



MEDFORD COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Abstract

This plan includes goals, recommendations, and objectives to help guide the future of the community. The goals and recommendations in the plan reflect the consensus of the residents on what they envision for the future of Medford.



CEDA
Community and Economic
Development Associates

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Introduction

Forward

"The site is almost an ideal one as to beauty and sanitary considerations, for aside from the pleasing landscape presented by the winding river between the bluffs on the east side, the drainage is good, the hills on the east and west provide shelter from storms, and the ground occupied by the village is level enough to make handsome streets and driveways. At one time in its history, Medford was the most important town in the county, and still does its full share of business, but many of its citizens are men who have retired from the business world or from the active management of large farms to take life easy in this cozy retreat, which gives all the town rather a quiet, dignified appearance. Medford Village enjoys all the advantages in a commercial and social way that any prosperous, well regulated village of its size could desire, including express, telegraph, telephone, and good train service in the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad, not to enumerate specially the excellent store and other business places." Source: Owatonna City and Steele County Directory of 1899.

The world has changed significantly since 1899, but one thing that hasn't changed is small town character and livability in the City of Medford. In the minds of the community's 1,400 residents, Medford is still the most important town in Steele County and beyond. The pride that the residents feel for their hometown and their school is remarkable. Because of this positive community attitude and its physical beauty and location the community has experienced significant growth recently. The following Comprehensive Plan is intended to act as a base guide for future growth and development.

The State of Minnesota through Statute 462.351 – 462.364 enables the City of Medford to create a comprehensive plan. This plan includes goals, recommendations, and objectives to help guide the future of the community. The goals and recommendations in the plan reflect the consensus of the residents on what they envision for the future of Medford.

What is Comprehensive Planning

Comprehensive planning is as much a process to engage the public in local decisions as it is to create a document to guide development. The planning process is, at its core, a way to gather information from people with different perspectives on the type of community they would like theirs to be. Planning can also create stable ground rules and a fair set of policies by which development and quality of life can flourish. In the end, it is about making communities better.

Land use planning involves the consideration and balancing of many different factors and issues to guide the best decisions for the community both for the short and long term. The goals, objectives and implementation measures of Medford's Comprehensive Plan are intended to guide City Council, boards and commissions in making these decisions. The Plan is intended for use by all those who participate in the City's land use planning process, including local officials, persons with development interests, state, regional and federal agencies, community groups, and citizens representing all interests.

Change is an inherent part of any community and it is necessary for the Plan to be responsive to changing conditions. Thus, it needs to be updated periodically. It is anticipated that the Plan will be periodically updated to comply with state requirements, address changed circumstances and respond to changing community values and needs.

It is essential to recognize that the Plan is "comprehensive." There are no parts that can be considered independently. Plan goals and objectives are intended to be supportive of one another. However, when using the Plan to make decisions, if conflicts arise between goals and objectives, the City has an obligation to make findings indicating why the goal or policy being supported takes precedence over other goals or objectives found to be in conflict. This involves a decision-making process on the part of the City that balances and weighs the applicability and merits of the Plan's many goals and objectives against one another.

Goals, objectives and recommended action measures identify the intent of the City to accomplish certain results. The different types of Plan statements vary in specificity. Usually, goals are the most general, and objectives and recommended action measures are the most specific. The City's obligations under these statements vary according to the type of statement.

The goals and objectives are intended to relate to one another. The goals are followed by supportive objectives. The goals and objectives in turn are supported by recommended action measures. However, each Plan statement can stand alone, either as a goal or objective which are obligations the City wishes to assume, or as a

recommended action measure which is a recommendation to achieve a desired end, but does not signify an obligation.

Why is Comprehensive Planning important to Medford

In the future, Medford must take full advantage of its dynamic growth opportunities while preserving its distinctive quality as a small town. This document is designed to communicate the vision of the community regarding its future. It is a future that is based on taking actions that will position the city to take full advantage of its growth prospects.

This plan builds upon the two previous planning efforts, the most recent of which was completed in 2007. The goal of all of these efforts is to compile recommendations for the development of the physical form of Medford and also provide recommendations for the social and economic development of the City.

The following philosophies realized through the community survey and community input meetings were used as a basis for this planning effort:

- Encourage input and participation from the residents
- Maintain community values and character
- Grow and sustain a diversity in housing options
- Provide opportunity for business growth and increased jobs
- The Medford School District is a big asset for the community
- Maintain and utilize the natural beauty of the area

The City's planning process does not end with the adoption of this document. Planning is an on-going process used to promote orderly growth and development through objectives established in this plan. The plan will continue to evolve after it is officially adopted. Fine-tuning the plan through later amendments will ensure that this document remains a reflection of the values of the City's residents.

The community should view this Plan as an advisory document, not only for planning and zoning, but also to all other boards, commissions, City Council and citizens. The purpose of the Plan is to become an over-arching guide for decision making relating to the physical, social, and economic change for the community over the next decade. The value of this plan can only be realized through the diligent efforts of City officials and residents.

Demographics

General Trends

It is important for planning purposes to have an understanding of population and demographic trends, as this allows a community to ascertain the types of services and amount of infrastructure needed. For example, if it is shown that there is an incoming class of kindergarteners that is going to be larger than the capacity allowed by the current teaching staff, it would seem to indicate that even though an adequate facility is available, more staff could soon be necessary.

Medford has the highest growth rate in Steele County. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 American Community Survey, the current population estimate is 1,392, which has increased 12.9% from 2010. In this same time period, Steele County's population decreased by 2.54%. Blooming Prairie and Ellendale both incurred population reductions by 1.3% and .86% respectively. Medford has had an average growth rate of 16.32% each decade from 1960 to 2012. The population growth between 1960 and 2012 grew from 567 to 1,392.

Medford lies along the I-35 corridor which provides a direct connection into Minneapolis and St. Paul. On I-35, it lies between Owatonna and Faribault. This has allowed Medford to attract families from Owatonna, Faribault, and the Twin Cities as there are lower costs of living, great schools, and other amenities such as the outlet mall.

Medford seems well positioned for continued growth; Figure 1 below shows the rate of growth for peer communities in Steele County. The growth trend for the peer communities has been sporadic over the past few decades. However, growth in Medford has been strong and steady. The population growth has the opportunity to remain steady.

Fig. 1

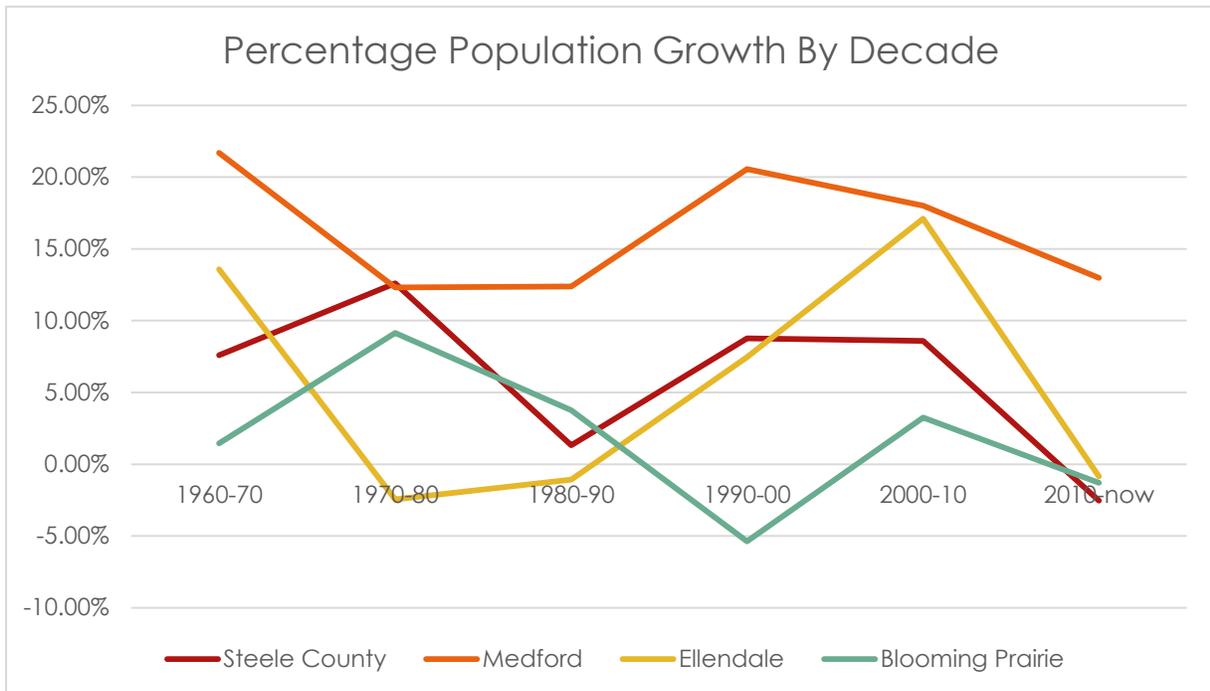
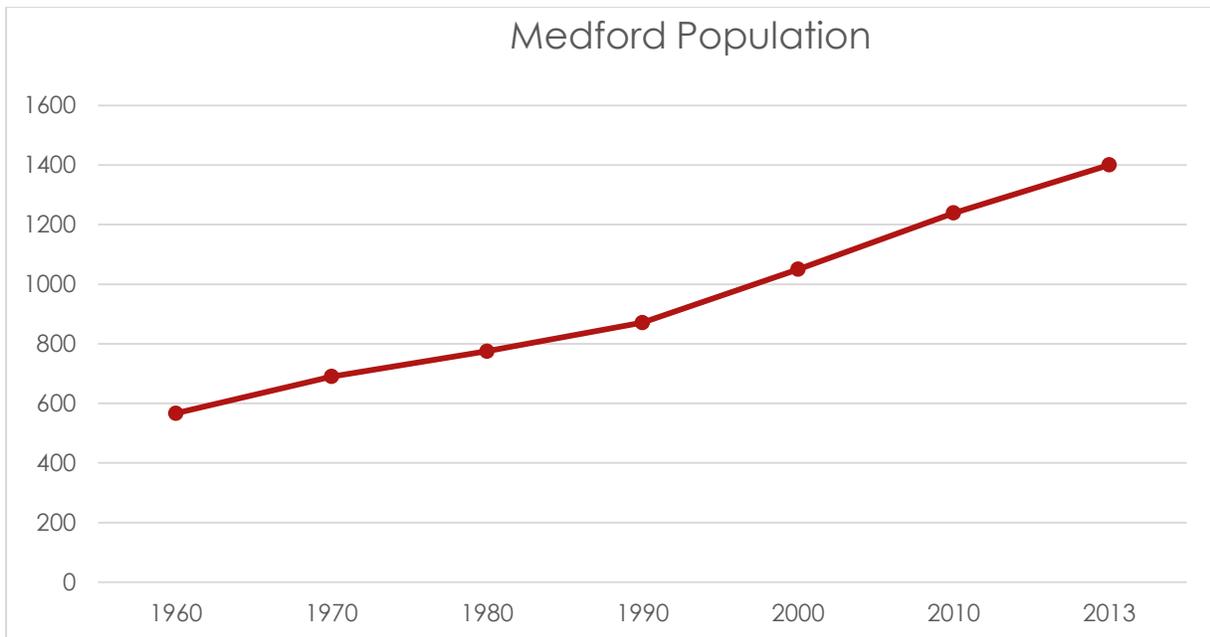


Fig. 2



Data Sources: Population Estimate from 2013. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Office, Washington, D.C

Age Groups

The distribution of age in a community can have a multitude of effects on a community. The example that was previously discussed was an increased population of 0-6 year olds, this may lead to a community needing increased facilities and personnel for the education system. Over the past ten years, more families have chosen to make Medford their home. This is evident in the increase in the younger working population of 30-40 year olds. This is a good indication that Medford can support local businesses with a workforce. However, a high percentage of those individuals are commuters as referenced in Fig. 9, meaning the businesses will be unable to capitalize on the workforce. With that said, those families have been having children, as indicated by the increased population of 0-6 year olds between the years of 2000 and 2010 reflected in fig.4 and fig. 5. This may require an increase in amenities and services, such as education, parks, transportation services, and recreational activities.

Fig.3

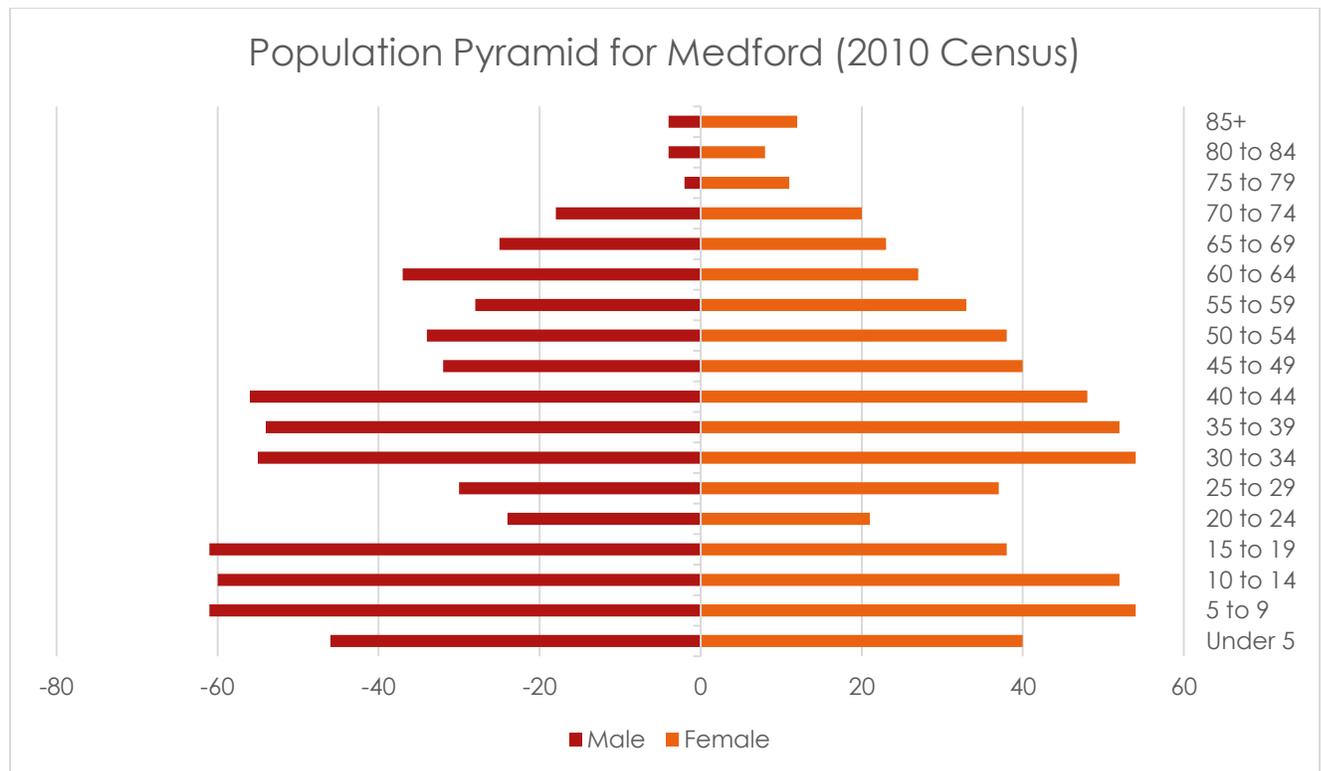


Fig.4

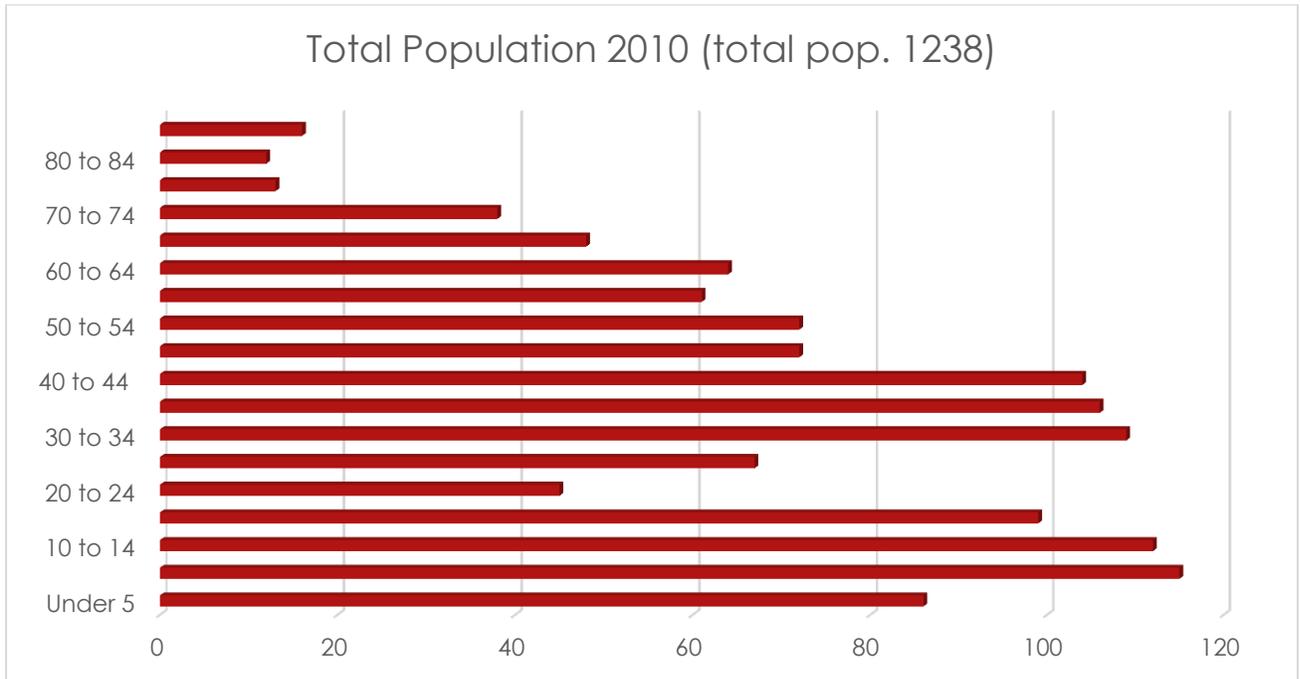
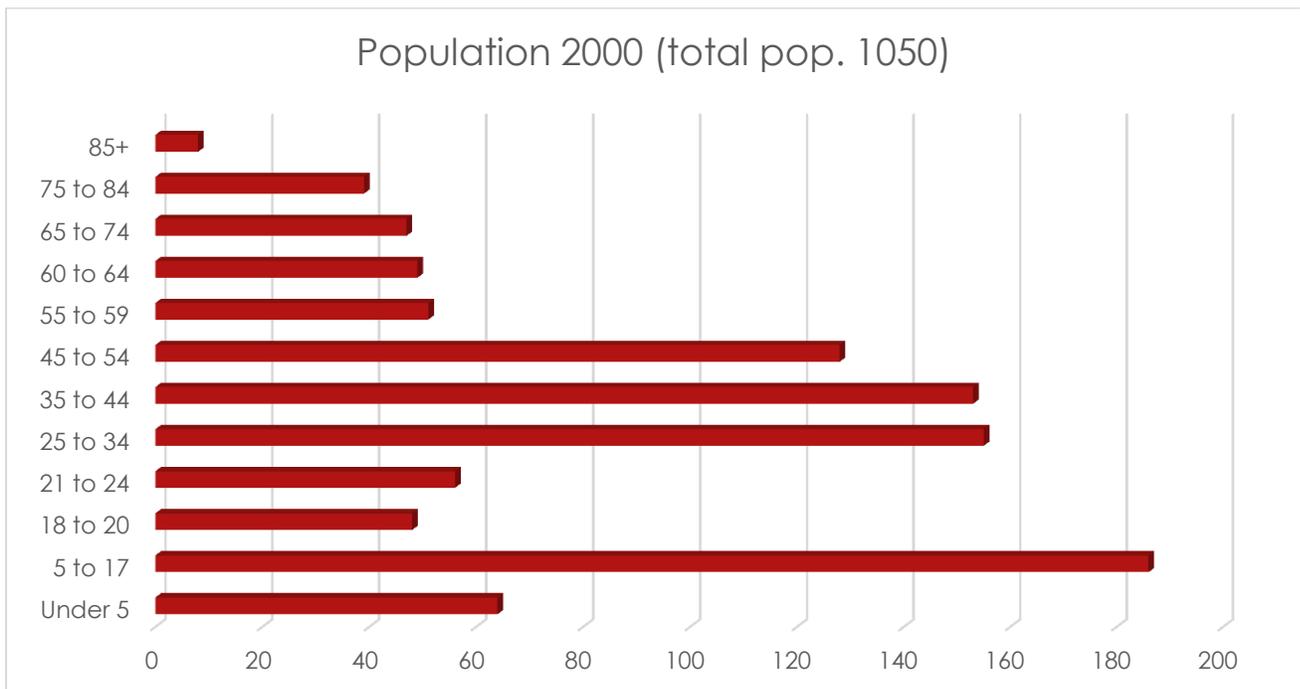


Fig. 5



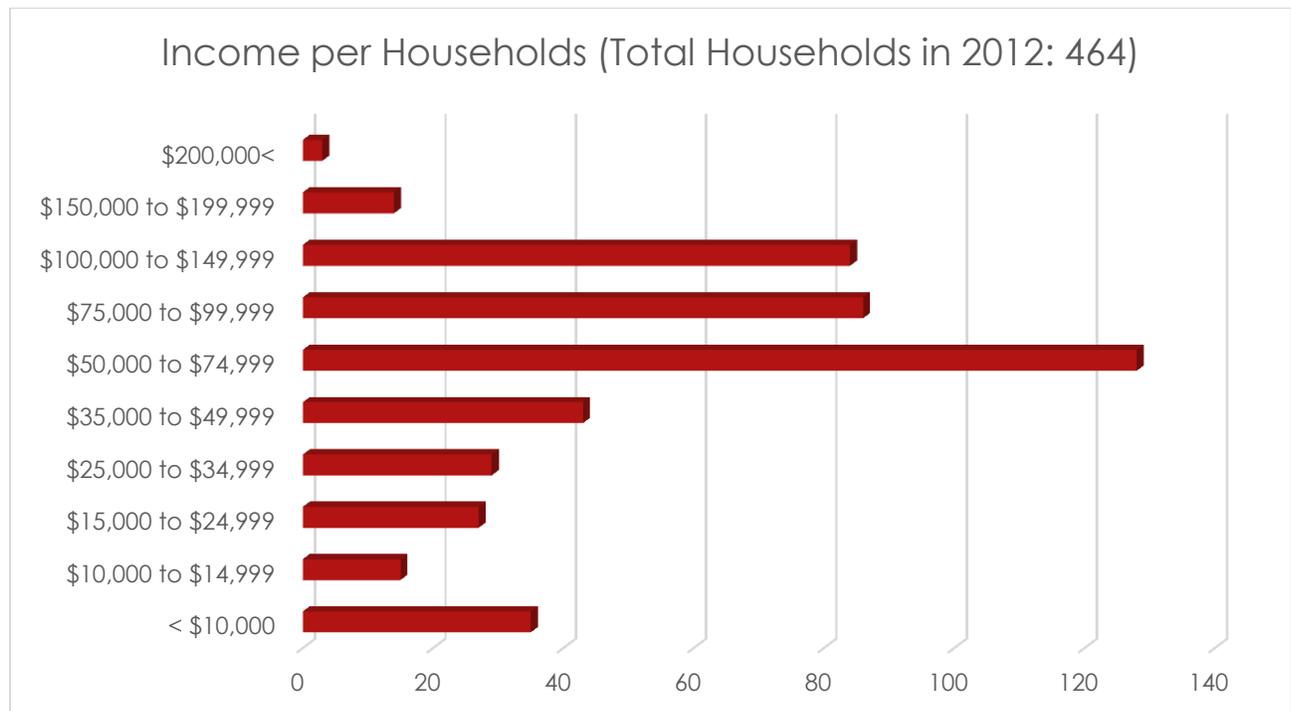
Data Sources: Population from Census Bureau, 2000 & 2010 Census Survey

While Medford has a large percent of its labor pool that commute out, there are 635 people, who as of 2011, commute into the community (see fig. 9). The majority of these people are coming from along the I-35 corridor. These individuals are all potential customers for goods and services in Medford. The workers' proximity to the outlet mall, restaurants, grocery stores, convenience stores, and gas stations will serve as an impetus to use those services and so increasing income. As Medford continues to grow, it can leverage marketing of these services to increase the traffic. The types of jobs associated with these industries can also be filled by the large high school age demographic, further serving to distribute money locally.

Income Distribution

Medford households are classified as upper-middle income bracket. This is characterized by the majority of households having an income above \$50,000.00. Median income in Medford, as of 2012, is \$67,381.00; this is well above the national average \$53,046.00. The vast majority of household income for the community does not come from Social Security or retirement. This illustrates the fact that Medford has a healthy labor pool from which it could draw if the proper industries were attracted. Understanding that, the people of Medford are commuters that carry jobs that pay upper-middle level wages.

Fig.6



Medford Labor Shed – Where Medford Workers Live

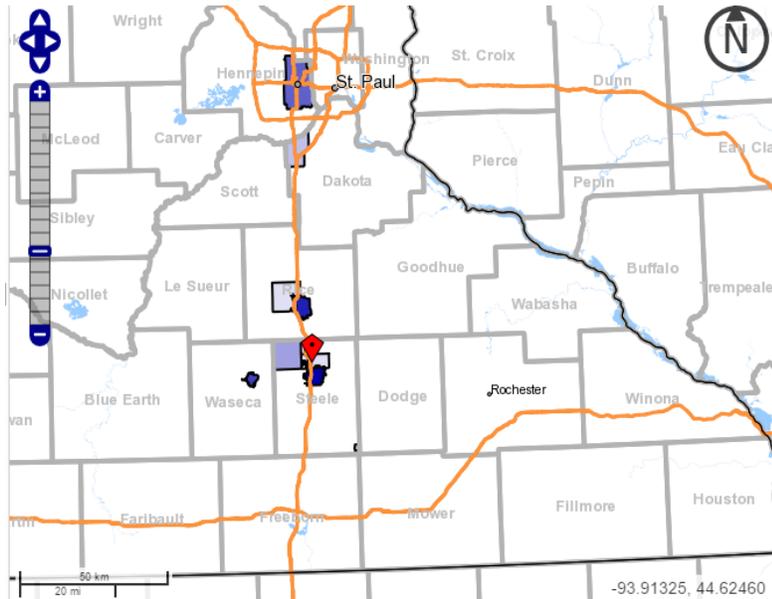


Fig. 8

Home Destination Report - Where Workers Live Who are Employed in the Selection Area - by County Subdivisions

Total Primary Jobs

	2011		2002	
	Count	Share	Count	Share
Total Primary Jobs	635	100.0%	302	100.0%

Jobs Counts by County Subdivisions Where Workers Live - Primary Jobs

	2011		2002	
	Count	Share	Count	Share
Owatonna city (Steele, MN)	165	26.0%	81	26.8%
Faribault city (Rice, MN)	62	9.8%	30	9.9%
Waseca city (Waseca, MN)	20	3.1%	12	4.0%
Minneapolis city (Hennepin, MN)	19	3.0%	2	0.7%
Medford city (Steele, MN)	16	2.5%	17	5.6%
Deerfield township (Steele, MN)	10	1.6%	8	2.6%
Burnsville city (Dakota, MN)	9	1.4%	-	-
Wells township (Rice, MN)	8	1.3%	3	1.0%
Blooming Prairie city (Steele, MN)	8	1.3%	6	2.0%
Clinton Falls township (Steele, MN)	8	1.3%	3	1.0%
All Other Locations	310	48.8%	140	46.4%

Medford Commute Shed – Where Residents Work

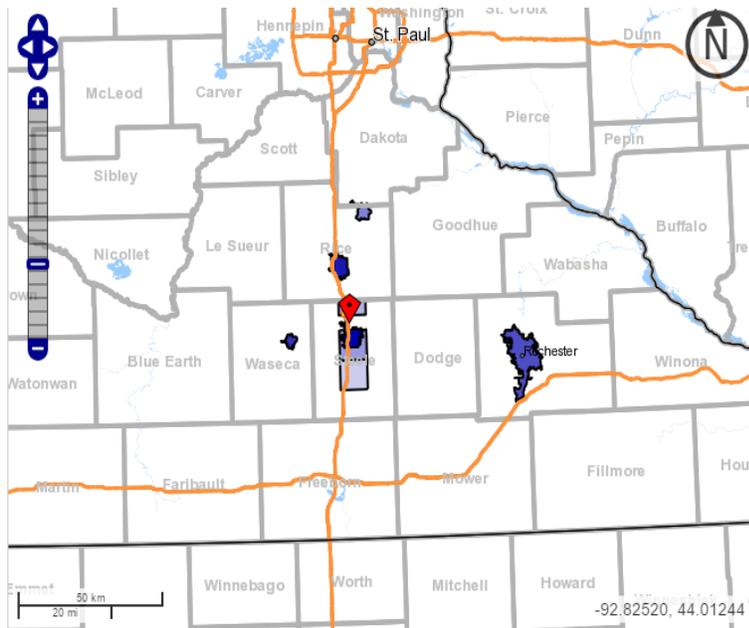


Fig.9

Work Destination Report - Where Workers are Employed Who Live in the Selection Area - by County Subdivisions

Total Primary Jobs

	2011		2002	
	Count	Share	Count	Share
Total Primary Jobs	440	100.0%	428	100.0%

Jobs Counts by County Subdivisions Where Workers are Employed - Primary Jobs

	2011		2002	
	Count	Share	Count	Share
Owatonna city (Steele, MN)	240	54.5%	223	52.1%
Faribault city (Rice, MN)	54	12.3%	44	10.3%
Waseca city (Waseca, MN)	22	5.0%	4	0.9%
Rochester city (Olmsted, MN)	19	4.3%	13	3.0%
Medford city (Steele, MN)	16	3.6%	17	4.0%
Northfield city (Rice, MN)	14	3.2%	6	1.4%
Owatonna township (Steele, MN)	9	2.0%	2	0.5%
Medford township (Steele, MN)	6	1.4%	1	0.2%
Somerset township (Steele, MN)	5	1.1%	-	-
Northfield city (Dakota, MN)	4	0.9%	2	0.5%
All Other Locations	51	11.6%	116	27.1%

Summary

The population in Medford has a robust, steady, and increasing growth rate. This is because of its location on I-35, between regional economic centers of Owatonna and Faribault, as well as its proximity to the Twin Cities and to a lesser extent Rochester. Medford has the capacity to continue surpassing Steele County in growth by continuing to capitalize on its strategic advantages and endeavoring to continue to set itself apart.

The data shows that Medford has a high percentage of its population that are commuters who are working in the communities of Owatonna and Faribault. This trend is likely to continue. As the I-35 corridor continues to develop, the dynamic may shift slightly. With that said, it should not be viewed as a drawback, but as an opportunity. Medford should explore options that would make Medford an attractive option to individuals looking to work in places like Owatonna and Faribault.

Also, as the Owatonna I-35 corridor continues to grow and the bigger cities' land and business costs continue to rise, communities such as Medford are strategically located as more affordable options for residential, commercial, and industrial development. This in turn would increase the amount of jobs and tax base in the community. Medford is positioned for continued growth.

Land Use

Land use is a broad socio-economic term used to categorize land based on both its present use and also according to its viability for future uses. The arrangements, activities, and actions undertaken by people in a certain area to develop, change, or preserve it characterize land use. This section as well as the Land Use Map should serve as a broad guide for City officials as they make decisions concerning the location of public facilities, housing, commercial and industrial development and recreational infrastructure to improve the quality of life for the residents of Medford. Land use designations are generally characterized by the following classifications;

NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL

Neighborhood residential areas encourage the development of single family and lower density multi-family residential development. A maximum density of 5 dwelling units per acre may be allowed subject to issuance of a Conditional Use Permit.

The City should continue to work with developers to develop residential land to serve potential new residents to the community. Some of the key areas for this development are near the school facilities because the school serves as one of the major draws for potential new residents. The City will also want to work to ensure a variety of property values to accommodate a broad range of household incomes.

COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Commerce and industry land use includes three distinct subsections designed to differentiate among desired and planned business uses. Land use designations include the Towne Centre, the Business Park, and the Regional Market Place. Desired characteristics of each designation are generally defined as follows:

The **Town Centre** includes areas in and around the existing downtown. Permitted land use in the commercial core includes those which offer basic goods and services which are required by Medford residents, professional office and related services, retail and entertainment businesses that promote visitor traffic, and higher density residential development.

The **Business Park** designation located along the east frontage road of Interstate 35 permits a blend of commercial and service business uses which desire freeway visibility but do not require immediate access. In addition the allowable business enterprises must be able to successfully integrate their operations and site development plans to compliment the adjoining Residential Neighborhood classification. Development proposals will require careful planning to ensure that objectives for the business park are met.

Within the **Regional Marketplace** designation, certain large scale commercial developments already exist, including the Medford Outlet Center. Existing and future developments will continue to rely on traffic and customers from markets reaching far beyond the City of Medford. Further commercial development will be permitted within the Regional Marketplace that is designed to complement and enhance the existing land uses, including those that have developed along the Interstate 35 corridor beyond the corporate limits of Medford.

The City should work to create strong ties between each of its three distinct commercial areas. The Interstate 35 traffic presents a significant opportunity for businesses, but care needs to be taken to ensure that the growth of one commercial area doesn't mean the decline of one of the others. Some possibilities to increase connections between the commercial areas could be additional directional signage that indicates all three areas or cooperative marketing between the areas if and when possible.

MIXED USE

The Mixed Use classification is intended to incorporate a blending of uses that isn't allowable by definition in the other land use designations. Projects reviewed for this type of designation could include higher density residential like apartment buildings mixed with some commercial activity. Care will have to be taken when reviewing these types of projects to ensure they do not negatively impact adjacent land uses or other commercial areas of the community.

OPEN SPACE

Considerable area has been designated as Open Space by the Land Use Map. These areas may be either publicly or privately owned. Limited land development will be permitted within these areas as a result of existing or future regulatory standards, environmental protection provisions, access limitations and other conditions that impact development rights and alternatives. Generally stated, development will be restricted to limited recreational purposes and other passive land uses that are designed to complement and preserve existing conditions, and prohibit those which may create negative impacts.

Green space and parks was one of the areas highlighted by the community survey as an area of focus for the future of Medford. These areas help maintain Medford's rural character as well as the high quality of life for residents. Preserving and enhancing these areas is in the best interest of the City.

Land Use Goals

- Enhance the quality of life for present and future generations of Medford residents by providing economic growth through the highest quality of residential, recreational, and business development
- Encourage the most desirable and efficient use of land while enhancing the physical and economic environment of Medford.
- Maintain and enhance the City's local character and aesthetic value through land use planning.
- Identify specific land uses that are needed to serve the citizens of and visitors to Medford.
- Modify, adapt, and promote City land use policies that both protect the various districts, and also provide safe, feasible, and cost efficient use of land through zoning, subdivision, and building regulations.
- Promote orderly growth through maintained relationships with surrounding townships to systematically annex land into the City.
- Promote programs to assist with restoration and redevelopment in the Towne Centre when possible

Land Use Objectives

- Ensure that the regulatory policies within the City's Zoning Ordinance and related map are consistent with current City needs and desires.
- Ensure that Medford's land use policies encourage a balance of land uses such that there are adequate areas for non-residential uses that will provide the essential tax base needed for the City to support existing and future residents.
- Review, and if necessary revise, the City's Zoning Ordinance to ensure that high standards are required for new development, both residential and non-residential.
- Ensure that new development enhances the quality of life in Medford
- Ensure that new development, both residential and nonresidential, will be compatible with existing land uses in terms of use, density, building heights, scale, and offsite effects.
- Provide flexibility in development options/tools to create win-win outcomes between landowner desires and community interests.
- Ensure an appropriate balance of open space to developed areas is planned for all new residential and commercial development.
- Encourage the development of new commercial uses around sites that offer good access.
- Provide suitable sites in sufficient quantity for each type of proposed use
- Explore opportunities to rehabilitate and redevelop existing developed areas within the community and in planned growth areas

Economic Development

General

Economic development has no generally accepted dictionary definition. It has always meant different things to different people. In his book on economic development planning, Edward J. Blakely defines local economic development as "a process by which local government and/or community-based groups manage their existing resources and enter into new partnership arrangements with the private sector, or with each other, to create new jobs and stimulate economic activity in a well-defined economic zone."

In general, local economic development is a process to improve the economic well-being and quality of life of a community. It is a means of providing a balanced, healthy local economy. To many local governments, economic development is a means of providing employment opportunities, expanding the local tax base, expanding economic opportunity, and improving the quality of life for its residents.

Local governments can assume a key role in facilitating the actions necessary to develop a solid foundation for successful economic development efforts. Labor force training, provision of infrastructure, coordination of educational institutions, technical and financial assistance, public/private partnerships, and supportive land use policies and regulations are all areas in which local government will continue to play a critical role.

Economic development does not grow spontaneously from the brick and mortar of abandoned buildings or from the weeds in the cow pasture. Rather, it happens as a result of careful planning with the necessary building blocks - planning and design, site assemblage, and financing - that have been put in place by public or private interests. Without these building blocks in place, development will come slowly, if at all.

There are six general variables that influence economic development activity: market, quality of life, labor, site, capital, and regulatory environment. These variables are important because they influence a community's ability to encourage enterprise. Moreover, they can be influenced by local government policies. Of the six, only quality of life is not an essential ingredient for a project to succeed financially, but is still a major consideration in the decision-making process. Any community having all six in a favorable condition will experience economic development. Any community not experiencing development is likely deficient in one or more of these areas.

According to "Achieving Economic Development Success," a special report published by the International City/County Management Association, there are more than 20,000 organizations in the country trying to attract businesses to their area. Yet, on average, there are only 500 - 700 industrial location decisions made each year. Competing for a new major commercial enterprise is costly and competitive. Despite the economic benefits to be derived from successfully recruiting a major industrial business, most communities are seeing the largest economic growth resulting from the expansion of existing local enterprises. Given the competition, cost, and risk of trying to lure new industries, it is easy to understand why most communities now focus on business retention and expansion activities, which carry less risk.

Medford

The business economy in Medford is fairly diverse featuring manufacturing, small retail, professional services, and large-scale highway commercial. Located directly on Interstate Highway 35, the City has significant potential for growth in most of those sectors. The proximity to the larger economic generator communities of Owatonna and Faribault will provide positive and negative consequences for Medford. The positive being there is significant potential for businesses from those communities looking to expand in the area that could view the land cost and tax environment in Medford inviting for growth. The negative with this proximity is two-fold. First, it can be found in the difficulty for local small retailers to compete with national big-box retail located in each of those communities so close to Medford. Second, these communities will always be a significant pull on the local workforce so local businesses will always have significant competition for new workers.

Employment by Industry, 2012*

	Medford city, MN	U.S.
Civilian employed population > 16 years	781	141,996,548
Agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting, mining	15	2,699,250
Construction	64	9,221,878
Manufacturing	221	15,079,996
Wholesale trade	15	4,018,762
Retail trade	70	16,422,596
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	46	7,096,633
Information	10	3,139,327
Finance and insurance, and real estate	49	9,574,851
Prof., scientific, mgmt., admin., & waste mgmt.	21	15,141,136
Education, health care, & social assistance	159	32,513,621
Arts, entertain., rec., accomodation, & food	45	13,039,332
Other services, except public administration	21	7,027,803
Public administration	45	7,021,363

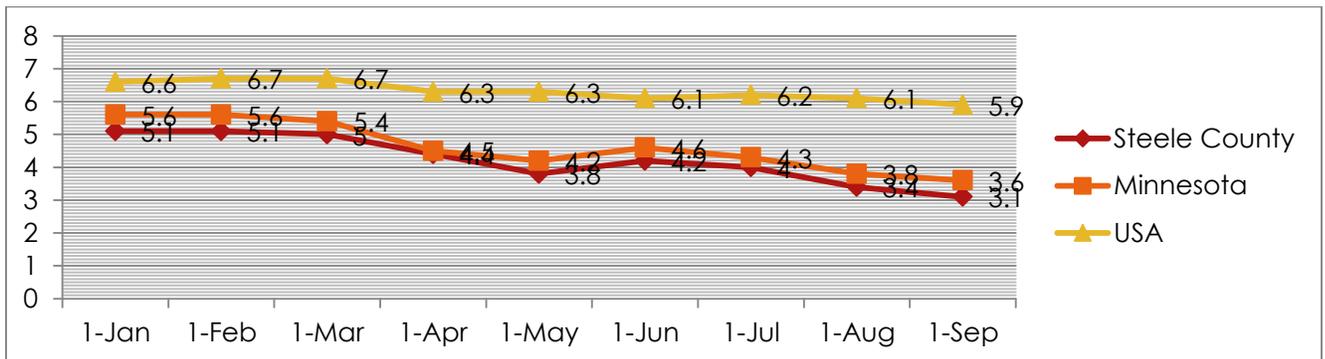
Percent of Total

Agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting, mining	1.9%	1.9%
Construction	8.2%	6.5%
Manufacturing	28.3%	10.6%
Wholesale trade	1.9%	2.8%
Retail trade	9.0%	11.6%
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	5.9%	5.0%
Information	1.3%	2.2%
Finance and insurance, and real estate	6.3%	6.7%
Prof., scientific, mgmt., admin., & waste mgmt.	2.7%	10.7%
Education, health care, & social assistance	20.4%	22.9%
Arts, entertain., rec., accomodation, & food	5.8%	9.2%
Other services, except public administration	2.7%	4.9%
Public administration	5.8%	4.9%

Data Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce. 2013. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Office, Washington, D.C.

Unemployment Rates

Fig. 10



Economic Development Goals:

- Maintain positive relationships with the business community and actively pursue opportunities to improve the local economy.
- Increase job opportunities on all skill levels
- Expand commercial and industrial tax base
- Retain existing businesses and when possible assist their expansion efforts
- Encourage continued job skills training to maintain a strong workforce
- Enhance the link to Interstate 35

Economic Development Objectives:

- Encourage small retail and service businesses that meet local needs to maintain strong quality of life
- Work with the State and other agencies to assist local businesses in accessing programs offering job-skills training to maximize workforce
- Utilize available financial programs both internal and through County, State, and Federal agencies to support business retention and growth when necessary
- Encourage development in areas serviced by adequate infrastructure by supporting contiguous development and orderly annexation
- Explore financial and logistical feasibility of new geographic areas for industrial and commercial growth
- Facilitate meetings with local businesses to discuss retention and expansion opportunities.
- Explore financial programs to encourage rehabilitation and revitalization of downtown
- Explore signage and marketing opportunities to enhance link to Interstate 35 and the significant traffic pattern there
- Utilize City website to provide economic development resources and information to local businesses

Housing

General

Along with water, sewer, roads, bridges, and schools, housing is an important component of a community's infrastructure. As such, local governments have a responsibility to ensure that the housing system meets the needs of its residents.

Unlike most infrastructure components, however, housing is provided primarily by the private sector. Even though the private sector constructs most housing units, local governments have a responsibility to ensure that the local housing market functions effectively and that the housing needs of the community are met. By so doing, local governments can enhance economic development and maintain a high quality of life.

In 1968, the federal government established the national housing goal of "a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family". Since then, that goal has been the guiding force for local government housing policy.

Housing Growth

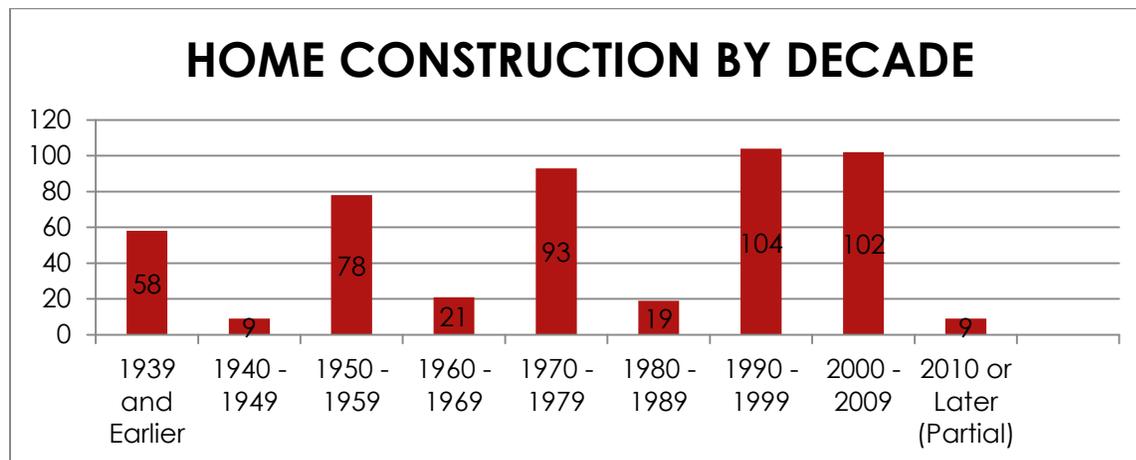


Fig.11

In recent years, Medford has seen significant residential growth, primarily of single family homes. The 2012 Census revealed that age segment that had the largest increase in population for Medford were children under 18 years old. This statistic would also illustrate that the City has experienced a significant influx of young family households. This influx has improved the age diversity for the community. Diversity in the city's population should be matched by diversity of housing choices. The City must continue to facilitate a mix of housing types, including less land-consumptive alternatives such as duplexes, small-lot homes, and townhouses in addition to continued single family home development.

Housing Characteristics, 2012*

	Medford city, MN	U.S.
Total Housing Units	484	131,642,457
Occupied	464	115,226,802
Vacant	20	16,415,655
For rent	0	3,294,653
Rented, not occupied	0	601,367
For sale only	11	1,815,473
Sold, not occupied	0	601,171
For seasonal, recreational, occasional	0	5,014,560
For migrant workers	0	34,579
Other vacant	9	5,053,852
Year Built		
Built 2005 or later	0	382,680
Built 2000 to 2004	102	18,670,035
Built 1990 to 1999	104	18,378,750
Built 1980 to 1989	19	18,413,257
Built 1970 to 1979	93	21,175,542
Built 1960 to 1969	21	14,705,468
Built 1959 or earlier	145	39,916,725
Median year structure built^	1978	1975
Percent of Total		
Occupancy		
Occupied	95.9%	87.5%
Vacant	4.1%	12.5%
For rent	0.0%	2.5%
Rented, not occupied	0.0%	0.5%
For sale only	2.3%	1.4%
Sold, not occupied	0.0%	0.5%
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional	0.0%	3.8%
For migrant workers	0.0%	0.0%
Other vacant	1.9%	3.8%
Year Built		
Built 2005 or later	0.0%	0.3%
Built 2000 to 2004	21.1%	14.2%
Built 1990 to 1999	21.5%	14.0%
Built 1980 to 1989	3.9%	14.0%
Built 1970 to 1979	19.2%	16.1%
Built 1960 to 1969	4.3%	11.2%
Built 1959 or earlier	30.0%	30.3%

As you can see from the graphic above, Medford has a very low percentage of vacant or available housing options to support continued population growth. In order to continue to grow, the community is going to have to continue to promote new housing development in all price ranges in order to accommodate both new residents and current resident looking to upgrade their housing.

Housing Cost

Housing Costs as a Percent of Household Income, 2012*

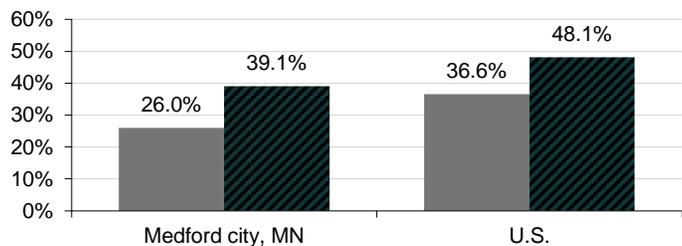
	Medford city, MN	U.S.
Owner-occupied housing units with a mortgage	358	50,671,257
Monthly cost <15% of household income	47	8,867,877
Monthly cost >30% of household income	93	18,547,302
Specified renter-occupied units	46	39,742,141
Gross rent <15% of household income	3	4,301,702
Gross rent >30% of household income	18	19,122,981
Median monthly mortgage cost[^]	\$1,425	\$1,559
Median gross rent[^]	\$681	\$889
Percent of Total		
Monthly cost <15% of household income	13.1%	17.5%
Monthly cost >30% of household income	26.0%	36.6%
Gross rent <15% of household income	6.5%	10.8%
Gross rent >30% of household income	39.1%	48.1%

[^] Median monthly mortgage cost and median gross rent are not available for metro/non-metro or regional aggregations.

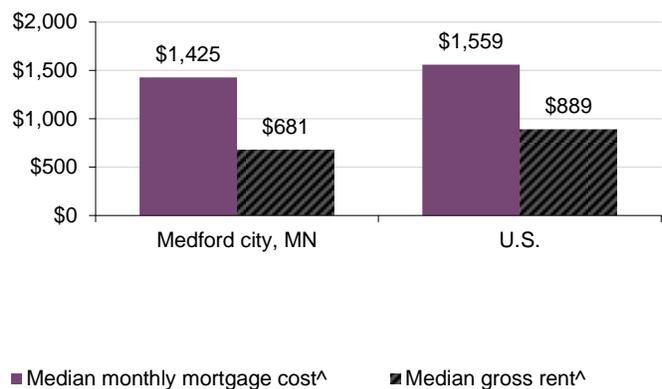
* The data in this table are calculated by ACS using annual surveys conducted during 2008-2012 and are representative of average characteristics during this period.

- In the 2008-2012 period, the U.S. had the highest estimated percent of owner-occupied households where greater than 30% of household income was spent on mortgage costs (36.6%), and Medford city, MN had the lowest (26.0%).
- In the 2008-2012 period, the U.S. had the highest estimated percent of renter-occupied households where greater than 30% of household income was spent on gross rent (48.1%), and Medford city, MN had the lowest (39.1%).
- In the 2008-2012 period, the U.S. had the highest estimated monthly mortgage costs for owner-occupied homes (\$1,559), and Medford city, MN had the lowest (\$1,425).
- In the 2008-2012 period, the U.S. had the highest estimated monthly gross rent for renter-occupied homes (\$889), and Medford city, MN had the lowest (\$681).

Housing Costs as a Percent of Household Income, 2012*



Median Monthly Mortgage Costs and Gross Rent, 2012*



Data Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce. 2013. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Office, Washington, D.C

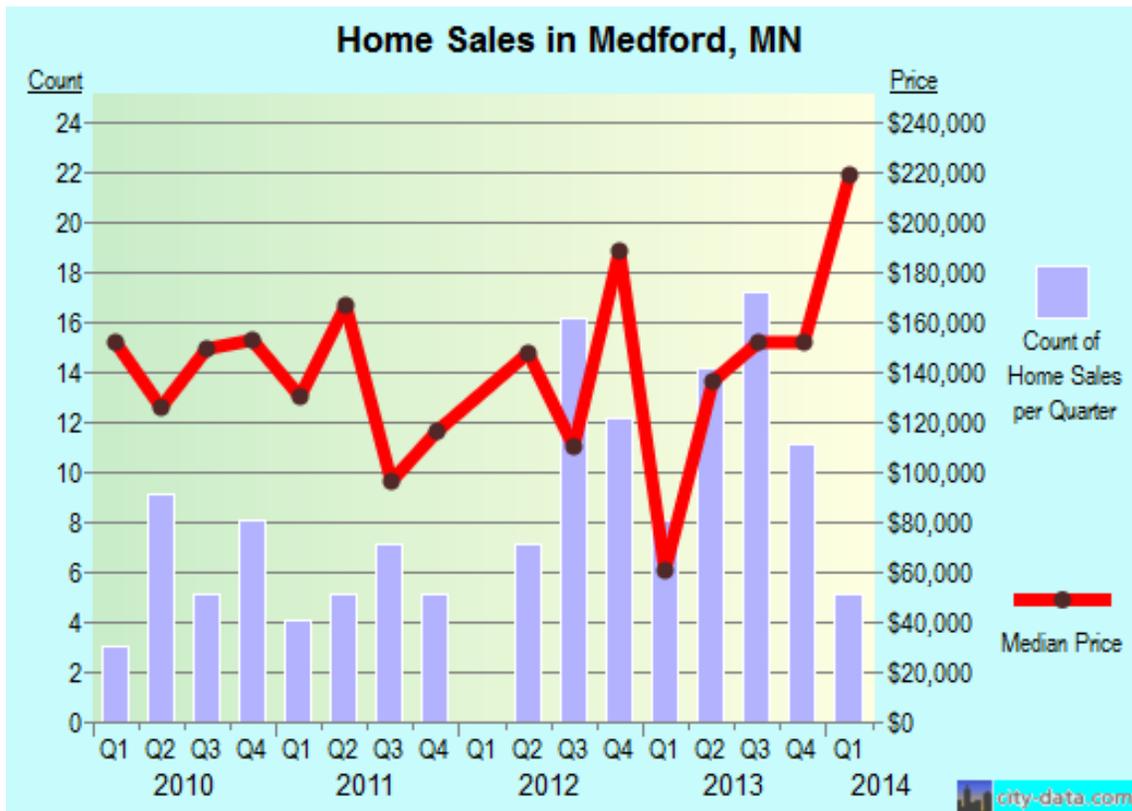


Fig. 12

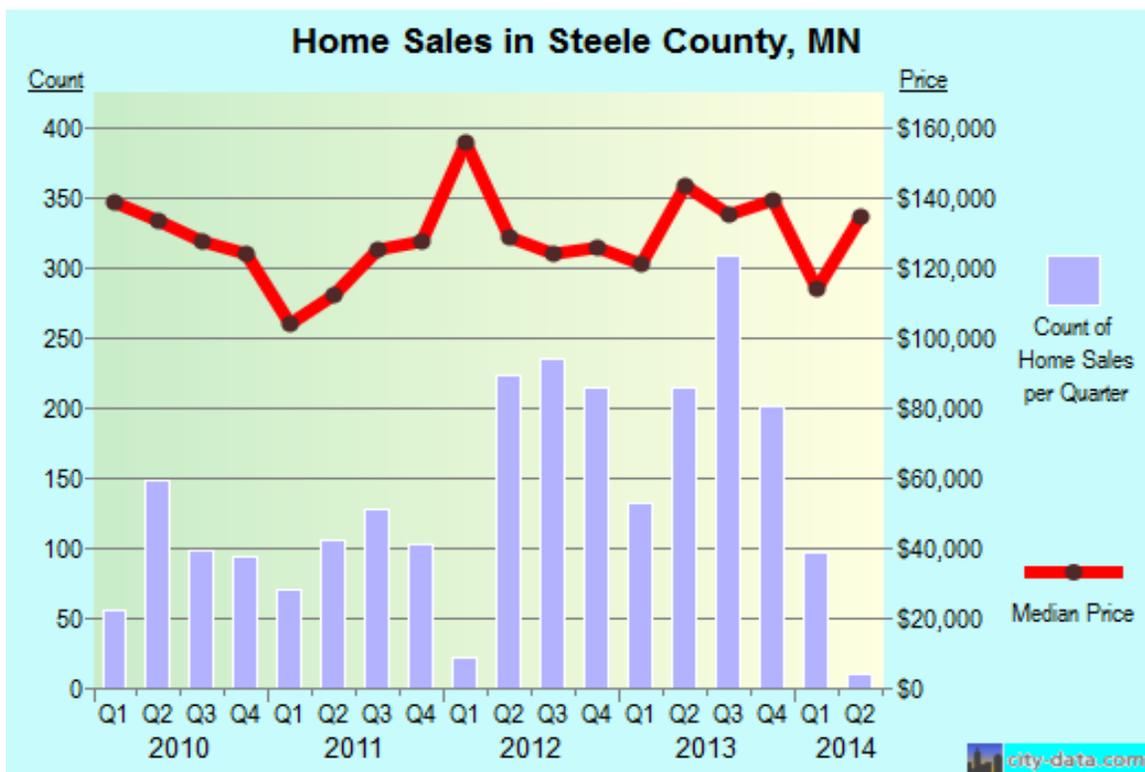


Fig.13

Medford has maintained a lower housing cost recently even though national trends have been to the contrary. This is a positive for new families looking to move to the community to take advantage of the very strong school system. It will be important for the community to continue to promote new housing growth across a diverse price range in order to maintain its recent growth. The Medford school district is a very important asset for the community and continues to be a significant draw for young families to move to the community.

Independent School District #763

One of the major strengths noted by the community repeatedly in the survey and the community meeting sessions was the Medford School District. This is further evidenced by the influx of young families mentioned earlier. Independent School District #763 encompasses the existing corporate limits of Medford and portions of Deerfield, Medford, Clinton Falls and Merton Townships in Steele County, parts of Walcott and Richland Townships in Rice County and part of Blooming Grove Township in Waseca County. All of the district's facilities are located in the City of Medford.

Unlike many rural school districts in the area, I.S.D. #763 has experienced significant growth over its recent history. Most rural school districts have experienced stagnant growth and often decline during that same time frame. This fact confirms the School District is a significant strength for the community and should be highlighted as a draw for continued population growth for the City. The district built a new facility that was open in 2003-04, and with that new facility, school administration feels like they have sufficient facilities to accommodate the continued growth of the community for some time. The current enrollment for school year 2014-15:

Kindergarten – Grade Six	477
Grade Seven – Grade Twelve	<u>378</u>
	855 Total Enrollment

Housing Goals:

- Provide for adequate housing opportunities for current and future residents of Medford while retaining the small-town character of the community.
- Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population and to serve special needs populations, such as the elderly.
- Maintain close positive relationship with the school district
- Improve property maintenance / elimination of substandard housing.
- Improve infrastructure and community development elements such as non-motorized trails and green spaces.
- Promote energy efficient construction and remodeling

Housing Objectives:

- Support housing repair and rehabilitation efforts to preserve and enhance existing housing stock.
- Continue exploring additional opportunities for apartments, manufactured housing, duplexes, small-lot developments, and other multifamily dwelling units that encourage affordable housing
- Encourage housing diversity that maintains the predominantly single family character of the community but also provides options to meet the needs of an economically diverse community
- Support funding programs designed to make housing more affordable.
- Plan for safe non-motorized transportation routes like sidewalks and bikes trails to connect residential areas to commercial areas, schools, and other residential areas
- Work with federal, state, and local agencies and programs to promote and possibly incent maintenance and rehabilitation of older housing stock to avoid blight and improve energy efficiency
- Continue to meet regularly with school district officials to stay informed on district issues and plans, and to continue to explore ways to partner together.

Public Facilities

General

The Public Facilities section of a Comprehensive Plan addresses the expectations that a community's residents have regarding certain public services and the facilities needed to provide those services. Public buildings that house the various governmental and service functions of a municipality are generally of two types: (1) those that require a nearly central or common location and that serve the entire municipal area, and (2) those that serve segments of the community on a service-area basis. The City Hall is an example of a governmental building that serves the entire community, while a fire station represents a public building that has a service-area relationship.

The demands for public facilities space at all levels of government usually increase as the population served grows and as the level of service expands. As a general rule, as communities grow in size, its citizens require increased levels of service. It is appropriate to review the status of existing municipal buildings as a basis for determining the future changes and additions that will likely be required. The following sections are a general evaluation and explanation of existing buildings and facilities.

There is a growing recognition that the availability of services, such as water and sewer, has a direct impact on increased traffic and residential activity. The community has been actively trying to manage growth for the past few years. The pressure on existing services, the cost of new services (compared to revenue collected), and the indirect impact of additional services are all issues continually explored as new projects are presented and discussed.

Sanitary Sewer System

The City of Medford operates its own sanitary sewer system which includes a mechanical treatment plant that was upgraded in 2008 to meet the growing capacity needs of the community. The system has gone through some major expansions over time. The first expansion was to the west and intended to serve the commercial growth along the Interstate 35 corridor. The second expansion was to the east to serve new residential growth for the community as well as the new school facility.

As the community continues to grow and expand, the community's sanitary sewer system will need to be planned for and grow to support these new areas.

Water System

The City of Medford upgraded its water system in 2011. The city water system consists of two sections. The Upper System consists of an elevated storage facility and the water distribution system. The Lower System consists of wells, water treatment facility, a pressure reducing station/booster station, an elevated storage facility, and the water distribution system. The City filters the water to meet state standards. Chlorine is used for disinfection. Fluoride is added to the potable water supply in accordance to State Statute. Orthophosphate is added to prevent corrosion within the distribution system. The upgraded water system delivers treated water to all of Medford. The City is constantly monitoring and addressing water quality issues with ongoing improvements.

As the community continues to grow and expand, the community's water system will need to be planned for and grow to support these new areas.

Storm Drainage System

The Medford area is part of the Cannon River Watershed by way of the Straight River which takes a great deal of the City's storm water. Medford is served by a storm drainage system and facilities. The City has also incorporated storm water ponding to reduce its outflows to receiving waters like the Straight River in order to preserve and improve water quality.

Street System

Interstate Highway 35 runs through the west side of the community. There is a recently upgraded roundabout interchange at the crossing of County Highway 12. The main traffic carrier roads for the community other than Interstate 35 include a number of County Highways which provide the community with quality access to the neighboring communities and surrounding rural areas. The Straight River, railroads, and Interstate 35 cause certain challenges to the overall transportation system for the community. However, the community will want to pay attention to all discussions the Department of Transportation has regarding the Interstate 35 corridor in the area, and Steele County has regarding the County Highway feeder system for the community as both play extremely important roles for Medford.

The community survey noted that the two biggest concerns for the residents with regard to transportation were upgrading road surfaces and better maintenance of roads. Upgrades are costly and need to be planned for over time in order to meet budgetary constraints, therefore street upgrades should be included in the community's Capital Improvement Plan.

that the fire station facility has the necessary space to provide the level of service requisite the community's size and need.

The City's maintenance facility is also located on this property. Again, as the community continues to grow the demands on the City's maintenance department will increase as well. It will be important for the community to make sure that this department's facility remains adequate to meet this demand.

Municipal Liquor Store

This facility is located downtown. Many improvements have been made to both the interior and exterior of the building over time. As a community owned building, continuously exploring improvements to the facility and operation will always be important because those factors will always reflect directly on the community.

Parks

Straight River Park: A major park facility along the Straight River that includes the community's swimming pool and tennis courts, as well as, a softball field, playground equipment, picnic shelters, restroom facilities and parking. This is a major gathering point for the community, so ongoing improvements and maintenance are extremely important to maintain quality of life for the residents.

The City also maintains three other community parks. Those are Central Park located at the intersection of Main Street and Central Avenue, Radel Park located at the intersection of First Street Southeast and Second Avenue Southeast, and the Frank Woodfill Wildlife Refuge located on County Highway 45.

Medford has done a good job of creating a quality community park system that takes advantage of the various landscapes that make up the area. The system ranges from simple open spaces near the Straight River to Straight River Park that includes large community amenities such as the pool and tennis courts. In addition, there are some additional green spaces such as the area near the water tower and the former water tower, as well as the green space included in the MetCon development, that may be developed into formal park areas in the future

A community is made up of people of all ages and interests, and it is important for the community to keep this in mind in looking at its park system. Working to meet the needs and wants of all different types of users provides the City with an opportunity to increase the overall quality of life for residents and visitors. Quality of life will always be one of the most significant factors in the decision making process as people decide which community they will live in.

Trails

As Medford grows and develops there is an increasing need and demand for recreational hiking and biking trails and neighborhood trails and connections. In addition to encouraging recreation, the development of a non-motorized trail system can help reduce vehicle trips. The result will be a community resource providing transportation alternatives, recreational opportunities, environmental aesthetics, and preserving open space. One of the major trail developments for the community is the Wildflower Trail that will utilize vacated railroad right of way through the community and looks to eventually connect with other regional trail systems in the area.

Public Facility Goals:

- Provide high level public facilities and services in the most effective and cost efficient manner possible
- Explore alternative forms of energy that can help provide quality renewable sustainable energy for Medford and its residents
- Provide safe and quality water supply
- Manage storm water in an efficient, effective, and environmentally conscious manner
- Create and maintain capital improvement program for large investments in upgrading infrastructure and public facilities to maximize efficiency of investment
- Provide and maintain quality street system within the community
- Encourage non-motorized transportation within the community
- Aesthetic values and natural environment will be considered when replacing and expanding City utilities
- Create and maintain a quality system of interconnected parks, recreation facilities, and open green spaces throughout the community
- Provide each new housing development or neighborhood with easy and direct access to a park
- Continually explore funding programs from local, state, and federal organizations for improvements to Medford's parks

Public Facility Objectives:

- Explore local, state, and federal agency programs for funding for utility improvements
- Require adequate park / green space be incorporated into new residential developments
- Require storm water retention ponding and other run off prevention methods be incorporated into new large scale developments
- Provide adequate funding to maintain existing park and recreational facilities including a balance between maintenance and new capital improvement expenditures
- Continually monitor whether facilities such as the Fire Station and City Maintenance building are sufficient to meet the growing community's needs
- Be active in communications with Steele County and the Department of Transportation regarding Interstate 35 and the other major traffic routes around the city
- Create and adhere to an annual maintenance plan to ensure existing curb, gutter, and road surfaces are well maintained.

Public Facility Objectives (Continued):

- Incorporate large scale street and utility improvements into the City's capital improvement plan
- Work to improve the overall non-motorized connectivity of the community through additional trails and sidewalks. Special attention should be paid to high traffic areas like the school, downtown and Straight River Park.
- Explore local, state, and federal agency programs for funding for parks and trails additions and improvements

Conclusion

Many communities feel that the planning process is complete with the adoption of a comprehensive plan, but the planning process in Medford will never end. The world outside of Medford is constantly changing and many of these changes will have an impact on Medford. The City will continue to grow and be successful if it is constantly planning and adapting to these impacts and changes. Formal adoption of the Comprehensive Plan establishes the goals for the direction of the City, including both policy objectives and achievement strategies, and should be viewed as the beginning of the journey, not the end. The community's planning efforts up to this point will not have the type of long range impact it is looking for without continuing advancement to implement and update the Plan continually.

The implementation of this plan is firmly tied to the ability of the City to promote the Plan over the long term. Key partners in the implementation include City Council, boards and commissions, staff, and residents. Support of the Plan by the residents and business owners of Medford is essential to the successful implementation of the Plan.

There are several critical requirements for effective implementation of this Comprehensive Plan. First, Medford should continue to evaluate and amend its official development controls, such as the zoning ordinance, which can enforce the Plan's policies and recommendations. Second, the City should develop its Capital Improvements Plan, which would implement a priority-based system of the most important public improvements in infrastructure and public facilities within the parameters of yearly budgetary guidelines.

City officials must ensure that the citizens of Medford continue to be actively involved in this and future planning projects to ensure their needs and concerns are being met by these plans. Some good examples of this would be the citizen group that came together for the Minnesota Design Team visit. Another possibility could be to work with the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation and their Town Meeting Initiative program. Like the Design Team, this group could work together to identify projects that would improve the community immediately and over the long term based on identifying the communities assets. Several strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were identified by the community during a series of community meetings as part of the information gathering process for the comprehensive plan. Many great thoughts and ideas were discussed, listed below are the ones that were identified most often:

Strengths:

- The Medford School District built a new school 11 years ago. Residents strongly feel that the building and quality of education provided are the greatest assets of the community. Currently the school district has significant open enrollment, and room for increased student enrollment from within the district.
- The Medford Outlet Mall provides the community with significant tax revenue, employment opportunities, and retail shopping choices. Residents strongly feel the outlet mall is an economic benefit to the community.
- Medford's location along the interstate and proximity to Owatonna, Faribault, Northfield, Waseca, Rochester, Mankato and the Twin Cities provide residents with many options for employment, entertainment and commerce. Businesses benefit from transportation, access to local networks and customers.
- Community pride is strong within the city of Medford. People feel pride in their school and small town quality of life. The pride and quality of life are the main reasons why people choose to permanently move to the community.

Weaknesses:

- Housing options in Medford are limited. New teachers are not moving to Medford because they have difficulty finding existing homes to buy or rent. The number of available lots is limited. Seniors are looking for townhomes/condos, but they are not available.
- Medford does not have a grocery or hardware store, and restaurant options are limited. The Main Street of Medford provides limited options for consumer services or goods. More businesses, including light industry, and a large employer would be welcome by residents.
- Citizen involvement in community organizing or planning is limited. City leagues, civic clubs, business organizations and opportunities for involvement will only be possible if residents get involved and take responsibility and ownership.
- The City of Medford would like to complete several infrastructure improvement projects, however, financing to complete the projects does not currently exist. The city's tax base is limited, and residents' median income disqualifies the community from several grant opportunities.

Opportunities:

- Available land for residential and commercial/business growth is the community's greatest asset.
- Recently, a railroad authority was formed along the abandoned rail line that runs through the communities of Medford, Owatonna and Faribault. The potential exists to turn the abandoned rail line into a regional trail that could create recreation, tourism and commerce opportunities for the community.

Medford Comprehensive Plan

- Medford's city festival is called the Straight River Days, named after the Straight River that flows through the community. Residents embrace the river and feel that it is an asset. The potential exists for RV/Campground, canoeing/tubing, a golf course and other recreation businesses to be built near the river to increase tourism and economic development.
- Commercial and residential expansion west of the interstate, increased business development, and construction of senior and single family housing could increase the city's tax base for infrastructure improvements and economic development.

Threats:

- Lack of citizen involvement and willingness to change could stifle future civic, recreation, and economic opportunities.
- Capital is needed for business start ups and expansions. If businesses and the community lack private or public financiers willing to invest capital in Medford, the community may not realize economic growth.
- The city's investment in infrastructure upgrades is limited by available tax revenue and grant opportunities.
- Continued viability of the outlet mall is dependent upon state tax policy, customers' support, and retailers' perceptions of its market potential.

Implementation Tools

Implementation tools are the mechanisms that the City has to use to guide its future development. These tools really are the teeth to realize the vision for the community described in this comprehensive plan. To that end, it is essential that these tools be instituted or revised in a way that is consistent with the goals and objectives set forth in this Comprehensive Plan. The following implementation tools can be utilized to reflect the community's values and accomplish the goals set forth in this plan.

ZONING ORDINANCE

The City's zoning ordinance utilizes zoning districts as its principal tool to implement the City's land use policies. The zoning ordinance consists of two essential parts, the ordinance text and the official zoning map. The ordinance text sets forth the specific rules for the development of land within Medford and the official map shows the zoning district boundaries. The City should review its zoning ordinance and official map to compare them to the adopted goals and objectives in this plan to identify and reconcile any discrepancies.

The zoning Ordinance and zoning map may be amended from time to time to reflect new goals, objectives and opportunities identified by the community. The City Council has tools to make these amendments through review by the Planning Commission. Any changes in zoning should be done as orderly and contiguously as possible, with great care taken to minimize effects on current and neighboring land owners. Spot zoning should be avoided.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN (CIP)

As indicated above, another potential tool for implementation is the Capital Improvement Program, which would prioritize and schedule large capital projects usually over a five to ten year period. City staff first compiles a list of all public improvements that will be required in the next five to ten years, including things like street upgrades, new equipment and public facilities projects. Then all projects are reviewed, priorities are assigned, cost estimates prepared, and potential funding sources identified.

In the current fiscal climate, the City's financial resources will always be limited and there will always be competition for those resources. The Capital Improvement Program allows Medford to provide the most critical public improvements, yet stay within budget constraints. Many of the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan can be articulated in a Capital Improvements Program. Through this CIP, the recommendations can be prioritized, budgeted and programmed into the City's decision making process.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

The City of Medford benefits from an active citizenship, involved and aware of issues and concerns throughout the community. Medford should continue to encourage opportunities for citizen participation at all levels of the planning and development processes through appointed citizen commissions and boards, and attendance and participation at public meetings. The City should continue to use as many media outlets as possible to provide public information. This can be accomplished through the City's website (the web address is www.medfordminnesota.com, City newsletter, school district newsletter, public service announcements on local radio, informational brochures, and press release distribution to area newspapers.

As mentioned above, another possibility for citizen involvement would be the Town Meeting Initiative program through the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation. Within this process citizens are invited to meetings to identify various community assets and develop projects that could work to enhance those assets and better the community.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Comprehensive Planning: Medford should review and amend the Comprehensive Plan as necessary, but at a minimum every five years, to ensure its usefulness as a practical guide for current and future development.

Development Ordinances: The City should continue to bring the zoning map into conformance with the Land Use Plan as future projects are reviewed. To support the orderly growth of Medford, the City should continually evaluate, maintain and enforce development performance standards to promote land use efficiency, quality development, and attractive neighborhoods.

Capital Improvements Plan: The City should work with its financial advisor to put together a formal capital improvements plan. As noted, this would prioritize and schedule large capital projects usually over a five to ten year period. City staff first compiles a list of all public improvements that will be required in the next five to ten years, including things like street upgrades, new equipment and public facilities projects. Then all projects are reviewed, priorities are assigned, cost estimates prepared, and potential funding sources identified.

Comprehensive Housing Study: The City could work with the County and other agencies to conduct an updated comprehensive housing study to identify gaps in the market. These gaps present opportunities for developers to meet potential demand in the market. Meeting this demand allows the community to continue to grow.

Annexation: Medford should maintain a policy of Orderly Annexation to contain development allowing for the most efficient use of existing utilities and infrastructure. Regular discussions should continue with the neighboring townships as the community continues to grow in size.

Summary Statement

Successful communities do not happen by accident. They are the product of hard work and dedication displayed by their decision makers, staff, and residents. Together, the community of Medford can make itself the best place to live, work, recreate, and do business that it can be.