



MONROE, IA

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

2019-2039

“Creating a sustainable future”

Prepared by

Department of Community and Regional Planning

College of Design

Iowa State University

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COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

2019-2039



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Senior Studio, Fall 2019*

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1	Comprehensive Planning Process	1
1.2	Definition and Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan	1
1.3	Plan Organization	2
1.4	Community Values and Vision Statement	3

Chapter 2. Public Participation

2.1	Introduction	6
2.2	Methods	6
2.2.1	Survey	6
2.2.2	Interview	17
2.2.2.1	Focus Group	17
2.3	Steering Committee	18
2.3.1	City Council / Meeting	19
2.4	Conclusion	19

Chapter 3. Population and Growth

3.1	Introduction	20
3.2	History and Character	20
3.3	Overview of Population	21
3.4	Population Characteristics	23
3.4.1	Household Analysis	23
3.4.2	Housing Analysis	26
3.4.3	Employment Analysis	27
3.4.4	Educational Attainment	27
3.4.5	Racial Distribution	28
3.4.6	Age and Gender Distribution	29
3.5	Population Projection	31
3.6	Overall Analysis	34
3.7	Recommendations	34

Chapter 4. Population and Growth

4.1	Introduction	35
4.2	Land Use Descriptions	36

4.3	Flood Zones	38
4.4	Soil Evaluation	38
4.5	Annexation Growth	41
4.5.1	South Annexation Growth Area	42
4.5.2	West Annexation Growth Area	43
4.6	Overall Analysis	44
4.7	Recommendations	45

Chapter 5. Economic Development

5.1	Introduction	47
5.2	Economic Development Zone	47
5.3	Population Characteristics	48
5.4	Labor Force	48
5.5	Employment by Sector	49
5.6	Unemployment Rate	50
5.7	Economic Structure	51
5.8	Inventory of Most Prevalent Businesses in Monroe	52
5.9	Recent Business Development	53
5.10	Downtown Monroe	56
5.11	Focus Group Results	57
5.12	Overall Analysis	57
5.13	Recommendations	58

Chapter 6. Housing

6.1	Introduction	60
6.2	Housing Inventory	60
6.3	Age of Housing	61
6.4	Types of Housing Unit	62
6.5	Types of Housing	62
6.6	Housing Affordability	63
6.7	Housing Market	65
6.8	Housing According to the Association of American Retired Persons (AARP) ...	67
6.9	New Housing Development	68
6.10	Retirement Housing	69
6.11	Overall Analysis	69
6.12	Recommendations	70

Chapter 7. Public Facilities

7.1	Introduction	71
7.2	Public Facilities Inventory	71
7.2.1	Public Schools	71
7.2.2	Water System	73
7.2.3	Library	73
7.2.4	Fire Protection and Law Enforcement	73
7.2.5	Parks and Recreation	74
7.2.6	Medical Facilities	74
7.3	Overall Analysis	75
7.4	Recommendations	76

Chapter 8. Transportation and Utilities

8.1	Introduction	77
8.2	Highway Access	77
8.3	Condition of Roads in Monroe	78
8.3.1	Current Maintenance	78
8.3.2	Pavement Score Interpretation	80
8.4	Current Capital Improvement Plan	81
8.5	Commuting Characteristics	81
8.6	Overall Analysis	83
8.7	Recommendations	83
8.8	Utilities	83

Chapter 9. Parks and Recreation

9.1	Introduction	84
9.2	Monroe Parks and Open Spaces Inventory	84
9.3	Monroe Resident's Feedback on Parks	87
9.4	Trails and Sidewalks Systems	88
9.5	Trees in Monroe Public Right of Way of Parks	92
9.6	Overall Analysis	93
9.7	Recommendations.....	93

Chapter 10. Action and Implementation

10.1	Introduction	95
10.2	Implementation Terms	95

10.3 Conclusion 98

Resource Appendix

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Comprehensive Planning Process

Figure 1.2 The Slogan, Depicting the Community's Pride and Strength

Figure 1.3 Map of Monroe

Figure 2.1 Tabling at the Prairie City Monroe vs. Pella Christian Football Game

Figure 2.2 Resident Survey

Figure 2.3 Survey Poster at the Library

Figure 2.4 One of the Students during the Steering Committee

Figure 3.1 Map showing Monroe

Figure 3.2 City of Monroe Population

Figure 3.3 Jasper County Population

Figure 3.4 Monroe Household Income

Figure 3.5 Monroe Households

Figure 3.6 Average Household Size

Figure 3.7 Households with Children Under 18

Figure 3.8 Housing Unit Occupancy Status

Figure 3.9 Monroe Age Distribution

Figure 3.10 Monroe Population Projections

Figure 3.11 Monroe Future Population

Figure 4.1 Existing Land Use Map of Monroe

Figure 4.2 New Development

Figure 4.3 Salon Essence Building

Figure 4.4 Monroe Wetlands

Figure 4.5 Flood Insurance Rate Map

Figure 4.6 Soil Evaluation Map

Figure 4.7 Monroe Future Land Use Map

Figure 5.1 Monroe Economic Development

Figure 5.2 Employment by Sector

Figure 5.3 Unemployment Rate in Monroe, Iowa State and the United States of America

Figure 5.4 Economic Structure of Monroe in Comparison to the State of Iowa

Figure 5.5 Jersey Freeze Ice-Cream Factory

Figure 5.6 Jersey Freeze Ice-Cream Factory

Figure 5.7 Heartland Co-Op

Figure 5.8 Red Rock Prairie Trail Map

Figure 5.9 Red Rock Prairie Trail

Figure 5.10 New Housing Development

Figure 5.11 New Houses in the Complex

Figure 5.12 Downtown Monroe

Figure 5.13 Downtown Monroe

Figure 6.1 The Green House Apartments

Figure 6.2 Gateway Apartments

Figure 6.3 House sold
Figure 6.4 AARP livability rating
Figure 6.5 Housing Metrics
Figure 6.6 Housing-related policies
Figure 6.7 New Housing development
Figure 6.8 New Housing development
Figure 7.1 Monroe Elementary School
Figure 7.2 PCM High School
Figure 7.3 Survey result
Figure 7.4 Monroe Public Library
Figure 7.5 Survey Result
Figure 7.6 Survey Result
Figure 7.7 Survey Result
Figure 8.1 Map of Monroe and surrounding highways
Figure 8.2 Highway 14 running through Central Monroe
Figure 8.3 Pavement Condition Map
Figure 8.4 Recently seal coated road
Figure 8.5 Iowa DOT 2017
Figure 8.6 Monroe Community Survey
Figure 8.7 National Commuting Methods Distribution
Figure 8.8 Monroe Community Survey
Figure 9.1 Park/Open Space Location in Monroe
Figure 9.2 Baseball Field at Monroe Recreation Park
Figure 9.3 Playground Equipment at Toole's Point Park
Figure 9.4 Stage at the Monroe City Square
Figure 9.5 Fountain at the Monroe City Square
Figure 9.6 Historic Red Rock Replica House in Red Rock Park
Figure 9.7 Rating of Park Quality
Figure 9.8 Rating of Park Facilities
Figure 9.9 Map showing extent of bicycle trail in Monroe.
Figure 9.10 Existing trail to be converted to paved bike path
Figure 9.11 Regional bicycle trail connections near Prairie City and Lake Red Rock
Figure 9.12 Rating of trail and sidewalk system in Monroe. Monroe Resident Survey.
Figure 9.13 Overgrown sidewalk near downtown.
Figure 9.14 Aerial image of Monroe City Square.

List of Tables

Table 3.1 Employment Analysis

Table 3.2 Educational Attainment

Table 3.3 Racial Distribution

Table 3.4 Jasper County Racial Distribution

Table 3.5 Monroe Age Distribution

Table 3.6 Population Projections

Table 4.1 Soil Evaluation Map Attribute Table

Table 5.1 Number of People Employed in Monroe

Table 5.2 Number of People Employed in Jasper County

Table 6.1 Monroe Housing Inventory

Table 6.2 Housing Age

Table 6.3 Housing Types

Table 6.4 Housing Affordability

Table 6.5 Housing Market Values

Table 9.1 Parks Assets and Acreage of Monroe

1.1 Comprehensive planning process

This can be defined as a process that determines community goals and aspirations in terms of community development. Comprehensive planning typically follows the process illustrated in Figure 1.1.

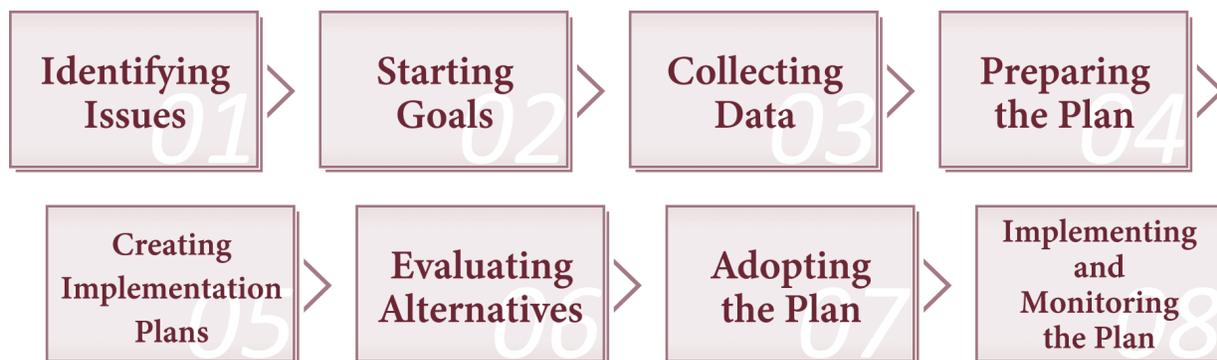


Figure 1.1 Comprehensive Planning Process

The result of this process is called a comprehensive plan, and both expresses and regulates public policies on transportation, utilities, land use, recreation, and housing. By following this process, urban planners can determine a wide range of interconnecting issues that affects a city.

1.2 Definition and Purpose of the Plan

A comprehensive plan is a lawful document that is designed to guide the future action of a community with long-range goals based on current demographics and trends, public engagement project, and stakeholder input. The plan accomplishes the following:

- i. Establishes a future land use map which informs decisions related to new development.
- ii. Promotes the maintenance and enhancement of existing property and infrastructure.
- iii. Helps to guide community investments.
- iv. Regulates public policies on land use.
- v. Establishes protection for open space, natural resources and future land use map which informs decisions related to new development.
- vi. Protects property values by ensuring compatible land uses throughout. This includes guidance on how to make decisions on public and private land development proposals, the expenditure of public funds, availability of tax policy, cooperative efforts and issues of pressing concern, such as farmland preservation or rehabilitation of older neighborhoods areas.

Every decision and planning strategy included within the comprehensive plan impacts the built environment directly and ultimately affects one's everyday life in the community. Most plans are written to provide direction for future activities over a 10- to 20-year period after its adoption. The current comprehensive plan of Monroe was made in 1997. The decision to upgrade the plan is because of the need to create a sustainable and "bedroom community" The recommendations obtained in this document are therefore meant to guide Monroe towards sustainability and is designed to be a 20-year plan. Regular review and updates are recommended in order to promote the success of the community. It is hoped that this document will serve as a guide to the city officials when considering development and capital improvement programs.

In 2010, the Iowa State Legislature signed the Iowa Smart Planning Act into law. The law was created to guide local comprehensive plans and investment decisions. It provides a clear list of items that should be included in city and county plans and establishes the Iowa Smart Planning Task Force and their role. As stated in the document, "the application of these principles is intended to produce greater economic opportunity, enhance environmental integrity, improve public health outcomes, and safeguard Iowa's quality of life."

The Iowa Smart Planning Principles include:

1. Collaboration
2. Efficiency, Transparency, and Consistency
3. Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy
4. Occupational Diversity
5. Revitalization
6. Housing Diversity
7. Community Character
8. Natural Resources and Agricultural Protection
9. Sustainable Design
10. Transportation Diversity

1.3 Plan Organization

This Plan is presented in ten (10) chapters. Within these chapters, existing conditions and needs are defined and recommendations made. Listed below is a brief definition of the chapters.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Provides the definition and purpose of the document and summarizes its organization.

This section also states the community's values, vision statement and goals.

Chapter 2. Public Participation

Describes input by residents and the methods used.

Chapter 3. Population and Growth

Describes the history and the character of the community, population overview and characteristics, age and gender distribution and population projection.

Chapter 4. Land Use

Describes and analyzes the city of Monroe and its surroundings as well as its current flood risk, soil analysis, and possible annexation opportunities.

Chapter 5. Economic Development

Describes population characteristics of the labor force, unemployment rate, economic structure and economic base analysis.

Chapter 6. Housing

Describes housing inventory, age of housing, types of units, types of housing, housing affordability, housing market, new development and retirement housing.

Chapter 7. Public Facilities

Describes public schools, work system, library, fire protection, law enforcement, parks and recreation and medical facilities.

Chapter 8. Transportation and Utilities

Describes highway access, the condition of roads and current capital improvement plan.

Chapter 9. Parks and Recreation

Describes quality of parks, the trail system, and trees.

Chapter 10. Action and Implementation

Contains a list of recommendations for a sustainable future of Monroe.

1.4 Community Values and Vision Statement

This comprehensive plan grew out of an expressed concern by the community leaders and residents to increase and maintain the quality of life within the community. Part of the planning process requires that goals are established based on the community's desires. The goals of Monroe were explored during a community assessment and visioning meeting held on October 2, 2019 at Monroe's city hall. Listed below is what the attendees at the meeting thought were the strengths and weaknesses of Monroe.

Strengths

- i. Location in the center of a decent number of major towns/cities
- ii. Good School System
- iii. Excellent community involvement. Kids are highly involved in volunteer/ extracurricular

activities

- iv. Low crime level
- v. Jersey Freeze Ice cream and other local businesses
- vi. A lot of highly exclusive private goods (golf course)
- vii. Red Rock Prairie Trail
- viii. Quiet, small-town atmosphere

Weaknesses

- i. Loss of businesses
- ii. Retail industry is lacking
- iii. Lack of niche business
- iv. Challenge with work force
- v. Concerning health care, they don't want a hospital but would appreciate having a clinic
- vi. Not much housing prices, that match the job market income (low income)
- vii. Lack of sidewalks and streets

At the visioning meeting, participants were also asked what they wish to change about the community. The main response was, “The need to bring in businesses that can make Monroe a holistic community and bedroom community.”



Figure 1.1 The Slogan, Depicting the Community’s Pride and Strength

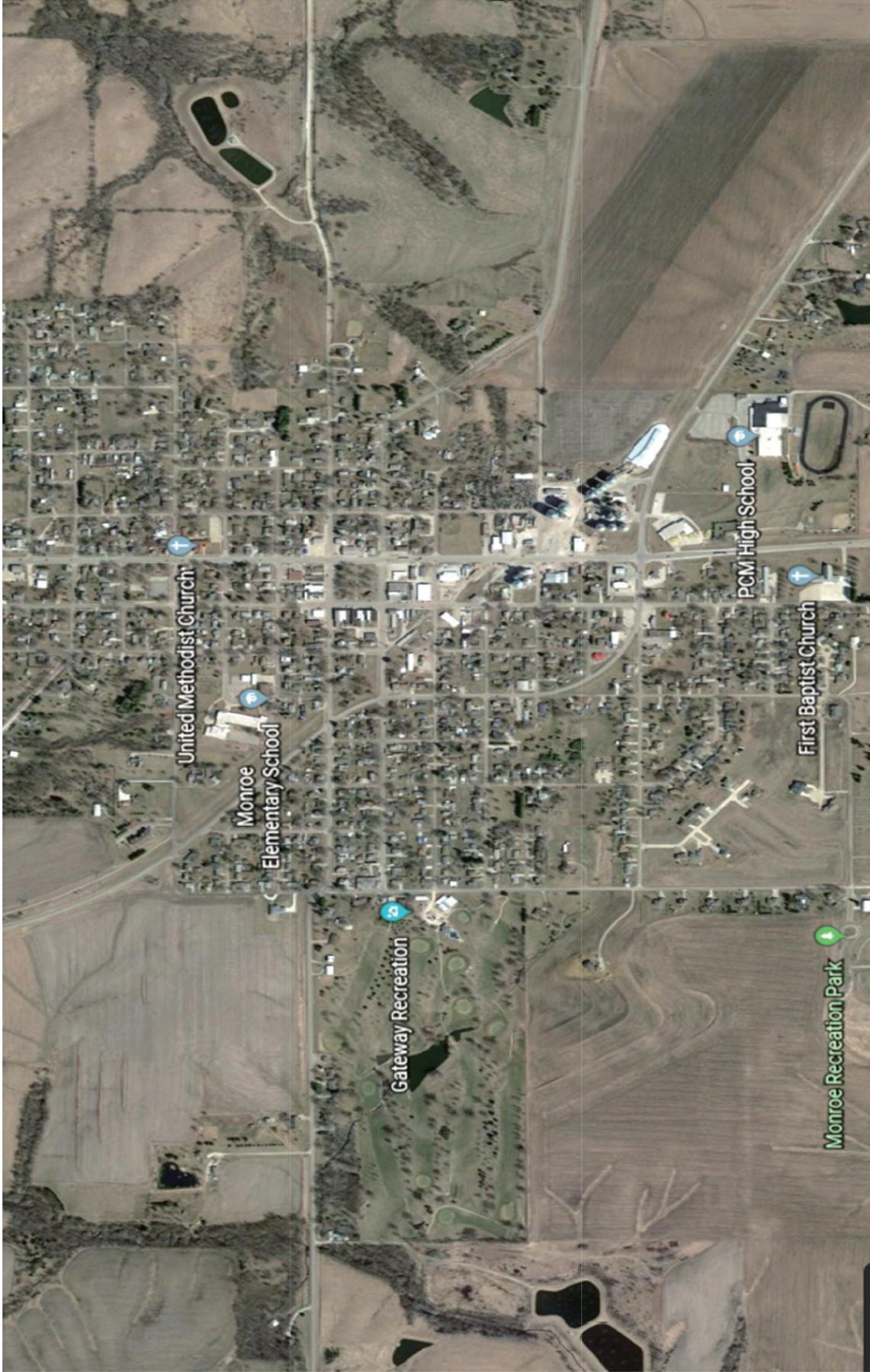


Figure 1.3 Map of Monroe

Source: Google Earth

2.1 Introduction

Public participation is a process by which organizations consults with interested or affected individuals, organizations, and government entities before making a decision. It can also be defined as a two-way communication and collaborative problem solving with the goal of achieving better and more acceptable decisions.

It is an important aspect of planning. In order to create a complete comprehensive plan, all avenues of a community must be fully analyzed, and the public can provide information that could not be found anywhere else. This is considered local knowledge and can only be attained by people who live in Monroe and experience the community's strengths and weaknesses every day. Our goal is to analyze every part of Monroe in order to create an accurate comprehensive plan and to do this, we must have a complete understanding of it. In order to obtain this local knowledge from the community, multiple methods of public participation were implemented. In this chapter, each method used will be explained, and the results will be reported and analyzed.

2.2 Methods

2.2.1 Survey

When working on a community project, it is important to establish community trust. For our first engagement technique, students attended the Prairie City Monroe vs. Pella Christian football game on September 20, 2019 and spoke with residents. Our table featured a map of Monroe along with an advertisement for the Monroe Resident Survey. At the table shown in Figure 2.1 below, residents could grab a sticky note and write what they would like to see in their town.



Figure 2.1 Tabling at the Prairie City Monroe vs. Pella Christian Football game

Answers varied from sidewalks to chain restaurants and stores. Many middle school aged children chose to participate with their friends along with parents and older members of the community. Frequently, the middle schoolers wished for Taco Bell, Target, and other chains, while the parents focused on infrastructure changes in their local neighborhoods. This exercise encouraged individuals to discuss what they liked and what they wish was existing in their neighborhoods and community.

While also at the game, students handed out 3x3” cards to community members encouraging participation in the survey (Figure 2.2) These cards complemented the large signs that were posted around the stadium. Featured on the card was the survey link, a QR code to scan, and a brief description of what the purpose of the survey was. We handed out approximately 80 cards at the football game. Five other posters were displayed at common locations including the grocery store, library, and bars. Figure 2.3 show some of the students with the students hanging the survey poster at the library.



Figure 2.2 Resident Survey

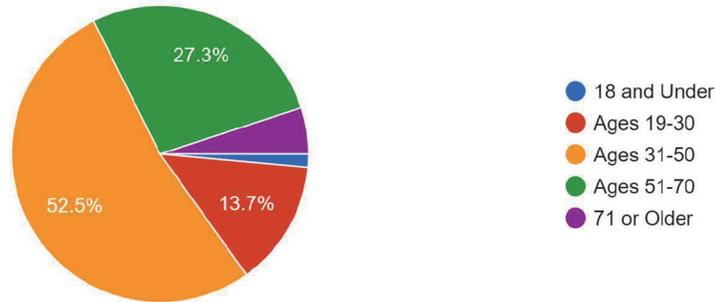


Figure 2.3 Survey poster at the library

The survey was comprised of questions regarding the conditions in Monroe. These questions focused on transportation, quality of infrastructure, community, housing, and shopping. Questions (shown in Appendix) were a combination of multiple choice and response questions. In total, 141 responses were gathered. The figures below are the results of the survey.

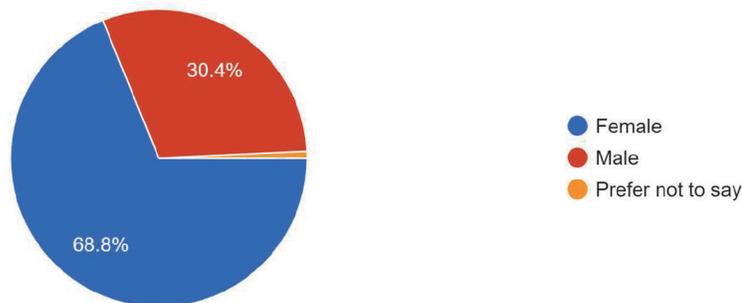
What is your age?

139 responses



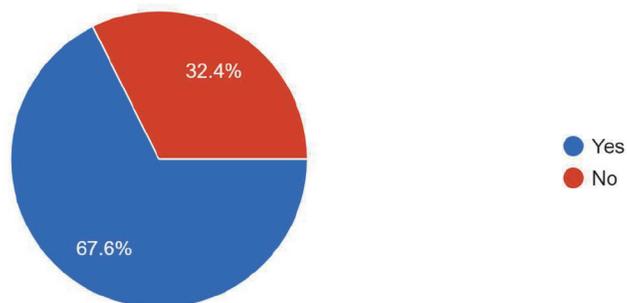
What is your gender?

138 responses



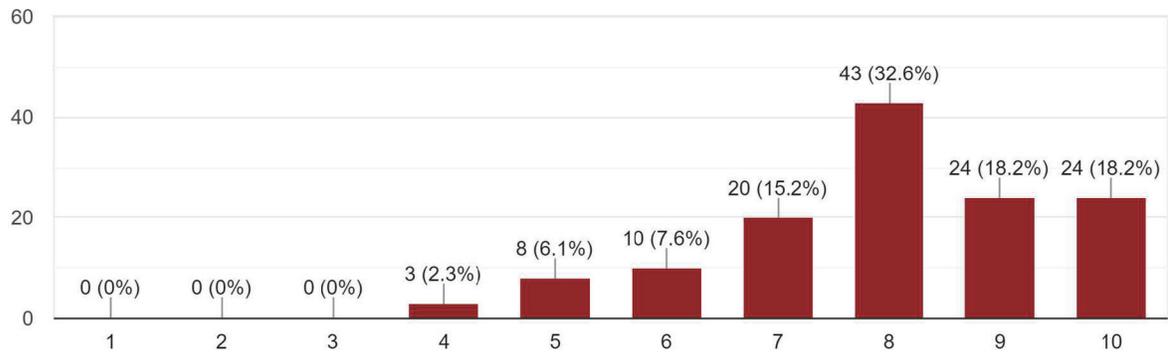
Do you have extended family that also live in Monroe?

139 responses



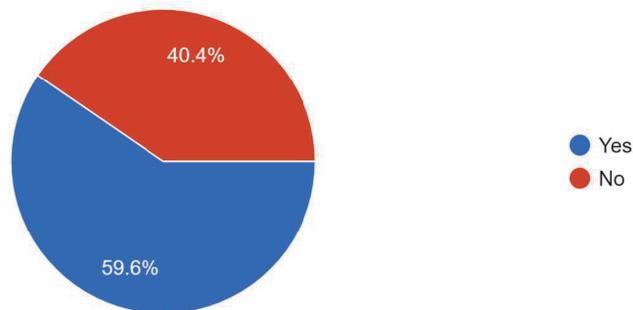
How would you rate Monroe's public schools?

132 responses



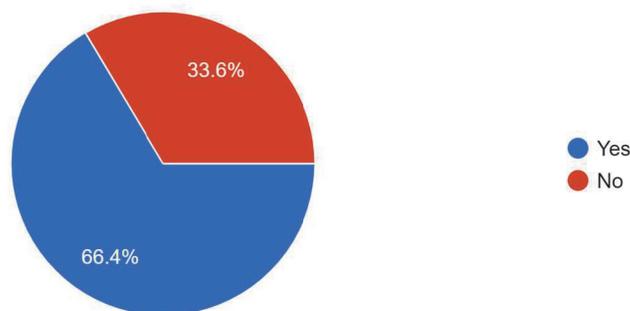
Are you involved in community-related activities?

136 responses



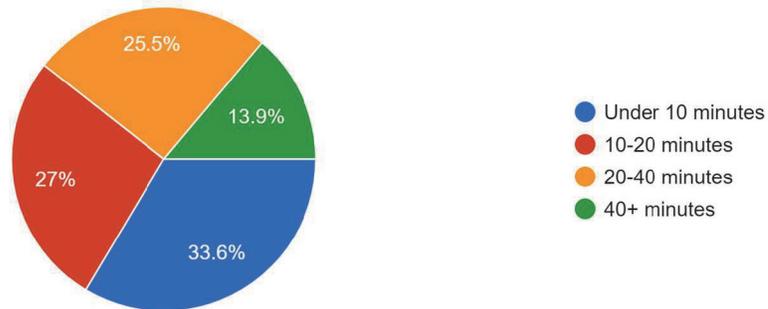
Do you believe there are enough public services present? (emergency, medical, education)

134 responses



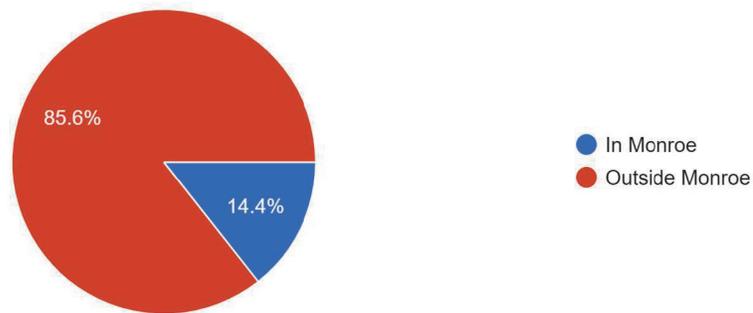
How long is your commute?

137 responses



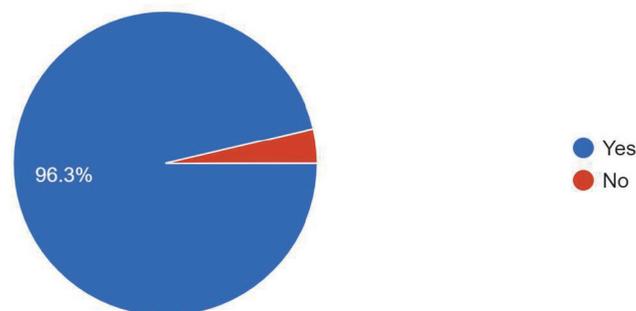
Where do you buy the majority of your groceries?

139 responses



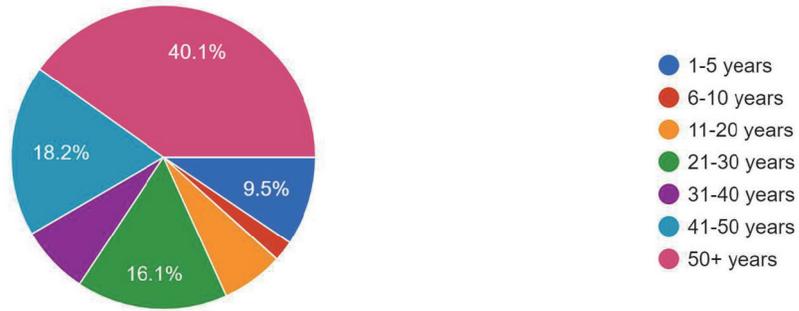
Do you think Monroe is currently a nice place to live?

136 responses



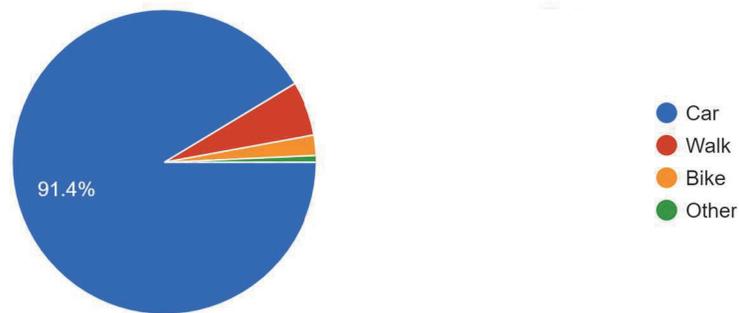
How old is your current home?

137 responses



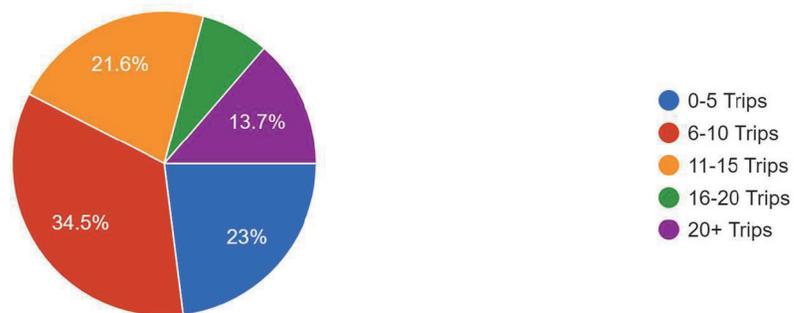
To run errands what is your preferred method of transportation?

139 responses



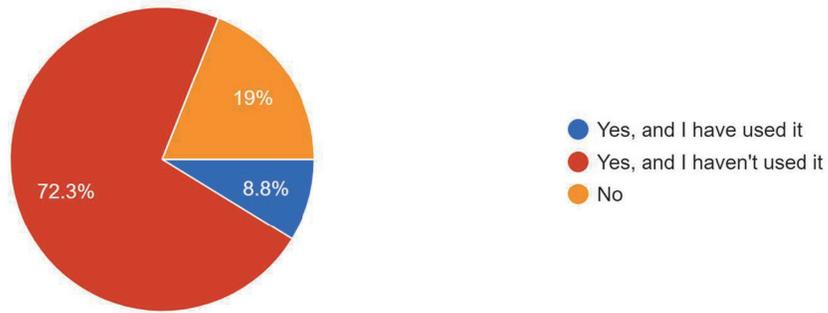
Roughly how many vehicle trips do you make a week?

139 responses



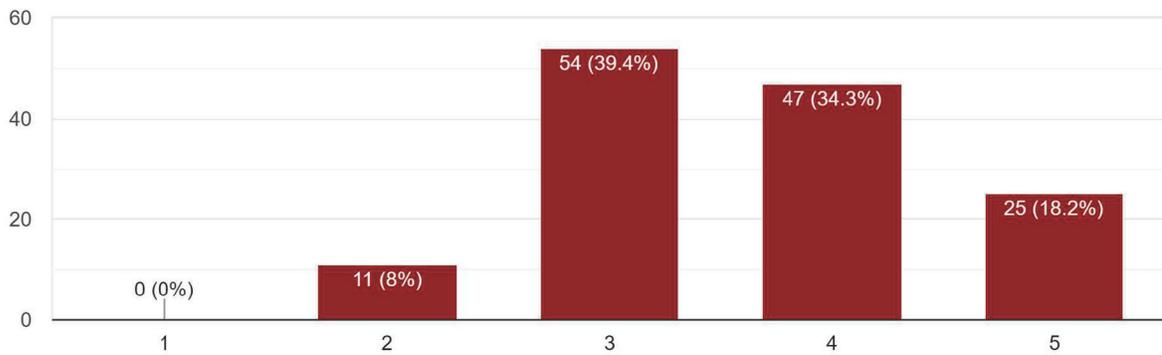
Are you familiar with the DART rideshare/vanpool programs?

137 responses



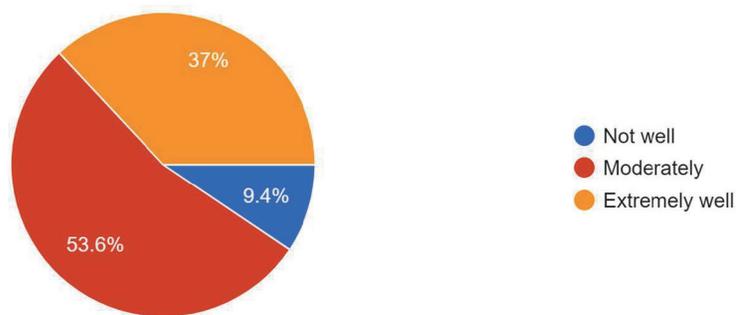
How would you rate the quality of the city parks?

137 responses



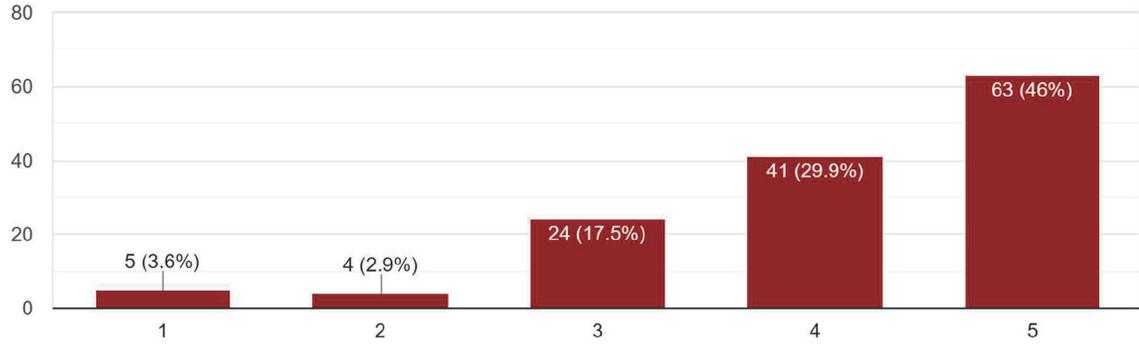
How well do you know your neighbors?

138 responses



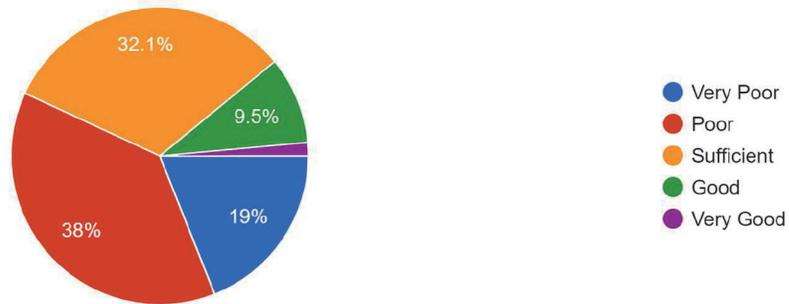
How comfortable are you with changes for modern development?

137 responses



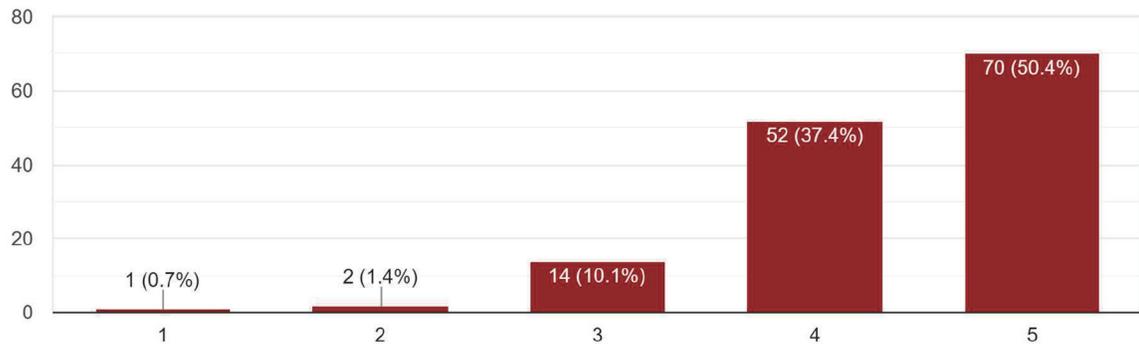
How would you rate the trails/sidewalk system in Monroe?

137 responses



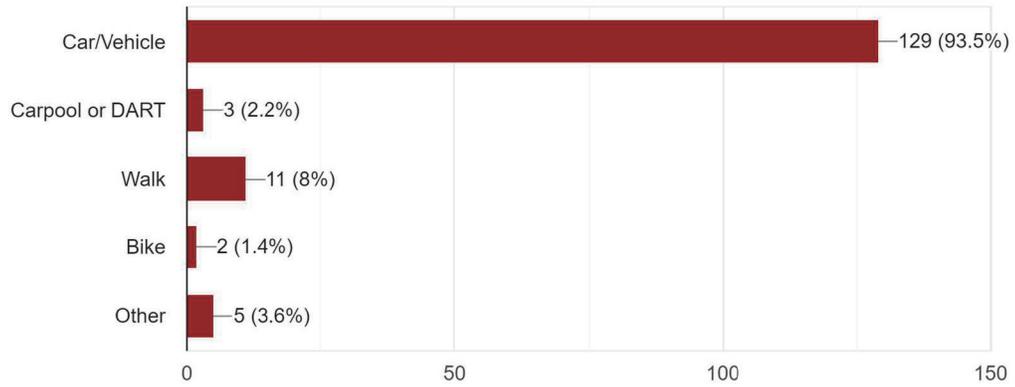
How safe do you feel in your community?

139 responses



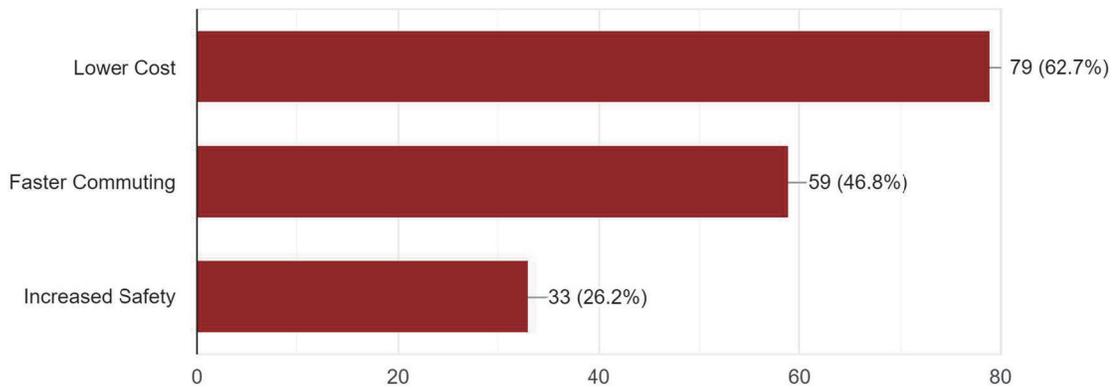
What mode of transportation do you use to get to work/school? (Check all that apply)

138 responses



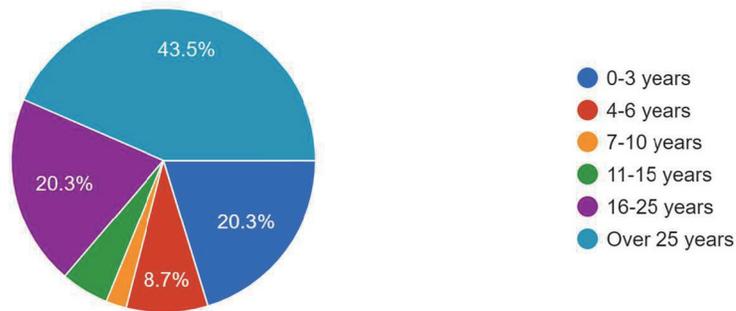
If you could choose an alternate mode of transportation other than driving, what factors would be important to you? (Check all that apply)

126 responses



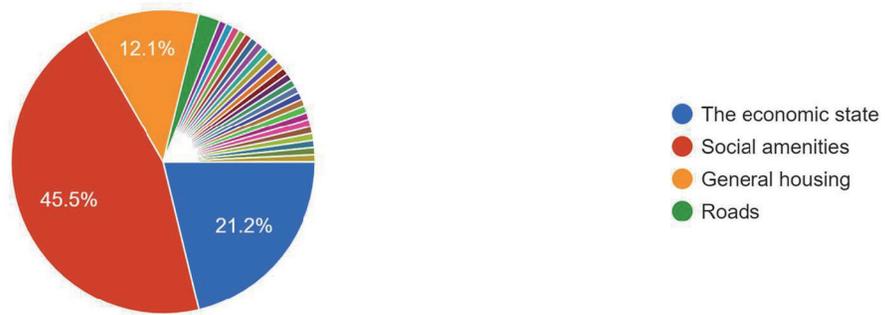
How long have you lived in Monroe?

138 responses



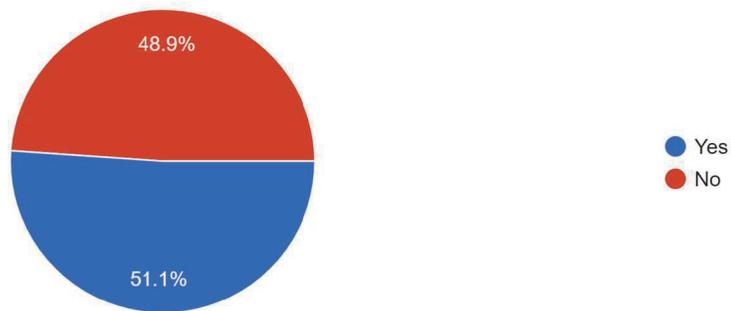
If you had to choose one aspect of Monroe to improve upon what would it be?

132 responses



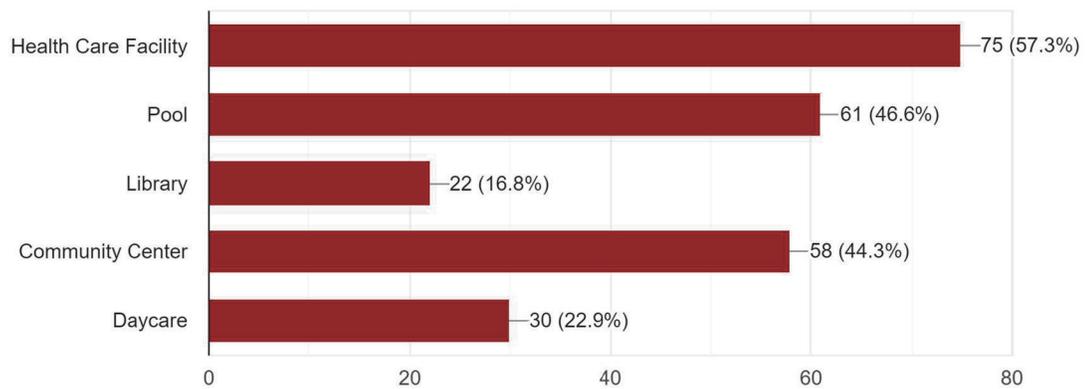
Do you have children under the age of 18?

137 responses



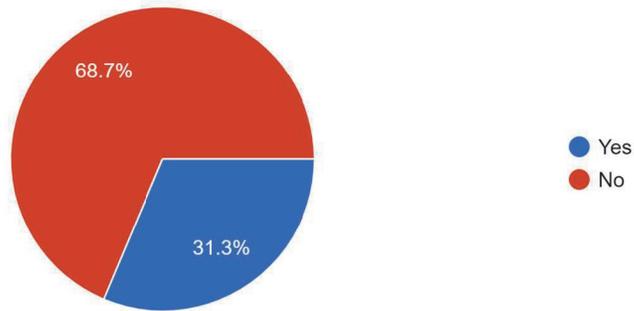
What public facilities would you like to see most in Monroe? (Check Two Boxes)

131 responses



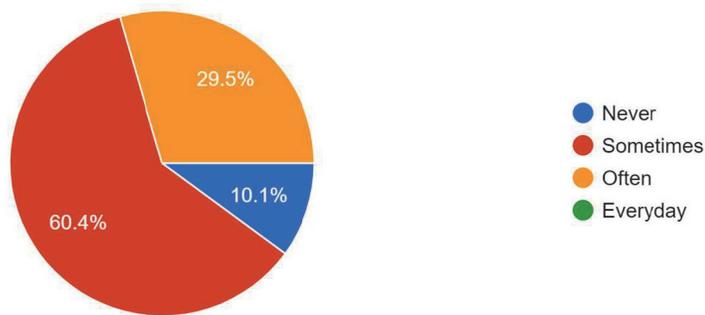
Are you pleased with the quality of the downtown area and the businesses within?

134 responses



How frequently do you visit each of the parks?

139 responses



The result can also be viewed using this link:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1faZ7ZUYztl9yPKwLIkj9MrPODUwseLO58C1RWh6N7iQ/edit?usp=sharing>

2.2.2 Interview

2.2.2.1 Focus Group

For our second method of public participation, students on October 2nd, 2019 had the opportunity to talk with a group of community members from various sectors of the community. Group one, through a question-based discussion, asked five economically based questions, and for approximately one hour, moderated a discussion between the eight community members present. The participants were:

1. Kim Thomas (City Clerk)
2. Jeff Davidson (Hometown Pride Coach)
3. Andrea Lanphier (Utility billing Clerk)
4. Brenda Lanser (Librarian)
5. Jean Goemaat (City council member)
6. Melissa Vander Hart (Leighton State Bank Representative)
7. Lynn Donahue (owner of Jersey Freeze, an employee of Midland Manufacturing)
8. Brad Jeremland (PCM School District Superintendent)

Through this process we learned about a variety of situations, concerns, wants and needs from these representatives of the community, as represented in the notes taken below.

- i. The community is eager to see new businesses because they have lost multiple businesses throughout the years. Restaurants closing all around. The retail industry is lacking too. Lack of Niche businesses.
- ii. Lack of sidewalks (Not a very walkable town).
- iii. They don't want a hospital but would appreciate having a clinic.
- iv. Group sees Monroe becoming a good family community, and continuing to develop as a bedroom community.
- v. Lack of reasons to stay in Monroe for the day.
- vi. Hope to create short-term economic activities.
- vii. Group interest in a coffee shop.
- viii. Not much Housing prices, that match the job market income (low income).
- ix. Need to bring in businesses that can make Monroe a holistic community.
- x. During the weekend, nobody is in town. They go to surrounding towns for activities.
- xi. There used to be a community garden in town, but nobody took care of it.
- xii. Residents are highly involved in volunteer/ extracurricular activities. Library tries to create activities and events for young kids to do at the library. Reading programs, etc., but only staffed by two people.
- xiii. Schools are getting relatively well involved in the community.

- xiv. Monroe is in the center of a decent number of major towns/cities. They feel that this is where most of their business comes from because it is a stop along the way.
- xv. Lots of people have their own gardens. Farm community.
- xvi. It is also a very family-centric town.
- xvii. The group claims this may be the reason why many businesses are not able to survive in Monroe, they try and branch out too fast when it comes to how big the store is, and what they are selling.
 - a. Jersey Freeze started in one single small building downtown, and later when comfortable moved to the building they now have, which is still relatively small.
 - b. Not enough of the businesses match the size of the town.

We learnt more about the city after this process. We would like to personally thank the participants for their cooperation and for sharing this information with us.

2.3 Steering Committee

When writing a comprehensive plan, it is important that all parties stay up to date on the work that is being accomplished. So, during the final construction processes of this comprehensive plan, one of the students, Alec Gustafson attended a city hall meeting on November 11, 2019 in Monroe to give an update on the progress. A lot was discussed in this meeting, all council members and many other forward-thinking citizens with strong community values were in attendance. Among the topics discussed were small traffic issues such as where to put a new stop sign, how and when elementary school students would be picked up by their parents since the recent construction on Jasper Street, and consideration to pay the Grimes Asphalt Co. for the West Lincoln Street Project. Some larger topics discussed were such as the resolution and final call to approve the FY2019 Annual Urban Renewal Tax Increment Financing, and the proposal to amend sections of city ordinances to allow for budget changes and changes on city code for the installation of stop



Figure 2.4 Alec Gustafson

signs on Meadowlark Drive and Big Blue Stem. During the meeting the student listened and gathered information that could pertain to certain chapters in this plan, then gave a brief overview of what the progress so far had been. The council and citizens were informed of current and potential ideas that the students had highlighted in the plan thus far. When the expansion of the Red Rock Prairie Trail was brought up, the council was very interested in what ideas had been floating around in the students’

work. There was a consensus that there was to be great economic benefits to come with this trail that could make Monroe a sort of tourist attraction. The talk and update of the comprehensive plan for the council and citizens in Monroe generated excitement for what this plan has in store for the city and further established the ISU Community and Regional Planning Department's relationship with the City of Monroe.

2.3.1 City Council Meeting

On December 9, 2019 the class travelled to Monroe to attend and present at the City Council meeting. This meeting provided an update, answered questions from the city staff, and gave insight to the data and recommendations the class has been working on.

2.4 Conclusion

Gathering information and perspectives from those who live in a community is critical to creating a well-informed comprehensive plan. For the Monroe Comprehensive Plan, the class used several methods to gather input and data. These methods included attending a football game to have discussions with residents, creating a resident survey, attending a steering committee meeting, and presenting at the city council meeting. Through a combination of these methods, many Monroe residents were engaged with and considered the conditions of assets in Monroe.

3.1 Introduction

In order to lay out policy recommendations for the city of Monroe, a complete understanding of Monroe's history and character, as well as a full analysis of its population must be made. The population and demographic makeup of an area plays a critical role in future and current plans for a city. Analysis of trends and projections help assess the needs for improvements to infrastructure as well as needs for housing and economic development. This section will analyze the history of Monroe and past population trends, look at the current demographic makeup of the population, and project future trends for the city of Monroe.

Population data used in this chapter was taken from the United States Census, which is a comprehensive survey carried out by the U.S Government and collected at the beginning of each decade. This is the official count of all population in the United States and is the most accurate data for cities across the nation, but unfortunately is also out of date since the most recent census was in 2010 and will not be updated until 2020. For this reason, when more recent data is needed for comparisons, population estimates are taken from the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is an annual survey also carried out by the Census Bureau to a sample population in all 50 states to make population estimates for each year as accurate as possible.

3.2 History and Character

Monroe is a small community sitting right outside the suburban ring of Des Moines. The city offers both a friendly-small town feel, while also being only 30 minutes away from Iowa's Capital city. The City of Monroe has a rich history which is very well documented. It was founded in 1843 by Adam Tool, William Highland, and others when they traveled to Iowa to stake out their homesteads. Originally, the town was named "Tools Point," after one of its founders. Eventually the town became incorporated in 1867 and was then named Monroe. The city still pays homage to its roots by naming one of its many parks "Tools Point Park."

The city of Monroe is located in Jasper County, and is intersected by highways 163 and 14, and is also only 12 miles from Interstate 80. This gives Monroe great access to larger neighboring communities, including Des Moines. Monroe is also very close to other larger cities. (Figure 3.1)

It is only 14 miles from Knoxville, 14 miles from Newton, and 14 miles from Pella, making it a community with access to many different amenities. This mix of great relevant location to large towns and charming small-town feel makes it an unbeatable community for those looking for a smaller community with large community accessibility. When asked what residents like the most about Monroe in a community survey, the most popular answer was the quiet, small-town atmosphere. When asked

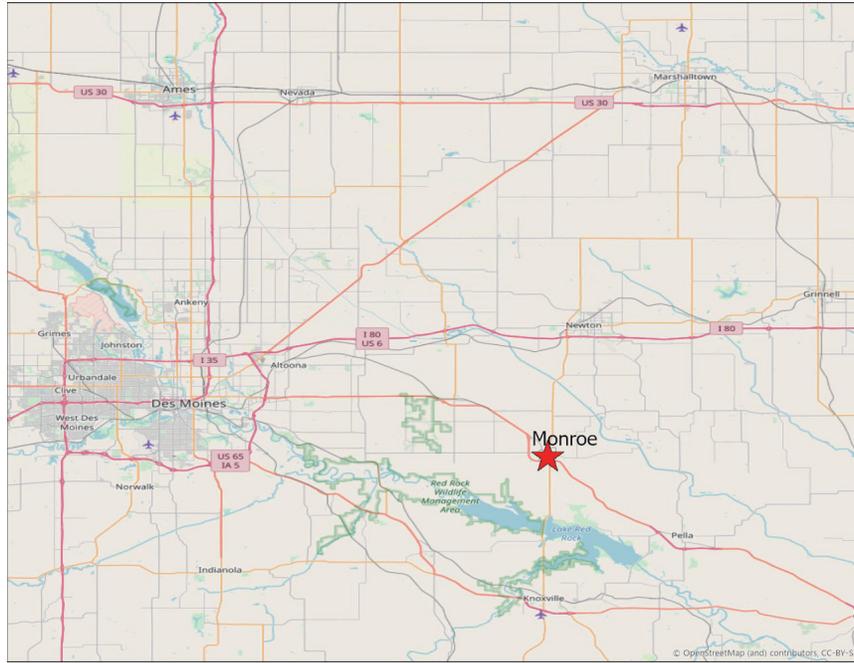


Figure 3.1 Map Showing Monroe
Source: Google Maps

what they think draws people to Monroe, a popular answer was the location. Along with this, 37% of respondents said they know their neighbors extremely well and 53.6% said they know them moderately well, which is proof of the close-knit community the town can offer. Finally, 96.3% of respondents said they think Monroe is a nice place to live.

Contributing to the sense of community, the town holds many community events that bring out residents, including an annual Fire Prevention Parade and a 5k centered around their popular ice cream shop, Jersey Freeze. Monroe also has many community organizations to be involved in, like the Old Settlers Club. 59.6% of survey respondents said that they are involved in community activities. Along with the sense of community and great location this town can offer, Monroe is a very safe place to live and has low crime rates. Residents can live at ease knowing their neighbors are watching out, and that the Monroe Police department is there to help.

3.3 Overview of Population

Although most of the nation’s rural population has been declining, Monroe, IA has been able to stay alive as a result of its proximity to Des Moines and other larger towns. Because of its unique charm and location, the rural town has a growing population. This can be seen now as well as in past trends. While most small towns have a history of declining population, Monroe’s population has been steadily increasing since the 60’s. The 1960s to the 1980s was a period of significant growth for Monroe especially. The population increased 37.26% from 1,366 to 1,875. (Figure 3.2) This is due to

suburbanization and lower housing prices. After that, this population boom slowed down to a steady growth, and Monroe is still growing in population today.

Monroe, IA, is in Jasper County, which is located next to Polk County. Jasper County has experienced interesting population trends in the past with it being comprised of mostly smaller rural towns, but close in proximity to the state’s Capitol. Jasper county has experienced times of both decline and growth. The 1960 population for Jasper county was 35,282, and has grown to 36,842, according to the most recent census in 2010. (Figure 3.3)

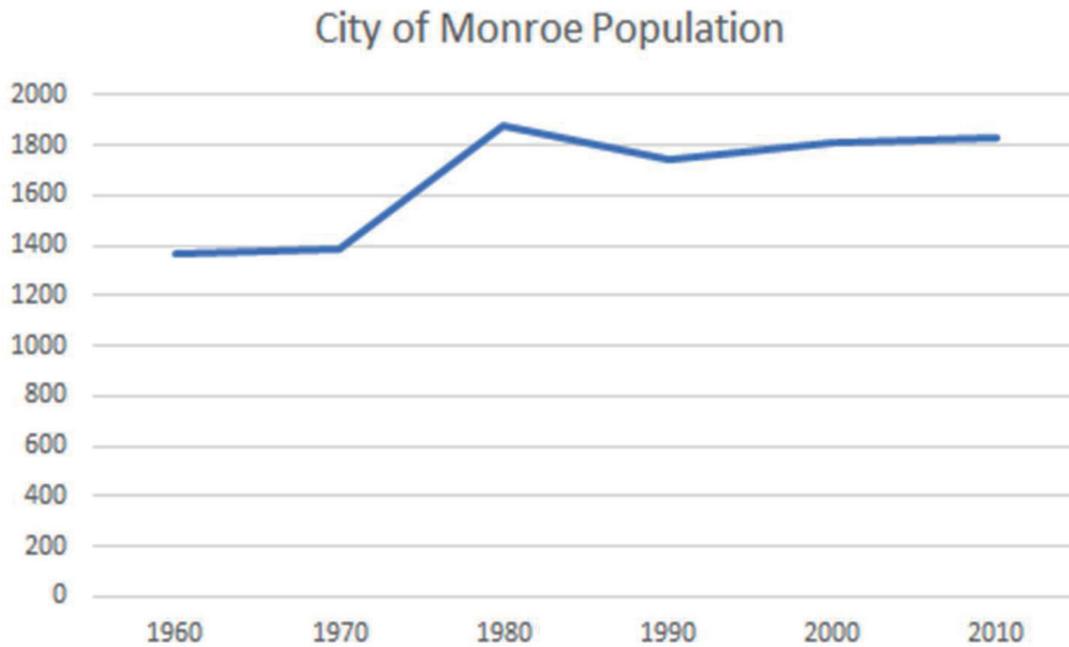


Figure 3.2 City of Monroe Population
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Monroe, on the other hand, experienced more growth than the county in this time frame. In 1960, the city of Monroe made up just 3.9% of Jasper county. But according to the 2010 census, it now makes up 5% of the county. Although Monroe and Jasper county seemed to have experienced growth and decline at different degrees of intensity, the city and county have a similar population pattern, which is common for a city-county relationship.

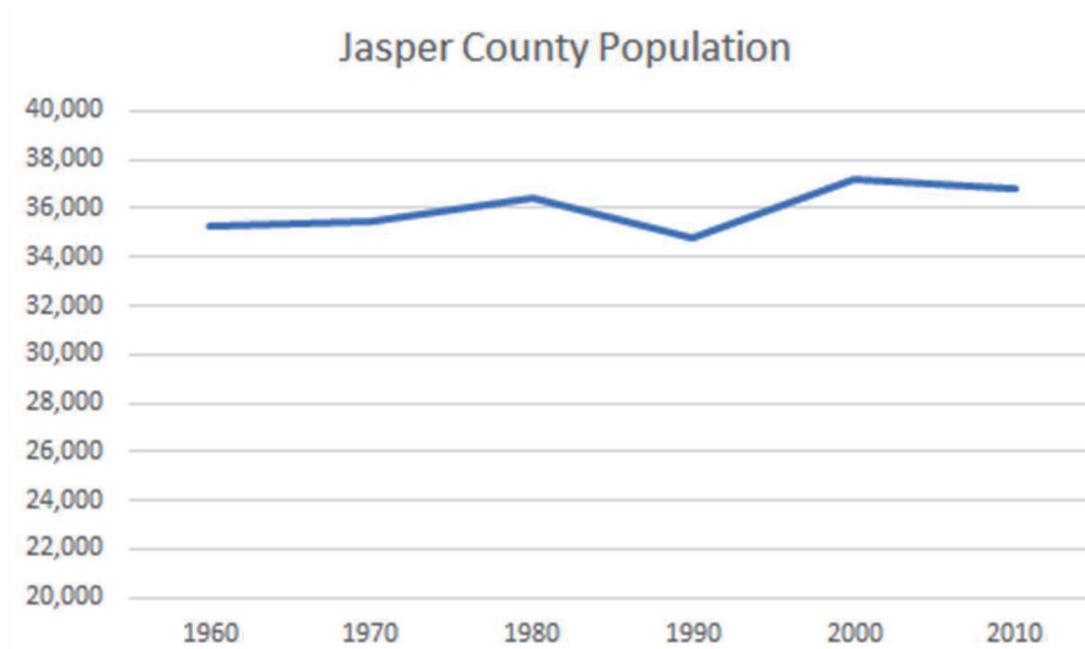


Figure 3.3 Jasper County Population
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

3.4 Population Demographics

The makeup of a city’s population is essential to the character of the city. The people of Monroe define the town and when planning for the future, you must pay attention to the demographics of a city in order to properly plan for it. In this section, we will discuss the demographics of Monroe in order to get a deeper understanding of the town, including household characteristics, education attainment, housing statistics, and employment demographics.

3.4.1 Household Analysis

Household information describes the characteristics of those living in households in Monroe. These defining characteristics are household income, type of household, household size, and family makeup. In Monroe, there was an estimated 764 households according to the 2017 ACS Survey, and the household median income was \$52,115 +/- \$10,814. Out of the 764 households, 8% made less than \$14,999, 24% made between \$15,000 and \$34,999, 33% made between 35,000 and %74,999, 29% made between \$75,000 and 149,000, and finally, 6% of households made \$150,000 or more. These numbers can be seen in Figure 3.4 below.

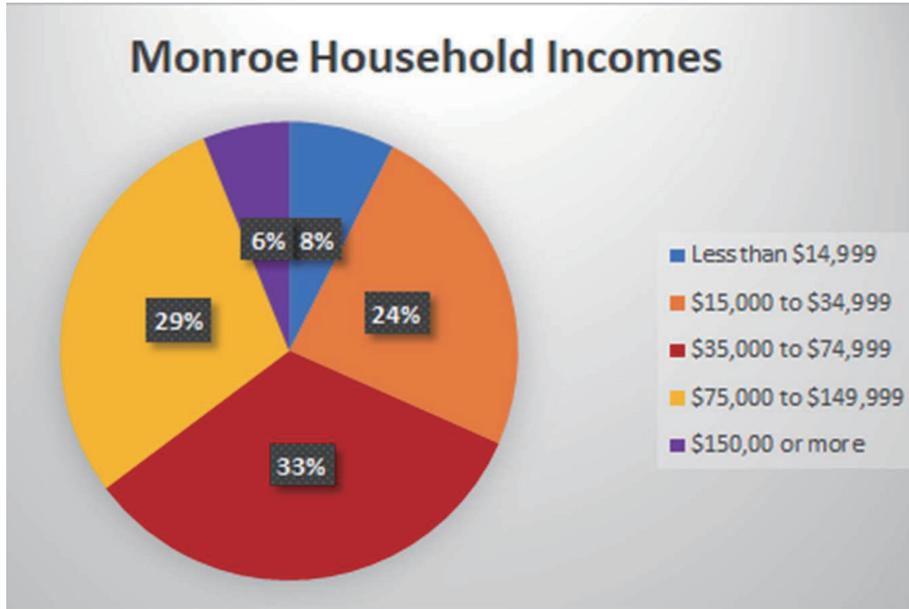


Figure 3.4 Monroe Household Income
Source: 2017 ACS Survey

According to the 2017 ACS, 8.5% +/- 4.2 of Monroe's population is below the poverty line. Poverty status is defined by the United States Census and is based on household income and weighted on size of household. As a comparison, 9.1% +/- 1.4 of Jasper County's population is below the poverty line. Because of the small-town, suburban character of Monroe, it is a very popular place for families to settle down at. It is also a very family-centric town. This can be seen in the community survey mentioned in Chapter 2. When asked if they have extended family also living in Monroe, 76.6% of respondents said they have extended family that also live in Monroe. The household demographics also exemplify this characteristic of Monroe. According to 2017 estimates, almost half of households are Married-Couple family households. Only 38% are non-family, and the remainder are family households without married couples as shown in Figure 3.5.

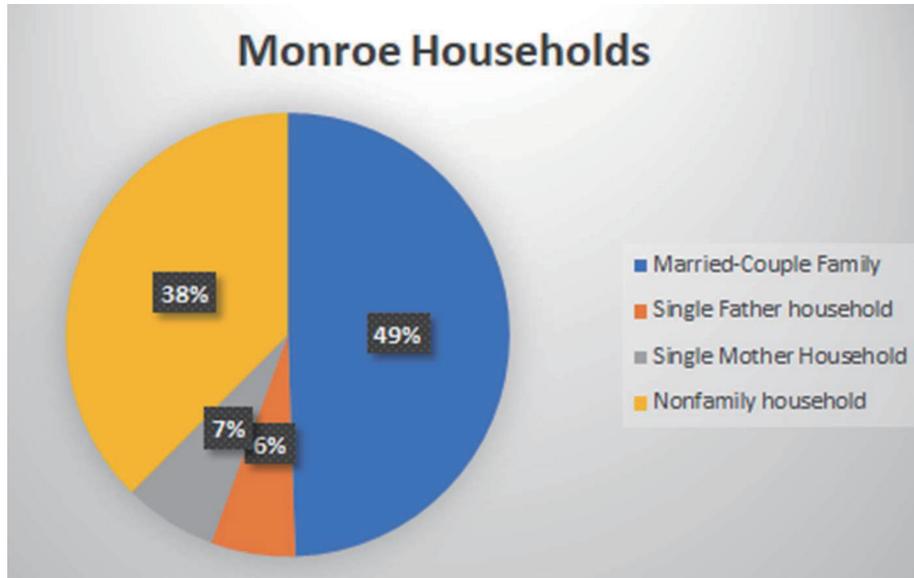


Figure 3.5 Monroe Households
Source: 2017 ACS Survey

The average household size for Monroe is 2.36. This is less for nonfamily households, which has an average size of 1.22. For married-couple family households though, the average household size is 3.06. (Figure 3.6)

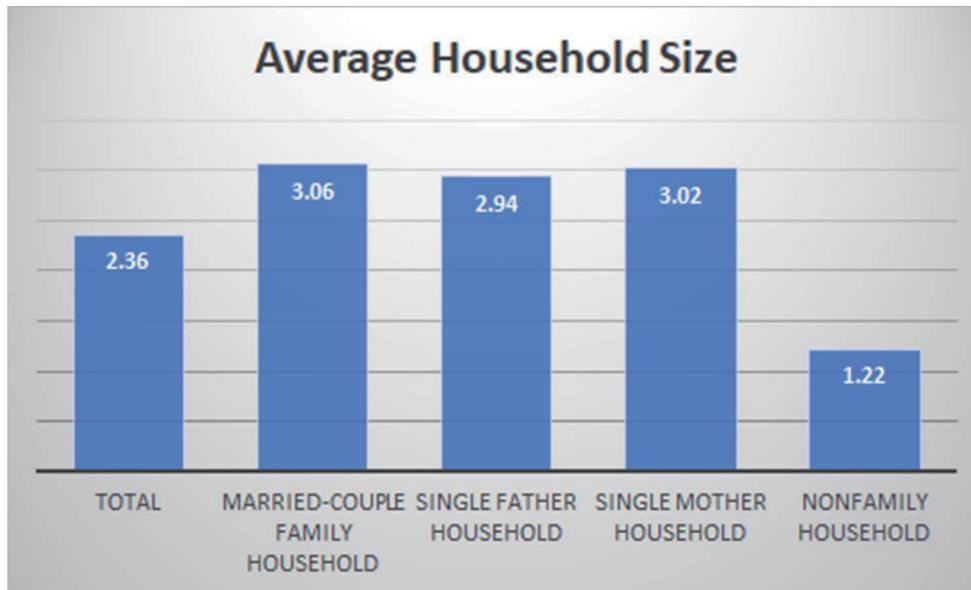


Figure 3.6 Average Household Size
Source: 2017 ACS Survey

Out of all the households in Monroe, 25% of them have children under the age of 18 (Figure 3.7) Because of Monroe’s good school program and it being a popular place for families, many families of school aged children are drawn to Monroe.

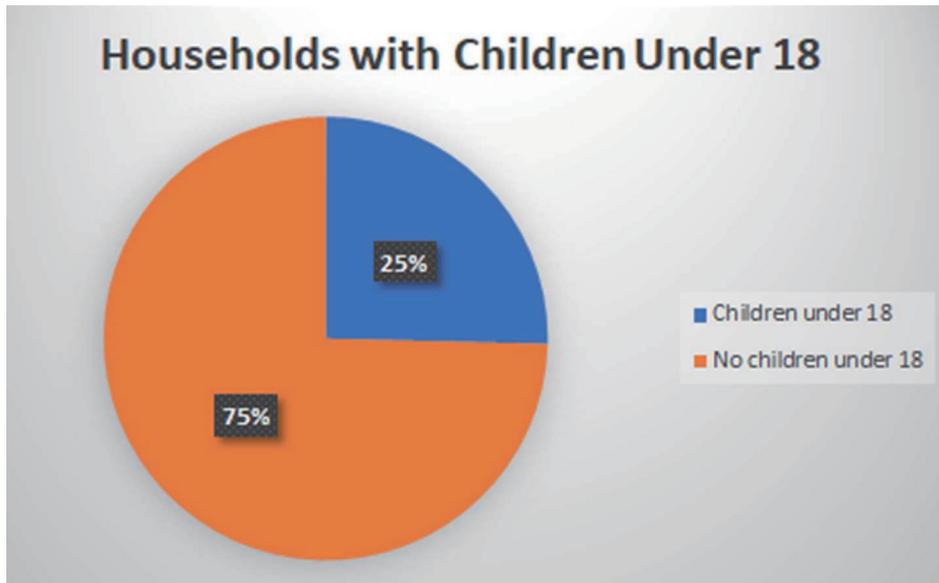


Figure 3.7 Households with Children Under 18
Source: 2017 ACS Survey

3.4.2 Housing Analysis

There are 839 housing units in the city of Monroe. Figure 3.8 shows that the majority of the housing units are owner occupied with 71% or 598 units. According to ACS 2017 survey (Figure 3.8) there are also 172 units that are renter-occupied and 69 units that are vacant.

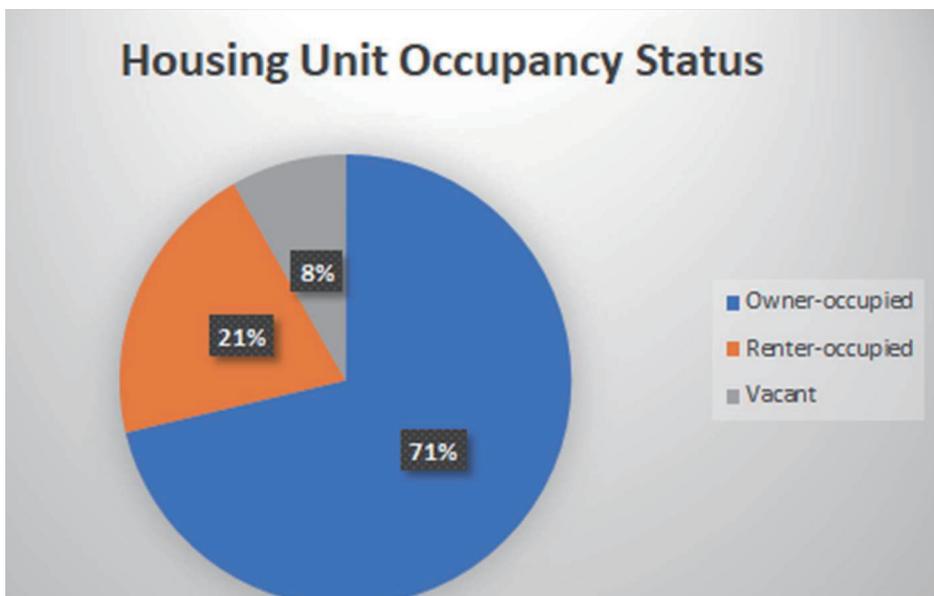


Figure 3.8 Housing Unit Occupancy Status
Source: 2017 ACS Survey

3.4.3 Employment Analysis

Subject	Monroe City, Iowa					
	Total		Labor Force Participation Rate		Employment / Population Ratio	
	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error
Population 16 years and over	1,404	+/- 150	71.7	+/- 5.0	67.4	+/- 5.1
Age (years)						
16 to 19	49	+/- 24	59.2	+/- 29.7	59.2	+/- 29.7
20 to 24	149	+/- 83	89.3	+/- 12.5	87.2	+/- 12.9
25 to 29	72	+/- 36	88.9	+/- 14.7	88.9	+/- 14.7
30 to 34	160	+/- 61	94.4	+/- 4.8	81.9	+/- 13.3
35 to 44	222	+/- 58	88.3	+/- 8.4	83.3	+/- 9.6
44 to 54	192	+/- 43	89.6	+/- 7.7	83.9	+/- 11.1
55 to 59	141	+/- 46	85.1	+/- 12.0	74.5	+/- 15.4
60 to 64	110	+/- 35	62.7	+/- 13.2	62.7	+/- 13.2
65 to 74	205	+/- 57	33.7	+/- 11.6	33.7	+/- 11.6
75 and over	104	+/- 38	2.9	+/- 4.2	2.9	+/- 4.2

Table 3.1 Employment Analysis

Source: 2017 U.S. Census Bureau

Table 3.1 shows the population 16 years old and older, the working eligible population of Monroe. The Labor Force Participation Rate refers to the number of people who are either employed or actively seeking employment. The Employment Participation Ratio is the percentage of workers currently employed. This table breaks it down based on age groups within Monroe. The largest labor force percentage in the town comes from the 30-34 years old age group at 94.4%. However, the employment ratio comes in at 81.9%. What this means is that 12.5% of this labor force is seeking employment, but not actively employed at the time of this survey. In total, 71.7% (1,007 individuals), of the towns working population is working or seeking work, while 67.4%, (946 individuals), is actively working. The table also provides the margin of error for each data set. What the margin of error tells you is that these numbers are estimates that may vary +/- the given margin of error. For example, the amount of 30-34-year old is estimated to be 160 individuals but could be anywhere between 160 + or - 61 individuals.

3.4.4 Educational Attainment

Table 3.2 table shows the education level earned by Monroe residents ages 25 to 64. The numbers on the left show the total amount of individuals, while the +/- numbers on the right show the margin of error for the data. What can be gathered from this table is of the Monroe residents at the time of this

survey, 95.8% are high school graduates or more, 59.4% have at least some college education or more, and 18.8% have a bachelor’s degree or more.

Educational Attainment	Total	Margin of Error
Population 25 to 64 years	897	+/- 123
Less than high school graduate	37	+/- 25
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	327	+/- 65
Some college or associate degree	364	+/- 81
Bachelor's degree or higher	169	+/- 55

Table 3.2 Educational Attainment
Source: 2017 ACS Survey

It is important to remember that this data only looked at ages 25 to 64 and does not take into account anyone younger. Those younger than 25 and older than 64 who obtain some level of education, or less than high school education, will be reflected in a future census.

3.4.5 Racial Distribution

Monroe’s racial distribution is shown in Table 3.3. As of 2017, most of the population was white and was reported to be 96.8% of the population. The Black or African American population in Monroe was reported at 0.2%. The Asian population made up 0.6% of the population, and the Hispanic or Latino population was shown at 0.2%. Finally, people of two or more races made up 2.2% of the population of Monroe.

As seen in Table 3.3, the racial makeup of Monroe has remained relatively constant since the last census in 2010. The white population in Monroe has seen a small decrease of 1.4%, going from 98.2% in 2010, to 96.8% in 2017 estimates. This has been caused by a slight increase in the percent of people identifying as two or more races, which increased to 2.2% in 2017, from 0.3% in 2010.

Jasper county’s racial distribution is shown in Table 3.4. According to 2017 estimates, most of the county’s population was white and was reported at 96.8% of the population. The Black or African American population was reported at 1.6%. American Indian and Alaska Natives contributed to 0.2% of the population. The Asian population made up 0.4% of the county. Hispanic or Latino was shown at 2%. And finally, people of two or more races was reported at 1.5% of the population of Jasper County.

The changes seen in Monroe are similar to changes seen in Jasper County. As seen in the Table 3.4, Jasper County has also seen a small decrease in the percentage of its white population. This is not unexpected since, as a whole, the United States continues to see more diversity amongst its citizens.

Race	Percentage (2017) %	Percentage (2010) %
White	94.20	95.80
Black or African American	1.60	1.30
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.20	0.30
Asian	0.40	0.40
Hispanic or Latino	2.00	1.50
Two or more races	1.50	0.80

Table 3.3 Racial Distribution
Source: US Census Bureau

Race	Percentage (2017) %	Percentage (2010) %
White	96.80	98.20
Black or African American	0.20	0.30
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.00	0.10
Asian	0.60	0.50
Hispanic or Latino	0.20	0.60
Two or more races	2.20	0.30

Table 3.4 Jasper County Racial Distribution
Source: US Census Bureau

3.4.6 Age and Gender Distribution

According to the most recent ACS estimates (2017), the age range of 30-34-year-old makes up the largest percentage of Monroe’s total population, at 8.9%. There is also a high percentage of young adults ages 20-24 (8.3%) (Table 3.5) There are many reasons these age ranges could be among the highest percentages of Monroe’s population. Monroe is only 30 miles away from Des Moines; this makes it an ideal spot to live for an easy commute for young professionals working in Des Moines, but not wanting to live in the city. The 30-34-year-old range is also a common age range for those with young children wanting to settle down. Monroe is a great area to draw in these types of people because of its small-town

community feel, good location, safety, and excellent schools.

This is also evident with the increased single-family housing development in order to keep up with the influx of young families. In contrast, 23.3% of the population are 60 and older. This large percentage of older population is common in small communities. This population age is very significant in Monroe, as many at this age may have even grown up in and lived their whole lives in Monroe. In the community survey, 43.5% of respondents said they have lived in Monroe for over 25 years. Others may have moved to the quiet community after their kids become adults and moved out of their care. Whatever brought them to Monroe, they are a significant part of the community, and are part of those most involved in community events and organizations, like bingo nights. Monroe needs to make sure they are taking action in order to accommodate this aging population.

The data collected from the U.S. Census Bureau was used to make the Age Distribution. (Figure 3.9) The figure shows that males and females are relatively similar across the board, with the exception of a few outliers. There is a noticeably higher percentage of males at ages 20-24 and 30-34. A possible explanation for this imbalance is due to the popularity of young adult men staying at home to help on the farm, which is very common in small rural communities, while young adult women leave to go to college. A reason for the spikes in both these age groups could be residents who went off to college, returning to start their lives and families in an affordable community.

Monroe Age Distribution		
Years	Total	Percentage (%)
Under 5	143	7.8
5 to 9	116	6.4
10 to 14	120	6.7
15 to 19	66	3.7
20 to 24	149	8.3
25 to 29	72	4.0
30 to 34	160	8.9
35 to 39	118	6.6
40 to 44	104	5.8
45 to 49	110	6.1
50 to 54	82	4.6
55 to 59	141	7.8
60 to 64	110	6.1
65 to 69	104	5.8

Monroe Age Distribution		
Years	Total	Percentage (%)
70 to 74	101	5.6
75 to 79	38	2.1
80 to 84	36	2.0
85 and over	30	1.7

Table 3.5 Monroe Age Distribution

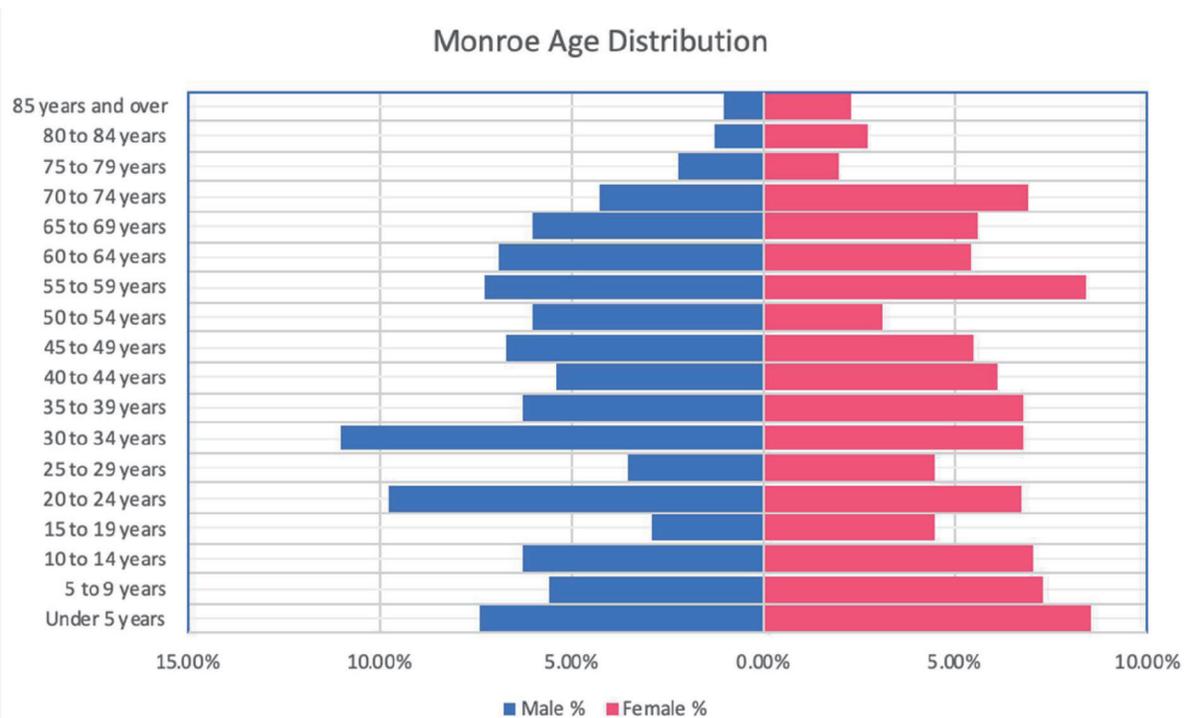


Figure 3.9 Monroe Age Distribution

Source: US Census Bureau

Monroe is also located in a spot that makes it friendly for work commutes due to the proximity to Des Moines, Newton, Altoona, Grinnell, and Prairie City, which is good for young professionals and families. As the chart goes up in age, the female percentage tends to be higher, except for a couple of outliers, which is due to females, on average, living longer than men.

3.5 Population Projection

Population projections are an important part of community development. Being prepared for the future is vital, and population projections are a window into the future. To determine the population

projection for the city of Monroe, linear, exponential, and shift-share extrapolation models were used (Table 3.6)

These projections provide a variety of scenarios for us to analyze. The linear technique assumes there is an equal, incremental growth year after year, based on the average growth from a set amount of previous year’s growth. The exponential technique compounds the growth on each year. Finally, the shift-share technique is a ratio type of projection, it assumes that the growth of a city will follow similar trends seen in a larger area that it is in. For the purpose of Monroe’s projection, we used Jasper county, as both have experienced similar population increases in the past years, which is a good indicator that Monroe will follow Jasper County trends. These three projections will give an adequate representation of the expected future of Monroe’s population.

Population Projections					
	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Linear	1,892	1,936	1,980	2,025	2,069
Exponential	1,892	1,938	1,985	2,033	2,083
Shift-Share	1,892	1,937	1,983	2,029	2,075

Table 3.6 Population Projections

Shown in Table 3.6 above are the three population projections for Monroe’s future. Although very similar, the three methods provided somewhat different results. Overall, each showed varying degrees of population growth. Because of the great location, as well as new housing developments, Monroe is expected to grow in population, rather than decline, like most rural communities in Iowa. The population of Monroe in 2040 is projected to be around 2,069-2,083. (Figure 3.10)

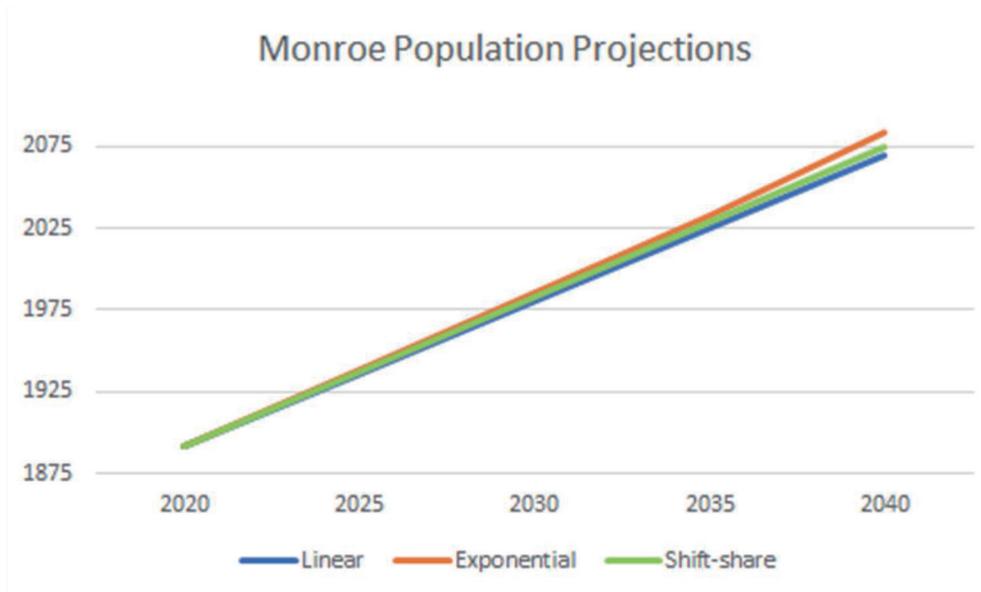


Figure 3.10 Monroe Population Projections
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 3.11 shows a population graph for the city of Monroe, with its future projection highlighted in orange. The recommended projection method for this situation is the exponential method. This is because of the new housing developments currently being built in Monroe, making room for, and attracting, more people.

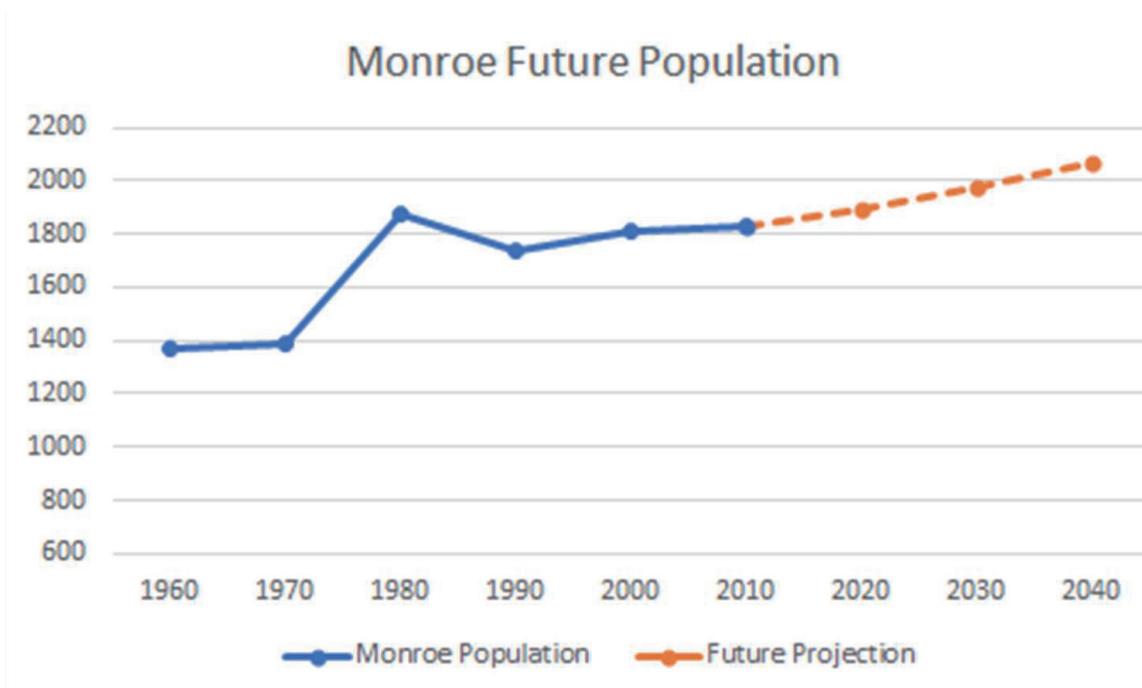


Figure 3.11 Monroe Future Population
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

3.6 Overall Analysis

Overall, the unique charm of Monroe and its great location are helping the city go against the odds and see population growth both in the past, and will in the future, unlike most small rural towns. The city should continue to strive for more growth with continued housing development and an increase in amenities. Monroe is expected to surpass 2,000 people soon and will need to plan accordingly.

However, it is important to understand that these projections are just estimates of what the population could look like in the coming years. In reality, many things could impact the Monroe population and cause a decline in population. A more accurate number for population will be available upon the completion of the 2020 Census.

Based on the data from Figure 3.8, Monroe has a high population percentage of 20-24 and 30-34-year olds. Because of this, they should continue their housing development efforts to accommodate the young professionals and young families moving to and living in Monroe. Monroe also has an aging population of 60 and older. This aging population also should be accommodated moving forward with necessary health facilities.

Monroe's unique charm should be capitalized on, and measures should be taken to keep up with the high community involvement with events and organizations to play into its small-town feel. This charm should also be kept in mind when building more housing developments and making updates to the town square. Further analysis into recommendations for housing, economic growth, and infrastructure will be made in the coming chapters.

3.7 Recommendations

- **Goal 1:** Begin planning to further accommodate the aging population
 - 23.3% of the population is 60 and older, making up almost a fourth of the population, accommodations should be considered.
- **Goal 2:** Put in place more amenities aimed at the younger population and families
 - Monroe has great potential for being a place where young families are drawn to settle down and should capitalize on current trends.
- **Goal 3:** Re-evaluate the figures in this document upon the completion of the 2020 Census.
- **Goal 4:** Continue moving in the right direction for continued expansion.
 - Monroe's current housing development project is a good step towards providing more housing to increase the population.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyzes the city of Monroe and its surroundings as well as its current flood risk, soil analysis, and possible annexation opportunities. As well as looking to the future of the city and how it can grow to use its possible economic assets to its advantage. The existing land use map in Figure 4.1 shows the current state and infrastructure of the city of Monroe, using parcel data acquired from Jasper County and zoning data from Veenstra & Kimm, Inc.

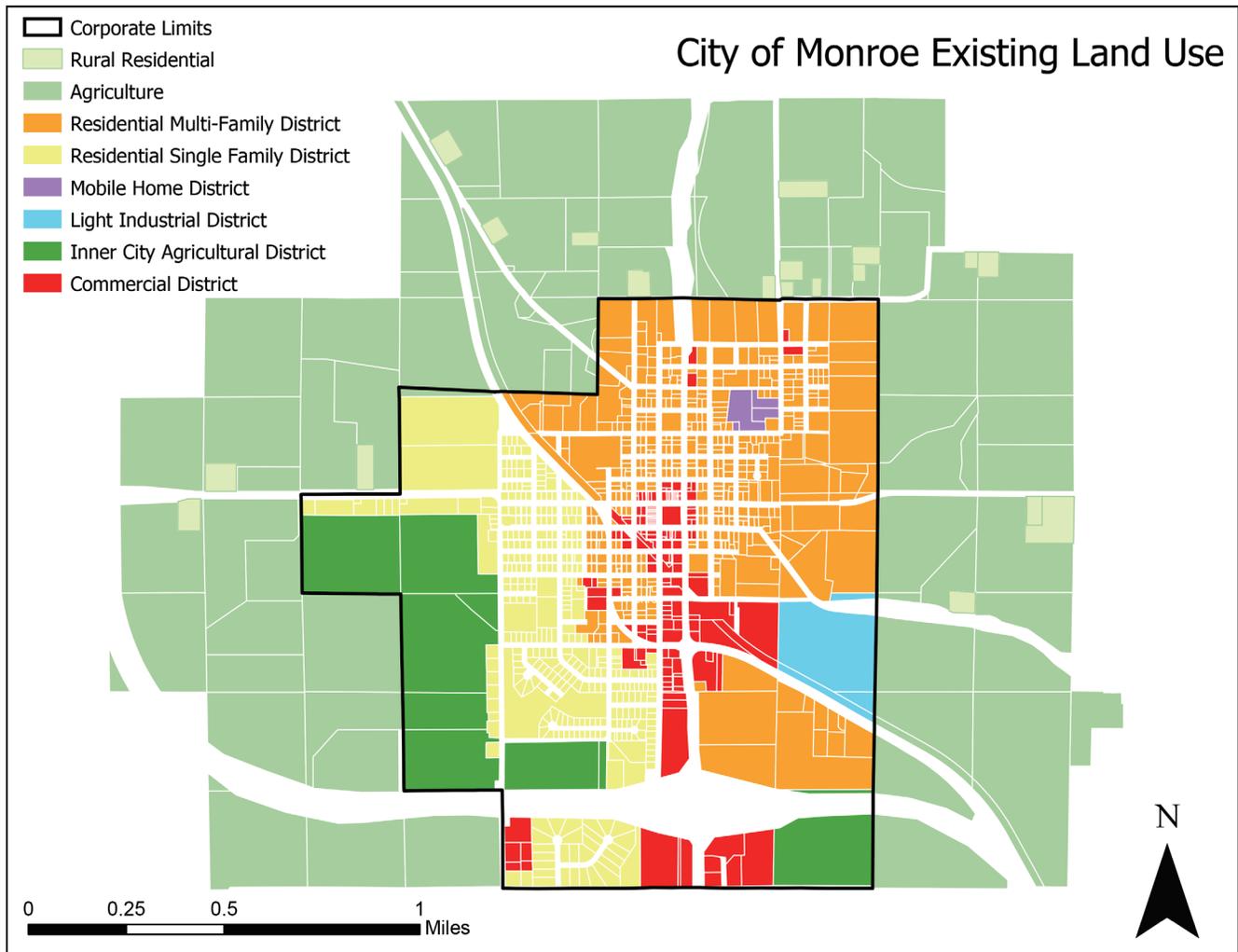


Figure 4.1 Existing Land Use Map of Monroe
Source: Jasper County / Map Source: Alex Gustafson

It will be used to influence our decisions in annexation and future land use development suggestions to the city. The Flood Zone section shows the City of Monroe as regulated by a Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) (Figure 4.4) and an Iowa Wetlands Map (Figure 4.5) constructed by the

students involved in the making of this plan.

The Soil Analysis section discusses the agricultural potential of land within and around Monroe, with data obtained from Jasper County and Beacon American Soil Survey. The Annexation Growth section of this chapter lays out Monroe's potential to expand beyond its city limits and evolve as a community. Recommendations will be made for the future of Monroe and how this current assessment can help Monroe succeed in coming years.

4.2 Land-Use Descriptions

Agriculture

Use is for agriculture, including crops and livestock and tends to be near the outskirts of the city. A majority of the cities surrounding parcels are all crops and fields for livestock owned by the residents in the Rural Residential areas.

Rural Residential

These parcels of land are the homesteads of the farmers who own most of the land outside Monroe.

Inner City Agricultural District

These parcels are made up of the Gateway Recreation Golf Course, Monroe Recreation Park, The Monroe Cemetery, and about 75 acres of Inner-City Agriculture.

Light Industrial District

This district starts east of the Heartland Co-op and one section of about 35 acres of Inner-City Agriculture.

Mobile Home District

This district is almost 15 acres with up to 20 or more mobile homes. This district does not contain any parks or other assets other than the homes that are there.

Residential Single-Family District

The Residential Single-Family District is mostly on the west side of town and extends as far east as North Commerce Street, and consists of housing along West Washington Street which turns into Highway F70 W. The North and borders of Residential Single-Family District are the northernmost section of West Jasper St. to the city limits and South 128th Ave. This land use zone also consists of about 36 acres of farmland to the northern boundary of the zoning district that could possibly be used for future land development in single/multi-family housing units.

Residential Multi-Family District

This land use zone is mostly on the east end of town. Its westernmost border is the northern section of West Jasper St. similar to the Residential Single-Family District, there is also multi-family residential housing up to the eastern city limit the northern and southern borders are Rosebud Ave and IA-163, respectively. This district contains Prairie City Monroe Highschool, as well as some undeveloped farmland within the city limits in the north eastern section of the Residential Multi-Family District of



Figure 4.2 New Development

83.74 acres, this could potentially also be used for more single or multi-family housing, or possibly more commercial or light industrial businesses.

Commercial District

The commercial district is comprised of downtown Monroe and contains all of the central businesses within the city. Most notably the Jersey Freeze Ice Cream Shop, the three bars within downtown Monroe, the grocery store, Dollar General, Gas Stations, etc. The Commercial Zone extends as far east and contains the Heartland Co-op and as far west as Taylor St. and flows north up N Monroe St. and heads as far south as the Jersey Freeze Ice Cream shop and the Casey's Gas Station and Subway at S 128th Ave W. The Commercial District has a few aspects that could use some updates to further grow the economic value of living in the city, these will be touched on in the Economic Development section of this Comprehensive Plan.



Figure 4.3 Salon Essence Building

4.3 Flood Zones

Flood zones are areas that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has identified according to the levels of flood risk in certain areas. There are two types of maps that FEMA creates, FIRM's (Flood Insurance Rate Map's) shown in Figure 4.5 and Flood Hazard Boundary Map's, which we did not use in this plan as the data it displayed was not deemed relevant.

The National Flood Insurance Program uses FIRM's for different purposes such as floodplain mitigation, management, and insurance purposes, while a FHBM is used primarily used for flood hazard identification and Emergency program communities. The FIRM in Figure 4.5 shows the City of Monroe is at practically no risk of flooding, the city sits at an elevation of 925 ft which is rather high in elevation compared to surrounding cities like Reasnor which sits at 764 ft and Colfax at 801 ft. Based on the FIRM you can see the two flood plains near Monroe and neither of them are close enough for there to be much of a risk for the city to worry about floodplain mitigation or management. Figure 4.4 shows essentially the same information about the City of Monroe's floodplain situation, however; this map shows more of Monroe's surroundings with the Iowa Wetlands shapefile acquired from Jasper County.

There are some run-off watersheds that run into Monroe based on this map, but they are of little importance when considering the flood risk of the city. All that can be deduced from this is that some of the roads in those sections of town may be at more risk of erosion.

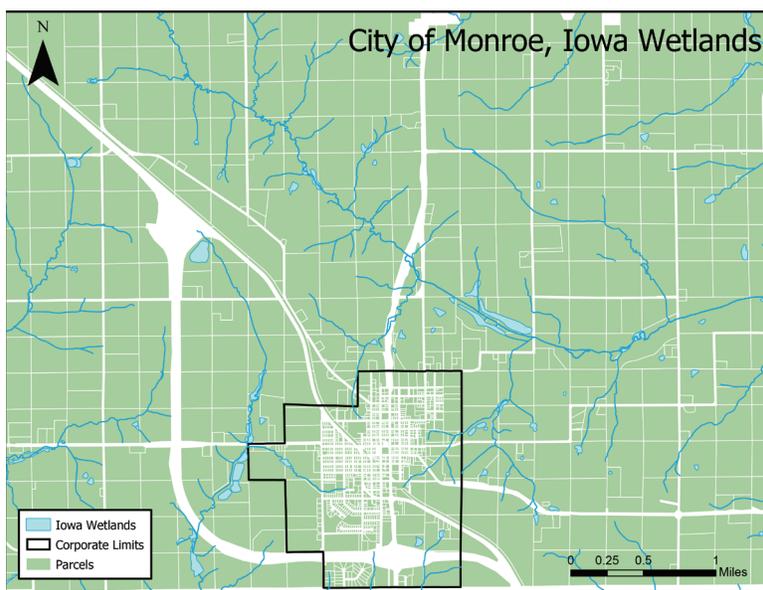


Figure 4.4 Monroe Wetlands

Source: Jasper County / Map Source: Alex Gustafson

4.4 Soil Evaluation

Soil Evaluation is an important subject to cover in a comprehensive plan, especially in Iowa, with the rich soil that we possess it is always in a city's best interest to have a soil analysis done so that any kind of agricultural business or practice that the city may want to bring in or perform will benefit the

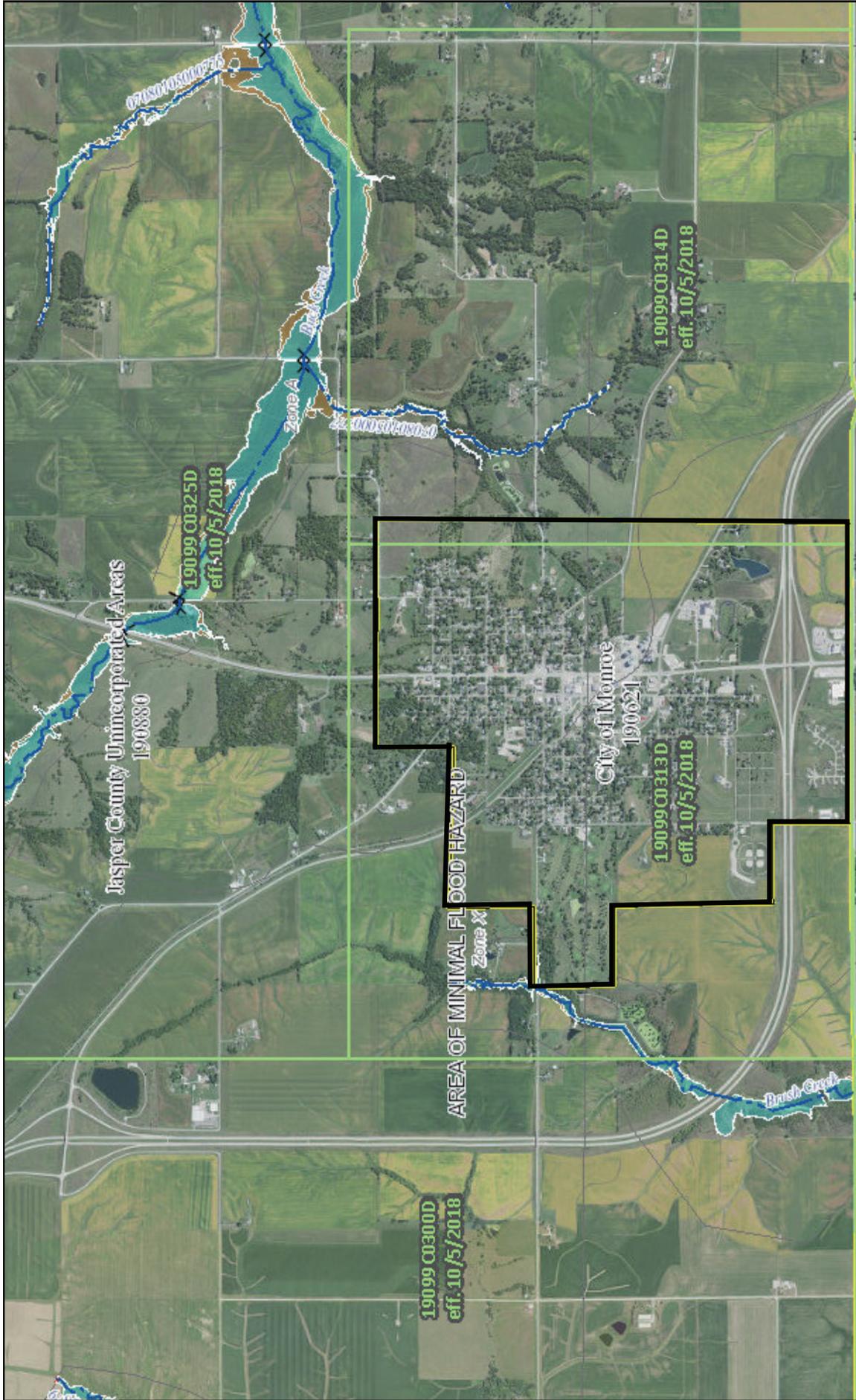


Figure 4.5 Flood Insurance Rate Map

Source: FEMA

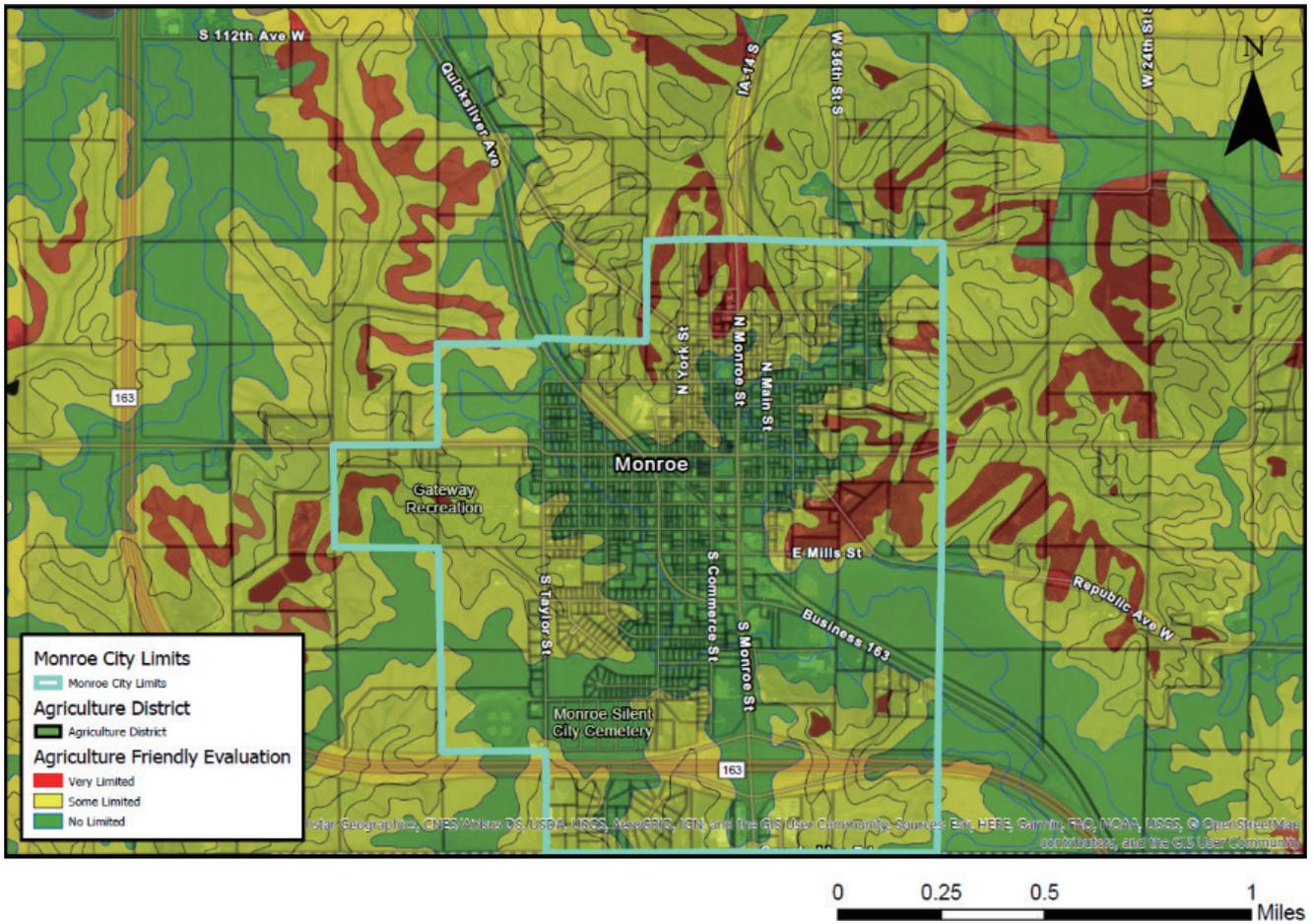


Figure 4.6 Soil Evaluation Map
 Source: Jasper County / Map Source: Alex Gustafson

FID	Shape	AREASYMBOL	SPATIALVER	MUSYM	MUKEY	CSR
157	Polygon	1A099	9	822D2	407698	15
269	Polygon	1A099	9	76B	407689	86
271	Polygon	1A099	9	65F	407684	10
383	Polygon	1A099	9	24E2	407646	38
392	Polygon	1A099	9	5B	407671	68
475	Polygon	1A099	9	W	3051865	0

Table 4.1 Soil Evaluation Map Attribute
 Data Source: Jasper County

community. Soil Evaluations and analysis can be done in many ways, however in this comprehensive plan we have acquired a soil analysis shapefile from Jasper County, created the map in Figure 4.6, and interpreted the Jasper data on our own using the Corn Suitability Rating as shown in Table 4.1.

Corn Suitability Rating (CSR) is a system developed by Iowa State University in the 1970's. (Hertz Ag, 2014) The purpose of the system is to measure potential soil productivity based on soil profile, topology, and weather conditions. The CSR is an index rating from 0 to 100 with 100 being the most productive soil for agricultural use. (Computing the Iowa Corn Suitability Rating for Your Farm, 2014) The CSR is not only used for corn however, it can also be used to determine how productive the soil can be for other crops such as soybeans and other crops grown in the area. In this comprehensive plan we utilized the CSR data from Jasper County to develop a topographic map (figure 4.6) that shows where the most agriculturally suitable soil is in and around Monroe. The CSR is shown by three colors, Red shows lower CSR ratings 33 and below, Yellow shows Mid CSR ratings 34 to 66, and Green shows the best CSR ratings 67 to 100. This data can be used to help determine property values for land in Monroe and help with future conservation planning methods.

4.5 Annexation Growth

Annexation Process in the State of Iowa

“All of the owners of land in a territory adjoining a city may apply in writing to the council of the adjoining city requesting annexation of the territory. Territory comprising railway right-of-way or territory comprising not more than twenty percent of the land area may be included in the application without the consent of the owner to avoid creating an island or to create more uniform boundaries. Public land may be included in the territory to be annexed. However, the area of the territory that is public land included without the written consent of the agency with jurisdiction over the public land shall not be used to determine the percentage of territory that is included with the consent of the owner and without the consent of the owner.”

“Not later than thirty days after the consultation, the board of supervisors of each county that contains all or a portion of the territory to be annexed shall, by resolution, state whether or not it supports the application or whether it takes no position in support of or against the application. If there is a comprehensive plan for the county, the board shall take the plan into account when considering its resolution. A copy of the resolution shall be immediately filed with the annexing city and shall be considered by the city council when taking action on the application. The city council shall forward a copy of the resolution to the city development board as part of the city proceedings on the annexation. Failure of a board of supervisors to adopt a resolution shall not delay the proceedings on the application

nor shall such failure be considered a deficiency either in the application or in the annexing city's proceedings.”

Annexation Law Source: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/ico/chapter/368.pdf>

4.5.1 South Annexation Growth area (Interstate 163)

The area south of Interstate 163 has some existing development currently. The land in this area has a soil suitability rating of no limited. This area had some potential land use for the area could be developed to commercial parcel or low-density residential parcel.

i. City Services for Growth Area

There is already some Infrastructure for city services in current area as some properties are developed. City services can be further extended to this area with vease, including sewer, water, electricity and high-speed internet services. It should be expected that the developer is responsible for construction of sewer and water system. If there is a high-density commercial area built for tourism purpose developing in feature. The city should also make sure that lines are compatible with the rest of the water and sewer systems to avoid future complications. Undeveloped areas that have potential to be annexed should be taken into consideration when extending any utility mains.

ii. Current Development Potential and Challenges

This area shows low flood hazard or flood plain area potential. The city is currently developing new properties near Interstate 163, a large number of existing service infrastructure is also being laid near the annexation area, which can ensure the high livability of the characteristic annexation area. The development of the city will be more suitable for the development trend of the city. Because it's only 10 minutes' drive from Monroe to the Lake Red Rock. The region also has tremendous potential to develop into a Tourist-centered catering, residential and entertainment area, by mixing residential zone with a commercial zone, providing catering, residential and entertainment. This will also feed into community identity.

iii. Development Strategies

This area had high potential could be used in feature development. In later time city of Monroe could continue developing additional service structures in the region to help the region evolve into a TIF area. Based on research a TIF area can last at least 20 years, the area can be adjusted. All taxable values in the region preferably will be reinvested into the city funds. These funds can be used to further encourage the development in the region. Proper use of these incentives can bring significant benefits to the city.

iv. Action Steps

- A. Gather community opinions.
- B. Attract developers with incentives.
- C. Evaluate which structures are compatible with land.
- D. Create more specific visions and goals on the land north of Interstate 163.
- E. Use logos that distinguish Monroe for visitors.

4.5.2 West Annexation Growth area

The west area of Monroe is currently zoning as agriculture district, Soil suitability grade of land in this area is not limited. According to the survey, the city is short of fresh organic produce, such as fruit and vegetables, which could be developed into a city farm, or be sold to agricultural investors/farmers

i. City Services for Growth Area

Because this area will be developed as agricultural land, the demand for services such as urban the water and sewer systems to avoid future complications. Undeveloped areas that have potential to be annexed should be taken into consideration when extending any utility mains.

ii. Current Development Potential and Challenges

After doing an analysis, this area shows low flood hazard or flood plain area potential. Urban agriculture is a hot topic in recent times. Planting fresh produce and selling to the community (both Monroe and surrounding Monroe) will greatly improve the livability index of the living sector, and also encourage a stronger economy. Urban agricultural problems around high-density cities, such as high utility costs, limited horizontal space or high land value, should not be a large concern for Monroe. Due to the expected use of fertilizers from agricultural purposes, and the negative externalities that can be associated with it, it would be advisable to have local officials to help monitor all agricultural land use and provide assistance, counseling, etc. to prevent, and also react to the possible problems caused by the overuse or misuse of fertilizer in cash crop or subsistence crop cultivation.

iii. Development Strategies

By approving part of the area for agricultural cultivation, it can increase employment opportunities and provide a better social practice opportunity for all age groups in the community, which will help to enhance the community as a whole. After such a plan is promoted, it will significantly

iv. Action Steps

- A. Gather community opinions.
- B. Organizing residents to participate in farm construction.
- C. Evaluate which structures are compatible with land.
- D. Create more specific visions and goals for future market form.
- E. supervise soil contamination level by city council.

4.6 Overall Analysis

Overall, the city of Monroe has many opportunities to grow based on the Land Use maps and analysis, its low risk of flooding, its farmable soil, and annexation possibilities. Monroe has a rather large commercial district that could potentially be re-zoned to that it is more central to the city rather than spread south along Monroe St. and being that the downtown area needs revitalization, it has the potential to become something more prominent. Based on the flood plain analysis data by FEMA and Jasper County, it is obvious that Monroe has no real risk of flooding which makes it a prime spot to live for young people/professionals and equally those starting families or those looking to settle down. With Monroe’s soil being highly suitable for cultivation, it is clear that Monroe also has potential, to develop community gardens or other agriculturally based economic developments. As expressed in the Annexation section of this chapter there is also the potential for western and southern growth for new development, whether that be housing or light industrial or any other district zoning.

The future/potential land use map in Figure 4.7 shows the city of Monroe, with the Raccoon River Trail Running through it and shows parcels of land that have potential to be rezoned. Due to the possible economic benefits of the trail, there is potential for more commercial land to be developed for businesses. This is depicted by the red hatched zones in the map. This land use map also shows the potential of the mobile home district to be developed into more affordable housing for Multi-Family Residential Zoning, as well as rezoning in order to take inventory of the parks and recreation in Monroe.

DISCLAIMER: This map is not a final projection of what the city of Monroe will look like after following this plan, it is merely a suggestion and shows the potential of certain parcels of land for economic benefit.

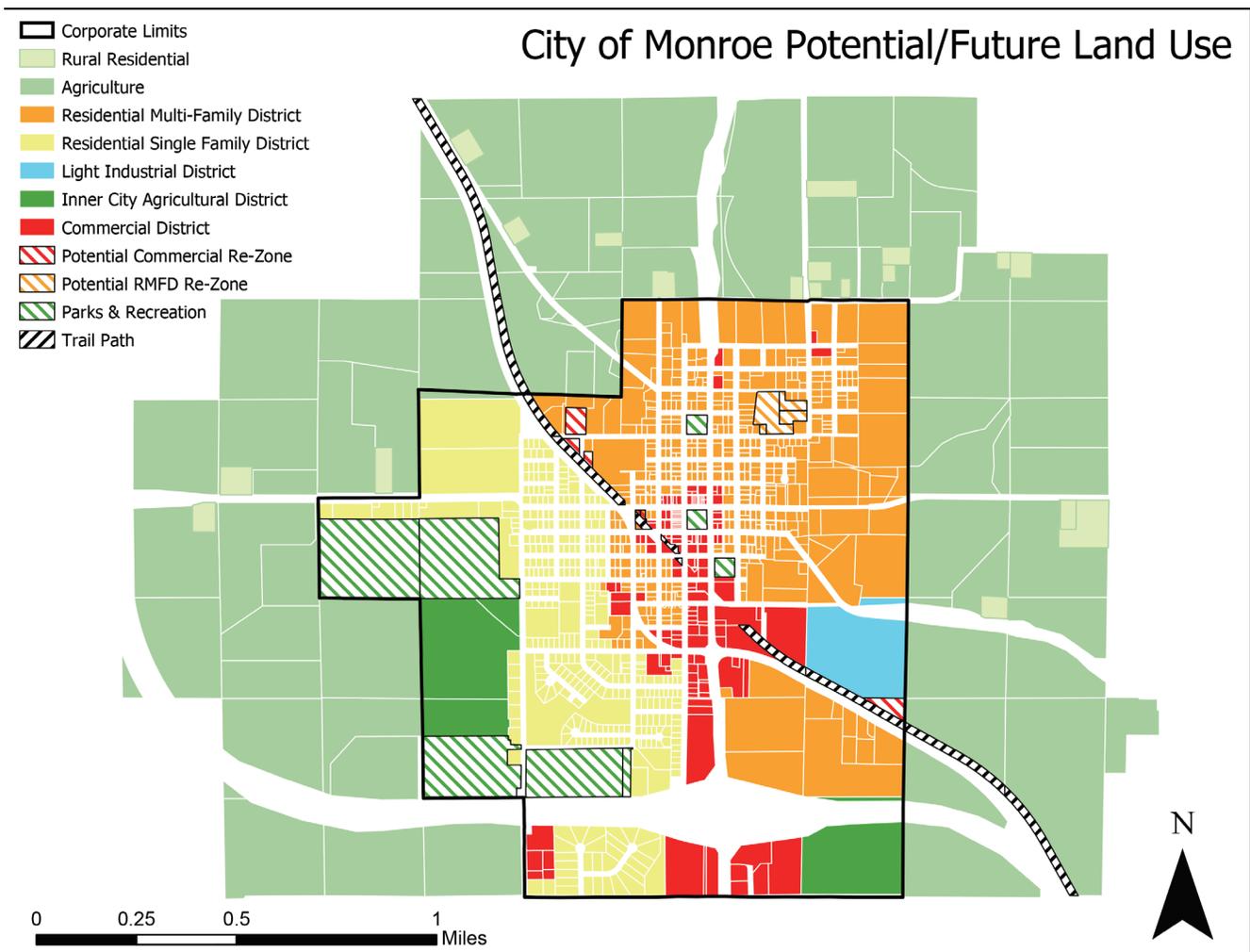


Figure 4.7 Monroe Future Land Use Map
 Source: Jasper County / Map Source: Alex Gustafson

4.7 Recommendations

Recommendations are created in order to provide guidance for current city officials in making sense and to utilize the previous analysis of the town. Recommendations are also for the purpose of encouraging review, adaptation, and reevaluation of this Comprehensive plan as seen fit by the city itself and its governing body.

- **Goal 1:** Potentially re-zone mobile home district to be more affordable housing, possibly Multi-Family Residential
 - o The current state of the Multi-Family Residential District is poor, there are only 15 acres of land zoned for the mobile park that could be turned into Multi-Family Residential affordable housing.
- **Goal 2:** Keep buildings up to date in the downtown/commercial area, including aesthetics and unsightly property maintenance of all Land Use districts.
 - o The downtown buildings are run down and are in need of some updating. Some changes in the

economic development of downtown are needed and with those changes should be an emphasis on beautification.

- o Some of the houses around downtown and within all districts could focus on beautification, possibly consider holding a neighborhood cleanup on an annual basis during spring.

- o Especially focus on vacant lots, Monroe is in need of taking inventory on vacant lots, it is a statistic that could be very useful when determining future goals for land use and housing in general.

- **Goal 3:** Focus on Potential rezoning for inner-city agriculture along the north west boundary where the Single-Family Residential district has an extra 36 acres of vacant land.

- **Goal 4:** Use existing residential development strategies to further promote investment in existing urban development centers, rebuild recreation areas, provide better services to urban residents, and generate more tax revenue for the City Council.

- **Goal 5:** To build urban organic vegetable farmland in the western part of the town to provide residents with healthy food and places to increase community contact. All activities under the supervision of the City Council to ensure that the entire development is under control and free from additional pollution.

- **Goal 6:** Take inventory of where there is erosion of sidewalks and roads and see how they compare to the Monroe Wetlands in Figure 4.5. This map should show you where to look when talking inventory of where there is potential erosion of sidewalks.

5.1 Introduction

It is important to examine and evaluate the economic health and vitality of a community for several reasons. The economy of an area determines whether population growth will occur in the future or not and also determines the quality of life residents can expect. This section discusses a general analysis of economic development in Monroe, IA. (Figure 5.1) The aim of this report is to establish a base of knowledge of Monroe’s economic situation.

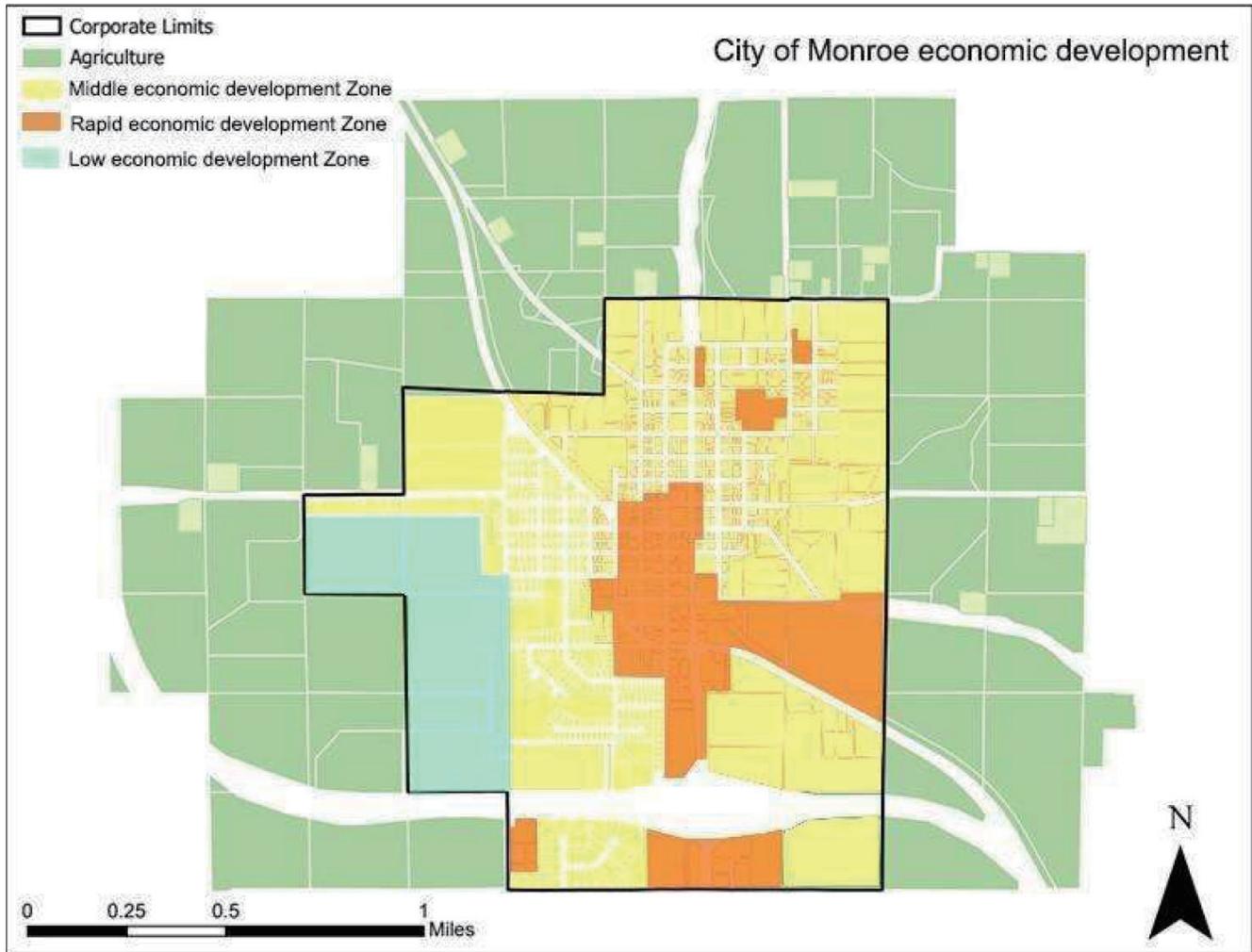


Figure 5.1 Monroe Economic Development
Source: Jasper County

5.2 Economic Development Zones

Figure 5.1 illustrates the economic development one of Monroe. In order to create a better understanding of Monroe’s economic situation visually, the map divides Monroe into different economic development zones namely; rapid, middle and low economic.

Below is a description of the zones:

- i. Corporate Limits: This refers to the boundary of municipal corporations.
- ii. Agriculture: This represents areas protected for farmland and farming activities.
- iii. Middle Development Zone: This represents residential area.
- iv. Rapid Development Zone: This is the commercial and industrial area.
- v. Low Economic Development Zone: This is the inner-city agriculture district.

Though these are not official categorizations of parcels, this is done in order to express the observed types of development within the town limits. As expected, most of the rapid economic development is located closer towards the center of town, middle economic development surrounds the rapid economic development epicenter, and low economic development is located mainly on the west side of the town’s limits.

5.3 Population Characteristics of Monroe

Figure 3.2 in chapter 3 shows that Monroe’s total population was 1,800 in 2010. Between 1960 and 2010, the population increased from 1,400 to 1,800.

5.4 Labor Force

In order to figure out the whole size of the economy in Monroe, we must know the size of the labor force. This is because effective economic development is based on a good standard of living. The residents must be able to find steady jobs and most importantly, there must be enough people to work the jobs available. During our Focus Group meeting, we found out that the labor pool is lacking due to lack of businesses, and lack of interest in low paying jobs. This vicious cycle needs to be broken soon for Monroe to mature fully. Table 5.1 demonstrates the number of people employed and the labor force participation rate in City Monroe between 2010-2017.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Size	1106	1112	1053	1032	1037	989	1016	980
Participation Rate (%)	74.40	75.50	75.90	75.50	75.00	72.30	71.00	71.70

Table 5.1 Number of People Employed in Monroe
Source: ACS 2010-2017

We can see that overall, the labor force has declined by 11.3 percentage from 1106 to 980 points from 2010 to 2017. The participation rate also declined from 74.4% to 71.7%, though Figure 3.2 show that the population is increasing.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Size	18,657	18,472	18,359	18,264	18,345	18,252	18,401	18,287
Participation Rate (%)	63.1	62.0	62.0	61.7	62.0	61.7	62.3	62.0

Table 5.2 Number of People Employed in Jasper County

Source: ACS 2010-2017

What may be the reason for this situation? The population is increasing but the labor force is decreasing. There are basically two reasons. First, the rather erratic nature of the employment statistics could be a result of business opening or closings. Given the relatively small number of firms in Monroe, if a firm decides to close or relocate, this may have a tremendous impact on the number of people employed. The second reason may be (by chance) that in recent years, most young people in the nation have increasingly chosen to avoid employment at firms. Many of them create their own businesses and work for themselves at home. This trend can affect the participation rate in Monroe.

Compared to the city of Monroe, the labor force participation rate is much lower in Jasper county (Table 5.2) The participation rate is only 62.2% in 2017. Meanwhile, the Jasper county has also been through a decreasing labor force size from 18657 to 18287. From Table 5.1 and Table 5.2, we know that the labor force size and the participation rate is healthy in the city of Monroe.

5.5 Employment by Sector

Economic and industrial firms help to form the base of any community. Industries of all types and functions present a variety of types of work for a diverse, ready-to-work population. Figure 5.2 illustrates Monroe’s employment by sector.

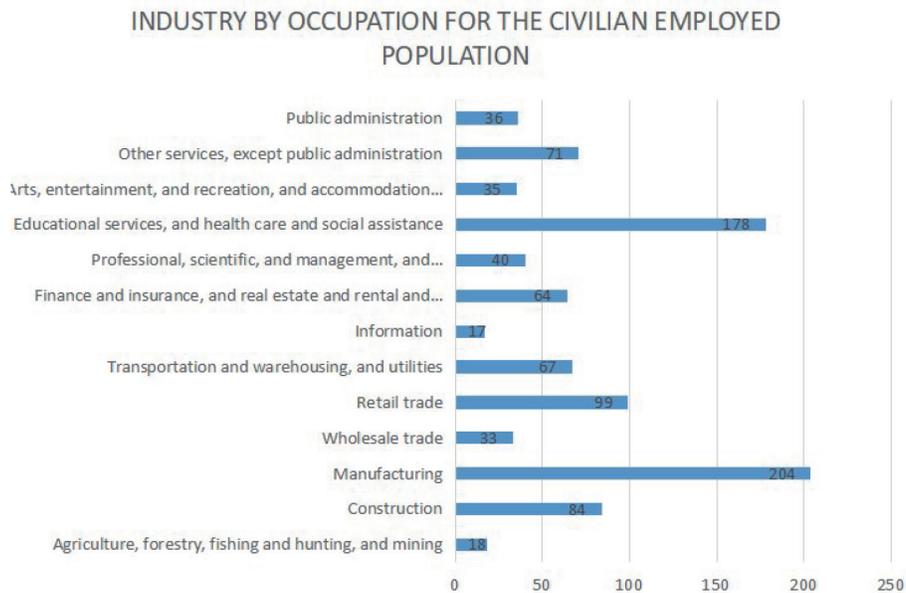


Figure 5.2 Employment by Sector
Source: ACS 2017

5.6 Unemployment Rate

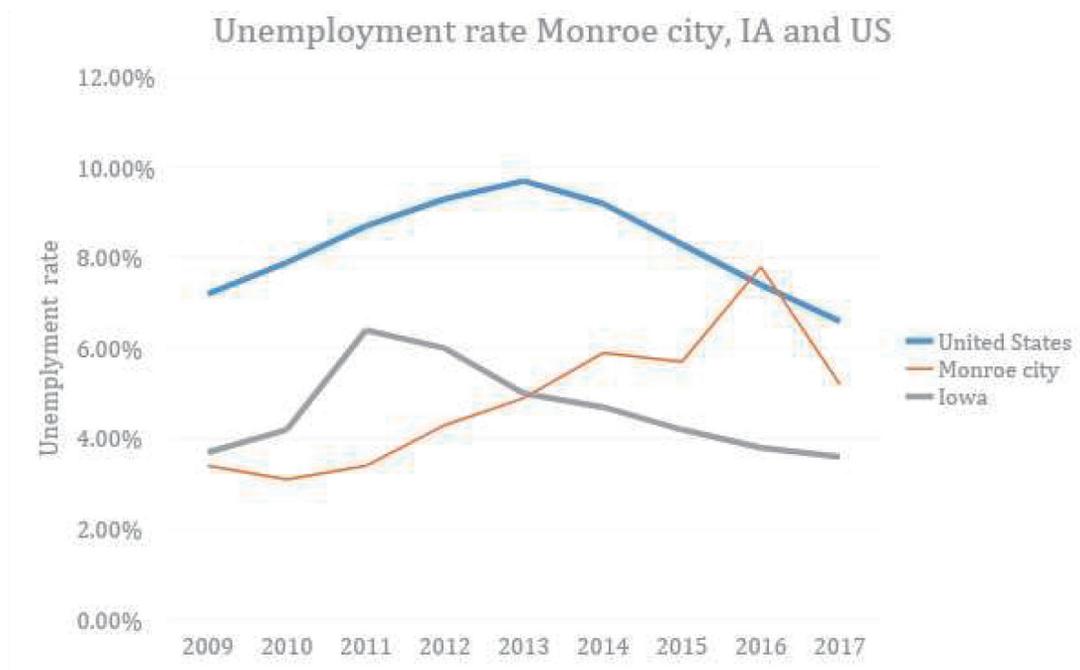


Figure 5.3 Unemployment Rate in Monroe, Iowa State and the U.S.
Source: Bureau of Labor

Figure 5.3 gives a comparison of the unemployment rate of Monroe, the State of Iowa and the United States from 2009-2017. The figure shows that unemployment rate in Monroe is decreasing. Monroe has been stable recently (~ 3.6-4.0 %) compared to the State of Iowa. By the end of 2012,

the employment rate was only 3.4 %. This is because most businesses in Monroe are small businesses and were not affected drastically by the financial crisis, at least all at once. However, after 2013 the unemployment rate increased exponentially. We can see that the unemployment rate for the United States and Iowa decreasing. With the increased dominance of larger businesses, small businesses and companies are finding it harder to survive with the same principles of yesterday. This may have possibly led to an increase in the unemployment rate in Monroe. This was supported by our focus group meeting when it was found that the reason why the Jersey Freeze has done well since its establishment. They invested time to see it grow, and remain within a single niche, instead of attempting to cater to multiple audiences.

5.7 Economic Structure

Figure 5.4 shows a comparison of household income in Monroe and in the State of Iowa. We can see that the state of Iowa got only \$2000 higher than Monroe, the mean household income in the state of Iowa is pretty much same to Monroe.

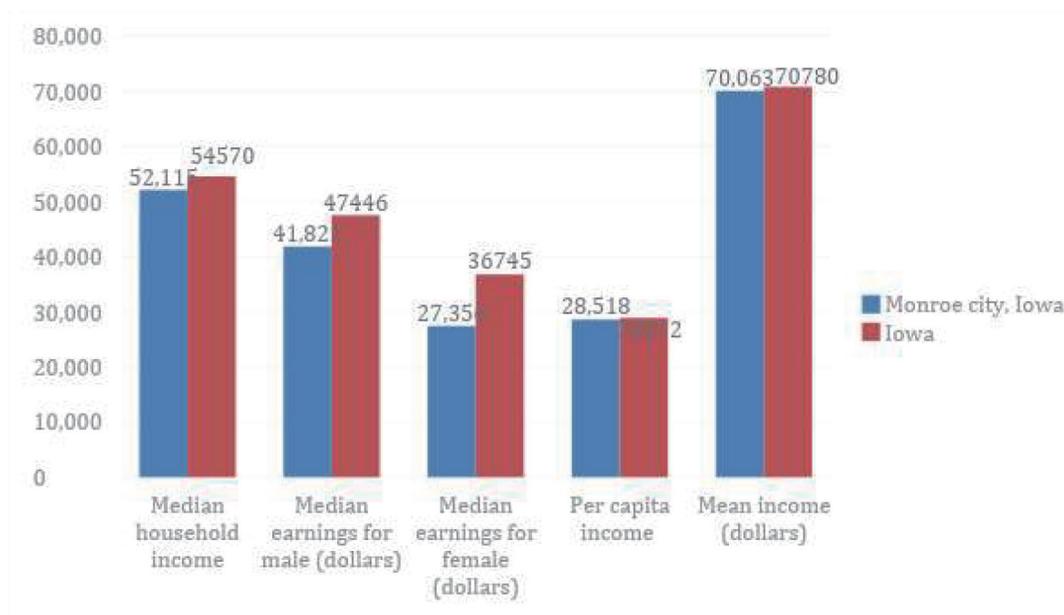


Figure 5.4 Economic Structure of Monroe in comparison to the State of Iowa
Source: ACS 2016

A possible explanation for this may be because of that most residents are employed outside of Monroe, possibly causing the mean and median to be higher than what it is for those who live and work in Monroe. In this area, Monroe mirrors the state of Iowa.

5.8 An Inventory of Most Prevalent Businesses in Monroe

i. Jersey Freeze Ice Cream Factory

Jersey Freeze Ice Cream is located on Highway 14 South in Monroe, Iowa. They produce soft-serve ice cream, malts, shakes, sundaes, Jersey Freezers, slushies, and smoothies. The business started in 1992 by brothers Brad and Lynn Donahue. In 2000, they out grew their building and since highway 163 was being re-routed south of Monroe, a location near the 163 and Highway 14 intersection seemed like the place to be.

In July 2000, Jersey Freeze Ice cream opened a new building on the corner of highway 14 and County Line Road. In 2005 the original downtown location was closed (Donahue Bros still owns the building and it is occupied by all about pies) By 2014, they had outgrown the second building and, in the fall of 2014, construction began on the new Jersey Freeze Ice Cream building located just across the highway from store #2, between Casey's and Subway. On April 17, 2015, the new building was opened.



Figure 5.5 (Left), 5.6 (Right)
Jersey Freeze Ice-Cream Factory

ii. Heartland Co-Op

This company assists farmers in multiple services to receive fair prices and treatment within the market. Monroe has a station for Heartland Coop with multiple crop storage silos, and as such the main purpose of Heartland Co-Op in Monroe as observed, is a place to store crops from the last harvest safely until ready to sell. But just as importantly, Heartland Co-Op helps central Iowa Farmers to find fair prices in the market for their crops. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Monroe is a very fertile area, definitely making farming a prevalent part of the economic structure of Monroe, although not that many people are necessarily employed within that industry, the importance of it to the surrounding area with Heartland Coop is huge.



Figure 5.7 Heartland Co-Op

5.9 Recent Business Development

i. Red Rock Prairie

The recreational trail was slated to connect the greater Des Moines Metro trails, Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge, and Lake Red Rock's Volksweg trail near Pella. The development of this trail extension, connecting Monroe, Prairie City and Mitchellville, is part of the long range goal of linking Saylorville Lake north of Des Moines with Lake Red Rock and Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge (Figure 5.8) According to Newton daily news, the project is developing an 8.3-mile link from Monroe to Prairie City, which will soon lead to Mitchellville, and an eventual goal to connect Lake Red Rock near Pella to the Gay Lea Wilson Trail in Altoona and the Des Moines metro and central Iowa trail systems. The abandoned rail corridor extends from Monroe to Highway F62 W southeast of Prairie City to Highway S27 near Mitchellville. (Figure 5.9)

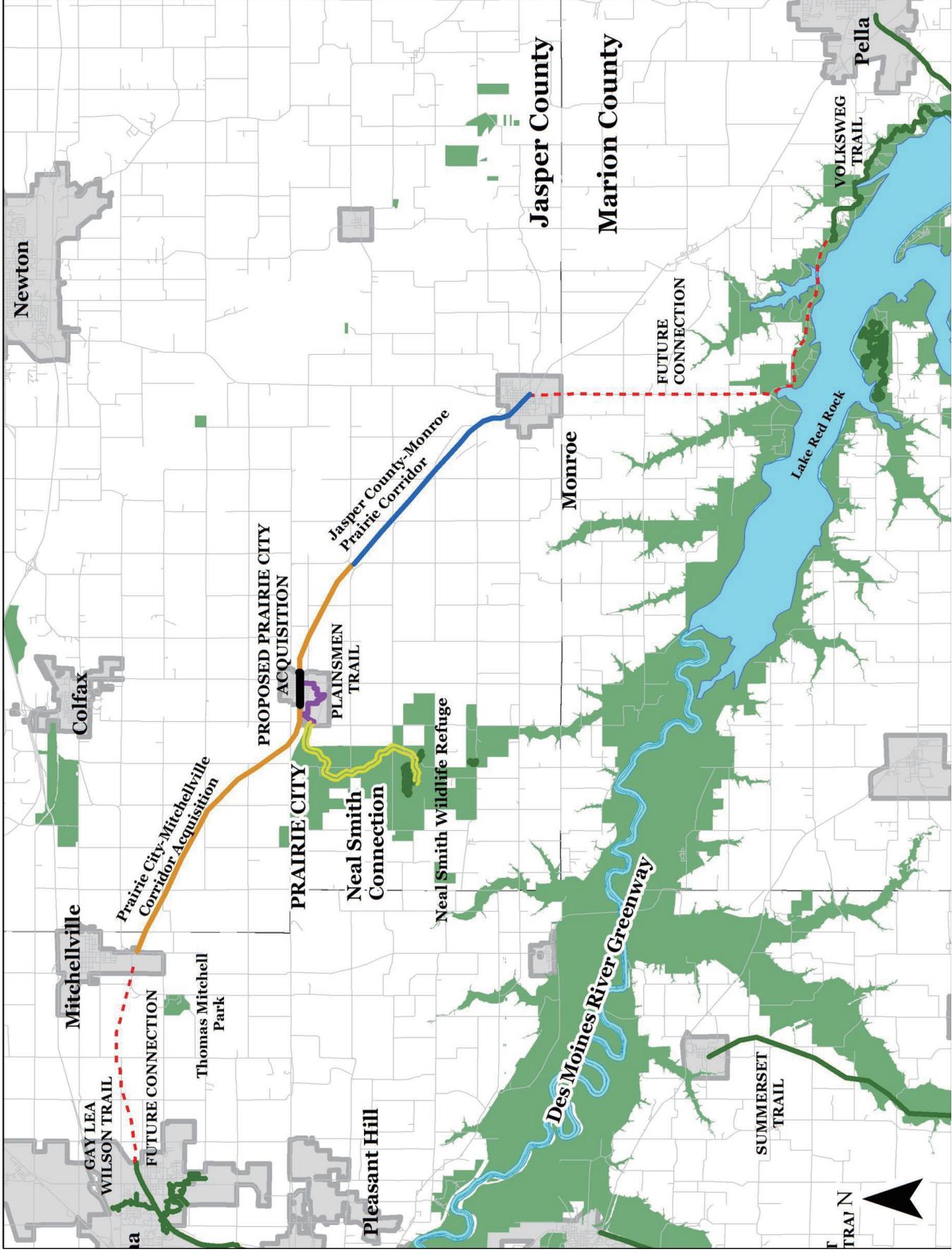


Figure 5.8 Red Rock Prairie Trail
 Source: Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation



Figure 5.9 Red Rock Prairie Trail

During the focus group meeting, one member expressed excitement over the trail project and hoped that it would spur some new economic activity within the Monroe area. It is thereby hoped that the project will bring development such as railway amenities and facilities, and also create jobs.

ii. Real Estate Development

The project is located on the Meadows and Two Sons Future Development in Monroe. Figure 5.10 shows the developing area framed in red.



Figure 5.10 New Housing Development

Source: Beacon GIS

The houses are complete and are ready for sale (Figure 5.11) As a residential city, this housing development is important for the economy as it can bring in new residents which means more labor force and more business owners.



Figure 5.11 New Houses in the Complex

5.10 Downtown Monroe

Traditionally in most US towns, the Downtown area is typically a place of local businesses and a major hub for socialization, partially caused by the amount of businesses and other amenities located in the area, such as parks, or entertainment attractions. From our group visit in late August, we did not observe this. We observed two hair stylist related businesses, multiple small bars, and the American Legion Post. The current Downtown roads also surrounds a rather large green square green. Also, from what we observed, the buildings seem to be quite old, giving it the “main street” look observe in other towns, with old two story, industrial style buildings. (Figure 5.12 & 5.13)

Downtown Monroe can and should be used as the birthplace for any future economic development concerning the wants brought up in our focus group meeting and football game survey, which the results are in Chapter 2, under Section 2.1. Of those wants, there was mentioning’s of coffee shops, small retail stores, and especially family -oriented food places. It is the opinion of this group that that as said earlier, most of the economic development related efforts, should try to be centered, and or vented towards the Downtown area of Monroe.



Figure 5.12 (Left) & 5.13 (Right) Downtown Monroe

5.11 Focus Group Results

In order to get a knowledge on the residents' perception of economic development, we conducted a focus group with some community leaders and business owners/ representatives at the town hall on October 2, 2019. We had a discussion with the participants and got feedback that helped us in completing this comprehensive plan.

The feedback was at times surprising, while others reinforced what we have found out through the data we collected. To begin with, we found out that the citizens in Monroe always spend their weekends in Des Moines for shopping and relaxing and rarely stay in the town for similar services and experiences. According to one of the citizens, the town is empty during the weekends.

We interviewed the owner of Jersey Freeze Ice Cream Factory and asked him why he decided to set up his own business in Monroe. He said the business was a family business at first (His father also makes and sells ice cream). Thirdly, when we asked what kind of business they will wish to have in Monroe in the future. Instead of any popular and famous chain businesses, they mentioned that they want coffee shops and Asian restaurants. We also asked whether they want big chain companies like Hyvee, or Walmart and the answer was no. They further mentioned that they have enough grocery stores and that they also go to Des Moines to get groceries.

5.12 Overall Analysis

According to the survey, we have a general overview of the economic base in Monroe. First, the education sector is the largest. The city has one of the best primary, middle and high schools and a lot of employees. There is therefore the need to keep upgrading this sector. Secondly, the residents want to

have their own small businesses like coffee shops or restaurants shops to make Monroe social life more “involved”. The government should therefore encourage young people to create their own businesses with financial support. Thirdly, Monroe should invite more manufacturers. The reason is that Monroe residents work in other areas, thus making the economy of the town, not a large concern. Concerning the vitality of the town, especially if it wants to establish itself as a self-sufficient town, the lack of a local economy is cause for concern. Much effort has to be put in by the residents and the government to improve the economy of the city.

5.13 Recommendations

Goal 1: Attract more firms and businesses to the community by policy or financial support

- o Provide more employment opportunities but also provide basic convenience services that will Monroe to be more attractive to live.
- o Create interest in small business creation, especially for the younger population.
- o Encourage niche businesses, as opposed to attracting investors who want to be a “one-stop-shop” type of place for services, food, or anything else.

Goal 2: Local government should attempt to diversify the current economic structure

- o As earlier discussed, most employees are employed by the local school district, the creation of other businesses will strengthen the economic portfolio and possibly give reasons for residents to stay in Monroe for the weekends.
- o Agriculture and manufacturing should be the first two industries to start with. They should be placed on the outer limits of the city.

Goals 3: Conduct regular evaluations or surveys of the current economic portfolio

- o This will establish better and more complete baselines of knowledge concerning the current “economic independence” of Monroe, as in whether Monroe can provide the necessary services and businesses to sustain a healthy and fulfilling life within Monroe.

Goal 4: Encourage the development of businesses for travelers

- o Small inns and niche dining places to keep a small-town feel.
- o Repair shops to service bike travelers or car travelers.
- o This will be in the hope of mainly bringing in jobs capable of sustaining singles and possibly attract young professionals in underused fields/industries?

Goal 5: Downtown Monroe Revitalization

- o Add new businesses specifically lumber shop, restaurant and coffee shop.

Goal 6: Make Monroe a way station using the trail

- o During our Focus Group meeting, members mentioned that Monroe is a stop for those on their way to various attractions (such as Lake Red Rock) or to Des Moines. It was indicated in the survey and the focus group meeting report in chapter 2 about the desire to maintain the “small-town” in Monroe. The idea of developing Monroe as a way station town can be a way of achieving this desire.

Goal 7: Business Mentoring

- o Create a forum where experienced business owners will mentor those who are interested in creating their businesses.

6.1 Introduction

This section looks at the different housing characteristics for the City of Monroe. Housing data was primarily collected in two methods. The First, and main collection method was by using the American Community Survey (ACS) 2017, 2012 and 2009 5-year estimates for both Monroe, IA and Jasper County, IA to allow for a proper historical and current background for Monroe Housing characteristics to be established. The second collection method utilized was the general survey conducted on the 20th of Sept. 2019, through the 27th of Sept. 2019 and a focus group conducted on October 7, 2019. That survey asked a variety of general community-related questions. Due to the low amount of participation for the general survey, we will rely on the ACS data for more consistent information. But this is not to say the general survey is of no use, as it will provide great insight into the possible thoughts/ thought processes of community members concerning their Housing situation. The focus group since we interviewed a limited number of representatives of the city, also has similar advantages but is limited due to the few amounts of participants.

6.2 Housing Inventory

Table 6.1 below describes the number of occupied housing units as compared to those vacant within the town limits of Monroe.

Housing Inventory for 2009	Jasper County, IA	Jasper County, IA (%)	Monroe, IA	Monroe, IA (%)
<i>Total Housing Units</i>	16,225	100	917	100
<i>Occupied Housing Units</i>	15,121	93.2	865	94.3
<i>Vacant Housing Units</i>	1,104	6.8	52	5.6
Housing Inventory for 2012	Jasper County, IA	Jasper County, IA (%)	Monroe, IA	Monroe, IA (%)
<i>Total Housing Units</i>	16,179	100	783	100
<i>Occupied Housing Units</i>	14,815	91.5	734	93.7
<i>Vacant Housing Units</i>	1,364	8.4	49	6.2
Housing Inventory for 2017	Jasper County, IA	Jasper County, IA (%)	Monroe, IA	Monroe, IA (%)
<i>Total Housing Units</i>	16,228	100	820	100

<i>Occupied Housing Units</i>	14,533	89.5	764	93.1
<i>Vacant Housing Units</i>	1,694	10.4	56	6.8

Table 6.1 Monroe Housing Inventory
Source: ACS 2009, 2012, 2017

According to Table 6.1, between the 5-year estimates for 2009, the 5-year estimates for 2012 and of what Jasper County averages through each 5-year estimate is most likely due to that Monroe, IA has had a relatively low positive population change, while Jasper County, with multiple larger cities, such as Prairie city, has been growing, and/or decreasing in population, creating a need to stay a little further ahead of the need for Housing as indicated by figure one below. Though Figure 6.1 shows an obvious decrease in the number of total housing units. It also does not account for the recent Housing developments in 2017-2019. But even then, numbers would show that Monroe has kept its vacant housing unit percentage at ~5-6%. This demonstrates that throughout the years since 2005, Monroe has kept up with the need for Housing, aided possibly by the low population change since 2000. It would be reasonable to expect an increase in total available Housing units within Monroe, IA, along with a possible increase in population with the future increased amount of available housing units.

6.3 Age of Housing

The table below is a record of the ages of each House in Monroe, going from a range of cohorts starting from “built-in 1939 or earlier” and increasing by bounds of ten years until 2010, moving up to 2014.

Age of Housing for 2017	Jasper County, IA	Jasper County, IA (%)	Monroe, IA	Monroe, IA (%)
<i>Housing Structures Built</i>	16,227	100	820	100
<i>Built 2014 or later</i>	22	0.1	12	1.5
<i>Built 2010 to 2013</i>	169	1.0	3	0.4
<i>Built 2000 to 2009</i>	1,390	8.6	48	5.9
<i>Built 1990 to 1999</i>	1,846	11.4	94	11.5
<i>Built 1980 to 1989</i>	1,079	6.7	35	4.3
<i>Built 1970 to 1979</i>	2,357	14.5	149	18.2
<i>Built 1960 to 1969</i>	2,050	12.6	199	24.3
<i>Built 1950 to 1959</i>	1,993	12.3	64	7.8
<i>Built 1940 to 1949</i>	997	6.1	20	2.4

<i>Built 1939 or earlier</i>	4,324	26.7	196	23.9
------------------------------	-------	------	-----	------

Table 6.2 Housing Age
Source: US Census 2017

Table 6.2 Demonstrates that a significant portion of the housing in Monroe, IA was built in 1939 or earlier (~23.90 %), built between 1960 – 1969 (~24.27%) and built between 1970 – 1979 (~18.17%). With less than 10% of housing units being built within the twenty-first century, this further supports the common belief that Monroe, IA is mainly occupied by those who have some sort of history with the area, explaining the lack of new housing developments within the area, besides the recent two Neighborhoods currently being built. If Housing is well maintained, this will possibly bring up property values, the same vice versa if the majority of Housing, which is considerably old age, is not maintained. Along with this by keeping a well-maintained look, the town can attract new residents and or strike itself as a well-maintained town. As the population grows, it will be expected that the percentages will change as housing developers attempt to keep up with housing needs whether through brownfield development, or possible greenfield development.

6.4 Types of Housing Units

According to the Existing Land use map (Figure 4.1), there are three primary types of Housing within the corporate limits of Monroe city. We have Mobile homes, which are located in the North-Eastern part of town, marked in Purple, Single-Family Housing, marked in yellow, and Multi-family Housing, marked in Orange, which occupies most of the area north of Highway 163. There is a larger proportion of multi-family designated zones closely followed by Single-Family Housing with the minority being the mobile Home zoning, which occupies 4 parcels, possibly used by mainly seasonal workers. The higher proportion of multi-family housing capable zones allows for the possible future development of apartments, which will ultimately allow for flexible population growth, but also runs the risk of possibly undermining the “small town” feel that is valued by the community as indicated within the public survey conducted on September 20, 2019.

6.5 Types of Housing

Table 6.3 records the types of Housing within Monroe. For types of housing units, please note that a single unit is defined as a single room/group of rooms within a standalone building. If the unit is attached this would indicate that the Housing unit is connected physically to a neighboring unit, if it is detached, the unit is not connected physically to any neighboring unit.

It is quite apparent according to Table 6.3 that 1-unit detached Housing is extremely popular within

Types of Housing Units for 2017	Jasper County, IA	Jasper County, IA (%)	Monroe, IA	Monroe, IA (%)
<i>Housing Structures built</i>	16,227	100%	820	100%
<i>1-unit, detached</i>	12,778	78.7	649	79.2
<i>1-unit, attached</i>	383	2.4	19	2.3
<i>2 units</i>	243	1.5	16	2
<i>3 or 4 units</i>	548	3.4	60	7.3
<i>5 to 9 units</i>	249	1.5	10	1.2
<i>10 to 19 units</i>	529	3.3	25	3

Table 6.3 Housing Types
Source: US Census 2017

Monroe, IA similar to Jasper County with almost 80% of the housing units being 1-unit, detached. This is interesting since Monroe’s zoning is somewhat dominated by multi-family Housing. This shows flexibility in zoning laws, allowing there to be a massive presence of 1-unit detached housing within the community such as in Figure 6.1. It also shows a possible lack of willingness to see a large amount of apartment-style buildings within the community specifically or need for Apartment Housing with a population of fewer than 2,000 people. Currently, it would be safer to assume that there is just not a large need for medium to high-density Housing. This is not to say that there are no multi-family housing developments in Monroe, but that there is an extreme lack of them as there are two multi-family housing developments within Monroe: The Gateway (Figure 6.2), and the apartment building on 802 N Monroe ST.



Figure 6.1 (Left), 6.2 (Right) The Green House and Gateway Apartments (respectively)

6.6 Housing Affordability

Housing Affordability in Monroe will be evaluated based on owners with a mortgage and those renting. The reason that those without a mortgage are being left out is due to the fact that a significant

amount of the population has a mortgage, with ~2000 more housing units having a mortgage.

Housing Affordability for 2017	Jasper County, IA	Jasper County, IA (%)	Monroe, IA	Monroe, IA (%)
<i>Housing units with a mortgage</i>	6,397	100%	319	100
<i>Housing units with a mortgage-Less than 20.0 percent</i>	3,670	57.4	200	62.7
<i>Housing units with a mortgage-20.0 to 24.9 percent</i>	956	14.9	50	15.7
<i>Housing units with a mortgage-25.0 to 29.9 percent</i>	631	9.9	28	8.8
<i>Housing units with a mortgage- 30.0 to 34.9 percent</i>	307	4.8	6	1.9
<i>Housing units with a mortgage- 35.0 percent or more</i>	833	13	35	11
<i>Occupied units paying rent</i>	3,471	100%	175	100%
<i>Occupied units paying rent-Less than 15.0 percent</i>	647	18.6	54	30.9
<i>Occupied units paying rent-15.0 to 19.9 percent</i>	647	18.6	46	26.3
<i>Occupied units paying rent-20.0 to 24.9 percent</i>	485	14	23	13.1
<i>Occupied units paying rent-25.0 to 29.9 percent</i>	468	13.5	15	8.6
<i>Occupied units paying rent-30.0 to 34.9 percent</i>	213	6.1	0	0

<i>Occupied units paying rent-35.0 percent or more</i>	1,011	29.1	37	21.1
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Table 6.4 Housing Affordability
Source: US Census 2017

According to Table 6.4 ~21.14 % of the population in housing units paying rent, pay 30% or more of their income on Gross rent, and ~12.85% of those with a mortgage, pay 30% or more of their income. With this in mind, along with the comparison to the rest of the county, Monroe considering Housing affordability is in relatively decent shape, as most (being ~80%) of the population is able to afford their housing without it being a financial burden, sort of like Figure 6.3. This may be a result of an older more established population, most likely with stable employment with it at 2017 unemployment is less than six percent, and continually decreasing. (Figure 5.3)



Figure 6.3 House Sold

6.7 Housing Market

An analysis of Housing Market Values will give a view into who financially will be able to move into Monroe, and also an idea of how well houses are being taken care of, or how much time people are putting into their maintenance.

Housing market values 2017	Jasper County, IA	Jasper County, IA (%)	Monroe, IA	Monroe, IA (%)
<i>Owner-occupied units</i>	10,716	100%	574	100%
<i>Owner-occupied units-Less than \$50,000</i>	956	8.92%	41	7.14%
<i>Owner-occupied units-\$50,000 to \$99,999</i>	3,106	28.98%	209	36.41%
<i>Owner-occupied units-\$100,000 to \$149,999</i>	2,530	23.61%	196	34.15%
<i>Owner-occupied units-\$150,000 to \$199,999</i>	1,942	18.12%	85	14.81%
<i>Owner-occupied units-\$200,000 to \$299,999</i>	1,496	14	35	6.10%
<i>Owner-occupied units-\$300,000 to \$499,999</i>	522	4.9	8	1.39%
<i>Owner-occupied units-\$500,000 to \$999,999</i>	88	0.8	0	0%
<i>Owner-occupied units-\$1,000,000 or more</i>	76	0.7	0	0%
<i>Owner-occupied units-Median (dollars)</i>	\$122,800.00	XX	\$109,300.00	XX

Table 6.5 Housing Market Values

Source: US Census 2017

According to Table 6., ~50% of the population of homeowners, have a house valued between \$50,000 - \$149,999, with most of the homes being in the \$50,000 - \$99,999 range (28.98%). I suggest the reason for these values may be due to the fact that a large majority of the Houses the team observed, are not well maintained looking at the yards and condition of the siding of houses. The lack of maintenance can be explained that the town, rightly, is considered a bedroom town, meaning that not as many of the

residents won't have as much time as someone who may only live 3 miles from their job to fix superficial problems.

6.8 Housing According to the Association of American Retired Persons (AARP)

Housing is one of the widely agreed upon needs for Human life, therefore many companies, especially within the insurance industry, conduct their own research to guide both their decisions concerning how they treat and advise customers in those areas according to Housing. With this purpose in mind, AARP has created a livability index, containing rankings concerning the environment, Transportation, Health and Housing, using data from various levels of the US Government including those on the policies applying to the specified area.

AARP rates Monroe at a 59, or within the middle third category of ratings as indicated in Figure 6.4. Specifically concerning Housing according to Figure 6.5 showing Housing specific metrics, as the US Census also supports, Monroe is in decent shape. Median Housing rent is at \$722 a month, and the median amount of income spent on housing is 13.3%. The points that cause concern is the lack of housing options, as only 16.2% of Housing is multi-family housing. Despite the fact that there is not an



Figure 6.4 AARP Livability Rating
Source: AARP Livability Index

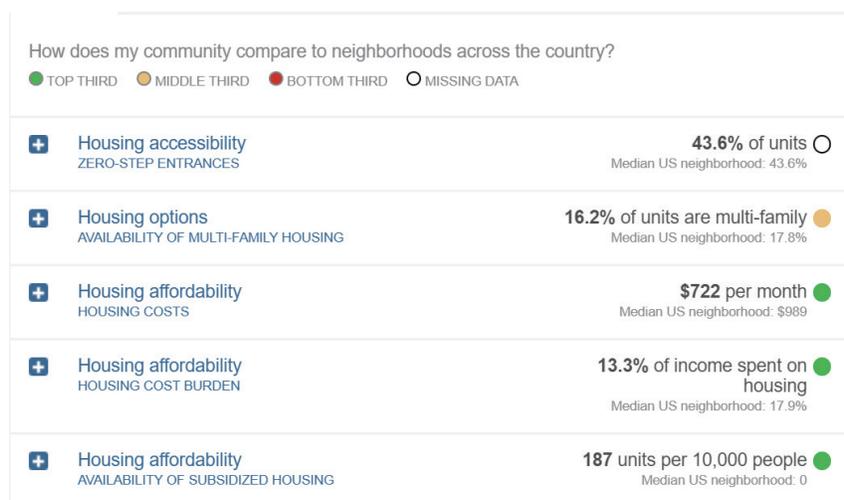


Figure 6.5 Housing metrics
Source: AARP Livability Index

	Housing accessibility STATE AND LOCAL INCLUSIVE DESIGN LAWS	No Policy <input type="radio"/>
	Housing affordability STATE AND LOCAL HOUSING TRUST FUNDS	No Policy <input type="radio"/>
	Housing options STATE MANUFACTURED HOUSING PROTECTIONS	No Policy <input type="radio"/>
	Housing affordability STATE FORECLOSURE PREVENTION AND PROTECTION	State Policy <input checked="" type="radio"/>
	Comprehensive livability commitment STATE AND LOCAL PLANS TO CREATE AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES	No Policy <input type="radio"/>

Figure 6.6 Housing-related policies

Source: AARP Livability Index

apparent need for multi-family housing, this severely limits the type of people that will live in Monroe, mainly those who plan to settle in Monroe, excluding possibly the young professionals that could spur development and growth in community and economy. Along with this, as Figure 6.6, showcasing the policies relating to Housing in Monroe, there is a lack of local policies protecting, and or planning for the growth, aging and general changing of its population. This does not only show a lack of regulation but more a lack of defined unity on the situation of Housing in Monroe. This may be due to a general trust of housing developers, lack of historical need to help guarantee Housing standards and possible fear of the externalities of regulation over local housing, such as a decrease in interest in housing investment into the area throughout the next decade or so. At the same time, a lack of policy guaranteeing housing standards also discourages some from moving into Monroe, without knowing what should be expected from Housing.

The AARP livability index can be used as a great tool so long as it is updated regularly, giving a good gauge of where the city ranks according to firms that will be advising and helping protect individuals financially, taking into account a wide variety of variables that can affect financial and social standing, especially ability to house themselves comfortably.

6.9 New Housing Developments

Currently, there is one area of town being developed into single-family housing, while another is currently ready to be developed, but no ground has been broken yet. Most of these housing developments seem to be single unit-detached facilities. The fact that they are single-family housing further supports the idea that Monroe sees no current need or does not want at least medium to high-density housing within the town. These new housing developments will add many housing units to the

current Housing counts.



Figure 6.7 (Left), 6.8 (Right) New Housing Developments

6.10 Retirement Housing

After first visiting the town, we left under the assumption that Monroe has a substantial elderly population, due to the idea that many of the residents are those who either work in Des Moines, or used to live in Monroe, and decided to come back to raise their children, and ultimately settle down. According to the population analysis (Chapter 3), it is apparent that there is a substantial elderly population, but not enough to justify say a retirement home located in town, but rather to justify offering proper medical care facilities for both the elderly and also family health care, as there is also an unknown spike within the age cohorts for males in 20-24 and 30-34. If the assumption that those that come here, stay here is valid, it would be advisable to prepare for the time when the current middle-aged population reaches such an age where retirement Housing or facilities would be appropriate.

6.11 Overall Analysis

Monroe Iowa is a stable town when it comes to Housing, which has been consistently keeping up with the needs of new residents to move into the area, but without many ways to guarantee this stability. Furthermore, it is apparent that Monroe is capable of growing its population without necessarily annexing more lands due to the large availability of multi-family residential zones, which are admittedly underutilized, within the town limits. This will be a great asset in ensuring that they keep up with the amount of Housing needed within the area. Adding on to the point of being able to House the population, it is also apparent that as of now, Monroe finds no need for medium-density housing. But with the possible hope to grow in population, this may change and a need for medium density housing may arise. As a final note, it would be highly advisable to conduct a further survey to analyze Housing needs to prepare for future residents and influence outside investment into Housing.

6.12 Recommendations

Goal 1: Establish a set of codified standards for Housing

- o This would include making it easily accessible through common entryways, like the town website.
- o These standards would include both safety codes and also aesthetic standards to give the residential buildings a unified “style”, while also increasing the standard for safe housing.
- o In doing this, it is imperative that the community agrees on the codification of any standards, even when considering standards of safety.
- o These codes will help guarantee good housing for Monroe residents, and also help beautify the town beyond what it is.

Goal 2: Establish a deeper understanding of housing conditions within Monroe, IA

- o The US Census can only give so much information to a limited level of specification. Conducting an independent survey would better evaluate the needs of the town.
- o This can be done by conducting a survey understanding topics from dwelling values, to the size of households, to the conditions of plumbing.

Goal 3: Encourage the development of multi-family/ medium density housing

- o In the anticipation of attracting possibly younger professionals that will man and spur a more self-sustaining economy, and also create cheaper housing options matching at least the current income.
- o Emphasize how the town can help control what the medium density developments can look like in order to calm possible anxieties about the fears of higher density housing in Monroe.
- o Highly suggest looking at mainly the idea of duplexes to keep single house style present in Monroe.

7.1 Introduction

The broad aim of planning is to maintain the welfare, safety and wellbeing of the public. Community facilities and services are essential to maintaining and achieving this aim. Some facilities such as schools and parks and recreation are not just important for welfare but a desired quality of life of an urban environment. They are also vital for attracting new residents and investments into the city. This chapter will discuss the public facilities that serve the people of Monroe to accommodate their health, safety, and educational needs and improve quality of life.

7.2 Public Facilities Inventory

7.2.1 Public Schools

The PCM School District serves the community and its outlying areas. The district was known as the New Monroe School District until it merged with Prairie city District into PCM in July 1991. Currently the high school is in Monroe, both towns have an elementary school, and middle school is in Prairie City. The school district currently serves approximately 1,100 students and employs 185 people. PCM also runs on a \$10.6 million general fund budget.

Monroe elementary school, pictured on the right, is located at 400 North Jasper in Monroe. In 2018, it had 251 students in kindergarten through 5th grade. In 2018, the school was rated as commendable by the Iowa Department of Education. PCM high school, shown in the image below, is located at 400 East Highway 163 in Monroe.

In 2018, it had an enrollment of 340 students in grades 9 through 12. In 2018, it received a rating of “high performing” from the Iowa Department of Education.



Figure 7.1 Monroe Elementary School



Figure 7.2 PCM High School

Overall, public opinion is high on Monroe’s public schools. In our public participation survey, shown in the chart below, the most common rating was an 8 out of 10 and 69% of survey responses rated the school as an 8 or higher out of 10 as shown in the result below. (Figure 7.3)

How would you rate Monroe's public schools?

132 responses

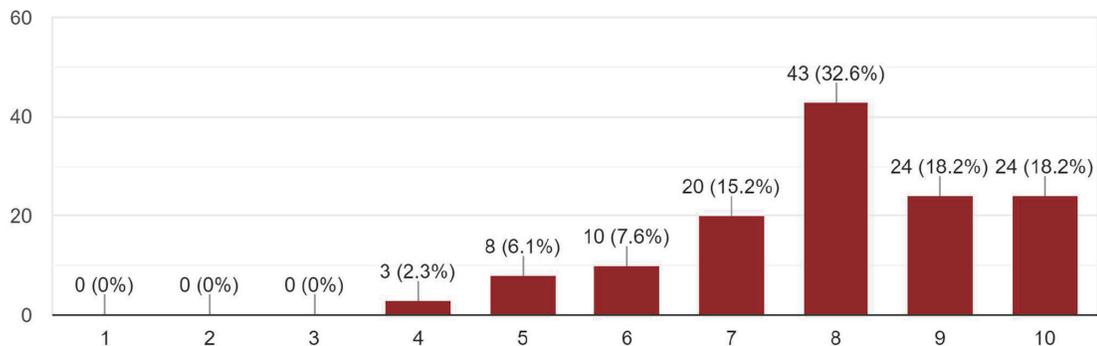


Figure 7.3 Survey Result

Many responses on the survey also listed the school system as a reason for why people choose to live in Monroe. The PCM school district has served its constituents well, shown through the district’s current 99 percent graduation rate. Community support has also been demonstrated through a recent passing of a \$10 million bond referendum for school facility improvements. These improvements are to be used to help the school prepare for future growth.

7.2.2 Water System

The city of Monroe purchases its water from a bulk connection with Iowa Regional Utilities Association (IRUA). Newton Waterworks supplies Monroe's water which is pumped from 21 wells located in the Alluvial and Cambrian-Ordovician aquifers of the Skunk River. The city produces water quality report for the Environmental Protection Agency since the law was enacted in 2013. The report is produced on a yearly basis to analyze the level of contaminants in the drinking water. Monroe can boast of having one of the safest drinking waters in the state. The city aims at protecting the health of its residents and strives to maintain quality water standards.

7.2.3 Library

The public library in Monroe charges no fees to access or borrow books. It serves the residents of the city and its adjoining areas. The library is located at 416 South Buchanan Street. The library has a large collection of adult fiction and non-fiction, print books, children's fiction and nonfiction among others. The library also has a collection of materials devoted to local history, genealogy and current popular magazines. It also has a photocopier and fax machine available at subsidized fees. The library staff offers reading programs for children during summer.



Figure 7.4 Monroe Pubic Library

7.2.4 Fire protection and Law Enforcement

The Monroe Police department was established in 1867. It partners with the community to maintain law and order and reduce fear in the community. The police department organizes programs yearly to keep the community abreast with resourceful information on security and assess strengths and weaknesses of the community's security. In a survey question asking residents how safe they felt, 50.4% answered very safe (5), and only 0.7% answered not at all safe (1). 97.9% answered in the moderate to very safe range. See Figure 7.5 below.

How safe do you feel in your community?

139 responses

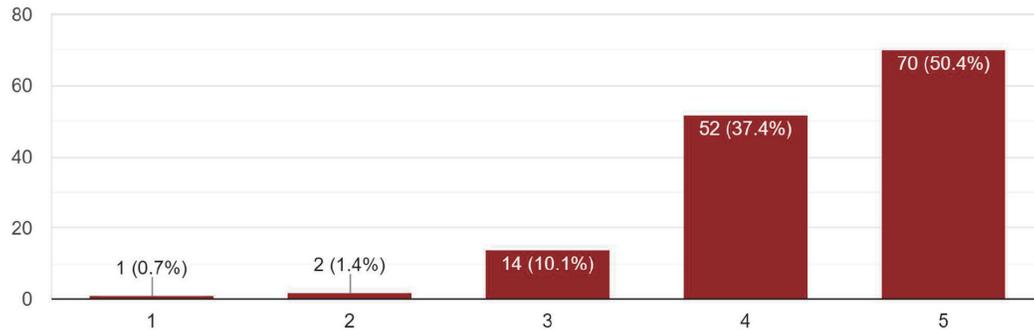


Figure 7.5 Survey Result

The city also has a fire and rescue department in place. The department comprises of 30 volunteer workers.

7.2.5 Parks and Recreation

The city has available cemeteries such as the Silent City Cemetery. These cemeteries are kept and maintained well according to the state law. Parks found in Monroe such as Monroe Recreation Park, Monroe Memorial Park and Tools Point park encourages outdoor recreational activities and leisure in the community. More information on the Parks and Recreation in Monroe can be found in Chapter 9.

As seen by the results of the survey study (Figure 7.6), a HealthCare Facility has become the number one public facility desire among residence.

7.2.6 Medical Facilities

Monroe recently lost their own medical facility located in the town. Monroe is currently without their own medical facility due to the fact that they could not keep up with surrounding areas like Des Moines and Pella. This is an issue that may want to be revisited within the community moving forward. As seen by the results of the survey study (Figure 7.5), a HealthCare Facility has become the number one public facility desire among residence.

Medical services are still available to the community outside of Monroe. The leading health care provider for the community is Pella Regional Health Center. It is a private non-profit Christ provider of health care and accredited by the Joint Commission. The hospital was opened in 1960. It offers outpatients services and other specialized care. Other health facilities include the Lung Health Institution.

What public facilities would you like to see most in Monroe? (Check Two Boxes)

131 responses

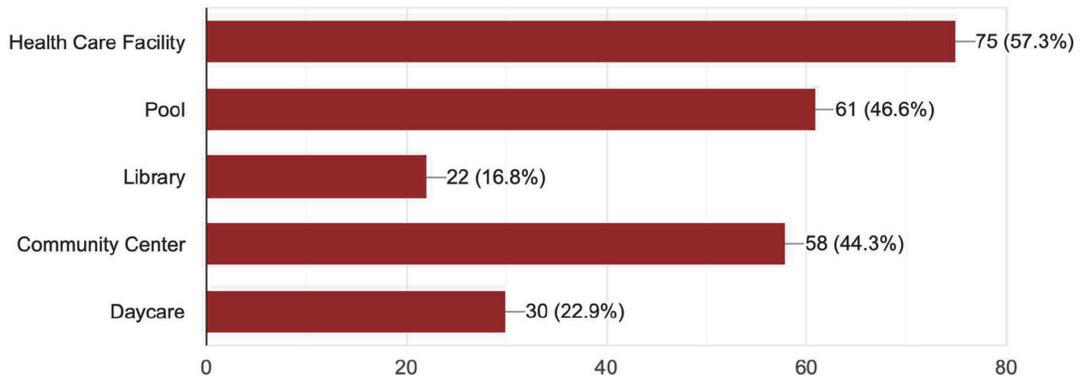


Figure 7.6 Survey Result

7.3 Overall Analysis

Monroe, IA is a small town close to Des Moines, with a population of 1,864 (Census Bureau), not many facilities are needed in order to adequately serve the public. According to survey results (Figure 7.6) 66.4% of Monroe residents believe that there are enough public services in the town. Monroe boasts a great school system, and a number of public facilities, but with a growing population, may need more in the future in order to serve its community well.

Do you believe there are enough public services present? (emergency, medical, education)

134 responses

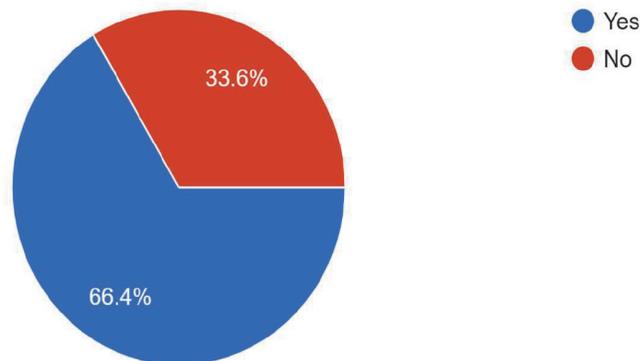


Figure 7.7 Survey Result

7.4 Recommendations

Public facilities are an important part to the safety and well-being of a community's members. Keeping the facilities up to date and able to service all members is essential and with a growing community could be difficult. Monroe must keep up its public facilities to continue providing a good quality of life for its residents. Our recommendations are to look into health care facility options as the aging population increases and assess the needs of the public in this area, as this was the most popular answer to the survey question about public facilities. Close and accessible health care is vital to the community's well-being. We also recommend continuing to analyze the growing community's need for safety facilities, and full-time firefighters and paramedics. The PCM school district has served the area well for many decades and will likely continue too with the support of Monroe behind them. It is important that Monroe continues to market the school district to potential residents and work with the school on all future improvement projects.

8.1 Introduction

This section is an analysis of the transportation services and options within the City of Monroe. This section also covers the utilities provided by the city. The online survey is cited throughout this document and provided key insight for this portion. The transportation section provides maps of the streets of Monroe as well as their conditions.

8.2 Highway Access

The City of Monroe is serviced by two state-maintained highways: Highway 163 and Highway 14 (Figure 8.1)

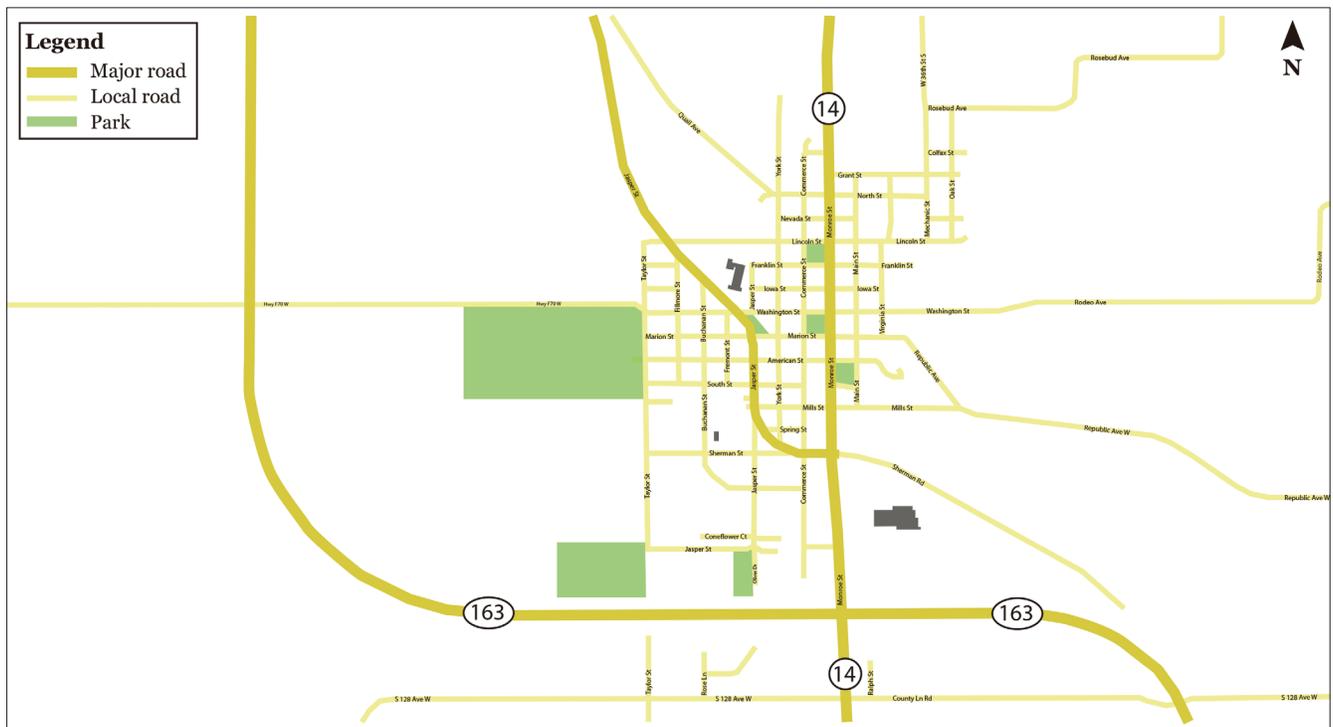


Figure 8.1 Map of Monroe and Surrounding Highways

Highway 163 serves as a bypass around the city of Monroe running from the west edge of the city south before heading eastwards onto Pella.

Upwards of 10,000 vehicles travel along this road in the most recent average annual daily traffic provided by the state department of transportation. Running north and south through the city of Monroe is highway 14. Highway 14, pictured in Figure 8.2, provides a through route from the northern edge of town all the way through the city before its intersection with highway 163 on the southern edge

of the city limits.



Figure 8.2: Highway 14 running through central Monroe

Regarding annual average daily traffic, according to the Iowa Department of Transportation, Highway 14 services just over 5,000 vehicles a day just north of Highway 163 and 3,700 per day on the north edge of the city boundary.

8.3 Condition of Roads in Monroe

On the PCI (Pavement Condition Index) scale of road conditions, most city-maintained roads in Monroe in a pavement management plan finished in 2016 fell under the “Fair” (41-55) category. The pavement conditions found in the December 2016 study by ISG are mapped out in the graphic below. (Figure 8.3)

8.3.1 Current Maintenance

Currently Monroe utilizes sealcoating roads that are treated once per year on a demand basis, locating and targeting roads in most need of treatment. This ongoing process of sealcoating helps to extend road life without having to completely replace the entire road surface. Figure 8.4 shows a recently seal coated road.

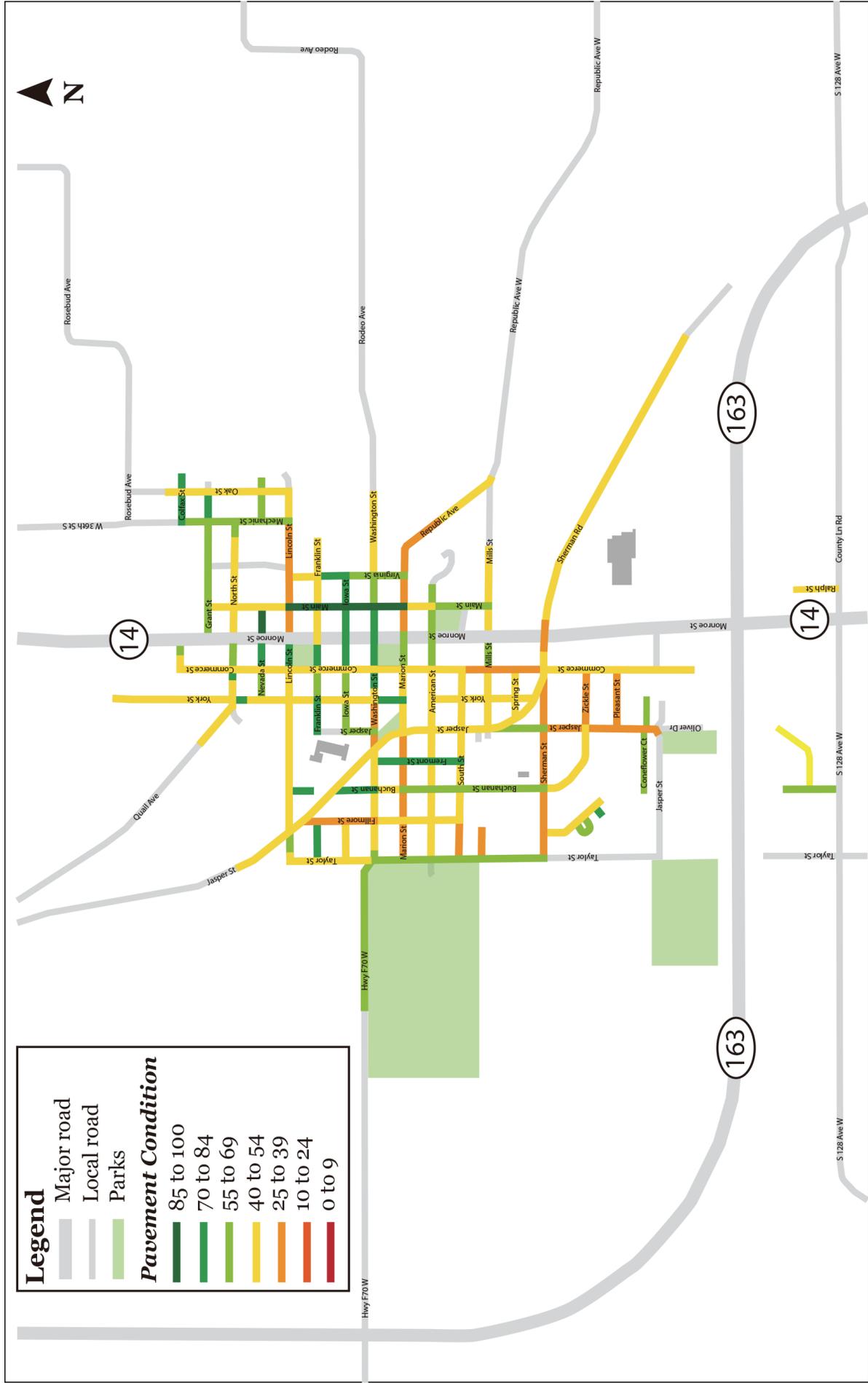


Figure 8.3 Pavement Condition Map

Source:



Figure 8.4 Recently Seal Coated Road

8.3.2 Pavement Score Interpretation

The Iowa Department of Transportation has created a chart based on the Pavement Condition Index which established a recommended plan of maintenance for roads falling under certain scores. The most frequent PCI score bracket for roads in the 2016 pavement survey by ISG was (40-54), which the Iowa Department of Transportation identifies as in need of “Major Rehabilitation.” Below is the Iowa DOT PCI repair chart. (Figure 8.5)

PCI Range	Repair
86-100	Preventive Maintenance
71-85	
56-70	
41-55	Major Rehabilitation
26-40	Reconstruction
11-25	
0-10	

Figure 8.5 Iowa DOT 2017

Source: IDOT 2017

8.4 Current Capital Improvement Plan

The current 5-year Capital Improvement Plan is being utilized by the City of Monroe to budget and schedule towards pavement management. Between the years of 2018 and 2022 which the plan is created for, the average cost allocated for surface improvements is roughly \$35,000 per year. The intention of this Capital Improvement plan is to promote a robust preventative maintenance program that advocates the “keeping good roads good” philosophy through increasing pavement life through routine maintenance.

Another point of emphasis created in the Capital Improvement Plan is setting strategies to help lower the amount of maintenance needed on city roads. ISG offered recommendations of cost reducing strategies such as street width reductions and closures to reduce the amount of road surface that needs to be maintained. Establishing designated truck routes to reduce heavy and damaging traffic on local streets is another strategy listed by ISG in the Capital Improvement Plan. These strategies with re-inspections every two years to continue the path set out in the Capital Improvements Plan will allow for Monroe to be efficient in making cost effective decisions regarding road maintenance in the coming years.

8.5 Commuting Characteristics

As seen in Figure 8.6, the most common mode of transportation of those surveyed in the community survey is by vehicle. Over 93% of respondents state that driving was one of the methods utilized to travel to work and school.

What mode of transportation do you use to get to work/school? (Check all that apply)

138 responses

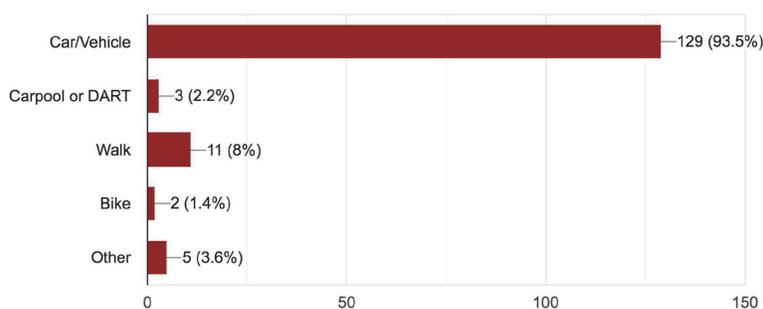


Figure 8.6 Monroe Community Survey

8% of respondents replied saying that they walked to either school or work followed by 2.2% using carpooling or DART (Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority) and 1.4% biked to work and school. 3.6% of respondents used other methods to get to school and work. (Figure 8.6)

This distribution of transportation methods indicates a higher reliance on traveling via vehicle to work and school in comparison to the national average in average of 76.6% traveling alone by vehicle to work (Figure 8.7).

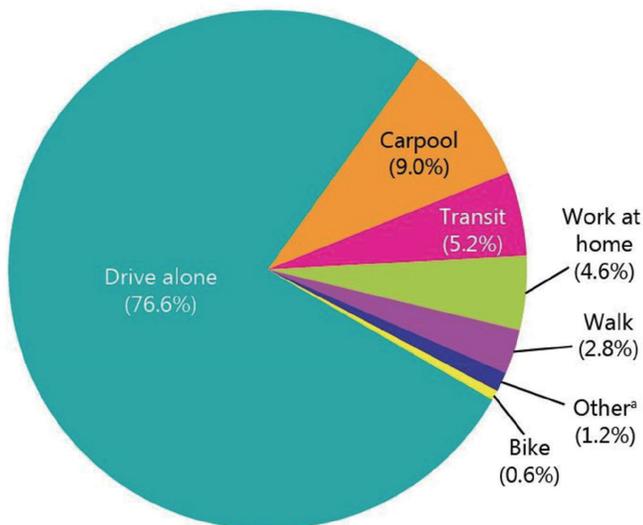


Figure 8.7: National commuting methods distribution
Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics 2015

One large gap of traveling methods from the national averages found ‘in a study done by the Bureau of Transportation in 2015. Other methods of traveling to work and school matched closely with national averages.

A similar distribution of transportation methods used to run errands was found in our community survey, with the largest portion (91.4%) of respondents saying that they drove to run errands (Figure 8.8) The next most common means of running errands was walking followed by biking as shown in the survey result below.

To run errands what is your preferred method of transportation?

139 responses

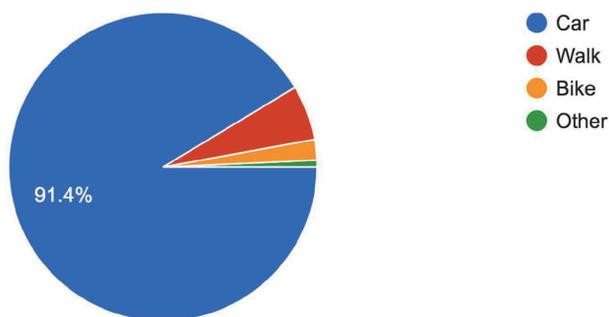


Figure 8.8 Monroe Community Survey

8.6 Overall Analysis

Monroe residents depend on their vehicles to serve their transportation needs to commute and run errands. By providing a well maintained and dependable road network, as well as alternative options for travel such as sidewalks and trails, the City of Monroe can provide residents with various options to commute and run errands. In order to ensure that the road network's lifespan can be maximized, it is recommended that the city follows the 5-year Capital Improvement Plan provided by ISG in the Pavement Plan provided to the city after their study on the condition of the roads in Monroe. By maximizing the lifespan by routinely inspecting and providing general maintenance, the city can lengthen the lifespan of the roads to provide better driving conditions for residents as well as reducing the need to completely replace roads.

8.7 Recommendations

Goal 1: Utilize a 5year Capital Improvement Plan

Goal 2: Addition of street lights/better lighting in the downtown area

Goal 3: Follow the yearly road maintenance schedule provided in the Capital Improvement Plan

Goal 4: Maintain a two-year road inspection cycle to determine appropriate actions for Capital Improvement Plan adjustments

Goal 5: Designate routes for heavy truck traffic to reduce road damage on less utilized side roads in the city

Goal 6: Promote options for Carpooling to Des Moines

Goal 7: Consider implementation of a "Complete Streets" Plan

8.8 Utilities

The City of Monroe provides their citizens with safe, dependable supply of drinking water that is in compliance with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines. Monroe currently purchases its water through a bulk connection with Iowa Regional Utilities Association (IRUA). The Newton Waterworks supplies the water that is pumped from 21 wells located in the Alluvial and Cambrian-Ordovician aquifers of the Skunk River. There are no significant concerns for Monroe's water quality. The City of Monroe is currently using private septic systems for their sewage system.

Overall the conditions of the utilities are in working order and not in need of necessary replacement at the moment.

9.1 Introduction

The City of Monroe has several recreation areas featuring different amenities. The parks are located on historic grounds as well as newly created land. Residents of Monroe visit the parks with children and pets to play, exercise, and watch sporting events. This section will discuss the quality of the parks, the sidewalk and trail system, and public trees within the city.

9.2 Monroe Parks / Open Space Inventory

This section is a case study of parks in Monroe. Figure 9.1 shows the location of the parks.

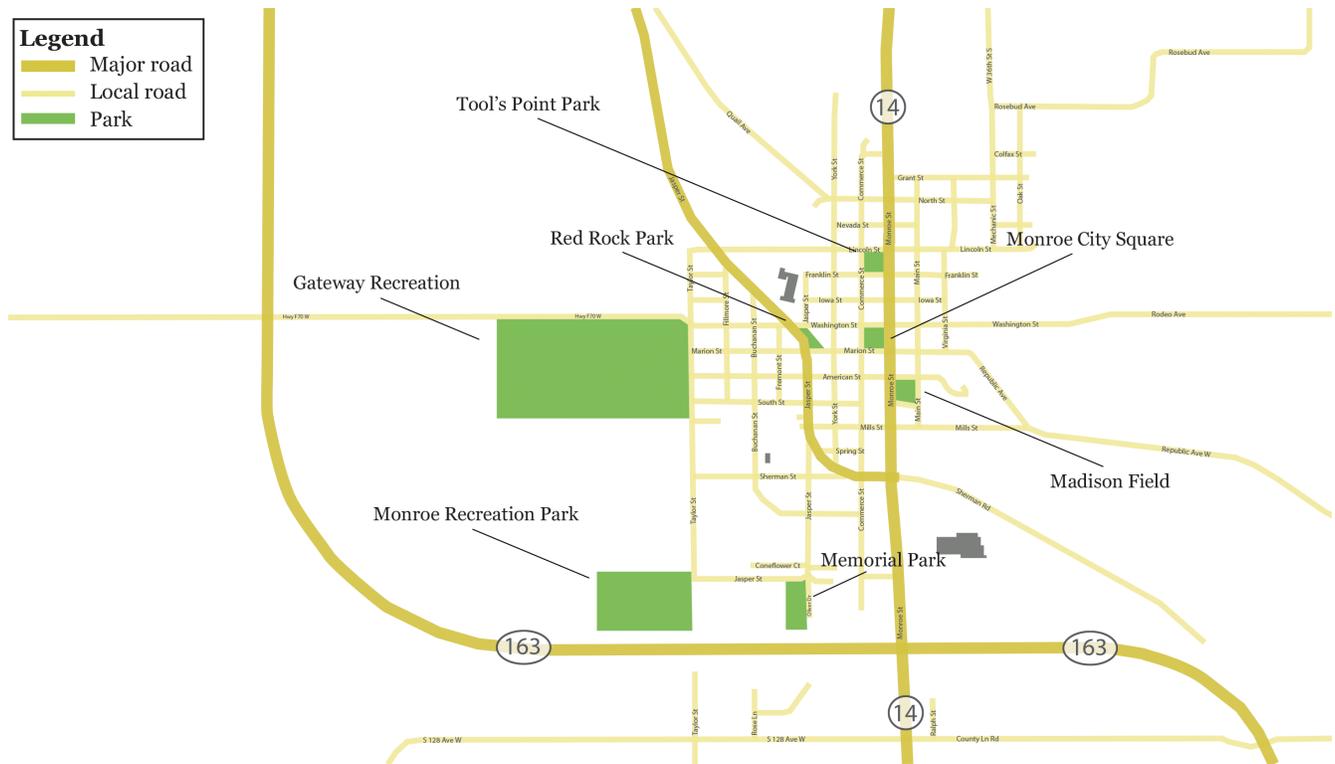


Figure 9.1 Park / Open Space Location In Monroe

i. Monroe Recreation Park is located on the southwest side of Monroe and has four baseball diamonds. This is the newest park added to Monroe. Amenities found at the park include a baseball field (shown in Figure 9.2) and a playground.



Figure 9.2 Baseball Field at Monroe Recreation Park

ii. Monroe Memorial Park is located east of Monroe Recreation Park. This park has a large open space with trees throughout the lot. Pets are not allowed at this park.

iii. Toole's Point Park is located just north of the square. This park features a basketball court, two tennis courts, and playground equipment. The park is on the site of the former Monroe High School. Parking is available on the lot and sidewalks provide access from all directions. (shown in Figure 9.3).



Figure 9.3 Playground equipment at Toole's Point Park

iv. The Monroe City Square has two picnic shelters, a fountain, and a stage. This area is surrounded by street parking on three sides and has sidewalks reaching north, east, south, and west, though pedestrians are required to cross to and from the center of streets, rather than at an intersection of roads. Finally, a baseball field is located to the south and east of the Monroe City Square (shown in Figures 9.4 & 9.5)



Figure 9.4 (Left) & 9.5 (Right) Stage and Fountain at the Monroe City Square

v. Madison Field has a baseball diamond is located to the south and east of the Monroe City Square.

vi. Red Rock Park is located on W Marion Square. This park has a picnic shelter and a small replica house made of rocks from the former town of Red Rock, before it was flooded to become part of Lake Red Rock, 12 miles to the south. (Shown in Figure 9.6)



Figure 9.6 Historic Red Rock Replica House in Red Rock Park

vii. *Gateway Recreation Country Club* is located on the western edge of Monroe. This private golf course has nine holes and an outdoor swimming pool.

The table below is a summary of the assets and acreage of each park in Monroe.

Park Name	Type of Park	Park Assets	Size (acres)
<i>Monroe Recreation Park</i>	Specialized Facility	Four baseball/softball diamonds, two soccer fields, playground	22.63
<i>Monroe Memorial Park</i>	Neighborhood Park	Grass lawn	1.68
<i>Tool's Point Park</i>	Community Park	Basketball court, two tennis courts, playground, swings, merry-go-round, three picnic shelters	1.59
<i>Monroe City Square</i>	Community Park	Bandstand, two picnic shelters, fountain	1.6
<i>Madison Field</i>	Specialized Facility	One baseball/softball diamond	1.6
<i>Red Rock Park</i>	Community Park	Red Rock House, picnic shelter	0.2
<i>Gateway Recreation Golf Course</i>	Private Park	Golf course, pool	0.5

Table 9.1 Parks Assets and Acreage of Monroe

9.3 Monroe Resident's Feedback on Parks

Through the Monroe Comprehensive Survey, input was given from residents regarding the quality of the parks. As shown in Figure 9.7 many residents (60%) indicated they visited the parks “sometimes”, 30% said they visited the parks often, and 10% indicated they never visit the parks. Most residents rated the city parks a three out of five (one being poor quality, and five being excellent quality). Monroe residents shared improvements that they would like to see. Many residents wanted to increase the amount of equipment available for children. Three responses explicitly wanted to see a splash pad, while other responses included a want for a skate park and sand volleyball court. Other residents indicated they would like to see an increase in facilities and infrastructure.

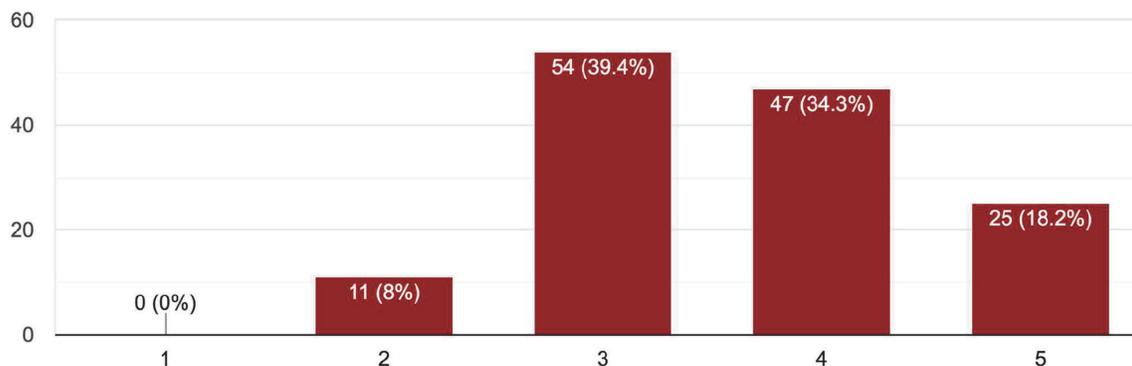


Figure 9.7 Rating of Park Quality (1 = Poor, 5 = Excellent)

Source: Monroe Resident Survey

This includes improved lighting, safety and patrols, many requests for more seating, restrooms on the square, dog park or walking trail at the Recreation Park, more shelters, and handicap accessibility. General maintenance and upkeep were mentioned by 9.3% of respondents with one response indicating they would like to see Madison Field brought back to use. 4% percent indicated more landscaping and plants would be appreciated and other 4% percent indicated they would like to see more parks, bigger parks, or an off-road park. 12% percent of respondents were satisfied with the condition and amenities of the parks in Monroe (Figure 9.8)

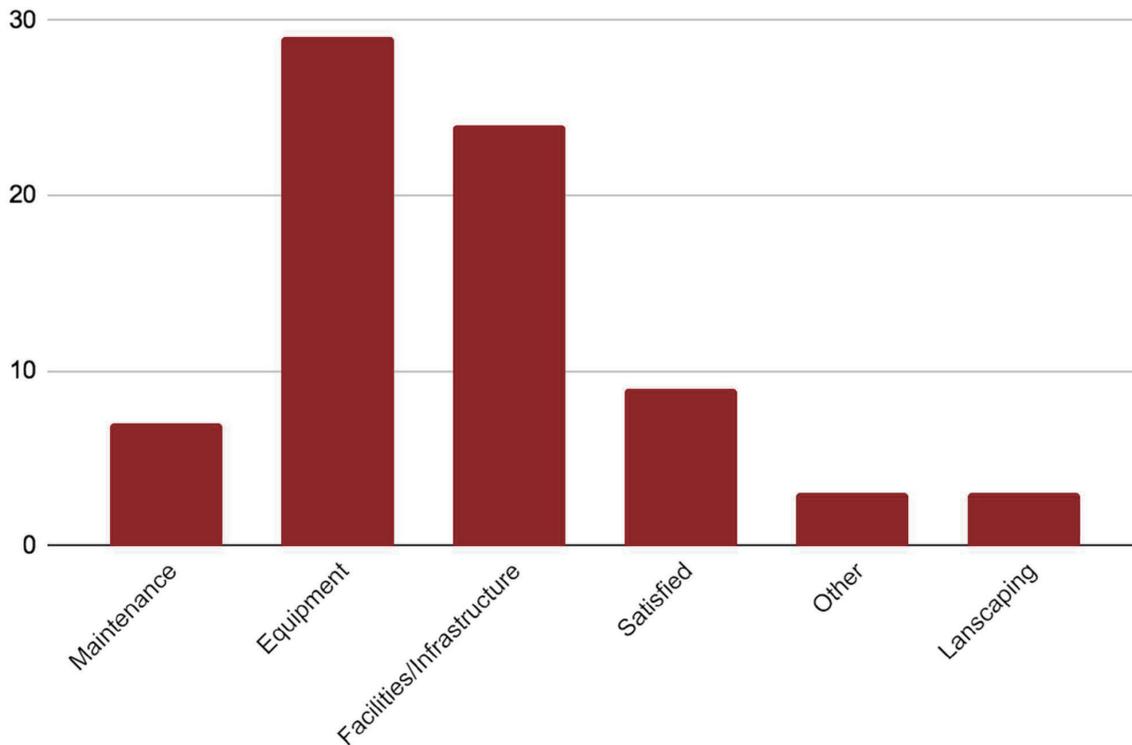


Figure 9.8: Rating of Park Facilities
Source: Monroe Resident Survey

9.4 Trails and Sidewalk Systems

In recent decades, the State of Iowa has been encouraging the construction and connection of regional trails. Near Monroe, there is the Volksweg Trail near Lake Red Rock and Pella. Along a former rail line, Jasper County plans to turn the gravel trail into a paved trail which will serve as a regional connection (Shown in Figure 9.9 & 9.10).



Figure 9.9 Map Showing Extent of Bicycle Trail in Monroe

Currently, the extent of the trail in the city limits runs from Red Rock Park northeast along the Jasper Street and Highway 163, towards Prairie City and is crushed gravel. (shown in Figure 9.11)

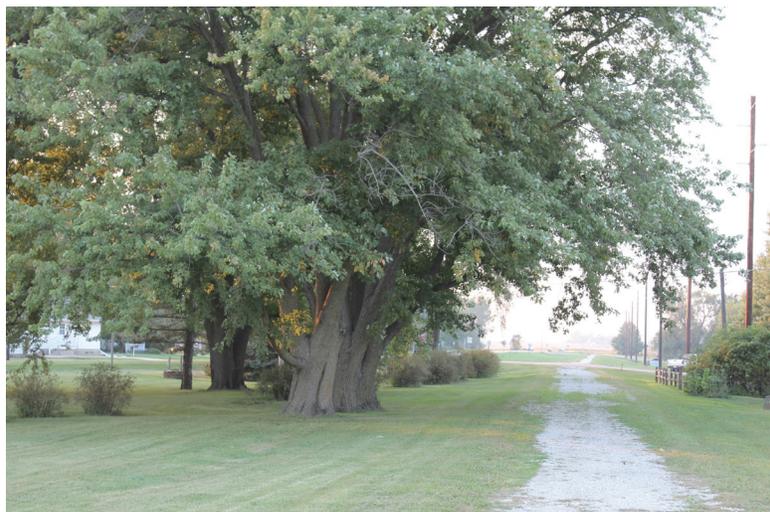


Figure 9.10 Existing Trail to be Converted to Paved Bike Path

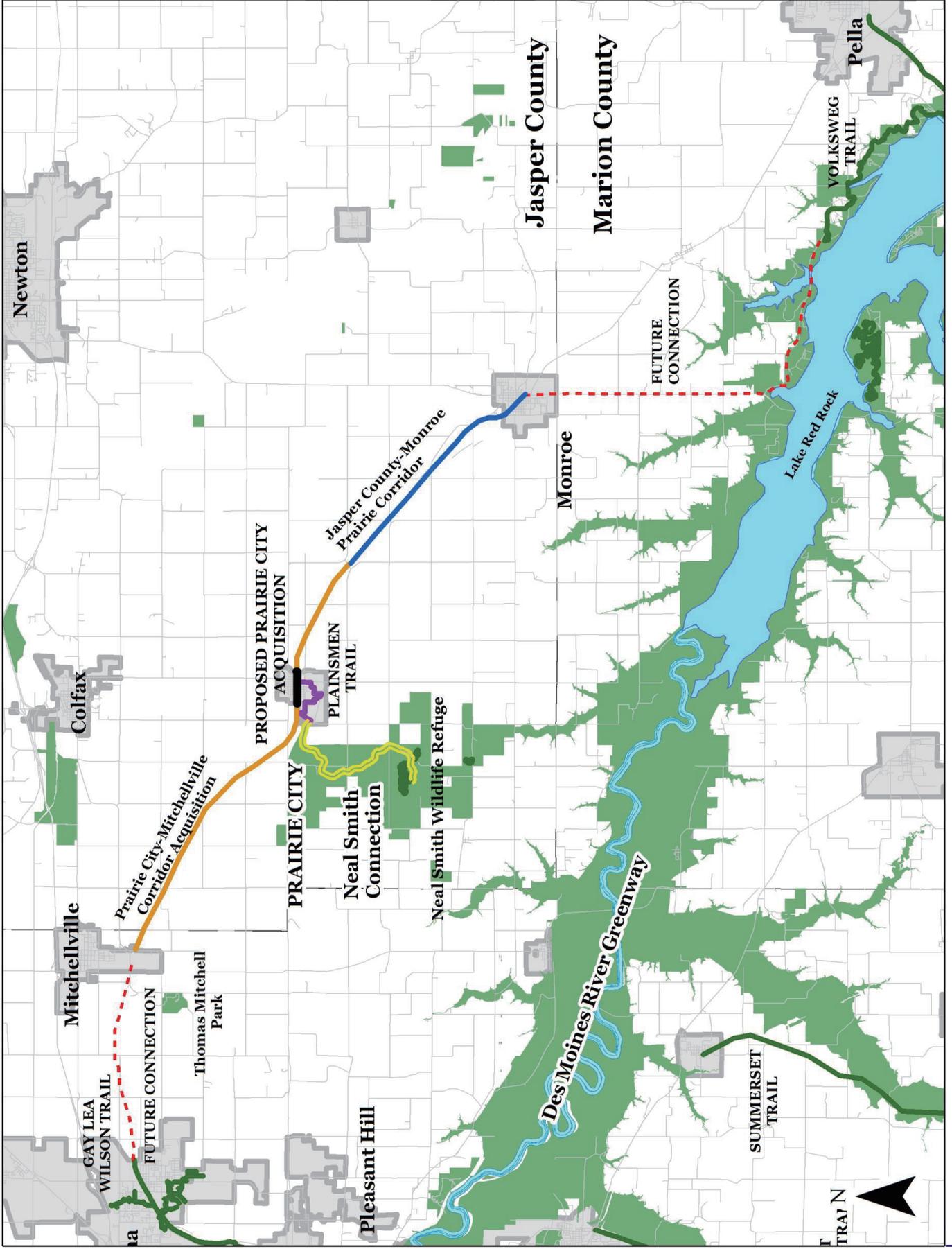


Figure 9.11 Regional Bicycle Trail Connections near Prairie City and Lake Red Rock

Source: Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation

The trail is planned to eventually connect the greater Des Moines Metro trails, Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge, and Lake Red Rock's Volksweg trail near Pella. By connecting these trail systems, visiting cyclists can spur economic activity along the route. Additionally, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is exploring options for placing a trailhead in Monroe.

The residents of Monroe do not have a generally positive view of their trail and sidewalk system. Over half (57%) of respondents in the survey believed the trails were “poor” or “very poor.” 32% found the trails to be sufficient and just over 10% of residents considered the trails to be “good” or “very good”. (Figure 9.12)

How would you rate the trails/sidewalk system in Monroe?

137 responses

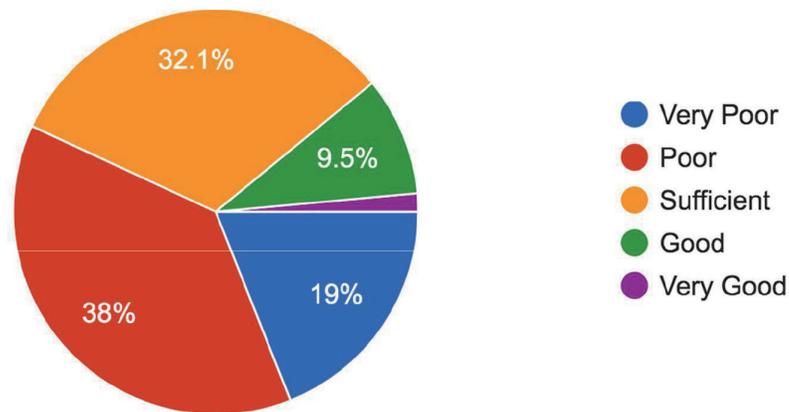


Figure 9.12: Rating of trail and sidewalk system in Monroe
Source: Monroe Resident Survey

There is a variety of sidewalk conditions across Monroe. Some sidewalks are overgrown with weeds and have shifted and created uneven surfaces (as shown in figure 9.13), while other sidewalks have been recently paved.



Figure 9.13 Overgrown Sidewalk near Downtown

Near the downtown, some sidewalk gaps exist, or sidewalks are only on one side of the road. Creating a connective sidewalk can encourage residents to walk downtown for shopping, eating, or enjoying the parks. Overall, as sidewalks are replaced, it is critical to replace sidewalks with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant ramps so all in Monroe, despite different abilities, can use this infrastructure.

9.5 Trees in Monroe Public Right of Way and Parks

In 2013, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) conducted an inventory of the trees in Monroe. Understanding the canopy of a community can show the benefits the community is reaping from trees, how trees can improve the community, and how to prepare for tree loss due to disease. Benefits of trees can include wind protection (lower heating bills), shade (lower air conditioning bills), improved mental health, mitigated storm water, increased property values, and more. The DNR inventoried all 576 trees in public spaces (2013). Each tree added approximately \$132 in benefits per year, over \$76,000 total (Iowa DNR, 2013). Over 42 species were in Monroe with the most common trees being Maple (29%), Spruce (10%), Redbud (8%), and Oak (8%). The DNR recommended additional care for 24% of trees and the removal of 30 trees (Iowa DNR, 2013).



Figure 9.14 Aerial Image of Monroe City Square

The city has yet to see major effects of the Emerald Ash Borer disease, but when the disease does strike Monroe, up to 6% of Monroe's trees, which are ash trees, could be impacted and die (Iowa DNR, 2013). The DNR recommends diversifying the urban tree makeup to not include ash, maple, evergreens, redbud, cottonwood, poplar, box elder, Siberian elm, willow, or black walnut (Iowa DNR, 2013). By

creating a more diverse inventory of trees, the tree canopy is less likely to be wiped out in the case of disease. In general, the majority of trees are younger and are between 0 and 18 inches in diameter (Iowa DNR, 2013). 88% of trees have good leaf condition and 72% of trees have good wood condition (Iowa DNR, 2013).

9.6 Overall Analysis

Residents in Monroe appreciate the many parks their community has to offer, however would like to see more improvements made within the parks to increase accessibility. Within Tool's Point Park and the Red Rock Park, historic structures of Monroe reside. These structures which provide valuable information, appear to be valued and taken care of by the city. Through the maintenance of these structures, the community can continue to be educated about the history of Monroe.

Though not yet completed, the bicycle trail linking Prairie City and Lake Red Rock can provide tourism and economic development. Residents and visitors currently are limited to walking short distances and driving. Walking may feel unsafe to some, as there are several gaps in the sidewalk network. With the completion of the trail and creating a more connected sidewalk network, Monroe residents and visitors will have the option to travel by alternate modes of transportation.

Monroe has a generally young tree canopy; thus, it is critical to continue annual maintenance to minimize tree or limb loss. Additionally, over a quarter of the public tree canopy is of the maple species, thus limiting diversity and making the tree population more susceptible to disease. Through regular pruning, inspection, and rapid response to Emerald Ash Borer, Monroe can improve and maintain its tree canopy.

9.7 Recommendations:

• Goal 1

Add infrastructure to make parks more inclusive for all ages and abilities

- o Add play equipment for young children
- o Improve handicap accessibility
- o Add seating
- o Improve lighting and landscaping to promote safety

• Goal 2

Invest in preservation of historic structures and education

- o Provide annual maintenance as needed to historic features including
 - Downtown
 - Tool's Point Park

- The Red Rock Replica House

• **Goal 3**

Encourage economic development and tourism through the bicycle trail and sidewalks

- o Focus on connectivity from neighborhoods to downtown
- o Promote safety

• **Goal 4**

Promote alternative modes of transportation

- o Fill sidewalk gaps to create a connected and walkable network
- o Comply with ADA standards

• **Goal 5**

Maintain trees

- o Follow the Iowa DNR report for Monroe guidelines through regular pruning, diversifying the population, and preparing for Emerald Ash Borer by removing infected trees.

10.1 Introduction

This chapter contains a list of recommendations for a sustainable future of Monroe. These suggestions were designed specifically for the next twenty years. Each section of recommendations corresponds to a chapter of this comprehensive plan that is related to its content. The recommendations listed below are labeled with a term length that indicates the timeline associated with implementing each strategy. The terms are separated into Short-Term, Mid-Term and Long-Term Strategies that may be implemented respectively. The categories are divided by the following:

Short-Term (<5 years)

Mid-Term (5-15 years)

Long -Term (15< years)

The collection of these recommendations was influenced heavily from community input through the online community survey and city council meetings.

10.2 Implementation Terms

Chapter 3 Population and Growth

- Recommendation 1 (Short Term): Begin planning to further accommodate the aging population
 - 23.3% of the population is 60 and older, making up almost a fourth of the population, accommodations should be considered
- Recommendation 2:

Chapter 4 Land Use

- Recommendation 1 (Long Term): Potentially re-zone mobile home district to be more affordable housing, possibly Multi-Family Residential
 - The current state of the Multi-Family Residential District is poor, there are only 15 acres of land zoned for the mobile park that could be turned into Multi-Family Residential affordable housing.
- Recommendation 2 (Long Term): Keep buildings up to date in the downtown/commercial area, including aesthetics and unsightly property maintenance of all Land Use districts.
 - The downtown buildings are run down and are in need of some updating. Some changes in the economic development of downtown are needed and with those changes should be an emphasis on beautification.
 - Some of the houses around downtown and within all districts could focus on beautification, possibly consider holding a neighborhood cleanup on an annual basis during spring.
 - Especially focus on vacant lots, Monroe is in need of taking inventory on vacant lots, it is a statistic that could be very useful when determining future goals for land use and housing in

general.

- Recommendation 3 (Short Term): Focus on Potential rezoning for inner-city agriculture along the north west boundary where the Single Family Residential district has an extra 36 acres of vacant land.
- Recommendation 4 (Long Term): Use existing residential development strategies to further promote investment in existing urban development centers, rebuild recreation areas, provide better services to urban residents, and generate more tax revenue for the City Council.
- Recommendation 5 (Mid Term): To build urban organic vegetable farmland in the western part of the town to provide residents with healthy food and places to increase community contact. All activities under the supervision of the City Council to ensure that the entire development is under control and free from additional pollution.

Chapter 5 Economic Development

- Recommendation 1: attract more firms and businesses to the community by policy or financial support
 - o can provide more employment opportunities but also provide basic convenience services that will Monroe to be more attractive to live.
 - o Especially among the younger population, try to create interest in small business creation
 - o Also encourage niche businesses, as opposed to attracting investors who want to be a “one-stop-shop” type of place for services, food, or anything else.
- Recommendation 2: Local government should attempt to diversify the current economic structure
 - o As earlier discussed, most employees are employed by the local school district, the creation of other businesses will strengthen the economic portfolio and possibly give reasons for residents to stay in Monroe for the weekends.
 - o Would highly suggest agricultural and manufacturing to be the two possible industries to start with, placed on the outer limits of the city.
- Recommendation 3: Conduct regular evaluations or surveys of the current economic portfolio
 - o This will establish better and more complete baselines of knowledge concerning the current “economic independence” of Monroe, as in whether or not Monroe is capable of providing the necessary services and businesses to sustain a healthy and fulfilling life within Monroe.
- Recommendation 4: Encourage the development of businesses for travelers
 - o Such as small inns to keep a small-town feel
 - o Such as niche dining places
 - o Repair shops to service bike travelers or car travelers
 - o This will be in the hope of mainly bringing in jobs capable of sustaining singles and possibly attract young professionals in underused fields/industries?

Chapter 6 Housing

- Recommendation 1: Establish a set of codified standards for Housing

- o This would include making it easily accessible through common entryways, like the town website
- o These standards would include both safety codes and aesthetic standards to give the residential buildings a unified “style”, while also increasing the standard for safe housing
- o In doing this, it is imperative that the community agrees on the codification of any standards, even when considering standards of safety.
- Recommendation 2: Establish a deeper understanding of housing conditions within Monroe, IA
 - o The US Census can only give so much information to a limited level of specification. Conducting an independent survey would better evaluate the needs of the town
 - o This can be done by conducting a survey understanding topics from dwelling values, to the size of households, to the conditions of plumbing.
- Recommendation 3: Encourage the development of multi-family/ medium density housing
 - o In the anticipation of attracting possibly younger professionals, and also to create cheaper housing options matching at least the current income.

Chapter 8 Transportation

- Recommendation 1 (Short Term)
 - o Utilize a 5-year Capital Improvement Plan
- Recommendation 2 (On Going)
 - o Follow the yearly road maintenance schedule provided in the Capital Improvement Plan
- Recommendation 3 (Ongoing)
 - o Maintain a two-year road inspection cycle to determine appropriate actions for Capital Improvement Plan adjustments
- Recommendation 4 (Short Term)
 - o Designate routes for heavy truck traffic to reduce road damage on less utilized side roads in the city
- Recommendation 5 (Long Term)
 - o Create a Complete Streets Policy to ensure all modes of transportation are considered during future projects
- Recommendation 6 (Mid Term)
 - o Addition of street lights/better lighting in the downtown area
- Recommendation 7 (Short Term)
 - o Promote options for carpooling to Des Moines Metro

Chapter 9 Parks and Recreation

- Recommendation 1 (Short term): Add infrastructure to make parks more inclusive for all ages and abilities.
 - o Add play equipment for young children

- o Improve handicap accessibility
- o Add seating
- o Improve lighting and landscaping to promote safety
- Recommendation 2 (Short term): Invest in preservation of historic structures and education
 - o Provide annual maintenance as needed to historic features including
 - > Downtown,
 - > Tool's Point Park, and
 - > The Red Rock Replica House
- Recommendation 3 (Midterm): Encourage economic development and tourism through the bicycle trail and sidewalks
 - o Focus on connectivity from neighborhoods to downtown
 - o Promote safety
- Recommendation 4 (Short term): Promote alternative modes of transportation
 - o Fill sidewalk gaps to create a connected and walkable network
 - o Comply with ADA standards
- Recommendation 5 (Short term): Maintain trees
 - o Follow the Iowa DNR report for Monroe guidelines through regular pruning, diversifying the population, and preparing for Emerald Ash Borer by removing infected trees.

10.3 Conclusion

By following these implementation strategies, we hope that the community will see sustainable advancement in population, economic development, housing opportunities, public facilities, transportation services and parks and recreation. The list of recommendations above are what the students of Iowa State propose that Monroe take for the next steps towards a sustainable future for the following 5 to 20 years. Our recommendations are created in order to provide guidance for current city officials in making sense of current data and to utilize the analysis of the town. They are also for the purpose of encouraging regular review, adaptation, and re-evaluation of this Comprehensive Plan as seen fit by the city itself and its governing body. Therefore, as a general recommendation, it is suggested that the local government attempt to involve the community as much as possible through either voting on recommendations or possibly creating steering committees to monitor progress in a specific sector and adjust the plan if need be.

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Resource Appendix

Questions for Public Participation

1. How long is your commute? (Under 5 minutes, 5-10 minutes, 10-20 minutes, 20-40 minutes, 40+ minutes)
2. What mode of transportation do you use to get to work/school? (Circle all that you've used) (walk, bike, drive, carpool)
3. To run errands what is your preferred method of transportation? (car, walk, bike)
4. How would you rate the trails/sidewalk system in Monroe (1-5) - (low->high)?
 - a. Opinion: insufficient links, poor
5. If you could choose an alternate mode of transportation than driving, what factors would be important to you? (costs less, takes less time to travel, safe to bike, safe to walk)
6. In an average week, how many vehicle trips (round trips = one trip??) do you make? (none, 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 20+)
7. Are you pleased with the quality of the city parks? (1-5)
8. What are your priorities for the park?
9. How frequently do you visit each of the parks? (never - everyday)
10. What does your city need the most? (choose one)
 - Restaurants
 - Businesses
 - Parks
 - Better Infrastructure
11. What type of restaurants would you like to see?
12. What type of businesses would you like to see?
13. What do you like the most about Monroe?
14. What do you like the least about Monroe?
15. Why do you live in Monroe?
16. Do you commute?
17. What changes do you want to see in Monroe?
18. Are you retired? Stay at home parent?
19. How satisfied are you with the types and amounts of businesses in Monroe?
20. What type of housing development would you like to see?
21. What is your perception of community pride?
22. How long have you lived in Monroe?
23. Do you have children under the age of 18?
24. Did you grow up in Monroe?
25. Do you have any extended family that also lives in Monroe?

Questions for Public Participation

Are you familiar with the DART rideshare/vanpool programs? (Yes, utilize it, Yes, don't utilize, No)

Questions for Public Participation

Base Link:

<https://forms.gle/N4LuVvf2yn4p7md17>

Shortened Link:

<https://qrco.de/bbFDx6>

Named Hyperlink:

[Monroe Community Survey](#)



