



PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, July 9, 2024 at 5:30 PM

Council Chambers, City Hall at 540 West Hills Circle

**Roll Call: Meier, Springer-Gasner, Rooks, Eickhoff,
Wilson, Peake, Effertz**

1. Planning Commission Agenda

1.a. Planning Commission Agenda - July 9, 2024

2. Roll Call: Meier, Springer-Gasner, Rooks, Eickhoff, Wilson, Peake, Effertz

3. Approval of Minutes

3.a. Planning Commission Minutes - June 25, 2024

4. Public Hearings

5. Downtown Parking Committee Requests

6. 2050 Comprehensive Plan

6.a. Stantec Presentation

7. Other Business

8. Next Meeting - July 9, 2024

9. Adjournment

Owatonna Planning Commission Agenda

Tuesday, July 9, 2024

5:30 PM

****Charles S. Crandall Center at West Hills****

Roll Call: Meier, Springer-Gasner, Rooks, Eickhoff, Wilson, Peake, Effertz

1. Approve minutes of the June 25, 2024 meeting
2. Public Hearings
 - A. None
3. Downtown Parking Committee Requests
 - A. None
4. 2050 Comprehensive Plan
 - A. Stantec Presentation
5. Other Business
 - A. Updates on Previous Items
6. Next Meeting – July 9, 2024
7. Adjourn

OWATONNA PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES FOR JUNE 25, 2024

The Owatonna Planning Commission met in regular session at 5:30 p.m. in the Charles S. Crandall Center – Chambers at City Hall with Chairperson Kelly Rooks conducting the meeting. Present at roll call were Commissioners Rachel Springer-Gasner, Kelly Rooks, John Eickhoff, Nick Peake, and David Effertz. Commissioners Mark Meier and Mark Wilson were absent. Community Development Manager Greg Kruschke, Planning Specialist Ashley Zidon, and Administrative Technician Kristen Kopp were also present.

A motion was made by Springer-Gasner and seconded by Eickhoff to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of June 11, 2024. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion carried.

Conditional Use No. CUP-13; which is a request by Matthew Kern, to allow for two self-storage buildings to be constructed on the subject properties located at 290 & 320 26th Street NW, as well as a minor PUD to change the proposed joint access and off street parking; was presented by Community Development Manager Greg Kruschke. (Refer to report on file.) Public hearing opened at 5:37 pm. Matthew Kern said he said he's seen the demand for these types of units in Owatonna. He already verbally has several units leased. He's trying to identify the right land for it and he designed it for this capacity. Peter Urberg, 196 Cedar Cove Lane NW, said he lives across the street. It looks like a good layout and said that Matt should be able to build a building of the same size as the existing storage building. He asked if it was appropriate to require foliage in his installation. Public hearing closed at 5:40 p.m. Springer-Gasner said it's a good use of space. A motion was made by Springer-Gasner and seconded by Peake to recommend City Council approval of CUP-13, a request to allow for two self-storage buildings to be constructed on the subject properties and a request to amend the minor PUD to change the proposed joint access and off street parking areas with the following conditions:

- 1) A masonry or stone wainscoting shall be added to the south elevation of the building to tie in with the other structures in the development.
- 2) A 5 foot setback shall be provided from the south property line to the back of curbing on the access drive.
- 3) Landscaping shall be installed on these lot as discussed in the report. A plan shall be submitted prior to a building permit being issued.
- 4) A Maintenance Agreement for existing stormwater BMP and accompanying access easements will be required prior to Grading Permit approval. No building permit will be issued until a stormwater management plan and grading permit are approved.
- 5) All retaining walls shall be located outside of the utility easements.
- 6) Trash shall be regularly picked up on site.
- 7) Exterior storage is not permitted.

All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion carried.

Community Development Manager Greg Kruschke gave an update on previous items. City Council approved the school district requests at their last meeting as well as the Habitat house. The Habitat board was able to meet with the concerned neighbor and work through most of their issues after the Planning Commission meeting. Cashman Addition No. 3 was approved as well.

A motion was made by Eickhoff to adjourn and seconded by Effertz at 5:43 p.m. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Greg Kruschke
Community Development Manager

IMAGINE OWATONNA

2050 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

July 2024

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PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The City of Owatonna's Comprehensive Plan is both a pragmatic, step by step action plan intended to accomplish specific outcomes and an aspirational vision for the community's future. Its implementation involves changes to official controls (like zoning and other codes and ordinances) and the allocation and prioritization of financial and human resources.

It is equally valuable as a guide to decision making when the City is faced with new challenges, opportunities and questions that weren't anticipated when the Plan was originally prepared. In this role, the Comprehensive Plan serves as a navigational tool to evaluate alternative decisions and determine which are best aligned with the community's vision.

The bedrock purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to protect public and private investment over time. It is the foundation of all land use policies, and it provides not only the rationale for the policies and actions, but also establishes the commitment to their enforcement. It is this clarity and commitment that supports investment. Once adopted, both the public and the private sector can make investments in reliance on the Comprehensive Plan.

Objectives

The Comprehensive Plan is meant to serve several purposes:

- Create a city-wide vision
- Establish a set of shared guiding values
- Assess data and trends affecting the entire community, including housing, economic development, redevelopment and mobility
- Provide a strong foundation for land use decisions (zoning changes, proposals for new development)
- Provide clear policy direction to make the city more accessible no matter how you travel (car, bike, walk)
- Create an implementation plan

How to Use this Plan

- **Vision and Guiding Values** – This section introduces the community's vision and guiding values and community input on which the vision and values were based. The rest of the recommendations and strategies in the plan support these vision and values.
- **Background Report.** The background report provides context and data for perspective on the current state of the city, and external trends affecting the city. This report is the basis for analysis that occurs in the subject-matter chapters, and is included as Appendix A.
- **What we Heard.** Engagement during the Comprehensive Plan process included topical focus groups, pop-ups at the high school, Downtown Thursday and the fair, in-person open houses and online information and surveys. Summaries of what we heard are included as Appendix B.
- **Subjects of interest:** Land Use and Housing, Parks and Trails, Economic Development, Transportation, Sustainability and Resilience, and Utilities. These chapters can be explored depending on the readers area(s) of interest. Each contains analysis, goals, and strategies for meeting the guiding values.
- **Implementation.** The implementation section provides information on how the plan can come to fruition, include prioritization of action items and assignment of responsibility. The implementation section also includes a decision-making matrix to assist the city in making decisions that align with the overall vision and guiding values.

VISION AND GUIDING VALUES

Vision 2050:

Owatonna is strategically located at the crossroads of I-35 and US 14 with opportunities for all. Residents and businesses thrive, with easy access to work, shopping, high quality education, and recreation. We are better together, welcoming and diverse, creating a quality of life unparalleled in Southern Minnesota.

Guiding Values

- Owatonna strives to be a community with opportunity for all to live happy, healthy, successful lives.
- Owatonna is both traditional and progressive, keeping its historic strengths and embracing new opportunities.
- Our city is innovative and supportive of its residents and businesses, helping all to succeed in Owatonna.
- Owatonna residents are determined and passionate about the city as a place to live, work and play.

WHAT WE HEARD

Engagement for the Comprehensive Plan was done in two phases. The first phase occurred in summer 2023 and focused on high-level visioning for what people would like to see the city accomplish over the next 20 years. This engagement informed the vision and guiding values above, as well as high-level topical goals for each section of this plan. Engagement activities included pop-ups at the high school, downtown Thursday and the Steele County Fair. Focus groups were conducted with several groups that can be harder to reach or with a special interest in the plan including businesses, nonprofits, the Hispanic and Somali communities, seniors, the alternative learning center and the park board. Additionally, information was shared on the city's website and input was solicited through surveys and comment boxes.

Phase 2 of public engagement occurred in Spring/Summer 2024 and focused on confirming the high-level vision, guiding values and goals for the plan. During this time, there were two open houses as well as online engagement and surveys.

Key themes of what we heard that informed this plan are included below. A full summary of what we heard is included as Appendix B.

Land Use

- Owatonna is a growing city and should continue to plan for growth in new areas of the city.
- The city has many natural amenities, such as the river where redevelopment could be prioritized. There is also an opportunity to redevelop the old high school site.
- Owatonna needs more places to shop, especially in small commercial nodes near neighborhoods. Residents appreciate the focus and momentum in downtown and would like this to continue, while retaining the city's history and character.
- Affordable housing and senior housing are key issues that need to be addressed in the comprehensive plan.

Housing

- A desire housing for all who want to live in Owatonna, but Owatonna is losing residents to other neighboring communities because people can't find a place to live here.
- Strong desire was expressed for more single-family owner-occupied housing.
- Awareness that apartments (especially in desirable locations like downtown) may be preferred by younger residents. Attracting and retaining young people was expressed in all focus sessions.
- Affordability of housing is a main issue within both the single-family and multi-family markets.
- Multigenerational and senior housing are also desired to serve all life stages and needs.

Parks and Trails

- People of all ages enjoy Owatonna's park system and see it as a selling point, especially enjoy the green space around Lake Kohlmeier, along the river, Kaplan Woods and Morehouse Park.
- It was highlighted that the park and trail network can bolster economic development, attracting businesses and employees.
- While there are trails connecting parks, there are some missing connections that would make the system safer and easier to utilize. Trail maintenance is also an issue that came up in many focus groups as something that the city could work to improve.
- Specific opportunities mentioned include more indoor spaces for year-round recreation, trail connections west of I-35 and a splash pad.

Economic Development

- Owatonna is one of the most business friendly cities in Southern Minnesota and should take advantage of this to attract a bigger workforce.
- Young people are key drivers for economic development, and the city should work to attract and retain a young workforce.
- Entrepreneurship is a strength; there is room to build on it with a business incubator program.
- Threats to Owatonna include the sentiment that the City is anti-growth. The consensus among the business community is that the city should continue to grow, but that Owatonna needs to plan its infrastructure and services for that growth. In order for the city to have the amenities that residents desire, its needs to grow.

Transportation/Mobility

- Road maintenance and connectivity were main concerns expressed by residents. A north-south connection on the east side is desired, although consensus on location has yet to be finalized
- East-west pedestrian connections were highlighted specifically, with focus on a connection to the industrial park.
- There is a desire for a connected trail system that is safe and accessible, expanded in all directions.
- The lack of transit, both within Owatonna and regionally, was brought up in most focus groups as an issue for the city and its partners to address.

Leadership/City Services

- Owatonna should embrace diversity as a strength and the city should strive for more inclusiveness – less divide and silos.
- Young people are very optimistic about the future of their city and believe that it will be inclusive, welcoming and be a land of opportunities.
- There is desire for a welcoming center, a hub for accessing services and communication.
- Residents feel that the city should strive to be more transparent in its decision making and communication, embrace partnerships and continue to make fiscally responsible decisions.

LAND USE, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DESIGN

Introduction

The key themes that emerged from the early engagement with the community on the Comprehensive Plan included the need for various housing types, the need for transit, the importance of parks and trails, supporting downtown development, and the desire for walkable neighborhoods other than the neighborhoods near downtown. These interrelated issues guide the Future Land Use Plan recommendations for Owatonna.

Land Use & Population Growth

Owatonna is projected to grow by about 8,000 population between 2022 and 2050 – from about 27,500 to 35,500 population. Household size has decreased statewide and in Owatonna in the last several decades from about 3.5 persons per household (p/HH) in the 1950s to about 2.5 p/HH in 2020. Assuming household size continues to decrease modestly to 2.4 p/HH we estimate that the added population will represent an additional 3,300 households or housing units by 2050.

The 2023 housing study by Maxfield Research & Consulting found a potential demand for new housing in Owatonna of about 1,500 units through 2030. Assuming growth slows in the decades beyond 2030 to 2050, or 1,800 more units in those two decades, the total of 3,300 units as estimated above is a reasonable estimate for the period 2024 to 2050.

The mix of housing type and density for these new housing units will determine how much land is needed for new residential development and which land use categories should be represented in the plan for this new development. The Maxfield study estimated the demand for new housing units would be about 19% for single family units, 23% for townhomes, and 57% for apartment units. These numbers are rounded below to 20%, 20%, and 60%, respectively, for low density, medium density, and high density residential, resulting in the following rough estimates of land needs for future residential development in Owatonna through 2050, assuming a total of 3,300 new units. The densities assumed are conservative overall gross densities and are lower than the target densities identified later in this plan:

<i>Housing Type</i>	<i>% of Units</i>	<i>Units</i>	<i>Density</i>	<i>Acres</i>
Low Density	20%	650	2.5 u/a	260
Medium Density	20%	650	8.0 u/a	80
High Density	60%	2,000	20 u/a	100
Total		3,300		440

Socio-Economic and Community Context

The Background Report for this Comprehensive Plan includes an analysis of socio-economic factors in Owatonna. That report includes analysis of past census information on population, race and ethnicity, age distribution, household characteristics, income, employment, and related information. There is also a market overview highlighting development since 2010, housing needs, and trends in office, industrial, and the housing markets.

Existing Land Use

Land use in Owatonna is characterized by the general categories illustrated on Figure 1.1, Existing Land Use and described in Table 1.1. The Existing Land Use Map shows how the land is used today, not how it is planned or zoned, or what can be developed on it. In most cases, the existing land use matches the zoning, but not in all cases.

Table 1.1 Existing Land Use Descriptions

	Existing Land Use	Description	Acres	Percent of Total
	Low Density Residential	Low Density residential consists of detached single-family homes, duplexes and townhomes at a density of about 6 units per acre. This land use category corresponds to the R-1, R-2 and R-3 zoning districts.	3456.2	36%
	High Density Residential	The High Density residential category includes multi-family residential uses, such as townhouses, apartments and condominiums in larger buildings, usually multi-story, typically at densities over 12 units per acres. This land use category corresponds to the R-4, R-5, R-6, and RB zoning districts.	92.3	0.9%
	Mobile / Manufactured Home	The Manufactured Home category includes the city's existing mobile home parks, corresponding to the Mobile Home Park & Manufactured Housing PUD zoning district. There are two existing mobile home parks in the city, Skyline Gardens on 3rd Avenue NW and Shady Acres on 24th Avenue NW.	137.3	1%
	Commercial	The Commercial land use category consists of commercial, office, and services business uses, including retail stores, restaurants, banks, hotels, business offices, clinics, and similar uses that cater to retail customers.	682.4	7%
	Industrial	The Industrial land use category includes both light and heavy industry, including manufacturing, processing, warehousing, storage, trucking, and handling of bulk materials. This land use category corresponds to the I-1, I-2, and I-P zoning districts.	1621.0	16.7%
	Public/Institutional	Public/Institutional includes schools, churches, and government buildings and facilities – such as the Steele County Fairgrounds. These uses almost all within one of the Residential zoning districts.	354.2	3.6%
	Park/Open Space	The Park/Open Space category consists of public parks, the Leo Rudolph Nature Reserve, city storm ponds, cemeteries, and other large open areas that have few if any buildings. Some of these properties are zoned Agriculture-Open Space district but some have other zoning designations.	980.5	10%
	Agriculture	The Agriculture designation is for areas outside the current city limits that are farmed or otherwise open, rural land. Being outside the city the township or county zoning would apply.	207.1	2.1%
	Airport	The Airport designation covers the Owatonna Degner Regional Airport, which is zoned I-1 Light Industry.	677.9	7%
	Right of Way	While not an official land use designation, a portion of the land within the city is held as right of way. There is right-of way that is owned and managed by the city, county and state.	1,524.1	15.7%
	Open Water	Open Water in the city includes the Straight River, Maple Creek, Lake Kohlmeier, and other larger lakes and streams. These water bodies are covered by various zoning districts and their land use acreage is encompassed mostly within the Parks/Open Space category.	-	-
		Total	9,733.0	100%

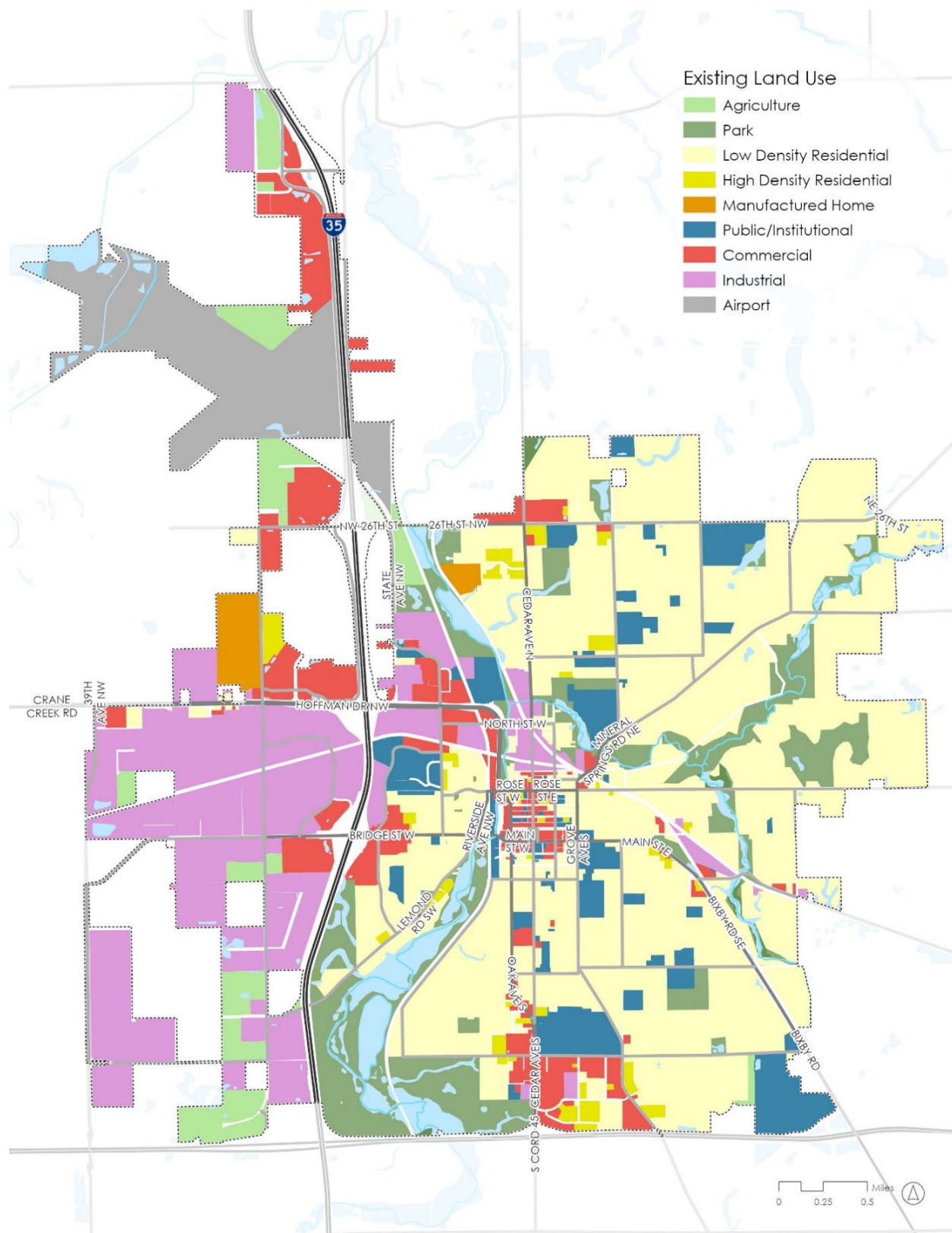


Figure 1.1 Existing Land Use
Source: City of Owatonna

Existing Land Use and Zoning Summary

Low Density Residential comprises much of the land in Owatonna, roughly 36 percent, nearly all of which is east of I-35. Most of this land is within the R-1 single-family residential zoning district, although there are areas allowing higher density housing as well, especially clustered around downtown. About 10 percent of the city is parks and trails, which support and provide an amenity for the residential areas.

Owatonna is a regional center for industrial businesses, which take advantage of its location at the intersection of I-35 and US Highway 14. Industrial land encompasses nearly 17 percent of the city, notably with two industrial parks west of I-35. There is additional industrial land further west of these industrial parks and north of Downtown. These areas represent a mix of industrial uses ranging from light to heavy industrial including manufacturing, processing, warehousing, storage, trucking, and handling of bulk materials. The city has three industrial zoning categories – Light Industrial (I-1), Heavy Industrial (I-2), Industrial Park (I-P) – which are encompassed by the Industrial existing land use category. Major employers include Viracon, Bosch, Jostens, Cabela's, Mills Fleet Farm, Lowe's and McQuay International (Daikin Industries).

Commercial land makes up about 7 percent of the city, with downtown serving as the hub of most of the local businesses and traditional retail. There are also highway commercial uses along the major roadways (I-35 and US-14) such as big box retail, hotels, gas stations and other service-oriented businesses. Additionally, the city has several commercial / industrial businesses, which are mainly located north of Downtown.

In the Comprehensive Plan, it will be important to examine how existing land use compares with current zoning. Understanding where the two are in conflict, especially where there are large areas of inconsistency can be one part of updating the future land use. The zoning categories in the city are listed in Table 1.2 and the map of zoning districts is shown in Figure 1.2.

Table 1.2 – Zoning District Descriptions

	Zoning Category	Description
	R-1, Single-Family Residential District	The R-1 District allows for low density single-family detached dwelling units. This district comprises the majority of the residential land area in the city.
	R-2, Medium Density Single-Family Residential District	The R-2 district allows for medium density single-family detached dwelling units
	R-3, Single- and Two-Family Residential District	The R-3 allows for low and moderate density one and two unit dwellings
	R-4, Townhouse District	The R-4 allows for townhouses or one and two unit dwellings
	R-5, Medium Density Residential District	The R-5 allows for medium density housing in multi-family structures up to 12 units
	R-6, High Density Residential District	The R-6 allows for high density housing in multi family structures over 12 units
	R-B, Residential-Business District	The R-B allows for high density housing and for the transition from residential uses to low intensity businesses, allowing for mixed use areas.
	B-1, Neighborhood Business District	The B-1 provides for office, service-oriented retail and goods and services that are intended to serve the surrounding neighborhood, not the entire city and beyond
	B-2, Community Business District	The B-2 provides for medium density retail providing goods and services for the entire city and region. This district includes larger retailers and other services that benefit from proximity to high traffic volumes.
	B-3, Central Business District	The B-3 provides for a centralized concentration of complementary retail uses in the downtown area.
	I-1, Light Industrial District	The I-1 provides for warehousing and light industrial uses
	I-2, Heavy Industrial District	The I-2 provides for heavy industrial and manufacturing which requires isolation from residential or commercial uses
	I-P, Industrial Park District	The I-P provides for industrial development compatible with surrounding uses with adequate open space, landscaping and parking spaces. Development is limited to administrative, wholesaling, manufacturing and related uses
	A-O, Agriculture-Open Space District	The A-O district retains area in the city for open space and agricultural uses
	FP, Floodplain District	The FP protects and preserves land within the floodplain and limits losses due to flooding. Development within this district is limited.
	PUD, Planned Unit Development District	The PUD district allows for groupings of parcels to be developed in an integrated coordinated manner. There is greater flexibility in site design within a PUD district.
	MH, Mobile Home Park	The MH district provides a dedicated area for manufactured and mobile homes.

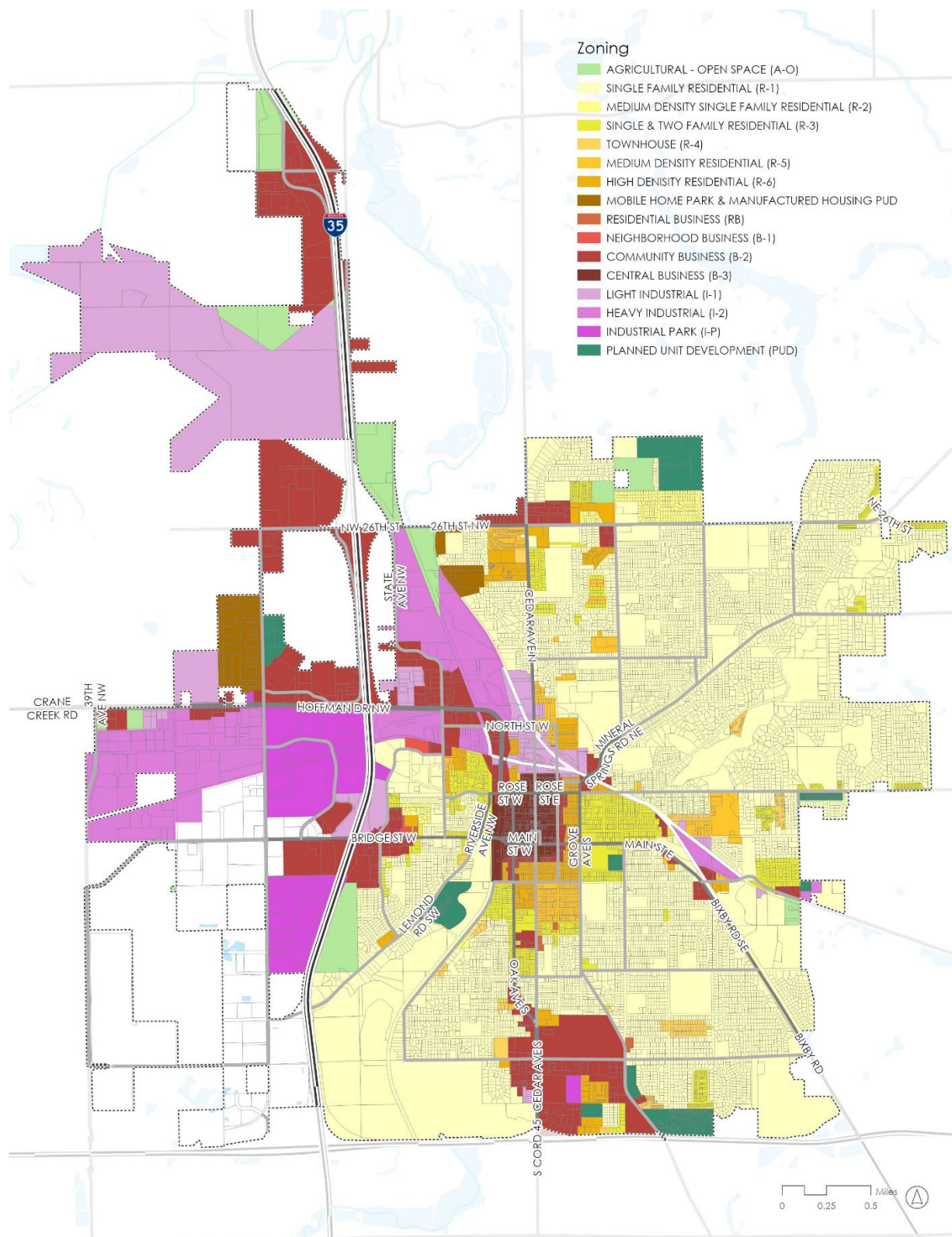


Figure 1.21 Existing Zoning

Current Trends and Opportunities

There are several land use trends that the city could consider as it begins to create a future land use map. These trends are explained below in relation to current city practice for land use.

- Currently the City of Owatonna represents areas with a mix of housing and commercial as Residential Business within the zoning code and Commercial in existing land use. Based on demographic shifts, more and more people are choosing to live in neighborhoods where they can easily walk to do their daily errands. This trend has led to a demand for areas with either a horizontal or vertical mix of uses, which many cities have designated as mixed use. This category could be applied in the downtown, and any other locations that the city envisions having a mix of uses.
- Currently, the city has three future land use categories for residential uses – low density residential, high density residential and mobile/manufactured homes. To attract a range of housing options and to be more consistent with zoning, the city could add a medium density residential category. The medium density residential category could represent the R-3 and R-4 zoning districts that do not fit well into the existing categories. Designating areas for different types of housing, especially missing middle housing, with clear development guidance can help the city to attract more housing options.
- The form of sites and buildings is becoming just as important as the function, or land uses. Incorporating design criteria can aide new development to fit into the character and context of the existing community. Clear development standards can also make it easier for developers to build in the community.
- Owatonna now has one commercial future land use category, where many cities have multiple representing different types of commercial development.
- Comprehensive Plans in growing cities such as Owatonna generally will consider growth areas where the city could expand within the next 20 years. This is something that could be included and planned for in a future land use map.
- The future land use map should consider the future of agricultural land within the current city boundary. Many cities are choosing to guide this land for other uses to take advantage of existing and nearby city services.
- Owatonna has good momentum in downtown with the Downtown Streetscape Project. There is an opportunity to build on this momentum through the Comprehensive Plan by carefully planning the desired future land uses. The Comprehensive Plan could also include goals related to community design, downtown economic vitality and placemaking.
- The City has an opportunity to prioritize revitalization of the Straight River through redevelopment and river cleanup. Best practices on infill and redevelopment can be found in Appendix C.

Land Use Goals

Goal 1. Provide community facilities that meet the needs of residents and visitors today and into the future.

- a) Analyze the need for new or reimagined community facilities in Owatonna, prioritizing community engagement to understand the needs of the community.
- b) Explore developing a regional destination community center to include an indoor swimming pool, indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, meeting rooms, and other integrated uses.
- c) Explore developing other community facilities in coordination with other city departments and the Chamber of Commerce such as a tourism or welcome center, sports complex and public safety center.

Goal 2. Improve housing opportunities and neighborhoods in Owatonna.

- a) Provide areas for a mix of housing densities and types throughout the City.
- b) Identify and zone new neighborhoods and neighborhood nodes on the east side of the City to include commercial and high density housing to serve as focal points for new development.
- c) Encourage mixed use development at key nodes throughout the City to encourage walkability and community character.
- d) Create a mixed use node near the new Owatonna Senior High School in southeast Owatonna to include commercial and high density residential uses.
- e) Continue to explore growth opportunities outside current city limits to expand housing and commercial opportunities.

Goal 3. Support Owatonna's economic development through land use plans and policies.

- a) Continue to invest in and support downtown Owatonna as the economic and social center of the City – a destination to live, work, and play.
- b) Explore mixed use development along the Straight River and connections to the river as an amenity and resource.
- c) Continue to build on Owatonna's historic buildings and character in land use and development decisions.
- d) Explore adding residential, mixed use, and open space areas to the industrial park area along with improved connections to the rest of Owatonna.
- e) Pursue pad-ready commercial and industrial sites as a tool to attract new development.

Housing Goals

Goal 1. Provide an appropriate mix of housing types in Owatonna.

- a) Explore programs and opportunities to develop a range of affordable housing in Owatonna.
- b) Explore programs and opportunities to develop senior housing in Owatonna, both independent and assisted living.
- c) Develop policies and programs to ensure that the City's existing housing stock is safe, attractive, and well-maintained.
- d) Maintain and enhance policies and programs to license and regulate rental housing in the City.
- e) Encourage and support sustainable and climate resilient design in new and existing housing.
- f) Update the City's housing market study regularly to understand the evolving housing needs in Owatonna.

Goal 2. Guide residential land use in appropriate locations in the City.

- a) Encourage new housing development in and near downtown Owatonna.
- b) Encourage a mix of housing opportunities in southeast Owatonna near the new high school.
- c) Support multi-family residential in areas with proximity to major thoroughfares, commercial areas, open space or other amenities, or in areas that are an extension of existing multi-family use.
- d) Require street and sidewalk/trail connections among all new and existing housing developments wherever possible.
- e) Support annexation of land when there is less than a five-year supply of lots based on recent land consumption or if there are other benefits to the City for annexation.

Walkable Neighborhoods

Walkable neighborhoods are those in which there are goods and services available within 1/4 to 1/2 mile of people's homes, the distance most people will walk or bike for many routine trips, and suitable sidewalks or trails. Within that radius, the rule of thumb is to aim for an average of 10 units/acre for residential development to support the neighborhood commercial uses, typically in mixed-use settings. Walkable neighborhoods are shown to be more valuable in the real estate market, promote healthier active lifestyles, and have less impact on the environment due to less driving. There are social benefits as well from interacting with more people in daily activities, which is more likely in walkable neighborhoods than in places where most trips are done by car. There are economic, health, environmental, and social benefits to creating and maintaining walkable neighborhoods.

An illustration of how walkable a city is can be found on the Walk Score® website, a tool that uses Google Maps to analyze areas of a city to show a "walk score" ranging from green to yellow to orange to gray (very walkable to not walkable). A score of 25 to 100 is assigned to walkability. Owatonna's current overall score is just 25, but some of the City's neighborhoods are green and yellow, with much higher Walk Scores. Owatonna's Walk Score map is shown on the next page with four potential future mixed use nodes at the east and west edges of the City. Owatonna's existing walkable neighborhoods are, not surprisingly, in the core of the City near downtown and in two areas north and south of downtown. Adding the four new mixed use nodes illustrated on the map would help meet the goal of promoting the health and wellbeing of the community, as well as adding to the character of these places. Adding mixed use nodes closer in, in existing neighborhoods just outside downtown, is not possible since it would involve taking out existing homes to develop new mixed use areas. The four nodes mixed use suggested are on currently vacant property. These nodes are illustrated in more detail on the following pages and reflected in the Future Land Use Plan map later in this chapter.

Each of the four nodes includes a central area designated Mixed Use. These areas can be commercial, high density residential, or a mix, either vertically or horizontally. The intent is to create a critical mass of people and activities that will lend itself to walking and biking to neighborhood destinations rather than always driving. The standards for what is allowed and encouraged in the Mixed Use areas will be detailed later in the zoning ordinance. Adjacent to the Mixed Use nodes are areas of high density residential, medium density residential, and low density residential, shown as HR, MR, and LR, respectively. Also shown are generalized locations for future parks, suggesting a park of some kind should be in or near the Mixed Use nodes, the location and facilities for each to be decided in future discussions.

The mixed use nodes are illustrated as generalized land use patterns, which can be refined in discussions at the City level, with developers and property owners, and ultimately as a new Mixed Use zoning district.

Examples of mixed use neighborhoods that have been developed in recent years in the Twin Cities suburbs of Burnsville, Maple Grove, and Golden Valley are included on the next page. There are many different examples and styles of mixed use development and redevelopment, but these show some real world examples of how neighborhood nodes like this have taken shape in Minnesota communities.

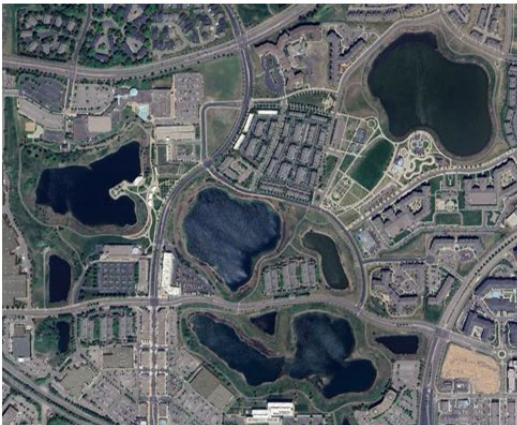
Mixed use zoning typically utilizes a form-based code (FBC) to shape the form, or shape and design of development, not just the uses. Often the zoning requires a mix of at least 10% commercial uses integrated with the residential uses. A new Mixed Use district might be a combination, replacing the current RB Residential Business and B-1 Neighborhood Business districts.

Mixed Use Examples

Burnsville - Heart of the City



Maple Grove – Arbor Lakes



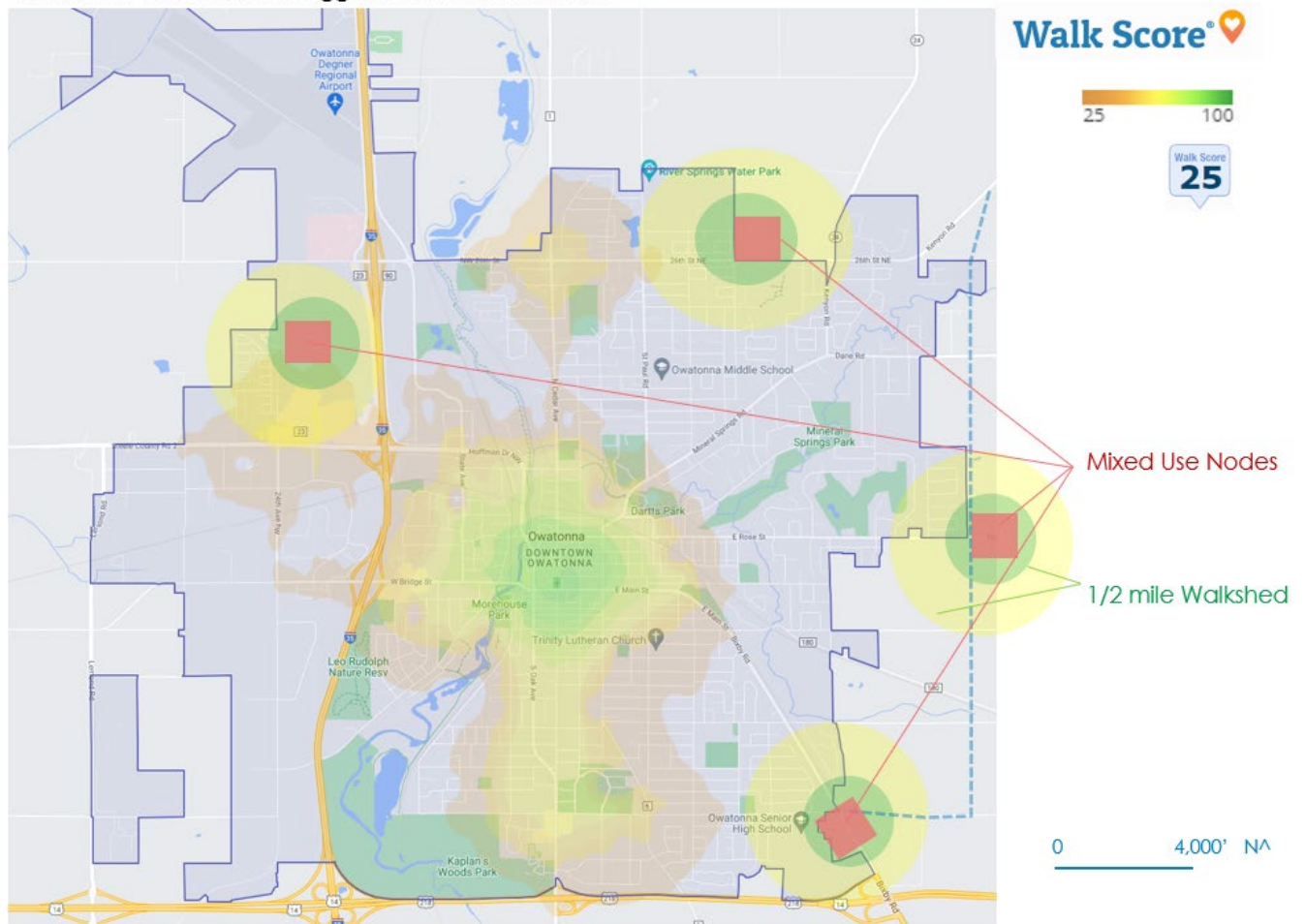
Golden Valley – Downtown



Proposed Owatonna Mixed Use Nodes

- **Mixed Use Node #1** is on the north side of 26th Street at Hemlock Avenue. This includes the recently proposed Mineral Springs residential PUD (planned unit development) as well as mostly vacant land east to Kenyon Road. The mixed use area would include neighborhood commercial uses serving new development and existing residential south of 26th Street, but would not be required to have residential in the Mixed Use area.
- **Mixed Use Node #2** is on Rose Street centered on the future East Side Corridor. The area includes a future school site which might be connected to a future park. Mixed use development east of the East Side Corridor would serve mostly new development but also existing residential areas on County View Avenue, Greenhaven Lane, and other nearby neighborhoods.
- **Mixed Use Node #3** would be developed along SE 18th Street on either side of Bixby Road near the new Owatonna High School. Future East Side Corridor would intersect the eastern edge of this node. The high school is a major destination and this node is also near the interchange with US Highway 14 and Bixby Road, suggesting that this mixed use area could be larger than in the other nodes and possible all commercial, with a potentially higher concentration of multi-family housing nearby.
- **Mixed Use Node #4** is at 24th Avenue and 18th Street NW, adding a mixed residential-commercial component to the commercial area north of Wal Mart and Kohl's, adding to the existing manufactured home park west of 24th Avenue and the proposed apartment in the SE quadrant of 24th Avenue and 18th Street NW. This node reflects the importance of establishing a residential neighborhood in the northwest part of the City which could thrive as an attractive neighborhood of its own in an area that is now dominated by large commercial uses.

Owatonna Walk Score & Suggested Mixed Use Nodes

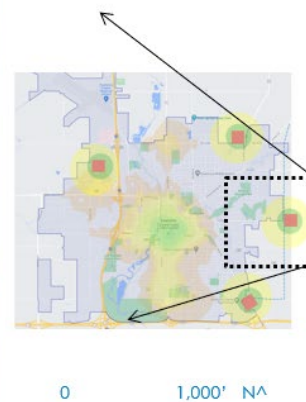




Owatonna
Comp Plan
**Mixed Use
Neighborhood
Node #1**
26th Street NE &
Hemlock Avenue



Owatonna
Comp Plan
**Mixed Use
Neighborhood
Node #2**
Rose Street & Future
East Side Corridor

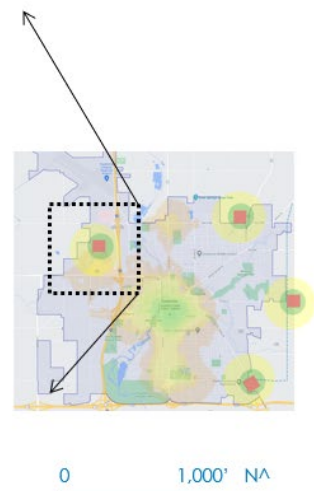




Owatonna
Comp Plan
**Mixed Use
Neighborhood
Node #3**
SE 18th Street & Bixby
Road



Owatonna
Comp Plan
**Mixed Use
Neighborhood
Node #4**
24th Ave NW
& 18th Street NW



Downtown

Downtown Owatonna is the center of the community and the hub of social and economic activity. It is essential that downtown retain its vital place in the community. The City undertook a Downtown Streetscape Study (WSB, 2019) which outlined a number of goals and improvements for the downtown. That study serves as a guide for preserving and enhancing downtown Owatonna. Many of the goals of that study are included in the draft Downtown goals below and several of the plan recommendations are excerpted on the following pages.

A key to the success of Downtown will be housing, to have permanent residents to support business and activity downtown. Having residents downtown means there need to be amenities – parks and open space, trails, businesses and services to meet daily needs, enhanced streetscape and other improvements. Details like ADA ramps at all intersections, sidewalks and streets in good repair, and aesthetic improvements – continuing the work of the earlier Downtown Streetscape Study – are all important to make Downtown livable and successful.

The Straight River is an asset and amenity for Downtown Owatonna that should be exploited to the fullest – make connections to the river and across it where possible, develop parks and open spaces along the river for employees and residents, explore ways to preserve and enhance the natural character of the river corridor.

Addressing the change in downtown work habits post-pandemic will also be important. With many people working at home or only parttime in office settings, it will be important to assess realistically the work environment Downtown and address the challenges and opportunities.

Downtown Goals

Goal 1. Continue to promote Downtown Owatonna as the social, economic, and cultural hub of the region.

- a) Encourage new and redeveloped housing opportunities in and near downtown.
- b) Prioritize revitalization of the riverfront through cleanup activities and redevelopment.
- c) Explore opportunities to use underutilized spaces in downtown, maintaining active spaces on ground-level and more passive spaces on the upper level.

Goal 2. Continue to implement the Downtown Streetscape Study.

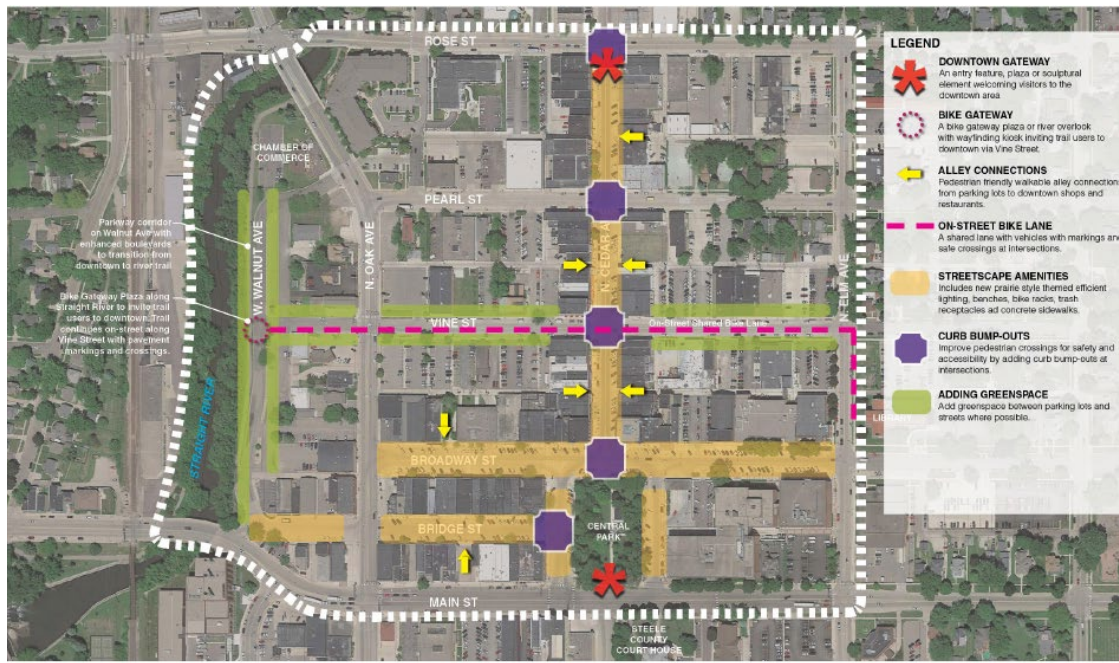
- a) Improve circulation and access throughout downtown for pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles.
- a) Maintain and enhance accessibility and pedestrian safety.
- b) Provide new and maintain existing amenities such as street lighting and street furniture in downtown.
- c) Incorporate art and placemaking into plans for downtown streetscaping.

Goal 3. Continue to work with partners and stakeholders to promote and enhance business opportunities and activity in the downtown area.

Goal 4. Continue to preserve the Downtown Historic District

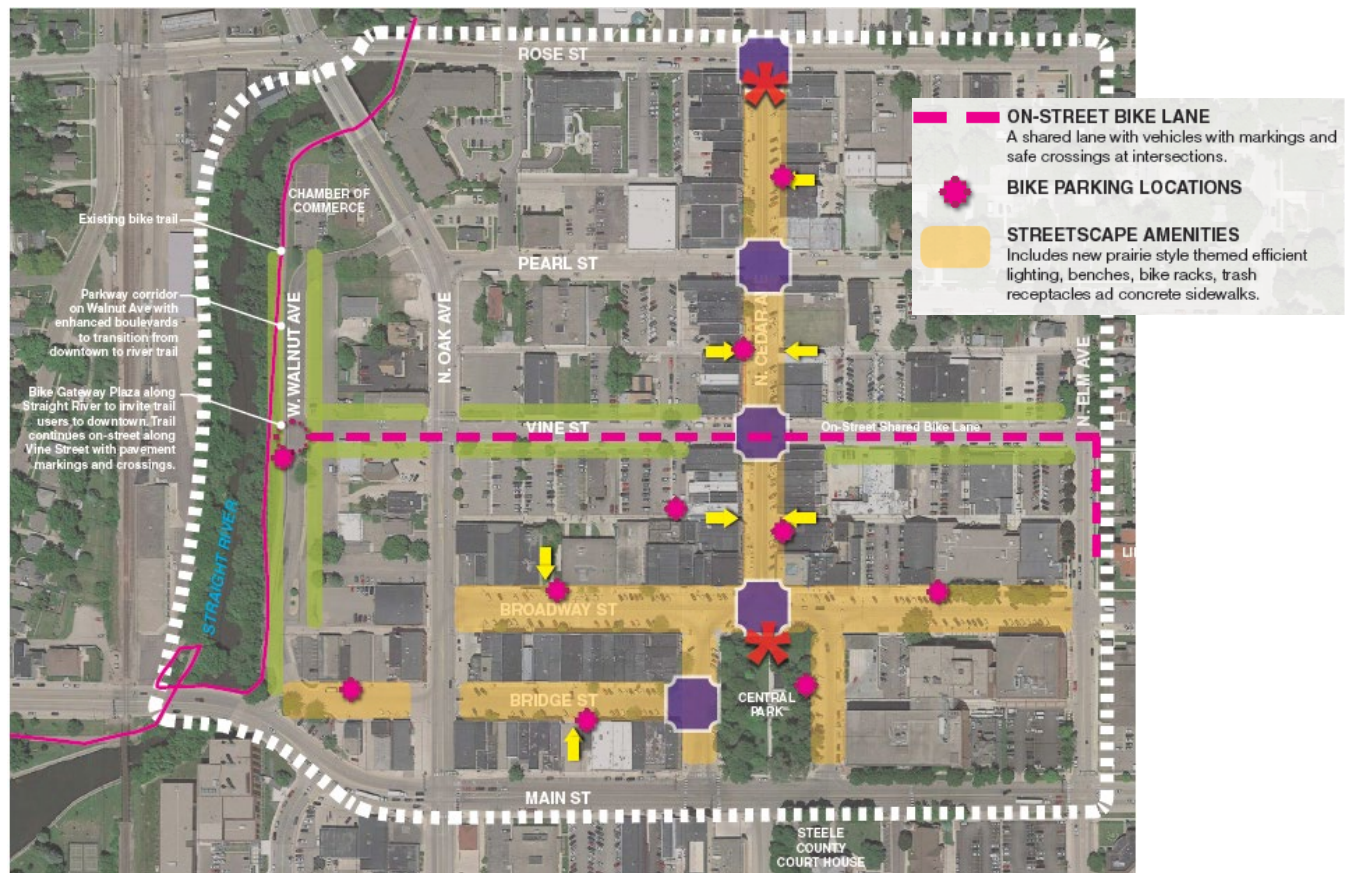
Goal 5. Continue to explore connections to and across the Straight River downtown and development on the riverfront as an amenity for Downtown.

DOWNTOWN STREETSCAPE PLAN (WSB, 2019)



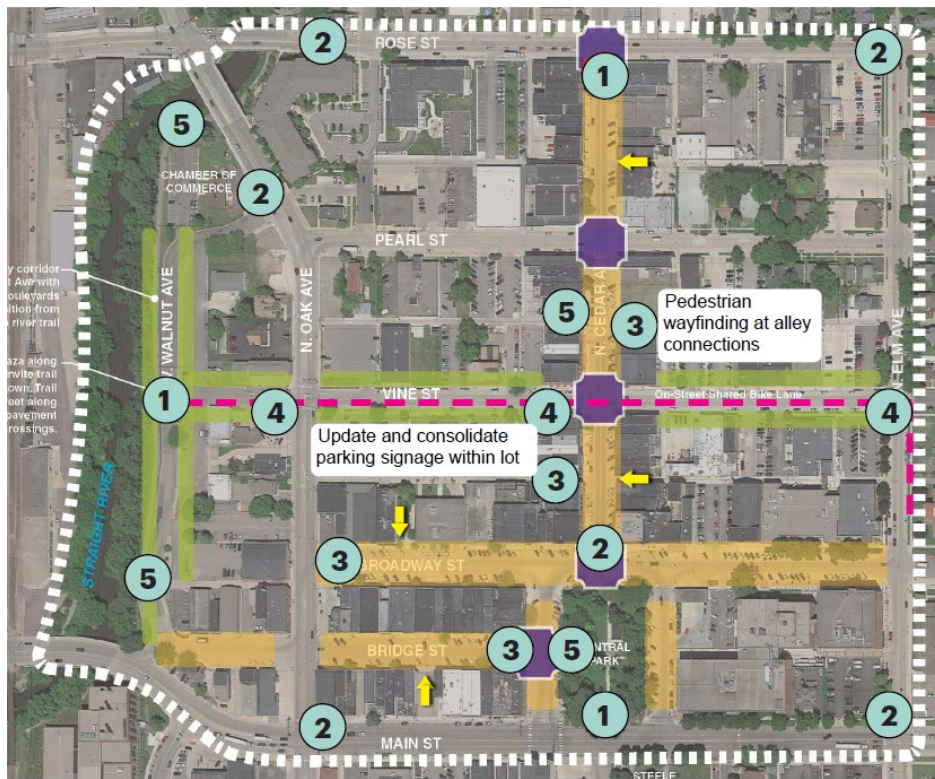
DOWNTOWN STREETSCAPE PLAN

DOWNTOWN BIKE PARKING (WSB, 2019)



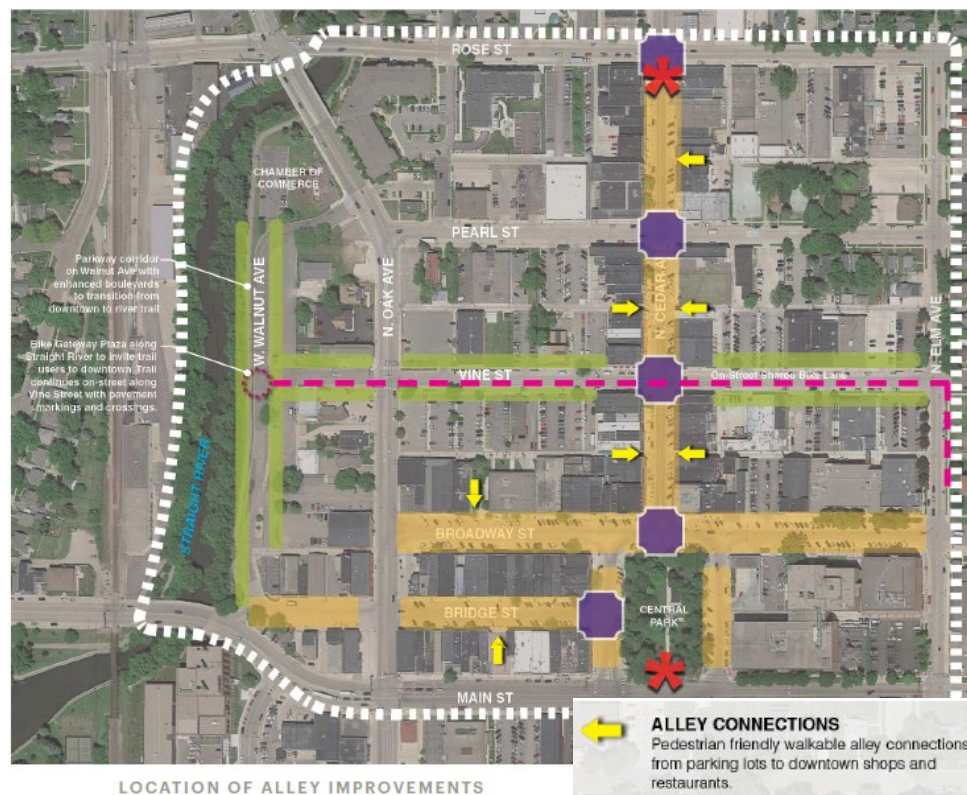
BIKE PARKING - LOCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

DOWNTOWN WAYFINDING SIGNAGE (WSB, 2019)



WAYFINDING SIGNAGE - LOCATION MAP

DOWNTOWN ALLEY IMPROVEMENTS (WSB, 2019)



Community Design

Community design encompasses not only aesthetic elements, but also the basic arrangements and functioning of the built environment. The relationships between buildings, building entrances, roadways, sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, and other features all combine to create the community character. Areas with well-designed, coordinated elements are generally more popular, better cared for, and more valuable than those with less attention to design. The aesthetic character of a community is important along with the basic land use, economic, and engineering framework. Design impacts not only aesthetics and the senses, but also the economic vitality of a community. A well-designed community is more attractive in the economic marketplace and enhances the quality of life for its residents. There may also be health impacts – if a given neighborhood is more attractive to pedestrians and bikers it will encourage walking and biking, with proportional improvements to health. To this end the community can adopt design standards and regulations relating to various aspects of the building environment. These can include:

- Placement of buildings and parking
- Building materials
- Building façade and roof treatment
- Location of entrances and windows
- Landscaping and buffering
- Lighting, streetscape furniture and accessories

A well-developed set of community standards would first identify the various character areas or districts to which various design guidelines apply. In Owatonna, these districts might include:

- Downtown
- North Downtown (transitional commercial-industrial area)
- Residential neighborhoods
- Mixed Use Nodes
- Commercial areas
- Industrial Park area

Community Design Goals

Goal 1. Identify character districts in Owatonna for development of design guidelines.

- a) In Downtown and Mixed Use nodes require placement of building close to the street, with sidewalks serving development and parking to the side and rear.
- a) Develop minimum building materials standards within the zoning code to maintain and enhance the community character, appropriate to various character districts.
- b) Develop minimum design standards related to building façade, roof treatment, landscaping, lighting and other features in the various character districts.
- c) Develop design guidelines for the downtown area, requiring continuity in the design and scale of development, consistent with the historic character of the area.

Goal 2. Prioritize pedestrian and bike access in all new development and redevelopment projects to provide continuity and choice in access to all parts of the City.

Land Use Categories

Table 1.3 shows the Future land use designations on the Future Land Use map in Figure 1.3.

Table 1.3 – Future Land Use Designations

	Future Land Use Category	Description
	Agriculture	Crop land, pasture, farming operations.
	Park/Open Space	Public park land, ballfields, recreational facilities, natural areas, public open space.
	Low Density Residential	Low density single-family detached and two-family dwellings up to 6 units/acre net.
	Medium Density Residential	Residential dwellings up to 8-unit structures, including twin homes, manufactured homes, quads, and townhouses up to 15 units/acre net.
	High Density Residential	Residential dwellings including apartments, condominiums, and congregate care up to 40 units/acre net.
	Mixed Use	Commercial, retail, service and similar uses, plus residential up to 40 units/acre net, mixed either vertically or horizontally.
	Commercial	Office, retail, and service uses serving the public.
	Central Business District	Commercial, retail, office, service, public, semi-public, and high density uses in the downtown area.
	Transitional	Office, commercial, industrial, warehousing, and related uses in areas adjacent to the downtown area.
	Industrial	Office, warehouse, manufacturing and related uses.
	Public/Institutional	Public and semi-public uses such as government buildings, schools, places of worship, and non-profit organizations.
	Airport	Owatonna Municipal Airport and associated land and buildings. The Future Land Use map also shows the safety zones within which development is limited.

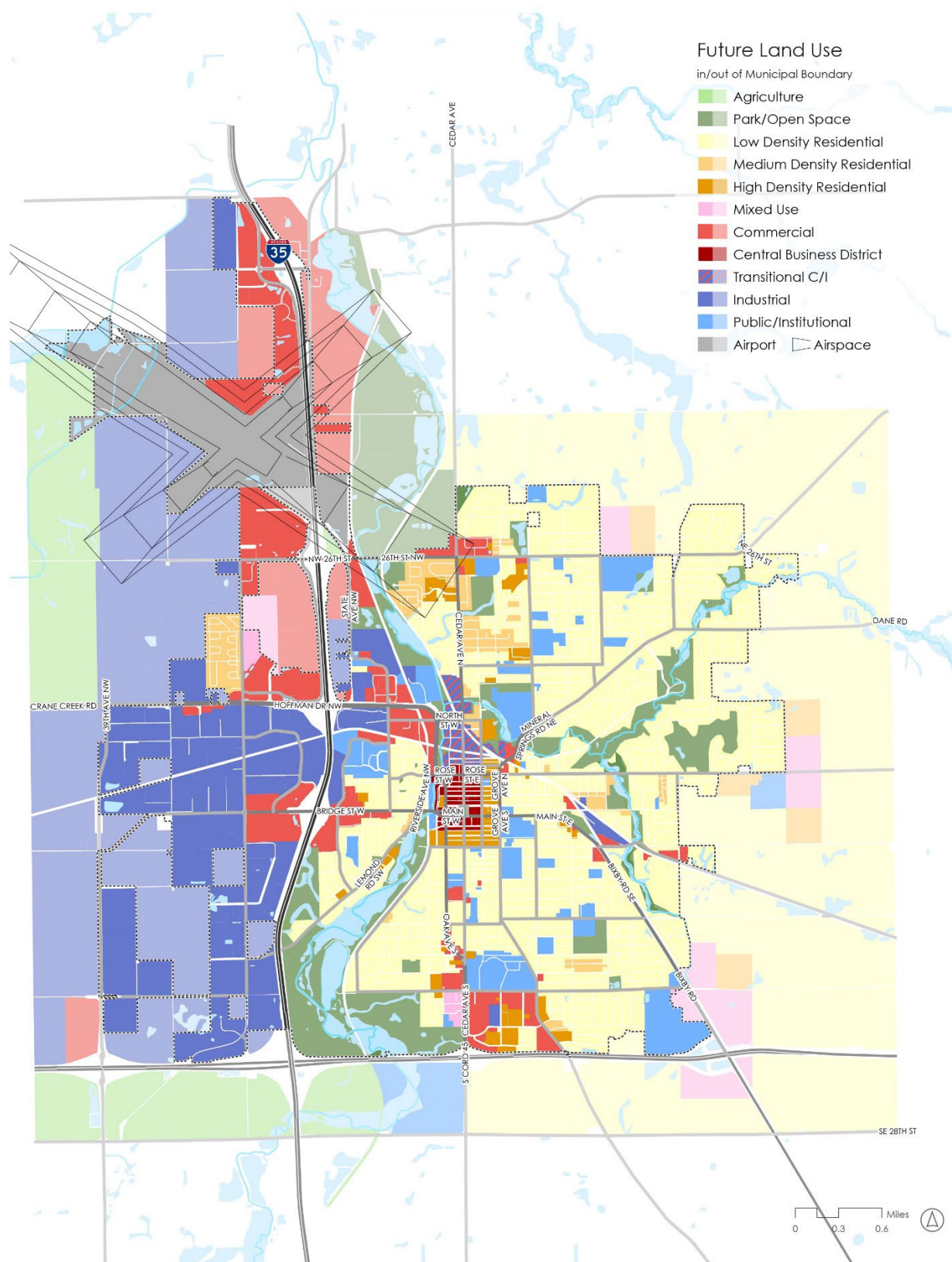


Figure 1.3 – Future Land Use Map

PARKS, TRAILS AND RECREATION

Introduction

The open space system in any city, including Owatonna, is a significant driver for where residents purchase homes and how amenity-rich they find their neighborhoods. Access to parks, open space, and recreation has a direct impact on quality of life. Positive neighborhood impacts and development of parks and park programs that support neighborhoods should be a driving force for new parks, facilities, maintenance priorities, and culturally specific programming.

During this comprehensive planning process, one of the most beloved parts of Owatonna identified over and over was the park and trail system. This is a significant reason residents call Owatonna home, which means it needs to be equally cared for and expanded so all residents have access to these rich amenities.

This chapter highlights the city’s adopted *Parks and Trails System Master Plan* (2020), which was the first stand-alone parks and trails plan completed for the city. The plan conducted a needs assessment, detailed the existing parks and trails systems, and proposed an implementation action plan. The goals and new park/trail recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan were developed based on the 2020 *Parks and Trails System Master Plan*, as well as public input and growth analysis conducted during the Comprehensive Plan process.

Existing Conditions

Parks

Overall, the park system is comprised of 33 parks, totaling 575 acres. The recreation system features 11 playgrounds, 5 basketball courts and 13 baseball/softball fields, 4 multipurpose fields, 7 outdoor tennis courts, and an outdoor ice rink. A couple gaps identified in the 2020 *Parks and Trails System Master Plan* include the need for a community athletic complex as Owatonna grows in population, an indoor multi-purpose recreation space, and another community park. A need was also identified for additional park space in the south-eastern portion of the city.

The city’s 33 parks are categorized as follows: Regional Park (1), Community Park (5), Community Athletic Complex (1), Neighborhood Park (5), Mini Park (4), Nature Preserve (1), Special Use Park (6), Urban Plaza Park (1), Undeveloped or Future Park (9). Owatonna’s parks and their classifications are shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Existing Parks

Park	Classification	Size (Acres)
Archery Park	Special Use Park	2.4
Brooktree Golf Course	Special Use Park	128.42
Brown Park	Neighborhood Park	6.77
Buecksler Park	Mini Park	4.75
Cashman Park	Neighborhood Park	18.43
Central Park	Urban Plaza Park	1.52
Countryview Park	Undeveloped / Future Mini Park	0.68
Crocus Park	Mini Park	0.45
Dartts Park	Community Park	22.7
Fairgrounds Park	Community Park	15.5
Falkland Meadow	Undeveloped	7.38
Fremont Park	Undeveloped	0.27
Hamman park	Undeveloped	10.5
Hazel Park	Undeveloped	0.31
Jaycee Park	Neighborhood Park	8.68
Kaplan's Woods Park	Regional Park	225
Kriesel Park	Undeveloped	19.76
Kriesel's Woods Park	Undeveloped	9.94
Lake Chase Park	Special Use Park	14.59
Leo Rudolph Nature Preserve	Nature Preserve	58.09
Manthey Park	Community Park	29.67
Maple Creek Park	Neighborhood Park	20.9
Mineral Springs Park	Community Park	42.57
Morehouse Park	Community Park	27.71
Daikin Soccer Complex	Community Athletic Complex	6.5
Nass Woods	Undeveloped	13.75
North Bluff Park	Mini Park	0.41
North Straight River Parkway	Undeveloped	41.59
River Springs Water Park	Special Use Park	9.97
Sid Kinyon Courts	Special Use Park	0.8
Summer Park	Undeveloped	7.9
Walter H. Gainey Park	Neighborhood Park	3.09
West Hills Park	Special Use Park	38.75
Willow Park		0.35
	Total Park System	575 Acres

Source: Parks and Trails System Master Plan

Trails

Owatonna has several existing trails that connect its park system, as well as internal trails in many of its larger parks. The highlight of the system is the north-south greenway corridor along the Straight River and an east-west trail greenway generally following along Maple Creek to the city's eastern boundary. The city's trail system consists of several different types of trails, including of 12 miles of mixed use trails. The key multi-use trail segments are summarized in Table 2.2 below. The city also has over 60 miles of sidewalks, which provide additional walking opportunities throughout the city.

Table 2.2 Existing Trails

Trail	Location	Length	Connections
Buxton Trail	From Elm Avenue NE to Dane Road	2.5 miles	Dartts Park, Brooktree Gold Course, Mineral Spring Park
18th Street Trail	From Mosher Avenue to Linn Avenue	.55 miles	Kaplan's Woods
Muckle Trail	From Bridge Street to North Street	1.5 miles	Morehouse park, Kaplan's Woods Parkway
Kaplan's Woods Parkway	From Kaplan's Woods to Bridge Street	1.5 miles	Morehouse Park, Kaplan's Woods
Cashman Crossing	Over the Straight River, south of Morehouse Park	200 feet (Pedestrian Bridge)	Connects Kaplan's woods Parkway Trail on the east side of Walter H. Gainey Park
26th Street Trail	Along 26 th St NE from Cashman Park to Kenyon Road	2 miles	East-west connection between North Straight River Trail and Buxton Trail Corridor
North Straight River Parkway	Along the Straight River from the Muckle Trail Corridor to 26 th Street	1.8 miles	Combination of Lange Woods Trail and Ihlenfeld/Wildung Trail

Source: Parks and Trails System Master Plan

In addition to the trails above, the city also maintains groomed cross country ski trails within Brooktree Golf Course and along Kaplans Woods Parkway during the winter months. Another city owned recreational opportunity are the hiking and mountain bike trails within Kaplans Woods Park. There are also a variety of planned sidewalks and trails, which date back to a 2012 Sidewalks and Trails Plan. The defining feature of this plan is a trail loop around the city, which would also connect to existing parks and trails. The existing and previously planned trails and are shown in Figure 2.1.

Other recreational amenities

The *Parks and Trails System Master Plan* identifies the following non-city, private, and nearby recreational amenities:

- Owatonna County Club: private golf club with a swimming/wading pool and fitness center.
- Christian Family Church partners with Owatonna's Pickleball Association and hosts games and tournaments.
- Steele County Fairgrounds and Four Seasons Center: The annual County Fair is held here; The Four Seasons Center hosts hockey tournaments.
- Nearby Amenities outside city limits:
 - Reptile and Amphibian Discovery Zoo
 - Havana Hills: par 3 golf course and driving range
 - Minnesota State Parks: Rice Lake State Park and Somerset Wildlife Management Area

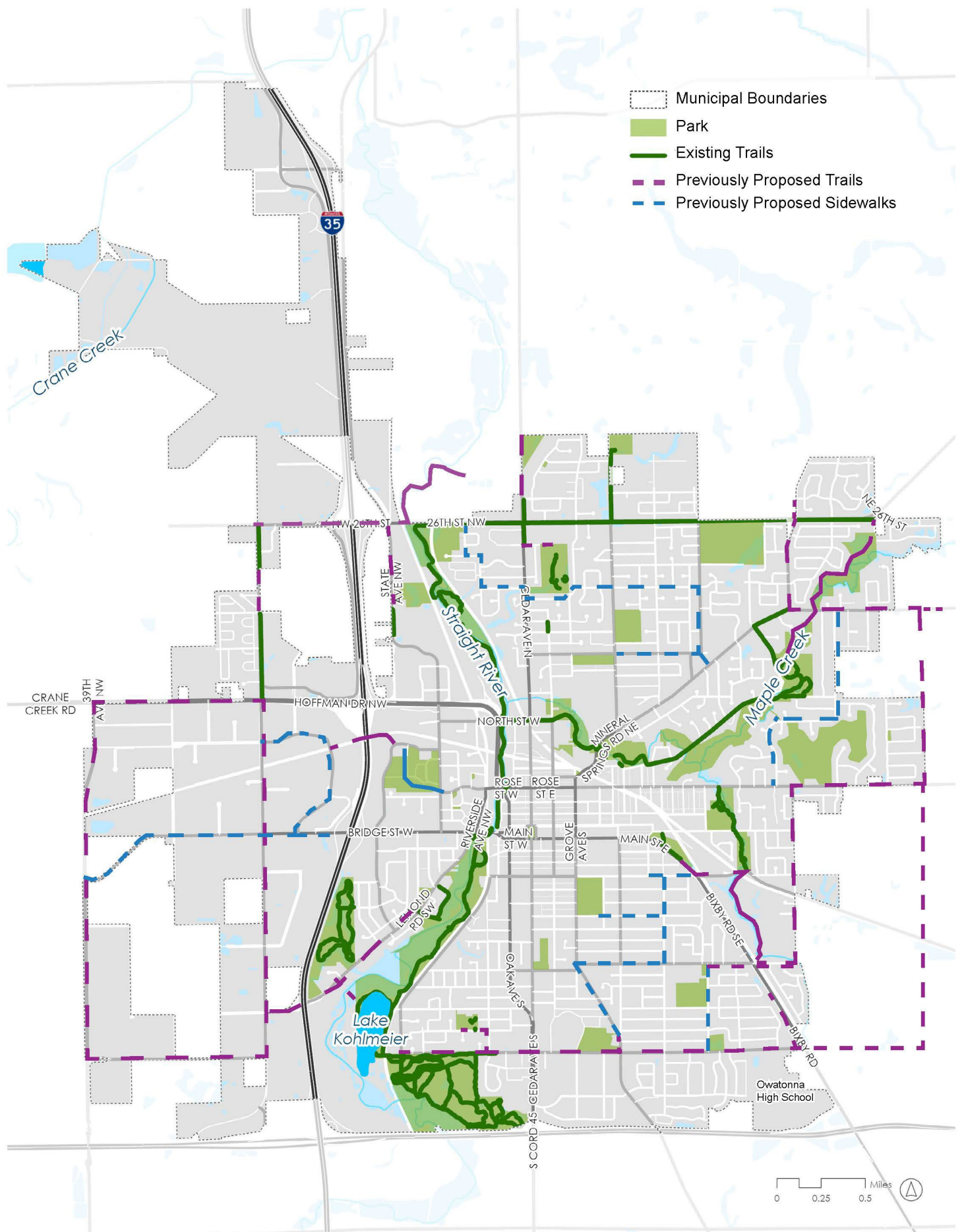


Figure 2.1 Existing Parks and Trails

Parks and Recreation Trends

- Increased need for trails to accommodate a trend towards more active living and health and wellness activities.
- A more intentional focus on accessible facilities to serve both people with disabilities, younger generations (moms with strollers etc.), and older generations.
- Recreational and social programming for the growing population of older adults and seniors.
- Increased participation in field sports, and a need for more space in communities for these types of facilities.
- Park space as an indicator of equity. Cities are viewing park space as critical infrastructure and increasing commitments to provide open space in every neighborhood.
- Greater understanding of the connections between parks and public health, and the mental and physical health benefits of parks, open spaces and trails.
- Shifting desires in park amenities including increased interest in splash pads, pickleball courts, dog parks, challenge courses, nature play areas, community gardens. The city's *Parks and Trails System Master Plan* includes a full list of park trends, which should be referenced in master planning for any new park space.

Future Park and Trail Recommendations

Future park and trail search areas identified in the 2020 *Parks and Trails System Master Plan*, as well as those identified through this Comprehensive Planning process are shown in Figure 2.2.

Search Areas	Description	Size
State Trail Search Corridors – Prairie Wildflower (North-South) and Stagecoach (East)	There are two legislatively designated future state trails through Owatonna. While the alignments have not been solidified, the city should continue to plan for these facilities with its partners. Preliminary alignments have been explored for the Stagecoach Trail through the DNR Stagecoach State Trail Master Plan in 2012.	N/A
Bridge Street Trail	Comprehensive plan engagement identified a desired missing connection between Downtown and the city's industrial park. The city should explore improvements to Bridge Street to fill this gap. Planning efforts are underway to add a pedestrian bridge across the river at Vine Street, as indicated	N/A

Search Areas	Description	Size
	in Figure 2.2, which could act as the river crossing.	
Hoffman Drive Trail	The city should also explore a trail connection along Hoffman Drive to serve the commercial areas west of I-35 and the proposed residential growth area south of Hoffman Drive. This trail was identified, but not added to the list of priorities in previous plans.	N/A
18th Ave Trail	The city should prioritize filling a gap in the trail system along 18 th Ave to Owatonna High School. This would facilitate safe non-motorized connections to the high school and serve the proposed growth area east of Bixby Road.	
Regional Park - North	A regional park search area was identified in the Parks and Trails System Master Plan, in the northern portion of the city. The city should continue to explore land acquisition options to fill the need for a larger park in this area of the city. This area is adjacent to the Minnesota Paving and Materials quarry. Owatonna should work with its partners at Steele County to understand potential for future park space once mining ceases.	Varies – over 20 acres
Neighborhood and Community Parks – North of 26th St at Hemlock Ave, Rose St and East Side Corridor, 24th Ave and 18th St NW	The Future Land Use map in this Comprehensive Plan includes planning for four new mixed use neighborhood nodes. These nodes should all be planned with new neighborhood park space (~3-5 acres). North of 26 th St there is additional need for a larger park (~20 acres).	~ 3-5 acres (neighborhood park) ~20 acres (community park)
Community and Neighborhood Park - Southeast	Currently, the southeast portion of Owatonna is lacking in park land and amenities. The high school helps with this deficiency,	~ 20 acres (community park) ~ 3-5 acres (neighborhood park)

Search Areas	Description	Size
	but additional park space will be needed east of Bixby as this area of the city continues to grow. The new mixed use neighborhood shown in the Future Land Use map in this Comprehensive Plan should incorporate a neighborhood park. Additionally, the city should search for a larger community park space in this area to address existing deficiencies and future needs.	
Greenway System	Search for property along the city's natural greenway corridors along the Straight River, Maple Creek, and Izaak Walton Creek for future parks and trails	N/A

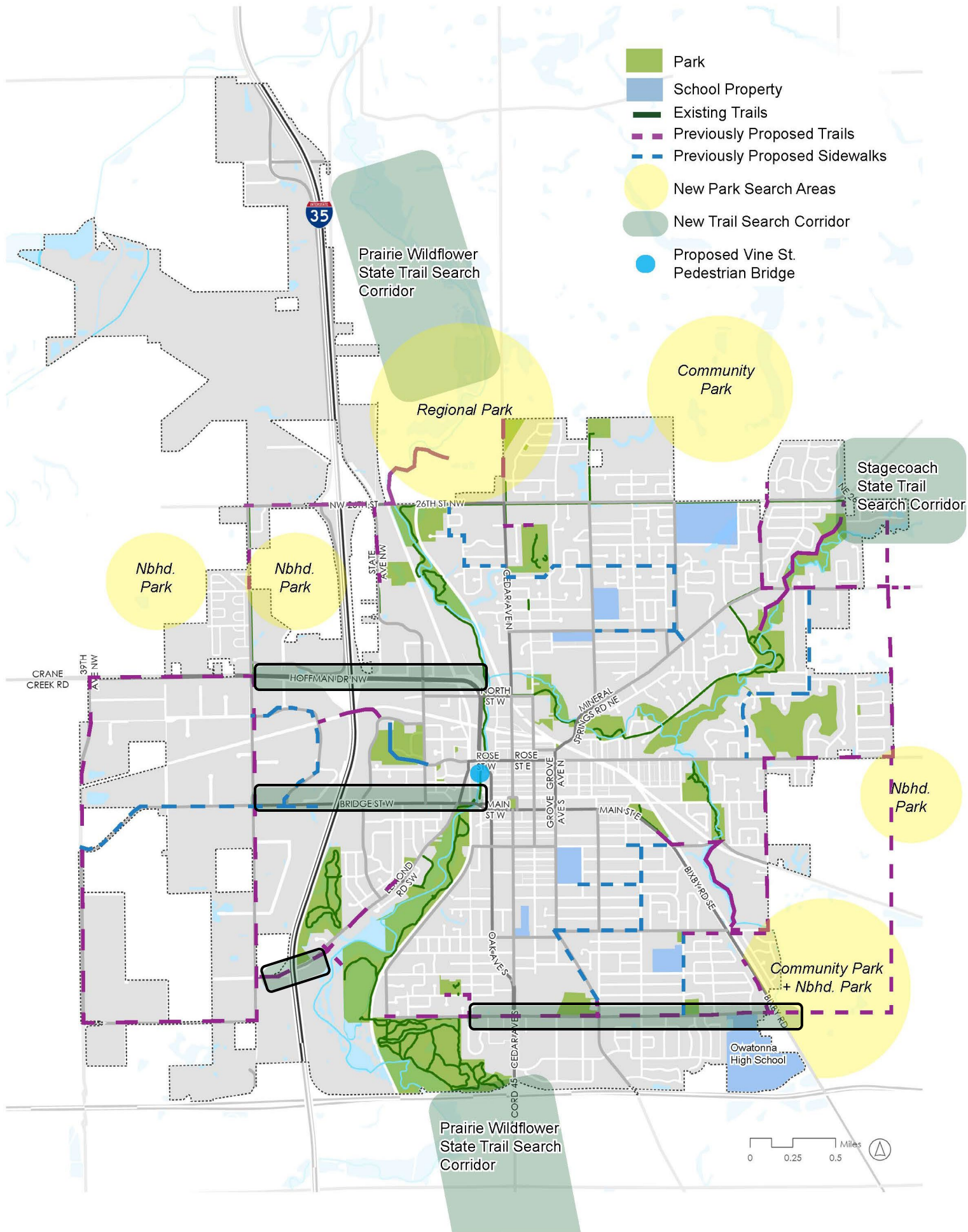


Figure 2.2 Future Parks and Trails

Parks and Trails Goals

Goal 1. Improve and diversify park, trail and recreation opportunities in Owatonna.

- a) Follow the recommendations of the Owatonna *Parks and Trails Master Plan* and regularly update the Plan to address changing needs in the City.
- b) Provide green space for each neighborhood in Owatonna, including active park space within one half mile of all residents wherever possible, and sidewalk or trail links between Owatonna neighborhoods and key destinations and services.
- c) Continue seeking regional park status for the combined properties of Kaplan's Woods, Lake Kohlmeier and a portion of the Straight River public land as a regional park.
- d) Explore the use of the quarry in Northwest Owatonna as a regional hub (park) once it reaches the end of its quarry reserves.
- e) Continue to make all City park and recreation facilities accessible and safe for all ages and abilities.
- f) Continue to maintain Owatonna's existing parks and trails.
- g) Integrate park and recreation facilities into a planned community center.
- h) Explore a park land dedication ordinance.

Goal 2. Improve connections within the park and trail system in Owatonna.

- a) Explore new east-west trail connections between Downtown, across the Straight River, across I-35, and the industrial park.
- b) Continue focusing on trail development, trail safety, and maintenance of existing trails in the community.
- c) Continue to pursue including Owatonna's trail system in the regional trail system defined by the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC), providing both north-south and east-west trail connections to regional destinations.
- d) Pursue funding to develop and implement a Safe Routes to School program in Owatonna.

Goal 3. Improve the health and wellness of the community through equitable park planning and construction.

- a) Prioritize planting trees in new and existing parks, and along trail corridors to allow for shade and a more robust urban tree canopy.
- b) Prioritize improving the health of Owatonna's natural areas, rivers and streams.
- c) Explore adopting Level of Service (LOS) metrics for parks planning through a Parks Master Plan update.
- d) Continue to plan for parks as critical infrastructure in all new and existing neighborhoods to improve physical and mental health of residents.
- e) Explore opportunities to add parks and trails through an updated Parks Master Plan that build a sense of community, improve physical and mental health of residents and address any gaps in the overall parks system.

Goal 4. Focus on partnerships to improve Owatonna's parks and trails system.

- a) Continue to work cooperatively on park and recreation programs and facilities with Owatonna Public Schools.
- b) Continue to establish relationships with Steele County and neighboring communities (Clinton Falls, Medford, Claremont) to partner on regional trail opportunities in order to best secure future grant funding of these amenities.
- c) Explore new partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships to leverage funding and deliver services.
- d) Work with the community to understand parks needs and actively target parks that need enhancement and investment.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Owatonna has a solid economic foundation. It is a growing city in terms of population and new development. The city is known as an economic powerhouse in Southern Minnesota, with a diversified industrial and commercial base of businesses. Owatonna has natural and recreational amenities with greenways along its rivers and a strong park system. It has a downtown center and the collective will to build on its identity and vibrancy.

Understanding the trends in demographics and development a city is experiencing is a vital part of the comprehensive planning process. It can provide clues to future growth patterns and indicate what types of housing, parks and open spaces, mobility options and public facilities may be needed in the future. This chapter highlights information on Owatonna's demographic characteristics and economic development, and provides goals for continuing economic competitiveness.

Demographics

Population

Owatonna has captured the majority of Steele County's growth since 1990. During the 1990s and 2000s, Owatonna grew at a faster rate than the State of Minnesota. In the 2010s, though, Owatonna's growth had slowed enough that it fell below the statewide growth rate.

In the early part of the 2020s, population growth has rebounded significantly in Owatonna. According to the MN Demographic Center, between 2020 and 2022, the City's population grew by more than 1,100 persons. Although this high rate of growth will likely ease somewhat throughout the 2020s, growth is anticipated to remain strong in Owatonna despite a statewide slow-down caused by an aging population, declining birth rates, and reduced in-migration from outside the state.

Table 3.1 Population Trends and Projections

Geography	Estimate*				Projection**			
	1990	2000	2010	2020	2022	2030	2040	2050
Population								
Owatonna	19,386	22,434	25,599	26,420	27,544	30,371	33,335	35,473
Clinton Falls Twp	518	466	351	386	387	410	417	411
Owatonna Twp	991	766	609	613	621	663	688	694
Steele County	30,729	33,680	36,576	37,406	38,611	41,747	44,704	46,639
Minnesota	4,375,099	4,919,479	5,303,925	5,706,494	5,757,358	5,976,058	6,190,685	6,333,531
Percent Change†								
Owatonna	--	15.7%	14.1%	3.2%	4.3%	15.0%	9.8%	6.4%
Clinton Falls Twp	--	-10.0%	-24.7%	10.0%	0.2%	6.2%	1.6%	-1.3%
Owatonna Twp	--	-22.7%	-20.5%	0.7%	1.3%	8.2%	3.7%	0.9%
Steele County	--	9.6%	8.6%	2.3%	3.2%	11.6%	7.1%	4.3%
Minnesota	--	12.4%	7.8%	7.6%	0.9%	4.7%	3.6%	2.3%

* 2022 Estimate for Owatonna is from the MN Demographic Center. 2022 estimates for all other geographies is based on 2021 estimates from MN Demographic Center.

** Projections for Owatonna are based on 2022 estimates and trended downward per MN Demographic Center's long range projections. Minnesota projections are from MN Demographic Center. All other geographies are based on estimated shares of countywide growth relative to Owatonna's 2022 estimate and projected growth.

† Percent change based on previous 10-year increment, except for 2022, which is based on change since 2020.

Sources: US Census; MN Demographic Center; Stantec

Age Distribution

The age distribution of the population has a profound influence on a community and its needs. Our age impacts the type of housing we need, the goods and services we consume, and numerous other elements of daily life. Due to the aging of the Baby Boom generation, those born between 1946 and 1964, Owatonna's overall median age has increased from 35 in 2000 to almost 39 in 2020. In particular, the age groups over age 55 have swelled in recent years. This phenomenon is not unique to Owatonna as Steele County and the state have experienced similar age shifts as well.

Another important dynamic is the prevalence of lower birth rates. This can be seen in the significant decline in children under the age of 5 from 2010 to 2020. This is due to several reasons including a decrease in persons of child-bearing age, declining birth rates, and reduced immigration.

Table 3.2 Age Distribution

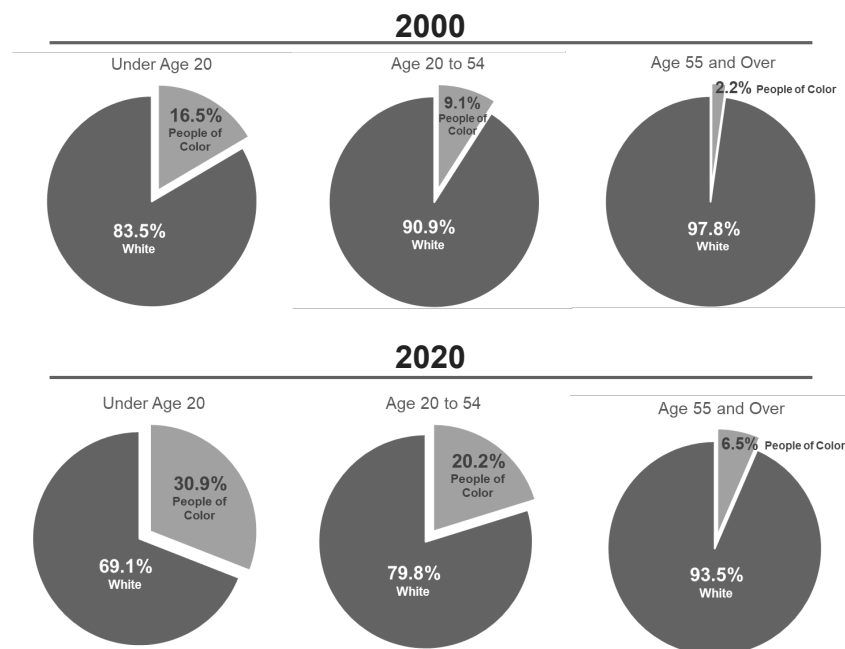
				Change '00-'10		Change '10-'20		Distribution		
Age Group	2000	2010	2020	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	2000	2010	2020
Owatonna										
Under 5 years	1,647	2,009	1,602	362	22.0%	-407	-20.3%	7.3%	7.8%	6.1%
5 to 14 years	3,511	3,743	3,864	232	6.6%	121	3.2%	7.6%	7.5%	7.1%
15 to 24 years	3,033	3,027	3,126	-6	-0.2%	99	3.3%	7.4%	6.7%	6.8%
25 to 34 years	3,019	3,365	3,209	346	11.5%	-156	-4.6%	13.5%	13.1%	12.1%
35 to 44 years	3,650	3,368	3,350	-282	-7.7%	-18	-0.5%	16.3%	13.2%	12.7%
45 to 54 years	2,940	3,661	3,188	721	24.5%	-473	-12.9%	13.1%	14.3%	12.1%
55 to 64 years	1,804	2,882	3,438	1,078	59.8%	556	19.3%	4.5%	6.3%	6.8%
65 to 74 years	1,378	1,663	2,648	285	20.7%	985	59.2%	6.1%	6.5%	10.0%
75 to 84 years	1,054	1,225	1,397	171	16.2%	172	14.0%	4.7%	4.8%	5.3%
85 years and over	398	656	598	258	64.8%	-58	-8.8%	1.8%	2.6%	2.3%
Total	22,434	25,599	26,420	3,165	14.1%	821	3.2%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Median Age										
Owatonna	35.0	37.2	38.8	2.2	6.3%	1.6	4.3%	--	--	--
Steele County	35.9	38.5	39.9	2.6	7.2%	1.4	3.6%	--	--	--
Minnesota	35.4	37.4	38.4	2.0	5.6%	1.0	2.7%	--	--	--

Source: US Census

Race and Ethnicity

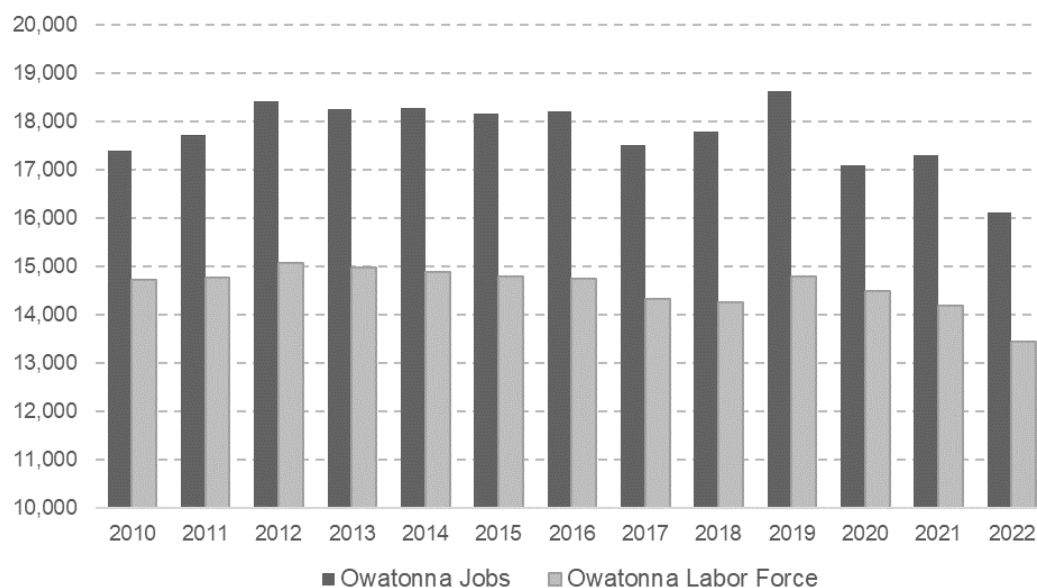
For over two decades, immigrant families have been attracted to the job opportunities in Owatonna, which has diversified the population. The percentage of the population that are people of color has increased from 8.2% in 2000 to 19.0% in 2020.

The diversity of Owatonna's population becomes even more pronounced when it is broken down by age. The percentage of the population under age 20 that are people of color has increased from 16.5% in 2000 to 30.9% in 2020. Meanwhile, for the population age 55 and over, the percentage has only increased from 2.2% in 2000 to 6.5% in 2020.



Employment and Labor Force

From 2010 to 2019, the number of jobs in Owatonna ranged between about 17,500 and 18,300. In 2020, there was a sharp decline in jobs due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Although those losses stabilized in 2021, the downward trend persisted through 2022. Some of this persistence can be attributed to a decline in the labor force due to reasons such as increased retirements. For example, the midpoint of the Baby Boom generation (i.e., those born between 1946 and 1964) began reaching age 65 around 2020.



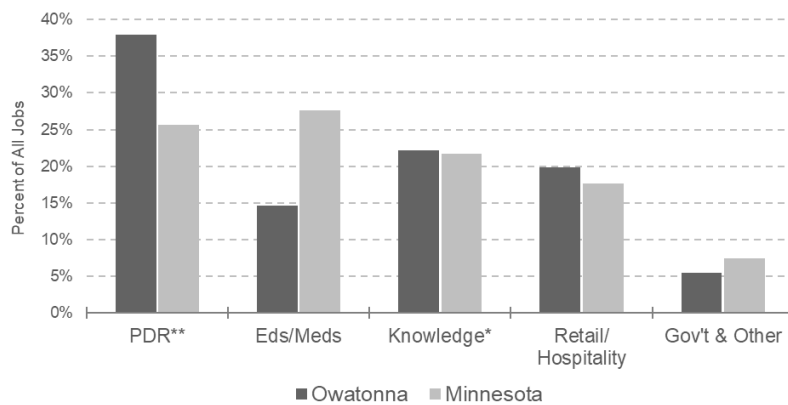
Sources: Minnesota DEED, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) dataset and the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) dataset

Figure 3.1 Employment and Labor Force

Employment by Industry Sector

Nearly 38% of Owatonna's jobs are in the Production, Distribution and Repair (PDR) industry sectors. This is significantly higher than the statewide proportion (25%). Conversely, Owatonna has a lower proportion of jobs in the education and healthcare sectors (15%) compared to the state (27%).

A strong employment base in PDR sectors typically means more higher-paying jobs. Moreover, it also results in a net inflow of dollars into the local economy, unlike service sector jobs, which typically recycle dollars within the local economy.

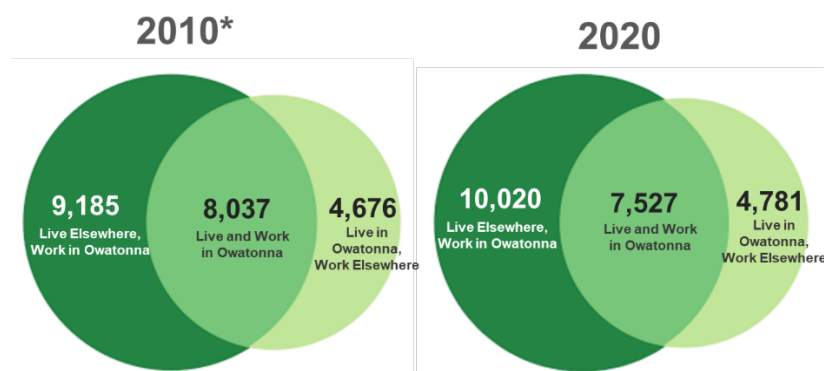


* Knowledge = Consists of "knowledge-based" industry sectors (e.g., Information, Finance, and Professional Svcs/Mgmt)
 ** PDR = Production, Distribution, and Repair industry sectors (e.g., Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities, etc.)
 Source: US Census, LEHD dataset

Figure 3.2 Employment by Industry Sector

Worker Commute Patterns

Changing commute patterns can signal important shifts in the local economy, such as the relationship between job growth and the availability of housing. Between 2010 and 2020, the number of people who work in Owatonna but reside elsewhere grew by 835. Meanwhile, the number of people living and working in Owatonna decreased by -510. This imbalance suggests that both new workers and existing workers are unable to find adequate housing in Owatonna and are finding housing in other communities.



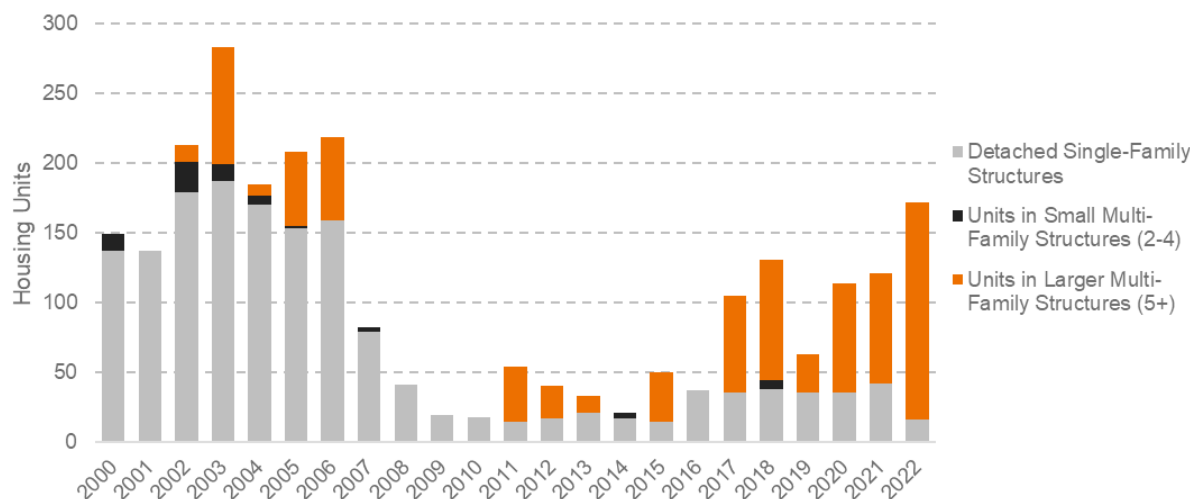
* Earliest year data is available.
 Source: US Census, LEHD Dataset

Figure 3.3 Worker Commute Patterns

Development Market Trends

Housing Market Trends

The recession from 2008-2010 resulted in a significant decline in housing construction that lasted into the late 2010s. Starting around 2017, housing construction began to increase once again in Owatonna. Although the volume of construction has not yet risen to pre-recession levels, it has taken on a different form. In the last six years, the majority of units constructed have been in larger multi-family structures of five or more units. This is in sharp contrast to the pre-recession housing boom that was dominated by single-family construction.



Source: US Census, SOCDS dataset

Figure 3.4 Housing Construction 2000 - 2022

Additional information on housing can be found in the Comprehensive Housing Needs Analysis completed for Owatonna by Maxfield Research and Consulting in September 2023. This study projects general occupancy housing demand and senior housing demand through 2030. The study also provides recommendations on the amount and type of housing that could be built in Owatonna to satisfy demand from current and future residents through this decade. The full document can be found on the City's website, with additional key information summarized in the land use chapter of this Comprehensive Plan.

Office Market Trends

Nationally, office real estate is undergoing a profound structural change as working from home and flexible schedules have become the norm post-pandemic. Although traditional office spaces will remain an important real estate use, the demand for such space has dropped significantly in a very short period of time. The full impact of this rapid shift is not known, but it is already evident that it is affecting businesses that use office space, office building owners, retail businesses dependent on office workers, traffic patterns, and much more.

The following charts illustrate trends in Owatonna's office market. Below are key findings:

- Owatonna's office market consists of roughly 340,000 square feet of space. This translates to about 12 square feet of office space per resident. Compared to Owatonna's peer communities, this is the lowest ratio of office square feet to population.

- There has been no new office development since 2015. Between 2013 and 2015, four small office buildings were constructed totaling about 9,500 square feet. Therefore, in the last 15 years, the inventory of office space in Owatonna has only increased about 3%.
- In the early to mid-2010s, the office vacancy rate peaked at just over 6%. Despite a short-term spike during the later stages of the pandemic, office vacancy has returned to a rate below 2%. This low vacancy rate suggests a healthy market. However, with more office workers regularly working from home, this data should be watched closely as many businesses may significantly change the amount of office space they need once their current leases expire.



Figure 3.5 Owatonna Office Development and Vacancy Rate 2007-2023
Source: CoStar

Retail Market Trends

Nationally, over the past 10-15 years, retail real estate has been battered by a shift to more on-line shopping. Much of the retail industry, therefore, has been attempting to adapt to this new environment in which bricks-and-mortar stores have become integral to the overall shopping *experience* instead of simply a *convenient* location to procure a specific good or service. As a result, many marginal retail locations, such as aging shopping centers and poorly sited buildings, have become vacant, been adapted to other uses, or redeveloped altogether.

The following charts illustrates trends in Owatonna's retail market. Below are key findings:

- Less than 8,000 square feet of new retail space has been constructed since 2013. This is less than 1% growth in Owatonna's total retail inventory of more than 2.3 million square feet.
- Retail vacancy generally ranged between 3% and 5% prior to 2019. Since 2019, though, the vacancy rate has dropped and has been ranging between 1% and 2%.

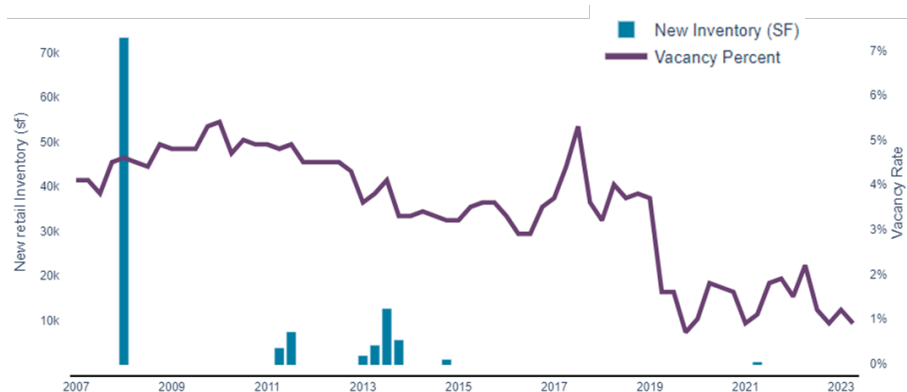


Figure 3.6 Owatonna Retail Development and Vacancy Rate 2007-2023
Source: CoStar

Industrial Market Trends

Nationally, demand for industrial real estate used for warehousing and distribution has grown significantly over the last 10 years. The primary cause is the growth in on-line retailing and its related need for parcel storage and shipments. The growth in on-line retailing has stimulated the industrial market.

The following charts illustrates trends in Owatonna's industrial market. Below are key findings:

- Several large properties added nearly 1 million square feet of industrial space in late 2020 and early 2021. Over the last 10 years, Owatonna's total industrial inventory has grown by roughly 30%. This is in sharp contrast to the growth of the office and retail inventories and consistent with national trends.
- Despite the significant increase in new space, the vacancy rate for industrial space remains well below 2%.

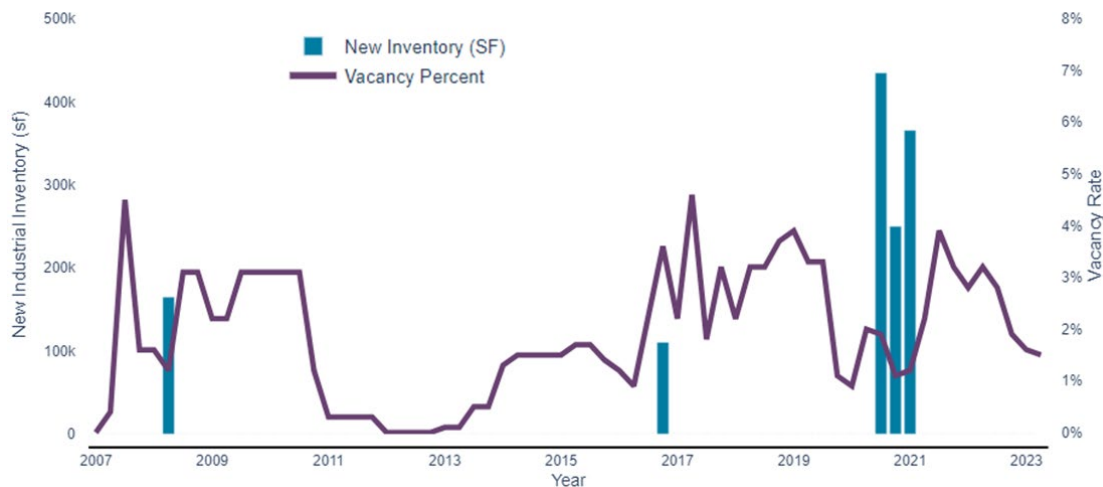


Figure 3.7 Owatonna Industrial Development and Vacancy Rate 2007-2023
Source: CoStar

Economic Development Trends

- **Identity and vibrancy.** Improving a city's vibrancy by creating distinctive, active places is an economic development strategy. Special places that are distinctive and active build personal attachment to a city.
- **The creative economy.** The innovation and creative economies can offer as much to a region as a traditional manufacturing base. And they can serve as attractors of new population.
- **Building attachment.** Strategies that build attachment to Owatonna are retention strategies with respect to the city's population and its businesses. Building connections and attachment between young people and Owatonna's parks, trails and downtown may be a key opportunity.
- **Unleashing the existing workforce.** Meeting the needs of families for quality childcare has the effect of freeing up some of the city's at-home parents to participate in the labor force and strengthen the economy.
- **Preconditions for workforce attraction.** Industrial growth is dependent on the ability to attract a workforce with the right technical skills, and that is often dependent on the availability of a good set of housing options at affordable rent levels.
- **Diversity of industry sectors.** Owatonna currently has a diversity of industries that provide a strong economic base for the city and a variety of high paying jobs. The city works to actively support these businesses and attract new businesses that complement its existing strengths and industry mix.

Economic Development Recommendations

Public input shared during the Comprehensive Plan process underscored the importance and emphasis of Owatonna as an economic leader in the region. Based on public input there are several recommendations to strengthen economic development in Owatonna.

- One of the main concerns expressed was the lack of appropriately priced housing options for people who would like to live and work in Owatonna. This can be seen in the worker commute patterns. The Land Use chapter of this Comprehensive Plan includes recommendations and goals specific to providing adequate housing for those who want to live and work in Owatonna.
- Transit to access jobs in Owatonna and the greater region would be beneficial and supported by public input. A circulator connecting the residential areas to the east and the commercial and industrial jobs to the west could be considered. A circulator would likely require funding support from businesses in the area and could be explored in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, SMART Bus, and other key stakeholders.
- An emphasis on young people and retaining talent in Owatonna was expressed in public input. Emphasis on community amenities, parks and open spaces, downtown, quality schools and affordable housing – topics emphasized throughout this Comprehensive Plan will help to retain young adults and young families in Owatonna.
- Workforce shortages were a concern expressed in focus groups with businesses and other stakeholders. The city should continue to partner with SteeleCoWorks, local colleges, educational organizations, and local businesses. SteeleCoWorks is a partnership between United Way of Steele County, Owatonna Chamber of Commerce, Workforce Development Inc and the Owatonna Public Schools which prepares students for the workforce through career exploration and internships, application and interview assistance and building soft skills and career readiness.

Downtown Owatonna is one of the engines for economic development in Owatonna. Continued efforts to bolster the downtown will help to attract both tourists and residents to the City.

Economic Development Goals

Goal 1. Continue to support and expand the workforce and quality of life in Owatonna.

- a) Continue to champion partnerships with SteeleCoWorks, Owatonna Public Schools, Riverland Community College, and other educational organizations to support educational programs that will meet Owatonna's workforce needs.
- b) Work to identify and implement activities, services, and community features that will attract and retain young people and employees in Owatonna.
- c) Continue to build and invest in the vibrancy of Downtown Owatonna to attract businesses and employees to Owatonna.
- d) Work with partners to highlight Owatonna's unique strengths such as the school system, Straight River, historic downtown and community events.
- e) Continue to address city challenges including lack of workforce housing and regional transportation options that improve quality of life and livability of the city.

Goal 2. Continue to support new business development in Owatonna.

- a) Expand the services and awareness of offerings for the business incubator program.
- b) Work to reduce any actual or perceived regulatory barriers to new development in Owatonna.
- c) Continue to work with the Owatonna Chamber of Commerce and other business interests to attract businesses to Owatonna.
- d) Continue to support business growth near the airport and attract industries that benefit from this proximity.
- e) Work to develop pad-ready commercial and industrial sites to attract new businesses.

Goal 3. Continue to support existing businesses in Owatonna

- a) Work to retain existing businesses wishing to grow or expand by assisting with location identification, development regulations and/or incentives for growth or expansion in the city.
- b) Work with the Owatonna Chamber of Commerce to identify ways the city can help support existing businesses.

Goal 4. Support efforts to better connect people to jobs

- a) Explore opportunities to expand transit within Owatonna through options such as a connector or on-demand system
- b) Explore opportunities to establish regional transportation routes to surrounding communities to provide increased access for workers.
- c) Enhance multimodal connections between the industrial and commercial job centers and existing or new housing areas.

TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

The city adopted its [*2040 Transportation Plan*](#) in June 2021. The *Owatonna 2040 Transportation Plan* (the Plan) identifies key transportation issues and opportunities that are intended to advance the city's existing and future needs. The *Imagine Owatonna* comprehensive plan summarizes key elements addressed in the *Owatonna 2040 Transportation Plan* related to the following elements. There are other transportation related elements from the Plan that have not been included this comprehensive plan.

- Existing Conditions
- Vision, Goals, and Policies
- Traffic Forecasts and Operational Needs
- Future System Analysis
- Planned and Potential Projects

Existing Conditions

Roadway Jurisdiction

The City of Owatonna is located in Steele County. There are a total of 173 miles of roadway (centerline) within the City of Owatonna and most of the roadways are local streets (59 percent), followed by Municipal State-Aid Streets (MSAS) (20 percent), county and County State-Aid Highways (CSAH) (14 percent), state roadways (6 percent), and township roads (1 percent). As a Municipal State-Aid Street (MSAS) City, Owatonna can designate qualified local roadways as MSAS. The municipal state-aid street (MSAS) system is a collection of higher volume and key streets located in 148 Minnesota cities. The roughly 3,700 miles of state-aid streets constitute around 16 percent of centerline miles of all city streets. One of the major benefits of having MSAS designation is the opportunity to receive state assistance for construction and maintenance of streets that are part of the system. Table 10 shows the mileage breakdown of the roadway jurisdictions within Owatonna. Figure 18 maps the existing roadway jurisdictional classifications in Owatonna.

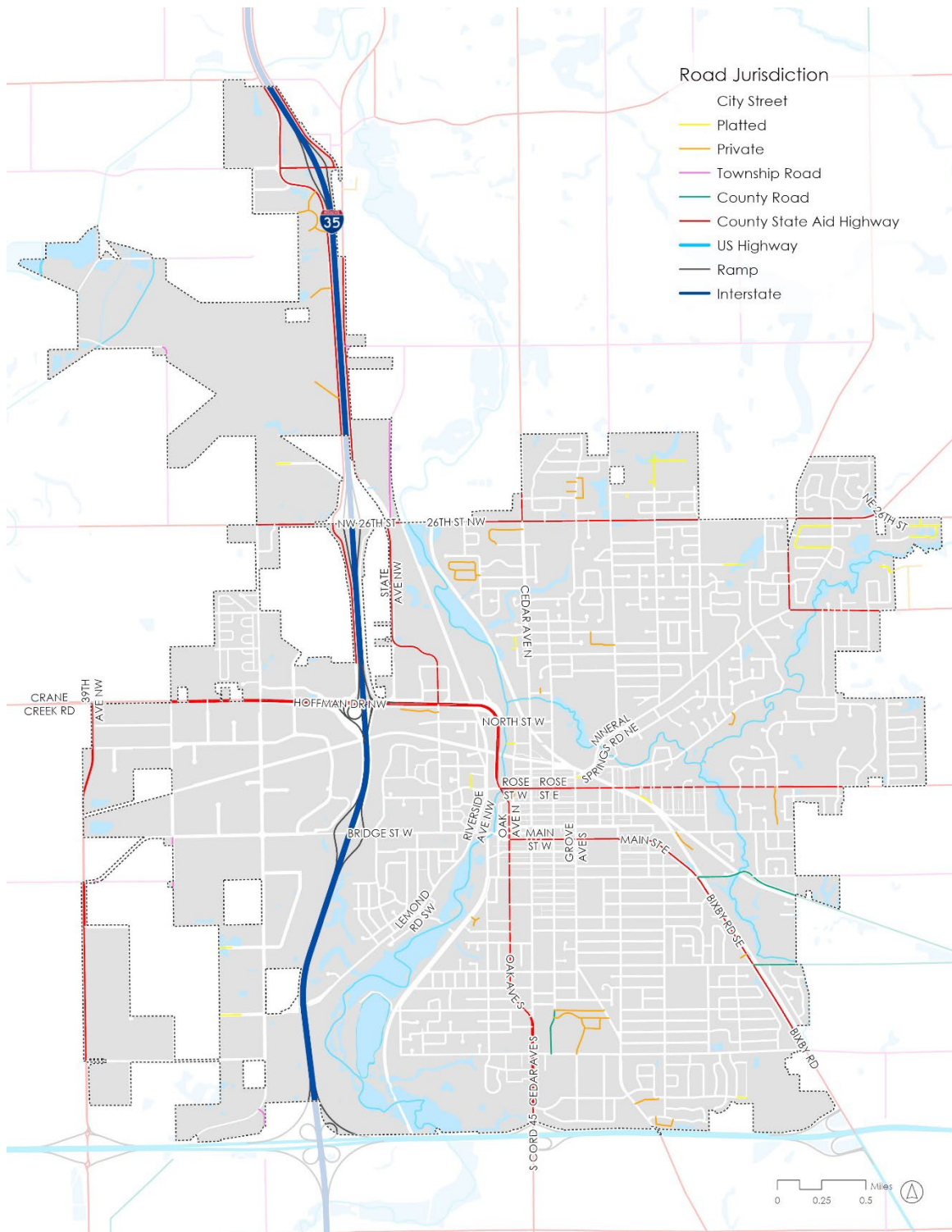


Figure 4.1 Existing Jurisdictional Classification

Table 4.1 Jurisdictional and Designation Classification

Jurisdictional Classification System		Mileage	Percentage of Total
State System	Interstate Highway	10.82	6%
	US Highway	.04	0%
	State Highway	0	0%
County System	County State Aid Highway	22.02	13%
	County Highway	2.13	1%
Municipal State Aid Street		34.41	20%
City Street		102.26	59%
Township Road		1.80	1%

Source: Owatonna 2040 Transportation Plan

Roadway Functional Classification

Roadways within the city are currently categorized into four major functional classifications: principal arterials, minor arterials, collectors (major and minor), and local roadways. As shown in Table 11, the city's existing functional classification system mileage is mostly consistent with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)'s guidelines; FHWA provides guidance on functional classification system mileage to help ensure balance within a given transportation network system. The two major functional classifications that are not within the FHWA recommended mileage are: minor and principal arterials. Figure 19 maps the existing roadway functional classifications.

Table 4.2 Existing Functional Classification Mileage

Functional Class	Percentage of Owatonna Roadways	FHWA Percentage Guidelines	Meeting FHWA Guidelines?
Local	66	62 to 74	✓
Minor Collector	7	3 to 15	✓
Major Collector	16	8 to 19	✓
Minor Arterial	7	2 to 6	1% over guideline
Principal Arterial: Expressway	0	0 to 2	✓
Principal Arterial: Interstate	4	1 to 3	1% over guideline
Principal Arterial: Other	0	2 to 6	2% under guideline

Source: Owatonna 2040 Transportation Plan

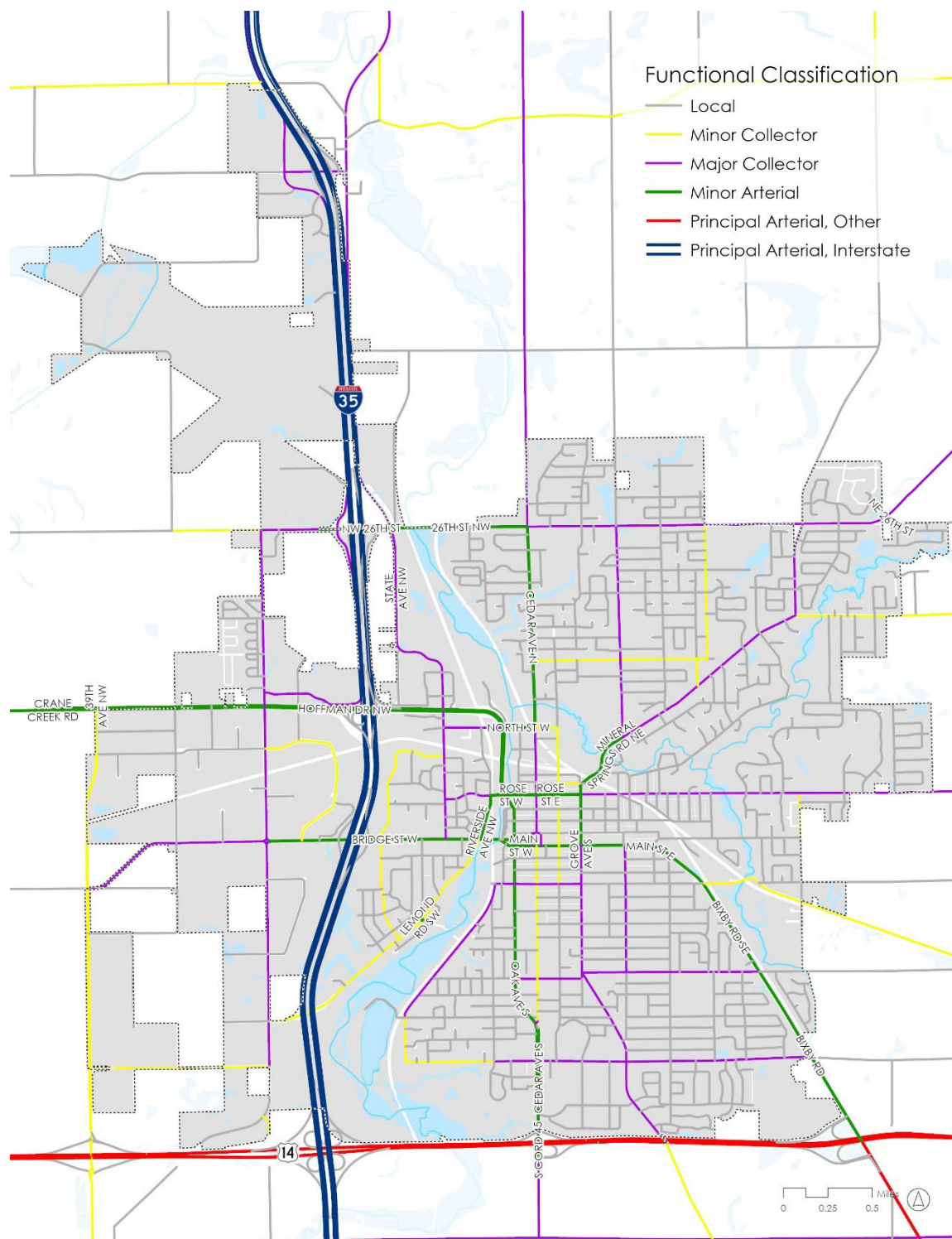


Figure 4.2 Existing Functional Classification

Traffic Volumes, Roadway Capacity, and Congestion

Planning-level capacity thresholds are used as guidelines to determine if a roadway is approaching or exceeding its capacity. Roadway capacity is determined by dividing the roadway's volume by the capacity (V/C) thresholds identified for each roadway facility type. Roadways are considered "approaching capacity" if its V/C is 85 percent of the threshold and "at capacity" if the V/C is 100 or higher. The Plan identified two roadways that are approaching capacity:

- North Street East from CSAH 45 to Cedar Avenue North (Volume/Capacity [V/C] = 0.89)
- Mineral Springs Road from Cherry Street to St. Paul Road (V/C = 0.93)

There are currently no roadways that exceed capacity.

Safety Analysis

The top ten intersection crash locations were identified in the Plan and a safety analysis was completed using MnDOT five-year crash data (2016-2020). Table 12 lists the top ten intersection crash locations and the calculated critical index. A critical index is the ratio of the observed crash rate to the critical crash rate; critical indexes above 1.00 indicate potential safety concerns identified at the location. The Cedar Avenue/18th Street intersection is the only intersection with a critical index of 1.00. However, there are several intersections that have calculated critical indexes that are relatively close to 1.00.

Table 4.3 Top 10 Intersection Crash Locations

Intersection		Severity					Traffic Control	Critical Index All Crashes
		Fatal	Type A	Type B	Type C	Property Damage		
1	Cedar Avenue and 18th Street	0	1	3	1	9	Signal	1.00
2	Hoffman Drive and 21st Avenue	0	0	1	4	14	Signal	0.96
3	Main Street and Grove Avenue	0	0	1	0	16	Signal	0.89
4	Hoffman Drive and 24th Avenue	0	0	2	2	8	Signal	0.77
5	Hoffman Drive / North Street / Industrial Drive	0	0	1	4	18	Signal	0.76
6	Rose Street / Hoffman Drive / Oak Avenue / Glendale Street	0	0	2	2	16	Signal	0.73
7	Bridge Street / Allan Avenue / Florence Avenue	0	1	3	0	20	Signal	0.72
8	Oak Avenue and School Street	0	1	0	1	11	Signal	0.70
9	Oak Avenue and Main Street	0	0	3	3	18	Signal	0.64
10	Hoffman Drive and State Avenue	0	0	1	0	12	Signal	0.43

Source: Owatonna 2040 Transportation Plan

Multimodal Transportation System

The city adopted a Sidewalk and Trail Plan in December 2012. The plan outlines existing multimodal connections and potential future connections to eliminate gaps within the multimodal network. It also focuses on implementation of sidewalks and trails to accommodate those who walk, bike, and/or roll. Figure 20 maps the existing multimodal system and points of interests. The city also has an ADA Transition Plan that was completed in 2016 which includes an inventory of pedestrian facilities along city roadways. Inventory of pedestrian facilities included:

- 62.76 miles of sidewalks
- 1,018 curb ramps
- 19.03 miles of trails
- 22 traffic control signals
- 16 bus stops

More information related to the [ADA Transition Plan](#) can be found here.

Additionally, Southern Minnesota Area Regional Transit (SMART) operates buses that provide transportation for workers, residents, and visitors throughout Steele, Mower, Waseca, and Freeborn Counties. SMART provides both flex-route and on-demand services. The majority of the SMART service requests are within the City of Owatonna, and generally around retail centers. A few key elements SMART staff shared with the city during the development of the Transportation Plan include:

- Many SMART riders work at Cedar Valley Services and request transport;
- Congestion is experienced frequently at roundabouts;
- Poor pavement conditions directly impact riders' experience;
- Several request to connect 20th Street as there is a gap between 20th Streets just south of McKinley Elementary School;
- Request for a north-south connection that is east of I-35.

Airport

Currently there is one airport, Owatonna Degner Regional Airport (OWA), in Steele County about three miles northwest of Owatonna. This airport is used for general aviation and is open to the public. In 2016, the OWA completed a Master Plan, outlining the needs of existing and future users for the next 20 years. This was a joint effort between the City of Owatonna, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Minnesota Department of Transportation's Office of Aeronautics. Improvements suggested in the plan include extension of the runway and additional hanger space. These improvements will result in a more efficient freight system for both the City of Owatonna and surrounding communities.

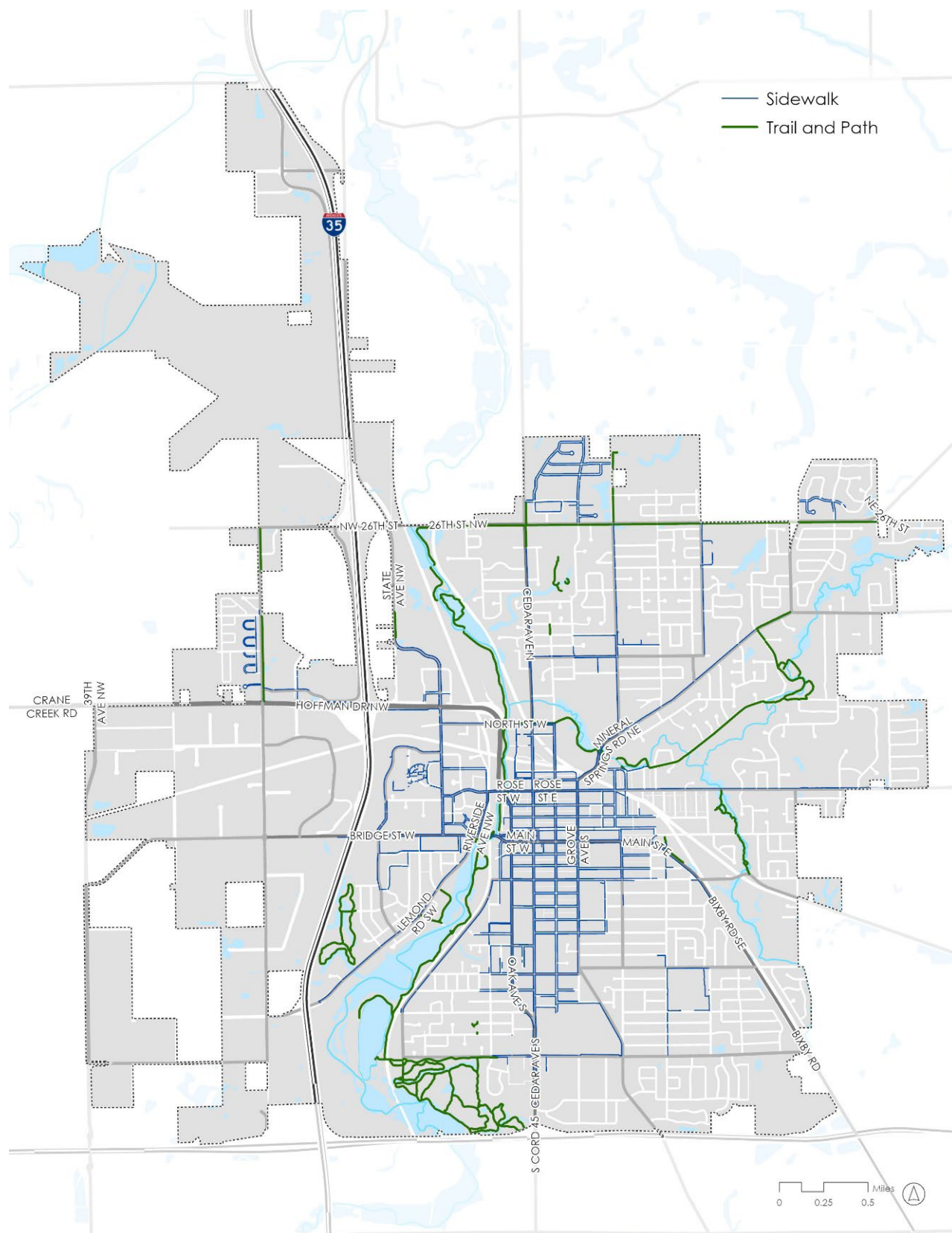


Figure 2 Existing Multimodal System

Vision, Goals, and Policies

The transportation vision statement in the Plan is as follows:

“The transportation vision for the City of Owatonna is to provide an integrated transportation system that will serve the future needs of its residents and businesses, support the city’s development plans, and balance the safety and mobility of its system for all users.”

The Plan lists four goals that support the vision statement along with policies that would help achieve these goals. Goals are focused on finding sustainable investments in the transportation system, enhancing safety for all roadway users, continuing to support and pursue opportunities that would interconnect the pedestrian and bicycle system, and supporting economic development through a reliable, affordable, and efficient multimodal transportation network.

Detailed information on the city’s transportation vision, goals, and policies can be found on pages 25-26 of the Owatonna 2040 Transportation Plan.

Traffic Forecasts and Operational Needs

Forecast 2040 Traffic Volumes

The year 2040 traffic forecasts were used to analyze roadway capacity deficiencies and operational needs on a corridor basis. Performance of the system under this future horizon can be compared to the existing system conditions, from which improvement projects are developed. Forecasted 2040 volumes confirmed that existing roadways experiencing high traffic volumes will continue to do so with additional roadways that are forecasted to experience higher volumes including: Mineral Springs Road, Main Street, and Hoffman Drive. Roadways near the retail clusters along Old Highway 14, west of I-35, are also anticipated to see large traffic volume increases. Table 13 lists the six segments that are anticipated to either approach or exceed capacity in 2040. Figure 21 maps the six segments.

Table 1 Roadways Forecasted to Approach or Exceed Capacity in 2040

Roadway	Extents		V/C	AADT
Bridge Street West	Park Drive NW	Selby Avenue SW	0.93	20,500
18th Street SW	CR 45	Hartle Avenue SE	0.95	9,500
North Street West	CR 45	Cedar Avenue N	1.13	11,300
Cedar Avenue North	North Street W	16th Street NE	0.92	9,200
Mineral Springs Road	Fremont Street E	Cherry Street NE	0.93	9,300
Mineral Springs Road	Cherry Street NE	St. Paul Road NE	1.01	10,100

Source: Owatonna 2040 Transportation Plan

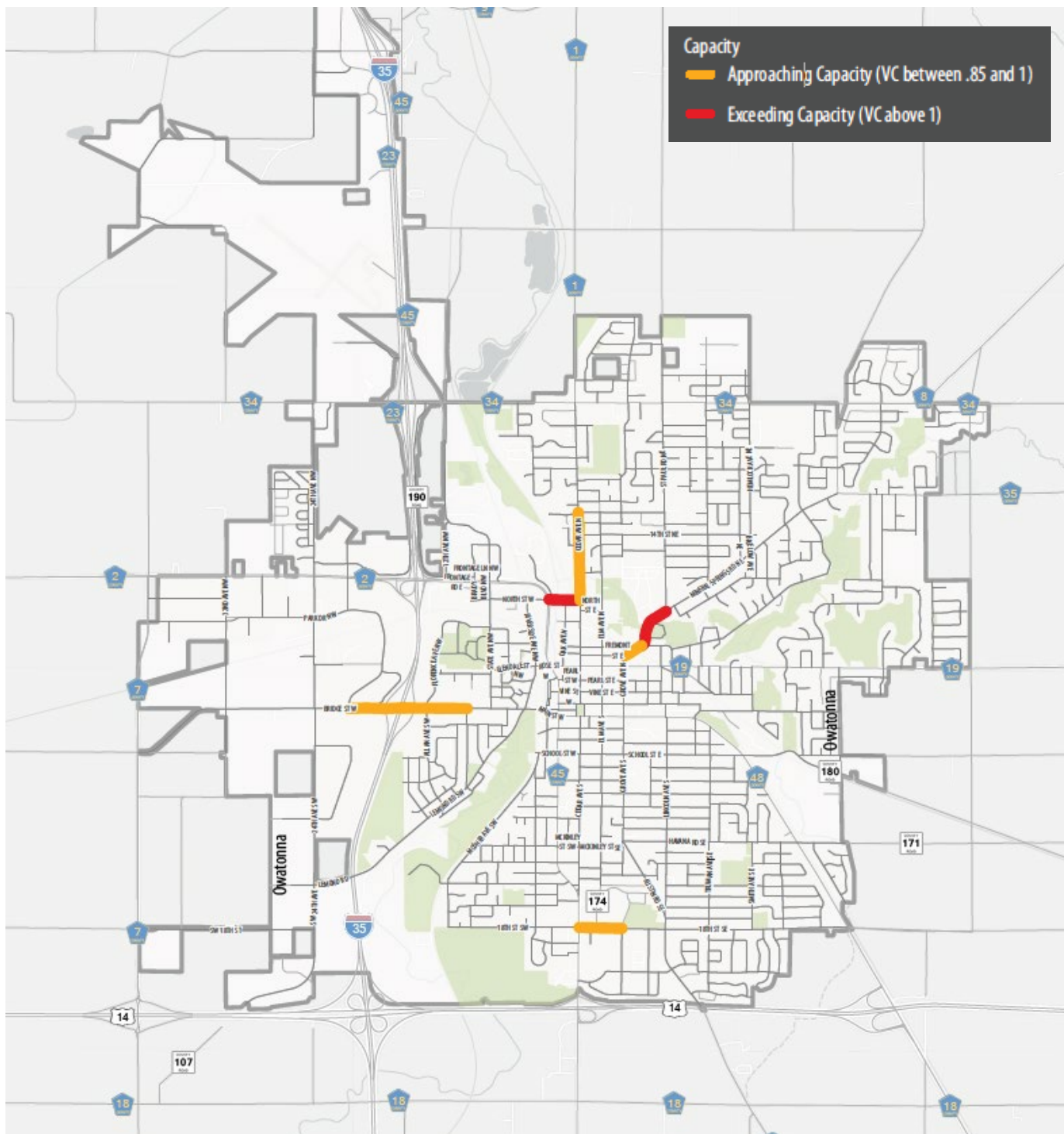


Figure 4.4 Future Congestion
Source: Owatonna 2040 Transportation Plan

Future System Analysis

Proposed Functional Classification Changes

Roadway functional classification changes are often recommended to help match roadway hierarchy and its functionality. Changes are often recommended to better meet FHWA's mileage guidance, ensuring consistency among various agencies' existing and future plans and providing functional balance within a transportation network. Based on multiple factors, the Plan proposed 13 functional classification changes. These changes are listed in Table 14.

Table 4.5 Proposed Functional Classification Changes

Change ID*	Roadway	Mileage	Existing Classification	Future Classification
1	20th Street NE	0.49	Local	Minor Collector
2	20th Street NE	0.12	Roadway does not exist	Local
3	14th Street NE	1.04	Minor Collector	Major Collector
4	Mineral Springs Road	1.24	Major Collector	Minor Arterial
5	Dane Road	0.73	Minor Collector	Major Collector
6	Florence Avenue	0.80	Minor Collector	Major Collector
7	Riverside Avenue	0.25	Minor Arterial	Minor Collector
8	Riverside Avenue	0.09	Minor Arterial	Major Collector
9	Bridge Street West	0.08	Minor Arterial	Local
10	Private Access along Bridge Street West	0.01	Minor Arterial	Remove
11	Lincoln Avenue South	1.21	Major Collector and Local	Minor Collector
12	Truman Avenue SE	1.00	Local	Minor Collector
13	SW 33rd Avenue	0.59	NA	Local

Source: Owatonna 2040 Transportation Plan

Proposed Jurisdictional Changes

Roadway jurisdictional changes are crucial when developing a future system plan as it impacts local, regional, and state agencies' functions and responsibilities related to maintenance, construction, improvements, and finances. The goal of a jurisdiction realignment is to match the management of roadways with their intended function and with the jurisdiction best suited to maintain them. The Plan proposed six jurisdictional changes, listed in Table 15 **Error! Reference source not found..** Based on the proposed jurisdictional changes, the city is anticipated to add approximately four additional miles to its local network.

Table 4.6 Proposed Jurisdictional Changes

Change ID*	Roadway	Mileage	Existing Jurisdiction	Future Jurisdiction
1	Kenyon Road	0.52	County	City
2	Dane Road	0.75	County	City
3	29th Avenue (Outside of City system, but along city boundary)	3.35	Roadway does not exist	County
4	Rose Street	2.41	County	City
5	Havana Road	0.24	County	City
6	SE 18th Street Extension	0.67	Roadway does not exist	County

Source:
Owatonna
2040

Transportation Plan

Future Multimodal System

Ensuring safe connectivity for non-motorists was highlighted as one of the top transportation priorities by the city in the Plan. As a result, several multimodal improvements were proposed to help eliminated

existing gaps within the multimodal network which include new sidewalks and trails. Figure 22 maps the proposed multimodal improvements.

Future Transit System

Transit needs in Owatonna will continue to be served by SMART, Steele County area transit provider. As additional transit needs come to the city's attention, the city will work closely with local, regional, and state agencies to continue to identify needs and find opportunities to expand its transit services to ensure mobility, connectivity, accessibility, and safety to those with the greatest need for transit (i.e., elder adults, individuals with disabilities, people without access to a personal vehicle, etc.).

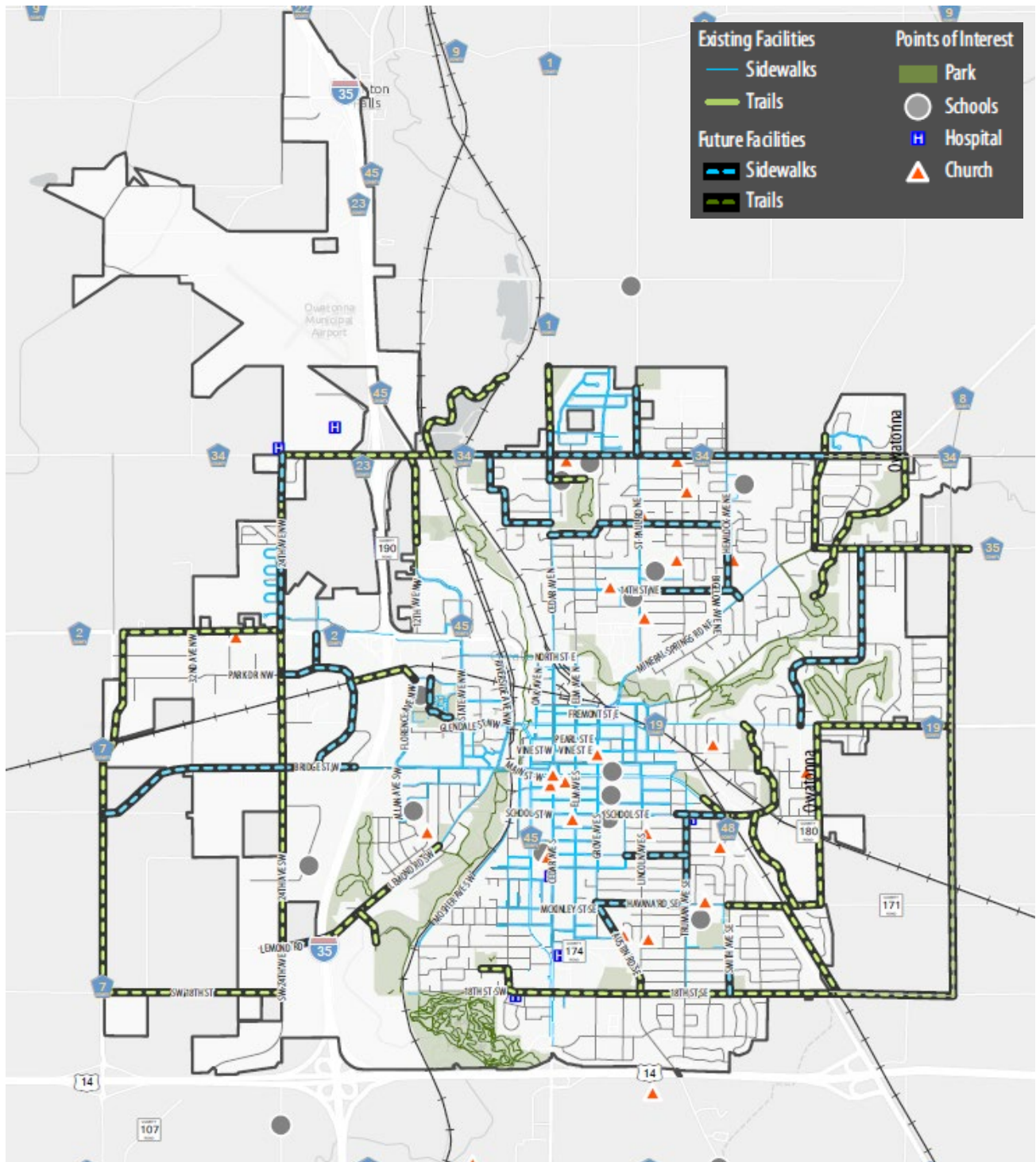


Figure 4.5 Future Multimodal System
Source: Owatonna 2040 Transportation Plan

Planned and Potential Projects

As part of the development of the Owatonna 2040 Transportation Plan, several potential projects were identified based on traffic volumes, crash data, future land use, stakeholder feedback and community engagement. The list consists of potential safety and operational improvements and multimodal enhancement projects. A complete list of planned and potential future projects is provided in Table 16 below. It is important to note that even if projects are identified as “Planned”, these projects may not have funding guaranteed and it may not be within the city’s control to initiate these projects if the roadway is not under the city’s jurisdiction. The City of Owatonna should continue to work closely with MnDOT, county, and/or townships to stay up to date on upcoming projects and funding opportunities for these projects.

Table 4.7 Planned and Potential Projects

Project Name	Project Description	Identified by:	Planned	Potential
CSAH 34 at CSAH 45 Intersection Improvement	Temporary signal replaced by roundabout	Steele County CIP	✓	
CSAH 34 (Straight River to CSAH 8)	Reconfigure lane markings to 3-lane cross section	Steele County CIP	✓	
North Street (CR 2 to Cedar Avenue)	Address existing congestion issues (V/C currently near or approaching capacity)	This Plan's Congestion Analysis		✓
Mineral Springs Road (Cherry Street to St. Paul Road)	Address existing congestion issues (V/C currently near or approaching capacity)	This Plan's Congestion Analysis		✓
Bridge Street West (Park Drive NW to Selby Avenue SW)	Address future congestion issues (V/C expected to be near or approaching capacity in 2040)	This Plan's Future Congestion Analysis		✓
18th Street SW (CR 45 to Cedar Avenue North)	Address future congestion issues (V/C expected to be near or approaching capacity in 2040)	This Plan's Future Congestion Analysis		✓
North Street West (CR 45 to Cedar Avenue North)	Address future congestion issues (V/C expected to be near or approaching capacity in 2040)	This Plan's Future Congestion Analysis		✓
Cedar Avenue North (North Street West to 16th Street NE)	Address future congestion issues (V/C expected to be near or approaching capacity in 2040)	This Plan's Future Congestion Analysis		✓
Mineral Springs Road (Fremont Street East to Cherry Street NE)	Address future congestion issues (V/C expected to be near or approaching capacity in 2040)	This Plan's Future Congestion Analysis		✓
Mineral Springs Road (Cherry Street NE to St. Paul Road NE)	Address future congestion issues (V/C expected to be near or approaching capacity in 2040)	This Plan's Future Congestion Analysis		✓

Source: Owatonna 2040 Transportation Plan

Project Name	Project Description	Identified by:	Planned	Potential
CSAH 45 State Avenue (CSAH 2 to CSAH 34)	Reconfigure lane markings from a 4-lane cross section to 3-lane	Steele County CIP	✓	
Signal Upgrades	Evaluate and upgrade signals	Steele County CIP	✓	
CSAH 2 (CSAH 7 to I-35)	Patch concrete pavement	Steele County CIP	✓	
CSAH 48 at 18th Street Roundabout	Construct roundabout	Steele County CIP, Owatonna CIP	✓	
CSAH 48 – Main Street (CSAH 45 to Chambers Ave.)	Rehabilitate pavement, convert to 3-lane cross section	Steele County CIP, Owatonna CIP	✓	
CR 174 Elm Avenue (18th St. SE to Park St.)	Reconstruct roadway	Steele County CIP	✓	
CSAH 8 Kenyon Road (CSAH 35 to CSAH 34)	Reconstruct to urban highway, add links to trail system	Steele County CIP	✓	
Bridge 4866	Replace bridge, add links to trail system	Steele County CIP	✓	
CSAH 23 (CSAH 34 to North) Realignment	Realign to the CSASH 34/24 th Street intersection, construct roundabout	Steele County CIP	✓	
29th Avenue (from 18th St. SE to CSAH 34)	Construct a north-south route on the east side of Owatonna	Steele County CIP	✓	
CSAH 34 (Future CSAH 7 to 24th Ave. NW)	Reconstruct gravel highway with paved surface	Steele County CIP	✓	
CSAH 34 (24th Ave. to I-35)	Reconstruct to urban cross section and construct multiuse trail	Steele County CIP	✓	
CSAH 34 at I-35	Construct roundabouts at both I-35 ramps, construct multiuse trails	Steele County CIP	✓	
CSAH 34 at St. Paul Road	Construct a roundabout	Steele County CIP	✓	
CSAH 45 (TH 14 to State Ave.)	Reconstruct the highway	Steele County CIP	✓	
CSAH 48 (US 218 to Chambers Ave.)	Realign intersection at Truman Ave., School Street and Havana Road	Steele County CIP	✓	
Future Sidewalks	Construction of sidewalks as shown in Figure 21	Owatonna Sidewalk and Trail Plan	✓	
Future Trails	Construction of trails as shown in Figure 21	Owatonna Sidewalk and Trail Plan	✓	
Truman Avenue (Havana Road to Main Street)	Reconstruct Truman Avenue	Owatonna CIP	✓	
Bridge Street Reconstruction	Reconstruct Bridge Street	Owatonna CIP	✓	
Downtown Streetscape (Cedar Avenue from Broadway to Rose Street)	Street reconstruction and streetscaping	Owatonna CIP	✓	
State and 26th Roundabout	Construct roundabout	Owatonna CIP	✓	
18th Street South Trail (Austin Road to Linn Avenue)	Construct shared user path	Owatonna CIP	✓	
Cedar Avenue & 18th Street Intersection	Address safety concerns (critical index near one)	This Plan's Safety Analysis		✓
Hoffman Drive & 21st Avenue Intersection	Address safety concerns (critical index near one)	This Plan's Safety Analysis		✓

Source: Owatonna 2040 Transportation Plan

DRAFT Transportation Goals

Goal 1. Improve transportation connections within Owatonna.

- a) Explore a new east-west vehicle and bicycle/pedestrian connections to connect the east and west sides of the City.
- b) Explore a new north-south vehicle and multi-modal connection on the east side of the City.
- c) Include traffic calming on roadway segments and intersections where pedestrians are present.
- d) Narrow roads and rights-of-way where possible to fit neighborhood character.
- e) Explore allowing more continuous roadway corridors by removing stop signs and other controls where possible.
- f) Continue to prioritize road maintenance throughout the City.

Goal 2. Improve multimodal transportation options in Owatonna.

- a) Explore expanded transit within the City to provide increased access for workers and shoppers.
- b) Explore expanded transit options between Owatonna and nearby cities.
- c) Provide bike lanes and sidewalks on key roadways.
- d) Strive for the safest possible facility type for bike and pedestrian infrastructure.
- e) Explore adoption of a [Complete Streets](#) Policy.

SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

Introduction

The City of Owatonna has chosen to include a chapter in its Comprehensive Plan dedicated to its Sustainability and Resilience. The Comprehensive Plan is a way to acknowledge existing work related to environment and sustainability and tie city initiatives, plans and goals together under one umbrella. Owatonna has excellent access to natural resources and protecting and sustaining them for the future is a long-term priority.

It is important to define sustainability at the outset, as it can have different meanings to different people. Sustainability in the context of this Comprehensive Plan means meeting the needs of the present generation without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Additionally, resilience is a topic that is regularly being addressed in Comprehensive Planning and discussed together with sustainability. Strategies that are deployed to achieve resilience are those that increase the ability to adapt to changing conditions and recover rapidly when disruptions or events occur. When considered regarding major weather events, resilience is often discussed as a system that is designed to better withstand the impact and recover more readily after a major event occurs.

For many reasons, the comprehensive planning process is an ideal time for a community to take inventory, complete assessments, engage a broad cross section of stakeholders, and foster conversations about sustainability and resilience. The health and well-being of the entire region is threatened by climate change. In the Midwest, those threats are manifested in more severe storms, more numerous flood events, and temperature extremes. These risks impact infrastructure, as well as the health and prosperity of residents and frequently impact socially disadvantaged populations disproportionately.

Existing Conditions

The city has many existing natural resources that provide an amenity for residents, businesses and tourists.

- The Straight River runs north-south through the middle of the city and branches off into Maple Creek and Izaak Walton Creek heading east.
- Crane Creek flows through the northwest tip of the city near the regional airport.
- Lake Kohlmeier is next to the Straight River in the south end of the city and boasts a swimming beach, fishing pier, walking paths and picnic tables.
- Much of the land along waterways is preserved in city-owned park and trail land.

These natural resources are shown in Figure 5.1, which also shows the location of parks and trails in the city.

Additionally, much of the land along the city's waterways is designated by FEMA as either floodway, 100-year floodplain or 500-year floodplain. The city has a Floodplain Management Ordinance which regulates the types of development that can occur in these areas. Generally, any development in the floodplain needs to be elevated above the regulatory flood protection elevation.

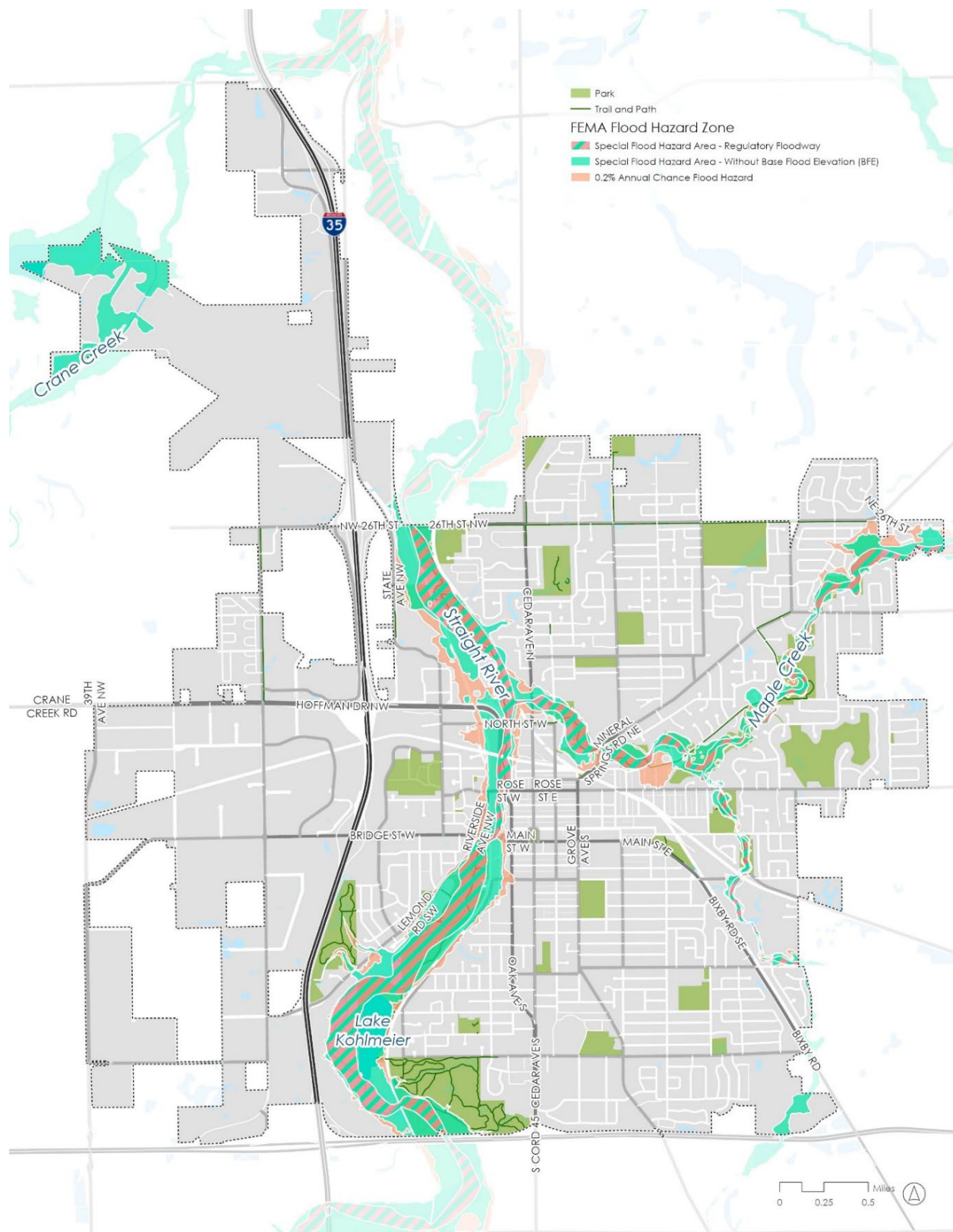


Figure 5.1 Natural Resources

Current Initiatives

The city has several initiatives that relate to the environment and sustainability. These initiatives include tree preservation and management, river cleanup and public works initiatives. Additionally, there are several adopted plans that discuss these topics. Current initiatives and plans are listed below.

Current Initiatives

- The city has several programs for planting, preserving and managing trees: Tree City USA, Shade Tree Committee, Emerald Ash Borer management.
- The city partners to clean up its water through the Straight River Cleanup – Clean Rivers Partners (CRP). "Clean H2Owatonna" is the city's Stormwater Management Program.
- Public Works has objectives to: provide and operate a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4), provide and properly manage a yard waste compost site, protect the environment through administration of programs and permits, maintain a healthy and diverse urban forest; public Works Wastewater Outreach and Education.
- Owatonna is a "Pollinator Friendly City."
- The city has a compost site for community yard waste.

Current Plans

- FY 2022-2024 Strategic Plan goals for Flood Mitigation:
 - Consider engineering studies to address localized areas for flood control
 - Review options and funding sources for implementation
 - Work towards removing city facilities from floodplain
 - Pursue strategic removal of homes in floodplain
- FY 2022-2024 Strategic Plan goals for Emergency Management:
 - Continue disaster response and preparedness efforts
 - Develop Continuity of Operation Plans for the city
 - Implement 5-year Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Parks and Trails Master Plan goals to:
 - Protect and secure land for parks and trails in areas with significant natural resources such as wooded areas, prairie restoration areas, Straight River, Lake Kohlmier, Maple Creek, and Issac Walton Creek.
- [Steele County Hazard Mitigation Plan](#)
- Owatonna LRAP (Long Range Asset Plan) will address the sustainability and resiliency of city facilities.

Sustainability and Resilience Trends

- **Land Use:** Sustainability and resiliency trends are intimately tied to land use patterns, design and function of parks and open space, economic development, and alternative mobility options. Shift towards a smart growth pattern with city infrastructure that is sustainable and affordable long-term.
- **Trees:** Renewed awareness about the public health benefits associated with urban forests. Importance of selecting species of trees for urban forests that are adaptable to climate change and disease resistant.
- **Stormwater:** Rather than designing stormwater ponds, instead creating native planting amenity areas that can be used as open space.
- **Building design:** Healthy buildings include aspects such as indoor air quality, lighting, access to open space, etc.
- **Renewable Energy:** Policies that focus on multiple energy sources, transition to new renewable energy options, and energy conservation should be explored.
- **Community Resilience:** Partnerships that promote and support access to food, health services, housing, emergency preparedness, and overall community wellbeing should be encouraged.

Sustainability and Resilience Goals

Goal 1. Continue activities that preserve and maintain Owatonna's natural resources

- Continue efforts to plant, preserve and manage trees to lower urban heat island effect within the City including Tree City USA, Shade Tree Committee, Emerald Ash Borer management.
- Continue efforts to ensure clean water including partnership with the Straight River Cleanup – Clean Rivers Partners (CRP) and through the City's Clean H2Owatonna program.
- Continue public works objectives to provide and operate a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4), provide and properly manage a yard waste compost site, protect the environment through administration of programs and permits, maintain a healthy and diverse urban forest.
- Continue to embrace the city's status as a Pollinator Friendly City and explore ways to include native plantings in parks and new developments.
- Continue strategic plan goals for flood mitigation and emergency management.
- Create and continue partnerships to clean up the Straight River and provide access to this natural resource.

Goal 2. Explore programs and regulations that will enhance the city’s sustainability and resilience

- a) Explore participation in the GreenStep Cities program to encourage city-led sustainability actions.
- b) Encourage sustainable land management practices to preserve and enhance the city’s natural resources.
- c) Explore the adoption of ordinance language to establish shoreline buffers, address erosion issues along the city’s waterways and protect waterways from pollution.
- d) Explore adoption of ordinance language to designate Environmentally Sensitive Areas and establish protected areas, as identified in the City’s Surface Water Management Plan. These areas include wetlands, wooded areas, shorelands, unprogrammed open spaces, and critical habitats

Goal 3. Continue to develop sustainable and equitable governance structures

- a) Commit to transparency and inclusion in all City decisions and actions, including exploration of a communications hub of events and resources for new and existing residents.
- b) Embrace diversity as a strength and work to ensure city leadership is representative of this diversity.

Goal 4. Continue to provide city services in an efficient and sustainable manner

- a) Plan for efficient and effective growth of City infrastructure and services.
- b) As shown in the City’s Future Land Use Map, approach development growth that is sustainable in the long-term.
- c) Maximize efforts to incorporate energy savings, renewable energy, resilience, and sustainable practices in all areas of City services.
- d) Continue to be fiscally responsible through careful stewardship of City resources and staff.

UTILITIES

Introduction

Owatonna has adopted city-wide plans for water supply, wastewater and stormwater, which it relies on to plan for and provide these services to city residents. This chapter discusses these items at a high-level as it relates to future planning, but mostly relies on and references existing plans for these topics. The goals in this chapter guide the city to continue coordination of utility plans with planned growth in the Comprehensive Plan.

Water Supply

Existing Conditions

Currently, there are eight municipal wells that provide water for the city. All of these wells are installed in bedrock, with depths ranging from 670 to 1325 feet, that draw water from the Prairie Du Chien Jordan, Prairie Du Chien - Mt.Simon and Prairie du Chien - Wonewoc aquifers. Owatonna Public Utilities (OPU) is responsible for water supply within the city. The utility also provides electricity and natural gas to the Owatonna area. Figure 6.1 shows the current water main system within the city.

Plans and Growth

All public water suppliers in Minnesota that operate a public water distribution system and serve more than 1,000 people (including OPU) must adopt a water supply plan approved by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Water supply plans must be updated and submitted to the DNR for approval every ten years. The most recent water supply plan was submitted to the DNR in 2017, and approved by the OPU Commission in March 2018. The OPU Commission is made up of representatives from each ward in the city.

One of the purposes of a water supply plan is to account for future water supply needs and population growth. It is anticipated that OPU will be required to update its water supply plan sometime between 2026-2028. This future water supply plan will analyze any water use trends and population growth that has occurred since the last plan, as well as anticipated population growth included in this Comprehensive Plan. Should proposed development occur in any of the planned growth areas on the east side of the city, as shown in the Future Land Use map, water services will need to be extended to those areas.

Wastewater

Existing Conditions

The existing wastewater collection and treatment system for the city includes the following components:

- Approximately 148 miles of sewer gravity main
- Approximately 5.6 miles of sewer force main
- Approximately 3,000 sewer manholes
- 18 sewer lift stations
- One municipal wastewater treatment facility (WWTF)

The basic layout of this system is shown in Figure 6.1.

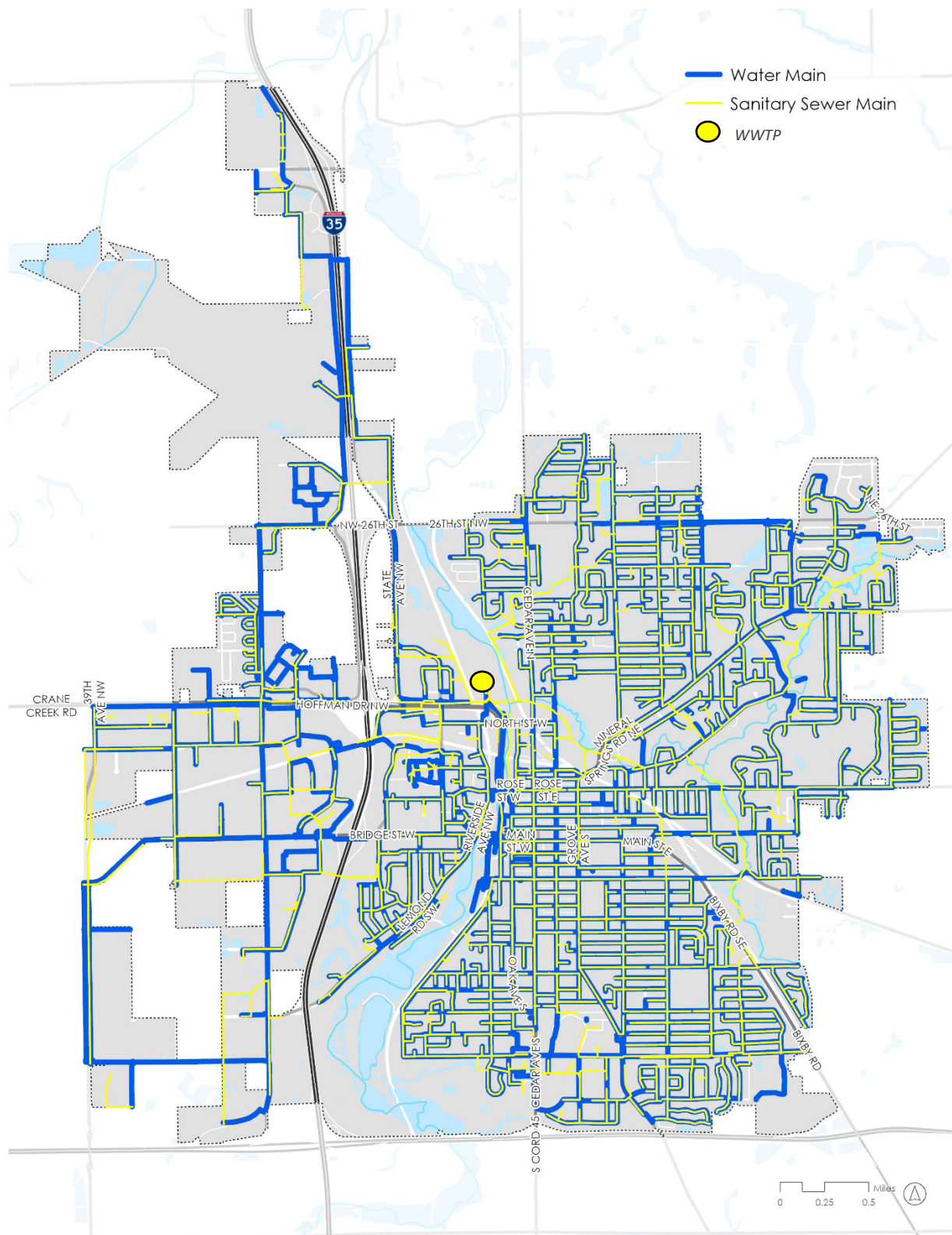


Figure 6.1 Existing Water Supply and Wastewater System

Plans and Growth

In 2017 the city initiated a Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion, which is expected to be completed in 2025. The expansion was needed because the Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) had been operating at or above its capacity for several years. The project will expand the plant from its current capacity of five million gallons per day (MGD) to more than nine million MGD and will serve the city's expected growth through 2050.

In 2023, the city hired Advanced Engineering and Environmental Services, LLC and Nero Engineering to conduct a Wastewater Collection System Study. The purpose of the study was to plan for future growth of the wastewater system and account for the additional capacity provided by the wastewater treatment plant expansion.

The study evaluated for future growth trends. The study service area was developed by reviewing current planning documentation, considering previously completed planning documents, evaluating geographical boundaries, and discussions with City staff. These boundaries establish the future growth areas. This growth area map is shown in Figure 6.2. This map will need to be compared with the adopted Future Land Use map in this Comprehensive Plan to determine whether there are any major incompatibilities with the planned land uses, and intended growth of the wastewater system.

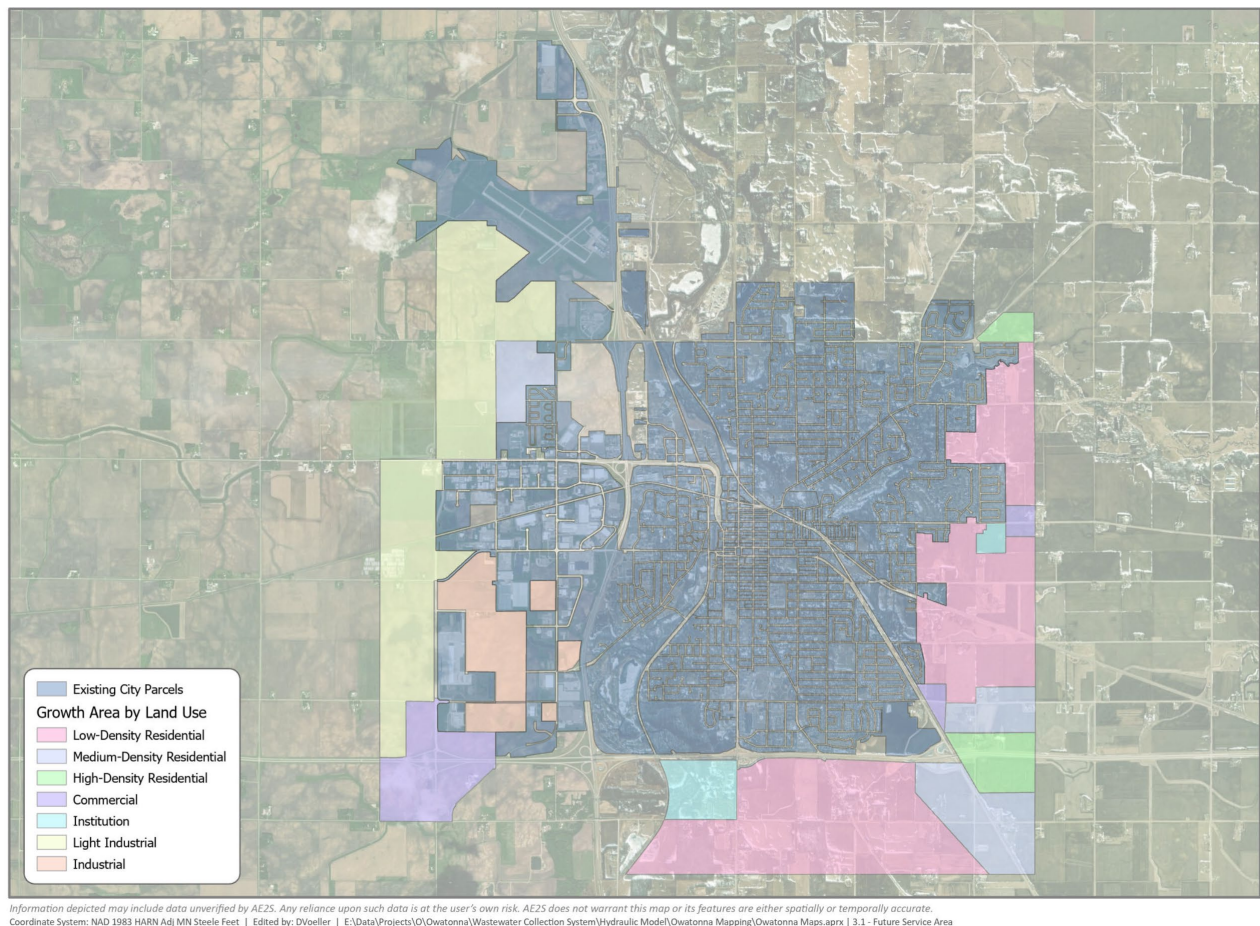


Figure 6.2. Wastewater Collection System Future Service Area and Planned Land Uses
 Source: Owatonna Wastewater Collection System Study

The Wastewater Collection System Study also identified existing bottlenecks in the system, reviewed how the system will grow and guided capital improvements to ensure the collection system is adequate for today and the future. Recommendations from this study are shown in Table 6.1 and Figure 6.3 shows the 30-Year Improvements Prioritization.

Table 6.1 30-Year CIP Wastewater Projects

Project Number	Capital Improvement Project	Anticipated CIP Year	Estimated CIP Cost
WW-01	Straight River Trunk Sewer #1	2024	\$2,759,619
WW-02	Straight River Trunk Sewer #2	2025	\$1,523,750
WW-03	18 th St and Smith Ave Trunk Sewer	2026	\$3,142,929
WW-04	Oakwood Lane Sewer Replacement	2027	\$999,442
WW-05	Straight River Trunk Sewer #3	2028	\$1,412,103
WW-06	Linn Ave Trunk Sewer	2029	\$2,936,955
			\$12,774,798

Source: Owatonna Wastewater Collection System Study

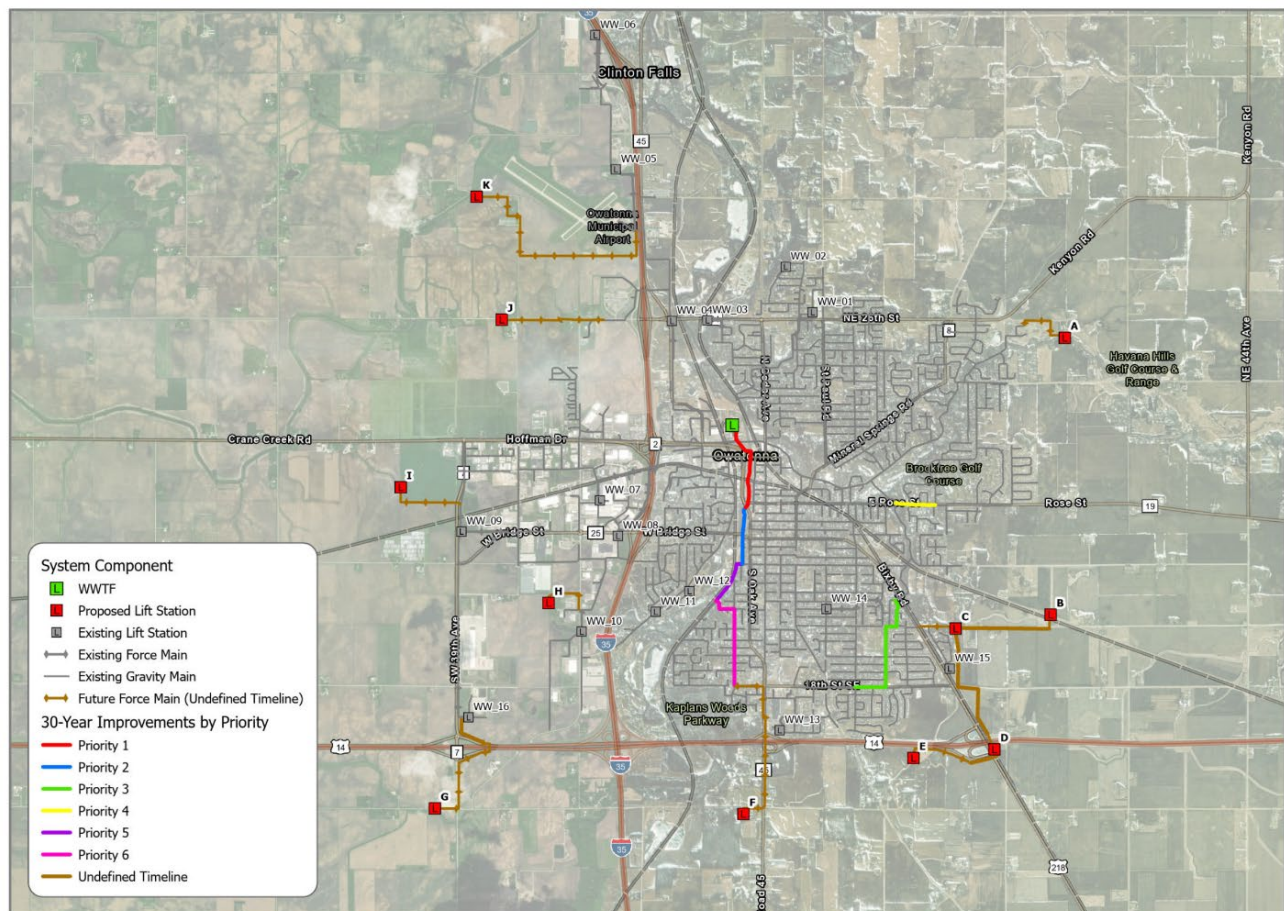


Figure 6.3 Wastewater 30-Year Improvements Prioritization

Source: Owatonna Wastewater Collection System Study

Stormwater

Existing Conditions

The city is situated around the Straight River, to which all runoff generated within the city ultimately discharges. Several creeks are also located around the city, which drain to the Straight River, including Maple Creek, Crane Creek, Willow Creek, and Izaak Walton Creek.

Aside from the river and creeks, the city has few other natural waterbodies. Lake Kohlmeier is the only major waterbody and wetlands are sparsely located throughout the city, with the vast majority located adjacent to the river.

Plans and Growth

Stormwater is managed to protect public safety and property while enhancing the quality of natural habitat and water bodies including the Straight River, Maple Creek, Izaak Walton Creek, Willow Creek, and the Cannon River. The City prioritizes needs based on a SWMP conservation, protection, and restoration of Owatonna's surface water resources, compliance with water quality regulations, and management of expenditures to achieve the most benefits at the least cost.

The City is in the process of developing a new Comprehensive Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP). The SWMP framework will be reflective of regulatory requirements, surface and storm water management schemes, fiscal needs, City policy, asset management, capital improvement planning/implementation tool, as well as inclusion of climate adaption strategies. This plan will be phased, frequently revised, and will aim to address current and future stormwater management needs as expansion and development occurs.

The City last embarked upon a comprehensive stormwater planning effort in 2006 with the development of the City of Owatonna Stormwater Management Plan by McCombs Frank Roos & Associates, Inc. This document has served as the basis for storm water management practices, water resources management, infrastructure planning, and funding since that time. While this document and modeling has been helpful, it is currently outdated due to current and future development needs, revised Atlas-14 precipitation data, and new environmental regulations related To stormwater. This new modeling will inform capital improvement projects that prevent or lessen the impact of major localized flooding and increase climate resiliency of infrastructure throughout the community.

The city's Surface Water Management Plan identifies the goals and policies that define the City's stormwater management program, which are implemented via the City's SWPPP and Stormwater Management Ordinance and development standards. Owatonna's stormwater requirements were written to meet the City's goals to preserve, protect, and manage its water resources, as well as to meet federal, state, and watershed stormwater regulations that comprise the following objectives:

1. Minimize increases in stormwater runoff rates from any development to reduce flooding, siltation, and erosion and to maintain the integrity of stream channels.
2. Minimize increases in nonpoint source pollution caused by stormwater runoff from development which would otherwise degrade local water quality.
3. Minimize the total annual volume of surface water runoff that flows from any specific site during and following development so as not to exceed the predevelopment hydrologic regime to the maximum extent practicable.
4. Ensure that these management controls are properly maintained and pose no threat to public safety.
5. Implement stormwater management controls to help meet current and future total maximum daily load (TMDL) goals, to address the need to improve water quality, and to meet objectives in the Surface Water Management Plan

The city also has a Stormwater Management Program called “Clean H2Owatonna” which is designed to reduce stormwater pollution and eliminate prohibited non-stormwater discharges.

Utilities Goals

Goal 1. Continue to partner with Owatonna Public Utilities to maintain the existing water supply, natural gas and electric systems and plan for expansion of these systems as the city plans for growth.

- a) Although the city does not have a primary role in providing these services, the city should continue to view OPU as a partner in providing these services as efficiently as possible to residents.

Goal 2. Continue to plan for effective and efficient operation and maintenance of the city’s sanitary sewer system

- a) The city will construct its system to facilitate operation and maintenance and prevent inflow and infiltration.
- b) Maintain a detailed inventory of its sanitary sewer system including an up-to-date electronic map including location and specifications of all pipes, structures, and lift stations.
- c) The city will regularly televise and clean its sanitary sewer system to determine whether it is performing adequately.
- d) During major street reconstruction projects, the city will assess the system within the project area and makes improvements as needed.
- e) The city is committed to training those responsible for managing its sanitary sewer system and ensures that staff has the equipment necessary to properly maintain the system.

Goal 3. Continue to plan for expansion of the wastewater system as the city plans for growth.

- a) Implement priority actions from the 2023 Wastewater Collection System Study or subsequent updates to this plan.
- b) The extension of sanitary sewers shall be programmed to achieve maximum benefit from the existing utilities.
- c) The sanitary sewer system shall be constructed to accommodate the proposed land use densities and uses identified in the future land use plan.
- d) The city will provide a system reserve capacity in all trunk designs so that local occurrences of higher sewage generating uses or higher densities can be accommodated.
- e) When in-fill development or redevelopment occurs, Cottage Grove will evaluate existing sanitary sewer systems as to their capacity

Goal 3. Provide, improve, and maintain the public storm sewer system and the stormwater management program as the City plans for growth.

- a) Implement strategies, actions, and capital improvement projects identified in the City's Comprehensive Surface Water Management Plan and update strategies based on development assumptions in the Future Land Use Map.
- b) Continue compliance with and enforcement of the MS4 Program and Permit requirements.
- c) Continue implementing the City's Clean H2OWatonna Stormwater Management Program.
- d) Seek partnerships and collaboration with agencies, organizations, and local property owners
- e) Review and revise stormwater management ordinance, development standards, and modeling as industry standards and climate trends evolve.
- f) Continue to improve the tools used to achieve water quality objectives.
- g) Improve infrastructure resiliency related to climate change and increased rainfall amount, duration, and frequency.
- h) Improve and identify infrastructure capacity and adequacy related to new development and redevelopment.
- i) Encourage and adopt low impact development standards.
- j) Make progress towards meeting current and future waste load allocations (WLAs) derived from total maximum daily load (TMDL) goals, to address the need to improve water quality, and meet objectives in the Surface Water Management Plan.
- k) Implement stormwater management controls identified in the City's Pollutant Reduction Strategy Plan
- l) Encourage private investment and interest in green infrastructure and other stormwater controls
- m) Seek opportunities, identify locations, and potential funding sources for implementing stormwater practices and improvements in areas of developed portions of the City.

IMPLEMENTATION

Public Open House & Online Engagement (May – June 2024)

Overview

The City held an open house to review draft plan content on the evening of May 16th from 4-7pm. Presentations of the material were given at 4:30 and 6pm. The open house materials reviewed the vision and values developed based on what was heard in earlier public engagement. Content in the plan chapters included discussion of future land use, parks and open space, mobility, economic development, sustainability and resilience. Additionally, content included a focus on three areas of proposed land use change: Bridge Street Corridor, North of Downtown and Mixed Use Nodes. Participants were asked to comment on whether the materials within the Comprehensive Plan reflected their vision for the future in Owatonna.



The same content shared in the open house was also provided on the City's website through a virtual StoryMap tool and survey. The same questions posed to participants of the open house were available for comment online. Finally, the city also included information and questions on their Engage Owatonna tool as an additional method to engage residents.

What we heard:

The following summarizes themes of what we heard through this second phase of engagement. These summaries are meant to describe main themes and sentiments heard, not each individual comment. Specific individual responses can be found in the Appendix to this document.

Vision Comments - Do the vision statement and guiding values describe the future you'd like to see for Owatonna?

Most participants expressed that the vision and guiding values generally described the future that they would like to see for Owatonna with a few suggestions for improvement. Participants felt that preservation and enhancement of the city's history, traditional values, heritage and historic downtown should be prioritized in the vision and values. Additionally, participants felt that there should be more of a focus on sustainability and resilience topics in the vision and values. Participants hoped that the city would focus more effort on retaining and attracting young people, and encouraging a diverse, non-segregated community. Other specific topics of importance to participants included a community center, affordable housing, continued focus on parks and trails and the city's fiscal responsibility.

Those who did not believe that the vision and values aligned with their vision for Owatonna expressed dislike for the concept of mixed-use nodes and the traffic and disturbances they may cause existing residents. Additionally, the location of the east side corridor and associated mixed use node was a focus for those who disagreed with the vision and guiding values. Participants expressed a desire for more focus on transportation infrastructure including biking, walking and transit connections. Additional focus on park maintenance and additional entertainment amenities were also topics raised.

Parks & Open Space Comments - Do the Parks and Trails Goals help achieve the future you'd like for Owatonna? Are there other trail connections or park locations you would like to see?

Many of the parks and trails related comments fall into three categories: Specific missing trail connections, funding and maintenance of the current parks and trails system and ideas for locations and amenities in new parks. Participants expressed desire to fill a variety of missing trail connections, most of which were identified in the Parks and Trails Master Plan. Key destinations include the industrial park, high school, mobile home park/new apartments, downtown, North side of town, and neighboring cities and trail systems. Additional information on specific desired connections can be found in the Appendix to this summary.

There was concern about the city's ability to fund and maintain current parks, and desire to focus on maintenance/improvement of existing before expanding to new parks and trails. Participants desire that the city seek funding sources for these improvements, rather than relying solely on city taxes. This was especially relevant when discussing regional parks and trail connections to other cities. The North Country neighborhood was mentioned several times as an area lacking investment in parks and trail resources.

There were several ideas shared for both location and amenity suggestions for new parks. As mentioned above, a location that was highlighted as missing parks/equipment is the North Country neighborhood, as well as the west of town near the new apartments and mobile home park. Both of these areas were identified as general locations for new neighborhood parks in this Comprehensive Plan. Additional park amenities desired include skatepark, splash pad, bike rental, older kid and adult amenities (Ninja Warrior), parks events and programming, natural/forested parks, and an option for indoor recreation such as a rec or community center.

Transportation/Mobility Comments - Do the Transportation goals help achieve the future you'd like for Owatonna?

Participants generally felt that the transportation and mobility goals aligned with the future they would like to see, with some important improvements or enhancements needed within the system. One of the biggest shortcomings expressed by participants of the current transportation system is the lack of both regional and local transit options. Participants felt that the SMART Bus routes are not adequate in that they do not serve the locations peoples want to go to/from, and they are not reliable or frequent. Enhanced transit options are a high priority for participants, including options such as Uber and Lyft.

The East Side Corridor was a main topic covered by participants. While most commenters agreed with the idea of the East Side Corridor, there was no consensus on the location of the road and associated mixed-use nodes. Some felt that the road should move further east from what was initially planned.

Concerns were expressed over the safety and overall options for biking and walking. Participants expressed a desire for a safer multimodal transportation system including potential for dedicated bike lanes, reduced speeds, enhanced crosswalks . Safe routes to schools were also an expressed desire from participants. Commenters desired further public engagement while building out this multimodal system and proactive planning for new developments.

Other ideas expressed included goals for electric vehicle charging stations and electric bikes. Getting people out of cars was a priority for some commenters including better multimodal and transit systems, as discussed above, as well as better connections between housing and workplaces/businesses.

Economic Development Comments - Do the Economic Development goals help achieve the future you'd like for Owatonna?

The Economic Development comments encompass a wide variety of topics including business attraction, focus on downtown, growth and infrastructure spending, small business support, retention of young people, and expansion of the tax base.

Many commenters thought that the city should continue work to attract new businesses to Owatonna. Of specific interest were businesses that could locate in vacant locations downtown, as well as businesses with high-paying jobs such as tech or medical research. Finding ways to support small businesses and entrepreneurs were also priorities expressed.

There was a general sentiment that downtown should be a focus for the city – both filling vacant storefronts and adding retail, restaurants and entertainment options. Participants expressed that these amenities and entertainment, as well as enhanced nightlife could help to attract and retain young people in Owatonna. Additional ideas for attracting young people included more affordable owner-occupied housing, family-friendly entertainment, entrepreneurship opportunities and additional higher ed opportunities.

There was a sentiment that Owatonna needs to continue growing, but that taxes and infrastructure spending need to be affordable to residents. Residents expressed frustration with increased taxes, and encouraged the city to explore how to fund infrastructure without substantial tax increases. One idea expressed was to explore expansion of the tax base through new business attraction.

Sustainability and Resilience Comments - Do the Sustainability and Resilience goals help achieve the future you'd like for Owatonna?

Sustainability and Resilience comments encompassed many different topics from renewable energy to transparent decision-making. Commenters feel that there should be a concerted effort to transition to renewable energy and there is potential for the city to support this through incentives or other initiatives. More stringent goals and vision for sustainability is also desired including more resident education and city initiatives such as native plantings or a compost service. Additional environmentally focused comments included the need for shoreline restoration along the city's waterways and more tree planting to replace ash trees.

Sustainability and resilience comments also included non-environmentally focused topics such as the need for more community input and transparency in decision-making, and more support for education and other services. Commenters also expressed a desire for fiscal sustainability, and for more ways to attract and retain young families in Owatonna such as affordable homes and other entertainment amenities.

General Land Use Comments - Do the Land Use and Housing goals help achieve the future you'd like for Owatonna?

The Land Use input echoes comments from other sections of the plan. Generally, there is a fear of higher density housing, especially when placed adjacent to single-family homes. Some of the concerns include safety, crime, maintenance, and affordability of this type of housing. There is also concern around the location of some of the mixed use nodes, particularly that the East Side Corridor and associated mixed use node should be moved further east. Additionally, there is a sentiment that Owatonna should fix and maintain its existing infrastructure before building new infrastructure.

There is an expressed need for affordable housing in Owatonna, that is also supported by the housing study. Participants particularly would like to see "affordability" defined and a concerted effort to attract more affordable single-family home developments. A continuum of senior housing is also desired by commenters. Finally, more attractions for young people was an issue that arose in the land use comments.

Additionally, six word stories were collected about three focus areas: Bridge St Corridor, North of Downtown and Mixed Use nodes. These specific six-word stories can be found in the Appendix to this document.

Appendix – All Comments

Vision Comments - Do the vision statement and guiding values describe the future you'd like to see for Owatonna?

- Yes – good strategic location.
- Not separate walking areas. Easy access to ALL areas, segregated areas cause division.
- What are “historic strengths?” Not historic buildings which are left to deteriorate and torn down for apartments or parking lots.
- Absolutely!
- Yes (x15)
- No
- It seems that our heritage is being lost and that still needs to be a priority while moving forward into the future.
- I wish there was more of an emphasis on future development focused on the growing community of young people AND continued diversity
- For the most part, yes. I wish there was mention of there being a focus/plan on filling the empty buildings in the historic downtown area with viable retail options- surprised you're using old photo of Cedar St in this Plan - especially after so many dollars were spent on Streetscape Project completed a few years ago.
- Sort of/mostly/somewhat
- For the most part, yes. I would like to see more emphasis on recycling. We have taken styrofoam and electronic equipment to Mankato to recycle for free! We need to do this here. And we need wind and solar energy options offered by OPU now!
- Yes. We desperately need a Community Center with a large pool to use for not only swimming lessons, but also big enough to host large swim meets. The OMS pool will not last forever. And being able to host large events will bring spectators to Owatonna along with their spending as well.
- Somewhat; focus on sustainability and addressing resiliency in the face of climate change needs to be focused on harder.
- No. This plan is overly focused on outdated development trends from 10-20 years ago of densely populated cities, particularly the concept of mixed-use nodes. These nodes are no longer desirable, as many cities are now spending significant resources to remove them due to the associated issues they bring to residential neighborhoods. While the idea of having businesses close to residents might seem beneficial, it fails to account for the unwanted traffic and disturbances they introduce. For example, a new gas station can quickly become a hotspot for illicit activities, exacerbating existing problems in the area. Residents are willing to travel a bit further—whether by car, on foot, or by bike—to avoid the proliferation of such mixed-use areas in their quiet neighborhoods. This plan also neglects the pressing need for improved transportation infrastructure in Owatonna. It is currently unsafe to walk across many streets due to poorly maintained crosswalks, and biking across town is not a viable option because of safety. Public transportation options are severely lacking, and there are no services connecting Owatonna to nearby destinations such as a major airport. The only taxi service is inadequate,

and Lyft and Uber are not permitted. A more effective approach would be to develop larger commercial areas strategically placed outside of residential zones. This would better serve the community's needs without compromising the tranquility of neighborhoods.

- Yes. seems to fit what we are striving to be.
- Not at all.
- It seems like something to strive towards but it also depends on the people in town to help pull out your vision. I'd love to be in a happy town where people get along but the truth is that does not always happen. Our schools need to be open and our kids need to be nicer to others and not talk down or against each other. Our schools need to challenge our kids not just feed them the teacher's opinions. I think that the town is getting a bit too big for our britches and we need to stop pushing the boundaries.
- Yes. love it!
- Some. We need more affordable options like a tiny home HOA supported community so seniors can afford to move out of their big houses to make them available to young families that need the space. Currently everything is more expensive than just staying in a home you have paid off so seniors don't have options to downsize if it will cost them more than they spend now on housing.
- Yes, especially the parks and trails section.
- Yes. I would like to see the city be very careful about how the bike lanes would be implemented. The concrete curbs in Northfield are rather dangerous. They are seldom used and young kids now ride on top of the concrete rather than in the lane. I would hope that whatever is done is safe for drivers and bike riders and that it is financially smart in design. Many people ride or walk down Kenyon Rd toward Mineral Springs and that is not safe for riders or drivers. I would welcome safe paths when the time is fiscally right.
- We are in a paradigm and the future is impossible to predict.
- For the most part yes
- Not if you put the East side corridor road so close to all ready established neighborhoods. Move the road over to 34th Ave so more residential homes can be built.
- No, I believe Imagine Owatonna missed an opportunity. The entire population was not contacted; instead, select, hand-picked groups were chosen, including minorities and high school students. While their input is valuable, it does not represent the community as a whole. By definition, minorities are not the majority, and most high school students lack the life experience of owning a home or living independently to base their decisions on. Apart from one downtown Thursday event, no open house or information-gathering session was available to the public. Hand-selected study groups do not provide an accurate representation. I do not believe Imagine Owatonna represents what I or a majority of other residents want to see. I prefer a more clustered development on the east side of town, planned further out to allow the city to grow into it. Currently, it takes 10 minutes to drive across town. Concentrating everything in one area on the east side would cut travel time in half, making everything accessible within 5 minutes. Additionally, alternative transportation is necessary. We lack public transportation and bike lanes, which would be especially beneficial for the aging, disabled, and younger active populations. The smart bus is insufficient, with a 30-minute window that may not get people to work on time. Transportation to an airport would also be ideal. We need entertainment options to attract younger populations and small families. Owatonna currently lacks things to do, causing

residents to leave town for entertainment and contribute tax dollars elsewhere. None of this is addressed in the current plan. Parks are great and should be the focus of mixed-use nodes rather than businesses. However, we cannot afford the upkeep of the parks we currently have. This was the first year preventative maintenance has ever been done, and our park has gone seven years without any improvements. Owatonna cannot support one or two scattered businesses throughout the city. We struggle to support the small and chain businesses we currently have. While new businesses bring in revenue, they also come with high costs when they cannot stay afloat and close. The lack of foot traffic in residential neighborhoods would deter future businesses, leaving empty buildings and a loss of tax base. Recently, Dairy Queen, KFC, Caribou, and a few local businesses closed. How can we expect businesses to survive in the middle of a residential area? It doesn't fit the character of Owatonna.

- Not really , I love a diverse population. A fusion of many cultures. But I also want to see all people succeed and be independent . I want to see interactive neighborhoods not ghettos - which is exactly how these neighborhood pods will become. Sequestering people rather than interaction.
- Keep a focus on our traditional values, strong work ethic, and the one you didn't mention - being fiscally responsible. Owatonna is the town it is today largely because of hard working, fiscally responsible companies and the people they've employed. The current trends have been spending too much money and raising our local taxes to the point many can't afford.

Parks & Open Space Comments - Do the Parks and Trails Goals help achieve the future you'd like for Owatonna? Are there other trail connections or park locations you would like to see?

- Enjoy the parks, trails – like to use trails for biking, walking etc.
- Why are we planning more parks when we don't have equipment in all the parks we already have. Ex) North Country Neighborhood.
 - Agreed!
- Currently have adequate parks, beautiful.
- There are no trails for bikes or walking from city center to the industrial park.
- Connect Buxton trail to North trail.
- Kaplan Woods is a gem. It is heavily used by many types of users.
- Yes (x12)
- I think so. I like the idea of expanding our north-south trail system and adding something east-west. I am surprised by the lack of goals and plans for parks and trails in the west of town near the new apartments and the mobile home park.
- I think so I would like to see a new skatepark built as well as splash pads and even an indoor park for winter time.
- I think so.
- I think it's great it's a start for sure but need some more concrete solution to connecting the suburbanized and sectioned off areas of Owatonna to parks The mineral springs/Northern side of town is very closed off especially the newer development.
- Yes now plan to eliminate the stinky dog poop along the trails / ban dogs (I'm a dog owner).
- No (x2)

- All should be connected.
- Build by high school.
- Connections to the new apartments near Lowe's/Kohls and the mobile home park.
- Missing parks and sidewalks in the Oakwood/Crestview area.
- The bike trail connecting owatonna to Medford (abandoned railway), mantorville (stagecoach trail). Improve the accessibility of the river for recreational use (canoeing, kayaking).
- I would love to see a park near the Rose street/Turtle Creek area.
- One to rice lake state park.
- Connect to other cities.
- Trail to Rice Lake. More sidewalks in neighborhoods.
- 18th street to Bixby Road.
- Bridge Street to Allan Ave and connection to Wilson Elementary, Better downtown bike access after getting off of the Muckle Trail.
- WHEN a community center is built on the old high school property (crossing fingers) PLEASE keep the land south of it (on Prospect St) as green space for outdoor play. People use that area for pick up golf football, kite flying, and overall sports practice with their children.
- east side corridor, but I believe that is already the plan.
- Yes; creating travel via means other than cars, grows a community closer together. It exposes people to nature, and helps them feel connected to the world around them.
- Parks and trails are wonderful amenities, but we currently lack the funding and resources to maintain our existing parks. Residents have been waiting nearly a decade for the city to install equipment in existing parks, and they are still told these parks are not a priority with no funding planned for their development. In some areas, residents must travel over three miles to reach the nearest park, making it impractical for children to visit, but still no funding to build or improve these parks often leaving funding to residents themselves. Moreover, our trails have never received preventative maintenance until now. While connecting Owatonna to other major trails is a commendable idea, it seems counterproductive to build more parks and trails when we cannot adequately fund and maintain the ones we already have. Prioritizing the upkeep and development of existing parks and trails should be our focus before expanding further.
- yes but trails connections need to be prioritized throughout the budget process to make them actually happen.
- Not really.
- Yes- Historically a source of pride; need to continue to nurture and update this area. Have been neglected with no clear vision over the last 25 years.
- I wish we had a longer and more connected trail system for bikes and walking. Encourage parking in the lots and not just on the road by soccer and baseball fields.
- I would like to see gaps filled.
- Need rentals of covered multi-seat bikes with canopies.
- Yes, more connection of trails would be a good thing.
- Yes adding parks and trails to the north end of town would be wonderful.
- We need playground that are good for older kids and adults. I see Ninja warrior courses and other cool playgrounds in other towns.

- Can we sustain our parks? While we continue to build new parks, it seems we have neglected their maintenance, and eventually, we'll need to replace all park amenities. Moreover, we haven't secured adequate funding for our current parks. How do we strike a balance? As we consider larger parks to connect with neighboring towns, can we seek funding from sources beyond the city? Should it be a collective responsibility across the county or even the state if the park spans multiple counties? Are there fundraising opportunities like bike races or 5Ks on our trails to promote usage? Taxes are already high, and parks are a significant recreational offering here. We cannot rely solely on taxing to cover park expenses. Where is the equilibrium? Connecting to other trails is a positive idea that could attract more visitors, necessitating a reconsideration of how to encourage them to stay and engage in local activities. Perhaps we can learn from successful models like Lanesboro.
- Yes! We love the park system and trails!
- Not sure where a rec center was mentioned, I am for a rec center in Owatonna but don't understand why the school is spending millions to preserve two gyms while there is a city need as well. Planning and working together to find a more economical solution fell short.
- It could, but you need to draw the youth to it. Classes in forestry , biology that connect the schools to the parks (Woodlake nature preserve in Richfield is one example . To connect people in the arts with programming photo classes and plein art painting in conjunction with an accredited college - MCAD ,University of Mn . Or Facebook groups like urban sketchers in Mpls , arts Midwest etc. will bring Steele co residents - hopefully young people to the parks. But also hosting marathons - if me Chad langes dream of uniting all the parks with a trail (as I understand it) it would be dynamite for a marathon or Ironman. And those events being in a ton of money. Likewise pride events. What happened last year was a horrid terrible blight on our community. I attended the pride in the park. It was a very sweet low key loving lovely & affirming event. Very different then Mpls reachour and often ranchy pride event. There's a place for crazy. But there's also a place for a laid back celebration of self. And it could also bring opportunities and money to our community. The lbgt community is vibrant. Involved in arts , literacy , education , restoration of historic homes and neighborhoods. We need this it is a scandal how they were treated last year. The cross welcoming people on I35 just says hypocrisy esp. with the lions den billboard across the way. This needs to be changed.
- We can't afford more parks and trails. If you push these through, make the large apartments pay for them.
- Will there be any consideration given to purchasing or using current swaths of barren land or unused farm land to let grow into new forested parks? For one to be planted now and be enjoyed in 2050 as a testament to this future vision?
- Connections to larger statewide trails would be great, but despite being planned for decades, they have yet to come to fruition. Currently, we can't afford to maintain the parks and trails we have. At the cost of millions, such connections aren't cost-effective unless they attract additional income streams. If we're going to connect to other trails, we need attractions that encourage people to visit and stay in the area. How do we convince them to linger and spend money? This ties back to accessibility. Sure, they can bike into Owatonna and continue on a trail, but we should aim for them to stay and explore. Currently, walking and biking in Owatonna is dangerous. We need to improve safety to welcome these trails. What attractions can make Owatonna a destination for trail users? Addressing these questions is essential to make such an

investment successful and to create a welcoming, safe environment that encourages visitors to spend time and money in Owatonna.

- Connection from north of Countryview Ave to Greenhaven to allow for a nice loop and easy access to Mineral Springs Park.
- Yes somewhere close to deer trail/wood duck lane area. Possibly on the lots between wood duck lane and grey fox?
- Improved safety on bridge street and around canning company.
- A path to get to the high school on Hayes Street is needed and on 18th street to make it safe for kids to walk from the neighborhood. With a 2 mile distance needed to get bus access that leaves a lot of kids who need to bike or walk to school. Not everyone can drive or be driven to school.
- not a park but a community center.
- We need to improve the walking path under the bridges along Hoffman/Oak. When it rains or melts it can really interrupt exercise when you find the gates closed due to flooding.
- Kaplan's woods to the ball diamonds hi the fair grounds.
- More connections to out of town trails.
- The subdivision in North County urgently requires amenities for their park, promised seven years ago. Since then, the project has been neglected, and we've been informed that there's no funding available, with equipment no longer being transferred from other parks. Why can't we secure funding for our current parks? Ensuring that all of Owatonna is bike-friendly would be beneficial. This means more than just creating a trail encircling the city; it involves making it safe and easy for children to bike to parks and other destinations, and for adults to commute by bike to work. However, priority should be given to funding our existing infrastructure first!
- A park on Countryview Ave where the development is set for one! A trail connecting from Rose St/ Patridge Ave south to 18th St SE.
- Scenic trails like those along the straight river are desired. Trails along busy roads like 26th street offer no appeal. Build trail connections on less busy roads. Look for ways to expand scenic trails.
- To connect all parks - to are it drivable like the grand rounds in mpls.
- No, we have ample supply as is.

Transportation/Mobility Comments - Do the Transportation goals help achieve the future you'd like for Owatonna?

- Add Riverland to bus route.
- Ability to easily bike/walk TO downtown not around the outskirts of town.
- Public transportation to get people to existing businesses and events.
- We need transit to Minneapolis – via Burnsville or Rosemount/Apple Valley.
- Need regular airport transportation.
- I like the idea of an east side corridor.
- Need a north-south connection further west and closer to town as it exists today.
- 55 mph highway is too fast and extremely unsafe at a 29th avenue location abutting so many homes and people.
- Why are we putting a school next to a 55 mph road? How will we prevent children from being injured or killed?

- ESC needs to be built further east to protect existing residents. Never has a road like this been built adjacent to residents in all of Steele County.
- Other options for east side corridor?
- Planned at 29th Ave?!?! NO!
- East side corridor needs to be re-located!
- County highway this close to 150-home neighborhood is unsafe, unprecedented, and puts children and the resiliency of this neighborhood at risk.
- Corridor needs to be moved. Once homes were built, the plan should have been changed to keep families safe.
- More roundabouts
- Yes -Need more transit type transportation for people without their own means that runs on the weekend as well
- Yes (x10)
- Need to get bike traffic off sidewalks in Downtown Owatonna. It's not being enforced....the tire tracks/skid marks are proof of this activity. It's a bad accident waiting to happen.
- Kind of. Owatonna missed the mark years ago on transportation goals.
- Fewer stop lights. They waste too much time.
- I do but I think an electric bike service similar to the scooter would be great for areas like Bridge Street and North Oak where the hills are hard to traverse but still vital areas where bike access is needed.
- I also think it's important to plan out Owatonna's transportation needs to give access to biking and walking to the Owatonna High School, OMS, and the 5 elementary school which would allow low income students more affordable transportation and allow for more exercise and lower obesity rates in children in the area to add on to making the city safer for children and other pedestrians.
- I think speed limits especially on Bridge Street and South Oak should be enforced more heavily mainly by narrowing the roads and adding bike lanes or bus lanes to our main arterials I don't think that narrowing or removing lanes will affect traffic if Owatonna commits to bikeability and walkability in the city and I think a major rethinking of what transportation method should come first is very important. I think in the future Owatonna should focus on biking and walking in our city and deprioritize cars but keep main access roads available for people who commute to and from the city.
- I worry about the East Side Corridor. I don't like it so close to current housing.
- Slow down 40 mph traffic on Bridge Street.
- YES, and I want more! Expanding the standing options for public transportation in Southern MN will change life for elders, the disabled, and help relieve pressure on families with limited means. With a strong campaign, it would become such a force for good in our community that can keep elders independent, longer, give the disabled opportunities to experience their communities and maintain their lives easier, and give families with limited transportation a way to get errands completed while someone else takes the car. Hell, I'd be able to get groceries done while my car is in the shop! Please reach out to other cities (Mankato, Rochester, Albert Lea, etc) and see if there's the possibility of expanding this web!
- The transportation goals outlined in the current plan are inadequate and fail to address key concerns raised by residents regarding bikeability, walkability, and public transportation. When

questioned about these issues, the response—"those are all great ideas, and we encourage residents and Owatonna to come up with creative solutions"—is insufficient and demonstrates a lack of actionable strategies. As a young family privileged to own two vehicles, we recognize the desire for alternative transportation options. Our attempts to bike to local destinations, such as ice cream shops, have been met with significant challenges. Although there are a few hills, the more pressing issue is the inadequacy of current infrastructure. Bikers are confined to sidewalks that are too narrow to accommodate both cyclists and pedestrians safely. There are no dedicated bike lanes on roads, making it unsafe for families with small children. Walkability is similarly compromised. Even if we drive downtown and then walk, crossing the main roads is hazardous due to insufficient controlled crosswalks and drivers who do not slow down. Implementing reduced speed limits in downtown areas could mitigate some of these safety concerns. Strategically placed development on the east side of town could reduce travel distances and provide residents with multiple directional choices for their commutes. This would also facilitate planning for additional safety measures for biking and walking. To comprehensively address these issues, the city must incorporate several advanced strategies:

1. ****Infrastructure Development****: Establish dedicated bike lanes separate from pedestrian sidewalks to ensure safe and efficient travel for both cyclists and walkers. This includes creating wide, well-maintained pathways that accommodate all users.
2. ****Traffic Calming Measures****: Implement reduced speed limits and increase the number of controlled crosswalks in high-traffic areas to enhance pedestrian safety.
3. ****Public Transportation Enhancement****: Develop a robust public transportation system that includes reliable and frequent service options to reduce dependency on private vehicles.
4. ****Comprehensive Urban Planning****: Ensure that new developments, particularly on the east side of town, incorporate these transportation needs from the outset. This proactive approach will alleviate current challenges and support sustainable growth.
5. ****Community Engagement and Education****: Actively involve residents in planning processes and educate them on the benefits of alternative transportation options to foster a community-wide commitment to these initiatives.

Addressing these transportation challenges with a detailed, actionable plan is imperative for creating a safer, more accessible, and interconnected community in Owatonna.

- Yes. 29th Ave needs to be constructed in its proposed location. This will alleviate the traffic issues downtown and will make a safer, more expedient route for vehicles around the City. Moving it does now good. Also 20th Street NE needs to be constructed through.
- Nope
- The East Side Corridor has been planned where you show it for years. Now to go back and put Partridge Ave. and other areas back into the mix of options is extremely unfair! We bought our houses here because of the quiet, there was no plan when we bought these houses to put a major street behind our homes!! The people who bought their homes at the 29th Ave. location NEW WHAT THEY WERE BUYING!!!!
- East side belt way needs to be done. 26th street plan for future growth needs attention.
- Stop the roundabout madness. If they need to be applied then they need to be larger like the one off 26th street and county road 45.
- We need a north south road on the east side of town! this has been overlooked for far too long!!
- We need more transportation options than just SMART Bus.

- Yes, but I would add a goal about adding more electric charging stations.
- Yes including the East side corridor.
- Connecting the north side from 26th street to 18th street is important to me.
- Building no new roads and renew the urban center using existing inter structure.
- Public transportation is poor in Owatonna. There are more people needing services than what can be supported by one bus.
- Needed: Sustainable, efficient, alternative & airport transportation. The smart bus is inadequate and unreliable for most residents, offering a wide window for pick-up and drop-off due to its lack of a set route. With a growing population, particularly in high-density housing areas, many residents may not own vehicles, underscoring the necessity for alternative transportation. However, the scattered nature of mixed-use nodes makes walkability impractical since residents require access to all businesses and jobs. This presents another challenge with the nodes. For mixed-use nodes to succeed, dependable public transportation is crucial. Residents need assurance that catching a bus at a specific time will ensure punctual arrival at work, especially given the stringent punctuality policies at many Owatonna jobs. The current plan neglects these requirements and exacerbates issues associated with mixed-use nodes. High-density developments near business districts could enhance job accessibility for non-drivers, thereby increasing housing affordability. Biking and walking are viable options that warrant attention. For example, residents in nearby residential areas face challenges walking safely to the clinic due to busy roads and inadequate sidewalks, a longstanding concern. Residents frequently travel to the cities, often for air travel. Implementing a shuttle service similar to Rochester's airport-to-airport connection and/or to a metro station for additional employment opportunities in the metro would be advantageous. This service could involve door-to-door transport or utilize secure park-and-ride facilities. To succeed, it must offer reliable service with either scheduled on-demand or regular interval options. The current plan overlooks the need for alternative transportation options. These amenities must be addressed and implemented for Owatonna to evolve into the larger city it aspires to become.
- The east corridor roadway needs to be further east than the 29th Avenue location for a better and safer future Owatonna.
- The desire for mixed use and higher density neighborhoods have not been listed as factors for where to build an east side corridor. Noise and traffic volume are important factors for planning a road. The county is unaware of the cities vision, the county should identify serving mixed use neighborhoods in its plans for building a new road.
- I'd like to see mass transit connect to Mankato , Rochester and to twin cities. Connecting to burnsville with more bus times during week and weekend would be a great start.
- Overall seems fine. The increased number of sidewalks could get very expensive and, as previously pointed out, people can't afford it in this economy. Also, I've noticed a trend of people no longer clearing sidewalks in the winter. You will have difficulty enforcing.
- The East Side Corridor is my only concern. An East side corridor would be great for the City's future. My concern is that the routes that are being most highly desired by government agencies are way too close to existing neighborhoods and do not address a more functional and safe option further east. A more Eastern option will serve Owatonna more functionally today and promote great growth for the City. Very disappointed how this process has been handled at all levels of government.

Economic Development Comments - Do the Economic Development goals help achieve the future you'd like for Owatonna?

- More owner occupied not high density. This can be condos or owner occupied duplexes.
- If you want young entrepreneurs – you need to have room for them and not big box/chain stores.
- Keep the unions out and Owatonna will boom.
- We need to bring in more retail, casual dining, and entertainment options to the city. Higher education options
- I would like to see more support for our younger population. They need things to do here in order to attract and retain young people. (Prevent brain drain!)
- I think chamber could work harder in encouraging businesses to relocate to owatonna. Incentivize them. We have store fronts available in downtown Owatonna
- Yes - finding ways to specifically attract BIPOC businesses could be added
- No. How about high paying jobs. Tech, medical research. High paying jobs brings more money to OWATONNA and helps with diversity
- Yes. Can't keep raising taxes double digits for businesses.
- Keep recruiting
- Increase retail in downtown area.
- I feel the city and the community has done a lot for Owatonna
- Yes (x10)
- No
- We need to grow Owatonna, and this fact is evident. Comprehensive studies of the city show that attracting and retaining younger generations while offering amenities for senior citizens is crucial. These two groups often seek similar amenities and services. While Owatonna boasts many beautiful parks, they are most enjoyable only a few months out of the year. The city significantly lacks entertainment options for families, forcing residents to travel elsewhere for activities that could be supported locally. These include indoor play areas, pools, children's museums, trampoline parks, and unique attractions such as escape rooms, virtual reality experiences, amusement parks, and real-life puzzle games. Owatonna should not bear the financial burden of these attractions. Instead, the city should seek outside investors willing to build and support these ventures. Currently, our youth lack affordable entertainment options, leading to increased risks of drug and alcohol use as alternative forms of entertainment. This situation contributes directly to the rising homelessness rates among young people, which imposes significant costs and detriments to the economy. Moreover, we are struggling to maintain our existing infrastructure. Crosswalks have faded, roads are crumbling, and we cannot complete new road projects. The East and West Beltlines remain unfinished, yet we continue building more roads because the incomplete ones do not meet our needs. We can only afford to repair one mile out of the 162 miles of roadway in Owatonna each year, despite property taxes increasing by 8-10% annually. For economic growth, we need to scrutinize our spending and invest in the needs of current and future residents. This involves listening to residents and not just developers looking to make a quick profit. Regardless of how much we increase our tax base, the economy will not continue to grow until we figure out how to fund our existing infrastructure without substantial annual tax increases. To grow the economy, we need to ensure residents

have disposable income. Substantially increasing property taxes year after year diminishes the money residents can spend locally. Even if we attract new residents, high property taxes with few attractions will deter them from choosing to live and stay here. We must find ways to decrease property tax burdens while enhancing local attractions to make Owatonna a more appealing and affordable place to live.

- The City should be more aggressive in attracting businesses here.
- Not realistic.
- Having Mixed Use Node #2 where you show it is ridiculous. People buy houses on this side of town to be away from this crap, and it will never survive that far from the main areas of the city. Stupid idea! Also in Mixed Ues Node #3, you show more mixed use right adjacent to established homes, ARE YOU SERIOUS?! Are you just trying to anger as many people as you can? These plans are not thought out at all!
- Yes. Note that Mayo needs to up their commitment or hand off clinic to Allina.
- We need to keep business downtown. Put the Tesla chargers back in service (someone cut the cord). It allows free charging while we visit downtown. The chargers near OPU are not close enough to walk to downtown and it's kinda sketchy there.
- Yes. I appreciate the success so far and want them to continue.
- We need to clean up the empty buildings in downtown Owatonna and force landlords to stop using vacant store fronts (like the one next to Muzuki) as a tax write off.
- Needs to be a goal about keeping the rent of buildings affordable for small businesses. Would be nice if new apartments and buildings built looked nicer.
- This will continue to be important for our town to prosper well.
- What happens if Truth moves to South Dakota, Bosch loses the GM and Ford contracts. Example: Truth paint line is closing.
- Not if you put the East side corridor road (North to South)so close to all ready established neighborhoods. Move the road over to 34th Ave so more residential homes can be built.
- Residents cannot sustain significant annual tax increases. Owatonna's economy relies on its tax base, primarily from homeowners and businesses through property taxes. Renters do not directly contribute to property taxes. Currently, businesses and new rental developments receive tax incentives to establish themselves here, placing the economic burden heavily on homeowners. Many homeowners are expressing concerns about affordability, voting against crucial measures because they can't afford the increases. From this perspective, Owatonna's economic outlook appears bleak, and Imagine Owatonna fails to touch on this. Owatonna is responsible for maintaining 162 miles of roads, many of which are in poor condition—cracked, crumbling, and weeds growing through. Major road projects this year covered only 0.9 miles, meaning each mile of road must last more than 162 years. How can residents be expected to continue paying higher taxes while essential infrastructure deteriorates? Meanwhile, large businesses benefit from tax breaks. Residents cannot bear annual tax increases of 8-10%, as has been the trend in recent years. Such increases could lead to new housing development but a declining population as current residents move away. While expanding the tax base with more businesses is necessary, it should not burden residents. Additionally, the focus on high-density residential developments with restrictions on single-family homes further strains the economy, forcing existing homeowners to subsidize new residents. To truly enhance Owatonna's economy, addressing current infrastructure deficiencies is essential to attract new residents with amenities

and entertainment that encourage them to stay, thereby increases all local tax bases. Instead of incentivizing development with tax breaks, efforts should focus on expanding the actual tax base. Listening to residents who bear the brunt of this obligation is essential, and this plan failed to do that.

- When attracting a young workforce to Owatonna, the biggest complaint I hear is a complete lack of nightlife. That was not addressed as a need.
- Not the high density housing pods.
- No. Diversified businesses made this town. Don't jeopardize that with continued local government spending that keeps increasing the tax burden.

Sustainability and Resilience Comments - Do the Sustainability and Resilience goals help achieve the future you'd like for Owatonna?

- I have not heard of these programs (Tree City USA, Shade Tree Committee, Emerald Ash Borer management) and I need them.
- Renewable Energy – yay! More!
- Like making stormwater collection areas more attractive and usable.
- Sustainability and Resilience are just buzz words.
- I think so/No/Who knows
- Yes(x6)
- I think the goals are amazing but I have some ideas Owatonna should implement a credit for people with solar panels or who are exploring to buy solar panels for their homes to add more incentive for people to switch to renewable energy
- I REALLY want these to be stringent and harder. On top of what's listed, I think there's opportunity to create resources for better education whether via community ed, or some other means re:composting, yard practices, planting native species, etc. as such I also think owatonna should be looking at what it can do to limit pesticide usage, create bug hotels and incorporate native planting and ecological Restoration into their plans (in conjunction with parks goals) in this regard. Climate change is happening now and we need to get on this. (Education could also include utilizing collected rainwater?) Owatonna should also look at relaxing ordinances regarding lawn maintenance; a change in maximum grass height would be a significant change for gas usage, and carbon capture from our grasses. Other cities have also incorporated a pickup for organic waste for composting. Would this be viable? The town already smells like dog feces from the dog food plant so any worry about smell would be negligible, and it could be used in parks projects, or be sold to homes.
- I'm deeply invested in seeing Owatonna thrive, but I don't believe this plan will achieve that. While I understand it's just a plan, I've had the opportunity to connect with numerous residents, and it's clear that this plan doesn't align with their wants and needs. Over recent years, it has become evident that Owatonna lacks the necessary financial resources for proper maintenance, leading to decisions driven by the desires of a select few who prioritize quick profits over the city's long-term sustainability and resilience, as seen in this plan. Having observed Owatonna's decision-making process, I've witnessed both successes and failures. What I've learned is that inclusive decision-making, which considers the perspectives of all residents rather than just

certain social circles, could lead to more effective use of resources and greater resident satisfaction. This approach would foster city growth far more than any professional development plan. Unfortunately, the lack of accessibility and transparency along with the marginalization surrounding this plan and the city as a whole is concerning. It was only made available to the public once, during a brief event downtown, with no opportunity for thorough discussion, note-taking, or community discussions. This does not accurately represent the desires and concerns of Owatonna residents, who express their needs daily. In order to truly grow and thrive, Owatonna needs decision-makers who prioritize community input, transparency, and inclusivity. By actively listening to and involving all residents in the decision-making process, we can create a city that reflects the aspirations and priorities of its diverse population.

- Shoreline restoration will be more important.
- Dreaming needs to stop. Listen to the people who are tired of the destruction of Owatonna because someone wants to be a big city.
- If you're a pollinator friendly city then why don't you plant more flowers? There's a lot of empty spaces in the parking lots and Lincoln where trees used to be. Encourage parents to turn off their cars waiting to pick up their kids from school and play games at soccer and baseball fields. Seems like the town is getting bigger and you're not able to keep up with roads and fixing roads and potholes. Invest in what you have. Bigger doesn't always mean better.
- I would like a plan regarding the replacement of all the ash trees the community is losing!
- We need more vision about moving towards solar, wind and electric and begin investing heavily in that technology.
- We have to become a bedroom community with commuter buses or rail to Rochester, Mankato and the Metro.
- Not if you put the East side corridor road so close to all ready established neighborhoods. Move the road over to 34th Ave so more residential homes can be built.
- This plan is neither sustainable nor resilient. As outlined above, this plan is predictable, but not in the desired way. It is clear that this plan did not address the concerns of a majority of residents. While it might look appealing on paper, it sets Owatonna up for failure and additional expenses. We need to plan for desired growth with the infrastructure to support it. Owatonna has a unique culture and atmosphere. Located 45 minutes from major areas poses unique challenges, as it's historically just outside the distance most people are willing to commute daily. Owatonna is not a big city like the metro area nor is it on par with Mankato or Rochester. But it is not a small town either. This means it needs creative solutions, not the same solutions as cities 2.5-15 times its size. Because of our location, we require solutions that truly listen to residents instead of applying cookie-cutter methods. We lack the young family population because there is nothing to attract them and keep them here. There is a lack of entertainment and amenities. The new apartments being built today do not accommodate families, as they are primarily 0-2 bedrooms. Families with more than 1 child, often desire 3 and 4 bedrooms, which are being requested but likely unaffordable given current rates. Affordable houses for immediate purchase are also unavailable with a moratorium on single family homes. Given all of this, it's no wonder young families bypass Owatonna. Residents are a wealth of knowledge and have amazing ideas, but it requires active listening and incorporating their feedback.
- We must move to more and more use of sustainable and renewable energy resources.

- I define it differently I think. Owatonna has a large proportion of single moms. They need support and encouragement to be self sufficient. Not just during this time of raising their children . But also for their future , their retirement. There seems to me a huge population of dead beat dads here . It is they , not the moms who are draining our resources . I do not have a solution to this . It's bigger . We have a large homeless population and a large addict population. They are here. Sometimes hidden in Kaplans woods. But they are here. Building high density housing does not take care of the problems that we as a society, a community are facing. We need more then an urban planner tossing out ideas to warehouse issues in high rises. Ralph raphsons bldg in cedar riverside / West Bank of mpls is proof of that. Hopefully his ideas are being reworked. Sullivan , Wright all promoted an equalitarianism society based on housing / architecture. There is a lot of good in that. But we need to build a strong community. Churches are usally the weakest link in that chain. We need great blue ribbon schools , education based not sports based. Talented teachers not a fancy bldg . We need strong engaging government . Not a system where people do not feel they have a voice before things happen. We need able and talented social services. We are truly blessed to have the owatonna foundation , Werner's , federated insurance to contribute to our wellbeing. But we need to be self reliant as a community. And not rely on them for basic things like a school. And raising taxes ,continual referendums aren't the answer either. We need to live within our means. We need to have through audits. And there is nothing wrong with our officials going out to meet the people. If not door knocking then at least glad hand at the steel county fair. (I'd like to see a dunking booth to raise money ... but that's just me)
- No. These goal statements contain broad wording that could be leveraged to push through various initiatives and ideology based programs. These are concerning and could usher in expenses and policies that are not good for Owatonna: explore participation, explore adoption, and commit to inclusion. There are several other portions of these goal statements that need to be approached carefully and shouldn't be implemented by 1 or 2 city employees.

General Land Use Comments - Do the Land Use and Housing goals help achieve the future you'd like for Owatonna?

- The city has so many buckled/cracked/potholes in the streets, crumbling curbs, potholed parking lots, unwalkable sidewalks. Fix them before continued new building.
- Med. Density and high density tends to run down and detract value from single family homes.
- Risks of bringing lots of high density housing must be determined – Minneapolis/St. Paul suburbs are overwhelming neighborhoods and green space with high rise apartments – review the safety and crime between high density and low density residences.
- Don't mix high density and single-family residential.
- What are plans for senior housing and social experience?
- No. How to get downtown? Public transportation ability to get to existing things.
- Keep neighborhoods consistent. Don't mix single family with more density.
- I moved from Mpls because I wanted small town living, not dense housing.
- I do NOT want high density – it'll just be another ghetto in the city.

- Build ESC further out w/low density adjacent to existing homes w/high density and mixed use land farther out.
- Take care of streets, curbs, alleys before you commit to future expenses!
- Yes (x12)
- Having lived in an apartment in Owatonna and now looking for an affordable starter home, the place we are at is not sustainable and leaves many out of options. I did not understand what the multi-use nodals means in this plan - what does that entail?
- Yes. Need low-income/affordable housing
- Yes. A focus on senior apartments, for transitional elderly lifestyles/needs is very needed. This would free up some single family starter homes, as well as be a nice place for elderly people to move to (owatonna) who wish to be closer to family members. More townhouses!
- I think for the most part
- Needs to be more of a focus on affordable housing
- Emphasis on affordable housing please!
- I like it but I think our current suburbanized areas need a lot of TLC I would recommend focusing on urbanizing or current suburbanized situation by converting homes in the area to townhomes or local businesses if you would like to reach out to me at valenspencer@musician.org I can give some amazing examples of what I'm talking about I also think strong towns which is based in brainerd Minnesota is an amazing non-profit that would be excellent to confer to with the 2050 plan The work that they have done across the US from multiple cities who are looking into urbanizing is amazing
- No/not really/somewhat
- For East Side Corridor node at Rose, mixed use so close to a large neighborhood (150 homes) with multitudes of small children seems to be a significant safety issue and compromises its own resiliency.
- We need ability to travel from all areas to existing areas w/o a vehicle – public transportation, bike, foot. 5 miles isn't far, but not navigable.
- ESC needs to be moved out w/mom and pop shops, gas station, grocery store further east. This is what has been asked for for 30 years! We will use it. Currently, it's 30 mins for groceries or gas. We didn't ask for walkable, we asked for space – safety and future single family homes – safe neighborhoods. High Res. And Med Res. Tend to bring crime especially as they get run down as they're not maintained to the same standards as single-family homes!
- NO to the 26th Ave East Side Corridor Option. Better opportunity for mixed use using a different location for the road.
- A healthy city can accommodate needs of population from birth to death without need to leave city.
- Yes; the focus on creating walkable centers, and addressing public transportation needs, are important and will help create a sense of community.
- No. While we want Owatonna to grow and expand, the proposed development appears overly focused on "affordable housing" without a clear definition of what that entails. When asked for clarification, the response was vague, indicating a need for a more precise definition. What is affordable for one person may not be for another, and this must be addressed. The development plan also seems misaligned with the housing need study conducted in the fall of 2023. The study noted a minor shortfall in apartment demand, with over 400 apartments

planned or in the pipeline, deemed sufficient to meet the demand. Since that study, approximately 480 units have been built, with more on the way. The cost of these apartments is often higher than many mortgages, making them unaffordable for young, established families. There are no apartments that can accommodate a family of six, which reflects a broader oversight: the needs of large, blended, or platonic families are not being met. The housing study emphasized the need for more single-family homes, a priority that seems underrepresented in the current plan. The layout along the east side of town, which includes single-family homes, a high-speed road, medium-density housing, and more single-family homes, is poorly thought out. Placing medium-density housing next to a high-speed road makes sense, as these homes typically do not attract large families who use their backyards. However, moving the road outward and filling the space with more single-family homes before building medium-density housing would better protect existing residents and home values. Moreover, there are no commercial zones on the east side of town, where amenities like grocery stores and gas stations are needed. The nearest gas station is over three miles away, and the nearest grocery store is even farther. Residents have expressed a desire for more conveniently located essentials. While mixed-use nodes may be walkable, they do not provide the convenience residents seek. Centrally locating essentials would better serve the community. The plan also fails to include any attractions to draw young families to Owatonna, a critical need identified in the 2023 housing study. The current population is predominantly 35-45-year-olds and senior citizens. Both active seniors and young families require similar amenities, and attracting young families would also keep seniors close to their grandchildren. Without attractions for young families or recent graduates, these individuals will establish roots elsewhere, leading to a population decline as their parents age and require care. The demand for housing with mother-in-law suites, which can accommodate aging parents and support home businesses or daycares, is another unaddressed need. In summary, the proposed plan lacks clarity on affordable housing, misaligns with current housing needs, fails to provide essential amenities conveniently, overlooks the importance of single-family homes, and does not offer attractions to retain and attract young families to Owatonna. Addressing these issues is crucial for the community's growth and sustainability.

- yes. the nodes will make neighborhoods again.
- No No NO
- I don't think so. There seems to be a lot of apartments and transitional housing which really puts a strain on the region. If they want a house they need to wait or build it which puts a strain on neighborhoods.
- yes. we need housing of all kinds and price ranges.
- Land use needs to take seniors into account and provide a space that doesn't feel like they are being shoved into a space where they are no longer part of the community. If that is the example children see that old people have to be moved outside of the community, they won't be able to appreciate the natural family or aging process.
- Yes. There is a definite need for affordable houses and apartments.
- For the most part yes
- I think so. It was not clear what was meant by having housing that is more affordable for more people. I was not certain what level of housing that referred to.

- We are in a paradigm and the future is changing at light speed. No one really understand the shift.
- My concerns are that Owatonna rental market is too expensive for lower wage earners. We need to look into a more equitable market for everyone.
- Not if you put the East side corridor road so close to all ready established neighborhoods. Move the road over to 34th Ave so more residential homes can be built.
- I don't think the land use and housing goals align with what experts have identified as the current and future needs of Owatonna, let alone what most residents want. The residential needs study indicated that the focus should be on affordable single-family houses. However, the current plan prioritizes denser residential areas. "Affordable" has become a buzzword, but we are building market-rate apartments and lacking the affordable housing people are asking for. The younger population cannot afford the average \$350k house that makes up a large portion of homes today. Why not build smaller houses costing \$150-200k? As a first-time homebuyer in my 20s, I looked for ways to reduce upfront costs, such as opting for an unfinished basement and linoleum instead of tile. This allowed me to afford a home my family could grow into, with the option to upgrade later. With current rent prices, owning a home becomes more cost-effective than renting. But houses are not going on the market. Why? This is the question you should be asking. There are many similarities between now and previous decades when smaller homes were built. Housing needs generally run in cycles, and the large homes of the 2000s aren't ideal for today's homebuyer population. Owatonna is an old town with a substantial population of senior citizens. Forcing this age group into apartments or senior housing is not ideal for most of them. They spent their lives paying for their homes, and retirement is when they want to enjoy them without worrying about monthly payments. Often, their home is their inheritance for future generations, and they don't want to sell it unless necessary. Forcing seniors out to make room for cheaper homes for new residents and growth is not a great plan for many reasons. People rent until they can afford to buy, as per the American dream. If people can't afford to buy, they aren't going to stick around, especially with rent comparable to or higher than larger cities with more amenities. People come here because houses cost significantly less than in larger cities. This aligns with the recent housing studies of Owatonna. There needs to be better long-term planning for maintaining higher-density housing.
- Property taxes are high in Owatonna. They often increase by double digits when combining city and county taxes. This has become a significant monthly cost to owning a house. High property taxes should be addressed with affordable housing.
- No! There needs to be affordable homes for all . And home ownership. This can be tinyish houses , condos / co ops , townhomes , twin homes. Opportunity to fix / build sweat equity in older historic homes . Rather than have just a few landlords / developers own the available housing and fill with tenants on sec 8.
- The park system goals are too aggressive. Having a park within a half-mile of every resident is going to drive our taxes up. We already have a large parks budget and it just isn't responsible in today's economy to continue to allow increases. Do we really need over 50 parks in Owatonna? Being in Minnesota, the parks and trails are really only used 6 months out of the year and are never even close to full. The summer weekends get a little busier, but still plenty of room for all. Also, you mention all different housing densities, but all I see going up for the past 5 years is large apartments. Please, don't put those next to nicer existing neighborhoods. Most folks don't

want the increased traffic, noise, and bright lights that come with high density housing. In addition, people aren't walking, other than those close to downtown. Most shopping and stores are by I-35, so driving is still the way to get around. As for the proposed East Corridor, putting it a little further out than the proposed 29th Ave makes more sense from a safety and growth perspective. Placing it directly behind several neighborhoods homes is irresponsible. The 34th Ave option would allow some of the mixed use you discuss to fill in nicely, in addition to providing safety for existing neighborhoods as it relates to cars and trucks flying off the roadway at proposed higher speeds.

Bridge Street Comments - Ernest Hemingway was famous for his 6-Word Story contest, an exercise in creativity while providing telling information about a thought or experience.

If you were to write a 6-Word Story about the future of Bridge St, what would you say?

- Bridge St is currently confusing and difficult to navigate unfortunately, the roadway should be wider and divided.
- This should be an attractive gateway to our city.
- Bridge Street, the bookcover to Owatonna
- Update and modernize
- entertainment, retail, youth, growth, exciting, hospitality
- A green bike-friendly ride
- Aesthetics and traffic flow need improvement.
- A space for living, wellness, & experiences
- Inviting gateway to historic downtown Owatonna
- Access and connection while relieving traffic
- Modern meets historic, food, drinks and parks.
- Welcoming, flowing, bright, Alluring, sunset
- Should be gateway into city.
- Build it they will come
- traffic mess
- Needs an overhaul STAT
- Starbucks needs to move locations
- Expect strong start and facing out
- Major disaster already / in the making,
- We could improve on curb appeal
- Now: barren. Soon: loved and experienced.
- Safety and accommodation for foot and bike traffic need to be prioritized. Currently, it is very dangerous to cross Bridge Street. There is only one flashing crosswalk light, conveniently located at Federated. Navigating Bridge Street by vehicle is also risky, with fast-moving traffic around corners making it difficult to see cars turning on or off Bridge Street. Additionally, in winter, Bridge Street becomes particularly hazardous. I have assisted more cars stuck on Bridge Street than anywhere else in the state, highlighting the need for basic snow removal from intersections on this street. Addressing these safety issues is crucial for the well-being of our residents.

- commercial and entrance to the City.
- Destroy history again.
- You don't explain at all what you are proposing. Are you intending to move the current commercial? Makes zero sense.
- Inviting functional first impression to Owatonna.
- No more roundabouts, traffic signals timed.
- Bustling corridor of retail/service options.
- Needs to showcase beauty of town.
- It's functional, safe and aesthetically pleasing.
- Great for commercial growth.
- Re-think.
- It could be better.
- Bridge Street should prioritize maintaining its existing businesses and making the area safer and more walkable.
- Expand to the west with homes.
- Beautiful historic community welcoming gateway.
- Heavy traffic for ped and bikes.

North of Downtown Comments - If you were to write a 6-Word Story about the future of North of Downtown, what would you say?

- This would be a great space for mixed use development. Many other small towns have revamped old industrial areas into attractive tourist shops and housing.
- Canning Company is there to stay
- Make more usable
- stagnant, boring, crime, undeveloped, inconvenient
- Beautiful communities with an emphasis on parks/trails
- Encourage renewal and revitalization in area.
- A place to live, work, & play
- Great potential
- Revitalize and reimagine
- Homes, parks, restaurants, family and safety
- Desirable, streamlined, smooth. Opportunistic, extension, rebounding
- The place for fun
- Ghetto
- Needs a plan
- Conversion into commercial mixed with housing
- Why has current development been put on hold? While a large regional park is a good idea in theory, we must consider our inability to maintain existing parks. Additionally, we need to thoroughly assess any hazards associated with the quarry site. The area used to be a city dump—has it been properly cleaned up, or will this burden fall on taxpayers? There are ongoing water cleanup initiatives in the area. Is the quarry a factor in this, and will it add to residents'

burdens? Will the Summer Park be connected to the quarry? If so, how? Will there be a highway between the two parks, or will they be directly accessible to each other? Ensuring the safety of children in these areas is crucial. If a park is built at the quarry, we need to know if it is spring-fed, which could make it a great option for boating, fishing, and swimming. However, this would require fish stocking and careful planning in collaboration with the DNR to avoid the constant need for chemical treatments to prevent overgrowth, as seen in other local parks and lakes. Addressing these questions and concerns is essential before proceeding with development.

- Aging area with businesses to remain.
- Big city minded then MOVE!
- Multipurpose clean entry to compliment downtown.
- Disconnected pathway, encourage beauty, level railroads.
- continuation of streetscape and charming downtown.
- Needs to be more inclusive.
- beautiful architecture, affordable rent for businesses.
- Great to continue the downtown corridor.
- Tear it down and start over.
- How do you make a silk purse out of a cow's ear.
- North of downtown experiences minimal use by residents overall. This presents a significant opportunity for revitalization, making it an ideal location for mixed-use nodes. Introducing mixed-use nodes here would bring numerous benefits, from expanding the tax base with new businesses to increasing foot traffic for downtown establishments. This area has the potential to support mixed-use nodes effectively if businesses are not currently maximizing its use.
- Expand with local businesses and parks.
- Saturated with hairdressers , financial advisors, & boutiques – useless.
- Don't bring more truck traffic here.

Mixed Use Nodes Comments - If you were to write a 6-Word Story about the future of Mixed Use Neighborhood Nodes, what would you say? Optional: specify node(s)

- There are 150 homes in this neighborhood right here (Rose St and Future ESC). How will you ensure the safety and resiliency of this with mixed use?
- Don' build ESC against homes. Never been done before. Not SAFE! Move this all over w/more LDR.
- Most of the homes in this neighborhood are built for families with young children. How will mixed use impact these homes next to this zone? There are 150 homes alone here.
- We need grocery stores, gas stations and business on the east side of town, not high density housing and mixed use.
- Put sidewalks in over Owatonna
- downtown, entertainment, dining, retail, youth, community
- Someone please explain the vision here
- Walkable destinations in mini-centers are appealing
- Your neighborhood has what you need
- Walkable, pleasant, easy, colorful, capitalistic

- Move here we have it
- Ghetto
- I think it's amazing and I think current suburb development should be looked into being converted to more urbanized with sidewalks and local businesses in the area I think zoning should be more inclusive in more areas and I think downtown should expand out with its current building style
- Won't ever happen.
- They have their places for success.
- Mixed-use nodes, while theoretically walkable, do not sufficiently meet residents' needs in Owatonna. These nodes are often located far from existing commercial areas, forcing residents to travel to multiple locations for essentials. The culture in Owatonna favors convenience; people prefer picking up everything they need in one area rather than making multiple trips. Owatonna culture is on the go, not walk to a coffee shop and chill, as is evident from the long lines at Starbucks, which often interfere with traffic and other businesses. A more effective solution would be to develop a strategically located commercial area on the east side of town. This would accommodate the growing populations in the north and east, and provide a convenient option for new developments on the north side to choose between going east or west for their needs. Locating commercial development on the north side would not serve the expanding SE Owatonna area effectively. Additionally, a centralized commercial area would help address concerns about illicit activities, as it would be easier for law enforcement to monitor and create a buffer from residential zones. For more than three decades, residents have expressed a desire for improved walkability. However, they don't just mean walkability to a single destination—they want safe access to all amenities within Owatonna. Although Owatonna is only five miles wide, making it potentially bikeable, current infrastructure does not support safe biking or walking. Mixed-use nodes alone do not solve this issue. Developing a comprehensive plan that includes essential amenities on the east side of town would significantly reduce travel distances for many residents. This plan should also incorporate bike lanes, sidewalks, and public transportation to make these areas more accessible and safer. This holistic approach aligns with what residents are truly asking for: convenient, safe, and accessible access to all necessities within Owatonna.
- historic comeback of what makes City's.
- Selfish, heartless, land grabbing from farmers.
- Absolutely ridiculous.
- Encourage walking, limiting Kwik Trip stores.
- Needed option for future housing.
- Seniors need respectful affordable housing.
- There needs to be green space.
- Great idea to create walkable neighborhoods.
- The downtown converted to a node.
- East Side Corridor needs to be moved out with mom and pop shops, gas stations, grocery store, farther east for the town to grow to it. This is what residents have asked for for 30+years now. We will use it. Currently it takes 30 mins to go get groceries or gas and come back home. We didn't ask for walkable amenities, we asked for space; safety and future single family homes. Safe neighborhoods - high and medium residential tend to bring crime, especially as they get

rundown and not maintained to the same level as single family homes, as is the precedent in Owatonna.

- Not if you put the East side corridor road so close to all ready established neighborhoods. Move the road over to 34th Ave so more residential homes can be built.
- Owatonna will not accommodate mixed-use nodes in residential neighborhoods. Mixed-use nodes were a popular concept in larger cities several years ago. Today, residential areas with mixed-use nodes are advocating for their removal due to increased crime rates and undesirable foot traffic that negatively impact neighborhoods. Businesses struggle and buildings often sit empty, leading to concerns such as vandalism and unauthorized use by the homeless population—a challenge this plan fails to address. In other settings, mixed-use nodes are found around large shopping areas or near college campuses, where they serve densely packed student populations and cater to visitors attending events. As a former college student, frequenting such establishments was often beyond my budget, relying instead on event-driven visitors to sustain them. Owatonna currently struggles to keep its small businesses and restaurants afloat, making these models unrealistic here. Scaling down to just a couple of businesses, like coffee shops and hair salons—which Owatonna already has in abundance—could be considered. For instance, hair salons in downtown Owatonna are often fully booked, not places where people linger but might encourage foot traffic to nearby businesses. However, adding more salons, coffee shops, or restaurants without impacting existing ones poses a challenge. Owatonna businesses, including popular chains like Dairy Queen, KFC, and Caribou, have all closed recently, indicating our struggle to sustain our current businesses. Adding more exacerbates these situations. People are more likely to visit businesses like Starbucks along their commute rather than travel through neighborhoods to a single destination. If neighborhoods could support small businesses, how would this plan protect existing downtown businesses from closure? Is the goal to relocate these businesses to mixed-use nodes, and if so, how would downtown vitality be maintained? While other businesses could be considered, the issue of ensuring vitality for both existing and new businesses remains critical. These small nodes would only accommodate small businesses, possibly resulting in small, costly grocery stores that might not adequately serve residents already burdened by taxes and inflation. A larger cluster of stores on the east side, along 34th Ave, could offer a solution, acting as a buffer from highway noise for residents and promoting safety, growth, and sustainability. This approach more closely aligns with current outlooks around these types of mixed-use nodes in other larger cities, where high costs are associated with their removal. Owatonna lacks both the structure and the atmosphere to sustain mixed-use nodes within its neighborhoods.
- Growing these sounds great.
- This conflicts with the desire to attract more people to downtown.
- Ghettos in the sky.
- Many don't want their neighborhood to feel like a mixed use chunk of suburbia. We live in Owatonna, not Burnsville, for a reason. Newer and bigger isn't always better.
- NO! to the 29th Ave East Side Corridor option. Better opportunity for mixed use using a different location for the road.