

CITY OF BIRD ISLAND **ACTIVE** **LIVING PLAN**



Chapter One: Introduction to the Bird Island Active Living Transportation Plan

The Bird Island Active Living Transportation Plan represents the community's commitment to promote outdoor recreation and physical activity in the City of Bird Island, Minnesota. The overarching goal of the plan is to "Create a healthy environment for Bird Island by ensuring that residents and visitors can safely walk and bicycle throughout the community."



The development of Bird Island's Active Living Transportation Plan was funded with financial assistance from Minnesota's Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) and the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC). The City contracted with MMDC to develop the plan and formed the Bird Island Healthy Living Committee, comprised of local residents and other stakeholders.

Chapter Overview

The Bird Island Active Living Transportation Plan consists of five chapters:

Chapter One Page 2 - introduces the plan. It includes information highlighting the benefits of active living transportation plans, a description of the planning process, and an overview of the plan's key stakeholders.

Chapter Two Page 9 - provides a description of Bird Island's community's profile. This includes community demographics, maps, a description of the community's land use, and information on the existing City infrastructure.

Chapter Three Page 20 - provides an assessment of the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, otherwise known as a "SWOT analysis". This chapter will provide a foundation for identifying items to be addressed to support the "6 E's", which are also described in Section C of this Chapter. In addition, it includes an assessment of the City's existing plans and policies, as they relate to active living.

Chapter Four Page 28 - lays out a plan (goals, objectives, and action steps) for City improvements that would support active living for the residents of Bird Island.

Chapter Five Page 41 - establishes a Bird Island Active Living Implementation Plan. Highlights include the identification of priority projects and discussion on potential project timing and funding sources.

A. What is 'Active Living?'

'Active living' is simply the act of incorporating physical activity into our daily lives. It is widely known a lack of physical activity is a major risk factor for many preventable diseases. The City of Bird Island's goal is ***to create an Active Living Community where residents and visitors can readily and safely participate in everyday physical activity.*** From a transportation perspective, such activities can be as simple as incorporating a short walk to a school, a park, or a local store into one's day. Active Living may also include bicycling longer distances, such as to and from work or school. The Active Living planning process results in a transportation plan that identifies the infrastructure, policies, and programs necessary to ensure efficient and effective transportation options for the residents of Bird Island.

B. The Benefits of the Active Living Transportation Plans

Health Benefits

A primary purpose of this Active Living plan is to positively impact the health of Bird Island residents. It is known that adding physical activity is one of the most important things one can do to for their health. Making it easier and more natural for individuals to walk and bike is an effective way to increase physical activity. This increased activity can help residents:

- ✓ Control their weight
- ✓ Reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease
- ✓ Reduce their risk for Type 2 Diabetes and Metabolic Syndrome
- ✓ Reduce their risk for some cancers
- ✓ Strengthen bones and muscles
- ✓ Improve mental health and mood
- ✓ Improve their ability to accomplish daily tasks and prevent falls, especially for older adults
- ✓ Increase their chances for a longer, higher-quality life

From the Minnesota Department of Health:

- In 1995 the state obesity rate was 15.3%.
- It was 27.6% in 2014.
- Over 50% of deaths are from obesity-related chronic diseases.

A joint Kandiyohi and Renville Counties' 2014 Community Health Improvement Plan provided the following key facts:

- ✓ “In the most recent measures, roughly 63% of Kandiyohi and Renville County’s population is overweight or obese, fairly equal to the Minnesota rate”.
- ✓ “Regular physical activity has been shown to reduce morbidity and mortality from many chronic diseases and increase quality of life. Kandiyohi and Renville County residents suffer from chronic illnesses that can be prevented or improved through regular physical activity. About 16% of Kandiyohi and Renville County adults report levels of activity report no regular exercise”.
- ✓ “According to the 2013 Minnesota Student Survey, 16% of Kandiyohi and Renville County teenagers in 9th and 11th grades, watch TV shows or movies, play video games or use phone or phone apps 3 to 5 hours a day. In the same age group, nearly 9% report doing those activities 6 or more hours each day. The amount of time spent watching television is associated with obesity in both children and adults”. (Surgeon General Vision for a Healthy and Fit Nation).

Economic Development Benefits

It may be possible for the City of Bird Island to derive economic development benefit from the incorporation of improvements identified in this Active Living Transportation Plan. Providing a network of trails, sidewalks, bicycle road sharing routes, and other bicycle and pedestrian accommodations will enhance community livability. Pedestrian- and bicycle-friendliness is a livability measure that can help to attract new and also retain existing residents, including members of the workforce required by area businesses. Studies have shown that neighborhoods with above average walkability levels have higher property values than similar, but less walkable neighborhoods. All other things being equal, people typically prefer to live in places where they have the easy option to walk to local shops, parks, and other destinations.

Fairness/Equity Benefits

Many within the Bird Island community do not have a driver’s license or the ability to drive. The city is home to a significant number of children who have not yet reached driving age. Bird Island is also home to a number of individuals who rely on non-motorized transportation due to advanced age, disability, or limited income. Transportation infrastructure must accommodate those who need or choose to walk or bike to their destinations, just as it accommodates drivers of motor vehicles.

Sense of Community

Walking and biking encourages the development of relationships that strengthen communities. When people walk or bike, they are more likely to interact with their neighbors. This engagement lends itself to the development of friendlier, more attractive communities.

Other Benefits

Besides health and economic development benefits, there are additional benefits to bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly environments. Although traffic congestion is not typically a major concern for the City of Bird Island, having a friendly active living transportation community will reduce roadway congestion, decrease driver frustration, and increase the availability of parking. Reducing the number of motor vehicle trips will also further support health by lowering air pollution.

C. Project Scope & Document Contents

Analysis and recommendations for this plan will be guided by the “Six E’s” planning process.

The 6 E’s

- **Engineering:** Creating safe and convenient places to ride a bicycle and walk.
- **Education:** Giving people of all ages and abilities the skills and confidence to ride and walk safely, while educating all users about the rules of the road.
- **Encouragement:** Creating local enthusiasm and a stronger culture that welcomes and promotes walking and biking.
- **Enforcement:** Implementing enforcement measures that will help ensure safe roads for all users, and sidewalks and paths for all ages.
- **Evaluation and Planning:** Planning for bicycling and walking as a safe and viable transportation option.
- **Equity:** A good community transportation system needs to address the needs of persons of all backgrounds, ages, incomes, and physical abilities.

D. Key Stakeholders

Bird Island City Council - The City of Bird Island has a five-member city council, including the mayor. The City’s mayor is elected each biennial city election for a two-year term. The remaining four council members serve four-year terms, with two members being elected during each biennial election. The City Council holds regular meetings on the second Monday of each calendar month at



the Bird Island City Hall (typically at 7:00 p.m. – 660 Birch Avenue, Bird Island). For more information on the City of Bird Island, visit: www.birdislandcity.com:

Renville County Public Works – The Renville County Public Works Department plays a large role in the success of the Bird Island Active Living Transportation Plan. Ultimately the Public Works Department, along with the Renville County Board, will need to support any infrastructure changes proposed along the county roads. For more information on the Renville County Public Works Department, visit: www.renvillecountymn.com/departments/public_works.



Renville County Sheriff's Office – The Renville County Sheriff's Office provides a full range of law enforcement services for all unincorporated areas of Renville County. Additionally, they contract to provide law enforcement services for the Cities of Bird Island, Franklin, Morton, and Sacred Heart. They operate with a strong, community-oriented



police philosophy and strive to form and maintain alliances with other emergency services agencies, as well as with the citizens of Renville County. For more information visit: www.renvillecountymn.com/sheriff/index.php.

Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) – As a regional development organization, the MMDC serves Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville Counties. MMDC leads the development of the Bird Island Active Living Plan. MMDC staff work with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) on transportation planning activities and help local governmental units by providing technical and grant writing assistance. For more information on MMDC or the Bird Island Active Living Plan, visit www.MMRDC.org.



Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) – All road infrastructure improvements on U.S., state, and county roads require the review and approval of MnDOT staff. The Bird Island active living plan will address issues on U.S. Highway 212 and County Road 5. Improvements to these corridors will need support from MnDOT District 8 staff, who are located in Willmar. MnDOT planners and engineers can assist by helping identify which infrastructure improvements are most feasible along the roads that are under their authority. For more information on MnDOT and their role in ALT plans, please visit: www.dot.state.mn.us.



Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) – The Minnesota Department of Health administers the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership. One of SHIP’s many objectives is to help create more active communities by increasing opportunities for walking and biking. SHIP also promotes and educates on a number of other related health-related topics. These topics include healthy eating, drugs and alcohol prevention, smoking cessation and reducing TV and other screen time. For more information on the Kandiyohi – Renville County SHIP program, visit: www.health.state.mn.us/divs/oshii/ship/communities/Kandiyohi-Renville.html.

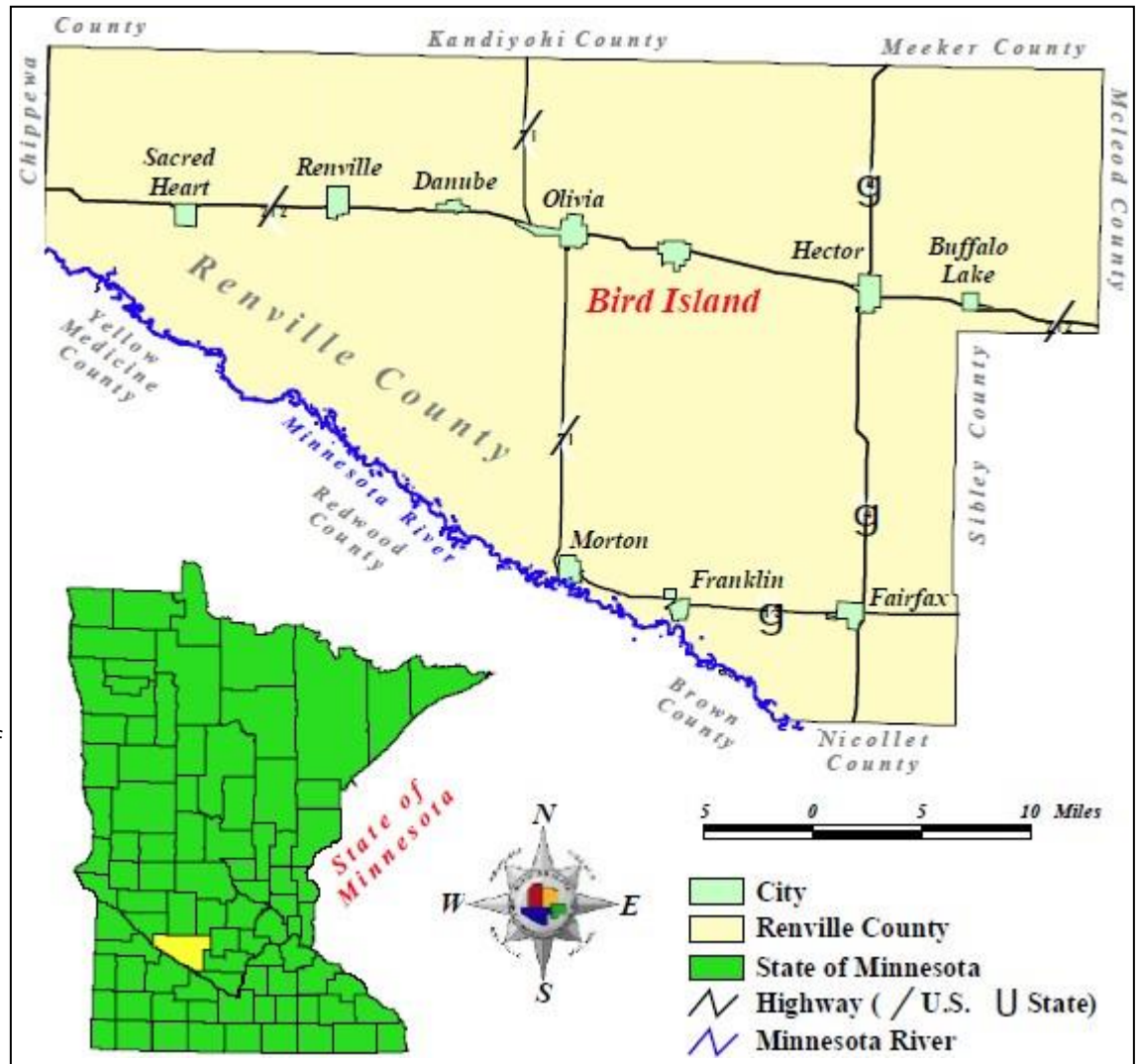


Chapter Two: City of Bird Island's Community Profile

Chapter Two profiles the City of Bird Island as well as Renville County, where Bird Island is located. Bird Island's history is also briefly mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. The profile contains demographic and land use information, including population and household statistics along with workforce distribution and age composition

Map 1A: Renville County

The City of Bird Island is located near the geographic center of Renville County, 90 miles west of Minneapolis. The community is located along U.S. Highway 212, in Bird Island Township. The Minnesota River, one of Minnesota's largest rivers, can be found approximately 15 miles to the south of the Bird Island community.



A. Bird Island History

Early Civil War veterans, entitled to a 160-acre homestead, were among some of the first settlers in the area near Bird Island. Rich farmland, said to be “the land of milk and honey”, attracted these early settlers. The land appeared to be extremely fertile and its tillage promised immediate and abundant reward to the new settlers. About one and one half to two miles to the south and west, in Section 15, lay an island, surrounded by sloughs, whose area extended over 60 acres. An island on an otherwise unbroken prairie grew tall trees unchecked by prairie fires and was a virtual paradise for thousands of birds. From this Bird Island, first the township and later the village, took its name. Settlers would come from some distance to get their share of the community’s useful timber, a precious commodity. Native Americans also used the island as an encampment, as evidenced by the many arrowheads found in the vicinity. Since the building of a large drainage ditch, the “island” has disappeared and only valuable farmland remains.



Bird Island was platted in July 1878, on land owned by the B.I. Townsite Company. By 1882, over 500 people were living within its confines. Bird Island had three general stores, one grocer, two hardware and drug stores, two millineries, one furniture store, one harness shop, one wagon shop, three blacksmiths, one shoe shop, one paint shop, one barber shop, three hotels, two meat markets, two saloons, two lumber

yards, three physicians, two lawyers, one bank and two elevators.

In 1970, a part of the former Lake Lillian Public School District voted to consolidate with Bird Island. Then, in 1992, Bird Island-Lake Lillian consolidated with Olivia to become the Bird Island-Olivia-Lake Lillian District (BOLD). Since the recent closure of

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Bird Island’s elementary school, all public school students, in grades K-12, now attend school in Olivia, where the district’s football field, stadium, and track are also located. Currently, 670 students attend BOLD P-12.

B. Bird Island Community Profile

Population

An important aspect of developing an active living plan is to determine current population trends within the community. This information is important because it can be used to help predict city growth or population decline. Any change in a city’s population will impact future planning.

Table 1A reports the population statistics for Bird Island and also for Renville County, since 1930.

**Table 1A:
City of Bird Island and Renville County
Population since 1930 (U.S. Census)**

Year	City of Bird Island	Change		Renville County	Change	
		#	%		#	%
1930	1,004	N/A	N/A	23,645	N/A	N/A
1940	1,201	197	20%	24,625	980	4%
1950	1,333	132	11%	23,954	-671	-3%
1960	1,387	54	4	23,249	-705	-3%
1970	1,309	-78	-6%	21,139	-2,110	-9%
1980	1,372	63	5%	20,401	-738	-4%
1990	1,326	-46	-3%	17,673	-2,728	-13%
2000	1,195	-131	-10%	17,154	-159	-1%
2010	1,042	-153	-13%	15,730	-1,424	-8%
2020	1,005	-37	-3.6%	14,487	-1,243	-8%
Average	N/A	4.5	1.7%	N/A	-944	-5%

Table 1A shows that Bird Island has experienced an overall population increase since 1930. However, the City’s population peaked at 1,387 in 1960 and has declined by 382 residents over the last 60 years. Table 1A also shows that Bird Island’s population in the year 2000 (1,195) was nearly the same as it was in the year 1940 (1,201). Renville County’s population has steadily decreased since 1940, while not experiencing a single ten-year

period of positive population growth. When looking at the average change in population over the 90-year period, Bird Island has not seen an increase or decrease in population. Renville County has decreased at the rate of 944 residents every ten years.

Age

Age composition as an important aspect to consider in the Active Living planning process. It is essential that every age bracket be considered and included in planning. For example, residents under 18 will have to get to school safely, so one way to encourage an active lifestyle for this group would be to incorporate a safe and accommodating route to school. This can also be applied to older demographics who would like to walk to work or to a local business. Bird Island's age statistics for 2010 appear in Table 1B. Note that a total number of people in each age category the is provided, along with that group's percentage of the total City population (1,195 total residents). The percentage information is also provided for Renville County and all of Minnesota.

**Table 1B
Population by Age Group for
Bird Island, Renville County and Minnesota (2010 Census)**

Bird Island		Age Category	County Percent	State Percent
Number	Percent			
211	20%	Under 18 Years	23%	24%
64	6%	18 to 24 Years	7%	10%
196	19%	25 to 44 Years	21%	26%
357	34%	45 to 64 Years	30%	27%
214	21%	65 and Older	19%	13%
1,042	100%	Totals	100%	100%

Compared to the State of Minnesota, Bird Island's age percentages differ in several ways. First, only 6 percent of Bird Island's population falls into the 18 to 24 age

category, compared to 10 percent statewide. Although the difference may not be large, it reinforces the idea that young rural Minnesota adults often leave their hometown after high school. A larger age difference between the population of Bird Island and the State is found in the 65 and older category. According to Table 1B, Bird Island has significantly more seniors than the state as a whole. The senior category comprises 21 percent of the City's population. For the State of Minnesota, this category makes up just 13 percent of the total populace. Table 1B also indicates that the majority of the population is of school or working age, and so it will be necessary to ensure that planning accounts for this.

Housing

**Table 1C:
Bird Island's 2010 Housing Statistics**

Bird Island 2010 Census	Number	Percent
Occupied Housing Units	487	100.0%
Owner-Occupied Units	393	80.7%
Population in Owner-Occupied Units	859	
Average Owner Household Size	2.19	
Renter-Occupied Units	94	19.3%
Population in Renter-Occupied Units	170	
Average Renter Household Size	1.81	

The 2010 Census showed that the City had 274 families, with an average family size of 2.77 persons. There were 102 families with related children under 18 years of age. There were 39 female heads of household with no husband present, and 23 of them had children under the age of 18. In 2010, The 2011 to 2015 Census estimate shows that 18.7% of the residents are below the poverty line. The 2010 Census showed that the City had 37 (3.6%) minority persons living in the community. The majority of the minority population (33) are Hispanic or Latino persons.

The number of occupied housing units in 2010 was 487. There were 393 (80.7%) owner occupied housing units and 94 (19.3%) renter occupied units. The 2010 Census showed that of these occupied housing units, 12 units had no vehicle available. Another 180 occupied housing units had only one vehicle available. Along with the occupied housing units, Bird Island contains 60 vacant housing units, which accounts for 11% of the total housing units.

Major Employers

Walking or biking to work is a common and great way to participate in an active lifestyle. Therefore, it is important to know where major employers are located so when determining how to support traffic – both vehicular and pedestrian. Table 1D shows the largest employers within the City of Bird Island and indicates the number of people working for each establishment. This information was taken from Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development under the community profile for Bird Island.

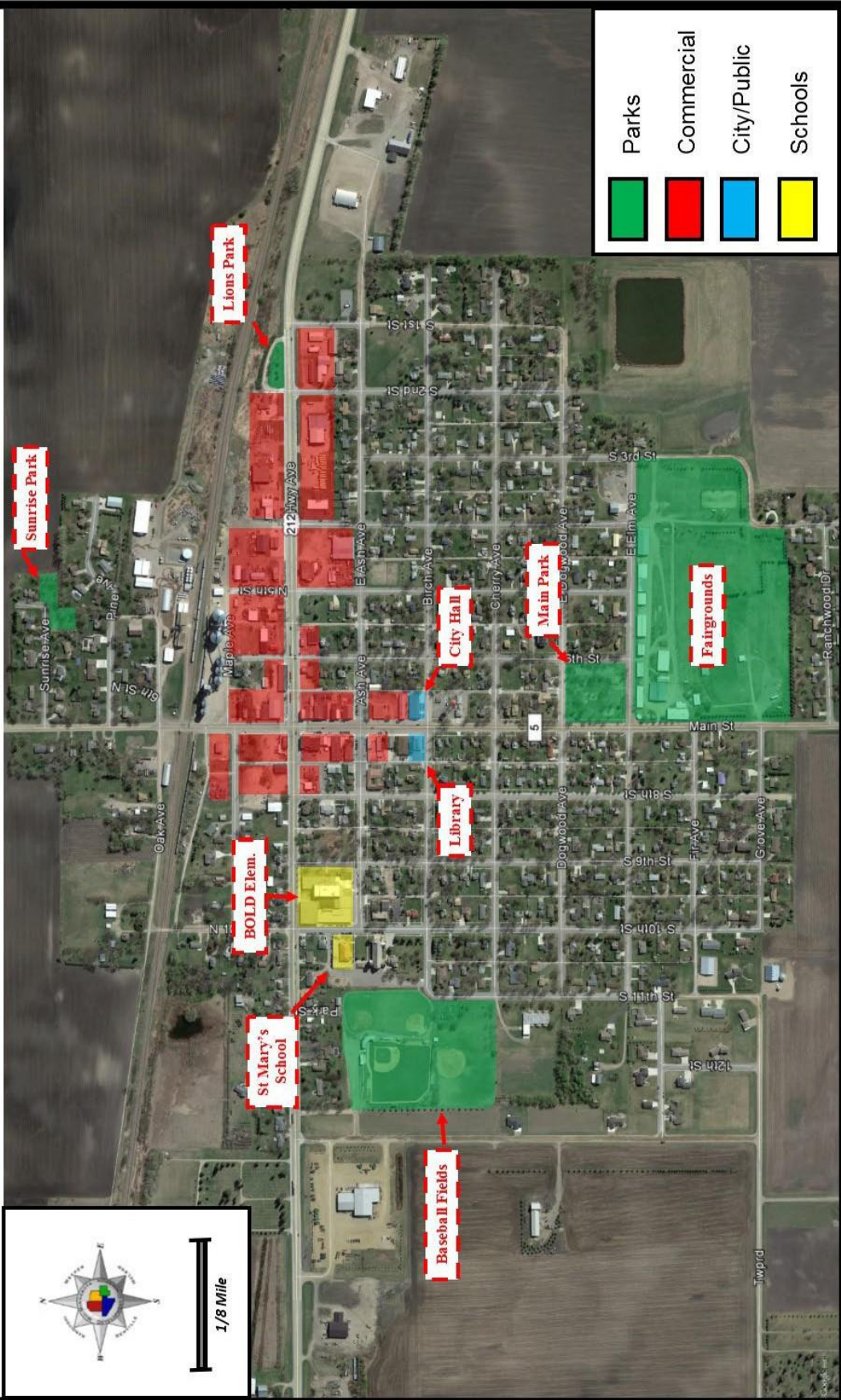
**Table 1D:
Bird Island’s Major Employers**

Employer	Products/Services	Employee Count
Renville County Community Residence	Intermediate Care Facilities	69
Rural Computer Consultants	Computer Programming Services	46
Bird Island Soil Service	Soil Preparation Services	29
St. Mary’s School	Elementary and Secondary Schools	26
MBW, Inc	Intermediate Care Facilities	25
Kibble Equipment	Agriculture Equipment	25
Island Manor Healthcare	Skilled Nursing Care Facilities	22
B&D Market	Grocery Stores	20
The Learning Funhouse, Inc.	Child Day Care Services	15
Frandsen Bank & Trust	State Commercial Banks	15
Smart Mart	Gasoline Service Stations	13

George Paur Insurance Agency	Insurance Agents, Brokers & Service	11
Rob Saunders Accounting SMS	Accounting, Auditing & Bookkeeping	8

The Minnesota of Trade and Economic Development states that Renville County Community Residence is the biggest employer in Bird Island with 60 employees. This is followed by the Island Market (30), Bob’s Country Market/Bottle Shoppe (30), and St. Mary’s School (26). All the other employers in Bird Island have less than 26 employees. Most of these businesses are either located on main street or along U.S. Highway 212, so having adequate walking and biking routes to these locations is an aspect that should be addressed for active living.

Map 1A: Bird Island Destinations



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Key Destinations

Determining key destinations is an important step within the Active Living planning process. Residents will most likely walk and bike to these areas if transportation suitable pedestrian routes are provided. On page 7, Map 1A highlights these key Bird Island destinations, which include parks, city/public buildings, St. Mary's school, and commercial buildings.

There are six public park/recreation areas within the City of Bird Island. The City's main municipal park, which is one block in size, contains a skatepark and basketball court, sand volleyball, horseshoe pits, shelter and playground equipment. A portable toilet is brought in for use during the spring, summer and fall. The City and Lion's Club have discussed the possibility of constructing a permanent restroom and enclosing the shelter, so that it can be locked.



There are also two smaller parks containing playground equipment. These are located on Ranchwood Drive and Sunrise Avenue. The Lion's Park, located along Highway 212, is used as a wayside rest area. A new warming house was recently constructed at the City's skating rink on Ash Avenue. In recent years, a \$250,000 improvement project, funded by the City, school district, and Lion's Club has been underway at 1150 Birch Avenue. This athletic facility now contains a JV baseball field, owned by the school district, as well as two little league and one large baseball field, owned by the City. The City has a joint power agreement with the school district regarding operation and maintenance of the facility.



Main Street is another key destination for walkers and pedestrians from all of the City's neighborhoods be provided sufficient access to Main Street area, which is home to City Hall, the Library, restaurants, the grocery store, and

various other businesses The City's central commercial district and Main Street area do provide pedestrian infrastructure. However, many residents lack direct access to the central area's sidewalk system. Walkers and bikers must share the streets with motor vehicle traffic when traveling to or from the City's central area.

. The following is the full list of key destinations in Bird Island:

Business and Civic

- St. Mary's School (140 S. 10th Street)
- City Offices (660 Birch Avenue)
- Library (260 S. Main Street)
- Post Office (240 Main Street)
- Downtown Business District
- Highway 212 Businesses
- B&D Market (125 N. Main Street)
- Broaster Café (745 Highway Avenue)
- Cultural Center of Bird Island (640 Dogwood Avenue)
- County Fair Grounds



Parks

- Lions Memorial Park (Ball Fields)
- Main Street Park
- Jacobs Memorial Park
- Sunrise Park
- Lions Park
- Cemetery (Highway 212)



Churches

- Saint Mary's Catholic Church
- United Methodist Church
- Our Savior's Lutheran Church



Apartments

- Island Estates (420 S. 11th Street)

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- Goelz I & II Apartments (725 and 761 S. 9th Street)
- Rham Apartments (110 Dogwood Avenue)

Senior/Congregate Living

- MBW Company (160 Main Street)
- Renville County Community Residence (831 Grove Avenue)



Chapter Three: SWOT Assessment and Inventory of Policies and Practices

A. SWOT Analysis

SWOT, which stands for **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats, is an analytical tool used to help identify both internal and external influences on the decision-making process. During a meeting with the Bird Island Active Living Transportation Committee the following SWOT analysis was generated:

STRENGTHS

- There is a good network of sidewalks in a large section of the Bird Island Community's central corridor.
- In many cases, busy crosswalks are marked for pedestrians.
- There is adequate lighting at street corners and in parks within the City.
- Bird Island has safe and clean downtown sidewalks, with good lighting and decorations.
- Excellent signage is present at intersections, informing of lower traffic speed limits.
- The intersection of Renville County Road 5 and U.S. Highway 212 has a stop light/traffic signal, with visual and audible safety protection for pedestrian traffic.
- The BOLD School District recently completed a Safe Routes to School Plan.
- The City has committed to improving the environment for active living
- Bird Island's street network was, in large part, built in a grid pattern with relatively-low traffic speeds (30 mph).
- The compact nature of Bird Island's neighborhoods makes biking and walking easier.
- Parks are located throughout the community and are within walking/biking distance of residential units.
- SHIP has been very supportive of the City's Healthy Living efforts.
- Most of Bird Island's streets have fairly-low traffic volumes.
- Intersections within the City typically allow for good visibility.
- Housing is adequately set back from the streets, which promotes additional visibility.

WEAKNESSES

- There is a lack of identified routes for safe walking, biking, and running/jogging on Bird Island's network of streets.
- No off-road trail(s) rout through the community.
- Additional collaboration and partnership is needed to complete projects.

- Much of the Bird Island community lacks sidewalks.
- While there are sidewalks along U.S. Highway 212, these sidewalks do not always include a buffer zone to provide more distance between walkers and vehicles.
- There is some concern over the safety of walkers and bikers who cross U.S. Highway 212.
- Many residents don't see biking or walking as a viable option for their in-town transportation.
- There is no clear funding source identified for wide-scale pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.
- A general lack of knowledge of laws and skills for drivers of motor vehicles exists, with regard to how they should operate around pedestrians, including bicyclists. There is also a need to educate bicyclists on the rules of the road.
- Currently, crosswalks within the City do not qualify as high-visibility crosswalks.
- Residents north of Highway 212 lack adequate sidewalk infrastructure to cross the railroad tracks and enter Bird Island's central district.
- The school's playground would benefit from increased lighting.
- Cold and windy conditions prevail for a large portion of the year.
- There is a need to bring all of Bird Island's sidewalks into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Ordinance does not require residents to remove snow from residential sidewalks.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Bird Island can promote an Active Living culture to improve physical activity, health, and safety.
- Local street routes can be enhanced and a trail system can be created to ensure safe and comfortable walking and biking throughout the City.
- Opportunities exist for Encouragement, Enforcement, and Education
- A private citizen coalition can be formed to help the City promote walking and bicycling, and to ensure that goals are eventually attained.
- Enough progress has been made by the City to consider a "Bicycle Friendly Community" status application.
- Bird Island can incorporate active transportation design features into any new development projects.
- Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements can be included in the City's annual budget each year.
- Ordinances can be adjusted to improve residents' ability to walk and bike throughout the City and achieve a healthier lifestyle.

THREATS

- Budget limitations and the City's continued need to ensure adequate funding to maintain current and future walking and biking infrastructure.
- Plans for trail segments could be sidelined if easement permissions are not granted, or if a few vocal residents resist trail developments.
- Future land use decisions could hinder walking and bicycling in new City subdivisions.
- Sustained political will is needed to sustain improvements over the long-term.
- Without sustained attention to the City's Complete Street Ordinance, opportunities for walking and bicycling improvements could be lost.

This SWOT assessment will be used to guide the active living plan by helping to identify areas for improvement as well as potential implementation actions.

B. Review of Local Policies

The Inventory of Policies and Practices section provides an analysis of local policies, private employee wellness practices, and active living best practices. The focus of the section is on policies or programs that affect, either positively or negatively, the average person's ability to engage in physical activity within the community.

Characteristics of a Walkable and Bikeable Community

There are various characteristics of a walkable and bikeable community that Bird Island should strive to improve to create a culture of walking and bicycling. When changes to City plans and ordinances occur these characteristics should be considered, not only for areas of new City growth but also within existing, more established parts of the city. These characteristics are:

- **Coherence.** There should be an organized, clear, and understandable sidewalk, trail, street, and land-use system, consistent with the scale and function of the surrounding environment. Sidewalks and trails should link the community's key destinations.
- **Safety.** Pedestrian and bicyclist safety must always be considered when designing new or updating existing roadways and when planning for major construction.
- **Continuity.** A pattern of design and usage that unifies the pedestrian system should be incorporated in planning.

- **Equilibrium.** A balance among transportation modes should be ensured to accommodate and encourage pedestrian and bicycle usage.
- **Comfort.** Well-maintained surfaces, negotiable crosswalks, unobstructed passage at corners, and well-timed crossing signals are needed to ensure pedestrian comfort and safety.
- **Accessibility.** ADA compliance is necessary to ensure opportunity for all to utilize the pedestrian/bicycle environment to the fullest extent possible.
- **Sociability.** The City should encourage a tone of hospitality and friendliness to promote social interaction within the community. A variety of uses and activities should be considered along sidewalks and trails.
- **Efficiency.** Simplicity in design and function will support cost-effectiveness and minimize route improvement delays.
- **Attractiveness.** The environment for walkers and bikers should be clean, comfortable, and efficient. Surroundings should be well-maintained. To the extent possible, shade trees should be placed along sidewalks, trails and other locations of interest. Amenities, such as benches and bicycle racks, should be strategically placed throughout the community, along pedestrian routes.

It is important to consider local policies and discuss the implications of these policies as they pertain to active living within Bird Island. Some of the key elements of land use and design that the City's plans and ordinances should encourage include:

- Incorporating appealing, compact neighborhoods with shared open spaces,
- Encouraging mixed-use development,
- Ensuring functional site designs with a sufficient level of detail,
- Including a network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities and infrastructure,
- Integrating shorter blocks and linked subdivisions,
- Providing universal access and safety for all.

MMDC staff have reviewed the following City planning documents and ordinances, which have effect active living in the Bird Island community:

- The City of Bird Island's Comprehensive Plan
- The City of Bird Island's Subdivision Ordinance
- The City of Bird Island's Zoning Ordinance
- Relevant Sections of the City of Bird Island's Code of Ordinances

Bird Island Comprehensive Plan Recommendations:

Overall, the City of Bird Island's Comprehensive Plan, completed in 2002, has many sections that support the concept of "active living transportation". The Comprehensive Plan's Goals and Policy section includes a number of policy recommendations that support pedestrian and bicycle travel. Below are a few recommendations that would make Bird Island's comprehensive plan even more pro-active and supportive of active living principles.

Recommendations:

- The Active Living Transportation Plan should be adopted as a Section of the Comprehensive Plan after its completion.
- Under Goal 6-Housing, Objective A, consider the following additions:
 - Active transportation design features will be incorporated into new housing and neighborhood developments.
 - Street connectivity will be improved using grid-like street patterns, with more intersections, and smaller block size.
 - Pedestrian-scale connections, throughout and between neighborhoods, will be developed to make the city a more livable and vibrant community for people of all ages and incomes.
- Under Goal 7-Transportation, Objective B, consider the following additions:
 - Planning will be balanced and includes each of the five E's: Engineering, Education, Enforcement, Encouragement, and Evaluation.
 - Infrastructure changes and improvements will be rooted in the concept of creating "complete streets" that integrate design to support all common modes of travel, including walking, bicycling, transit, and motor vehicles.
 - Transportation mode shares will, as best as possible, achieve a balance of walking, bicycling, transit, and motor vehicles, and the amount of walking and bicycling will be measured in terms of physical activity, public health, and transportation benefits.

- Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure will be prioritized and given the same level of consideration as motor vehicle infrastructure when directing community funds.
- The safety of pedestrians and bicyclists will be improved, with specific actions taken to reduce the likelihood of collisions, injuries, and fatalities.

Subdivision Ordinance Recommendations:

Ensuring that local site plan review adequately addresses the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists is important. To provide a better pedestrian and bicycling environment in Bird Island, the following Subdivision Ordinance recommendations are provided.

- Within the subdivision purpose, the language gives mention to facilitating adequate provisions for transportation. However, additional language centered specifically on pedestrian activity/transportation would be beneficial. New subdivisions should ensure pedestrian and bicycle connectivity through the inclusion of facilities (i.e. sidewalks, routes, and trails) that are both integrated into roadway design and provided as stand-alone amenities.
- In the subdivision design standards section, new subdivisions shall be required to have an internal circulation plan for traffic. “Traffic” will be defined broadly to include bicyclists and pedestrians. As part of the traffic impact analysis, an analysis of bicycle and pedestrian facilities and impact shall take place.
- Subdivision plans must demonstrate connectivity between developments for bicyclists and pedestrians, to minimize short-distance motor vehicle trips. If the City approves multiple cul-de-sacs in a new development, “cut through” easements, allowing for connecting paths between cul-de-sacs, should be required. Traditional neighborhood design and development, incorporating street grids, should also be encouraged as the best option.
- The City should also allow and even encourage the use of conservation or cluster development for new subdivisions, as this will encourage access and open space while incorporating compact land use patterns that support increased walking and bicycling.
- The City of Bird Island should consider a Dedication Requirement policy in the Subdivision Ordinance, reserving a significant percentage of land for parks

and recreational use. Typically, Minnesota communities reserve between three and 12 percent for this purpose. The Dedication Requirement policy should include specific mention of trails as an allowable use. Consideration should be given for language that gives the City the discretion to decide whether a proposed dedicated requirement area meets the needs of the community or if a fee option is more appropriate. This would allow for more City flexibility and ensure that the dedicated spaces contribute to the community's comprehensive plan and other planning documents to the fullest extent.

Zoning Ordinance Recommendations:

Following are recommendation adjustments for the Bird Island Zoning Ordinance. These changes would positively influence pedestrian and bicycle facilities improvement within the City:

- Under Article II - General Regulations, include a section on design standards for bicycle and pedestrian facilities. This section:
 - a. Should address which development applications must include provisions for bicycle and/or pedestrian access,
 - b. Provide a reference to the bicycle and pedestrian circulation plan, to related components of the Comprehensive Plan, and to this Active Living Transportation Plan.
 - c. Should explain how the zoning administrative officer, commission, or council will decide if bicycle and pedestrian access-focused requirements have been met.
 - d. Should describe conditions under which the zoning commission or council may waive bicycle and pedestrian facility, easement, dedication requirement, and related standards. For instance, indicating that requirements may be waived if the development occurs along existing public bicycle lanes or multi-use paths.
 - e. An explanation of the process by which facilities will become public right-of-way, owned by the city.

- Under the design standards section in Article VIII Site Plan, consider adding language directing City officials to address bicycle and pedestrian amenities and related topics. This should include provision of access; linkage/connectivity; safety; bicycle lane and sidewalk width, and geometry; related amenities; bicycle parking; relation of facilities to parking lots/on-street parking; easements for bicycle lane, sidewalk, or path right-of-way; and ADA compliance.

General Provisions of Ordinance Code Recommendations:

- Ordinance-221 (Parking on City Streets), Ordinance-219 (Truck Parking) and Ordinance-212 (Parking) should include language prohibiting parking on or across any sidewalk, path or trail designed for pedestrian use.
- Sufficient language on the timely removal of snow, ice, dirt, and rubbish currently exists. The City's ordinance also addresses actions taken if snow, ice, dirt, and rubbish is not removed. Current language similarly describes the City's process for making necessary sidewalk repairs along with the sidewalk inspection process to assess condition. Other sections of the Code of Ordinance are also relevant, such as ensuring a clear view at intersections. It will be important for the City to consider whether, and to what degree, these codes are being enforced.
- Currently, there are a limited number of sidewalks within the City's residential zones. It is recommended that a couple of other short sidewalk segments be constructed on streets abutting residential property. Additionally, given there are so few sidewalks in these residential areas, the City should consider fairness when determining if the owners of properties abutting public sidewalks should be financially responsible for their repair, and to what degree. This conversation should take place prior to the construction of new or the repair of existing sidewalks. The sidewalks proposed in this Active Living Transportation plan are important pedestrian corridors for all residents in the community. As such, it may be considered reasonable and fair if all, or at least most, sidewalk-associated costs be handled by the City. Determining responsibility for keeping sidewalks clear of snow, ice on public sidewalks would be another appropriate action. If the City does move to take on this responsibility, it would be wise to inform residents that street snow removal streets will be prioritized, to ensure clear expectations. It is recommended that individual property owners remain responsible for keeping sidewalks clear of rubbish.
- Language addressing the trail maintenance should be added to the ordinance code before the recommended trail segments are constructed.
- The City of Bird Island adopted a Complete Streets policy on June 8th, 2015. Complete Streets are streets designed and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users, including drivers, walkers, bicyclists, or public transportation riders of all ages and abilities. The Complete Streets concept incorporates multiple approaches to planning, design, and operating for roadways and rights-of-way, with a focus on safety and efficiency.

Chapter Four: Existing Conditions and Engineering Needs

Future Sidewalk Locations, Sidewalk Repair Inspections, and ADA Inventory

Bird Island's sidewalk infrastructure is well-developed and connected within the central section of the city. However, within the City's outer neighborhoods, sidewalks are scarce, forcing walkers and bikers to compete for roadway space with motor vehicles. While sidewalks are not needed on every Bird Island street, incorporating additional north/south and east/west sidewalks would filter pedestrians to the City's central sidewalk network. Please see the following map for an illustration of proposed sidewalk locations.

Locations for recommended sidewalk additions include:

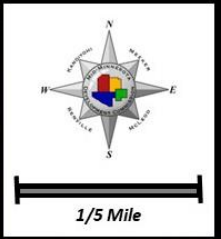
- Along South 9th Street, from the existing sidewalk on Cherry Avenue to the southern edge of town.
- Along Birch Avenue, from Main Street to the eastern edge of town.
- Along Main Street, from Highway 212 to Sunrise Avenue.
- Along Main Street, from Elm Avenue to Ranchwood Drive, along the west side of the Renville County fairgrounds.

It is recommended that the City review the current condition of sidewalks, throughout the community, to identify where repairs are needed. It is important to identify large cracks, lips, and buckled sidewalks that could cause injury, and then schedule any needed repairs. Additionally, the inspecting party should identify any overhanging tree limbs and/or shrubbery blocking portions of the sidewalk and in need of trimming or removal. A review should also be conducted to identify if and where any Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance steps are needed. Once a list of needs is identified, a long-term ADA plan should be created to resolve any compliance issues. Sidewalk investments should be included in the City's annual budget until all identified issues are resolved. The ADA requires Bird Island to "give priority to walkways serving state and local government offices and facilities, bus stops and transportation services, private businesses offering goods and services to the public, and employees, followed by walkways serving residential areas." The City should

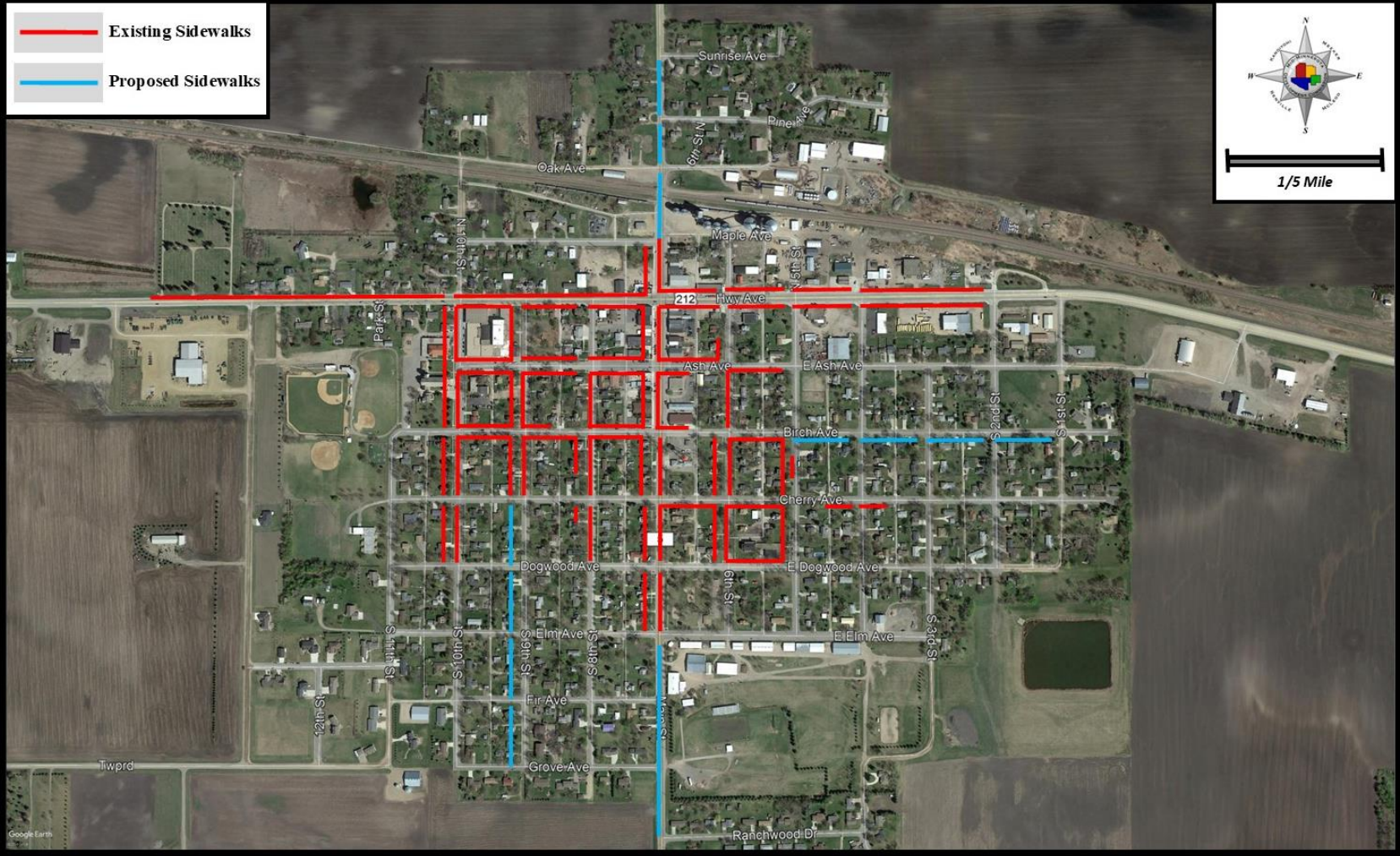


Bird Island Existing and Proposed Sidewalk Map

Existing Sidewalks
Proposed Sidewalks



1/5 Mile



develop procedures to provide the public an easy way to request curb ramp installations at specific intersections frequented by people with disabilities.

When sidewalks are reconstructed within the community, efforts should be made to bring them to current width standards. A sidewalk in a residential area, with a buffer zone, should be at least five feet (60 inches) wide. In areas where sidewalks fail to meet that standard, the ADA requires a minimum of four feet (48 inches) of width. To address ADA needs in areas where a significant length of the sidewalk is under five feet in width, passing spaces (designed for wheelchairs) should be placed every 200 feet. These passing spaces should, at a minimum, be 5 feet x 5 feet (60 inches x 60 inches) in size. Sidewalk standards have other design considerations that should also be met. These will not be covered in this plan. However, things like grades and cross slope standards must be adhered to. Additionally, ADA requirements include curb ramps and detectable warning truncated domes. Sidewalk design manuals are readily-available for the City's engineering firm to follow when planning improvements.

In business districts, sidewalks should be considerably wider than in residential areas. Currently, sidewalks in Bird Island's central business district (CBD) are adequate, as they extend from buildings to the curb and are sufficiently wide. To ensure accessibility, care should be taken to ensure sidewalk furniture and other obstructions allow for no less than a four-foot (48 inch) width of contiguous clear space.

Trail Development

Trail development and use has become increasingly popular as communities embrace the multiple benefits that come with having a quality trail network. Ideally, trail segments should be 10 feet (120 inches) wide, paved, and prohibited to motor vehicles. The following chapter sections highlight some of the benefits of incorporating trails into community plans.

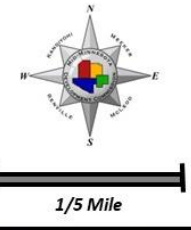
Recreational Opportunities and Healthy Lifestyles- Trails provide excellent opportunities for recreation and promote healthy living. Increased physical activity has long been associated with numerous health benefits, including the prevention of heart disease, diabetes, cancer and depression. Furthermore, trails provide a means for exercise, and reduce the instance of obesity and its negative health

impacts. Data released by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows Minnesota's adult obesity rate in 2020 was 30.7%, up from 30.1% in 2019.

Transportation Options - In many communities, trails are used by residents as a means of transportation. Although walking and biking to or from work or school

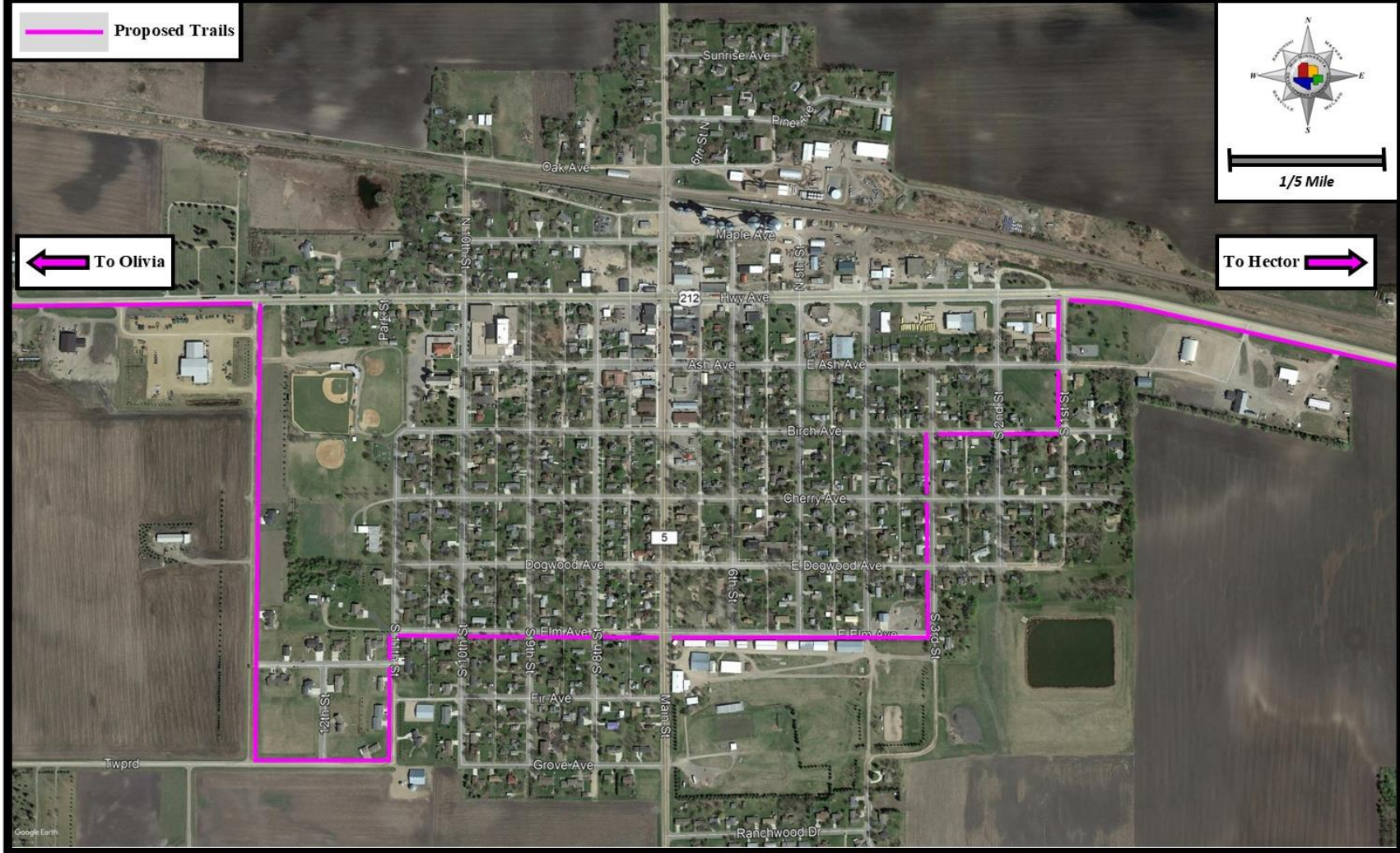
Bird Island Proposed Trails Map

Proposed Trails



To Olivia

To Hector



are not viable options for everyone, providing access to trails is a simple way of supporting walking and biking to these destinations. The existence of a 'safe network of trails' is usually a key factor for commuters who decide to walk or bike, rather than drive. In addition, the presence of an adequate trail network can provide an economical transportation option for low-income families.

Tourism and Economic Benefits - A well-established trail network increases opportunity for residents and visitors to spend locally. During Minnesota's warm weather months, nearly 1.5 million cyclists, inline skaters, and walkers use the state's nationally-recognized city, county, and regional trails (Parks & Trails Council of MN: www.parksandtrails.org). According to American Trails (www.americantrails.org), 90% of trail users will be local. They will spend approximately \$17 per day per user in local shops and restaurants, on items like fuel, water, snacks, etc. In some cases, trails can also be used to attract a variety of tourists. In addition to those who appreciate quality walking and biking areas, trails can be used to attract bird watchers, amateur botanists, photographers, or other visitors.

A well-designed Bird Island trail system would allow residents to more efficiently walk and bike for commuting, exercise, and leisure. The map on the previous page includes depicts a recommended trail location/route. The trail will travel as follows:

- South, along 13th Street, from Highway 212 to Grove Avenue
- East, along Grove Avenue, from 13th Street to South 11th Street
- South, along S. 11th Avenue, from Grove Avenue to Elm Avenue
- East, along Elm Avenue, from S. 11th Street to S. 3rd Street
- South, along S. 3rd Street, from Elm Avenue to Birch Avenue
- East, along Birch Avenue, from S. 3rd Street to S. 1st Street
- South, along S. 1st Street, from Birch Avenue to Highway 212



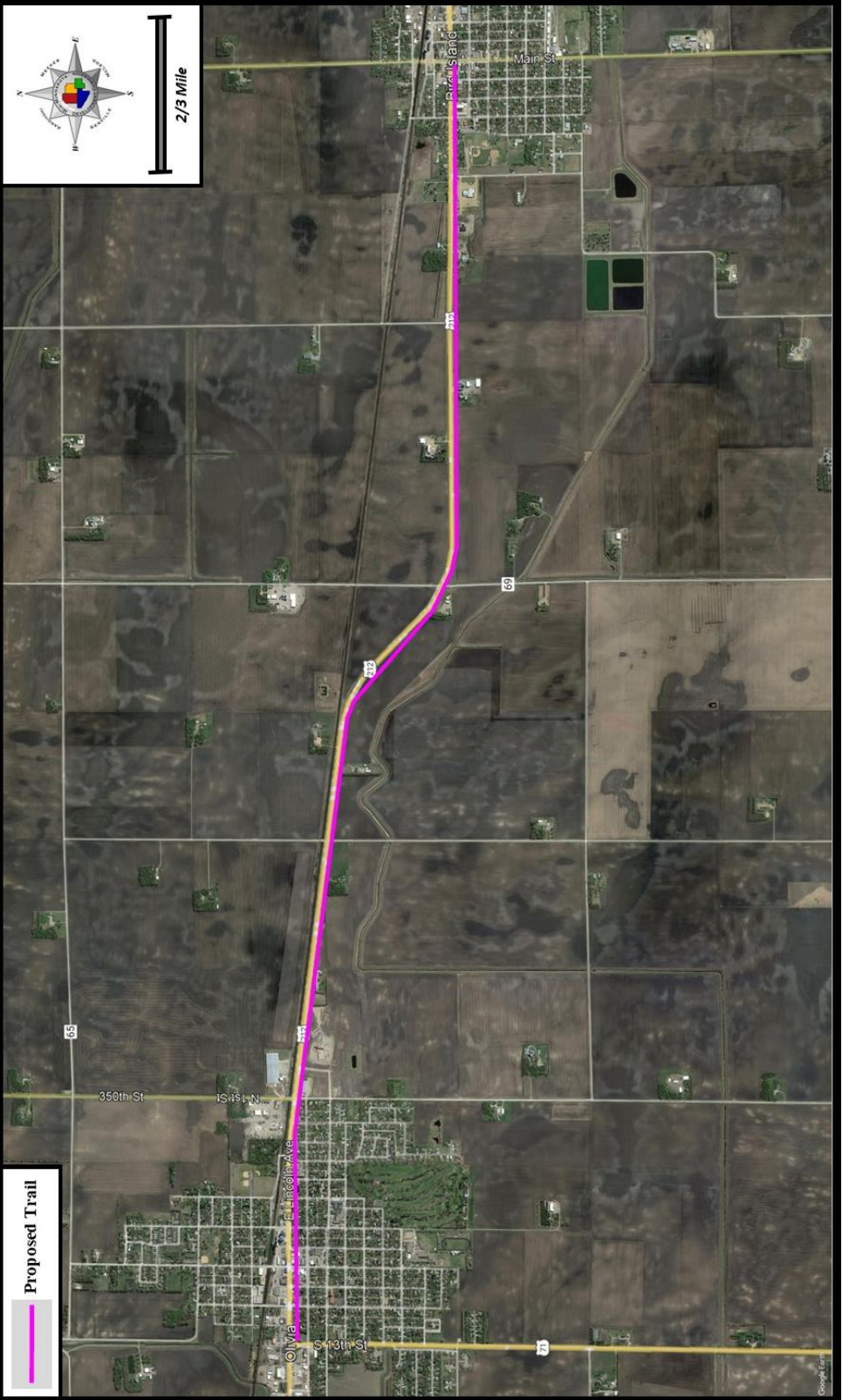
(Proposed trail location on 13th Street)



(Trail example)

There is also some community interest in extending a trail from Bird Island to neighboring Olivia, along U.S. Highway 212. This trail segment would benefit residents from both communities for both exercise and leisure purposes. The trail would also increase safety for bikers that currently use U.S. Highway 212. If completed, this paved, 10-foot wide, multi-purpose trail, would be approximately 5.5 miles parallel to U.S. Highway 212. The trail will travel along the south-side of the highway from U.S. Highway 71, in Olivia, to Renville County Road 5, in Bird Island. Please see the map below for a visual representation.

Bird Island to Olivia Trail Map



Long Range Overview of Pedestrian and Bicycle Flow and Highway 212

There are many benefits that come with U.S. Highway 212 running through the City of Bird Island. U.S. Highway 212 provides easy access for Bird Island's industries and stores, for those that provide professional services, and also for residents. U.S. Highway 212 must also be considered, beyond the local level, for its importance as an important county, regional, and state transportation corridor. U.S. Highway



212 is designated both as a “principal artery” and as an “interregional corridor”. These designations signal that the State of Minnesota desires improved and maintained traffic flow along the corridor, with limited stops and slowdowns.

All indications are that traffic, for both general motorists and for heavy commercial trucking, will continue to increase in the coming years. An increase of residents in places along the corridor, along with expanded industry and business development, will likely add to traffic volumes.

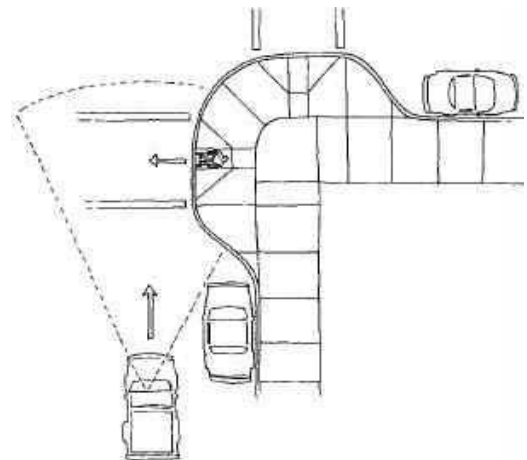
The above U.S. Highway 212 information should be considered when developing a long-term vision for pedestrian and bicycle travel within the city. The highway presents challenges to the natural flow of pedestrian and bicycle users in the community. The two-lane highway, along with high and increasing traffic, presents crossing difficulties. Safety concerns must be addressed. Some of these concerns could be addressed following the following prescribed project recommendations. However, other long-term solutions may be needed as crossing concerns rise with increased motorized traffic. Bird Island's outlook includes residential growth, which will also increase the number of pedestrians and bicyclists in need of a safe highway crossing. Given the importance of U.S. Highway 212 to the state's network of key highways, there will likely be little state interest in slowing or stopping traffic in many locations. As safe highway crossings become more difficult, the City may need to consider additional grade-separated pedestrian crossings within the community.

Sidewalk Extension

The intersection of Main Street and U.S. Highway 212 is an example of a location where sidewalk curb extensions could be considered as an additional safety feature. This chapter section explains what sidewalk extensions are, along with their benefits and drawbacks.

Many communities use curb extensions (also called bump-outs or bulb-outs) as a pedestrian safety measure at key intersections. A curb extension is an extension of the sidewalk into the roadway that reduces the roadway's crossing distance for pedestrians, while minimizing their exposure to vehicular traffic. The primary benefits of curb extensions are:

- Increased pedestrian visibility at intersections through improved sightlines.
- Decreased pedestrian exposure to vehicles as a result of the shortened crossing distance.
- Encouragement of slower turning speeds for vehicles, due to a tighter curb radius.
- Prevention of vehicles from illegally passing other vehicles that are turning.
- Reduction of illegal parking at corners.



The incorporation of curb-extensions is one of many strategies that can be considered to enhance pedestrian safety. In some cases, median refuges, raised crossings, or a combination of strategies may be more appropriate.



Temporary curb-extensions are often used by communities to determine if this is the most appropriate safety improvement. These are placed before constructing a permanent curb-extension at an intersection to ensure the change will have the desired effect. In some locations, curb-extensions may hinder large trucks from turning. Temporary curb extensions can be used to see if this will be a problem before spending significant funds and more permanently altering infrastructure. Due to costs associated with the demolition and reconstruction of curbs, re-grading of the roadway, curb ramp construction, realignment of utility lines, poles and hydrants, repaving, and relocation of any catch-basins, permanent curb extensions can be quite expensive. However, while costly, curb extensions have many safety benefits which could be fully realized at the intersection of Highway 212 and Main Street.

Bike Infrastructure and Bike Sharrows

The City of Bird Island currently has minimal bicycle infrastructure. The bike infrastructure that is there is in need of upgrades.



Bike racks would allow riders to secure their bikes and keep the sidewalks and streets clear of parked bikes. These racks should be strategically placed in key destinations to encourage the use of bicycles for short trips. Good locations for bike racks include city hall, parks, restaurants, and the grocery store.

Bike repair stations are also convenient additions for local and visiting bicyclists. Bike repair stations typically provide a manual air pump for tires, tools to adjust brakes

and derailleurs and other bicycle maintenance items. Good Bird Island locations for a bike repair station include parks and along any future bike trails.

The City may also consider the incorporation of “shared lane markings” called “sharrows” on designated bike routes. The name sharrows is derived from the words shared and arrows. They are pavement markings used to mark a designated bike route. Placed in the travel lane, they encourage bicyclists to ride in a safe position outside of the door zone (where the driver’s side door of parked cars open). Besides providing bicyclists with proper positioning, sharrows also give additional legitimacy to bicycles. This empowers bicyclists to more effectively share the road with motorists and can also aid with directional and wayfinding guidance. Motor vehicles are still permitted to drive in travel lanes where shared lane markings/sharrows are present. However, when bicyclists are traveling in the same lane motorists must travel behind them until it is safe to pass. When passing bikes, motorists must give the bicyclist at least three feet clearance (between bicyclist and the side of the passing vehicle). Bike sharrows are typically very inexpensive and require only street paint and signage. Bird Island’s residential roads are wide enough to accommodate this type of bike infrastructure.



Signage and Street Paint

Pedestrian signage is a key component to a well-organized, safe transportation network system. Some of the City’s existing signage is in need of replacement due to rust and fading. This new signage will be crucial along proposed sidewalks and trails, for both safety and wayfinding. Street paint and markings will also allow for better understanding and promote communication between motor vehicles and pedestrians. On city streets, drivers are more aware of pedestrian crossings and infrastructure, when proper street markings are present. If the city chooses to implement bike sharrows, painted bike lanes will help drivers and bikers navigate without conflict. To ensure continued visibility, the city should budget for fresh street paint every two years.



Railroad Pedestrian Improvements

Currently, Twin Cities and Western Railroads has a railway through Bird Island located north of Highway 212. For pedestrians, crossing over the railway tracks poses a safety concern with the current infrastructure. With the addition of the new proposed sidewalk segment from Highway 212 to Sunrise Avenue, additional railway improvements can be completed at the same time. There are a number of ways pedestrian safety can be improved at



railroad crossings by selectively using passive and/or active devices. Passive devices include: fencing, channelization, swing gates, pedestrian barriers, pavement markings and texturing, raising the approaches to the track and the area between the tracks to the level of the top of the rail creating flat level areas to cross. Active devices include flashers; audible active warning devices; automated pedestrian gates; pedestrian signals; variable message signs; and blank-out signs.

Crossings being considered for safety improvements should be reviewed by a diagnostic team. An engineering study should be conducted to select the appropriate warning devices for each crossing. All pedestrian railroad crossings should be designed to minimize the time required for pedestrians to cross, with emphasis on avoiding entrapment of pedestrians on or between sets of tracks. In addition, rail safety laws that prohibit dangerous actions around rail crossings should be enforced.

CHAPTER 5: Strategies and Implementation

This chapter lays out suggested strategies for implementation for Bird Island Active Living Transportation Plan implementation. Special attention has been given to the “Five E’s” – Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering, and Evaluation - along with a sixth “E” which stands for “Equity” or “Everyone”. The implementation plan has been developed after consideration of information gathered and discussed in the previous chapters of this document.

Active Living Transportation Plan Goals

- Provide essential infrastructure that encourages physical activity and makes active transportation an easy, accessible, and enjoyable option.
- Raise awareness of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and improve the overall health and safety of Bird Island residents.
- Promote and implement policies and practices that create more active communities by increasing opportunities for nonmotorized transportation and improving access to recreational activities.

Objectives and Strategies

The objectives below describe *what* could be done to address active living transportation within the community and attain the goals listed above. Associated strategies outline *how* the objectives could best be accomplished. This section outlines an approach to implement those strategies.

Objective 1: Generate Community-wide support for active living and collaborate with key partners to drive changes in the community.

Strategy 1.1 – An Active Living Transportation Committee takes the lead role in promoting and educating citizens about this Active Living Plan working to increasing local “buy-in”. This committee may have the same membership as the committee utilized for the Active Living Plan’s development. It is possible that this roster could be used as a starting point, with other willing community members added, as appropriate.

Description – The Active Living Transportation Committee, with assistance from City staff, are most knowledgeable of the benefits and proposed goals of this Active Living Plan. They will reach out to the community’s elected officials, businesses, organizations, and residents to garner support to move this Active Living Plan

forward. Promotional work will be key in increasing the number of walking and bicycling community members. Helping these community members incorporate walking and bicycling into their daily routine, as part of a healthy lifestyle, is essential. Work could include providing the local newspaper with prepared articles and creating an Active Living page on the City's website are two examples of ways to accomplish this objective. Any new infrastructure that is added or improved to support walking and biking should be shared and celebrated. Creating and distributing brochures that include maps showing bicycle and walking routes, possibly with mileage/distance information, is another strategy for increasing physical activity. Bird Island already has multiple events with activities that involve running and bicycling. These should remain and be enthusiastically promoted and supported. Other events, such as "Bicycle to Work Day" should be considered as an additional community-promoted event.

The Committee may also consider promoting "workplace wellness programs" to employers in the community. Even small businesses can implement workplace wellness programs with only minimal expense. Information on simple workplace wellness program ideas could be researched, compiled, and distributed to existing and incoming employers. The local Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) program, accessed via Renville County Public Health, may be able to assist with this activity.

Strategy 1.2 – Partner/collaborate with other interested partners and community organizations to who can assist with Active Living Plan strategy implementation.

Description – There are some organizations who have already shown their support for active living and others that would likely join the effort after learning more. The Active Living Transportation Committee should continue to collaborate with local **SHIP and other Public Health-focused workers**, who can be valuable partners. **Carris Health/CentraCare** will also consider local/community requests for activities that improve health, wellness, and safety. Their wellness programming empowers people to build healthy habits. **The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and Renville County's Highway Department** have jurisdiction of several roads within the community. As such, any plans for adding or improving walking and bicycling infrastructure along these roads will require their collaboration. **Local law enforcement** should be included with Active Living Transportation efforts, to provide enforcement assistance, when/where needed (e.g., for problem areas and/or to ensure additional safety during walking and/or bicycling events). **Service clubs and organizations** can be recruited to help promote and manage various events or activities that support healthy living initiatives. As new trails are constructed in the community, these same organizations may be willing to adopt a section of a trail to assist the City with routine maintenance activities.

Where no organizations already exist, the Active Living Transportation Committee can support the formation of new groups to tackle various aspects of this Active Living Plan. For example, local bicycle enthusiasts may be interested in organizing a bicycle club. Local employers could be encouraged to work together to offer small incentives to workers who walk or bike to work.

As with every Active Living Plan objective, it is important to continuously plan, implement, and evaluate new initiatives that increase physical activity and healthy, active living.

Objective 2: Provide the necessary safety education of citizens to help ensure that walking and bicycling in the community can be an enjoyable, safe activity.

Strategy 2.1 – Increase residents' skills and safety knowledge related to biking and walking in the Bird Island community.

Description – Residents of all ages should be educated on safety and understand the rules of the road. The Active Living Transportation Committee and City should provide information on state and local laws along with other safety information on the City's website, on an Active Living webpage. Safety and education-focused articles can be written and provided to the local newspaper for publication.

The Active Living Transportation Committee could reach out to the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, which works to train bicyclists, of all ages, on bicycle safety. There may be an opportunity to organize classes within Bird Island during summer months. The Active Living Transportation Committee could assist with logistics (e.g, meeting location), advertising, and class recruitment. "Bike rodeos" can also be held. Bike rodeos are a fun activity that can be incorporated to teach children and, by extension, their parents, basic safety techniques. These events also provide opportunities to make sure young riders have properly-fitted helmets. Civic organizations can be encouraged to provide helmets to youngsters or support in some other way. These groups should always be recognized and celebrated for their contributions.

As off-road trails are added to Bird Island's infrastructure, it will be important to inform residents of proper trail etiquette. Bicyclists, runners, and other pedestrians should also be reminded to wear highly-visible, reflective gear and clothing, especially at dusk and at night, and all bicyclists should be educated on the importance of properly-fitted helmets.

Strategy 2.2 – Educate local motor vehicle users on laws and proper etiquette when interacting with both pedestrians and bicyclists.

Description – Work with local law enforcement and the Renville County TZD (Toward Zero Deaths) Safe Roads Coalition to educate drivers on laws that pertain to pedestrian and bicycle interaction. This information can be compiled and distributed to all local drivers. Education on distracted driving is also important, as distraction is a key factor in many accidents. Drivers should be reminded that bikes are allowed to use any street in the community, but also let them know about the City’s efforts to create and promote any “share the road” routes within the community. The BOLD School District’s driver education course is another opportunity to educate new drivers on laws related to pedestrian and bicycle interaction.

Objective 3: Improve and enforce city ordinances and planning documents to support a culture of active living throughout Bird Island.

Strategy 3.1 – Encourage and pass recommended changes to various plans and ordinances to improve the current and future pedestrian and bicycle environment.

Description – In Chapter 3, this Active Living plan includes suggested changes to City ordinances and planning documents. If implemented, these changes will improve the pedestrian and bicyclist environment throughout the community. The City should carefully consider these suggestions and provide the necessary document updates, when possible. In some cases, the City may wish to adjust suggested language prior to adoption. This is okay, as it is important that any approved changes be effective for Bird Island over the long-term.

Strategy 3.2 – Educate residents on key ordinances need to be followed, especially those related to sidewalk accessibility, and enforce these ordinances.

Description – The City has plans and ordinances in place that can be useful when implementing this Active Living Transportation Plan. However, these will only be helpful if they are used and enforced. The City should be diligent and consistently adhere to approved plans and policies to create and maintain a pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly environment.

Sidewalks and future trails should be well-kept and maintained. Education and enforcement will be necessary to keep sidewalks and trails from being blocked by parked vehicles, debris, or other items. Low hanging trees, bushes, and shrubbery must be trimmed, so as not to impede sidewalk use. Property owners should be reminded that some users may have poor eyesight and or mobility issues, and that items left in the sidewalk can impose a safety hazard. In winter, City rules

surrounding snow and ice removal must be enforced. Residents should be encouraged to report sidewalks that are unsafe or in need of repair so they can be restored.

To encourage resident support for sidewalk expansion, the City should revisit resident obligations for sidewalk repairs and maintenance within residential areas. The City should also work closely with any new developers to ensure new subdivisions address pedestrian and bicyclist needs. When major rehabilitation or reconstruction occurs, the City should ensure plans are in place and implemented to support the healthy living transportation environment.

Objective 4: Make physical infrastructure improvements to address the needs identified in this Active Living Plan and improve pedestrian and bicycle safety while encouraging more physical activity.

(Note: Please see Chapter 4 for a more detailed explanation of key infrastructure needs highlighted in this plan.)

Strategy 4.1 – Provide infrastructure that supports improved pedestrian and bicycle access to identified key destinations (e.g., government offices, downtown businesses, parks).

Description – Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure is typically added over the long-term. Construction of additional sidewalks, off-road trails, and other identified improvements will likely need to be implemented in stages. More expensive infrastructure projects will need to be prioritized. Work should be coordinated with other construction projects (e.g., street improvements) whenever possible to maximize efficiency and cost-effectiveness. When projects involve MnDOT, Department of Natural Resources, and/or County rights-of-way, these units must be consulted.

The City should include funds in the annual budget to ensure continued progress with these projects. Competitive grant dollars, such as those provided by the Transportation Alternatives Program, may be available to help supplement City funds and mitigate costs.

Strategy 4.2 – Relocate and add crosswalks in several community locations.

Description – As outlined in Chapter 4 there are several locations where the need for a new crosswalk has been identified. Recommendations also call for the relocation of one crosswalk and to either improve an existing landing zone or completely

eliminate one other crosswalk. It is imperative that all crosswalk improvements include proper landing zones and high-visibility paint.

Strategy 4.3 – Improve pedestrian safety in crossing Highway 212.

Description – Making improvements to improve safety and convenience for pedestrians and bicyclists crossing U.S. Highway 212 should be considered this Active Living Plan’s highest infrastructure priority. This would include the incorporation of a sidewalk extension to improve visibility and minimize pedestrian and bicyclist time within the busy highway. Additional safety improvements are also proposed for the nearby railway crossing along Main Street.

Strategy 4.4 – Inventory current city sidewalks to determine present condition and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance and develop a plan.

Description – Within Chapter 4, there is a discussion about ADA requirements. Curb ramps at intersections and other sidewalk requirements are explained within the law. City staff should evaluate the community’s sidewalk network to determine any need for ADA-related modifications. After this evaluation has taken place, an implementation plan should be developed that identifies projects, shows continuous improvement, and projects full ADA compliance within a reasonable timeframe.

Strategy 4.5 – Determine locations to install bicycle racks and pedestrian benches and complete these installations.

Description – Bicycle racks are an important feature to have throughout the community to include when encouraging bicycle use. Benches, placed at key locations, will aid those who require a place to rest when walking to and from community destinations. This may be a particularly important feature for Bird Island’s older citizens. City organizations and businesses should be encouraged to sponsor the purchase and donate these racks and benches. SHIP has also helped to fund bicycle racks and may be able to provide further financial assistance in the future.

Strategy 4.6 – To provide for a network for safe, community-wide bicycle travel, identify key bicycle routes and provide necessary signage. Consider using “sharrows” on streets that need additional bicycle traffic awareness.

Description – Off-road trails are recommended in only a couple of Bird Island locations. City streets will continue to be the primary means of bicycle transportation. Chapter 4 highlights the need to designate a network of streets

bicyclists can use as primary routes of travel. These routes will require proper signage to guide bicyclists and caution motorists of the additional bicycle traffic.

The City may decide to go a level beyond simple bike route designation by designating some streets as “sharrow” routes. These routes would have stenciled sharrow markings on the roads to make motorists more aware of the fact they are sharing the road with bicyclists. Bike route signs and paint are relatively affordable improvements that can be made in the near term. These activities can have an immediate, positive impact on bicycle safety and are relatively easy ways to make Active Living Transportation Plan progress.

Implementation

The purpose of this section is to discuss how the City can best approach goal implementation, policies development, and strategies associated with this Active Living Transportation Plan. The City’s Active Living Transportation Committee will be called upon to champion Active Living Plan implementation. In addition to the Active Living Transportation Committee, the City’s staff and Council will play a large role. Bird Island’s Active Living Plan also includes a variety of other partners (current and potential) who should be engaged for successful plan implementation.

It will be important for the City and the Active Living Transportation Committee to maintain a close partnership with SHIP, the Renville County Highway Department, and local law enforcement. Mid-Minnesota Development Commission will also be available to connect the City and Active Living Transportation Committee with resources and provide guidance, as needed.

Active Living Plan implementation should include the following five strategies:

1. **Preparation & Collaboration:** Success requires that continuous effort be put forth to maintain existing and develop new and effective partnerships that support active living. Alone, the Active Living Committee cannot hope to achieve the goals of the Active Living Plan. Collaboration, with both public and private players, is necessary for goal achievement. An assessment of existing conditions, and resources is also necessary.
2. **Promotion and Programming:** Bird Island supports a variety of programs and events that encourage activity among residents. This should continue. New programs that provide incentives for healthy living and environments should be fostered were possible. Promotion and communication are essential to the success of any active living initiative. Promotion activities can also encourage wide resident support for physical/infrastructure improvements. The City and Active Living Transportation Committee should promote their vision and

advocate for actions that can be taken to advance active living goals. Working with local media to highlight activities and share success should be considered a high priority. The Committee/City should begin with some easier projects, considered “low hanging fruit”, generate momentum and a positive buzz amongst residents. All successes should be publicly celebrated, as this will help to garner support for larger projects.

3. **Policy:** Chapter 3 discussed opportunities for the City to improve current policies and implement healthy living strategies. In addition to implementing these recommended changes, other components of this healthy living initiative will help to create an environment where healthy living is institutionalized and comes naturally.
4. **Education and Awareness:** This activity is closely-tied with promotion. The public should be fully-informed of the City’s healthy living initiatives and understand the benefits of active living. Motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians must be aware of how to safely interact with one another at street level. These education and awareness efforts need to be inclusive of all residents (e.g., youth, seniors, English-language learners, the business community).
5. **Physical Projects:** One of the primary outcomes of this Active Living Plan is to make physical/infrastructure changes that improve the built environment for active living. Strategies 1 – 4, if well-implemented, will help to create political and public will for the infrastructure investments and maintenance described in this plan. The City should begin making physical active living-focused improvements as soon as possible, beginning with less expensive investments (e.g., paint high-visibility crosswalks, and begin adding signs for bicycle routes).

When implementing the above strategies, it is important to maintain the flexibility to capitalize on opportunities as they arise. Goal elasticity may be required. If a group or entity wishes to champion a desired Active Living Plan-focused project or activity, it is important to give them the latitude to proceed. When no champion emerges on certain projects, the Active Living Committee may need to take that leading role. Without a champion, there is little likelihood of progress.

Implementation Matrix

The Implementation Matrixes, shown below, are intended to guide the efforts of the City and the Active Living Committee (ALC). The matrixes are split between physical infrastructure improvements and non-infrastructure strategies (Preparation & Collaboration, Promotion & Programs, Education & awareness, and policy).

Under each strategy the matrix provides a level of priority, suggests responsible parties, and designates a short-, mid-, or long-term timeline. Short-term strategies

are intended to be started within one year with a goal of completion within three years. Mid-term projects should be completed within three to six years. Long-term projects are typically completed within ten years. Some strategies are intended to be on-going and will continue throughout the life of the City’s active living efforts.

It is advised that the Active Living Transportation Committee and City identify “low hanging fruit”-type projects and start on these within the six months of the adoption of this Active Living Transportation Plan. This will demonstrate to the community that the intent is not to let this plan sit on a shelf, but to be used as a working document. Tackling these smaller projects will also provide some of the momentum required for larger projects. The projects described below are given timeframes of short-term, mid-term and long-term. Short-term are projects within the first two years of the plan’s adoption.

Implementation Matrix for [Non-Infrastructure Strategies](#):

Implementation Matrix					
Strategy	Priority	Responsible Party**		Timeline	
		Lead	Support	*ST or LT	Notes
Hold regular meetings of the Active Living Transportation Committee and develop sub-committees as needed.	High	ALTC	City staff, SHIP, MMDC, and other identified contributors, as needed	ST	Ongoing
Develop a close partnership with SHIP, county, school, businesses, & service organizations and work together to increase opportunities for physical activity.	High	ALTC	All parties highlighted within the Strategy	MT	Ongoing
Sidewalk condition/ADA review and planning.	High	City Staff	ALTC, MMDC	ST	Ongoing
Develop marketing and education materials and employ use of City website for distribution.	High	ALTC	City staff, SHIP, off-shelf materials from State and others	ST	Ongoing
Provide opportunities for bicycle safety education in the community.	Moderate	ALTC	SHIP, City staff, City organizations	ST	Ongoing

Work with local businesses to implement employee wellness programs that include an active living component.	Low	ALTC	SHIP	MT	Ongoing
Organize an annual “alternative mode of transportation to work” (bike, walk, skip, gallop, etc.) day.	Moderate	ALTC	City Staff, SHIP	LT	Ongoing
Apply to become a Bicycle Friendly Community.	Moderate	ALTC	City Staff, SHIP, County Tourism Bureau, MMDC	MT	Ongoing

*Abbreviations used: ST = Short-term, MT = Mid-term, LT = Long-term

** Under the “responsible party”, the City’s Active Living Transportation Committee shall be abbreviated as the ALTC.

Implementation Matrix for [Infrastructure Strategies](#):

Implementation Matrix						
Strategy	Priority	Responsible Party		Timeline		
		Lead	Support	*ST or LT	Notes	
Sidewalk extension to improve safety while crossing U.S. Highway 212, at or near Main Street.	High	City	MnDOT, City, ALTC	MT	Need multiple funding sources	
Railway safety improvements across Twin Cities and Western Railroad line, along Main Street.	High	City	MnDOT, SHIP, ALTC	LT	Railway study needed	
Multipurpose trail along 13th Street, Grove Avenue, South 11 th Street, Elm Avenue, South 3 rd Street, Birch Avenue, and South 7 th Street.	Moderate to low	City	City, ALTC, Property Owners	MT	Grant funding needed	

Bicycle routes with proper signage and possible “Sharrows” on some routes.	Moderate to Low	City	ALTC, SHIP	ST, MT, & LT	High priority ST and Lower priority LT
Construct sidewalk along South 8 th Street, Birch Avenue, and Main Street	Medium	City	ALTC, Property Owners	LT	High priority ST and Lower priority LT
ADA planning and sidewalk repairs.	Medium	City	ALTC, City	LT	
Install biking infrastructure (e.g., bike racks and bike repair station).	Low	City	City, SHIP, ALC	MT	
Pedestrian signage improvements.	Low	County and City	City, ACL	ST to MT	
Street paint improvements and upkeep.	Low	County	City, ACL	LT	Street paint should be installed every 2 years.
Multipurpose trail from Bird Island to Olivia along Highway 212.	Low	City and County	City, SHIP, MnDOT	LT	Grant funding needed

* Abbreviations used: ST = Short-term, MT = Mid-term, LT = Long-term

** Under the “responsible party”, the City’s Active Living Committee shall be abbreviated as the ALC.

Note: The City’s contracted engineering firm, currently Bolton and Menk, is included as part of “City”

Funding

While a variety of worthwhile projects are discussed within this Active Living Plan, each comes with a cost. Non-infrastructure activities may be inexpensive but are likely to cost volunteer and/or staff time. Infrastructure costs range from relatively inexpensive (e.g., paint or signage) to quite expensive. The community of Bird Island will need to find funds that can be dedicated toward projects over time. Identifying or creating local funding sources that can be used as matching funds for available grants will help to stretch the City’s local investment. **The City will also need to determine how to fund needed sidewalk expansion as well as ongoing maintenance (e.g. Who will pay and/or be responsible?).**

When determining whether to fund projects, the City will need to consider all costs – beyond construction and land use. Health impacts, sprawl, the sense of community, and the City’s ability to attract businesses, residents, and visitors must also be considered, as should any ongoing maintenance costs.

The availability of outside funding tends to ebb and flow. The City and its residents need to remain vigilant, so the community can capitalize on opportunities that do become available. The following list provides examples of commonly-accessed funding sources. This list is not all-inclusive:

Minnesota Department of Transportation – Transportation Alternatives Program
www.dot.state.mn.us/ta/

MnDOT’s District 8 Transportation Alternatives Program has annually awarded approximately \$700,000. Eligible Transportation Alternatives Program projects include construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for non-motorized transportation, including sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle signals, traffic calming measures, lights and other safety-related infrastructure, ADA compliance, and conversion of abandoned railroad corridors for trail use. State rules prohibit the use of these funds for engineering activities and the purchase of rights-of-way.

As the funds originate with the federal government, there are federal requirements attached. Transportation Alternatives Program applications for cities with less than 5,000 residents must be sponsored by their county. Counties may also apply for this funding and it may be in the City’s best interest to collaborate with Renville County to achieve common goals. As these federal projects require more capacity for grant administration, this can be a good arrangement for involved cities. Typically, counties will ask the involved cities to contribute the required matching funds, though this may vary. The minimum local match is no less than 20 percent of total project costs, and larger local matches will strengthen any grant application.

Transportation Alternatives Program projects are awarded four years prior to project commencement.. However, in order to accelerate a project, communities typically have an option to pay all of the associated costs up-front, with the understanding that the grant award would reimburse the City later.

The Transportation Alternatives Program application process begins in the fall of each year with a letter-of-intent process. Final applications are normally due in early-January. Mid-Minnesota Development Commission is part of this process and should be contacted by any City interested in accessing this funding stream.

Greater Minnesota Legacy Grants

www.legacy.leg.mn/funds/parks-trails-fund

Greater Minnesota Legacy Grants are funded as a result of the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment, which was passed by voters in 2008. This amendment increased the state's sales tax by .375 percent and dedicated 14% of new revenues to a Parks & Trails Fund. A portion of this Parks & Trails Legacy Fund supports regional parks and trails throughout Greater Minnesota. Greater Minnesota Legacy Grants are available to assist with the acquisition, development, improvement, or restoration of regionally significant parks and trails outside of the seven-county metropolitan area. As such, any local unit of government, outside the seven-county metropolitan area, is eligible to apply.

Eligible projects include land acquisition for development of trails or outdoor recreation facilities; development, redevelopment or rehabilitation of existing trails or outdoor recreation facilities; and protection or restoration of natural resources within parks and trails. Projects must be within a designated regional park or trail in Greater Minnesota. There is no minimum or maximum amount for funding requests and applicants are not required to provide a match. However, projects that include non-state cash contributions will receive additional consideration. Past grants have ranged from \$20,000 to \$1.5 million.

The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks & Trails Commission receives, reviews, and evaluates all applications. Projects are selected based upon criteria in the Parks & Trails Legacy Plan, the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks & Trails Strategic Plan and Funding Program, the availability of a non-state cash match, and the project's overall quality, readiness, and design.

Regional Trail Grant Program

www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/trails-regional.html

The Regional Trail Grant Program serves to accelerate the acquisition and development of long-distance, regionally significant trails outside of the seven-county metropolitan area (Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington). Any local unit of government, outside of the seven-county metropolitan area, is eligible. Trail organizations and/or user groups may also apply, but only in coordination with a local unit of government.

Eligible funding uses include land acquisition from willing sellers; trail construction and/or restoration; permanent trailside improvements (e.g., drainage, parking, bathrooms); ADA compliance-related improvements; contracted maintenance; and

bridge construction and restoration. Projects within state park boundaries or in state trail corridors are not eligible for funding.

Grants may range from \$5,000 to \$250,000, though grants between \$100,000 and \$170,000 are common. Funds are distributed on a reimbursement basis and the grantee must fund at least 25% of the total project cost. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources reviews all applications and makes final funding decisions. Priority is given to projects that develop trails of significant length, projects involving trails that are expected to see high usage, and projects that provide a unique and interesting connections to the outdoors.

Regional Trail Grant Program grants are primarily-funded by the Minnesota State Lottery. Each year, the State Lottery returns 6.5% of gross sales to the state as a payment “in lieu of” sales tax. From these proceeds, state law dictates that 2.2% is to be spent on local trail grants. These dollars are divided between the Local Trails Connection Program and the Regional Trail Program. In some years, state bond sales and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund have also been used to fund local trail grant programs.

PeopleForBikes Community Grants

www.peopleforbikes.org/pages/community-grants

The PeopleForBikes Community Grant Program provides funding for important and influential projects that leverage federal funding and build momentum for bicycling in communities across the U.S. These projects include bike paths, rail-to-trail projects, mountain bike trails, bike parks, BMX facilities, and large-scale bicycle advocacy initiatives. Grants typically range from \$4,500 to \$8,000 and require a 50% local match.

Advocacy Advance Grants

www.advocacyadvance.org/grants

Advocacy Advance Grants help state and local organizations take advantage of unexpected opportunities to win, increase, or preserve funding for biking and walking. These REI-supported grants are fund short-term campaigns that will increase or preserve investments in active transportation, in communities where program decisions on how to spend federal, state, and local funding are being made. Average grants range from \$1,000 to \$10,000, with no local match required.

Active Transportation Program Grant

www.dot.state.mn.us/active-transportation-program/

Active Transportation (AT) Program grants are available to communities who wish to make walking, biking, and rolling better. The grant aims to increase the number of people walking and biking via both non-infrastructure and infrastructure projects. This grant requires no match and can be a great option for funding more expensive projects.

Other Funding and Educational Resources

Renville County's Statewide Healthy Improvement Partnership (SHIP) program may be a source of funding to help Bird Island implement low-cost infrastructure projects, such as bicycle racks, paint and signage for bicycle routes. At times, **Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Minnesota** has funds available to support active living-focused projects. The **Minnesota Bicycle Alliance** (www.bikemn.org) is a great source for educational assistance and materials. They also are the organization to contact if Bird Island is interested in pursuing a "Bicycle Friendly Community" designation. The **America Walks** organization (<https://americawalks.org>) offers both education and funding opportunities. The **Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center** (www.pedbikeinfo.org) can also be a helpful information resource. The **Minnesota Safe Routes to School (SRTS)** program provides educational resources. While it may be difficult to include local walking and bicycling-focused infrastructure projects, the **State bonding** bill should be considered. Local State Representatives may be able to help determine if state bonding is possible and provide sponsorship.

Local Support

When presented with the opportunity, community service organizations, businesses, user groups, and individuals are often willing to donate time and/or money toward worthwhile community projects.

Plan Maintenance

For the goals and strategies of this Plan to be successfully implemented, the City's Active Living Transportation Committee will need to remain actively-engaged after this Active Living Plan's adopted. The Active Living Plan should be considered a living document, which means it should be periodically updated as conditions and needs change. The City Council should also be provided with a regular update from the Active Living Transportation Committee.

Key partnerships will need to be formed and maintained to advance projects. While nurturing current collaborations, the Committee should always seek to forge new partnerships as opportunities present. Goals will be more easily achieved with wide

and diverse participation. Dedication to flexibility and to strong collaboration between the City, County, walking/bicycling groups, law enforcement, the BOLD school district, community education, parents, students, civic organizations, businesses, active and involved residents, and others will likely be the best way to achieve Plan's success.