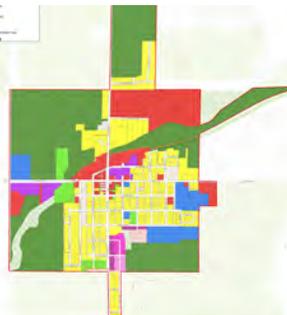


City of Conrad Comprehensive Plan 2019–2039

Prepared by Community and Regional Planning Studio 432
August 2019



College of Design



Iowa



Acknowledgments

In Collaboration With

The City of Conrad
BCLUW School District
Iowa State University College of Design
Iowa State University Extension and
Outreach

With Special Thanks To

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Introduction

Conrad has a long history, spanning nearly two centuries. The town was named after J.W. Conrad, who first settled the area in 1853. He filed the second land claim in Grundy County around the same time and soon the area surrounding Wolf Creek became known as “Conrad Grove.” In 1855, Dr. Elijah Fisher arrived in the area and began quarrying stone from the grove and constructing what would become the town’s first stone house, school, and church. In 1880, the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad began construction on a rail line that would run through the Wolf Creek valley. Conrad was officially declared a town and plans for the new town were developed.



Figure 1.1. Conrad Depot

In 1894, a fire broke out and destroyed nearly every downtown building. The downtown was later rebuilt and a number of businesses and industries found a home in the area. In 1991, Conrad was accepted into the National and State Main Street programs after practicing as a program since 1989. The designation has fostered economic prosperity in the city and ensured its success over the last two decades.

Conrad’s first population count, conducted in 1890, identified 157 residents. By 1900, the number more than tripled to 483. The population grew steadily in conjunction with businesses growth, until it plateaued to current levels by the 1980 census.

Government Operations

Introduction

Conrad’s local government makes cultural, historical, emergency, and educational services accessible to its residents. The city offers a public library, a heritage museum, a volunteer fire department, and police protection through a contract with the Grundy County Sheriff’s Office. Additionally, the city houses two of the three schools in the BCLUW Community School District, connecting residents of neighboring towns to Conrad.

Libraries, Museums, Culture

Conrad offers cultural, historical, and educational resources to its citizens through its library and heritage museum. Conrad Public Library has existed since 1940, evolving from an initiative started by the Women’s Club Library Committee. Today, the library is a prominent building on Main Street, offering typical library services and space for community events. Heritage Hall Museum is



Figure 1.2. Conrad Public Library

1. Introduction

located in Conrad City Hall. Open by appointment, the museum works to preserve Conrad history and educate citizens.

Conrad is also home to the Grundy County Freedom Rock, the 47th of 99 rocks in Iowa. The rock depicts WWII soldiers, a woman walking out of a cornfield, an eagle holding the 40 & 8 logo, and “The City of Grundy Center” B-29 bomber. The rock emphasizes patriotic symbolism and Grundy County’s agricultural roots.

City Hall

Conrad City Hall is located at the corner of Church and Center Streets. City Hall houses the city clerk’s office, council chambers, the Main Street Inc. office, and Heritage Hall Museum.

Emergency and Medical Services

Conrad has a volunteer fire department that was established in 1892. The fire department participates in calls to the Beaman Conrad Emergency Response team, established in 1987. They respond to calls for accidents and medical and fire emergencies. In 2017, a new fire station opened in Conrad.



Figure 1.3. Conrad City Hall

Conrad police are contracted through the Grundy County Sheriff’s Office. One officer must live in the city and there are routine patrols during the day and at night.

Schools

Conrad is part of the BCLUW Community School District. The elementary (grades K–4) and high schools are both located in Conrad, while the middle school (grades 5–8) is located in Union, nine miles west of Conrad. The elementary and high schools serve youth from Beaman, Liscomb, Union, and Whitten in addition to Conrad.

Geographic Context

Conrad is located on the southern edge of Grundy County, bordering the northern end of Marshall County. Conrad is also situated just east of State Highway 14 and approximately 15 miles north of US Highway 30. Notable communities in the vicinity of Conrad include Marshalltown approximately 12 miles to the south, Waterloo 45 miles to the northeast, Cedar Rapids 72 miles to the east, and Des Moines approximately 67 miles to the west (see figure 1.4).

Plan Review

The aim of this comprehensive plan is to provide a guiding vision for Conrad’s development over the next two decades. This vision has been broken down into seven key categories: population, economy, housing, community facilities and services, parks, recreation and the environment, zoning, and land use. The plan was created using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data analysis, an assessment of current conditions within the town, public input, and professional expertise.

Planning Process

What is city planning?

City planning is an interdisciplinary profession considers the social, environmental, and physical aspects of urban places and spaces. It is important to Conrad to utilize this skill set because of the cohesiveness it brings to the people and the spaces that make up the community's identity.

What is a comprehensive plan?

A comprehensive plan is a compilation of data analytics, guiding principles, and goals used by local governments to help direct future land use decisions and policy making. Comprehensive plans usually include elements such as those illustrated in figure 2.1.

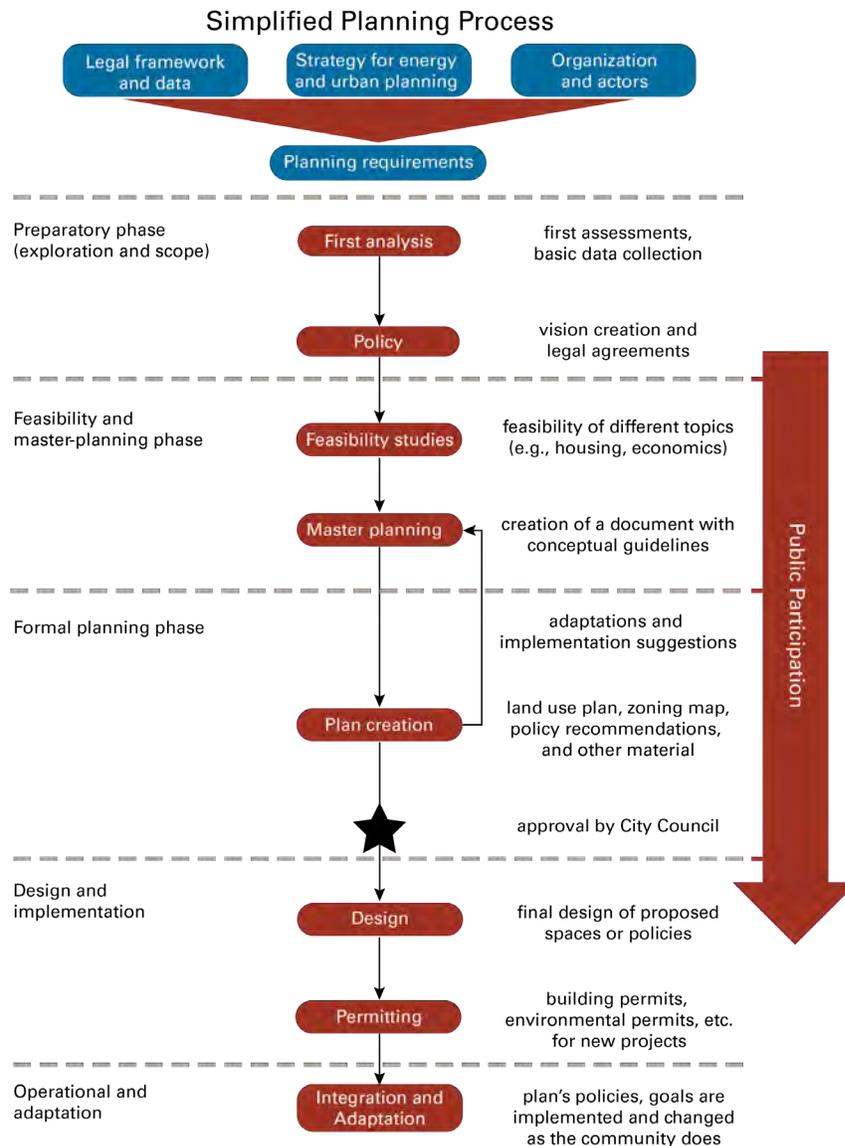


Figure 2.1. Simplified planning process

2. Process and Engagement

Engagement Process

Public engagement allows citizens to play an active role in the planning process. This process permits planners to use the input and local knowledge of residents to create goals and proposals suited for the city of Conrad. Our engagement process included sessions with a steering committee; a community survey; and a number of outreach events with business owners, school-aged children, and other residents in the community.

Steering Committee Meetings

Our process began on February 6, 2019, with meeting with the steering committee, a group of eight. We asked committee members general questions about their vision for Conrad, as well as their perception of community strengths and challenges. The committee described Conrad as a close-knit and progressive community, citing cases where residents pulled together to fund and develop community projects in the past. At our second steering committee meeting on April 3, we presented our research on the existing conditions of Conrad.

Community Survey

The second element of our engagement process was a community survey. The survey was distributed online and by mail, included in residents' utility bills.

Outreach Events

The final element of our engagement process involved a series of outreach sessions. Our first session, geared toward the general public, was conducted at the Conrad Public Library on March 27 from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Our team presented Conrad's existing zoning map, answered general questions about the upcoming plan, and collected feedback from five residents.

Resident feedback included concern over the lack of enforcement of city ordinances. They feel that a lack of enforcement on property maintenance dissuades businesses from investing in Conrad and that structural upkeep and community cleanliness should be key goals for the city. Additionally, respondents agreed that Conrad is a family-oriented community, but limited services prevent young adults from returning to Conrad to start their own families.

Our second outreach session was geared toward Conrad businesses. We received responses from eight downtown businesses and two additional businesses. Business owners and employees believe future growth should be a main priority for the city, both to attract new residents and meet the needs of existing residents. Participants agreed that Conrad needs more restaurants, entertainment opportunities, and community activities.

Our third outreach session took place on April 2 at BCLUW High School with 101 students. A series of questions were presented, including two open-response questions. Many students expressed an unwillingness to return to Conrad because of a lack of job opportunities or age-appropriate activities. The students supported the addition of a downtown coffee shop, as well as updated public facilities and parks to meet their age-specific needs. To fill open space in Conrad, students suggested developing restaurants, recreational parks, entertainment options, or a movie theater.

2. Process and Engagement

Our fourth outreach session involved approximately 173 students at BCLUW Elementary on April 15. Each grade spent 15 minutes identifying their favorite places in Conrad and talking about why they liked those places. The exercise resulted in maps of approved places for each grade level and a list of criteria for great places (see figure 2.2).



Figures 2.2. 4th grade feedback

Each grade then took 15 minutes to use their criteria to draw ideas for parks, places, and trails. The most popular ideas included ice cream or pizza shops, skate parks, a bigger swimming pool, trampoline parks, and chain stores such as Target or Walmart. Almost every student participated and seemed excited to have agency in community decisions. Their input can be used to guide park development, investment choices, and other decisions that will impact the spaces used primarily by children.

Our fifth outreach session on March 25 involved group discussions with 15 residents from the Oakview Nursing Home. When thinking about the future of Conrad, they expressed their hopes for an increase in young families, low-cost housing availability, and more job opportunities. There was also a desire for a public transportation service to take people to their day-to-day activities and to Marshalltown. Restaurant ideas included a breakfast place, as well as a restaurant with both sit-down and take-out options. The residents agreed Conrad was a safe, strong, close-knit community that needs more shopping and entertainment.

Our final outreach session was an open house, held April 17 at BCLUW High School between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. The event allowed citizens to engage with and provide input on survey results, existing conditions, and most importantly, goal and policy proposals. Part of this engagement included a station where we asked residents to identify community strengths and weaknesses. As strengths, attendees identified a history of community-initiated development, the school district, fiber-optics, downtown services, and the Main Street program. As weaknesses, attendees identified a lack of employment opportunities, as well as a lack of affordable and quality housing. The input gathered at this event allowed our team to determine the final goals and policy recommendations for the city.



Figures 2.3. April 17 open house

Conclusion

The remainder of this document is organized by the following focus areas: population; economy; housing; community services and facilities; parks, recreation, and environment; zoning; and land use. Each focus area includes Conrad's existing conditions, as well as goals and policy recommendations for the future of the city. The existing conditions, goals, and policy recommendations were determined in large part by the results of extensive data collection and the engagement process detailed in this chapter.

Introduction

This chapter includes information related to population change; age, gender, and racial distributions; future population projections; and neighboring city comparisons. These population characteristics are critical to understanding the opportunities and challenges facing Conrad.

Population demographics are one of the biggest factors in making decisions related to economic development; housing; community services and facilities; parks, recreation, and environment; zoning; and land use. Although this element intertwines with every other element of the comprehensive plan, it is the most subject to change and hardest to control. As such, it is the first element of the city's efforts to plan for the future.

Population trends provide public and elected officials with evidence on what kind of services may need to be provided in the city's future and provide prospective employers with an overview of the local labor force. Much of this information was obtained through the United States Census Bureau.

Existing Conditions

Population Change

In 2010, the most recent census year, Conrad had a population of 1,108. The population was 47.4% male and 52.6% female and the median age was approximately 41 years old. The city's 2010 racial makeup was slightly more diverse than its 2017 estimation, with a population that was 97.9% White, 0.4% Black or African-American, 0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.3% Asian, 0.3% another race, and 1% two or more races.

In 2010, 50.4% of Conrad's population was between the ages of 18 and 61 years old. Slightly more than 23% was under 18 years old and 26.5% was older than 61 years old. Various changes in Conrad's age distribution have occurred in the past 17 years (see figure 3.1). Age ranges in figure 3.1 are separated into the following groups: 14 and under, 15 to 19, 20 to 34, 35 to 59, and 60 years old and over. The population of each group was recorded and plotted for the years 2000, 2010, and 2017, to show how each age group has grown or regressed over the 17-year period.

One of the most worrisome trends is the rapid decline in the 14 and under population from 2010 to 2017. In the last seven years, the number of people 14 and under has declined

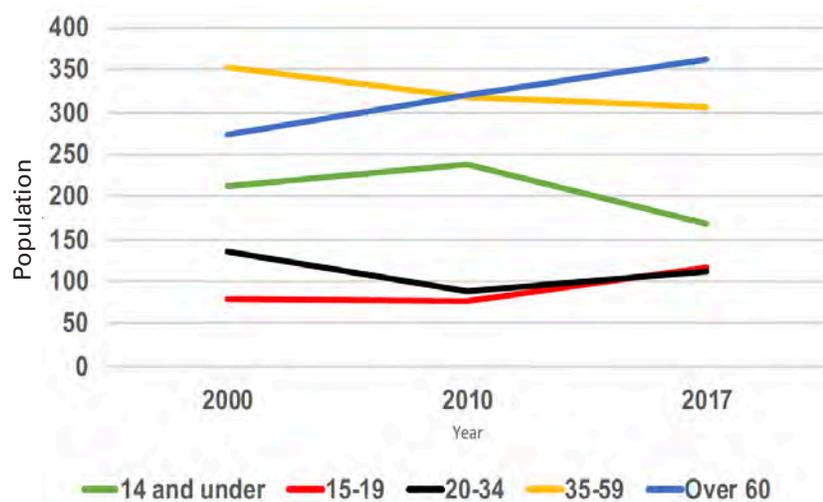


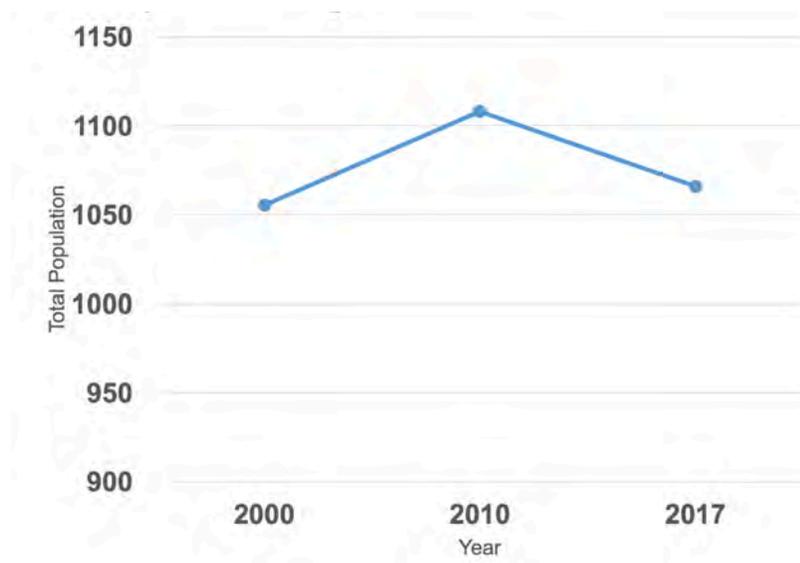
Figure 3.1. Population change by age group

3. Population

by almost 30%, from 238 in 2010 to 168 in 2017. The 15–19 age group was consistent between 2000 and 2010 with a small loss of two residents. However, this age group significantly increased between 2010 and 2017, moving from 77 residents to 116 residents.

The young adult demographic, 20–34 year olds, decreased from 136 people in 2000 to 89 people in 2010. The age group grew in the next seven years, increasing to 112 residents in 2017. The 35–59 year old age group steadily regressed from 2000 to 2017. After being the most populous demographic in 2000 at 354 residents, this age group fell to 318 residents in 2010 and decreased to 307 residents in 2017.

The 60 years old and over population has steadily grown from 2000 to 2017 and is now the most populous age group in the city. This demographic rose from 273 residents in 2000 to 319 in 2010 to 363 residents in 2017. These trends indicate Conrad is an aging community. Other age groups are starting to decline as the senior population grows. Additionally, a decline in school-aged children in the last 10 years had led to a decrease in enrollment numbers.



Conrad's population change can be separated into two phases. The first phase, characterized by population growth, occurred between 2000 and 2010. Conrad's population rose by 53 residents, shifting from 1,055 to 1,108. What followed was a phase of population decline. Between 2010 and 2017, Conrad's population decreased by 42 residents to a 2017 estimate of 1,066.

Figure 3.2. Population change in Conrad, 2000–2017

Age Distribution

As mentioned in the previous section, Conrad's population is aging. Almost one-third of the population is 65 years old or over, while only one-fifth of the population is under 18 years old. According to 2017 estimates, 304 of Conrad's residents are 65 years old or over and 134 of those residents are between ages of 65 and 74.

An estimated 229 Conrad residents are under 18 years old and 533 residents are between ages 18 and 65. Within the 18–65 age bracket, the highest proportion of residents are as follows: 77 residents are between the ages of 25 and 34, 124 residents are between the ages of 35 and 44, and 133 residents are between the ages of 45 and 54. Conrad's median age is within the latter bracket, at approximately 46 years old.

3. Population

According to 2017 estimates, Conrad's age structure is similar to age structures in Grundy County and the state of Iowa. Grundy County has a population of 12,354 with the following age structure: 2,915 residents under 18 years old, 6,967 residents between the ages of 18 and 65, and 2,472 residents 65 years old and over. Roughly half of the 65 years old or over population is between ages 65 and 74, with 1,252 residents in the age group.

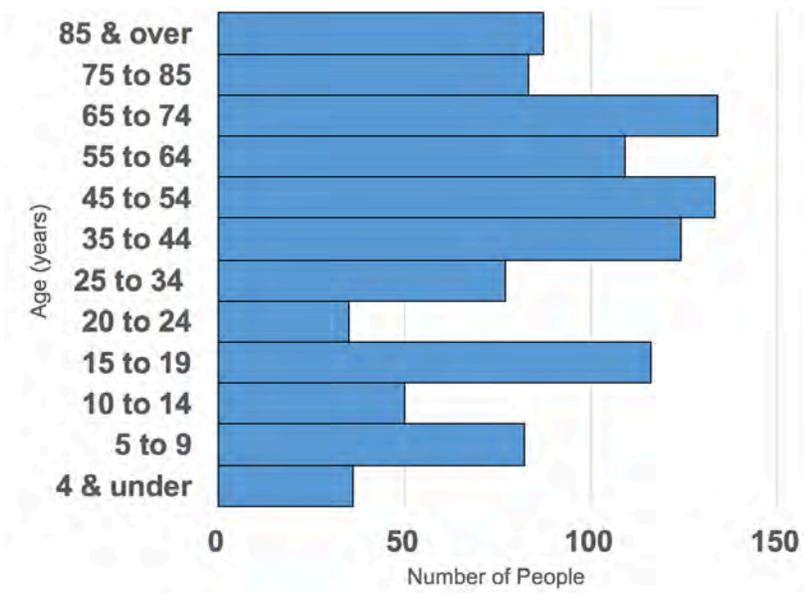


Figure 3.3. Age distribution in Conrad, 2017

Within the 18–65 age bracket, the highest population counts include 1,310 residents between the ages of 25 and 34, 1,437 residents between the ages of 35 and 44, and 1,626 residents between the ages of 45 to 54. The county's median age falls within the middle of these brackets, at approximately 42 years old.

Iowa has a population of 3,118,102 with the following age structure: 728,704 residents under 18 years old, 1,888,372 residents between the ages of 18 and 65, and 501,026 residents 65 years old and over. Approximately half of the 65 years old or over population is between ages 65 and 74, with 269,334 in the age group.

Within the 18–65 age bracket, the highest population counts include 391,056 residents between the ages of 25 and 34, 367,237 residents between the ages of 35 and 44, and 397,965 residents between the ages 45 to 54. The state's median age falls within the middle of these brackets, at approximately 38 years old.

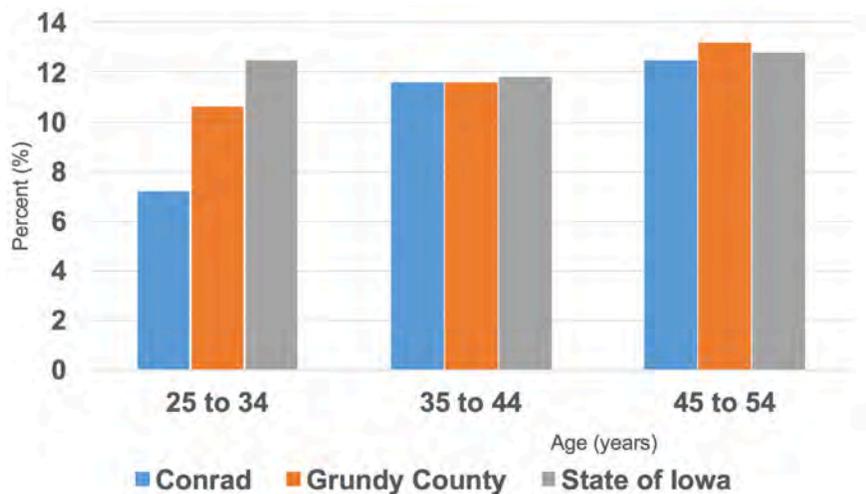


Figure 3.4. Comparison of groups with the highest percentage of total population in 2017 among Conrad, Grundy County, and Iowa

3. Population

Gender Distribution

Conrad's population is 57% female and 43% male and the ratio of women to men raises as age increases. Although this is also true for Grundy County and the state of Iowa, Conrad has a higher ratio.

For every 100 females 18 years old and over in Conrad, there are 76.2 males 18 years old and over. The ratio is significantly different for Conrad's 65 years old and over population, with 52.8 males per 100 females. This ratio difference for the 65 years and older population is likely due to women living statistically longer than men.

In comparison to Conrad, Grundy County's 18 years old and over population has 96.1 males per 100 females. The county's 65 years old and over population has 78.6 males per 100 females. The state of Iowa compares similarly, with 96.8 males per 100 females 18 years old and over, and 78.9 males per 100 females 65 years old and over.

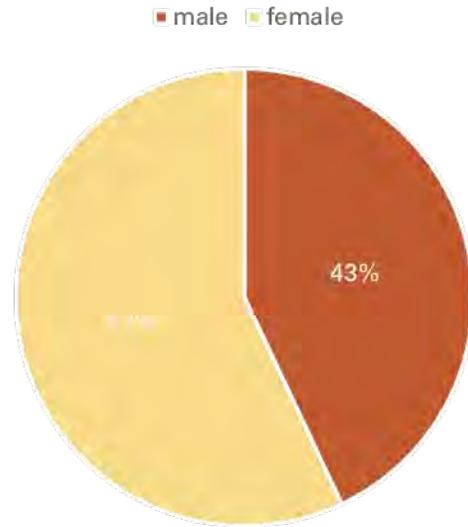


Figure 3.5. Gender distribution in Conrad

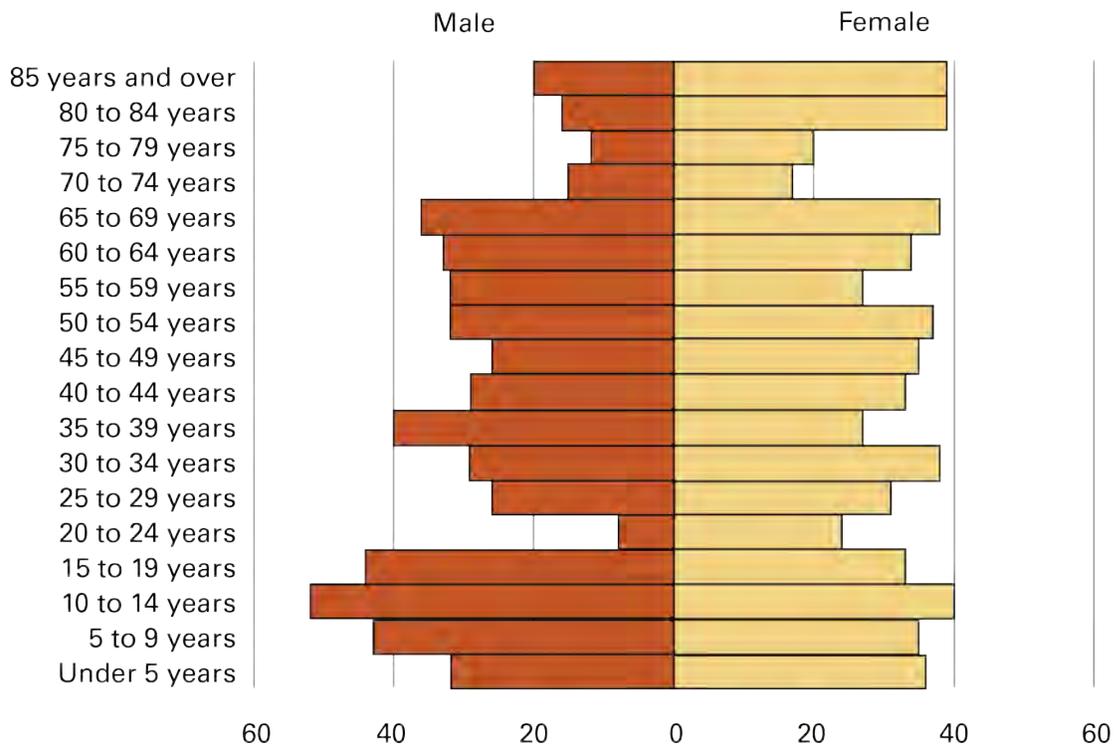


Figure 3.6. Gender distribution by age group

Racial Distribution

Conrad is 99.3% White, which is not dissimilar to Grundy County or the state of Iowa, where populations are at least 90% White. According to 2017 estimates, 0.7% of Conrad's population is Asian, while Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaska Native, two or more races, and other races all account for 0% of the population. These percentages are estimates and may slightly differ from the actual racial makeup in Conrad. However, estimates do reflect the city's general racial makeup in which a majority of residents are white and less than 1% of the population is some other race.

Similar to Conrad, Grundy County is 98.3% White. However, its racial makeup is slightly more diverse: 0.7% of the population is Black or African American, 0.3% is Asian, 0.7% is two or more races, and 0.1% is another race. American Indian and Alaska Native are recorded at 0%. For further comparison, the state of Iowa's racial makeup is 90.6% White, 3.4% Black or African American, 0.3% American Indian or Alaska Native, 2.3% Asian, 2.0% two or more races, and 1.3% other.

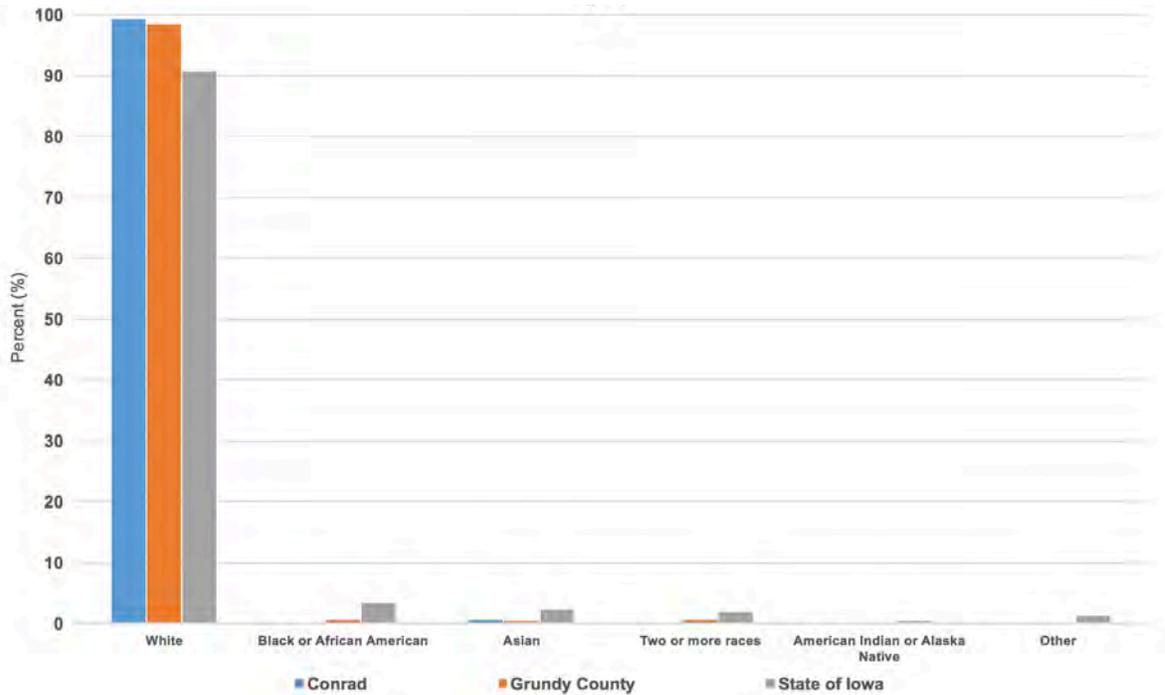


Figure 3.8. Comparison of racial distribution in 2017 among Conrad, Grundy County, and Iowa

3. Population

Population Projections

To estimate Conrad's 2020 and 2030 populations, there are two fitting approaches. One method is the constant share method, which predicts the city's population based on county data and trends. Another method is the linear method, which predicts the city's population based on average annual change.

The constant share method follows the same expected growth rate of a city's county, rather than the city itself. Its equation is as follows:

$$P = (C/G) * E$$

P = Conrad's estimated future population in a target year of either 2020 or 2030

C = Population of Conrad in 2010

G = Population of Grundy County in 2010

E = Grundy County's estimated future population in a target year of either 2020 or 2030

The constant share method predicts a population of approximately 1,200 by 2030, an increase of 150 residents from 2017 estimates.

The linear method assumes a specific population will continue to change by the same amount and uses average change from past years to predict future populations. Its equation is as follows:

$$P = C + (Z \times \Delta)$$

P = Conrad's estimated future population in a target year of either 2020 or 2030

C = Population of Conrad in 2010

Z = Number of years in the projection horizon (i.e., to project for 2020 Z = 20, for 2030 Z = 30)

Δ = Average annual change from base year to present

In this case, Δ is calculated by dividing the population change from 2000 to 2017 by the total number of years (17). The population for 2000 is 1,055 and the population for 2017 is 1,066—a growth of 11 residents in 17 years or an average growth of 0.65 people per year from 2000 to 2017.

The linear model projects future growth to continue at the same rate. According to linear projections, the population will be 1,068 in 2020 and 1,074 in 2030. Figures 3.8 and 3.9 show reported populations for 2000, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015, and 2017, and projected values for 2020 and 2030. Figure 3.8 shows results using the constant share method and figure 3.9 shows results using the linear method.

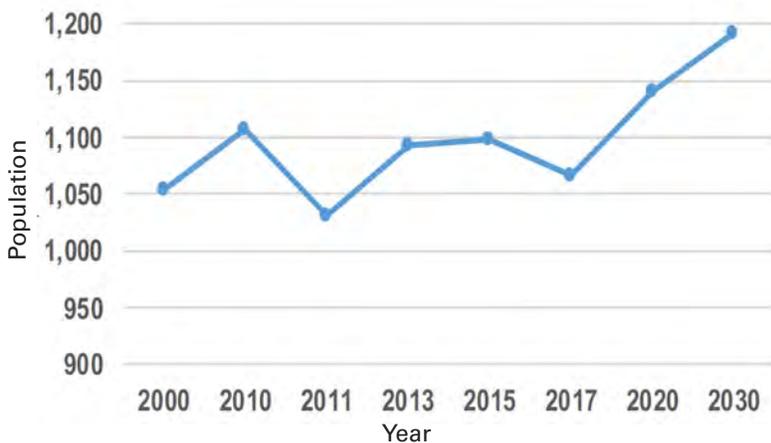


Table 3.8. Projected growth: Constant Share Method

The goals and policies in this plan are based on projections determined by the linear model due to its more conservative nature and reliance on city populations trends.

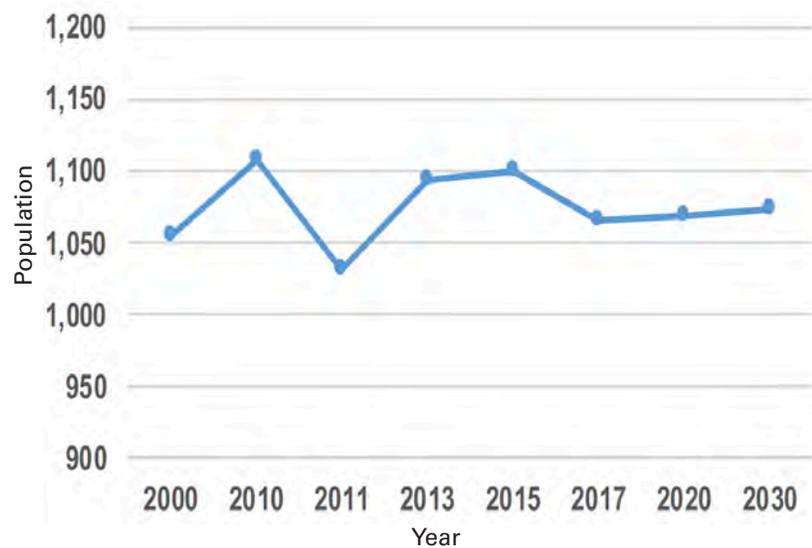


Figure 3.9. Projected growth: Linear Method

Cities for Comparison

In later chapters, Conrad is compared to the cities of State Center and Reinbeck to measure its economic and housing conditions against the conditions of similar, nearby communities. State Center and Reinbeck have slightly larger populations than Conrad, but have similar population characteristics. According to 2017 estimates, State Center has a population of 1,361 and Reinbeck has a population of 1,628.

Compared to Conrad's median age of 46, State Center has a median age of 42 and Reinbeck has a median age of 45. Racial demographics for all three cities are also similar, with White residents making up at least 90% their populations. In terms of gender ratios, Reinbeck has a more even distribution of male and female ratios, with 95.2 males per 100 females, while State Center has more males than females, with 107.2 males per 100 females.

Because of their proximity and similarity to Conrad, State Center and Reinbeck are used as comparative communities throughout this plan.

Policy Recommendations

Goal 1: Attract more families with children K–12 to Conrad

Policy 1. Continue to maintain and add more opportunities, activities, or events aimed at families.

Policy 2. Further promote the existing family-friendly aspects Conrad has to offer; such as safety, local schools, and recreation opportunities.

Policy 3. Establish sidewalks along all city roads to allow children to walk to school as safely as possible.

3. Population

Goal 2: Make Conrad an attractive city for young adults

Policy 1. Create more affordable housing, such as apartments and mixed-use developments, specifically on Main Street.

Policy 2. Expand the city's services and opportunities that are aimed at young adults.

Conclusion

Conrad's growing senior population and limited number of young families reflect a larger phenomenon affecting rural cities across the U.S. However, by committing to proactive planning, infrastructure improvements, diversified housing, and innovative ideas for growth, Conrad can attract more families and young adults to ensure its future as a unique and prosperous community.

Introduction

This chapter presents the existing conditions of Conrad's economy, as well as the goals and policies for its future development. Planning impacts a city's economy through a number of processes and strategies. Zoning, for example, establishes the location, potential, and standards for commercial and industrial development in a community. Other planning strategies include property-based incentives, revitalization projects, public-private partnerships, and district-based financing tools. Each of these strategies are dependent on context and address different economic challenges.

This chapter serves as a guide to the city, so any strategy it chooses to implement is supported by the community's goals and policies for its future economy. The goals and policies in this chapter are based on the unique economic conditions of Conrad, presented in the following section.

Existing Conditions

Commuting Characteristics

Conrad is home to a number of manufacturing industries, two of the three community school district's public schools, a strong local service sector, and numerous health care facilities. In 2015, it is reported 321 individuals from outside communities worked in Conrad, while 263 Conrad residents worked outside of the city. Only 68 people both work and live in Conrad (see figure 4.1).

The ultimate priority of the housing and economy chapters in this plan is to increase the amount of overlap between individuals who work and live in the city. To make recommendations in this area, more information is needed on the current professions of Conrad residents and the general nature of Conrad's labor force.

In addition to job commutes, Conrad residents make a number of commutes for basic services.



Figure 4.1. Map of commuting characteristics
(Source: US Census Bureau OnTheMap)

4. Economy

In the community survey discussed in Chapter 2, residents revealed they often leave Conrad to buy groceries, go out to eat, shop for retail, and more. Though Conrad offers a number of local services, there is still a lack of a restaurant, recreation, and retail in the city.

Some residents even commute for services already offered in Conrad. For example, though Conrad offers a local grocery store, about 81% of survey respondents said they buy groceries outside of the city (see figure 4.2). To understand the reason for this trend, more information is needed on the

existing needs and desires of Conrad consumers, which can be determined by income characteristics, poverty demographics, and residents' responses to the community survey.

The remainder of this section presents a clearer picture of Conrad's economic conditions by presenting data on occupation and industry, employment demographics, and livability. The data provide insight into the professions of Conrad residents, the general nature of Conrad's labor force, and the existing needs and desires of Conrad consumers.

Occupation and Industry

Conrad residents are primarily employed by the educational services, health care, and social assistance sector; as well as the manufacturing sector. Though the two sectors' employment counts changed slightly each year between 2011 and 2017, both sectors consistently served as top employers (see figure 4.3).

The manufacturing sector in Conrad includes Ritchie Industries and Green Products Company, both of which are examples of Conrad's nationally-connected and historically-rooted industries. The educational services, health care, and social assistance sector in Conrad includes BCLUW Elementary School and High School; Unity Point—Conrad Clinic; NuCara Management Group, Home Medical, and Retail Pharmacy; Oak Estates Assisted Living; and Oakview, Inc. Nursing Home.

Retail trade and agriculture/forestry employ far fewer residents than manufacturing or education, health care, and social assistance, but still serve as important employers of Conrad residents. Conrad's retail and service sector exists within and immediately surrounding its Main Street district, which will be further discussed in the Goals and Policies section of this chapter. Agricultural land is located on the periphery of the city.

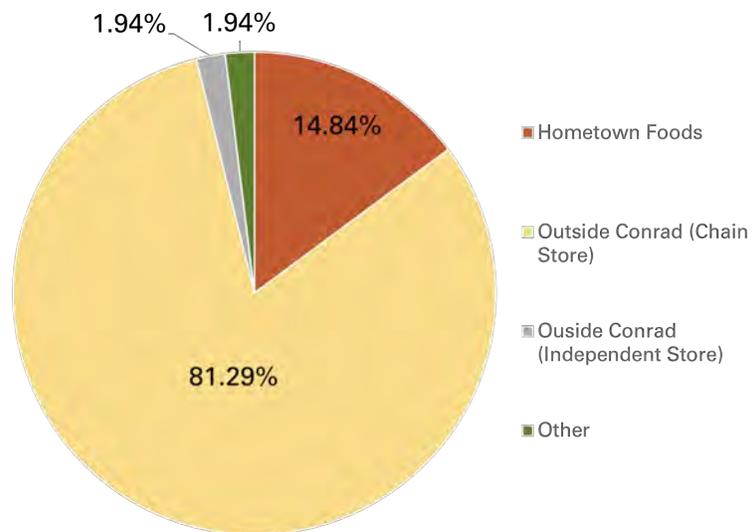


Table 4.2. Grocery store preferences

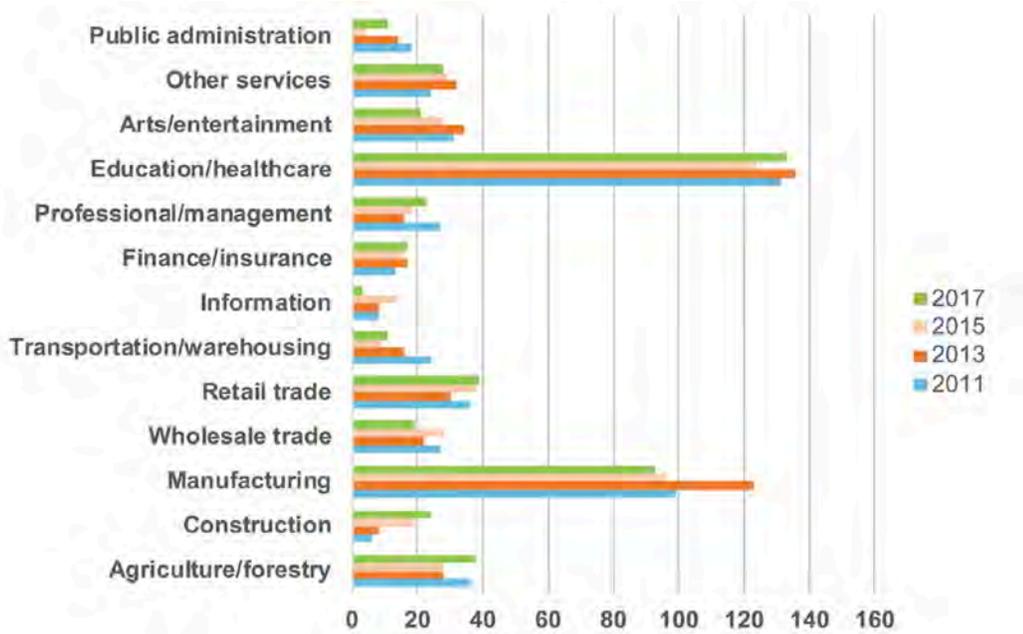


Figure 4.3. Employees by industry in Conrad, 2011–2017

The largest sector increase in Conrad was in the construction industry, which quadrupled employment between 2011 and 2017. Conrad’s smallest employment sector is the information industry, followed by public administration and transportation, warehousing, and utilities.

Almost half of Conrad’s residents are employed by management, business, science, and arts occupations, while the other half are employed by service occupations; sales and office occupations; natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations; and production, transportation, and material moving occupations (see figure 4.4).

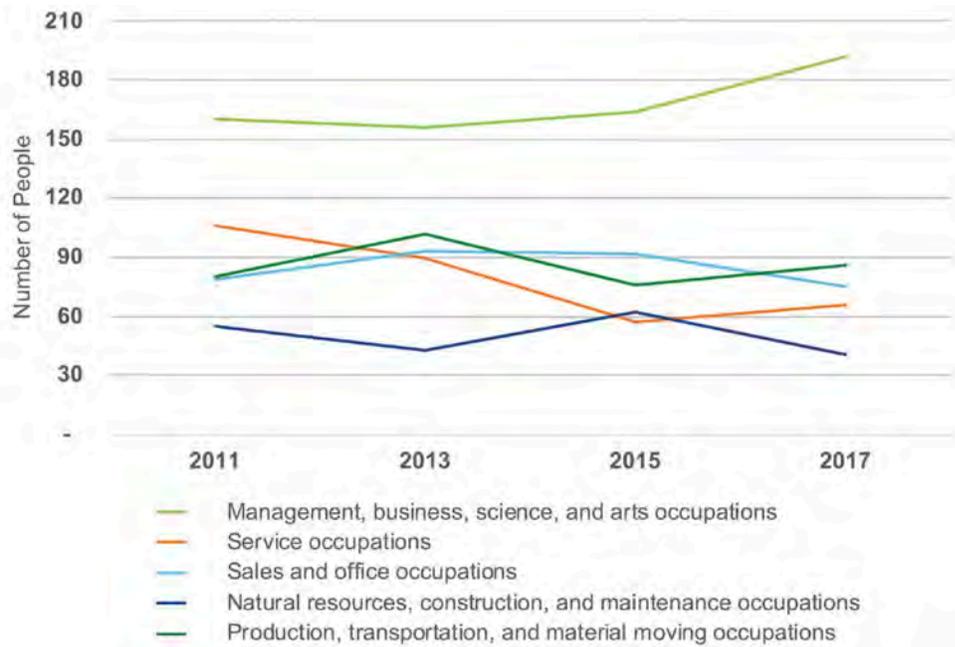


Figure 4.4. Number of people employed by occupation in Conrad, 2011–2017

4. Economy

This information can be interpreted in two ways. First, because Conrad residents are employed by the manufacturing and educational services, health care, and social assistance sectors, the development of those types of industries should be prioritized. Second, because industries outside of the manufacturing or education, health care, and social assistance sectors are highly limited in and around Conrad, they should be prioritized to attract new residents to the city.

Employment by Gender

As discussed in the Chapter 3, females outnumber males in Conrad. However, when looking at the percentage of Conrad residents who are employed, males have higher rates of employment than females.

Figure 4.5 displays a consistent disparity between the employment of males and females, yet both genders remained at stable levels from 2011 to 2017, with males approximately 5% more employed than females overall.

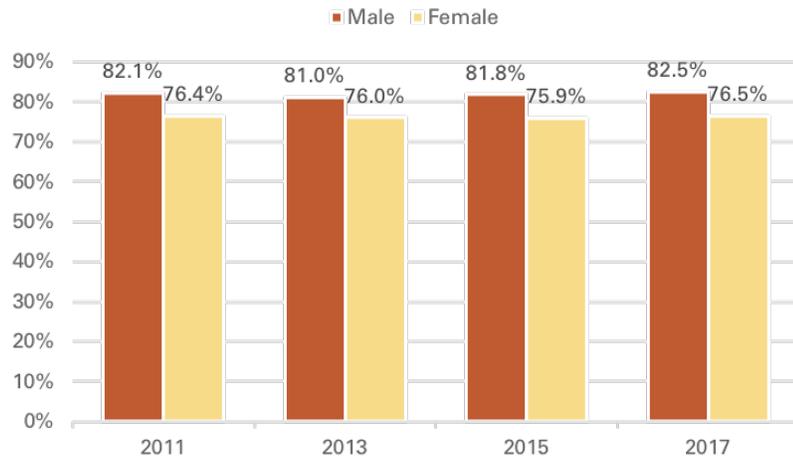


Figure 4.5. Employment by gender in Conrad

Employment by Age

The top age bracket for labor participation in Conrad is 25 to 44 years old. The bracket, which remained relatively stable between 2011 and 2017, serves as a target group for employers. Conrad's 16 to 19 year olds and 20 to 24 year olds are the lowest participants in the labor force, suggesting a potential need for minimum-wage jobs and jobs for young professionals in the city (see figure 4.6).

Figure 4.7 illustrates Conrad's labor force participation by educational attainment. The graph indicates that high school students and residents

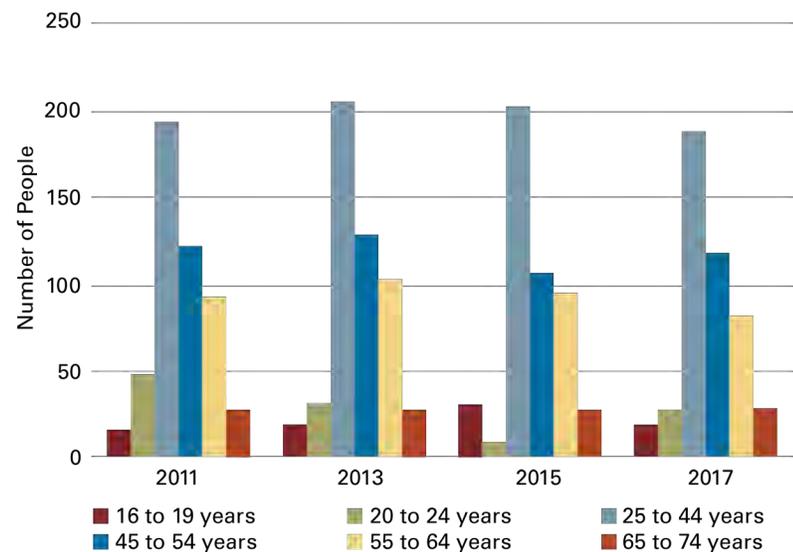


Figure 4.6. Employment by age in Conrad

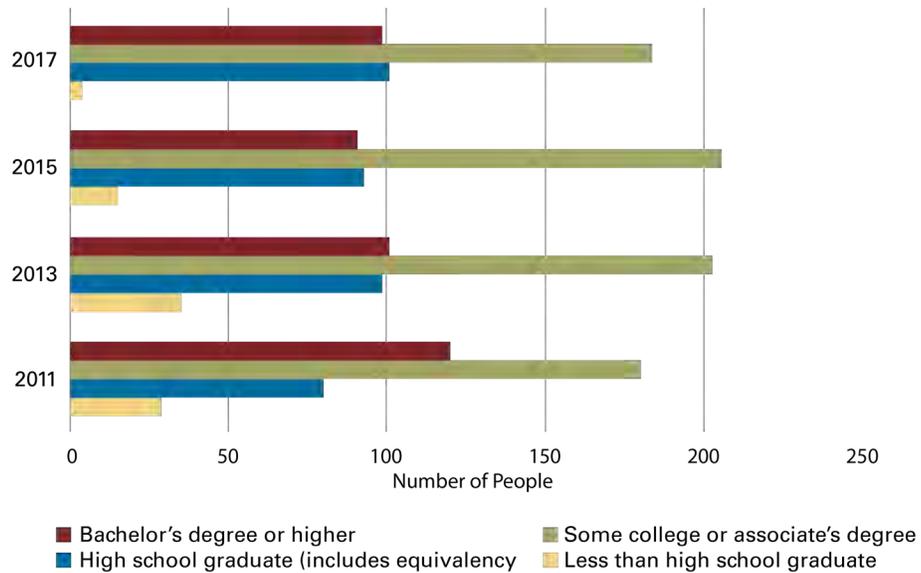


Figure 4.7. Employment by educational attainment in Conrad

without high school diplomas are most in need of employment and experienced the most sporadic trends between 2011 and 2017.

Further investigation would be needed to examine why the labor force for high school graduates increased so significantly from 2011 to 2013. For example, there may have been a large graduating class around that time.

Income

According to the US Census Bureau's 2017 estimate, Conrad has a median household income of \$44,191, which is lower than that of the state of Iowa, Grundy County, and the cities of Reinbeck and State Center. Figure 4.8 illustrates median household incomes for years 2011–2017 in 2017 inflation-adjusted dollars, in order to show a more accurate depiction of change over time. The graph indicates Conrad's median household income has declined in the past two years, while all other areas have experienced growth.

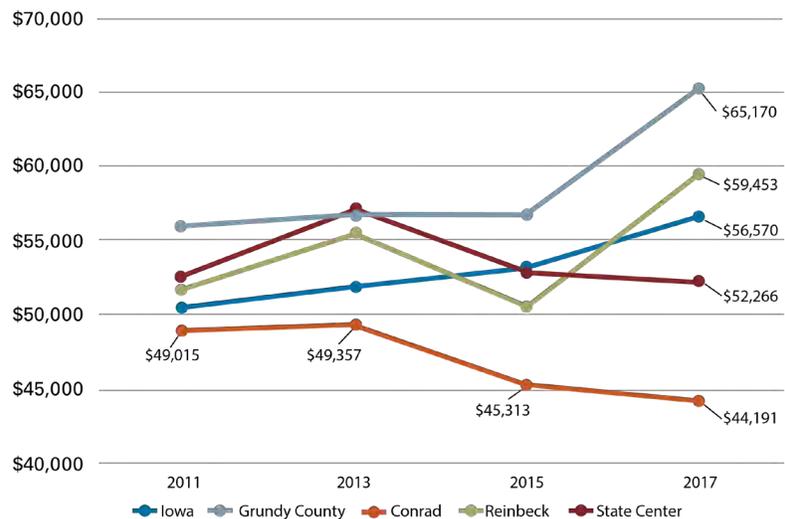


Figure 4.8. Comparison of median household income of Conrad with those of Iowa, Grundy County, Reinbeck, and State Center (in 2017 inflation-adjusted dollars)

4. Economy

Of Conrad's 457 households, almost half are within the following income brackets: 80 within the \$75,000 to \$99,999 income bracket, 76 within the \$35,000 to \$49,999 income bracket, and 65 within the \$50,000 to \$74,999 income bracket.

Poverty

Slightly more than 9% of Conrad's population is below the poverty line. Reinbeck and State Center have similar estimates, with almost 9% of Reinbeck's population living below the poverty line and about 6% of State Center's population living below the poverty line (see figure 4.9).

Conrad's poverty estimates differ from Reinbeck and State Center by their age distributions. While Reinbeck and State Center have similar age distributions within their populations below the poverty line, almost half of Conrad's population below the poverty line is 65 years old or over (see figure 4.10). By understanding poverty demographics, Conrad can better address poverty in the community.

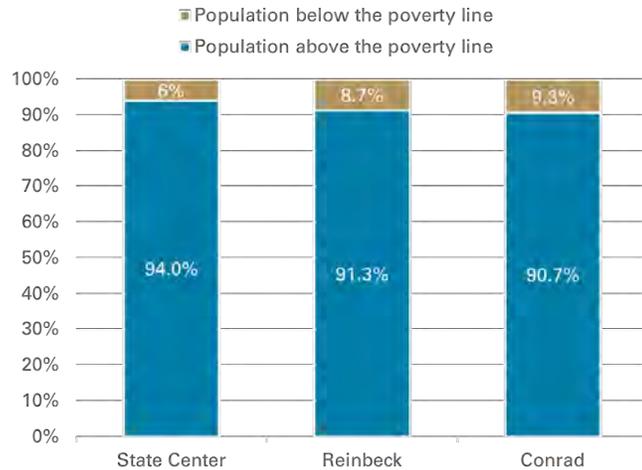


Figure 4.9. Comparison of poverty status of Conrad residents with those of Reinbeck and State Center in the last 12 months

Additional research is required into Conrad's poverty conditions, as the 65 years old and over population may be estimated as living below the poverty line for reasons other than poverty status.

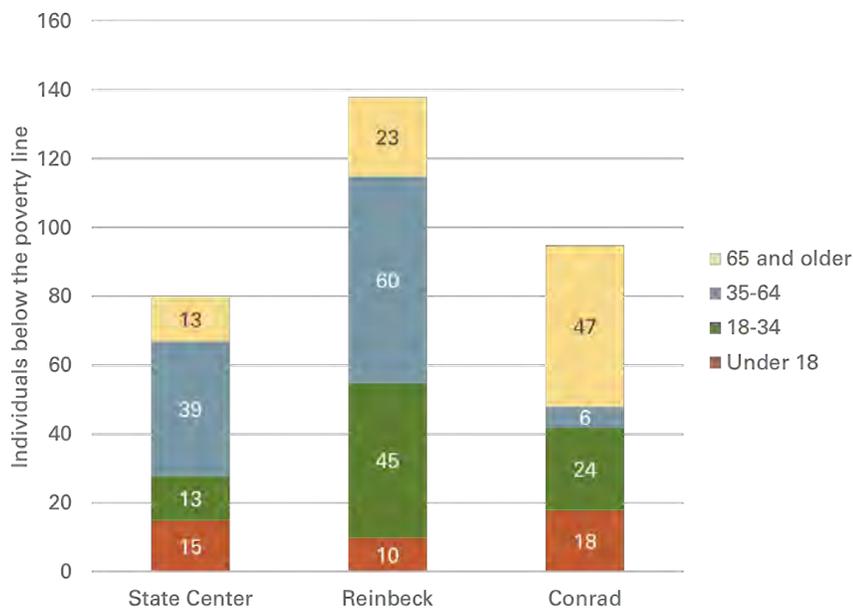


Figure 4.9. Comparison of poverty status by age of Conrad with that of Reinbeck and State Center in the last 12 months

Conclusion

A large proportion of Conrad's labor force is 25 to 44 years old, has some college or associate's degree, and is primarily employed by the manufacturing sector, as well as the educational services, health care, and social assistance sector. Not only are the two sectors primary employers of Conrad residents, but they employ dramatically more residents than other sectors. Businesses and industries belonging to this sector in Conrad are nationally connected and historically tied to the community.

Residents between the ages of 16 and 24 and residents with less than a high school degree minimally participate in the labor force and make up a larger cohort of unemployment than other age groups.

Conrad's poverty status is relatively limited and similar to nearby communities, but is unique in its age distribution, with the 65 years old and over population making up half of the population below the poverty level. Additionally, residents 65 years and older minimally participate in Conrad's labor force.

Lastly, Conrad has a household income of \$44,191, which is lower than that of the state of Iowa, Grundy Center, Reinbeck, and State Center. While those communities have experienced a median household income increase in the past few years, Conrad has experienced some decline.

The above conditions define Conrad's economy and help determine assets and challenges for the community.

Policy Recommendations

Economic challenges and community assets are determined by the economic indicators and survey responses discussed in the previous section, as well as input from steering committee meetings and community outreach events.

Assets

- Residents invested in Conrad's well-being and future growth
- Businesses and industries historically tied to Conrad
- Connection to seasonal food-truck vendors
- State and national Main Street community

Challenges

- Lack of a restaurant, recreation, and retail
- Limited job opportunities within the city
- Grants and funding resources underutilized
- Low number of 20–34 year olds
- Income and poverty conditions somewhat unknown

4. Economy

Goal 1: Increase Restaurant, Recreation, and Retail Options

Policy 1. Diversify and expand municipal funding sources to support economic development

Project 1. Apply for grants and programs

Though Conrad currently applies for grants through a number of agencies and organizations, there are specific grants and programs the city can use to their full potential in order to fund economic development projects.

Through creative proposals and regular monitoring of grants and programs offered by the agencies listed below, Conrad can use federal, state, and local grants and programs to diversify and expand municipal funding sources.

Examples of agencies and organizations offering economic development grants and programs for communities such as Conrad are:

Grants.Gov

<https://www.grants.gov>

- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Department of Commerce (DOC)

USDA – Rural Development

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/programs-services-communities-nonprofits>

- Rural Business Development Grant
- Rural Community Development Initiative Grant

Iowa Economic Development Authority

<https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/Community>

- Revitalization & Downtown Community Development Programs

Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa

<https://www.cfneia.org/affiliates/grundy-county>

- Grundy County Grant

Project 2. Increase Property Tax by < 5%

According to a community survey question for which we received 168 responses, 113 of responders would support a property tax increase of varying degrees to finance local projects or services, as illustrated in figure 4.11.

Based on the community's response, it is recommended the city hold an open house for its residents to determine what types of economic development projects for which they would be willing to see property taxes increase. The city can then consider a property tax increase of less than 5% to support the projects residents favor.

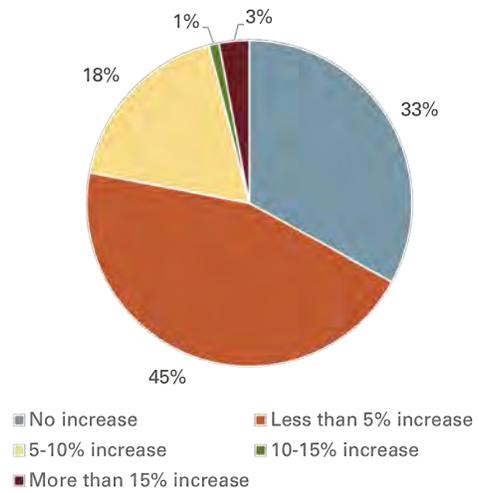


Figure 4.11. Percentage of survey respondents who support an increase in property taxes

Policy 2. Develop community-based, adaptive service and retail options

Project 1: Collaborate with property owners of vacant buildings, regional food-truck vendors, industries, banks, businesses, and individuals who might sponsor a community-based service and retail space.

Securing long-term restaurant and retail services in Conrad has proven to be a unique challenge for the community. In light of this challenge, a highly collaborative approach between city officials and property owners of vacant buildings is recommended. By working with the property owners to identify barriers to securing tenants, the city can work to lift or lighten these barriers. The city may also consider acquiring some of these vacant properties to transform them into a not-for-profit, community-based indoor market—a well-received concept at the April 17 open house event.

The community-based indoor market concept is intentionally left open-ended in this plan, as the model will depend on the opportunities and constraints within Conrad. The following are two examples of community-based indoor markets, in which communities capitalize on the success of seasonal farmers markets by creating year-round spaces for vendors. In both examples, vendors have gone on to open their own locations within the city:

Newbo City Market, Cedar Rapids, IA

<https://www.newbocitymarket.org>

- Originally city-owned, sold to non-profit
- Open Thursday-Sunday
- 12+ vendors

Rockford City Market, Rockford, IL

<http://www.rockfordcitymarket.com>

- City-owned
- Recently developed
- Year-long extension of summer farmers’ market

4. Economy

It is recommended that the city:

- Connect with food-truck vendors who appear at Conrad's annual Black Dirt Days event to determine their interest in maintaining a more permanent location in Conrad
- Contact local industries, businesses, banks, and individuals to determine their interest in sponsoring the project
- Ensure affordable housing options are available to support vendors, should they choose to live in Conrad
- Prioritize infill development in the downtown area in order to reduce vacancies and make the market a central development in Conrad

Goal 2: Boost Job Opportunities

Policy 1. Use new approaches to promote Conrad to local, regional, and state developers and industries

Project 1. Develop "quick facts" list to identify assets and needs of community, as determined by this plan

Create a list or sheet identifying the following:

- Key community assets to developers, businesses, and industries
- Key needs and demands of the community using indicators and survey responses (see figure 4.12)

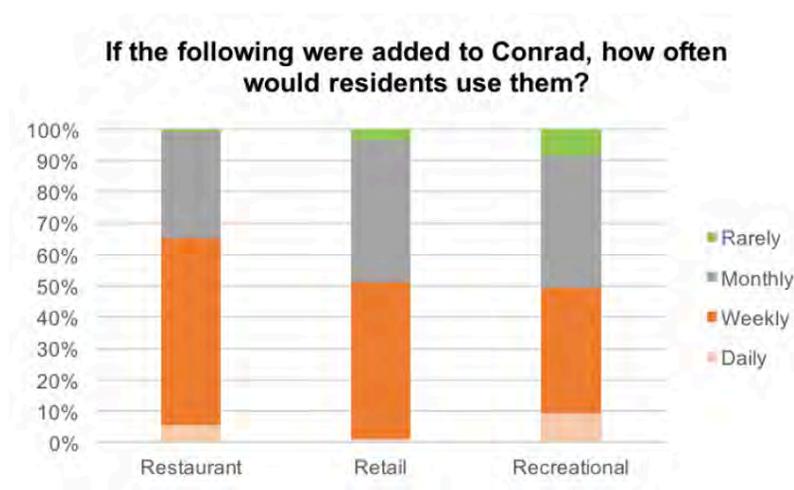


Figure 4.12. Demand for services

By having a clear idea of community needs and assets, Conrad can clearly express its vision to developers.

Project 2. Connect with local, regional, and state developers and industries

Conrad is eager to rethink the way it markets itself. It is recommended the city connect with local, regional, and state developers and industries in order to communicate its assets and needs.

The following may be considered to establish these connections:

- Distribute a "quick facts" sheet of community assets and needs to developers and industries through local and regional networks
- Develop a "For Employers" page on city website with a "quick facts" sheet and a city contact for interested developers and industries
- Hold an open house or tour day for local, regional, and state developers and industries in order to communicate the community's needs and showcase its assets

Project 3. List available building sites on the Cedar Valley Regional Partnership website

The Cedar Valley Regional Partnership website (<https://www.cedarvalleyregion.com/buildings-sites/available-sites/>) identifies available sites and key demographics within communities belonging to six counties, including Grundy County. It is recommended Conrad list available sites and buildings on the website, as well as a city contact for interested developers and industries.

Goal 3: Enhance Economic Accessibility for all Residents

Policy 1: Explore needs of 65+ population

According to economic indicators detailed on page 22, the demographics of residents under the poverty line in Conrad differ from that of nearby, similar communities. Almost half of Conrad's population under the poverty line is 65 years old or older. Though only 95 of Conrad's residents are under the poverty line, addressing the needs of the 65+ community could significantly enhance livability for residents under the poverty line. Residents 65 years old and older may be considered under the poverty line due to additional factors. It is recommended Conrad further explore the needs of this population in order to have a clear understanding of poverty conditions.

Policy 2: Prioritize affordable services when approving new businesses and industries

According to results of the community survey, residents do much of their shopping outside of Conrad even when services are offered in the city. Additionally, residents identified affordability as a key priority when making consumer decisions. It is recommended the city target developers and business owners who will offer affordable services to Conrad residents. To determine what is affordable, Conrad may consider existing costs of services in town, as well as the median household income and household income distribution.

Goal 4: Determine a Vision for Downtown

Policy 1: Create an overlay zone for the downtown area

A community's downtown is its key asset for attracting new residents, supporting the needs of young people, and fostering business growth and new investment. In order to preserve and enhance this asset, it is recommended that Conrad determine its vision for the downtown area and add an overlay zone to the area to carry out that vision. Overlay zones may contain the following design standards or bulk regulations:

- Promote building preservation
- Maintain aesthetic consistency
- Require sustainable and resilient building materials and methods
- Allocate space for outdoor seating
- Increase maximum height
- Add minimum density requirements

The goals and policies in this chapter require innovation and creativity, but are all feasible for a city of Conrad's size and character.

4. Economy

Conclusion

By finding new ways to market community assets and needs; prioritizing affordability; collaborating with residents, business owners, and the region; and developing a vision for commercial character and growth, the City of Conrad can determine and ensure its future as a locally driven, nationally connected, and livable community.

The goals of this plan—to increase restaurant, recreation, and retail options; boost job opportunities; enhance economic accessibility for all residents; and determine a vision for downtown—should serve as the guiding force for all development, commercial, and financial decisions made by the city.

This chapter supplements the following chapter on housing in order to increase overlap between individuals who work in Conrad and individuals who live in Conrad.

Introduction

As many of Iowa's rural communities are losing population, housing is an increasingly important issue. Housing is a vital community asset and can play a major role in determining population and economic growth. In order to attract and retain residents of all age groups, a community's housing stock should be well-maintained and diversified.

Due to the extensive nature of this topic, this chapter is organized differently than others in the plan. This chapter presents existing conditions and recommendations for the following sections: housing stock, home valuation, development, and accessibility. The chapter then outlines more specific goals and policies for future housing development in Conrad.

To provide high-quality housing for people of all ages, a community must determine the needs of its residents. For example, with an increasing number of senior residents in Conrad, staff may identify proximity to services as a key issue for the population that is 65 years old and over and work to develop this group's housing near community amenities and businesses.

Additionally, a city must determine the status of its housing options. For example, more than 34% of Conrad's existing housing stock was built before 1939. Our team assessed the exterior façades of all 457 residential units and compiled the data into a geographic information system (GIS) software called Esri Collector (Collector).

Housing Assessment Categories

Each housing unit was assessed on:

- Integrity of exterior materials and façades
- Condition of roofing material
- Appearance of foundation
- Overall condition of the unit from the street

All of these factors were compiled and given an overall assessment based on the unit's outside appearance.

Of the 457 total housing units in Conrad, units were characterized as follows:

- 441 Livable
- 12 Somewhat Livable
- 4 Not Livable

Maintenance subsidies and grants are potential remedies for addressing an aging housing stock. When these types of programs are utilized, the entire community benefits. Sources of this funding can come from many entities, including the United States Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Department, Community Development Block Grants, state and federal low-income housing tax credits, and more. Even when funding sources are utilized, there must be a social willingness and desire to maintain the aesthetic integrity of all properties.

5. Housing

It is noted the individuals assessing these properties are not officially certified or licensed to assess properties in the way the Grundy County Assessor is; the purpose of this collection is to show the current state of housing throughout Conrad and bring attention to areas and units that are experiencing value and structural decay.

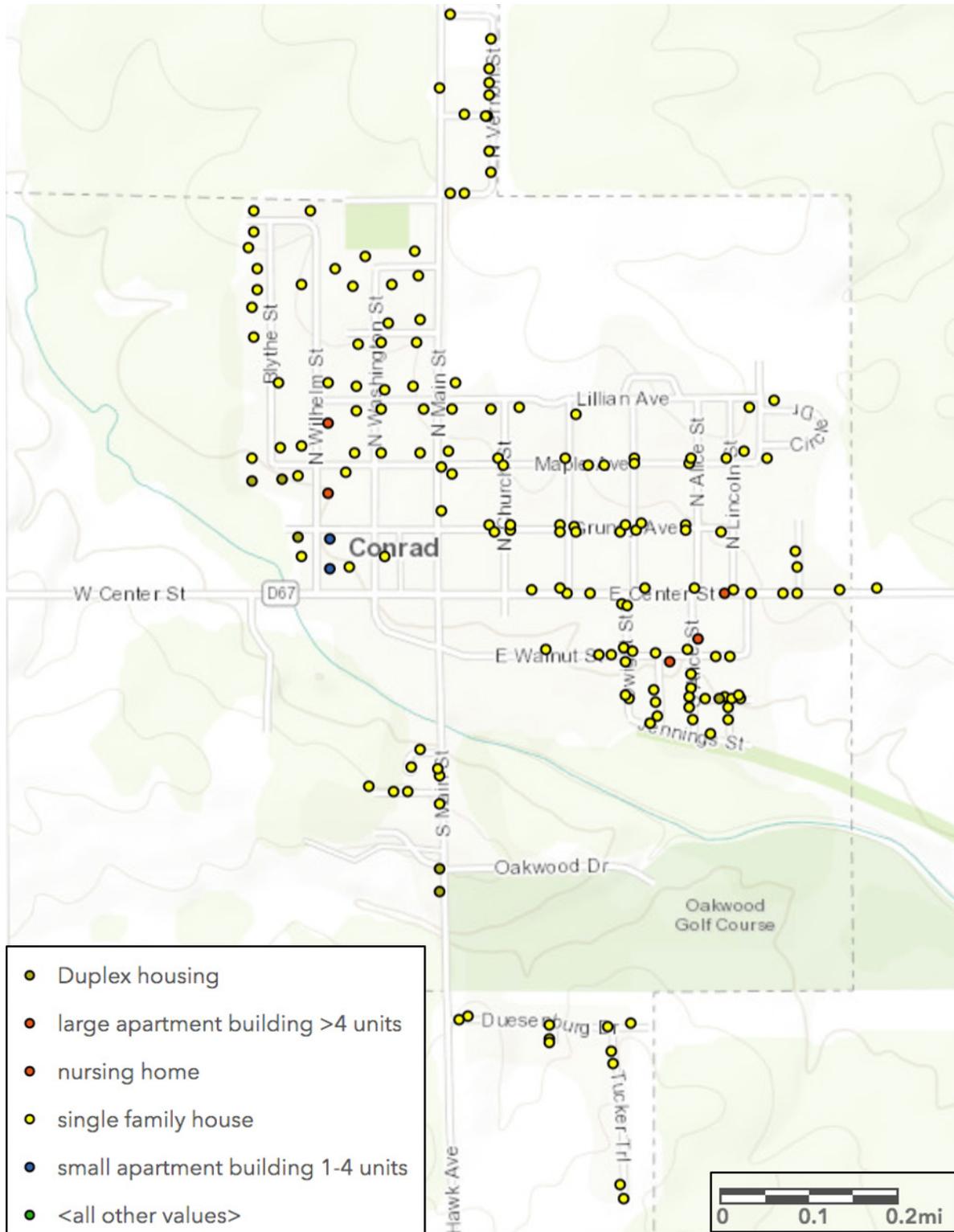


Figure 5.1. Housing assessment map

Housing Stock

Existing Conditions

According to the community survey, Conrad residents have varying visions for future housing development. Half of respondents desire more single-family housing, which is the dominant housing type in Conrad. Some of these properties are currently vacant or in disrepair.

To attract young professionals and families to Conrad, increased housing options are needed, including rental options and new or updated options. A variety of housing options ensures Conrad's housing stock is inclusive for all ages, family structures, and incomes. Manufactured housing; high-density, multi-family apartments; duplexes/triplexes; and town homes are just some housing types that can cater to a wide variety of tax-paying individuals.

The age of Conrad's housing stock must be considered. As mentioned previously, more than 34% of Conrad's housing stock was built before 1939. Consequences of an older housing stock include lower average taxable property values, a decline in community attractiveness, and more. All of these factors could persuade potential residents to look to other communities for housing. Figure 5.2 compares the age of Conrad's housing stock to that of Reinbeck and State Center, cities which are experiencing similar challenges with their housing stock.

The largest proportion of housing for all three cities was built before 1940, while none of the cities have more than seven new housing units built in or later than 2014. The creation of new housing in any of these areas will benefit the overall regional economy, but create the most overall revenue in the city in which it is



Category | Livable

- Solid foundation
- No cracks on exterior
- Minimal roof degradation



Category | Somewhat livable

- Solid foundation
- Signs of cracks on exterior
- Moderate roof degradation



Category | Not livable

- Sinking foundation or supports
- Failing exterior building materials
- Broken windows

5. Housing

located. A sustainable future for Conrad will need to include the development of new housing units and the redevelopment of current housing for all types of individuals and families.

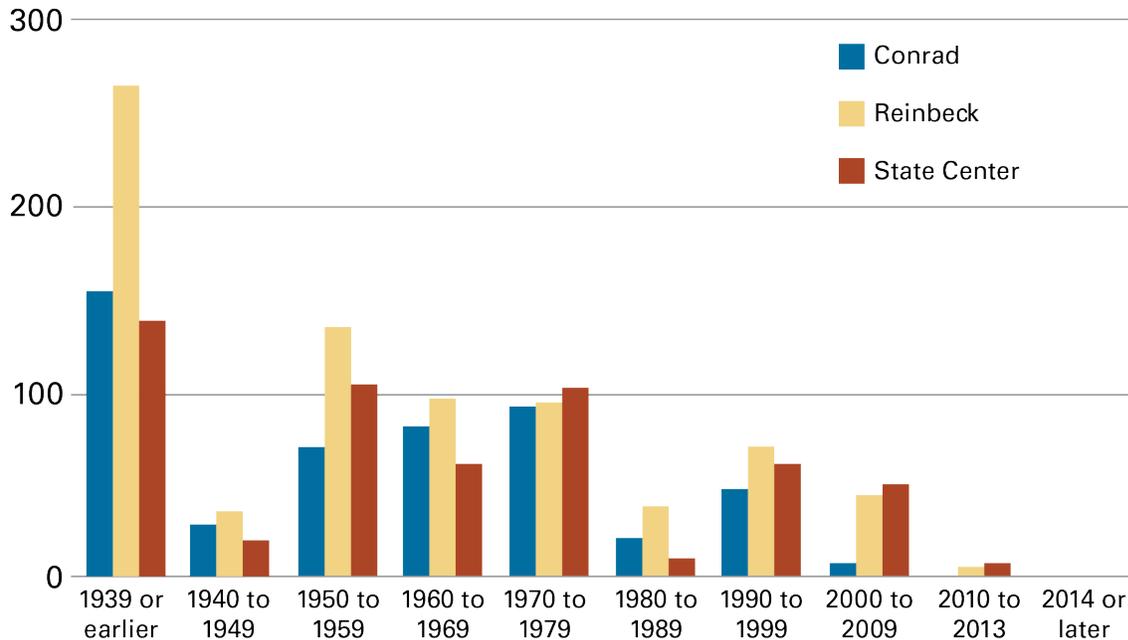


Figure 5.2. Comparison of housing stock age of Conrad with that of Reinbeck and State Center¹

Other risks to cities with a majority of older homes include the endangerment of public health, safety, and well-being. According to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), homes that were built before 1970 may contain asbestos. Common places for asbestos in older homes are:

- Insulation around pipes, furnaces, and boilers
- Asbestos vinyl tile flooring
- Floor coverings
- Spray-on ceiling insulations

More than 74% of Conrad's housing stock was built before 1970. Addressing the asbestos issue is one that many rural towns across the nation are facing.

To enhance the sustainability and viability of Conrad's housing stock, it is our recommendation that Conrad create policies that drive innovative housing solutions. Policies should encourage incentives for the development of higher density housing such as apartments, town homes (attached homes), duplexes, and triplexes. If developed, market-rate and affordable housing options would be absorbed into the market without much friction. High-density housing requires smaller lot sizes, making it ideal for towns with limited developable land, such as Conrad. Policies that encourage redevelopment and adaptive re-use of existing buildings are highly recommended. The most economically and

¹The data for these data clusters are highly variable due to gaps in the American Community Survey data collection methods. The housing team did not integrate public comments on housing developed during these times as part of following best practices. The most accurate housing data can be obtained from the city clerk.

ecologically sustainable building is one that is already built. Adaptive re-use of vacant buildings also often results in creative housing solutions.

Conrad's current housing stock caters well to its aging population but could be improved. Most aging individuals want to own or rent a property with lower maintenance, lower square footage on the floor plate, and all amenities located on the first level to reduce the use of stairs. The preceding design elements are usually associated with single-family housing, which does not fare well with aging individuals. Age-friendly housing caters to all individuals and age groups, including retirees, workforce-aged couples, and young professionals. It would be in the best interest of Conrad to create policies that drive development for new, age-inclusive housing types.

Model City: Woodbine, Iowa

The city of Woodbine, Iowa, is a model city for successful housing planning. The town is similar in size to Conrad—about 1,400 people—most of its housing was developed before 1940, it has sizable industry, and is an Iowa Main Street community. When industry in the area started to expand, the town conducted a housing study as part of its future improvement plan. The plan identified conditions of Woodbine's housing stock and recommended infill development of downtown upper-story housing, senior housing, and duplexes/triplexes.

The plan also called for the creation of a Housing Construction Technology Building Program, which allows students to gain on-site skills in the home rehabilitation and construction industry. The community is now an Iowa Blue Zones Project Designated Community. The implementation of its housing plan, along with other capital improvements, is spurring economic development, retaining job talent, and enhancing quality of life.

Figure 5.4. Case study: Woodbine, IA

Recommendations

No housing stock can avoid the environmental factors that cause depreciation. However, the following recommendations will help mitigate some of the regenerative effects caused over time. Though not specific goals, policies or projects, the following are suggestions that may help guide future housing decisions in Conrad. Some recommendations are applicable to other topics and may be repeated.

Recommendation 1. Develop vacant and abandoned parcels

Recommendation 2. Redevelop livable and somewhat livable housing units

Home Valuation

Existing Conditions

Home value fluctuates greatly because of the factors that determine it and the buyers in the market at any given time. These factors include neighborhood comparables, location, home size and usable space, age and condition, upgrades and updates, the local market, economic indicators, and interest rates. With minimal comparables within city limits, understanding the true value of the homes in

5. Housing

Conrad is rather difficult. Instead, reasonable comparables are in State Center and Reinbeck as seen in graphics throughout the chapter.

Location is an important factor in the home appraisal process. Considerations include quality of local schools; employment opportunities; and proximity to retail, recreation, and entertainment services. Conrad residents take pride in their quality schools, but the community lacks employment opportunities and services. Conrad, as well as State Center and Reinbeck, is also facing the issue of an aging housing stock that negatively affects it. One home in a lesser condition than others on a block has the ability to depreciate surrounding homes, so regular maintenance, upgrades and updates are a necessity.

According to 2017 estimates, the median value of housing stock for owner-occupied housing is approximately \$123K for Conrad, \$109K for State Center, and \$128.9K for Reinbeck. There was a significant increase in median housing value from 2011 to 2017 for Conrad from \$100,600 to its current assessed value. A positive slope in a data cluster indicates a decrease in the number of homes in a given valuation range.

The goal is to see negative slopes—which indicate an overall increase in the number of houses in a given valuation range—in the higher-valuation ranges and positive slopes in the lower-valuation ranges. In the \$80,000–89,999 value range, there is a negative slope because the quantity of homes in that range decreased. On the other hand, the quantity of homes in the \$200,000–249,999 range has increased. (See figure 5.6.) An increase such as this is positive for the community, but has an even bigger impact since it is one of the higher value ranges.

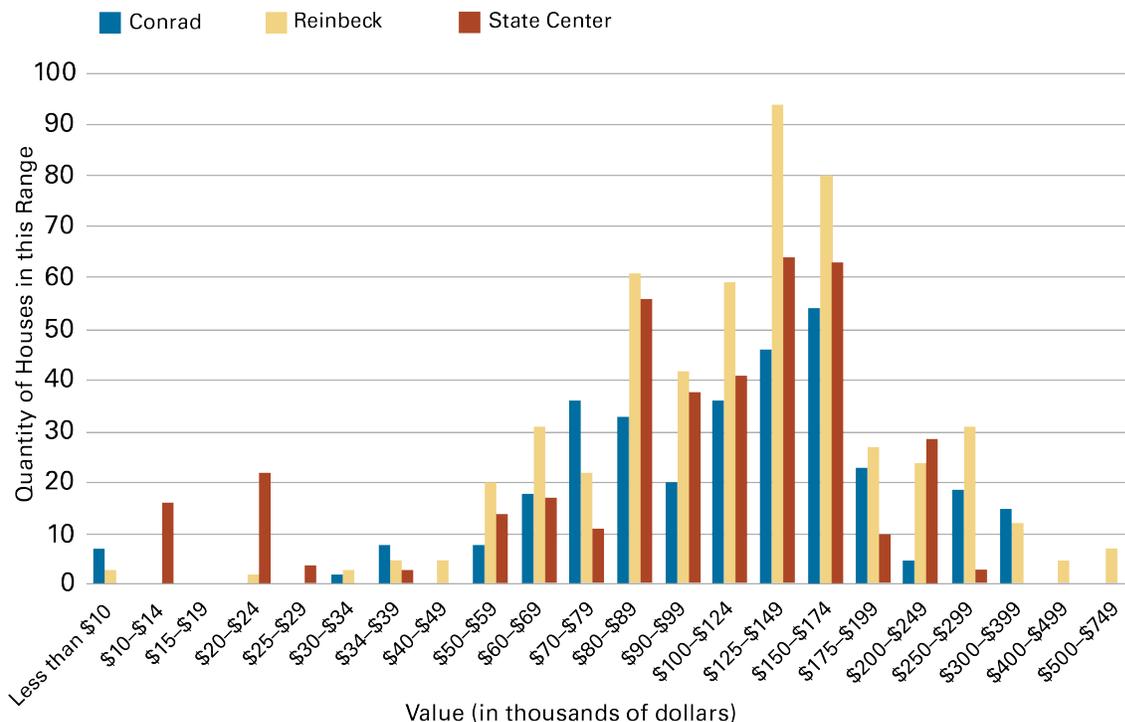


Figure 5.5. Comparison of home values in Conrad with those of Reinbeck and State Center

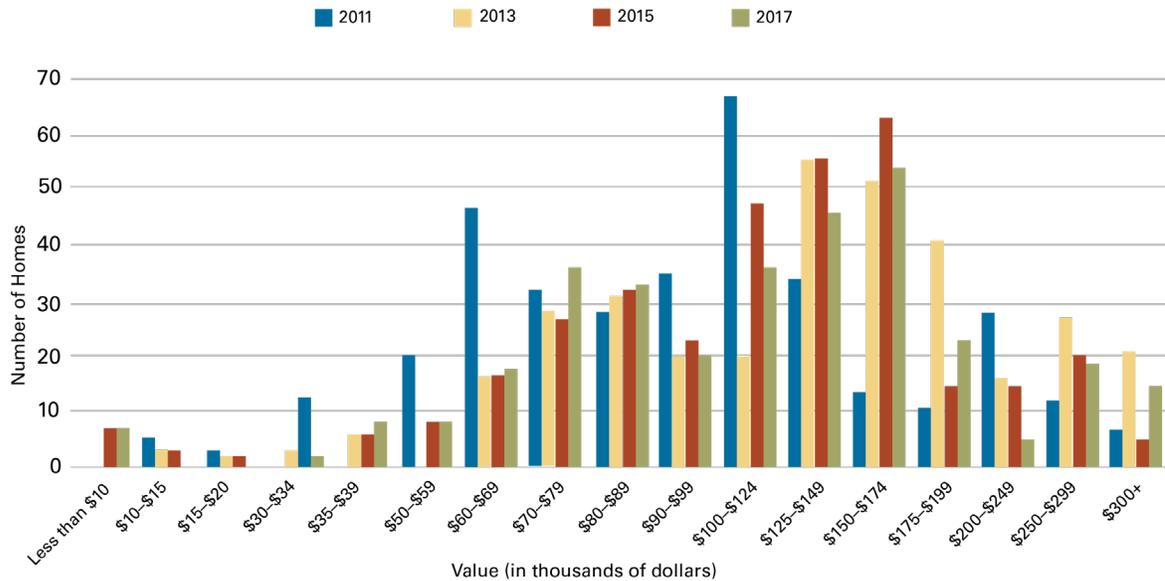


Figure 5.6. Home valuation for Conrad, 2011–2017

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Increase multifamily and high-density housing

This recommendation offers value to all communities because its cash flow per property is greater with multiple paying tenants on one lot, while retaining its long-term value. These types of housing units are less subjective to market-price changes versus single-family housing, as well. This type of housing offers features such as low maintenance, affordability, and efficient living.



Figure 5.7. Duplex example

To continue growing Conrad, multi-family housing is essential because there is little room to expand. Building up instead of out will allow more properties to become available for people considering making the move to Conrad. Building up is an efficient use of undeveloped land, since the city needs to construct the greatest number of units possible.

Recommendation 2. Develop vacant and abandoned parcels

Vacant lots and abandoned houses are not generating revenue for the community, but are of high value. Smart development of quality homes is needed to ensure that the land is generating money, rather than sitting vacant.

5. Housing

Recommendation 3. Build single-family housing that is value sensitive

Approximately 81% of Conrad's housing stock is single-family. Typically, smaller communities are majority single-family, so Conrad is no different in this ratio. This type of housing offers features unlike other types of housing that include bigger yards, no shared walls or floors, and privacy. It is important that construction on the few remaining lots in Conrad is done with value in mind. Craftsman and ranch-style homes offer design flexibility to each owner instead of the bland model homes that make blocks repetitive. Additionally, flexible design fits the needs of various age demographics.



Figure 5.8. Ranch-style example

Development

Development is the process in which cities engage in planning, organizing, and controlling the types of housing built in the community. This process usually takes some time to reach completion, with some projects taking up to 20 years to complete. This is often dictated by the demand within the community and/or current trends in the surrounding area. Looking at national trends, larger metropolitan areas have seen an increase in population and growth. This challenges smaller communities to find new ways to attract people and maintain current residency.

There are a variety of housing development approaches communities can use. Often, a combination of approaches is required. Projects can focus on providing single-family homes, multi-family homes, and/or a combination of these projects. Single-family homes can provide a mix of residential uses, depending on what the community wishes to achieve. They can be built as starter homes for growing families, built as larger homes for those who have sound financial security, or even built as flexible rental units.

As for multi-family homes, they can provide a wider range of housing options than those from single-family homes. Multi-family housing can consist of two units or more. This allows communities the ability to have higher-density housing in specific locations, reducing the size of impermeable surfaces housing units may create and reducing the required infrastructure to adequately support them.

Our team analyzed the types of housing available, the quality of housing units, and the assessed value of the homes in Conrad. To perform this analysis, we collected a variety of data. Data from the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS), our own assessment of properties, and the community survey and engagement is detailed on the following page.

Existing Conditions | ACS

There are a total of 457 housing units in Conrad. Approximately 72% are owner-occupied, roughly 7% higher than the national average. This indicates that there is a small percentage of rental housing for those who live in or wish to move to Conrad. With an already small pool of housing, this could be a potential problem for the future. Younger families wishing to move to Conrad or stay in the area may move to neighboring communities for more affordable, rental housing.

Existing Conditions | Assessment

During our physical assessment of the community, we wanted to analyze the current condition of housing units, the types of housing, and the accessibility of these units. Overall, Conrad's housing stock has been well-maintained. In a comparison of other small communities, those homes built during the post-World War II period and earlier did not show deterioration, which is commonly seen with units from that time period.

Existing Conditions | Engagement

At our outreach event, residents agreed that there is an issue with the number, types, and affordability of available housing units in Conrad. The community survey echoed these concerns. In the survey, 38% of respondents indicated that the availability of quality housing was the biggest concern facing Conrad's housing situation and 19% of respondents said that availability of options was the biggest concern. Seventeen percent believe that Conrad faces a combination of problems (see figure 5.8).

Respondents were also asked what types of residential properties they want to see developed in Conrad (see figure 5.9). Fifty-five percent want more single-family homes and 21% want more town homes or duplexes, indicating that majority of respondents wish to maintain the current development trends in the community.

Housing Types by 2017 ACS - Five Year	
Owner Occupied	
Detached Home	312
Attached Home	14
Mobile Home	4
Combined	330
Renter Occupied	
Detached Home	56
Attached Home	55
Mobile Home	16
Combined	127
Total	
Detached Home	368
Attached Home	69
Mobile Home	20
Combined	457

Figure 5.9. Owner- and renter-occupied housing in Conrad

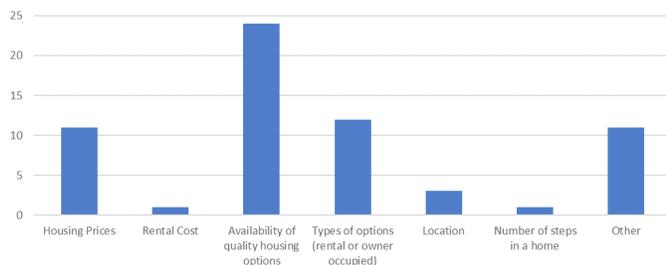


Figure 5.10. Problems with Conrad's housing situation indicated by survey respondents

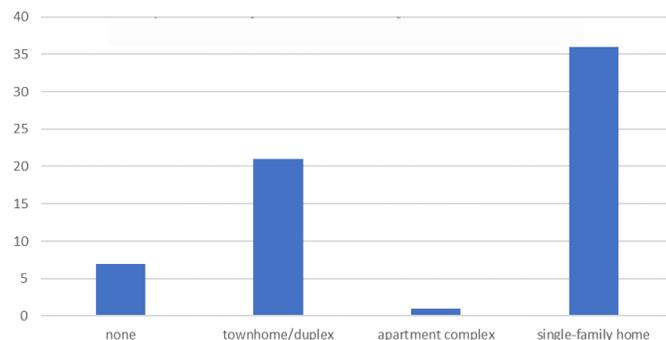


Figure 5.11. Types of residential properties desired among survey respondents

5. Housing

Conrad has a limited amount of multi-family housing stock, which may dissuade younger individuals from moving to the city. More housing is needed, but there are various elements to consider before development can begin.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Consider the city's suitable site locations for future development

After assessing the current development trends in Conrad, we concluded outward growth is not the most feasible option for the town. Land uses on parcels that could be sites for multi-family expansion are not currently compatible with multi-family use. In the future, infill development should be utilized to develop multi-family housing. This does not eliminate the potential for expansion, but merely prioritizes infill development.

Infill development would allow the community to develop at a consistent growth rate, within the service area of its existing infrastructure and utilities. Changes to zoning and land use policies are recommended to encourage this type of development.

Based on Conrad's zoning map, there is currently one location zoned for multi-family residential. This does not provide an adequate and diverse selection of options for high-density housing. Our recommendation is to rezone the northern area of Conrad to low to medium density and to apply subdivision regulations that would allow for a variety of housing options in one location.

We recommend phasing development in three stages: 1) develop medium-density housing, 2) develop low-density housing, and 3) perform further analysis on the future needs of the area.

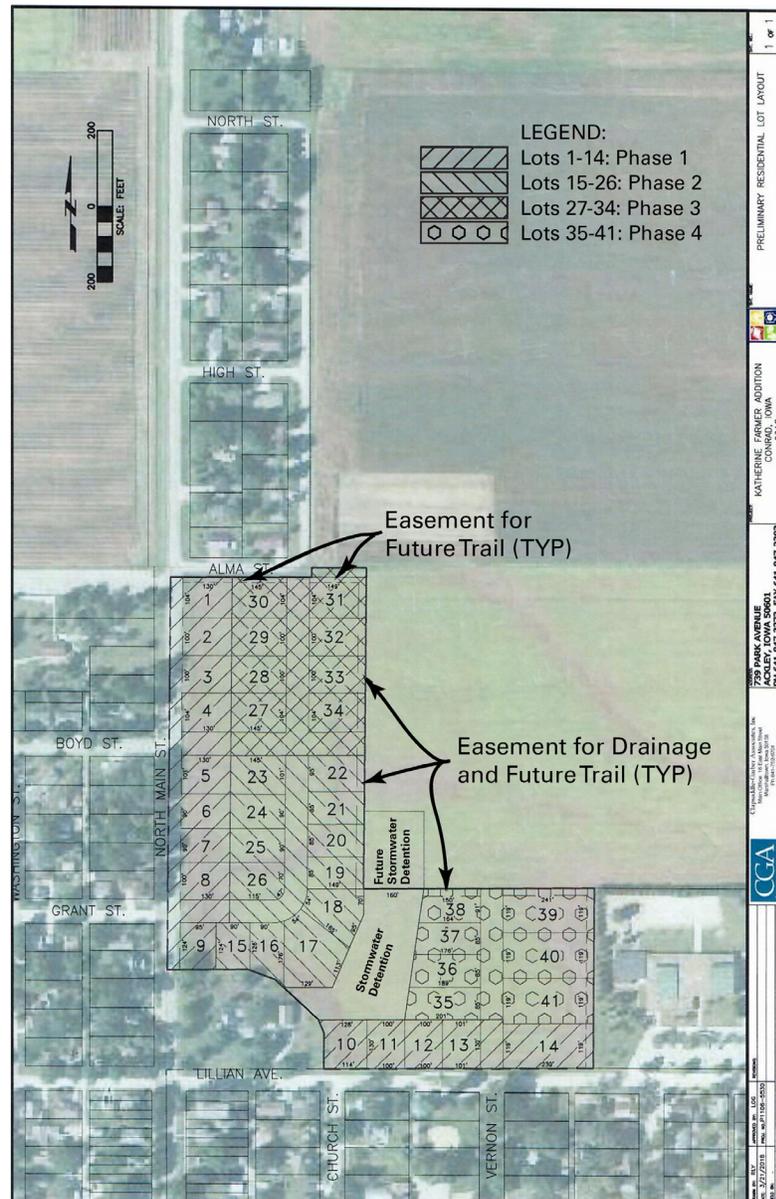


Figure 5.12. Site plan for north side development

Recommendation 2. Provide incentives to housing developers and utilize grants and programs to cover costs

Incentives for future development in Conrad are needed. It can be challenging for a small community to attract experienced developers to the region without incentives. Some of the most common tools are tax incentives. Tax incentives can be used to provide needed services, ranging from community amenities to affordable housing and needed infrastructure. Providing these services would help reduce the cost of specific requirements and allow for developers to reach their target goals.

There are a combination of state and federal programs that can be used. One program is the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), which provides financial assistance to cover some of the cost of construction. The Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) also offers a number of programs for homeowners, which local officials can encourage residents to use. IFA programs can help new or experienced homeowners purchase a home. Support can range from down-payment assistance to fixed-rate mortgages, often using partnerships with local lenders to maximize community benefits.

Recommendation 3. Implement zoning or subdivision regulations to ensure residential developments support community goals

Conrad can implement zoning and subdivision regulations to ensure residential developments support Conrad's goals for future growth. It is recommended that Conrad utilize Iowa's smart-growth principles to guide its approach to regulations. Smart growth is a set of strategies used to curb suburban sprawl, often focused on economic stability, social diversity, and the natural environment. These strategies would provide focus within the community and reduce unnecessary expansion that would put a strain on the current infrastructure. The Iowa Smart Planning, with the Rebuild Iowa Office (RIO) can help with using these principles.

Providing affordable and accessible housing options for present and future residents of Conrad is vital to maintaining stable community development. Affordability is one of the leading issues facing home buyers and renters across the world. A wide array of factors determine housing affordability, including construction date, market pressures, and societal trends. There are ways Conrad can address current accessibility issues and prevent housing cost burden.

Of Conrad's owner-occupied homes, more than half are three-bedroom homes. This can be expected because Conrad's median family size is 2.9. A three-bedroom home caters to the spatial needs of a small family or a couple. More than 90% of the owner-occupied units in Conrad are single-family, detached homes.

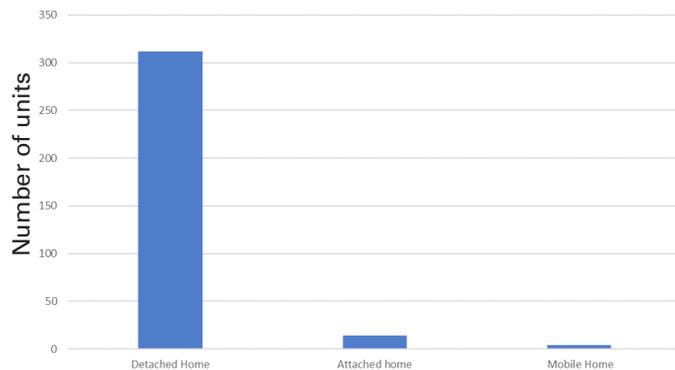


Figure 5.13. Total owner-occupied housing

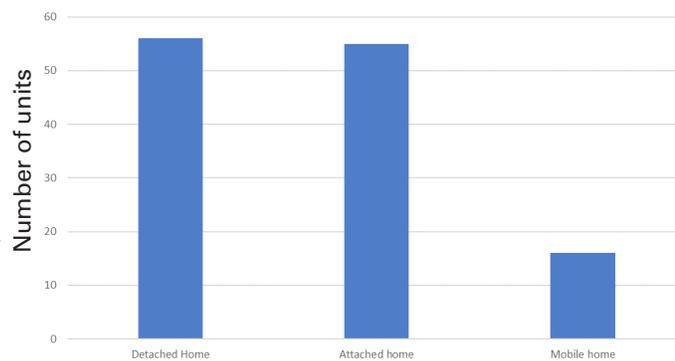


Figure 5.14. Total renter-occupied housing

5. Housing

With a strong base in owner-occupied housing, the abilities to rent in Conrad are limited. Figures 5.13 and 5.14 show how Conrad's current renter market is much more diverse in housing-unit type than its owner-occupied counterpart.

Accessibility

Existing Conditions | Affordability

Detached and attached units make up a majority of rentable units, while mobile homes compose around 13%. Rentable units can often offer a solution to cities that have limited space to grow by increasing the density of housing units per unit area. These types of units can include duplexes, triplexes, and multi-family apartment units. Higher-density housing types often require less maintenance by residents. From busy, working professionals to older residents who may not desire to maintain a property full time, higher-density housing can be attractive.

Though some Conrad residents expressed their concerns about introducing apartments or other high-density housing to their town, new policies that favor its creation will fill a void in the current market and create a more inclusive community for all.

Existing Conditions | Age Inclusivity

There are many ways to assess how housing suits the needs of present and future generations. AARP's Livability Index can be used to rank overall livability of neighborhoods, cities, counties, or states on a scale of 1–100. The score includes seven livability categories: housing, neighborhood, transportation, environment, health, engagement, and opportunity.

At the community level, Conrad's AARP Livability Index is 59, with an overall housing score of 58 (see figure 5.15). The overall livability indices for Iowa and Grundy County are 57 and 60, respectively. Having relatively similar values to those of the state and county indicates that Conrad is keeping up with the rest of the county and state in regard to livability.

Studies from AARP indicate that many seniors want to stay in their homes and communities for as long as they can. Currently, more than 38% of Conrad residents are older than 38 years old, a number growing at a rate almost three times higher than the national average.

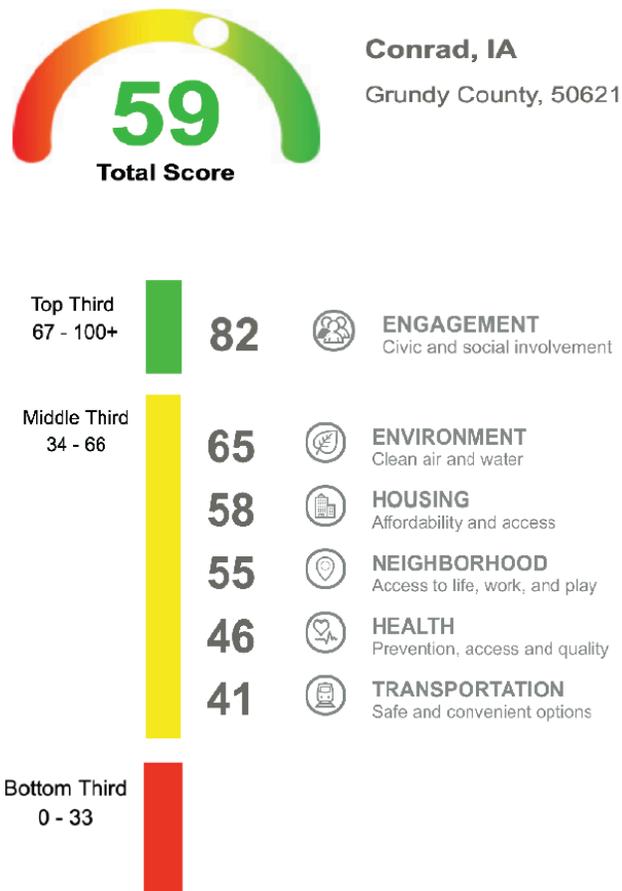


Figure 5.15. Conrad's AARP livability rankings

5. Housing

Understanding the current state of Conrad’s housing stock in relation to age is helpful in creating housing that anticipates the future needs of residents. This can lead to an inclusive, supportive, and thriving community for all ages.

According to the US Census, more than 43% of housing units in the Conrad have zero-step entrances. In addition to entrances, steps in a house can cause challenges to older residents. Conrad can accommodate these residents by providing policies that drive new, step-free housing units. In regard to single-family homes, ranch style is a great option. These types of homes provide all of the amenities necessary for people to carry out their daily tasks without going up or down steps.

Residents who attended the open house were polled to determine how age-inclusive their homes are. Figure 5.16 shows the results of the 10 individuals polled. These results indicate that Conrad’s housing stock is favorable for absorbing an aging population, namely members of the Baby Boomer generation. However, the sample size for this survey was small. Further analysis will be necessary to ensure reliable data on how age-friendly Conrad’s housing is.

First Floor Amenities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Kitchen Sink*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10
Refrigerator*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10
Stove*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10
Shower*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10
Toilet*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10
Sink	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10
Bathtub*		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	9
Stairless to Garage				x	x	x	x			x	5
Front Door Access*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10
Laundry*	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	9
Master Bedroom*	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	9
Walk-In Closet*	x			x	x		x	x	x	x	7
Stand-In Closet*	x		x	x		x	x	x	x		7

Figure 5.16. Age-friendly housing amenities survey results

Recommendations

One way Conrad can ensure the viability of its housing stock is to develop policies that encourage diverse housing options for all age cohorts, which will attract many different types of people to live in the area. Indirect benefits of attracting all age groups and income levels to one’s community include increased art and cultural inclusion, the introduction of new businesses, and an overall higher tax base.

Recommendation 1. Prioritize affordability in future development decisions

It is recommended that a developer using tax credits use the 60% Area Median Income (AMI) as a baseline qualification for future tenants. This recommendation is based on the analysis of the most current data and polling residents of all ages and demographics. Combined with implemented knowledge of real estate trends and planning policy, recommendations in this chapter consider the need for affordability and accessibility. Together, the ultimate goal of these recommendations is to maintain a high quality of life for all residents, while securing future revenue streams for the city.

5. Housing

Recommendation 2. Provide incentives for development and redevelopment of housing for all age demographics and familial status

Recommendation 3. Conduct further housing analysis on the number of steps in Conrad homes

Recommendation 4. With the remaining lots in Conrad, generate a more flexible housing stock for current and future residents

Strategic housing design can accommodate numerous demographics and act as a solution to minimize vacant parcels. A complex such as the one pictured in figure 5.17 can offer one-level homes for residents who are older in age, face challenges moving around, or simply desire minimal lifestyles. The middle units have more rooms for people looking for a low-maintenance starter home or just a larger home that is low maintenance in general. The low-maintenance aspect is especially important in construction today, as people in the market are highly attracted to that amenity.



Figure 5.17. Example of a diversified housing complex

A community might also encourage developers to use universal design elements. Universal design is the design of products and environments accessible to all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. Concepts such as equitable use, flexibility in use, simple and intuitive use, perceptible information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and overall size and space are considered in this design concept. Universal design should follow the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance guidelines.

Features in these types of homes include:

- Zero-step entry
- One-story living
- Wide doorways and hallways for wheelchair entry
- Extra floor space for wheelchair turns
- Floors and bathtubs with non-slip surfaces

- Handrails on stairways and grab bars in bathrooms
- Thresholds that are flush with the floor, which eliminates tripping and allows enhanced wheelchair mobility
- Good lighting
- Lever door handles and rocker light switches

Considering the elements above will create a simpler and more intuitive design and reduces hazards.



Figure 5.18. Example of an age-flexible, single-family home

For example, The Lifelong Housing Demonstration Home, built in 2014 by W.L. Moore Construction at just a little more than 2,200 square feet, is a single-story home that promotes aging in place. The residence is certified to the Rogue Valley Council of Governments Lifelong Housing standard and is a certified platinum Earth Advantage Home. Design features include a zero-step entry, wide doorways and hallways, a spacious floor plan, an ADA-compliant kitchen, accessible closets and bathrooms, and more.



Figure 5.19. Lifelong housing demonstration home, Twin Creeks Development in Central Point, OR

5. Housing

While Conrad does not necessarily have the land available to build these single-family style units, the universal design elements can be easily replicated in other types of housing.

Policy Recommendations

The following is a condensed version of the policy recommendations discussed in the preceding sections. Some policies apply to multiple goals.

Goal 1: Boost Home Values

With an aging housing stock, it is important to keep up with regular maintenance and improve unlivable housing stock.

Policy 1. Enhance neighborhood character and increase block value

Project 1. Divert city funds to demolish or retrofit dilapidated housing units

Goal 2: Increase Housing Density

Considering the lack of land left to develop within Conrad, high-density housing is the best option for the city and developers to undertake. The manufactured housing development is a prime area for redevelopment and should be done so with high-density housing units.

Policy 1. Develop Multi-Family Housing

Project 1. Create enticing opportunities for multi-family housing developers.

Project 2. Identify suitable sites for the development of new housing units.

Project 3. Introduce new town homes, apartments, duplexes, and triplexes to the housing stock.

Goal 3: Increase Overall Housing Development

Increased residential development creates more opportunities for a community to expand and provides a wider tax base, allowing for increased investment in the community. Additionally, a community must provide a diversity of housing options to be inclusive and adapt to future changes.

Policy 1. Consider Suitable Sites

Project 1. Analyze current sites and provide a wider variety of housing density.

Policy 2. Incentivize Development

Project 1. Provide tax incentives to developers and prioritize new housing in the Capital Improvement Plan.

Policy 3. Create new development regulations and guidelines

Project 1. Implement new zoning and subdivision regulations that support community development goals.

Project 2. Use Iowa Smart Growth principles to determine regulations.

Goal 4: Enhance Affordability

Rent and mortgage payments are often a burden on individuals and families. Ensuring housing affordability will help create a more equitable housing market for Conrad.

Policy 1. Increase rental units

Project 1. Post a request for proposals (RFP) for rental housing unit development for bid to the public.

Project 2. Incentivize high-density rental development.

Project 3. Diversify rental options by adding rental town homes, apartments, duplexes, and triplexes.

Policy 2. Develop affordable owner-occupied housing

Project 1. Attract new condominium and small single-family development.

Project 2. Maintain the value of the current housing stock by using grants and other funding sources.

Goal 5: Improve Accessibility

With an aging population, it is crucial to include age-friendly design elements in housing developments. By developing housing to be age-inclusive, Conrad can ensure housing is accessible to all residents.

Policy 1. Assess Current Housing Conditions

Project 1. Create a housing plan that comprehensively assesses housing elements and identifies specific housing goals tailored to data provided in this plan.

Project 2. Find buildings suitable for adaptive re-use as housing projects.

Conclusion

Overall, Conrad's housing stock is fairing well for its current residents. However, providing quality, livable housing units for future generations must be a priority. The forward-thinking, all-inclusive goals, policies, and projects in this chapter have been created for the unique conditions and capabilities of Conrad. Recommendations include providing housing for a wide variety of demographics, implementing smart-growth principles, and harboring partnerships with local- and state-level programs.

Throughout this chapter, the housing analysis team has provided detailed analysis to help Conrad ensure housing stability; healthy, sustainable growth; neighborhood attractiveness; and inclusivity.

6. Community Services and Facilities

Introduction

Connectivity, mobility, and inclusivity are important for Conrad to maintain its small-town charm, while allowing people of all ages to independently move about their daily lives. Conrad is a town that values families, as well as young adults entering the workforce. These values are translated into a town that maintains and enhances its services such as sidewalks, roads, and other facilities to continue to increase the safety of all residents.

The Conrad city government is responsible for a wide range of essential services for the community. Sewer, water, park and recreation facility maintenance, and road work are just a few of those services. The quality, efficiency, and equity of these services have a direct relationship to quality of life for residents. While each of these services is individually managed and monitored, they are considered in the comprehensive plan to ensure investment in these services continues and serves the overall vision for the future of Conrad. With goals for new housing development in the future, it is essential to understand the current conditions of the community's infrastructure and needs for quality expansion. The overarching themes of the plan for these services are quality, efficiency, and equity.

Existing Conditions

Conrad has done a good job monitoring its water, sewer and stormwater facilities in terms of maintenance and upkeep. Conrad often works with an engineering consulting firm for expertise on those matters.

Water

In 2013, the City of Conrad had a water quality report conducted because its water sources, the Mississippian and the Pleistocene aquifers, were identified to be susceptible to contamination. The city has done tests of its water system to monitor the contamination level. So far there have been no contaminants to cause the city to work on the water system. However, this is something to keep in mind as time goes on.

Sewer

Conrad's sewer lines were recently re-lined in 2010 by Ryken Engineering. Not all pipes were re-lined during the project.

Stormwater

Stormwater management has become a concern in the state of Iowa in recent years because of increased heavy rainfall. In 2013, Ryken Engineering investigated Conrad's current system and identified weaker points in the system. Recommendations were made to help alleviate the weaker points so the system can perform properly. It is recommended Conrad consider alternative stormwater management facilities to supplement its system. These alternative facilities are essential for any new developments that would add strain to the existing system because they would help add capacity to the existing pipes. The City Council should consider this project with the potential new housing development on the north side of town.

6. Community Services and Facilities

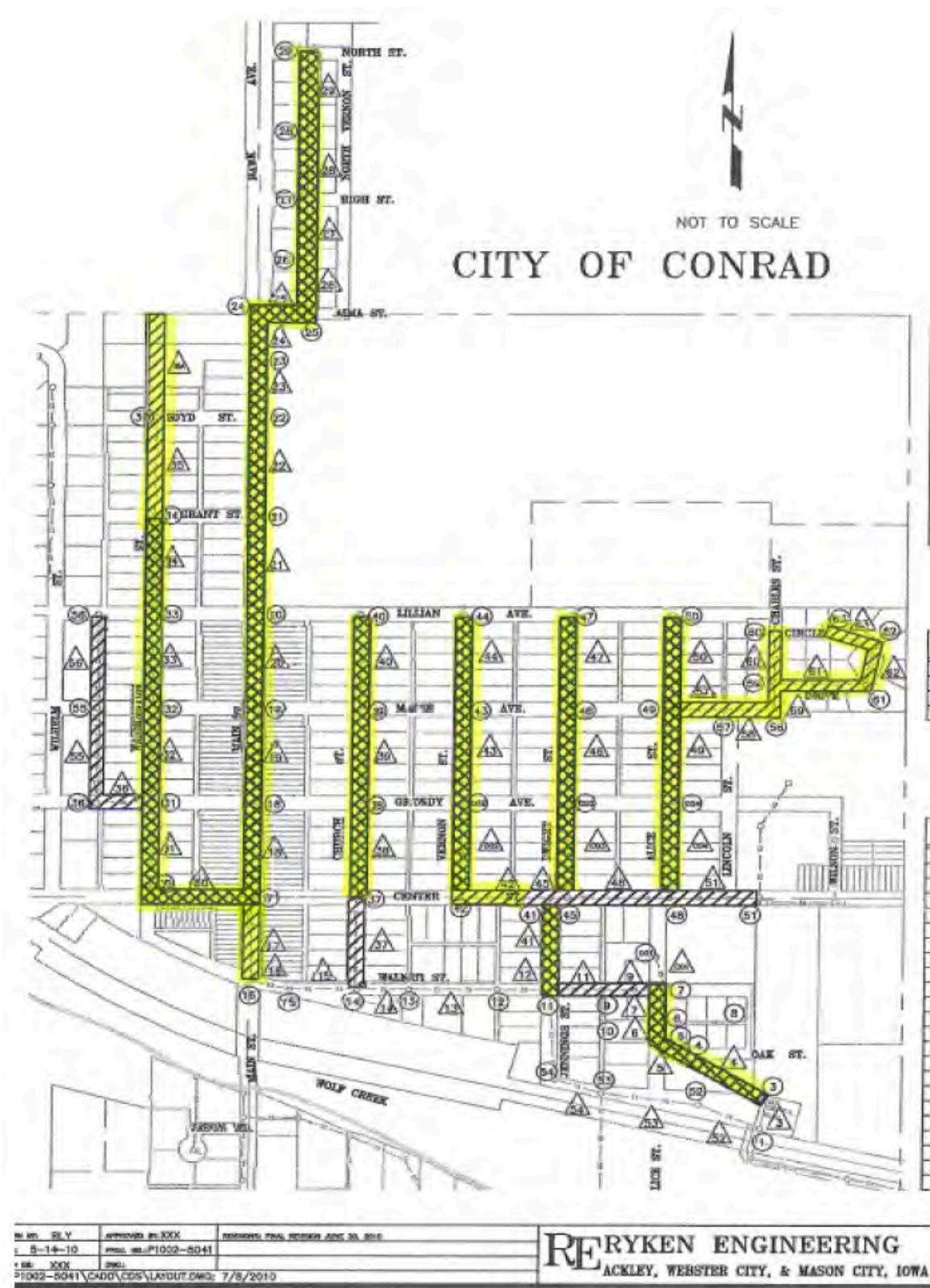


Figure 6.1. Map of Conrad sanitary sewer relining

6. Community Services and Facilities

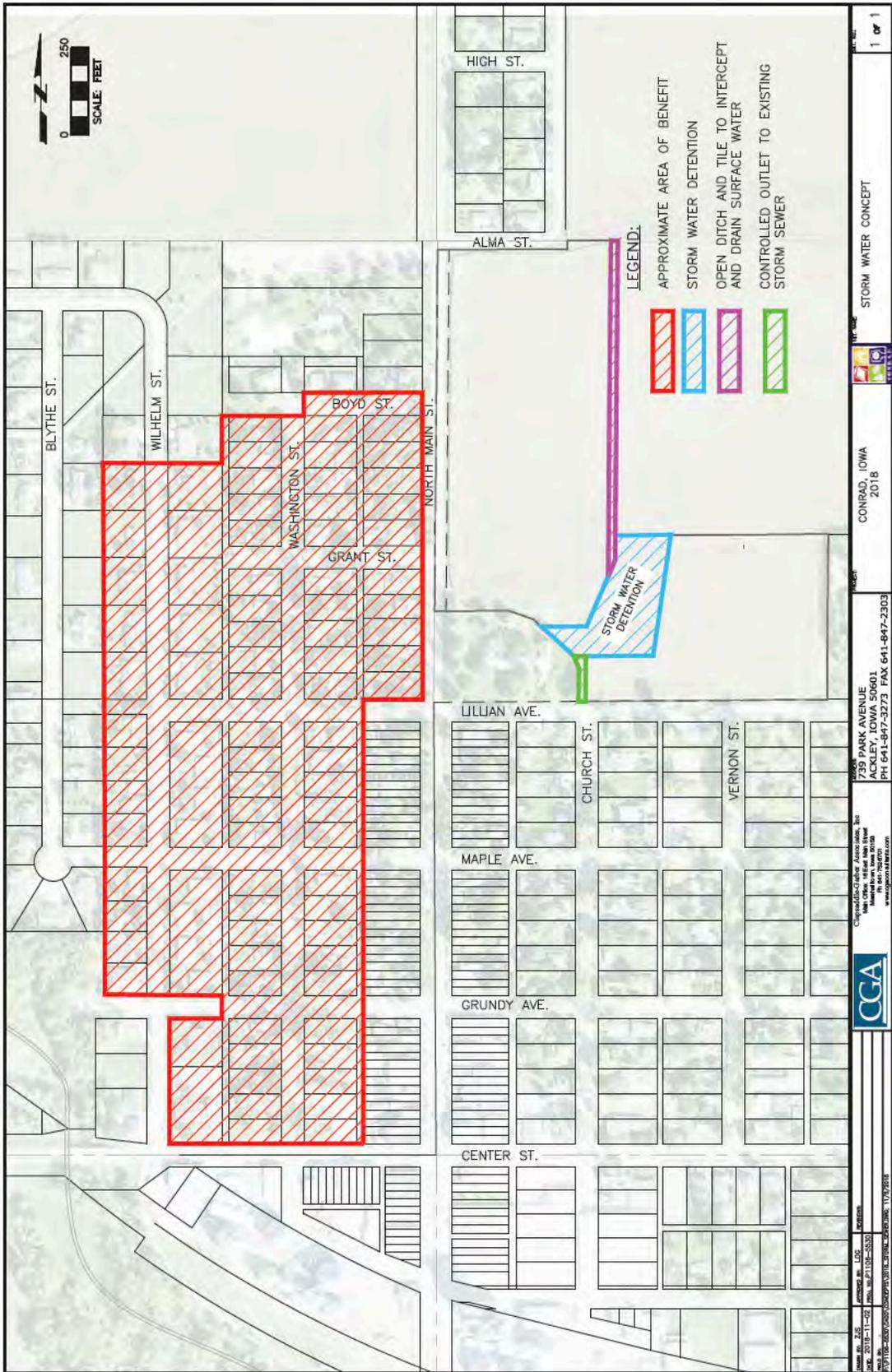


Figure 6.2. Conrad stormwater map

6. Community Services and Facilities

Sidewalks

The conditions of all the sidewalks in Conrad were assessed and mapped indicating where there are areas of decay as well as where there was recent maintenance or improvement. Figure 6.3 shows a rubric that helped determine how each sidewalk was assigned its condition. Overall, most of the sidewalks were assessed to be in fair condition because there were some visible age and wear that could interfere with the mobility of some residents. Lines in red are assessed as poor condition. Areas marked with grey lines are labeled as unusable because there are currently no sidewalks; however, there is the capacity to have sidewalks in those locations. (See figure 6.4.)

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Unusable
Wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair	Wheelchairs can utilize with little difficulty	Wheelchair would have some difficulty moving smoothly across	No possible way for wheelchair to move across the sidewalk	
No cracks, or uneven portions in cement	No cracks and is almost level between each portion of cement	Some areas where walk is uneven/cracked	Numerous crack/ uneven sections and chunks of cement missing	No existing sidewalk
Appears to be newly poured	Worn but well maintained	Does not look like its had any maintenance in awhile	Looks very worn with no maintenance	

Figure 6.3. Criteria for rating sidewalks

Most of the existing sidewalk infrastructure is in the center of town and abruptly ends as it nears the edges of Conrad. Fifty-four percent of the entire town has sidewalks and the other 46% does not.

In the past, newer housing developments did not include sidewalks because the city code does not require sidewalks for developments.

In addition, while this feature was not assessed or placed on a map, it was noted that many of the intersections within Conrad, excluding Main Street, are not ADA compliant in the sense that there are no bump-outs or slight slopes where sidewalks meet the street. Instead, many of the sidewalks at intersections have steep slopes to the street, or simply end at the curb making it impossible for residents in wheelchairs or who have a limited range of mobility to use.

Sidewalk Recommendations

Our first project recommendation is to address all areas on the map that have been identified to be in poor condition. These areas are in severe decay and pose a safety risk to residents. Sidewalks in poor condition are identified in red in figure 6.4.

The second recommendation is to bring all existing sidewalks up to ADA standards, meaning intersections should be wheelchair accessible. The process of converting all sidewalk intersections will take some time, so our advice is to update the intersections where the areas are red to reduce immediate safety hazards. Moving forward, it is recommended that the city complete sections where ADA standards have already been implemented, but not done to sidewalks at a four-way intersection.

6. Community Services and Facilities

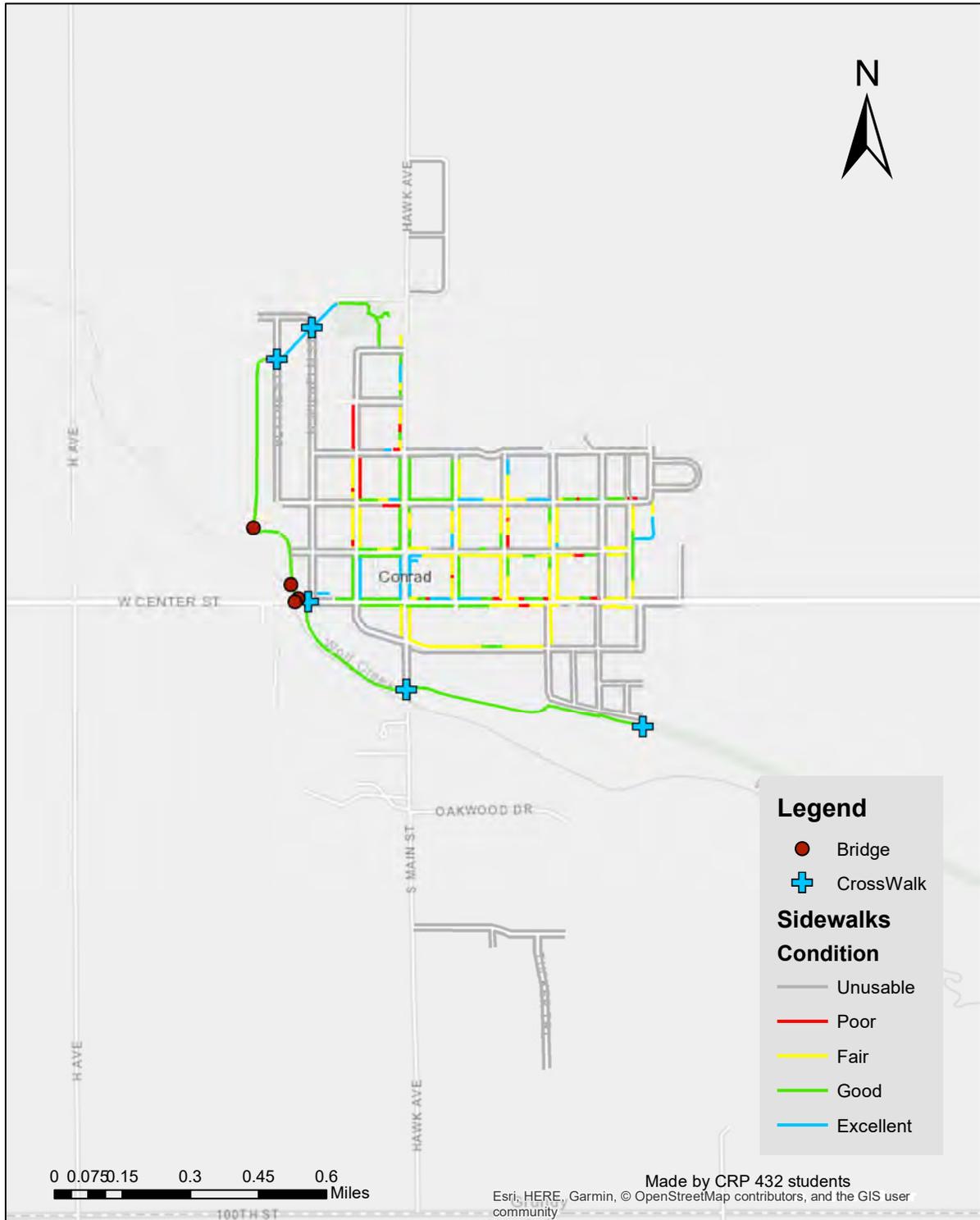


Figure 6.4. Map of existing bridges, crosswalks, and sidewalks in Conrad

6. Community Services and Facilities

The south corner of the intersection of N. Washington and Grundy Ave. has a ramp to the street, but the other three corners do not, making the one ADA-compliant corner ineffective. It is recommended that this be updated. Also, it is advised that Conrad update the city code to state that all existing and future sidewalks must be ADA compliant. Doing so will motivate Conrad's government to be in compliance with its code as well as increase the overall safety and mobility of the city's residents.

The third recommendation is to expand the sidewalk network within the city where areas are unusable, marked in grey. AARP describes sidewalks as "...conduits for pedestrian movement and access, they enhance connectivity and promote walking. As public spaces, sidewalks are the front steps to a community, activating streets both socially and economically." AARP also notes that, "In a scenario where two houses are nearly identical, the one with a five-foot-wide sidewalk and two street trees not only sells for \$4,000 to \$34,000 more but it also sells in less time." Therefore, it is recommended the city update its code to require all future housing developments to include sidewalks to avoid issues with connectivity and increase housing values within Conrad.

Streetlights and Signs

Sign and lamp conditions were not assessed as most of them were readable and in fine condition. Their locations were assessed and plotted to show density and distribution within the town (see figures 6.5). Around the schools there are many stop signs to control traffic flow into and out of the parking lot.

During the community engagement process, participants pointed out the need for stop signs where there are currently yield signs and uncontrolled intersections. Many residents find it confusing and inconsistent to have a variety of signs. This variability is also a safety issue, especially with limited designated crosswalks in town and in areas close to the elementary and high schools.

Streetlight and Sign Recommendations

Following our engagement process and mapping of street lamps, we concluded an increase in street lamps would be beneficial to the community. The University Transportation Research Center, report on pedestrian safety states, "Overhead street lighting is commonly used for visibility of both vehicles and pedestrians. Overhead lighting is primarily designed to produce a particular level of roadway surface luminance, which serves as a background against which potential hazards are seen." The study was conducted in Aspen, Colorado; New Jersey; and New York.

In Conrad, an increase of lighting along sidewalks and roads would boost safety for pedestrians and drivers at night. The newer housing development on the west side of Conrad should be a priority because there are few street lamps in that area.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has set standards per recommendation of the US Congress. The agency sets rules and regulations for everything related to traffic, ranging from signage and speed limits to lane widths. It is said that "yield signs are prohibited to assign the right-of-way on all approaches to an intersection, other than for a roundabout intersection. The standard statement in this final rule, so that it is explicitly clear, is that yield signs shall not be used to control the right-of-way on all approaches to an intersection, other than for all approaches to a roundabout intersection, for consistency with requirements for traffic-signal-controlled intersections and stop-controlled intersections."

6. Community Services and Facilities

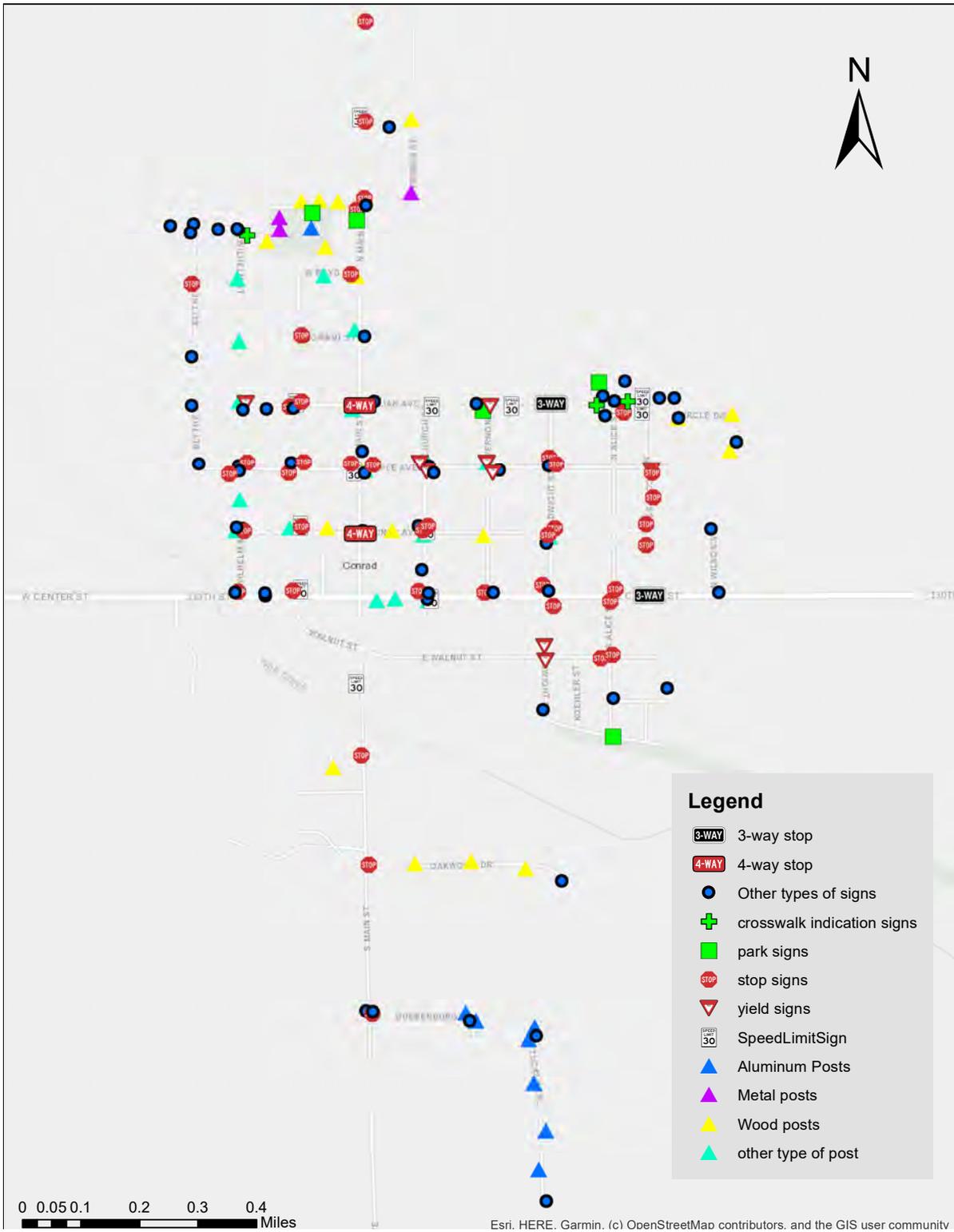


Figure 6.5. Map of sign locations in Conrad

6. Community Services and Facilities

With this suggestion from the federal government, Conrad should change the existing yield signs at four-way intersections to stop signs. It is important to use public feedback and official standards such as these to better construct policy recommendations and help improve and grow the town.

Roads

To evaluate the road conditions in Conrad, we identified three elements on which to base our assessment (see figure 6.6). These elements included potholes and cracks, which indicates deterioration; paint, which indicates traffic safety; and general appearance. After assessing the roads using these criteria, it was agreed that most of the roads are in fair or good conditions. Some areas of concern found in our assessment were the lack of paint markings and the incomplete paving of W. Grundy Ave., which is highlighted in red in figure 6.7. Markings are vital for drivers to know where to stop and what to look for, making roads safer for drivers and pedestrians. The dirt portion of W. Grundy Ave. is a high-traffic area because of the daycare center on the corner of N. Wilhelm St. and W. Grundy Ave. Other than the small section on W. Grundy Ave., there are little immediate road concerns.

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Unusable
No potholes or cracks	No potholes some minor cracks	Small potholes and many cracks	Large potholes or road is very crack/deteriorated	No existing road
Brand new paint for stop limit and other	Paint of stop limit and other in relatively good condition	Paint for stop limit and other is very faint and needs retouching	No paint where there should be at stop sign and other crossings	
Looks brand new	Looks to be well maintained	Some maintenance but could use more	Appears to have no maintenance for a long time	

Figure 6.6. Criteria for rating roads

Road Recommendations

Following our assessment of road conditions in Conrad, we concluded our recommendations should focus on paint markings and crosswalks. Adding road markings such as these will make the distinction between pedestrian and vehicular domains visible to the public. Furthermore, these recommendations increase the health, safety, and well-being of the community.

First, we advise Conrad have crosswalk lines painted at each intersection that currently have sidewalks. It is also recommended that when implementing crosswalks, priority is given to the downtown and school areas within Conrad, because these areas have heavy pedestrian traffic. In addition, it would be beneficial that the next phase of crosswalks be all streets intersecting with the main road, E. Center St., because of traffic turning off and onto the street. Having designated crosswalks will not only make crossing streets for children and shoppers safer, but it will also alert drivers that pedestrians may be present.

Secondly, to further traffic and pedestrian safety, it is recommended that new stop lines be painted before each stop sign within the town. The intersection of Main St. and E. Center St. already have

6. Community Services and Facilities

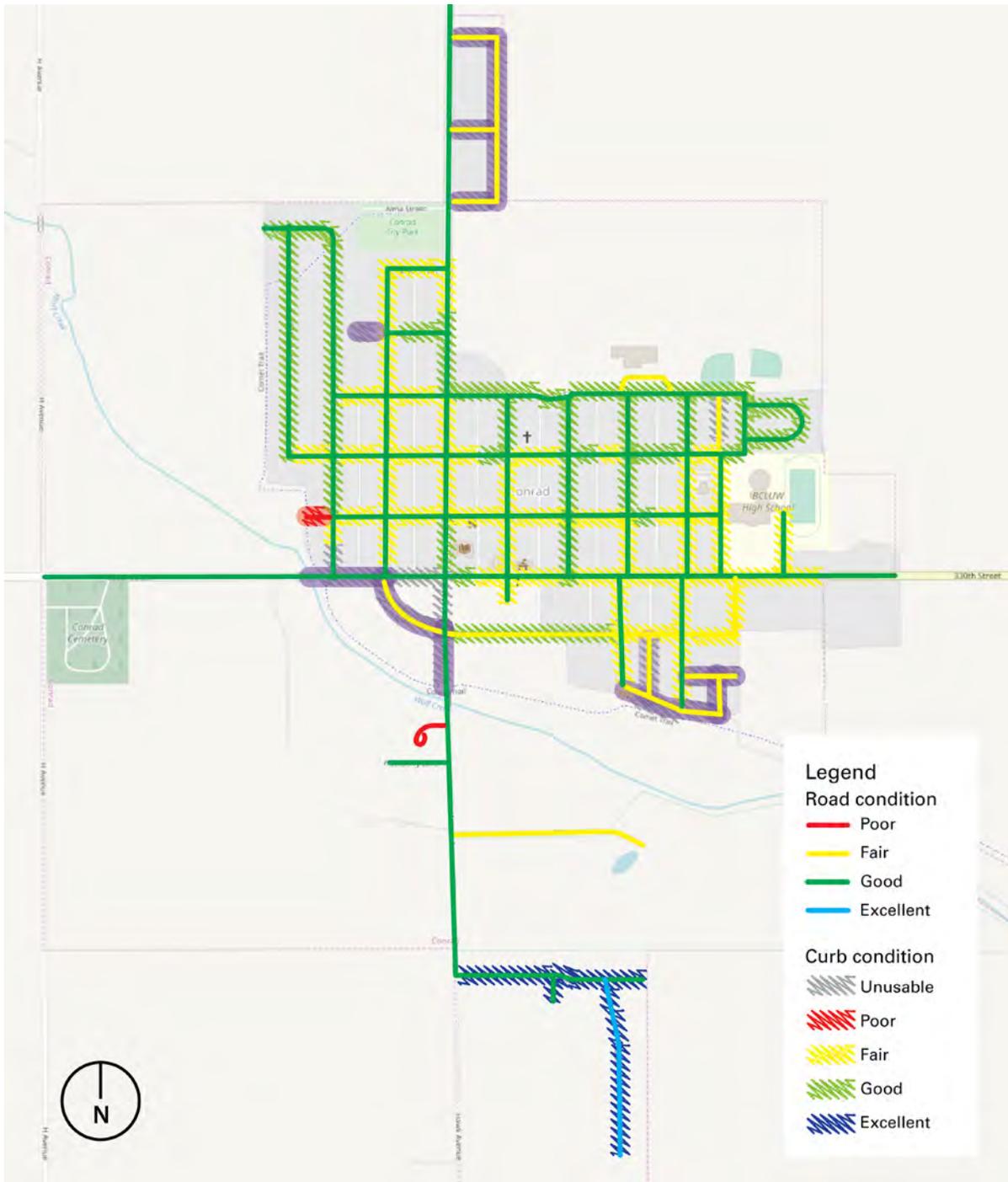


Figure 6.7. Road and curb conditions in Conrad

stop lines at the four-way intersection, so adding them to the end of downtown, Main and W. Grundy Ave., at both schools, and at street connections to E. Center St. would be compatible with the previously recommended crosswalks. Doing so would add additional safety measures at intersections between pedestrians and vehicles. According to the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA), “More than 35% of pedestrian fatalities occur on a local street.”

6. Community Services and Facilities

Curbs

To evaluate the curb conditions in Conrad, we identified two elements on which to base our assessment (see figure 6.8). These elements are painted markings, indicating where vehicles should not be parked, and appearance since maintenance. After assessing the curbs with these two elements, it was agreed most of the curbs are in fair or good condition. The only problem that was found in our assessment is the lack of paint strips. These strips are vital for drivers to know where and where not to park, and to make room for emergency vehicles.

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Unusable
Can clearly differentiate between painted and unpainted	Can differentiate between painted and unpainted	Hard to tell between painted and unpainted areas of curb	Impossible to know what is supposed to be painted	No existing curbs
Very good condition looks brand new	Good condition no visible crumbling	Spots where there is some erosion of cement	Very deteriorated most of the cement is eroded	

Figure 6.8. Criteria for rating curbs

Curb Recommendations

While assessing the conditions of curbs in the city, it was noted many of them are not painted, which allows some vehicles to park illegally. Therefore, our recommendation is to have paint lines added to all curbs so that drivers will be able to see where they can and cannot park. Doing this would be much safer for drivers, as well as all residents because vehicles would no longer be allowed to park in front of stop signs or in front of fire hydrants and Conrad's citizens, as well as services, would not be inconvenienced by a wayward parked car.

Policy Recommendations

The following is a condensed version of the recommendations discussed above.

Goal 1: Promote Safety

Policy 1. Prioritize pedestrians

Project 1. Improve conditions of existing sidewalks to comply with ADA standards. This includes the addition of curb bump-outs and ramps at intersection corners.

Policy 2. Address residential areas

Project 1. Introduce more city street lamps to ensure safety when traveling at night through the town.

Policy 3. Calm traffic

Project 1. Paint new crosswalk lines at intersections. A defined intersection with signage and paint would help keep drivers alert for pedestrians and increase safety on the roads. Crosswalks should first be added to the streets in front of the high school and elementary school. Since students are from surrounding communities, as well as Conrad, there is a mix of cars, buses, and children walking home.

6. Community Services and Facilities

Goal 2: Continue Maintenance

Policy 1. Updates roads and parking spaces

Project 1. Repaint the curbs to indicate where parking is prohibited so that public services such as the fire department and school buses are not hindered.

Project 2. Add stop lines behind all stop signs to indicate where vehicles should stop so they do not invade pedestrian crosswalks.

Policy 2. Update sidewalks

Project 1. Improve poor and unusable sidewalks.

Policy 3. Ensure services are updated

Project 1. Have the stormwater management system, water lines, and sewer lines inspected to properly assess their condition.

Goal 3: Develop Smart

Policy 1. Administer Infrastructure Guidelines

Project 1. Alter city code to require all existing and new construction of sidewalks to be ADA compliant.

Project 2. Change city code to require all new housing developments to include sidewalks.

Project 3. Expand the sidewalk network by adding and expanding new walks where there currently are none. There are areas in the community, specifically on 330th Street between N. Wilhelm and N. Washington, where the sidewalk simply stops in the middle of the block.

Conclusion

Most of Conrad's services and facilities are in relatively fair condition. However, the city can still make improvement to infrastructure to promote mobility, connectivity, and inclusivity.

Recommended projects can be funded partially through grants from multiple public and private entities. Grants provided by the Iowa Economic Development Authority, the DOT, and FHWA are just a few opportunities. Grants may require a city provide matching funds. It is important to allocate money in the city budget and Capital Improvement Plan for these costly but necessary infrastructure projects.

By proactively allocating funds, the city will have resources available to make these changes in the case of emergency or immediate hazards. Small, step-by-step projects are key to implement policies and projects that seem like too big of an undertaking. These projects will make a significant impact on Conrad's current and future residents. Pedestrians and drivers will be safer and everyone will be able to navigate the community with more ease.

6. Community Services and Facilities

Introduction

This chapter evaluates parks, recreation, and environmental conditions in Conrad. Conrad is characterized by its strong sense of community. This sense of community is reinforced by the amenities provided by the government (see Chapter 1).

Conrad's seven parks and trails vary widely in their resources, offering a variety of recreation opportunities ranging from an aquatic center and sports facilities to playgrounds. Open space is available but underutilized, and parks require different degrees of maintenance. The parks section will analyze the amenities and conditions of the parks and pose suggestions for improvements based on these findings.

Conrad is well known for its "black dirt." With its location comes environmental challenges, such as flood mitigation and erosion prevention. The environmental section will provide examples of Conrad's unique environmental conditions and how to ensure that the community grows in a sustainable manner in the future.

Parks and Recreation | Existing Conditions

Guiding Questions

The four questions for assessing parks and recreation focus on amenities, ADA compliance, walkability, and way-finding: To what age groups are the parks tailored? Are the parks accessible for all abilities? What areas are beyond a reasonable walking distance? How are areas identified and promoted?

Park Use

The park system in Conrad offers seven locations for outdoor recreation. The parks range widely in variety, offering an aquatic center, trails, playgrounds, and outdoor sports facilities. Parks and recreation offer important networks for community engagement, while simultaneously promoting healthy and active lifestyles.

Given Conrad's strong sense of pride, which was reinforced during in-person interviews and well public outreach, it seems logical to use the park system as a means of continuing community pride, as well as attracting visitors and potential new residents. Attention, maintenance, and investment in the park system will help the city achieve its long-term goals of growth.

In order to make informed recommendations, assessments were completed regarding park use, the amenities currently available, and overall quality of the parks. Figure 7.1 is a graph representing survey results regarding park use. The survey results show that Comet Trail is the most actively utilized amenity. Oakland Trail and Four Seasons Park are the least utilized; for each facility, the largest number of people marked "occasionally" or "never" for level of use. This indicates that improvements can be made to recreation facilities with the intent of increasing utilization of parks and recreation services, especially for older residents who may have lower mobility.

7. Parks, Recreation, and Environment

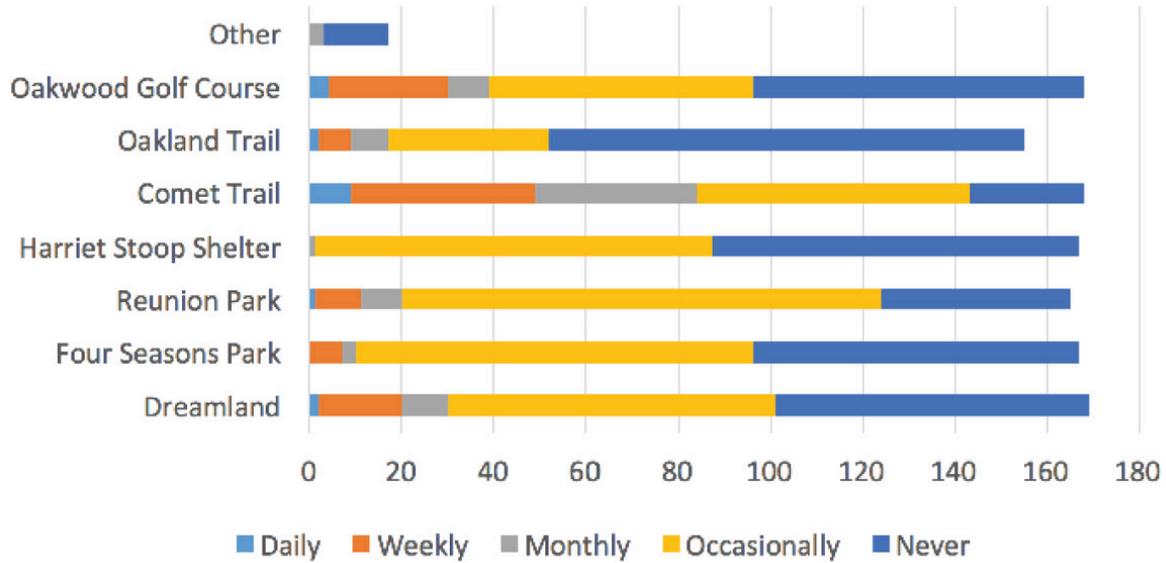


Figure 7.1. Park use among survey respondents

The survey also addressed satisfaction with the current conditions of the parks (see figure 7.2). Fifty-one percent of residents indicated on the survey that they are “extremely satisfied” with the current conditions of Conrad’s parks, while 49% of residents indicated they were “moderately,” “slightly,” or “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.”

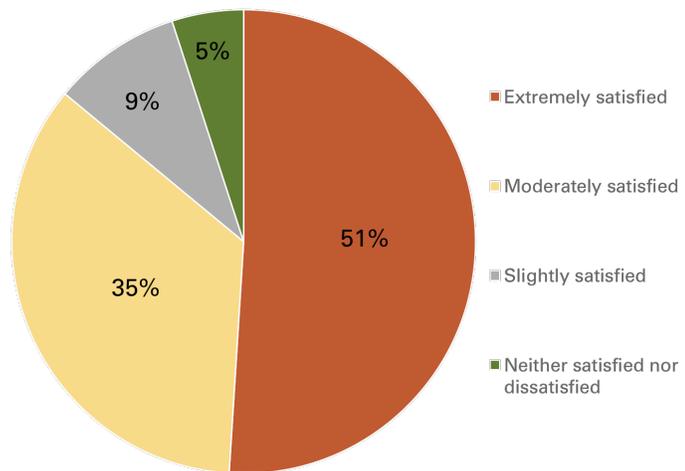


Figure 7.2. Park satisfaction among survey respondents

Park Amenities and Conditions

The parks in Conrad cover a variety of amenities, ranging from sports facilities to picnic areas. Figure 7.3 shows the amenities available in each park.

Reunion Park

The bulk of amenities are in Reunion Park (see figure 7.3), located in the northwest corner of Conrad. The Harriet Stoop Shelter House rental facility is one of the few places for outdoor shelter available in the parks. The park also has numerous picnic tables and benches. Reunion Park is also home to the Conrad Aquatic Center, which is open from June to August and accessed by passes purchased through the city clerk.

Reunion Park is in largely good condition. The play equipment is older but has been updated and is well-maintained. Both the basketball and volleyball courts are clean and safe, with fully intact nets and a well paved court. Benches and picnic tables are all in good condition. The shelter at the Family Aquatic Center is in need of exterior repairs. Overall, Reunion Park has a low need for updates.

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Park Name	Amenities						
	Biking	Playground	Basketbal	Baseball	Volleyball	Shelter	Other
Reunion Park		X	X		X	X	picnic area aquatic center
Comet Trail	X						
Dreamland		X					
Four Seasons Park		X		X			
Gier Park						X	Grundy Co. Freedom Rock
Oakland Trail Park	X						picnic area fishing
Oakwood Golf Course						X	golf course

Figure 7.3. Amenities in Conrad by facility

Four Seasons Park

Another playground can be found in Four Seasons Park, located near the water tower. Four Seasons Park has a baseball diamond, benches, and a swing set with play equipment. Several picnic tables are available in Four Seasons Park. The park has open green space between the baseball field and the play equipment. The park can be accessed from the adjacent church parking lot.

Four Seasons Park is in need of repair. The swing sets in the play area are not fully intact, and one swing set is missing a swing altogether. The seesaw play equipment is a little older but still maintained. The surface beneath the play equipment could be replaced with a safer material. There is quite a bit of space on this playground for more play equipment to be installed in the future. The baseball field is in fair condition; the dirt is slightly uneven but the fence is sturdy. Overall, Four Seasons Park has a high need for maintenance.

Gier Park and Main Street

Gier Park is home to the Grundy County Freedom Rock. The shelter in Gier Park is in fair condition, and the surrounding seating in the park and on Main Street is in good or excellent condition. There are several places for people to sit and enjoy the environment on Main Street. Main Street is also well lit, with streetlights in good condition. Several bike racks are available for those who wish to bike within town. Gier Park and Main Street have a low need for maintenance.

The conditions of each public park are described in figure 7.4. The parks are largely in good condition, with Reunion Park having the least need for maintenance of facilities and Four Seasons Park having the most need. Much of the play equipment in Four Seasons Park is in need of repair. Minor improvements to Four Seasons Park could be made to increase park usage.

None of the facilities meet the standards for accessibility set by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For playgrounds, play equipment must be accessible by ramps, travel routes, and transfer systems. ADA standards require that at least one piece of ground-level playground equipment be accessible, that half of elevated components be accessible, and that the surfaces under the playground equipment be accessible. Accessible trails have an appropriate surface (such as concrete or asphalt)

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Park Name	Amenities			
	Playground	Sports	Seating	Shelter
Reunion Park	Good condition	Good condition	Moderate condition	Good condition
Dreamland	N/A	Good condition	Good condition	Needs repair
Four Seasons Park	Needs repair	Moderate condition	Moderate condition	N/A
Gier Park	N/A	N/A	Good condition	Moderate condition

Figure 7.4. Conditions of park amenities in Conrad

and width (suitable for a wheelchair, with passing points for two wheelchairs to pass). ADA accessibility is particularly important for communities to encourage elderly populations to stay.

Ownership

The parks are primarily owned by the City of Conrad, with the exception of Dreamland and the Oakwood Golf Course. Ownership of parks shows who is responsible for the maintenance of the parks and their facilities.

Facility Name	Owner
Reunion Park	Public
Comet Trail	Public
Dreamland	BCLUW Community School District
Four Seasons Park	Public
Oakland Trail	Public
Oakwood Golf Course	Conrad Grove Recreation Park
Cemetery	Conrad Cemetery Association

Figure 7.5. Ownership of recreation facilities

Fiscal Information

The Annual Fiscal Conditions Report published by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach details financial trends over a five-year period in Conrad. General trends relevant to this chapter show a fairly steady trend along government expenditure.

The expenditure for culture and recreation saw a slight decrease from 2015 to 2017 (from \$196 to \$193). Overall, the expenditure has been fairly stable in the past five years. The general government expenditure has also seen a slow decline in the five-year period. However, as long as the government is maintaining services and efficacy, a declining trend is not problematic. However, an increase in expenditure may be needed to ensure maintenance of facilities in the future.

Walkability and Bikability

A standard walking distance is 0.25 miles. This describes distance that is comfortable to walk to instead of driving. Walking is important, as it fosters a connection to place, while improving health and reducing vehicle emissions. The size and centrality of Conrad indicates the community is optimal for walking and biking distances.

Parks and trails are not within a minimum standard walking distance of every area of Conrad (see figures 7.6 and 7.7). Parcels that are excluded from this walking distance are outlined in purple. Comet Trail, for example, is not within standard walking distance from the retirement home.

There is a notable lack of green space to the southeastern part of town near the retirement home and manufactured home park. While this area does have access to Comet Trail, the residents are relatively far from open green space. Moreover, the sidewalk network shown on the map indicates that even for areas within an optimal walking radius to the parks and trails, there is no designated path for pedestrians.

7. Parks, Recreation, and Environment



Figure 7.6. Proximity to city parks

7. Parks, Recreation, and Environment

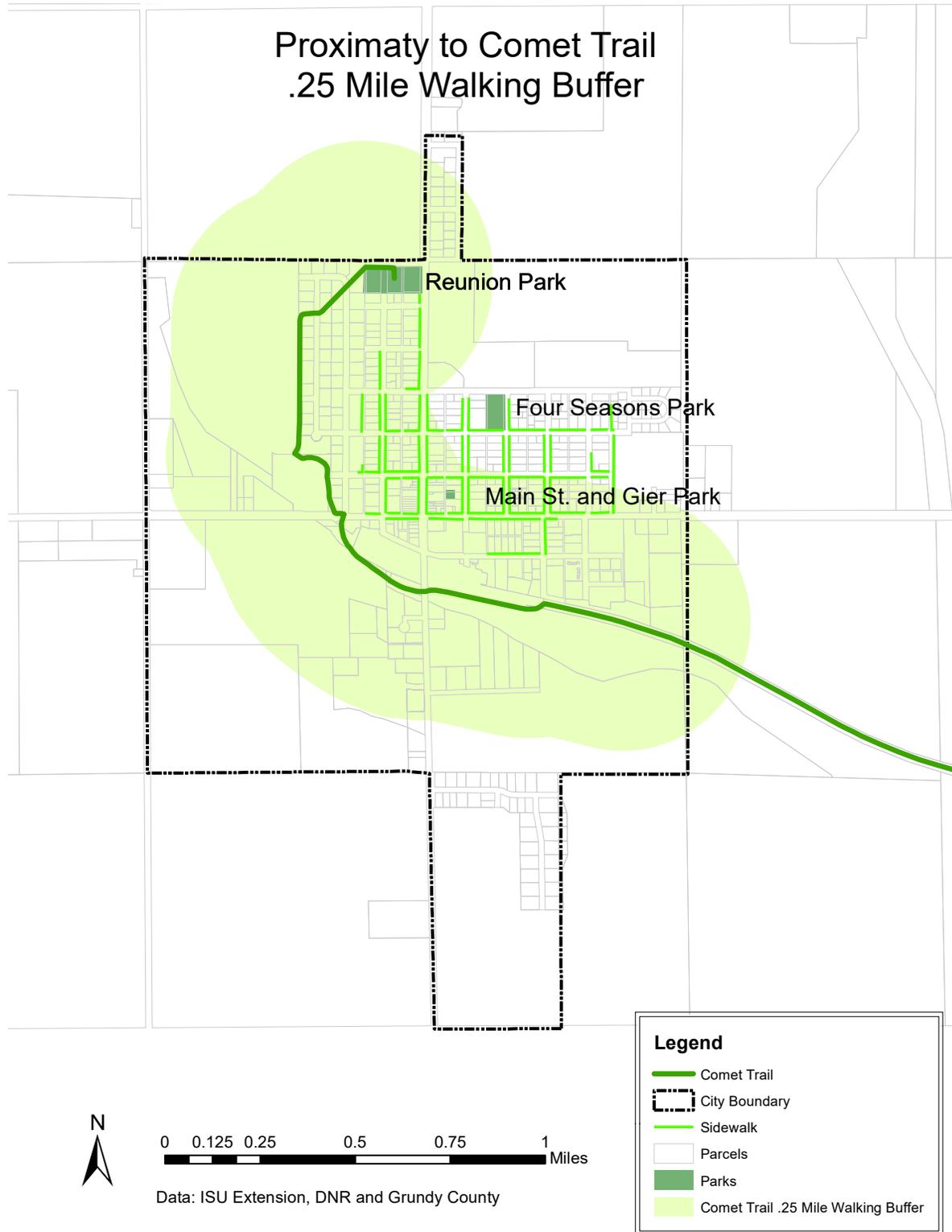


Figure 7.7. Walking distance to Comet Trail

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Environment Existing Conditions

Guiding Questions

The three questions for assessing environmental conditions focus on environmental impact, transportation, and resilience: How will future plans in Conrad impact the environment? How do residents of Conrad travel? What issues is Conrad facing with environmental resilience?

Transportation

Most people in Conrad drive as a primary means of transportation. The size and centrality of Conrad indicates the city is optimal for biking. However, survey results indicate that few residents utilize bikes as a primary means of transportation.

Green Programs

Conrad is serviced by Alliant Energy. Alliant Energy has focused recently on more clean energy programs. The company has four wind farms, solar energy initiatives, hydroelectric power, and natural-gas generation programs.

Within Conrad, initiatives have been taken to reduce the environmental impacts of everyday life. The recycling and compost service is located at 412 Jennings Street. The recycling center is open 24/7 and is a self-service center. Citizens must sort their own recycling into the designated bins.

Soil

Conrad is well known for its “black dirt”—rich soil beneficial for agriculture. The soil in Conrad is of great local importance, so general background information was gathered to understand current conditions and to plan accordingly. Figure 7.8 is a map of the different types of soils present in Grundy County within the city limits of Conrad.

Conrad’s soil has a corn suitability rating of 84.7 according to ISU Extension and Outreach. Because of its location surrounded by this soil, much expansion should happen within the existing footprint of Conrad. This is beneficial because it keeps costs to the taxpayer and environmental impacts of development low. Expanding an infrastructure system to accommodate greenfield development will come at an added expense to the taxpayer. Infill development, rather than greenfield development, helps to preserve community character without compromising the natural landscape around the city of Conrad.

Flooding

The Oakland Trail is located in a 100-year floodplain in Conrad (see figure 7.9). While this floodplain may not affect the majority of residential or commercial areas, it is still located centrally within Conrad. If this area were to flood, it would lead to costly repairs and environmental damage. There are no current green systems utilized to reduce the risk of runoff, such as green streets or bioswales.

7. Parks, Recreation, and Environment

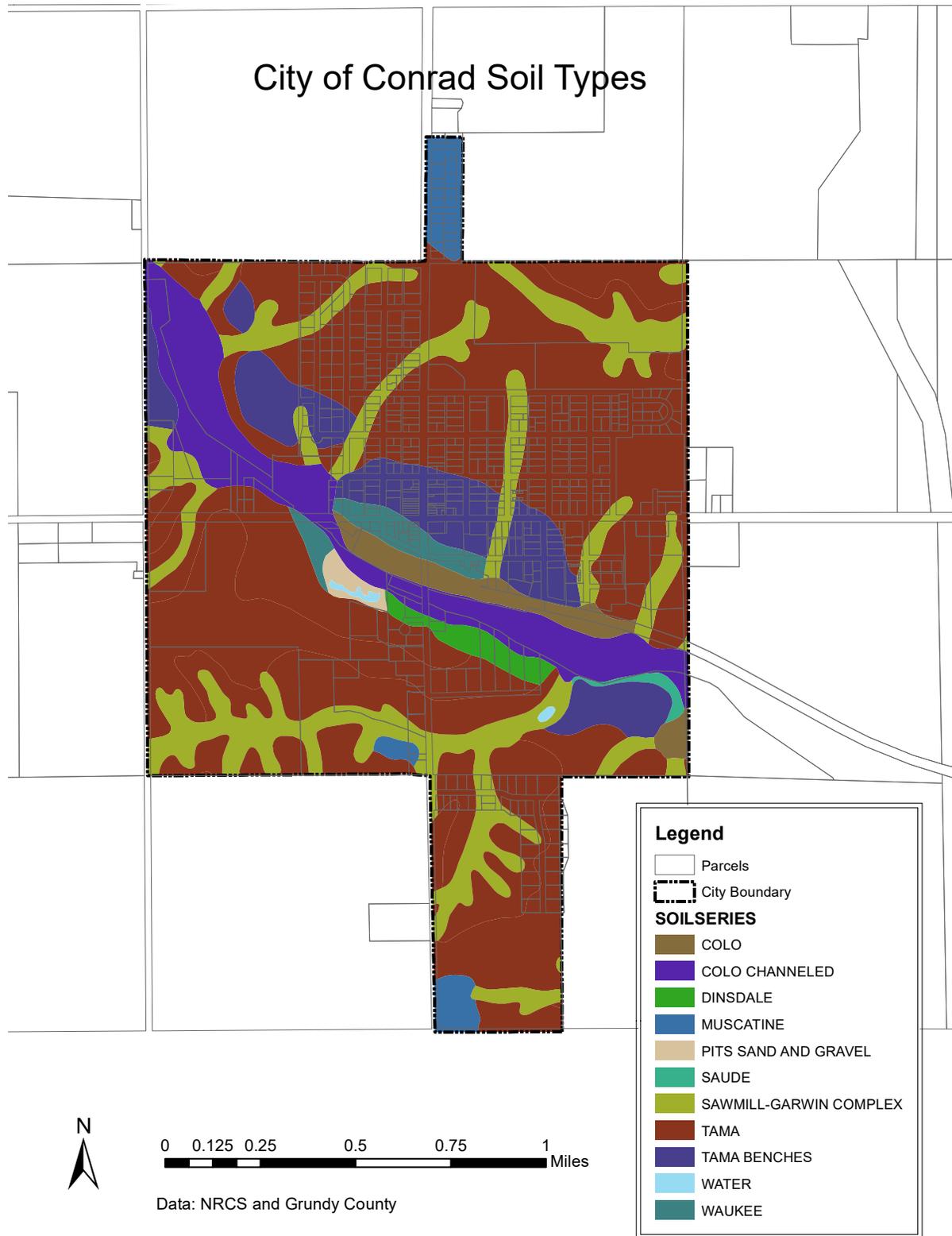


Figure 7.8. Soil map

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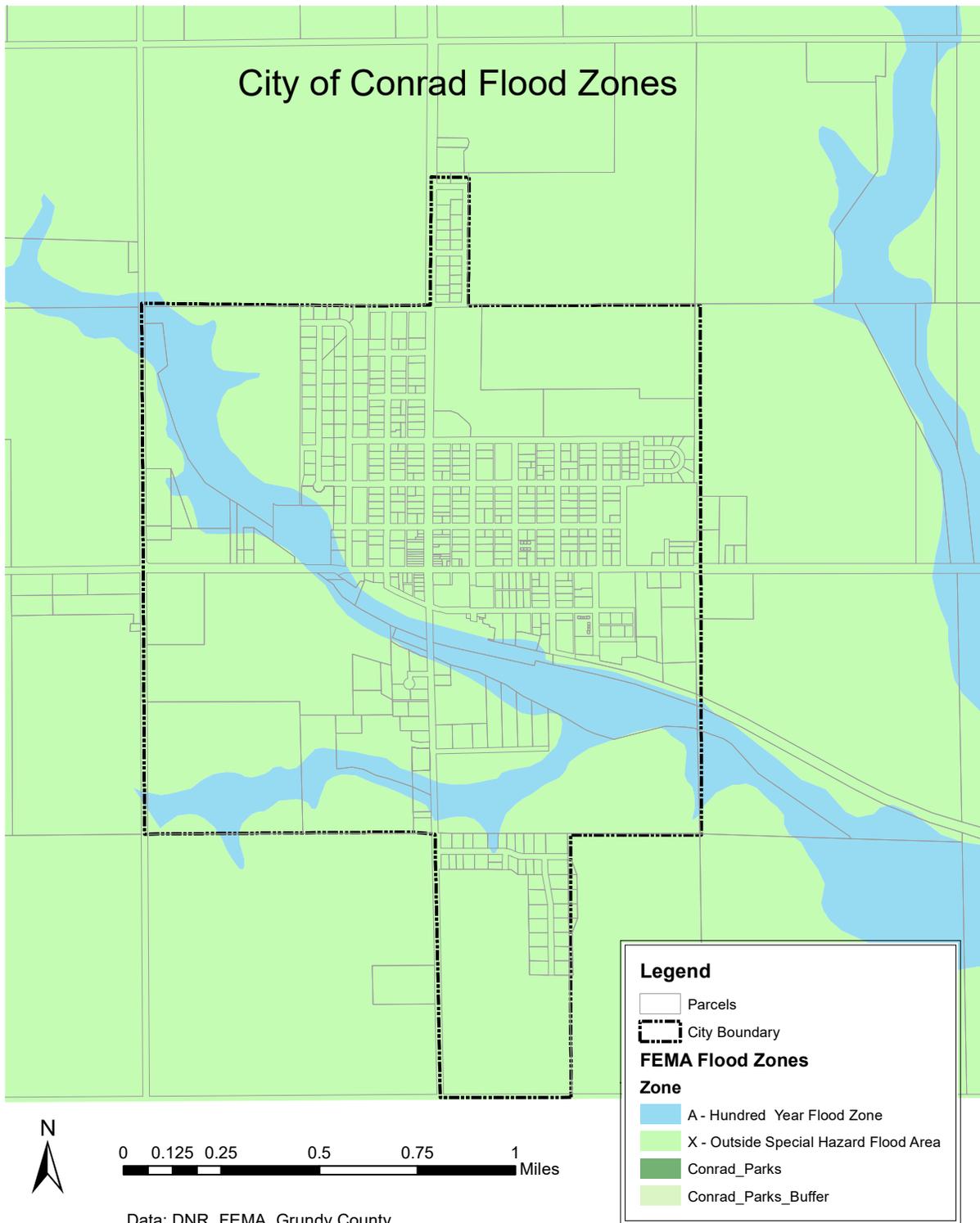


Figure 7.9. Floodplain map

7. Parks, Recreation, and Environment

Carbon Footprint

Carbon footprint data are broken down by US zip codes and display the average total metric tons of CO₂ generated per household in a year. The 50621 zip code creates an average 54.63 metric tons of CO₂ per household per year (see figure 7.10). Figure 7.11 further breaks down this number into five categories: transit, housing, food, goods, and services.

Conrad's carbon footprint is within the range expected for its size. Rural towns tend to have higher scores due to lower densities and higher vehicular use; however, steps can always be taken to reduce carbon emissions. Doing so can save households money and be used to market Conrad to new residents.

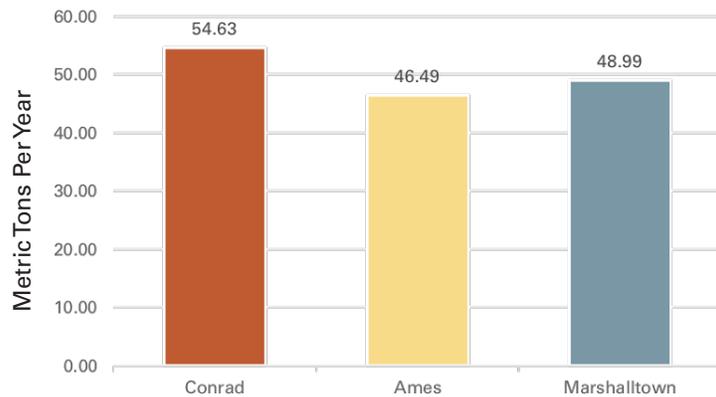


Figure 7.10. Comparison of total carbon emissions by household in Conrad with that of Ames and Marshalltown

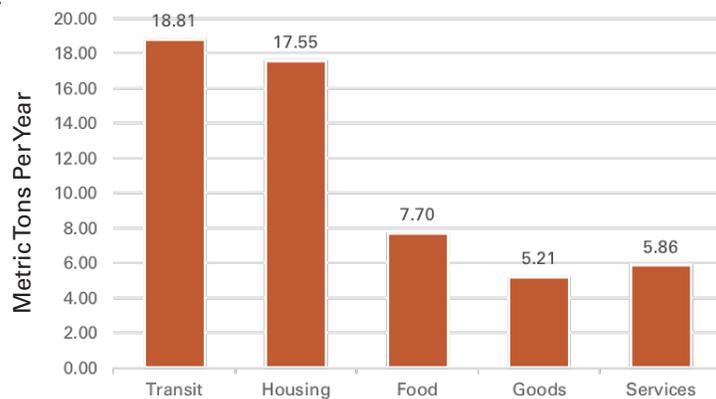


Figure 7.11. Total carbon emissions in Conrad by category

Policy Recommendations

The findings described in this chapter indicate that while Conrad has many existing resources for recreation, they are generally underutilized. Updating existing parks could incentivize people to utilize them more. Similarly, while Conrad is an optimal community for walking and biking, few residents choose to walk or bike. As the city looks to the future, it is imperative that it grows in a way that is both sustainable and true to its character.

Based upon these findings, three general areas of improvement are set forth in this comprehensive plan: accessibility, walkability, and resilience. These goals focus on increasing inclusion around the use of the existing resources in Conrad, creating a healthy community, and preserving its future.

Goal 1: Improve Accessibility

For parks to be fully enjoyed by all residents of Conrad and neighboring communities, they must be accessible. Accessibility can be improved by meeting ADA standards and designing recreational activities for all community members.

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Policy 1. Meet ADA Standards

The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) was designed to prevent discrimination based on ability. The ADA provides accessibility standards for a number of facility types, including parks and recreation. Conrad can use ADA standards to promote inclusivity in its own parks.

Project 1. Change the surface underneath playground equipment. ADA standards require playground equipment to be supported by an accessible ground surface, such as rubber or wood fiber.

Project 2. Install ground-level accessible playground equipment. ADA standards require playground equipment to be accessible from the ground level.

Project 3. Ensure that half of elevated components have ramps or transfer systems.

Project 4. Install curb ramps in the park.

Project 5. Add sidewalks between all areas of the park to make it accessible to individuals of all mobility types.

Policy 2. Increase Way-finding

For residents of Conrad and visitors alike, increased way-finding makes the resources of Conrad more accessible to all.

Project 1. Implement signage indicating relevant city policies, such as curfew or park closing times.

Project 2. Add signage indicating park locations and facilities.

Project 3. Create signage along the trail to provide directions and distances.

Project 4. Create signage at each park to indicate what amenities are available.

Project 5. Increase signage around the city to show the location of parks and open services.

Project 6. Designate emergency signs that indicate emergency routes.

Project 7. Ensure signs are accessible by including multiple languages and braille. Signage should be inclusive across languages and abilities. Font size should be large for ease of reading.

Policy 3. Create Options for All Ages

Currently, the parks in Conrad are geared toward the younger population. This presents an opportunity for the parks and open space in Conrad to grow to be beneficial for all ages. Shade and seating are simple ways to make parks enjoyable for an older population. Increased green space and greenery are also ways to improve outdoor enjoyment.

Project 1. Encourage expansion of the existing park system.

Project 2. Maintain existing park benches and provide benches along major walkways and near amenities.

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Project 3. Ensure that there is adequate shelter at each park.

Project 4. Designate and utilize open green spaces, such as fields, to increase community use.

Project 5. Increase availability of sports equipment around parks to encourage visitors to engage with the existing park resources.

Project 6. Plant trees for shade cover.

Goal 2: Enhance Walkability

Walkable pedestrian infrastructure is a key element of a “Complete Community.” Walkable communities encourage pedestrian activity, expand transportation options, and have safe and inviting pedestrian infrastructure that is accessible and serves people of all ages and abilities. When sidewalks, parks, and trails are pleasant to walk, all residents benefit.

Conrad’s strong sense of community is built in part from the many daily interactions that take place in the public sphere. Activities that build relationships (socializing, waiting, shopping, etc.) often occur within pedestrian environments (sidewalks, paths, seating, etc.), and are therefore affected by their quality. The policies in this plan aim to facilitate Conrad’s community connections by encouraging expansion and improvement of quality of the current pedestrian environment.

Policy 1. Improve Safety

The safety of Conrad can be increased with improvements to lighting, sidewalks, and shelter. Lighting, particularly within parks and public areas, can provide necessary visibility to promote a safe community. Lighting along roads can assist drivers with safe travel and allow pedestrians to feel comfortable walking at night or early in the morning.

Project 1. Implement lamp posts and lighting in parks to provide visibility.

Project 2. Install solar panel lamp posts to encourage use of sustainable energy and reduce costs.

Project 3. Design shelter systems for parks.

Project 4. Implement bike lanes to encourage bikability in neighborhoods.

Project 5. Install emergency contact posts (911 posts).

Policy 2. Prioritize Community Health

Improved health of the population benefits the community as a whole. Increased health promotes positive living, community engagement, and individual consciousness. For a more healthy, active community, there needs to be more opportunities for travel outside of driving. This can be achieved by increasing the ease with which people can walk or bike to certain areas.

Project 1. Repair playground equipment in Four Seasons Park and continue to update and maintain existing playground equipment.

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- Signage and design features to make clear the intended shared use of the alleys
- Permeable paving and rain gardens

Project 1. Convert at least two or three alleys into green alleys.

Goal 3: Promote Resiliency

Small communities generally have more environmental impacts than what is expected because of the energy it takes to support their larger footprints. Several steps may be taken by the city to reduce this footprint. Environmental improvements are also a way to retain young people.

Policy 1. Use Existing Infrastructure

Utilizing existing infrastructure and buildings reduces the impact of development. Farmland and black dirt is also integral to Conrad's history and should be preserved.

Project 1. Encourage rehabilitation and re-use of old buildings to preserve Conrad's history and encourage use of existing resources.

Project 2. Continue to encourage Main Street development.

Project 3. Incentivize infill development over greenfield development.

Policy 2. Improve Sustainability

By making practices more sustainable, Conrad can ensure longevity and adaptability.

Project 1. Build within existing city footprint with regard to future development.

Project 2. Encourage consumer-owned renewable energy.

Project 3. Meet the Iowa Renewable Energy Standard (2030) for all utilities.

Project 4. Preserve existing trees and plant new trees.

Policy 3. Protect Local Land Features

Protecting the environment and its present conditions will reduce future environmental problems that may affect water quality, farmland, and overall quality of life.

Project 1. Reduce growth along periphery of the city to eliminate pollution or development impacts.

Project 2. Apply for agricultural land easements.

Project 3. Preserve existing open green space and designate areas for open green space.

Policy 4. Implement Bioswales and Rain Gardens

Bioswales are vegetated, landscaped depressions designed to capture, treat, and filtrate stormwater runoff as it moves downstream. They are the most effective type of green infrastructure for stormwater velocity and cleansing, while recharging the underlying groundwater table.

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Project 1. Install bioswales along Main Street, Center Street, and Lillian Avenue.

Project 2. Implement bioswales in any future green alleys.

Conclusion

By applying ADA standards, increasing way-finding, enhancing age inclusivity, focusing on safety, prioritizing health, and implementing sustainable and resilient practices, Conrad can improve its parks and recreation facilities to meet the needs of current and future residents.

Maintaining and updating infrastructure, public spaces, and local features should be prioritized in Conrad's Capital Improvement Plan and municipal budget, but may require additional funding. Though Conrad utilizes some programs already, it is important that the city regularly monitor the following resources and develop innovative ideas for park and infrastructure projects.

Additional Resources

ADA Accessibility Standards for Recreation

<https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/recreation-facilities>

<https://www.access-board.gov/attachments/article/1369/play-guide.pdf>

ADA Playground Checklist

<https://www.gametime.com/uploads/media/ADA-Checklist.pdf>

Making Parks Accessible to All Ages

http://www.ignitecda.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ULI_Parks_People-Doc-to-post.pdf

Environmental Protection Agency Smart Growth Recommendations

1. <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/putting-smart-growth-work-rural-communities>
2. <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/framework-creating-smart-growth-economic-development-strategy>
3. https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-01/documents/10-180_smart_growth_rural_com.pdf

Iowa DNR

<https://www.iowadnr.gov/About-DNR/Grants-Other-Funding>

Reconnecting America

<http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/resource-center/federal-grant-opportunities/>

American Planning Association Small Town Grants

<https://www.planning.org/divisions/smalltown/grants.htm>

National Recreation and Park Association

<https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Grant-Fundraising-Resources/>

7. Parks, Recreation, and Environment

Play and Park Structures

<https://www.playandpark.com/funding/grant-opportunities/>

Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program>

Strong Towns

<https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2018/1/29/small-scale-grants-fund-walkable-communities-across-america>

Recreation Economy for Rural Communities

<https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/recreation-economy-rural-communities>

Kaboom

<https://kaboom.org/grants>

Introduction

The section on zoning and subdivision regulation of the comprehensive plan is an essential element because the development of this code will determine the future permitted growth of the city. Zoning and subdivision code sets the regulations that divide the city into smaller use districts and regulates the development requirements in each area of divided land such as residential housing, commercial businesses, or industrial factories.

The purpose of the Conrad zoning code, as stated in the code itself, is to provide adequate light and air; to prevent overcrowding; to avoid undue concentrations of population; to regulate the use of land; and to promote the health, safety and general welfare of residents in the city of Conrad. Zoning assigns divided land into use districts such as residential or agricultural. The zoning regulations chapter is divided into seven sections with 74 subsections. These sections are general provisions, nonconformities, district regulations, supplementary district regulations, administration, board of adjustment, and enforcement and amendments.

The subdivision section of the code defines the standards for streets, blocks, lots, utilities, and other improvements that can ensure a harmonious look of subdivision infrastructure. The subdivision regulations section is divided into one section with 16 subsections.

Existing Conditions

Process

For zoning and subdivision regulation there are no data to assess the suitable code level in the city. Therefore, our group created a library of code from throughout the country to learn how code is implemented into a city. We utilized the national and Iowa chapters of the American Planning Association to familiarize ourselves with notable code that was highlighted as successful in certain communities. We created a knowledge of code from regional areas in Iowa and code from cities across the country that were the same size as Conrad.

Code of Ordinances

The Conrad Code of Ordinances has 16 sections. The Zoning and Subdivision Regulations section makes up a fourth of the current code. The majority of the zoning code holds the requirements for nine different zoning districts in Conrad. Below is a list the zoning districts with brief description of each.

Agricultural: Intended to provide for areas in which agriculture and related uses are encouraged as the principle use of land.

Conservation: Intended to include those areas within the city that have extreme limitations for development.

Residential: Intended to provide for a variety of residential areas where public utilities and services are available and to encourage the promotion of public health, safety, and welfare.

8. Zoning

Residential Multi-family: Intended to provide for a variety of multi-family residential areas.

Manufactured Housing: Intended to provide for certain medium-density residential areas in the city now developed as manufactured/mobile home parks.

Arterial Commercial: Intended to provide for development areas of the city related to service, retail, and other non-residential uses.

Business Commercial: Intended to accommodate the major business and office concentration in the city, such as offices, clinics, hotels and motels.

Light Industrial: Intended to provide areas for industrial firms that have high standards of performance and that can locate close to residential and business uses.

Heavy Industrial: Intended to provide less restrictive areas for uses of heavy industrial character where no residential uses are permitted.

Distribution of Zones

Figure 8.1 shows the percent of land in Conrad that is currently zoned for each zoning district. Currently, 33% of Conrad's land is zoned residential, 1% is business commercial, 8% is light and heavy industrial, and 50% is agricultural. The remaining 8% of the land area is used for streets and other infrastructures that are covered in the subdivision section of code. It is important to note that there is no land in Conrad that is currently being zoned in either the conservation district or arterial commercial district.

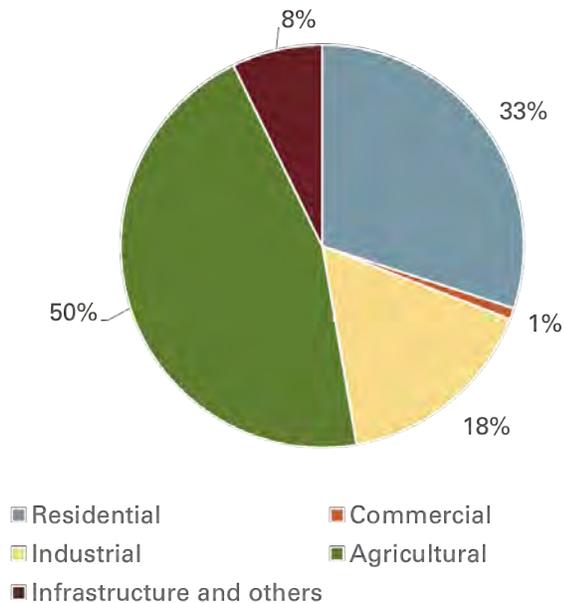


Figure 8.1. Percentage of land in each zoning category in Conrad

Conclusion

Zoning and subdivision regulations determine the legal structure for the future of Conrad. For this plan to be successful, it is imperative to build a holistic zoning and subdivision code that can support the changes that will benefit the community. From our research, we found that Conrad's code and zoning map are hard to follow and do not meet the needs of the type of city that Conrad is.

After assessing the existing conditions for zoning and subdivision regulations, we found that Conrad's current zoning code consists of seven sections, with the largest being district regulations. We learned there are nine different zoning districts with two—arterial commercial and conservation—currently not in use.

In this chapter, we provide some suggestions for Conrad to improve its code of ordinances. These recommendations will help the city use its code to support its unique city functions and character.

Policy Recommendations

Goal 1: Improve Usability of the Code

Policy 1. Clarify the Language of the Code

The current zoning and subdivision code hinders a resident's ability to use it in a productive manner. We recommend going through zoning and subdivision code and removing language and definitions that are confusing, contradictory to the purpose of the code, not utilized by the city, or that are in conflict with other sections of the code. Specifically, we suggest editing definitions that are not useful in Section 165.05 and updating the title names in the nonconformities section of the code, Section 165.10–165.14.

Policy 2. Reformat the Document

We recommend adding basic formatting such as headings, subheadings, and bullet points to the zoning and subdivision code to help residents find key pieces of information—specifically in Section 165.05, which identifies the definitions that will be utilized in the code, and in longer lists throughout the code. A good example of this formatting can be found in Section 17.06 of the zoning code from McMinnville, Oregon.

Policy 3. Make the Code More Accessible

The current zoning code is very hard to quickly utilize on the City of Conrad's website. We recommend adding hyperlinks to the website that will direct citizens to the chapter of the code they want to see, in addition to adding hyperlinks within the primary PDF of the code. The City of Ames, Iowa, has a good example of this style of web design. These changes will allow residents to easily find the sections of the code and search within the code for the specific areas they are attempting to reference, rather than scrolling through 300 pages of content until they find what they need.

Policy 4. Remove Blank Pages

In the current zoning code, there are multiple blank pages, such as page 651. Removing these pages will lessen the bulk of the code and hopefully encourage residents to use the code as a reference.

Policy 5. Utilize Color Zoning Map

Figure 8.3 shows a color zoning map for Conrad that has been adapted to match the city's current zoning code. We suggest replacing the existing black and white zoning map shown in figure 8.2 with the color map, because colorful zoning maps are easier to read and understand. The color map groups together similar zoning areas with similar colors. For example, the light industrial district is a light purple while the heavy industrial district is a darker purple. This symmetry helps define where the different use districts are.

8. Zoning

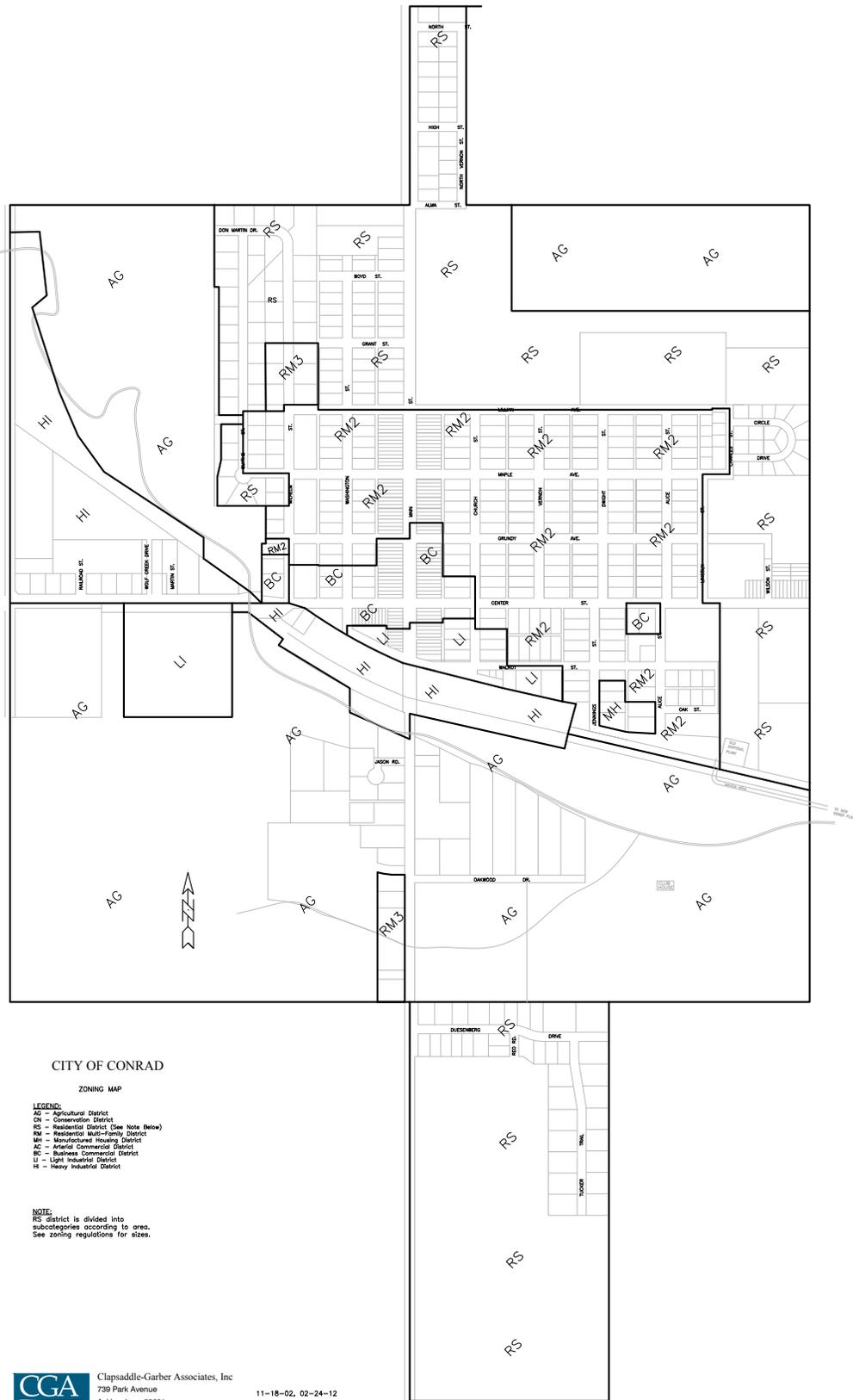


Figure 8.2. Conrad's existing zoning map

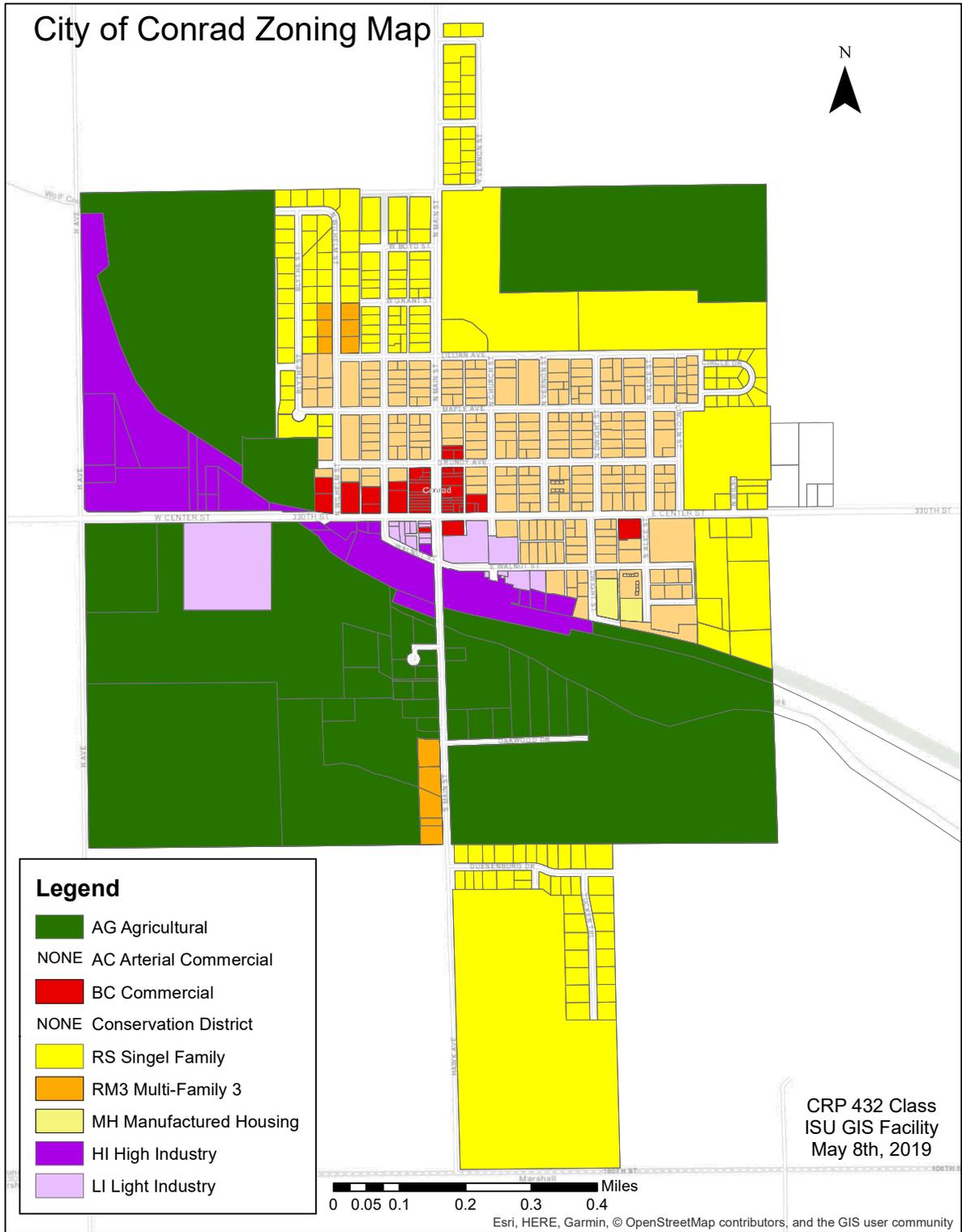


Figure 8.3. Proposed color zoning map of Conrad

8. Zoning

Policy 6. Add Illustrations of Definitions

Zoning code can be confusing. We suggest that once the city decides which definitions they want to use in the zoning code, it acquires visuals that demonstrate the definitions. Visuals can serve two functions. First, they can help residents better understand the definitions. Second, it can increase the use of the code because residents will enjoy looking through the document. Figure 8.4 is a visual example of Residential requirements from the City of Dubuque's code.

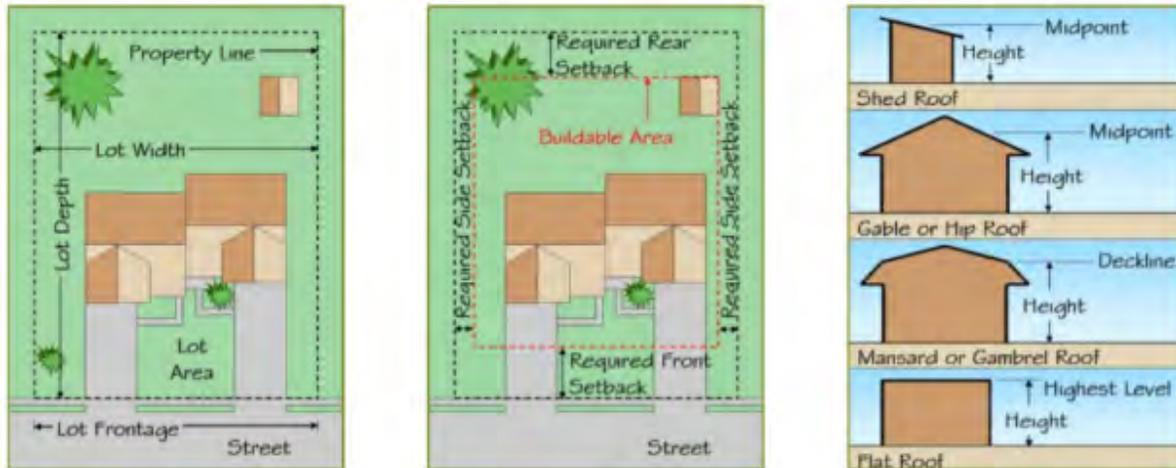


Figure 8.4. Example of residential requirements from the City of Dubuque's code

Goal 2: Update Zoning Districts

Policy 1. Eliminate the Arterial Commercial District

Arterial commercial is intended for commercial areas along arterial roads or main thoroughfares, which Conrad does not have. Eliminating this district will simplify their code.

Policy 2. Utilize the Conservation District

The cemetery, public parks, Comet Trail, and vacant land near the Conrad city limits may be zoned as conservation. Currently, the cemetery is zoned agricultural and many parks are zoned single-family residential. The conservation district is more closely related to these uses and can ensure preservation of open space.

Additionally, it is recommended that a conservation subdivision ordinance be added to provide standards for development in a conservation district. Conrad hopes to expand housing and it is important that its natural assets are protected. The ordinance would support sustainable housing development by encouraging conservation of open space and retention of natural and cultural features. The specific guidelines would be dependent on Conrad's goals for future conservation and resilience.

Goal 3: Diversity Residential Uses

Policy 1. Expand Multi-family Residential District

In order to support the housing diversification, expansion, accessibility, and age-inclusivity goals described in Chapter 5 on housing, we suggest editing the zoning map so the multi-family residential

district encompasses more of the town. The growth of the district will allow for greater flexibility, density, and affordability in Conrad's housing stock.

Conclusion

Zoning and subdivision regulations are a city's greatest tool. In order to accomplish the goals set out in this plan, it is critical Conrad transform its zoning code to reflect its vision for the future.

The first step is for the city to update its zoning map and ordinances to match existing conditions by eliminating unused districts and applying remaining districts where they're best suited. Then Conrad can update regulations and guidelines to promote goals outlined in previous chapters, such as housing affordability and diversity, unique downtown character, age-inclusivity, and preservation of green space.

This chapter complements the following land use chapter, which discusses Conrad's existing land use conditions and vision for land use in the future. The policies of this chapter can be coupled with the policies in the next—as zoning acts as the city's mechanism to accomplish land use goals.

Introduction

Land use maps are used in cities throughout the United States. Land use is key to understanding how land within a city or region is currently being used and for what it could potentially be used in the future, but it is often confused with zoning and zoning policy. Although zoning maps and land use maps are often seen together and look similar, zoning maps and land use maps portray very different views of a city. Land use is usually determined by contrasting the zoning code with an understanding of how Conrad, in this case, is using land. The “use” of a unit of land is determined often by the physical features of a parcel.

Over the course of several months, three maps for the City of Conrad were created and two are seen in this document. The first map that was created, the zoning map, was used to contrast the existing land use of the city. The second map showcases the land use currently within the city and the third map is the potential changes that are recommended for the city in the next 5–25 years. Each feature that is changed in the future land use map for Conrad has an explanation of what that feature is, why that feature was chosen for Conrad, where and why the implementation of this feature should be located, and in what way the feature can be implemented within the city.

Existing Conditions

Conrad’s existing land use conditions were created by combining the existing zoning code with a data collection process. This land use map was helpful, but also incorrect and misleading in multiple areas. As the existing land use map must correctly identify the accurate use of land within the city, in-person trips were made to Conrad to document every clear difference between the zoning data collected and the actual land use within the city. Several differences between the zoning map and land use map became extremely apparent. For example, many areas in the zoning code identified as single-family residential are actually used as multi-family residential or a public park.

Displaying an accurate representation of how Conrad’s land is used is important for both planners and for those working in Conrad. Understanding the use of a unit of land can lead city officials to make decisions regarding what they would like Conrad to look like in the next 25 years.

The zoning data was incorrect in multiple areas. For example, the BCLUW Elementary School was zoned R: single-family residential. The BCLUW High School was also incorrectly



Figure 9.1. 108 Vernon Street

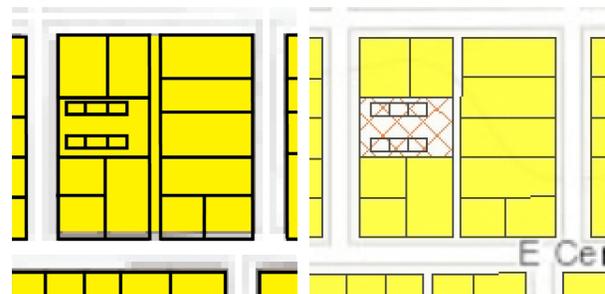


Figure 9.2. Error: Single-family residential (right). Update: Multi-family residential (left)

labeled, designated C: commercial. These schools require a new category: CI (civic/institutional). Other incorrectly labeled parcels needed to be put in this category, such as the fire station, the Conrad United Methodist Church, First Methodist Church, and the Conrad Cemetery. Another change to be made was 108 Vernon Street, which was originally labeled single-family residential, but is in fact multi-family housing (see figures 9.1 and 9.2).

The Conrad Aquatic Center, located on Alma Street, was originally zoned as single-family residential. Figure 9.3. is an aerial photo showing the location of the aquatic center.



Figure 9.3. 108 Vernon Street

Figure 9.4 shows the error in zoning and the corrections made to properly designate the parcels as parks. Similarly, Dreamland Park and Gier Park were reclassified as parks, rather than single-family residential. Oakland Trail Park was also reclassified.

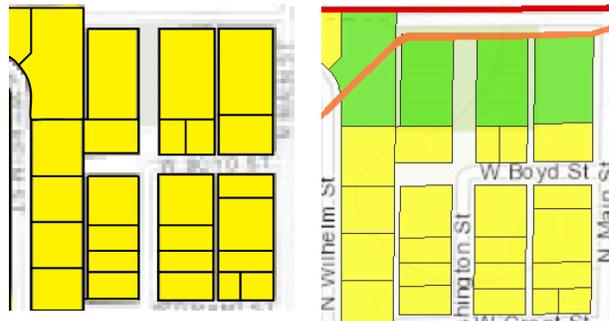


Figure 9.4. Error: Single-family residential (right). Update: Parks (left)

Another reclassification included Wolf Creek Child Care and Preschool, which was changed from single-family residential to commercial. Lastly, Wolf Creek Village Mobile Home and RV Park was changed from multi-family to single-family residential.

Zoning data provided by Clapsaddle-Garber Associates, Inc. was used to create a map that illustrates existing land use in the city. A zoning map was created using existing information to compare original zoning to current land use. All of these changes were documented during an in-person examination of Conrad. The changes were updated to create an updated land use map for Conrad (see figure 9.5).

Future Land Use

After examination of the updated existing land use map, it is clear that Conrad has great potential to become more sustainable, increase the population with new development, and stimulate the downtown economy.

Sustainability

To achieve any of these goals, Conrad's Main Street area must be a land use priority. In relation to sustainability, the alleyways off Main Street provide an excellent opportunity for the implementation of green corridors.

Another land use priority for achieving sustainability is the area surrounding Comet Trail. Conrad's trail system is already well established, but with further development, the trail can lead to an increased sense of community, connectivity, and value of natural assets.

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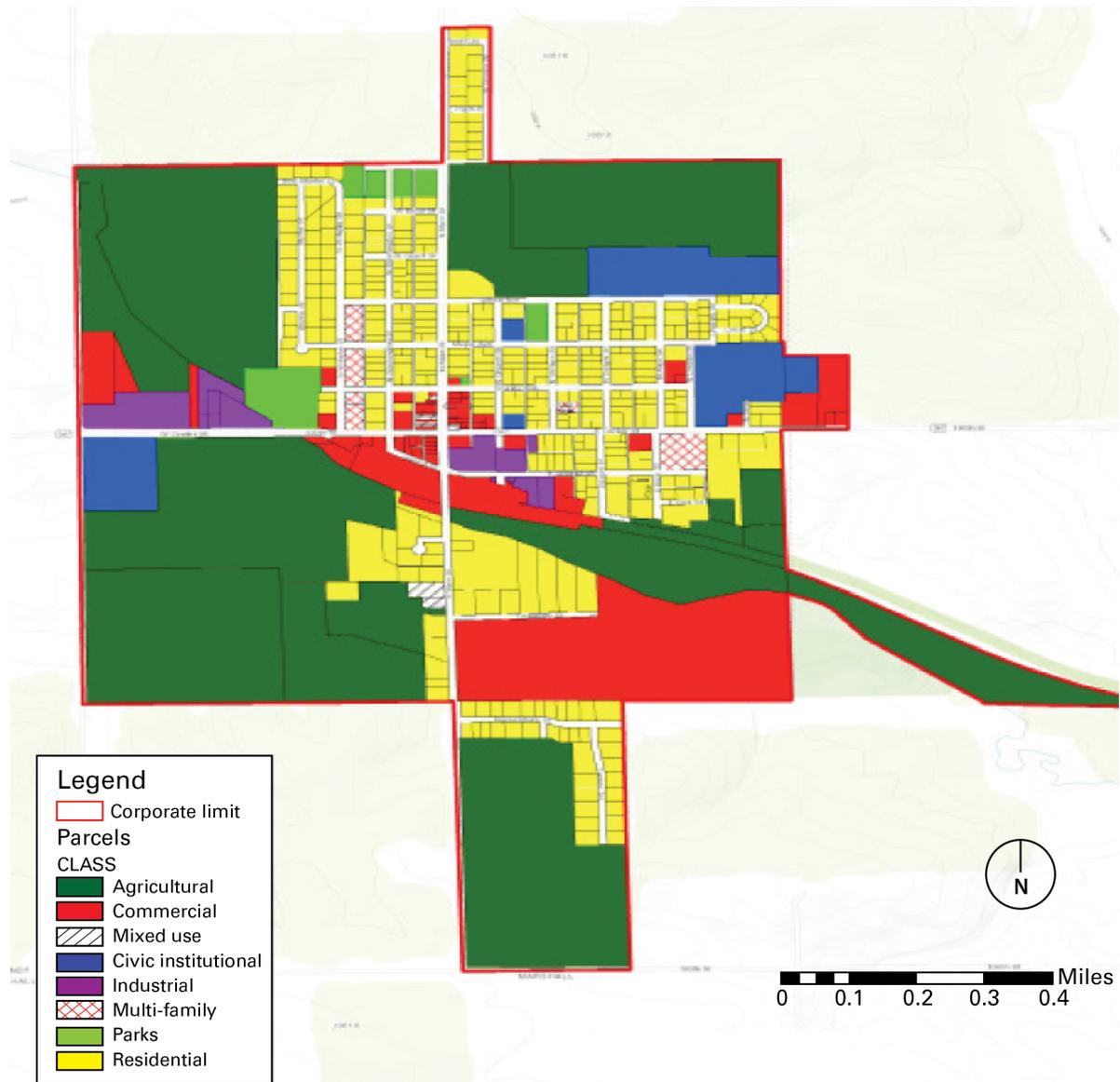


Figure 9.5. Updated land use map of Conrad

Additionally, conservation is critical. Both the new development to the west of BCLUW Elementary School and Wolf Creek are examples of this, as they required potential water hazard mitigation.

Population and Economic Growth

According to the community survey, discussed in Chapter 2, economic development and population increase are the major goals of Conrad residents. Specifically, respondents of the survey desire more locally-owned, downtown services, which makes Main Street a land use priority. Main Street is an excellent area for the implementation of mixed-use buildings that include services on the first floor and apartments on the upper levels.

With the population increase Conrad is projected to experience, a new residential development consisting of single-family residential homes should be created between Main Street and the BCLUW

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Elementary School. Additionally, the old quarry off 330th Street has potential to stimulate the economy with outside investment by becoming a campsite attraction.

These projects are displayed in the future land use map for Conrad (See figure 9.6). The map is the culmination of months of research, community engagement, and writing. Before finalizing the map, sets of goals, policies, and projects were created that Conrad can initiate in the next 15–20 years.

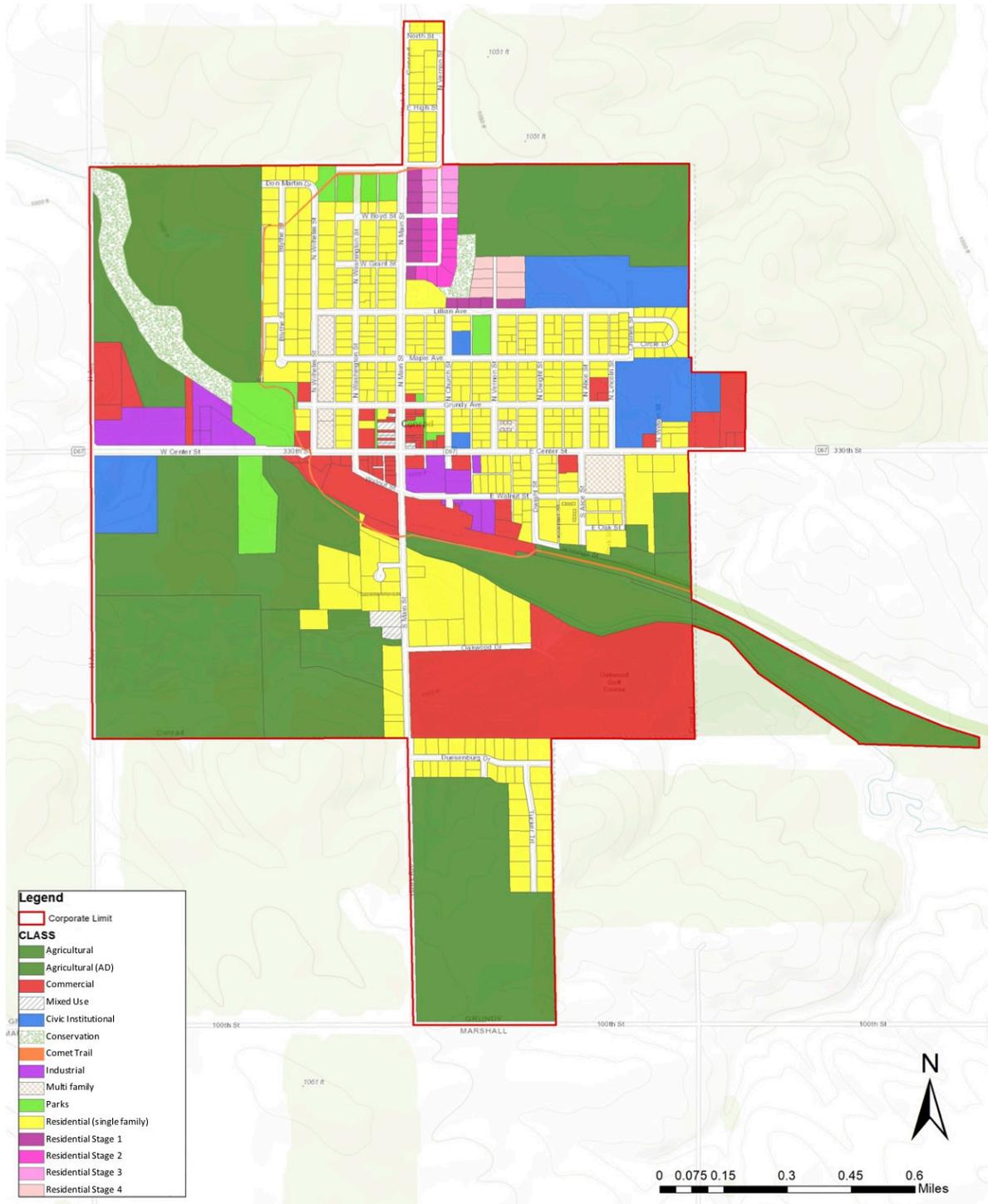


Figure 9.6. Future land use map of Conrad

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Policy Recommendations

Projects Overview

The following projects range from low to high cost with most having eligibility for grant applications and loans to help fund them.

Future Projects:

1. Green corridors
2. Expansion of trail surrounding the city
3. Waterway conservation
4. Mixed-use downtown apartments
5. Campground attraction (rezone land to parks)
6. Residential development

Green Corridors

Green corridors are rapidly being adapted by cities nationwide to help beautify and increase usage in otherwise unused areas. Green corridors are underutilized spaces that have been rehabilitated with greenery to promote better use of the area.

There are several sites in Conrad that could benefit from the implementation of these green corridors. One such area is located in the alley behind the post office between Main Street and Church Street. This location would have access on Main Street to the west, East Center Street to the south, Church Street to the east, and E. Grundy Avenue to the north.

An alternate location is the alley behind Hometown Foods, between Main Street and E. Washington Street. This site would have entrances to the north on E. Washington Street and to the south on E. Center Street. These areas have been targeted because of their central locations and likelihood that they will see use. The green spaces in Figure 9.7 illustrate potential green corridors, east and west of Main Street.

These alleys would provide numerous benefits to the community. For one, they offer increased safety. Both pedestrians and cyclists could easily maneuver through the downtown area with its varieties of entrances and exits. These new green corridors would also foster increased gathering space due to improved safety and beautification.

This usage could be furthered by promoting public events in the space, such as music or town activities. The locations at the north and south ends would also be available for food trucks to set up.

With beautification and increased usage, green corridors would become areas of community pride and foster higher levels of community engagement. In addition to the aforementioned benefits, the change in usage



Figure 9.7. Potential are for green corridor

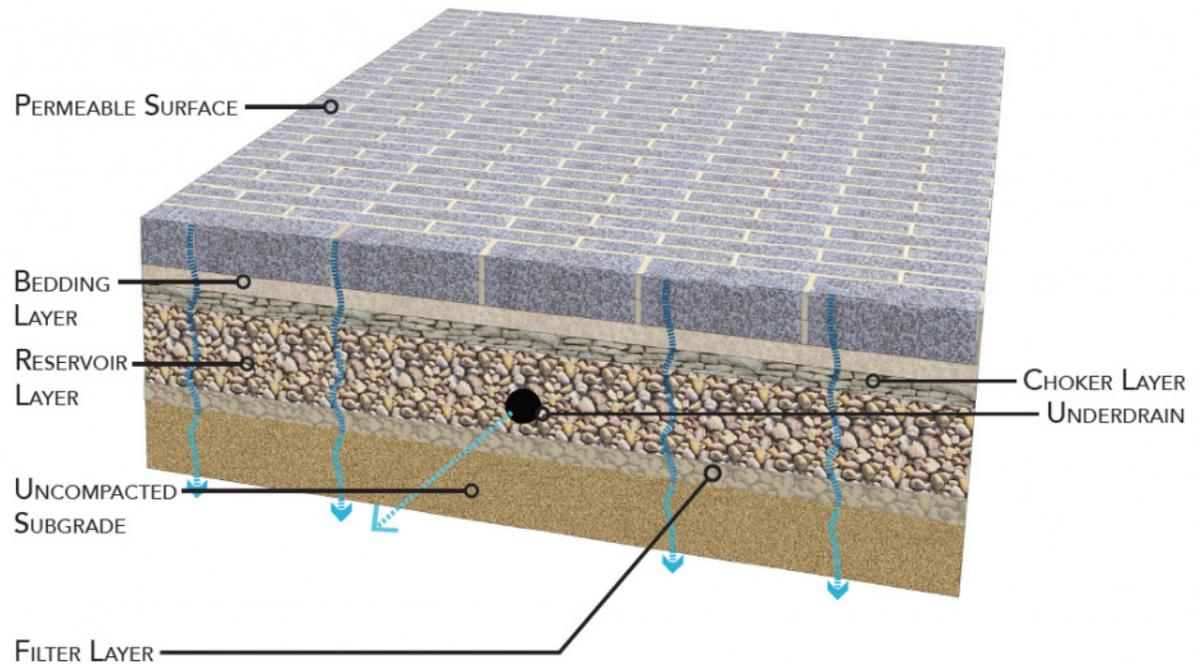


Figure 9.8. Typical section showing green alley water management

to corridors would promote better upkeep. The parking spaces in the lots between Main Street and Church Street would be kept intact so as not put increased stress on other areas of Conrad.

Examples of green corridor implementation can be found nationwide, but some primary cases are in Detroit, Los Angeles, and Washington DC. In Washington, DC, green corridors are being used to alleviate stormwater damage, as well as promote beautification of neglected alleyways and turn them into safe and efficient public areas (See figures 9.8 and 9.9). Meanwhile in Los Angeles, green corridors are being introduced to increase safety and community space (see figure 9.10).

Green corridor implementation can be undertaken in several steps. One step is to replace existing concrete with lighter, more absorbent concrete to help reduce heat given off during hot months, as well as help absorb stormwater to prevent flash flooding. Other steps include planting new plants. Vinery or flowers can be included to increase the beauty of corridors. At the April 17 open house event, the idea for green alleys garnered positive reviews and praise from citizens.



Figure 9.9. Green alley in Detroit



Figure 9.10. Green alley in Los Angeles

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Trail Extensions

The existing trail is a key amenity in the city of Conrad and is marked in orange on the future land use map. Improvement of the system can spur even greater connectivity within the city. The first area to target is the proposed northern development (see figure 9.11).

By connecting the Comet Trail from its start at Reunion Park with BCLUW Elementary School, safety and non-motorized transportation can be encouraged. The red line in figure 9.11 illustrates how the trail will follow along the back of the new development and connect with the north end of Vernon Street.

Another area to target is where the trail touches the south of E Walnut Street and Jennings Street (see figure 9.12). This part of the trail can be connected to the north, near the Oakview nursing home. Elderly residents could use this extension to more easily access the trail and its corresponding nature areas. Additional parks and green space can also be included along this new extension to bring parks and community spaces closer to the Oakview nursing home.

The third area to target is near Oakland Trail Park at the western edge of the city. This section of trail has fallen into disrepair and could use revitalization (see figure 9.13). This would help connect the two north and south sections of trail as well. The southern areas of trail could then almost form a circle, connecting the southern sections of the city to amenities in the north, such as the aquatic center and the Conrad United Methodist Church.

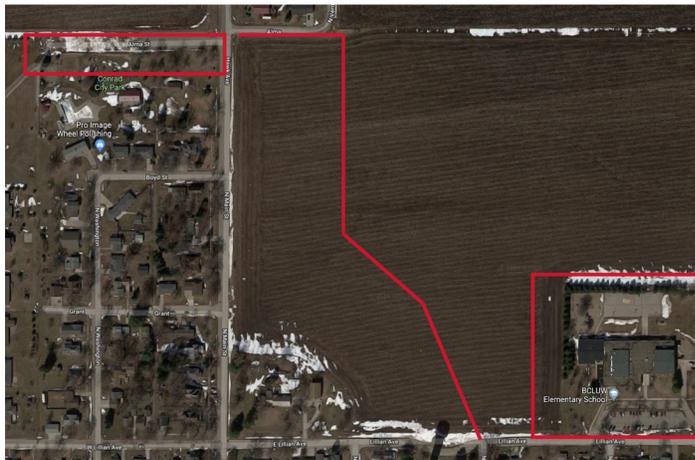


Figure 9.11. Trail extension 1



Figure 9.12. Trail extension 2

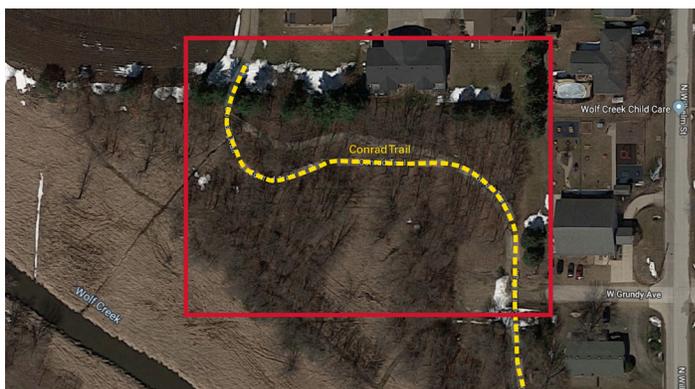


Figure 9.13. Trail extension 3

The idea for trail extensions garnered positive reviews at the open house and allowed residents to improve the idea. Residents suggested that the trail be more closely connected to the Oakview nursing home.

Waterway Conservation

Conrad can work to improve waterway conservation. Wolf Creek runs from the northwest to the southeast of the city and cuts through many areas of Conrad. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has designated Wolf Creek a 1,000-year floodplain. Although the chances of Wolf Creek causing significant damage are slim, it is a good idea to designate any area it could affect as a new classification: conservation (CON) (see figure 9.14). This designation will lead to increased safety and preparedness. Also, because the conservation area runs through the Oakland Trail area, the conservation designation will foster safety and usability of the trail. Implementation of this new conservation area is simple, as city code is the only thing that needs revising.



Figure 9.14. New Wolf Creek CON designation

Another area that was created as a conservation zone was the new stormwater drainage site near the new development between the BCLUW Elementary School and Main Street. This area will be created to manage stormwater collection and to prevent flooding in the new residential houses being built there (see figure 9.15).

Mixed-use Apartments

Downtowns and Main Streets are essential to a community's vitality because the interests of both residents and tourists are in areas where people can gather and use a diversity of services. To ensure that a downtown also serves the needs of its residents and employees, it is important to provide housing opportunities, especially for lower-income residents or minimum-wage workers.

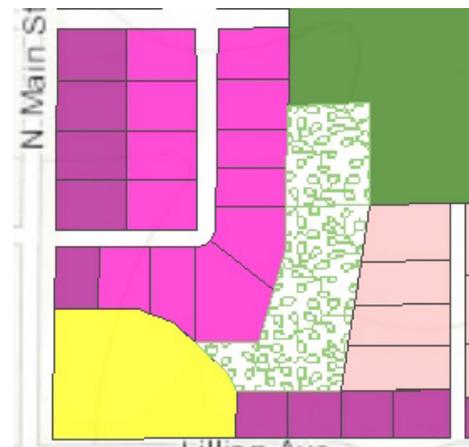


Figure 9.15. New stormwater drainage site CON designation

It is recommended that existing housing units on Main Street be rented out at an adjusted rate for low-income residents. When a business is added to Main Street or the surrounding downtown, apartment units should be added by converting the space above it. There is an identified need for low-income housing and often rental apartments are preferred. Apartments in the downtown area also provide resources for residents because they can walk to work, as well as the grocery store, post office, and library. There is concern that the Hometown Foods grocery store may not survive outside competition. The city may consider rethinking the use of this building as a downtown apartment building. There are many resources for converting a building into apartments and there are many

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grants and funding options available. This would be a great location for low-income apartments. Therefore, Hometown Foods was labeled as mixed-use in the future land use map.



Figure 9.16. Woodbine Savings Bank | example of mixed use

An example of a successful mixed-use downtown is in Woodbine, Iowa. Woodbine has converted many downtown buildings into businesses with apartments located above. Woodbine used the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to create six upper-floor, one- and two-bedroom apartments on its historic Main Street. One of these buildings includes the Woodbine Savings Bank, which has two real estate companies below and a one-bedroom/one-bathroom apartment for rent above.

Woodbine also utilized the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, the federal historic tax credit, HOME, CDBG funds, and tax increment financing (TIF) to fund its projects.

The idea of mixed-use buildings downtown garnered positive reviews at the open house event. There seems to be a desire for cheaper, more convenient, multi-family structures in the more heavily trafficked areas of Conrad. Currently, all downtown apartment units are occupied, revealing that there is a need for this style of housing.

Campground Attraction

The old quarry south of 330th Street, southwest of the city center and currently zoned agricultural, is a suitable location for a campground. Campgrounds, if maintained properly, can be a great way to attract tourism, as well as promote a city as a sustainable and a fun destination.

This piece of land (see figure 9.17) would be usable for the city to develop into a campground in the future, projected at approximately 20 years out, because it is flat and open for development. Additionally, its proximity to the



Figure 9.17. Potential campground site

downtown area provides adequate distance to local services. The proposed development would be limited to small campsites for families and small groups. A minimum of two acres would provide adequate space for the campground. These campsites would follow regulations pertaining to parks and recreation signage, as well as any rules for water, sanitation, hours of maintenance and services outlines by the City of Conrad.

On-site water and sanitation services are recommended and the addition of parking spaces—a recommended one space per campsite—is a necessity. The number of campsites is dependent on city officials' goals for the site.

Additional services could be provided at the campground for a fee that would benefit the city. These services could include showers, a convenience store, trash services, and locker facilities.

The potential use of this space could increase tourism within Conrad and when combined with other recommended projects in this chapter can make the community even more attractive. For example, Conrad could use its expanding trail system, the campground, and other parks and recreation facilities to promote the city as a destination for a high-grossing event such as RAGBRAI. On-site services in the campground could give Conrad an advantage when competing with similar towns in east-central Iowa.

Residential Development

As discussed in the Chapter 5 on housing, more single-family housing is needed in the community, especially ranch style or single-level homes. The area selected for the new single-family residential development is in the north part of Conrad. The development will involve four stages. Stage one is the addition of 14 parcels, east of Main Street and north of Lillian Ave., designated as the darkest shade of purple in figure 9.18. Stage two is the addition of 12 parcels, designated as the second darkest shade of purple. The third stage of development is eight parcels, designated as the third darkest shade of purple, and the fourth stage is seven parcels, designated the lightest shade of purple. Lastly, conservation land will be included around the drainage area for stormwater.

This development addition will ultimately add 41 new parcels of land on which single-family homes can be built. When building the addition, the developer should consider both single- and two-story homes.

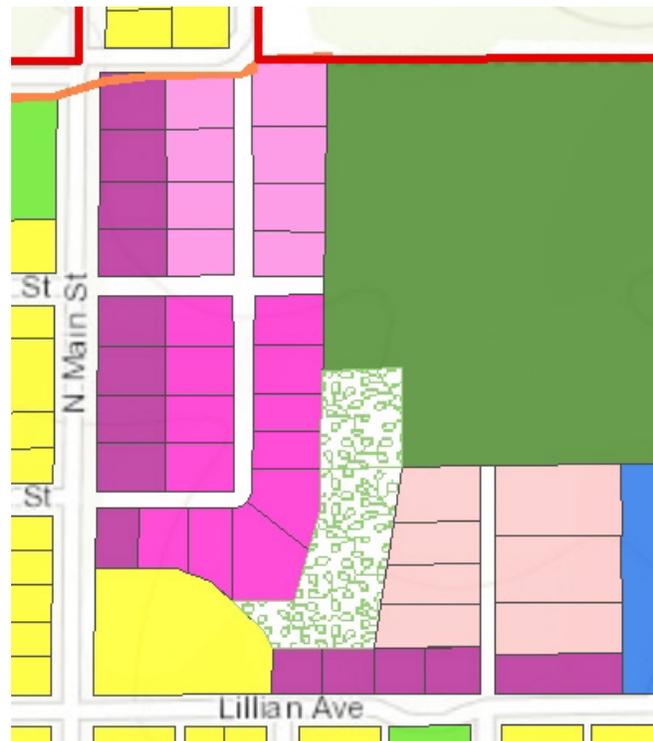


Figure 9.18. Four-stage, single-family housing development

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Goals and Policies

The following are the goals and policies that correspond to the projects discussed above, as well as the broader goals of preceding chapters.

Goal 1: Develop Unique and Diverse Uses Downtown

Policy 1. Create Interesting Open Spaces or Parks Between Buildings

Community gathering spaces enhance a sense of place and increase involvement in community events and use of local services. By creating a green corridor, Conrad can create a fun and interesting space for its residents to participate in civic life and feel connected to their community.

Policy 2. Change Zoning from Business Commercial to Mixed Use

Mixed-use downtowns provide more housing and commercial flexibility, ensure economic success, and attract more people to the community.

Policy 3. Implement an Overlay Zone with Unique Guidelines and Standards

Refer to the Goals and Policies Section of Chapter 4: Economy for more on this concept.

Policy 4. Develop Affordable Housing to Support Low-income Residents and Minimum-wage Workers Using the Workforce Housing Tax Credit

The Workforce Housing Tax Credit is a program for which towns can apply to provide housing on the upper floors of downtown buildings. There is a limit of \$1 million per project and developers can get a 10% tax credit on their development. Conrad can meet this criterion by rezoning its downtown to mixed use.

Policy 5. Prioritize Locally-owned Business

Conrad can market itself as a unique Main Street destination by increasing its share of locally-owned businesses.

Goal 2: Promote Sustainability and Resiliency

Policy 1. Convert Floodplains to Parks

This policy will help Conrad move towards a progressive future, as well as protect its housing stock and public buildings.

Policy 2. Expand Trails System

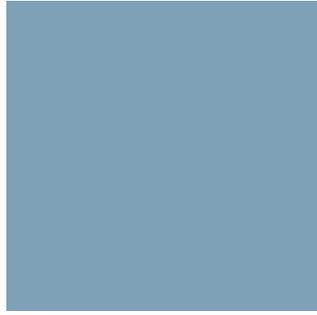
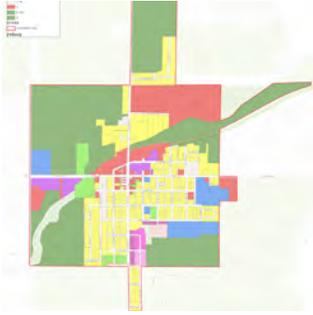
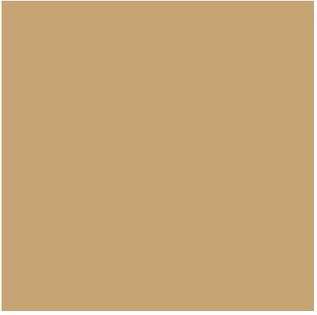
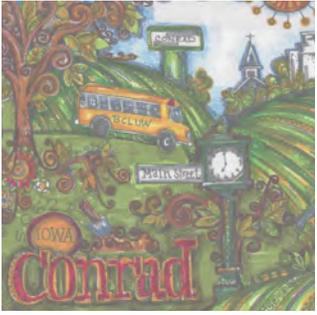
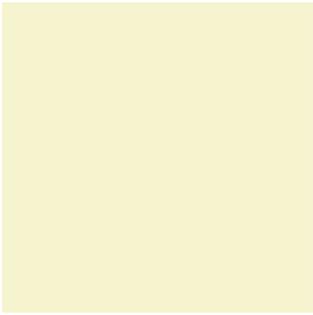
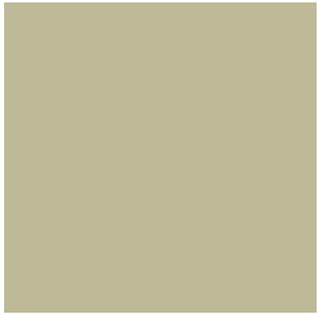
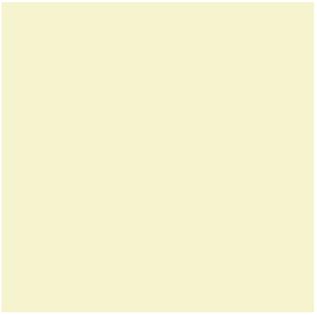
Utilize the Enhance Iowa Grant to fund recreational attractions, such as extended trails. The grant requires Conrad to raise 65% of the funds.

Conclusion

These goals and policies provide vision for Conrad's future land use in 20–30 years. There is room for land use improvements in the areas of residential development, sustainability and resilience, economic prosperity, and downtown composition.

The implementation of green corridors, as well as multiple conservation areas, can enhance Conrad's overall sustainability and protect natural assets. Economic stimulation can be provided through the extension of the trail system, the introduction of new businesses downtown, and the development of a municipal or privately-owned campground.

The recommendations in this chapter are based on many months of data collection, meetings with city officials, public engagement, and meetings with the steering committee. These recommendations will steer Conrad in a positive direction for progressive and community-oriented change.



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