figures for Grundy County farm size for the period 1997 to 2002 in *Table 38* show an increased number of larger operations. The number of farms in the 1,000 or more acres category experienced an increase of 20% during this time. The number of farms in the next three smaller categories and the smallest category all declined. These trends have occurred as agricultural land owners sell their land to developers or to other farmers. The 10 to 49 acre farm size category showed an increase in the number of farms. Generally, all of these trends are comparable to that experienced from 1992 to 1997.

**TABLE 38 – Farms by Size (Acres) for Grundy County, 1997-2002**

Farms By Size			
Grundy County			
Source: 2002 Census of Agriculture			
	1997	2002	% Change
1 to 9 acres	20	11	-45.0%
10 to 49 acres	61	67	+9.8%
50 to 179 acres	109	84	-2.3%
180 to 499 acres	130	104	-20.0%
500 to 999 acres	88	75	-14.8%
1,000 acres or more	55	66	20.0%



*Table 39* shows that the average age of the primary operator has increased slightly in recent years for Grundy County farms. The rate of increase has slowed from that of 1992 to 1997 when the average age grew by 2.1 years. As younger generations seek employment opportunities other than farming, it seems likely that the number of farms in Grundy County will continue to decline. As today's farmers approach retirement, if another family member will not be taking over responsibility for the land, there may be an increased willingness to sell their farmland to potential developers or other farmers. The decline of Grundy County's mid-sized farmer will likely continue.

**TABLE 39 – Average Age of Operator for Grundy County Farms, 1997-2002**

Average Age of Operator	
Grundy County	
Source: 2002 Census of Agriculture	
1997	2002
51.5	51.9



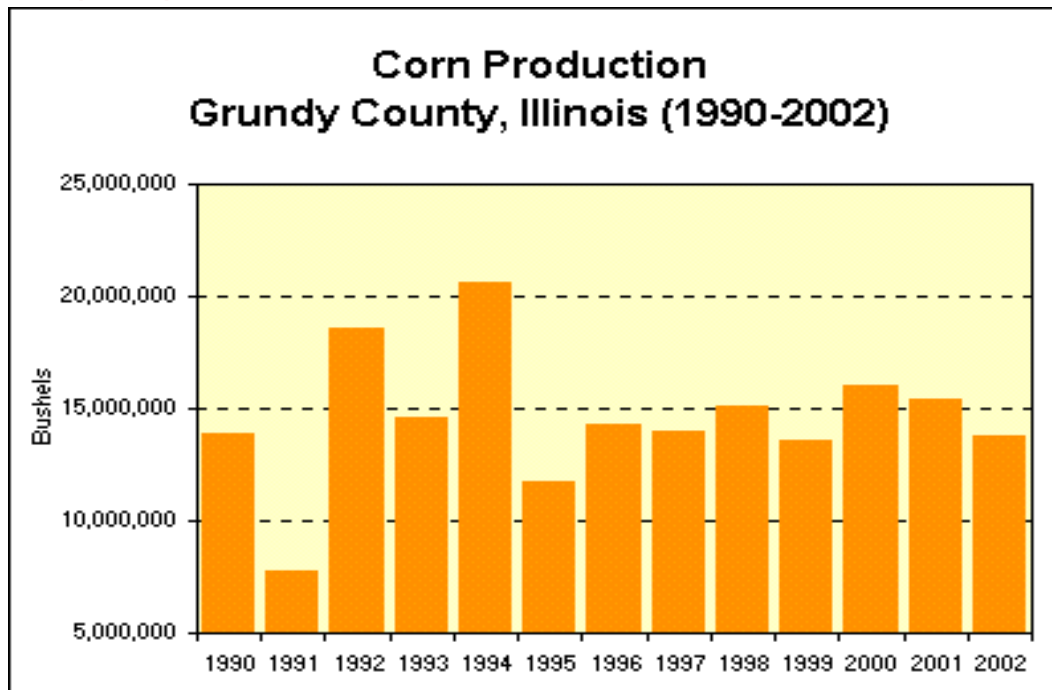
The data in *Table 40* depicts the ranking of Grundy County in terms of crop production compared to other counties in the state and in the United States. *Figure 11* and *Table 41* show Grundy County corn production by year for the period 1990-2002. The total amount of corn produced has remained fairly stable at close to 15 million bushels during most of this period.

**TABLE 40 – Top Commodities in Grundy County Agriculture, 2002**

Top Commodities - Crops (Acres)			
Grundy County			
Source: 2002 Census of Agriculture			
		Rank in State	Rank in U.S.
Corn for Grain	100,262	44/102	213/2,592
Soybeans for Beans	92,946	55/102	293/2,076
Hay Crops	1,884	91/102	2,698/3,059
Oats	145		
Wheat	209	97/102	2,029/2,517

**FIGURE 11 – Corn Production, Grundy County (1990-2002)**

**Grundy County, Illinois**



**TABLE 41 – Corn Production for Grundy County, 1990-2002**

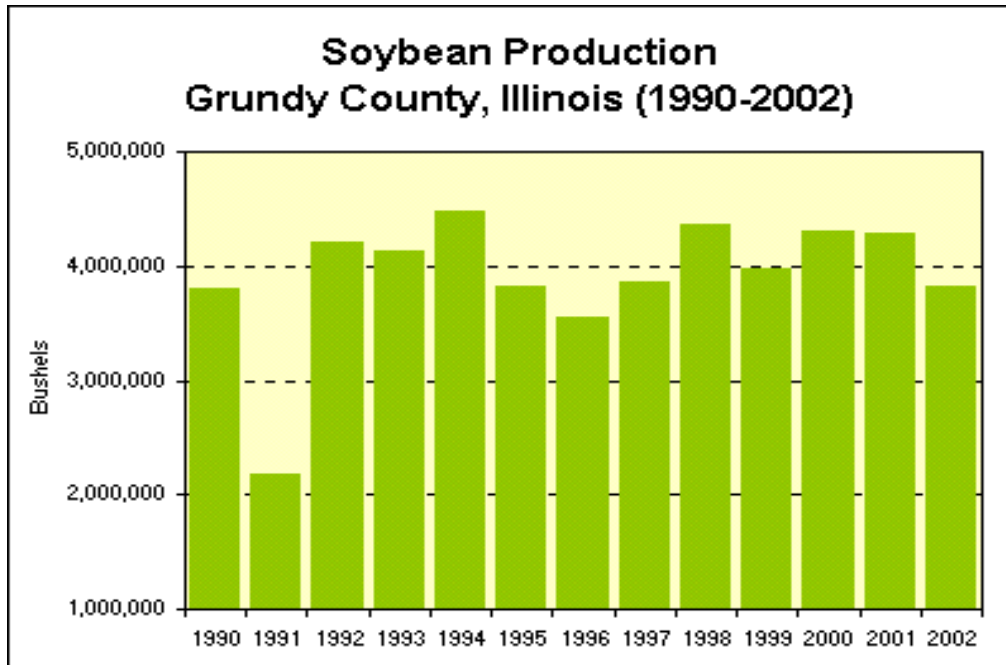
Year	Acres Planted	Acres Harvested	Yield (Bu./Acre)	Production (Bushels)
1990	110,300	108,400	128	13,906,800
1991	118,000	116,400	67	7,798,800
1992	120,000	119,800	155	18,569,000
1993	109,000	106,700	137	14,617,900
1994	117,000	116,600	117	20,638,200
1995	104,000	103,000	114	11,742,000
1996	110,000	108,000	132	14,256,000
1997	111,000	110,000	127	13,970,000
1998	104,000	103,000	147	15,141,000
1999	102,000	101,000	134	13,534,000
2000	107,000	106,200	151	16,036,200
2001	108,000	107,200	144	15,436,800
2002	106,000	104,900	131	13,741,900

SOURCE: National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

*Figure 12 and Table 42* show Grundy County soybean production by year for the period 1990-2002. The total amount of soybeans produced has remained fairly stable at close to 4 million bushels during most of this period.

**FIGURE 12 – Soybean Production, Grundy County (1990-2002)**

**Grundy County, Illinois**



**TABLE 42 – Soybean Production for Grundy County, 1990-2002**

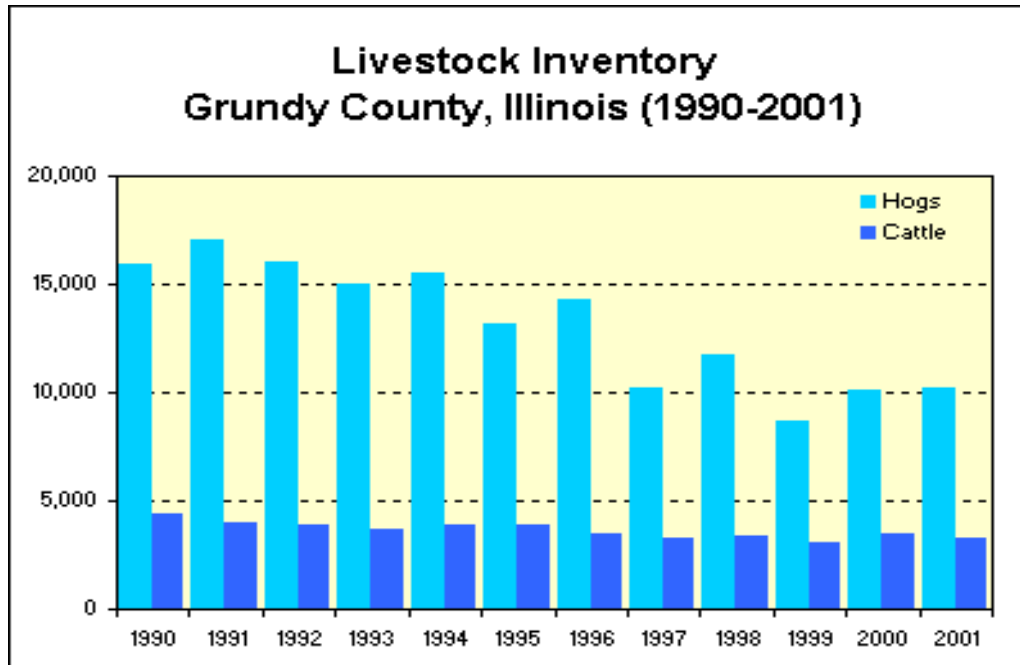
Year	Acres Planted	Acres Harvested	Yield (Bu./Acre)	Production (Bushels)
1990	85,200	85,000	45	3,799,200
1991	87,000	86,800	25	2,170,000
1992	94,000	93,600	45	4,212,000
1993	92,000	91,600	45	4,122,000
1994	91,000	90,500	50	4,479,750
1995	92,000	91,900	42	3,813,850
1996	96,000	95,800	37	3,544,600
1997	86,000	85,700	45	3,856,500
1998	95,000	94,900	46	4,365,400
1999	95,000	94,600	42	3,973,200
2000	96,000	95,700	45	4,306,500
2001	98,000	97,300	44	4,281,200
2002	94,000	93,000	41	3,813,000

SOURCE: National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Figure 13 and Table 43 show the inventory of hogs and cattle for Grundy County for the period 1990-2001. The overall numbers for these livestock show a steady decline. The inventory of cattle was highest in 1990 at 4,400 and by 2001 the number was 3,300, a drop of 25%. The inventory of pigs was highest in 1991 at 17,000 and by 2001 the number was 10,200, a drop of 40%.

**FIGURE 13 – Livestock Inventory, Grundy County (1990-2001)**

**Grundy County, Illinois**



**TABLE 43 – Livestock Inventory for Grundy County, 1990-2001**

YEAR	CATTLE & CALVES		HOGS & PIGS	
	January 1st Inventory (Head)	Marketed (Head)	December 1st Inventory (Head)	Marketed (Head)
1990	4,400	2,600	15,900	31,000
1991	4,000	2,200	17,000	33,300
1992	3,900	2,300	16,000	33,000
1993	3,700	2,100	15,000	29,000
1994	3,900	2,300	15,500	30,000
1995	3,900	2,200	13,200	28,000
1996	3,500	--	14,300	27,000
1997	3,300	1,300	10,200	16,000
1998	3,400	--	11,700	20,000
1999	3,100	1,700	8,700	18,000
2000	3,500	1,000	10,100	18,000
2001	3,300	800	10,200	18,000

SOURCE: National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Overall, the above analysis would seem to indicate a thriving and stable agricultural economic base in Grundy County. The importance of agriculture is demonstrated by its dollar value to the county and the fact that this has continued to grow throughout the study period. Farmland continues to be lost to development at a steady pace. Grundy County experienced a decline in farmland from 1992 to 1997 of 11% which was the largest in comparison to surrounding counties. This rate reversed some in 2002 but the change from 1992 was still an overall loss of more than 5%. This may not seem substantial for the period. However, the loss rate will likely begin to mirror that of Will County's average 10% farmland loss rate that it has experienced since 1992. This will occur as the amount of buildable space in Will County declines. Grundy County will then begin to realize

comparable losses in crop production and its overall predominant agricultural land uses unless measures are implemented to curtail growth and development.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Changing demographic trends in Grundy County have made it imperative that the Land Use Plan be updated. The majority population is now urban rather than rural. The agricultural economy is changing. The growing Chicago metropolitan region is beginning to encompass Grundy County. New home construction is on the rise. Morris continues as the regional commercial trade center, however, municipalities such as Channahon and Minooka have annexed unprecedented tracts of land. The numerous statistics outlined above provides a basis for understanding and interpreting the changing demographics of the county. Analysis of this data will help the county plot its future. Several of the more specific findings are as follows:

- **REGIONAL SETTING:** Grundy County is located in northeastern Illinois and the southwestern portion of the Chicago MSA. The Census Bureau recently redefined the Chicago MSA to include Grundy County. A significant amount of the county population is commuting to the western/southwestern and other portions of the Chicago region for employment. Population is growing faster than employment in the county. The excellent interstate, arterial, rail and water access facilitates the increasing day-to-day interaction between other areas in the Chicago region and Grundy County. While many largely rural counties to the south and west have relatively stagnant population growth, Grundy County is adding residents.
- **POPULATION:** Total population in Grundy County is estimated to be about 40,000 as of 2004. The population grew by about 16% during 1990 to 2000 and is projected to grow by more than 13% by 2010. Of note is that the county's rural population dropped to 51% of the total in 1990. By 1994, the majority of Grundy County's population has become urban. The population is aging. In 1980 the largest age group was 15 to 24 year olds. The largest age group is now 35 to 44 year olds. This aging population mix will affect the demand and provision for services at all levels of government and industry.
- **HOUSING/HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURES:** Since the year 2000, building permit activity has increased substantially up to and above levels of the early to mid 1990s. Most new development is in an area of northeastern/eastern Grundy County extending from Will County west to Morris. This is the area that most allows residents to commute into the western and southwestern suburbs of Chicago.

On the surface, Grundy County might appear to be thriving as it makes the transition from a small rural community to a part of the Chicago MSA. However, a deeper look into the realities of day-to-day life for typical Grundy County residents reveals likely strains on family budgets. County residents allocate a substantially higher proportion of their overall expenditures to housing costs as compared to 1962. Transportation costs in the Chicago MSA account for almost 20% of household expenditures, which is substantially higher than

levels in the 1960's and earlier. Not surprisingly, the increase coincided with the decline in transit use and the emergence of sprawl development.

Grundy County residents have almost no transportation alternatives outside the private automobile. About one-third of Grundy County households have one vehicle or less. The lack of a balanced transportation system almost doubles household travel costs for the more than 2,000 county residents living in poverty. Increased availability of transit in addition to pedestrian and bicycle pathways has the potential to save the average Grundy County household thousands of dollars per year.

Money not spent on transportation increases family sustainability by making more income available for savings and home ownership. In addition, decreased travel expenditures lessen the necessity that households must rely upon the employment of both parents. Having one parent at home more often results in stronger family structure and upbringing for children. The benefits for the community as a whole cannot be overstated.

According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, statistics for 2002, almost 40% of Grundy County adults reported that they are overweight. An additional 21% of adults surveyed reported that they are obese. Lack of exercise and poor diet are the primary causes of obesity for Grundy County residents and Americans as a whole. Low-density sprawl perpetuates this problem with auto-dependent physical design lacking in transportation alternatives.

It is clear that the 2020 Comprehensive Plan must address the shortcomings in land use and transportation in Grundy County. An efficient land use plan can reduce unnecessary household expenditures, provide greater mobility, and improve the physical health of its residents. It is critical that the Land Use Plan implement a physical design that provides transportation options to meet the needs of all residents as the county continues to grow.

- **EMPLOYMENT:** In the year 2000, the four major employment categories in Grundy County were the services (i.e., education, self-employed, business, health, etc.); wholesale and retail trade; transportation, communications, & utilities; and manufacturing. The percentage of employment associated with the services sector continues to rise dramatically in comparison to other sectors. Manufacturing as a percentage of employment continues to realize the sharpest decline. Most other sectors have either maintained their employment levels or are declining slowly. These trends are expected to continue according to industry employment projections for 2010. The services sector is expected to account for almost 40% of all employment in Grundy County by 2010. The lack of jobs in proportion to population is evident as many more workers leave the county for employment than come into the county. It is recognized that restructuring of the industrial economy and growth in the service sectors are a reality. However, it is important that aggressive recruitment of industry and adequate land and infrastructure be provided to meet the needs of county residents for local employment.



- **AGRICULTURE CHANGES:** Agriculture remains the major industry in Grundy County. However, farming as a way of life has changed substantially. Family farming has given way to agri-business. The number of farms in Grundy County decreased from 463 to 407, or about 12%, from 1997 to 2002. In 1997, the average farm size was 435 acres and was valued at \$948,046. In 2002, the average farm size was 524 acres with a value of \$1,528,380. Grundy County total farm produce sales decreased from \$59,864,000 in 1997 to \$52,765,000 in 2002, a drop of 12%. An increasing rate of decline in production and farmland acreage, comparable to that in Will County during recent years, is likely as development pressures mount.

## EXISTING LAND USE PATTERN

### BRIEF OVERVIEW

Any long-range plan that is sound and realistic must consider the existing land use pattern. The land use study is a major component of the planning process. Existing uses must be mapped in order to establish future courses for the development of land. Important features such as concentrations of housing, business and industry as well as their direction of growth must be understood. The present study analyzed the land use changes that have taken place since the completion of the original study in 1964, and utilized building permit information, aerial photography, and field inspections. Land uses are classified into seven major categories. *Table 44, Distribution of Existing Land Use - 2004*, indicates by acreage, square miles and percentages, the distribution of these land uses within the county's planning area (unincorporated).

The total area of the county is about 430 square miles or 274,560 acres. Of this total, [INSERT] acres or [INSERT]% of the county is unincorporated. Approximately [INSERT] square miles ([INSERT] acres) of land has been annexed into the county's 16 municipalities during the last 30 years. Since the majority of the developed land in the county is located within or adjacent to Morris, Coal City, Minooka, Channahon and Gardner, the remainder of the planning area has a predominantly open character.

The planning area is devoted to the following in order by acreage: agriculture and vacant; transportation (road and railroad right-of-way, airport, and other terminal facilities); public and semi-public (schools, cemeteries, and public and private open space); industrial; utilities (power plants and power line right-of-way); residential; and business and commercial uses. The latter six categories include all land classified as developed. Developed land in the unincorporated area accounts for [INSERT]% of the total planning area as compared to only 7.7% in 1964.

The remainder of the planning area is classified as undeveloped and includes vacant land, water areas; and all farm land except farm residences. Farm land is classified as undeveloped only because of its non-intensive character. Agriculture is the dominant land use in this category, accounting for [INSERT] acres or [INSERT] % of the total planning area.

**TABLE 44 - Distribution of Existing Land Use, Unincorporated Area, Grundy County 2004**

USE CATEGORY	TOTAL AREA		% of TOTAL AREA
	ACREAGE	SQ.MILES	
Residential			
Business & Commercial			
Industrial			
Transportation		[INSERT]	
Public & Semi-Public			
Utilities			
Agriculture & Vacant			
Total			100.00

Since 1997, 501 Single-family residential building permits have been issued in the unincorporated area. The area experiencing the greatest growth occurred within a triangular area formed by Minooka to the northeast, Coal City/Diamond to the southeast, and a point approximately one mile west of Morris.

## TRANSPORTATION

With respect to transportation, Grundy County is advantageously located in the upper northeast portion of the State of Illinois and to the near southwest of Cook County and the City of Chicago. With such a location, Grundy County has the ability to put to use many of the major transportation benefits Illinois possesses. The key to the success of Illinois businesses is having one of the largest and most comprehensive transportation infrastructures in the United States. This infrastructure consists of excellent highway, rail, water, and air transportation systems.

Three coast to coast interstate highways pass through Illinois; I-80, I-90, and I-70. Illinois is also serviced by a total of 2,048 miles of interstate. These highways are connected to points throughout the state by an additional 1,700 miles of state highways.

Illinois is also the center of the nation's rail network. The state has long served as the connecting point for traffic headed to and from markets in the eastern and western United States. Numerous national and regional railroads serve Illinois and allowing for container service to every part of the U.S., such as the two-day service between Chicago and Los Angeles on the Sante Fe railway.

Another key transportation advantage is Illinois' extensive waterway system and proximity to the Great Lakes. Lake Michigan offers easy access to the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Atlantic Ocean, and the Illinois River connects with the Mississippi to access the Gulf of Mexico. At the forefront of the waterway is the Illinois International Port, which is the Great Lakes port that operates year round. Barge traffic from New Orleans has increased in recent years and has added to the continued increase in the Port's volume of business.

Illinois is also a major air service center with Chicago O'Hare International Airport being the greatest attraction. O'Hare serves about 70 million passengers annually, and as the world's largest and busiest airport, it handles more than 900,000 flights per year. Chicago's Midway Airport serves more than 18 million passengers annually on more than 300,000 flights per year. In addition, the Gary/Chicago International Airport located in northwest Indiana serves about 3 million passengers with more than 50,000 flights per year. All of these facilities are available to Grundy County business and recreational travelers via the two interstate highways that serve the county.

A strong infrastructure denotes a strong economy. Illinois is America's transportation center. With rising energy costs making it more expensive than ever to ship and receive goods, Illinois role as a transport hub grows in significance every time the price of fuel climbs. A greater examination of these Illinois assets as they appear within or at close range to Grundy County reveals that Grundy County is well poised to continue using these systems and reaping their benefits in the future.

The regional area is serviced by the Grundy County Expanded Area Transit (GREAT) system. GREAT is a para-transit service that provides on-demand point to point shuttle service throughout the county and to Joliet for a nominal fee. GREAT operates an ADA accessible, twenty-six passenger bus with available service on weekdays.

## **RAILROADS**

Grundy County is serviced by four mainline railroads; the Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railway (BNSF); CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT); Union Pacific Railroad (UP); and the Elgin, Joliet, and Eastern Railroad (EJ&E). These railroads allow for direct connection with every major railroad throughout the Midwest, including linkage to Chicago, which is the largest rail center in the United States. The BNSF, CSXT, and the Union Pacific all pass through Grundy County in a northeast-southwest direction as they radiate outward from Chicago. The Elgin, Joliet, and Eastern is located in the eastern portion of the county and runs in a north-south direction to service the extractive industries of the area. Relco Locomotives, Inc., maintains its corporate headquarters in Minooka. The company provides locomotive lease and repair services to the railroad industry.

In the past, railroads have been willing to work with companies in the development of industrial sites, rail service, and spur tracks. However, bankruptcies, mergers, and acquisitions that have taken place in the railroad industry may have an impact on such practices. In addition, freight rail has increasingly focused on long distance container service due to its efficiency over comparable truck transportation.



### **Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway**

In 1995, Burlington Northern, Inc. (parent company of the Burlington Northern Railroad), acquired the Santa Fe Pacific Corporation (parent company of the AT&SF) to form the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corporation (parent company of BNSF Railway). The newly formed entity, headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas, provides full freight service over 33,000 route miles in 28 states and two Canadian provinces. This network covers the major Pacific Northwest and Southern California ports to the Midwest, Southeast and Southwest, and from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. BNSF right-of-way extends in a southwesterly/ northeasterly direction in Grundy County through the towns of Verona, Mazon, and Coal City on the way to Joliet. Many years ago, the AT&SF had provided passenger service between Chicago and Los Angeles with stops in these communities. This service no longer exists.

Logistics Park Chicago is a new 621-acre intermodal rail yard operated by the BNSF in Elwood outside of Joliet and just east of Grundy County. The development is part of a transportation trend that locates these transfer centers just outside of major urban centers. These yards combine the strengths of rail and truck hauling using cargo containers. The Elwood facility is projected to handle about 400,000 train-to-truck and truck-to-train transfers per year. The development has enhanced employment opportunities for Grundy County residents without taking away jobs from Chicago where rail yard operations will not be altered.

### **CSX Transportation, Inc.**

Another rail corridor extends from LaSalle Street Station in Chicago to Council Bluffs, Iowa, which was previously owned and operated by the CRI&P Railroad. The section from Chicago to Joliet is now owned by Metra. The portion through Grundy County from Joliet to Bureau, Illinois, is now owned by the International Mining Corporation (IMC). The remainder of the route is now owned by the Heartland Rail Corporation, parent company of the Iowa Interstate Railroad. CSXT operates freight service on the line pursuant to a lease agreement valid through the year 2030. CSXT, a subsidiary of CSX Corporation (CSX), provides freight rail service in 23 states and two Canadian provinces. Headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida, CSXT is the largest railroad in the eastern United States with more than 23,000 miles of track that connects to all Class I railroads and shortlines. CSX was created in 1980 with the acquisition of the Chessie System Railway and the Seaboard Coastline Railroad.

Metra offers frequent commuter rail service between Joliet and Chicago over what is now called the Rock Island District segment of the route. The CRI&P had operated passenger service up until the late 1970's between Chicago and Peoria and from Chicago to Rock Island and beyond. An *Illinois Valley Commuter Rail Feasibility Study* report issued in August 2003, explored the possibility of reinstituting passenger rail service over the former CRI&P right-of-way. This study specifically looked at establishing service between Joliet and LaSalle/Peru with stops in Morris, Minooka and other locations. Complete details concerning the costs and benefits of such service can be found in the report.

### **Union Pacific Railroad**

The UP is a subsidiary of Union Pacific Corporation which is headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska. The UP provides full freight rail service over more than 33,000 miles of track serving 23 states linking every major west coast and gulf coast port in addition to connections with Canada and

Mexico. This includes a major route between Chicago and St. Louis, Missouri, through the Grundy County communities of Braceville and Gardner. This rail line was previously owned and operated by the Illinois Central Railroad.

Amtrak operates passenger rail service between Chicago and St. Louis over the UP route through Grundy County. Service consists of three daily trains in each direction with the closest stops in Joliet, Dwight, and Pontiac, Illinois. Southbound trains depart these stations at the following times: Joliet @ 9:15 AM, 4:15 PM, 6:05 PM; Dwight @ 9:49 AM, 6:39 PM; Pontiac @ 10:06 AM, 5:02 PM, 6:56 PM. Northbound trains depart the stations as follows: Pontiac @ 7:58 AM, 1:42 PM, 5:28 PM; Dwight @ 8:16 AM, 5:46 PM; Joliet @ 9:00 AM, 2:49 PM, and 6:24 PM. The Metra Heritage Corridor commuter service operates over the same line between Joliet and Union Station in Chicago. Service consists of three morning trains and three evening trains.

### **Elgin, Joliet, and Eastern Railway**

Headquartered in Joliet, Illinois, the Elgin, Joliet, and Eastern Railway (EJ&E) provides freight service on 170 miles of track in Illinois and Indiana. The majority of this trackage extends around the Chicago region in a circular fashion from Waukegan, Illinois, to northwest Indiana, via West Chicago and Joliet. A segment extends from Plainfield, Illinois, south into Grundy County through Minooka and terminating in Goose Lake. The EJ&E has connections to most of the major railroads in the Chicago region.

## **ROADS AND HIGHWAYS**

Grundy County is served by two main interstate highways (I-80 and I-55), one federal highway (U.S. Route 6), five major intrastate highways (Routes 17, 47, 53, 113, and 129), and numerous county roads. The state and federal highways passing through the county carry intrastate and interstate traffic along with traffic that originates and ends within the county. The portions of the federal and state highways that pass through Grundy County are the heart of the area's thoroughfare system. The county roads complete the circulation system by serving as feeders to the major roads.

### **Interstate Highways**

Interstate highways are designated as part of the national system of interstate and defense highways and are geared towards the movement of large volumes of through traffic at high speed. The interstate highways are constructed with wide right-of-ways, traffic lane separation, full access control, and grade separation at railroad crossings. The two interstate highways that pass through Grundy County are I-55 and I-80, both of which are free of tolls. These provide for ease in commuter travel as well as the efficient movement of goods to major markets.

### ***Interstate 55***

I-55 is an important north-south highway that cuts through the southeastern portion of the county and connects directly into Chicago to the northeast and to Bloomington-Springfield to the southwest. Extending from Chicago to New Orleans, I-55 connects Grundy County with such immediate cities as St. Louis, Memphis, and Jackson. In the Chicago area, I-55 is designated as the Stevenson Expressway from its juncture with the Tri-State south of Hinsdale to its end at the Dan Ryan Expressway and Lake Shore Drive. I-55 also provides immediate access to the southwest suburbs of Chicago, Midway Airport, and I-355.

### ***Interstate 80***

I-80 is located in the northern part of Grundy County and cuts through the county in a primarily northeast-southwest direction. Heading eastbound I-80 connects with I-55 west of Joliet and also continues on to the Tri-Cities of Davenport, Moline, and Rock Island. I-80 is the primary east-west highway linking the East and West coasts from New York to San Francisco. I-80 directly connects Grundy County with Chicago, Hammond, Gary, Toledo, and Cleveland to the east, and to Des Moines, Omaha, Cheyenne, Salt Lake City and Reno to the west.



Within Grundy County, I-80 has interchanges near Minooka, Morris, and in Nettle Creek Township just north of U.S. Route 6, and two miles west of the county line near Seneca. An interchange has been approved by IDOT for Brisbin Road about midway between Morris and Minooka. County residents can use I-80 to travel to the Chicago area by making the connection with I-55 and either making the juncture with the Tri-State Tollway and then the Eisenhower Expressway, or by continuing to I-55's terminal point at the Dan Ryan Expressway or Lake Shore Drive, or its connection with I-355. All of these routes allow for motorists to gain access to the entire Chicago expressway system and thereby to the entire Chicago Metropolitan Area. Thus, I-80 and its connections to other highways play an important role in the growth and development of Grundy County.

### ***U.S. Route 6***

U.S. Route 6 passes through the northern portion of Grundy County immediately south of I-80's alignment. U.S. Route 6 is a transcontinental highway linking Provincetown, Massachusetts with Los Angeles, California. However, the highway is primarily used for local purposes as a means of getting to Ottawa or Joliet since the presence of I-80 has removed the major interstate traffic.

### **Major Arterials/Intrastate Highways**

Major arterials are transportation networks which carry a great deal of through traffic and allow access to communities. The five major arterial thoroughfares in Grundy County are State Routes 17, 47, 53, 113, and 129.

### ***Illinois Route 17***

Route 17 only appears in a small section in the southeastern corner of the county. Although this is a minor distance, Route 17 does provide an important east-west route between Streator to the west and Kankakee to the east.



### ***Illinois Route 47***

Route 47 extends through the middle of the county from the northern border to the southern border. The bridge over the Illinois River has just been upgraded to accommodate four lanes of traffic and a bicycle/pedestrian path. As Route 47 traverses the county, it intersects with I-80, U.S. Route 6, I-55 and Route 113, providing access to these major highways and arterial routes. It connects the county with the rapidly growing counties of Kendall, Kane, and McHenry to the north, and Livingston County to the south.

### ***Illinois Route 53***

Route 53 runs through the southeastern portion of the county from Gardner on to Joliet and into Du Page County as it parallels I-55 and then heads north beyond the eastern border of the county. Historic Route 66 is parallel to Route 53 in Grundy County and continues from Gardner in a southwesterly direction parallel to I-55.

### ***Illinois Route 113***

Route 113 runs east-west from its intersection with Route 47 and to the east and southeast where it connects with I-55, State Route 53, and terminates at I-57 in Kankakee. The principle importance of Route 113 is the direct connection to I-55. Therefore, efforts should be made to maintain an unimpeded flow of traffic along the highway. Route 113 is also the base line (ground 0) for the county numbering system.

### ***Illinois Route 129***

Route 129 parallels Route 53 beginning at Gardner and running northward until its termination at I-55 near Wilmington.

## **AIRPORTS**

Grundy County contains within its northern portion the Morris Municipal Airport - James R. Washburn Field, which is one of about 50 general aviation airports in Illinois. General (private) aviation is the largest segment of air transport in the United States, consisting of more than 200,000 aircraft. General aviation aircraft include small jets and single/twin engine propeller driven aircraft used for business and recreational flying. In 1999, general aviation flew more than 3 billion miles on more than 35 million flights, carrying about 90 million passengers (Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, 2004). Beyond passenger services, general aviation uses are many and varied and include numerous public needs such as flying emergency medical patients and doctors, businessmen, traffic reporters, police observers, and mail.

The Morris Municipal Airport's primary purpose is to service business aviation. This is reflected in the Federal Aviation Administration's most current annual operation totals for the period of August 2003 to August 2004. These figures state that there were 1,000 air taxi operations (unscheduled commuter flights), 19,000 general aviation local operations (planes based at the airport), 22,000 general aviation itinerant operations (planes coming from other airports), and 300 military operations, for a total of approximately 42,300 operations. This represents an increase of about 173% over total operations of 15,500 recorded for the period covering June 1991, to June 1992.

Currently, an average of 85 planes use the airport for a variety of aviation activities from corporate to recreational aviation. The main activity comes from the business flyers, including two Grundy County businesses, Bi-Met Manufacturing and PEM Trucking, which both maintain planes at the airport. The airport also serves as a pit-stop for flyers traveling to destinations throughout the Midwest, especially to Wisconsin and Chicago. Many recreational pilots fly to the Morris airport and then visit Morris before their return flight. The airport is the site for a flight school. Instructors from other airports fly with students to the Morris Municipal Airport. There are also Army trainers and an experimental airplane agency that use the airport for their activities.

The Morris Municipal Airport is an important transportation asset, especially because of its excellent location within the scheme of surrounding airports. Many aviators prefer to fly out of Morris rather than to contend with the congestion associated with O'Hare, Midway, and Gary/Chicago airports.

The following airfields and heliports are also located in Grundy County:

- Morris Hospital Heliport
- Exelon Dresden Power Station Heliport (Minooka)
- Howard Heliport (Seneca)
- Dwight Airport
- Curanda Airport (Morris)

## **WATERWAYS**

The Illinois River is formed by the confluence of the Kankakee and Des Plaines Rivers between Chicago and LaSalle and flows in a westerly, southwesterly, and southerly direction in its course through Illinois until its confluence with the Mississippi at Grafton, Illinois. The Illinois River is both Illinois' and Grundy County's most important long-distance inland water carrier with a total of 272.9 miles of navigable water in the state. The Illinois Waterway, which consists of the Illinois River, the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, and the Calumet-Sag Canal, provides the only direct all water connection between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi Waterway.

According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Illinois Waterway is currently fully canalized and maintains a minimum depth of 9 feet over the entire 327 mile stretch between Chicago and Grafton. It is controlled by a system of locks and dams that elevate the level of the river from 419 feet above sea level at Grafton to 579.5 feet above sea level at Chicago. The waterway can be entered from Lake Michigan through the Chicago Lock or through the Calumet Harbor and River. Between Chicago and Lockport, which is 60 miles downstream, the waterway falls 139 feet and is controlled by 4 permanent locks and dams: Brandon Road, Dresden Island, Marseilles, and Starved Rock. These locks and dams create four pools. Each lock and dam controls the pool that is formed between it and the lock and dam above it. For example, the Dresden Island Lock controls the pool that is formed between Dresden and Brandon Road.

The 9 foot depth is maintained by 2 navigable movable dams at Peoria and LaGrange. The dams are raised during periods of low water and lowered during periods of high water if sufficient depths are available. When the dams are lowered the locks are used to move navigation from one pool to the next in a series of lockages. When the dams are lowered lockages are not necessary and navigation can pass freely along the river.

With the exception of the Thomas J. O'Brien Lock on the Calumet River, the locks are all 110 feet in width and 600 feet in length. The upper 6 locks are electrically operated and the lower 2 are hydraulically operated. The locks are uniform in their ability to take one towboat and up to eight jumbo barges in a single lockage.

Maintenance and operation of the Illinois River is controlled by the USCE which has been conducting a study of the river to determine navigation structure improvements that will be required to allow the river to function in to the 21st century. The USACE has posted on its Internet Web Site, a *Draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement*, dated April 29, 2004, concerning the Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway (UMR-IWW). The purpose of this report is to provide wide-ranging documentation regarding the alternatives for optimizing the UMR-IWW as a sustainable, efficient transportation system and ecological resource for the future. The study began in 1993 to address delays on the system and projected traffic increases. The report recommends that navigation efficiency be improved through small-scale structural and non-structural projects, new 1,200-foot locks and lock extensions, and pertinent techniques to minimize environmental impacts. In particular, the report recommends the construction of 1,200-foot locks at LaGrange and Peoria addition to mooring facilities at LaGrange. The Dresden Lock in Grundy County was repaired during July and August of 1995.

### Waterborne Commerce

Information contained in *Table 45* below documents barge traffic by commodity on the Illinois River that has passed through the Dresden Island Lock during selected periods over the past ten years. The data was obtained by running reports in the USACE, Operation & Maintenance of Navigation Installations (OMNI) Internet Web Site. Total annual tonnage transported for the periods shown has dropped by about 12% to 16% from that of 1994. Perhaps most significant is that the annual amount of coal shipped has dropped in the range of about 50% during the last three years depicted from that of 1994. According to the Lockmaster at the Dresden Lock, overall future barge traffic along the river is projected to remain fairly stable in the near future. It should be noted that a recent National Resources Council research report documents the difficulties in estimating river traffic over the next 50 years.

**Table 45 - SUMMARY OF BARGE TRAFFIC THROUGH THE DRESDEN ISLAND LOCK**

<b>Commodity</b>	<b>9/1/93-8/31/94</b>	<b>9/1/98-8/31/99</b>	<b>9/1/02-8/31/03</b>	<b>9/1/03-8/31/04</b>	<b>% 10-Year Change</b>
Coal	4,836,044	2,769,450	2,148,575	2,495,955	-48.39%
Petroleum <sup>1</sup>	3,239,810	2,462,138	3,334,959	3,147,443	-2.85%
Chemicals <sup>2</sup>	3,170,920	2,910,520	2,712,236	2,850,265	-10.11%
Crude Materials <sup>3</sup>	5,222,382	4,504,351	5,324,991	5,885,598	+12.70%
Manuf. Goods	3,733,550	4,494,989	3,673,259	3,694,151	-1.06%
Farm Products <sup>4</sup>	1,815,180	969,212	1,129,414	1,050,386	-42.13%
Manuf. Machinery	51,131	53,029	78,297	49,384	-3.42%
Unknown	54,413	491,272	291,870	126,798	+100.33%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22,124,830</b>	<b>18,656,461</b>	<b>18,831,301</b>	<b>19,575,380</b>	<b>-11.52%</b>

Source: Operation & Maintenance of Navigation Installations (OMNI) Internet Web Site, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers

1. Oil, gasoline, etc.
2. Fertilizer, sulfur, etc.
3. Wood, stone, gravel, rock.
4. Grain and grain products.

The monthly totals vary as certain products appear in greater amounts during different seasons. There are many grain shipments from Morris due to the large amount of grain activity within Grundy County. This has led Morris to be considered as the largest grain port in the area immediately adjacent to the river. In general, future barge traffic along the river is projected to remain fairly stable level by the Lockmaster at the Dresden Lock.

Grundy County is home to numerous companies which maintain terminals along the river. These major companies are: Seneca Port Operating Co., with a private liquid bulk terminal; Material Service Corp., with a public dry bulk terminal; Archer Daniels Midland Co., with two private dry bulk terminals; Cargill Inc., with a private dry bulk terminal; Commonwealth Edison, with a private liquid bulk terminal; and Equistar Chemical Co., with a private liquid bulk terminal.



### **Recreational Uses**

Although the Illinois River's primary function is commercial navigation, the river also serves as a recreational asset as well. According to the Dresden Lockmaster, there are numerous recreational vessel lockages at the Dresden Island Lock for such craft as yachts, sailboats, runabouts, and jet skis. The USACE also maintains recreation areas along the river at various lock and dam locations. One of these is the Dresden Island Lock & Dam Corps project located 8 miles from exit 240 off of I-55.

The City of Morris has also undertaken a project that will take advantage of the Illinois River and I&M Canal, both of which flow through Morris. Grundy County and the City of Morris have jointly formed a Riverfront Commission to develop an historic/recreational area along the river and the canal. The area is planned to be a county-wide corridor of multiple uses such as parks, a picnic area, an historical area, retail, and service areas, a river overlook, and a nature preserve. The various uses are to be connected by a canal walk that will be below street grade and will allow visitors to enjoy the beauty of the canal and river.

### **Illinois and Michigan Canal**

In conjunction with Illinois River recreational activities, the county is also served by the I&M Canal pedestrian pathway and recreational areas. Opened in 1848, the I&M Canal was originally used for large-scale navigational purposes. However, barge traffic dwindled over the years until the canal was closed to navigation in 1933. The state has conserved the canal as an example of an earlier transportation mode in addition to its valuable recreational uses, history, and natural beauty.

The 60 mile I&M Canal State Trail which begins in Lockport can be followed through Grundy County as it passes through Morris and continues on to LaSalle. There are wonderful scenic sights along the trail for the enjoyment of pedestrians and bicyclists, and during the winter cross-country skiers and snowmobilers. Other activities along the canal include camping, picnicking, fishing, and boating. In Morris, access to the trail is at the Gebhard Woods State Park. Some of the points of interest at this location are the William G. Stratton State Park, the Nettle Creek Aqueduct, the Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area, and the Heidecke State Fish and Wildlife Area.

Thus, the Illinois River and the I&M Canal are outstanding transportation assets which offer Grundy County many opportunities for development from both commercial and recreational functions.

# PART II THE LAND USE PLAN

## PLANNING FRAMEWORK

### INTRODUCTION

The initial Comprehensive Plan for Grundy County was a 1967 report prepared by Carl L. Gardner & Associates, Inc. The sole subsequent revision was drafted in 1995 and entitled, 2010 Grundy County Comprehensive Plan. Subdivision Regulations and a Zoning Ordinance were adopted by the Grundy County Board in 1969 and amended in 1997 to implement the goals and objectives of the previous comprehensive plans. A Planning and Zoning Department was created by Resolution adopted and approved in 1969 by the County Board.

The primary functions of the Planning and Zoning Department are building, zoning, and subdivision review. The Department also provides assistance to the Grundy County Regional Planning Commission. The Planning Commission was created by Resolution adopted and approved in 1962 by the County Board and pursuant to “An Act to provide for regional planning and for the creation, organization and powers of regional planning commissions,” approved in 1929, by the Illinois legislature. The primary responsibility of the Commission is to review preliminary subdivision plans to determine their conformity with the planning standards delineated in the Comprehensive Plan, Subdivision Regulations, and Zoning Ordinance. The Commission also reviews the planning standards on a routine basis, in an effort to determine if revisions are warranted. It also evaluates proposed amendments and variances to the planning standards. The Commission then recommends to the County Board approval or disapproval of any proposed changes.

The 1967 Comprehensive Plan states: “In a very broad sense, there is but one objective which the forthcoming Grundy County Plan should endeavor to achieve - that of assuring a modern, healthful, safe, and attractive living environment. The Plan should provide a broad framework within which decisions affecting both private and public development can be made with the knowledge that the physical and economic growth of the County have been given adequate direction.” It is from this basic premise that the more specific *Goals, Objectives, and Policies* are derived in the Land Use Plan.

### EVOLUTION OF THE LAND USE PLAN

As outlined in the *Part I – Background for Planning* section above, the rate of growth and development in Grundy County has been slowly increasing over the last several decades. The physical plan land use map contained in the 1967 Comprehensive Plan has been continuously updated and revised over the years. Historically, land extending from Morris to Minooka along the I-80 and U.S. Route 6 corridor has been zoned as either industrial or residential in the expectation of growth and economic development. A very small portion of this area has actually been developed. Over time, the primary industrial-zoned areas here have been moved to the north to encompass an extensive amount of land to include areas on both sides of I-80. At the same time, the southern border of this industrial section has been moved to the north side of the Illinois River. A generous amount of land outside of the municipalities has always been zoned residential since the Zoning



Ordinance was implemented. The amount of land zoned industrial adjacent to the municipalities has increased over the years.

To the small rural and sparsely populated county of Grundy, such land use plans represent expectations for economic prosperity that are being realized at an increasing rate in recent years. Grundy County is now experiencing a spillover effect of urban sprawl from the Chicago metropolitan area. Growth and development pressures from Will County to the east and Kendall County to the northeast have to be addressed. Channahon in Will County has annexed a 17-mile linear stretch of land along U.S. Route 6 that extends deep into Grundy County. This action, along with annexations by neighboring towns such as Morris and Minooka, has created a solid stretch of incorporated land that begins at the far northeast corner of Grundy County. This area covers an extensive amount of land along the I-80 and U.S. Route 6 corridor to a point about two-thirds the entire width of the county. The municipalities of Coal City, Carbon Hill, South Wilmington, and Gardner, among others along the eastern side Grundy County are also growing together to create a solid conglomerate of incorporated land. If these trends continue, it is very probable that the majority of the entire northern one-third and eastern one-third of Grundy County will ultimately be developed. The result will be that Grundy County's predominant rural and agricultural character will be reduced to about one-third or less of all land use.

The increasing development pressures warrant a close reevaluation of the growth patterns Grundy County hopes to achieve. The previous land use plan strongly encourages a line or corridor of sprawling low-density office/industrial parks and residential development along both sides of the I-80 and U.S. Route 6 right-of-ways comparable to the aforementioned annexation patterns. The result will be an aesthetically unappealing "planned sprawl" comparable to much of the suburban Chicago area. For the county and its towns to retain their rural character, uniqueness, imageability, and sense of place, it is necessary to effectuate a new land use plan that directs more desirable growth and development. The revised Land Use Plan map is in *Appendix 2*.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

The Land Use Plan section of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan encourages carefully measured sustainable growth and development. A generally accepted definition of sustainability is meeting the needs of today without compromising the needs of future generations. A good rule of thumb is to plan conservatively if there is any doubt about the sustainability of a development project. The Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) and the Campaign for Sensible Growth have identified the sustainable development practices below.

- Agricultural Land Preservation.
- Air Quality Protection and Improvement.
- Building Green Infrastructure: Creation/preservation of an interconnected system of parks, greenways, natural areas, and open space.
- Community Character and Historic Preservation
- Conservation Development: Incorporate development with open space and natural resources (Conservation Design).

- **Creating Livable Communities:** Build “imageable”, “likeable”, and aesthetically pleasing communities with easy access to commercial, residential, and recreational areas.
- **Energy Efficiency and Green Buildings:** Reduce overall energy usage, especially nonrenewable resources, and limit the impact of development on the environment.
- **Reusing Built Environments:** Promote infill development to enhance land use efficiency.
- **Strengthening Local Economies:** Support workforce training and local businesses; build technology infrastructure.
- **Sustainable Sites and Natural Landscapes:** Protect natural features within development and use native vegetation in landscaped areas.
- **Transit-Oriented Development:** Promote mixed-uses and higher density communities around public transit nodes.
- **Water Resource Protection.**
- **Workforce Housing:** Provide diverse housing such as multi- and single-family residences, including low-income housing, in close proximity to employment centers.

## **NEW URBANISM AND SMART GROWTH**

The Land Use Plan uses New Urbanism and Smart Growth concepts to achieve orderly growth and development. Most of the sustainable practices above are compatible or comparable to New Urbanism and Smart Growth concepts. Many features of New Urbanism and Smart Growth are synchronous. They promote spatial arrangement of the built environment similar to design practices prior to World War II. Communities implementing these techniques have neighborhood centers containing many amenities within a one-quarter to one-half mile walking distance. They promote infill as opposed to urban fringe development. Economic opportunities are increased while development is balanced with environmental protection. Higher density mixed residential, commercial, and business uses, where appropriate, are encouraged as opposed to segregated zoning. Housing options are promoted. Physical design maintains/creates a sense of community and a sense of place. The street system is built in the form of a traditional grid with sidewalks that stress connectivity and walkability. The automobile is accommodated but is not encouraged. Rather, design and policy allows for transportation choices such as transit, commuter vanpools/carpools, and bicycle paths or routes.

## **LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION INTERRELATIONSHIP**

The Land Use Plan recognizes the strong interrelationship between land use and transportation. Land use has been impacted upon significantly by construction of the interstate highway system over the past 50 years. High-speed limited access highways have rapidly increased travel demand. Larger market sheds have been created as people travel farther than ever before for employment, shopping, recreation, education, health care, and numerous other amenities. These highways have spawned inefficient automobile dependent, low-density land uses. This has contributed significantly to urban sprawl.

According to NIPC, from 1970 to 1990, urban land uses in the six-county Chicago metropolitan area (Cook, Du Page, Lake, McHenry, Will, and Kane), increased by about 33% while the population only increased by about 4%. Urban sprawl further perpetuates travel demand which pressures state

and local governments to expand roadways. The growing road network has made it increasingly difficult to fund maintenance of the highway system in addition to new construction.

The sustainability of automobile dependent land uses is questionable given the looming oil supply peak. Analysis by the U.S. Department of Energy has shown that petroleum demand will exceed supply by the year 2037. The International Energy Agency estimates that the oil production peak will occur between 2010 and 2020. Most analysts and experts agree that this peak will occur when about the halfway point is reached in extracting oil from known reserves. The oil peak will result when oil production cannot keep up with demand. Prices will then increase continually until demand decreases. Vehicles that run on other fuels such as biodiesel and ethanol from agricultural products in addition to hydrogen are potential alternatives. However, it is unclear if these options will be economically feasible to fully meet the increasing demand of transportation. Responsible and conservative long term planning must address this possibility if Grundy County is to be well prepared for the future.

Sustainable transportation also speaks to issues of health, equity, efficiency, humanity, environment and quality of life. Increasing obesity and rising expenditures for health care in the United States are directly correlated to our auto-dependent living environment. Many Americans spend up to one-third or more of their income on transportation to cover vehicle payments, insurance, fuel, and maintenance costs. Less money spent on transportation frees up finances for other expenses. Many low-income and elderly individuals cannot even afford a vehicle leaving them vulnerable to non-existent or inadequate public transit. Low-density sprawling land uses costs all of us more in terms of expenses for public services such as police and fire, in addition to funding for construction and maintenance of infrastructure, including utilities and the roadways themselves.

Dense, compact, pedestrian-oriented environments promote a vibrant community, neighborliness and public spaces for human interaction. The alternative is conventional development resulting in “privatization of space” with gated communities, income-segregated neighborhoods, and low-density lots that make it less and less necessary to interact with people. This diminishes diversity and community. Visual preference surveys have shown that “big-box” retail, regional and strip malls, and “cookie-cutter” residential subdivisions do not meet standards for “imageability” and “likeability.” Finally, transportation projects must meet standards under the Illinois State Implementation Plan in accordance with the Clean Air Act and National Environmental Protection Act. Projects that cannot demonstrate the most efficient design in terms of environmental impacts will severely limit federal funding opportunities.

The flexible funding provisions outlined in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), and the Transportation Equity Act of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century of 1998 (TEA-21) make it difficult to justify funding for traditional highway construction and road expansion due to the negative consequences noted above. Policy now encourages funding for alternatives such as mass transportation, bike routes, more efficient land uses, pedestrian walkways, and transportation demand management (TDM) techniques. Appropriate funding programs include: Surface Transportation Program (STP); National Highway System (NHS); Transportation and Community System Preservation Pilot Program (TCSP). Design for any built environment must make transportation choices available.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

The 2020 Comprehensive Plan builds upon the previous land use plans by taking the initiative to address the tremendous growth and development pressures facing Grundy County. Any plan must develop a set of guidelines in order to accomplish its purpose. The goals, objectives and policies of a land use plan are guidelines covering specific areas of consideration. They reflect values of the community and the future development that will take place. The goals address eight concerns:

- Agricultural Land;
- Environmental, Natural Resources and Open Space;
- Residential;
- Commercial and Industrial;
- Transportation;
- Public Facilities and Services;
- Historic Preservation.

Goals are a generalized illustration of values that provide direction toward an ideal form to be sought. Each of the general goals has a set of specific objectives. Objectives are more precise methods for directing public policy and action to achieve the stated goals. From these objectives, policy directives have been developed. Policies provide further detailed guidelines for decision making. Policies are to be wholly considered when evaluating public improvements, development proposals, allocation of resources, and growth patterns. The policy directives are used to implement the objectives through ordinances, regulations, intergovernmental agreements and education.

The 2020 Comprehensive Plan will be continually updated; however, the *Goals, Objectives, and Policies* are the foundation and are less subject to change. To further the goals of the Land Use Plan, it is imperative that cooperation amongst Grundy County, the municipalities, and the townships is fostered through intergovernmental agreements and/or on-going open communication.

### **AGRICULTURAL LAND GOAL**

***Goal:*** Agricultural lands shall be preserved, maintained, and protected to meet existing and future needs for food and other agricultural products.

#### **Objectives**

- To promote agriculture as the predominant element in the county's economic base.
- Recognize that highly productive prime farmland and other agricultural lands are a finite natural resource and resolve that these areas should be protected and maintained.
- Encourage the use of soil conservation practices that will reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, and increase farmland productivity.
- Ensure that, in areas where agriculture represents a significant land use, the practice of agriculture is not threatened or restricted by adjacent land owners or uses.
- To assist property owners in maintaining farmland and agricultural infrastructure by supporting preservation incentives.



## **Policies**

- Encourage owners of farmland to voluntarily place their land into Agricultural Districts pursuant to the Illinois Agricultural Areas Conservation and Protection Act to prevent intrusion by development.
- Coordinate with pertinent public and private organizations to develop a farmland preservation funding program for the purchase of conservation easements and development rights to prevent encroachment by development.
- Develop and coordinate farmland preservation and open space preservation in addition to bicycle and pedestrian pathways, to create an interconnected system of greenbelts and greenways that will, in part, serve as urban growth boundaries, preserve wildlife corridors, protect natural resources, provide a buffer between development and agriculture, and become part of the Prairie Parklands Macrosite. These concepts will be implemented through a *Greenway/Greenbelt, Farmland Preservation, and Alternate Transportation Plan*.
- Encourage zoning guidelines that first and foremost promote continued farming practices in agricultural areas and provide strict limitations on conversion to other uses.
- Promote right to farm legislation that protects traditional farming practices in agricultural areas and limits the circumstances in which they may be deemed a nuisance.
- Foster public awareness, education, and support for farmland protection.
- Coordinate with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and other entities in programs that promote soil conservation practices and water quality improvement.
- To encourage the use of filter strips along waterways to prevent silt formation.
- Encourage farmers' markets for the sale of local agricultural products.
- Coordinate with municipalities and townships to establish intergovernmental agreements to protect farmland and minimize conversion to other land uses.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL, NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE GOAL**

**Goal:** Provide adequate and plentiful open space to protect the rural character of Grundy County, preserve its natural resources, maintain an attractive living environment, and provide for the recreational needs of its population.

## Objectives

- To encourage the preservation of a sufficient quantity and variety of open space to meet the ecological, recreational, and aesthetic requirements of the county.
- To protect and encourage the use of native/natural vegetation.
- To protect and improve the quality of waterways, including groundwater, flood plains, wetlands, and the natural drainage systems of the county.
- Ensure that the development of mineral resources occurs with nominal environmental impact and with maximum benefit to the county.
- To improve air quality and reduce obnoxious noise levels.
- Promote a network of greenbelts and greenways to protect wildlife habitat/movement, flood plains, wetlands, and natural drainage systems.
- To enhance the county's open space by providing areas for trail system connections and to buffer conflicting land uses.
- To promote environmentally supportive recreational uses of lands in floodplains and areas adjacent to waterways and other natural open space systems.
- To encourage the use of creative techniques to preserve permanent open spaces.
- To encourage the dedication of open space and recreational land in subdivisions.
- To foster public awareness, education, and support of environmental and open space preservation and management.



## Policies

- Develop and coordinate open space preservation, bicycle and pedestrian pathways, and farmland preservation to create an interconnected system of greenbelts and greenways that will, in part, serve as urban growth boundaries, preserve wildlife corridors, protect natural resources, provide a buffer between development and agriculture, and become part of the Prairie Parklands Macrosite. These concepts will be implemented through a *Greenway/Greenbelt, Farmland Preservation, and Alternate Transportation Plan*.
- Develop a funding program for creation of a county forest preserve district, including a nature preserve, and identify appropriate land to be acquired that provides for a variety of natural settings and recreational activities commensurate with the needs of an expanding population.
- Promote and encourage design techniques to ensure that impervious areas in watersheds are kept below 10% to enhance groundwater regeneration, minimize runoff and maintain ecological health.



- Conservation of energy and natural resources shall be a primary consideration for all development decisions.
- Coordinate with the Grundy County Soil and Water Conservation District, and other agencies and organizations to promote protection of the Illinois River, Mazon River and Aux Sable Creek, Nettle and Waupecan watersheds through creation of a *Waterway Corridor Protection Program*.
- As part of the *Waterway Corridor Protection Program*, regulate the amount, direction, and quality of stormwater runoff in developing areas.
- Encourage wastewater management that protects public health, promotes recycling, and eliminates point discharges.
- Coordinate with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and Illinois Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Land and Water Resources, to fully evaluate environmental impacts of proposed facility planning area (FPA) boundary expansions.
- Create a wetland protection ordinance as a means to reduce water pollution, maintain storm and floodwater capacity, and provide wildlife habitat.
- Require developers to evaluate impacts on the environment including groundwater and existing wells.
- Coordinate with the Morris Community Foundation, other pertinent organizations, and interested individuals as part of a public education campaign to promote and establish open space proportional with the growing population.
- Require neighborhood parks and pedestrian walkways to be integrated into new developments and fully connected to adjacent areas as appropriate.
- Protect biodiversity by preserving, regenerating, and restoring natural areas.
- Protect scenic views through physical design and enhancement methods and through implementation of a county *Rustic Roads Program*.
- Coordinate open space planning and management with protection and maintenance of county water resources and waterway corridors.
- Establish environmental design standards in addition to builder incentives and requirements in county ordinances and development controls to dictate the amount, distribution, and type of open space necessary to minimize adverse impacts, protect natural features of the environment, and provide adequate recreational areas.
- Preserve and improve the quality of all watersheds for wildlife habitat, recreation and other uses.
- Establish intergovernmental agreements and/or continual communication with municipalities and townships to coordinate implementation of the policies.

## **RESIDENTIAL GOAL**

**Goal: Provide diverse housing to meet the needs of all citizens.**

### **Objectives**

- To encourage equitable opportunities for a variety of housing types for different age groups, family sizes, and incomes.

- Ensure orderly county and municipal development within or adjacent to existing population centers, where necessary services are most efficiently provided, thereby discouraging residential sprawl.
- To provide for the design of residential and neighborhood units that are free from environmental, public health and safety hazards, in addition to incompatible land uses.
- Encourage physical design that enhances the imageability, attractiveness, and local character of the area.
- To ensure that residential development is fully integrated with the traditional street network.

## Policies

- Pursuant to the Affordable Housing Planning and Appeal Act and its amendments administered by the Illinois Housing Development Authority, support compliance with the mandate that a minimum of 10% affordable housing is available in the county and its municipalities.
- Require that new residential development provide a variety and adequate amount of low-income and affordable housing regardless of age, gender, race, religion, ethnic background, family size, or income level.
- Require development to primarily radiate contiguously from the traditional town center using the traditional street grid or similar form in conjunction with the “transect” rural-urban categorization system to promote physical harmony, provide maximum connectivity, and reduce traffic congestion.
- Require new development to use Traditional Neighborhood Design and Conservation Design techniques as opposed to those of conventional subdivisions.
- Require design of new development that emphasizes pedestrian, bicycle, and transit uses.
- Develop model design guidelines for mixed uses in terms of neighborhood commercial centers and housing types within planned residential developments through Form-Based Zoning as opposed to rigid Euclidian-Zoning land use code standards.
- Provide for a sense of community by designing neighborhoods in the appropriate scale and density to encourage human interaction and walkability.



- Encourage residential areas that preserve and enhance natural features such as vegetation, waterways, wetlands, topography and scenic vistas through, in part, the use of clustered development and the use of wildlife corridors/buffers.
- Disallow residential development in areas that would compromise county farmland preservation objectives and policies.

- Develop residential building standards that promote quality construction and architecture using traditional and natural materials as opposed to synthetic components.
- Require new development to maximize energy efficiency and use of renewable resources through appropriate site design, home placement, and architecture.
- Require developers of residential projects to fund general infrastructure and public facilities through imposition of exactions, impact fees or other similar means that are proportional to the increased need for these amenities.
- Develop and coordinate open space preservation, bicycle and pedestrian pathways, and farmland preservation to create an interconnected system of greenbelts and greenways that will, in part, serve as urban growth boundaries, preserve wildlife corridors, protect natural resources, provide a buffer between development and agriculture, and become part of the Prairie Parklands Macrosite. These concepts will be implemented through a *Greenway/Greenbelt, Farmland Preservation, and Alternate Transportation Plan*.
- Establish intergovernmental agreements and/or continual communication with municipalities and townships in an effort to insure implementation of the policies.

## **COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL GOAL**

**Goal: To provide adequate opportunities for a variety of economic activities to serve the employment and consumer needs of county residents.**

### **Objectives**

- Encourage redevelopment of older commercial centers and reuse of existing buildings.
- Encourage the attraction, retention and expansion of a diverse cross section of industries and businesses to provide a healthy tax base, adequate supply of goods and services, and sufficient employment opportunities.
- Encourage diverse employment opportunities commensurate with the population and labor force.
- Encourage the location of commercial and industrial activities in areas that are compatible with surrounding land uses.
- Encourage commercial and industrial development within or in close proximity to existing population centers for the availability of services and to minimize transportation needs.
- Promote higher density buildings that make more efficient use of land.
- Encourage appropriate industry to locate adjacent to railroad corridors and the Illinois River and to use these modes as a preferred means of freight movement.
- Promote adequate availability of infrastructure to support the growth and development of commercial and industrial entities.

### **Policies**

- Coordinate with the Grundy County Chamber of Commerce, Grundy County Economic Development Council, and Morris Downtown Development Partnership to foster planned growth and expansion of commercial and industrial activity.

- Ensure that commercial and industrial developments are primarily located within or contiguous to urban areas as appropriate and buffered from conflicting land uses.



- Encourage development that revitalizes and expands downtown centers and preserves historic buildings and sites when possible and appropriate.
- Require design of new development that integrates pedestrian, bicycle, and transit uses.
- Encourage commercial and industrial areas that preserve and enhance natural features such as vegetation, waterways, wetlands, topography and scenic vistas through, in part, the use of clustered development and the use of wildlife corridors/buffers. Develop model design guidelines for neighborhood commercial centers within planned residential developments.
- Allow and encourage design that provides mixed uses in terms of commercial and light industrial areas that are compatible with residential areas through the use of Form-Based Zoning as opposed to rigid Euclidian-Zoning land use code standards.
- Develop model restrictions that limit highway-oriented businesses not contiguous with the traditional urban environment.
- Prevent scattered, non-agricultural related commercial and industrial uses in unincorporated areas.
- Coordinate with utility companies and other entities as appropriate to ensure sufficient adequate provisions for natural gas, electricity, water, sewer and other services to meet the needs for new and expanded development.
- Require developers/builders of commercial and industrial projects to fund general infrastructure and public facilities through imposition of exactions, impact fees or other similar means that are proportional to the increased need for these amenities.
- Establish intergovernmental agreements and/or continual communication with municipalities and townships to coordinate implementation of the policies.

## **TRANSPORTATION GOAL**

**Goal:** To provide an efficient transportation system compatible with land use.

### **Objectives**

- Promote the development of a diversified, integrated, economic, safe, equitable, and efficient transportation network responsive to the county's needs.
- To fully coordinate transportation planning with land use planning to minimize environmental impacts.

- Cooperate with federal, state, regional, and municipal agencies in the creation of a multi-modal, intermodal, and balanced transportation network, emphasizing transit, rail, monorail, and waterway systems to complement existing air and trucking modes.
- To encourage the inclusion or enhancement of adjacent multi-use trails and pathways as a part of any construction or improvement project.
- Preserve the character of rural roads and associated scenic vistas.
- To maintain and improve the environment, including air quality, in accordance with the mandate and intent of the National Environmental Protection Act, Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, reauthorization of TEA-21, and related federal legislation.
- To encourage preservation and protection of existing and potential right-of-ways for transportation systems as appropriate.

## Policies

- Coordinate land use and transportation planning together and integrate higher density development, context-sensitive roadway design and Transit-Oriented Development to provide maximum travel choices.
- Require development to primarily radiate in a contiguous fashion from the traditional town center using the traditional street grid or similar form in conjunction with the “transect” rural-urban categorization system to promote physical harmony, provide maximum connectivity, and reduce traffic congestion.
- Develop model restrictions that protect highway corridors from highway-oriented businesses outside of municipalities and/or not contiguous with the traditional urban environment.
- Work toward improving county public transit service by planning for fixed route commuter rail and/or bus service, and employer-based transportation as appropriate through the following: identifying and utilizing programs under TEA-21 and other legislation; working with the Regional Transportation Authority, Grundy County Extended Area Transit (GREAT), and other entities; performing a local commuter and transportation survey within the next five years; and through complimentary compact and clustered land use design practices.



- Educate employers about alternatives for reducing single-occupancy vehicle commuting as mandated by federal regulations to reduce emissions and reliance on fossil fuels.
- Encourage the use of infiltration systems utilizing permeable transport surfaces, trenches, ponds, and underground sumps/tanks to reduce groundwater depletion, the need for stormwater management, and heat generation.



- Implement transportation control measures (TCM), exempting agricultural related uses, as a means to reduce the demand for travel and associated traffic congestion and emissions.
- Create pedestrian pathway and bicycle lane guidelines for existing and new roadways as part of the *Greenway/Greenbelt, Farmland Preservation, and Alternate Transportation Plan*.
- Develop and coordinate bicycle and pedestrian pathways, open space preservation, and farmland preservation to create an interconnected system of greenbelts and greenways that will, in part, serve as urban growth boundaries, preserve wildlife corridors, protect natural resources, provide a buffer between development and agriculture, and become part of the Prairie Parklands Macrosite. These concepts will be implemented through a *Greenway/Greenbelt, Farmland Preservation, and Alternate Transportation Plan*.
- Explore the possibility of using public school buses as an alternate means of transit when they are not in use transporting students.
- Convert abandoned railroad corridors to trails for recreational purposes and to preserve right-of-way for future rail redevelopment if the need should arise.
- Create a *Rustic Roads Program* to preserve rural character and scenic vistas.
- Establish intergovernmental agreements and/or continual communication with municipalities and townships to coordinate implementation of the policies.

## **PUBLIC UTILITIES AND SERVICES GOAL**

**Goal:** To maintain, plan and develop public utilities in an economically feasible and environmentally sound manner.

### **Objectives**

- To encourage the coordinated planning and development of an economically viable and environmentally sound water supply, wastewater and other utility systems in a timely, orderly and efficient manner to meet the existing and future needs of the county.
- Encourage the location and development of utility structures and lines where they are most compatible with the surrounding land uses and rural character of the county.
- Discourage land uses that utilize septic systems for disposal of sanitary waste in areas where soil conditions are insufficient for waste disposal.
- Utilize a stormwater management system that incorporates the natural watershed functions to reduce the negative impacts of development on water quality.
- Reduce the amount of solid wastes deposited in landfills and explore disposal alternatives.
- Coordinate with municipalities and townships in the efficient provision of utilities and facilities.

### **Policies**

- Minimize public utility and service costs through development that is compact, integrated with and adjacent to urbanized areas.
- Ensure provisions for adequate public facilities and services are in place before approving new development.



- Prevent the establishment or extension of water, sewer, and other utility systems outside urban growth boundaries or unincorporated community boundaries.
- Coordinate with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and Illinois Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Land and Water Resources, to fully evaluate environmental impacts of proposed Facility Planning Area (FPA) boundary expansions.
- Require developers to fund public facilities and services through imposition of exactions, impact fees or other similar means that are proportional to the increased need for these amenities.



- Encourage wastewater management that protects public health, promotes recycling, and eliminates point discharges through coordination with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and delegation agreements that allow for local enforcement.
- Create a wetland protection ordinance as a means to reduce water pollution and maintain storm and floodwater capacity.
- Maintain impervious areas in watersheds below 15% to minimize runoff and maintain ecological health.
- Manage storm runoff volume by infiltrating wherever possible.
- Provide water detention, retention, and infiltration as close to its source as possible by incorporating these functions into the overall right of way of design.
- Prevent conversion of agricultural land to residential uses that do not have alternatives to septic systems.
- Discourage the acceptance of solid waste from outside of Grundy County for landfills.
- Promote solid waste recovery methods such as recycling, gasification, composting and food-waste processing for residential, commercial, and institutional refuse with a target of level of more than 50% of all solid wastes diverted from landfills.
- Ensure that the educational system, police, fire, and other services are sufficient for the expanding population.
- Encourage and provide incentives for developers to construct smaller scale schools within neighborhoods as part of residential development to encourage walkability.
- Establish intergovernmental agreements and/or continual communication with municipalities and townships to coordinate implementation of the policies.

## **HISTORICAL PRESERVATION GOAL**

**Goal: Protect and maintain historic and cultural resources to preserve the unique character and sense of place in Grundy County.**

### **Objectives**

- To enhance educational opportunities concerning the value of county architectural, archaeological, and historic resources.
- To identify and preserve historically significant structures and areas.
- To preserve and retain historic central business districts as the primary areas of commerce.
- To encourage economic development associated with historic preservation.
- To integrate county preservation efforts with other pertinent entities and organizations.



### **Policies**

- To create a *Historic Preservation Plan* that establishes goals and objectives for identifying, maintaining, and protecting historic and archaeological resources.
- Establish Grundy County as a Certified Local Government through the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.
- Encourage preservation of older structures such as buildings, bridges, and fences to retain a sense of identity, visual beauty, and architectural diversity.
- Promote reuse and reconstruction of existing buildings to retain their original appearance and character.
- Encourage new development that is compatible with historic architecture, community character, human scale, and New Urbanism concepts.
- Enhance property values by promoting the continued maintenance of buildings and creation of special incentive districts for streetscape, facade improvements and similar new construction.
- Coordinate with state and municipal governments and national, state, and local historical societies, museums, and other pertinent organizations in Grundy County to facilitate public education and preservation efforts.

# LAND USE STRATEGY

## INTRODUCTION

The Illinois Compiled Statutes, Chapter 55, states that the reasons for a plan's development are to "best promote health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, efficiency and economy". The Land Use Plan's primary concern is for the public good, both for the present and future residents of Grundy County. The Land Use Plan is a guide to be used for the management of the county's resources. It is a dynamic, comprehensive, and significant document.

The Land Use Plan is intended as a guide for government, public and private organizations, and individual citizens to encourage future investments in a manner that will improve the living environment for its residents. The Land Use Plan can be successful if these various stakeholders can agree to support the *Goals, Objectives, and Policies*.

Consistent with the premise of previous comprehensive plans, the land use planning program is composed of three major segments of work – analysis, plan update, and implementation. The analysis portion involves a complete inventory of those factors such as existing land use, population characteristics, transportation facilities and economic data that have critically influenced growth and development of the county.

The plan update segment evaluates past growth and development and other related events so that positive aspects can be strengthened and encouraged while detrimental features can be eliminated or minimized. This portion was the basis for revising and creating the series of long-term planning *Goals, Objectives, and Policies* for land use. The plan update segment also includes a revised Land Use Plan map (*Appendix 2*). This map broadly sets forth a land use form which will create a compatible relationship between various privately and publicly held lands. In addition, it seeks to achieve a balanced land use pattern that will broaden the tax base, stabilize and enhance property values, and increase the physical attractiveness of the county.

The third portion, implementation, encompasses legal devices available under Illinois Statutes, programmatic funding and support mechanisms, and continuous planning. These include: zoning, which designates the use and intensity of land development by districts; subdivision regulations that provide guidelines and standards for development; identifying and encouraging land for agricultural preservation and open space designation; creation of more detailed sub-plans such as an *Historic Preservation Plan*; *Waterway Corridor Protection Plan*; and a *Greenway/Greenbelt, Farmland Preservation, and Alternate Transportation Plan*; and intergovernmental agreements/cooperation amongst the county and its municipalities. Continuous planning includes updating of the Comprehensive Plan and the day-to-day processing of planning matters. It is expected that issues will arise in the future that were not anticipated at the time the Comprehensive Plan was written. The Planning and Zoning Department and the Planning Commission will be the primary entities to address these concerns. The Comprehensive Plan will be revised to reflect these new facts to best serve the changing needs of the county. The Comprehensive Plan should be periodically reviewed and updated on a yearly basis.

## **SLOW-GROWTH**

The previous land use plans embrace a pro-growth strategy that designated large expanses of land for development to occur. A build-out scenario reveals that, if the county were to be fully developed in accordance with those plans, an overabundance of industrial and commercial projects would be developed along most of the I-80, U.S. Route 6, Route 47, and other major transportation corridors. In addition, with the annexations by the municipalities and the amount of land allocated for residential uses, the number of homes built would exceed the current amount several times over. Such land use plans will forever change the rural and small town character of Grundy County. In turn, the area will become a sprawling suburb or an “edge city” like many of the communities along the outer ring of the Chicago metropolitan area.

The Land Use Plan map reflects the collective vision of the community to retain Grundy County’s rural heritage, character, and sense of place. The Land Use Plan makes a noticeable change from the previous plans by embracing a slow-growth strategy. This concept does not take for granted that the county must accommodate increased population projection rates. Rather, this strategy will utilize a number of growth management techniques to ensure that the location, type, and scale of development are complementary and consistent with what exists. The approach will ensure that the rate of new development and improvement of public services will be manageable for taxpayers.

The slow-growth strategy of the 2020 Land Use Plan does bring about certain techniques that will dictate more precisely how the spatial arrangement of the built environment will occur. In particular, urban growth boundaries will be developed through intergovernmental agreements between the county and the municipalities. The purpose of this technique is to insure that measured and sustainable growth and development occurs primarily in areas contiguous to the municipalities.

Farmland preservation and open space acquisition are now cornerstones of the land use strategy. One of the Land Use Plan's primary goals is the protection of prime farmland, a resource which has the greatest pressure for and the least resistance to land use conversion. The Land Use Plan also promotes the protection of farmland because conversions to other uses tend to have the greatest impact on the county's rural character and the economic stability of the agricultural community. Another primary goal is preservation of open space as it is crucial for the protection of watersheds and wildlife corridors in addition to recreational uses for the growing population.

## **LAND CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM**

The success of the slow-growth plan is heavily dependent upon the land use strategy. This means that development should be compact to preserve the natural environment and minimize land consumption. This includes protecting watersheds and topography through farmland preservation and dedication of generous amounts of open space. A land classification system establishes the framework for the Land Use Plan. This system has been devised to recognize the aforementioned trends and demands of the market and guide measured growth and development in accordance with the *Goals, Objectives, and Policies*. The system ensures that development occurs mainly within or in close proximity to *Primary Centers* where the largest array of services and facilities are available. As part of this approach, it is essential that urban growth boundaries are created through intergovernmental cooperation with each of the municipalities. The three land classification types

are: *Primary Centers; Rural Centers; and Agricultural Priority, Environmental Protection and Open Space.*

## **PRIMARY CENTERS**

Primary Centers include the incorporated municipalities in the county that have a full range of land uses to accommodate their populations. These areas include: Morris; Minooka; Channahon; Dwight; and Coal City/Diamond. Other municipalities such as Gardner, Seneca, and Mazon are considered to be approaching this category. Primary Centers have the following characteristics:

- residential population with the highest densities;
- highest potential for expanding or creating transportation alternatives;
- substantial effect on growth and development through annexations;
- full range of municipal services and utilities;
- an established downtown commercial district or potential for such; and
- moderate to diverse employment opportunities.

Primary Centers will have greenbelts which are areas of open space surrounding the municipalities that provide transition from urban to rural land uses. More importantly, greenbelts are located along the outer edges of the urban growth boundaries to direct development within and adjacent to the Primary Centers. The actual urban growth boundaries will be determined through intergovernmental agreements between the county and the municipalities. Ideally, the greenbelts will be connected to each other via additional open space such as greenways that traverse waterways and roadways. Other open space consists of state, county, and municipal parks. Greenbelts, greenways, and open space are areas within the county that have any of the following functions:

- recreational use;
- environmental preservation;
- wildlife habitat and corridors;
- urban growth boundaries;
- watershed protection;
- bicycle paths and hiking trails; and
- private hunting grounds.





## **RURAL CENTERS**

Rural Centers include the incorporated and unincorporated municipalities and urbanized areas in the county that have minimal to moderate range of land uses to accommodate their populations. These areas include: Verona; Kinsman; South Wilmington; and Braceville. Rural Centers have the following characteristics:

- residential population with lower densities as compared to Primary Centers;
- moderate potential for expanding or creating transportation alternatives;
- limited effect on growth and development through annexations;
- moderate to full range of municipal services and utilities;
- a small established or limited downtown commercial district; and
- limited employment opportunities.

As with Primary Centers, Rural Centers will have agreed upon greenbelts to serve as urban growth boundaries so that development is directed contiguously and efficiently.

## **AGRICULTURAL PRIORITY, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND OPEN SPACE**

Agricultural areas predominantly encompass most of the lower two-thirds of the county. About one-eighth of the county located in the upper northwest corner is also included. Family operated farming has been the primary land use in the agricultural areas for more than 100 years. Row crops are the primary agricultural activity. Agricultural Priority, Environmental Protection and Open Space areas have the following characteristics:

- farming is and will continue to be the predominant land use activity;
- rich black and brown loam soil;
- planning activities will focus on farmland, environmental protection and open space preservation;
- they will be devoid of large-scale non-agricultural economic development;
- any conversion from farmland to other uses will be for open space preservation; protection of natural resources; and expansion of urban growth boundaries pursuant to intergovernmental agreements;
- highway or roadside-oriented businesses not within or contiguous to Primary Centers or Rural Centers will generally not be allowed.



The Land Use Plan designates categories of land uses up to at least the year 2020. The Land Use Plan officially applies only to the unincorporated portion of the county (official planning area), which represents [INSERT]% of the total. The slow-growth strategy continues certain aspects of the previous plans by taking into account the vast amount of fertile soils for farming and the importance of agriculture to the local economy. See *Appendix 1* for a full definition of prime farmland. In addition, the Land Use Plan will guide development into compacted or clustered areas contiguous to the municipalities as in the past. In some respects the Land Use Plan will continue the tradition of flexibility to accommodate unforeseen situations.

## CONSERVATION DESIGN

The Land Use Plan strongly recommends that standards be developed to provide guidance in the use of Conservation Design techniques. Conservation Design facilitates development while maintaining the most valuable natural landscape features and ecological functions of the site. Conservation Design includes a collection of site design principles and practices that can be combined to create environmentally sound development. The main principles of Conservation Design are:

- Flexibility in site design and lot size - increases property values; preserves natural resources and features; produces broader range of marketable housing.
- Protection and management of natural areas - reduces flooding; meets increasing demand for public open space; reduces soil erosion; conserves biodiversity.
- Reduction of impervious surface areas - reduces demand for stormwater runoff management; reduces municipal maintenance costs; improves water quality and quantity.
- Sustainable stormwater management - Areas with this element are more marketable because they provide aesthetic features such as rain gardens, wet detention basins, retention ponds that could be restocked with fish, and natural drainage areas that attract wildlife.

## OTHER METHODOLOGY

The Land Use Plan is based, in part, on the findings of the background studies, analysis of existing land use, and meetings with municipal officials. This included evaluation of data in the incorporated sections of the county and review of municipal land use plans. Grundy County is now on the verge of tremendous growth and development pressures from the Chicago metropolitan region. Such circumstances often cause local governments to fall into a vicious cycle of seeking property tax revenue through continued land development and population growth. Consequently, local governments often cause sprawl on the urban fringes with short-sighted land use plans by annexing land along major transportation corridors for highway-oriented commercial uses. In addition, they often compete to annex and develop inexpensive land at low densities to minimize public service costs. The unique sense of place and rural heritage of Grundy County will likely be changed forever if urban sprawl rapidly envelops the area. County and municipal services could be overwhelmed unless a proactive planning approach using urban growth boundaries is taken.

*Table 46*, Distribution of Planned Land Use, enumerates by acreage and percentage the planned allocation of land uses as illustrated on the Land Use Plan, and comparisons with the plan adopted in 1967.



**TABLE 46 - Distribution of Planned Land Use in Grundy County**

Land Use	1967 Plan		2010 Plan		2020 Plan	
	Acreage	%	Acreage	%	Acreage	%
Residential	19,000	7.0	14,240	5.4	[INSERT]	
Business & Commercial	100	0.1	10	0.1	[INSERT]	
Industrial	17,000	6.3	24,500	9.2	[INSERT]	
Agriculture & Vacant	181,200	67.2	176,080	66.2	[INSERT]	
Open Space	39,300	14.6	37,840	14.2	[INSERT]	
Road R.O.W.	12,300	4.6	12,300	4.6	[INSERT]	
Railroad R.O.W.	750	0.3	750	0.3	[INSERT]	
<b>Total</b>	<b>269,650</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>265,810</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>[INSERT]</b>	

The Land Use Plan recognizes the four major land uses in the unincorporated portions of the county: agriculture, open space, residential, and industrial. For this reason, a large portion of the planning area is devoted to these uses. A major focus of the Land Use Plan is to insure that the municipalities retain their sense of place, character, and imageability. The physical design or spatial arrangement of the built and natural environment has a substantial influence on the attractiveness of an area. Kevin Lynch, a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century urban planner, found through visual preference surveys that people generally describe the quality of urban areas within the framework of the following physical concepts (Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1960):

- landmarks (distinctive places such as a town hall or a steep hill);
- nodes (points of convergence, often paths);
- edges (boundaries);
- districts (medium to large areas);
- paths (thoroughfares along which people move).

The Land Use Plan acknowledges that for Grundy County's municipalities to remain unique and physically attractive they must maintain strong imageability of these concepts. For example, Morris has an attractive and welcoming downtown district with historical landmarks such as the courthouse, post office buildings, Gebhard Brewery and Coleman Hardware Building. Minooka has the Mule Barn at the Zellinger Farm. Channahon has the Gatekeeper's House and lock on the I & M Canal. The I&M Canal, bicycle path and Illinois River are imageable paths that pass through the community. All of these and other elements together provide a strong sense of place that is crucial to the distinctive character of Morris. For Morris and the other municipalities, it is equally important that they retain their edges or geographic borders so that they can be distinguished from each other. While annexations have greatly compromised this concept, developed portions of the municipalities can still be kept visibly separate.

The annexations by the villages of Channahon, Minooka, Morris, and others have significantly reduced the ability of the county to control land use in these areas. The primary tools available to prevent the municipalities from growing together are as follows: to establish close intergovernmental working relationships and agreements for urban growth boundaries; encourage landowners to dedicate their land as Agricultural Districts for initial ten-year periods with eight year renewals; and to create a funding source to match federal and state program financial initiatives for farmland and

open space preservation. Success of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan will rely on the ability of the county to develop a progressive implementation policy.

The Land Use Plan is to be adopted by the County Board, as the elected representative body of the county. County Board adoption constitutes approval and acceptance of the Land Use Plan and its concepts for the development of the county.

## **2020 LAND USE**

### **AGRICULTURAL LAND USE**

The majority of land in unincorporated Grundy County falls into the agricultural and vacant land use category, and although the area allocated to agricultural land use has been reduced by approximately [INSERT] square miles ([INSERT] acres) as compared to the 1967 plan, it still represents [INSERT]% of the total planning area. Lands within these areas are generally zoned agricultural although there may be some existing inconsistencies.

"Agriculture" represents large, contiguous areas of farmland containing mostly prime soils that are crucial for abundant crop production. See *Appendix I* for an expanded definition of farmland from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service. These soil types include: Reddick Silty Clay Loam; Selma Loam; and Drummer Silty Clay Loam, among others. About 75% of agricultural land in the county is used for crops. The vast majority of these crops are corn and soybeans while much smaller acreage is allocated for hay, grass silage and wheat. Farm operations tend to be large in size, utilizing modern technology.

Non-farm land uses are increasingly located in areas designated as "Agriculture" on the Land Use Plan map. Areas designated as "Agriculture" have top priority for protection. Any non-farm development may be incompatible with agricultural operations because of the intensity of farming practices. Non-farm development in this category is discouraged.

Agriculture is a key element in the county's economic base. Furthermore, prime soils and other agricultural lands constitute a finite natural resource which should be protected and maintained. The formation of designated Agricultural Districts is encouraged. Morris continues to be a primary shipping point for grain. In addition, a joint effort by the business community, local farmers, and the Grundy County Economic Development Council are working to establish a corn-based ethanol plant about six miles east of the county seat.

Increasing rural non-agricultural residential uses slowly erodes agricultural character, displaces farming, and increases conflict between incompatible uses. In addition, large residential estates and hobby farms compete with commercial farmers over the land base. Agricultural areas not suitable for crops such as pasture and woodlands can be beneficial for non-planting farming uses and natural habitat. Farmland and open space are also more desirable as they tend to bring in more in property tax revenue than they demand in services. Therefore, the minimum lot size for land zoned as agricultural will be increased substantially to fully discourage property sales that result in conversion

of farmland to residential usage.

Land Use Plan map designation of these land use categories does not preclude the ability of an individual to request rezoning. The Grundy County Zoning Ordinance should be referenced for the unincorporated portions of the county to determine allowable uses and rezoning requirements. The county has no jurisdiction in incorporated areas, as municipal plans and zoning ordinances govern in those locations. The county encourages intergovernmental agreements and continued cooperation on land use issues.



## **PUBLIC AND SEM-PUBLIC RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE LAND USE**

The character of Grundy County is reflected, to a notable degree, in the quality of its community facilities - its schools, parks, libraries, hospitals, and governmental services. This is because they are among the foremost factors in a citizen's mind when giving thought to their community. Beyond the consideration of civic pride, a high standard of design and efficiency in the development of adequate community facilities has other advantages. In a competitive situation, for instance, those areas in Grundy County vying for desirable new developments and capital investments that have attractive and properly functioning community facilities will have a marked advantage. The Land Use Plan recognizes that the majority of these facilities will be located in the municipalities.

The Land Use Plan for Grundy County recognizes the compelling urgency of providing adequate space for major public and private recreation areas. During the next decade, the inhabitants of Grundy County will have an opportunity to determine the desirability of the county as a place of residence for generations to come. The characteristic American assumption has always been that there will be plenty of green space "out beyond." However, it is essential that recreation lands be nearby where they can effectively serve local populations. It is important to recognize that the more rapid the growth of the county, the more urgent is the need for fast action to provide and preserve public open spaces.

The Land Use Plan recommends that Grundy County obtain funding and coordinate with other public and private organizations as necessary to establish a forest preserve system, including a nature preserve. Promotion of this concept is critical to ensure passage of a referendum for funding in order to obtain matching financial support from available programs. A public outreach and education program can demonstrate the many benefits of having public recreational areas. In 2003, voters failed to pass a referendum for the creation of a Morris Park District that would have encompassed a

northeastern portion of the county. The failure of similar referendums in the future will have significant consequences in terms of quality of life, environmental preservation, and protection of wildlife in the county. A forest preserve system will be part of a *Greenway/Greenbelt, Farmland Preservation, and Alternate Transportation Plan*. This sub-plan will identify significant watersheds and other natural features for preservation in conjunction with the greenbelts that will be created along the outer edges of the urban growth boundaries. The vision is to create an interconnected series of county, state and municipal parks, in addition to greenbelts and linear greenways that will primarily serve to protect natural resources and provide corridors for wildlife. These areas will also provide an array of recreational uses including pathways for pedestrians and bicyclists. The sub-plan will also promote development of a commercial recreation/tourism area along the Illinois River, especially in those areas where extraction operations have been completed and reclaimed.

The Land Use Plan map shows the approximate locations of lands to be reserved as open space. The provision for public open space was carefully related to the existing land use pattern, the Land Use Plan, and the thoroughfare plan. Some of the areas designated as public or semi-public uses that are already in operation include: the two state parks (William G. Stratton and Gebhard Woods); the Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area; Heidecke State Fish and Wildlife Area and Lake; the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor; Dresden Island Lock and Dam; Dresden Nuclear Power Station; and the various private hunting and swimming clubs. A significant portion of the public open space proposed by the Land Use Plan will be recreational and tourism areas which can serve not only the citizens of Grundy County but the surrounding region as well. According to population projections, by 2020 the northeastern Illinois area population will increase by 1,700,000 persons bringing the total to approximately 9,000,000. In order to provide adequate recreational facilities in this region, a tremendous increase in the amount of park camp sites, conservation areas, picnic areas, hiking paths, water trails and nature centers will be needed.

Acquisition priorities for open space should be based not only on availability of lands for public use at a reasonable cost, but also on the suitability of the land for development proposed, i.e., location and recreational value. Lakes, creeks, wooded lands, and areas having interesting topography have been included where possible. Historical sites and structures are the county's connection with its past and should be preserved whenever possible. This can be done either in conjunction with the larger state park sites established for recreational purposes or in small county owned parks.

Public recreational open space opportunities within the county are numerous. Those areas having the highest priority for acquisition should be the flood plains along the Illinois River, Mazon River, major creeks, and the I&M Canal. Greenbelt areas surrounding urban growth boundaries established through intergovernmental agreements also have priority.

It is important that the Mazon River, Aux Sable, Nettle, and Waupecan Creek watersheds are preserved for their environmental benefits, aquatic and wildlife protection, and for recreational use. In particular, the Mazon River is known the world over as an excellent fossil bed; geological formations are exposed in many places along its banks. It is one of the few streams left in northern Illinois that is relatively unpolluted and could be one of the finest fishing streams if siltation is reduced.

The large open space area proposed by the Land Use Plan extends along a significant portion of the south side of the Illinois River. Scenic vistas along the roads in this area will be preserved through a *Rustic Roads Program*. A significant feature would be a series of large man-made lakes that would be created after all extraction processes have been completed. These would be located on the south side of the river just west of State Route 47. Ideally, most of the area should be part of a large publicly owned park, but some of it could be developed for commercial recreation, featuring marinas, resorts and convention facilities. These areas would also tie into the aforementioned greenways and greenbelts.

## **RESIDENTIAL LAND USE**

Residential areas in the Land Use Plan will be designed to provide and protect the quality of life for all residents of the county. A quality environment is one that is free from public health hazards such as impure air, water, and/or inadequate sewage disposal. To this end, full utilities and services will be provided for all residential areas. This includes public water main and sewer systems. Overall, the choice of appropriate service facilities will depend on the characteristics of the individual site and the type of development under consideration. Most of the agricultural areas in the county presently have no reasonable expectation of public water main and sewer systems. In such areas, individual well and septic systems may be considered along with innovative waste-handling approaches. Such alternatives should be designed for easy tie-in to municipal water main and sewer systems, if they become available.

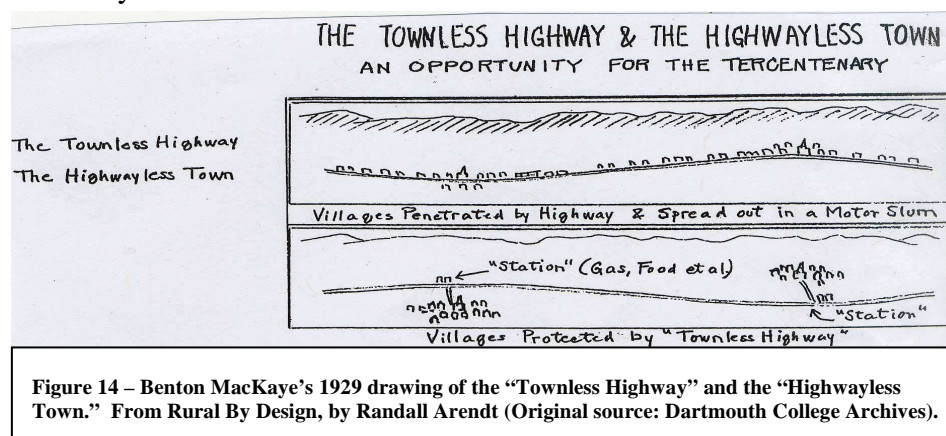
The Land Use Plan recognizes and proposes the idea that the majority of new residential development will occur within the existing municipal centers as they expand toward their established urban growth boundaries. Such development will allow for the most convenient and economic provision of services. The Land Use Plan also encourages the in-filling of existing vacant parcels and lots in municipalities and in existing subdivisions in unincorporated areas. Development on existing parcels is considered preferable to any changes in zoning which create new nodes of development or expand the boundaries of existing subdivided areas. A build-out scenario of the previous land use plans would show that the amount of land zoned as residential was excessive in relation to the small town and rural character of the county. Therefore, residential zoned areas around the peripheries of the municipalities will be reduced in accordance with urban growth boundaries that will be established.

The Land Use Plan encourages new residential development to be consistent with the existing local character and density. Proposed new developments should be evaluated for compatibility with architectural design, street layout, lot size, setback requirements, and sight lines. It is crucial that the traditional street grid be continued. The soils for any proposed development site must be evaluated for conformance with the Health Ordinances of the county. Techniques including Planned Unit Developments, Traditional Neighborhood Design, and Conservation Design are encouraged to help in defining local character, while allowing for compatible variations to occur.

The Land Use Plan encourages the establishment of residential and neighborhood units that are also affordable to all of the county's population and work force. Innovative techniques to encourage the development of high-quality, affordable housing options are recommended.

## BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL LAND USE

One major cause of urban sprawl is short-sited zoning that seeks to maximize public revenues through highway-oriented business and commercial uses (*Figure 14*). Business and commercial corridors should be physically separate from highways. Benton MacKaye, early 20<sup>th</sup> century planner, stated the following about highway-oriented commercial development: “This is not the architecture of the well-ordered town; it is the architecture of the slum: not the slum of poverty but the slum of commerce.” Such development is associated with high accident rates with vehicles entering and exiting high-speed traffic. Highway-oriented development is discriminatory to those without access to a car. Highway-oriented businesses siphon economic activity from CBD’s and other comparable urban districts. Placement of commercial activities should be promoted in CBD’s and developed areas to encourage customers of these entities to patronize other businesses nearby. Chain motels and restaurants at highway intersections and exits diminish community character and sense of place. Such development is aesthetically unattractive and contributes to a sense of “sameness” or “anywhere USA.”



With the expansion of the urban characteristics of the county, mixed use districts will need to be enhanced and created to serve the people's needs. One of the objectives of the Land Use Plan is to encourage the expansion of the existing CBD’s within the incorporated places in the county so they may continue to serve as the prime business centers. This will require measured expansion, both in size and range of shopping facilities. Planning and transportation design techniques will have to be employed in order to develop shopper appeal and accessibility options. The Land Use Plan encourages the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts and the creation of Enterprise Zones for business and commercial land use. TIF’s provide incentives to encourage business to locate or expand in an area without tapping into general funds or raising taxes for infrastructure. The tax base is expanded through the growth in property tax revenues or the tax increment. Enterprise Zones are geographical areas where businesses can obtain savings against their Illinois income tax, in addition to other incentives to encourage investments.

In addition to the traditional business districts of the municipalities, neighborhood shopping, designed to serve the day-to-day needs of the residential areas, will be required throughout the planning area. These mixed use business areas will be smaller scale locations comparable to CBD’s. Their major function would be the sale of convenience goods and personal services to residents in the immediate vicinity. As with the CBD’s, these areas will also allow compatible residential units



and offices to be integrated within the same buildings or located in close proximity to them. The design will increase density through multi-level structures which will also maximize opportunities for transportation cost savings. This allows the potential for the majority of residents in a community or development to patronize businesses and/or work at a location within about one-half mile of their residences. The mixed use areas will also often be strategically located to minimize reliance on the automobile and increase potential for Transit-Oriented Development.

The unincorporated commercial areas designated on the Land Use Plan map provide for minimal highway-oriented automobile and truck servicing facilities. In addition, the intent of these and other business and commercial areas is to minimize their scale or size and to prevent highway-oriented shopping and strip malls.

## **INDUSTRIAL LAND USE**

The attraction of desirable industrial development within Grundy County is a fundamental objective of the Land Use Plan. Additional industrial expansion is necessary to promote the economic growth of the county and a simultaneous broadening of the tax base to provide better municipal and county facilities and services. Employment opportunities for Grundy County residents also would be increased. To carry out this objective, the Land Use Plan designates approximately **[INSERT]** acres, or **[INSERT]**% of the total planning area, for industrial purposes. Industrial land uses should strive to maintain and improve air quality in accordance with the provisions of the National Environmental Protection Act and Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, among other legislation. The Land Use Plan encourages the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and the creation of Enterprise Zones for industry.

Backed by a well defined zoning ordinance designating the types of manufacturing uses allowed and requiring strict adherence to performance standards, the county can acquire advantageous manufacturing operations. Unlike the old prohibitive zoning concepts which barred certain kinds of industrial activity from some industrial zones, performance standards lend themselves to a permissive type of zoning. In effect, by utilizing performance standards, almost any industry can be located in a given area if its performance conforms to certain criteria governing tolerable levels of smoke, dust, noise, glare, odor, vibration, and other nuisances. The specific kind of industrial activity is not as important today as the degree to which the above factors are brought under control through technological and planning measures. This approach will make it possible to locate sizeable non-nuisance manufacturing districts in proximity to agricultural and residential districts. Such manufacturing districts can also be employed as transitional zones to insulate “heavier” industry from other uses in the general vicinity.

Performance standards include appropriate alternatives for buffers between levels of industrial classifications and other land uses. A general guideline for buffers is that if a fence or wall appears to be the likely option for separating different land uses then they are probably located too close to each other and/or the physical design is poor. Preferable buffers include roads, open space, and landscaping that does not reduce connectivity in terms of walkability and transportation options.

The requirements for industrial locations vary with the type of industry, but generally include the following factors:



- Fast and convenient access to good transportation facilities - not only by rail and highway, but air and water as well.
- Reasonable location with respect to labor supply and raw material markets.
- An adequate amount of suitable land, free from foundation and drainage problems, with a sufficient reserve for future growth.
- An adequate and reliable supply of utilities - water, waste disposal, power, and fuel.
- Protection from encroachment of residential or other land uses.
- Location so as to minimize obnoxious external effects on neighboring non-industrial land uses.

The previous land use plan designates three major industrial areas, the largest of these being a proposed industrial corridor that extends from just inside the eastern boundary of the county, from Ridge Road near Minooka, westward to the city of Morris. The corridor is bordered by I-80 on the north, has the Chessie System/CSX Railroad as its central spine, and has the Illinois River as its southern boundary. The 2020 Comprehensive Plan reevaluates this particular industrial corridor and concludes that full build-out would be out of scale with the rural character and slow-growth plan of the county. The result would be the continuation of urban sprawl from the Chicago metropolitan area as it attempts to move in a southwesterly direction primarily from Will County.

The agreed upon urban growth boundaries will result in reclassification of much of this industrial zoned land back to agricultural, which historically has been its actual use. In addition, areas along the exterior of the growth boundaries will be high priorities for acquisition of open space for greenbelts to reinforce those borders and to provide a transition from urban to rural land uses. Also, in the spirit of keeping highways and development primarily separate, and in support of the *Rustic Roads Program*, land outside urban growth boundaries and adjacent to I-80 and U.S. Route 6 will generally not be classified for land uses other than agricultural and open space.

The smaller-scale industrial areas will be realigned into portions contiguous to the municipalities. From a transportation standpoint, these industrial areas are ideally located. They are served directly by two railroads (the Elgin, Joliet, and Eastern and the Chessie System/CSX), the Illinois River, and are in close proximity to State Route 47, I-80 and I-55. There are two existing interchanges with I-80, one at Route 47 and one at Ridge Road. The Land Use Plan acknowledges that an additional interchange will be built at Brisbin Road.

The EJ&E Railroad crosses the Illinois River about one mile east of the Dresden Locks and could serve industrial plants on both sides of the river. This line makes direct connections with nearly every major railroad serving the Midwest. The Illinois River provides a direct all-water connection between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi Waterway which in turn opens the area to the St Lawrence Seaway and the Gulf ports. I-80 and I-55 connect with the Illinois and Indiana tollways. All are high speed expressways leading to the entire Chicago metropolitan area, including the Chicago Loop, O'Hare International Airport and Midway Airport. They would also facilitate travel to and from the airport proposed for Peotone in Will County.

Ample groundwater is currently available in the area and the Illinois River is a significant source of water for industrial uses. However, it should be recognized that these resources are finite. Therefore, physical plans for new industrial facilities need to be scrutinized carefully to ensure that

growth and development is well balanced with environmental protection. In addition to water, other natural resources located either within the corridor or in close proximity include limestone, sand, gravel, clay, and silica.

The Dresden Nuclear Power Station, owned by Commonwealth Edison Company, and the Collins Power Station owned by Midwest Generation, are both located on the south side of the Illinois River in the eastern portion of the county. In addition to the availability of abundant electrical power, there are 19 pipelines in the county. This includes the Natural Gas Pipeline Company of America which has a 30-inch pipeline. The Herscher Gas Storage Dome of the Peoples Gas, Light & Coke Company is nearby and connected to the area by a 36-inch pipeline. All gas service in the area is handled by one distributor, the Northern Illinois Gas Company.

The second largest industrial area designated on the previous land use plan is located north of I-80, south of Minooka Road, east of Route 47, and includes the Morris Municipal Airport. It recommends the development of a special area that encompasses and expands the present airport to provide the county with a unique airport business park and corporate office and distribution facility. The previous land use plan proposes that this area plus the industrial area south of I-80 be served by a new interchange at Brisbin Road. This new interchange will serve the needs of the area. However, the 2020 Comprehensive Plan realizes the consequences of air transport induced sprawl. Such designs create inefficient and congested automobile dependent land uses that cause high concentrations of air pollution. Aircraft emissions are highest during takeoff and landing and higher overall per passenger mile compared to other modes. The impact of air transport on global warming is projected to increase substantially due to the perceived need to meet air transport demand. Therefore, the Land Use Plan now only encourages those businesses to locate adjacent to the airport where this mode of transport is integral to their operations.

The third primary industrial area promoted by the previous land use plan is located at the western edge of the county along both sides of the Illinois River. Some of the land on the south side of the river is presently being utilized, while the majority of the land which is located one-half mile north of DuPont Road, west of Gonnarn Road and north of Shabbona Road between Gonnarn Road and Buffalo Road is undeveloped. The area designated on the north side of the river is located south of U.S. Route 6 and extends one mile east of the county line. As part of the 2020 Land Use Plan, the industrial categorization of these areas will be reevaluated in coordination with the proposed urban growth boundary with Seneca. Changes will be made to direct future industrial development contiguous to that municipality and the Illinois River in a more compact manner. The Seneca Regional Port District promotes industrial development in this area. This port district encompasses the Village of Seneca, section 36 in Brookfield Township in LaSalle County, and one section of land in Erienna Township.

In addition to these larger industrial areas, the previous land use plan also proposes smaller industrial concentrations adjacent to the communities of Coal City, Diamond, Gardner, Dwight and Mazon. It is projected that all of the communities will have some industrial development. As part of the 2020 Land Use Plan, these industrial areas will also be reevaluated and reduced to a smaller scale in conjunction with their respective urban growth boundaries.

## THE THOROUGHFARE PLAN

The Land Use Plan is based significantly on the thoroughfare plan. The objective of the thoroughfare plan is to institute an efficient system of primary transportation corridors classified by function. These corridors facilitate the movement of people and goods between the various economic and social loci within the planning area. They also tie into the surrounding regional network, increase the total network's capacity, and improve traffic flow. The development and improvement of the thoroughfare system illustrated on the Land Use Plan has been coordinated with county, state, and federal agencies concerned with transportation planning.

Four classifications of thoroughfares comprise the transportation network of the Grundy County thoroughfare plan: Railroads, Interstate Highways, Major Arterials, and Collector Roads. Minor streets will eventually be built within the proposed residential, business and industrial areas, and are not indicated on the Land Use Plan. However, their alignment is still of concern and will require careful plan review at the time of development to ensure they are fully connected to the street network. Due to safety concerns, the previous land use and thoroughfare plans encouraged limited vehicle access minor streets in new developments. Planning methods now realize the consequences of a disconnected street network. Limited access roads generate traffic congestion and increase vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by directing the majority of vehicles to arterials and limited access highways. A disconnected street network isolates communities and tends to diminish the sense of community and vibrancy inherent with Traditional Neighborhood Design. Traffic calming techniques such as narrower streets, brick pavers, and sidewalks extending into intersections are just as effective in creating safe streets.

Federal transportation policy focused predominantly on construction of the interstate highway system and regional expressways during the period of the mid-late 1950's into the 1990's. The bulk of the system has been built. There has been a gradual realization in policy over the past 40 years that we cannot build ourselves out of congestion. In addition, it is increasingly difficult to provide funding for maintenance of the highway system.

Past government subsidies and promotion of the interstate highway system, trucking industry, and private automobile transportation have deferred the true costs of vehicular dependent roadways. Transportation goals overall should attempt to impose the full social costs of the automobile on its users. These negative externalities or unintended damages, as listed below, are not reflected in the costs of owning and operating a vehicle.

- Oil consumption in the U.S., as much as two-thirds of the total, is attributed to transportation dependent upon finite fossil fuel sources.
- About one-third of greenhouse gases created in the U.S. are from the use of fossil fuels by transportation.
- Inefficient land uses and depletion of wildlife habitats.
- Traffic congestion and the related economic losses.
- About 33% - 80% of urban air pollution is caused by motor vehicles according to the U.S. (Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics)
- Dependence on oil has an effect on foreign policy and the costs for the military to protect those interests.

➤ Noise.

The flexible funding provisions outlined in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, and the Transportation Equity Act of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century of 1998, have made it increasingly difficult to justify funding for traditional highway construction due to the aforementioned negative consequences. Policy now encourages funding through various programs for alternatives such as mass transportation, bike routes, more efficient land uses, pedestrian walkways, and other transportation control measures (TCM), including TDM techniques. These techniques include: fuel tax increases; VMT taxes; emissions taxes; and a more extensive toll system, including peak-period or congestion pricing, for all expressway use by single occupant vehicles. However, coordination and/or assistance from federal, state, and other local governments may be necessary for implementation. Funding generated from these techniques could be used for the construction of high occupancy vehicle/express bus lanes and to help provide the exorbitant funding necessary to maintain the transportation system. The Land Use Plan also encourages the use of alternatives that offer commuters choices such as carpools, vanpools, park and ride, and teleworking. These concepts can be promoted by government and used by employers to reduce traffic congestion during peak periods.

## **RAILROADS**

Railroads were a significant factor in the initial settlement and development patterns of Grundy County. Due to government promotion of an extensive highway system, the percentage of freight and passengers transported by railroads declined throughout a significant portion of the post World War II period. Consequently, track mileage has been reduced considerably. Despite this, the railroads have adjusted freight operations by focusing on intermodal operations using cargo containers that can easily be transferred between rail cars, trucks, and vessels. The Land Use Plan recognizes the efficiency of the rail network in terms of fuel usage, air emissions, and impact on land uses as opposed to other transport modes. Railroads are a key component to sustainable growth and development. Grundy County is fortunate to be serviced by four rail corridors.

Just as limited access highway corridors have served to generate traffic congestion, the reduction of railroad track mileage throughout the U.S. has contributed to rail congestion. Despite this, rail transport in Grundy County is vastly underutilized. The predominant use of the railroads is for through traffic that does not service industry in the area. Previously, the rail lines in the county had daily passenger service and more extensive point-to-point freight service to the local area. The Land Use Plan seeks to increase industrial uses that can be directly served by sidings and spur tracks along these rail corridors. In addition, the Land Use Plan seeks expansion of the Metra Rock Island commuter rail service west of Joliet as outlined on the list of transportation projects proposed by the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS).

The Illinois Commuter Rail Feasibility report from August 2003 documented the feasibility and projected costs for passenger train service through Grundy County between Joliet and LaSalle/Peru. The Land Use Plan promotes the eventual implementation of this or comparable commuter rail with stops in Minooka, Morris, and other strategic locations that connect to fixed bus routes. Bus service will connect the Primary Centers and Rural Centers with each other, including their business districts and residential areas, and with major employers within these and outlying locations. Feasibility of

such an interconnected transit system may not be readily apparent in the short term. However, it is important that growth and development patterns occur in accordance with the Land Use Plan to ensure that such a system can be implemented successfully over time as necessary. Therefore, sustainability is increased by providing transportation alternatives to county residents.

Perhaps the majority of residents will continue to use the automobile as their primary mode of transportation. Research has shown increasing consumer willingness to pay rising vehicle maintenance and operating costs. Reference is made to *Part 1 – Background for Planning* which documents the consequences to Grundy County residents of an auto dependent environment. Research has shown that people will use transit if service is frequent, convenient and reliable. The Land Use Plan recommends a local commuter and transportation survey within the next five years to determine residential travel patterns and confirm demand for particular transit routes. This survey would be a questionnaire that would be mailed to a representative sample of county residents.

Establishment of commuter rail stations presents a tremendous opportunity to create a multimodal and intermodal transportation system that includes Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). TOD can be defined as higher density, mixed land uses located in or around transit facilities. The vast majority of county residents are not within walking distance to retail, commercial, and business establishments as is typical of many communities. The benefits of TOD in Grundy County would include compact development, new retail opportunities, reduced dependence on the automobile, and the creation of a vibrant pedestrian oriented community. Connecting bus service coordinated with commuter rail schedules provide further transportation options to residents. Grundy County and its municipalities have a tremendous opportunity to create TOD with the extensive growth and development impacting the area. Other potential alternatives for intermodal transportation include passenger helicopters and monorail.



Amtrak currently provides daily passenger rail service between Chicago and St. Louis that transverses Grundy County with stops in Joliet and Dwight. Substantial upgrades have been made to the right-of-way over the past several years that will enable high-speed service in the near future. This route is part of the Midwest High-Speed Rail Corridor that will eventually provide upgraded rail passenger service between the hub city of Chicago and the following cities: St. Louis, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Milwaukee, Detroit, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, and Cleveland. The Midwest High Speed Rail Association envisions several trains a day over each route which, along with the increased speeds, will enable rail service to successfully compete with the airlines.

As high-speed rail service is established in the Midwest, it is crucial that Grundy County create connections to this system. Other long-term capital improvement projects envisioned by CATS provide further linkages between Metra and Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) rail. This will enable further transit connections to each of the major airports in the Chicago metropolitan area.

## **INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS**

Interstate highways are those routes currently designated as part of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. They are designed to accommodate large volumes of through traffic at relatively high speeds. Projects included in this category are usually constructed on a new or largely expanded right-of-way and have such features as full access control, median strips, and grade separation at railroad crossings. Right-of-way widths vary from a minimum of 200 feet through built-up areas to well over 300 feet in outlying areas. Two interstate highways are designated on the thoroughfare plan – I-80, which passes through the northern third of the county and I-55, which passes through the southeast corner of the county.

The construction of I-80 and I-55 in the 1960s alleviated a substantial portion of traffic on U.S. Route 6 other roads in Grundy County. Increased transportation demand, in addition to growth and development in the area and lack of transportation alternatives, has resulted in rising traffic congestion. This includes north-south traffic on State Route 47 and other parallel roads which connect to the interstate highways.

## **COLLECTOR HIGHWAYS**

This category of roadways primarily serves traffic generated from residential neighborhoods, mixed use business districts, and small industrial areas. This classification also consists of those short routes or spurs which provide service to small communities. It also includes other traffic generators geographically situated in such a way that they are not already served by a higher classification of road. Collectors serve both urban and rural areas. In both situations, their primary function is to act as feeders to and from the major traffic arteries and to provide an integrated system of roadways.



## **MAJOR ARTERIALS**

Major arterials are traffic arteries that embody, in part, the functional and developmental characteristics of interstate highways while directly accommodating traffic having an origin and destination both within the county and the surrounding region and providing secondary service to abutting property. They are, therefore, designed to provide continuity within the county, to afford direct-service traffic routes between neighboring communities, and to serve as feeders to interstate highways. Intersections at grade with other major and collector highways should be controlled by traffic signal lights and channelized to improve turning movements. The Land Use Plan promotes the concept that, if any additional lanes are constructed, they should be dedicated specifically for transit and/or car-pools. Six major arterials are designated on the thoroughfare plan -four east-west routes (U.S. Route 6, Lorenzo Road, State 113, and State 17), and two north-south routes (Ridge Road, located just west of the Village of Minooka and extending between I-80 and U.S.6 and State 47).

## **GENERAL IMPROVEMENTS**

According to the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), numerous improvements are planned for the roads under its jurisdiction in Grundy County, both in the immediate future and the long term. Projects of special interest for fiscal year 2004-2008 include reconstruction of I-80 for 3.3 miles from the west side of Route 47 to 3 miles east of Route 47. U.S. Route 6 is currently being widened from I-55 to near the Grundy County border. In addition, a planning study has been undertaken for the proposed Brisbin Road interchange. The CATS 2030 Regional Transportation Plan (CATS 2030 RTP) proposes an additional lane to I-80 with the initial phase between Route 45 and I-55 in Will County. A second phase would continue this expansion west to the Will/Grundy border and, possibly, into a portion of Grundy County. The CATS 2030 RTP also proposes adding an additional lane in each direction on I-55 with an initial phase from Naperville Road to south of U.S. Route 6 in Will County. A second phase would extend the I-55 expansion south to Arsenal Road. The realization of these projects will be dependent upon the level of funding approved under the pending reauthorization of TEA-21.

### **Prairie Parkway**

In 1999, IDOT initiated the Prairie Parkway Study to analyze and determine the need for transportation improvements in Kendall County and portions of Grundy, Kane, LaSalle, Will, and De Kalb counties. Although many transportation options are being considered, IDOT has filed a corridor protection plan map with the recorder of deeds offices in Kendall, Kane, and Grundy counties. The area of this corridor is about 400 feet wide and 36 miles long extending from I-80 west of Minooka in a northwesterly direction crossing Route 47 in Kendall County, and continuing in a northerly direction roughly parallel and to the west of this road to I-88 in Kane County. This plan map effectively preserves a corridor for future construction of a roadway. A decision has not yet been made to follow through with construction. If built, this roadway would impact the travel patterns of a significant portion of the Chicago metropolitan region and facilitate travel between Grundy County and areas to the north.



### **Analysis of Road Projects**

The previous land use plan proposes improvements to both State 47 and that portion of U.S. Route 6 east of Route 47. This included designation of Route 47 as a major north-south strategic regional arterial (SRA) extending from I-55 north to the Wisconsin border. The implication is that these routes would eventually be widened to accommodate four lanes of traffic throughout Grundy County. However, in recent years surrounding counties have proposed the Wikaduke Trail which is a four or six-lane arterial that would be built via reconstruction of existing roads and connecting to I-80 via Ridge Road in Minooka with I-88 to the north. As discussed above, IDOT is studying the need for the Prairie Parkway expressway. Although these two latter projects would only be physically located in Grundy County at the northern border, each of them would have tremendous impact on area traffic patterns. It is unclear which, if any, of these projects will be built.



The Land Use Plan recognizes that there are undesirable consequences to construction of the Wikaduke Trail and Prairie Parkway or expansion of Route 47 and U.S. Route 6 into four-lane highways. While such road expansions will facilitate greater vehicular accessibility, this will be more than offset by: auto-dependent development; urban sprawl; induced traffic and congestion; and higher emissions, among others. The Land Use Plan offers alternatives by restricting highway-oriented land uses and promoting urban growth boundaries in conjunction with compact development, mixed land uses, and continuation of the urban street grid. Aggressive implementation of the Land Use Plan, together with comparable policies by the municipalities and surrounding counties, will collectively eliminate the perceived need for these costly projects.

## PART III IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

In order to carry out the long-range goals and to realize the recommendations of the Land Use Plan, a great deal of concerted effort will be required over a period of years. The first step involves awareness by the citizenry of the need to improve their county through cooperative and systematic action. The active participation of many individuals, organizations, and public officials is vital to the implementation of this Land Use Plan.

The Land Use Plan as set forth on the preceding pages and map has little or no value unless it is implemented. Therefore, the success of the Land Use Plan will be dependent, to a large extent, upon proper administrative actions to carry out its proposals and recommendations. This includes enforcement of the various regulating ordinances. The Land Use Plan will be effective and useful only if active steps are taken to carry out its proposals and recommendations so they can be used by the citizens of Grundy County in making day-to-day decisions. Every community is developed as the result of countless individual decisions such as: to buy or sell land; to subdivide land; to build homes, businesses, industries, schools, and other community facilities; and to construct streets and install utilities. Each day decisions are made that will affect the future of the county. They are made by landowners, lawyers, developers, realtors, public officials, and private citizens. Whether these individual actions will add up to a well-developed, attractive and economically sound county will depend in large measure on how well they mesh with the county's objectives and plans. Successful implementation of the Land Use Plan can only be accomplished through adequate legislative and administrative tools, public support and enthusiastic leadership.

While the Planning Commission is charged with the responsibility of preparing the Land Use Plan, it is, by law, only an advisory body and does not have the legislative power necessary to implement it. The County Board must, therefore, pass on all planning recommendations and take the necessary steps to effectuate them and give them legal status.

To help implement the objectives of the Land Use Plan, it is recommended that the following steps be taken:

- Adopt and enforce revisions to the Zoning Ordinance as soon as possible.
- Continue to update and enforce the Subdivision Regulations.
- Coordinate with municipalities to create urban growth boundaries, promote Traditional Neighborhood Design, and implement elements of Conservation Design to ensure compact and efficient development.
- Obtain state and matching funding to create a county forest preserve district and coordinate development of a *Greenway/Greenbelt, Farmland Preservation, and Alternate Transportation Plan*.
- Develop a *Waterway Corridor Protection Plan*.
- Create a *Rustic Roads Program* to preserve rural character and scenic vistas.
- Develop a *Historic Preservation Plan*.
- Develop an initiative to promote creation of Agricultural Districts and to obtain federal and matching funding for the purchase of development rights to prevent development of farmland.

- Conduct a commuter and transportation survey within the next five years to identify travel habits of the population.
- Continue to develop a close working relationship between the Planning Commission and the Economic Development Council.
- Develop a good education and public relations program to promote the long-range objectives of the county and gain wide public understanding and support of the Land Use Plan, and develop a process to keep it up-to-date.

The following is a brief discussion of the implementation tools and other aids which are available to the county and its municipalities.

## **ZONING ORDINANCE**

A Zoning Ordinance, including a zoning district map, reflects within the limitations of zoning the recommendations of the Land Use Plan for the future distribution of land uses within the county. The prime objective of zoning is to achieve the best possible environment in which people can live and work. Under this broad objective, zoning regulations have four specific purposes: to promote health, safety, and the general welfare; to assure orderly development; to protect existing property improvements; and to conserve and enhance land values throughout the county.

The Zoning Ordinance, which is based upon the Land Use Plan, has as one of its objectives the protection of the best agricultural lands from urban-type encroachments. In turn, such development is directed into suitable areas where public utilities and community facilities can become available in the future on an economical basis. All counties, whether they be rural or urban, are confronted with problems of change and growth. Planning and zoning provide the means of solving many of these problems or preventing their occurrence.

Zoning regulations, in one form or another, have been in existence in this country since its beginning. The early pioneer settlements adopted zoning measures to restrict the gun-powder mills to the outer edges of towns. In 1692, Massachusetts granted to Boston and Salem and other communities the power to restrict the location of “offensive” industries; each community was authorized to assign areas where slaughterhouses, still houses, and houses for currying leather would be least objectionable. While zoning has been in effect in municipalities for a long time, zoning in rural areas is a comparatively recent development. It is believed that Oneida County, Wisconsin adopted the first rural zoning ordinance in 1933 and DuPage County, Illinois adopted the first zoning ordinance in the Chicago area in 1935.

Illinois began moving in the direction of zoning for rural areas in 1929 when the legislature adopted the Regional Planning Act. This act provided for the creation of regional planning commissions to prepare plans for the coordinated and harmonious development of areas larger than a single municipality. In 1933 the Illinois legislature gave to counties the authority to establish building or set back lines along all public roads and streets outside the boundaries of incorporated areas. The purposes of this act were to promote public safety and to avoid or lessen congestion on existing traffic arteries.

It was soon realized that further legislation was necessary if Illinois counties were to be able to regulate and restrict the location and use of buildings for the purposes of “promoting the public health, safety, morals, comfort, and general welfare,” and to help conserve the values of property throughout the respective counties. Thus, on June 28, 1935, the first Illinois General County Zoning Act was passed which enabled the county boards to adopt comprehensive restrictions over the use of land and buildings. However, the authority to zone was restricted to the unincorporated area of each county outside cities.

The 1935 Illinois zoning legislation gave counties the power to regulate the location and uses of buildings for commercial, industrial, residential, and other uses. In addition, the act granted to county boards the authority to regulate the intensity of such uses; to establish building or setback lines; to divide the county's unincorporated area into zoning districts of appropriate number, shape, area, and classes, and to regulate the permissible uses and the intensity of such uses in each district; and to prohibit uses, buildings, or structures which are incompatible with the character of the individual districts. However, the act sets forth three specific areas which are excluded from zoning regulations. As is true of zoning generally, any buildings or uses of land which are lawfully in existence when the zoning ordinance becomes effective are permitted to continue, even if the zoning regulations make such buildings or uses “nonconforming.” However, the continuation of such nonconforming uses or buildings may be bound by certain restrictions governing moving, repair, alteration, or the use of buildings.

The second area over which county zoning regulations have no control is property of public utilities. County boards do not have the power to specify the kind or location of equipment, including poles, wires, conduits, towers, and other similar distributing equipment. These public utility uses are allowable in all zoning districts.

Similarly, counties are denied authority by Illinois statutes to impose regulations with respect either to land used for agricultural purposes or to building or structures used for agricultural purposes located upon such land. The only zoning requirement to which such buildings or structures may be made to conform is building or setback lines. This limitation upon the authority of zoning means that agriculture is permitted in any zoning district.

## **SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS**

Many of the county's present problems can be traced directly to mistakes made in the original land subdivisions. These mistakes, once fixed upon the land, are difficult and costly to correct. In response, state legislation granted counties the right to control the subdivision of land, to promote orderly physical design and development.

The Grundy County Subdivision Regulations state the rules for the preparation of plats, for the dedication of land for public uses, for the paving of streets, for the installation of utilities, and for other physical elements of the environment which affect the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of the county. In short, the subdivision regulations are aimed at insuring a reasonable division of land and good construction details. Through the combined provisions of the subdivision regulations and the zoning ordinance, effective use of land and good design can be achieved.

## **URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARIES**

A major initiative of the Land Use Plan is to establish urban growth boundaries to ensure that development primarily occurs compactly in areas contiguous to municipalities. The success of this program will be highly dependent upon the ability of the county to establish intergovernmental agreements with the municipalities to determine where these boundaries will be located. Public education will play a key roll in demonstrating how urban growth boundaries are in the best interests of not only the county, but also the municipalities, industrial and business concerns, and communities at large. Due to the rate that development is occurring, it is imperative that these boundaries be established as quickly as possible. They can be revamped at a later date.

Urban growth boundaries are complementary to the creation of sustainable and pedestrian-oriented communities; Transit-Oriented Development; aspects of Conservation Design; and agricultural and natural resource preservation. The implementation of these concepts together will support the slow-growth strategy of the Land Use Plan. The approach will reduce infrastructure costs and will help break the competitive nature plaguing many local governments that continually search for tax revenues because of poor planning policies.

## **FARMLAND AND OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION PROGRAM**

### **FARMLAND**

Implementation of a farmland preservation program is crucial to protecting the agricultural economy and rural character of Grundy County. Limitations on conversions of farmland to residential uses in correlation with urban growth boundaries promote this agenda. The county will be proactive in working with other government entities and private organizations to protect farmland. For example, the American Farmland Trust (AFT) is a public private partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), that works to save farmland from encroaching development. AFT has performed contingent valuation studies in the counties of Kane, McHenry, and De Kalb. These studies have revealed that residents support farmland preservation as a technique to limit urban sprawl. These residents also seek to maintain open space to maintain their quality of life. The studies have been used by the counties to build support for farmland protection.

Pursuant to the Farmland Preservation Act, the Illinois Department of Agriculture works with county governments to enroll property in Agricultural Districts or “ag areas” for a minimum of ten years with potential for re-enrollment every eight years. Land with these designations is exempt from local ordinances or laws that would seek to change property to different uses or restrict farming practices.

The Farmland Protection Program administered by the USDA, NRCS, assists local governments in purchasing conservation easements/ development rights or other interests from landowners. USDA provides up to 50% of the fair market value to help purchase these interests to keep productive

farmland in agricultural uses. The original landowner retains general ownership and control of the property.

## **OPEN SPACE**

A key component of the urban growth boundaries concept is the creation of open space or greenbelts surrounding each periphery of the municipalities. It is envisioned that the width of these greenbelts will be a minimum of one-half mile. This will provide transition from urban to rural land uses in addition to corridors for movement of wildlife, environmental protection, and recreational uses. From 1950 to 1995, land development in the Chicago metropolitan area increased by 165% despite the fact that the population only grew 48%. The loss of farmland and rural culture has been staggering. Valuable habitats for animal and plants have been lost as adequate parkland and open space has not kept pace with increasing population. A February 2002 Illinois Growth Task Force Study found that land preservation and the creation of open space has been hampered by poorly coordinated growth and development. Recent studies have shown that Illinois ranks near the bottom in terms of state-owned open space.



The Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) program provides grants up to \$750,000 with local matches for land purchases. Funding is provided by a dedicated percentage of the real estate transfer tax. Limited funding from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is also administered through the OSLAD program. From 1999 to 2003, the Open Lands Trust (OLT) program has complemented the OSLAD program by providing \$160 million for open space. About one-half of this amount was dedicated for use by local governments which are required to match funding amounts. The remainder was for use by the Illinois DNR to obtain parklands and open space. Maximum grant awards for OLT funding is \$2 million. Funding for both the OSLAD and OLT programs was retained by the 2005 fiscal year Illinois State budget.

According to the Trust for Public Land, funding provided by the OSLAD and OLT programs are insufficient to meet the needs for land conservation in Illinois. The three main options for local governments in obtaining funding to match these programs are property taxes, sales taxes, and general obligation bonds. The most popular method has been the use of general obligation bonds. Some states have mechanisms for tax credits which, together with federal tax incentives, encourage private land owners to donate/sell land or land interests for conservation as opposed to development. Illinois does not have any such tax or income credit provisions. During a three-year period from about 1999-2002, voters in the U.S. have approved more than 400 land conservation referendums for a total of \$11 billion in funding.



## **CONTINUATION OF THE PLANNING PROGRAM**

The Land Use Plan should be thought of as a dynamic document. Changing conditions which cannot be foreseen at this time may call for periodic modifications and amendments to the Land Use Plan. However, these changes should be made only after careful study and sufficient consideration. An annual review of the Land Use Plan for the purpose of comparing original planning with current development and goals will greatly assist in keeping it up-to-date. The Planning Commission should, in addition to such annual review, be responsible for analysis of plans and proposals for individual public or private developments as they relate to the objective of the Land Use Plan.

Background material, too, should be kept current. Periodic updating of population, employment, housing, and economic characteristics will provide the Planning Commission with statistics on which to base planning revisions. The Land Use Plan map should be updated from building permit records every six months and periodically by field survey.

Provision should be made for continuing professional planning assistance to aid the Planning Commission and the Planning and Zoning Department during the period following the adoption of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan - a time important to its effectuation. The long range aspects of planning, as well as short-range problems such as the review of subdivision applications or zoning amendments, can best be solved if the Planning Commission is provided with professional planning direction on a consistent basis.

It is essential that all citizens of Grundy County become generally familiar with, and interested in, the 2020 Comprehensive Plan. Interest should be continuous and not allowed to wane once it is officially adopted. If planning goals are to be attained, the support of the entire community will be required. Therefore, in addition to keeping the 2020 Comprehensive Plan up-to-date, the Planning Commission should also keep the county's citizens well informed on current planning with any major changes to the existing pattern of Grundy County publicized by the Planning Commission through local publications.

## Appendix 1 - FULL DEFINITION OF PRIME FARMLAND

The United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service describes Prime Farmland as “land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is also available for these uses (the land could be cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest land or other land, but not urban built-up land or water). It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce economically, sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed, including water management, according to acceptable farming methods. In general, prime farmlands have an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks. They are permeable to water and air. Prime farmlands are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period of time, and they either do not flood frequently or are protected from flooding.”

Currently, the USDA-SCS identifies Prime Farmland in Illinois with the following criteria:

- A. The soils have sufficient available water capacity within the soil depth of 40 inches, or in the root zone if it is less than 40 inches deep, (a minimum of 4 inches of available water in the upper 40 inches), to produce the commonly grown crops 7 or more years out of 10.
- B. The soils have a mean annual soil temperature at a depth of 20 inches higher than 32 degrees Fahrenheit. In addition, the mean summer temperature at 20 inches is higher than 59 degrees.
- C. The soils have a pH between 4.5 and 8.4 in all horizons within a depth of 40 inches or in the root zone if the root zone is less than 40 inches deep.
- D. The soils have no water table or a water table that is maintained at a sufficient depth to allow crops common to the area to be grown.
- E. The soils have in all horizons within a depth of 40 inches or in the root zone if the root zone is less than 40 inches deep, an exchangeable sodium percentage of less than 15.
- F. The soils flood less often than once in two years during the growing season.
- G. The soils have a product K (erodibility factor) X percent slope of less than 2.0.
- H. The soils have a permeability rate of at least 0.06 inches per hour in the upper 20 inches.
- I. Less than ten percent of the surface layer in these soils consists of rock fragments coarser than three inches.