



# **BELLE** **STRATEGIC** **PLAN**

**2023**



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# PLAN

# INTRODUCTION

## STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Strategic planning is a process by which a community can recognize and prioritize their needs and then develop a plan of action to accomplish the identified goals. Using CARES Act funding supported by the Economic Development Administration (EDA), the Meramec Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) selected five communities from the Meramec region to participate in a strategic planning process with the purpose of assisting cities in recovery efforts from the coronavirus pandemic. In addition, this planning work is designed to build resiliency from future significant events. MRPC staff evaluated four key community indicators, comparing statistics and data for 2019 and 2021. This information was gathered for the eight counties in the region and served to help identify the counties most impacted by the pandemic. Staff then ranked the counties most at-risk and identified cities within these counties that were impacted by the pandemic. A comparison of taxable sales for each city were reviewed and categorized by < 0%, 0-10% increase, 10-30% increase and over 30% increase between 2019 and 2021. MRPC also reviewed the following community indicators:

- Unemployment Rates
- Overall Employment Numbers and Changes in Labor Force

The main difference between unemployment rates and employment numbers is the unemployment rate measures the percentage within the labor force that is currently without a job, while the participation rate measures the percentage of citizens who are in the labor force. Both are calculated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Ultimately, MRPC finalized the selection of cities by determining which communities also had the structure in place necessary to

participate in a strategic planning process. The city of Belle, located in Maries and Osage counties, was one of the five communities selected for participation in this strategic planning process. MRPC staff, working with the Belle community, gathered members of the city of Belle, the Belle Community Betterment Association (BCBA), and a variety of community stakeholders to participate in a strategic planning session on March 31, 2023. Over the course of the one-day session, the group, through a SWOT Analysis, identified Belle's top strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and worked to create viable action items to address the needs of the community.



Picture 1: Stakeholders participate in the SWOT Analysis.

It is important to note that this strategic planning process included four key steps leading up to the strategic planning workshop.

- I. Securing City Commitment: The city of Belle made a commitment to participate with MRPC staff on the planning process. Mayor Daryl White served as the key



individual/contact person for this planning effort. Mark McClane, representing the Belle Community Betterment Association (BCBA), was also closely involved.

- II. Identifying Key Stakeholders: The city of Belle and the BCBA worked with MRPC on identifying key community members to involve in the strategic planning process.
- III. Determining Planning Process and Developing Agenda for Economic Development Strategic Planning Workshop: MRPC staff worked with Mayor White and Mr. McClane to develop the planning process for Belle's strategic plan/workshop. The one-day session was held at the Belle-Bland Community Center located at 200 Highway 28 in Belle with the meeting held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (*The Belle Planning Workshop agenda is included in Exhibit III.*)
- IV. Developing an Economic Development Community Survey: MRPC staff developed an online community survey to provide opportunity for additional community input into the planning process. This survey focused on the community's perceptions of Belle's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. (*The Belle Economic Development Survey is included in Exhibit IV.*) The City of Belle and the BCBA assisted in distribution of this survey to the community. Prior to the planning session, MRPC staff collected the results of the survey, sharing the results of the survey at the strategic planning workshop. In addition, staff integrated the survey content into the overall strategic plan. (*The Belle Community Survey Results are included in Exhibit IV.*)

Based on the specific nature of the one-day planning session, a separate vision, mission and purpose statement were not created as part of this process. The intention is that this strategic plan will be adopted and further developed by existing city and community organizations. The City of Belle has numerous city committees and community organizations actively working together toward the betterment of the Belle community. Specifically, the Belle Community Betterment Association (BCBA) is actively involved in community and economic development efforts. This organization's stated mission is to create and sustain growth to improve the Belle community and its focus includes the development of new industry and businesses. Additionally, they work in the areas of improving residential housing and commercial property and community beautification efforts and projects. It is anticipated that the completion of the planning process

and the adoption of the final plan will help guide the City of Belle, the BCBA and other community organizations as they work together for the future development of Belle.



Picture 2: Stakeholders prioritize identified strengths for the community.

## PLANNING STAKEHOLDERS

The following stakeholders provided survey responses and participated in the SWOT and action planning process.

- *Daryl White, Mayor of Belle*
- *Mark McLane, President of Belle Community Betterment Association*
- *Dr. Lenice Basham, Superintendent of Maries County R-2 Schools*
- *Cindy Butler, President of YaYa's*
- *Ashley Harris, Legends Bank*
- *Jesse Kelly, Maries County Bank and Belle Fair Board*
- *Amy Kiso, Maries R-2 Board of Education*

- *Seth Perkins, MidAmerica Bank and Golf Course Leadership*

### ***Meramec Regional Planning Commission***

- *Bonnie Prigge, Executive Director*
- *Anne Freand, Planning Manager*
- *Candace Connell, Community Development Specialist*
- *Orin Pogue, Community Development Specialist*



Picture 3: The group discusses action items for the community.

# BELLE DATA

The City of Belle was founded in 1901 and is located in both Maries and Osage counties. Situated along two major thoroughfares, Missouri Highways 28 and 89, Belle is a fourth-class city with a mayor and four alderpersons. All the highways in the area are maintained by the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) and the closest airports are the Rolla National Airport, located at Vichy, and the Jefferson City Memorial Airport, located northeast of Jefferson City. The closest international airport is in St. Louis, approximately 100 miles northeast of Belle. Union Pacific railroad operates a rail line that follows the general route of Missouri State Highway 100, with the closest point located approximately 20 miles to the north of Belle. Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad also operates a rail line that follows the general route of I-44 through neighboring Phelps and Crawford counties. The Rock Island Rail line ran through Belle until the early 1980s when it ceased operation.

Nearby cities include Vienna, which is located about 14 miles to the southwest along routes 63/28 and 42. Owensville in Gasconade County is approximately 14 miles to the east-northeast along Route 28, and Linn is about 17 miles to the northwest along Route 89 and 50. Other nearby cities include St. James, located 25 miles to the south, and Cuba is located about 35 miles to the southeast. The Gasconade River is approximately five miles to the southwest. Belle is located about 100 miles (160 km) west/southwest of St. Louis.

Highway 28 is a connection route for multiple towns in Maries and Osage counties and has a daily average traffic count of almost 1,500 vehicles in the Belle area. The newly designated Rock Island Trail State Park runs through the center of the city. Top employers in the Belle area include Kingsford Charcoal and the Maries County R-II School District.

As of the 2020 decennial census, the city of Belle is home to 1,381 people, a decrease of almost 12% since the 2010 decennial census count of 1,545. Consistent with Belle's population, neighboring cities including Vienna and Owensville, and Maries and Osage counties, all experienced declines in population between 2.9-8.8%.

Table 1: 2010 & 2020 Decennial Census Population Comparison

Location	2020 Decennial	2010 Decennial	% Change
Belle	1,381	1,545	-11.8%
St. James	3,935	4,216	-7.1%
Steelville	1,472	1,642	-10.4%
Cuba	3,181	3,356	-5.5%
Owensville	2,757	2,676	-2.9%
Linn	1,350	1,459	-8.0%
Vienna	581	610	-4.9%
Maries County	8,432	9,176	-8.8 %
Osage County	13,274	13,878	-4.5 %
Missouri	6,154,913	5,988,927	2.7%

Preliminary reviews of 2020 decennial census numbers have spurred discussions of undercounts and reviews of final population numbers. Therefore, this report also provides population counts for non-decennial census years.

Table 2: 2010 & 2020 ACS Population Comparison

Location	2021 ACS	2010 ACS	% Change
Belle	1,446	1,460	-1.0%
St. James	3,970	4,169	-4.8%
Steelville	1,607	1,390	15.6%
Cuba	3,206	3,372	-4.9%
Owensville	2,728	2,681	1.8%
Linn	1,514	1,662	-8.9%
Vienna	838	610	37.4%
Maries County	8,457	9,203	-8.1%
Osage County	13,372	13,768	-2.9%
Missouri	6,141,534	5,988,927	2.5%

Source: 2010 & 2021 American Community Survey data. <http://data.census.org>



The American Community Survey (ACS) provides detailed population and housing information for local community leaders and businesses on an annual basis. It takes a sampling of addresses in each state and then provides estimates for a variety of geographies. Each estimate contains a margin of error. While certain ACS data may have a larger margin of error over others, it is usually the best available data to communities when reviewing topics such as education, employment, transportation, etc. In comparison to the 2020 decennial population data, Table 2 on page 7 provides a review of population estimates between the 2010 and 2021 ACS.

Differences in the numbers between the ACS and decennial census highlight some of the reasons for concern, as the 2021 ACS estimate shows a population of 1,446 people compared to the 1,381 people in the 2020 decennial census. This difference is also reflected in the percentage of change in population change over the past decade being a 1% in population loss, using the ACS data, compared to an over 11% loss in population with the decennial population numbers for the City of Belle. Currently, there is not a clear answer as to the difference in numbers. It is noted that the 2010 decennial count occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely limited face-to-face interaction.

Table 3: Population Comparison between Decennial & ACS Data

Location	2020 Decennial	2021 ACS	Net Difference
Belle	1,381	1,446	65
St. James	3,935	3,970	35
Steelville	1,472	1,607	135
Cuba	3,181	3,206	25
Owensville	2,757	2,728	(29)
Linn	1,350	1,514	164
Vienna	581	838	257
Maries County	8,432	8,457	25
Osage County	13,274	13,372	98
Phelps County	44,638	44,692	54
Missouri	6,154,913	6,141,534	(13,379)
Source: 2020 Decennial & 2021 American Community Survey data. <a href="http://data.census.org">http://data.census.org</a>			

Map 1: City Map of Belle



The educational level of the residents of Belle has shifted up over the last decade when reviewing American Community Survey (ACS) data. The percentage of individuals 25 years and over that are a high school graduate or higher increased between 2011 and 2021 (79.5% to 85%); in addition, the percentage of individuals with associates or bachelor's or other graduate/professional degrees increased for the same timeframe (16.7% to 26.6%). The cities of St. James and Linn also saw increases in percentages of individuals with high school or higher degrees. However, the cities of Cuba and Owensville saw decreases in those with high school or higher educations over the past decade.

Table 4: Educational Attainment % Population High School Graduate or Higher

Location	% 2021	% 2011	% Change
<b>Belle</b>	85%	79.5%	5.5%
<b>St. James</b>	84.9%	72.3%	12.6%
<b>Cuba</b>	74.1%	80.9%	(6.8)%
<b>Steelville</b>	78.7%	78.9%	(0.2)%
<b>Owensville</b>	79.8%	81.8%	(2)%
<b>Linn</b>	90.6%	82.5%	8.1%
<b>Maries County</b>	85.9%	79.6%	6.3%
<b>State of Missouri</b>	91.0%	86.2%	4.8%
<b>United States</b>	88.9%	85%	3.9%
Source: 2011 & 2021 American Community Survey data. <a href="http://data.census.org">http://data.census.org</a>			

Belle saw a 6.4% decrease in those 25 and over with no high school diploma between 2011 and 2021. The communities of St. James and Linn also saw decreases; however Steelville, Owensville and Cuba experienced increases ranging from .1 to 6.8% in those without a high school diploma over the last decade. Based on the 2021 ACS statistics, 15.1% of Belle's 25 years and older residents have no high school diploma.

Table 5: Educational Attainment % Population Without High School Diploma

Location	% 2021	% 2011	% Change
Belle	15.1%	21.5%	(6.4)%
St. James	15.1%	27.8%	(12.7)%
Steelville	21.2%	21.1%	.1%
Cuba	25.9%	19.1%	6.8%
Owensville	20.2%	18.2%	2%
Linn	9.4%	17.6%	(8.2)%
Maries County	14.1%	20.4%	(6.3)%
State of Missouri	9%	13.8%	(4.8)%
United States	11.1%	15.0%	(3.9)%

Source: 2011 & 2021 American Community Survey data. <http://data.census.org>

The total number of housing units in Belle was estimated at 684 in the 2017-2021 ACS with single family homes comprising about 72%, multi-family housing about 21% and mobile homes about 7%. The average age of homes in Belle is 52 years. According to 2021 ACS, 10.5% of housing units were built in 1939 or earlier, 43% were built between 1940 and 1979, and 39% were built in 1980 or later. ACS data for 2017-2021 also indicated that 102 housing units have been built since 2000.



Picture 4: Example of newer construction single-family home in Belle. Maries County R 2 Schools Building Trades Department built this house at 312 W&W Circle Drive. It was built in the 2020-2021 school year. This house was sold in June 2021 to its first family. Source: Maries County R-2 School District

The decade with the most housing construction in Belle was between 1980-1989 with 131 homes built during this time. Of the 684 housing units, 178 were built prior to 1940. While many of these structures may be properly maintained, it is likely that a portion of the properties are in need of renovations. The city of Belle secured a grant in 1993 to renovate several homes and also secured a demolition grant in 2003 that resulted in the removal of 10 structures.



Picture 5: Example of older single-family home in Belle. The home pictured was built in 1965. Source: MRPC Photograph

The median value of an owner-occupied home in Belle was \$81,600 in 2011 and grew to \$127,200 in 2021. This was an increase of 55.9% over the past decade and was a greater increase than all neighboring communities, Maries County and the state of Missouri experienced during that same time. The majority of homes (162) in Belle were valued between \$100,000 and \$200,000 (2017-2021 ACS). With the increase in property values during COVID-19, median value of owner-occupied homes is expected to increase with the next ACS data release.



Table 6: Median Home Values in Belle and Neighboring Communities

Location	2021 Median Home Value \$	2011 Median Home Value \$	% Increase
Belle	\$127,200	\$81,600	55.9%
St. James	\$102,600	\$88,600	15.8%
Steelville	\$76,300	\$78,400	(2.7)%
Cuba	\$135,900	\$100,700	35%
Owensville	\$109,500	\$87,600	25%
Linn	\$140,100	\$102,800	36.3%
Vienna	\$109,400	\$89,000	22.9%
Maries County	\$158,600	\$116,200	36.5%
State of Missouri	\$171,800	\$139,900	22.8%
United States	\$244,900	\$188,400	30.0%
Source: 2011 & 2021 American Community Survey data. <a href="http://data.census.org">http://data.census.org</a>			

Of the total housing units in the city, slightly half are owner-occupied (314 or 53.8%). The percentage of housing units that are owner-occupied decreased in the last decade from 59.3% in 2011 to 53.8% in 2021. In relationship to this change, the housing units used as rentals increased from 40.7% of total units to 46.2% of housing units in Belle. According to this ACS data, the total rental units increased from 262 in 2011 to 269 in 2021.

Table 7: 2011 Housing Characteristics Including Vacancy, Owner, and Rental

Location	Total Housing Units	Occupied Units	% Vacant Units	% Owner Occupied Units	% Renter Occupied Units
Belle	786	644	18.1%	59.3%	40.7%
St. James	1,704	1,523	10.6%	59.6%	40.4%
Steelville	871	722	17.1%	68.7%	31.3%
Cuba	1,304	1,158	11.2%	54.3%	45.7%
Owensville	1,185	1,051	11.3%	67.9%	32.1%
Linn	908	709	21.9%	57.8%	42.2%
Vienna	497	434	12.7%	62.2%	37.8%
Maries County	4,591	3,635	20.8%	80.5%	19.5%
State of Missouri			12.9%	69.5%	30.5%
United States			12.4%	66.1%	33.9%
Source: 2011 ACS 5 Year Estimates Data Profiles. <a href="http://data.census.org">http://data.census.org</a>					

Neighboring communities with the highest renter occupied unit rates include Cuba at 67.1%, Steelville at 60.6% and St. James at 51.9%. The city of Owensville has the lowest percentage of renter occupied units at 34.4%. It is interesting to note that all the renter occupied rates increased over the last decade for all communities referenced, except for Steelville, which saw a slight decrease.

Approximately 100 units are noted as vacant, based on 2021 ACS data. The vacancy rate in the community was 18.1% in 2011 and decreased to 14.6% in 2021. 2021 vacancy rates for neighboring communities range from 7.8% in Cuba to a high of 18.6% in Vienna.

Table 8: 2021 Housing Characteristics Including Vacancy, Owner, and Rental

Location	Total Housing Units	Occupied Units	% Vacant Units	% Owner Occupied Units	% Renter Occupied Units
Belle	684	584	14.6%	53.8%	46.2%
St. James	1,618	1,464	9.5%	48.1%	51.9%
Steelville	745	616	17.3%	39.4%	60.6%
Cuba	1,331	1,331	7.8%	32.9%	67.1%
Owensville	1,293	1,113	13.9%	65.6%	34.4%
Linn	710	586	17.5%	62.1%	37.9%
Vienna	398	324	18.6%	50.9%	49.1%
Maries County	4,294	3,633	15.4%	74.7%	25.3%
State of Missouri			12.5%	67.6%	32.4%
United States			11.2%	64.6%	35.4%
Source: 2021 ACS 5 Year Estimates Data Profiles. <a href="http://data.census.org">http://data.census.org</a>					

The average household size of owner-occupied housing units in Belle is 2.48 people in comparison to neighboring towns of Linn at 2.74, St. James at 2.6, Owensville at 2.49, and Vienna at 2.44. The state of Missouri's average household size for owner-occupied units is 2.57. The average household size of renter-occupied units in Belle is 2.47 people. This compares to a low of 2 people per unit in Owensville, 2.32 in Linn, and 2.48 people per rental unit in St. James. The state of Missouri's average household size of renter-occupied units is 2.21.

According to 2021 American Community Survey, 10.6% of Belle’s individuals (153) are living below the poverty level compared to 27.5% of the total population in 2011 living in poverty. This is a significant decrease over the past decade and sets Belle apart from all other neighboring communities. With the exception of Steelville, all other comparable communities experienced an increase in the percentage of people living in poverty. In the Belle community, less than 1% (10) of those below the age of 18 are living below poverty, 7.8% are between 18 and 64 years of age and 2.1% of those over the age of 65. Vienna and St. James experienced the largest increase in those living in poverty, with Vienna seeing an increase of 14.7% and St. James showing an increase of 10.6% with 29.4% of St. James 2021 population living below poverty. Vienna has the highest rate of those living in poverty at 34.9%.

Table 9: 2011 and 2021 Population Living Below Poverty

Location	2011 Population Below Poverty		2021 Population Below Poverty		2021 Age Under 18 Below Poverty	2021 Age 18-64 Below Poverty	2021 Age 65 & Over Below Poverty
	Number	%	Number	%	%	%	%
<b>Belle</b>	429	27.5%	153	10.6%	0.7%	7.8%	2.1%
<b>St. James</b>	732	18.8%	1,094	29.4%	14.4%	13.3%	1.7%
<b>Steelville</b>	531	31.0%	227	15.9%	17.6%	16.9%	8.7%
<b>Cuba</b>	826	25.2%	800	26.1%	7.1%	16.3%	2.7%
<b>Owensville</b>	344	13.7%	362	14.0%	5.1%	6.9%	2.1%
<b>Linn</b>	320	18.9%	339	22.6%	5.4%	14.7%	2.5%
<b>Vienna</b>	172	20.2%	271	34.9%	14.4%	13.3%	1.7%
<b>Maries County</b>	1,286	14.3%	1,329	15.8%	21.0%	16.5%	9.1%
<b>State of Missouri</b>	869,036	15.0%	762,023	12.8%	16.9%	12.3%	8.9%
<b>United States</b>		14.9%		12.6%	17%	11.8%	9.6%
Source: 2011 & 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, US Census							

Median household incomes in the city increased approximately 41% over the last decade, surpassing the percentage of increase of all neighboring communities except for Steelville, which saw a similar increase in household income. Cuba was the only neighboring community to see a decline in the median household income (-2.1%) in the last decade.

Table 10: Median Household Income

Location	2021 Median Household Income	2011 Median Household Income	% Change
Belle	\$45,368	\$32,083	41.4%
St. James	\$45,126	\$37,029	21.9%
Steelville	\$45,368	\$31,685	43.2%
Cuba	\$33,447	\$34,143	-2.1%
Owensville	\$43,007	\$39,963	7.6%
Linn	\$47,045	\$38,447	22.4%
Vienna	\$34,524	\$39,881	13.4%
Maries County	\$50,434	\$42,018	20.0%
Missouri	\$61,043	\$47,202	29.3%
United States	\$69,021	\$53,046	30.1%
Source: 2011 & 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, US Census			

Community indicators including local sales tax receipts and property tax assessed valuations are compared for the years 2019 through 2022. There was a decrease in sales tax revenues in 2020, with increases realized in 2021 and 2022. In addition, there was a decrease in property assessed valuation in the city in 2020 but that has rebounded, increasing by over \$1.4 million in 2022.

Table 11: Sales and Property Tax Revenues

Year	Local Sales Tax Revenue	Property Assessed Valuation	Property Tax Revenues
2019	\$274,983	\$13,053,001	\$83,370
2020	\$273,156	\$12,889,052	\$83,676
2021	\$304,088	\$ 13,644,971	\$88,583
2022	\$337,380	\$14,474,832	\$95,273
Source: Missouri Department of Revenue, Tax and Fee Distribution Cities and Missouri State Auditor, Property Tax Rates Report			

Sales tax revenues indicate, in part, the health and growth of retail in communities. There has been modest growth in Belle and it is anticipated that this growth will continue with continued and new efforts in downtown revitalization and community development.

The majority of the commercial businesses in Belle are located in the downtown area of the city. A windshield survey of the downtown area was conducted to determine the approximate number

of buildings downtown and the available open lots. The survey also determined the approximate numbers of buildings with commercial storefronts and those that were vacant. The survey area included Alvarado Ave. from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> streets and 3<sup>rd</sup> St. from Linn to Belle avenues. The results of the survey determined that there are a total of 48 individual parcels in the downtown area, 18 of these are occupied with a business, 16 are occupied as residential, nine are vacant structures, and five are undeveloped lots.

Map 2: Map of Belle's Downtown Commercial Area

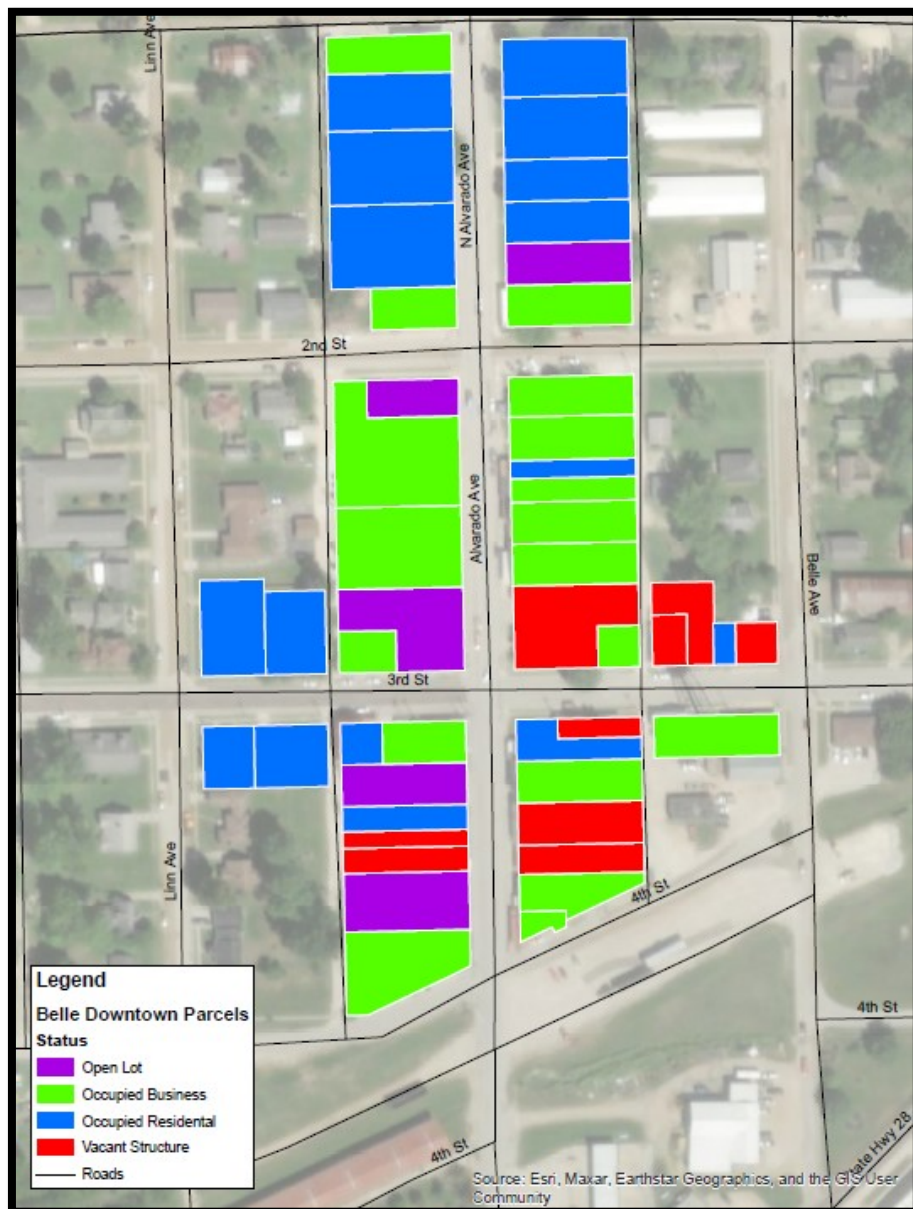




Table 12: Survey of Downtown Buildings

	# of Individual Parcels	# Parcels with Open Storefront	# Vacant Structures	# Open Lots
<b>Alvarado Street</b>	35	15	5	5
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Street</b>	13	3	4	0
Source: MRPC Survey of Downtown Belle, May 2023				

Belle's civilian labor force (16 years and older) totals 692 people, which is 62.7% of the available population, slightly lower than 64.8% in 2011. Area communities range from Cuba's labor force of 50.6%, Owensville's 54.1%, to St. James 62.1%. Belle's numbers are consistent with the state of Missouri, which has 63.2% of its civilians working or actively looking for work.

Unemployment in the city of Belle was listed at 2.2%, based on the 2021 ACS in comparison to the average 2021 unemployment rate of 3.8% for Maries County, based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Osage County's average rate for that same period was 2.6%. From January 1, 2022, to the end of January 2023, Maries County has averaged an unemployment rate of 2.66%, with a high of 3.7% in January 2022. The current unemployment rate through January 2023 in Maries County was 2.7. In comparison, Osage County averaged an unemployment rate of 2.1% January 2022 through January 2023, with a current unemployment rate of 2.2. Overall, the unemployment rates have improved over the course of the last 2 years.

Table 13: 2021 Employment by Industry Sector

Industry Sector	Number	%
Retail Trade	178	26.3%
Manufacturing	121	17.9%
Education, Healthcare, Social Assistance	121	17.9%
Transportation, warehousing, utilities	65	9.6%
Public Administration	40	5.9%
Construction	35	5.2%
Source: 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, US Census		

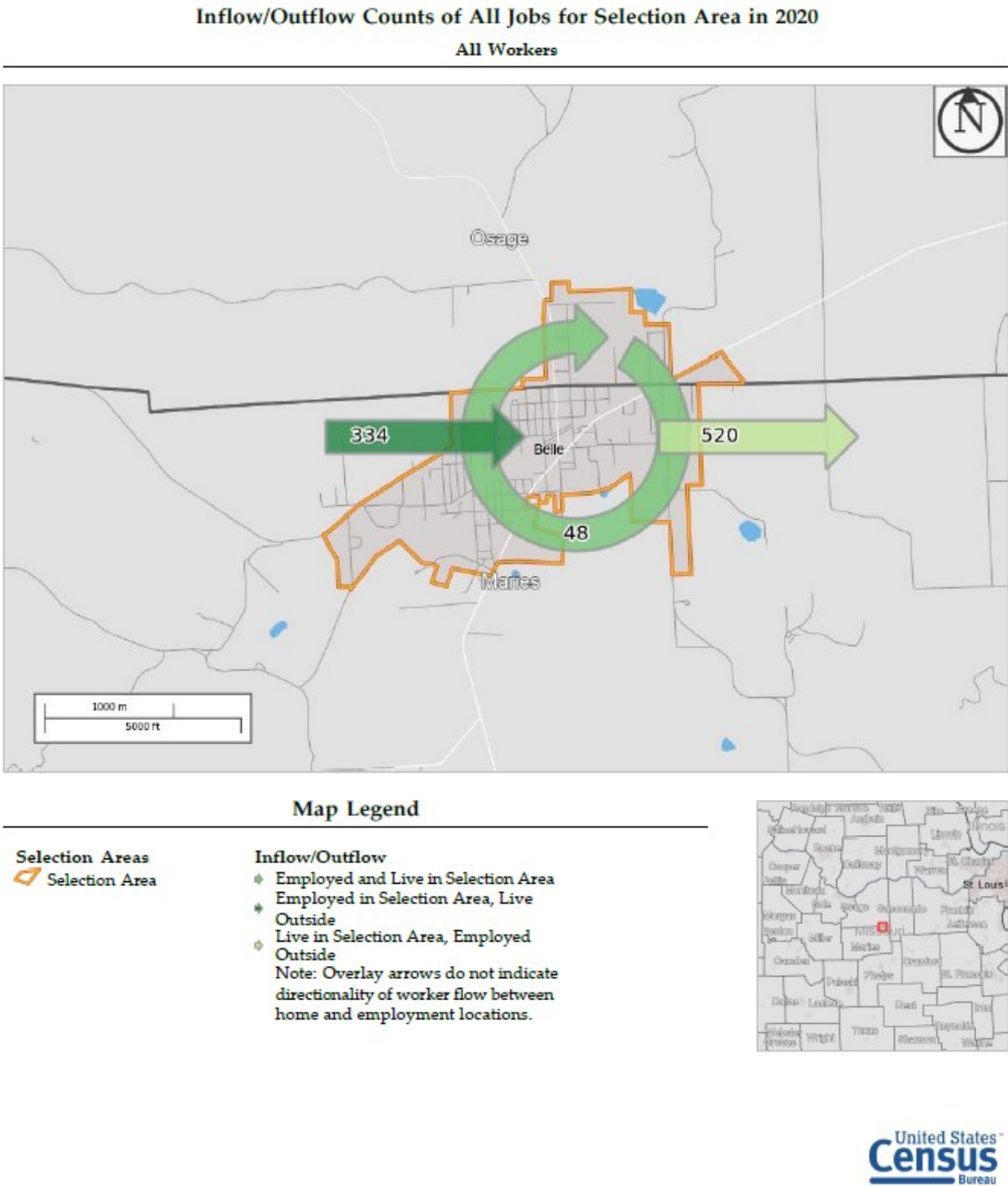
In Belle, the top four industry sectors employed over 71% of the population in 2021 per ACS data. These industries include retail trade, manufacturing, education/ healthcare/social assistance,

and transportation/warehousing/utilities. The next two sectors of public administration and construction employ just over 11% of the total labor force.

The largest employer, Maries County R-II School District, currently employs 129 people. Kingsford Charcoal is located about five miles from Belle and is the area's largest employer behind the school district. Kingsford Charcoal currently employs 106 people. Per recent information from the Central Workforce Development Region, which includes Maries County, top employing industries include health care and social assistance, retail trade, educational service, accommodation and food services, manufacturing, public administration, and construction. The region's top employment sectors compare similarly to Belle's top sectors for employment.











The U.S. Census OnTheMap Inflow/Outflow Analysis provides a visual representation of those within the city of Belle and their commuting characteristics. The most recent analysis is from 2020. The following map shows that 334 individuals are employed in Belle but live outside the city limits, 520 live in Belle and travel outside of the city for work, and only 48 people live and work within the community.

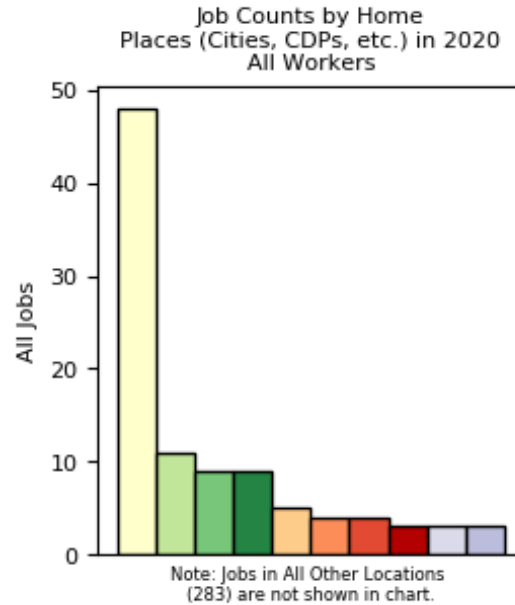
Map 3: U.S. Census OnTheMap Inflow/Outflow 2020 Analysis



## Graphs 1 and 2: Commuting Characteristics Inflow of Workers

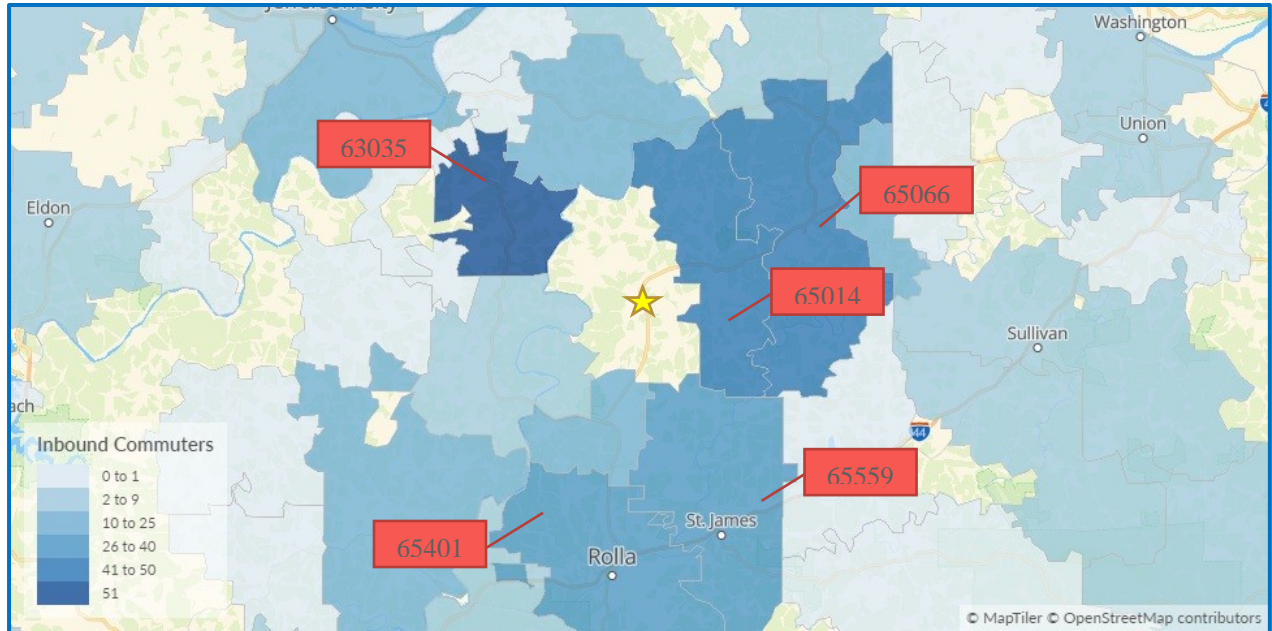
### Jobs Counts by Places (Cities, CDPs, etc.) Where Workers Live - All Jobs

2020		
	Count	Share
All Places (Cities, CDPs, etc.)	382	100.0%
 Belle city, MO	48	12.6%
 Freeburg village, MO	11	2.9%
 Owensville city, MO	9	2.4%
 Rolla city, MO	9	2.4%
 Bland city, MO	5	1.3%
 Columbia city, MO	4	1.0%
 Springfield city, MO	4	1.0%
 Jefferson City city, MO	3	0.8%
 St. James city, MO	3	0.8%
 Vienna city, MO	3	0.8%
All Other Locations	283	74.1%



Additional commuter data for the Belle area was gathered from Lightcast, an economic modeling workforce data source. The following data is based on Census statistics for the 65013 zip code in Belle, which covers a larger geographical area, but provides a more recent (2020) visual depiction for the community. Mean commute time for those living in zip code 65013 is 25.3 minutes, according to ACS Data for Belle, Missouri.

Map 4: 2020 Inbound Commuters to the 65013 Belle Zip Code



Data shows that the largest number of inbound commuters (51) come from the adjacent 65035 zip code for Freeburg (dark blue) and an overall total of 388 inbound commuters travel to the area in green (65013 zip code). The top areas for outbound commuters traveling from the Belle community for work include Jefferson City, Owensville and Freeburg. Unfortunately, the area is losing 487 net commuters because 875 people are leaving the area to work in other zip codes.

Table 14: Top 5 Zip Codes for Inbound/Outbound Commuters from Belle 65013 Zipcode

City	Zip Code	Inbound Commuters	Outbound Commuters	Net Commuters
<b>Freeburg</b>	65035	51	82	-30
<b>Owensville</b>	65066	43	103	-60
<b>Bland</b>	65014	41	5	35
<b>Rolla</b>	65401	28	74	-46
<b>St. James</b>	65559	26	9	18
<b>Vichy</b>	65580	17	2	15
<b>Dixon</b>	65459	16	2	14
<b>Jefferson City</b>	65101	20	166	-146
<b>Linn</b>	65051	11	41	-30

Source [www.lightcaset.io](http://www.lightcaset.io). Statistics from Missouri Economic Research and Information Center



# SWOT ANALYSIS

The Meramec Regional Planning Commission led the participants in a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) to assist community leaders in making more careful and informed decisions for the city's future. The SWOT addresses what the city is lacking, identifies ways to mitigate community risks and recognizes means to take the most advantage of chances for long-term success. The following items were identified and prioritized by the participants and are listed in priority order for each category.

Belle Strengths	
Priority Ranking	Community Strengths Identified
# 1	Many active civic organizations including Belle Community Betterment Association, Fair Board, YaYas, Park Board, Masons, VFW, Tri-County Youth, Osage Art Community
# 2	Good community involvement/strong business and community support of community efforts/willingness to give of time, resources
# 3	Maries County R-II Schools
# 4	Located at junction of Highways 28 & 8
# 5	The people of Belle community
# 6	Small town feel and tight knit community

Belle Weaknesses	
Priority Ranking	Community Weaknesses Identified
# 1	Transient Population/percentage of residential/multi-unit rental properties
# 2	Improvements needed to school facilities/new school
# 3	No long-term planning for public infrastructure improvements or growth/lack community-wide plan
# 4	Aging public infrastructure including water and sewer/lack of capacity to support growth
# 5	Lack of market rate rentals/quality rental housing
# 6	Lack of existing quality housing stock
# 7	Communication infrastructure/broadband/internet
# 8	Increase in drugs/addiction
# 9	Need for communication infrastructure/broadband/internet
# 10	Older and declining housing stock/lot of low-income housing

Belle Opportunities	
Priority Ranking	Community Opportunities Identified
# 1	Need city-wide long-term plan for public infrastructure
# 2	Need comprehensive website/community calendar/positive social media presence

<b>#3</b>	Dedicated emphasis on community development, grant writing and management/actively seek out more grant opportunities
<b>#4</b>	Expand and improve housing stock (new developments)
<b>#5</b>	Entrepreneurship/lodging, tourism, restaurants, rentals
<b>#6</b>	Improve public perception of schools
<b>#7</b>	City-wide trash pick-up/community-wide beautification

<b>Belle Threats</b>	
<b>Priority Ranking</b>	<b>Community Threats Identified</b>
<b>#1</b>	Failure to upgrade city infrastructure to include water/wastewater/streets and sidewalks/stormwater
<b>#2</b>	Lack of housing stock/home ownership opportunities/continued purchasing of homes to use as rental housing
<b>#3</b>	Continual decline of residential areas within city/deteriorating housing stock
<b>#4</b>	Anti-tax sentiment
<b>#5</b>	Lack of support for upgrading/new facilities for Maries County R-2 School district
<b>#6</b>	Bad publicity due to local issue (drugs, crime, etc.)
<b>#7</b>	Loss of state/federal funds/consolidation of resources/increasing match requirements

# FOCUS AREAS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

The areas of focus, objectives and strategies identified in this section were based on items identified in the SWOT Analysis, as well as input from various stakeholders during the one-day strategic planning session held in March 2023.

## **FOUR FOCUS AREAS FOR BELLE**

- 1. Prepare Belle for Growth***
- 2. Improve and Expand Housing***
- 3. Enhance Community Development***
- 4. Promote Belle***

## **FOCUS 1: PREPARE BELLE FOR GROWTH**

*Continued growth in the city of Belle will require preparation and planning for the physical growth of the community through infrastructure investments. In addition, the improvement and expansion of the Maries County R-2 School District's facilities will be a critical part of preparing Belle for growth.*

## **OBJECTIVE 1: MAINTAIN, IMPROVE AND UPGRADE PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE**

**STRATEGY 1:** Create a Capital Improvement Plan for infrastructure

**STRATEGY 2:** Increase funding for infrastructure needs

**STRATEGY 3:** Improve streets and sidewalks throughout the community

## **OBJECTIVE 2: DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**STRATEGY 1:** Determine scope of comprehensive plan

**STRATEGY 2:** Pursue grant opportunities to fund necessary planning

**STRATEGY 3:** Update ordinances as part of the comprehensive planning process

## **OBJECTIVE 3: IMPROVE AND EXPAND MARIES COUNTY R-2 SCHOOLS**

**STRATEGY 1:** Work to develop a single-campus plan for the District

**STRATEGY 2:** Create a Grow Your Own program to encourage faculty and staff to live within the District

**STRATEGY 3:** Develop partnership between school district and business community to promote local employment opportunities for area youth

## **FOCUS 2: IMPROVE AND EXPAND HOUSING**

*Over the past decade, Belle has seen an increase of almost 6% in the percentage of housing units used as rentals with close to 47% of the homes in the community now used as rentals. Most residentially healthy communities experience 60% or more owner-occupied versus rental rates. In Belle, 53.8% of the homes are owner-occupied. Quality affordable housing is a key to continued community growth and provides additional opportunities for homeownership. The number of total housing units in Belle has decreased from 786 in 2011 to 684 in 2021 and combined with the increase in housing units used as rentals, there are fewer homes available. Of*

*the 684 housing units, 178 were built prior to 1940 and it is likely that a portion of these properties need renovations. Property maintenance and enforcement should play a key role in improving the quality of housing, general community aesthetics, and is ultimately a key factor in attracting new residents to the city.*

**OBJECTIVE 1: INCREASE AVAILABLE HOUSING**

**STRATEGY 1:** Conduct housing needs assessment

**STRATEGY 2:** Support and move forward current development plans for additional new housing within city limits

**STRATEGY 3:** Improve infrastructure for new housing developments

**STRATEGY 4:** Develop multi-family options for in-fill

**OBJECTIVE 2: ENCOURAGE MORE HOME OWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**

**STRATEGY 1:** Determine home ownership needs and community goal for housing units occupied by owner compared to rental units

**STRATEGY 2:** Develop plan for community to work together to grow home ownership opportunities

**OBJECTIVE 3: IMPROVE RENTAL HOUSING**

**STRATEGY 1:** Address dilapidated housing and research options to encourage property maintenance of rental housing stock

**STRATEGY 2:** Encourage development of quality/market rate rental housing

**OBJECTIVE 4: EXPLORE SENIOR HOUSING NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITES**

**STRATEGY 1:** Study the need and explore options for senior housing/senior care resources

**STRATEGY 2:** Seek out funding programs and opportunities



## **FOCUS 3: ENHANCE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

*Enhancing the development of the Belle community will focus on efforts to further enhance the quality of life to be more attractive to current and potential residents of all ages and interests. Focus will be placed on downtown continued development and revitalization including developing new community attractions. Proposed new community assets including the Depot Mall Project (included in Exhibit I) and the Belle Motorsports Project (Exhibit II) will continue to be studied, developed and promoted. By working together, the Belle community will be better prepared and positioned to thrive and grow.*

### **OBJECTIVE 1: FOCUS ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**STRATEGY 1:** Build momentum within community to implement projects/make changes

**STRATEGY 2:** Promote effective networks/promote information sharing across organizations

### **OBJECTIVE 2: REVITALIZE DOWNTOWN BELLE**

**STRATEGY 1:** Develop plan for downtown revitalization with a focus on downtown development/destination tourism related to the planned Rock Island Trail

**STRATEGY 2:** Improve beautification in downtown and throughout the city

**STRATEGY 3:** Improve downtown streets, sidewalks, and parking for pedestrians and vehicle movement

### **OBJECTIVE 3: IMPROVE WALKABILITY AND CONNECTIVITY FOR PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT**

**STRATEGY 1:** Develop a master plan for walking/biking, expanding on the city's Active Living plan

**STRATEGY 2:** Pursue grants to help fund new sidewalks and trails, including Rock Island State Park Trail

**STRATEGY 3:** Establish walking trail in Belle to connect to the Rock Island Trail

**STRATEGY 4:** Incorporate trail and pedestrian signage into walking/biking trails to promote community assets, provide information and enhance pedestrians trail experience

#### **OBJECTIVE 4: INCREASE COMMUNITY ASSETS**

**STRATEGY 1:** Establish a Farmer's Market in downtown Belle

**STRATEGY 2:** Recreate the previous train depot for local use and for visitors to Belle

**STRATEGY 3:** Revitalize and repurpose existing building in downtown as tourist attraction

**STRATEGY 4:** Explore opportunity to develop multi-use facility/venue to offer a wide range of community events and programming

#### **OBJECTIVE 5: INCREASE CHILDCARE AVAILABILITY**

**STRATEGY 1:** Work to identify unmet childcare needs

**STRATEGY 2:** Consider funding options and ways to incentivize new childcare facilities

### **FOCUS 4: PROMOTE BELLE**

*Effectively promoting Belle will require strategies that target both the people that call the Belle community home, and also those that are coming to visit Belle. Internally, the focus will be on creating more ways to better communicate the activities, events, businesses, and resources to the local people that live in and around the City of Belle. Additionally, an emphasis will be placed on attracting more tourists to the city. Increased tourism boosts the local economy and will lead to the creation of additional jobs. Furthermore, marketing the destination draws visitors and tax dollars to Belle while helping to create a sense of place for residents and tourists alike.*

**OBJECTIVE 1: IMPROVE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MARKETING EFFORTS**

**STRATEGY 1:** Create a comprehensive website for local community and to address tourism

**STRATEGY 2:** Develop social media plan and improve social media presence to better promote Belle

**STRATEGY 3:** Create a branding plan for the city

**OBJECTIVE 2: WORK TOGETHER TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY EVENTS**

**STRATEGY 1:** Identify lead organization/agency for coordination of community events

**STRATEGY 2:** Partner with local businesses to promote public events

**OBJECTIVE 3: ENGAGE MEDIA POSITIVELY**

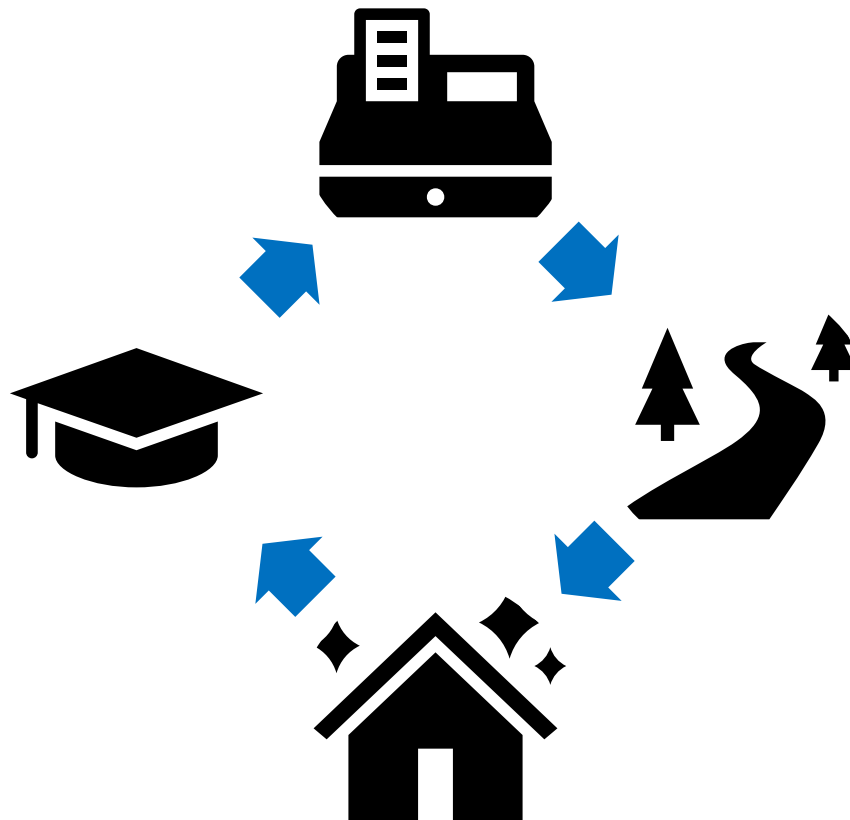
**STRATEGY 1:** Develop media communication plan for municipal government

**STRATEGY 2:** Develop media communication plan for school district

**STRATEGY 3:** Create Business Spotlight

# ACTIONS IDENTIFIED

The action plan answers the question “How do we get there?” and is based primarily on the prioritized weaknesses and opportunities identified during the SWOT Analysis. While the action plan should provide a guide to prioritizing resources and efforts, it should not be used to limit the identification and implementation of other activities that support the strategic direction for the city of Belle. The scope of this plan follows a five-year timeframe and highlights four major areas of focus (infrastructure/schools, housing, community development, and marketing/tourism).



## FOCUS: PREPARE BELLE FOR GROWTH

### Objective 1: *Maintain, Improve and Upgrade Public Infrastructure*

Strategies	Action Items	Partners and Stakeholders	Timeline
<b>Create a Capital Improvement Plan for Infrastructure</b>	<p>Create capital improvement plan to support needed public infrastructure improvements</p> <p>Work with City Engineering firm to determine long-term planning needs and plan development cost</p> <p>Pursue funding for the cost of the development of the plan</p>	<p>City of Belle</p> <p>City Council</p> <p>Mayor</p> <p>City Utilities Staff</p>	
<b>Increase funding for infrastructure needs</b>	<p>Consider possibility of infrastructure funding options such as TIFs, CIDs, etc. tax to support infrastructure improvements, once priorities are determined</p> <p>Evaluate utility rates and consider adjusting rates as necessary</p>		
<b>Improve streets and sidewalks throughout the community</b>	<p>Pursue grants and other funding for the development of and/or improvement of sidewalks/trails</p> <p>Develop plan to improve First Street and address safety and drainage to include consideration of closing off entrance to First Street from Highway 28</p> <p>Work with city engineer/MoDOT to develop a comprehensive study of all streets including condition and need for widening</p> <p>Develop plan to rebuild/lower Alvarado Street/Highway 89 between Third and Fourth Streets to include researching possible grant opportunities for funding</p>		

	Develop plan and secure funding for a sidewalk along Hwy 28 from retail area (Dollar General/Maces) to Alvarado		
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### **Objective 2: *Develop a Comprehensive Plan***

Strategies	Action Items	Partners and Stakeholders	Timeline
<b>Determine scope of Comprehensive Plan</b>	Review existing comprehensive plan  Investigate comprehensive plan process and determine content  Garner support for needed update		
<b>Pursue grant opportunities to fund necessary planning</b>	Work with MRPC to investigate funding opportunities for the development of an updated comprehensive plan		
<b>Update ordinances as part of the comprehensive planning process</b>	Consider updating the city ordinances as part of the process		

### **Objective 3: *Improve and Expand Maries County R-2 Schools***

Strategies	Action Items	Partners and Stakeholders	Timeline
<b>Work to develop a Single-Campus for the Maries County R-2 Schools</b>	Develop long-term school improvement plan to include single-campus plan		
<b>Create a Grow Your Own program to encourage faculty and staff to live within the District</b>	Review best practices of area Grow Your Own programs to identify opportunities to encourage graduating seniors pursuing degrees in education to return to Belle to teach and live		
<b>Develop a partnership between school and business community to promote local</b>	Work with local employers to identify needs within the job market		



<b>employment opportunities for area youth</b>	<p>Expose students to businesses and manufacturers within the community through business/manufacturing days</p> <p>Increase availability of internships and job shadowing opportunities</p> <p>Consider the development of a college and career readiness advisory team partnership between local employers and the Maries County R-2 School District</p> <p>Create community service opportunities for students</p>		
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## FOCUS: IMPROVE AND EXPAND HOUSING

### Objective 1: *Increase Available Housing*

Strategies	Action Items	Partners and Stakeholders	Timeline
<b>Conduct Housing Needs Assessment</b>	<p>Create a Housing Task Force</p> <p>Determine scope of study and options for implementing</p> <p>Research and seek out necessary funding to complete the assessment</p>		
<b>Support and move forward current development plans for additional new housing within city limits</b>	<p>Work with local realtors and developers to identify potential tracts for infill and subdivision construction of single and multi-family housing</p> <p>Research options and programs for incentivizing and funding new housing developments</p>		
<b>Improve infrastructure for new housing developments</b>	<p>Search for grant opportunities to support infrastructure expansion within residential developments</p> <p>Ensure that Capital Improvements Plan for infrastructure evaluates capacity and plans for expansion of</p>		

	necessary utilities to potential sites for new residential construction		
<b>Develop multi-family options for in-fill</b>	Encourage local developers to consider construction of multi-family/rental units in vacant lots and lots with dilapidated units		

### **Objective 2: Encourage More Home Ownership Opportunities**

Strategies	Action Items	Partners and Stakeholders	Timeline
<b>Determine home ownership needs and community goal for housing units occupied by owner compared to rental units</b>	Research and identify the ideal home owner/rental rate in the Belle community (this will be part of the housing needs assessment if this study is done)		
<b>Develop plan for community to work together to grow home ownership opportunities</b>	<p>Form group of local mortgage lenders, developers and city to consider options to incentivize and encourage home ownership</p> <p>Research best practices of other cities to promote homeownership</p> <p>Identify funding programs, including grant opportunities available to help incentivize home ownership</p>		

### **Objective 3: Improve Rental Housing**

Strategies	Action Items	Partners and Stakeholders	Timeline
<b>Address dilapidated housing and research options to encourage property maintenance of</b>	<p>Enforce ordinances and address nuisances. Hire staff or assign duties to an existing staff member</p> <p>Explore the pro's and con's of housing inspections, along with costs</p>		

<b>rental housing stock</b>	<p>Research rental occupancy inspections</p> <p>Research funding opportunities, including potential fees, to support cost of inspections</p>		
<b>Encourage development of quality/market rate rental housing</b>	<p>Review existing rental units and potential areas for development within Belle</p> <p>Work with local developers, banks and realtors to promote development of additional rental housing</p>		

#### **Objective 4: Explore Senior Housing Needs and Opportunities**

Strategies	Action Items	Partners and Stakeholders	Timeline
<b>Study the need for senior housing/senior care resources and explore options</b>	<p>Identify lead organization/individual to coordinate this effort</p> <p>Consider community survey and fact gathering to help evaluate the need in the Belle community</p> <p>Research senior housing programs in other areas</p> <p>Identify potential developers and work to promote the community</p>		
<b>Seek out funding programs and opportunities</b>	Research federal and state funding programs for communities to develop senior housing		

### **FOCUS: ENHANCE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Objective 1: Focus on Community Engagement**

Strategies	Action Items	Partners and Stakeholders	Timeline
<b>Build momentum within community to implement</b>	Identify lead organization and/or individual to coordinate community efforts		

<b>projects/make change</b>			
<b>Promote effective networks/promote information sharing across organizations</b>	Work to create a process to encourage all community groups to share information on events, programs, calendars with City and lead organization/individual		

## **Objective 2: Revitalize Downtown Belle**

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Action Items</b>	<b>Partners and Stakeholders</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
<b>Develop plan for downtown revitalization with a focus on downtown development/destination tourism related to the planned Rock Island Trail</b>	<p>Investigate and research main street downtown planning processes and best practices</p> <p>Consider community branding opportunities</p> <p>Include community signage and wayfinding to promote a better sense of community and make visitors feel welcomed</p> <p>Investigate and consider opportunities for downtown related to bike trails tourism to include outdoor dining, restaurants, shops and activities</p>		
<b>Improve beautification in downtown and throughout the city</b>	<p>Look at façade and sidewalk grants for downtown property owners</p> <p>Encourage property maintenance for local businesses and residents through the enforcement of public nuisance ordinances</p> <p>Enforce codes and remove dilapidated structures</p>		
<b>Improve downtown streets, sidewalks, and parking for</b>	Develop plan to address limited parking, needed street and sidewalk improvements		

<b>pedestrians and vehicle movement</b>	Create a parking map for the downtown		
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### **Objective 3: *Improve Walkability and Connectivity for Pedestrian Movement***

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Action Items</b>	<b>Partners and Stakeholders</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
<b>Develop a master plan for walking/biking, expanding on the city's Active Living plan</b>	<p>Complete Belle's Active Transportation Plan (ATP)</p> <p>Implement the plan as proposed</p> <p>Expand the ATP and develop a master plan for walking/biking to address the entire community</p>		
<b>Pursue grants to help fund new sidewalks and trails, including Rock Island State Park Trail</b>	<p>Prioritize sidewalk and trail needs and/or planned projects</p> <p>Work with MRPC staff to determine applicable grant programs and pursue funding opportunities such as the TAP, RTP, etc.</p>		
<b>Establish walking trail in Belle to connect to the Rock Island Trail</b>	Implement Belle City Heart Healthy Trail project and continue to pursue funding opportunities for further trail development		
<b>Incorporate trail and pedestrian signage into walking/biking trails to promote community assets, provide information and enhance pedestrians trail experience</b>	<p>Develop way finding signage for sidewalk and trail systems to guide users to community destinations and also educate users on trail rules</p> <p>Ensure consistency and uniformity of trail and sidewalk signage with other community wayfinding signage and community branding</p>		

#### Objective 4: *Increase Community Assets*

Strategies	Action Items	Partners and Stakeholders	Timeline
<b>Establish a Farmer's Market in downtown Belle</b>	<p>Meet with local farmers and vendors to determine greatest needs of the market</p> <p>Include music and food sales vendors each week to expand interest in attendance</p>		
<b>Recreate the previous historic train depot for local use and for visitors to Belle</b>	<p>Implement the proposed Belle Train Depot project that includes a multi-use building to serve as a visitor center, covered picnic areas and parking for main street businesses (Exhibit 1, pp. 45-48)</p> <p>Incorporate the train depot into the downtown, in part to serve as a trail head for the Rock Island Trail for bike trail visitors</p> <p>Plan for the Belle Flag Park to serve as a community attraction and draw attention to the downtown/Depot area (Exhibit I., p. 46)</p>		
<b>Revitalize and repurpose existing building in downtown as tourist attraction</b>	<p>Explore the idea to restore the Kingsford charcoal building along Fourth Street to become the Belle Depot Mall as a retail center (Exhibit I., p. 48)</p> <p>Explore opportunities to tie the Depot Mall to the Rock Island trail/trail users</p>		
<b>Explore opportunity to develop multi-use facility/venue to offer a wide range of community</b>	<p>Further explore and work to develop the proposed Belle Motorsports Park plan (Exhibit 11, pp. 49,50)</p> <p>Research funding options</p> <p>Reach out to potential developers</p>		



events and programming			
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### **Objective 5: Increase Child Care Availability**

Strategies	Action Items	Partners and Stakeholders	Timeline
<b>Work to identify unmet childcare needs</b>	<p>Survey local businesses, including the school district's employees, to determine the need for childcare in the community</p> <p>Request information from childcare providers regarding numbers of families on their wait list</p>		
<b>Consider funding options and ways to incentivize new childcare facilities</b>	<p>Research state and federal programs that provide financial and technical support for childcare facilities</p> <p>Partner with the Maries County R-2 School District to evaluate opportunities for early care and education programming through the school district</p>		

## **FOCUS: PROMOTE BELLE**

### **Objective 1: Improve Internal and External Marketing Efforts**

Strategies	Action Items	Partners and Stakeholders	Timeline
<b>Create a comprehensive website for local community and to address tourism</b>	<p>Identify community information to be included on the website</p> <p>Complete a business directory for the city</p> <p>Establish a regular update schedule to ensure information is accurate and timely</p>		
<b>Develop social media plan and</b>	Create a social media strategy to push people towards the new website		

<b>improve social media presence to better promote Belle</b>	Target the market/boost Facebook and other social media posts to focus on certain demographics based on community events or destination		
<b>Create a branding plan for the city</b>	Form working group to develop a brand/logo for Belle  Identify ways to integrate branding into marketing Belle  Improve 'Welcome' sign on Hwy 89 at the entrance to the city		

### **Objective 2: Work Together to Promote Community Events**

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Action Items</b>	<b>Partners and Stakeholders</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
<b>Identify Lead Organization/ Agency for Coordination of Community Events</b>	Organize community meeting to include one to two key members from all active organizations in Belle  Work together to determine ways to better coordinate community events and actively support each other		
<b>Partner with local businesses to promote public events</b>	Encourage businesses to promote local events to include adding to their websites, at their place of business, and on digital message boards around town  Consider the development of a tourism group to work with local organizations		

### **Objective 3: Engage Media Positively**

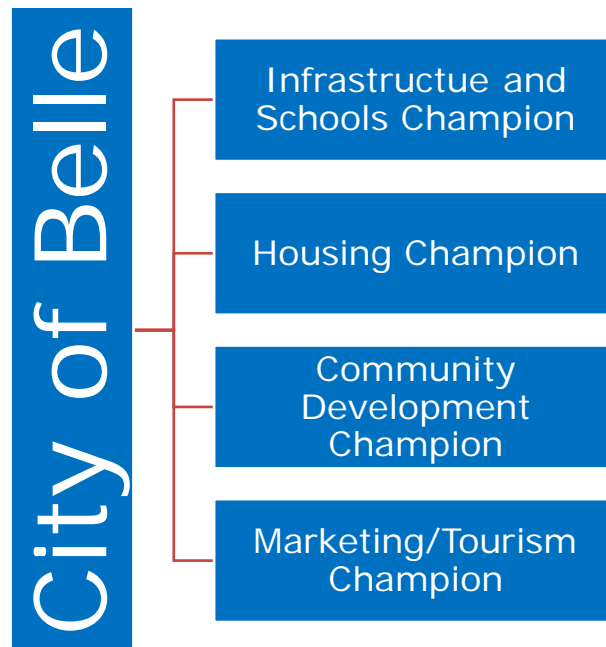
<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Action Items</b>	<b>Partners and Stakeholders</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
<b>Develop media communication</b>	Coordinate a joint meeting with local media and mayor, city clerk and other		

<b>plan for municipal government</b>	<p>city leadership to discuss options for sharing city information</p> <p>Consider development of a regular Mayor's Message column</p>		
<b>Develop media communication plan for school district</b>	<p>Coordinate a joint meeting with local media and superintendent, president of the board of education and other school leadership to discuss options for sharing school district information</p> <p>Consider development of a regular Superintendent's Message column</p>		
<b>Create Business Spotlight</b>	<p>Encourage local businesses to work with local media to create a regular business spotlight column to share good news about the local business community</p>		

# NEXT STEPS

The following steps are recommended to keep the momentum of the City of Belle and local stakeholders moving forward towards the focus areas established in the Strategic Plan.

- *City leadership, the Belle Community Betterment Association, other community groups in Belle, and strategic planning participants should hold a follow-up meeting to set timelines and identify partners, based on the action items discussed within the plan.*
- *Planning partners should host a large community meeting to find interest in various projects and to identify local champions to assist with implementation.*





- *The City of Belle, the Belle Community Betterment Association and community stakeholders should review the plan at least annually to ensure that tasks meet the focus of the plan and to track accomplishments.*

## **ATTACHMENTS/EXHIBITS**

- I. Belle Depot Mall Project Rendering*
- II. Belle Motorsports Project Rendering*
- III. Belle Strategic Planning Workshop Agenda and Supporting Documents*
- IV. Belle Economic Development Survey Results*

Exhibit I: Belle Depot Mall Project Rendering

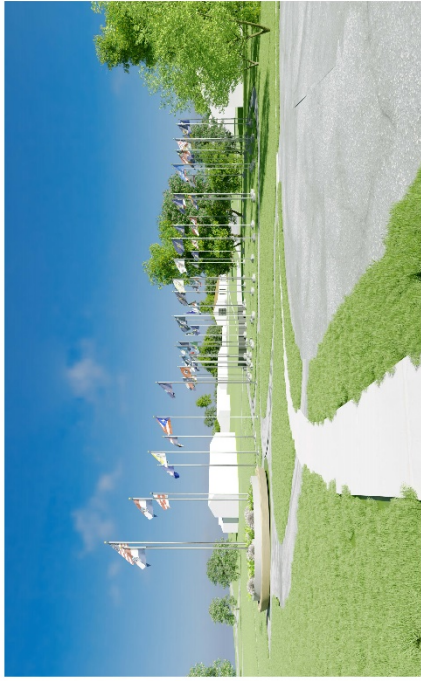


**Belle Depot Mall Project**

**Location:** Belle, Missouri  
**Designed by:** Wesley Scafe  
**Donated to:** Belle Community Betterment Association

\*The above information is for informational purposes only and does not constitute an offer of insurance. The information is not intended to be used for any other purpose. The information is not intended to be used for any other purpose. The information is not intended to be used for any other purpose.





## Flag Park



**Location:** Belle, Missouri

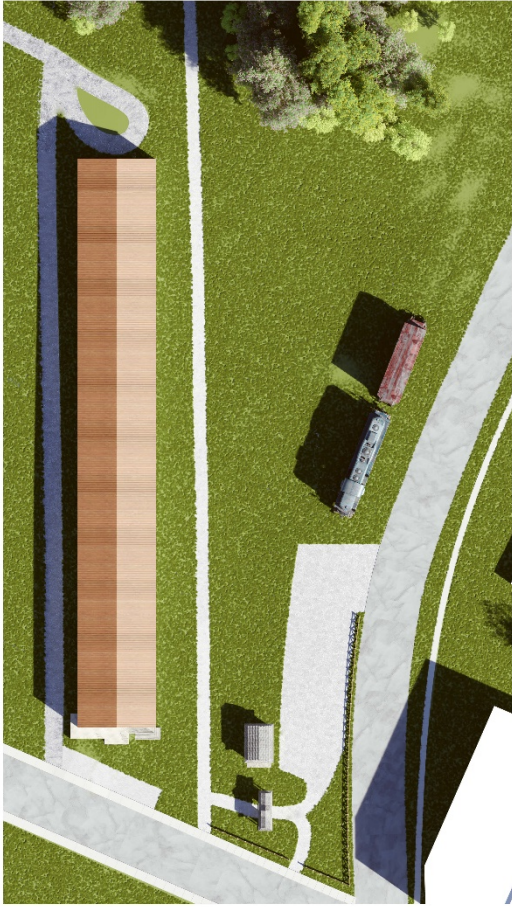
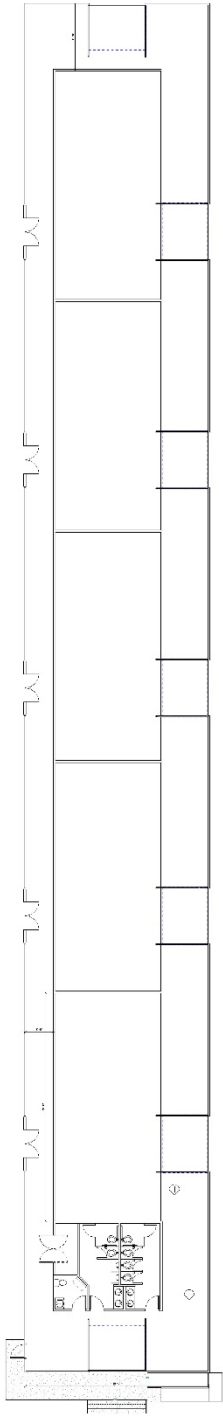
**Designed by:** Wesley Scafe

**Donated to:** Belle Community Betterment Association

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**Location:** Belle, Missouri


**Designed by:** Wesley Scafe

**Donated to:** Belle Community Betterment Association

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# Charcoal Depot Renovation

Exhibit II: Belle Motorsports Project Rendering

 		<p>Location: Belle, Missouri Renderings by: Wesley Scafe</p>	
		<p>Belle Motorsports Complex</p>	





**Belle Motorsports Complex**

**Location:** Belle, Missouri  
**Renderings by:** Wesley Scafe

## Attachment III: Belle Strategic Planning Workshop Agenda and Supporting Documents

**CITY OF BELLE, MISSOURI and the  
MERAMEC REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SWOT ANALYSIS  
(Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats)**

**March 31, 2023  
9:00 a.m. to 3 p.m.**



The meeting will be held at the  
BELLE/BLAND COMMUNITY CENTER  
200 HIGHWAY 28 EAST  
BELLE, MISSOURI

### **MEETING AGENDA**

- I. Welcome and Introductions – 15 minutes**
- II. Review of SWOT Analysis Process – 15 minutes**
- III. SWOT Analysis:** MRPC will facilitate a SWOT analysis for economic development within the city of Belle. Following each category, participants will utilize the dot method to vote for priorities. This process takes about two hours.
  - a. Strengths – 30 minutes**  
Capabilities and resources that allow Belle to engage in activities that generate economic value and competitive advantages.
  - b. Weaknesses – 30 minutes**  
Weaknesses are a lack of resources or capabilities that can prevent Belle from generating economic value or gaining a competitive advantage.
  - c. Opportunities – 30 minutes**  
What are opportunities for future economic development in Belle?
  - d. Threats – 30 minutes**  
What issues or forces could negatively impact the future success of businesses and workforce development within the region?
- IV. Action Item Discussion – Remainder of meeting time**  
Following prioritization of all items (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats), MRPC will count votes and the group will discuss final results. During lunch, MRPC staff will compile the results of the SWOT to be used in the identification and development of Action Items to address the top priorities.
- V. Adjournment**

# Strengths

- Located at junction of Hwys 28 & 89
- Central location
- Retail hub for area
- The people of Belle community
- Proximity to Gasconade River
- Many active civic organizations including Fair Board, YaYas, Park Board, Masons, VFW, Tri-County Youth
- Small town feel
- City park and lake
- Good community involvement
- Belle Community Center
- Belle Community Betterment Association
- Churches/faith community
- Enhanced Enterprise Zone
- Maries County R-2 Schools
- Tight knit community
- Golf course
- Adequate infrastructure for growth
- Available land for growth
- Strong business and community support of community efforts/willingness to give of time, resources
- Community has a desire to move forward
- Kingsford Manufacturing
- Osage Art Community

# Weaknesses

- Pedestrian infrastructure/lack of and condition of sidewalks
- Lack of community vision for growth of Belle
- High level of residential/multi-unit rental properties
- Communication infrastructure/Broadband/internet
- City leadership/  
Turnover in city elected officials
- Lack of existing quality housing stock
- Need for more outdoor recreation/increased fitness opportunities
- Aging public infrastructure including water and sewer
- Need nursing home/affordable senior housing
- No industrial park/industrial development
- No long-term planning for public infrastructure improvements or growth
- Poverty
- Lack of community-wide plan
- Improvements needed to school facilities/new school
- Lack of enforcement of building codes/nuisance violations
- Drugs/Addiction
- Lack of childcare
- Older and declining housing stock
- More main street businesses needed
- Lack of senior center
- Lot of low-income housing
- Park buildings need fixed/upgraded
- Lack of competitive jobs with exception of Kingsford



## Opportunities

- City-wide long-term plan for public infrastructure
- Upgrade all city-wide infrastructure
- Rock Island Trail promotes trail development in Belle
- Form coalition to work on senior housing/nursing home
- Improvement in school district facilities/new school facilities
- Downtown redevelopment/promoting the downtown area
- Better utilize City committees in place
- Actively seek out more grant opportunities
- Expand and improve housing stock through new developments
- Building code/ordinance review and enforcement
- Dedicated emphasis on community development, grant writing and management
- Focus on economic development/industrial attraction
- Development of industrial park
- Tourism/improve local charm (eg Rosebud)
- City-wide trash pickup
- Community-wide Beautification
- Improvements in telecommunications infrastructure
- Improve and increase area recreational assets/youth activities

# Threats

- Poor internet/broadband
- Downsizing of major businesses, including Kingsford
- Continual decline of residential areas within city/deteriorating housing stock
- Lack of support for upgrading/new facilities for Maries County R-2 School district
- Not upgrading city infrastructure to include water/wastewater/streets and sidewalks/stormwater
- Continued purchasing of homes to use as rental housing
- Loss of the Maries County R-2 School District
- Brain drain
- Resistance to change/stuck in the past
- Bad publicity due to local issue (drugs, crime, etc.)
- Turning away of big opportunities by local community
- Increasing poverty
- Drug Misuse
- Lack of community vision for future opportunities
- Lack of housing stock/home ownership opportunities

## Possible projects to address Opportunities and/or Weaknesses

- Improvements to Belle City Park
- Expand and further develop Belle City Park/Belle Motorsports Complex
- Updates to Masonic Hall
- Belle Flag Park
- Updates to VFW Hall
- Install Welcome to Belle signage at entrances
- Develop the Belle Depot Mall
- Add new housing stock of up to 150 units, adding 3 to 5 new housing development areas
- First Street improvements including streets, sidewalks, stormwater infrastructure, street lighting
- Belle City “Heart Healthy Trail”
- Main Street Beautification Project
- Lodging in Belle City Park
- Belle Beautification/Belle Train Depot
- Development and adoption of a larger scale comprehensive strategic plan to include infrastructure, economic development
- Grow facilities for youth/New Skate Park for Youth
- Community Center Upgrades

**POPULATION:** Population has remained pretty much static. 2020 ACS Population was 1,458 – just 2 less than 2010 of 1,460

Location	2021 ACS	2010 ACS	% Change
Belle	1,458	1,460	-0.1%
St. James	4,112	4,169	-1.4%
Cuba	3,340	3,372	-1.0%
Owensville	2,580	2,681	-3.9%
Linn	1,654	1,662	-0.5%
Vienna	678	610	10.0%
Maries County	8,884	9,203	-3.6%
Osage County	13,372	13,768	-3.0%
Phelps County	44,789	44,473	0.7%
Missouri	6,090,062	5,988,927	1.7%

Source: 2010 & 2021 American Community Survey data. <http://data.census.org>

#### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:

- 85% of those 25 and over that live in Belle are a high school graduate or higher. This improved from 79.5% in 2010.

Location	% 2021	% 2010	% Change
Belle	85	79.5	5.5
St. James	84.9	72.3	12.6
Cuba	74.1	80.9	(6.8)
Owensville	79.8	81.8	(2)
Linn	90.6	82.5	8.1

Source: 2021 American Community Survey data. <http://data.census.org>

- 15.1% of those 25 and over in Belle are without a high school diploma. This number also improved in the last decade.

Location	% 2021	% 2010	% Change
Belle	15.1	21.5	(6.4)
St. James	15.1	27.8	(12.7)
Cuba	25.9	19.1	6.8
Owensville	20.2	18.2	2
Linn	9.4	17.6	(8.2)

Source: 2021 American Community Survey data. <http://data.census.org>

## HOUSING

- Median value of an owner-occupied home in Belle was \$81,600 in 2011 and grew to \$127,200 in 2021. This was an increase of 55.9% over the past decade and was a greater increase than all neighboring communities, Maries County and the State of Missouri experienced during that same time. The majority of homes (162) in Belle were valued between \$100,000 and \$200,000 (2017-2021 ACS).

Location	2021 Median Home Value \$	2011 Median Home Value \$	% Increase
Belle	\$127,200	\$81,600	55.9
St. James	\$102,600	\$88,600	15.8
Cuba	\$135,900	\$100,700	35
Owensville	\$109,500	\$87,600	25
Linn	\$140,100	\$102,800	36.3
Vienna	\$109,400	\$89,000	22.9
Maries County	\$158,600	\$116,200	36.5
State of Missouri	\$171,800	\$138,900	23.7
Source: 2021 and 2011 American Community Survey data. <a href="http://data.census.org">http://data.census.org</a>			

- Belle has 684 total housing units with slightly over half of those being owner-occupied (314 or 53.8 percent of the total occupied units) and approximately 100 noted as vacant, based on 2021 ACS data. The vacancy rate in the community was 18.1% in 2011 and decreased to 14.6% in 2021. The percentage of housing units that are owner-occupied decreased in the last decade from 59.3% in 2011 to 53.8% in 2021. In relationship to this change, the housing units used as rentals increased from 40.7% of total units to 46.2% of housing units in Belle. It is interesting to note that all the renter occupied rates increased over the last decade for all communities referenced, with the exception of Linn which saw a slight decrease.

Location	Total Housing Units	Occupied Units	% Vacant Units	% Owner Occupied Units	% Renter Occupied Units
Belle	786	644	18.1%	59.3%	40.7%
St. James	1,704	1,523	10.6%	59.6%	40.4%
Cuba	1,304	1,158	11.2%	54.3%	45.7%
Owensville	1,185	1,051	11.3%	67.9%	32.1%
Linn	908	709	21.9%	57.8%	42.2%
Vienna	497	434	12.7%	62.2%	37.8%
Source: 2011 ACS 5 Year Estimates Data Profiles. <a href="http://data.census.org">http://data.census.org</a>					

Location	Total Housing Units	Occupied Units	% Vacant Units	% Owner Occupied Units	% Renter Occupied Units
Belle	684	584	14.6%	53.8%	46.2%
St. James	1,618	1,464	9.5%	48.1%	51.9%
Cuba	1,331	1,331	7.8%	32.9%	67.1%
Owensville	1,293	1,113	13.9%	65.6%	34.4%
Linn	710	586	17.5%	62.1%	37.9%
Vienna	398	324	18.6%	50.9%	49.1%
Source: 2021 ACS 5 Year Estimates Data Profiles. <a href="https://data.census.org">https://data.census.org</a>					

## INCOME

According to 2021 American Community Survey, 10.6% of Belle's individuals (153) are living below the poverty level compared to 27.5% of the total population in 2011 living in poverty. This is a significant decrease over the past decade in the number of people in Belle living in poverty and sets Belle apart from neighboring communities. In the Belle community less than 1% (10) of those below the age of 18 are living below poverty, 7.8% are between 18 and 64 years of age and 2.1% of those over the age of 65.

Location	2011 Population Below Poverty		2021 Population Below Poverty		2021 Age Under 18 Below Poverty	2021 Age 18-64 Below Poverty	2021 Age 65 & Over Below Poverty
	Number	%	Number	%	%	%	%
Belle	429	27.5	153	10.6	0.7	7.8	2.1
St. James	732	18.8	1,094	29.4	14.4	13.3	1.7
Cuba	826	25.2	800	26.1	7.1	16.3	2.7
Owensville	344	13.7	362	14.0	5.1	6.9	2.1
Linn	320	18.9	339	22.6	5.4	14.7	2.5
Vienna	172	20.2	271	34.9	14.4	13.3	1.7
State of Missouri		15.0		12.8	3.8	7.4	1.5
Source: 2011 & 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, US Census							



- Median household incomes in the city increased approximately 41% over the last decade.

Location	2021 Median Household Income	2011 Median Household Income	Percent Change
Belle	\$45,368	\$32,083	41.4%
St. James	\$45,126	\$37,029	21.9%
Cuba	\$33,447	\$34,143	-2.1%
Owensville	\$43,007	\$39,963	7.6%
Linn	\$47,045	\$38,447	22.4%
Vienna	\$34,524	\$39,881	13.4%
Maries County	\$50,434	\$42,018	20.0%
Missouri	\$61,043	\$47,202	29.3%
Source: 2011 & 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, US Census			

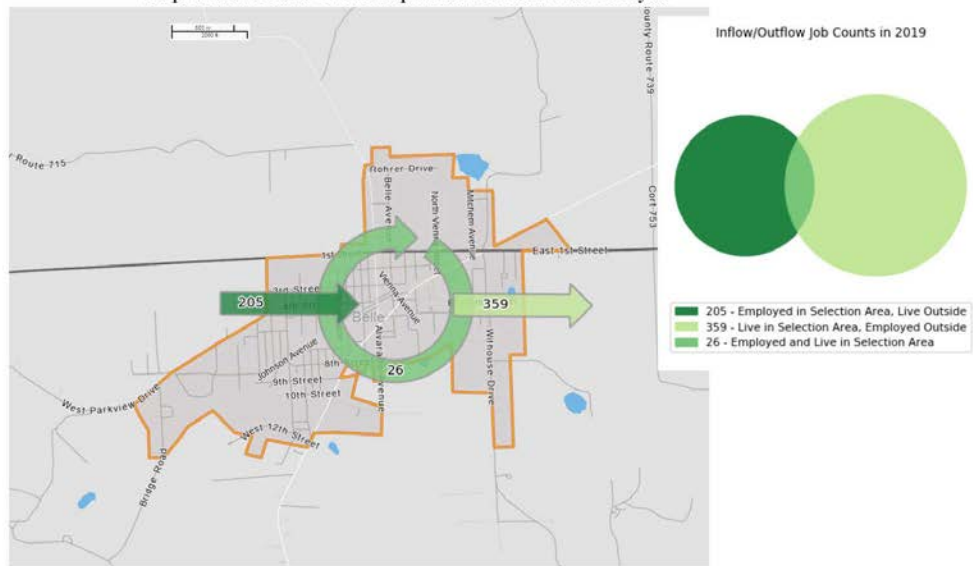
## UNEMPLOYMENT

- Unemployment in the city of Belle was listed at 2.2% based on the 2021 ACS.
- The average 2021 unemployment rate for Maries County was 3.8%, based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Osage County's average rate for that same time period was 2.6%.
- From January 1, 2022 to the end of January 2023, Maries County has averaged an unemployment rate of 2.66%, with a high of 3.7% in January 2022. The current unemployment rate through January 2023 in Maries County was 2.7.
- Osage County averaged an unemployment rate of 2.1 January 2022 through January 2023, with a current unemployment rate of 2.2.
- Overall, the unemployment rates have improved over the course of the last 2 years.

## COMMUTING CHARACTERISTICS

The U.S. Census OnTheMap Inflow/Outflow Analysis provides a visual representation of those within the city of Belle and their commuting characteristics. The most recent analysis is from 2019 and shows that 205 individuals are employed in Belle but live outside the city limits, 359 live in Belle and travel outside of the city for work, and only 26 people live and work within Belle.

Map 2: U.S. Census OnTheMap Inflow/Outflow 2019 Analysis



Source: US Census OnTheMap 2019 ACS  
Data <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>



## Attachment IV: Belle Economic Development Survey and Results

### Belle Economic Development Survey

What is the city/community of Belle known for?

Kingsford and Restaurants and cheap rental properties

Small town with affordable cost of living

Cummunity Involvement

Kingsford charcoal; aggressively coming together to help others in a time of crisis/need/devastation.

Kingsford,rock island trail potential

Our park

Amazing people

Belle has a wonderful park with lake and we hold as many events as possible; i.e. BCBA Swap Meet,

Ya Ya Rodeo, Belle Fair, many ball games, etc; Belle is fairly close to the Gasconade River but we

really don't promote it; it's eating places (sadly), due to economy we have had 3 places close

permanently. Also, we have a wonderful art facility that could be promoted more; The Osage Arts

Kingsford, drug bust, fundraising/supporting each other

Close-knit, opinionated, passionate about their town. Unfortunately, most media coverage focuses on

Kingsfords Charcoal, low income rentals, disparity in city government

Belle Fair

a community that helps those in need

nice City Park

good restaurants

Bob's Frozen Custard

Six Restaurant's and eateries

What is unique about Belle?

Tight nit community, helps each other in times of need

Old railroad town that no longer exists. Needing new identity.

Community Involvement

It's a small community, but as I previously stated, the community always comes together to help a

Small town,big heart

Small town living

Sense of strong community that support each other

Sad, but I cannot think of anything. We have struggled with this which has adverting affected us

being able to promote our community.

Perfectly placed equally between JC & Rolla

The willingness to give and support community events.

Committed from individuals supporting the many organizations and fundraising

It's location as a crossroads, highest elevation in the area, proximity to the Gasconade River and the

'someday' Rock Island Trail wooded and hilly scenic section

Belle is the Largest City / Town of Maries County

What resources does the city/community have readily available?

Nice park, golf course, cheap housing and utilities

Churches - they typically have their own ways to support the community. Banks - three banks in a

small town. Space - potential to expand

A lot of 501C3

There are always businesses and individuals available and willing to give back to the community, either in the form of money or some sort of machinery and/or materials. (rock, mulch, dirt, steel, etc.) There are also a couple strong churches making positive changes in the community.

Good water, land for development

People, time,

Faith

We are fairly close to the Gasconade River and will soon have a walking trail; but the trail doesn't connect yet to any portion of the Rock Island trail. Many people here fish, hunt and golf, plus archery and ball. We have a nice golf course, but their pool could be larger.

grocery, banking, church, gym, school, post office, pharmacy, eateries, carwash, salons, florist, bar Kingsford Charcoal and school system

Centrally located in between Jefferson City, Washington / Union / St James / Cuba, and Rolla.

Commuter community / within a one-hour drive to Columbia, Washington, Union, Jefferson City, and Rolla. Located near the Gasconade River. Located near the historic Gasconade railroad bridge.

Clorox / Kingsford manufacturing. Agranco Corp USA North American manufacturing headquarters.

Maries R2 School District / High school, and Elementary school. Retail hub / fifteen miles to the nearest town. Mace's Supermarket is the regional center. Three regional banking locations. Country

#### **What do you value most about your community?**

The people.

Benefits - community reaction to people/groups raising funds

The fact that we have such good community involvement and everyone helps one another.

There are a lot of great people here, there's always someone willing to lend a hand.

Support for school groups and organizations

Lifestyle is very laid back but need more residual living

The people

The people plus it's a small farming community and crime is low.

small town- everyone comes together to help each other

The people and businesses.

How the community comes together in tragedy for each other.

The compassion of the people for others

Community involvement: Active community groups contributing to the growth of our community /

Belle Fair Board, Belle Park Board, Belle Community Betterment Association (BCBA), Ya Ya's, Tri County Youth Association, Soccer Park group, two FFA chapters, Golf Course NFP group, Masons,

#### **What is the city/community of Belle doing that no one else is?**

BCBA, Yay's and the events they put on.

Hosting a lot of our own events that funnel money back to the community

I am not aware of anything that someone, somewhere, isn't doing already.

Central location, access to gasconade river nearby and rock island trail potential.

Not sure

Not sure

I can't really think of anything "unique" that we are doing in comparison to other small communities can't think of anything

BCBA has been a blessing to the city. They are a small group that works hard.

Division on marshall position and chief of police, city government.

Osage Arts is restoring some buildings that have been neglected, I am unaware of other unique  
Working as a rural community in Mid Missouri to continue to move into the 21st century

**What is Belle's biggest strength?**

Our people.

Providing a small rural area to live; embracing small town America

The people living in it

Kingsford, schools, people

Its people

Our community is committed to trying to improve our water and sewer systems

People

It's residents. Then, when you review visual strengths, I would say, the City Park, the Community Center, the Osage Art Community, and the various organizations that work hard to assist in our the people who live here

The willingness of the community and businesses to give their time and resources to better the town.

That Belle has adequate infra structure to support moderate growth, and available land to grow the Belle is the Largest City / Town of Maries County, located at the junction of Hwys 28 & 89, centrally located in between Jefferson City, Washington / Union / St James / Cuba, and Rolla, a commuter community / within a one-hour drive to Columbia, Washington, Union, Jefferson City, and Rolla, and

**What kind of change would you like to see in Belle?**

Better housing and cleaning up old housing.

I would like to see a new school no matter what the means to get it are. That is the single most important thing for any community to grow.

I'd like to see a mentality shift. A lot of the older, wealthier community members do not want to see the school succeed, nor do they want to have to pay any more taxes to help with pretty much Stronger city leadership.

Improving our infrastructure

1. Housing; we are getting more and more rental housing plus ordinances are not strong enough nor enforced to ensure housing (primarily residential) is well maintained.

2. A strong Mayor and City Council; I feel that they do not stay focused on long-term needs and improvements to our community. I think this is because they are always changing so opinions change, then they struggle to get improvements done. They don't focus on applying for community grants and that is probably because they don't have adequate staff to administer the grants.

3. A strong working police department. People get really frustrated in the community because police do not enforce nuisance violations, building code violations, etc. It's sad, but the people vote in Marshals based on their personality and do not pay attention to their true qualifications. This has caused many problems.

More jobs, less slum type housing, not highlighted for drugs and crime in local news

More positive news, less nitpicking and in-fighting at public meetings.

Commitment to improve our community

Progress toward a school building project in phases, and with a vision to the future

Belle City: establish walking trail through the town to interface with the MORIT Trail; city wide upgrade of all sidewalks, curbing, guttering, and storm drainage program plan, city wide street resurfacing and alley upgrades program plan, city wide update / improvements to telecommunications infrastructure, city wide weekly trash pickup program, Belle Beautification projects: Belle Flag Park, Re-creation of the 'Belle Train Depot' with a Main Street community parking area, Welcome to Belle sign on west side of town on hwy 89 and one on north side of town on hwy 89 outside Belle /Bland Community Center, First Street Improvement Project, Belle City Park Improvements, Belle City Park Expansion & Development of the 'Belle Motorsports Complex' / Multi

#### **What improvements would you like to see in Belle?**

Residential clean up, more business.

Communication Infrastructure - offer 100Mbps like most cities do. Water/Sewer Infrastructure - seems like a lot of line breaks recently. Community Calendar - organized calendar on city website that shows town events and benefits/fundraisers. Something anybody can find if they search "Events in Belle, MO". Public Meeting Lot - nice paved lot with good lights and cameras that can be used for Farmers Market or Online Sale Meetings. Better use of Downtown Space - Mixed use buildings along I would like to see municipal services spread out more for new housing development. Spec homes New school, better water & sewage systems, more resources for police/SRO presence at all school Water and sewer lines. Development of rock island trail and flag park.

Water and sewer upgrades

1. New developments for housing.
  2. Evaluate older and declining housing and stop the purchases of older housing which is in turn turned into rental housing. Maybe pass ordinances restricting the purchase of homes in various neighborhoods that would prevent those houses from being rental homes. It is a well know fact that these rental houses are bringing in less taxes.
  3. More Main Street businesses.
  4. Strict housing and commercial business ordinances that require the owners to properly maintain the properties and keep the buildings properly repaired so the value of the property does not decline. For example: house on Johnson St where roof is actually falling in, commercial building on Main St. has no windows,etc.
  5. New School facilities.
  6. New underground water system to all properties plus new water tower.
  7. After new water system, then ensure all streets are repaired.
  8. New sidewalks throughout town to replace ones that need tore out; then replace with 5 foot water tower, increased businesses, sidewalks, clean up some of the poor looking housing Resources for employment, updated school facilities, sewer system
- To focus on keeping the city streets in good repair before they deteriorate beyond repair  
School buildings replaced

After school program where children could have help with homework and mentors to help the youth  
A City employee who would be responsible for grant writing and grant management, upgraded and usable city website, promote city to outsiders, city directory available at all businesses, churches, city hall, etc., assisted living center opportunity, attracting more businesses to Belle Main Street, hwy 28, and hwy 89 business extension, city wide strategy and long-term plan to address existing citywide infrastructure that has been neglected for decades that needs active improvements for growth: sidewalks, curbing, guttering, and storm drainage plan, street resurfacing and alley upgrades program plan, improvements to telecommunications infrastructure, sewer, lagoon and water



**What are other communities doing better than Belle?**

Linn, St James

Organized Efficient Fundraising - United Way - One group that advocates for all not profit organizations in the community. Document/Mailer that list all organizations and people can choose which they want to support. Enforcing Construction Permits and Building Code Inspections. Does Belle have a modern building code policy? Are there timelines for construction permits? What are the Owensville, Linn, St. James. All of these communities are doing better than Belle I believe because of one common thing. They have much better schools.

Supporting their school better and making updates & improvements that Belle can't afford without City organization and web site updates.

1. Downtown revitalization.
2. Police services.
3. New School facilities.
4. Community beautification.
5. Water and sewer systems.
6. Art, murals, veteran memorials.
7. Green Spaces in Downtown or surrounding areas.

business recruitment, activities

Focus on the positives.

Passing school bonds to improve the school system and general upkeep of properties

I think some communities of similar size work together as a community better than Belle does Westphalia, Linn and Vienna come to mind. St James also but they have some advantages of size, They are realizing opportunities of creating new housing stock to attract new community members and retain youth; also realizing funding opportunities from federal state and local grants by attracting and retaining a grant writer for their municipality, and also grant cycle oversight and management; they are upgrading street pavement and alley's, sewer, water infrastructure, storm drain, sidewalks and curbing upgrades city wide to support community growth; they are improving their elementary, middle school and high school facilities; they aware of lack of vision and action will result in

**What resources does Belle lack (e.g. healthcare, childcare, jobs, etc.)?**

Childcare, Jobs, certain infrastructure

Childcare - Not enough providers for infant/toddlers. Legal - Maybe elder/trust law, tax advising, Childcare is probably the biggest thing that I struggle with as a young adult with young children.

Money, industry

Coul use more housing,not just rental property.

Healthcare, childcare, increased facilities allowing more jobs to increase tax revenue

1. Local good paying jobs (exception Kingsford Charcoal)
2. Industrial park facilities which attract manufacturing jobs.
3. Nursing home within community. All of our elderly people who need nursing home care have to locate to a facility out of town (mostly Vienna, Linn, Owensville, or Rolla, or Westphalia.
4. Childcare services (especially for under age of two).
5. Elderly resident programs, except for church
6. Facilities and programs for our younger residents (except for sports).
7. Outdoor exercise programs/activities (except for city park).
8. Senior Center for our elderly.
9. Affordable Senior Citizen Housing (the last one closed due to all the federal regulations/paperwork, is what owner indicated)
10. Good sidewalks where people can walk or ride bikes (most people use the streets for extended walks because many of the sidewalks are in disrepair or there are no sidewalks). Note: When the walking trail is built, that will help; however, the trail ends on First Street, and there is no connecting sidewalks, just the highway or busy First street that has no sidewalks at all. You will either have to turn around and go back on the trail or face unsafe walking/bicycling conditions. There will need to be a phase two to the trail that hopefully will provide for sidewalk/bicycle trail that will circle back healthcare clinic with ability to meet needs, childcare, jobs, solid police force

#### Industry

Economic base of multiple employers, smaller farms than some surrounding communities, no unique industries such as furniture makers, niche farm producers, childcare is probably somewhat an issue, The resource of a systematic community wide plan to develop strategies to realize opportunities in the near future as well as in the long-term, and then to grow into the healthy community we can all

#### What additional weaknesses exist in Belle?

Structure for repeat/ongoing ordinance violations. If people honestly don't have the means to fix/correct the violation, we need a program that offers them resources to be able to reach out to community members who would help them. There needs to be something that encourages/motivates. The fact that most of the grants are given to bigger communities over Belle. We need more money for our school and park. The park we are able to hold bigger events to get people to our community and the school makes people want to stay in our community. I believe these two things are what really. A lot of low-income housing makes things difficult for the school system and for the community. I'm not at all judging the people or their circumstances, as I've been there myself. However, it does attract a certain type of people that are statistically more troublesome for a community.

More take charge attitude from the city.

No response.

empty buildings or partially remodeled buildings

low incomes, low tax base, no long term, sustained and concerted effort to bring good jobs to the community. Losing the tax base of the railroad, the Conoco/Phillips fuel loading facility without. We need to promote the city to outsiders more effectively, and we need a city directory available at all businesses, churches, city hall, etc. Additionally, our lack of vision and throughput by 'old guard', community leaders with general inability to imagine, visualize, and realize opportunities for community growth. Unfortunately we also have a high level of residential / multi-unit rental properties, contrasted to available existing family housing stock for rent; weak or low landlord involvement for improving rental property, thus attracting more lower income, individuals and families that do not

**What are some newer opportunities for citizens and the city/community of Belle?**

A new company just opened.

Rock Island Trail - projected/unknown potential

I know of a couple new business coming to town one of which will employ around 20 people.

The potential of the walking trail is the only thing I know of, or at least that I can think of at the

Organizations willing to improve belle.

1. Work with MRPC and appropriate contacts to build a nursing home in Belle.
2. Work with various groups and the City to create and maintain a pleasing environment and functions to bring people into our community.
3. Work together as a community to identify and improve our weaknesses (there is a lot of work to do in this regard, and the community should work together to overcome our weaknesses and make I don't know

New businesses. Local government and organization opportunities.

The Hance family technology business in the west end, new retail businesses, the expansion of

Brewer Science facility at the airport and the expansion of Wieberg Red-E Mix at Vichy

Possibility of the Rock Island Trail some day

Several new homes built in the area

Some young families able to remain in the area since remote work stations are more viable

Fiber optic installations ongoing

newer opportunities. not sure at this time - thinking

**How is the community of Belle changing?**

While many great people live here we still have crime issues.

New Fire/Ambulance Sheds. Noticeable improvements at the park. Started BCBA group. Started

YaYa's group. Started School Foundation.

I believe that we have added a couple of new non-for profits over the past 5 years as well as new members on sitting on other boards making more innovative and new community involvement.

There are some younger families here, but I'm not sure how long they will stay with the lack of community support for a better school, and lack of higher-paying jobs. I also see the BCBA cleaning Getting older.

Losing opportunities to improve and maintain because of revenue

We have lost our manufacturing facilities (as numerous small towns have), our housing market is poorer, our park buildings and facilities need fixed and upgraded, our downtown area needs are noticeable. etc. Even with the work the city and community members are doing, I feel our community appears tired and neglected. In speaking with business leaders here, they do not believe we can entice many new jobs in manufacturing as there is no industrial park/facilities (closest would be at Vichy). Our community is facing growth challenges because our only manufacturing jobs revolve around Kingsford Company. In the last study conducted about Belle, notable concerns were addressed (MU Extension Study) which the previous city officials have. I guess this really depends on what the City officials and community want.....do you want a community that is considered a one new business coming to town

Slowly deteriorating

Influx of new landowners who are buying up rural land for various uses  
 More low income and disabled residents  
 many older homes in extreme disrepair  
 new residents more secluded from their neighbors than past generations  
 the town is not as safe as it once was, this is a culture wide problem not unique to Belle.  
 Police Dept too distant from the community at large  
 more interested in citations than serving the citizens  
 think the same is a problem in a large portion of the newer business community  
 Organizing and moving forward

**Has the city/community of Belle passed on any opportunities that are still available?**

Not that I know of.

Possible Grants - There are lots of opportunities but we have to be organized and prepared and take  
 Yes the fact that we didn't pass for the increase in property tax for a new school. In our business we  
 pay for property tax in several other communities as well as Belle's. Belle is by far the cheapest by a  
 long shot and we pay property tax in about 20 different counties.

The opportunity to pass a bond issue and begin the process of building a new, one-campus school.

Grants and answering important surveys on hazmat and emergency preparedness.

Grants have not been sought as much as there is not adequate staff to oversee and administer the  
 grants. Numerous grants available throughout the year.

City officials previously determined various needs and set up working groups, but employees of city  
 have commented no working meetings, etc. ever held. This is an opportunity that will hopefully be  
 addressed through this study and with the assistance of MRPC.

unsure

Not aware

I do not know

Lack of an overall strategic plan / planning and thus not being able to pursue funding / grant  
 opportunities has significantly and historically handicapped significant growth. This unfortunate  
 situation will continue until there is a full time grant writer for the City of Belle. There are currently  
 grant writing efforts that have resulted in meager resources, but lack of long term vision and formally

**What is the competition ignoring that the community can take advantage of?**

Inexpensive living, therefore labor can be less expensive than larger communities.

Hire a full time employee to be a Grant Writer/Social Media & Website Admin. City website needs an  
 Events Calendar and also a Projects page that shows current and future projects, explain their  
 need/impact, the project budget, explain if the funds are coming from appropriation or if it needs  
 fundraising/grants. Adopt - A - Spot Program - volunteers can adopt key focal sections of town to  
 We need ways to get more grants. I know that grants are tough but we need to be applying for as  
 many as possible to get projects done so it makes Belle a more desirable place to live.

I don't have enough information to answer this.

Leadership.

? Not sure

Not certain.

unknown



Rock Island Trail

Applying for grants

Seeking out start up businesses that need space, exposure, whatever to get them going

Not sure how to attract investors to a new school, but we need an approach that does not depend entirely on bond revenue to begin building a new school

Perhaps private money and labor to construct 5 miles of the Rock Island trail from Belle to Summerfield

I'm not aware of the 'competition' at this point. What is of concern is that 'we are ignoring' our own potential. We need a focused community wide plan for all our government agencies and civic groups to engage to move through the ignorance and into realizing opportunity.

**Are there any additional opportunities for the community?**

Some vacant buildings. Land to expand housing

We have companies in our community that do the kind of work that needs to be done in our community. If a project were to get funded, we need to be sure an emphasis is given to local

I believe that through zoning and what other means we have that we need to get the HUD housing out of Belle. That would make for less crime and a higher income rate for our community to grow. I do sympathize with people that don't have much money but the cold truth is that HUD housing brings attract more industry, build a new school, and support the school system more as a whole.

Improving downtown and the park.

more business opportunities- belle could easily be a "rosebud"

Not aware

Develop scenic tours of the surrounding area?? That might be a public/private endeavor. There are many beautiful vistas and unique settings in the surrounding area

Dark areas for stargazing with telescopes??

The closest schools for special needs children are in Rolla and Bourbon, there seems to be a need for one in this area that would be available to Vienna, Linn, Owensville??

continued communication

**What communities are Belle's biggest competitors and in what area/areas do they compete?**

Vienna, Linn, Owensville. For business.

Any town that provides something Belle doesn't have. Owensville - Water Park, Bowling Alley, I would say Owensville is our biggest competitor due to the Walmart taking sales tax away from Belle. As well as the school being so much better making it a more desirable place to live.

Owensville; they have a lot more industry and support.

Vienna; more community support.

Rolla; A lot more industry and much larger tax base.

Grants and updating website.

1. Nursing home care. All communities surrounding Belle, except town of Bland
2. Shopping - most all other communities,, except town of Bland.
3. Walking/bicycle trails, biggest competitors would be Vienna, Linn, Owensville, St James, and Rolla.
4. Art culture - competitors would be Cuba, St. James and Rolla area.

Owensville- industrial companies, Walmart Linn  
 Owensville- job opportunities and school district, Vienna- county seat and school district, Rolla- job opportunities, community growth and opportunities, and school opportunities.  
 Owensville, higher wages for school district; Vienna county seat  
 Owensville has a number of large employers, better schools,  
 Vienna and Linn have the county governments and Linn has State Tech  
 Belle property values are lower and our street and infrastructure look better than those communities  
 Our competition might be Owensville, Linn, Jefferson City, Union / Washington, and Rolla.  
 Employment, retail and entertainment option are their most significant attractions.

**What has the potential to cause a major disruption to the city's economy (e.g. specific business closing, natural disaster, etc)?**

Kingsford closing.

Removing any employer. The School and Kingsford are probably the largest employers. Ice storms causing long term power outages. Might want to think about burying more power lines within city  
 KingsFord closing or the School closing

If any of the following closed/moved: Kingsford, the local trucking company, Maces Supermarket, Midstate Pipeline, ARD, just to name a few. These are all huge community supporters, they provide a lot of jobs, and the move a lot of money in and through the town.

Disasters and reasons for people to move to belle.

Lack of funds

1. Kingsford Manufacturing Company employs the most manufacturing jobs
2. Continual decline of residential areas within city and continued purchasing of homes to use as rental housing.
3. Continued decline in tax revenue (businesses closing and decline in housing market - property tax revenue loss and people moving into community that have no "vested" interest in the community.

Kingsford closing, tornado

business vulnerability

Losing our school or Kingsford Co leaving our area

If Kingsford would close it would devastate Belle, additionally if our school closed it also, would Kingsford manufacturing closing, slowed or significant reduction of sales tax revenue in Belle from the county, reduction in state funding to the school district, and closing of any of our retail merchants.

**What are some additional internal or external threats to the community?**

#### Crime

Leadership who have their own agenda and doesn't pay attention to information such as this SWOT Analysis. Not understanding the difference between creating a thriving small community vs growing a small town into a city. Keeping small town values but providing resources to live quality lives.

The additional internal threats I believe are people being stuck in the past. Examples: still having a Marshalls position over Chief of Police" There is a reason almost all small towns have a Chief of Police instead". Also not wanting to cough up more money for a school. You have to keep up with inflation this isn't the 60's anymore "I get tired of older people complaining about the fact that they went to school in Belle in the 60's and still think the school is fine". External threats are more An internal would be people with an extremely outdated mindset as far as what it takes to keep a community and school system thriving. One of the biggest external threats to the community and school is the government and all of their regulations, inclusions, and restrictions.

#### Politics

##### Lack of jobs

1. People moving out of the community that are searching for better opportunities or job opportunity (those who work hard to contribute to the town) and then people moving into town that move into rental properties that have no vested interest in our town. I think a real focus of this study should be on the number of residential housing that is being sold and used as rental properties. Example: 2 years ago, a property company out of Boonville (I think) came to town and bought up 6 to 10 properties within a couple of months; and just last week, all of these properties are now being sold on funding, less tax revenue

##### Internal- discord between city leaders

Rental properties not being maintained, sewer and water system out of date

Drugs, homelessness, crime. Any legislation from the federal government to limit livestock & crop production, federal water laws that prevent landowners from utilizing their land for the use they have invested in, curtailing petroleum fuels and mandating electric vehicles, appliances, etc.

The closing our Maries R2 School District as a result of the State pursuing cost reduction measures or general reorganizing of rural schools. Lack of long term funding for the MORIT Trail State Park. Lack of long term planning by current and future City of Belle Mayor and Council, city Staff, Police

#### **What are some community projects that could address Belle's biggest weaknesses?**

A good police force. Clean up properties for redevelopment. A city council that is more progressive in moving the community forward.

Quality Infrastructure - modern communications, utilities, roads/curbs/sidewalks, Mixed Use Buildings downtown. Beautification Projects - Adopt-A-Spot challenges.

More sewer and water coverage outside the city limits for new development. I have several thoughts and numbers on redoing the community center to make it more desirable for functions. Which I believe is needed because the community center is one of the things in belle where the community comes together. Also there are a few big projects at the park I believe that need to get done so that we can have more events. Example: Completely new track with concession stand that could hold around 2,000 to 3,000 people and property around the park for more parking. More people we can I don't really know what you could do to realign the thoughts of the folks that are adamant about not Develop rock island trail,downtown and sewer and water infrastucture.



1. Working group to focus on downtown business district.
2. Working group to focus on ordinance update concerning residential properties and what to do to ensure properties are clean and well cared for, in addition to restricting rental property expansion (if possible).
3. Working with MRPC evaluate and secure grant funding for water/sewer facilities and improvements needed.

unsure

Applying for grants, pass bond issues

New school buildings without bond revenue, after school programs in the downtown area with easy access to the school, more volunteer participation at the school, volunteer programs to help the elderly, low income with home upkeep and regular maintenance, progress on the Rock Island Trail Develop new housing stock of 150 units within three to five new housing developments / These developments will be existing 'in town' property and / or will be properties annexed into the City of Belle. Increasing the property values of the City of Belle, generate tax revenue for the City of Belle, and consequently improve our Belle schools and community. Working with city and developers to expand existing infrastructure: Five year development project, 150 units: 75 first time home owner units, 50 mid-price range units, and 25 high-end units, this resulting in three to five new housing developments.

Belle City: establish walking trail through the town to interface with the MORIT Trail; city wide upgrade of all sidewalks, curbing, guttering, and storm drainage program plan, city wide street resurfacing and alley upgrades program plan, city wide update, Belle Beautification projects: Belle Flag Park, Re-creation of the 'Belle Train Depot' with a Main Street community parking area, Belle City Park Improvements, Belle City Park Expansion & Development of the 'Belle Motorsports Complex' / Multi use facility, develop a Skate Park for youth activities.

Belle Beautification project with the Re-creation of the 'Belle Train Depot' as multi use building with a Main Street community parking area to include: Establish a local visitors center, farmers market, covered picnic areas for use for MORIT Trail head visitors and Main Street restaurants visitors, and parking area for Main Street businesses, as well as MORIT Trail head visitors.

Belle Beautification Project / 'Belle Depot Mall' at the MORIT Trailhead: Re-purpose of the old Kingsford charcoal shed into the 'Belle Depot Mall' / MORIT Belle Trail-head, Belle Depot Mall will be a retail venue (40' x 260' = 10,400') and tourist attraction for Belle visitors, Mall will include public bathrooms, vendor stores and cart stalls, indoor and outdoor picnic areas adjacent to the MORIT Trailhead

Lodging for MORIT Trail visitors and Belle community: national chain hotel, camping hookups in our city park

Belle City Park / work with Park Board, Fair Board, Ya Ya's group, Tri-County Youth group, Maries R2 School District, FFA group, Livestock Committee, and Belle City for complete list of programming improvement opportunities: Update Park property, clean lake, quonset hut electrical upgrades, electrical upgrades park wide working with Ameren, concession stand upgrades, camp ground development and hookups, create formal walkway / path completely around the lake, update

**Based on the previous question, which project do you think should be a top priority?**

A better police force, cleaning up properties.

Modern High Speed Internet Capabilities - I think reliable modern internet can allow people to work from anywhere, opening up rural American towns to new opportunities.

The Community center it is in bad shape. I also think that we can have more events here if it is redone correctly for example we have events over at Vienna at the Eagles all of the time? We could redo to accommodate things like this and have Belle community events in Belle as oppose to another N/A

Rock island trail.

Water and sewer upgrades

Probably the two special taxes just because it could be achieved more quickly; then focus on NA

Applying for grants

School

New housing stock development

**Are there any specific projects to address potential opportunities within the city?**

Create an incentive package for new companies that bring good jobs to the area.

There are a few housing development opportunities that can be done as long as the city can support some of the infrastructure. One huge complaint I hear all of the time is also how bad Highway 28 is, I know this is a MODOT issue but the city leaning on them and some of our reps would be a big push forward. Also I would work on getting most all of 28 annexed into the city because of future The city, the fair board, and the school could come to an agreement on who is responsible for maintaining and having authority of the ball-fields.

Rock island trail grant.

Unsure

I don't know

The previously mentioned list

**Based on the previous question, which project do you think should be a top priority?**

Trail system, trash clean up, Infrastructure improvements.

Have an elevator pitch that gets the attention of growing businesses. Give them a reason to think about "Rural Sourcing" instead of Outsourcing. Have a viable area they can build/create on.

Infrastructure for housing development opportunities.

Rock island trail.

New housing stock project

**How strong is the sense of community in Belle?**

4

4

5

4

3

3

5

4

4

3

2

3

4

**I think the sense of community in Belle is impacted positively or negatively by...**

The different non profits positively. City government negatively.

Positive - People coming together to support those who need it. Fundraisers/Benefits that provide opportunity or support. Negative - those who demand assistance but never provides assistance and have a victim mentality and never takes responsibility or ownership of their own situation. people who have time to volunteer but makes excuses not to. Deteriorating Properties - Lack of pride in Positively by so many different people being involved with 501c's.

It is impacted positively by churches and the ability to love your neighbor.

It is impacted negatively by a lot of people that don't want to do their part at home nor in the Politics and lack of leadership.

Drugs

The people

negatively by influx of drug use

press coverage of public meetings and arrests

Perhaps not a common vision for the community and lack of pride in this community that some other surrounding communities seem to have

Social media and print media coverage

**How promising is the future for the Belle community?**

3

3

5

3

3

3

3

4

3

4

3

5

3

**Please identify the main reason/reasons for your rating.**

Belle could go either way. Either better or worse in the near future.

When thinking about the future, I think about younger generations. They/We need to be investing in their education/training. Its difficult and scary for young people to think about the unknown future. They need ways to see the paths they can take so they can start with confidence instead of blind luck. They need career advising, shadowing, apprenticeships, etc. We need young people to become well educated/trained to get good jobs and then live in our community. VVe need a community full of confident people who have pride in their work and the life they create. They should have the same pride in the town they live and the home they live in. Home/Equity Goals - I think one of the biggest assets people gain is the equity in their Real Estate. Our town and its people can both benefit from Real Estate ownership. The town needs more quality built spec homes that are perfect starter homes. The spec home market is aging in Belle. We need to be able to provide young people with a reason to invest in Real Estate and take pride in their asset as they watch they gain equity. Buying a I think that we are getting younger people involved with the community.

Because if things do not change, and more people get involved and be supportive, I'm not sure how sustainable the future is. On the flip side, I'm optimistically hopeful that it grows stronger.

Politics and city budget.

I believe if we (the citizens, business leaders, and city officials) can come together and work together with the people in the community and the people understand what is trying to be achieved, you will

Only one large manufacturer/employer in the immediate area

railroad trail potential, BCBA and YaYa potential

Hopeful to find a solution that the community will support

Economic

Optimism, our willingness to make community wide change to attract more peoples to visit and then liv

**How proud are you to live in and be a member of the Belle community?**

4  
4  
5  
5  
4  
5  
5  
5  
4  
3  
5  
4  
5

**Reasons that I am or I'm not proud to be part of the Belle community are...**

I am proud of the people that volunteer and donate to several local causes. Not proud of the crime and the looks of the community. While it looks good from the hwy the residential areas have gone I am happy to do my part and volunteer a large portion of my time to see projects/events develop in I'am proud to be from Belle and have such a great community that works together. Sometimes people don't get along but always come together to make a good event or work done around the Basically, all the reasons I've listed above! For the most part, it is a loving community with a lot of Leadership.

Lifelong resident and would like to see more growth so that my grandchildren can continue to reside  
I love living in a small rural agricultural community and most of the people that live and stay here truly  
want to see our community improve and thrive. It really is about the heart of the people in a  
community and the support they give. I've been by blessed to serve with the members of the Belle  
Community Betterment Association. We have a lot of work to do for improvements to our  
Negative coverage on social media and television of the community. Quickly highlighted for crime,  
etc but not for the good events or positive happenings  
Raised in Belle and seen a time when the community worked to support Belle and there was unity.  
The compassion of the people in this community is outstanding. They always come to the aid of  
people in need whether they are local or on the Gulf Coast devastated by a hurricane, or in Kansas  
Lack of vision and throughput by 'old guard', community leaders with general inability to imagine,  
visualize, and realize opportunities for community growth