



# MOUNTRAIL COUNTY, ND 2030 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



AUGUST  
2020



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<http://www.co.mountrail.nd.us/subpage/42>



# Executive Summary

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## What is the 2030 Comprehensive Plan?

The 2030 Comprehensive Plan is a planning document which articulates Mountrail County's 10-year vision for growth and development. It shapes the County's land use and zoning policies and sets clear expectations for County administrators, private landowners, and industry. It also guides administrators as they plan investments in public infrastructure.

## Statutory Planning Requirement

The North Dakota Century Code empowers counties to regulate property for the purpose of promoting public health, safety, and welfare (Chapter 11-33). The legal basis for this authority comes from the Comprehensive Plan.

***"The comprehensive plan shall be a statement in documented text setting forth explicit goals, objectives, policies, and standards of the jurisdiction to public and private development within its control." (NDCC 11-33-03)***

When considering a request for a zoning amendment, conditional use permit, or variance, the Planning and Zoning Board and the County Commission must evaluate their decisions within the context of the Comprehensive Plan.

## Jurisdictional Authority







The 2030 Plan applies to areas within the County's zoning jurisdiction. It does not apply municipalities and townships that exercise their own zoning authority, including the following:

- City of New Town
- City of Parshall
- City of Plaza
- City of Ross
- City of Stanley
- City of White Earth
- Bicker Township
- Howie Township
- Shell Township

No future growth areas are indicated for Bicker Township, Howie Township, and Shell Township. If a township decides to relinquish its zoning authority, Mountrail County will work with the township to amend the Comprehensive Plan as needed.

## Plan Elements

The 2030 Plan is organized into six elements. Navigate to any element by clicking on its name below:

	<b>Vision</b> The Vision element includes a vision statement, goals, and objectives that articulate the County's aspirations for 2030. This element provides the foundation for the Plan.
	<b>Land Use</b> This element describes the County's vision for future land use and development. It provides the blueprint for zoning and other policies.
	<b>Transportation</b> This element provides a guide for efficiently maintaining and improving transportation infrastructure.
	<b>Infrastructure and Services</b> This element provides a guide for sustaining and improving existing public infrastructure and services (such as rural water and broadband), as well as coordinating development with necessary public infrastructure and services.
	<b>Economic Development</b> This element provides a vision for County strategies and investments that promote desired development, expand employment, and grow local wealth.
	<b>Implementation</b> This element identifies action steps, responsibilities, and timelines for implementing the recommendations of the Plan.

## County Profile

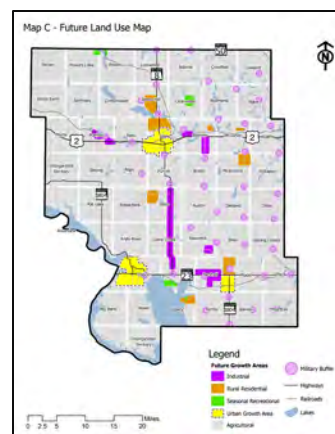
The **County Profile**, an appendix to the 2030 Plan, is an additional resource for County residents and staff. This document summarizes existing conditions, including demographic information, growth trends, and forecasts. It also includes maps and discussion of the County's natural resources and environment, which provides additional context for the Future Land Use Plan.

## Maps

Several maps were created for the 2030 Plan and the County Profile. Maps referenced in the Comprehensive Plan are labeled with letters; maps referenced in the County Profile are labeled with numbers. The first reference to each map in this document includes a thumbnail image like the one at right and a hyperlink to access the map on the County's website. Also, all maps can be viewed at the link below:

<http://www.co.mountrail.nd.us/subpage/42>

[Map C – Future Land Use Map](#) is a key element of the 2030 Plan. This map is intended to guide growth and development to suitable locations throughout Mountrail County.



## Public Involvement

### Steering Committee

The planning process was led by a Steering Committee in consultation with SRF Consulting Group, Inc. The Steering Committee included representatives from:

- County Planning and Zoning
- County Road and Bridge
- Agricultural Industry
- Minot Air Force Base
- States Attorney
- County Commission
- County Law Enforcement
- County Department Heads

### Public Meetings

A series of public meetings were conducted in Stanley and New Town during the winter of 2020. County residents and stakeholders provided their feedback on draft planning materials, including the vision statement, goals and objectives, and the Future Land Use Map.



## January 22-23, 2020

Attendees were asked to identify the ideal lot size for rural residential development. Their feedback informed the policy recommendations for the Plan. Attendees also provided input on preferred policies and best practices for farmland conservation. They participated in mapping exercises, helping to refine the land use alternatives, identify transportation issues, and propose road improvements.

## February 26-27, 2020

This meeting focused on economic development issues and opportunities. Attendees discussed threats/blockers to County growth as well as opportunities for improvement. They participated in mapping exercises, providing input on a preferred land use alternative and road system recommendations.

## Stakeholder Interviews

Several key stakeholders were interviewed to further inform the direction of the Plan. Stakeholder representation and interview topics are outlined below:

Stakeholder	Topic(s)
Don Longmuir/State Representative	Economic Development, Land Use
Geoff Simon/Western Dakota Energy Association	Oil and Gas Industry, Renewable Energy, Trucking
Shannon Suggs/ND Department of Environmental Quality	Water Quality, Wellhead Protection Areas
Richard Weisz/ND Department of Agriculture	Noxious Weed Programs

## Amending the Plan

The 2030 Plan is intended provide a blueprint for land use, zoning, transportation planning, and related policies that can serve the County for the next 10 years. Minor amendments to maps and text may be adopted from time to time to help the County respond to changing conditions. Amendments may be proposed by County citizens or administrators – for example, to achieve consistency with the Zoning Ordinance. County officials should consider proposed amendments carefully to determine whether they are consistent with the Plan’s intent. Amendments should be adopted after thorough analysis of immediate needs, as well as consideration for the long-term effects of the change. A full update of the Plan is intended for 2030, or whenever the Plan reaches the end of its useful life. Staff should review the Plan on a periodic basis to monitor efforts toward implementation.



# Vision





# Vision

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## Vision Statement

Mountrail County is thriving in 2030. Its identity remains rooted in its rural values and agricultural heritage, but its citizens and leaders are also **prepared** to confront new challenges and seize opportunities created by growth and change. Government is fiscally **responsible** and responsive to community needs and desires. Communities are **safe** and **connected** as critical infrastructure and services are expanded and improved. A high **quality of life** is built on availability of and **access** to education and training, good jobs, livable housing, recreation opportunities, and essential services. Mountrail County will **coordinate** with other government agencies and interest groups, but the 2030 Comprehensive Plan also supports County government to pursue policies and partnerships which **advance** its distinct vision, goals, and objectives.



## Goals and Objectives

**Table 1. Goals and Objectives**

<div data-bbox="198 382 402 432" data-label="Section-Header"> <h3>Land Use</h3> </div> <div data-bbox="1230 338 1414 527" data-label="Image"> </div>
<div data-bbox="198 550 1279 592" data-label="Section-Header"> <h4>GOAL LU-1: Protect the County's rural character and agricultural heritage.</h4> </div> <div data-bbox="198 606 1377 709" data-label="Text"> <p><b>Context:</b> Mountrail County has a longstanding tradition on living off the land. Agriculture dominates the rural setting of the County, with farming and ranching the primary activities. Other uses should be complementary to agriculture and should be compatible with the rural landscape.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="198 716 334 749" data-label="Section-Header"> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> </div> <div data-bbox="245 756 1404 999" data-label="List-Group"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Residential lot sizes and densities are consistent with a rural setting.</li> <li>B. In areas designated "Agricultural" on the future land use map, the County should seek to limit residential density to four residences per legal quarter-section (160 acres, defined as NE ¼, NW ¼, SE ¼, or SW ¼). The count of residences per quarter section should include existing habitable residences as well as any lots – whether improved or unimproved – that are entitled to a residence. Such residences or lots may be located anywhere within each quarter-section as allowed per the County's subdivision resolution and zoning ordinance.</li> </ul> </div>
<div data-bbox="198 1018 1024 1060" data-label="Section-Header"> <h4>GOAL LU-2: Facilitate orderly and efficient development.</h4> </div> <div data-bbox="198 1075 1414 1178" data-label="Text"> <p><b>Context:</b> County residents bear infrastructure costs in the form of property taxes and use fees. In very low-density areas, the per capita costs of capital improvements and public services are relatively high. Efficient development ultimately helps reduce private landowner costs.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="198 1184 1421 1287" data-label="Text"> <p>When development is orderly, it is more predictable and manageable. County residents understand where residential, commercial, and industrial development is expected to occur, and at what scale. This predictability also benefits all parties in the development process.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="198 1293 334 1327" data-label="Section-Header"> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> </div> <div data-bbox="245 1333 1421 1772" data-label="List-Group"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Issue variances on a limited basis. If variances become commonplace, the Zoning Ordinance needs to be amended to make use of the ordinance more practical.</li> <li>B. Ensure that road access, water supply, and other necessary utilities are readily available or can reasonably be provided to platted, yet still undeveloped residential lots.</li> <li>C. Encourage the siting of residential subdivisions close to available infrastructure and existing development to reduce infrastructure costs and preserve contiguous farmland and open space.</li> <li>D. Confirm buffers between conflicting uses are established and enforced to protect businesses and residents. One example of a land use conflict is intensive industrial sited next to residential.</li> <li>E. Do not extend community infrastructure and services into areas which are not intended for further development.</li> <li>F. Direct future permanent development (e.g. rural residential, industrial, etc.) towards the Development Focus Areas as shown on the Future Land Use Map.</li> </ul> </div>

### **GOAL LU-3: Conserve and sustain productive farm and ranch lands.**

**Context:** Land is the County's most valuable long-term resource. The conservation of farm and ranch lands for continued use of future generations is key to the sustainability of the County's economy and rural way of life.

**Objectives:**

- A. Promote best practices for soil conservation and water management. Encourage voluntary action from private landowners through education, outreach, and connection to funding resources.
- B. Review existing agricultural zoning to ensure that regulations discourage incompatible development.
- C. Property subdivision and development avoids fragmentation of valuable agricultural areas, with the aim to preserve areas that are contiguous and of sufficient size to remain viable for farming and ranching. "Stranded acres" of limited size or irregular shape that might remain from project development or subdivision should be avoided.

### **GOAL LU-4: Protect and enhance the quality of natural resources and recreation areas.**

**Context:** Mountrail County is home to a wealth of high quality natural resources and recreational areas associated with those resources. These resources and recreational areas are not only limited to Lake Sakakawea and its long shoreline but includes other assets such as a large section of the prairie pothole region and associated wildlife areas.

**Objectives:**

- A. Maintain, to the most viable extent, the integrity of areas designated as constrained open space (i.e. wetlands, streams, steep hills, etc.).
- B. Discourage development from occurring on the edge of bluffs and ridges in the County and utilize development setbacks to promote bluff stability and reduce landslide risk to development.
- C. Ensure grading and site prep work respects the natural terrain and is discouraged where slopes exceed 20 percent.
- D. Safeguard significant natural assets (e.g. Federally and State protected wetlands, Lake Sakakawea, etc.) by closely scrutinizing and only approving neighboring uses of minimal intensity such as agricultural, rural residential, or recreational-type uses.

### **GOAL LU-5: Promote a positive visual perception of the County and active property maintenance.**

**Context:** Community aesthetics are a public interest. Promoting aesthetics is a valid public purpose of County government. It is especially important to consider aesthetics along major highway corridors, such as US Highway 2, which represents the face of the County to prospective property owners, investors, regional travelers and tourists, and County residents.

**Objectives:**

- A. Strengthen and enforce regulations to the extent allowable to hold industrial operators accountable for management and restoration of gravel pits, stockpiles, and other disturbed areas.
- B. Discourage the storage of recreational vehicles along primary public corridors.
- C. Provide resources to landowners to properly enforce permit conditions and minimize noxious weed problems. Respond proactively to citizen complaints.
- D. Development that occurs along community gateways and key corridors contributes to the aesthetic quality of the County and local communities.
- E. Rural residential lot owners are aware of the responsibility to control noxious weeds on their property and resources available to control the spread of noxious weeds.

## **GOAL LU-6: Protect the quality and supply of the County's water resources.**

**Context:** The County's extensive system of wetlands and watercourses, as well as Lake Sakakawea are integral to the health and preservation of agriculture, recreation, and local communities. How the County manages land use is critical to the quality and supply of these resources.

### **Objectives:**

- A. Ensure that potential impacts to wellhead protection areas are considered by the Planning and Zoning Board and County Board of Commissioners in development review (conditional use permits, subdivisions, and zone change applications, etc.)
- B. Develop robust criteria for the County's consideration of applications that involve temporary water lines.
- C. Engage the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality and the North Dakota Rural Water Systems Association for assistance in evaluating the viability of the County's wellhead protection areas and developing appropriate action steps to ensure sustainability.
- D. Establish development setbacks from the County's surface water resources, including wetlands, lakes, and streams.

## **GOAL LU-7: Support the operations of the United States military and preserve the integrity of military facilities and operations in Mountrail County.**

**Context:** Land use and development should not interfere with U.S. military facilities or operations, including operations associated with missile alert facilities, missile launch facilities, and military training activities.

### **Objectives:**

- A. No habitable structures are constructed within the 2,500' radius evacuation zones around military facilities.
- B. Ensure notification of development applications for property located within 2 miles of military facilities.
- C. Existing habitable structures within federal easements are classified as non-conforming uses. As such, they cannot expand or modify their use.
- D. Work with the military and ND One Call to ensure a notification system is in place to protect underground military infrastructure from damage by any ground disturbing activity.
- E. Large structures and infrastructure which may interfere with military operations are sited and designed appropriately in coordination with Minot Air Force Base.
- F. Provide disclosure to property owners about the rules and risks of living and working near military facilities.

## **GOAL LU-8: Encourage ongoing communication and cooperation between different governmental entities within Mountrail County.**

**Context:** Mountrail County cannot achieve the aims of this plan acting alone. Only by actively working with all government entities can the goals and objectives of this plan be accomplished.

### **Objectives:**

- A. Ensure that a constructive working relationship exists with the US Army Corps of Engineers to promote an understanding of County aims regarding access to Lake Sakakawea, the viability of farming/ranching adjacent to streams and wetlands, and other issues involving federal jurisdiction.
- B. Pursue communication and cooperation between the governmental entities throughout any revision of the Comprehensive Plan.
- C. Coordinate with local cities to require sufficient right-of-way and utility easements for subdivisions within the cities' extraterritorial areas, so that they can readily receive urban services in the future (i.e., city sewer, curb and gutter).



## GOAL LU-8 Cont'd

- D. Direct higher density urban development, such as multifamily housing, to cities within the County that can more appropriately handle needed infrastructure and services.

## Transportation



### GOAL T-1: Develop and maintain a transportation system that promotes safety for all users.

**Context:** Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of injury-related death in North Dakota. The reality is that crashes can be reduced through several measures. The County has the opportunity to influence the rate of crashes on its own road and bridge system. The management of land uses also indirectly impacts the safety of the entire County transportation system.

**Objectives:**

- A. Continue to implement safety improvements in coordination with the NDDOT, Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, local government partners, and the development community on existing and new County roads and bridges to minimize serious injuries and fatalities.
- B. In local communities, work with local government agencies and the MHA Nation to ensure that transportation improvements address safety and operation needs beyond those for vehicles, including pedestrians and bicyclists.
- C. Continue to actively manage access onto County and township roads to ensure property access points are located to maximize safety and traffic flow.

### GOAL T-2: Develop a transportation system that is sustainable, maintains a state of good repair, and explores low-cost/high-benefit solutions to satisfy the public's transportation priorities.

**Context:** The traveling public expects a road and bridge system that provides safe travel and provides access to important local and regional areas. However, the public also expects that funding for transportation improvements be utilized efficiently and in a transparent manner.

**Objectives:**

- A. Maximize the useful life of existing County infrastructure (e.g. roads, bridges, culverts, drainage facilities) through a sound preservation program.
- B. Provide transparency, accountability, and effective engagement to residents and stakeholders (especially the oil and gas industry) when planning and implementing transportation improvements.
- C. When planning for road projects, consider the need to serve development areas as identified in the Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan.

### GOAL T-3: Effectively and efficiently use available transportation funding.

**Context:** Limited funding for transportation improvements means that projects need to be prioritized. Prioritization should be based on clear and reasonable rationale. Such rationale should also be leveraged to seek further funding for important projects.

## GOAL T-3 Cont'd

### Objectives:

- A. Invest, as first priority, in safety and preservation improvements to the County's road and bridge system.
- B. Invest in new or additional road mileage and new road alignments only as financial resources allow and when proven by a clear and significant need.
- C. Coordinate with NDDOT and State legislators to secure additional funding.
- D. Maintain a rational, performance-based, transparent project prioritization system that can withstand public scrutiny and is flexible to account for changes to applicable rules and regulations and other external factors.

## GOAL T-4: Maximize intergovernmental cooperation and coordination to improve the transportation system.

**Context:** County residents, workforce, and visitors travel throughout the County regardless of the jurisdictional responsibility (i.e. state highway, County road, or township road) for the facility that is used. Therefore, the County must actively work with other local, state, and tribal authorities to ensure improvements are well-coordinate across the entire transportation system.

### Objectives:

- A. Work with adjacent counties, local cities, and townships to ensure that the County is given notification of proposed development and transportation projects that may impact County roads and bridges.
- B. Continue to advise and work with local cities, townships, and utilities (public and private) to ensure that County road and bridge projects are well-coordinated.
- C. Reach out to and coordinate the County's road and bridge plans with the MHA Nation, NDDOT (Minot and Williston Districts and Local Government Division), local cities, and local townships so that plans can be harmonized where possible.
- D. Promote education about road jurisdiction to help County residents understand which agency maintains which roads throughout the County.

## Infrastructure & Services



## GOAL IS-1: Promote efficient extensions, connections, upgrades, and maintenance for water, gas, electric, and other infrastructure to serve development.

**Context:** Infrastructure and utilities should not be over-extended in order to minimize costs to local taxpayers and consumers.

### Objectives:

- A. Periodically engage regional rural water and wastewater providers to provide regular map updates of utility systems as these systems are modified and expanded.
- B. Establish an open line of communication with local electric utilities and energy transmission companies in order to coordinate the location of new infrastructure to minimize the cumulative impact infrastructure corridors have on the usability of agricultural lands. Continue to work with other agencies to overlap easements where possible.

## **GOAL IS-2: Development is served by rural water providers to the greatest extent feasible.**

**Context:** Multiple rural water providers serve Mountrail County. Use of rural water limits the need for individual water wells and ensure a high level of water quality.

**Objectives:**

- A. Rural water providers must provide verification regarding whether or not the provider can service the proposed development at build-out.
- B. The cost of additional rural water capacity necessary for new development should be borne solely by the developer.
- C. Existing development currently served by individual wells is encouraged to be added to a rural water system.
- D. Support the efforts of the Western Area Water Supply Authority to increase system capacity and further expand into Mountrail County.

## **GOAL IS-3: Existing development and new development is served by adequate fire protection, law enforcement, schools, emergency, and non-emergency medical services.**

**Context:** Infrastructure and utilities alone are not sufficient to properly serve development. The County has a responsibility to ensure the provision of public services, such as law enforcement and fire protection, are reasonably provided to development throughout the County.

**Objectives:**

- A. Promote the preservation of statutory section-line right of way throughout the County to allow for emergency access and the provision of infrastructure services as needed.
- B. Ensure that new development provides fire suppression capabilities in coordination with the rural water provider and meets the needs of the proposed development.
- C. For new development that cannot be reasonably serviced by local fire protection or emergency response service providers, the developer shall prove that the proposal includes measures to mitigate the risk of emergencies, such as fire mitigation and emergency access provisions.
- D. Require the provision of at least two points of access to new major subdivisions and other developments of significant size.

## **GOAL IS-4: Collaborate with the State agencies to ensure proper wastewater disposal.**

**Context:** As with other rural areas, many residents and businesses rely on either individual septic or larger private wastewater systems. The County can help make available educational resources and help health agencies best provide services locally.

**Objectives:**

- A. Increase engagement with the Upper Missouri District Health Unit and First District Health Unit to encourage compliance with state regulations of individual septic systems and residents' long-term care of individual systems.
- B. Enhance coordination with the State Department of Health to ensure that all private wastewater disposal systems (defined by NDCC as serving 25 persons or more) are effectively regulated to protect local groundwater and private property.

## Economic Development



### **Goal ED-1: Continue to support agriculture as a key basic industry that is integral to the County's cultural heritage.**

**Context:** Agriculture should not be sacrificed at the expense of the oil and gas industry. The County also has access to a number of tools to continue to support agriculture and the County can use its zoning authority to promote the conservation of agricultural land and practices.

**Objectives:**

- A. Reserve the best farmland in Mountrail County for agriculture and compatible uses which do not diminish agricultural value.
- B. Buffer development under County zoning jurisdiction from active oil and gas development and related oil and gas land uses.
- C. Partner with regional education institutions to develop and apply agricultural science research and advanced technology in the field and continue to develop the next generation of farmers.
- D. Help connect County residents with available local and regional resources to support individuals and families interested in pursuing small-scale agriculture as a business.
- E. Increase awareness of existing agriculturally-focused youth development opportunities, such as 4H Club and other opportunities through the NDSU Extension office and other regional and local organizations.

### **GOAL ED-2: Align economic development goals with land use and infrastructure planning.**

**Context:** Mountrail County can support local and regional economic development activities through long-range and current planning. The Comprehensive Plan provides the foundation for long-range land use planning and infrastructure planning, which sets the stage for economic development. Land use policies should support the development and expansion of industries that contribute to economic growth. Current planning includes zoning and development review.

**Objectives:**

- A. The County will be prepared for renewable energy infrastructure, especially related to wind and solar power, and be ready to account for the impacts related to such infrastructure.
- B. Where possible, focus intense industry under County planning and zoning control toward cities with capacity to provide supportive infrastructure.
- C. Provide a clear, easy-to-follow process and timely review of development proposals.

### **GOAL ED-3: Actively support regional economic development efforts.**

**Context:** Mountrail County's economy operates within a regional context. Its industry makeup, resource opportunities, labor needs, and growth trends are largely consistent across the Bakken. Its interests and actions also intersect with those of the MHA Nation. As such, the County's approach to economic development should be broadly integrated with regional interests and program development.

### **GOAL ED-3 Cont'd**

#### **Objectives:**

- A. Maintain active dialog with the North Dakota Department of Commerce, which coordinates financial packages and tax incentives for special industries and planning areas. Coordinate technical assistance, such as GIS expertise and planning services, for communities as needed.
- B. Encourage private industry to invest in local communities to support a growing permanent workforce.
- C. Enhance the County's workforce by strengthening supportive infrastructure, such as daycare, permanent single-family housing, parks and recreations, and local schools.

### **GOAL ED-4: Promote sufficient permanent housing for a growing labor force.**

**Context:** To provide an adequate housing supply, housing demand must be identified, and there must be sufficient land zoned and ready for residential development. It is critical to engage with cities, which have capacity to support multiple housing types more efficiently than the County.

#### **Objectives:**

- A. Continue to track building permits, occupancy rates, housing prices, and other indicators of housing demand. Coordinate with higher education and State agencies as needed to develop projections of housing need.
- B. Coordinate with utility service providers to identify potential system issues that might limit the location, density, or timing of residential development in both the cities and unincorporated County.
- C. Examine the role that multifamily units, accessory housing units, and temporary housing should play in areas under the County's zoning jurisdiction and update the Zoning Ordinance if needed.
- D. Encourage cities to zone and prepare land to support housing alternatives based on population needs.

### **GOAL ED-5: Promote regional linkages between suppliers, producers, and end consumers.**

**Context:** County industries which produce goods for export create community wealth. However, additional value can be captured by involving more local producers and suppliers before final products leave the County's borders. Developing clusters of supportive industries also builds community resilience, which helps support the County during economic downturns.

#### **Objectives:**

- A. Focus on value-added businesses, including operations that support oil and agriculture and associated product processing. Identify associated industry segments (i.e., refining, transmission, implement manufacturing, fertilizer manufacturing) which could be strengthened.
- B. Encourage businesses and residents to buy local.
- C. Work with the State and townships to streamline the regulation of trucking so that the transportation of goods between suppliers, producers, and end consumers can be enhanced.

### **GOAL ED-6: Encourage the expansion of technical jobs and match workforce training programs to suit these jobs.**

**Context:** Economic growth is increasingly driven by technological improvements. Technological innovation and automation cause some jobs to be lost, while creating new employment opportunities that demand a different set of workforce skills. To compete in a globalized economy, Mountrail County must continue to encourage innovation and expand the technical capacity of businesses and workers.

## **GOAL ED-6 Cont'd**

### **Objectives:**

- A. Support deployment of new technologies in the field to create new job opportunities and expand productivity. Actively encourage research demonstration projects in the County.
- B. Promote STEM education and computational skills in local schools.
- C. Promote regional vocational-based training institutions to help support local industry.

## **GOAL ED-7: Encourage the expansion and enhancement of outdoor recreation opportunities.**

**Context:** The County's natural resources and recreation areas are a source of tourism, which forms a part of the economic base. The proximity to hunting, camping, and fishing areas is also a selling point to people who may consider moving to the County. Enhancing access to natural areas, while maintaining the quality of these resources, are goals which can be integrated with land use planning, infrastructure planning, and economic development.

### **Objectives:**

- A. Coordinate with USACE to enhance and better advertise public access to Lake Sakakawea.
- B. Coordinate with the County Park District, city parks districts, and nonprofit visitor and recreation organizations to develop, enhance, manage, and advertise County recreational facilities.
- C. Where possible, coordinate with MHA Nation to align tourism strategies and actions.
- D. Support a concept for a regional trail system that is coordinated with existing trails (such as the Four Bears-New Town shared use path) and proposed corridors (such as the North Country National Scenic Trail).

## **GOAL ED-8: Promote increased access to high-speed broadband and wireless communication.**

**Context:** Internet infrastructure is essential for business expansion, recruitment, and retention. It provides critical support to deploy technology and develop data systems. Access to the internet through direct broadband systems and wireless connections can be a significant factor in attracting business and workers to Mountrail County. In Mountrail County, 91 percent of the population has access to broadband speeds of 25 megabits per second (mbs). The goal should be to increase coverage to 100 percent. Long-term, the service target should be set to 100 mbs, which will become the standard for service within the decade.

### **Objectives:**

- A. Work with local providers to increase overall access to broadband and wireless service networks. Encourage wireless expansion to areas with limited broadband service.
- B. Work with local providers to increase service speeds and prioritize improvements accordingly
- C. Encourage development in locations which are already served by, or can be served by, reliable broadband services and wireless communication networks.
- D. Support broadband service availability to new development. Encourage internet service agreements prior to approval of County preliminary plats.
- E. Coordinate with wireless companies to identify appropriate sites for wireless communication towers. Encourage collocation of wireless tower facilities.





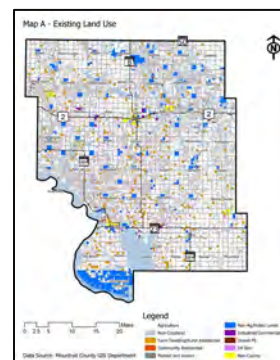
# Land Use



# Land Use

## Existing Land Use

Existing land use data was developed to provide a basis for the Future Land Use Map and an additional reference for County residents and administrators. The County's [Ag Land Use Map](#) was used as a starting point, but some new land use categories were added and some feature attributes were edited for cartographic display. [Map A – Existing Land Use](#) is a parcel-based map of existing land use Mountrail County. **Table 2** summarizes the existing land use categories.



**Table 2. Existing Land Use Categories**

Color	Existing Land Use Category	Description
	Agriculture	Active farmland; no residences
	Non-Cropland	Open areas which are not farmed due to physical limitations such as wetlands or steep slopes.
	Agriculture/Rural Residential	Large-lot residential and farmed quarter-sections which include at least one residence.
	Residential Community	Clusters of small-lot residential, seasonal residential, or mobile homes
	Platted and Vacant	Recorded plat for residential dwellings that remains fully or partially undeveloped.
	Non-Agriculture/Public Lands	State Land Trust lands, USACE land, and other non-taxed parcels.
	Industrial/Commercial	Example uses include rail yards and transfer stations, pipe yards, power stations, manufacturing facilities, and licensed LLCs; does not include oil development or industrial agriculture
	Gravel Pit	Open aggregate quarry
	Oil Site	Oil pad area; indicates approximate area of parcel easement.
	Non-County	Parcels contained within the limits of an incorporated city; various uses apply.

## Development Limitations

Mapping development limitations was an important step in developing the 2030 Plan. Development limitations restrict development opportunities and/or limit the types of development which are suitable for a location. There are many potential limitations, including jurisdictional limitations, natural limitations, and existing land use limitations. With a jurisdictional limitation, development is restricted because the land is owned or managed by another entity, such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Natural limitations such as wetlands, steep slopes, or other sensitive environments should also be avoided to protect environmental quality and manage development costs. (See County Profile maps and discussion). Finally, existing development of various kinds may impact the appropriateness of certain kinds of development. Example uses and infrastructure which may conflict with future development include:

- U.S. military facilities
- Oil and gas development
- Hazardous transmission pipelines
- Wind turbines
- Gravel pits
- Grain elevators
- Railroads
- Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)
- Industrial sites

An exhaustive discussion of potential land use conflicts is not feasible. Two prominent uses, military facilities and oil development, are discussed in more detail below.

### Military Sites

Minot Air Force Base (MAFB) oversees three missile alert facilities and 39 missile launch facilities in Mountrail County. The areas around missile launch facilities need to remain open and undeveloped to protect public safety and to allow unrestricted military access and operation. Missile launch facilities are located within a circular no-build easement with a 1,200-foot radius. The military has the right to prohibit habitable structures and remove existing or future buildings which are used for habitation. However, most easements were purchased more than 50 years ago, so current landowners may not be aware of restrictions on the property. Following the transfer of land ownership, development plans may be prepared without the knowledge of these property restrictions.

In the event of an emergency, the military would evacuate an area beyond the easement, extending to a radius of 2,500 feet from the missile launch facility. For this reason, the military would prefer a

setback of 2,500 feet (almost one-half mile) for habitable buildings. To support the military's operations, Mountrail County has marked these half-mile buffers on the Future Land Use Map. Where they overlap priority growth areas, the boundaries of the growth areas have been adjusted to avoid the military sites.

**Figure 1. Military Easement and Buffer Area**



***Future development is encouraged to locate at least one-half mile from military facilities. Development is prohibited within the 1,200-foot military easement. In some cases, development already exists within these areas.***

### **Hardened Intersite Cables**

The Hardened Intersite Cable System (HICS) is an extensive underground cable network which connects the missile Launch Control Centers (LCCs) to the intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). Each cable is buried within a 16.5-foot no-build easement. For security reasons, the locations of HICS cables is not public information.



With the proliferation of oil and gas infrastructure as well as fiber-optic cables, there are concerns about impacts to the HICS. Any excavation has the potential to interfere with the HICS, fiber optics, oil infrastructure, and other utilities. With the North Dakota One Call system, contractors are mandated to “call before they dig”. One Call is a critical resource which forwards information about proposed excavations to all potentially impacted utilities, including Minot Air Force Base. Compliance with the One Call mandate is critical and is each contractor’s responsibility.



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

***Collaboration between Mountrail County and the military is essential to protect the military’s mission, ensure the safety of all County residents and military personnel, and to support the long-term sustainability of the regional economy.***



Military personnel splice a cable in the hardened intersite cable system. (Photo credit: Minot Air Force Base)

## **Oil and Gas Development**

Residential development should avoid existing oil and gas pads as well as areas which are traversed by transmission lines and gathering lines. The County does not have authority to site oil and gas development, but it can use its zoning authority to site incompatible uses away from existing oil and gas development. This prevents instances of development “coming to the nuisance,” which reduces the likelihood of landowner complaints and potential legal headaches.



Pumpjacks in Mountrail County (Source: Bismarck Tribune)

## Underground Infrastructure

Geographic data for gathering lines is maintained by private companies and the State Industrial Commission. The County does not have access to this information. Therefore, it is especially important to provide adequate buffers between new residential and existing oil field development. Coordination between developers, utilities, the energy industry, and the State (North Dakota One Call) is paramount to ensure that new development does not interfere with underground facilities.

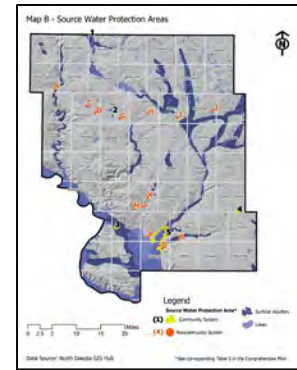
## Public Water System Source Water Areas

A public water system is any system, publicly or privately administered, that has at least 15 service connections or regularly serves at least 25 individuals sixty or more days out of the year. The State Department of Environmental Quality (NDDEQ) regulates public water systems and the source water areas they depend on. Source water is either classified as groundwater or surface water.



[Map B – Source Water Protection Areas](#) shows all source water areas in Mountrail County connected to a public water system. **Table 3** lists each of these public water systems. All public water systems in the County are in compliance with State and Federal requirements.

The NDDEQ re-evaluates each public water system on a five-year rotational basis for community systems and as-needed for transient systems. Non-community systems include an evaluation area of 1,200 feet around the source well. Community systems have a unique source water protection area as shown on Map B.



Source water protection areas require heightened review of any development to ensure the anticipated use of land will not be detrimental to the water source. “Red flag” land uses that can negatively impact source water areas include uses such as intensive agricultural operations (i.e. confined animal feeding operations), industrial uses, waste management facilities, and commercial operations that may be harmful (i.e. gas stations, auto repair, construction yards, paint shops).

**Table 3. Public Water Systems with Source Water Areas in Mountrail County (2019)**

Map Code	System Name	Water Source	System Type*
1	City of Powers Lake	Surface water	Community
2	City of Ross	Groundwater	Community
3	City of New Town	Groundwater	Community
4	City of Plaza	Groundwater	Community
5	City of Parshall	Groundwater	Community
A	Up the Creek Campground	Groundwater	Non-community
B	Railroad Springs RV Park	Groundwater	Non-transient non-community
C	Manitou Village	Groundwater	Non-community
D	Missouri Basin Well Services	Groundwater	Non-community
E	Nabors Drilling Ross Camp (1)	Groundwater	Non-transient non-community
F	Nabors Drilling Ross Camp (2)	Groundwater	Non-transient non-community
G	Omar Farms	Groundwater	Non-community
H	Meadowlark RV Park	Groundwater	Transient non-community
I	Aux Sable Midstream LLC	Groundwater	Non-transient non-community
J	Stanley Blaisdell RV Park	Groundwater	Non-community
K	Whiting Oil & Gas - Robinson Lake Gas Plant	Groundwater	Non-transient non-community
L	Crane Creek MHP	Groundwater	Transient non-community

Map Code	System Name	Water Source	System Type*
M	LB Trailer Court	Groundwater	Non-community
N	LB Trailer Park (1)	Groundwater	Non-transient non-community
O	LB Trailer Park (2)	Groundwater	Non-transient non-community
P	Traynor Park	Groundwater	Non-community
Q	Brendles Bay Inc.	Groundwater	Non-community
R	Kline Overlook	Surface water	Non-community
*Community water system – serves year-round residents Non-community water system – does not serve year-round residents Transient system – serves a transient population			

Source: North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality (2019)

## Development Opportunities

Some types of existing development provide an opportunity for future development to locate nearby. Certain infrastructure, services, and facilities are assets for future development. This includes public facilities such as high-capacity roads and railroads; rural water service areas; fire stations, police stations, and ambulance stations; schools; and recreation areas. Typically, these facilities are concentrated within larger communities, such as Stanley and New Town. Existing roads and water lines are perhaps the most important assets for growth.

### Road Access

Whenever possible, Rural Residential should have access to an existing paved road. This helps the County protect its investment in public infrastructure. To protect public safety, future dwellings should also be accessible by at least two improved travel routes, so that emergency vehicles have alternate means to access each home. On the Future Land Use Map, all Rural Residential areas are located within a mile of a state highway or County highway. This facilitates efficient travel for County residents.

### Rural Water

Three rural water providers serve Mountrail County: Northern Prairie Rural Water District, R&T Water Supply Association, and Fort Berthold Rural Water. R&T Water Supply is focused around the City of Stanley. It has partnered with the Western Area Water Supply Program (WAWSA) to provide a sustainable source of water to serve the immediate and long-term needs of residential and industrial development. Meanwhile, Fort Berthold Rural Water provides service to the City of New Town and the surrounding area. Northern Prairie is a small system that provides water to Parshall.

This Plan recommends focusing new development within existing water service areas as much as possible. This limits the need for individual water wells, which minimizes potential safety hazards and

ensures that County residents and businesses receive the best water available. In addition, focusing development within water service areas helps support system investments. Proximity to existing rural water lines was a primary consideration in developing the Future Land Use Map.

## Zoning Ordinance

Mountrail County's Zoning Ordinance currently uses five zoning districts: Agricultural (Ag); Commercial (Co); Industrial (In); Residential (Re); and Rural Recreational (R-Rec). **Table 4** defines the purpose of each district and lists example use types.

**Table 4. Existing Zoning Districts**

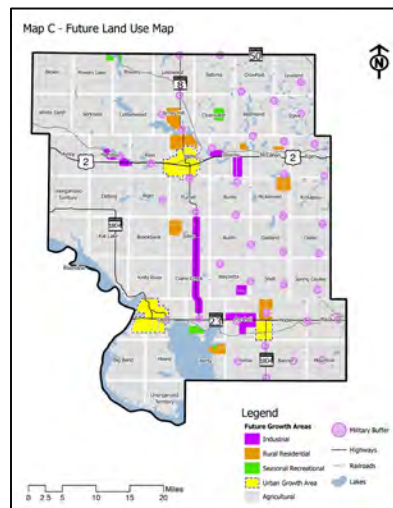
District	Purpose	Example Uses
Agricultural (Ag)	"To establish and preserve areas of agriculture and low intensity development which do not significantly change the existing character of the area."	Farming and ranching; farm dwellings; low-density residential (3-acre minimum lot); mineral extraction
Residential (Re)	"To establish and preserve general residential neighborhoods which allow for varied types of residential development."	Single-family homes (7,500 square foot minimum lot); public and civic uses.
Commercial (Com)	"...to reserve an area for the grouping of businesses and personal services into a concentrated area serving the shopping needs of the community and surrounding area."	Commercial businesses (this district is primarily used for cities and small communities that do not have their own zoning)
Industrial (In)	"...to establish and preserve areas with public transportation facilities, such as highway and rail, for industrial development in locations not compatible with other zoning districts."	Grain elevators, lumber yards, truck terminals, mills, manufacturing, most commercial uses.
Rural Recreational (R-Rec)	"...protecting general farm operations and permitting small vacation or seasonal residence developments, recreational vehicle parks for short term or seasonal parking and the uses that service them..."	Lake cabins, cottages, and manufactured/mobile homes; commercial outdoor recreation facilities; parks; farming

## Future land Use Plan

The Land Use Element of the Mountrail County Comprehensive Plan consists of two components:

- A Future Land Use Map that identifies priority growth areas and preferred development types.
- Supporting text that describes the character of each category/growth area

[Map C – Future Land Use Map](#) provides valuable information to County residents, property owners, prospective residents, land developers/industry, and buyers. Map data can be viewed interactively on the County’s GIS system. This allows viewers to use an aerial image to navigate around the County and view the Future Land Use layer along with other layers in the County’s GIS system, such as parcel lines.



### Interpreting the Future Land Use Map

***The Future Land Use Map is not the same as the zoning map, but rather is meant to be a guide for future zoning decisions. It is a tool to assist the County in guiding future development toward certain locations and away from others. It does not supersede landowner rights. Therefore, some flexibility is required to implement the Plan.***

It is important to remember that the extent of the growth areas on the Future Land Use Map does not indicate the extent of development that is anticipated by 2030. Some growth areas may change little if at all. However, because there are many suitable locations in which growth could reasonably occur, planning for surplus acreage provides more flexibility for the private sector.

The Future Land Use Map cannot dictate land use without a corresponding zoning action. Many types of development will require rezoning from existing Agricultural zoning. Landowners, developers, and County administrators may submit applications for rezoning. An application for rezoning must be considered and approved or denied at a public hearing. Remember: when a property is rezoned, its land use does not change immediately. Development is often triggered by an ownership transfer, which may occur during or after the rezoning.

## Future Land Use Categories

This Plan creates five future land use categories:

1. Urban Growth Areas
2. Rural Residential
3. Seasonal Recreational
4. Industrial
5. Agricultural

The first four categories are priority growth areas. Growth will be encouraged here. Rural Residential, Seasonal Residential, and Industrial are planned for specific types of development, discussed in the pages that follow. Meanwhile, the Urban Growth Areas are suitable for various types of urban development within the cities with ETA jurisdiction.

The fifth category, Agricultural, is intended to support long-term farming and ranching. Energy development is also a focus, including continued mineral extraction and potentially wind or solar operations.

## Rural Residential Category



The Rural Residential category is the primary residential category the County will use to guide future residential development within its jurisdiction. Note that this category is not the same as the Residential District defined in the Zoning Ordinance. In the Residential District, the minimum lot size is 7,500 square feet. This allows for mobile homes and other communities with smaller lots and shared septic. In contrast, the Rural Residential category provides for larger lots that can accommodate larger homes with individual septic systems and accessory buildings, etc.

The priority growth areas encourage clustered residential development. This reduces the per-capita costs of supplying infrastructure and utilities and helps preserve large, contiguous areas for farming and ranching. The Land Use Map identifies good locations for clusters of development which can be served by essential services and infrastructure. Not by accident, all growth areas identified as Rural Residential are located within a mile of existing rural water service lines, and most have access to a state highway or County highway.

## Lot Size Recommendations

A key goal for this Plan is to protect the County’s rural character. For residential development, this means that lot sizes, densities, setbacks, etc. should be consistent with a residential setting. The essence of “rural character” is largely defined by large lots and open spaces. Rural living is appealing because it allows people to acquire a large plot of land and enjoy the seclusion that open space provides. Mountrail County’s Zoning Ordinance defines a minimum lot size for residential development, which is currently 3 acres. This ensures that development maintains a rural character, but also that each lot is large enough to include a drain field, outbuildings, etc.

Many County residents favor large lots. When asked to define the ideal size/density for Rural Residential, County residents who attended the public input meetings voiced support for 10-acre lots. This provides space to raise a very limited number of livestock. On the other hand, large lots take more land out of farming, cost more to purchase (which excludes some buyers), and increase infrastructure costs (cost per user).

County administrators are also aware that demand has grown for smaller, more affordable parcels. Many members of the growing workforce want to live in the country but aren’t interested in keeping animals or maintaining large plots of land. Thus, the Plan recommends more flexible lot standards to accommodate a range of household demands. A two-tier approach would allow for lots with and without livestock. **Table 5** summarizes the recommendations for residential lots. For landowners without livestock, this reduces the minimum lot size to 2 acres. However, the minimum lot size for keeping livestock would be increased from 3 acres to 5 acres. The reduced lot requirement is encouraged for Rural Residential to help differentiate it from Agricultural areas.

**Table 5. Residential Lot Size Recommendations**

	With Livestock (cows, horses, pigs, etc.)	Without Livestock (small animals allowed—poultry, rabbits, etc.)
Minimum lot size	5 acres	2 acres
Target range	5-10 acres	2-4 acres
Land Use	Agricultural	Rural Residential
Typical subdivision type	Single-lot subdivision, 4 lots per quarter	Planned, multi-lot subdivisions
Location	Outside growth areas (farther from cities)	Within growth areas (closer to cities)



## Seasonal Recreational Category



The Seasonal Recreational designation is for areas near Lake Sakakawea and other natural amenities. It allows flexibility for public recreation uses, small cabins and seasonal homes, commercial campground recreational vehicle parks with short-term/seasonal parking, and other uses which serve these areas. Residential uses are not intended for permanent occupancy. The Seasonal Recreational category corresponds to the existing Rural Recreation District in the Zoning Ordinance.

## Industrial Category



The Industrial category identifies preferred corridors and nodes for industrial or commercial development. Industrial uses include manufacturing facilities, warehousing, grain elevators, truck terminals, lumber yards and pipe yards, value-added businesses related to energy or farming, and other uses of a character which is not compatible with a rural residential setting. Industrial does NOT include oil and gas development, since the County has no authority to regulate these activities.

Industrial uses need access to shipping and receiving. Preferred industrial areas have been identified along existing rail corridors, US Highway 2, and ND Highways 8 and 23, especially within or near areas which have already experienced industrial development.

Many commercial uses are also compatible in industrial growth areas. However, the Future Land Use Map does not define a unique category for commercial, because the County anticipates that most commercial uses will locate within the Urban Growth Areas/cities, and it encourages them to do so.

Many industrial sites produce noise, odors, glare, and similar impacts which negatively affect other uses nearby. The County may use a variety of strategies to mitigate these impacts, such as requiring larger setbacks or landscaped or physical buffers between adjacent properties.

## **Agricultural Category**



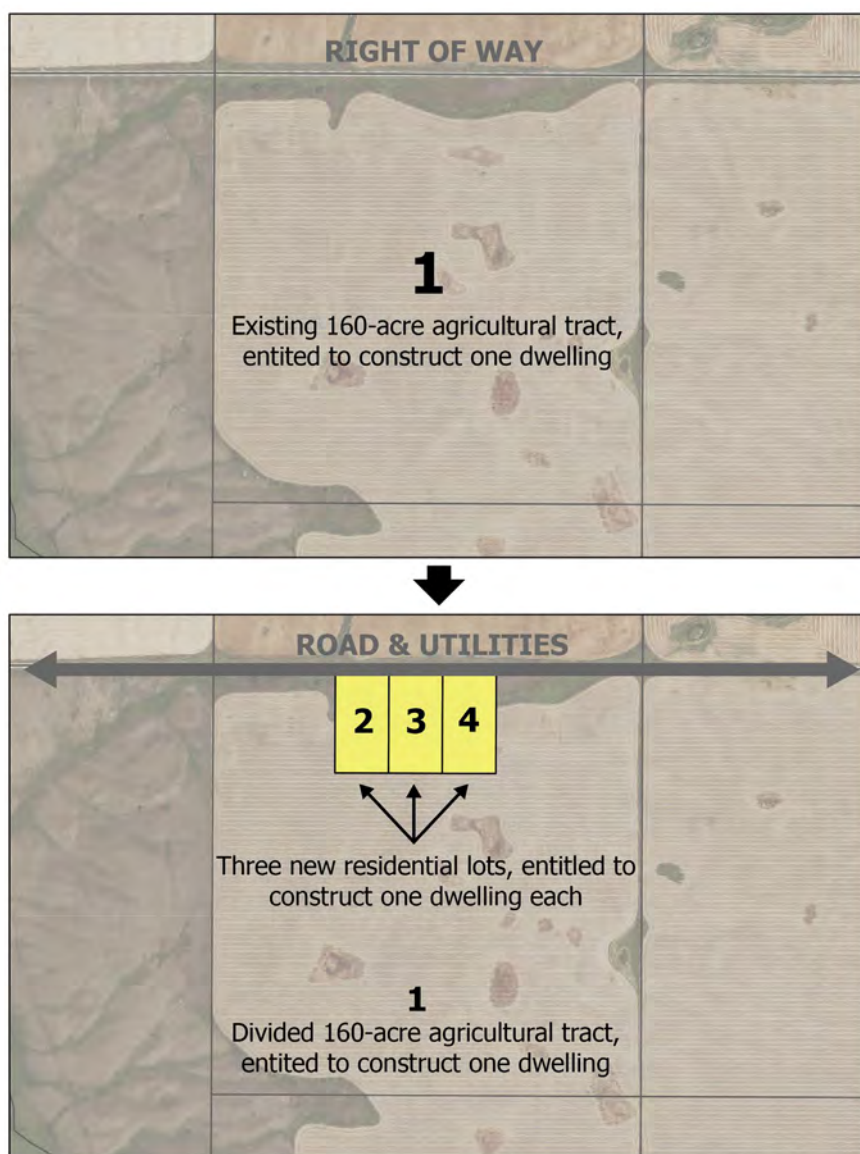
The Agricultural land use category includes all areas which are not located within one of the identified growth areas. This category is intended primarily to sustain commercial farming and ranching activities. It also includes oil field development. Many sections of land support both agriculture activities and oil production, with landowners leasing a portion of their property for oil/gas extraction.



## Residential Development in Agricultural Areas

In addition to powering the County's economy, Agriculture areas also house much of the County's rural population. While the Future Land Use Map promotes the Rural Residential category to help organize clusters of future residential development in appropriate growth areas, it can be difficult to predict where and when residential development will occur. In agricultural areas, residential development can be sporadic. In a typical scenario, a child asks their parents to subdivide one lot from the family farmstead so they can build a home. The County's current Zoning Ordinance allows for a maximum of four dwellings per quarter section on prime farmland (net density of 1 dwelling per 40 acres). Land area-efficient subdivisions are encouraged to maximize infrastructure and minimize fragmentation of valuable farmland.

**Figure 2. Four Dwellings per Quarter**



## Land Use/Zoning Consistency Matrix

**Table 6** shows current and proposed County zoning districts and which future land use categories identified in this Plan are consistent with each zoning district. This table should be used as a guide for future zone changes to ensure consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

**Table 6. Land Use – Zoning Consistency Matrix**

Future Land Use		Zoning Districts					
Map Color	Land Use	Ag	Res	Com	In	R-Rec	R-Res*
	Agricultural	✓					
	Rural Residential	✓ **					✓
	Seasonal Recreational	✓ **				✓	
	Industrial	✓ **			✓		
	Urban Growth Area	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>Ag = Agriculture  Re = Residential  Com = Commercial  In = Industrial  R-Rec = Rural Recreational  R-Res = Rural Residential (*New District)</p> <p>** Until zone change takes place</p>							

## Urban Growth Areas and ETA Authority

Within the last 10 years, most of the County's growth can be attributed to the growing Cities of Parshall, New Town, and Stanley. Moving forward, the County anticipates that growth will continue to be focused within and around these communities. The Urban Growth Areas Category identifies an area surrounding each of these communities to accommodate outward development.

In North Dakota, cities with fewer than 5,000 people can extend their zoning and subdivision controls 1 mile beyond city limits. This extraterritorial area (ETA) extends when cities annex new territory. The County has the right to share jurisdiction within the outer half-mile of the ETA. However, in 2009, a County resolution relinquished its right to joint authority in the outer half-mile ETA for the Cities of Parshall, Stanley, New Town, Plaza, and White Earth (the Cities of Palermo and Ross have not



formalized an ETA.) Mountrail County intends to continue to defer its right to joint ETA authority to help streamline planning and organize growth on the periphery of cities.

This Plan created the Urban Growth Areas category to provide direction for future ETA mapping and community discussions. The boundaries of the Urban Growth Areas were created as follows:

1. Create a one-mile buffer around city limits (GIS process)
2. Evaluate the distance between the buffer boundary and quarter sections.
3. Draw example ETA boundary to the nearest quarter-section line.
4. Adjust this boundary to account for growth limitations (i.e., Lake Sakakawea, military facilities). For example, New Town cannot realistically grow to the west. Therefore, the Urban Growth Area was extended to the south, which presents more development opportunities.

[Map D – Urban Growth Areas](#) shows the rough 1.0-mile ETA for New Town, Parshall, and Stanley, along with the adjusted boundary for the Urban Growth Areas. These maps can be used to guide inter-jurisdictional planning discussions.



## Other Jurisdictional Considerations

The purpose of ETA planning is to enable orderly development within cities' outer fringes. Fringe development should be compatible with urban land uses and density patterns. This helps jurisdictions prepare for annexation and ensures that fringe areas can become connected to urban infrastructure and services. By waiving its right to partial zoning authority, Mountrail County is anticipating that cities will be able to coordinate land use planning in these areas. However, the County will still maintain an interest in fringe-area development, because it has responsibility for County highways within municipalities and their ETAs. Although this interest does not extend to zoning, the County will continue to be involved in platting, right-of-way agreements, access management, annexation, roadway improvements, and other administrative tasks.

## Planning for Wind and Solar

One objective of planning and zoning is to anticipate and prepare for new uses that could locate within the jurisdiction. This is especially important for intensive uses. Two examples come from the renewable energy sector: solar and wind. There are no large-scale wind or solar farms in Mountrail County currently. In workshop discussions for this Plan, County residents and stakeholders favored a neutral approach toward renewables – neither promoting them nor actively discouraging renewables development. The Zoning Ordinance provides comprehensive regulations for wind energy development. There are no provisions for solar.



Wind turbines sit behind a home north of Hettinger, N.D., in 2016. (Photo credit: Dustin Monke/Forum News service.)

## Wind

With wide open spaces and windy skies, North Dakota ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in the country in terms of installed wind capacity, according to the Wind Energy Association. Wind provides opportunities to expand local power production, create new jobs, and reduce emissions. Still, there are numerous challenges to overcome.

Utility-scale wind development is often controversial and divisive. Communities are often concerned about loss of rural character – many people consider wind turbines to be a major eyesore, although others may not. Resistance can intensify over industry subsidies, which are perceived as warping the economics of development.

Another issue involves the sharing of costs and benefits. Typically, one landowner benefits by leasing property for wind development. Meanwhile, neighboring landowners do not share in these benefits, but they are still impacted by changes to the landscape, increased development pressure, and potential impacts to property values. One approach to reconciling costs and benefits is through a system of pooled leases, which is commonly used for oil and gas development. Pooling for wind has been discussed at the state level.

There are also concerns over the height of towers, which can interfere with low-flying aircraft. Minot Air Force Base has voiced concerns over potential impacts to their operations. Towers can also interfere with crop dusting. Some aerial applicators may avoid areas with extensive wind development if they are concerned about their pilots' safety.

Mountrail County's Zoning Ordinance allows wind energy facilities as conditional uses in the Agricultural, Commercial, and Industrial Districts. However, where large turbines are concerned, any area with a future land use classification or zoning designation that is not agricultural has limited suitability for wind development. Mountrail County should consider excluding wind facilities outright in these areas. In addition to land use compatibility, the Zoning Ordinance could address proximity to airports, visually sensitive areas, topographical challenges, and other issues. **Table 7** summarizes some of these considerations.

**Table 7. Zoning for Wind**

Consideration	Context	Recommendation
Land Use Compatibility	Any area with a future land use classification or zoning designation that is not agricultural has limited suitability for wind development.	Exclude wind facilities outright in non-Agricultural areas.
Visually sensitive areas	Visually sensitive areas of community value should be protected from wind energy intrusion.	Proactively identify natural landscapes and viewsheds which are inappropriate for wind development.
Airports	The FAA requires notice for any facility which is greater than 200 feet in height that is located within 20,000 feet of an airport runway.	Adopt setback requirements that limit proximity to airports.
Slope and soil characteristics	Hilly areas and some soils are unsuitable for turbine placement. This excludes some areas in the south and west reaches of the County.	Evaluate topography during conditional use permit review.
Setbacks	The Zoning Ordinance requires a setback from inhabited structures equal to 5 times the rotor diameter (~1,640 feet for a 100-meter rotor) to mitigate noise and visual impacts, and a setback from infrastructure equal to 1.5 times the turbine height to protect against tower collapse.	These setback requirements are generally consistent with other jurisdictions. However, the structure setback may be excessive. If pooling is allowed, consider reducing setbacks for participating owners. For non-participating owners, a setback of ¼ mile is appropriate.

## Solar

While North Dakota has seen growing interest in wind development, solar has been slower to enter the scene. In 2018, North Dakota ranked last in installed solar capacity. Partly this is due to the high potential for wind energy; partly it's due to farmland impacts. Utility-scale solar has a larger land footprint than wind projects, which takes agricultural land out of production (unlike wind, which still allows farming to occur in the area surrounding the turbine).

Mountrail County's ordinance does not include provisions for utility-scale solar. However, the economics of solar continue to improve, so it is becoming increasingly viable in northern climates. Mountrail County will monitor the pace of solar development around the state and evaluate the need for a solar amendment to the Zoning Ordinance.





# Transportation





# Transportation

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## Overview

The Transportation Element reinforces objectives for land use planning and economic development. Transportation and land use are interrelated. Roadway system design impacts travel routes, traffic volumes, and trip characteristics for personal travel and freight. Further, investments in the transportation system affect the location of development, property use, and property value.

Mountrail County's transportation system is the connective tissue that supports economic growth. It enables businesses everywhere to connect to their supply chains and ship products to market. Because of these relationships, it is important to emphasize consistency between land use planning, transportation planning, and economic development. The economic benefit of a road or bridge improvement is a key consideration in assessing project need, funding alternatives, and construction timing.

The Transportation Element provides guidance for the County's Road and Bridge Department. It is intended to help the County identify key transportation issues, synthesize community feedback, and develop a framework to better prioritize roadway system improvements. It is not a substitute for a long-range transportation plan, which is typically a standalone document that develops a comprehensive list of projects, cost estimates, and a timeline for completion.

## Jurisdictional Coordination

Highways, roads, and bridges in Mountrail County are managed by various government entities. The North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) manages the state highway system and U.S. Highway 2. Mountrail County manages County highways and provides some assistance to local townships. Local governments (cities and townships) operate community systems. MHA Nation oversees a system of BIA routes throughout the Fort Berthold Reservation. Effective transportation planning requires coordination between these government entities. The County is open to expanding partnerships with NDDOT, MHA Nation, and local jurisdictions to improve transportation planning and project delivery within its jurisdiction.

## County Responsibilities

The Road and Bridge Department oversees all short- and long-range planning for County roads and structures. Its highway system comprises 408 miles. It is responsible for developing and implementing the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) – a five-year plan for priority maintenance and new construction. The CIP is updated on an annual basis. It is fiscally constrained – i.e., it must reflect the realities of the County's highway budget. The Road and Bridge Department budget for 2020 is approximately \$70 million. Each year the department needs roughly \$5-10 million for pavement maintenance and \$20-40 million for new construction.

The Road and Bridge Department is also responsible for coordinating with the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) and affected communities on planning and construction for the state highway system. The remaining roads are the responsibility of townships, cities, and MHA Nation/BIA. The Department of Road and Bridges may occasionally provide technical assistance to these jurisdictions and limited services such as winter maintenance, but it is not financially obligated for system maintenance or improvements.

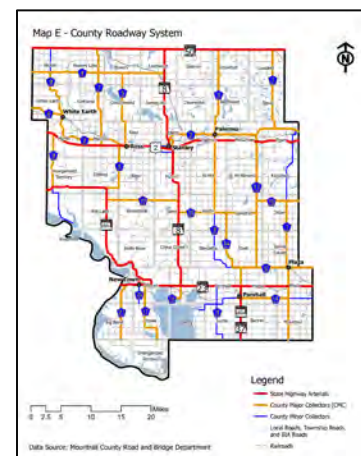
## NDDOT Districts

Most state highway projects in Mountrail County are coordinated through District 7 (Williston), which includes a portion of Highway 2, all of Highways 8 and 1804, and the sections of Highway 23 and Highway 50 which are west of Highway 8. The remaining highway sections are included within District 4 (Minot). Some improvements may require coordination with both districts.

## Roadway System Classification

Road classification provides a framework for thinking about different roadway types. Roads are specialized for different uses. Some provide for uninterrupted, high-speed traffic flow. Others provide direct access to homes or businesses. Some routes are prioritized for trucking or emergency snow plowing. These characteristics impact roadway design and system management.

Roads may be classified based on their jurisdiction or function (functional classification system). Functional classification typically aligns with roadway jurisdictional responsibilities. This ensures that roadway systems can be effectively managed and maintained by the appropriate level of government. [Map E – County Roadway System](#) depicts the roadway system for Mountrail County. **Table 8** summarizes various characteristics of roadway system classification.



**Table 8. Roadway System Classification**

System Class	Jurisdiction	Continuity	Access	Trip Type	Surface	Land Use
Arterials	NDDOT	Regional/ statewide continuity	Limited- access highways	Intercity trips, commutes	Paved	Urban economic centers, highway industrial
Major Collectors	Mountrail County, MHA Nation/BIA	20-30 miles	1-mile spacing for intersections; some direct access to property	Local trips, farm-to- market	Paved	Agriculture, industrial, residential
Minor Collectors	Mountrail County, MHA Nation/BIA	10-15 miles	1-mile spacing for intersections; some direct access to property	Local trips	Gravel	Agriculture, industrial, residential
Local Roads	Townships, MHA Nation/BIA, private landowners	1-2 miles	Direct access to property	Local trips, first- and last mile- connections	Gravel, Dirt	Agriculture, industrial, residential

## State Highway System | Arterials

The arterial system includes state and federal highways. All highways are owned and operated by NDDOT. In Mountrail County, the primary corridors are Highways 2, 8, 23, 37, and 1804. These highways provide connectivity between local and regional employment centers, including New Town, Stanley, Minot, and Williston. State Highway 50 is another arterial, but with much less traffic.

Average daily traffic volumes (ADT) on the state highway system range from 240 on Highway 50 to 11,840 on Highway 23 west of New Town. A large percentage of traffic consists of heavy commercial vehicles – up to 30 percent for Highway 2.

## County Road System | Collectors

As of July 2020, the County’s roadway inventory consists of 408 roadway miles. This network largely consists of collector roads, as well as some minor roads which are owned by Unorganized Townships.

County collectors provide the connections between local roads and the arterial system. Some are farm-to-market roads. Others convey substantial oil traffic. Several collector roads have traffic volumes that are comparable to arterial highway segments.

There are two subclassifications of collector roads – major collectors and minor collectors. The County Major Collector designation (CMC) is used by NDDOT to distinguish corridors that provide enhanced connectivity between communities and/or serve a critical economic function. CMC routes have higher traffic volumes and freight volumes than minor collectors. They are eligible to receive dedicated funding for maintenance through NDDOT. It is important for Mountrail County to take advantage of this funding source and reserve its own revenues for gap funding when possible.

## County Roadway Surface Inventory



[Map F – Roadway Surfaces](#) shows surface types for County roadways. **Table 9** summarizes the roadway mileage for paved and gravel surfaces. About half of the total mileage for County Major Collectors (CMC) is paved. Moving forward, the County should consider paving the remainder of its CMC routes when traffic volumes warrant. This includes sections of County Roads 1, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12. In addition, public input during the planning process identified the following CMC sections for potential conversion to paved surface:

- CR 10 from CR 3 to CR 11
- CR 11 from HWY 2 to CR 10
- CR 12 from CR 1 to CR 3A



Meanwhile, the County's current CIP for 2020-2023 includes two new pavement projects:

- CR 9 from HWY 2 to HWY 1804 (2020)
- CR 4 from CR7 to HWY 8 (2021)

**Table 9. County Roadway Surface Inventory**

Route System / Surface Type	Mileage
County Paved Roads	166
County Gravel Roads	192
Unorganized Township Gravel Roads	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>408</b>
CMC Paved Roads	141.0
CMC Gravel Roads	157.5
<b>Total CMC Route Roadway Mileage</b>	<b>298.50</b>
***Mileage totals as of July 2020. This includes the pavement project for CR 9, which was approved on July 7, 2020. CR 9 was added as a CMC route in March of 2019.	

## Local Roads

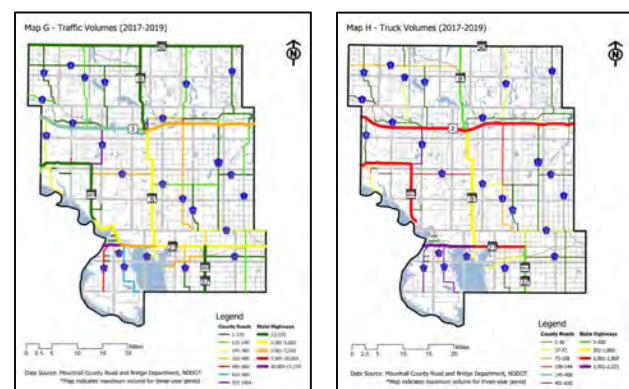
Local roads are the most common type of road in the County. They provide direct access to property. They are low-speed roads that are intended to discourage through traffic. Most have very low traffic volumes, estimated at less than 10 trips per day. They typically have a minimum built-up surface. The County has limited capacity for oversight over local roads, although it does maintain about 50 miles of Unorganized Township roads.

## Traffic Volumes

[Map G – Traffic Volumes](#) displays average daily traffic volumes for County highways. [Map H – Truck Volumes](#) displays average daily traffic volumes for trucks. The maps include data for State and County roads that was collected from 2017-2019. State highway counts were collected by NDDOT and adjusted to account for seasonal variation. Counts for County roads are collected by the County.

Many County roads have substantial truck traffic.

The highest truck volumes occur on County roads in Fort Berthold Reservation. Traffic on County Road 17 and County Road 21, for example, consists of more than 50% trucks.





***Tractors, oil trucks, and other heavy vehicles can exponentially degrade a roadway surface, especially if it wasn't designed for trucks; the road surface impacts of one long haul semi-trailer are equivalent to several hundred passenger cars. High truck volumes significantly shorten the life of a road and condense the maintenance schedule.***

## Roadway Safety

Roadway safety is a central concern of transportation professionals. Roads are public infrastructure; the government agencies which are tasked with maintenance play a significant role in protecting public safety. Safety concerns are often the top priority when evaluating the need for roadway system improvements.

Crash analysis is extremely valuable for transportation planners. First, it provides insight into where safety improvements might be warranted. Second, it helps transportation planners make the case for funding assistance to implement highway safety improvements. State and federal grants are awarded on the basis of need. Persistent highway safety issues need to be addressed. Documenting them helps the County make its case for grant funding. In addition, this can help the County get state highway improvements programmed in NDDOT's Transportation Improvement Plan.

To assist in the analysis of crash data, NDDOT maintains a database of reported crashes from around the state. Data can be requested for any jurisdiction or area of interest. The dataset is extremely detailed – it helps identify the number of crashes, crash severity, crash type, and several other factors which can help the County determine where there are roadway safety concerns.

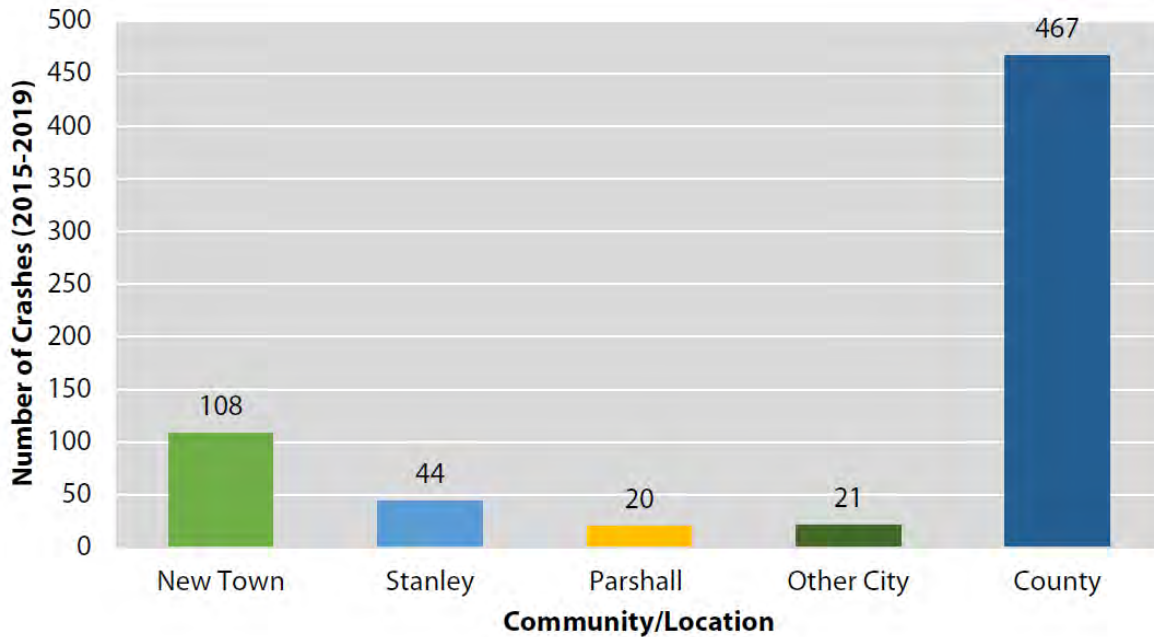
From 2015 to 2019, NDDOT documented 660 total crashes and 26 fatal crashes in Mountrail County. [Map I – County Crashes](#) shows all crashes which were documented during this period, highlighting those which resulted in death or severe injury. General observations from the five-year crash dataset include the following:

- 360 crashes occurred on or within 100 feet of a state or federal highway (55%), while 300 crashes occurred on County or local roads (45%).
- Of the 69 crashes which resulted in death or severe injury, 47 occurred on the state highway system (68% of all severe crashes)
- 450 crashes occurred in clear conditions (68%)
- 369 crashes occurred during daylight hours (55%)
- Alcohol was a factor in 67 crashes (10%)



- Approximately one-sixth of all crashes (108) occurred in or near New Town, as reported by the highway patrol officers who responded to the crashes.
- 203 of 467 crashes which were documented outside of cities occurred off the state highway system, i.e., on rural County highways (43% of non-city crashes)

**Figure 3. Crashes by Community**



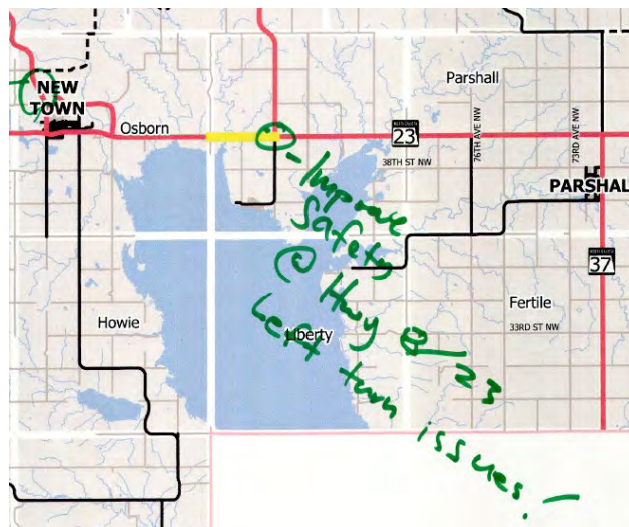
Data Source: Highway patrol report data obtained by NDDOT.

It is important to note that the crash data is incomplete. Many crashes and near crashes are not reported. Several studies have found that crash statistics are underreported for the American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) demographic, even as there is a higher prevalence of crash deaths and alcohol-related crashes within this demographic.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tribal Motor Vehicle Injury Prevention (TMVIP) Best Practices Guide. 2016. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

## Highway 23 Safety Issues

During the public outreach meetings for this Plan, public citizens shared their traffic safety concerns for specific intersections and corridors. The Steering Committee and community residents consistently stated that the most glaring issue is the Highway 23 corridor from approximately the Highway 1804 junction to the Highway 8 junction (5 miles). Even after the height of the oil boom, this section of Highway 23 still averages about 8,000-9,000 vehicles per day with 25-30 percent trucks. In addition, the rolling terrain shifts the highway's vertical profile, reducing site distance and visibility at some locations. The addition of passing lanes



has improved traffic flow, yet more improvements are necessary. From 2015-2019, there were 40 recorded crashes on Highway 23 from the Highway 1804 junction to the Highway 8 junction; 26 crashes were related to an intersection or driveway, and over half of the crashes (21/40) were rear-end collisions.

***NDDOT recognizes the safety concern on Highway 23. The 2020-2023 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) has programmed highway safety improvements for the 2.7-mile segment from east of New Town to the Highway 8 junction. These improvements will include the addition of turn lanes, lighting, and roadway widening. These improvements will significantly enhance corridor safety.***

## Highway Safety Plan

This Plan includes only a high-level summary of crash data. Further analysis is recommended. This would allow County staff to isolate variables of interest for specific intersections and corridors. NDDOT uses a statistical method to determine whether the rate of observed crashes exceeds the expected, or average, crash rate for roadway intersections or segments with similar characteristics. A similar analysis would help the County identify critical locations that may be candidates for safety improvements. Since many crashes occurred on County roads, this analysis should be extended to all roads within the County's jurisdiction. This is critical, because safety improvements for County roads are often under-represented in the funding picture. Further analysis could be completed as part of a countywide road safety plan. Low-cost, high-impact safety improvements, such as rumble strips and warning chevrons, can significantly reduce crash risk. At-risk roadway segments or intersections may include one or more of the following characteristics:

- Limited visibility (e.g., horizontal curves)

- Narrow or no shoulders
- Narrow or no clear zones
- Steep side slopes
- Inadequate signing, lighting, striping, etc.
- Access concerns
- Roads or intersections with several crashes or multiple severe crashes

## Access Management

Access management controls cross-street spacing and driveway placement along high-volume roadways. For rural roadway sections in Mountrail County, this concept mostly applies to the state and federal highway system, but it may also apply to certain County highways. Limiting access density reduces the risk of the crash and preserves efficient traffic flow on high-volume roads. Larger developments are encouraged to consolidate site access at one or two locations.

## Freight

### Load Restrictions

Road restrictions and permitting procedures vary from county to county. Patchwork regulations can be a challenge for inter-jurisdictional freight traffic. The LoadPass system is a one-stop location for information on county road restrictions, highway closures, and other information. The LoadPass website provides contact information participating cities and counties in western North Dakota. Drivers can download the LoadPass phone application for mobile use.

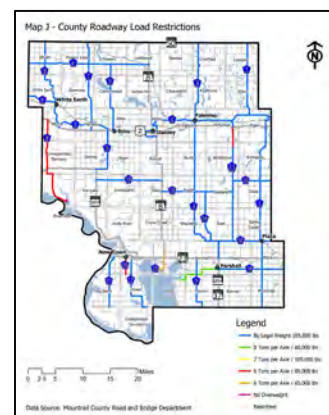


[Map J – Load Restrictions](#) shows load restrictions for the County highway system.

### Railroads

Two railroad companies provide freight service to and through Mountrail County:

- Burlington Northern Sante Fe (BNSF) has 73 miles of track in Mountrail County. BNSF tracks generally parallel Highway 2, connecting the Cities of White Earth, Ross, Stanley, and Palermo.



- Canadian Pacific Railway (CPRS) has 37 miles of track in Mountrail County. CPRS tracks generally parallel Highway 23, connecting the Cities of New Town, Parshall, and Plaza.

There are approximately 95 railroad crossings in the County. (Data from the GIS Hub data contains some inaccuracies.) Mountrail County will proactively monitor safety concerns and work to coordinate with railroad companies when problems arise.

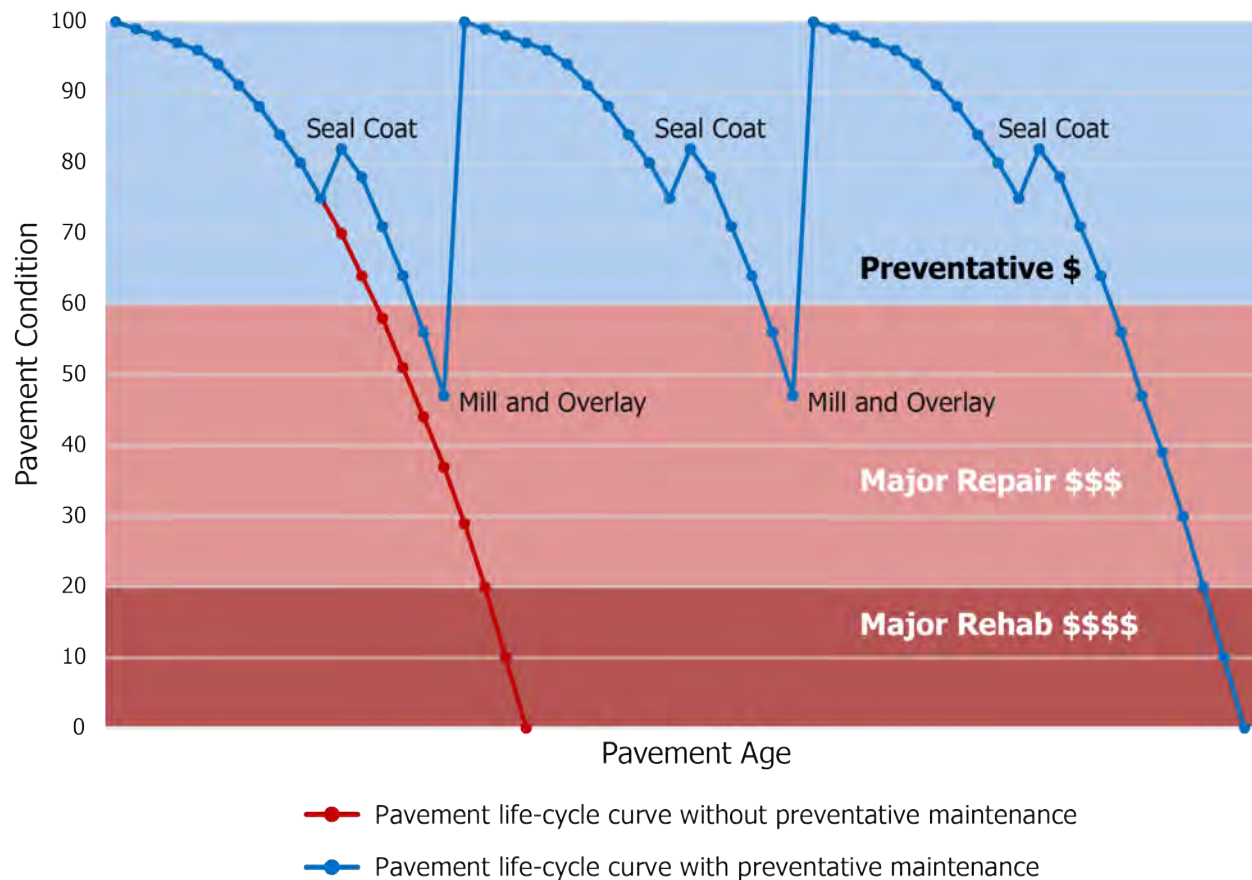
[Map K – Railroad System](#) identifies the two railroad lines and points where the railroads intersect with the County’s highway system.



## Pavement Preservation

Pavement preservation is a key component of system management. This involves routine pavement maintenance activities, such as a seal coat or mill and overlay, which extend the life of the pavement while optimizing available funding. Factors which affect the lifecycle of paved roads include traffic loading, weathering, the amount of heavy commercial traffic (trucks), and soil conditions, to name a few. Well-timed maintenance activities can extend the life of paved roads and minimize life-cycle costs.

**Figure 4. Pavement Lifecycle with and without Preventative Maintenance**





***Pavement deteriorates over times as it is subjected to traffic loading, water intrusion, freeze-thaw cycles, and sun exposure. Multiple seal coats and overlays extend the lifetime of a road by several years, with significant cost savings to the County.***

In addition to roadway surface quality, it is important to recognize the importance of subsurface quality. A paved surface will have a longer life if the subsurface is in good condition. When the roadbed is in poor condition, surface maintenance would be inefficient and reconstruction is preferred. However, reversion of pavement to gravel surface could also be considered *if travel volumes warrant this*.

## **Pavement Construction vs. Pavement Maintenance**

Mountrail County's Road and Bridge Department reports that the cost to maintain paved roads in 2020 is \$177,500 per mile. This cost includes the following maintenance assumptions, which were prorated annually:

- Annual crack sealing
- Striping every 2 years
- Chip seal every 4 years
- Overlay every 8 years
- Widening/overlay every 12 years

Of course, new roadway construction introduces many additional costs, including but not limited to:

- Right-of-way acquisition
- Utility relocation
- Pipeline relocation
- Roadway realignment
- Design engineering
- Construction engineering

Bearing these costs in mind, the total cost of a new pavement project completed in 2020 is approximately \$1,800,000 per mile. Clearly, new pavement construction is substantially more expensive than pavement maintenance. Further, when additional mileage is added to the pavement inventory, this adds to the County's total maintenance costs, although some of these costs can be offset by federal funding. It is important to bear these costs in mind when evaluating the tradeoffs of new road construction versus a no-build alternative.

## **Project Prioritization**

When the CIP is brought to the County Commission for annual approval, the Road and Bridge Department prioritizes projects for review. Projects are typically prioritized using the criteria in **Table 10**. All criteria can be evaluated objectively.

**Table 10. Road and Bridge Project Prioritization Criteria**

Criterion	Considerations
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the roadway have deficient side slopes, shoulders, clear zones, lighting, or other issues that are associated with a higher volume of crashes?</li> <li>How do observed crash rates compare for other roads?</li> <li>Is there a prevalence of serious crashes?</li> <li>Is there a prevalence of crashes of a certain type which the improvement will clearly minimize?</li> </ul>
Traffic Volumes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review State and County traffic counts.</li> </ul>
Truck Volumes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review State and County truck counts</li> </ul>
Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the road a designated CMC route or farm-to-market road?</li> <li>Is the route a primary means of access for residents or commerce?</li> <li>Would a road or bridge closure cause significant travel delay?</li> <li>Would a road or bridge closure significantly impact schools, businesses, emergency services, etc.?</li> <li>Is the route frequently impassable due to flooding or another issue?</li> </ul>
Pavement Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pavement quality index (County utilizes private vendor for pavement data collection)</li> <li>Prioritize preventative maintenance for roads in “good” or “fair” condition.</li> <li>Avoid patch-work maintenance when road will require major rehabilitation in the near future.</li> </ul>
Gravel Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visual distress surveys (County conducts its own windshield surveys)</li> <li>Prioritize re-graveling based on survey conditions</li> </ul>
Bridge Rating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structure Inventory and Appraisal ratings for box culverts and bridges</li> </ul>

Mountrail County’s budget for pavement preservation is about \$5 to \$10 million per year. To make the most of this budget, it is imperative to maintain an inventory of roadway surface quality. Then, the primary goal of pavement preservation should be to keep roads which are in good condition (i.e., pavement scores 60 and above) from slipping into disrepair, when repairs become much more costly. It may seem counter-intuitive, but addressing the roads in poorest condition, a “worst-first” approach, is considerably less effective than proactive maintenance.

***Mountrail County will prioritize investments in the transportation system that produce the greatest public benefit. Safety concerns, system connectivity issues, daily travel volumes, commercial trucking needs, and roadway quality are all criteria which may be evaluated in determining project need.***

## Planned Roadway System Improvements

[Map L – Planned Roadway System Improvements](#) shows planned improvements for State and County roads, including projects from the County's CIP and NDDOT's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). One significant project is the roundabout planned for the Highway 8/Highway 23 junction, which will be constructed in 2022. This project will be a substantial safety improvement at a high-crash location. In addition to planned improvements, Map L indicates feedback obtained at the public open houses for this Plan. County CIP and STIP projects are for identified for 2020-2023. Note that some programmed improvements already address public concerns – in particular, the safety improvements for Highway 23 and the pavement construction for CR 4 and CR 9. One proposal to consider is construction of alternative route for Highway 23, which would provide secondary access to New Town during peak traffic hours or highway closure. However, this would require considerable planning, including a corridor study and evaluation of potential alternatives. The route which is indicated on the map may be a suitable alternative, but hilly terrain is a challenge. The County should also wait to evaluate the impacts of the Highway 23 safety improvements before it considers further study.



## Future Trails

Public input identified trails as a missing component of the County's transportation and recreation infrastructure and a potential opportunity for local community development. Trail system improvements enhance recreation areas and provide alternative local travel options for residents who may have a limited capacity to drive. The County has some critical assets, including lake front areas around the Van Hook Arm, which could be enhanced by trail improvements.

Future trails could be motorized or non-motorized, depending on the intended user and general trail function. Paved, shared-use trail facilities that parallel highway or major roads can significantly improve connectivity near communities for pedestrians and bicyclists. Otherwise, unpaved trails are less costly to maintain and are more appropriate for rural areas.

### Trails Within MHA Nation

In addition to containing key recreation areas for potential trail corridors, the Reservation population may greatly benefit from trail improvements. According to the American Community Survey, roughly 7 percent of the population which lives on the Reservation walks or bikes for their primary means of travel.

The County is open to collaborating with the Tribe to help complete projects of regional significance. New Town already has a working paved shared use path system that connects to Four Bears (outside of Mountrail County) that can continue to be built upon.

***On the Reservation, the rate of vehicle ownership is lower than it is for the County as a whole – approximately 20 percent of households rely on one vehicle or none – even as households are larger on average. For these reasons, personal mobility is relatively lower within the Reservation compared to other parts of the County.***

## **Trail Considerations**

Trail improvements are encouraged where there is identified need and capacity for ongoing maintenance. There are a variety of state and federal grants and other sources of revenue to finance trail improvements. Notable grant programs include NDDOT's Transportation Alternatives and the Outdoor Heritage Fund administered by the ND Industrial Commission. Private sources of trail funding should not be overlooked, as many businesses are willing to assist with initiatives that may improve workforce recruitment and retention. Maintenance is a critical aspect that cannot be overlooked. All opportunities should be explored, from non-profit and private entities to governmental entities. Trail projects should not be initiated until an entity or combination of entities have entered into an agreement to provide ongoing maintenance.





# Infrastructure & Services





# Infrastructure and Services

## Overview

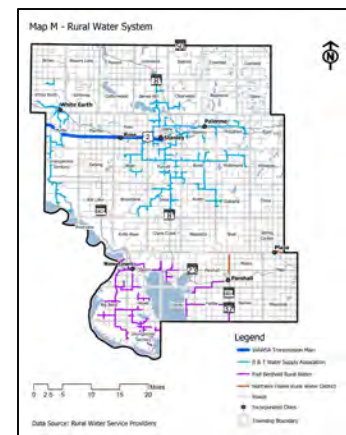
The Infrastructure and Services element is linked with other elements of the 2030 Plan. For example, land use planning and development feasibility are shaped by infrastructure capacity and limitations. Roads, rural water systems, broadband, and other infrastructure provide the platform for economic development. They also support critical public services, including education and emergency response.

Some infrastructure and services are directly provided and maintained by the County. Some are provided by other government agencies or private utilities. It is important to coordinate with service providers and encourage coordination between them. This helps ensure efficient service coverage and minimize impacts to landowners and the environment. Many types of infrastructure can be co-located within a single corridor if planned well.

## Water Service

### Rural Water Systems

There are three rural water providers in the County: Northern Prairie Rural Water District, R&T Water Supply Association, and Fort Berthold Rural Water. Generally, rural water providers do not plan for regular system expansions. They will add system capacity only at customer request, and only to the extent paid for directly by the customer. Even though each user pays for their share of system costs, it is important to focus development around the water systems. Adding new users can potentially compromise levels of service elsewhere in the system, so development should be prioritized in locations with service capacity. [Map M – Rural Water System](#) shows the rural water system for each provider. Note that Map M was created from information made available from each of the rural water providers as of 2019; additional areas may have rural water availability



### Western Area Water Supply (WAWSA)

The Western Area Water Supply Project (WAWSA) sources water from the Missouri River and groundwater reserves to supply water to over 70,000 people in western North Dakota. The project was launched to meet the spike in demand triggered by rapid growth throughout the region; WAWSA estimates that it will have 160,000 users by 2038. The WAWSA transmission main parallels U.S. Highway 2, extending service to the City of Stanley and to surrounding rural water users through its partnership with R&T Water District. The availability of reliable water primes this area for future

growth. Mountrail County can support capacity improvements by continuing to encourage growth in and around the City of Stanley.

WAWSA tries to use existing infrastructure as much as possible to expand system capacity; however, new extensions will probably be necessary over the next two decades given WAWSA's estimate for growth potential. To help facilitate system expansion, Mountrail County can support interagency coordination, right-of-way agreements, environmental review, and other tasks.

## Wastewater Disposal

Safe and effective wastewater disposal is vital for communities. Development cannot proceed without it. Most residents in rural Mountrail County use individual wastewater systems, while some small communities and temporary housing facilities use a community system.

The Upper Missouri District Health Unit (UMDHU) regulates individual wastewater systems in accordance with state law. It updated its *Individual Sewage Treatment System Rules and Regulations* in 2018. This document regulates the design and installation of individual sewage treatment systems. Initial inspection is required, but there are no standards for ongoing inspection or maintenance – neither UMDHU nor Mountrail County provide oversight in this regard. This places the responsibility for system maintenance on individual homeowners. It is important for residents to educate themselves so they can identify potential issues and proactively address them, as sewage treatment systems are a hazard to public health and environmental quality.

The State Department of Health is responsible for regulation and oversight of community wastewater systems. Ongoing enforcement is needed to ensure these large privately-owned systems are properly maintained. It is also important to ensure proper removal of these systems for housing that is closed or abandoned (such as former crew camp housing establishments).

Mountrail County can help to promote proper wastewater disposal by coordinating with UMDHU and the Department of Health to ensure effective permitting and compliance and provide accessible, user-friendly resources to educate residents.

***Many soil characteristics affect septic siting. The best soils for drain fields are sandy soils which are not too coarse, and certain loams. If the soil is too coarse, wastewater drains too quickly for adequate treatment. If soil is too fine, it holds water too long. By simply observing the ground, areas with frequent depressions or standing water can be immediately classified as poorly draining. Drainage patterns can vary substantially across a development site, so a field assessment is needed for proper siting.***

## Internet Service

### Economic Impact

North Dakota has heavily invested in broadband to bring high-speed internet to rural parts of the state. Internet expansion has changed the landscape for business and industry. Continued expansion and improvement of internet service will attract more growth to the state, prevent some workers from leaving, and expand opportunities for collaboration. Online education opportunities are equally significant for rural residents, providing flexibility for scheduling and working from home. Like colleges and universities, primary and secondary schools increasingly feature online learning opportunities. North Dakota aims to be the first state in the country to provide 1 gigabit of connectivity to every K-12 school district.

***With increasing bandwidth, more business tasks are done remotely. Traditional tasks such as face-to-face meetings are increasingly conducted online, while entirely new opportunities are created, such as novel applications for drones and other automated technology. This creates new job opportunities and increases demand for computer literacy and technical skillsets.***

### Broadband Infrastructure

Broadband infrastructure is one-half of Mountrail County's internet infrastructure. Broadband enables high-speed network connections. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, fiber optic connectivity is as essential to businesses as electricity was a hundred years ago. Mountrail County has good broadband coverage (91.7% according to broadbandnow.com). Expanding broadband coverage and speeds remains a priority.

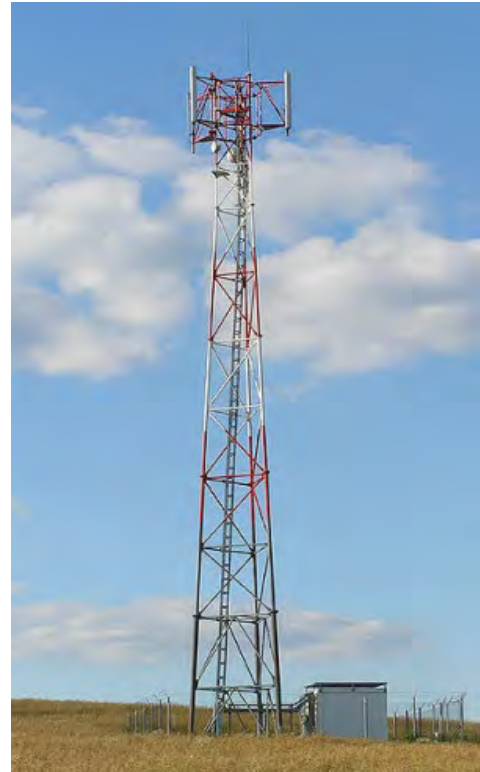
Mountrail County can help plan for broadband by:

- Encouraging access to fiber cables for all developments.
- Encouraging internet service agreements prior to platting.
- Encouraging development in locations which are already served by high-speed internet.
- Promoting the “dig once” concept – parallel installation of underground utilities and road construction.
- Encouraging building/internet sharing arrangements where capacity exists.
- Encouraging access for multiple internet providers to provide a variety of service options for the community.

## Wireless Facilities

Wireless communication infrastructure is a vital complement to broadband internet. From farmers to businesses to emergency responders – all rely on mobile connectivity to maintain communications in a world that is constantly evolving. Like broadband and other essential services, wireless connectivity and speed of service impacts the quality of life for County residents and business growth and development.

Mountrail County can regulate siting of wireless facilities, subject to certain federal criteria. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) establishes procedures for development review. It also requires that local government siting policies do not have the effect of discriminating amongst service providers. So, if Mountrail County allows for one wireless provider, it cannot exclude another's entry to the market. However, it can require service providers to co-locate their facilities when possible to limit the construction of new towers and reduce visual impacts on the landscape.



With mobile technology constantly evolving and ever-increasing service needs, wireless facilities are continually changing. 4G networks often utilize large towers. The newer 5G networks can utilize smaller towers, but more towers are needed to provide blanket coverage. It is important to keep County ordinances updated with the latest industry developments, and ensure they are consistent with all FCC requirements.

Mountrail County can help plan for wireless networks by:

- Encouraging wireless connectivity to areas of the County which cannot be physically connected to the broadband network.
- Identifying potential limitation for new cell towers to meet community needs while limiting visual impacts and other nuisances. An example could be tower restrictions within two miles of missile launch facilities and missile alert facilities.
- Encouraging access for multiple mobile internet providers to provide a variety of options for the community.

## Utility Installation and Relocation

Utilities such as water and electric are often installed together, at the time of development or roadway improvements. Parallel installation can reduce overall project costs and construction burdens on

County residents and landowners. By considering multiple systems in conjunction with future corridor needs, parallel installation also helps coordinate long-term planning.

One issue can occur when roadside utilities need to be relocated to facilitate a roadway improvement, such as shoulder widening or the construction of a new roadway connection. For a system which is already financed by private users, such as rural water, the cost of relocation may fall on private citizens. Mountrail County can help reduce the impacts of relocation by providing clear guidance for building and infrastructure setbacks from County roadways.

## Utility Siting Along Section Lines

The County's Zoning Ordinance requires utilities to conform with section lines and/or right-of-way for highways or rail. It is appropriate to use public right-of-way for shared utility systems, such as rural water systems, electric lines, or fiber optic cables, all of which provide a direct public benefit. In addition, requiring the use of established right-of-way minimizes the need to purchase new easements, helps organize the system, and provides the most direct means of access to customers.

One challenge arises when the North Dakota Industrial Commission co-opts existing right-of-way for oil development. When transmission lines, gathering lines, or oil pads are constructed within a section line, this effectively closes the right-of-way. When right-of-way is closed, this limits access to adjacent farmlands and hunting areas. If an entire corridor is blocked, this forces County residents to find alternative travel routes. Sometimes right-of-way is closed without notice, so landowners do not anticipate reduced access or route closure. To maintain the viability of Mountrail County's farming industry and support residents' livelihoods, it is necessary to maintain access to agricultural land as provided by North Dakota law.

***Mountrail County should bring its oil industry concerns to state representatives. To gain traction with the State, it helps to build a coalition with other local entities that are similarly affected. The North Dakota Association of Counties (NDACo) is organized to promote common county interests to the State legislature. It can be an effective organization to amplify the voice of county governments and advance Mountrail County's interests.***

## Fire Protection

The following communities have organized fire districts (taxing districts) that serve portions of Mountrail County:

- Stanley
- Parshall
- New Town
- Plaza



- Berthold
- Donnybrook
- Kenmare
- Powers Lake
- Tioga

Although not a taxing district, the Three Affiliated Tribes has a fire department, which is separate and distinct from the New Town Fire District.

The ability to provide fire districts to provide fire protection service is greater in and near the communities they serve. As distance from regional fire stations increases, fire districts have less ability to serve development.

New development is reviewed for fire protection standards. This includes ensuring that emergency access is available and that there is adequate water pressure for fire suppression. If water pressure is substandard, water storage needs to be provided. Building codes are also enforced to ensure that building design and construction addresses fire safety.



# Economic Development



# Economic Development

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## Overview

Mountrail County is blessed with an abundance of mineral resources and valuable farmland. These resources form the basis of the County's economy, which is rooted in farming, ranching, and mineral extraction. These primary industries employ approximately 25 percent of the County's workforce and support development and employment growth across other industries.

Historically, agriculture has been the dominant industry. More recently, growth has been driven by the previous decade's oil boom. From 2009 to 2018, more than 1,000 jobs were added as a direct result of oil development. While primary industries (resource-based industries) are strong, there are opportunities to expand value-added industries in related sectors.

***PRIMARY INDUSTRY: an industry such as mining or agriculture which obtains or provides raw materials for conversion into commodities and consumer products.***

***SECONDARY INDUSTRY: an industry which converts raw materials into commodities and consumer products (i.e., manufacturing or "value-added" industry).***

***TERTIARY INDUSTRY: an industry which provides services to consumers, including a wide range of businesses and programs, i.e., the service industry.***

## What is Economic Development?

Mountrail County has a role to play in sustaining the thriving economy. Economic development refers to various tools, investments, and overall strategies which are directed to induce development, expand employment, and increase wealth. It also includes quality-of-life initiatives that attract workers and families and keep them in the County. This is a critical point which can't be overlooked – throughout the previous decade, the County's primary challenge was not a lack of jobs but a lack of workers to fill them. Available housing, outdoor recreation opportunities, good schools, and other amenities are selling points to a potential labor force.

## Workforce Needs

After the most recent oil boom, Mountrail County has consistently had one of the lowest employment rates in the nation. In 2019, the County's unemployment rate never grew above 1.6 percent – it reached as low as 1.1 percent in May, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). A very low unemployment rate is good for workers but not for industry. It indicates that there is a shortage of workers to fill available jobs. This limits opportunities for industry to expand. It also reduces local tax revenue, which impacts the ability of communities to maintain infrastructure and services.

While workforce conditions will change as a result of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and drop in oil prices, the long-term trend of increased workforce competition with the rest of the nation should be expected. This means paying more to attract workers, which can diminish profits. A shortage of workers also means that workers can be highly mobile, both geographically and within their occupations. High worker turnover forces businesses to invest more in rehiring and retraining, diminishes productivity over time, and limits opportunity for expansion.

## **Oil Economy**

Economic growth in Mountrail County is directly related to the price of oil. Price is determined by changes in global supply and demand, which are driven by a multitude of factors and feedback mechanisms which are beyond the County's control. Global events at the beginning of 2020 precipitated a steep decline in oil prices, with prices plummeting to around \$10 a barrel in western North Dakota by the end of March. Shale fracking is more cost-intensive than conventional oil recovery. This makes the Bakken economy especially susceptible to price drops. Whiting Petroleum Corporation, once the largest oil producer in North Dakota, filed for bankruptcy at the end of March. More defaults could produce a cascade of economic effects throughout western North Dakota and beyond. Industry diversification can help combat these effects by building regional resilience, which is key to absorbing and rebounding from economic shocks.

## **Strategies and Opportunities**

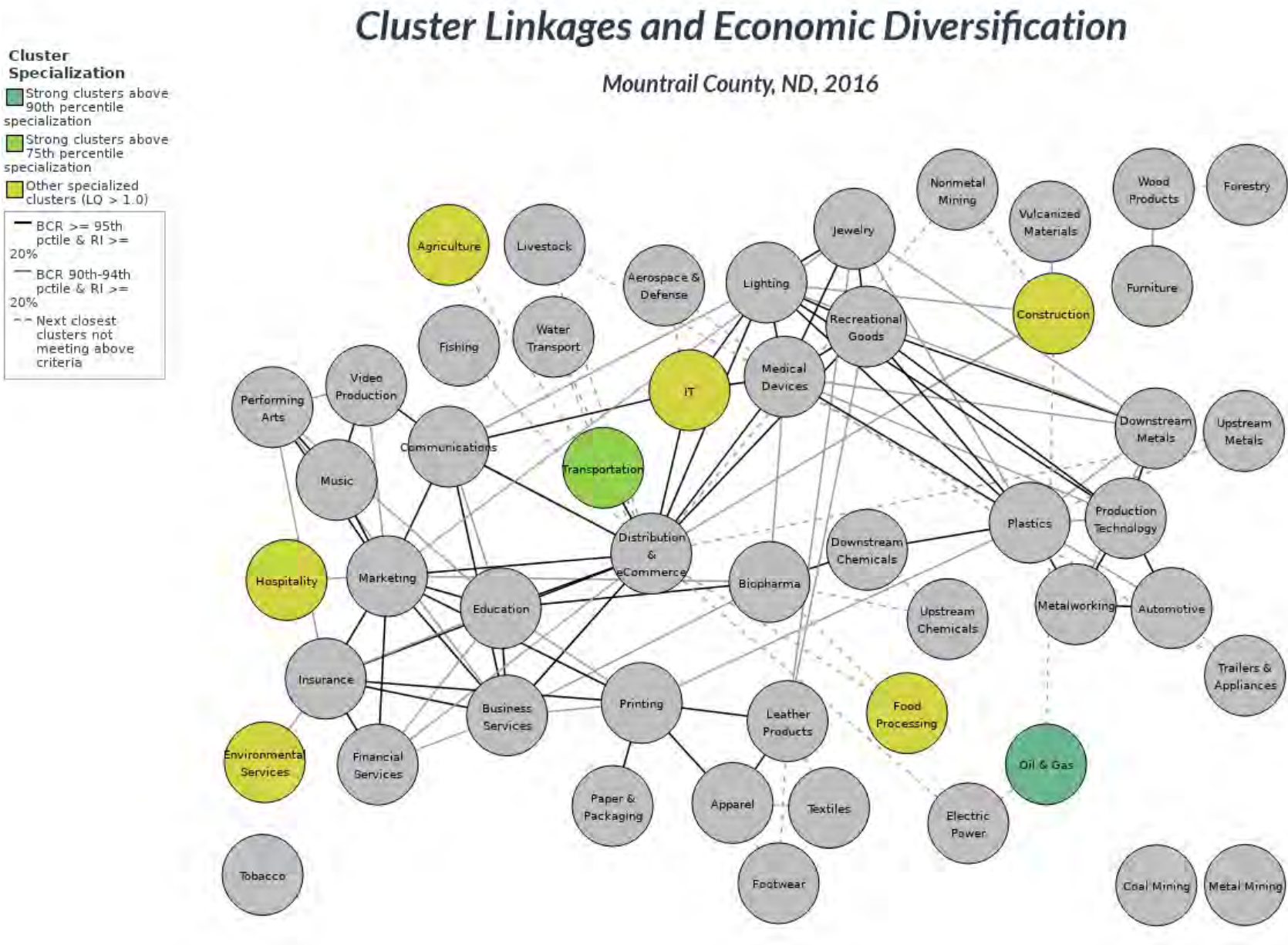
### **Building Clusters and Adding Value**

Industries are linked through chains of supply and production. These connections add value to the economy – for example, the products of one regional industry become inputs to another. A cluster is a regional concentration of related industries.

Cluster-based planning emphasizes the importance of coordinating economic development strategies to improve conditions for a group of supporting industries, rather than focusing on just one industry. It is also important to engage with regional businesses and industry representatives to maintain effective relationships and develop regional partnerships. This can help the County identify unique cluster deficiencies, such as technical training, which it may be positioned to support, and ensure that its efforts are coordinated with the needs and plans of private industry.



Figure 5. Regional Cluster Industries



***Industry clusters increase circulation of capital and materials within the region, which creates added value from products before they are exported from the regional economy. One example of a value-added industry is petroleum products manufacturing. A petrochemical plant in Mountrail County could obtain inputs to production from regional oil development, and its products might be used by regional fracking operations, which oil-based flocculants in their fracking-fluid mixtures. These linkages add value to the regional economy.***

The accompanying chart illustrates clustering effects in Mountrail County – lines represent linkages between supporting industries. Strong industries are shown in green.

## **Regional Planning**

Mountrail County must consider economic development from a regional standpoint. Its economy is not self-contained, but rather it is linked to cities and counties throughout western North Dakota and beyond. Further, economic opportunities are shaped by state and federal policies. Regional planning involves coordinating with other jurisdictions and private entities that are linked by common industries and interests. Aligning interests and development strategies with one another is more effective than planning in isolation. The County needs to continue to stay engaged with regional entities such as the Souris Basin Planning Council and the Western Dakota Energy Association to strengthen regional connections.

## **Workforce Housing**

Quality, affordable workforce housing is essential for growth. Cities, especially New Town and Stanley, have greater capacity to meet workforce housing needs than in rural Mountrail County, because they have the infrastructure capacity to build at higher densities. They can provide a greater variety of housing types, including multifamily apartments and townhomes. It is important for the County to support cities' development efforts and provide assistance as it is able. Cities are encouraged to update their long-range plans and examine their codes and policies to assess potential barriers to growth. Local plans and codes must reflect market realities – they should provide sufficient flexibility for housing types that align with housing projections and consumer preferences.

## **Workforce Training**

To remain competitive, industries and businesses are constantly evolving. Workers must adapt their skills to fit new employment opportunities. Industry growth and development is increasingly driven by technological change, requiring businesses and workers to expand their technical capacity. During periods of high unemployment, many workers are seeking to acquire new skills and transition careers. Mountrail County supports active partnerships between businesses, students, and transitioning workers to provide continuing education and career-based learning opportunities.

## **Supporting Local Businesses**

Local economic development policy should support local businesses – generally, because most state and federal economic policies are focused on broader industry goals. Further, the scale of local programs is achievable for communities, and a little assistance can go a long way. Mountrail County and municipalities can incentivize business growth and retention through tax abatement and other means. Renaissance zones, business improvement districts, and North Dakota’s Main Street ND program assist communities with downtown revitalization. City and County staff should engage with the North Dakota Department of Commerce to identify other programs and sources of funding which can be of assistance.

## **Promoting Mountrail County**

If there’s a simple solution to solving the labor shortage, it’s population growth. North Dakota has several initiatives aimed at attracting new workers to the state. Mountrail County can support these initiatives through focused promotional and engagement efforts. A coordinated approach might focus on enhancing and promoting the County’s recreational assets, such as Lake Sakakawea. The promotional strategy must be prepared for target audiences – whether they be young families, single workers, returning residents, etc.

## **Lobbying**

Systemic issues are best addressed at higher levels of government. State and federal policies can benefit or harm Mountrail County. The recent economic downturn provides an opportunity to address systemic issues; it has already resulted in a federal stimulus package and infrastructure proposals. Collective lobbying of legislators can encourage policy that benefits Mountrail County and western North Dakota.

## **Mountrail County Job Development Authority (JDA)**

The mission statement of the JDA is to grow Mountrail County’s quality of life, enhance economic opportunity, and promote growth and development by providing guidance and resources to entrepreneurs and communities. The JDA plays a key role in furthering many of the economic development aims of this Plan. It is important to understand that like many other organizations in the County, the JDA has a limited capacity and must focus its efforts on a limited number of priorities at a time. Therefore, the County Commission should carefully select its economic development priorities and use other partners (County staff or others outside of County government) who can assist the JDA in its efforts.

## **Graduate Retention**

Rural counties often struggle to retain graduating students. Improving graduate retention has the same effect as attracting new workers from out-of-County. Students in Mountrail County may not be aware of all work and career opportunities. Improving coordination between schools and industry can help promote local job opportunities that keep graduates in Mountrail County. This also helps training

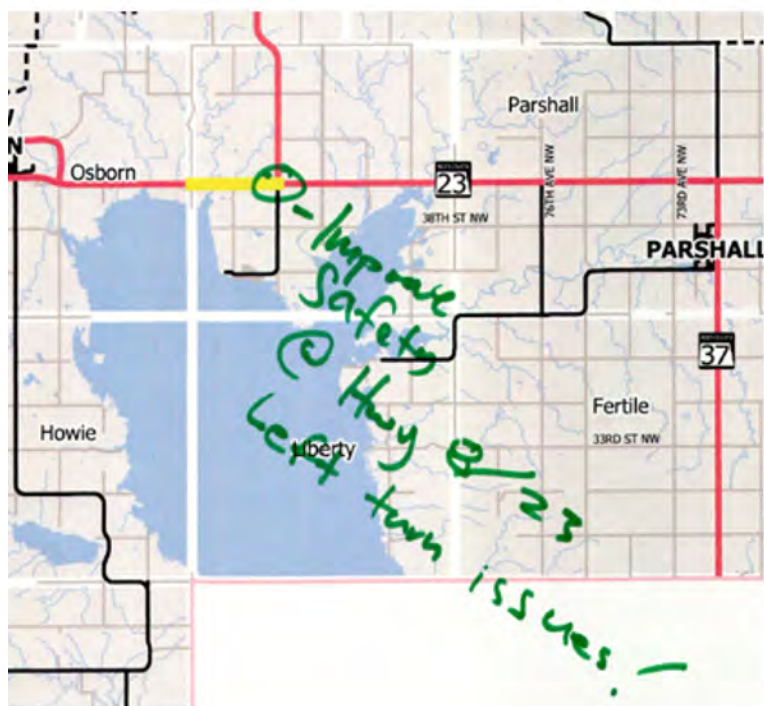
programs identify gaps and adapt curriculum to meet industry needs. More colleges and universities have satellite campuses, outreach programs, and online learning opportunities, which allows students to complete degrees while living closer to home.

Ultimately, many students will leave the County for school or work. However, they may consider returning when they are older. It is important to maintain connections with high school graduates so that business recruiters can reach out to them in the future, and to continue to build a community that residents want to call home.





# Implementation



# Implementation

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## Action Plan

### Step 1: Comprehensive Plan Committee

The success of this Plan will rely on a Comprehensive Plan Committee appointed by the County Commission.

As part of the Plan adoption, it is recommended that the Commission appoint a committee representing important local stakeholders, much like the Steering Committee that helped create the Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan Committee should meet at least quarterly and focus on closely monitoring 3-5 issues at a time (following the priorities in the tables below).

The Committee needs to select individuals or groups to take on each implementation task shown in the Implementation Table below.

### Step 2: Implementation Areas

As a result of the goals, objectives, and other ideas presented in the plan, the below implementation areas are provided.

#### Implementation Table Key

- **Timeline** – Short Term (1 year), Mid Term (2-5 years), Long Term (6+ years)
- **Investment/Cost** – Low (up to 40 hrs or \$2,000); Medium (41-100 hrs or \$2,001 - \$5,000); High (101+ hrs or \$5,001+)
- **Priority** – The Plan Steering Committee ranked the action steps based on project need, project readiness, and project costs.

**Table 11. Implementation Areas**

<b>Development Regulation Amendments</b> The below zoning ordinance amendments follow many of the goals and objectives of this Plan. It will be the responsibility of the County's planning and zoning staff to carry out the below tasks.			
<b>Task</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Priority (1-10)</b>
<b>User-friendly Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Resolution</b> – Create a use table, searchable online documents, and online maps	Short Term/ Ongoing	High	1
<b>Rural Residential District</b> – Create new district for large residential lots with a minimum size of 2 acres where only small animals are allowed, not livestock.	Short Term	High	2
<b>Agricultural District</b> – Increase the minimum parcel size to 5 acres. Remove conditional use permit allowance for mobile home parks and junk yards.	Short Term	Medium	3
<b>Temporary water line evaluation criteria</b> – Develop strong criteria for the review and approval of temporary water line applications. Consider County right-of-way encroachment needs, verification of private property easements, business licensure with the State, and proof of current State water permit(s).	Long Term	High	4
<b>Highway buffer and screening standards</b> – Create buffer and screening standards for all non-agricultural development adjacent to arterials (ND and US highways).	Mid Term	Medium	5
<b>Create reverse setbacks for new housing from oil and gas development</b> – Ensure all new housing is set back an appropriate distance from above ground oil and gas infrastructure.	Mid Term	Low	6
<b>Water resource setbacks</b> – Create setback standards for all non-agricultural development adjacent to County water resources. (Amend Zoning Text)	Mid Term	Medium	7
<b>Habitable structures in military safety areas</b> – Prohibit all habitable structures within 2,500' of any military facility (military evacuation zone). All existing habitable structures become nonconforming uses.	Short Term	Low	8
<b>Amend wind turbine regulations</b> – Amend regulations to account for impacts to military and agricultural flight operations, light pollution, wildlife, and the availability of valuable farmland.	Mid Term	Medium	9
<b>Utility-scale solar power</b> – Create standards to allow for utility-scale solar power installations, including standards to minimize impacts to valuable farmland.	Long Term	Medium	10



## Planning & Zoning Application Checklists

To carry out some of the goals and objectives of this Plan, robust review of subdivision, conditional use permit, variance, and zone change application needs to take place before and after application submittal. The County's existing application checklists (for applicants) need to be reviewed and amended per the task items provided below. The County's internal (for staff) checklists also need to be reviewed and amended per the task items below. County planning and zoning staff are responsible for the below tasks.

Task	Timeline	Cost	Priority (1-9)
<b>Provision of rural water service</b> – For development needing rural water service, require applicants to provide confirmation from rural water provider regarding whether or not provider can service development.	Short Term/ Ongoing	Low	1
<b>Proposals are appropriate in source water protection areas</b> – Scrutinize proposals within source water protections areas, limiting land uses and associated operations that can harm the water supply, such as intensive agricultural operations (i.e. confined animal feeding operations), industrial uses, waste management facilities, and commercial operations that may be harmful (i.e. auto repair, construction yards, paint shops). Coordinate with the ND Department of Environmental Quality and/or ND Rural Water Systems Association for assistance when needed.	Short Term/ Ongoing	Medium	2
<b>Two points of access</b> – Ensure that major subdivisions (5 or more parcels) and conditional use permits generating significant traffic (determined in conjunction with Road & Bridge Dept.) have two points of access.	Short Term/ Ongoing	Low	3
<b>Limit stranded acres</b> – Does the proposal limit the size or create an irregular shaped remaining parcel(s) – especially concerning agricultural land? Advise against applications that create stranded acres.	Short Term/ Ongoing	Low	4
<b>Protect constrained open space</b> – Does the proposal infringe on wetlands, steep slopes, streams, or other areas that present long-term development challenges? Ensure applications do not infringe on these areas.	Short Term/ Ongoing	Low	5
<b>Fire suppression/mitigation</b> – Require applicants to provide a fire suppression plan and proof of the plan's acceptance by the appropriate fire protection agency.	Short Term/ Ongoing	Low	6
<b>Wireless facilities</b> – Prior to application submittal, encourage developers of wireless facilities to collocate where possible to minimize the number of individual towers located throughout the County.	Mid Term	Medium	7
<b>Screen 2-mile radius of all applications for military facilities</b> – Immediate notice is sent to Minot Air Force Base if proposal is within 2 miles of military facilities.	Short Term/ Ongoing	Medium	8
<b>Broadband service</b> – Have applicants provide confirmation that non-agricultural residential development will have broadband service.	Short Term/ Ongoing	Low	9

## Road and Bridge Procedures

The below procedures and actions follow many of transportation-related goals and objectives of this Plan. County Road and Bridge staff are responsible for carrying out the below tasks.

Task	Timeline	Cost	Priority (1-8)
<b>Share the CIP with all organized townships and cities</b> – On an annual basis, share the adopted CIP with local governments in the County.	Short Term/ Ongoing	Low	1
<b>CIP project prioritization process is transparent</b> – Share CIP project prioritization information on the County's website so the public understands what the CIP is and how projects are included on the list.	Short Term/ Ongoing	Low	2
<b>Access management</b> – Ensure Road & Bridge Department practices incorporate access management guidelines for County roads and state and US highways (arterial and collector routes). Consider updating development regulations as necessary (such as subdivision regulations).	Mid Term	Medium	3
<b>Road information available on County's GIS interface</b> – make road jurisdiction data available on the County's public GIS interface so residents understand who is responsible for maintenance of local roads.	Mid Term	Medium	4
<b>County Road Safety Plan Update</b> – Update the County's current road safety plan. Consider increasing scope to include County roads in addition to state and US highways, if crash data supports such a scope increase.	Long Term	Very High	5
<b>Preservation and safety are given priority</b> – Preservation and safety projects are given priority in the CIP process (weighted scoring, for example).	Mid Term	Medium	6
<b>Leveraging industry to help build CIP list</b> – Involve local oil and gas industry experts to help inform the development of CIP projects.	Short Term/ Ongoing	Medium	7
<b>Bike and Pedestrians Needs Near Cities</b> – Work with local cities on County road projects in developing areas to determine the need to provide bike and pedestrian facilities along County roads.	Short Term/ Ongoing	High	8



## Property Owner Awareness

Several goals and objectives of this Plan are best promoted through County actions that promote greater property owner awareness of existing regulations and programs available to assist with a number of issues. Responsibility for each task is indicated in parenthesis.

Task	Timeline	Cost	Priority (1-4)
<b>Restoration of gravel pits</b> – Increase property owner awareness of State rules pertaining to gravel pits – NDAC 38-16-01.1 (requirement of operator to reclaim pits, written agreement with land owner, criteria for restoration, remedies for operators who fail to follow agreements). <b>(Responsibility – Planning and Zoning)</b>	Mid Term	Medium	1
<b>Noxious weed abatement resources</b> – Work with the local extension office and County Weed Control Officer to improve promotion of noxious weed control resources available for property owners. <b>(Responsibility – County Weed Board)</b>	Mid Term	Medium	2
<b>ND One Call</b> – Use all possible avenues to promote ND One Call, through permit information, regular property owner notifications, and other possible means. <b>(Responsibility – State One Call System)</b>	Short Term/ Ongoing	Medium	3
<b>Military easement disclosure</b> – Use all possible avenues to provide property owners with information about the potential for military easements and issues associated with living and working near military facilities. <b>(Minot Air Force Base)</b>	Short Term/ Ongoing	Medium	4

## Extra-governmental Advocacy

This Plan provides the County's platform for making its case where State or Federal actions may infringe upon County interests. The below tasks specify how the County will present its "platform". Responsibility for each task is indicated in parenthesis.

Task	Timeline	Cost	Priority (1-6)
<b>Use the Comprehensive Plan to promote the preservation of agricultural land and practices</b> – Use this Plan's vision, goals, objectives, and Plan maps to promote the preservation of valuable farmland when threatened by incompatible development proposals under the jurisdiction of State or Federal agencies. <b>(Responsibility – Planning and Zoning)</b>	Short Term/ Ongoing	Low	1
<b>Maintain statutory section line right of way</b> – Work with local state representatives and senators to advocate for the preservation of section line right of way and the prohibition of closures authorized by State agencies. <b>(Responsibility – County Commission)</b>	Short Term/ Ongoing	High	2
<b>Promote existing PSC rules to protect agriculture</b> – Concerning energy facility projects under the jurisdiction of the ND Public Service Commission, stress strict adherence to ND Administrative Code 69-06-08-02 selection criteria and policy criteria (prioritize existing right of way and utility corridors and minimize overall impact on agriculture for energy transmission facilities). <b>(Responsibility – County Ag Agency)</b>	Short Term/ Ongoing	High	3
<b>Regional destination for research demonstration</b> – Work with the local extension office and local State representatives and senators to promote Mountrail County as a place for research demonstration (i.e. energy industry, agriculture, UAV, etc.). <b>(Responsibility – County Ag Agency)</b>	Long Term	High	4
<b>Promote use of LoadPass</b> – Continue to promote the use of LoadPass, especially at the state level, to ease the transportation of goods throughout the County. Leverage partners, such as the Western Dakota Energy Association, to assist in this effort. <b>(Responsibility – Road &amp; Bridge)</b>	Short Term/ Ongoing	Low	5
<b>Lake Sakakawea is a long-term County asset accessible to the public</b> – Initiative a working group involving the County, County Park District, MHA Nation, and US Army Corps of Engineers to improve existing lake access points and other opportunities to recreate along the lake's shoreline. Work with these agencies to increase internet information about recreation associated with the Lake. <b>(Responsibility – Park Board)</b>	Long Term	High	6

## Working with Partner Organizations

Select goals and objectives of this Plan will require a strong working relationship with entities outside of the County government. Responsibility for each task below is indicated in the parenthesis.

Task	Timeline	Cost	Priority (1-3)
<p><b>Economic development working group</b> – Create a working group consisting of the County, the County JDA, and other local partners (could be MHA Nation, cities, or others) to pursue a County economic development program that focuses on:</p> <p>Attracting value-added agriculture and energy businesses to the County. Specific tasks could include making an industry site selection page on the County website or creating fact-sheets on the benefits of Mountrail County for value-added agriculture and value-added energy business.</p> <p>Expanding workforce supportive infrastructure. Specific tasks could include identifying primary issues, such as daycare or single family housing, and working to identify key partners and funding opportunities to carry out each task. <b>(Responsibility – Jobs Development Authority)</b></p>	Mid Term	High	1
<p><b>Rural water data</b> – Establish ongoing contact with rural water providers in the County and request new system maps on an annual basis. Information will help to inform future zoning and future land use map changes. <b>(Responsibility – County Water Board)</b></p>	Short Term/ Ongoing	Low	2
<p><b>Improve safeguards for source-water protection areas</b> – Engage the MHA Nation and work together to encourage all non-community water systems (and their respective governing bodies) to evaluate their source-water protection areas to identify the presence and location of sources or activities within each protection area that may contaminate groundwater or surface water. Use appropriate measures to abate any land uses or operations that are likely to contribute contaminants. <b>(Responsibility – County Water Board)</b></p>	Mid term	High	3