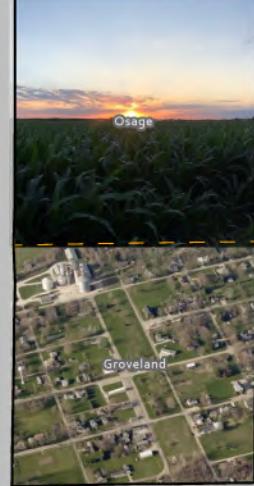




## LaSalle County 2023 Comprehensive Plan

# Plan to 2030+





LaSalle County  
2023 Comprehensive Plan  
**Plan to 2030+**

ADOPTED: July 13, 2023

LaSalle County Board

Don Jensen, Chairman

LaSalle County Land Use and TIF Committee

Doug Stockley, Chairman

LaSalle County Land Use Department

Brian Gift, Director



- Plan prepared by LaSalle County Land Use Department-
- Bruce Harris and Associates providing technical GIS support-
- Aerial photo credits: Pictometry and Google Earth-
- All other photos by LaSalle County Land Use unless otherwise noted-





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# INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER 1

## LASALLE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



### 1.1 WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is a document with corresponding maps that provides detailed information about the characteristics of a locality and guides future policy and development. The Plan allows the community to identify and leverage its physical/geographic/demographic assets in order to spur economic development while still protecting its resources.

Comprehensive planning at the County level is an exercise to spark discussion among people and governing bodies from municipalities, rural areas, and more regional levels, whose voices and actions are often fragmented. It also serves to educate about a place by gathering information and opinions in one place. The final product, should be a reflection of community members' values and goals for the future, and lay out the actions that will help them achieve those goals.

#### WHY PLAN?

- *To coordinate community activities*

Comprehensive planning brings together the work and viewpoints of regulating bodies, community groups, and citizens to create a holistic path to the future.

- *To create a roadmap to the future*

A comprehensive plan is a document that records the goals and values members have for their community and the steps needed to achieve their vision for the future.

- *To understand and record the past and present*

During the process of creating a comprehensive plan, useful information is gathered and recorded about the community that enlightens the story of a place.

- *To maintain uniqueness*

Coming together to identify the special character of a community helps instill pride in its members.

- *To identify issues*

A comprehensive plan can help a community identify its potential conflict points and provides an early opportunity to resolve issues.

- *To save money*

Bringing together community groups and regulating bodies to create a plan helps identify redundancy in function and promotes cooperation.

- *To promote economic development*

Planning helps communities identify and leverage their best assets to attract new businesses and industry.

- *To protect valuable resources*

As with economic development, planning helps communities identify and protect their precious resources, from wetlands to prime farmland.

This Comprehensive Plan is the result of a process of data gathering, public participation, analysis, and

planning for the future. Cities, towns, and counties around the world often experience similar planning issues; however, each place is also unique. This Comprehensive Plan documents and reflects LaSalle County's unique character, local values, and special issues. If used often, in all types of policy decisions, it can serve as a guiding roadmap to the future.

## 1.2 LASALLE COUNTY PLANS OF THE PAST

LaSalle County initially started discussion of planning in the 1960s when the LaSalle County Regional Planning Commission was formed and planning funds were available through Federal programs. However, public support waned and the County chose not to adopt a zoning ordinance. A Subdivision Regulations Ordinance was adopted in 1966 to provide some control and guidance for subdivision and development of land within the unincorporated portions of LaSalle County.

In the 1990s, townships within LaSalle County recognized the potential problems that come with the lack of planning and zoning regulations; so the townships that contained, or were on the fringe of, growing population/development chose to take action by enacting planning and zoning for their individual townships. However, many areas of the county still remain unprotected from uncontrolled development.

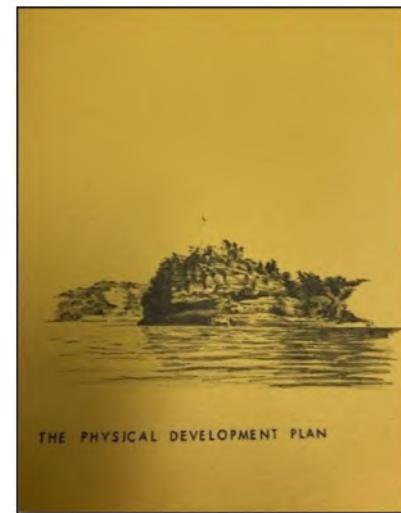
In 1995 twenty-five townships requested LaSalle County to undertake the task of creating a new comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance for the entire county. In late 1996, the LaSalle County Board appointed the LaSalle County Planning and Zoning Commission and assigned them the task of preparing an updated Comprehensive Land Use Plan and the County's first Zoning Ordinance.

### EARLY PLANNING STUDIES

In the late 1960s, the LaSalle County Regional Plan Commission was formed. With land and transportation planning funds available through the

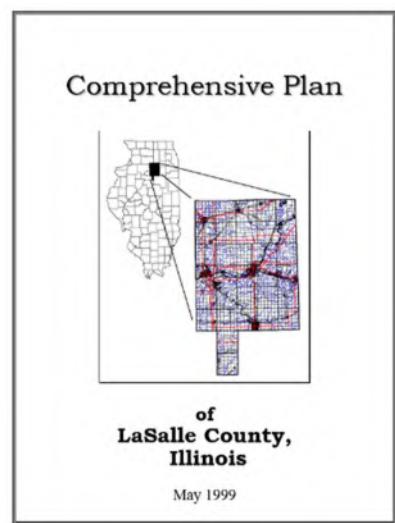
Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, a consultant was commissioned to complete several in-depth plans for LaSalle County. The LaSalle County Comprehensive Planning and Transportation Study included the following documents: Background for Planning- Population and Economy, Background for Planning-Existing Land Use, Physical Development Plan, Present Travel and Forecasting Procedures, Existing Transportation Facilities, The Transportation Plan, Proposed Subdivision Regulations, and Proposed Zoning Ordinance.

It appears that the adoption of a subdivision regulations ordinance and some of the proposed highway improvements were the only major elements of the plans that were implemented.



### 1999 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

In 1999, LaSalle County was the only county in the Northern two-thirds of Illinois without a zoning ordinance governing the unincorporated areas of the County. Without such documents, LaSalle County was at risk for unmanaged growth and scattered site development, leading to incompatible land uses and the loss of prime farmland. The 1999 LaSalle County Comprehensive Plan, drafted by North Central Illinois Council of Governments, focused on County



assets and the need for controlled development through an adopted County Zoning Ordinance, updated subdivision ordinance, and uniform building regulations.

In the years following the adoption of the 1999 Plan, LaSalle County implemented several of the important goals of the plan including:

- In 2002, a major update of the County Subdivision Ordinance
- In 2004, a major update of Building Permit Ordinance to include building codes (2003 IRC/IBC, 2002 NEC)
- In 2006, adoption of LaSalle County's first zoning ordinance

#### 2008 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

LEAMgroup, a planning consulting firm based in Champaign, IL, created the 2008 LaSalle County Comprehensive Plan. LEAMgroup leveraged the Land use Evolution and impact Assessment Model (LEAM) to simulate land use change over time based on variables that are important in a community. LEAM also allowed local officials and the public to visualize and test the potential impacts of proposed policies and infrastructure investment choices on the community. LEAMgroup used traditional planning tools as well as LEAM to produce a dynamic Comprehensive Plan to help guide the County's future.



#### LaSalle County Comprehensive Plan

LaSalle County, Illinois

Prepared by LEAMgroup, Inc.  
June 2008

The 2008 Plan included significant public input through surveys, multiple charrettes throughout the County, and meetings with several community

groups. This input led to the creation of many important goals and strategies that were carried on to the 2014 plan update and are still relevant today.

#### 2014 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (UPDATE)

In 2014 an update to the 2008 Plan was completed by LaSalle County Environmental Services and Land Use staff with assistance/input from the LaSalle County Development Committee. Staff also facilitated 6 public meetings throughout the County to gather public input for the Plan update.

The 2014 Plan was updated with new demographic data, maps, and updated goals/strategies.



### 1.3 THE PLAN TO 2030+ PLANNING PROCESS

LaSalle County's Comprehensive Plan is vital because it provides guidance for the development of the County for the next ten years and beyond. The Plan provides this guidance by outlining goals, policies, and strategies that are supported by data and technical analysis, and developed with a thorough public review process.

**The 2030+ planning process consisted of the following elements:**

- **Review of Goals/Strategies with the LaSalle County Land Use Committee**
- **Staff review and update of all plan content and maps**
- **Community Input Survey posted online and sent to a random sampling of unincorporated residents**
- **Review of survey results and re-review of Goals/Strategies with Land Use Committee**
- **Posting of draft plan/maps on website**
- **Public hearing/presentation**
- **Final plan adoption by the LaSalle County Board**

The overall purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to enable government officials and citizens to anticipate and constructively handle County-wide growth and change and to encourage the development of a safe, healthy, orderly, and distinctive living environment.

This Comprehensive Plan reflects and draws key elements from all the past plans and elaborates with new data, maps, and content to provide a significant Comprehensive Plan update to guide the County's future.

As with past plans, this Comprehensive Plan addresses three questions that are integral to good planning:

- **Where have we been?**
- **Where are we now?**
- **Where do we want to be in the future – and how do we get there?**

## 1.4 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND COMPLIMENTARY ORDINANCES

*The comprehensive plan is a guide for the County's future growth. However, a zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinances must be implemented and updated to reflect the intent of the comprehensive plan in order to carry out the Plan. When the adopted ordinances are updated to be in line with the adopted Comprehensive Plan, the plan's goals can be achieved.*

### ZONING ORDINANCE

LaSalle County enacted a County-wide zoning ordinance on April 1, 2006. The zoning Ordinance is the legal document that regulates land use on private property. The State of Illinois courts recognize the Comprehensive Plan as an appropriate guide and legal basis for future zoning decisions. Typically, zoning decisions should be based on whether they are consistent with the County's expressed goals for future land use as stated in the Comprehensive Plan.

The zoning ordinance is one legal enforcement mechanism for achieving goals identified in the Comprehensive Plan. If the Zoning Board of Appeals and the County decide that the requested zoning change is not in harmony with the County's Comprehensive Plan, then that decision will have a sound legal basis because the decision is based on a thoroughly researched and carefully prepared place-based Comprehensive Plan.

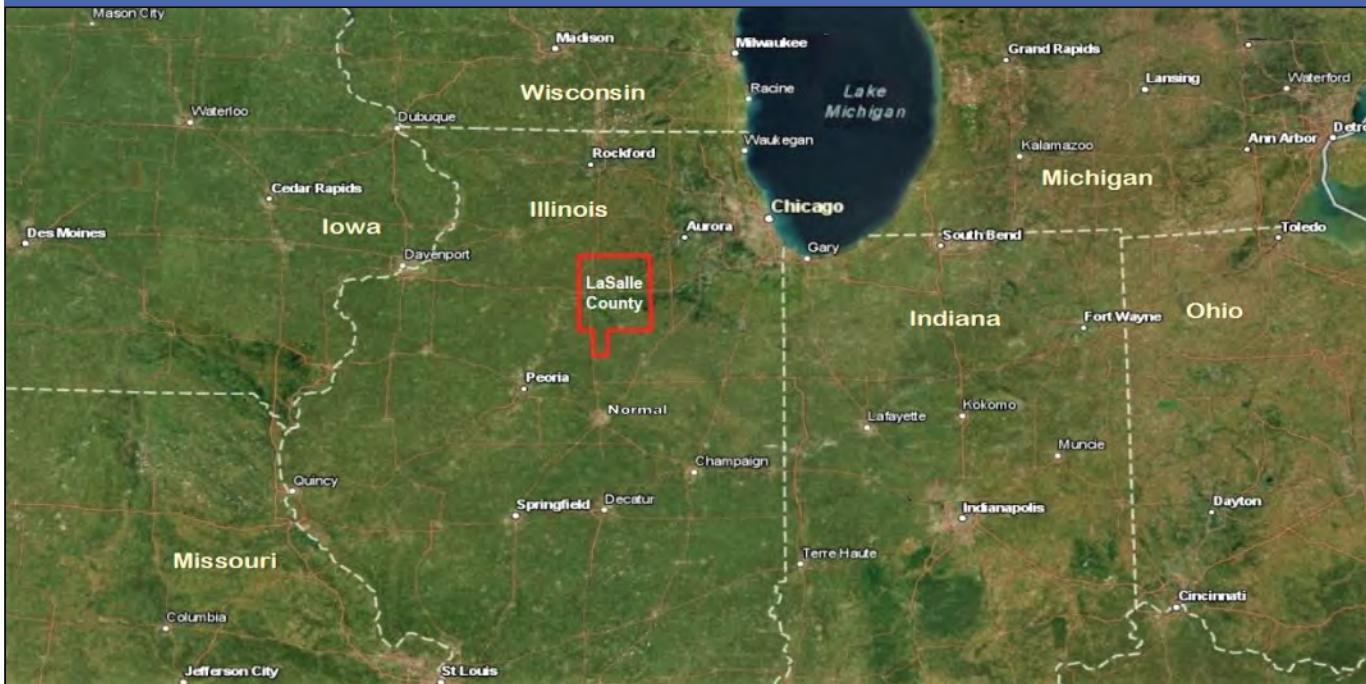
### SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE

LaSalle County adopted its first Subdivision Regulations Ordinance in 1966. The ordinance has been updated many times over the years to apply more control over the County's development. Subdivision regulations allow for orderly development of land by requiring uniform guidelines, planned access, and infrastructure improvements for new subdivisions.

# COMMUNITY PROFILE

## CHAPTER 2

## LASALLE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



### 2.1 REGIONAL SETTING

LaSalle County is located in North Central Illinois and nearly equidistant from metro areas of Chicago, Bloomington-Normal, Peoria, Moline-Rock Island, and Rockford. LaSalle County borders nine other Illinois counties: DeKalb, Kendall, Grundy, Livingston, Woodford, Marshal, Putnam, Bureau, and Lee.

The County has 37 townships and spans 1135 square miles; making it the second-largest Illinois county in land area. Agricultural land covers most of the county's acreage with urban and forested areas generally concentrated near the Illinois, Fox, and Vermillion Rivers.

**The County's central location paired with excellent transportation facilities, including highways, railways, and waterways provides the County with a prime advantage for future development and growth.**



## 2.2 HISTORY

LaSalle County's history is as rich as its soils and mineral resources. The beginning of the recorded history of the area tells the stories of Native American tribes including the Iroquois, Potawatomi, Sauk, Fox, Ottawa, and Illinois and early French explorers; Louis Joliet, Father Jacques Marquette, and Rene Robert Cavalier de LaSalle. The first recorded European settlement in the area was the establishment, in 1675, of a mission and fur trading post by Marquette and Joliet at Grand Village; a Native American trading village near present day Utica.

Subsequently, in 1683, Rene Robert Cavalier established Fort St. Louis near Starved Rock.

Many French and Native American relics have been discovered in LaSalle County. The area shows a wide diversification of Native American cultures indicating its use by tribes whose activity centers were hundreds of miles away. The Native American remains on Plum Island, located just west of the Starved Rock Dam, are thought to be the oldest in Illinois.

France controlled the Illinois River valley until 1763 when Great Britain took possession under the terms of the Treaty of Paris which ended one of the many wars between Britain and France at that time. Britain ceded control of the area after the American Revolutionary War in 1783. In 1787 Congress passed an ordinance which created the Northwest Territories. Illinois became a separate territory in 1809 and successfully petitioned to enter the Union and become the 21st State of the Union in 1818.

Despite the fact that statehood was granted to Illinois, Chief Blackhawk, of the Fox Indian tribe, repudiated the treaty that ceded the Native

American lands east of the Mississippi River. When European settlers began to occupy the area, Chief Blackhawk led several raids back across the Mississippi River to attack the new settlers. LaSalle County settlers were not entirely free from their confrontations with the Native Americans until the Indian Creek Massacre in 1832 occurred and the

Blackhawk Wars subsequently concluded in the area.

The title "LaSalle County" was not attached to this land until 1831, when it was formed from portions of Putnam County. The modern day boundaries of

LaSalle County were established in 1843. During this time, permanent settlers came and formed the beginning of the cities of La Salle, Peru, Ottawa, and Utica along the Illinois River.

During the early and mid-1800s, agriculture became an increasingly important industry in LaSalle County. New Englanders came to LaSalle County to transform the prairie into productive farmland. With the invention of better farm equipment, farmers were able to produce more food than they could use and were soon looking to export the excess to markets in the east.



Construction of the Illinois-Michigan Canal, which opened in 1848, further increased migration into the LaSalle County area. The canal also brought more commerce to the area, as it allowed goods to travel from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River and on to the Gulf of

Mexico. By the mid-1800s railroads were built with lines and connections in most of the towns throughout the county. The Rock Island Railway line, completed in 1853, ran through the county paralleling the Illinois-Michigan Canal and extended the ability of the area to quickly move goods west to the Mississippi River. The proliferation of railroads and the new canal allowed farmers cost-effective transportation methods for shipping grain to eastern markets. As agriculture flourished in the County, residential and agriculture related industrial growth accelerated.

In the mid-to-late 1800s through the early 1900s, larger resource-based industries expanded throughout the County. Locally mined coal, sand, clay, and limestone allowed for significant growth in the following industries: zinc processing, brick making, glass manufacturing, and cement manufacturing. Many cities such as Ottawa, Streator, LaSalle, and Peru saw significant growth during this period. Matthiessen and Hegeler (M&H) Zinc Company, located in LaSalle to be near the coal fields, was the largest zinc processing plant in the United States at the time. Matthiessen's country estate would later become Matthiessen State Park.

Throughout the early and mid-1900s, general manufacturing also continued to thrive within the County. At the time, Westclox of Peru employed more than 4,000 workers at its peak. During World War II, the Seneca Shipyards employed 27,000 shipyard workers to build landing craft used in the D-Day invasion. Plastics and chemical industries also grew during this time, using the Illinois River and local rail for transport. Interstate 80 through LaSalle County was completed in the early 1960s and Interstate 39 was completed in the early 1990s. This led to additional retail, hospitality, and logistics growth near the interstate corridors throughout the late 1990s up until the present day. Small to medium sized manufacturers still thrive in LaSalle County. Agriculture, mining, logistics, chemical/plastics, and resource-based industries continue to be major employers and economic drivers in LaSalle County. As the County's natural resources, parks, and history continues to draw

more visitors; tourism related industry is on the rise in LaSalle County.

## 2.3 COUNTY GOVERNMENT FACILITIES / SERVICES

LaSalle County Government provides services to residents from multiple locations throughout the County.

### COUNTY GOVERNMENT COMPLEX



The LaSalle County Government Complex is located at 707 E. Etna Rd., Ottawa. This building complex contains the following departments:

**Assessments**—Maintains county property assessment records, township assessments, assessment publications, exemptions, and GIS.

**Auditor** - Responsible for evaluating and reporting on county financial operations including examining all bills, reimbursements, and requests for payment made by the various county departments.

**Central Services**- Provides services/supplies including document scanning/microfilming, printing, and postage for LaSalle County's offices and departments.

**Chief Judge's Office**- Administers authority for the entire Court Services Department.

**Circuit Clerk Traffic and Criminal Division-**  
Preserves all files and records of sessions of courts in the Traffic and Criminal Division.

**County Clerk** - Administers and conducts all elections, keeps all vital records, issues licenses, files budgets, levies, bonds, and abatements.

**Criminal/Traffic Courts** – Handles all criminal and traffic court cases.

**Detention Home** - Detention of Juveniles for protection of public and the minor.

**Emergency Telephone System Board Office (ETSB)**- Responsible for planning and implementing enhanced 911 Emergency Telephone System for all residents in unincorporated LaSalle County. This office also issues address numbers for unincorporated areas and maintains public safety GIS data.

**Human Resources** - Responsible for the administration and coordination of all human resource functions which support the successful operation of county departments and their employees.

**Jail**- A medium security facility, used by the jurisdictions of LaSalle County, to confine inmates for short periods of time. The facility has a capacity of 305 beds.

**Jury Commission**- Provides service of summons to jurors and screening of jurors.

**Public Defender**- Represents people by Court order, charged with crimes that carry potential prison time and minors.

**Recorder of Deeds** - Files land records/deeds to be part of the official public record.

**Sheriff's Office** - Provides law enforcement services to the residents of the County. Running of the County's Jail. Patrols the unincorporated areas of the county 24 hours/7 days a week. Provides security for the Judicial Circuit Court and screening for County buildings. Serves warrants, summonses, orders of protection, and other legal documents.

**State's Attorney** - Prosecutes criminal offenders while providing compassionate service to the victims

of crime. Divisions include: domestic violence, traffic, drug, misdemeanor, felony, civil, and juvenile.

**Treasurer** - Responsible for depositing, investing and distributing monies on behalf of LaSalle County.

## HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The LaSalle County Health Department is located at 717 E Etna Rd., Ottawa. The LaSalle County Health Department is comprised of three divisions; Administrative, Environmental, and Personal Health. Division personnel direct and coordinate the assessment of community health needs, the development of program plans, the implementation of programs, and the evaluation of health outcomes.

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

The LaSalle County EMA Department is located at 711 E Etna Rd., Ottawa. The LaSalle County Emergency Management Agency provides education, resources, and support necessary to reduce the loss of life and human suffering; to minimize property damage; and to protect environmentally sensitive areas from all types of disasters through a comprehensive, risk-based, all-hazard emergency management program. The program coordinates activities to protect from, prepare for, mitigate against, respond to and recover from disasters.

## DOWNTOWN COURTHOUSE

The LaSalle County Downtown Courthouse is located at 119 W Madison St., Ottawa. This building complex contains the following departments:



**Animal Control** – Administers/enforces rabies vaccine requirements within the County, removes stray and wild animals outside of city limits, enforces Animal Control Act, and contracts with municipalities for assistance in animal control situations.

**Civil Courts** - Handles all civil court cases.

**Circuit Clerk Civil Division** - Preserves all files and records of sessions of courts in the Civil Division.

**Court Services** - Provides overall supervision of all court services.

**Land Use** – Administers and enforces LaSalle County zoning, subdivision, building, flood, and other land related ordinances. The department is also delegated by the Illinois EPA to conduct inspections and enforcement on LaSalle County landfills, compost facilities, open dump sites, and open burn sites

**Probation** – Provides supervision of offenders released back into the community.

**Regional Superintendent of Schools** - Regional Office of Education for LaSalle, Marshall and Putnam. Serves as an intermediate link between local school district and state and ensures that all districts are complying with state law.

**School Health Services** - Provides child health and nursing services. Conducts hearing tests, head-lice checks and eye tests.

## HIGHWAY

The LaSalle County Highway Department is located at 1400 N 27<sup>th</sup> Rd., Ottawa. The department maintains 363.46 miles of county highway, 81 major structures, and over 5500 signs. The department also has garages in Leonore and Serena, used primarily during snowplow operations.



## NURSING HOME

The LaSalle County Nursing Home is located at 1380 N 27<sup>th</sup> Rd., Ottawa. LaSalle County Nursing Home contains 79 beds and provides skilled nursing services, hospice, and rehabilitation/restorative programs.



## VETERAN'S ASSISTANCE

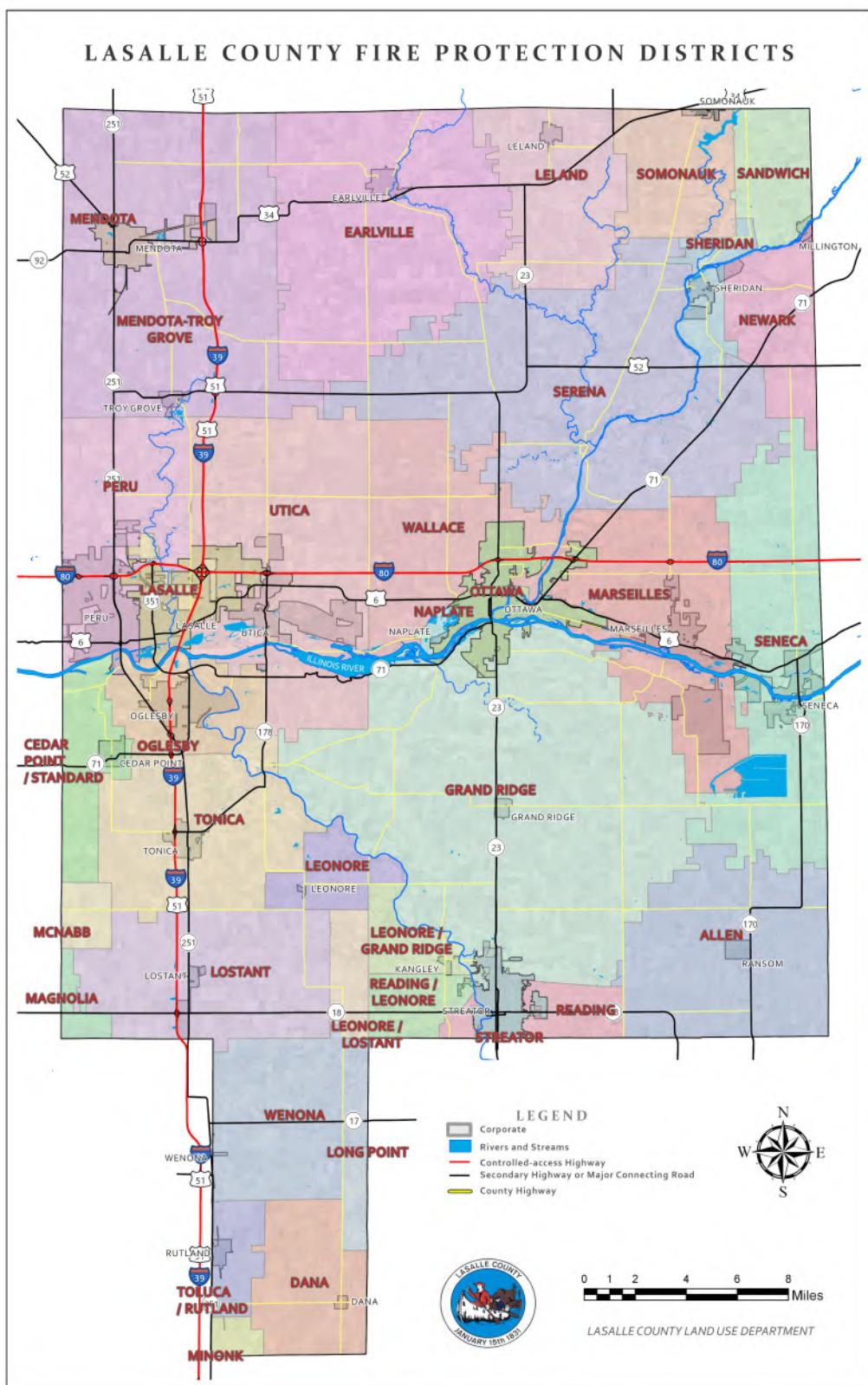
The LaSalle County Veteran's Assistance Commission is located at 4231 Progress Blvd, Suite 4 - Peru, IL. Advocates for veterans and their families. Assists with helping veterans and their families in applying for benefits/claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Defense, and various other agencies.

## CORONER

LaSalle County Coroner's Office is located at the LaSalle County Forensic Center, 520 West Walnut Street, Oglesby. The Coroner's Office provides the people of LaSalle County with a thorough investigation in the event of a death, and provide the decedent families support during this event.

## 2.4 FIRE PROTECTION

LaSalle County is covered by 36 different fire protection districts. Many of these districts also have their own ambulance/EMT services.



## 2.5 EDUCATION

LaSalle County contains approximately 39 educational entities within its borders.

### ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL DISTRICTS

LaSalle County contains facilities for the following 21 elementary and middle school districts:

- Allen-Otter Creek #65
- Deer Park #82
- Dimmick #175
- Earlville #9
- Grand Ridge #95
- LaSalle Elementary #122 (2 schools)
- Leland #1
- Lostant #425
- Marseilles #150
- Mendota #289 (3 schools)
- Miller #210
- Oglesby #125 (2 schools)
- Ottawa Elementary #141 (5 schools)
- Peru Elementary #124 (2 schools)
- Rutland #230
- Seneca Elementary #170 (2 schools)
- Serena Unit #2 (3 schools)
- Streator Elementary #44 (3 schools)
- Tonica #79
- Wallace #195
- Waltham #185

### HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICTS

LaSalle County contains facilities for the following 8 high school districts:

- Earlville Junior/Senior High School #9
- LaSalle-Peru High School #120
- Leland High School #1
- Mendota High School #280
- Ottawa High School #140
- Seneca High School #160
- Serena Unit #2 High School
- Streator High School #40



### COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICTS

**Illinois Valley Community College**- The primary community college for LaSalle County residents is located in Oglesby. IVCC had a 2018 full-time



enrollment of 1,095 and part-time enrollment of 1,863.

A small area in northeast LaSalle County is covered by Waubansee Community College in Sugar Grove.

### PAROCHIALS & MISC SCHOOLS

LaSalle County is home to several parochial elementary schools and one parochial high school. There are also several other specialty support schools/services located within the County.

- Circuit Breaker School-Peru
- Holy Cross Elementary School-Mendota
- Holy Family School-Oglesby
- LaSalle Putnam Educational Alliance for Special Education (L.E.A.S.E.)-Ottawa
- Lighted Way- LaSalle
- LP Christian School - LaSalle
- Marquette Academy- Ottawa
- Peru Catholic School- Peru
- Regional Safe School-Peru
- Rhema Christian Academy- Streator
- Starved Rock Associates for Vocational and Technical Education (SRAVTE) –Oglesby
- Seventh Day Adventist School- Sheridan
- St. Michael the Archangel School- Streator
- St. Columba and St. Patrick School- Ottawa
- Trinity Catholic Academy- LaSalle

## 2.6 HEALTHCARE

Several major hospital/care centers and numerous urgent care centers are located throughout LaSalle County. These important community assets provide access to local healthcare, emergency services, primary and specialty care providers and diagnostic and laboratory services.

The major hospital/care centers are listed below:

**Mendota OSF Saint Paul Medical Center**

Full service hospital located at 1401 E 12<sup>th</sup> St., Mendota

**Ottawa OSF Saint Elizabeth Medical Center**

Full service Hospital located at 1100 E Norris Dr., Ottawa

**Peru St. Margaret's Health** - Full

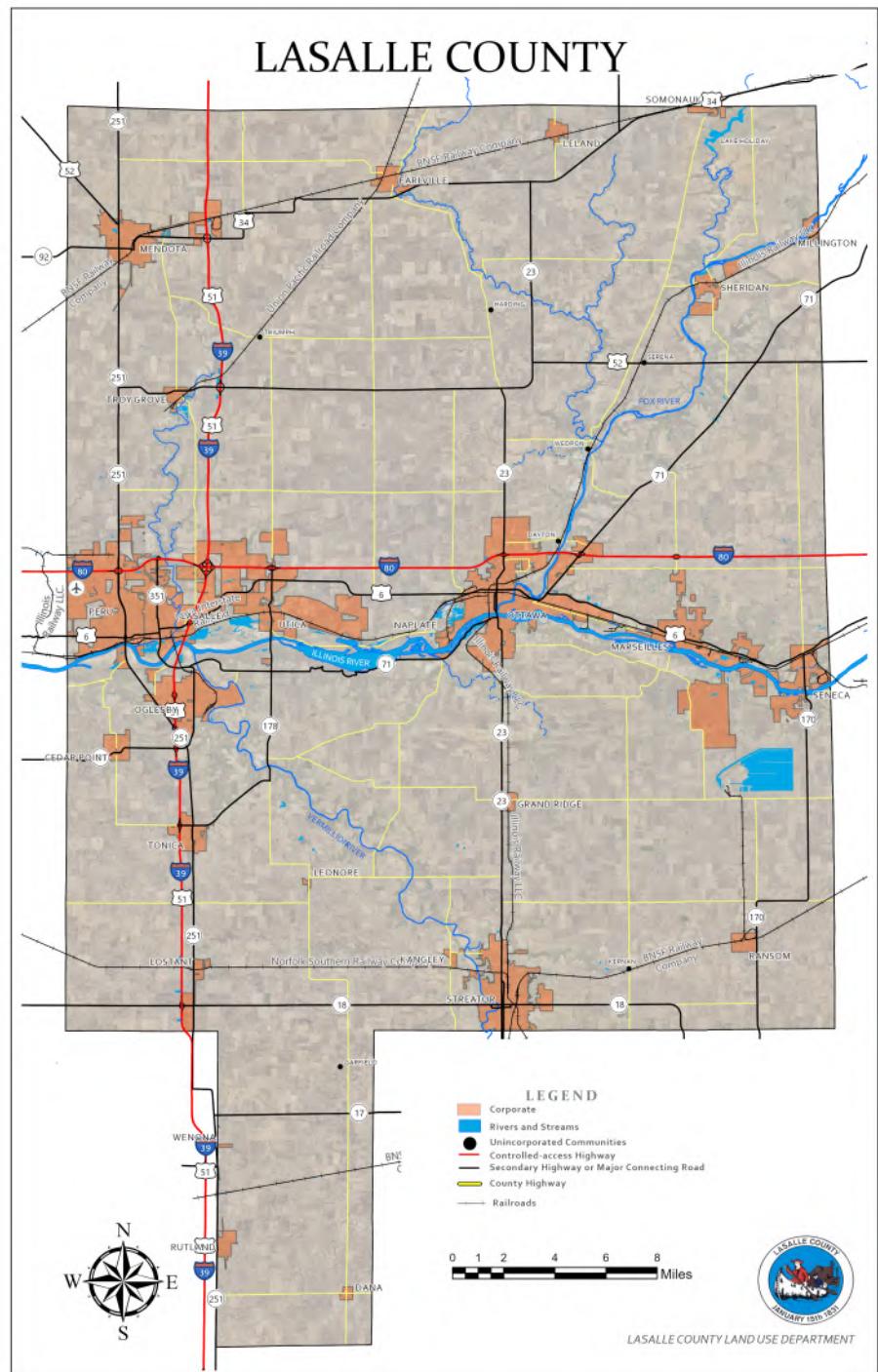
service hospital located at 925 West St., Peru (As of the June 2023, OSF Healthcare is acquiring St. Margaret's Health assets and plans to reopen this hospital location).

**Streator OSF Emergency Center**

Emergency care center located at 111 Spring St, Streator.

## 2.7 TRANSPORTATION

All forms of transportation serve LaSalle County; however, its principal transportation facilities are highways, railroads, and waterways. Each plays a significant role in the growth and development of the county.



## HIGHWAYS

According to the LaSalle County Highway Department, there are now 363.46 miles of highway in the County highway system; only Cook County has more. There are also 81 major structures associated with the County highway system, the 5<sup>th</sup> largest in Illinois. The County Highway Department also identifies 1468.59 miles of Township District roads in the County total, and the number of major structures totaling 233.

LaSalle County has two controlled-access interstate highways. Interstate 80, a major east-west highway, passes through LaSalle County approximately 5 miles north of the Illinois River. Interstate 39 runs north and south on the western side of the county. These interstate highways provide direct links to the national interstate system.

In addition to the interstate freeway system, LaSalle County is served by a number of U.S. and State Highways which, in conjunction with the Interstate Routes, provide access to all areas in the county, region, and state. Among the important U.S. highways that pass through the county are routes 6, 34 and 52. All provide general east-west travel and are located north of the Illinois River. The numbered state highways in LaSalle County include Routes 251, 17, 18, 23, 71, 170, 178, 179, and 351. Combined with the interstate highways, these routes provide direct access to all parts of Illinois.

All highways throughout the county are shown on the ***Official LaSalle County Highway Map***  
***(Attachment A)***

## RAILWAYS

The rail lines of five railroad companies serve the county, connecting it to virtually all parts of the United States.

The Union Pacific Railway has tracks that extend diagonally across the northwest portion of the county serving Earlville, Triumph and Troy Grove. At its northern end this track connects in DeKalb County

with the Union Pacific main line between Chicago and the West Coast of the United States.

The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway crosses LaSalle County at the southeast corner and again in the panhandle section. The major city directly served by the Burlington Northern is Streator. The Burlington Northern also crosses the northern part of the County; connecting Leland, Earlville, and Mendota.



The Norfolk Southern Railway Company operates in the southern part of the county. The rail line runs west from Streator, connecting with Lostant and the communities of Granville, Moronts and Hennepin in Putnam County.

The Illinois Railway branch enters the northeastern part of the county near Sheridan, and then continues on to Ottawa and Streator.

The Iowa Interstate rail branch connects Chicago to the City of Bureau in Bureau County and the City of Henry in Marshall County. This line crosses LaSalle County in an east-west direction just north of the Illinois River. This rail line serves the cities of Peru, LaSalle, Utica, Ottawa, Marseilles, and Seneca.

Due to recent demands in the agriculture and mining industries, a number of railroad siding and spur projects have been installed along railroads in LaSalle County.

### Passenger Train Service

A passenger train terminal is located adjacent to the BNSF track in Mendota, where the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (AMTRAK) runs several trains per day.

The Illinois Zephyr and Carl Sandburg trains run round trip twice daily from Chicago to Quincy Illinois with stops at the Mendota Station.



The nearest Metra commuter line connecting the area to Chicago is in Joliet, about 35 miles to the east, and Aurora, about 15 miles to the northeast.

### WATERWAYS

The Illinois River, which flows through LaSalle County in an east-west direction, forms an integral part of the national waterway system. As such it is one of the State's most important inland water routes. The Illinois Waterway extends about 330 miles between Lake Michigan and Grafton, where the Illinois River converges with the Mississippi River. The waterway, along with its tributaries, drains over one-half of the state and is one of the most prominent topographic features in Illinois. This waterway is of significant importance to the national waterway system as it is the only direct, all-water connection



between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. The Army Corps of Engineers operates 8 locks/dams along this route to maintain a minimum 9 foot deep navigable channel. Two of those locks/dams (Starved Rock and Marseilles) are located in LaSalle County.

Other than recreational use, most of the traffic on the Illinois River is in the form of barges. Barges are best suited for bulk shipments of commodities that require economy in the cost of freight. Waterborne transportation is especially well-suited for the movement of non-perishable bulk goods of great weight and volume such as grain, mineral products, bulk fuel, coal and building materials. The Illinois Waterway carries more than 30 million tons of cargo each year (2010 estimate) and is essential for the export of Illinois agricultural products.

### AIR SERVICE



The Illinois Valley Regional Airport in Peru serves LaSalle County for business flights, charter flights, and recreational flights. The airport can handle single engine planes up to large business jets. With two runways, the airport can operate in most wind conditions.

Several other small airports/landing strips are located throughout the County; mainly for private aircraft and agricultural crop dusting use.

Most of the County is less than 100 miles (around 1.5 hour drive) from Midway and O'Hare International Airports in Chicago, which provide a multitude of airlines and a variety of connections to all parts of the world. Additionally, airports located around

an hour from most parts of the County include the Moline, Bloomington, and Rockford airports; which offer many direct and connecting flights.

### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The North Central Area Transit (NCAT) bussing service started July 1, 2013 and has evolved to become an essential regional asset. The service offers an affordable door-to-door, origin to destination public bus transportation service for residents and guests of LaSalle County. The service can also arrange for connections to nearby County's regional bus services and even national services such as AMTRAK, Greyhound, and Burlington Trailways (which also have stops in LaSalle County).



The 2002 Illinois Valley Commuter Rail Study was commissioned to identify the feasibility to expanding commuter rail service to LaSalle County. In 2015 a second broad public transportation study was commissioned upon the recommendations of the first study. Many of the short term recommendations from the 2015 study have been met through the expanded NCAT service and connections. However, additional long term recommendations include passenger commuter rail service connection from LaSalle-Peru to Joliet (with stops in cities in between) and/or fixed route bus service covering the same route.

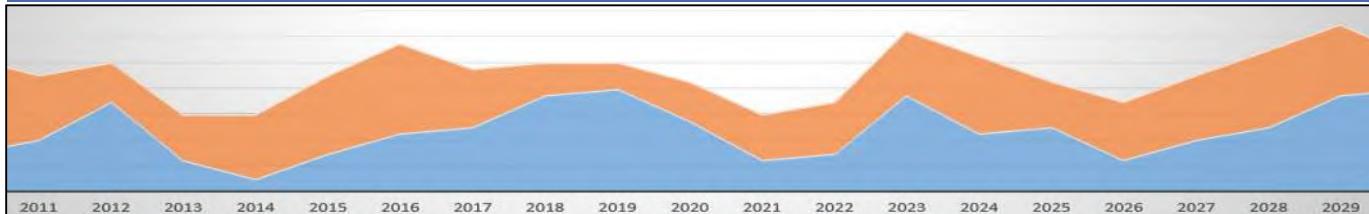
In 2022, the Illinois Department of Transportation conducted a feasibility study to determine the viability of a new AMTRAK route between Peoria and Chicago. The proposed route included stops in LaSalle-Peru and Ottawa.



# DEMOCRAPHICS AND ECONOMIC PROFILE

## CHAPTER 3

## LASALLE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



### 3.1 POPULATION and DEMOGRAPHICS

#### POPULATION

LaSalle County's population 2020 population of 109,658 decreased 3.7% from the 2010 population of 113,924 residents. Historically, LaSalle County has only previously had a decline in population between 1980 and 1990.

Only 3 municipalities within the county (Ottawa, Sheridan, and Dana) experienced an increase in population from 2010 to 2020. Sheridan's population also includes the Sheridan Correctional Center.

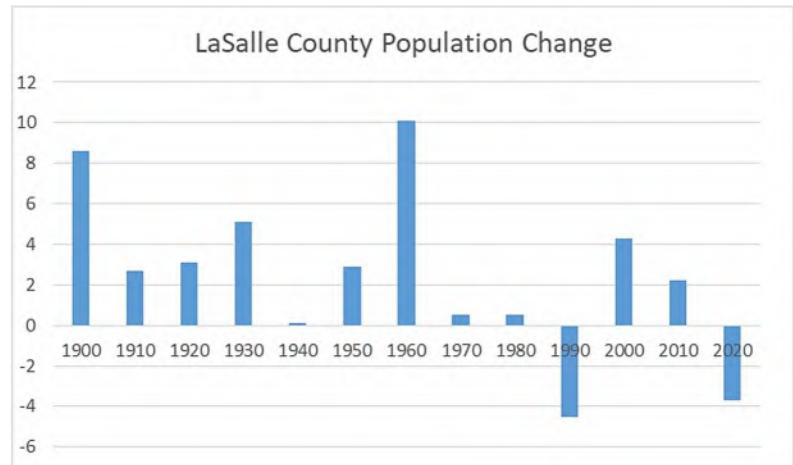
Bruce Harris and Associates estimated the 2020 unincorporated population of LaSalle County at 31,243 based on census block and corporate boundary data.

LASALLE COUNTY HISTORICAL POPULATION		
Year	Population	% Change
1840	9348	
1850	17815	90.6
1860	48332	171.3
1870	60792	25.8
1880	70403	15.8
1890	80798	14.8
1900	87,776	8.6
1910	90,132	2.7
1920	92,925	3.1
1930	97695	5.1
1940	97,801	0.1
1950	100,610	2.9
1960	110,800	10.1
1970	111,409	0.5
1980	112,033	0.5
1990	106,913	-4.5
2000	111,509	4.3
2010	113,924	2.2
2020	109,658	-3.7
US Census Bureau		

LaSalle County Population by Municipality			
Municipality	2000 Population	2010 Population	2020 Population
Cedar Point	262	277	266
Dana	171	159	162
Earlville	1778	1701	1613
Grand Ridge	546	560	515
Kangley	287	251	235
LaSalle	9769	9609	9582
Leland	970	977	951
Leonoire	110	130	121
Lostant	486	498	423
Marseilles	4655	5094	4845
Mendota	7272	7372	7061
North Utica	977	1352	1323
Oglesby	3647	3791	3712
Ottawa	18307	18768	18840
Peru	9835	10295	9896
Ransom	409	384	308
Rutland*	354	318	259
Seneca*	2053	2371	2353
Sheridan	2411	2137	2431
Streator*	14190	13710	12,500
Tonica	685	768	749
Troy Grove	305	250	225

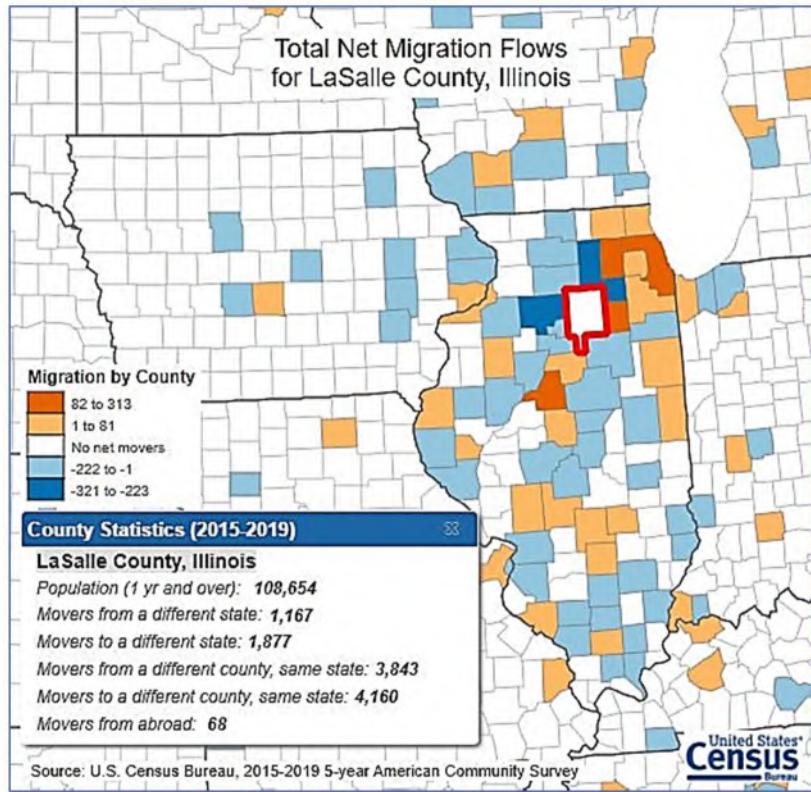
Estimated 2020 Unincorporated LaSalle County Population: 31,243 (based on census block/corporate limits)

US CENSUS BUREAU DATA \* Includes population outside LaSalle County



### NET MIGRATION

Another way to gage population trends is to look at the migration in or out of the county. According to the 2015-2019 American Community Survey, LaSalle County had a net migration out of state of 710, a net migration out of county (within Illinois) of 317, and migration of 68 from abroad during this time period. Some of the highest inbound migration to LaSalle County is from Cook County, Kane, and Grundy Counties. The highest outbound migration is flowing to Bureau, DeKalb, and Kendall Counties. Overall LaSalle County had a net outmigration of 1,027 people from 2015-2019.



### BIRTH/DEATH STATISTICS

The birth vs. death statistics for the County also help to assess population trends. [LaSalle County's death rate has exceeded its birth rate](#) annually for the past 10 years; with an average excess deaths of 128 annually.

#### LASALLE COUNTY BIRTH/DEATH

Year	Births	Deaths	Difference
2010	1259	1284	25
2011	1221	1318	97
2012	1119	1307	188
2013	1131	1239	108
2014	1225	1350	125
2015	1288	1356	68
2016	1262	1296	34
2017	1180	1354	174
2018	1093	1342	249
2019	1117	1329	212
Source: IDPH			

## SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

While enrollment tends to have natural fluctuation year to year; LaSalle County enrollment has seen a 7% overall reduction in students from 2010-2020. The percentage of low income students has increased from 45.9% in 2010 to 48.9% in 2020.

<b>LASALLE COUNTY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT</b>					
	<b>2010-2011</b>		<b>2019-2020</b>		<b>ENROLLMENT CHANGE 2010-2020</b>
<b>District Name</b>	<b>K-12</b>	<b>Low Income</b>	<b>K-12</b>	<b>Low Income</b>	<b>K-12</b>
Serena CUSD 2	824	234	634	224	-190
Dimmick CCSD #175	105	8	168	35	<b>63</b>
Tonica CCSD 79	202	57	138	43	-64
Peru ESD 124	964	450	861	442	-103
Ottawa ESD 141	1922	961	1744	964	-178
Miller Twp CCSD 210	230	5	169	33	-61
Mendota CCSD 289	1261	796	1023	628	-238
Leland CUSD 1	293	101	266	114	-27
Streator ESD 44	1912	1307	1481	1036	-431
Grand Ridge CCSD 95	338	93	189	43	-149
Ottawa Twp HSD 140	1421	364	1224	426	-197
Marseilles ESD 150	550	327	478	268	-72
Earlville CUSD 9	441	221	379	168	-62
Streator Twp HSD 40	914	376	844	371	-70
Allen-Otter Creek CCSD 65	110	37	71	28	-39
Deer Park CCSD 82	72	14	69	11	-3
Waltham CCSD 185	238	26	201	30	-37
Rutland CCSD 230	76	22	68	18	-8
Mendota Twp HSD 280	605	242	532	256	-73
Lostant CUSD 425	96	50	56	26	-40
La Salle-Peru Twp HSD 120	1199	353	1214	472	<b>15</b>
La Salle ESD 122	863	717	921	775	<b>58</b>
Oglesby ESD 125	487	279	428	264	-59
Seneca Twp HSD 160	450	74	431	128	-19
Seneca CCSD 170	505	161	443	156	-62
Wallace CCSD 195	310	67	344	80	<b>34</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>15459</b>	<b>7100</b>	<b>14376</b>	<b>7039</b>	-1083
		45.90%		48.90%	-7%

SOURCE- ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION (FALL ENROLLMENT)

## POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Official Illinois county future population projections, based on recent data, have not been released by the US Census Bureau or the State of Illinois.

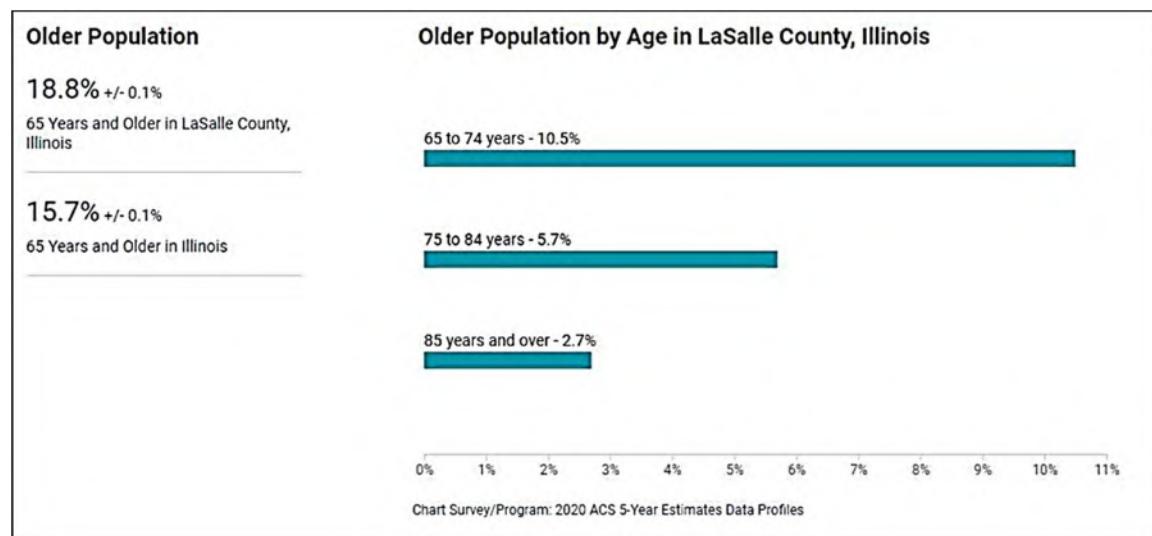
Upon review of data within this chapter, it is expected that LaSalle County will continue to see population loss (as it appears there are trends of population loss including: excess deaths over births, increased net outmigration, and lower school enrollment). However, increased economic development within the State of Illinois, LaSalle County, and surrounding counties could reverse this trend.

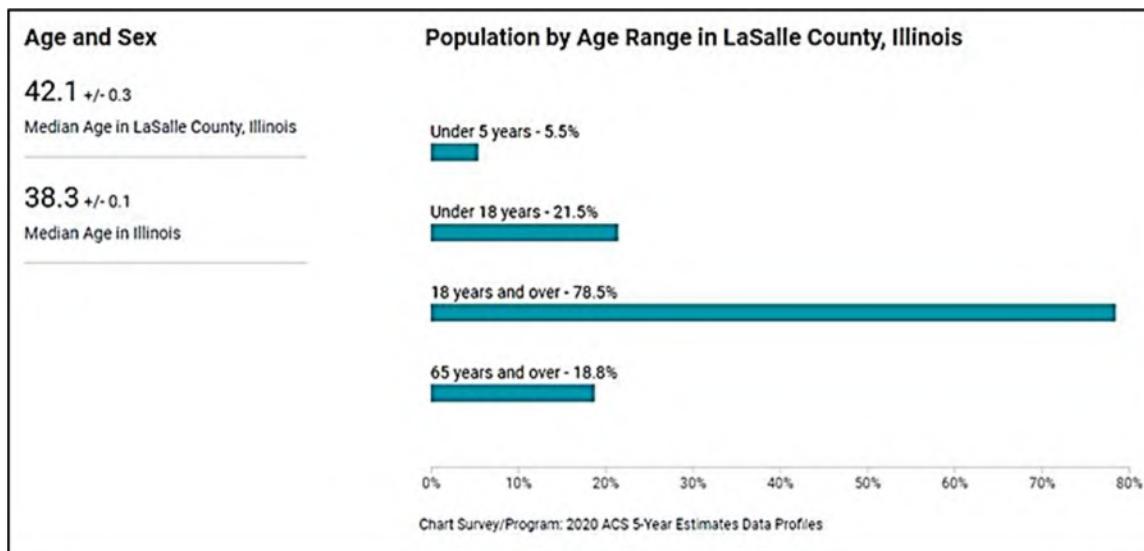
## LASALLE COUNTY GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS

The following US Census Bureau tables/charts outline general LaSalle County demographic data. The specific source data is outlined within the table.

LASALLE COUNTY POPULATION BY SEX/AGE			
Label	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percent
<b>Total population</b>	<b>108,998</b> (X)		(X)
<b>Male</b>	<b>54,884</b> ±81		50.40%
<b>Female</b>	<b>54,114</b> ±81		49.60%
Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	101.4 ±0.3		(X)
Under 5 years	6,047 ±67		5.50%
5 to 9 years	6,609 ±379		6.10%
10 to 14 years	6,291 ±375		5.80%
15 to 19 years	6,735 ±78		6.20%
20 to 24 years	6,374 ±115		5.80%
25 to 34 years	13,214 ±149		12.10%
35 to 44 years	13,036 ±132		12.00%
45 to 54 years	13,770 ±115		12.60%
55 to 59 years	8,716 ±444		8.00%
60 to 64 years	7,673 ±458		7.00%
65 to 74 years	11,391 ±90		10.50%
75 to 84 years	6,225 ±340		5.70%
85 years and over	2,917 ±336		2.70%
<b>Median age</b>	<b>42.1</b> ±0.3		(X)
Under 18 years	23,387 *****		21.50%
16 years and over	88,629 ±172		81.30%
18 years and over	85,611 *****		78.50%
21 years and over	81,865 ±273		75.10%
62 years and over	25,128 ±376		23.10%
65 years and over	20,533 ±82		18.80%

US CENSUS BUREAU ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles (V2020)





**LASALLE COUNTY RACE DISTRIBUTION**

Label	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percent
Total population	108,998	*****	108,998
White	102,133	±642	93.70%
Black or African American	3,592	±106	3.30%
American Indian and Alaska Native	585	±54	0.50%
Asian	1,322	±16	1.20%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	88	±67	0.10%
Some other race	3,941	±530	3.60%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	10,751	*****	9.90%
Not Hispanic or Latino	98,247	*****	90.10%
White alone	92,632	±169	85.00%
Black or African American alone	2,858	±201	2.60%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	87	±59	0.10%
Asian alone	894	±175	0.80%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	16	±27	0.00%
Some other race alone	47	±35	0.00%
Two or more races	1,713	±299	1.60%
Two races including Some other race	267	±162	0.20%
Two races excluding Some other race, and Three or more races	1,446	±241	1.30%

**US CENSUS BUREAU ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles (V2020)**

**Ancestry****8.7% +/- 0.8%**

Italian Ancestry in LaSalle County, Illinois

**5.7% +/- 0.1%**

Italian Ancestry in Illinois

**Ancestry in LaSalle County, Illinois**

English - 8.1%

French (except Basque) - 3.1%

German - 27.8%

Irish - 18.0%

Italian - 8.7%

Norwegian - 4.4%

Polish - 7.6%

Scottish - 1.5%

Subsaharan African - 0.2%



Chart Survey/Program: 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles

**Poverty****13.6% +/- 1.3%**

Poverty, All people in LaSalle County, Illinois

**12.0% +/- 0.1%**

Poverty, All people in Illinois

**Poverty by Age in LaSalle County, Illinois**

Under 18 years - 21.8%

18 to 64 years - 13.2%

65 years and over - 5.2%



Chart Survey/Program: 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles

**Educational Attainment****18.4% +/- 0.9%**

Bachelor's Degree or Higher in LaSalle County, Illinois

**35.5% +/- 0.2%**

Bachelor's Degree or Higher in Illinois

**Education Attainment (Population 25 Years and Older)**

High School or equivalent degree - 35.7%

Some college, no degree - 24.6%

Associate's degree - 10.9%

Bachelor's degree - 12.1%

Graduate or professional degree - 6.3%

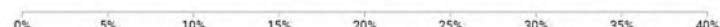
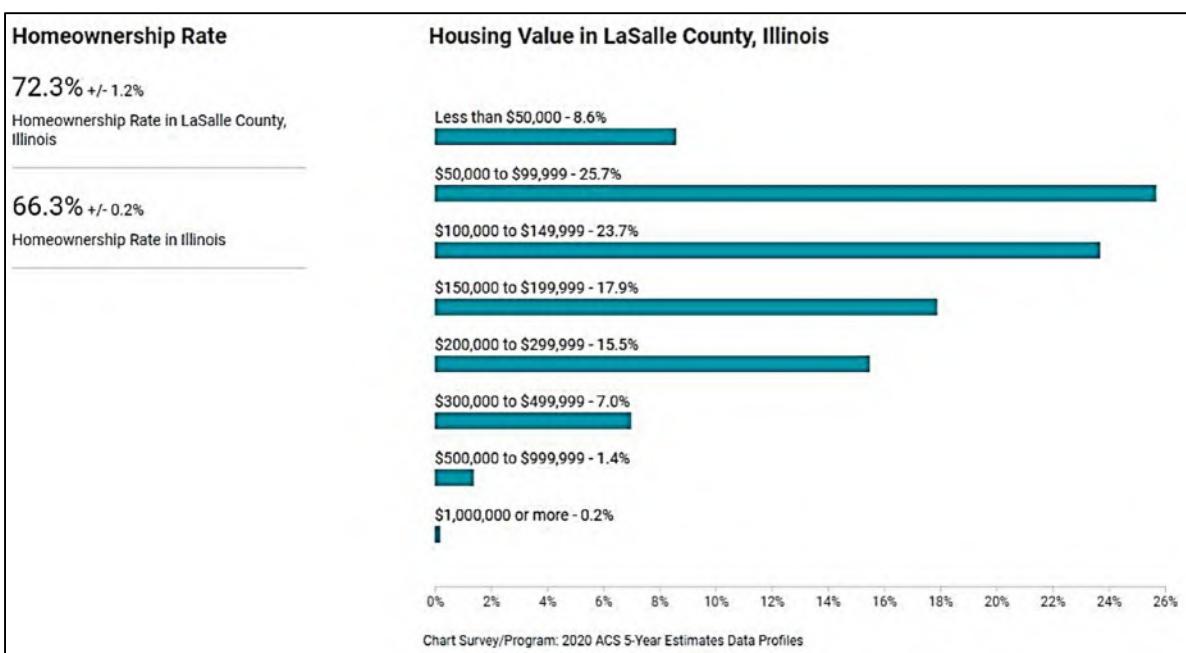
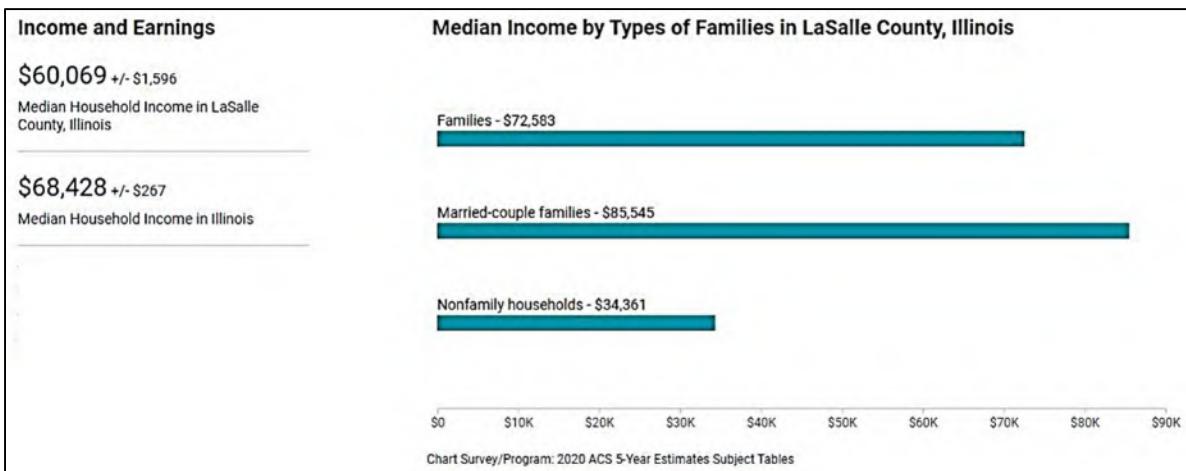


Chart Survey/Program: 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles



## 3.2 ECONOMIC PROFILE

LaSalle County's economy is relatively diversified. However, historically, growth and prosperity have come to industries that have taken advantage of the county's geographical location, transportation resources, and/or its natural resources.

*"The immense supply of motive, power, both coal and water, with commanding geographical position of the county, and facilities for cheap transportation indicate that it must at some time become a great manufacturing district. It is true, its agricultural resources are second to none, and if purely agricultural can compete with any of her sister counties of like character: but it would be the most reckless folly to neglect and spurn those facilities for a diversified industry which nature has lavished so profusely upon us. No purely agricultural region can ever be rich. Agriculture flourishes best, and its profits are doubled when along-side a manufacturing industry. In fact, all pursuits of an enlightened civilization flourish best in the vicinity of each other: all are mutually dependent, and languish isolated and alone; and that community is the most wealthy, refined and intelligent that cultivates its arts and industries- that so far as climate, location and resources will permit, is of itself a miniature world, its citizens living independent, and by their own industry supplying most of their wants.*

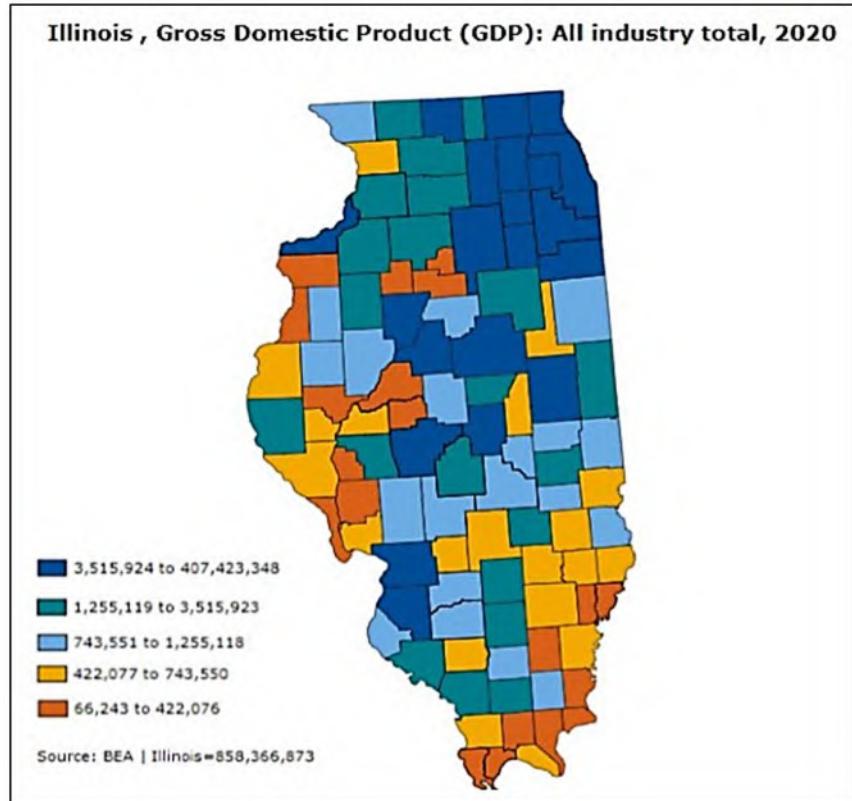
*There are few localities in the State where nature has bestowed with a more lavish hand such riches of mineral wealth as lie beneath the soil of LaSalle County. "*

*(Elmer Baldwin, History of LaSalle County (Rand, McNally & Co, 1877))*

### LASALLE COUNTY GDP

According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis: in 2020, LaSalle County produced \$6,030,586,000 in [current-dollar total GDP](#). This GDP ranked 17th in the state and accounted for 0.7 percent of the state total. In 2010, the total GDP of LaSalle was \$5,009,380,000 and ranked 17th in the state.

In 2020, LaSalle real GDP grew 3.3 percent; the 2019-2020 state change was -5.1 percent. The 2010-2020 compound annual growth rate for LaSalle County real GDP was 0.1 percent; the compound annual growth rate for the state was 0.6 percent.



Goods- and services-producing industries and government comprise total GDP. Industry statistics reflect the value of goods and services produced by each of those industries located in LaSalle County. In 2020, services-producing industries produced the largest portion of GDP, while goods-producing industries and government produced the second and third largest portion of GDP, respectively.

The adjacent LaSalle County GDP table outlines GDP for 2001, 2010, 2019 and 2020. Green shows increase from prior year and red shows decrease from prior year. 2019 year was included to show pre-pandemic GDP levels.

LaSalle County GDP				
(thousands of current dollars)	2001	2010	2019	2020
<b>All industry total</b>	<b>3762458</b>	<b>5009380</b>	<b>5822792</b>	<b>6030586</b>
<b>Private industries</b>	3439925	4541538	5305995	5518829
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	(D)	50072	113983	158460
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	53623	185246	178531	119931
Utilities	(D)	1022900	1192834	1315695
Construction	149564	193417	186348	200189
Manufacturing	545546	819152	954059	1179824
Durable goods manufacturing	246323	303698	447087	503098
Nondurable goods manufacturing	299223	515455	506971	676725
Wholesale trade	228176	231079	344209	341192
Retail trade	301817	342647	347772	362785
Transportation and warehousing	127675	160311	264191	238449
Information	(D)	79693	61724	55267
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental, and leasing	597985	685678	799149	747248
Finance and insurance	184176	188509	283291	276792
Real estate and rental and leasing	413809	497169	515858	470457
Professional and business services	128596	224417	264152	256654
Professional, scientific, and technical services	67797	96192	98919	99483
Management of companies and enterprises	23004	56233	63477	52509
Admin. and support and waste mgt. and remediation services	37795	71993	101756	104662
Educational services, health care, and social assistance	226802	322097	298567	274531
Educational services	11685	15760	17048	15534
Health care and social assistance	215117	306337	281519	258997
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services	100448	126048	166089	136794
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	12245	12857	13121	10388
Accommodation and food services	88203	113192	152968	126406
Other services (except government and government enterprises)	82500	98780	134390	131810
Government and government enterprises	322534	467842	516796	511757
Addenda:				
Natural resources and mining	(D)	235318	292514	278390
Trade	529992	573726	691981	703978
Transportation and utilities	(D)	1183211	1457025	1554144
Manufacturing and information	(D)	898845	1015782	1235091
Private goods-producing industries 2/	(D)	1247887	1432920	1658403
Private services-providing industries 3/	(D)	3293651	3873075	3860426

(D) Not shown to avoid disclosure of confidential information; estimates are included in higher-level totals.

Bureau of Economic Analysis 2001,2010,2019,2020 CAGDP2 Data

## LASALLE COUNTY ESTABLISHMENTS

The US Census Bureau establishment data for LaSalle County Businesses for 2001 and 2019 is outlined in the adjacent table. Green shows increase from prior year and red shows decrease from prior year.

2001 and 2019 County Establishments (NAICS)		
	2001	2019
Meaning of NAICS code	Number of establishments	Number of establishments
All establishments	2,942	2,598
Establishments with less than 5 employees	1,501	1,313
Establishments with 5 to 9 employees	632	547
Establishments with 10 to 19 employees	420	357
Establishments with 20 to 49 employees	249	235
Establishments with 50 to 99 employees	76	82
Establishments with 100 to 249 employees	49	50
Establishments with 250 to 499 employees	9	9
Establishments with 500 to 999 employees	6	4
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	13	9
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	11	13
Utilities	9	15
Construction	295	224
Manufacturing	156	145
Wholesale trade	148	124
Retail trade	494	383
Transportation and warehousing	144	160
Information	47	46
Finance and insurance	191	166
Real estate and rental and leasing	77	66
Professional, scientific, and technical services	169	165
Management of companies and enterprises	9	10
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services	119	101
Educational services	22	22
Health care and social assistance	245	261
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	50	52
Accommodation and food services	342	317
Other services (except public administration)	367	318
US CENSUS-COUNTY BUSINESS PATTERNS 2001 and 2019		

LaSalle County has seen an increase in the number mid-sized businesses (50-250 employees) since 2001. Significant increases in the number of businesses since 2001 were in the mining, utility, transportation/warehousing, management, healthcare, and arts/entertainment/ recreation industries. Significant decreases in number of businesses were seen in the retail, construction, wholesale trade, finance/insurance, accommodation and food services. LaSalle County also experienced an 11.6% drop in the total number of establishments from 2001-2019.

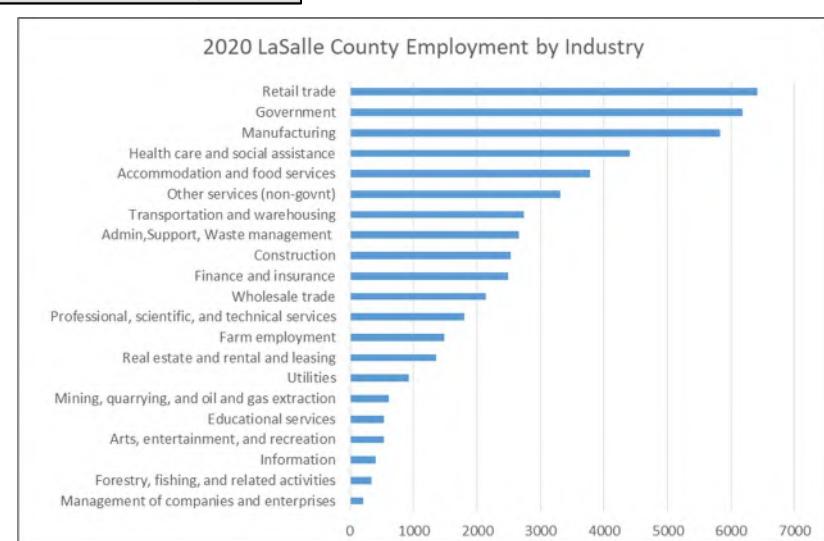
## LASALLE COUNTY EMPLOYMENT

LaSalle County Total Full-Time and Part-Time Employment (NAICS) (number of jobs)				
Description	2001	2010	2019	2020
Total employment (number of jobs)	57916	55010	53843	50664
By type				
Wage and salary employment	47493	44636	43689	40714
Proprietors employment	10423	10374	10154	9950
Farm proprietors employment	1602	1334	1276	1273
Nonfarm proprietors employment 2/	8821	9040	8878	8677
By industry				
Farm employment	1803	1594	1489	1489
Nonfarm employment	56113	53416	52354	49175
Private nonfarm employment	49251	46473	45856	42993
Forestry, fishing, and related activities	181	277	405	333
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	(D)	492	841	613
Utilities	1007	895	958	923
Construction	2973	2504	2622	2524
Manufacturing	6618	5602	6082	5830
Wholesale trade	3304	2336	2070	2135
Retail trade	9036	8354	6555	6413
Transportation and warehousing	2440	2405	3001	2742
Information	(D)	696	485	407
Finance and insurance	2403	2505	2481	2491
Real estate and rental and leasing	1377	1336	1424	1358
Professional, scientific, and technical services	1829	1969	1824	1796
Management of companies and enterprises	237	195	227	211
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services	1561	2302	2731	2657
Educational services	589	531	589	534
Health care and social assistance	5500	5808	4703	4407
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	699	618	680	530
Accommodation and food services	4642	4194	4586	3784
Other services (except government and government enterprises)	3473	3454	3592	3305
Government and government enterprises	6862	6943	6498	6182
Federal civilian	342	388	351	358
Military	241	231	214	212
State and local	6279	6324	5933	5612
State government	(D)	775	791	791
Local government	(D)	5549	5142	4821
Bureau of Economic Analysis 2001,2010,2019,2020 CAEMP25N Data				
(D) Not shown to avoid disclosure of confidential information; estimates are included in higher-				

The US Census Bureau establishment data for LaSalle County Employment for 2001, 2010, 2019, and 2020 is outlined in the adjacent table. Green shows increase from prior year and red shows decrease from prior year. 2019 year was included to show pre-pandemic employment data.

In 2020, LaSalle County had 50,664 jobs. Excluding sole proprietors; the 2020 top LaSalle County employment industries were in retail trade, government, and manufacturing.

The total number of jobs in LaSalle County have been trending downward since 2001.



## LASALLE COUNTY AGRICULTURE

Excluding open water; LaSalle County has 723,923 acres of land. In 2017, 1,496 farms covered 573,041 acres of land in LaSalle County (79.15%). The total number of farms and acres in farms appears to be trending downward.

<b>LASALLE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DATA</b>				
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2017</b>
<b>Farms (Total Number)</b>	1,478	1622	1583	1496
<b>Land In Farms ( Total Acres)</b>	579,141	643291	602279	573041
<b>Farm Size (Total Farms)</b>				
1-9 Acres	64	156	177	223
10-49 Acres	219	319	283	277
50-179 Acres	343	361	389	328
180-499 Acres	441	346	353	290
500-999 Acres	264	245	212	208
1000 Acres or more	147	195	169	170
<b>Market Value of Products Sold</b>	<b>\$161,703,000</b>	<b>\$328,997,000</b>	<b>\$459,279,000</b>	<b>\$370,945,000</b>
Average Per Farm	\$109,407	\$202,834	\$290,132	\$247,958
Crops	\$146,335,000	\$308,500,000	\$435,104,000	\$349,158,000
Livestock, Poultry, and their Products	\$15,368,000	\$20,497,000	\$24,175,000	\$21,787,000
<b>Cropland</b>				
Total Farms	1443	1541	1453	1409
Total Acres	546471	614381	569010	545372
<b>Farm Type (Total Farms)</b>				
Cattle	214	252	225	211
Hogs	46	29	21	24
Sheep/Lambs	49	49	37	51
Layers	38	54	64	72
Poultry -Meat	5	5	9	4
<i>Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service</i>				

# ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

## CHAPTER 4

## LASALLE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



**The County's land surface is mostly former prairie vegetation converted to agricultural use, gently rolling and generally well-drained. The streams have very little bottomland except along the Illinois River.**

**The Illinois River cuts through the central part of the county in an east-west course. The River's principal tributaries in the county are the Fox River coming in from the north, and the Vermillion and Little Vermillion rivers from the south. The smaller tributaries are the Pecumsaugan, Covel, and Clark's Run creeks.**

**Generally the major riverbeds are lower in elevation in relation to the gently rolling land around them. There is a considerable descent toward the Illinois River. The river valleys are deep and narrow wherever they have been cut into the underlying rocks below the glacial drift. Bluffs are prevalent, especially along the Illinois River in the western half of the County and along the Vermilion River.**

**One of the most prominent rock formations is Starved Rock, near Utica, which is a major scenic attraction in Illinois. Buffalo Rock is another rock formation, as are the outcrops that can be seen along the Fox River.**

### 4.1 SOILS

The surface soil of the county is primarily a black or brown silt loam. The soils of LaSalle County were formed from the materials deposited during the Illinoian and Wisconsin glacial periods. Although there are many different types of individual soils present within the county, the soils can be generally broken down into four major groupings:

***Upland Prairie Soils*** — These soils are generally situated on flat prairie lands, are high in organic matter, and are considered excellent for agricultural purposes. Erosion is generally slight but drainage is poor, particularly in level areas.

***Upland Timber Soils*** — These soils are generally found along streams and drainage courses in sloping or rolling terrain. They contain less organic matter than the prairie soils and are more susceptible to erosion. The soils in this group offer good drainage and in many cases are forested. The rolling topography and forest cover provide areas for scenic enjoyment and recreational opportunities.

***Terrace Soils*** — These soils are found along creeks and streams and are formed as a result of flooding. They are composed of either silt or gravel. In some areas, these soils have been favorable for commercial sand and gravel operations.

***Swamp and Bottomland Soils*** --- These soils are found along the Illinois and Fox Rivers on land that is subject to periodic flooding. The soil-bearing strength of these lands is very low and they are not suitable for urban uses.

## 4.2 WATER RESOURCES

LaSalle County currently has an abundant supply of water from multiple sources for industrial, municipal and domestic purposes.

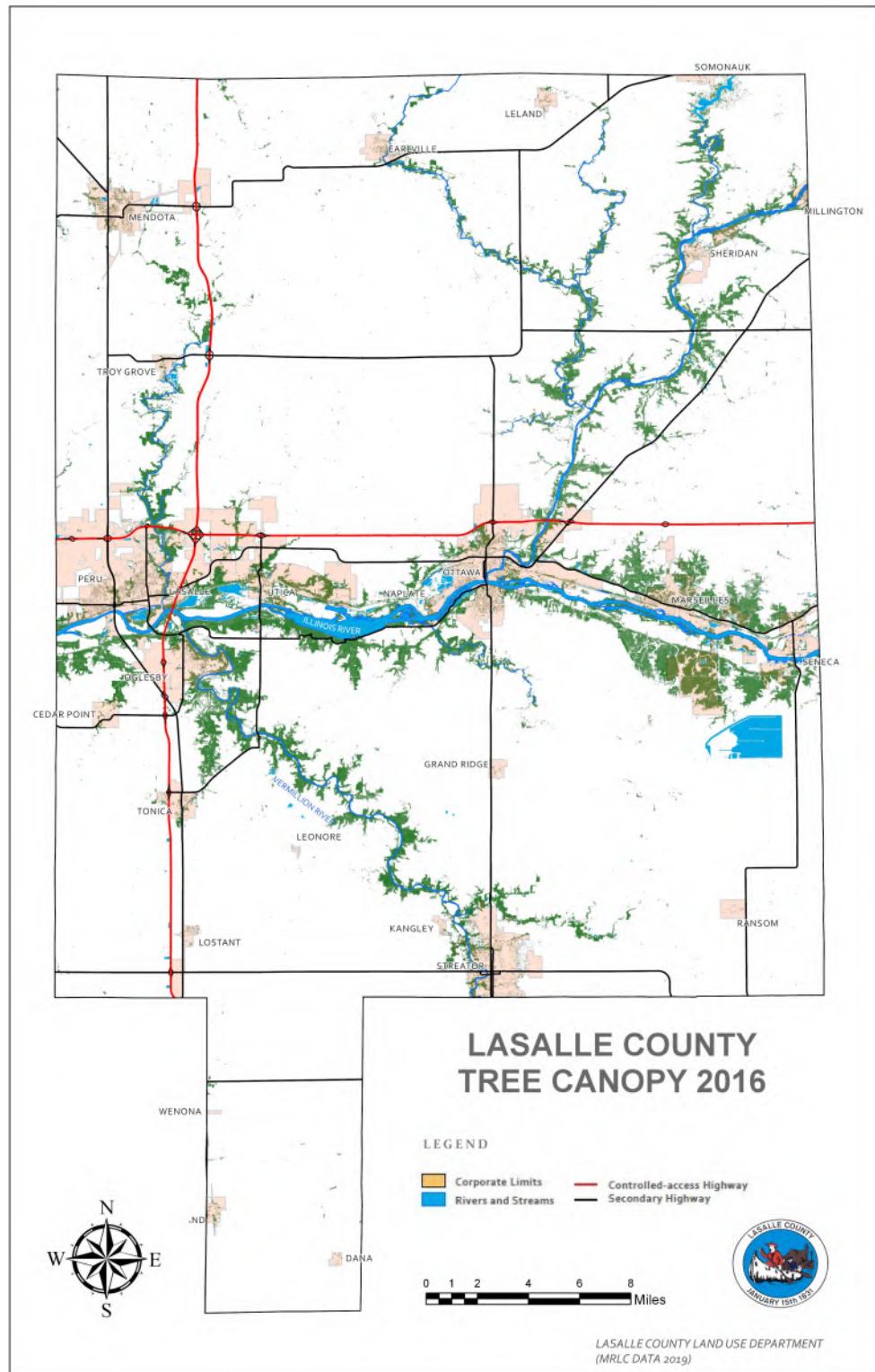
The Cambrian-Ordovician aquifer system is the most productive and widespread throughout northern Illinois. Much of the public municipal water supply in the County is obtained from this aquifer. Water levels in this system have declined as much as 300 feet in parts of the County. Surface water from the Vermillion River is also used for drinking-water supply in the Streator area. Smaller amounts for domestic, shallow well purposes are obtained from the Pennsylvanian Aquifer.

While the current water supply is adequate; according to the USGS Hydrogeologic Framework of LaSalle County (2016), “Increased water use to meet the needs of an expanding population as well as needs of growing commercial, industrial, irrigation, and mining operations in LaSalle County has the potential to result in the overutilization of the water resources in parts of the county, particularly the groundwater resources.”

## 4.3 FORESTS

Approximately 6.71% of the County is covered in forest or woodlands, totaling over 50,000 acres. Most of the tree coverage is found along the rivers and streams. The predominate species of trees found in LaSalle

County include oak, hard maple, sycamore, hickory, ash, black walnut and black locust. Except for the production of Christmas trees, very little wood is produced for commercial purposes. There is little possibility that the forests, along with their primary



and secondary products, will become a major factor in the county's growth. However, forests do contribute to the County's tourism, are of value for public recreational uses, and are of interest to subdivision developers.

## 4.4 RIVERS AND RIVER BASINS

The Illinois River's principal tributaries in the County are the Fox River coming in from the northeastern part of the County, with the mouth of the river at Ottawa, the Little Vermilion River with headwaters in the northwestern part of the County, and the Vermilion River, which enters the County from the south. The smaller tributaries are Pecumsaugan Creek, Covel Creek, and Clark's Run.

### FOX RIVER BASIN

The Fox River Basin comprises 1,720 square miles in Illinois and 938 square miles in Wisconsin. The basin spans from southeastern Wisconsin to LaSalle County Illinois at the confluence of the Fox and Illinois Rivers. Below Aurora, the Fox River floodplain broadens and the river begins its descent to the low plain near the Marseilles moraine. The river follows the moraine until it discharges into the Illinois River. The water quality of the Fox River is generally good, and significant natural resources are associated with it.

### VERMILION RIVER BASIN

The Vermilion River Basin encompasses 1,330 square miles, primarily in LaSalle and Livingston counties. Its major tributaries include Long Point Creek and Rooks Creek. The watershed is very flat, although the relief becomes greater near the Illinois River. This increased relief near the confluence with the Illinois River has created whitewater features along the river that are unique in Illinois, drawing rafting and kayaking enthusiasts to the area.

Water quality in the Vermilion River is generally good, and provides habitat for the (endangered) greater red horse and (state threatened) river red horse fish species, as well as the slippershell, spike, and rainbow mussels. There are also significant natural communities and geological resources within the Vermilion River basin. Matthiessen State Park is located within the Vermilion River Basin.

## 4.5 WETLANDS AND LAKES

The US Army Corps of Engineers defines wetlands as: "areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas." Wetlands can be home to a number of unique habitats and species. Historically, wetlands covered vast areas of LaSalle County and northern Illinois. Most of these wetlands

have been drained for agricultural purposes, leaving the majority of remaining wetlands isolated along riparian areas. There are an estimated 16 square miles of



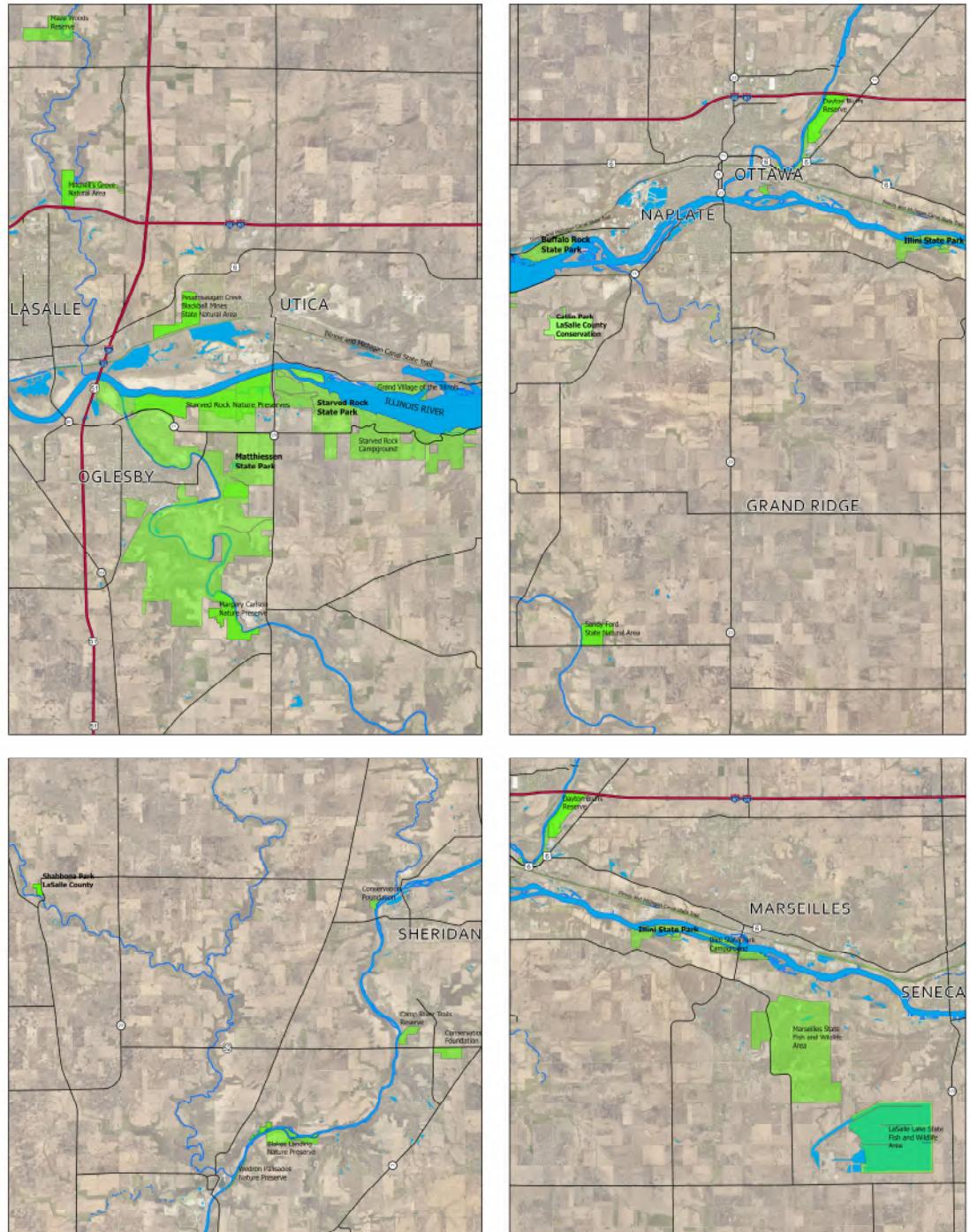
open water in LaSalle County, primarily consisting of the Illinois River and LaSalle Lake. Wetlands cover approximately 1% of LaSalle County, primarily bottomlands near the Illinois River. Wetlands are sensitive to disturbance and can offer unique habitats. Protection of any remaining wetlands in LaSalle County is crucial.

## 4.6 RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

LaSalle County has two exceptionally scenic river valleys along the Illinois and Fox Rivers, along with sections of the Vermilion River. Along these waterways are some of the most picturesque and historic land in the state. Four State Parks are located along the valleys, all of which have assisted with the preservation of these areas for the enjoyment of the public. All four parks have a combined attendance of over 3 million visitors per year (2019), and attendance continues to increase annually.

In addition to the many State Parks in LaSalle County; there are a plethora other natural area recreational opportunities throughout the County available for public access.

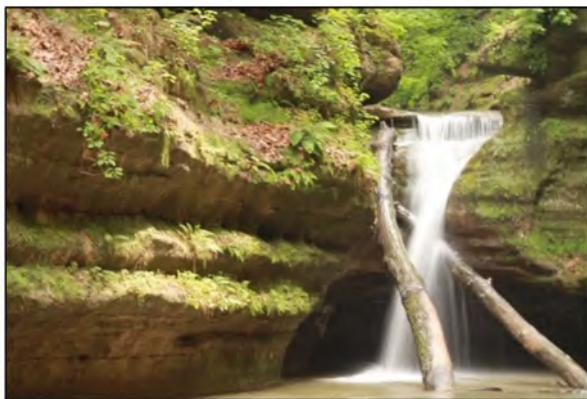
### LaSalle County Parks and Conservation Areas



## STARVED ROCK STATE PARK

Starved Rock State Park is located just west of Ottawa and south of Utica. Starved Rock was dedicated in 1911 and is Illinois' second state

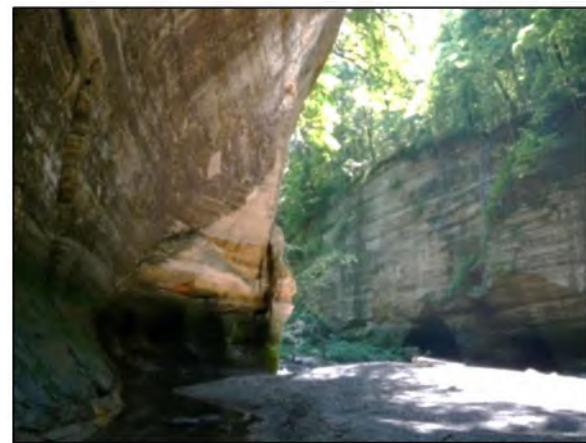
park. It encompasses an area of approximately 2,842 acres of land that is covered with trees and crossed with 13 miles of trails leading to 18 canyons, waterfalls, sandstone bluffs, and other places of scenic beauty. Recreational opportunities include hiking, camping, fishing, boating, picnicking, and hunting.



Starved Rock Lodge, a 1930's stone and log structure, offers luxury lodging, cabin rooms, and dining within the park. The Starved Rock campground includes 129 Class-A sites.

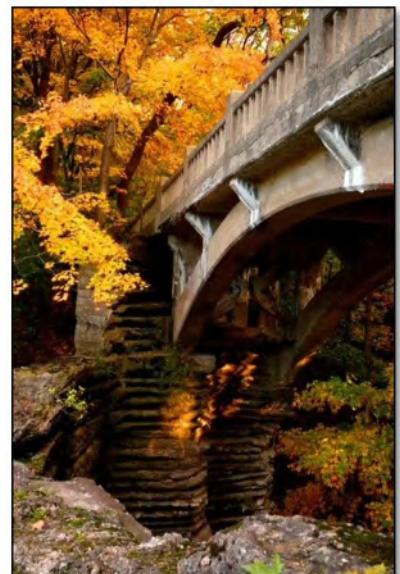
Starved Rock has an annual attendance of over 2 million visitors per year (2019) and continues to be the most visited of all Illinois state parks. The park generally reaches capacity on Spring/Summer weekends.

## MATTHIESSEN STATE PARK



Matthiessen State Park consists of 1,924 acres of land (currently open to the public). The park contains a series of trails leading through deep canyons to several waterfalls and Vermillion River access. Horseback riding/mountain bike trails and an equestrian campground are located near the Dells Area. The park also features several historic shelters and bridges; with many originally built when the park was a private estate owned by its namesake, Frederick William Matthiessen.

The park acreage was expanded to 4,463 acres of land and 100 acres of water, when the Illinois Department of Natural Resources purchased 2,629 acres of land from Buzzi Unicem USA. Much of this acreage is reclaimed cement mining area. The land contains several lakes/ponds, streams, and Vermillion River frontage. The expanded area was opened in 2021 for hunting, but is still closed to the general public while planning/studies/infrastructure are being completed.



Annual attendance at Matthiessen State Park was 389,248 in 2019 and the park continues to frequently be at capacity with overflow from Starved Rock.

## BUFFALO ROCK STATE PARK



The 298 acre Buffalo Rock State Park is located on the north side of the Illinois River approximately four miles west of Ottawa. Native American tribes that inhabited the area historically utilized this area as an important trade/meeting area. Now it provides several picnic shelters and trails. In addition to the scenic bluff views of the Illinois River Valley, the park is home to captive native buffalo.

Adjacent to the park is one of the largest earth sculptures ever built, the Effigy Tumuli. This reclaimed mine site has turned a barren wasteland into an area filled with recreational opportunities and interesting landscapes. It contains five large earthen figures (effigies) of native aquatic animals. Represented in geometric form are a water strider, a frog, a catfish, a turtle and a snake.

Annual attendance at Buffalo Rock State Park was 172,151 in 2019.

## ILLINI STATE PARK

The Illini State Park located just south of Marseilles and consists of 510 acres along the Illinois River. The park features camping, picnic shelters, boat launch, fishing, and beautiful views of the Illinois River.

Illini State Park had annual attendance of 376,597 in 2019.

## I&amp;M CANAL

The Illinois & Michigan (I&M) Canal State Trail runs 61.5 miles from Lock 14 in LaSalle to Rockdale along the I&M Canal. Along the trail, there are numerous state parks, restored historical sites, wildlife, and distinctive landscapes ranging from bluffs to rolling hills. This trail is an old canal towpath, providing level biking/walking and unparalleled scenery. It is currently LaSalle County's only bike path.

At the start of the trail in LaSalle, Lock 14 area offers seasonal canal boat rides on a replica canal boat pulled by mules. The City of Ottawa recently reformed/excavated and re-watered portions of the Canal in its downtown area to promote recreation.



## LASALLE COUNTY PARKS

Shabbona Park and Catlin Park are County-owned parks. Shabbona Park is located 16 miles north of Ottawa and was the location of the Indian Creek Massacre during the Blackhawk War. The 333 acre Catlin Park, located south of the Illinois River west of

Ottawa, offers 14 well-groomed trails for walking and horseback riding. Shelters at the parks can be reserved for events/reunions. In 2022, the County appropriated funds to update several of Catlin Park's facilities.



## OTHER RECREATION/CONSERVATION AREAS

*State of Illinois Nature Preserves* are numerous throughout LaSalle County. These areas are generally only open to the public for hunting/hiking with permit from IDNR.

*State Fish and Wildlife Areas* are located in the Marseilles/Seneca area. The Marseilles Fish and Wildlife Area and LaSalle Lake Fish and Wildlife Area are open for hunting and fishing.

*The Fox and Vermilion Rivers* have several private recreational areas along them. The scenic and historic banks of the rivers are enjoyed by hundreds of canoers each year.

*Dayton Bluffs Preserve* is located on the lower Fox River between Ottawa and Dayton. The preserve/park consists of 253 acres of woodland and restored prairie with miles of trails. The Conservation Foundation purchased the land in 2013, and after it restored the site, partnered with the City of Ottawa to provide security and general maintenance at the site. The Foundation owns the site and is responsible for its long-term ecological management.

## 4.7 MINERAL RESOURCES

The geology of LaSalle County lends itself to a plethora of mineral deposits, most notably silica sand. LaSalle County is only one of a handful of locations in the country that can easily access the St. Peter Sandstone formation and it's nearly 99.5% pure silica. The unique characteristics of this sand, lends itself nearly exclusively, to a number of industries and purposes. Some of those commercial uses include

the glass making industry, filter and molding sand industry, abrasives industry, and more recently the fracturing



industry. The consistency in grain size and shape, as well as its resilience to heat and pressure makes the sand very valuable for such commercial uses. Limestone, gravel, and clay are also important industrial/commercial deposits accessible in LaSalle County. Historically, underground and strip mines were also active in LaSalle County for coal mining purposes.



## 4.8 UNDERGROUND GAS STORAGE

Nicor Gas operates large natural gas injection and storage facilities in southern Troy Grove Township and northern Dimmick Township. Additional gas storage is in Osage Township near Garfield (Acona-Garfield storage field). A solid dome-shaped caprock covers the Mt. Simon sandstone formation/aquifer in these areas; allowing for entrapment of gas within the porous sandstone. The gas is pumped in via pipeline and injected into the formation to store for periods of peak demand. Both storage facilities are estimated to be able to hold 10s of billions of cubic feet of gas.

## 4.9 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

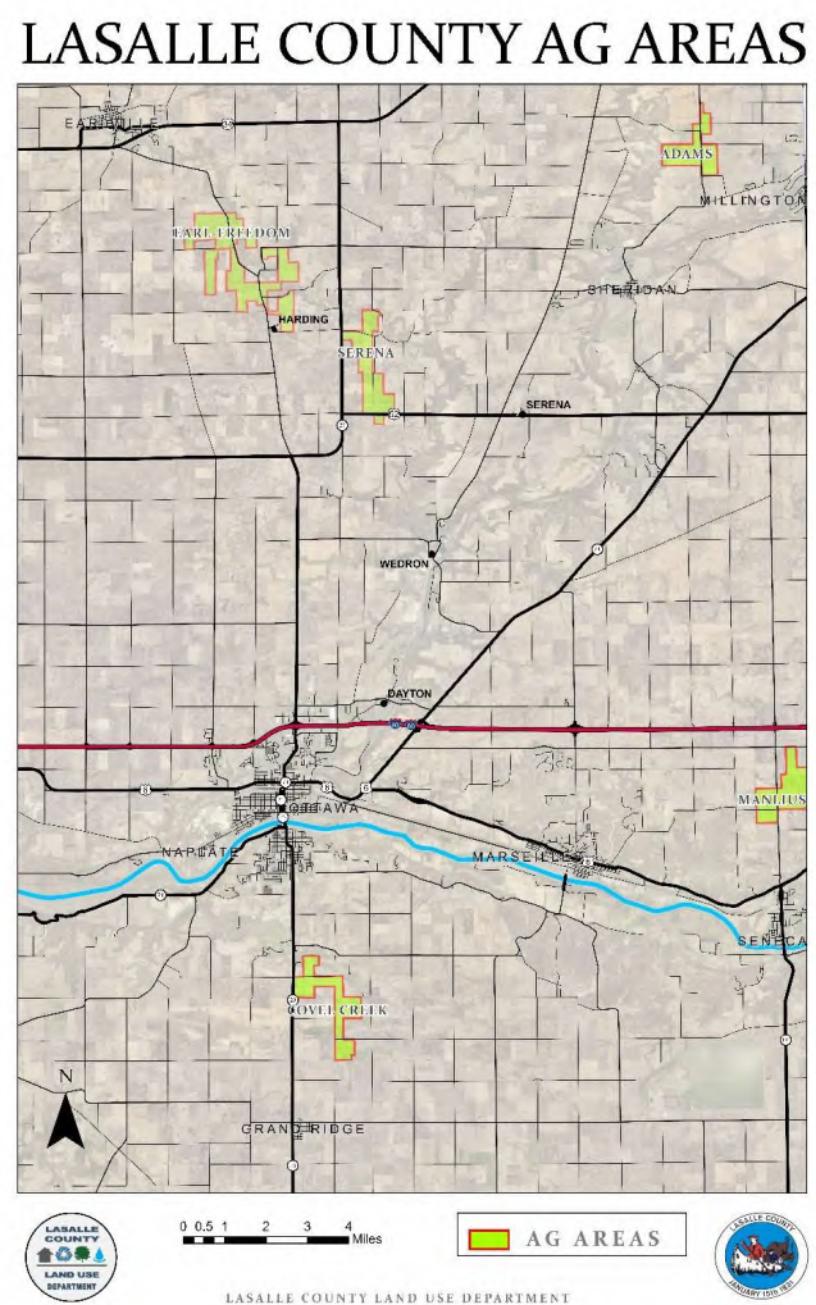
Although use of farmland for specific agricultural purposes varies from one year to the next, cropland accounts for approximately 79.1 percent of the total land in farms. Corn, soybeans, wheat, and hay are the major crops grown in the county. In 2016, LaSalle County ranked in the top 10 Illinois counties for corn and soybean production (Illinois Farm Bureau).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture classifies over 90 percent of LaSalle County's soils as prime agricultural soils. These prime soils have a number of properties that make them ideal for growing crops including: over 60 inches of rooting depth, adequate water-holding capacity, only minor limitations from poor drainage and excessive erosion, level ground or minor gentle sloping, and infrequent flooding.

### AG AREAS

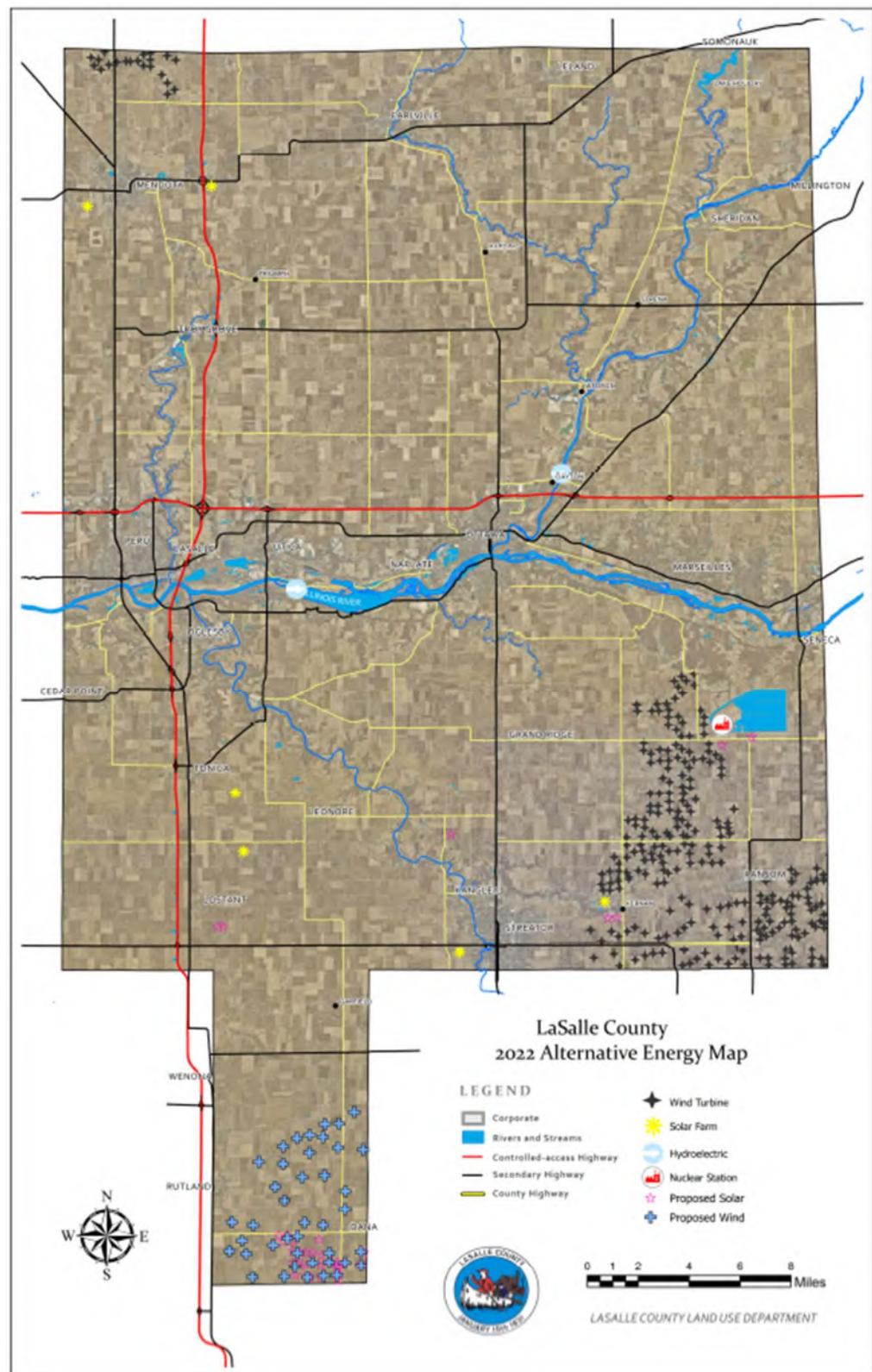
Various property owners throughout LaSalle County have already recognized the importance of protecting productive farm areas by creating Agricultural Areas pursuant to the Illinois Agricultural Areas Conservation and Protection Act. Under the Act, landowners can voluntarily place their land in an Agricultural Area through a petition and approval by the LaSalle County Board. Generally, once land is placed in an Agricultural Area, local and state governments are restricted from passing laws that might unreasonably restrict farming, and state agencies must modify their administrative regulations and procedures to encourage the maintenance of farming in such areas. Formation of Agricultural Areas also restricts development of the land for non-agricultural purposes.

LaSalle County currently has five approved Agricultural Areas: the Adams Family Ag Area in Northville Township, the Serena Township Ag Area, the Manlius Township Ag Area, the Covel Creek Ag Area (South Ottawa/Fall River/Grand Rapids Townships), and the Litow-Wiley Ag Area in Earl/Freedom Townships. Together, these Agricultural Areas consist of approximately 5,396 acres.



## 4.10 ALTERNATIVE ENERGY RESOURCES

LaSalle County has nearly every type of “green” or “alternative” energy generation: including hydro, wind, solar, and nuclear. Alternative energy infrastructure continues to be an economic development opportunity for LaSalle County.



## HYDROELECTRIC

The Starved Rock hydroelectric plant is located on the Illinois River across from Starved Rock. The plant is owned and operated by the City of Peru. The plant utilizes up to 7,200 cubic feet per second of water to generate up to 7,600 kilowatts of electrical power that transfers to the City of Peru electric grid.



The Dayton power station is a 3,700 kilowatt generating station located on the Fox River near the unincorporated community of Dayton. The facility is owned and operated by Eagle Creek Renewable Energy. The facility produces approximately 18 million kilowatt hours per year.

The Marseilles Hydroelectric Plant, along the Illinois River, was completed in 1911 and in operation through 1989. The large plant contained 7 large 400 kilowatt generators. The plant buildings are now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Some of the infrastructure still exists and there have been efforts to try and reopen/renew the plant.

## WIND

Approximately 271 wind towers have been erected in LaSalle County, with a total capacity of over 500 megawatts. The projects were constructed and are operated by four different developers. The bulk of the turbines within the County are older, with a capacity of 1.5 to 2 megawatts each. However, the newest turbines installed in 2020 with the Otter Creek Project have a



capacity of 3.8 megawatts each. The table below provides details of each constructed project.

Name	Active Date	# of turbines	Nameplate per turbine	Total Capacity
GSG/Leeward	2007	21	2 MW	42 MW
Top Crop/ EDP	2009	68	1.5 MW	102 MW
Grand Ridge/Invenergy	2008-2009	140	1.5 MW	210 MW
Otter Creek/ Avangrid	2020	42	3.8 MW	160 MW
Osagrove Flats/ Avangrid	In Development	Up to 35	TBD	TBD

## SOLAR

In 2012, Invenergy completed a 160 acre, 20 megawatt solar farm northeast of Streator. At the time it was one of the largest in the Midwest.

Currently, LaSalle County has approved numerous 20 acre, 2 megawatt community solar farms throughout the County. Many of these solar farms are in various stages of development.



## NUCLEAR

LaSalle County Nuclear Generating Station is located in Brookfield Township south of Seneca. The plant was completed in 1984 and currently is operated by Constellation Energy. Two nuclear reactors produce 2,320 megawatts of zero emission energy, or enough to power 2.3 million homes. The station is cooled by water from the man-made, 2,058 acre, LaSalle Lake.



## 4.11 LANDFILLS



LaSalle County has several operating and closed landfills. It's important to highlight the location of existing and closed landfills for their long term protection and potential reuse.

### ACTIVE LANDFILLS

The following landfills are actively used and monitored for compliance through the Illinois EPA and LaSalle County Land Use Department staff (Delegated by the IEPA to inspect landfills).

**Landcomp Landfill-** This non-hazardous/municipal waste landfill is located at 2840 East 13<sup>th</sup> Rd, just west of Ottawa. The landfill was opened in 1998 and will continue to accept waste through 2038.

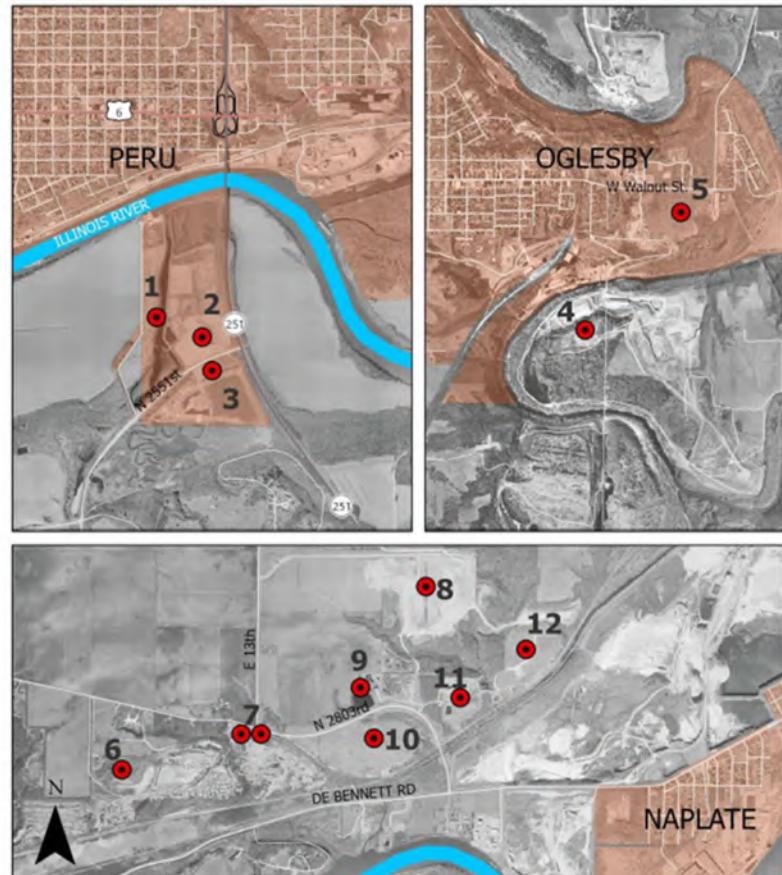
**Carus Mono Fill 3-** This is non-hazardous special waste landfill located at 1325 N 2803<sup>rd</sup> Rd, Ottawa. The landfill is primarily used for disposal of non-hazardous industrial waste from Carus Corporation.

### CLOSED LANDFILLS

The following landfills are closed. Some are still monitored under post closure care period by the IEPA and LaSalle County Land Use Department staff (Delegated by the IEPA to inspect landfills).

- Peru Municipal Landfill 1
- Peru Municipal Landfill 2
- Peru Municipal Landfill 3
- Buzzi Unicem Mono Fill
- Oglesby Municipal Landfill
- Brockman Landfill 1
- Brockman Landfill 2 and Carus Mono Fill 1
- State's Land Improvement 1
- State's Land Improvement 2
- Carus Mono Fill 2

### LASALLE COUNTY LANDFILL MAP



- 1. Peru Municipal Landfill 1 (Closed)
- 2. Peru Municipal Landfill 2 (Closed)
- 3. Peru Municipal Landfill 3 (Closed)
- 4. Buzzi Unicem Mono Fill (Closed)
- 5. Oglesby Municipal Landfill (Closed)
- 6. Brockman Landfill 1 (Closed)
- 7. Brockman Landfill 2 and Carus Mono Fill 1 (Closed)
- 8. LandComp Landfill (Active)
- 9. Carus Mono Fill 3 (Active)
- 10. State's Land Improvement 1 (Closed)
- 11. State's Land Improvement 2 (Closed)
- 12. Brockman Landfill 2 and Carus Mono Fill 1 (Closed)





***It's important to have an accurate picture of an area's existing landscapes/land cover, existing land uses, and past changes, to understand how it is evolving. The future land use plan and policies will help to guide future growth and conservation efforts.***

### 5.1 LAND COVER

Understanding how the county's land cover changes over the years helps us understand the effects of previous land use planning allows us to plan for future land use needs.

The Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics Consortium (MRLC) is a group of federal agencies who coordinate to generate consistent and relevant land cover information. All the information in this subsection has been derived from MRLC data and reports.

#### LANDCOVER CHANGE 2001-2019

***On average, from 2001 to 2019, .275 square miles per year (or 176 acres) of the county were developed per year. During the same time .235 square miles (or 150 acres) of agriculture was lost per year.***

From 2001 to 2019, LaSalle County gained 4.95 square miles of development and 2.88 square miles of impervious surfaces. The county lost .77 square miles of forest and 4.24 square miles of agricultural lands within this same time period.

Almost all of the development land cover change from 2001 to 2019 was located within city limits or annexed land. Major commercial developments during this time frame include north Ottawa retail/industrial/logistics, north Peru retail/industrial/logistics, north and east LaSalle industrial/logistics, west Oglesby industrial logistics, north Streator retail, and the Mendota flour mill. Major residential developments include Heritage Harbor Ottawa and various infill subdivisions throughout the more populated cities.

Unincorporated major residential development from occurred northwest of Marseilles, south of Seneca, Ottawa area, Sheridan area, and infill development in Lake Holiday. Other major land cover changes occurred due to mining in Wedron area, Utica area, and southwest of Ottawa.

**See Land Cover Change Map (Attachment B)**

## 2019 LAND COVER

In 2019, 9.23% of LaSalle County is developed (of which, 2.94% is impervious), 6.71% is forest, 80.2% is agricultural, 1% is wetland, 1.4% is open water, and 1.46 grassland/barren land/scrub.

LAND COVER 2019	
TYPE	SQUARE MILES
Developed HD	6.46
Developed MD	17.96
Developed LD	51.68
Developed Open Space	29.89
Cultivated Crops	891.97
Pasture/Hay	28.89
Grassland	12.37
Deciduous Forest	75.8
Evergreen Forest	0.08
Mixed Forest	1.12
Scrub/Shrub	0.31
Woody Wetland	9.85
Emergent Wetland	1.5
Barren Land	3.39
Open Water	16.87
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1148.14</b>

See 2019 Land Cover Map (Attachment C)

## 5.2 EXISTING LAND USE AND ZONING

The majority of the urban growth in the county has occurred in a broad corridor along the Illinois River, in those townships in the northeast section of the county and at the crossroads of transportation intersections. This growth reflects the important influence that transportation routes have exerted on urban development patterns. The urban population is principally concentrated in the seven municipalities of Ottawa, Streator, LaSalle, Peru, Oglesby, Mendota, and Marseilles. It is also in and around these communities where commerce and industry have centered, and where the bulk of the future growth of the county may be anticipated. These development trends are evident on the LaSalle County Existing Land Use Map (Attachment D).

The Illinois River extends in an east-west direction through the center of the county and has attracted both people and development to its banks. More than half of the county's population resides within five miles of the river and it is in this general area where the majority of LaSalle County's commerce and industry flourishes. Outside of this area development is less intense and is primarily agriculturally oriented except for the cities of Streator and Mendota which are more urban in character and to a large extent self-contained and self-supporting units. Like the larger urban areas of the county, transportation has been the key factor in the location of these communities. In both instances, each community is served directly by at least one rail line and one important highway.

In addition to transportation, the natural resources of the area have played an important role in the physical development of the county. The discovery and mining of coal in the Streator, Ottawa, Marseilles, and LaSalle areas has greatly influenced the early growth of those communities. Evidence of the strip mining industry is readily visible today, particularly along the Illinois River.

As evident on the existing land use map, agricultural lands account for the greatest single percentage of the total land area within the county. How this land is being used for agricultural purposes is of particular interest. Although use of farmland for specific agricultural purposes varies from one year to the next, cropland accounts for approximately 80 percent of the total land in farms. Corn, soybeans, oats, and hay are the major crops grown in the county.

Widespread residential growth has been very spotty and has followed a scattered site pattern within the county with new subdivisions and developments being generally under 20 lots in size and located throughout the county. These types of rural residential subdivisions generally contain larger lots, wooded lots, and/or a rural atmosphere away from the cities. Over the last 10 years, there has only been a few new rural residential subdivisions of 5 lots or more.

Much of the past development has taken place without any overall direction at the County level and has resulted in an extremely disjointed pattern. The result of this development pattern has been an increase in the number of actual and potential conflicts between the existing agriculture uses and the new residential developments. The placement of new residential developments shall be directed to those areas where the potential conflict with agricultural uses can be minimized.

Manufacturing and commercial uses have been largely contained within or near the municipalities of the county. Exceptions to this are those commercial uses that serve the agricultural community and some uses that require proximity to rail or river.

Mining industries are prevalent throughout the County where sand, gravel, limestone, and clay deposits are easily accessed. Generally, these operations are located on large swaths of unincorporated land.

Energy generation facilities; including nuclear, wind, and solar are primarily located in the unincorporated south-southeast area of the county. However, more recently, wind and solar facilities are being developed throughout the county.

The above-listed characteristics of past growth and present development trends in LaSalle County are general observations; however, in order to achieve an effective Comprehensive Plan, it is essential that all factors relating to past growth and future development are carefully studied and analyzed. LaSalle County's physical characteristics such as its location and transportation network and its physiography such as its soils, water resources, forests, and recreational resources are evaluated next. Population and economic factors are also examined to provide a historical basis for projecting future population and economic growth. Finally, existing land use is evaluated as an important factor in determining future land use. Overall, all of these factors are examined to prepare an effective plan for future growth.

An examination of these characteristics is necessary in order to understand LaSalle County, why it developed as it has, what its assets and limitations are, and how it is likely to grow in the future. Equally important, the data derived from this phase of the planning program will establish the rationale upon which the Future Land Use Map (Attachment F) can be based.

## EXISTING LAND USE MAP

**The Existing Land Use Map (Attachment D)** lumps land uses into general categories to be able to better visualize them on the map. This map was derived by using tax code data as well as aerial map identification.

The following land use categories are listed with description:

**Agriculture:** All agricultural land, including isolated rural single family homes, ag buildings (including commercial grain storage and ag services), golf courses, wetlands, water, and forest.

**Commercial:** retail, services, offices, resorts, motels/hotels, and campgrounds.

**Government/Institutional/Utility:** local/state/federal facilities, school district facilities, hospital facilities, religious facilities, and utilities.

**Industrial:** light and heavy industrial, logistics, manufacturing, heavy equipment and outdoor storage areas, and landfills.

**Mining:** active open pit mining areas, facilities, and non-reclaimed former mining areas (in mining company inventories since 2006).

**Park/Conservation:** local, state, federal, and private parks and conservation areas; and cemeteries.

**Neighborhood Residential:** single family, two family, and multifamily residential dwellings on platted lots; mobile home parks, and other rural contiguous clusters of residential homes.

**Corporate:** incorporated cities and villages.

## EXISTING ZONING

### The Existing Zoning Map (Attachment E)

classifies all county parcels into zoning districts that correspond to regulations of the LaSalle County Zoning Ordinance. Zoning classifications include: A1 (Agriculture), AC (Agriculture Conservation), RR (Rural Residential), R2 (Single Family Residential), R3 (General Residential), B1 (Local Business), B2 (General Business), and I1 (Industrial).

As LaSalle County was not zoned until 2006, there are numerous non-conforming uses throughout the County that still exist today.

The majority of unincorporated LaSalle County is zoned A-1 Agriculture with the heaviest concentrations of residential zoning (RR and R2) adjacent to municipalities on the eastern half of the County. There is minimal commercial and industrial zoning within the County and it is generally concentrated along important transportation routes.

## 5.3 FUTURE LAND USE

The pattern of planned land use, as graphically illustrated on the Future Land Use Map (Attachment F), identifies the long-range objectives for land use within LaSalle County. This plan is well adapted to provide a broad framework for coordinated growth while preserving agricultural lands and natural resources. Although the planning area is primarily only the unincorporated area of the county, the Map attempts in broad terms to reflect the general pattern of land use on the fringes of the various municipalities. In this way, a more realistic and coordinated view of proposed land use within and around communities can be seen.

Many municipal comprehensive plans were reviewed and incorporated into the future land use map; including: Ottawa, LaSalle, Marseilles, Oglesby, Seneca, Streator, Sandwich, and North Utica. However, the Comprehensive Plan is not intended to supersede or serve as a substitute for local planning. The plan's purpose is to supplement and coordinate land use planning activities throughout the county.

In projecting a pattern of land uses for the future development of LaSalle County, special consideration was given to those details which would help broaden the tax base, stabilize and enhance property values and in all ways make the county an attractive place to live and work. In addition to these fundamental considerations, some of the other considerations included within the plan are as follows:

1. The long-range growth goals of the county;
2. The desirability of vacant areas for specific uses based upon land characteristics and transportation;
3. The logical extension of existing uses forming homogeneous or compatible areas; and
4. Infill near municipalities, in conjunction with municipal comprehensive plans.

**The Future Land Use Map (Attachment F)** lumps land uses into general categories to be able to better visualize them on the map.

The following land use categories are listed with description:

**Agriculture:** All agricultural land, including isolated rural single family homes, ag buildings (including commercial grain storage and ag services), wetlands, water, and forest.

**Commercial:** retail, services, offices, resorts, motels/hotels, and campgrounds.

**Government/Institutional/Utility:** local/state/federal facilities, school district facilities, hospital facilities, religious facilities, and utilities.

**Industrial:** light and heavy industrial, logistics, manufacturing, heavy equipment and outdoor storage areas, and landfills.

**Mining:** active open pit mining areas, mining facilities, and areas with active special uses for mining. Also includes mining company land inventories (acquired prior to 2006).

**Park/Conservation:** local, state, federal, and private parks and conservation areas; cemeteries; golf courses and other open space.

**Neighborhood Residential:** single family, two family, and multifamily residential dwellings on platted lots; mobile home parks, and other rural contiguous clusters of residential homes.

**Corporate:** incorporated cities and villages.

**Municipal Growth Boundary:** projected municipal growth/infill areas.

## 5.4 CONSERVATION

The County, in conjunction with the LaSalle County Soil and Water Conservation District; shall always be stewards in conservation of LaSalle County's natural resources. The Natural Resource Inventory and Land Evaluation and Site Assessment System allow for the Zoning Board and County Board to be well informed of environmental and agricultural assets prior to zoning decisions that result in development of, or reduction in, these assets.

## NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

The purpose of the Natural Resource Inventory report is to inform officials of the local governing body and other decision makers with natural resource information. This information may be useful when undertaking land use decisions concerning special uses, amendments or relief of local zoning ordinances, proposed subdivision of vacant or agricultural lands and the subsequent development of these lands. This report is a requirement under Section 22.02a of the Illinois Soil and Water Conservation District Act. NRI reports are completed by the LaSalle County Soil & Water Conservation District.



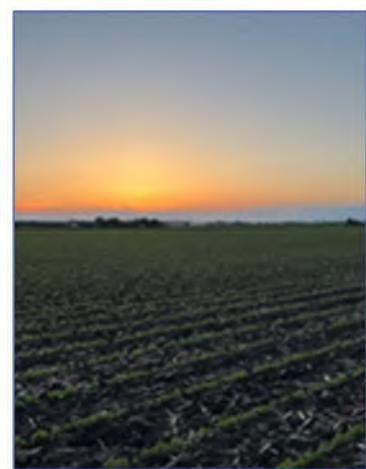
The intent of this report is to present the most current natural resource information available in a readily understandable manner. It contains a description of the present site conditions, the present resources, and the potential impacts that the proposed change may have on the site and its resources. The natural resource information is gathered from standardized data, on-site investigations and information furnished by the petitioner. This report must be read in its entirety so that the relationship between the natural resource factors and the proposed land use change or special use can be fully understood.

This report, when used properly, will provide the basis for proper land use change decisions and development while protecting the natural resource base of the county. It should not be used in place of detailed environmental and/or engineering studies that are warranted under most circumstances, but in conjunction with those studies.

The conclusions of this report in no way indicate that a certain land use is not possible, but it should alert the reader to possible problems that may occur if the capabilities of the land are ignored.

## FARMLAND PRESERVATION- LESA

The Land Evaluation and Site Assessment System is recognized nationally as an impartial system that helps determine the value of land for agriculture. LESA reports are prepared by the LaSalle County Soil & Water Conservation District, using an approved format for the system.

***How it works:***

This system is used whenever a map amendment or special use will change the use of land currently zoned as "agricultural". Prior to the zoning hearing, the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment system will be used to determine the agricultural value of the land. The score sheets will be completed by the LaSalle County Soil & Water Conservation District. The LESA value is scored on a scale of 0 to 300, with land scoring from 200 points and greater being extremely valuable for agriculture, and from 0 to 100 points having little value for agriculture. This score will be reported to the zoning board, which will use it in making a decision on the request for a Map Amendment or special use.

The LESA system has two parts. The first is the Land Evaluation (LE), which considers the productivity of the soils on the land; any limitations that it may have for crop production, and whether the soils are considered to be "prime" or "important" farmlands by USDA. This information is in the LaSalle County Soil Survey. The Soil Survey shows the types of soils that have been identified on all parcels of land within the county. Each soil has a relative value (a score of 0 to 100 with 0 being the worst and 100 being the best).

The Site Assessment (SA) is the second part. It considers such factors as the land's distance to

towns and cities; the quality of roads adjacent to the site; the availability of sewer and water; and surrounding land use. It also considers whether a proposed use is compatible with agricultural operations, if substantial investments have been made to develop infrastructure, and whether the proposed use is compatible with existing land use plans. Each factor contributes to a score that ranges from 0 to a maximum of 200 points.

Once the Land Evaluation Score and Site Assessment scores have been made, they are added together for a total LESA score. Those sites scoring high (200 and above) are valuable for agriculture and should not be considered for a zoning change. Those sites scoring less than 200 are not as valuable for agriculture and may be suited for some other land use.

***The systems' scoring will show the following:***

Land that is highly productive and located in rural areas will score high on both the land evaluation and site assessment parts. It probably should be kept in agricultural use.

Land that is highly productive but close to cities and towns will score high on the land evaluation part and low on the site assessment parts. A land use change should be carefully considered.

Land that has low productivity in rural areas will score low on the land evaluation part and high on the site assessment part. However, the loss of this land for crop production may be acceptable. The impact of the change in land use on road/school districts and compatibility with farming operations needs to be considered.

Finally, land that has low productivity close to town will score low on the land evaluation part and low on the site assessment part. This land would probably be suited for a land use change.

In summary, the system is designed to show how valuable farmland is for agriculture. It helps to identify the land that is best suited for agriculture so that it can be kept in agricultural use.

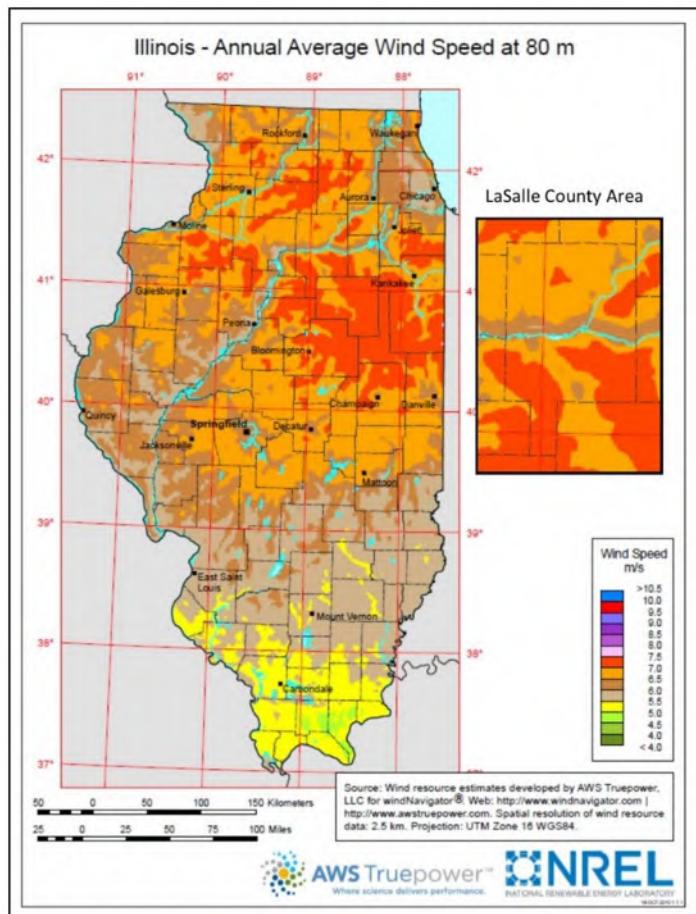
## 5.5 ALTERNATIVE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

The Illinois Climate and Equitable Jobs Act passed in 2021 requires Illinois to be supplied by 100% carbon free energy by 2045. As Illinois power suppliers aim to meet this goal; it is likely that LaSalle County will continue to see significantly more development of wind, solar, and other renewable energy development.



LaSalle County may also see development of energy storage sites. Wind technology is always evolving. Future projects in development will have less turbines, larger blades, taller hubs, and generate more power per turbine than existing projects. New wind projects will also be paired with solar farms on the same lease parcels.

Wind farms are generally located in areas with consistent average wind speeds. The Illinois Average Wind Speed Map from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (on the next page) shows higher average wind speeds in red and orange. The areas LaSalle County with the highest average wind speeds are located in the southeast, southwest, and northeast (south of the Fox River). Many of the existing, and under development, wind farms are located in these areas. For future land use planning; it should be noted that we can expect further future wind development concentrated in these same (red) areas of the County.



Care should be taken to prevent wind farms from impacting the natural viewshed from the County's State Parks.

LaSalle County will continue to see development of 2-5 megawatt community solar facilities that will occupy 15-30 acres. Some of these facilities may also contain battery storage. These community solar farms can be located near rural 3 phase power lines or smaller substations. Larger scale (100 MW+) solar farms will likely be placed near large substations or will need new substations near high voltage lines.

Solar development does occupy large areas of farmland. When possible; solar development should be encouraged on less productive farmland, barren land, and reclaimed land (mining areas/landfills).

The LaSalle County nuclear power plant is licensed to operate through at least the 2040s. At this time, nuclear power is needed to meet Illinois' clean energy goals.

The Starved Rock and Dayton hydroelectric plants will continue to produce clean energy for the foreseeable future. The Marseilles Hydroelectric plant may have the possibility to be reconstructed and provide future clean energy.

## 5.6 MINING

Mining has been an important part of LaSalle County's development since the mid-1800s. Today there are several active silica sand, limestone, other aggregates, and clay mines throughout LaSalle County.

Many of the active silica sand, limestone, and other aggregate mining companies within the County have identified the areas of the county near their processing facilities where deposits are close to the surface and easier to extract. Most of these shallow deposits are near the river valleys. In many cases, the companies have already purchased and are holding land in their inventory for future mining.

Mining companies shall be encouraged to continue to maintain forested habitats and agriculture operations on their inventoried parcels until they are ready to be mined. It would also be beneficial to encourage the transfer of reclaimed mining areas for development/reuse opportunities.



# GOALS AND STRATEGIES

## CHAPTER 6

## LASALLE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

For the current update, the LaSalle County Land Use and TIF Committee examined, reviewed, and revamped the goals from the 2014 Plan over a series of monthly meetings during 2021 and 2022. The following goals are the compilation of a collaborative effort of the public, the county board, and Department staff. Strategy recommendations for how to achieve the goals have also been identified and are listed in this chapter.

### FARMLAND PRESERVATION

With almost 80% of the County's land currently used for agriculture, LaSalle County citizens and officials recognize the importance of prime farmland, and farmland preservation is a main focus in the County's planning for the future.

LaSalle County possesses some of the

finest farmland in the country, and ranks as one of the leading agricultural counties in the state. The high quality of the soils and the importance that agriculture plays in the economy continues to lead a strong local interest in protecting the County's agricultural lands. The challenge that faces the County in the future is, therefore, one of keeping farm and urban land uses in proper proportion and protecting land that is particularly well-suited for crop production from encroachment of urban or other uses.

Recognizing that the transformation to non-agricultural uses of productive agricultural lands will be gradual over an extended term of years, the land best suited for farming should be protected from premature and scattered urban development.

**Goal 1: Preserve the land best suited for farming and other agricultural pursuits while allowing for development and growth in and around existing municipalities.**

#### Strategy:

- Utilize the future land use map to encourage urban development in areas where public infrastructure and services exist, thus preventing "spot-zoning" or scattered development and the loss and fragmentation of agricultural lands. Residential growth on tillable land should be limited to farm buildings and farm homes.
- Continue to utilize the LESA scoring process for the identification of high-value agricultural lands.
- Continually assess Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances and modify as needed to use as tools for farmland preservation.
- Encourage municipalities to involve County input on all annexations and pre-annexation agreements in areas where highly productive cultivated property could be compromised.



**Goal 2: Support the retention/creation of Agricultural Areas and explore other programs/policies to protect agricultural lands.****Strategy:**

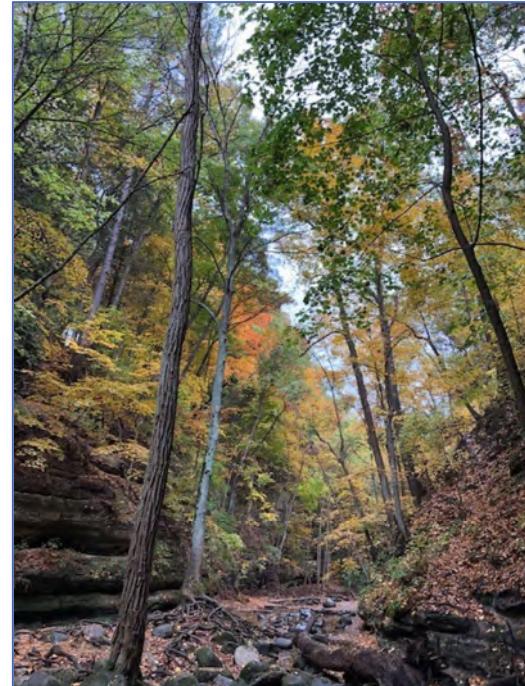
- Notify each landowner prior to their Ag Area agreements expiring and encourage their renewal.
- Work with Farm Bureau/Soil and Water Conservation District to promote Agricultural Areas through the agricultural media.
- Continue to provide and update Ag area information on the County website.
- Collaborate with Illinois counties with experience in protecting agricultural lands and addressing other growth issues to determine the approaches they used and the successes they achieved.
- Explore the use of Purchase of Development Rights for farmland preservation.

**NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE PROTECTION**

Natural resources are an extremely important asset to LaSalle County. This includes the major river corridors, water quality and quantity, and green space. Natural resources such as the Illinois, Vermilion, and Fox Rivers, and those found at Starved Rock, Matthiessen, Buffalo Rock State Parks, and other protected green spaces are important to tourism and economic development. It is imperative to identify and ensure the protection of the highest quality local natural resources.

**Goal 1: Protect green space, particularly state and county parks, nature preserves, Illinois Natural Area Inventory sites; as well as the Illinois River and its tributaries, including the Fox and Vermilion rivers, and their riverine corridors.****Strategy:**

- Include current best management practices for erosion control to provide protection of watershed areas.
- Promote the use of conservation easements and programs (CRP, CREP, etc.) to protect stream and riverine corridors, forests, wetlands, and other high-quality natural communities.
- Encourage funding for programs designed to protect green space and natural areas.
- Encourage buffering areas of natural resources, green space, and waterways as a conditions of special uses at the County level.
- Identify, protect, and reconnect greenways and contiguous forested areas.
- If development pressures increase; explore the expansion of the county park system and the possible formation of a forest preserve/conservation district.



**Goal 2: Encourage increased conservation of the County's natural resources; discourage development and operational practices that pollute the air, groundwater, streams, and rivers.****Strategy:**

- Discourage the clearing of established forests for development, mining, and agriculture.
- Explore flood buyout programs to protect floodplains and preserve riverine areas.
- Incorporate provisions to protect surface/ground water quality and quantity into any future water resources management plan.
- Promote the use of best management practices (BMPs-such as grassed waterways, appropriate timing for fertilizer application, filter strips) on agricultural lands to help buffer streams, prevent erosion, and reduce water pollution.
- Work with the Illinois Department of Public Health, the LaSalle County Health Department, and the LaSalle County Health Board to prohibit septic systems to be located in flood hazard areas and where soil conditions present the potential for ground/surface water contamination.

**Goal 3: Protect the County from natural resource and economic damages caused by invasive species.****Strategy:**

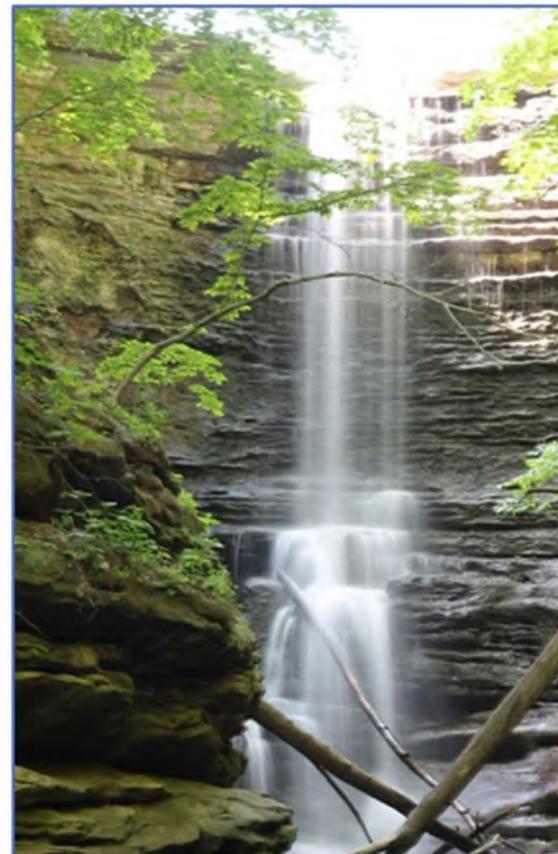
- Monitor state/federal agency websites for updates on invasive species that may be a threat to the area and identify/implement the steps necessary to protect the County's natural resources from such species.

**WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

Following the State of Illinois' Stormwater Management Act of 2005; a nonbinding county referendum in February 2008 approved the establishment of the LaSalle Water Resources Commission to develop a stormwater management plan and prepare plans to control flooding and the loss of water supplies.

**Goal 1: Reestablish a Water Resources Commission to identify the need for plans that address stormwater management, water conservation, and groundwater/watershed protection.****Strategy:**

- The Land Use/TIF Committee shall annually review the need to reestablish the Water Resources Commission and make a recommendation to the Committee on Appointments & Legislation & Rules.
- Once approved by the county and municipal governments, implement the plans with grants and fees, or seek a referendum to establish a stormwater levy.



**Goal 2: Until a Stormwater Management Commission is established and plans are approved, LaSalle County Should address watershed and groundwater protection with the following strategies.****Strategy:**

- Encourage new, large groundwater users (i.e. mining/industrial uses) to perform an analysis of the effects of proposed water withdrawals and minimize adverse impacts on other users.
- Encourage new developers that will be large groundwater users to offer well protection agreements to surrounding landowners.
- Review the need to implement the groundwater monitoring recommendations from the 2016 LaSalle County Hydrology Plan (Northwestern University Publication).
- Adopt land use, zoning, and development priorities that are based on natural resource constraints and opportunities, particularly streams, lakes, wetlands, and their respective watersheds and recharge areas.
- Promote and encourage the use of design techniques, best management practices, and other methods to reduce imperviousness within developing watersheds.
- Consider adding conditions requiring onsite stormwater management on Special Use petitions for development that include large impervious areas.
- Continue to update the LaSalle County Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance as needed.

**LAND RECLAMATION**

An important aspect of conservation is reclaiming land considered unsuitable for development in its present condition and making it available for a more productive use. In this regard, LaSalle County has both a challenge and an opportunity to reclaim existing but retired strip mines and open pit mines that detract from its present landscape. Since most of these areas are located along the County's rivers and streams, much of the land could be rehabilitated for recreational purposes. However, in other areas it is reasonable to expect that the land could be reclaimed for other uses, including residential and industrial uses. All present and future mining operations in the County shall be considered for possible reuse once the mines have been retired.

**Goal 1: Evaluate existing retired strip mines and open pit mining sites for reclamation and make them available for other uses including reforestation.****Strategy:**

- Identify post-mining land use opportunities and develop criteria for determining future reclamation.
- Encourage reforestation/prairie restoration to prevent further erosion of barren sites
- Encourage transfer of reclaimed land for residential/commercial/industrial use or donation for preservation

**Goal 2: Evaluate existing mining operations to anticipate their potential future land use once mines have been retired.****Strategy:**

- Encourage conditions (during active mining and reclamation) for new mining operations so that public benefits are maximized and to minimize detrimental effects to the environment and public health.

**TRANSPORTATION**

An efficient transportation system is necessary for all future development. A good system of transportation that links to larger systems is one of the important keys to local economic development. The County should continually strive to improve and strengthen its existing transportation system; to make transportation safe, efficient, and economical.

**Goal 1: Encourage that transportation infrastructure and planning minimizes environmental consequences and preserves the integrity and character of LaSalle County.****Strategy:**

- Consider creating a Greenways Map and Plan to assist in making decisions about transportation planning so as to minimize or eliminate impacts to natural resources.
- Encourage the advancement of rail transportation for efficient transport of materials and passengers.

**Goal 2: Maintain a County highway and street system that has adequate quality and capacity and is safe and efficient.****Strategy:**

- Collaborate with the Illinois Department of Transportation on the need to improve key state highways.
- Secure the funding necessary to maintain and upgrade County highways and structures as needed.
- Review, and amend where needed, subdivision regulations, building permits, and other plans to ensure they are compatible with the future transportation plans.

**Goal 3: Identify and address issues related to the future of the County's transportation system.****Strategy:**

- Secure funding to continue developing the planning and analysis tools needed to develop and maintain a long-range transportation plan.
- Integrate transportation and land use planning to achieve the goals of this plan.
- Upgrade the County Highway system, including improvements to the weight-carrying capacity, width, and intersections as need arises.

**Goal 4: Continue to collaborate with township highway commissioners and provide technical assistance on transportation issues of mutual interest.****Strategy:**

- Continue to offer assistance to township highway commissioners in the development of annual work plans.

**Goal 5: Explore opportunities to expand or create new multi-modal transportation opportunities.****Strategy:**

- Collaborate with appropriate municipalities and federal agencies to explore opportunities to extend the Metra mass transit line and AMTRAK service.
- Continue to work with North Central Area Transit (NCAT) to expand regional bus services throughout the County.
- Develop a county-wide bike and pedestrian plan as components of the County transportation plan.
- Collaborate with the Illinois Valley Regional Airport to explore opportunities for air taxi/passenger services.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

LaSalle County faces challenges regarding future economic development, including retaining young, educated workers and high-paying businesses.

Economic development and attraction of new



employment is especially important for the stabilization and growth of the LaSalle County population.

Opportunities need to be recognized and seized through the use of incentives. However, opportunities also need to be balanced with the need to protect valuable farmland, natural resources, and environmentally sensitive areas. The following goals and strategies will help the County address these issues:

**Goal 1: Develop a collaborative county-municipal economic development plan to achieve common goals and objectives. Among these are:****Strategy:**

- Market the area to industries/businesses similar to those that have historically flourished in the area and take advantage of the county's superior geographical location, transportation resources, and/or its natural resources: warehousing/logistics, agriculture, silica sand, cement, glass, energy, chemicals/plastics, general manufacturing, and tourism.
- Encourage the revitalization and modernization of existing central business districts within municipalities to restore the character of our communities while promoting smart growth.
- Encourage business and commercial centers that are conveniently-located, attractive, stable, and safe in which to shop and work.

- Attract diverse industrial and commercial opportunities that will provide additional jobs by actively promoting the County's central location, transportation facilities, and natural resources.
- Work with the private sector to expand access to high-speed internet or cable service across rural areas of the County.
- Continue to provide opportunity for expansion of renewable energy resources.
- Work with healthcare providers to ensure continued access to local emergency services, primary and specialty care providers and diagnostic and laboratory services.

**Goal 2: Develop a balanced and efficient approval process for TIF districts that includes collaboration between the County and municipalities and considers the impacts to taxing bodies.**

**Strategy:**

- County officials shall continue to meet with municipalities to represent County interests in the formation of TIF districts and identify performance standards for TIF districts that meet common objectives.

**Goal 3: Promote methods of minimizing the adverse effects of commercial and industrial uses on natural resources and residential areas.**

**Strategy:**

- Avoid locating or expanding industrial uses in areas close to residential areas, or other incompatible development, and near sensitive environmental resources.
- Site developments, such as warehousing or industrial uses, in proximity to existing infrastructure when possible.
- If commercial/industrial developments must be sited near residential areas or natural resources; require sufficient buffers to minimize impact.

## RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

A major goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to guide residential developments into those areas that can most effectively and economically provide urban services and amenities, such as public sewerage and water systems, schools, and fire and police protection. Compact development in recognizable neighborhood units located principally around existing communities is one way to achieve this goal.



**Goal 1: Prevent residential sprawl by containing and directing residential growth within areas that public utilities and services can economically serve.**

**Strategy:**

- New large residential developments should be guided to areas adjacent to existing utilities and adequate police/fire protection. In most cases this would be adjacent to incorporated areas.
- Encourage municipalities to focus on residential infill of already annexed and undeveloped land.

- Use LESA to evaluate the advisability of rezoning agricultural lands for any development and to encourage the protection of these lands.

**Goal 2: Encourage areas/districts for residential developments that will allow affordable living opportunities for all county residents.**

**Strategy:**

- Evaluate the County's housing needs and work to meet them.

**Goal 3: Promote high standards of quality in construction and maintenance of housing in the County.**

**Strategy:**

- Update and enforce building codes.

**Goal 4: Address the need for increased fire protection, police protection, and infrastructure prior to establishing new residential areas.**

**Strategy:**

- Evaluate the need for increased fire and police protection and infrastructure improvements at the time a project is proposed for approval. (page 2-6 Fire Protection District Map)

## RECREATION AND TOURISM

Recreation and tourism are important to economic development within the County now and can be expanded in the future. Both recreation and tourism are based, in part, on high quality natural resources and existing state and county parks. Strong connections exist between these and the natural resources goals and strategies described above.



**Goal 1: Develop a balanced county-wide tourism strategy to expand tourism opportunities.**

**Strategy:**

- Cooperate with existing tourism/recreational groups to develop strategies to enhance existing greenway and bike trail systems.

**Goal 2: Encourage and assist the promotion and development of the County's historical, natural, and scenic points of interest as tourist attractions.**

**Strategy:**

- Identify opportunities to create a biking, hiking, or auto trail systems linking key historic, scenic, and natural points of interest throughout the County and beyond.
- Fund or actively search for funding to restore existing historic sites, e.g., the I&M Canal.
- Improve and promote the recreational opportunities for the Illinois, Vermilion, and Fox Rivers.

**Goal 3: Recognize the importance of a healthy environment as vital to recreation and tourism and protect the integrity of open spaces including parks, nature preserves, Illinois Natural Area Inventory sites, waterways, and greenways.**

**Strategy:**

- Work with volunteer groups and local companies to coordinate/participate in river/land clean ups.

## GENERAL PLANNING OPPORTUNITIES

Planning provides opportunities to address problems and advance solutions on a wide range of issues. Specific planning-related goals and strategies include:



**Goal 1: Support regional planning that is collaborative between the County, townships, and municipalities.**

**Strategy:**

- Engage municipalities and townships in the review and update of the Comprehensive Plan and other planning efforts.

**Goal 2: Review the LaSalle County Comprehensive Plan on a biannual basis and revise as needed. The Comprehensive Plan should be thought of as a dynamic and valuable tool to guide the future of the County rather than as a static document.**

**Strategy:**

- Make every effort to inform the public of the contents of the Comprehensive Plan and to engage them in its implementation.
- The LaSalle County Land Use and TIF Committee and Land Use Director shall review of the Comprehensive Plan on a biannual basis to determine when an update is advisable.

**Goal 3: Review and update the LaSalle County Zoning/Subdivision Ordinances to reflect planning goals and to adjust to new development pressures.**

**Strategy:**

- The LaSalle County Land Use and TIF Committee and the Land Use Director shall review the Zoning Ordinance on an annual basis to determine if updates are needed.
- Assess the need for a unified development ordinance to combine subdivision/zoning ordinances.
- Assess the need to address non-conforming unincorporated communities and other non-conforming areas of the county through zoning overlay districts.
- Assess the need for changes or additional zoning districts.

**Goal 4: Maintain and implement the LaSalle County Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan.****Strategy:**

- Coordinate with the LaSalle County Land Use Department, EMA Department, and the LaSalle County Land Use/TIF Committee to review this plan and report on the status of implementation on an annual basis.

**Goal 5: Maintain and implement the LaSalle County Parks and Recreation Plan****Strategy:**

- The LaSalle County Property Committee and Parks Department shall review the Parks and Recreation Plan on a biannual basis to determine if updates are needed.

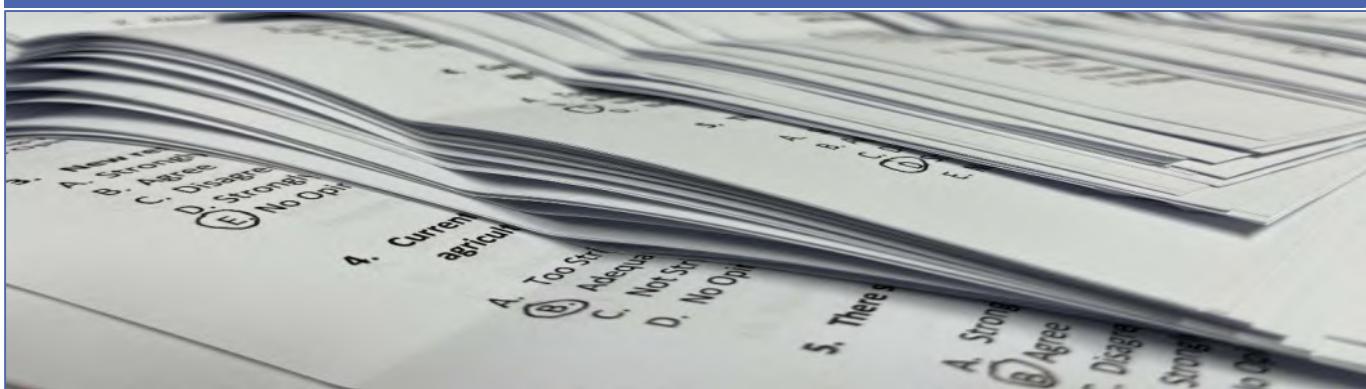
**Goal 6: Continually assess the need for other development/resource related plans or studies****Strategy:**

- The LaSalle County Board, its committees, and departments shall continually assess the needs for additional studies or plans in order to react to new development pressures, population growth, transportation issues, natural resource related issues, and flooding/stormwater/ground water issues.

# COMMUNITY INPUT SURVEY

## CHAPTER 7

## LASALLE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

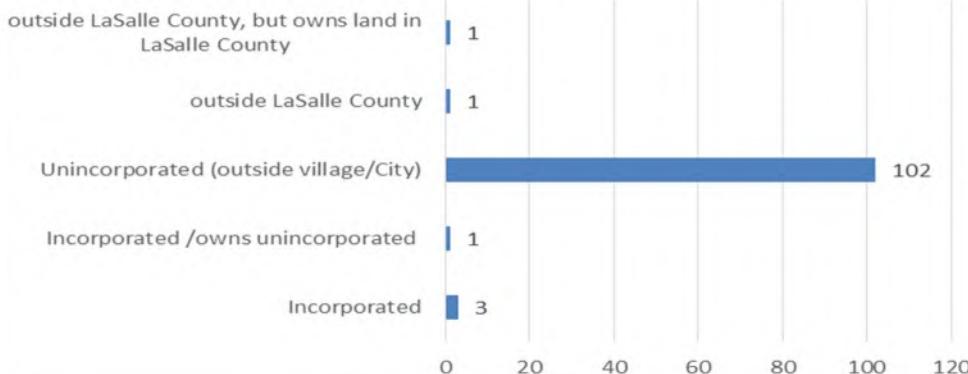


In August of 2022, an online community input survey was conducted as well as a targeted mail survey. The 10 question survey was conducted to gain resident/landowner feedback on some important issues/themes affecting LaSalle County.

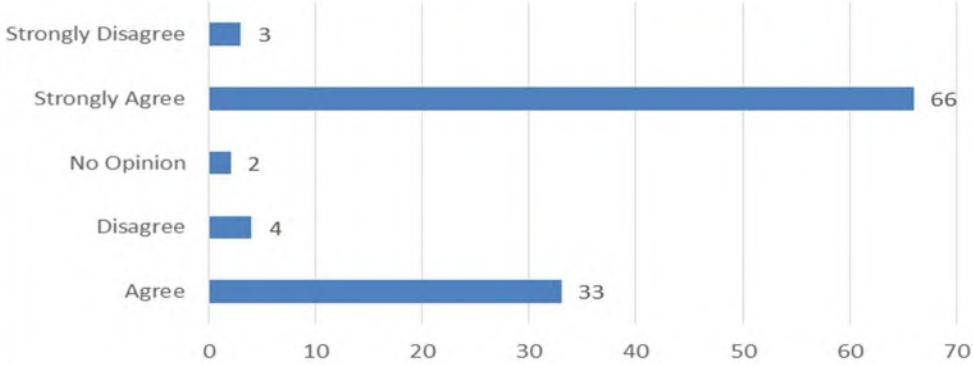
### MAILED SURVEY RESULTS

The targeted mailed survey was sent to 250 addresses. Bruce Harris and Associates assisted in using GIS to randomly sample addresses throughout the County that were unincorporated and owner-occupied. A total of 108 completed surveys were returned and the results were tabulated by the Land Use Department.

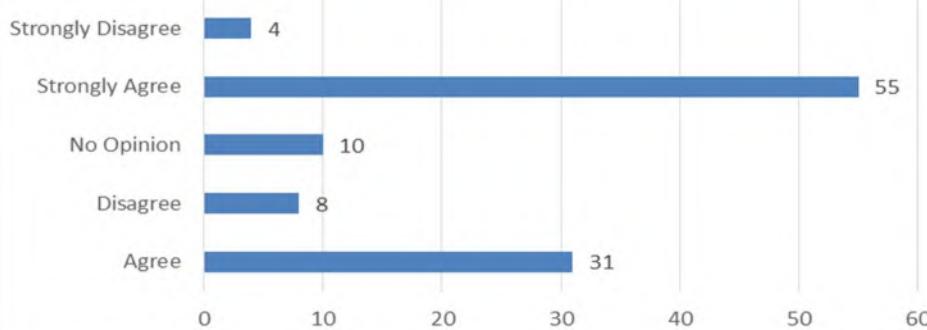
#### Question 1. Where do you reside?



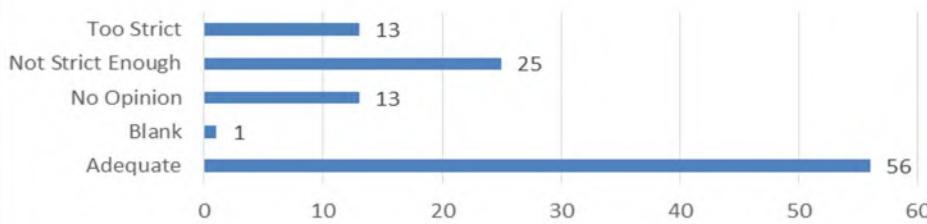
#### Question 2. Preserving existing agricultural land should be a planning priority in LaSalle County?



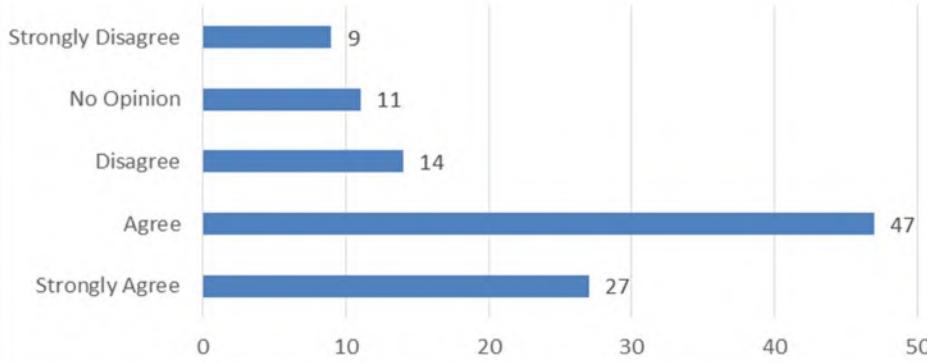
Question 3. New residential/commercial developments be limited to near (or in) incorporated areas?



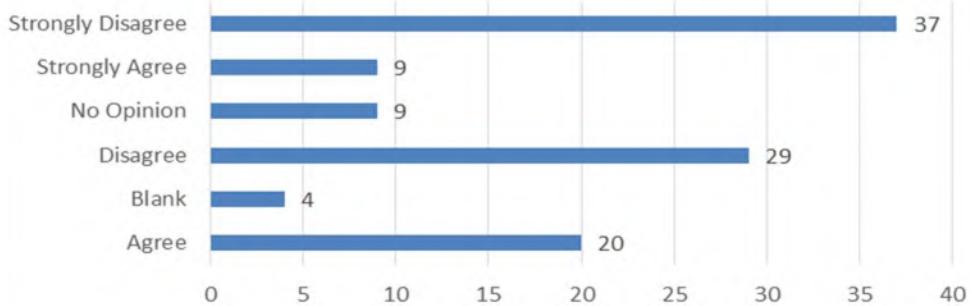
Question 4. Current zoning regulations/restrictions in place to protect public health, safety & welfare; preserve agricultural land; conserve natural resources and promote orderly development are:



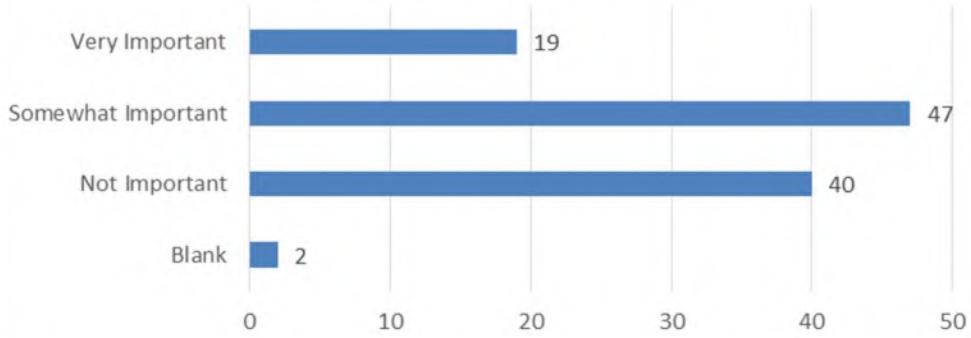
Question 5. There should be a minimum acreage requirement for the keeping of farm animals (>1 acre).



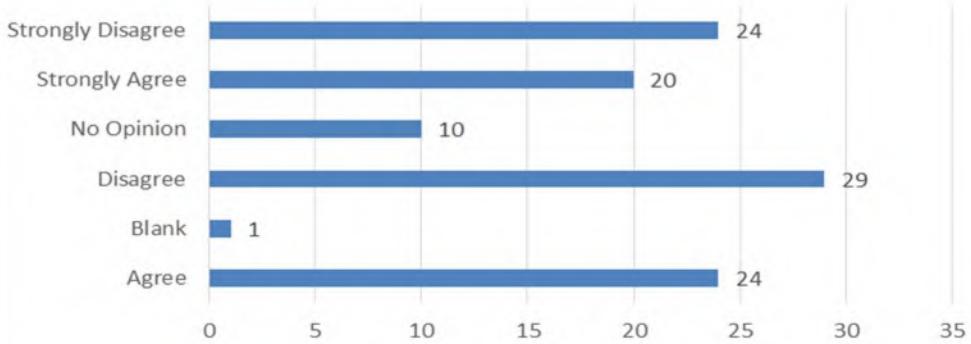
Question 6. The County shall implement a stormwater management ordinance for the unincorporated areas of the County; even if it requires new permits/fees.



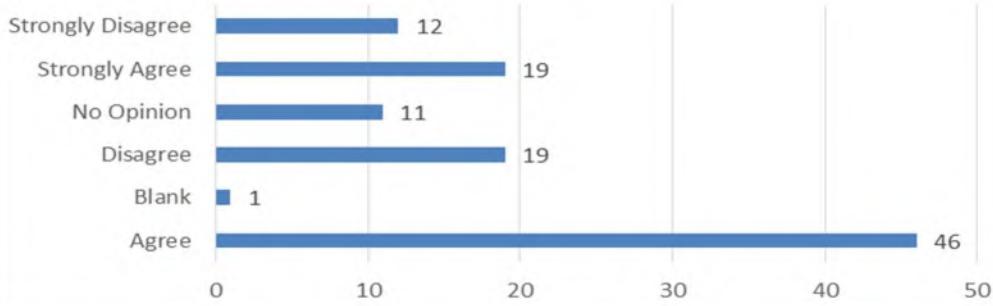
Question 7. How important is increasing alternate modes of transportation (such as regional bus, biking, walking, train, etc.. ) to the future of LaSalle County?



Question 8. Renewable energy production, such as wind and solar energy, is important to the future development of LaSalle County



Question 9. Mining and related industries of local natural resources such as: silica sand, limestone, gravel, and clay; is important to the future development of LaSalle County

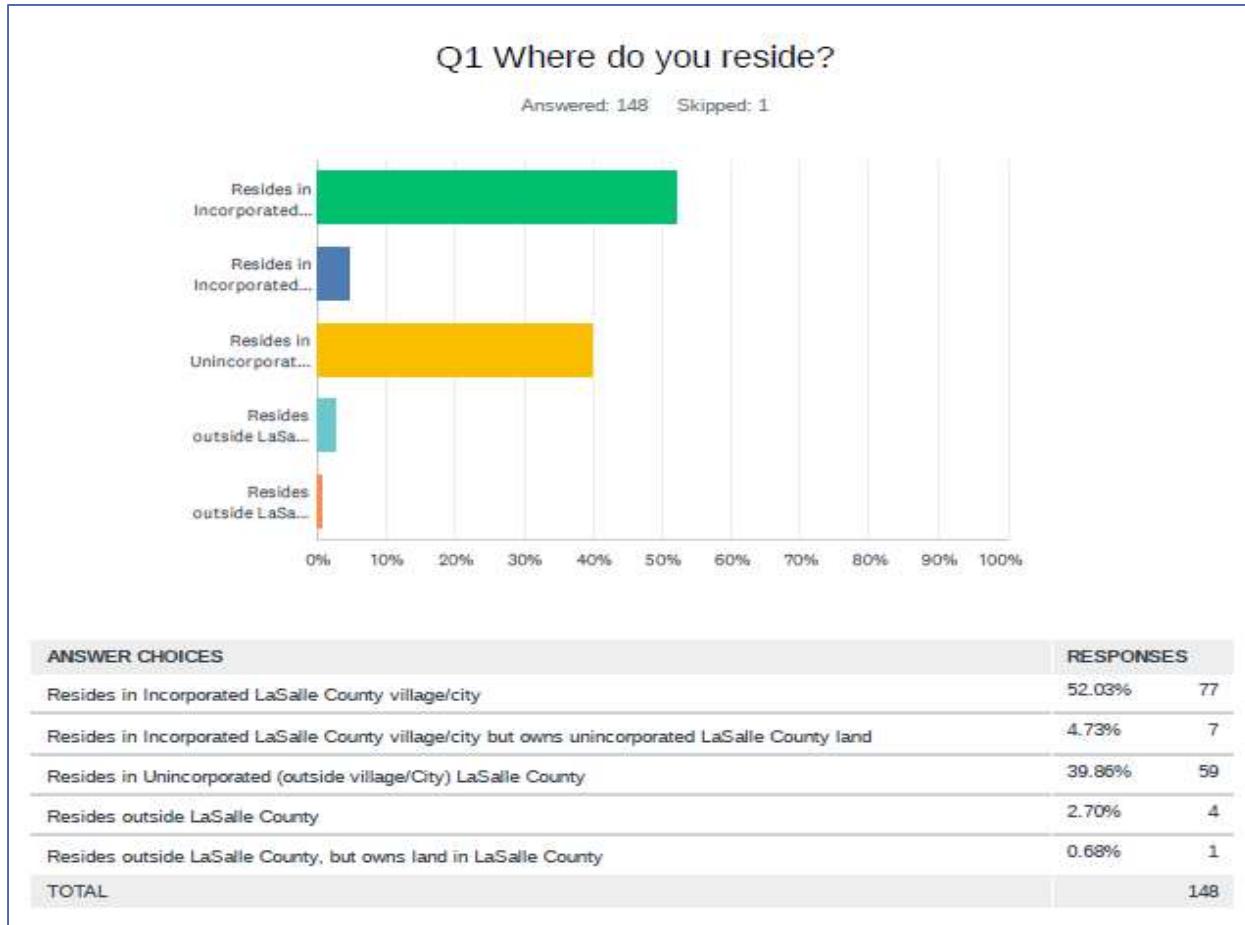


**QUESTION 10: Please provide any additional comments as it relates to future growth and development in unincorporated LaSalle County**

1	People live here to peace, we don't need further development, fill the current empty downtown area.
2	Renewable energy's are so inefficient
3	Against wind and solar construction on prime farmland.
4	Put gun ranges indoors only, more recycling needed, land fill needs daily cover less dust and continue picking up garbage in ditches.
5	Stop signs at corner of 17th & 170 north of ransom.
6	Wind turbines set back need to be updated min 1320 ft from residence for new installations.
7	Not in favor of wind mills and solar panels. Money better spent on education. Keep our farmland pristine & horizon views beautiful.
8	Too many farmsteads have turned into junk yards zoning doesn't enforce the rules.
9	Reclamation of mined land is important..no using for dump...instead do pond, trees, trails. Require bond for end use.
10	Would like more info on the future of lasalle county. Too much polution created keep rivers and streams clean.
11	Do not wish to see wind turbines but believe they beneficial to lasalle county.
12	There will be no future growth & development in lasalle county or state taxes keep going up.
13	Unincorporated taxes are getting to high in lasalle county causing people to leave this area.
14	New ordinances and restrictions should respect property rights to the extent practical.
15	The county will pursue tax revenue at any cost.. The tax payers will be given almost no consideration at all.
16	Lower real estate home tax increase sale tax on durable goods
17	Current zoning has done little to limit new sand quarries, hog farms and such with very little benefit to lasalle county and many things to the detrierent of local landowners.
18	No more sand mines
19	2 more nuclear power plants needed
20	Get rid or lower taxes on homes owned by people over 65.
21	Look to offer grants or assistance to homeowners in unincorporated ares dedicated to home repairs.
22	Leave it alone
23	Gov't planning only where critical for public safety and essential for public good.
24	It is important to keep our farm land and trees that's what filters the air. Need to keep green areas.
25	MINING COMPANIES SHOULD BE LIABLE FOR RUINING LOCAL RESIDENCE WATER QUALITY
26	Keep townships in place. Our farms are being operated by 4th & 5th generations.

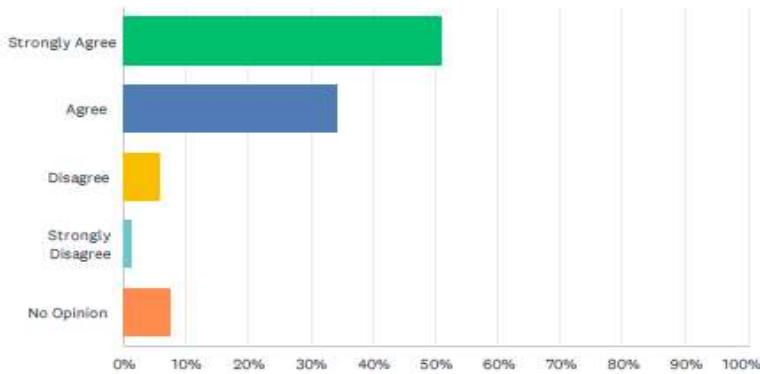
## ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

The online survey was conducted for about 30 days starting in August of 2022 through a link available on the County's website. A press release was also sent out to kick off the survey. The online survey resulted in 149 completed surveys. This survey resulted in a nearly balanced mix of both incorporated and unincorporated LaSalle County resident/owner responses.



**Q2 Preserving existing agricultural land should be a planning priority in LaSalle County?**

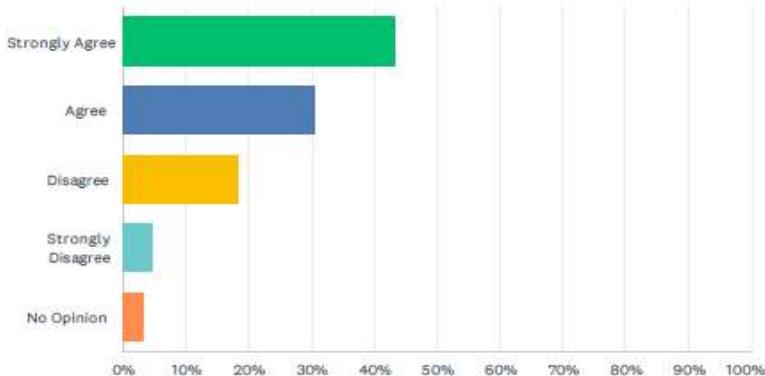
Answered: 149 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly Agree	51.01%
Agree	34.23%
Disagree	6.04%
Strongly Disagree	1.34%
No Opinion	7.38%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>149</b>

**Q3 New residential/commercial developments be limited to near (or in) incorporated areas?**

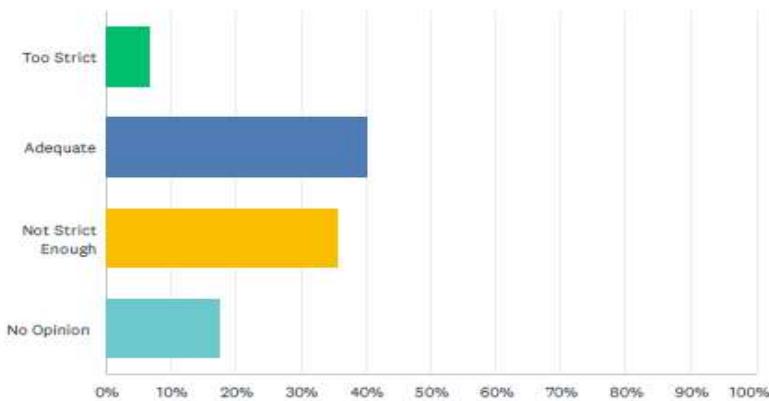
Answered: 148 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly Agree	43.24%
Agree	30.41%
Disagree	18.24%
Strongly Disagree	4.73%
No Opinion	3.38%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>148</b>

**Q4 Current zoning regulations/restrictions in place to protect public health, safety & welfare; preserve agricultural land; conserve natural resources and promote orderly development are:**

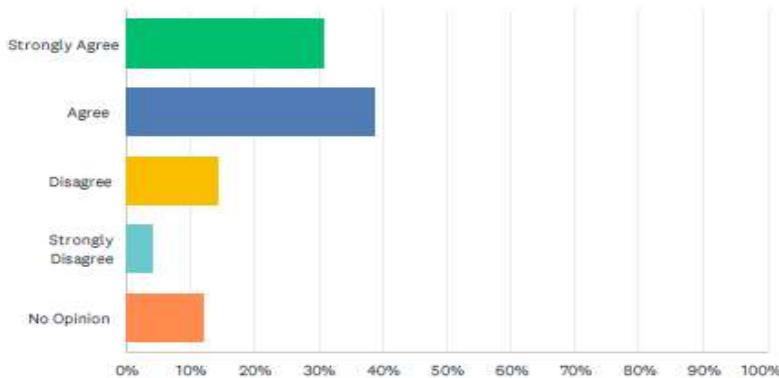
Answered: 149 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Too Strict	6.71% 10
Adequate	40.27% 60
Not Strict Enough	35.57% 53
No Opinion	17.45% 26
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>149</b>

**Q5 There should be a minimum acreage requirement for the keeping of farm animals (>1 acre).**

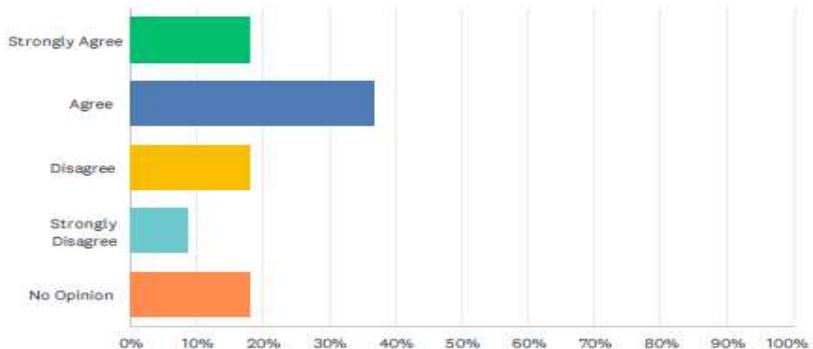
Answered: 147 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly Agree	30.61% 45
Agree	38.78% 57
Disagree	14.29% 21
Strongly Disagree	4.08% 6
No Opinion	12.24% 18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>147</b>

**Q6 The County shall implement a stormwater management ordinance for the unincorporated areas of the County; even if it requires new permits/fees.**

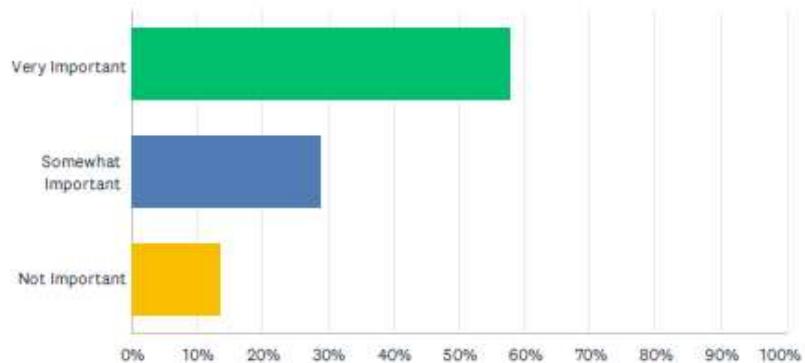
Answered: 149 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly Agree	18.12%
Agree	36.91%
Disagree	18.12%
Strongly Disagree	8.72%
No Opinion	18.12%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>149</b>

**Q7 How important is increasing alternate modes of transportation (such as regional bus, biking, walking, train, etc.. to the future of LaSalle County?**

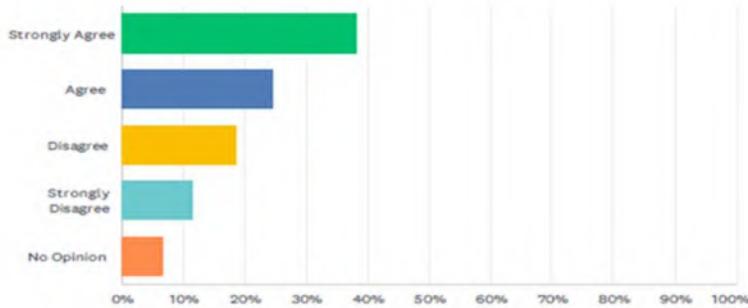
Answered: 149 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Very Important	57.72%
Somewhat Important	28.86%
Not Important	13.42%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>149</b>

**Q8 Renewable energy production, such as wind and solar energy, is important to the future development of LaSalle County**

Answered: 149 Skipped: 0



**ANSWER CHOICES**

Strongly Agree

**RESPONSES**

38.26%

57

Agree

24.83%

37

Disagree

18.79%

28

Strongly Disagree

11.41%

17

No Opinion

6.71%

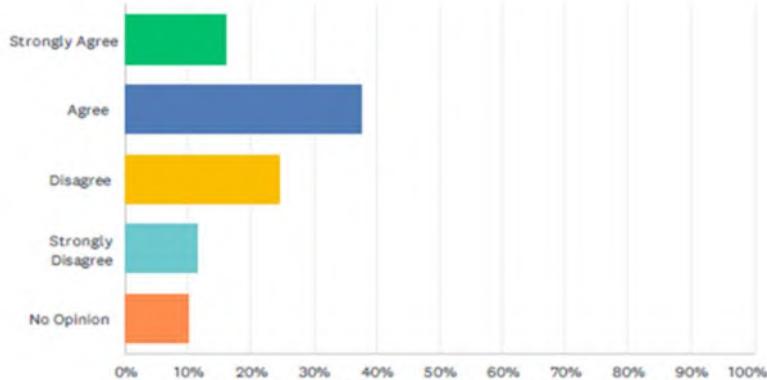
10

**TOTAL**

149

**Q9 Mining and related industries of local natural resources such as: silica sand, limestone, gravel, and clay; is important to the future development of LaSalle County**

Answered: 149 Skipped: 0



**ANSWER CHOICES**

Strongly Agree

**RESPONSES**

16.11%

24

Agree

37.58%

56

Disagree

24.83%

37

Strongly Disagree

11.41%

17

No Opinion

10.07%

15

**TOTAL**

149

<b>QUESTION 10: Please provide any additional comments as it relates to future growth and development in unincorporated LaSalle County</b>	
1	Nothing about preserving more park land. Predictable. This county board is pro sand mine, to the harm of residents.
2	Increase user fees. Let people pay their own way instead of passing cost along to all taxpayers
3	Must work in water resource management and also participate with recycle events reaching out to specific locations through LaSalle County
4	Many zoning and land use laws/rules do not appear to be enforced. Need to use the eyes and ears of all county employees as they travel around the county.
5	LaSalle County has some beautiful areas of water and nature and we are not always careful about where we put mining industries.
6	Allowing appropriate, environmentally-sustainable development to allow residents and visitors to engage with and learn about nature is beneficial to the LaSalle County economy and can be harnessed to simultaneously preserve designated natural areas.
7	Farmers need help with farmland drainage issues that is coordinated among many farmers, like a watershed management project. There is a lot of land that has drainage tile, but no canals or creeks where the water can drain. We are at the mercy of neighbors to say yeah or nay to our desire to add tile to our fields. In addition, we are at the mercy of landowners and tenants who do not manage surface water runoff, which creates erosion and drainage issues on land downslope.
8	Some of the things I've only marked important, are important to the county, but, mining and natural resources are also at great risk of destroying our beautiful county. The quarry up on 35th near E5th will probably never be restored to anything good for man or beast. The owners will probably go out of business or file for bankruptcy before restoring it, one fears. Stormwater out of cities but in the county is important. Seems like every structure that sheds rainwater should have its own retention pond. River flooding is ridiculous and a house for instance, would only need a couple inch deep area in its yard to capture its run-off. 'Green' energy is important somehow to the future of LC. Is it killing migrating birds/bats? Probably. Not a good thing. Could solar farms be built on old quarries instead of farmland? Could sheep be grazed in solar farms? Saving farmland from the farmers and their love of over-tilling and overspraying is important to the future of farming and the health of the planet. There are people bemoaning the destruction of the Amazon, meanwhile, in the US where we supposedly know better, gas stations are built on beautiful road frontages, chopping down trees our native Americans probably slept under. Saving the environment and ALL its life-forms should be one of the big goals of LC and the US. No bugs this year, what are our endangered bats eating? What are any of our birds eating? It is very sad watching the planet close-down from all the assaults on it. There are two new truck-stops about to be built, even though supposedly the future is all electric, therefore the lifespans of these land-destructing installations will probably be less than 10 years, and the destruction they've caused will last possibly forever. How do you ever rebuild nature. You probably get the idea, hang in there, thanks!
9	Renewable energy should be restricted to blighted or unusable properties such as mine sites and landfills rather than prime agricultural lands. Mines need to have a closing clause such as, if not in use for 5 years, the mine has to reclaim the site. Agriculture needs to promote riparian protections for streams and wetlands. Agricultural land should be graded so that prime agri land is not used for other purposes. New subdivisions should be close to towns so that those residents don't put a great burden on the county infrastructure and on agricultural uses.
10	I have lived in LaSalle County for over 60 years and have seen many changes. I have a concern with the annexation of incorporated cities to unincorporated areas of the county, especially with the roads in mining districts. I think the cities are abusing the annexation of the roads. The cities are not maintaining the roads as the townships are maintaining. This needs to be changed. I have talked to state officials and IDOT about my concerns. I would like to elaborate about my findings. I can be contacted at -----REDACTED----- Thankyou.
11	A lot of quarries have land bought up already and should use that land instead of buying up more. Solar farms should not be placed on good productive farmland.
12	Park improvements would be nice. More picnic areas and upgraded playgrounds.
13	No hog farms in unincorporated residential area.
14	LaSalle County should create a land bank that will redevelop existing neighborhoods to ensure our communities stay walkable. Our population is not increasing; therefore, we should not be expanding our geographic footprint. We do not want to become like a suburb where kids and the elderly are reliant on someone driving them. Ottawa has done a nice job with their redevelopment plan.
15	Strive to improve existing residential areas rather than new subdivisions.
16	For the present time, we have sufficient solar, wind and mining. Ask me again in another 10 years. It is important to research and develop alternate modes of transportation that can serve the county.
17	Farm animals definition is required a cow, horse, or sheep is a lot different than ducks or chickens
18	"They're not making any new farmland." Edmund Engels, deceased La Salle County farmer
19	WHY WOULD YOU BE CONSIDERING MORE DEVELOPMENT BEFORE IMPROVING THE ROADS THAT ARE SO TERRIBLE?
20	Need to investigate and test for PFAs and forever chemicals in our lands and drinking water. Sludge should be tested before it is allowed to be spread as fertilizer. We have enough toxicity and radium issues in this county. We don't need to add to it.
21	LaSalle County needs more housing development in incorporated areas.
22	So called green energy is not reliable at this time. We need all forms of energy. Green is not the answer now.
23	There needs to be ordinances against junk cars, high weeds, uncut lawns, and run down homes.
24	Create more county parks.
25	None
26	Future growth in all areas discussed should not impact upon the existing homesites in the area.
27	Eliminate Townships
28	Come up with a plan to help townships tar and chip the gravel roads that still exist
29	County board should be reduced in size from 29 to 9 board members as was voted for in a referendum several years ago.
30	LaSalle County has the ability to grow if future projects and transportation is more designed and more connected to the nearby Chicago metro area
31	Stop the wind farms already. Such a blight on the landscape. Also what are you going to do with the solar battery farms when those cells are no longer viable? One isn't better than the other. Fossil fuels and renewable energies all have consequences eventually.
32	We need more support for our nuclear station -- and that includes political support -- and less support for wind and solar that leave a bigger footprint and do less to supply electricity. Often times the wind turbines are not even running, even on windy days, why add more to LaSalle county when what is here isn't being utilized to capacity? Wind turbines are harmful to our eco system and farmland, both solar and wind take up too much room and provide no real long term employment for the people of LaSalle county.

## QUESTION 10: Results Continued

33	What is stormwater management for unincorporated areas?
34	What needs to be accomplished is the entrance to Jimmy John's in incorporated Ottawa, IL. This business is on State Route 23 approaching State Route 71, Norris Drive. Terrible entrance. People are traveling on Columbus St./Route 23 and traffic is stopped by cars waiting to get into Jimmy John's. A major disaster waiting to happen. Same with McDonald's on U.S. 6/Route 71. This sorely needs attention.
35	How about 4 lanes connecting Ottawa and Streator....way to much traffic from people commuting to and from work....not enough road to bring industry into Streator
36	We need more sidewalks and outdoor paths. It's hard to get around without a car.
37	Enact laws to slow/stop climate change! This should be our top priority!
38	Seems like Nell's Landing is a scam. Why isn't that part of the City and being developed for much needed housing near downtown Ottawa?
39	We need more nature/outdoor activities/locations.
40	this community needs to be more walkable. We should focus on and incentivize redeveloping downtown areas instead of expanding more and more outward, which is honestly wasteful. I feel really strongly about using the already developed land (a lot of which is vacant, deteriorating, or underutilized) for residential/commercial use. Additionally, walkability and bike paths are super important to young families when looking for places to establish residence. Thank you!
41	Creation, protection and preservation of natural areas and watersheds should be a focus of future development in unincorporated LaSalle County.
42	I think solar energy panels have no place on prime farmland. They can be sited on marginal farmland.
43	No more wind farms or solar farms.
44	It's terrible that mining is allowed so close to state parks
45	Building PAVED bike/walking trails connecting Ottawa/Utica/Lasalle/etc should be a priority. It's ridiculous we live in such a beautiful area with the parks, and what passes for a trail is ridiculous. Look at Peoria and what they did with their path system.
46	How can we protect landowners from unscrupulous alternative energy approaches?
47	I believe the recent trend of historically agricultural land being converted into camp grounds is an issue. One example being the girlscout camp on Gentleman Rd. Formerly, the land was farmed and the girl scouts held events that promoted conservation and respect for wildlife. It is now being turned into a campground, likely to host adults from the northern counties, that will place a burden on the nearby residents and local law enforcement, fire and EMS. Understanding that land use changes over the years, I think it's fair to say that nobody who buys a home and land in rural LaSalle county is in favor of an Air B&B popping up in their backyard overnight.
48	Zoning is important to keep development to appropriate places. Mining should be made to mitigate dust and noise. Solar should be put on top of existing structures, not on crop fields.
49	This survey was poorly written. Questions tried to influence answers
50	We need to put a moratorium on renewable energy this is getting out of hand in the county zoning is no good with out support of ZBA and county board will vote in anything if it means a little tax money
51	Less strip mining, fewer building codes and regulations on unincorporated areas such as minimum acreage to build home. This hurts rural school districts and families who have owned farms for years. a
52	Small government is needed. Keep out of peoples land use.
53	There are entirely too many sand mines permanently scarring the land for short term profit for a few. Future generations will wonder what could we possibly been thinking when looking back. They're ruining land forever and it's gotten to be way too much.
54	Regulate Rural Subdivisions with infrastructure planning
55	Reduce minimum acreage required to build on or own a home . We are wasting farm land by requiring 5ac lots