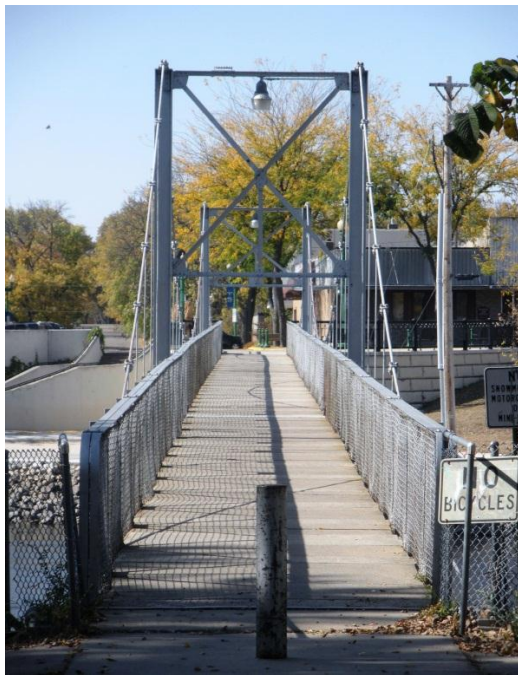


# Bridging Preservation and Economics in Granite Falls, Minnesota



By Sarina Otaibi

December, 2011

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: BRIDGING PRESERVATION AND  
ECONOMICS IN GRANITE FALLS,  
MINNESOTA

Sarina Otaibi, Master of Historic Preservation,  
2011

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Preservation

Granite Falls, Minnesota, is a small, rural city with a sleepy downtown. The town's population is declining, the community lacks diversity, and seventeen of its downtown commercial buildings are vacant. While the downtown is currently undergoing revitalization efforts, the community is not fully aware of the benefits of using historic preservation as a tool to help bring back their downtown. Historic preservation is often misinterpreted or viewed with suspicion by people in rural communities. This project will examine the various issues and values involved in waking a sleepy downtown and provide a guide for how Granite Falls can use historic preservation as an economic tool in their revitalization plan.

BRIDGING PRESERVATION AND ECONOMICS IN  
GRANITE FALLS, MINNESOTA

By

Sarina Otaibi

Masters Final Project submitted to the Faculty of the Historic Preservation Program  
of the School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation of the  
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Historic  
Preservation  
2011

Advisory Committee:  
Dr. Donald W. Linebaugh, Chair  
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Patrick Moore

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisory committee, Dr. Donald W. Linebaugh, Dr. Constance Ramierez, and Patrick Moore, for the valuable feedback and guidance they have provided me during this project.

A special thank you to my mother, Mary Gillespie, who has encouraged me every step of the way as I began my career in historic preservation. Without her, I would not have realized my passion for historic preservation at the early age of sixteen.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who took the time to speak with me about my final project and who answered all of my questions.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This final project focuses on the city of Granite Falls, the city that sparked my passion for historic preservation. While attending the local high school, I lived in a historic octagon house, one of only five octagon houses built during the 1870s and 1880s in Minnesota. Living in that house was just the beginning of my preservation relationship with Granite Falls. After graduating from high school, I moved away to explore the rest of the country, but returned to save a historic building that was about to be demolished due to a flood mitigation project. The city had already demolished or moved eighteen other historic homes on the same street that paralleled the Minnesota River. The Weaver House, one of only two buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places in Granite Falls, was one month away from being demolished. I purchased the Weaver House as is, without viewing or inspecting the structure itself, after I had convinced the City of Granite Falls to give me a chance. The house was moved, restored, and once again used as a home. None of this would have been possible without the community of Granite Falls; numerous individuals in the community held the same vision as I did for the area and helped me make it happen. Nothing was more gratifying than working on that house and having passersby stop and take a photo, exclaim about the house's historic beauty, and best of all, share their memories of the home. I wanted the Weaver House to help prove that historic preservation is a vital factor in developing the quality of place that will attract people to Granite Falls. This city of under three thousand people continually surprises me with its ability to rally the community, its social capital, in supporting historic preservation projects.

Unfortunately, the cultural landscape of Granite Falls has continued to change due to flood mitigation since the rescue of the Weaver House in 2008. Four historic commercial buildings located in downtown Granite Falls have been demolished: the old City Hall building, the Copeland building, the State Farm building, and the Dave's Family Foods building. Nineteen of the most historic homes in the city are also missing from Minnesota Avenue on the east side of Granite Falls, which runs along the river. A total of six historic homes on Prentice Street, the main street that runs through downtown Granite Falls, will be either moved or demolished. As of December, 2011, two have been demolished, one moved, and the three others are awaiting word of their fate.

Currently, downtown visitors, from outside the city and the people who live in the city, walk or drive by eight large vacant commercial buildings located along Prentice Street. Of the thirty-nine commercial buildings, eight provide shopping and three house restaurants; most are service businesses that close at five o'clock every weekday and do not open on weekends. Visitors seeking to enjoy the scenic riverfront find that the downtown is a vast area of concrete and pavement with no activity; this is particularly true for the area behind the buildings, facing the river, the city's most valuable asset. A visitor cannot learn about the history of downtown by walking along its streets. There is no reason for anyone to visit the historic downtown after five o'clock in the evening or on weekends unless they want to pick up a pizza.

My final project focuses on historic preservation as a means of solving the problems of small cities like Granite Falls. The specific problems I will address in this paper are Granite Falls' declining population, its lack of diversity (age, sexuality,

ethnic, and cultural), flood damage and mitigation, the growing number of vacant buildings downtown, its poor use of historic assets, and the need for an improved downtown strategic plan. I will begin by presenting the context of Granite Falls in terms of its history, demographics, and economy. I will then provide a description of downtown Granite Falls in terms of architecture, businesses, events, attractions, and examine the interaction of different values such as community values, social values, economic values, and preservation values. Building on this, I will analyze the current downtown strategic plan. In particular, I will explore the application of Mason's value-centered preservation approach to the downtown planning process for Granite Falls. Based on my analysis, I will develop recommendations for strengthening Granite Falls' strategic downtown plan. The goal is to improve the current strategic plan by developing a more integrated economic strategy for downtown that will reflect the community's values, focusing on ways to revitalize the historic downtown and developing a strong sense of place.

## CHAPTER 2: CONTEXT OF GRANITE FALLS

This chapter will provide context on Granite Falls, offering a thorough understanding of and orientation to the city. A discussion of the setting, history, demographics, major employers, and property values for the area will provide a basic overview of the community and the issues that impact its downtown.

### **Setting of Granite Falls**

Granite Falls, located in the southwest region of Minnesota, is a city bridging Chippewa, Renville, and Yellow Medicine counties (Figure 2). It is about a two and a half drive west of Minneapolis and St. Paul on U.S. Route 212. U.S. Route 212 and Minnesota State Highways 23 and 67 are the main transportation routes that connect the city to the rest of the state but all bypass the historic downtown (Figure 1). State Highway 23 connects Duluth with Sioux Falls and Federal Highway 212 connects Minneapolis with Watertown, South Dakota. Downtown Granite Falls is located along the Minnesota River (Figure 3), which is ironically both the city's most valuable asset and its source of destruction. Beginning in Sici Hollow State Park in South Dakota, the Minnesota River travels over 330 miles through central Minnesota on its way to the Mississippi River at St. Paul. The city is surrounded by rolling prairie that gives way to the scenic Minnesota River Valley, creating breathtaking vistas in and around the community.



Figure 1. Location of Granite Falls in the state of Minnesota (*Source: Mapquest.com*).

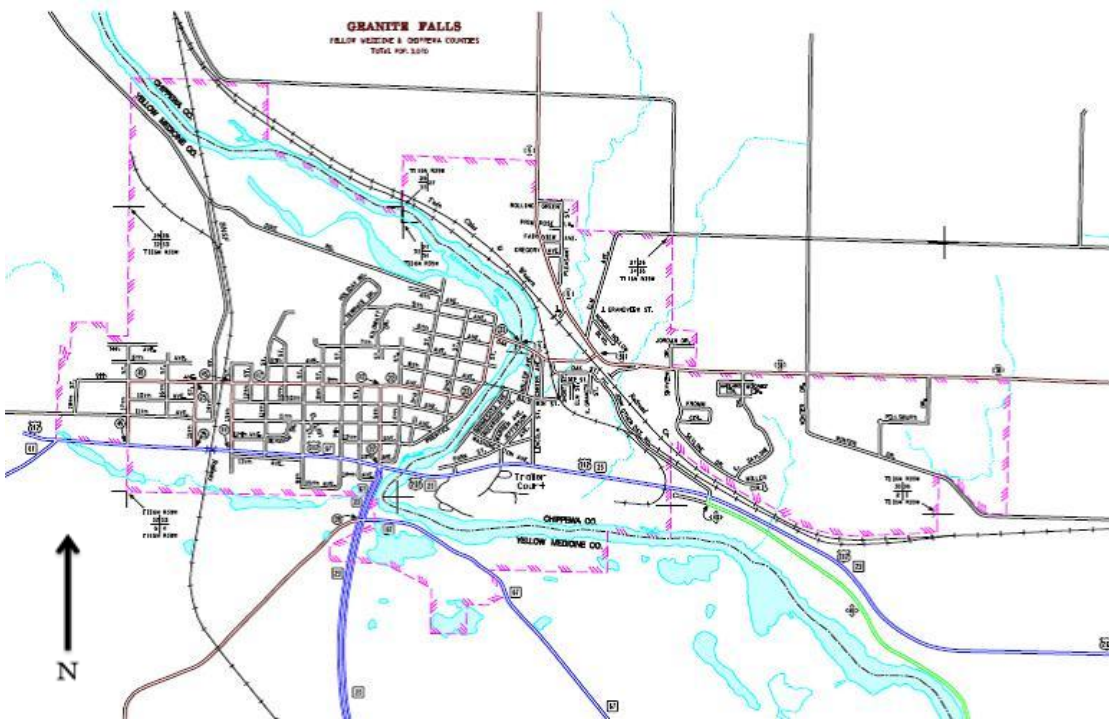


Figure 2. Map of the City of Granite Falls with the location of highways and the Minnesota River (*Source: Yellow Medicine County*).



Figure 3. Satellite map of Granite Falls (*Source*: Mapquest.com).

- Downtown Area
- Minnesota River
- U.S. Route 212 Commercial Corridor
- Yellow Medicine East High School (upper right) and Minnesota West Community College (lower left)

## Regional and Local History

Henry Hill of Loudon, New Hampshire, who helped establish the Granite Falls town site in the 1870s, was attracted to the area because of the river rapids that could harness water power, which was a rare resource in western Minnesota.<sup>1</sup> Many of the town's well-established families, such as the Holts, the Pillsburys, and the Morrills, also came from New Hampshire. When these families arrived, the area had only been recently settled by whites.

Prior to 1849, Yellow Medicine County was under federal jurisdiction and was officially known as a part of Wisconsin Territory. At this time the territory was mostly inhabited by Chippewa Indians to the north and Dakota Sioux Indians to the

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<sup>1</sup> Carl and Amy Narvestad, *Granite Falls 1879-1979*, 16.

south. In 1849, Yellow Medicine became part of Minnesota Territory and was a part of DahKotah and Waubashaw counties. According to the treaties of 1850, when tribes of the Sioux surrendered title to their lands in Minnesota, a tract of land ten miles wide on each side of the Minnesota River was reserved as Indian Territory.

Missionaries quickly moved in after the new Indian Territory was established. In 1852, Dr. Thomas Williamson, a medical missionary with the Presbyterian Church, established the Pejuhatazizi Mission. "Pejuhatazizi" is an Indian name meaning "Yellow Medicine", the name of the bitter root of the Moonseed plant used by the Indians for medicinal purposes. In 1854, Stephen R. Riggs, another Presbyterian, established the Hazel Creek Mission. These two missions were located about five miles south of Granite Falls in what is now Minnesota Falls Township. The government established the Upper Sioux Agency in 1854 in what is now Sioux Agency Township. During the Sioux Uprising of 1862, the Agency, missions, and several white settlements were destroyed and as a result of the uprising the Indian lands were declared forfeit.

Consequently, white settlement to the region began again in 1865. At this time Yellow Medicine was a part of Redwood County, MN. The early settlers were largely Scandinavian and German with smaller concentrations of English, Irish, Czech, and Bohemian.<sup>2</sup> Yellow Medicine County was created by a legislative act on March 6, 1871. A board of three commissioners met on January 1, 1872 in Yellow Medicine City, which became the first county seat. In the spring of 1874, Granite Falls became

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<sup>2</sup> Yellow Medicine County, "History of Yellow Medicine County, Minnesota," *About Our County Page*, ([http://co.ym.mn.gov/index.asp?Type=B\\_BASIC&SEC={30AE3EFE-D26D-4C59-9900-BCC5DA82AC32}](http://co.ym.mn.gov/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={30AE3EFE-D26D-4C59-9900-BCC5DA82AC32})), accessed October 24, 2011).



the county seat and the first courthouse, containing a court room and three small offices, was completed on the site of the present jail. In 1888, this building was replaced with a two-story stone structure on Ninth Avenue, which is the Historic Yellow Medicine County Courthouse that is still standing today. Twenty-one townships and ten communities were established in the new county between 1871 and 1890.



Figure 4. Downtown Granite Falls, late 19th century (*Source: Granite Falls Historical Society, used with permission*).

Henry Hill, one of the founders of Granite Falls, completed a dam and grist mill at the rapids in 1872 for water power.<sup>3</sup> The grist mill and adjoining saw mill became a center for activity in the town as new buildings were built from the

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<sup>3</sup> Carl and Amy Narvestad, 6.

harvesting of local timber.<sup>4</sup> The introduction of the railroad in 1878 brought new people into Granite Falls and expanded business (Figure 4).<sup>5</sup> The City of Granite Falls was incorporated in 1879, and East Granite was incorporated into the city in 1889.<sup>6</sup> A wagon bridge over the Minnesota River connected the east side of Granite Falls in Chippewa County and the west side of Granite Falls in Yellow Medicine County. Henry Hill went bankrupt after generously loaning out money to people and borrowing money in order to get the city started. Charles A. Pillsbury, the brother of John S. Pillsbury, governor of Minnesota (1876-1882), bought out Henry Hill's assets, which included a flour mill and much of the city lots in Granite Falls. Charles A. Pillsbury became the new owner of the Granite Falls' town site. In an 1885 *Granite Falls Tribune* article titled "Our City: As Seen by Others," Granite Falls is described as the finest location for a city in the northwest. The city had a magnificent water fall producing 30,000 horse power that ran three large flouring mills.<sup>7</sup> The article reported that the city of 1,200 residents has more side-walks than any city of its size in the United States.<sup>8</sup> In 1885, Granite Falls included two large school houses, five churches, two banks, seven general stores, one public hall and opera, one roller skating rink, and five carpenter shops. Granite Falls' location on the Minnesota River powered the flour mills and the saw mills.

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<sup>4</sup> Narvestad, *Granite Falls*, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Narvestad, *Granite Falls*, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Narvestad, *Granite Falls*, 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Granite Falls Tribune*, October 5, 1886.

<sup>8</sup> *Granite Falls Tribune*, October 5, 1886.



Figure 5. Downtown Granite Falls during the early twentieth century (*Source: The Granite Falls Historical Society, used with permission*).

The population continued to increase through the early 1900s as people moved to the area to start farming the rich agricultural land (Figure 5). In the 1920s, Memorial Park on the south side of Granite Falls was completed where area residents could swim in the river. The bath house and the shelter house in Memorial Park were built in the 1930s. In 1933, the city approved construction of a sewage plant due to the increase of population. The Yellow Medicine High School opened up to area students in 1930. After WWII, the city continued to grow with four new housing developments. However, as farming technology began to improve throughout the 1930s and 1940s, there were fewer farmers farming larger tracts of land. This trend was a significant factor in the decreasing rural population that began in the 1940s and 1950s in Yellow Medicine County, Chippewa County, and Renville County (see Appendix 1). While Granite Falls' population did not decline as early as did the rural

areas, the city did experience a decline in population beginning in the 1980s (Table 1).

In the 1960s, the city embarked on a decade of housing expansion, downtown improvements, and long-term planning. In 1966, a fire destroyed six buildings on the east side of downtown. As a result, a group called Granite Falls Improvement, Inc. was formed to build modern commercial buildings to fill in the vacant lots resulting from the fire. The group also built the Riverview Apartments for the elderly across the river on the east side of Granite Falls. Henry Hill Apartments, located next to the U.S. Post Office, was built as elderly housing in the 1970s. The public library was constructed in 1973 across the street from the Henry Hill Apartment building. In 1976, an Economic Development Administration position was added in the city government. During the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, Granite Falls had a busy and thriving downtown where residents would go to shop, run errands, attend community events, and take part in recreational activities. The decline of the downtown began in the late 1980s and early 1990s when big box departments stores began to open up in cities like Willmar and Montevideo. Business activity is still a problem for downtown Granite Falls today.

## **Demographics**

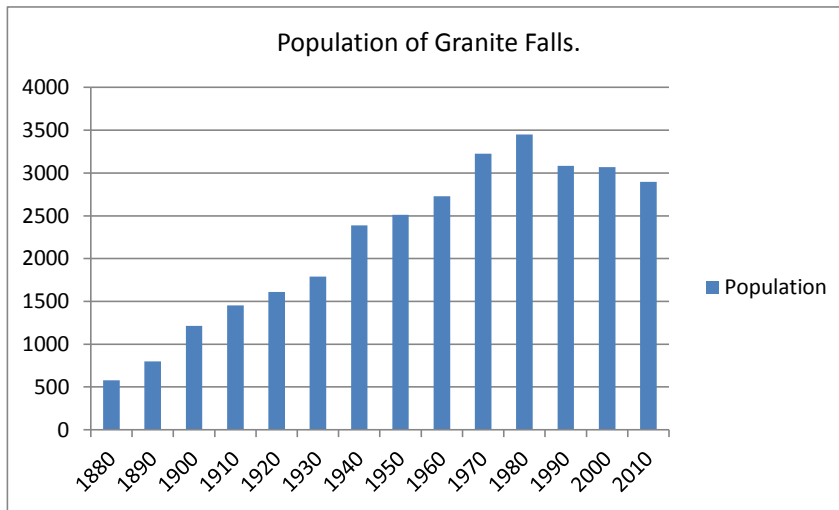
Minnesota's population has grown from around 3.8 million people in 1970 to around 5.3 million people in 2010. However, most of that population growth has occurred in large cities such as Minneapolis and St. Paul. The demographic analysis

that follows is based on the three counties surrounding the city of Granite Falls: Yellow Medicine County, Chippewa County, and Renville County.

***Population Trends:***

The population in Granite Falls has dropped from 3,070 people in 2000 to 2,897 people in 2010, a 5.6 percent decrease in population. Over the past thirty years, Granite Falls has witnessed a 16.7 percent decrease in population compared to its first one hundred years of population growth.

Table 1. Population of Granite Falls over 130 years (*Source: U.S. Census Bureau*).



A decreasing population trend is found in the three counties surrounding the city (Appendix 1). The decline in population began to occur in the 1940s, while Granite Falls’ decline occurring in the 1980s. This is largely a result of the development of advanced farming technology that began during the 1940s, which allowed fewer farmers to farm more land. People were forced to move into cities to

find work as the traditional rural economic sector of agriculture began to employ fewer people.

*Average Demographic Trends for Yellow Medicine County, Chippewa County, and Renville County:*

The population in the area is 91 percent white, 5 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 3 percent Native Indian (Appendix 2). The largest age group is males between the ages of 45 to 60 years old. The next largest age group is males between the ages of 15 and 20 years old (Appendix 3). The high school graduate level is slightly lower than the Minnesota average of 91.1 percent but slightly higher than the national average rate of 84.6 percent. The Bachelor's degree or higher educational level is about half that of the Minnesota average of 31.2 percent and the national average rate of 27.5 percent (Appendix 4).

***Economic Trends:***

The average income per person varies slightly in each county with an average per capita income of approximately \$23,000 (Appendix 7). The county averages are lower than the average Minnesota per capita income of \$29,431<sup>9</sup> and the national average per capita income of \$27,041.<sup>10</sup> The median household income for Minnesota in 2009 was \$55,621 and the national median was \$50,221, both are higher than the median income of \$46,000 in all three counties that surround Granite Falls (Appendix 6).

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<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, USA QuickFacts, last modified October 13, 2011, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/27000.html> (accessed November 23, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, USA QuickFacts, last modified October 13, 2011, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html> (accessed November 23, 2011).

The average unemployment rate in all three counties has increased between 2008 and 2010 from 5 percent to 7 percent as a result of the current economic recession (Appendix 9). The current national average unemployment rate as of November, 2011, is approximately 9 percent. These numbers clearly impact the revitalization of downtown businesses as residents are increasingly shopping at outlying big box stores that are able to offer low pricing and thus pull customers away from downtown.

The main transportation choice for individuals who work in Yellow Medicine County is driving alone in a car, truck or van. The mean travel time is approximately 18 minutes each way to and from work (Appendix 11).<sup>11</sup>

*Property Value:*

The average median value of owner-occupied housing units in Minnesota is \$207,000 and the national average is \$185,400, double the value of houses in all three counties surrounding Granite Falls (Appendix 8).

Property value of real estate on the highway 212 corridor is higher than the property values of downtown. For example, a commercial, income-producing property built in 1920 with 20 parking spaces on highway 212 is listed at \$250,000. The structure is a small home town cafe with all the equipment and inventories included. The average property value of a downtown commercial building is \$30,000.

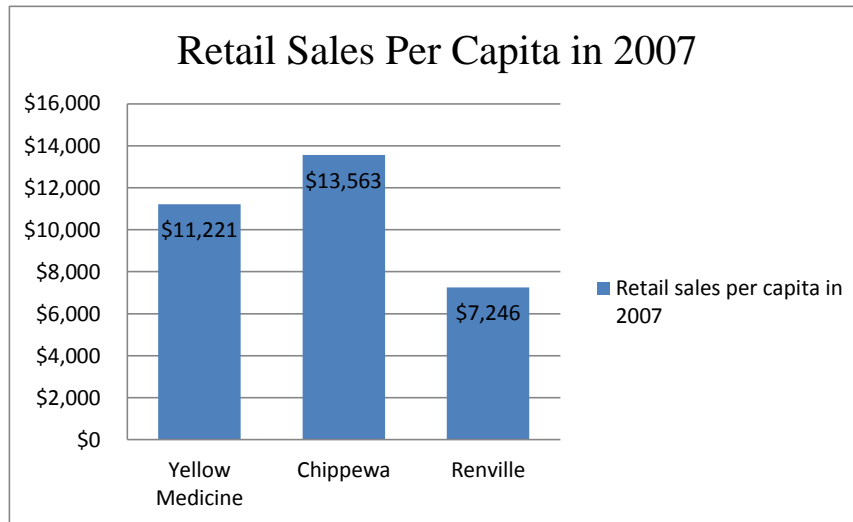
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<sup>11</sup> U. S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey*, 2010.

*Retail Sales:*

The average retail sales per capita for Minnesota in 2007 was \$13,751, while the national average was \$12,990. Yellow Medicine County has a slightly lower average, while Renville County’s retail sales per capita is just half of the Minnesota sales average. The sales per capita for Chippewa County is slightly higher than the national average and slightly lower than the Minnesota average (Table 2).

Table 2. Retail sales per capita in 2007 for the three counties surrounding Granite Falls (*Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Economic Census, 2007*).



The accommodation and food services sales for 2007 are available for two of the counties that surround Granite Falls, Chippewa County and Yellow Medicine County (Appendix 12). Chippewa County’s accommodation and food sales in 2007 were \$11,559. The accommodation and food sales in Yellow Medicine County were \$38, 276, more than three times higher than Chippewa County sales. This is most



likely the case because Prairie's Edge Casino and Resort is located in Yellow Medicine County.

***Major Employers:***

Major employers in Granite Falls include agricultural and engineering industry, healthcare industry, education sector, and the local government sector, both city and county. It is important to consider the type of employment available to people in the area in order to ensure a stable economic base.

***Agricultural and Engineering Industry:***

Fagen, Inc. is a major industrial employer in the area. Founded in 1974, the company built its first ethanol plant in 1988. Today, the firm is involved in the construction of wind farms and numerous green-energy projects throughout the United States. The company is headquartered in Granite Falls with a Southeast Regional Office in Greenville, South Carolina. Fagen Engineering LLC, a second company within Fagen Inc., was established in 1996. Their engineering experience covers biofuels including ethanol and biodiesel, agricultural processing, food processing, power, grain handling, cogeneration, water treatment, wind turbines, and many other heavy industrial projects.

Specialty Systems Inc. (SpecSys Inc.) was founded in 1997 and has grown to be a premiere engineering design firm. SpecSys Inc. specializes in design and development of machinery and mobile equipment for original equipment

manufacturer clients across North America and throughout the world.<sup>12</sup> The firm is comprised of 150 employees consisting of a mix of Engineers, Designers, Drafters, Purchasing, Production Planning, Administrative, Technical Publication, and Production Technicians.<sup>13</sup> The manufacturing facility is located in Granite Falls with its headquarters in nearby Montevideo.

The Granite Falls Industrial Park consists of 240 acres of land zoned specifically for industrial use. Incentives including JOBZ, Tax Increment Financing (TIF), local Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) loans, Regional Revolving Loan Funds and State Revolving Loan Funds are available for qualifying companies. Some of the companies located in the industrial park are MARR Valve Company in the dental industry, Ryer Plumbing and Heating, Kosen Feedlot, Par Piping and Fabrication, Inc.

*Healthcare Industry:*

The Granite Falls Municipal Hospital and Manor has three family medicine physicians, a nurse practitioner and a physician assistant. They serve the 25-bed Granite Falls Municipal Hospital and neighboring 57-bed Medicare certified skilled care Granite Falls Manor. Cardiologists, surgeons, dermatologists, ENT and other specialists provide outreach to Granite Falls. In addition, there are a number of nursing homes and assisted living homes that are located around downtown Granite Falls in residential neighborhoods.

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<sup>12</sup> Specialty Systems Inc., *Employment at SpecSys*, <http://www.specsys.org/employment.html> (accessed December 18, 2011)

<sup>13</sup> Specialty Systems Inc., *Our Firm*, <http://www.specsys.org/firm.html> (accessed December 18, 2011).

*Education:*

The Minnesota West Community and Technical College has a Granite Falls campus, which is one of their five southwestern campuses. The college offers an Associate Degree, Diploma, or Certificate in more than 60 disciplines including Renewable Energy and Computerized Manufacturing. According to their 2010-2012 Master Academic and Student Services Work Plan, based on the 2009 Fiscal Year data, 33 percent of Minnesota West students are between the ages of 18 and 21 years old, 50 percent are 22 and older, 15 percent are under 18 years old, and 2.4 percent unknown.<sup>14</sup> In the fall of 2008, full-time attendance was 1,939, and the head count in credit courses was around 3,000 students. Of those students, 53.7 percent attended college part time, 52.2 percent were women, 40.9 percent were aged 25 or over, and 7.7 percent were non-Caucasian.<sup>15</sup>

The Yellow Medicine East School District is located in Granite Falls, MN and includes 2 schools that serve 895 students in grades PK through 12. The Yellow Medicine East School District has 13 students for every full-time equivalent teacher, with the MN state average being 16 students per full-time equivalent teacher; the school district employs about 68 teachers and support staff.

***Local Community Organizations:***

There are several local organizations that have a presence in downtown Granite Falls and they are: Granite Falls Riverfront Revitalization (GFRR), Clean Up

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<sup>14</sup> Minnesota West Community and Technical College, "2010-2012 Master Academic and Student Services Work Plan," May 2010, 8.

<sup>15</sup> Minnesota West Community and Technical College, "2010-2012 Master Academic and Student Services Work Plan," May 2010, 8.

the River Environment (CURE), Yellow Medicine Historical Society, Granite Falls Historical Society, Granite Falls Area Community Foundation, Granite Falls American Legion, Lady Slipper Garden Club, and the Granite Falls Lions Club. There are eight churches in Granite Falls: Granite Falls Luthern Church, Rock Haven Church, St. Paul Luthern Church, Granite Falls United Church of Christ, Pejuhutazizi Presbyterian Indian Church, First Baptist Church, St. Andrew Catholic Church, and Assembly of God. These community organizations provide some of the social capital needed to implement changes and improvements to the historic downtown.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of Granite Falls in terms of what its position is in the western region of Minnesota. The demographic information for the area will aid in the development of my recommendations and strategies. The population trends in the Granite Falls area document three of my identified problems: declining population, lack of diversity, and vacant commercial buildings. In order to achieve my goal of implementing strategies that will create a more integrated economic engine for the downtown, the demographic trends in the area must be fully analysed and considered.

## CHAPTER 3: DOWNTOWN GRANITE FALLS

This chapter provides an overview of the current conditions in downtown Granite Falls as of December 2011. The Downtown Granite Falls chapter is divided into two sections, Historic Resources and Economic Resources. In Historic Resources, there are two subsections, one that provides an overview of the downtown commercial buildings and the other that lists the historic attractions in the area. The Economic Resources section is divided into four subsections: downtown businesses, current businesses incentives, businesses that pull people away from downtown, and downtown events.

### **Historic Resources**

The City of Granite Falls has a wide range of historic resources, many of which are located in the downtown area (Figure 6). The downtown includes a core of commercial buildings along Prentice Street from Oak Street to 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue that date from the 1870s to the 1970s with some newly constructed buildings. Nineteen historic homes on Minnesota Avenue on the east side of Granite Falls have been demolished or moved. Three historic homes on Prentice Street have been moved or demolished and another three await news of their fate.

#### ***Downtown Commercial Buildings:***

There are approximately forty seven commercial buildings located in downtown Granite Falls. The building stock is comprised of a variety of architecture styles, heights, and uses. They vary in type and date of construction. The Granite

Falls Bank Building, for example, is part of a Victorian version of a two-part commercial block (Figure 8).



Figure 6. Map of downtown Granite Falls (*Source: Mapquest.com*).

- Downtown perimeter
- The Falls
- Vacant commercial buildings
- Demolished commercial buildings as a result of flood mitigation and damage
- 19 historic homes on the east side of Granite Falls that have been demolished or moved

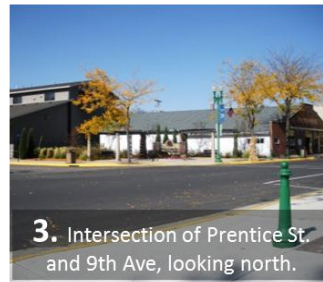
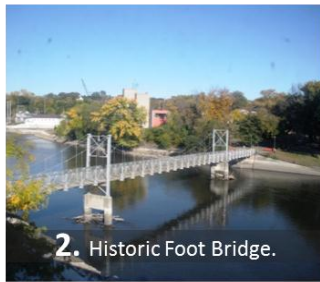


Figure 7. Photo map key for downtown Granite Falls.  
 Source: Sarina Otaibi.

A two-part commercial block is characterized by two to four story structures with a horizontal division into two distinct zones.<sup>16</sup> There are also one-story buildings with enframed window walls with a large glazed area for retail display. As a result of the flood damage and mitigation, four historic commercial buildings are missing from the downtown landscape.



Figure 8: Restored Granite Falls Bank Building on Prentice St., 1878  
(Source: Author).

The oldest residential neighborhood is on the south side of town, bounded by Prentice St., 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and Granite St. The houses in this area are typified by the Victorian style that date to the 1880s and the Arts and Crafts style that date to the

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*. American Association for State and Local History Book Series. 2000. 278-87.



1930s. In the residential neighborhoods located northwest of downtown, the homes range in style from Gothic Revival, Folk Victorian, Art and Crafts, and other vernacular styles (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Examples of residential housing styles surrounding the downtown area  
(*Source: Author*).

Fortunately, some of Granite Falls' vital community amenities are located within walking distance from downtown (**Error! Reference source not found.**). The U.S. Post Office is located downtown as well as the Granite Falls Library. The library has an average of forty visitors per day; senior citizens are the majority of library visitors. The community center, Yellow Medicine Courthouse and Yellow Medicine East High School (Figure 11), are located three blocks from the downtown. The

hospital and clinic is located two blocks outside the downtown business district. The newly built City Hall is now located where the Dave's Family Foods building used to stand.



1. Beginning of Downtown
2. End of Downtown
3. Andrew J. Volstead House Museum
4. Foot Bridge
5. Yellow Medicine East High School
6. Popcorn Stand
7. K.K. Berge Building
8. City Hall
9. U.S. Post Office
10. Municipal Hospital and Manor
11. Community Center
12. Water Falls
13. Rice Park
14. Yellow Medicine County Court House

Figure 10. Locations of noted places in the downtown area  
(Source: Mapquest.com).

1930



2011



1888



2011



Figure 11. Yellow Medicine East High School, 1930, on 9th Ave. across the street from the Yellow Medicine County Courthouse, 1888  
 (Source: Granite Falls Historical Society, used with permission, and Author).

***Historic Attractions:***

Historic community landmarks located in the downtown area that hold the potential of becoming visitor attractions include the Volstead House Museum, Popcorn Stand, Historic Foot Bridge, the K.K. Berge Building, and the Historic Railroad Depot once it is moved to the downtown area.

*The Volstead House Museum:*

The Volstead House Museum (see Figure 12) is on the National Register of Historic Places and is a National Historic Landmark. The city owns the house and property, and the Granite Falls Historical Society manages the museum, which is only open by appointment. From 1894 to 1930, this was the home of Andrew J. Volstead (1860-1947). Volstead served in the House of Representatives (1903-23), where he drafted the National Prohibition Enforcement Act in 1919, which became known as the Volstead Act. He was also responsible for the Capper–Volstead Act, which enabled the formation of cooperatives. The house was privately owned until 1974, when it was put on the National Register and named a National Historic Landmark. It was converted into a museum by the Minnesota Association of Co-operatives and given to the city of Granite Falls in 1979.



Figure 12. Volstead House Museum, Granite Falls, MN. View from 9<sup>th</sup> Ave

(Source: Mary Gillespie, used with permission).

*Popcorn Stand:*

Another interesting resource is the popcorn stand (Figure 13), which has been in operation since the 1920s. The current stand, built in 1969, was originally privately owned as an income producing business, but is currently run by the Granite Falls Kiwanis Club. It is open beginning on Memorial Day until Labor Day, from 7:00pm to 9:30pm. In addition to popcorn, a 1919 draft root beer is served, which represents the year prohibition was enacted. A common downtown activity during the summer months is to walk along the river and feed the ducks popcorn from the popcorn stand.



Figure 13. Left: Current popcorn stand located in downtown Granite Falls on the corner of 1<sup>st</sup> St. and 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. Right: The first popcorn stand built in the 1920s (Source: Granite Falls Historical Society, used with permission, and Author).

*Historic Foot Bridge:*

A valuable historic resource for downtown Granite Falls is the Historic Foot Bridge crossing the Minnesota River. It represents a design by John Roebling, a German-born American civil engineer known for his wire rope suspension bridge designs, in particular, the design of the Brooklyn Bridge. The current bridge was built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to connect east Granite Falls to downtown Granite Falls on the west side of the Minnesota River. It still provides that same function today and helps focus activity on the riverfront.

*K.K. Berge Building:*

The K.K. Berge Building (Figure 14), built in 1924, is a downtown commercial building that was saved from being demolished due to flood damage and subsequent mitigation. There have been a few businesses that occupied this building throughout the years, such as a tailor shop, a millinery shop, jewelry shop. Now it will house as the Chamber of Commerce Office and serve as a gateway into the historic downtown.



Figure 14. K.K. Berge Building, 1924 (*Source: Author*).

*Historic Railroad Depot:*

The Historic Railroad Depot (Figure 15), located on the west side of Granite Falls surrounded by residential housing, was built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century after the original depot was burned. While currently vacant, there are plans to move the depot to the riverfront in downtown Granite Falls to serve as the trailhead for a bike path in the area.



Figure 15. Historic Granite Falls Railroad Depot. Side View from 9<sup>th</sup> Ave. (left) and rear view (right) (*Source: Author*).

***Historic Attractions Located Outside of Downtown:***

There are several historic attractions located outside of downtown Granite Falls that can help attract visitors to the area, including the Yellow Medicine County Museum, Upper Sioux Agency State Park, Wood Lake Battlefield, Minnesota Machinery Museum, Swensson Farm Museum, and the National Scenic Byway.

***Yellow Medicine County Museum:***

The Yellow Medicine County Museum, built in 1967 along the Minnesota River, tells the stories of the geology and archaeology of the Minnesota Valley, Native American history, and pioneer life in the county. The museum maintains a fine historical reference and genealogical library available during museum hours and by appointment.



*Upper Sioux Agency State Park:*

Upper Sioux Agency State Park contains the site of the Upper Sioux or Yellow Medicine Agency. The park, established in 1963 to preserve and interpret the remains of the old Agency site, covers 1,280 acres and offers hiking, skiing, horseback riding, camping and canoe rides on the Minnesota River. Today, the Upper Sioux Agency State Park exists to preserve the agency site (Figure 16) and to provide recreational opportunities in the scenic Minnesota River Valley.<sup>17</sup>



Figure 16. 1860 Duplex, Upper Souix Agency State Park (*Source:* Author).

*Wood Lake Battlefield:*

Wood Lake Battlefield is one of two Minnesota sites that are recognized as Civil War sites, one of 384 in the nation. The Civil War Sites Advisory Commission (SWSAC) determined in 1993 that the Great Sioux Uprising of 1862-1864 was of national significance. This battlefield is considered nationally significant because of its association with the Civil War, western expansion, and the government's Indian

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<sup>17</sup> Upper Souix Agency State Park, *Home Page*, ([http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state\\_parks/upper\\_sioux\\_agency/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/upper_sioux_agency/index.html) accessed October 22, 2011)

policy.<sup>18</sup> The site has a fenced in space where visitors may view parts of the battlefield and to visit the battlefield memorial.

*Minnesota Machinery Museum:*

The Minnesota Machinery Museum features five large buildings (26,000 sq ft) on a six-acre site in nearby Hanley Falls. The museum opened in 1980 as an Agricultural and Transportation Museum with a mission to recall a century of stories about farm life. Implements, tools, tractors and gas engines in mint condition along with rural art are on display in a building that used to be the Hanley Falls High School. Self-guided tours or guided tours are available to visitors.<sup>19</sup>

*Swensson Farm Museum:*

The Swensson Farm Museum located between Montevideo and Granite Falls, includes 17 acres of farmland, a 22-room 1901 brick farm house, a recently restored 1880s timber-framed barn, a grist mill with hand cut millstones, and a family burial plot. This National Register of Historic Place site is owned by the Chippewa County Historical Society and opened on Sundays during the summer months.

*Minnesota National Scenic Byway:*

The Minnesota National Scenic Byway is a 287-mile long byway located along the Minnesota River. This scenic byway meanders right through downtown Granite Falls, and connects Granite Falls to several other river cities along the byway.

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<sup>18</sup> Wood Lake Battlefield Preservation Association, *About the Association*, <http://www.woodlakebattlefield.com/about-the-association.php> (accessed December 19, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Minnesota Machinery Museum, *Home Page*, <http://www.mnmachinerymuseum.com/> (accessed December 19, 2011).

In addition, the Upper Minnesota River Watershed was recently established as a National Blueway, or water trail, as a part of President Obama's American's Great Outdoors initiative to reconnect Americans to the outdoors. It is one of two projects in Minnesota to be highlighted in an upcoming final report that will include what the State governments and local stakeholders believe are among the best investments to support a healthy, active population, conserve wildlife and working lands, and create travel, tourism and outdoor recreation jobs across the country.<sup>20</sup> This area will be the focus of numerous partnerships to plan and implement programs to connect people to the river, Granite Falls' major asset.

## **Economic Resources**

### ***Downtown Businesses:***

The list of downtown retail and service businesses include: True Value Hardware Store, Granite Floral and Greenhouse, the Dollar Stop with an Antique shop on the second-floor, American Legion, Thrifty White Drug Store, two spas, a salon, the *Advocate Tribune* newspaper, a photographer, the Granite Falls Bank, Carl's Bakery, and Jimmy's Pizza. There are also a number of accounting firms, law firms, and insurance agents located on the first-floor of store fronts. The U.S. post office, City Hall, and public library are located downtown, which bring residents into town on daily errands.

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<sup>20</sup> Department of the Interior, *America's Great Outdoors Highlighted Projects*, <http://www.doi.gov/Americas-Great-Outdoors-Highlighted-Projects.cfm> (accessed December 18, 2011).



Figure 17. Four downtown businesses: Jimmy's Pizza and Thrifty White Drug Store (top); The Dollar Store and Antique Shop (bottom) (*Source*: Author).

***Financial Resources:***

The Granite Falls Revolving Loan Fund Account (RLF) was started in 1984. It is usually a secondary loan to another lender's financial participation in business's economic development loan package. It is administered by the Granite Falls

Economic Development Authority (EDA). According to the RLF Guidelines, the loan's target criteria are:<sup>21</sup>

- Existing or new manufacturing and/or closely related businesses which serve to assist and diversify the business and manufacturing base as well as strengthen the local economy.
- Where the intent is to locate a business or housing in appropriately zoned areas or in the Granite Falls Industrial Park.
- Existing or new commercial or service business which serve to assist, diversify and enhance the provision of retail services in the Granite Falls market area and is physically located in downtown Granite Falls or the Highway 212 business area.
- Existing or new business which enhances tourism in the area.
- Existing or new information technology business that will enhance skills serving local, state and national market areas with computer processing or closely related services.

An application package requires, at minimum, a letter of intent to apply for City economic development assistance, a business plan, a two-year financial plan, a history of the business and financial statements of owners. The RLF Guidelines state that the EDA will assist in preparation of business, marketing and financial plans, as appropriate.<sup>22</sup>

Prairieland EDC is a private non-profit corporation organized in 1983 to deliver the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) 504 program. Today, Prairieland EDC is a SBA 504 Premier Certified Lender. As a non-traditional lender for twenty-five years in the region, Prairieland EDC has created a diverse portfolio of more than 350 loans totaling about \$99 million. The organization is focused on:

- Providing on-site financial analysis and business counseling
- Structuring the business project and developing appropriate financing packages

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<sup>21</sup> Economic Development Authority, *Loan Fund Guidelines*, [http://granitefalls.com/EDA\\_Loan\\_Fund\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://granitefalls.com/EDA_Loan_Fund_Guidelines.pdf) (accessed December 19, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

- Assisting with the packaging, processing, closing and servicing of loan programs
- Coordinating the entire lending process
- Working in confidentiality with the private business
- Working directly for small business

### ***Downtown Events:***

The Western Fest Stampede Rodeo, an annual event that takes place in late June over a full weekend, attracts people from all over the state as well as people from other states. In addition to the rodeo that occurs about a mile outside of Granite Falls, there are numerous activities and events that different community organizations hold during Western Fest. Some of the downtown events include the Grand Parade, Street Dance, Miss Western Fest Pageant, Lions Club Beer Garden, and Ambulance Squad Burger and Brats.

The Meander Art Crawl is a free self-guided tour of thirty-three artist studios in the Upper Minnesota River Valley in western Minnesota. There is a wide range of work: from fine art to folk art that can be found along the river near Ortonville, Appleton, Madison, Milan, Dawson, Montevideo and Granite Falls. This year, Granite Falls held the first annual kick-off event for the Meander. It was one of the downtown's most successful events, keeping businesses open late and creating economic activity.

### ***Businesses That Pull People Away From Downtown:***

The businesses located along Highway 212 pull customers away from downtown. These businesses include the only grocery store in the city, gas stations, a laundry mat, three fast food restaurant chains, and three sit-down restaurants. A Motel

6, which is the only accommodation for visitors other than the casino hotel, is located on Highway 212.

Big box stores, such as Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Target, located in neighboring cities also pull people away from downtown and other city businesses such as the local grocery store. Residents of Granite Falls will typically travel to cities like Montevideo, Marshall, and Willmar to do their weekly shopping.

The Prairie's Edge Casino Resort, another business that pulls people away from downtown, is located about four miles south of the center of Granite Falls on Highway 23 (see Figure 18). The casino is owned and operated by the Upper Sioux Community. The casino resort houses a convenience store, business center, fitness center, Pezhutazizi gift shop, pool area, and an RV park. The hotel has over 160 rooms and suites. The Events and Convention Center provides 20,000 square feet of space for meetings or special events such as wedding receptions, trade shows, and reunions. The Events and Convention Center also hosts big name entertainment with the 1,000 plus concert seating. There are two restaurants; the Firefly Bar & Grille and the Meadows Buffet and for something quick, the Wotapi Deli.<sup>23</sup> Even though the casino pulls people away from downtown, it does attract visitors from all over Minnesota and provides employment for residents who live in the area.

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<sup>23</sup> Prairie's Edge Casino Resort, *Home Page*, <http://www.prairiesedgecasino.com/> (accessed November 22, 2011).



Figure 18. Location of Prairie's Edge Casino Resort  
(Source: Google Maps).

## Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the historic and economic resources that are located in and around downtown Granite Falls, which suggest good potential for preservation-based rehabilitation strategy. The downtown historic resources that were highlighted in this chapter include the Volstead House Museum, Popcorn Stand, Historic Foot Bridge, the K.K. Berge Building, and the Historic Railroad Depot. In addition, this chapter provided some of the threats to downtown businesses and historic attractions, such as the big box stores in neighboring cities, the casino outside of city limits, and bar and restaurants that are located along highway 212. However, these threats may easily be turned into opportunities for downtown if partnerships are created.



## CHAPTER 4: DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN

This chapter provides a description and analysis of the current strategic plan for downtown. This chapter will address the need to improve the current downtown plan in order to fully take advantage of the community's historic and economic resources.

### **Current Strategic Plan for Downtown**

The current strategic plan, titled “Granite Falls Strategic Plan,” was facilitated by the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Association and initiated by the Granite Falls Economic Development Authority. The plan's purpose was to bring different organizations in the Granite Falls area together to share ideas and resources for improving the downtown. It encompasses twenty strategies that were identified by community members from different organizations in Granite Falls. The twenty strategies in order of prioritization are:

1. Rentals for canoes, paddleboats, kayaks, elec. children's boats
2. Improve bicycle path
3. Chamber office in K.K. Berge building/volunteer coffee shop
4. Art in the Park
5. Provide live music/theater events downtown
6. Improve pedestrian bridge
7. Improve stone shelter, new dock at Memorial Park
8. Community garden plots downtown
9. Depot (Trailhead)
10. River walks
11. Historical information signs
12. Park improvements – overall
13. Bike racks downtown
14. Dog park
15. Fire hall
16. Host USC events within Granite Falls
17. Band shell in park

18. MN Tech College concerts
19. Meeting place/information sharing/meeting for champions
20. Improve connectivity between pedestrian bridge, walking path, Hwy. access

These projects were prioritized during two meetings, an initial meeting of eighteen attendees on March 2, 2011 and a follow-up meeting with twenty-nine attendees on March 21, 2011. The plan focused on the top ten projects prioritized by those who attended the two meetings. Each of the projects is divided in to four categories: Steps in the project to (what will be done?), who is responsible for the project, project timeline, and possible resources to complete the project.

Nicole Zempel, the Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce and one of the project coordinators for this plan, explained that the purpose of the strategic plan was to bring the different organizations in the Granite Falls area together to share ideas and resources for downtown. Local organizations had been working on various projects and goals over the years, but without much coordination.<sup>24</sup>

What we wanted out of this (the strategic plan) was to take all these ideas floating around, many from previous planning ventures that never panned out, and prioritize them. This plan was actually more so a process we went through for this reason, to see where current interests were in various projects and then to begin to organize a plan of attack. Also, to see what resources were available.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Nicole Zempel, e-mail message to author, November 11, 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Nicole Zempel, e-mail message to author, November 11, 2011.

## **Analysis of the Current Downtown Strategic Plan**

The Granite Falls Strategic Plan is missing a lot of information and details. The current plan does not provide the reasoning behind each project and/or strategy or what the effects will be as a result of each project. When resources are limited as in the current economic downturn, projects need to be prioritized based on those that will provide the largest impact with the least amount of resources. By analyzing projects on a cost/benefit basis, they are likely to garner more support and will be more likely to be completed. The value of each project in the current plan is not clear. For example, what is the strategic reason that rental for canoes, paddleboats, kayaks, and electric children's boats is listed as priority one? Why is improving the bicycle path priority two?

Nicole Zempel's opinion of the plan is "... that it does reflect quite accurately the desires and needs within this community. Further, it provides a listing of resources, and it is organized. All that we need is there... now people just need to tackle the projects."<sup>26</sup> While the plan is a good start, there are several questions left unanswered:

- What is the demand for such a project?
- Who is the project for?
- How will the community benefit from this project?
- What is the project's effect on the local economy?
- What types of values are involved in this project?

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<sup>26</sup> Nicole Zempel, e-mail message to author, November 11, 2011.

- How will this project contribute to creating an integrated economic engine for downtown?

A good start to finding the answers to these questions is to utilize a values-centered preservation approach. Randall Mason, the author of “Theoretical and Practical Arguments for Values-Centered Preservation,” defines “values” as the simple insight that any particular thing or place has a number of different values in the sense of characteristics.<sup>27</sup> Potential values for downtown Granite Falls include historic values, economic values, cultural values, artistic values, social values, educational values, environmental values, recreational values, and political values. Mason describes places as being complex and contradictory just as the efforts it takes to preserve and manage these places. The identification of values within Granite Falls is the first step in the values-centered approach to the planning process. As a result, each project that is laid out in the strategic plan should clearly identify the values that are held by each project’s stakeholders.

The value-center preservation approach may easily be applied to the current strategic plan. The potential and likely values for each of the top ten projects are (not in order by value):

1. Rentals for canoes, paddleboats, kayaks, elec. children’s boats  
Values: Economic, environmental, recreational, and social.
2. Improve bicycle path  
Values: Recreational, social, and environmental.
3. Chamber office in K.K. Berge building/volunteer coffee shop

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<sup>27</sup>Randall Mason, “Theoretical and Practical Arguments for Values-Centered Preservation,” 22

Values: Political, artistic, social, historic, and economic.

4. Art in the Park

Values: Artistic, social, economic, cultural, and recreational.

5. Provide live music/theater events downtown

Values: Recreational, economic, social, artistic, and cultural.

6. Improve pedestrian bridge

Values: Historic, economic, political, and recreational.

7. Improve stone shelter, new dock at Memorial Park

Values: Environmental, recreational, and economic.

8. Community garden plots downtown

Values: Recreational and social.

9. Depot (Trailhead)

Values: Political, economic, historic, and recreational.

10. River walks

Values: Educational, social, and economic.

The values of each of these projects represents all of the segments in a community that may come together to support them and carry them to completion. Thus, each value potentially represents a partnership opportunity. As explained by Mason, Values-Center Preservation Planning offers an opportunity to fine tune the current strategic plan. This approach, he notes,

1. Enables the holistic understanding of sites;
2. Leads to an acknowledgement and inclusion of a greater range of stakeholders by accounting for all the values of a site (downtown);

3. Is based on comprehensive knowledge about a site's (downtown) values, which is essential to supporting the long-term stewardship of a historic site (downtown); and

4. Reveals serious gaps in preservation professionals' knowledge about the historic environment and how the historic environment is used. This gap in knowledge can become an opportunity for continued research, learning and professional development, which would ultimately benefit the field of preservation.<sup>28</sup>

This values centered approach may be applied to planning for the preservation of downtown buildings and historic resources and the strategic plan may be strengthened. For example, a high environmental/natural values and historic/cultural values associated with projects tied to the river could benefit from a cultural landscape approach that brings these often competing resource types in to a cooperative approach in terms of use and interpretation.

## **Summary**

The strategies of values-centered preservation provide a whole understanding of what a project means to the community. It offers the tools to deal with the different values and their conflicts in a balanced and political manner. The current strategic plan is identified as a problem for downtown Granite Falls because it does not provide strategies to implement each project, the impact of each project on the community, and the value and reasoning for each project is not identified. The plan needs to better represent the identity of Granite Falls while serving as a guide towards developing downtown as an integrated economic engine.

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<sup>28</sup> Mason, *Values-centered Preservation*, 35

## CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

My recommendations to solve the problems that I have identified in the introduction of this report will include the six strategies of heritage-based rural development as defined by James Lindberg, the director of preservation initiatives in the Mountains/Plains Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The recommendations are divided into three categories: Create Diversity, Develop Downtown, and Engage Heritage Tourism. Each recommendation will draw on the area's history, demographics, and economics, as well as the current downtown Granite Falls' strategic plan and the values-centered preservation approach; additional ideas come from the creative class economic concept by economist Richard Florida<sup>29</sup> and the third place concept expounded by Ray Oldenburg in *The Great Good Place*. These concepts, along with my personal knowledge of Granite Falls and personal interviews, will provide a guide to creating an integrated economic plan for downtown Granite Falls and to improving the current strategic plan.

### ***Heritage-Based Rural Development:***

James Lindberg, the author of "Heritage-Based Rural Development," defines heritage-based rural development as building sustainable communities and strengthening regional economies through the conservation, use, and promotion of historic and cultural assets.<sup>30</sup> These assets include all of Granite Falls' historic and

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<sup>29</sup> Randall Mason, "Theoretical and Practical Arguments for Values-Centered Preservation," *The Journal of Heritage Stewardship*. 2006.

<sup>30</sup> James Lindberg, "Heritage-Based Rural Development," *Forum Journal*, 10.

economic resources that were noted in the Downtown Granite Falls Chapter. The six principles of heritage-based rural development are:

1. Use a regional approach
2. Protect historic authenticity
3. Nurture grassroots involvement and leadership
4. Forge strong partnerships
5. Be flexible
6. Make a long-term commitment

The six strategies for implementing the six principles are:

1. Educate about the value of rural heritage
2. Conserve heritage assets
3. Encourage local entrepreneurship and the use of historic structures
4. Develop heritage tourism potential
5. Brand and market your regional identity
6. Advocate for public policies that support heritage-based rural development

Integrating the heritage-based rural development principals and applying its strategic within each recommendation will provide more focused and successful projects.

## **Create Diversity**

Granite Falls needs to attract more people from the creative class to the town to help address the decline in population, lack in diversity, and use of vacant buildings. However, there are numerous people that are classified as belonging to the creative class who already reside in the Granite Falls area. This provides the foundation to attract newcomers, both as visitors and as residents. Creative people tend to think of creative solutions to problems, including the problems I have identified in this report. Florida divides the creative class in to two major sub-components: A Super-Creative Core and creative professionals.<sup>31</sup> The *Super-Creative Core* include individuals who are in computer and mathematical

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<sup>31</sup> Florida, *Creative Class*, 328.



occupations; architecture and engineering occupations; life, physical and social science occupations; education, training, and library occupations; arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations.<sup>32</sup> *Creative professionals* are individuals in management occupations; business and financial operations occupations; legal occupations; healthcare practitioners and technical occupations; high-end sales and sales management.<sup>33</sup> According to Florida's interviews, focus groups and statistical surveys, the creative class is attracted to three values:

- **Individuality:** creative workers have strong preference for individuality, self-statement; don not want to conform to organizational directives; resist traditional group-oriented norms; endeavor to create individualistic identities (which can entail a mixing of multiple identities).<sup>34</sup>
- **Meritocracy:** merit, hard work, challenge and stimulation in work are strongly valued; propensity for goal-setting and achievement; no longer define themselves mainly by financial status symbols – instead want to move up on the basis of their abilities and effort; are motivated by respect of peers; have faith that virtue will be rewarded; value self-determination; mistrust rigid caste systems.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Florida, *Creative Class*, 328.

<sup>33</sup> Florida, *Creative Class*, 328.

<sup>34</sup> Florida, *Creative Class*, 77-80.

<sup>35</sup> Florida, *Creative Class*, 77-80.

- **Diversity and openness:** diversity in *all* its manifestations is valued – seeking environment open to differences (from ethnic diversity to sexual orientation to acceptance of odd personal habits and styles of dress); value (geographic) mobility.<sup>36</sup>

For this recommendation, I will focus on increasing the diversity and openness value in Granite Falls because it will attract people who already possess the other two values and/or allow others to develop or find the other two values within themselves in a diverse and open environment.

People have the desire to live in small towns and rural areas. The Pew Research Center conducted a survey that asked respondents to identify what kind of place they would most like to live in: a city, suburb, small town, or rural area. Small towns and rural areas were the top choice of more than 50 percent of the respondents, but only 17 percent of the nation’s population actually lives in small towns and rural areas.<sup>37</sup> This survey provides a positive outlook for small city development and tourism. Even if people do not end up moving to small towns and rural areas, they may visit regularly.

***Connect With The Local Community College:***

According to Linda Degriseselles, dean of the Minnesota West Community and Technical College’s Granite Falls’ campus, “students are always looking for activities off campus as well as taking advantage of activities on campus (Student Senate,

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<sup>36</sup> Florida, *Creative Class*, 77-80.

<sup>37</sup> James Lindberg, “Heritage-Based Rural Development,” *Forum Journal*. Winter 2010.

Business Professionals of America, Liberal Arts Club, etc.).”<sup>38</sup> Historic downtowns benefit greatly from college students and young people because they can provide both a workforce and potential customer base.

Currently, the Granite Falls campus has approximately 450 students, majority of whom are from a 66-mile radius around Granite Falls. The average age of students is a reflection of college students across Minnesota: 26 years of age. Many of these students rent apartments in Granite Falls, and a good number commute from surrounding communities.<sup>39</sup>

The Granite Falls campus has already developed goals to connect with the community better. Some of the goals are:

- To build bridges with diverse members of community and surrounding communities such as the Upper and Lower Sioux Nation, Spanish Speaking, and additional Diverse Populations
- Possibly “piggy-back” Community Meetings with local community events as a way of reaching more people.<sup>40</sup>
- Support regional vitality by contributing artistic, cultural and civic assets that attract employees and other residents seeking a high quality of life.

The college has scheduled Community Outreach Meetings in order to reach local diverse communities. For example, their current progress with the Upper Sioux community includes:

- Networking with the Arts Council for resident artists to display art work in a continual display/show. For example, the college has had a display of

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<sup>38</sup> Linda Degriselles, e-mail message to author, November 18, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Linda Degriselles, e-mail message to author, November 21, 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Minnesota West Community and Technical College, , *2010-2012 Master Academic and Student Services Work Plan*, May 2010, 12.

photographic work done by a member of the Upper Sioux permission given by local Tribal Council.<sup>41</sup>

- Asked the Upper Sioux Tribal Council for input in educating the Granite Falls Campus on customs of the Dakota people. The Tribal Council has approved and appointed two members to meet with our staff and faculty.<sup>42</sup>

***Integrate Cultural Heritage:***

The integration of cultural heritage into the historic interpretation of downtown will add to the city's diversity and boarder approach. There is a 3 percent Native Indian population and a 5 percent Hispanic or Latino population that lives in the community. In addition, cultural interpretation will attract diverse visitors and attract members of the creative class.

***Diversify City Council:***

According the Charter of the City of Granite Falls, all powers of the city are vested in the city council.<sup>43</sup> Currently, the six city council members are 40 years old or older white males, including the mayor. Many of the members have served on the council for many years. Introducing a different demographic, such as a female or younger individual, into the city council will add to the diversification of the city itself to better represent values that are present but not heard. The terms of the current council members will expire in 2012. This is an opportunity for Granite Falls to take a step towards diversity by introducing a female or young individual in to the city council to better represent the community.

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<sup>41</sup> Minnesota West Community and Technical College, *2010-2012 Master Academic and Student Services Work Plan*, May 2010, 15

<sup>42</sup> Minnesota West Community and Technical College, *2010-2012 Master Academic and Student Services Work Plan*, May 2010, 15

<sup>43</sup> Charter Commission, *Charter of the City of Granite Falls, Minnesota*, 1987, 5.

## Develop Downtown

The problems this recommendation will address are the decline in population, the vacant buildings, and the underutilization of historic resources. Within this recommendation, I will provide implementation strategies for creating a Storefront Rehabilitation Program and a Small Business Development Program, marketing Prentice Street, and developing the riverfront.

Several cities in the southwest region of Minnesota have focused efforts on their downtowns and experienced an experience in population. For example, while the neighboring city of Montevideo had a decrease in population of 8.7 percent from 1980 to 2000, population has increased in the last ten years by 0.7 percent. The city of Milan has grown in the last ten years from a population of 326 people in 2000 to 369 people in 2010, which is an 11.7 percent increase in population for this rural community that has utilized historic preservation as an economic tool. Likewise, Marshall has consistently grown over the past 130 years and has increased its population at a rate of 33.9 percent over the past 30 years. It would be noted that factors such as business growth, educational facilities, housing, etc. play a varying role in attracting people to the different communities in southwest Minnesota.

In his book, *The Creative Class*, Richard Florida makes the claim that people no longer base their decision on jobs when making the decision of where to live. They now look at the quality of life that is available to them. For example, “the university's Crookston campus (University of Minnesota) compiled interviews with 53 people who migrated to rural Minnesota towns and found the following top reasons, among

others, for their move: a simpler pace of life, less congestion, and good schools.”<sup>44</sup>

Historic preservation can play a vital role in the quality of life for residents of a community. Many people are looking for a sense of place, which is often a result of thoughtful historic preservation. Attracting people to live in rural regions, such as Western Minnesota, brings economic vitality to downtown. Florida’s creative class concept will provide a method for attracting people from the creative class to move to the area, even if it is for a short time-period, or for a visit. The third place concept by Oldenburg will create a vision of what type of businesses need to exist in downtown buildings, businesses and spaces that will serve and connect current residents with newcomers.

***Storefront Rehabilitation Program:***

According to the National Park Service, the careful rehabilitation of storefronts on Main Street will aid in the rejuvenation of businesses as well as enhance the architectural character of downtown.<sup>45</sup> Educating downtown building owners of the aesthetic and economic value of restoring their storefronts will be the first step to revitalizing the historic downtown. In addition, this is an important step to be done in order to attract visitors. Some preservation and restoration of downtown buildings have already been completed, and these examples can be used as guides for other building owners (Figure 19).

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<sup>44</sup> Gregg Aamot, Kids may leave, but rural Minnesota benefits from ‘brain gain’ among 30- and 40-somethings,” *MinnPost.com*, September 27, 2011.

<sup>45</sup> Ward Jandl H., “Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts,” *Preservation Brief 11*, <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief11.htm> (accessed November 21, 2011).



Figure 19. Twin downtown commercial buildings, one is restored, the other not  
(Source: Mary Gillespie, used with permission).

***Small Business Development Program:***

Downtown Granite Falls does not have a Small Business Development Program that caters to the needs and wants of current business owners. This is an opportunity to develop the vision that the downtown is striving for (by nurturing business development that will add to the identity of downtown).

***Current Resources for Small Businesses are:***

- The Southwest Region Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at the Southwest Minnesota State University, [www.smsu.edu/sbdc](http://www.smsu.edu/sbdc) .
- The Rural Micro Entrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP). The purpose of the RMAP program is to support the development and ongoing success of rural microentrepreneurs and microenterprises. Direct loans and grants are made to selected Microenterprise Development Organizations (MDOs). The organizations that are eligible to become an MDO are non-profit entities, Indian tribes, and public institutions of higher education that, for the benefit of rural micro entrepreneurs and microenterprises, provides training and technical assistance, makes microloans or facilitates

access to capital or another related service, and/or has demonstrated record of delivering, or an effective plan to develop a program to deliver such services.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to current resources for small businesses, specific training and educational programs to aid Granite Falls' downtown businesses owners is needed. For example, providing documents and brochures to attract new small businesses to fill vacant storefronts will encourage economic growth. Signage with the type of businesses located downtown need to be placed on highway 212 to direct drive-through visitors. Business owners need to identify and penetrate market segments that are capable of generating sales revenues to support their venture.

*Create Third Places:*

Ray Oldenburg, the author of *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community*, argues that "third places" are where people can gather without thinking of work and home issues to hang out with good company and take part in lively conversation. Oldenburg also argues that third places are "the heart of a community's social vitality and the grassroots of democracy."<sup>47</sup> A Main Street or small downtown in its entirety can be viewed as a third place according to Oldenburg. The third place characteristics defined by Oldenburg are: neutral ground, leveler, conversation as the main activity, accessibility and accommodation, regulars, low profile, playful mood, and be a home away from home.<sup>48</sup> However, not all eight of the third place characteristics would apply to a Main Street, such as the low profile, leveler, and neutral ground

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<sup>46</sup> Rural Micro entrepreneur Assistance Program, [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP\\_RMAP.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP_RMAP.html) (accessed November 23, 2011).

<sup>47</sup> Oldenburg, *Third Places*, 20-42.

<sup>48</sup> Oldenburg, *Third Places*, 20-42.



characteristics. A main street cannot be low profile for it to remain alive, it needs a lot of visibility. It is hard for a main street to be a leveler and neutral ground since there are a variety of people who represent different classes within the community that work and patron downtown. But how can a Main Street today become a third place for community members?

Downtown Granite Falls already has the potential of becoming a third place for the community. For example, the feeding-the-ducks with popcorn from the downtown popcorn stand located next to the Minnesota River is an activity that brings people together where conversation takes place. Another example is Carl's Bakery where residents stop by for a coffee and conversation. Local landmarks on Prentice Street, such as the popcorn stand, help to develop Main Street as a third place for people in the community. However, there is more potential within downtown Granite Falls' landscape to create places where people are able to gather on a daily basis to have conversation.

***Marketing Prentice Street:***

This strategy will brand the downtown of Granite Falls by naming the historic downtown "Prentice Street." Prentice Street may develop into a third place for community members through the businesses and public spaces located downtown. Third places develop in the form of a local bakery where neighbors bump in to each other and convince one another to try a new baked product that the other one has recommended; a local coffee shop where students meet with each other to discuss an upcoming community project; a local pizza joint where a meeting is held for an

organization to plan the next fundraiser; or a local bar where a few of the downtown business owners think of a great event that will generate some foot traffic after speaking with a couple of the regulars.

***Develop the Riverfront:***

This is a project listed as priority number ten in the Granite Falls Strategic Plan titled as “River Walks.” The activities to take place in this space according to the strategic plan are:<sup>49</sup>

- Link River Walk with trail
- Wall murals and art work
- Alley way planters, benches, tables, and bike racks
- Educational signage on natural and historic resources

A great example from a city that is utilizing their riverfront is from Northfield, MN. Their Riverwalk Market Fair is a success for their community each summer, and it is where local artist entrepreneurs can sell their products to visitors, occur every Saturday during the summer months (**Error! Reference source not found.**)<sup>50</sup>

The Minnesota River is the downtown’s main asset. From the Riverfront, a downtown visitor may view the Historic Foot Bridge, the dam, parks, and wildlife. Currently, the riverfront is a mass of concrete and pavement with no activity in the area (Figure 20).

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<sup>49</sup> Granite Falls Strategic Plan

<sup>50</sup> Riverwalk Market Fair, *Home Page*, <http://www.riverwalkmarketfair.org/> (accessed December 12, 2011).



Figure 20. View of the Riverfront, facing south (*Source:* Author).

### **Engaging Heritage Tourism**

Heritage tourism is a popular in cities all over the country because it works. It clearly defines a city's identity within a region to its visitors and to members of the community. This recommendation will address the underutilization of historic resources, flood damage and mitigation, lack in diversity, and vacant buildings. It will include documenting and interpreting historic downtown commercial buildings and historic residential neighborhoods. The cultural landscape in and around Granite Falls should be documented and interpreted in a way that demonstrates the powerful link of natural resources and the town's cultural heritage .

### ***Conduct a Survey of Historic Resources:***

A reconnaissance survey of the historic resources in the downtown area should be conducted in the Granite Falls area. A windshield survey would be an efficient first step in the identification and initial description of historic districts made up of buildings, structures, and landscapes, and in the identification of major landscape features such as parks, roadways, and areas where distinctive land use patterns have shaped the surface of the land.<sup>51</sup> A windshield survey is done by surveyors driving the streets or walking on foot to identify and record the characteristics of buildings, landscapes, and structures. A subsequent comprehensive survey of downtown historic resources would provide a more detailed understanding that would include documenting each historic resource through photo and written documentation.

### ***Cultural Landscape Preservation:***

Granite Falls is surrounded by varying types of landscapes so documenting its cultural landscape would contribute to the city's heritage tourism. According to the National Park Service, a cultural landscape is defined as "a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values."<sup>52</sup> There are four general types of cultural landscapes: historic sites, historic designed landscapes, historic vernacular landscapes, and ethnographic

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<sup>51</sup> National Park Service, "Conducting Field Survey," on *Chapter II: Conducting the Survey* Page, <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb24/chapter2.htm> (accessed November 22, 2011).

<sup>52</sup> Charles A. Birnbaum, "Protecting Cultural Landscapes Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes," *Preservation Brief 36*, <http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief36.htm> (accessed November 23, 2011).

landscapes. Historic landscapes include residential gardens and community parks, scenic highways, rural communities, institutional grounds, cemeteries, battlefields and zoological gardens. Examples of historic landscapes in Granite Falls are Memorial Park, Granite Falls City Cemetery, Upper Souix Agency State Park, and the Gnesis Outcrop. Outdoor recreation is a great way for visitors to see the cultural landscape of the Minnesota River Valley surrounding Granite Falls.

***Market Historic Resources:***

There are just 2,400 National Historic Landmarks in the entire United States and the small city of Granite Falls has one, the Andrew J. Volstead House Museum, as a part of their downtown.<sup>53</sup> As defined by the National Park Service, National Historic Landmarks “are nationally significant historic places designated by the Secretary of the Interior because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States.”<sup>54</sup> The City of Granite Falls needs to develop a preservation plan, stabilize, and maintain the Volstead House. It is the only National Historic Landmark in this region of Minnesota, providing Granite Falls with an exclusive asset to attract visitors. Currently, it is only open by appointment and is not in use most days of the year. The rich history associated with this house gives the site a great opportunity to become a successful historic house museum. The erection of a sign on Hwy. 212 is needed for better exposure.

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<sup>53</sup> National Park Service, “Preservation,” February 1, 2011, <http://www.nps.gov/history/preservation.htm> (accessed November 22, 2011).

<sup>54</sup> National Park Service, “National Historic Landmarks Program,” December 13, 2011, <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nhl/> (accessed November 22, 2011).

### ***Downtown History Interpretation:***

This project will fulfill the heritage-based rural development strategy of development the heritage tourism potential of downtown. The interpretation of Granite Falls' history in the form of a walking tour should be developed for visitors to take on their own. A driving tour should also be implemented for visitors to be able to learn about the history in other parts of the city and right outside the city limits. Since there are many different stories to tell about in Granite Falls, I would suggest offering visitors a variety of themed tours based on different histories from the area. Some of the themes may include: Prohibition, Life during WWII, Agricultural History, Downtown Business History, Native American History, Civil War History, Modern History, etc. The variety of themes will offer visitors and residents a different look at each of Granite Falls historic resources during each tour and keep people coming back to do the other themes. Individuals will be able to choose a tour that will interest them the most. Themed tours will provide an opportunity for the community to share Granite Falls' multiple layers of history and values.

### **Conclusion**

Granite Falls contains all of the ingredients to produce a successful and viable historic downtown for the local community and for visitors. At the beginning of this project, I had the dilemma of choosing whether this project should focus on the development of downtown for the local community's use or for the use of outside visitors. My conclusion was to focus on developing downtown in a way that protects its built heritage for the local community with the use of economic development that may attract visitors. The downtown should be developed as a representation of what

the residents' value so that when visitors visit the downtown, they are able to learn about the community, which is exactly what visitors want to do when they travel to different cities. Currently, downtown Granite Falls does not represent all of its values that were described in the Strategic Plan chapter. However, it is not enough to develop a downtown economy just for visitors, but a downtown economy that utilizes local assets and resources. That is what an integrated economic engine for downtown Granite Falls will accomplish.

My love for historic preservation began in Granite Falls, Minnesota. After studying in the field for three years, I will be going back to continue my work in downtown Granite Falls. The following poem accurately summarizes my image of what Granite Falls may become. It was written and read for the first annual Meander Art Crawl Kick-off event held in downtown Granite Falls. During a ceremony that highlighted the Historic Foot Bridge and the Minnesota River, a poem was read aloud for the crowd to hear. The poem is titled "We Celebrate the River," by Florence Chard Dacey, 2011, used with permission.

We celebrate the river---  
the water that offers us peace and inspiration  
the creatures that bring us life and beauty  
mud and rocks, bluffs and islands  
the people who use and tend it.

We celebrate the river  
and all kinds of bridges that join---  
our past with our future  
our great cities and thriving small towns  
our peoples of many races and nations  
our dreams united with our common-sense  
our hopes realized through our hard work.

Let the fire in our hearts brighten the night!  
Let the love of our place bring us new light.

Let the bridges we fashion be steady and strong.

Let all the rivers of life carry us safely home.<sup>55</sup>

*Performed at Meander Kick-Off event, Granite Falls MN, September 30, 2011*

This poem embraces all of my recommendations for diversity, development and heritage for downtown. Bridging preservation and economics in downtown Granite Falls will create the integrated economic engine that is needed to solve the identified problems in this report.

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<sup>55</sup> Florence Dacey, "We Celebrate the River," 2011.

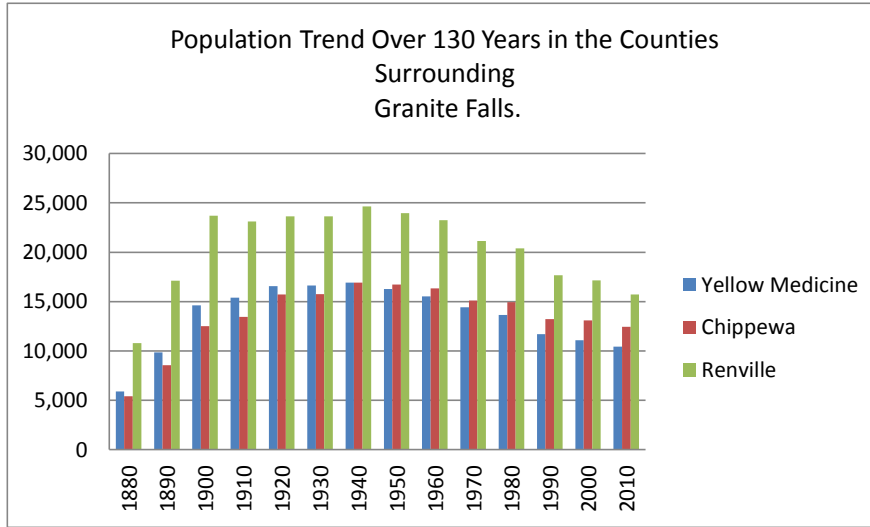


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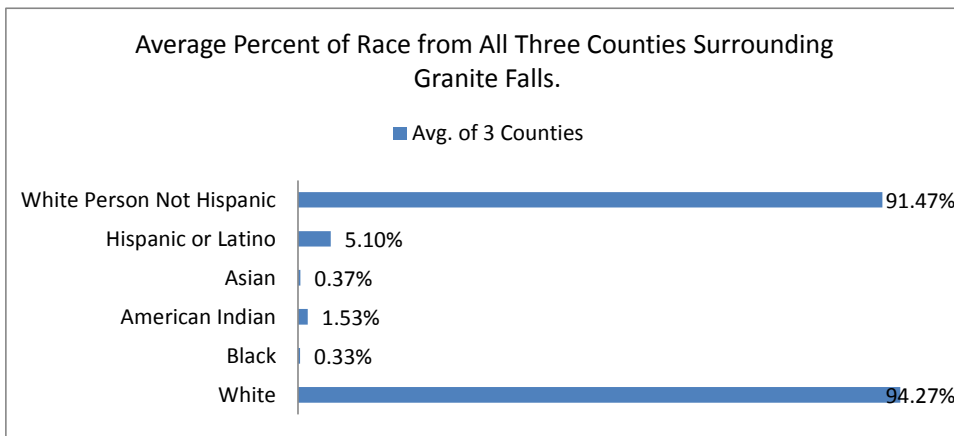
## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Population trend over 130 years in the counties surrounding Granite Falls.



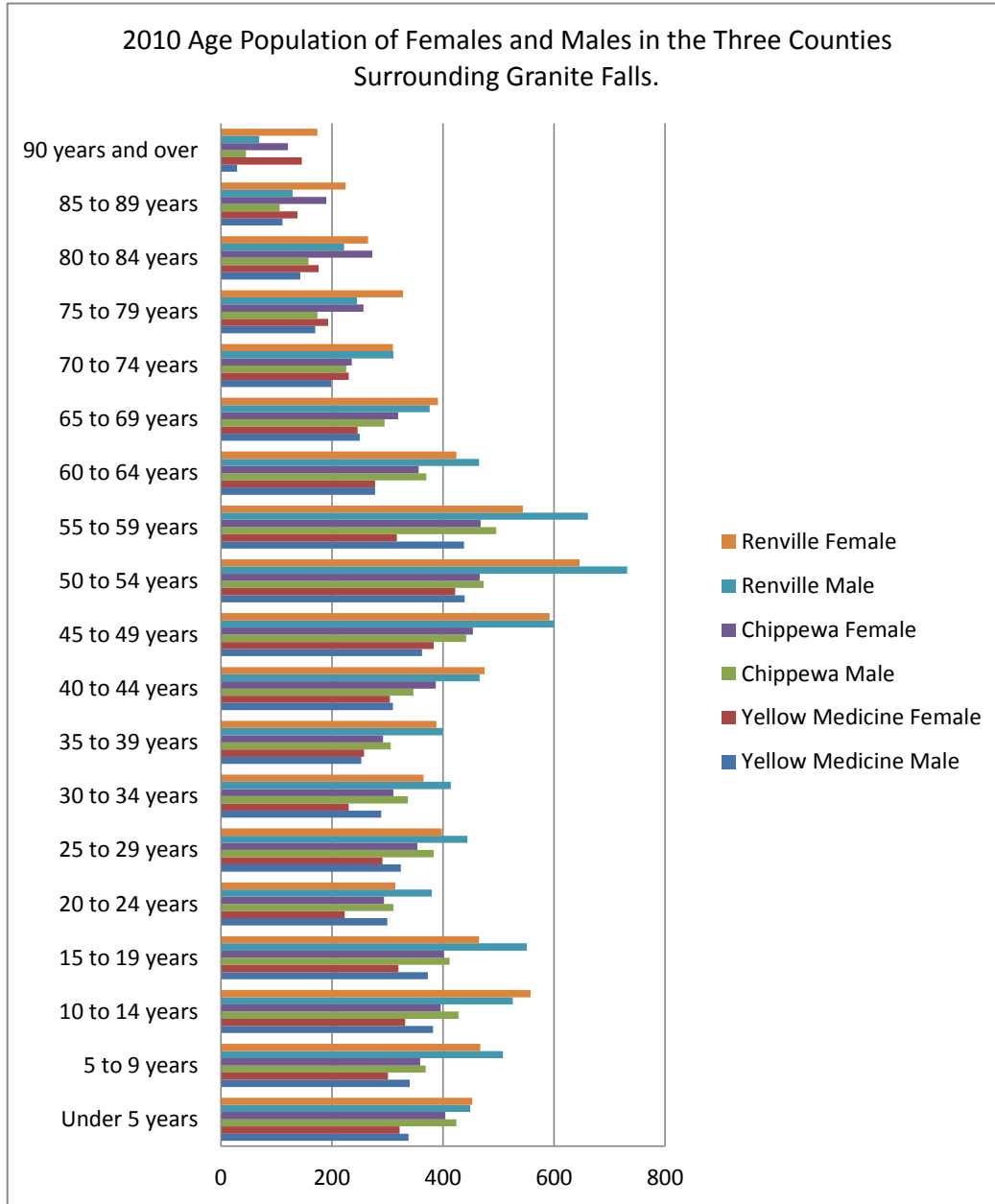
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, County Population Estimates by Demographic Characteristics - Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin, 2010.

### Appendix 2. 2010 average distribution of race in the three counties surrounding Granite Falls.



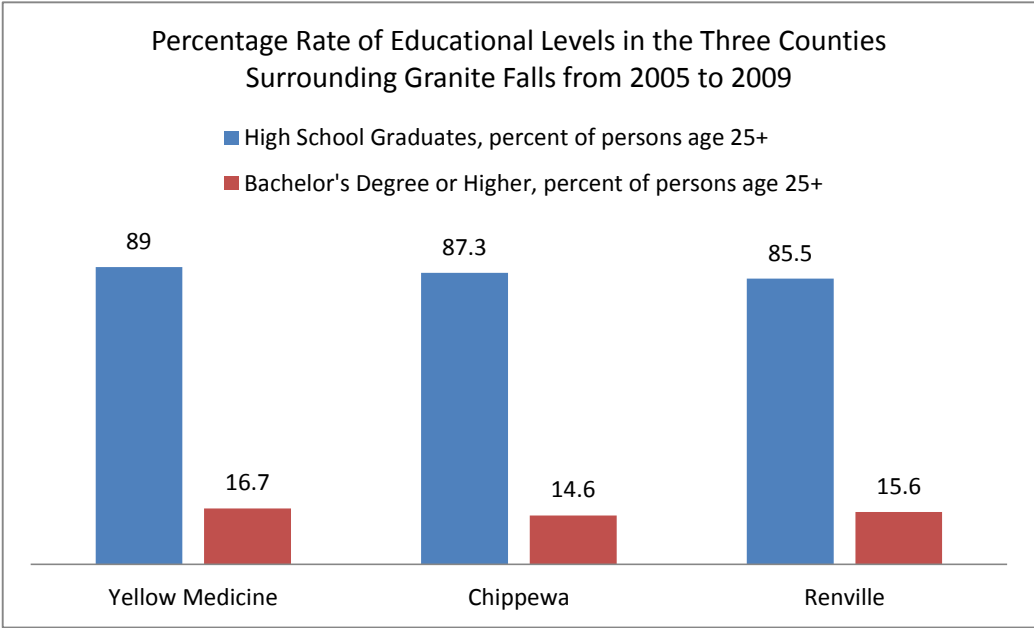
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, County Population Estimates by Demographic Characteristics - Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin, 2010.

Appendix 3. 2010 age population of females and males in the three counties surrounding Granite Falls.



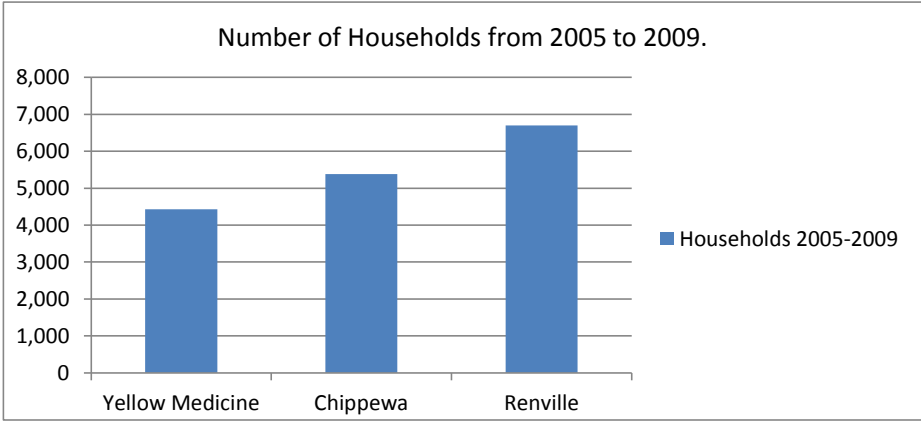
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, County Population Estimates by Demographic Characteristics - Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin, 2010.

Appendix 4. Percentage rate of educational levels in the three counties surrounding Granite Falls from 2005 to 2009.



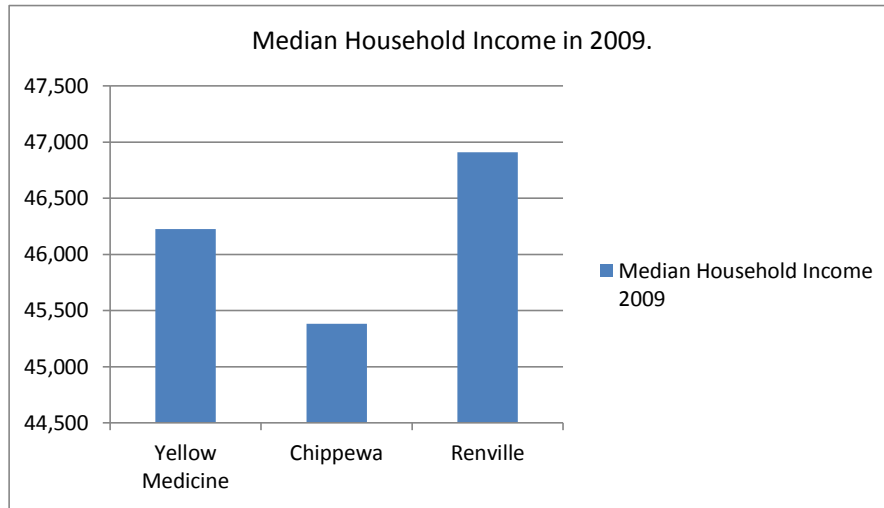
Source: U. S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates.

Appendix 5. Number of households in the three counties surrounding Granite Falls from 2005 to 2009.



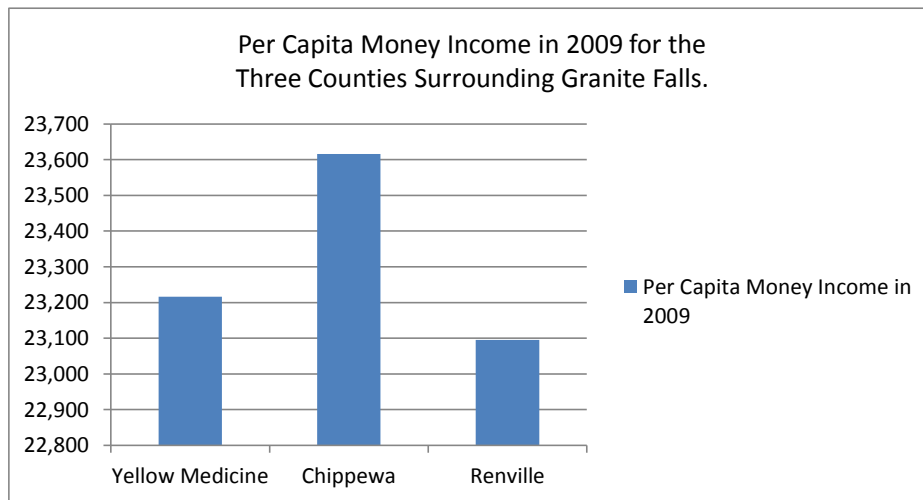
Source: U. S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates.

Appendix 6. Median household income in 2009 for the three counties surrounding Granite Falls.



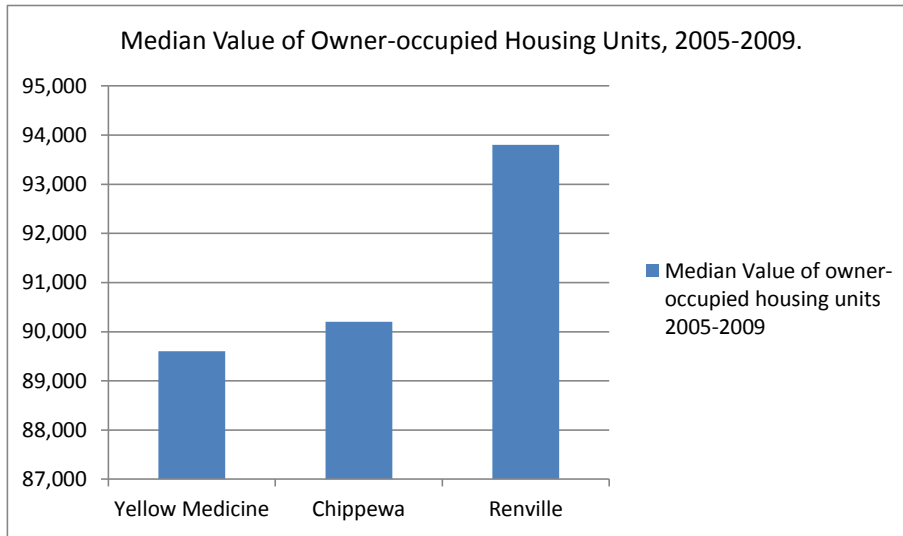
Source: U. S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates for states and counties, 2009.

Appendix 7. Per capita money income in 2009 for the three counties surrounding Granite Falls.



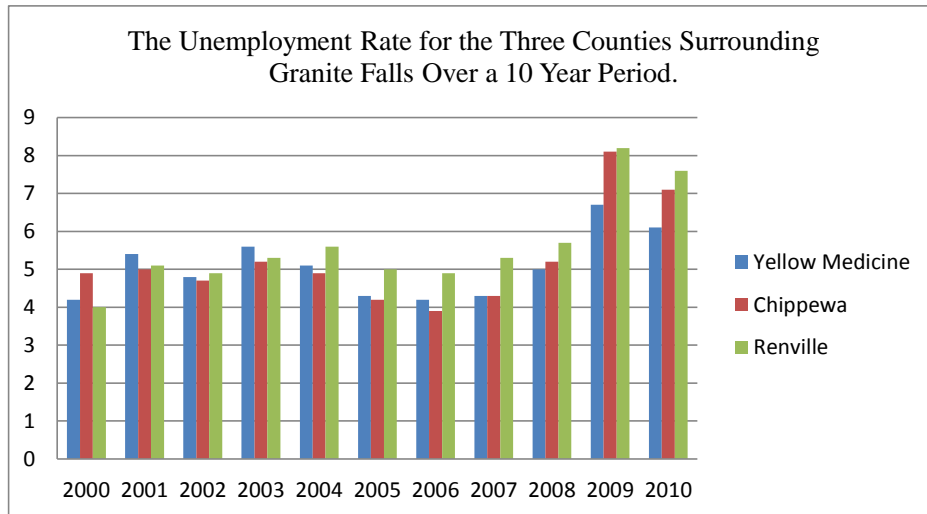
Source: U. S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2009.

Appendix 8. Median value of owner-occupied housing units in the three counties surrounding Granite Falls, 2005-2009.



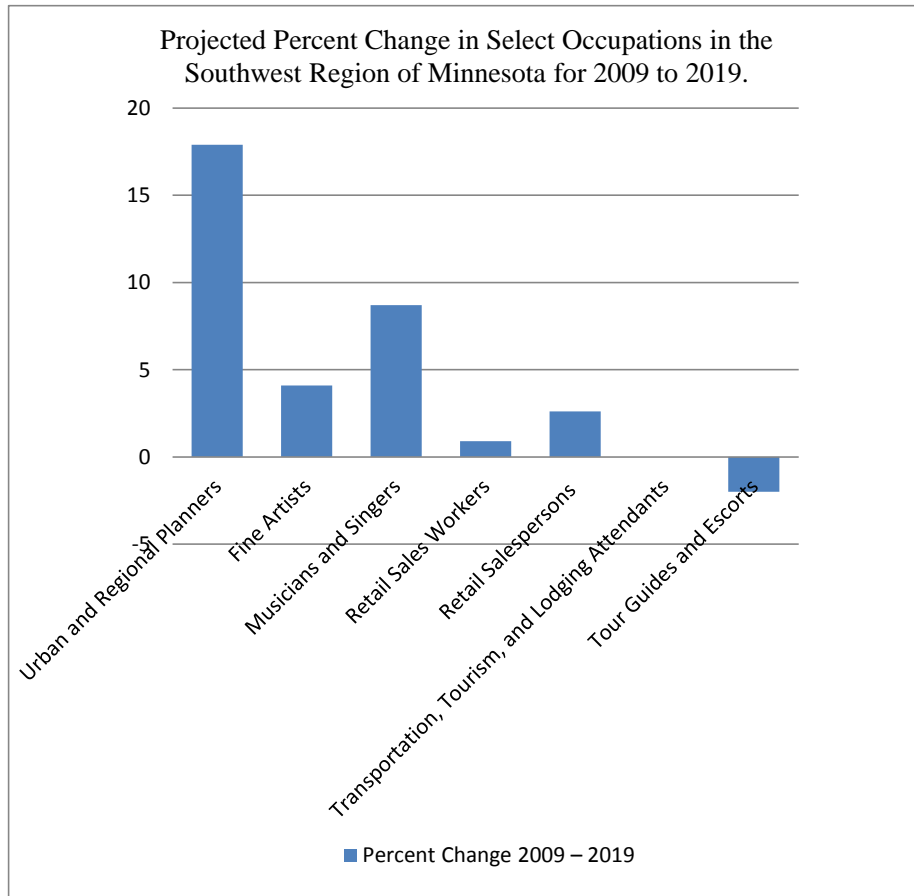
Source: U. S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2005-2009.

Appendix 9. Unemployment rate in each of the three counties surrounding Granite Falls over 10 years



Source: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

Appendix 10. Projected employment trends in the Southwest Region of Minnesota.

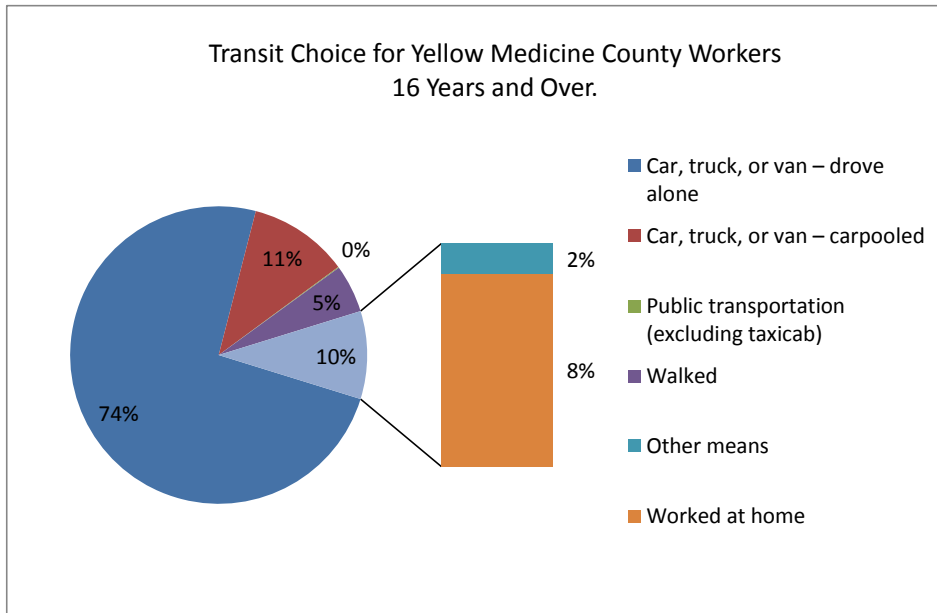


*Source:* Department of Employment and Economic Development, Positively Minnesota, Long-Term Occupation Projections.

The occupations listed in the table above are defined below according to the Department of Employment and Economic Development:

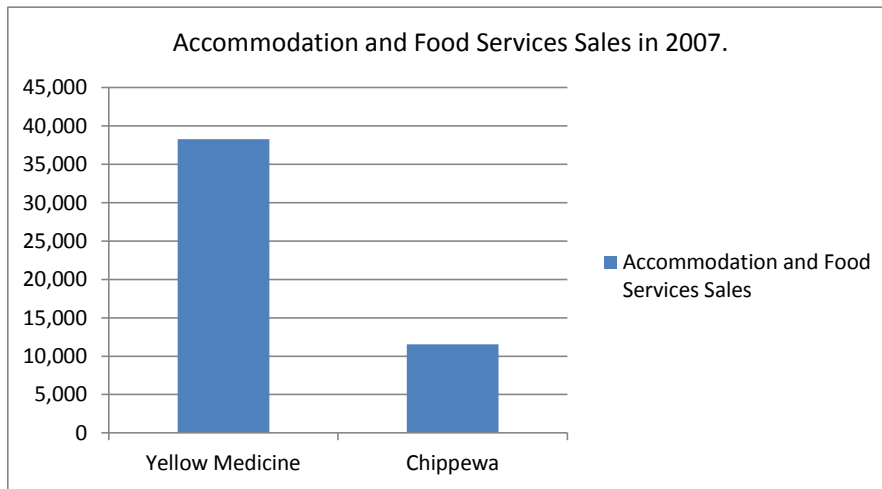
- *Urban and Regional Planners develop comprehensive plans and programs for use of land and physical facilities of jurisdictions, such as towns, cities, counties, and metropolitan areas.*
- *Fine Artists, Including Painters, Sculptors, and Illustrators create original artwork using any of a wide variety of media and techniques.*
- *Musicians and Singers play one or more musical instruments or sing. May perform on stage, for on-air broadcasting, or for sound or video recording.*
- *Retail Salespersons sell merchandise, such as furniture, motor vehicles, appliances, or apparel to consumers and excludes "Cashiers".*

Appendix 11. Transit choice for Yellow Medicine County Workers 16 years or older.



Source: U. S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates.

Appendix 12. Accommodation and food services sales for 2007 in two of the counties that surround Granite Falls.



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Economic Census, 2007.

Note: Renville County suppressed to avoid disclosure of confidential information.