

Introduction

A comprehensive plan is a long-range planning document intended to identify a community's vision, goals, and policies to guide future development and public investment. Simply put, a comprehensive plan describes the hopes, dreams and aspirations a community holds for itself. Through public input, a comprehensive plan identifies infrastructure needs, promotes the preservation of natural resources, and guides land use and transportation patterns.

The City of Rice Lake's Comprehensive Plan is the policy document providing a foundation for growth and development. It provides an overview of Rice Lake's historical context, demographics, existing and future land use, economic climate, public utilities, transportation, natural resources and parks and trails. The Comprehensive Plan contains goals, objectives and policies to guide land use development, redevelopment, and preservation of all lands and waters within the City. It also proposes a plan to implement these policies through the 2040 timeframe.

But the comprehensive plan is more than just a document. The process provided an opportunity to engage the public in local decisions and to allow people with different perspectives to articulate the sort of community they would like to live in and leave behind. Together, the City and its residents came together to create a plan for ***"Preserving Our Future."***

Purpose of the Plan

Minnesota Statutes, Section 462.351 describes legislative goals for city and township planning:

- Prepare for anticipated change.
- Guide future development of land.
- Ensure a safer, more pleasant and economic environment.
- Preserve forest, timberland, wetlands and other open lands.
- Enable other public and private agencies to plan their activities in harmony with the plan.
- Assist in developing lands more wisely to serve citizens more effectively.

A comprehensive plan creates a framework to make sound decisions that positively affect the City of Rice Lake and provide guidance for the community to reach its' long-term goals.

A Vision for Rice Lake

The City of Rice Lake established the following vision statement:

Rice Lake Township, with its recreational amenities and rich rural character, strives to provide a well-balanced, secure, and enjoyable living environment for citizens of all ages. As a friendly, quiet, family oriented community, the citizens of the Township appreciate and respect the needs of their neighbors. Families will raise their children in safety, peace and quiet, away from the congestion and noise of the city. The Township will work together with its residents to sustain moderate commercial, residential and recreational growth, while making sure not to alter the existing character of the Town. Proactive decision-making, and the provision of services on the part of the Township will maintain the existing quality of life.

Background and Community History

Rice Lake was founded as a township in 1870 and was one of the first to be established in the St. Louis County area.

During his travels through northern Minnesota in 1680, Father Louis Hennepin observed the Sioux and Dakota Indians enjoying the land around Wild Rice Lake in present-day Rice Lake. These two groups had forced the Hidatsa Indian Tribe from the region earlier. By 1750, the Sioux were driven from the land by the Ojibwa, who were in turn forced by white settlers to live on reservation lands in 1854 by the Treaty of La Pointe. Shortly after, the area was opened for settlement by newcomers. The town of Valley Field was platted on the northeast side of Wild Rice Lake, but due to hardships during 1857 and 1858, was never developed.

A small number of settlers were attracted to Rice Lake Township in the late 1800's as a result of the National Homestead Act of 1862. Under this act, an individual could gain title to a piece of land simply by living on it for five years and making improvements to the land. By 1900, when the first record of the population was taken, there were 231 inhabitants. Ten years later, that number had more than doubled to 580 and by 1930 had reached 916. During this period the assessed valuation of the township also increased rapidly. It rose from \$62,254 in 1873 to \$331,597 in 1919.

During the early days of the township, lumbering and farming were the main occupations. Then, in 1918, a forest fire in the Arnold area severely reduced the lumbering business. Since 1930 the townspeople have depended heavily on Duluth for employment, with a large percentage of the work force employed in the City. Over the years, Rice Lake has slowly grown into a thriving community.

Not only did the population and the monetary value grow during these three decades but also along with it the service provided by the township expanded. The Town Board, which was formed back in the late 1800's, began to take a more active role. The Rice Lake dam was built in 1907 for power storage and has been in continuous use since. The Rice Lake Volunteer Fire Department was formed in 1948, and land for a town park was acquired from St. Louis County in 1947.

During the 1960's and 1970's, Rice Lake Township continued to expand the level of services it provided for residents. In 1960, Rice Lake Township adopted a zoning ordinance, and the Planning and Zoning Commission was established. The Township actually adopted the ordinance before St. Louis County, and was the only township locally to administer zoning authority. The Town Park was established in 1963 with the development of 12 acres of the 20-acre site. In 1965 the Public Works department was created, and the first public water lines were built. They now serve the city along East Calvary Road and portions of Arnold, Howard Gnesen, West Tischer, and Martin roads. The original Town Hall, now the Rice Lake City Hall, was constructed in 1976 at the intersection of Howard Gnesen and West Beyer roads. Adjacent to the north of City Hall, is the Recycling Drop Off Center. In 1992 the Uniform Building Code was adopted, which led to the addition of a building official. In 1998 and 2007, a Comprehensive Plan was adopted.



In August 2015, an administrative law judge ruled in favor of the incorporation petition filed by Rice Lake Township, making the City of Rice Lake Minnesota’s 853rd city. Since its incorporation, Rice Lake has taken all powers and authority provided to a city under Minnesota statutes.

Process

Beginning in September 2019, Bolton and Menk, Inc., worked with the City of Rice Lake to complete the Comprehensive Plan. Descriptive data about the City were gathered through a variety of sources, including:

- A community survey was available online from September 2019 thru _____. Questions in the survey asked basic demographic data of the respondent, community assets and weaknesses, visions for the future, and investment priorities. Approximately _____ responses were collected. The responses helped form the goals and objectives of the Plan. A summary of the Community Survey response is provided in Appendix A.
- A Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was formed to inform the overall comprehensive process and guide policy goals and recommendations. The group was comprised of key community leaders from public, private, and government spheres. The committee met once at the beginning of the comprehensive planning process and reviewed the draft plan prior to submittal to the City Council.
- Information from previous plans has been incorporated into this plan where appropriate.

The City used a variety of resources to gather public input on the Plan, including:

- The City held _____ “pop-up” meetings to raise awareness about this project and to discuss different elements of the plan.
- A public open house was held _____ to discuss the draft comprehensive plan.
- A project website provided regular updates and links to the plan as it was developed.
- Regular updates on the plan were provided to the Planning Commission as part of its regular meeting schedule.
- The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the plan on _____.
- The City Council formerly reviewed and adopted the final plan on _____.

Regional Setting

The City of Rice Lake is located in southern St. Louis County north of the City of Duluth in the Arrowhead Region of northeastern Minnesota. Once generally rural in nature, Rice Lake is now a transition area between the Duluth metropolitan area and rural St. Louis County.

INSERT MAP WITH REGIONAL SETTING

Demographics and Data Analysis

Population

Historical Data

Historical demographic data is based on 2010 Census Data. Because the census was completed prior to incorporation, data for Rice Lake Township is used.

According to the 2010 Census, Rice Lake had a population of 4,095 people, with 1,611 households, and 68 businesses in a land area of 32.3 square miles and 1.1 square miles of water. The Minnesota State Demographer estimates the 2017 population for the newly incorporated City at 4,139 people and 1,774 housing units.

Table I-1 identifies historic population and household characteristics in the city.

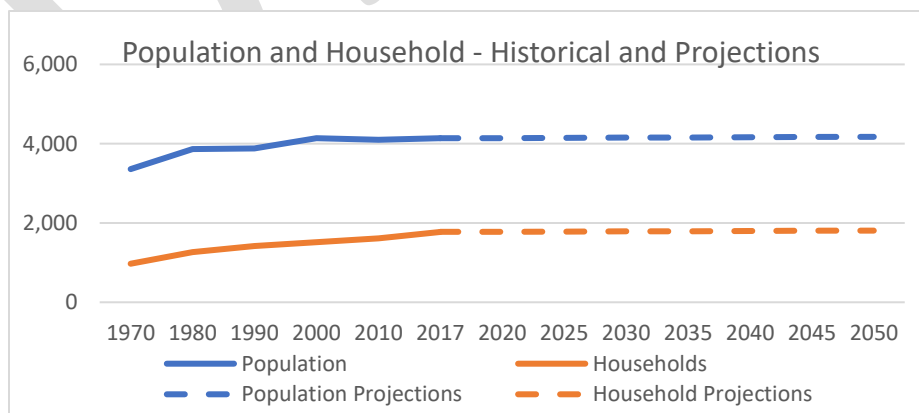
Table I-1 - Historical Population and Households of City of Rice Lake						
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2017
Population	3,359	3,861	3,883	4,139	4,095	4,139
Households	973	1,265	1,418	1,518	1,611	1,774

Source: State Demographer

Projections

Projections for future levels of populations and households may be developed based on past growth patterns. Table I-2 identifies population and household projects based on growth patterns from 1970 to 2017.

Table I-2 - Rice Lake Population and Household Projections							
	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
Population	4,142	4,147	4,152	4,157	4,162	4,167	4,172
Households	1,777	1,782	1,787	1,792	1,797	1,802	1,808



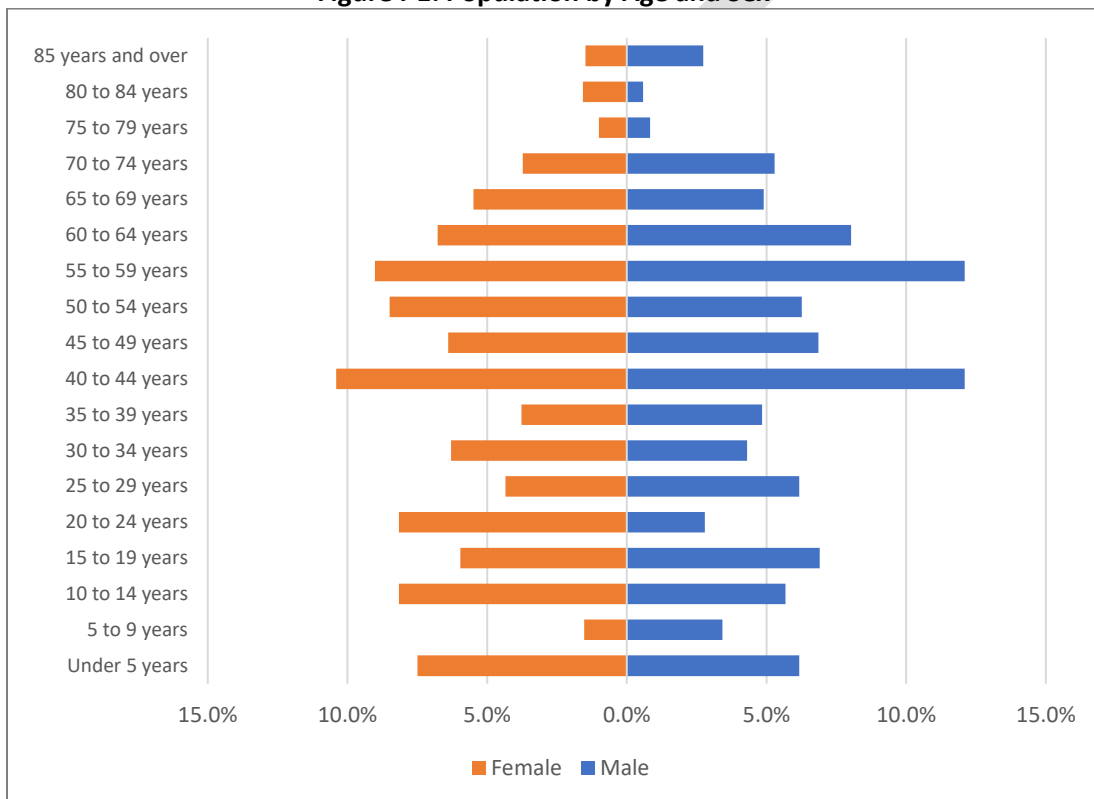
Source: U.S Census

Other Population Characteristics

Age

Figure I-1 shows the population of Rice Lake in 2010 separated by sex and age cohorts. The largest age groups within Rice Lake are persons in the range of 40 to 44 years old. This age group accounts for 11.2% of the entire population. The population of Rice Lake is slightly older than the average for St. Louis County; the median age for Rice Lake is 43.6 years old while the County median is 41 years old. Table I-3 displays median age for Rice Lake, St. Louis County, the State on Minnesota and other neighboring communities.

Figure I-1: Population by Age and Sex



Source: American Community Survey, 2017

Table I-3 – Median Age	
City of Rice Lake	43.6
State of Minnesota	37.9
St. Louis County	41.0
Duluth	33.8
Hermantown	41.0

Source: American Community Survey, 2017

Household Size and Quantity

As shown in Table 1, there were approximately 1,774 households in the City of Rice Lake in 2017. While the population of Rice Lake has plateaued since the growth in the 1990's, the amount of housing still grew by 356 units since the year 1990. However, there has been a decrease in the number of persons per household, which is a trend both regionally and statewide. Table I-4 shows the average number of persons per household and the quantity of households.

Table 4 - Household Size and Quantity				
	1990	2000	2010	2017
Quantity of Households	1,418	1,518	1,689	1,774
Persons Per Household	2.74	2.73	2.54	2.33

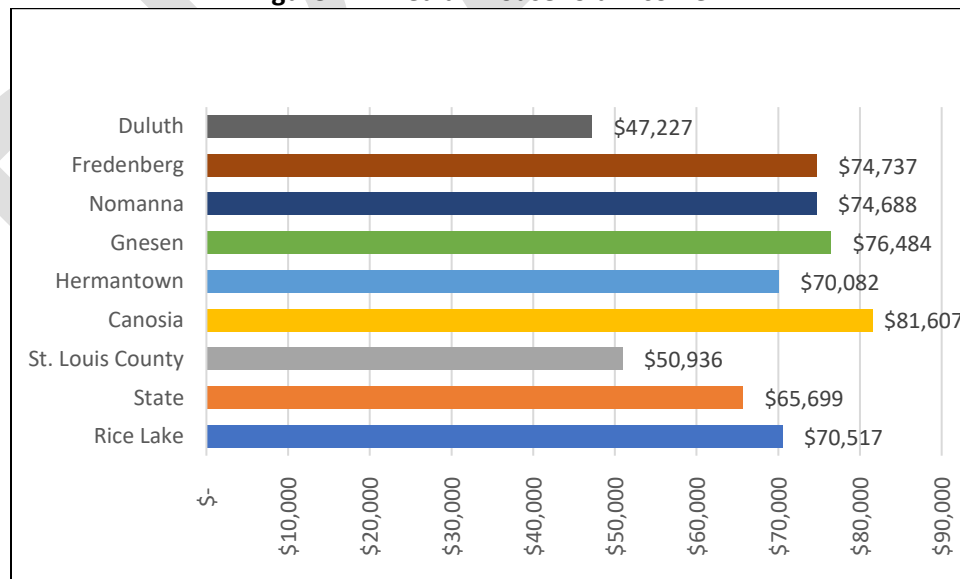
Source: Minnesota State Demographer, American Community Survey, 2017

According to the American Community Survey, 1,712 (96.5%) of Rice Lake's housing units were occupied. Of these, 89.5% were owner occupied.

Household Income

Median household income in Rice Lake was estimated to be \$70,517 in 2017 significantly higher than the median for St. Louis County (\$50,396). However, St. Louis County had a higher per capita income than the City of Rice Lake with \$35,121 and \$29,197, respectively. This indicates that the City of Rice Lake has a larger household size than the County. The City of Rice Lake has a comparable median household income when compared to surrounding jurisdictions and a higher median household income than the county as a whole.

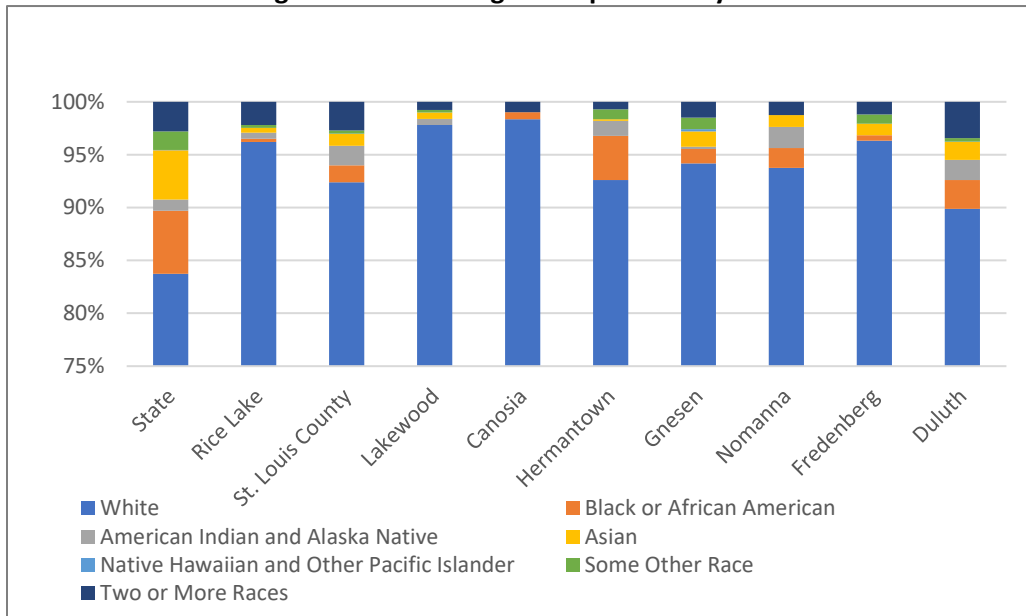
Figure I-2: Median Household Income



Race and Ethnicity

Figure I-3 below illustrates the estimated racial composition of Rice Lake and other neighboring communities. About 96% of Rice Lake residents identified as “White”. Rice Lake is somewhat less diverse than St. Louis County and far less diverse than the State of Minnesota.

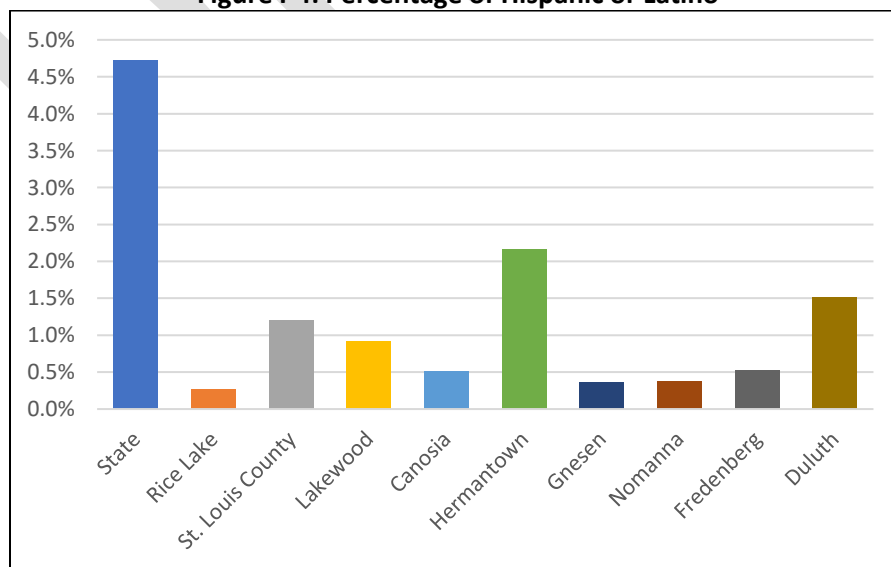
Figure I-3: Percentage of Population by Race



Source: American Community Survey, 2017

The 2017 American Community Survey reports race and ethnicity (i.e. Hispanic origins) separately; respondents may select any race and any ethnicity, meaning race and ethnicity are not mutually exclusive. Figure X below shows the percentage of the population that identified as Hispanic or Latino in Rice Lake and surrounding communities.

Figure I-4: Percentage of Hispanic or Latino

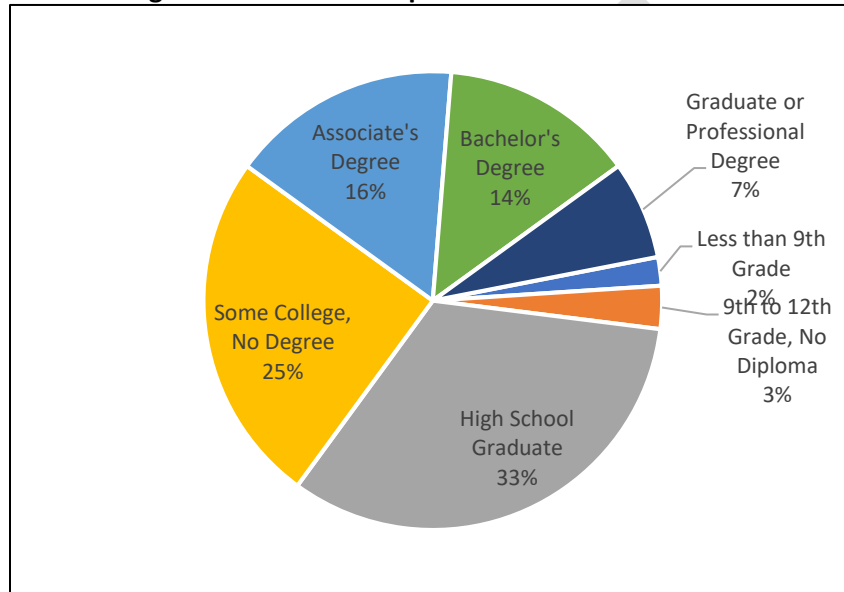


Source: American Community Survey, 2017

Education

According to the 2017 American Community Survey, 33% of the city’s population age 25 or older has graduated from high school, while approximately 25% have some college, but no degree. Only 5% of residents age 25 or older had less than a high school education.

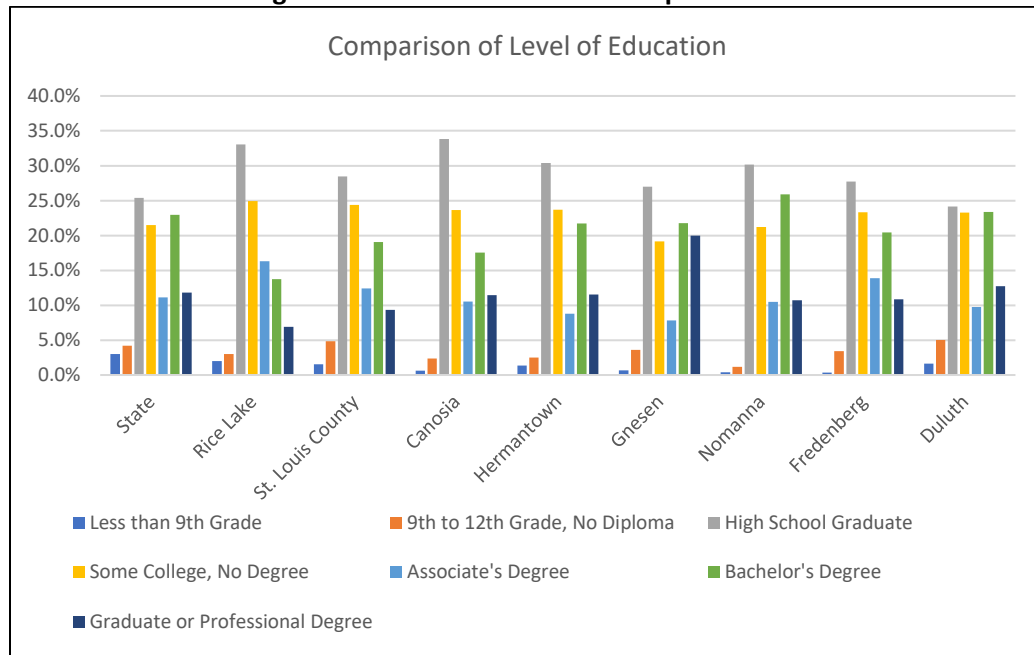
Figure I-5: Rice Lake Population Level of Education



Source: American Community Survey, 2017

The following graph compares the Rice Lake population’s level of educational to surrounding communities using 2017 estimates. While Rice Lake has a very low percentage of people who have not received a high school diploma, there is also a low percentage of people who have received advanced degrees.

Figure I-6: Level of Education Comparison



Source: US Census 2010, ACS 2017

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