

## 2040 Comprehensive Plan Goals, Strategies, and Action Items

### Economic Development

<p><b>Business and Industry Economics:</b></p> <p><b>Goal 1: Maintain and strengthen economic diversity.</b></p>	
<p><b>Strategy 1.</b> Support the establishment and maintenance of housing, transportation, communication, and utility systems which support and foster quality development.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Coordinate the provision of supportive infrastructure in concurrence with new development.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Evaluate new development impacts on existing infrastructure and service to ensure adequate availability of development ready land.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3:</b> Establish partnerships to address and solve transportation and workforce housing needs.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 4:</b> Encourage the development of infrastructure and state of the art telecommunication technology to promote telecommuting and E-business.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 2.</b> Encourage increasing the number of small to mid-size firms within the region by fostering local entrepreneurship and business ownership.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Partner with other agencies and institutions to identify programs and services to assist in the creation of new small and mid-sized businesses.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Strengthen programs which provide business development, information, and technical assistance.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 3.</b> Promote and foster historical, ecological and agricultural tourism as a suitable and appropriate form of economic development.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Coordinate tourism efforts with other public, non-profit and private organizations.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Promote a variety of year-round attraction to encourage tourism.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3:</b> Educate the public on the economic benefits of historic and natural resource preservation.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 4:</b> Encourage the development of tourism-related businesses.</p>

<b>Goal 2: Build and retain a highly skilled, adaptable workforce.</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Cooperate with local education institutions to coordinate training/skill requirements to meet the needs of local employers.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Work to reduce barriers to obtaining necessary or upgraded job skills.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Promote access to resources and tools for education, training, and supportive services through a variety of means and media.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Collaborate with business, educational institutions, community organizations, and government to provide information to local businesses.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Provide information on work skills development and available employment opportunities through print, electronic, and telecommunications media.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Create a collaborative recruitment strategy among business, non-profits, and government.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Encourage business, labor, education, and government partnerships to solve work force development problems.
<b>Strategy 3.</b> Promote and encourage quality of life and healthy living environment for employers and employees.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Through public and private partnerships, improve and increase workforce housing options.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Improve transportation connections between residential communities and work sites by pursuing opportunities for alternative modes of transportation such as transit bus service, bicycle/pedestrian facilities and amenities.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Provide open space and recreational opportunities as an amenity to attract new businesses and their employees.
<b>Goal 3: Retain and expand existing local businesses.</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Encourage access to economic incentives for quality job creation and/or tax base enhancement.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Explore an economic development marketing and incentives program targeting strategic business clusters.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Engage with State, Regional and local economic development organizations and agencies to sustain and expand current economic activities and be prepared for future economic trends.
	<b>Action Item 3.</b> Continue to collaborate and partner with municipalities and townships, to promote employment opportunities and expand the tax base in Rice County.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Encourage existing neighborhood employers to grow “in	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Development industry clusters by encouraging the retention, expansion, and recruitment of industries that already have a presence in the County.

place,” keeping jobs close to where people live.	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Encourage Cities to work with property owners and interested developers to address unique development challenges including the maintenance, revitalization redevelopment of existing buildings.
<b>Strategy 3.</b> Support downtown revitalization and neighborhood business development in the cities.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Develop strategies to increase employment growth through more intense and efficient use of existing infrastructure.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Support local innovative businesses and economic activities.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Promote downtowns as a place for innovative and emerging business to expand or relocate.
<b>Goal 4: Attract new businesses to Rice County.</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Make available vacant, development-ready land for commercial and industrial use.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Promote well-designed and efficient development and redevelopment of vacant underutilized industrial and commercial lands.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Support redevelopment of existing vacant and underutilized industrial and commercial lands rather than designing additional lands for these purposes.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Monitor and update buildable lands inventory to ensure adequate short and long-term supplies of buildable commerce land.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Encourage businesses that are environmentally and economically sustainable.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Encourage programs that promote sustainable business practices (e.g., recycling, green building or other sustainable design features, the use of green or alternative energy, commute trip reduction programs and utilizing by-products of other Rice County businesses).
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Maximize efforts to attract and recruit industries that are best suited for Rice County’s assets and opportunities.
<b>Strategy 3.</b> Maximize efforts to attract and recruit industries that are best suited for Rice County’s assets and opportunities.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Actively encourage businesses that provide family-wage jobs to start-up, expand, or locate in Rice County.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> The County shall assure economic development that promotes other community qualities, such as livability and environmental quality that are necessary for a sustainable economic future.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Develop a branding/marketing efforts to promote Rice County as a place to live and do business.
	<b>Action Item 4:</b> Institute appropriate land use regulations to accommodate a contemporary mix of economic activities and development.

	<b>Action Item 5:</b> Promote Rice County’s cultural, historic, recreational, education, and environmental assets and amenities.
	<b>Action Item 6:</b> Update zoning and subdivision regulations to accommodate for a variety of potential industries.
	<b>Action Item 7:</b> Promote economic development along the Interstate 35 corridor.

**Agricultural Economics: Economic Development**

**Goal 1: Sustain a diverse economic mix for the County by promoting and strengthening agricultural and complementary businesses.**

<b>Strategy 1.</b> Maintain a strong and productive agricultural economy while promoting the purchase and sale of locally produced products.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> The County, in cooperation with the cities, will actively promote buying locally, farmer’s markets, events and agricultural tourism opportunities.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Attract agricultural related industries to support diversification and use of raw materials from area farms.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Expand rural business opportunities and enhance rural quality of life.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Work with agencies such as the US Department of Agriculture and other state and local agencies to help fund agricultural resources projects.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Identify strategies that promote agriculture and agricultural support businesses in the County, which may include but not be limited to vineyards, community gardens, agritourism, et al.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Revise the County’s regulations and ordinances to address the evolving technological and operational characteristics of farm operations.

**Goal 2: Expand awareness of local agriculture opportunities and agriculture related businesses within the County.**

<b>Strategy 1.</b> Expand awareness of local agriculture opportunities and agriculture related businesses within the County.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Develop a program to educate the public and the farming community on agricultural issues and opportunities.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Establish a leader and mentorship program to encourage youth involvement in agriculture.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Develop a marketing/awareness campaign focused on local food and agricultural programs.
	<b>Action Item 4:</b> Create outreach programs to engage youth and adults with little or no agricultural experience.

# Land Use

**Growth and Development:**

**Goal 1: Support and Encourage Orderly Growth and Development.**

<p><b>Strategy 1.</b> Support land use planning, which encourages orderly growth and sustainable development and redevelopment.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Coordinate infrastructure expansion with development; and encourage development where the infrastructure is adequate to sever that growth.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Support the provision of joint services among jurisdictions.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3:</b> Remain apprised of expected future urban growth areas.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 2.</b> Encourage a diverse economic mix for Rice County by promoting existing assets and identifying new opportunities.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Create commercial/industrial zones to promote employment and generate tax base in Rice County.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Identify appropriate areas for commercial and industrial developments, including along the I-35 corridor.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3:</b> Promote agriculture and associated businesses.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 4:</b> Identify and reserve areas with sand, gravel and aggregate deposits for extraction.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 3.</b> Identify additional areas for mixed-use development and further support urban growth.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Continue to evaluate and implement urban growth zones where municipal infrastructure is likely to expand.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Continue to have zoning districts for the unincorporated villages to allow for mixed-use development encouraging the development of municipal type water and sewer services.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 4.</b> Promote the opportunity to lead active and healthy lifestyles through the coordinated development of infrastructure or supporting programs that promote active lifestyles.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Develop connections between existing communities, parks and other destinations to promote safe and active options.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Create land use regulations to improve proximity to nutritious foods and encourage local wholesome food-related businesses and activities.</p>

<b>Strategy 5.</b> Support and further develop land use patterns that encourage alternative modes of transportation.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Identify and map concentrations of compact residential and employment development that has potential to be served by transit.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Identify existing land uses and travel corridors in the county that could be transformed into transit-friendly corridors.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Encourage local planning for mixed land use areas in or adjacent to transit corridors.
	<b>Action Item 4:</b> Continue to expand existing partnerships and look for new opportunities to collaborate on providing alternative modes of transportation.

## Agriculture and Natural Resources:

### Goal 2: Preserve Agricultural Land and Natural Resources.

<b>Strategy 1.</b> Minimize conflicts between agricultural, residential, and other uses.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Adopt land use regulations that control density and development in agricultural and open spaces, to protect and preserve agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Develop management methods for accommodating diverse types of agricultural activity.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Allow and encourage complementary commercial or industrial uses.
	<b>Action Item 4:</b> Protect and promote agriculture by preserving large tracts of land by encouraging clustering of rural residential development through use of transfer of development rights.
	<b>Action Item 5:</b> Promote higher density housing development in cities and unincorporated villages that can provide municipal or municipal type water and sewer services rather than in the agricultural districts.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Preserve, protect, and improve the surface and underground waters including, but not limited to, rivers, streams, lakes, groundwater, and aquifer recharge areas.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Encourage development to comply with wellhead protection zones.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Develop and employ land use regulations and other techniques for natural resource protection, including transfer of development rights or density, and best management practices.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Recognize the relationship between land use and water quality, and continue to support water quality improvements through land use plans and regulations.
	<b>Action Item 4:</b> Encourage shore land protection and restoration methods such as vegetative buffers.

	<b>Action Item 5:</b> Promote higher density housing development in cities and unincorporated villages that can provide municipal or municipal type water and sewer services rather than in the agricultural districts.
<b>Strategy 3.</b> In working through land development, the potential for air, water, and land contamination will be considered and minimized throughout the entire process.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Encourage conservation design to preserve natural and scenic values.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Support and implement state and federal regulations that pertain to environmental review.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Define, by GIS overlay, and preserve environmentally sensitive areas and other open space by allowing only compatible land uses and development.
	<b>Action Item 4:</b> Recognize that soil conditions may limit development potential.
	<b>Action Item 5:</b> Coordinate with Local, State and Federal agencies and organizations to encourage landowners and tenants to implement and maintain good soil erosion healthy soil practices.

## Housing and Livable Communities Design

<b>Goals 1: Create a diverse range of housing types for all income levels.</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Partner with local communities to develop and manage housing choices for seniors, low- and moderate-income families, and minorities.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Incorporate services into denser areas that support affordable housing.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Encourage the availability of an adequate supply of land and infrastructure for multi-family housing developments.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Allow accessory dwelling units in single-family houses or single-family lots in certain districts that are subject to specific development, design, and occupancy standards.
	<b>Action Item 4:</b> Encourage the development of mixed income housing units.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Work with other organizations to coordinate funding for additional affordable housing units.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Use tax increment financing to support housing projects that serve a mix of incomes and housing types.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Encourage private-public partnerships to aid in the development of affordable housing.
<b>Strategy 3.</b> Promote mixed-use development near	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Support the provision of rental assistance programs for low-income residents.

<p>infrastructure that integrates rental housing.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Encourage the cities to use inclusionary zoning and developer incentives to integrate affordable rental units into market rate developments.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3:</b> Support the provision of programs that provide affordable financing options to owners of rental housing to maintain, improve and upgrade the existing supply of rental housing in the county.</p>
<p><b>Goal 2: Make available adequate housing for all life stages to ensure diverse communities.</b></p>	
<p><b>Strategy 1.</b> Encourage affordable senior housing to allow residents to age in their own communities instead of needing to relocate to get the care they need.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Work with cities to locate senior housing in or adjacent to basic amenities and transit hubs.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Promote a range of housing types for seniors; e.g., adult family homes, skilled nursing facilities, assisted living, and independent living communities.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 2.</b> Promote the development of affordable workforce housing for newly hired workers (e.g. teachers, nurses, city/county employees, etc.).</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Provide education on first time home buying and homeownership.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Look for opportunities to co-locate housing with other civic projects and/or employers.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 3.</b> Continue to promote homeownership and increase opportunities for minority families.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Support and collaborate with Rice County’s Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) on assistance programs.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Encourage equitable access to housing, making a special effort to remove disparities in housing access for people with disabilities, people of color, low-income households, diverse household types, and older adults.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 4.</b> Support housing that addresses the needs of people with physical or developmental disabilities, or mental illness.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Encourage the development of specialized programs to provide rental assistance to persons with disabilities.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Support development of physically-accessible housing to allow for a diverse supply of affordable, accessible housing to meet the needs of people with disabilities, especially near basic amenity areas and provide services and transit.</p>
<p><b>Goal 3: Encourage maintenance and improvements of existing housing stock.</b></p>	
<p><b>Strategy 1.</b> Support the provision of homeowner rehabilitation and</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Partner with non-profit housing providers to rehabilitate existing housing for low and moderate income homeowners.</p>



improvement programs that assist low and moderate income residents with the financial means to maintain and improve the quality of their homes.	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Advocate grant and loan programs that provide residents with the ability to make energy and weatherization improvements to their properties in order to make their homes more energy efficient.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Support educational programs that provide residents with information on how to rehabilitate, improve and upgrade their homes.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Support local city and township redevelopment efforts.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Support local efforts to retrofit existing homes with accessibility improvements.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Support tax incentives policies that encourage the rehabilitation of existing housing in the county.
<b>Goal 4: Advocate for housing near basic amenities and features necessary for a high-quality of life and to maintain a healthy life style.</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Support land use patterns that efficiently connect housing, jobs, retail centers and civic uses.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Collaborate with cities to put housing in transit corridors and near greenway/recreation corridors and basic amenities.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Encourage compact, mixed-use, multi-modal development that will increase travel options within existing urbanized areas, employment centers, and along transit nodes and corridors.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Encourage the cities to have complete, walkable neighborhoods that provide proximity to daily goods and services in order to decrease automobile dependence, and enhance livability and build community cohesion.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Support the development of housing that is in close proximity to healthy foods and recreational opportunities.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Build and encourage partnerships that work to expand residential access to healthy food.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Provide convenient and accessible recreational open space.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Improve year-round access to both public and private recreational facilities.

## Transportation

<b>Goal 1: Enhance and maintain a Transportation system that supports economic development along with existing and future land uses.</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Update the Rice County Transportation Plan to guide future	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Identify and collaborate with local, regional and State transportation agencies, governmental units, business and county residents to gather input on existing and future concerns.

transportation improvement decisions for the County.	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Identify and address emerging deficiencies in capacity, access, mobility, safety, transit, trail and multi-modal needs.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Coordinate and work with cities and townships to develop long term land use and transportation plans to develop cost effective and efficient transportation systems.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Improve and expand identified transportation corridors.	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Develop priorities, financing scenarios and funding options for improving and expanding identified transportation corridors.
	<b>Action Item 2.</b> Develop partnerships, collaborate and cost-share with local and state transportation agencies on traffic studies, planning and programming of future improvements.
	<b>Action Item 3.</b> Identify preliminary needs for planning, design, right of way, access control and construction of transportation corridors.
	<b>Action Item 4.</b> Consider multi-modal air/rail corridors that may be utilized for economic transport.
<b>Goal 2: Preserve and improve the transportation infrastructure in Rice county to maximize safety and efficiency.</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Develop preservation strategies and policies to maintain the existing transportation system to ensure safe and efficient travel.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Review and update access management and cost participation polices.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Analyze crash data to identify potential needs while updating and utilizing adopted safety plans.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Identify and negotiate maintenance agreements that provide more efficient delivery and services.
	<b>Action Item 4:</b> Identify reconstruction and replacement projects as part of the annual Transportation Improvement Plan.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Evaluate existing conditions and identify future needs in an effective way to maximize and protect existing investment.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Evaluate and prioritize system wide needs, develop funding and collaboration opportunities.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Strategically apply for funding to offset county investment needed for the transportation system.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Build a local coalition of support for planning and funding partnerships by encouraging cities, business owners and community groups to be active participants in seeking funding at local, state, and federal levels.
<b>Goal 3: Develop multi-modal and integrated transportation components to enhance options for a diverse population.</b>	

<b>Strategy 1.</b> Support the continued efforts of the County and Cities working together to support transit opportunities.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Evaluate the option of the Park-and Ride facilities for carpool commuters within the county.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Increase current transit options/routes within and outside the cities of Rice County.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Advocate for long-term investment in transit infrastructure.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Encourage usage of the transit systems.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Prioritize transit service and bike/walk infrastructure improvements in populated areas with low vehicle ownership and low access to needed services.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Connect major employers with needed work forces through a variety of multi-modal programs.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Encourage increased advertising and education of alternative transportation options and local transit providers.
<b>Strategy 3.</b> Support and incorporate active living principles in transportation plans and identified projects.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Continue working with surrounding counties to establish long range trails that could be used for recreation and transportation.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Work with Cities and Townships to implement safe and appropriate trails crossings and access to the roadway system.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Identify and promote safe pedestrians crossings to promote walkable communities.
	<b>Action Item 4:</b> Support and assist Cities with their Safe Routes to School Plans.

## Parks, Trails, Recreation & Open Space

### Goal 1: Utilize all available resources to further enhance the quality of the Rice County Park System.

**Strategy 1.** Update the 2012 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.

**Action Item 1.** Work with local municipalities, agencies and residents to construct a new and revised Parks Plan that suits all party's needs.

**Action Item 2.** Set a timeline for the completion of each section of the Parks Plan.

	<b>Action Item 3.</b> The County will use the Comprehensive Plan to guide the development of updating the Parks Plan.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Create/update Master Plans for each County Park.	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Use GIS to construct descriptive maps for these master plans.
<b>Strategy 3.</b> Identify and implement funding resources for maintenance and improvements of the County Park System.	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Work with Inter-county municipalities to secure funding from sources such as grants.
<b>Strategy 4.</b> Promote active communication between the County, local municipalities, and residents.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Increase the frequency of public meetings and surveys for residents to have the ability to voice their opinions/concerns in regards to County parks, trails, and open spaces.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Improve and update the parks section of the County website.
	<b>Action Item 3.</b> Collaborate with cities, townships, and school districts to promote community use of parks, recreation facilities, and opens spaces.
<b>Goals 2: Protect, Enhance, and Maintain County Parks and Open Areas.</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Identify areas where future parks, recreation, and open areas could be placed.	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Utilize GIS to analyze features for potential uses and future County parks.
	<b>Action Item 2.</b> Work on providing parks, facilities, and programs to underserved areas.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Continue keeping County parks and trails clean and accessible for residents.	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Encourage the development of a volunteer program to help with maintaining and improving the overall quality of the County’s natural spaces.
	<b>Action Item 2.</b> Implement excellent maintenance service in the park system.
	<b>Action Item 3.</b> Develop a plan to eliminate physical barriers in all park areas to meet he recreational needs of all residents.

	<b>Action Item 4.</b> Address ADA accessibility across the park and trail system and incorporate changes (where needed) when there are park improvement projects.
<b>Strategy 3.</b> Ensure safety throughout the park system.	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Have park and trail map guides easily available for Rice County residents and visitors.
	<b>Action Item 2.</b> Increase and improve wayfinding's throughout County parks.
	<b>Action Item 3.</b> Continue working with the Rice County Sheriff's Office to decrease negative activity going on in parks, open spaces, and trails.
<b>Goal 3. Encourage a Healthy and Active Lifestyle by Promoting the Use of Parks and Trails.</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Collaborate with surrounding counties and municipalities to develop potential multi-county trails/parks.	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Continue advocating for the expansion of the Sakatah State Trail and the Mills Town Trail.
	<b>Action Item 2.</b> Explore the option of implementing an Adopt-a-Trail program within the County park system.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Support the development of programs that encourage active living.	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Encourage community involvement with the park and trail system. Ex. Park clean-ups, fundraisers for park equipment.
<b>Goal 4: Conserve and Protect Natural Resources that are Present in the County Park System.</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Park design shall protect and improve the functions of the natural environment and strike a balance between public use and preservation.	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Encourage the establishment of a planting program in parks and open space areas where trees and vegetation are lacking.
	<b>Action Item 2.</b> Support native landscaping and maintenance in County parks, if applicable, to maintain the natural environment.
	<b>Action Item 3.</b> Advocate for the maintenance and development of natural corridors to foster ecosystems continuity and connections to parks and open spaces.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Encourage the creation, adoption, and usage of Natural Resource Management plans to manage and preserve natural resources within Rice County parks.	

<b>Strategy 3.</b> Provide recycling opportunities and facilities at public parks and points along the trail.	

## Sustainability

<b>Goal 1: Enhance, Protect, and Restore Natural Lands and Systems.</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Encourage County farmers and agricultural land owners to participate in The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP).	
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Protect and manage streams, watersheds, and floodplains.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Promote education about the values of watershed, raingardens, and low-impact development to address storm water run-off.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Minimize the potential for air, waters and land contamination and pollution that could result from the development process.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Encourage landowners in the shoreland areas to develop and maintain native vegetative buffers.
<b>Strategy 3.</b> Encourage collaboration between the county and cities to expand urban & county parks and street tree programs.	
<b>Strategy 4.</b> Encourage farmers to utilize cover crops programs such as Rice County’s Soil and Water Conservation Districts Cover Crop Incentive Program.	
<b>Strategy 5.</b> Work with County landowners and local municipalities to increase land enrolled in programs like the Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement (MN CREP) and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).	
<b>Goal 2: Advocate and Expand the Use of Energy Efficient Methods and Renewable Energy Resources.</b>	

<p><b>Strategy 1.</b> Encourage cities within Rice County to participate/continue to participate in the Minnesota Green Steps Cities program.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Partner with local communities and organizations to create a Sustainability Plan that aligns with Rice County’s future goals.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 2.</b> Evaluate Rice County owned land that is suitable for renewable energy sources as solar gardens and wind turbines.</p>	
<p><b>Strategy 3.</b> Collaborate with local municipalities to offer incentives for businesses to incorporate environmentally friendly and sustainable business models and practices.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Work with MinnPACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) and commercial property owners to invest in energy efficiency upgrades.</p> <p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Advocate for the implementation of green building and energy conservation.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 4.</b> Encourage Rice County residents to reduce their carbon footprint.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Work with local entities to increase the number of electric vehicle charging stations.</p> <p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Assist homeowners with researching and obtaining grants for the weatherization of their homes.</p>
<p><b>Goal 3: Encourage Waste Reduction, Reuse, Recycling, and Composting.</b></p>	
<p><b>Strategy 1.</b> Increase accessibility of composting and organics recycling.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Encourage the use of programs like Northfield Curbside Compost.</p> <p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Promote residential backyard composting throughout the county.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 2.</b> Work with local entities to host educational engagements pertaining to waste reduction, reducing and managing food waste, and composting and recycling practices.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Advocate for events going on in Rice County to be zero waste.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 3.</b> Encourage businesses around the County to switch over to more sustainable and biodegradable products.</p>	