



City of Blair Comprehensive Plan

Blair, Wisconsin

BLAIR 140812 | March 13, 2018



Building a Better World
for All of Us®

Engineers | Architects | Planners | Scientists

City of Blair Comprehensive Plan

City of Blair Comprehensive Plan
Blair, Wisconsin

Prepared for:
City of Blair
Blair, Wisconsin

Prepared by:
Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc.
10 North Bridge Street
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729-2550
715.720.6200

In Conjunction with:



Acknowledgments

Common Council

Ardell Knutson, Mayor
Jill Anderson
Wanda Cartrette
Chris Ekern
Tim Robertson
Paul Syverson
Terry Wheeler

Plan Commission

Mayor Ardell Knutson
Alderson Wanda Cartrette
Alderson Tim Robertson
Rod Anderson
Gary Olson
Brian Stenberg
Robert Tranberg

Clerk/Treasurer

Susan Frederixon

Funding provided by the Department of Housing and Urban Development – Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG), administered by the Wisconsin Department of Administration

The individuals above, along with many other City staff, community leaders, and City residents and business owners were instrumental in the creation of this Plan.

Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc. (SEH) was retained by the City of Blair to assist in developing this Comprehensive Plan. SEH is a multidisciplinary, professional services firm comprised of 800 engineers, architects, planners and scientists in a full range of transportation, civil, environmental and structural engineering services; urban design, community planning and architectural design; and technology and GIS services.

Contents

Certification Page
Acknowledgements Page
Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.2	Scope of the Comprehensive Plan	2
1.3	The City of Blair Planning Effort.....	2
1.4	The City of Blair Planning Process and Public Involvement	2
2	Issues and Opportunities	4
2.1	Introduction.....	4
2.2	Vision Statement	4
2.3	Public Input.....	4
2.4	Key Issues.....	9
3	Housing	25
3.1	Existing Conditions	25
3.2	Housing Programs.....	30
3.3	Assessment of Future Needs	32
3.4	Goals, Objectives and Policies	32
4	Transportation Element.....	35
4.1	Introduction.....	35
4.2	Background Data/Existing Conditions	35
4.3	Relationship to State and Regional Transportation Plans	45
4.4	Assessment of Future Needs	46
4.5	Goals, Objectives and Policies	48
5	Utilities and Community Facilities.....	50
5.1	Introduction.....	50
5.2	Existing Conditions	50
5.3	Assessment of Future Needs	60
5.4	Goals, Objectives and Policies	62
6	Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources	65
6.1	Introduction.....	65
6.2	Existing Conditions	65
6.3	Existing Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Programs.....	78

Contents (continued)

6.4	Assessment of Future Needs	79
6.5	Goals, Objectives and Policies	81
7	Economic Development	82
7.1	Introduction.....	82
7.2	Existing Conditions	82
7.3	Assessment of Future Conditions.....	84
7.4	Local Plans and Programs	91
7.5	Goals, Objectives and Policies	92
8	Intergovernmental Cooperation.....	94
8.1	Existing Conditions	94
8.2	Assessment of Future Conditions.....	96
8.3	Growth Trends and Planning Activities in Adjacent Communities	96
8.4	Goals, Objectives and Policies	97
9	Land Use.....	98
9.1	Land Use Summary	98
9.2	Land Use Agencies and Programs	113
9.3	Goals, Objectives and Policies	113
10	Implementation.....	115
10.1	Action Plan	115
10.2	Plan Integration and Consistency	115
10.3	Plan Monitoring and Evaluation	116
10.4	Plan Amendments and Updates	127

List of Tables

Table 2-1 – Historical Population and Population Change - 1970 to 2015	9
Table 2-2 – Population Projections - 2010 to 2040 - Trempealeau County by Minor Civil Division	10
Table 2-3 – Household Projections 2010-2040 - Trempealeau County by Municipality	11
Table 2-4 – City of Blair and Trempealeau County Age Distribution	12
Table 2-5 – Blair and Trempealeau County Labor Force	13
Table 2-6 – Place of Work - 2010 to 2015 - Blair	14
Table 2-7 – Commuting Characteristics - 2000 to 2015 - City of Blair.....	14
Table 2-8 – Education Level - Persons 25 years and over - Blair and Trempealeau County - 2000 and 2015	15
Table 2-9 – City of Blair School District Enrollment.....	15

Contents (continued)

Table 2-10 – Private Schools for Blair-Taylor Public School District	16
Table 2-11 – Blair-Taylor School District Homeschooling	16
Table 2-12 – 2015-2016 ACT Scores by School District	16
Table 2-13 – Family Income - 2011-2015.....	18
Table 2-14 – Median Household Income - 2000 and 2011-2015 - Trempealeau County	18
Table 2-15 – Blair Employment by Industry - 2015	19
Table 2-16 – Blair Employment by Occupation	19
Table 2-17 – Trempealeau County Establishments by Industry - 2012 to 2015.....	20
Table 2-18 – Average Annual Wages by Industry	21
Table 2-19 – Top 10 Employers in Trempealeau County - September 2014	21
Table 2-20 – Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Area Industry Projections	22
Table 2-21 – Occupation Employment Projections for Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Area - 2014 to 2024	23
Table 3-1 – Housing Units - 2000-2015.....	25
Table 3-2 – Year Structure Built - 2015.....	26
Table 3-3 – Housing Characteristics - 2010 to 2015	26
Table 3-4 – Units in Structure - 2015.....	27
Table 3-5 – Housing Value of Specified Owner Occupied Units - 2015	28
Table 3-6 – Owner Occupied Housing Costs as a Percentage of Household Income - 2015.....	28
Table 3-7 – Renter Occupied Housing Costs as a Percentage of Household Income - 2015.....	29
Table 3-8 – Average Household Size – 2000 - 2010.....	29
Table 3-9 – Household Projections 2010-2040 - Trempealeau County by Municipality	29
Table 3-10 – Housing Unit Projections - Blair.....	30
Table 9-1 – 2012 to 2017 Land Use - City of Blair	99
Table 9-2 – 2017 Real Estate Valuation.....	100
Table 9-3 – Land Value per Acre	104
Table 9-4 – Projected Acreage Needs	110

List of Figures

Figure 1-1 – Blair Location Map	1
Figure 4-1 – Roadway Functions	35
Figure 4-2 – Blair Roadway.....	37
Figure 4-3 – Blair Roadway Functional Classification (2017)	38
Figure 4-4 – Railroads.....	40
Figure 4-5 – Long Truck Operators Map	42
Figure 4-6 – Snowmobile Trails.....	43

Contents (continued)

Figure 4-7 – Trempealeau County Bike Map.....	44
Figure 9-1 – Zoning Map - City of Blair.....	101
Figure 9-2 – Current Land Use - City of Blair	102
Figure 9-3 – Generalized Future Land Use	112

List of Appendices

Appendix A	Market Analysis
Appendix B	Financial Management Plan

P:\AE\B\Blair\140812\8-planning\Comp Plan Update\Comp Plan Update 1.17.18.docx

Prepared for City of Blair

The City of Blair is a community that has experienced very rapid land use change in the past decade. The City lies along the Trempealeau River corridor, which provides excellent recreational resources.

Blair was built along the railroad – and still today, this plays a critical role in the current development of the City. First settled in the 1850's – the city's population was largely Norwegian – and that heritage is still celebrated today. In 1873, John Insley Blair, one of the Green Bay and Western's chief investors, routed the railroad through the City.

The City has experienced growth since the 1950's, and is expected to continue growing at a steady rate. The City's location with regard to transportation access, good-paying jobs, and natural amenities make the City a desired destination for people of all ages.

[illegible]

Assessed land use in the City of Blair is primarily agricultural in terms of acres. However, there is a significant amount of acreage throughout the City that is industrial in nature. The City, along with neighboring incorporated communities, has been able to expand their corporate limits numerous times to allow for continued growth. Managing this growth through the future will be important for the City to remain fiscally sound.

U.S. Highway 53 and State Highway 95 run through Blair and – in terms of western Wisconsin, offer good connectivity between the regional economic hubs of Eau Claire and La Crosse.

1.2 Scope of the Comprehensive Plan

The 1999 Wisconsin Legislative Act 9 created a framework in the State of Wisconsin for community planning. There are nine elements of a Comprehensive Plan that must be addressed under the current planning legislation. These nine elements include the following:

1. Issues and Opportunities
2. Housing
3. Transportation
4. Utilities and Community Facilities
5. Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources
6. Economic Development
7. Intergovernmental Cooperation
8. Land Use
9. Implementation

According to Wisconsin Statute, the Comprehensive Plan shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the community. In accordance with existing and future needs, the Comprehensive Plan will promote public health, safety, and general welfare of the entire community. The Planning Law requires zoning, official mapping, and subdivision regulations be consistent with a Comprehensive Plan.

1.3 The City of Blair Planning Effort

Blair's current Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2009 and is being updated in accordance with the State Statute. The plan update process began in the spring of 2017. Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc. (SEH) was retained to assist the City of Blair in the planning process and the update of their Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan is being prepared through the guidance of the City's Plan Commission. This group represents a wide range of interests to ensure that the entire community's values and interests are expressed in the Comprehensive Plan.

1.4 The City of Blair Planning Process and Public Involvement

The City of Blair is committed to an open public involvement/ outreach program that invites participation in the decision-making process from all City residents. The City engaged the community in the development of planning related items and tasks that are discussed in the Comprehensive Plan.

*Comprehensive
Planning Answers
Three Questions:*

- 1) *Where has the community been?*
- 2) *Where do we want to be in 20 years?*
- 3) *What will it take to get there?*

The City of Blair had a Market Analysis completed to help project future development that the City could reasonably expect. Separate analysis was performed for Residential, Commercial and Industrial development throughout the City. This study can be found in Appendix A.

Meeting notices for all Plan Commission meetings are advertised and open to the public.

The City also conducted a community-wide workshop to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for the community. Input from the workshop was used to aid in the formulation of goals and a Vision Statement to guide the update of the Comprehensive Plan.

Finally – using projections of capital improvements and investments, balanced by anticipated revenues for the City, Ehlers & Associates put together a Financial Management Plan for the City to utilize over the next several years. Contents of this can be found in Appendix B.

2 Issues and Opportunities

2.1 Introduction

The Issues and Opportunities section is designed to be the primary source of background information for the Comprehensive Plan. This element will be referred to throughout the document, and much of the information contained in the Issues and Opportunities Element will be utilized when considering goals, objectives, and policies for the plan.

2.2 Vision Statement

Based on the public input received below, Committee members worked to identify a Vision Statement for the City of Blair.

The City of Blair strives to be a growing community in the heart of Trempealeau County with strong and stable employers, with progressive environment that welcomes and supports future business and economic growth. The City will continue to provide quality public infrastructure that serves all development types, and will offer an excellent four-season quality of life through access to outstanding water resources, community-oriented civic groups, world class fishing and hunting recreational opportunities, and excellent local education and park systems.

2.3 Public Input

On August 15, 2017, dozens of residents, business owners and landowners gathered to participate in the City of Blair's Comprehensive Plan Update by identifying the City's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

When we evaluate the SWOT analysis the City completed, the results can be summarized into three major groupings: Local Business and Industry, Public Infrastructure and Organizations, and Quality of Life.





City of Blair Comprehensive Plan

SWOT Voting Summary



Economic Base – Better our Community by Strengthening Economic Resiliency

One of the themes that ran through the SWOT meeting is that Blair has a good economic base with a relatively stable history in AMPI, Grand View Nursing Home and the mining industry. However, many (48 percent) of the weaknesses identified involved Blair's lack of businesses, particularly those in the retail sector, limited local job opportunities, including those for recent graduates, limited industrial diversity and a struggling downtown district. Participants identified several opportunities in the economy, including the empty and available properties for redevelopment. Threats to the community economics included skilled employees and jobs, businesses leaving and/or closing, e-commerce, residents being too mobile and the repetition of businesses from neighboring communities.

Quality Infrastructure and Community Facilities – A Strong Base for a Great City

Many of Blair's Strengths revolved around community facilities, such as the good school system, great park, being safe, having an excellent Fire Department and good community organizations. Weaknesses included the need to dredge Lake Henry, aging infrastructure, and there only being one east-west corridor through the City. A vote recipient in the Opportunities category that was related to infrastructure or community facilities were several park improvements, a community center with greater youth options, having a second east-west corridor through the City, collaborating with neighboring communities, and improvements to Lake Henry. Threats related to infrastructure included the rising cost of infrastructure, levy limits, and the ease of transportation leading to residents being very mobile, and being able to commute to other communities for work and retail.

Community Appearance – Resident Pride and an Improved Quality of Life

One of the strongest community sentiments that became evident throughout the SWOT meetings was that community pride and the appearance of the City is very important to the community. People are very proud of the community, and characterize it as a Great Place to Raise a Family, quiet/small, safe, generous. These are strengths to build from. Weaknesses included poorly kept properties and the trailer park, no activities for teens outside of school, and limited job opportunities. Key opportunities to combat these weaknesses include park improvements, having a community center with greater youth options, beautification of properties, and promoting activities/events with a new community sign. The threats included many concerns about local businesses and jobs, meth and drug-related problems, retention of young people, the City needing stronger ordinances and better enforcement of them, lack of pride of ownership, and juvenile boredom.

Complete Vote Tally, August 15

Strengths	Votes
Good School System	19
Great Park	14
Safe	10
Generous People/Supportive	7
Excellent Fire Department	6
Good Place to Raise Family	4
Quiet/Small	3
Moderate Real Estate Tax	2
Rail Structure/Transportation	2
Plentiful Housing/Moderately Priced	2
Nursing Home	2
Public Library	1
Grand View/AMPI/Mining	1
Community Organizations	1
Friendly, Clean Community	
Close to Family	
Scholarships Available	
Cheese Fest	
Variety of Churches	
Great Size	
Industry Jobs	
Community Involvement	

Weaknesses	Votes
Lack of Business	20
Need to Dredge Lake Henry	15
Limited Local Job Opportunities for Grads (Not Attractive to Young People)	8
Poor Kept Properties/Trailer Park	8
Aging Infrastructure	6
Limited Industrial Diversity	5
Only One Access through Community	4
No Activities for Teens Outside School	4
Struggling Downtown District	3
Lack of Rental Property	1
Potential Drug Problems	
Shared Sewer System	
Property Valuations	
Willingness to Join in Community Organizations	
No Grocery Store	

Complete Vote Tally, August 15 (Continued)

Opportunities	Votes
Potential for New Business - Empty Buildings	23
Park Improvements	15
Community Center combined with Youth Options	13
2nd Main through Street/Corridor	9
Collaboration with Neighboring Communities	7
Utilize/Improve Lake Henry	6
Follow-Through on Beautification of Current Properties	2
Regional Housing Shortage	2
Promote Activities/ Events via New Community Sign	1
Improve Tourism/Camping	
Creative Use for 2nd Lutheran Church/Cultural Center	
Regional Community Cooperation	
Wineries	
Retired Folks Need More Events	
Cheese Fest, Fireworks and Christmas Fair	

Threats	Votes
Skilled Employees and Jobs	12
Businesses Leaving/Closing	11
Meth/Opiates	9
People not Engaged	8
Retention of Young People	6
Need Stronger Ordinances and Better Enforcement	5
Not Taking Ownership/Pride of Property	3
Levy Limits (City, Town, School)	3
Rising Cost of Infrastructure	3
Juvenile Boredom	3
E-Commerce	2
Ease of Transportation/Too Mobile	2
Next Generation Involvement	2
Repetition of Businesses from Neighboring Communities	2
Lack of Social Services	1
Culture	1
Community Members Resistant to Change	
Kwik Trip/Wal-Mart	
Elimination of Family Farms	
Aging Population	
Open Availability of Internet	

2.4 Key Issues

Population

Historically, the City of Blair's population has been slowly increasing the past several decades. Most recently, the 1990's and 2000's saw a relatively small increase in total population. From 2010 to 2015 the data suggests there has been a small decline in the population, however data from years between the decennial censuses are collected via samples, which may result in higher margins of error.

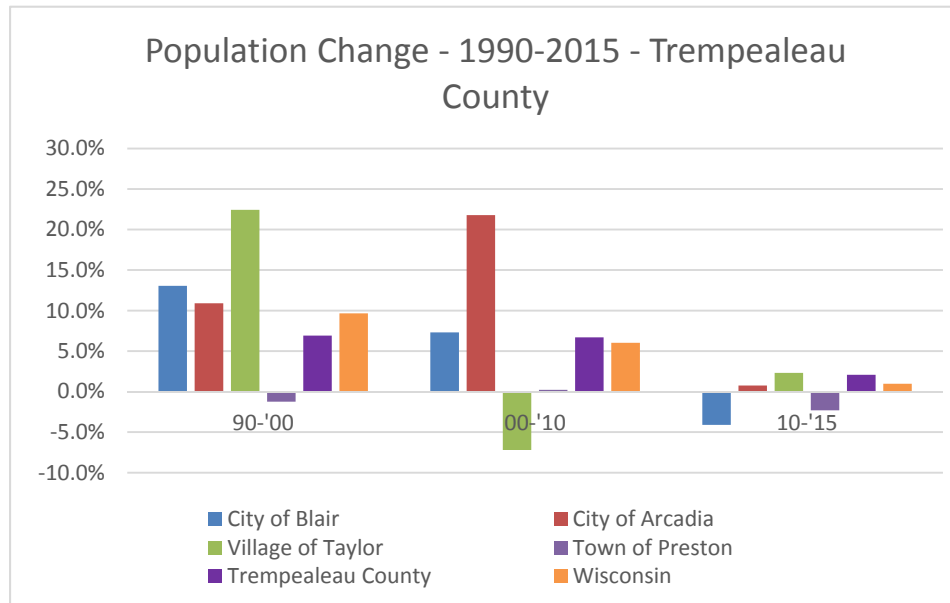


Table 2-1 – Historical Population and Population Change - 1970 to 2015

Unit of Government	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015	Percentage Change				
							70-'80	80-'90	90-'00	00-'10	10-'15
City of Blair	1,036	1,142	1,126	1,273	1,366	1,310	10.2%	-1.4%	13.1%	7.3%	-4.1%
City of Arcadia	2,159	2,109	2,166	2,402	2,925	2,947	-2.3%	2.7%	10.9%	21.8%	0.8%
City of Whitehall	1,486	1,530	1,499	1,651	1,558	1,676	3.0%	-2.0%	10.1%	-5.6%	7.6%
City of Independence	1,036	1,180	1,041	1,244	1,336	1,624	13.9%	-11.8%	19.5%	7.4%	21.6%
Village of Hixton	300	364	345	446	433	423	21.3%	-5.2%	29.3%	-2.9%	-2.3%
Village of Taylor	322	411	419	513	476	487	27.6%	1.9%	22.4%	-7.2%	2.3%
Town of Preston	1,027	1,112	963	951	953	931	8.3%	-13.4%	-1.2%	0.2%	-2.3%
Trempealeau County	23,344	26,158	25,263	27,010	28,816	29,412	12.1%	-3.4%	6.9%	6.7%	2.1%
Wisconsin	417,821	4,705,642	4,891,796	5,363,715	5,686,986	5,742,117	6.5%	4.0%	9.6%	6.0%	1.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The City of Blair's growth rate has recently been relatively consistent with the County growth rate. The City of Independence has seen the largest growth in the area since the 1990's

Population Projections

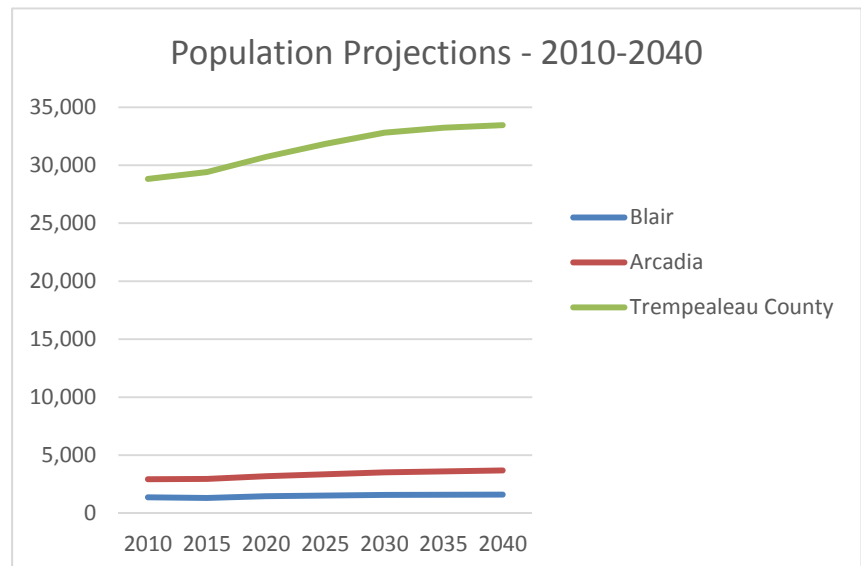
Population projections are used to assess development prospects and community facility needs created by population growth. Small area population forecasts can be used to evaluate potential residential development, economic conditions, and the level of demand for public facilities and services. This estimate of future growth is also valuable information for establishing management techniques in order to provide for orderly growth and development.

Table 2-2 – Population Projections - 2010 to 2040 - Trempealeau County by Minor Civil Division

Municipality	Census	Estimate	Projection					Change 2010-2040	
	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	Number	Percent
Blair	1,366	1,310	1,460	1,515	1,565	1,590	1,600	234	17.1%
Arcadia	2,925	2,947	3,185	3,350	3,510	3,605	3,680	755	25.8%
Whitehall	1,558	1,676	1,570	1,580	1,580	1,555	1,520	-38	-2.4%
Independence	1,336	1,624	1,435	1,500	1,555	1,585	1,600	264	19.8%
Hixton	433	423	440	450	450	445	435	2	0.5%
Taylor	476	487	495	505	515	510	500	24	5.0%
T. Preston	953	931	1,005	1,035	1,055	1,060	1,460	507	53.2%
Trempealeau County	28,816	29,412	30,725	31,840	32,810	33,240	33,450	4,634	16.1%
Wisconsin	5,686,986	5,742,117	6,005,080	6,203,850	6,375,910	6,476,270	6,491,635	804,649	14.1%

Source: U.S. Census & Wisconsin Department of Administration

The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) population projections are, by state statute, the official population projections for Wisconsin. Over the next 20 years, the DOA projections predict a 17 percent increase in the City of Blair's population, which amounts to 234 additional residents (Table 2-2).



This projected percentage increase is similar to the expected increases in Trempealeau County (16.1 percent). The City of Arcadia, which is the largest city in Trempealeau County, is also predicted to grow by around 25 percent by 2040.

Household and Housing Unit Projections

Housing projections are helpful to estimate how much land will be consumed by future development. As households and housing units increase, there is an increased demand for public facilities and services.

The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) provides household projections. The City of Blair is projected to see a 120 household increase, or 21.0 percent from the year 2010 to 2040 as shown in Table 2-3. Trempealeau County is expected to see a 21.6 percent increase. By 2040, the City is projected to have an average household size of 2.15, compared to 2.33 for Trempealeau County.

Table 2-3 – Household Projections 2010-2040 - Trempealeau County by Municipality

Municipality	Census	Estimate	Projections					Change 2010-2040	
	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	Number	Percent
Blair	571	590	622	647	672	684	691	120	21.0%
Trempealeau County	11,524	11,913	12,521	13,023	13,534	13,805	14,008	2,484	21.6%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration

Housing unit projections are intended to provide an estimate of the number of housing units that will be developed through the year 2040. Over the past decade, Blair has seen relatively little new housing development. With the development of the Wildcat subdivision, and some potential for residential development with a potential second east-west through street, it may be reasonable for the City to see a moderate growth in housing development. As indicated in the Market Study, a general preference seen within the Trempealeau County area is for more rural development. With the expanded geographic reach of the City, there may be some growth captured in these areas as well. In 2010, Blair had 638 housing units – the market study indicated that a reasonable goal would be for the City, under the right conditions, to capture 30-40 new housing units over the next ten years.

Age

The age of residents in a community is important in identifying the needs of the community. Table 2-4 shows Blair and Trempealeau County age distributions. Blair's median age (35.8) is significantly younger than Trempealeau County's (40.7) and slightly younger than Wisconsin's median age of 38.5. Blair has more residents under 18 than Trempealeau County, but when drilling down into the data a bit further, the gap is generated in residents aged 10-18. Proportionally, there are fewer families with young families in Blair. However – there is a slightly higher proportion of persons in the 25-34 age categories, which is the children-producing generation, so this may reverse slightly in the near future.

Table 2-4 – City of Blair and Trempealeau County Age Distribution

	Blair					Trempealeau County				
	2000		2011-2015 Est.		Proportional Change	2000		2011-2015 Est.		Proportional Change
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Under 5	81	6.4%	80	6.1%	-0.3%	1,663	6.2%	1,983	6.7%	0.6%
5 to 9	86	6.8%	71	5.4%	-1.3%	1,940	7.2%	1,926	6.5%	-0.6%
10 to 19	140	11.0%	240	18.3%	7.3%	3,884	14.4%	3,872	13.2%	-1.2%
20 to 24	60	4.7%	66	5.0%	0.3%	1,231	4.6%	1,470	5.0%	0.4%
25 to 34	156	12.3%	171	13.1%	0.8%	3,317	12.3%	3,339	11.4%	-0.9%
35 to 44	155	12.2%	156	11.9%	-0.3%	4,300	15.9%	3,610	12.3%	-3.6%
45 to 54	127	10.0%	131	10.0%	0.0%	3,688	13.7%	4,283	14.6%	0.9%
55 to 64	105	8.2%	143	10.9%	2.7%	2,552	9.4%	4,032	13.7%	4.3%
65 to 74	106	8.3%	129	9.8%	1.5%	2,030	7.5%	2,603	8.9%	1.3%
75 to 84	183	14.4%	61	4.7%	-9.7%	1,691	6.3%	1,570	5.3%	-0.9%
85 and over	74	5.8%	62	4.7%	-1.1%	714	2.6%	724	2.5%	-0.2%
Under 18	276	21.7%	349	26.6%	5.0%	6,844	25.3%	7,141	24.3%	-1.1%
Over 65	363	28.5%	252	19.2%	-9.3%	4,435	16.4%	4,897	16.6%	0.2%
Total	1,273		1,310		37	27,010		29,412		2,402
Median Age	42.3		35.8		-6.5	38.3		40.7		2.4

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey

Labor Force

As shown in Table 2-5, the labor force participation rate in the City of Blair has been very constant and stable since 2000. Trempealeau County follows the trend as well. The City of Blair and Trempealeau County have lower rates of unemployment than the national average.

Table 2-5 – Blair and Trempealeau County Labor Force

City of Blair	2000	2011-2015 Est.
Persons Age 16 and over	1,011	990
In Labor Force	581	664
Percent in Labor Force	57.5%	67.1%
Employed	556	643
Unemployed	25	21
Percent Unemployed	2.5%	2.1%
Trempealeau County	2000	2011-2015 Est.
Persons Age 16 and over	21,021	23,017
In Labor Force	14,540	15,740
Percent in Labor Force	69.2%	68.4%
Employed	14,028	15,166
Unemployed	510	574
Percent Unemployed	2.4%	2.5%
Percent Unemployed - February 2017		4.7%
Wisconsin Unemployed - June 2016		4.5%
U.S. Unemployed - June 2016		4.9%

Source: U.S. Census, ACS and Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

Employment

The area's economy is a major contributor to the employment opportunities available to residents of Blair. The principal economic factors that influence an individual's quality of life and provide a choice of residential options are employment opportunities and income.

The average commute time for City of Blair residents is 20.8 minutes. Trempealeau County's average commute time is 21.4 minutes, which means that Blair residents travel less than average. Individuals working at home and not commuting on a daily basis also decreased during these times, a trend that is most often reversed. This is important in part because it is one indicator of the use of existing transportation infrastructure. It also provides an important economic factor. As people experience longer commutes, they are driving more, resulting in higher fuel consumption and costs.

From viewing the 2000 Census and the 2010-2015 American Community Survey (ACS), it can be seen in Table 2-6 that City of Blair residents working within Blair increased by seven percent. Over three-quarters of Blair residents work in Trempealeau County. This is around what is generally anticipated. The percentage of individuals working outside of Trempealeau County went down from 2010 to 2015 by 2 percent.

Table 2-6 – Place of Work - 2010 to 2015 - Blair

Place of Work	2010		2015	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
City of Blair	161	27.1%	218	34.2%
Trempealeau County	469	79.0%	517	81.2%
Other Wisconsin County	125	21.0%	120	18.8%
Outside Wisconsin	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
TOTAL WORKERS 16+	594	100.0%	637	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census and ACS

Table 2-7 – Commuting Characteristics - 2000 to 2015 - City of Blair

	Blair		Trempealeau County	
	2000	2015	2000	2015
Car, truck, or van - drove alone	68.5%	84.1%	74.7%	81.3%
Car, truck, or van - carpooled	19.6%	7.2%	11.8%	8.7%
Public Transportation	0.0%	0.5%	0.2%	0.2%
Walked	8.6%	3.9%	5.3%	3.9%
Other Means	1.1%	1.3%	0.9%	1.4%
Worked at Home	2.2%	3.0%	7.1%	4.6%
Mean Travel Time	28.7	20.8	21.9	21.4

Educational Attainment

The Census provides information on the educational attainment levels, which are summarized in Table 2-8 below. City of Blair residents, on average, have a slightly lower level of education compared to residents of Trempealeau County and the State of Wisconsin. Wisconsin has 91 percent of residents 25 years and over with a high school diploma or higher. Comparatively, the City of Blair (84.5 percent) is lower than the state average, as is Trempealeau County (88.5 percent).

Table 2-8 – Education Level - Persons 25 years and over - Blair and Trempealeau County - 2000 and 2015

Highest Education	Blair				Trempealeau County			
	2000		2010-2015		2000		2010-2015	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Less than high school diploma	230	25.8%	132	15.5%	3,494	19.1%	2,322	11.5%
High school graduate	389	43.6%	339	39.7%	7,485	40.9%	7,813	38.8%
Some college, no degree	138	15.5%	209	24.5%	3,387	18.5%	3,959	19.6%
Associate Degree	47	5.3%	47	5.5%	1,519	8.3%	2,205	10.9%
Bachelor's Degree	61	6.8%	95	11.1%	1,690	9.2%	2,656	13.2%
Graduate or Professional Degree	28	3.1%	31	3.6%	742	4.1%	1,206	6.0%
High School Graduate or higher	663	74.2%	721	84.5%	14,823	80.9%	17,839	88.5%
Bachelor's Degree or higher	89	10.0%	126	14.8%	2,432	13.3%	3,871	19.2%

Source: U.S. Census and ACS

The City of Blair and Trempealeau County are both behind the state average in terms of Bachelor's Degree or higher educations as well. Wisconsin has approximately 27.4 percent of residents having earned at least a Bachelor's Degree, while Blair has 14.8 percent and Trempealeau County has 19.2 percent of residents with at least a Bachelor's Degree.

Schools

Blair residents are served by the Blair-Taylor Area School District. Table 2-9 shows the enrollment for each school in the District. The 2015-2016 enrollment for the District was 636.

Table 2-9 – City of Blair School District Enrollment

District	State Rank in Size (District) (Out of 450)	County Name	Type	School	Grades		2015-2016 Enrollment
Blair-Taylor	279	Trempealeau	Elementary	Blair-Taylor Elementary	K4	6	314
		Trempealeau	Elementary	SoSET Charter School	K	6	58
		Trempealeau	Middle/High	Middle/High	7	12	264
					TOTAL		636

Source: Wisconsin Information Source for Education

There is also one private school in the area, Larkin Valley Amish, which serves the Amish students in the area. There are 23 students enrolled in this school from Grades 1-8.

Table 2-10 – Private Schools for Blair-Taylor Public School District

Public School District Area	Private Schools	Grades Served	2015-2016 Enrollment
Blair-Taylor	Larkin Valley Amish	1-8	23
		TOTAL	23

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Some children throughout Trempealeau County and the City of Blair are also home-schooled. There are 23 children that are home-schooled, who would qualify for enrollment in the Blair-Taylor Area School District. This is equivalent to 3.6 percent of the current public school enrollment, as indicated in Table 2-11. In 2014, there were 17 students within the District homeschooled.

Table 2-11 – Blair-Taylor School District Homeschooling

School District	2015-2016		2014-2015		2013-2014	
	Number Homeschooled	Percent of District Enrollment	Number Homeschooled	Percent of District Enrollment	Number Homeschooled	Percent of District Enrollment
Blair-Taylor	23	3.6%	17	2.7%	25	4.10%

Blair- Taylor Area School District average ACT scores are presented in Table 2-13. The Blair-Taylor Area School District average ACT scores are above Wisconsin averages in reading, English and science.

Table 2-12 – 2015-2016 ACT Scores by School District

	English	Math	Reading	Science	Writing	Composite
Blair	19.9	19.5	21.6	20.7	16.4	20.5
Wisconsin Average	19.1	20.1	20.0	20.5	16.7	20.1

The City of Blair is located within the Western Wisconsin Technical College service area. There is a regional location in Independence for educational classes, which is closest to Blair.

The education facilities not only provide children and adults a place to learn, but also provide recreational opportunities with playgrounds, and a source of employment Blair residents.

Income

Personal income is derived primarily from employment wages. An individual's occupation correlates to a particular wage scale which strongly influences their personal standard of living. A comparison of the occupations of those employed in the labor force helps to determine the economic impact of the employment opportunities available to area residents and the ability to increase their standard of living.

Personal income includes net earnings by place of residence; dividends, interest, and rent; and personal current transfer receipts received

Per capita personal income is the amount of income each individual in that geographic unit would receive if all of the income were divided equally amongst the entire population

As shown in Table 2-13, the City of Blair has a higher percentage of families earning less than \$25,000 and between \$25,000 and \$75,000 annually, compared to Trempealeau County. Trempealeau County also has a much higher percentage of high wage earners. The City of Blair's median family income is nearly \$6,000 lower than Trempealeau County's. Per capita income is \$2,500 lower for the City of Blair compared to Trempealeau County.

Household median incomes in Blair rose significantly from 2000 to 2015. However, Blair's median household income has remained below Trempealeau County's and Wisconsin's. From 2000 to 2015, Blair's median household income rose 41 percent, which was a larger increase than both Trempealeau County's and Wisconsin's by nearly double.



Table 2-13 – Family Income - 2011-2015				
	City of Blair		Trempealeau County	
Earnings	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Less than \$10,000	0	0.0%	209	2.6%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	0	0.0%	200	2.5%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	45	15.3%	533	6.8%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	36	12.2%	730	9.2%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	45	15.3%	1,167	14.8%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	77	26.2%	1,992	25.2%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	37	12.6%	1,310	16.6%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	35	11.9%	1,295	16.4%
\$150,000 or more	19	6.5%	457	5.8%
TOTAL	294	100.0%	7,893	100.0%
Median Family Income (dollars)	\$58,333		\$64,510	
Per Capita Income (dollars)	\$23,934		\$25,502	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2-14 – Median Household Income - 2000 and 2011-2015 - Trempealeau County

Municipality	2000	2015	Change	
			No.	Percent
Blair	\$30,769	\$43,333	\$12,564	40.8%
Trempealeau County	\$37,889	\$51,077	\$13,188	34.8%
State of Wisconsin	\$43,791	\$53,357	\$9,566	21.8%

Source: U.S. Census

Employment and Wages

Table 2-15 shows Blair's employment by industry sector. About 28 percent of Blair's employed population works in the Education, Health and Social Services industry. Another 10 percent are employed in the Retail Trade industry. The most prominent industry is manufacturing, which provides 29 percent of Blair's total employment.

Table 2-15 – Blair Employment by Industry - 2015

Employment by Industry	Number	Percent
Educational, health and social services	179	27.8%
Manufacturing	187	29.1%
Retail Trade	65	10.1%
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental & leasing	45	7.0%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	23	3.6%
Professional, scientific, management, administration and waste management services	21	3.3%
Other services, except public administration	18	2.8%
Transportation, warehousing and utilities	29	4.5%
Public Administration	26	4.0%
Wholesale Trade	0	0.0%
Construction	22	3.4%
Information	3	0.5%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting & mining	25	3.9%
Total Employment (16 years and over)	643	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census

Table 2-16, below, shows the occupations City of Blair residents hold. Over 24 percent of Blair residents are employed in management, business, and science and arts occupations. Another 21 percent of residents are employed in sales and office occupations. Close to 25 percent of residents are working in production and transportation.

Table 2-16 – Blair Employment by Occupation

Occupation	Number	Percent
Management, business, science and arts	158	24.6%
Sales and Office	139	21.6%
Service	117	18.2%
Production, transportation and material moving	156	24.3%
Natural Resources, construction and maintenance	73	11.4%
Total Employment (16 years and over)	643	100.0%

Prominent industries throughout Trempealeau include overwhelmingly Food Services and Drinking Places as well as Retail. Unfortunately, these industries are also the lowest paying. Manufacturing, a relatively well-paying industry, was the fastest growing industry from 2012-2015 within Trempealeau County in terms of employees.

Table 2-17 – Trempealeau County Establishments by Industry - 2012 to 2015

Industry Code	2012			2015			2012-2015 Percent Change		
	Establish-ments	Employees	Annual Payroll (\$1,000)	Establish-ments	Employees	Annual Payroll (\$1,000)	Establish-ments	Employees	Annual Payroll (\$1,000)
Utilities	4	55	3,345	4	62	3,978	0.00%	12.73%	18.92%
Manufacturing	30	1,791	73,801	53	7,110	298,444	76.67%	296.98%	304.39%
Wholesale Trade	32	253	9,783	28	253	10,178	-12.50%	0.00%	4.04%
Retail Trade	105	1,163	26,171	95	1,033	20,120	-9.52%	-11.18%	-23.12%
Transportation & Warehousing	44	974	55,475	42	1,154	68,135	-4.55%	18.48%	22.82%
Information	12	87	4,489	10	77	3,805	-16.67%	-11.49%	-15.24%
Finance and Insurance	45	292	10,997	43	307	11,957	-4.44%	5.14%	8.73%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	7	D	D	7	7	151	0.00%	n/a	n/a
Professional, scientific, technical services	38	195	5,929	40	224	7,175	5.26%	14.87%	21.02%
Admin., support, waste mgmt., remediation	21	174	4,355	14	160	3,934	-33.33%	-8.05%	-9.67%
Educational services (all establishments)	3	D	D	2	B	D	-33.33%	n/a	n/a
Health care and social assistance (all establishments)	53	1,344	38,685	49	947	27,974	-7.55%	-29.54%	-27.69%
Arts, entertainment & recreation (all establishments)	13	57	835	16	66	810	23.08%	15.79%	-2.99%
Accommodation & food services	81	1,478	6,645	75	630	7,102	-7.41%	-57.37%	6.88%
Other services (except public administration)	40	110	2,843	73	303	6,246	82.50%	175.45%	119.70%
TOTAL	528	7,973	\$243,353	551	12,333	470,009	4.36%	54.68%	93.14%

Source: U.S. Census

D- Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual companies; data are included in high level totals

N- Not available or not comparable

c=100-249 employees

b=20-99 employees

Table 2-18 – Average Annual Wages by Industry

Industry	Trempealeau County				State of Wisconsin
	Year			Percent Change	
	2013	2014	2015	2013-2015	
Natural Resources	\$33,376	\$35,014	\$35,840	7.4%	\$36,580
Construction	\$38,762	\$38,005	\$40,515	4.5%	\$57,103
Manufacturing	\$42,102	\$43,890	\$45,841	8.9%	\$55,375
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	\$33,266	\$34,295	\$35,977	8.1%	\$38,662
Financial Activities	\$39,097	\$39,711	\$47,287	20.9%	\$65,241
Education & Health	\$31,685	\$31,972	\$33,814	6.7%	\$46,188
Information	48,734	51,737	\$49,643	1.9%	\$66,378
Leisure and Hospitality	\$9,916	\$10,190	\$10,571	6.6%	\$16,555
Professional & Business Services	\$28,242	\$29,926	\$30,688	8.7%	\$55,146
Other Services	\$28,973	\$29,925	\$33,760	16.5%	\$27,243
Public Administration	\$27,937	\$28,455	\$29,792	6.6%	\$45,670

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

The average annual wage of \$49,643 in the Information industry, as shown in Table 2-18, is the highest in the County. County wages shown above lag behind Wisconsin averages in nearly every industry.

Data is suppressed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics when necessary to protect the identity, or identifiable information, or cooperating employers.

Table 2-19 – Top 10 Employers in Trempealeau County - September 2014

Establishment	Product or Service	Size (Sept. 2014)
Ashley Furniture Industries (Arcadia)	Furniture Stores	1,000 or more employees
Ashley Furniture Industries (Whitehall)	Furniture Stores	1,000 or more employees
GNP Co.	Poultry Processing	250-499 employees
Howards Home Furnishings	Furniture Stores	250-499 employees
AMPI	Dairy Product Merchant and Wholesale	100-249 employees
Blair-Taylor High School	Elementary & Secondary Schools	100-249 employees
GEA Farm Technologies	Farm Machinery & Equipment Mfg	100-249 employees
Gale-Etrick-Trempealeau Schools	Elementary & Secondary Schools	100-249 employees
Global Finishing Solutions LLC	Sheet Metal Work Mfg.	100-249 employees
Grand View Care Center	Offices of Specialty Therapists	100-249 employees

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

The top employer shown in Table 2-19 in Trempealeau County is Ashley Home Furniture, located in Arcadia and Whitehall. Ashley employs over 1000 employees at each of its two locations. Manufacturing and the school districts employ a large amount of people as well in Trempealeau County.

Employment Projections

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) released a publication in 2013 that projects future employment. The long range projections cover the years to 2022. However, this data is only available on a regional basis. The region that Trempealeau County is included in is considered the Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Area (WDA). WDA9 encompasses the following counties: Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau and Vernon counties.

The Western Wisconsin WDA employment by industry projections are shown in Table 2-20. The two industries in this region expected to have the highest growth rate in terms of jobs provided are Education and Health Services, with an expected growth of 1,694 positions, and Trade, Transportation and Utilities with an expected growth of 1,612 positions.

A notable increase was predicted in numbers of Self-Employed and Unpaid Family Workers, with an increase in 1,344 positions. These positions could range from startup companies where employees aren't taking salary, stay at home mothers, or family members working on a farm.

The industries that are expected to grow the most in terms of percent change are: Construction (15 percent) and Financial Activities (14.3 percent). These predictions can be made based on the predicted increase in need for housing with an increase in population.

Table 2-20 – Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Area Industry Projections

Industry	2014 Estimated Employment	2024 Projected Employment	Change	
			Number	Percent
Total, All Industries	174,129	182,391	8,262	4.7%
<i>Goods Producing</i>	<i>37,796</i>	<i>39,301</i>	1,505	<i>4.0%</i>
Natural Resources and Mining / Construction	9,393	9,692	299	3.2%
Construction	4,903	5,643	740	15.1%
Manufacturing	23,500	23,966	466	2.0%
<i>Services-Providing</i>	<i>122,161</i>	<i>127,574</i>	5,413	<i>4.4%</i>
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	31,161	32,773	1,612	5.2%
Information	1,476	1,390	-86	-5.8%
Financial Activities	5,806	6,634	828	14.3%
Professional and Business Services	9,354	10,128	774	8.3%
Education and Health Services (Including State and Local Government)	41,308	43,002	1,694	4.1%
Leisure and Hospitality	12,826	13,883	1,057	8.2%
Other Services (Except Government)	7,036	7,103	67	1.0%
Government	13,194	12,661	-533	-4.0%
<i>Self Employed and Unpaid Family Workers</i>	<i>14,172</i>	<i>15,516</i>	1,344	<i>9.5%</i>

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

Table 2-21 goes a step further and looks at the occupation employment projections for the Western Wisconsin WDA. The occupations expected to make the largest increase in terms of percentage of growth in number of jobs are: Construction and Extraction Occupations (11.1 percent growth expected) followed closely by Computer and Mathematical Occupations (9.1 percent increase expected), and Business and Financial Operations (8.8 percent growth expected). This reflects the needs of an aging population who are retiring within the next few years. The one industry projected to retract is Legal Occupations, but only slightly.

It can also be seen in this table, that Office and Administrative Support, Food Preparation and Serving Related, and Sales Related Occupations have the most average annual openings and creation of new jobs. These are relatively low paying occupations that do not typically require a lot of training, so persons filling these positions tend to be very mobile when better opportunities present themselves. However, this increase in new jobs also reflects a prediction of growth in the Western Wisconsin region.

Table 2-21 – Occupation Employment Projections for Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Area - 2014 to 2024

Occupational Title	Estimated Employment				Estimated Average Annual Openings			Average Annual Salary
	2014	2024	Change	Percent Change	New Jobs	Replacements	Total	
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	1,832	1,998	166	9.1%	20	27	47	\$57,577
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	10,700	11,166	466	4.4%	49	226	275	\$55,682
Healthcare Support Occupations	4,807	5,161	354	7.4%	39	106	145	\$28,518
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	13,265	14,166	901	6.8%	99	493	592	\$18,806
Construction and Extraction Occupations	6,094	6,771	677	11.1%	68	99	167	\$42,313
Personal Care and Service Occupations	7,703	8,358	655	8.5%	66	160	226	\$24,471
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	15,235	16,370	1,135	7.4%	122	352	474	\$31,220
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	5,557	6,046	489	8.8%	56	116	172	\$53,931
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	7,334	7,731	397	5.4%	46	172	218	\$40,050
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	5,364	5,674	310	5.8%	31	110	141	\$25,750
Community and Social Services Occupations	2,201	2,295	94	4.3%	10	48	58	\$45,466
Legal Occupations	536	535	-1	-0.2%	1	10	11	\$43,628

Table 2-21 – Occupation Employment Projections for Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Area - 2014 to 2024

Occupational Title	Estimated Employment				Estimated Average Annual Openings			Average Annual Salary
	2014	2024	Change	Percent Change	New Jobs	Replacements	Total	
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	21,378	21,558	180	0.8%	66	452	518	\$31,197
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	1,252	1,349	97	7.7%	12	38	50	\$50,820
Sales and Related Occupations	14,358	14,951	593	4.1%	62	430	492	\$23,687
Production Occupations	16,986	17,289	303	1.8%	72	374	446	\$32,770
Education, Training, and Library Occupations	13,636	13,996	360	2.6%	37	296	333	\$41,992
Management Occupations	13,252	14,153	901	6.8%	93	270	363	\$74,039
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	2,718	2,768	50	1.8%	9	70	79	\$32,186
Protective Service Occupations	3,008	3,023	15	0.5%	3	83	86	\$39,494
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	5,237	5,279	42	0.8%	11	136	147	\$36,376
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	1,676	1,754	78	4.7%	10	41	51	\$62,618
Total, All Occupations	174,129	182,391	8,262	4.7%	982	4,109	5,091	\$33,255

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

3 Housing

Housing is an essential component to healthy and vibrant communities, and striving to provide safe and affordable housing is a common community goal. An analysis of housing conditions will help the City gain a better understanding of the changes that have occurred over the past 20-25 years. It will also provide insight into future changes that can be anticipated. This information will create a foundation from which decisions regarding future housing development can be based. Demographic information presented in the Issues and Opportunities element is not repeated here. Below is a summary of the existing housing conditions in the City of Blair and Trempealeau County.

Wis. Stats. 66.1001(2)(b)

(b) Housing element. A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs of the local governmental unit to provide an adequate housing supply that meets existing and forecasted housing demand in the local governmental unit. The element shall assess the age, structural, value and occupancy characteristics of the local governmental unit's housing stock. The element shall also identify specific policies and programs that promote the development of housing for residents of the local governmental unit and provide a range of housing choices that meet the needs of persons of all income levels and of all age groups and persons with special needs, policies and programs that promote the availability of land for the development or redevelopment of low-income and moderate-income housing, and policies and programs to maintain or rehabilitate the local governmental unit's existing housing stock.

3.1 Existing Conditions

“There are social and economic benefits from housing. Socially, “studies have shown that in addition to being a place to sleep, relax, and keep possessions, decent shelter is important for one’s self-respect; people who take responsibility and pride in their homes are more likely to also participate in community and civic activities.” Housing also affects economies significantly as well, through the generation of taxes for governments, and providing many jobs. (Ohm, Brian, et al. Housing Wisconsin, June 2003.)

When change and development take place, it will be important for the City to manage this growth and maintain the character of the community. Many individuals and families that choose to live in Blair do so because of its community character, location and proximity to jobs.

Housing Units

According to the American Factfinder, in the year 2015 the City of Blair had 615 residential housing units – a 25.3 percent increase from 2000. Trempealeau County as a whole also experienced an increase in housing units, with an 11.1 percent increase between 2000 and 2015, as shown in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1 – Housing Units - 2000-2015

Municipality	2000	2010	2015	2000-2015 Percent Change
Blair	564	629	615	9.0%
Trempealeau County	11,482	12,619	12,764	11.1%

Source: U.S. Census

Age Characteristics

The age of the local housing stock is an important element to view when preparing for the future. If there is a significant amount of older housing units among the housing supply, they will most likely need to be replaced, rehabilitated, or abandoned for new development within the planning period. Allowing for a new housing supply also requires planning regarding infrastructure, land availability, community utilities, transportation routes, and a variety of other public services to address community needs that are affected by new development.

Table 3-2 – Year Structure Built - 2015

Municipality	1939 or earlier	1940 to 1959	1960 to 1969	1970 to 1979	1980 to 1989	1990 to 1999	2000 to 2009	2010 or Later
Blair	22.6%	29.8%	10.2%	17.1%	1.1%	13.3%	5.2%	0.7%
Trempealeau County	27.3%	14.3%	6.7%	15.6%	8.5%	12.5%	13.8%	1.2%

As shown in Table 3-2, approximately 52 percent of all housing units in the City of Blair were built prior to 1960. Only 41 percent of all Trempealeau County houses were built prior to 1960. This is an indicator that the average housing stock for the City of Blair is older than that of the County as a whole. This could indicate that Blair residents may have generally higher costs associated with the maintenance and rehabilitation of their homes compared to homeowners in other areas of the County.



Occupancy and Structural Characteristics

Housing occupancy is a measure to determine whether the housing supply is adequate to meet demand. A stable housing market is one where the availability of new and existing housing units roughly matches the needs of the population. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), an overall vacancy rate of three percent is considered to be optimal. Vacancy rates under the three percent standard may imply a tight housing market where demand exceeds supply, causing housing prices to rise. Conversely, a vacancy rate greater than three percent may indicate an over-supply of housing units, causing stagnation in housing prices.



Table 3-3 – Housing Characteristics - 2010 to 2015

Blair	2010	2015
Total Housing Units	638	615
Total Vacant	67	83
Total Occupied Units	571	532
Owner Occupied Units	387	362
Renter Occupied Units	184	170
Occupancy Rate	89.5%	86.5%
Single Family Units	365	398
Multi-Family Units	131	100
Mobile Homes	75	34

Source: U.S. Census & American Community Survey

The vacancy rate in Blair has increased slightly over the last decade. The current estimates show vacancy at approximately 13 percent – while Trempealeau County stands at about 7 percent.

Also shown in Table 3-3, is that of the occupied housing units, 68 percent were owner-occupied in 2015. This is consistent with the 2010 number (67.7 percent). Trempealeau County housing is approximately 73 percent owner-occupied.

Table 3-4 – Units in Structure - 2015

Municipality	1-Unit Detached		1-Unit Attached		2 Units		3-4 Units		5-9 Units		10-19 Units		20+ Units		Mobile Homes	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Blair	458	74.5%	6	1.0%	39	6.3%	39	6.3%	39	6.3%	0	0%	0	0%	34	5.5%
Trempealeau County	9,787	76.7%	251	2.0%	607	4.8%	392	3.1%	490	3.8%	294	2.3%	151	1.2%	792	6.2%

Source: American Factfinder

Table 3-4 displays the number of units per structure for the City of Blair and Trempealeau County in 2015. The majority of housing units in Blair (56 percent) are one-unit detached structures, commonly referred to as single family homes. Detached housing units are one-unit structures that are detached from any other house, with open space on all four sides. Structures are considered detached even if they have an attached garage or contain a business unit. Attached housing units are one or more unit structures that have one or more walls extending from ground to roof departing them from adjoining structures. Trempealeau County also has a majority of single-family homes, as well as more of the larger apartment (10+ unit) structures.



Housing Value Characteristics

Providing affordable housing which meets the needs of current and future City residents is an important element in planning for the future. A lack of quality affordable housing has impacts on population migration patterns, economic development, and the tax base.

An owner-occupied housing unit is a unit where the owner or co-owner lives, even if it is mortgaged or not fully paid for. The U.S. Bureau of the Census determines value by the respondent's estimates of how much the property (house and lot, mobile home and lot, or condominium unit) would sell for if it were for sale. The figures presented may differ from assessed housing values as calculated by an assessor.

The median value of owner-occupied housing units in 2015 was \$96,000 for the City of Blair and \$140,800 for Trempealeau County, as shown in Table 3-5. It can be seen that Blair has a much

higher percentage (nearly 60 percent) of its houses valued under \$100,000 compared to Trempealeau County (28 percent).

Table 3-5 – Housing Value of Specified Owner Occupied Units - 2015

Municipality	Less than \$50,000		\$50,000 to \$99,999		\$100,000 to \$149,999		\$150,000 to \$199,999		\$200,000 to \$299,999		\$300,000 to \$499,999		\$500,000 to \$999,999		\$1,000,000 or more		Median Value
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	
Blair	48	13.3%	165	45.6%	91	25.1%	46	12.7%	12	3.3%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	\$96,000
Trempealeau County	582	6.8%	1,818	21.1%	2,220	25.8%	1,746	117	1,516	17.6%	496	5.8%	170	2.0%	55	0.6%	\$140,800

Source: American Factfinder

Housing Affordability

“Over time, policy analysts have come to use ‘30 percent’ as a standard to assess the affordability of housing. The belief is that households who have to pay more than 30 percent of their incomes for housing may be forced to forego other important needs.”

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines affordable housing as that housing which does not cost a household more than 30 percent of their monthly or annual income. This affordability benchmark is not an underwriting standard; it does not address the ability to pay for housing. Households may choose to pay more to get the housing they need or want. However, according to HUD standards, people should have the choice of having decent and safe housing for not more than 30 percent of their household income.

As shown in Table 3-6, a majority (65.8 percent) of owner-occupied households in Blair pay less than 30 percent of their household income towards housing costs. Trempealeau County also has most owner-occupied households paying less than 30 percent of their income towards housing costs (76.7 percent).

Table 3-6 – Owner Occupied Housing Costs as a Percentage of Household Income - 2015

Municipality	Monthly Housing Costs as a Percentage of Household Income									
	Less than 20.0%		20.0% to 24.9%		25.0% to 29.9%		30.0% to 34.9%		35.0% or more	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Blair	193	53.8%	34	9.5%	9	2.5%	45	12.5%	70	19.5%
Trempealeau County	4,498	52.5%	1,240	14.5%	833	9.7%	503	5.9%	1,488	17.4%
State of Wisconsin	782,703	50.9%	228,065	14.8%	152,787	9.9%	97,738	6.4%	277,292	18.0%

Source: U.S. Census

A much higher percentage of rental housing is experiencing housing cost burdens. As shown in Table 3-7, 32.3 percent of Blair rental households are paying 30 percent or more of their monthly income for housing costs. Over 34 percent of Trempealeau County rental households are paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing costs, and a staggering 47.5 percent of renters throughout Wisconsin are paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing costs.

Table 3-7 – Renter Occupied Housing Costs as a Percentage of Household Income - 2015

Municipality	Monthly Housing Costs as a Percentage of Household Income											
	Less than 15.0%		15.0% to 19.9%		20.0% to 24.9%		25.0% to 29.9%		30.0% to 34.9%		35.0% or more	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Blair	29	18.7%	32	20.6%	10	6.5%	34	21.9%	0	0.0	50	32.3%
Trempealeau County	584	20.4%	445	15.6%	480	16.8%	381	13.3%	192	6.7%	779	27.2%
Wisconsin	96,919	13.7%	97,650	13.8%	93,013	13.2%	83,402	11.8%	61,007	8.6%	274,872	38.9%

Source: American FactFinder

Housing Projections

Persons per household in both Trempealeau County and Blair has been very slowly declining. The average household size has decreased from 2.38 to 2.26 since 2000 (Table 3-8). Trempealeau County has experienced a similar decline. This is important to consider when determining demand, as this impacts housing requirements and infrastructure needs.

Table 3-8 – Average Household Size – 2000 - 2010

	2000			2010		
	Owner	Renter	Average	Owner	Renter	Average
Blair	2.36	1.86	2.38	2.41	1.97	2.26
Trempealeau County	2.62	1.98	2.51	2.56	2.16	2.45

Source: U.S. Census

In the Issues and Opportunities Chapter, we discussed housing unit projections. The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) provides household projections. Blair is projected to see a 120 household increase, or 21 percent from the year 2010 to 2040. Trempealeau County is expected to see a 21.6 percent increase.

Table 3-9 – Household Projections 2010-2040 - Trempealeau County by Municipality

Municipality	Census	Estimate	Projections					Change 2010-2040	
	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	Number	Percent
Blair	571	590	622	647	672	684	691	120	21.0%
Trempealeau County	11,524	11,913	12,521	13,023	13,534	13,805	14,008	2,484	21.6%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration

Housing unit projections are intended to provide an estimate of the number of housing units that will be developed through the year 2040. The market study indicated that a reasonable goal will be for the City to capture 30-40 new residential units over the next ten years. This will result in smaller household sizes, and this projection will include both single and multi-family structures.

Table 3-10 – Housing Unit Projections - Blair

Municipality	Census	Estimate	Projections					Change 2010-2040	
	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	Number	Percent
Blair	638	648	663	678	693	708	723	85	13.3%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, SEH and Place Dynamics\

3.2 Housing Programs

The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning legislation requires governments completing plans to compile a list of programs available to help provide an adequate supply of housing that meets existing and forecasted housing demand in their jurisdiction. Below is a partial listing of programs that are available.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Housing Rehabilitation

Housing rehabilitation funds are made available through the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The CDBG program provides grants to local governments for housing rehabilitation initiatives that benefit low-to-moderate income households.

Community Development Block Grant – Small Cities Housing

Funds may be used for housing revitalization efforts to Wisconsin communities with a population under 50,000 and not eligible for a direct federal CDBG grant.

Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME)

Funds in this federal program are used for down payment assistance for homebuyers, rental rehabilitation, weatherization, accessibility improvements, and rental housing development.

Section 8 Program

This federal program provides rent assistance to eligible low-income households based on family size, household income, and fair market rents. Typically, a tenant's share of the total rent payment does not exceed 30 percent of his/her annual income.

Property Tax Deferred Loan Program (PTDL)

This state program offers loans to low-to-moderate income elderly homeowners (65 years old with a spouse at least 60 years old, unless one is disabled) to help pay local property taxes so the elderly can afford to stay in their homes.

Low Income Housing Tax Credit

This program was created in 1986 by the Tax Reform Act. Federal housing tax credits are awarded to developers of qualified projects. Developers then sell these credits to investors to raise capital for their projects, which reduces the debt the developer would otherwise have to borrow. A tax credit property can then offer more affordable rents because the debt is lower.

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)

The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority serves Wisconsin residents and communities by working with others to provide creative financing resources and information to stimulate and preserve affordable housing, small business, and agribusiness.

USDA-Rural Development

Rural Development administers federal funds to help secure loan options to assist low- to moderate-income families with home purchase and rehabilitation. Rural Development generally funds individuals who cannot obtain conventional financing.

Community Options Program (COP)

Community Options programming is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services through the health and social services departments of each county. This program helps people stay in their homes by providing cost-effective alternatives to expensive health care institutions and nursing homes. Elderly and long-term disabled individuals receive funds and assistance to find services they are not going to be able to receive through other programs.

Western Dairyland Community Action Agency

Western Dairyland Community Action Agency is a regional nonprofit organization serving low-income people and families in area Counties. Housing programs and assistance they offer includes:

- Housing Assistance – limited term affordable housing to homeless individuals and families needing assistance in returning to independent living.
- Homeownership Assistance and Programs – assists income-eligible homebuyers with first-time purchases, including down payment and closing cost assistance.
- Homebuyer Counseling – counseling to individual planning to purchase a home; no income restrictions.
- Owner-Occupied Home Rehabilitation – low and moderate income homeowner assistance in rehabilitating homes to make them safe, sanitary and energy efficient.
- Home Weatherization Assistance – homeowner and renter assistance to improve energy efficiency of their residences.

Housing Authority of Trempealeau County

The Housing Authority of Trempealeau County provides rental units and rental assistance to low income families, elderly or the disabled.

Western Wisconsin Cares

This organization serves elders and adults with disabilities in western Wisconsin to help them live independently in their homes. They have an office located in Blair.

3.3 Assessment of Future Needs

The Residential Market Analysis performed as part of this planning effort conclude that County-wide, there will be demand for an additional 368 rental units throughout Trempealeau County. Much of this growth will be by households headed by someone over the age of 65. Appropriate types of rentals may include apartment buildings with some level of assisted living. Many of these households will be able to afford up to \$1,000 per month – but the largest group of renters will remain those that can afford less than \$600 per month.

The housing market growth will be split between those wanting newer homes on large rural lots, and those with lower to middle-incomes wanting to purchase or rent within an urbanized area. It is anticipated that Blair can capture up to 40 new housing units over the next ten year with pricing below \$250,000. County-wide there is a tight rental market – meaning places are fully occupied with waiting lists. This presents Blair an opportunity to possibly consider mid-market units with mid-higher end amenities that are currently available, as well as senior-oriented units.



3.4 Goals, Objectives and Policies

The City encourages proper placement of housing to limit potential land-use conflicts. Housing developments in the City should be constructed and maintained in a fashion that is consistent with the surrounding atmosphere.

Affordable housing development, including low- to moderate income, should be considered to ensure all ranges of family incomes have an opportunity to live, work, and raise in the City.

The City of Blair shall continue to enforce applicable state and local building regulations (building codes) to encourage safe and high quality housing developments.

Goal: The City should attract new residential developers to offer a variety of new housing units that serve the market interests.

Objectives:

1. The City should continue to identify appropriate locations for new subdivisions.

Policies:

1. The City should continue to evaluate acting as subdivision developer and preparing and selling lots for new residential home construction.
 - a. The City should aggressively encourage infill and redevelopment opportunities until Wildcat Subdivision is 80 percent occupied – or until market demand is high and warrants additional lot development.
 - b. Developments and redevelopment should be located in areas that will be efficiently and economically served by existing or planned City streets, sanitary sewers, water mains, and stormwater management facilities.
 - c. The City should encourage new middle-to-high end rental units to accommodate a tighter rental market that would serve that market segment.
2. The City will ensure that appropriate locations for multi-family housing developments are identified on the future land use map.

Goal: Strengthen and support existing Blair neighborhoods.

Objectives:

1. New developments shall be compatible with or enhance the character of existing adjacent residential neighborhoods.
2. Protect neighborhoods from incompatible land uses through effective land use and design controls.
3. Improve transportation connections, particularly bicycle paths/routes and pedestrian facilities, between and within existing neighborhoods and other parts of the City and region.
4. Encourage and support the maintenance and rehabilitation of older housing stock.

Goal: A variety of housing types, styles and price ranges will exist in the City for people of all income levels and ages. Particular importance will be paid to ensuring that housing choices are available.

Objectives:

1. Expand the supply of middle income family housing in the community, particularly moderately priced single-family housing.
2. Encourage the private sector to provide affordable senior housing so that long-term residents and retirees may continue to live in the City.
3. Ensure that senior, special needs, and multi-family residential developments are well integrated into the community through safe and convenient connections to public amenities (e.g. parks), a variety of transportation options (e.g. sidewalks, bicycle routes), and, accessible to places to shop, work, and go to school.
4. Inform residents about housing ownership programs to allow for increased owner-occupancy for all Blair residents.

Policies and Recommendations

1. Require public access easements for walking and biking trails in new developments to link new housing and park developments, and work with property owners to obtain such easements for existing neighborhoods where appropriate.

2. Require major residential developments to provide safe and efficient pedestrian and bicycle circulation.
3. Evaluate storm water improvements in southern areas of the City to promote better drainage and to mitigate insect nuisances.
4. Consider the implementation and enforcement of stricter ordinances regarding the appearance and upkeep of property.
 - a. Continue to enforce property maintenance codes.
 - b. Continue to implement the home-business licensing requirement.
 - c. Seek to implement a rental registration requirement to ensure accurate documentation of residential rental units and to ensure properties are being kept code compliant.
 - d. Continue to monitor mobile home park developments with annual permits and reviews.
5. Housing and Infill Development
 - a. Infill development providing housing opportunities shall be encouraged in Blair. Infill sites should be considered for uses including senior housing, low/moderate income housing, and condominium housing when deemed compatible with the Plan.
6. Housing Rehabilitation
 - a. The City of Blair should pursue programs aimed at housing rehabilitation. Current programs include:
 - 1) WHEDA (Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Administration) Home Improvement Loans
 - 2) WHEDA Paint and Fix-Up Grant
 - b. Develop and promote neighborhood beautification programs within the City.
7. Housing and the Environment
 - a. Encourage the use of native vegetation where appropriate in new residential areas. For instance, require native vegetation at entrances to subdivisions/neighborhoods, etc.
 - b. Facilitate the use of trails and connections from housing areas to the City's important natural resource areas, including the downtown and Lake Henry by improving such connections.

4 Transportation Element

4.1 Introduction

Transportation planning can be used as a tool to help guide and accommodate the growth a community envisions. Like the other elements in this Plan, transportation is interconnected, especially with land use. Transportation decisions such as construction of new roadways or upgrading existing roads can impact accessibility, land values, and land use development.

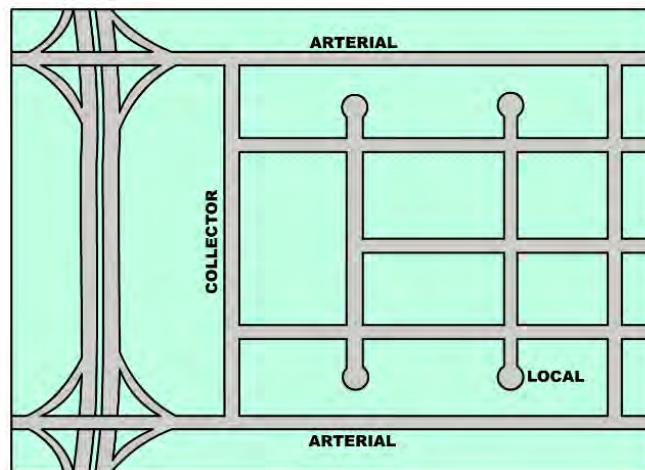
The City of Blair's transportation system is largely focused on vehicular travel. However, there are options available for alternative transportation methods, such as walking and bicycling. Freight rail access is also available in the City.

4.2 Background Data/Existing Conditions

Roads

Roads can be generally classified into three categories – arterials, collectors, and local roads. Road classification is determined by the type of service it provides. Typically arterials provide the least amount of access and highest level of mobility, while local streets provide the most access and lowest level of mobility. Collector roads provide a combination of access and mobility. A demonstration of the function of these roadways is shown in Figure 4-1.

Figure 4-1 – Roadway Functions



Wis. Stats. 66.1001(2)(c)

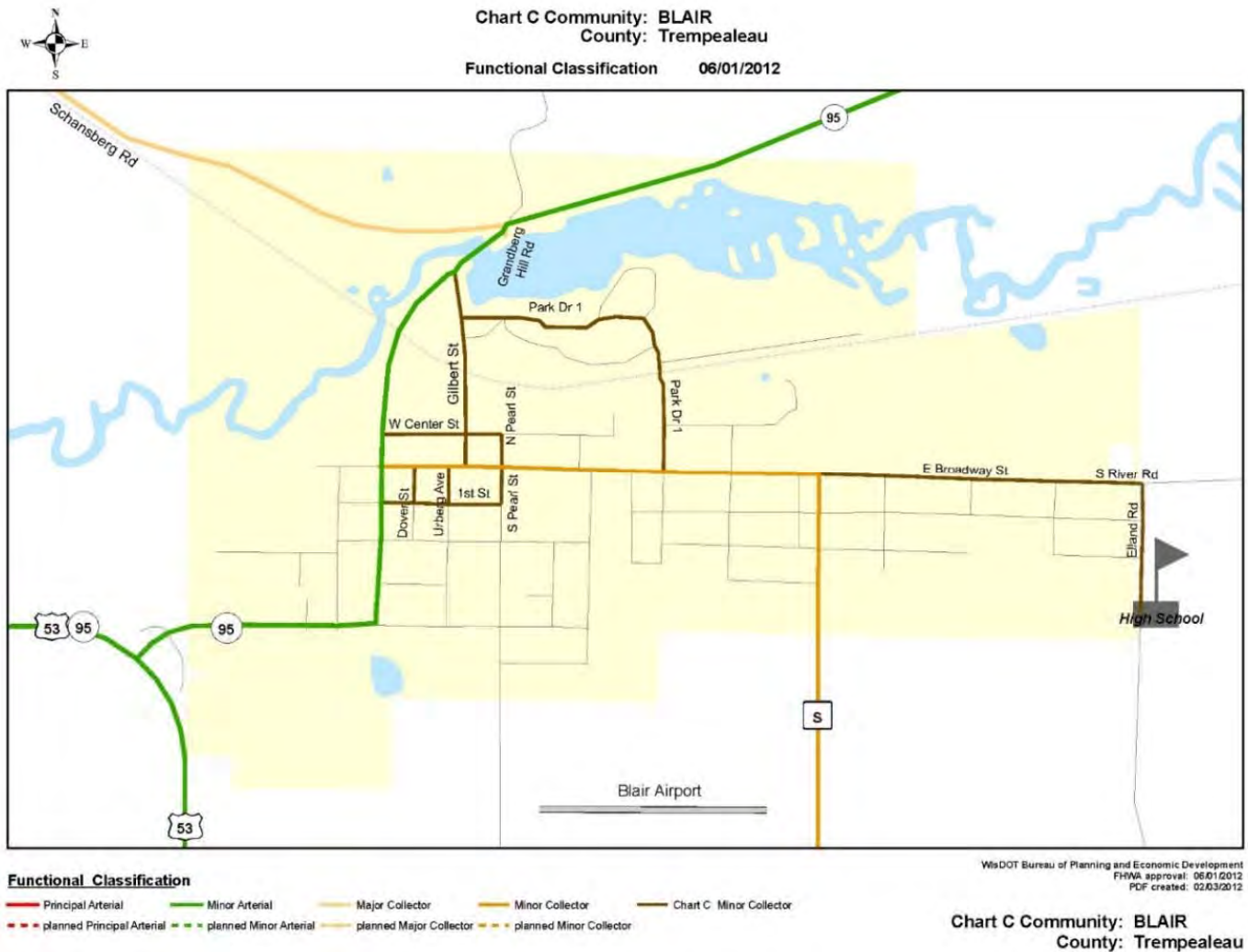
(c) Transportation element. A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs to guide the future development of the various modes of transportation, including highways, transit, transportation systems for persons with disabilities, bicycles, electric personal assistive mobility devices, walking, railroads, air transportation, trucking and water transportation. The element shall compare the local governmental unit's objectives, policies, goals and programs to state and regional transportation plans. The element shall also identify highways within the local governmental unit by function and incorporate state, regional and other applicable transportation plans, including transportation corridor plans, county highway functional and jurisdictional studies, urban area and rural area transportation plans, airport master plans and rail plans that apply in the local governmental unit.

Blair is served by approximately 27.85 miles of streets and roads under county and local jurisdiction. Blair is served by two major highway facilities, including United State Highway (US) 53 and State Highway (STH) 95. Together, these state-owned highways include 4.71 miles within the Blair city limits.

Figure 4-2 illustrates US 53 and STH 95 are classified as minor arterial routes, designed to provide a high level of mobility between communities. Broadway Street, Schansberg Road and County Highway (CTH) S are minor collector routes, which act as a funnel for traffic to get to the arterial routes for inter-community travel.

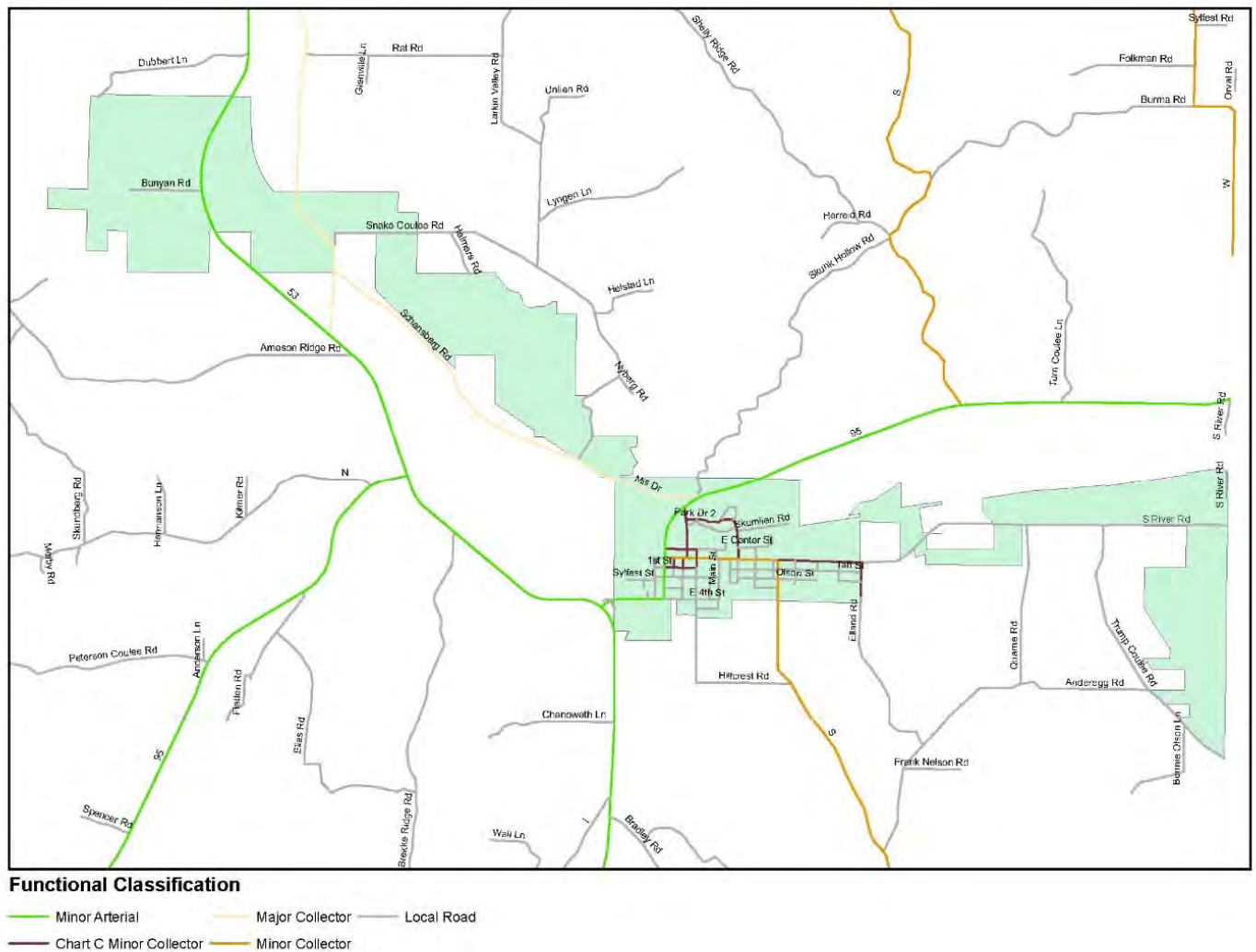
WisDOT updates Figure 4-2 once every 10 years. The next map will be created following the decennial Census in 2020. In the meantime, it's important to note that Blair's city boundary has changed considerably through annexation since the 2012 map was created. Figure 4-3 was developed for this report to depict the current boundary and road network.

Figure 4-2 – Blair Roadway



Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Figure 4-3 – Blair Roadway Functional Classification (2017)



Source: SEH and Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Traffic Counts

Traffic counts are limited throughout the city. The table below shows an overall decrease in traffic from 2004 to 2015.

Location	2004	2009	2012	2015
STH 95 – North-South through Blair	3,100	3,700		3,200
Broadway Street – East of STH 95	2,600	2,300		
STH 95 – Between US 53 and Peterson Avenue		5,700	6,100	5,000
Gilbert Street – from STH 95 to Broadway Street	830	1,100		
US 53 – West of STH 95		5,000	5,100	4,800 (2014)

Source: WisDOT (<https://trust.dot.state.wi.us/roadrunner/>)

Transit

Paratransit Service: The Aging and Disability Resource Center of Trempealeau County (ADRC) offers transportation service to persons 60 years or older or have a disability. ADRC operates a van service to/from Whitehall once per week for medical trips, shopping, and social activities. ADRC also runs an inter-city bus to La Crosse, WI and Eau Claire, WI on alternating days. A volunteer driver program is also offered through the ADRC providing transportation to medical appointments via volunteers using their own vehicles.

Intercity Bus Service: Greyhound bus service is available from the nearby communities of Winona, MN (34 miles), Sparta, WI (42 miles), La Crosse, WI (43 miles), and Eau Claire, WI (54 miles).

Bridges

There are a total of nine bridges in Blair that appear in the WisDOT bridge structures database.

State and local bridges are inspected at least once every two years. WisDOT is responsible for all inspections of bridges along the state highway system. Municipalities complete the inspections for bridges along the local roadway.

Bridges are rated and categorized in terms of their functional and structural condition. A functionally obsolete bridge is typically older and no longer meets geometric standards, such as having narrow lanes or shoulders. However, this classification does not mean the bridge is unsafe. A structurally deficient bridge generally has an element that needs attention, such as potholes or rust.

The city-owned bridge on S. River Road over Trump Coulee Creek is the only bridge in the city identified as structurally deficient. This is referred to as P-61-176 in the WisDOT bridge structures database.

Pedestrian Facilities

Some of the areas in the City lack complete sidewalk networks. Sidewalks are inconsistent throughout the community in both residential and commercial areas. However, there is a lack of

integrated land uses that allow for walkable multi-purpose trips. The City should continue to install sidewalks in new and existing developments to create a connected sidewalk system.

Railroads

Figure 4-4 shows Wisconsin's railroads. The Canadian Pacific runs east/west through Blair. This track is heavily utilized for freight traffic travelling between Winona, MN and Green Bay, WI. Passenger rail service via Amtrak is available in La Crosse.

Figure 4-4 – Railroads



Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Air Transportation

Commercial air passenger service and light freight service is available at the La Crosse Regional Airport located approximately 45 miles from Blair, or the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport, about 50 miles from Blair.

In the five-year Wisconsin Airport Program (2017-2022) the La Crosse Regional Airport is slated for \$28 million of improvements. The Chippewa Valley Regional Airport is slated to receive approximately \$12 million of improvements from 2017 to 2022.

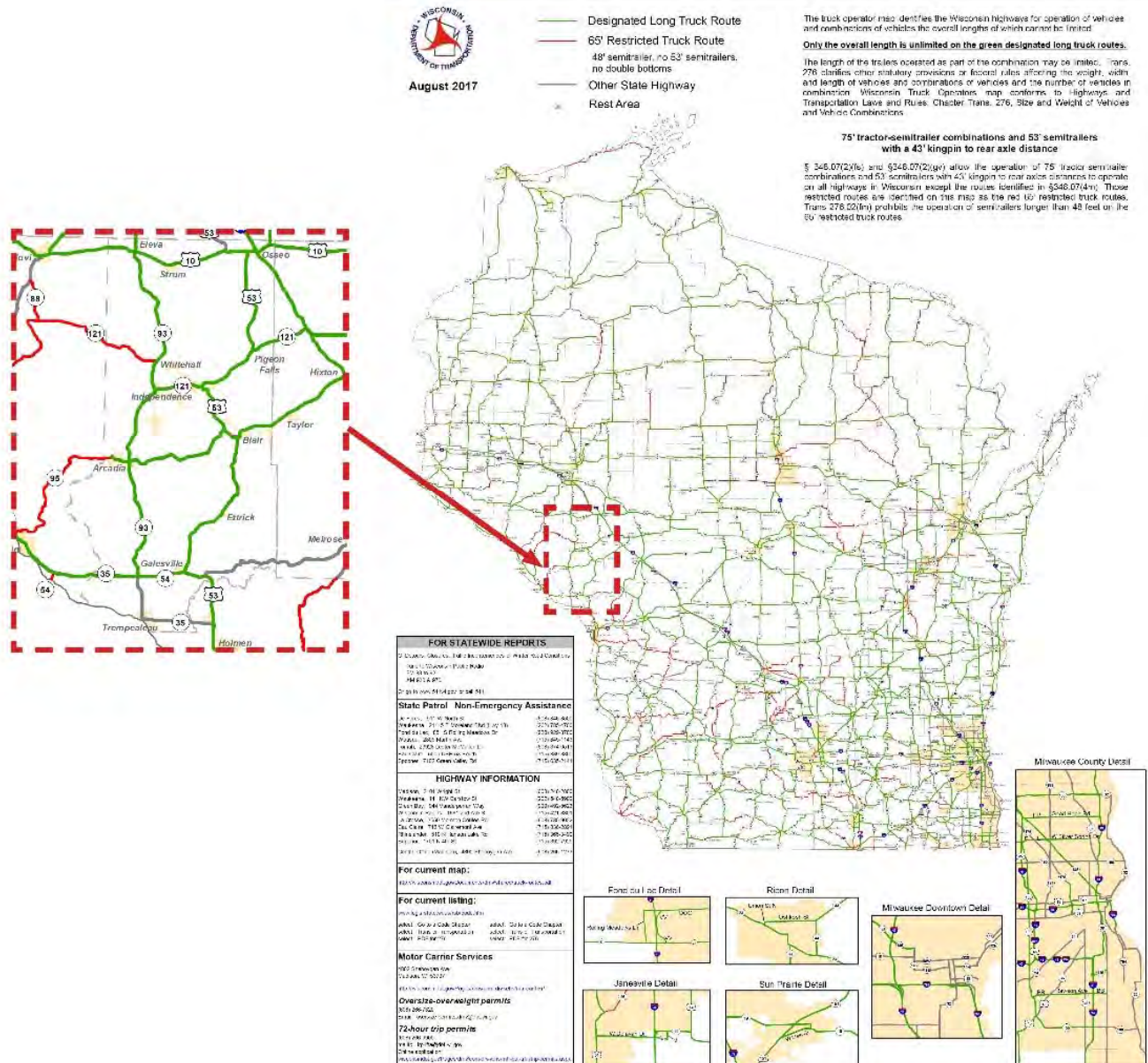
Trucking

According to the WisDOT Wisconsin Long Truck Operator's Map, updated in August 2017, US 53, STH 95 and STH 121 are designated long truck routes. These are routes that are safe to operate vehicles and combinations of vehicles with overall lengths that cannot be limited. In the western part of Trempealeau County, STH 95 and STH 121 are classified as 75-foot Restricted Truck Routes, meaning trucks may have a maximum of a 53-foot long trailer. Figure 4-5, below, visually represents Wisconsin's long truck routes.

Figure 4-5 – Long Truck Operators Map

Wisconsin Long Truck Operators Map

Designated Long Truck Routes identified in Trans 276.07



Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Since the sand mining industry has grown significantly within the region, the City has seen a rise in the amount of dump trucks hauling sand products through the City. All three of the mines are either restricted to not hauling on City streets, or only hauling on designated routes. The mining operations have been required to also enter into heavy haul agreements with the Town of Preston for the designated haul routes within the Town.

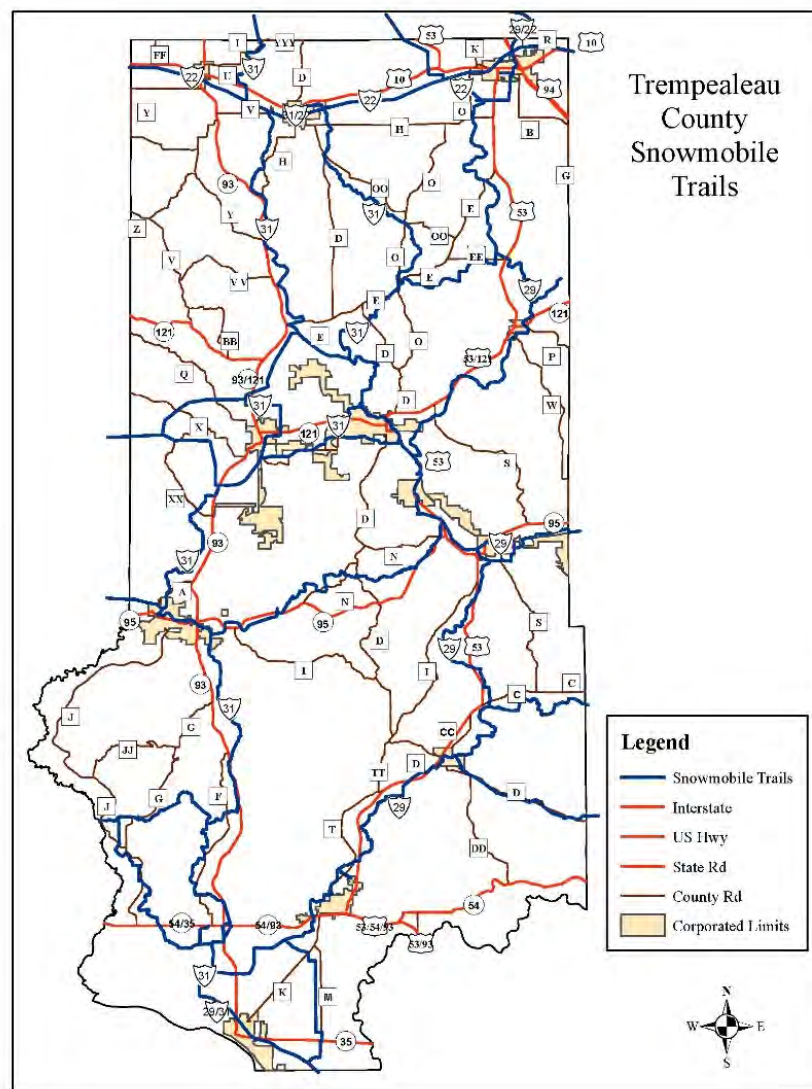
Water Transportation

The City of Blair is not located on a commercial waterway. The nearest water transportation is located at a port in Winona, MN, 35 miles southwest of Blair. This harbor contains docks, fleeting areas for barges, grain terminals, and the Port Authority commercial dock. The municipal dock was originally established by the City of Winona in 1956 and is now operated by the Port Authority of Winona. It is used for loading and unloading barges in the transport of commodities such as fertilizer, salt and coal. The Port Authority currently leases the facility.

Trails

There are several miles of snowmobile, all-terrain vehicle (ATV), and cross-country ski trails throughout Trempealeau County. Figure 4-6 shows that snowmobile trails run roughly parallel to US 53 and STH 19 on the City's east, west, and south sides.

Figure 4-6 – Snowmobile Trails

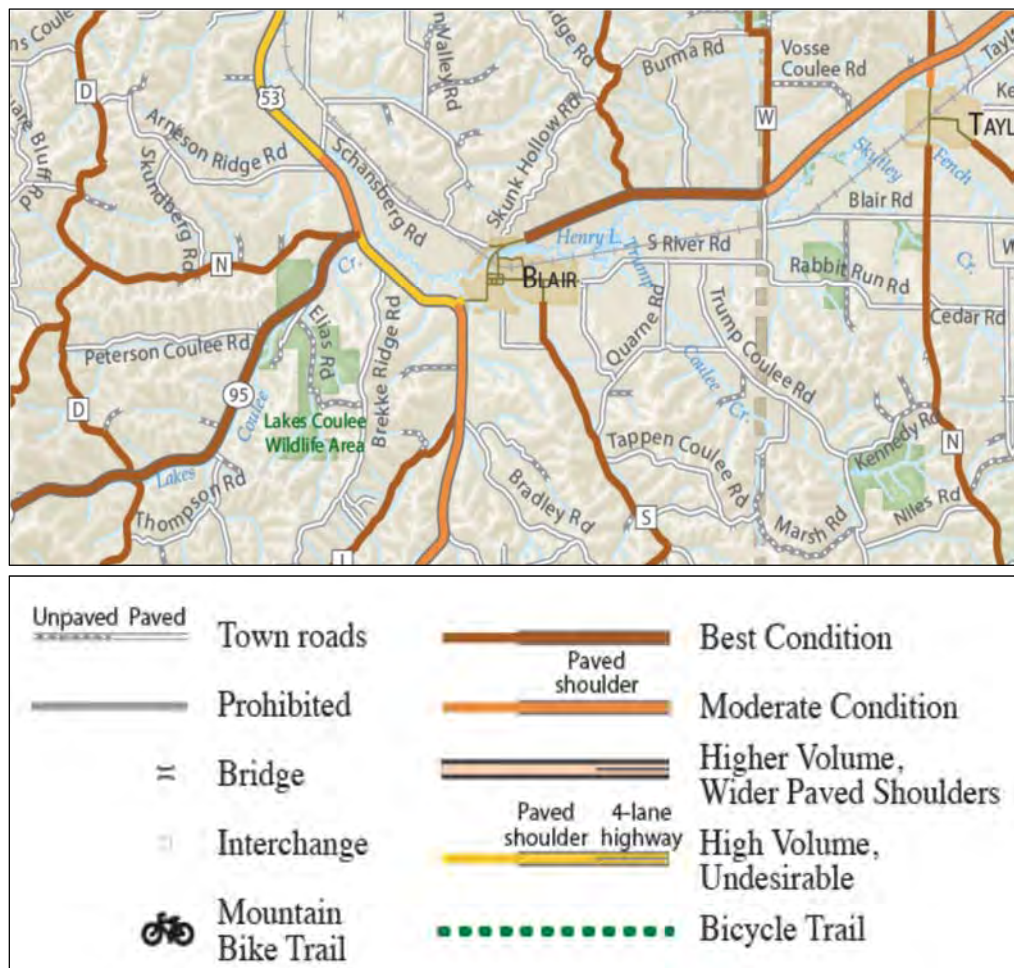


Source: Trempealeau County

Major Trails in Trempealeau County include the Buffalo River State Trail and the Great River State Trail. The Buffalo River State Trail can be accessed in Osseo, WI, which is located about 27 miles north of the City. The Great River State Trail can be accessed at Perrot State Park in Trempealeau, WI, about 25 miles southwest of the City of Blair. The Great River State Trail links to the La Crosse River State Trail via a short road route in La Crosse. These trails are open to hikers, bicyclists, skiers, snowshoers, horseback riders, snowmobiles, and ATV's.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has identified roads most suitable for biking in all 72 counties in the State. The roads nearest to Blair that WisDOT has identified as most suitable for biking include County Highways I, N, and S, and certain sections of STH 95 (see Figure 4-7 below).

Figure 4-7 – Trempealeau County Bike Map



Source: <http://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/travel/bike/bike-maps/county.aspx>

4.3 Relationship to State and Regional Transportation Plans

Several state, regional and county organizations and agencies have developed plans and programs for the management and systematic update of transportation facilities in the area. Based on a review of these plans and programs, no land use conflicts or policy differences were identified.

Connections 2030

"The planning, design, and construction of road and highways as well as other transportation modes affect existing land uses and plans and proposals for future development. Safe and efficient travel, whether by walking, taking a car, an airplane or a bike, is also influenced by the types and patterns of land use" (Wisconsin Department of Transportation).

WisDOT developed a long-range transportation plan for the state, called Connections 2030. This plan addresses all forms of transportation: highways, local roads, air, water, rail, bicycle, pedestrian and transit. The overall goal of the planning process is to identify a series of policies to aid transportation decision-makers when evaluating programs and projects.

As part of the Connections 2030 planning process, WisDOT identified 37 System-Level Priority Corridors, each with its own recommendations for how the plan can be implemented over its 20-year horizon. Several such corridors are located in Trempealeau County, including the Badger State Corridor (Eau Claire to Madison), Mississippi River Corridor (Dubuque to La Crosse to Twin Cities), and the Trempealeau River Corridor (La Crosse to Eau Claire).

Plans in these corridors generally include maintaining adequate airport and highway service, increasing intercity bus and rail connections, and improving bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2030

Airports, aviation and aviation-related industries play a significant role in the economic success of Wisconsin communities. The La Crosse Regional Airport is located approximately 45 miles from Blair, and the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport is located about 50 miles from Blair. The Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2030 establishes a vision, develops and evaluates system goals for the Wisconsin Airport System, and provides a framework to meet current and future needs for the preservation and enhancement of the airport system. According to the plan, both the La Crosse Regional Airport and the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport are expected to see slight increases in total operations, based aircraft, and enplanements between 2010 and 2030. Wisconsin also has a five-year airport improvement program. The La Crosse Regional Airport is scheduled to receive approximately \$31 million of improvements from 2017 to 2022. The Chippewa Valley Regional Airport is slated to receive approximately \$12 million of improvements from 2017 to 2022.

Wisconsin Statewide Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020

WisDOT developed the Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020 to provide a long-range vision addressing Wisconsin pedestrian needs.

The Pedestrian Plan provides a basic description of existing and emerging pedestrian needs over the next 20 years, with a set of recommendations to meet those needs. WisDOT's efforts ensure that this plan complements both existing and future long-range transportation plans.

Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020

WisDOT encourages planning for bicyclists at the local level and is responsible for developing long-range, statewide bicycle plans. Guidelines for accommodating travel by bicycles when roadways are reconstructed, or new roads are built, are available and their use is encouraged.

The development of WisDOT's statewide long-range bicycle plan, Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020, involved many people, including an advisory committee. This bicycle planning document is intended to help communities and individuals in developing bicycle-friendly facilities throughout Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030

Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030 identifies rail issues statewide and is meant to serve as a guide for decision-makers through 2030, with updates occurring every five-years.

The Canadian National (CN) Railway Company operates 1,578 miles of railroad in the state of Wisconsin, accounting for 43.8 percent of the state's total rail by length. The rail that travels through Blair is part of the CN network. Wisconsin's railroads move 33 percent of Wisconsin's total freight by weight, about 180 million tons annually. Statewide, there is a projection that freight rail commodities will grow by over 16 percent by 2030.

The Amtrak Empire Builder Route is the only passenger rail service in Trempealeau County, traveling along the Mississippi River in the southwest portion of the county. The Empire Builder is Amtrak's most popular long-distance train. It provides one daily round-trip between Chicago, Milwaukee, Minneapolis/St. Paul and Seattle/Portland. Since 2002, the Empire Builder has experienced growing ridership. In 2010, Empire Builder ridership to and from Wisconsin stations was more than 95,000. This represents a 16 percent increase during the five-year period from 2005 to 2010.

Specific projects noted in the 2030 plan include infrastructure improvements include adding an additional round trips on the Empire Builder corridor between Chicago and Minneapolis/St. Paul and improvements to accommodate six to eight daily intercity passenger trains between Minneapolis/St. Paul and Milwaukee using the existing Empire Builder Amtrak route.

Wisconsin DOT: Six Year Highway Improvement Program

This plan identifies all construction projects scheduled for Wisconsin roads for the next six years. The projects change frequently, and updates are made monthly. The 2018–2023 map indicates that the portion of US 53 between Blair and Whitehall is scheduled for preservation and restoration in 2020. Additional projects near Blair include bridge and culvert replacement and asphalt mill and overlay on US 53 and slope repair on STH 95.

4.4 Assessment of Future Needs

Generally, the accessibility within the region is favorable for the City of Blair. The 2009-2029 Comprehensive Plan identified two key transportation issues impacting the city.

The first issue was the decrease in traffic counts between 1992 and 2006, despite an increase in population. The same trend of decreased traffic has been observed from 2006 to 2015. There continues to be significant heavy truck traffic in the City – and in particular along Broadway. These trucks represent local industries – and as such – the City seeks to continue to have a good partnership with local haulers. There is a designated truck route through the City – and local sand mines are not permitted to haul through the City, but local haulers and trucks providing other materials, as well as serving other local industries still have a presence – and this is vital to the success of the local economy.

The second issue was the further development of the street network. Discussion and consideration has occurred regarding development of a second east-west thoroughfare – with

strong consideration of 4th Street. This seems to be an important issue – both from a people movement perspective, as well as from a health and safety point for emergency vehicles. Alternatives to the development of 4th Street should also be considered. Management of the routes is important to ensure that Broadway retains steady traffic to help bolster the redevelopment of downtown.

Transportation for recreational uses needs to continue to be expanded as well. Local interest in developing improved water access points for paddle sports – both along the Trempealeau River and Lake Henry are high priorities, as well as exploring the designation and establishment of ATV and snowmobile routes. The walking path through Riverside Memorial Park can also be expanded in the future. Bicycle routes throughout the City can be established with signage that can connect into the regional County system as well.

Going forward, regionally, within the planning horizon, we are going to continue to see development and increased use of electric vehicles. Nationally, we are seeing a trend to increase the availability of charging stations. This is likely something the City can accommodate if the need arises with relatively minimal efforts. We are also seeing private businesses and industries supplying these as a means to increase foot traffic.

Driverless vehicles are a “futuristic” approach to driving that is actually already being implemented in specific locations throughout the United States. Estimates vary greatly as to when this technology will actually be widespread and available; ranging from 5-20 years. Companies like Google, Tesla, and Uber are actively creating their versions of autonomous vehicles. Some of the pros and cons to this technology include:

PROS: fewer serious accidents, traffic flow.

CONS: increase in vehicles, privacy and convenience, people may commute longer distances.

While widespread use is not anticipated in Blair within the planning horizon, it is important to consider the future impacts of this technology and to stay tuned-in to the infrastructure needs that these transportation improvements will require.

Few planning elements will impact how connected a community is more than transportation. Having a designed, accessible and maintained transportation network – both motorized and non-motorized – is an important component to maintain economic vibrancy, attractive neighborhoods, and creating steady market-demand throughout the community. Particularly in a reasonably confined geographic area, having non-motorized options, including sidewalks and bicycle options available will help to increase the social cohesion and integration, and will lead to a more engaging quality of life as neighbors interact with one another more.

The City’s location on rail is a huge asset for local companies with logistics and distribution needs. Much of the industry in the City would not be located in Blair without the availability of rail access.

4.5 Goals, Objectives and Policies

Transportation goals, objectives and policies reflect a vision of what Blair's transportation system should provide. They will also help guide priorities for future investment, either as a publicly-maintained local system or in partnership with regional or state transportation agencies. These transportation goals, objectives and policies provide the City with a means to measure the performance of the transportation system over time, and as necessary, an opportunity to reassess, revise and/or supplement the desires of the community. The following goals, objectives and policies are not ranked or presented in order of importance or need.

Goal: Provide a complete, multi-modal transportation system that provides a range of transportation alternatives and options.

Objectives:

1. Continue to develop and expand pedestrian and bicycle facility networks.
2. Incorporate additional recreational considerations within the transportation network.

Policies:

1. Develop a second east-west corridor through the City.
2. Ensure that development incorporates bicycle and pedestrian transportation alternatives.
3. Evaluate, designate and sign a Heavy Truck Route through the City, including limiting trucks on Broadway Street.
4. Develop a more complete walking and/or biking trail system and incorporate signage. Develop connections of local bicycling routes that connect to the County and regional trail systems.
5. Evaluate trail access for ATV and snowmobiles, as well as additional trail development consideration.
6. Evaluate locations for improved water access connections with regard to paddle sports and other recreational activities.

Goal: Ensure transportation networks are safe and accessible.

Objectives:

1. Coordinate with regional and state agencies to facilitate efficient and cooperative planning, design, operation and maintenance of transportation facilities and programs.
2. Work with WisDOT to evaluate safety of the new intersection of US 53 and STH 95. The realignment has created poor sight lines and increased safety concerns.
3. Continue the positive partnerships with local haulers to ensure the safe operation of their vehicles through the City as needed.

Policies:

1. Develop a second east-west corridor through the City.
2. Ensure safety features are incorporated into the design of all transportation facilities.
3. Ensure railroad crossings are safe for motorists and non-motorists.
4. Encourage interconnected streets and patterns of development to create more convenient multi-modal travel options for residents that will also foster a sense of neighborhood.

Goal: Continue to work with railroad operator and users to mitigate challenges to smooth transportation flow.

Objectives:

1. Minimize amount of time roadways are blocked.
2. Mitigate noise impacts to neighborhoods due to freight rail movements.

Policies:

1. Recognize the value of rail access to the local economy.

5 Utilities and Community Facilities

5.1 Introduction

Residents and businesses in the City of Blair are served by a diverse set of public and private utilities and other service providers. Wisconsin's Smart Growth Law requires that comprehensive plans describe current utilities and public facilities, and provide guidance concerning the future need for new services or the rehabilitation of existing ones.

Blair's quality of life is enhanced by reliable utilities and services. These help to make Blair a good place for residents and businesses alike. The City will continue to maintain a high standard of service for those utilities, services, and facilities under its direct management, and will work with others to ensure that they are supported in continuing to deliver quality service to their customers.

5.2 Existing Conditions

5.2.1 Water Supply, Wastewater and Stormwater Utilities

Water Supply and Distribution

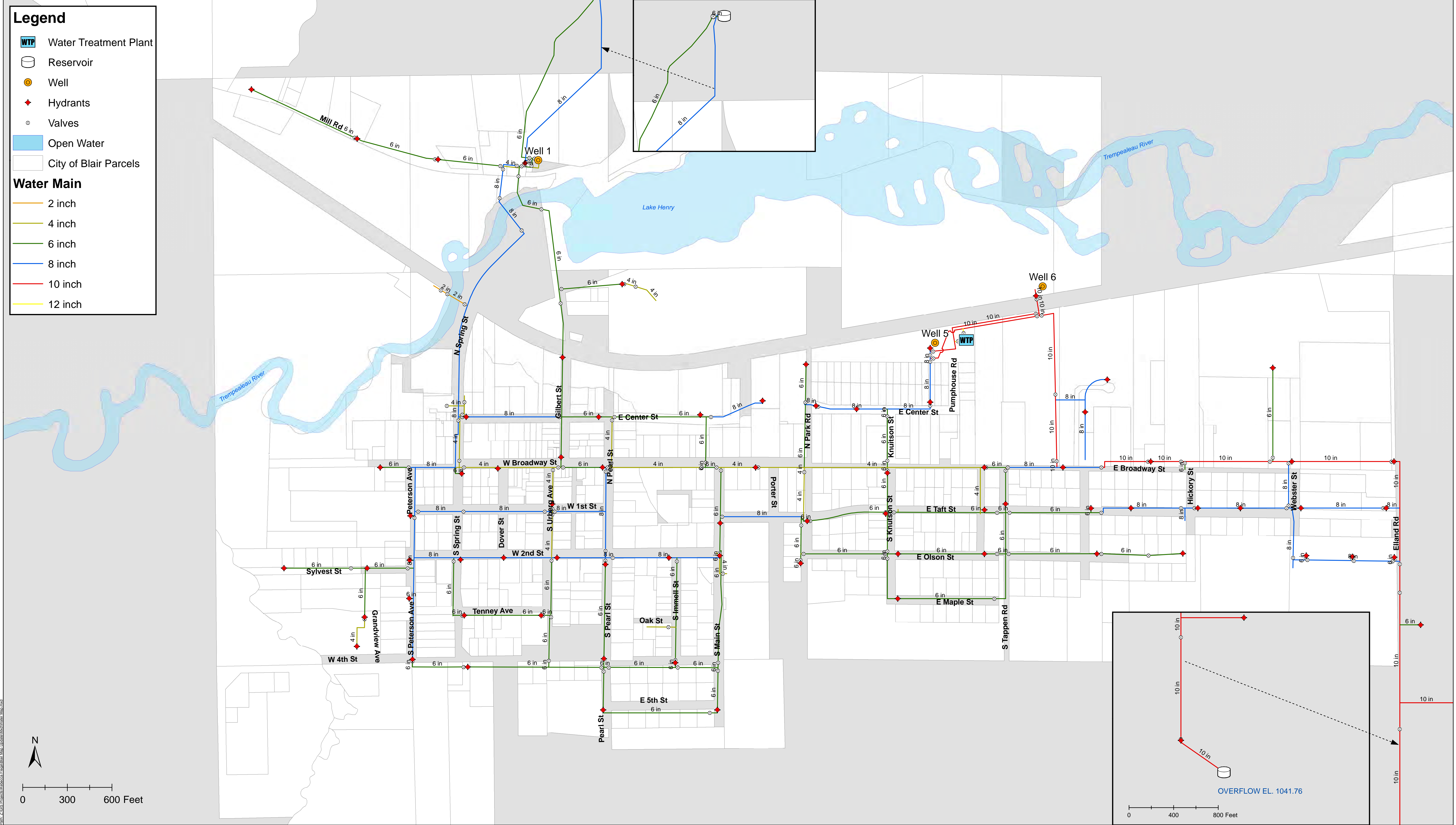
The City's water system has two wells with a combined yield of over 300,000 gallons per day. The City also has a water treatment plant.

The water utility maintains two storage facilities with a total capacity of 550,000 gallons. These include a standpipe constructed in 2002 and a reservoir constructed in 1965.

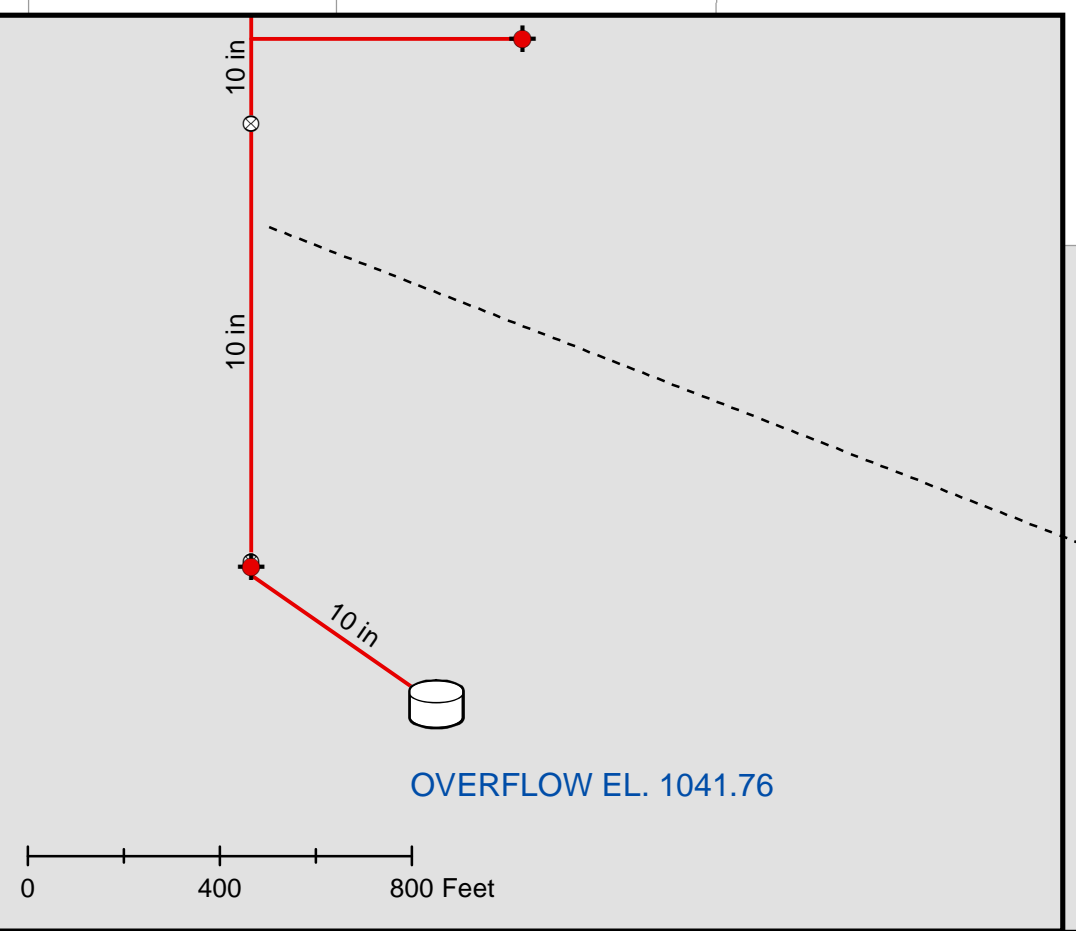
To protect the municipal water supply, the City of Blair has a Wellhead Protection Overlay District. This regulates land use within zones of influence on the City wells or groundwater to mitigate the potential degradation of water quality being sold to customers. The Ordinance may need to be updated to reflect all active wells.

Water production should be sufficient to accommodate the projected growth discussed in the Issues and Opportunities Chapter. It is important to note that the City's municipal water does not provide water services to the non-metallic mineral operations within the City. If any of these would need public water services, additional capacity, distribution and treatment would likely be necessary. This is not anticipated to be needed by these organizations.

Water rates in Blair are relatively low across the state compared to utilities with between 400 and 900 accounts.



0 300 600 Feet



312 South 3rd Street
La Crosse, WI 54601-4007
PHONE: (608) 782-3161
FAX: (888) 908-8166
www.sehinc.com

Project: BLAIR 135764
Print Date: 6/14/2016

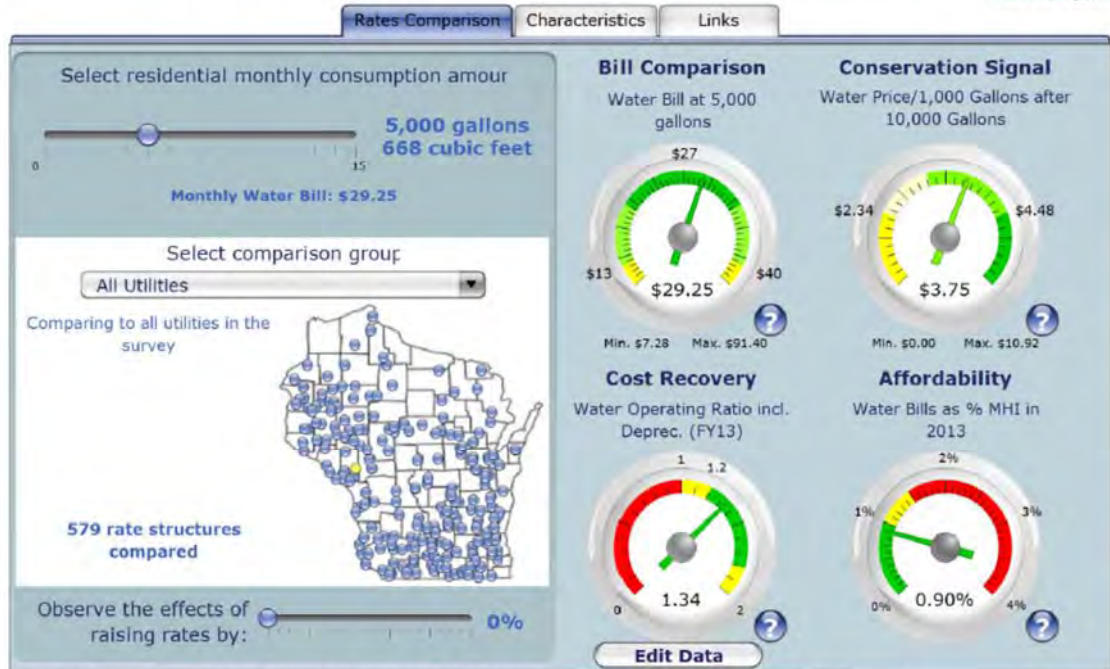
Map by: mfolk
Projection: NAD_1983_HARN_WISCRS
_Trempealeau_County_Feet
Source: Trempealeau County GIS
CSM Doc. 419411
Blair GIS

WATER UTILITY MAP

CITY OF BLAIR, WISCONSIN

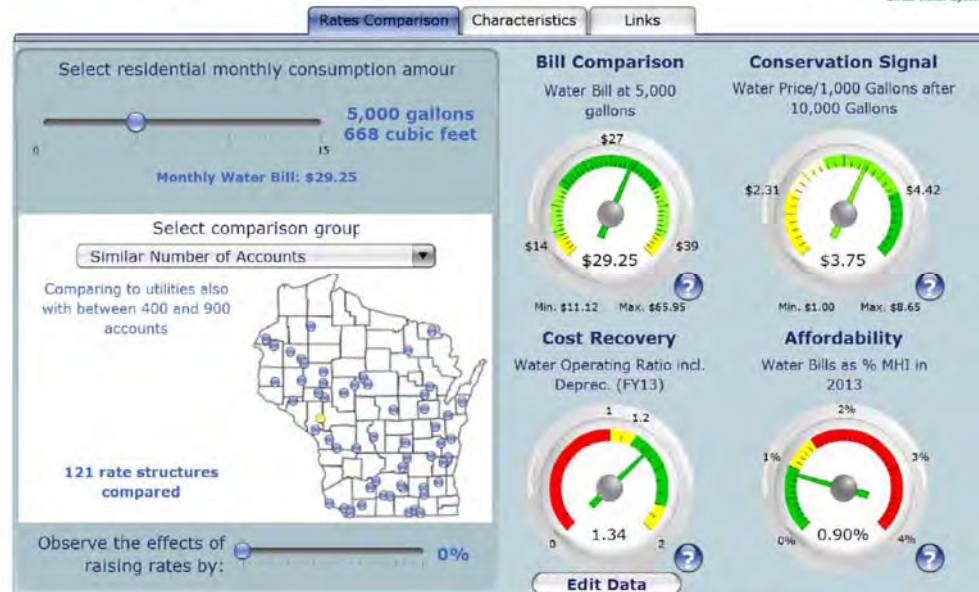
This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey map and is not intended to be used as one. This map is a compilation of records, information, and data gathered from various sources listed on this map and is to be used for reference purposes only. SEH does not warrant that the Geographic Information System (GIS) Data used to prepare this map are error free, and SEH does not represent that the GIS Data can be used for navigational, tracking, or any other purpose requiring exacting measurement of distance or direction or precision in the depiction of geographic features. The user of this map acknowledges that SEH shall not be liable for any damages which arise out of the user's access or use of data provided.

BLAIR



Copyright (c) 2015 Environmental Finance Center at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Data sources: Wisconsin Public Service Commission 2015 statewide residential drinking water rates survey; U.S. EPA SDWIS; U.S. Census Bureau; U.S. Geological Survey. Funding provided by a cooperative agreement with the U.S. EPA.

BLAIR



Copyright (c) 2015 Environmental Finance Center at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Data sources: Wisconsin Public Service Commission 2015 statewide residential drinking water rates survey; U.S. EPA SDWIS; U.S. Census Bureau; U.S. Geological Survey. Funding provided by a cooperative agreement with the U.S. EPA.

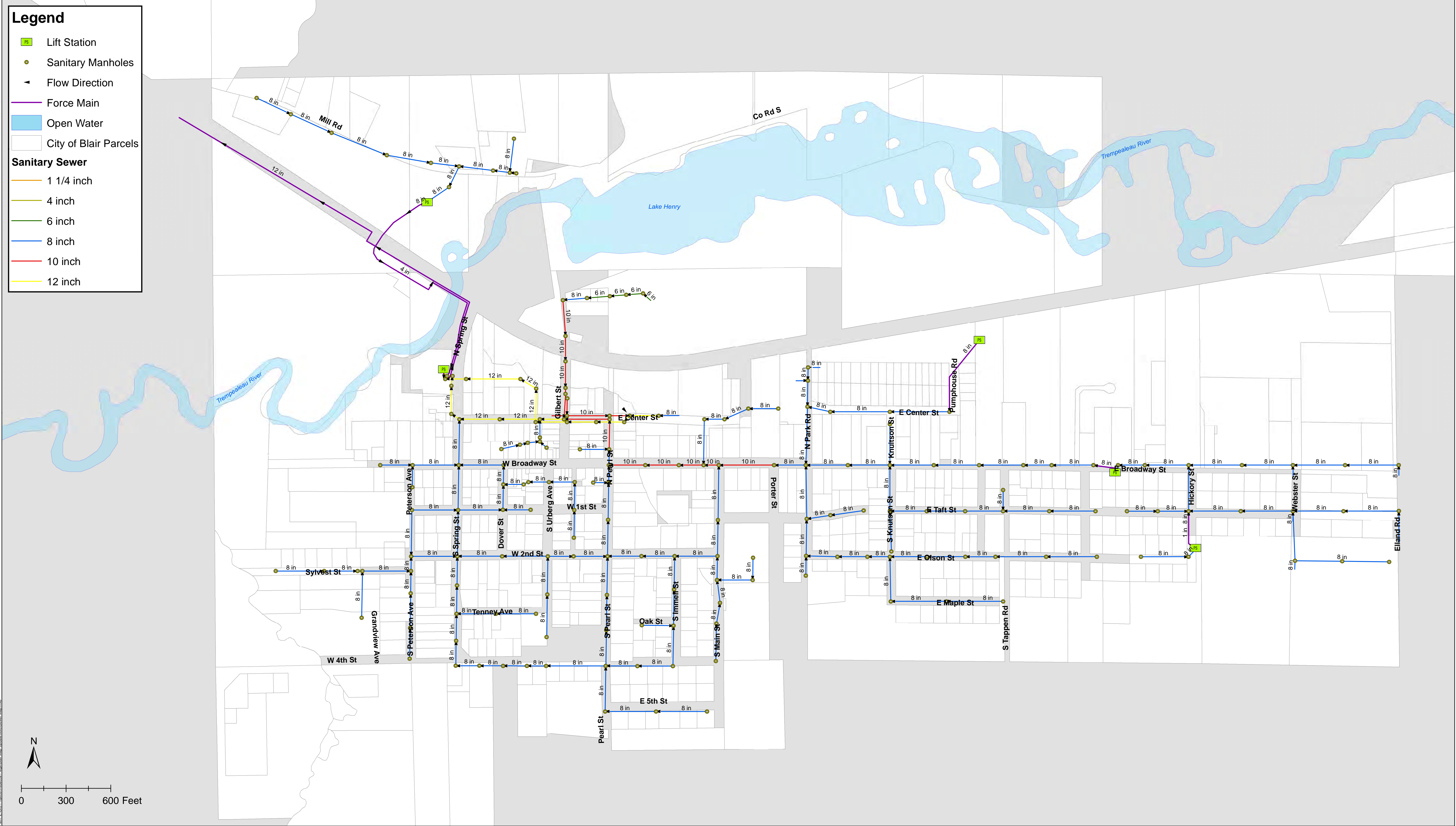
Source: Wisconsin Public Service Commission

Wastewater Collection and Treatment

Blair's wastewater system consists of approximately seven miles of sanitary sewer, as well as a main lift station and pumps to the City of Whitehall's wastewater treatment plant. The City of Blair and City of Whitehall have an agreement that has been amended several times documenting the rates of contribution for ongoing operations and maintenance with the City of Whitehall's treatment plant. Whitehall upgraded their Treatment Plant in 2013, and Blair recently completed an upgrade to the Main Lift Station in 2017. These components should remain in good operating condition for the foreseeable future.



The strength of waste generated from Blair – however – is a concern at the Whitehall facility. Much of the high-strength waste is generated from AMPI in Blair. AMPI also contributes to the ongoing operations and maintenance of the system through Blair.



312 South 3rd Street
La Crosse, WI 54601-4007
PHONE: (608) 782-3161
FAX: (888) 908-8166
www.sehinc.com

Project: BLAIR 135764
Print Date: 6/14/2016

Map by: mfallk
Projection: NAD_1983_HARN_WISCRS
_Trempealeau_County_Feet
Source: Trempealeau County GIS
CSM Doc. 419411
Blair GIS

SANITARY SEWER UTILITY MAP

CITY OF BLAIR, WISCONSIN

Stormwater Management

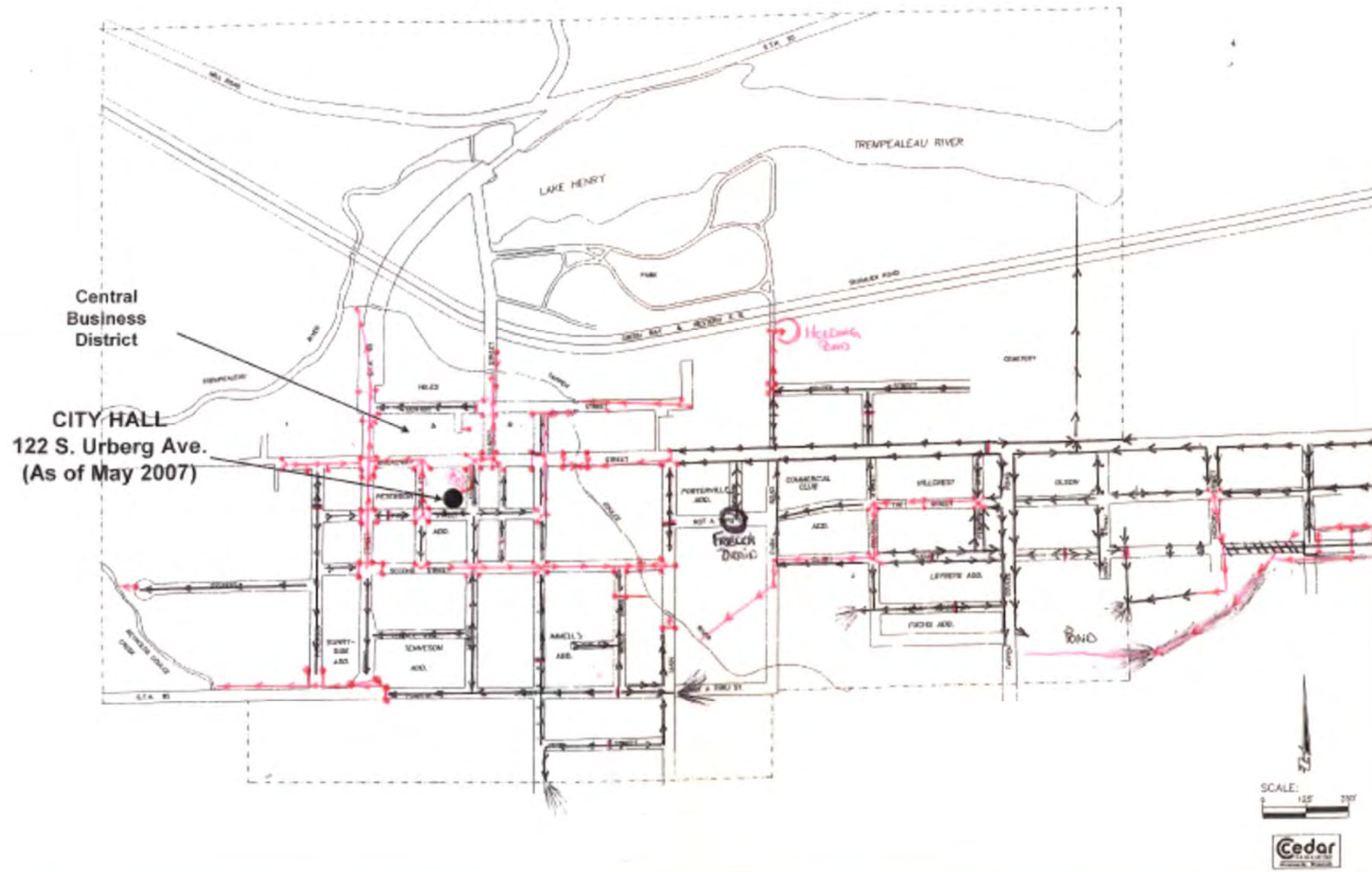
The City of Blair has a limited stormwater management system. There are some storm sewers along with open water channeling. The City has two primary stormwater ponds. Stormwater quality improvements are of concern as there are ongoing maintenance issues with Lake Henry and the need for dredging work to be done.

The City has adopted ordinances that require and regulate buildings in floodplains, construction site pollutant control, post-construction stormwater management, and illicit discharge detection and elimination.

There is an additional area of concern with the southern area of the developed portion of the City. Standing water is a regular year-round occurrence on the former school property. This becomes a large attractor to mosquitos during the warmer months, which become a nuisance to nearby property owners in that part of the City.



● Catch Basin
→ Storm Sewers Direction
← open water flow Direction



Electrical Power and Natural Gas Utilities

WE Energies provides natural gas to customers in Blair.

Electricity is provided by Xcel Energy.

Telecommunications

Private companies provide numerous alternatives for conventional, cellular, and VOIP telephone services within the City of Blair. Internet services are provided to most customers by companies offering DSL, cable, or Wi-Fi services. These companies include CenturyLink, TCC Co-op, Exede, DirectTV, HughesNet, Frontier Communications and AT&T.

Police, Fire and Emergency Services

Police, fire, and emergency services are provided by the City of Blair.

Police Protection

The City of Blair Police Department is housed within City Hall. They have three full-time officers as well as part-time staff.

Fire Protection and Emergency Services

The Blair-Preston Volunteer Fire Department provides fire protection services for the City of Blair and Town of Preston. They currently have significant space constraints within their existing facility – located at 105 E. Broadway. A conditions assessment has been completed, and it is anticipated that they will be actively pursuing a new facility.

Ambulance service is provided by Tri-County Ambulance in Whitehall and Arcadia.

Municipal Facilities

Most of the City's administrative services originate in City Hall – located at 122 S. Urberg Avenue.

The Blair Preston Community Center is located at 103 E. Broadway Street. This facility has a full kitchen, heating and air conditioning and restrooms. There is ample space for events and this can be rented for use.

The City of Blair owns and operates several pieces of large equipment for their public works crews, including dump trucks, grass movers, loader, chipper, sewer jet, street sweeper and pickup trucks. Generally, the crews have what they need to conduct their business.



Blair-Preston Public Library

The Blair-Preston Library is located along-side City Hall. They are opened daily with the exception of Sundays. This facility is part of the Winding Rivers Library System.

K-12 Schools

Blair residents are served by the Blair-Taylor Area School District. It is also served by one private school offering 1st through 8th grade education. These schools serve a large portion of Trempealeau County that is far beyond the City limits. Schools and their performance is also mentioned in the Issues and Opportunities Chapter.

The Blair-Taylor Area School District currently enrolls 636 students in three schools. Enrollment has remained stable over several years, and little overall change is projected. Data and other discussion is also included in the Issues and Opportunities Chapter.



Higher Education Facilities

The City of Blair is located within the Western Wisconsin Technical College service area – which has a regional location in Independence.

Solid Waste and Recycling

The City of Blair has a contract with Tri City Sanitation for garbage and recycling collection. Residents are required to purchase blue bags.

The City also offers residents a free brush site on South River Road and a free compost site on Skumlien Road.



Health Care Facilities

The City has two primary health-care facilities. Gundersen Health System operates a clinic in Blair – open four days per week. This is located at 420 South Peterson Avenue.

The City is also home to the Grand View Care Center – celebrating 50 years. This facilities offers skilled nursing care through 98 rooms and 12 assisted living facilities. They also manage over 100 independent senior apartments and condominium units.

Parks and Recreation

The City has a variety of park and recreational opportunities for area residents to enjoy.

Riverside Memorial Park and Campground is the City's primary park facility. This is located along the shore of Lake Henry – which was created in 1873 by a grist mill dam. Boating is available on Lake Henry (no wake), canoeing, kayaking and year-round fishing. Riverside Memorial Park has basketball courts, baseball and softball fields with concessions, tennis court, volleyball court, the Blair Municipal Pool, boat dock and landing, deer pen, fishing piers, picnic areas, playground equipment, shelter rentals and a paved walking trail. There is also a popular campground with 31 sites here. Four shelters and a restored Bell Tower are available for rental and usage for special events.



The Blair Municipal Pool is currently closed due to major repairs. The City is in the process of making the necessary repairs and improvements to the pool.

The Strand Wayside – located on the north shore of Lake Henry, has picnic areas, handicapped accessible fishing piers, and a historical monument dedicated to ice harvesting from Lake Henry.

The City has developed a Five-Year Outdoor Park and Recreation Plan. This plan needs to be updated to remain eligible for park and recreation funding assistance.



Child Care Facilities

Wisconsin began to require licensing of day care centers in 1949. The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families currently lists licensed family day care providers and group day care providers in the City of Blair. Licensed family child care providers care for four to eight children. This care is usually in the provider's home. Licensed group child care centers provide care for 9 or more children. A search of the database indicates that there are two licensed facilities in Blair – the Blair Head Start Center – with a capacity of 31, and Old School Daycare at 219 S. Main Street with a capacity of 50. This equates to a total licensed capacity of 81 within the City, and most recent population data found there are approximately 151 children under the age of 9 living in the City.

Senior Care Facilities

The City of Blair is served by two senior care facilities. Community-based residential facilities typically offer room and board and basic nursing care. Adult family home facilities provide similar services to community-based residential facilities, but can only serve up to four adults at one time. A nursing home is a place where five or more unrelated peoples receive care or treatment, and require 24-hour nursing services due to a mental or physical condition. Residential Care Apartment Complexes are independent apartment units where individuals needing up to 28 hours per week of supportive care, personal care or nursing services can reside.

The Hickory Ridge Adult Family Home is located on Arneson Ridge Road and has a capacity of four. The second is the Grand View Care Center with a capacity of 98.

There are approximately 250 residents in Blair 65 and over, and a capacity of approximately 102 senior care beds. As the population of elderly residents in the Blair area continues to escalate, it is anticipated there will continue to be an increasing need for additional senior care facilities. Senior care facilities are often located in urbanized area as they are close to essential goods and services, have good access to public transportation systems, and are connected to municipal utility services.

Churches and Cemeteries

There are several churches and cemeteries within the City.

Churches

Blair Lutheran – 126 S. Peterson Avenue

First Lutheran – 419 Urberg Avenue

St. Ansgar – 702 E. Olson

Christian Church – Western WI – W116990 State Highway 95

Cemeteries

Rest Haven – E. Broadway between Pershing Avenue and S. Birch Street

Comess Cemetery – W. 4th Street at Pearl Street

Zion Cemetery – 126 S. Peterson Avenue, between Broadway and Sylfest Street.

5.3 Assessment of Future Needs

5.3.1 Introduction

Properly assessing future needs requires not only an understanding of existing conditions and critical issues, but also an appreciation of broader utility and community facility trends. This section of the report highlights key trends impacting utility and facility planning and concludes with a description of local utility and facility issues which are seen as priorities by the community. Much of the infrastructure and services provided to City residents have adequate capacity. However, with the population growth, services and facilities may need to be reviewed to ensure they are adequately providing the services to the populations needing them. It will be important to continue to monitor developments and their impact to the facilities and services that residents and businesses depend on.

5.3.2 Key Trends

Technology and the Smart City

New technologies are emerging to support the development of “smart cities” where data is used to support better decision making related to crime, traffic, public health, and many types of infrastructure. For example, fiber capacity and internet connectivity are allowing cities to use data to help better forecast and respond to crime, monitor energy and water consumption, and better manage traffic challenges.

Sustainable Infrastructure

Similar to the growth in the green building industry through certification programs such as LEED, there is growing interest in how cities plan, design, construct, maintain, and decommission their infrastructure. A variety of rating systems and other tools have been developed to respond to the trend, including ENVISION™, discussed below, LEED for Neighborhood Development, and EcoDistricts.

Investment Gap

There is a growing gap between the amount of resources needed to sustain existing infrastructure and the financial resources required to do so. According to the 2017 Infrastructure Report Card by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), the nation’s infrastructure earned a “D+”. Highlights from Wisconsin include:

- Driving on roads in need of repair in Wisconsin costs each driver \$637 per year.
- 17.3 percent of bridges are rated structurally deficient.
- Drinking water needs and wastewater needs total \$7.33 billion.
- 157 dams are considered to be high-hazard potential.
- The State’s schools have an estimated capital expenditure gap of \$836 million.

Electric Vehicles

As the push for utilizing more renewable energy continues, the increased use of Neighborhood Electrical Vehicles (NEVs) will increase. Having the capacity to charge these vehicle batteries in a timely fashion is critical to their viability.

Drones

Drone usage is growing for recreational, commercial and governmental purposes. Drone technology is becoming more heavily tested and utilized for parcel delivery, photography, law enforcement surveillance and reconnaissance, and use with building and structure inspections – particularly for tall facilities that would otherwise require a manned-operation, such as water towers/tank inspections.

Wireless Infrastructure

As technology becomes increasingly prevalent through mobile devices, carriers are investing in infrastructure to accommodate the growing demand to provide sufficient data coverage. Communities are limited in the regulations they can impose on the development and placement of infrastructure. A key challenge for utilities is to balance the infrastructure needed to meet growing demand and position the City to remain competitive for business, while maintaining a safe environment and addressing local neighborhood concerns.

5.3.3 Local Needs

Several infrastructure needs were identified throughout the input sessions of the plan. These projects are significant community investments and will require good planning to complete these projects in a cohesive yet cost-effective manner.

Several of the facilities within the City have been identified as needing improvements. The pool project is underway with financing. This will be completed within the next year or two depending on financing. The Blair-Preston Volunteer Fire Department has expressed the need for a new facility as well as the current facility lacks adequate space for vehicle storage, training and record keeping. The existing facility is also prone to flooding – as it saw during the summer of 2017.



Related – the Community Center has been identified as needing upgrades or replacement. This is currently located in the same structure as the Fire Department – and its future will likely depend on what is decided with for the Community Center. Having a community center still remains a value to the community, as this was identified during the public workshop.

Much of the City's water and sewer distribution and collection system infrastructure is outdated. While the Main Lift Station has recently been upgraded, most of the City's water and sanitary sewer distribution and collection systems are 60+ years old and will need rehabilitation or replacement within the planning horizon.

Expansion and improvements to the existing campground in Riverside Memorial Park have also been discussed – as many of the pads are gravel. Discussions and preliminary investigations have also been conducted to dredge Lake Henry. Further, the City's salt/sand shed's location and capacity could be improved.

Broadway Street is currently the City's only east-west thoroughfare and the City is exploring the creation of a second east-west route in the southern portion of the City.

5.4 Goals, Objectives and Policies

Utilities and Community Facility goals, objectives and policies reflect a vision of what Blair's public and private infrastructure systems should provide. They will also help guide priorities for future investment as publicly-maintained local systems, in partnership with regional or state agencies, or in partnership with private entities.

These utility and facility goals, objectives and policies provide the City with a means to measure the performance of the infrastructure system over time, and as necessary, an opportunity to reassess, revise and/or supplement the desires of the community. Goals indicate a specific policy direction and assist in organizing individual objectives and more defined policies. The following goals, objectives and policies are not ranked or presented in order of importance or need.

Goal: Provide City utilities to all residents in a safe, efficient, resilient and cost-effective manner.

Objectives:

1. Create, maintain and follow a Capital Improvements Plan.
2. Updated as needed the City's Wellhead Protection Ordinance.

Policies:

1. Promote adequate and efficient utilities for City residents, commerce and industry.
2. Prioritize infill and/or redevelopment of blighted properties to better utilized existing utility facilities, over greenfield expansions where facilities and service needs to be extended.
3. Support long range utility planning which factors into consideration of changes in local and regional climate conditions.

Goal: Maintain and provide community facilities and services that will improve Blair's attractiveness to live, work and raise a family.

Objectives:

1. Provide adequate police and fire protection and emergency services to all areas of the City.
 - a. Complete the creation of the Fire Board to streamline Fire Department-related decision.
2. Maintain City's high water quality.
3. Promote health and medical facilities and social services to meet the needs of all residents.
4. Provide an adequate and efficient level of governmental services and facilities to City residents.
5. Develop and program space (community center) for activities targeted towards a wide range of ages – but paying close attention to engaging the youth and the senior citizens.

Policies:

1. Actively monitor on a regular basis the water quantity/supply from impacts of sand industry and related high-capacity wells.
2. Evaluate and prioritize the upcoming infrastructure improvements necessary for the City including a new Fire Department facility, remodeled Community Center, improvements to the park and campground areas, and pool improvements.
3. Utilize capital improvements programming to ensure long range financial planning for anticipated public improvements.
4. Open dialogue with City's large industries and employers on future anticipated improvements to the City's utility systems and impacts this will have on the operations of their facilities. Mitigate impacts to the extent feasible to ensure residents and businesses are able to thrive in Blair.
5. Work to ensure high potency and volume wastewater discharges area managed to ensure protection of the environment.

Goal: Strive for a park and outdoor recreation system which satisfies the basic outdoor recreation and open space needs of City residents and visitors in an economical and environmentally sensitive fashion.

Objectives:

1. Update the City's Comprehensive Outdoor Park and Recreation Five-Year Plan.
2. Consider development of a Park Master Plan for Riverside Memorial Park.

Policies:

1. Develop programming for the Riverside Memorial Park that emphasis uses for all ages.
2. Continue to promote water access to Lake Henry and the continued use of this resource for recreational activities.
3. Develop a trail connection from Riverside Memorial Park to Strand Wayside.
4. Consider reconstruction of the park road and parking areas.
5. Evaluate feasibility of campground upgrades and improvements, as well as expansion.
6. Consider developing a beach area for improved water access.

6 Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources

6.1 Introduction

This element of the Comprehensive Plan is meant to document and discuss conditions and trends, and to formulate goals, objectives and policies with regard to several attributes of the community, including:

- agriculture and agricultural lands;
- natural resources, including metallic and non-metallic mining;
- historic resources; and
- cultural resources.

These features are important in their own right, but are often interrelated with other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. The City's geographic nature has largely transformed in the last five years with the overwhelming presence of sand mining operations. Agriculture also plays a role in the local economy. Floodplains and wetlands may impact land use patterns or lead to related infrastructure needs (i.e. storm water conveyance). This chapter will attempt to define these relationships through its analysis of existing conditions.

6.2 Existing Conditions

Agriculture remains an important element of the regional economy, although its role within the City of Blair is somewhat limited. As of 2012, there were 1,436 farms and 323,157 acres in farms in Trempealeau County. About 61 percent of this total, or 197,816 acres, is cropland. Corn, forage and soybeans are the primary crops.

Cattle and calves make up a vast majority of the livestock farmed in Trempealeau County, totaling 88,783 on 1,026 farms in 2012. Other livestock raised in the area includes poultry, hogs, and sheep.

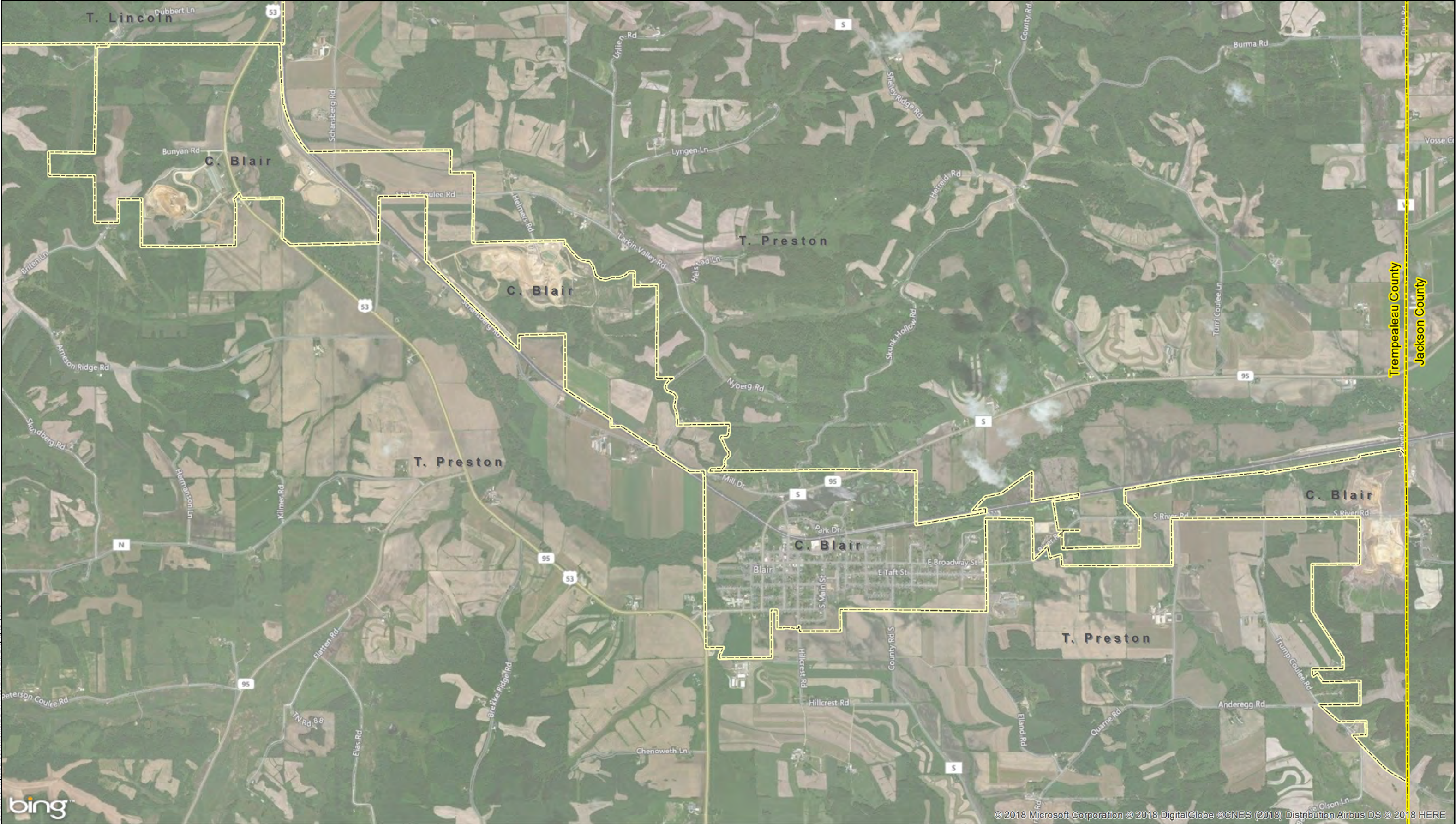
In 2017, there were 92 parcels and 890 acres of land in Blair that are assessed as agricultural as reported by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue.

Urban Agriculture

While agriculture plays an important role in the local economy, it is important that there is an opportunity available for urban agriculture – that is, space available for those that live within the City limits and do not have access to land available for traditional food production, to be able to grow their own fruits and vegetables. These often take the form of community-gardens.

Topography

The topography of the developed portion of the City of Blair – or the more urbanized area – is relatively flat. However – the topography fluctuates to a much greater extent as one gets to further easterly and westerly boundaries of the City – near the non-metallic mineral extraction activities.





6808 ODANA RD
SUITE 200
MADISON, WI 53719
TF: (608) 620-6199
FAX: (888) 908-8166
www.sehinc.com

0 1,250 2,500 Ft

Map by: mfaik
Projection: WisCRS Trempealeau County (US feet)
Source: Trempealeau County, USGS
Print Date: 3/20/2018

TOPOGRAPHY

City of Blair, Trempealeau County, Wisconsin

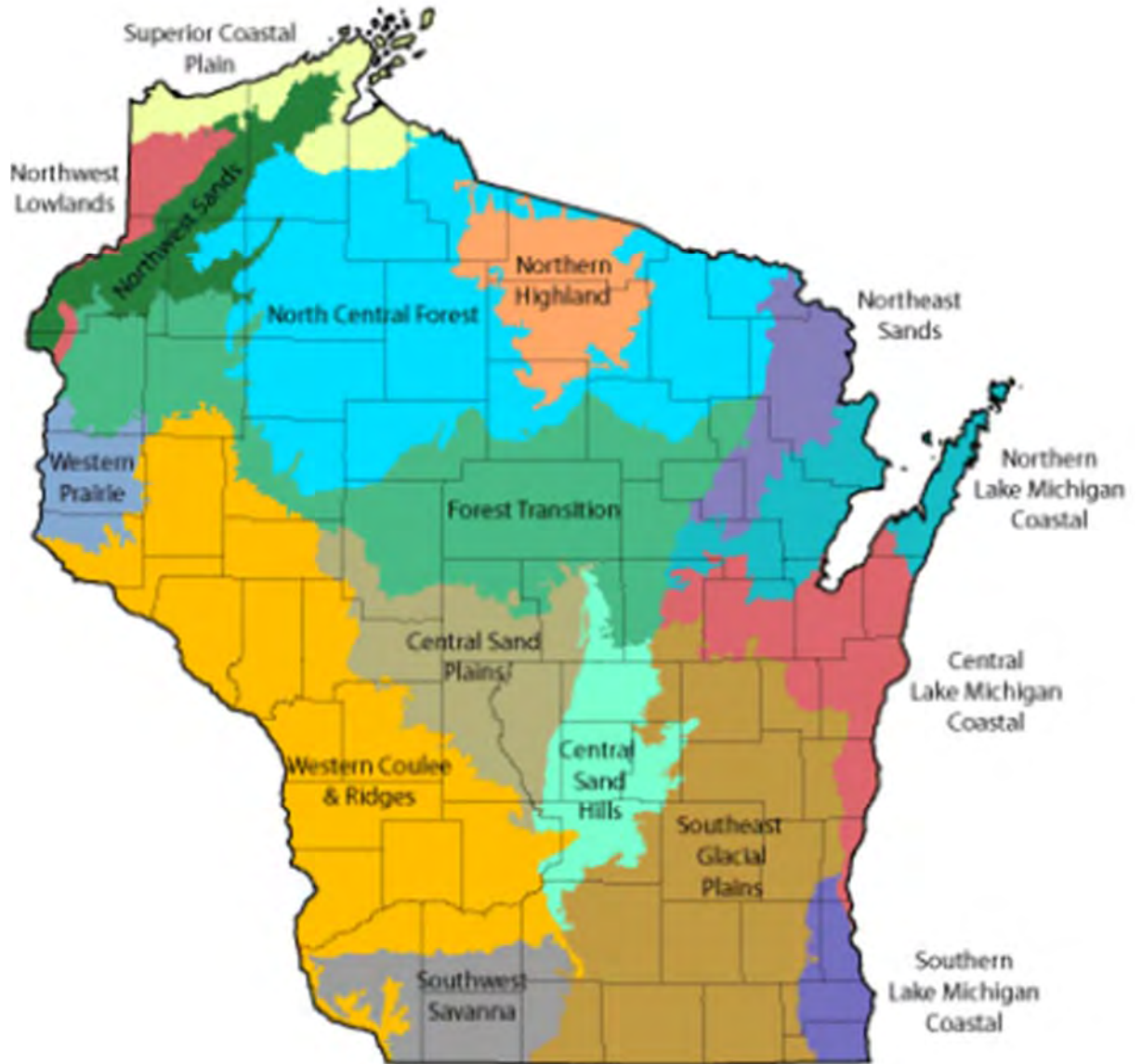
— 10-Foot Contours
— 100-Foot Contours

▭ Municipal Boundaries
▭ County Boundaries

This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey map and is not intended to be used as one. This map is a compilation of records, information, and data gathered from various sources listed on this map and is to be used for reference purposes only. SEH does not warrant that the Geographic Information System (GIS) Data used to prepare this map are error free, and SEH does not represent that the GIS Data can be used for navigational, tracking, or any other purpose requiring exacting measurement of distance or direction or precision in the depiction of geographic features. The user of this map acknowledges that SEH shall not be liable for any damages which arise out of the user's access or use of data provided.

Bedrock Geology & Soils

The City of Blair has primarily loamy soils, however there is also a strong presence of sands, silts and alluvial as well. Most of the soils are quite permeable, meaning they drain well. The City lies within the Western Coulee & Ridges ecological landscape.



Mineral Resources

Non-metallic mining has been an industry of rapid expansion in the region and within the City in the last five years. Trempealeau County placed a moratorium on permits for these facilities, which resulted in a number of companies seeking annexation and permitting through municipalities within the region – including Blair.

The City now has three active non-metallic mineral extraction and processing operations. The on-site operations general consist of extracting sand products, processing them through wet and dry plant facilities, and ultimately loading them into rail cars which are then shipped to oil and gas well fields in the southern United States.

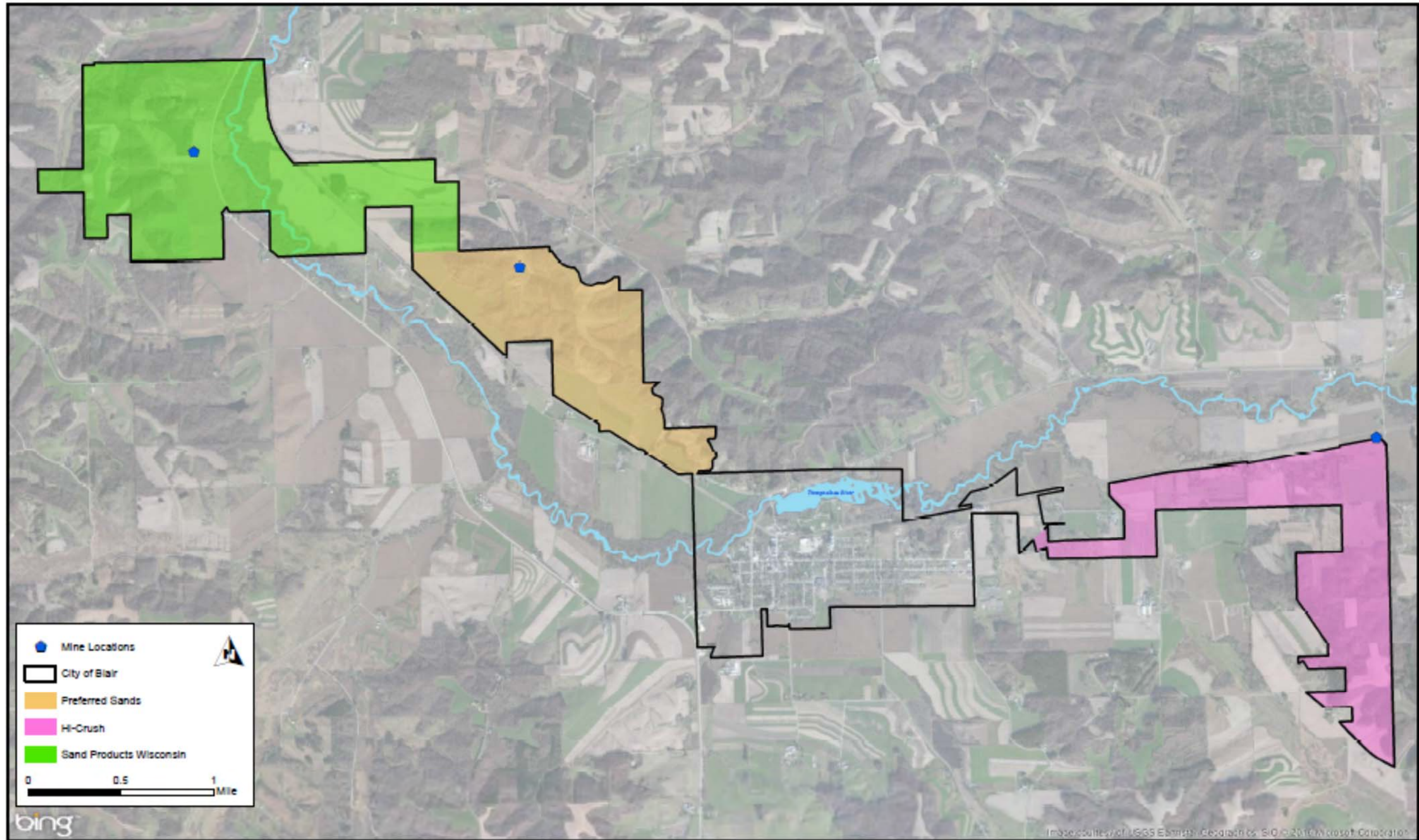
These operations are highly regulated, and as such, as inspected by City, as well as agencies from the State of Wisconsin as well as the federal government through the EPA.

The mines generally have a 30-year life – with the exception of one site which is currently likely closer to a 15-year life. After these areas are mined, they are reclaimed – wherein the overburden and top soil that gets stripped gets replaced, sculpted and seeded for re-growth.

The mines do not use any City-owned water or sewer utilities. They have to aggressively treat and manage stormwater. Blasting activities are highly regulated, including taking noise and vibration readings. The mines are required to have and follow a Fugitive Dust Plan, to manage and minimize any dust that is created by the operation.

While there have been some growing pains, these organizations for the most part appear to be making efforts to be good neighbors, and offer their assistance with community efforts.

Upon reclamation, most of the land will be returned to production row crops, while the remaining will be sloped at no more than 3:1 and suitable for pastures, tree planting or perennial plantings. The rail lines may remain in some or all locations, as these can be vital to future industrial uses for material shipping.



**Blair Mine Locations
City of Blair**

Watersheds and Surface Water

Lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, intermittent waterways, and natural drainage ways make up the surface waters of Blair. These resources are all water bodies, standing still or flowing, navigable and intermittent, including natural drainage ways that collect and channel overland rainwater or snowmelt runoff. Natural drainage ways are characterized by intermittent streams, threads, rills, gullies, and dry washes that periodically contribute water to first-order streams. There are also many artificial drainage ways where the natural drainage ways have been altered by human activity. All of these features have the ability to transport sediment and pollutants and are affected by their watersheds, the land that surrounds them.

Blair is located in the Upper Trempealeau River watershed. This watershed is severely impacted by non-point source pollutants, many from agricultural operations and animal-related industries.

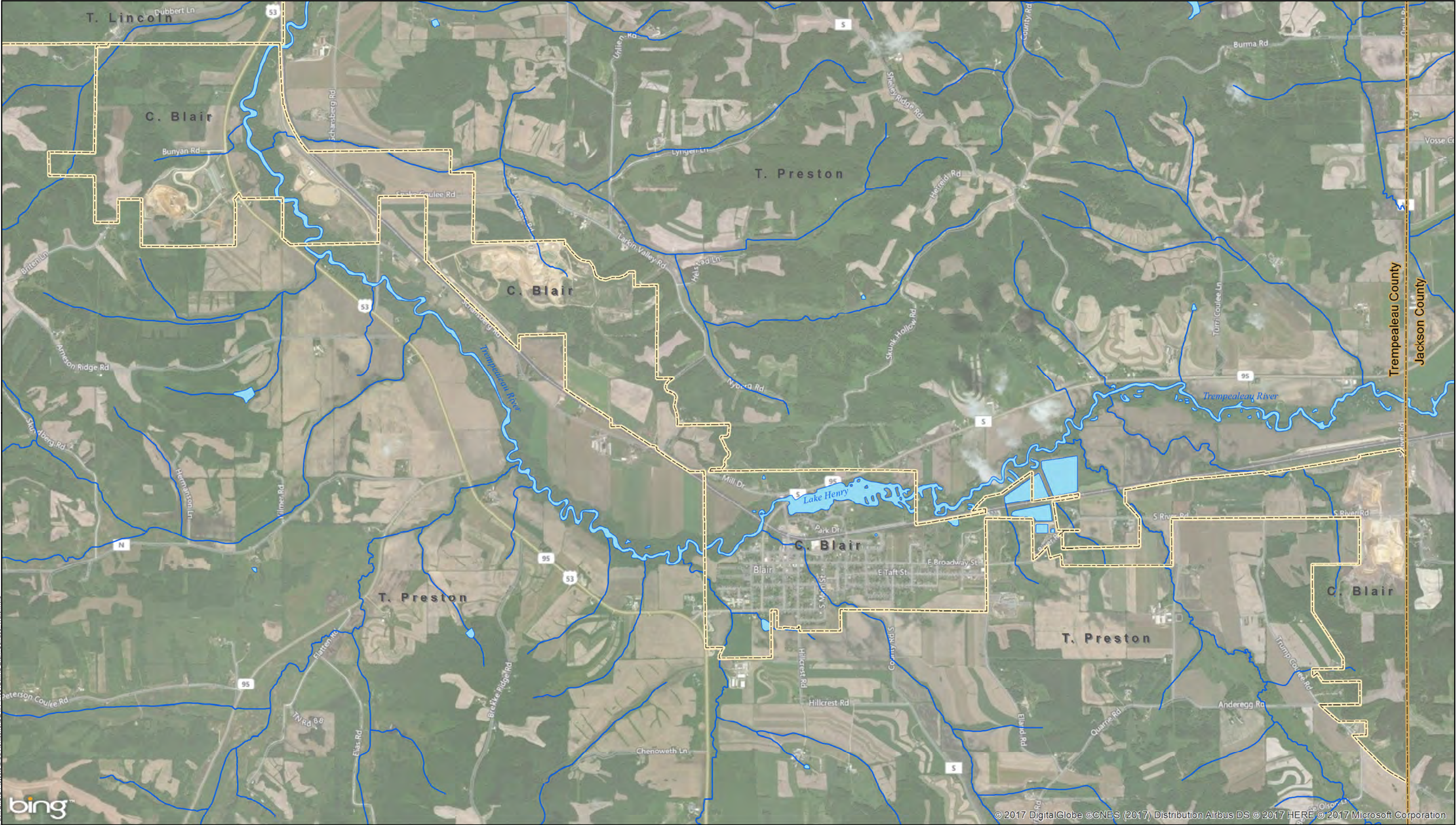
Lake Henry and the Trempealeau River are the major surface waters in Blair. There are also several smaller rivers and streams within the City – particularly in the far eastern and western boundaries of the City near the mining activities. These include Trump Coulee Creek, Tappen Coulee Creek, and Reynolds Coulee Creek. These are excellent fishing destinations – but have been impacted by runoff. The City is planning to dredge Lake Henry in the near future to improve its water quality and the recreational resources available to users of the Park.

Impaired Waters

The Tappen Coulee Creek and the Trump Coulee Creek are both on the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) 303d impaired waters list for impacts of sedimentation, elevated temperatures, and loss of instream habitat due to stream bank pasturing and stream bank erosion. The Trempealeau River is also proposed to be listed. These determinations indicate when water bodies are not meeting state or federal water quality standards, and are used to establish a method to protect and restore the quality of Wisconsin's surface waters.

Improving groundwater is a critical component of long-term sustainability and resiliency. Efforts which are often largely enforcement and/or educational in nature, can result in the common use of best management practices to protect our waterways. Having infrastructure designed to collect and treat stormwater before it enters waterways helps, as does public education to encourage reduced use of pollutants and better vegetation maintenance to help capture pollution before it finds its way into our waterways will help mitigate possible groundwater contamination.

Significant efforts are occurring at the local mineral extraction facilities to ensure that appropriate stormwater management techniques and best management practices (BMPs) are being integrated into their sites. These are monitored closely and the WDNR closely regulates the runoff associated with these entities. They generally are able to retain all storm water on-site in the areas of construction and impact – or sufficiently allow for natural settling of sediments in designated pond areas before discharge to area surface waters. Where there is discharge, regular sampling occurs to ensure the water quality being sent back to the areas surface waters is high.





6808 ODANA RD
SUITE 200
MADISON, WI 53719
TF: (608) 620-6199
FAX: (888) 908-8166
www.sehinc.com

0 1,250 2,500 Ft

Map by: mfaik
Projection: WisCRS Trempealeau County (US feet)
Source: Trempealeau County, WDNR
Print Date: 12/11/2017

SURFACE WATER

City of Blair, Trempealeau County, Wisconsin

-  Municipal Boundaries
-  County Boundaries
-  Surface Water

This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey map and is not intended to be used as one. This map is a compilation of records, information, and data gathered from various sources listed on this map and is to be used for reference purposes only. SEH does not warrant that the Geographic Information System (GIS) Data used to prepare this map are error free, and SEH does not represent that the GIS Data can be used for navigational, tracking, or any other purpose requiring exacting measurement of distance or direction or precision in the depiction of geographic features. The user of this map acknowledges that SEH shall not be liable for any damages which arise out of the user's access or use of data provided.

Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters

There are no outstanding or exceptional water resources as identified by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources within Blair's boundaries. Tappen Coulee Creek, Lake Henry and the Trempealeau River east of the Lake are identified by the WDNR as an Area of Special Natural Resources Interest (ASNRI) for trout streams. Areas of Special Natural Resources Interest include designated state natural areas, designated trout streams, water inhabited by endangered, threatened, special concern species or unique ecological communities identified in the Natural Heritage Inventory, wild rice waters, federal or state waters designated as wild or scenic rivers, waters in areas identified in a special area management plan or special wetland inventory study, and water in ecologically significant coastal wetlands along Lakes Michigan and Superior as identified in the Coastal Wetlands of Wisconsin.

Point Source Discharges

The WDNR regulates the discharge of pollutants to waters of the state through the Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) program. This limits and sets forth a process to monitor discharges for pollutants. The Blair AMPI facility has a WPDES permit.

Nonpoint source pollution, or polluted runoff, is a primary cause of water quality issues throughout Wisconsin. Educational efforts and promotion of best management practices can help to reduce runoff impacts to our waterways by limiting fertilizers, oil, grease, sediment and bacteria in agricultural, urban and residential areas. Major urban contributors include roads, parking lots, construction sites, industrial storage areas, and residential manicured lawns.

Area High Capacity Wells

Many Wisconsin municipalities utilize deeper aquifers for obtaining water supply. There are numerous high capacity wells in the City. The City of Blair operates two high capacity wells to feed the municipal water system. The Blair Sportsman's Club has a high capacity well. There are 9 high-capacity wells owned and operated by the sand mining industry – six by Hi-Crush and three by Source Energy Services.

Groundwater

Groundwater is the primary source of potable water. The City's water comes from wells which provide good quantity and quality water. This water is somewhat susceptible to groundwater contamination from agricultural practices. The City of Blair has a Wellhead Protection Plan and ordinance in place to help protect water quality. Additional data regarding drinking supply and production is provided in the Utilities section.

Shorelands

Shorelands provide valuable habitat for both aquatic and terrestrial animals and vegetation, and also act as buffers and thus serve to protect water quality.

Recognizing this conflict, and in order to maintain the environmental, recreational, and economical quality of our water resources, the State of Wisconsin requires counties to adopt and enforce a shoreland ordinance.

As required by the State, shorelands are defined as:

- all land within 1,000 feet of the ordinary high water mark of a lake, pond or flowage; or

"A high capacity well is a well on a high capacity property. A high capacity property is one property that has or will have one or more wells with a combined capacity of 70 gallons per minute (gpm) or more." Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

- all land within 300 feet of the ordinary high water mark of a river or stream or to the landward side of the floodplain, whichever is greater.

Incorporated municipalities are allowed to create and enforce their own shoreland zoning ordinances that differ from the State's regulations. The City of Blair defines shorelands in the same regard as the State.

Floodplains

One sensitive land feature that most residents are aware of is the floodplain, the flood-prone lands adjacent to water bodies. Floodplains can be desirable development areas due to the proximity to lakes, rivers and streams, but pose additional problems by possibly putting residents and property at risk. Development in floodplains can also affect the environmental quality of the waterway.

According to FEMA, floodplains exist along the Trempealeau River and along the Reynolds Coulee and Tappen Coulee Creeks within the developed portion of the City. Development within the floodplain is usually assessed through the use of the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The City experienced significant flooding during the summer of 2017. Trempealeau County had a disaster declaration. The Tappen Coulee Creek and Trempealeau Rivers both rose significantly – to where waters began to overtop Broadway. Portions of the Community Center and Fire Department were damaged by the flooding.

It is important to remember that these maps are no substitute for site specific analysis. Natural and man-made changes in the landscape, and the age and accuracy of flood insurance maps have in some cases limited their reliability for the identification and designation of floodplains. The City also has floodplain development regulations in their zoning ordinance which should be consulted prior to any construction activity.

*“According to the Wisconsin Emergency Management Division, Wisconsin communities experienced significant flooding each year from 1990-2001, except 1994. A Federal Disaster Declaration was granted for nine of those years. Total damages to public and private property (including agricultural damages) during that time period totaled more than one billion dollars”
(Ohm, Brian. Planning for Natural Resources. P. 28, 2002.)*





6808 ODANA RD
SUITE 200
MADISON, WI 53719
TF: (608) 620-6199
FAX: (888) 908-8166
www.sehinc.com

0 1,250 2,500 Ft

Map by: mfaik
Projection: WisCRS Trempealeau County (US feet)
Source: Trempealeau County, FEMA
Print Date: 12/11/2017

FEMA 100-YEAR FLOOD ZONES

City of Blair, Trempealeau County, Wisconsin

- Municipal Boundaries
- County Boundaries
- 100-Year Flood Zones

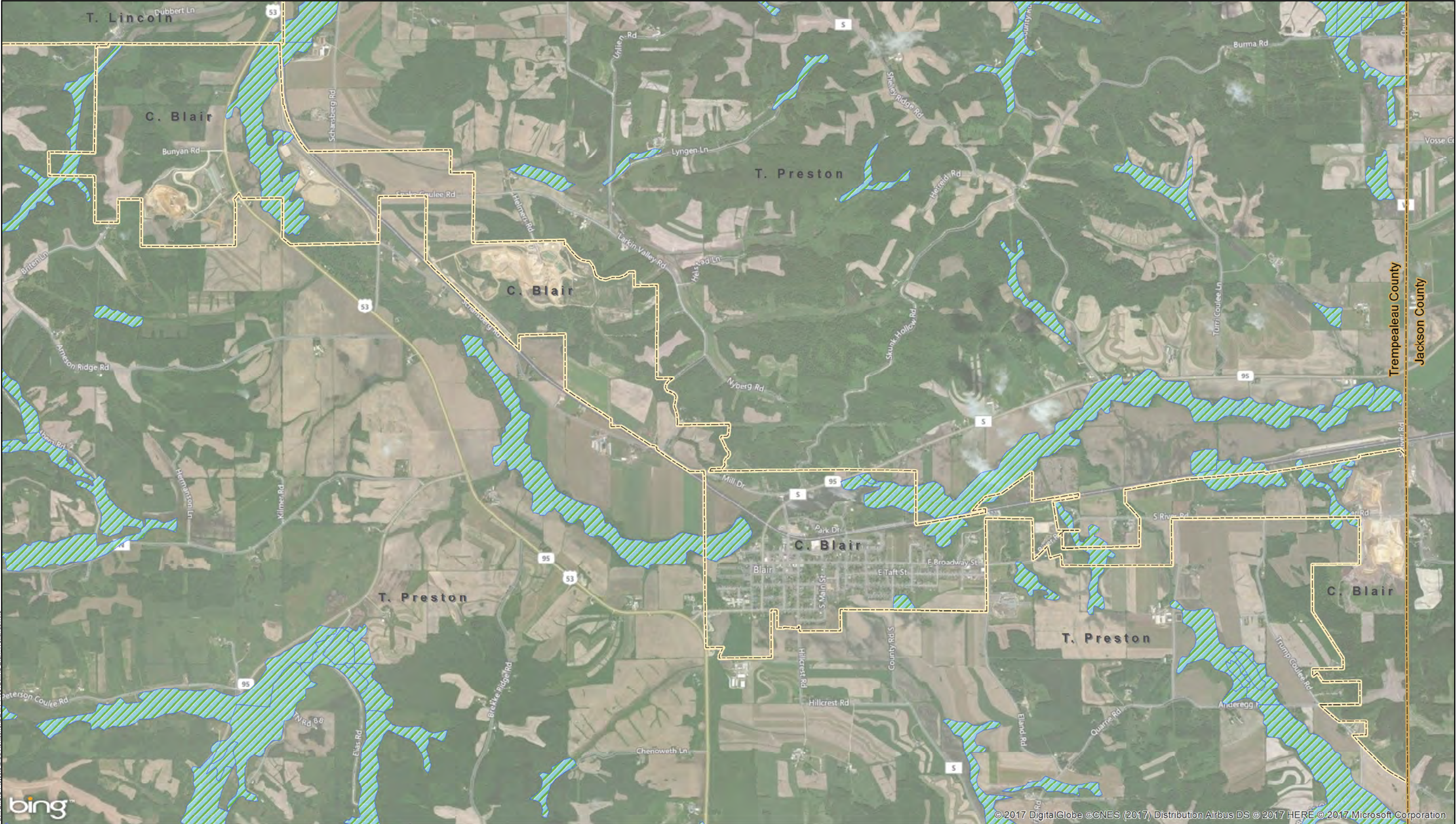
This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey map and is not intended to be used as one. This map is a compilation of records, information, and data gathered from various sources listed on this map and is to be used for reference purposes only. SEH does not warrant that the Geographic Information System (GIS) Data used to prepare this map are error free, and SEH does not represent that the GIS Data can be used for navigational, tracking, or any other purpose requiring exacting measurement of distance or direction or precision in the depiction of geographic features. The user of this map acknowledges that SEH shall not be liable for any damages which arise out of the user's access or use of data provided.

Wetlands

There are a number of wetland areas within the watersheds that can affect water levels of rivers flowing through the City of Blair. Wetlands are defined by the state statute as “an area where water is at, near, or above the land surface long enough to be capable of supporting aquatic or hydrophytic (water-loving) vegetation and which has soils indicative of wet conditions.” Wetlands may be seasonal or permanent and are commonly referred to as swamps, marshes, or bogs. Wetland plants and soils have the capacity to store and filter pollutants, replenish groundwater supplies, store floodwaters and maintain stream flows.

Wetland areas exist along the Trempealeau River as it makes its way through the City.

*“...wetlands serve a vital role in nature, are part of the balance of nature and are essential to the purity of the water in our lakes and streams. Swamps and wetlands are a necessary part of the ecological creation and now, even to the uninitiated, possess their own beauty in nature.”
(The Wisconsin Supreme Court in Just v. Marinette County (1972)).*



 <p>6808 ODANA RD SUITE 200 MADISON, WI 53719 TF: (608) 620-6199 FAX: (888) 908-8166 www.sehinc.com</p>	<p>0 1,250 2,500 Ft</p> <p>Map by: mfaik Projection: WisCRS Trempealeau County (US feet) Source: Trempealeau County, WDNR Print Date: 12/11/2017</p>	<h2>WDNR DELINEATED WETLANDS</h2> <p>City of Blair, Trempealeau County, Wisconsin</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Municipal BoundariesCounty BoundariesWDNR Wetlands
---	--	---	--

This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey map and is not intended to be used as one. This map is a compilation of records, information, and data gathered from various sources listed on this map and is to be used for reference purposes only. SEH does not warrant that the Geographic Information System (GIS) Data used to prepare this map are error free, and SEH does not represent that the GIS Data can be used for navigational, tracking, or any other purpose requiring exacting measurement of distance or direction or precision in the depiction of geographic features. The user of this map acknowledges that SEH shall not be liable for any damages which arise out of the user's access or use of data provided.

Steep Slopes

Steep slopes that are prohibitive to development, in general, are not prevalent in the developed portion of Blair. There are some steeper slopes in the outlying areas of the City where the mineral extraction activity is occurring. Steep slopes help to build the character of the City and region. They are a challenge to farm, and development in general should avoid these areas, as they are susceptible to challenges associated with topography and stormwater.

The mining plans have called out that there are to be no slopes that are greater than 3:1 post-mining.

Forest and Woodlands

Forests and woodlands are not particularly prevalent within the developed portion of the City. More forested areas exist within the extended area of the City nearer the mineral extraction activities. As part of the mining operation, these woodlands will largely be disturbed during the mining activities. There have been planting activities that have been required of some of the mining operations to ensure some visual screening from the activities. When mining ceases on these properties and the mines are reclaimed, forest management practices will be needed to ensure these lands are reclaimed in an appropriate manner, and that sustainable forestry can occur on them.

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) has been confirmed in the Trempealeau County. Monitoring of local trees should be done to watch for any presence of invasive species that will threaten the urban tree canopy. An inventory of local trees should be completed.

Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat and Open Space

Scattered throughout Trempealeau County are various federal, state, and local wildlife, fishery, natural and scientific areas, including private conservancy areas. These often encompass one or more of the sensitive land areas discussed previously (e.g., wetlands, forests, shorelands, prairies). These areas are managed as open space to provide important feeding, breeding, nesting, cover, and other habitat values to a wide variety of plant and animal species.

Fish and wildlife habitat are contained within the Trempealeau River, Lake Henry, as well as the Coulee Creeks that flow into the Trempealeau. Many of these rivers and creeks are classified – or have been classified as high class Trout streams.

The Lakes Coulee Wildlife Area is over 800 acres located two miles southwest of Blair on STH 95. This area provides hunting opportunities and also is host to a Class III trout stream.



Management of the property occurs through land acquisition, timber harvesting, tree and shrub plantings, grassland plantings, prescribed burning, establishment of trails and wetland development.

The Vosse Coulee Wildlife is also located two miles southwest of Blair on both sides of STH 95. The 123 acre property consists of hardwood forest and marsh.

Rare and Endangered Species and Natural Communities

According to the WDNR Natural Heritage Inventory, Portage County is home to many animal and plant species, as well as natural communities that can be considered rare or endangered.

Blair lies within numerous town ranges in Trempealeau County. The areas where Blair lies have been identified as having many endangered species and natural communities by the WDNR's Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) (<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/NHI/data.asp>). Due to the fluidity of this list, a comprehensive list is not provided here. References to the weblink above should be made when exploring areas and the potential for rare and endangered species presence.

These species are protected, and as such, are preserved to the extent possible.

Cultural Resources Existing Conditions

Preservation of historic and cultural resources is important to the vitality of any community. The City of Blair has a rich history that originally centered on dairy farming, trapping, logging and railroads. While the importance of these to the region have become less prominent, they are still an important part of the City's character and history.

Blair was originally settled as Porterville during the 1850s. The City's Norwegian heritage is well represented, as Countryside Lefse calls the City home. It was in 1873 when the City's name changed to Blair. This coincided with when the Green Bay and Western Railroad was routed through the City. John Insley Blair was one of the railroad's chief investors, and is whom the City was named after.

There are no registered historic places within the City. However, there are over 140 sites within Blair that are on the Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory. This is a database of historic buildings, structures and objects throughout the state. Their inclusion on the list does not convey any special status.

6.3 Existing Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Programs

Numerous Federal, State, Regional, Local, and private plans and programs exist which contribute to the preservation, conservation, or management of agricultural, natural, and cultural resources in Trempealeau County. Although no list can be exhaustive, a partial list is shown below.

Farmland Value Use Assessment

This program allows farmland to be assessed based on the lands ability to produce income from agricultural uses, rather than its potential market value to developers.

Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program

Wisconsin farm owners are eligible to receive a state income tax credit, provided their county has a Farmland Preservation Plan in place.

[Trempealeau County Farmland Preservation Plan](#)

This plan attempts to identify land in productive agriculture, and that which could be in productive agriculture and preserve those lands for that purpose to the extent feasible, while still balancing additional development and growth.

[Forest Land Tax Program](#)

These programs are run by the Wisconsin DNR and encourage sustainable forestry on private lands by offering tax incentives to landowners.

[Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permits \(WPDES\)](#)

This DNR operated program regulates municipal and industrial operations discharging wastewater to surface or groundwater.

[Wisconsin Historical Society](#)

The Historical Society was founded in 1846 and helps people to connect with the past by maintaining and collecting stories and items. This organization also has grant funding available to help local communities identify and preserve historical features.

[Wisconsin's Historical Preservation Plan 2006-2015](#)

This plan outlines specific goals and objectives to protect and enhance the state's cultural resources.

[Trempealeau County Land and Water Resource Management Plan 2016-2026](#)

Each Wisconsin county is required by state law to develop a County Land and Water Plan. It is meant to serve as a guide for local conservation efforts that are administered by various regulatory organizations.

[City of Blair Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan](#)

This plan inventories existing recreational facilities and identified future needs.

[City of Blair Ordinances](#)

Ordinances have been adopted to aid in the effort of conserving resources and protecting landowner rights, land values, and the public health and safety.

6.4 Assessment of Future Needs

6.4.1 Key Trends

[Mineral Extraction](#)

Nonmetallic mineral extraction is now an integral part of the City's identity and fabric. While somewhat controversial, the operations provide a valuable asset that our nation is relying on for energy production. Locally, the operations are providing jobs and appear to be trying to be good neighbors. Efforts are being taken to minimize impact to neighboring property owners, and the operators have contributed financially to the City and community by way of civic engagement. The mine life of the existing operations is 30 years. Many of them are in their infancy and will be present throughout the planning period.

All three mine operations within the City currently have reclamation plans. Working in cooperation with these operators to ensure that the land is reclaimed in a manner that will again create a

desirable rural atmosphere is critical. At some point – these areas will cease to produce the sand they are harvesting now. Some of these areas may be appropriate to rural residential development, while others may be best suited for agricultural practices. These will also likely be some consideration for the use of the rail lines being installed – as rail continues to be an economical mode of distribution transportation.

River restoration and public access

A key trend impacting natural resources throughout the Upper Midwest is the significant amount of investment occurring along river corridors. Rivers used to be something communities turned their back towards as transportation networks, but now river frontage, particularly in urban areas close to downtowns has seen significant demand and investments.

As the City continues to develop and land use decisions are being made, it is imperative to ensure that developed uses are providing a supportive role for promoting urban agriculture, natural resources preservation in terms of water resources, and quality mineral extraction activities that limit the impact to the areas natural resources.

Runoff from urban areas contains a mixture of pollutants from hard surfaces such as parking lots, streets, and rooftops. These areas may accumulate sediments, petroleum-based and other chemicals from cars and trucks, heavy metals, and other contaminants that enter the storm sewer system and are flushed into streams and rivers. Runoff from lawns may contain fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals or oxygen-demanding organic waste that also enters surface waters. Impaired waters in Wisconsin are largely addressed through an analysis, known as a total maximum daily load (TMDL). A TMDL is the amount of a pollutant a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards. TMDL phosphorous standards help ensure water quality by limiting the amount of non-point phosphorous stormwater runoff. TMDL's are not established at this time for the Trempealeau River of the Tappen Coulee or Trump Coulee Creeks.

Numerous techniques have been developed to improve the quality of stormwater, at the level of the individual property up to a basin-wide approach. Many of them have additional environmental benefits beyond stormwater management and water quality. These techniques are sometimes referred to as low-impact design (LID), and may include:

- downspout disconnection, redirecting stormwater from impervious areas or storm sewers to locations where it can be stored or seep into the ground;
- onsite filtering, practices such as sand filters, bioretention cells, swales, and filter strips that use a filter media to reduce stormwater runoff and filter pollutants;
- rain gardens, vegetated depressions where stormwater can be captured and infiltrated;
- stormwater trees, planted to intercept and take up stormwater, often in parking lots; and
- stream restoration, returning water channels to a more natural state in which meanders, wetlands, floodplains, and other features function to slow, store, and filter stormwater.

It is also imperative that the City continue to implement and monitor their Wellhead Protection Plan and to ensure that groundwater supplies are protected. These all will help to ensure that natural systems and the built environment protect and enhance habitats, create a healthy environment, mitigate local climate impacts, and promote energy efficiency.

6.5 Goals, Objectives and Policies

The goals, objectives and policies in this Chapter reflect on how the City's natural and cultural environments will be developed and utilized to further influence the growth and development of the City. These provide the City with a guide for future investments as well as methods to develop and grow that not only protect these valuable resources, but find unique and creative ways to utilize them in creating inviting atmospheres.

Goal: Improve and maintain the rivers, lakes, ponds and wetlands of Blair.

Objectives:

1. Evaluate and proceed with dredging Lake Henry.
2. Improve the Trempealeau River corridor.
3. Work to improve overall stormwater management throughout the City.

Policies:

1. Identify and prioritize sensitive lands, distinctive open spaces and natural areas surrounding the City's lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands that preserve and provide for natural and recreational uses.
2. Ensure appropriate City staff are trained on operations of the dam to minimize flooding impacts.
3. Work to implement improvements to urban area runoff to reduce sedimentation.
4. Work with Trempealeau County to continue to implement their Land and Water Resource Management Plan – to encourage agriculture producers to farm in a manner that helps to protect these resources from increased pollution.
5. Consider a river corridor management plan to make strategic improvements to the streambank of the Trempealeau River.
 - a. Create a consortium of area Sportsman's Clubs to coordinate on the Trempealeau River corridor improvements.
 - b. Incorporate improved river access for paddles sports and other recreational activities.
6. Ensure stormwater reviews are completed on all development.
7. Complete groundwater study and evaluations on growth areas.
8. Continue to implement and complete activities from the City's Stormwater Management Plan.

Goal: Continue to actively ensure appropriate reclamation of mining property.

Objectives:

1. Minimize the potential for pollution and contamination of local ground and surface waters.

Policies:

1. Continue to conduct annual inspections of reclamation efforts.
2. Continue to review and ensure stormwater BMP's are integrated into the mineral extraction activities.
3. Continue to maintain the good relationships between the City and the sand mine operations.

7 Economic Development

7.1 Introduction

Economic development is a critically important function for the City of Blair. Without a strong tax base, there is insufficient revenue to make the types of investments successful communities require, including investments in education, transportation, safety, clean water, and a thriving downtown. The Economic Development Chapter provides a framework for public investment in economic development activities consistent with the overall goal of pursuing economic development that brings good, living wage jobs to the City and supports the long-term growth and vitality of the City's industrial areas, downtown and neighborhood business areas.

7.2 Existing Conditions

The labor force is that portion of the population that is 16 years or older who are employed, or unemployed but actively seeking employment opportunities. As a business, it is helpful to know information about the population that will be depended on to fill open positions in the future.

Blair's population has grown at a rate relatively consistent with Trempealeau County for the past several decades. Over the next 20 years, the Department of Administration (DOA) projections predict a 17 percent increase in the City of Blair's population, which amounts to 234 additional residents. This projected percentage increase is similar to the expected increases in Trempealeau County (16.1 percent). The 2011-2015 American Community Survey (ACS) shows Blair had a labor force participation rate of 67.1 percent.



As shown in the Issues and Opportunities element, the 2011-2015 ACS shows Blair had a median age of 35.8, which is significantly younger than 40.7 in Trempealeau County.

Educational Attainment

A good indicator of the economic potential of an area is the education attainment of its residents. Generally speaking, a population with a higher level of education reflects a more skilled workforce with higher earning potential. A more skilled population can be seen as an attractive quality for businesses relocating as well. Nearly 94 percent of Blair residents had at least a high-school diploma in the 2011-2015 ACS. Almost 15 percent of Blair residents had attained a Bachelor's degree or higher. These numbers are low compared to County (19.2 percent) and State (27.4 percent) numbers.

Income

In the Issues and Opportunities element, the income for Blair and Trempealeau County residents is identified. The median family income in Blair is \$58,333, while Trempealeau County's is \$64,510. Household incomes are also a bit lower for the City of Blair when compared to Trempealeau County and the State of Wisconsin.

Economic Base

The Issues and Opportunities element indicates Trempealeau County's prominent industries and occupations. Approximately 29 percent of Blair residents are employed in the Manufacturing Industry while 28 percent are employed in the Education, Health and Social Services Industry.

Employment Projections

Employment projections for the Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Area are presented in the Issues and Opportunities element. The industry in this region expected to see the largest growth rate through 2022 is Education and Health Services, with an expected increase of 1,694 positions. The occupation expected to see the largest increase through 2022 is Construction and Extraction with a 11.1 percent increase expected), followed closely by Computer and Mathematical Occupations (9.1 percent growth expected) and Business and Financial Operations Occupations (8.8 percent growth expected).



Economic Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths

- Quality grade school education system
- Excellent freight rail opportunity
- Excellent Infrastructure – including roads and utilities
- Niche area businesses – sand mining operations, food processing (AMIP), furniture assembly (Arcadia and Whitehall)
- Growing population – 30-40 new housing units over the next 10 years
- Redevelopment opportunities
- Centralized geographic location within State

Weaknesses

- Distance to Interstate 94 (15 miles away in Hixton)
- Low traffic volume

According to the National Governor's Association, Center for Best Practices, the seven New Economy Development Strategies are:

- 1) Invest in People
- 2) Build state-of-the-art infrastructure
- 3) Treat citizens as customers
- 4) Streamline taxes and regulations
- 5) Nurture entrepreneurs
- 6) Create hi-tech magnets
- 7) Preserve quality of life

- Small population
- Proximity to shopping, amenities for families, and healthcare
- Limited or non-existent airport operations
- State-wide budget and local revenue sources declining

Opportunities

- Collaboration with builders who are willing to construct speculative housing
- Rental housing development(s) for elderly and mid-market quality
- New business offering unique products or services
- Adoption of internet sales
- Existing business expansion into new product lines
- Conversion of vacant buildings into new uses
- New operational business format like Co-ops

Threats

- Future exhaustion of fracking sand
- The continued desire for rural living – outside of Blair

7.3 Assessment of Future Conditions

Key Trends

Several emerging trends will shape Blair's future economy and appropriate economic development programs and policies of the City.

Globalization

An increasing number of products and services are free-flowing across international borders due to low-shipping costs, favorable trade agreements, and improved telecommunication. This has expanded markets for some products, but also made certain industries with prevalence in Blair vulnerable.

Manufacturers seeking to be competitive while still retaining local production seem to generally focus on niche markets or substitute technology for labor to increase productivity and decrease labor costs. Many incentives offered by state and federal programs do so to generate job creation or retention. This mismatch can leave some economic development organizations with few tools to assist companies looking to remain competitive without investing in manual labor production.

Local businesses have been engaged in efforts to combat globalization while focusing on “buy local” campaigns. This concept – whether business-to-business or business-to-consumer, looks to retain as much money in the local economy as possible.

Manufacturing vs. Services

The well-publicized loss of jobs has created a general perception that manufacturing has been in a long-term decline in the United States. While true in some sectors, manufacturing output overall has grown due to productivity gains, even while industry employment has decreased. The

challenges facing manufacturers have in many cases been due to competition, structural changes, or both.

Service employment overtook manufacturing and has been seen as the source of future job growth in the United States. Once thought to be secure from foreign competition, services have now begun to be “off-shored” in the same way that manufacturing jobs were twenty years earlier.

Entrepreneurship

Economic development is increasingly focused on promoting entrepreneurship. The 2016 Kauffman Growth Entrepreneurship Index, an indicator of how much entrepreneurial businesses are growing, rose in 2015 for the third year in a row, suggesting that business growth has largely recovered from its Great Recession slump. Several facts may suggest a coming surge in entrepreneurial activity.

- The population is aging, and contrary to popular belief, the highest rates of entrepreneurship are among those people between the ages of 55 and 64.
- The 20-34 age bracket has the lowest rate of entrepreneurial activity.
- Business formation rates are also higher among recent immigrants.

Common practices adopted to encourage entrepreneurship include facilitating networking and collaboration, improving access to financing, providing training and education, offering supportive services such as incubators and technical assistance, and adopting favorable public policies. Most of the entrepreneurial programs that have been created are focused on a set of targeted industry sectors, such as high technology, manufacturing, or in some cases retail businesses.

The most common entrepreneur, however, is a solo individual often starting a business within their own home. This includes a group of people recently termed “pajama entrepreneurs” or “third bedroom entrepreneurs”, who leverage their expertise to provide design, business and technical consulting, business management, and other services.

As mentioned above, the highest rates of entrepreneurship are among those people between the ages of 55 and 64. Other common entrepreneurs may include those 65 years and older. They represented 12.9 percent of the U.S. population in 2010. By 2030, their number will reach about 72.1 million, more than twice their number in 2000. People 65+ represented 12.4 percent of the population in the year 2000 but are expected to grow to be 19 percent of the population by 2030.¹ Many seniors over 50 are looking to reboot their careers and lives.²

A different set of programs may be needed to foster development of this group. The few programs targeting these entrepreneurs focus on helping them get additional work, providing business support services, and providing locations where they can conduct business functions, including amenities such as broadband access, meeting rooms, teleconferencing equipment, and general office equipment.

¹ [http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/\(S\(2ch3qw55k1qylo45dbihar2u\)\)/Aging_Statistics/index.aspx](http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/(S(2ch3qw55k1qylo45dbihar2u))/Aging_Statistics/index.aspx)

² Philip M., Burgess, “Reboot!: What to do when your career is over but your life isn't.”

Financial Markets

Tightened lending practices have been a lasting outcome of the economic recession. This affects both business and consumer credit, as well as financing for development projects. Businesses have been impacted by reductions in lines of credit and higher requirements to borrow adequate funds to meet their expansion needs. Consumers are less able to borrow to fund major purchases, contributing to a drop in sales. Developers are sometimes finding it harder to secure the funds they need to invest in new construction or rehabilitation projects. For example, stringent regulatory requirements specific to condo mortgage insurance were introduced in the wake of the housing finance crisis³, which have made it more difficult to secure condo financing. These barriers are being addressed by Congress, which may help stimulate demand for more condos in the future. On the other hand, tighter lending requirements for first time homeowners are helping stimulate the development of new multi-family rental housing projects.

Agriculture

The 2014 study completed by the UW Extension, *Value and Economic Impact of Agriculture in Trempealeau County*, explains how important agriculture is to Trempealeau County. Agriculture provides jobs for 5,077 residents (32 percent of the workforce) and accounts for \$1.23 billion or 47 percent of the county's total economic activity. Agriculture contributed \$338 million to the county's total income and pays \$15.5 million in taxes.



Retail Revolution

Consumers are becoming more deliberate in their shopping habits, empowered by the convenience of on-line shopping and constrained by the slow growth in levels of personal income. Demand for retail space is on the decline in most markets, with newer development taking place in central city locations where population growth has occurred. Existing retailers are responding to this trend by embracing social media, mobile payments, and unique offerings such as hands on learning opportunities for shoppers.

Designated Economic Development Sites

Economic development sites and projects should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Of foremost importance is to determine if the proposed project is consistent with the City's vision and Plan.

Brownfield Redevelopment Sites

A search of the Wisconsin DNR BRRS database revealed that Blair has 40 sites that have been contaminated. 27 of these sites are "Closed," meaning that the sites have been satisfactorily cleaned according to state standards. There are three "No Action" sites which means that based

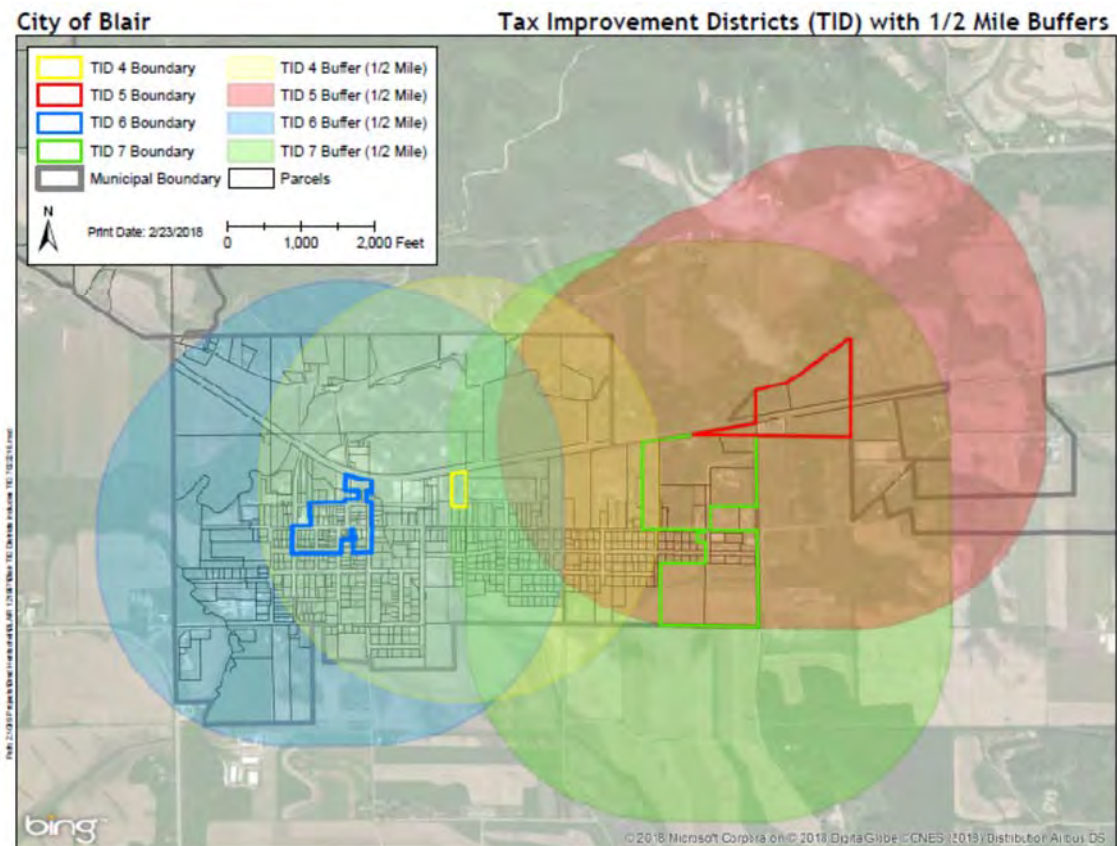
*Brownfield
Definition: "...real
property, the
expansion,
redevelopment, or
reuse of which may
be complicated by
the presence of
hazardous
substances,
pollutants,
contaminants,
controlled
substances,
petroleum or
petroleum products,
or is mine-scarred
land."
-Environmental
Protection Agency
(EPA)*

³ <http://urbanland.uli.org/development-business/u-s-congress-approves-less-restrictive-fha-condo-financing-program/>

upon the action or site attributes, no action needs to be taken to clean-up the site. Ten sites are “Historic,” meaning spills were cleaned prior to 1996.

Tax Increment Financing

The City has several tax increment financing districts (TIDs) that have been successfully used to assist with economic development. The City has four (4) active TIF Districts. The use of TIF dollars in a sensible manner to promote and encourage private sector economic investments is important.



The City has added capacity to create additional District(s) if needed. A maximum of 12 percent of a community’s equalized value may be within a TID. Currently – the City has approximately 6.6 percent of their value within a TID.

Local Needs

The City of Blair recognizes the challenges it faces regarding attraction of new commercial and industrial development.

Commercial Market

As referenced in the Market Analysis, the relatively small Blair population and lighter traffic patterns will present a challenge to attracting large commercial businesses. The market potential – however – supports neighborhood-level retail services.

A primary point of emphasis for the City moving forward will be to work with local businesses to expand their product lines into new market areas, and work with entrepreneurs to grow into storefronts.

Locally, the City has begun implementing an in-home business licensing system. This is an excellent step in being able to regulate – and to a larger extent – support, entrepreneurs. Working with in-home businesses and start-ups can allow them to reach greater potential faster. By identifying and finding appropriate sites for these businesses to locate in – possibly even temporarily – can foster business growth, employment expansion and – if positioned in strategic locations, can lead to increased vibrancy and retail activity within a downtown area.



Similarly – the City should consider exploring and possibly offering assistance in establishing a facility where alternative formats of ownership – such as co-ops – could occur. Continued infill development of the City's downtown will be critical to ensuring that downtown economic vibrancy remains, and that home-occupations can continue to flourish and expand in an increasingly competitive and expensive market.

Having local events on a regular basis that serves a niche audience can also attract external funds. The City has a strong Norwegian heritage, including local businesses providing goods and services that honor this heritage. Building and expanding on this can help draw in tourists, and can help to build a brand for the community that can be marketed. An excellent example of this is New Glarus, Wisconsin – where during redevelopment efforts, the community made a strategic choice to embrace and honor their Swiss heritage. They have a population of approximately 2,200 – but have created a very strong tourism draw that has become a destination for people throughout the entire State and beyond.

Industrial Market

As referenced in the Market Analysis, Blair's industrial employment has remained consistent recently. Grand View Care Center and AMPI are the City's two largest private employers (the School District is No. 2). There is strong concern over the cost of utilities to AMPI – while also recognizing there is significant aging infrastructure throughout the City. Locally – mining has also added to the employment base of the community.

In terms of growth, trucking will continue to be a high priority with the



local sand production occurring at Source Energy Services. The support services necessary for the mining operations will also remain in high demand. However – many of these are very small operations with limited employment – often owner-operators, or family-run businesses.

Again – these businesses often struggle to expand beyond the sole or family proprietorship – and will often not have a need for a dedicated space. However – they all require equipment, often vehicles, and having a co-op facility, or a space where these entities could cohesively store their equipment, generate some activity, and clean-up neighborhoods by removing the business vehicles may mutually benefit all parties.

Blair also has a niche market related to cheese production. There is likely a possibility of future – and related food product manufacturing to consider locating in or near Blair to provide for some aggregate efficiencies.

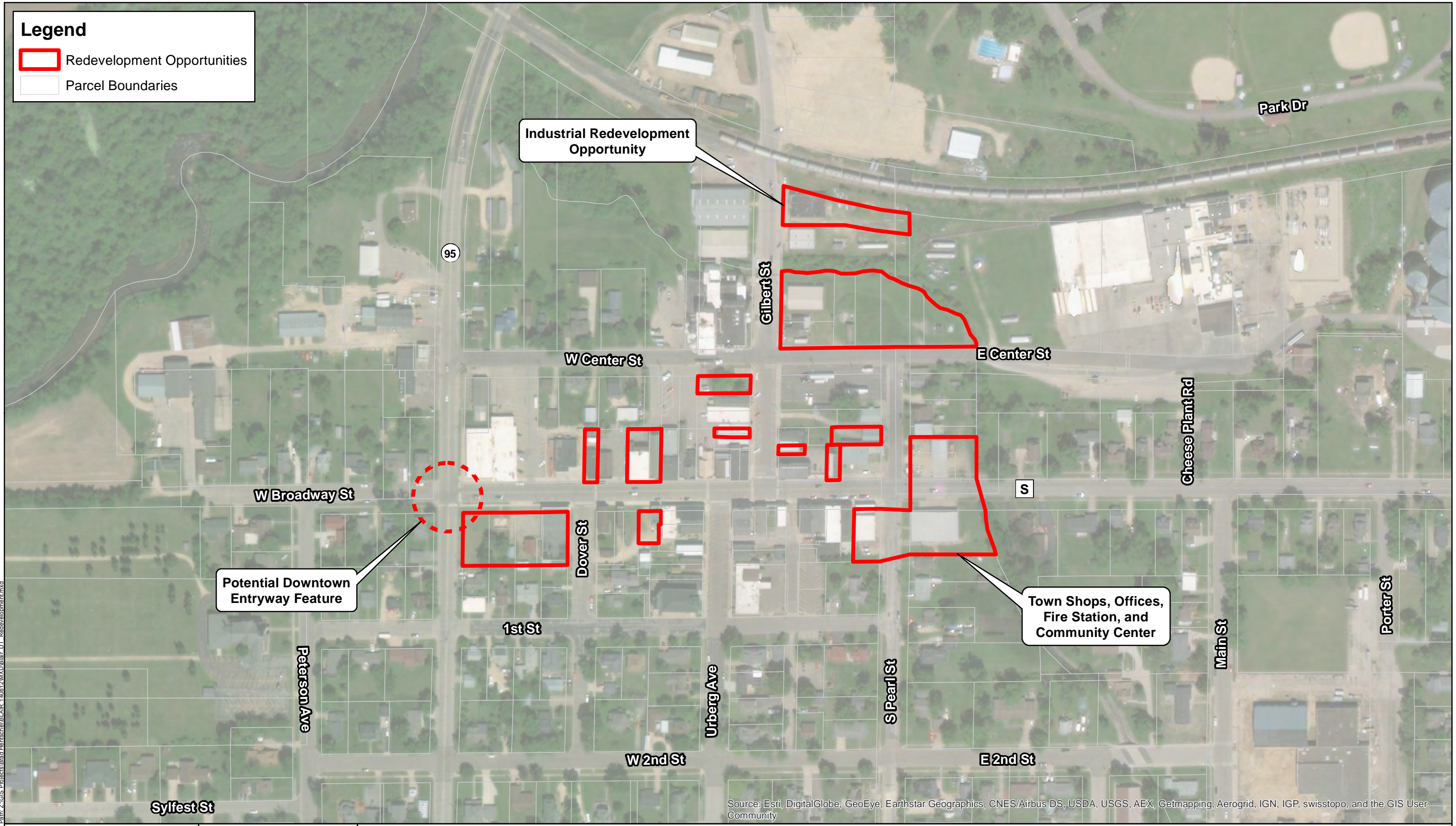
The City has several lots or small, vacant buildings that could be used to accommodate these facilities. This will not require large infrastructure or building investments from these businesses – which should lead to affordable and more attractive expansion offers for them. A map of preliminary redevelopment sites is below.

Also noted on the below map is a possible downtown entryway feature. Something to slow traffic down and get them to notice and travel into downtown Blair would help with the vibrancy. This in turn – should serve to stir economic development activity in the downtown area.

Legend

Redevelopment Opportunities

Parcel Boundaries



Path: Z:\GIS Projects\Blair\Henshel\BLAIR_140812\MXD\Blair_DT_Redevelopment.mxd

Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

6808 ODANA RD
SUITE 200
MADISON, WI 53719
TF: (608) 620-6199
FAX: (888) 908-8166
www.sehinc.com

0100200

Ft

Map by: mfaik

Projection: WisCRS Trempealeau County (US feet)

Source: Trempealea County

Print Date: 2/1/2018

DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT SITES

City of Blair, Trempealeau County, Wisconsin

This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey map and is not intended to be used as one. This map is a compilation of records, information, and data gathered from various sources listed on this map and is to be used for reference purposes only. SEH does not warrant that the Geographic Information System (GIS) Data used to prepare this map are error free, and SEH does not represent that the GIS Data can be used for navigational, tracking, or any other purpose requiring exacting measurement of distance or direction or precision in the depiction of geographic features. The user of this map acknowledges that SEH shall not be liable for any damages which arise out of the user's access or use of data provided.

7.4 Local Plans and Programs

"A comprehensive economic development framework is fundamentally about enhancing the factors of productive capacity – land, labor, capital, and technology – of a national, state or local economy" ("Defining Economic Development," U.S. Economic Development Administration Information Clearinghouse, http://www.osec.doc.gov/eda/html/sa1_whatised.htm).

There are a variety of local, regional, and statewide economic development plans and tools available to municipalities to assist them with supporting existing businesses and recruiting new businesses. Many of these, the City already takes part in. In addition, there are programs available for individual businesses to assist in start-up and expansion. At the state level, economic development took on the form of creating a strategic framework that refines the state's priorities, renews commitment to existing programs, and presents new programs.

Economic development tools include tax increment financing (TIF), low-interest business loans, and business incubators. Effectively using these tools requires an investment by the community to provide resources such as staff to organize and manage these tools, foster partnerships, and secure and manage funding. Numerous other economic development plans and programs exist including:

- **Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Administration (WHEDA)**
WHEDA offers many financial assistance programs to assist small-businesses with low-interest loans and grants.
- **Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA)**
DOA offers some financial assistance programs to assist small-businesses with low-interest loans and grants, and communities with grants to build infrastructure necessary to accommodate business development.
- **Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC)**
Wisconsin (WEDC) offers programs that help with many areas of business development, including business planning, initial capitalization, site selection, permitting, regulations, employee training programs, economic development tax credits, and expansion programs.
- **Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT)**
WisDOT has many programs that provide grants and loans to businesses and local communities for transportation related needs.
- **Transportation Economic Assistance and Development (TEA-Grant) Program**
This program, operated by WisDOT, offers grant money to communities or private businesses for transportation projects that will attract and retain businesses and jobs in the State of Wisconsin.
- **Wisconsin Public Service Corporation**
Wisconsin Public Service Corporation offers programs to companies that are looking to expand, relocate, or start-up in their service area. They also maintain lists of available land and marketing resources for communities in which they provide service.
- **Competitive Wisconsin, Inc.**
Competitive Wisconsin is a nonpartisan coalition engaging business, higher education, agriculture and labor and provides analysis and recommendations for action on issues affecting Wisconsin's economy and quality of life.

- **Western Technical College**
The Western Technical College offers employee training programs to maintain competitiveness in today's global business environment.
- **7 Rivers Alliance**
The 7 Rivers Alliance represents the Upper Mississippi Valley region across three states and includes the La Crosse County. The region is focused on growing five business clusters – advanced agriculture, advanced manufacturing, composites, entrepreneurs and inventors, and health care.
- **Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Area**
This regional organization is a collaborative, interactive, and coordinated network of training resources and support services that provides and retains a well-skilled labor force for employers of western Wisconsin.
- **Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission (MRRPC)**
This organization offers industrial park and site inventories, business park development, loan fund assistance, economic development studies and strategies, and grant writing.
- **Blair Industrial Development Corporation**
This organization works closely with the City on economic development related issues, and has authority to buy, sell and market land and buildings.

Effectively using these tools and programs requires an investment by the City to provide resources such as staff to organize and manage these tools, foster partnerships, and secure and manage funding. A limited amount of technical assistance is available to municipalities from the State, County, Regional Plan Commission, and other organizations.

7.5 Goals, Objectives and Policies

The Economic Development Goals, Objectives and Policies for the City of Blair are shown below.

Goal 1: Work to ensure current local employers remain viable and competitive in Blair.

Objectives:

1. Work with local businesses to proactively address utility improvements and their impacts to business operations.
2. Promote regional conglomeration of local businesses. Market availability of sites to critical supply or service chain businesses. This applies to both food processing and sand mine industries.

Policies:

1. Continue to promote – and recognize the importance of rail access and availability to the local economy.
2. Continue to implement and utilize the home occupation licensure program. This is useful to target market pop-up shops or co-op spaces once established.

Goal 2: Promote the efficient use of land and buildings.

Objectives:

1. Encourage compact and mixed use development and redevelopment opportunities.

Policies:

1. Investigate the possibility of City-owned and operated spaces that are flexible. Use these as incubators, event spaces, pop-up shops, etc.
2. Develop incentives for infill development in target areas.
3. Ensure zoning and land use regulations that allow for the development of compact, walkable neighborhoods that provide environments that can accommodate live-work lifestyles.

Goal 3: Continue to diversify the City's economic base to improve resiliency to economic shocks and transformations that are outside the City's control.

Goal 4: Foster an atmosphere that encourages and supports entrepreneurial activity.

Objectives:

1. Identify existing resources to assist entrepreneurs and early-stage primary-sector businesses. Align existing resources – identify and fill gaps in service(s).
2. Investigate and evaluate the development of incubator space, or co-op style ownership structure for entrepreneurial activity.
3. Foster key relationships with organizations seeking to improve the business climate in Blair. Develop strategic directions with regard to promoting Blair's business environment.

Policies:

1. Work with local Blair organizations – including churches and non-profits, to organize events and make available otherwise underutilized facilities to small businesses for entrepreneurship.
2. Consider development of additional, regularly timed events to draw people to Blair from other communities. Examples to consider include Farmer's Market, Food Trucks, local music, craft/flea market/car show, etc.
3. Encourage the development of local business(es) that cater to youth as a safe and inviting place to congregate. An example would be a Dairy Bar.

8 Intergovernmental Cooperation

Wis. Stats. 66.1001(2)(g) Intergovernmental cooperation element. A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps, and programs for joint planning and decision making with other jurisdictions, including school districts and adjacent local governmental units, for siting and building public facilities and sharing public services. The element shall analyze the relationship of the local governmental unit to school districts and adjacent local governmental units, and to the region, the state and other governmental units. The element shall consider, to the greatest extent possible, the maps and plans of any military base or installation, with at least 200 assigned military personnel or that contains at least 2,000 acres, with which the local governmental unit shares common territory. The element shall incorporate any plans or agreements to which the local governmental unit is a party under s. 66.0301, 66.0307 or 66.0309. The element shall identify existing or potential conflicts between the local governmental unit and other governmental units that are specified in this paragraph and describe processes to resolve such conflicts.

Intergovernmental cooperation is an important tool needed to operate in an efficient and cost effective manner, as well as to control and promote growth in an orderly fashion for the City of Blair, as well as the adjacent units of government.

Existing Conditions

Intergovernmental Plans, Agreements, and Relationships

The City currently does not have any cooperative boundary agreements as defined under State Statute 66.0307. A regional master plan as defined under State Statute 66.0309 has been completed by the Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission (MRRPC). Other indirect relationships exist between neighboring jurisdictions, the Blair-Taylor School District, Trempealeau County, the MRRPC, WDNR, WisDOT, and several other State agencies/departments. Enhancing the relationship of the City with all adjoining and overlapping jurisdictions can and will advance dialogue and actions necessary to ready the City for future changes in land use and growth pressures.

Adjacent Jurisdictions

The City of Blair is located in Trempealeau County and borders the Towns of Preston and Lincoln. The City shares a common boundary with Jackson County to the east. The City of Whitehall is located approximately eight miles northwest. The Village of Taylor is located approximately seven miles northeast.

The Town of Preston borders the City of Blair. The Town and City have a joint fire department and public library. The City also cooperates with the City of Whitehall for wastewater treatment.

The Blair-Preston Volunteer Fire Department is located in Blair. The Department has a 30-person roster and serves the City of Blair and the Town of Preston.

Schools

Students in the City of Blair generally attend public school in the Blair-Taylor School District. The

Why Collaborate?

- Provide a wider network of compatible businesses for clustering.
 - Provide a greater array of services available to a larger market.
 - Create traffic patterns that capitalize on the contributions of multiple communities, while retaining a greater number of dollars within the region.
 - Pool government resources to prevent overlapping or duplicative services.
 - Consolidate heavy-cost services.
 - Pool government resources to achieve volumes necessary to access deep discounts not available individually.
 - Share financial resources to protect natural resources.
- Source: Wisconsin Economic Development Institute, Inc., *A Guide to Preparing the Economic Development Element of a Comprehensive Plan*. 2003.

City's relationship with the School District is cooperative. The City has been supportive of the Blair-Taylor School District's expansion needs when they have arisen, and will continue to work with both school districts on future needs as they arise. An addition/renovation project in 2014 resulted in a united campus for elementary through high school.

County and Regional Agencies

The City of Blair is located in Trempealeau County. The County has limited jurisdiction within the City.

The relationship between the City of Blair and Trempealeau County can be characterized as one of cooperation. Particular areas of emphasis include economic development, general mutual aid agreements with emergency services and transportation issues.

The Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission (MRRPC) represents nine counties in western Wisconsin including Trempealeau County. The City of Blair and Trempealeau County are located in the multi-county region of the MRRPC. The MRRPC maintains the region's eligibility as an Economic Development District and eligibility for Economic Development Administration funding. It also provides planning and development assistance to local governments, including comprehensive planning, zoning ordinance drafting, economic development assistance, geographic information system mapping, and grant writing.

State Agencies

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) are the primary state agencies the City of Blair must coordinate with to achieve the goals and objectives of this Plan.

WDNR has a lead role in wildlife protection and the protection and sustained management of woodlands, wetlands, and other natural wildlife habitat areas. WDNR-monitored surface waters located in Blair include: the Trempealeau River, Lake Henry, Tappen Coulee Creek, Reynolds Coulee Creek, and Trump Coulee Creek. The activities of the WDNR are discussed further in the Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Element of this Plan. Additional information is also available on-line at www.dnr.wi.gov.



WDNR also helps to regulate the sand mining industry in Blair. Because of its high quality sand, the City has seen recent growth in this industry as well as demand for this resource. As a result, the WDNR works with the sand mining industry while protecting natural resources through permits, regulations and compliance. This includes getting necessary air and water permits from WDNR and following state reclamation laws. The WDNR is responsible for mine associated permits covering stormwater, air quality, wetlands (when applicable), high capacity wells, solid/hazardous waste, drinking water and endangered/threatened species.

Like all other industrial activities in Wisconsin, the sand mining industry is extensively regulated through several different levels of government.

Mine reclamation and floodplain and shoreland zoning issues are dealt with at the local level with WDNR oversight. Health issues related to sand mining are the jurisdiction of local health officials and the state Department of Health Services.

- "Healthy collaborations:*
- Are less competitive than traditional decision-making.*
 - Are based on joint learning and fact finding.*
 - Feature opportunities for creative and systemic thinking.*
 - Encourage parties to participate jointly in the decision-making process.*
 - Can be ongoing processes that accept new players.*
 - Structure participant interaction to encourage constructive dialogue, discussion and deliberation.*
 - Accommodate mutual gain negotiation.*
 - Address matters of procedure and relationships as well as substance.*
 - Allocate implementation responsibility across as many parties in the process as the situation warrants."*

Source: Daniels and Walker, Oregon State University.



WisDOT is a key player in the planning and development of transportation facilities in the City of Blair. WisDOT is responsible for the maintenance of US Highway 53 and State Highway 95. The City will continue to coordinate with WisDOT with respect to decisions regarding all roadways under WisDOT jurisdiction. Additional information is also available on-line at www.wisconsindot.gov.

Open communication and participation in land use and transportation decisions, which may impact the City, is an important priority for intergovernmental cooperation in the future.

8.2 Assessment of Future Conditions

In the future, an open and continuous dialogue between the City, Trempealeau County, and other governmental jurisdictions will result in cooperative and mutually beneficial efforts. These efforts are critical to the future planning and development of public and shared services and open communications. Without the coordination and cooperation of local governmental jurisdictions, decisions critical to preserving and enhancing local and regional characteristics, activities, and natural resources will be compromised.

Competition has been shown to be useful up to a certain point and no further, but cooperation, which is the thing we strive for today, begins where the competition leave off.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

As growth and land use changes continue in the area, development in the City of Blair may be a contentious topic to neighboring property owners, and surrounding communities. Collaboration with communities in the region to attract new development and retain existing businesses is vital. Continued work with adjacent jurisdictions towards cooperative boundary agreements would also reduce contention and potential conflict.

The City and Town of Preston have been considering a new fire station. With that will come a decision on how best to repurpose the current facility. There will be a cost-share that occurs with these activities. It is also evident that the Town of Preston may at some time in the near future decide to construct a Town Hall outside of the City limits – leaving their current facility's future use in question.

Conflict Resolution Procedures

The City recognizes the importance of coordinating with neighboring communities. If conflicts arise, initial attempts to resolve such conflicts could involve written or face-to-face communication between elected or appointed community officials. If these efforts do not result in a mutually satisfactory agreement, more formal conflict resolution methods could be explored, such as mediation or arbitration. Additional conflict resolution techniques are available as described in Wisconsin State Statutes 802.12.

8.3 Growth Trends and Planning Activities in Adjacent Communities

The City of Blair will seek to cooperate with all neighboring municipalities, the county, state agencies, and the school district for mutual benefit. To ensure compatibility with the planning goals and objectives identified in the City of Blair's Comprehensive Plan, the City will share their plan with adjacent communities and agencies and would like to participate in future planning efforts with these entities.

8.4 Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Continue to work cooperatively and maintain excellent relations with all governmental units in and around the region.

Objectives:

1. Work cooperatively with the Town of Preston on the development of a new fire station – and the re-purposing and re-use of the current fire station.
2. Work cooperatively with the Town of Preston if they determine to construct a Town Hall outside of the City limits.
3. Continue to cooperatively work with the City of Whitehall on wastewater treatment issues.
4. Work cooperatively with Trempealeau County on Hazard Mitigation planning and efforts.

Policies:

1. Develop a framework plan for the redevelopment of the area encompassing the existing fire station, Town of Preston Town Hall, and associated parking areas.
2. Continue to work cooperatively with State and Federal agencies – with particular emphasis on roadways, natural resources and mining regulations.

Goal 2: Support multi-jurisdictional and non-profit efforts to improve the Trempealeau River corridor.

Objectives:

1. Support the establishment of a consortium of Sportsman's Clubs in neighboring communities to implement best management practices to improve and re-establish the stream corridor and the associated wildlife habitat.

Policies and Recommendations:

1. Cooperate with surrounding jurisdictions to improve service delivery.
2. Jointly plan transportation and trail (bicycle and pedestrian) improvements and connections.
3. Work cooperatively to implement regional planning efforts.
4. Involve the school district in long range planning efforts and in reviewing current development proposals.
5. Consider participating in a regional Purchase of Development Rights and similar programs to preserve environmentally sensitive areas, important open spaces for recreational uses or other public purposes, and farmland.

9 Land Use

The Land Use Element is intended to provide important background data, analyze trends, and define future needs related to land use. This information will serve as the foundation for the development of goals, objectives, policies, and actions. This element must be defined and utilized in conjunction with the other eight planning elements and will serve as a guide to future growth and development in the City of Blair.

Defining appropriate land use involves more than making ecological and economical choices. It is also about retaining values, lifestyles, cultural assets, and community character. The planning of future land uses is sometimes perceived as an intrusion on the rights of private property owners. The actual purpose of this activity is to protect rights of the individuals and to give landowners, citizens, and local communities the opportunity to define their own destiny.

Many Wisconsin communities are facing problems due to unplanned growth: pollution, a loss of community character, traffic congestion, and sprawling development. Taxes have reached all-time highs and infrastructure and maintenance costs continue to encumber local units of government. By giving communities the opportunity to define the way they wish to grow and by developing a “vision” to reach that target, the magnitude of these problems can be reduced.

This chapter contains a listing of the amount, type, and intensity of existing uses of land and discusses opportunities for redevelopment within the City of Blair. This chapter analyzes existing trends in the supply, demand, and price of land and contains a future land use map that identifies the City of Blair’s vision for future land uses.

Overall, the intensity and density of all land use activities is somewhat mixed in the City. The center of the City has smaller lot sizes for residential and commercial uses. Towards the outer boundaries, lot sizes are larger – and the land use changes to agriculture as well as industrial operations. Over the next 20-years, it is anticipated that overall density will remain fairly constant – with a focus of trying to drive more infill development, and to revitalize the City’s downtown.

Wis. Stats. 66.1001(2)(h)

(h) Land-use element. A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs to guide the future development and redevelopment of public and private property. The element shall contain a listing of the amount, type, intensity and net density of existing uses of land in the local governmental unit, such as agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial and other public and private uses. The element shall analyze trends in the supply, demand and price of land, opportunities for redevelopment and existing and potential land-use conflicts. The element shall contain projections, based on the background information specified in par. (a), for 20 years, in 5-year increments, of future residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial land uses including the assumptions of net densities or other spatial assumptions upon which the projections are based. The element shall also include a series of maps that shows current land uses and future land uses that indicate productive agricultural soils, natural limitations for building site development, floodplains, wetlands and other environmentally sensitive lands, the boundaries of areas to which services of public utilities and community facilities, as those terms are used in par. (d), will be provided in the future, consistent with the timetable described in par. (d), and the general location of future land uses by net density or other classifications.

9.1 Land Use Summary

Blair is located in central Trempealeau County. The land use has dramatically changed over the course of the last ten years. Historically – the City has been relatively compact, with a defined downtown area, surrounded predominantly by single family homes on small lots. Also in the central portion of the City is a strong industrial core – with AMPI having a prominent location and stance within the City limits.

More recently – the City has been impacted by a few issues – the primary being the growth of the regional sand mining production. Trempealeau County is one of the state’s areas of rich sand deposits. This sand is highly sought after to hydraulically fracture oil wells – which allows them to produce more oil.

Trempealeau County issued a moratorium on new sand mining permits in the early 2010’s, at which time, sand mines begin requesting annexation to incorporated communities – thereby being able to request operational approvals from these entities. The City of Blair has annexed a significant amount of territory and now has three mining operations within its jurisdiction.

The planning horizon of this plan is 20-years. The three mining operations will – in all likelihood – remain operational at the end of the planning horizon. One – Source Energy Services - Blair – has a slightly shorter mine life and may be nearing the end of its production, but likely still within reclamation at the end of the planning horizon. Source Energy Services – Preston has a remaining mine life of approximately 23 years, and Hi-Crush has a remaining mine life of approximately 27 years. These are assuming additional lands are not acquired, and that market demand remains strong for the product being produced.

Development Limitations

The re-use of existing mine lands – post-mining operations – is very important to the long-range plan and organization of the City. The topography of the lands within the mine areas is significantly sloped – to the point that, in much of the mine areas, significant development would be a challenge to accomplish.

Existing Land Use

The City of Blair is largely residential and commercial. According to 2017 assessment records, 37 percent of the City’s acres are agricultural, 20 percent ag/forest, and nearly 20 percent manufacturing. Developed uses (residential, commercial, and manufacturing) make up approximately 30 percent of Blair’s assessed acreage (Figure 9-1).

Table 9-1 – 2012 to 2017 Land Use - City of Blair

Real Estate Class	2012			2017			2012-2017 Change		
	Parcels	Acres	Percent Acres	Parcels	Acres	Percent Acres	Parcels	Acres	Acres Percent Change
Residential	443	114	29.8%	451	112	4.7%	8	-2	-1.8%
Commercial	90	70	18.3%	101	142	5.9%	11	72	102.9%
Manufacturing	7	10	2.6%	19	473	19.7%	12	463	4,630.0%
Agricultural	24	160	41.9%	92	890	37.1%	68	730	456.3%
Undeveloped	1	2	0.5%	29	202	8.4%	28	200	10,000.0%
Ag Forest	3	21	5.5%	37	491	20.5%	34	470	2,238.1%
Forest	3	5	1.3%	8	80	3.3%	5	75	1,500.0%
Other	0	0	0.0%	6	6	0.2%	6	6	n/a%
Real Estate Totals	571	382	100.0%	743	2,396	100.0%	172	2,014	527.2%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Between 2012 and 2017, the City actually saw a small decrease in residential parcels. Due to the timing of the Wildcat Subdivision, these residential parcels are likely not included in the data. Due to annexations, the City saw exponential growth in most categories. The annexations were due in large part to the sand industry – and as such, the largest growth was in manufacturing, agricultural, undeveloped and forest related parcels. A zoning map is located on the following page.

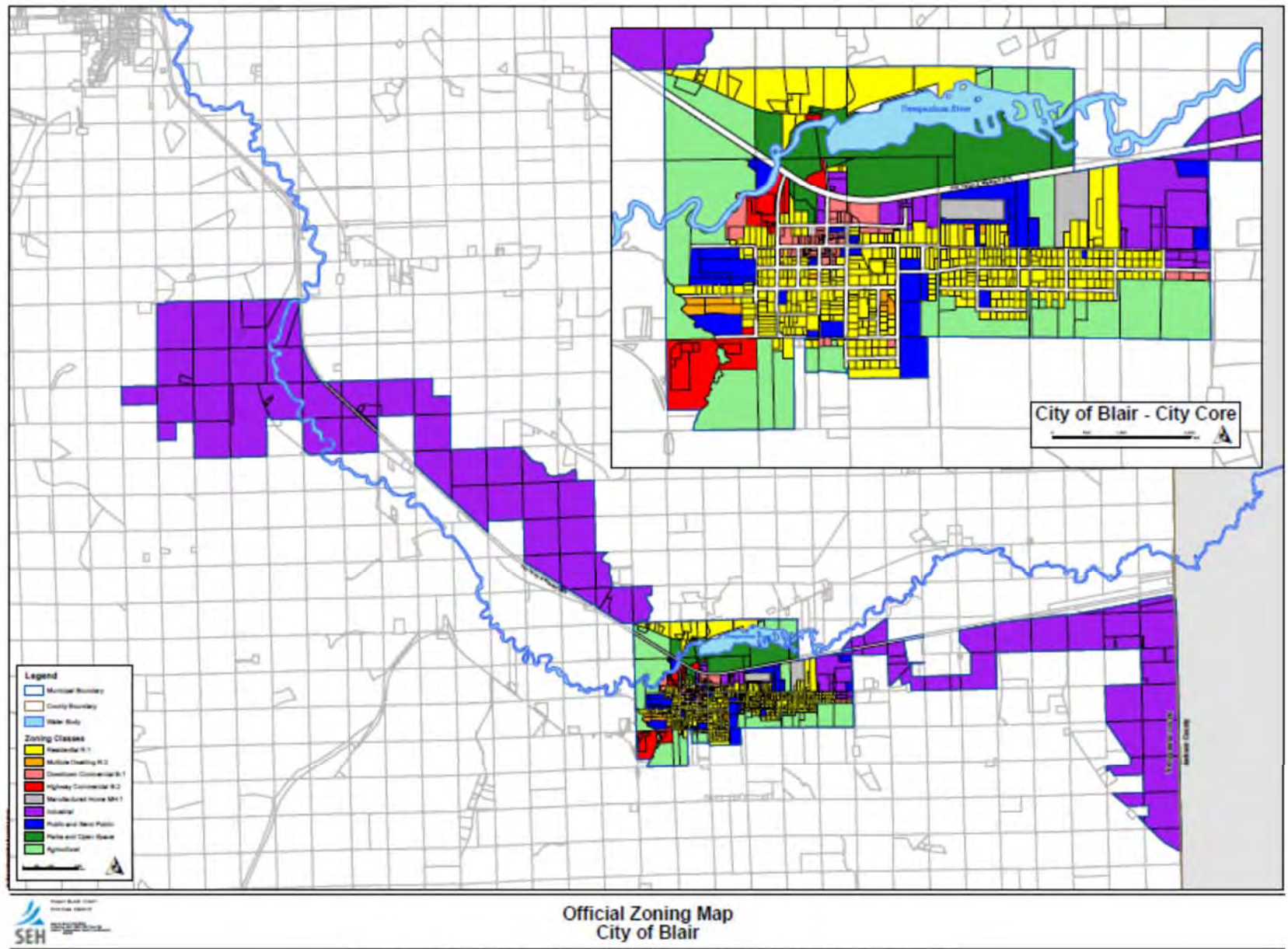
The equalized valuation of property in the City has been increasing as well. Personal property values has increased as well from \$1.3 million in 2007 to \$26.1 million in 2017.

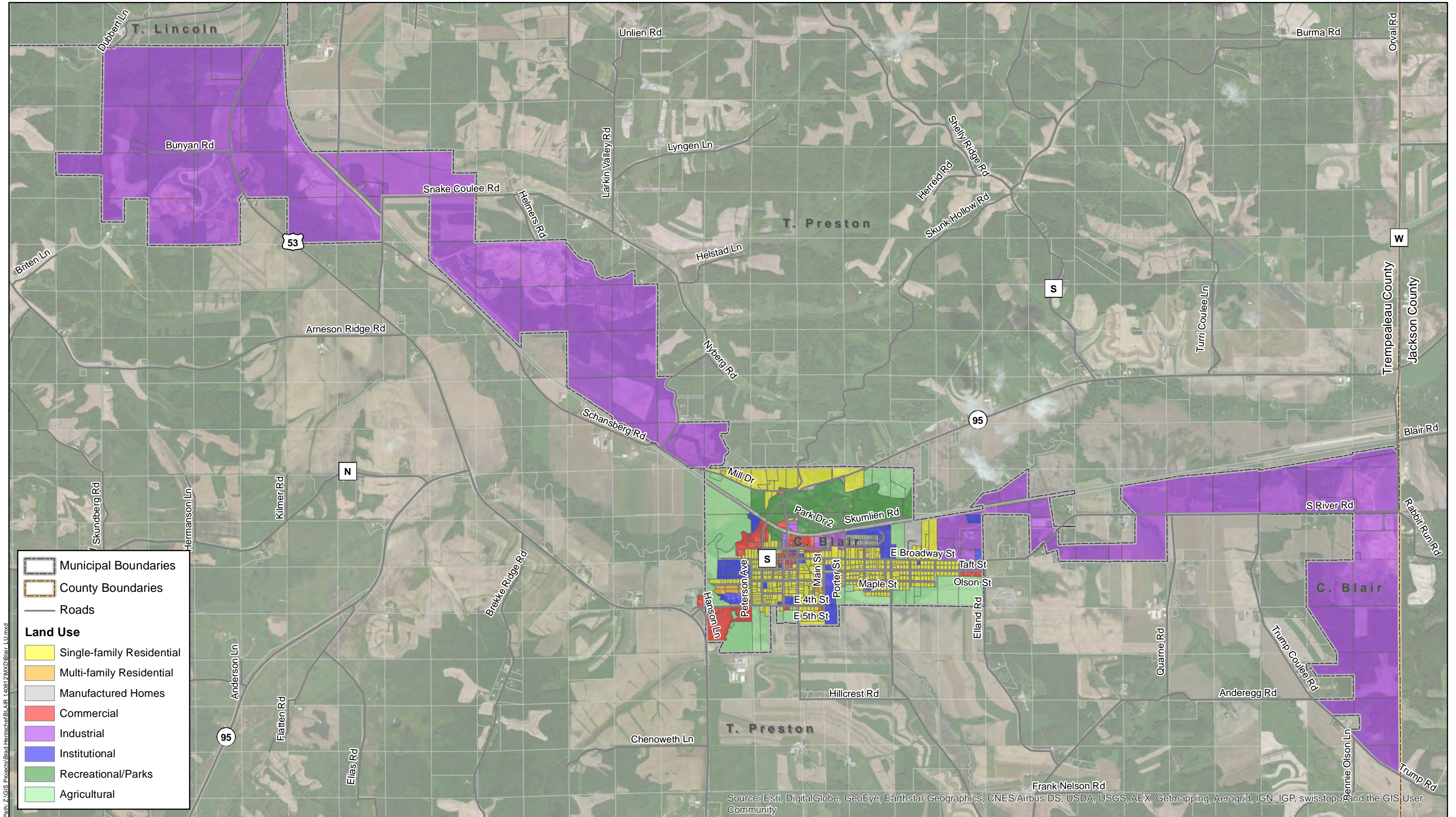
Table 9-2 – 2017 Real Estate Valuation

Real Estate Class	Land Value	Improvement Value	Total Valuation	Percent Change Since 2007
Residential	\$4,860,300	\$33,871,500	\$38,731,800	7.2%
Commercial	\$1,809,600	\$18,406,500	\$20,216,100	205.2%
Manufacturing	\$5,879,900	\$24,886,600	\$30,765,500	1,133.7%
Agricultural	\$141,800	\$0	\$141,800	481.1%
Undeveloped	\$117,100	\$0	\$117,100	n/a (\$0 in 2007)
Ag Forest	\$761,100	\$0	\$761,100	2,838.6%
Forest	\$248,000	\$0	\$248,000	2,888.0%
Other	\$25,200	\$192,400	\$217,600	n/a (\$0 in 2007)
Total	\$13,843,000	\$77,357,000	\$91,200,000	101.2%


Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue, Statement of Changes in Equalized Values by Class and Item

Figure 9-1 – Zoning Map - City of Blair





Path: Z:\GIS Projects\Blair\Henshel\BLAIR_140812\MXD\Blair_LU.mxd



6808 ODANA RD
SUITE 200
MADISON, WI 53719
TF: (608) 620-6199
FAX: (888) 908-8166
www.sehinc.com

0 1,250 2,500 Ft

Map by: mfaik
Projection: WisCRS Trempealeau County (US feet)
Source: Trempealeau County, WDNR
Print Date: 1/19/2018

This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey map and is not intended to be used as one. This map is a compilation of records, information, and data gathered from various sources listed on this map and is to be used for reference purposes only. SEH does not warrant that the Geographic Information System (GIS) Data used to prepare this map are error free, and SEH does not represent that the GIS Data can be used for navigational, tracking, or any other purpose requiring exacting measurement of distance or direction or precision in the depiction of geographic features. The user of this map acknowledges that SEH shall not be liable for any damages which arise out of the user's access or use of data provided.

EXISTING LAND USE

City of Blair, Trempealeau County, Wisconsin

Commercial Land Use

As of the 2017 assessment, there were 101 commercially assessed properties in the City. There has been an increase of 11 parcels from 2007. While this is about six (6) percent of the total City acreage, the commercial land class makes up over 22 percent of the City's valuation. These uses typically are found along in downtown Blair, as well as the convenience stores/fueling stations along the major thoroughfares through the City.

Industrial Land Use

There are 19 manufacturing properties in the City. This was an increase of 12 parcels from 2007. This is 33 percent of the City's property valuation. The majority of these land uses are mining properties, as well as food processing facilities in Blair's downtown along the railroad.

Forested Land Use

There are 45 parcels of assessed forest land in the City. This is an increase of 39 parcels from 2007, making up one percent of the City's valuation. The growth has been related to lands annexed to the City for mineral production.

Residential Land Use

There are 451 residential parcels and 112 acres currently devoted to residential land use in the City, which results in an average of one-quarter of an acre per residential parcel. This is the most valuable land class, making up nearly 42.5 percent of the City's assessed valuation. Additional information on the composition of the City's housing stock is included in the Housing Element.

Agricultural Land Use

There are 92 parcels of assessed agricultural land in the City. This is a large increase from 2007 due to lands being annexed for future mineral production. More information about the change in farming in the City and Trempealeau County is presented in the Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Element.

Public/Other Land Use

There are a significant number of public lands in the City of Blair, including the Blair-Taylor School District, parks, the City and Town of Preston municipal buildings, the Fire Department/Community Center, several churches, and other non-profit, tax exempt organizations.

Land Demand and Prices

Land sales and prices can indicate changes in an economy and land use patterns. Particularly when agricultural and forested lands are sold and converted to alternative land uses, it is important to see if there is a desire to shift some of these lands to more intense uses, such as residential, commercial, or industrial.

In Trempealeau County during 2016, agricultural land that was sold and remained in agricultural use averaged \$4,310 per acre. There were 25 transactions including over 1,900 acres in which this occurred. For agriculture land being transferred to a different use, the average payment was only \$3,679. There were 4 transactions of 57 acres in this case. We can see that a large premium is being paid for agriculture land to retain it as agriculture use. For the past several years – the opposite was happening, with per acre costs for transferring agriculture land to other uses averaging over \$6,000.

Forest land sales have seen a slightly different trend. In fact, the cost per acre was identical in 2016 for forest land retained or converted. In 2014 and 2015, all forest land transactions in Trempealeau County were retained as forest use.

Table 9-3 – Land Value per Acre

	Blair		Trempealeau County	
	2012	2017	2012	2017
Residential	\$33,076	\$43,395	\$11,835	\$13,252
Commercial	\$13,131	\$12,743	\$17,905	\$18,398
Manufacturing	\$18,950	\$12,431	\$7,607	\$10,193
Agricultural	\$172	\$159	\$134	\$129
Undeveloped	\$50	\$579	\$680	\$670
Ag Forest	\$557	\$1,550	\$1,385	\$1,569
Forest	\$1,940	\$3,100	\$2,784	\$3,251
Other	N/A	\$4,200	\$3,623	\$4,195

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue, Statement of Assessments, Statement of Changes in Equalized Values by Class and Item

According to Table 9-3, when looking at assessments, land use classes are valued fairly comparably when compared to Trempealeau County. The exception is in residential and commercial. Commercial lands are valued significantly more in the County as a whole than in Blair. However – in residential land classes, Blair is valued significantly higher. This is on a per acre, not per parcel basis. In communities where development is denser – this is common to see. In Blair, it is normal to see four lots with homes on them in an acre, where in larger lot developments in the County, one home may be all there is on a 5-acre lot.

Land Use Analysis

The City of Blair continues to grow – albeit at a relatively slow pace. Based on the market analysis, it is expected to see 30-40 new housing units over the next ten years. This would largely be accommodated in the City's new Wildcat Subdivision. There are also opportunities for infill development and rental units.

Commercially – many entrepreneurs are choosing to operate from their homes. The City acknowledges a need to generate activity within their downtown – and as such, will be considering alternative forms of ownership – including City-led efforts by way of new events and pop-up shop atmospheres to encourage home-run operations to help generate vibrancy in the downtown.

Industrial land use is anticipated to remain constant. Any growth will likely come from existing employers – or service oriented business that provides necessary goods or services to the niche markets in the region – food processing and mineral extraction.

Post-Mining Land Use

The post-mining land use of the three operations is of utmost importance to the City. The mines all have lives that extend to 20-years and beyond – depending on market conditions. While it is anticipated that at the end of this planning horizon all mines will continue to operate, it is reasonable to consider the potential land use alterations they may encourage.

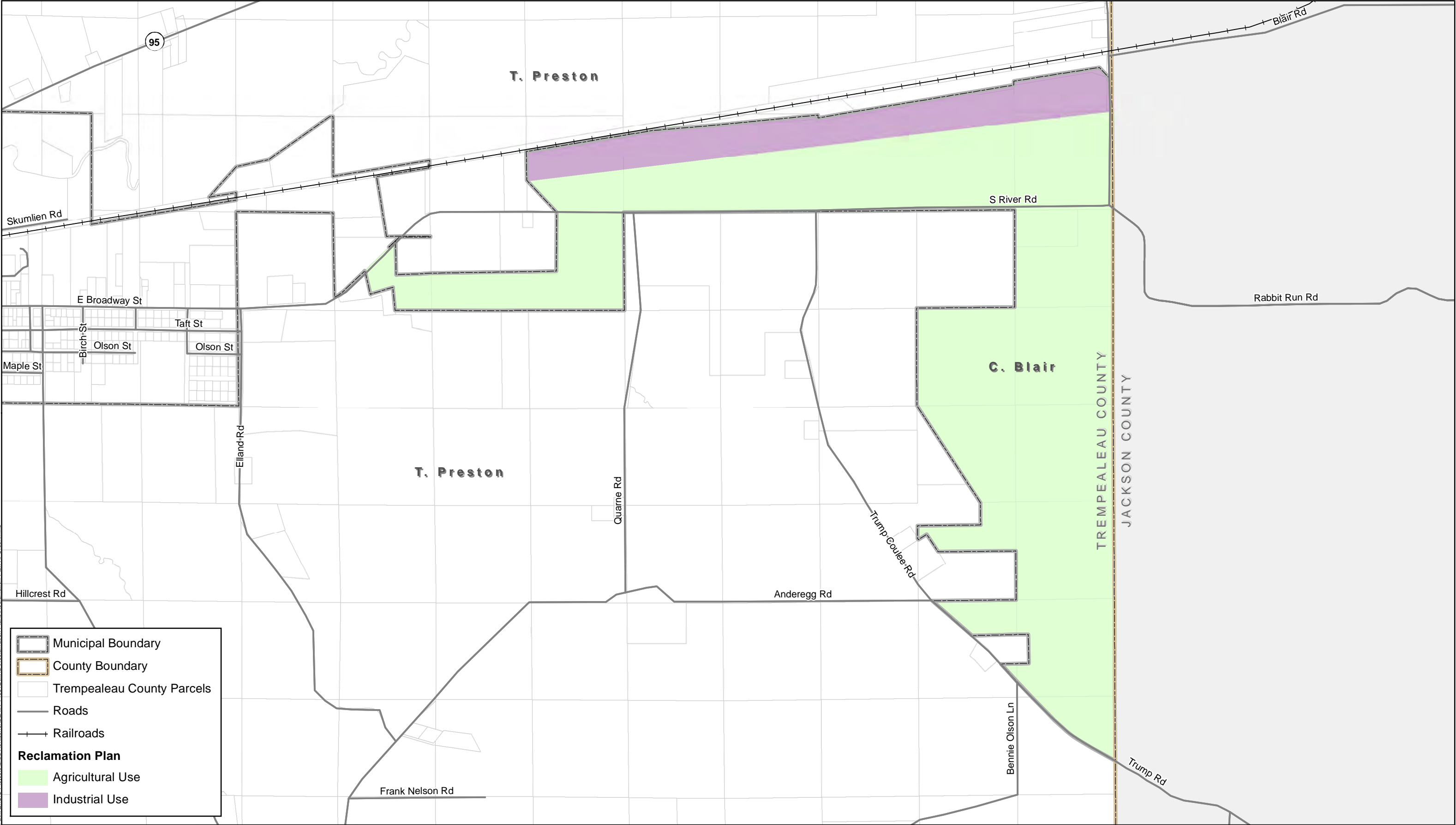
The three mines are required to have reclamation plans in place – that is – an approved state of the land upon termination of the mineral extraction activities.

All mineral extraction operations within the City have extensive rail operations. Even upon the exhaustion of mineral operations, it is anticipated that the rail infrastructure will remain on-site. Rail spurs and industrial sites located along rail infrastructure continues to be valuable and sought-after development amenities. For this reason, it is recommended that even when mining activities cease due to material depletion, the properties abutting rail loading facilities and rail spurs remain appropriate for industrial development.


Aside from these areas, the reclamation plans of the mines themselves generally call for the lands to be returned to the pre-mining land use. In most cases, this is agricultural, wooded, or recreation.

The Market Analysis indicated in terms of residential land use, a large segment of the market the City is missing out on is the rural, large lot residential development. Post-mining land could be an appropriate location for this type of development – and would enable the City of Blair to capture some of this market share. The City should be proactive with the post-mining land owners to evaluate these alternatives – as reclamation of the mined areas is on-going. Negotiations to strategically create a larger lot residential environment that would be attractive to these homeowners should be discussed with local real estate experts, and if appropriate, the sand mines as well as the post-mine land owners – as the site reclamation can begin to be shaped appropriate when typical reclamation activities are occurring.

The maps below represent the preservation of lands adjacent to rail as remaining industrial in nature, while the remaining property is generally returned to agricultural. This does not necessarily match the mining reclamation plans, but is a reasonable re-use of these lands.



Path: Z:\GIS Projects\Blair Henschel\BLAIR 140812\MXD\Reclamation Plans\Reclamation Plan HI-Crush.mxd



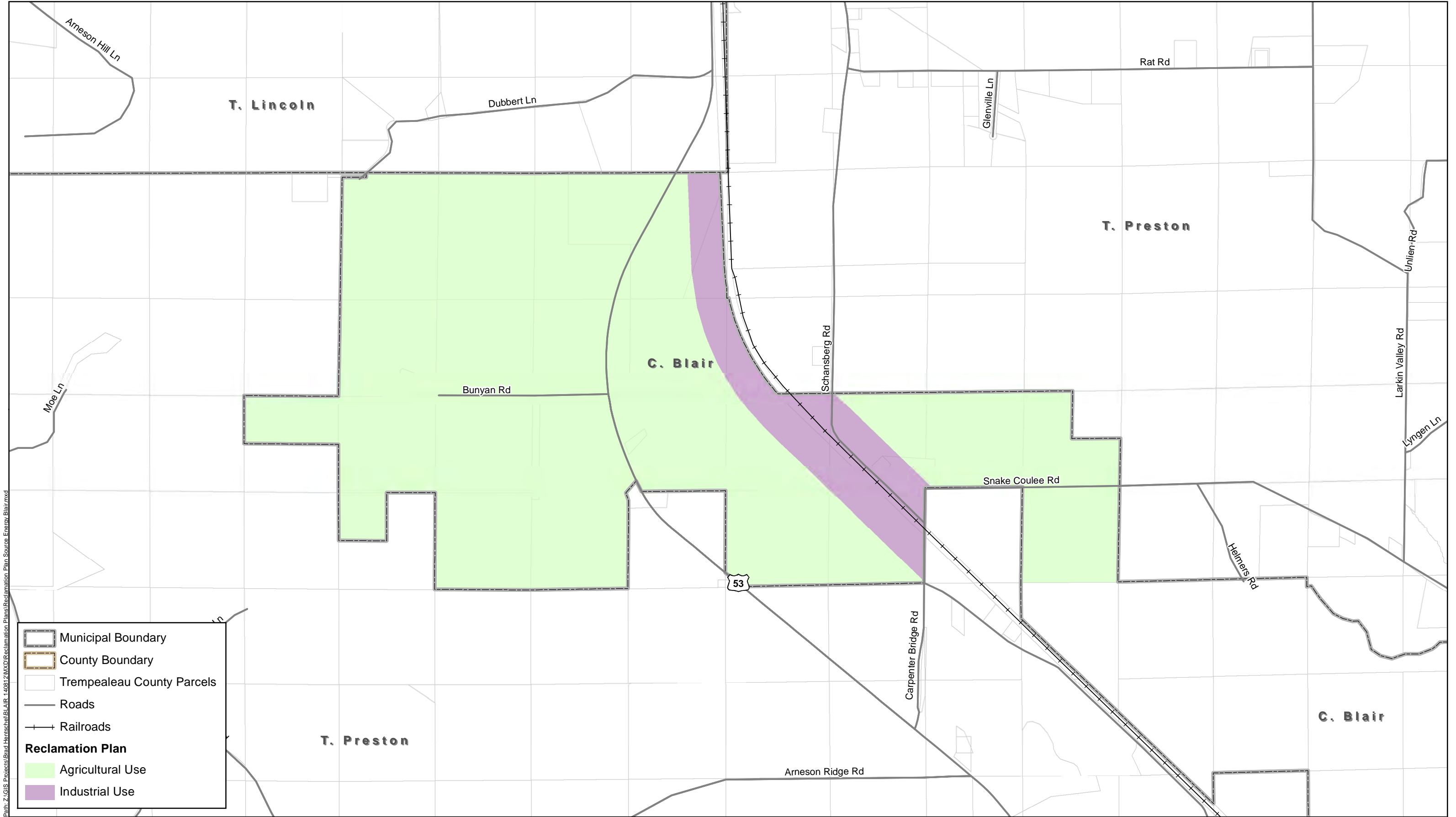
6808 ODANA RD
SUITE 200
MADISON, WI 53719
TF: (608) 620-6199
FAX: (888) 908-8166
www.sehinc.com

Map by: mfaik
Projection: WISCRS Trempealeau County (US feet)
Source: Trempealeau County, WDNR
Print Date: 1/15/2018

RECLAMATION PLAN: HI-CRUSH

City of Blair, Trempealeau County, Wisconsin

This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey map and is not intended to be used as one. This map is a compilation of records, information, and data gathered from various sources listed on this map and is to be used for reference purposes only. SEH does not warrant that the Geographic Information System (GIS) Data used to prepare this map are error free, and SEH does not represent that the GIS Data can be used for navigational, tracking, or any other purpose requiring exacting measurement of distance or direction or precision in the depiction of geographic features. The user of this map acknowledges that SEH shall not be liable for any damages which arise out of the user's access or use of data provided.



Path: Z:\GIS Projects\Brad Hentschel\BLAIR 140812\MXD\Reclamation Plans\Reclamation Plan Source Energy Blair.mxd

Municipal Boundary

County Boundary

Trempealeau County Parcels

Roads

Railroads

Reclamation Plan

Agricultural Use

Industrial Use

0

600

1,200

Ft

N

Map by: mfaik

Projection: WisCRS Trempealeau County (US feet)

Source: Trempealea County, WDNR

Print Date: 1/15/2018

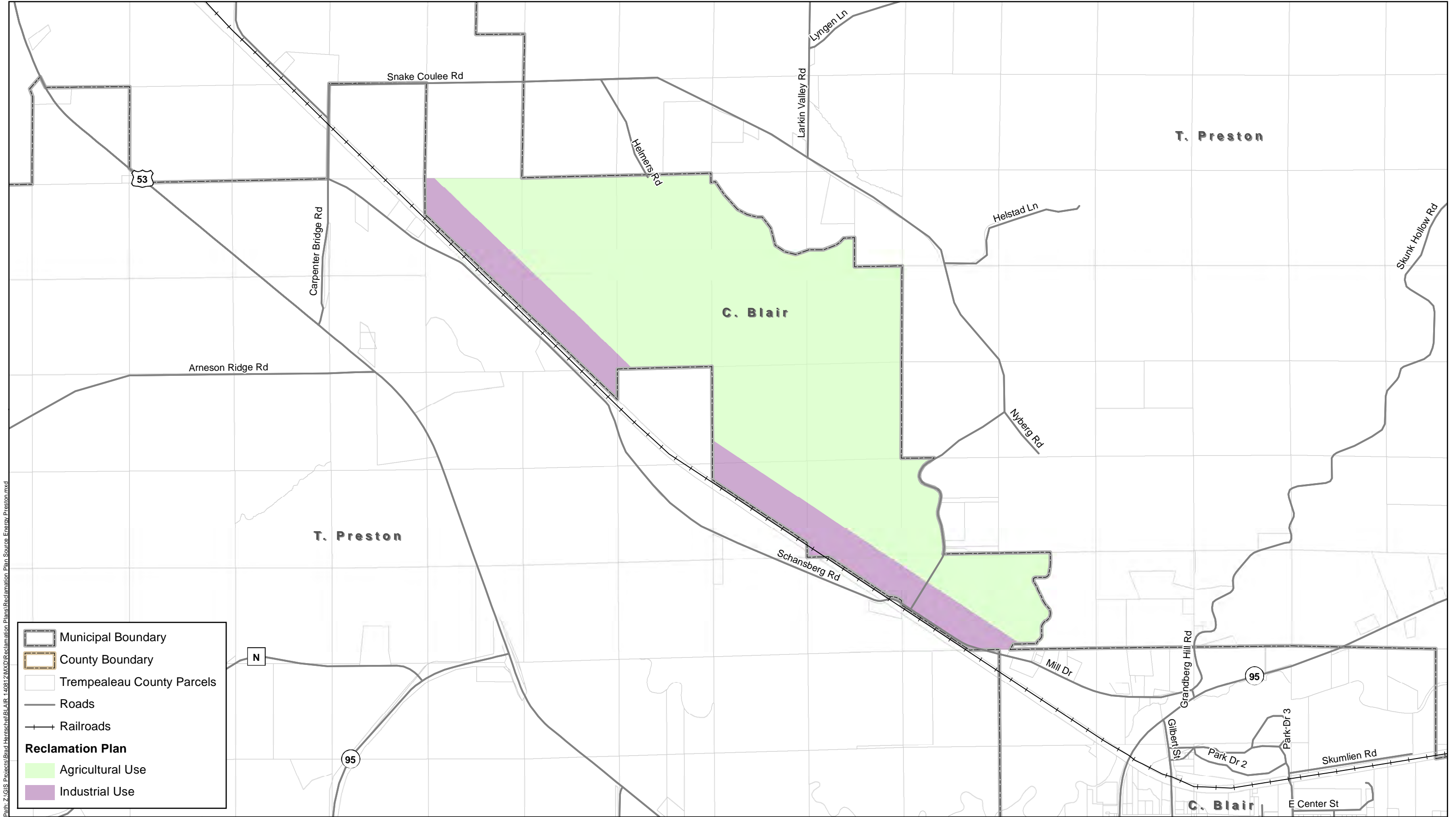


6808 ODANA RD
SUITE 200
MADISON, WI 53719
TF: (608) 620-6199
FAX: (888) 908-8166
www.sehinc.com

RECLAMATION PLAN: SOURCE ENERGY SERVICES - BLAIR

City of Blair, Trempealeau County, Wisconsin

This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey map and is not intended to be used as one. This map is a compilation of records, information, and data gathered from various sources listed on this map and is to be used for reference purposes only. SEH does not warrant that the Geographic Information System (GIS) Data used to prepare this map are error free, and SEH does not represent that the GIS Data can be used for navigational, tracking, or any other purpose requiring exacting measurement of distance or direction or precision in the depiction of geographic features. The user of this map acknowledges that SEH shall not be liable for any damages which arise out of the user's access or use of data provided.





6808 ODANA RD
SUITE 200
MADISON, WI 53719
TF: (608) 620-6199
FAX: (888) 908-8166
www.sehinc.com

0 600 1,200 Ft

Map by: mfaik
Projection: WisCRS Trempealeau County (US feet)
Source: Trempealeau County, WDNR
Print Date: 1/15/2018

RECLAMATION PLAN: SOURCE ENERGY SERVICES - PRESTON

City of Blair, Trempealeau County, Wisconsin

This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey map and is not intended to be used as one. This map is a compilation of records, information, and data gathered from various sources listed on this map and is to be used for reference purposes only. SEH does not warrant that the Geographic Information System (GIS) Data used to prepare this map are error free, and SEH does not represent that the GIS Data can be used for navigational, tracking, or any other purpose requiring exacting measurement of distance or direction or precision in the depiction of geographic features. The user of this map acknowledges that SEH shall not be liable for any damages which arise out of the user's access or use of data provided.

Land Use Projections

Future land use in the City will continue to be predominantly residential. There is not a significant demand for additional properties to be developed for commercial or industrial uses – and there are enough underutilized parcels within the developed portion of the City that could accommodate any projected growth.

Based upon the population and housing projections developed in the Issues and Opportunities Chapter, the City of Blair is projected to see an increase in population of nearly 17 percent from 2010 to 2040, resulting in a project population of 1,600. This is an increase of nearly 250 persons, and it is projected that an additional 80 housing units would be needed to accommodate this population rise. In 2010, there were 638 housing units in the City, and 112 acres assessed as residential. This results in 5.7 housing units per acre. At this benchmark rate, it would be projected that 14 additional acres – minimum - would be needed by the year 2040 to accommodate the proposed residential growth if this were to all be new development. That being said, the market study indicated that there is a need for more rental units – as well as a desire by homeowners for larger residential lots – resulting in the need to provide a good mix of units. Given the mixed densities, it is likely that 14 acres may still be enough – but some larger lot areas may consume more than this.

Commercial development and redevelopment activities are expected to be relatively minor in the future. The City is developing strategic plans to help spur private investment in the City's downtown area to help revitalize some of the underutilized buildings. For this reason, it is not anticipated that new commercial acreage will be needed, as there are a variety of infill and redevelopment opportunities appropriate for commercial uses in the downtown. The last ten years has shown a significant increase in commercial acres, with a current average of 1.4 acres per commercially assessed parcel. While it is reasonable to see small commercial growth it should be anticipated to come in the form of valuation and not necessarily parcels or acreage – as most of the redevelopment opportunities are currently zoned and assessed as commercial already.

Industrial uses are projected to remain relatively constant – for the same reasons as commercial development above. The exception will be during the termination of mining operations. Again – this is not anticipated to occur during the planning horizon of this plan – but should be planned for. When mining operations terminate, the use of the plant and loading facilities will likely be abandoned. It is anticipated that the rail loading facilities will remain on these sites – and as such, the City should work to actively market these properties as “rail-ready.” The current “Certified Sites” marketing program by Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation would be appropriate to consider – pending what similar program exists at the time of mining termination.

Agricultural lands within the City will likely remain quite stable. Over the last decade these lands increased substantially – but largely due to land annexations into the City. The lands that were annexed but had wet or dry plants and rail loading facilities are changed to industrial – but for the most part, these are completed. We anticipate this land use to remain very stable – while lands may be taken out of agricultural purposes during mining, it is not likely that their assessments will change – and as reclamation occurs, the lands will be largely returned to agricultural use.

Undeveloped lands also grew during the past decade due to annexations. Much of the undeveloped lands are likely classified as such due to natural development limitations, such as wetlands, floodplain or bluffslands. As additional development is occurring, there may be slightly

more lands that become “Undeveloped” – particularly as mining lands are reclaimed, as there may be the creation of drainage ways and/or areas not fit for development.

Forested parcels will likely remain very stable. As the lands are mined, they will be replanted for regrowth.

Table 9-4 – Projected Acreage Needs

Real Estate Class	2017	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Residential	112	115	120	126	131	136
Commercial	142	143	145	147	149	151
Manufacturing	473	473	473	473	473	473
Agricultural	890	888	885	877	873	870
Undeveloped	202	202	205	207	210	212
Ag Forest	491	490	486	485	480	475
Forest	80	76	76	72	71	70
Other	6	9	9	9	9	9
Total	2,396	2,396	2,396	2,396	2,396	2,396

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue, Statement of Assessments, Statement of Changes in Equalized Values by Class and Item & SEH

Future Land Use Districts

This section of the Land Use Element includes descriptions of each of the recommended Land Use Plan districts. Land-use related decisions, such as zoning, land division, annexations, among others, should be consistent with this plan.

Future Land Use areas and Zoning Districts are different. Zoning districts contain specific requirements and standards for the development of land, such as height limitations, setbacks and types of uses.

The Land Use classifications are meant to be more general, allowing for greater flexibility in making land use and zoning decisions.

Mixed Density Residential District

The Mixed Density Residential District is intended for residential units. The City generally encourages Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) patterns, which typically includes mixed-density development located in close proximity to essential goods and services establishments. Higher density residential development may be appropriate in locations adjacent to transportation corridors, commercial areas, and schools. Institutional uses, clinics, senior housing and services, clinics, children's nurseries, group homes, bed and breakfast establishments, neighborhood commercial and services, and home-based offices are also appropriate in this district with proper zoning controls.

Downtown Mixed Use District

The Downtown Mixed Use District is intended to include the City's mixed-use central business district. The intent of this district is to have pedestrian-focused development with a mix of uses, including residential, personal service, commercial, institutional and civic uses.

Multiple story, mixed use buildings that include quality architecture, signage, lighting and streetscape amenities that are sensitive to and enhance the character of Blair's small central business district are strongly encouraged.

Commercial District

The Commercial District is intended to accommodate large and small-scale commercial and office development. A wide range of retail, service and office uses are appropriate in this district.

Industrial District

The Industrial District is intended to accommodate processing and manufacturing facilities, as well as those facilities that generate heavy truck traffic frequently, and are more likely to produce nuisance odors or sounds. It is desirable to maintain separate of this District from residential development.

Institutional District

This district is intended to accommodate civic, institutional, and related uses including schools, churches, libraries, governmental buildings, utilities, and public parks.

Parks and Open Space District

This district is intended to include environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, steep slopes and floodplains, publicly-owned recreation facilities and other permanently protected open spaces.

9.2 Land Use Agencies and Programs

There are a number of available agencies and programs to assist communities with land use projects. Below are brief descriptions of various agencies and programs.

University of Wisconsin

The UW-Madison, River Falls, Milwaukee, and Stevens Point can provide research and outreach planning services to area communities.

Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission (MRRPC)

Regional Plan Commissions provide planning assistance, assist local interests in responding to state and federal programs, serve as a coordinating agency for programs, and provide other technical and advisory assistance to local governments. For more information visit

www.mrrpc.org.

9.3 Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Maintain a land use plan and map that reflects the current values of the community, and identifies appropriate areas for growth and redevelopment.

Objectives:

1. Work cooperatively with the Town of Preston on the development of a new fire station – and the re-purposing and re-use of the current fire station.
2. Work cooperatively with the Town of Preston if they determine to construct a Town Hall outside of the City limits.
3. Continue to cooperatively work with the City of Whitehall on wastewater treatment issues.
4. Work cooperatively with Trempealeau County on Hazard Mitigation planning and efforts.
5. Ensure new developments are compatible with and complementary to surrounding land uses.

Policies:

1. Utilize the plan and future land use map to make sound land use decisions.
2. Continue to work cooperatively with State and Federal agencies – with particular emphasis on roadways, natural resources and mining regulations.
3. The City will ensure local regulation encourage property maintenance that keeps the City attractive and inviting to residents and tourists alike.

Goal 2: Revitalize downtown. Establish Downtown Blair as a vibrant place and gathering space.

Objectives:

1. Establish an alternative ownership structure to encourage co-location of businesses in a centralized downtown location.

Policies:

1. Evaluate local zoning code to ensure it encourages mixed-use locations to promote a live-work environment.
2. Promote infill and redevelopment in downtown Blair.

Goal 3: Promote the regional preservation and enhancement of local waterways – including the Trempealeau River corridor

Objectives:

1. Ensure development is guided properly to locations that minimize the potential impact to these resources.
2. Ensure development is guided properly to protect investments from flood hazards.

Policies:

1. Coordinate planning efforts of neighboring and impacted local units of government, the County and school districts.
2. Encourage environmentally sensitive development to minimize negative impacts on the environment, including water quality and soil integrity.

Goal 4: The City will utilize existing infrastructure to guide new development.

Objectives:

1. Strive to ensure development that needs utilities can be adequately served.

Policies:

1. Work closely with the City of Whitehall to ensure adequate capacity is available for sanitary sewer service when new development is proposed.

10 Implementation

This element serves as a “priority” list for implementing and realizing the Plan. It prescribes those actions necessary to realize the visions, goals, and objectives highlighted in previous chapters of the Plan. The Plan addresses many important components critical to sustaining a healthy community while preserving the community character and resources residents enjoy. As change is inevitable, the Plan may need to be amended to appropriately reflect land use changes.

If there is a question regarding a decision that is not clearly conveyed in the details of this Comprehensive Plan, then the decision should be based on community desires identified during the Community SWOT workshop and the results presented in the Issues and Opportunities Element of the Plan. All nine elements included in this Plan work to achieve the desired future for the City of Blair.

10.1 Action Plan

Completing the plan document is only one step in the planning process. Getting complete commitment in implementing the plan involves getting all departments and key individuals involved in order to have a unified stance in matters pertaining to the plan.

The City of Blair Comprehensive Plan is intended to help guide decisions within the City. The Plan is an expression of the City of Blair’s preferences and provides a series of policies for assisting the community in attaining its goals, and objectives. The Plan is not an attempt to predict the future, but rather an attempt to document the City’s values and philosophies that citizens of Blair share. The Plan guides a variety of community issues including housing, transportation, utilities and community facilities, economic development, intergovernmental cooperation, and land use.

The City of Blair’s Plan Commission, Common Council, Staff, and citizens should utilize the Comprehensive Plan in reviewing all proposals pertaining to development in the City. Development proposals should be examined to determine whether they are consistent with City preferences as expressed in the Plan. As part of the development review, a thorough review of the Plan is necessary with particular attention given to the goals and objectives. Where the impact of a proposed development is minimal, the evaluation may simply be a determination of whether or not the Plan provides relevant direction and whether the requested action is in conformance with the Plan. Development proposals with significant potential impacts will require a more detailed analysis in order to determine consistency.

Wis. Stats. 66.1001(2)(i)

(i) Implementation element. A compilation of programs and specific actions to be completed in a stated sequence, including proposed changes to any applicable zoning ordinances, official maps, or subdivision ordinances, to implement the objectives, policies, plans and programs contained in pars. (a) to (h). The element shall describe how each of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan will be integrated and made consistent with the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan, and shall include a mechanism to measure the local governmental unit’s progress toward achieving all aspects of the Comprehensive Plan. The element shall include a process for updating the Comprehensive Plan. A Comprehensive Plan under this subsection shall be updated no less than once every 10 years.

10.2 Plan Integration and Consistency

Within this implementation element, it is required to “describe how each of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan will be integrated and made consistent with the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan.” As a result of the Comprehensive Plan being developed in a coordinated and simultaneous effort, the planning process has ensured that the development and review of each element is consistent with the others; and based on that analysis, there are no known inconsistencies between the planning elements. In the future, as plan amendments occur, it is important that the City of Blair Plan Commission, and Common Council all conduct consistency

reviews. Those reviews will ensure the document continues to represent an integrated approach to planning.

To ensure consistency across jurisdictional boundaries, the City of Blair encourages early dialogue between adjoining and overlapping jurisdictions as they develop or revise their Comprehensive Plans and ordinances. Where inconsistencies are identified and a resolution cannot be reached, future actions can be developed to bring the parties together to address their concerns.

10.3 Plan Monitoring and Evaluation

As part of the Comprehensive Planning process, a number of goals, objectives, and policy items were developed that, when implemented, are intended to build stronger relationships and give direction to the Common Council, as well as other City Committees and residents. The goals are the “purpose or end” that provides direction for the City and other governmental organizations. Objectives are statements that are measurable benchmarks the community works to achieve, and the policies are more specific statements that set preferred courses of action to carry out the objectives in the future. While many of the objectives and actions can be accomplished in the short term, several others will be continuous or ongoing and do not have a specific implementation target date. A Comprehensive Plan must be updated at least once every 10 years. However, in order to ensure that the City’s plan is an effective management tool, the City of Blair Plan Commission will review the plan’s goals and objectives annually to track those activities that have been completed to realize its accomplishments, and identify areas where additional resources or actions are needed. Part of this effort will also include addressing conflicts which may arise between the elements of the Plan.

As a means of measuring progress towards achieving the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, action steps for some of the goals have been developed that propose a timeline that may be followed to implement the goals.

GOAL

A variety of housing types, styles and price ranges will exist in the City for people of all income levels and ages.



Housing

Strategy

- Identify areas throughout the City appropriate for infill residential development (refer to Future Land Use Plan)
- Coordinate with area housing agencies and key target populations to identify key features and amenities for those populations. Particular emphasis shall be provided towards the missing housing segments from the Market Analysis – including the mid-upper level rental market, and senior housing.
- Coordinate with Developers to identify redevelopment opportunities.
- Evaluate the ability of the City and partner agencies to provide incentives for affordable multi-family housing development.

Implementation Lead(s)

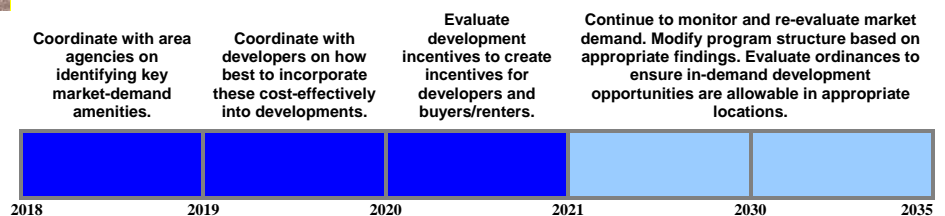
- Blair Plan Commission

Key Partners

- Common Council
- City residents and landowners
- Regional housing agencies (e.g. Western Dairyland Community Action Agency, Trempealeau County Housing Authority, etc.)
- Developers
- Realtors

Potential Funding Sources

- City of Blair
- Local, regional and state housing-related agencies.
- WDOA – Small Cities Housing Program
- Tax Increment Financing



ACTION STEPS

GOAL

The City will provide a complete, multi-modal transportation system that provides a range of transportation alternatives and options.



Transportation

Strategy

- Evaluate alternatives for a second east-west corridor for vehicular traffic. Ensure selected alternative retains consumer traffic in Downtown Blair.
- Designate and sign a heavy truck route to mitigate traffic congestion and conflict.
- Continue to fill in the missing links in the City's bicycle and pedestrian grid.
- Evaluate trail linkages and access for recreational motorized vehicles.
- Improve water access locations for paddle sports.

Implementation Lead(s)

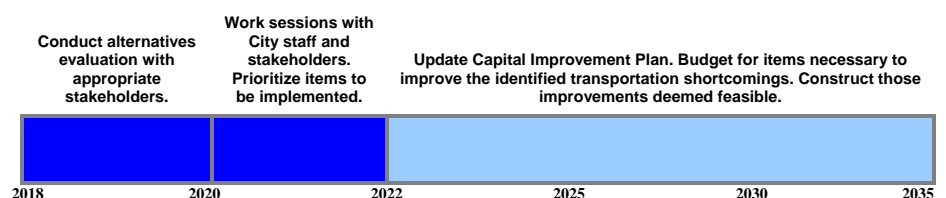
- Blair Plan Commission
- Common Council
- Blair Department of Public Works

Key Partners

- City residents, business owners and land owners.
- Area Sportsman's Clubs and neighboring communities
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation
- Trempealeau County

Potential Funding Sources

- City of Blair
- Regional communities and government entities
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation – Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources – Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program



ACTION STEPS

Utilities and Community Facilities

Strategy

- Coordinate with the Town of Preston and complete the formation of a Fire Board.
- Identify alternatives for new fire station amenities and needs.
- Select preferred alternative(s) for each identified deficiency. Begin budgeting for improvements through the utilization of a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP).

Implementation Lead(s)

- Blair Plan Commission
- Common Council

Key Partners

- City Staff
- Town of Preston
- Fire Department Staff and Volunteers
- Fire Board (once established)

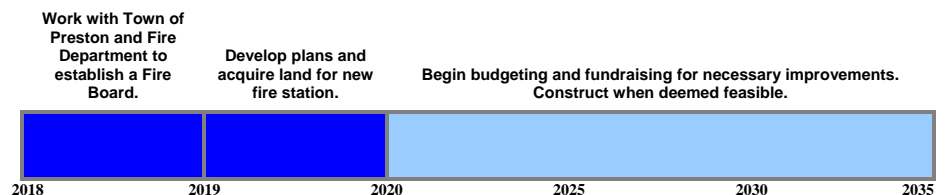
Potential Funding Sources

- City of Blair
- Town of Preston



GOAL

Maintain and improve community facilities and services that will improve Blair's attractiveness to live, work and raise a family. Evaluate the development of a new fire station.



ACTION STEPS

GOAL

Maintain and improve community facilities and services that will improve Blair's attractiveness to live, work and raise a family. Work with large employers on utility needs and rate impacts.

Utilities and Community Facilities

Strategy

- Develop capital improvements list for utility related improvements.
- Meet with area large employers to discuss the needs and possible rate impacts
- Work cooperatively to ensure industry needs are being met, while ensuring they are able to remain competitive in Blair.

Implementation Lead(s)

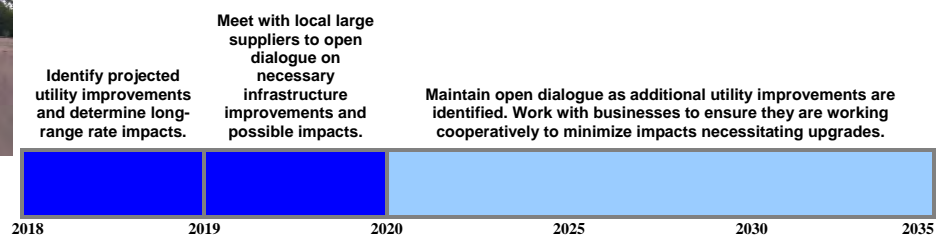
- Blair Plan Commission
- Common Council
- Blair Public Works

Key Partners

- City residents and businesses
- City of Whitehall (for wastewater)

Potential Funding Sources

- City of Blair
- Special Assessments
- WDNR – Safe Drinking Water and Clean Water Fund Loan Programs
- USDA- Rural Development
- Community Development Block Grant – Public Facilities



ACTION STEPS

GOAL

Maintain and improve community facilities and services that will improve Blair's attractiveness to live, work and raise a family. Consider the redevelopment of the Community Center and Town of Preston municipal building if the Fire Department and Town offices are relocated.

Utilities and Community Facilities

Strategy

- Work with Town of Preston to determine their future plans with the Fire Department and current municipal building.
- If relocations are planned, consider creation of a redevelopment plan for those facilities and area.
- Develop, consider and evaluate alternatives for redevelopment.
- Prioritize redevelopment alternatives and select desired alternative(s).

Implementation Lead(s)

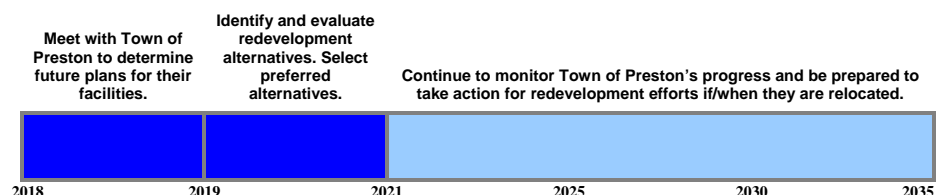
- Blair Plan Commission
- Town of Preston
- Common Council

Key Partners

- Blair residents and businesses.

Potential Funding Sources

- City of Blair
- Town of Preston
- Tax Increment Financing
- Community Development Investment Grants
- Community Development Block Grants – Public Facilities
- Community Development Block Grants - Planning



ACTION STEPS

GOAL

Strive for a park and outdoor recreation system which satisfies basic outdoor recreation and open space needs of City residents, and visitors in an economical and environmentally sensitive fashion



Utilities and Community Facilities

Strategy

- Update the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
- Consider creation of a Master Plan for Riverside Memorial Park. This will help to capture all capital improvement ideas – including improvements to the Lake and waterway, expanded trails with increased access, a beach area and campground updates.
- Implement the Plan.

Implementation Lead(s)

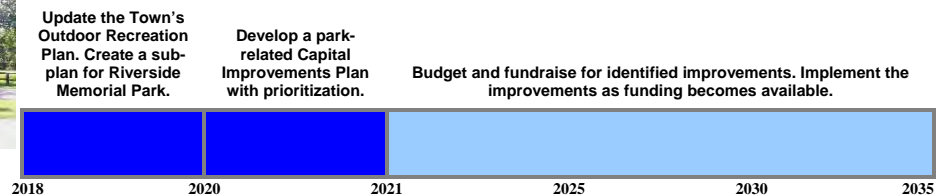
- Park and Recreation Board
- Blair Plan Commission
- Common Council

Key Partners

- Blair-Taylor School District
- Area Sportsman's Clubs

Potential Funding Sources

- Private Developers and Businesses
- City of Blair
- Aids for the Acquisition and Development of Local Parks (ADLP)
- Land and Water Conservation Fund
- Wisconsin DNR Stewardship Funds
- Community Development Block Grants



ACTION STEPS

Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources

Strategy

- Continue to implement existing stormwater management plan.
- Install recommended stormwater management infrastructure as appropriate to mitigate losses from flooding, and to improve the drainage from existing and future identified development areas (see Future Land Use map)
- Continue to monitor improvements post-construction.

Implementation Lead(s)

- Common Council
- Blair Plan Commission
- Department of Public Works

Key Partners

- Private Developers
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

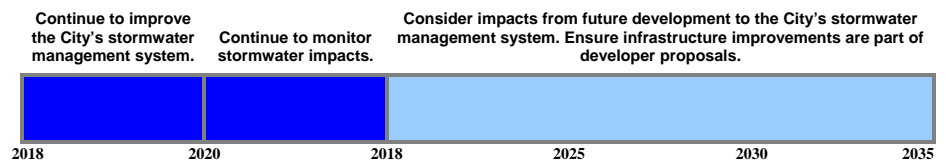
Potential Funding Sources

- City of Blair
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources – Urban Non-Point Source and Stormwater Management Grants



GOAL

Improve and maintain the rivers, lakes, ponds and wetlands of Blair. Work to improve overall stormwater management throughout the City.



ACTION STEPS

Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources

Strategy

- Continue to work with local mines to foster the positive relationship and ensure the City is updated with mine projections and reclamation activities.
- Continue to work with state agencies with oversight of mining regulations to ensure activities are being completed in a responsible manner.

Implementation Lead(s)

- Common Council
- Blair Plan Commission

Key Partners

- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Potential Funding Sources

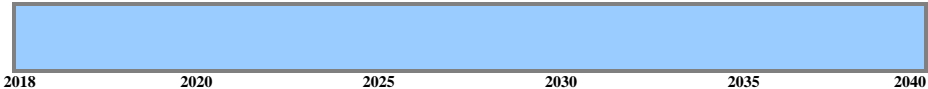
- City of Blair (staff/elected official time)

GOAL

Continue to actively ensure appropriate reclamation of mining property.



Continue to maintain updated plans for mining and reclamation activities. Ensure the continued positive relationship between the City and mineral extraction activities.



ACTION STEPS

GOAL

Foster an atmosphere that encourages and supports entrepreneurial activity.



Economic Development

Strategy

- Create an inventory of home businesses via licensing system.
- Evaluate creation of a local Community Development Authority or Redevelopment Authority
- Evaluate acquisition and redevelopment of downtown building(s) for use as incubator space – or for pop-up shops.
- If appropriate, develop flexible space to accommodate a variety of business needs. Consideration for possible event space use also.

Implementation Lead(s)

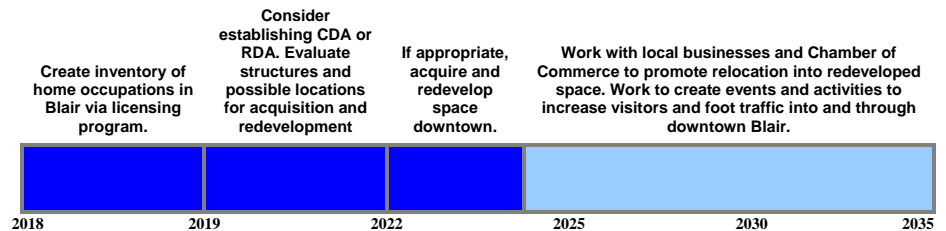
- Blair Plan Commission
- Blair Industrial Development Corporation
- Blair Community Development or Redevelopment Authority (if created)

Key Partners

- City businesses and Blair Chamber of Commerce

Potential Funding Sources

- City of Blair
- Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation
- Tax Increment Financing
- Community Development Block Grant – Public Facilities for Economic Development (PFED)



ACTION STEPS

GOAL

The City will utilize existing infrastructure to guide new development. Strive to encourage redevelopment and infill development when possible.

Land Use

Strategy

- Identify key redevelopment locations and opportunities.
- Promote these to local developers and realtors – and when proposals are brought to the City for consideration.
- Evaluate possible incentives to offset redevelopment costs to make this a more attractive and feasible option for developers.

Implementation Lead(s)

- Blair Plan Commission
- Community Development Authority or Redevelopment Authority (if established)

Key Partners

- Common Council
- Chamber of Commerce
- Blair Industrial Development Corporation

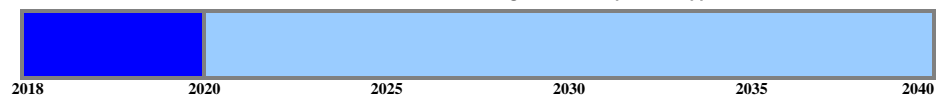
Potential Funding Sources

- City of Blair
- Tax Increment Financing
- Community Development Investment Grants



Work with BIDCO and Chamber to establish priority redevelopment sites. Consider development incentives.

Budget for and implement applicable measures.



ACTION STEPS

10.4 Plan Amendments and Updates

Evaluating the Comprehensive Plan is an ongoing process and will, at some time, lead to the realization that the Plan requires updating and amendments. The time that elapses between the completion of the Plan and the need to amend the Plan will depend greatly on evolving issues, trends, and land use conditions. Periodic updates will allow for updates to statistical data, and to ensure the Plan's goals, objectives, and actions reflect the current conditions, needs, and concerns. The Comprehensive Planning legislation requires plan updates at least every 10 years. The City of Blair will remain flexible in determining when and how often the Plan should be updated. Generally, a Comprehensive Plan update should not be expected more often than once every 5 years. A tremendous amount of change can occur in a community over just a couple of years and the City will be prepared to address changing conditions with timely plan updates. Amendments to the plan will follow the requirements of State law and will be evaluated for consistency with the existing plan, including all elements.

To ensure residents are involved in plan amendments, the following process and protocol should be followed to allow public involvement and comment. The City of Blair Plan Commission shall undertake a review of the Plan and shall consider the necessary amendment(s) to the Plan resulting from property owner requests and changes to social and economic conditions. Upon the Plan Commission review, recommended changes to the Plan shall be forwarded to the Common Council. The City of Blair Plan Commission shall call a public hearing to afford the public time to review and comment on recommended Plan changes. A public hearing shall be advertised in accordance with the City's public meeting notice procedures and Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning legislation. Based on public input, Plan Commission recommendations, and other facts, the Common Council will then formally act on the recommended amendment(s).

Appendix A

Market Analysis

Analysis of the Market
for Residential, Commercial, and Industrial Development
in the City of Blair, Wisconsin



Analysis of the Market for Residential, Commercial, and Industrial Development
in the City of Blair, Wisconsin



PLACE DYNAMICS LLC

www.placedynamics.com

June 2017

Contents

Introduction / Situational Assessment.....	1
Residential Market	2
Recommendations	6
Commercial Market.....	7
Recommendations	9
Industrial Market.....	11
Recommendations	12

INTRODUCTION / SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Blair is one of many small communities in rural Wisconsin. Unlike many of the others, though, Blair is continuing to add population, as did Trempealeau County. This may be due to steady job growth in the county as well as an influx of Amish families. That growth came through both a natural increase (births less deaths) and net migration into the county. In Blair, the population increased from 1,273 to 1,366 residents between 2000 and 2010; a rate of 7.3 percent. The 2016 population was estimated to be 1,386 residents. Wisconsin's Department of Administration anticipates continued growth for both the city and county, with Blair's population reaching 1,460 in 2020, and 1,565 by 2030.

Blair is located at the junctions of US Highway 53 and State Highway 95 about 40 miles north of La Crosse, and 50 miles south of Eau Claire. About 5,000 cars per day pass through this intersection. West Broadway Street, where the city's primary business district is located, carries about 2,300 cars per day. This is a very low volume of traffic for any commercial district.

The nearest interstate highway junction is just under 15 miles from Hixton, where Highway 95 meets Interstate 94. This comparatively remote location limits access to employment, shopping, and services, and impacts the community's ability to attract new residents.



Geographically, Blair lies in the valley of the Trempealeau River. The surrounding land outside of the city is predominantly agricultural, with forests on the steeper bluffs. Several sand mining operations have started among these bluffs, as demand has grown for fracking sand. These mines have increased utilization of the rail line running through the community.

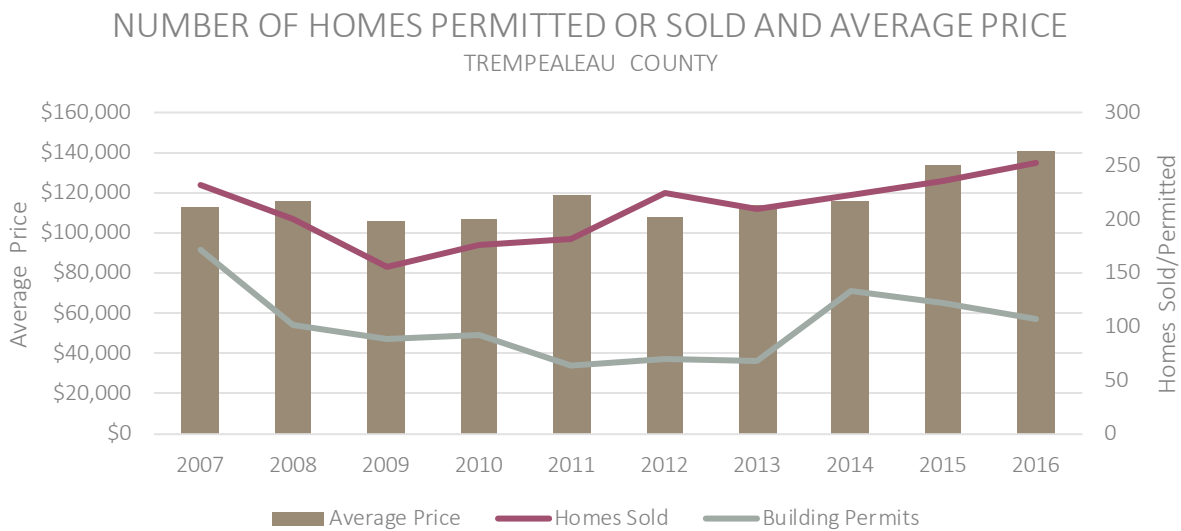
Aside from sand mining, there have been other growth areas in the local economy. Ashley Furniture's success has created thousands of new jobs in Arcadia and Whitehall. Health care and nursing care has also been a source of growth. Due to population growth, expanding local schools have created new jobs, along with growth in other government jobs.

Looking ahead, Blair has the opportunity to add new housing. It faces a more challenging task in attracting commercial and industrial activities. The most likely prospects for industrial development lie in local expansions and startups. Commercial development is more constrained by a small base of households and light traffic. With the very challenging retail environment we are facing, the City may consider alternative approaches to help meet some of its residents' desires.

RESIDENTIAL MARKET

Trempealeau County is used as a market area in determining potential demand within the City of Blair. The county represents a pool of buyers or renters who may consider Blair as a housing location.

The supply of housing in Trempealeau County has continued to expand at a steady pace, even through the recession years. An average of 102 new housing units (including rentals and owner-occupied housing) have been built in each year of the past decade, while population growth is estimated at 78 new households per year. The pace of population growth is expected to increase and remain higher through 2030.

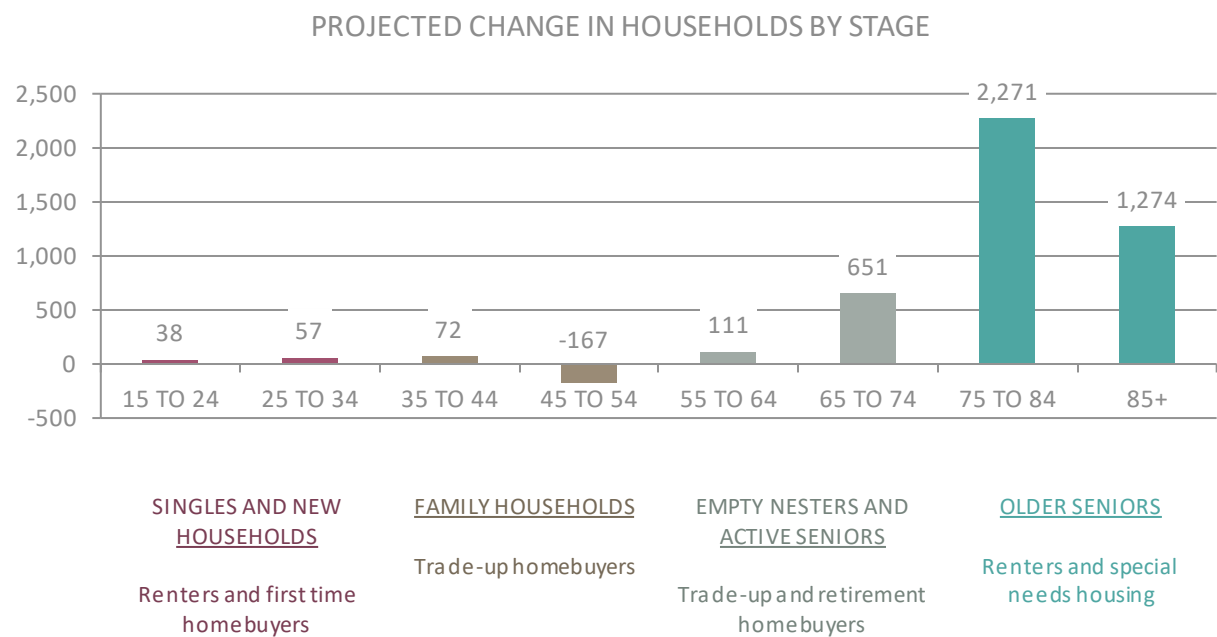
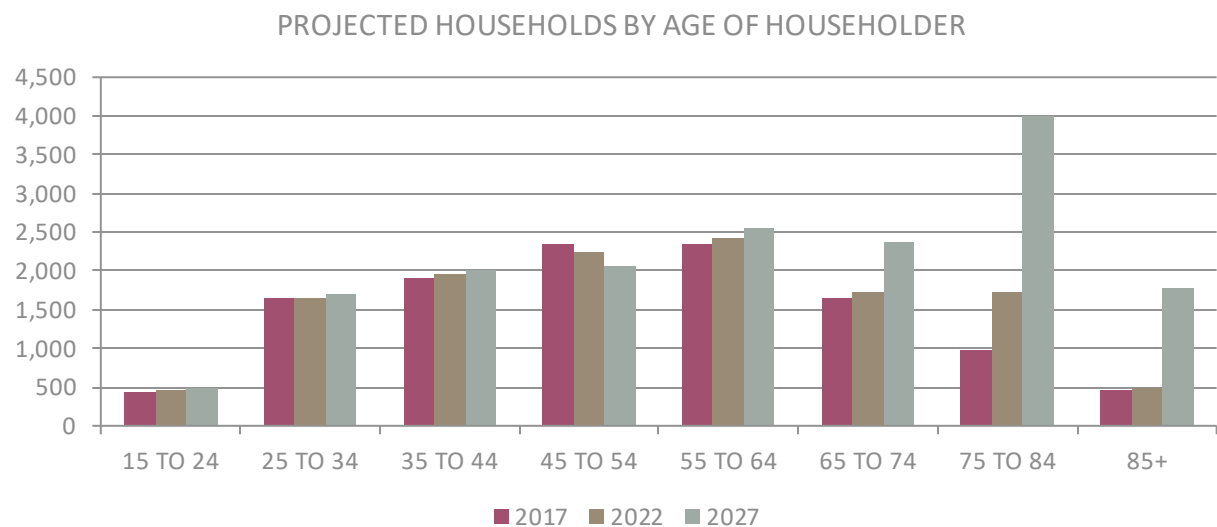


ESTIMATED INCREASE IN HOUSEHOLDS

	2010 to 2015	2015 to 2020	2020 to 2025	2025 to 2030
Trempealeau County	389	608	502	511
City of Blair	19	32	25	25
Percent of County	4.9%	5.3%	5.0%	4.9%

Blair has captured little of the new housing market within the county, adding only ten units over the last decade, including six detached homes and two two-unit structures. By far the largest increases have been in the unincorporated parts of the county, attesting to demand for rural living. This preference may change over the next couple decades, as most of the expected growth will be in older households. The State's forecasts show that 93.6 percent of new households will be headed by someone over the age of 65. Older households will tend to prefer locations closer to shopping and amenities.

The predictive model used for this analysis produced results similar to the State’s projections. The greatest growth will be among older households, created primarily as existing residents age within the community. Still, growth is expected within all cohorts except the 45 to 54 year old grouping.



Annual demand for both buyers and renters is expected to grow from current levels. This demand is not the same as projections for new households. Rather, it is the expected number of households in the market for a new home or apartment. It includes existing residents that may be moving between one home or apartment to another, from a home to an apartment, or from an apartment to a home.

ESTIMATED ANNUAL HOMEBUYERS BY AGE

AGE OF HOUSEHOLDER	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
15 TO 24	12	18	18	18	18	19	19	19	19	19	19
25 TO 34	99	147	148	149	151	152	153	155	156	158	159
35 TO 44	48	72	72	73	73	74	75	76	76	77	78
45 TO 54	39	57	58	58	59	59	60	60	61	62	62
55 TO 64	24	36	36	36	37	37	37	38	38	39	39
65 TO 74	14	21	22	22	22	22	22	23	23	23	23
75+	5	7	7	7	7	7	7	8	8	8	8
TOTAL	241	358	361	364	367	371	374	378	381	385	389

ESTIMATED ANNUAL HOMEBUYERS BY PREFERRED TYPE OF HOUSING

TYPE	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
DETACHED	205	304	307	310	312	315	318	321	324	327	331
ROWHOUSE	17	25	25	25	26	26	26	26	27	27	27
CONDO (5+)	10	14	14	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	16
CONDO (2-4)	10	14	14	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	16
OTHER	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

ESTIMATED ANNUAL HOMEBUYERS BY PURCHASE PRICE

PRICE RANGE	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
UNDER \$100,000	41	61	61	62	62	63	63	64	65	65	66
\$100,000 TO \$149,999	36	53	54	54	54	55	55	56	56	57	58
\$150,000 TO \$199,999	33	49	50	50	50	51	51	52	52	53	53
\$200,000 TO \$249,000	26	39	39	39	40	40	41	41	41	42	42
\$250,000 TO \$299,999	27	40	40	41	41	41	42	42	43	43	43
\$300,000 TO \$349,000	19	28	28	28	29	29	29	29	30	30	30
\$350,000 TO \$399,999	16	24	24	25	25	25	25	26	26	26	26
\$400,000 TO \$449,999	11	17	17	17	17	17	18	18	18	18	18
\$450,000 TO \$499,999	6	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	10
\$500,000 OR MORE	26	39	39	39	40	40	40	41	41	41	42

The model estimates demand for different kinds of housing based on preferences expressed through surveys conducted at the national level. Very few attached housing units are available anywhere in Trempealeau County, with the exception of a small number of two- or four-unit buildings.

About 40 percent of buyers are able to purchase homes priced in excess of \$250,000. With the current housing stock in the county, the majority of these homes are found outside of incorporated municipalities, usually located on large lots on isolated sites or rural subdivisions.

About half of all buyers will be households – singles and families – headed by someone under the age of 35. Buyers 65 and older will make up only about ten percent of the total. Available data does not allow estimation of unit type and price point by age grouping. At a broader market level, there are some generalities that apply. Younger households tend to look for more affordable housing. They will usually prefer detached units, and are more likely to consider proximity to schools, shopping, and amenities for families. Older households often prefer attached properties requiring little maintenance, and weigh access to shopping and health care in their housing choice.

Many of the same observations apply to the rental market. The following tables estimate demand for apartments or rental homes by age of householder and the monthly rent that can be afforded.

ESTIMATED ANNUAL RENTERS BY AGE

AGE OF HOUSEHOLDER	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
15 TO 24	146	148	149	150	152	153	154	156	157	159	160
25 TO 34	296	296	297	298	299	300	301	303	305	307	309
35 TO 44	208	209	210	210	211	211	212	212	213	213	214
45 TO 54	193	191	189	187	186	185	185	184	184	184	184
55 TO 64	162	166	167	167	168	168	167	167	166	165	164
65 TO 74	129	138	144	150	155	159	164	168	171	174	176
75 TO 84	97	110	117	124	132	139	147	154	162	169	176
85+	78	105	121	138	156	176	197	219	242	267	293
TOTAL	1,308	1,362	1,393	1,425	1,458	1,492	1,527	1,563	1,599	1,637	1,676

ESTIMATED ANNUAL RENTERS BY MONTHLY RENT

MONTHLY RENT	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
UNDER \$600	263	274	280	286	293	300	307	314	321	329	337
\$600 TO \$699	111	115	118	120	123	126	129	132	135	138	142
\$700 TO \$799	74	77	79	81	82	84	86	88	91	93	95
\$800 TO \$899	66	69	70	72	73	75	77	79	80	82	84
\$900 TO \$999	103	107	109	112	115	117	120	123	126	129	132
\$1,000 TO \$1,099	60	63	64	66	67	69	71	72	74	76	77
\$1,100 TO \$1,199	49	51	53	54	55	56	58	59	60	62	63
\$1,200 TO \$1,299	65	67	69	71	72	74	76	77	79	81	83
\$1,300 TO \$1,399	80	84	86	87	89	92	94	96	98	101	103
\$1,400 TO \$1,499	60	62	64	65	67	68	70	71	73	75	77
\$1,500 TO \$1,749	78	81	83	84	86	88	90	93	95	97	99
\$1,750 TO \$1,999	85	89	91	93	95	97	99	102	104	107	109
\$2,000 OR MORE	215	224	229	234	239	245	251	257	263	269	275

Over the next decade there will be demand for an additional 368 rental units in the county, not including any obsolete units that may be replaced. Additionally, some units may be less marketable to the households that will comprise the evolving rental market. Much of the growing demand will be created by households headed by someone 65 or older, with the greatest growth among households with at least one person over the age of 85. These may be apartment buildings offering some level of assisted living. Even when not providing additional services, most of the market will be motivated by age-friendly design more typical of newer construction.

By price point, most of the growth will occur among households able to afford up to \$1,000 per month in rent, and the largest group of renters remains those who can afford less than \$600 per month. Contrasting with this, the next-largest group is those who can afford to spend more than \$2,000 per month on rent. Renters in the upper brackets are most likely leasing homes, as none of the apartments in the region is catering to a more affluent market, which will want amenities like an attached garage, quality finishes in the unit, and recreational facilities.

Anecdotally, a search of online listing sites report several apartment complexes in the region (Arcadia, Whitehall, Black River Falls, etc.) none of which have current vacancies. This, along with the data and projections, suggest that there is unmet demand for rental housing in the market.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The area's growing population will create demand for new housing. That market will be split between more affluent households who will prefer homes on large rural lots, and lower- to middle-income households who will be more amenable to purchasing or renting within area communities. These often include families and seniors who desire to be closer to the amenities often found in the area's cities.

- Blair can reasonably set a goal to capture 30 to 40 new housing units over the next ten years, in a combination of detached and attached styles, with pricing below \$250,000. To do so, the City will need to collaborate with builders who are willing to construct speculative housing, rather than solely build-to-suit. There are several approaches the City may consider as an inducement, including acting as the subdivision developer to prepare and sell lots, partnering with a developer to finance infrastructure costs, or even subsidizing development costs.
- The tight rental market presents Blair with an opportunity to develop good quality new rental housing. Two products should be considered: mid-market units with better amenities than currently available in the area; and senior-oriented units, which may include assisted living. A range of 30 to 40 units of each type is achievable.

Most of the apartments found in the area are single buildings with a small number of units. They tend to be built economically and offer few amenities. A better-quality development, with improved aesthetics, attached garages, upgraded interior finishes, and community amenities will be able to compete for middle-market renters willing to pay more for a better product.

The senior market can also be served by the kind of units described above, where accessible ground floor apartments are provided in a mixed-age complex. This will be attractive as younger seniors prefer not to be segregated into age-restricted housing. Among an older set of renters, provided services become a more important consideration. Assisted living apartments will be needed, particularly for existing residents who are no longer able to maintain a home and may begin to experience problems with mobility.

COMMERCIAL MARKET

Blair's small population and light traffic present a challenge to attracting commercial businesses such as retailers, restaurants, and personal services. Without a sufficient local market, most of these businesses need to attract people from nearby communities. In most cases, comparable businesses already exist in those places. To be competitive, a business in Blair would need to be exceptional, offer unique products or services, or adopt strategies such as selling through the internet to reach a level of sales that would support the business.

Any community's businesses will draw from a broader region. In this case, Trempealeau County is used as a trade area for the City of Blair. In reality, the City probably does not draw much into the northern and southern portions of the county, and does draw from western Jackson County, but the resulting estimates will be similar.

Even while incomes in the area are below state average, the aggregate market potential is respectable and sufficient to support a healthy retail sector in the county. A majority of these businesses are located in Arcadia and Whitehall, along with Osseo. The businesses in these communities generally top out at what would be considered a neighborhood-level market, and include uses like small grocery stores, hardware stores, auto parts stores, and pharmacies.

ESTIMATED MARKET POTENTIAL BY RETAIL INDUSTRY

DESCRIPTION	NAICS	2017	2022	2027
New car dealers	441110	\$40,631,117	\$54,556,054	\$73,234,203
Used car dealers	441120	\$3,815,481	\$5,123,107	\$6,877,086
Recreational vehicle dealers	441210	\$915,400	\$1,229,122	\$1,649,932
Motorcycle, boat, other motor vehicle dealers	441220	\$2,951,889	\$3,963,548	\$5,320,533
Automotive parts and accessories stores	441310	\$2,761,954	\$3,708,519	\$4,978,191
Tire dealers	441320	\$1,833,408	\$2,461,747	\$3,304,565
Furniture stores	442110	\$3,248,678	\$4,362,052	\$5,855,471
Floor covering stores	442210	\$1,317,581	\$1,769,137	\$2,374,830
Other home furnishings stores	442290	\$1,975,250	\$2,652,200	\$3,560,224
Appliance, television, other electronics stores	443110	\$5,518,606	\$7,409,921	\$9,946,828
Computer and software stores	443120	\$1,296,113	\$1,740,312	\$2,336,136
Camera and photographic supplies stores	443130	\$243,935	\$327,535	\$439,673
Home centers	444110	\$9,332,739	\$12,531,219	\$16,821,485
Paint and wallpaper stores	444120	\$688,360	\$924,272	\$1,240,711
Hardware stores	444130	\$1,428,993	\$1,918,732	\$2,575,641
Other building material dealers	444190	\$8,459,501	\$11,358,708	\$15,247,546
Outdoor power equipment stores	444210	\$400,061	\$537,168	\$721,077
Nursery, garden center, farm supply stores	444220	\$2,278,667	\$3,059,603	\$4,107,108
Supermarkets and other grocery stores	445110	\$30,846,805	\$41,418,501	\$55,598,796
Meat markets	445210	\$345,711	\$464,191	\$623,115
Fish and seafood markets	445220	\$113,933	\$152,980	\$205,356

ESTIMATED MARKET POTENTIAL BY RETAIL INDUSTRY *(continued)*

DESCRIPTION	NAICS	2017	2022	2027
Fruit and vegetable markets	445230	\$213,472	\$286,632	\$384,765
Other specialty food stores	445290	\$345,723	\$464,208	\$623,137
Beer, wine, and liquor stores	445310	\$2,124,253	\$2,852,269	\$3,828,789
Pharmacies and drug stores	446110	\$16,470,925	\$22,115,775	\$29,687,469
Cosmetics, beauty supplies, perfume stores	446120	\$828,423	\$1,112,337	\$1,493,163
Optical goods stores	446130	\$623,170	\$836,740	\$1,123,212
Other health and personal care stores	446190	\$1,156,010	\$1,552,193	\$2,083,611
Gasoline stations with convenience stores	447110	\$19,884,624	\$26,699,404	\$35,840,378
Other gasoline stations	447190	\$6,993,124	\$9,389,780	\$12,604,523
Men's clothing stores	448110	\$461,724	\$619,964	\$832,219
Women's clothing stores	448120	\$2,292,489	\$3,078,162	\$4,132,021
Children's and infant's clothing stores	448130	\$529,982	\$711,615	\$955,248
Family clothing stores	448140	\$5,484,600	\$7,364,260	\$9,885,534
Clothing accessories stores	448150	\$332,234	\$446,095	\$598,824
Other clothing stores	448190	\$646,787	\$868,452	\$1,165,781
Shoe stores	448210	\$1,451,196	\$1,948,545	\$2,615,661
Jewelry stores	448310	\$1,658,116	\$2,226,379	\$2,988,617
Luggage and leather goods stores	448320	\$130,917	\$175,784	\$235,967
Sporting goods stores	451110	\$2,159,930	\$2,900,172	\$3,893,093
Hobby, toy, and game stores	451120	\$1,118,981	\$1,502,473	\$2,016,870
Sewing, needlework, and piece goods stores	451130	\$343,930	\$461,800	\$619,905
Musical instruments and supplies stores	451140	\$351,082	\$471,403	\$632,795
Book stores and news dealers	451210	\$1,299,741	\$1,745,183	\$2,342,674
Prerecorded tape, compact disc, record stores	451220	\$236,118	\$317,039	\$425,583
Department stores (exc. discount stores)	452111	\$4,766,408	\$6,399,933	\$8,591,054
Discount department stores	452112	\$8,851,626	\$11,885,220	\$15,954,318
Warehouse clubs and supercenters	452910	\$20,327,082	\$27,293,499	\$36,637,871
All other general merchandise stores	452990	\$2,905,133	\$3,900,769	\$5,236,261
Florists	453110	\$430,680	\$578,281	\$776,264
Office supplies and stationery stores	453210	\$1,499,678	\$2,013,642	\$2,703,044
Gift, novelty, and souvenir stores	453220	\$1,204,443	\$1,617,225	\$2,170,908
Used merchandise stores	453310	\$640,586	\$860,124	\$1,154,602
Pet and pet supplies stores	453910	\$741,461	\$995,572	\$1,336,422
Art dealers	453920	\$1,108,229	\$1,488,038	\$1,997,491
Manufactured (mobile) home dealers	453930	\$43,782	\$58,787	\$78,913
All other miscellaneous store retailers	453990	\$1,397,661	\$1,876,662	\$2,519,167
Non-store retailer	999900	\$17,136,374	\$23,009,285	\$30,886,886
TOTAL		\$248,594,874	\$333,792,333	\$448,071,547

ESTIMATED SPENDING AT EATING AND DRINKING PLACES

TOTAL SPENDING	2017	2022	2027
Full Service Restaurants	\$17,124,089	\$21,913,965	\$27,976,539
Limited Service Restaurants	\$14,773,724	\$18,906,165	\$24,136,622
Other venues	\$1,678,832	\$2,148,428	\$2,742,798

Businesses in Blair include a Kwik Trip gas and convenience store and the Rainbow Restaurant along Highway, and several businesses in the downtown including Dollar General, Blair Pharmacy, Blair Building Center, two gift shops, a resale shop, and a half dozen taverns or restaurants. There are a small number of personal or professional services, the US Post Office, and Union Bank. The Grocery Store, an approximately 8,000 square foot supermarket, recently closed. Napa Auto Parts and a BP gas and convenience store are located on Highway 95 north of Broadway Street.

These are the kinds of neighborhood-serving businesses that would be expected in a community with a population and location similar to Blair. The city will not attract larger, chain, or specialty retailers because of its size and competition. Its best future prospects are businesses similar to those already there, especially personal services and eating and drinking places. Retail is more challenging and is likely to emerge from the personal interests of someone in the area. For example, a person may choose to start a business around a hobby or pastime, and will probably rely on internet sales or other means of selling to an outside market of other enthusiasts.

The City should also be concerned that some existing businesses may not continue once the current owner steps down. Like the grocery store, it is not uncommon for these "legacy" businesses to exist because of low costs, with a building, fixtures, and other assets already paid off, enabling it to operate on sales that are often below average. Buying a business in this situation is not an attractive investment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While Blair may not have good prospects for attracting new retailers, it does have alternate approaches that it may pursue. One of these would be to work with existing businesses to expand into new product lines. The other is to explore alternative ownership or operational formats. Lastly, it can develop economic development programs to assist its businesses in competing more effectively to capture a larger market share.

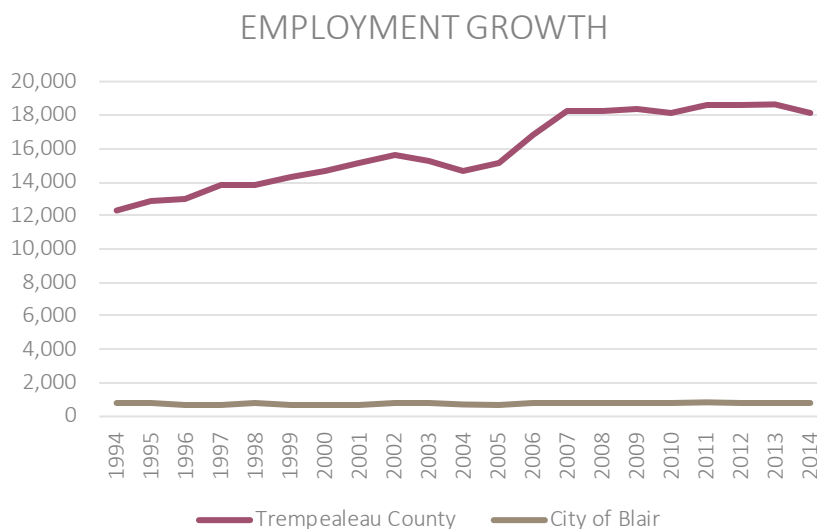
- Work with existing retailers to examine new product lines that can be carried, which will help to meet local demand for basic shopping goods. As an example, either of the two convenience stores might consider expanding to carry a larger assortment of groceries or the pharmacy might add a larger "front end" of health care and household goods.
- Look for ways to activate the vacant space in the downtown. The large number of vacant buildings gives the impression of a dying community, which makes it more difficult to fill that vacant space. Some of the buildings, especially off Broadway Street, may be converted to other uses. On Broadway, vacant space may be made available on a temporary basis to individuals or organizations that will put in uses that generate good traffic. Similar communities have developed programs for "pop-up" businesses, such as restaurants and retail stores (or kiosks) that occupy space for a short time.

- Examine alternative operational formats. Several communities have formed co-ops to meet local needs for which there is little private interest. These can include any type of business, with numerous examples of different kinds of retail and restaurants. Other places are experimenting with self-serve businesses. The Vault is an example of such a business in Valley City, North Dakota. It uses an honor system to let customers pay for drinks and pastries. The community benefits from having a popular gathering place and active downtown building, which would not be profitable if it required full-time staffing.

INDUSTRIAL MARKET

Total employment in Blair has remained essentially flat for the last two decades, while growing by close to 48 percent in the county. Grand View Care Center and Associated Milk Producers, Inc. (AMPI) are the city's largest private employers. AMPI's employment decreased over this period.

Arcadia has captured the lion's share of employment growth, primarily through expansions of Ashley Furniture Industries and GNP (Gold n Plump Poultry). These two companies account for 56.9 percent of all job growth in the county between 1994 and 2014. Other manufacturers that added a sizable number of jobs were TRW Automotive, Sourcecut Industries, and Global Finishing Solutions. The health care sector also saw substantial expansion through health care and nursing facilities.



Nearly all of the establishments in the county are owned locally or by entities based in Wisconsin. Aside from retail, banking, and federal offices, the majority of outside investment is originating in Minnesota.

Data comparing employment in 1994 and 2014 suggest that the largest number of new jobs in the county have been added in manufacturing, health care and social services, and agriculture and forestry. The data for manufacturing needs a caveat, however, as it has already been noted that 3,340 jobs were added by two manufacturing companies, while the sector only grew by 1,570 jobs overall. This means that many establishments in the sector closed or shed jobs, while employment has become more concentrated in a small number of large companies.

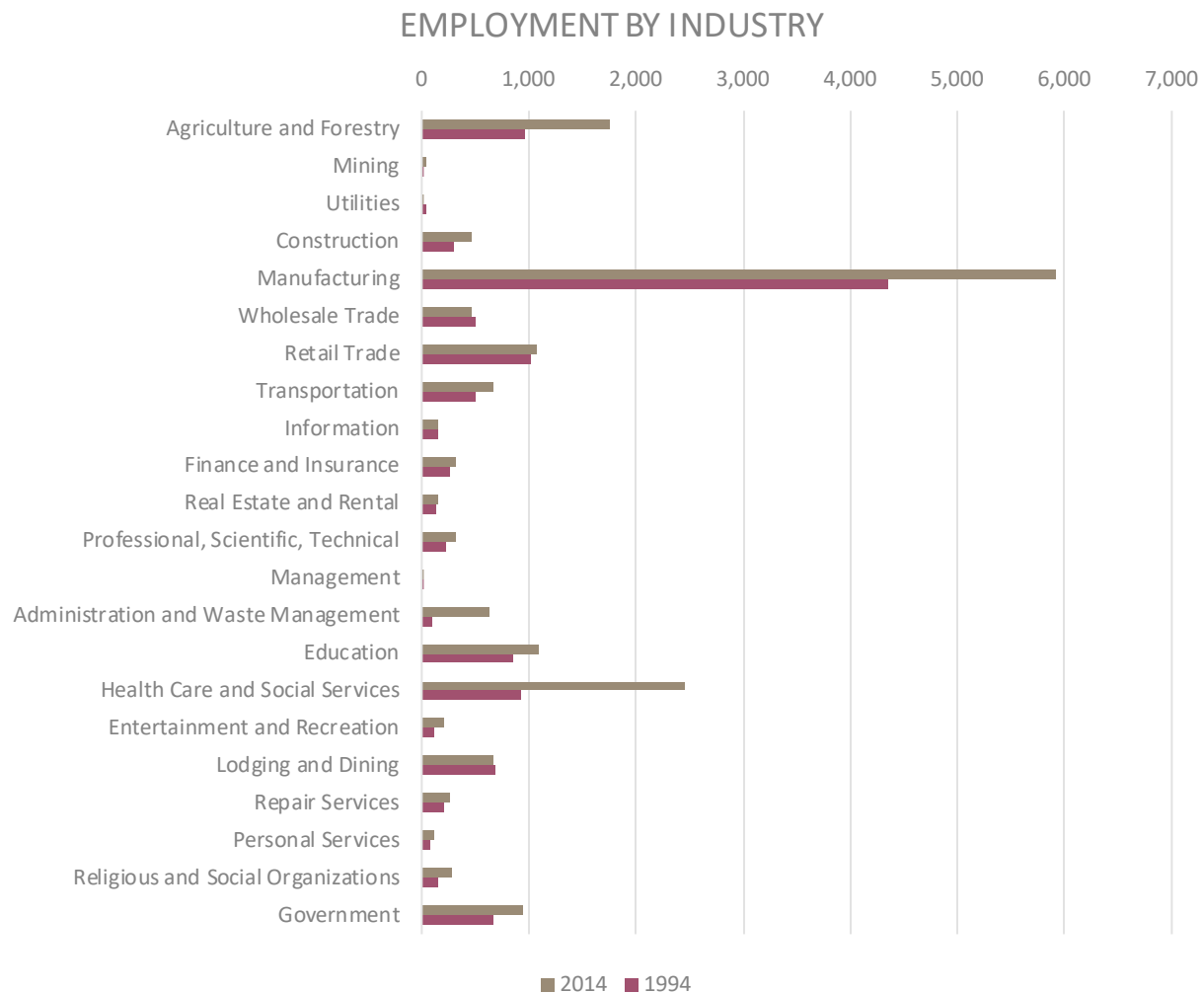
Five sectors present the best opportunity for new business development within Blair, based on growth in the number of establishments in the county. These are:

- Construction
- Transportation
- Professional, scientific, and technical services
- Administrative and support and waste management and remediation
- Health care and social services

Aside from health care and social services, these tend to be very small businesses, with an average of two to three employees. They will have minimal need to occupy commercial space, and many will be operated from their homes.

Within the manufacturing sector, the best prospect for new business development is in food processing. Regionally, there is a trend toward crop diversification and food entrepreneurship. The Food Enterprise

Center in Viroqua (Vernon County) has attracted several such businesses. While not solely focused on food processing, food processing tenants make up half of the total at the Coulee Region Business Incubator (La Crosse). Locally, most food manufacturing in the county is in cheese, animal foods, and bakeries. Some of the existing vacant buildings in Blair may have the potential to accommodate these uses. Among the small businesses being started in the region, there is usually limited access to capital to build new or afford extensive building renovation. While low in cost, existing buildings appear to require extensive renovation to make them usable, particularly for businesses in industries like food processing, which must meet strict regulatory requirements.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Opportunities for industrial development in Blair are most often going to be generated from within the region. The City's small size and location off of the interstate will make it difficult to attract businesses from outside of the area. Local businesses will tend to be small in size, and will be easier for the City to accommodate on small lots (an acre or less) or in existing buildings. The City does have available lots.

Available buildings, such as several older commercial buildings in the downtown, may require a considerable amount of renovation to make them suitable for new occupants.

- Blair needs to be more aggressive in marketing its industrial development sites and buildings. On-site, this can include signage. Online, the sites and buildings need to be listed on commercial real estate sites like LoopNet and CoStar. Trempealeau County is part of the 7 Rivers Alliance, promoting economic development in the region. City officials should meet with the organization's staff to identify potential development and marketing opportunities.



Example of an existing downtown building that could be used for small manufacturing or related purposes.

- Rehabilitating existing buildings for new industrial and related tenants is an expensive proposition. The City should examine ways to leverage state funds and local resources, such as tax incremental financing, to provide grants and/or loans for building renovation.
- As part of an aggressive strategy to help fill its vacant commercial/industrial buildings, the City of Blair can pursue development of a low-cost, move-in ready, multi-tenant industrial space tailored to startup and small businesses. A facility of this type can help to move these businesses out of the home, allowing them to grow and eventually transition to independent space. The first step in considering this strategy would be to prepare a feasibility study and business plan. The feasibility study should address the market and physical space requirements, examining options for rehabilitating existing buildings for the purpose. The business plan should lay out an operational framework and examine the financial needs of the facility.

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation offers competitive grants to help fund the costs of planning and executing economic development projects such as this one, under the Capacity Building and Community Development Investment programs.

Appendix B

Financial Management Plan



City of Blair, Wisconsin Financial Management Plan

Executive Summary
March 19, 2018

Introduction

The City of Blair, Wisconsin ("City") has requested Ehlers to complete a Financial Management Plan ("FMP") to review the affordability of proposed improvements as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan. The FMP outlines financial operations for the General Fund and Capital Projects Fund for the next ten years by integrating the capital improvement plans provided by the City and Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc. ("SEH"), future anticipated operating needs, and tax base changes to determine future financial outcomes.

A revenue requirement analysis was the first analytical step in the development of the financial study. This FMP balances the forecasted revenues against competing demands for services, including upcoming street projects, park improvements, vehicle replacements and others. A long-range cash flow analysis was prepared through the year 2028 to examine projected cash flows in future years and estimate the tax levy and other financial impacts anticipated to meet all financial obligations of the Funds while maintaining and building adequate cash reserves.

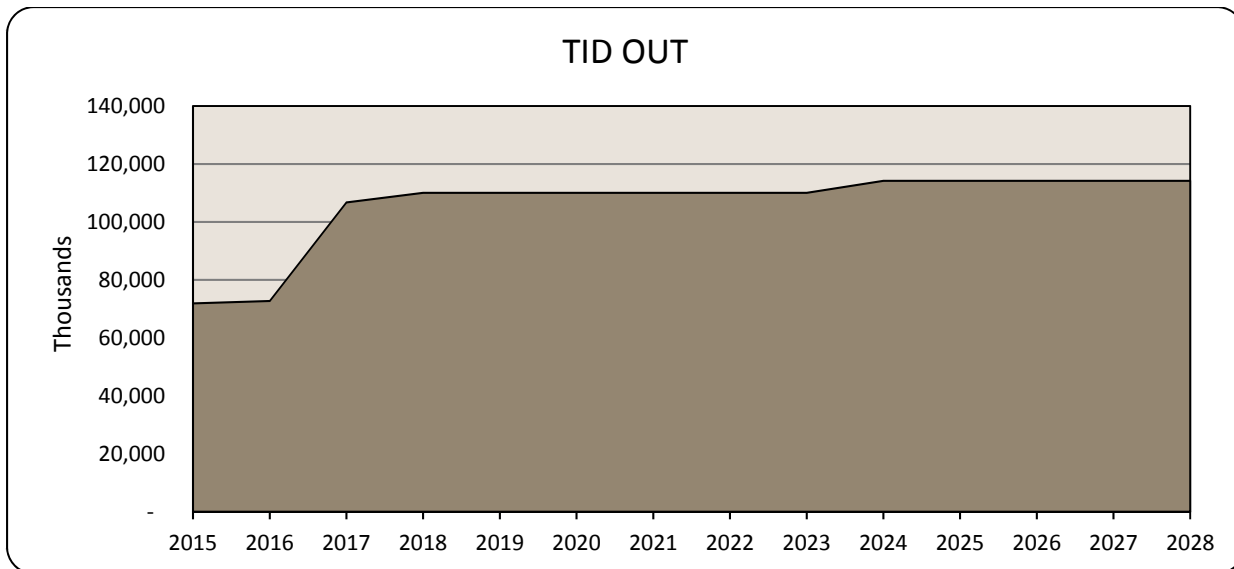
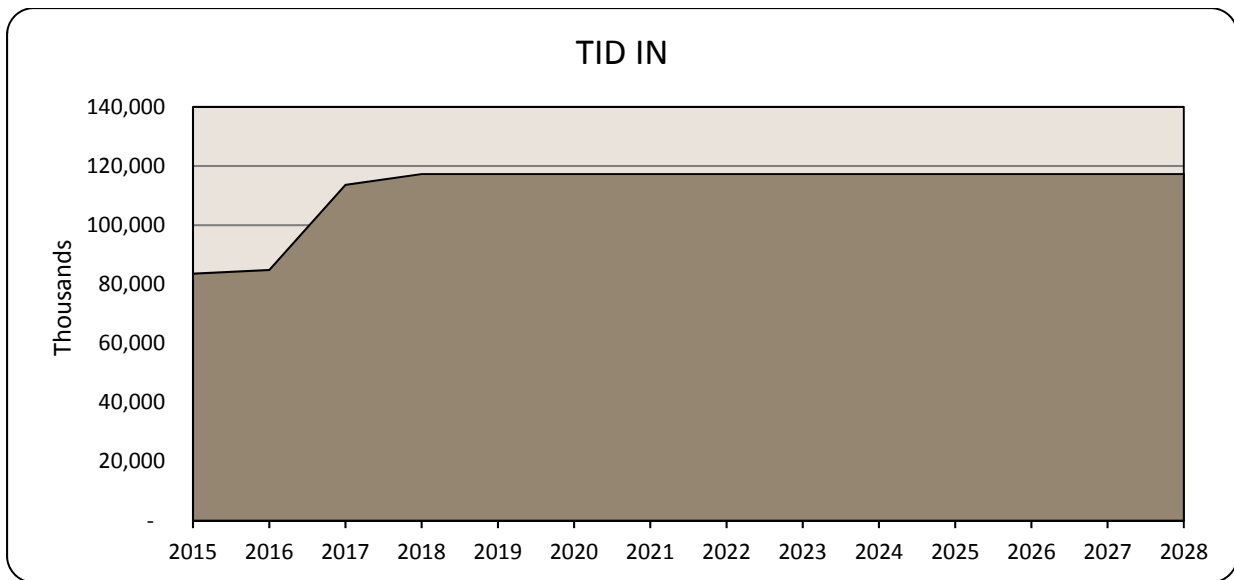
This type of cash needs approach is a commonly used methodology by municipalities to set their revenue requirements and is comprised of operating and maintenance expenses, transfer payments, debt service and capital projects. The primary financial inputs in the development of the revenue requirement analysis were the City's audited financial statements, budget documents, and capital improvement plan. A multi-year time frame is recommended to better anticipate future financial requirements and allow the City to begin planning or adjusting for changes sooner, thereby successfully managing short and long-term rate and tax impacts.

Market Value Projections

The City recently had significant increases in Equalized Value due to the annexation(s) of property located within the Town of Preston, Wisconsin. The FMP makes relatively conservative assumptions about future development and inflationary growth. In the process of completing the plan, several key assumptions regarding tax base have been made:

- Assumed no growth in Equalized TID IN Value
- Assumed TID 4 is closed in 2023 with current value increment (\$4.1M) returning to tax rolls for payable 2024

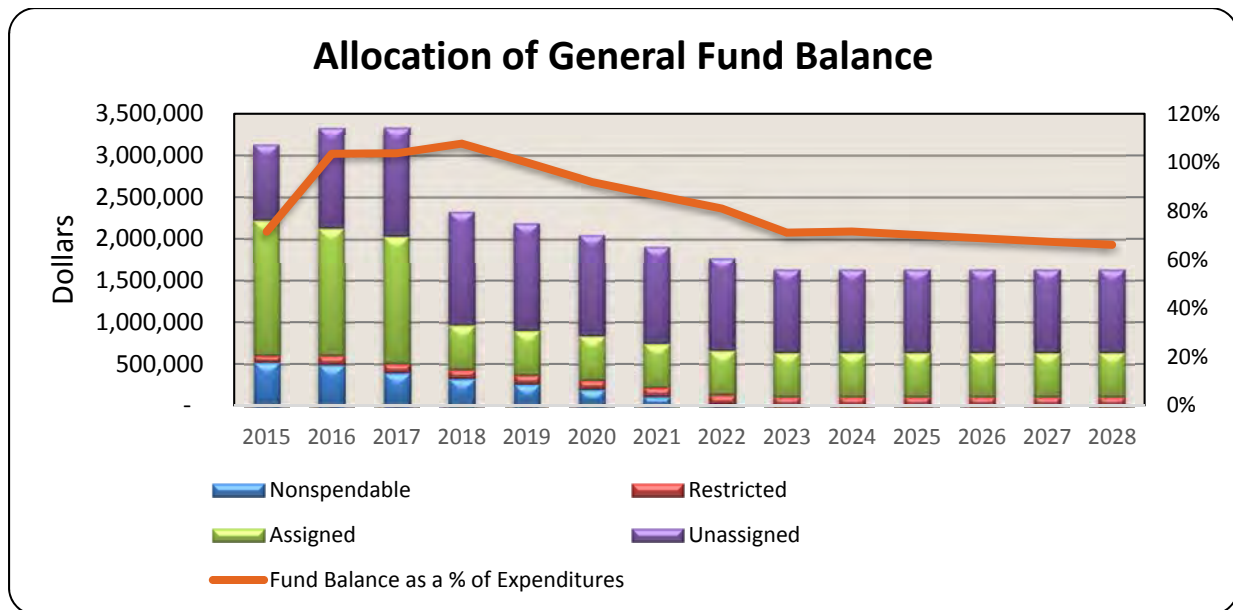
The following charts show the projected future TID IN and TID OUT values:



General Fund Balance

Fund balance is intended to serve as a measure of the financial resources available in a governmental fund. It is essential that governments maintain adequate levels of fund balance to mitigate current and future risks (e.g., revenue shortfalls and unanticipated expenditures) and to ensure stable mill rates. The City has done an excellent job of creating and maintaining a strong balance in the General Fund.

Fund balance levels in the General Fund are a crucial consideration in long-term financial planning. The chart below shows the breakdown of the General Fund balance compared to a percent of total General Fund expenditures.



The following are key assumptions and considerations for the City going forward related to its General Fund balance:

- Assumed no increase to Levy Limit for net new construction. The impact of closing TID 4 in 2023 is reflected as an increase to the levy limit for taxes payable in 2024.
- Assumed non-levy revenue growth increases 1.00% annually or held flat
- Assumed \$100,000 minimum royalty payment each year under the Annexation Agreement with Sand Products Wisconsin, LLC for years 2018-2023 and gradually increasing \$25,000 each year thereafter in connection with additional royalty payments received under the Annexation Agreement with Hi-Crush Blair LLC
- Assumed General Fund expenses grow 2.00% annually
- Payment in lieu of taxes from utilities is held flat in relation to the 2018 Budget
- The City does not currently have a formal policy in place for guidance on maintenance of fund balance during forecast period, so we have used best practices and standardized benchmarks.
- The unassigned balance is that portion of the balance not reserved for any particular purpose. As of the end of 2016, the City's unassigned balance had reached 104% of expenditures. The City may want to consider using a portion of unassigned fund balance in order to assist funding future capital projects. It is advisable for the City to retain an unassigned General Fund balance of at least 60% of expenditures. **However, the City should carefully consider any use of the balance because it is very difficult to rebuild it.**
- The non-spendable balance is that portion which is not currently available but is expected to eventually become available. The majority of the City's non-spendable balance is

comprised of TID advances and prepaid expenses. The TID Districts have strong cash flows and are expected to fully repay the advances. Repayment of these advances is reflected in the forecast, which is reflected in a reduction of the non-spendable portion and corresponding increase in the unassigned general fund balance.

Capital Projects Fund

Buildings, infrastructure, technology and major equipment are the physical foundation for providing services to constituents. The procurement, construction, and maintenance of capital assets are an essential activity of local governments and therefore require careful planning. Capital facilities and infrastructure are important legacies that serve current and future generations. It is extremely difficult for governments to address the current and long-term needs of their constituents without a sound multi-year capital plan that clearly identifies capital and major equipment needs, maintenance requirements, funding options, and operating budget impacts.

The City and SEH have prepared a capital improvement plan that provides for the construction or reconstruction of streets, equipment replacement, renovation and/or expansion of City buildings and utility improvements. Non-utility capital projects are typically financed with General Obligation (G.O.) debt, which is backed by the full faith and credit of the City and is paid via a property tax levy or from offsetting revenue sources such as a TID. A summary of the non-utility capital improvement plan is shown below:

BREAKDOWN OF CAPITAL OUTLAY PROJECT DESCRIPTION	Budget 2018	Projected									
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Pool	2,300,000										
Dredge Lake Henry				2,000,000							
East/West Corridor						1,500,000					
Fire Station (Blair portion only 50%)		500,000									
Community Center Remodel (Blair portion only 50%)			250,000								
Acquisition/Demo/Pave T. Preston Town Hall (Blair portion only 50%)			75,000								
Stormwater Improvements				150,000							
Park Improvements			55,000	55,000	55,000	55,000	55,000	55,000	55,000	55,000	55,000
Trempealeau River Corridor Rehab			25,000								
City Salt/Sand Shed				150,000							
Economic Development Activities			58,500	58,500	58,500	58,500	58,500	58,500			
Ambulance		20,000				20,000				20,000	
Squad Car			25,000			25,000			25,000		
Loader		120,000			120,000			120,000			120,000
Future Placeholder (Mower, Sweeper, Snow Blower, etc.)		-	20,000	-	20,000	-	20,000	-	20,000	-	20,000
Total Capital Outlay	2,300,000	640,000	508,500	2,413,500	253,500	1,658,500	133,500	233,500	100,000	75,000	195,000
CAPITAL OUTLAY WITH INFLATION	2,300,000	659,200	539,468	2,637,297	285,316	1,922,656	159,406	287,176	126,677	97,858	262,064

The City's current non-utility capital improvement plan is feasible based on the City's current financial status with careful planning. This FMP assumes and recommends the following basic approach to implementation:

- **Projects should be financed over 15-20 years** – The impact of the project is significantly reduced by extending payments to 15-20 years, and doing so is financially sound for long-lived capital assets like streets and buildings.
- **Dedicated royalty payments** – Starting January 2020, the City shall receive a \$300,000 royalty payment each year under the Annexation Agreement with Hi-Crush Blair LLC. The City should consider dedicating the entire \$300,000 to the Capital Projects Fund for years 2020-2023 and gradually decreasing \$25,000 each year thereafter; shifting additional royalty receipts to the General Fund.
- **Continue to levy for capital projects** – The City currently allocates a portion of the levy directly to the Capital Projects Fund. This amount varies from year to year and will continue

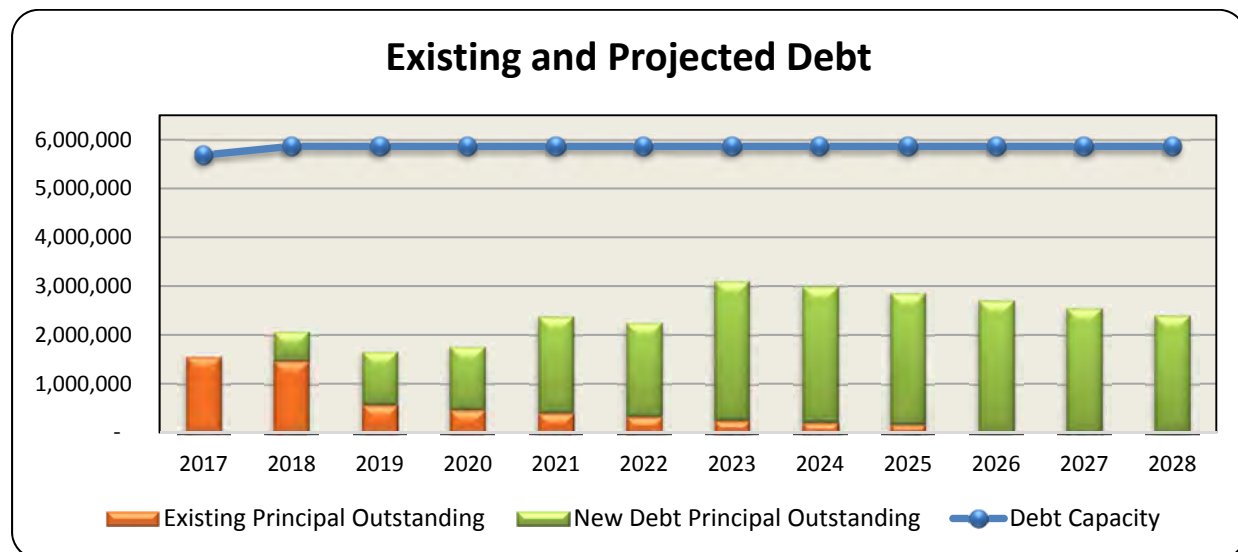
to be a necessary component of financing capital projects going forward. Cash outlays are especially prudent for shorter-lived capital assets that require regular replacement.

- **Carefully plan project timing** – Some projects can be carefully timed to mitigate some of the tax impact of large projects that require new debt burdens. The forecasting model has structured project implementation to coincide with the retirement of existing debt and TID closures.

Debt Obligations

The ability to incur and support debt is a vital part of a financial management plan. Debt provides the capacity to meet many important equipment, infrastructure and development needs. Debt also allows the City to spread the cost of infrastructure across current and future users. This FMP includes the periodic issuance of debt to fund major capital projects.

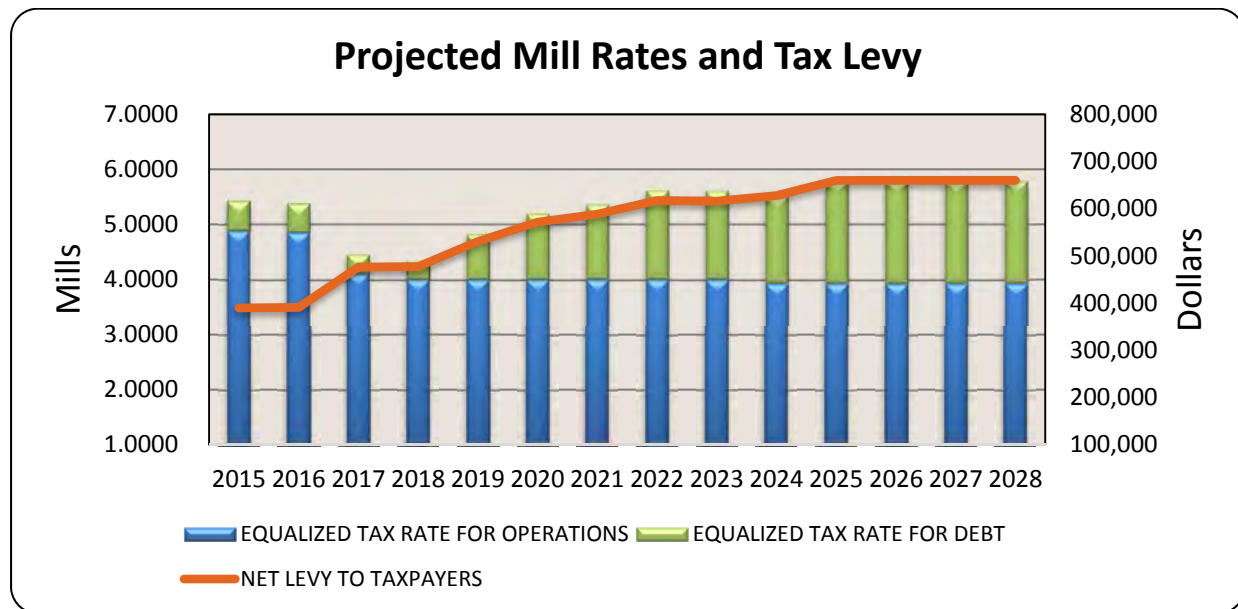
Debt capacity is the first factor to consider prior to the issuance of new debt. By state statute, the City's G.O. debt outstanding is capped at 5% of total Equalized Valuation. The limit for the City is currently \$5,865,030, of which approximately \$4.31 million (73%) is remaining. The chart below shows the City's existing and projected debt as it relates to debt capacity. This projection includes all non-utility projects. The City is well within statutory capacity limits for both existing and potential new debt. The City should revisit these projections if it chooses to finance utility projects with G.O. debt. Revenue debt, which is backed by the rates and charges of the respective utility and is a common source of utility financing, does not count against G.O. borrowing capacity.



Finally, this financial study models when debt may be issued to finance capital expenditures, but it is not a debt plan. The City should review whether it has sufficient cash to pay for capital improvements prior to issuing debt. At its option, the City may accumulate less cash in its funds in order to reduce the amount of new debt issued for improvements. As with all other bonding decisions, the City's decision to issue debt for any given improvement will be based on many factors, including the City's cash balances, rating (if any), and other financing needs.

Impact on Mill Rates

This section of the plan includes the full amount of proposed capital projects and the impact they have on the tax levy. The City may continue to be faced with serious challenges from outside sources, including but not limited to economic adjustments, natural disasters, and policy changes by the state and federal governments. As such, the City should focus on implementation of systems that are adaptable and regenerative. Annual updates are recommended to reflect changing resources and community priorities. The total projected levy as compared to the mill rate is shown in the following graph:



The following are key points related to the overall tax rate:

- The drop in mill rate between 2016 and 2018 is related to the annexation of property.
- The primary driver of any increase in tax rates will be financing capital projects with debt. The plan projects an increase of over \$174,000 in the debt levy during the next ten years. To the extent that operational expenses remain flat, projects are delayed or additional General Fund cash is used to pay for projects, the above mill rate projection would be moderated.
- Our conservative estimates do not include net new growth or inflationary growth to the tax base. Thus, any actual growth that does occur in the future would alleviate projected mill rates.
- Timing of projects is critical to the impact on mill rates. Some projects can be carefully timed to coincide with the retirement of existing debt and TID closures in order to moderate tax impacts. The forecast assumes timing projects and debt issuance with the anticipated closure of TID 4 and the retirement of debt paid entirely from taxes.
- Future debt issuance has been structured to mitigate tax impact. Actual debt structures will be reviewed at the time of debt issuance.

Summary

The City of Blair has managed its financial operations well. The need to review and integrate future capital improvements and operating needs of the City will introduce new financial pressures along with the need to maintain adequate cash balances.

The Financial Management Plan indicates that steady debt levy and tax rate increases will be necessary in order to finance the City's capital projects as identified in this plan.



Building a Better World for All of Us[®]

Sustainable buildings, sound infrastructure, safe transportation systems, clean water, renewable energy and a balanced environment. Building a Better World for All of Us communicates a companywide commitment to act in the best interests of our clients and the world around us.

We're confident in our ability to balance these requirements.

