

2025 Renville County Comprehensive Plan



Renville
COUNTY
Service · Stewardship · Shared Responsibility

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An Introduction to the Renville County Comprehensive Plan

This document is the Renville County Comprehensive Plan. A comprehensive plan is a document that provides a long-range vision for a community, outlining its future development strategies across various aspects like land use, housing, transportation, parks, and economic development. Essentially this comprehensive plan serves as a blueprint or roadmap for County growth and development over time.

Because it incorporates public input, this plan can be considered a foundational document and used to guide decision-making related to zoning, infrastructure or departmental investments, and other County development initiatives. Because it spans a long time horizon, it can ensure continuity of vision, despite changes in Renville County's elected or departmental leadership.

The Renville County Comprehensive Plan should not be considered inflexible or all-inclusive, but rather a living and evolving document. It is important for communities, like Renville County, to adapt and pivot as necessary to meet current needs and address immediate challenges. While one project or area of focus may be a priority today, future events and opportunities will almost certainly motivate decision makers to reprioritize and respond appropriately, in what they believe is their stakeholders' best interest. It is, therefore, important to revisit the plan on a regular basis, note changing conditions, note progress, and adjust, as appropriate.

In addition to being flexible, this comprehensive plan should be aspirational. While it provides a context of "what is", it also provides a framework upon which future development strategies can be stacked to achieve "what can be."

The development of this plan was approved by the Renville County Board of Commissioners in late 2023. Work would begin in the summer of 2024 and be completed in 2025. To assist with this plan, Renville County entered into a service agreement with Mid-Minnesota Development Commission, the regional development commission serving the four counties of Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville. Renville County Environmental Services Director Scott Refsland served as the County's lead for plan development. However, to provide additional guidance and provide feedback on the plan's development, a Renville County Comprehensive Plan Advisory Team was assembled. Members of this Advisory Team included:

Name	Role
Sara Benson	Director, Renville County Public Health (RCPH)
Jeff Filipek	Coordinator, Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) Coordinator, RCPH (Retired)
Corey Gruendemann	Mayor, City of Franklin
Joel Harmoning	Local Business Owner
Jon Hawkinson	Mayor, City of Olivia
Lisa Herges	Administrator, Renville County
Amy Hubbard	Administrator, City of Sacred Heart (Former)
Randy Kramer	Commissioner, Renville County Board (Retired)
Jeff Marlowe	Director, Renville County Public Works
Kelly O'Neill	Assistant Director, Renville County Environmental Services
Jill Pelzel	Local Resident
Steve Prax	Local Resident
Scott Refsland	Director, Renville County Environmental Services
John Robinson	Commissioner, Renville County Board
Stefanie Ryan	Communications and Grants Coordinator, Renville County
Brittany Schmalz	Coordinator, Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP)
Phil Smith	Local Resident
Sawyer Tersteeg	Local Business Owner
Shane Wohlman	Administrator, City of Renville
Jordan Zeller	Economic Development Coordinator, Renville County HRA/EDA
Mike Nicholas	Economic Developer/Planner, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission
Eric Day	Executive Director, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission

Additionally, to ensure significant public input, an extensive community survey was developed, in both English and Spanish, and then distributed throughout the County, with assistance from Comprehensive Plan Advisory Team members and others. The full results of this survey can be found in Appendix A of this document. In total, 366 individuals participated in this survey, providing valuable input, including a wide variety of comments on topics important to them.



**WE WANT
YOUR
FEEDBACK**

★★★★★

**HELP PLAN RENVILLE
COUNTY'S FUTURE!**



**Scan to take
survey in English**



**Escanear para realizar
la encuesta en español**

An Overview of Renville County

Geography

Renville County is found in Southwest-Central Minnesota, roughly 90 minutes to two hours west-southwest of Minneapolis. The County has an area of approximately 987 square miles, including 983 square miles of land and 4.2 square miles of water. Renville County terrain consists of wide expanses of relatively flat landscape, though some low rolling hills, drainages, lakes, and ponds, are present. Land within the County is primarily devoted to agriculture. A departure from this ag landscape can be found at the County's southwestern edge, which is dominated by the Minnesota River Valley, locally known as the "river bottom" area. In addition to the river, notable waters include Lake Allie, Boon Lake, and Preston Lake in the northeastern portion of the County, and the Buffalo Creek, Hawk Creek, and Beaver Creek waterways.



History

Renville County was established on February 20, 1855, and named after Joseph Renville, a fur trader and British officer during the War of 1812 who regularly communicated with local Native American Groups, primarily the area's Dakota people. The County was a location of great significance during the U.S. – Dakota War of 1862, with battles such as the Battle of Redwood Ferry and the Battle of Birch Coulee taking place within its borders. The Renville County seat was initially located in Beaver Falls. However, in 1900, after a 12-year dispute involving the Minnesota Supreme Court, it was moved to the railroad town of Olivia. The Renville County Historical Society Museum in Morton showcases the County's rich history.

Demographics

As of the 2024 census, Renville County had an estimated population of 14,348. The County's demographic breakdown includes approximately 85.3% White alone (not Hispanic or Latino), 1.8% American Indian and Alaska Native, 0.9% Black or African American, 0.9% Asian, and 10.6% Hispanic or Latino. 3.4% of County residents were foreign-born. 48.7% of residents identified as female and 51.3% identified as male. 22.4% were age 65 or older, and 23% were under the age of 18. Among the County's adult population were 773 veterans of the U.S. Armed Services.

The median household income for the period of 2019-2023, in 2023 dollars, was estimated at \$69,086, and the per capita income was \$36,131. 11.2% of Renville County's residents were estimated to live in poverty. The median home value, for owner-occupied units, was approximately \$151,900.

Features

Renville County offers a variety of features and amenities, including parks, historical sites, and community events. The County also has several parks, which provide opportunities for camping, horseback riding, fishing, hiking, and other leisure activities. Additionally, the County is known for its agricultural contributions and scenic landscapes.

Renville County's Municipalities

Renville County is home to 10 incorporated municipalities, all found along major State or U.S. Highways. The largest city, Olivia, serves as the County seat, but each of these communities has its own rural character and history,

Each of Renville County's communities is governed by a City Council. The City Council is a representative body, comprised of a mayor and several City Council members, that makes decisions about the community's policies and programs. The number of city council members may vary from one community to the next but all City Council members and mayors are elected by local voters, typically in November.

City Councils work to determine what is best for their community's well-being. Specific tasks include setting and following rules for City Council meetings; voting on budgets; approving policies, programs, and projects; and providing oversight to city staff.

To accomplish their work and serve their residents, cities hire staff, including administration, public safety, and infrastructure maintenance (i.e., public works). An updated list of city and township officials is maintained and made available at the Renville County website, <https://www.renvillecountymn.gov/>. The size of a community's staff will vary with the size of the community. In some cases, cities may opt to receive services from an outside entity, rather than providing it themselves. For instance, rather than staffing and maintaining their own city police force, a community may enter into an agreement with the Renville County Sheriff's Office to provide law enforcement-related services. A city may also contract for legal, engineering, planning, and other services when the scope of work and costs associated fail to justify the addition of city staff.

Either directly or by contract, each city is responsible for maintaining its own public street and utility infrastructure (water, sewer, electrical). Renville County's cities also maintain their own parks, community buildings, and other public amenities. Most cities provide emergency services to some degree, via volunteer fire departments and/or ambulance services.

The following pages provide brief descriptions of each incorporated Renville County municipality. Each description includes:

- A brief narrative description of the community, including population, location, establishment history, and/or other items of interest;
- Census information, including population trends, age and race information, median household income, poverty rate, employment rate, home ownership rate, and median property value;
- A short listing of larger community employers;
- Contact information for the city and local school district; and
- Two to three photos highlighting community features.

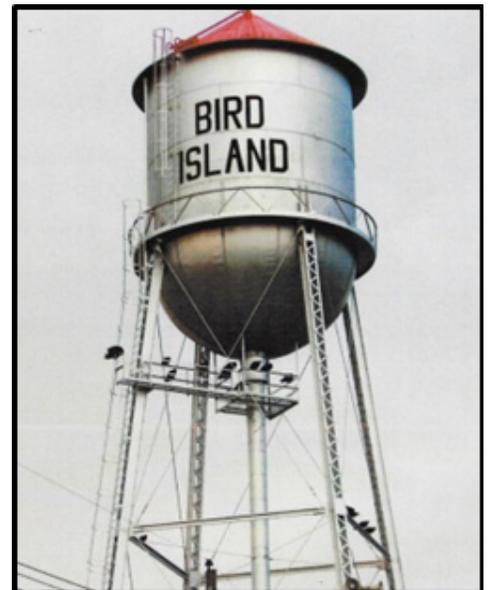


Photo of Bird Island Water Tower, Courtesy of the Renville County Historical Society and Museum.

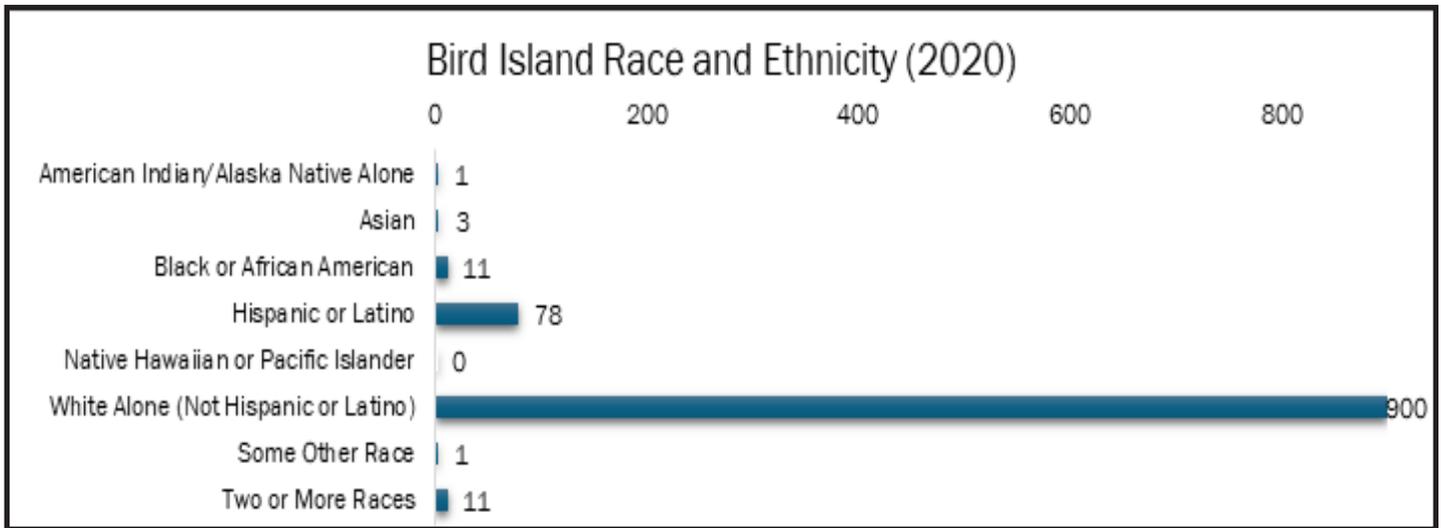
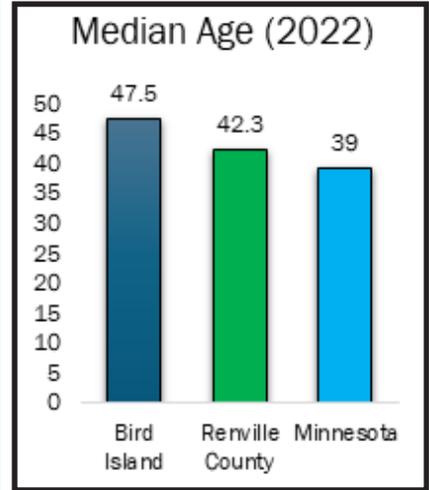
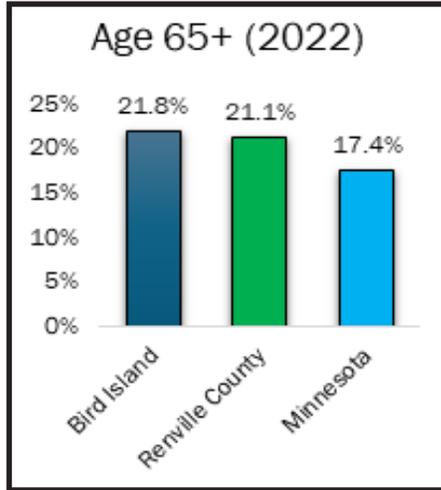
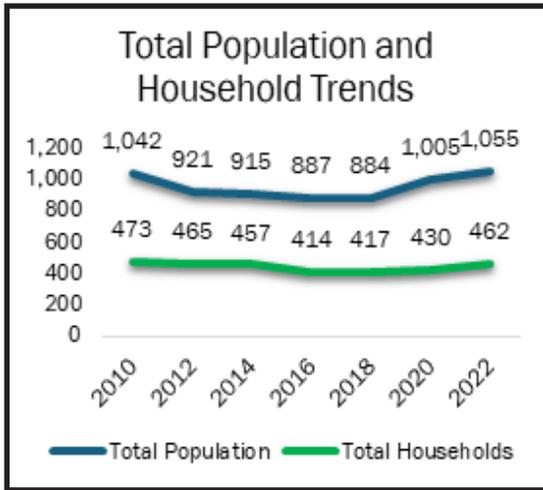
City of Bird Island

Bird Island (2022 population: 1,055) is a welcoming town nestled along U.S. Highway 212, approximately 94 miles west-southwest of downtown Minneapolis. Named after a nearby bird sanctuary, Bird Island was platted in 1878. Although the original “Bird Island” is no longer present, the town retains its charming character.

Notable Bird Island amenities include the Renville County Fairgrounds, compact but robust central business district, complete with a small public library, and the Bird Island Cultural Center.



Bird Island Census Data



Major Employers

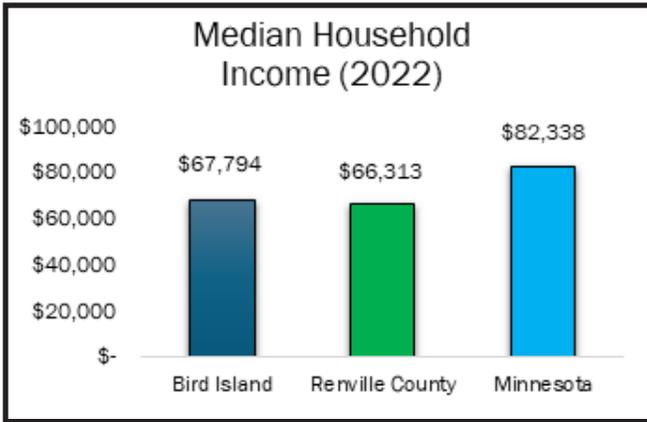
- Central Region Cooperative
- Kibble Equipment
- Rural Computer Consultants

Public School District

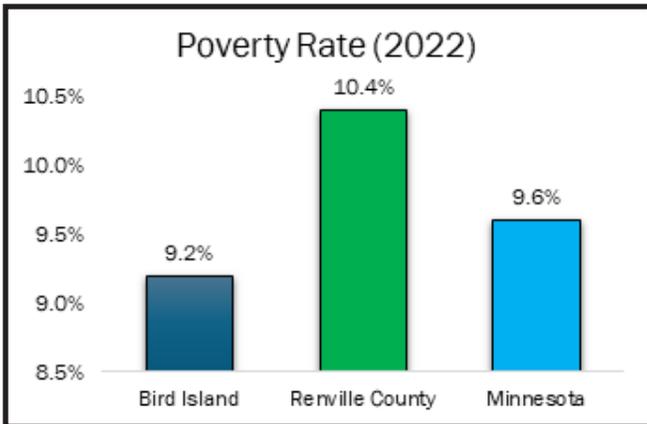
Bird Island-Olivia-Lake Lillian School District
 (#2534)
<https://bold.k12.mn.us/our-schools/district/>

City of Bird Island

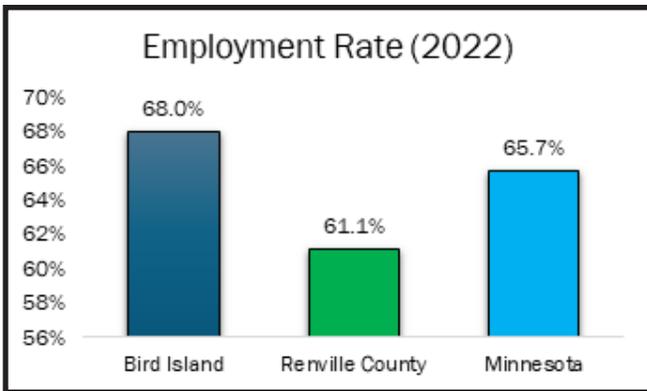
(320) 365-3371
<https://www.birdislandcity.com/>



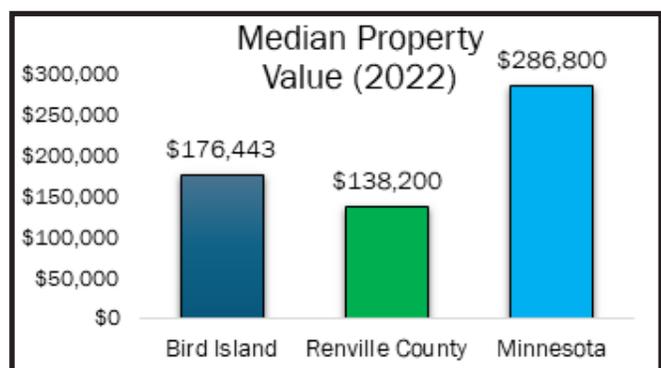
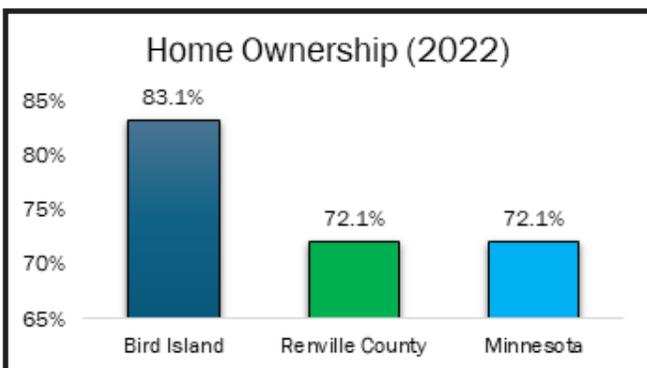
Bird Island Cultural Center



Downtown Bird Island



Historic Tinnes-Baker House (A Cultural Center Property)

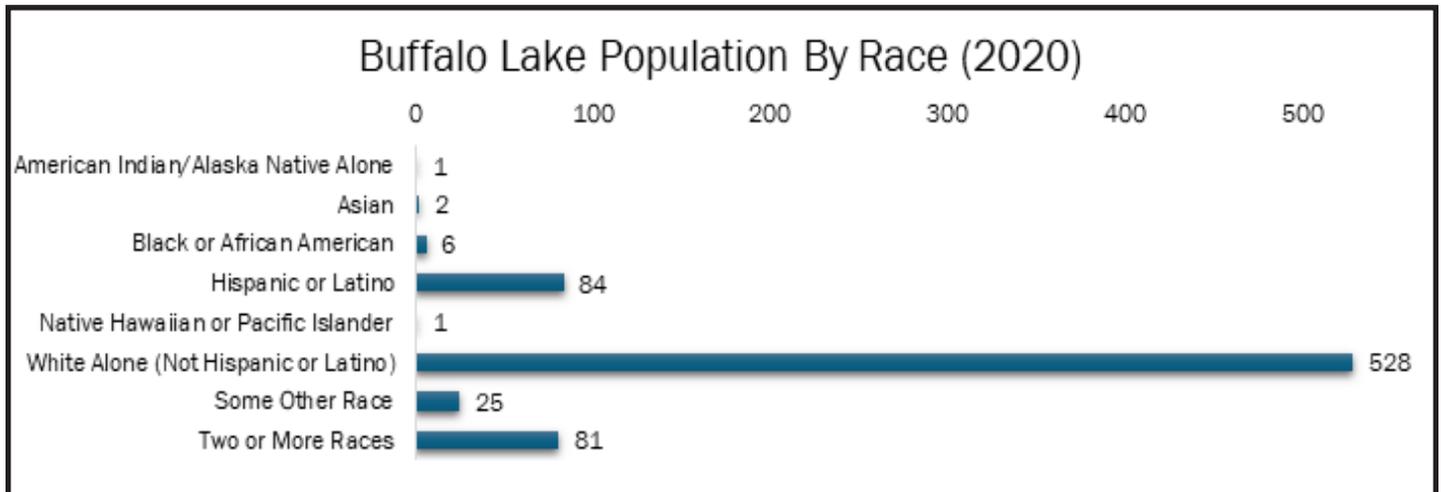
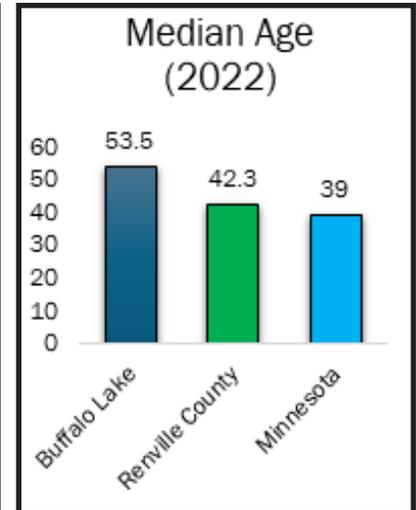
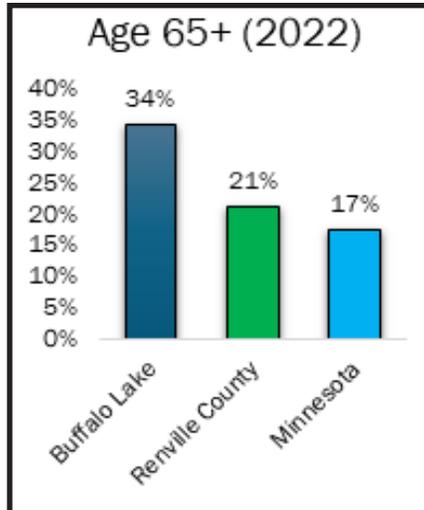
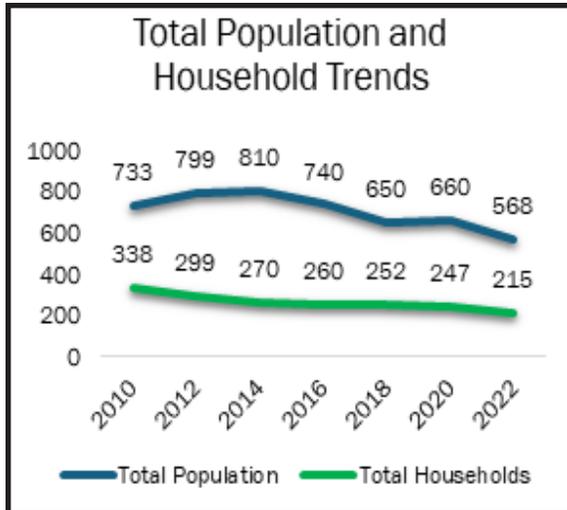


City of Buffalo Lake

The City of Buffalo Lake (2022 population: 568) is a small community located on the eastern edge of Renville County, approximately 80 miles west of downtown Minneapolis. The community is situated along U.S. Highway 212, which runs from the western suburbs of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area to and beyond the South Dakota border, eventually terminating in Montana. Buffalo Lake was platted in 1881 and was named after a nearby body of water.



Buffalo Lake Census Data



Major Employers

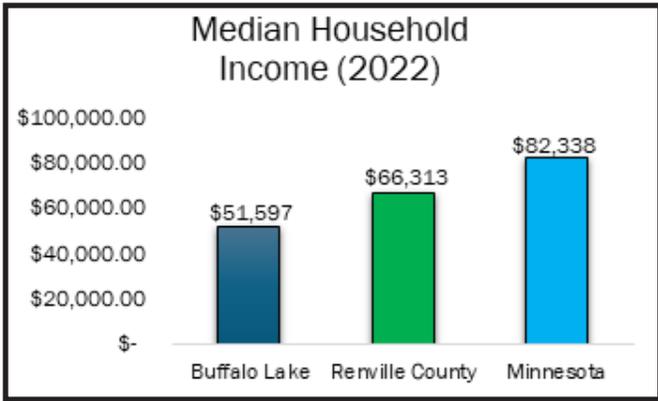
- 212 Beef Corporation
- Buffalo Lake Healthcare Center
- Central Region Cooperative
- K & S Millwrights

Public School District

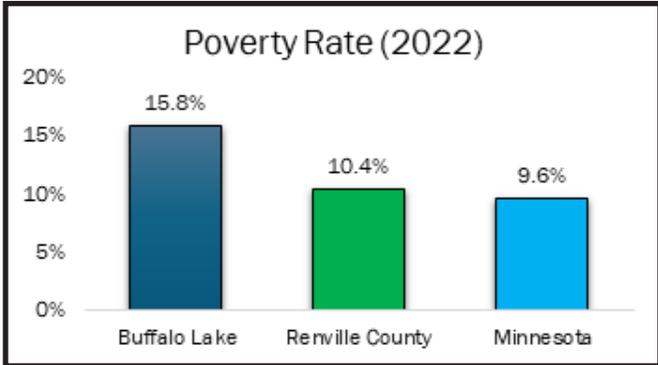
Buffalo Lake - Hector - Stewart (#2159)
<https://www.blhsd.org/>

City of Buffalo Lake

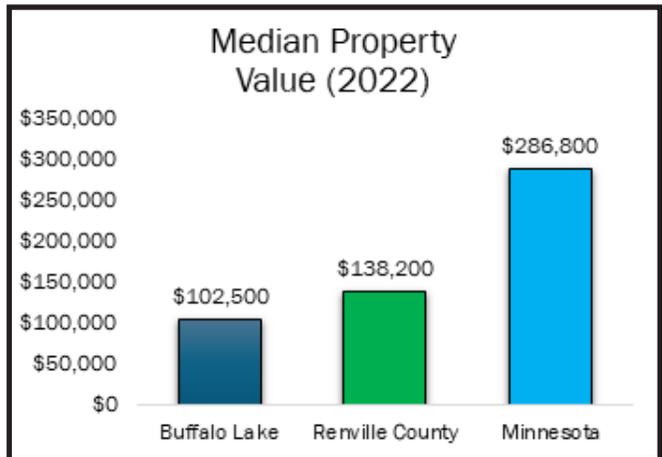
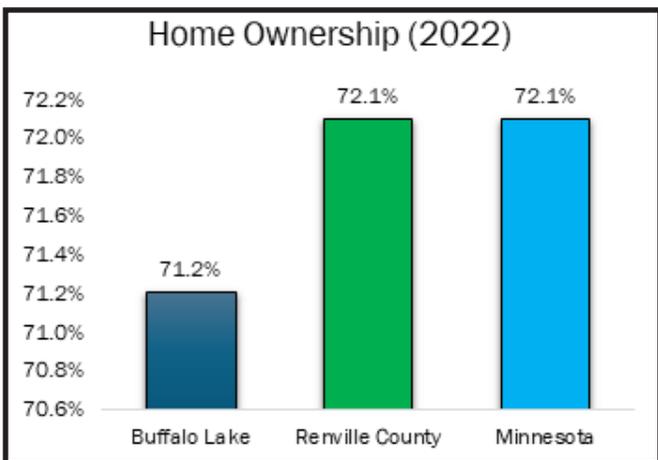
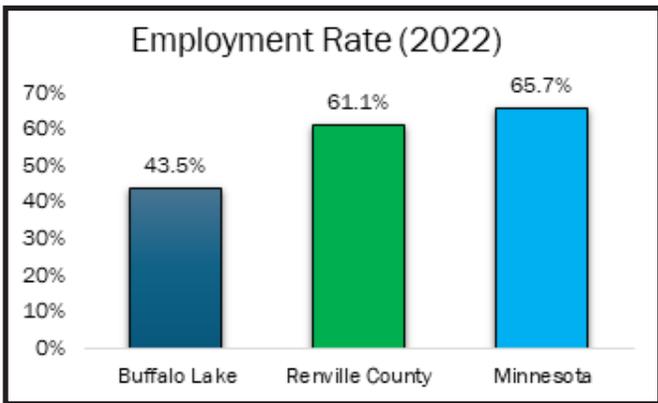
(320) 833-2272
<http://www.buffalolakemn.govoffice3.com/>



Central Region Cooperative Elevator

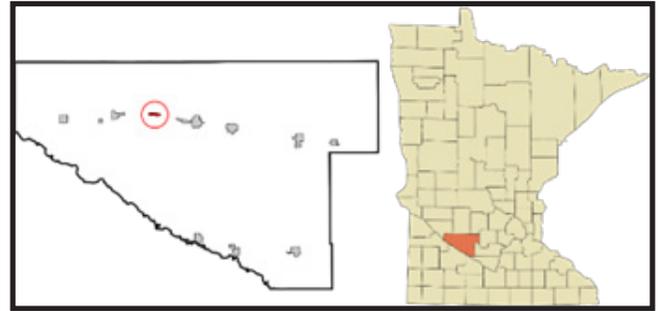


Gaines Park Playground and Shelter



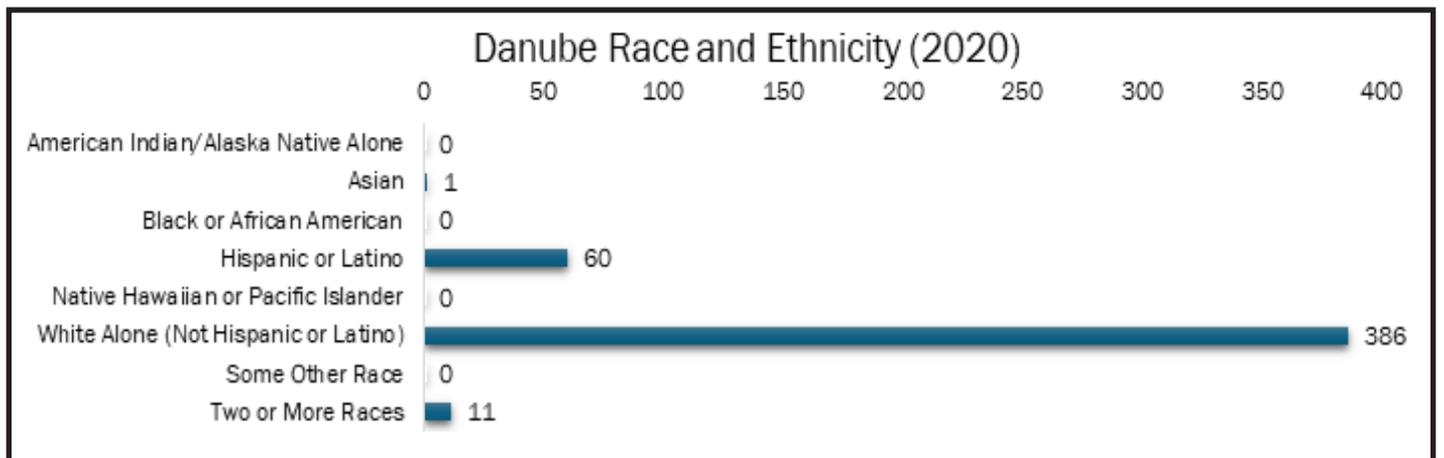
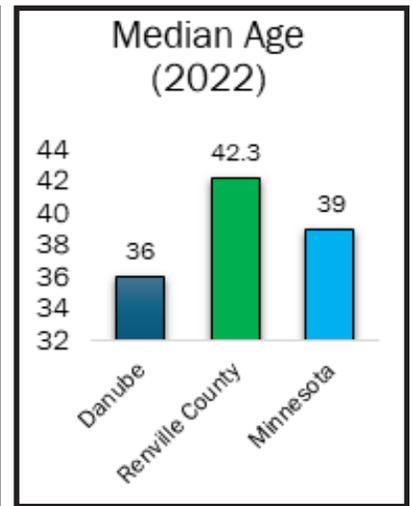
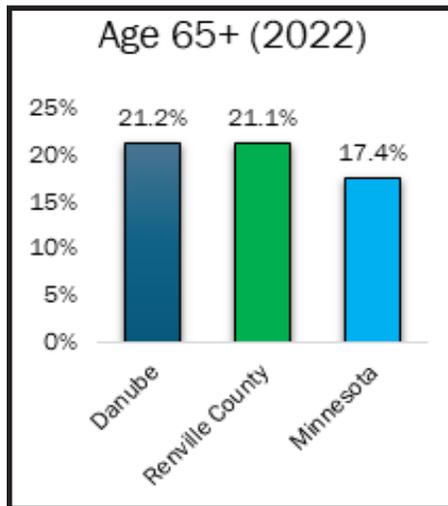
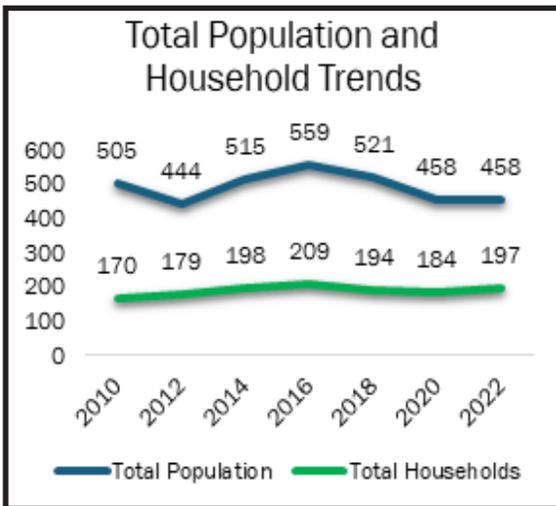
City of Danube

Named after the famed European river, the City of Danube (2022 population: 458) can be found along U.S. Highway 212, approximately 104 miles west-southwest of downtown Minneapolis.



The Danube community values its history and, in 2005, the Danube Historical Society relocated the city’s original “Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway Co. Depot” to the northeast corner of town, in view of its original location. It has since been restored and it now serves as a local museum. The Danube Veterans Memorial and Alumni Building are also found at this site. In recent years, the community also raised funds and developed a new, accessible park for all to enjoy.

Danube Census Data



Major Employers

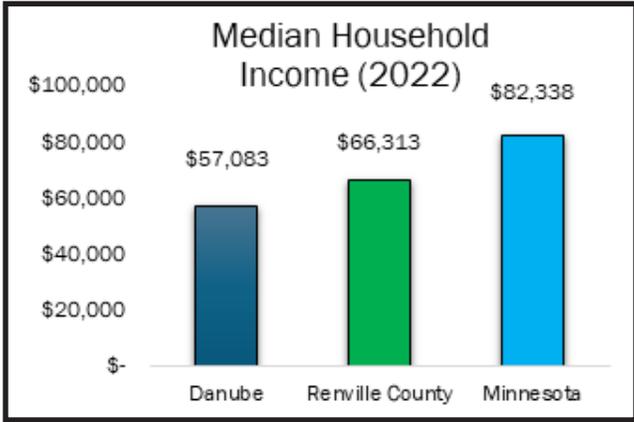
- Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power
- Grizzly’s Supply, Inc.
- Farmward Cooperative

Public School District

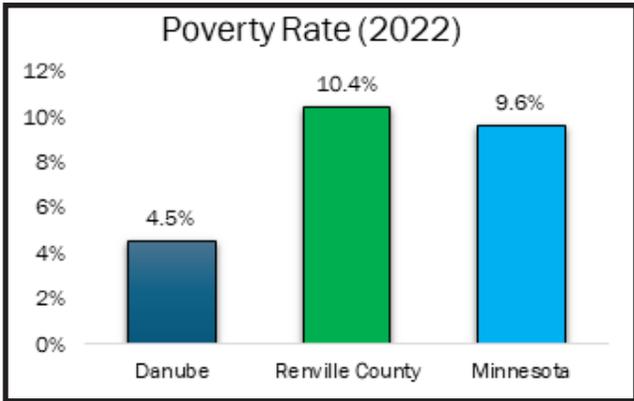
Renville County West Public Schools (#2890)
<https://www.rcw.k12.mn.us/>

City of Danube

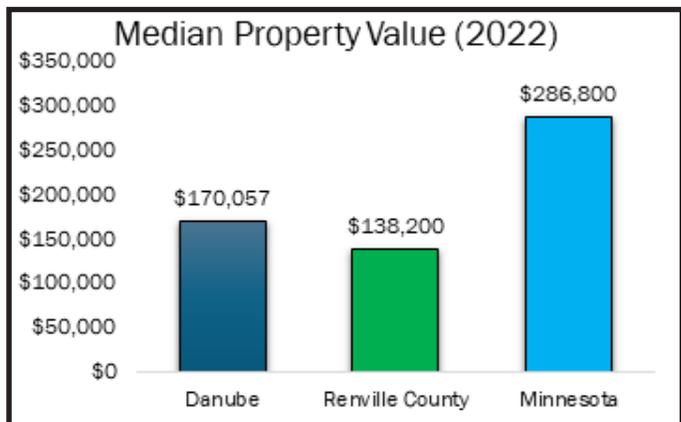
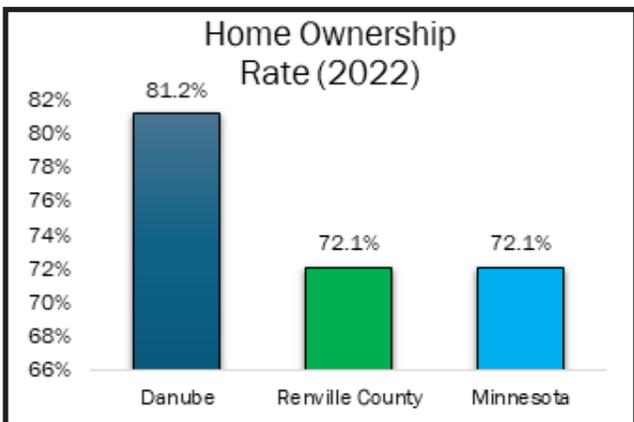
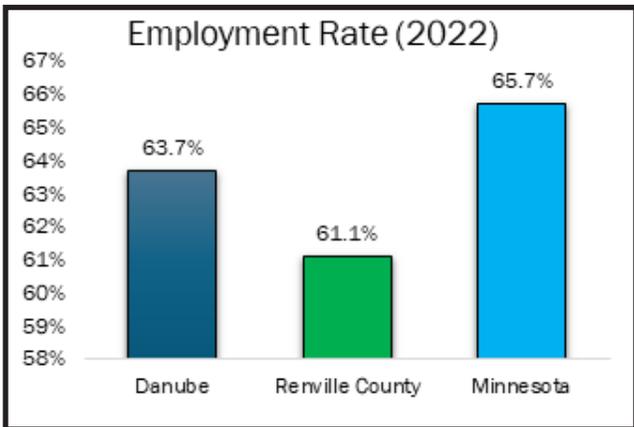
(320) 826-2563
<https://www.cityofdanube.com/>



Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway Co. Depot Museum

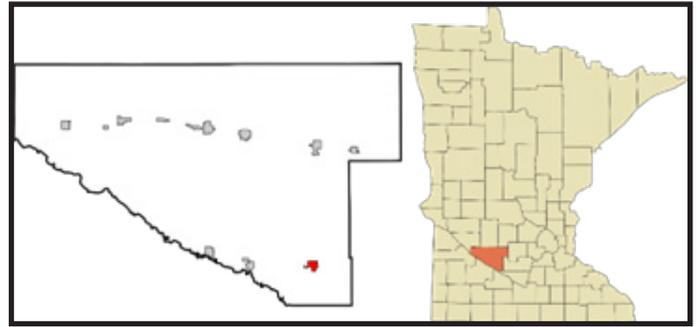


Danube's Heart of the City Playground

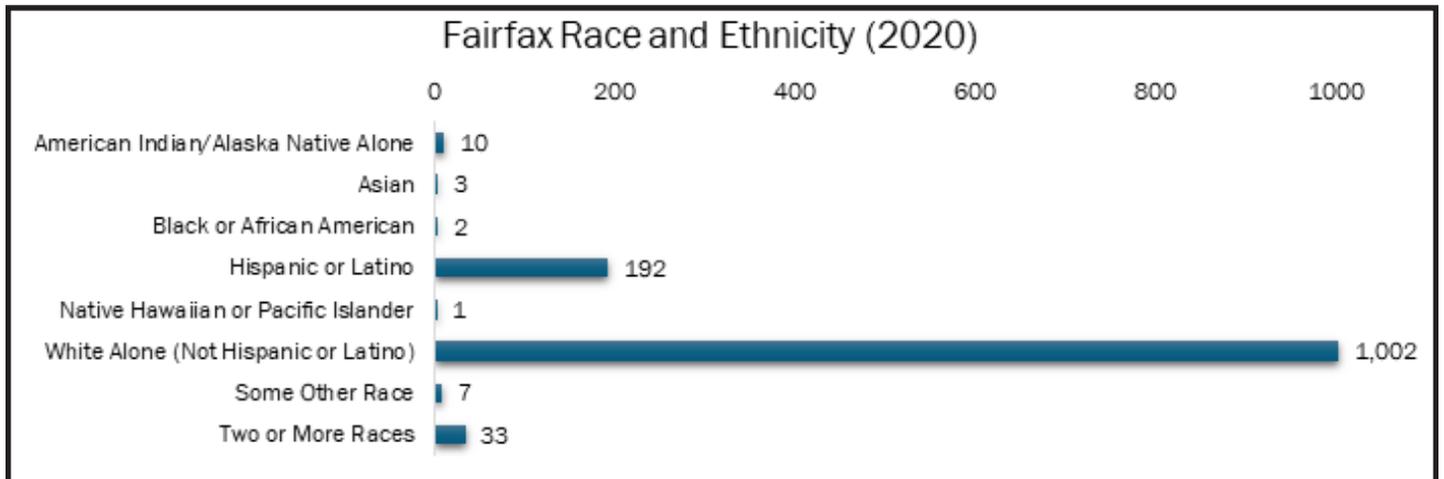
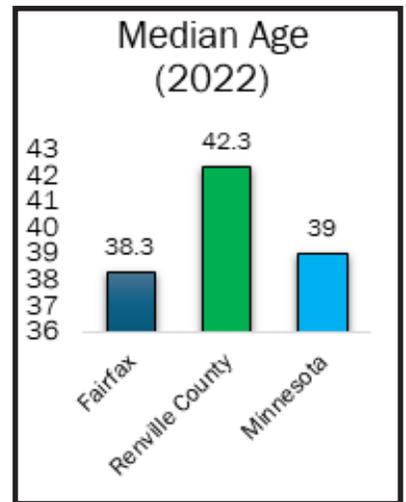
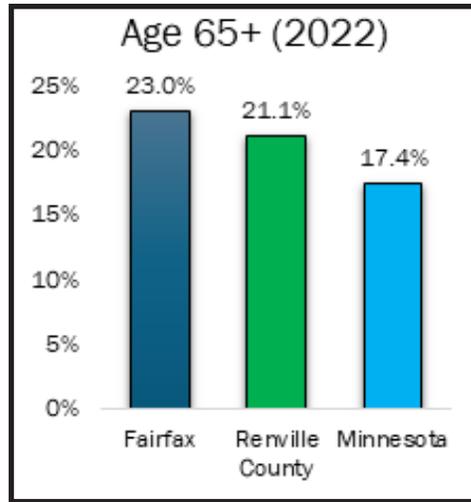
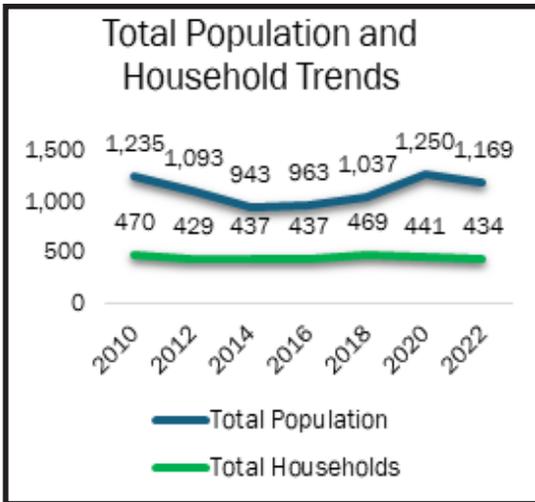


City of Fairfax

Situated at the junction of MN State Highways 4 and 19, approximately 91 miles southwest of downtown Minneapolis, Fairfax is Renville County’s southernmost incorporated community. Fort Ridgely State Park, the Mayflower Golf Club, and the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway can be found approximately five miles south of town. Originally platted in 1882, the city had a 2022 population of 1,169. Among its amenities is a community pool, a freestanding public library, a Community Center, and the well-known Memorial Park baseball facility, which is home to the Fairfax Cardinals and Fairfax Baseball Museum.



Fairfax Census Data



Major Employers

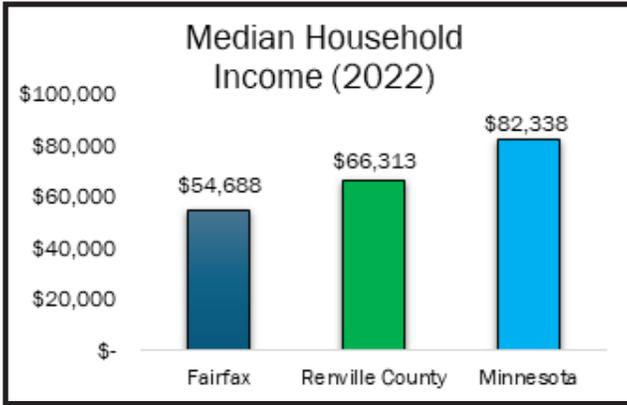
Northland Lumber & Supply
Central Region Cooperative

Public School District

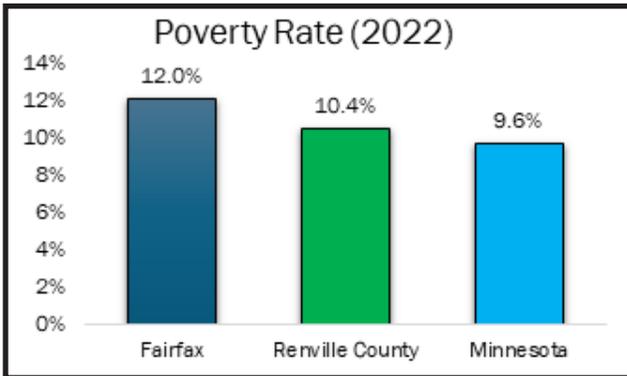
GFW Public Schools
<https://www.gfwschools.org/>

City of Fairfax

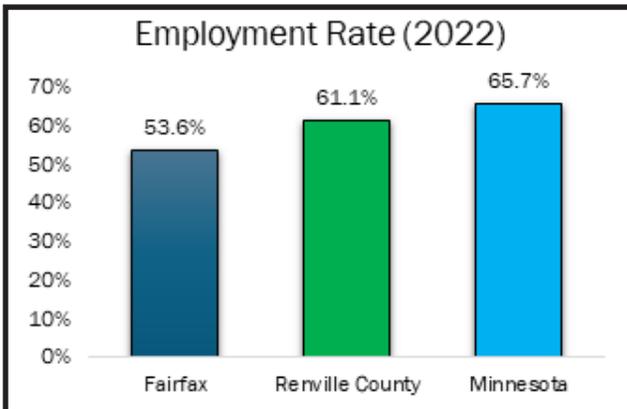
(507) 426-7255
<https://fairfax-mn.gov/>



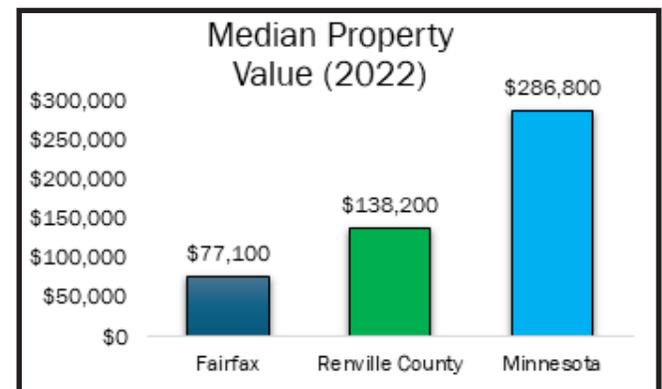
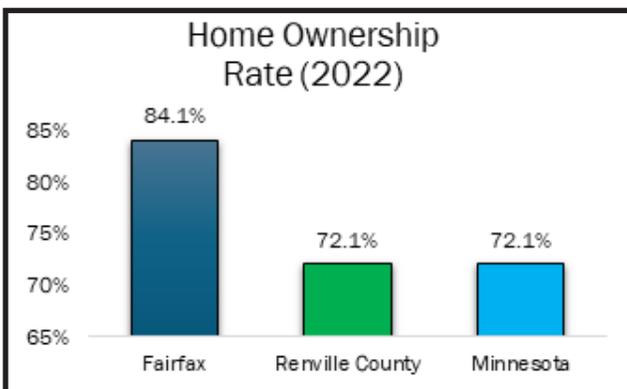
Depot Park



Fairfax Community Center

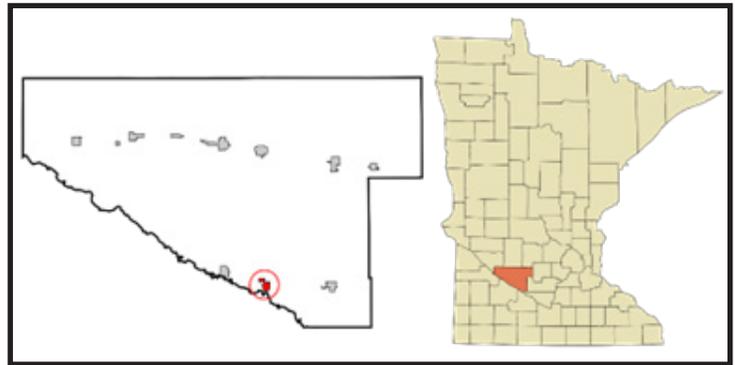


Welcome to Fairfax

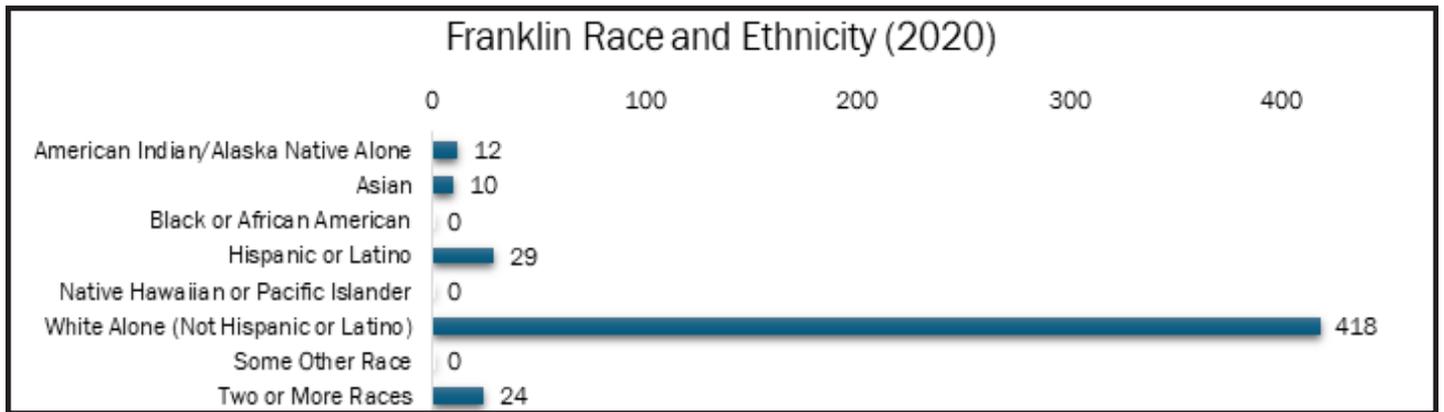
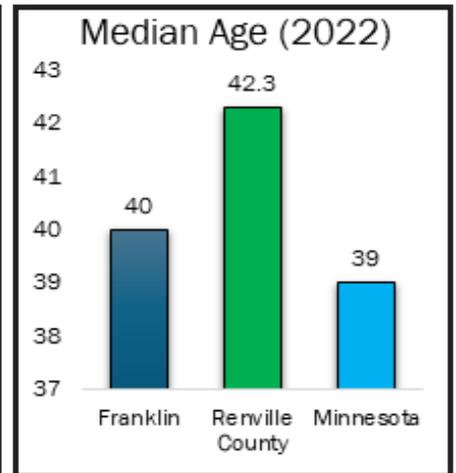
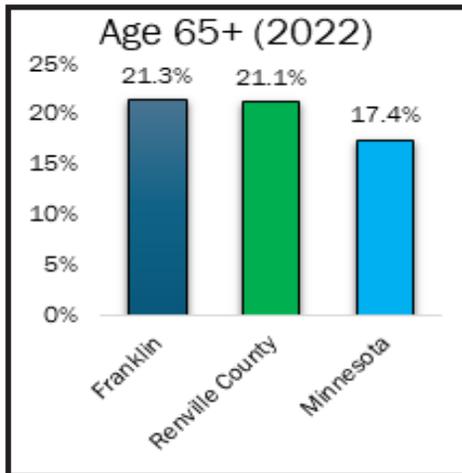
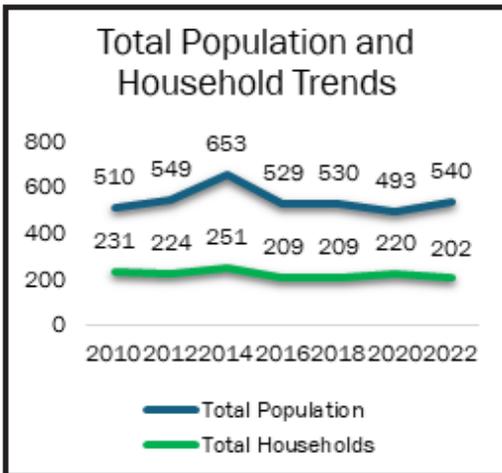


City of Franklin

Located on MN State Highway 19, approximately 99 miles southwest of downtown Minneapolis, Franklin(2022 population:540)overlooksthepicturesque Minnesota River Valley and is a Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway community, which provides ample opportunity for inspiration. The town was officially platted in 1882 and named after Benjamin Franklin. Known as Minnesota’s Catfish Capital, Franklin proudly hosts its annual town festival, Catfish Derby Days, every July. While local students attend middle and high school in neighboring Morgan, MN, Franklin is home to the Cedar Mountain Elementary School. The town’s welcoming atmosphere, local events, and scenic views make it a pleasant and enjoyable place to live and visit.



Franklin Census Data



Major Employers

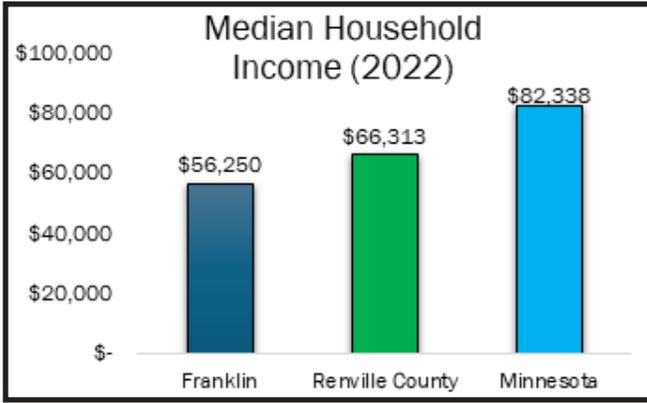
- Cedar Mountain Elementary School
- Franklin Restorative Care Center
- Cedar Heart Homes

Public School District

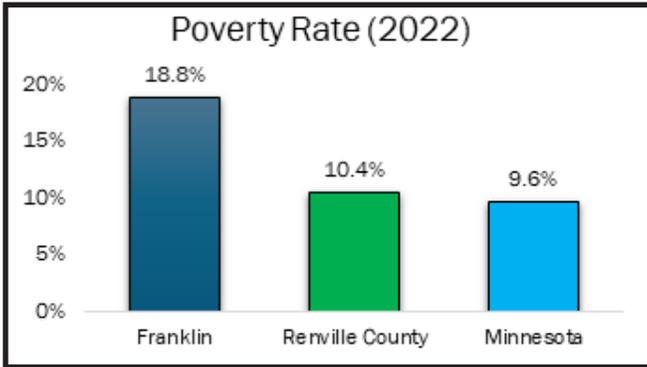
- Cedar Mountain Schools (#2754)
- <https://www.cms.mntm.org>

City of Franklin

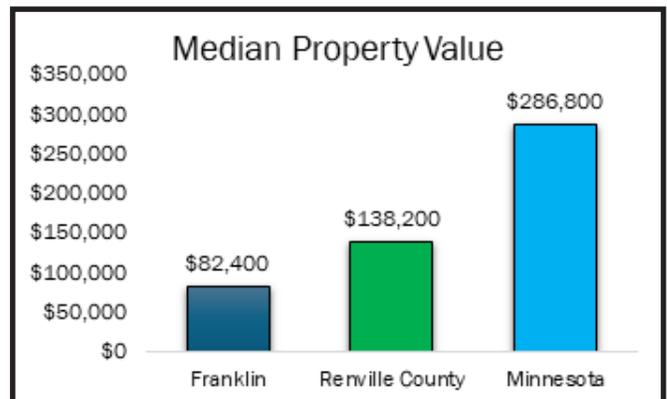
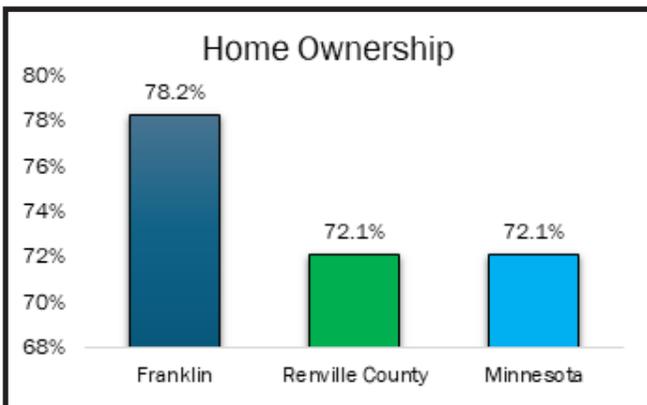
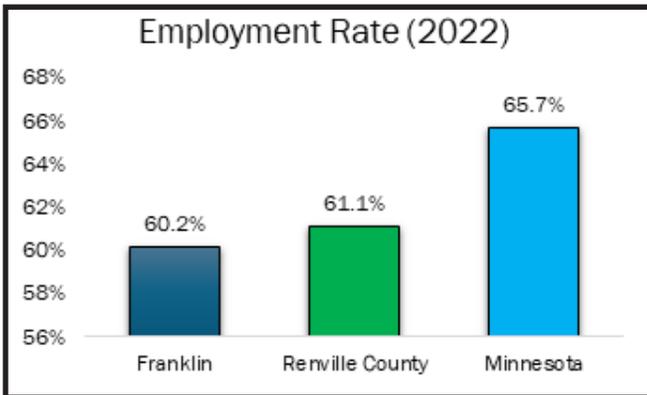
(507) 557-2259
<https://franklinmn.us/>



Franklin Sign with Nod to Catfishing Fun

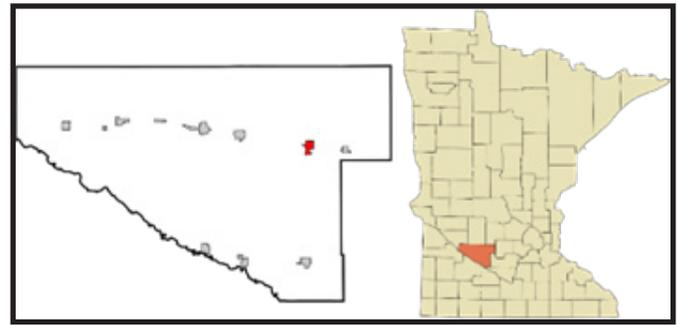


Franklin, MN Water Tower



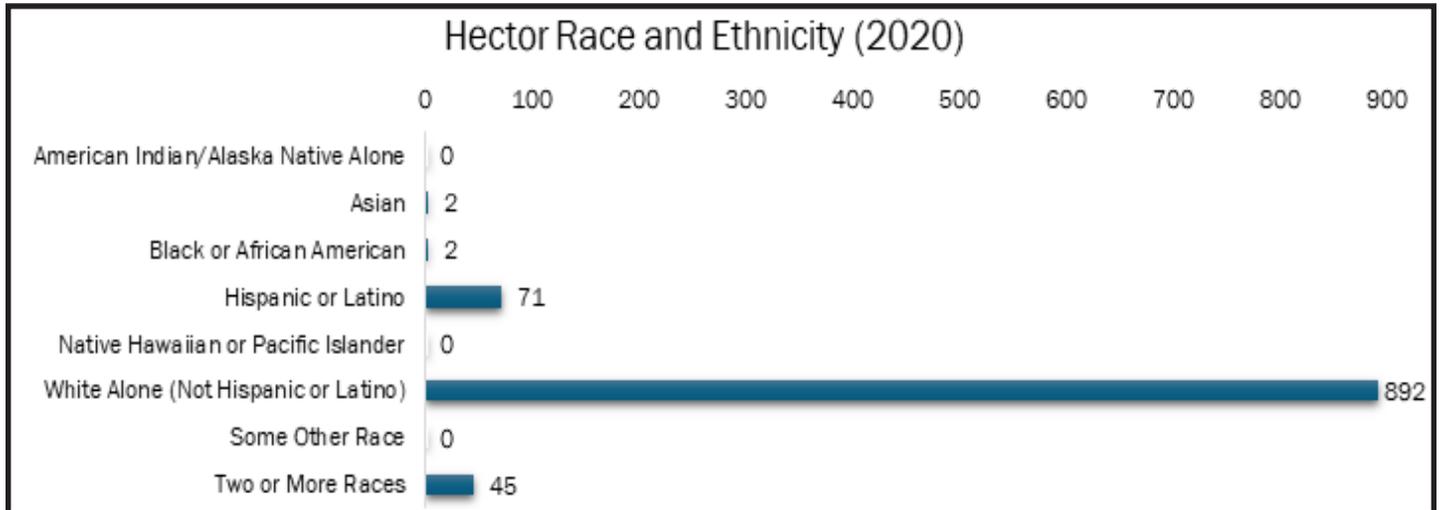
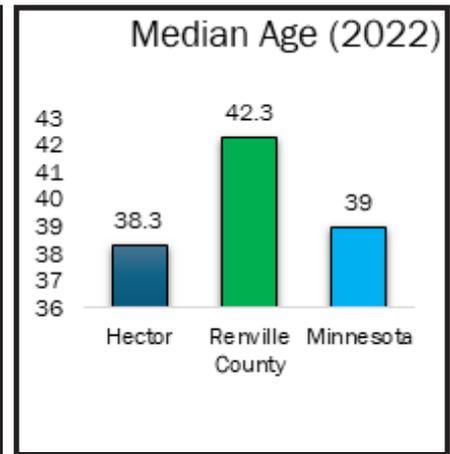
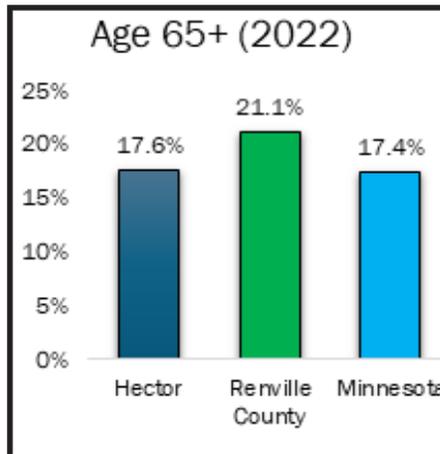
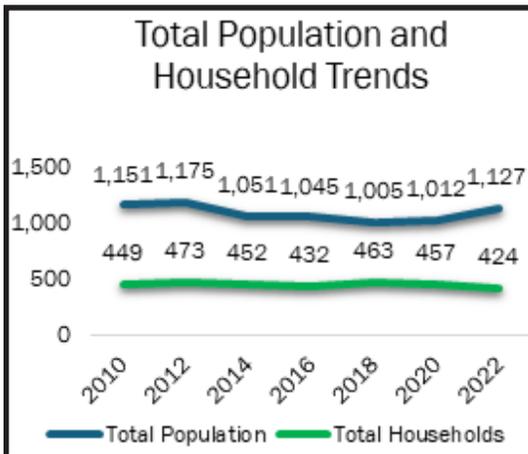
City of Hector

Located at the intersection of U.S. Highway 212 and MN State Highway 4, Hector is approximately 84 miles west-southwest of downtown Minneapolis. Founded in 1878, with the construction of the railroad, the community was home to 1,127 residents in 2022.



Among the amenities found in Hector are the local public school district (Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart Public Schools), a community building with a public library and community room, the city-owned Palace Theater, and the Hector Municipal Airport. In 1939 and 1940, Hector laid claim to being the “most air minded city in the U.S.A” and, in 1940, the rural community was home to 45 residents who did solo flying and another 100 who took flying instruction.

Hector Census Data



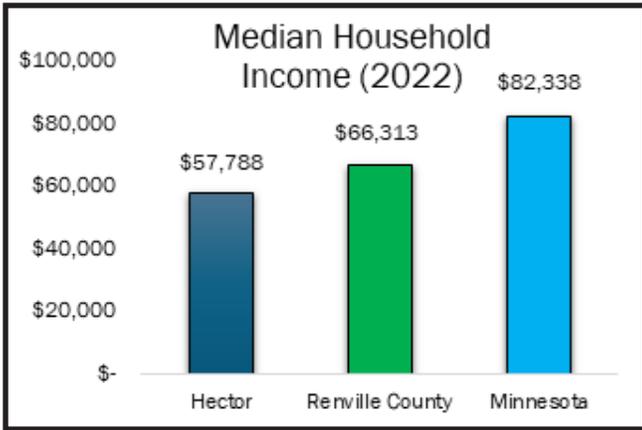
Major Employers

- Loftness Specialized Equipment
- Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart Public School District
- United Farmers Cooperative
- Primex

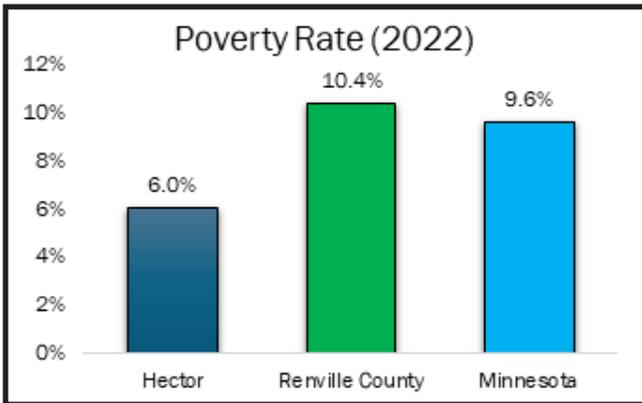
Public School District

Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart Public School Dist.
 (#2159)
<https://www.blhsd.org/>

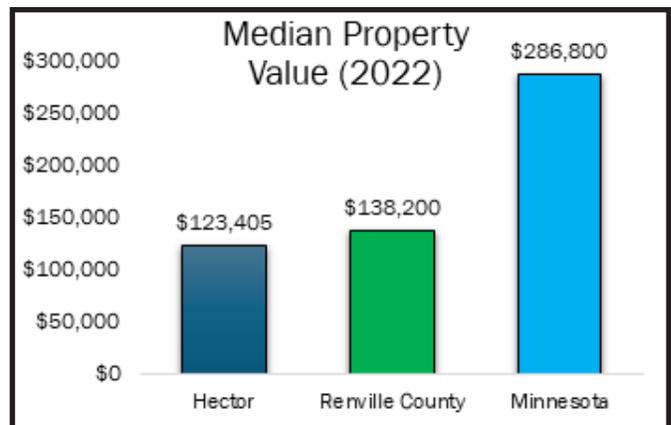
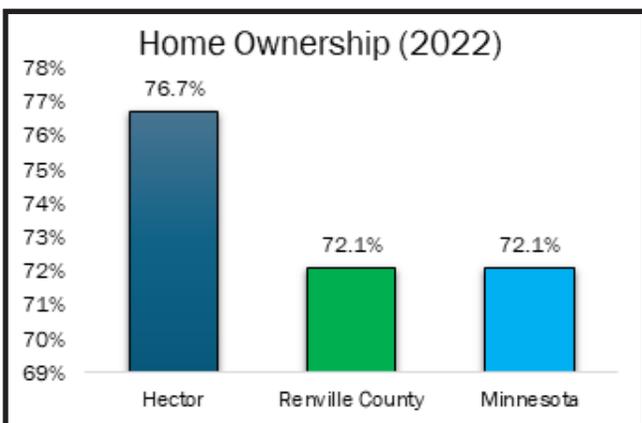
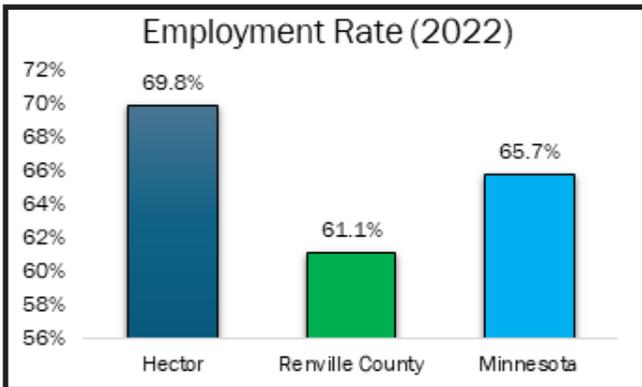
City of Hector
 (320) 848-2122
<https://hector.govoffice.com/>



Hector Municipal Airport



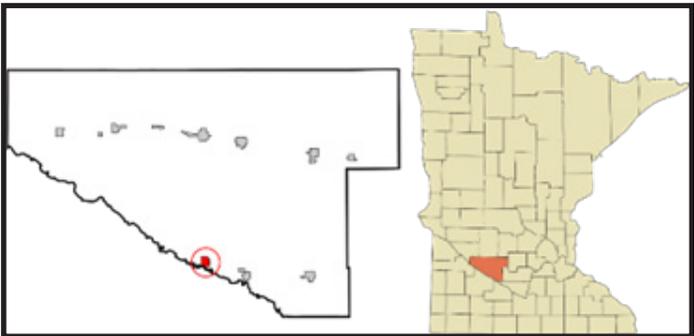
Hector's Main Street Park



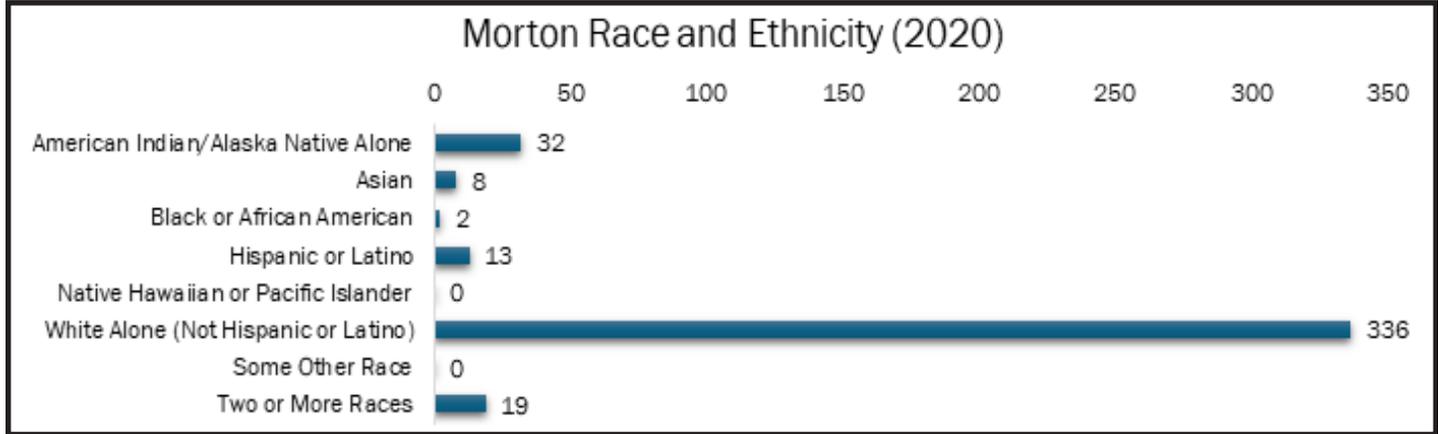
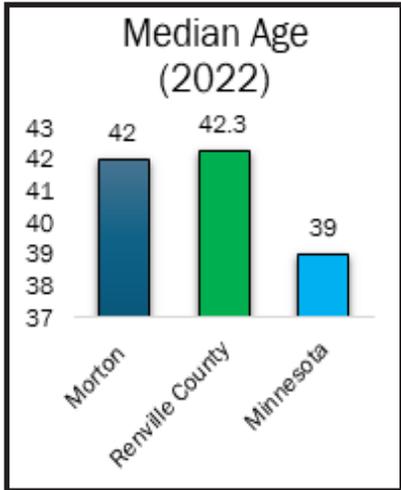
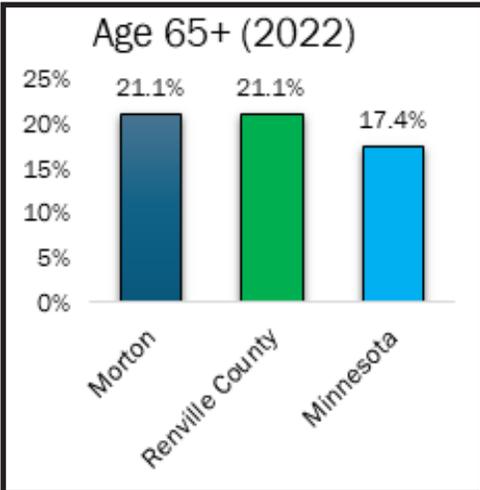
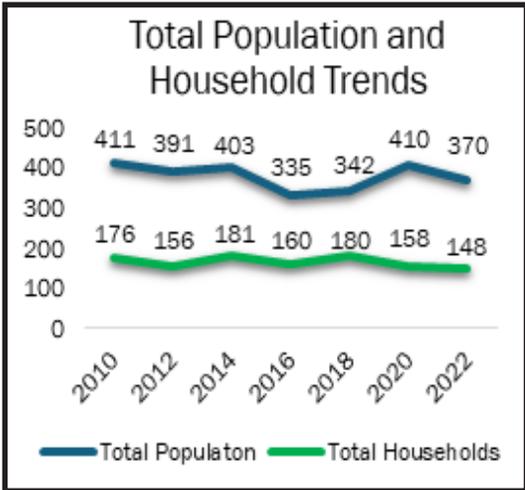
City of Morton

Morton, Minnesota (2022 Population: 370), is a charming community found about 105 miles southwest of Minneapolis. Nestled at the junction of U.S. Highway 71 and Minnesota State Highway 19, Morton is highly accessible and well-connected.

The Lower Sioux Indian Community lies just across the adjacent Minnesota River from Morton, The area is steeped in rich history, especially related to the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, and the Renville County Museum can be found in Morton. The Minnesota River National Scenic Byway, which passes directly through Morton, provides beautiful vistas to locals and visitors alike and one of just two Renville County hotels can be found in this community, at its western edge.



Morton Census Data



Major Employers

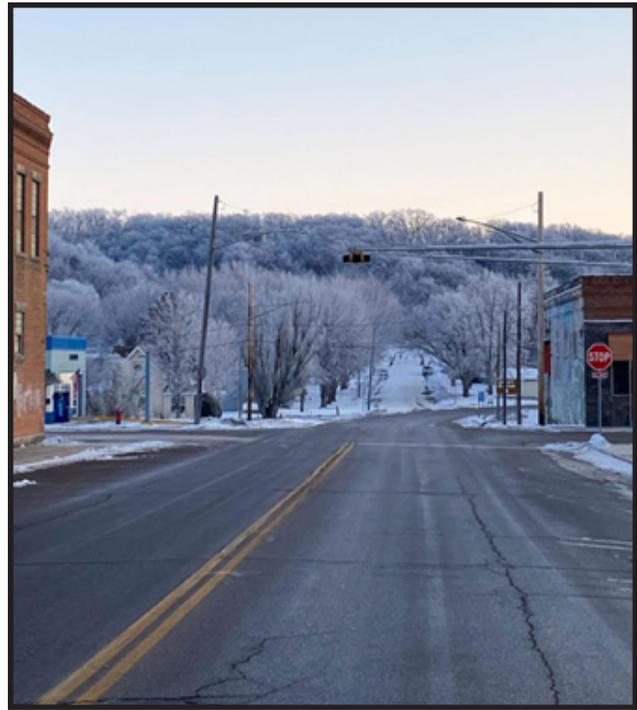
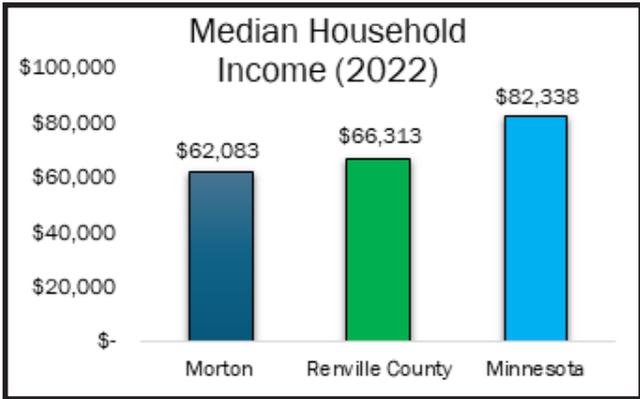
- Altimate Medical
- Step Saver, Inc.
- Jackpot Junction Casino Hotel

Public School District

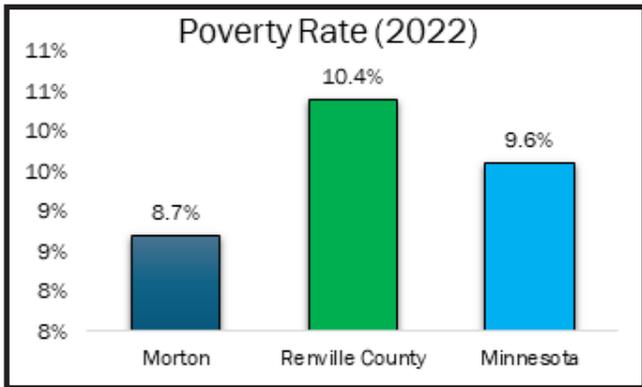
Redwood Area School District (#2897)
<https://www.redwoodareaschools.com/>

City of Morton

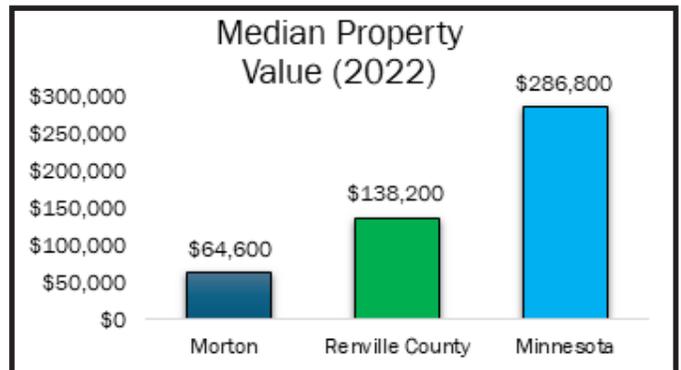
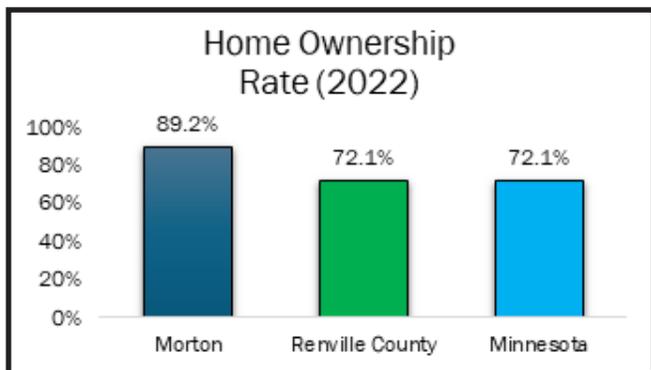
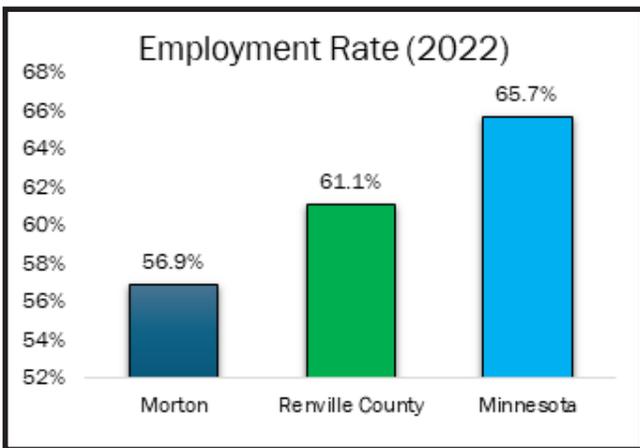
(507) 697-6912
<https://mortonmn.gov/>



A Frosty Morton Morning

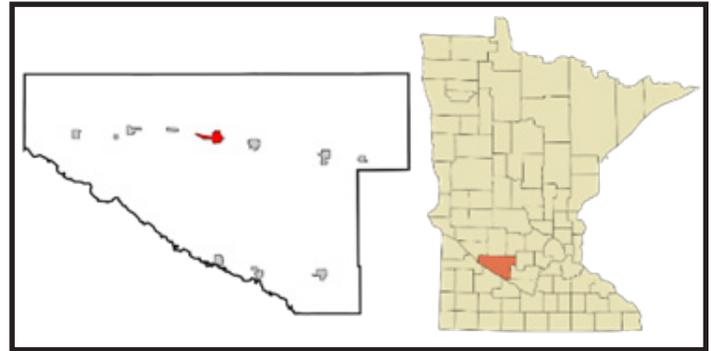


Renville County Museum



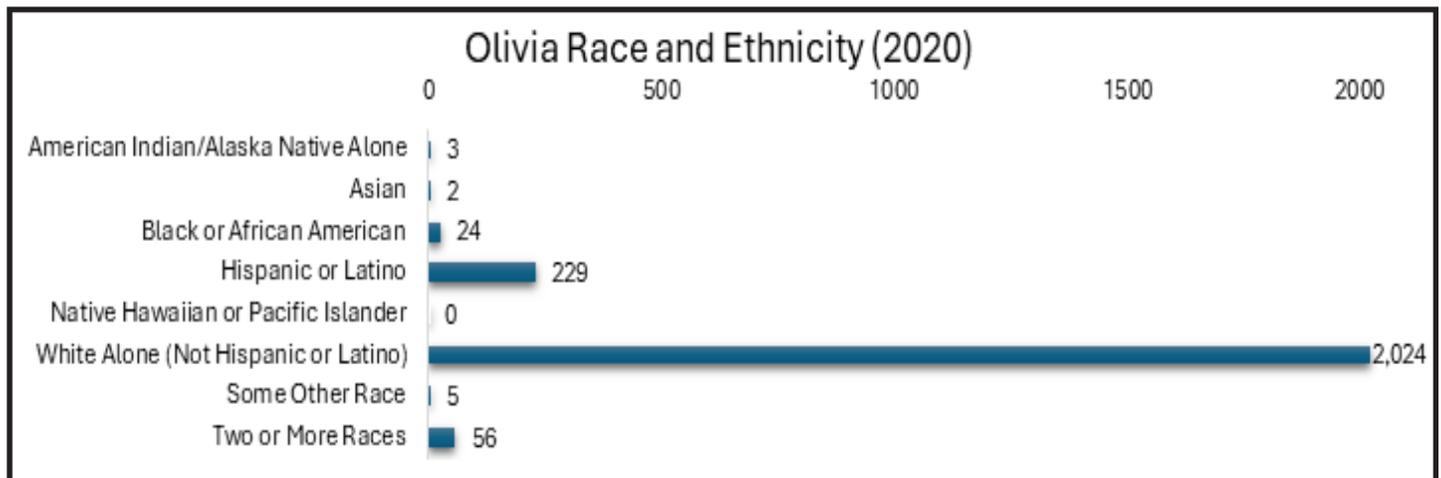
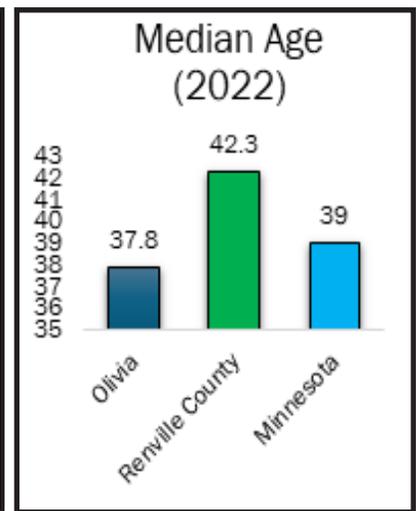
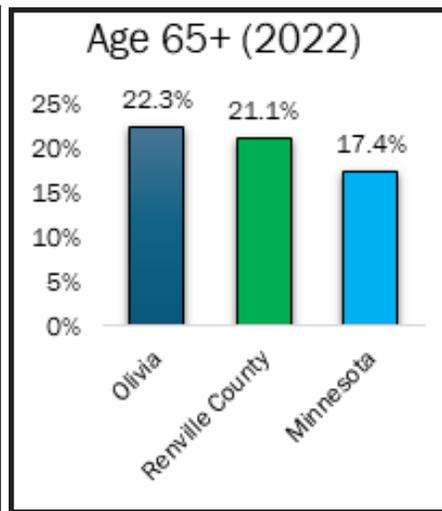
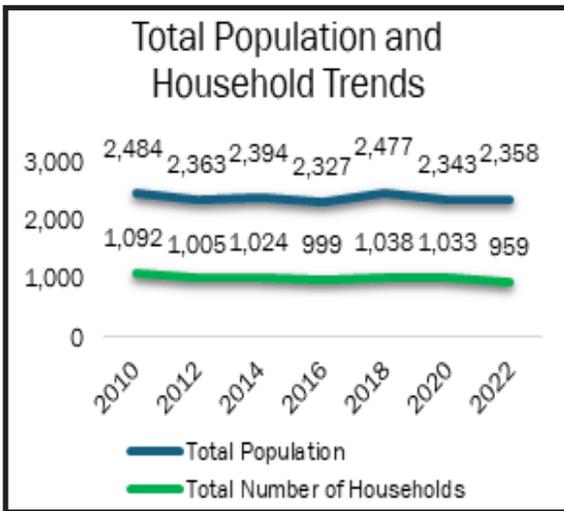
City of Olivia

Olivia sits at the intersection of U.S. Highways 71 and 212, approximately 98 miles west-southwest of downtown Minneapolis. With a 2022 population of 2,358, Olivia is the County’s largest community. It serves as the County seat and is a hub of both governmental activity and commerce.



Olivia is the home to multiple seed research facilities and, in 2004, was officially designated the Corn Capital of the World , a moniker self-proclaimed since the 1970s. The Olivia Corn Monument (a giant ear of corn perched atop a large gazebo within the city’s Memorial Park) pays tribute to Olivia’s agricultural impact. Olivia is also home to the County’s only hospital. Opened in 2015, this hospital, and attached clinic, provides Renville County’s residents with local access to quality healthcare.

Olivia Census Data



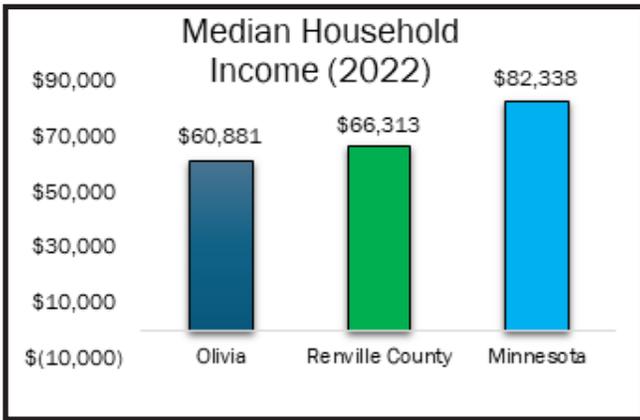
Major Employers

- Beck’s Hybrids
- Olivia Hospital & Clinic (HealthPartners)
- Remington Seeds
- Renville County

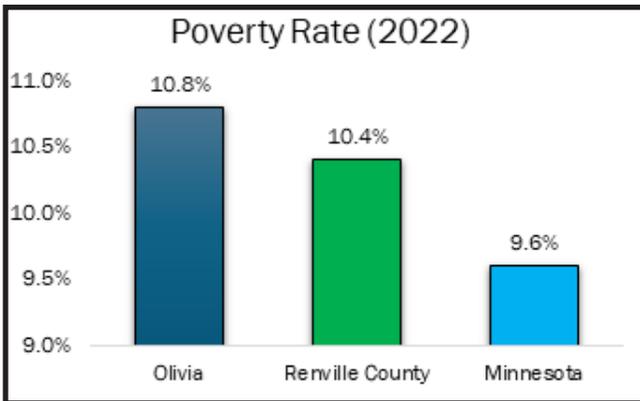
Public School District

BOLD Public School (#2534)
<https://bold.k12.mn.us/>

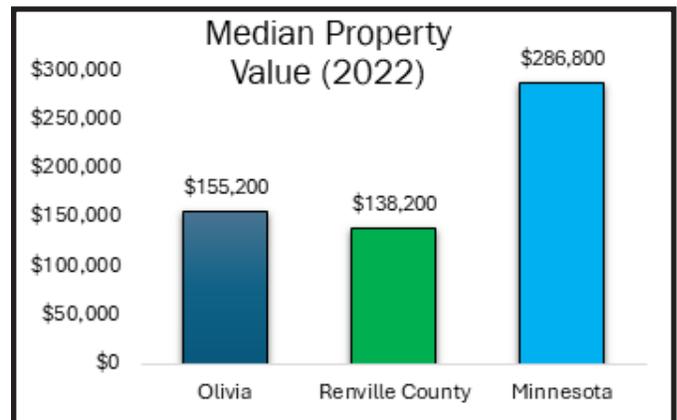
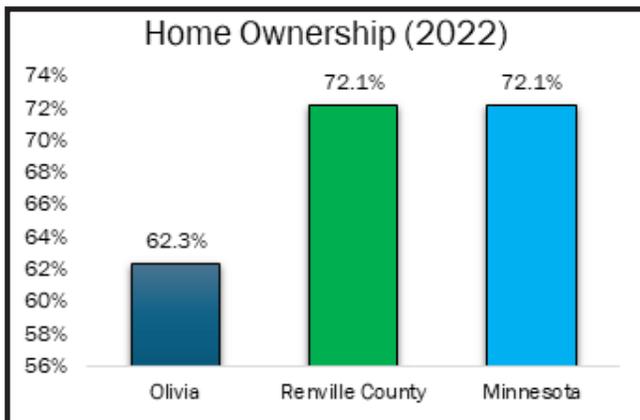
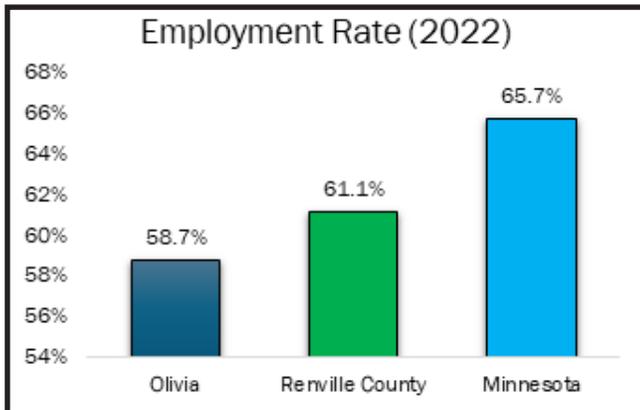
City of Olivia
 (320) 523-2361
<https://olivia.mn.us/>



World's Largest Ear of Corn

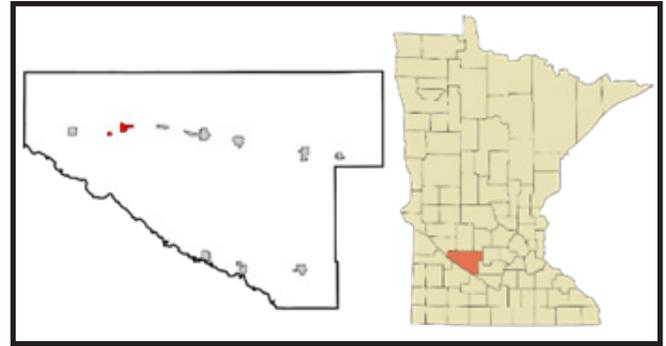


Renville County Courthouse

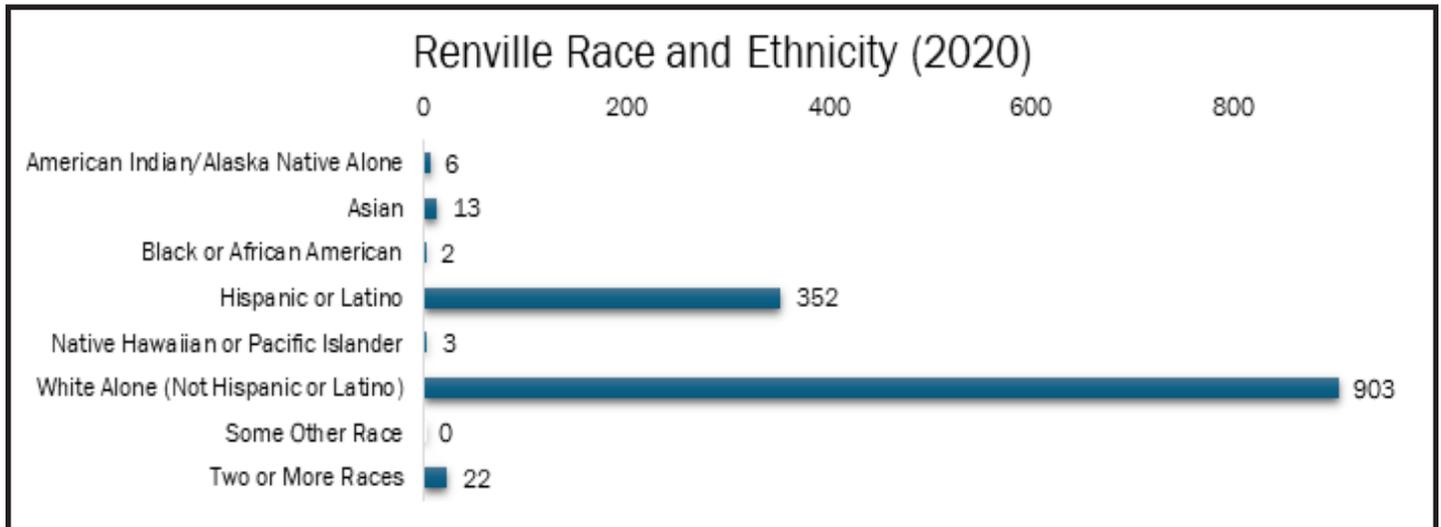
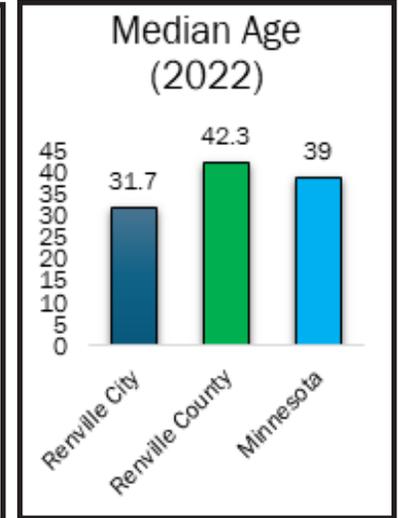
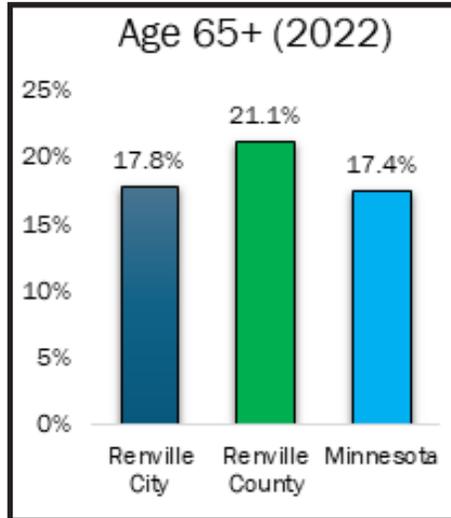
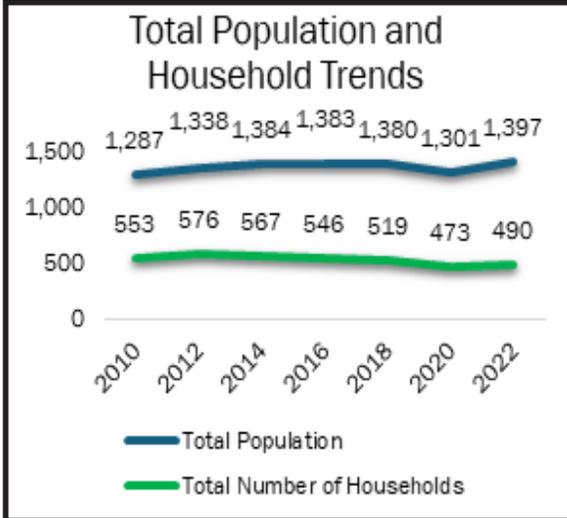


City of Renville

Renville is located approximately 109 miles west-southwest of downtown Minneapolis, along U.S. Highway 212. With a 2022 population of 1,397, Renville is Renville County’s second-largest community. It is also home to the Renville County West School District complex. Like the surrounding County, agriculture/agribusiness is central to Renville’s economy, employing many Renville community residents. Renville was first platted in 1878 and incorporated in 1906.



Renville Census Data



Major Employers

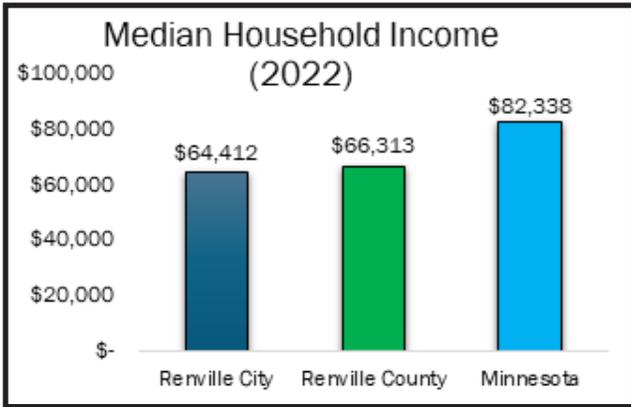
- Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative
- K & M Manufacturing
- Transystems

Public School District

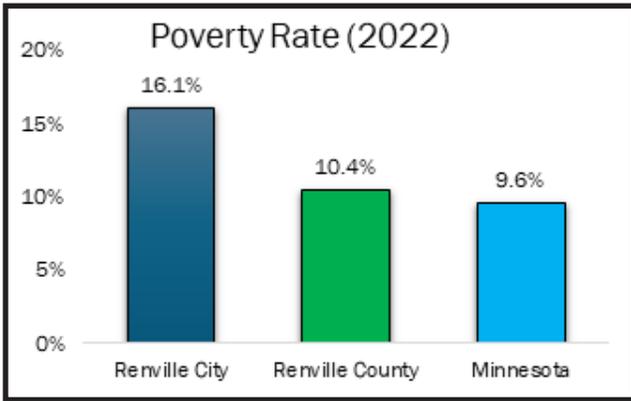
Renville County West Public Schools (#2890)
<https://www.rcw.k12.mn.us/>

City of Renville

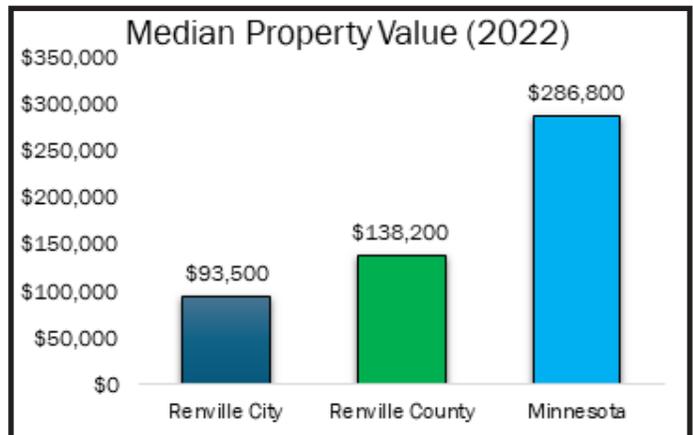
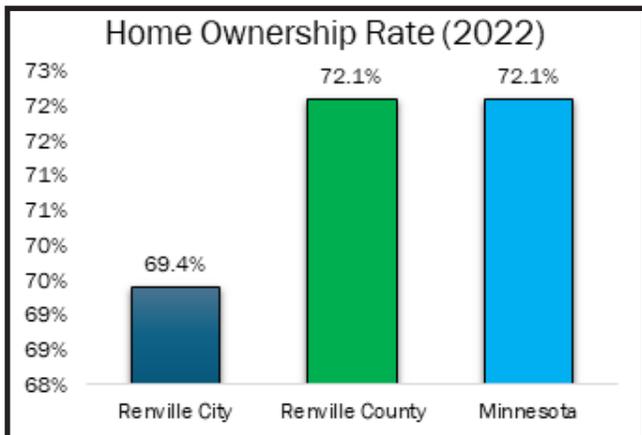
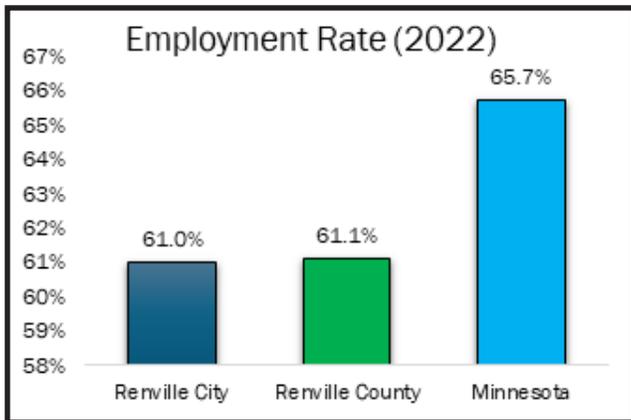
(320) 329-8366
<https://ci.renville.mn.us/>



Renville Community Center

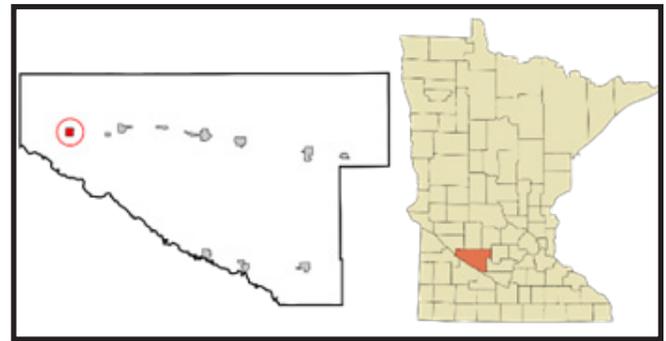


Aerial View of Renville's Business District

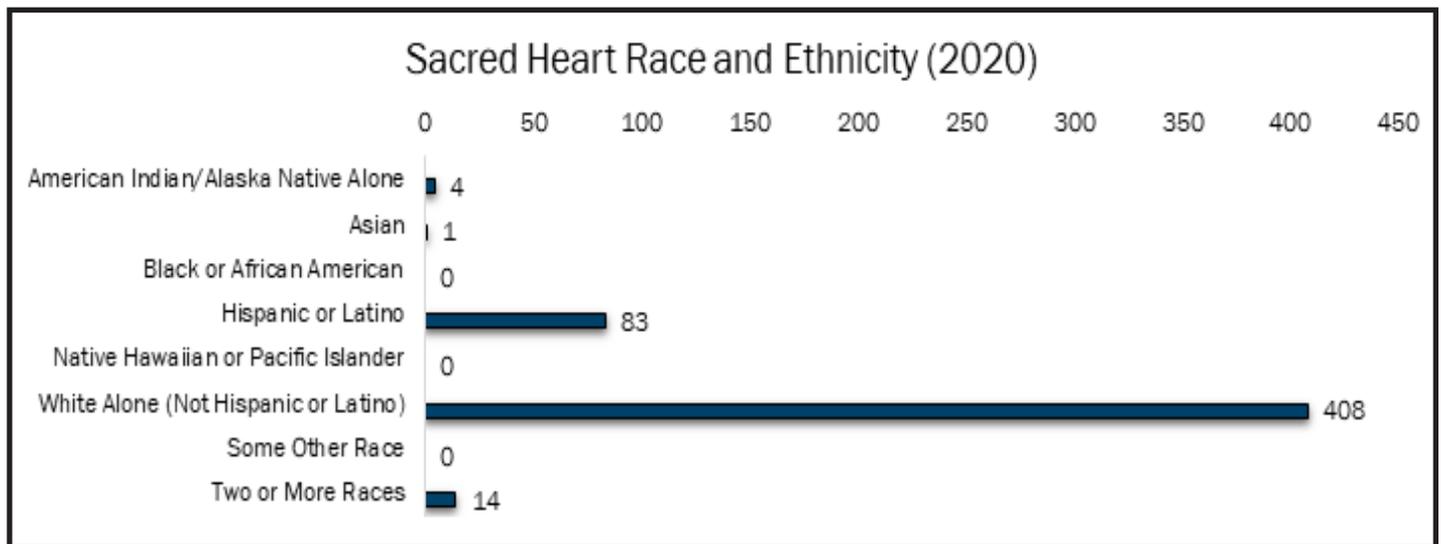
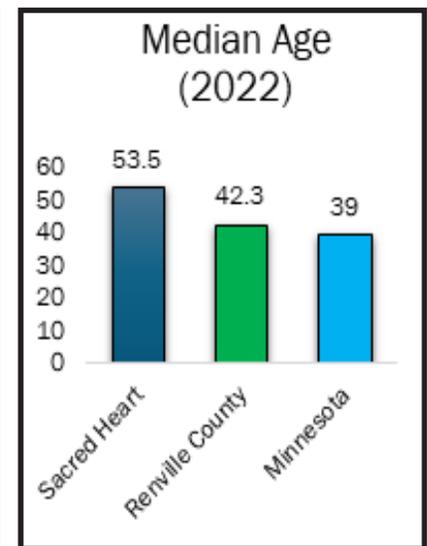
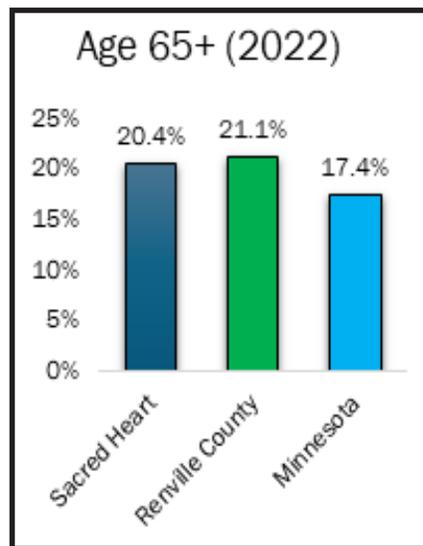
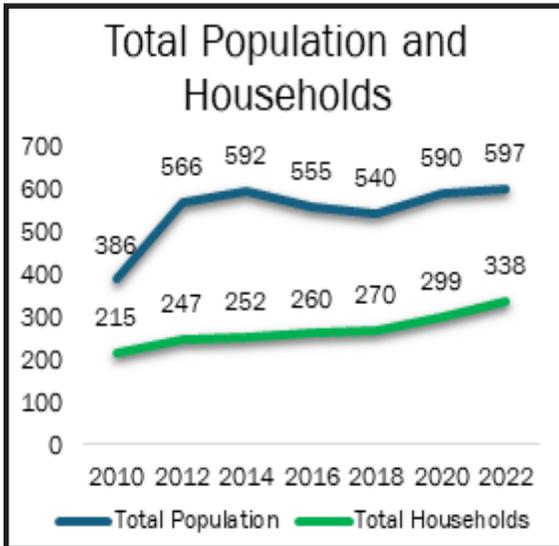


City of Sacred Heart

Located along U.S. Highway 212, approximately 115 miles west-southwest of downtown Minneapolis, the community of Sacred Heart is the western-most city in Renville County. Rich in history, Sacred Heart was originally platted in 1878. It is an 1862 U.S. - Dakota war site of significance and the Hotel Sacred Heart, built in 1914, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The city is also known for its state-of-the-art baseball complex, which is home to the Sacred Heart Saints.



Sacred Heart Census Data



Major Employers

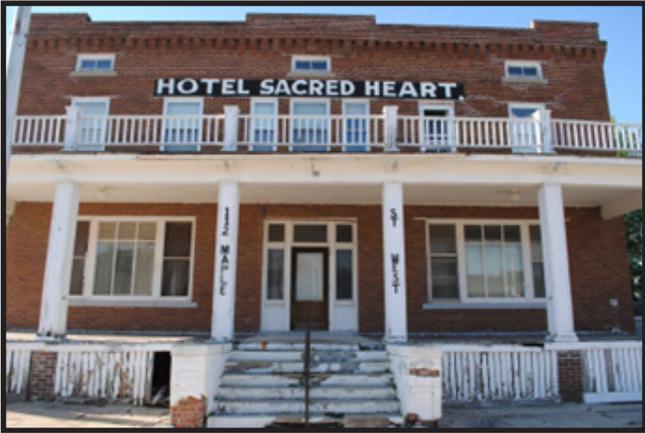
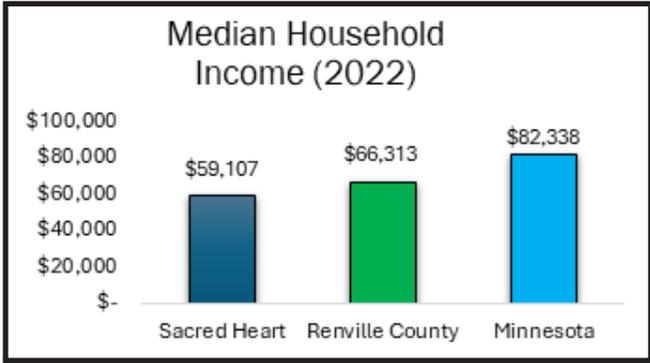
- Warner Manufacturing
- Renville County Highway Department
- Enestvedt Seed Company

Public School District

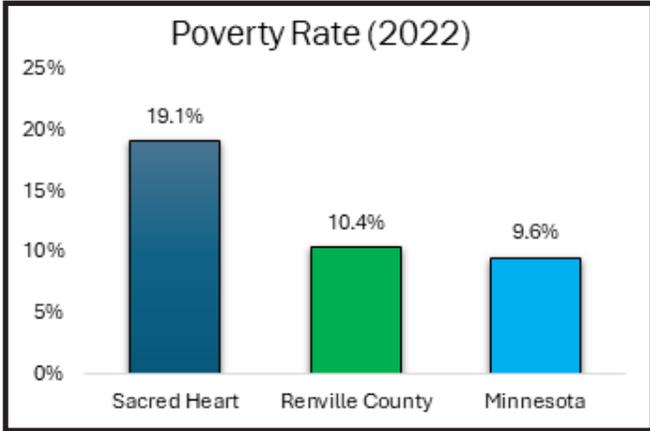
Renville County West Public Schools (#2890)
<https://www.rcw.k12.mn.us/>

City of Sacred Heart

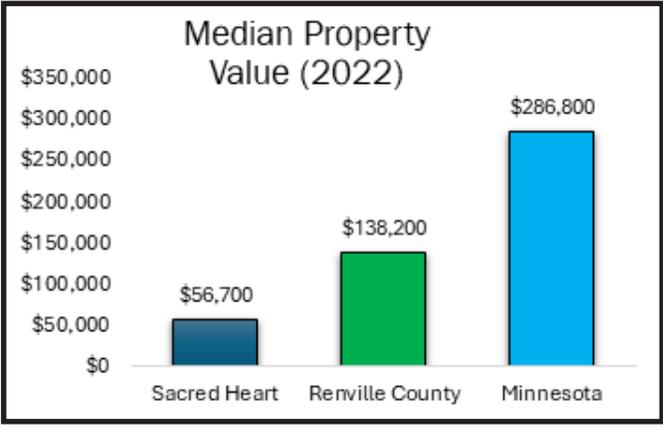
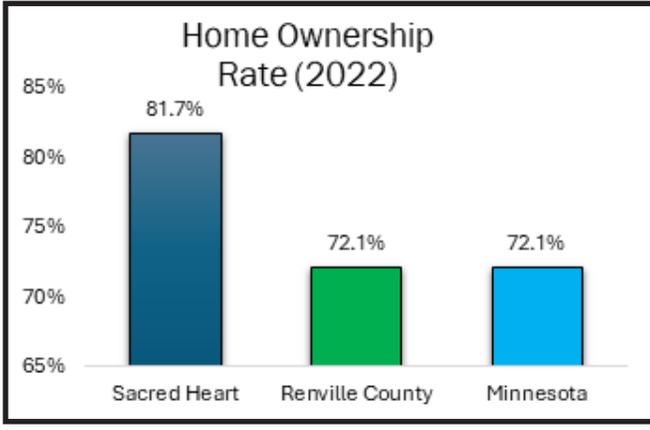
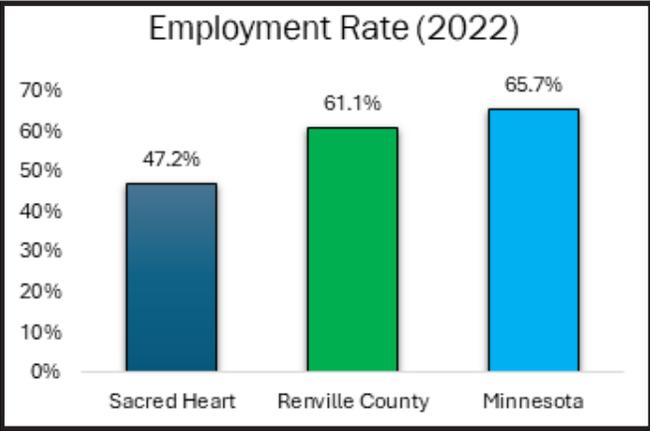
(320) 765-2559
<https://www.sacredheartmn.org/>



Hotel Sacred Heart



Sacred Heart Ballpark



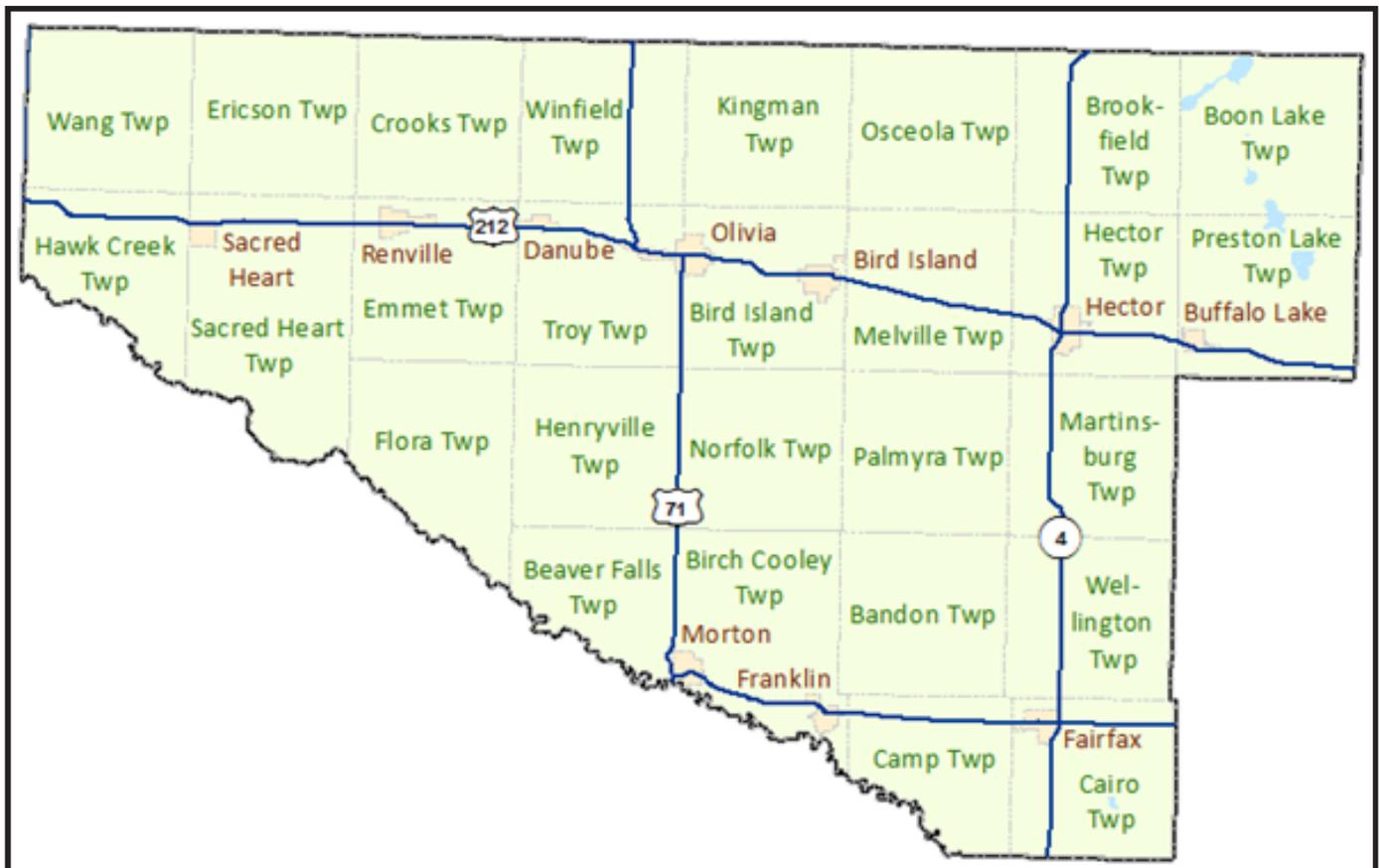
Renville County's Townships

Townships are the original form of local government in Minnesota, established as part of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Today, "township" refers to organized but unincorporated communities governed by a local board of supervisors, created to provide services to residents. There are 1,790 townships in the State, with 27 in Renville County. Most are approximately 36 miles in area, though this can vary, especially along the Minnesota River.

Townships are governed by an elected town board of supervisors, each serving staggered three-year terms. Annual elections are usually held on the second Tuesday of March, coinciding with the township's annual meeting. At this meeting, residents can vote on various matters, including the township's tax levy for the next year. The town board can only spend what voters authorize. Townships must comply with State mandates and can also be directed by the County on some issues.

Primary township responsibilities include maintaining township roads, conducting elections, and ensuring fire protection. Meetings are held to conduct township business and financial obligations, often in a local township hall. A list of city and township officials, with contact information, is provided at the Renville County website.

Renville County's Townships		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bandon Township • Beaver Falls Township • Birch Cooley Township • Bird Island Township • Boon Lake Township • Brookfield Township • Cairo Township • Camp Township • Crooks Township 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emmet Township • Ericson Township • Flora Township • Hawk Creek Township • Hector Township • Henryville Township • Kingman Township • Martinsburg Township • Melville Township 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norfolk Township • Osceola Township • Palmyra Township • Preston Lake Township • Sacred Heart Township • Troy Township • Wang Township • Wellington Township • Winfield Township



Renville County's Land Use

What is Land Use Planning?

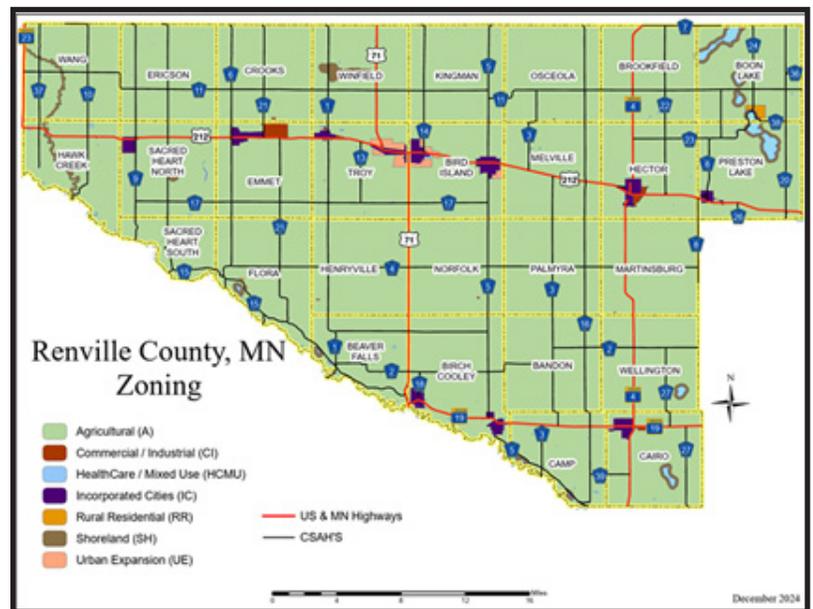
Land use planning is the process of strategically organizing and regulating how land is developed to benefit the community as a whole. Land use planning promotes the efficient use of limited resources while protecting the environment, so desired outcomes, including economic and community development outcomes can be achieved. This is done by designating specific areas of land for different uses, like residential, commercial, industrial, or agricultural, often through the incorporation of zoning laws and regulations.

Benefits of Land Use Planning

- Reduces urban sprawl, preserving land for other uses and minimizing infrastructure development and maintenance costs.
- Protects natural resources by minimizing environmental impacts and directing development away from sensitive ecosystems like wetlands, floodplains, and wildlife habitats, thereby preserving biodiversity and water quality while also promoting sustainable resource management.
- Improves traffic and community flow by strategically placing complimentary land uses (e.g., residential and commercial) in close proximity. This encourages walking and bicycling and minimizes the necessity of motor vehicles
- Enhances and preserves quality of life by protecting the environment, improving community cohesion, improving accessibility, enhancing public health, promoting economic development, and even mitigating natural disasters (e.g., floods).
- Preserves local culture by identifying and protecting culturally-significant sites, areas, and even local ways of life (e.g., farming)

Renville County's Environmental Services Department provides technical advice and information in the areas of planning, zoning, mining land subdivision, land use, and both feedlot and sewage treatment system permitting. Along with a less detailed county-wide Renville County Zoning Map, more detailed zoning maps can be found at: <https://www.renvillecountymn.gov/environmental-services/zoning-maps/>. These maps are provided for each of Renville County's 27 townships.

Additionally, Renville County's Land Use Ordinances are available online at <https://www.renvillecountymn.gov/government/ordinances/>.



Summary Renville County Zoning Districts

- “A” Agricultural District: The purpose of the “A” Agricultural District is to maintain and conserve agricultural lands which are historically valuable for crop and animal production, pastureland, and natural habitat for wildlife. This district is intended to sustain agriculture as a desirable land use for the long term and to preserve highly valued farmland for agricultural pursuits.
- “RR” Rural Residential District: The purpose of the “RR” Rural Residential District is to provide limited low-density residential development opportunity on land that is not highly valued farmland and is land that is located well beyond any growth or expansion area of a municipality. The intent of the district is to retain the rural character of the County by allowing residential development and on-site utilities in areas that will not be in conflict with agricultural uses, city growth, or destroy important natural resource areas.
- “UE” Urban Expansion District: The purpose of the “UE” Urban Expansion District is to attempt to limit urban sprawl and preserve agricultural and rural lands immediately adjacent to urban areas served with public infrastructure. The district is intended to preserve these areas of the County, in very low rural development densities, until such time when public infrastructure can be extended for future planned areas of commercial, industrial, and residential development. Limited rural development will be allowed in the Urban Expansion District that is consistent with a city’s or township’s Comprehensive Land Use Plan or Guide goals, objectives, and policies with regard to land use, facilities, utilities, and fiscal planning.
- “HMU” Healthcare/Mixed Use District: The “HMU” Healthcare/Mixed Use District is established to preserve land in the area surrounding Olivia Hospital & Clinic in order to promote, support, and accommodate the development of a medical campus by providing healthcare and medical office uses, health-oriented professional and administrative offices, retail and service uses supporting healthcare uses, and medium to high-density housing uses which benefit from immediate proximity to healthcare uses, including mixed use projects.
- “CI” Commercial/Industrial District: The purpose of the “CI” Commercial/Industrial District is to provide land for the development of commercial and light industrial uses that require limited services that allow the use to operate without providing environment or nuisance concerns and that do not adversely impact natural or scenic resources.

In addition to the Primary Districts described above, Renville County has several Overlay Districts, which regulate development. These overlay districts include Flood Plain (FP), Shoreland (S), Scenic River (SR), and Project River Bend (PR) Districts. Unless otherwise specified in County ordinance, when one or more zoning district standards are in conflict, the more restrictive standards will apply.

Summary of Renville County’s General Land Use Regulations

*Note: The following Land Use Regulations are accurate as of the date of publication of the comprehensive plan. The Renville County Land Use Ordinance may be amended and controlled in the event of any conflict with the summarized information in this section.

- Dwelling Unit Density: Renville County regulates the density of residential dwelling units. In areas designated as Agricultural Districts, the density of residential dwelling is one unit per 40 acres, or two units if at least one of the dwelling units is a farm dwelling. In Rural Residential Districts, the density of residential dwellings may increase, up to eight dwellings per 40 acres. In Urban Expansion Districts, density is limited to one dwelling per 10 acres. These limitations do not apply to land located in the Minnesota Scenic River and Shoreland Districts.
- Accessory Buildings and Uses: The Renville County Land Use Ordinance specifies that accessory buildings must comply with setback and height requirements and are for residential accessory use only. They may not be used as dwelling units. Commercial use or storage is prohibited unless it is part of a home occupation. In various districts, permitted accessory uses include garages, carports, swimming pools, signage, sewage treatment systems, decks, patios, fences, private kennels, television towers, satellite dishes, and solar energy systems. Agricultural buildings must meet specific standards and are for agricultural use only. These regulations ensure accessory buildings support the primary property use and maintain area character.

- **Building Access and Lot Requirements:** Ensures buildings have frontage on public streets and meet minimum lot area requirements. The Renville County Land Use Ordinance specifies that building access and lot requirements vary by district.
 - In the “A” Agricultural District, the minimum lot size is five acres with a minimum median lot width of 300 feet. Buildings must be set back 67 feet from the front, 20 feet from the side and rear, and 150 feet from ditches.
 - The “RR” Rural Residential District requires a minimum lot size of 5 acres, 300 feet of frontage on a public road, and similar setback requirements.
 - The “UE” Urban Expansion District mandates a minimum lot size of 10 acres and a median lot width of 300 feet, with setbacks of 67 feet from the front, 20 feet from the side and rear, and 150 feet from ditches.
 - The “HMU” Healthcare/Mixed Use District has a minimum lot size of 0.5 acres, 200 feet of frontage, and setbacks of 40 feet from the front, 10 feet from the side, and 20 feet from the rear.
 - The “CI” Commercial/Industrial District requires a minimum lot size of 10 acres (unless platted), 300 feet of frontage, and setbacks of 67 feet from the front, 20 feet from the side and rear, and 150 feet from ditches.

Maximum building heights and lot coverage percentages also vary by district.

- **Off-Street Parking and Loading:** Specific requirements for parking spaces and loading areas are in place for various building types. Ordinance requires off-street parking areas to have a durable surface and be properly graded and drained. Parking spaces must be located on the same site or adjacent to the principal use and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Parking spaces must be at least nine feet wide and 20 feet long, with a standard of 300 square feet per space for total area calculations. Joint parking facilities are allowed in the “CI” Commercial/Industrial District. Required parking spaces cannot be used for storage. Driveway access widths must be between 24 and 32 feet, and no parking space can be closer than 10 feet to any right-of-way or property line. Screening is required for parking areas near residential zones, and all exterior storage in a “CI” Commercial/Industrial District must be screened.
- **Height and Yard Requirements:** Ordinance specifies height and yard requirements for different zoning districts, with a goal of ensuring orderly development and maintaining the character of different areas.
 - In the “A” Agricultural District, agricultural buildings have no height limit, while other structures are limited to 35 feet. Setbacks include 67 feet from the front, 20 feet from the side and rear, and 150 feet from ditches.
 - In the “RR” Rural Residential District, buildings are also limited to 35 feet in height, with similar setback requirements.
 - The “UE” Urban Expansion District has a 35-foot height limit for non-agricultural buildings and the same setback requirements.
 - The “HMU” Healthcare/Mixed Use District allows buildings up to 60 feet in height, with setbacks of 40 feet from the front, 10 feet from the side, and 20 feet from the rear.
 - The “CI” Commercial/Industrial District permits buildings up to 45 feet in height, with setbacks of 67 feet from the front, 20 feet from the side and rear, and 150 feet from ditches.
- **Performance Standards** To encourage a high standard of development, prevent and eliminate conditions that cause blight, minimize conflict between land uses, and protect public health and safety, Renville County has established performance standards which apply to all land uses and structures. These are in addition to any specific zoning district regulations. While these standards include general regulations, including those related to erosion prevention, right-of-way protections, permitted set-back encroachments, building size and foundation, access, etc. There are also standards specifically related to the relocation of existing structures, environmental regulation, exterior storage, fencing, land alteration/grading, land preservation and clearing, parking, screening, signage, and recreational use and storage. This information can be found, in detail, at the County’s website or by contacting the Renville County Environmental Services Department.

- Permitting Renville County requires permits for any construction of new buildings, building additions, or significant alterations to existing structures. This gives the County the ability to ensure that any construction, renovation, or property alteration meets the County’s performance standards. Permitting inquiries are handled by the County’s Environmental Services Office. Site plans are typically required. More permitting information can be found at <https://www.renvillecountymn.gov/environmental-services/#Permits>.

Land Use Permits, or zoning permits, are required for any structure erected, expanded, enlarged, intensified, or moved in. The land use permit indicates that both the existing or proposed structure and the use of the land comply with regulations in the County’s Land Use Ordinance. No site preparation work may occur prior to the issuance of a land use permit unless prior approval has been granted by the Environmental Service Department. These permits are not required for building interior work or for the replacement of a building’s roof, windows, or siding.

Conditional Use Permits give Renville County the opportunity to consider allowances for land uses that are not typically permitted in a district but may be acceptable if conditions are attached to protect the adjacent property owners and the public’s interest. Conditional use permits are commonly requested for commercial and industrial uses, communication towers, large feedlots (over 300 animal units), solar gardens, and wind energy systems.

Interim Use Permits are required for the temporary use of a property until a particular date, until the occurrence of a particular event, or until zoning regulations no longer permit the use as determined by Renville County. Examples of uses requiring interim use permits include home occupation, temporary dwelling, and gravel mining.

Driveway Access Permits are required when considering any new access onto a Renville County-managed road. Property owners interested in adding access onto a township road are required to contact their local township board for approval.

Handicap Accessibility Permits are required for all public and most commercial or industrial buildings, subject to the Handicap Accessibility Requirements of the Minnesota State Building Code. A list of building inspectors who can be contacted to verify compliance is available via the Renville County Environmental Services Office.

Variations allow the County to grant permission to vary from the Renville County Zoning Ordinance’s standard requirements. Variations may be granted when it is determined that the strict enforcement of zoning regulations would cause practical difficulties. However, variations cannot be granted that would allow a use otherwise prohibited in the property’s zoning district. Variations are commonly offered to allow deviation from typical setback requirements, lot width or depth, and height restrictions.

- Administration and Enforcement
 - Zoning Administrator Duties: The Zoning Administrator in Renville County is the County’s Department of Environmental Services. That department is responsible for enforcing the Land Use Ordinance and ensuring compliance with zoning regulations. Their duties include reviewing and processing applications for permits, variations, and amendments, conducting site inspections, and investigating complaints related to zoning violations. They also provide information and assistance to the public with zoning requirements and procedures, maintain accurate records of zoning activities, and prepare reports for the Planning Commission and County Board. The Zoning Administrator plays a crucial role in managing land use and development to ensure orderly growth and adherence to the County’s zoning policies.
 - Planning Commission: The Renville County Planning Commission is a citizen advisory board appointed by the County Board to review and recommend policies related to land use and community development. This body also reviews requests for special and conditional use permits.
 - Renville County Board of Commissioners: The Renville County Board of Commissioners is the governing body of Renville County. The board is made up of elected commissioners who represent the various districts within the County. They are responsible for managing the County’s finances, supervising County officials, and developing County laws/ordinance. This body appoints citizens to a variety of advisory boards, including the Planning Commission, and has final County authority over all development within the County’s jurisdiction.

- Penalties for Violations: Penalties for violations of the Renville County Land Use Ordinance include fines, imprisonment, or both, as determined by the court. Each day a violation continues is considered a separate offense, potentially increasing the severity of penalties. Additionally, the County may seek injunctive relief to stop or prevent violations, and violators may be required to pay for the costs of enforcement, including attorney fees. These measures ensure compliance with zoning regulations and protect public health, safety, and welfare.
- Appeals: Renville County has established a Board of Adjustment and Appeals. This entity has exclusive authority to hear and decide appeals from and review any order, requirement, decision, or determination made by the Zoning Administrator with respect to the administration of the Renville County Land Use Ordinance. They have the exclusive power to order the issuance or denial of variances from the terms of any official control. This process requires a public notice and hearing procedure to ensure neighboring property owners have opportunity to provide comment. All decisions by the Board of Adjustment and Appeals are considered final, though any aggrieved person may appeal the body's decision via the courts, as set forth by Minnesota law.

Public Input

Renville County Comprehensive Plan Survey respondents offered the following land use-focused comments.

- *“Create building opportunities for new housing. Infrastructure needs to be addressed so that housing developers can build spec and model homes. Renville county is missing an opportunity to be the bedroom communities to Redwood, Willmar and even Hutchinson.”*
- *“Opportunity for everyone in agriculture.”*
- *“Eliminate half of agriculture and bring in manufacturing and tech.”*

Renville County Land Use Strategies

1. Promote Sustainable Agricultural Land Use

- A. Preserve prime agricultural land to ensure a stable food supply, protect the environment, maintain biodiversity, support the local economy, and preserve Renville County's agronomy culture:
 - i. Implement zoning and land use policies that protect the vast majority of high-quality farmland from permanent development.
 - ii. Determine if there are exceptions for which the development of prime farmland should be allowed (e.g., development that contributes to the local economy or addresses a common need) and when those exceptions should be allowed.
 - iii. Establish agricultural preservation districts to maintain long-term agricultural use.
- B. Support sustainable farming practices to conserve and protect natural resources, improve soil health, and support the well-being of current and future farmers:
 - i. Encourage the adoption of conservation tillage, crop rotation, and integrated pest management.
 - ii. Provide technical assistance and connect farmers with financial incentives, from the County or from other interested parties, for sustainable farming practices.
- C. Ensure sufficient regulation of animal feed lots to mitigate their potential environmental impacts, including air pollution, surface water pollution, and groundwater contamination that can impact nearby ecosystems and communities if not properly managed.
 - i. Maintain an effective permitting system for feedlot management.
 - ii. Monitor feedlot operations to ensure compliance with all County standards, including environmental standards.

- D. Diversify agricultural production to ensure sustainability and resilience.
 - i. Promote the cultivation of a variety of crops to enhance economic resilience.
 - ii. Support the development of niche markets and enterprises for specialty crops, including but not limited to organic produce.
- E. Strengthen local food systems to help communities improve health via access to quality local food.
 - i. Facilitate access to local markets for farmers through farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs.
 - ii. Support initiatives that connect local producers with consumers, such as farm-to-school programs and local food shelves/pantries.

2. Manage Residential Development

- A. Direct residential growth to areas with existing infrastructure to maximize existing public investment and minimize the need for additional public inputs.
 - i. Prioritize infill development and redevelopment in areas with existing utilities and services.
 - ii. Encourage higher-density residential development in designated growth areas.
- B. Maintain the rural character of the County to preserve the local way-of-life while allowing for thoughtful progress and modernization.
 - i. Limit residential development in rural areas to low-density housing that preserves open space and agricultural land, with exceptions made, after careful consideration, for areas adjacent to lakes, rivers, other wetlands, and existing residential areas.
 - ii. Implement design standards that reflect the rural character and landscape.
- C. Promote energy-efficient and sustainable building practices to reduce environmental impact, reduce energy consumption, and increase affordability over the long term.
 - i. Encourage the use of green building techniques and materials in new residential developments.
 - ii. Provide incentives for energy-efficient home design, construction, and retrofitting.
 - iii. Share strategies to reduce construction materials, improve efficiency, add durability, and lower long-term costs.
- D. Ensure new developments include green spaces to preserve natural character and maintain habitat to support biodiversity.
 - i. Preserve natural features (e.g., wetlands, forested areas, prairies) to the extent reasonably possible in new and existing rural enclaves and other developments.

3. Promote Sustainable Agricultural Land Use

- A. Limit urban sprawl to mitigate any negative effects associated with development.
 - i. Designate specific urban expansion areas to concentrate growth and prevent sprawl.
 - ii. Implement policies that encourage compact, mixed-use development and accessory dwelling units.
 - iii. Work with municipalities and watersheds to align urban expansion with their respective plans.
 - iv. Develop joint planning agreements with municipalities to manage growth at the urban-rural interface and preserve agricultural and other rural lands.
 - v. Encourage mixed-use developments that combine residential, commercial, and recreational uses to reduce the need for excessive urban expansion and promote efficient land use.
 - vi. Maintain agricultural and rural lands adjacent to urban areas until they are truly needed for development.
 - vii. Use tools such as transfer of development rights (TDR) to protect rural lands.

4. Promote Sustainable Agricultural Land Use

- A. Designate appropriate areas for commercial and industrial activities to allow for economic development while protecting Renville County's rural character and environment.
 - i. Identify and zone areas suitable for commercial and industrial development to minimize conflicts with other land uses.
 - ii. Ensure areas zoned for commercial and/or industrial development have access to necessary infrastructure and transportation networks, capitalizing on existing infrastructure, whenever possible.
- B. Ensure compliance with environmental regulations to protect the local environment, including soils, surface water, groundwater, and air.
 - i. Require commercial and industrial developments to adhere to local, state, and federal environmental standards.
 - ii. Implement best management practices to minimize environmental impacts.
- C. Promote efficient technologies and sustainable practices to mitigate environmental damage, minimize waste, and reduce resource consumption.
 - i. Encourage businesses to adopt energy-efficient technologies and sustainable practices.
 - ii. Provide and/or connect businesses with incentives and opportunities for the use of renewable energy sources and waste reduction measures.
- D. Improve infrastructure to support growth.
 - i. Invest in infrastructure improvements, such as roads, utilities, and broadband, to support commercial and industrial development.
 - ii. Ensure that infrastructure projects are planned and implemented in a way that supports sustainable growth and resilience/durability.

5. Promote Sustainable Agricultural Land Use

- A. Regularly review and update land use ordinances to ensure consistency and adjust for evolving needs.
 - i. Ensure all Land Use Ordinance and associated staff recommendations are improved at least annually.
- B. Ensure robust public participation in land use planning to allow for a more informed and representative decision-making process.
 - i. Hold public meetings and workshops to involve residents, business owners, and local community leaders (e.g., mayors, city council members, township board members, school district representatives) in the planning process.
 - ii. Use surveys and other tools and host public events to gather community input on land use issues.
- C. Provide training and resources for local officials and staff to ensure adequate local expertise.
 - i. Offer training programs on land use planning, zoning, and development regulations.
 - ii. Provide access to resources and technical assistance to public stakeholders to support effective land use management.
- D. Monitor and enforce compliance with land use regulations to protect the local environment, promote sustainable development, and maintain Renville County's rural character.
 - i. Conduct regular inspections to ensure compliance with zoning and land use ordinances
 - ii. Implement enforcement measures to address violations and maintain orderly development.

Specific Renville County Land Use Projects, Efforts, or Activities:

1. The County will regularly examine housing density restrictions, height and yard requirements, access, parking, and other standards within each zoning district to ensure continued appropriateness, adjusting as needed to encourage property development while preserving local character.
2. The County will enforce codes and ordinances related to land use.
3. The County will be amenable to the long-term use of agricultural land for non-ag purposes, including energy generation, provided adequate decommissioning plans are in place, as appropriate, and provided sufficient protections are incorporated to largely preserve the local character of the area and minimize disruption to neighboring properties.
4. The County will work with local business entities to develop and promote agritourism to draw visitors to Renville County.
5. The County will work with Renville County's municipalities as they review zoning maps and identify areas for future city growth.

*This list is not intended to be all-inclusive. Items should be added over time, as conditions and opportunities change. Similarly, items may be removed. Explanations for additions and subtractions should be documented. Progress should also be acknowledged as items are accomplished.

Renville County's Economic Development

Economic development is a holistic approach used to improve economic well-being and the standard of living for a community's residents. It focuses on:

- The creation of sustainable business opportunities,
- The enhancement of widespread prosperity through the addition of quality, family-sustaining jobs, and
- The promotion of activities that foster broadly-shared growth, so that all residents may benefit.

Key Elements of Economic Development

- **Local Focus:** Economic development leverages local resources, capacities, and assets to foster economic growth.
- **Inclusive Participation:** Economic development includes community members in decision making. This helps to ensure development initiatives address local needs and supports local goals.
- **Sustainability:** Economic development prioritizes long-term solutions that balance economic growth with environmental stewardship, social well-being, and community character.
- **Capacity Building:** Economic development includes building skills, increasing knowledge, and sharing resources within and throughout the community to enhance community members' ability to contribute to the local economy.
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** Economic development encourages partnerships among various stakeholders, including local governments, businesses, nonprofits, and community groups.

The Value of Economic Development

- **Economic Diversification:** By fostering entrepreneurship and supporting small businesses, economic development helps to diversify the local economy, reducing the community's dependence on just a small number of local employers.
- **Job Creation:** Economic development initiatives can create jobs and bring work and career opportunities for local workers, reducing local unemployment and underemployment.
- **Fairmindedness:** Effective economic development considers the needs of, and brings significant benefits to, all community members, reducing obstacles and promoting extensive involvement.
- **Local Empowerment:** Involving locals in economic planning and development empowers them to take control of their community's economic future, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.
- **Resilience:** Communities that engage in economic development are typically more resilient to economic shocks and/or downturns because they have diversified economies and stronger local networks.
- **Quality of Life:** By taking a holistic approach, economic development initiatives can improve residents' standard of living. This may include better housing, education, healthcare, and/or recreational facilities.



In summary, economic development is the work that harnesses local potential to nurture and stimulate vibrant, resilient, and inclusive communities that attract businesses, visitors, and new residents.

Current Economic Conditions

The following information is taken from the most recent Renville County profile that is supplied by the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). This data helps to illustrate the current state of Renville County's economy, based on population trends, educational attainment, cost of living, and employment opportunities.

Population and Demographics

- Population: 14,348 people, a reduction of 375 people since 2020.
- Median Age: 42.1 years, higher than the state median of 38.6 years.

Population Change (2020-2023)

- Negative Natural Increase: - 376 (more deaths than births).
- Net Migration: - 181 (more people moved out than moved in).
- International Migration: + 9 (a net gain of people from other countries).

	Total Population Change	April 1, 2020, to July 1, 2023					
		Natural Increase	Vital Events		Net Migration		
			Births	Deaths	Total	International	Domestic
Renville Co.	- 376	- 205	488	653	- 172	9	- 181
Minnesota	31,111	40,368	207,857	167,489	- 11,352	34,624	- 45,976

Foreign-born Population

- Total: 495 people (3.4% of the Renville County population)

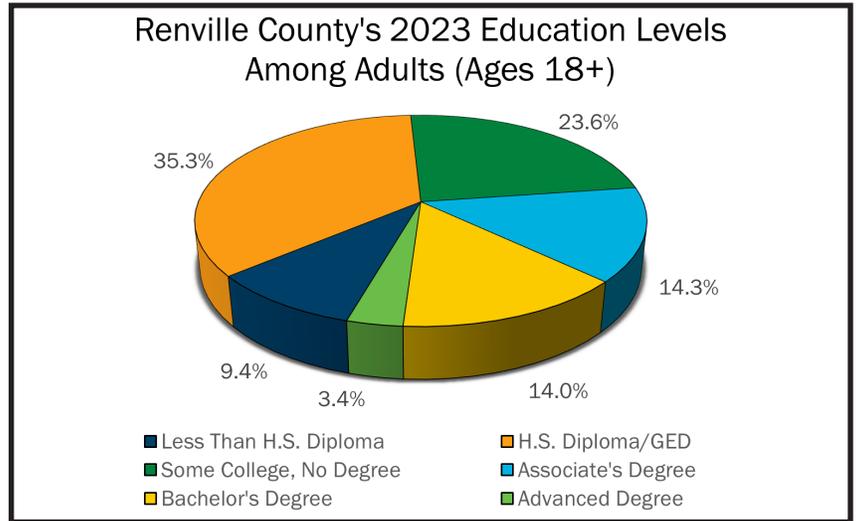
Population Projections (2025-2035)

- Total Projection: Based on current projections, Renville County's population is expected to decline to 13,877 in 2035.
- Age Group Projections:
 - An increase in the number of residents in the 35-44 (+6.8%) and 45-54 (+7.6%) age groups is anticipated.
 - A more significant decrease in the number of residents in the 55-64 (-19.6%) and 65-74 (-0.1%) age groups is also predicted.

	Renville County	2025 Projection	2035 Projection	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Under 5 Years		842	847	+ 5	+ 0.6%
5-14 years		1,877	1,719	- 158	- 8.4%
15-24 years		1,637	1,538	- 54	- 3.3%
25-34 years		1,595	1,565	- 30	- 1.9%
35-44 years		1,680	1,794	+ 114	+ 6.8%
45-54 years		1,617	1,740	+ 123	+ 7.6%
55-64 years		1,866	1,500	- 366	- 19.6%
65-74 years		1,868	1,492	- 376	- 20.1%
75-84 years		975	1,228	+ 253	+ 25.9%
85 years & older		462	409	- 53	- 11.5%
Total Population		14,419	13,877	- 542	- 3.8%

Educational Attainment (2023)

- 90.6% of Renville County’s adult residents (ages 18+) had at least a high school diploma, lower than the percentage of the state adult population as a whole, at 93.2%..
- 55.3% of adult residents had at least some college, compared to the State of MN’s percentage, which was at 68.8%
 - Some College, No Degree: 23.6%
 - Associate’s Degree: 14.3%
 - Bachelor’s Degree: 14.0%
 - Advanced Degree: 3.4%



Labor Force and Employment

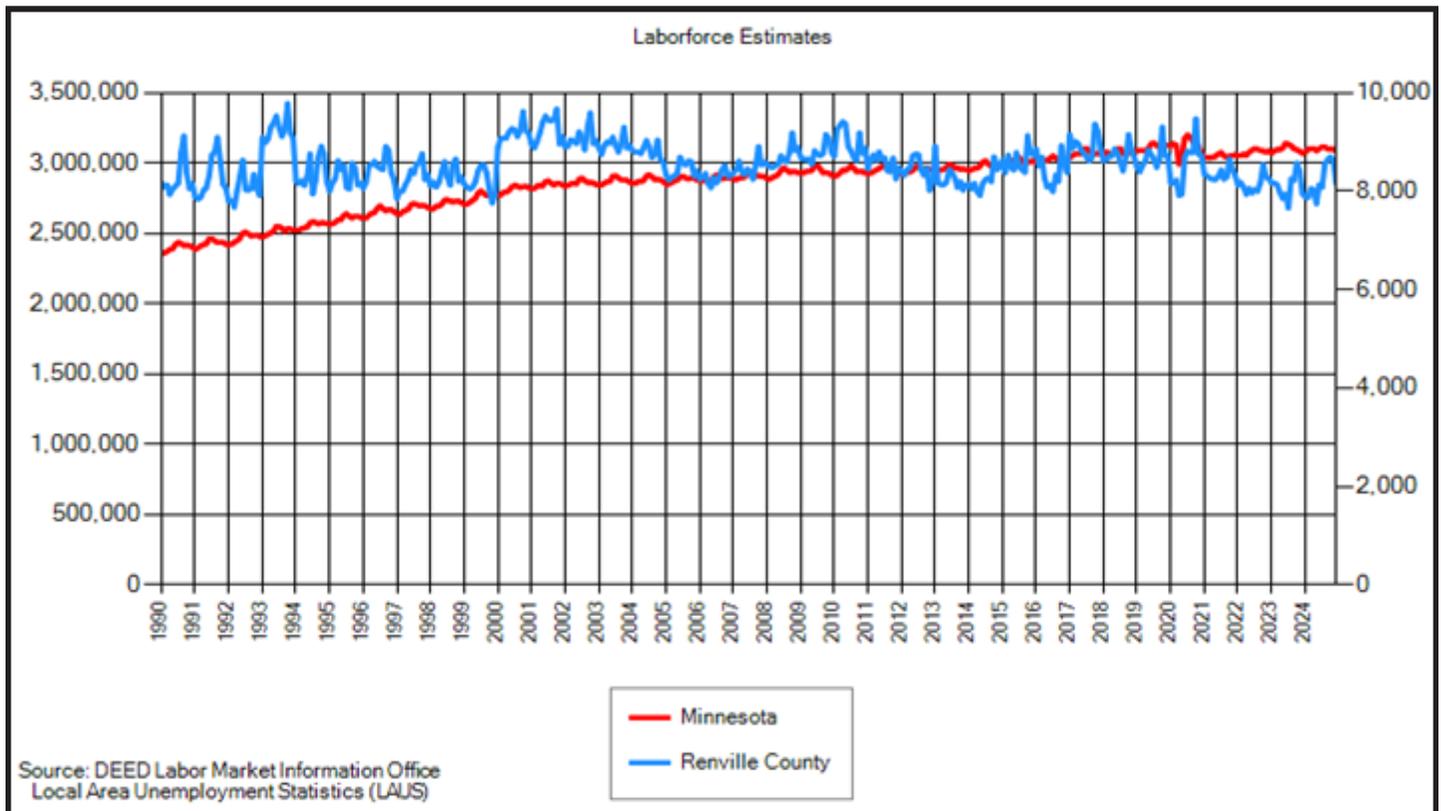
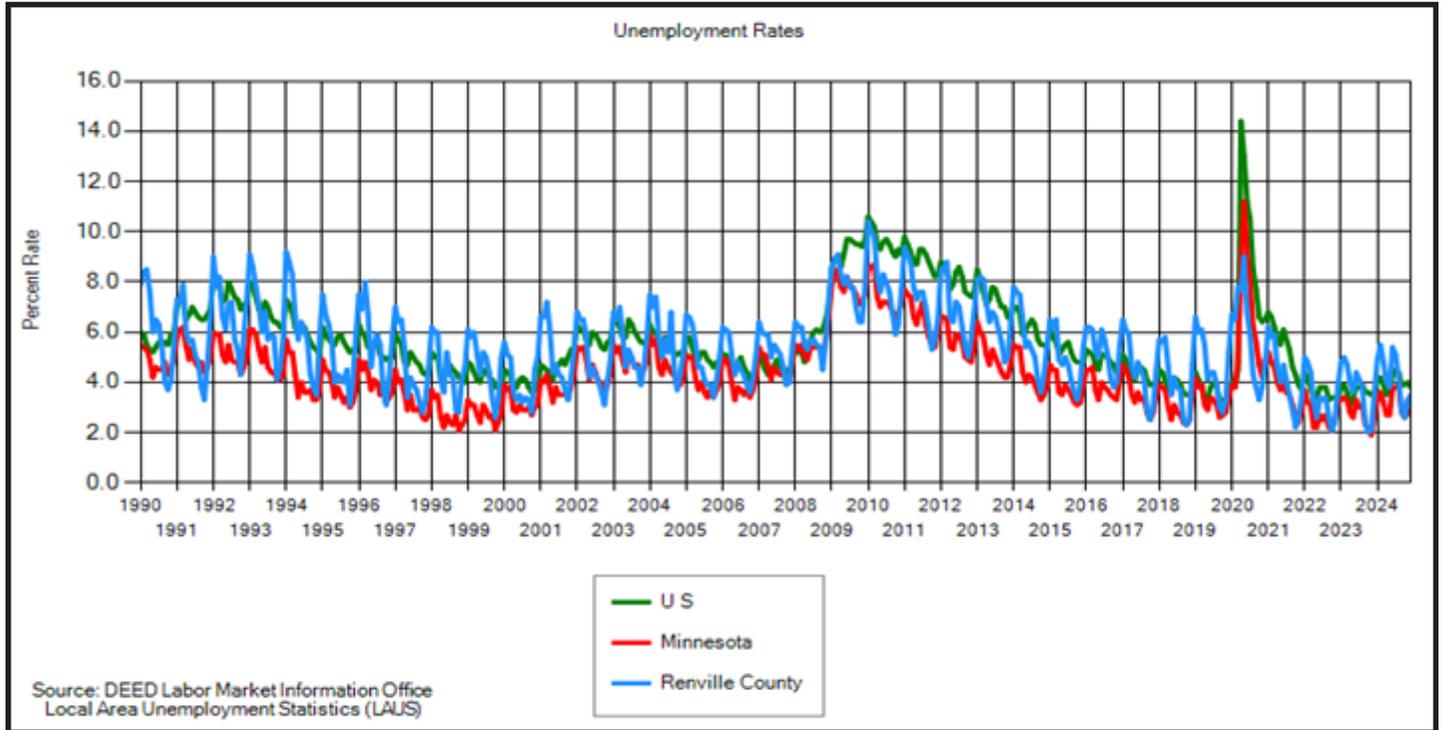
- Labor Force: Renville County had 8,105 available workers in 2023, a decline of 577 workers since 2008.
- Renville County’s 2023 unemployment rate was 3.7%. This was higher than the state average of 2.8% but still considered quite healthy and even a bit too low to support a healthy churn of talent, according to some economists.
- Renville County’s 2023 labor force participation rate was 62.8%. 4,026 male and 3,202 female residents were working or available for work. 30.6% of these workers were ages 55 or older. 90.0% of these workers were “white alone” and not Hispanic or Latino.

Industry and Employment

- 594 Renville County employers provided 5,463 jobs in 2023, a reduction of 329 jobs or 5.7% from 2019.
- Renville County had the 56th largest and 50th fastest growing economy, among the state’s 87 counties, in 2023.
- Renville County’s Major Industries include:
 - Health Care and Social Assistance: 26% of local jobs.
 - Retail Trade: 16% of local jobs.
 - Accommodation and Food Services: 15% of local jobs.
 - Manufacturing: 9% of local jobs.
- 2023 average annual wages: \$53,193

Economic Trends

The labor market grew extremely tight in the years preceding the pandemic, with less than one jobseeker available for each job vacancy. In 2020, the pandemic-caused recession caused unemployment to spike. However, in 2023, job vacancies in Minnesota’s Central Region, which includes Renville County (the Central Region’s most southwestern county), returned to pre-pandemic levels. Employers continue to experience challenges as they work to fill their vacancies.



2023 Occupations in High Demand for Minnesota's Central Planning Region (includes Renville Co.)			
No High School Diploma or GED Required	High School Diploma or GED Required	Some College or an Associate's Deg. Required	Bachelor's Degree or Higher Required
Retail Salespersons \$35,952/yr.	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers \$60,953/yr.	Registered Nurses \$97,279/yr.	General Operations Managers \$82,833/yr.
Home Health & Personal Care Aides \$35,952/yr.	Nursing Assistants \$40,289/yr.	Radiology Techs \$79,926/yr.	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education \$65,166/yr.
Fast Food & Counter Workers \$30,548/yr.	Licensed Practical & Vocational Nurses \$58,035/yr.	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers \$78,056/yr.	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special Ed. & Career/Technical \$66,539/yr.
Cashiers \$31,985/yr.	Automotive Service Techs & Mechanics \$49,872/yr.	Industrial Engineering Techs \$64,316/yr.	Medical & Health Services Managers \$108,690/yr.
Stockers & Order Fillers \$38,723/yr.	Machinists \$61,397/yr.	Calibration Techs \$51,876/yr.	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education \$38,309/yr.
Janitors & Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeepers \$37,511/yr.	Emergency Medical Technicians \$43,830/yr.	Dental Hygienists \$95,926/yr.	Accountants & Auditors \$73,426/yr.
Waiters & Waitresses \$44,527/yr.	Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks \$49,071/yr.	Detectives & Criminal Investigators \$77,932/yr.	Child, Family, & School Social Workers \$65,914/yr.
Childcare Workers \$32,303/yr.	Electricians \$79,223/yr.	Surgical Techs \$66,288/yr.	Industrial Engineers \$97,918/yr.
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers \$47,389/yr.	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, & Mental Health Counselors \$54,808/yr.	Human Resources Assistants, Except Payroll & Timekeeping \$49,531/yr.	Project Management Specialists \$85,453/yr.
Customer Service Representatives \$44,527/yr.	Medical Assistants \$48,462/yr.	Veterinary Tech's \$46,438/yr.	Special Education Teachers, Secondary School \$69,045/yr.

Income and Cost of Living

- The Median Household Income among Renville County's households was \$69,086, lower than the state median of \$87,556, though this figure includes households in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area.
- Cost of Living:
 - According to MN DEED, in 2023, single adults with no children required wages totaling \$29,716 annually, or a wage of \$14.29 to meet basic household needs.
 - A family with two adults, one working full-time and the other part-time, with one child, required total wages of \$56,668 annually, or hourly wages of \$18.16 to meet basic household needs.

- **Housing Costs:**
 - Renville County has a lower median house value than the State of Minnesota, which includes the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. In 2022, Renville County had the 72nd highest median home value, of the state's 87 counties. Only 8.2% of Renville County's housing stock was built since the year 2000, compared with 21.1% of the entire state's housing stock.
 - The percentage of Renville County households who had a mortgage and spent 30% or more of their income on housing costs in 2022 was 21.6%, slightly better than the state's rate of 22.5%.
 - For renters, the median 2022 monthly rent in Renville County was \$760, far lower than the state's median monthly rent of \$1,235.

Renville County's Recent Economic Development Efforts

The Renville County Housing and Redevelopment Authority and the Economic Development Authority make up the HRA/EDA. Together, they work to keep the County strong by fostering business growth and development, promoting tourism and recreation, and providing housing opportunities for County residents. More information can be found at the County's website: <https://www.revillecountymn.gov/housing-and-economic-development/>.

Recent areas of focus and leadership have included the following:

Business Creation and Expansion:

- **Assistance and Mentorship:** The Renville County HRA/EDA provides Technical Assistance and Mentorship. The department works to connect newer entrepreneurs with more experienced business leaders, so they may benefit from additional guidance and support.
- **Access to Financing:** The Renville County HRA/EDA has created microloan programs for small businesses and startups, who may not qualify for traditional bank loans, to help bring their plans to fruition. When financing amounts are significant, this can also include partnering with other regional government or nonprofit lenders (e.g., Mid-Minnesota Development Commission, Southwest Initiative Foundation, etc.).
- **Workforce Development:** The Renville County HRA/EDA partners with local education institutions to offer training that aligns with the needs of the local business community. This work includes the promotion of apprenticeship programs, including the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry's Registered Apprenticeship opportunity. To learn more about this opportunity, visit <https://www.dli.mn.gov/business/workforce/apprenticeship>.
- **Business Literacy:** The Renville County HRA/EDA often promotes and refers to small business education programs offered by the SCORE Foundation, U.S. Small Business Administration, and the State of Minnesota's Small Business Development Center.

Housing Development:

- **Affordable Housing Initiatives:** In 2020, Renville County worked with a private firm to complete a comprehensive housing study and identify the housing development needed to meet resident needs. This study, along with a copy of its presentation, are available at <https://www.revillecountymn.gov/housing-and-economic-development/housing-authority/>.
- The Renville County HRA/EDA encourages public-private partnerships to address housing shortages and other needs. Through these collaborations, private developers are better able to create affordable housing. In other words, housing does not cost households more than 30% of their gross income.

The HRA/EDA also offers a Tax Abatement Building Incentive to encourage the development of new housing units. The County can also consider other incentives, such as reduced permit fees and/or expedited approval processes for builders interested in developing affordable housing.

In addition, the County offers Down Payment Assistance and Homeowner Rehab Loan Programs. These programs are available, on a first-come, first-served basis to first-time home buyers or buyers who have not owned a home

for at least three years. Loans of up to \$6,000 are available at an interest rate of 0%. A unique aspect of this program is that these Down Payment Assistance Loans do not have to be repaid until the borrower moves out of the home.

Renville County's Homeowner Rehab Loan program provides loans of up to \$6,000 to match funds used for permanent home repairs. These loans are also offered at 0% and are repayable over five years. However, for very low-income households, repayment of the loan is not due until any bank loan necessary to provide the matching funds has been repaid.

- Renville County offers a Rental Rehab Loan program, which provides interest-free matching loans to owners of single and multi-family rental homes for eligible improvements. Property owners may access up to \$25,000 per unit or \$50,000 per complex. These loans carry 0% interest with repayment based on equal installments over the course of five years.

The HRA/EDA also offers a Blight Removal Grant Program. The goal of this program is to partner with private and public property owners to remove blighted structures and encourage reinvestment on the property. Grants of up to \$5,000 are available for this residential cleanup (up to \$10,000 for commercial properties), and a dollar-for-dollar cash match is a requirement of the property owner.

Housing Development:

Renville County understands the importance of a strong network of childcare providers, as this can help to reduce employment barriers for needed workforce participants. In that vein, the County provides leadership or plays supporting roles in the following areas:

- **Licensed Childcare Provider Support:** With assistance from other entities, such as First Children's Finance and Child Care Wayfinder, Renville County can provide technical assistance to help those who want to open family childcare businesses or larger childcare centers. This includes connecting them with training and certification programs to enhance their skills and qualifications.
- **Legal Non-Licensed Childcare Provider Support:** Renville County offers technical assistance to help those interested in providing legal childcare to just one unrelated family. The County can offer technical assistance and connect these providers with the required training and small start-up payments to assist them with registration and start-up costs.
- **Childcare Lending:** The Renville County HRA/EDA's Childcare Forgivable Loan program assists with the creation of new and the expansion of existing childcare businesses. Forgivable loans of up to \$7,500 for family childcare providers, and up to \$15,000 for childcare centers. This lending may include investment in the development of special family child care facilities, which can house multiple family-style providers. Loan repayments are deferred for five years, or until the provider ceases operation, whichever is first. 20% of the loan is forgiven for each year of operation after receiving the loan. The HRA/EDA can also provide other business development assistance and connect childcare businesses with other grant and financing opportunities to help them manage and grow their operations.

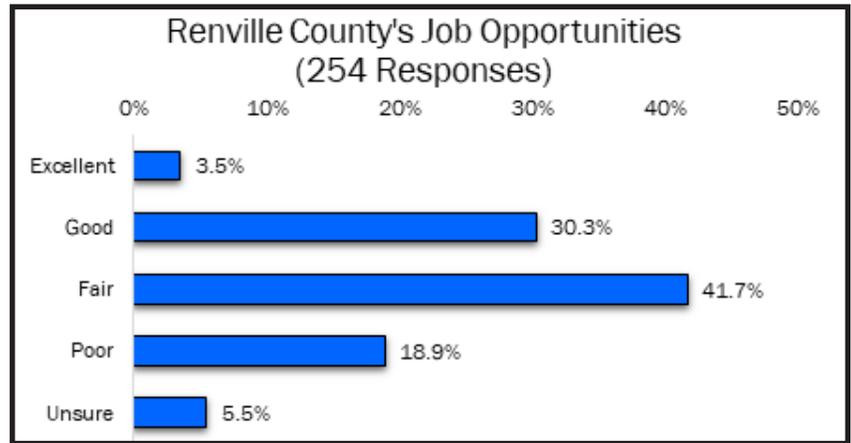


Photo By Taylor Wertish

Public Input

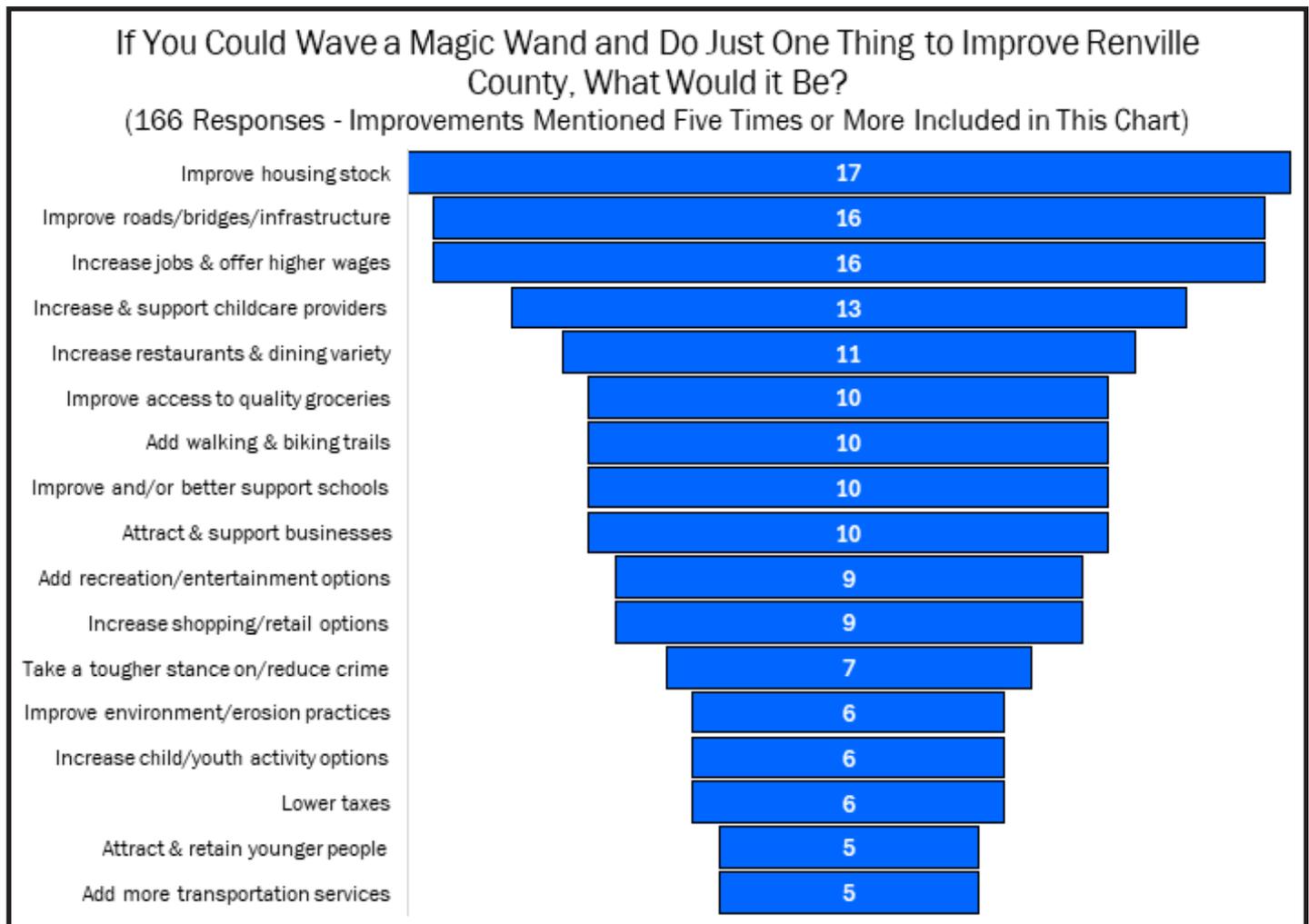
There are various aspects of economic development, several of which were captured in Renville County Comprehensive Survey Responses.

When asked to rate Renville County on its job opportunities, 34% of respondents indicated “good” or “excellent.” 60.5% rated Renville County’s as “fair” or “poor” in the area of job opportunities, with 5.5% indicating they were “unsure.”

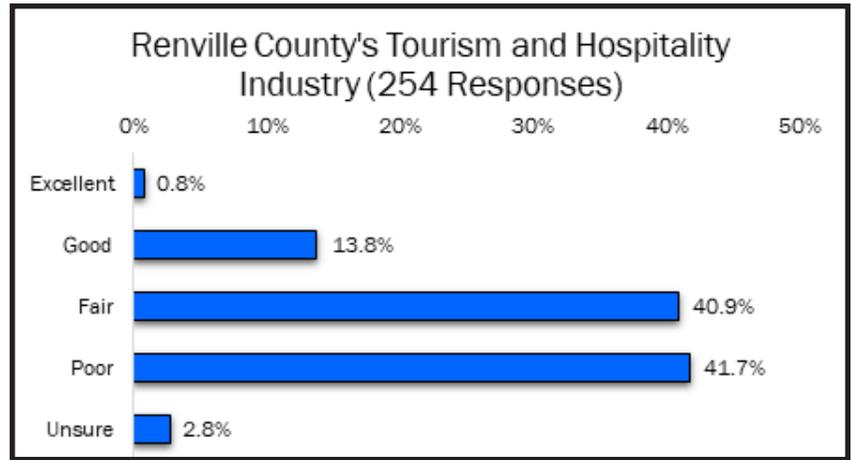


When asked what one thing they would do to improve Renville County, several economic development-related items were mentioned with notable frequency. These included:

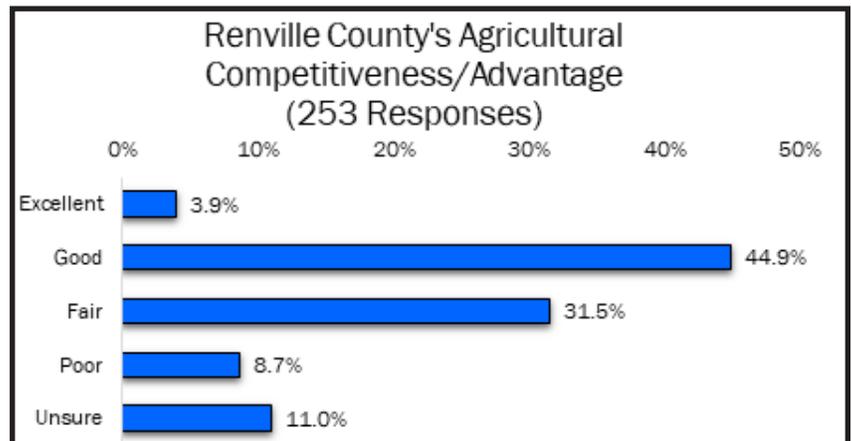
- Increasing jobs and offering higher wages
- Increasing support for childcare providers
- Increasing restaurants and dining variety
- Attracting and supporting businesses
- Adding recreation and entertainment options
- Increasing shopping/retail options
- Lowering taxes
- Attracting and retaining younger people



When asked to rate Renville County on its tourism and hospitality industry (e.g., restaurants, entertainment venues, etc.) 14.6% provided an answer of “good” or “excellent.” 82.6% rated Renville County’s tourism and hospitality industry as “fair” or “poor”, with 2.8% indicating they were unsure. This is significant as “third places”, that is to say places to spend time outside of the home and workplace, such as restaurants and coffee shops, are appealing to current and prospective workers. However, it is important to understand that it is difficult for more rural areas to support these places of hospitality, due to the limited customer base.



When asked to rate Renville County’s agricultural competitiveness, almost half, 48.8%, provided an answer of “good” or “excellent.” 40.2% rated Renville County’s agricultural competitiveness/advantage as “fair” or “poor,” with 11% indicating they were unsure. This is important because, while agriculture is just one of Renville County’s economic sectors, it does provide the foundation for many other sectors and jobs within them.



Economic Development focused comments offered by Renville County Comprehensive Plan survey respondents. A sampling of these comments includes the following:

- *“More housing, more residents leading to larger tax base to create better economic opportunities.”*
- *“Better jobs with wages to reflect inflation to reflect all taxes that are inflating.”*
- *“Increase the population which in turn would increase businesses and job opportunities.”*
- *“Bring more people to the whole county through jobs and transportation options—new businesses and county road improvements. High speed internet in all rural areas, cities might be adequate but the farther out you go is more limited.”*
- *“I do not feel it is a question of affordability, but possible lack of a variety of jobs that bring different races of people to our area.”*
- *“I think outsiders, or even kids that grew up here but moved away, really underestimate the job/career opportunities in the area. Especially if they have an entrepreneurial spirit.”*
- *“I have kids that hope to plan come back if jobs & daycare is available. I do think is this does not happen - then at some point older parents may move closer to their adult children. So - I think that is a double loss for Renville County.”*
- *“More local job opportunities with competitive wage.”*
- *“Make it more affordable for new businesses to come in and create more jobs.”*

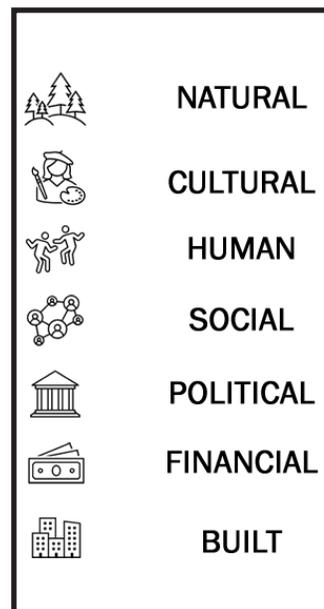
- *“Bring in more entertainment, restaurants, things to do. And higher wage jobs.”*
- *“More restaurants.”*
- *“More hotels, restaurants, shopping.”*
- *“[Need] restaurants (not fast food), shopping options.”*
- *“[Need] places to eat all day long...concerts, more stores to shop clothes.”*
- *“[Need] affordable restaurants, thrift store, bowling alley, coffee shop, grocery store...etc.”*
- *“More restaurants and shopping.”*
- *“[Need] gathering spaces such as coffee shops, restaurants, brewery/winery, retail shops.”*
- *“More restaurants - shopping - movie theater - bowling.”*

Note: Additional information on topics such as housing, childcare, and broadband can be found in dedicated chapters of this plan.

Capital Development Framework

While there are numerous approaches to developing goals and strategies for economic development, the Renville County Comprehensive Plan will focus on the concept of Community Capitals Framework (CCF). The CCF is a comprehensive approach to community development that identifies and leverages seven types of capital within a community. These capital types include:

- **Natural Capital:** The landscape, air, water, soil, and biodiversity of both plants and animals.
- **Cultural Capital:** The values, norms, beliefs, and traditions that people inherit from their family, school, and community.
- **Human Capital:** The attributes of individuals that provide them with the ability to earn a living, strengthen the community, and contribute to community organizations, their families, and self-improvement.
- **Social Capital:** The connections among people and organizations that help make things happen in the community.
- **Political Capital:** The ability to influence and enforce rules, regulations, and standards, and access to individuals and groups with the power to influence decisions.
- **Financial Capital:** The variety of financial resources available to invest in local projects or economic development initiatives.
- **Built Capital:** The infrastructure of the community, including facilities, services, and physical structures needed by a community.



The Importance of the Community Capitals Framework

- **Holistic Approach:** The CCF provides a multi-dimensional perspective on community development, recognizing that a community’s well-being depends on a balance of various types of capital. This holistic approach ensures that development efforts are comprehensive and sustainable.
- **Guidance for Practitioners:** The framework offers a structured way for community and economic development practitioners to assess and address the strengths and needs of a community. It helps in identifying areas that require investment and those that can be leveraged for growth.

- **Balanced Development:** By emphasizing the need for balanced investments across all seven capitals, the CCF helps prevent the overemphasis on one type of capital at the expense of others. This balance is crucial for the long-term health and resilience of a community.
- **Interconnectedness:** The framework highlights the interconnected nature of the capitals, showing how improvements in one area can lead to positive changes in others. This “spiraling-up” effect can create a cycle of continuous improvement and growth.
- **Community Engagement:** The CCF encourages the involvement of diverse community members in the development process. By seeking input from various stakeholders, communities can create more inclusive and effective development strategies.
- **Sustainability:** The focus on natural and cultural capitals underscores the importance of preserving the environment and cultural heritage for future generations. This sustainability aspect is vital for the long-term viability of communities.

Renville County’s Economic Development Strategies

1. Enhance Renville County’s Natural Capital

- A. Preserve and improve the quality of natural resources such as parks, lakes, rivers, and wildlife habitats.
 - i. Implement and support existing conservation programs that protect and restore natural areas, including reforestation projects, wetland and natural prairie restoration, and wildlife habitat preservation
- B. Promote sustainable use of natural resources to ensure long-term environmental health.
 - i. Encourage sustainable/eco-friendly practices among residents and businesses. Examples include recycling, composting, energy conservation, and informed consumer decision making (e.g., choosing aluminum packaging instead of plastic).
 - ii. **Environmental Education:** Provide educational programs, resources and workshops on environmental stewardship and sustainable living to the public (at-large and specific subsets – youth, businesses, seniors, etc.).

2. Strengthen Renville County’s Cultural Capital

- A. Celebrate and preserve local traditions, values, and cultural heritage.
 - i. Organize annual cultural festivals and events that celebrate local heritage, arts, and traditions in an inclusive way, and find ways to incorporate Renville County’s parks and facilities as celebration, art, and history venues.
 - ii. Promote the preservation of historical sites and landmarks and support local museums and historical societies.
- B. Support cultural events, festivals, and institutions like museums and libraries.
 - i. Support and promote arts and cultural education in schools, community centers, and other public locations. Consider ways to include music, dance, theater, visual, and folk arts programs.

3. Build Human Capital

A. Invest in education and training programs to improve skills and knowledge, including workforce and community leadership and participation-centered skills and knowledge.

- i. Partner with educational institutions, the region's CareerForce partners (e.g., Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services, Inc.; MN Vocational Rehabilitation Services, etc.), and area employers to provide workforce training and continuing education opportunities.
- ii. Offer leadership development programs to build the skills and capacities of local leaders and community members.

B. Promote health and wellness initiatives to enhance the overall well-being of residents.

- i. Launch health initiatives focusing on preventive care, mental health, and healthy lifestyles, including fitness programs and nutrition education.

4. Increase Social Capital

A. Foster strong community bonds through activities that build trust and cooperation

- i. Promote volunteerism and community service projects that address local needs and strengthen community ties.
- ii. Organize inclusive community events and celebrations that bring diverse groups of people together.

B. Encourage civic engagement and participation in community, meetings, events, and organizations.

- i. Create and support community groups and networks that bring people together for social, recreational, and service activities.

5. Expand Political Capital

A. Develop leadership programs to equip and empower local leaders.

- i. Establish leadership development workshops and training sessions for current and aspiring community leaders.

B. Increase citizen involvement in decision-making processes and public forums.

- i. Provide civic education programs to inform residents about local government processes and how they can get involved.
- ii. Facilitate town hall meetings, public discussions, and deliberation forums on key community issues to encourage citizen participation.

6. Boost Financial Capital

A. Enhance access to financial resources for community projects and economic development.

- i. Establish and maintain grant programs to support community initiatives, small businesses, and nonprofit organizations.

B. Support local businesses and entrepreneurial ventures through grants and loan programs.

- i. Support and grow the resources of the Renville County Economic Development Authority and collaborate with private, public and nonprofit lending organizations (e.g., Mid-Minnesota Development Commission, Southwest Initiative Foundation).
- ii. Offer microloan programs to help entrepreneurs and small business owners start and grow their businesses.

7. Improve Built Capital
 - A. Invest in infrastructure improvements such as roads, bridges, trails, and public facilities.
 - i. Plan and execute infrastructure projects that meet community needs, including transportation, utilities, and public facilities.
 - ii. Ensure that new developments are sustainable and enhance the built environment, incorporating green building practices and smart growth principles.
 - B. Promote the development of shared community spaces that enhance quality of life.
 - i. Develop and maintain community spaces such as parks, recreational facilities, and public gathering areas.

Specific Renville County Economic Development Projects, Efforts, or Activities:*

1. The County will support business start-up and expansion by
 - A. Fostering an environment conducive to commerce, without unreasonable restrictions or regulations and with the community resources workers and their families require (e.g., housing, childcare);
 - B. Working to develop and nurture relationships with current and prospective entrepreneurs;
 - C. Providing technical assistance and resources (e.g., financing, grant programs) to businesses; and,
 - D. Ensuring business owners have ample opportunity to develop cooperative relationships with each other.
2. The County will support the establishment of a new multi-use wellness center and then promote its use by all Renville County residents.
3. The County will develop and employ strategies to attract workers and their families to Renville County, including strategies related to County marketing/promotion and the addition of needed housing, childcare, jobs, and other common resident necessities.
4. The County will cooperate with entities seeking to bring visitors to the area, especially those interested in local history, nature, and/or agritourism. This work may include but should not be limited to working to grow tourism along the Yellowstone Trail and Minnesota River Scenic Byway, private businesses and local chambers of commerce, convention and visitor bureaus, state agencies, and community booster clubs or similar organizations.
5. The County will cooperate with students and with local school districts and workforce providers who are interested in providing young people, as well as those considering a career change, with opportunities for experiential learning (e.g., job shadowing, tours, career events, internships, part-time employment, etc.).
6. The County will actively pursue grant funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Transportation, and other funders to support economic development and adjacent initiatives, when grant eligibility criteria can be met, and will strategically invest local tax dollars to leverage these grant awards. This work may be in partnership with other entities (e.g., local municipalities, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission).
7. The County will promote the economic and other community benefits of supporting local businesses to residents.
8. The County will invest in commerce-supporting infrastructure (e.g., industrial parks) via tax and/or other incentives.

**This list is not intended to be all-inclusive. Items should be added over time, as conditions and opportunities change. Similarly, items may be removed. Explanations for additions and subtractions should be documented. Progress should also be acknowledged as items are accomplished.*

Renville County's Housing

Renville County's housing situation presents both opportunities and challenges. The county boasts a relatively affordable housing market, with median home prices near \$184,000¹ (August 2024), reflecting a 0.3% increase from the previous year. In 2024, properties have remained on the market for an average of 24 days (just below the U.S. average, per Zillow), compared to just 10 days in 2023. When compared to the Minnesota average of 22 days this reflects how quickly houses turn in the market and highlights the fact that prospective buyers need to be prepared to move quickly in their home purchase decision-making process.

The Renville County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) plays a crucial role in providing affordable housing. It manages 22 public housing units and 89 Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. The Housing Choice Voucher Program is a federal program that helps low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled afford safe, quality housing in the private market. A significant portion of these residents earn less than 30% of the Area Median Household Income which, for Renville County, was \$66,313 in 2022 . The HRA continues to accept applications for its public housing and Section 8 programs, though the availability of units is limited and there can be significant waiting lists .

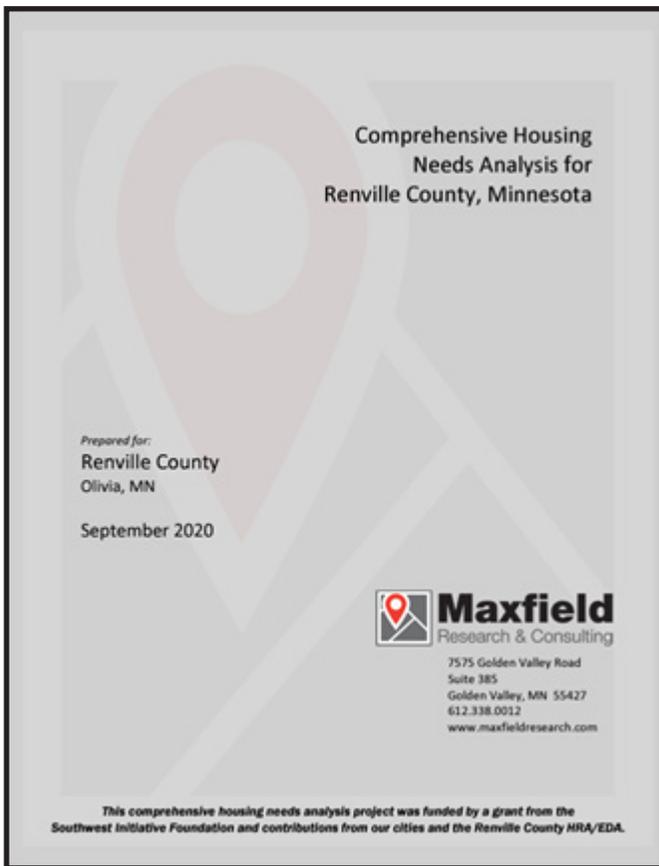


In Minnesota, the average effective property tax rate is 1.02% of the total property value . Renville County's rate is slightly higher than average, at 1.11%, ranking it 35th highest in the state among 87 Minnesota counties. This higher tax rate can likely be attributed to Renville County's lower housing density, which leads to a higher cost per household for County infrastructure and services.

The 2020 Renville County Housing Study, presented by Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC, provides several key recommendations to address the housing needs in the area. It is anticipated that, since this study was conducted, Renville County's need for housing, especially senior housing, has only increased with the aging of the Baby Boomer generation. The full 2020 Renville County Housing Study can be found at Renville County's website, at: https://www.renvillecountymn.gov/departments/renville_county_housing_study.php



Key 2020 Renville County Housing Study Takeaways:



Single-Family Housing

- **Lot Supply:** The study recommends maintaining a three-to-five-year supply of lots.
- **Demand:** At the time of the study, there was a demand for 331 single-family homes across various price points, with a particular need for entry-level homes, despite rising development costs.
- **Submarket Distribution:** The demand for single-family housing was spread across the City of Renville (82 units), Olivia (114 units), Buffalo Lake-Hector (75 units), and the "South Submarket", which surrounds the State Highway 19 corridor and the cities of Franklin, Fairfax, and Morton (61 units).

Multifamily Housing



- **Demand:** In 2020, there was a need for over 80 multifamily units, including twin homes, detached town homes, and patio homes.
- **Submarket Distribution:** The 2020 demand included 20 units in the City of Renville, 28 in Olivia, 19 in Buffalo Lake/Hector, and 15 in the South Submarket.



Rental Housing

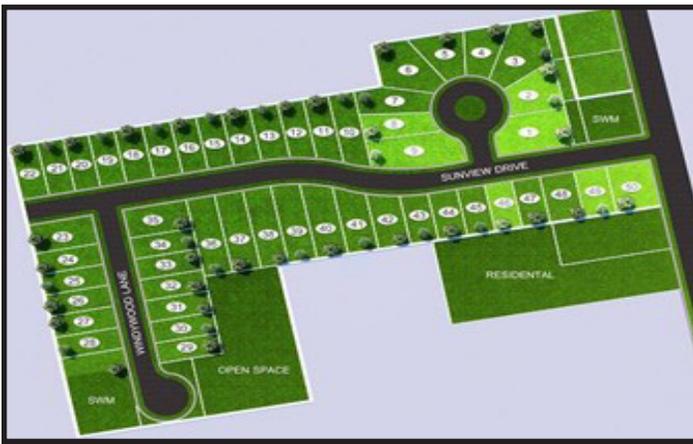
- **Overall Demand:** Over 240 rental units were needed at the time of the 2020 study. This included an estimated need for 160 market-rate units, 59 affordable units, and 24 subsidized units. For clarity, market-rate housing is priced according to the current market conditions, without any subsidies or price controls. Subsidized housing includes units for which low-income occupants receive government financial assistance to reduce costs and prevent homelessness. The term "affordable housing" simply refers to housing that is priced at no more than 30 percent of a household's gross income, including utilities.
- **Submarket Distribution:** The study concluded there was demand for 42 units in the City of Renville, 97 in Olivia, 44 in Buffalo Lake/Hector, and 59 in the South Submarket.

Senior Housing

- **Significant Demand:** The study found there was a high demand for senior housing, particularly for active-adult rentals, senior ownership options, and affordable active-adult rentals.
- **Submarket Distribution:** The study found demand for 170 units in the City of Renville, 221 in Olivia, 148 in Buffalo Lake/Hector, and 193 in the South Submarket



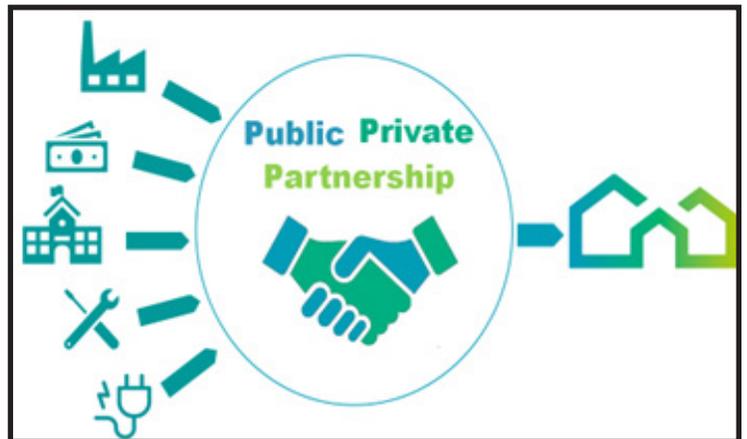
General Recommendations of the 2020 Renville County Housing Study



- **Promote Market Rate Rental Housing:** Encourage the production of market-rate rental housing.
- **Platted Lots:** Increase the supply of platted, build-ready lots that have all necessary infrastructure in place.
- **Inventory Future Sites:** Identify and inventory potential sites for housing development in each of Renville County's cities.
- **Housing Resources:** Implement a "One Stop Shop" to assist both buyers and developers find the resources they need. These resources should include not only available property to purchase or develop, but also

information and assistance with available programs.

- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Stimulate housing markets through partnerships between local government units and housing developers. The purpose of these partnerships is to facilitate larger-scale projects that may otherwise strain government resources. These agreements allow for the combination of public oversight with the innovation and efficiency of the private sector.
- **Regular Updates:** Develop and regularly update a housing action plan.
- **Promote Rural Living:** Highlight the advantages of living in rural Minnesota, such as lower cost of living, desirable schools, and a sense of community.



Types of Housing

Housing types vary widely, each with distinct characteristics and impacts on communities, economies, and environments. Here's a brief overview:



Single-Family Housing

- Description: Detached homes designed for one family. Typically have a yard and an attached or detached garage.
- Pros: Privacy, space, and ownership stability.
- Cons: Higher land use, contributing to urban/community sprawl and potentially higher infrastructure costs. Can lead to less social interaction.

Apartments

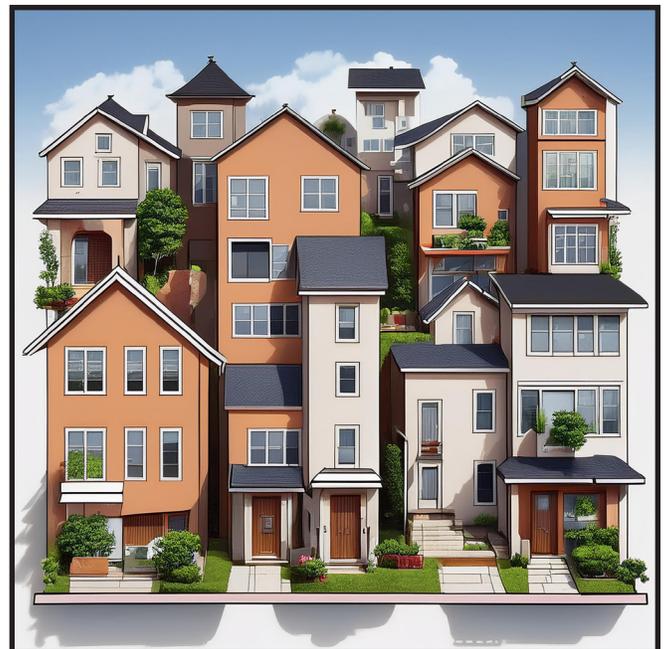
- Description: Multi-unit buildings, often in urban areas, ranging from small to high-rise complexes.
- Pros: Efficient use of space, lower individual costs, and easier access to urban amenities. Can foster a sense of community.
- Cons: Less privacy and potential for overcrowding. Can contribute to noise and higher population density.

Condominiums (Condos)

- Description: Individually owned units within a larger building or complex. Owners share common areas.
- Pros: Ownership in urban areas, often with amenities like gyms or pools. Lower maintenance responsibilities.
- Cons: HOA fees and rules can be restrictive. Shared walls can reduce privacy.

Cooperative Housing (Co-ops)

- Description: Residents own shares in a corporation that owns the building, rather than owning their individual units.
- Pros: Strong community governance, often more affordable. Residents have more control over who joins the community.
- Cons: Complex buying and selling process. Can have strict rules and regulations.



Duplexes/Triplexes

- Description: Single structures divided into two or three units, each with separate entrances.
- Pros: Cost-sharing opportunities, often more affordable. Suitable for multi-generational living.
- Cons: Shared walls and limited space compared to single-family homes.

Tiny Homes

- Description: Very small, often mobile homes, typically under 500 square feet.
- Pros: Affordable, minimal environmental impact, and promotes a minimalist lifestyle.
- Cons: Limited space and zoning challenges. Not suitable for all climates or lifestyles.

Mobile/Manufactured Homes

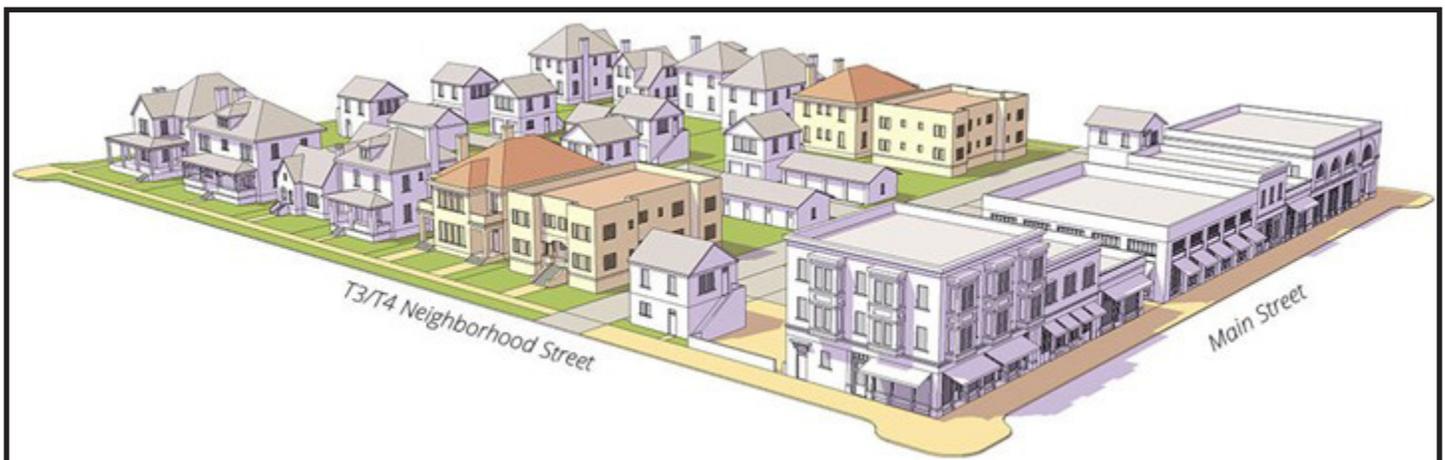
- Description: Prefabricated homes that can be moved but are often placed in a permanent location.
- Pros: More affordable and quicker to build. Can be in rural or urban areas.
- Cons: Often located in less desirable areas, potential for stigma. May depreciate in value over time, especially if not permanently fixed to a foundation, utilities, etc.

Mixed-Use Developments

- Description: Buildings or areas that combine residential, commercial, and sometimes industrial spaces.
- Pros: Promotes walkability and reduces the need for transportation. Encourages a vibrant community atmosphere.
- Cons: Can lead to congestion and higher living costs in desirable areas.

Public Housing

- Description: Government-subsidized housing for low-income individuals and families.
- Pros: Provides essential housing for those in need, can help reduce homelessness.
- Cons: Often stigmatized, can suffer from underfunding and maintenance issues. Concentration of poverty can lead to social challenges.



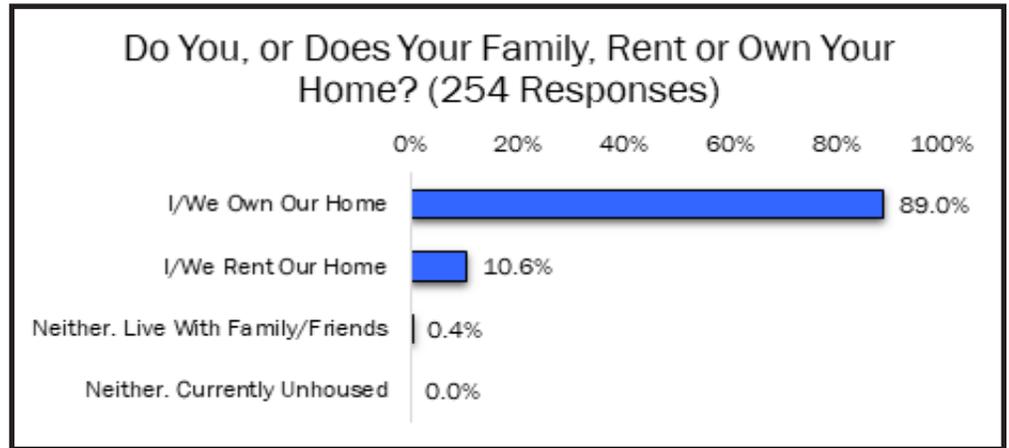
Environmental and Social Impact

- **Environmental Impact:** Higher density housing (like apartments and townhouses) tends to be more environmentally sustainable, reducing land use and infrastructure costs. In contrast, single-family homes, especially in suburban areas, contribute to urban sprawl, increased car dependency, and higher energy consumption.
- **Social Impact:** Different housing types can influence community dynamics, with higher-density housing often fostering more interaction and diversity, while low-density housing may promote privacy and stability but can also lead to isolation.

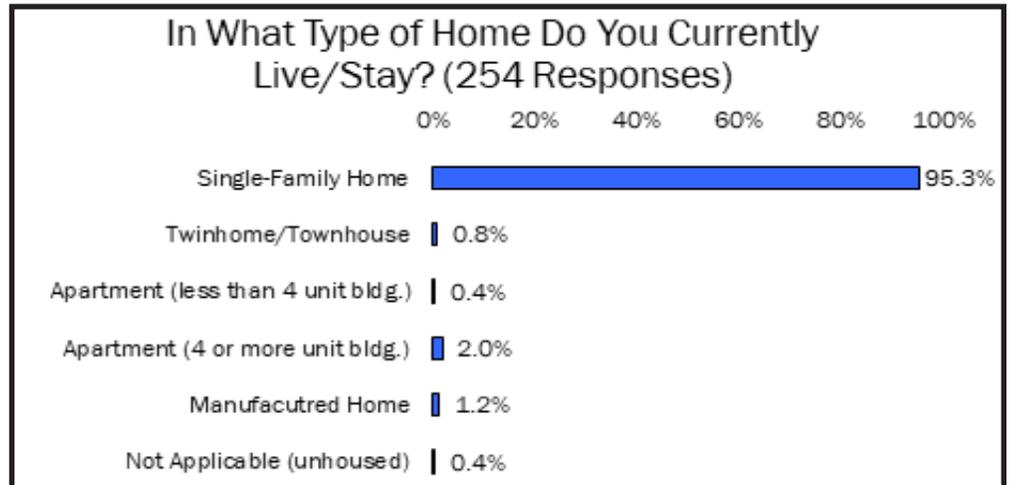
Each housing type plays a unique role in the broader housing ecosystem, affecting everything from urban planning to social cohesion.

Public Input

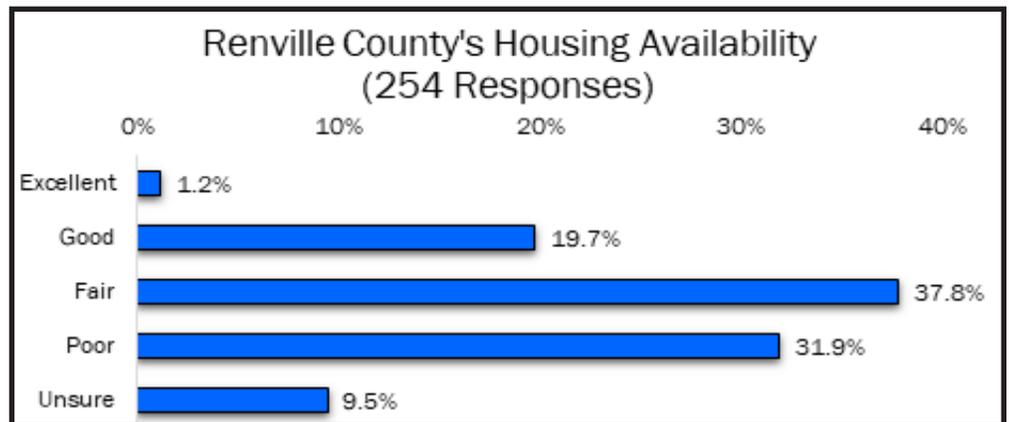
89% of respondents to the Renville County Comprehensive Plan Survey indicated that they own their home, with only 10.6% reporting that they rent. A small number of respondents, just 0.4%, indicated that they live with family or friends.



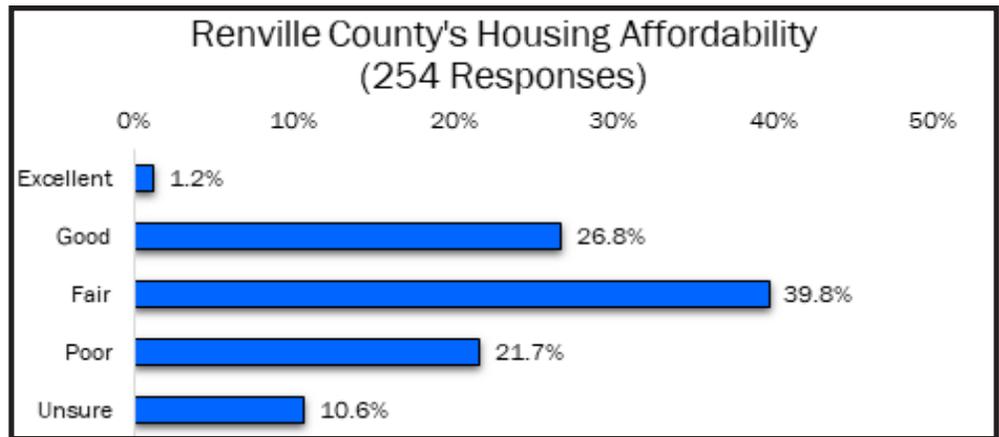
Most survey respondents, 95.3%, indicated that they live in a single-family dwelling.



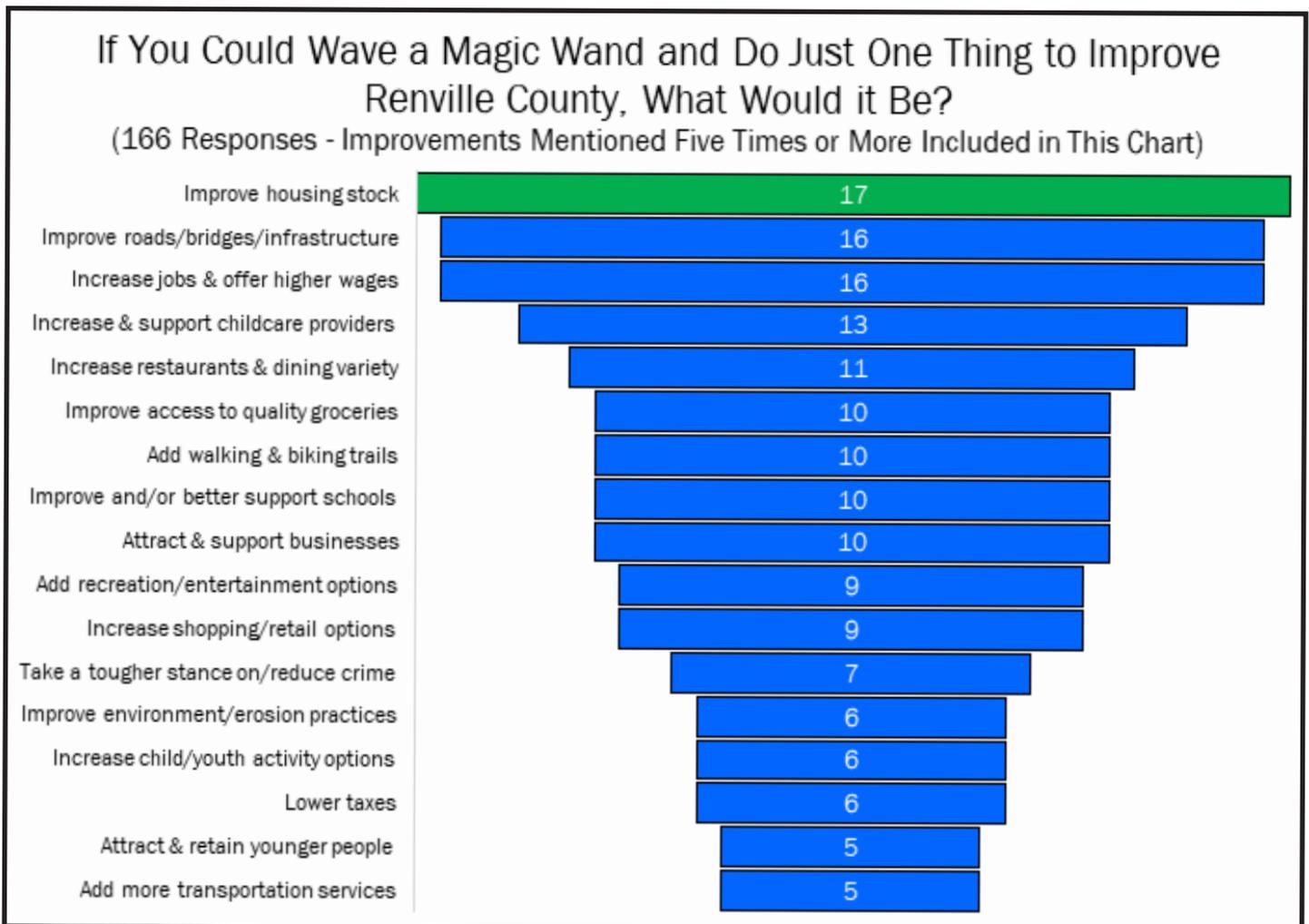
When Renville County Comprehensive Plan survey respondents were asked to rate housing availability within the County, just 20.9% reported they thought availability was “good” or “excellent.” 69.7% of respondents indicated that local housing availability was “fair” or “poor”, with 9.5% indicating they were “unsure.”



Similarly, when asked to rate Renville County's housing affordability, just 28% provided a "good" or "excellent" rating. 61.5% of respondents indicated they thought local housing availability was "fair" or "poor", and 10.6% indicated they were "unsure" on the matter.



In response to the question – If you could wave a magic wand and do just one thing to improve Renville County, what would it be? – answers related to the improvement of housing stock were most popular.



Survey respondents also provided the following housing-related comments:

- *“Have each city set up a revolving fund to fix up the houses in each community before they fall down... sorry, No more housing in our community.”*
- *“Add more affordable housing and childcare options.”*
- *“Build housing for those seeking a modern and attractive option for middle-class individuals and families that include a two-car attached garage (one and two story townhomes).”*
- *“Create building opportunities for new housing. Infrastructure needs to be addressed so that housing developers can build spec and model homes. Renville county is missing an opportunity to be the bedroom communities to Redwood, Willmar and even Hutchinson.”*
- *“Offer more housing for older people and younger families - townhomes.”*
- *“Increase investment in public schools, affordable housing, and addiction treatment programs.”*
- *“More housing.”*
- *“Better housing opportunities or getting rid of the old abandoned homes that make the towns look less desirable.”*
- *“More housing, more residents leading to larger tax base to create better economic opportunities.”*
- *“[Add] housing developments. Sponsored by county EDA.”*
- *“More housing & child care to attract young families.”*
- *“More affordable housing rural.”*

Renville County Housing Strategies

In addition to the recommendations listed in the 2020 Renville County Housing Study, strategies to increase and improve Renville County’s housing stock should include:

1. Regularly Examine Renville County’s Land Use Ordinance
 - A. Ensure no unnecessary barriers limit the development of quality housing and encourage local municipalities to do the same.
 - B. Make allowances for accessory dwelling units or, in more rural settings, allowances for more homes on one-homestead site if water, sewer, and other utility requirements can be met, etc.



- C. Provide and maintain adequate regulations to ensure rented homes are properly maintained, safe dwellings and encourage municipalities to do the same.
2. Regularly Examine Renville County's Land Use Ordinance
 - A. Ensure the public is aware of Renville County's Housing Ordinances, and the reasons for them
 - B. Inform the public on current housing trends and solutions.
 - i. Offer presentations on projects successfully executed in other Greater Minnesota or similar communities.
 - ii. Invite members of the public to join County leaders on visits to newly-built apartment buildings or other housing developments.
 - iii. Encourage local leaders, developers, and other members of the general public to bring forward new ideas that have potential to add necessary housing while preserving land, natural resources, and local character.
 3. Incorporate Nontraditional Solutions to Maintain and Grow Housing Stock
 - A. Develop or support programs that could incorporate local volunteers assist homeowners, particularly aging homeowners or homeowners with disabilities, with property maintenance to improve, or at least preserve, existing housing stock.
 - B. Support collaboration with entities like Habitat for Humanity of West Central Minnesota to increase affordable housing stock.
 - C. Partner With Area Secondary Schools' and Colleges' Building Trades-Related Programs to Increase Housing Stock.
 4. Provide Tax Abatement or Other Incentives for Builders/Developers
 - A. Consider taxing only the commercial portion property on a new, or improved, mixed-use property development.
 - B. Weigh the long-term benefit of using tax increment financing (TIF) to reduce development costs.
 - C. Prioritize incentives for the construction of affordable homes and homes that provide lower-maintenance, accessible options for those who want to age in-community.
 5. Continue to Provide Housing-Focused Grant and/or Loan Opportunities and Ensure Dollar Limitations are Adjusted, as Appropriate, to Account for Rising Costs
 - A. Homeowner Down Payment and Rehab Loan Assistance Programs
 - B. Rental Rehab Loan Program
 - C. Blight Removal Grant Program
 - D. Housing Development Gap Loan Program
 6. Support the Development of Workforce Housing.
 - A. Consider allowances for housing development on property that is currently zoned for commercial, industrial, or agricultural use when it will accommodate employees of the property owner.
 7. Maintain Quality Public Housing.
 - A. Ensure all housing operated by the Renville County HRA is kept in good repair and updated, as appropriate to ensure quality and extend useful life.

Specific Renville County Housing Projects, Efforts, or Activities:

1. The County will enforce ordinances related to housing construction and maintenance to remove or improve blighted properties and ensure quality housing stock.
2. The County will regularly (at least annually) review recommendations of the 2020 Renville County Housing Study and determine if and how these activities can be better supported.
3. The County will ensure all Renville County-owned and managed housing is kept in good repair.
4. When blighted residential properties cannot be effectively restored, the County will work with local municipalities and private developers and prospective developers to replace these properties with quality housing.
5. The County will work with local municipalities to identify building sites that would be conducive to multifamily housing and will work to draw the attention of housing developers and prospective housing developers to these sites .
6. The County will work with local municipalities and property owners to support mixed-use development in downtown areas and look for ways to incorporate quality housing into vacant or underused downtown properties.
7. The County will work to streamline permitting, to the extent possible and practical.

**This list is not intended to be all-inclusive. Items should be added over time, as conditions and opportunities change. Similarly, items may be removed. Explanations for additions and subtractions should be documented. Progress should also be acknowledged as items are accomplished.*



Renville County's Transportation Infrastructure and Services

Robust transportation networks ensure the efficient and reliable movement of people and goods, even in the face of disruptions like weather events, accidents, or other unexpected challenges. They support economic growth, social mobility, emergency response, and community resilience. The following is a more detailed and categorized explanation of the benefits of effective transportation infrastructure:

Economic Growth and Development

- **Trade and Commerce:** Efficient transportation networks facilitate the movement of goods and services, enabling businesses to reach markets quickly and cost-effectively. This is essential for local, regional, and global trade.
- **Job Creation:** The construction, maintenance, and operation of transportation infrastructure create jobs in sectors including construction, logistics, and public transportation.
- **Attracting Investment:** Reliable transportation systems attract businesses and investors, fostering economic development and increasing property values.

Capacity

- **Volume:** Thoughtfully designed transportation networks provide dedicated higher-capacity routes for vehicles, allowing faster, more efficient travel and less restricted traffic flow.
- **Weight:** Quality transportation networks include a sufficient number of well-located routes built to ensure sufficient durability and able to withstand the additional strain caused by heavy vehicles, including commercial trucks and farm implements.

Mobility and Accessibility

- **Commuting:** A well-developed transportation network reduces travel time and congestion, making it easier for people to commute to work, school, and other essential destinations.
- **Access to Services:** Effective transportation infrastructure gives residents access to healthcare, education, shopping, and recreational facilities, improving their overall quality of life.
- **Inclusivity:** Public transportation options, including public transit but also including things like sidewalk and bicycle trail infrastructure, provide access for those who do not operate private vehicles, including some older residents, people with disabilities, and those of less financial means.

Safety and Reliability

- **Crash Reduction:** Well-maintained transportation networks that include clear signage, adequate road shoulders, ample and unobstructed rights-of-way, and efficient traffic management systems enhance roadway safety for all users, reducing the likelihood and severity of crashes.
- **Emergency Response:** A robust transportation network ensures that emergency services, such as ambulances, fire trucks, and law enforcement vehicles, can quickly respond to incidents, potentially saving lives.

Environmental Sustainability

- **Reduced Emissions:** Efficient public transportation systems and well-planned road networks reduce traffic congestion, thereby reducing vehicle emissions and contributing to cleaner air and a healthier environment.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Incorporating green infrastructure, such as bike lanes/trails and pedestrian paths, promotes sustainable transportation modes and gives residents the option of reducing their carbon footprint.



Social and Community Benefits

- **Community Connectivity:** Transportation networks connect communities, fostering social interaction and cohesion. They enable people to visit family and friends, participate in community events, and access cultural and recreational activities.
- **Quality of Life:** Access to reliable transportation enhances the overall quality of life by providing opportunities for employment, education, worship, commerce, and leisure.

Resilience and Adaptability

- **Disaster Response:** A durable transportation network can withstand natural and human-caused disasters. They provide a foundation for local or regional recovery by ensuring essential services and supplies can be delivered during and after emergencies.
- **Adaptability:** Modern transportation systems can adapt to changing needs and technologies, such as the integration of electric vehicles, smart transportation solutions, and consumer trends (e.g., increased online purchases and related shipping).

Regional and Global Connectivity

- **Regional Integration:** Efficient transportation networks connect rural and urban areas, promoting regional integration and balanced development.
- **Global Competitiveness:** A country, state, or region with a robust transportation network is better positioned to compete in the global economy, supporting international trade and foreign investment.

Renville County's Roadways

Renville County's transportation system includes a variety of roadways, each developed to accommodate different uses and traffic levels. These roadways are funded by, receive oversight from, and are maintained by different entities. In total, not inclusive of State and U.S. Highways, 1,668 miles of roadway can be found in Renville County, approximately 400 miles of which are paved. Additionally, the County is home to 220 bridges of various size.



U.S. Highways: Two U.S. Highways can be found in Renville County. While these roadways receive substantial funding through the U.S. Department of Transportation, they are primarily maintained by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). MnDOT performs or oversees regular maintenance activities like resurfacing, repairing concrete, updating guardrails, and implementing safety improvements along the highway.

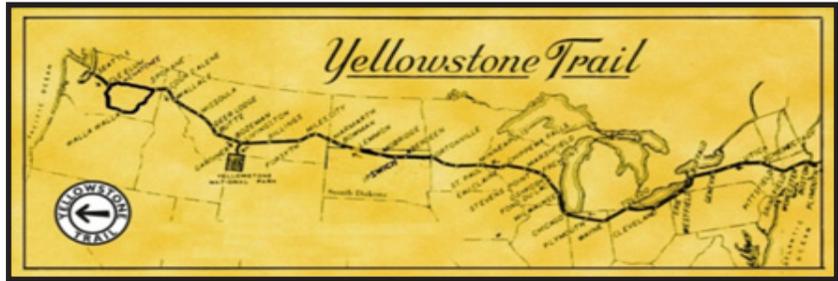
- **U.S. Highway 71:** This north-south highway is found toward the center of the Renville County. It provides a connection to Willmar, Redwood Falls, and locations beyond. Two Renville County communities, Morton and Olivia, can be found along this major highway. This is Renville County's busiest highway. In 2024, the MnDOT-reported traffic count was 5,845 vehicles per day near downtown Olivia.



- U.S. Highway 212: This east-west highway provides a major connection to the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, 75-90 minutes to the east. It also connects residents to Granite Falls and points beyond. Most of Renville County's municipalities (Bird Island, Buffalo Lake, Danube, Hector, Olivia, Renville, and Sacred Heart) can be found along this route.



Notable is the fact that U.S. Highway 212 is part of the Yellowstone Trail, the first transcontinental automobile highway through the upper tier of U.S. States. More information on this historic roadway can be found at <https://yellowstonetrail.org/>.



Minnesota State Highways: Several Minnesota State Highways can be found within or at the border of Renville County. These highways are primarily funded by the State of Minnesota and are largely maintained by MnDOT.

- MN State Highway 4: This north-south highway runs through the eastern portion of Renville County. It provides connections to Cosmos in the north, Sleepy Eye in the south, and locations and major roadways beyond. The Renville County municipalities of Fairfax and Hector are located along this highway.
- MN State Highway 19: This east-west route traverses the southern part of Renville County, providing another major connection to the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, to the east, and terminates at the South Dakota border in the west. Three of Renville County's municipalities, Fairfax, Franklin, and Morton, are found along this route.
- MN State Highway 23: This highway runs from U.S. Interstate 90, near the South Dakota border, all the way to Duluth, traveling through St. Cloud, Willmar, and many smaller communities along the way. A small, approximately 6.5-mile portion of Highway 23 runs along the westernmost edge of Renville County.



County State Aid Highways (CSAH): The County State Aid Highway System is a collection of key highways under County jurisdiction. It covers roughly 30,700 centerline miles throughout all Minnesota counties, composing over two-thirds of County highway miles. CSAH roads are eligible for state funding for maintenance and construction. Renville County maintains approximately 444 miles of CSAH roads, which serve as secondary roads, supporting the area's rural transportation needs and providing access to farm markets, agricultural processing facilities, rural residences, business centers, and places of recreation.

County Roads: In addition to CSAH roadways, Renville County also maintains roughly 267 miles of County roads. These roads primarily serve local traffic, providing improved access to residential areas, businesses, and other local destinations.

Township Roads: 957 miles of township roads are found throughout Renville County's unincorporated areas. They provide connections to larger roadways for the County's most rural businesses and residents. Typically, these roads are unpaved. Maintenance is the responsibility of the township in which they are located, typically contracted to a local business.

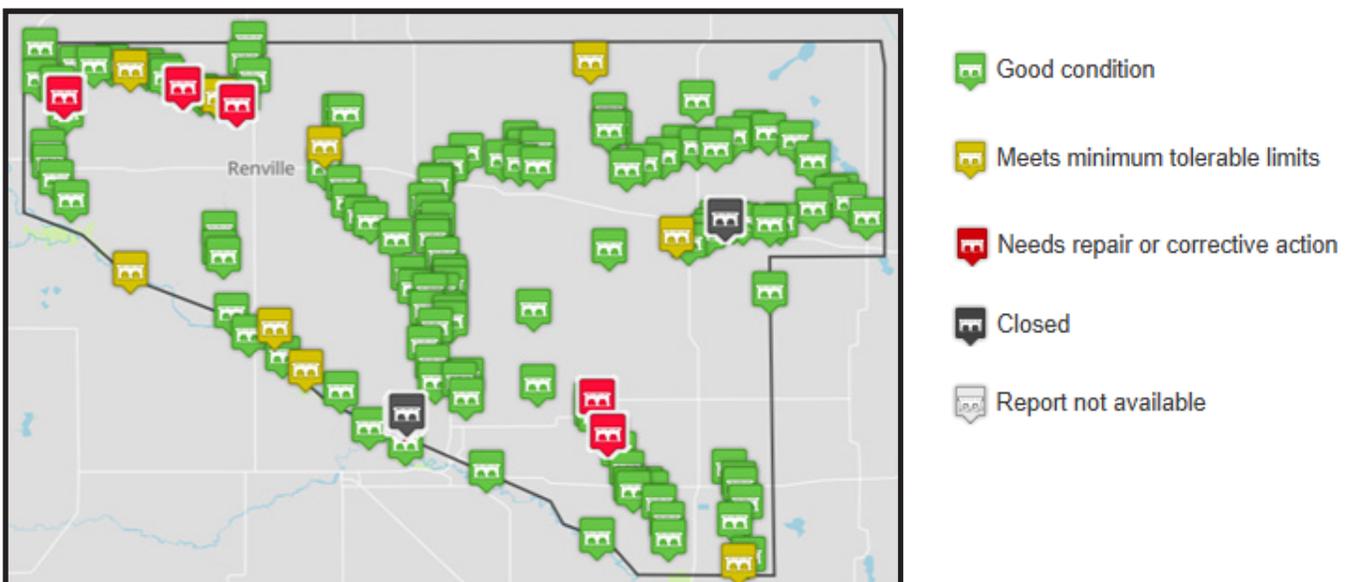
The Renville County Roadmap, which outlines all of the County's public roadways, can be found at <https://hub-renvilleco.hub.arcgis.com/documents/09b1fbd1d78a445ea4176e839c0f273b/explore>.

Commuting: Renville County vs. the State of MN

Transportation Mode	
Renville County: Most residents rely on personal vehicles for commuting, reflecting the rural nature of the area, as well as limited public transportation.	Minnesota: While the majority of Minnesotans also commute by car, urban areas have more transportation options, including public transit and more highly-developed walking/biking infrastructure.
Commuting Time	
Renville County: The average commute time for residents is generally shorter than the state average. Many residents work in agriculture or in small local industries, often requiring shorter, more local commutes.	Minnesota: The state’s average commute time is longer, especially in urban and suburban areas like the Twin Cities, where commutes can exceed 25 minutes (one way) due to traffic congestion and longer distances to employment centers.
Transportation Mode	
Renville County: A significant portion of the population works within Renville County or in adjacent rural counties, resulting in a more localized commuting pattern.	Minnesota: In contrast, many Minnesotans, especially in or near metropolitan regions, may commute well-beyond county lines, with a substantial number traveling into and out of the Twin Cities for work.
Transportation Mode	
Renville County: Telecommuting is less common compared to more urbanized parts of the state, though it may have increased in recent years, as more companies support remote or “hybrid” work environments.	Minnesota: Telecommuting is more prevalent in urban and suburban areas, reflecting the higher concentration of jobs in sectors that support remote work.
Summary: Renville County’s commuting details reflect rural character, with shorter commutes, a reliance on personal vehicles, and less diversity in transportation options compared to the rest of Minnesota, particularly urban areas.	

Renville County’s Bridges

Scattered throughout Renville County’s roadways are 220 bridges of various size and capacity. While most are in good to fair condition, a handful are in need of repair or corrective action due to structural or other deficiencies. An interactive map, which provides detailed information on each bridge found within Renville County, including bridge capacity, can be found at <https://data.metrowestdailynews.com/bridge/minnesota/renville-county/27129/>.



Public Transit

Central Community Transit (CCT) provides public bus transportation services to passengers of all ages across Renville County, as well as Kandiyohi and Meeker Counties. Most service is provided on an on demand, curb-to-curb basis. Riders schedule their rides by calling CCT's dispatcher. Those who cannot be accommodated by the public transit bus, because they require rides to medical appointments beyond CCT's typical service area or service hours, or because they require a higher level of service, are often assisted by CCT's volunteer driver program. CCT's total fleet includes 32 buses and over 50 volunteer drivers, spread across Kandiyohi, Meeker, and Renville Counties. For more detailed information on CCT services, visit <https://www.cctbus.org/>

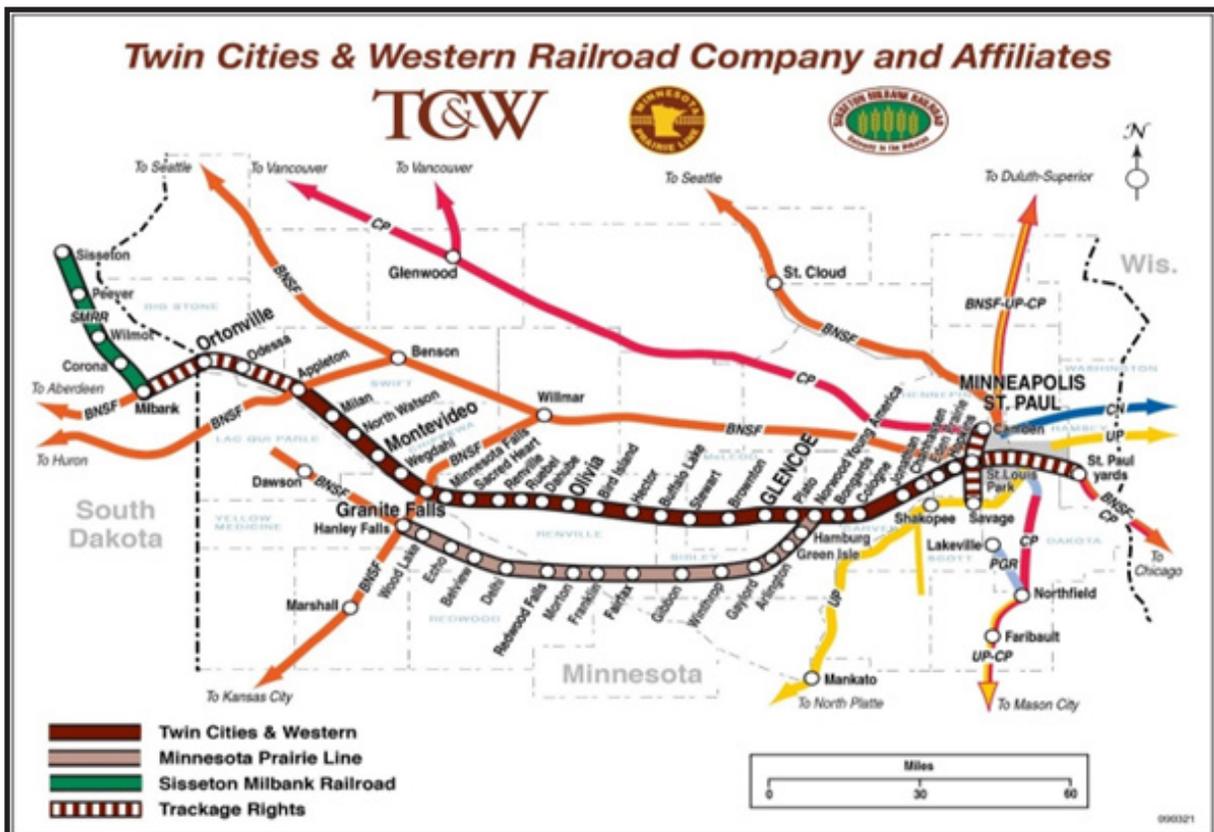


Railroads

Renville County is served by two rail lines, both maintained by Twin Cities & Western Railroad Company:

- The Twin Cities & Western (TC&W): The TC&W Railroad is the largest short line in Minnesota. Operated by Twin Cities & Western Railroad Company, this 229-mile railway connects St. Paul, MN with Milbank, SD as well as points in between. The railroad crosses the entire length of Renville County, roughly parallel to U.S. Highway 212, crossing through the communities of Bird Island, Buffalo Lake, Danube, Hector, Olivia, Renville, and Sacred Heart.
- Minnesota Prairie Line (MPL): The Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority (MVRRA) owns a 94.7-mile railroad track, from Norwood Young America, MN to Hanley Falls, MN. The line is operated by Minnesota Prairie Line Inc. (MPLI), a wholly owned subsidiary of Twin Cities & Western Railroad Company. In Renville County, the MPL runs roughly parallel to MN State Highway 19, and crosses through the communities of Fairfax, Franklin, and Morton.

While no passenger service is provided, these rail lines are crucial to Renville County's economy, supporting the movement of goods to and from processing facilities and markets.



Airports

Renville County has two small local airports that are open to the public and support general aviation. They include:

- Hector Municipal Airport – 1D6: This airport is located approximately one mile south of Hector, just east of MN State Highway 4. It includes a 2,776 ft. x 50 ft. asphalt runway with edge lights and basic markings. This airport also includes a second, 2,395 ft. x 185 ft. turf runway with cone-style edge markings, though this runway is not plowed in winter months. Aviation fuel is available via a call to a fuel service. The Hector Municipal Airport is owned by the City of Hector and is used by recreational flyers as well as for business operations (e.g., a small crop-spraying operation).
- Olivia Regional Airport – OVL: This airport is located south of U.S. Highway 212, at Olivia’s western edge. It includes a 3,498 ft. x 75 ft. asphalt runway, with edge lights and markings, and aviation fuel is available on-premises. The Olivia Regional Airport is owned by the City of Olivia. The public use general aviation airport is base for 11 single-engine airplanes and hosts an FAA-licensed agricultural and light aircraft repair center. It is used by approximately 90 flights per week.



In February of 2025, ordinance adjustments were made to the long-term development plan for the Olivia airport. A north-south runway that had previously been proposed was dropped in favor of an extension to the existing runway. Updated safety zones and other restrictions were also put into effect. To review all changes, visit https://cms3.revize.com/revize/oliviamn/Documents/Airport/OVL_Airport%20Zoning%20Ordinance_FINAL_February%202024.pdf. Additionally, while not physically located within the County, a portion of the Redwood Falls Municipal Airport’s airspace can be found over a small portion of southwestern Renville County.

Other notable local aviation resources include a helicopter landing pad at the Olivia Hospital & Clinic facility, for emergency use. Life Link III is an air medical transportation service that provides helicopter and airplane services for patients in the Renville County area and beyond. Passenger service is provided via larger airports in the greater region. These include:

- St. Cloud Regional Airport (STC), approximately 94 miles northeast of Olivia.
- Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP), approximately 95 miles east of Olivia
- Sioux Falls Regional Airport (FSD), approximately 146 miles southwest of Olivia.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure

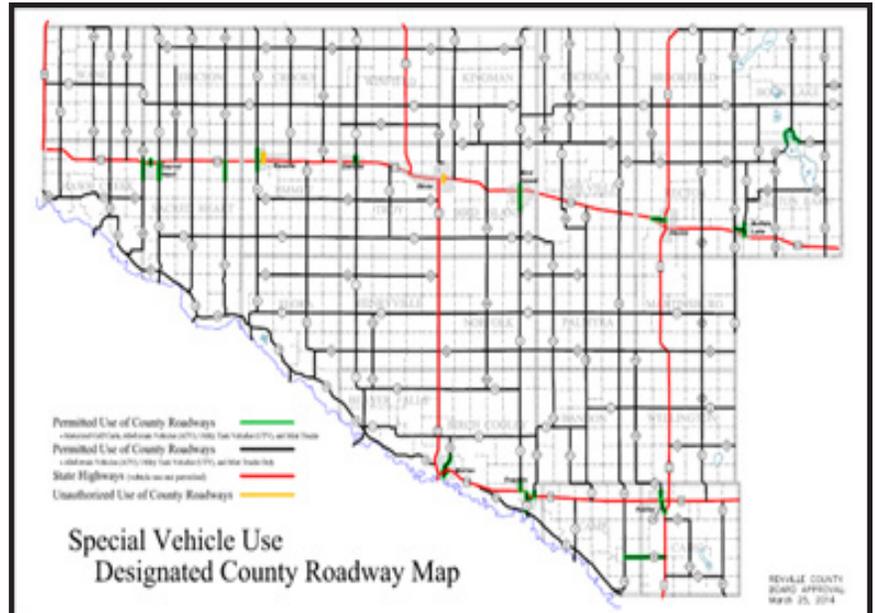
Trails and other pedestrian infrastructure promote healthy lifestyles and provide safe routes for non-motorized transportation. As Renville County's residents are highly-reliant upon motor vehicles, the County currently offers fairly little in the way of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Local communities do incorporate sidewalk infrastructure in varying degrees, at least in some areas. Some communities may also incorporate preferred bicycle routes or even short off-road pathways. Renville County's park system also incorporates a handful of walking/hiking paths for visitor use.



In addition to the bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure mentioned above, one relatively major off-road pathway can be found within Renville County. The approximately six-mile FairRidge Trail connects the Fairfax community with Fort Ridgely State Park at the southern edge of the County. This trail is paved for biking, in-line skating, and walking. A horse trail runs alongside a portion of the trail, from Valley View Campgrounds to the State Park horse trails. At the trail head, there is a park with restrooms, picnic tables, and the Railroad Depot Museum.

Special Vehicle Use – Permitted Routes

The Renville County Special Vehicle Use on Designated County Roadways Ordinance authorizes the use and operation of all-terrain vehicles, minitrucks, utility task vehicles, and motorized golf carts on designated Renville County roadways. This ordinance does not permit the use and operation of these recreational vehicles on federal or state highways and streets or roads under the jurisdiction of a city or township. A Special Vehicle Use (SVU) Permit must be applied for and approved for each recreational vehicle intended to be operated on a designated County roadway. More information can be found by visiting the County's website at <https://www.renvillecountymn.gov/environmental-services/#Permits>.

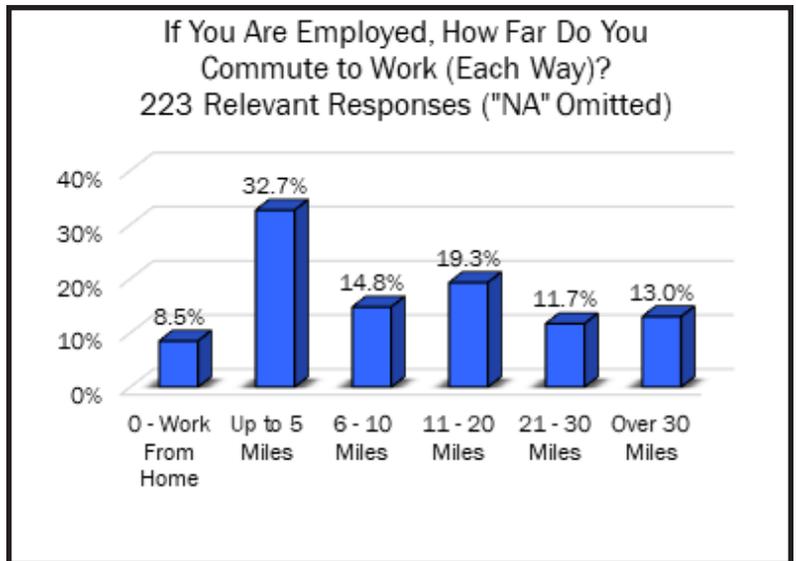
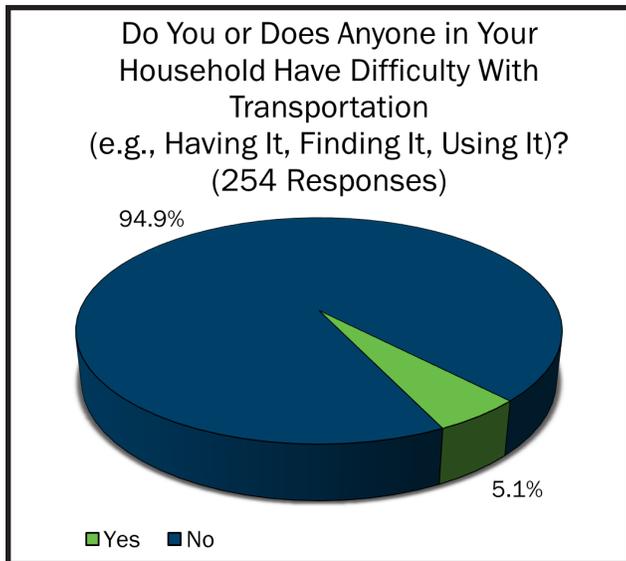


Waterways

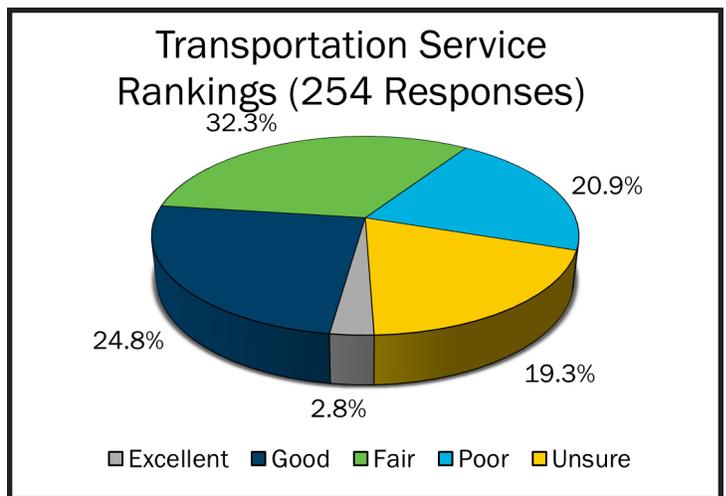
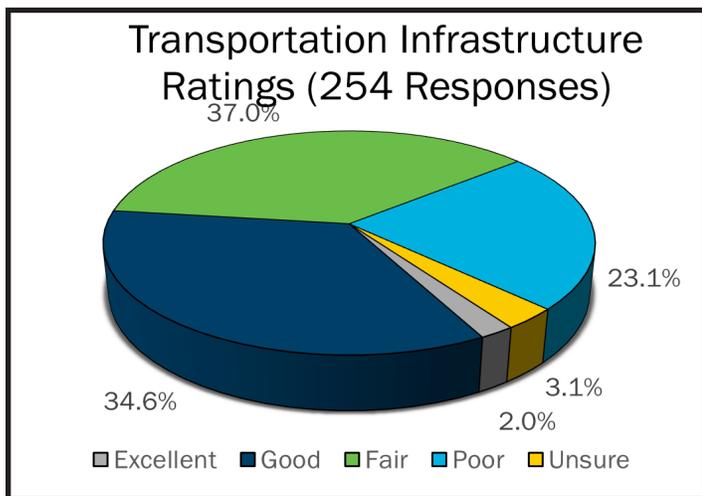
Renville County includes two lakes suitable for recreation (Lake Allie and Preston Lake). While they lie adjacent to each other, they are not connected, nor are they connected to other navigable waterways. Therefore, they are not considered a significant transportation factor. The Minnesota River does define the County's southwestern border with Redwood County. However, this portion of the river features several challenging sections, including Class 1 rapids upstream and downstream of Vicksburg County Park, near CSAH 6. It is, therefore, suitable only for small craft and most, if not all, navigation along this stretch of riverway is recreational in nature, at least in modern times.

Public Input

When asked if anyone in their household had difficulty with transportation (e.g., having it, finding it, or using it), only 5.1% indicated that this was a concern. When asked about their work commutes, 24.7% of respondents to the Renville County Comprehensive Plan Survey indicated a one-way commute of more than 20 miles. 41.2% of respondents indicated a commute of five miles or less.



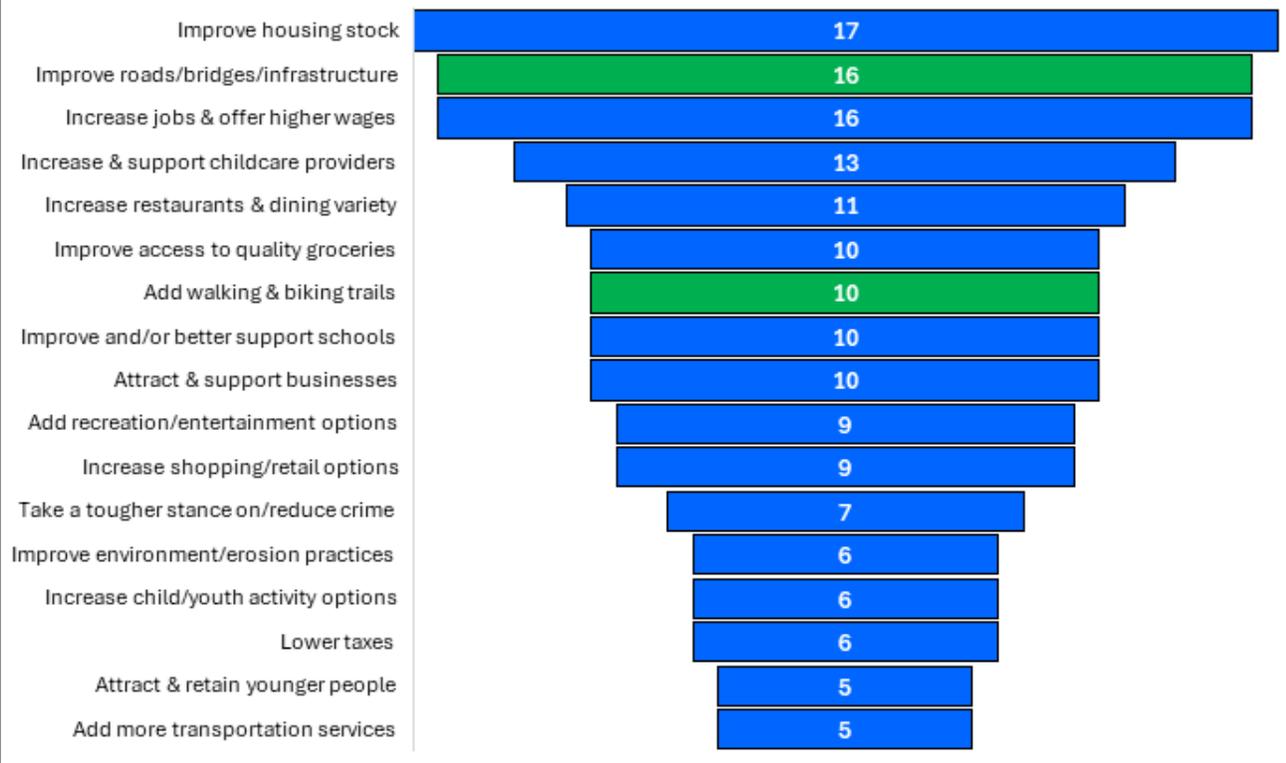
When asked about Renville County’s transportation infrastructure 36.6% of question respondents indicated they thought it was either “excellent” or “good.” 37% answered that the County’s transportation infrastructure was “fair” and 23.2% indicated it was in “poor” shape. The remaining 3.1% indicated that they were unsure. When asked to rank transportation services within the County, 27.6% indicated they were either “excellent” or “good.” 32.3% answered “fair” and 20.9% answered “poor.” The remaining 19.3% indicated they were unsure.



An additional question was also asked to better understand residents’ desires – If you could wave a magic wand and do just one thing to improve Renville County, what would it be? The most common answers to this question were grouped. Along with improving housing stock, the most common desire was for improved roads, bridges, and infrastructure (both received 17 mentions of 167 question responses).

If You Could Wave a Magic Wand and Do Just One Thing to Improve Renville County, What Would it Be?

(166 Responses - Improvements Mentioned Five Times or More Included in This Chart)



Other transportation-focused comments included:

- *“We would love to see sturdier county gravel roads. When there is a lot of snow or rain, they become mucky and we are sliding around on them and it has been scary to drive on them during those times. However, we definitely appreciate all the time and effort Public Works put forth to maintain the roads! We just feel there should be a better, tougher base/foundation.”*
- *“Fix roads.”*
- *“Update/Improve roads and bridges.”*
- *“I read about so many drunk driving issues but I think people should be able to support the street dance beer gardens/ bars/restaurants/golf courses/wineries which serve alcohol & food – can we develop some type of transportation with a grant to reduce costs to an affordable level for an easy way to request rides?”*
- *“I’d like to have transportation to the airports. (FSD and MSP).”*
- *“I consider transportation to include entities like Uber & Lyft – it would add value to this community for elderly/people without cars/people who want to arrange rides if they plan on drinking at our businesses/etc. We support all these small community fun days & give business grants – but it would build confidence in supporting the businesses as far as entertainment if we know citizens have an option to drink without having to drive.”*
- *“Public transportation would be a plus for small towns.”*
- *“I do not but I know of a lot of people that have transportation inaccessibility.”*
- *“Bike and walking trails! How great would it be to have a trail connecting our towns that would allow kids and adults alike to use for exercise and transportation!”*

Renville County Transportation Strategies

To ensure Renville County continues to maintain an effective and efficient transportation network, ongoing strategies should include:

1. Support a Robust and Efficient Roadway Network

A. Accommodate all roadway users and vehicle types.

- i. Ensure roadways are classified appropriately, according to their function, and that higher functioning routes are spaced to provide countywide connectivity for all users, including heavy commercial and agricultural vehicle operators.
- ii. Ensure roadway maintenance is sufficient to support all users, including heavy commercial and agricultural vehicles.
- iii. Design roadway improvements to emphasize efficient mobility on busier, higher-functioning roadways while also ensuring sufficient access via quieter local roads.

B. Maximize taxpayer value.

- i. Prioritize improvements that enhance access to agricultural markets, processing facilities, and business centers.
- ii. Prioritize the maintenance of existing roadways.
- iii. Coordinate County roadway improvements with improvements occurring on MnDOT-controlled roadways.
- iv. Incorporate smaller improvements into larger construction projects.

2. Support a Robust and Efficient Roadway Network

A. Prioritize transportation projects that reduce crashes and/or crash severity.

- i. Work with local law enforcement entities to identify problem roadways and intersections.
- ii. Support Public Works Department personnel as they identify and implement strategies to improve safety.

B. Ensure adequate enforcement of traffic laws.

- i. Ensure the Renville County Sheriff's Office is adequately staffed, trained, and equipped to provide effective traffic and safety enforcement.
- ii. Support intentional collaboration between the Renville County Sheriff's Office and other law enforcement entities, including the Minnesota State Patrol and local police departments.

C. Support and promote Renville County Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) efforts to reduce the number of serious crashes, improve frequency of seat belt use, and reduce speeding, impaired driving, and distracted driving.

- i. Use social media to educate the public on safety-related driving laws.
- ii. Cooperate with state and local law enforcement agencies to enforce safety-related driving laws.
- iii. Look for venues to educate drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians of all ages (e.g., community events, insurance discount courses for mature drivers, k-12 classrooms, etc.)
- iv. Participate in MnDOT District 8 TZD meetings and initiatives.

D. Ensure Harmonious Interaction Between Railways and Intersecting Roadways

- i. Work with local rail entities to ensure crossings provide adequate crossing safety for all roadway users.

3. Support Increased Biking and Walking Infrastructure

A. Improve on-road safety for walkers and cyclists.

- i. When planning road construction projects, consider the incorporation of wide shoulders to accommodate on-road bike routes, especially in areas that will improve connectivity to more popular destinations (e.g., between neighboring communities, between residential and park areas).
- ii. Consider the addition of shoulder rumble strips to help maintain separation between bicyclists/pedestrians and motor vehicles.
- iii. Ensure signage and roadway markings are sufficient to support bicyclist and pedestrian safety.

B. Add off-road biking and walking trail infrastructure in areas where motor vehicle traffic volume reduces on road bicycle and pedestrian safety and/or in areas where surroundings and local features (e.g., natural areas, recreational spaces, schools) make this investment more attractive to Renville County residents and visitors.

- i. Maintain a robust, active Renville County Park and Trails Committee to study, lead and oversee trail development efforts.
- ii. Consider the development of a long-term Renville County Trails Plan, or a combined Renville County Parks and Trails Plan, to guide trail decisions.
- iii. Maximize taxpayer dollars via the pursuit of state, federal, or other funding.
- iv. Coordinate trail efforts with the County's municipalities, townships, and school districts and provide ample consideration of any local planning they have done to support walkers and cyclists (e.g., Safe Routes to Schools or Active Living planning).

It is important to note that each of these strategies may require collaboration with outside entities, including but not limited to the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the U.S. Department of Transportation, Twin Cities & Western Railroad, neighboring counties, and/or local townships. By incorporating these strategies, Renville County will ensure a comprehensive and effective transportation network to support the mobility needs of its residents and businesses, contributing to economic vitality and good quality of life.

Renville County Transportation Strategies

1. The County will make progress on roadway safety improvements along all County-managed routes, incorporating sufficient shoulders, adequately sloped and graded roadsides, and unobstructed rights-of-way to minimize collisions and enhance motorist safety during road departure incidents.
2. The County will prioritize the improvement of Renville County Road 21, between Renville County Road 11 and U.S. Highway 212, as needed to ensure safety and support commerce in an area with a high volume of heavy truck traffic (e.g., Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative, Transystems).
3. The County will enforce traffic safety laws, including laws and ordinances related to the use of special vehicles (ATVs, golf carts, etc.).
4. The County will continue to participate in the State of Minnesota's Toward Zero Deaths initiatives to reduce the number of severe crashes involving fatality and/or serious injury.
5. The County will support resident participation in drivers' education and safety/refresher classes focused on mature drivers (e.g., "55 Alive").
6. The County will continue to participate in the MnDOT District 8 Area Transportation Partnership and will provide input into the MnDOT District 8 Area Transportation Improvement Plan to ensure Renville County's state-funded highways receive adequate attention and to ensure improvements along these roadways are adequately prioritized.

7. The County will stay abreast of and, as appropriate, incorporate new roadway design and construction practices and materials to improve roadway safety, increase roadway durability, and minimize adverse environmental impacts.
8. The County will support the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure via the pursuit of related grant funding, the strategic investment of tax dollars, and/or via collaboration with private entities interested in making such installations available to the public.
9. The County will keep abreast of technological developments that may impact transportation (e.g., autonomous vehicle technologies) and will consider adjustments to County ordinance to allow for the incorporation of these technologies, if they are found to provide safe and effective transportation solutions.
10. The County will explore the use of municipal bonds to raise funds for transportation projects.
11. The County will take meaningful steps toward the development of a robust, countywide trail network to support healthy activities (e.g., biking, running, walking) and improve quality of life for current and prospective residents. These steps may include the development of a bicycle and pedestrian trails plan, the pursuit of trail development grants, and/or the strategic investment of tax dollars to support off-road trails and on-road routes (e.g., wide, paved road shoulders).

**This list is not intended to be all-inclusive. Items should be added over time, as conditions and opportunities change. Similarly, items may be removed. Explanations for additions and subtractions should be documented. Progress should also be acknowledged as items are accomplished.*



Photo By Stacy Peterson

Renville County's Utility Infrastructure

Imagine a community where essential services like electricity, water, and gas remain uninterrupted, even during severe storms or unexpected crises. This community benefits from a resilient utility system.

In this community, the power grid is designed with redundancy. If one power line fails, energy is transmitted over a different existing line, ensuring continuous service. The water infrastructure is robust, constructed with durable materials capable of withstanding harsh and varied Minnesota conditions and multiple sources to ensure a steady water supply. Gas lines are monitored using advanced technology, which constantly checks for leaks or weaknesses. For all utilities, respective maintenance teams address issues proactively and quickly respond to emergencies and outages.

When faced with emergencies such as tornadoes or cyber-attacks, this community's emergency response teams act swiftly to restore services efficiently, using plans designed to guide the appropriate response. This community's utilities system is designed to survive disruptions, adapt to new challenges, integrate renewable energy sources, and ensure residents can rely on service under almost any circumstance. It embodies stability, safety, and adaptability, providing a reliable foundation for the community's daily operations and long-term sustainability.

Electrical Infrastructure

The term "electric utility" refers to a company or other entity that generates, transmits, and distributes electricity to consumers, essentially acting as the provider of electrical power to homes and businesses within a specific area. It is responsible for maintaining the infrastructure needed to deliver that electricity, including power lines and poles.

Advantages of Electricity:

- **Versatility:** Electricity can be easily converted into various forms of energy like heat, light, and motion, making it suitable for diverse applications in homes, industries, and transportation.
- **Ease of Delivery:** Electricity can be transmitted over long distances through power grids, allowing for large-scale distribution.
- **Renewable Potential:** Electricity can be generated from renewable sources like solar, wind, and hydropower, reducing reliance on fossil fuel.
- **Efficiency:** Electric motors are generally more efficient than combustion engines, converting a larger percentage of energy into useful work.
- **Controllability:** Electricity can be precisely controlled and regulated through switches and automated systems.
- **Lower Maintenance:** Electric motors often require less maintenance due to fewer moving parts.
- **Quiet Operation:** Electric motors generally operate quietly compared to combustion engines.

Disadvantages of Electricity:

- **Environmental Impact:** Depending on the source of electricity generation, there can be significant environmental impacts like greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel power plants.
- **Transmission Losses:** Some energy is lost during transmission over long distances through power lines.
- **Cost of Infrastructure:** Building and maintaining power grids can be expensive.
- **Potential for Electric Shock:** Improper handling of electrical equipment can lead to serious electric shock hazards.
- **Storage Challenges:** Storing large amounts of electricity efficiently can be difficult, requiring battery technology advancements.
- **Dependence on Power Grid:** Power outages can disrupt electricity supply to entire areas.

Renville County's Electric Utilities/Providers

Renville County's residents are served by one of several electrical utilities, determined by their physical location. The State of Minnesota makes an interactive map available to those interested in determining a community's electricity and gas providers. That map can be found at <https://mn.gov/puc/consumers/utility/>. Renville County's electricity providers include:

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power

- **Service Area:** This member-owned cooperative serves over 1,900 electric accounts throughout unincorporated western and southern areas of Renville County as well as parts of several neighboring counties.
- **Sources of Electricity:** Through its membership in East River Electric and Basin Electric Cooperative, Renville-Sibley Cooperative is part of the Southwest Power Pool. The cooperative takes an "all of the above" approach to energy sourcing. Electricity is generated via a mix of sources including coal, natural gas, hydroelectric, recovered petroleum products, and renewable energy sources like wind and solar.



McLeod Cooperative Power

- **Service Area:** While based in neighboring McLeod County, this member-owned cooperative serves a large portion of northeastern Renville County, including Boon Lake, Brookfield, Hector, Martinsburg, Melville, Osceola, Palmyra, and Preston Lake Townships as well as portions of neighboring townships.
- **Sources of Electricity:** As a customer of Great River Energy and, to a much smaller extent, the Western Area Power Administration, McLeod Cooperative Power's energy sources include coal, natural gas, hydroelectric generation, and renewables.



Xcel Energy

- **Service Area:** This large provider serves locations within an eight-state area. Most of Renville County's municipalities, including Bird Island, Buffalo Lake, Danube, Franklin, Hector, Morton, Renville, and Sacred Heart receive power from Xcel Energy. The large utility also delivers electricity in several unincorporated areas. A full listing of Xcel Energy-served communities can be found at: <https://corporate.my.xcelenergy.com/s/energy/service-areas/minnesota>.
- **Sources of Electricity:** Xcel Energy's electricity generation portfolio includes a diverse mix of sources such as coal, natural gas, nuclear, biomass, hydroelectric, wind, and solar.



Olivia Municipal Utilities

- **Service Area:** The City of Olivia Municipal Utilities provides electric utilities to city residents, using the city's own infrastructure. The city has a contract with Missouri River Energy Services for day-to-day management and maintenance.
- **Sources of Electricity:** The City of Olivia purchases power through the Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, which generates electricity from a variety of conventional and renewable sources, including natural gas, fuel oil, wind, biomass, and solar. The city also receives power under a long-term contract with the U.S. Department of Energy's Western Area Power Administration, which generates electricity from 56 federal hydropower plants and one coal-fired plant. For a small fee, Olivia's residents can choose to purchase up to 100% of their electricity from environmentally friendly, renewable sources, via the Clean Energy Choice Program.



Fairfax City Utilities

- **Service Area:** The City of Fairfax owns electricity distribution infrastructure which is used to serve its residents.
- **Sources of Electricity:** Electric power is purchased from the U.S. Department of Energy's Western Area Power Administration and the Central Minnesota Municipal Power Agency. Sources, therefore, include a mix of natural gas, hydropower, wind, and solar generation. The City of Fairfax also has its own diesel-fueled electrical generating power plant which can provide electricity to customers on a standby basis.



Natural Gas and Liquid Propane

Natural gas is a fossil fuel energy source. It contains many different compounds, but the largest component of natural gas is methane. Natural gas also contains smaller amounts of natural gas liquids and nonhydrocarbon gases, such as carbon dioxide and water vapor.

Advantages of Natural Gas:

- **Abundance:** Natural gas reserves are large, and new sources are constantly being discovered.
- **Efficiency:** Natural gas is an efficient energy source that can be used for heating, power generation, and more.
- **Relative Cleanliness:** Natural gas emits fewer emissions than other fossil fuels, like coal and oil.
- **Versatility:** Natural gas can be used in many settings, including homes, businesses, and transportation.
- **Relative Ease of Transport:** Natural gas is easy to transport over long distances, via pipeline, truck, rail, etc.

Disadvantages of Natural Gas:

- **Nonrenewable:** While currently abundant, natural gas is a limited resource that will eventually run out.
- **Environmental Impact:** The use of natural gas can contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, air and water pollution, and habitat loss.
- **Fracking:** The process of fracking can create wastewater, release toxic air pollution, and generate noise.
- **Methane Leaks:** Natural gas can leak methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. In addition to harming the environment, these leaks can be dangerous due to explosive risks.



Renville County's Natural Gas Providers

Most of Renville County's municipalities are served by one of several natural gas utilities. Each providing gas to different parts of the County. According to the Clean Energy Brief: Natural Gas in Minnesota publication, piped natural gas is typically sourced from other states and/or Canada. This because Minnesota has no natural gas production plants or wells.

CenterPoint Energy

CenterPoint Energy provides natural gas services to several parts of Renville County, including the cities of Hector and Olivia, along with some more rural areas.



Great Plains Natural Gas Company

Renville County communities served by this gas utility include Danube, Renville, and Sacred Heart. Great Plains is a division of Montana-Dakota Utilities Company, which is a subsidiary of Bismarck, ND-based MDU Resources Group, Inc.



Sheehan's Gas Company

Sheehan's LP Gas Services Inc provides piped natural gas to residents and businesses in the communities of Bird Island and Buffalo Lake.



New Ulm Public Utilities

While the City of Fairfax owns and operates a natural gas distribution system, gas is supplied by New Ulm Public Utilities. This entity also provides maintenance, inspection, and protection services, emergency services, and public outreach/education.



Renville County's Liquid Propane Providers

In some areas, including most unincorporated areas and the municipalities of Franklin and Morton, no piped natural gas service is available. Instead, residents, businesses, and other building occupants must heat with electricity or purchase "bottled" liquid propane or fuel oil. There are several providers of these products in the area. They include:

Central Region Cooperative

<https://www.centralregioncoop.com/>



Dooley's Petroleum, Inc.

<https://www.dooleypetro.com/>



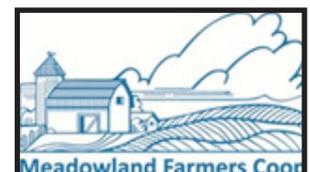
Farmward Cooperative

<https://farmward.net/>



Meadowland Farmers Cooperative

<https://meadowlandfarmerscoop.com/>



United Farmer's Cooperative

<https://ufcmn.com/>

(Planned merger with Central Region Cooperative at the time of plan development)

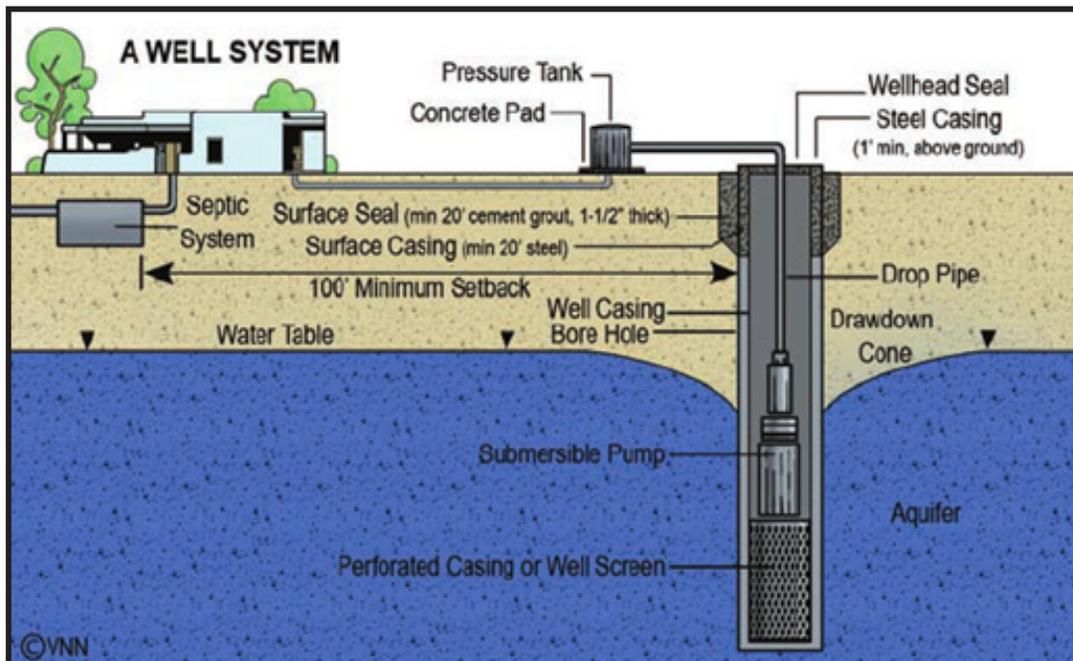
Farmer's Co-op Oil Company
<https://fcoc.us/>



Water Infrastructure

Quality water infrastructure is important for several reasons. It protects public health by preventing waterborne illnesses caused by bacteria, viruses, parasites, and toxic chemicals. It also supports the economy as it can be an important ingredient to products or used in processing. It also connects people to employment, healthcare, and education opportunities. Finally, quality water infrastructure serves to protect the environment as it manages limited water resources and prevents flooding.

Renville County's residents and businesses access their water from groundwater sources, either municipal or private well systems. While the water table is often found within 10 feet of the surface, area wells tap into aquifers at depths typically ranging between 55 and 255 feet below ground. Renville County's municipalities and Renville County's Environmental Services Department work to ensure wells are properly located and permitted, in compliance with all state and federal regulations, and that drinking water meets state and federal water quality standards.



Municipal well water is treated, usually through a process involving chemical addition, sedimentation, filtration, and finally disinfection. The most common disinfection method is chlorination, where chlorine is added to kill bacteria and other pathogens. This process removes impurities and ensures the water is safe to drink.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is responsible for monitoring water quality standards throughout Minnesota. For more information on the MPCA's water quality monitoring, visit https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/whaf/5-component/wq_concepts.html#:~:text=Water%20Quality%20Monitoring,agencies%2C%20as%20well%20as%20citizens.

Sewer Infrastructure

Quality sanitary sewers are important. They prevent the spread of disease by removing hazardous wastewater and sewage away from homes and businesses. They also prevent untreated wastewater from entering natural bodies of water, which protects aquatic ecosystems, ensuring clean, safe water.

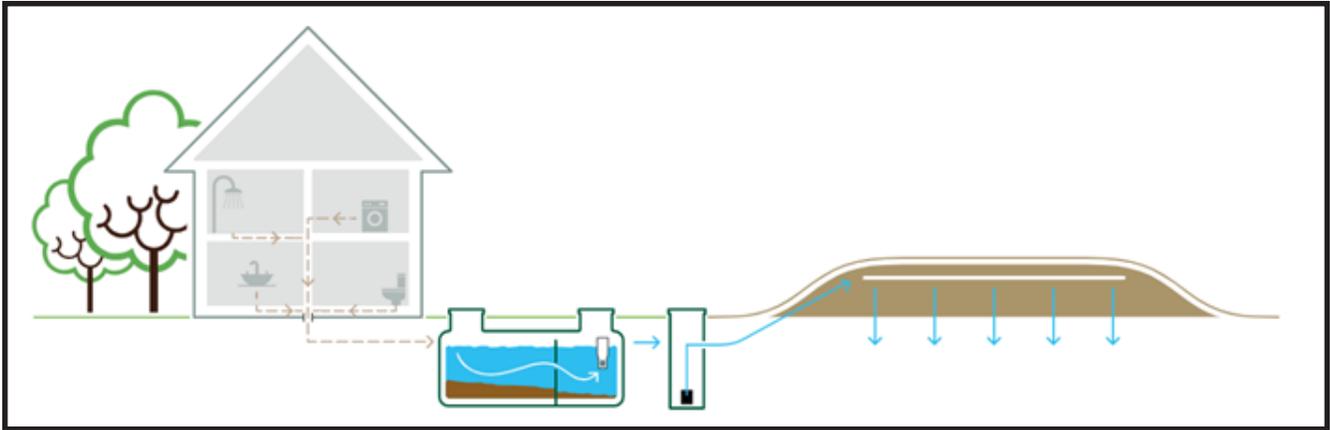
Renville County's municipalities each have sanitary sewer utilities to manage wastewater collection and treatment for their respective residents and businesses. However, each city's wastewater treatment and removal strategy varies, often based on factors such as community size, waste volume, waste type, and geography. The level of operator licensure required also varies, based on the treatment and removal strategy. To some extent, the type of wastewater and local geography may also play a role. In every case, the goal is to safely manage wastewater and protect community health and the surrounding environment.

Treatment Facility Classifications

- **Class A:** This is the highest classification of a wastewater treatment facility, indicating a plant that meets the most stringent standards for effluent quality. These facilities typically include the most advanced treatment processes and produce the cleanest discharged water, which is often suitable for reuse in certain applications, like irrigation. These wastewater treatment facilities usually serve communities with populations of 50,000 or more. However, some communities may support a Class A facility based on the type of waste process (e.g., industrial wastewater that is particularly high in bacteria or chemicals due to production processes).
- According to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) Wastewater Facilities List, the City of Hector's Wastewater Treatment Plant has a Class A designation, though it is considered a "Minor" Class A, due to lower wastewater volumes. Additionally, the Southern Minnesota Sugar Beet Cooperative maintains its own major Class A certification to handle wastewater associated with their industrial sugar production.
- **Class B:** These facilities process at a flow rate typically ranging from 1 million to 5 million gallons per day. The level of treatment provided by a Class B plant will depend on the specific design and regulations, but it typically involves a combination of primary and secondary treatment stages to remove a significant volume of pollutants. MPCA's Wastewater Facilities List indicates that the communities of Olivia, Renville, and Sacred Heart have Class B facilities to manage their wastewater.
- **Class C:** Class C refers to a wastewater treatment facility with a lower level of complexity in terms of its design and operation. These facilities typically serve smaller communities and require less stringent treatment processes compared to Class A or B plants. According to the MPCA's listing, the Morton community incorporates a Class C wastewater treatment facility, as does the Lake Allie Environmental Subordinate Service District (ESSD) which serves a collection of homes in the Lake Allie vicinity, northeast of Buffalo Lake.
- **Class D:** These wastewater treatment facilities have the lowest level of treatment capacity and typically serve very small communities. Therefore, they have the least stringent effluent quality standards, meaning these systems remove fewer pollutants from the wastewater compared to higher class plants like A, B, or C. The communities of Bird Island, Buffalo Lake, Danube, Fairfax, and Franklin all use Class D wastewater treatment plants to serve their communities, according to the MPCA's Wastewater Facilities List.
- **Class S:** Type S systems are waste collection, pumping, and conveyance facilities distinctly separate in operation from treatment facilities. Essentially, they only handle the transportation of wastewater to the treatment plant without performing any of the treatment processes. A good example would be a network of sewer pipes that collect sewage from homes and businesses and deliver it to a central wastewater treatment plant.

Private Septic Systems

A septic system is a wastewater treatment system that treats wastewater from homes and businesses that aren't connected to a public sewer system. Septic systems are made up of an underground tank and a drain field. Wastewater first flows into an underground tank made of concrete, fiberglass, or plastic. Once there, bacteria present in the tank break down solids and organic material. The partially clarified effluent is then piped to a drain field for further treatment and disposal.



Most of Renville County's rural residents rely on private septic systems to manage their wastewater. These systems require regular maintenance to ensure effective performance, which includes having them pumped out from time to time to remove the built-up sludge. It's important to ensure these systems maintain their integrity, as a leaking system can contaminate groundwater and well water. Eventually, these systems will need to be replaced, and this comes at great expense to the home or business owner.

Broadband Infrastructure

Broadband is a term that refers to high-speed internet access that is always on and is considerably faster than the more traditional dial-up access still common in many remote areas. Broadband involves the transmission of wide bandwidth data over a high-speed internet connection. Quality broadband connectivity is used to support commerce, education, telemedicine, socialization, and entertainment.

The Importance of Broadband Infrastructure

Not so long ago, quality internet access was considered a luxury. However, over the course of time and especially in recent years, connectivity has become essential for modern American life. As a result, it is common to compare the expansion of broadband infrastructure to the expansion of electrification in the early 20th century. Broadband connectivity now provides a platform for economic development, education, healthcare, social connectivity, and various public services.

- **Economic Growth:** Broadband access supports businesses, enables remote work, and fosters innovation.
- **Education:** Provides access to online learning resources and virtual classrooms. Commonly used, to some degree, at all grade levels, elementary through postsecondary.
- **Healthcare:** Facilitates telemedicine and ensures access to health information.
- **Social Connectivity:** Enables communication through social media, video calls, and other online platforms.
- **Public Services:** Enhances access to government services and information.

Broadband Infrastructure Definitions

- **Download Speed:** The rate at which data is transferred from the internet to your device. It is crucial for activities like streaming videos, downloading files, and browsing the web.
- **Upload Speed:** The rate at which data is transferred from your device to the internet. It is important for activities like video conferencing, uploading files, and online gaming.
- **Broadband Symmetry:** This occurs when download and upload speeds are equal. Symmetrical broadband is ideal for situations that require high upload as well as download speeds, as is often the case in business settings, home security, etc. Only fiber optic connections can offer broadband symmetry.

Types of Broadband Connections

- **Fiber Optic**
 - **Description:** Uses pulses of light through strands of glass or plastic fibers to transmit data at very high speeds.
 - **Speed:** Can reach up to 1 Gbps or higher.
 - **Advantages:** Extremely fast and reliable with low latency. The only option that allows for broadband symmetry. Widely considered the “gold standard” for connectivity.
 - **Disadvantages:** Costs associated with building out the fiber optic network.
- **Cable**
 - **Description:** Uses the same coaxial cables that deliver cable TV to provide internet access.
 - **Speed:** Typically ranges from 25 Mbps to 1 Gbps.
 - **Advantages:** Widely available and offers relatively high speeds.
 - **Disadvantages:** Costs associated with building out the cable network. Not as fast as fiber optic connectivity. Does not allow for broadband symmetry.
- **Digital Subscriber Line (DSL)**
 - **Description:** Transmits data over traditional copper telephone lines.
 - **Speed:** Typically ranges from 1 Mbps to 100 Mbps.
 - **Advantages:** More widely available in rural areas compared to fiber and cable.
 - **Disadvantages:** Not as fast as fiber optic connectivity. Does not allow for broadband symmetry.
- **Satellite**
 - **Description:** Provides internet access via communication satellites.
 - **Speed:** Typically ranges from 12 Mbps to 100 Mbps.
 - **Advantages:** Available in remote and rural areas where other types of broadband are not.
 - **Disadvantages:** Signal can be hindered by weather as well as trees or other objects. Not as fast as fiber optic connectivity. Does not allow for broadband symmetry. Requires additional on-site equipment (i.e., satellite internet receiver/dish).

- Wireless (Fixed Wireless and Mobile Broadband)
 - Description: Uses radio signals to provide internet access. Fixed wireless connects a home or business to the internet using a radio link to a nearby tower. Mobile broadband uses cellular networks.
 - Speed: Varies widely; fixed wireless can reach up to 100 Mbps, while mobile broadband speeds depend on the network (3G, 4G, 5G).
 - Advantages: Mobility and flexibility, especially with mobile broadband.
 - Disadvantages: May be less reliable. Speed depends on the user’s location and physical objects may interfere. Does not allow for broadband symmetry.

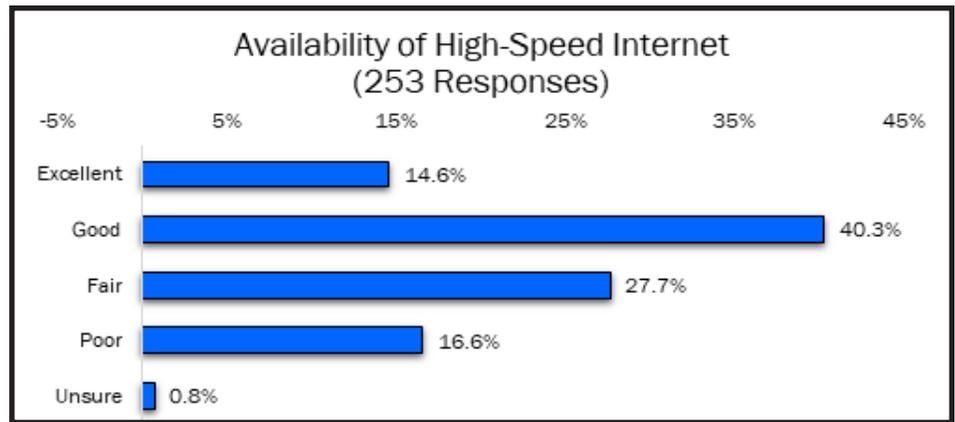
Broadband Speed Requirements

- Basic Use: For lower-level activities, like browsing the web and checking email, speeds of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload are generally sufficient.
- High-Usage Activities: For streaming videos, online gaming, video conferencing, operating smart home devices, remote work that incorporates multiple applications, and other business functions, higher speeds (100 Mbps and above) are recommended to ensure a seamless experience, especially when there are multiple users.

Type of Internet Usage				
Number of Users	Light (Email and Web Browsing)	Medium (Limited File Downloads, Music & Video Streaming, Cloud Resources, VOIP)	Multi-Media (High Volume of Large File Downloads, Web Conferencing Including Video & Desktop Replication)	Heavy (High Bandwidth Demand, Intense Internet-Based Applications, Multiple Devices Per User)
5	1-6 Mbps	2-7 Mbps	4-9 Mbps	7-12 Mbps
10	2-7 Mbps	4-9 Mbps	7-12 Mbps	14-19 Mbps
15	3-8 Mbps	6-11 Mbps	11-16 Mbps	21-26 Mbps
20	4-9 Mbps	9-14 Mbps	14-19 Mbps	29-34 Mbps
30	6-11 Mbps	13-18 Mbps	21-26 Mbps	43-48 Mbps
40	9-14 Mbps	17-22 Mbps	29-34 Mbps	57-82 Mbps
50	11-16 Mbps	21-26 Mbps	36-41 Mbps	71-96 Mbps
75	16-21 Mbps	32-37 Mbps	54-79 Mbps	107-132 Mbps
100	21-26 Mbps	43-48 Mbps	71-96 Mbps	143-168 Mbps

Public Input

When asked to rate the availability of high-speed internet service within Renville County, 54.9% indicated that service was “good” or “excellent.” 44.3% indicated that high-speed internet service availability was “fair” or “poor.” This supports the assertion that service is highly-dependent on one’s location within the County.



Utility-focused comments offered within responses to the Renville County Comprehensive Plan Survey included:

- *“Better internet service - fiber optic in Bird Island”*
- *“There are areas that have high speed Internet and others that don’t”*
- *“I’ve lived in several larger metros, and this is the best Internet situation I’ve ever been in.”*
- *“Get fiber internet in Bird Island.”*
- *“High speed internet in all rural areas, cities might be adequate but the farther out you go is more limited.”*
- *“Access to funding to support infrastructure upgrades that was not dependent on taxpayers. Some of the county has fiber internet service, but not all. More investment to see all served.”*
- *“Infrastructure, roads, bridges, ditches, small town water, sewer and storm sewer,” offered in response to the question “If you could wave a magic wand and do just one thing to improve Renville County, what would it be?”*

Renville County Utility Strategies

1. Ensure Highly Functional and Resilient Electricity Infrastructure

- A. Support renewable energy investments to enhance Renville County’s energy security, reduce dependence on outside sources, and improve resilience to disruptions like extreme weather events.
 - i. Where development can be accommodated without undue harm to adjacent properties, partner and/or cooperate with renewable energy developers and local entities as they develop renewable energy infrastructure (e.g., solar farms, wind turbine installations).
 - ii. Consider providing incentives for local renewable energy projects and/or contributing matching funds to support the addition of clean energy infrastructure via state, federal, or private grants.
 - iii. As technology improves, implement energy storage systems such as batteries in public buildings to store excess renewable energy and ensure a stable supply during peak demand or when renewable sources are not generating power.
 - iv. To capture energy that would otherwise be wasted, where and when it is feasible, support the implementation of technologies to capture and utilize methane emissions, using gas-fired turbines, at municipal or private wastewater treatment plants.
 - v. Support the addition of electric vehicle infrastructure, via grants and/or a combination of public and private investments, to accommodate residents and visitors who rely on this technology. As technologies improve (range, weight, etc.), consider the incorporation of electric vehicles to the County’s fleet.

B. Support grid modernization to ensure reliability and efficiency.

- i. Incorporate data analytics, smart meters, and advanced grid management systems to monitor and manage power usage in real-time to reduce outages and improve maintenance and repair response times.
- ii. Promote the development of microgrids that can operate independently from the main grid during emergencies, enhancing resilience and reliability.
- iii. Be open to partnering with energy providers as they take part in research and the development of new or improved technologies and practices that improve or enhance local utility services.

C. Incorporate and promote energy efficiency and cost-savings programs.

- i. Encourage Renville County consumers to reduce or shift their electricity usage to reduce strain on the electrical grid during peak times and connect residents and businesses with related incentives.
- ii. Either directly or through other entities (power providers, helping agencies, etc.) inform on how to reduce energy consumption, via smart consumerism and energy-efficient practices, to help residents and businesses save energy dollars. Consider launching public awareness campaigns to inform the public on topics like energy conservation and the benefits of renewable energy.
- iii. Connect low-income households with energy assistance programs to ensure health and well-being, especially during periods of extreme heat or cold.
- iv. Offer or provide connections to energy auditing programs and financial incentives for energy-efficient upgrades in homes and businesses.

D. Ensure Energy Infrastructure Resilience

- i. Ensure, to the greatest practical extent, that multiple electricity distribution routes are available to ensure necessary redundancies and minimize weather-related and/or other service interruptions to residents and businesses.
- ii. Protect electric infrastructure, where practical, by burying powerlines and/or ensuring above-ground transmission wires and supporting structures are sufficient to withstand windstorms, ice storms, and other
- iii. disruptive weather events.

2. Ensure Highly Functional and Resilient Water Infrastructure and Protect Water Resources

A. Be proactive about leak detection and preventative repair to minimize water loss and protect other local investments.

- i. Encourage the use of advanced monitoring systems (e.g., sensors and IoT technology) to detect leaks in real-time and prioritize repairs.
- ii. Ensure a proactive maintenance schedule is used, by the County or by municipal partners, to inspect and repair aging infrastructure before failures occur, especially in areas of County infrastructure investment (e.g., along County roads and highways).

B. Incorporate and support water conservation initiatives.

- i. Collaborate with municipalities and other interested parties on public awareness campaigns designed to educate the community on water-saving practices and the importance of conservation.
- ii. Provide or connect residents and businesses with rebates for water-efficient appliances and fixtures.

C. Incorporate and promote energy efficiency and cost-savings programs.

- i. Encourage Renville County consumers to reduce or shift their electricity usage to reduce strain on the electrical grid during peak times and connect residents and businesses with related incentives.
- ii. Either directly or through other entities (power providers, helping agencies, etc.) inform on how to reduce energy consumption, via smart consumerism and energy-efficient practices, to help residents and businesses save energy dollars. Consider launching public awareness campaigns to inform the public on topics like energy conservation and the benefits of renewable energy.
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3. Ensure Highly Functional and Compliant Sewer Infrastructure

- A. Ensure infrastructure is adequate to accommodate current and future residents and businesses/industries.
 - i. Support and encourage municipalities' rehabilitation of aging sewer lines and treatment facilities to prevent overflows, leaks, and storm resilience.
 - ii. Support the thoughtful expansion of local municipal sewer capacity to accommodate industrial use and any population or housing growth.
 - iii. Ensure all wastewater facilities within County borders are regularly inspected and compliant with all local, state, and federal regulations to protect the environment from wastewater contamination.
- B. Encourage the incorporation of advanced treatment technologies.
 - i. Support the local use of advanced biological treatment processes to improve the removal of organic matter and nutrients from wastewater.
 - ii. Support the local incorporation of membrane filtration and ultraviolet technologies to improve effluent quality.
 - iii. Cooperate with wastewater treatment plant operators (municipal and private) interested in the incorporation of methane capture technology where and when it is feasible.

4. Ensure Effective Stormwater Management

- A. Incorporate Green Infrastructure Solutions.
 - i. Use rain gardens, permeable pavements, vegetative buffer strips, and green roofs on County properties to manage stormwater runoff and reduce sediments and pollutants in downstream areas. Encourage local municipalities, residents, and businesses to do the same.
 - ii. Develop and maintain integrated stormwater and wastewater management systems to reduce flooding and pollution.

- B. Maintain adequate stormwater infrastructure
 - i. Ensure all County-owned curbs, gutters, culverts, and drainage pipes (i.e., “gray infrastructure”), and all locally-owned stormwater features found upstream and downstream of County stormwater infrastructure, are sufficient to effectively direct stormwater during severe weather events.
 - C. Protect existing wetlands and support wetland restoration, whenever and wherever possible.
 - i. Encourage sustainable farming practices.
 - ii. Ensure compliance with and enforcement of all County land use ordinances.
5. Ensure Safe and Effective Natural Gas Infrastructure
- A. Ensure a high level of facility and pipeline safety and maintenance.
 - i. Require and verify gas provider’s regular inspection and maintenance of pipelines using a combination of advanced technologies like drones and smart sensors, and human observation.
 - ii. Support the implementation and maintenance of leak detection systems to quickly identify and address gas leaks.
 - B. Reduce methane emissions
 - i. Encourage the implementation of technologies to capture and utilize any methane emissions from natural gas systems to reduce waste and protect the environment.
 - ii. Upgrade Infrastructure: Confirm the use of high-quality, durable materials during any gas pipeline/ infrastructure replacement.
 - C. Incorporate and promote energy efficiency and cost savings programs
 - i. Educate Renville County residents and business owners on energy-saving practices and the benefits of using highly-efficient appliances to reduce natural gas resource consumption and save residents money.
 - ii. Ensure residents and business owners have easy access and connections to energy-focused rebate programs and other incentives, via their utility providers, local municipalities, and other government or private programs.
 - iii. Connect low-income households with energy assistance programs to ensure health and well-being, especially during periods of extreme heat or cold.
 - iv. Offer or provide connections to energy auditing programs and financial incentives for energy-efficient upgrades in homes and businesses.
6. Ensure Countywide Broadband Access
- A. Expand infrastructure
 - i. Invest in the deployment of high-speed broadband services and infrastructure wherever feasible to provide quality internet access and ensure the connectivity required for modern living and working.
 - ii. Prioritize the use of fiber-optic networks, which provide the highest speeds and offer upload and download symmetry.
 - iii. Support fixed wireless access and satellite internet as a longer-term but temporary solution to reach the most remote locations, only until fiber deployment becomes practical.

B. Participate in public-private partnerships

- i. To maximize local investments, and leverage resources and expertise, actively partner with private companies, as well as with local municipalities and townships, for broadband deployment.
- ii. Whenever possible, stretch County dollars by using them to leverage state, federal, or other grants to support broadband infrastructure projects.

C. Work to reduce user barriers to broadband access

- i. Promote and connect residents to any available broadband subsidy programs offered by other entities and consider the development of a local subsidy to ensure equitable access for low-income residents, families, workers, and students.
- ii. Ensure public access points (e.g., public libraries) are prioritized and have the broadband and technology resources necessary to provide quality patron access.
- iii. Implement and/or support digital literacy programs to help residents make the most of their broadband connections.

7. Ensure Utility Reliability and Resilience

A. Ensure continuous and reliable service for all utilities and enhance infrastructure to withstand, extreme weather events and other emergencies:

- i. Maintain current and effective emergency response plans to prepare for and respond to extreme weather events, cyber-attacks, and other emergencies, including those that might disrupt utility services.
- ii. Invest in the hardening of infrastructure (e.g., burying powerlines, improving durability of above-ground electric infrastructure, reinforcing water, sewer, and stormwater systems) to increase durability and protect utility services from extreme weather events.
- iii. Support School and Work-Based Learning: Work with schools, utilities, local public works departments, etc. to prepare prospective workers for essential, utility-focused careers, via classroom and work-based learning (e.g., job shadowing, internship programs, and apprenticeships).

8. Promote and Encourage Public Involvement

A. Ensure transparency in utility operations and decision-making to build trust and provide accountability.

- i. Hold public meetings and workshops to gather input from residents, businesses, and other stakeholders when considering or planning for utility-related projects, and invite local media to these gatherings.
- ii. Ensure all project information (e.g., project plans and related meeting minutes) is easy to access in multiple locations, including online.

B. Promote and foster robust and meaningful community engagement

- i. Use surveys, public events, and/or other means to gather input from residents who will be affected by utility projects or changes in utility services.
- ii. Use public forums, County resources (e.g., staff, website) to educate the public on sustainable practices, new and emerging technologies, and efficient energy use.

Specific Renville County Utility Projects, Efforts, or Activities*

1. The County will support property owners interested in the installation of small-scale renewable energy generation systems.
2. The County will ensure County regulations include requirements for the proper decommissioning of all public or commercial renewable installations when they've exceeded their useful life, without placing undue burden on the taxpayer.
3. The County will encourage, cooperate with, and support local schools, utilities, state or federal entities, other workforce-focused agencies, and utility-focused businesses interested in the development of career and technical education programs related to energy and utility infrastructure.
4. The County will work toward countywide access to quality broadband service and maximize the County's tax investments through the pursuit of state and federal broadband infrastructure grants and via active partnership with reputable private firms who have demonstrated an ability to provide quality, reasonably affordable service.
5. The County will advocate for state and federal funding to support infrastructure projects, including those related to utilities.
6. The County will work with state regulators to ensure fair and efficient utility regulations that encourage investment in modernization and utility upgrades.
7. The County will explore the use of municipal bonds to raise funds for infrastructure projects.
8. The County will seek state and federal grants and consider funding programs specifically designed for infrastructure projects, including those related to utilities.
9. The County will promote the services offered by entities (e.g., Clean Energy Resource Teams, United Community Action Partnership) to improve the energy efficiency of local businesses and homes.

*This list is not intended to be all-inclusive. Items should be added over time, as conditions and opportunities change. Similarly, items may be removed. Explanations for additions and subtractions should be documented. Progress should also be acknowledged as items are accomplished.



Photo By Taylor Wertish

Renville County's Natural Resources

It is important to preserve the natural resources we all need to thrive. If our clean air, water, soil, and biodiversity are depleted, the environmental damage could negatively impact generations of Renville County's residents. Health and well-being will be reduced, as will Renville County's economic competitiveness.

Key reasons to preserve natural resources:

- **Sustainability:** By conserving and nurturing our resources, we ensure their availability for future generations.
- **Biodiversity:** Natural ecosystems that include diverse plant and animal life serve to help us maintain an effective ecological balance by performing essential functions like pollination and water filtration.
- **Climate Regulation:** Prairies, wetlands, and other natural habitats play a vital role in absorbing carbon dioxide, helping to mitigate climate change.
- **Human Well-being:** Access to clean air and water, and nature, provide connections to the environment that can contribute to physical, mental, and even spiritual health, and improve quality of life.
- **Economic Impact:** By protecting natural resources, we are protecting some of the very things that give Renville County a competitive advantage, like high-quality soil and wide-open spaces suitable for relaxation, hunting, fishing, and other leisure activities.
- **Resource Depletion:** Over-exploitation of non-renewable resources like groundwater and surface water can lead to their depletion, causing economic and environmental challenges.



Photo by Jordan Anderson

Renville County is rich in various natural resources and related assets that contribute to its vitality. These include:

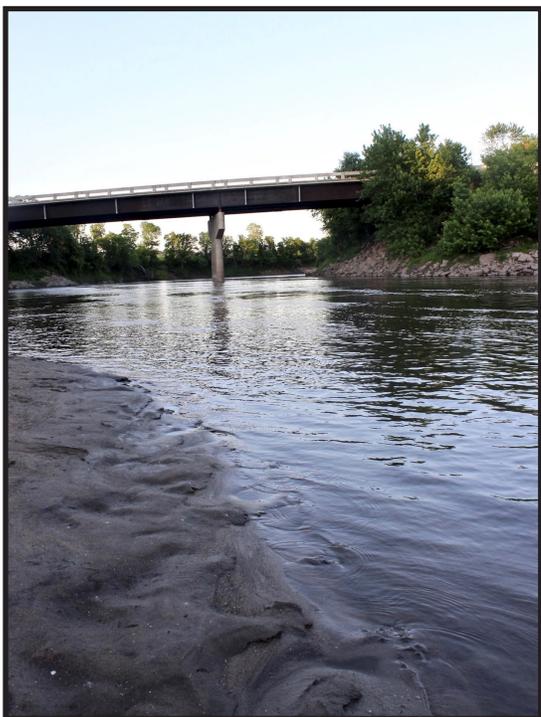


Photo By Taylor Wertish

Water Resources:

- **Rivers and Streams:** The Minnesota River flows along Renville County's southern border. The river provides a recreational resource and scenic areas for rural homeownership. However, when coupled with the various natural streams, creeks, and man-made drainage ditches that feed it, the river also provides an effective means of drainage, which is essential for Renville County's agricultural sector.
- **Lakes:** While Renville County is not known for large lakes, it has several smaller lakes (Boon Lake, Lake Allie, Mud Lake, and Preston Lake) and several smaller ponds that support wildlife habitat and provide an opportunity for recreational activities like fishing and hunting.
- **Sloughs and Other Wetlands:** These areas are crucial for water filtration and flood control. They also provide critical habitat needed to support a wide array of plant and animal species.

Soil Resources and Agricultural Lands:

Extensive agricultural lands dominate the landscape, making Renville County one of the leading agricultural producers in Minnesota. Approximately 90 percent of Renville County is occupied by farmland. The County's fertile soil is a significant asset to the area's agriculture industry. The soil supports the growth of various cash crops, including corn, soybeans, sugar beets, peas, and other edibles. It also supports the growth of vegetation in areas used for livestock grazing and provides a good foundation for area gardeners.



Photo by Heather Link

Forests and Woodlands:

- Although not heavily forested, Renville County has patches of woodlands, especially near the Minnesota River that contribute to biodiversity and add to the aesthetic of the area.

Wildlife:

- While other animals, including bobcats, black bears, and wayward moose can be found here from time to time, Renville County is normally home to deer, coyotes, pheasants, turkeys, waterfowl, and a variety of other small animals. These species thrive in the County's diverse habitats, including our wetlands, prairies, and woodlands.

Mineral Resources:

- Renville County has deposits of sand, gravel, and hard rock, which are important for construction projects, including shared infrastructure projects.

Conservation Areas:

- Several conservation programs and protected areas help preserve Renville County's natural resources. These include wildlife management areas, conservation easements, buffer strips, and programs like the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program.

Threats to Renville County's Natural Resources

The primary threats to Renville County's natural resources include: agricultural runoff leading to water quality degradation, aquatic invasive species, potential groundwater contamination, erosion from intensive farming practices, and climate change impacting weather patterns which can exacerbate existing issues like flooding and drought.

- **Agricultural Runoff:** Excess fertilizer and pesticides from farmlands can leach into nearby waterways, impacting water quality and aquatic life.
- **Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS):** Non-native plants and animals like buckthorn, wild parsnip, Eurasian watermilfoil, zebra mussels, and carp can outcompete native species, disrupting the ecosystem balance.
- **Groundwater Contamination:** Improper disposal and the unintended leaching of wastewater, chemicals, and solid wastes can contaminate groundwater sources and drinking water quality, as can irresponsible agricultural practices (e.g., the excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers).
- **Erosion:** Intensive farming practices, particularly tillage and inappropriate or poorly maintained drainage infrastructure can lead to soil erosion, impacting soil fertility and contributing to sediment and mineral build-up in waterways.
- **Climate Change:** Less predictable weather patterns, including increased frequency of windstorms, heavy precipitation events, and periods of extreme drought, can lead to flooding, reduced water availability, and other stresses to Renville County's natural resources.



Photo By Stacy Peterson

Threats to Renville County's Natural Resources

While it is important for residents and business owners to take the steps necessary to preserve our natural resources, Renville County's Environmental Services Department leads preservation. The Environmental Services Department administers



environment and planning programming and offers technical assistance and information in related areas. Specific responsibilities include the administration of the County's Land Use Ordinances as well as management of areas of the County's land use and environment-related Nuisance Ordinances. The department also provides technical advice and information on planning, zoning, mining, land subdivision and more. Finally, Environmental Services Department staff inspect septic systems and issue permits for sewage treatment systems, feedlots, etc. More information can be found at <https://www.renvillecountymn.gov/environmental-services>.

Renville County Soil and Water Conservation District

The Renville County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWDC) is a legal subdivision of Minnesota that helps landowners manage their soil and water resources. The SWDC's mission is to promote the sustainable use of soil and water resources throughout the County.

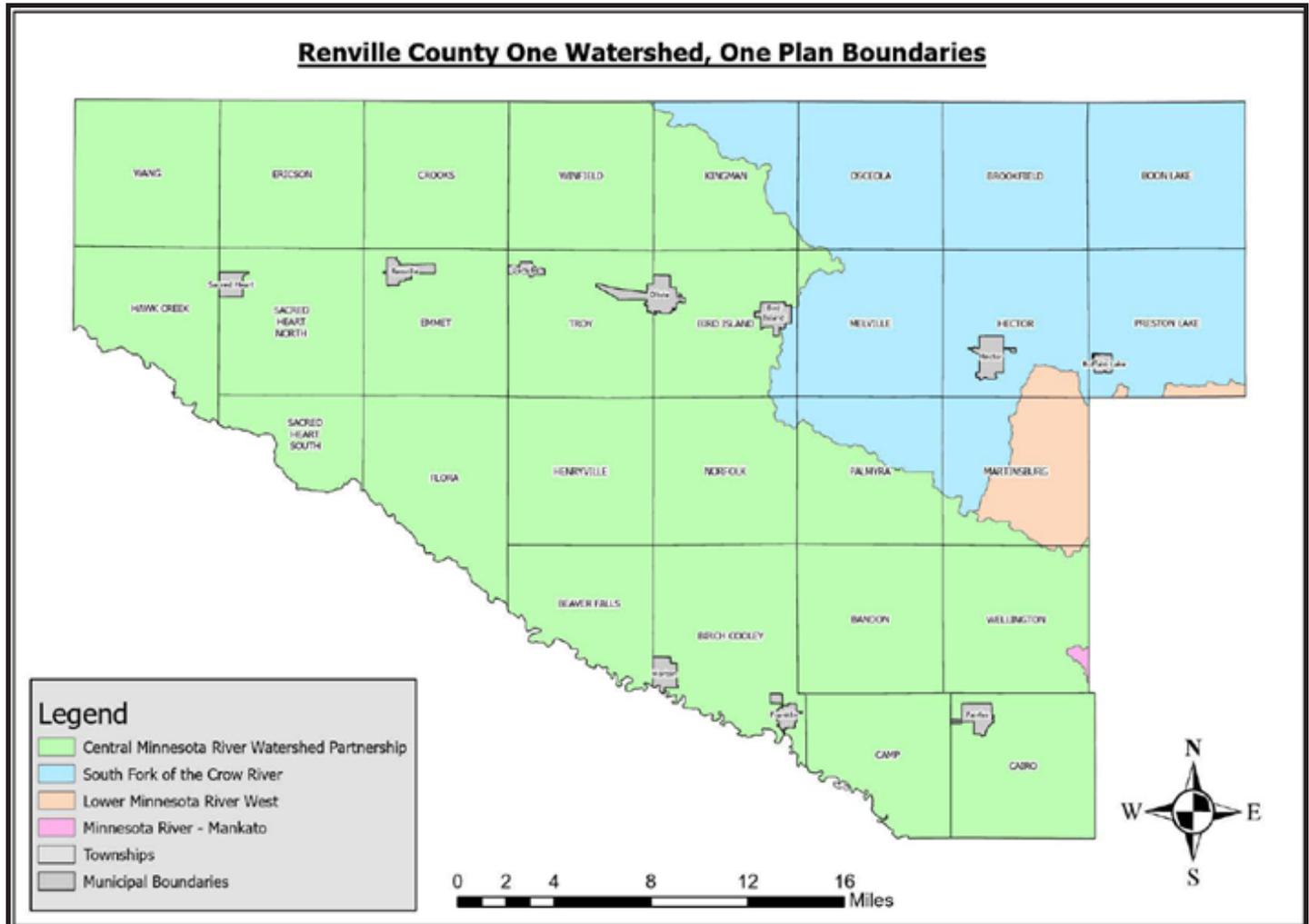
Specifically, the work of the Renville County SWCD includes the provision of financial and technical assistance to landowners, municipalities, and townships. They help these stakeholders apply conservation practices and offer educational activities that will support the improved health of soil, water, habitats, and farmland. Located in Olivia, the SWCD is governed by a five-member board of supervisors. It is funded through a variety of sources,

including state dollars, grants, and fees for service. More information on the Renville County SWCD can be found at <https://www.renvilleswcd.com/>.



Renville County One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P)

Renville County is located within four major watersheds. The first three are part of the Minnesota River Drainage Basin and include Hawk Creek, High Island Creek, and Middle Minnesota River Watersheds. The fourth, the Crow River Watershed, is part of the Upper Mississippi Drainage Basin.



To ensure effective and comprehensive management, a One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) strategy is employed. The goals of these plans are to:

- Align local water planning purposes and procedures to create a systematic, watershed-wide, science-based approach to watershed management;
- Acknowledge and build off existing local government structure, water plan services, and local capacity;
- Incorporate and make use of data and information, including watershed restoration and protection strategies; and
- Leverage agency expertise as well as citizen and stakeholder input to prioritize and target actions that will lead to measurable watershed management progress.

1W1P strategies also serve as a substitute for a comprehensive plan, local water management plan, or watershed management plan. These plans and additional information can be found at <https://www.renvillecountymn.gov/environmental-services/>.

Other Natural Resources Affecting Organizations

In addition to the entities noted previously, several state and federal agencies include Renville County's natural resources within the scope of their work. Among them are:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (UFWS): The Litchfield Wetland Management District of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages federally owned land, called waterfowl production areas, within a seven-county area of south-central Minnesota that includes Renville County. In addition to managing land for public use, the district protects privately owned wetland and grassland, purchased as permanent easements to restore and protect habitat. The district also works with private landowners to protect privately owned wetland and prairies through the voluntary Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. More information can be found at the Litchfield District's website: <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/litchfield-wetland-management-district/about-us>.



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR): Minnesota's DNR manages and protects the state's natural resources. This includes land, water, fish, wildlife, and minerals. Specifically, the DNR:

- Protects the state's natural heritage by managing forests, wetlands, prairies, and rare plant and animal communities.
- Maintains healthy waterways and groundwater resources.
- Maintains healthy populations of fish and wildlife.
- Manages parks, trails, and other facilities for hunting, fishing, camping, skiing, hiking, and more.
- Manages state forest lands for multiple values, including wood resources, tourism, and wildlife.
- Manages mineral resources responsibly, ensuring that exploration and mining are environmentally sound.
- Uses strategies to prepare for climate change and reduce the state's carbon footprint.



Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA): The MPCA upholds environmental standards, develops environmental regulations, and provides outreach, education and technical assistance and regulations when necessary to help entities and individuals protect the environment. The work of the MPCA falls into four categories: Monitoring, Regulating, Enforcing, and Assisting::

- **Monitoring:** The MPCA collects data on air, land, and water quality at over 1,000 sites across the state. They report on emissions of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide, and also conduct biological monitoring of rivers and streams. This work includes both fish sampling and water chemistry analysis.
- **Regulating:** The MPCA issues permits for air, water, and land to businesses, citizens, and government units. They also inspect facilities, like wastewater treatment plants and manufacturing facilities, and review reports and files to ensure compliance with environmental regulations.
- **Enforcing:** The MPCA investigates public complaints. They also issue field citations, administrative penalty orders, and consent decrees. Additionally, the agency directs clean-up work at contaminated sites
- **Assisting:** The MPCA provides technical and financial assistance and works with Minnesota's communities most impacted by pollution.



A wealth of additional information on the MPCA can be found at <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/>.

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED): Among DEED’s initiatives is the Contamination Cleanup and Investigation Grant Program. This program helps communities pay for assessing and cleaning up contaminated sites for private or public redevelopment. Grants pay up to 75 percent of the costs to investigate and clean up polluted sites. Both publicly and privately owned sites with known or suspected soil or groundwater contamination qualify. Various entities, including cities, housing and redevelopment authorities, economic development authorities, and counties are eligible for this program. For more information on DEED’s Contamination Cleanup and Investigation Grant Program, visit <https://mn.gov/deed/government/financial-assistance/cleanup/contamination.jsp>.



Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR): The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources is the State of Minnesota’s soil and water conservation agency. The agency is charged with helping meet the state’s goals for clean water, clean air, and abundant fish and wildlife. Core functions include implementing the state’s soil and water conservation policy, comprehensive local water management, and the Wetland Conservation act as it relates to the 41.7 million acres of private land in Minnesota. More information is available at <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/>

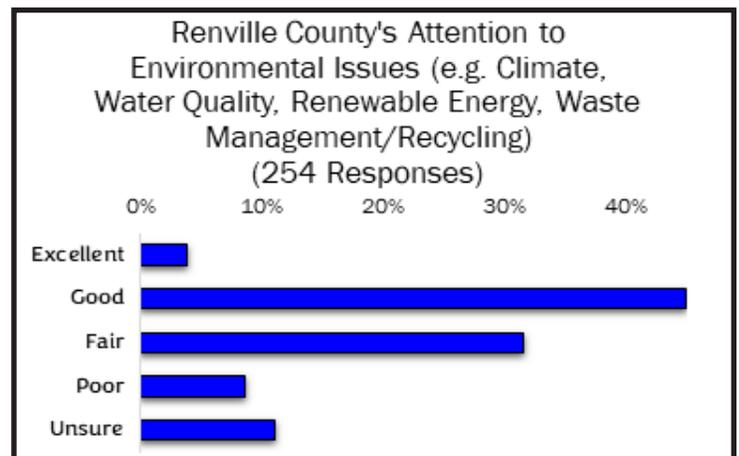


The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) St. Paul District has involvement in Renville County, primarily through its civil works projects related to water resource management and flood risk mitigation. This includes the maintenance of the 9-foot channel navigation system on the Upper Mississippi River, which has locks and dams in the region. Additionally, the USACE is involved in environmental infrastructure assistance projects and project partnerships to address erosion and protect culturally significant tribal lands. <https://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/Missions/>



Public Input

When asked about Renville County’s attention to environmental issues (e.g., climate, water quality, renewable energy, waste management/recycling), nearly 49 percent of Renville County Comprehensive Plan Survey respondents indicated that the County was doing an “excellent” or “good” job, with the vast majority of these responding “good.” Over 31 percent indicated they thought the County was giving environmental issues a “fair” amount of attention, over eight percent indicated the County was giving a “poor” level of attention to the matter, and just over 11 percent indicated that they were unsure on the matter.



Natural resources-focused survey respondent comments included:

- *“Less soil erosion from farming practices. Drainage issue causing flooding from farmland that has tile and water erosion. Less chem and fertilizer into waterways and drainage with the use of cover crops, more residue and installation of bio control structures placed on tile outlets.”*
- *“Renville County needs to pay attention to more climate issues...More and more drainage tile is being put in which is causing major issues to our cropland. Something has to change fast.”*
- *“Encourage water control structures - (grant funded) on pattern tiling systems.... slow the water down.”*
- *“See more lakes and limit amount of tiling.”*
- *“Develop Pelican Lake”*
- *“See more wind breaks/line fences to prevent topsoil from blowing into ditches and ending up in our waterways.”question “If you could wave a magic wand and do just one thing to improve Renville County, what would it be?”*

Renville County’s Natural Resources Strategies

1. Preserve and Enhance Renville County’s Surface and Groundwater Resources

A. Ensure adequate regulation and enforcement to protect lakes, streams, rivers, and wetlands.

i. Regularly revisit County ordinances to ensure sufficient water protection.

ii. Vigilantly monitor water quality, via surface water and groundwater testing.

iii. Adhere to local watershed plans and strategies.

iv. Ensure compliance with all County, state, and federal regulations to prevent surface and ground water pollution and degradation.



Photo By Taylor Wertish

B. Promote water conservation

i. Implement and/or reinforce and promote conservation programming to safeguard Renville County’s water bodies and aquifers.

ii. Ensure information on best water conservation practices and related resources are readily available to the public.

iii. Encourage sustainable agriculture, including the incorporation of best management practices, vegetative buffers, and the adoption of precision agriculture technologies to optimize water use.

2. Maintain Soil Health and Fertility

- A. Promote the responsible extraction and use of mineral resources (sand, soil, hard rock, etc.).
 - i. Regularly revisit County ordinances to ensure sufficient soil and mineral protection.
 - ii. Ensure robust monitoring, management and enforcement to minimize environmental impacts related to mineral extraction.
 - iii. Require the meaningful rehabilitation and reclamation of extracted lands.
 - iv. Encourage the use of alternative and recycled materials in construction, when feasible and cost-effective.
- B. Promote soil conservation
 - i. Encourage sustainable agriculture, including the incorporation of best management practices, including cover crops, conservation tillage, vegetative buffers, shelter belts to preserve soil health and minimize erosion/mineral loss.
 - ii. Ensure information on best soil conservation practices and related resources are readily available to the public.
 - iii. Conduct regular soil health assessments to identify and address degradation, then develop soil health improvement plans based on the assessment results.
 - iv. Encourage the use of alternative and recycled materials in construction, when feasible and cost-effective.

3. Protect Forests and Woodlands

- A. Prevent deforestation and habitat loss.
 - i. Maintain zoning regulations that prevent deforestation and habitat loss.
 - ii. Establish conservation easements to protect forested areas.
- B. Support forest and habitat rejuvenation/creation
 - i. Support tree planting initiatives and collaborate with local organizations and municipalities to increase forest cover, including in-town forest cover.
 - ii. Implement habitat restoration projects in degraded areas.
 - iii. Develop and enforce regulations to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species and support local initiatives to manage and eradicate invasive species.
 - iv. Collaborate with conservation organizations to protect threatened plant and animal species.
 - v. Provide funding and resources for wildlife conservation projects, maximizing this contribution, when possible, by using County dollars to leverage conservation grants.
 - vi. Encourage landowners to adopt practices that enhance habitat diversity and support the creation of wild life-friendly landscapes in urban and rural areas.

Specific Renville County Natural Resource Projects, Efforts, or Activities*

1. The County will regularly (at least annually) examine ordinance language to ensure it provides sufficient environmental protection while making reasonable allowances for hard rock gravel mining.
2. The County will work to support farmers as they adopt more sustainable agricultural methods to conserve soil and water.
3. The County will, where and when appropriate, acquire conservation easements to protect valuable natural areas.
4. The County will enforce regulations including those included within Minnesota's Wetland Conservation Act to preserve and/or restore degraded wetlands.
5. The County will actively participate in watershed planning, in partnership with other entities.
6. The County will collaborate with local, regional, state, and federal entities to preserve natural resources and will pursue related natural resource investments (e.g., conservation-related grant funding).
7. The County will promote the incorporation of conservation practices (e.g., the removal of drain tile on conservation land, the incorporation of native plant species, the creation of nesting habitat) to the public.
8. The County will work to minimize invasive species via inspection for the presence of noxious weeds and aquatic invasive species, through collaboration with other partners, and through public awareness campaigns.
9. The County will continue to encourage environmental stewardship through educational programs and outreach initiatives (e.g., by making County staff available to speak with local elementary, middle school or high school classes).

*This list is not intended to be all-inclusive. Items should be added over time, as conditions and opportunities change. Similarly, items may be removed. Explanations for additions and subtractions should be documented. Progress should also be acknowledged as items are accomplished.



Photo By Stacy Peterson

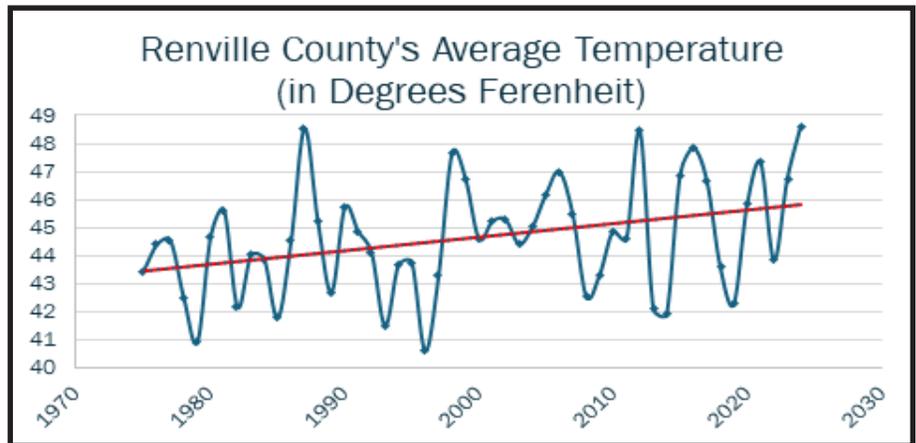
Renville County's Climate and Weather Resilience

The term climate and weather resilience refers to the capacity of communities, ecosystems, and economies to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to the impacts of a changing climate, including extreme weather events. Improving resilience involves taking measures to withstand and bounce back from harmful events, such as blizzards, floods, droughts, and heatwaves. By enhancing resilience, we can protect lives and property, minimize economic loss, and ensure the stability and sustainability of both our environment and our communities.

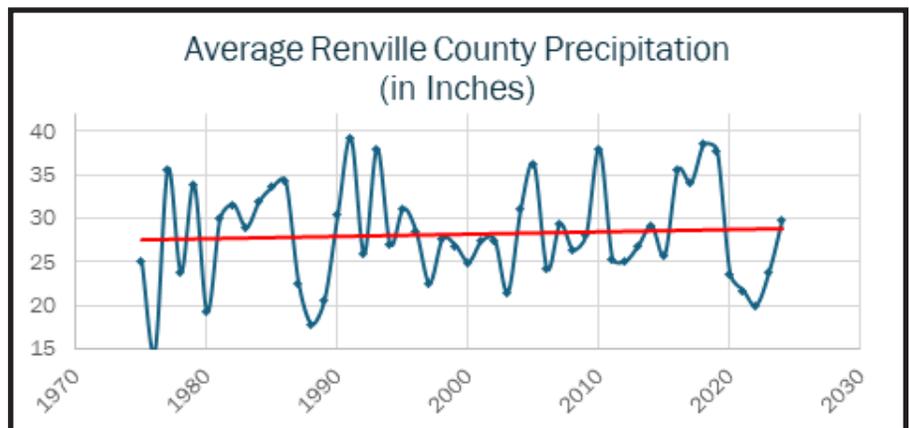
The importance of climate and weather resilience cannot be overstated. It plays a crucial role in safeguarding against immediate threats while also ensuring long-term prosperity. Resilient communities are better equipped to handle disruptions, maintain access to essential services, and preserve their quality of life. Additionally, resilient ecosystems can better withstand and recover from climate impacts, preserving biodiversity and natural resources. Ultimately, building resilience is about creating a safer, more stable, and sustainable future for all.

Weather Changes:

Though there have been fluctuations, Renville County's average temperature has risen 0.47 degrees Fahrenheit per decade since 1975, a total increase of 2.35 degrees Fahrenheit over the last 50 years. Higher temperatures can lead to more extreme weather events, including heatwaves, droughts, and intense storms, which can threaten lives, disrupt communities, and damage shared community infrastructure.



Similar to the temperature, Renville County's average precipitation has shown an increase of 0.27" per decade since 1975, a total increase of 1.35" of precipitation in the last 50 years. However, as depicted in this chart, there is significant volatility in this area, with some years showing significant deviation, both dryer and wetter, from the average.



Weather Unpredictability

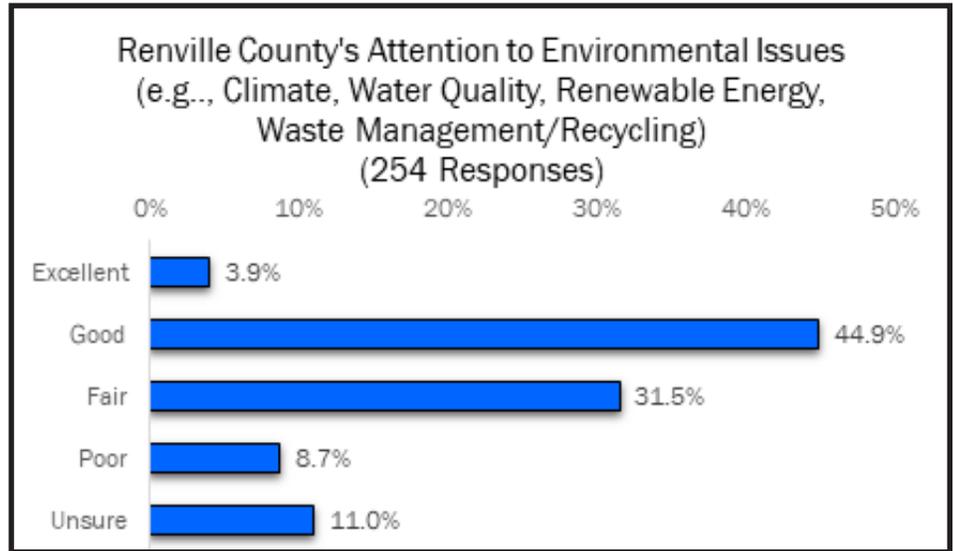
Weather unpredictability refers to the inherent difficulty of accurately forecasting weather conditions due to the complex and chaotic nature of the atmosphere. Small changes in atmospheric conditions can influence significant variations in weather patterns, making precise predictions challenging. This unpredictability is significant because it impacts safety and preparedness. Sudden and severe weather events like storms, floods, and heatwaves can put human safety at risk and, therefore, necessitate robust emergency response plans.

Moreover, weather unpredictability can have substantial economic consequences. It can disrupt agriculture, transportation, and other sectors, leading to economic losses and affecting livelihoods. Additionally, unpredictable weather patterns can stress ecosystems, impacting biodiversity and the health of natural habitats. Understanding and addressing weather unpredictability is necessary in order to enhance resilience and minimize adverse effects.

Recent Renville County weather events have highlighted the unpredictability and potential severity of local weather patterns. The County was included, along with many other Minnesota counties, in a 2024 federal disaster declaration due to severe storms and flooding brought on by an astonishing amount of rain (up to nine inches) which fell during a stationary storm. within just a few hours. This intense rainfall led to significant localized flooding, demonstrating the challenges posed by sudden and extreme weather events. Renville County also received a federal disaster declaration in 2022, due to the impacts of another storm which included significant straight-line wind damage, tornadoes and flooding across 23 Minnesota counties. While far less significant, another notable event occurred in August 2020, when a storm inflicted \$12,000 in damage within Hawk Creek Township. As the damage was only locally significant, it did not qualify for federal assistance. This event underscores the need for communities to have local capacity to manage and recover from unpredictable weather events.

Public Input

When asked to rate Renville County’s attention to environmental issues, such as climate, water quality, renewable energy, waste management/recycling, 48.8% said they thought the County was doing a “good” or “excellent” job. 40.2% said that the County was doing a “fair” or “poor” job and 11.0% indicated they were “unsure”.



Climate-related comments offered by respondents to the Renville County Comprehensive Plan Survey included:

- *“Renville County needs to pay attention to more climate issues. Places like the beet plant get away with many environmental issues all the time. More and more drainage tile is being put in which is causing major issues to our cropland. Something has to change fast.”*
- *“Renville County would figure out a way to curb the widespread environmental impacts of excessive spraying, fertilizer, and drain tile usage.”*

Renville County Climate and Weather Resilience Strategies

1. Engage and Educate Renville County Residents on Climate Change Realities, Including Opportunities to Increase Weather-Related Resilience.
 - A. Develop and implement educational programs and materials that raise awareness about climate change and resilience.
 - B. Actively involve community members, including youth, older residents, the business community, and other subgroups, in resilience planning and decision-making processes.
2. Improve Infrastructure to Improve Durability to Better Withstand Extreme Weather Events.
 - A. Over time, upgrade and reinforce County infrastructure (i.e., buildings, roads, bridges, utilities) to withstand extreme weather events, and cooperate with local municipalities and townships as they make similar efforts.
 - B. Implement infrastructure solutions, such as rain gardens, permeable pavements, and retention ponds, to help manage stormwater and reduce flooding.

3. Engage and Educate Renville County Residents on Climate Change Realities, Including Opportunities to Increase Weather-Related Resilience.
 - A. Protect and restore natural areas, such as wetlands, prairies, and forests, to enhance their ability to add environmental durability by preventing erosion, absorbing and/or slowing stormwater, and reducing greenhouse gases.
 - B. Support, preserve, and incorporate native species to promote biodiversity and provide natural habitat while conserving water, reducing inputs (e.g., fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides), and adding aesthetic value.
 - C. Control invasive species to prevent the disruption of Renville County’s natural ecosystem.
4. Improve Infrastructure to Improve Durability to Better Withstand Extreme Weather Events.
 - A. While agriculture will certainly remain fundamental to Renville County’s economy for the foreseeable future, encourage the local growth of other, potentially less climate-sensitive sectors and industries to spread investment and risk.
 - B. Provide support and resources to help business owners, including farmers, adapt to changing climate conditions.
 - i. Collaborate with organizations like Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs), University of Minnesota Extension, Minnesota Technical Assistance Program, the Rural Minnesota Energy Board, local utilities, and various state and federal agencies who have subject matter experts.
 - ii. Ensure Renville County Economic Development has the support and resources (e.g., adequate funding) it needs to be effective in this area.
5. Emergency Preparedness and Response to Ensure a High Level of Responsiveness to Severe Weather Events.
 - A. Maintain updated, effective, encompassing emergency response plans and ensure they include effective response strategies for all types of extreme weather events in addition to other emergencies.
 - B. Conduct community drills and training sessions to ensure readiness for weather-related emergencies.
 - C. Encourage resident participation in local fire departments and other emergency services.
6. Collect Data and Monitor the Local Climate to Inform Decision-Making.
 - A. Invest in technology, systems, and processes for monitoring local weather patterns and climate changes.
 - B. Use collected data to inform and adjust weather resilience strategies.
7. Integrate Climate and Weather-Focused Policy Into County Plans to Ensure Adequate Investment and Preparedness.
 - A. Include climate and weather resilience consideration and mitigation strategies into all infrastructure and land use plans.
 - B. Collaborate with local, regional and state agencies to align resilience efforts and share resources.

Specific Climate and Weather Resilience-Focused Strategies, Projects, Efforts, or Activities for Renville County*

1. The County will work to continuously improve energy efficiency in all departments, provided adequate effectiveness is maintained.
2. The County will incorporate recycled or otherwise environmentally-friendly materials into construction projects when quality and cost-effectiveness can be maintained.
3. The County will work to improve the efficiency of its vehicle fleet, to the extent practical.
4. The County will work to improve the resilience of its properties, buildings, and utility infrastructure, to minimize impacts of severe weather events including windstorms, heavy rains and flooding, fire, etc.
5. The County will explore opportunities to incorporate renewable energy installations on County properties to reduce grid dependence.
6. The County will work to address stormwater management issues to minimize flooding and stormwater contamination of waterways.
7. The County will support efforts to reduce miles driven by staff to meetings, to the extent practical, when these meetings can be virtually attended with a similar level of engagement.
8. The County will consider opportunities for a reasonable amount of remote work/telework for County staff, to the extent effectiveness and departmental cohesion can be maintained and contingent upon good performance and productivity.
9. The County will promote recycling, composting, and other waste reduction strategies to minimize landfill waste and related emissions.
10. The County will work to support farmers as they adopt more sustainable agricultural methods to conserve soil and water.
11. The County will support the development of energy efficiency and climate resilience strategies and other planning efforts aimed at climate, resilience, and sustainability efforts.
12. The County will resist efforts to politicize climate and resilience strategies.

*This list is not intended to be all-inclusive. Items should be added over time, as conditions and opportunities change. Similarly, items may be removed. Explanations for additions and subtractions should be documented. Progress should also be acknowledged as items are accomplished.

Renville County's Parks and Recreation Spaces

Parks and recreation spaces are essential for any community. They offer places for residents and visitors to relax, move their bodies, and connect with others. This helps to improve well-being and foster a sense of community. This section of the Renville County Comprehensive Plan discusses the benefits of parks and recreation spaces, including their impact on health, the environment, and quality of life. It also provides suggested strategies for planning and maintaining these spaces to ensure they meet the needs of the community.

How Parks and Recreation Spaces and Investments Contribute to Renville County

Health and Wellbeing:

- **Physical Health:** Parks, trails, and other green spaces provide a venue for physical activities such as walking, jogging, biking, and sports. This contributes to improved cardiovascular health, strength, coordination, balance, and overall fitness.
- **Mental Health:** Spending time in nature and engaging in outdoor activities can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, promoting mental wellness.
- **Social Interaction:** Parks and recreation facilities can become hubs of community activity. They are natural spaces for people to gather, socialize, and build relationships. As they do this, they foster a sense of community and belonging.

Environmental Benefits:

- **Biodiversity:** Parks preserve natural habitat for wildlife, supporting biodiversity and ecological balance.
- **Air Quality:** Trees and plants in parks help improve air quality by absorbing pollutants and producing oxygen.
- **Climate Regulation:** Green spaces help mitigate the urban heat island effect, regulate temperatures, and reduce the impact of climate change.
- **Disaster Mitigation:** In some cases, parks and recreation spaces can provide an important buffer zone between neighborhoods and areas that are prone to flooding or other hazards.

Economic Value:

- **Property Values:** Proximity to parks and green spaces can increase property values and attract residents and businesses to the area.
- **Tourism and Recreation:** Parks and outdoor recreation areas also attract tourists and visitors who can boost local economies as they spend their money on local lodging, dining, and recreational activities.
- **Job Creation:** The development and maintenance of parks can create jobs in landscaping, construction, and park management. However, there is potential for additional job creation within businesses that serve the users of park and recreation spaces (e.g., bike shops, food and beverage vendors, sporting goods/equipment stores, hotels).

Educational Opportunities:

- **Environmental Education:** Parks provide opportunities for environmental education and awareness, teaching visitors about local ecosystems, conservation, and sustainability.
- **Historical and Cultural Learning:** Many parks preserve historical and cultural sites, offering educational experiences about the area's heritage and history.

Quality of Life:

- **Aesthetic Value:** Parks and other recreation spaces enhance the beauty and aesthetic appeal of communities, providing scenic landscapes and green spaces for relaxation and enjoyment.
- **Recreational Opportunities:** Parks offer a wide range of recreational activities, from playgrounds and sports fields to walking/hiking/biking trails and picnic areas, catering to diverse interests and age groups. These spaces provide enjoyment to all users, regardless of income, and therefore provide a measure of local equity.

Renville County's Parks and Recreation Spaces

Renville County Parks

Renville County is home to over 1,300 acres of County-owned parkland, featuring primitive stands of trees, wildflowers, and native prairies and wildlife. Unique bedrock outcroppings add additional interest and beauty within the parks located along the banks of the Minnesota River. Day visits are free, though there is a reasonable fee for overnight camping, where permitted.

Anderson Lake County Park

- **Location:** 63339 County Road 5, Franklin, MN
- **Description:** Anderson Lake County Park is a day-use-only park whose principal feature is shoreline fishing. During high water, the park is subject to flooding. The park gates are closed year-round. Guests are welcome to use the park by non-motorized vehicles only.



Beaver Falls County Park

- **Location:** 31599 County Road 2, Morton, MN
- **Description:** Beaver Falls County Park offers 20 rustic campsites divided into two parts; the horse camp and the recreation area. The horse camp features wooded ravines, horse ties, manure bunkers, and Beaver Creek, while the upper half features the Beaver Creek Recreational Area. Both areas of the park include picnic shelters, restrooms, potable water, fire pits, and multi-use trails appropriate for hiking, biking, and horseback riding.



Birch Coulee County Park

- **Location:** 68638 County Road 18, Morton, MN
- **Description:** This park features a picnic shelter, restrooms, water, picnic areas, trails, a playground, and sand volleyball. Both rustic camping (two sites) and camping with water/electrical hook-ups (five sites) are available. A waste dump station is also available.

Birch Coulee was named after its paper birch trees. Birch Coulee Creek runs through the park, and a newly created trail connects the park to the Birch Coulee Historic Battlefield, the location of one of the deadliest battles of the US – Dakota War.



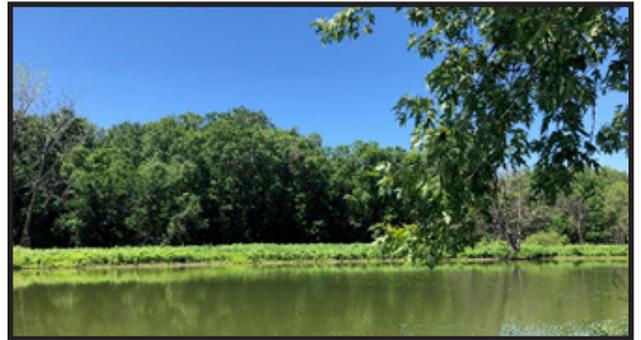
Lake Allie County Park

- Location: 84068 County Road 24, Buffalo Lake, MN
- Description: Lake Allie County Park amenities include a picnic shelter, restrooms, a playground, a fishing pier, and 16 RV campsites (including water and electrical hookups and a waste dump station). Grant-supported improvements, including the construction of a new bathroom/shower house on the current playground space and the addition of a camper cabin at an existing campsite, are planned for 2025. It is hoped that a new playground can be added in the near future. Lake Allie Park is located only one mile from the Oakdale Golf Club, which provides campers and other visitors with an additional opportunity for recreation and dining.



Mack Lake County Park

- Location: 60757 County Road 5, Fairfax, MN
- Description: Mack Lake County Park offers five rustic campsites and a picnic shelter. A restroom is also available. For those who like to fish, this park offers two opportunities, at Mack Lake itself or along the banks of the Minnesota River. Visitors should be aware that, during times of high water, the park is subject to flooding.



Skalbekken County Park

- Location: 79186 County Road 10, Sacred Heart, MN
- Description: Skalbekken County Park offers 14 rustic campsites, along with picnic shelters, restrooms, and potable water. The park also features horse trails and camps with horse ties and manure bunkers. The west side of the park offers a beautiful rocky sandbar where Hawk Creek feeds into the Minnesota River.

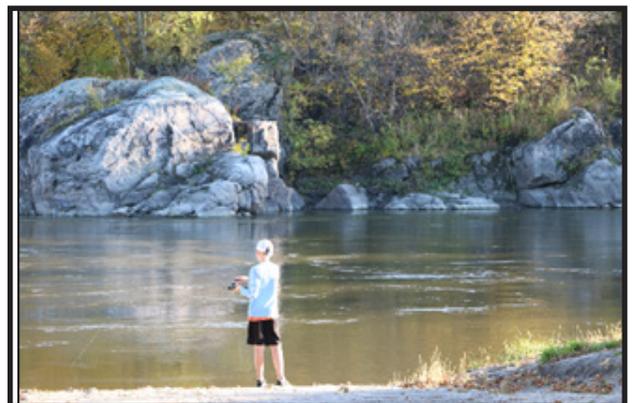
Skalbekken became Renville County's first park in 1967. The original deed belonged to Ole Skalbeck, and his original 1868 log home was moved to the park in 1974.



Vicksburg County Park

- Location: 73715 County Road 6, Renville, MN
- Description: Vicksburg County Park offers 11 rustic campsites, a picnic shelter, potable water, restrooms, and picnic areas. The river provides a venue for fishing. Many visitors also enjoy canoeing and playing on the sandbar. The park also features hiking trails, ancient granite and gneiss outcrops, and oxbow ponds

Vicksburg was named after a town that was nearby from 1860 until 1905.



Renville County's parks are open on a year-round basis. Visitors are welcome to enter any of the seven County parks on foot to enjoy winter recreational activities. The park roads in Beaver Falls and Skalbekken County Parks are groomed during the winter to allow for walking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, fat-tire biking, and other non-motorized recreational uses. Hunting is not allowed in any Renville County park at any time of the year, unless in possession of a permit under the terms of a special park hunting season.

More information on Renville County's parklands, including photos, park maps, park ordinances, the County's camping reservation system, and a downloadable brochure can be found at <https://www.renvillecountymn.gov/public-works/parks/>.

Fort Ridgely State Park

Fort Ridgely State Park straddles the county line, between Renville and Nicollet Counties, where it sits atop bluffs of the Minnesota River Valley. It can be found at 72158 County Road 30, Fairfax, MN, just west of MN State Highway 4, approximately six miles south of Fairfax. The park may also be accessed using the FairRidge Trail, which originates within the Fairfax community.

The park is named for the frontier military post (1853 to 1872) where it was established. Established in 1911, Fort Ridgely is the fourth oldest state park. Summer activities include hiking and horseback trails, fishing in a stocked trout stream, and camping (both drive-in and walk-in sites). Visitors may also rent a renovated farmhouse, which can provide overnight accommodation for up to six people. A larger chalet is also available. This building can host up to 30 people for day use and up to 15 overnight guests. Winter brings snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, or staying overnight at the chalet. For more information on historic Fort Ridgely, visit https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/park.html?id=spk00151#homepage.



Fort Ridgely State Park's Historic Fort Site

FairRidge Bike Trail

While rural areas of Renville County typically do not offer off-road trails for bicyclists and pedestrians, the FairRidge Bike Trail is such an amenity. Located between Fairfax and Fort Ridgeley State Park, the trail offers beautiful scenery and historical landmarks. The trail is paved for biking, in-line skating, and walking. A horse trail also runs alongside a portion of the trail.

Snowmobile Trails

Snowmobile trails touch several Renville County parks, including Anderson Lake, Mack Lake, and Vicksburg. These trails, along with all the other snowmobile trails found within the County, are maintained and groomed by local snowmobile clubs (e.g., the Cross-Country Trail Blazers and the Renville County Drifters). The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administers the Grants-in-Aid program, which provides funding for this work. However, the success of this program is heavily dependent on club volunteers. A Minnesota DNR maintained, interactive trail map can be found at <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/snowmobiling/index.html>.



Cross Country Trailblazers Snowmobile Club Grooming Equipment

Public Hunting Lands

While many of Renville County's hunters have access to private hunting land, numerous public lands are also available for this purpose. 20 different Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) are found either entirely within or straddled across Renville County's borders (totaling over 4,000 acres). WMA's are public areas that are protected and managed to preserve wildlife habitats. WMAs are part of the state's outdoor recreation system and are open to the public for hunting, fishing, and other activities. A full listing of these areas, with maps and descriptions, can be found at <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/wmas/index.html>.



Photo By Stacy Peterson

Golf Courses

Four privately operated golf courses, all open to the public, can be found in Renville County. They include:

Mayflower Golf Club

- Location: 46321 County Road 39, Fairfax, MN 55332
- Description: This nine-hole public course sits on 160 acres just north of Fort Ridgely State Park. The course prominently features the winding Fort Ridgely Creek, mature tree lines, and many wooded areas with abundant wildlife. An onsite clubhouse provides a pro-shop with cart rental, as well as dining options (open seasonally). Other amenities include a driving range To learn more about this club, visit <https://www.mayflowergolfclub.com/>



Oakdale Golf Club

- Location: 55106 County Road 38, Buffalo Lake, MN
- Description: This 18-hole public course is located adjacent to Lake Allie. It includes rolling hills, mature trees, and expertly-maintained greens. The full-service golf facility offers a pro-shop with cart rentals, chipping and putting areas, tournament packages, and the Chip Shots Grill & Bar (open seasonally). <https://oakdalegolfclub.com/>



Olivia Golf Club

- Location: 512 South 6th Street, Olivia, MN
- Description: Established in 1928, the Olivia Golf Club is one of the oldest courses in Minnesota. Its signature finishing hole, the ninth, was featured in MGA Magazine in 1998 and 2009. The public, nine-hole course is known for narrow tree-lined fairways, well-manicured conditions, and pristine greens. Course amenities include a driving range and putting green, a pro-shop with cart rental and golf instruction. <https://oliviagolfclub.com/>



Birch Coulee was named after its paper birch trees. Birch Coulee Creek runs through the park, and a newly created trail connects the park to the Birch Coulee Historic Battlefield, the location of one of the deadliest battles of the US – Dakota War.

Stoney Creek Golf Course

- Location: 21278 820th Avenue, Renville, MN 56284
- Description: The nine-hole Stoney Creek Golf Course offers challenging greens, a variety of hazards, and scenic beauty. This public golf course bills itself as an excellent challenge for beginners as well as proficient golfers. Course amenities include a clubhouse with party room availability, cart rentals, and a pro-shop. <https://www.golfrenville.com/>,



The Wild and Scenic Minnesota River



Minnesota River at Vicksburg County Park

This includes Renville County's entire southwest border, providing ample opportunity for paddlers. The river is generally gentle and placid, with some portions designated as a "Wild and Scenic River." The surrounding valley was carved into the landscape by the Glacial River Warren between 11,700 and 9,400 years ago. Paddlers will see a diversity of terrain, ranging from steep granite bluffs to marshy lowlands. This river also saw important human history during the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. More information on the Minnesota River State Water Trail, including a virtual tour, water trail segment maps, and a podcast, can be found at <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/watertrails/minnesotariver/index.html>

The Minnesota River provides ample opportunities for water-based recreation, including fishing, bird watching and wildlife observation, and canoeing/kayaking. While known for channel and flathead catfish, a wide variety of fish species can be found, including crappies, bluegills, northern pike, and walleye. Local bird species include the Canada goose, herons, pheasants, wood ducks, hawks, owls, turkeys and various songbirds. Beaver, muskrats, and white-tailed deer are also commonly found.

The Minnesota River State Water Trail flows 318 miles from Big Stone Lake, in Ortonville, MN, to its confluence with the Mississippi River State Water Trail, near Fort Snelling in St. Paul.

Bicycling

While Renville County does not offer an abundance of off-road bicycle and pedestrian trails, it does serve as a quality venue for long, at times scenic bike rides. This is particularly true on roadways adjacent to the Minnesota River, locally known as the "River Bottom" area. These roadways offer a mix of gravel and pavement, and most suitable for those interested in the sport of gravel biking. In 2021, the MN Gravel 160 gravel ride traversed both Renville and Kandiyohi Counties, including significant mileage along the Minnesota River. While intentionally small, this event served to provide proof of the concept that local communities could attract gravel biking tourists.



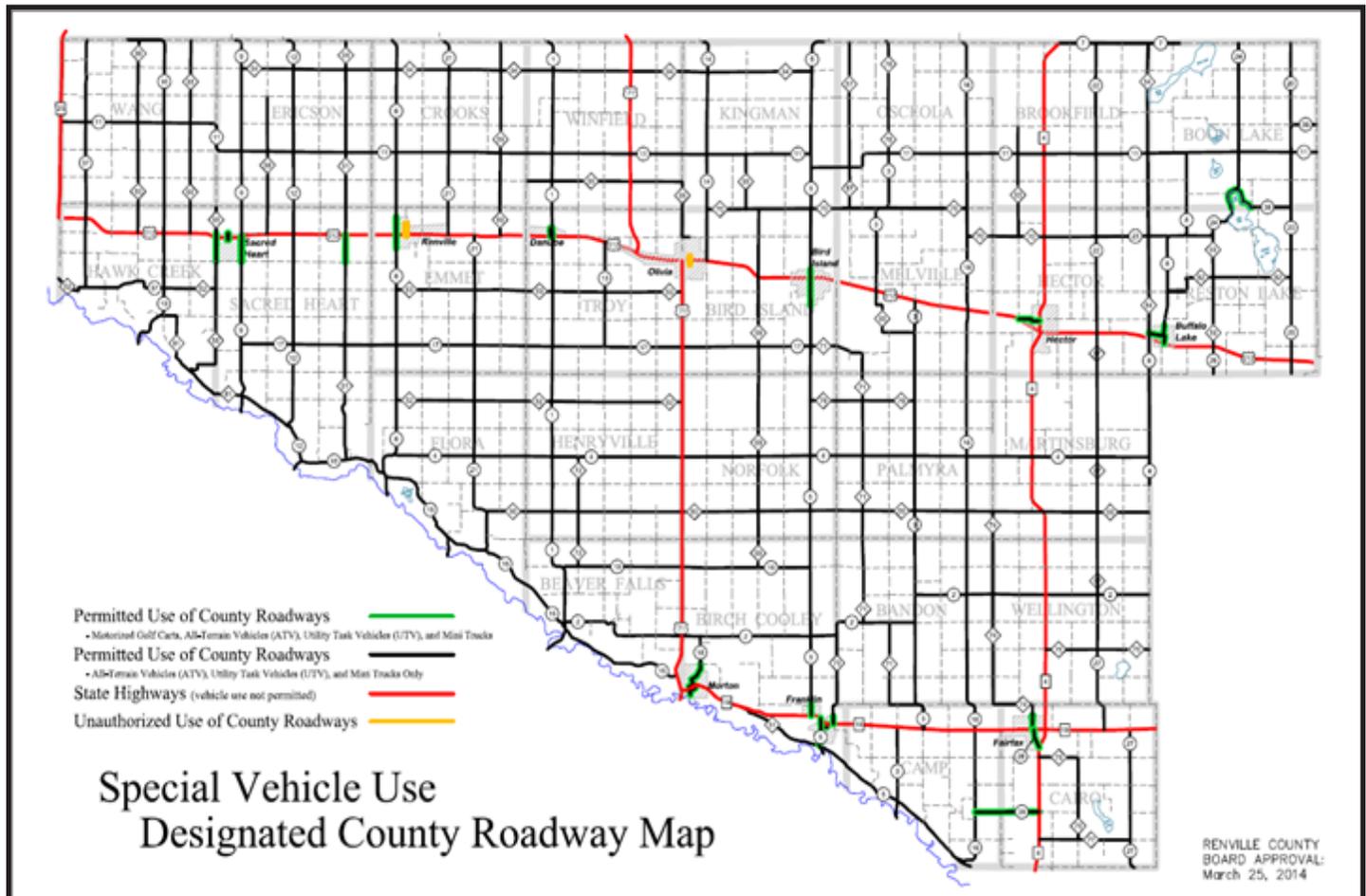
MN Gravel 160 Riders (September 2021)



Caution should always be exercised whenever sharing roadways with motorists, regardless of the surface or bicycle type. At times, visibility may be limited due to hills, curves, and foliage. Bicyclists should be sure to wear high-visibility clothing and consider other safety items such as helmets, mirrors, and blinking taillights, and keep aware of motorists around them. Other sensible precautions include carrying ample water, as most locations lack access to potable water.

Special Vehicle Use Recreation

As noted in the Transportation section of this plan, Renville County has designated areas where all-terrain vehicles, mini-trucks, utility task vehicles, and motorized golf carts may be used on Renville County highways and roadways under its jurisdiction. These vehicles may be operated from sunrise to sunset unless equipped with original equipment headlamps, tail lamps, and rear-facing brake lamps. They must not be operated during inclement weather or when visibility is impaired. Permits for this on-road operation are issued by the County. A Special Vehicle Use Map, showing routes where use is permitted, is available at <https://www.renvillecountymn.gov/county-maps-gis/>.



City Parks and Facilities

Within each of Renville County's local communities, residents and visitors can find over 40 parks and other recreation facilities, including playgrounds, outdoor basketball courts, ballfields, ice rinks, camping facilities, and even swimming pools and splash pads. In some cases, these facilities may be owned by or shared with the local school district. These amenities provide residents and visitors with access to healthy activities while also providing a place for socialization and community-wide events.



Fairfax Swimming Pool



Heart of the City Playground, in Danube

In addition to facilities, a number of communities offer parks and recreation activities, such as softball. School districts also offer community education and other enrichment activities, as do local churches and other organizations.

Future Wellness Center

At the time of this plan's development, Renville County has applied for state bonding to support the development of a wellness center. This facility would be developed in partnership with HealthPartners, the operator of the Olivia Hospital & Clinic, who has offered \$3.75 million for project development and is committed to offering therapy services in the facility, assuring it of a tenant revenue stream. Plans for the wellness center call for a multi-use facility for people of all ages. It would include a two-court gymnasium and an indoor walking track, as well as areas for cardiovascular and cross-training.

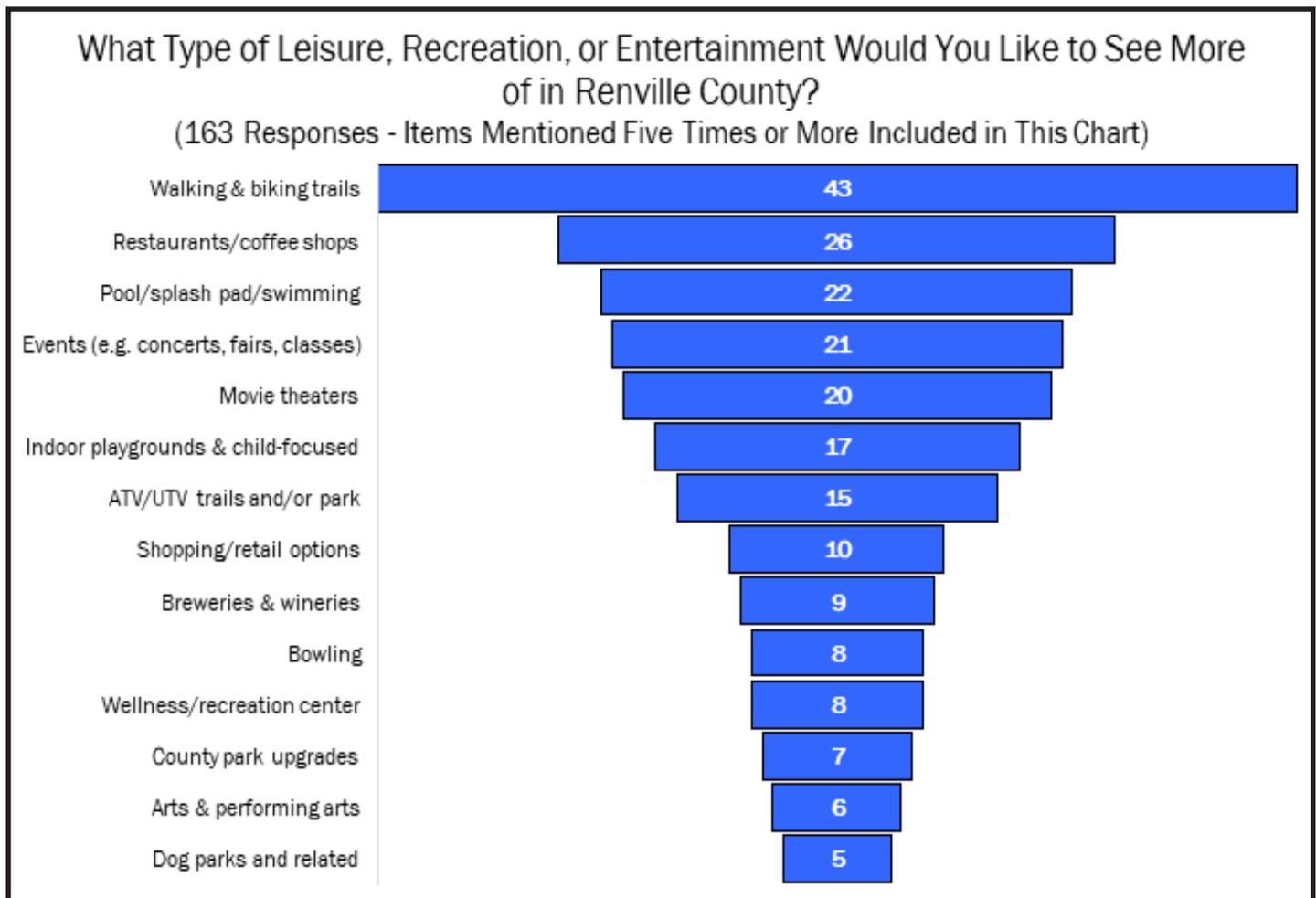
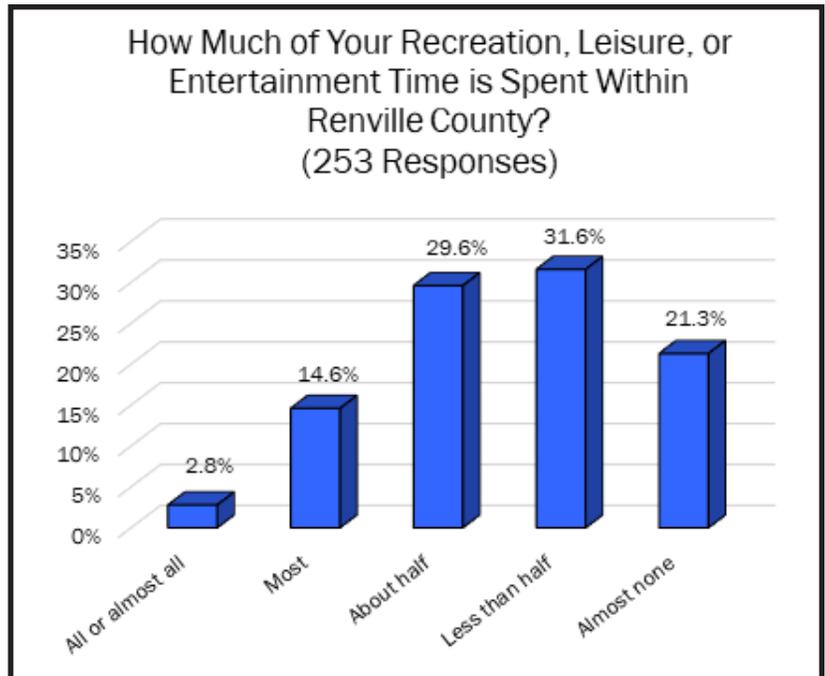


Engan and Associates of Willmar developed this rendering of a possible main entrance for the proposed wellness center for the campus of the Olivia Hospital & Clinic.

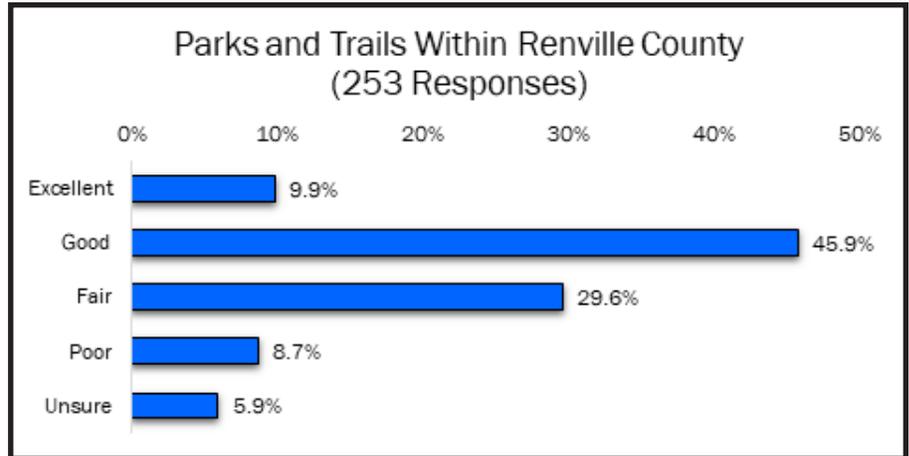
Public Input

When asked how much of their recreation, leisure, or entertainment time is spent within Renville County, most respondents (82.6%) indicated about half or less. Only 17.4% indicated that they spend most or all of their recreation, leisure, or entertainment time within the County. In addition to their time, this likely means that a significant amount of residents' money is leaving the County for recreational pursuits.

Survey respondents were also asked about the type of leisure, recreation, or entertainment options they would like to see more of within Renville County, if any? While most answers were related to the addition of business ventures, like restaurants, coffee shops, and movie theaters, other common answers included pool/swimming and splash pad facilities, indoor playgrounds, ATV and UTV trails, and County park upgrades.



When asked to rate Parks and Trails within Renville County, 55.8% of Renville County Comprehensive Plan survey respondents indicated “good” or “excellent.” 38.3% indicated the parks and trails were “fair” or “poor” and 5.9% indicated they were “unsure.”



Parks and Recreation related comments offered in response to the Renville County Comprehensive Plan Survey included:

- *“We do like the county parks.”*
- *“[We] do use Renville Co parks for trails.”*

A sampling of responses to the question – What type of leisure, recreation, or entertainment options would you like to see more of within Renville County, if any? – includes:

- *“county campground with water and electric amenities; especially electric preferably on the western end of the county”*
- *“Atv Trails.”*
- *“Walking paths.”*
- *“Bike trail along Hwy. 212.”*
- *“Walking paths, dog parks”*
- *“Horseback riding allowed in Vicksburg. I love the horseback trails in Beaver falls and Skalbekken. With losing Upper Sioux it would be nice to have the option for day trail riding at Vicksburg.”*
- *“ATV park, trails for youth/adults with motorized vehicles.”*
- *“Parks/boating/camping/outdoor rec.”*
- *“Atv park/ atv trails, camping, hunting, fishing.”*
- *“Pools like that of Willmar public outdoor pool and Redwood Falls public outdoor pool.”*
- *“Canoe/kayak landings.”*
- *“Biking/walking trails, more parks with trails, more conservation areas that are open to public.”*
- *“Rec Center with kids and senior programs, ATV Park, More Hiking/walking opportunities, more nature areas.”*
- *“Bicycle trails (currently I have to drive over 15 miles just to get to a trail to ride).”*
- *“Improved County Parks”*
- *“More activities for the younger kids east of Olivia/Bird Island. outdoor pool. toddler friendly park”*
- *“Volleyball courts.”*
- *“More ATV trails. More places to fish along the river.”*
- *“Trails - hiking, biking, walking, snowmobiling.”*

- *“More centrally located parks.”*
- *“Walking and biking trails on 212 corridor.”*
- *“Would like to see the county invest in the local community baseball and softball fields.”*
- *“A nature center or wellness center.”*

Parks and Recreation Strategies

1. Enhance Existing Parks and Facilities
 - A. Upgrade Current Amenities and Offerings
 - i. Improve existing County-owned recreation facilities restrooms, picnic areas, shelters, and playgrounds to enhance user experience and ensure ongoing usability.
 - ii. Add features to County-owned recreational facilities to enhance the user experience.
 - B. Ensure Accessibility
 - i. Work toward ensuring all County-owned parks and facilities are as accessible as reasonably possible to people of all mobility levels by adding ramps, accessible trails, inclusive playground features, and other equipment.
 - ii. Prioritize safe connections between County parks and more populated areas.
 - C. Ensure regular maintenance.
 - i. Address minor issues before they become larger hazards or hinder facility use.
 - ii. Maintain a capital improvement plan to anticipate and accommodate larger expenditures (e.g., restroom or shelter replacements).
 - D. Ensure robust public engagement.
 - i. Maintain a robust, active, Renville County Park and Trails Committee to study, lead and oversee trail development efforts.
 - ii. Consider the development of a long-term Renville County Parks Plan, or a combined Renville County Parks and Trails Plan, to guide park and facilities decision.
2. Develop New Recreational Opportunities for County Residents and Visitors
 - A. Grow Renville County’s network of multi-use trails for hiking, biking, horseback riding, and winter activities like snowmobiling and cross-country skiing.
 - i. When possible, support connections between neighboring communities and other destinations of interest (e.g., between County parks and their closest communities).
 - ii. In locations where off-road trails are impractical, consider the incorporation of wide roadside shoulders to more safely accommodate walkers and bikers.
 - iii. Maximize County funds by using local dollars to leverage state and/or federal trail grants.
 - B. Add new features to Renville County parks.
 - i. Ensure new features complement existing park features and reflect the character of each individual park.
 - ii. Consider a wide range of projects, from the addition of fairly simple amenities, like benches and barbecue grills, to more ambitious projects, like the addition of observation towers or camping cabins.

- C. Develop and promote water-based recreational activities such as fishing, canoeing, and kayaking in Renville County's waterways.
 - i. Promote safe practices and enforce the use of all required safety equipment (e.g., personal flotation devices/ life jackets).
 - ii. Consider ways to incorporate instruction on safe practices and proper use.
 - iii. Add and maintain water-focused park features, such as fishing platforms, canoe and kayak rentals (via public/private partnership), and launching stations.
- 3. Promote Natural and Cultural Resources
 - A. Preserve and promote visits to historic Renville County sites located within parks and on public lands.
 - i. Work with the Renville County Historic Society, area Tribes, and other entities to inform on historic locations found within Renville County's public areas (e.g., Birch Coulee Battlefield).
 - ii. Look for opportunities to promote historic tourism throughout the County to draw outside visitors.
 - B. Protect, enhance, and, when practical, expand natural areas, including prairies, woodlands, and wetlands, to support biodiversity and provide educational and recreational opportunities.
- 4. Ensure Robust Public Engagement
 - A. Add programming within Renville County's parks.
 - i. Solicit input from County residents and other park visitors when prioritizing projects.
 - ii. Provide adequate outreach to ensure public awareness of County and state regulations surrounding special vehicle use, roadway cycling, fishing/watercraft, and other recreational activities.
 - iii. Organize, directly or in collaboration with other entities, community programs and events, such as guided nature walks, historical tours, educational/interpretive talks, fishing tournaments, etc. to engage residents and visitors
 - iv. Provide opportunities for volunteerism to support the maintenance and enhancement of Renville County's recreational amenities. This could include soliciting volunteers to assist with park clean-up days or other maintenance projects, event facilitation, etc. This could also include working with local scout groups and community service clubs to add amenities or achieve other park goals.
- 5. Ensure Robust Public Engagement
 - A. Implement sustainable park management practices
 - i. Incorporate low-maintenance, native plants into County landscaping, including landscaping within park areas.
 - ii. Conserve water resources.
 - iii. Promote waste reduction and ensure effective waste management by providing adequate facilities for recycling, composting, and pet waste disposal, especially in more popular areas.
 - B. Incorporate Renewable Energy
 - i. Explore the use of renewable energy sources, such as solar panels, to power park facilities.
 - ii. Consider installation of appropriate electric vehicle infrastructure (e.g., Level 2 Charging Stations) in campgrounds and other recreation areas that might be attractive to residents and visitors who rely on this technology.

6. Support Effective Collaboration
 - A. Collaborate with local communities, organizations, schools, and businesses to support park, trail, and other recreational facility and program development.
 - B. Work with neighboring counties to create a cohesive regional network of parks and trails.
 - C. Seek technical assistance from state and federal agencies to support Renville County park and recreation focused projects.
7. Diversify Parks and Recreation Funding
 - A. Maximize County Tax Dollars.
 - i. Use County dollars to leverage grants made available by state agencies (e.g., DNR, MnDOT), community foundations, and other grantors.
 - ii. Ensure projects are scheduled and undertaken in a thoughtful manner to maximize efficiency.
 - iii. Ensure good value by prioritizing investments that result in higher-quality and greater/longer expected utility with lower continued maintenance costs
 - B. Provide easy avenues for residents and others to make financial contributions to help fund desired amenities and other facility enhancements.



Specific Renville County Parks and Recreation Projects, Efforts, or Activities*

1. The County will routinely examine Special Vehicle Use permitting to ensure continued appropriateness and support both recreation and safety.
2. The County will use social, print, and radio media to inform the public on proper/approved uses of special vehicles and related requirements.
3. The County will maintain law enforcement to ensure safe, legal, and nondestructive use of special vehicles and watercraft, including use in park areas. This may include the investigation of cost-effective ways to increase enforcement, such as seasonal internship programs and joint service delivery with municipal police departments.
4. The County will investigate cost-effective ways to increase enforcement.
5. The County will fill Park and Trails Committee vacancies and regularly engage that body to study, report, and make recommendations on park and trail issues. This should include determination of whether it would be beneficial for Renville County to develop a Renville County Parks and/or bicycle and pedestrian trails plan.
6. The County will take meaningful steps toward the development of a robust, Countywide trail network to support healthy activities (e.g., biking, running, walking) and improve quality of life for current and prospective residents. These steps may include the development of a bicycle and pedestrian trails plan, the pursuit of trail development grants, and/or the strategic investment of tax dollars to support off-road trails and on-road routes (e.g., wide, paved road shoulders).
7. The County will prioritize the improvement of County parks, through the addition, replacement, or enhancement of park amenities that complement the natural park features, improve accessibility, and draw local and out-of-county visitors.
8. The County will find ways to incorporate community events and programming in County park spaces, in collaboration with local, state, and federal entities, to increase park use.
9. The County will look for ways to extend quality internet service to park areas to better accommodate visitors, including campers who might require connectivity for remote work, in a cost-effective way.
10. The County will use recreation dollars received from the State of Minnesota, as a result of the closure and transfer of Upper Sioux Agency State Park, to expand camping, improve trails, and modernize bathroom and shower facilities within the Skalbekken, Vicksburg, and Beaver Falls County Parks.

*This list is not intended to be all-inclusive. Items should be added over time, as conditions and opportunities change. Similarly, items may be removed. Explanations for additions and subtractions should be documented. Progress should also be acknowledged as items are accomplished.

Renville County's Childcare Resources

In a variety of ways, high-quality childcare can contribute to a community's level of resilience and help it to thrive.

Why Quality Childcare Matters:

- **Early Childhood Development:** High-quality childcare programs provide children with crucial learning experiences during their critical formative years, fostering cognitive, social, and emotional development necessary for future school success.
- **Economic Benefits:** Access to quality childcare empowers parents, particularly mothers, to fully-participate in employment and contribute to the local economy. This can lead to increased household income, decreased dependence on public assistance programs, and realized upward mobility. Furthermore, parents with reliable childcare are often more productive at work, as they are less likely to be absent due to childcare issues.
- **Social Impact:** Disparities can be reduced by providing access to quality care for children from diverse backgrounds, promoting social integration and community cohesion. Good childcare can offer support to families, especially single-parent families, as they break the cycle of poverty.
- **Parental Support and Family Stability:** Trusted providers often reduce stress on families by ensuring safe and reliable childcare, allowing parents to focus on their work and personal lives. Knowing that their children are in a loving, nurturing, and well-supervised environment reduces parental stress and anxiety, contributing to better mental health, family dynamics, and life-work balance.
- **Community Wellbeing:** A strong childcare system can contribute to a healthier and more vibrant community by supporting children's development and fostering positive family dynamics. Childcare centers can become informal community hubs as they foster connections between and among families, creating a sense of belonging. They can also improve public health by ensuring children receive nutritious food and develop healthy habits.
- **Educational Foundation:** Quality childcare prepares children for school by introducing them to structured routines, basic academic concepts, and social norms. In addition to developing a basic understanding of math concepts and an appreciation for reading, children often learn how to follow directions, compromise, and work with one another. This early exposure to learning activities, coupled with positive reinforcement, can instill a love for learning that can last a lifetime.



Return on Investment (ROI):

Early childhood education and care have been linked to lower crime rates in the long term, as children who receive quality care are more likely to succeed in school and less likely to engage in criminal activities. Investing in good childcare can also lead to long-term economic savings by reducing the need for remedial education, social services, and criminal justice interventions.

In summary, good childcare is crucial for the healthy development of children, supports parents in balancing work and family life, and provides significant social and economic benefits to communities and society. It lays the foundation for a brighter future for children and contributes to the overall well-being of families and communities.



Current State of Childcare in Renville County

Providers:

According to the State of Minnesota Department of Human Services' Licensing Information Lookup System, as of January 2025 there are six licensed childcare centers in Renville County. Center-based childcare facilities are licensed facilities that incorporate a team of childcare professionals to provide nonmedical care and supervision for children in a group setting. They are typically located in commercial buildings and care for children from infancy to school age.

Additionally, there are 23 licensed family-based childcare providers with active licenses within Renville County. Unlike childcare centers, family-based providers typically care for a smaller group of children in the provider's home. In some cases, this model can provide for greater schedule flexibility. They can also be more personalized and better suited for children who thrive in smaller environments.



Little Stangs Learning Center, Buffalo Lake

The Special Family Childcare Unit childcare facility is a new concept in Minnesota that allows several childcare providers to operate out of the same building to provide family-based care. Providers share resources and overhead costs but run their programs separately. Benefits of this model can include faster startup, cost savings, and the building of strong professional relationships among providers. This model can also be a good fit for those who prefer to separate their childcare business from their personal dwelling.

While no childcare Special Family Childcare Units are currently found in Renville County, in February 2025, during the development of this plan, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development announced that the County would receive a \$345,000 Child Care Economic Development Grant for the development of such a facility. The funding will be used to purchase and repurpose a wing of an assisted living facility located in the City of Renville, to create four special family childcare units. This project is a collaborative effort involving the Renville County Housing and Redevelopment Authority and Economic Development Authority, Renville Health Services, and other local nonprofits. This new development will initially support 40 childcare slots and eventually support slots for up to 48 children.



Stevens County Special Family Childcare Unit, Morris, MN

To ensure healthy, safe, and nurturing environments, all licensed childcare facilities must successfully complete a rigorous inspection and licensing process. Renville County Human Services provides resources and technical assistance to those interested in starting a childcare business. Those interested in considering this opportunity, as well as those in need of a childcare provider for their current or expected children, can start by visiting <https://www.revillecountymn.gov/housing-and-economic-development/economic-development-authority/>.

While many parents choose to send their children to a licensed childcare provider for care, others may choose to use the services of a legal non-licensed provider. These individuals are also known as Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) caregivers. FFN caregivers are often relatives or close family friends and neighbors who provide childcare on a restricted basis. More traditionally, these individuals are often known as “babysitters.” If these caregivers wish to receive payment via the Child Care Assistance Program, they must register as a legal non-licensed provider. This process includes a background study of all household members ages 13 and older, as well as training and an annual visit from Renville County Human Services. The County has funds available to help defray the cost of training for those interested in becoming legal non-licensed providers.

Renville County’s Childcare Need

According to a childcare needs assessment conducted in June 2020 by First Children’s Finance, a childcare-focused nonprofit, Renville County’s capacity for childcare met only 76% of the County’s childcare needs at that time. This meant that the County needed an additional 154 childcare slots to meet demand. Since that time, it is believed the problem has likely intensified, as more providers have left the industry.

In 2021, to address this pressing need, a coalition of Renville County leaders, including childcare providers, worked with First Children’s Finance to use a Rural Child Care Innovation Program (RCCIP) process to develop a Renville County Community Solutions Action Plan. This plan, which was funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, defined seven goals to retain and increase childcare slots within the County. These goals included:

1. Increasing access to local training for all Renville County childcare programs.
2. Increasing teacher-qualified personnel in Renville County.
3. Recruiting potential early childhood staff through engagement and programming in local school districts.
4. Creating a provider association that promotes and shares ideas among members and provides opportunities for benefits, such as health insurance and shared training, mentorship, and supply opportunities.
5. Developing an inclusive marketing plan that provides opportunities for providers to engage with one another and their communities, while encouraging the development of new providers.
6. Partnering with Renville County to create and promote a forgivable loan fund that can be used to help launch new childcare businesses, and partnering with local chambers of commerce, service clubs, economic development authorities, and businesses to raise donations for teacher training stipends and employee scholarships.
7. Partnering with area banks, the Renville County EDA, and local economic development authorities to create a database of available locations for potential childcare sites, targeting communities with the greatest childcare need.



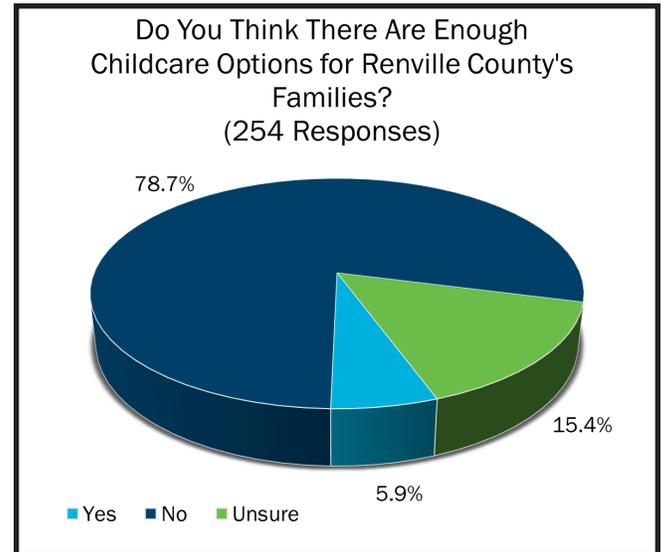
To view the Renville County Community Solutions Action plan, visit <https://www.ruralchildcare.org/renville>.

While setbacks were experienced, due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic, some progress has been made. A highlight of this progress is the forgivable loan program now available via the Renville County EDA. This program provides forgivable loans of up to \$7,500 for family-based childcare providers and up to \$15,000 for childcare centers. More information on this program can be found at <https://www.renvillecountymn.gov/housing-and-economic-development/economic-development-authority/child-care-providers/#Loan>. Other work toward goal achievement and the reduction of childcare slot deficits continues.

Public Input

While most Renville County Comprehensive Plan survey respondents don't currently require childcare services, the vast majority (78.7%) indicated they do not believe there are enough childcare options for Renville County's families. Insightful comments included:

- *"We are currently pregnant and called daycares in Renville County the day after we found out. Most daycares within a reasonable distance from our home/work were not accepting new children or had an extremely long wait list. Even though we were calling a year in advance...it was still a struggle. Thankfully the individual who is going to be our provider was willing to get a variance."*
- *"As an employer in Renville Co, we experience employees who cannot find adequate, affordable childcare."*
- *"I continuously hear my coworkers, friends, and customers explain their current childcare situations.... no childcare options or having to cut work hours to accommodate to family needs."*
- *"Government regulations have forced too many in home care services out of business."*



Renville County Childcare Strategies

In addition to making continued progress toward the goals listed in the Renville County Community Solutions Action Plan, and maintaining progress already realized, the following strategies are recommended to ensure sufficient access to quality childcare for Renville County's workforce.

1. Enhance Childcare Affordability
 - A. Ensure parents of low income are aware of childcare subsidies and financial assistance programs available to them through the Renville County Human Services Department.
 - B. Pursue grants that can support childcare providers, by lowering their operational costs, when they are available.
 - C. Connect current and prospective childcare providers with financing, as needed to open, expand, or maintain operations.
2. Increasing teacher-qualified personnel in Renville County.
 - A. Whenever possible, continue to take a coaching/helping approach when enforcing childcare standards, including health and safety regulations, curriculum guidelines, and caregiver-to-child ratios.
 - B. Connect childcare providers with childcare business-focused service providers and other resources.
3. Increase Childcare Accessibility
 - A. Flexible Hours: Encourage childcare providers to offer flexible hours, including evening and weekend care, to accommodate the diverse schedules of working parents.
 - B. Transportation Services: Support robust transit services to ensure parents, including nondriving parents, can access childcare as well as employment.
 - C. Prioritize the addition and retention of childcare slots in the communities most in need

4. Advocate for Childcare.
 - A. Advocate for increased state and federal childcare funding to support the sustainability, expansion, and improvement of Renville County’s childcare businesses.
 - B. Advocate to ensure childcare regulations are clear and preserve the health, safety, and development of Renville County’s children without placing unreasonable burdens on childcare providers.
5. Encourage Innovative Solutions.
 - A. Encourage local employers to provide onsite childcare or partner with nearby childcare providers to offer childcare services to their employees.
 - B. Consider the implementation or promotion of shared services models that allow multiple childcare providers share resources and administrative support, coordinate training, and participate in bulk purchasing to reduce costs and improve efficiency.
 - C. Support the development of Special Family Child Care (SFCC) facilities that might attract prospective childcare providers, including those who rent their homes or those whose personal dwellings cannot effectively support a childcare operation
 - D. Work with local educators and childcare providers to develop childcare training and preparation programs to ensure an adequate childcare workforce.

Specific Renville County Childcare Projects, Efforts, or Activities*

1. The County will apply grant funds awarded by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development to develop the planned Special Family Child Care units within the City of Renville.
2. The County will actively collaborate and participate in local efforts to preserve childcare slots and add at least 50 new childcare slots within Renville County.
3. The County will actively collaborate and participate in local efforts to add childcare slots for second and third shift workers.
4. The County will regularly revisit the implementation projects and goals outlined in the 2021 Community Solution Action Plan for Child Care, developed by Renville County’s Rural Child Care Innovation Program participants, to determine if these are still appropriate, if progress has been satisfactory, and/or if new projects or goals should be added.
5. The County will continue to look for ways to incentivize childcare providers via grant programs, forgivable loans, and/or tax incentives.
6. Via collaboration with childcare providers, educators, and childcare focused technical assistance providers, the County will work to provide training opportunities for current and prospective childcare industry professionals.

*This list is not intended to be all-inclusive. Items should be added over time, as conditions and opportunities change. Similarly, items may be removed. Explanations for additions and subtractions should be documented. Progress should also be acknowledged as items are accomplished.

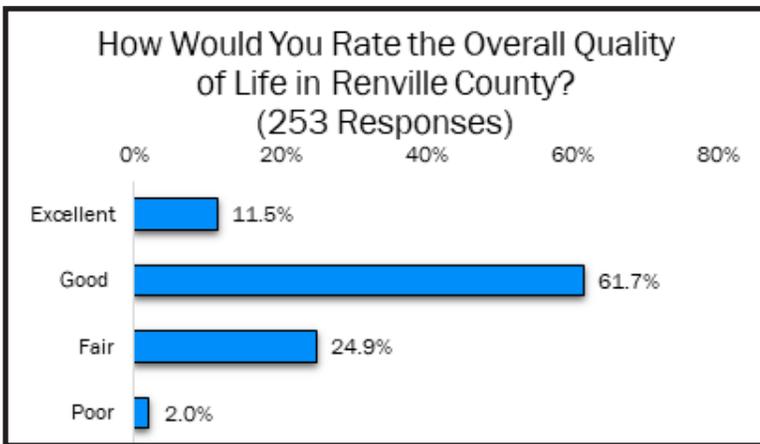
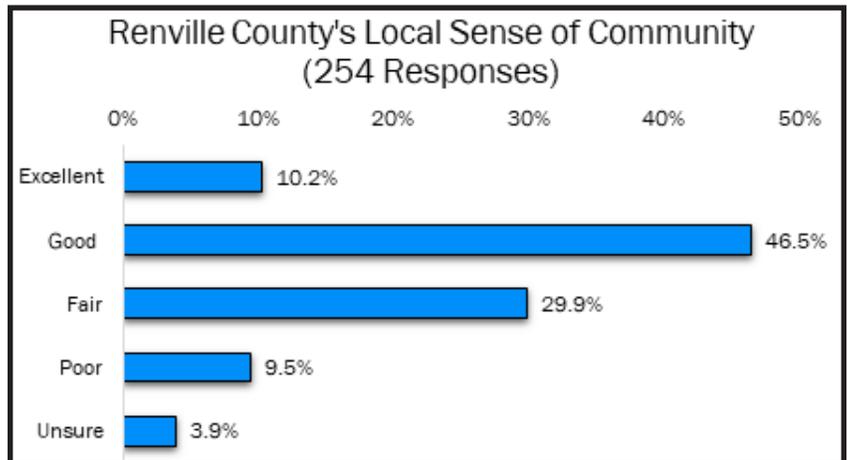
Renville County's Vitality

Renville County's vitality can be thought of as the lifeblood that fuels economic growth and stability. It is the assurance that, while the County's agricultural roots will remain strong, new opportunities can and will be embraced. The local economy benefits from a diverse range of activities and industries, including farming, healthcare, manufacturing, and tourism. This creates a resilient foundation able to withstand economic and social ebbs and flows. This vibrancy is essential, as it supports jobs, encourages business establishment and operation, and fosters a high standard of living for County residents.

Renville County's continued vitality will hinge upon the ability to attract and retain residents. By investing in quality education, recreational facilities, and housing, the County can create and maintain an inviting environment where families and young workers want to settle. This will be reinforced by providing a sense of community, strong social ties that bind residents together, and ensure that everyone feels supported and included. Sustainable development practices will also play a crucial role, as they will help preserve the natural beauty and resources of the area.

Public Input

When asked to rate Renville County's sense of community 56.7% of respondents provided an answer of "good" or "excellent." 39.4% rated Renville County as "fair" or "poor," with another 3.9% indicating they were "unsure." The fact that the majority of respondents noted a good or excellent sense of community is a positive indication that people feel comfortable and supported in Renville County.



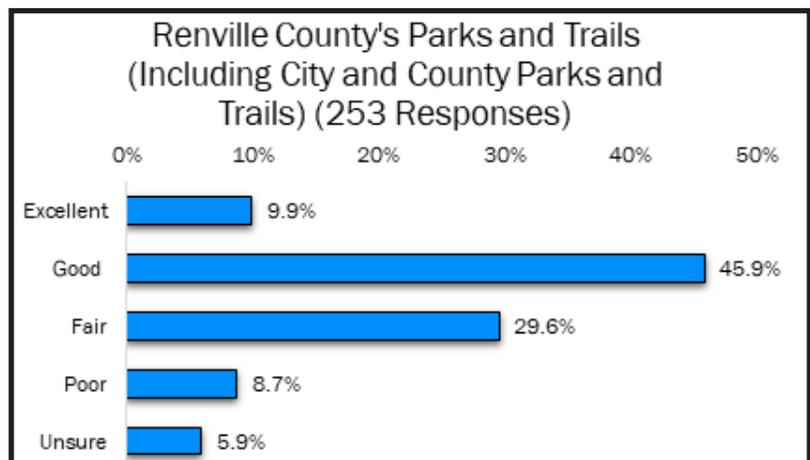
When rating the overall quality of life in Renville County 73.2% answered "excellent" or "good." While only 26.9% rated it as "fair" or "poor."

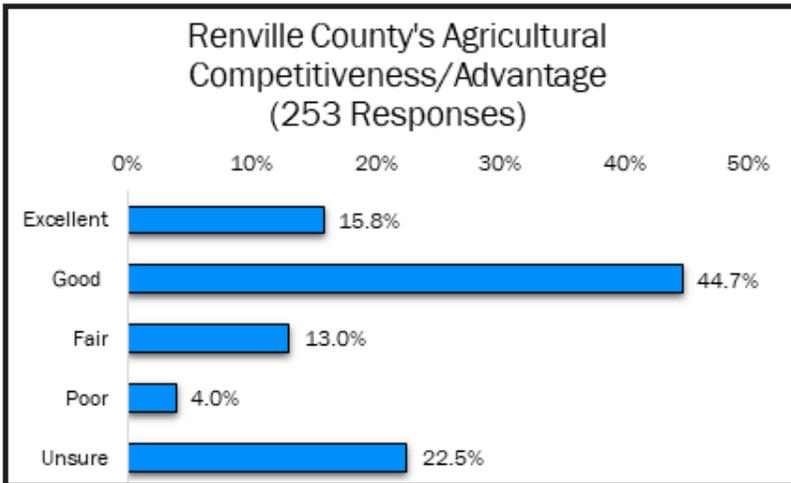
One respondent said:

"The first time I drove through Morton I said to myself I wanted to live in this quaint little town, and I did! I plan to retire here!!"

When asked to rate Renville County's parks and trails 55.8% said "excellent" or "good" and 38.3% answered that they were "fair" or "poor." Another 5.9% indicated that they were "unsure." One comment that stood out was:

"I moved here four years ago and LOVE The trail options for horseback riding!!"

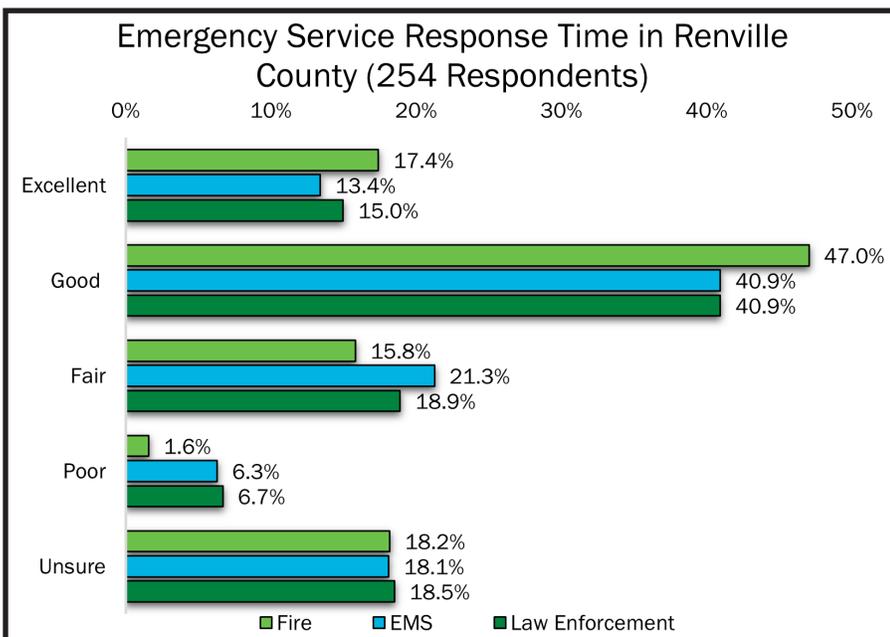
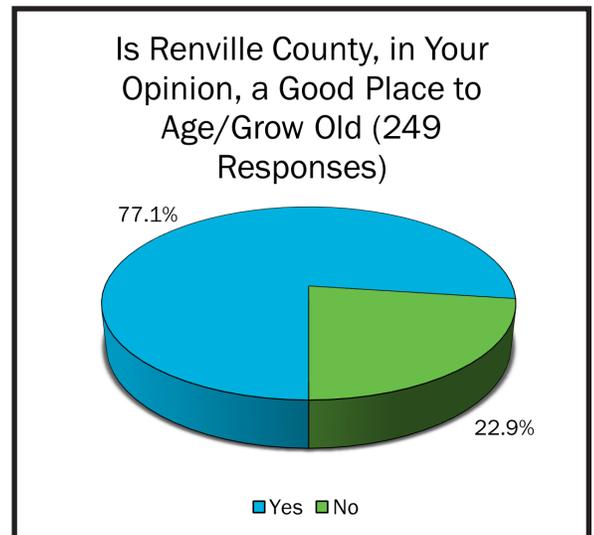




60.5% of survey respondents indicated they believed Renville County's agricultural competitiveness and advantage were either "excellent" or "good." Only 17.0% rated the County's ag competitiveness as "fair" or "poor." The remaining 22.5% were "unsure." In a community that has centered itself around the agriculture industry, it could be taken as affirming to see that a majority of people feel positive about the state of the local ag industry.

When asked if Renville County was a good place to age and grow old, a significant majority, 77.1%, responded with "yes," while only 22.9% said "no." This provides a positive indication that most respondents would be pleased to remain in Renville County for years to come. A couple of stand-out comments were:

- "I think outsiders, or even kids that grew up here but moved away, really underestimate the job/career opportunities in the area. Especially if they have an entrepreneurial spirit."
- "Cost of living is decent, it's quiet"



Responsive emergency services can provide a sense of security to residents. A majority of Renville County Comprehensive Plan survey respondents indicated that they thought they could receive a timely response from local or County law enforcement, paramedics/EMS, or fire departments in times of emergency, as indicated by the number of good and excellent responses.

- Law Enforcement: 55.9%
- EMS/Paramedic: 54.3%
- Fire Department: 64.4%

It is notable that a fairly high percentage of respondents, over 18%, indicated that they were "unsure" of local response times. This may be due to the fact that they have been fortunate enough to have little personal or familial experience dealing with emergencies.

Strategies to Increase and Maintain Community Vitality Throughout Renville County

1. Continue to Support and Fund Economic Development Initiatives That Help Renville County Diversify Sectors, Industries, and Employment Opportunities
 - A. Continue to support the retention and expansion of existing local businesses to create and preserve jobs.
 - B. Promote production/manufacturing, healthcare, energy, tourism and other economic activities, including but also beyond ag-centered activities.
2. Collaborate with Local Communities to Ensure Quality of Life Fundamentals Remain Solid
 - A. Enhance education and training facilities and programs, pre-Kindergarten through postsecondary.
 - B. Maintain and continue to enhance parks and other recreational facilities.
 - C. Ensure essential assets and services (e.g., transportation, nutrition/food and wellness programs and facilities) are in place and sufficient to meet the needs of all residents, including older residents and residents with disabilities.
3. Stimulate and Support Engagement to Foster a Sense of Community
 - A. Organize and promote community events and activities that increase social interaction and engagement.
 - B. Consider and accommodate the needs of older residents and other more vulnerable or disenfranchised groups when planning services and events.
4. Ensure Sustainable Practices
 - A. Implement policies that protect Renville County's natural resources, including soil, water, air, and habitat.
 - B. Encourage sustainable agricultural practices and other environmentally friendly initiatives.
5. Promote Public Safety and Leadership
 - A. Support emergency services providers by ensuring they have the resources needed to maintain effective, highly-responsive operations.
 - B. Encourage wide public participation, including participation from youth and older adults, and encourage more residents to become involved with their communities, via employment (i.e., public sector jobs), volunteerism, meeting attendance (e.g., Renville County Boards, city councils, school boards, etc.), or participation in elected office.



Photo By Stacy Peterson

Specific Vitality-Focused Strategies, Projects, Efforts, or Activities for Renville County*

1. The County will encourage a diverse representation of residents on the County Board and on various County committees and task groups by actively promoting these opportunities for community leadership.
2. The County will encourage public attendance and participation at County Board meetings and other public meetings and events.
3. The County will look for ways to support volunteerism to address local needs, support local projects, and encourage collaboration while fostering positive community relationships.
4. The County will encourage local districts to cooperate with each other, with local employers, and with other interested partners, including the County, to preserve learning opportunities and enrich our young residents.
5. The County will promote quality cooperation between communities and will ensure good collaboration from County departments to ensure effective emergency response (e.g., fire, EMS, law enforcement, disaster management) for all Renville County residents.
6. The County will look for and be open to new ways of collaborating with our local municipalities and will encourage our communities to explore new opportunities for collaboration with each other (e.g., equipment or staff sharing, joint or complimentary programming).
7. The County will increase access to healthy food by removing transportation barriers, promoting collaboration between food producers and distributors (e.g., between growers and school districts and/or food pantries), and providing economic development assistance to food-focused businesses, either directly or in partnership with other local, regional, state, or federal entities.
8. The County will support the establishment of a new multi-use wellness center and then promote its use by all Renville County residents.
9. The County will collaborate with local healthcare organizations to attract healthcare professionals to the area, and will also collaborate with educators and workforce development professionals to train local residents for jobs and careers in these roles.
10. The County will work to promote activities that reduce physical and social isolation among its residents, as this can lead to serious mental health issues.

*This list is not intended to be all-inclusive. Items should be added over time, as conditions and opportunities change. Similarly, items may be removed. Explanations for additions and subtractions should be documented. Progress should also be acknowledged as items are accomplished.



Photo By Taylor Wertish

Renville County's Departments and Services

To meet resident needs and support wellbeing, various public services are provided by Renville County. Services include those related to public safety and law enforcement, health and human services, infrastructure and public works, economic development, and environmental services. These services have a direct impact on residents' standard of living. For example, by maintaining roads and bridges, Renville County ensures safe and efficient transportation. Public health services help prevent disease, provide interventions to those most at-risk, and promote overall wellbeing. Additionally, human services support vulnerable populations and ensure everyone can satisfy their basic needs. This section of the Renville County Comprehensive Plan provides an overview of County departments and services.

Board of Commissioners

The Renville County Board of Commissioners is a governing body that serves the County as both the executive and the legislative authority. Comprised of five elected officials, the board is responsible for enacting local ordinances, approving budgets, overseeing County spending, and hiring County employees. Commissioners play a crucial role in managing County services such as public safety, health and human services, infrastructure maintenance, and economic development. They ensure the efficient and effective administration of County government and represent the interests of County residents at local, state, and federal levels. They also engage in long-term planning, manage County finances, and work to improve the overall quality of life for their communities. By addressing local needs and priorities, the Renville County Board of Commissioners helps maintain a stable and responsive County government.



County Administration

The Renville County Administrator is responsible for overseeing the daily County operations. This professional implements the policies set by the Renville County Board of Commissioners, manages County departments in collaboration with various department directors, and ensures the efficient delivery of public services. As such, they have an important leadership role and are held responsible for ensuring each department is working cohesively and effectively, while ensuring public responsiveness. The County Administrator also plays a key role in budget preparation, financial management, and long-term planning to meet the County's goals and objectives.

Sheriff's Office

The Renville County Sheriff's Office is dedicated to maintaining public safety and enforcing the law. The office is responsible for a wide range of services, including patrolling rural areas, responding to emergencies, investigating crimes and managing the county jail. Additionally, the Sheriff's Office handles civil processes, such as serving legal documents and executing court orders.

The Sheriff's Office often collaborates with other law enforcement agencies, including municipal police departments, the Minnesota State Patrol, and other state and federal agencies, as well as community organizations and the public to address local safety concerns and prevent crime. Through these efforts, the Sheriff's Office aims to enhance the quality of life for all County residents. The head of the Sheriff's office is the Renville County Sheriff and this individual is elected by County residents.



County Courts and Administration

The Renville County District Court is part of the Eighth Judicial District and has original jurisdiction over a wide range of cases, including civil, family, probate, juvenile, criminal, and traffic matters. This court serves as the primary venue for legal disputes and judicial proceedings within the County, ensuring that justice is administered fairly and efficiently. The court handles everything from minor misdemeanors to major felony cases. They also deliberate over all civil disputes.

The Court Administrator is responsible for managing the daily operations of the court. This includes working with court administration staff to maintain court records, schedule hearings, process legal documents, and provide support to judges and other court staff. The Court Administrator ensures that court proceedings run smoothly and that all parties involved receive timely and accurate information. By facilitating the judicial process, the Court Administrator plays a crucial role in upholding the rule of law and ensuring access to justice for all residents of Renville County.



Renville County Courthouse

County Attorney's Office

The duties of the Renville County Attorney's Office include the prosecution of adult felonies, gross misdemeanors, misdemeanors, and traffic violations; juvenile delinquency prosecutions; and working alongside Renville County Human Services for Children in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) cases, and civil commitment for people with mental illness or chemical dependency. The Attorney's Office also serves as the general legal advisor for all County government departments. The Renville County Attorney is elected and serves a four-year term. They are assisted by two Assistant County Attorneys and a legal staff.

Department of Corrections/Probation

The Renville County Department of Corrections/Probation supervises individuals sentenced to probation as well as those released from prison on supervised release. The department's probation officers work with both adults and juveniles by providing supervision, support, and rehabilitation services to help clients remain in or reintegrate into the community. Probation services include monitoring compliance with court-ordered conditions, which may include counseling, educational programs, and/or community service. The primary purpose of probation is to use evidence-based practices to reduce recidivism, promote public safety, and help clients make positive life changes.

Restorative Justice

The Renville County Restorative Justice Department is committed to addressing harm through a collaborative and inclusive process. Using restorative practices, such as community circles, the department brings together those who are involved, along with community members, to discuss the impact of their harmful actions and determine meaningful ways to make amends. Referrals come primarily from the Renville County Attorney's Office and Human Services agency, meaning some but not all cases involve legal matters. Regardless, the need for external community support remains essential in all situations.

The Restorative Justice Department's goal is to create a supportive environment where individuals can recognize the effects of their actions and take responsibility. By actively involving the community and those affected, the department strengthens relationships and promotes justice and reconciliation.



This approach not only encourages personal growth and accountability but also provides those impacted with a voice and an opportunity for healing and closure.

County Assessor's Office

The Renville County Assessor's Office is responsible for directing, planning, and supervising the appraisal and recording of all property assessments within the County. This office ensures that property assessments are conducted in accordance with Minnesota Statutes and the directives of the Commissioner of Revenue. Work involves inspecting properties, recording characteristics, and determining an opinion of each property's market value.

The goal of the Assessor's Office is to ensure that property taxes are fairly and accurately assessed and reflect each property's true market value. Property owners receive assessment notices each spring, detailing the estimated market value and classification of their property. If property owners disagree with the assessment, the office provides information on how to appeal the valuation. By maintaining accurate property records and assessments, the Assessor's Office plays a crucial role in the financial stability of the County, ensuring that tax revenues are appropriately allocated to fund public services and infrastructure. Renville County's Assessor is appointed by the Renville County Board of Commissioners and confirmed by Minnesota's Commissioner of Revenue.

County Recorder

The Renville County Recorder's Office is responsible for maintaining and safeguarding all public records related to land titles and transfers within the County. This includes recording various deeds, mortgages, bankruptcies, mechanics' liens, probate papers, corporate name changes, and plat maps. The Recorder's Office ensures records are accurate and accessible to the public, thereby providing a reliable means of verifying property ownership and transactions. In addition, the Recorder's Office manages vital statistics, such as births and deaths, issues marriage licenses, and accepts passport applications on behalf of the Federal Passport Agency.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Renville County maintains a Geographic Information Systems Hub to organize and present information on locations and features within the County. Work involves gathering, managing, and analyzing spatial data related to these locations and features. This data is organized into layers that can be compared, analyzed, and visualized through maps and other tools. Through this GIS work, a wide range of County functions, including land use planning, environmental management, infrastructure maintenance, and emergency response can be facilitated. Within the GIS Hub, residents and county officials access critical information about property boundaries, drainage systems, and infrastructure status.



Driver and Vehicle Services

As the name implies, Renville County's Driver and Vehicle Services Department provides a variety of services related to vehicle and driver licensing. This office handles vehicle registration, title transfers, and the issuance of license plates and tabs. Additionally, it processes driver's license applications, renewals, and replacements. The office also assists with special plate applications and disability permits, ensuring that residents have access to the necessary documentation for legal and safe vehicle operation. The goal of the Driver and Vehicle Services Department is to facilitate the efficient and accurate processing of vehicle and driver-related transactions and ensure compliance with state regulations.

Auditor-Treasurer

The Auditor-Treasurer is an appointed Renville County Official. This professional serves as the liaison between 27 township boards, 10 city councils, nine school districts, and neighboring counties with ties to county government. The Auditor is also Renville County's Chief Election Official, overseeing the administration of elections and ensuring compliance with state and federal election laws.

The Auditor-Treasurer's Office handles property tax administration. This includes calculation of property taxes, the collection and monitoring of current and delinquent real estate tax records, escrow management, settlement of tax receipts to taxing entities, forfeited land proceedings and special assessments including ditches. The office reviews and certifies all property transfers and collects mortgage and deed registration tax. The goal of the Auditor-Treasurer's Office is to ensure the efficient and accurate management of Renville County's financial resources. By maintaining transparency and accountability in financial and administrative matters, the Auditor-Treasurer's Office plays a crucial role in supporting the overall governance and fiscal health of Renville County.

Emergency Management

Renville County's Emergency Management Department is dedicated to protecting local communities and residents by coordinating and integrating the activities, training, and information necessary to build, sustain, and improve the County's ability to prepare for, respond to, and mitigate emergencies and disasters caused by all natural, technological, and human-caused hazards. The department utilizes a whole community approach including local, state, and federal partners to ensure a comprehensive emergency management program is achieved. Specific work includes conducting risks assessments, developing emergency plans and validating plans through training and exercises, providing public education on all-hazard preparedness, and coordinating recovery efforts following major disaster declarations. Through these tasks, the Emergency Management Department works to achieve the overarching goals of life safety, injury prevention, and protection of property and environment thus improving the County's overall level of safety and resilience.



Human Services

Renville County Human Services is dedicated to carrying out the County's mission by preserving and enhancing quality of life for our citizens through services, resource stewardship, and shared responsibility. The department provides the following services to the Renville County community:

Child and Adult Protection Services include the receipt and investigation of reported abuse, neglect and exploitation allegations. This unit plays a crucial role in establishing the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults while connecting families to necessary resources, such as healthcare, education, financial support, and other resources to help them meet their basic needs. The unit works with clients and caregivers to create person-centered goals. They monitor each situation to ensure progress toward goal attainment, while also fostering supportive relationships between the agency and each client/family by providing guidance and advocacy.

Child and Adult Mental Health Services support those experiencing mental illness by empowering resilience and providing connections and access to essential resources. Responsibilities include assessment, treatment planning via coordination with healthcare providers, other resource coordination, monitoring, evaluation, advocacy, education, and crisis intervention.

Developmental Disability Case Management Services are designed to support individuals who have been diagnosed with a developmental disability, to maximize their safety, opportunity for self-determination, independence, and overall quality of life. This is achieved through a comprehensive process that begins with the assessment of each client's unique needs. The most appropriate services and supports are then identified and tailored to the individual. Case managers from this unit work to coordinate care across various agencies, ensuring that services are integrated and effective. They also advocate for their clients to ensure both their rights and their well-being are prioritized at every stage. With personalized attention and a commitment to holistic care, this unit empowers individuals with developmental disabilities to lead fulfilling and autonomous lives.

Elderly Services assist individuals ages 65+, and their families, as they work to preserve independence while also ensuring safety. Work includes assessment, planning, care/service coordination and advocacy. Work can also include connecting older adults with more supportive living environments, like long-term care facilities, when they are no longer able to safely remain in their own homes or receive adequate care through a combination of family and/or in-home services providers.

MNChoices Assessments staff are trained to complete comprehensive assessments to identify needs and support more informed planning for individuals who require long-term services and support, regardless of age, type of disability, or barrier. Income may be considered to determine eligibility for services after the assessment is complete

The Child Care and Foster Care Licensing Services unit is dedicated to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Renville County's children and vulnerable adults. This work includes conducting inspections, monitoring ongoing compliance, and enforcing safety standards. Licensing staff are also committed to supporting providers by helping them navigate challenges they may face as they work to meet regulatory requirements. Additionally, the unit's professionals connect providers with the resources and assistance they need to enhance the quality of their care. Through these efforts, Renville County Human Services aims to create safe and nurturing care environments.

Child Support Services ensure children receive financial support from their absent or non-custodial parents. The Renville County Child Support team works to establish and enforce child support orders, including financial, medical, and childcare support. Their responsibilities include locating absent parents, setting up court orders, enforcing and modifying support orders, and participating in child support hearings. By ensuring children receive the necessary financial resources from both parents, the unit strives to promote wellbeing and stability.

Financial Support Services professionals assist eligible residents in need by connecting them with vital public assistance programs. These programs include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), medical assistance, childcare assistance, cash assistance, and emergency assistance. Their work involves assessing applicants' eligibility, ensuring program compliance, and preventing fraud. By providing access to these resources, this unit helps to improve the wellbeing and stability of Renville County's individuals and families in need.

Public Health

Renville County Public Health (RCPH) is committed to preventing the spread of disease, promoting healthy lifestyles, and improving overall community health. This mission is accomplished through a variety of programs and strong partnerships with community organizations.

Professional staff offer a free home visit to every newborn within the County, providing essential guidance and resources to support families during the early stages of a child's life. Ongoing family home visiting is available for eligible families, offering continued support, education, and monitoring to ensure healthy child growth and development. RCPH also connects families to medical and dental care through the Child and Teen Checkups Program and collaborates with the Minnesota Department of Health for newborns with hearing or birth defects. Public health workers further support families through the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program, offering nutrition counseling and referrals.

RCPH operates a Medicare-certified home health agency, providing professional home healthcare services to residents in need. Additionally, staff collaborate with Renville County's Human Services Department to offer case management for individuals receiving waived services or enrolled in PrimeWest Health case management programs.

Emergency preparedness and response is a key priority, with trained staff ensuring effective responses to public health emergencies and managing the Minnesota Responds volunteer program. RCPH also leads disease prevention and control efforts related to infectious diseases, including screening, monitoring, treatment support, public notifications, and vaccinations.

Environmental health initiatives address complaints like mold, rodents, and other potential hazards. Through participation in the Kandiyohi-Renville Community Health Board, the department is responsible for licensing and inspecting various establishments, including food and beverage businesses, public swimming pools, lodging establishments, manufactured home parks, and special events requiring health permits. For more details on licensing, visit <https://www.renvillecountymn.gov/public-health/#Environmental>.



As part of the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP), RCPH works with local schools, workplaces, and healthcare organizations to promote healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco reduction, and overall well-being. SHIP focuses on creating lasting policy, system, and environmental changes to address the root causes of chronic disease. For more SHIP information, visit <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ship/index.html>.



Community health education is a vital part of RCPH’s outreach efforts. The department collaborates with local partners, such as schools, and conducts various community outreach activities to implement prevention programs and provide valuable health information to residents, further supporting public health awareness and engagement.

As part of the Kandiyohi-Renville Community Health Board, RCPH follows a strategic plan, workforce development plan, continuous improvement and performance management plan, and a community health improvement plan (CHIP)—each with specific goals aimed at enhancing public health services. The CHIP is developed based on findings in the department’s Community Health Assessment, completed every five years. The CHIP is a long-term systemic effort to address public health priorities identified in the County. Upcoming CHIP Goals (2025-2030) will focus on addressing the needs of an aging population, promoting mental well-being, and reducing substance use. For more information on local health initiatives and data, visit <https://www.renvillecountymn.gov/public-health/#Data>.

Environmental Services

The Renville County Environmental Services Office is responsible for administering and overseeing various environmental and planning programs within the County. This includes providing technical advice and information on planning, zoning, land subdivision, land use, mining, feedlot management, and sewage treatment system permitting. The Environmental Services Office ensures that all activities under their purview comply with federal, state, and County regulations, promoting sustainable development, and avoid environmental harm. The office works to safeguard the County’s natural resources and support responsible land use practices. Specific tasks may include conducting site visits, reviewing development plans, issuing permits, and enforcing environmental regulations. The Office also plays a key role in managing aquatic invasive species, shoreland management, and other environmental initiatives to maintain ecological health. Through their work, the Environmental Services office helps to balance growth with conservation, ensuring a quality of life and sustainability over the long term.

Public Works

Renville County’s Public Works Office is responsible for the maintenance and development of the County’s infrastructure, including roads, bridges, drainage systems, and parks. This office ensures that the County’s transportation network is safe and efficient, supporting commerce and facilitating smooth travel for residents and visitors. Transportation-focused work includes the management of roadway snow and ice removal as well as road construction and maintenance. This office also issues permits for access driveways, oversized/overweight vehicles, and utility installations. The Public Works office is responsible for ensuring that all infrastructure is well-maintained and meets safety standards. This requires good communication and collaboration with other entities, including the Minnesota Department of Transportation as well as local municipalities and townships.

Facilities

Renville County’s Facilities and Maintenance Department is responsible for the upkeep and cleaning of all County buildings. This includes performing routine maintenance, cleaning, and some repair work to ensure that all facilities are safe, functional, and presentable. This department also oversees any outside contractors working on County facilities and operates a computerized energy management system to optimize energy efficiency. Additionally, the department is involved in long-term facilities maintenance planning, which helps County leaders anticipate future needs and effectively allocate resources. Through these activities, the Facilities Department protects the public’s facilities investment and maximizes useful facility life.



Landfill, Solid and Hazardous Household Waste

The Renville County Landfill is managed by the Redwood-Renville Regional Solid Waste Authority (RRRSWA). The RRRSWA is responsible for providing environmentally sound and cost-effective solid waste management services for residents and businesses in Renville County. This department oversees the collection, processing, and disposal of municipal solid waste, including demolition materials and household hazardous waste. The Renville County Landfill, located eight miles south of Olivia, provides a venue for the disposal of demolition waste (e.g., asphalt, concrete, plumbing fixtures, roofing materials, untreated lumber). The landfill ensures all construction and demolition waste is properly buried below secured and stratified layers of dirt and isolating material to prevent environmental contamination. It is estimated that the Renville County Landfill has an estimated two to five years of capacity remaining. Its longevity is highly dependent upon the amount of demolition that occurs in the coming years and remaining capacity could be quickly exhausted if a large storm or other event should occur that produces widespread damage to buildings within the County.



The Renville County Landfill does not accept garbage/municipal solid waste, which is to be brought to the Redwood Falls Transfer Station and eventually to the Lyon County Landfill. The RRRSWA also manages recycling efforts for both counties. By responsibly managing waste and providing educational resources on proper disposal methods, the RRRSWA helps reduce the environmental impact associated with solid waste and supports a cleaner, healthier community. More information on the RRRSWA and various solid waste disposal means can be found at <https://www.renvillecountymn.gov/rrrswa/#Landfill>. Renville County's Solid Waste Management Ordinances can be found at <https://www.renvillecountymn.gov/government/ordinances/>.

With assistance from the Southwest Regional Development Commission, the Southwest Regional Solid Waste Commission (SWRSWC) was organized to facilitate planning, management, and implementation of solid waste management across a 12-county area, which includes Renville County, essentially coordinating waste disposal and recycling efforts. In 2024, the SWRSWC embarked on the development of an updated Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan for their region. This new plan will guide solid waste management practices for the coming 10-year period. It will include implementation steps aimed at reducing solid waste generation and improper waste disposal, diverting materials from local landfills, and increasing recycling. More information on the SWRSWC, including the most recent version of the Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan, can be found at <https://www.swrdc.org/planning/environment/>.

Economic Development Authority

Renville County's Economic Development Authority (EDA) is dedicated to fostering economic growth and development. The EDA provides a range of services and resources to support local businesses, including business assistance for development and expansion, business innovation grants, and small business loans. Additionally, the EDA promotes tourism and recreation, helping to attract visitors and stimulate the local economy. The EDA also collaborates with the Renville County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) to provide housing opportunities and support community development initiatives. By offering technical assistance, funding resources, and community impact fund grants, the EDA helps businesses reach their full potential and contributes to the County's economic vitality.

Housing and Redevelopment Authority

Renville County's Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) works in tandem with the Economic Development Authority (EDA) to support housing and economic growth. The HRA works to ensure affordable housing options for current and prospective County residents. This includes the management of public housing and the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. The HRA also offers home improvement loans, down payment assistance, and blight removal grants for those who qualify. By addressing housing needs, the HRA helps ensure that all residents have access to safe and affordable living conditions. More information on HRA services and opportunities can be found at <https://www.renvillecountymn.gov/housing-and-economic-development/housing-authority/>.

Veterans Services Office

Renville County's Veterans Services Office is dedicated to assisting veterans, as well as their dependents and survivors, by connecting them with the federal and state benefits and care they have earned through military service. The office can provide a wide range of services, including helping veterans find medical care at and transportation to Veteran Administration (VA) hospitals or other approved facilities, filing claims for service-connected disabilities, and obtaining death and burial benefits. The office also provides information on programs such as the Homestead Exclusion for disabled veterans, which can reduce property taxes for qualifying individuals. The goal of the Veteran Services

Office is to ensure that our U.S. Armed Services veterans and their families receive the support and resources they need to lead healthy and fulfilling lives while honoring their service to our country.



Parks Department

Renville County's Parks Department is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the County's natural beauty and recreational opportunities. The department manages over 1,300 acres of parkland, which features primitive stands of trees, wildflowers, native prairies, streams and other wetlands, and unique bedrock outcroppings along the Minnesota River. These parks offer a variety of recreational activities, including hiking, camping, fishing, and wildlife observation, providing residents and visitors with numerous ways to enjoy the outdoors. The Parks Department develops and manages park facilities, organizes community events, and promotes environmental education. By offering well-maintained parks and recreational programs, the department aims to enhance the quality of life for all residents, foster a strong connection to the natural environment, and support economic development.



Other Collaborating Partners

Located at the Renville County Government Services Center, the University of Minnesota's Renville County Extension Office serves as a vital resource for residents by providing a connection to the resources and expertise available through the University of Minnesota. It serves as a practical education and research-based information source. U of M Extension offers a wide range of programs and services, including agriculture, horticulture, natural resources, family development, and youth development via the administration of the 4-H program.

The office works to enhance rural life for individuals and communities by delivering educational workshops, conducting research, and offering expert advice on various topics. The Extension Office also collaborates with local organizations and government agencies to address community challenges and promote sustainable development. More information can be found at <https://extension.umn.edu/local/renville#office-hours-and-location-2549260>.



Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services, Inc.

Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services (CMJTS) is the nonprofit employment and training services partner of the region’s CareerForce system. In Renville County, CMJTS is co-located within the Human Services Department. CMJTS staff work with Renville County’s public assistance participants to help them achieve self-sufficiency through family-supporting employment. As such they must closely collaborate with Renville County’s financial workers.



CMJTS is not an employment agency. Rather, the organization offers programs and services to help jobseekers identify their individual needs, plan a career path, and conduct an effective job search. Career navigators provide a full range of services, from skill assessment and training to job search assistance and follow-up placement services. More information on the services offered by CMJTS can be found at <https://www.cmjts.org/>.

Renville County Food Shelf

The Renville County Food Shelf is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that provides food and support to County residents who are facing food insecurity. The organization is operated by a paid food shelf coordinator with oversight from the Renville County Food Shelf Board and liaisons, which include representatives from local communities, a clergy representative, a representative from United Community Action Partnership, and representatives from Renville County’s Human Services and Public Health Departments. To learn how you can benefit from or contribute to the Renville County Food Shelf, as a volunteer or by providing a monetary or food donation, visit <https://www.renvillecountymn.gov/public-health/food-shelf/>.



In 2024, the Renville County Food Shelf received official designation as a certified “SuperShelf.” Developed by the University of Minnesota Extension and partner organizations, including HealthPartners, SuperShelf is a program that transforms food shelves into welcoming environments. They also prioritize healthy and appealing food options and take a client-centered approach by focusing on the needs and preferences of the people who use the food shelf. This includes carrying culturally appropriate foods. SuperShelf locations must maintain specific standards, methods, and values to ensure quality and consistency. To learn more about SuperShelf, visit <https://www.supershelfmn.org/>.



Central Community Transit:

Central Community Transit (CCT) operates a public transit bus service and volunteer driver program throughout Kandiyohi, Meeker, and Renville Counties. Their mission is to provide safe, reliable, and cost-effective transportation to all residents of the counties they serve. From their Olivia location, CCT operates demand-response (i.e., dial-a-ride) service between the hours of 6:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. CCT is governed by a joint powers board, which includes elected county and city representatives from each of the three counties within its service area. The organization is also advised by an operations board, which includes representatives of various entities, including human service agencies and consumers. Information on CCT fares and more can be found at <https://www.cctbus.org/>.



Mid-Minnesota Development Commission

While not housed within Renville County's facilities, the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) is a frequent County partner. MMDC collaborates with counties, cities, nonprofits, and others to improve quality of life and support economic development throughout the four Minnesota counties of Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville. In the fall of 2023, Renville County entered into a service agreement with MMDC for the 2024-2025 development of this Renville County Comprehensive Plan. More information on MMDC and the services they provide can be found at <https://mmrdc.org/>.



Southwest Initiative Foundation

Southwest Initiative Foundation is a nonprofit community foundation supported by individuals, families, businesses and organizations who care about the 18-county Southwest Minnesota region. The organization's focus areas include economic development, including business lending, as well as leadership development and community engagement. In addition to offering their own grants to support their communities, SWIF assists with the management of numerous local community foundations. To learn more about Southwest Initiative Foundation, visit <https://swifoundation.org/>.



Specific Renville County Department, Strategies, Projects, Efforts, or Activities:

1. The County will, on an annual basis, update a Renville County Capital Improvement Plan to schedule infrastructure, facilities, equipment, and vehicle expenditures for the coming five years, with significant input from all department heads. This Capital Improvement Plan will include anticipated costs and funding sources for each expenditure.
2. The County will, on an annual basis, update a Renville County Staffing Plan to schedule the addition or elimination of County positions for the coming two to three years, with significant input from all department heads. This Staffing Plan will include anticipated costs and funding sources for each position added or eliminated.
3. The County will promote quality cooperation between communities and will ensure good collaboration from County departments to ensure effective emergency response (e.g., fire, EMS, law enforcement, disaster management) for all Renville County residents.
4. The County will expand and enhance restorative justice programs.
5. The County will cooperate with students and with local school districts and workforce providers who are interested in providing young people, as well as those considering a career change, with opportunities for experiential learning (e.g., job shadowing, tours, career events, internships, part-time employment, etc.).
6. The County will strive to hire staff who are fluent in Spanish and/or other languages frequently spoken by its residents.
7. The County will strive to hire staff who are fluent in Spanish and/or other languages frequently spoken by its residents.
8. The County will support the Renville County Public Health Department's execution of a Strategic Plan that prioritizes workforce empowerment, generates and ensures sustainable funding, and effectively projects the value of public health and the Kandiyohi-Renville Community Health Board. The County will also evaluate if and when similar planning should occur for other departments, based, in part, on the Public Health Department's strategic planning experience and outcomes.
9. The County will strategically allocate Opioid Settlement Funds it has received to maximize meaningful and lasting impacts for our community members
10. The County will support increased Central Community Transit services (transit bus, volunteer driver, etc.) to improve mobility for those with transportation barriers or limitations.

Renville County Comprehensive Plan Implementation

The Renville County Comprehensive Plan is meant to be a working document that results in County improvements and enhancements. In a sense, the plan presents a blueprint for action and provides direction to assist decision makers with short- and long-term strategies.

By implementing the strategies identified in each plan chapter, Renville County can achieve development goals and improve the standard of living for all stakeholders. However, it must be understood that this is a long-term plan, with a useful life of well over 10 years. Due to limited time, staff capacity, and financial resources, it will be impossible for the County to achieve every strategy at the same time. Therefore, work must be prioritized and reprioritized based on current conditions, developments, and opportunities.

On an annual basis, Renville County's elected leaders, Renville County Planning Commission, and department heads should review the Renville County Comprehensive Plan to ensure it remains relevant and that they remain aligned with the vision it provides. They should also determine which specific strategy-supporting projects should become areas of concentration for the coming year, with the understanding that some projects will require more than one year to implement. In these cases, it will be important to measure progress toward goal achievement.

Proposed changes/amendments to the Renville County Comprehensive Plan should be approved by the Renville County Board after consideration of recommendations from the Renville County Planning Commission and affected department heads. One or more public hearings should be held to ensure adequate opportunity for stakeholder input. Criteria for amendment may include correcting mistakes found within the plan or addressing progress and/or changing community conditions.

Also annually, key data measures (e.g., population, population age, median household income, median home value, etc.) should be analyzed to inform decision-making. While it is important to consider data from Renville County, it is also important to contextualize this data by looking at the surrounding economic and workforce development regions, and the entire state and country.

Every three to five years, the County should make a special effort to request additional public input. This could include providing a description of work accomplished and then surveying the public to get feedback on these accomplishments. This will also provide opportunity to solicit new ideas from County stakeholders.

After 10 to 12 years of implementation, Renville County should begin to take the steps necessary to develop the next iteration of the Renville County Comprehensive Plan.



Photo By Taylor Wertish



Renville

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