



# Yellow Medicine County

## Comprehensive Plan

Adopted: December 16, 2025



Upper Minnesota Valley  
**REGIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
COMMISSION**

Helping Communities Prosper

## Acknowledgements

*This plan could not have been possible without the work and dedication of the following individuals:*

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*This plan was created by the  
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Upper Minnesota Valley  
**REGIONAL  
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# Executive Summary

## Yellow Medicine County Vision Summary

Yellow Medicine County is rooted in its agricultural heritage with rich farmland and robust livestock production. The natural beauty of the Minnesota and Yellow Medicine River Valleys provide opportunities for diverse wildlife, vegetation, and recreation. Agriculture and manufacturing are the driving economic sectors in addition to local schools, healthcare facilities, and public sector. The county’s rural setting offers a slower pace of life, safety, affordable housing, and strong work ethic making it an attractive place to live, work, and play.

### Strategy Highlights

#### Economic Outlook

- Support agriculture industry
- Recruit/retain workforce
- Provide adequate quality childcare & housing
- Collaborate and utilize existing resources



#### Recreational, Natural and Cultural Resources

- Utilize the county’s unique natural amenities
- Protect and preserve the beautiful natural areas of the county
- Share the history



#### Public Infrastructure and Services

- Maintain existing infrastructure
- Provide exceptional services to all residents
- Provide sufficient communication with residents and local units of government



#### Land Use

- Protect ag land and rural character
- Prioritize efficiency with new development
- Consider flexible housing regulations





# County at a Glance

Source: 2020 U.S. Census & 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates



<b>Population</b>	9,509
<b>Households</b>	3,993
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	3.4%
<b>Housing Units</b>	4,512
<b>Vacant Units</b>	519
<b>Rental Units</b>	629
<hr/>	
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$71,573
<b>Median Family Income</b>	\$88,091
<b>Median Housing Value</b>	\$148,200
<b>Median Monthly Mortgage</b>	\$1,366
<b>Median Monthly Rent</b>	\$688
<b>Median Age</b>	42.0

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

- YMC’s population is projected to decline by over 12% by 2035.
- The cost of living in Yellow Medicine County is significantly lower than in the metropolitan area.
- Housing values and monthly rents are significantly lower than statewide figures. Housing stock is significantly older than statewide figure.
- The county’s unemployment rate is slightly higher than the state of Minnesota.
- The number of households declined by nearly 1,000 over the past 40 years.
- The average household size has decreased by 12.6%.
- The county is slowly becoming more diverse. White population declined by 12% from 2011-22, but remains almost 90% of total population.
- Over 60% of the county’s labor force works outside of YMC
- Median household income is lower than the state of Minnesota.
- The largest employment sector is the “Educational services, and health care and social assistance” sector due to the large number of jobs provided by the County, schools, including MN West, and healthcare providers.

# Introduction

## Purpose of the Plan

The Yellow Medicine County Comprehensive Plan is a vision for the future and guides the County for the next 10 years. This plan allowed Yellow Medicine County to connect with the public to help establish a shared vision, determine goals and prioritize the next steps for the County.

A comprehensive plan can help the County consider its level of involvement, expense and commitment as it works towards its vision. It can also preserve important resources and ensure a more efficient delivery of County services.

The plan serves three primary roles:

- Serves as a legal basis for land use regulations.
- Allows the residents to create a shared vision for the community.
- Provides guidance for the County commissioners and other decision makers.

### Legal Basis for Comprehensive Plan

Counties are authorized to plan under Minnesota Statutes Section 394.23, which states: “A comprehensive plan or plans when adopted by ordinance must be the basis for official controls...”

A County comprehensive plan provides the legal basis for ordinances and enforcement of the ordinances. The County’s ordinances should be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

## Using the plan

A comprehensive plan, as a vision and policy document, must remain relatively general and conceptual. The plan is designed as a flexible document that can be updated as conditions change over time.

### Annually

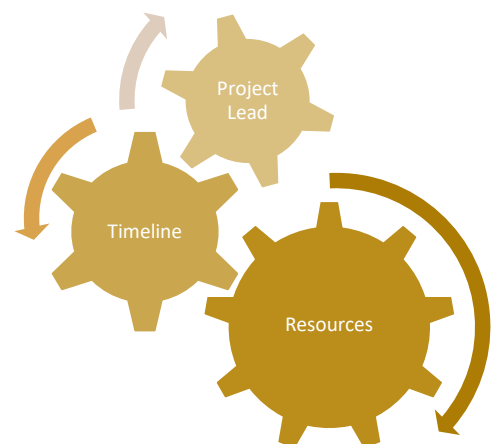
Review the Goals and Strategies. Determine what you want to work on this year. Create an Action Plan.

### Every 2-3 years:

Review the Vision, Goals and Strategies. Consider if there are changes needed and revise your strategies accordingly.

### Every 5-10 years:

- Update the entire plan and utilize new census data.
- Engage the public.
- Review the vision statement, goals and strategies and update as needed.
- Update your Action Plan.



## Vision Statement

A vision is a broad statement that encompasses the overarching aspirations of the County over the next 20 years.

Through the survey, public input laid the foundation of this vision statement. The county's rural, agricultural framework along with its safety, Midwest values, affordability and natural beauty were the focal points of the County's vision. Strengthening the local economy and retaining young families were seen as priorities for the future.

**Yellow  
Medicine  
County:  
Rooted in  
Agriculture**

### In 2045, Yellow Medicine County looks and feels like:



We envision a **welcoming and thriving rural** county where **beautiful landscapes** nurture a **vibrant, safe, and friendly** environment. Our county provides endless opportunities, characterized by a **strong and stable economy** rooted in **agriculture**, that **supports local businesses** and fosters **economic** prosperity.



We prioritize **affordable living** and a high quality of life, which includes strong schools and excellent healthcare options for all families and households, meeting the needs of those who want to call our county **“home”**.



Our **youth** remain a vital part of the future with emphasis put on providing **quality and affordable childcare** options. **Educational opportunities** remain strong and train the **next generation of workers**, meeting the needs of the workforce.



We aspire to be a leader in **conservation** and **environmental stewardship** while producing crops and livestock for local and global markets. We are committed to maintaining our **clean, sustainable** surroundings - capitalizing on the **natural beauty of our unique landforms** to **provide recreational opportunities** for residents and visitors alike.



Our residents are **connected** through supportive networks and enjoy a tranquil, rural lifestyle enriched by **recreational and cultural** activities. We are a place where everyone feels at **home**—a desirable destination for those seeking **opportunity**, friendship, and a **great place to raise families**.



Together, we build a future-focused, energetic, and resilient community that embraces change while honoring our heritage, ensuring that we remain **vibrant and productive** for generations to come.

## Planning Process

A targeted public participation process was the foundation of this plan. The public was included through a task force, community surveys and a comment period of the draft plan. The public input survey was completed early in the process. This feedback was used to shape the vision, goals and strategies for the County.

### Comprehensive Plan Task Force

The plan was guided by a task force that was made up of various County department heads and township representatives. This group met four times over the course of 16 months to review public input, discuss the priorities, goals and strategies of each section and review plan drafts. The task force guided and promoted the planning process and played an important role in establishing this comprehensive plan for the County.

### Public Input Survey

To collect public input, a survey was distributed countywide in July 2024. The survey was available online and paper copies were available as well. County residents were notified of the survey via postcard, County website and Facebook.

The County attempted to mail the postcard to every address through a mass mailing. While every effort was made to reach every address, there were reports of households not receiving the postcard due to some locations getting their mail from post offices outside of the county. Altogether, approximately 4,500 postcards were mailed out.

*The complete results of the survey can be found in the Appendix.*

Paper copies of the survey were available at the Yellow Medicine County Government Building (Granite Falls), YMC Planning & Zoning Office (Clarkfield), all city halls in the county or by calling the County Administrator to have one mailed out. Altogether, 365 responses were received.

### Cities, Townships & Tribe Surveys/Interviews

A survey was also sent to all cities, townships and the Upper Sioux Community to gather similar input, but also to see if there were ways the local units of government could work together or pool resources. In general, the results of this survey showed that

- 87.5% of responding jurisdictions considered their relationship with the County to be “good” or “great”
- 75% of responding jurisdictions would like to work with the County on coordinating infrastructure projects (roads/streets, drainage and broadband)
- Townships were primarily concerned with maintaining roads and bridges
- Demolition/addressing dilapidated properties, land use planning, and public safety/emergency management were other areas local jurisdictions would like to collaborate with the County

### Plan Adoption

A public comment period for the final plan draft was held November 5 through December 5, 2025. No comments were received. The Yellow Medicine County Commissioners held a public hearing on December 16, 2025 to consider adoption of this plan.

## Emerging Conditions and Trends

As a result of the community input process described above, several emerging conditions and trends became evident. Residents love the rural quality of life the county offers – the slower pace of life, safety, and local pride in their communities. Quality schools, healthcare and air and water quality were just a few of the many strengths and assets mentioned by residents in the public survey. Conversely, several challenges and issues were also identified such as childcare availability, housing options, and the lack of an available workforce. However, with a positive mindset and collaboration, a lot of these challenges can also be seen as opportunities for new projects and initiatives in the years to come.

Some of these challenges/opportunities include:



**Childcare availability and affordability** – This is a common issue across rural Minnesota. Current providers are full and there is a severe gap between the cost of providing childcare and what families can pay. State regulations can be a burden to providers looking to start operation.



**Housing availability** – Another common issue across much of greater Minnesota is that there is not enough available quality housing. One reason is that building costs are higher than home values, making new construction unfeasible in rural areas. A potential solution is to make quality housing available for seniors, making their homes available for new residents and/or young families. Housing across all household sizes and income levels is needed.



**Available workforce/Population loss** – Since the pandemic, data shows that people are looking to relocate in rural areas for the safety, quietness and low cost of living if there are quality homes, broadband and amenities available. Having things to do, available quality housing and a welcoming environment are key to attracting new residents. Yellow Medicine County offers many, if not all of these traits. Retaining the county’s youth was a top priority from the public survey. Promoting the available careers in the area while providing quality affordable housing and childcare are key elements in retaining young residents and families.



**Available Healthcare & Medical Services** - Yellow Medicine County is fortunate to offer quality healthcare services and clinics located in Granite Falls and Canby. As the population continues to age, it is convenient to have these facilities close to home. In addition, having reliable, high-speed broadband also allows residents to access telehealth services when appropriate.



**Economic resiliency** – Interruptions in the economy can happen without warning. Natural disasters, global conflict, and poor weather conditions can all disrupt the local economy. Planning for some of these events and diversifying the local economy can keep communities and the county going when things get tough.



**Economic development programs** – Yellow Medicine County does not provide economic development programming. Rather it relies on each individual community and regional partners to provide these services. Economic development programming was listed as one of the top priorities from the public survey. The County could consider being more involved in economic development activities across the county. Adding this to its list of services would come at a significant cost and the County has indicated it does not wish to add more staff at this time due to budget limitations.



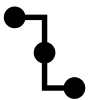
**Support local businesses** – Survey responses indicated that residents find supporting local businesses to be the top priority in the county. This is a challenge in today’s economy when competition is fierce, especially with the presence of online shopping. Many households, especially younger families, tend to shop online due to cost and convenience. To be competitive, local businesses need to offer quality products and/or superior service and go above and beyond in customer service. As consumers, county residents need to be deliberate in supporting their local businesses or they will not likely survive. It may cost a little more to do so, but local businesses are the engines of rural communities. They support local fundraising campaigns, provide jobs and generate tax revenue.



**Recreational opportunities** – With the recent closure of the Upper Sioux State Park, there is an opportunity to provide and enhance local recreational facilities in Yellow Medicine County. The County currently has two County parks – Oraas and Timm County Parks – that offer a variety of options. The County could consider ways to update or enhance their existing parks to replace some of the activities previously offered at the Upper Sioux State Park. Stone Hill Park and Del Clark Lake near Canby are also recreational assets to the county as they draw many visitors to the area for camping and water activities. The county also possesses unique landforms such as the Yellow Medicine and Minnesota Rivers, rocky outcroppings, prairie lands and rolling hills that could be developed to offer recreational opportunities unlike any other in southwestern Minnesota. These types of amenities are key in attracting new residents and visitors alike.



**Agriculture production** – Outside of the unique landforms mentioned above, Yellow Medicine County is home to large amounts of very productive farmland. The majority of the county’s land use is agricultural and there is local pride in that. Local farmers grow corn, soybeans and small grains and raise hogs, cattle and poultry. With significant reliance on agriculture, there is potential opportunity for value-added agricultural products and expansion of local foods options. Yellow Medicine County values their productive soil as a precious resource and knows that agriculture is the foundation of their local economy and rural lifestyle.



**Connectivity** – Roads are essential to rural areas, allowing farmers to transport their commodities to market and rural residents the ability to commute to their jobs. Having many miles of roads with a limited number of residents to pay for the upkeep and maintenance is always a challenge for rural areas. Collaboration between the County and townships is already happening and helps keep maintenance costs down. High-speed broadband is another piece of essential infrastructure for rural areas. Having this service available opens so many opportunities for remote workers, telehealth, precision agriculture, and education. Work is being done in previously unserved areas to provide high-speed coverage to all that desire it in the coming years.



**Transportation and Rural Access** - As the county’s population continues to age, residents will need better access to healthcare, groceries, and employment. Rural residents sometimes face challenges in reaching urban centers for certain services that small cities may not offer. Alternative transportation options, such as dial-a-ride services, are essential to ensure that seniors and those with mobility challenges can access vital services to maintain or improve their quality of life.

# County Profile

## Location and Regional Setting

Yellow Medicine County is located in west central Minnesota approximately 168 miles west of Minneapolis/St. Paul. Shaped like a hammer Yellow Medicine County is 758 square miles in size. It is 54 miles from east to west and varies in length from 12 miles on the west end to 21 miles on the east end of the county. Yellow Medicine County has nine cities and 21 townships. The Upper Sioux Community is located in the eastern end of the county. Granite Falls bordering the Minnesota River is the County seat and is the county's largest community. Yellow Medicine County is part of the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission planning and economic development district which includes Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift and Yellow Medicine Counties.



## History

In 1849 Yellow Medicine County became a part of the Minnesota Territory which included the Dakotas. The whole Mississippi Valley was part of the Louisiana Purchase from France in 1803. Minnesota statehood in 1858 brought rapid settlement to the area moving the frontier westward.

Prior to 1850, Yellow Medicine County was part of Redwood County. In 1852, Dr. Thomas Williamson, a medical missionary of the Presbyterian Church, established the Pejuhutazizi Mission. This Indian name means Yellow Medicine, the name of the bitter root of the Moonseed plant used by the Indians for medicinal purposes. In 1854, Reverend Stephen R. Riggs established the Hazel Creek Mission. These two missions were located about five miles south of Granite Falls in what is now Minnesota Falls Township. The government established the Upper Sioux Agency in 1854 in what is now Sioux Agency Township. According to the treaties of 1850, when the Sioux surrendered title to their lands in Minnesota, a tract of land ten miles wide on each side of the Minnesota River was reserved as Indian Territory. During the US – Dakota War of 1862, the Upper Sioux Agency, missions, and all white settlements were destroyed and as a result Indian lands were declared forfeit. White settlement began again in 1865. Early white settlers were predominantly English, Scandinavian and German with smaller settlements of Irish, Scotch and Bohemian.

Yellow Medicine County was created by legislative act on March 6, 1871. Voters approved the act in November 1871. An appointed board of three County commissioners met for the first time on January 1, 1872, in Yellow Medicine City, which was then the largest settlement (population 40). Three communities vied for the County seat - Yellow Medicine City, Minnesota Falls, and Granite Falls - and on January 27, Yellow Medicine City was chosen. In 1874, Granite Falls took the honor and continued to be the County seat, but not without some contention. Several times other communities in the county vied for the County seat, but with no success. The last attempt was made in 1940 by the city of Clarkfield.

Nine cities in the county were incorporated beginning with Granite Falls and Canby in 1879 and ending with St. Leo in 1940. The two earliest cities to be platted were Minnesota Falls and Yellow Medicine City, but both failed before being incorporated. The 21 townships were incorporated from 1871 to 1881 starting with Hazel Run and ending with Fortier Township.

# Demographics

## Population

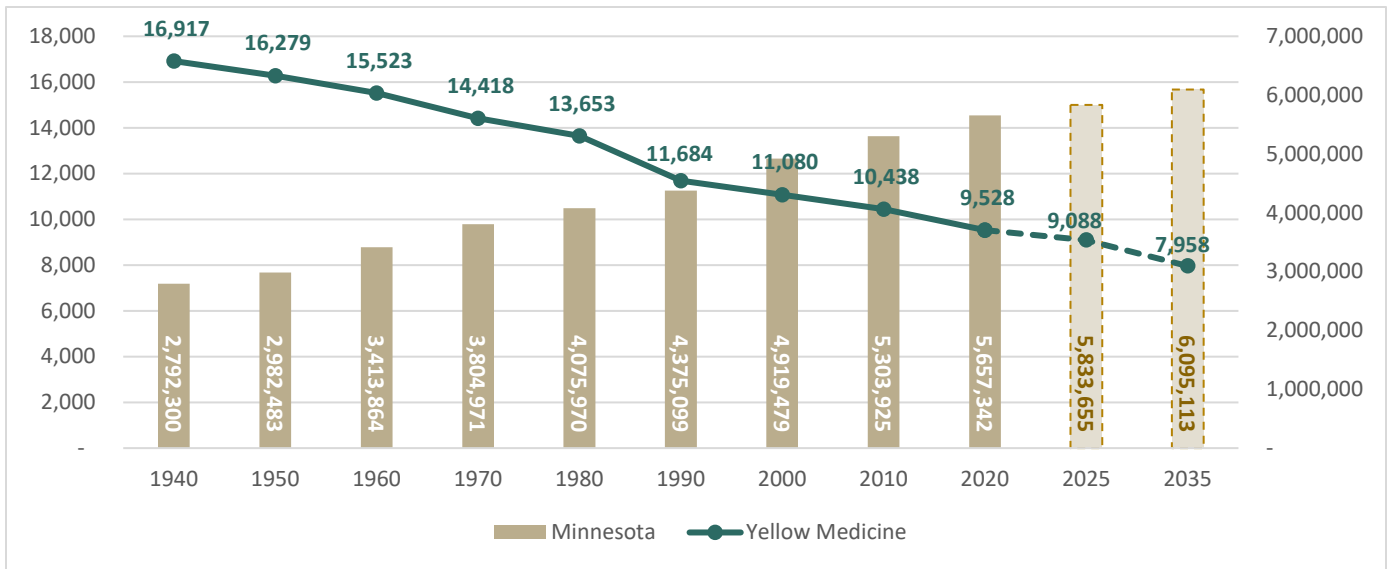
Yellow Medicine’s population has been on a continuous decline since peaking in 1940 at 16,917 to a population count of 9,528 in 2020, or a 43.7% decline. The largest decline happened from 1980-1990 when the county experienced a 14.4% decline. Most recently in 2010-20, the county lost 8.7%. The number of households has also been declining as has the average household size.

Projections from the Minnesota State Demographic Center anticipate that Yellow Medicine County’s population will continue to decline by 12.4% by the year 2035.

**Data sources used in this plan:**

- [U.S. Census, 1980-2020](#)
- [American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates](#)
- [Census On the Map Tool](#)
- [DEED 2024 Yellow Medicine County Profile](#)
- [DEED 2024 Region 6W Profile](#)
- [USDA Census of Agriculture, 2017, 2022](#)

Population of Yellow Medicine County, Minnesota, 1940-2035



Source: 2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census; MN State Demographic Center

Population Projections, 2025-2035

	2020	2025	2035	% change 2020-2035
Big Stone	5,155	4,987	4,830	-6.3%
Chippewa	12,509	12,112	11,938	-4.6%
Lac qui Parle	6,753	6,353	5,773	-14.5%
Swift	9,810	9,466	9,285	-5.4%
<b>Yellow Medicine</b>	<b>9,528</b>	<b>9,196</b>	<b>8,394</b>	<b>-11.9%</b>

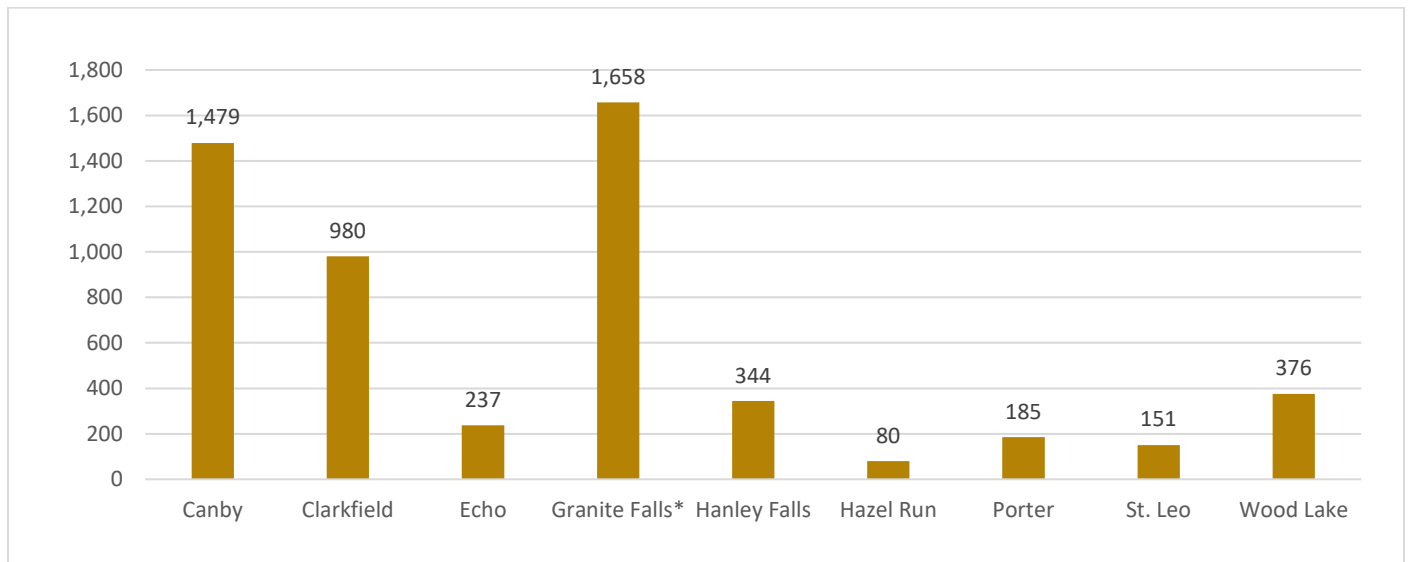
Source: MN State Demographer Center, DEED County Profiles, 2023

### Population, Households, and Average Household Size of Yellow Medicine, 1980-2023

	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2023 (est.)</b>
Population	13,653	11,684	11,080	10,438	9,528	9,497
Households	4,991	4,607	4,439	4,292	4,040	3,993
Avg. household size	2.68	2.48	2.42	2.36	2.33*	2.32

*\*Data from 2020 ACS 5-year estimate as 2020 Decennial Census data is unavailable  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019-2023 5-year Estimates*

### 2022 City Population estimates



*\*Yellow Medicine County side only, total city population is 2,423  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-2022 5-year Estimates*

### 2022 City/Rural Population estimates

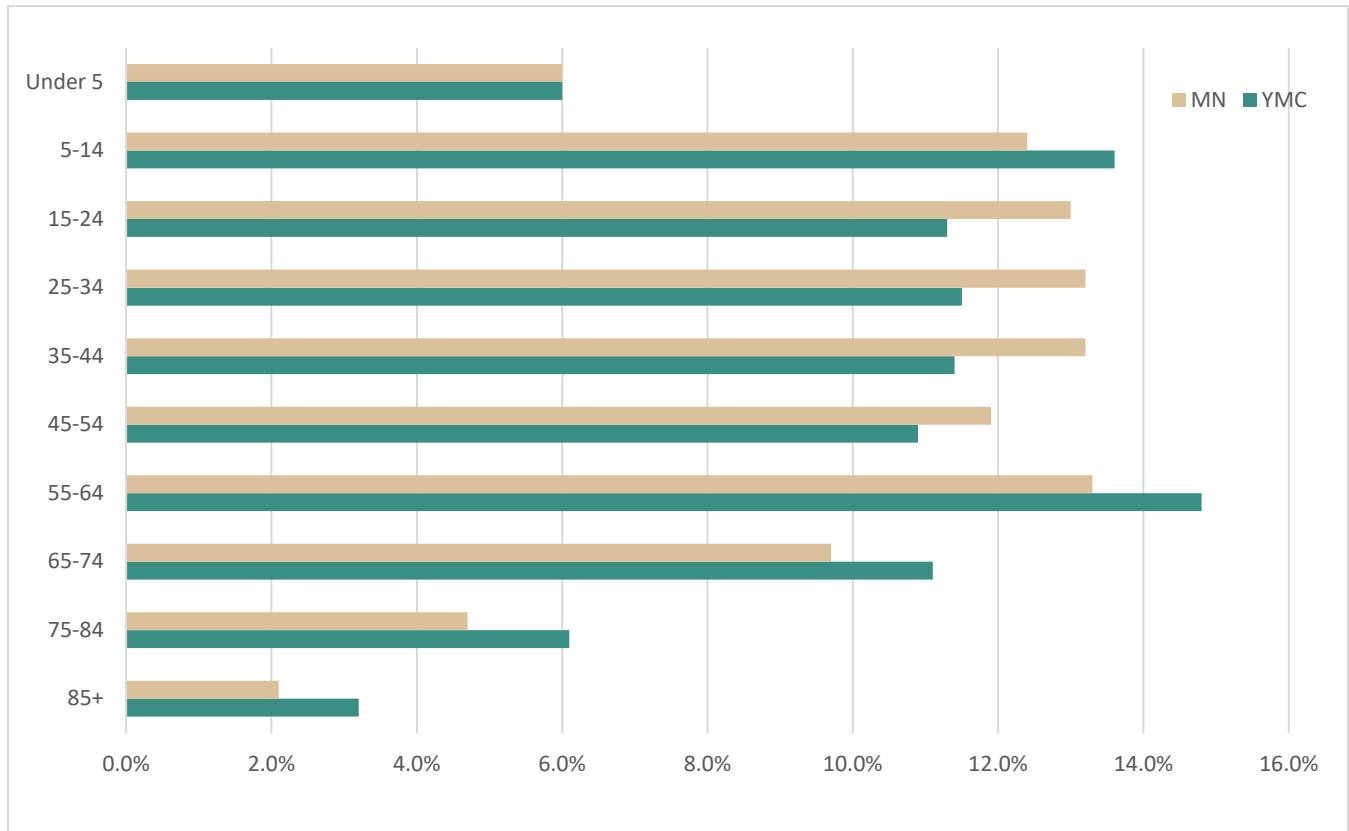
Total city population	5,489
Rural population	4,079
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,569</b>

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-2022 5-year Estimates*

## Age of Residents

The 2023 median age for Yellow Medicine County of 42.0 is almost three years older than the Minnesota median age of 39.1 and almost two years older than its 2000 median age of 40.4. YMC has 21% of the population over 65, which is higher than the state's percentage of 17.9%.

### Yellow Medicine Population by Age, 2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018 – 2022 5-year Estimates

The overall population of the county is expected to **decline by over 12%** from 2025-2035 according to the Minnesota State Demographic Center. During that same time frame:

- The 75-84 year-old population is projected to **increase** by almost 37%
- The 45-54 year old age group is the only other group projected to **increase** (+2.5%)
- The population aged 85+ is projected to **decrease** by 24.5%
- The county's projected 2035 population is 7,958

## Population Projections by Age Group, 2025-2035

Age group	2022 <i>American Community Survey</i>	2025 Projection	2035 Projection	Numeric Change 2025-2035	Percent Change 2025-2035
Under 5 years	570	534	454	-80	-15.0%
5-14 years	1,306	1,143	952	-191	-16.7%
15-24 years	1,081	1,116	929	-187	-16.8%
25-34 years	1,096	932	848	-84	-9.0%
35-44 years	1,092	1,069	866	-203	-19.0%
45-54 years	1,046	997	1,022	25	2.5%
55-64 years	1,419	1,172	895	-277	-23.6%
65-74 years	1,066	1,269	983	-286	-22.5%
75-84 years	587	591	809	218	36.9%
85 years & over	306	265	200	-65	-24.5%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>9,569</b>	<b>9,088</b>	<b>7,958</b>	<b>-1,130</b>	<b>-12.4%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018 – 2022 5-year Estimates and Minnesota State Demographic Center

## Race and Ethnicity

In Yellow Medicine County:

- “White” remains largest race category in the county at 89.6%, but has declined 12.7% from 2011 and was the only race category to decline.
- “Hispanic or Latino origin” is 5.1% of population, a 36.8% increase since 2011.
- “Two or more races” makes up 4.1%, a 279% increase since 2011.



## Race and Hispanic Origin, 2022

	Yellow Medicine Co.			Minnesota	
	Number	Percent	Change from 2011-22	Percent	Change from 2011-22
White	8,574	89.6%	-12.7%	79.7%	-0.4%
Black or African American	78	0.8%	13.0%	6.7%	44.3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	280	2.9%	5.3%	0.9%	-10.2%
Asian or Other Pac. Islanders	53	0.6%	15.2%	5.1%	37.1%
Some Other Race	194	2.0%	38.6%	2.3%	84.7%
Two or More Races	390	4.1%	278.6%	5.3%	159.6%
Hispanic or Latino origin	491	5.1%	36.8%	5.7%	34.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,569</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>-8.4%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>7.9%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018 – 2022 5-year Estimates

## Cost of Living and Income

The cost of living in Yellow Medicine County is significantly lower than the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. For a typical family with two working parents and one child, it costs about a third less to live in Yellow Medicine County vs Hennepin County. (Other counties in the metro area had similar annual costs of living - Anoka, Ramsey, Carver, Washington, Scott, and Dakota Counties).

Childcare, housing and taxes are the three cost areas having the most disparity between Yellow Medicine County and the metro counties.

Income levels are lower in Yellow Medicine County compared to the state as a whole.

### Cost of Living in Yellow Medicine County vs. Surrounding Counties, Hennepin County, 2022\*

	Average monthly costs							
	Yearly cost	Childcare	Food	Health Care	Housing	Transport	Other	Taxes
Yellow Medicine	\$51,085	\$436	\$929	\$528	\$794	\$939	\$417	\$214
<b>Hennepin County</b>	<b>\$79,332</b>	<b>\$1,547</b>	<b>\$941</b>	<b>\$567</b>	<b>\$1,394</b>	<b>\$818</b>	<b>\$565</b>	<b>\$779</b>
Lac qui Parle Co.	\$49,727	\$436	\$944	\$528	\$794	\$841	\$421	\$180
Chippewa County	\$49,675	\$436	\$911	\$528	\$794	\$879	\$413	\$179
Lyon County	\$49,623	\$543	\$908	\$528	\$794	\$773	\$412	\$177

\*Costs shown are for average family with two full-time working parents and one child  
Source: 2022 DEED Occupational Employment Statistics Data Tool

### Income Statistics of Yellow Medicine County and the State of Minnesota, 2022

	Yellow Medicine	Minnesota
Median Household Income	\$70,605	\$84,313
Average Household Income	\$87,454	\$111,341
Median Family Income	\$86,214	\$107,072
Average Family Income	\$103,478	\$134,671
Per Capita Income	\$36,737	\$44,947



Source: 2018 – 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

There is a slightly higher percentage of *people* living in poverty (10.0%) in comparison to the state (9.6%). However, the percentage of *families* below the poverty level is only 5.6%.

### Poverty Rates in Yellow Medicine and Surrounding Counties, State of Minnesota, 2022

	Yellow Medicine	Chippewa	Lac qui Parle	Lyon	Minnesota
People below the poverty level	<b>10.0%</b>	11.2%	8.7%	12.4%	9.6%
Families below the poverty level	<b>5.6%</b>	7.4%	4.8%	9.4%	5.5%

Source: 2018-2022 American Survey

# Planning Topics

The topics chosen for Yellow Medicine’s Comprehensive Plan are:

## *Economic Outlook*

- Agricultural Hub
- Business and Industry Resources
- Housing Stock
- Labor Force

## *Public Infrastructure and Services*

- Infrastructure
  - Transportation & Highway Dept
  - Buildings and Facilities
  - Broadband
  - Water/Wastewater
  - Utilities/Energy
- Public Services
  - Public Transit
  - Family Services
  - Education
  - Public Safety & Emergency Management
  - Sanitation, Solid Waste & Recycling
- Communication

## *Recreational, Natural and Cultural Resources*

- Parks and Trails
- Stewardship and Conservation
- Culture and History

## *Land Use and Zoning*

- Current Land Use
- Future Land Use
- Current Zoning
- Zoning Map (2006 map)

# Economic Outlook

Economic development seeks to strengthen a community through the expansion of its tax and employment base. A strong tax and employment base allows the community to support a higher quality of life for its residents by improving public services (parks, schools, libraries, infrastructure, emergency services, and other governmental services).

The Economic Outlook includes the following sections:

- [Agricultural Hub](#)
- [Business and Industry Resources](#)
- [Housing Stock](#)
- [Labor force](#)



## Agricultural Hub

Almost 80% of the land in the county is used for farming. The county mirrors the statewide trends of slightly increased average size of farms and fewer farms between 2017 and 2022.

The types of farming include:

- **Corn and soybeans** are the primary crops grown in the county by far (296,120 acres combined)
- There are **more cattle farms** than other types of livestock farms (143)
- There are **more hogs** raised than any other type of livestock (214,088)

	Yellow Medicine		Minnesota	
	2017	2022	2017	2022
Number of farms	852	847	68,822	65,531
Land in farms (acres)	383,646	383,404	25,516,982	25,442,625
Average size of farm (acres)	450	453	371	388
Proportion of land in farms, 2022	78.9%		49.9%	

Source: Census of Agriculture, USDA

### Yellow Medicine Farmland Sales, 2022-23

Number of farmland sales	19
Average price per acre	\$8,295
Minimum price per acre	\$1,069
Maximum price per acre	\$12,221
Average price per acre in 2022	\$6,921

Source: U of MN Extension, 2022-23

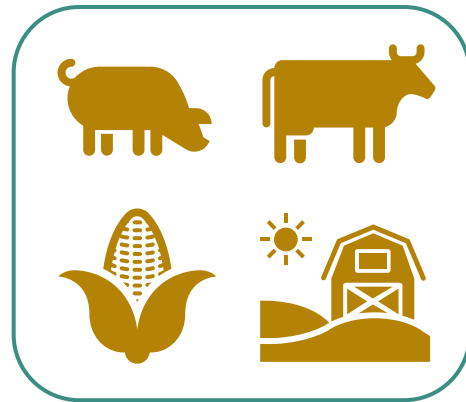
### Yellow Medicine County Livestock Data, 2022

Livestock	Number of farms	Number of animals
Cattle & calves	143	19,424
Hogs & pigs	44	214,088
Layers	38	664
Sheep & lambs	35	1,924
Broilers & other meat-type chickens	8	1,900

## Yellow Medicine County Crop Data, 2022

Crops	Farms	Acres
Soybeans	456	140,040
Corn	436	156,080
Wheat	29	2,038
Oats	14	945
Sugar beets	8	2,469
Vegetables	11	16
Orchards	2	N/A

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2022



## Business and Industry Resources

### Economic Development Activities/Programs

Three communities in Yellow Medicine County have established Economic Development Authorities or EDAs – Granite Falls, Canby, and Clarkfield. These entities are established to help businesses thrive within their respective communities. Some EDAs offer financial assistance such as revolving loan funds or small grants for improvements to facilities or equipment. While Counties can also establish an EDA or RDA, Yellow Medicine County does not currently have an economic development organization at the county level.

#### UMVRDC Revolving Loan Fund

The UMVRDC Revolving Loan Fund is designed to provide gap financing for business and industry starting up or expanding in the five-county region of Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift and Yellow Medicine. The primary focus of the program is manufacturing and industrial-related businesses that will create or retain jobs.

#### Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF)

The Southwest Initiative Foundation or SWIF has a variety of loan products to fit the needs of businesses. From entrepreneurs or large employers, their experienced team can leverage resources and connections to help local businesses grow and improve. In partnership with banks and credit unions, economic development organizations, non-profit lenders and private investors, SWIF's investments can help create and retain quality jobs, foster entrepreneurship and help communities of all sizes compete in a global marketplace.

#### Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)

MN DEED offers a variety of programs, resources and expertise to assist businesses in getting started or expanding as well as communities looking to support economic growth.

#### Small Business Development Center (Marshall office)

The Southwest Minnesota SBDC in Marshall is available to provide access to potential capital and resources businesses need to start, build, and grow. They offer confidential consulting to help clients identify, understand and overcome the challenges of running a successful business. SBDC counselors have significant experience in the private sector, including extensive management and financial consulting backgrounds. In addition, all services are provided at no cost.

### **USDA Rural Development**

USDA Rural Development’s Business Programs provide financial backing and technical assistance to stimulate business creation and growth. The programs work through partnerships with public and private community-based organizations and financial institutions to provide financial assistance, business development, and technical assistance to rural businesses. These programs help to provide capital, equipment, space, job training, and entrepreneurial skills that can help to start and/or grow a business. Business Programs also support the creation and preservation of quality jobs in rural areas.

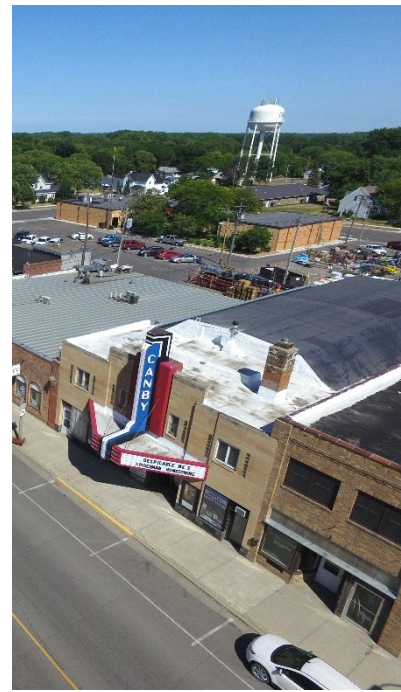
Loans, loan guarantees, and grants are available to individuals, businesses, cooperatives, farmers and ranchers, public bodies, non-profit corporations, Native American Tribes, and private companies in rural communities. The financial resources of the Business Programs are often leveraged with those of other public and private credit source lenders to meet business and credit needs in under-served areas.

### **U.S. Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration (EDA)**

The EDA has programs for construction and non-construction projects related to strengthening local and regional economies. There are programs available for technical assistance, project planning, and infrastructure.

### **Tax Increment Financing (TIF)**

Tax increment financing (TIF) is a public financing method that allows local governmental units to provide financial assistance to developers by using additional property taxes, or tax increment, paid as a result of development.



## Housing Stock

Yellow Medicine County has an older housing stock than the state as a whole and the median home value is almost half of the statewide value. A higher percentage of residents own their home compared to the statewide percentage and median monthly mortgage and gross rent costs are significantly lower than the statewide figures.

### Housing Values, Costs and Year Built, 2022

	Yellow Medicine	Minnesota
Median Home Value	\$145,400	\$286,800
Median Monthly Gross Rent	\$640	\$1,178
Median Monthly Mortgage Cost	\$1,348	\$1,818
Mortgage Cost > 30% of household income	22.6%	22.0%
Gross Rent > 30% of household income	29.8%	46.7%
<b>Median Year Structure Built</b>	<b>1954</b>	<b>1978</b>
2020 or later	0%	0.5%
2010-2019	2.3%	7.3%
2000-2009	5.1%	13.3%
1980-1999	13.0%	25.5%
1960-1979	23.4%	23.8%
1940-1959	18.5%	13.8%
1939 or earlier	37.6%	15.8%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2018-2022

### Housing Units & Occupancy, 2022

	Yellow Medicine	Minnesota
Housing units	4,526	2,493,956
% Owner occupied	82.9%	72.1%
% Renter occupied	17.1%	27.9%
% Vacant housing units	12.1%	9.5%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2018-2022

### Housing Units by location, 2020

	Total Units	Occupied	Vacant	% Vacant
Canby	865	766	99	11.4%
Clarkfield	407	340	67	16.5%
Echo	118	109	9	7.6%
Granite Falls	1,392	1,262	130	9.3%
Hanley Falls	114	109	5	4.4%
Hazel Run	25	18	7	28.0%
Porter	97	82	15	15.5%
St. Leo	53	53	0	0%
Wood Lake	175	161	14	8.0%
<b>Total City</b>	<b>3,246</b>	<b>2,900</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>10.7%</b>
<b>Total Rural</b>	<b>1,267</b>	<b>1,140</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>10.0%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,513</b>	<b>4,040</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>10.5%</b>

Source: 2020 U.S. Census

## Available Housing Programs

### **Habitat for Humanity**

Habitat for Humanity partners with qualified families and individuals to help them purchase new construction and previously-owned homes. The programs lends aid to families who meet income requirements as well as a need for housing. Yellow Medicine County is not currently served by a Habitat for Humanity chapter. However, the West Central Minnesota Chapter located in Willmar or Redwood River Chapter in Marshall could provide services if requested.

### **Prairie Five Community Action**

Housing **Home Repair Programs** are offered through Minnesota Housing Finance Agency and the Department of Employment and Economic Development. These funds are income-based deferred loans for improvements for basic, necessary housing repair to owner occupied properties. There is no interest or monthly payment until such a time you sell, transfer or move from the property or until after the 15<sup>th</sup> year when the deferred loan is forgiven.

The **Weatherization Program** provides grant funding through the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The program prioritizes services to the elderly, people with disabilities, high energy consumers, households with high energy burden, and households with young children.

### **Housing and Redevelopment Authority (RDA)**

Chippewa and Yellow Medicine County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (RDA) provides housing assistance to low-income residents through the management of the areas Housing Choice Voucher Program - Section 8. This program is income based and the eligibility guidelines are set by HUD.

### **USDA Rural Development**

USDA's Single Family Housing Programs give families and individuals the opportunity to buy, build, or repair affordable homes located in rural America. Eligibility for these loans, loan guarantees, and grants is based on income and varies according to the average median income for each area.

USDA Rural Development offers qualifying individuals and families the opportunity to purchase or build a new single-family home with no money down, to repair their existing home, or to refinance their current mortgage under certain qualifying circumstances. There are also programs to assist non-profit entities in their efforts to provide new homes or home repairs to qualifying individuals and families.

### **MN Housing Local Government Programs**

The Local Government Housing Programs team was recently created and will administer some of the new programs identified in the 2023 Housing Bill. The team will support local governments as they develop new affordable rental and single-family housing, provide rental assistance and address lead hazards. Programs are still being developed.

### **Small Cities Development Program (SCDP)**

Funds are granted to local units of government, which, in turn, lend funds for the purpose of rehabilitating local housing stock. Loans may be used for owner-occupied, rental, single-family or multiple-family housing rehabilitation. Loan agreements may allow for deferred payments or immediate monthly payments. Interest rates may vary, and loan repayments are retained by grantees for the purpose of making additional rehabilitation loans. In all cases, housing funds must benefit low- and moderate-income persons.

## Labor Force

Educational services and health care and social assistance is the largest employment sector due to the presence of three schools, a community college campus, a hospital, clinics, and many city and county government positions. This is typical of many of the surrounding rural counties. The Retail trade, Agriculture, and Manufacturing sectors also employ a relatively large percentage of workers.

Overall employment in Yellow Medicine County is still down about 333 jobs from pre-pandemic levels (2019-2023). There are currently only 0.6 job seekers per job vacancy in southwestern Minnesota, a figure that has slightly increased since bottoming out after the pandemic (0.3 jobseekers per vacancy in 2022).

About 36% of the county’s workforce works in Yellow Medicine County (primary jobs) while 17% work in Lyon County and 10% work in Chippewa County.

### Employment

Yellow Medicine’s percentage of the population in the labor force is slightly lower than that of the state of Minnesota (68.7%). The unemployment rate of Yellow Medicine County (2.1%) is slightly lower than the state’s rate (2.7%) and indicates there is likely still a need for additional workers in the county.

	Yellow Medicine	Yellow Medicine %	Minnesota %
<b>Population</b>	<b>9,569</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Population 16 years and older	7,575	79.2%	79.7%
Population in labor force*	4,897	64.6%	68.7%
Employed	4,733	62.5%	65.9%
Unemployed**	158	2.1%	2.7%

Source: 2018 – 2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

\*The Labor Force includes people actively seeking work. People not counted as part of the work force include students, retired people, stay-at-home parents, people in prisons or similar institutions; people employed in jobs or professions with unreported income, as well as discouraged workers who cannot find work.

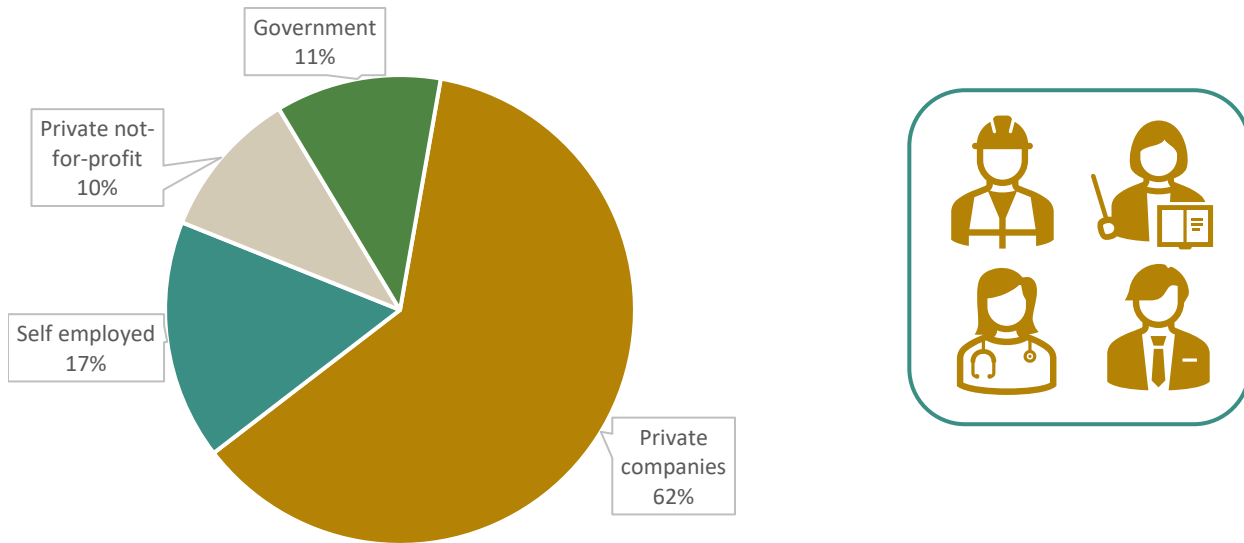
\*\*Percent of those unemployed in the labor force.

### Labor Force Projections

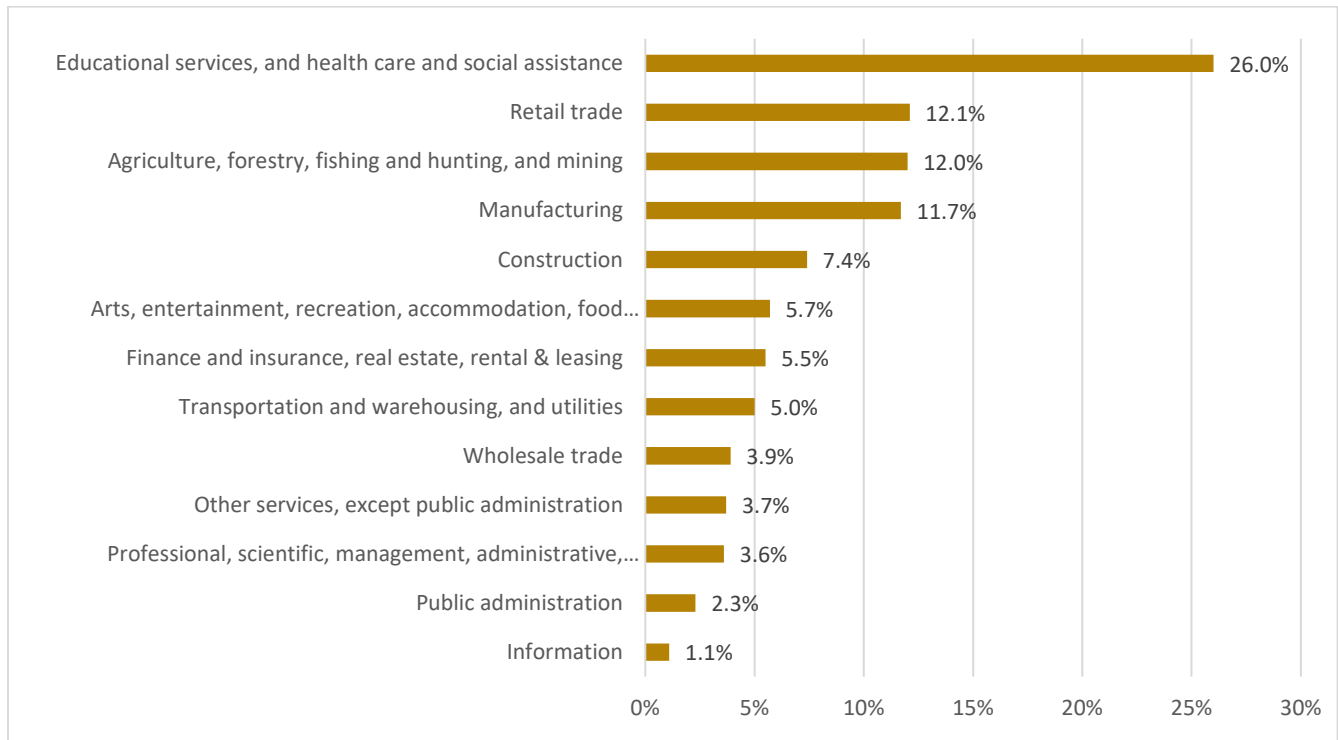
Age Group	Labor Force Projection	
	2025	2035
16 to 24 years	765	646
25 to 54 years	2,569	2,348
55 to 64 years	844	644
65 years & over	461	396
<b>Total labor force</b>	<b>4,639</b>	<b>4,034</b>



### Type of work for Employed Residents aged 16 and up

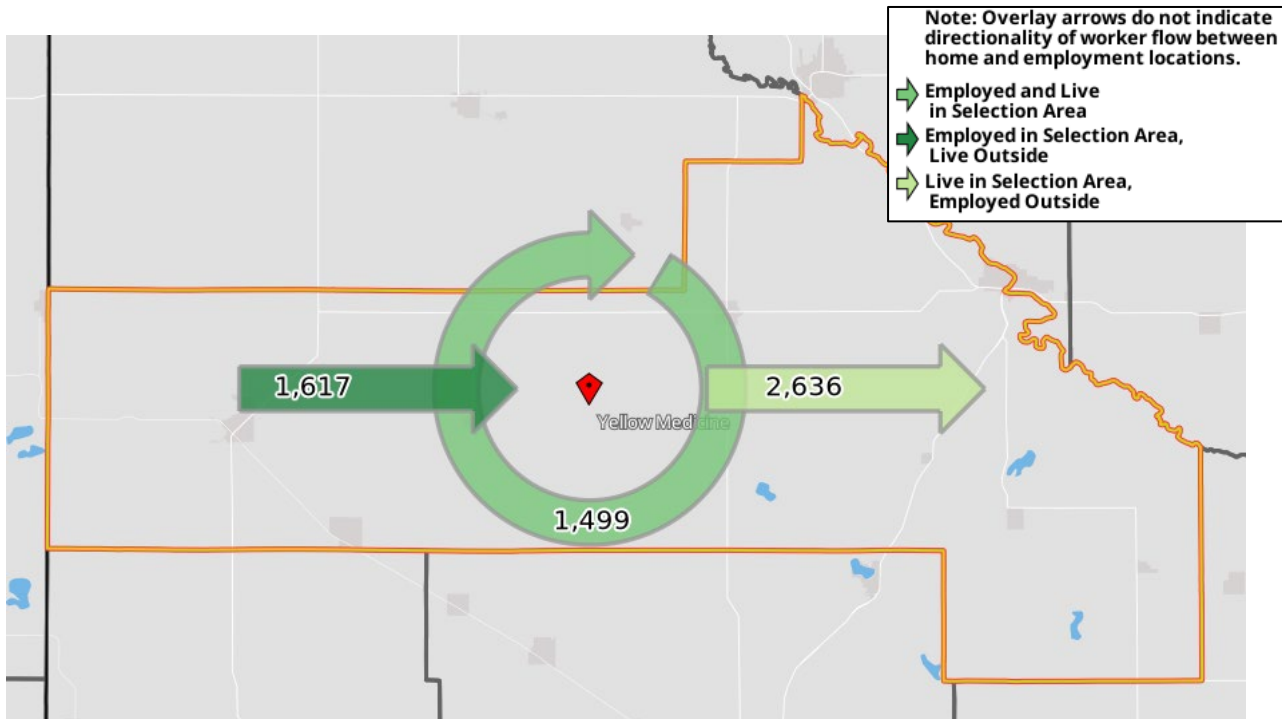


### Labor Force by Industry



Source: 2018 – 2022 American Community Survey

## Inflow/Outflow of Labor Force – Primary Jobs, 2022



Source: U.S. Census, OnTheMap, 2022

## Job Counts by Counties, Where YMC's Workers are Employed– Primary Jobs, 2022

County	Number of Workers	% of Labor Force
Yellow Medicine County	1,499	36.3%
Lyon County	713	17.2%
Chippewa County	434	10.5%
Kandiyohi County	145	3.5%
Hennepin County	119	2.9%
Redwood County	108	2.6%
Lac qui Parle County	105	2.5%
Renville County	97	2.3%
Blue Earth County	81	2.0%
Ramsey County	66	1.6%
All Other Locations	768	18.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,135</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: OnTheMap 2022

## Job Counts by Places (cities), Where YMC's Workers are Employed - Primary Jobs, 2022

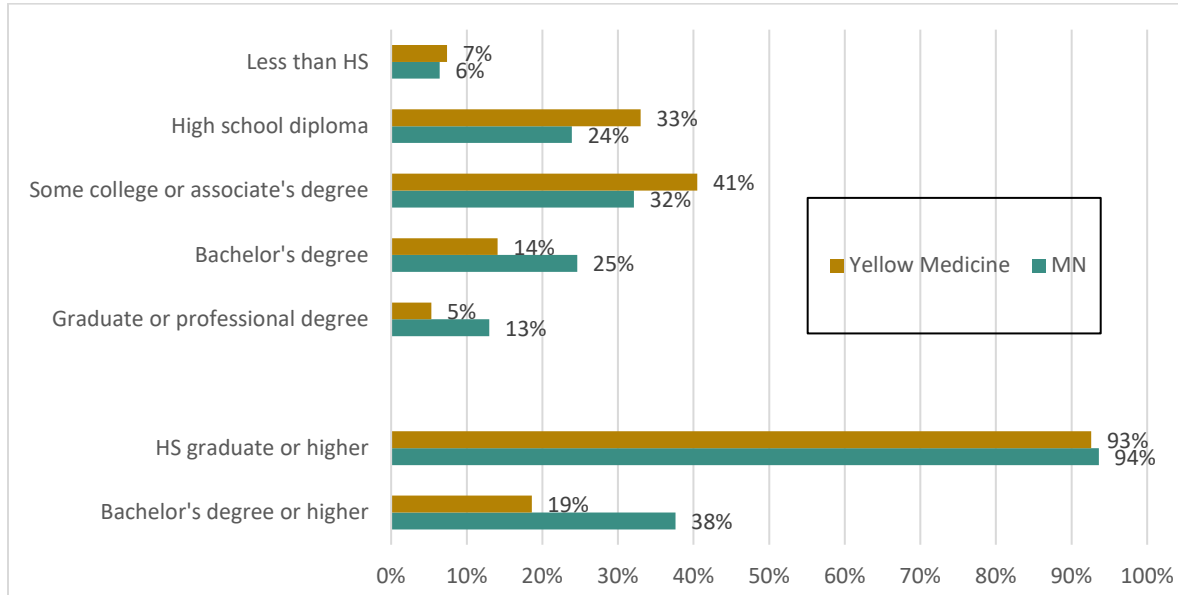
	Number of Workers	%
All Places (Cities, CDPs, etc.)	4,135	100.0%
Granite Falls	605	14.6%
Marshall	473	11.4%
Canby	378	9.1%
Montevideo	239	5.8%
Cottonwood	102	2.5%
Willmar	100	2.4%
Clarkfield	90	2.2%
Minneota	79	1.9%
Mankato	70	1.7%
Redwood Falls	54	1.3%
<i>All Other Locations</i>	<b>2,154</b>	<b>47.0%</b>

Source: OnTheMap 2022

## Education Attainment

The percentage of residents that have attained a bachelor’s degree or higher is half of the statewide percentage. The percentage of residents that have attained a high school diploma or higher is about the same as the state as a whole.

### Educational Attainment for Population 25 and over in Yellow Medicine & Minnesota, 2022



Source: 2018-2022 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

## Childcare

Childcare is a vital service for the area’s employers. In June 2025, there were 27 licensed childcare providers in Yellow Medicine County. Of this total, four are childcare centers and the remaining 23 are family providers.

The First Children’s Finance Child Care Needs Summary showed there was a shortage of 183 childcare slots in the county in 2024, which was an improvement from the shortage of 218 in 2023.

The County had an established deferred loan program to assist childcare centers and family providers with financial assistance, but the program is no longer available.

### Yellow Medicine Child Care Needs, 2024

Community	Childcare Capacity	Children under 5	Child Care Need
Canby	99	99	0
Clarkfield	22	80	-58
Echo	10	30	-20
Granite Falls	109	156	-47
Hanley Falls	20	42	-22
Porter	29	28	1
Wood Lake	9	46	-37
<b>Total</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>-183</b>

Source: First Children’s Finance Child Care Needs Summary, June 2024

## Economic Outlook Issues

Below is a summary of the top issues that Yellow Medicine County would like to address.

### Agricultural Hub

- Larger farm operations are pushing the smaller ones out

### Business and Industry Resources

- Lack of local incentives and/or support for local businesses
- Lack of quality job opportunities

### Housing Stock

- Housing of all types is needed – new construction, rehab, senior housing, affordable housing, rentals
- Lack of available and affordable workforce housing
- Address dilapidated homes in communities

### Labor Force

- Less than one person (0.6) per job opening in SW Minnesota region
- County's labor force is projected to decline by 600 in the next 10 years
- Lack of available and affordable childcare is a significant barrier to employment and residential recruitment
- Restrictive regulations for childcare providers
- Retention of youth

### Survey Says:

- *Over 98% of survey respondents rated both "Support local businesses" and "A strong and resilient local economy" as "High" or "Medium" priorities.*
- *Nearly 73% of survey respondents rated Economic Development in the County as "Good" or "Fair"*
- *Over 90% of survey respondents indicated the County should focus time, energy and dollars on both "Workforce recruitment/retention" and "Economic development programming"*
- *Childcare availability is poor and is important to address*

## Economic Outlook Goals & Strategies

The foundation of Yellow Medicine County’s economy is farming and agriculture. As the County continues to support and prioritize the agricultural economy, it also recognizes that there are many opportunities to diversify the county’s economy.

A big factor in attracting new businesses is to provide a qualified labor force. In addition to the typical services provided by a county, necessities such as housing stock and childcare options become a barrier if not available.

Yellow Medicine County is committed to building on its unique strengths and assets to promote the county as a desirable place for residents, businesses, entrepreneurs and visitors to live, work, grow and play.

### Strategy Highlights:

- *Support agriculture industry*
- *Recruit/retain workforce*
- *Provide adequate quality childcare & housing*
- *Collaborate and utilize existing resources*

### Goal 1.1: Agricultural Hub

Promote, support and diversify the county’s strong agricultural industry.

#### Strategies:

- 1.1.1. **Existing Agricultural Industry:** Support and preserve existing agricultural enterprises by considering agricultural needs when making decisions about land use and infrastructure investments.
- 1.1.2. **Diversify:** Encourage value-added agricultural industries, businesses, and diverse agricultural enterprises to operate in the Yellow Medicine County, while also supporting the production of non-traditional ag commodities (crops and livestock) and the local foods economy.
- 1.1.3. **Infrastructure Development:** Develop and plan for future infrastructure needs (i.e. roads, bridges, farm to market stands, broadband) in a manner that supports and promotes all agricultural industries, including value-added and diversified agricultural businesses.
- 1.1.4. **Urban Development:** Protect prime agricultural land by regulating urban development.
- 1.1.5. **Feedlot Ordinance:** Support the County’s Feedlot Ordinance to keep agricultural growth and development in balance with non-farm development.
- 1.1.6. **Livestock Farming:** Support the orderly development and expansion of livestock production as a viable business sector in the county while minimizing impacts on existing residents and the surrounding environment.
- 1.1.7. **Conservation:** Support conservation efforts (windbreaks, buffer strips, water quality protection) that protect both future agricultural production and the county’s natural resources.

## Goal 1.2: Business and Industry Resources

Utilize and provide resources to sustain and enhance business and industry in Yellow Medicine County.

### Strategies:

- 1.2.1. **Marketing:** Continue partnership with Western Minnesota Prairie Waters and Get Rural or similar marketing groups and/or agencies to promote county attractions and benefits of living and working here.
- 1.2.2. **County Communication:** Provide information needed for those wanting to live and work in Yellow Medicine County through a well-managed and updated County website.
- 1.2.3. **Resources and Partnerships:** Continue to utilize existing economic development resources and partnerships to provide services and assistance to implement economic development activities.
- 1.2.4. **Technology:** Support the availability of high-speed (100 Mbps upload/20Mbps download) broadband service (fiber, fixed wireless, satellite) throughout the entire county by 2030.
- 1.2.5. **Entrepreneurship:** Support entrepreneurship by reviewing regulations that do not unnecessarily prevent small business retention and expansion, and home-based occupations.
- 1.2.6. **Local and Regional Collaboration:** Collaborate with local, regional, state and federal partners to develop infrastructure for business and industry growth and look for multiple ways to support existing businesses and attract new businesses. Partners should include the Upper Sioux Community (USC), cities, local Economic Development Authorities (EDAs), Housing Redevelopment Authorities (HRA), DEED, SWIF, UMRVDC, EDA and USDA and others.
- 1.2.7. **Financing Tools:** Utilize financing tools and incentives such as tax increment financing, tax abatement, revolving loan funds and state or federal programs to encourage both expansion of existing businesses and new businesses to locate in the county.
- 1.2.8. **Infrastructure Investment:** Continue to invest in County services and infrastructure that are vital elements to the growth of new industry or business.

## Goal 1.4: Housing Stock

Support the maintenance and growth of safe, affordable and quality housing stock for residents at all income levels and stages of life.

### Strategies:

- 1.1.1. **County HRA:** Explore the expansion of the County HRA's role in housing development and redevelopment activities to address housing issues and develop additional incentives for housing development and rehabilitation.
- 1.1.2. **Housing Rehabilitation:** Seek grants and develop county-wide incentives for housing rehabilitation to protect the existing housing stock.
- 1.1.3. **Dilapidated housing:** Consider the development of a county-wide demolition program to work with cities to address dilapidated homes. Continue to enforce nuisance property ordinances to maintain safe and appealing homes and properties.

- 1.1.4. **Housing Study:** Work with the cities to conduct a housing study to determine housing needs and priorities.
- 1.1.5. **Financial Incentives:** Consider establishing incentives such as a Local Housing Trust Fund to support local housing initiatives.
- 1.1.6. **Housing Development Locations:** Work closely with cities to expand new development areas adjacent to cities and existing public infrastructure. New housing development should be in suitable locations that are in harmony with the future planning of Yellow Medicine County and should consider potential conflicts between urban needs and rural/agricultural activities.
- 1.1.7. **Housing Development Regulations.** Support flexible housing regulations to encourage new construction and/or rehabilitation that also complement surrounding land uses. Consider allowing non-traditional housing alternatives where applicable such as ADUs, multiple dwellings on larger parcels, cluster developments. Evaluate the current one non-farm dwelling per 40-acre zoning requirement in areas of the county and determine if it should be adjusted.
- 1.1.8. **Life Cycle Housing:** Encourage a range of quality housing types and values for all ages and income levels (i.e., low-income, rentals, multi-family, single family, market rate, young families, seniors).

### Goal 1.3: Labor Force

Recruit and retain a quality labor force for existing and potential businesses and operations.

#### Strategies:

- 1.2.1. **Welcoming Environment:** Support policies and programs that create a welcoming environment for new residents of the county.
- 1.2.2. **Local Employment Opportunities:** Support MN West Community & Technical College, SWMNPIC, SWWC, and local high schools to identify workforce needs and promote local employment opportunities to fill labor force gaps.
- 1.2.3. **Childcare Resources:** Provide resources to local providers to assist in meeting state regulations.
- 1.2.4. **Childcare Funding:** Provide assistance to new and existing childcare providers (both family and center providers) to adequately equip them in providing safe, affordable and quality care.

# Public Infrastructure and Services

Infrastructure, facilities and services present an important challenge as well as a great resource as the County plans for the future. It is a challenge because the infrastructure is always aging while upgrades and replacement costs continue to increase and thus require large amounts of financial resources. The services provided by the County are often an important factor in attracting new residents as well as in keeping current residents.

The Public Infrastructure and Services section includes the following:

- Infrastructure
  - Transportation & Highway Dept
  - Broadband
  - Water/Wastewater
- Public Services
  - Public Transit
  - Family Services
  - Education
  - Public Safety & Emergency Management
  - Sanitation, Solid Waste & Recycling
- Communication

## Transportation and Highway Department

Transportation includes all modes of transportation from buses, automobiles, bicycles and pedestrians to heavy commercial vehicles, freight trains and airplanes. It offers opportunities as it connects people and industries to the region, the state and beyond. It also has a major impact on existing and future land uses as well as future growth.

### Highway Department

The Yellow Medicine County Highway Department is responsible for the maintenance and construction of 510 miles of County State Aid Highways and County roads.

The highway department maintenance crew operates trucks and heavy equipment out of the main shop in Granite Falls, and four outlying shops in Canby, Porter, Clarkfield, and Wood Lake.

### Roadways

Yellow Medicine County is served by a network of federal and state highways that provide critical connections between local communities and regional destinations. These routes support the movement of residents, visitors, and freight across the county and beyond. The following summary highlights the major U.S. and Minnesota State Highways that run through Yellow Medicine County, including the communities they serve and their entry and exit points across county boundaries. A map of the County's roadway system can be found in the appendix as well as [online](#).



## U.S. Highways

### U.S. Highway 59

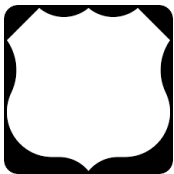
Enters seven miles north of Clarkfield from Lac qui Parle County and exits 11 miles south of Clarkfield into Lyon County.

### U.S. Highway 75

Enters from northeast of Canby from Lac qui Parle County and exits five miles south of Canby into Lincoln County.

### U.S. Highway 212

Enters from the north just south of Montevideo (Chippewa County) and follows the Minnesota River until exiting east of Granite Falls into Chippewa County.



## Minnesota State Highways

### State Highway 23

Enters from Lyon County four miles southwest of Hanley Falls and exits east of Granite Falls into Chippewa County.

### State Highway 67

Originates at U.S. Highway 75 two miles south of the Lac qui Parle County border and runs east through Clarkfield, to Granite Falls, south to Wood Lake and then east out of the county to Redwood County.

### State Highway 68

Enters seven miles west of Canby from South Dakota and exits a half mile southeast of Porter into Lincoln County.

### State Highway 274

Originates at a junction with MN Highway 23 south of Granite Falls and runs south to Wood Lake, where it terminates.



## Functional Classification

Functional classification is the grouping of streets and highways into classes or systems according to the character of service they are intended to provide. Functional classification defines the role that any particular road or street plays in serving the flow of trips through an entire network.

In Yellow Medicine County, the functional classification system is designed to organize the local road network based on the role each road plays in the transportation system. This classification ensures that roads are managed efficiently and appropriately to meet the needs of the community. The key road categories in the county are:

### Classifications

The common classifications or roads/streets (given in order of highest traffic levels to lowest):

- Interstate
- Other Freeway or Expressway
- Principal Arterial - Other
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Local

- **Principal Arterials:** Major highways such as U.S. Highways 59 (central, through Clarkfield), 75 (western, through Canby), and 212 (northeastern, through Granite Falls), which provide high-capacity routes for long-distance travel and connect regional centers.
- **Minor Arterials:** State Highways 23 (Granite Falls), 67 (from U.S. 75 east to Clarkfield, continuing south to Wood Lake and Echo), 68 (Canby, Porter), and 274 (south of Granite Falls to Wood Lake), which link smaller communities and serve as important connectors between the principal arterials and local roads.
- **Major Collectors:** County roads collect traffic from local roads and provide access to key destinations within the county.
- **Local Roads:** These include the numerous local streets that provide direct access to homes, businesses, and rural properties, making up the majority of the county’s road network.

## Average Annual Daily Traffic

Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) is a key measure used to evaluate the traffic volume on roads, providing a snapshot of how many vehicles travel on a given road segment over the course of a year. This data is crucial for transportation planning, road maintenance, and infrastructure investment decisions. To view current traffic counts in the county, visit MN DOT’s [Traffic Mapping Application](#).

	Highest AADT stretch Vehicles per day	Lowest AADT stretch Vehicles per day
<b>Granite Falls</b>		
U.S. Highway 212	7,700	2,300
Minnesota State Highway 23	6,900	3,636
<b>Canby</b>		
U.S. Highway 75	3,300	1,000
Minnesota State Highway 68	2,444	0
<b>Clarkfield</b>		
State Highway 67	1,666	75
U.S. Highway 59	1,800	834

## Vehicles per Household & Types of Transportation Used

Type of Transportation Used		
Category	Count	Percent
Workers (16 years and older)	4,638	100.0%
Car, truck, or van (including passengers)	4,000	86.2%
Public transportation	12	0.3%
Walked, biked, worked at home, or other	626	13.5%
Vehicles per Household (2019–2023)		
Category	Count	Percent
No vehicles	215	5.4%
1 vehicle available	818	20.5%
2 vehicles available	1,634	40.9%
3 or more vehicles available	1,326	33.2%

Source: U.S. Census, 2024 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

### Major Trip Generators in Yellow Medicine County

Understanding the location of major trip generators is crucial for assessing transportation needs in Yellow Medicine County. These generators influence traffic patterns and transportation demand, particularly in terms of commuting, service access, and overall mobility. The following key employers and institutions are primary sources of trips within the county:

- Avera Granite Falls, Granite Falls
- Fagen, Granite Falls
- Granite Falls Energy, LLC, Granite Falls
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Granite Falls & Canby
- Prairie’s Edge Casino Resort, Upper Sioux Community, south of Granite Falls
- Project Turnabout, Granite Falls
- Sanford Canby Medical Center, Canby
- Yellow Medicine County, Granite Falls
- Yellow Medicine East School District, Granite Falls
- Canby School, Canby

These facilities contribute to the daily travel needs of employees, students, and service users.

### Emerging Technologies

#### Electric Vehicles (EVs)

Electric vehicle (EV) adoption in Yellow Medicine County remains limited, with only one public charging station located at the Electric Circuit Station in Granite Falls (142 U.S. 212). Even though EVs have not yet become widely popular in the county, nationally, electric vehicles are rapidly gaining traction, with U.S. EV registrations totaling 1.4 million in 2023, a 40% increase from 2022. As EV use continues to grow, it will be crucial to expand charging infrastructure.

### **Autonomous Vehicles (AVs)**

Autonomous vehicle (AV) technology is advancing, but widespread adoption is still on the horizon. While this comprehensive plan does not make specific recommendations regarding AVs, it is important for the County to monitor developments in AV technology as they progress.

### **Rail Transportation**

There are two railroads located in the county: Minnesota Prairie Line and Burlington Northern Sante Fe.

- **Minnesota Prairie Line** is a wholly owned subsidiary of Twin Cities & Western Railroad Company and runs from Hanley Falls through Wood Lake and Echo to the east.
- **Burlington Northern Sante Fe** runs northwest to southeast serving the communities of Clarkfield, Hazel Run and Hanley Falls and also runs northeast to the southwest from Granite Falls through Hanley Falls.

### **Air Transportation**

There are two public airports located in Yellow Medicine County: Canby Municipal Airport/Myers Field and Granite Falls Municipal Airport/Lenzen-Roe-Fagen Memorial Field.

- **Myers Field at Canby Municipal Airport** is located just north of Canby. It has one runway with an asphalt surface measuring 4,648 by 75 feet. In March 2017, there were 28 aircraft based at this airport - 23 single-engine and five multi-engine.
- **Granite Falls Municipal Airport** is located about four miles south of Granite Falls and has an asphalt runway with measuring 4,357 by 75 feet. There are 21 aircraft based at this airport - 16 single-engine and three multi-engine and two jets.
- The nearest commercial airports are MSP International Airport (135 miles east) and Sioux Falls International Airport (110 miles southwest).

### **Transportation Funding Resources**

#### **Federal U.S. Department of Transportation**

##### ***Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative Efficient and Cost-Saving Transportation***

**(PROTECT):** Projects eligible for PROTECT funding will respond to a weather-driven, climate vulnerability. Eligible projects are highways, public transportation facilities or services.

**BUILD Grant:** The U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) BUILD grant program supports surface transportation projects with significant local or regional impact. It funds multi-modal and multi-jurisdictional projects that are harder to fund through other grants.

#### **Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)**

**Federal Land Access Program (FLAP):** Provides safe and adequate transportation access to and through Federal Lands for visitors, recreationists, and resource users. This program supplements State and local resources for public roads, transit systems, and other transportation facilities, with an emphasis on high-use recreation sites and economic generators.

**Carbon Reduction Program (CRP):** The primary intent of the CRP is to advance projects that reduce carbon from the surface transportation sector. Examples of projects could be electric County vehicles, charging stations, trail projects, etc. Each ATP solicits projects annually.

### **Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)**

**Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program:** Identifies infrastructure needs, including new or improved sidewalks, crosswalks, signage, and bike paths. Incorporating Safe Routes to School planning into broader transportation initiatives will ensure that children and other pedestrians can travel safely, fostering healthier travel habits and improving connectivity in the community and enables access to funding from state and federal programs.

**Corridors of Commerce (COC):** Established by the Minnesota Legislature in 2013, COC focuses on state highway projects that promote economic growth by creating jobs, enhancing goods transportation, and improving mobility. It operates separately from MnDOT's regular State Road Construction program with specific eligibility and prioritization criteria.

**Minnesota Rail Service Improvement Program (MRSI):** Provides grants and loans for constructing railroads, rehabilitating deteriorating rail lines, improving rail-shipping opportunities, and preserving abandoned rail corridors for future use.

**Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP):** A competitive grant opportunity for local communities and regional agencies to fund projects for pedestrian and bicycle facilities, historic preservation, and Safe Routes to School.

**Active Transportation (AT):** Program provides grants and technical assistance to make walking, biking, and rolling better. Our program aims to increase the number of people walking and biking to destinations.

**Local Bridge Replacement Program:** Provides local agencies transportation funding for the reconstruction, rehabilitation and/or removal of bridges or structures on their local road system.

### **Minnesota Department of Economic Development (DEED)**

**Transportation Economic Development Infrastructure (TEDI):** Competitive grant program available to communities for road and public infrastructure projects that create jobs and support economic development. Funds must be used to fund predesign, design, acquisition of land, construction, reconstruction, and infrastructure improvements.

### **Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR)**

**The MN DNR Parks and Trails Grant Programs** provide funding to improve public access to recreational areas, preserve natural and scenic lands, and promote trail development and maintenance. These grants support local governments, school districts, and other entities with projects such as park development, trail creation, and the acquisition of natural areas. It includes grants such as the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program, Natural and Scenic Area Program, Federal Recreational Trail Program, Regional Trail Grant Program, and Local Trail Connections Grant Program.

**State Park Road Account Program (SPRA):** Helps local governments improve access to public recreation facilities. It provides financial assistance to County state-aid, county, township, and city roads which provide access to state parks, outdoor recreation units such as public lakes, rivers, and state campgrounds.

## Regional Programming

**Area Transportation Partnerships (ATP 8):** Lac qui Parle, Chippewa, and Yellow Medicine Counties): The ATPs is a regional committee that oversees the expenditure of federal Transportation funding. MnDOT created Area Transportation Partnerships (ATPs) to emphasize greater public involvement, enhance regional planning and increase the development of our four-year State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The UMRDC has staff and board members that participate in the ATP.

**Local Partnership Program (LPP):** Districts have some money they can use to assist with local projects. Typically, the District State Aid Engineers are working the city and county engineers during the winter to find projects for these funds.

## County Owned Buildings & Facilities

Yellow Medicine County owns various buildings and facilities across the county. The following represent the County's more significant facility investments.

Building or Facility	Location
County Highway Department	Granite Falls
Land & Resource Mgmt. Office	Clarkfield
Yellow Medicine County Judicial Center	Granite Falls
Family Services Centers	Granite Falls & Canby
YMC Government Center	Granite Falls
Timm County Park	Wood Lake
Oraas County Park	Clarkfield
Yellow Medicine Fair Ground buildings	Canby
Yellow Medicine County Museum	Granite Falls
Minnesota's Machinery Museum	Hanley Falls

## Capital Improvements Plan (CIP)

A Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) is a long-range planning tool that outlines major public projects and investments necessary to support County services and infrastructure. This plan includes not only County-owned buildings but also roads, bridges, and other significant assets that require ongoing maintenance, upgrades, or replacement.

Yellow Medicine County currently has an extensive CIP in place that guides their budgeting and scheduling for the coming years. The CIP typically details each asset's age, current value, maintenance history, capacity, and estimated costs for improvement or replacement. By prioritizing these projects and identifying potential funding sources, the County can responsibly plan for future needs. Including capacity data also supports strategic decision-making about growth and development in Yellow Medicine County.

# Broadband

Since the recent pandemic, broadband service is becoming more essential than ever for an endless number of reasons – remote work, communication, healthcare, precision ag, security, entertainment and commerce. The percentage of people working from home has been on the rise in recent years, likely accelerated by the pandemic, going from 7.3% in 2019 to 9.18% in 2023.

Internet is offered by a variety of providers, both wireless and cable/fiber. While most of the available service is provided via wireless or cable/DSL, there are some areas served by fiber with additional areas planned in the near future. Most recently in 2023, ITC received almost \$5 million in state funding to provide 1Gb/1Gb fiber-to-the-premise to 483 locations in the central part of the county. Arvig (Redwood County Telephone) also offers fiber broadband service in the southeastern side of the county. To view the current statewide broadband coverage map, visit the MN DEED Office of Broadband’s [Mapping Application](#).

According to the Blandin on Broadband blog, who annually ranks Minnesota counties on broadband access, Yellow Medicine County ranked 84 out of the 87 counties in 2024. This is based on approximately 58% of the county being served with broadband speeds of 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload, which is the State of Minnesota’s 2026 goal. In 2023, Blandin on Broadband estimated it would cost approximately \$15.7 million to provide ubiquitous broadband in the county.

However, it should be noted that 99.5% of the county is reported to be covered by fixed wireless. This service is primarily provided by MVTW Wireless and provides up to 100 Mbps download and 30 Mbps upload.

The largest broadband providers in the county are:

Provider	Technology Type	Speeds (Mbps)		Total residential locations
		Download	Upload	
MVTW Wireless	Fixed wireless	50-100	10-30	5,460
MIDCO	Cable/Fixed wireless	100-2,000	20-400	4,426
Mediacom	Cable	1,000	40	8,12
Arvig (Redwood County Telephone)	Fiber/DSL	25-1,000	3-1,000	713
CenturyLink	DSL	40-60	3-5	<700 residential locations each
Frontier	DSL	45-115	3-12	
HughesNet	Satellite	25	3	
Interstate Telecommunications Cooperative (ITC)	Fiber	1,000	1,000	
Starlink	Satellite	50	25	
T-Mobile	Fixed Wireless	25-100	3-20	
Verizon	Fixed Wireless	50	5	
Spectrum	Cable	1,000	35	

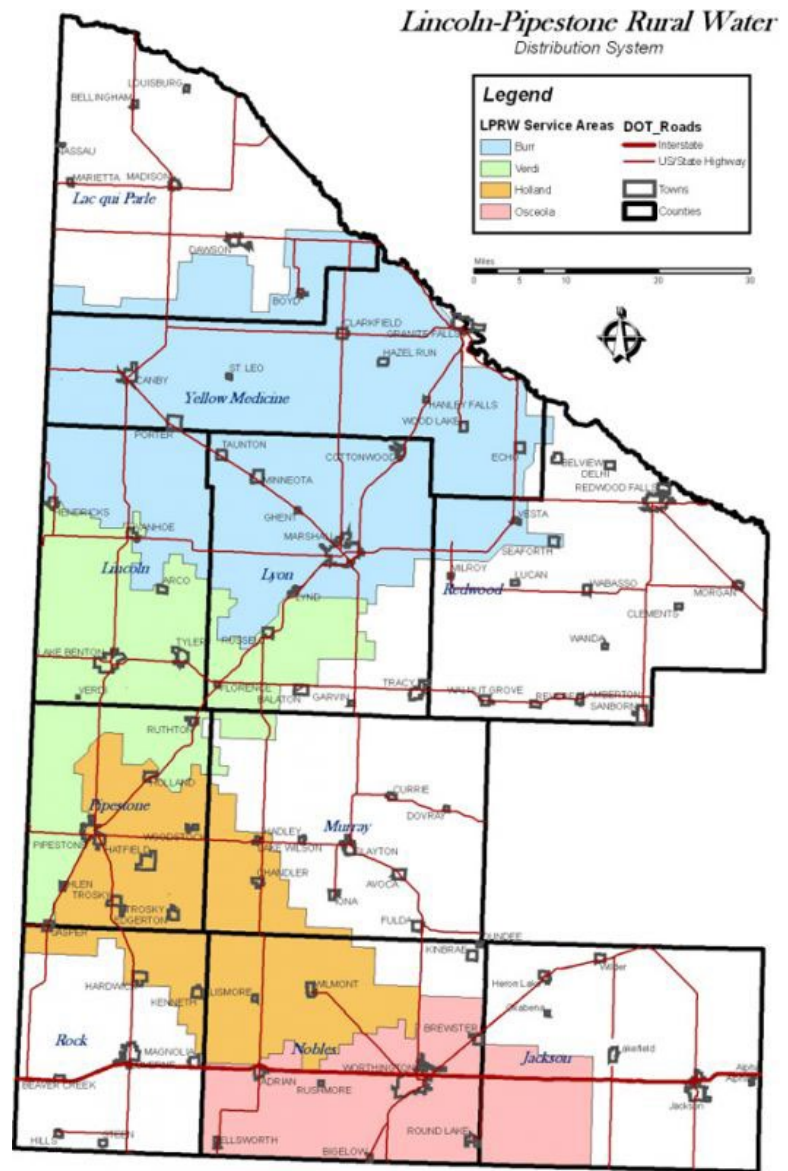
Source: MN DEED, Office of Broadband Development, 2025

## Water/Wastewater

Yellow Medicine County is located within Lincoln-Pipestone Rural Water’s service territory. The rural water association covers all but the far eastern part of the county. LPRW also serves the communities of Echo, Hazel Run, Porter and St. Leo (Canby is also connected in case of emergency). Rural households not connected to rural water can still get their water from their own private well if desired. All other cities (Clarkfield, Granite Falls, Wood Lake, Hanley Falls) in Yellow Medicine County have a municipal water system from their own wells.

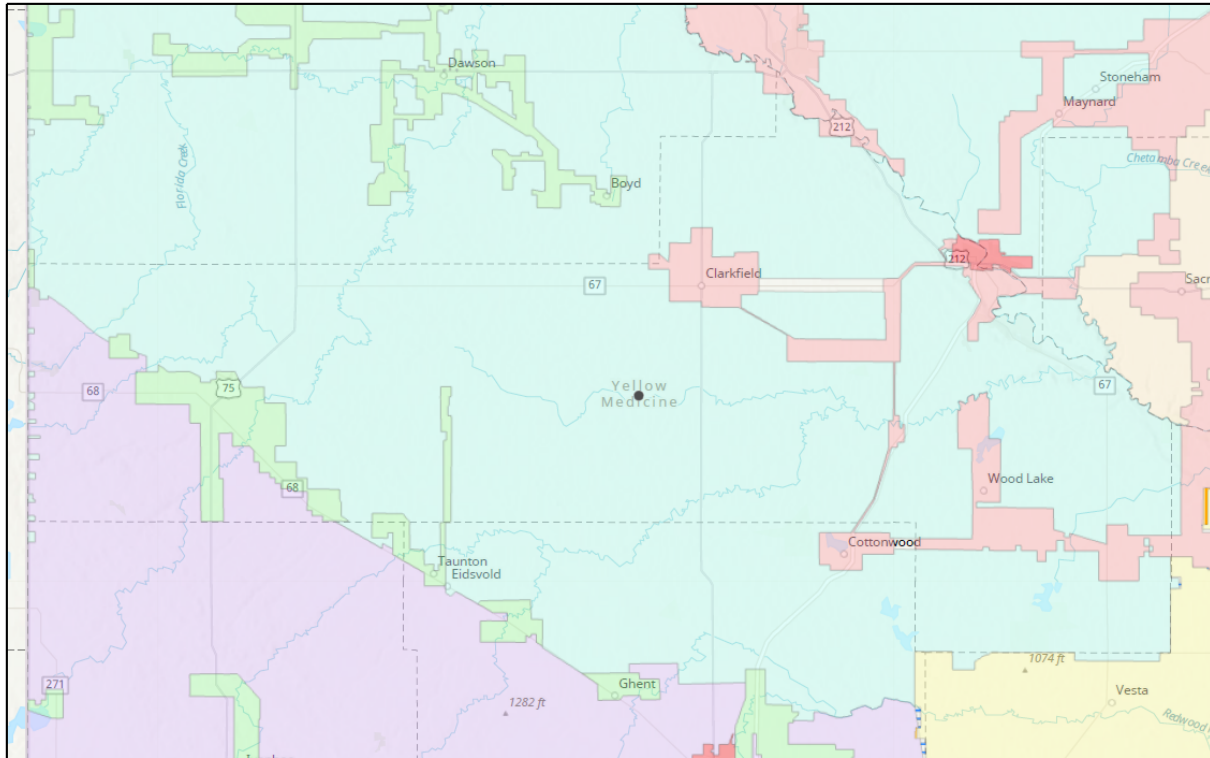
Wastewater treatment in the rural part of the county is primarily handled by individual septic systems. Each municipality, aside from Hazel Run, has their own centralized wastewater collection and treatment system. Hazel Run has a number of cluster systems and a common drainfield located west of town.

The Upper Sioux Community has both water and wastewater distribution systems that serve most of their homes and businesses.

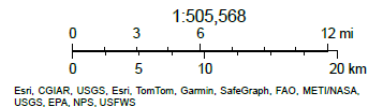


## Utilities

Electricity is provided in the county from Minnesota Valley Co-op Light and Power Association, Otter Tail Power Company, Xcel Energy, Lyon-Lincoln Electric Co-op and H-D Electric Co-op (small areas on the far western side of the county).



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MnGeo  
Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METINASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS | Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS |

## Public Transit

Prairie Five Rides operates public transit services in eight cities in its five-county region, including Canby and Granite Falls. The city bus is an on-demand service which operates on a first-come, first-serve basis. Prairie Five Rides also offers trips to the Minneapolis metro area as well as St. Cloud, Alexandria, Mankato, Rochester, Sioux Falls, Fargo and points in between on a fee per mile basis.

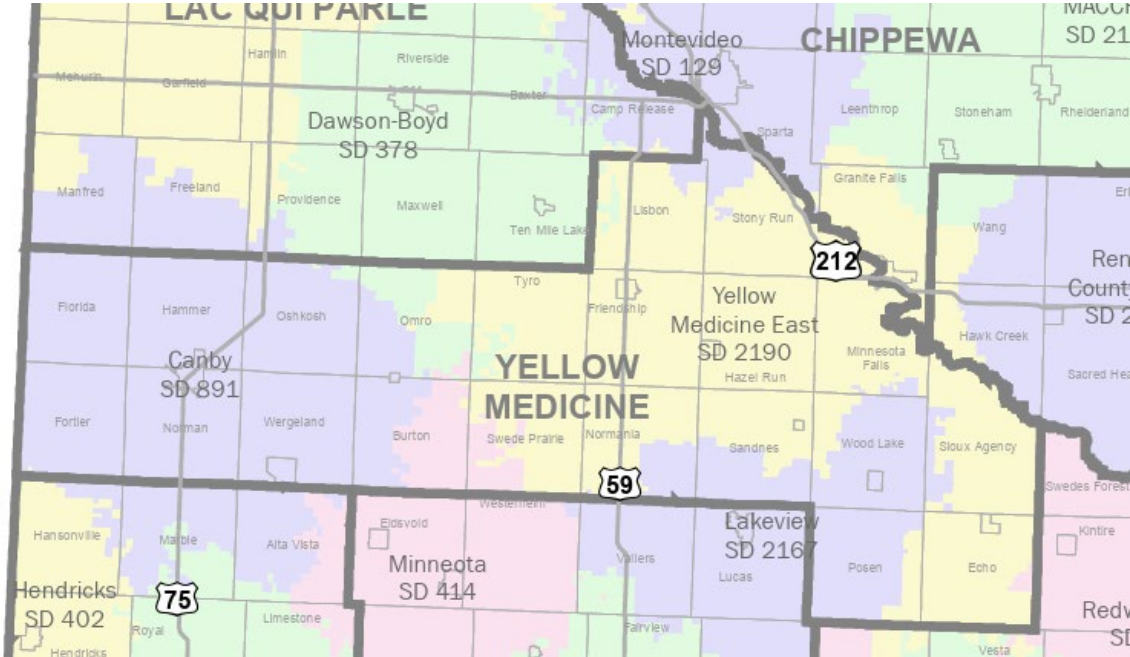


# Education

There are two K-12 school districts based within the county – Canby and Yellow Medicine East. While these two districts cover most of the county, there are also portions of five school districts that extend into the county as well – Dawson-Boyd, Lakeview, Minneota, Montevideo, and Redwood Area. Minnesota West Community and Technical College provides post-secondary education and has two of their five campuses in Granite Falls and Canby.

## K-12 Education

Yellow Medicine County School District Map



In addition to the K-12 academic programming, the school districts offer Early Childhood Family Education, Early Childhood Special Education, Community Education, Head Start, and Adult Basic Education.

### Canby - District 891

Canby serves the communities of Canby, Porter, St. Leo, and Taunton. The district consists of one elementary and one junior/senior high school building located in the city of Canby.

Canby Enrollment, 2024-25	
K-12	569
K-6	269
Enrollment 7-12	300
Student to staff ratio K-6	15:1

### Yellow Medicine East - District 2190

Yellow Medicine East serves the communities of Granite Falls, Hanley Falls, Hazel Run, Clarkfield, and Echo. The district utilizes the Bert Raney Elementary and the YME Middle/High School facilities, both located in Granite Falls

YME Enrollment, 2024-25	
K-12	589
K-6	303
Enrollment 7-12	286
Student to teacher ratio	12:1

### E.C.H.O. Charter School, Echo

Every Child Has Opportunities (ECHO) Charter School is a K-12 public school offering a full range of basic courses including music and physical education. Opportunities in athletics are also available. ECHO is a Core Knowledge Visitation Site, as well as holds membership in MACS, CAE and NCA. The school has an enrollment of approximately 70 students with a student/teacher ratio of 8:1.

E.C.H.O Enrollment, 2024-25	
K-12	65
K-6	27
Enrollment 7-12	38
Student to teacher ratio	8:1

### School of St. Peter, Canby

St. Peter’s Catholic School offers preschool through sixth grade with a current enrollment of approximately 50 students. The school welcomes students from all faiths.

### Minnesota West Community and Technical College

Minnesota West Community and Technical College is a public two-year college serving southwestern Minnesota through five campuses—in Canby, Granite Falls, Jackson, Pipestone, and Worthington—and learning centers in Luverne, Marshall, and Redwood Falls. Students can pursue Associate Degrees, Diplomas, and Certificates in over 60 areas of study, ranging from health sciences and technical trades to business and liberal arts.

The Granite Falls and Canby campuses are especially important to Yellow Medicine County, providing accessible postsecondary education and workforce training that support local employment needs and community development.

#### Canby Campus Programs:

- Dental Assistant
- Diesel Technology
- Electrician
- Solar Photovoltaic Technician
- Wind Energy

#### Granite Falls Campus Programs:

- Biofuels Technology
- Early Childhood
- Information Technology
- Medical Laboratory Technician
- Nursing
- Powerline Technology
- Surgical Technology
- Welding



## Human Services

Yellow Medicine County, through its Family Services Department, provides or administers a variety of programs and resources for children, adults, seniors, specifically those that are low-income, disabled, dealing with mental and physical health issues. The department also oversees childcare licensing, foster care, adoption and financial assistance for food, childcare, and burial.

These services are essential to meeting the needs of vulnerable populations and promoting stability and resilience across communities. As part of its long-term planning, the County will continue to collaborate with regional partners, schools, health care providers, and nonprofits to strengthen service delivery, improve access—especially in rural areas—and adapt to changing demographic and economic conditions.

Below is a list of services available through Yellow Medicine County Family Service Center. For some services there is no charge, but most are based on a person’s income and assets.

- Adoption Services
- Child Support Services
- Children and Family Services
- Chemical Abuse/Dependency Services for Adults and Children
- Developmental Disabilities Services for Adults and Children
- Financial Services
- Child Care and Adult Foster Care Licensing
- Mental Health Services for Adults and Children
- Adult Services

### Services Available in All Areas

- Case management
- Individual and family counseling
- Emergency/crisis assistance
- Orders for protection
- Education/public speaking

## Public Safety & Emergency Management

Yellow Medicine County provides public safety services through a coordinated system that includes the County Sheriff’s Office, local police departments, volunteer fire departments, and emergency medical services.

The Yellow Medicine County Sheriff's Office serves as the primary law enforcement agency for the County, handling patrol, investigations, 911 dispatch, and emergency management. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement officer in the county and is an elected official serving a four-year term. The Sheriff’s Office staff consists of 10 full-time sworn officers, two part-time deputies, 14 full-time correction staff and a full-time office associate.

### Public Safety Services in Cities and Tribe

City/Tribe	Fire Department	Ambulance Service	Police Department
Canby	x	x	x
Clarkfield	x	x	Contract with County
Echo	x		
Granite Falls	x	x	x
Hanley Falls	x		
Hazel Run			
Porter	x		
St. Leo	x		
Wood Lake	x		
Upper Sioux Community	x		x

There are also local police departments in Canby, Granite Falls, and the Upper Sioux Community. The City of Clarkfield contracts with the Sheriff's Office for Law Enforcement Services.

Emergency medical services are provided by local ambulance services and supported by regional hospitals and clinics. Ambulance and EMS services are located in Granite Falls, Clarkfield and Canby.

The Yellow Medicine County Emergency Management Department plays a key role in planning and coordinating responses to natural disasters, hazardous material incidents, and other emergencies. Fire protection is delivered through a network of volunteer fire departments located in communities across the county.

## Sanitation, Solid Waste and Recycling

Yellow Medicine County contracts with Lyon County to oversee the solid waste and recycling programs in the county. There are three solid waste contractors that serve various parts of the county and its communities. Granite Falls is served by West Central Sanitation, Sweetman Sanitation and Olson Sanitation. Olson Sanitation provides recycling and solid waste collection in the rural areas of the county and in all cities but Granite Falls. Sweetman provides waste collection services in the eastern rural areas of the county including Echo and Granite Falls.

The County's Household Hazardous Waste Facility and Product Reuse Center, located in Clarkfield, is where residents can drop off household hazardous wastes such as fluorescent light bulbs, paints, aerosols, chemicals and other hazardous materials for free or a nominal disposal fee. In addition, the facility also accepts mattresses and box springs.

## Communication

Coordination between the County, the tribe, cities, and townships is essential when working to reach the goals in this comprehensive plan. Building relationships with local, regional, state and federal organizations will also provide for more opportunities and collaboration.

### Local and Regional Agencies and Organizations

- *Chippewa and Yellow Medicine County Housing and Redevelopment Authority*
- *Countryside Public Health*
- *Watershed Districts*
- *Yellow Medicine County Soil and Water Conservation District*
- *Southwest Initiative Foundation*
- *Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission*

### State Agencies and Organizations

- *Minnesota Department of Health (MnDOT)*
- *Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)*
- *Minnesota Pollution Control Agency*
- *Minnesota Department of Health*
- *University of Minnesota, Extension*

## Tools for Communication

Clear and accessible communication is essential for connecting residents with County services, news, and opportunities. Yellow Medicine County utilizes a variety of platforms to share information and engage with the public. These tools support transparency, community awareness, and timely updates.



### Yellow Medicine County Website

The current County website is [www.co.ym.mn.gov/](http://www.co.ym.mn.gov/) and contains information about all of the County's departments and services. It also contains public information such as Board of Commissioners' meeting agendas and minutes.



### Yellow Medicine County Facebook page

The County also operates a Facebook page for more timely information such as upcoming events, job openings, and other notices. The County Sheriff's office also has a Facebook page that posts emergency management and law enforcement related news and information.

## Newspapers

There are two newspapers in circulation within the county: Granite Falls Advocate Tribune and The Canby News.

## Citizen Participation

Local units of government can use a variety of methods at various points in a planning activity to get different interests and perspectives engaged.

- Public hearings
- Planning events
- Open houses
- Community meetings
- Community visioning
- Working groups
- Surveys

## Public Infrastructure, Facilities and Services Issues

Below is a summary of the top issues that Yellow Medicine County would like to address.

- There are a good variety of healthcare providers in the county
- Road maintenance and transportation were indicated as a priority by residents, especially township roads
- Childcare is inadequate, long wait times, lack of affordable and available providers

### Survey Says:

- *Residents seem satisfied with solid waste/recycling efforts and would welcome more opportunities and increased participation by residents*
- *Quality of public safety/emergency management was rated high by residents*
- *Reliable, high-speed broadband is a priority for residents*
- *Providing great educational facilities is important*
- *Collaboration with the County Highway Department on road maintenance was recognized as a strength by several townships*

# Public Infrastructure and Services Goals & Strategies

Residents indicated “quality of life” as one of the strongest assets that draw and retain people to a place. Yellow Medicine County is committed to providing a high quality of life for its citizens through access to a variety of County programs and services.

Yellow Medicine County’s infrastructure and services play an important role in connecting the places where residents live, work and play. It is important that the infrastructure and services provide reliable networks (physically, digitally and personally) that connect people to resources. The County also has a responsibility to maintain the County’s infrastructure and services in a sustainable and fiscally responsible manner.

## Strategy Highlights:

- *Maintain existing infrastructure*
- *Provide exceptional services to all residents*
- *Provide sufficient communication with residents and local units of government*

## Goal 2.1: Infrastructure

Support and provide for the maintenance and expansion of essential infrastructure to meet the needs of residents and industry.

### Strategies:

- 2.1.1. **Multi-Modal Transportation:** Investigate multi-modal transportation funding opportunities within the current systems such as air, rail, transit and ground transport.
- 2.1.2. **Regional Transportation Planning:** Take an active role with MN DOT, Yellow Medicine County cities, townships, UMVRDC, neighboring counties, and other agencies involved in transportation planning, providing the most effective transportation system for Yellow Medicine County, particularly regarding state and federal highways.
- 2.1.3. **Asset Maintenance:** Maintain County-owned infrastructure and assets (e.g., roads, bridges, buildings, etc.) in good condition.
- 2.1.4. **Capital Improvement Plan:** Continue to follow a systematic Capital Improvement Plan for all County buildings, parks, facilities, roads/bridges and sites.
- 2.1.5. **Funding:** Support communities seeking funding for necessary local infrastructure projects.
- 2.1.6. **Cost Sharing:** Look for cost sharing opportunities whenever possible with other jurisdictions in an effort to provide services, facilities and infrastructure in a cost-effective manner.
- 2.1.7. **Road Safety:** Swiftly address any unsafe access points, crossing conflicts along State and County Highways and at-grade railroad crossings.
- 2.1.8. **Active Transportation:** Support planning and implementation efforts that address pedestrian and bicycle movement.
- 2.1.9. **Broadband:** Support the expansion of high-speed broadband in the county.
- 2.1.10. **Rural Water:** Support the efforts of rural water systems to locate, expand and maintain sources of good quality and quantity drinking water for residents and businesses.
- 2.1.11. **On-site Wastewater Treatment:** Continue to support and enforce State rules for wastewater collection and treatment.

- 2.1.12. **Impacts on Surroundings:** Infrastructure projects should address all impacts on natural resources and surrounding land uses.
- 2.1.13. **Utilities Expansions:** Support utility standards and programs for projects seeking to strike a balance between maximizing benefits to county residents while minimizing environmental impacts and are in accordance with County development policies.

## Goal 2.2: Public Services

Deliver and support exceptional services in Yellow Medicine County to meet the needs of families and residents while providing accessible, well-maintained facilities for staff and the public.

### Strategies:

- 2.2.1. **Transit:** Support and promote transit options (public and private) that serve a rural population requiring alternative modes of transportation to access key destinations (e.g., large employers, grocery stores, public services, schools, healthcare, etc.).
- 2.2.2. **Post Secondary Education:** Work cooperatively with Minnesota West Community and Technical College and Southwest Minnesota State University to encourage educational programs that meet the educational needs of residents and employers.
- 2.2.3. **Educational Partnerships:** Develop public and private partnerships at all levels to work together to preserve and maintain the public education systems in the county.
- 2.2.4. **Human Services:** Continue to provide human services serving a wide variety of Yellow Medicine County residents including vulnerable populations such as children, seniors, minorities, and the disabled. Expand online resources with web links for information and services specifically targeted towards these groups.
- 2.2.5. **Regional Solid Waste Planning:** Continue participation with the Southwest Regional Solid Waste Commission to plan, oversee, and implement solid waste management activities across the twelve-county region.
- 2.2.6. **Solid Waste Disposal:** Provide adequate and convenient disposal options for recyclable materials and household hazardous waste.
- 2.2.7. **Solid Waste Public Education:** Provide regular communication and education to the public regarding the proper disposal of waste.
- 2.2.8. **Public Safety Coordination:** Work with cities to ensure adequate, well-funded and well-coordinated public safety services (sheriff, police, fire, ambulance, emergency management, etc.).
- 2.2.9. **Emergency Planning:** Develop and maintain appropriate emergency management procedures and plans and coordinate these procedures and plans with the local units of government in the county, the Upper Sioux Community and appropriate regional, state and federal agencies.
- 2.2.10. **County Staffing:** Continue to improve and update the County's staff capabilities through training and improved facilities and equipment.
- 2.2.11. **Accessibility:** Provide adequate accessibility to all County facilities and services.

### **Goal 2.3: Communication**

Improve and maintain communication with constituents and partners

#### **Strategies:**

- 2.3.1. **External Communication:** Make use of the County’s website, social media, newspaper/radio media and other appropriate forums to communicate with the public and provide opportunities for meaningful input.
- 2.3.2. **Local Governments:** Work to keep the county’s cities and townships abreast of County activities and decisions.
- 2.3.3. **State/Federal Partners:** Maintain and improve lines of communication with the State of Minnesota and federal government, including elected representatives of the area.
- 2.3.4. **Community Engagement:** Engage and invite community members to participate in the local decision-making process.

# Recreational, Natural and Cultural Resources

Yellow Medicine County is unique for its natural resources and beautiful landscape. The Minnesota River Valley on the east side of the county provides rock outcrops and river landscapes. The central and west part of the county is agricultural land with rivers and lakes. It is important to preserve both the agricultural land as well as the natural and water resources in the county. It is also important to give access to natural areas for residents and visitors within a 20-minute drive from their home.

The Recreational, Natural and Cultural Resources section includes the following:

- Parks and Trails
- Stewardship and Conservation
- Culture and History



## Parks and Trails

Access to public land enhances the livability of a community by providing residents and visitors opportunities to connect with nature, explore rivers, and experience the region’s unique landscapes through parks and trails.

### County-Owned Parks

The County owns and maintains two County Parks: Oraas Park and Timm Park.

#### Oraas Park

Oraas Park is located along U.S. Highway 59, seven miles south of Clarkfield.

Amenities:

- Six family camping sites with electrical and water hook-ups
- Water hydrant
- Picnic shelter
- Playground
- Restroom
- Wayside rest area



### Timm Park

Timm Park is located three miles north of Wood Lake on the north shore of Wood Lake

Amenities include:

- Campground with 110 electrical and water hook-ups
- Picnic shelter
- Swimming area
- Playground
- Restrooms
- Volleyball
- Basketball
- Boat ramp & dock
- Fishing



## County Recreational Areas

### Stonehill Regional Park / Del Clark Lake

Stonehill Regional Park is located 1.5 miles southwest of Canby on Del Clark Lake. It is managed by the Lac Qui Parle Yellow Bank Watershed District.

Amenities include:

- 70 camping sites with electric, water, sanitary, hot showers
- Bike trail
- Playground
- Swimming/floating raft
- Picnic shelter
- Storm shelter
- Basketball court
- Volleyball court
- Boat ramp
- Hiking trails
- Fishing pier
- Restrooms



## Memorial Park

Memorial Park is a regional park located on the edge of Granite Falls. It is 141 acres, and sits along the Minnesota River.

Amenities include:

- 13 RV camping sites with electric and water hook up
- 2 tent camping sites
- 1 group camp site
- Picnic area
- Nature based playground
- Large shelter
- Hiking trails
- Paved trails
- Camper cabin



## City Parks

All nine cities also have parks with shelters and playground equipment. In addition, there are campgrounds, city pools and golf courses within the county.

### Campgrounds

Upper Sioux Community  
Granite Falls  
Clarkfield  
Canby  
Wood Lake

### City pools

Canby - outdoor  
Clarkfield - outdoor  
Granite Falls – indoor

### Golf courses

Granite falls  
Canby

## Recreational Trails

Yellow Medicine County offers a variety of recreational trail opportunities within its parks and public spaces. These trails support walking, biking, and other forms of non-motorized transportation, and contribute to community wellness, connectivity, and quality of life. While the County does not currently operate a countywide trail network, several cities within the county have developed their own trail systems that enhance access to parks, neighborhoods, and natural areas.

### Trail Locations

#### City of Granite Falls:

Granite Falls maintains a growing system of city trails. The Wegdahl Trail runs along the Minnesota River Valley, serving as both a scenic and functional non-motorized transportation corridor. A new trail project was awarded funding in 2021 through the Minnesota Department of Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program. This federal grant supports projects designed to improve pedestrian transportation infrastructure. The new trail is currently under construction in 2025 will be constructed along the west side of County Road 5, from the intersection of County Road 5/38 to Pleasant Street. There will be crossings at both the Hungry Hollow neighborhood and at the end by Pleasant Street.

### City of Canby:

Canby maintains a multi-use city trail that begins within the city and runs along 210th Avenue, curving around to U.S. Highway 75 and continuing to Stone Hill/Del Clark Lake Park. This continuous trail serves as a key recreational and transportation corridor, offering safe, non-motorized access between Canby and the regional park. The trail is designed for both pedestrians and bicyclists and plays a vital role in connecting residents with outdoor recreation opportunities.

### Park trails

#### Stone Hill/Del Clark Lake Park (Canby):

A dedicated trail segment connects the City of Canby to Stone Hill/Del Clark Lake Park, enhancing regional accessibility and encouraging active transportation between the park and the city. This multi-use trail supports both pedestrian and bicycle use.

#### Lake Sylvan Park (Canby):

Features a designated walking trail that provides opportunities for scenic, low-impact recreation.

#### Triangle Park (Canby):

Includes an unpaved trail offering a natural walking route within a neighborhood park setting.

#### Vahalla Park (Clarkfield):

Contains an unpaved walking path used by local residents for exercise and recreation.

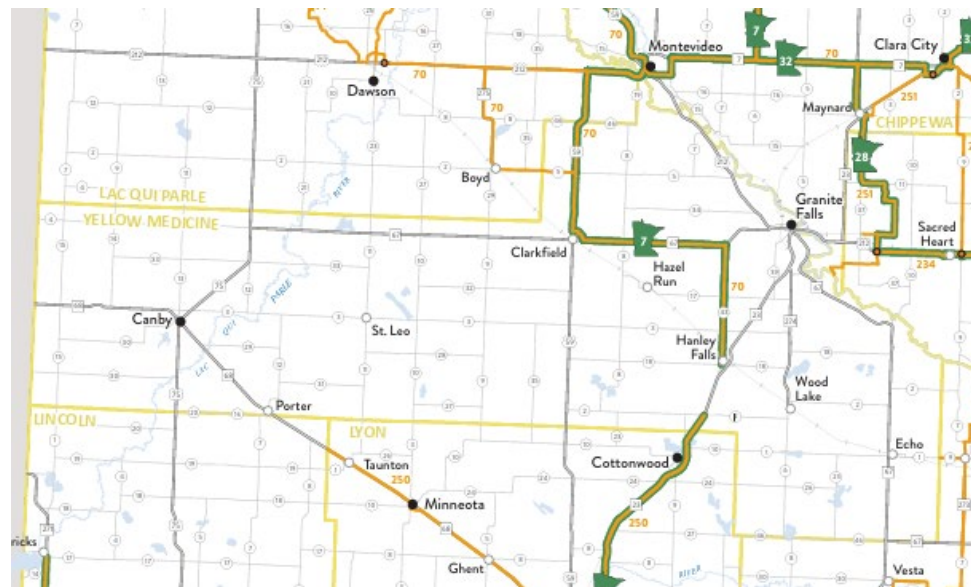
#### Memorial Park (Granite Falls):

A developed trail winds through the park, connecting amenities and allowing for multiple recreational uses including walking, biking, and nature viewing. The trail is paved, was finished and dedicated in June, 2024, and is named the 'Dave Smiglewski Memorial Trail.

### Snowmobile Trails

There are a limited number of snowmobile trails in Yellow Medicine County. Minnesota Trail 70 (Snow-Drifters of Montevideo Trail) which is part of the MNUSA Corridor, runs for 103 miles along U.S. Highway 59 from the north and then east along State Highway 67 and south to Hanley Falls along County Highway 43 to Hanley Falls. There is also a small, two-mile section of Trail 250 (the Lyon County Trail) south of Hanley Falls along State Highway 23.

Yellow Medicine County Snowmobile Trails Map



Source: MN Department of Natural Resources

## Stewardship and Conservation

It is important to preserve the function of the County’s natural systems, while also meeting the housing, economic development, and agricultural preservation goals of the County.

### Water resources

Water resources are managed and protected through the Land and Resource Management Office. A number of plans and departments address issues to preserve water quality.

- Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Program
- Water Plan
- Floodplain management
- Watershed Districts
- Wetland Conservation Act

The Yellow Medicine River, Lac qui Parle River and Redwood River watersheds are all located in Yellow Medicine County and are a part of the larger Minnesota River drainage basin. More information and maps about the watershed can be found on the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) website: [www.dnr.state.mn.us/watersheds/map.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/watersheds/map.html)

There are also floodplain areas throughout the county along many of the streams and rivers. The Yellow Medicine County FEMA floodplain maps can be found here: <https://yellow-medicine-county-hmp-umn.hub.arcgis.com/pages/flooding> [msc.fema.gov/portal/search?AddressQuery=yellow%20medicine%20county](https://www.fema.gov/portal/search?AddressQuery=yellow%20medicine%20county)

### Surface Water in Yellow Medicine County

Name	Size
Burton Lake	~150 Acres
Curtis Lake*	382 Acres
Del Clark Lake* √	156 Acres
Johnson Reservoir (Lake John)*√	20 Acres
Kvistid	~150 Acres
Highbank	~150 Acres
Mini R6	2 Acres
R-4*	13 Acres
R-6*	5 Acres
Lone Tree	~140 Acres
Sylvan Lake	15 Acres
Tyson Lake*	166 Acres
Unnamed (114) – Wood Lake Township	Unknown
Unnamed (116) – Stony Run Township	Unknown
Wood Lake*	432 Acres
Lac qui Parle River	36 Miles
Minnesota River	39 Miles
Wetlands	12,581 Acres
Creeks	12,595 Miles

\* Denotes Public Access Available. √ Denotes suitable for swimming.

Source: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Lake Finder

## Natural Resources

Connecting natural resources together through conservation practices and land management tools will help establish stronger natural system corridors for natural habitat and plant communities.

### Conservation Programs

The following programs have helped to preserve land, creating natural habitats for animals and plant communities as well as improve environmental health and quality throughout the county.

#### **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) provides a yearly rental payment to farmers who remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality.

#### **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)**

The Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a partnership between the USDA and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) that provides voluntary conservation easement opportunities for landowners. CREP focuses on protecting environmentally sensitive land across 66 counties in southern and western Minnesota. Through this program, farmers and agricultural landowners receive payments to establish and maintain permanent conservation practices, ensuring long-term environmental benefits.

#### **Reinvest in MN Reserve Program (RIM)**

The RIM Reserve program is the primary land acquisition program for state held conservation easements and restoration of wetlands and native grasslands on privately owned land in Minnesota. This program partners with public and private landowners, state, federal and local government entities, non-profit organizations and the citizens of Minnesota.

#### **Reinvest in MN Wetlands Reserve Program (RIM WRP)**

Described as the premier private lands wetland restoration easement program in the nation, the RIM-WRP partnership combined Minnesota's RIM Reserve conservation easement program and the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).

#### **Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)**

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program under which USDA may purchase conservation easements from, or enter into restoration cost-share agreements with, eligible landowners who voluntarily cooperate in the restoration, enhancement, and protection of wetlands and associated lands. The WRP is administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

<b>Conservation Programs</b>	<b>Total acres enrolled</b>
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	20,231
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)	6,547
Reinvest in MN Reserve Program (RIM)	2,369
Reinvest in MN Wetlands Reserve Program (RIM WRP)	908
Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)	597
Total resource acres	30,652
Cropland acres	396,669
<i>Percent enrolled</i>	<i>7.7%</i>
<i>Statewide enrolled</i>	<i>6.4%</i>

Source: Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, 2024

### **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP)**

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) offered through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is a partner-driven approach to conservation that funds solutions to natural resource challenges on agricultural land. Through RCP Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFAs), NRCS provides funding to partners to support conservation activities with eligible producers and landowners on eligible land. RCP AFA funding reimburses partners for conservation activities done for or on behalf of producers, landowners, or other entities.

### **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is NRCS’s flagship conservation program that helps farmers, ranchers and forest landowners integrate conservation into working lands. NRCS works one-on-one with producers to develop a conservation plan that outlines conservation practices and activities to help solve on-farm resource issues. Producers implement practices and activities in their conservation plan that can lead to cleaner water and air, healthier soil and better wildlife habitat, all while improving their agricultural operations. Financial assistance for practices may be available through EQIP.

### **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) offers technical and financial assistance to help agricultural producers take their conservation efforts to the next level. The program is designed to compensate agricultural producers who agree to increase their level of conservation by adopting additional conservation activities and maintaining their baseline level of conservation. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) helps farmers build on existing conservation efforts while strengthening their operation.

### **Agriculture Best Management Practices Loan Program (AgBMP)**

The AgBMP Loan Program, a NRCS program administered through the Yellow Medicine SWCD, is a water quality program that provides low interest loans to farmers, rural landowners and agriculture supply businesses to implement practices that improve water quality. The purpose of the program is to encourage agricultural BMPs that prevent or reduce runoff from feedlots, farm fields, and other pollution problems identified by the county in local water plans.

### **Yellow Medicine County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Tree Program**

Since 1961, the Yellow Medicine County SWCD has planned, planted, sold and established trees for windbreak rows in fields to mitigate soil erosion from wind. A shelter belt or grove around rural homesteads also help keep energy costs low and minimize snow drifts in yards. The SWCD sells, plans, advises, and provides for the sale and installation of products to ensure a successful planting.

## Land Use and Cover

**Cultivated land** is the predominant land use of the county. **Grasslands** and **forested areas** are the next largest land use, but only consist of 6.6% and 3.3% respectively. See detailed table in Current Land Use section of this plan for a breakdown of all land use types in the county.

## Soils

Yellow Medicine County features a landscape developed from glacial till, loess and alluvial deposits, transitioning from the prairie pothole region in the northeast to more rolling hills and river valleys in the southwest. The soil characteristics of the county reflect this diversity in topography, glacial history, and vegetation. Soil types are characterized by their thick, organic-rich surface horizons making them ideal for agriculture production. Soils are generally loamy with well drained soils on upland areas and poorly drained soils in low-lying areas. Areas on sloped land are more prone to erosion and may require conservation practices such as contour farming, strip cropping and grassy areas as mitigation.

For a complete soil map, go to <https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>.

## Aggregate Resources

Local sources of aggregate are of prime importance to development activities, from building construction to maintaining the transportation system. Aggregate resources need to be protected so that development does not infringe upon them and prevent extraction. Aggregate extraction also creates significant nuisances to surrounding land uses (dust, noise, vibrations, etc.) and puts at risk other natural systems, if not appropriately managed.

High quality aggregate areas may consist of sand and gravel and crushed stone. Most of the highest quality aggregate is used for construction purposes, such as the manufacturing of concrete or asphalt. Lower quality aggregates are used for fill, base-course for roads, and for a variety of other purposes.

Aggregate resources in Yellow Medicine County are somewhat limited. Yellow Medicine County recognizes the demand for mining operations and aggregate use in the area. There is a desire to preserve these resources for local economic development initiatives and public works projects. Accessing these resources locally can reduce the costs for local construction projects, compared to shipping resources from outside of the region. In July 2025, the MN DNR released a [mapping application](#) of Yellow Medicine County that shows the potential for sand, gravel and crushed stone resources as well as the locations of the existing pits and quarries in the county.

## Culture and History

Yellow Medicine County has a rich and deeply rooted cultural history shaped by the land and the people who have called it home for generations. The Upper Sioux Community, or Pejuhutazizi Kapi—meaning “the place where they dig for yellow medicine”—continues to carry forward Dakota language, traditions, and ways of life in the region. Local historical societies across the county work to preserve and share a range of histories, including those of farming communities, rail towns, and cultural traditions that have developed over time. Together, these stewards reflect the resilience, diversity, and cultural strength that define Yellow Medicine County.

## Cultural Stewards

*Upper Sioux Community Pezuhutazizi Oyate Tribal Historic Preservation Office*

While the Upper Sioux Community does not have a museum, the Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) works to preserve important historic properties and tribal interests through the Section 106 review process. The THPO has the formal responsibility for the preservation of significant historic properties on tribal lands.

### ***Lund-Hoel House, Canby***

The Lund–Hoel House is a historic house museum in Canby. The residence and an adjacent carriage house were built in 1891 for John G. Lund, an influential land speculator, banker, and politician. In 1900, additional renovations included a surrounding fieldstone fence, additional living space, “servants’ quarters”, balconies, a turret, and porches. Although considered extravagant at the time, the House boasted a gas plant to light the house at night with original gas fixtures on display. The rooms were designed without continuity or harmony with many styles of millwork. All bedrooms except the “servants’ quarters” had their own balcony. Now an Interpretive Center, the home has been completely restored to its original glory, complete with cupola and is open for tours during the summer months.

### ***Minnesota’s Machinery Museum, Hanley Falls***

The Museum holds the state's largest collection of agricultural equipment and exhibits, recalling a century of farm life in stories and artifacts. The Museum features five large buildings (26,000 sq ft) on a beautiful six-acre site. Its mission is to recapture a century of stories about farm life. Implements, tools, tractors and gas engines in mint condition along with rural art.

### ***Yellow Medicine County Historical Society, Granite Falls***

The Yellow Medicine County Historical Society was organized in 1937 with officers from all parts of the county, but the 1940’s war and gas rationing caused the organization to disband. The society was reestablished in 1949 and with interest in history high, a County museum was established.

The Yellow Medicine County Museum displays tell a story of the geology and archaeology of the Minnesota Valley, Native American history, and pioneer life in the county. The Museum has a Family History Lab that is open to anyone having ancestors who lived or came from Yellow Medicine County. The lab has computers with shortcuts to Ancestry.com and a large collection of county history books, church history books, printed family histories, history on schools, and township histories all relating to Yellow Medicine County.

# Recreational, Natural and Cultural Resources Issues

Below is a summary of the top issues that Yellow Medicine County would like to address.

## Natural Resources

- Air and water quality could be improved
- Increase recycling programs and participation
- Improve soil conservation efforts

## Recreation

- Lack of outdoor recreation options
- Improve access to water/streams/rivers
- Replace the State Park land returned to Upper Sioux Community
- Underutilization of unique natural and scenic areas of Yellow Medicine County

## Culture

- Limited number of arts and cultural sites and/or events
- Younger generations are not interested in preserving history
- Overall lack of interest

### Survey says:

- *Air & water quality and conservation were considered good to fair, but could be improved*
- *Residents would like to see additional recreational options and/or better access to recreational areas*
- *History, arts and culture ranked low in importance and were considered low priorities*

# Recreational, Natural and Cultural Resources

## Goals & Strategies

Protecting the natural environment offers many benefits in the long-term. The Minnesota River and other natural resources are great assets to the county and offer recreational opportunities that translate into economic benefits. While capitalizing on the natural beauty of the county for recreational and tourism opportunities, it is important to preserve environmentally and culturally sensitive areas and productive agricultural lands for the long-term viability of these benefits.

Yellow Medicine County is committed to providing recreational opportunities and connecting people to nature, while recognizing the value of natural resource protection, restoration, and preservation.

### Strategy Highlights:

- Utilize the County's unique natural amenities
- Protect and preserve the beautiful natural areas of the County
- Share the history

### Goal 3.1: Parks and Trails

Connect people to nature in our county.

#### Strategies

- 3.1.1. **Regional, State and Federal Land:** Work with regional, state and federal partners to enhance recreational opportunities in the county.
- 3.1.2. **Trail Development:** Support new trail development including sections of a regional trail system.
- 3.1.3. **Funding:** Seek grants and allocate funding to protect, preserve and develop parks and trails in Yellow Medicine County.
- 3.1.4. **Accessibility:** Provide recreational, environmental, cultural opportunities for residents of all ages, interests, incomes and abilities.
- 3.1.5. **Partnership:** Partner with cities, townships, adjoining counties and state agencies to broaden the potential pool for park acquisition and improvement.
- 3.1.6. **State Park Closure:** Replace recreational lands and/or amenities that were impacted by the closure of the Upper Sioux Agency Park.
- 3.1.7. **River Access:** Consider increasing and improving river access when developing and acquiring recreation lands.

### Goal 3.2: Stewardship and Conservation

Promote environmental stewardship for the county's long-term environmental benefit.

#### Strategies

- 3.2.1. **County Water Plan:** Implement the County's Water Plan and update regularly.
- 3.2.2. **Watershed Management Plan:** Support One Watershed, One Plan efforts to protect water quality in the county.

- 3.2.3. **Solid Waste Plan:** Implement the County’s solid waste plan and update regularly.
- 3.2.4. **Ordinance Review:** Review the County’s shoreland, flood plain, feedlot and other ordinances that potentially have a direct or indirect impact on the natural resources of the county and update.
- 3.2.5. **Aggregate Resources:** Protect the county’s limited aggregate resources and provide for reasonable economic use of aggregate.
- 3.2.6. **Scenic Resources:** Protect scenic values by controlling billboards and regulating signs, auto junkyards, and other potentially unsightly land uses and practices.

### **Goal 3.3: Culture and History:**

Share the county’s history and promote cultural understanding.

#### **Strategies**

- 3.3.1. **Collaboration:** Work with the Yellow Medicine County Historical Society, local historical societies and the Upper Sioux Community to share the history of the area and educate others.
- 3.3.2. **Preservation:** Protect and preserve historic and culturally significant areas, artifacts and structures to the greatest extent feasible.

# Land Use and Zoning

The purpose of land use planning is to provide a consistent set of policies specific to Yellow Medicine County that will guide the future growth and development and provide a basis for land use decisions. This planning translates the County’s vision for the future into a recommended physical pattern of agriculture, commercial and industrial areas, roads, and public facilities.



Although they are related, Land Use and Zoning are two different things. Land use shows how the land is currently being used, while zoning ordinances refer to the legal framework that governs how land can be used in the future. Ideally, current land use aligns with zoning regulations. When it does not, zoning serves as a guide for how the land is expected to be used over time.

The Land use and Zoning section includes the following:

- Current Land Use
- Future Land Use
- Current Zoning
- Current Zoning Map (2006)

## Current Land Use

This section provides an overview of how land in Yellow Medicine County is currently being utilized. Existing land uses do not always reflect the current zoning designation or the desired future land use pattern. Outside of the incorporated cities of the county, land use categories include agriculture, residential, business, industrial, and public recreation.

According to the Land Management Information Center, Yellow Medicine County has an area of 763 square miles, or 488,661 acres.

### Land Use

	Acres	% of total
Urban and Industrial	2,029	0.4%
Farmsteads and Rural Residences	5,486	1.1%
Rural Residential Development Complexes	65	<0.1%
Other Rural Developments	859	0.2%
Cultivated Land	424,068	86.8%
Transitional Agricultural Land	397	<0.1%
Grassland	32,387	6.6%
Grassland – Shrub, Tree Complex (Deciduous)	675	0.1%
Deciduous Forest	16,087	3.3%
Coniferous Forest	2	<0.1%
Water	4,000	0.8%
Wetlands	2,330	0.5%
Gravel Pits and Open Mines	248	<0.1%
Exposed Soil	21	<0.1%
Unlabeled/unclassified/outside state or outside county	7	<0.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>488,661</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: The Land Management Information Center (LMIC), 1990

## Population Density

The population density of Yellow Medicine County has steadily declined since 1980 – from 17.9 to its current density of just 12.5 people per square mile today. This is significantly less than the statewide density of 72.13, reinforcing the rural nature of the county.

## Agricultural Land Use

As shown earlier in this plan (under the Economic Outlook chapter), agriculture is the predominant industry and consequently the largest land use section of the county. The amount of land used in agricultural production is approximately 85% of the total. Farm sizes are increasing while the number of farms has declined. This is due to fewer farmers being able to farm more land with larger equipment and advancements in efficiency.

## Recreational Land Use

Another noticeable existing land use found in the county is for public recreation. Yellow Medicine County manages two park areas (Oraas and Timm Parks) totaling about 40 acres for public use including picnicking, playgrounds, camping, fishing, hiking, bicycling, and boating. In addition, there are approximately 7,500 acres of State Wildlife Management Areas in the county for hunters, trappers, and wildlife enthusiasts. (source: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/wmas/index.html>)

## Residential Land Use

Following the COVID-19 Pandemic, rural areas have seen an increase in people looking to relocate from more urban areas to escape the hustle and bustle of urban life for the more relaxed, peaceful rural lifestyle. Improvements in broadband have provided some people with the ability to work from almost anywhere. As improvements to the county’s broadband infrastructure continue, the county may experience an increased demand for residential options in the rural areas.

With this potential demand, comes the potential removal of productive ag-land, the need for increased municipal-type services in the rural area and an increase for potential conflict between agriculture producers and rural, non-farm dwellers. The County has taken an active stance through previous zoning efforts to control this type of development by limiting just one non-farm dwelling per 40-acre parcel.

## Industrial Land Use

Industrial land use, according to the County’s Zoning Ordinance, is defined as facilities used for the storage of agricultural or non-agricultural related products such as grain and fertilizer bins or been piles and the storage of energy related products such as propane or natural gas. There is a very limited amount of industrial use outside of city limits. The only industrial area is the Farmers Cooperative Elevator located just south of Hanley Falls.

## Commercial Land Use

There is relatively little commercial activity outside the corporate limits of the cities within the county. Most, if not all of the commercial activity is in the form of small, home-based businesses, which typically do not impact surrounding land uses and largely unnoticeable.

## Future Land Use

Future Land Use is a key component of the Comprehensive Plan, describing how land in Yellow Medicine County is intended to be used and function in the years ahead. Land use decisions should be guided by the values and priorities identified through the County’s planning process and community engagement. These are reflected in the guiding principles outlined below.

Applying these principles helps ensure that land use decisions align with the County’s goals and contributes to a well-planned, livable future. They should be used to inform decisions related to:

- Reviewing land use permits
- Defining future land use patterns
- Evaluating rezoning requests
- Guiding growth and development
- Establishing Orderly Annexation Agreement boundaries
- Prioritizing infrastructure investments
- Assessing development proposals

These guiding principles also served as the foundation for the goals and strategies included in this plan.

### Guiding Principles

**Aggregate Resources:** Direct development away from areas with accessible, large aggregate deposits.

**Agricultural Resources:** Protect agricultural land as a vital base for producers, the rural economy, and Yellow Medicine County’s character.

**Environmental Resources:** Enforce State and County regulations that protect natural resources, wetlands, shorelands, and floodplains.

**Growth:** Protect existing farms by directing future commercial and industrial development to areas already served by infrastructure or compatible uses.

**Housing:** Create housing development opportunities that align with existing land uses and avoid conflicts with the county’s natural and agricultural resources.

**Natural Resources:** Preserve and manage natural resources to protect environmental quality and ensure long-term sustainability.

**Rural Residential:** Provide adequate buffering between residential development and farming operations to minimize land use conflicts.

**Water Resources:** Protect the quality and supply of surface water and groundwater resources.

## Orderly Annexation

Orderly Annexation Agreements are voluntary arrangements between a city and a township (with County involvement as needed) that outline how and when land may be annexed into the city under agreed-upon conditions. These agreements give townships a voice in the annexation process while offering predictability and planning clarity for cities.

Such agreements typically address timing, location, tax revenue sharing, infrastructure responsibilities, and permitted land uses. By defining these terms in advance, cities and townships can more effectively coordinate development and public services.

This Comprehensive Plan neither promotes nor discourages annexation but recognizes orderly annexation as a valuable tool for supporting coordinated, sustainable growth. Cities and townships are encouraged to work together to define urban growth boundaries—ideally at the parcel level—to align land use decisions with shared goals. In accordance with **Minn. Stat. § 462.3535, Subd. 5**, cities must negotiate orderly annexation agreements with affected townships when an urban growth area is identified in a county or city comprehensive plan. There is currently only one urban growth area in the county and is located south of the city of Canby.

### Legal Reference

#### **Minn. Stat. § 462.3535 (Subd. 5.)**

Urban growth area boundary adjustment process. (a) After an urban growth area has been identified in a County or city plan, a city shall negotiate, as part of the comprehensive planning process and in coordination with the County, an orderly annexation agreement with the townships containing the affected unincorporated areas located within the identified urban growth area.

## Current Zoning

Yellow Medicine County’s zoning ordinance was last updated in 2021 and the County’s zoning map was last updated in 2006. Both were referenced during this comprehensive plan update. Since the map has not been updated in almost 20 years, it is recommended that it be reviewed to ensure accuracy and amended if necessary.

### *Management Districts*

Yellow Medicine County currently has seven Management Districts as outlined below.

#### Floodplain Management District

This ordinance regulates development in the flood hazard areas of Yellow Medicine County. These flood hazard areas are subject to periodic inundation, which may result in loss of life and property, health and safety hazards, economic disruption, and extraordinary public expenditures for flood protection and relief. It is the purpose of this ordinance to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare by minimizing these losses and disruptions. This district is also intended to preserve the natural characteristics and functions of watercourses and floodplains in order to moderate flood and stormwater impacts, improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, protect aquatic and riparian habitat, provide recreational opportunities, provide aesthetic benefits and enhance community and economic development.

### Shoreland Management District

The Shoreland Management District exists to ensure that development along the public waters of the county is regulated consistent with the classifications assigned by the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources under Minnesota Rules, part 6120.3300. Further, the district identifies land uses that are compatible with the protection and preservation of shoreline resources in order to conserve the economic and environmental values of shoreland and sustain water quality.

The District also regulates alterations of vegetation and topography to prevent erosion into public waters, fix nutrients, preserve shoreland aesthetics, preserve historic values, prevent bank slumping, and protect fish and wildlife habitat while ensuring that new development minimizes impacts to shoreland resources and is safe and functional.

### Minnesota River Management District

This Minnesota River Management District is land within the county that borders the Minnesota River where it is essential to control bluffland and riverland development in order to protect and preserve the outstanding scenic, recreational, natural, historical and scientific values such a river system provides for the State of Minnesota.

Within the Minnesota River Management District, the land is divided into two types of Districts: that portion which is designated Scenic and that portion which is designated Recreational in terms of future development and use.

### Urban Expansion Management District

The Urban Expansion Management District has been classified as either partial, perimeter or potential urban service areas. Each classification is dependent upon the location a parcel of land in relation to an incorporated municipality and the public services that a community provides to it or a neighboring parcel of land such as paved streets, sewer and/or water facilities.

### Rural Preservation Management District

For all lands that are not classified as Urban Expansion Management District, they will lie within the Rural Preservation Management District. These lands are predominantly noted for their agricultural and/or natural area uses. The Rural Preservation Management District is divided into eight rural preservation areas.

In addition, the District aims to preserve and enhance the existing aesthetics and scenic values of present plantings throughout the county because of its natural prairie topography and to conserve agricultural topsoil. This will also enhance wildlife habitat, create snow, wind and water retention areas and green spaces and other environmental uses beneficial to citizens of Yellow Medicine County.

### General Business District

The General Business District is intended to allow retail and commercial uses in the unincorporated areas of the county at standards that will not impair the traffic carrying capabilities of abutting roads and highways.

## Industry District

The Industry District is intended to allow general industry in the county at standards that will not impair the traffic carrying capabilities of abutting roads and highways. The regulations for this district are intended to encourage industrial development that is compatible with surrounding or abutting districts.

## Other Land Use Regulations

In addition to the seven designated Management Districts, Yellow Medicine County regulates land use through a comprehensive set of ordinances that address a wide range of specific uses and activities. These include regulations for airports, signage, mining, solid waste, sewage and septic systems, renewable energy installations, adult-use businesses, cannabis related businesses, feedlots, and subdivisions, as well as permitting, conditional uses, and variances.

Countryside Public Health also has ordinances governing manufactured home parks and campgrounds, lodging establishments, and various public health concerns such as nuisances and tobacco use. Additional ordinances regulate events like carnivals and endurance contests, park use, food and beverage services, pools, social host liability, and motor vehicle use on ice. Together, these ordinances provide a detailed framework for managing land use and protecting public health, safety, and natural resources throughout the county.

## Feedlot Ordinance

Yellow Medicine County is home to many livestock producers and a substantial number of feedlots—225 registered as of December 2024. Feedlots are regulated through the County’s zoning ordinance as conditional uses in appropriate districts, with specific standards for setbacks from neighboring properties, water bodies, and public infrastructure, as well as limits on size and requirements for environmental protection.

Through a delegation agreement with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), Yellow Medicine County administers feedlot regulations for operations under 1,000 animal units (AU), or those that do not require federal permits. The County Feedlot Officer (CFO) is responsible for registering feedlots with 50 or more AU—or as few as 10 if located near public waters—reviewing permit applications for new or expanding operations, conducting site inspections, and addressing complaints. Larger or more complex operations may be referred to the MPCA.

The County also requires manure management plans to ensure that land application aligns with crop nutrient needs and prevents runoff into water resources. This local oversight helps maintain a balance between supporting agricultural production and protecting Yellow Medicine County’s natural environment and rural character.

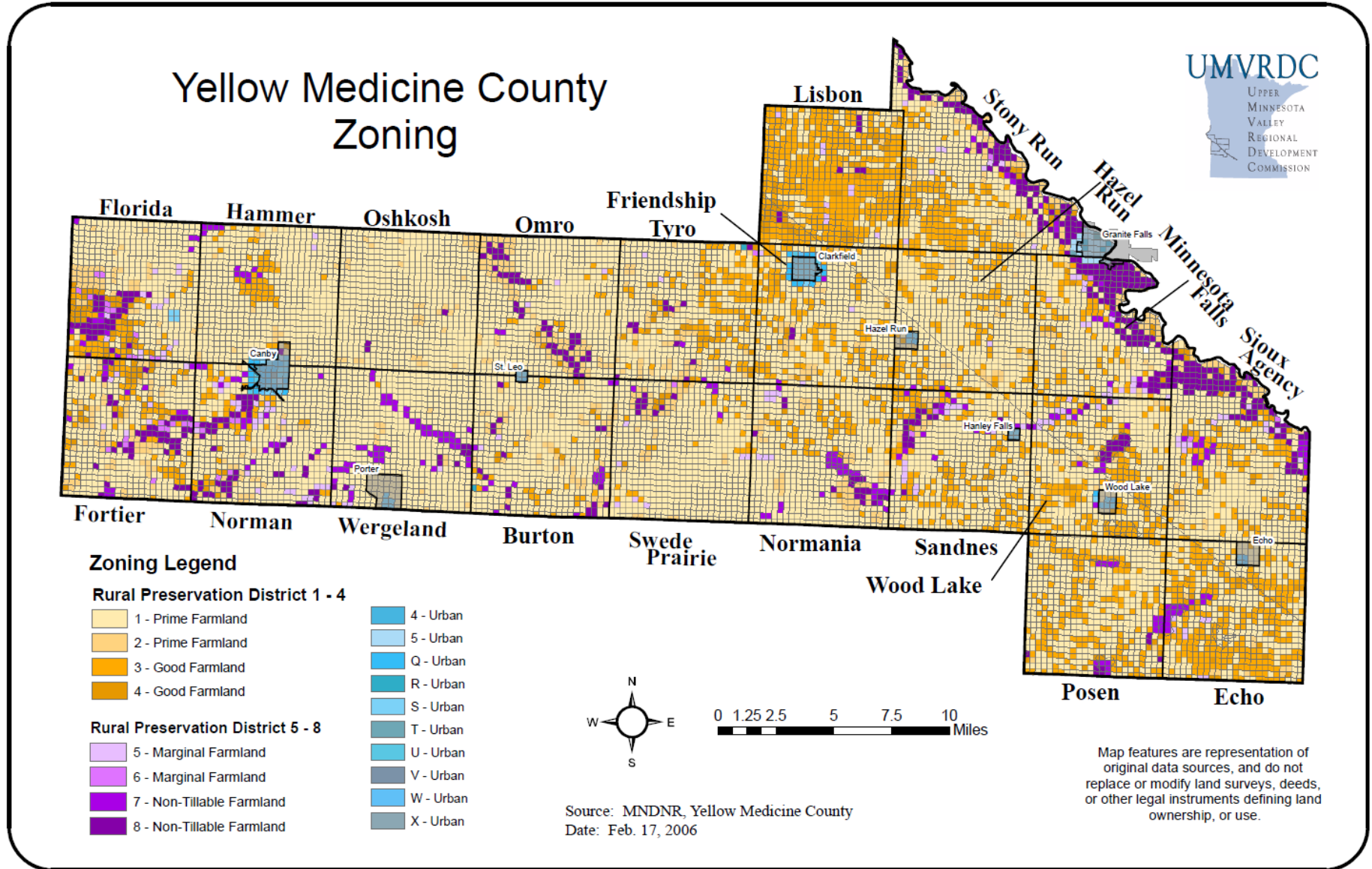
### Feedlot Regulation in Minnesota

In Minnesota, a feedlot is defined as an open lot or building used for feeding, breeding, raising, or holding animals where manure may accumulate and vegetative cover cannot be maintained. Manure storage structures are considered part of a feedlot, but pasture areas with established vegetation are not.

Under delegation agreements with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), counties oversee feedlots with 50 or more animal units (or as few as 10 near public waters), including registration, permitting, inspections, and complaint investigations for operations under 1,000 animal units. Larger operations fall under direct MPCA jurisdiction.

Manure management is a critical part of feedlot regulation. Facilities with 300 or more animal units, or those applying for a permit, must prepare a Manure Management Plan—unless using a licensed commercial applicator—to ensure manure application matches crop nutrient needs and prevents runoff into surface and groundwater. These plans also require setbacks from water bodies and drain tile intakes.

# Yellow Medicine County Zoning Map, 2006



## Land Use Issues

Below is a summary of the top issues that Yellow Medicine County would like to address.

- Agricultural production is a vital part of the county's economy and must be preserved.
- Environmentally sensitive areas are scattered throughout the county and require protection and conservation.
- Infrastructure investments are costly, and prime farmland is a finite, irreplaceable resource.
- Effective coordination among all relevant government entities is essential for sound land use decisions. Engagement with appropriate stakeholders should occur before approving any future changes.
- With the recent loss of the Upper Sioux Agency State Park, additional public access points to publicly owned land and waterways may be needed to meet the recreational needs of residents and visitors. The loss of the park leaves a significant gap in the recreational opportunities of Yellow Medicine County. To recapture the economic benefit the former state park provided, existing parks should be evaluated and improved to attract visitors from around the region or new facilities added.
- Aggregate resources in the county are limited. It is important not only to protect adjacent land uses but also to practice responsible stewardship of the resource itself.
- The expansion of renewable energy production in western Minnesota brings challenges such as noise, increased traffic, visual and light flicker impacts, and effects on habitats and flight patterns. New energy projects must be carefully managed to balance economic and environmental benefits with the interests of local residents and wildlife.

### Survey Says:

- *Preserve ag lands for ag use*
- *Coordinate development areas with areas of preexisting infrastructure*
- *Make public lands more accessible, amenities*

## Land Use and Zoning Goals & Strategies

Land use planning is a critical tool for guiding sustainable development, preserving natural resources, and supporting economic vitality in rural Minnesota counties. It provides a framework for making decisions about where and how land is used, balancing growth with the protection of agricultural lands, natural areas, and other valuable rural assets.

In rural areas, land use planning helps ensure that growth is well-managed and aligned with County goals. It supports the efficient use of infrastructure and public services, safeguards water quality and wildlife habitat, and maintains the rural character and heritage.

Good planning promotes economic stability by identifying areas suitable for farming, housing, and business development, while minimizing land use conflicts. It also enhances resilience to environmental challenges like flooding or drought by considering natural systems in decision-making.

Ultimately, land use planning is essential to preserve the land for future generations, guide responsible growth, and support a high quality of life for residents.

### Strategy Highlights:

- *Protect ag land and rural character*
- *Prioritize efficiency with new development*
- *Consider flexible housing regulations*

### Goal 4.1: Planning for Growth

Plan for growth by regulating land use to accommodate a logical and compatible extension of urban and rural growth patterns.

#### Strategies:

- 4.1.1. **Comprehensive Planning:** Promote the implementation of this comprehensive plan to effectively plan for land use, community facilities, transportation, housing, economic development, environmental protection, and technological advancement of Yellow Medicine County.
- 4.1.2. **Land Use Changes:** Examine requested land use changes in relation to adjoining land uses and consistency with the Yellow Medicine County Comprehensive Plan and the Land Use & Related Resource Management Ordinance.
- 4.1.3. **Municipal Growth:** Work with cities in Yellow Medicine County and their adjacent townships to plan, discuss and thoroughly evaluate municipal expansions to allow for the orderly growth outside of existing corporate limits.
- 4.1.4. **Efficient Development:** Make efficient use of existing infrastructure prior to building new infrastructure. Seek to promote new development along existing infrastructure, when appropriate, before allowing development in areas that would require new infrastructure.
- 4.1.5. **Future Land Use Map:** Consider the development of a detailed Future Land Use Map to help guide future policy decisions.

### Goal 4.2: Rural Land Use

Sustain a predominant agricultural land use pattern in harmony with surrounding land uses.

#### Strategies:

- 4.2.1. **Rural Character:** Plan land use and provide roads and other public services to sustain most of the county as a low-density, rural and generally agricultural environment.
- 4.2.2. **Housing Flexibility:** Continue to allow accessory dwelling units on existing building sites to allow for flexible housing for family members, workforce and caregivers, etc. wanting to live near existing rural housing.
- 4.2.3. **Housing Density:** Consider allowing a higher density of housing development, when feasible, in areas that do not negatively impact the environment or take land out of crop production and where adequate public or private infrastructure can be obtained.
- 4.2.4. **Special Soils:** Recognize and protect soils that are highly productive when properly managed (i.e. irrigation).
- 4.2.5. **Confined Animal Feedlots:** Continue to allow confined animal feedlots in the rural area by protecting them from new non-farm housing through County zoning. Require pollution controls consistent with State requirements.

### Goal 4.3: Commercial and Industrial Development

Plan for orderly and efficient commercial and industrial development that enhances the tax base, increases employment opportunities while placing minimal demands on the environment.

#### Strategies:

- 4.3.1. **Commercial and Industrial Development:** Encourage any new commercial or industrial developments to locate within the incorporated boundaries of cities in accordance with their comprehensive plans or other development plans. Commercial and industrial development that does not need public sewer and water services should be located in areas with adequate transportation access and regulated through Conditional Use Permits.
- 4.3.2. **Home Businesses:** Allow home-based businesses in rural areas that are compatible with neighboring properties and do not significantly increase or impact existing traffic patterns.
- 4.3.3. **Renewable Energy Regulations:** Support the orderly development of renewable energy production as a viable business sector in the county while minimizing impacts on existing residents and the surrounding environment. Such projects should not diminish surrounding property values, negatively impact natural resources, environmentally sensitive areas, disturb scenic views or introduce unreasonable levels of noise, light flicker, shadows, and vibrations.
- 4.3.4. **Aggregate Resources:** Allow a very low density of rural, non-farm housing development in areas of mapped sand and gravel (aggregate) resources. Require adequate buffer, landscaping, and end use plans.
- 4.3.5. **Clarity and Consistency:** Ensure that land use regulations (e.g. zoning/subdivision ordinances) are clear, promote greater certainty in the land development process, and are consistent with the goals of the County and the well-being of the community.

# Appendix 1: Public Survey Results

## 2024 Yellow Medicine Public Survey Results

During the summer of 2024, the County launched a public input campaign to solicit thoughts, ideas, challenges that would drive the development of this plan. The County attempted to mail the postcard (shown below) to every available address through a mass mailing. Word of the survey was publicized via the County’s website and Facebook page. Cities were asked to share on their websites and social media as well. While every effort was made to reach every address, there were reports of households in the St. Leo, rural Cottonwood, Clarkfield, Granite Falls and Canby areas not receiving postcards. Some of this can be attributed to how the postcards were distributed by post offices in the county. St. Leo is served by the Minneota post office and would handle mail for both Lyon and Yellow Medicine Counties, so they were unable to deliver in that area. Altogether, approximately 4,500 postcards were mailed out and 364 responses were received.

### Yellow Medicine County Survey 2024

Yellow Medicine County is currently updating its comprehensive plan.

A comprehensive plan is one of the primary tools used by local governments to achieve the County’s vision, regulate land uses and guide future investments.

To help guide the development of the plan and shape the County’s vision for the future, the County is seeking public input from its residents via a public survey.

Please visit [www.co.ym.mn.gov](http://www.co.ym.mn.gov) for more information.

Thank you for your input!

#### WAYS TO FILL OUT SURVEY


**PAPER SURVEY:**

- YMC Gov’t Building  
180 8th Avenue, Granite Falls
- YMC Planning & Zoning Office  
1000 10th Avenue, Clarkfield
- All city halls in the county
- Or call (320) 564-5841 to have one mailed to you

Return to one of the dropboxes where paper surveys are available.  
Or mail to:  
UMVRDC  
323 W. Schlieman Ave.  
Appleton, MN 56208

**ONLINE:**

- [www.surveymonkey.com/r/WXCRMFJ](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WXCRMFJ)
- Scan QR code



Please complete the survey by **August 31, 2024**

Translation of survey is available upon request/  
La traducción de la encuesta está disponible a pedido.

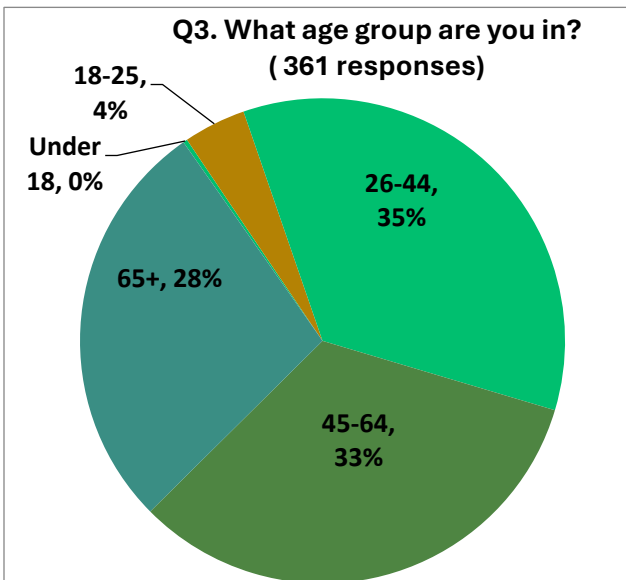
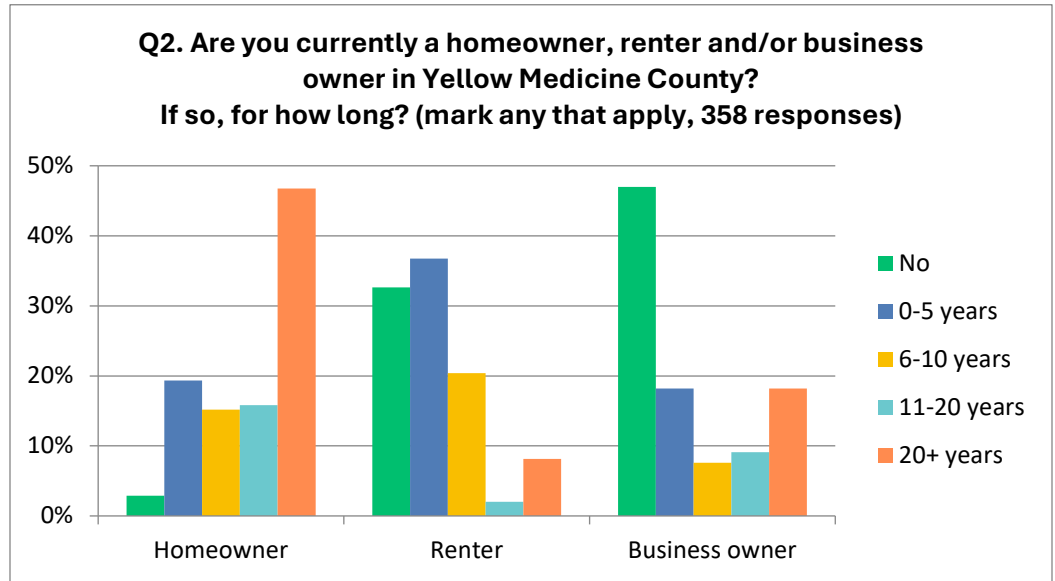
# Yellow Medicine County 2024 Public Survey Results

## Who filled out the survey?

We had over 360 people fill out the survey from July - August 2024.

### Q1. What is your zip code? (364 responses)

Zip Code - Community	Number
56220 - Canby	130
56241 - Granite Falls	122
56297 - Wood Lake	33
56237 - Echo	20
56223 - Clarkfield	16
56280 - Porter	14
56245 - Hanley Falls	11
56265 - Montevideo	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>364</b>



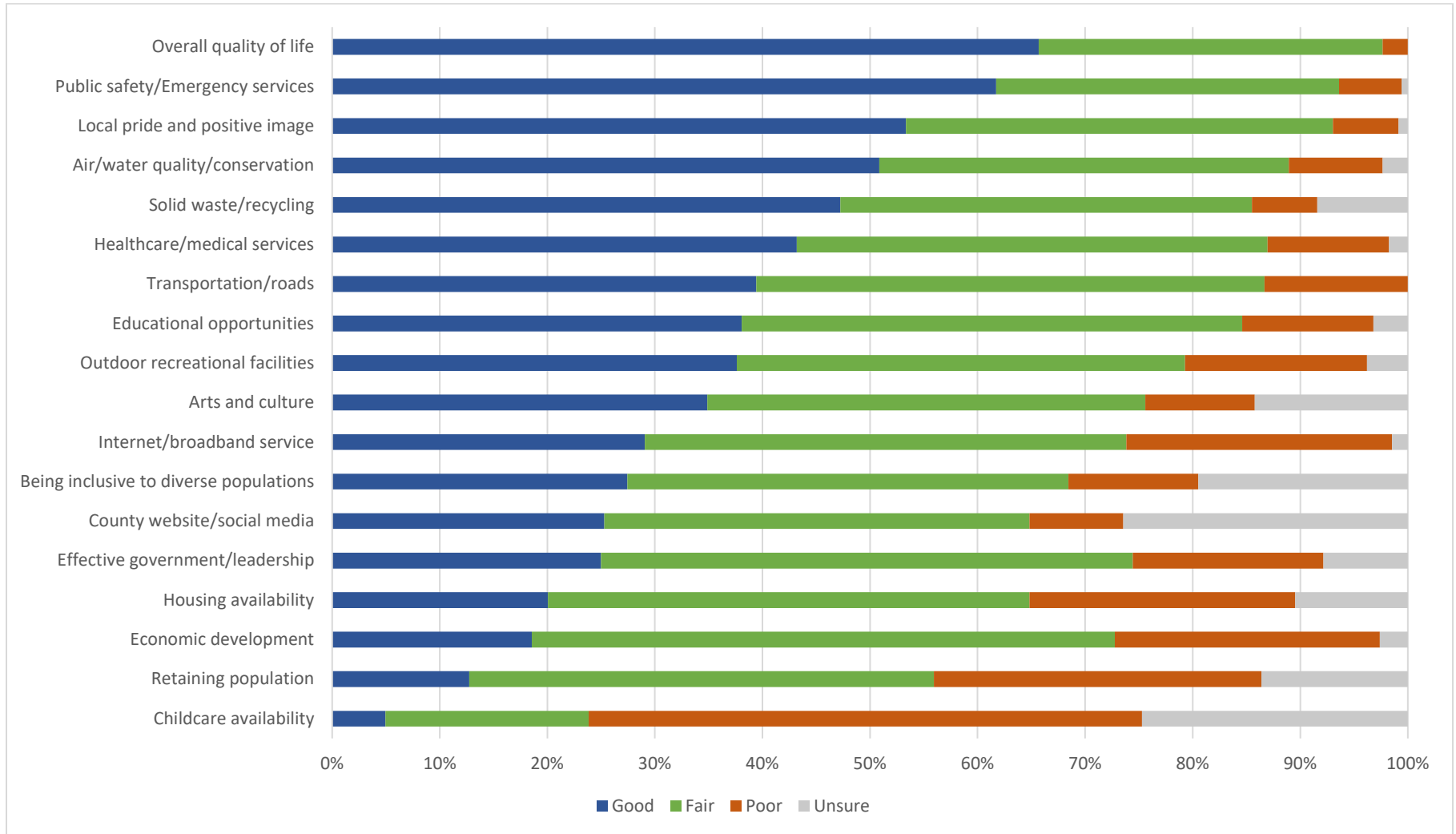
### Q4 How do you associate with Yellow Medicine County? (365 responses)

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
I live in a town/city of the County	206	56.44%
I live seasonally in the County	4	1.10%
I work in the County	84	23.01%
I own a business in the County	52	14.25%
I own land/home in the rural part of the County	164	44.93%
I rent land/home in the rural part of the County	25	6.85%
I farm in the County	47	12.88%
Other	14	3.84%



## What did the respondents say?

Q5 How would you rate Yellow Medicine County in the following areas? (345 responses)



## Summary of Q5 Comments...

### Childcare Issues:

- There is a **significant shortage of childcare options** across the County. Respondents consistently noted that the lack of affordable and available daycares as a major barrier for young families as many parents are unable to work or grow their families due to the lack of options. Long waitlists and closures of daycares compound the issue.
- Many expressed that **current regulations** are too restrictive, limiting the ability of providers to operate effectively and serve the community's needs.
- Suggestions included promoting the establishment of more childcare centers, potentially through large local employers (hospital?), and reducing regulatory burdens to help existing providers.
- Calls for **financial assistance** and incentives for both new and existing childcare providers were prominent, as many believe that enhancing childcare availability is crucial for community sustainability and attracting residents.

### Environmental Concerns:

- Respondents highlighted issues with **air and water quality**, noting pollution in local rivers/streams and lakes, and a general lack of environmental conservation efforts.
- There is a strong desire for improved **recycling programs** and more proactive measures to enhance environmental health, including better farming practices to combat erosion and pollution.
- Many expressed a need for community-wide **recycling initiatives**, including better participation and convenience.

### Economic Development:

- Economic development is perceived as stagnant, with comments about inadequate job opportunities, low wages, and a lack of support for local businesses.
- Respondents indicated that many businesses are closing, and there is little incentive for new companies to establish themselves in the area.
- Concerns about **youth retention** were raised, with many noting that young families are leaving the area due to limited job prospects, high taxes and lack of childcare.

- Suggestions for improvement included promoting new businesses, ensuring competitive wages, and fostering a more welcoming environment for entrepreneurship.

## Leadership

- **Concerns About Local Governance:** Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with local leadership, particularly at city level, citing poor responsiveness, lack of accountability, and inadequate enforcement of ordinances.
- **Economic and Regulatory Issues:** There were calls for better communication regarding tax spending and regulatory concerns affecting local development.

## Housing

- **Affordability and Availability:** High property taxes and rising housing costs were major concerns, with a noted lack of affordable housing options for families and seniors. Many reported long waiting lists for rentals and criticized the quality of existing housing.
- **Need for Diversity in Housing:** A desire for more varied housing types, including family homes and senior living facilities, was highlighted to attract and retain residents.

## Population Retention

- **Job Opportunities:** Retaining young people is seen as critical, with many citing a lack of good jobs and economic opportunities as reasons for outmigration.
- **Community and Inclusivity:** Concerns about a perceived lack of inclusivity and safety for minorities were raised, affecting the attractiveness of the area for younger generations.

## Recreation

- **Limited Recreational Opportunities:** Many expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of outdoor recreation options, following the loss of the state park, and called for improved access to water/streams/rivers and more family-friendly activities.

## Agriculture and Economy

- **Impact of Large Farms:** There is a perception that larger farms are pushing smaller ones out, affecting rural community dynamics.

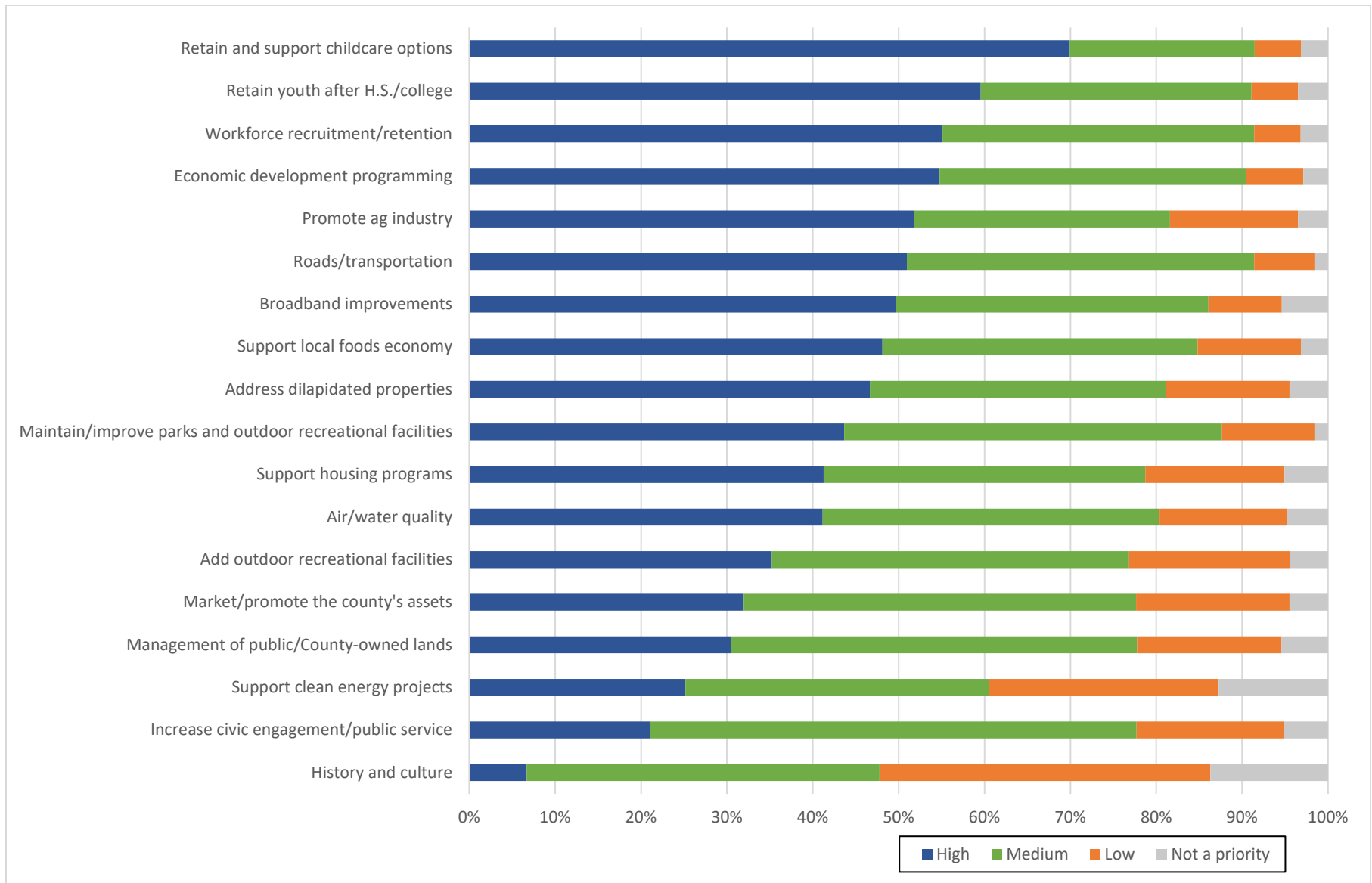
## Infrastructure and Services

- **Road Conditions and Internet Access:** Poor road maintenance and unreliable internet service were major grievances, with calls for improved infrastructure and expanded broadband options.
- **Healthcare Services:** Some expressed concerns about the local healthcare facilities.

## Marketing and Communication

- **Visibility and Information:** There were comments about how the County's marketing efforts and communication could be improved, particularly regarding the usability of the County website and social media outreach.

**Q6. What should the County focus its time, energy and dollars in the next 5-10 years? (317 responses)**



## Summary of Q6 Comments...

### Housing and Community Development

- **Senior Housing:** There is a need for improved affordable housing options, particularly for seniors.
- **Dilapidated Properties:** Addressing and cleaning up dilapidated properties is a priority, with suggestions for incentives to renovate rather than abandon buildings.

### Economic Concerns

- **Tax Reduction:** A strong desire for lowering taxes and cutting unnecessary budget expenses, with a belief that the free market should drive economic growth without heavy government intervention.
- **Support for Agriculture:** Some felt that the agricultural sector receives excessive support and should not be prioritized over other industries.

### Infrastructure and Services

- **Broadband Access:** The need for improved broadband connectivity is highlighted as a top priority for the County.
- **Parks and Recreation:** There are calls for better maintenance and improvement of parks, including the replacement of the state park and enhancements to existing facilities.

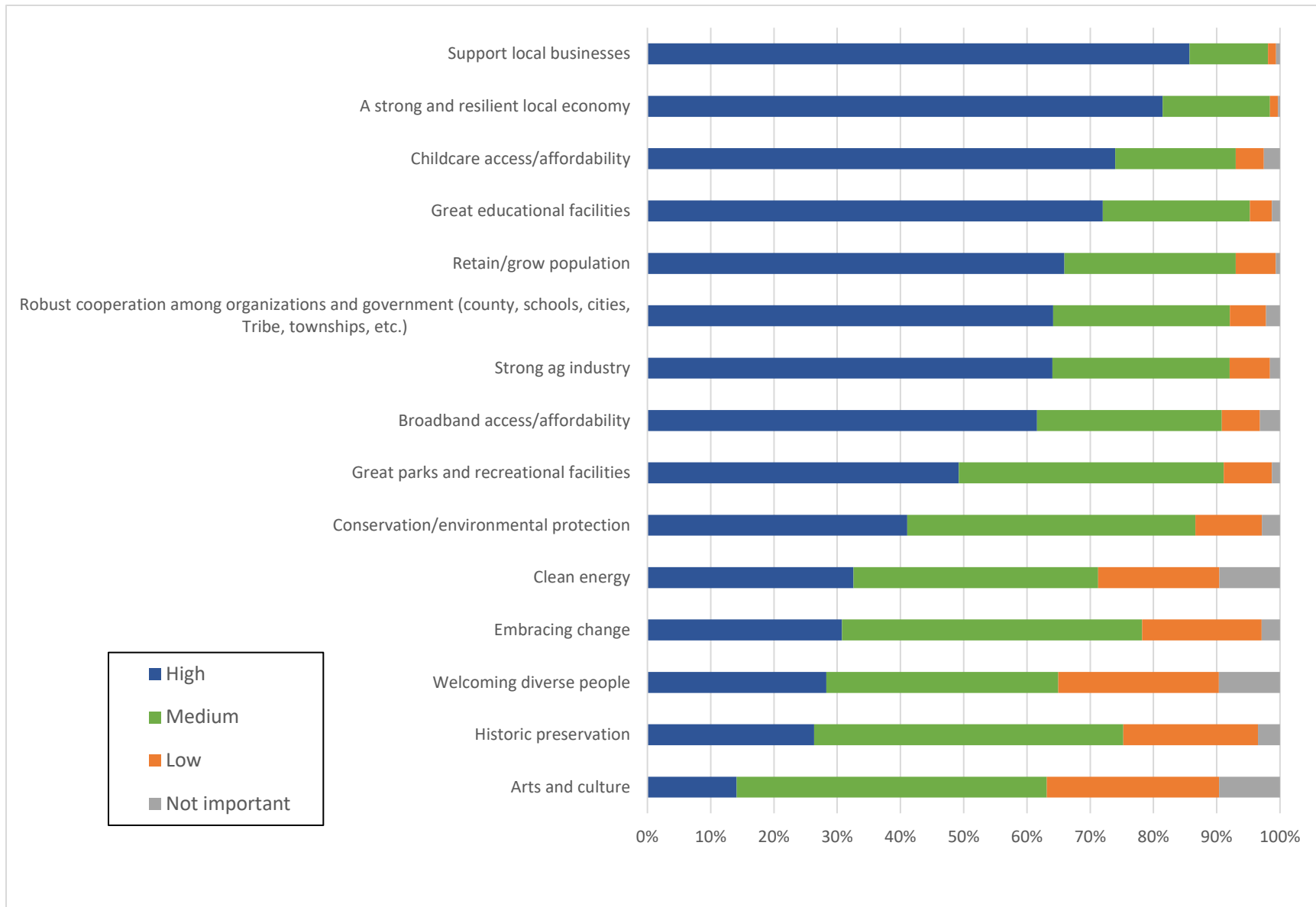
### Environmental Concerns

- **Wildlife and Land Management:** Concerns about responsible land use, wildlife preservation, and holding the DNR accountable for managing state lands effectively.
- **Recycling Participation:** A need to improve community participation in recycling initiatives.

### Community Engagement and Future Outlook

- **Public Input:** A strong desire for more public involvement in decision-making processes regarding community development and spending.
- **Future Growth:** A recognition of the challenges facing Yellow Medicine County, including population decline and business retention, with calls for proactive strategies to encourage growth and attract new businesses.

**Q7. Rate the importance of these. How important is it for Yellow Medicine County to have? (315 responses)**



## Summary of Q7 Comments...

### Community Concerns

- **Safety and Crime:** A strong emphasis on addressing crime and drug issues, with calls for a safer community environment.
- **Housing Needs:** Concerns about the lack of affordable and safe housing for young families and seniors, alongside a call to improve neighborhood aesthetics in communities.

### Economic Issues

- **Taxes and Regulation:** An expressed dissatisfaction with high taxes and excessive regulations, advocating for a free-market approach to economic growth.
- **Job Opportunities:** There is a desire to support agriculture and manufacturing as key economic drivers, with an emphasis on attracting jobs that align with local values.

### Childcare and Education

- **Childcare Shortage:** A critical shortage of childcare facilities was highlighted, with calls for improved ratios and support for early childhood programs.

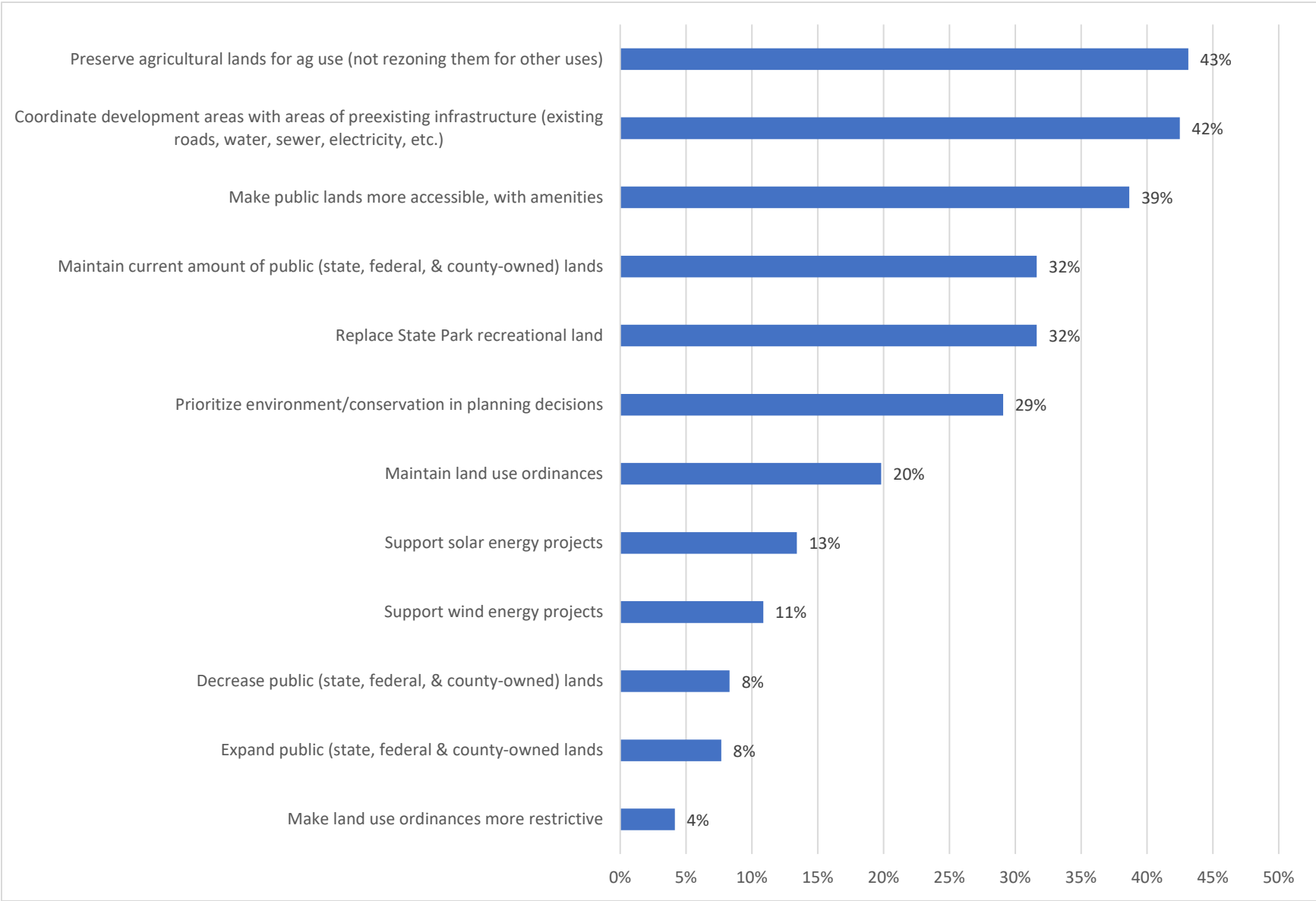
### Environmental and Energy Perspectives

- **Clean Energy Skepticism:** Many respondents expressed skepticism about clean energy initiatives, viewing them as ineffective or detrimental.
- **Environmental Preservation:** While skeptical of certain environmental policies, there is support for preserving wildlife and natural habitats, alongside ensuring clean drinking water.

### Community Pride and Engagement

- **Local Pride:** Encouragement for residents to take pride in their community/county, address dilapidated structures.
- **Equitable Services:** Concerns about disparities in service levels between different areas of the county, particularly between the east and west ends.

**Q8. What do you feel should be the priorities related to land use in Yellow Medicine County? (Pick your top 3) (313 responses)**





## Summary of Q9 Comments

### Economic Concerns

- **Job Opportunities:** There is a strong desire for better job availability and higher wages to retain residents and attract new businesses. Many respondents feel that the local economy is not providing sufficient employment opportunities.
- **Economic Development:** A need for diversifying and growing the local economies, with emphasis on attracting industries and supporting local businesses.
- **Childcare Availability:** A significant shortage of affordable childcare is hindering workforce participation and family retention in the area.

### Population Issues

- **Declining and Aging Population:** Many expressed concerns about the decreasing and aging population, with young people leaving for better opportunities elsewhere.
- **Community Engagement:** There is a perceived lack of community involvement and cooperation between different areas within the county.

### Infrastructure and Services

- **Road Maintenance:** Adequate upkeep of township roads is a recurring issue mentioned by respondents.
- **Housing:** A need for affordable housing options for families, seniors, and students was highlighted, as well as concerns about the condition of existing homes.

### Environmental and Recreational Concerns

- **Conservation and Recreation:** The loss of the state park and the need for more outdoor recreational opportunities were noted, along with a desire for improved environmental conservation efforts.
- **Pollution and Safety:** Issues related to water pollution, crime, and drug use were also significant concerns affecting the residents' perception of safety.

### Taxes and Government

- **High Taxes:** Respondents frequently cited high property taxes as a barrier to economic growth and personal financial stability. There were calls for greater transparency in how tax dollars are spent.

- **Welfare Dependency:** Some expressed concerns about welfare programs being perceived as overly generous, contributing to a cycle of dependency rather than encouraging workforce participation.

## **Educational Opportunities**

- **Workforce Education:** There is a strong need for educational initiatives that prepare young people for local job markets, ensuring they have the skills to compete for available positions.

## **Community Well-Being**

- **Mental Health Services:** The need for accessible mental health services was noted, particularly in the context of community support and well-being.
- **Crime and Safety:** Increased law enforcement presence and measures to combat drug use were suggested to improve safety.

Q10. Use two or three words to describe how you would like people to describe Yellow Medicine County in 10 years? (211 people answered)




**Q11. Please provide any final thoughts or additional comments**

- **Community Pride:** Many residents expressed pride in living in Yellow Medicine County and Granite Falls, appreciating the area's natural beauty, sense of community, and slower pace of life.
- **Support for Local Initiatives:** There's appreciation for efforts to maintain and improve the county, such as enhancing downtown Granite Falls and supporting local art and cultural events.
- **Community Engagement:** Residents value opportunities to provide feedback through surveys and discussions, indicating a desire for ongoing communication with local government.
- **Potential for Growth:** Several comments highlight the area's potential for economic development, particularly through tourism and outdoor activities, which could enhance quality of life and attract younger residents.
- **Acknowledgment of Progress:** Many express gratitude for what has already been done in the county and support for continued improvement efforts.
- **Support for Small Farms:** There is a strong emphasis on valuing small farms.
- **Community Needs:** Residents express a pressing need for affordable childcare, senior housing, and improved infrastructure, such as roads and reliable internet access. They also highlight the importance of cleaning up dilapidated properties and promoting recycling.
- **Environmental Concerns:** Many comments address climate change, with calls for better land conservation, historical preservation, and responsible environmental practices, along with concerns of current agricultural pollution.
- **Local Government Engagement:** A desire for more engagement to discuss community needs and issues, along with a call for equal services across the county and better cooperation among towns.
- **Economic Development:** Suggestions include attracting more jobs, promoting tourism through outdoor activities and community events, and developing housing options, especially for families.
- **Quality of Life Improvements:** Residents want enhanced community amenities, including recreational facilities, family restaurants, and vibrant main streets, as well as addressing drug problems and safety concerns.
- **Critique of Local Governance:** There are calls for reduced government regulation, less financial waste, and improved transparency in local politics.

# Appendix 2: Yellow Medicine County Highway Map

# Yellow Medicine County

## MINNESOTA

-  U.S. Highway (2-Lane, Multilane)
-  State Highway (2-Lane, Multilane)
-  County State Aid Highway (unpaved, paved)
-  County Road (unpaved, paved)
-  Township Road
-  City Street
-  Scenic Byway Main Route
-  Scenic Byway Alternate Route
-  Railroad
-  Section Line
-  City Limits
-  Wildlife Area
-  Park, Historic Site

The Yellow Medicine County addressing grid originates along the west and south borders of the county, with road numbers increasing as one travels to the east and north. Avenues run east/west, Streets run north/south. There are 100 potential residence numbers per mile.

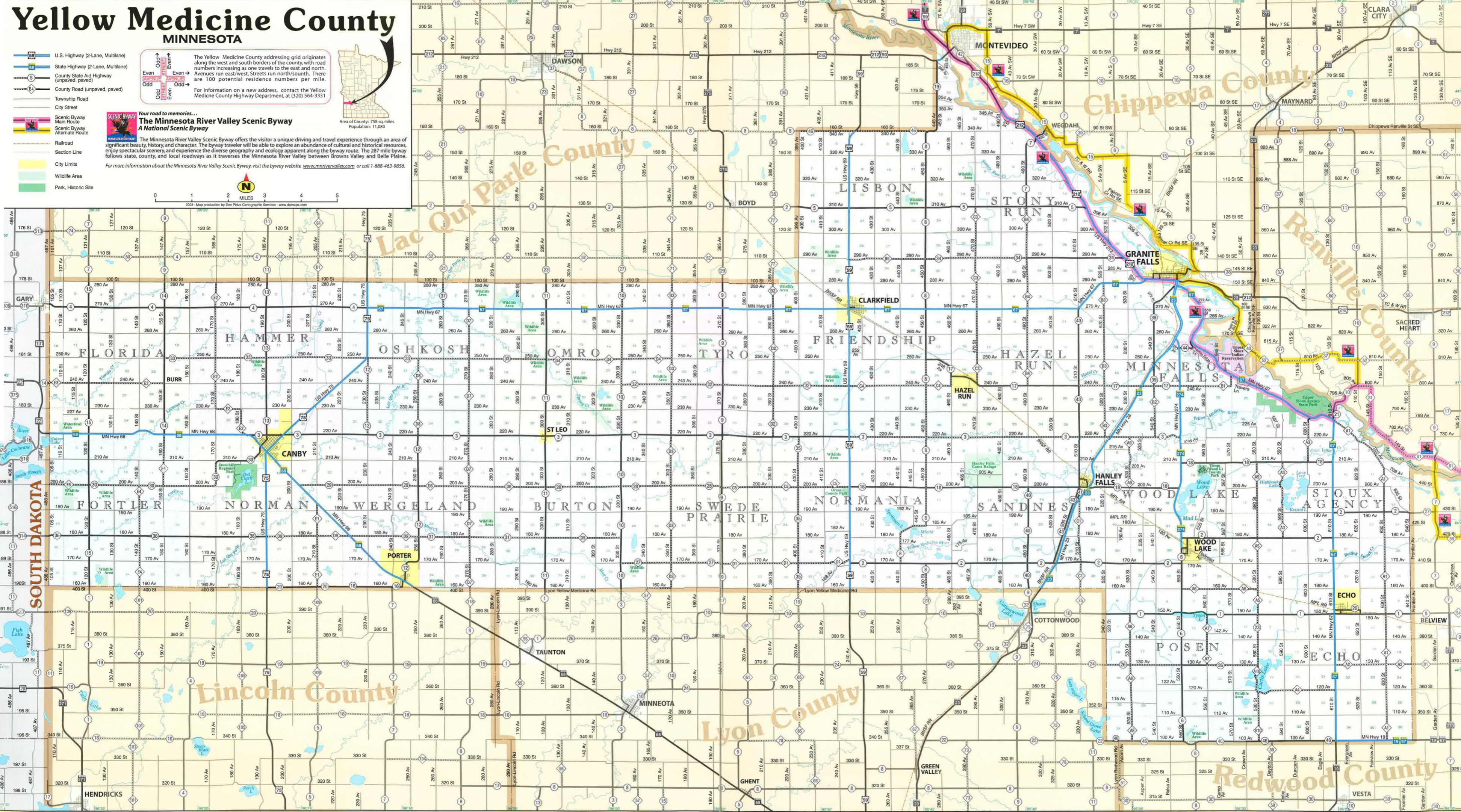
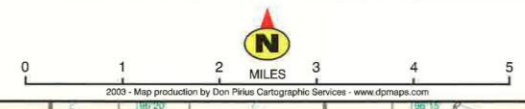
For information on a new address, contact the Yellow Medicine County Highway Department, at (320) 564-3331



### Your road to memories... The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway A National Scenic Byway

The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway offers the visitor a unique driving and travel experience through an area of significant beauty, history, and character. The byway traveler will be able to explore an abundance of cultural and historical resources, enjoy spectacular scenery, and experience the diverse geography and ecology apparent along the byway route. The 287 mile byway follows state, county, and local roadways as it traverses the Minnesota River Valley between Browns Valley and Belle Plaine.

For more information about the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway, visit the byway website [www.mnrivervalley.com](http://www.mnrivervalley.com) or call 1-888-463-9856.



# Appendix 3: Adopting Ordinance

**Comprehensive Plan Adoption:  
An Ordinance Adopting the Yellow Medicine County Comprehensive Plan.**

The County Board of Yellow Medicine County ordains:

**TITLE**

This Ordinance shall be titled and referred to as “The Yellow Medicine County Comprehensive Plan”. It referred to herein, it may also be known as “this Ordinance”.

**PURPOSE**

The Yellow Medicine County Comprehensive Plan has been prepared for the purposes of promoting the health, safety, morals and general welfare of Yellow Medicine County residents: guiding the future development of the County; and providing goals, objectives and strategies to serve as the basis for official controls of the County.

The Yellow Medicine Comprehensive Plan establishes a vision for the future. It is a guide to help the County identify what citizens value, do not want changed and feel should be improved. It provides day-to-day direction for the County in making decisions. In addition, the Plan serves the following purposes:

- Addresses the planning areas of housing, agriculture, business/economic development, transportation, natural resources/parks/recreation and county services. The Plan also considers social and economic issues.
- Ties together components of the County into a single “comprehensive” plan that reflects the interrelationships and the importance of all aspects of the County.
- Creates a forum for County residents to express and develop a long-range vision for Yellow Medicine County through the year 2045.
- Identifies key issues expressed by residents through public input.
- Sets goals, develops strategies for achieving the goals and creates an implementation process.

## **AUTHORITY**

The Yellow Medicine County Board has the power and authority under Minnesota Statute 394.23 to prepare and adopt by ordinance, a comprehensive plan. A comprehensive plan when adopted by ordinance must be the basis for official controls.

## **GOALS**

Goal 1: To support and encourage quality, affordable housing for all stages of life and socioeconomic backgrounds that provide residents a safe, appealing living environment.

Goal 2: To support agricultural strategies and opportunities that encourage economic growth, diversity and rural preservation in the County.

Goal 3: Encourage sustainable, viable economic strategies and opportunities that achieve a balanced distribution of economic growth throughout the County.

Goal 4: To improve and maintain a diverse transportation system and road network that is safe, functional and environmentally sound.

Goal 5: To encourage a balanced and harmonious relationship between the County's natural resources/parks/recreation and the County's socioeconomic factors.

Goal 6: To provide the residents of the County with affordable, quality services that meet the needs of the people while within the County's financial limitations.

## **REPEAL AND ADOPTION**

The Yellow Medicine County Board of Commissioners hereby repeals the Yellow Medicine County Land and Related Resources Plan adopted on April 25, 2006, and as amended, and hereby replaces that document with this Ordinance – “The Yellow Medicine County Comprehensive Plan”.

## **EFFECTIVE DATE**

This Ordinance shall be in full force and effect after its passage and publication, as provided by law. Adopted this 16th day, of December, 2025.



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**John Berends, Yellow Medicine County Board Chair**