



Elk River

Comprehensive Plan



Adopted: May 19, 2014



701 Xenia Avenue South, Suite 300
Minneapolis, MN 55416
Tel: (763) 541-4800 · Fax: (763) 541-1700
wsbeng.com



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Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)

Paul Motin, City Council
Barbara Burandt, City Council
Mark Konietzko, Planning Commission
Gunther Sagan, Parks and Recreation Commission
Larry Toth, Housing and Redevelopment Authority
Bryan Provo, Economic Development Authority
Joshua Fox, Historic Preservation
John Setala, Energy City Commission
Debbi Ryberg, Elk River Area Chamber of Commerce
Bruce Anderson, Sherburne County

Project Advisory Committee (PAC)

Calvin Portner, City Administrator
Jeremy Barnhart, Community Operations Development Deputy Director
Chris Leeseberg, Park Planner/Planner
Zack Carlton, Planner I
Justin Femrite, City Engineer
Michael Hecker, Parks and Recreation Director
Brian Beeman, Economic Development Director
Suzanne Fischer, Community Operations and Development Director
Gary Leirmoe, Wastewater Treatment Chief Operator

City Council

John J. Dietz, Mayor
Stewart Wilson, Ward 1
Matt Westgaard, Ward 2
Barbara Burandt, Ward 3
Paul Motin, Ward 4

Planning Commission

Dana Anderson, Chair
Mark Konietzko
Jeremy Johnson
Eric Johnson
Mike Keefe
Mike Keller
Chad Westberg



Purpose of the Plan

Elk River's Comprehensive Plan is a guide to help the City preserve what it values, enhance what it feels is needed to be improved upon, and continue to create what it desires for the future. The Plan is a tool that the community uses to guide its future growth, redevelopment and improvement efforts. It provides a foundation upon which the community will construct its future. More specifically, it offers a framework for public action that helps the City make the best and most appropriate use of its resources by establishing policies that are used to guide the decision-making process.





The Comprehensive Plan brings together various elements of Elk River into a comprehensive long range plan. The Plan is a guiding document that will periodically be reviewed, amended and updated.

City staff, the City Council, Boards, Commissions and others associated with the City will use the Plan to assist them in many ways. It will provide guidance for making informed decisions regarding development, redevelopment and infrastructure improvements, acquire and use public land, assist in budgeting capital improvements, establish regulatory tools and necessary changes, and facilitate the communication of the City's vision to residents, property owners, and others.

Property owners and residents will use the Plan to assist them with determining potential property use, understand possible land use changes that may occur in the surrounding area, understand future infrastructure improvements, and make property improvements based on the City's vision for property in the area.

Business owners, developers, and entrepreneurs will use the plan to guide them in acquiring property and coordinating development plans with existing and future City infrastructure. It will also assist in helping to coordinate issues of mutual interest, including coordinating the regional systems like transportation and water resources.





Organization of the Plan

The 2013 Comprehensive Plan builds on the City's 2004 Comprehensive Plan. While the general guiding principles of the two plans are similar, this Plan emphasizes the City's desire to maintain (and enhance) its existing growth patterns and character. The content and organization of this Plan are as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction. This chapter describes the purpose of the Plan, how it is intended to be used, how it was developed and how it is organized.

Chapter 2: Vision. The chapter on vision provides a snapshot of what the members of the community would like the future of Elk River to look and feel like. The Vision Statement provides the basic framework for planning and decision-making.

Chapter 3: Implementation. The Comprehensive Plan is the most important tool for guiding the development of Elk River, but the plans and implementation strategies contained within each chapter can only help achieve the community's vision for the future if the Plan is used. The purpose of this section is to provide guidance on using the Plan and creates a set of guidelines to do so.

Chapter 4: Community Context. This chapter provides general background on the community and its people.

Chapter 5: Land Use. In order to realize the Vision for the future of Elk River, this chapter sets the foundation and guides the use of land. The Land Use chapter considers broad community patterns and questions such as how much growth should be anticipated and accommodated and where should the growth occur. It also contemplates how land uses relate to each other and to the natural environment.

Chapter 6: Transportation. This chapter provides an inventory and analysis of the regional and local transportation system and it provides a plan to address transportation issue and opportunities.

Chapter 7: Housing. While many aspects of housing development will be controlled by market forces, there are aspects of the Housing chapter that focus on the type of housing envisioned for the City of Elk River. These aspects include, but are not limited to, affordability, housing patterns, and housing type choices. The Housing chapter provides an inventory and analysis of existing housing conditions and it provides a plan to address housing issues and opportunities.

Chapter 8: Utilities. Community growth and development involves a variety of municipal Utilities. This chapter focuses on inventorying, maintaining, sustaining, and enhancing the municipal utility system within the City.

Chapter 9: Parks. Parks provide places for the community to gather and play and also provide a means for protecting natural features, open spaces, and other aspects of Elk River's natural heritage. A system of trails connects the community and allows for safe movement outside of vehicle traffic. This chapter provides a summary of the existing park system and outlines strategies for future improvements. The City is in the process of updating a standalone Parks, Trails and Open Space Plan which should be used for more detailed information.

Chapter 10: Community Facilities. This chapter describes existing and proposed community facilities and services in the city. This chapter also summarizes the key issues and opportunities relating to intergovernmental cooperation and it provides a plan for joint efforts in the future.

Chapter 11: Environmental Resources. Elk River is blessed with a variety of natural and environmental resources. This chapter examines their impact and importance to the future development of the community.

Chapter 12: Community Development. This chapter of the Plan discusses roles and initiatives for the City to take in attempting to meet specific development and redevelopment needs of the community.

Chapter 13: Community Image. This chapter explores approaches to create a consistent image for Elk River as it continues to grow, development and redevelop, including general appearance guidelines for the downtown area, major roadway corridors and community gateways.



Planning Process

This Comprehensive Plan updates the 2004 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Elk River, for which the City gratefully acknowledges the efforts of those who participated in the development of the 2004 Plan.

Many stakeholders were involved in the development of the 2013 Comprehensive Plan Update including the following:

- **Project Advisory Committee (PAC):** The Project Advisory Committee (PAC) was made up of members of the City staff and the WSB Team. The PAC met on a bi-monthly basis throughout the planning process to provide pertinent background information and data, review and provide feedback on all technical memos and draft chapter language, and assisted in the development of the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC):** The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was comprised of a broad-based citizen group that consisted of members from the City Council, Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, Heritage Preservation Commission, Energy City Commission, Economic Development Authority (EDA), Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), Elk River Area Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Rivers Edge Business Association, and Sherburne County. The CAC met on a monthly basis throughout the planning process to provide direction and feedback on the visioning process, draft chapter language and assist in the development of the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Community Open House:** The City held two (2) community open houses to seek public input on the draft Comprehensive Plan. The first open house was to explain the comprehensive planning process and gather feedback on issues, concerns, and opportunities within the city. The second open house provided up to-date Plan information including future land use plans, visions, and implementation strategies.
- **Community Education.** A visioning session was held with a group of students (K-5) through District 728 Community Education Adventures Club. Students graphically communicated what they like, what they don't like, and what they want in the City of Elk River.
- **Social Media and Community Outreach:** Understanding the importance of stakeholder engagement and community buy-in of the Plan,



the City utilized a variety of social media and community outreach techniques.

- **Project Website:** The City hosted a project website which provided meeting agendas, draft plans and meeting minutes for public review and comment throughout the process.
- **List Serve System:** Updates and announcements were sent out using the City's list serve system.
- **Newsletters:** The City's newsletter was used to communicate key stakeholder events and the project throughout the planning process.
- **Facebook Page:** Announcements of the Community Open House and opportunities for the public to comment and engage in the planning process was posted onto the City's Facebook Page.
- **Cable TV:** Advertisements announcing the Community Open Houses and encouraging participation in the process was broadcasted using ERtV Channel 12.
- **Public Hearing and City Council Approval:** Public hearings on the draft comprehensive plan were held on March 11, 2014 with the Planning Commission, March 17, 2014 and May 5, 2014 with the City Council. The draft plan was also reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission at a special meeting on April 2, 2014, and again by the Planning Commission on April 8, 2014. On May 19, 2014 the City Council approved and formally adopted the comprehensive plan.



Importance of a Vision

According to an old story, two stonecutters were asked what they were doing. The first said, "I'm cutting this stone into blocks." The second replied, "I'm on a team that is building a cathedral."

This story as first told in the City's 2004 Comprehensive Plan illustrates the role of a vision in managing the growth and development. Without this vision, development management works much like the first stonecutter with new pieces added without a clear picture of what is being built. The comprehensive planning process is a tool used to guide the future growth and development of Elk River. The cornerstone of this process is the Vision Statement, which provides the larger picture of the "cathedral" that Elk River seeks to become by offering a broad and enduring view of Elk River. Each development or redevelopment must help to build that vision, not just fit cleanly with the next "stone block."

Furthermore, the Vision serves several purposes including:

- The Vision serves as a tool for evaluating proposals, projects, ideas and new directions. How does this action fit with the Vision?
- Creating a Vision Statement allows a shared understanding of community desires for the future.
- The Vision encourages the community to consider the future, even a future that is twenty years distant.
- The Vision provides an anchor in times of conflict and change – a way of finding common ground and shared values.
- The Vision encourages imagination, recognizing that the direction it sets can be the reality of the future.
- The Vision creates energy and enthusiasm for maintaining the commitment to the Comprehensive Plan.



Overarching Vision Statement

Elk River’s Vision Statement, as expressed below, and adopted in 2010, captures the “big-picture” aspirations of the City. Specific visions for each of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan are provided in each of the other chapters of this Plan, along with specific goals and objectives on how to attain those visions.

Elk River Vision Statement

Abounding in natural beauty, Elk River is a vibrant, historic rivertown that promotes an active lifestyle in an innovative and involved community offering unlimited opportunities.

Furthermore, the future of Elk River consists of several themes, including:

1. Maintain a distinct identity for Elk River

- Elk River will keep an identity and character all its own.
- Natural, cultural and historical resources of the community are essential ingredients of Elk River’s identity.
- Elk River seeks to grow in a manner that preserves the qualities of its “small town” heritage, including providing community space, maintaining and creating connectivity throughout the city, providing opportunities for social connection and interaction, and having destination locations such as downtown.

2. Create and Maintain strong neighborhoods

- Neighborhoods are the basic building blocks of Elk River and are the reason people stay in Elk River.
- Residential development is judged on both aesthetics and function.
- Commercial corridors are the most visible aspect of our community and shape our views and attitudes about the community.

3. Keep Elk River a “safe” place

- Elk River is a place where people feel comfortable and secure.
- Traffic safety is an important factor in all aspects of community development.
- A system of streets, sidewalks and trails encourages safe and convenient movement throughout the City.
- Elk River is accessible for all people.
- Municipal services (police, fire, water treatment) create both the perception and reality of safety.



4. Preserve and maintain the environment

- Elk River seeks to promote clean air and water in the management, development, and delivery of municipal services.
- Development must be served by well maintained and reliable infrastructure.
- Development seeks to incorporate and blend the built and natural environments.
- As Energy City, Elk River seeks to promote sustainable and energy efficient forms of development.

5. Make Elk River a complete place

- Community and economic development policies will seek to attract employment opportunities and goods and services needed by the community.
- The expansion of local employment creates more opportunities for people to live and work in Elk River.
- Planning and decision-making must recognize that the population of Elk River is not a single commodity. Differences in age, economic status and ethnicity must be considered in planning for future development, facilities and services.
- Recreational and cultural opportunities are vital elements of a complete place and the strength of the Elk River Brand.
- A quality education system attracts and keeps people in Elk River.

6. Work to achieve the vision

- Everyone shares responsibility for achieving the vision. It is not the sole responsibility of city government.
- The City will seek collaborative efforts with other partners who have shared interests in achieving this vision.

All Chapters and aspects of this Comprehensive Plan work to achieve the Vision and the themes for Elk River.

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Introduction

This Comprehensive Plan sets a vision of what Elk River will look and feel like in thirty years. The Comprehensive Plan is one of the most important tools for guiding the development and redevelopment in Elk River. The plans, policies, and implementation strategies outlined within can only help achieve the community's overarching vision for the future if the Plan is actively followed and used. The City, its residents, property owners and business owners must take specific actions if the City is to realize the full value of this Plan. While each chapter within this Plan offer additional implementation actions specific to each component, the purpose of this Chapter is to provide guidance on using the Plan.



Holistic Approach

An overarching principle of this Plan is to consider economic, social and environmental issues and opportunities simultaneously. In addition, each chapter within this Plan is integrated and connected to other chapters. Therefore, the successful implementation of this Plan requires that the City Council, Boards and Commissions, City Staff and others consider this Plan as a whole when making decisions. This balanced approach will ensure that Elk River makes informed decisions that will help the City meet its overarching vision of a “vibrant, historic rivertown that promotes an active lifestyle in an innovative and involved community offering unlimited opportunities.”

Initiatives

A Comprehensive Plan is a general plan that can provide the framework for more detailed plans relating to a special topic or special area in the city. The following provides, a summary of key initiatives that are important steps in moving Elk River towards its vision for the future.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

The Comprehensive Plan is a guide for public action. In many cases, these actions lead to public investments in infrastructure and facilities. Planning for these investments must include a financial element.

The City’s capital improvement plan (CIP) matches the estimated project costs over a five-year period with funding sources, allowing the City to prioritize projects and make the best use of available revenues. By looking at future needs, the City is better able to find funding sources to fill gaps and to coordinate projects with other jurisdictions.

The City adopted its first financial management plan, Key Financial Strategies for Elk River, in 2002. Since then the City has prepared a five-year CIP annually. Future capital improvement plans should continue to be coordinated with the Comprehensive Plan.

Sanitary Sewer Capacity

In 2013 the City underwent a study and investigation of the sanitary sewer system capacity. Sewer capacity (or the lack thereof) influences the type and intensity (density) of development and private and public costs of these improvements also influence development in this area. While the study completed in 2013 addresses many of the questions pertaining to capacity gained through expansion of the wastewater treatment plant and the financial implications of making these improvements, continued study and analysis of the future sanitary sewer system will be critical for future planning efforts, particularly those areas in the northern half of the City currently outside of the municipal urban service area.



Street System

The City's Transportation Plan and Chapter 6: Transportation provide a long-term framework for managing the local street system. This initiative focuses on specific steps that work to achieve the objectives of these plans.

Establish Key Street Corridors

Both the Comprehensive Plan and the City's adopted Transportation Plan discuss broad locations for expansion of the street system. A key to understanding these improvements will be identifying and maintaining the routes of these key street corridors. This initiative should involve preliminary engineering and transportation planning analysis to evaluate the physical factors that affect routing. While several studies have been completed over the past several years, further analysis is needed to proactively plan for future routing of streets. This is important because:

- A designated route allows the city to protect the corridor from land use conflicts. Without the routing plan, the City has no means of keeping development out of the potential right-of-way for the street. Encroaching development increases the complexity and cost of the street projects.
- A designated route gives the City the means of incorporating these streets in future plats.
- This information provides better coordination of roadway planning with overlapping agencies such as MnDOT, Sherburne County and Anoka County.

One way of achieving clarity is the creation of an "official map." An official map is one tool for protecting street corridors. It shows existing and proposed future streets, roads, and highways of the City and County, the area needed for widening existing streets, roads, and highways of the City and County, and existing and future county state aid highways and state trunk highway rights-of-way. The statutory authority for the official map comes from Minnesota Statutes Section §462.359.

Undertake Financial Planning

On-going capital improvement planning is critical in the success of future street improvement projects. With limited sources of funding, it is particularly important to create financially sustainable street improvement plans. Among the financial issues to consider in this planning are:

- Which streets should be part of the City's state aid system and eligible for funding with municipal state aid for streets?
- Are other sources of local revenue available to support this initiative?
- How can the City most effectively leverage funding from the County and State?

A key strategy to understand existing conditions and what future improvements are needed would be to complete a pavement rating and program management exercise to rate all of the City's existing street network. This will inform the City of where we are and where we need to be in the future in terms of our existing street network.

Interchange Area Planning

While the actual improvement of highway corridors may lie years into the future, the City benefits from the continuing proactive approach to planning for the interchange areas. The location and design of intersections with Highway 169 and Highway 10 have significant implications for land use, economic development, and transportation planning.

The nature of highway access influences adjacent land uses. The conversion from intersections to interchanges or underpasses will change traffic movements, may require removal of existing buildings, and may create a catalyst for new development or redevelopment. Intersections and interchanges will also become focal points for automobile traffic. The local street system must be designed to support traffic volumes and movement patterns. Likewise, the closure of current intersections would alter the movement patterns within the City and would alter development opportunities and patterns at these locations.

A proactive approach provides the City with a basis for working with MnDOT on planning for highway improvements. The alternative places the City in a position of reacting to State proposed designs.



Greenways and Open Spaces

The Comprehensive Plan proposes to establish a greenway system throughout Elk River. The implementation of this concept is not a single action. It involves commitment to the concept and incremental steps to building this system. Much like assembling a jigsaw puzzle, individual pieces are added within the framework of a broader plan.

Identify Key Properties

The City's Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan currently underway will show potential greenway and open space patterns based on existing data. A Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) was completed in 2004 by the City which identified key natural areas in Elk River including wetlands, prairies, swamps, marshes, forested areas, and critical habitats. This information should continue to be utilized and incorporated into the review of future development and redevelopment applications.

Establish a Finance Plan

Limited financial resources will play a role in undertaking this initiative of maintaining and obtaining greenways within the City. Some potential funding strategies include, but are not limited to:

- Allowing a landowner to place a desired preservation area in an easement that is recorded on the deed to prohibit development of that land area. In return the landowner would receive some property tax relief. As appropriate, these areas should include a trail easement to allow public access and links with other areas.
- Encouraging property owners to donate property to the City for long-term preservation through the greenway and open space system.
- Using density bonuses as an incentive for additional land dedication. A developer can offset the loss of dedicated lands with the ability to building additional housing units or cluster the homes. The City's Open Space Preservation Plat regulations provide a model for the implementation of this strategy. The City can also grant the ability to add additional lots if certain criteria are met. Allowing additional units or smaller minimum lots might also be options for sewered subdivisions and zoning districts. This approach requires specific criteria for obtaining the bonus and limits on maximum changes in density.
- The greenway initiative promotes a reevaluation of the overall park dedication regulations, allowing the City to discuss the role of the park dedication, and to develop plans to ensure implementation of overall park open space needs. Shifting park dedication resources to greenways will reduce funds for other elements of the park system.
- Parks and greenways will compete with other services and facilities for property taxes. Some communities have sought voter approval to issue bonds to finance park and open space initiatives.



Promote Housing Maintenance and Revitalization

The residential neighborhoods in the Mississippi Connections Area contain some of the oldest homes in Elk River. Housing in this area helps to provide more affordable housing options. Creating tools for maintaining and revitalizing the housing stock is an important part of the Mississippi Connections initiative.

Distinct edges between single-family residential neighborhoods and commercial districts should be defined and maintained because residential and commercial uses typically have different objectives for the use of property. Commercial properties need signs to attract customers, and successful businesses create traffic and require parking. None of these conditions fit the objectives for a single-family neighborhood. Edges and buffers can allow residential and commercial uses to coexist. Without this approach, commercial uses may erode the edges of neighborhoods, and may discourage maintenance of the existing housing stock.

The success of the City in preserving the Mississippi Connections Area identity will play a role in maintaining the housing stock because establishing a desirable place to live will attract homeowners and encourage investment. Property owners will then be able to capture monies used for home improvements at the time of resale. Some potential public actions related to housing in the Mississippi Connections Area could include:

- Incentives to encourage home ownership.
- Financial assistance for home improvements.
- Regulations to prohibit undesirable activities and land uses.



Intergovernmental Collaboration

The vision for the future of Elk River cannot be achieved without the cooperation and collaboration of other units of government and overlapping agencies. Strong working relationships and collaborative solutions are essential to the success of this Plan. Some of the key governmental elements of the Plan include, but are not limited to:

- **Annexation.** Continued discussions with adjacent communities should occur relating to opportunities for future annexation. Further planning and discussions are necessary to ensure adequate services are available.
- **Land Use.** While a large portion of the City is undeveloped (due to limitations relating to the municipal utility system), there are areas where Elk River and neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions should coordinate on land use issues including future extension of utilities to the outer boundaries of the City, the coordination of the final plans for the Landfill area when final grade has been achieved within the next 15-20 years, and the Highway 10 and 169 corridor areas as they develop over the next several decades. Partnerships with surrounding communities, the County and MnDOT will be needed moving forward.
- **Community Facilities and Services.** Continued partnerships should be maintained as it relates to the community facilities, in particular with the Independent School District 728 and the various athletic associations on various recreation facilities and programs, community education, celebrations and events, and similar issues and opportunities. The City should also coordinate with ISD 728 if plans are made in the future for expansion of existing, or the development of new, facilities. The City should also continue to explore opportunities to work with other communities on joint or shared services where appropriate.
- **Parks, Trails, and Open Space.** The City of Elk River and neighboring communities should continue to coordinate on providing trail connections between communities. Coordination on connecting greenways and open spaces between the communities should also be considered.
- **Housing.** Elk River and the surrounding communities should collaborate on housing issues and opportunities so that regional housing needs are met.



- **Economic Development.** Elk River’s economy is tied to the regional economy to some extent. In fact, most of Elk River’s labor force commutes to a job in another community outside of the City. Consequently, Elk River should coordinate with other jurisdictions to ensure that the regional economy is healthy.
- **Transportation.** The transportation system involves many jurisdictions – some of which have goals, objectives and resources that differ from those of the City, but nonetheless transportation must work as a cohesive system. It is critical that Elk River and pertinent neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions coordinate on transportation issues. Key areas where intergovernmental collaboration is necessary include:
 - Highway 10 corridor improvements and enhancements;
 - Highway 169 corridor improvements and enhancements;
 - Pedestrian and bicycling crossings;
 - Truck traffic issues associated with aggregate and sand mining areas, plants and the landfill;
 - Railroad at-grade crossing areas;
 - Continued future planning with the Northstar Commuter Rail;
 - Potential road turn-back candidates; and
 - Public transit.
- **Utilities.** Elk River and its neighboring communities have coordinated and should continue to coordinate on water supply, sanitary sewer, and electrical supply issues. In particular, Elk River and pertinent neighboring communities should continue to review and adjust joint powers agreements relating to shared services. Elk River and neighboring communities should also coordinate on Elk River’s plans to extend utilities to the outer boundaries of the City.
- **Surface Water Management.** Surface water is not constrained by political boundaries. The way Elk River handles its surface water affects the surface water in neighboring communities. Likewise, Elk River’s surface water is affected by neighboring communities. Consequently, it is important that all jurisdictions have a shared vision and approach to handling surface water management. Elk River and neighboring communities should continue to coordinate with Sherburne County, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and others.



Small Area Studies

As the mining activities cease and municipal utilities get extended beyond the current utility boundary limits, further study and analysis will be necessary. In particular, the area surrounding the Highway 169 corridor north to the City limits, and the area at the intersection of Highway 169 and County Road 33 will be of particular interest. A study on land use and needed public improvements will be necessary. While planning for these areas may be several years away, further analysis and study of these corridors is vital to the success of the area long term.



Implementation

Implementation Tools

There are many tools that the City can and should use to help implement this Plan, including, but not limited to, awareness and education, incentives, and public-private partnerships. Perhaps one of the most important implementation tools includes the City's ordinance and regulations. The following provides an overview of the updates the City will need to make to its land use controls to be consistent with this Plan.

Zoning and Related Ordinances

The City has adopted zoning regulations for the purpose of carrying out the policies and goals of the land use plan element of the Comprehensive Plan. The application of zoning districts and the specific regulations must support the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. As a result, an outcome of adopting the Plan will be the review and modification of the Zoning Ordinances as necessary.

The land use plan provides the basis for guiding zoning decisions that will be made by the City and private property owners. Minnesota Statutes Section 462.356 states that "...the planning agency shall study and propose to the governing body reasonable and practical means for putting the plan or section of the plan into effect. Subject to the limitations of the following sections, such means include, but not limited to, zoning regulations, for the subdivision of land, an official map....."

This statute anticipates that the zoning regulations will be reviewed and updated to ensure implementation of the land use plan. In a broad sense, this review of the zoning ordinance should examine the following items:

- The regulations for each zoning district should be reviewed to determine if they fit with the intent of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Zoning districts should be examined in relationship to land use designation. Changes in zoning districts will be needed to match zoning with land use.
- The City will need to thoroughly review and update its Ordinances to address inconsistencies and conflicts to integrate the concepts described in this Comprehensive Plan. Updating the Zoning Ordinance will be a large undertaking that will require significant input, time and energy.

One of the policy decisions the City will need to make is how to implement the land use plan through the zoning map. Unlike the Metropolitan Land Planning Act (Minnesota Statutes Section 473), which requires consistency between the land use plan and zoning in cities within the Twin Cities metropolitan area, Elk River may choose to take a number of implementation strategies. Elk River has historically chosen to have zoning consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Each has varying implications for existing property uses and the current zoning. The strategies include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Keep current zoning in place until such time as the use terminates or redevelopment is initiated.
- Rezone property to a zoning district compatible with a land use plan category.
- Develop an interim strategy to address current use situations as they relate to long term objectives.

Nonconforming Uses

Changes in zoning districts will create nonconforming uses. Such uses occur when the existing land use is not allowed within the zoning district. In most cases, when these situations arise as the result of a new or amended Comprehensive Plan, the goal is not to influence an immediate change in the property use. Instead, the objective is to guide future investment to achieve the outcomes desired by the Comprehensive Plan.

Nonconforming uses are controlled by the City’s Zoning Ordinance. A review of the overall Zoning Ordinance will provide the context for an evaluation of the nonconforming provision of the Ordinance. This evaluation, in turn, may point to Ordinance changes that will assist in the reasonable transition of nonconforming land uses.

Subdivision Regulations

Changes to the Subdivision Regulations are not required for the immediate adoption of the Plan. The Plan does raise a series of potential changes in subdivision regulations that should be considered by the City over the next several years.

- Continue to consider amending the data required for Preliminary and Final Plat application to include the Resource Inventory required for Open Space Preservation Plats;
- Consider whether to alter subdivision design standards to achieve more affordable housing without sacrificing the sustainability of neighborhoods.
- Continue to study and make modifications as necessary to the park dedication requirements to enhance the ability to undertake the greenway plan.



Building Codes

As conditions warrant, the City should coordinate with others to explore opportunities to facilitate the City’s progress toward sustainable development by updating the City’s adopted Building Code to address “green” building techniques.

Amending the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan anticipates change in Elk River over the next several decades. Development must occur in a manner consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinances. If a proposed development is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the City must evaluate whether or not it should amend the Comprehensive Plan (and likely the Zoning Ordinances) to allow the development to occur. A great deal of thought, time and energy went into this Plan, and the same effort must go into any amendment.

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan may take several forms:

- Changes to the Land Use Plan map or categories of the Land Use element;
- Changes in other elements of the Plan;
- Plans and other studies that become part of the Comprehensive Plan (e.g. Mississippi Connections Redevelopment Plan and the FAST Study);
- Updating of entire sections of the Plan as needed; or
- Revisions related to major geographic or demographic sections of the community.



Amendments to the Plan may originate from the City Council, Boards and Commissions, or another party with a vested interest in an effected property. Adoption of amendments, however, can only be accomplished by City Council resolution.

Measurements of Progress

The City should periodically review its progress on implementing the Comprehensive Plan. The City could also consider developing a set of indicators to help measure the progress of the Plan. City staff, the Planning Commission, City Council and other Boards should periodically review progress on this Plan and make adjustments accordingly.

In adopting this Plan, the City of Elk River makes a commitment to use the Plan as a means of evaluating a variety of private and public projects. This evaluation requires using a series of questions to consider the merits of the project:

- Is the project consistent with the land use plan?
- Does the project move Elk River towards its vision for the future?
- Is the project consistent with the policies contained in the Plan?

A negative answer to one or more of these questions may illustrate flaws in the proposed project. These flaws may be fundamental and require denial of the project, but modifications to the project that bring it into compliance with the Plan may be possible. Negative answers to the questions listed above might, however, point to a need to amend the Plan. In such circumstances in which a noncompliant project underscores a potential flaw in the Plan, then an effort to properly amend the plan should be initiated. Not following the Plan in order to allow projects to move forward will eventually render the Comprehensive Plan useless.



Introduction

This Chapter analyzes the City of Elk River’s population and demographic dynamics, including an examination of the City’s future population composition. It provides baseline data and future projections of basic demographic elements including population, housing and employment. The information contained in this Chapter is intended to inform residents, city staff and city officials of the current demographic conditions and their potential impact on future land use and infrastructure. This historical data is provided to offer a glimpse of past trends and the possible implications of those trends as Elk River continues to evolve and change to meet new challenges based on changing circumstances.



Geographic Setting

Elk River is situated at the confluence of the Mississippi and Elk Rivers in Sherburne County, roughly 34 miles northwest of downtown Minneapolis. It is bordered by the City of Ramsey to the east, the City of Otsego to the south, Big Lake Township to the west, and Livonia Township to the north. U.S. Highways 10 and 169 and State Highway 101 are the three main arterial routes. Elk River has a station on the Northstar Commuter Rail line to downtown Minneapolis.

Elk River Past, Present and Future

A Comprehensive Plan forms a bridge between the city's past and the city's future. The Plan as a tool for managing and directing future actions naturally looks forward, but building the future occurs within the context of Elk River's past because the city's history and heritage are important parts of community identity. Failure to recognize and build upon Elk River's heritage risks losing the community's identity – making Elk River just like any other place.

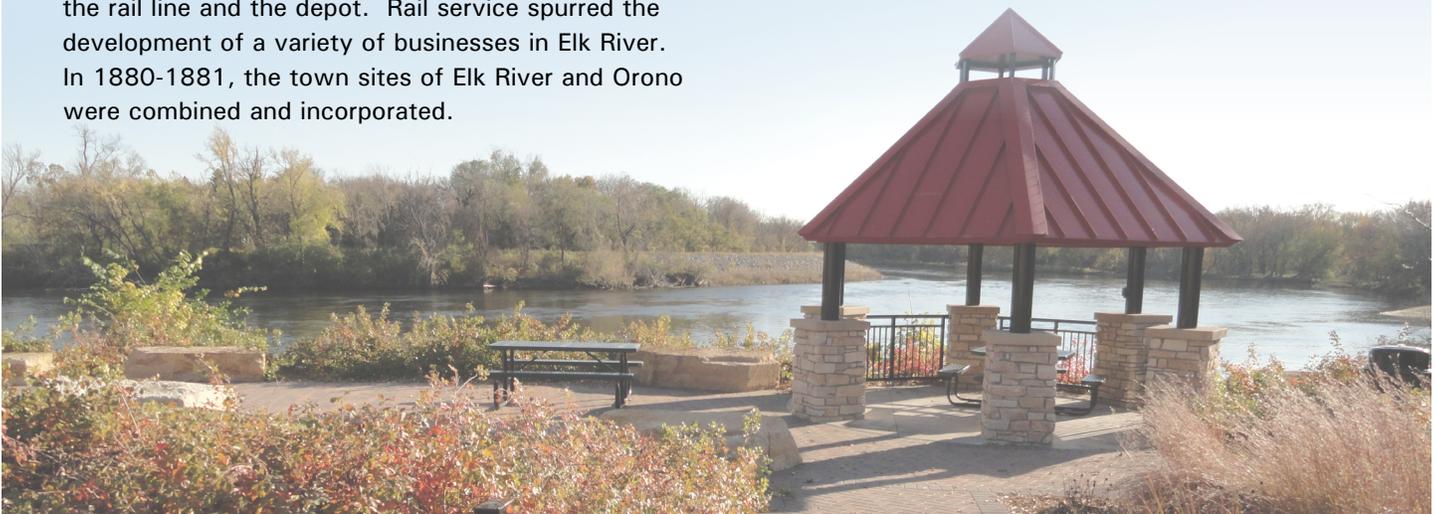
As the name suggests, Elk River's roots lie in the river. The first dam was built in 1851 and led to the construction of mills, making the river the catalyst for commerce in the area. Initial development included a flour mill and a saw mill. The community was originally platted shortly thereafter in 1855, as the town of Orono. This original plat covered an area of approximately 14 square blocks.

Then, in 1864, the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad line reached Elk River, which drew development further to the east. The town of Elk River was platted in 1865 with the development pattern of the town oriented to the rail line and the depot. Rail service spurred the development of a variety of businesses in Elk River. In 1880-1881, the town sites of Elk River and Orono were combined and incorporated.

In addition to the railroad, farming played an important role in the development of Elk River. The original claim of the City's most famous farmer, Oliver Kelley, dates to 1850. By 1860, there were 110 recorded farms in Sherburne County. This number grew to a peak of 1,190 in 1910. Agriculture in the area included grain crops, potatoes, and dairy cattle.

The current City of Elk River covers 44 square miles. The largest area of the city was added in 1978 by the merging of Elk River Township. This expansion of Elk River provided the capacity for recent development.

This Comprehensive Plan is about planning for the future of Elk River. It's about making choices on how to address significant issues that the community is currently facing or will be facing in the coming years. Issues like rising energy costs, increased traffic congestion, and changing demographics. Moreover, this Plan is about guiding change in a positive way.



Population

Population projections are effective planning tools when used correctly. However, their accuracy is subject to several factors including assumptions for birth rates, death rates, migration, and economic conditions. Assumptions are based on past trends and the best information available at the time, but assumptions do not always remain true, and unexpected changes can occur. Therefore, Elk River should use population projections presented in this Comprehensive Plan as a general guide and not as an absolute certainty. Moreover, the City should periodically review and update the population projections based on new conditions.

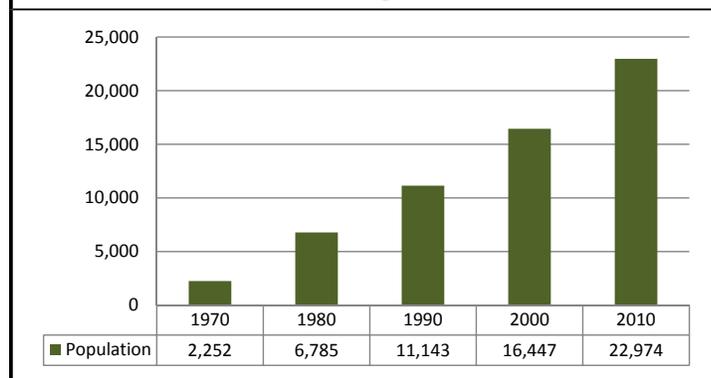
Over the past 30 years, the City of Elk River experienced significant change in population. In 1980, Elk River was home to 6,785 people, nearly tripling in size from 1970 (2,252 people). By 2000, the population grew to 16,447, and in 2010 the U.S. Census documented a population of 22,974. Refer to Table 4-A: Population Change: 1980-2010 for additional information.

Table 4-A: Population Change: 1980-2010

Place	1980 Population	Change 1970-1980	1990 Population	Change 1980-1990	2000 Population	Change 1990-2000	2010 Population	Change 2000-2010
City of Elk River	6,785	201%	11,143	64%	16,447	48%	22,974	40%
City of Otsego	4769	213%	5219	9%	6,389	22%	13,571	112%
Big Lake Township	2697	37%	4452	65%	6,785	52%	7,386	9%
City of Big Lake	2210	118%	3113	41%	6,389	105%	10,060	57.50%
Livonia Township	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3,917	51%	5,951	51.90%
City of Zimmerman	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,851	83%	5,228	83.30%
Sherburne County	29908	63%	41945	40%	64,417	54%	88,499	37.40%
State of Minnesota	4,075,907	7%	4,375,099	7.10%	4,919,479	7.30%	5,303,925	12.40%

Source: U.S. Census

Chart 4-I: Population Change



Source: US Census

In 2006 the Minnesota State Demographer’s Office projected a population of 46,638 for the City of Elk River by 2035. While the City anticipates more growth, it is recognized that the City desires to preserve its character and that the utility system has limitations. As such, Elk River anticipates a total population of 34,890 by 2035. The following projections were made using a growth rate of 615 people per year, which is based on the average building permits over the past fifteen years and a household size of three people per household.



Population Estimates and Projections

Table 4-B: Forecasted Population Change: 2015-2035

Place	2015 Population	Change 2010-2015	2020	Change 2010-2020	2030	Change 2020-2030	2035	Change 2030-2035
City of Elk River	23,172	1%	26,600	16%	31,960	20%	34,890	26%
City of Otsego	17,498	29%	19,040	40%	28,000	47%	N/A	N/A
Big Lake Township	10,456	42%	11,658	58%	13,806	18%	14,857	8%
City of Big Lake	13,581	35%	15,686	56%	19,503	24%	21,370	10%
Livonia Township	8,137	37%	9,318	57%	11,454	23%	12,498	9%
City of Zimmerman	7,380	41%	8,595	64%	10,802	26%	11,881	10%
Sherburne County	119,040	35%	134,390	52%	161,990	21%	175,410	8%
State of Minnesota	N/A	N/A	5,772,258	9%	6,182,306	7%	N/A	N/A

Source: Minnesota State Demographer, WSB and City of Elk River (Building Permit Data and Household Size Projections)





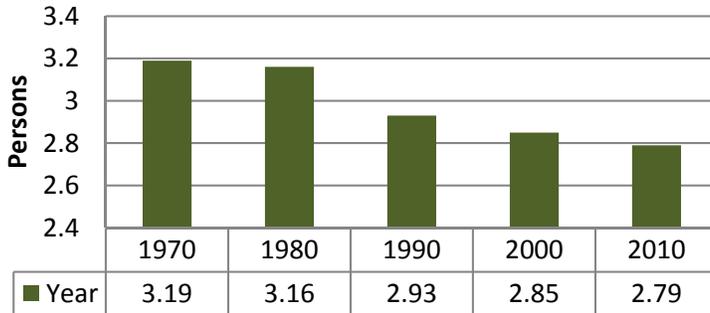
Household Characteristics

In 2010, the U.S. Census reported 8,023 households in Elk River and 5,946 families. A household refers to all persons who occupy a housing unit. A household could involve a family living in a house or it could involve unrelated people sharing an apartment. A family refers to a parent or grandparent living with at least one child.

In Elk River, most families are comprised of married couples with children. Yet, in the future, it is likely that the percentage of married couples without children living with them will increase. The percentage of single parent households will also increase.

The average household size in Elk River in 2010 was 2.79 persons, which was down from 2.85 in 2000.

Chart 4-2: Average Persons Per Household

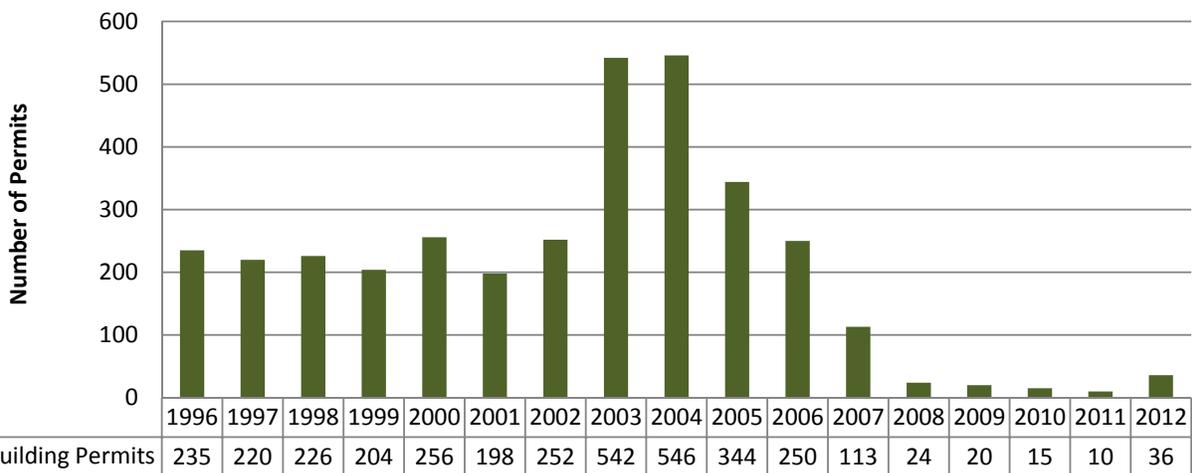


Source: US Census

Building Permits

Building permit data provides insights on the form and pace of development. Elk River experienced consistent growth in new housing from 1996 to 2004, yet with the recent economy experienced a slow growth period.

Chart 4-3: Building Permits 1996-2012



Source: City of Elk River



The value of residential housing in Elk River is also increasing, as the median value of residential property increased from 2000 to 2010, as shown to the right.

Table 4-C: Residential Property Valuation 2000-2010

Value of Residential Property	2000 Number	2010 Number
Less than \$50,000	9	100
\$50,000 to \$99,999	475	262
\$100,000 to \$149,999	1,683	647
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1,181	1,578
\$200,000 to \$299,999	482	2,282
\$300,000 to \$499,999	43	1,430
\$500,000 to \$999,999	-	128
\$1,000,000 or more	8	23
Median (dollars)	144,800	225,400

Source: US Census



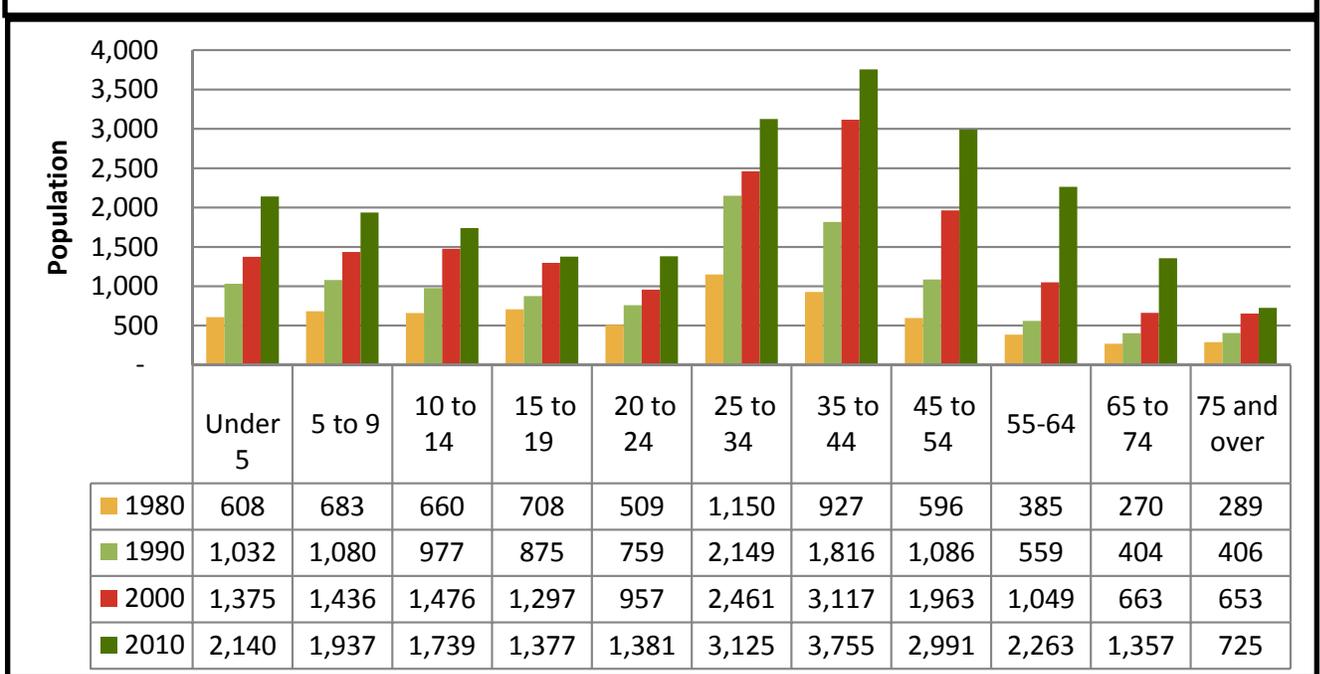
Key Demographic Trends

In addition to knowing how many people live and will likely live in Elk River, understanding the key characteristics of the people, such as their age, education and employment status can aid the City in planning for and providing necessary and desired services for all of its residents.

Age Composition

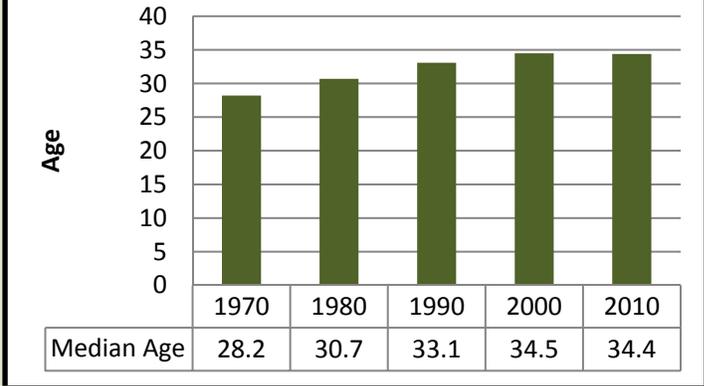
The population of Elk River is growing older as the median age is increasing from 28.2 in 1970 to 34.4 in 2010. The rate of median age change in the community has slowed, with the rates from 1990-2010 changing by one percent or less each year. In 2010 the 35-44 age category was the largest in Elk River, and the second largest between ages 25-34. This reflects a trend of younger households in the community, which will desire quality housing, schools, recreational opportunities, and public services. Over the next 30 to 40 years this age group will be aging and consequently requiring senior housing options to remain in the community. Alternatively, older populations may move out of the community leaving housing stock open for younger families to move in. Either scenario the City of Elk River will need to assess the community amenities and infrastructure to accommodate specific needs of major demographic shifts.

Chart 4-4: Age Composition



Source: U.S. Census Comparison Profile

Chart 4-5: Median Age

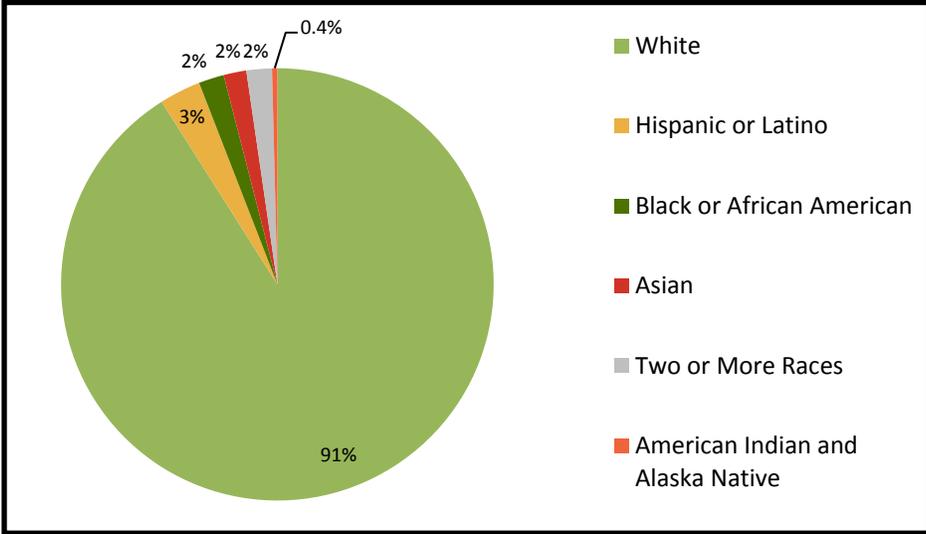


Source: U.S. Census



Table 4-D: Race and Origin 2010

Race 2010	Elk River	Sherburne County	Minnesota
White	91%	92%	83%
Hispanic or Latino	3%	2%	5%
Black or African American	2%	2%	5%
Asian	2%	1.2%	4%
Two or More Races	2%	1.6%	2%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.4%	0.5%	1%



Source: U.S. Census

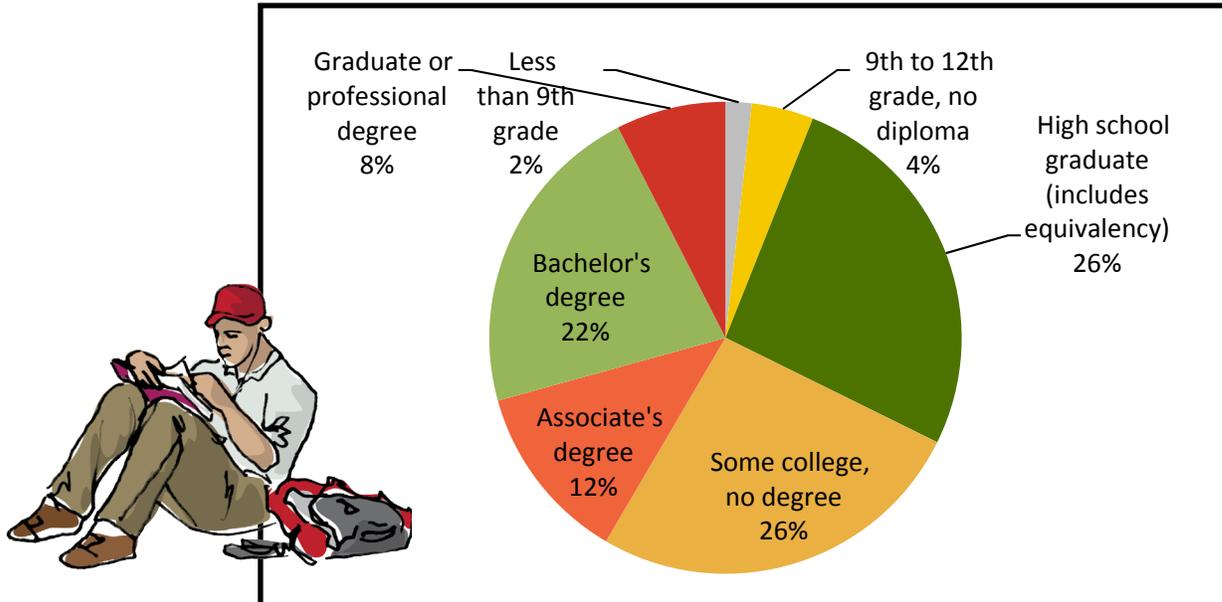


Educational Attainment

The US Census reports that approximately 94 percent of the population attained a high school degree or its equivalent, and roughly 42 percent of the population completed an Associate's degree, Bachelor's, or graduate/professional degree. Compared to Sherburne County and the State of Minnesota, Elk River has higher percentages of high school graduates. Compared to Sherburne County, the City has a higher percentage of persons over the age of 24 who hold bachelor's degrees or higher levels of education; and compared to the state has a lower percentage of persons who hold advanced degrees.

Table 4-E: Educational Attainment - 2010

Educational Attainment	Elk River	Sherburne County	Minnesota
High school graduate or higher	94%	92%	91%
Bachelor's degree or higher	29%	24%	31%

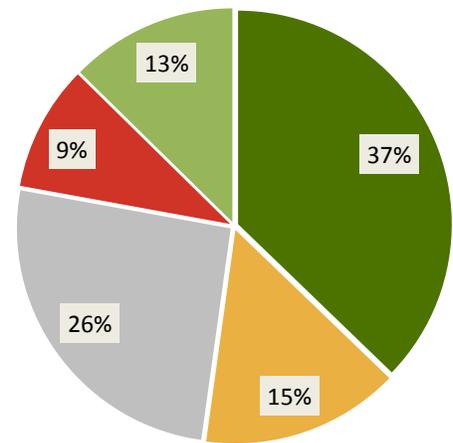


Source: US Census

Employment and Income

In 2010, Elk River’s unemployment rate (5.5%) was slightly higher than the state average (4.9%), and slightly higher than Sherburne County (5.3%). Elk River’s median household income was higher than that of Sherburne County, and higher than the State of Minnesota. The poverty level of Elk River was lower than Sherburne County and the State of Minnesota. (See Table 4-F for general employment and income characteristics).

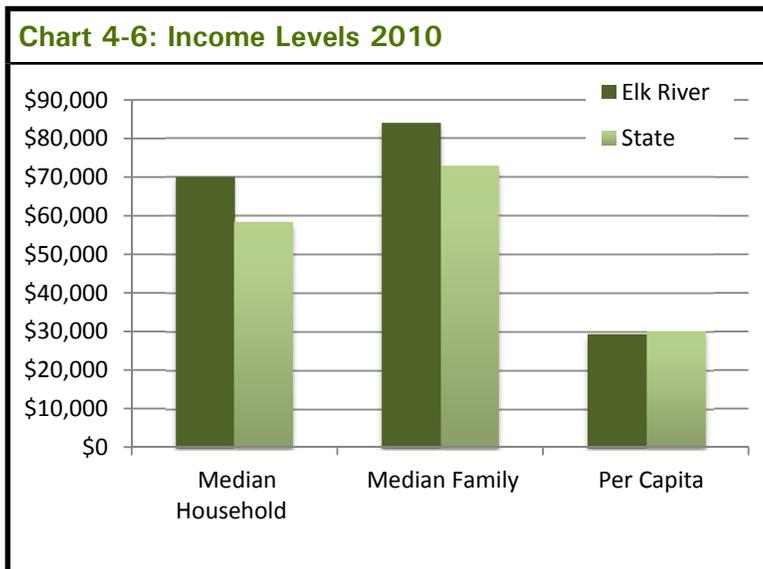
**2010 Employment Industry-
Elk River**



- Management, business, science, and arts occupations
- Service occupations
- Sales and office occupations
- Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations
- Production, transportation, and material moving occupations

Characteristics	Elk River	Sherburne County	Minnesota
In Labor Force	75.6%	74.3%	70.9%
Employed in Labor Force	70.1%	69.0%	65.9%
Unemployed In Labor Force	5.5%	5.3%	4.9%
Not In Labor Force	24.4%	27.3%	29.1%
Median household income	\$70,224	\$71,819	\$58,476
Persons below poverty level	7.1%	8.0%	11.0%

It is anticipated that the employment in Elk River will steadily increase, at least through the year 2035. This employment forecast is based on several assumptions involving anticipated population changes, regional employment opportunities, unemployment, self-employment, multiple job holding, and net in-commuting.





Summary of Demographic Trends Affecting Elk River

The number of people living in Elk River will grow at a fairly consistent rate until 2035. However, the percentage of residents over the age of 65 will continue to increase, which has ramifications for the types of housing and community facilities and services that Elk River will need to provide its residents. In a related matter, the average household size will continue to decrease over the years, meaning that Elk River will need to provide additional housing units both to accommodate the projected future population and maintaining its current population.

As the population continues to grow, planning for a diversified population will be instrumental to providing for all within the community. Employment opportunities in Elk River are expected to gradually increase and opportunities for development and redevelopment will be critical to providing for these opportunities.

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Introduction

The Land Use Chapter describes existing land use patterns and provides an overview of how the city desires land will be used and developed in the future. It seeks to accommodate desired growth while reinforcing the preferred qualities of the community.

The Land Use Plan guides city staff, the Planning Commission, the City Council, property owners, developers and other interested parties in decisions relating to the type, location and density of future development in the community. It also serves as the foundation for updating the City's Zoning Ordinances, Zoning Map, Subdivision Regulations and other implementation tools. Implementation of the Land Use Plan produces several important implications:

- **Uses.** Every parcel is placed into a specific land use category. Each category includes a description of the type of land use intended for that category. This description should match with the types and forms of development currently found in Elk River and desired for the future.
- **Relationships.** Much like a jigsaw puzzle, the true picture comes from how each piece fits together into a whole. The Land Use Plan guides how elements of the built and natural environment come together in Elk River. These relationships will characterize the look, function, and feel of Elk River.
- **Actions.** The Land Use Plan sets the framework for public actions and investments. Utilities, streets, parks, and facilities are all influenced by the form and pace of development.

Inventory and Analysis

Existing Land Use Characteristics

Figure 5-1: 2014 Existing Use of Land shows the location and types of existing land uses in the City of Elk River as of 2013. The inventory as conducted as part of this planning process reflects general development patterns and is intended for general planning purposes only. The land use categories shown in the figure are further defined as follows:

Rural Residential

Rural Residential includes land currently developed for residential use in areas outside of the Urban Service Area that are not currently served by municipal sewer and water. The predominant land use in this area is single family detached homes. Included among the detached single family homes are single family “cluster subdivisions.” Cluster subdivisions are development patterns that place housing closer together in order to preserve greater areas of undeveloped or natural land and to minimize the number of individual on-site septic systems. In 2013 Rural Residential comprised of roughly 3,363 acres or 13.0% of the City.

Urban Residential

Urban Residential land use makes up 2,537 acres or 9.8% of the City and includes land for residential use in areas that are currently served by municipal sanitary sewer system. Urban Residential land uses include single family detached housing and attached housing in the form of duplexes and townhomes.

High Density Residential

High Density Residential land use consists of forms of multi-family attached housing units such as apartment buildings and condominiums. In 2013, roughly 94 acres or 0.4% of Elk River was classified as high density residential use.

Central Business District (Commercial)

The Central Business District (Commercial) includes retail, service and office uses in and around Downtown Elk River. Roughly 70 acres or 0.3% of Elk River is classified as Central Business District (Commercial) land use.

Highway Business

Outside of the Central Business District, the majority of commercial land uses are placed into this category. The uses range from commercial areas that are occupied by professional trades (such as finance, insurance, and real estate) to more intense commercial activities requiring highway orientation for access and visibility. Approximately 342 acres or 1.3% of Elk River is located in the Highway Business land use category.

Community Commercial

Community Commercial land use makes up 21 acres or 0.1% of Elk River and focuses on community retail development that are often service and convenience oriented. Community Commercial refers to smaller, neighborhood-oriented commercial uses. Although limited use of the Community Commercial designation exists in Elk River, these areas typically appear as small pockets of retail development along the highway corridors.

Industrial

The Industrial land use includes all forms of businesses with manufacturing, distribution, warehousing or other industrial use and is commonly referred to as “Light Industrial”, “Medium Industrial” or “General Industrial.” The majority of Elk River industrial development is classified as “Light Industrial”. The Cretex property and an area in the southeastern portion of the City south of 165th Avenue and along the Highway 10 corridor are classified as “Medium Industrial”. Industrial land use makes up approximately 686 acres or 2.7% of the City.



Public/Semi-Public

Public/Semi-Public uses make up approximately 564 acres or 2.7% of area in Elk River and refer to larger tracts of lands used for public and institutional (religious and educational) purposes. These uses include schools, City and County governmental buildings, and religious uses.

Open Space

The Open Space category contains parks and open spaces, and the City’s recreation system. Approximately 1,812 acres or 7.0% of land in 2013 is allocated to the Open Space land use. Some of the existing open space involves private recreation facilities (such as golf courses).

Wetlands/Open Water

The land use map includes areas identified as wetlands according to the most recent National Wetland Inventory as well as bodies of water in the City. This category contains approximately 5,298 acres or 20.5% of Elk River.

Landfill

The Landfill area represents land operated in conjunction with the sanitary landfill and makes up approximately 137 acres or 0.5% of Elk River.

Mining

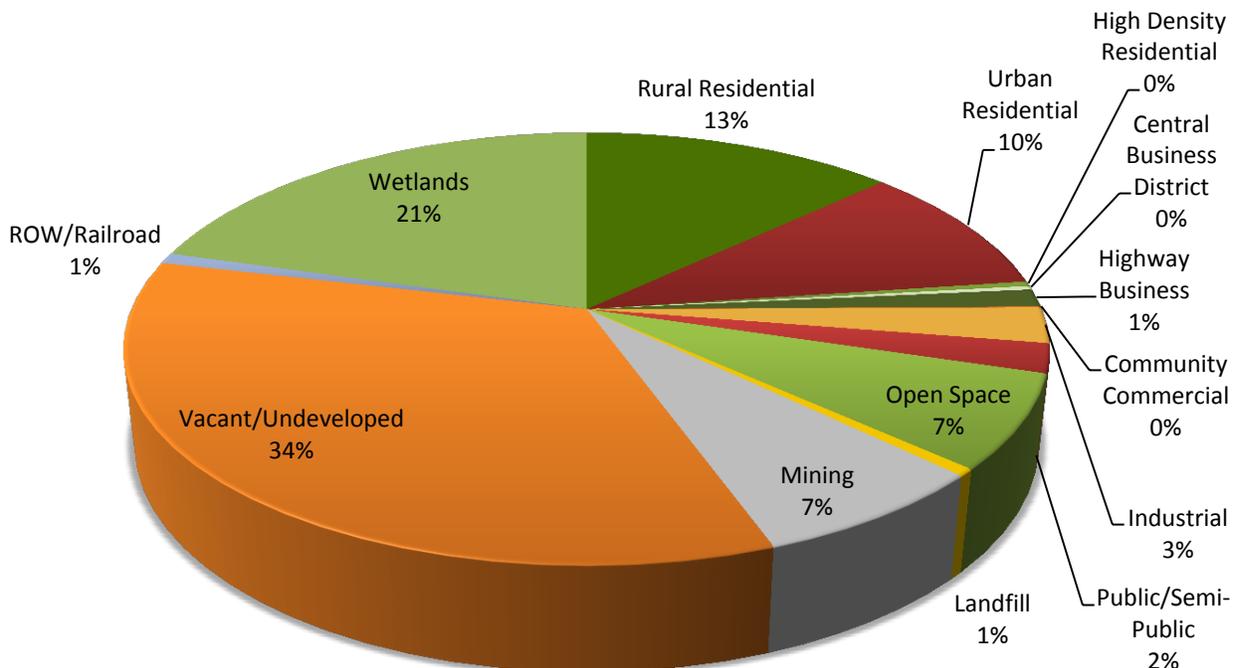
In 2013, the Mining use makes up 1,869 acres or 7.2% of the City and its primary objective is to allow the current mining use of the land within this category. These areas are currently being mined or are set aside for future mining.

Undeveloped

Undeveloped land refers to land that is in an undeveloped state, but that is guided and zoned for future development or use. These lands may currently be used for agricultural or agricultural research purpose, or may be vacant land awaiting future development to occur (specifically areas currently within the MUSA boundary). Wetlands are not included in this category. In 2013, roughly 8,840 acres or 34.2% of Elk River consisted of vacant/undeveloped land.

Road Right-of-Way/Railroad

In 2013, road right-of-ways and railroads accounted for roughly 205 acres or 0.8% of Elk River. Road right-of-way include city, county, state road right-of-ways. Refer to Chapter 6: Transportation for additional information.



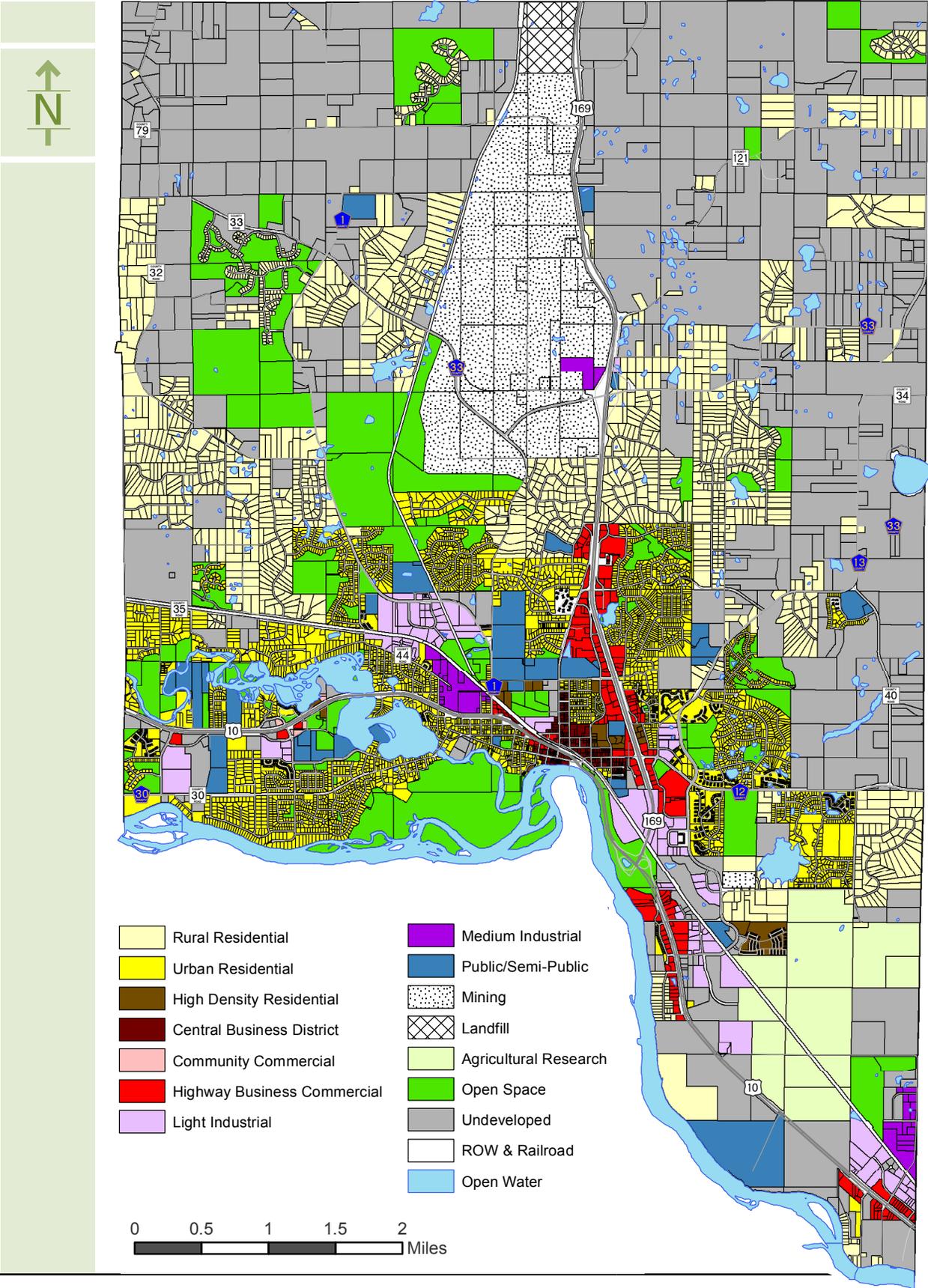


Figure 5-1. 2014 Existing Use of Land



Relationship between the 2013 Existing Land Use and 2004 Land Use Plan

The 2013 Comprehensive Plan Update utilizes the 2004 Comprehensive Plan as its foundation and builds off of the amendments that have occurred since then. Although there are some differences in future land use guidance as shown in Figure 5-2, the 2013 Plan takes all planning efforts (e.g. Mississippi Connections, FAST Study, and several transportation planning efforts) and integrates them into this document for ease of use.

Table 5-A: Summary of Future Land Use - 2040

Existing Land Use	Gross Acres*	Wetland Acres	Net Acres*	Net Percent of City
Agricultural Research	826.41	208.28	618.13	2.7%
Commercial Reserve	2,651.57	57.49	2,594.07	8.8%
Highway Business	532.30	32.96	499.34	1.8%
FAST	986.31	166.49	819.82	3.3%
High Density Residential	94.47	23.88	70.59	0.3%
Landfill	132.03	0.75	131.28	0.4%
Industrial	938.27	81.17	857.10	3.1%
Mining	2,651.57	57.49	2,594.07	8.8%
Mixed Use	196.82	2.17	194.65	0.7%
Mississippi Connection	463.70	5.11	458.59	1.5%
Open Space	2,560.26	509.81	2,050.46	8.5%
Public/Semi Public	577.14	28.18	548.95	1.9%
Residential	17,265.40	4,030.73	13,234.67	57.1%
Water	357.38	326.39	30.99	1.2%
TOTAL	24,702.73	5,530.90	19,171.83	100%

Source: WSB & Associates, Inc.

Land Use Plan

The land use plan provides the framework or “road map” for the growth and development of the City. The land use plan serves as a guide for the character and intensity of development and will be supported by other land use controls and public actions taken pursuant to the Comprehensive Plan.

The land use map appears in Figure 5-2: Future Land Use. The Plan builds on the existing community pattern to achieve the desired vision for the future of Elk River.

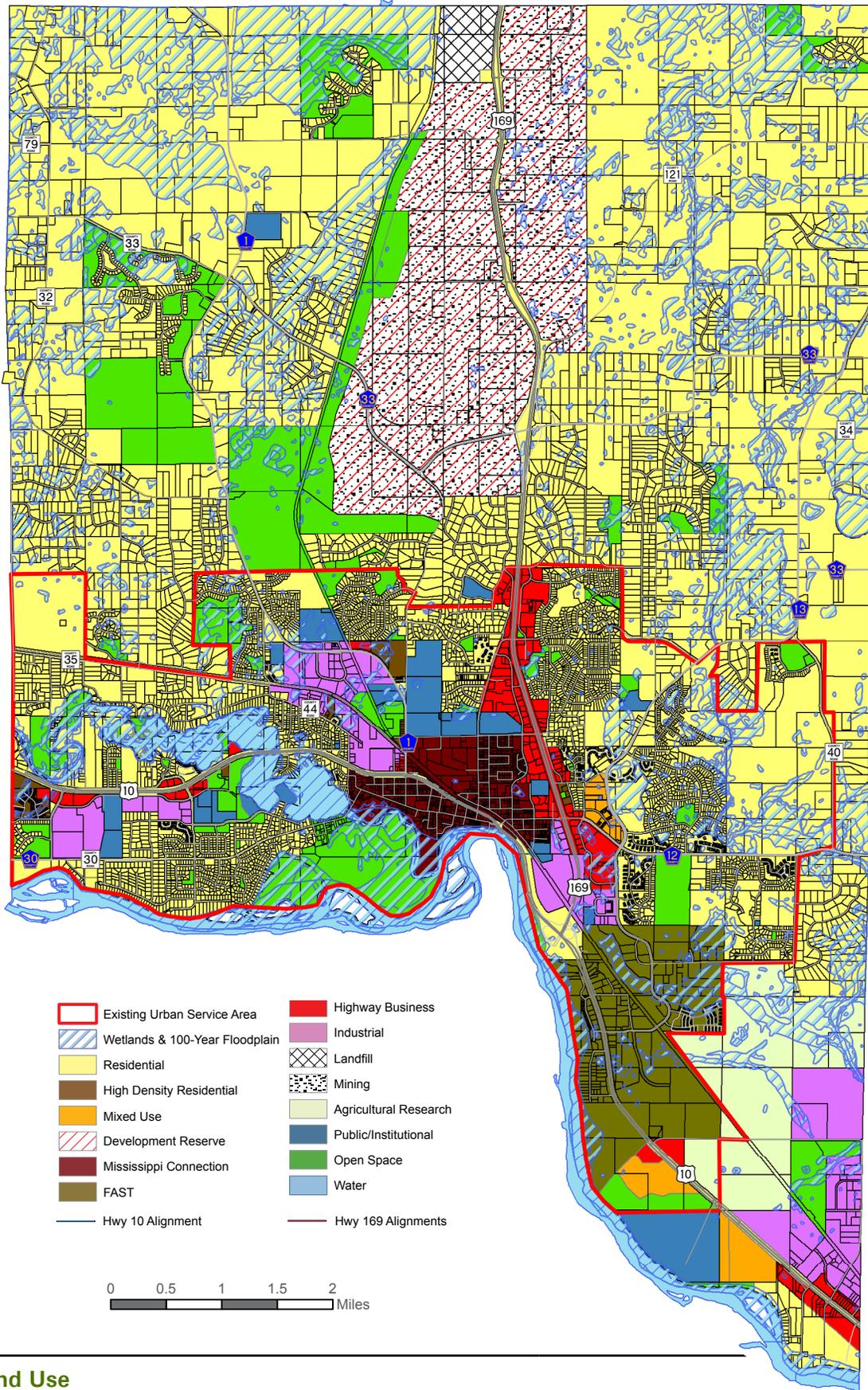


Figure 5-2. Future Land Use



Future Land Use Characteristics

Residential

Rural Residential

Rural Residential uses are guided to be developed as residential use in areas outside of the Urban Service Area that are not currently served by municipal sewer and water. The predominant land use in this area is single family detached homes. Forms of detached single family units can be built in “cluster subdivision”. Cluster subdivisions are development patterns that place housing closer together in order to preserve greater areas of undeveloped land and to minimize the number of individual on-site septic systems.

A gross density of 0.4 units per acre (1 unit per 2.5 acres) is the target density in the Rural Residential area. Increases in density should be allowed for achieving certain public objectives such as preserving natural features (which are not otherwise protected by ordinance), implementing the City’s trail and park master plan (beyond the typical required park dedication), incorporating energy saving building techniques, or a combination of the above mentioned concepts.

Urban Residential

The Urban Residential area includes land guided for residential use in areas that will be served by the municipal sanitary sewer system. This Urban Residential land use will be guided by the density of development and not the type of housing. Densities of this development pattern would range from a low density pattern consisting mostly of single family detached homes at 2 dwelling units per acre to a denser pattern of smaller lots or attached housing at a density of up to 8 dwelling units per acre.

The intent of the Urban Residential land use is to have an average overall density of 3 to 4 dwelling units per acre throughout this land use. This density would be averaged over all lands designated Urban Residential and would be achieved through the use of multiple zoning districts that apply alternative density restrictions in order to achieve the overall density goals. Currently, the City uses R-1b, c, d, R-2a and R-2b to facilitate the density goals throughout the community.

Urban Residential land uses include single family detached housing, duplexes, townhomes and multiple family dwellings. Housing units may be owner or renter occupied within this land use designation. Urban residential should provide connections between neighborhoods, including trails and streets, while also supporting screening and buffering from more intense traffic corridors and uses.

High Density Residential

The High Density Residential land use category consists of multiple family attached housing oriented in a vertical fashion, more commonly referred to as apartments and condominiums. This land use category may accommodate a combination of side by side townhomes and multi-story buildings. The densities targeted in this category are over 8 dwelling units and up to 20 dwelling units per acre.

High Density Residential uses are located in places with compatible adjacent land uses and where the local street system will accommodate the traffic. Preferred settings include adjacent to Commercial Districts, employment and service centers, civic centers, park facilities, schools, transit facilities and principal roadway corridors. When located adjacent to lower density neighborhoods, high density housing can be designed to transition from its most intense use (3

or 4 story apartments) to lower density (small lot single family or attached townhomes) as it approaches lower density neighborhoods.

High Density Residential uses may also be located in appropriately zoned locations within the Mixed Use and Mississippi Connections land use areas.

Mixed Use

The Mixed Use land use category allows a mixture of housing, jobs and/or retail services uses within close proximity to each other. This land use creates the potential for people to live close to their jobs and retail services, and it offers an environment where one can live with less reliance on the car. This area provides another setting for high density residential land use in Elk River.

Mixed Use is a district that reflects continued trends that seek to integrate residential and nonresidential development in a common setting, close to transit services. Mixed use development should be supported where transportation systems, including transit, are available to provide alternative circulation opportunities.

The Mixed Use area is more frequently proposed in the redevelopment of commercial areas. “Vertical” mixed use puts retail and housing uses into a single building. This form of mixed use typically puts residential uses over street level retail or office uses where appropriate. The Mixed Use designation may also include a more horizontal arrangement of uses with strong pedestrian connections to foster a pedestrian friendly environment. Typically, a mixed-use development will be completed as a Planned Unit Development (PUD).



Mississippi Connections

Mississippi Connections represents the historical core of the city, and corresponds to a redevelopment framework adopted by the City Council in November, 2012. This redevelopment framework established specific goals to strengthen the study area, which was broken up into five neighborhoods. These neighborhoods include the older residential and downtown commercial neighborhoods which are facing changes in the form of access and visibility, shopping habits, and housing desires. The Mississippi Connections Plan attempts to identify key strategic objects to reinvent the area as a destination for a variety of uses and activities.

FAST

The **F**ocused **A**rea **S**tudy is the area immediately adjacent to the commuter rail station at 171st and Twin Lakes Road. The study, completed in 2010, represented an intense collaborative effort between the City and the property owners and stakeholders in the region. The Study identified the changing traffic patterns and how they affect business and land uses in the area, as well as provided alternative uses as these patterns continue to evolve over time.



Highway Business

The Highway Business land use ranges from moderate to high intensity forms of commercial development in Elk River. Businesses in this category may be the largest both in terms of size and traffic generation while also providing services and convenience types of business. Market orientation tends to be regional in nature. Development orientation tends to be toward regional highways. Future Highway Business developments should be located within the Urban Service Boundary and adjacent to regional highways with both visibility and access. Examples of Highway Business uses include discount retailers, grocery, restaurants, automotive sales and service, general merchandise, and professional services.

The Highway Business land use follows the Highway 169 and Highway 10 corridors. An important planning issue is providing options to accommodate increased demand for retail and service opportunities that meet access, visibility and size requirements.

Development Reserve

The Development Reserve land use identifies areas held in reserve for future development. The areas designated for this use lie adjacent to Highway 169 and Highway 10 outside of the Urban Service Area, in the area generally north of Co Rd 33. These locations are well suited for various development options in the future. While not currently served by municipal utilities, intense development is expected in the future due in part to the size, access, and visibility of much of the area. The Comprehensive Plan seeks to guide development in vacant land already served by utilities before opening new areas for growth. The reserve status allows planning to facilitate the desired form of development in the future. When the Development Reserve area is developed, it is expected that this area will receive urban services. The City should plan for future expansion of utilities into this area within the near future.

Industrial

Historically Elk River has enjoyed a diverse and strong industrial base. This base thrives with a regionally recognized labor force and business friendly posture. Industrial uses provide a wide variety of benefits, including employment and daytime population. Daytime population helps entice services, including a greater variety of services.

Light Industrial

The Light Industrial category includes industrial uses that are lower in intensity of activity. These uses limit the potential for adverse impacts on adjacent land uses due to factors such as noise and odor. Examples of Light Industrial uses include research and development offices, enclosed storage and warehousing, laboratories, and light manufacturing.

A portion of the current mining area south of County Road 33 may also include some industrial development which will be determined through a more detailed planning and engineering study before full reclamation and development occurs.

Medium Industrial

Medium Industrial land uses are intended for businesses with more intensive uses. The level of intensity refers to the amount of land used by the business, the nature of the industrial activity, and the potential for truck traffic. Examples of Medium Industrial uses include contracting yards, lumber yards, concrete products processing, processing of natural resources, and truck terminals.

Future Medium Industrial land uses are also appropriate for future reuse of the mining area south of County 33 which will be determined through a more detailed planning and engineering study prior to full reclamation and development occurs.

Public/ Institutional

This category includes larger tracts of land used for public and institutional purposes. These uses include schools, City and County governmental buildings and religious institutions. The Kelley Farm is an example of this type of land use.



Open Space

The Open Space category contains the public and private park and recreation and open space system. In the future, land will be added to this category as new public parks are identified, developed or as open space land is dedicated pursuant to the Parks element of the Comprehensive Plan.

In evaluating expansion of the open space land use, due regard to unique and substantial environmental features shall be given.



Landfill

This area represents land operated in conjunction with the sanitary landfill. The Landfill use is consistent with the current land use plan. The Landfill area should not be expanded beyond the currently approved area within the City.

Mining

The primary objective of this land use category is to allow the current mining use of the land and address future land use when development becomes appropriate. Based on current information, the majority of resources in the Mining area will be extracted over the next 10 to 40 years. An alternative use of this property is needed when the mineral resources are removed. It is anticipated that the southern portions of the Mining area (south of CR 33) will be available for development in the next 10 years. The mining areas represent those portions of the community most likely to experience heavy growth pressure, due to access, visibility, and abundance of available acres.

The City wishes to plan for this growth prior to development pressure. As part of the Development Reserve Area planning, a number of issues need addressing:

- What are the desired land uses for the area, post mining?
- How can the City work with the miners to establish compatible reclamation plans?
- How much development can be supported through an extension of the existing sanitary sewer collection system?
- If this capacity is inadequate, what are the options for sanitary sewer service to this area?
- Does the cost of these sewer improvements influence the form of development?
- How would the extension of sewer service to this area affect overall planning for sewer plant capacity?
- How is development within the area to be phased to provide both a critical mass of property for development and the payment for the extension of municipal services?
- How will access and visibility be managed?
- How with neighboring incompatible land uses be protected?

Agricultural Research

The purpose of the Agricultural Research land use is to coincide with the agreement between the City and Cargill, and consistent with the Focused Area Study (FAST) for the 171st Avenue area. This land use allows for the continued use of the property for animal nutrition and agricultural research and other related activities pursuant to the agreement, while protecting the City’s ability to guide other development. Other land uses not consistent with agricultural research require and amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.



Water

Open water (permanently flooded open water, lakes, rivers and streams, and ponds, but not including wetlands or periodically flooded areas) seeks to identify the bodies of water in the community.



Redevelopment

The City should explore more aggressively the practice of redevelopment. Redevelopment does not need to be the top down practice of relocating neighborhoods and businesses to other areas so that new development can move in. Redevelopment should be the stated and practiced posture of the community to allow for and promote the reuse of substandard parcels to achieve the vision of the community.

Redevelopment has many benefits, including increased jobs, tax base, and employment options within existing infrastructure, improving streetscape and community image blight, and improved pedestrian and vehicular connections. Even with these benefits, redevelopment is more costly and time consuming than greenfield development. The City should seek to remove obstacles to redevelopment, such that it is as attractive to new development as greenfield sites in neighboring communities.

Implementation

The following objectives are aimed to use land in a manner that promotes a strong economy, respects the natural environment, and ensures a high quality of life for all residents.

- Actively seek opportunities to encourage redevelopment of substandard and underutilized sites within the urban services area.
- Encourage development and redevelopment that enhances the existing character of the neighborhood, protects natural resources and strengthens the vitality of the neighborhood.
- Promote the expansion of industrial uses in those areas identified in the Land Use Plan. Ensure that the expansion complements existing uses, protects the natural environment, and respects the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Support the renovation and reuse of existing buildings where feasible. Encourage measures to increase energy efficiency where appropriate.
- Continue to work with adjacent communities and overlapping jurisdictions to address issues of mutual interest that, if not addressed, may constrain future economic development in Elk River and/or the adjacent communities or overlapping jurisdictions.
- Ensure the protection of the City parks and open spaces are protected where feasible.
- Where appropriate, coordinate with landowners and others to encourage the preservation of existing privately owned natural areas.
- Focus development and redevelopment in areas that are already urbanized. Minimize further encroachments into natural areas where feasible.
- Understand and recognize the significance that Elk River's natural resources had/have in the development of the City. Continue to use ordinances and other tools to ensure that reasonable protection and enhancement of natural resources.
- Based on market and demand, continue to work with property owners and the development community on redevelopment proposals to ensure consistency with the Plan and the overall community vision.
- Where appropriate, encourage the continued use or adaptive reuse of existing buildings with historic value, rather than the demolition of the buildings.
- Continually seek and secure opportunities to expand funding sources.
- Work with the City Council and City Boards and Commissions on continuous review and modifications to the Plan, as needed.

The City must also update its Zoning Ordinance to address inconsistencies and conflicts that may exist. Updating the Zoning Ordinance may be a large undertaking that will require significant input from the Planning Commission and others. It may also require that the City simultaneously conduct additional studies that provide information needed for the Zoning Ordinance update. This process should start shortly after the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.

The City must also revise the Zoning Map to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Although most of the Zoning Map will remain unchanged, there are some areas that will need to be rezoned. The process of updating the Zoning Map should start shortly after the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan.

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Introduction

The transportation network, like most utilities, is something most people use daily without really thinking about how it works. Most individuals are not interested in how the various components of the transportation network (roads, rails, trails and sidewalks) function with one another or how they relate to the feel and function of a community. Most people are just interested in how to get themselves, their customers and their goods from Point A to Point B with little delay and as safe as possible. However, integrated transportation networks that support a healthy community do not just happen. Considerable thought and planning is needed to make a system work up to its full potential and to help support the type of community desired by residents.



Transportation has played a key role in how Elk River developed in the past (river, railroad, TH 101, US 10 and US 169) and how it will grow and redevelop in the future. As such, transportation planning and the issues on the transportation network are an important part of the City's Plans. The transportation network has a significant impact on the character, feel and functionality of a community. There is a natural nexus between transportation and land use planning. Neither can be successful without taking the other into account.

As the city progresses into the future, the needs and demands of the transportation network are changing. What once was an auto-only focus has evolved to include important connections for transit, bicycling and walking.

This section of the Comprehensive Plan provides background on basic network information, summarizes studies and analyses that have been completed since the last plan update, (including the Highway 10 and Highway 169 studies of 2010), identifies ongoing issues and concerns, identifies planned improvements and suggests practices that can be used to address future needs.

Inventory and Analysis

There are four primary systems that comprise the transportation network within the City of Elk River: roadways, freight rail, transit and trails/sidewalks. The sections that follow describe the existing systems and their various components.

Roadways

This section of the plan describes the existing roadway system within Elk River.



System

The existing roadway system in Elk River is shown in Figure 6-1: Existing Roadway Network. In a review of the system, it can be noted that there are a limited number of continuous north-south and east-west routes. A majority of the roadways shown on the map primarily serve a development, a neighborhood or a small growth area.

The lack of continuous routes can be attributed to a number of factors including: natural and man-made barriers (topography, lakes, rivers, streams, railroad, parks); past development patterns and styles; and ongoing mining activities.

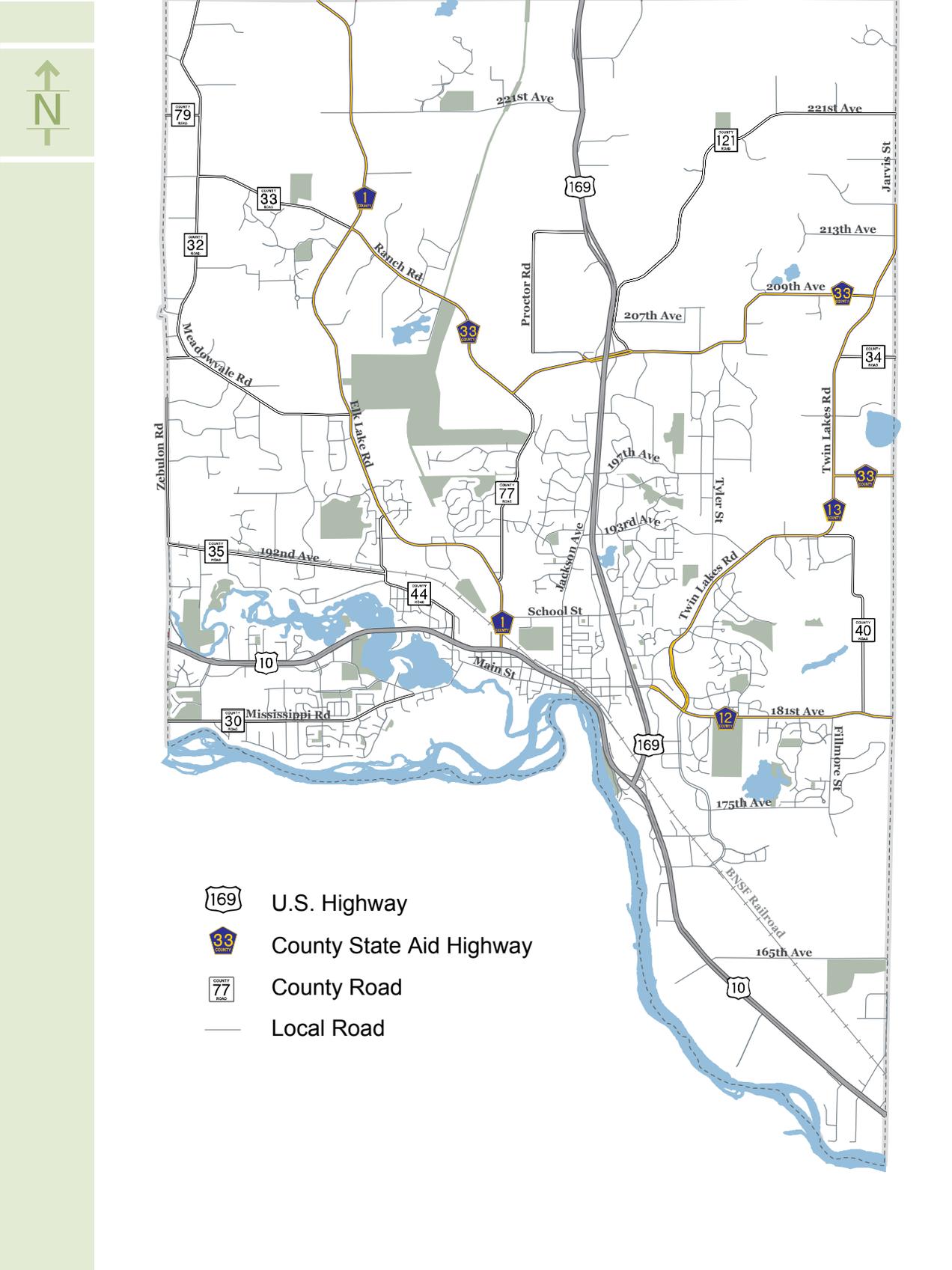


Figure 6-1. Existing Roadway Network



Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction refers to the agency that owns and maintains a particular roadway. The roadway network in Elk River is owned and maintained primarily by three governmental agencies; the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), Sherburne County and the City of Elk River. MnDOT is responsible for interstate roadways (I), trunk highways (TH 101) and US highways (US 169 and US 10). Sherburne County is responsible for county roads (CR 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 40, 44, 79, and 121) and county state aid highways (CSAH 1, 12, 13, and 33). Most of the remaining streets are under the jurisdiction of the City of Elk River. It should be noted that there are some roadways that are privately owned and maintained by a neighborhood association. These roadways are paid for by the property owners and the property owners are responsible for plowing the streets in the winter and repairing the roadways when they need to be fixed.

The Sherburne County transportation plan identifies potential jurisdictional transfers for the future. No timing has been identified, but the following roadways have been identified to be transferred to the City of Elk River: CR 121; CSAH 33 between Jarvis Street/Twin Lakes Road and 205th Avenue; CR 44/35 between western city limits and US 10.

In addition to these changes, the County has identified future roadways that it would operate and maintain within the City of Elk River. These changes include: 221st Avenue with a future connection to CR 33 to the west and to the eastern city limits to the east; 193rd Avenue; and Fillmore Street with a new connection to Jarvis Street (includes Jarvis Street). The county plan also identifies new county connections that currently do not exist and are not yet a part of the roadway network. These routes include a new CSAH 33 connection between 205th Avenue and Twin Lakes Road (CSAH 13) and a new CR 32 extension between Elk Lake Road (CSAH 1) and the CSAH 33/CR 77 intersection. Figure 6-2: Sherburne County Identified Jurisdictional Changes shows the proposed changes.

Functional Classification

As drivers, people are aware that roadways serve different purposes. Some roadways accommodate high traffic volumes and have few points to enter and exit roadway. Others have multiple locations where vehicles can enter and exit and have lower speeds. The purpose or function that a roadway provides is known as functional classification. A roadway's functional classification identifies its role in the roadway hierarchy used by agencies and planning officials to manage access, setback and other design-related features of a roadway. It also influences the types of land use and development in an area. For example, a Principal Arterial generally has higher traffic volumes and speeds. It is intended to get people through an area and sever a larger travel shed. Developments that would result in numerous individual driveways or homes along this type of corridor would be discouraged for safety, mobility and noise reasons.

Figure 6-3: Existing Functional Classification shows existing functional classification.



Figure 6-3. Existing Functional Classification



There are four roadway types within Elk River: principal arterials, minor arterials, collectors and local streets. Each roadway plays an important role in the system. Figure 6-4: Access versus Mobility shows the traits associated with the various functional classes. The roles are discussed below.

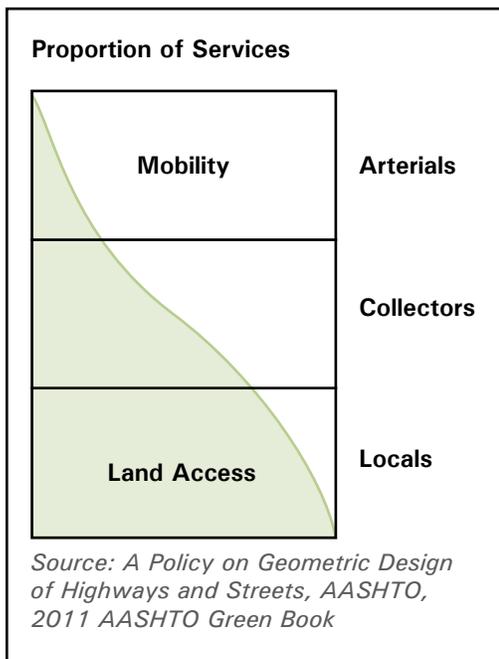


Figure 6-4: Access versus Mobility

Principal Arterial: There are three principal arterial routes within the City of Elk River, TH 101, US 10 and US 169. In general, principal arterials provide the greatest connectivity (link counties and/or states), have significant continuity at a state or regional level, serve longer trips (through traffic), and generally have higher posted speeds and less access. They typically only connect with other principal and minor arterial routes and some select collectors. In some instances principal arterials are freeways (interchange access only) and in other locations they have at-grade intersections.

Minor Arterial: Existing minor arterial routes within the City include CSAH 1, CSAH 12, CSAH 13 and Jackson Avenue. Generally minor arterial routes are state or county facilities (with a few select city roadways) that connect key activity centers and nodes and have continuity on a county level. They generally serve medium to long trips and they typically have higher posted speeds and more restrictive access than collector or local streets. Minor arterials generally connect to principal arterials, other minor arterials and collectors.

Collector: Collector roadways (e.g., Tyler Street and CSAH 1) provide links to local activity centers and connections between arterial routes and local city streets. These roadways are intended to bring traffic from various nodes and funnel it to the arterial network. Collector streets have continuity at a local level and generally serve medium to short trips. They serve a variety of land uses and can therefore have a variety of speeds. In general, an equal emphasis is placed on mobility and access.

Local Street: The remaining roadways are considered local streets (e.g., Zane Street and 8th Street). Local streets provide connections to neighborhoods, developments and to other streets. There is generally low continuity (many cul-de-sacs), low speeds, access is emphasized and a small travelshed.

Table 6-A below shows the different characteristics associated with each functional class type.

Characteristics	Roadway Classification			
	Principal Arterial	Minor Arterial	Collector	Local
Place Connections	Connect to the Twin Cities and with other communities in Minnesota.	Provide connections to nearby communities, major traffic generators and regional business concentrations.	Interconnect neighborhoods and minor business concentrations. Provide supplementary interconnection of major generators with regional business concentrations.	Interconnect blocks within residential neighborhoods and land parcels with commercial and industrial developments.
Spacing	Spacing should vary in relationship to density – 2 – 6 miles.	1 - 2 miles or as needed.	As needed in conjunction with minor arterials to provide adequate connections of places. In addition, collectors should be designated at an average spacing of not less than 4 miles.	As needed to access land uses.
System Connections	To interstate freeways, other principal arterials and minor arterials. Connections should be limited.	To most freeways and other principal arterials, other minor arterials and collectors and some local streets.	To minor arterials, other collectors and local streets	To a few minor arterials. Primarily to collectors and other local streets.
Trip Making	Trips greater than eight miles.	Medium-to-long trips (2-6 miles) at moderate speeds. May have longer trips to access the principal arterial network.	Short trips (depending upon development density) at low to moderate speeds. Longer trips for accessing the arterial network.	Short trips (under 2 miles) at low speeds. Longer trips accessing the collector network.
Mobility vs. Access	Greater emphasis on mobility than land access. Little or no direct land access.	Emphasis on mobility rather than on land access. Direct land access should be limited to concentrations of uses rather than driveways.	Equal emphasis on mobility and land access. Direct land access predominantly to development concentrations.	Emphasis on land access, not mobility. Direct land access predominantly to residential and agricultural land uses.
Access Spacing	Defer to MnDOT guidelines.	Defer to county guidelines.	Local guidelines	Local guidelines for distances between driveways.
System Mileage	Between 2 and 10 percent	Between 6 and 25 percent with principal and minor arterials	Between 5 and 25 percent	Between 55 and 80 percent
Intersections	Grade separated desirable. High-capacity controlled at-grade intersections at a minimum	Traffic signals and cross-street stops	Four-way stops and some traffic signals	As required
Parking	None	Restricted as necessary	Restricted as necessary	Permitted as necessary
Large Trucks	No restrictions	Restricted as necessary – generally not restricted	Restricted as necessary	Permitted as necessary
Management Tools	Access control/spacing, median barriers, and traffic signal progression	Traffic signal progression and spacing and land access management/control	Number of lanes, traffic signal timing and land access management	Intersection control, cul-de-sacs, diverters, traffic calming measures
Vehicles Carried	> 10,000	1,000 – 30,000	250 – 15,000	Less than 1,000
Posted Speed Limit	> 40 mph	35 – 55 mph	30 – 40 mph	30 mph maximum
Right of Way	100 – 300 feet (depends upon design)	60 – 150 feet	60 – 100 feet	50 – 80 feet

Table 6-A: Functional Classification Characteristics



Freight

Freight is served primarily through truck and train movements. In Sherburne County the movement of agricultural goods, commercial and industrial products and natural resources (aggregate, etc.) are the major sources of truck freight. Adding to the freight mix within the City are the existing aggregate and sand mines near CSAH 33, the landfill at the northern end of the City and the concrete plants located closer to the southern half of the City. Truck traffic uses TH 101, US 10, US 169 and a number of county roadways to travel through the area and to destinations within Elk River.

Rail Freight – Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway

The BNSF Railway provides freight service to the Elk River area. The BNSF Railway is a Class I railroad (major rail carrier that links large portions of the country) that connects the west coast of the United States to Chicago. The BNSF railroad roughly parallels US 10 through the City of Elk River (Figure 6-1). In 2013, MnDOT updated its statewide railroad information. According to the updated data, approximately 54 trains per day use the railroad with speeds up to 75 miles per hour.

Because many of the railroad crossings are at-grade (no bridge over or roadway under the railroad), the trains can have a negative impact on automobile and freight traffic flow, as well as pedestrian and bicycle crossings. In addition to blocking travel across the railroad when trains are present, the railroad bisects the City, creating a physical barrier between downtown and the rest of the community to the north.

Transit

There is limited transit service in the City of Elk River. Most of the service is provided by Northstar Commuter Rail; however, there are a few specialized services that can assist targeted residents. The different services are described in the following sections.

Northstar Commuter Rail Line

Since the passage of the 2004 Comprehensive Plan, the former Northstar Commuter Coach has been upgraded to the Northstar Commuter Rail line. The Northstar Line offers service between Big Lake and downtown Minneapolis, with stations at Big Lake, Elk River, Ramsey, Anoka, Coon Rapids and Fridley. In addition, there is a bus that will take commuters from the Big Lake station to the City of St. Cloud. Northstar is considered, as its name implies, commuter rail. This means that the service is provided is generally limited to serving commuter trips into the “city” (Minneapolis in this case) in the morning and out of the metro area in the afternoon/evening.

The Northstar Commuter Rail line operates on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) rail line. During the work week, service on the line includes trips to and from Big Lake to Minneapolis both in the morning and in the afternoon. The Elk River station is connected to a park and ride lot located at the intersection of Twin Lakes Road and 171st Lane. There are over 750 parking stalls at the lot, some of which are available for overnight parking. Figure 6-5, provided by Metro Transit, shows the location of the park and ride.



Figure 6-5: Location of Elk River station

RiverRider Public Transit

RiverRider Public Transit provides door to door service for all trips. Any resident in Elk River is able to use this service for any transportation need – trip to the doctor, shopping, work, school, etc. The fare is based on the destination. Rides must be scheduled in advance. RiverRider is typically referred to as a dial-a-ride service.

Veterans Services – Medical Center Transportation

The Sherburne County Veterans Service operates a 12-passenger van for the expressed purpose of providing transportation to and from the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. This service is limited to veterans who are unable to transport themselves. There is also service to the St. Cloud VA Medical Center; however, this is done through volunteer drivers in their own cars. This service is free. Hours are limited, and rides must be scheduled at least 48 hours in advance.

Sherburne County Volunteer Driver Program

The Sherburne County Volunteer Driver program provides necessary rides for clients of Sherburne County when no other transportation is available. Necessary appointments include: medical appointments, social services, mental health and other purposes approved by the county. Seniors 65+ may qualify for the program according to maximum income guidelines. Service hours are limited.



Trails

As noted in the introduction of this chapter, there has been notable change in the transportation network over time. At one point, sidewalks and trails were recognized for recreational purposes and not for serving a transportation purpose. That thought process is changing. Today there is recognition that most trips start and/or end with someone walking and bicycle commuting rates are increasing within the state. Because of the evolving role of the trail and sidewalk systems, it is important to address them in both the transportation and parks and recreation sections of the Comprehensive Plan.

Figure 6-6: Existing Trails and Sidewalks shows the existing trail and sidewalk system. As shown in the figure, the existing system does not link the entire community. There are a number of gaps within and between neighborhoods and major destinations such as schools, parks, other recreational areas and shopping nodes. There are, however, areas within the community that currently have a robust sidewalk and trail system in place. The areas with the most connected trails and sidewalks are in the older downtown areas and in newer developments that have occurred over the past decade. Areas that are more rural generally lack trail and sidewalk facilities and areas that developed between 10 and 25 years ago are also less likely to have trails and sidewalks in place. These areas developed in an era when communities were not constructing sidewalks or trails as part of development.

Issues and Opportunities

The previous section of this chapter provided an overall description of the transportation network as it exists today. This section identifies the various issues associated with the network and identifies opportunities for addressing concerns.

A number of issues and concerns related to roadways were identified as part of this planning process. Concerns noted as part of this process and as part of the previous plan are described below along with opportunities to address the concern. Final recommendations or policies that have been adopted through previous studies have more detail in the Future Improvements section.

Congestion on MnDOT Roadways

Congestion continues to be a problem on US 10 and US 169, especially during peak travel periods and during the weekend. Both US 10 and US 169 link the Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota. As such, there is commuter, freight and recreational traffic using these roadways on a regular basis. This mix of traffic can also contribute to the congestion experienced by users.

US 10 and US 169 are both principal arterials that provide continuous travel flow. US 10 is an east-west route and US 169/TH 101 is a north-south route. These routes are part of a limited number of arterial facilities that provide a continuous connection. Because there are few alternatives, traffic will continue to primarily use these routes to get through the area. Additionally, because there are few alternatives to these routes, local residents/businesses are also required to use these routes for short trips or to use circuitous routes through local streets.

MnDOT has recognized the problems on both US 10 and US 169 for well over a decade. Serious efforts were initiated to identify improvements on both the corridors in the early 2000s. The City of Elk River and Sherburne County were a part of those efforts. Generalized concepts suggested that these roadways eventually be converted to freeway facilities to accommodate projected traffic demands. Interim improvements in some locations were also identified. Following the completion of the generalized plans, MnDOT, the City and the County, along with input from property owners and stakeholders, developed specific improvements for the corridors that were documented in two environmental assessments. The

intent of these improvements is to make the roadways less congested, to develop supporting frontage/backage roads for local trips and to improve safety by eliminating or improving the existing at-grade intersections and driveways.

Along with proposed improvements identified for US 10 and US 169, the City of Elk River and Sherburne County have the opportunity to develop or preserve local north-south and east-west corridors.

Traffic Diversion through Neighborhoods

Residents are concerned that as MnDOT roadways become more congested, motorists will look for alternative routes that take them out of the congestion and keep them moving – even if it is a less direct route. However, a majority of the through traffic (traffic not destined to stop in Elk River) is not likely to divert to other roadways unless it is a county road simply due to the existing roadway network. Because of the way Elk River has developed, in small sections at a time and in a more rural style, there are very few continuous north-south and east-west routes that have been developed, and even fewer are owned by the city. The few continuous routes that exist are generally state or county roadways which are intended to accommodate heavier traffic volumes. While this does not mean that residential areas are not disturbed by traffic, there are few city streets that are going to experience major traffic flows from through traffic as a result of congested MnDOT roads.

Residential neighborhoods are more likely to experience diverting traffic from other local residents and/or businesses that are familiar with the roadway network and know how to link from one neighborhood to the next. Most through traffic will not have the patience to figure out a route that would get them to where they want to go in a timeframe that would make it worth the effort.

Improvements identified by MnDOT, the County and the City for US 169 and US 10 will address a majority of these concerns. Additionally, if the County and City develop other continuous routes, there will be opportunities for local traffic to avoid US 169 and US 10. Providing opportunities for local trips will free up capacity on MnDOT's roadways, thereby improving traffic flow and resulting in less diversion. The proposed functional classification map shown in the last section of this chapter identifies potential collector and arterial routes that could be developed to help address the issue.

Lack of Continuous North-South and East-West Routes (arterials and collectors)

The City of Elk River has been noted as having few continuous north-south and east-west routes. This lack of continuous routes is a result of natural barriers as well as the development patterns that have occurred over time. As noted above, much of the City's development has come in small sections at a time, has been more rural in nature, and has been constrained by the BNSF Railway, the Mississippi River and other resources in the area.

At this time, it will be quite challenging to provide good continuity in areas that have already mostly/fully developed. There may be some limited opportunities to provide better connectivity than what exists today in locations with some existing development (but not fully developed), but there will be impacts to homes and businesses in these locations.

The City should use the opportunity when it updates its transportation plan to identify new north-south

and east-west connections in areas where there is limited development today. This will ensure a more even distribution to traffic in the northern half of the community and provide for better connectivity over the long-term. Coordination with Sherburne County will be key to the success of these efforts.

The proposed functional classification map identifies potential collector and arterial routes that could be developed to help address connectivity needs. Some of the proposed changes shown on the map are included because Sherburne County's transportation plan identified new connections or modifications to the roadway status. A few of the county's proposed changes include new alignments through public areas such as parks. Coordination and discussion between the county and the city will occur before any new roadways are constructed. The discussion between the agencies will include ways to minimize impacts to existing land uses.

Non-Motorized Transportation Facilities and System

The City of Elk River recognizes that a number of systems make up the transportation network, and that not all of them involve the use of single occupant vehicles on the roadway. As shown in Figure 6-6, there are a limited number of sidewalk and trail facilities within the community and they do not form a cohesive system at this time. Like the roadway system, lack of continuous sidewalk and trail routes will hamper the mobility of pedestrians and bicyclists, result in safety problems (sometimes there is no space to walk/ride when the system suddenly ends and opportunities are limited for those with physical disabilities) and limit system users (who wants to use a system that does not link to anything?).

The City has begun to address the existing deficiencies by requiring new developments to include construction of either sidewalks or trails as part of their plans. In addition, the City has also identified a number of new sidewalk and trail connections that serve as links between neighborhoods, recreational areas, downtown Elk River, and along key

transportation corridors. Figure 6-7: Proposed Trails and Sidewalks shows the proposed trail/sidewalks.

Along with facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists, transit is another opportunity to provide connections for those that cannot or choose not to drive. The City has been very supportive of Northstar Commuter Rail and has developed a station area that supports transit needs. Additional transit-supported development is expected in this area. As part of these efforts, there will be opportunities to include additional provisions for non-motorized traffic.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Crossings (US 10 and US 169)

The provision of safe and well-spaced crossings of US 10, US 169 and other high volume roadways for pedestrians and bicyclists is a concern for system users. Both US 10 and US 169 are larger transportation facilities that can be challenging for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross, especially during peak periods when traffic is congested. From a safety perspective, even though technically pedestrians have a right to cross the roadway at unmarked intersections, the true crossings on both US 10 and US 169 are at signalized intersections and on cross streets where there is a grade separation (interchange or overpass). Traffic signals play an important role in getting pedestrians and bicyclists across these busy roadways. They provide adequate gaps for both users to cross the roadway and they offer a controlled crossing that keeps their movement separated from motor vehicle movements.

On US 169 there are six locations where there are facilities in place for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross the highway with the assistance of a traffic signal or a grade-separated (bridge, overpass or interchange) facility. Locations with traffic signals include: Main Street, School Street, Jackson/193rd, and 197th. There is a stand-alone pedestrian/bicycle bridge over US 169 between School Street and Jackson/193rd which connects to Freeport to the west of US 169 and to Dodge east of US 169. An interchange at 205th also includes pedestrian and

bicycle facilities; however, the existing network is not connected to these improvements.

There are seven locations on US 10 with traffic signals that provide accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross the highway. The seven signalized intersections include: 171st Avenue, Main Street, Jackson Avenue, Proctor Avenue, Upland Avenue, Joplin Street and Waco Street. There are no grade-separated crossings of US 10 today. It should also be noted that there are gaps at some of the intersections where a segment of sidewalk/trail is missing between the intersection with US 10 and the spot where the trail/sidewalks starts (sometimes the first cross street, sometimes after the first parcel, etc.). These gaps create problems for users – users find themselves trapped at the intersection.

The Mississippi Connections redevelopment plan identifies the need for a grade separated crossing between downtown and the blocks to the north of the train tracks, in the area currently occupied by the American Legion. The proposed sidewalk and trail network map (Figure 6-6) shows these connections being addressed. The map also includes additional crossings on both US 10 and US 169. It should also be noted that the long-term plans to convert US 10 and US 169 to a freeway will include accommodations for both pedestrians and bicyclists at interchange and overpass locations.

Because the future trail and sidewalk plan is very comprehensive, there are a number of proposed corridors throughout the city. The City should take the opportunity as part of its updates to the Transportation Plan and the Parks and Trails Plan to develop criteria that can be used to prioritize construction of trails/sidewalks in areas that are already developed (efforts for new trails/sidewalks should be included as a requirement for new development areas and for redevelopment sites).

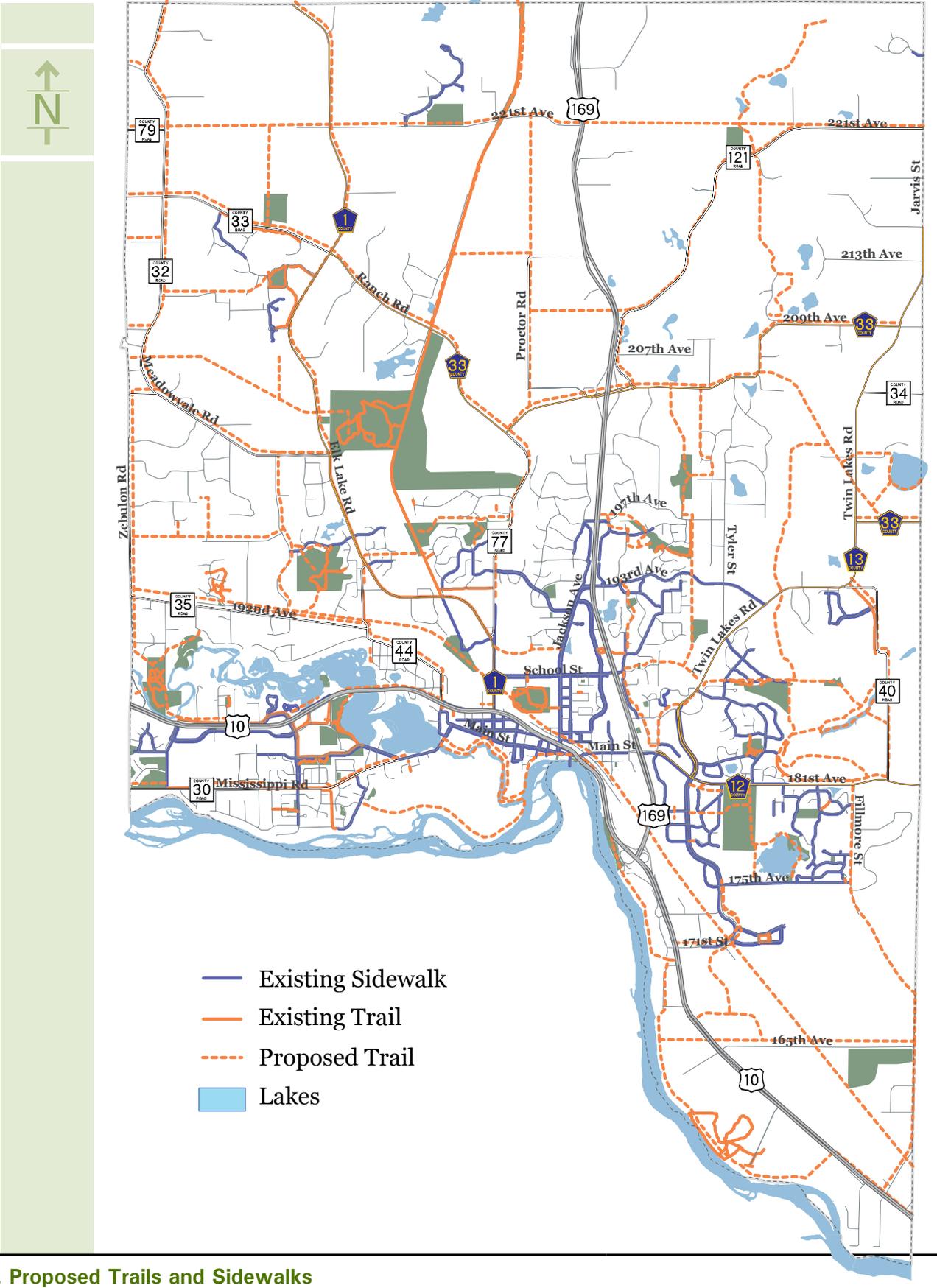


Figure 6-7. Proposed Trails and Sidewalks

Future Improvements and Guidelines

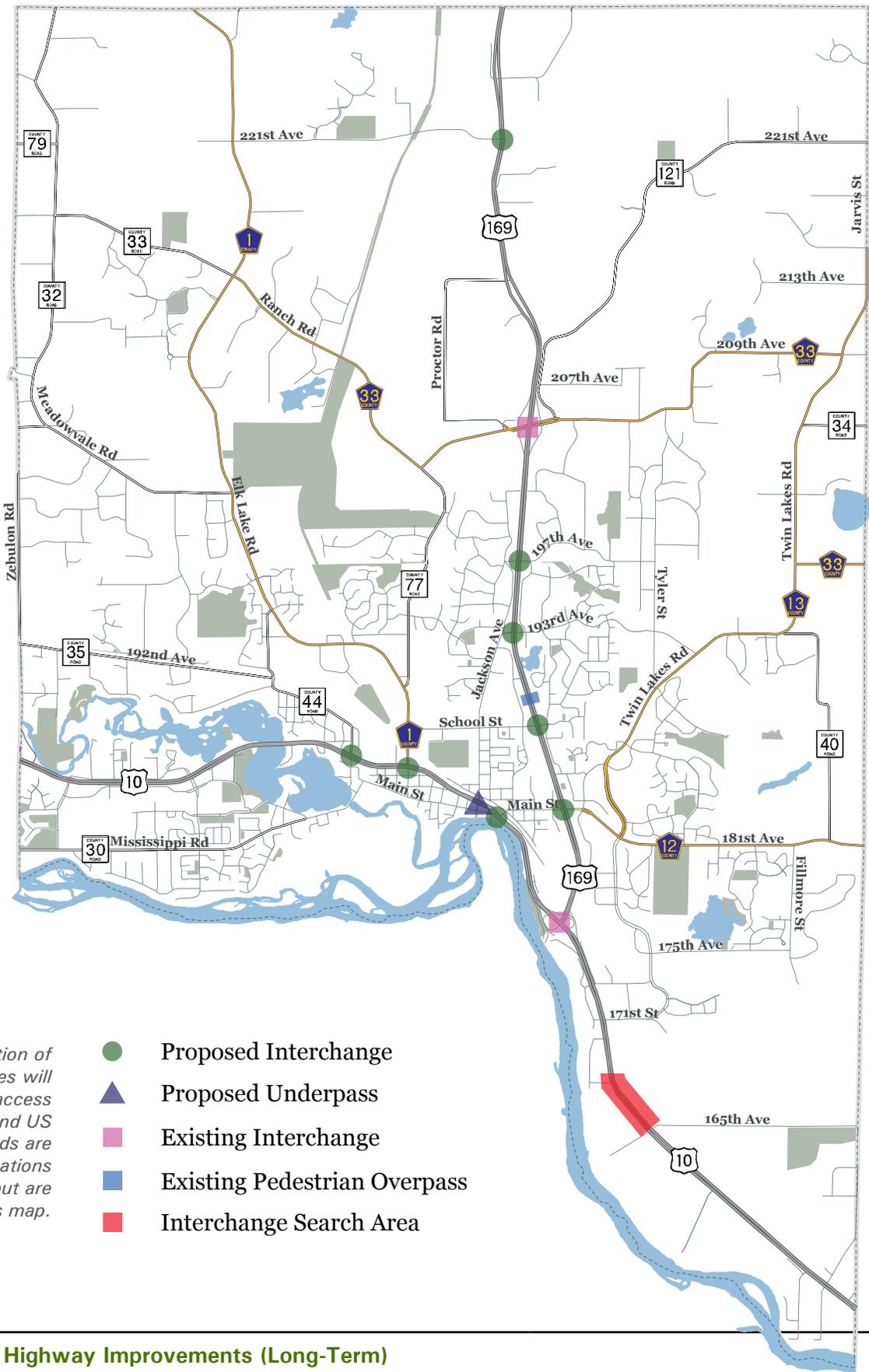
Over the past several years, there have been a number of studies completed that have addressed or studied the issues identified above and/or other issues identified by the City. The recommendations of these studies, along with implementation guidelines for addressing the issues and opportunities identified in the previous section are included here.

Congestion on MnDOT Roadways - US 10 and US 169 Congestion and Access Management

MnDOT and its partners, including the City of Elk River, have identified a number of improvements to both US 10 and US 169 in order to reduce the amount of congestion on the corridor, improve safety, and address some of the existing connectivity concerns along the corridor. In addition to providing connectivity and better crossings for motorized vehicles, the proposed improvements also identified connections and crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists. The improvements for US 10 and US 169 were developed as part of two separate environmental documents completed in 2010 by MnDOT, Sherburne County and the City of Elk River. The improvements include converting US 169 to a freeway facility and converting a portion of US 10 to a freeway. The improvements identified in the environmental document were confirmed in additional studies (Mississippi Connections Redevelopment Framework, 171st Focused Area Study, and 171st Avenue AUAR). Figure 6-8 shows the locations of proposed interchanges and overpasses on US 10 and US 169. Figure 6-9 shows greater design detail of these interchanges and overpasses and includes the frontage roads.

It should be noted, that while plans have been developed for both roadways, no funding has been identified for improvements at the state or local level. Because funding has not been identified or programmed, the timing of improvements is uncertain as is the feasibility of making them as identified. This plan acknowledges the uncertainty surrounding the improvements, but presents them with the understanding that the proposed plans represent the best information available.

The text on the following pages identifies specific improvements by highway.



Construction of interchanges will eliminate existing access points onto US 10 and US 169. Frontage roads are also proposed in locations along the corridor, but are not shown on this map.

- Proposed Interchange
- ▲ Proposed Underpass
- Existing Interchange
- Existing Pedestrian Overpass
- Interchange Search Area

Figure 6-8. Proposed Highway Improvements (Long-Term)

US 10

US 10 has been identified for conversion to a freeway over the long-term between US 169 and CR 44. The improvements identified by MnDOT and its partners also require shifting the BNSF Railway in order to create grade separations with both US 10 and the railroad. The grade separations will enable vehicles (as well as pedestrians and bicyclists) to cross the railroad and US 10 without having to be stopped by trains or mainline traffic on US 10. It is anticipated that these changes will take 20 years or more to implement.

Proposed improvements include:

- Four travel lanes (2 in each direction) with shoulders and a median barrier
- Interchange at Main Street
- Interchange at Proctor Avenue
- Interchange at Upland Avenue
- Underpass at Jackson Street
- Frontage road system between Upland Avenue and Main Street
- Access at Lowell Avenue is eliminated and will be served by the frontage road
- Accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross both US 10 and the railroad
- Pedestrian and bicycle trails/sidewalks along crossings and frontage roads

In addition to these improvements, the 171st Avenue Focused Area Study recommends constructing a new interchange between 165th and 171st Avenues. This interchange will require frontage road connections to eliminate other existing at-grade intersections. This interchange is also shown in Figure 6-8 Proposed Highway Improvements (long-term).

US 169

Like US 10, US 169 has also been identified to be converted to a freeway facility by MnDOT, Sherburne County, the City of Elk River, Livonia Township and the City of Zimmerman. Other improvements identified for US 169 include:

- Ultimate six-lane facility (initially constructed as a four-lane freeway that can be modified by converting the inside shoulders)

- Auxiliary lanes and collector-distributor road between Main and School Streets and School Street and 193rd Avenue.
- US 169 is lowered (reduces reconstruction of local roadways that cross over the highway)
- US 169 shifted slightly to the east near BNSF Railway
- BNSF Railway shifted
- Existing interchange at US 10/US 169/TH 101 is upgraded to better channel all movements
- Interchange at Main Street
- Interchange at School Street
- Interchange at Jackson/193rd Avenue and 197th Avenue (split diamond)
- Interchanges at 205th Avenue/CSAH 33 (already constructed)
- Interchange at 221st Avenue
- Frontage and backage roads
- Accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross both US 10 and the railroad
- Pedestrian and bicycle trails/sidewalks along crossings and frontage roads

All other public street and driveway access will be eliminated from the corridor, with access provided at the interchange locations.

It should also be noted that there is an existing pedestrian bridge located north of School Street that is used by both pedestrians and bicyclists to cross US 169. This bridge connects to local trails on both sides of the highway. This pedestrian bridge could remain in place with proposed improvements.

Implementation

Because no timeframe has been developed, most of the changes identified for US 10 and US 169 will occur incrementally as funding becomes available, although some portions of the project need to be coordinated with one another. In general, construction of proposed frontage and backage roads can occur before interchanges are constructed and right of way for them can be preserved as parcels develop and/or redevelop. The City of Elk River should work with MnDOT and others to identify funding sources and to move the various projects forward. Partners should also consider low-cost- high benefit improvements that can be implemented ahead of final implementation of the freeway vision.

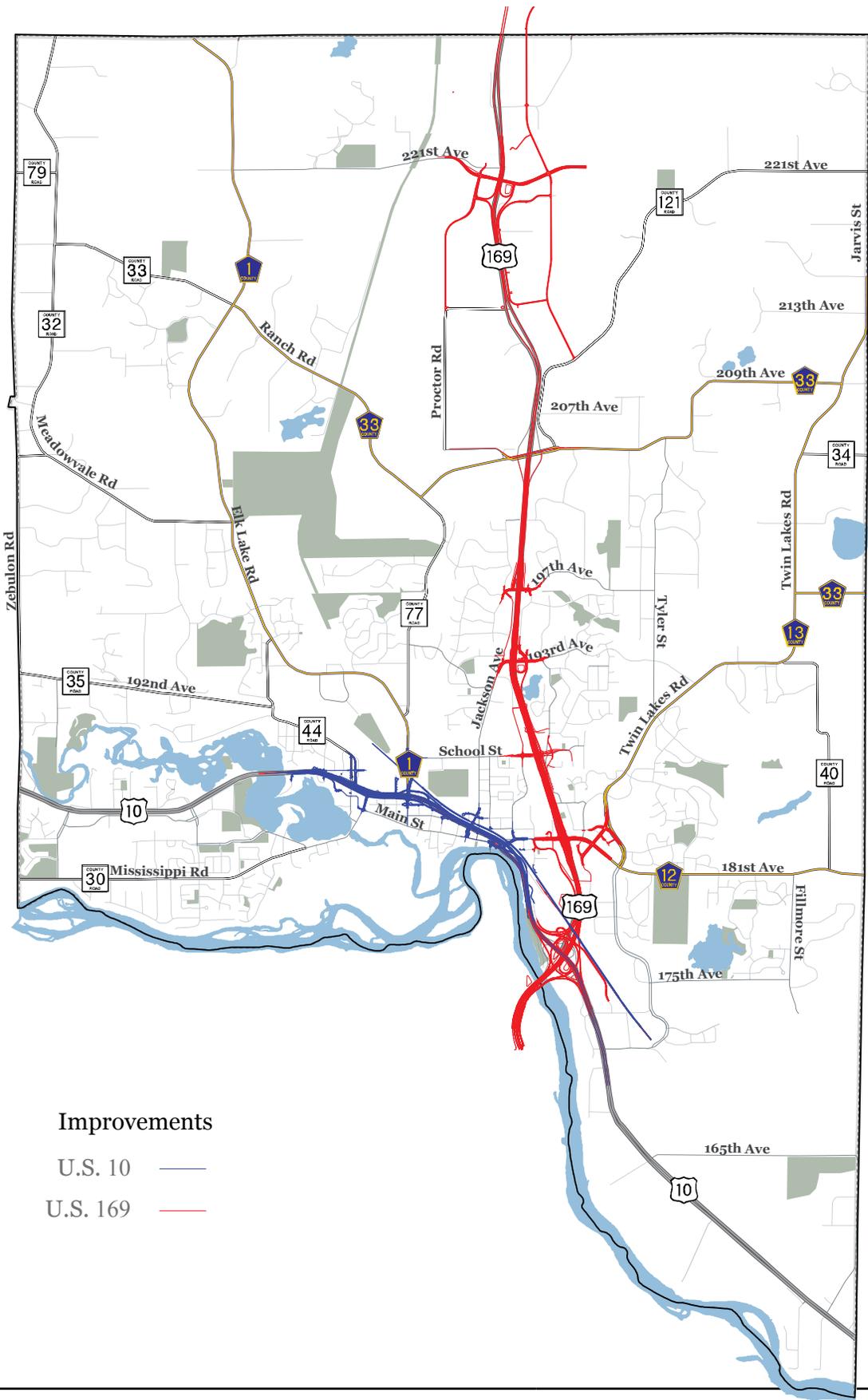


Figure 6-9. Detailed U.S. 10 and U.S. 169 Improvements



Traffic Diversion and Continuous Routes (arterials and collectors)

The lack of continuous north-south and east-west collector and arterial routes creates connectivity problems and results in congestion on the limited number of continuous routes that do exist. At times this results in traffic using county and local streets to get to destinations that could be better served by having additional continuous routes. Implementation of improvements to US 169 and US 10 (along with associated frontage and backage roads) will help provide some of the connectivity that is currently lacking. However, these improvements are not programmed for the near future, so additional connections are needed.

Figure 6-10: Future Functional Classification shows the proposed future functional classification map for the City of Elk River. This map includes facility upgrades to collector and arterial routes on county roadways identified by Sherburne County as part of its long-term transportation plan. Some of the changes in functional classification include constructing additional roadways (shown as dashed lines) or segments of roadways. It should be noted that the proposed routes shown on the map are conceptual only. Discussions between the city and county will occur prior to any new roadway construction. As part of these discussions, the city and county will identify ways to minimize impacts to existing residential and park uses.

Other changes over time may include additional investments such as roadway widening (on minor arterials), pedestrian and bicycle facilities, limiting driveway access for newly constructed segments, consolidating driveway access when redevelopment occurs, etc.

In addition to changes on the county network, there are also classification changes recommended for collector roadways on the city system. Most of the proposed collector roadways are a continuation

of existing collector or arterial roadways or include construction of new routes as development occurs. Much of this proposed collector network was identified as part of the US 10, US 169, the Mississippi Connections Redevelopment Framework, and 171st Avenue Focused Area studies.

Implementation

In order to implement changes that require construction of new routes or segments of routes, it is recommended that proactive efforts be undertaken by the City in order to preserve the right of way that is needed rather than building segments of roadways as property develops. Waiting until development and/or redevelopment occurs does not protect the route, it can lead to increased acquisition costs and it may not occur in the correct timeframe. Things the City can do to preserve the routes:

- Complete a corridor study to identify the preferred alignment and location of the route
- Adopt an official map
- Advance purchase the right of way needed

It is important to coordinate these efforts with MnDOT and Sherburne County if the efforts impact county or state routes to ensure that an alignment can be identified that serves the transportation need, minimizes impacts to existing development (regardless of use), and has the support of the required agencies. It also provides an opportunity to pool funding resources.

If proactive elements are not completed in time and a development does come along, it is important for the City to include the locations of potential connections as part of discussions with property owners and developers prior to them submitting an official application for approval.

Summary of Roadway Improvements and Changes

The previous sections highlighted a number of roadway network changes and improvements. Figure 6-11 shows all of the proposed changes graphically. Some of the proposed changes, such as the connection between Proctor and Upland Avenues along the School Street alignment will not be made unless or until requested by the affected property owner.

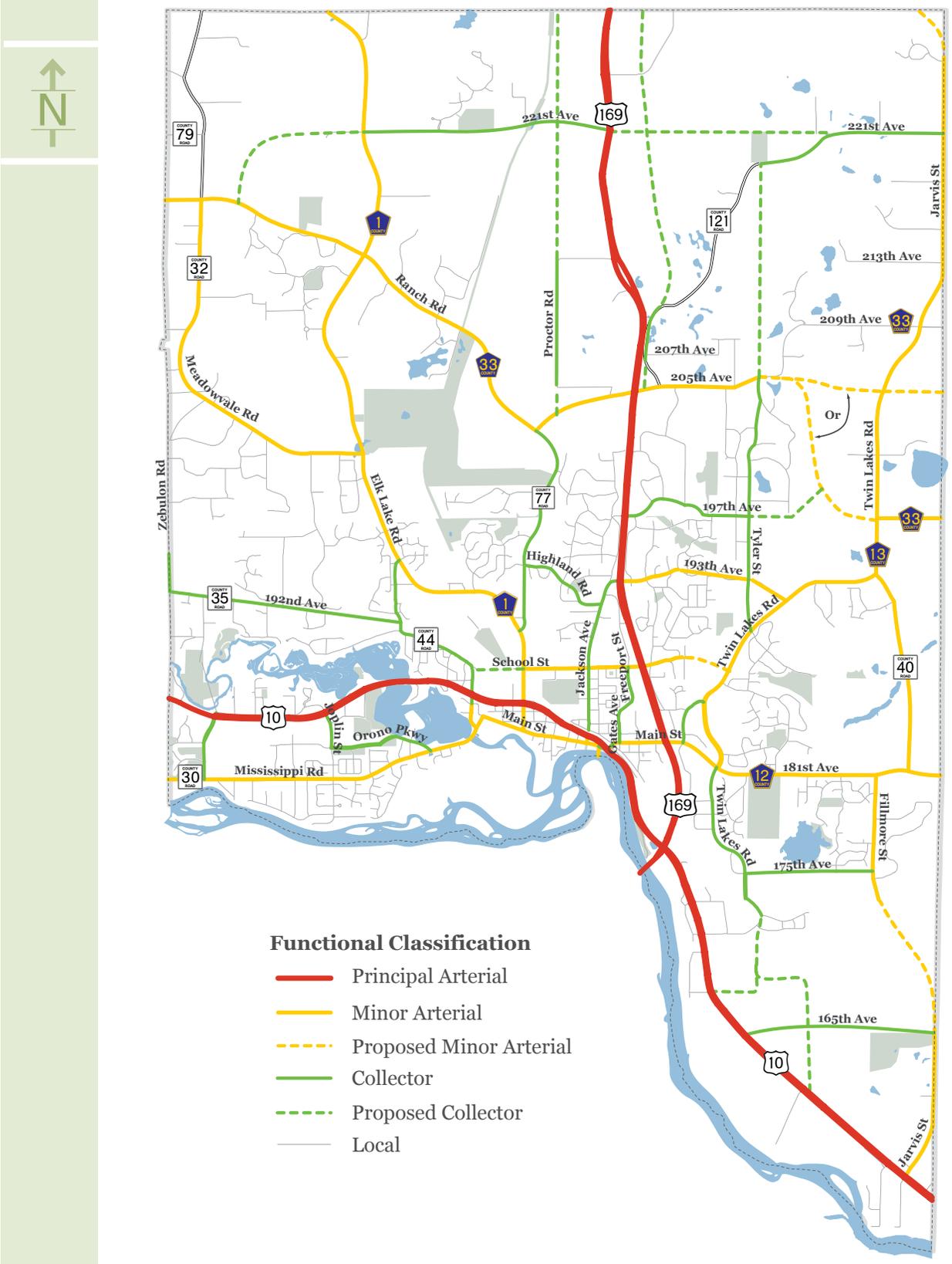


Figure 6-10. Future Functional Classification

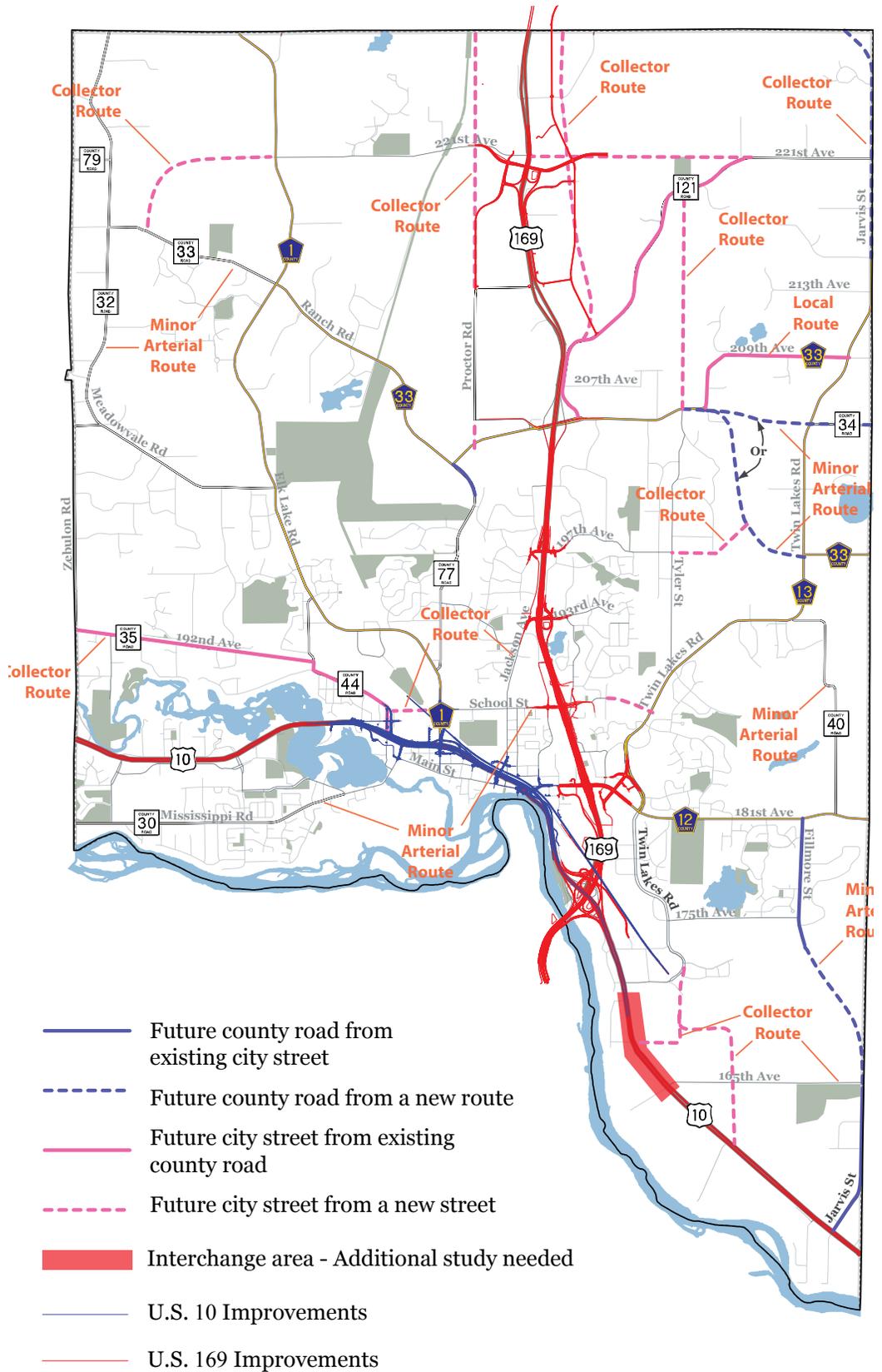


Figure 6-11. Future Network



Bicycle and Pedestrian Connections and Crossings

In addition to the long-term planned improvements on US 10 and US 169 which include crossings and connections for pedestrians and bicyclists, the City has identified a number of future trails and sidewalks (Figure 6-7) to address the lack of trails and challenging roadway crossings in some areas of the community. As shown on the map, the recommended trail network is quite extensive and comprehensive. However, there is not any prioritization to the network so it is challenging to identify which segments will provide the most benefit for users and thus should be prioritized for implementation.

One of the ways that the City can improve connections and crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists is to recognize walking and bicycling as a transportation mode as well as a recreational activity. By elevating these facilities as a means of transportation, there are additional opportunities through grants and planning to prioritize connections that serve a transportation or dual purpose. It is recommended that the City's Park, Trails and Open Space Plan identify crossing and connection priorities. Recommended priorities should be based off of criteria developed as part of the process and should be incorporated into both plans.

Implementation

There are things the City can do on an ongoing basis that will improve conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists and enhance the network. Activities include:

- Incorporate sidewalk and/or trail provisions as part of the subdivision ordinance and plat review criteria.
- Incorporate sidewalk and/or trail facilities as part of construction and/or reconstruction on all collector and arterial roadways.
- Incorporate adequate shoulders on collector and arterial roadways for commuter cyclists.
- Include American with Disabilities Act improvements when repairing or constructing roadways
- Incorporate countdown timers and audible commands as part of new traffic signal construction and traffic signal replacement (MnDOT has upgraded most of the traffic signals on its network).
- Incorporate best design practices for bicycle and pedestrian facilities at intersections and at any mid-block crossings.
- Consider lighting needs for system users when facilities are developed.
- Apply for grants to help build the sidewalk and trail network.
- Work with Sherburne County and MnDOT to implement improvements on their roadway networks.



Introduction

Housing is an important component of all communities. Not only do the quality, availability, affordability, and diversity of housing enhance the quality of life in the City, it also supports economic development and contributes to a community's sense of place. Many business owners look at the type and supply of housing in a community when considering locations for opening or expanding their business. In return, the location and expansion of businesses within the City serves the population and attracts more businesses which keeps the cycle of growth and development vibrant.

Housing is not a single, one size fits all, commodity. Personal housing needs change as life passes from young, single adult to family to elderly. This chapter provides an inventory and analysis of Elk River's existing housing and paints a broad picture of residential development.



Inventory and Analysis

Housing Supply

Quantity and Types of Housing Units

In 2010, the U.S. Census reported 8,023 housing units in Elk River, which is 2,359 more units than identified in 2000. Data describing the household type, as shown below in Table 7-A, is based on data available as an estimate. The most recent data is from the 2011 American Community Survey. Roughly 66.92% of the housing units in 2011 were single-family detached houses – this is considerably lower than Sherburne County (78.7%) and only slightly lower than the State of Minnesota (67.5%). In 2011, roughly 15.1% of the housing units in Elk River were single-family attached units (townhouses) – this is considerably higher than Sherburne County (5.9%) and the State of Minnesota (7.2%). In 2011, the City had a fairly consistent percentage of multi-family housing with Sherburne County and the State of Minnesota. Refer to Table 7-A: Housing Supply by Type, for more information.

Table 7-A: Housing Supply by Type – 2000 and 2010

Housing Type	2000 Units	2000 Percent	2010 Units	2010 Percent	2010 Sherburne County Percent	2010 State Percent
Single-Family Detached	4,216	72.9%	5,666	66.9%	78.7%	67.5%
Single-Family Attached	432	7.5%	1,277	15.1%	5.9%	7.2%
2-4 Unit Multi-Family	97	1.7%	204	2.4%	1.6%	4.5%
5+ Unit Multi-Family	1,006	17.2%	1,234	14.6%	11.0%	17.1%
Manufactured Homes	31	0.1%	86	1.0%	2.8%	3.7%
Total Units	5,782	100%	8,467	100%	100%	100%

Source: 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Characteristics of Household Type

Table 7-B: Household Type Distribution – 2000 and 2010 compares the distribution of family and non-family households in Elk River, Sherburne County, and the State of Minnesota in 2000 and 2010. Elk River's percentage of "family households" increased more substantially between 2000 and 2010 than the County and the State.



Table 7-B: Household Type Distribution – 2000 and 2010

Household Type							Change (Number)			Change (Percent)		
	2000			2010			2000-2010			2000-2010		
	Elk River	County	MN	Elk River	County	MN	County	MN	Elk River	County	MN	MN
Family Households:												
Married-couple:	3,665	14,294	1,018,245	4,894	19,163	1,060,509	1,229	4,869	42,264	33.5%	34.1%	4.2%
Male household, no wife present:	N/A	N/A	68,114	336	1,064	89,707	N/A	N/A	21,593	N/A	N/A	31.7%
Female household, no husband present:	519	1,615	168,782	716	2,271	198,799	197	656	30,017	38.0%	40.6%	17.8%
Total, Family Households	4,402	21,581	1,255,141	5,946	22,498	1,349,015	1,544	917	93,874	35.1%	4.2%	7.5%
Non-Family Households												
1-person household	973	3,393	509,468	1,638	5,101	584,008	665	1,708	74,540	68.3%	50.0%	14.6%
2 or more-person household	289	1,445	130,518	439	1,973	154,204	150	528	23,686	51.9%	36.5%	18.1%
Total, Non-Family Households	1,262	4,838	639,986	2,077	7,074	738,212	815	2,236	98,226	64.6%	46.2%	15.3%
Total	5,664	21,581	1,895,127	8,023	29,572	2,087,227	2,359	7,991	192,100	41.6%	37.0%	10.1%

Comparison of Owner-Occupied and Renter-Occupied Units

It is important for communities to have a mixture of both owner-occupied and renter-occupied units. In general, regional planners note that many communities strive to have roughly 65-70% of their housing units owner-occupied. In 2000, approximately 78.2% of the housing units in Elk River were owner-occupied, which is lower than the average of Sherburne County (84.0%) and slightly higher than the State of Minnesota (75%). In 2010, the City of Elk River’s housing occupancy ratio (owner: renter) increased slightly, with 80.4% of the housing units being owner occupied and 19.6% being renter occupied. Refer to Table 7-C: Housing Tenure by Type – 2010, for additional information.

Table 7-C: Housing Tenure by Type - 2010

Units per Structure	Owner Occupied Units	Percent Owner Occupied	Percent Owner Occupied County	Percent Owner Occupied State	Renter Occupied Units	Percent Renter Occupied	Percent Renter Occupied County	Percent Renter Occupied State
Single-Family Detached	5,298	66.0%	74.2%	62.5	221	2.8%	6.6%	5.0
Single-Family Attached	1,014	12.6%	5.1%	5.6	217	2.7%	1.2%	2.0
2-4 Unit Multi-Family	53	0.7%	0.1%	0.9	100	1.2%	1.1%	3.5
5+ Unit Multi-Family	51	0.6%	0.2%	1.9	983	12.3%	10.0%	15.4
Mobile Home	34	0.4%	1.2%	2.7	52	0.6%	0.3%	0.5
Total Units	5,782	100%	8,467	100%	100%			100%

Source: 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Table 7-D: Vacant Housing by Type - 2010

Year	City Vacant Units	City Percent Vacant	County Percent Vacant	State Percent Vacant
2000	118	2.0%	5.5%	8.3%
2010	462	5.4%	6.7%	10.5%

Source: 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Vacancies

In 2010, the City of Elk River faced an overall housing vacancy rate of 5.4%, which is 1.3% lower than the vacancy rate for the County and 5.1% lower than that of the State. In the year 2000, Elk River’s vacancy rate was also lower than the rates of both the County and the State. From 2000 to 2010, the County vacancy rate increased just 1.2% compared to a 2.2% increase statewide. Elk River experienced a 3.4% increase during this same time period. This can partly be explained by the fact that the number of housing units in the City increased by 46.4% during this time and the housing market experienced a significant decline. Refer to Table 7-D: Vacant Housing by Type-2010 for additional information.

Table 7-E: Owner-Occupied Housing by Value - 2010

Value	Units*	Percent	Sherburne County	State
Less than \$50,000	100	1.6%	2.7%	5.6%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	262	4.1%	3.8%	9.2%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	647	10.0%	14.0%	14.3%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1,578	24.5%	29.5%	20.4%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	2,282	35.4%	32.4%	27.5%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	1,430	22.2%	15.7%	16.5%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	128	2.0%	1.8%	5.5%
\$1,000,000 or More	23	0.4%	0.2%	1.0%
Median Value	225,400	x	\$200,100	\$201,400
Total	6,450	100%	100%	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey

*Owner occupied units

Value of Housing

The median value of owner-occupied housing units in Elk River in 2010 was \$225,400– up 55.7% (or \$80,600) from the median value in 2000 of \$144,800. Most housing in Elk River is valued in the range of \$200,000 to \$299,999. In comparison to low and moderate valued housing, there is a relatively small choice of higher valued housing units in Elk River. The median value of owner-occupied housing in Sherburne County was \$200,100 and \$201,400 in the State of Minnesota. Refer to Table 7-E: Owner-Occupied Housing by Value -2010 for additional information.



Table 7-F: Owner Monthly Costs as Percent of Household Income - 2010

Percent of Household Income	Units	Percent	Sherburne County	State
Less than 20%	1,461	27.9%	29.5%	35.1%
20.0 to 24.9%	989	18.9%	18.4%	17.7%
25.0 to 29.9%	719	13.7%	14.6%	13.6%
30.0 to 34.9%	505	9.7%	9.8%	9.3%
35.0% or More	1,556	29.8%	27.7%	24.3%
Not Computed	-	-	-	-
Total	5,230	100%	100%	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey

*Housing Units with a Mortgage

Owner Monthly Costs as Percentage of Household Income

Housing decisions should not be based solely on the value of housing, but also the cost of housing expenses in relation to household income. In general, housing costs (taxes, insurance, principal, interest, etc.) should not exceed 30% of total household income. In 2010, 39.5% of homeowners in Elk River had monthly costs that were 30% or more of their household income, compared to 37.5% in Sherburne County and 33.6% in the State of Minnesota. Refer to Table: 7-F: Owner Monthly Costs as Percent of Household Income -2010. These figures suggest that housing was less affordable in Elk River than in Sherburne County and the State of Minnesota in 2010. They also suggest that about two out of five homeowners in Elk River may find it difficult to make their mortgage payments. Consequently, some may default on their loans and others may find it difficult to keep up with household maintenance and repairs.

Table 7-G: Owner Monthly Costs as Percent of Household Income - 2010

Monthly Rent	Units	Percent	Sherburne County	State
Less than \$200	72	4.7%	5.2%	3.1%
\$200 to \$299	0	0.0%	2.6%	5.1%
\$300 to \$499	82	5.4%	6.2%	10.6%
\$500 to \$749	383	25.1%	24.3%	27.1%
\$750 to \$999	621	40.7%	32.6%	26.5%
\$1000 to \$1,499	204	13.4%	21.6%	19.9%
\$1,500 or more	164	10.7%	7.5%	7.7%
No Rent Paid	47	-	-	-
Median Rent Paid	\$795	-	\$813	\$783
Total	5,230	100%	100%	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey

Contract Rent

In 2010, rental housing units accounted for 19.61% of the occupied housing units in Elk River. 78.8% of the renter-occupied units had a monthly rent of \$500 or more in 2000. In 2010, about 89.9% of units had a monthly rent of \$500 or more, which is higher than Sherburne County (86.0%), and the State of Minnesota (81.2%) average. Refer to Table 7-G: Renter-Occupied Housing Units by Gross Rent – 2010, for additional information.

Table 7-H: Gross Rent as Percent of Household Income - 2010

Percent of Household Income	Units	Percent	Sherburne County	State
Less than 15%	144	9.4%	10.4%	12.0%
15.0 to 19.9%	336	22.0%	14.0%	12.5%
20.0 to 24.9%	241	15.8%	12.1%	13.5%
25.0 to 29.9%	184	12.1%	11.7%	12.6%
30.0 to 34.9%	98	6.4%	8.7%	9.5%
35.0% or More	523	34.3%	43.0%	39.9%
Not Computed	47	-	-	-
Total Specified Units	1,573	100%	100%	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey

Renter Monthly Costs as Percentage of Household Income

In 2010, 40.7% of renters paid over 30% of their household income in rent. Refer to Table 7-H: Gross Rent as Percent of Household Income - 2010. This number is lower than Sherburne County (51.7%) and the State of Minnesota (49.4%).

Table 7-I: Owner Monthly Costs as Percent of Household Income - 2010

Year Structure Built	Units	Percent	Sherburne County	State
2005 or later	772	9%	7.4%	4.4%
2000 to 2004	1,802	21%	21.0%	9.3%
1990 to 1999	1,850	22%	25.7%	13.5%
1980 to 1989	1,941	23%	16.6%	12.9%
1970 to 1979	1,022	12%	13.8%	16.0%
1960 to 1969	359	4%	4.7%	10.0%
1950 to 1959	218	3%	3.8%	10.6%
1940 to 1949	125	1%	1.9%	5.0%
1939 or Earlier	378	4%	5.1%	18.1%
Total Specified Units	8,467	100%	100%	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; 2007-2011 American Community Survey

Age and Maintenance of Housing Stock

In 2010, roughly 24% (2,102 units) of the City’s units were constructed before 1980. Just 4% of the housing units in Elk River were built before 1939. The number of new housing units built in Elk River is generally consistent with the County but higher than the State, with 52% of housing units being built since 1990 compared with 54.1% for the County and 27.2% for the State. Refer to Table 7-I: Owner Monthly Costs as Percent of Household Income-2010 for additional information.



Table 7-J: Building Permit Trends 2000 to 2012

Year	Single-Family (Units)	Multifamily (Units)	Total (Units)
2000-2009	2,499	95	2,659
2010	15	0	15
2011	10	0	10
2012	36	0	36
	2,560	95	2,720

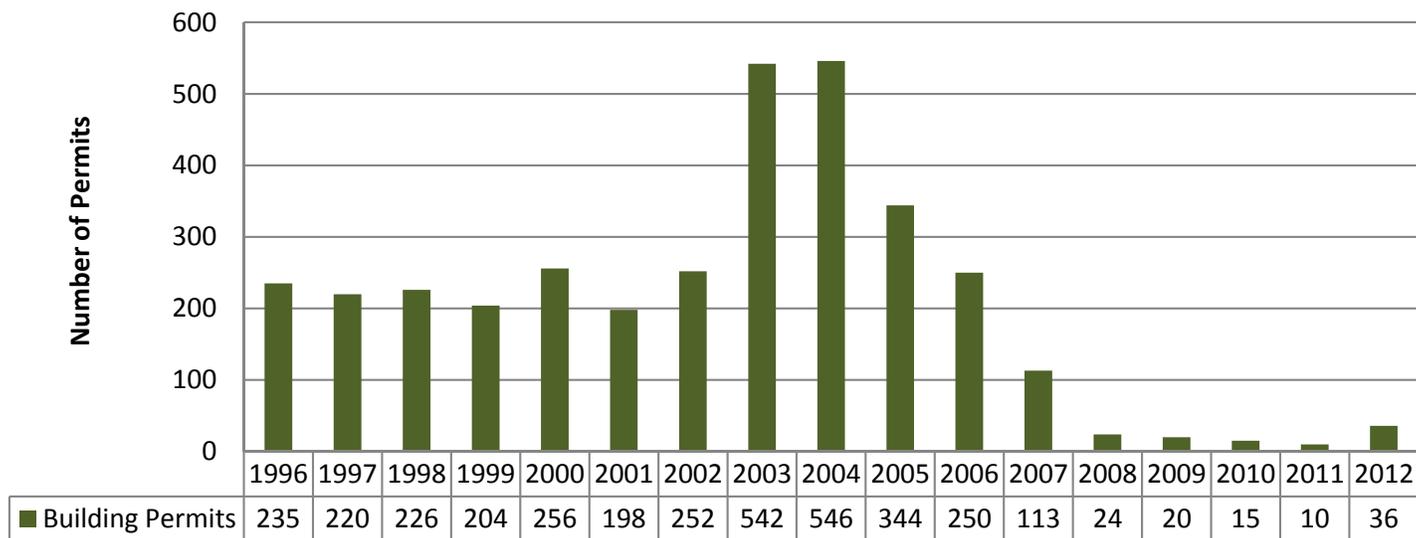
Residential Construction

2,659 new housing units were added in Elk River over the last decade (2000-2009). This includes 160 multifamily units and 2,499 single family homes.

Single family home construction averaged about 250 homes per year during the past decade (2000-2009). The first three years of this decade (2010-2012) have averaged much lower numbers at 20 homes per year, which is attributed in part to the economic recession. Single-family home construction peaked during the last decade in the years between 2003 and 2005, with an average of 477 homes per year. Refer to Table 7-J: Building Permit Trends 2000-2012 for additional information.

Source: City of Elk River, WSB & Associates, Inc.

Building Permits 1996-2012



Source: City of Elk River

Plumbing, Kitchen, and Telephone

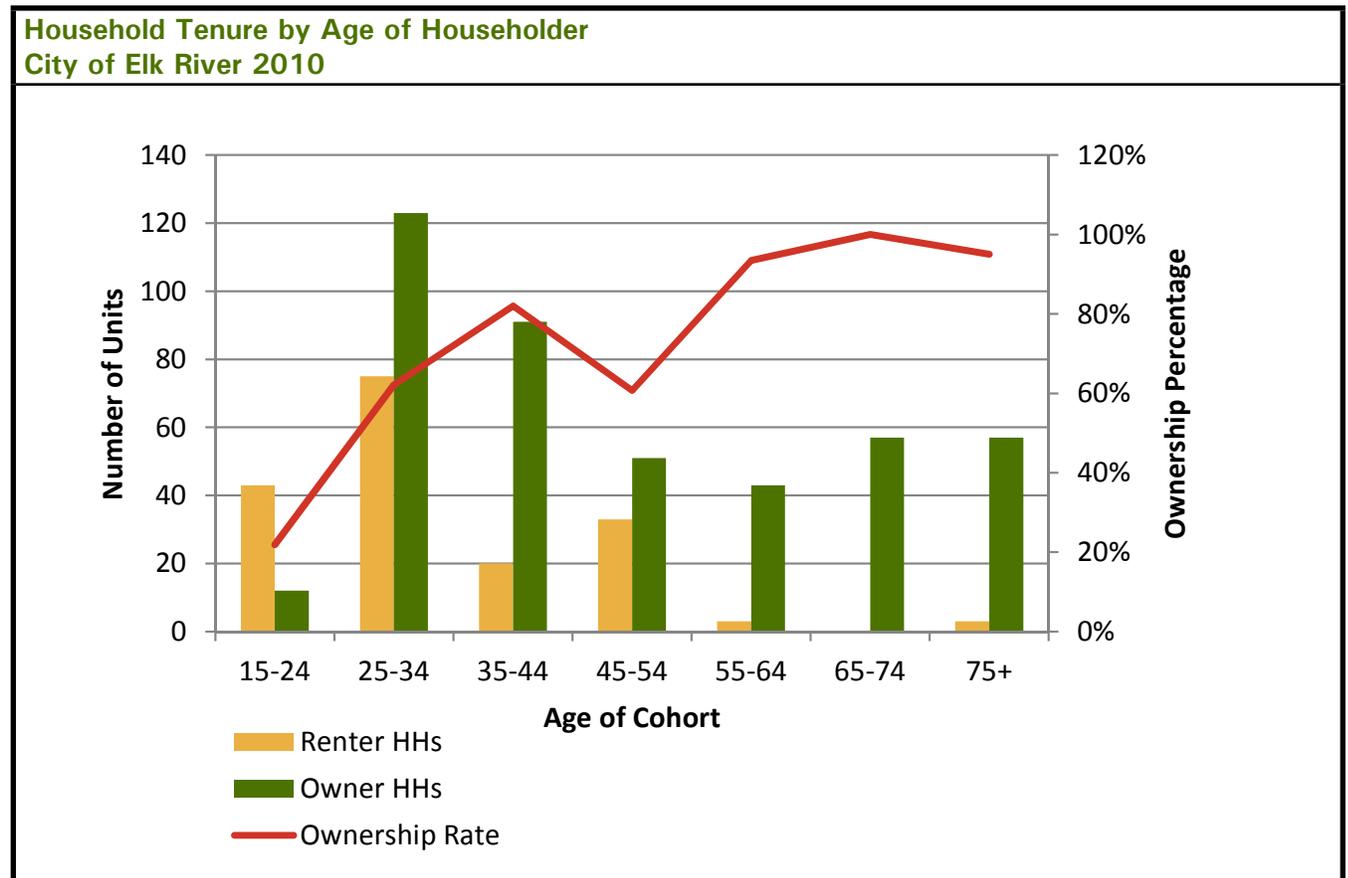
The U.S. Census identified that of the 8,023 occupied housing units in Elk River in 2010, 34 lacked complete plumbing facilities and 87 lacked complete kitchen facilities. It was estimated that 242 units (3.0%) had no telephone service, which today is a commonality as many people choose to terminate in-home telephone service for usage of their cellular device. This is important to note to understand that future community outreach will need to be communicated in a variety of ways to ensure input is received where necessary.

Tenure by Age of Householder

Table 7-K: Household Tenure by Age of Householder-2010, on the next page, shows the distribution of the owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units in Elk River in the year 2010. The graphic below breaks down the number of units by the age cohort, as housing needs tend to differ at key stages of a person’s life. The graphic also shows the gradual change in the rate of homeownership within the City.

Rental housing is generally most popular with young adults (35 and under) as well as older seniors (75+) in the State of Minnesota. The same is true in Elk River as there is a lower ownership percentage for younger and older age groups in comparison to those that are more middle aged. With the low cost generally associated with the cost of renting as well as the flexibility in housing situations, young households typically find renting as the preferred housing option. Increased burdens of home maintenance can make rental housing a desirable alternative for seniors.

The homeownership rate fluctuated in the year 2010 between ages 35 to 74, ranging from 83.1% for 35 to 44 year olds to 90.9% for those between 55 and 64. The percentage of rental households in Elk River decreased from 21.7% to 19.8% from 2000 to 2010.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; WSB & Associates, Inc.



Table 7-K: Household Tenure by Age of Householder - 2010						
	Elk River		Sherburne County		Minnesota	
	Number	Percent*	Number	Percent*	Number	Percent*
Owner HHs						
15-24	71	0.9	323	1.1%	21,339	1.0%
25-34	1,099	13.7	4,295	14.5%	203,188	9.7%
35-44	1,650	20.6	6,336	21.4%	295,586	14.1%
45-54	1,338	16.7	5,937	20.1%	379,200	18.1%
55-64	1,235	15.4	4,182	14.1%	307,858	14.7%
65-74	713	8.9	2,062	7.0%	181,502	8.7%
75+	344	4.3	1,306	4.4%	153,697	7.3%
Total Owner HHs	6,450	80.4	24,441	82.6%	1,542,370	73.6%
Renter HHs						
15-24	210	2.6	853	2.9%	86,269	4.1%
25-34	410	5.1	1,331	4.5%	151,047	7.2%
35-44	335	4.2	991	3.4%	89,684	4.3%
45-54	242	3.0	696	2.4%	78,169	3.7%
55-64	123	1.5	357	1.2%	52,602	2.5%
65-74	91	1.1	308	1.0%	30,513	1.5%
75+	162	2.0	595	2.0%	63,611	3.0%
Total Renter HHs	1,573	19.6	5,131	17.4%	551,895	26.4%
Total HHs						
15-24	281	3.5	1,176	4.0%	107,608	5.1%
25-34	1,509	18.8	5,626	19.0%	354,235	16.9%
35-44	1,985	24.7	7,327	24.8%	385,270	18.4%
45-54	1,580	19.7	6,633	22.4%	457,369	21.8%
55-64	1,358	16.9	4,539	15.3%	360,460	17.2%
65-74	804	10.0	2,370	8.0%	212,015	10.1%
75+	506	6.3	1,901	6.4%	217,308	10.4%
Total Households	8,023	100.0%	29,572	100.0%	2,094,265	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; 2007-2011 American Community Survey

Life-Cycle Housing and Profile of Households

The housing needs of a community relate to the demographic profile of the household. Typically, households move through several life-cycle stages including entry-level households, first time homeowners, move-up buyers, empty nesters, and older seniors.

The following describes each of these household types and the effect that they have on housing demands in Elk River.



Entry-Level Households

People in the 18 to 24 year old age group typically leave their childhood home and establish their own household. They often rent a house or an apartment because they generally do not have the income and savings needed to buy a home. In addition, many people in this age group move frequently, so they are hesitant to buy a house. They

are also more apt to share housing with other unrelated people of similar age.

The entry-level household population in Elk River will fluctuate annually. Many Elk River residents that graduate from high school move to other communities to attend a university or to pursue job opportunities. In the long term, unless current conditions and trends change, Elk River will not see an increase in the 15 to 24 year old age group, rather a significant decrease in that sector. Nevertheless, there will always be a strong need to provide affordable housing for people of all ages.

First Time Homeowners

First time homeowners are typically in their 20s and 30s. They are usually “move-up” renters, meaning they “move up” from an apartment to a home. They are often young families, or single individuals. They are prone to moving within several years of buying their first home for several reasons including increased financial resources allowing them to move to more expensive housing, children may require larger housing, and job opportunities may require that they move to another community.

Move-Up Buyers

Move-up buyers are typically in their 30s and 40s. They move up from the smaller, less expensive house that they had purchased earlier. From an economic growth perspective, this is an important age group of people. Typically, move-up buyers have children in school and an established job. They are less apt to move to another community and start over. Also, professionals who are moving to a community to advance their career are generally looking to move to a more expensive house than what they had in their previous community. Elk River must continue to ensure that it has adequate choices for those who are looking for move-up housing that will satisfy their needs until they are in their late 50s and beyond. Long term, the move-up buyers represent the largest age demographic. The variety of move-up housing options will be important to these groups.



Empty Nesters

Empty nesters are generally in their 50s and 60s. Often, their children have moved out of their house and left them with a larger house than needed. Empty nesters often want to live in a smaller house, like a townhouse, that has less maintenance. This type of

smaller house is located within the community. Empty nesters wish to maintain the friend, family, service and recreational connections established over the previous decades.

As the baby boom generation moves into this age group, this population will likely increase in Elk River. Interviews with persons familiar with the rental market in Elk River indicate there has been a notable increase in apartment rentals in Elk River by members of the baby boom generation.



Seniors

Those in their 80s and older are often looking for low maintenance or assisted living housing. Elk Ridge Manor provides apartment and townhome living with 24-hour maintenance and on-site management with opportunities for aging seniors.

Guardian Angels also provides a continuum of services for seniors including assisted living, long and short term care, hospice, and senior housing options in Elk River. As the population ages, Elk River must continually ensure that it has adequate housing to meet the needs of seniors.

The number of empty nesters and seniors, coupled with their increasing level of activity, will drive housing, transportation, recreational and service needs into the next 30 years. Elk River should strive to be a senior-friendly community that values the contributions of seniors, promotes positive intergenerational interactions, considers the needs of seniors in community planning, supports the efforts of seniors to live independently, and acknowledges the role that family, friends, and neighbors play in the life of seniors.



Special Needs

Housing for those with special needs includes housing for those with mental and/or physical disabilities or health issues and those who are in need of temporary or transitional

housing. The number of people with special housing needs is expected to increase as the population of Elk River continues to age.

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is important to a strong economy and a healthy community. Increasingly, housing is not affordable for many working families and the lack of affordable housing for people of all ages and incomes causes families stress, dampens productivity and stifles job growth. Various organizations define “affordable housing” in many different ways. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) generally defines housing as affordable if it costs less than thirty (30) percent of a household’s income. However, HUD’s Section 8 Income Guidelines are the basis for most affordable housing programs. Section 8 guidelines define low and moderate incomes on a sliding scale, depending on the number of persons in the family. For example, a four person household is considered “moderate income” if their family income is eighty (80) percent of the area’s median family income.

It is noted most housing affordability programs and data place emphasis on creating owner occupied units at eighty (80) percent of the median family income (moderate income) and rental units at fifty (50) percent of the median family income (low income). Since low income persons are typically renters, the definition of “low income” is tied to the number of persons in each unit. As of spring of 2013 this study identifies “affordable owner occupied units” as those affordable for moderate income families (eighty (80) percent of median income). Affordable rental units are based on fifty (50) percent of the median income and reflected on a per capita and per family basis.

Further housing analysis is desired to determine future housing demands and needs in Elk River.

It’s very important to note that the definition used in this Study of “affordable” in terms of a dollar amount will continue to change as the cost of living increases and interest rates change. Therefore, the City should periodically review income/housing statistics and update the definition as warranted. Factors such as interest rates will impact housing affordability.

Income by Age of Householder

Looking at income data is also important when predicting future housing demands in the City of Elk River. In 2000, the median household income was \$58,114 and the largest employment industries were educational, health and social services, manufacturing, and retail trade. By 2011, the median household income increased significantly to approximately \$70,224 and the top employment industries were the same. The total population in 2010 age 16 and over was approximately 16,705, of which approximately 75.6% were considered to be in the labor force. The unemployment rate in the City of Elk River in 2010 was approximately 5.5%. During this same time, Minnesota had an unemployment rate of about 4.9%. Refer to Table 7-L: Household Income by Age of Householder-2011.

Annual Household Income	Number of Households in Category	Pct.
Less than \$10,000	125	2.1%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	122	2.1%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	260	4.4%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	290	4.9%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	604	10.2%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	1,145	19.3%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	1,235	20.8%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	1,502	25.3%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	491	8.3%
\$200,000 or More	172	2.9%
TOTAL HHs	5,946	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2007-2011 American Community Survey)

Income	Under 25		25-44		45-64		65+	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Less than \$10,000	0	0%	0	0%	30	1%	42	3%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	19	8%	130	4%	34	1%	118	9%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	18	7%	282	9%	189	6%	190	14%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	31	12%	121	4%	53	2%	315	23%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	47	19%	423	13%	289	9%	251	19%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	116	46%	637	20%	872	27%	177	13%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	0	0%	891	27%	485	15%	142	11%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	21	8%	536	17%	889	27%	78	6%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	0	0%	126	4%	279	9%	21	2%
\$200,000 or More	0	0%	97	3%	118	4%	11	1%
TOTAL HHs	252	100%	3,243	100%	3,238	100%	1,345	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2007-2011 American Community Survey)

Income distributions as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau can be compared to affordability standards to determine how many households and families in the City of Elk River may require affordable housing. Table 7-M: Median Family Income depicts the number of households that may require affordable housing (based on family income) as shown in the shaded area. 1,401 households (23.6%) have median family incomes of less than 80% of the median family income.

Neighborhood Preservation

Creating and maintaining strong neighborhoods is a key ingredient of the vision for Elk River. Neighborhood issues take several forms in context of the Comprehensive Plan.

Sustainable Neighborhoods

The future role of the City in neighborhood preservation can be diminished by quality planning, design, and construction. Some guidelines for designing sustainable and livable neighborhoods include, but are not limited to:

- New housing development should be consistent with the style and type of housing in the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Subdivision design, standards for public improvements, layout of public parks, and orientation to the natural environment are important factors in defining place.
- Street design and use of pedestrian trails and sidewalks can be used to promote a greater degree of connection between neighborhoods.
- Good transportation planning and related capital investment help to minimize traffic on local streets.

Seeking these qualities in initial design and development should help to promote strong neighborhoods and minimize future maintenance issues that require public solutions.

Homeowner's Associations

- Homeowner's associations will play an increasingly important role in neighborhood sustainability. A homeowner's association is responsible for the maintenance of all common property in townhome developments. An association is also established to operate and maintain the shared septic system in cluster subdivisions. Elk River will continue to see growth in both of these areas.
- The public policy implications of homeowner's associations lies with long-term financial viability. If associations do not implement plans for future capital replacement, then the City may face involvement in alternative solutions. Homeowner's typically demand and pay for current maintenance services. The ability to finance long-term, replacement improvements is more difficult. In townhome neighborhoods, an association is responsible for the eventual replacement of private streets, roofs, and exteriors. The sewer system is the primary financial obligation for a cluster neighborhood.
- A well run association employs a dues structure that builds a replacement reserve. Without adequate reserves, an association may not be able to undertake needed capital improvements in future years. Failure to reinvest in the common property leads to a deterioration of these neighborhoods. With cluster subdivisions, the lack of funding may have environmental consequences.



Maintaining Neighborhoods

- Existing neighborhoods, particularly older ones, are an important part of the fabric of the community. These neighborhoods define the character and the heritage of Elk River. Older neighborhoods provide lower cost housing than new developments. Maintaining housing quality in these areas is an essential part of providing affordable housing.
- There are several aspects of maintaining neighborhoods. One of the desired by-products of building strong neighborhoods and community is pride in property. This sense of pride leads to a personal value in the maintenance of buildings and grounds. All other approaches are more difficult when maintenance is not important to the property owner.
- Economics is part of the maintenance equation. As more income is required simply to obtain housing, less funds are available to pay for maintenance activities. Current low interest rates help this situation by making home equity loans more affordable. Higher interest rates not only reduce the affordability of debt for home improvements, but require more income for the same housing.
- Similar constraints apply to rental housing. The ability to finance building maintenance comes from rent income. If the ability to charge an adequate rent is constrained by market forces, then maintenance activities get deferred.
- In considering Historic Preservation and neighborhood revitalization projects, there is a difference between the correction of deferred maintenance and the correction of functional obsolescence. Programs developed to address housing and preservation goals must recognize this distinction, and the cost of each in the long term. The City will assess its involvement with such projects on a case by case basis.

Market Gaps

- Market forces are not likely to fill all housing needs in Elk River. Gaps in the operation of the housing market point to potential public roles. Market gaps tend to change over time with demographic and economic changes in the community. City housing initiatives should focus on identifying these gaps and determining the appropriate responses. Gaps may relate to the need for specific types of housing.
- Gaps are also linked to mortgage financing and market conditions. An ongoing concern is the down payment and other factors needed to qualify for a mortgage loan. The city and local banks can pursue programs to promote homeownership.
- Finally, the physical deterioration of structures often creates a barrier to private investment. Rather than fix the problem, the market avoids the unit. If unchecked, blight may spread to adjacent properties.

Housing Programs and Organizations

Many municipal powers related to housing come from the housing and redevelopment authority statues as outlined in Minnesota Statutes, Section §469.001 to §469.047. The Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) Act lists the following activities as public purposes:

- To provide a sufficient supply to adequate, safe, and sanitary dwellings in order to protect the health, safety, morals, and welfare of the citizens of the state;
- To clear and redevelop blighted areas;
- To perform those duties according to comprehensive plans;
- To remedy the shortage of housing for low and moderate income residents, and to redevelop blighted areas in situations in which private enterprise would not act without government participation or subsidies; and

Public participation in activities intended to meet the purposes of sections 469.001 to 469.047 and the exercise of powers confined by sections 469.001 to 469.047 are public uses and purposes for which private property may be acquired and public money spent.

The City of Elk River intends to partner or coordinate with various housing programs and organizations that can help address the City’s housing needs. Some housing programs available to Elk River residents include:

- **Central Minnesota Housing Partnership Programs.** The Central Minnesota Housing Partnership helps to maintain affordable housing through a variety of acquisition and rehabilitation programs including the Home Stretch, First Time Homebuyer Program, The Central Minnesota Community Land Trust, Acquisition/Rehabilitation Program, Small Cities Development Program and Rental Rehab Deferred Loan Pilot Program (RRDL).
- **Minnesota Housing.** The mission of Minnesota Housing is to finance and advance affordable housing opportunities for lower and moderate income Minnesotans. Minnesota Housing can help finance new affordable housing opportunities and preserve existing affordable housing.
- **Tri-Cap Home Repair Loan.** The Home Repair Loan provides homeowners resources to make repairs to their homes. These loan funds may be used to make homes more livable, accessible and energy efficient.
- **Tri-Cap Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Programs.** These funds are available to families or singles that are homeless or are at imminent risk of homelessness, or living in shelters to stabilize their lives by providing services such as budget counseling, assisting with damage deposits or first month’s rent.
- **MN Center for Energy & Environment Programs.** Elk River is an Energy City with ample opportunities and tips for homeowners looking to reduce consumption, save money, and rehabilitate their homes in the process. Programs available through MN Center for Energy & Environment include the Home Energy Program, Fix-Up Fund Program, and Save \$ Now Program.
- **Not-for Profit Organizations.** Not-for profit organizations including, but not limited to, Habitat for Humanity can help Elk River address its housing needs.

By utilizing these available resources, Elk River can leverage viability and healthy investments in the City. The City will continue to assist the community in increasing home values and strengthening neighborhoods through investment and encouraging energy efficiency.

Implementation

Key actions or strategies that are intended to accomplish the objectives for housing include: encouraging strong residential property maintenance, supporting safe and attractive neighborhoods, promoting green building techniques, ensuring new housing and housing renovation, respecting neighboring properties and the overall character of the neighborhood, and promoting opportunities for “aging in place” enabling existing residents to stay in their homes longer. Further implementation strategies include:

- Revise the Zoning Ordinance as necessary to ensure that any infill development or further subdivision of large lots will not adversely affect the existing character of the neighborhood.
- Study the possibility of allowing accessory dwelling units in the City of Elk River to help promote affordable housing and to help those who may need physical assistance, including elderly residents.
- Ensure the City has adequate and appropriately zoned land to meet the changing housing needs of the community.
- Continue to monitor and enforce timely progress related to residential building permits. Do not allow building projects that have been started to go unfinished for an excessively long period.
- Study the need for, and if appropriate, implement a residential rehabilitation program using state funding, community development block grants (CDBGs), or other suitable resources to provide rehabilitation loans and grants for residents in need.
- Continue to monitor and enforce home occupation ordinances in the city to ensure safe and healthy neighborhood conditions.
- In accordance with the policies of this Comprehensive Plan, coordinate the effective and cost effective extension of municipal sewer and water to residential areas that are not served by public utilities.
- To the maximum extent feasible, ensure the preservation of existing natural features and promote the sensitive integration of natural features, such as wildlife corridors, into existing and proposed development.
- Support neighborhoods in their efforts to beautify their homes and neighborhoods.
- Identify and remove possible barriers in the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations that discourage or prohibit the use of green building techniques and/or renewable energy sources.
- Study opportunities to provide incentives that encourage the use of green building techniques and renewable energy sources, as appropriate. Incentives may include expedited review time, reduction of review fees, increased density, or administrative flexibility to grant minor variances (such as setback variances) that would support green building techniques and renewable energy sources.
- Review and modify ordinances as necessary to promote building compatibility with the site. For example, strive to ensure that development does not unnecessarily remove mature trees or other desirable site features.
- Strive to identify, study, and map unique residential neighborhoods in Elk River. To the extent feasible, work with the neighborhoods to identify the qualities of the neighborhood that they would like to see preserved. As necessary, modify existing ordinances or develop guidelines to ensure that future renovations and development are consistent with the desired neighborhood character.
- Before applying for the necessary development approvals, encourage the developer or landowner to conduct a neighborhood meeting to review proposed development, redevelopment, or renovations that may impact the neighborhood character. Offer meeting space at City Hall or other community facilities as a means to support this effort.
- Where guided in the Land Use Plan, promote the redevelopment of existing vacant or underutilized commercial property to include moderate to high density residential housing. In particular, promote mixed commercial and moderate to high density housing in the downtown area and near future transit hubs in the City. Ensure that housing is consistent with the desirable character of the area.
- Promote flexible development standards and innovative development techniques that encourage development, redevelopment, and renovation of existing housing without jeopardizing the desirable character of the area.
- Study the feasibility and desirability of allowing multiple types of housing units in existing neighborhoods that are currently restricted to single family dwellings. For example, explore the possibility of allowing outright, or as a conditional use, duplexes and/or twin homes in single family districts.
- Conduct a housing market study based on the City’s goals and future needs.



Introduction

The City of Elk River’s infrastructure systems are the framework for the City’s basic operations and future growth. These systems operate and provide basic support for the lives of Elk River’s residents. Ultimately, a key principle of this Chapter is to provide infrastructure investments that correspond to the community’s growth potential. As Elk River develops, the development should be managed to make the most efficient use of existing and future investments in infrastructure and public facilities.

The Comprehensive Plan sets the pattern for future development within the City of Elk River, which ultimately defines the parameters for municipal utilities needed to support this new development. Alternatively, the limitations of the utility system influence the type, form and location of future development.



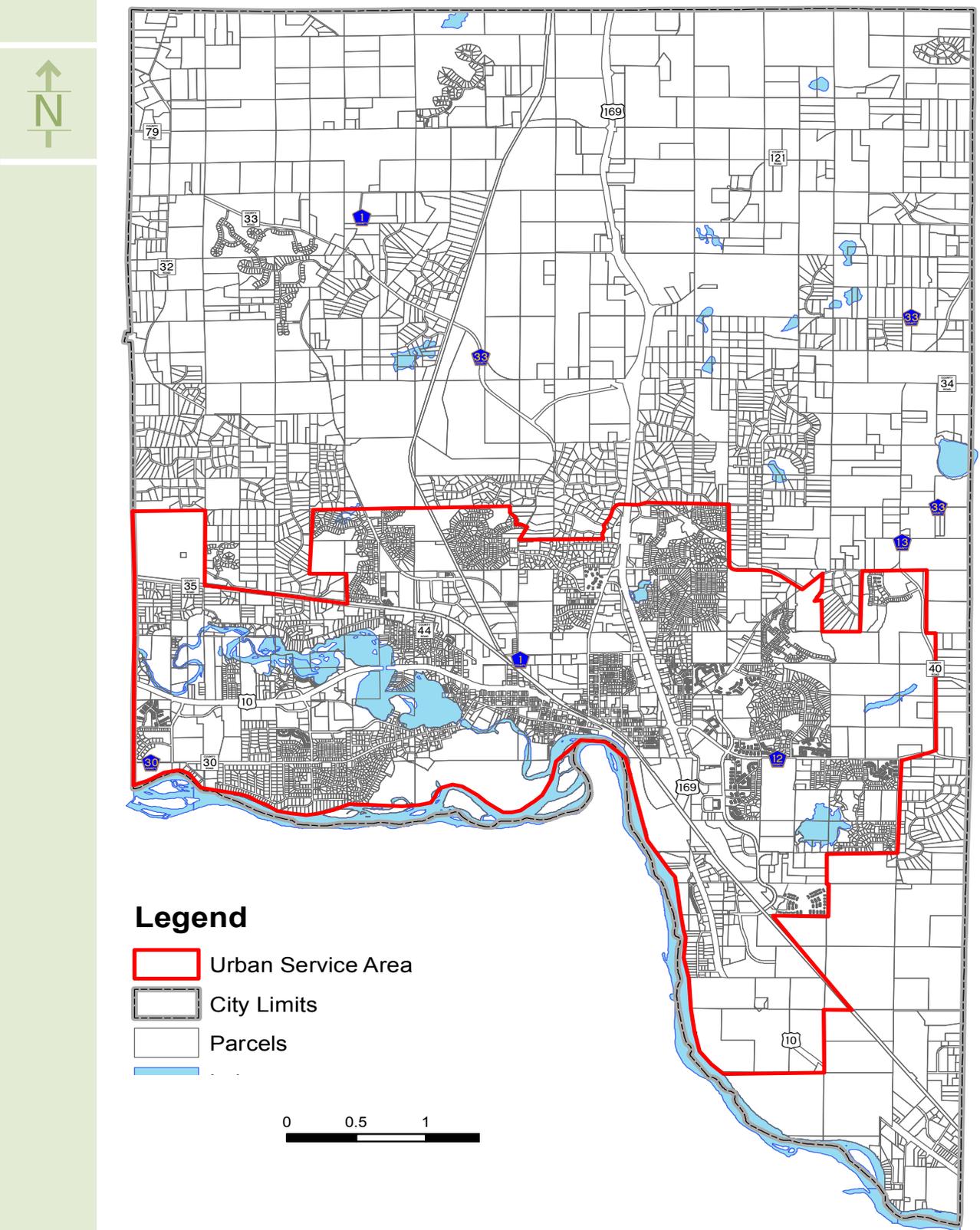
The utility system represents significant public investment and as such, continued coordination between community development and utilities is essential to make the best use of financial resources. The City must determine the appropriate timing for any public financing of new service extensions and improvement, considering the land use policies set in place and community development goals of the Plan. Encourage development and growth in areas contiguous to existing development and areas currently served by infrastructure will maximize the efficiency of City services.

The City of Elk River has a land area of approximately 28,000 acres within the city limits. The City has delineated this area into rural areas (no municipal water and/or sewer services provided) or urban service areas (municipal water and/or sewer services provided). The City provides water and sewer services to residents within the urban service area as shown in Figure 8-1: Urban Service Area. It is the City's belief that over the next 20 years the urban service area will be fully developed and that additional land areas will be added as shown in Figure 8.2: Future Development Within the Urban Service Area and Figure 8.3: Future Development Outside the Urban Service Area.

Although many of Elk River's growth areas, as designated in Chapter 5, presently include adequate infrastructure, other growth areas will require extension and improvements. As these areas develop/redevelop, the City should invest in new infrastructure with care; consideration must be given to the total public and private costs of new services. Public dollars must be spent wisely in providing these services. The boundary should only be expanded if the City believes that sufficient sewer and water treatment capacity will be available to serve property within the urban service area and the development (and redevelopment) within the expansion area. The implications on treatment capacity should also be considered with redevelopment projects and changes in land use that will alter demands on the utility system.

The Elk River Municipal Utilities provides electric and water services to Elk River and surrounding areas and is responsible for the construction, operation and maintenance of these systems. The Utilities Commission serves as the governing body for the Municipal Utilities. Wastewater treatment and storm water management are the responsibility of the City Council and City staff.

The goal of this Chapter is not to present a "plan" for the expansion and operation of the municipal utility system, rather to provide citizens, designers, City staff and potential developers with the knowledge to make more informed choices.



Legend

- Urban Service Area
- City Limits
- Parcels
- Water

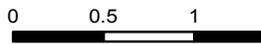


Figure 8-1. Urban Service Area

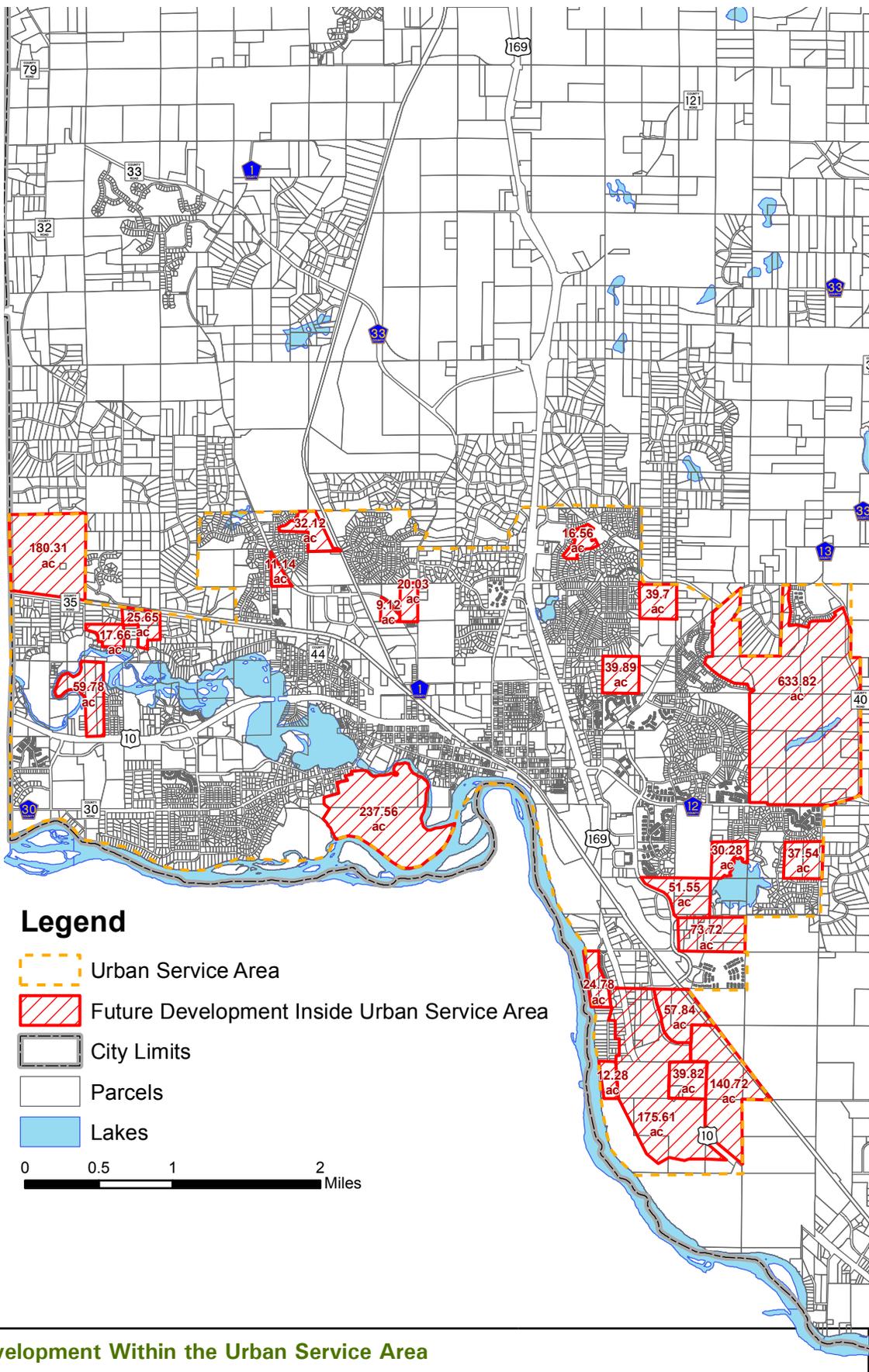


Figure 8-2. Future Development Within the Urban Service Area

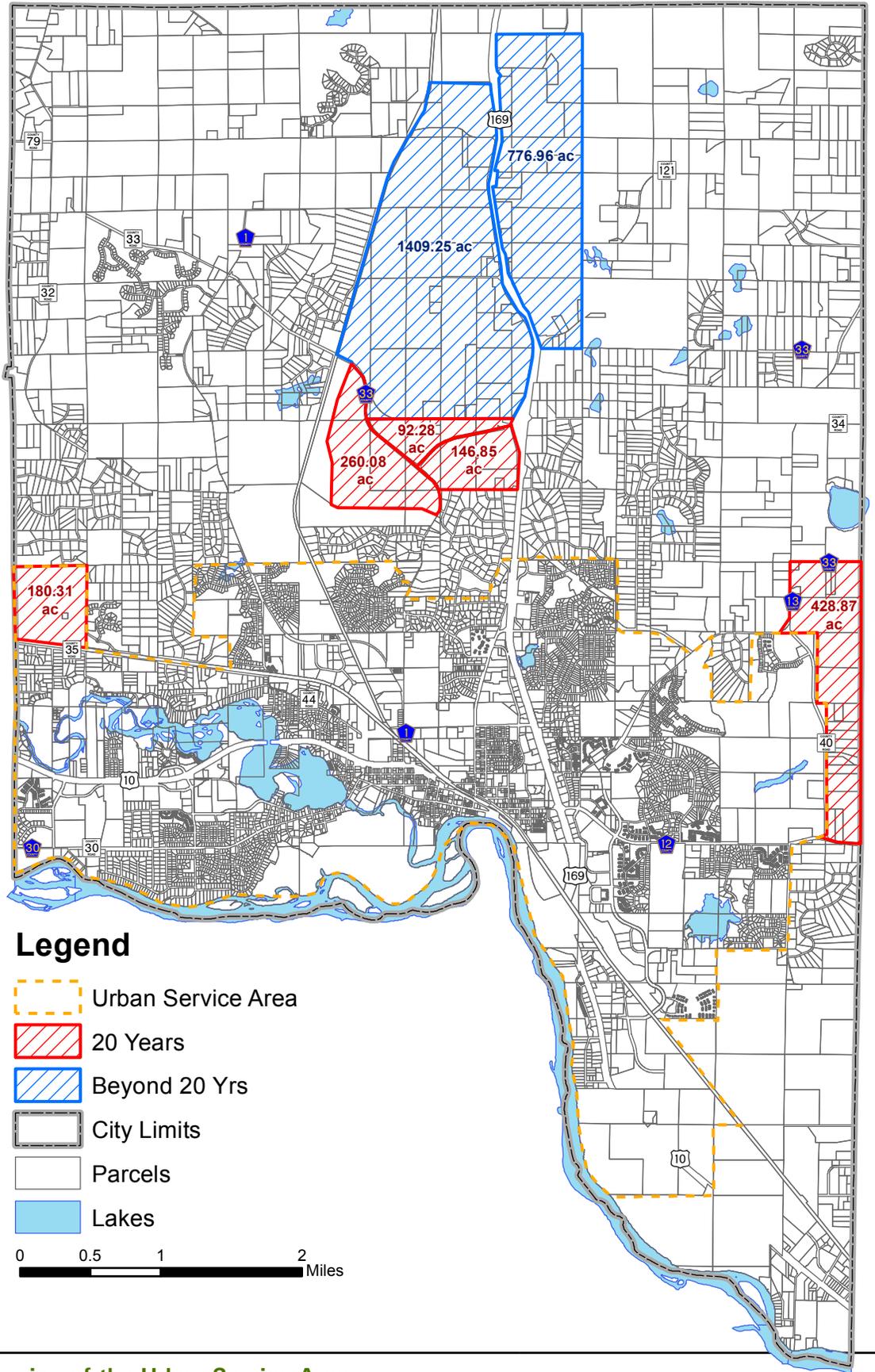


Figure 8-3. Future Expansion of the Urban Service Area

Inventory and Analysis

Sanitary Sewer

Elk River’s desired future land use pattern must be tied closely with a cost-effective wastewater service strategy. The City must be certain in determining the pattern of sanitary sewer interceptors, lift stations, and force mains to complete its development pattern. Moreover, the City must ensure that costs of these improvements are equitably distributed and services are provided in a planned, phased sequence that promotes development.

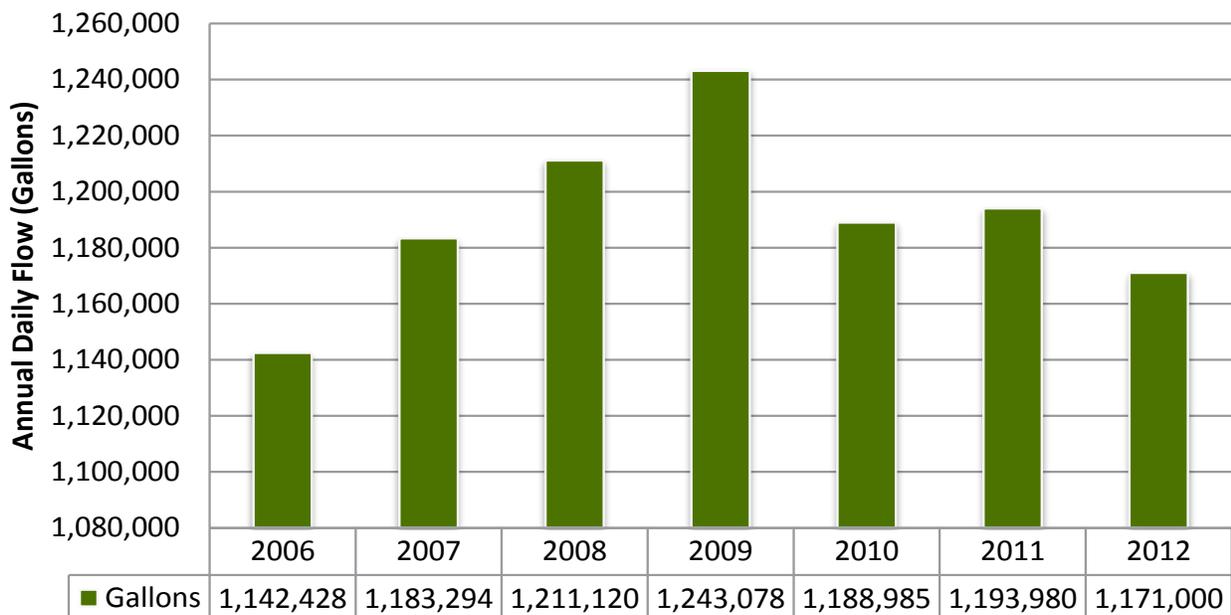
The sanitary sewer collection system in the City of Elk River includes over 77 miles of lines. As a result, 21 lift stations are needed to transport sewage to a wastewater treatment facility that the City of Elk River owns and operates that serves the residents of Elk River as well as commercial and industrial users located within the community. The plant is located between Highway 169 and the rail line, north of the

Great River Energy plant and has been in operation since 1977 with several upgrades since. Wastewater improvements since 2004 include upgrades to the wastewater treatment facility in 2005, sand filter upgrades in 2006, and upgrades to various lift stations every year.

In February 2013, a Wastewater Treatment Facility Plan was completed to evaluate the capacity of the existing facility and the ability to reliably achieve the reduced effluent limits at design flows and loads and to develop a plan for future plant modifications. As improvements to the facility are presented, the City should follow the recommendations of the Wastewater Treatment Facility Plan.

The current plant has a maximum treatment capacity of approximately 2,200,000 gallons per day. On June 23, 2012 the highest daily flow was recorded at 1,930,000 gallons. Table 8-A: Wastewater Treatment Facility Average Daily Flows 2006-2012 shows the changes in annual daily flow since 2006.

Table 8-A: Wastewater Treatment Facility Average Daily Flows 2006-2012





The size and location of the sanitary sewer collection system influences the ability to expand the system, which results in a limit to the growth and development of land. Areas outside of the urban service area are included in this limitation, the area currently being mined as identified in Figure 5-1: Existing Land Use is a critical area.

Projected areas of development and flow from un-sewered connections from the Wastewater Treatment Facility Plan were used to estimate the average daily flow (ADF) at 3,980,000 gallons for the year 2035. Improvements to the wastewater treatment facility will be necessary to meet the requirements for this future planned growth to meet the design approved by the City. Improvements to the wastewater treatment facility are anticipated to occur over the next several years as outlined in the Wastewater Treatment Facility Plan and should be incorporated into the City's CIP accordingly. Wastewater flows will be monitored by the City and Treatment Facility improvements will be completed as flows increase.



Elk River Municipal Utilities

Water System

A key element of this section of the Plan is to ensure that the City of Elk River provides a safe and adequate water supply. A sufficient water supply is a fundamental prerequisite for community growth and sustainability. Obtaining, protecting and distributing drinking water that meets health standards is one of the most important functions performed by a community. In addition, water pressures must be maintained for health, convenience, and to meet multiple and simultaneous demands by local residents.

It is important to also maintain adequate water pressure and supply for fire protection. The City must maintain and expand its present system to ensure reliability and meet increasing water demands and quality standards. Strategic improvements to support desirable growth patterns will be critical as well.

ERMU operates the water system for the City of Elk River and has done so since its creation on October 4, 1945 by the City Council. Water is supplied from 8 wells ranging from 225 to 406 feet in depth with water drawn from the Mr. Simon Hinckley aquifer. The wells range in capacity from 650 to 1,300 gallons per minute (gpm). The water utility is positioned well for the long term growth with the capability of providing over 8 million gallons of water per day to local residents and businesses.

ERMU's water system contains over 78 miles of water mains and 4 water towers that have a total capacity of approximately 4,000,000 gallons of water. Peak day water pumped in 2012 was on July 16th with 4,420,000 gallons and 2012 water sales were 727,912,000 gallons.

System improvements undertaken by ERMU since 2004 include: added 3 miles of main, changed over 4,000 meters to automated meter reading, completed a 20 year wellhead protection plan, and modified pressure zones in the City to optimize existing pressure by installing RPZ valves. ERMU also installed additional well filter equipment to better serve the long term growth of the City.

Water efficiency and conservation efforts have been increased as the concern for the longevity of the aquifers in the state. The water utility implemented a rebate program to promote the installation of Smart Irrigation Controllers, implemented tiered pricing structures to promote water efficiency, and provided rebates and rate schedules for customers that irrigate using the most efficient equipment available. There are also programs for smaller customers that promote rain gardens and water barrels for residential customers. These efforts support the long term growth of the City and water supply.



Electric System

The Elk River Municipal Utilities operates an electric system in the City of Elk River that provides service to approximately 44 square miles as shown in Figure 8-4: Electrical Distribution Territory Map. The ERMU purchases power from Connexus Energy and constructs and operates the distribution system, including lines and substations, needed to provide power in its service area. There are approximately 315 miles of electric lines throughout the City, of which approximately 70% are underground. As part of the long term growth plan for the City of Elk River the utility has added an additional 65,000 kW of substation capacity to the distribution system since 2004.

Elk River Municipal Utilities (ERMU) received national recognition in 2011 when awarded a high honor for having reliable and safe electric service. There are more than 2,000 public power utilities and ERMU is one of only 176 receiving the Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3[®]) award. The award is based off of four categories: reliability, safety, workforce development and system improvement.

ERMU's reliability index numbers reflect the condition of its robust electrical system as well as its commitment to long term growth and superb customer service. The ERMU reliability numbers are comparing extremely well to other electric utilities in Minnesota. Elk River Municipal Utilities' 2012 reliability numbers were as follow:

1. **ASAI (average service availability index)** is a measure of the average availability of the sub-transmission and distribution systems to serve customers. It is the ratio of the total customer minutes that service was available to the total customer minutes available in a time period. This is normally expressed as a percentage. ERMU's 2012 ASAI is 99.999% Availability.
2. **CAIDI (customer average interruption duration index)** is defined as the average length of an interruption weighted by the number of customers affected. It is calculated by summing the customer minutes off during each interruption in the time period and dividing this by the number of customers experiencing one or more sustained interruptions during the time period. The resulting unit is minutes. The index enables utilities to report the average duration of a customer outage for those customers affected. ERMU's 2012 CAIDI is 66 minutes.
3. **SAIDI (system average interruption duration index)** is defined as the average interruption duration for customers served during a specified time period. It is determined by summing the customer minutes off for each interruption during a specified time period and dividing that sum by the average number of customers served during that period. The unit is minutes. This index enables the utility to report how many minutes' customers would have been out of service if all customers were out at one time. ERMU's 2012 SAIDI is 7.7 minutes.
4. **SAIFI (system average interruption frequency index)** is defined as the average number of times that a customer is interrupted during a specified time period. It is determined by dividing the total number of customers interrupted in a time period by the average number of customers served. The resulting unit is "interruptions per customer." ERMU's 2012 SAIFI is 0.117.

Table 8-C: Electric Generation Units				
Unit No.	Capacity (kw)	Horsepower	Date Installed	Fuel
1	550	735	1947	Diesel Fuel
2	550	735	1947	Diesel Fuel
3	3,000	4,100	1961	Diesel Fuel & gas
4	5,000	6,911	1971	Diesel Fuel & gas
Landfill	3,200	4,600	2002 & 2006	Landfill Gas

In 2012, the electrical peak demand was at 59,620 kW with the annual energy sales of 273,455,846 kWh. The Landfill gas generation facility contributes approximately 26 million kilowatt hours, or 9% of the City’s needs.

ERMU will need to add electric substations and modify or improve some of the existing substations as development occurs.

Table 8-C: Electric Generation Units



Stormwater Management

Many of the goals and smart growth principles that are discussed throughout this Plan can only be fully achieved when issues surrounding stormwater management and environmental protection are considered as central to the planning process.

The City of Elk River conducts surface water management planning to determine the needs and approaches for managing stormwater systems throughout the community. Managing stormwater and surface water protects and improves the quality of our lakes, streams, and rivers. It also helps to control flooding.

The formal stormwater system consists of catch basins, pipes, ditches and detention ponds. Wetlands and other natural systems play an important role in effective stormwater management and further analysis of these systems is outlined in Chapter 11: Environmental Resources.

With a lack of Watershed Districts or Water Management Organizations within the County, the City has been utilizing the existing Stormwater Ordinance and the existing Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) for water management issues. The City completed an update of the SWPPP and developed a Surface Water Management Plan in November of 2013. The implementation plan within the new document should be followed for purposes of future planning related to stormwater management.



Implementation

- Continue to review and update, as needed, the sanitary sewer and water supply system plans.
- Encourage, where feasible, existing above ground utilities to be converted to underground systems or to be screened if the utilities must be located above ground.
- Maintain adequate zoning regulations for antenna towers and telecommunication equipment, consistent with federal law.
- Continue to coordinate with telecommunications companies on providing services throughout the City where feasible.
- Develop community utility facilities to the same aesthetic, environmental and development standards required for private property.



Introduction

The City of Elk River's vision includes recognition of the area's natural beauty and seeks to promote clean air and water and blend the built and natural environments. The City's environmental and natural resources work in concert with the people and development in the City to make Elk River a unique place. This Chapter of the Plan provides a basis to maintain and improve environmental quality in Elk River as the City seeks a sustainable balance between man-made and natural systems.



Implementation

The following statements reflect specific parts of the City's vision relating to natural environment and resources.

- Undertake a more detailed greenway corridor planning process within the City (NRI plan). The purpose of this would be to identify goals of the greenways within the City, identify where public ownership could be incorporated into the greenway, incorporate the trails system, identify areas where ecological restoration may be feasible, consider opportunities for recreation and pedestrian movement, and target projects for grant funding. Some of this will occur with the update to the Parks System Plan that is currently underway, but should be expanded upon to ensure preservation and enhancement of these corridors is sustained.
- Continue to enforce all environmental protection zoning standards related to restrictive soils, woodlands, wetland, floodplains, shorelands, bluffs, steep slopes and erosion control, to preserve and protect sensitive and other natural areas of community importance. One key part of this will be to update/review ordinances per NRI recommendations to review park dedication requirements, data that is required for preliminary platting, tree preservation.
- Include the city-owned natural areas recommended for management into the City's CIP. This will allow the city to explore and potentially be eligible for grant funds.
- Invasive species can negatively impact native habitats within the City. The City will work to manage and control invasive species if funding is available.
- Encourage and assist businesses, organizations, and citizens in their efforts to enhance and improve the community's natural environment and to conserve natural resources.
- Manage the community's wildlife resources to protect and preserve native habitat and wildlife, and to protect human safety.
- Work with and encourage projects designed to reclaim contaminated lands and restore natural resources where appropriate.
- Continue programs to regulate the use of private individual sewage treatment systems per County and State requirements and to protect ground and surface water within Elk River.
- Continue monitoring and regulation of quarrying of resources such as sand, dirt, and gravel to mitigate potential visual and environmental impacts such as noise, erosion and dust.
- Continue to manage the impacts of land uses such as aggregate mining, landfills, and others on the environment by collecting appropriate fees or other funds to mitigate the impacts of the use on the community's infrastructure.
- Continue and expand environmental education and awareness programs to include the proper use and disposal of such pollutants such as hazardous waste, pesticides, non-point source pollutants, and fertilizers. Encourage public and private recycling and source reduction programs.
- Promote the efficient use of land to encourage the protection of natural and energy resources where appropriate.

Existing Natural Resource Information

Natural resources can be defined as materials or substances such as gravel, forests, water, and land that occur in nature and can be used for economic benefit. This economic benefit can be characterized as the benefit of using rich gravel resources to support the local and state economy as well as preserving open spaces to enhance the community and wildlife. Elk River’s natural resources, including the Elk and Mississippi Rivers, bluffs, lakes, wetlands and wooded areas, natural open space and views, all add to the unique and defining characteristics. As future development and redevelopment occurs, Elk River’s challenge will be to link these new and redeveloped areas to its existing fabric, with an eye toward the existing natural resources.

There are many sources of existing information available to the City in reviewing and developing a plan related to natural resources. These resources include the following:

- **National Wetland Inventory (NWI):** Mapping provided by the US Fish and Wildlife Service that provides general information about the location and type of wetlands. The NWI information is shown in Figure 9-1.
- **Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Public Waters/Wetlands Inventory (PWI):** The DNR has jurisdiction over larger wetland and open water waterbodies. These water bodies are also shown on Figure 9-1.
- **Land use inventory:** The City’s land use inventory provides guidance on proposed land uses for the area.
- **Floodplain Data:** The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides maps that show the floodplain within a community. Generally, development is not allowed or is restricted in these areas. The floodplain is shown in Figure 9-2.
- **Minnesota County Biological Survey Data (Sites of Biodiversity Significance):** The DNR, through the County Biological Survey, has identified areas with varying levels of native biodiversity that may contain high quality native plant communities, rare plants, rare animals, and/or animal aggregations. A biodiversity significance rank (outstanding, high, moderate, or below) is assigned on the basis of the number of rare species, the quality of the native plant communities, size of the site, and context within the landscape. MCBS Sites that are found to be disturbed are given the Biodiversity Significance rank of “Below.” Figure 9-3 shows this information. The rating code is based on the data provided by the DNR at the time of the survey and may or may not still be applicable.
- **Minnesota Land Cover Classification System:** As part of the City’s Natural Resources Inventory project, the existing land cover was mapped within the City using the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS). This is a methodology standardized by state agencies to classify land cover and identify native plant communities.
- **City of Elk River Natural Resources Inventory (2004):** The Elk River Natural Resources Inventory is incorporated by reference into the Comprehensive Plan. This report contains background information on the landscape history of Elk River as well as the results of the MLCCS survey. This data is more accurate and up to date than the County Biological Survey Data, although it should be noted that not all areas within the City granted property access to field review the land cover.
- **Connection opportunities map:** The map was developed as part of the 2004 Comprehensive Plan and provides information about potential greenway connections.
- **Natural Resource Inventory Conceptual Greenways/Corridors Map:** A greenway is generally defined as a linear corridor exhibiting a natural environment. Focus is on protecting ecological resources and providing wildlife and trail corridors. Secondary use is for trails, assuming that they can be integrated without compromising the integrity of the natural systems.
- **Gravel Resources:** Elk River is rich in gravel resources and gravel is an important natural resource for the economy of Minnesota.



Natural Resource Guidelines

The background information that has been collected and developed by the City of Elk River provides a wealth of natural resource data for the City and its planning efforts. Information from public input processes indicated a desire to maintain open space and greenways as well as to provide connections to various areas within the City and is further defined in Chapter 9: Parks, Trails and Open Spaces. The following guidelines are intended to provide direction to the City with respect to future planning efforts.

1. **Balance the protection of natural resources with economic development to maintain the vision of Elk River.**
2. **Preserve significant natural resource areas where applicable by implementation of greenway connections through development, park dedication, as well as identifying grant opportunities to implement or enhance greenways and natural resources.**
3. **Protect and enhance air and water quality to provide a livable and sustainable community.**
4. **Provide opportunities and connections to orient the City to its connection to the Mississippi River and Elk River.**
5. **Continue to allow gravel mining in the mining areas to make full use of these natural resources.**

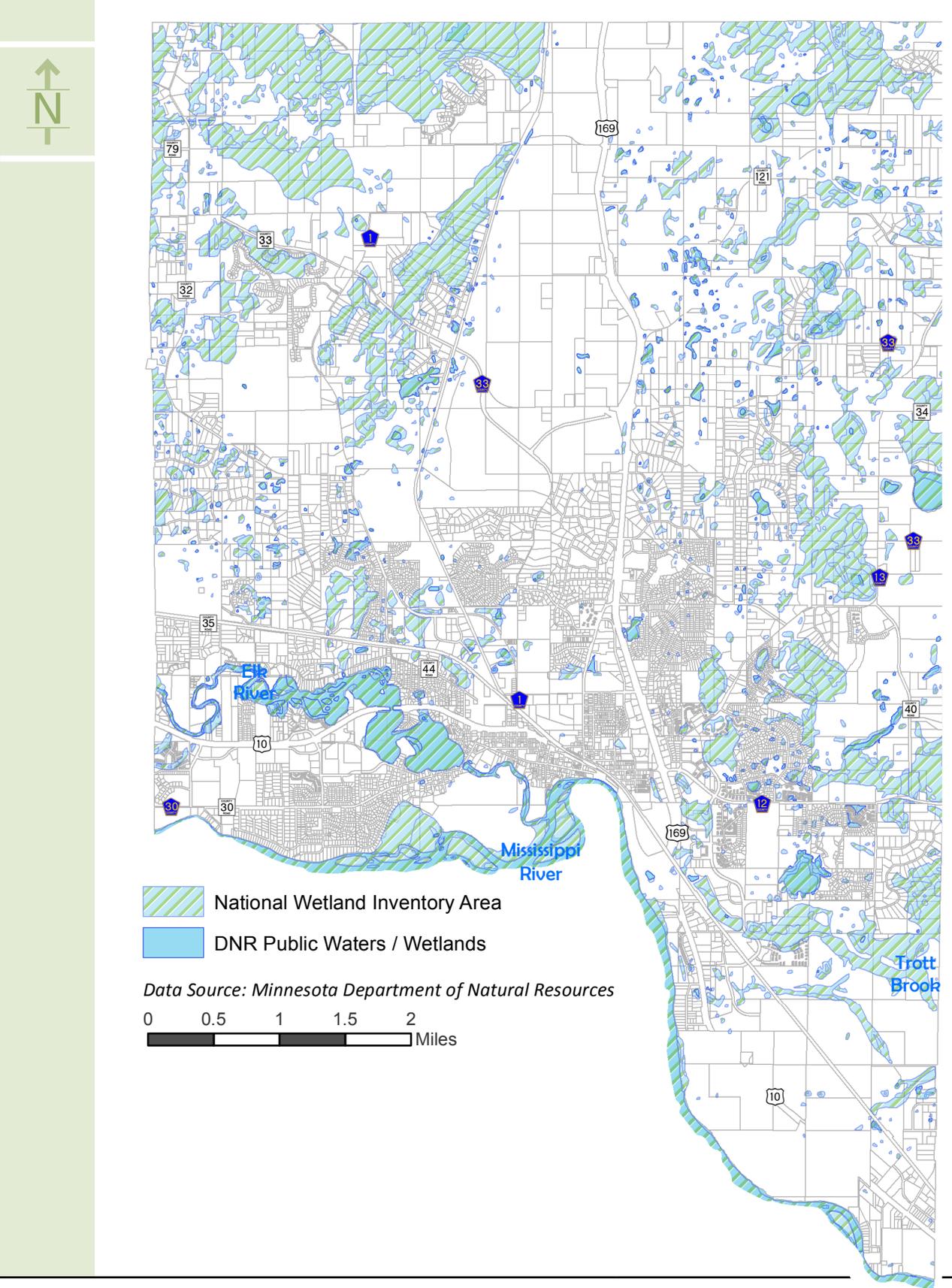


Figure 9-1. National Wetland Inventory

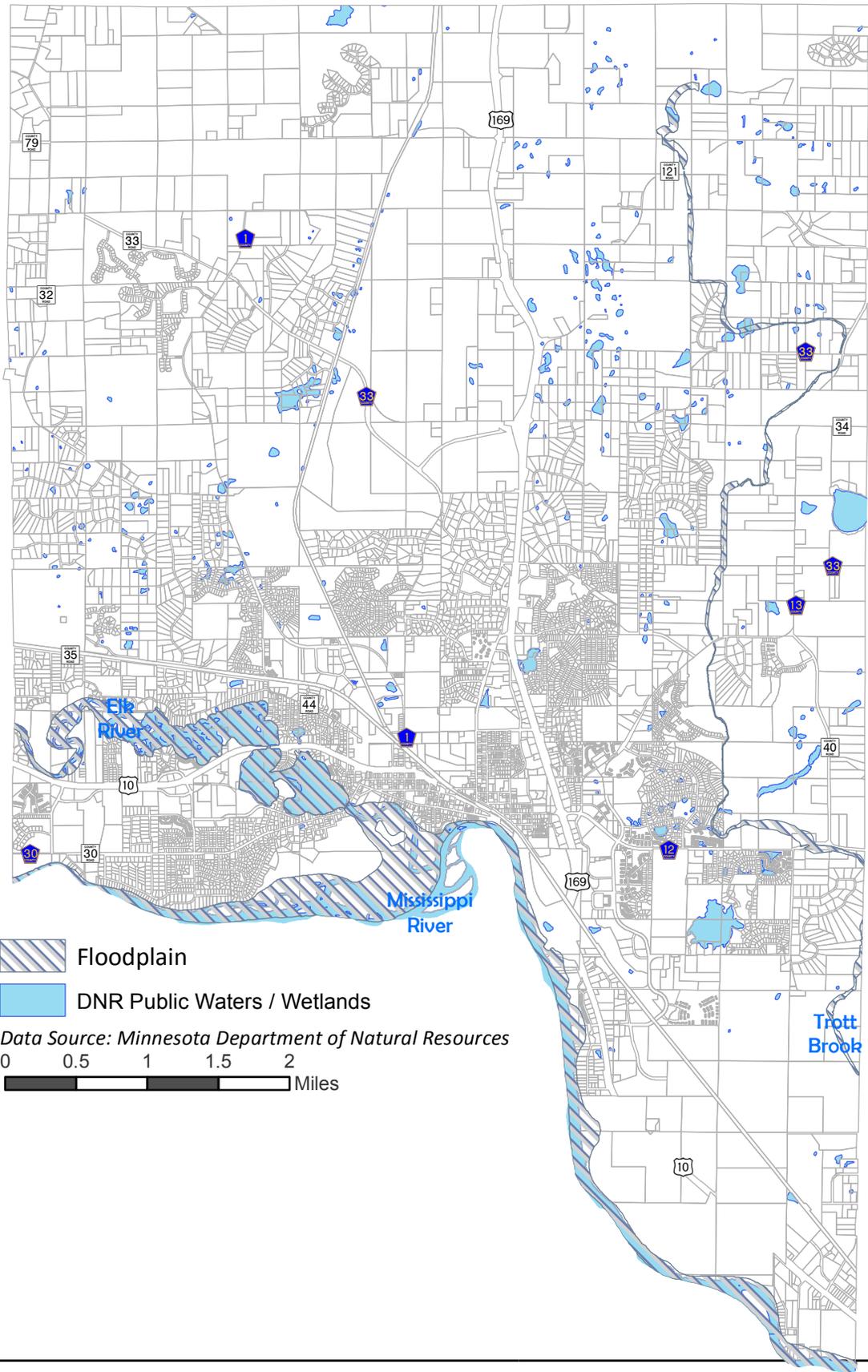


Figure 9-2. Flood Plain Location

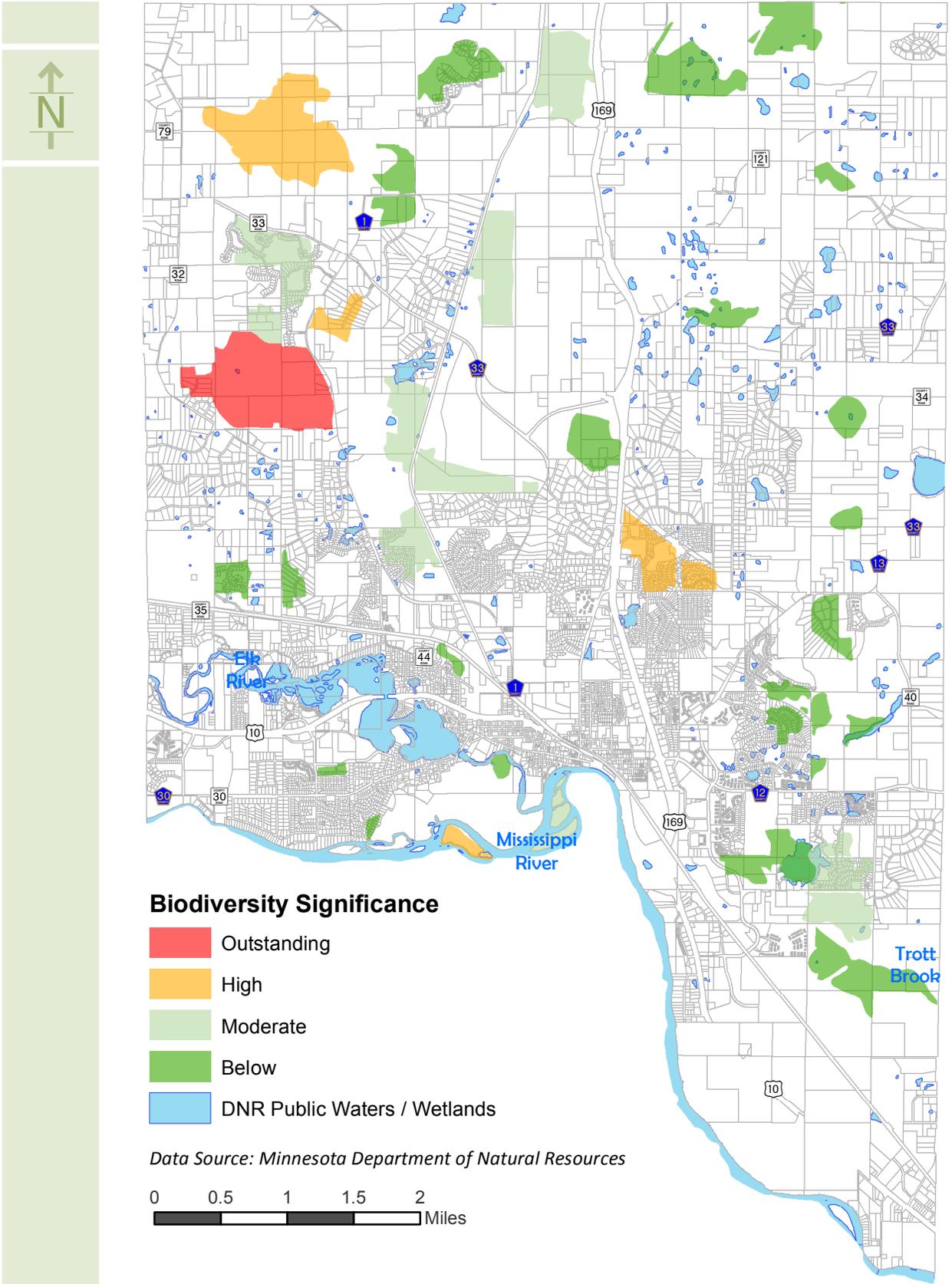


Figure 9-3. County Biological Survey

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Introduction

In the fall of 2013, the City began the process of developing a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The final document resulting from that planning process should be incorporated by reference to this section of the comprehensive plan.



Guiding Principles

In early 2013, the Parks and Recreation staff prioritized city services into the following three priorities:

- Maintenance – take care of what we have
- Preservation of open space
- Take care of our youth

These are viewed as core services which are defined as the department's basic civic duty and prime value to the community. The forthcoming guiding principles support these goals of providing a dynamic high quality system that is well-positioned to meet the needs of current and future residents of Elk River.

Guiding Principle #1 - Implement a Balanced System Plan that Provides a Consistent Level of Service within Each Geographic Area of the City

As the City of Elk River continues to grow into the northern area of the City, it will be important to provide residents with a cross-section of recreational opportunities from which to choose. It appears there are some overlapping service areas within the existing park system. This indicates there is potentially redundancy within the system and some parks/recreation features may be unnecessary.

Guiding Principle # 2 – Maintain Adequate Resources to Oversee Development, Operations and Maintenance of Parks and Trails and Administration of Recreational Services

Personnel should be planned for, hired and trained prior to the date of actual need to ensure that a consistent level of service is maintained as park facilities are enhanced and local recreational programs or services are expanded. Funding and resources needs should be balanced.

Guiding Principle #3 - Plan and Design Parks for Their Entire Lifecycle

An important consideration in implementing the system plan is the expected "lifecycle" of each component or park unit, which is the time frame between when it is initially developed until it is redeveloped or refurbished. In most cases, parks have an effective "lifecycle" of 15 to 20 years, although this will vary substantially depending on the specifics of the park in question. In addition, recreation trends and demand fluctuate as some activities become more or less popular or interest/demographics change. It is important to plan for evolving recreation needs by having flexible recreation spaces/facilities where feasible.

Guiding Principle #4 – Clarify Park Roles and Classifications

The system plan uses and a variety of park classifications to assure that the spectrum of recreation needs are being served within the larger system. The park classifications should follow guidelines and criteria set by national planning organizations to simplify and define the roles parks play and the services they provide. Those national standards can be adapted to meet the unique needs of Elk River. This will aid the City in establishing long-term maintenance costs, community expectations, and implementation. This principle should be further defined by the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Guiding Principle #5 - Foster Community Involvement at Each Level of System Planning and Implementation

Continuing community involvement in the decision-making process as the plan is implemented is fundamental to the City being successful in gaining

residents support for funding initiatives. An ongoing commitment by the city leaders and staff to community involvement in implementing the system plan should remain a cornerstone of the implementation strategy.

Guiding Principle #6 – Provide Access to Recreational Activities and Programs through Coordinated Services with Local Partners

Working with local program providers, the City will work to provide the opportunity for residents to participate in recreation activities and programs through well-designed, effective and cost efficient recreation programs. The City will continue to provide programming and will work with other program providers such as the local school district and youth associations, etc. to address this need and to provide adequate facilities for programmed use on a fair and equitable basis.

Framework for the Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trail System

The following framework establishes the base set of parameters that should be considered when developing a comprehensive and cohesive physical system plan. The framework serves as a means to translate the assessment of need and vision statement into a plan that meets the physical requirements, land and facilities, which will satisfy community needs.

The framework builds upon the existing park and trail infrastructure that is already in place within the City, with the basic precept being to use existing parks and open space lands to their highest and best uses within the context of demographic changes and resource limitations (capital investment and operations/maintenance funds) that are expected to prevail for some years to come. This last point is of particular importance in that meeting residents' desire for quality facilities within the context of anticipated resources requires some rethinking of past planning models and points of emphasis. To that end, the major themes include:

1. Expansion of the trail system will provide connections and continuity in the community.
2. Facility maintenance needs to be balanced with available resources.
3. Consider City-wide and geographic service areas within in the City when planning for parks.
4. Each geographic area will be anchored by a place based brand to bring community together.
5. Continue to work with local agencies and adjacent communities on meeting the recreation facility needs.
6. Plan for and obtain space for future needs.





Park Classifications Guidelines

As per Guiding Principle #4 the system plan consists of a variety of parks and open spaces defined under various classifications. Each classification serves a particular purpose in meeting local park and recreation needs. Although some flexibility is warranted, classifying parks is necessary to ensure a well-balanced system and that all recreation needs are effectively and efficiently met.

The classifications Elk River should consider when updating the Parks and Recreation Master Plan are based on guidelines recommended in the National Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Greenways Guidelines (National Recreation and Parks Association, 1996) and Planning and Urban Design Standards (American Planning Association, 2006), albeit expanded or modified to address circumstances unique to the city. The following table provides an overview of each classification.

Classification	General Description
Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood park remains the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on informal active and passive (non-scheduled/programmed) recreation.
Community Park	Serves broader purpose than neighborhood parks. Focus is on meeting service sector-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.
Youth Athletic Complex	Consolidates programmed youth athletic fields and associated facilities to fewer strategically located sites within the community. Can also provide neighborhood-use functions.
Community Athletic Complex	Consolidates programmed adult and youth athletic fields and associated facilities to a limited number of sites. Tournament level facilities. Can also provide neighborhood-use functions.
Conservancy Area	Lands set aside for preservation of natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space and visual aesthetics/buffering. Also provides passive use opportunities (i.e., nature-type trails, overlooks, interpretive program, etc.). This also includes lands set aside for preservation of natural resources and open space through means other than community preserves. This includes lands in wetlands and floodplains and an assortment of outlots left as open space
Greenways	Serve as linear corridors exhibiting a natural environment. Focus is on protecting ecological resources and providing wildlife and trail corridors. Secondary use is for trails, assuming that they can be integrated without compromising the integrity of the natural systems.
Special Use	Covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose use - such as a nature center, historic sites, plazas, etc.
Regional/ County Park/ Open Space	Regional parks and open spaces with a natural resource and larger acreage focus.
Private Park/ Rec. Facility	Parks and recreation facilities that are privately owned, yet contribute to the public park and recreation system.

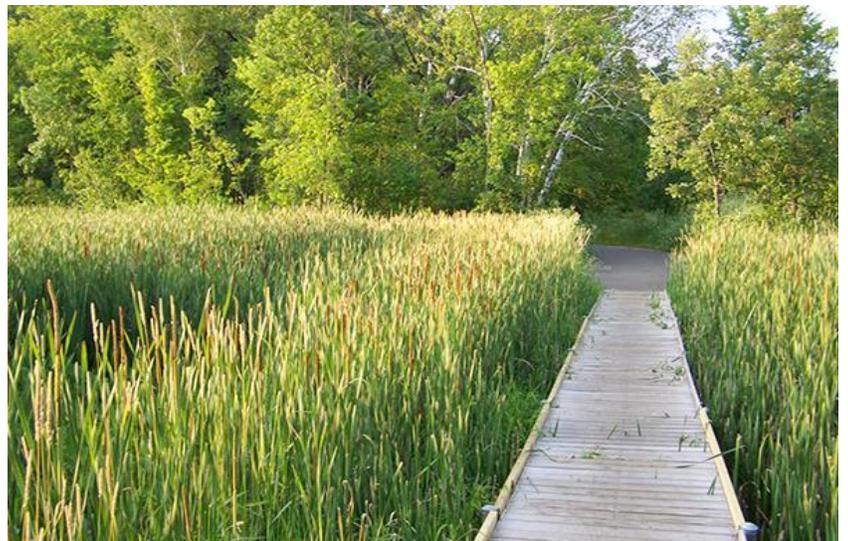
Building Highly Valued Trail System

Four guiding principles provide the foundation for developing a highly-valued trail/pedestrian-way system, including:

- Principle #1: Incrementally fill in gaps and otherwise improve the pedestrian-level public infrastructure to enhance safety and encourage the use of alternative forms of transportation within neighborhoods and along routes to school.
- Principle #2: Focus on interconnections between local and regional trails as the trail system continues to expand.
- Principle #3: Improving the overall quality of experience trail users have.
- Principle #4: Allow for four-season use of trails where feasible.

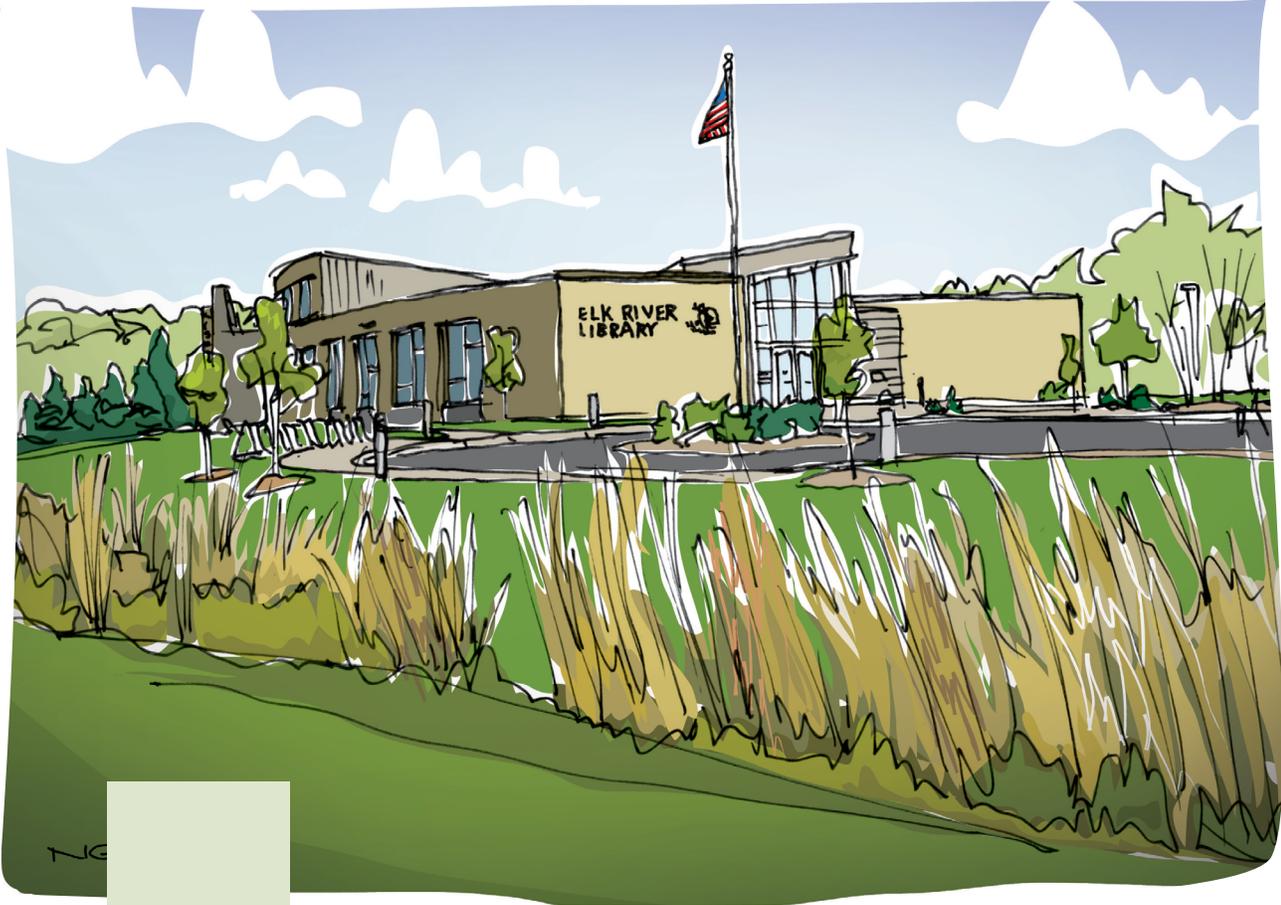
Trail Classifications

The trail system plan consists of a variety of trails and pedestrian-ways/sidewalks defined under various classifications. Each classification helps translate the aforementioned personal values and principles into an implementable form, with each serving a particular purpose in meeting local needs. The distinction between classifications is important due to the variability in their value, which in turn greatly affects the importance of the system to residents and the degree to which the various trails, sidewalks, and bikeways will be used. The classifications applied to Elk River should be consistent with the MN DNR's Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines (2007), albeit modified to accommodate some local nuances.





Funding Source	Description / Overview	Probability
State Outdoor Recreation, LCCMR, Legacy Fund, and Similar Grants	The State of Minnesota annually allocates funds for park acquisition and development projects which meet recreational needs identified by the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. In recent years, Legacy Amendment Fund has emerged as a legitimate potential funding source for projects of regional or state-wide significance. Whatever the program, the grants are competitive and awarded according to project merits.	Very competitive, especially with very tight public funding available at all levels. Most promising might be Legacy Amendment Funds, especially for parks or trails of regional significance.
Land and Water Conservation Fund	The federal government allocates monies each year to states for public acquisition and development projects. The State of Minnesota Administers these grants through the Department of Natural Resources.	Funding availability through this program has been limited in recent years.
Federal Transportation Funds (T-21, RTP, etc.)	The federal government allocates monies each year for alternative forms of transportation, which includes bicycle trails that focus on transportation.	Funding availability through this program has been significant in past years. The potential for receiving funding for local trails is relatively good.
Fees/Enterprise Funds	Minnesota statute allows cities to prescribe and provide for the collection of fees for the use of any city park or other unit of the city park system or any facilities, accommodations, or services provided for public use therein.	Becoming a much more relied upon funding source, especially for singular use facilities ranging from ballfields to hockey arenas.
Partnerships	Relates to partnerships formed with adjacent cities, the county, and school districts to develop, maintain, and operate parks and recreational facilities on a joint-use basis.	Although limited public funding availability is an issue at all levels, forming partnerships to spread the cost of providing a specific type of service or facility still has merit whenever there is an opportunity.
Park Dedication Fees	The park dedication fund provides funding for parks as long as community development continues to occur. Any controls imposed on the extent (i.e., total number of units) or rate of development (i.e., number of units per year) allowed within the city will limit the revenue generated under this fund. The City will need to ensure the fees imposed are consistent with current state statutes.	Even with periodic adjustments, park dedication fees alone will not be adequate to fund the system plan to an optimal level.
Donations	Donations relates to cash donations, gifts, volunteerism, and professional services donated to the park for planning, acquisition, or development purposes.	Limited potential from a cash perspective, but important with respect to the use of volunteers to offset some program costs.
Local Sales Tax Increase	A local sales tax is a special-purpose tax implemented and levied at the city level. A local option sales tax is often used as a means of raising funds for specific local or area projects, such as improving parks and trail within the community.	As much as the sales tax approach offers high degree of merit, it must be noted that enacting it requires approval by the State Legislature following requirements established by state statute. In an ever shifting political environment, getting this approval is not always certainty.
Park and Trail Bond Referendum	A Bond Referendum is a way to borrow money to fund capital projects and it normally requires voter approval. Collection of the money is carried out by taxing local property owners.	Although many communities have been successful at passing bond referendums to fund park and trail improvements in recent years they have done so by having a detailed park and trail system plan, completed community surveys to understand priorities, and have carried out a marketing campaign that educated citizens on the monetary impacts and the value added to the city.



Introduction

Community facilities include parks, schools, health and safety services, libraries, religious institutions, and similar facilities. They help contribute to the quality of life in the City of Elk River and the City’s ability to maintain and attract businesses, industries, residents and visitors alike. This part of the Comprehensive Plan provides an inventory and analysis of existing community facilities and services in Elk River. It also describes implementation strategies for maintaining and enhancing those facilities and services.

Planning for community facilities is important for several reasons, including, but not limited to:

- Community facilities represent important community services;
- In Elk River, community facilities often are the locations of large employers;
- The facilities should be accessible to both residents and visitors;
- These facilities often represent significant elements of community heritage and identity;
- Community facilities may influence the pattern of traffic and adjacent land use;
- The future growth of Elk River may lead to the expansion of existing facilities and the need to build new facilities;
- Municipal buildings, libraries, schools, religious institutions, health care and a variety of other elements all form the mosaic of what residents and businesses want and need in the community;
- Residents and businesses place value on the quality and variety of educational opportunities available in Elk River. Schools become focal points of the community.



Inventory and Analysis

City Facilities

City Hall

Elk River is a statutory city with a weak Mayor-Council form of government whereby administrative, as well as legislative, authority is the ultimate responsibility of the council as a whole. The Mayor and four council members serve on the City Council as elected officials for 4-year terms. The Mayor is elected by the electors of the city at large. The City of Elk River is divided into four wards. One council member is elected from each of the four wards by the electors of that ward.

Elk River City Hall is located at 13065 Orono Parkway and houses the City Administration, Community Operations and Development, Parks and Recreation, and the City Council Chambers. The City Administrator is directly responsible to the City Council for the operations of the entire city including the oversight of the budget, which includes 6 departments and over 140 employees. The City Administrator provides leadership, vision, guidance, and direction to a diverse city services operation. The Administrator also serves as an ambassador for the community and to other governmental agencies.



Elk River has several boards and commissions including the Board of Adjustments, Economic Development Authority, Energy City Commission, Heritage Preservation Commission, Housing & Redevelopment Authority, Ice Arena Commission, Library Board, Parks and Recreation Commission, Planning Commission, and the Utilities Commission.

Key to the comprehensive and land use planning process is the Planning Commission, which is an advisory body to the City Council. The Planning Commission participates in various studies and planning issues that are applied to guiding the development of the community. The Planning Commission conducts public hearings to receive public comments on development proposals, subdivisions, zoning ordinance amendments, variances, re-zonings, and conditional use permits. The Planning Commission makes recommendations to the City Council based on information provided by staff, various agencies, and the public.

Also instrumental to the land use planning process is the Economic Development Authority (EDA) which is a public corporation empowered to undertake certain types of economic development projects. The EDA is an arm of the City Council and handles all types of city economic development projects including acquiring, developing, improving, and disposing of property, entering into contracts and operating and maintaining public affairs.

The Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) is a public body that undertakes certain types of housing and redevelopment projects including planning, acquisition, clearance, rehabilitation and construction for the provision of safe housing for persons of low and moderate income. Projects may also include the improvement and restoration of stagnant and underdeveloped land. The HRA, like the EDA and Planning Commission, is a body that will utilize the Comprehensive Plan to aid in land use decisions and

make recommendations to the City Council pertaining to land use policy and future use of properties.

Police

The Elk River Police Department is a full service police department providing 24-hour police service to over 23,000 residents within the City. The police department is led by a Chief of Police and organized into two divisions: Patrol Division and Administrative Division, each commanded by a Captain. In 2013, the Police Department was comprised of 31 sworn officers, nine non-sworn support staff and approximately 15 volunteer Police Reserves.

The Police Reserve Unit that has served the police department and community since 1975, is a volunteer organization that is comprised of non-sworn members. Key responsibilities of the Police Reserve Unit include response to major incidents for traffic control and scene security, community event security, search and rescue, home and business security checks, general patrol, officer assistance, public education, and child fingerprinting.

The Patrol Division is comprised of 21 officers assigned to the division and is divided into twelve hour work shifts covering a 24-hour day. Each patrol shift is supervised by a sergeant. The Captain of the Patrol Division is also responsible for maintaining the department's fleet of vehicles, supervising the field training unit and other patrol related activities. The Police Department has established a variety of specialized units to enhance the overall department effectiveness including K-9, Bike Team, SWAT/Crisis Negotiations Team, Honor Guard, and Police Chaplain Corps.

The Administrative Division of the Police Department is tasked with supporting and enhancing overall department effectiveness and is comprised of the Detective Unit, Support Services Unit, and Community Services Unit.

Key initiatives relating to traffic safety include the



Sherburne County Toward Zero Deaths (TZD)/Collision Reduction And Safer Highways (C.R.A.S.H.) program dedicated to making roadways in Sherburne County safer. Partners in this effort include Sherburne County Sheriff’s Office, Elk River Police Department, Becker Police Department, Big Lake Police Department, and the Princeton Police Department.

Fire

The Elk River Fire Department, formally established in 1881, is a full-service emergency response and public safety agency, offering a wide range of services to provide for a healthy and safe community. Over the years, the department has transitioned from a single-mission of fire suppression, to providing many additional life-safety and value added services to the community. The fire department is focused on four specific service areas: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

The City of Elk River has a Fire Chief who is directly responsible for the operation of the fire department and overseeing the functional divisions within, including Fire/Rescue Operations, Fire & Building Safety, and Code Enforcement.

The Elk River Fire Department currently responds from two strategically located fire stations; Fire Station #1 and Station #2. Station #1 is located at 415 Jackson Avenue and houses advanced support ambulances which belong to a separate non-profit ambulance service, and Station #2 is located at 13073 Orono Parkway which is home to the office of the Fire Chief and is typically staffed during normal business hours.

Future development patterns and traffic levels will influence the need for a future satellite station in the northern and/or eastern section of the City.

Library

The Elk River Library is a branch of the Great River Regional Library. This library system consists of 32 libraries over a six county area offering nearly 1 million items including books, audio materials, video materials and serial subscriptions. The public library is located across the street from City Hall at 13020 Orono Parkway. The library has computers with Internet access. The library also provides a large multi-purpose room available for public events/meetings.

Liquor Stores

The City of Elk River operates two municipal liquor stores as authorized by Minnesota state laws and the Elk River City Council. The Westbound Liquor Store is located at 13484 185th Street and the Northbound Liquor Store is located at 19348 Evans Street. Profits from the City of Elk River’s liquor operations go back into community projects which would otherwise have to be paid for with increased property taxes. The Elk River liquor stores offer a variety of regional, domestic, and imported beer, wines, and liquors.

Streets Division

The Streets Division maintains 150 lane miles of streets, over 200 cul-de-sacs and 20 parking lots. This includes snow plowing, ice control, crackfilling, sealcoating, street sweeping, gravel road maintenance, right of way maintenance and signs within the road right of way. In addition, the Division is responsible for the maintenance and repair of the city’s storm water system. The division operates the equipment service department which repairs and maintains the city fleet and Elk River Municipal Utilities fleet. The division has its own sign department and designs and creates signs, logos and



banners for every department in the City. The Streets Division is located at 19000 Proctor Road.

Parks System

The City of Elk River has an extensive park system that provides quality recreation opportunities for residents and visitors. Refer to Chapter 10: Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Spaces for more information.

Activity Center (55+ years)

The City operates an activity center located at 413 Proctor Avenue. People 55 years and older may enjoy fitness classes, creative art classes, cards and games or relaxing in the Gathering Grounds coffee shop. The Activity Center also has three computers with internet access which are available at no charge. The Senior Scene monthly newsletter provides up-to-date information on tours, special events, programs and activities available at the Activity Center.

Golf Course

The Pinewood Golf Course in Elk River is a nine-hole executive course that supports the golfing community with a variety of programs and opportunities that suit the occasional player as well as the avid golfer. Pinewood Golf Course is located at 18150 Waco Street and is open early April through November of each year, weather permitting.

Ice Arena

The Elk River Ice Arena located at 1000 School Street NW provides opportunities for the community including learn to skate programs, open skating and hockey activities, leagues, clinics and tournaments, youth and school hockey teams including Elk River High School, and provides a venue for a bi-annual craft show and a walking track.

Elk River Municipal Utilities (ERMU) Municipal Utilities

Elk River Municipal Utilities is a community-based provider of power, water, and security systems located at 13069 Orono Parkway. Elk River Municipal Utilities (ERMU) provides electric and water services to Elk River and surrounding areas, including parts of the Cities of Dayton, Big Lake, and Otsego. ERMU bills the residents monthly for services provided by the City of Elk River, which includes sewer and residential trash removal. ERMU also sells, installs, and services security systems while providing monitoring.

ERMU has a variety of energy and water conservation programs including the promotion of renewable energy sources such as wind power and power from the local landfill gas. ERMU offers many programs to its customers that saves them money and conserves energy, including rebate programs and promoting good daily practices to make conservation a priority. It is active in the Energy City partnership with the City of Elk River.

County Facilities

Elk River is the county seat for Sherburne County. The county government center campus is located at 13880 Business Center Drive NW along Highway 10 in the western portion of the City. This facility includes administrative offices, courts and detention facilities, as well as administration, GIS and Survey staff. These facilities provide a significant source of local employment. The County services also provide a source of activity bringing people to Elk River to conduct business.

The Sherburne County DMV is located outside of the County campus at 600 Railroad Drive.

The County Public Works and Engineering departments have their office out of a separate facility as well, which is located off of Jackson Avenue in downtown Elk River.

The County fairgrounds are also located at 13372 Business Center Drive between the county and city government campuses.



Schools

Schools are very important components of a successful and viable community. Elk River is fortunate to have outstanding schools. The following provides a brief description of the schools in Elk River.

Independent Public School District #728

Independent School District (ISD) 728 Elk River Area School District, the eight largest school district in Minnesota, is a progressive district proudly serving approximately 12,500 neighborhood students and more than 50,000 total lifelong learners in all or parts of Albertville, Dayton, Elk River, Otsego, Ramsey, Rogers, St. Michael, Zimmerman and the townships of Big Lake, Baldwin, Livonia, Nowthen, Orrock and Stanford. The District operates nine elementary schools, four middle schools, and four high schools. ISD 728 has a seven-member elected School Board with a District Office located at 815 Highway 10.

ISD 728 operates a major school campus in the City of Elk River that is located on School Street

between Jackson and Proctor. The campus contains two elementary schools, two middle schools and the Elk River High School. Ivan Sand, a community alternative high school is located in this area as well. Meadowvale Elementary and Twin Lakes Elementary Schools are the only ISD 728 schools in Elk River not located on this campus. The schools are an important part of the community identity, provide for one of the largest local employers in the City, and bring people into Elk River.

Schools located in the City of Elk River include:

- **Lincoln Elementary School (Grades K-5).** Lincoln Elementary School (Lincoln) is located at 600 School Street providing schooling for approximately 500 students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade.
- **Meadowvale Elementary School (Grades K-5).** Meadowvale Elementary School (Meadowvale) is located at 12701 Elk Lake Road and serves approximately 640 students in kindergarten through fifth grade.
- **Parker Elementary School (Grades K-5).** Parker Elementary School (Parker) is an elementary school providing schooling for students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade located at 500 School Street.
- **Twin Lakes Elementary School (Grades K-5).** Twin Lakes Elementary School (Twin Lakes) is a two-story building that opened in fall of 2007 at 10051 191st Avenue NW with students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The school was designed as an energy efficient school and a green school and currently has approximately 835 students. Twin Lakes was recently named a "Minnesota School of Excellence".
- **Salk Middle School (Grades 6-8).** Salk Middle School (Salk) is located at 11970 Highland Road and serves over 700 students in grades 6-8. Salk Middle School offers a core curriculum in areas of English, Math, Social Studies, and Science, as well as the areas of Art, Computer Applications, Industrial Technology and Physical Education. In addition, Salk offers Magnet specific course work (STEM Based) in English, Science and Social Studies for students who have registered for the Pre-Engineering Magnet Program in 7th and 8th grades and all students in 6th grade.
- **VandenBerge Middle School (Grades 6-8).** VandenBerge Middle School (VMS) provides school for students in grades 6-8 and is located at 948 Proctor Avenue.
- **Elk River High School (Grades 9-12).** Elk River High School (ERHS) is located at 900 School Street and provides schooling for students in grades 9-12.



- **Ivan Sand Community High School (Grades 9-12).** The Ivan Sand Community High School (ISCHS) is an alternative high school that opened in 1998 for students with different or unique needs. ISCHS is a secondary program that is designed to help students, who may be at-risk of not graduating, earn a diploma. ISCHS provides schooling for approximately 120 students in grades 9-12 and is located at 1232 School Street in Elk River.

The influences of the ISD 728 facilities, and the importance of the public school system on community development, create shared interest for the City and ISD 728. A strong working relationship and collaborative approaches should be part of addressing future issues. Among the issues related to school facilities area:

- Maintaining a quality setting for Elk River schools;
- Planning for facility needs with continued growth in east Elk River;
- Addressing challenges of school funding and growth in other parts of the district;
- Community and regional recreation needs; and
- Capturing the economic benefits of visitors attracted by the schools.

Charter School

Spectrum High School (Grades 6-12). Spectrum High School is a public charter school located at 17796 Industrial Circle NW in the southeastern portion of Elk River. The charter school is celebrating its eight year as a member of Elk River during the 2013-2014 school year.

Handke Center

The historic Handke Center located at 1170 Main Street is home to the following ISD 728 programs which enhance the education programs within the City: Community Education, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), Early Childhood Screening and health services, Adult Basic Educaiton (ABE), and General Education

Development (GED).

Built in 1930, the Handke Center is ISD 728's oldest facility, and is now in its 83rd year of continuous operation serving the public. It served as the District's only high school from 1930 to 1961, then as a junior high school, and later still as Handke Elementary school and the Handke Magnet (elementary school). It has housed the current array of programs since 2001. A portion of the main floor of the 1930 building was remodeled and restored to its original 1930 luster during 2005-2006.

Private Schools

In addition to the public schools in the ISD 728 School District, Elk River has the following private schools:

- **My Own Montessori (Grades Pre-K – K).** My Own Montessori School is located at 1118 4th Street NW and provides schooling for preschool and kindergarten students in Elk River, Big Lake, Otsego, and the Zimmerman area. My Own Montessori School is located in Union Congregational Church one block off of Highway 10 with Norfolk as the cross street.
- **St. Andrew's Catholic School (Grades Pre-K – 5).** St. Andrew's Catholic School is located at 428 Irving Avenue NW and offers schooling for children in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade.
- **Solid Rock Christian Academy (Grades K – 12).** Solid Rock Christian Academy was founded in 1994 and is located at 11800 196th Avenue NW, west of Highway 169.
- **Monarch Montessori (Age 33 months – Grade 6).** Monarch Montessori School provides a unique alternative to traditional schools, both public and private within the Elk River area. The School is located at 19277 Vernon Street (by Meadowvale Elementary School) and serves the Elk River, Otsego, Rogers, Zimmerman, Big Lake, and Monticello communities.

Minnesota School of Business- Elk River College Campus

Minnesota School of Business Elk River campus is located off of Highway 169 at 11500 193rd Avenue. The Elk River Campus opened its doors in 2009 and offers career focused college degree programs in business, accounting, technology, veterinary technology, health and legal science fields. While relatively new to the City, student enrollment and faculty have grown since its inception. Internship opportunities provide an excellent way to engage the students in City government and provide assistance to local businesses throughout the City.



Religious Institutions

These institutions are an important part of the social fabric of the City and have a large impact on the community. With a variety of faith based options for the City’s residents, religious institutions add to the quality of life in a town the size of Elk River. They provide opportunities for neighbors to connect, socialize, and they also provide employment opportunities.

Cemeteries

Four cemeteries are located in Elk River including:

- Meadowvale Cemetery, organized in 1895, located off of Meadowvale Road NW approximately two miles north of County Road 33 (a portion of the cemetery is located within Livonia Township;
- Orono Cemetery, graves dating back to 1855, located on the south side of Lake Orono in the western portion of the City;
- St. Andrew’s Catholic Cemetery, organized in 1891 with records dating to the 1860’s, located south of 193rd Avenue and west of Highway 169; and
- Vernon Cemetery, organized in 1915 with land deeded in 1878 and some burials first seen in 1855, located two blocks west of Evans Street on Railroad Drive in Elk River.

The cemeteries have sufficient available space to meet the anticipated demand for burials in cemeteries, at least through the year 2040.



Community Events

The City of Elk River has many celebrations and community events throughout the year. These events help define Elk River’s unique sense of place and contribute to the City’s high quality of life. Some key events include, but are not limited to ArtSoup Community Art Festival, 4th of July Elk River, Taste of Elk River, Shiver Elk River, and the Riverfront Concert Series.



Community Facilities and Services Plan

The following expands on the implementation strategies outlined later in this chapter by further describing key concepts for maintaining and enhancing community facilities and services in Elk River.

City Facilities and Services

City Hall

City Hall will continue to provide cost effective services that meet the needs of the residents, business owners, and property owners alike. The City will strive to make City Hall a showcase facility that simultaneously considers social, economic and environmental factors. Examples of this include continuing to make cost-effective improvements to City Hall that will conserve energy. The City will explore ways to enhance the City Hall site by implementing low impact design storm water management techniques, low maintenance native landscaping, and similar techniques that are cost-effective, visually attractive, and environmentally sound.

Streets Division

The Streets Division and associated facilities will continue to identify opportunities to provide cost-effective, safe, and environmentally sound City vehicles and equipment. The Streets Division will also continue to explore opportunities for alternative design, construction, and maintenance techniques for City streets and similar facilities.

Police and Fire Department

The City will continue to monitor the current and anticipated staffing, equipment, and facility needs of the Police and Fire Departments and will explore opportunities to address those needs in an efficient and cost effective manner. The City will also continue to work with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to explore the most appropriate ways to provide police, fire and emergency medical services to Elk River and the region.

Energy Consumption

The City will explore ways to reduce its energy consumption. For example, the City will strive to replace inefficient lighting in City facilities, replace inefficient City vehicles and equipment with more efficient vehicles and equipment, and to use green building techniques in new and renovated City buildings.

The City will explore opportunities to partner with other public or private resources (such as the Center for Energy and Environment (CEE), Renew Minnesota!,

and the International Council on Local Environmental Issues (ICLEI)) to promote an awareness and understanding of energy conservation efforts and to seek grants to implement energy conservation measures.

The City will strive to update its ordinances and policies to address energy conservation issues that affect community facilities as well as other types of development.

Other Facilities and Services

ISD 728

It is critical for the City of Elk River to continue to coordinate with the Independent School District (ISD) 728 Elk River Area School District on future land use needs or issues moving forward.

Shared Community Facilities and Services

The City of Elk River and neighboring and overlapping agencies and jurisdictions should continue to coordinate efforts to provide cost-effective services. Specifically those potential shared facilities that may be difficult for an individual jurisdiction to provide on its own, but may be feasible if shared with others.

Telecommunications

The City recognizes that high-speed information services are a critical component of Elk River's infrastructure and a critical component of economic development and quality of life. As such, the City will listen to the hopes and concerns of residents, business owners, and industries relating to telecommunications. As the City continues to grow and develop and implements plans to upgrade and extend municipal sewer and water lines, it will also consider opportunities to work with telecommunication providers and private utility companies to enhance telecommunication throughout the City where feasible.



1. Sherburne County Fairgrounds
2. City Hall/Police Station/Fire Station #2 /Municipal Utilities
3. Elk River Public Library
4. Orono Cemetery
5. Elk River Streets Division
6. Ivan Sand Community School/ Elk River Community Education Center
7. Salk Middle School
8. VendenBerge Middle School
9. Ice Arena
10. Elk River High School
11. Lincoln Elementary School
12. Parker Elementary School
13. Elk River Activity Center
14. Handke Center
15. My Own Montessori School
16. Fire Station #1
17. St. Andrew's Catholic School

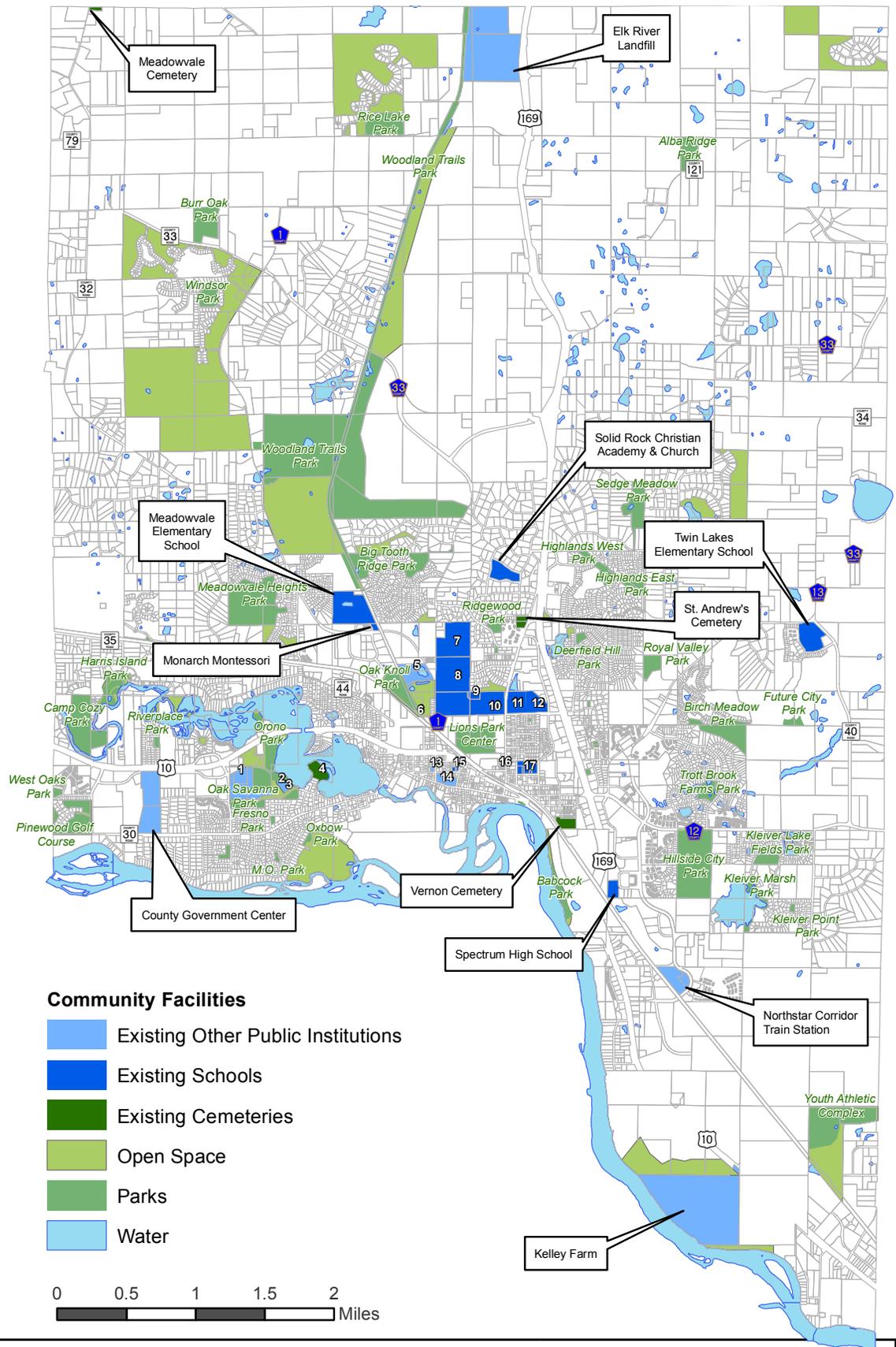


Figure 11-1. Community Facilities

Implementation

The following are statements that reflect strategies that are geared toward community facilities.

- Continue to evaluate and pursue the costs and benefits of partnering with other government entities to provide cost effective community services in Elk River. When appropriate, explore contracting with other government entities for services.
- Continue to evaluate and pursue the costs and benefits of sharing Elk River’s services with other communities.
- Continue to coordinate and/or partner with Independent School District 728 on pertinent services such as community education and recreation programs.
- Consider developing and implementing a plan to ensure that new construction and renovations pertaining to City facilities, follow green technology standards, where feasible.
- Where appropriate, promote native landscaping that reduces the use of chemical fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, irrigation and fossil fuel use.
- Consider developing and implementing a plan to provide community gardens on City property or partner with Elk River institutions (ISD 728, Sherburne County and religious institutions) to provide community garden space where feasible.
- Lead by example by using rain gardens, rain barrels, and other techniques that others can use on their properties.
- Consider developing and implementing an environmental preference purchasing program. Consider partnering with other government entities to maximize savings. Where appropriate and feasible, engage institutions, businesses, and residents.
- Continue to conduct periodic energy audits of all pertinent City facilities. Identify and implement strategies to reduce carbon emissions, increase energy efficiency, and provide the City with monetary savings.
- Consider developing and implementing strategies to reduce the use of fossil fuel in City vehicles and equipment. Consider the use of hybrid vehicles, alternative fuel-efficient conventional vehicles and other types of vehicles that reduce fossil fuel use. Also, develop and implement strategies that reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled for City business using fossil fuel vehicles.
- Consider developing and implementing strategies to use “green” cleaning products in all City facilities.
- Consider developing and implementing strategies to help the Streets Division continue to implement their tasks in a sustainable and cost-effective manner.
- Continue to inventory and analyze all City equipment to make sure that it works safely and efficiently.
- Continue to budget and plan for equipment replacement and repair as needed. Prepare a cost-benefit report to support decisions.
- Continue to partner with or support others in their efforts to provide events and celebrations that benefit Elk River residents and business owners.
- Encourage City Staff and Elected Officials to promote the City through speaking engagements, news articles, and presentations at a variety of events, as established by City policy.
- Actively solicit citizen participation in City affairs, including committees and events.
- Work with the School District to promote opportunities for youth to be involved in City activities.



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Introduction

Communities with strong economies have the financial resources necessary to support the services that their residents need and desire. However, sustainable communities recognize that community development is not simply about increasing the financial resources of the community; it is not simply about promoting businesses and industries that will create more products and deliver more services without regard to the natural and social environments; nor is it simply about increasing the financial wealth of individuals. Rather, community development in a sustainable community is about bringing together social, natural, and economic resources to sustain the “whole” community.

The community development section is, to some degree, the sum of all the other parts in the Comprehensive Plan. The process of discovery that is required to complete the Comprehensive Plan provides a basis for current and future City leaders to decide things like what, if anything, should the City of Elk River do to help facilitate business and/or residential growth. In addition, this section aims to outline planning activities that should be undertaken in achieving the current economic development goals of the City of Elk River. One of the current goals of the City is to “foster a pro-business atmosphere that provides incentives and other opportunities for new and existing business growth”.

Three aspects of Elk River’s future that require particular attention and action by the City include:

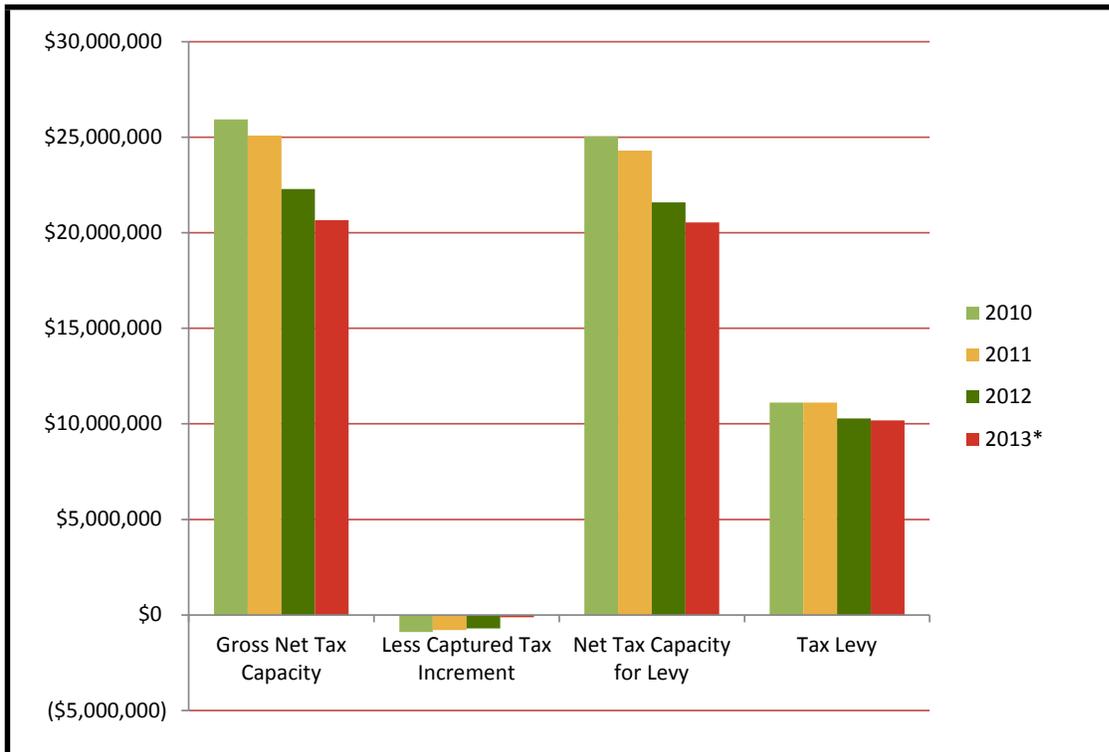
- Expanding the tax base
- Attracting jobs
- Encouraging redevelopment

These actions remain the three key aspects for the 2013 Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committees.

Expanding the Tax Base

Property taxes remain the largest source of revenue for the City of Elk River. In fact, roughly three-fourths of the City’s budget is derived from property taxes. While all forms of development contribute tax base to the community, it can be risky to place too much weight on tax base growth as a strategy. A lack of local control over the critical elements of the tax system is cited as the main reason for the risk.

Chart12-1: Tax Base



Source: City of Elk River, WSB & Associates, Inc.

Chart 12-1: Tax Base, on the previous page, shows a decline in gross net tax capacity for the City of Elk River since 2010. It also shows that even though the City was able to reduce the tax levy amount in recent years, the local tax rate increased from 44.56% in 2010 to 49.56% in 2013. According to the 2013 Budget, the decline in gross net tax capacity is mainly due to a decline in residential taxable market values, which dropped 13% in 2012. The taxable market values for commercial properties dropped .21% and industrial properties increased .38%. Seeking commercial and industrial development as a means of building tax base is commonly thought of as ideal since, historically, a dollar of estimated market value of commercial-industrial property carried a higher tax capacity value than residential property. Legislative changes to the tax system resulted in declining tax capacity values for commercial-industrial properties from 1997 to 2002. However, given the relative stability of the taxable market values for commercial-industrial properties compared to residential properties in recent years, it is clear that focusing attention on tax base growth as a strategy for commercial-industrial properties is a legitimate community development strategy.

The disparity in declines in taxable market values between residential and commercial-industrial properties results in businesses taking on a larger share of the local tax levy. Local tax competitiveness is an issue that falls within the context of business retention and expansion, commonly known as BR&E. City officials should continue efforts to perform functions within the BR&E framework to ensure local businesses have an opportunity to have an open dialogue with the City on an ongoing basis. This would aid in achieving the City's Community Development goal, which aims to, "Enhance and expand community involvement and public participation through a variety of innovative outlets".



Jobs

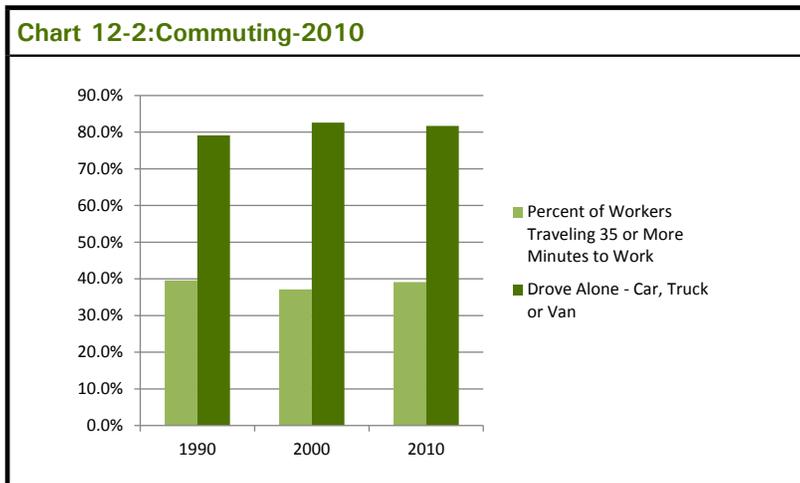
Planning for commercial-industrial development continues to be an important issue for the City. A motivation for commercial-industrial development is the creation of jobs.

Retaining and attracting livable wage jobs has been an ongoing objective for the City of Elk River. In 2013, commercial and industrial properties made up 23% of the tax base in Elk River (21% and 2% respectively). According to the 2010 Census, 68% of Elk River workers had jobs outside of the City. Since 1990, roughly 40% of Elk River workers travel 35 or more minutes to work and nearly 80% of workers drive alone. By comparison, only 17.1% of Minnesota workers have an average commute time of 35 minutes or more. Refer to chart 12-2: Community-2010 for more information.

Long commute times and employment outside of the City creates barriers to building local connections, can contribute to retail leakage, and reduces the amount of time available for recreation. In addition, there is a growing body of evidence that the next generation of workers will want to spend as little time commuting as possible. Retaining and attracting livable wage jobs will provide current and future Elk River residents the option of working where they live.



The major employers in Elk River have traditionally been various institutions in the service-providing sector including Elk River Independent School District 728, Sherburne County, City Hall, and various religious institutions. Over time, the employment base began to diversify and add new major employers including Wal-Mart and other retail establishments, Metal Craft Machine & Engineering, Cretex and other retail, service, and light industrial institutions. The top 20 employers within the City include:



Source: US Census

Top 20 Employers within Elk River				
Largest Employers	Product/Service	Full-Time Employees	Part-Time Employees	Total
Independent School District 728	Education	892	706	1598
Sherburne County	Government	560	38	598
Wal-Mart	Retail Store	n/a	n/a	380
Guardian Angels of Elk River, Inc.	Nursing/Housing	79	238	317
Great River Energy	Electric Utility	236	0	236
Tescom Corporation	Pressure Control Devices	187	0	187
City of Elk River	Government	114	45	159
Menards	Retail Store	n/a	n/a	150
Cornerstone Auto Resource	Automobile Sales	105	42	147
Coborn's	Grocery Store	27	95	122
Sportech, Inc.	Plastics Thermoforming	103	8	111
Cub Foods	Grocery Store	44	65	109
Metal Craft Machine & Engineering	Precision Maching	100	5	105
Cretex Companies, Inc.	Precast Concrete Products	100	0	100
Crystal Distribution, Inc.	Custom Curb Adaptors	100	n/a	100
The Home Depot	Retail Store	n/a	n/a	100
The Bank of Elk River	Financial Institution	86	13	99
E&O Tool and Plastics, Inc.	Injection Molding	98	0	98
Faribault Foods, Inc.	Pouch Packaging	79	n/a	79

Source: City of Elk River

Planning Efforts

Economic Development Strategic Plan

The Elk River 2013-16 Economic Development Strategic Plan seeks to “Modify [the] Industrial Development goal to Business Development and include two sets of strategies: 1) Industrial Development Strategies, and 2) Commercial Strategies.” Under the Business Development goal is the following objective: “Attract new businesses and support existing businesses to increase the city’s industrial tax base, commercial base and employment base.” The Economic Development Strategic Plan provides a strategic approach for attracting industrial and commercial businesses.

Strategic Industrial Marketing Plan

There is a realization among City officials that reaching the industrial development goals will require more effort than simply designating property in a land use plan; especially as it relates to attracting new business to Elk River. To this end, the City has created a Strategic Industrial Marketing Plan. The vision of this plan is for Elk River “to be the light industrial hub for small to medium-size firms in the northwest metro region.” The Strategic Industrial Marketing Plan provides the framework for identifying opportunities and attracting new businesses to Elk River.

Energy City 2024 Action Plan

The Energy City Commission is developing an action plan to focus its efforts on creating tangible targets and benefits to the City, its residents, and business partners.

171st Avenue Focused Area Study (FAST)

The 171st Avenue FAST has an employment focus. It seeks to leverage key assets that are embedded in the community to reinforce Elk River as a regional hub. The Plan also seeks to create nearly 6.5 million square feet of retail, office and industrial space at the maturity of the plan, which is a 25 to 30 year planning horizon.

Redevelopment

The roots of redevelopment are intrinsically tied to local economic factors. Limitations on income means a lack of disposable income needed to reinvest in property. Over

time, the lack of investment leads to a deterioration of property. These conditions of blight often spread to adjacent properties.

Redevelopment will become an increasingly important community development issue for Elk River. Several factors define the need for city action:

- Redevelopment becomes a public issue because market forces are not likely to solve the problem. While Elk River has the ability to expand, development demand can bypass redevelopment parcels and seek out vacant land. There is little or no incentive to correct the problems on blighted parcels. Vacant land avoids many of the barriers of redevelopment sites.
- Redevelopment property is often more expensive. Acquisition includes both land and buildings. Redevelopment often requires the assembly of smaller parcels into a larger site. Multiple property owners with differing interests compound the complexity of land acquisition.
- Redevelopment sites have more site preparation costs. Buildings must be demolished and the site cleared before new construction can occur.
- Redevelopment may face the need and cost of environmental remediation. Old buildings may have asbestos or other hazardous materials that require special treatment. Certain commercial and industrial may have allowed pollutants to enter the soil.

All of these factors combine to create significant economic barriers to redevelopment. Removal of these barriers is a primary focus of city actions related to redevelopment.

Mississippi Connections Redevelopment Framework

- The Mississippi Connections Redevelopment Framework establishes a long-range vision for the 400-acre core of Elk River. The objective of the plan is to, “provide guidance to property owners, stakeholders, and community leadership to position the area in such a way that strengthens the area to survive the impacts of time and change; methods to reestablish the downtown area as a destination; a desirable address to do business, live, and enjoy the diversity of uses in a character rich downtown amid the hustle and bustle of a growing community.”

Mississippi Connections Area

The area identified as the Mississippi Connections Area is an essential part of Elk River’s heritage and identity. The Mississippi Connections land use seeks to preserve and enhance the commercial districts and residential neighborhoods in this area. Continued designation of a land use is only one step in the effort to preserve and enhance the downtown area. Continued actions must be taken to achieve the objectives of the Mississippi Connections plan.

Continue to Build Connections

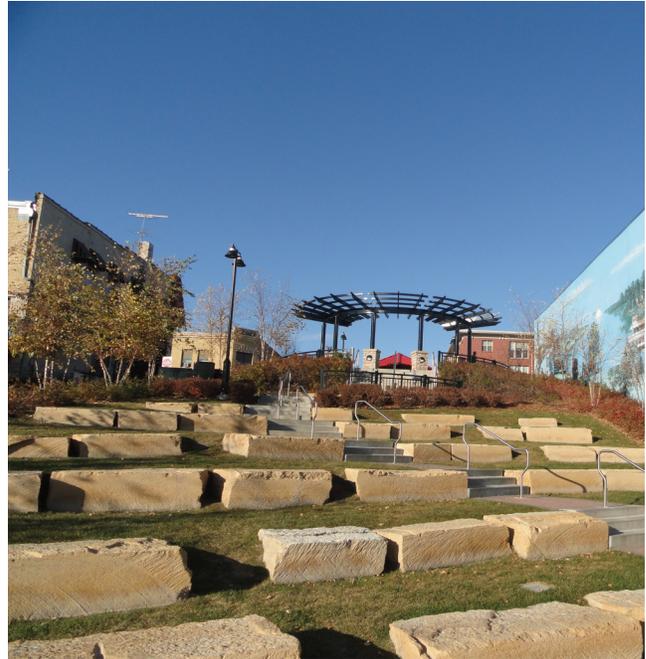
A key to the revitalization and sustainability of the Mississippi Connection area is creating connections within the area to other parts of the community.

Some potential connections include:

- Continued streetscape improvements along Main, Proctor and Jackson to maintain the sense of identify and appearance of the downtown area.
- Build off of and strengthen a well-defined system of sidewalks and trails to encourage pedestrian and other non-vehicular movement within the area. North-south connections and safe access across Highway 10 are critical in this area. Further connections should link downtown to school campuses, Lion’s Park, the River, Handke School and the Library, which are outside the area.
- Continued connections through parks, other public open spaces, trails, and orientation of private development to create visual and physical connections between the Mississippi Connections area and the Mississippi River.

Continued Maintenance of Public Facilities

Public facilities are key elements of the Mississippi Connections Area. Schools, Lion’s Park Center, other parks and the Library shape the identity of the Mississippi Connections Area. They also attract people into the area. Continued improvements and maintenance of these public facilities should be considered and objectives of the Mississippi Connections area and public actions should focus on retaining these public uses within the area.



Tools for City Actions

- The Community Development section of the Comprehensive Plan presents items that serve as a focus for city actions. These actions seek to achieve the vision for the future of Elk River in areas where market forces alone will not be sufficient. State Law provides a broad array of powers and tools that may assist the city in these initiatives. The following section provides a brief discussion of the tools currently available to the city. This information is designed as a point of reference in continued community development planning.

Finance Tools

Community development actions require a framework for financial decision-making. The investment of public dollars to achieve community development objectives should be guided by several key principles:

- Financial resources are limited. The City has limited funding to apply to community development initiatives, so the use of resources must be targeted to achieve the greatest effect on community needs.
- Financial decisions require a long-term perspective. The current use of financial resources may reduce monies available in the future. In evaluating short-term opportunities, it is important to question the long-term impact on community development.
- Public funds should lead to private investment. While this section focuses on public finance actions, the Comprehensive Plan cannot become reality without private investment. The use of public funds should be targeted to actions that encourage private investment in Elk River.

Tax Increment Financing

- Tax increment financing (TIF) is the primary development finance tool available to Minnesota cities (Minnesota Statutes, Sections 469.174 through 469.179). TIF is simple in concept, but complex in its application. Through tax increment financing, the property taxes created by new development (or redevelopment) are captured and used to finance activities needed to encourage the development. The challenge in using TIF lies with the complex and ever changing statutory limitations. The City has utilized TIF sparingly in the past, and it is expected that it will continue to do so in the future.

Tax Abatement

Tax abatement acts like a simpler and less powerful version of tax increment financing. With TIF, the city controls the entire property tax revenue from new development. Under the abatement statute (Minnesota Statutes, Sections 469.1812 through 469.1815), the City, County and School District have independent authority to grant tax abatement.

Special Assessments

Public improvements are often financed using the power to levy special assessments (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 429). A special assessment is a means for benefiting properties to pay for all or part of the costs associated with improvements, and to spread the impact over a period of years. This tool can be applied to both the construction of new improvements and the rehabilitation of existing improvements.

Utility Revenues

The City operates three municipal utilities: water, sanitary sewer and storm water. The revenues from the operation of these utilities are available to pay for capital improvements in support of community development initiatives. State Law (Minnesota Statutes, Section 444.075) gives the authority to pledge these revenues to general obligation bonds for utility system improvements.

Capital Improvement Bonds

Cities may issue capital improvement bonds (Minnesota Statute, Section 475.521) for specific purposes.

Microloans

The Microloan program provides low interest, long-term (i.e. greater than one year) loans as incentives to encourage the following:

- Industrial development that supports the tax base and brings quality jobs to the city
- Rehabilitation of existing buildings in the Central Business District
- Energy Efficiency improvements to businesses and manufacturers



Implementation

The following are broad implementation strategies reflecting the City's vision, specifically as it relates to community development.

- Set retention of existing businesses and industries as a priority of the City's economic development plan.
- Continue implementation of periodic BR&E meetings on an individual basis with businesses and industries to listen to concerns and discuss opportunities for success. Also identify any perceived or real barriers or obstacles (such as overly restrictive ordinances) that the City could potentially remove or minimize to help businesses and industries prosper, while still protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the public.
- Coordinate with Sherburne County, the Elk River Area Chamber of Commerce, Minnesota School of Business - Elk River Campus, the School District, GreaterMSP, and others in their efforts to promote training opportunities that can help businesses and industries prosper. If appropriate, co-sponsor and/or offer City facilities for employee training programs.
- Coordinate with energy providers and others to help businesses and industries conserve energy resources and reduce operating costs.
- Continue to promote Elk River's high quality of life as a means to help attract new businesses and industries.
- Encourage the development of new, value-added industries and businesses that can benefit from the area's amenities and existing industries.
- As appropriate, coordinate with the Elk River Area Chamber of Commerce, neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions, and others to promote Elk River and/or the area as a special destination area with unique shops and restaurants and diverse recreation activities and community events.
- Strive to identify under-utilized or under-served local and regional markets and give priority to local business development to service these markets.
- Coordinate with businesses and industries to explore opportunities for the City to stand out as a leader in sustainable business and community development.
- Analyze the long-term viability of existing and proposed neighborhood convenience nodes in the City. Where appropriate, work with property owners and neighbors to ensure continued success of neighborhood convenience uses in a manner that compliments the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Identify and implement strategies to enhance the infrastructure in a way that can help support residents telecommute or conduct business out of their home.
- Continue to promote and encourage the expansion of jobs and business growth within the city.



Introduction

Community image is a thread running through the entire Comprehensive Plan. Every chapter of the Plan deals, in some manner, with the face Elk River presents and the vision it holds for the future. The Comprehensive Plan seeks to establish and maintain a positive community image by:

- Creating an overall development pattern that is well designed and sustainable;
- Maintaining edges and buffers that define and protect adjacent land uses;
- Promoting a development pattern that properly blends the built and the natural environment;
- Sustaining livable neighborhoods and promoting pride in property and community;
- Creating and maintaining excellent systems of parks, trails, and open spaces throughout the community; and
- Providing community facilities that meet the needs of Elk River residents of today and tomorrow.



In addition to these key objectives of the Comprehensive Plan, certain aspects of community image merit additional attention. This Chapter of the Plan examines several specific aspects of community image for Elk River.

The focus of development and redevelopment in Elk River should focus on creating a community of connections, carefully designed places, sidewalk and trail connections, and green spaces and open spaces that are walkable and create opportunities to enhance the health and vitality of the community.

Image Issues and Opportunities

Various elements combine to form community image. In 2012, the City of Elk River underwent a community-wide branding process that resulted in the City's "Community Brand Compass & Brand Navigator". "Powered By Nature" brings the community brand to life in a powerful and compelling way.

In using the Comprehensive Plan as a tool to enhance image beyond the efforts of the branding plan, it is important to consider the issues that shape Elk River's image. The following questions help to frame planning related to image:

- What factors establish Elk River's identity?
- Should and/or how can the image of Elk River be improved in the minds of residents and non-residents?
- How can the sense of "place" be enhanced?
- Should neighborhoods be more clearly defined and identified?
- How can the entrances (or gateways) to Elk River be more clearly identified?
- Do the City, the business community, and School District market themselves effectively to existing and prospective residents (especially to families)?

The answers to these questions will help to guide public actions related to community image. Some of these issues are explored in greater detail in the sections to follow.

Public Investment

Investments in public buildings and infrastructure create the opportunity to define and enhance community image. The public investment in streets and the adjacent right-of-way can have significant impacts on community image. Elements to enhance the streetscape are key to creating a community image that people can relate to and enjoy. Planning improvements to the local street system create the opportunity to explore the use of these improvements to enhance image. This opportunity is critical, especially in areas such as the downtown. Improvements over the past several years within the downtown area have made strides to enhance the downtown area in terms of place-making and streetscaping, but continued support and dedication to this concept will be critical in the years to come.



Public buildings are an important component of community character as well. The reuse and enhancement of historic structures shape the face of the community and maintain that “small-town-feel” that residents and business owners alike have grown to love and expect in years to come. The reuse of existing properties with exceptional character provide a positive reflection of community heritage and values. The continued public use of the Handke School is a prime example of this approach and other similar opportunities should be encouraged in the future.

The park system offers another illustration of using public investment to enhance image. Parks create green space and natural settings in a built environment. Parks provide places for community to gather and play. They also provide tangible proof of Elk River’s commitment to quality of life. The Rivers Edge Commons is a great example of this type of amenity that adds to the image of the community.

Open Space/Greenways

The continued preservation and use of open space and natural features helps to maintain the “rural” or “small town” character of the community that has continuously been expressed as a top priority. The Parks, Trails, and Open Space chapter of the Plan discusses the creation of greenway corridors. These corridors help to create a place that blends the built and natural environment. Other open space initiatives seek to establish a stronger connection between the community and the River.



Signage

Both private and public signage plays a huge role in community image. Business signs are an important extension of commercial development as these signs announce the presence and location of their business. Without public guidance and key design standards, business signs can diminish the overall image of commercial or industrial districts and corridors. Local ordinances should seek a balance between private and public objectives. At a minimum, the size, quantity and appearance of signs should not detract from a positive community image. A better objective is to find ways of using these private investments to enhance the visual appeal of the area. Business interest will center on cost and effective communication.



Public signage is an important element of image as well. Directional and informational signage can reflect community image and heritage. These public improvements should be part of a broader plan for corridor enhancements. If corridors attempt to draw people into Elk River, signage must support this objective. Signage suggests that there are points of interest not immediately visible from the edge or gateway. Effective signage and consistent signage helps visitors navigate around the community.

Design Guidelines

With the completion of the Mississippi Connections Plan, further analysis of design guidelines for the downtown area is key to successful implementation of the Plan. Design guidelines help to preserve historic character and to promote a cohesive appearance. Design guidelines should also be considered as part of area development and redevelopment efforts throughout the community.



Downtown

One key facet of the Downtown land use and the implementation of the Mississippi Connections Plan is to build on the historical character of Elk River. The strategies for using the Downtown area to enhance the image of Elk River include:

- Focus on other redevelopment opportunities in this area;
- Continued enhancement of community orientation and public access to the River;
- Use community facilities to make this area a focal point of community life;
- Use consistent streetscape and signage to create a common identity;
- Maintain the area as a strong and distinct residential neighborhood; and
- Maintain the historic character of downtown.



Maintaining a balance between existing structures and redevelopment will be critical to ensure the character of the downtown is sustained.

Implementation

The following are statements that reflect strategies that are geared toward community image.

- Work with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to guide appropriate land uses near the boundaries of Elk River (both within the City and within the surrounding communities).
- Where feasible, coordinate with neighboring communities and Sherburne County to ensure compatibility between the various Comprehensive Plans, Subdivision Regulations, and Zoning Ordinances.
- Explore opportunities to coordinate with agencies to implement compatible standards relating to protection of natural and cultural resources.
- Promote the protection and enhancement of important historical and natural resources as a means to maintain the integrity, heritage and local character of the community.
- Continue implementation of the Mississippi Connections Plan and streetscaping enhancements throughout the entire city, in the downtown area in particular.
- Continue the implementation of the Community Brand Compass and Brand Navigator to establish and enhance the cohesive image for the entire community.
- Continue to support adaptive reuse of existing buildings where appropriate.
- Promote the development and implementation of a Comprehensive Plan that effectively and efficiently plans for land use, community facilities, transportation, housing, economic development, recreation and natural spaces and technological advancement for Elk River.
- Continue to support organizations that promote Elk River including the Elk River Area Chamber of Commerce.
- Create and maintain attractive gateways and entry points in the City. A key component of this will be to develop a plan to keep the City's gateways appealing by maintaining and enhancing lighting, signage, public art, landscaping and other features at the City entrances.
- Where appropriate, support and assist efforts to improve the appearance of commercial and industrial developments along major corridors within the City including along Hwy 169, Hwy 10, within the downtown, and at key entry points and industrial parks through the use of building rehabilitation, screening and enhanced landscaping and signage.
- Continue to work with properties that detract from the established community image goals by requiring compliance with all city codes through effective enforcement strategies.
- Continue to promote private reinvestment in Elk River. One way to accomplish this task is to provide assistance and information with regard to available programs that may assist property and business owners in building renovations, expansion, enhancement and beautification.
- Consider developing a plan or implementation tool that offers incentives for infill development and removal of substandard buildings or consolidation of land where feasible.
- Encourage volunteerism and participation in community activities and acceptance of City leadership positions. Ideally this will lead to increased and improved communication and interaction between City and residents, business and property owners, and other community members.





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