

# IMAGINE OWATONNA

***2050 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN***

October 2024

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# INTRODUCTION

## 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.

The Plan 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 it 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 basic 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.
- Owatonna is innovative and supportive of its residents and businesses, helping all to succeed.
- Owatonna residents are determined and passionate about the city as a place to live, work and play.
- Owatonna will utilize its resources efficiently and effectively.

### **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.

There were several key themes identified through public engagement that are illustrated below and highlighted throughout this plan – Downtown, Economic Development, Parks and Trails, Transportation, and Housing. While some of these key themes have their own chapter, they are all interconnected and woven throughout the goals and strategies in this plan. A full summary of what we heard is included as Appendix B. These key themes should be the key focus point for implementation of this plan, along with the supporting goals and policies. What we heard on the main topics and the key themes are discussed below.

### **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 feeling 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 to have the amenities that residents desire, the city 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.

## Key Themes



# 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 *Comprehensive Housing Needs Analysis* 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, totalling about 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 the 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.	-	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9,733.0</b>	<b>100%</b>

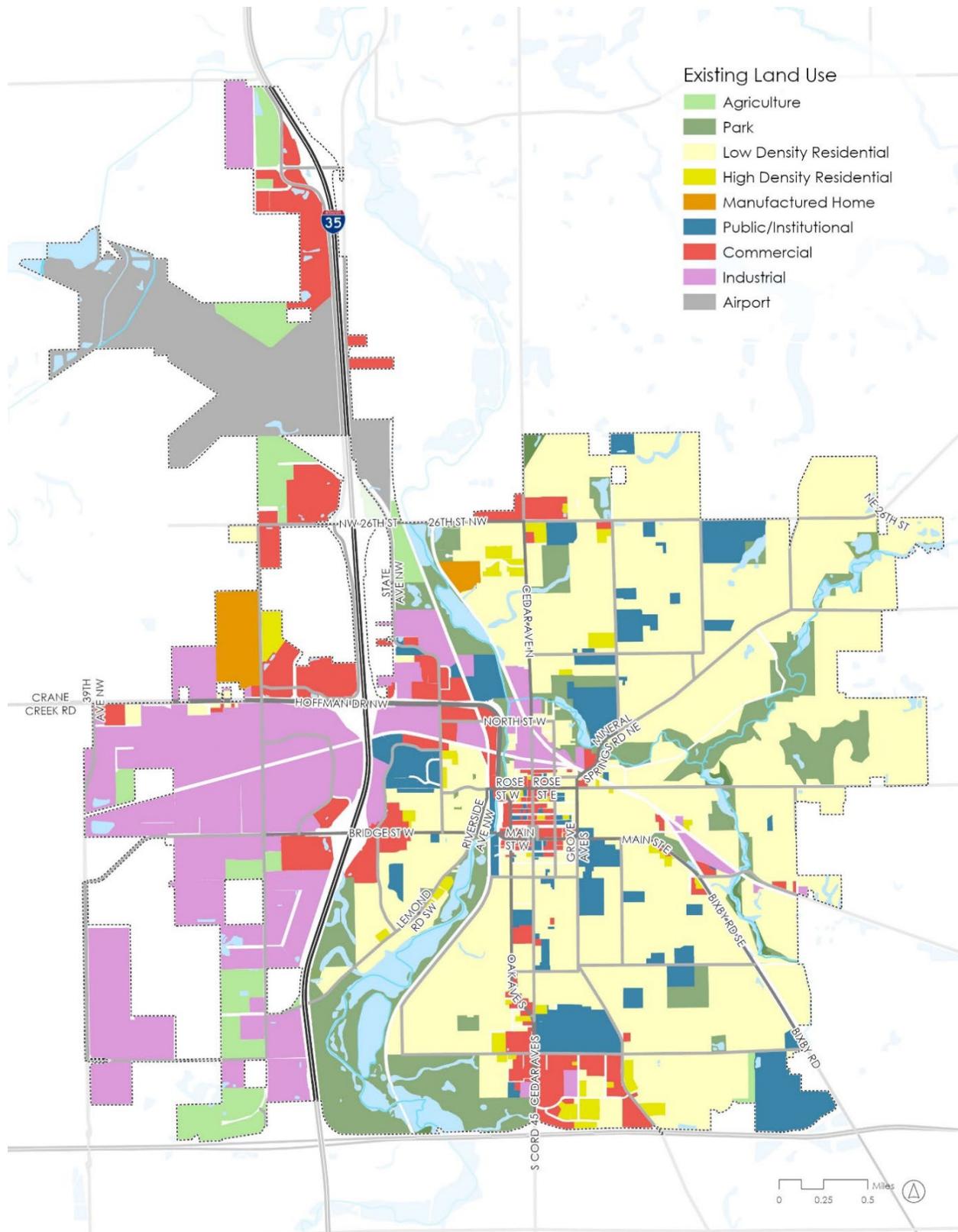


Figure 1.1 Existing Land Use  
 Source: City of Owatonna

## 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 land in 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 in the 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 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), and 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 is 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, is 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.

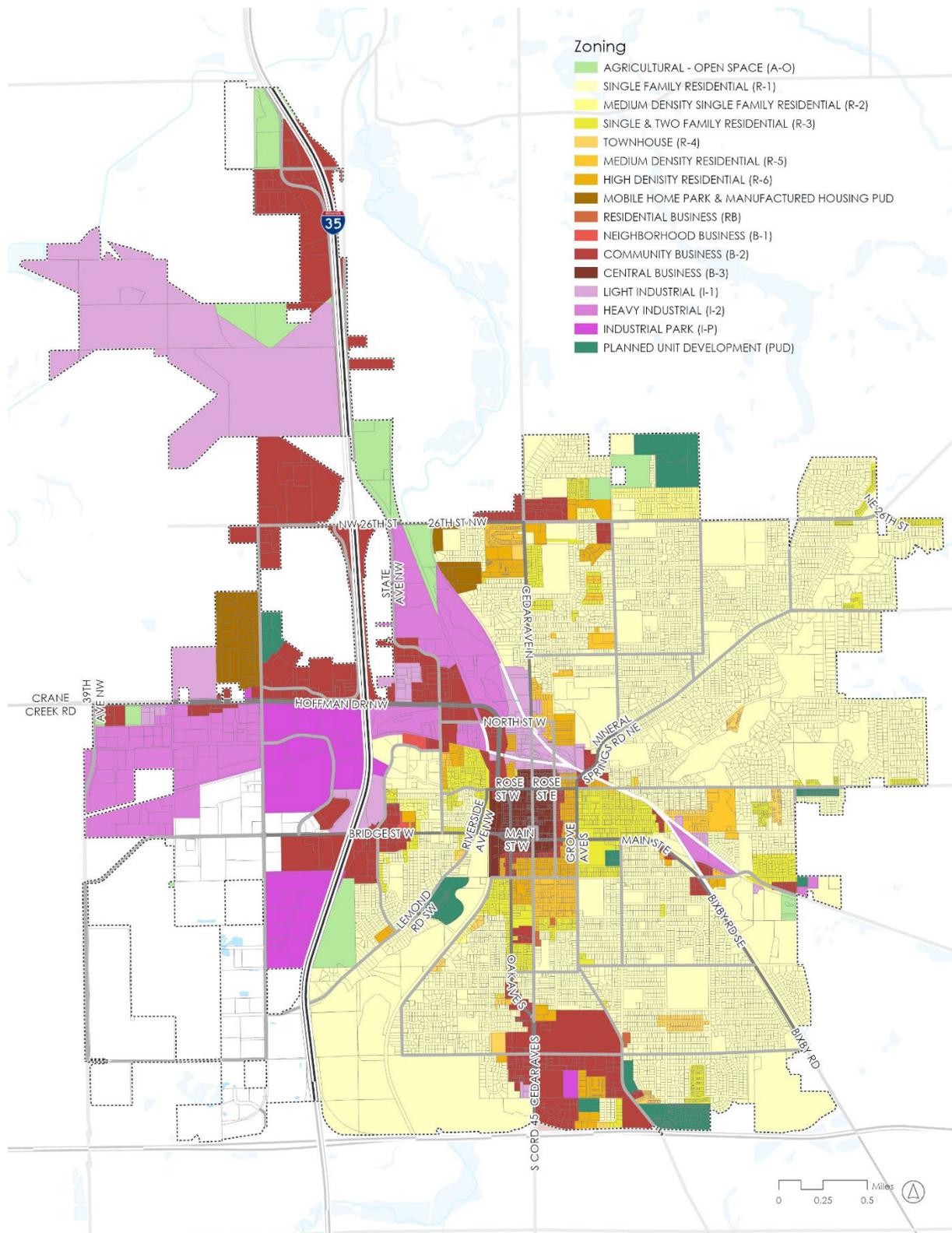


Figure 1.21 Existing Zoning

## Current Trends and Opportunities

There are several land use trends that the city could consider as it creates the future land use pattern for the city. 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 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 twenty 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 use 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 in new mixed use form-based zoning districts.
- 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 in new mixed use form-based zoning districts.
- c) Encourage mixed use development at key focus areas 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) Continue mixed use development along the Straight River and create 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 open space areas and trails to the industrial park area along with improved connections to the rest of Owatonna.
- e) Study the potential of adding residential and mixed use along the fringes of the industrial park area.
- f) 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) Apply recommendations in the 2023 *Comprehensive Housing Needs Analysis* for market rate housing, developing lots and executive housing.
- c) Explore programs and opportunities to develop senior housing in Owatonna, both independent and assisted living.
- d) Develop policies and programs to ensure that the City's existing housing stock is safe, attractive, and well-maintained.
- e) Maintain and enhance policies and programs to license and regulate rental housing in the City.
- f) Encourage and support sustainable and climate resilient design in new and existing housing.
- g) 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 where there are 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.

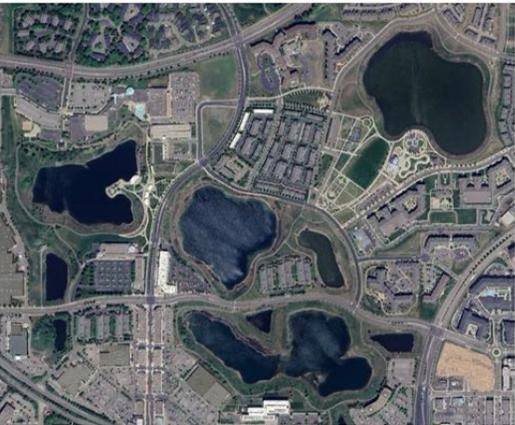
Mixed use zoning typically utilizes a form-based code (FBC) to shape the form, or shape and design of development, not just the uses. Often the zoning requires a mix of at least 10% commercial uses integrated with the residential uses. A new Mixed Use district might be a combination, replacing the current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

# Mixed Use Examples

Burnsville - Heart of the City



Maple Grove – Arbor Lakes



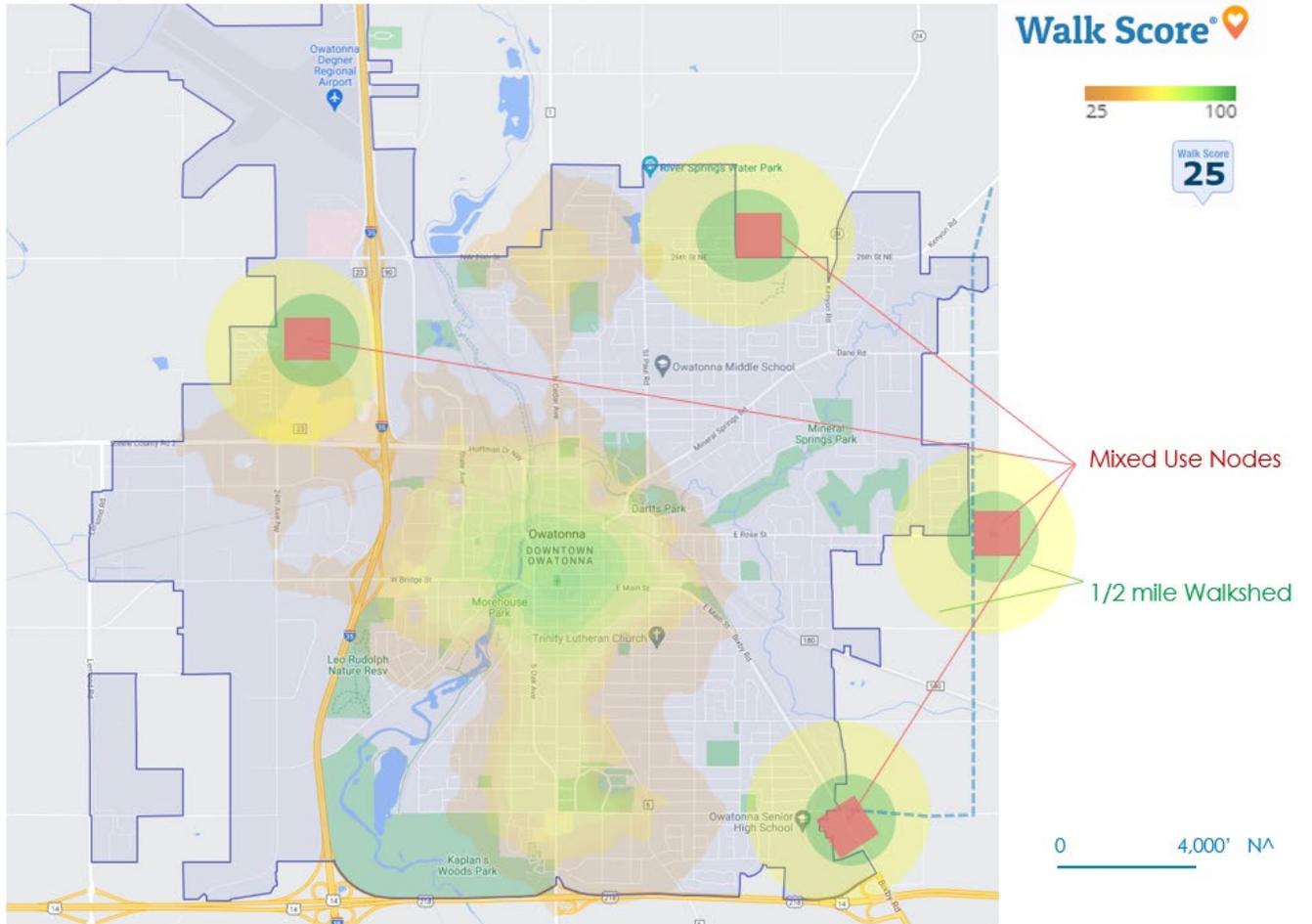
Golden Valley – Downtown



## Proposed Owatonna Mixed Use Nodes

- **Mixed Use Node #1** is on the north side of 26<sup>th</sup> 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 26<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 18<sup>th</sup> 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 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the proposed apartment in the SE quadrant of 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 18<sup>th</sup> 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

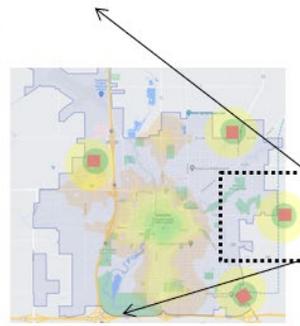




Owatonna  
Comp Plan  
**Mixed Use  
Neighborhood  
Node #1**  
26<sup>th</sup> Street NE &  
Hemlock Avenue



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





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



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



## Option to consider: Infill and Missing Middle Housing

Purposeful infill growth, in the form of well-planned and managed development, can play a critical role in enhancing existing neighborhoods and strengthening downtown—in large part by supporting their ability to adapt to the community’s changing needs and opportunities. “Missing Middle” housing types help fill the gap between traditional detached housing units and large multi-unit apartment or condominium buildings – generally including duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and small apartment structures.

In most cities, there is a crucial need for missing middle housing types, which can be accommodated primarily in the Mixed Use Areas, but also as infill development in existing mature neighborhoods and along the community’s corridors. The incorporation of missing middle housing throughout the city – particularly in proximity to existing infrastructure and transit – provides a larger range of housing choice and offers increased affordability for a larger portion of the community.

Scale and form parameters are key to ensuring that missing middle housing supports the context of an area; it is not necessary to introduce large buildings in sensitive areas to create more housing options. Most of these missing middle types fit into structures that are a similar scale to existing housing: not more than 2.5 stories, no more than 55-75 ft. wide, and approximately 45-60 feet deep



## 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.

One of the keys 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. Within floodplain areas where structures are prohibited, passive parks or open spaces can be developed providing a natural flood barrier and an open space for residents to use during non-flood times.

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.

There is an opportunity in Downtown to activate underutilized public and private spaces. This could include upper levels of buildings Downtown that are currently unused or underutilized. The Main Street Upper Level Grant program can help to incentivize use of these spaces. Additionally, underutilized public spaces in Downtown can be transformed into small pocket parks with places to sit and public art. Interventions in these types of spaces can be a simple, but effective way to transform a space and the feel of Downtown.



## 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) Continue to 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.
- d) Continue to work with partners and stakeholders to promote and enhance business opportunities and activity in the downtown area.
- e) Continue to explore connections to and across the Straight River in Downtown.

### **Goal 2. Continue to implement the Downtown Streetscape Study.**

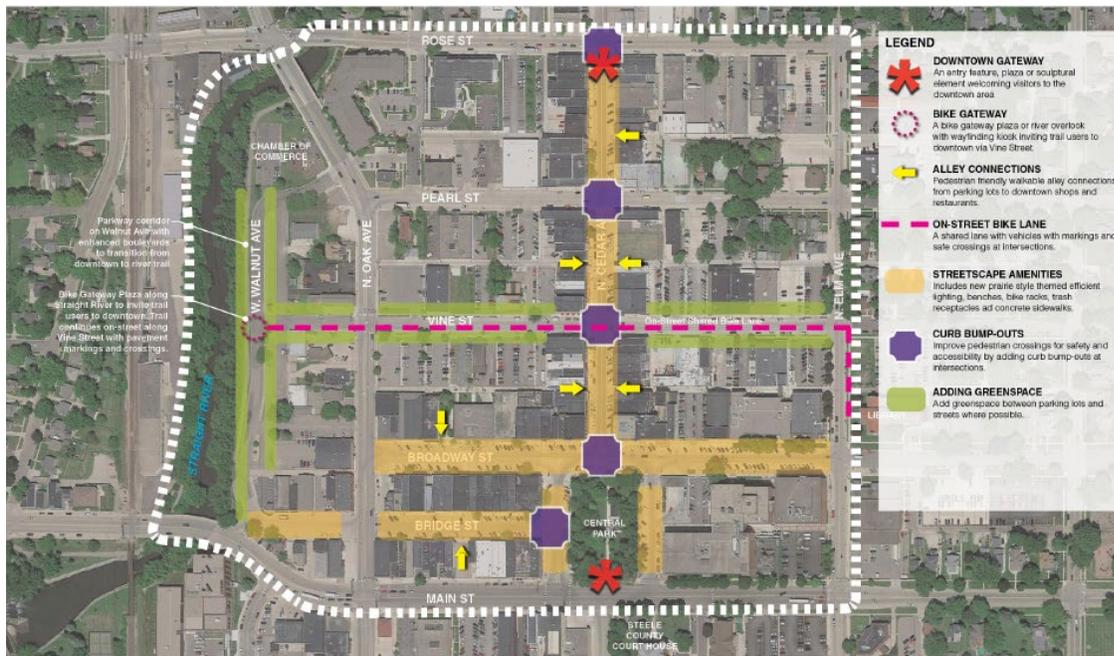
- a) Improve circulation and access throughout downtown for pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles.
- b) Maintain and enhance accessibility and pedestrian safety.
- c) Provide new and maintain existing amenities such as street lighting and street furniture in downtown.

Incorporate art and placemaking into plans for downtown streetscaping.

### **Goal 3. Continue to preserve the Downtown Historic District**

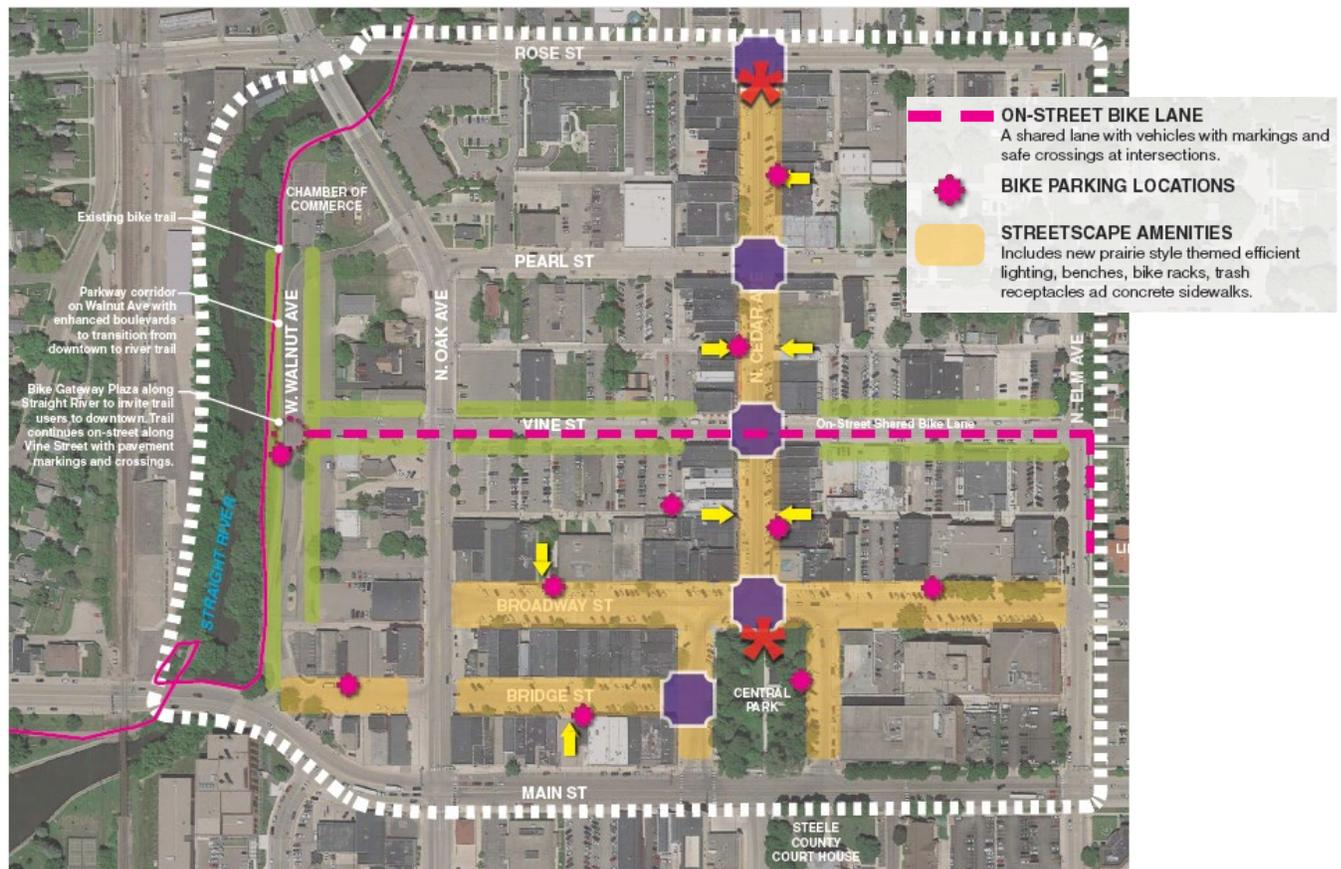
- a) Work with property owners to maintain historic buildings through the Main Street Forgivable Loan program or other similar program.
- b) Work with property owners and businesses to utilize upper spaces in Downtown through the Main Street Upper-Level Grant program.

**DOWNTOWN STREETSCAPE PLAN (WSB, 2019)**



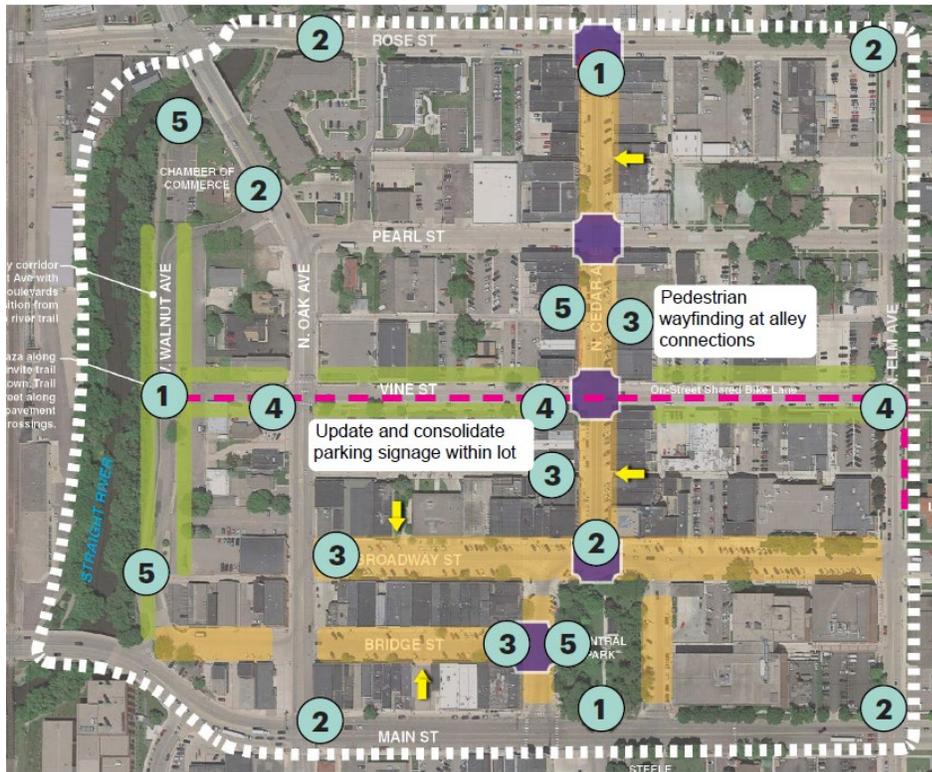
DOWNTOWN STREETSCAPE PLAN

**DOWNTOWN BIKE PARKING (WSB, 2019)**



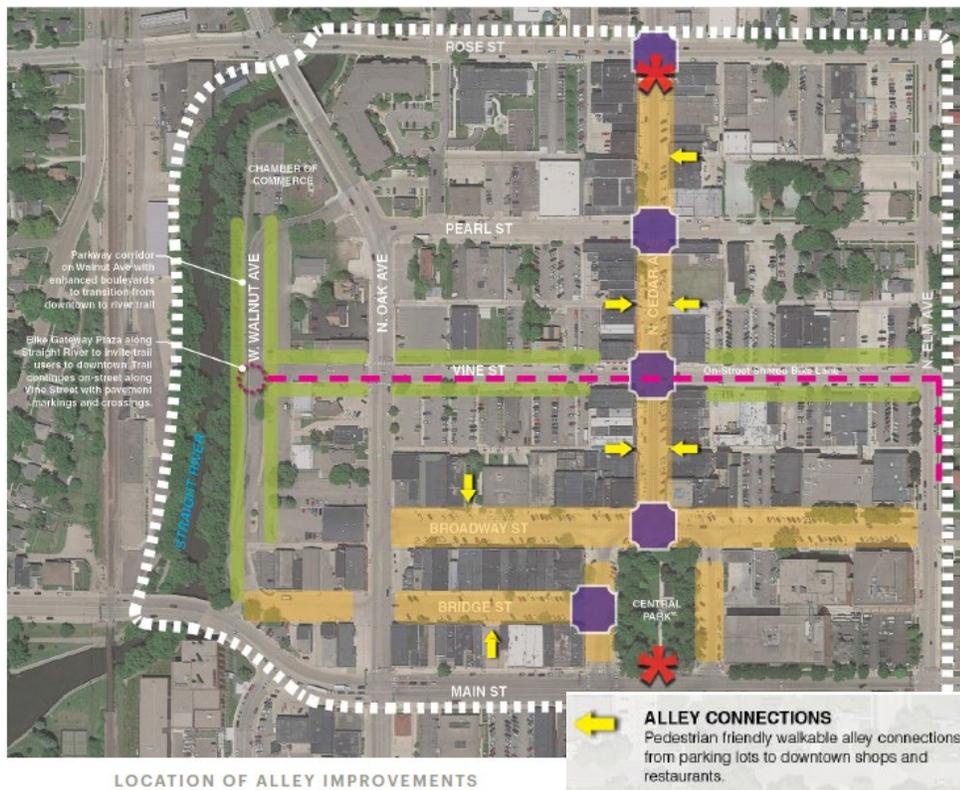
BIKE PARKING - LOCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

**DOWNTOWN WAYFINDING SIGNAGE (WSB, 2019)**



WAYFINDING SIGNAGE - LOCATION MAP

**DOWNTOWN ALLEY IMPROVEMENTS (WSB, 2019)**



LOCATION OF ALLEY IMPROVEMENTS

## Community Design

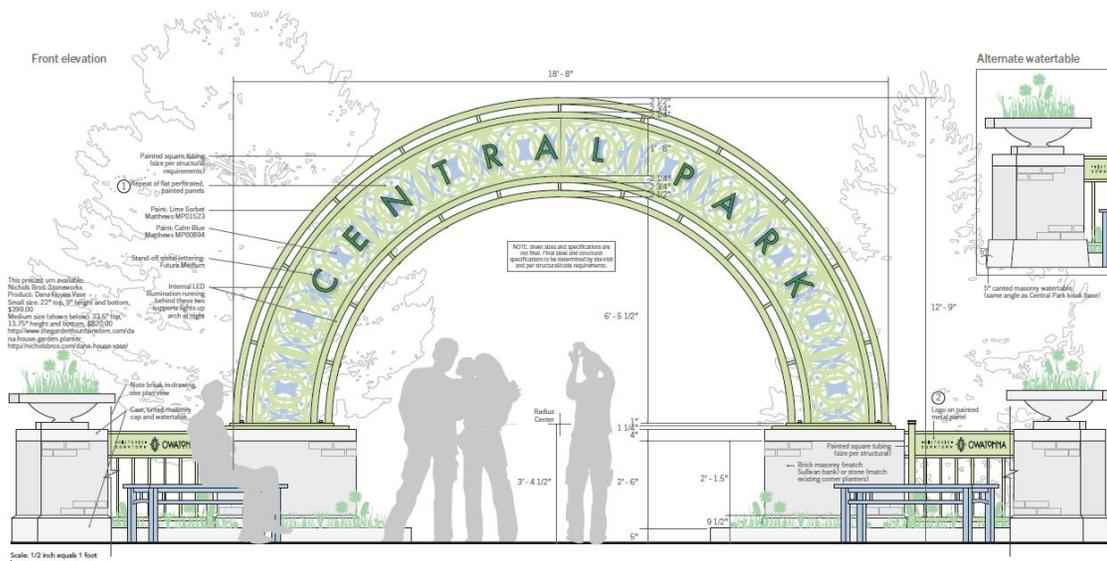
Community design encompasses not only aesthetic elements, but also the basic arrangements and functioning of the built environment. The relationships between buildings, building entrances, roadways, sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, and other features all combine to create the community character. Areas with well-designed, coordinated elements are generally more popular, better cared for, and more valuable than those with less attention to design. An example of community design efforts in Owatonna is the Main Street Owatonna Wayfinding Design Development document, which offers ideas for a cohesive downtown district through placemaking.

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 areas require placement of building close to the street, with sidewalks serving development and parking to the side and rear through new mixed use form-based zoning districts.
- b) Develop minimum building materials standards within the zoning code to maintain and enhance the community character, appropriate to various character districts.
- c) Develop minimum design standards related to building façade, roof treatment, landscaping, lighting and other features in the various character districts.
- d) 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, as well as public street projects.**

- a) Strive to fill missing connections in the overall sidewalk and trail network.

## 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 C/I	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.

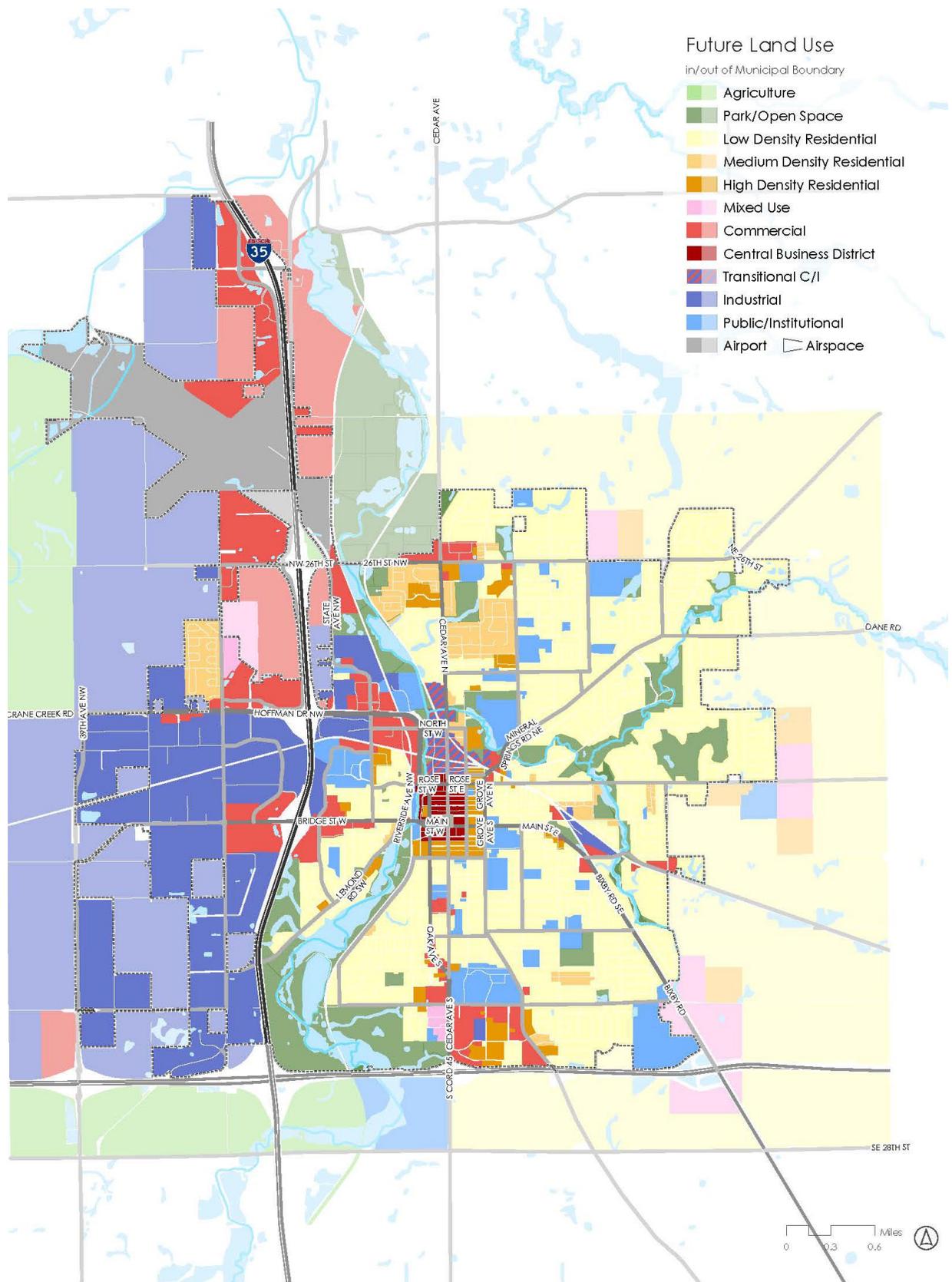
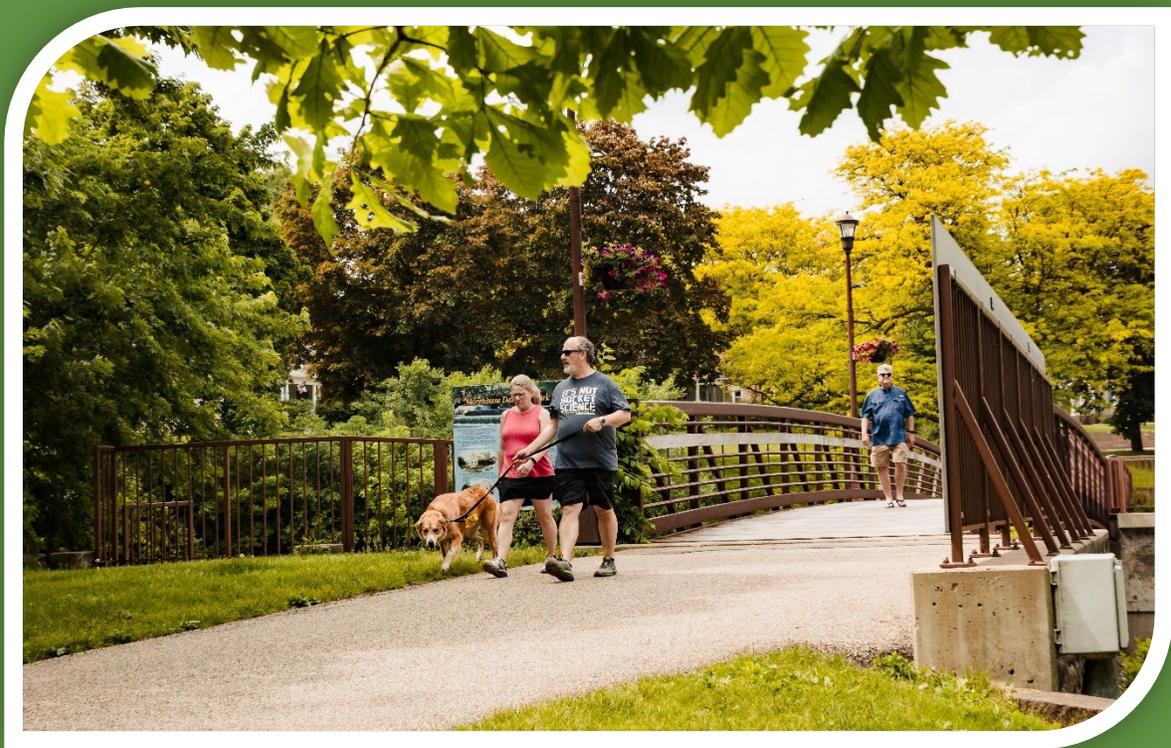


Figure 1.3 – Future Land Use Map

# 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. 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
<b>Nass Woods</b>	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
	<b>Total Park System</b>	<b>575 Acres</b>

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. Complementing the trail system, the city also has over 60 miles of sidewalks, providing additional walking opportunities throughout the city.

Table 2.2 Existing Trails

Trail	Location	Length	Connections
<b>Buxton Trail</b>	From Elm Avenue NE to Dane Road	2.5 miles	Dartts Park, Brooktree Gold Course, Mineral Spring Park
<b>18<sup>th</sup> Street Trail</b>	From Mosher Avenue to Linn Avenue	.55 miles	Kaplan's Woods
<b>Muckle Trail</b>	From Bridge Street to North Street	1.5 miles	Morehouse park, Kaplan's Woods Parkway
<b>Kaplan's Woods Parkway</b>	From Kaplan's Woods to Bridge Street	1.5 miles	Morehouse Park, Kaplan's Woods
<b>Cashman Crossing</b>	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
<b>26<sup>th</sup> Street Trail</b>	Along 26 <sup>th</sup> St NE from Cashman Park to Kenyon Road	2 miles	East-west connection between North Straight River Trail and Buxton Trail Corridor
<b>North Straight River Parkway</b>	Along the Straight River from the Muckle Trail Corridor to 26 <sup>th</sup> 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

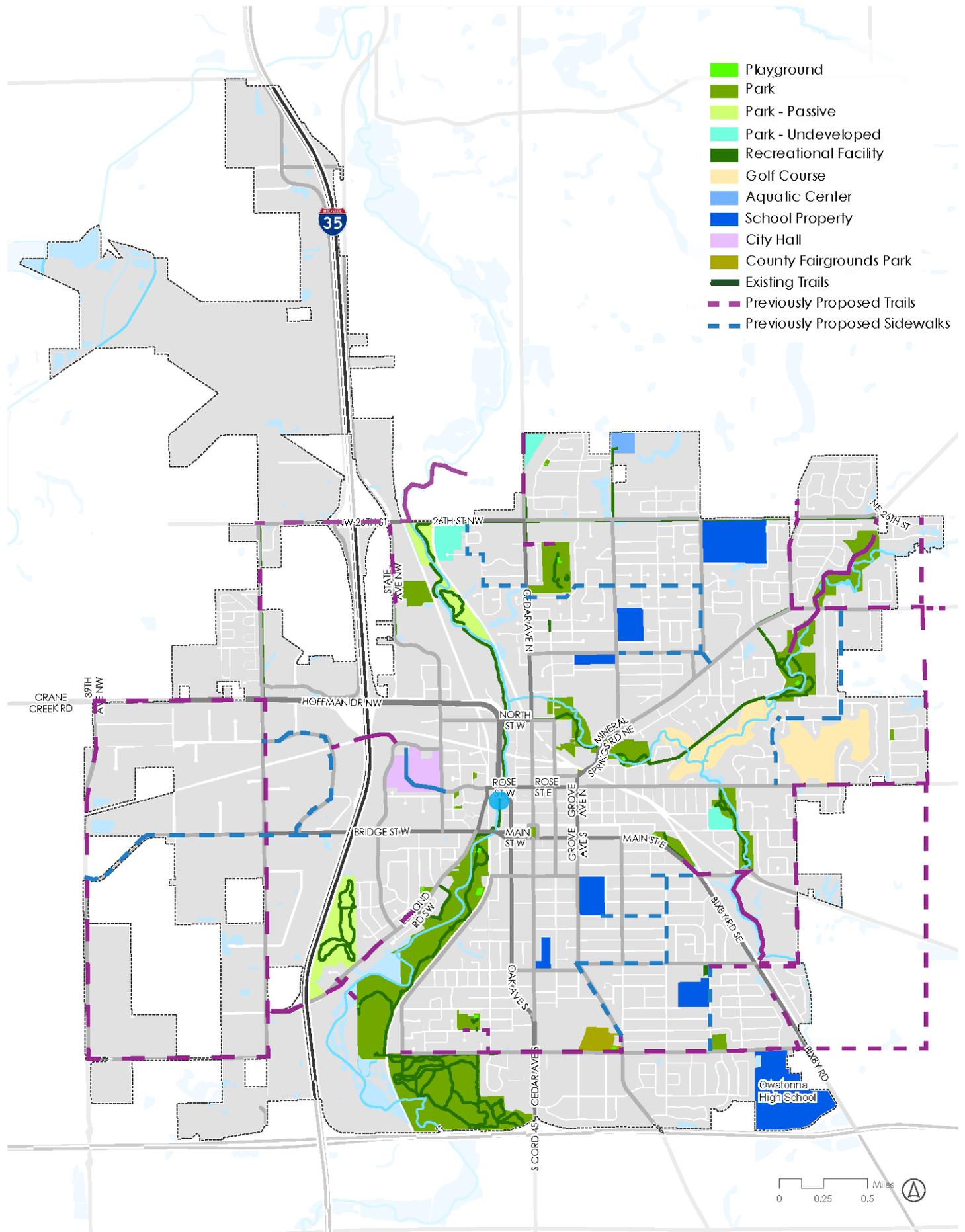


Figure 2.1 Existing Parks and Trails

## 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 (people with strollers, mobility devices 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.
- Many cities have adopted a 10-minute walk policy, ensuring parks or open space within a 10-minute walk of all residents. The 10-minute walk metric—equivalent to approximately a half-mile for an able-bodied person—is the average distance most people are willing to walk to reach a destination, a standard that helps examine the number of opportunities and resources a person has close to home. Ensuring that all people have access to a park within a 10-minute walk of home and that there's adequate park space in all neighborhoods is essential to creating an equitable park system.
- 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.
- Utilization of floodplain land along waterways as passive parks and open space. This could be coordinated with partners such as OPU.



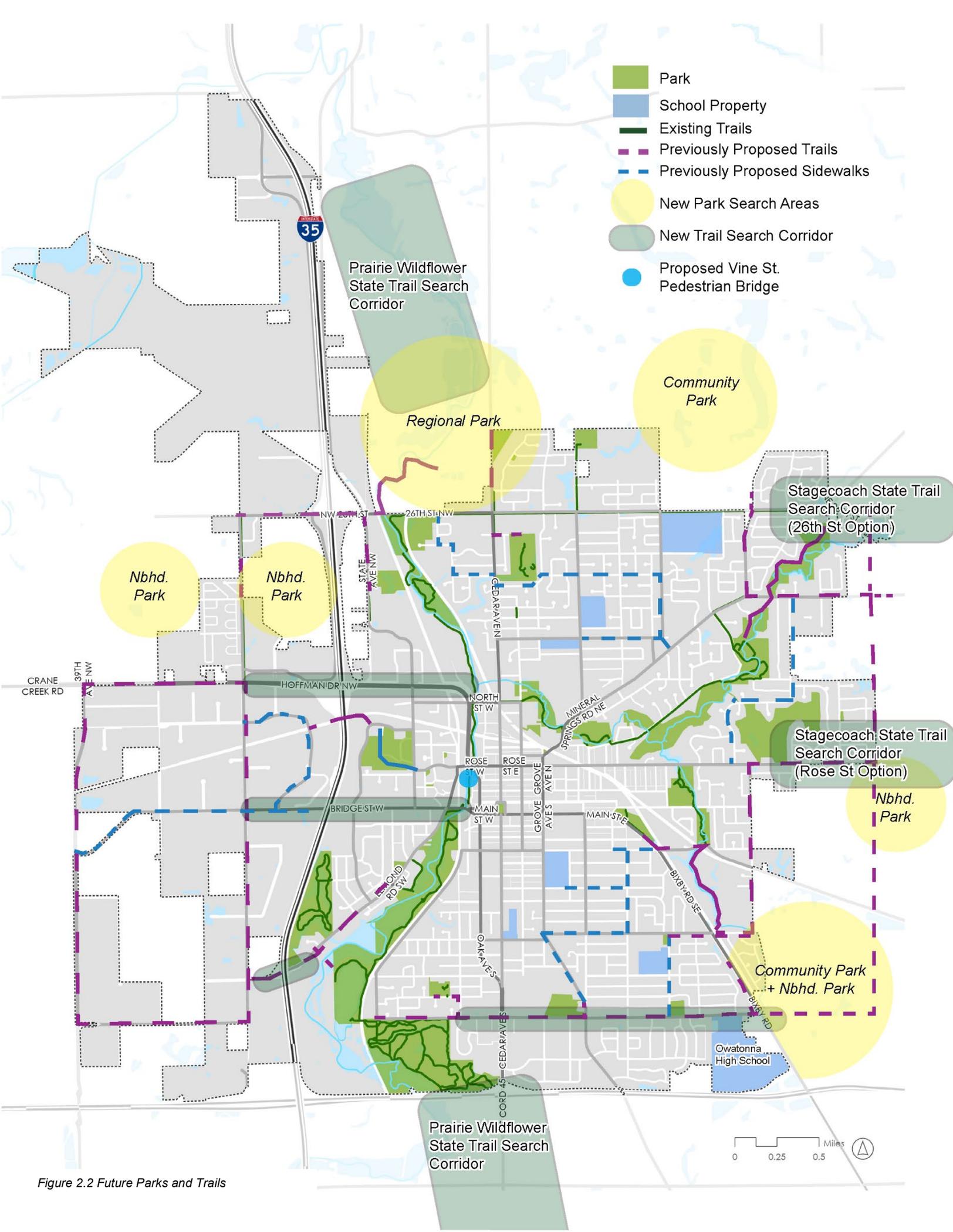
## Future Park and Trail Recommendations<sup>1</sup>

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
<b>State Trail Search Corridors – Prairie Wildflower (North-South) and Stagecoach (East)</b>	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
<b>Bridge Street Trail</b>	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 in Figure 2.2, which could act as the river crossing.	N/A
<b>Hoffman Drive Trail</b>	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
<b>18<sup>th</sup> Ave Trail</b>	The city should prioritize filling a gap in the trail system along 18 <sup>th</sup> 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.	
<b>Regional Park - North</b>	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

<sup>1</sup> The Comprehensive Plan identifies potential future park and trail development outside of city limits in the proposed growth areas. The Park System Master Plan and subsequent updates to this plan details the existing park and trail system and action plan.

Search Areas	Description	Size
<b>Neighborhood and Community Parks – North of 26<sup>th</sup> St at Hemlock Ave, Rose St and East Side Corridor, 24<sup>th</sup> Ave and 18<sup>th</sup> St NW</b>	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 <sup>th</sup> St there is additional need for a larger park (~20 acres).	~ 3-5 acres (neighborhood park) ~20 acres (community park)
<b>Community and Neighborhood Park - Southeast</b>	Currently, the southeast portion of Owatonna is lacking in park land and amenities. The high school helps with this deficiency, 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.	~ 20 acres (community park) ~ 3-5 acres (neighborhood park)
<b>Greenway System</b>	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



- Park
- School Property
- Existing Trails
- Previously Proposed Trails
- Previously Proposed Sidewalks
- New Park Search Areas
- New Trail Search Corridor
- Proposed Vine St. Pedestrian Bridge

Prairie Wildflower  
State Trail Search  
Corridor

Regional Park

Community  
Park

Nbhd.  
Park

Nbhd.  
Park

Stagecoach State Trail  
Search Corridor  
(26th St Option)

Stagecoach State Trail  
Search Corridor  
(Rose St Option)

Nbhd.  
Park

Community Park  
+ Nbhd. Park

Prairie Wildflower  
State Trail Search  
Corridor



Figure 2.2 Future Parks and Trails

## Option to consider: Parkland Dedication Ordinance

Goal 1h below encourages the city to explore adoption of a Parkland Dedication Ordinance. This concept was introduced in the 2020 Parks and Trails System Master Plan. Excerpts from that recommendation are included below.

### Why a Parkland Dedication Ordinance?

A Parkland Dedication Ordinance can provide much needed capital funding for parks and open space. Upon adoption of such an ordinance, a city may require that a reasonable portion of any proposed subdivision be dedicated to the public or preserved for conservation purposes or for public use as parks, playgrounds, trails, wetlands, or open space, and that the city may alternatively accept an equivalent amount in cash.

In order to continue to provide residents of Owatonna with park and recreation, it is recommended that the City explore using park dedication land or fee equivalents. When land develops with residential homes, there will be a need for park land to accommodate these new residents. It should be noted that this funding source only works if new developments are occurring in Owatonna as the fees cannot be used to replace or maintain existing facilities.

The 2020 Parks and Trails System Master Plan included examples from comparable communities, which is excerpted below for ideas on how this ordinance may be administered.

CITY	POPULATION	PARK DEDICATION FEE / LAND DEDICATION FEE OR BOTH	PARK DEDICATION FEE	LAND DEDICATION AMOUNT	ADDITIONAL NOTES
Bemidji	15,366	Yes, both	Cash in lieu equivalent based upon fair market value.	Residential = 1 acre per 25 units, Nonresidential = 4% of gross area, Mixed Use = 4% of gross area	No wetlands, floodplains, drainage ways. Some private rec land may receive 20% credit
Faribault	23,750	Yes, both	Cash in lieu equivalent based upon fair market value.	Residential = 7%; Commercial = 4%; Industrial = 4%, other 7%	No wetlands, ponding, drainage-ways.
New Ulm	13,238	Yes, both	\$340 per lot/unit (R1/R2); \$1,040 per lot, \$340 per unit (R3); \$265-\$2,185 (COMM/IND)	675 sf per unit (R1,R2,R3)	Land must not be drainage-way, floodplain or ponding. Land must be grading with 6" topsoil and seeded prior to dedication.
Northfield	20,084	Yes, both	Cash in lieu must be equivalent to land dedication costs. Commercial = 5% of land area; Industrial = 2% of gross area for trails only; 0-3.9 units/acre = 16%; 4-7.9 units/acre = 13%; 8+ units/acre = 10%	Commercial = 5% of land area; Industrial = 2% of gross area for trails only; 0-3.9 units/acre = 12% of net land area; 4-7.9 units/acre = 9% of net land area; 8+ units/acre = 6% of net land area	Commercial sites can be waived if affordable housing, tax revenue or greater benefit to the City. Land must be suitable, no steep slope, above OHW, graded and 4" topsoil.
Waseca	8,978	Yes, both	Residential = \$420/unit; Multi-Family = \$250-300/unit	Residential = 8-14%; Multifamily=20-45%, Mobile Homes = 13%	Fees are based upon \$15,000 per acre assumed land costs. Land must be graded and suitable 50% for fields, less than 2% grade.
Willmar	19,628	Yes, both	Cash in lieu equivalent based upon fair market value.	Residential = 7%; Commercial = 4%; Industrial = 4%, other 7%	City may waive if affordable housing or greater benefit to city. Private open space credit up to 25%.
Owatonna	25,794	No			

## Parks and Trails Goals

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

- a) Follow the recommendations of the Owatonna Parks System Master Plan and update the Plan every 10 years to address changing needs in the City. Align goals and policies with the Comprehensive Plan.
- b) Prioritize 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) Strive to make all City park and recreation facilities accessible, safe and welcoming for all ages and abilities.
- f) Continue to maintain Owatonna's existing parks and trails by exploring creative funding and financing strategies.
- g) Integrate park and recreation facilities into a planned community center.
- h) Explore a park land dedication ordinance to support acquisition, development and improvements for the park, trail and natural resource system.

### **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 Park and Trail System 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 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 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 Minnesota Demographic Center, between 2020 and 2022 the City’s population grew by more than 1,100 persons. This high rate of growth will likely ease somewhat throughout the 2020s, but 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
<b>Population</b>								
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
<b>Percent Change †</b>								
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. Age impacts the type of housing people 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

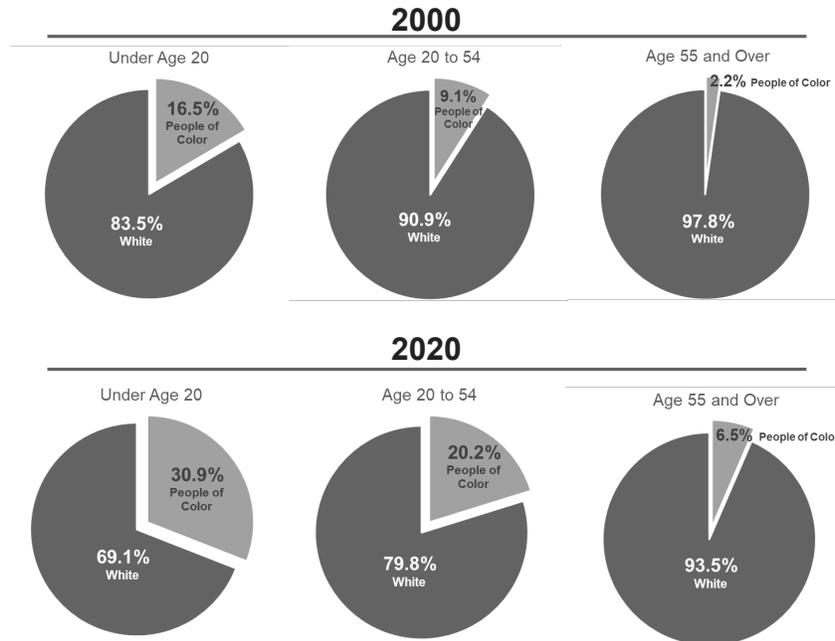
Age Group	2000	2010	2020	Change '00-'10		Change '10-'20		Distribution		
				No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	2000	2010	2020
<b>Owatonna</b>										
Under 5 years	1,647	2,009	1,602	362	22.0%	-407	-20.3%	7.3%	7.8%	6.1%
5 to 14 years	3,511	3,743	3,864	232	6.6%	121	3.2%	7.6%	7.5%	7.1%
15 to 24 years	3,033	3,027	3,126	-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%
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,434</b>	<b>25,599</b>	<b>26,420</b>	<b>3,165</b>	<b>14.1%</b>	<b>821</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Median Age</b>										
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

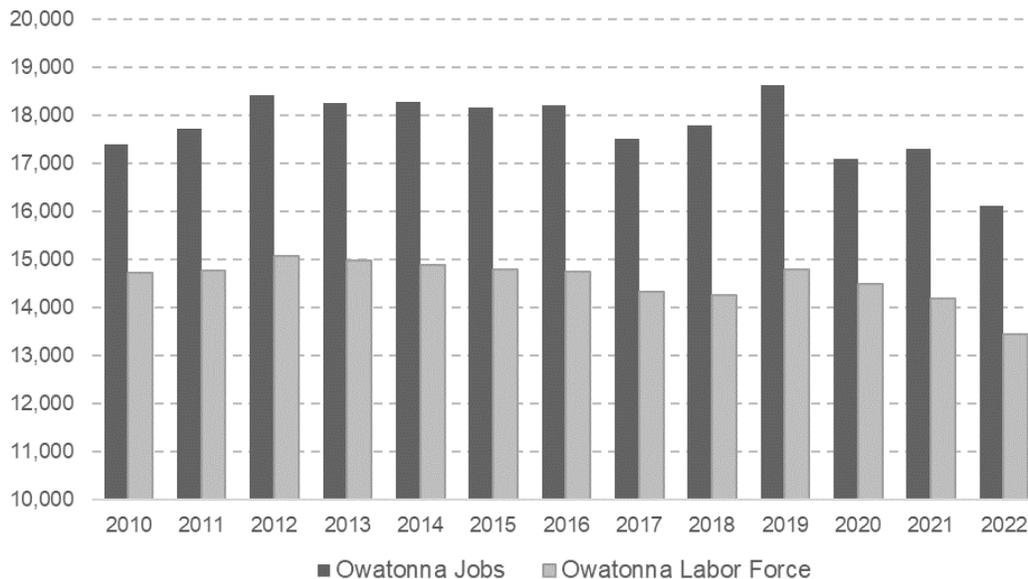
For over two decades, immigrant families have been attracted to the job opportunities in Owatonna, which has diversified the population. The percentage of the population that are people of color has increased from 8.2% in 2000 to 19.0% in 2020.

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, those born at the midpoint of the Baby Boom generation (1958) began reaching age 65 around 2020.



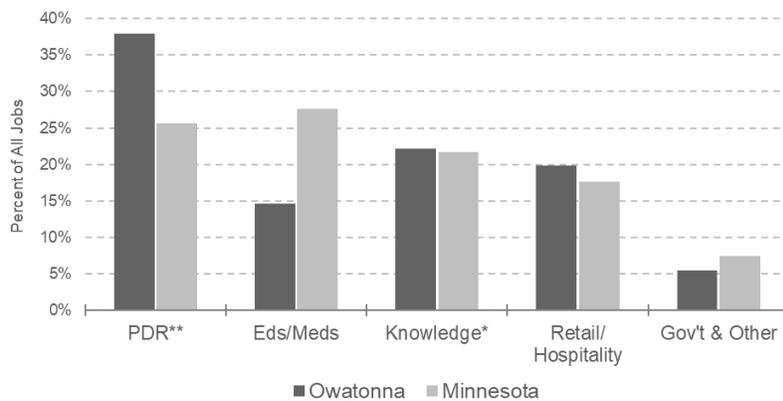
*Sources: Minnesota DEED, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) dataset and the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) dataset*

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.

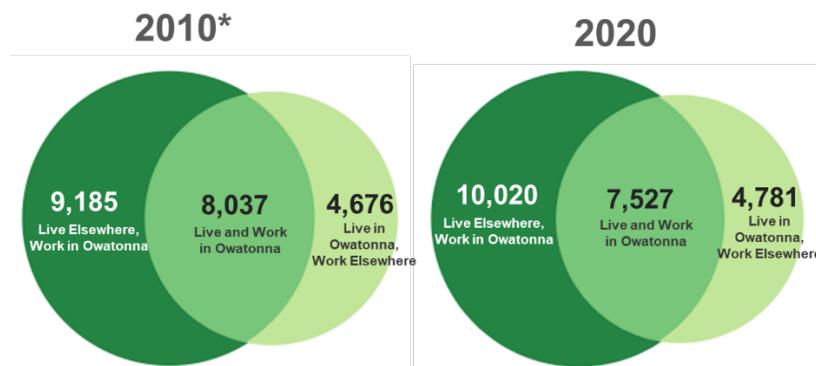


\* Knowledge = Consists of "knowledge-based" industry sectors (e.g., Information, Finance, and Professional Svcs/Mgmt)  
 \*\* PDR = Production, Distribution, and Repair industry sectors (e.g., Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities, etc.)  
 Source: US Census, LEHD dataset

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.



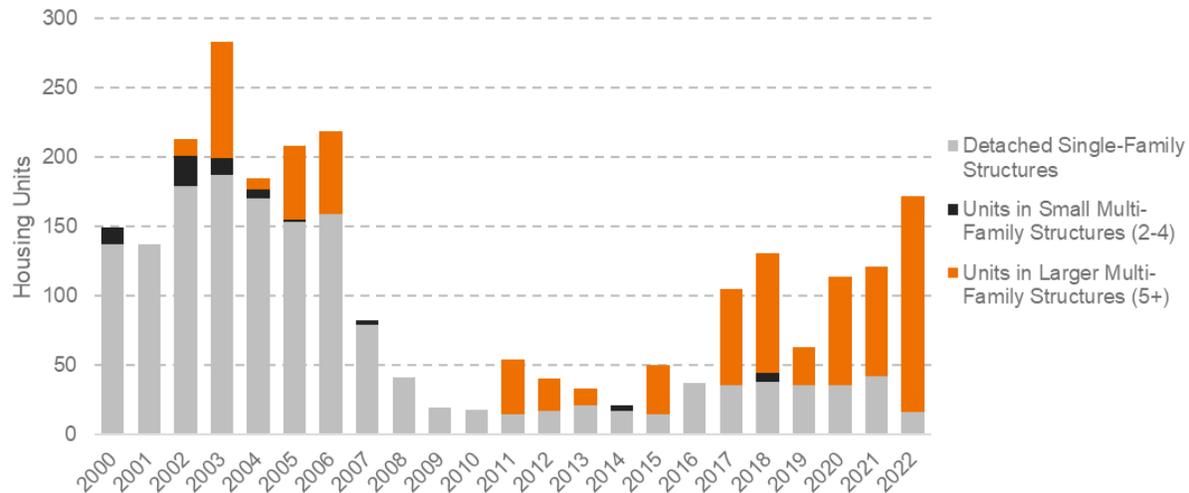
\* Earliest year data is available.  
 Source: US Census, LEHD Dataset

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. Among 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.

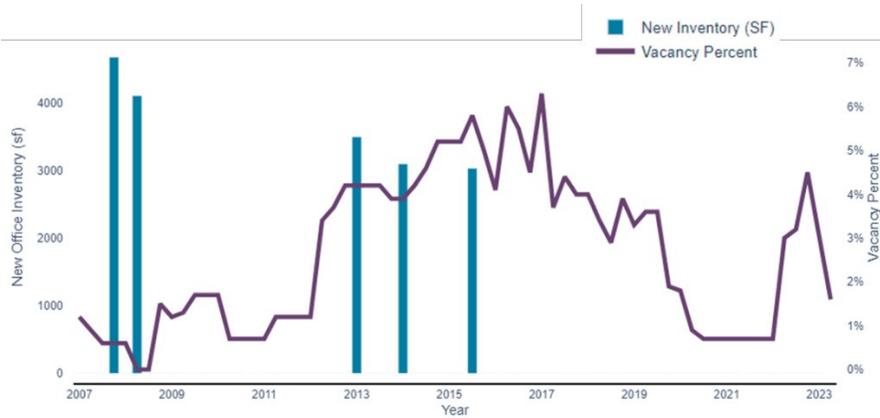


Figure 3.5 Owatonna Office Development and Vacancy Rate 2007-2023  
Source: CoStar

### 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.



## 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.

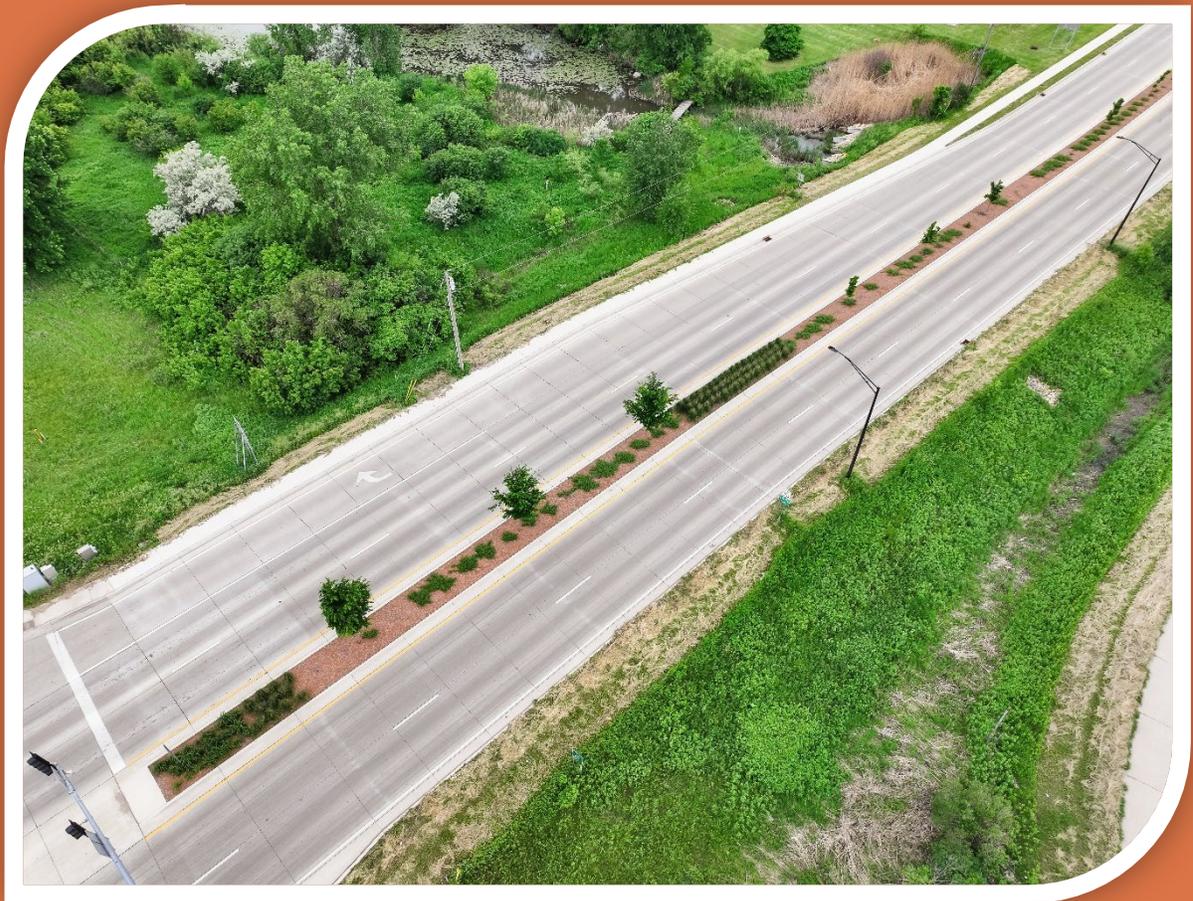
**Goal 3. Continue to support existing businesses in Owatonna**

- 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.
- 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 4.1 shows the mileage breakdown of the roadway jurisdictions within Owatonna. Figure 4.1 maps the existing roadway jurisdictional classifications in Owatonna.

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

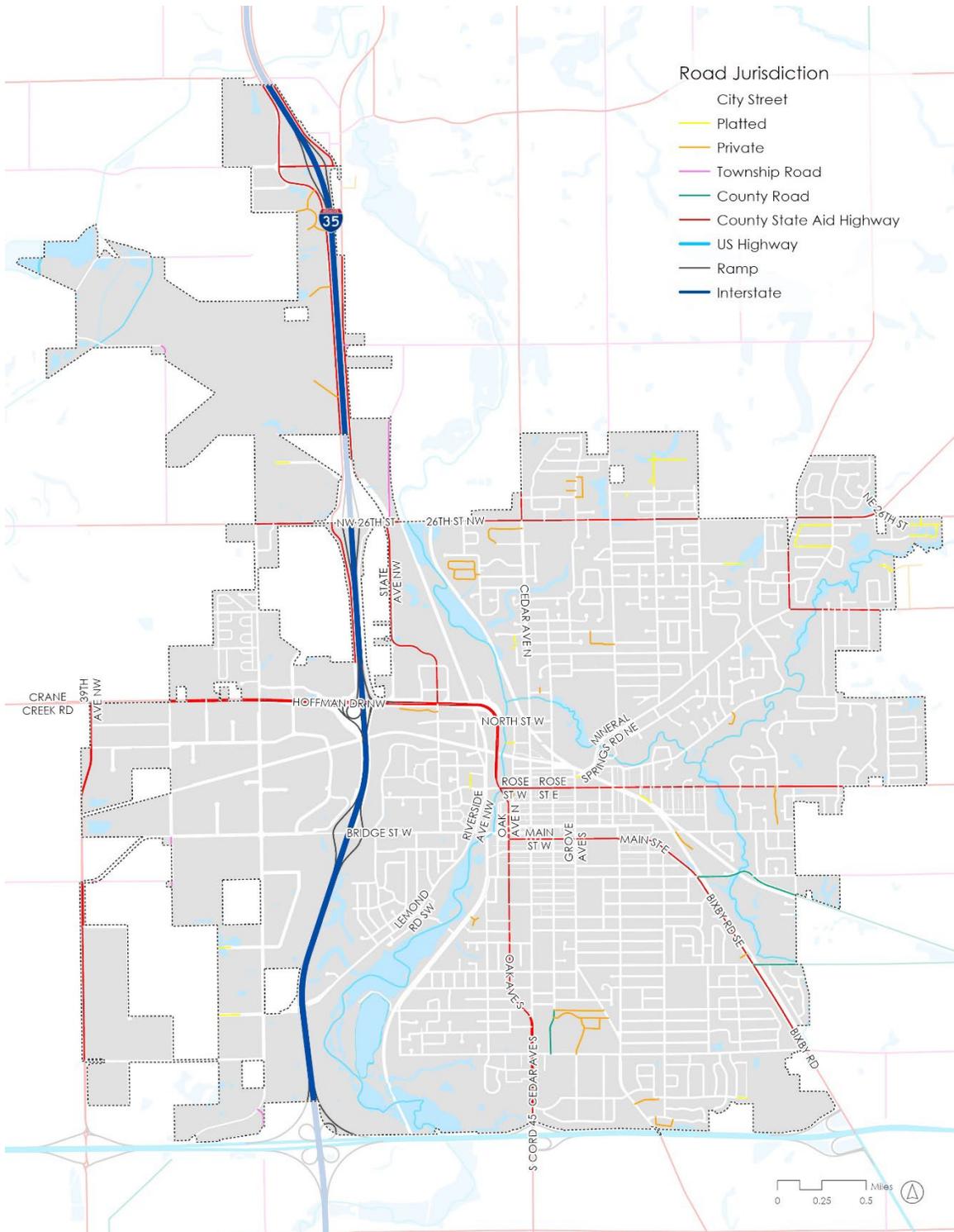


Figure 4.1 Existing Jurisdictional Classification

### 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 4.2, 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 4.2 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

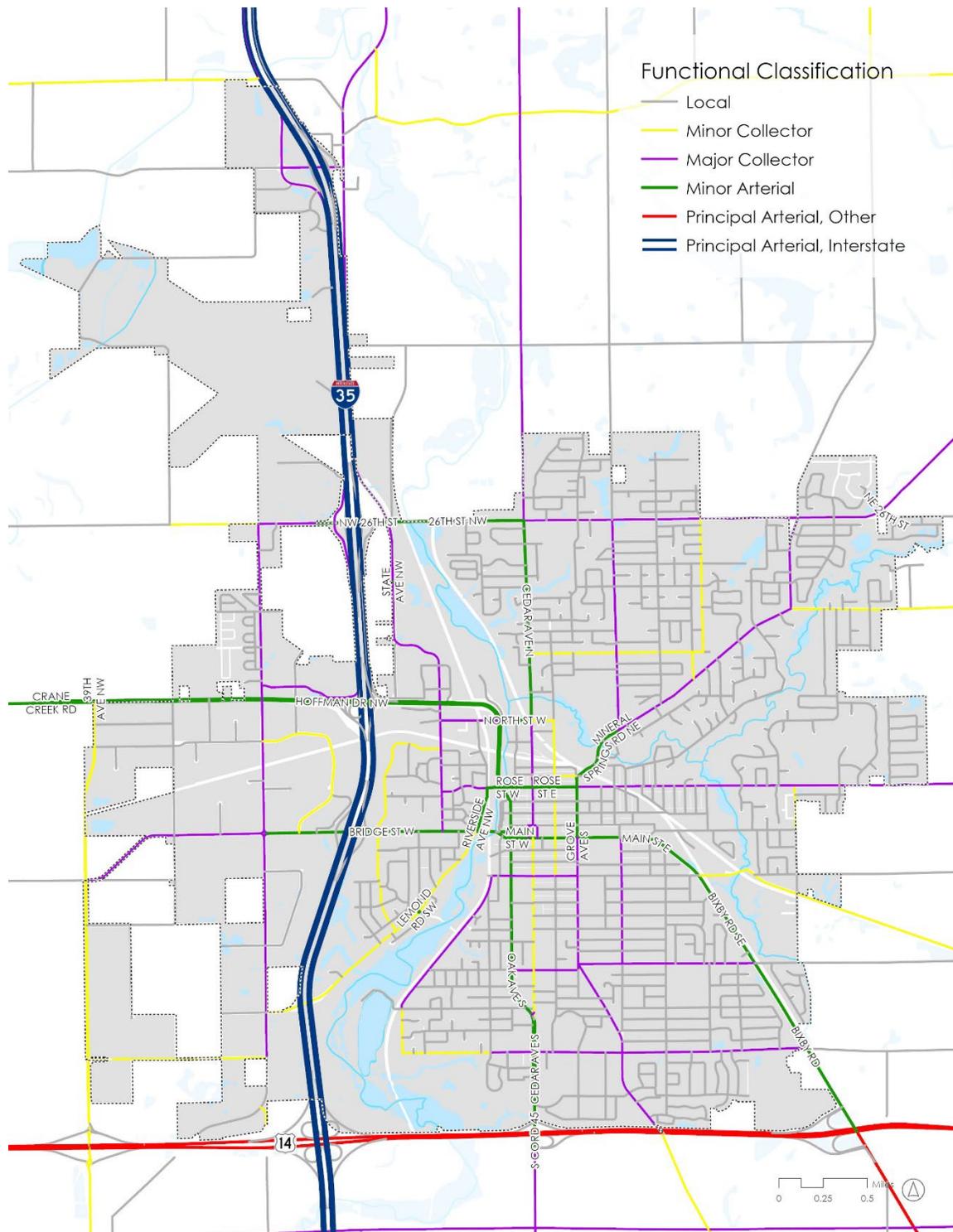


Figure 4.2 Existing Functional Classification

**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 4.3 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 4.3 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.



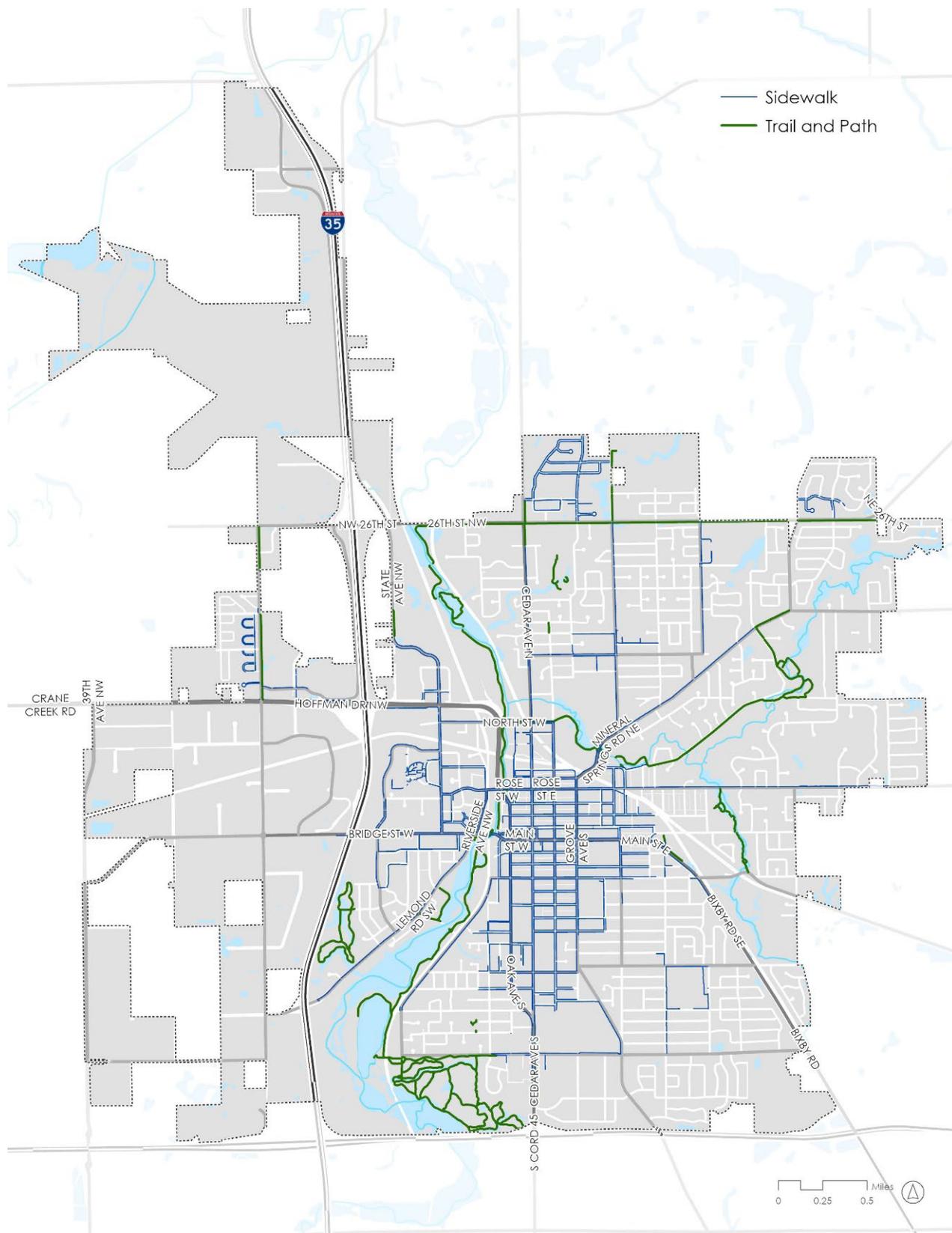


Figure 2 Existing Multimodal System

## 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.

## 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 4.4 lists the six segments that are anticipated to either approach or exceed capacity in 2040. Figure 4.4 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

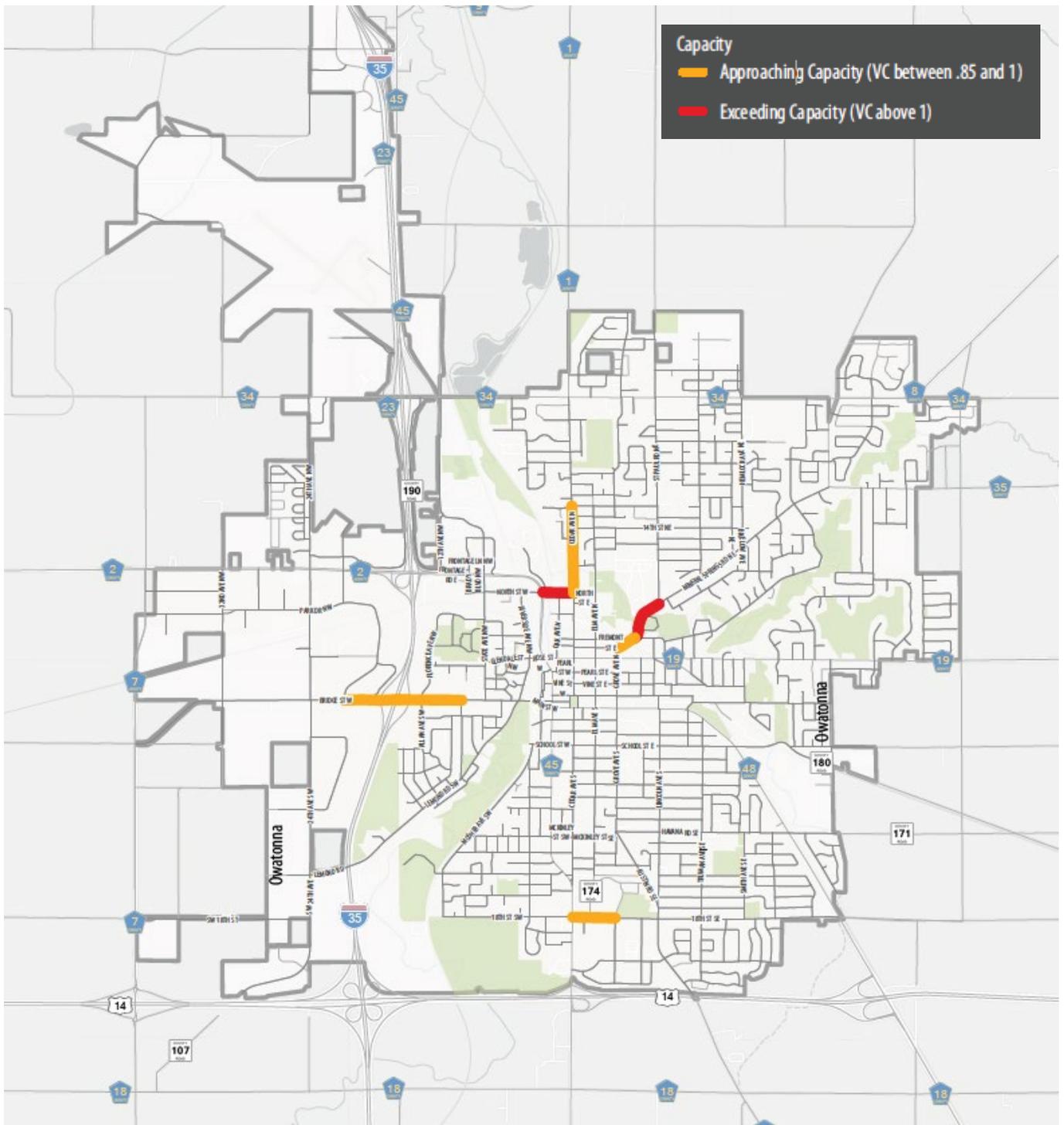


Figure 4.4 Future Congestion  
 Source: Owatonna 2040 Transportation Plan

## 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 4.5.

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 4.6. 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 4.5 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.).

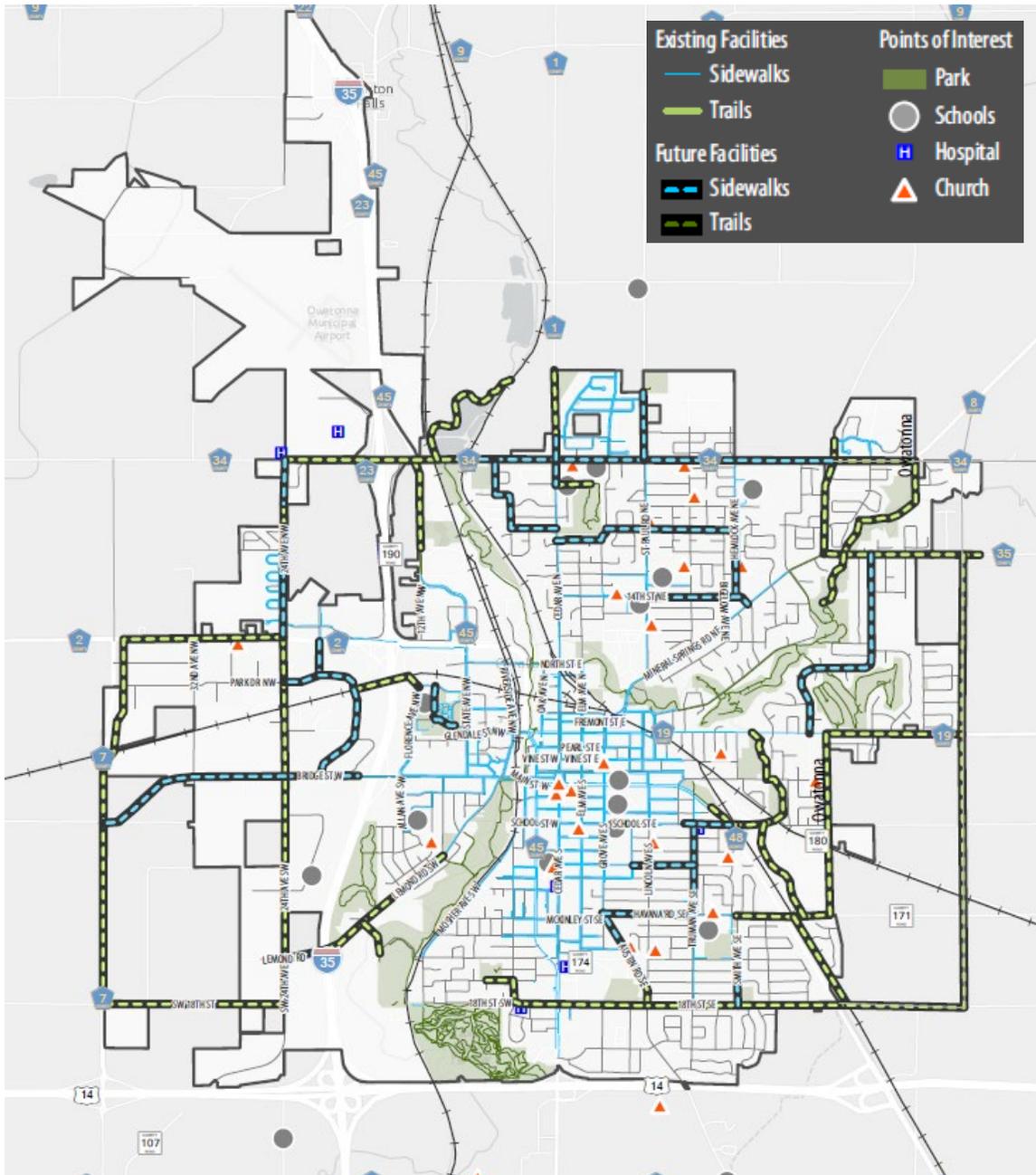


Figure 4.5 Future Multimodal System  
Source: Owatonna 2040 Transportation Plan

## 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 4.7 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 <sup>th</sup> 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 <b>Figure 21</b>	Owatonna Sidewalk and Trail Plan	✓	
Future Trails	Construction of trails as shown in <b>Figure 21</b>	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

## Option to consider: Complete Streets Policy

Goal 2e below encourages the city to consider adoption of a [Complete Streets Policy](#). The information below and at the provided link describes what this means and the potential benefits to the city of adopting this policy.

### What does Complete Streets mean?

Complete Streets is an approach to planning, designing and building streets that enables safe access for ALL users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. This approach emphasizes the needs of the most vulnerable individuals, or those whose needs have not been met through a traditional transportation approach, such as people walking, biking or rolling.



### What do Complete Streets look like?

While Complete Streets are a **process** and **approach** to street design, there is no singular design prescription for Complete Streets. Each one is unique and responds to its community context. A complete street may include: sidewalks, bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders), special bus lanes, comfortable and accessible public transportation stops, frequent and safe crosswalks, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, narrower travel lanes, roundabouts, and more.



October 2024



Source: Smart Growth America



## Transportation Goals

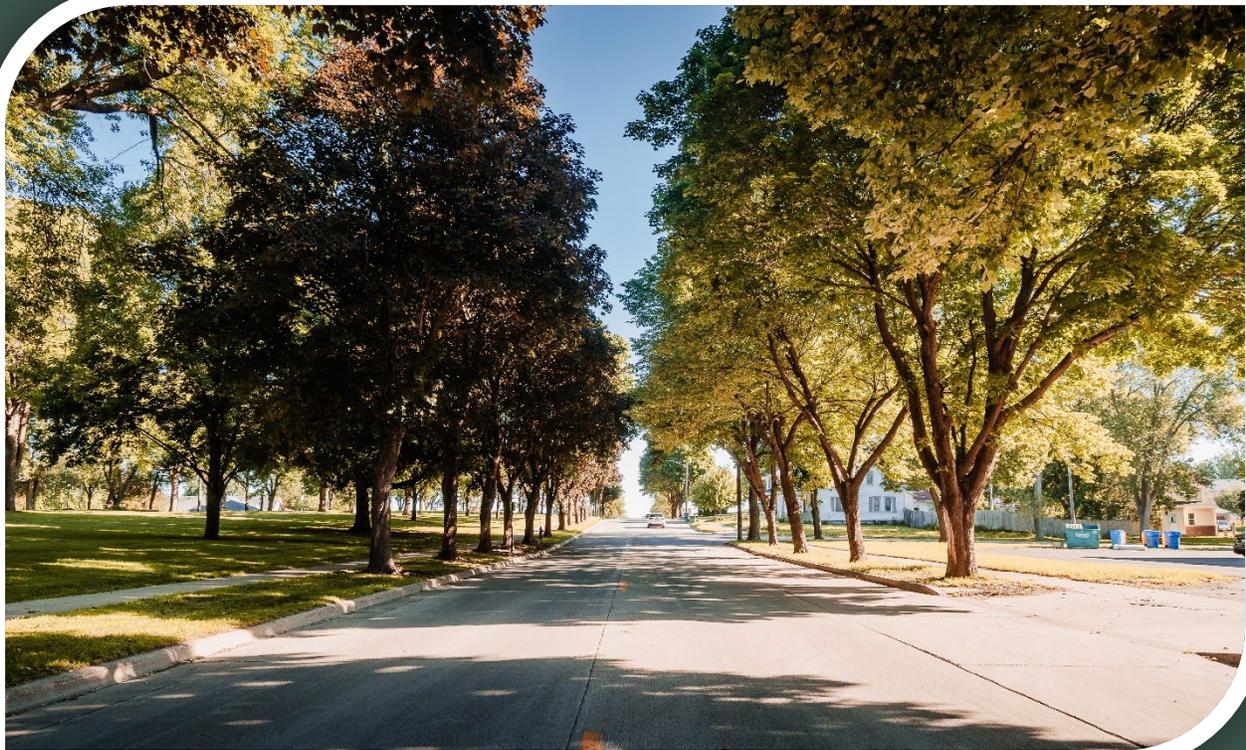
### Goal 1. Improve transportation connections within Owatonna.

- a) Explore a new east-west 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 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](#).
- f) Pursue funding to develop and implement a Safe Routes to School program in Owatonna.
- g) Complete a sidewalk and trail plan update or re-write to reflect the changing needs of the community and develop a reoccurring plan update cycle

# SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE



## Introduction

The City of Owatonna chose to include a chapter in the Comprehensive Plan dedicated to sustainability and resilience. The Comprehensive Plan is a way to acknowledge existing work related to environment and sustainability and to 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.

Sustainability 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 deployed to achieve resilience are those that increase the ability to adapt to changing conditions and recover rapidly when disruptions or events occur. Related to 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.

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 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.

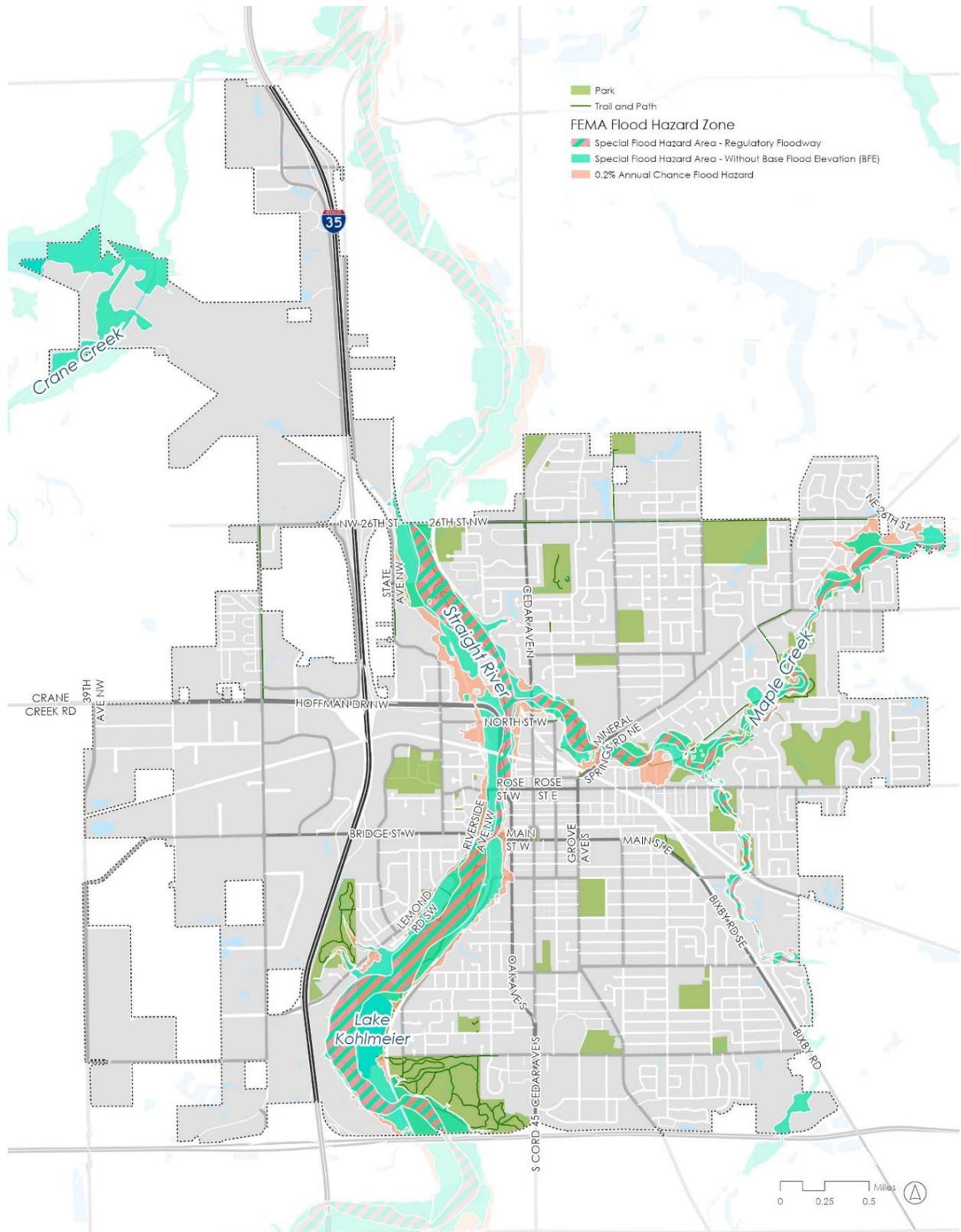


Figure 5.1 Natural Resources

## 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

- a) Continue efforts to plant, preserve and manage trees to lower urban heat island effect within the City including Tree City USA, Shade Tree Committee, and urban forestry practices.
- b) 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.
- c) 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.
- d) Continue the city's status as a Pollinator Friendly City and explore ways to include native plantings in parks and new developments.
- e) Continue strategic plan goals for flood mitigation and emergency management.
- f) 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 and Gold Leaf program to encourage city-led sustainability and climate action.
- 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 waterways and protect them 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) Continue transparency and inclusion in City decisions and actions, including exploration of a communications hub of events and resources for new and existing residents.
- b) Continue embracing diversity as a strength and work to ensure community 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.

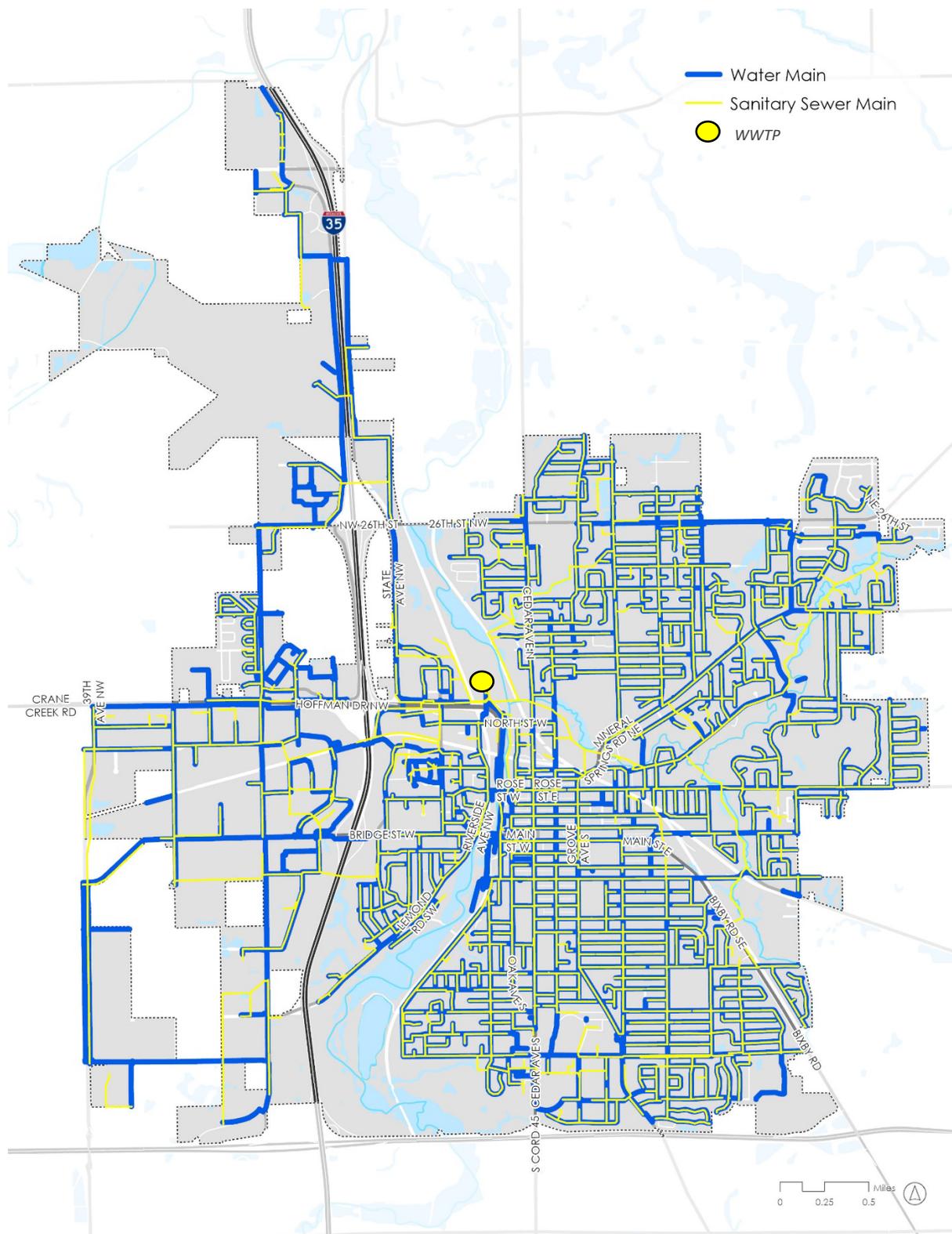


Figure 6.1 Existing Water Supply and Wastewater System

## 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.

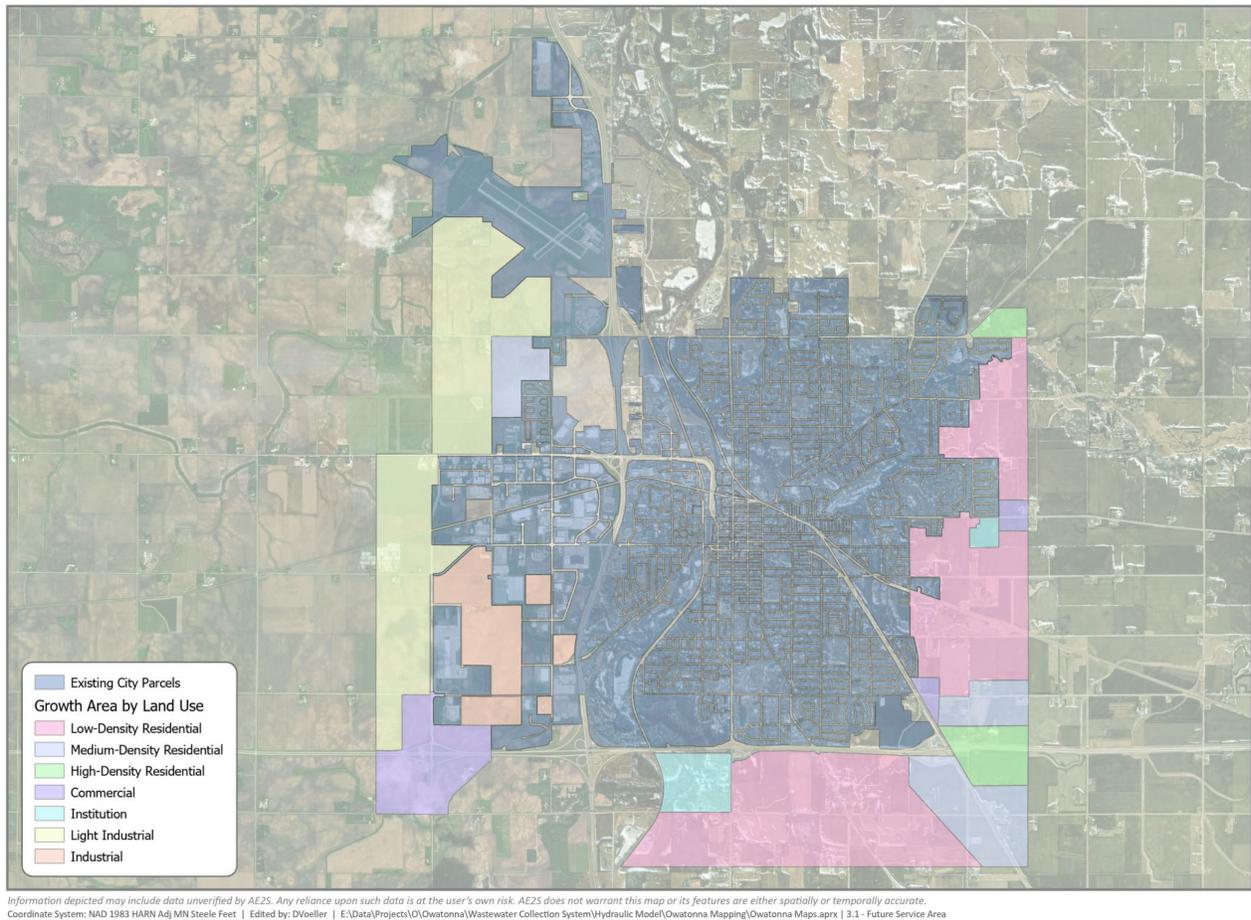


Figure 6.2. Wastewater Collection System Future Service Area and Planned Land Uses  
Source: Owatonna Wastewater Collection System Study

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 <sup>th</sup> 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
			<b>\$12,774,798</b>

Source: Owatonna Wastewater Collection System Study

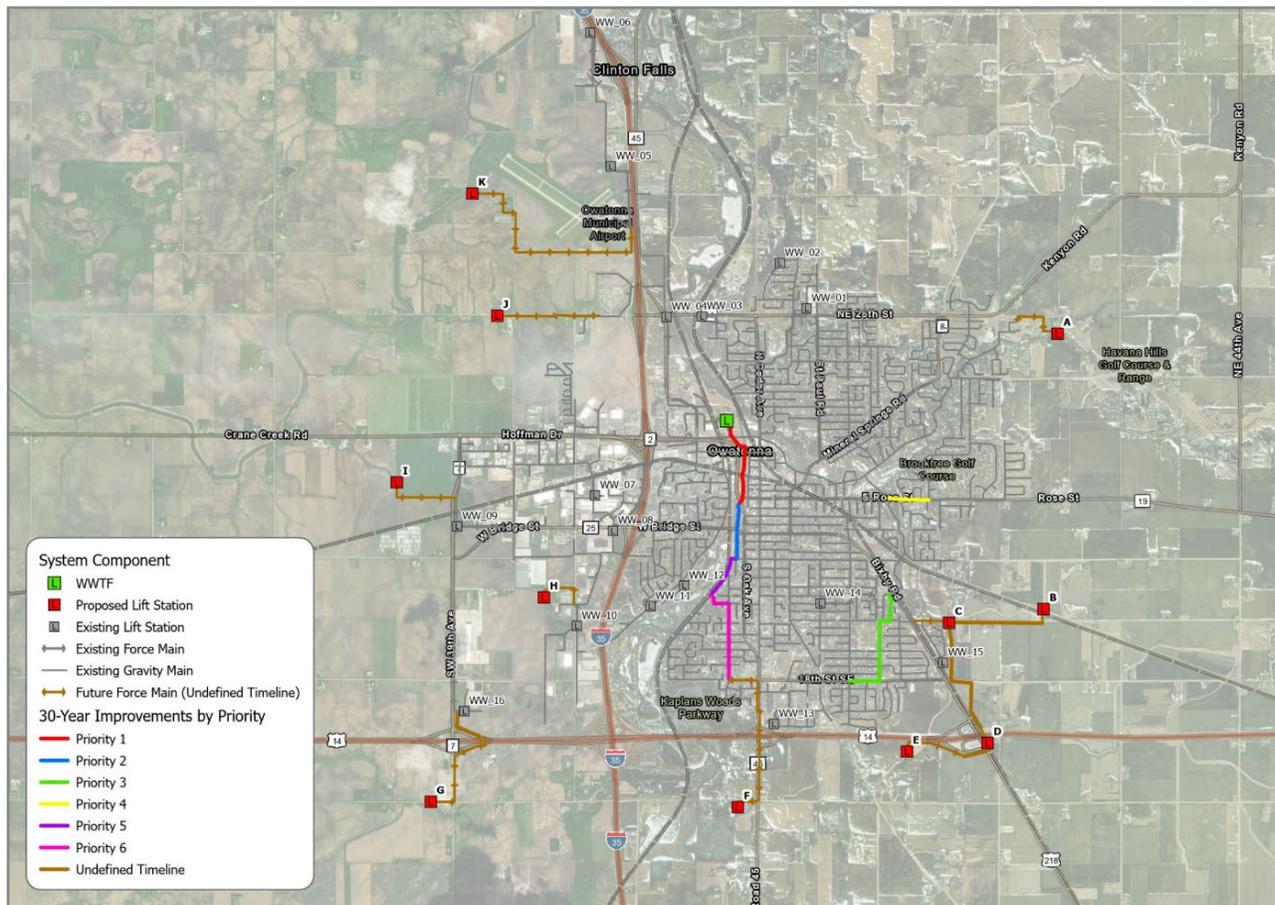


Figure 6.3 Wastewater 30-Year Improvements Prioritization

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 municipal 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.
- a) 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.
- b) When in-fill development or redevelopment occurs, Owatonna will evaluate existing sanitary sewer systems as to their capacity

**Goal 4. 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



# Implementation Matrix

The implementation matrix provides a comprehensive list of all the implementation goals and strategies contained within the Imagine Owatonna Comprehensive Plan. This plan is a long-term document, and the matrix is intended to provide staff with a tool to prioritize implementation activities over the life of this plan. It is intended that staff would regularly refer to this matrix and use this as a tool in updating City Council, Boards and Commissions on Comprehensive Plan implementation progress. The matrix includes a priority level, timeframe and responsible party and potential partners to complete each task.

## Priority

Priority is assigned based on both importance and ease of implementation. Each action in the Implementation Matrix includes one of the following priority levels:

H	High
M	Medium
L	Low

## Timeline

Given the long-term nature of the Imagine Owatonna Comprehensive Plan, it is important to break down the actions into implementation timeframes. This will help the city to prioritize and seek funding for implementation at the appropriate time.

5	Short-term - 5 years
5-10	Medium-term – 5-10 years
10+	Long-term – 10+ years
>>>	Ongoing

## Responsibility

To ensure seamless implementation of the plan, it is important to set out a responsible party (or parties) for each implementation goal or strategy. This will assist each city department or partner in identifying actions that they can take to implement the vision for the city set out in the Imagine Owatonna Comprehensive Plan.

Plan Goals and Strategies	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>LAND USE GOALS</b>			
<b>Goal 1. Provide community facilities that meet the needs of residents and visitors today and into the future.</b>			
a) Analyze the need for new or reimagined community facilities in Owatonna, prioritizing community engagement to understand the needs of the community.	M	>>>	Planning, Parks
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.	H	5	Planning, Parks, CC, Administration
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.	M	>>>	Planning, Parks, Chamber, Administration
<b>Goal 2. Improve housing opportunities and neighborhoods in Owatonna.</b>			
a) Provide areas for a mix of housing densities and types throughout the City in new mixed use form-based zoning districts.	H	5	Planning
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 in new mixed use form-based zoning districts.	H	5	Planning
c) Encourage mixed use development at key focus areas throughout the City to encourage walkability and community character.	M	5-10	Planning
d) Create a mixed use node near the new Owatonna Senior High School in southeast Owatonna to include commercial and high density residential uses.	H	5	Planning
e) Continue to explore growth opportunities outside current city limits to expand housing and commercial opportunities.	M	>>>	Planning
<b>Goal 3. Support Owatonna’s economic development through land use plans and policies.</b>			
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.	H	>>>	Planning, Chamber, CC, EDA, Parks
b) Continue mixed use development along the Straight River and create connections to the river as an amenity and resource.	H	5-10	Planning, Parks, Chamber
c) Continue to build on Owatonna’s historic buildings and character in land use and development decisions.	L	>>>	Planning, Chamber, CC

Plan Goals and Strategies	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility
d) Explore adding open space areas and trails to the industrial park area along with improved connections to the rest of Owatonna.	M	5-10	Planning
e) Study the potential of adding residential and mixed use along the fringes of the industrial park area	L	10+	Planning
f) Pursue pad-ready commercial and industrial sites as a tool to attract new development.	M	5-10	Planning, Chamber
<b>HOUSING GOALS</b>			
<b>Goal 1. Provide an appropriate mix of housing types in Owatonna.</b>			
a) Explore programs and opportunities to develop a range of affordable housing in Owatonna.	H	>>>	Planning, HRA
b) Apply recommendations in the <i>2023 Comprehensive Housing Needs Analysis</i> for market rate housing, developing lots and executive housing.	H	>>>	Planning, HRA
c) Explore programs and opportunities to develop senior housing in Owatonna, both independent and assisted living.	H	5-10	Planning, HRA
d) Develop policies and programs to ensure that the City's existing housing stock is safe, attractive, and well-maintained.	M	>>>	Planning, Building
e) Maintain and enhance policies and programs to license and regulate rental housing in the City.	L	5-10	Planning, HRA, Fire
f) Encourage and support sustainable and climate resilient design in new and existing housing.	M	5-10	Planning
g) Update the City's housing market study regularly to understand the evolving housing needs in Owatonna.	M	>>>	Planning, HRA
<b>Goal 2. Guide residential land use in appropriate locations in the City.</b>			
a) Encourage new housing development in and near downtown Owatonna.	H	10+	Planning, EDA
b) Encourage a mix of housing opportunities in southeast Owatonna near the new high school.	M	10+	Planning, EDA
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.	H	>>>	Planning, HRA, EDA
d) Require street and sidewalk/trail connections among all new and existing housing developments wherever possible.	H	5	Planning, Engineering
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.	L	10+	Planning, CC

Plan Goals and Strategies	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>DOWNTOWN GOALS</b>			
<b>Goal 1. Continue to promote Downtown Owatonna as the social, economic, and cultural hub of the region.</b>			
a) Encourage new and redeveloped housing opportunities in and near downtown.	H	5	Planning, HRA
b) Continue to prioritize revitalization of the riverfront through cleanup activities and redevelopment.	H	5-10	Parks, CC, Planning
c) Explore opportunities to use underutilized spaces in downtown, maintaining active spaces on ground-level and more passive spaces on the upper level.	H	5	Planning, EDA, Chamber
d) Continue to work with partners and stakeholders to promote and enhance business opportunities and activity in the downtown area.	H	>>>	Chamber, EDA
e) Continue to explore connections to and across the Straight River in Downtown.	H	5-10	Planning, Chamber, Parks
<b>Goal 2. Continue to implement the Downtown Streetscape Study.</b>			
a) Improve ongoing circulation and access throughout downtown for pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles.	M	>>>	Planning, Engineering, County
b) Maintain and enhance accessibility and pedestrian safety.	H	5-10	Engineering, County
c) Provide new and maintain existing amenities such as street lighting and street furniture in downtown.	M	5	CC, Parks
d) Incorporate art and placemaking into plans for downtown streetscaping.	L	5-10	Chamber, CC
<b>Goal 3. Continue to preserve the Downtown Historic District</b>			
a) Work with property owners to maintain historic buildings through the Main Street Forgivable Loan program or other similar program.	M	>>>	Planning, Chamber, EDA
b) Work with property owners and businesses to utilize upper spaces in Downtown through the Main Street Upper-Level Grant program.	M	>>>	Planning, Chamber, EDA
<b>COMMUNITY DESIGN GOALS</b>			
<b>Goal 1. Identify character districts in Owatonna for development of design guidelines.</b>			
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 through new mixed use form-based zoning districts.	M	5	Planning

Plan Goals and Strategies	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility
b) Develop minimum building materials standards within the zoning code to maintain and enhance the community character, appropriate to various character districts.	M	5	Planning
c) Develop minimum design standards related to building façade, roof treatment, landscaping, lighting and other features in the various character districts.	M	5	Planning
d) Develop design guidelines for the downtown area, requiring continuity in the design and scale of development, consistent with the historic character of the area.	M	5	Planning
<b>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.</b>	H	5	Parks, Planning, Engineering
a) Strive to fill missing connections in the overall sidewalk and trail network.	H	5	Parks, Planning, Engineering
<b>PARK &amp; TRAIL GOALS</b>			
<b>Goal 1. Improve and diversify park, trail and recreation opportunities in Owatonna.</b>			
a) Follow the recommendations of the Owatonna Parks System Master Plan and update the Plan every 10 years to address changing needs in the City. Align goals and policies with the Comprehensive Plan.	H	>>>	Parks
b) Prioritize 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.	H	5-10	Parks
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.	H	5	Parks
d) Explore the use of the quarry in Northwest Owatonna as a regional hub (park) once it reaches the end of its quarry reserves.	L	10+	Parks, Planning
e) Strive to make all City park and recreation facilities accessible, safe and welcoming for all ages and abilities.	H	>>>	Parks
f) Continue to maintain Owatonna’s existing parks and trails by exploring creative funding and financing strategies.	H	>>>	Parks
g) Integrate park and recreation facilities into a planned community center.	H	5	Parks, Administration, Community Partners, ISD 761
h) Explore a park land dedication ordinance to support acquisition, development and improvement for the park, trail and natural resource system.	H	5	Parks, Planning
<b>Goal 2. Improve connections within the park and trail system in Owatonna.</b>			

Plan Goals and Strategies	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility
a) Explore new east-west trail connections between Downtown, across the Straight River, across I-35, and the industrial park.	M	5-10	Parks, Planning
b) Continue focusing on trail development, trail safety, and maintenance of existing trails in the community.	H	>>>	Parks
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.	M	5-10	Parks
d) Pursue funding to develop and implement a Safe Routes to School program in Owatonna.	H	5	Parks, Planning
<b>Goal 3. Improve the health and wellness of the community through equitable park planning and construction.</b>			
a) Prioritize planting trees in new and existing parks, and along trail corridors to allow for shade and a more robust urban tree canopy.	M	>>>	PW, Parks
b) Prioritize improving the health of Owatonna's natural areas, rivers and streams.	M	>>>	Parks, Engineering
c) Explore adopting Level of Service (LOS) metrics for parks planning through a Parks Master Plan update.	H	5	Parks
d) Continue to plan for parks as critical infrastructure in all new and existing neighborhoods to improve physical and mental health of residents.	H	>>>	Parks, Planning
e) Explore opportunities to add parks and trails through an updated Parks and Trail Master Plan that build a sense of community, improve physical and mental health of residents and address any gaps in the overall parks system.	H	5-10	Parks, Planning
<b>Goal 4. Focus on partnerships to improve Owatonna's parks and trails system.</b>			
a) Continue to work cooperatively on park and recreation programs and facilities with Owatonna Public Schools.	H	>>>	Parks, ISD 761, CC
b) Continue to establish relationships with Steele County and neighboring communities to partner on regional trail opportunities in order to best secure future grant funding of these amenities.	M	10+	Parks, DNR, other agencies
c) Explore new partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships to leverage funding and deliver services.	M	>>>	Parks, DNR, Federal partners
d) Work with the community to understand parks needs and target parks that need enhancement and investment.	H	>>>	Parks
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS</b>			
<b>Goal 1. Continue to support and expand the workforce and quality of life in Owatonna.</b>			
a) Continue to champion partnerships with SteeleCoWorks, Owatonna Public Schools, Riverland Community College, and	M	>>>	Chamber, EDA

Plan Goals and Strategies	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility
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.	M	5	Chamber, Planning, CC, Parks
c) Continue to build and invest in the vibrancy of Downtown Owatonna to attract businesses and employees to Owatonna.	H	>>>	Chamber, CC
d) Work with partners to highlight Owatonna's unique strengths such as the school system, Straight River, historic downtown and community events.	M	>>>	Planning, CC, EDA, Chamber
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.	M	5-10	Planning, CC, EDA, Chamber
<b>Goal 2. Continue to support new business development in Owatonna.</b>			
a) Expand the services and awareness of offerings for the business incubator program.	H	5	OABDC, EDA
b) Work to reduce any actual or perceived regulatory barriers to new development in Owatonna.	H	>>>	Planning, Chamber, CC
c) Continue to work with the Owatonna Chamber of Commerce and other business interests to attract businesses to Owatonna.	H	>>>	Planning, Chamber, CC
d) Continue to support business growth near the airport and attract industries that benefit from this proximity.	H	5-10	Planning, Airport, CC
e) Work to develop pad-ready commercial and industrial sites to attract new businesses.	H	10+	Planning, Chamber
<b>Goal 3. Continue to support existing businesses in Owatonna</b>			
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.	H	>>>	Planning, Chamber, EDA
b) Work with the Owatonna Chamber of Commerce to identify ways the city can help support existing businesses.	L	>>>	Planning, Chamber, EDA, CC
<b>Goal 4. Support efforts to better connect people to jobs</b>			
a) Explore opportunities to expand transit within Owatonna.	M	5-10	SMART, Planning, Engineering
b) Explore opportunities to establish regional transportation routes to surrounding communities to provide increased access for workers.	M	5-10	Planning
c) Enhance multimodal connections between the industrial and commercial job centers and existing or new housing areas.	M	5-10	Planning, Parks, Engineering

Plan Goals and Strategies	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>TRANSPORTATION GOALS</b>			
<b>Goal 1. Improve transportation connections within Owatonna.</b>			
a) Explore a new east-west bicycle/pedestrian connections to connect the east and west sides of the City.	M	5-10	Parks, Engineering, Planning
b) Explore a new north-south vehicle and multi-modal connection on the east side of the City.	H	5	County, Engineering
c) Include traffic calming on roadway segments and intersections where pedestrians are present.	M	>>>	Planning, Engineering
d) Narrow roads where possible to fit neighborhood character.	H	5	Planning, Engineering
e) Explore allowing more continuous roadway corridors by removing stop signs and other controls where possible.	L	>>>	Engineering
f) Continue to prioritize road maintenance throughout the City.	H	>>>	Engineering, CC
<b>Goal 2. Improve multimodal transportation options in Owatonna.</b>			
a) Explore expanded transit within the City to provide increased access for workers and shoppers.	L	10+	Planning, Engineering
b) Explore expanded transit options between Owatonna and nearby cities.	M	5-10	Planning, Engineering, SE MN Together
c) Provide bike lanes and sidewalks on key roadways.	H	5	Planning, Engineering
d) Strive for the safest possible facility type for bike and pedestrian infrastructure.	H	5	Planning, Engineering
e) Explore adoption of a <a href="#">Complete Streets Policy</a> .	M	10+	Planning, Engineering
f) Pursue funding to develop and implement a Safe Routes to School program in Owatonna.	H	5	Parks, Planning, Engineering, ISD 761
g) Complete a sidewalk and trail plan update or re-write to reflect the changing needs of the community and develop a reoccurring plan update cycle	H	5-10	Planning, Engineering, Parks
<b>SUSTAINABILITY &amp; RESILIENCE GOALS</b>			
<b>Goal 1. Continue activities that preserve and maintain Owatonna's natural resources</b>			
a) Continue efforts to plant, preserve and manage trees to lower urban heat island effect within the City including Tree City USA, Shade Tree Committee, and urban forestry practices	H	>>>	PW, Parks

Plan Goals and Strategies	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility
b) 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.	H	>>>	PW
c) 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.	H	>>>	PW
d) Continue the city’s status as a Pollinator Friendly City and explore ways to include native plantings in parks and new developments.	M	>>>	PW, Parks, Planning
e) Continue strategic plan goals for flood mitigation and emergency management.	H	>>>	Planning, Fire
f) Create and continue partnerships to clean up the Straight River and provide access to this natural resource.	H	5	Clean River Partners, PW, 1W1P
<b>Goal 2. Explore programs and regulations that will enhance the city’s sustainability and resilience</b>			
a) Explore participation in the GreenStep Cities and Gold Leaf program to encourage city-led sustainability and climate action.	H	5	OPU, Administration
b) Encourage sustainable land management practices to preserve and enhance the city’s natural resources.	M	5-10	Planning, Engineering
c) Explore the adoption of ordinance language to establish shoreline buffers, address erosion issues along waterways and protect them from pollution.	H	5	Planning, Engineering
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	M	5-10	Planning
<b>Goal 3. Continue to develop sustainable and equitable governance structures</b>			
a) Continue transparency and inclusion in City decisions and actions, including exploration of a communications hub of events and resources for new and existing residents.	H	>>>	All partners
b) Continue embracing diversity as a strength and work to ensure community leadership is representative of this diversity.	H	>>>	All partners
<b>Goal 4. Continue to provide city services in an efficient and sustainable manner</b>			
a) Plan for efficient and effective growth of City infrastructure and services.	H	>>>	Planning, Engineering
b) As shown in the City’s Future Land Use Map, approach development growth that is sustainable in the long-term.	H	>>>	Planning

Plan Goals and Strategies	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility
c) Maximize efforts to incorporate energy savings, renewable energy, resilience, and sustainable practices in all areas of City services.	H	>>>	Planning, OPU, Administration
d) Continue to be fiscally responsible through careful stewardship of City resources and staff.	H	>>>	CC
<b>UTILITY GOALS</b>			
<b>Goal 1. Continue to partner with municipal 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.</b>			
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.	H	>>>	CC
<b>Goal 2. Continue to plan for effective and efficient operation and maintenance of the city's sanitary sewer system</b>			
a) The city will construct its system to facilitate operation and maintenance and prevent inflow and infiltration.	H	>>>	PW
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.	H	>>>	PW
c) The city will regularly televise and clean its sanitary sewer system to determine whether it is performing adequately.	H	>>>	PW
d) During major street reconstruction projects, the city will assess the system within the project area and makes improvements as needed.	H	>>>	PW
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.	H	>>>	CC
<b>Goal 3. Continue to plan for expansion of the wastewater system as the city plans for growth.</b>			
a) Implement priority actions from the 2023 Wastewater Collection System Study or subsequent updates to this plan.	H	>>>	PW
b) The extension of sanitary sewers shall be programmed to achieve maximum benefit from the existing utilities.	H	>>>	PW
c) The sanitary sewer system shall be constructed to accommodate the proposed land use densities and uses identified in the future land use plan.	H	>>>	PW
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.	H	>>>	PW

Plan Goals and Strategies	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility
e) When in-fill development or redevelopment occurs, Owatonna will evaluate existing sanitary sewer systems as to their capacity	H	>>>	PW
<b>Goal 4. Provide, improve, and maintain the public storm sewer system and the stormwater management program as the City plans for growth.</b>			
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.	H	5	PW, Planning
b) Continue compliance with and enforcement of the MS4 Program and Permit requirements.	H	>>>	Stormwater
c) Continue implementing the City's Clean H2Owatonna Stormwater Management Program.	M	5	Stormwater
d) Seek partnerships and collaboration with agencies, organizations, and local property owners	M	5	Stormwater
e) Review and revise stormwater management ordinance, development standards, and modeling as industry standards and climate trends evolve.	H	>>>	Stormwater
f) Continue to improve the tools used to achieve water quality objectives.	M	>>>	Stormwater
g) Improve infrastructure resiliency related to climate change and increased rainfall amount, duration, and frequency.	M	5-10	Stormwater
h) Improve and identify infrastructure capacity and adequacy related to new development and redevelopment.	H	5	Stormwater
i) Encourage and adopt low impact development standards.	H	5	Stormwater, Planning
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.	M	10+	Stormwater
k) Implement stormwater management controls identified in the City's Pollutant Reduction Strategy Plan	M	5-10	Stormwater
l) Encourage private investment and interest in green infrastructure and other stormwater controls	H	5	Stormwater, Planning
m) Seek opportunities, identify locations, and potential funding sources for implementing stormwater practices and improvements in areas of developed portions of the City.	M	>>>	Stormwater, Planning

# Appendix A - Imagine Owatonna Background Report

# IMAGINE OWATONNA

## Background Report

November 2023

Imagine Owatonna: 2050 Comprehensive Plan

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## PURPOSE OF BACKGROUND REPORT

A Comprehensive Plan is a guiding framework that helps city leaders, developers, business owners, and residents make decisions about how a city will grow over the next 20 years. Community engagement and input throughout the process is essential to determine the vision of the city. The *Imagine Owatonna* Comprehensive Plan will include numerous topics that are important to communities, including Land Use, Housing, Downtown, Business and Jobs, Parks and Public Space, Transportation, Utilities, Environment and Natural Resources. The plan is designed to be specific enough to guide day-to-day planning activities, within the context of a long-range future framework.

This background report outlines both the existing conditions in each of these topic areas within the city, as well as any recent plans or studies the city has conducted. The background report discusses the city's current demographics and economic context which create the basis for further planning in the full Comprehensive Plan. While all topics are important, there are some topic areas where the Comprehensive Plan will reference other planning efforts that provide much more detail and guidance than this plan allows. This background report gives an overview of other relevant planning efforts, and the full Comprehensive Plan will include goals or strategies related to these efforts.

### Relationship with other plans and studies

The results of several planning and infrastructure capacity studies have been incorporated into this report. The studies include the following:

- Owatonna 2040 Transportation Plan – June 2021
- Owatonna Nero Sanitary Sewer Study – Jan 2022
- Owatonna Wastewater Collection System Report – Feb 2023
- Owatonna Park and Trail Plan – Feb 2019
- Sidewalk and Trail Plan – Dec 2012
- ADA Transition Plan – Feb 2018
- City of Owatonna Downtown Streetscape Study – Nov 2019
- Housing Study – Pending

The city also prepares additional detailed plans and studies from time to time including a housing demand analysis and market analyses. When applicable, *Imagine Owatonna* should serve as the basis or framework for these future efforts.

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

### Introduction

The following section on demographic and economic data for Owatonna provides an understanding of key trends that influence land use and other important community systems. In many of the exhibits included in this section, additional data is also presented for Steele County and Minnesota. In select cases, data is presented for the peer communities of Faribault, Albert Lea, Austin, Mankato, and Rochester. This additional data is intended to provide greater context to trends and patterns that likely extend well beyond Owatonna’s border but nevertheless impact the community.

### 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 1 Population Trends and Projections

Geography	1990	2000	2010	2020	Estimate*	Projection**		2050
					2022	2030	2040	
<b>Population</b>								
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
<b>Percent Change †</b>								
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

### Population of Peer Communities

Owatonna’s population has increased each decade since 1970. This is largely attributed to its diverse and growing economy. Meanwhile, peer communities have had a range of growth patterns.

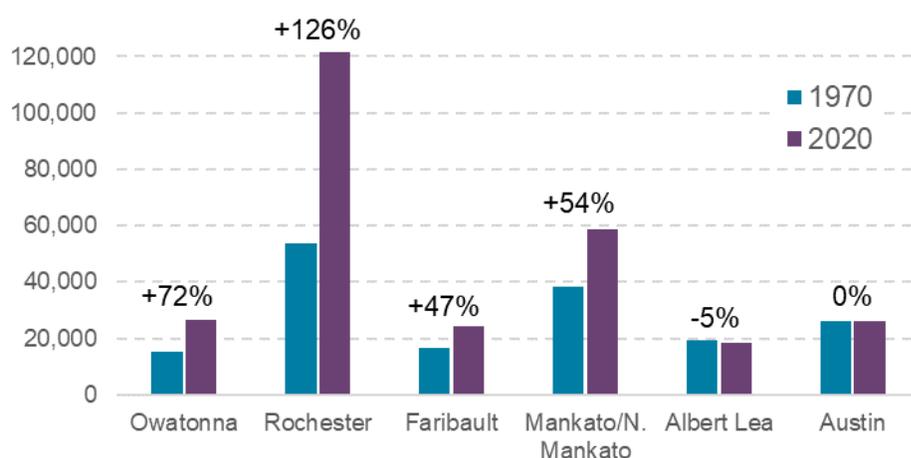
In Albert Lea and Austin, which have less diverse economies, growth has been generally stagnant over the last 50 years. Faribault and Mankato are most similar to Owatonna, but each has experienced periods of population decline since 1970. Rochester is the outlier with high rates of growth each decade, which has been driven by its unique situation as a global center for healthcare.

Table 2 Population of Peer Communities

Geography	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
<b>Population</b>						
Owatonna	15,341	18,632	19,386	22,434	25,599	26,420
Rochester	53,766	57,890	70,745	85,806	107,050	121,396
Faribault	16,595	16,241	17,085	20,818	23,360	24,423
Mankato/N. Mankato	38,242	37,787	41,632	44,225	53,355	58,955
Albert Lea	19,418	19,200	18,310	18,356	18,207	18,518
Austin	26,210	23,020	21,907	23,314	24,945	26,175
<b>Percent Change</b>						
Owatonna	--	21.5%	4.0%	15.7%	14.1%	3.2%
Rochester	--	7.7%	22.2%	21.3%	24.8%	13.4%
Faribault	--	-2.1%	5.2%	21.8%	12.2%	4.6%
Mankato/N. Mankato	--	-1.2%	10.2%	6.2%	20.6%	10.5%
Albert Lea	--	-1.1%	-4.6%	0.3%	-0.8%	1.7%
Austin	--	-12.2%	-4.8%	6.4%	7.0%	4.9%

Source: US Census

### Population Change 1970-2020



Source: US Census

### Age Distribution

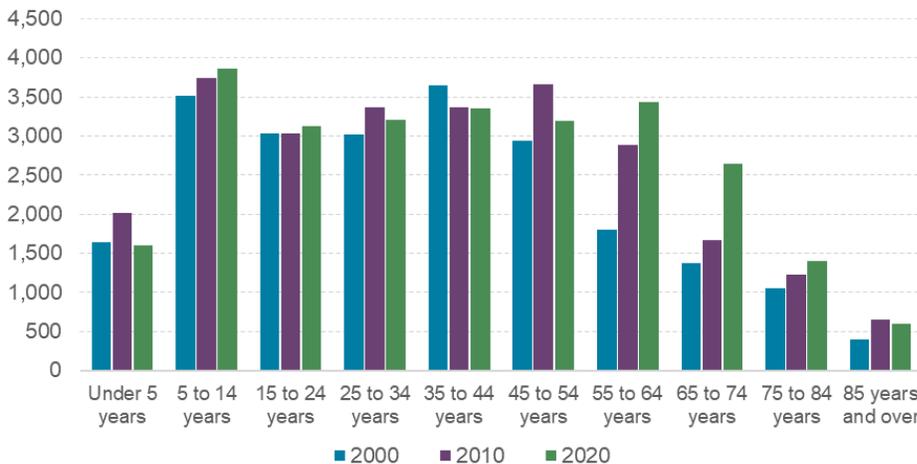
The age distribution of the population has a profound influence on a community and its needs. Our age impacts the type of housing we need, the goods and services we consume, and numerous other elements of daily life. Due to the aging of the Baby Boom generation, those born between 1946 and 1964, Owatonna’s 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 Age Distribution

Age Group				Change '00-'10		Change '10-'20		Distribution		
	2000	2010	2020	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	2000	2010	2020
<b>Owatonna</b>										
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%
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,434</b>	<b>25,599</b>	<b>26,420</b>	<b>3,165</b>	<b>14.1%</b>	<b>821</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Median Age</b>										
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



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.

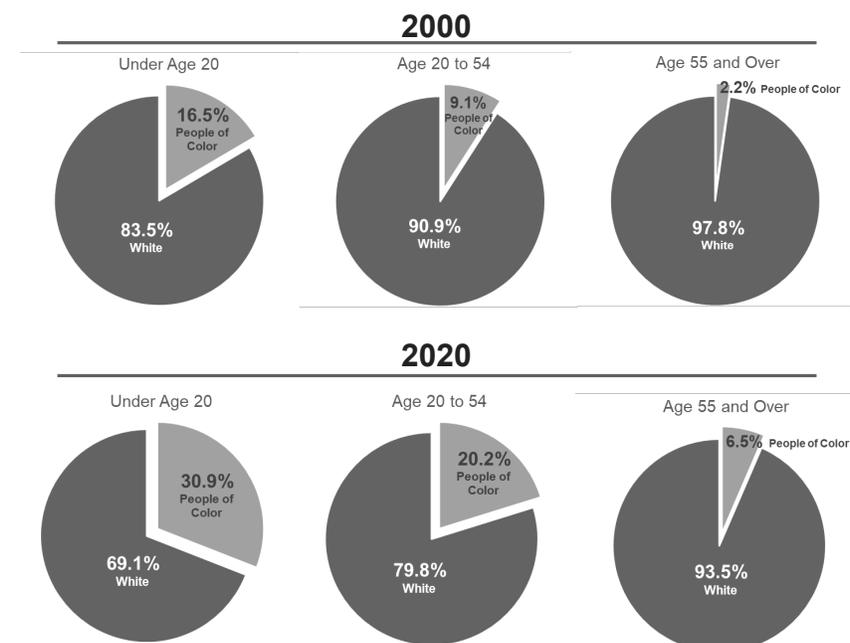
Table 4 – Race and Ethnicity

Race & Ethnicity*	2000	2010	2020	Change '00-'10		Change '10-'20		Distribution		
				No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	2000	2010	2020
<b>Owatonna</b>										
White	20,604	22,172	21,410	1,568	7.6%	-762	-3.4%	91.8%	86.6%	81.0%
Black or African American	348	974	1,308	626	179.9%	334	34.3%	1.6%	3.8%	5.0%
Hispanic or Latino	967	1,868	2,539	901	93.2%	671	35.9%	4.3%	7.3%	9.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native	24	53	46	29	120.8%	-7	-13.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%
Asian	222	234	289	12	5.4%	55	23.5%	1.0%	0.9%	1.1%
Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	3	17	3	--	14	466.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Some Other Race	23	13	38	-10	-43.5%	25	192.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Two or More Races	246	282	773	36	14.6%	491	174.1%	1.1%	1.1%	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,434</b>	<b>25,599</b>	<b>26,420</b>	<b>3,165</b>	<b>14.1%</b>	<b>821</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\* The US Census considers Hispanic or Latino as an ethnic identifier and not a race. Therefore, people who identify as Hispanic or Latino can be of any race. All other categories pertain to race and consist of people who do not identify as having Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.

Source: US Census

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.



## Households

Households are the primary social structure for evaluating economic activity and consumption. Therefore, tracking changes in the size and structure of households helps understand the need for housing, transportation, and many community services.

Owatonna’s number of households has increased every decade since 1990. From 1990 to 2010, the rate of household growth exceeded the state’s growth rate. However, from 2010 to 2020, Owatonna’s household growth slowed and was below the state’s growth rate.

Consistent with an overall aging population and lower birth rates, Owatonna’s average household size has declined from 2.63 persons in 1990 to 2.50 in 2020.

Table 5 Households

Geography	1990	2000	2010	2020	Percent Change		
					'90-'00	'00-'10	'10-'20
<b>Households</b>							
Owatonna	7,382	8,686	10,068	10,584	17.7%	15.9%	5.1%
Clinton Falls Twp	174	167	153	149	-4.0%	-8.4%	-2.6%
Owatonna Twp	349	288	249	231	-17.5%	-13.5%	-7.2%
Steele County	11,342	12,818	14,330	14,823	13.0%	11.8%	3.4%
Minnesota	1,647,853	1,896,209	2,087,227	2,253,990	15.1%	10.1%	8.0%
<b>Average Household Size</b>							
Owatonna	2.63	2.58	2.54	2.50	-1.7%	-1.5%	-1.8%
Clinton Falls Twp	2.98	2.79	2.29	2.59	-6.3%	-17.8%	12.9%
Owatonna Twp	2.84	2.66	2.45	2.65	-6.3%	-8.0%	8.5%
Steele County	2.71	2.63	2.55	2.52	-3.0%	-2.9%	-1.1%
Minnesota	2.66	2.59	2.54	2.53	-2.3%	-2.1%	-0.4%

Source: US Census

## Household Types

Changing family and household structures can also have a significant effect on housing and other community needs. For example, decreasing household size has a direct impact on the size of housing a household needs. Also, the presence of children not only impacts local schools and parks, but also the types of retailers that can be supported.

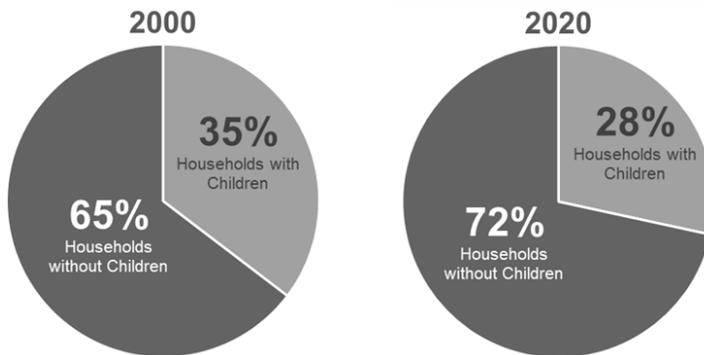
As Owatonna’s overall household growth slowed down in the 2010s, there was an especially sharp decline in the number of single parent families and roommate households. In contrast, the number of married/partnered households without children and persons living alone increased substantially.

Between 2000 and 2020, the share of households without any children increased from 65% to 72%.

Table 6 Household Types

Household Type	2000	2010	2020	Change '00-'10		Change '10-'20		Distribution		
				No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	2000	2010	2020
<b>Owatonna</b>										
Married/Partnered, no child	2,564	3,035	3,652	471	18.4%	617	16.9%	29.5%	30.1%	34.5%
Married/Partnered, w/child	2,354	2,288	2,300	-66	-2.8%	12	0.5%	27.0%	22.7%	21.7%
Single Parent, M	192	243	188	51	26.6%	-55	-29.3%	2.2%	2.4%	1.8%
Single Parent, F	531	717	517	186	35.0%	-200	-38.7%	6.1%	7.1%	4.9%
Householder living alone	2,317	2,807	3,159	490	21.1%	352	11.1%	26.6%	27.9%	29.8%
Roommates/Other Family	746	978	768	232	31.1%	-210	-27.3%	8.6%	9.7%	7.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,704</b>	<b>10,068</b>	<b>10,584</b>	<b>1,364</b>	<b>15.7%</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>4.9%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: US Census



### Median Household Income by Household Age

Household income is important to track because it is strongly correlated with age and directly affects the spending power of area residents. This impacts their ability to support retail and afford new forms of housing.

The 2020 overall median household income in Owatonna was just over \$66,000. This is 11% below the median income for the State of Minnesota (\$73,400). Every age category, except households under 25, has a lower median income than the statewide median. However, statewide income data is skewed somewhat by higher incomes in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metro area.

Historically, the median income in Owatonna has been more aligned with the statewide median. In 2000, the difference between the two medians was only about \$1,500 or 3%.

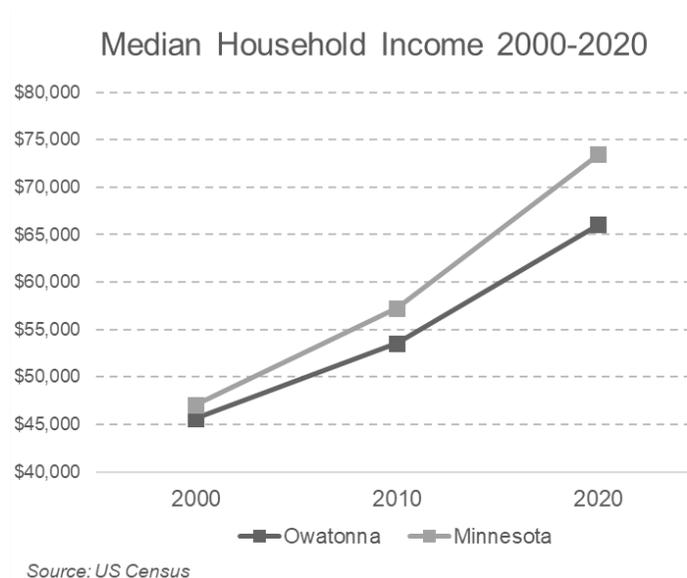
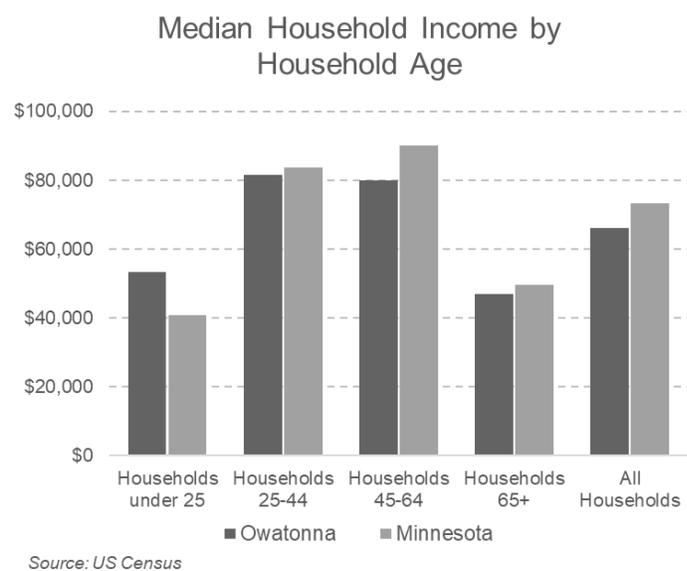


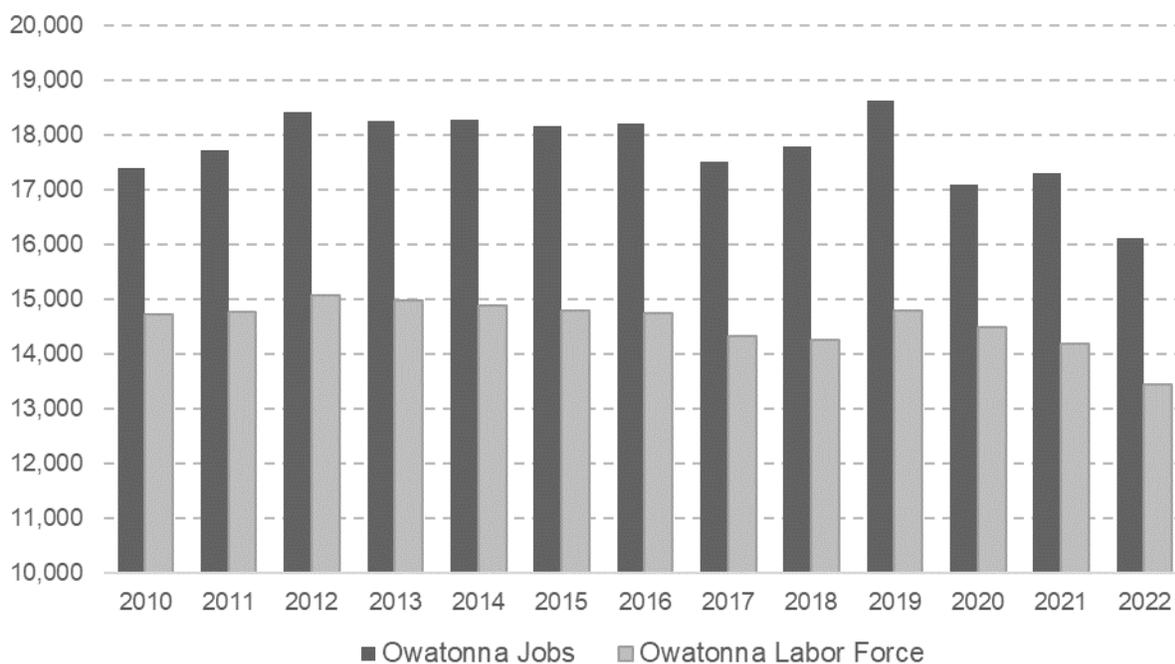
Table 7 Median Household Income by Household Age

Household Age	2000	2010	2020	Change '00-'10		Change '10-'20	
				No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
<b>Owatonna</b>							
Households under 25	\$28,571	\$29,514	\$53,262	\$943	3.3%	\$23,748	80.5%
Households 25-44	\$51,404	\$61,467	\$81,394	\$10,063	19.6%	\$19,927	32.4%
Households 45-64	\$58,840	\$66,276	\$80,000	\$7,436	12.6%	\$13,724	20.7%
Households 65+	\$26,069	\$29,209	\$46,898	\$3,140	12.0%	\$17,689	60.6%
All Households	\$45,660	\$53,569	\$66,037	\$7,909	17.3%	\$12,468	23.3%
<b>Minnesota</b>							
Households under 25	\$21,763	\$28,693	\$40,813	\$6,930	31.8%	\$12,120	42.2%
Households 25-44	\$53,036	\$64,639	\$83,759	\$11,603	21.9%	\$19,120	29.6%
Households 45-64	\$58,953	\$70,338	\$90,158	\$11,385	19.3%	\$19,820	28.2%
Households 65+	\$26,673	\$34,152	\$49,601	\$7,479	28.0%	\$15,449	45.2%
All Households	\$47,111	\$57,243	\$73,382	\$10,132	21.5%	\$16,139	28.2%

Source: US Census

### 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.



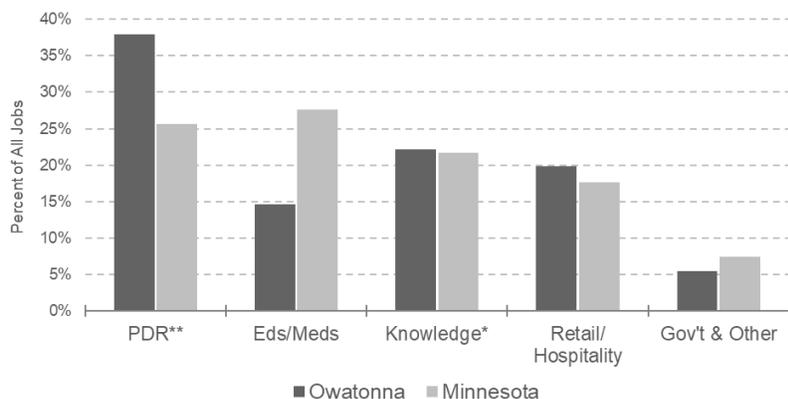
Sources: Minnesota DEED, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) dataset and the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) dataset

Figure 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.

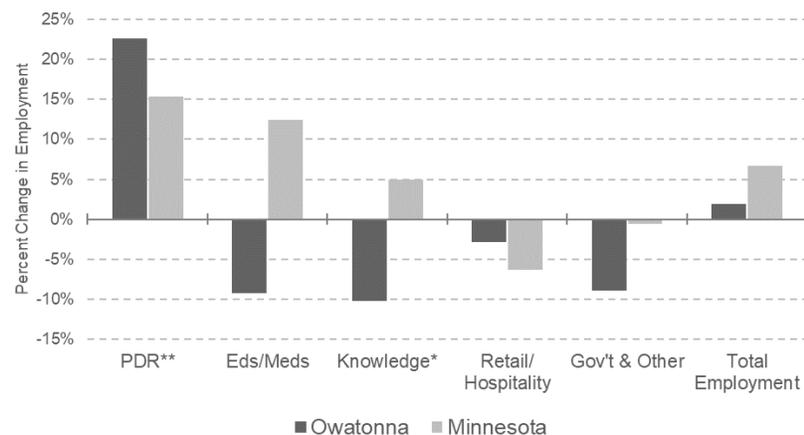


\* Knowledge = Consists of "knowledge-based" industry sectors (e.g., Information, Finance, and Professional Svcs/Mgmt)  
 \*\* PDR = Production, Distribution, and Repair industry sectors (e.g., Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities, etc.)  
 Source: US Census, LEHD dataset

Figure 2 Employment by Industry Sector

### Change in Employment by Industry Sector

Between 2010 and 2020, the PDR industry sectors have been the main engine for job growth in Owatonna. Some of the PDR growth, though, is attributed to the rebound that occurred after the recession of 2008-2010. Regardless, all other industry sectors in Owatonna experienced a net loss of jobs during this period.

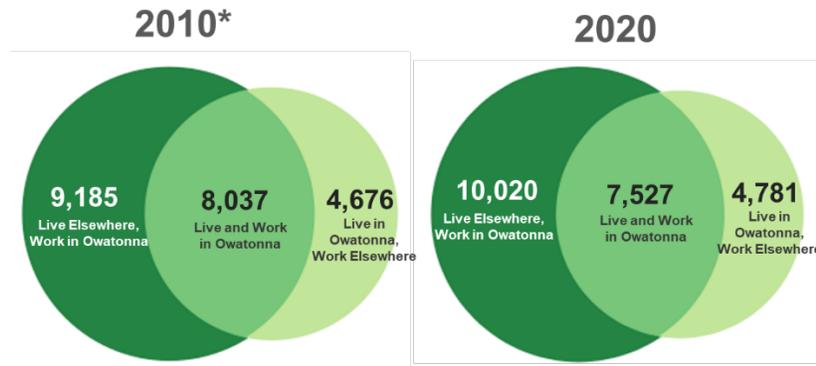


\* Knowledge = Consists of "knowledge-based" industry sectors (e.g., Information, Finance, and Professional Svcs/Mgmt)  
 \*\* PDR = Production, Distribution, and Repair industry sectors (e.g., Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities, etc.)  
 Source: US Census, LEHD dataset

Figure 3 Change in 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 4 Worker Commute Patterns

Where workers are coming from and going to provides additional insight into the dynamics of Owatonna’s economy. Owatonna residents who work elsewhere tend to commute to larger cities or nearby cities with strong employment. In contrast, Owatonna workers who commute into Owatonna for employment tend to live in smaller communities where housing is more affordable.

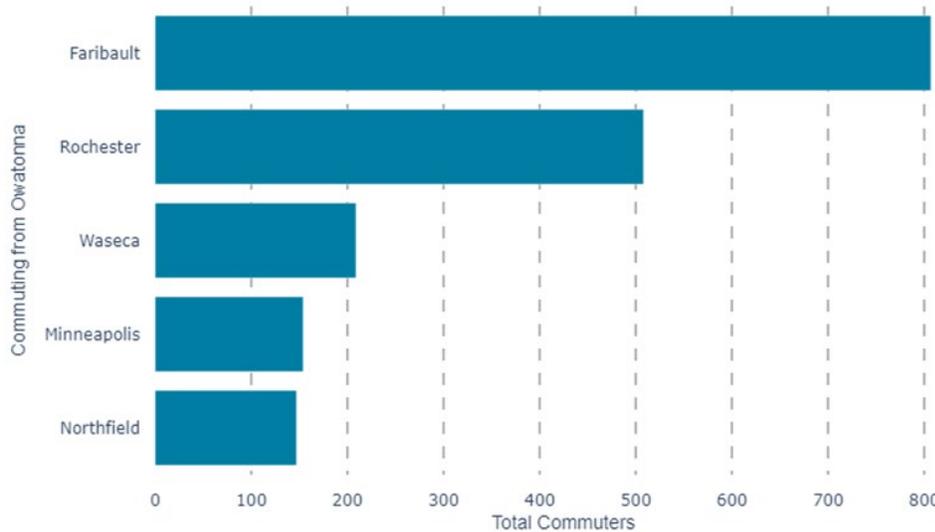


Figure 5 Workers Commuting From Owatonna

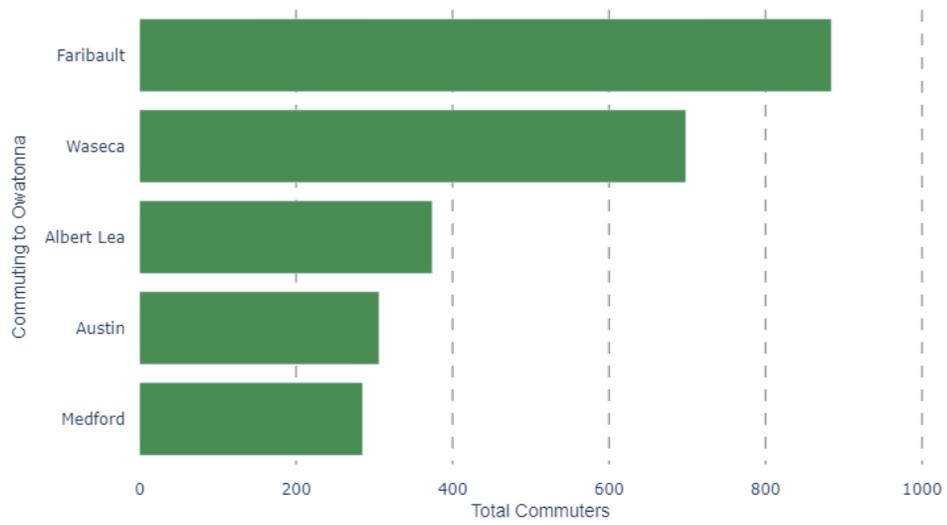


Figure 6 Workers Commuting to Owatonna

## **MARKET OVERVIEW**

This section provides a data-supported understanding of the key market drivers impacting Owatonna. Findings from the market overview will help inform decision-makers, stakeholders, and the public about how current and future market trends will impact various districts and systems within the city. A strong base of market knowledge is vital for setting achievable goals.

### **New Development Since 2010**

The following map displays the location of recent commercial development in Owatonna. Industrial development has been concentrated west of I-35 and consists of the largest properties. Multi-family properties are the most numerous with multiple developments in several areas of the city. Retail has consisted mostly of very small projects scattered throughout the city. Office has the fewest number of projects and the smallest in size.

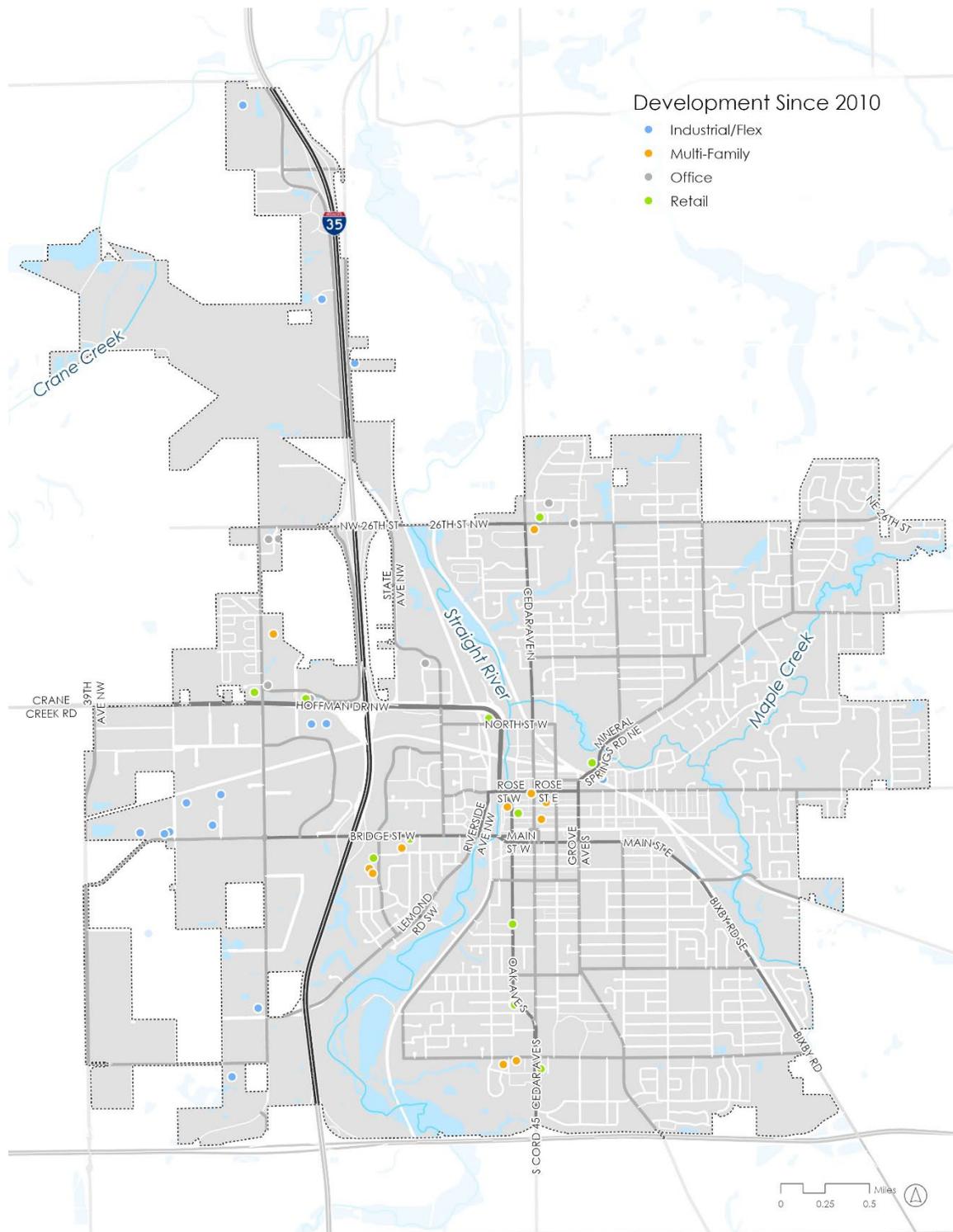


Figure 7 New Development Since 2010  
 Source: CoStar

## Housing Market Trends

A Comprehensive Housing Needs Analysis was 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. The executive summary of this report is shown below and details existing conditions and key recommendations for housing within the City of Owatonna and its Primary Market Area (PMA) and PMA Remainder (outside Owatonna proper).

### Demographic Analysis

- The population in Owatonna has grown every decade since 1900. Population growth has ranged from 1.7% growth between 1900 and 1910 to 31.6% growth between 1950 and 1960. In contrast, the PMA lost population between 1900 and 1910 (-2.3%) but has gained population every decade since and reached a growth high of 18.3% between 1950 and 1960.
- Owatonna’s population has grown by over 20,000 (20,859) people from 5,561 people in 1900 to 26,420 people in 2020. The PMA has grown by 20,882 people from 16,524 people in 1900 to 37,406 people in 2019.
- Projections indicate Owatonna will experience a 0.9% increase in population between 2023 and 2030. The projected population increase will be lower than the population increase experienced between 2010 and 2020 (2.6%) and between 2000 and 2010 (8.6%).
- Between 2030 and 2035 Owatonna is also projected to experience a 0.9% population growth.
- In 2010 household size in Owatonna was 2.54. In comparison, household size was 2.55 in the PMA, 2.58 in the PMA Remainder, 2.55 in the Southeast Minnesota Planning Area and 2.54 in the State of Minnesota as a whole. By 2020, estimates of household size had fallen to 2.50 in Owatonna, 2.52 in the Southeast Minnesota Planning Area, 2.52 in the PMA, 2.59 in the PMA Remainder, and 2.53 in Minnesota.
- Owatonna’s household size is projected to be 2.49 by 2030 and decrease slightly to 2.48 by 2035. Owatonna’s projected household size will be less than the state’s, which is projected to be 2.54 in 2030 and 2.53 in 2035.
- In 2023, the largest adult age cohorts are estimated to be those age 35 to 44 and 54 to 65 which each represent 12.9% of all age cohorts. In comparison, in the PMA Remainder, PMA, Southeast Minnesota Planning Area, and Minnesota the 55 to 64 age cohort is the sole largest adult age cohort.
- In 2023, the median income for Owatonna is \$76,941 across all ages. The median income is forecast to rise by 8.2% to \$83,249 by 2028.
- The highest median income in Owatonna was recorded among those between the ages of 35 and 44 at \$91,008 in 2023. In 2030, those between the ages of 45 to 54 are expected to be the highest income earners with a median income of \$103,085.
- In 2010, 73.7% of Owatonna households were owner households. This number increased slightly by 2023 to 74.6%. The proportion of owner households in Owatonna exceeded the state proportion, which was 72.3% in 2023.

- One and two-person renter households in Owatonna accounted for nearly 75% (74.9%) of renter households in 2023.
- Owner households were most likely to contain two people in Steele County, representing 40.6% of households.
- In all geographies, with the exception of Owatonna, married couples without children represent the largest household type. These households account for 32.3% of all households in the PMA in 2023, a decrease of 0.4% from 32.7% of all households in the PMA in 2010. In contrast, the largest household type in Owatonna is the living alone category which represents 32.6% of all households in 2023, an increase of 4.7% from 2010.
- Owatonna reported a 2022 average net worth of \$669,464 and a median net worth of \$186,995.

***Housing Characteristics***

- Between 2004 and 2022, 1,700 new residential units were permitted in Owatonna. Of those 1,700 units, 57.1% were issued for single-family units while 42.9% were issued for multifamily units.
- Between 2010 and 2022 there were 115 residential demolition permits issued per year in Owatonna: an average of nine residential demolition permits per year.
- Housing within the City of Owatonna was newer than housing in the Remainder of the PMA. The median age of housing stock in the City of Owatonna was 1975 compared to 1971 in the Remainder of the PMA. When combined, the overall median age of housing stock for both owner-occupied and renter-occupied was 1973.
- Single-family houses are the dominant housing type in Owatonna and the PMA. Over 91% of owner-occupied housing in Owatonna and over 92% of owner-occupied housing in the PMA are single-family homes. Single family homes accounted for the largest portion (50.3%) of renter-occupied homes in the PMA (22.6%) but not Owatonna where the largest portion of renter-occupied homes were in structures with 20 to 29 units (19.3%) followed by single family homes (18.1%).
- Owner-occupied homes in Owatonna and the PMA had median values of \$183,400 and \$185,200, respectively, in 2021. Median contract rent in Owatonna and the PMA was \$770 and \$760, respectively, in 2021.
- Median income in the PMA was significantly higher among owner-occupied households (\$85,909) compared to renter occupied households (\$32,493). Similarly, within Owatonna, owner-occupied households (\$85,909) were significantly higher compared to renter occupied households (\$31,692).
- The majority of PMA residents (89.0%) did not move during the last year. Mobility was slightly higher in the City of Owatonna where 87.4% of the population did not move the previous year.
- Among PMA residents that moved, they were most likely to move within the county (6.0%).
- Of those who reported a move in the PMA, 13.7% were between the ages of 18 and 24, 20.4% were between the ages of 25 and 34, and 15.0% were between the ages of 35 and 44. In addition, 28.3% of those under 18 reported a move.

**Employment Trends**

- Between 2010 and 2020 the City of Owatonna lost 304 employees, a decline of 1.7%. The PMA lost 451 employees a decline of 2.2%. In comparison, the Southeast Minnesota Planning and Minnesota experienced increases of 3.6% and 5.6%, respectively.
- From 2020 and 2030, the City of Owatonna is projected to decrease by 57 employees, a decrease of 0.4%. The PMA, in contrast, is projected to lose 401 employees, a decline of 2.0%. In comparison, the Southeast Minnesota Planning and Minnesota are both expected to experience increases of 7.0% and 10.2%, respectively.
- In the City of Owatonna, the Financial Activities industry reported the highest weekly wage, \$1,627, or approximately \$84,604 annually in the fourth quarter of 2022. Similar to Owatonna, throughout the PMA, the Financial Activities industry reported the highest weekly wage, \$1,584, or approximately \$82,368 annually in the fourth quarter of 2022.
- In 2020, 61.2% of workers who live in Owatonna are also employed in Owatonna. Faribault was the next largest work destination for Owatonna residents, with 6.6% of workers living in Owatonna commuting to Faribault. Rochester also was a large work destination for Owatonna residents with 4.1% of workers living in Owatonna commuting to Rochester.
- Commuting patterns in the PMA were similar to those in the City of Owatonna. The City of Owatonna was the largest work destination for PMA residents (55.4%) and the largest home destination for PMA workers (40.0%).
- The largest employer in the county was Federated Mutual Insurance Company with 1,205 employees, operating in the insurance industry. Viracon, Inc. a manufacturing company, was the second largest employer with 1,350 employees.
- The manufacturing industry was overwhelmingly the most represented industry among top employers in Owatonna. Manufacturing represented eight of the thirteen largest employers in the city (61.5%). The only other industry with multiple large employers was healthcare with two of the thirteen largest employers (15.4%). Owatonna, as a major regional center is home to Allina Hospital and a clinic in the Mayo Clinic Health system.

**Rental Housing Market Analysis**

- In total, Maxfield Research surveyed 1,070 general occupancy market rate rental units in Owatonna spread across 36 multifamily developments (12 units and larger) At the time of the survey, there were four vacant units representing a vacancy rate of 0.4%.
- Affordable/subsidized projects make-up 181 and 292 units, respectively. At the time of the survey, there were no vacant affordable units and twelve subsidized vacancies with a vacancy rate of 4.1%.

**Senior Housing Market Analysis**

- Between 2010 and 2023, the fastest growing population in Owatonna is the 65 to 74 age group, which experienced a 57.8% increase in population, an addition of 961 people. This was also the case in the PMA Remainder where 39.2% of the population between 75 and 84 increased between 2010 and 2023, an addition of 363 people.
- With a homeownership rate of 75.5% for all Owatonna households over the age of 65, a large number of residents would be able to use proceeds from the sales of their homes to-ward senior housing alternatives. The resale of single-family homes would allow additional senior households to qualify for market rate housing products, since equity from the home sale could be used as

supplemental income for alternative housing. These considerations are factored into our demand calculations.

- Maxfield Research identified 20 senior housing properties in the PMA. Combined, these projects contain a total of 813 senior housing units. Fourteen of the senior housing properties are market rate, totaling 587 units (72.2% of the supply), and there are six affordable senior housing projects, totaling 226 units (27.8%).
- Based on our survey, 57.1% of units provide service-enhanced housing, for a total of 464 units. These include 2 independent living units, 339 assisted living units, and 123 memory care units. The remaining 42.9% (349 units) are active adult units, including 226 affordable units (deep- and shallow-subsidy), 45 market rate units, and 78 cooperative/ownership active adult units.
- There are 271 assisted living units in the PMA (excluding Traditions I and II for which vacancies were unable to be obtained), 50 of which are vacant for a 18.5% vacancy rate.
- The City of Owatonna has the highest number of senior housing units in the PMA, with 712 units (85% of the total), followed by Blooming Prairie with 50 units (6.0% of the inventory), Medford with 44 units (5.3%), and Ellendale with 29 units (3.5%).

***Housing Affordability***

- About 61% (60.9%) of renter households and 14.8% of owner householders are estimated to be paying more than 30% of their income for housing costs in Owatonna. Compared to the Minnesota average, the percentage of cost burdened renter households is higher than the state average (46.0%), but lower than the state average for owner households (18.0%).
- The number of cost burdened households in Owatonna increases proportionally based on lower incomes. About 91% (90.5%) of renters with incomes below \$35,000 are cost burdened and 48.0% of owners with incomes below \$50,000 are cost burdened.
- Owatonna has 113 allotted housing choice vouchers available and 95 are currently in use.
- The majority of vouchers in the Steele County PMA are in use in the City of Owatonna (94%) while 6% of vouchers are used in other Steele County communities.

***For-Sale Housing Market Analysis***

- Between 2010 and 2022, there has been an average of 417 residential sales per year in Owatonna. In contrast, in the PMA Remainder, which includes the rest of Steele County excluding Owatonna, there were an average of 79 closed sales per year between 2010 and 2022. The number of closed sales in Owatonna represented over 84% (84.1%) of all closed sales in the Steele County PMA.
- Median Resale prices in Owatonna increased 126.6% from \$120,038 in 2010 to \$271,985 in 2022. In contrast, between the same time frame, the overall PMA increased by an even greater 130.2% while the Southeast Minnesota Planning Area increased by 118.2%.
- As of March 22, 2023, there were twenty-one homes listed for sale in Owatonna and eight homes listed for sale in the Remainder of the PMA. All home listings in both Owatonna and the PMA Remainder were single family homes and none were multifamily homes.
- The median list prices in Owatonna and the PMA Remainder as of March 23, 2023 are \$349,000 and \$289,900, respectively. The median sale price is generally a more accurate indicator of housing values in a community than the average sale price. Average sale prices can be easily

skewed by a few very high-priced or low-priced home sales in any given year, whereas the median sale price better represents the pricing of a majority of homes in a given market.

- Based on a median list price of \$324,450 in the PMA (includes both Owatonna and the PMA Remainder), the income required to afford a home at this price would be between \$92,700 and \$108,150, based on the standard of 3.0 to 3.5 times the median income (and assuming these households do not have a high level of debt). A household with significantly more equity (in an existing home and/or savings) could afford a higher priced home. About 38.2% of PMA households have annual incomes at or above \$92,700.
- The majority of single and multifamily homes listed for sale in Owatonna are priced between \$200,000 and \$300,000 (33.3%) and \$300,000 and \$400,000 (28.6%). In the PMA Remainder, the majority of single and multifamily homes listed for sale in the PMA Remainder are also priced between \$200,000 and \$300,000 (36.4%) and \$300,000 and \$400,000 (27.3%).
- One-story listings were the most common type of property in both Owatonna, accounting for 71.4% of listings. Similarly, in the PMA Remainder, one story listings were also the most common property type, representing 65.6% of all listings.
- There are just over 80 vacant single family lots in newer subdivisions. Given the projected lot absorption of roughly 21 lots per year between 2023 and 2030, the lot supply is sufficient in the near-term to meet future demand, but new lots will be needed to be platted soon to be future demand.

***Development Pipeline***

- As of May 2023, there are four planned rental projects and one planned for sale housing project either under construction or in the planning process. Four of the five rental projects are market rate (421 total units). East Gate II, a MHFA Tax Credit project, is the lone afford-able development in the pipeline (49 units). Mineral Springs Estates is the lone pending for sale project.

***Housing Needs Analysis***

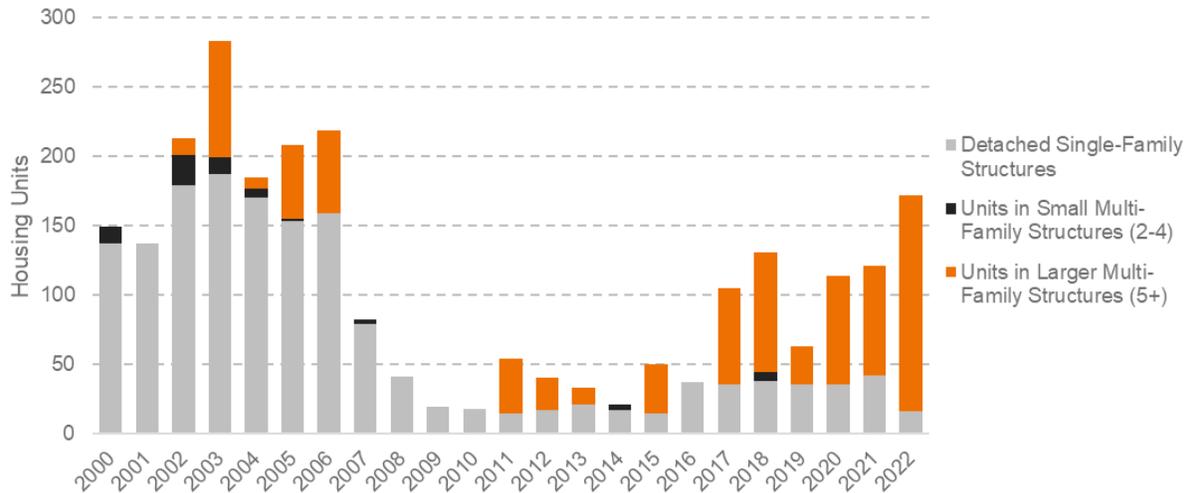
- Based on our calculations, demand exists in Owatonna for the following general occupancy product types between 2023 and 2030:
  - Market rate rental 152 units (After 421 units in Pipeline)
  - Affordable rental 157 units
  - Subsidized rental 157 units
  - For-sale single-family I 155 units (After absorption of 84 lots)
  - For-sale multifamily 86 units (After absorption of 8 lots)
- In addition, we find demand for multiple senior housing product types. By 2030, demand in Owatonna for senior housing is forecast for the following:
  - Active adult ownership 191 units
  - Active adult market rate rental 170 units
  - Active adult affordable 208 units
  - Active adult subsidized 0 units
  - Independent Living 258 units
  - Assisted Living 10 units
  - Memory Care 31 units
- The diagram below shows recommended product types for the City of Owatonna over the next seven years.

RECOMMENDED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CITY OF OWATONNA 2023 to 2030				
		Purchase Price/ Monthly Rent Range <sup>1</sup>	No. of Units	Development Timing
<b>Owner-Occupied Homes</b>				
<i>Single Family</i>				
	Entry-level	<\$250,000	30 - 35	Ongoing
	Move-up	\$250,000 - \$375,000	125 - 130	Ongoing
	Executive	\$400,000+	45 - 50	Ongoing
	<b>Total</b>		<b>200 - 215</b>	
<i>Townhomes/Twinhomes/Detached Townhomes/Villas</i>				
	Entry-level	<\$225,000	25 - 30	Ongoing
	Move-up	\$250,000 - \$325,000	45 - 50	Ongoing
	Executive	\$350,000+	25 - 30	Ongoing
	<b>Total</b>		<b>95 - 110</b>	
<b>Total Owner-Occupied</b>			<b>295 - 325</b>	
<b>General Occupancy Rental Housing</b>				
<i>Market Rate Rental Housing</i>				
	Apartment-style (moderate)	\$975/1BR - \$1,400/3BR	100 - 120	2025+
	Townhomes (move up)	\$1,450/2BR - \$1,675/3BR	30 - 40	2025+
	<b>Total</b>		<b>130 - 160</b>	
<i>Affordable Rental Housing</i>				
	Apartment-style	Moderate Income <sup>2</sup>	90 - 100	2024+
	Townhomes	Moderate Income <sup>2</sup>	30 - 40	2024+
	Subsidized	30% of Income <sup>3</sup>	60 - 70	2024+
	<b>Total</b>		<b>180 - 210</b>	
<b>Total Renter-Occupied</b>			<b>310 - 370</b>	
<b>Senior Housing (i.e. Age Restricted)</b>				
	Senior Cooperative(s)	\$75,000+	75 - 80	2024+
	Active Adult Market Rate Rental <sup>4</sup>	\$1,200/1BR - \$1,500/2BR	100 - 120	2024+
	Active Adult Affordable Rental <sup>4</sup>	Moderate Income <sup>3</sup>	100 - 120	2024+
	Independent Living/Congregate	\$1,850/1BR - \$2,900+/2BR	100 - 120	2025+
	Memory Care	\$4,000/EFF - \$5,000/2BR	20 - 24	2026+
	<b>Total</b>		<b>395 - 464</b>	
<b>Total - All Units</b>			<b>1,000 - 1,159</b>	
<sup>1</sup> Pricing in 2023 dollars. Pricing can be adjusted to account for inflation.				
<sup>2</sup> Affordability subject to income guidelines per Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA). See Table HA-1 for Steele County Income limits.				
<sup>3</sup> Subsidized housing will be difficult to develop financially.				
<sup>4</sup> Alternative development concept is to combine active adult affordable and market rate active adult into mixed-income senior communities.				
Source: Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC.				

### Housing Construction

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 8 Housing Construction 2000 - 2022

### 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:

#### Size of Office Market

- 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.
- A little over half of Owatonna’s office space is considered Class A or B, which typically consists of larger buildings that are newer or have been renovated with more amenities and higher quality finishes. Class C properties tend to be smaller and/or older buildings that have not been updated with modern features but are often adequate for many smaller businesses.

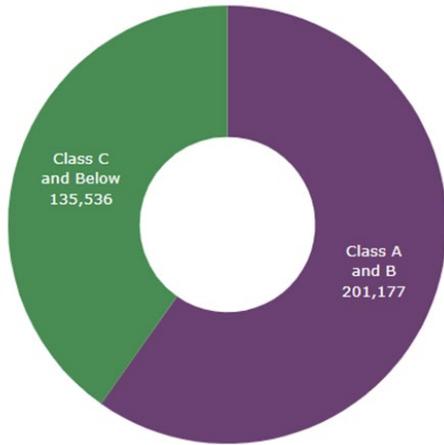


Figure 9 Total Owatonna Office Square Feet by Building Class  
Source: CoStar

**Office Development and Vacancy Rate**

- 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.

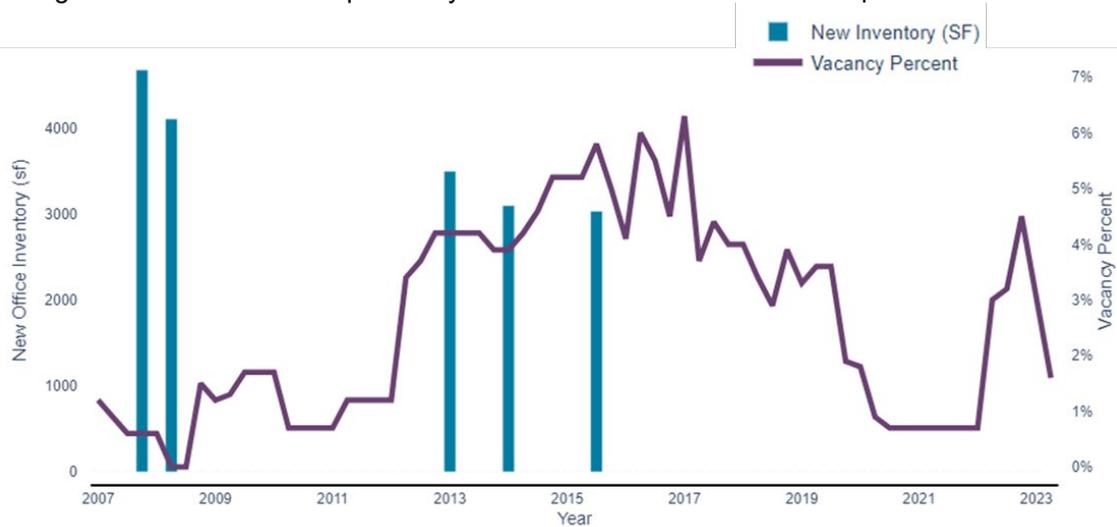


Figure 10 Owatonna Office Development and Vacancy Rate 2007-2023  
Source: CoStar

### Average Office Rent per Square Foot

- Due to the relatively small size of Owatonna’s office inventory, much of which is dominated by a small number of users, rents tend to fluctuate wildly depending on the availability of space in particular buildings. Over the last 15 years, average rents have oscillated between \$14 per square foot and \$7 per square foot. Furthermore, there doesn’t appear to be a strong correlation between asking rents and the supply of available space.

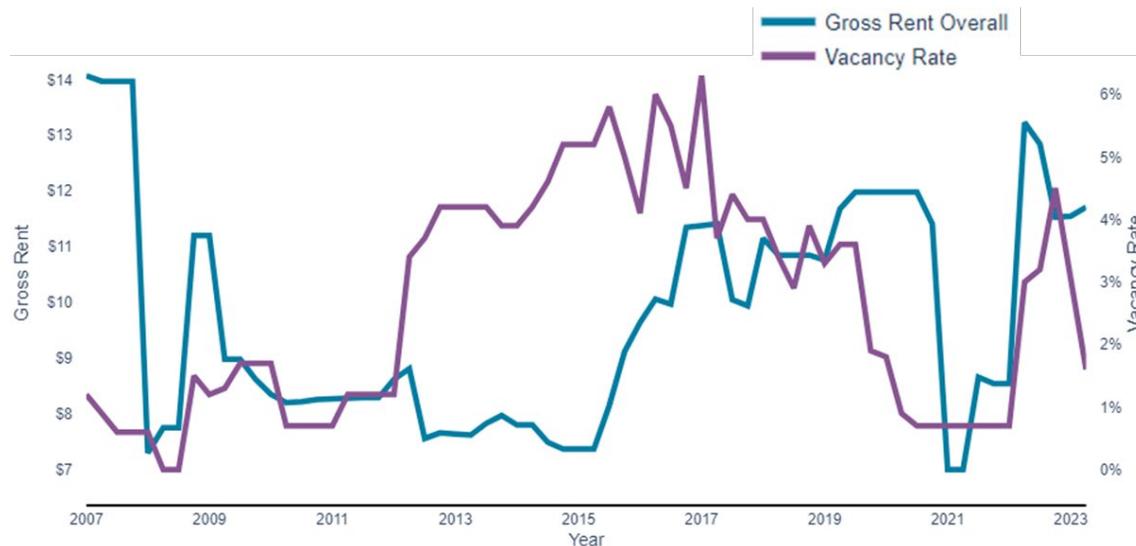


Figure 11 Owatonna Average Office Rent per Square Foot and Vacancy Rate 2007-2023  
Source: CoStar

### 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:

#### Retail Development and Vacancy Rate

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

**Average Retail Rent per Square Foot**

- Retail rents have generally increased over the last 15 years. A sharp increase occurred around 2013 and then steady increases continued until 2021 when the average rent peaked at about \$17 per square foot, which was consistent with the drop in vacancy around 2019. Since 2021, though, average rents have dropped slightly to about \$14 per square foot.



Figure 13 Owatonna Average Retail Rent per Square Foot 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:

#### Industrial Development and Vacancy Rate

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

#### Average Industrial Rent per Square Foot

- Industrial rents were relatively stable between 2014 and 2020 at around \$5 per square foot. Since 2020, though, rents have increased over 30% and are now well above \$6 per square foot.



Figure 15 Owatonna Average Industrial Rent per Square Foot and Vacancy Rate 2007-2023  
Source: CoStar

### Real Estate Expert Interviews

In order to augment the quantitative market data presented previously, various real estate experts familiar with Owatonna were interviewed to gather their opinions and perspectives of the prevailing market trends, as well as the opportunities and challenges associated with future change in Owatonna. The following are key themes and findings from the interviews.

#### Overall Economic Growth

- All of those interviewed felt very positive about Owatonna’s future potential to attract and support development.
- Everyone mentioned that the local economy has been very strong in recent years, which has supported growth in most real estate sectors.
- When asked about barriers to continued growth, the following examples were frequently mentioned:
  - There needs to be a greater variety of restaurants, many households regularly travel outside Owatonna to obtain more dining options.
  - There needs to be more housing options across all product types and price points.
  - New neighborhood commercial nodes for retail in the northern and especially eastern portions of the city.
  - A new state-of-the-art multi-purpose community center with pool, waterpark, exercise facilities, etc.
  - Ability to extend sewer, water, and other utilities south of Highway 14.

**Housing Market Insights**

- There is significant pent-up need for single-family housing. However, a number of critical issues are impacting both the supply and demand of single-family housing:
  - Inflation is at a 40-year high, which has caused mortgage interests to rise sharply in recent years after a long-sustained period of low mortgage interest rates.
  - Building contractors serving the Owatonna area are in short supply, which has slowed the ability of the housing industry to build new homes.
  - Regulatory costs, many at the state level, add costs to home construction, which are on top of rising inflation and mortgage interest rates.
  - Many landowners who hold key parcels in growing areas of the city are choosing not to sell to home builders, which is severely constraining the availability of buildable lots, especially those that could accommodate starter homes.
- The multifamily market has been very strong in recent years, which has been driven by the following factors:
  - Pent-up demand for multifamily housing due to many years of little to no multifamily development.
  - An increase in the number of young adults and older adults, which tend to be the prime market for multifamily housing.
  - A slight but important cultural shift away from single-family homeownership as a financial goal.
  - An overall lack of affordably priced entry-level homes, which means many younger households remain in rental housing longer than desired.

**Industrial Market Insights**

- Industrial market has been very strong over the last 10 years. This has largely been driven by manufacturers and logistics firms that have either expanded their local operations or been attracted to Owatonna.
- A key reason for Owatonna’s industrial growth is its strategic location along I-35 and Highway 14, which makes it easily accessible to Mankato, Rochester, and the Twin Cities.
- Despite significant industrial development in recent years, there is still opportunity for more smaller, flexible industrial spaces.
- Regardless of overall market strength, future industrial development will be impacted by the limited number of property owners in the industrial park and recent land sales that have re-set land value expectations. In particular, Costco purchased a site in an industrial area at prices typically associated with traditional retail sites.
- The I-35/Hwy 14 interchange is a very strategic location for future industrial growth.

## **Retail Market Insights**

- Retail development is hindered by the lack of land sites that meet the criteria of national/corporate retailers. This is due in large part to two large commercial sites owned by WalMart and Lowes that have covenants limiting the size and types of retailers that can go on their out lots. This has had a dampening effect on attracting large chain restaurants.
- There is also growth potential for developments that favor independent (i.e., mom and pop) retailers.

## **Office Market Insights**

- Unlike many other markets, there has been recent demand for new office space in Owatonna. However, many real estate investors have shifted their focus away from the office sector, which has reduced the ability to support the development of new speculative office space.
- Any new office development that is developed in the near-term will likely come from internal business growth.
- There is a market for renovated office space, especially in the downtown. The challenge is that the renovation costs require rents that are too expensive for most small-scale downtown office users.

## LAND USE

### Existing Land Use

Land use in Owatonna is characterized by the following general categories, illustrated on Figure 16, Existing Land Use:

- Low Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Manufactured Home
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Park/Open Space
- Public/institutional
- Airport
- Agriculture
- Open Water (not an official land use designation)
- Right of Way (not an official land use designation)

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.

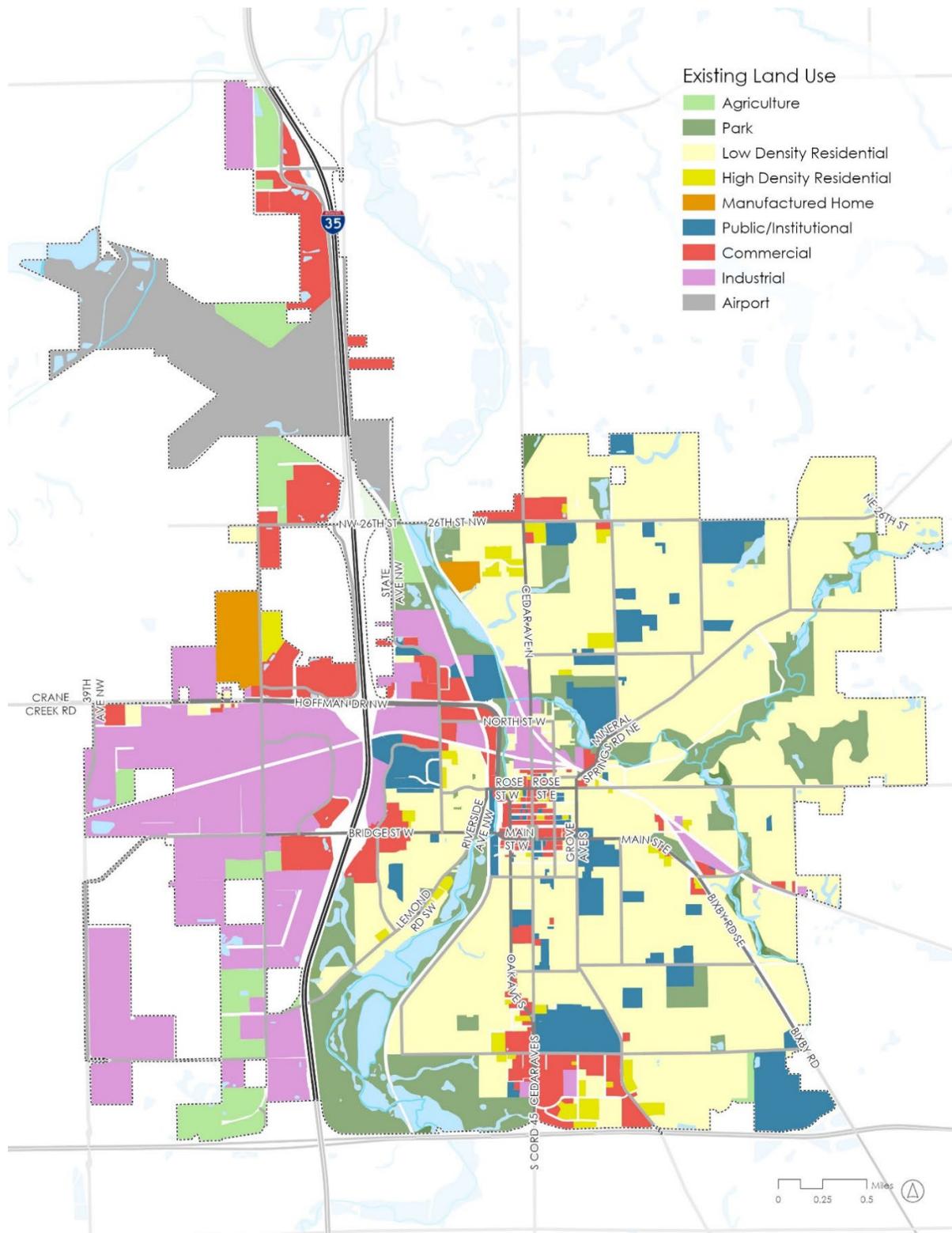


Figure 16 Existing Land Use  
Source: City of Owatonna

The land use categories are further defined and described below in Table 8.

Table 8 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	The Public/Institutional category 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.	-	-
		<b>Total</b>	<b>9,733.0</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 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 9 and the map of zoning districts is shown in Figure 17.

Table 9 – 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.

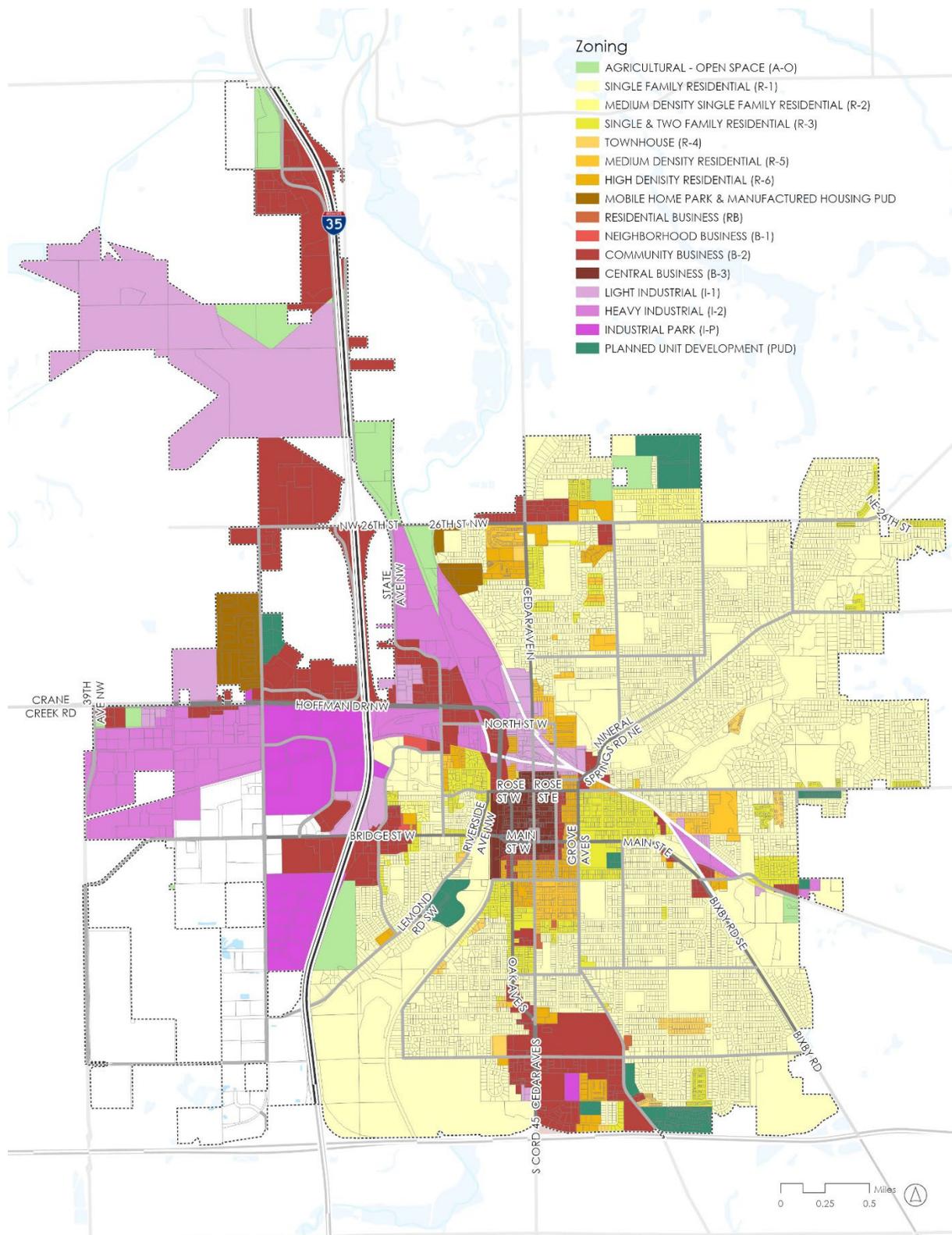


Figure 17 Existing Zoning

## 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 has one commercial future land use category, where some cities have multiple representing different types of commercial development. That said, it is generally better to simplify land use unless there is a compelling reason not to.
- 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.

## 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* background report 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 in the background report.

- 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.

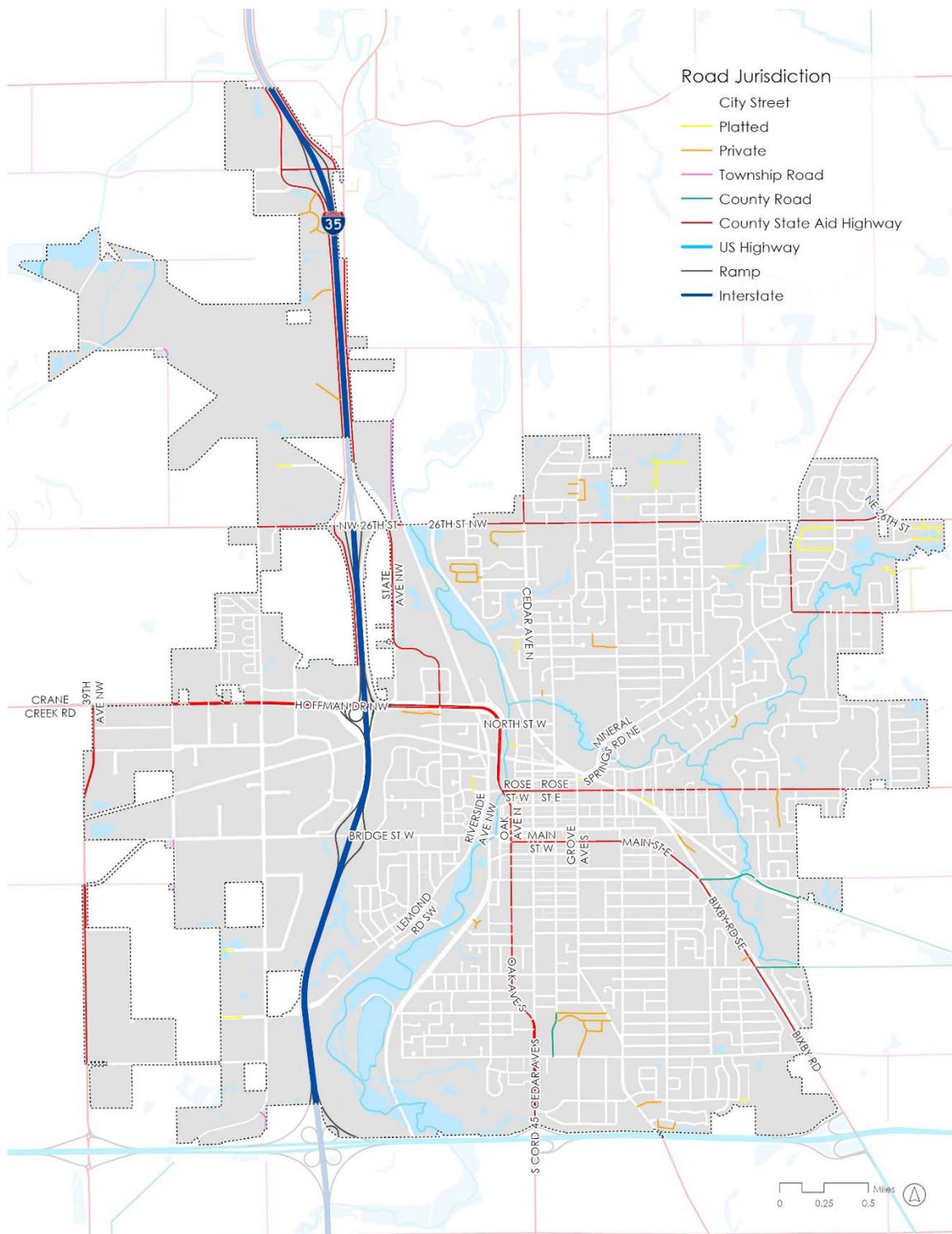


Figure 18 Existing Jurisdictional Classification

Table 10 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 11 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

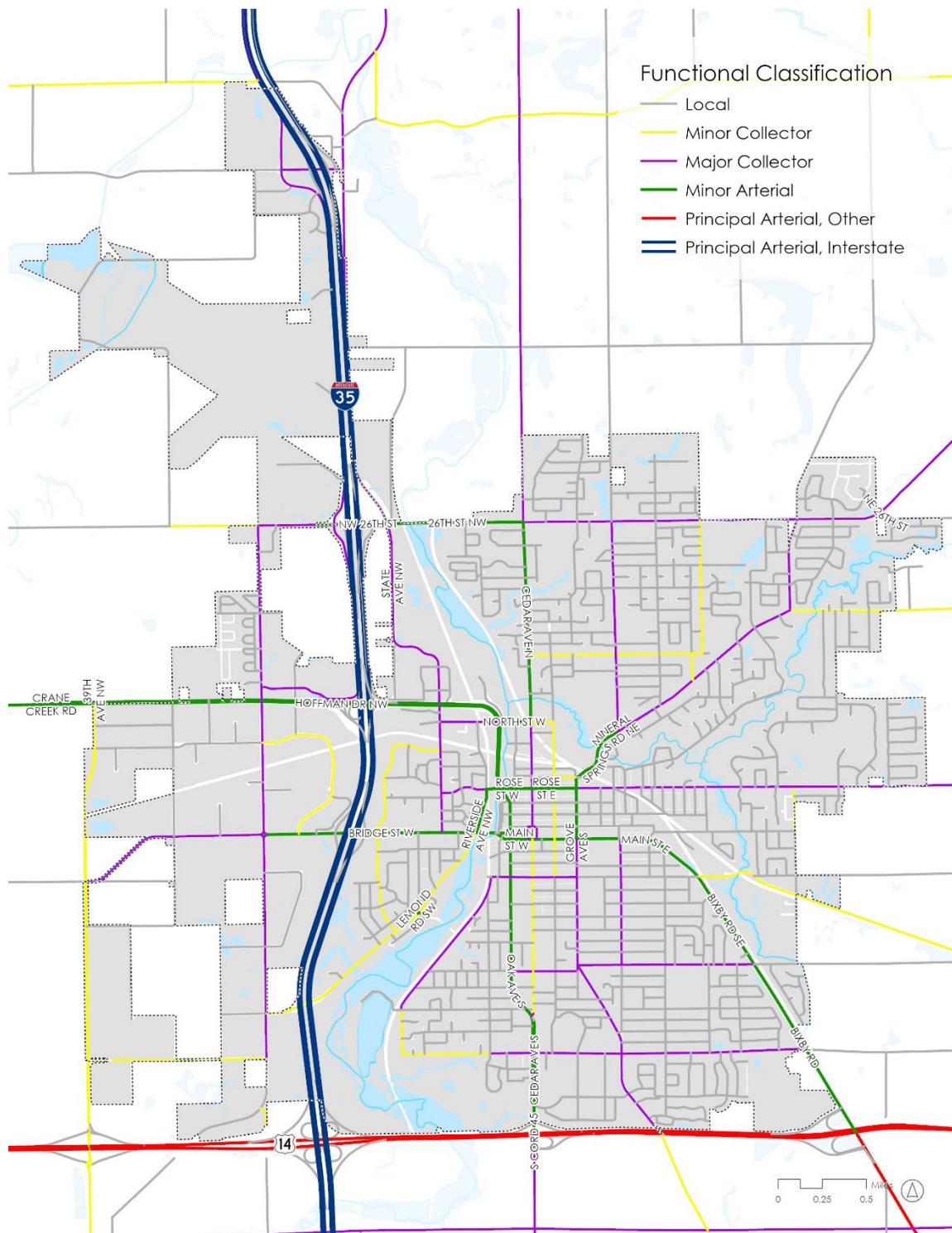


Figure 19 Existing Functional Classification

**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 12 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.

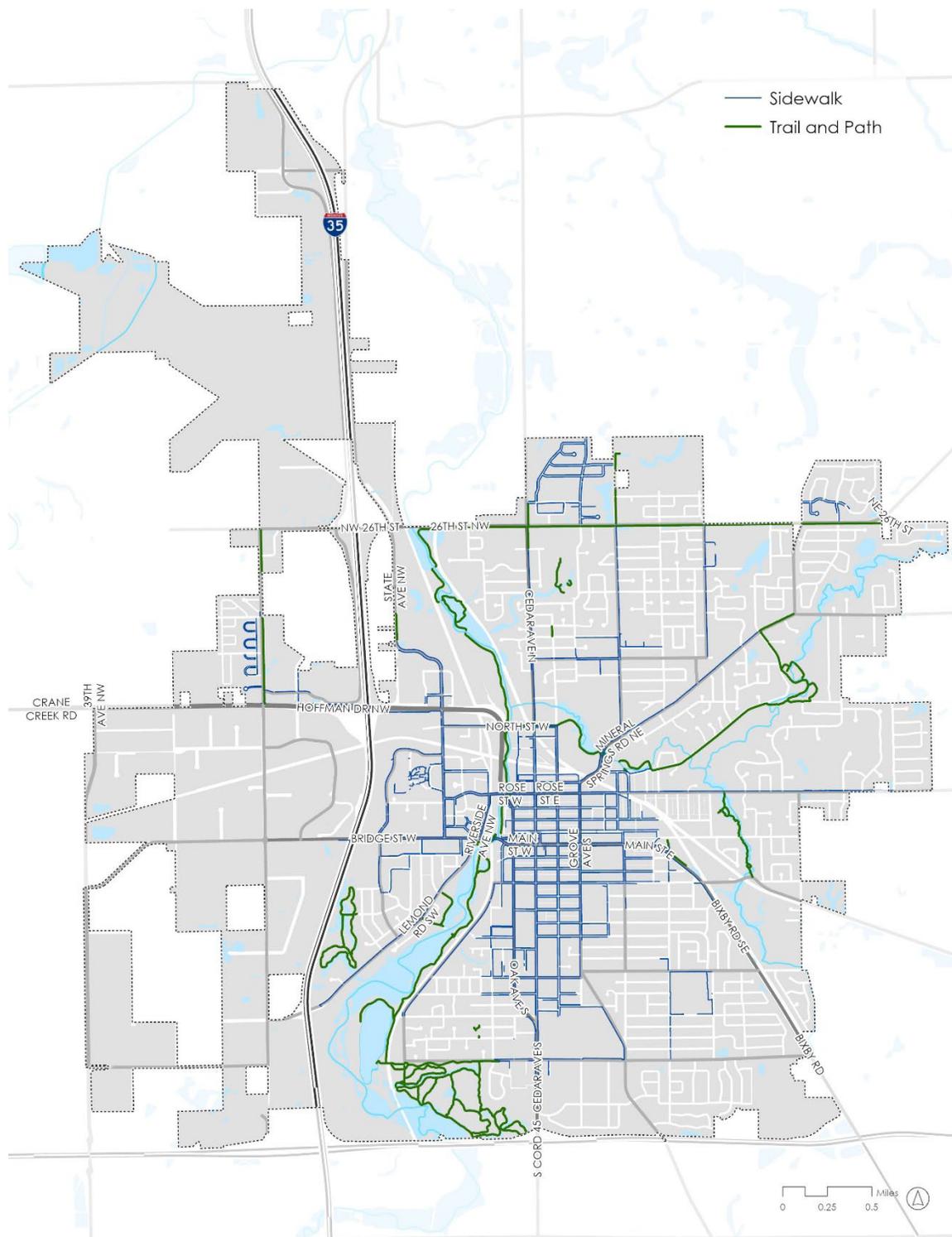


Figure 20 Existing Multimodal System

## 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 13 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

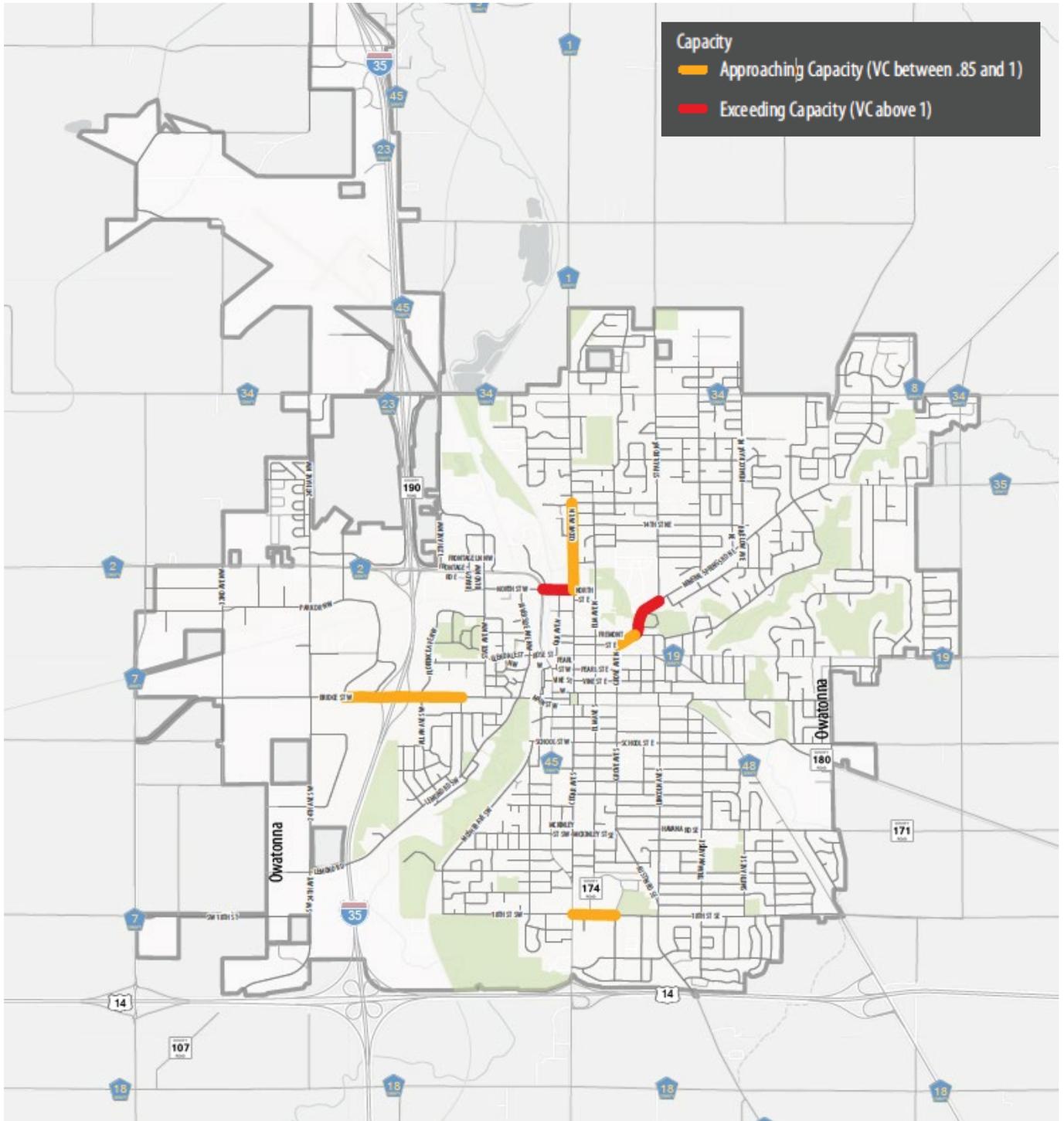


Figure 21 Future Congestion

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 14 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 15 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.).

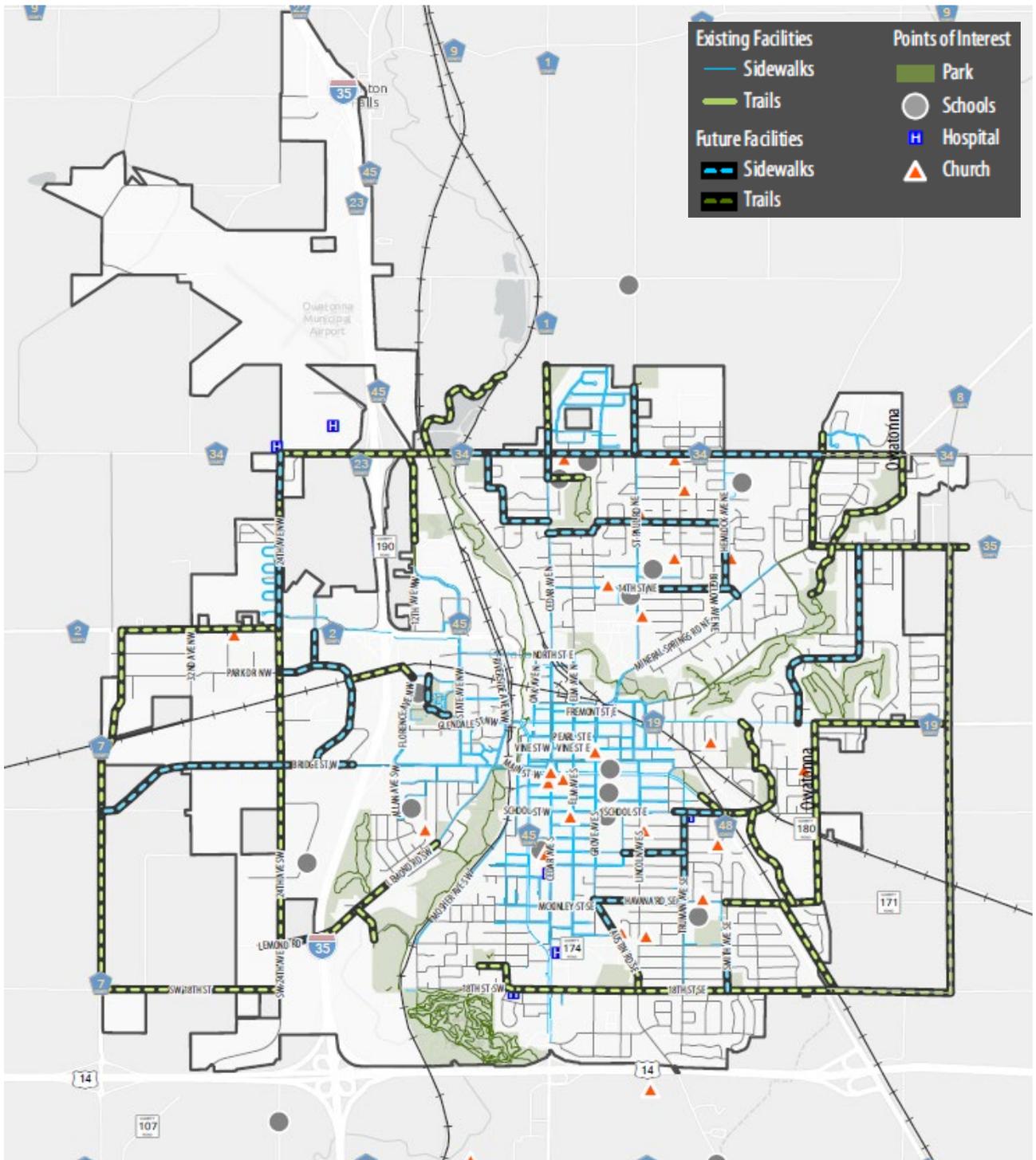


Figure 22 Future Multimodal System

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 16 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) North Street (CR 2 to Cedar Avenue)	Reconfigure lane markings to 3-lane cross section Address existing congestion issues (V/C currently near or approaching capacity)	Steele County CIP 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 <sup>th</sup> 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 <b>Figure 21</b>	Owatonna Sidewalk and Trail Plan	✓	
Future Trails	Construction of trails as shown in <b>Figure 21</b>	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

## **WATER, SEWER AND STORMWATER SYSTEMS**

Owatonna has city-wide plans in place for water supply, wastewater and stormwater that it relies on to provide these services to residents. The Comprehensive Plan will discuss these items at a high-level as it relates to future planning but will mostly rely on and reference existing plans for these topics.

### **Water Supply**

A municipal utility called Owatonna Public Utilities is responsible for water supply within the city. The utility also supplies the Owatonna area with electric and natural gas. As a municipal utility, Owatonna Public Utilities is responsible for its own water supply, electric and natural gas planning. The OPU Commission is the governing body and is made up of representatives from each ward in the city. Figure 23 shows the current water main system within the city. As the city grows, this system will be expanded to accommodate that growth.

### **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 23.

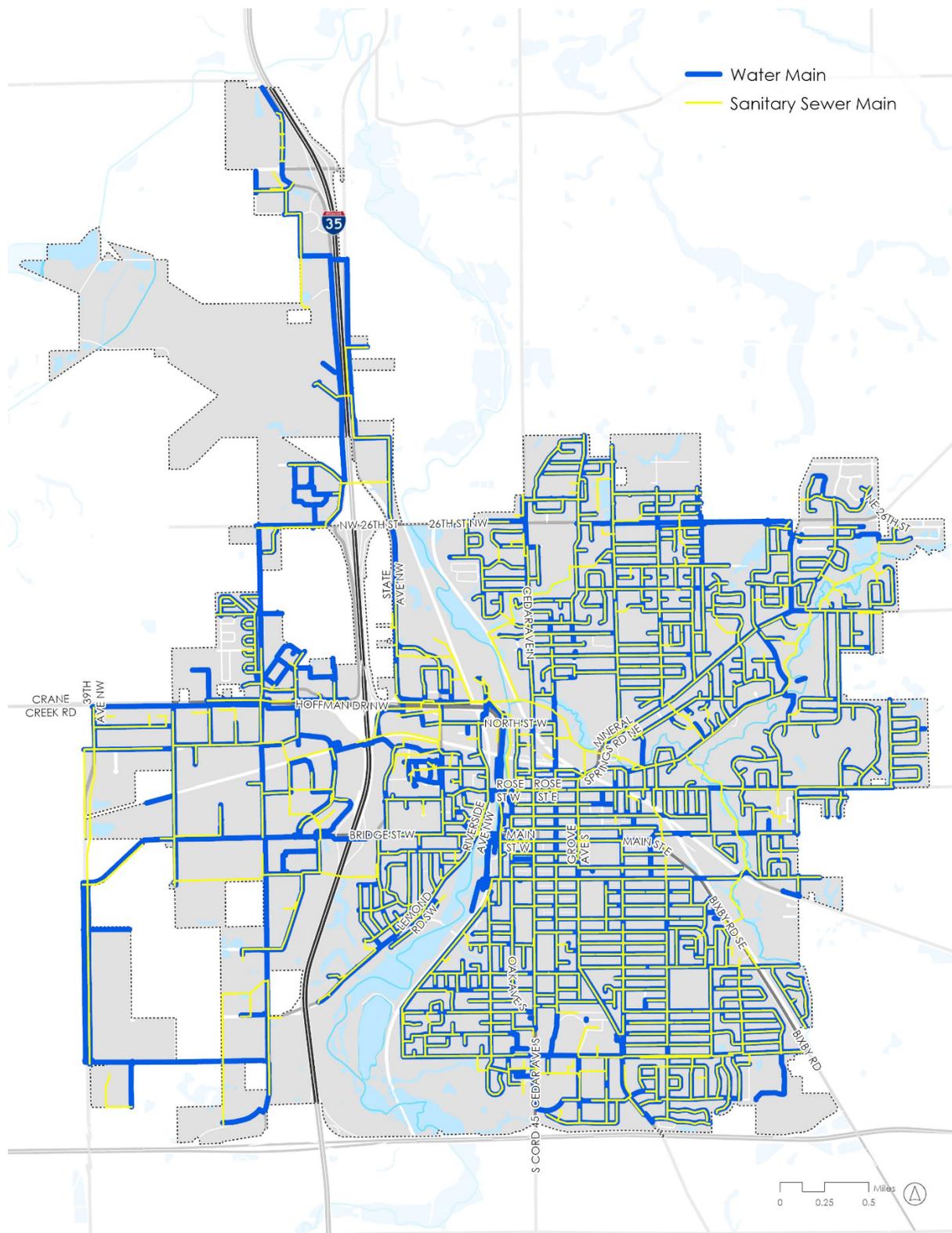


Figure 23 Existing Water Supply and Wastewater System

**Plans and Growth**

In 2017 the city initiated a Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion, which is expected to be completed in 2024. 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 conducted a Wastewater Collection System Study to account for the additional capacity provided by the wastewater treatment plant expansion. The study 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 (which is still in draft format) are shown in Table 17 and Figure 24 shows the 30-Year Improvements Prioritization.

Table 17 30-Year CIP Wastewater Projects

Project Number	Capital Improvement Project	Anticipated CIP Year	Estimated CIP Cost <sup>1</sup>
WW-01	Straight River Trunk Sewer #1	2024	\$2,662,199
WW-02	Straight River Trunk Sewer #2	2025	\$1,523,750
WW-03	18 <sup>th</sup> 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
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$12,677,378</b>

<sup>1</sup>Costs are indexed to the year of construction

Source: Owatonna Wastewater Collection System Study

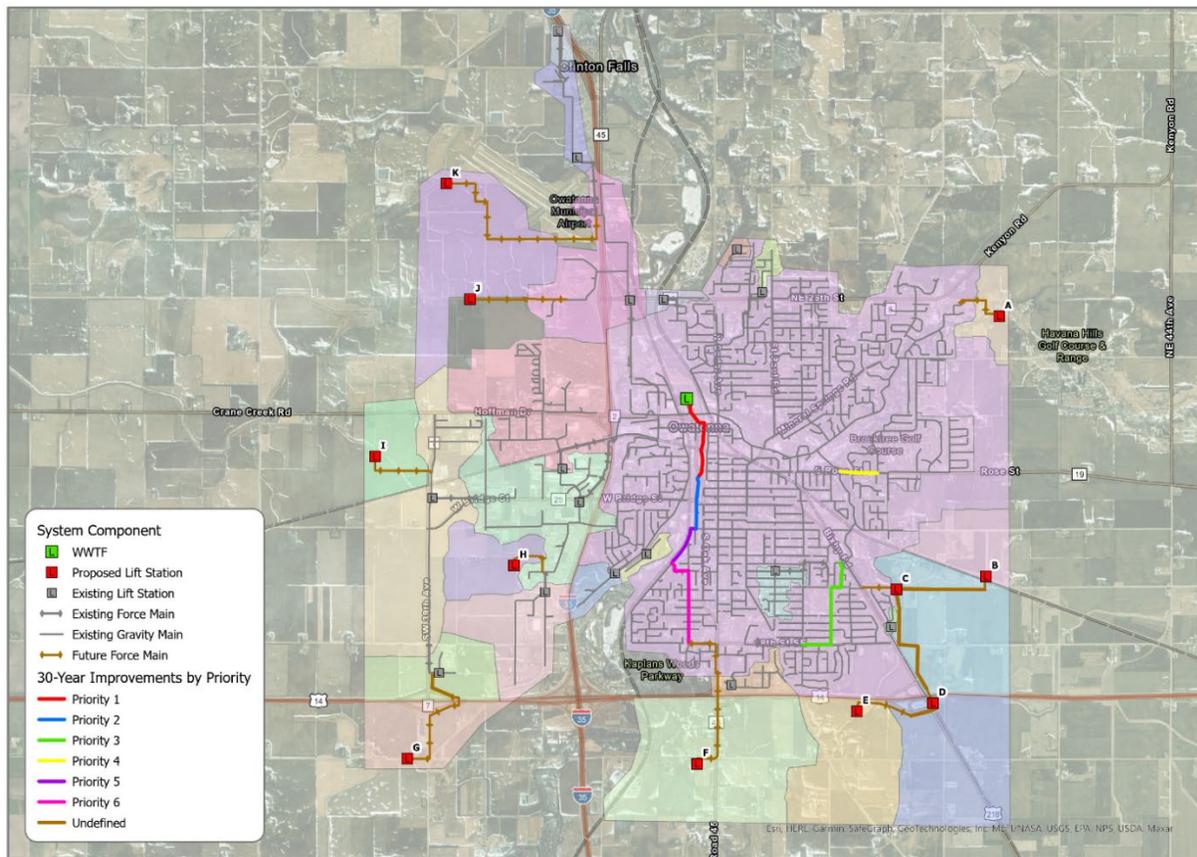


Figure 24 Wastewater 30-Year Improvements Prioritization  
 Source: Owatonna Wastewater Collection System Study

## Stormwater

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.

The city is governed by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) through National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit called MS4 Permit. MPCA’s stormwater program regulates municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s) to reduce the amount of sediment and pollution that enters surface and ground water from storm sewer systems to the maximum extent practicable. The city’s Stormwater Ordinance requires each applicant for a building approval or subdivision approval to submit a stormwater management plan. The city also has a Stormwater Management Program called “Clean H2Owatonna” and is designed to reduce stormwater pollution and eliminate prohibited non-stormwater discharges.

## PARKS, TRAILS AND RECREATION

### Introduction

The City of Owatonna adopted the *Parks and Trails System Master Plan* (the Plan) in 2019, which is the first stand-alone parks and trails plan completed for the city. The Plan conducted a needs assessment, details the existing parks and trails systems, and proposes an implementation action plan. The *Imagine Owatonna* Comprehensive Plan references the Plan throughout the background report. The Comprehensive Plan will ultimately provide goals and strategies for parks and trails based on the Plan, and will identify general locations for new parks based on the proposed future land use for the city and its growth areas.

### Existing Conditions

#### Parks

The City of Owatonna has a park system comprised of 33 parks totaling 807 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.

The 38 city parks are further broken down into the following classifications: 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 18.

Table 18 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	8.00
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	18.00
Fairgrounds Park	Community Park	15.5
Falkland Meadow	Undeveloped	7.38
Fremont Park	Undeveloped	0.27
Hammann Park	Undeveloped	10.5
Hazel Park	Undeveloped	0.31
Jaycee Park	Neighborhood Park	8.68
Kaplan's Woods Parkway	Regional Park	276.16
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	20.90
Mineral Springs Park	Community Park	42.57
Morehouse Park	Community Park	27.71
Daikin Soccer Complex	Community Athletic Complex	16.6
North Bluff Park	Mini Park	0.41
Owatonna Soccer Complex	Community Athletic Complex	15.90
River Springs Water Park	Special Use Park	9.97
Sid Kinyon Tennis Courts	Special Use Park	0.80
Summer Park	Undeveloped	7.90
Walter H. Gainey Park	Neighborhood Park	3.09
West Hills Park	Special Use Park	38.75
Willow Park	Mini Park	0.35
	<b>Total Park System</b>	<b>807 acres</b>

Source: Parks and Trails System Master Plan

**Trails**

The city's trail system consists of 6 trails totaling approximately 9.5 miles, as shown in Table 19 below.

Table 19 Existing Trails

Trail	Location	Length	Connections
Buxton Trail	From Elm Avenue NE to Dane Road	2.5 miles	Darts Park, Brooktree Gold Course, Mineral Spring Park
Muckle Trail	From Bridge Street to North Street	1.5 miles	Moorehouse 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	Connects Kaplan's woods Parkway Trail on the east side of Walter H. Gainey Park
26 <sup>th</sup> Street Trail	Along 26 <sup>th</sup> 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 <sup>th</sup> Street	1.8 miles	Combination of Lange Woods Trail and Ihlenfeld/Wildung Trail

The existing parks and trails are shown in Figure 25.

**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

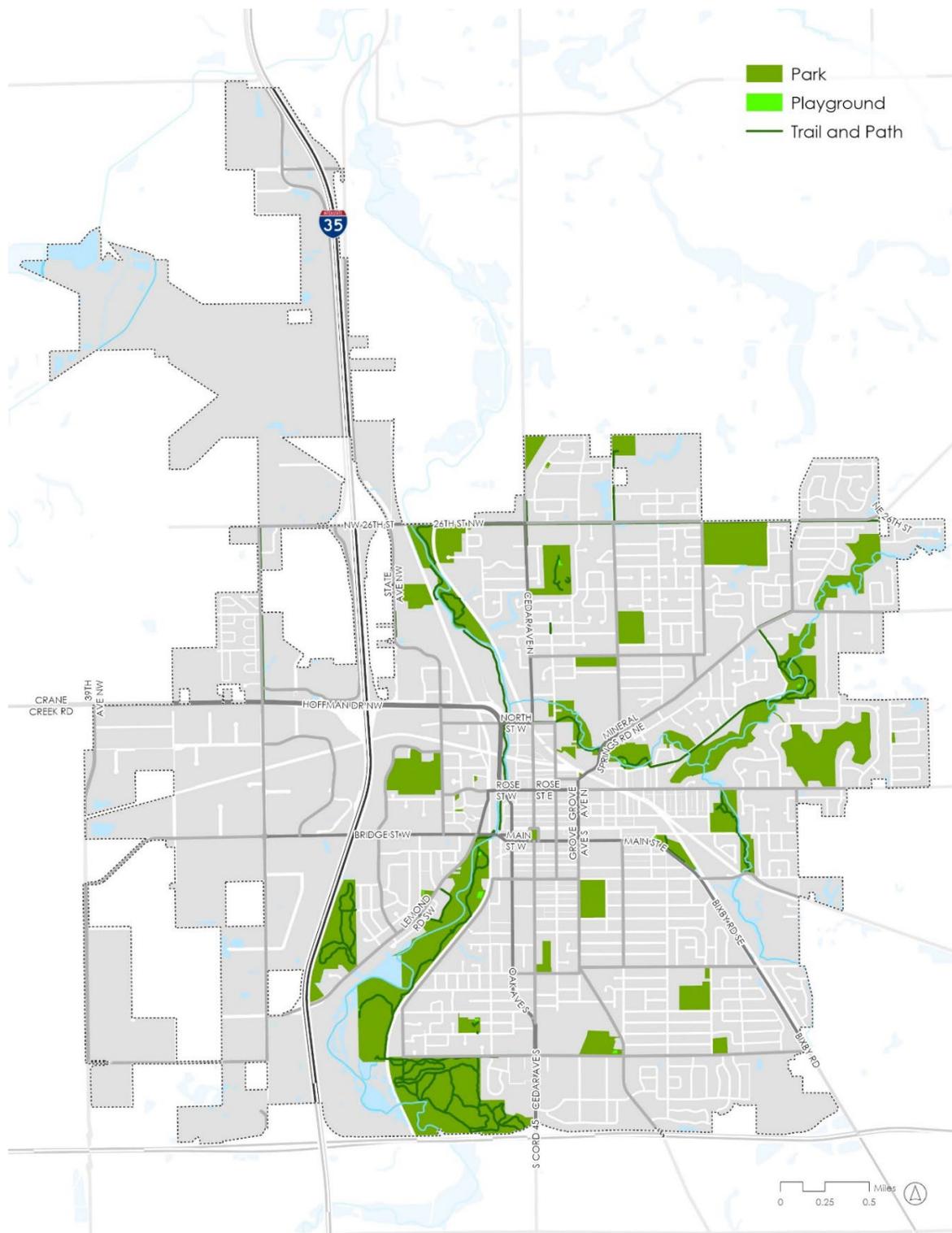


Figure 25 Existing Parks and Trails

**Parks and Trails Plan Recommendations**

The following is a summary of key recommendations from the Plan that the Imagine Owatonna Comprehensive Plan can reference and build upon.

- The city should continue focusing on trail development, trail safety, and maintenance of existing trails in the community as this is of great importance to the public.
- The city should build flexibility into the parks system in order to meet the changing needs of the citizens of Owatonna.
- The city should seek regional park status for the combined properties of Kaplan’s Woods, Lake Kohlmier and a portion of the Straight River public land as a regional park. This could aid in future funding opportunities for improvements.
- For new parkland acquired, the city should utilize a master planning process to best determine correct use of park space, trail connections, amenities and to ensure accessibility standards are met before the park is constructed.
- The city should engage the community and involve them in the programming of the parks including selecting character and styles of amenities.
- The Owatonna school district is an invaluable resource and partner for the city by utilizing shared facilities and maintenance agreements. The city should continue developing athletic fields in partnership with the school district.
- The city should 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.
- As a result of the successful November (2019) high school bond referendum, the city should work with the school district to consolidate fields currently existing in the park system to the new high school to serve future athletic needs.

**Future Park Recommendations**

Future Park and Trail search areas identified in the Plan are shown in Figure 26.

- As Owatonna develops to the north and east, secure park land in these areas to meet the growing community needs and equitable distribution throughout the city. Currently, the southeast portion of Owatonna is lacking in park land and amenities. Consider complementary park features at the future soccer fields such as a play area.

**Future Trail Recommendations**

- Future trail corridors should follow the planned State Trail corridors to the north, south, and northeast along the Straight River and Maple Creek.
- Search for property along the city’s natural greenway corridors along the Straight River, Maple Creek, and Izaak Walton Creek.
- Continue search along existing railroad corridors not in use, minimize railroad, waterway, and street crossings along trail.
- Trail search areas should be based upon the State Trail Corridor search area and guidelines (Refer to the Trail System Plan for more information). Consider locations for trailheads with enough land for parking for trail users.

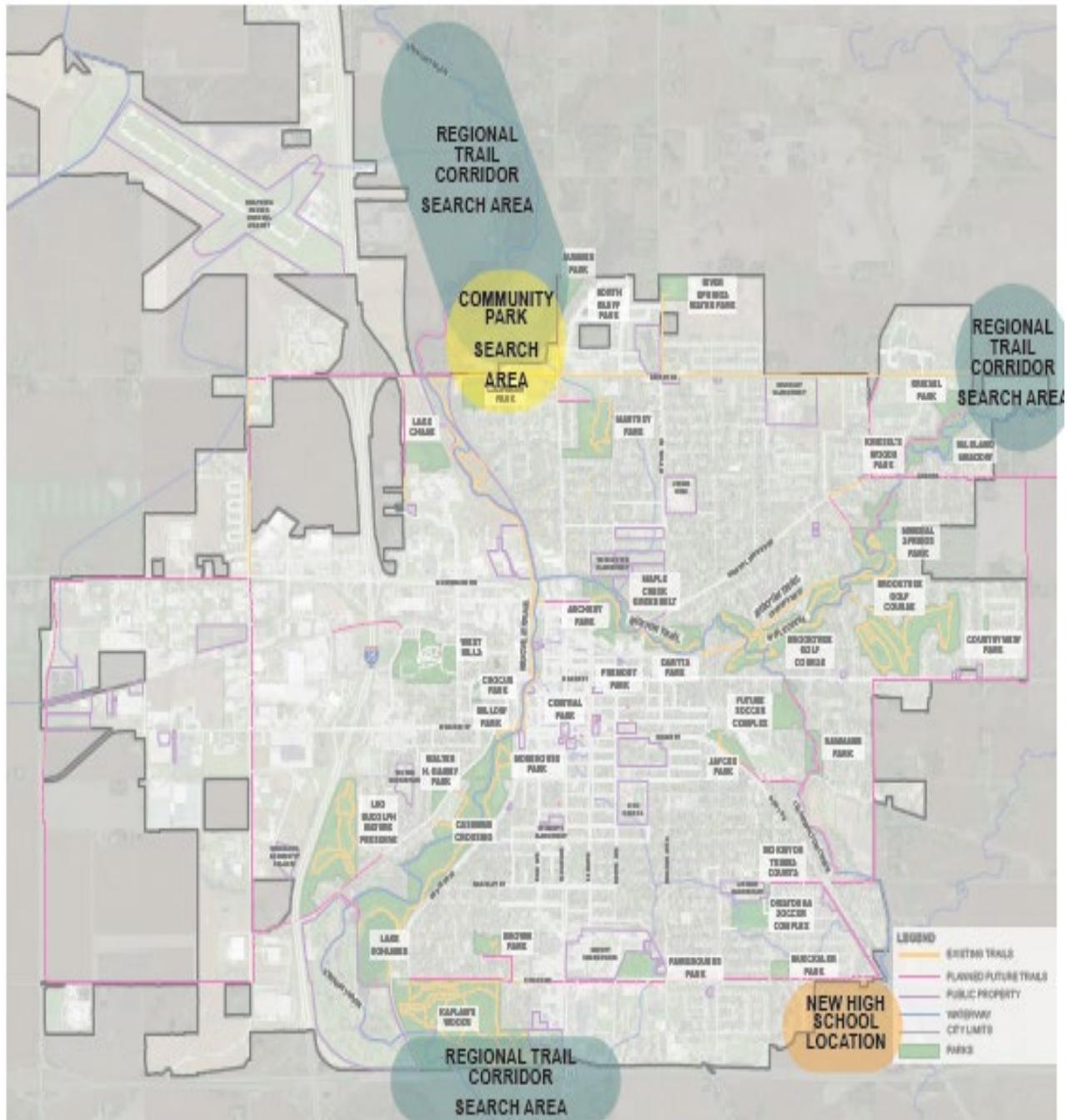


Figure 26 Potential Future Park and Trail Areas

## ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABILITY

The City of Owatonna has chosen to include a chapter in the *Imagine Owatonna* Comprehensive Plan dedicated to its Environment, Natural Resources and Sustainability. 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.

This background report includes existing conditions and current initiatives in Owatonna related to environment, natural resources and sustainability. These topics are intertwined throughout many parts of the Comprehensive Plan including Parks and Trails, Transportation, Utilities and Land Use.

### 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 27, 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.

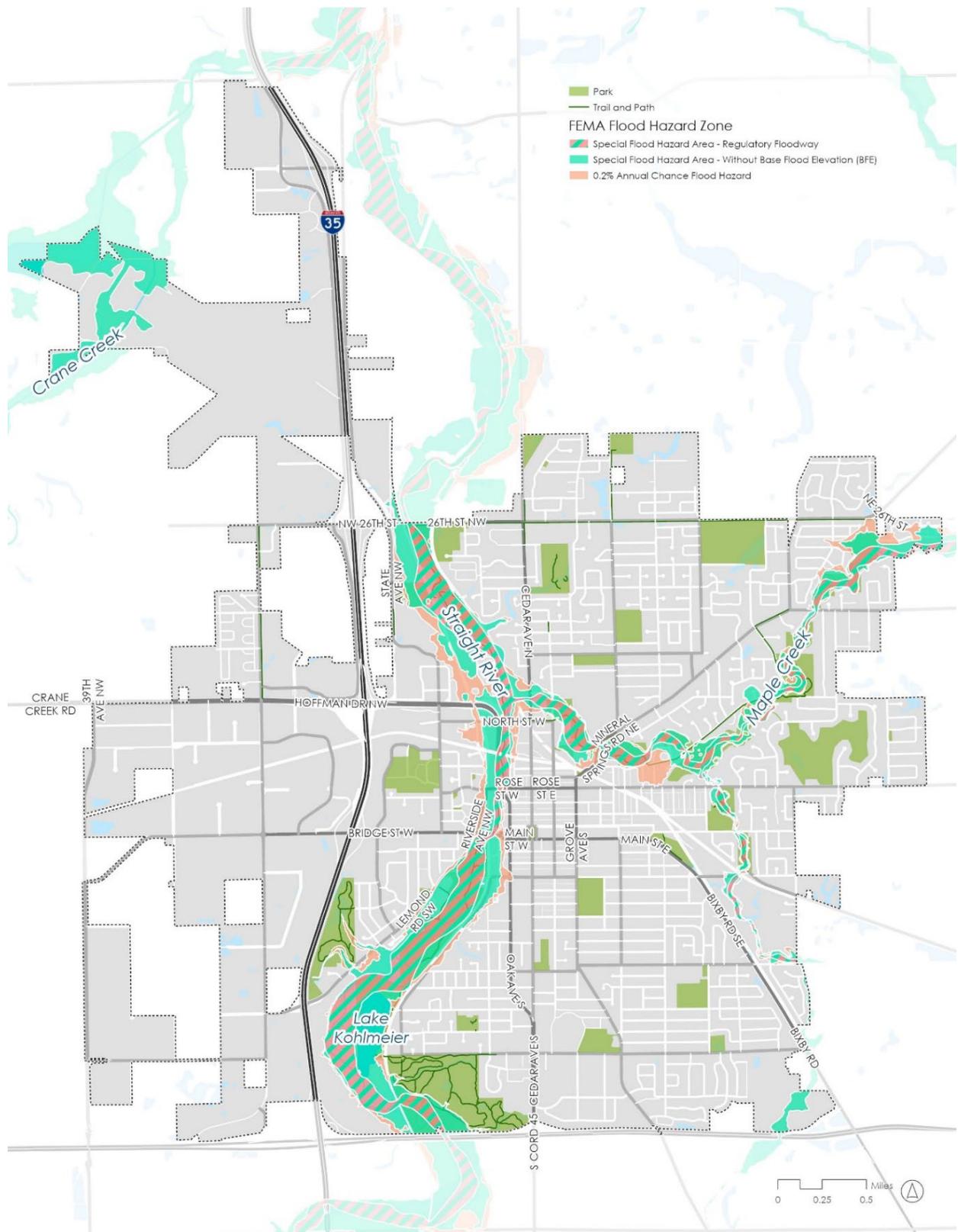


Figure 27 Natural Resources

## Current Initiatives

The city has several initiatives that relate to environment, natural resources 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.

## Current Trends and Opportunities

These current trends offer an idea of best practices from cities around the region and can be adapted into goals or strategies later in the Comprehensive Planning process.

- Many cities are intentionally planting trees and other landscaping along streets and in parks which play a vital role in storm water management and quality improvements. There is also a renewed awareness about the public health benefits associated with urban forests.
- Rather than designing stormwater ponds, cities are instead creating native plant amenity areas that can be used as open space. This benefits pollinators which could align with the "Pollinator

Friendly City” designation. It also reduces the need for mowing, maintenance costs, and chemical applications within open space.

- Participation in programs that encourage city-led sustainability actions such as GreenStep Cities, Regional Indicators Initiative and Envision Minnesota. The city is not currently a member of GreenStep Cities.
- The city does not currently have a shoreland ordinance. The city could consider establishing shoreline buffers where active recreation does not exist along waterways and lakes. This will help fix existing erosion issues along the Straight River, Maple Creek, and flooding/washout at Lake Kohlmier and Lake Chase. This will also help to protect existing waterways from pollution and invasive species.

# Appendix B - Public Engagement Summary

Phase 1 Public Engagement -  
Summer 2023

# Imagine Owatonna – 2050 Comprehensive Plan

## Downtown Thursday Event – 8.3.2023

### Description of the Event

Downtown Thursdays is a summer monthly event that happens in the Downtown of Owatonna during the first Thursday of summer months, June, July, August, and September. Stantec participated in the Downtown Thursday event on the evening of August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. The event takes place from 5 pm to 8 pm and the expected attendees were over 4,000. Stantec set-up a booth at the intersection of Vine Street and Cedar Avenue in the downtown area. This was next to the information booth set-up by the Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism.



The Stantec tent displayed the banners with the title “Imagine Owatonna: 2050 Comprehensive Plan” along with the QR Code. The Stantec tent displayed two maps that provided opportunities for the residents to interact. One map had the title “What are the hidden gems of Owatonna” along with sticky notes where participants could make use of to let us know their thoughts. The other map showed the extent of Owatonna along with the land uses. There was also a poster that contained information about the transportation, parks, trails and recreation, and the environment of Owatonna. The six-word stories collected from the high school engagement event were displayed on the other side of the tent. Three sandwich boards were placed on the three sides of the intersection. A table was set up at the front of the tent with coloring sheets and tabletop stands containing the QR Code. Stantec staff also had business cards to hand it out to the residents and participants as they interacted.



The QR code was linked to the interactive Story map containing information about the 2050 Comprehensive Plan. It had a link for the participants to write their 6-word story about their hopes and future of Owatonna. The Storymap had introduction to Comprehensive Plan along with the timeline. It also had brief summaries about Land Use, Parks, Transportation and Sustainability from the previous plans. At the end of the Storymap, the participants were provided with an opportunity to take a survey.



The survey had eight questions in total, with the first four questions being open ended. The participants were asked about what they love about Owatonna, what they would like to have more of, less of in Owatonna and what are the hidden gems in Owatonna. The next four questions were demographic questions and were clearly indicated that they were optional. The questions asked in the section were age, renter status, location of their residence with respect of Owatonna (living in Owatonna, live within 10 miles of Owatonna, live more the 10 miles from Owatonna) and their email address if they want to stay connected with the process of Comprehensive Plan.

#### **What we did:**

As soon the visitors started coming to the Downtown event, Stantec staff interacted with them by providing the business card, briefing about the Comprehensive plan, their role as residents and their opportunity to take part in the survey. The staff also encouraged the visitors to look at the map and mark their hidden gems places on the map. They were also requested to check out the poster containing information about Owatonna if interested. Coloring sheets were distributed to kids.



#### **What we heard:**

Most of the visitors had been in Owatonna all their lives and had very interesting perspectives to share. There were contradictory opinions about having a north-south connection on the eastern side of Owatonna. The majority were happy about the change in landscaping in Downtown Owatonna and



welcomed the Streetscape Plan. Young parents wanted more entertainment options for their kids along with importance given to safety. Some visitors were interested to know about the future of Owatonna with respect to job opportunities and economic development.

Twenty-seven people had filled the survey by scanning the QR Code within a few days of the event. Most of the respondents valued the feeling of community in Owatonna. They also enjoyed the number of parks and trails in and around Owatonna. Other aspects of

Owatonna that most people valued are safety, diversity and the historic character and preservation of

those characteristics. Affordability and ease of access were also important to the residents of Owatonna.

### **Question 1: Six-Word Stories**

**Description:** As an activity in the planning process, the Six-Word Story encourages participants to be creative while providing information about how they envision the future of their place/community would be like, according to them. The Six-Word Story attempts to distill a person's expectation into a short, evocative story.

**What we heard:** The six-word stories completed by respondents of the survey highlighted the importance of inclusive community. The participants were particular about the community being respectful, welcoming, inclusive, diverse, and progressive. There were also thoughts about having a healthy community.

### **Station 2: More, Less**

**Description:** This section included two questions:

- In Owatonna, I want more of...
- In Owatonna, I want less of...

### **What we heard:**

The participants wanted more options for housing in Owatonna. They wanted affordable housing, housing for seniors, and more townhomes that won't be too expensive for residents looking to buy a home in Owatonna. Participants were also interested in more entertainment and retail options. They wanted family-friendly options like YMCA, indoor playgrounds, entertainment options like Go kart track, billiards hall, etc. They want the restaurant scene to be more diverse and have local shops and businesses to be open during the weekends for longer hours. Overall, the residents of Owatonna want a community that is inclusive, accessible, and visionary.

Moving forward, some residents said they want fewer Mexican and Somali restaurants. They would like to see improvements made with respect to infrastructure such as fewer potholes and better connection to biking trails. Even though they are excited about the developments such as the new school, there is skepticism surrounding it with respect to the accessibility. They want safety to be prioritized and want to see fewer crimes.



## Appendix

### Appendix A: 6-word stories

1. Be a Respectful, Kind, Tolerant, Patient Community Member
2. An inclusive, family friendly, progressive community.
3. Let's finish what we started.
4. A vibrant, healthy community for all.
5. Welcoming, progressive, safe proud community
6. Most Positively Diverse and Inclusive Community

## Appendix B: What do you love about Owatonna?

- The focus on building the community and making it a better place for all!
- The trails, the parks, the location
- It still has a small town feel but has many employment opportunities and amenities.
- The community
- Clean, safe, parks, trails
- For the most part it's clean
- Small town feel with decent number of things to do.
- It's situation at a perfect spot to travel to bigger cities when needed.
- The public golf courses, school athletic programs and Nicks Pizza!
- The feelings of community
- The hometown feel. It's a great community to call home.
- Small town feel with increasingly more amenities. Ability to walk.
- I love the community and the convenient places it has to offer.
- The community togetherness
- The size
- Parks
- Small town, beautiful parks and downtown, Steele county fair, school system and music dept. Little theater and history center. Safe streets.
- The diversity and variety of people...and things to do.
- historic downtown is still alive.
- Safe place to live low crime.
- Small town feel with access to larger cities within 60 minutes' drive.
- Seems like we're getting more progressive i.e., New High School, riverfront development apartments (these last two our private ventures - non-city)
- It being a small town - a "family" town. Easy access to the Interstate that takes you to larger cities if you care to go there.
- It's vibrancy. Virtually everything I need is here.
- I enjoy the new downtown space as well as the many parks and natural areas that are readily accessible. There is also the ease of travel to other local communities via Highway 14 and I-35.
- Affordable cost of living. Outdoor space, trails, parks, golf courses. Ease of commuting and accessibility to most major amenities and services.

## Appendix C: What do you want more of in Owatonna?

- Trails, parks on the east side of town( upper part of Brooktree) more retail.
- things to do, community center, east side corridor project
- More "higher end" townhouse development with "detached" townhomes. Those are nice for people that want a single family house but not the outside upkeep.
- More small business opportunities, old buildings being remodeled and cleaned up, not penalize small businesses in small old buildings that need work done.
- Senior housing options. A place that people can go to use wood and metalworking equipment including cancer mills.
- Good paying production jobs
- Affordable housing
- Indoor places for families and kids. A YMCA, codeNinja, indoor playground, indoor walking track, a fresh/local bakery, splash pads around town, hockey rinks with boards in different areas of town, side walk down Smith Ave and 18th st, a cross walk at the corner of smith and 18th (Lincoln kids walking home will have a big increase of traffic from the new high school opening up.)
- High end restaurants.
- More family oriented places to go to. Like a YMCA
- Family friendly events. Original architecture staying downtown, it keeps the historical feeling. We need things that draw tourists to the area. Different choices in restaurants. We have so many of the same things.
- Valuing diversity and giving the opportunity for all to feel included. Well thought out community center.
- I want more places for recreation like maybe a go kart track or something it doesn't have yet that would be cool
- Small businesses
- Vision. New leadership.
- Shopping places
- Cab service or uber. Something more for kids and teens. Maybe a YMCA and indoor pool
- More restaurants.
- more small businesses shopping and entertainment options and Restaurants.
- High-quality restaurant variety, a lap swim pool with decent hours, and longer distance road biking trails
- Better 2-way Communication between City Officials & Community. Thought things would get better when we hired Communication Director however it seems like talking back n forth has lessened with assumption that this is "her job". More senior housing opportunities. More single family homes that are affordable More townhomes Want rest of Historic Downtown to be included in streetscape project - not just 1 street More nice(r) dining options beyond Toreys & Romas
- A community which shows and encourages adults and children to love their country - patriotism and good moral respective citizens who appreciate Law Enforcement.
- A Billiards hall would be nice. As would a Hawaiian Poke restaurant. A Costco or Sam's Club. A mountain bike park maybe on the hills by Summer Park off North Cedar

- Better and more diverse selection of restaurants, and retail choices that provide better hours (very few are open on Sundays and that majority have very limited hours on Saturdays). Also, there is a lack of sidewalks in many areas of the town. This is not ideal for those who have children and animals that they want to safely take on walks.
- Recreation, dining, and entertainment. MSB is one of my favorite locations to visit because of live music, outdoor space, and rotating food trucks. Longer trail systems for biking/running. More variety of dining options, either fast or sit-down.
- Nicer Sidewalks ALL of Downtown, not just the few blocks.

#### Appendix D: What do want less of in Owatonna?

- Mexican restaurants. Omg, enough already! How about Thai or Somali food. Seriously, something different.
- Fast food restaurants, less pizza and Mexican food, more variety!
- Potholes
- Bars
- None
- Mexican restaurants ( hahaha.)
- Roundabouts (at least the one at Rose St intersection)
- Na
- Less tax increases would be nice. I get improving the community, new school, updating downtown etc. . .but the cost is going to drive people out of the area.
- Bigotry, close-mindedness.
- I want less parks or any places that Owatonna already has enough of
- Crime and section 8 housing
- Old thinking.
- Construction
- subsidized housing we need to build single family homes to add to the tax payer base. Existing home owner are being bleed to pay for non-tax paying people to come to owatonna and float on the system this needs to stop.
- Less roundabouts Less cyclists & skateboarding on downtown city sidewalks (rules aren't being enforced and someone's going to get injured).
- Crime, Drugs and Projects that look like good thought was never a main point - like the street project in front of the high school which has basically alienated the home owners there with no parking on both sides of the street and an island obstructing one owners backing out of their own driveway. I guess those people just don't get to invite people to come for birthday parties, graduation parties - do not get to hire someone to mow etc etc
- Intolerance
- I would love to see a drop in the general negative tones that can be off-putting to new residents (those who do not like progress being made, and those who are vocal about their bigoted views).
- Fewer Mexican restaurants, Owatonna is saturated.

## Appendix E: What are some hidden gems in Owatonna?

1. Old Town Bagel, Wells Fargo bank downtown, the trails
2. The down town park with the farmers market and all the other programs there
3. Eating ice cream by the river at The Blast.
4. The owls painted on the buildings
5. Not so hidden parks and trails.
6. All the parks
7. Schools, trails, restaurants
8. Mizuki Fusion, Kaplans woods, Mineral Springs, and the cleanliness of the city.
9. Parks
10. Central Park coffee
11. Mineral Springs Park, Central Park, OPU building (smoke stacks), the lights on the Morehouse park bridge,
12. Owatonna Public Utilities.
13. Wagoners lunch, water park
14. Wagners Pool & Lunch
15. Mineral Springs Park, West Hills, downtown and central park, steele county historical society
16. The parks and trails....and variety of things to do.
17. mineral spring park
18. Kaplan park woods trails
19. Independent retailers Trails & Brooktree Golf Course History Center West Hills Museum
20. West Hills, Forest Hill Cemetery and other historical sights around town - the many parks with trails connecting them
21. Wenger Corp The "River Walk"
22. The park and trail systems, as well as the numerous cultural and historic attractions.
23. The MSB scene and concept of outdoor space (igloo in winter) with food trucks on a bike trail. Parks are impressive with age appropriate and accessible equipment. High School will be a not so hidden gem once it opens in the Fall.

# Imagine Owatonna – 2050 Comprehensive Plan

## High School Pop-up – May 24, 2023

### Station 1: SIX WORD STORY

Description: As an activity in the planning process, the Six-Word Story encourages participants to be creative while providing information about how they envision the future of their place/community would be like according to them. The Six-Word Story attempts to distill a person's expectation into a short, evocative story.



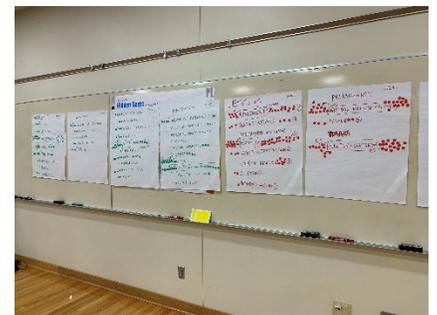
What we heard: The six-word stories completed by the students at Owatonna High School highlighted the importance of school and education. The students are very optimistic about the future of their city and believe that it will be inclusive, welcoming and be a land of opportunities. They also believe that the youth can shape the future of their city and would be playing an integral role in doing so. They also want to preserve and improve the natural resources that exist along with having a vibrant, local community with walkable streets and local, fresh produce along with preserving its history and culture.

### Station 2: More, Less

Description: This station included two boards with board questions for the students where they put up stickers.

- In Owatonna, I want more of...
- In Owatonna, I want less of...

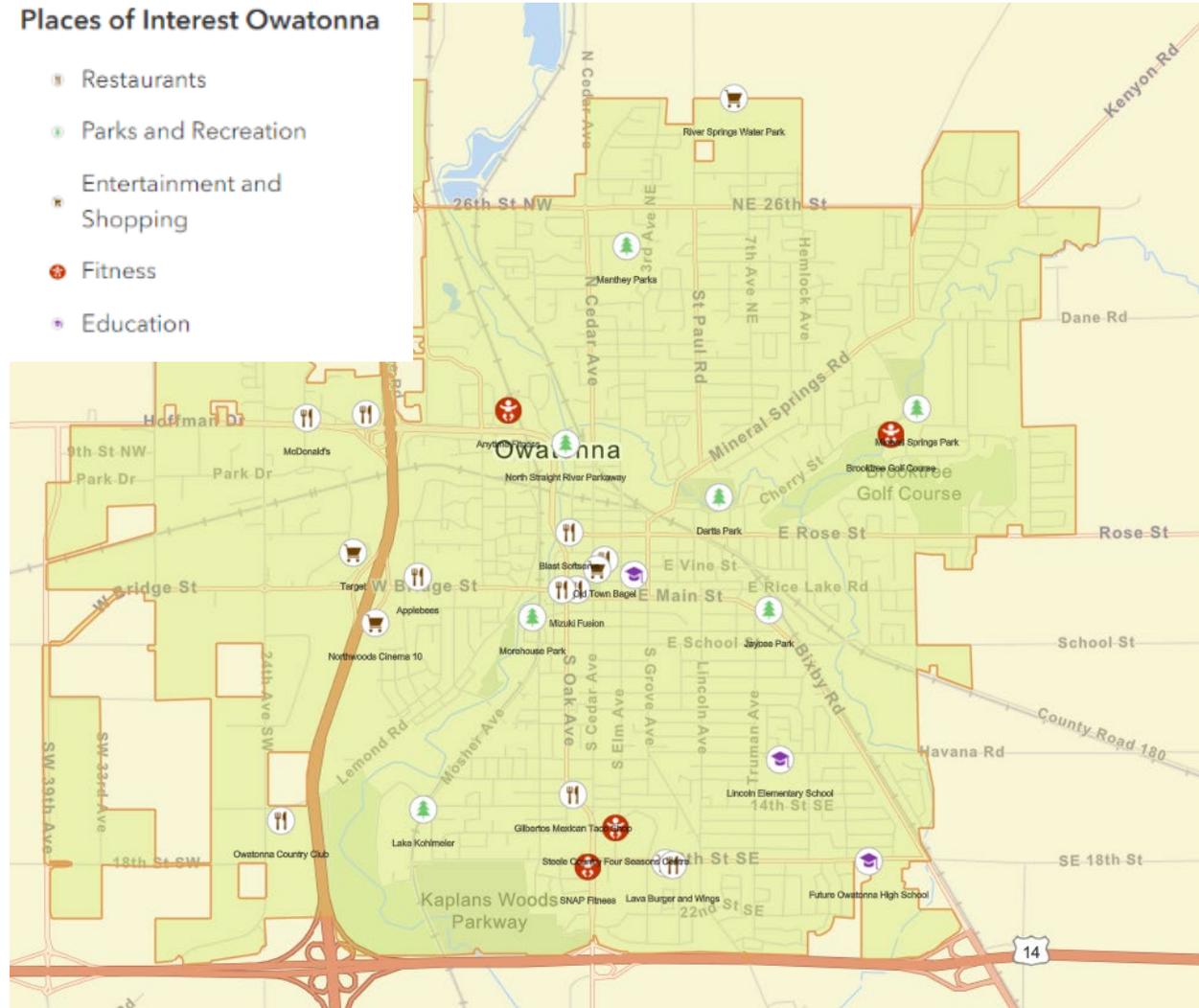
What we heard: High school students of Owatonna want better roads. They would also like amenities catering to their physical fitness needs such as sporting good stores and gyms. They would like more fast chain restaurants such as Chik-fil-a. The high school students would love to have more shopping and retail places such as Costco, Target and clothing stores like TJ Maxx in their city.



Moving forward, the high school students of Owatonna want better infrastructure where there are fewer potholes and roundabouts. They also want fewer apartments and gas stations. They have a desire for

better maintenance of lakes, parks and want their city free of pollution. They would also like their city to be safer and healthier.

### Station 3: Hidden gems of Owatonna



## Appendix

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

- Owatonna will be lit with greatness due to its culture.
- Owatonna will be full of history.
- The future will probably be like these.
- Have better schooling for the people that need schooling and don't have enough money.
- Well, happy, utopia, advance, grateful, thankful.
- I love Jose Rosas so much.
- Happy, better, wonderful, pretty, great look.
- The success of Owatonna starts with the people.
- Caleb will own most businesses/stuff.
- Owatonna, the best town in Southern MN.
- Graduating seniors onto new great things.
- Dark crime cops big bidding money.
- A place where anyone calls home.
- Better schooling, more parks, more activities.
- Healthy environment, safe, friendly, fun, something nice to come back to everyday.
- All mental illnesses are no more.
- Better, bigger, faster, stronger, gold, robots.
- No cop, no stop, way to roll.
- Pop, cop, flap, drop Owatonna zesty.
- The future is bright with us.
- Bigger and stronger and fully healthy.
- We will be better than ever.
- We will have a turf field.
- The future of the city will be beautiful.
- Getting the new school is huge.
- Young dudes making a great city.
- More youth activities and youth involvement.
- Bright up and coming future ahead.
- Better parks in safer neighborhoods, please.
- Cleaned, big, more plants, better roads.
- Cleaner parks and streams year round.
- Community gardens with lots of produce.
- Allows for a variety of opportunities.
- It shrinks and grows: it is alive.
- I see a lot of new buildings and a lot of money going into new schools.
- Parks, trees, hiking trails, nature, service projects.
- Better opportunities for kids and teens.

- Quaint and cozy, yet it grows.
- Hopeful, richer, nicer, beautiful, safer, happy.
- Went to store-big, big building.
- I think the future of Owatonna would be a great place good community.
- Hard, long, successful, inspiring, great, best.
- Hopeful, peace, plenty, rich, advance, greatness.
- Better school, a place everyone calls home.
- Hello, yellow, ice spice, fellow, nice rice
- Growing, expanding, and becoming more diverse.
- Owatonna will be very very successful.
- The future of Owatonna will have a better school.
- Moving, walking, fresh food, healthy living.
- Passionate, brave, connect, strong, smart, inclusive.
- Collaborative, dedicated, connective, smart, inclusive, together.
- Together, fun, passionate, inclusive, courageous and welcoming.
- Modern, together, inclusive, family, bold, optimistic.
- Bright, increased population, advanced, closer community.
- Modern, futuristic, community, tradition, increase population.
- Up and coming, new modern, connected.
- Bigger and better city and opportunities.

#### In Owatonna, I want more

- Mental Health Awareness (6 agree)
- Trader Joe
- Better bowling Alley
- Scheels sporting goods (42 agree)
- Better roads (51 agree)
- Better Connected Roads (6 agree)
- Theme Park (4 agree)
- Disc Golf Courses (1 agree)
- Activities for teenagers (17 agree)
- DMV in town (1 agree)
- Sit-down restaurant (11 agree)
- Roller Rink (5 agree)
- Boba (8 agree)
- Casey's Gas Station (1 agree)
- Townhouses over apartments
- Race track (4 agree)
- Packing plant for processing meat (1 agree)
- Five guys (5 agree)
- Lakes (2 agree)
- Barnes and Noble Bookstore (8 agree)
- Best Buy (4 agree)
- Pet Store
- Chik Fil A (23 agree)
- Thrift Store (10 agree)
- Drive-in Movie Theater
- Indoor Mall (16 agree)
- Super Target (9 agree)
- Costco (18 agree)
- Sonic (2 agree)
- Red Lobster
- Indoor Ice Skating
- Parks in Safer Neighborhoods

- Olive Garden (4 agree)
- Marshalls (1 agree)
- Hobby Lobby
- Hotels
- Bigger Water Park (7 agree)
- Swimming Pools (1 agree)
- Panera (1 agree)
- Sushi (3 agree)
- YMCA (20 agree)
- Arcade (4 agree)
- TJ Maxx
- Dave and Busters (1 agree)
- Later Business Hours
- ER Vet Clinic (8 agree)
- Local stores/restaurants (11 agree)
- Waffle House (8 agree)
- Entertainment Uses (10 agree)
- Fast chain restaurants (29 agree)
- YMCA (11 agree)
- Clothing Store (19 agree)
- Gyms (9 agree)
- Music Stores (4 agree)
- Volleyball Courts (2 agree)
- Dog Park (1 agree)
- Sports Dome (10 agree)
- Minor League Team
- Chipotle (4 agree)
- Walking Trails (3 agree)
- Dunkin Doughnuts
- Food Co-op (1 agree)
- More parking in Downtown (4 agree)
- Zumiez store
- Native Plants (3 agree)
- Trains(2 agree)
- Texas Roadhouse (4 agree)
- Rock Climbing (2 agree)
- Dessert Places (3 agree)
- Nautical (3 agree)
- Trampoline Park (3 agree)
- Bigger Lake (1 agree)
- Bakery (2 agree)
- Ease of walking/biking (5 agree)
- Refs in sporting events
- Outback
- Stores (4 agree)
- Plant life (1 agree)
- Additional McDonalds (1 agree)
- Coffee Shops (2 agree)

#### In Owatonna, I want less of

- Apartments (65 agree)
- Gas stations (30 agree)
- Potholes (188+ agree)
- Fast food (18 agree)
- Burger Kings (8 agree)
- Federated Buildings
- Road Construction (5 agree)
- Bullies (8 agree)
- Chain Restaurants (5 agree)
- Judgement (5 agree)
- Polluted Water (dirty lakes) (16 agree)
- Railroads (6 agree)
- Alleys (3 agree)
- Roundabouts (21 agree)
- Soccer Complexes (5 agree)
- Taxes (11 agree)
- Pizza places (6 agree)
- Drugs/Illegal substances (16 agree)
- Weirdos walking around (27 agree)
- People (5 agree)
- Pollution-garbage (26 agree)

#### Hidden gems of Owatonna

- 1) River Springs Water Park (44.11703181807128, -93.21301628217913)
- 2) Manthey Parks (44.10712874214212, -93.22287664930353)
- 3) SNAP Fitness (44.06570741724237, -93.2265676493052)
- 4) Tennis Courts
- 5) Mineral Springs Park (44.09636189457542, -93.19596401307008)
- 6) Brooktree Golf Course (44.09458088398136, -93.19843404430138)
- 7) JC Park (44.08293544837446, -93.20969693553847)
- 8) Dartts Park (44.090441971611696, -93.21438707444075)
- 9) Straight River Trail aka North Straight River Parkway (44.0939833196371, -93.22862582814027)
- 10) Old Town Bagel (44.086207861574415, -93.22507571676964)
- 11) Owatonna Public Library (44.08519441200441, -93.2223370792018)
- 12) Lucky dice (44.0855768808755, -93.22564076099277)
- 13) Downtown
- 14) Blast Soft Serve (44.0880933567804, -93.2282354734277)
- 15) Mizuki Fusion (44.08420414902002, -93.22760772198374)
- 16) Pupuseria La Paz (44.08420414902002, -93.2290346571256)
- 17) Morehouse Park (44.0823520895293, -93.23163827259151)
- 18) Trails along River
- 19) Gilbertos Mexican Taco Shop (44.07058367305921, -93.22798690697634)
- 20) Spare time entertainment (44.06595696228549, -93.21938062046952)
- 21) Lava Burger and Wings (44.065891525164965, -93.21860647688676)
- 22) Lincoln Elementary School (44.07294082995274, -93.20870542286488)
- 23) Steele Country Four Seasons Centre (44.068375260907644, -93.22403274579014)
- 24) Lake Kohlmeier (44.06958484556257, -93.24173929126738)
- 25) Owatonna Country Club (44.06878314349226, -93.25500013213453)
- 26) Future Owatonna High School (44.06610403700448, -93.20040521292238)
- 27) Northwoods Cinema 10 (44.08203797125035, -93.24623782773895)
- 28) Target (44.08669307905185, -93.24833848093851)
- 29) Applebees (44.0850956165565, -93.24239888978356)
- 30) Olivia's Family Restaurant (44.09592598551247, -93.24715562231793)
- 31) McDonald's (44.095771881510835, -93.25258441315835)
- 32) Anytime Fitness (44.09625312261285, -93.23395934005616)

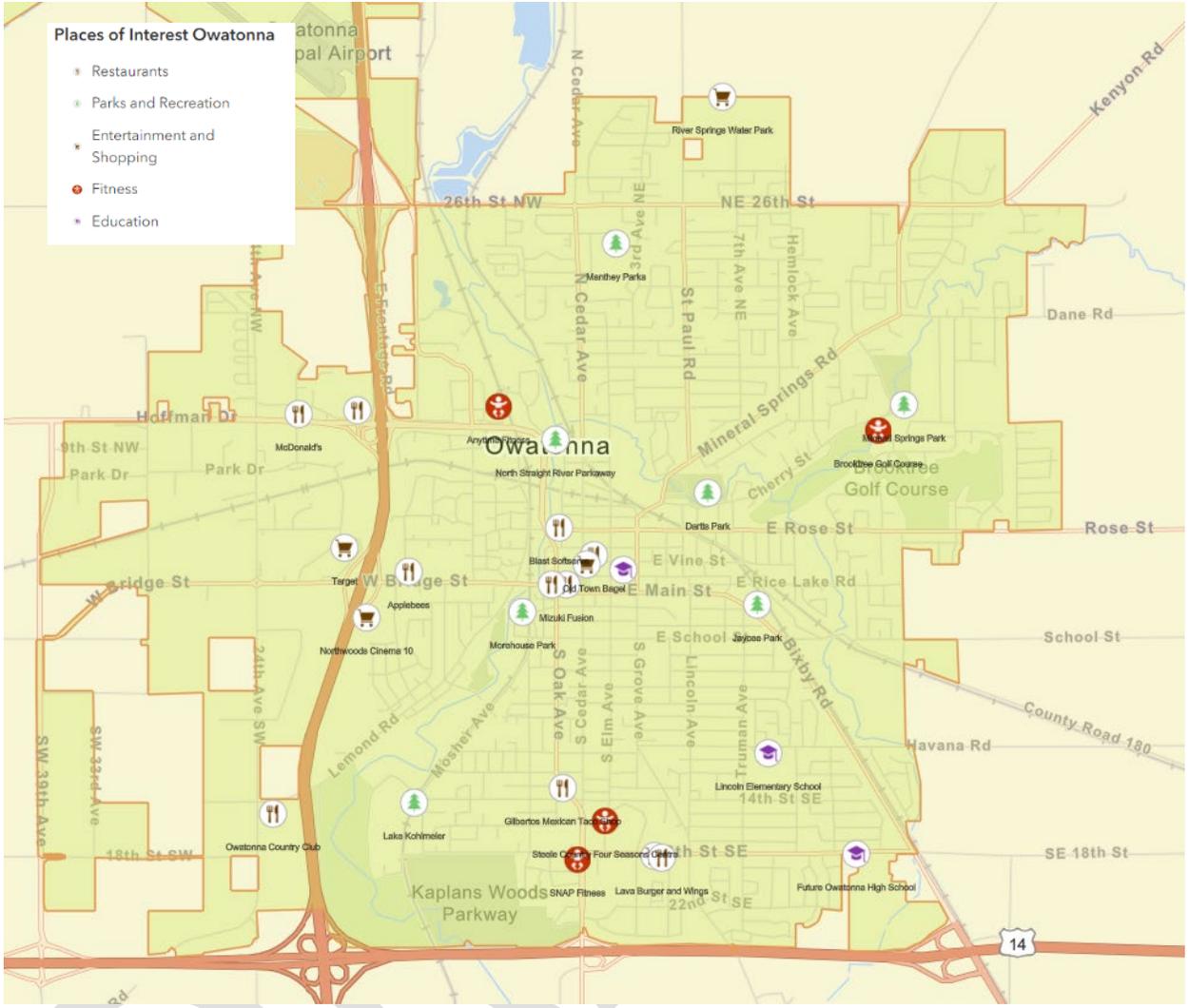
#### Education

#### Restaurants

#### Entertainment and Shopping

#### Fitness

#### Parks and Recreation



# Imagine Owatonna – 2050 Comprehensive Plan

## Business Focus Group – 7.18.2023

### Summary

#### **What do you want MORE of in Owatonna?**

In Owatonna, the business community wants to see a bigger workforce with room for job development and advancement and more business attraction within the city. In order to support this, Owatonna will need to engage and attract more young people. Housing is an important factor in attracting young people and the city could do more to provide affordable single-family homes and to remove barriers to home buying. Additionally, Owatonna needs services to support its existing and future residents such as more public transportation, childcare options and senior housing for residents to age in place. Additional amenities desired in Owatonna include multi-modal infrastructure, a community center, restaurants, breweries, and continued downtown development.

#### **What do you want LESS of in Owatonna?**

In Owatonna the business community wants to see a government that is fiscally responsible with less regulatory barriers for businesses, streamlined procedures and lower taxes. There is general support for local business and finding ways to fill empty buildings with small businesses is a priority.

Entrepreneurship is a strength in Owatonna and there is an opportunity to strengthen this further by working with Owatonna's diverse communities and improving the business incubator program. The business community views Owatonna as a strong community and would like to see less negative speculation that harms the image of the city. There is support for housing options other than apartments, as well as deeply affordable housing to serve the homeless and low-income communities. Owatonna should embrace diversity as a strength and the city should strive for less divide and silos and more inclusiveness.

#### **Opportunities**

Opportunities in Owatonna will build off a strong community and business environment. While the city has great events such as the Steele County Fair and Downtown Thursday, there is room for improvement with year-round events. An event center or community center could be helpful in achieving this.

Owatonna has an opportunity to capitalize on the river as an amenity and strategically redevelop properties along the river, as well as add public infrastructure such as trails or walking paths. Finally, business leaders see an opportunity to create connections between the existing industrial park and the rest of the city, a connection between both sides of I-35, better multimodal connections and better connections with other cities in the region.

#### **Threats**

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, it needs to grow. Finally, the city will also need to keep up with trends such as electric vehicles and renewable energy to make sure that it doesn't fall behind its peers.

## All Comments

What do you want MORE of in Owatonna?

- Restaurants
- Continued downtown development.
- Public transportation (x2)
- Integrate city with industrial park – walking, biking, public transportation connections.
- Affordable single-family housing (x1)
- Bigger workforce (housing to attract)
- Job development (advancement)
- Continued expansion of community events/entertainment
- Community center
- Removing home purchase barriers
- Affordable senior housing
- Bike trail all around the city – safety issues with people driving too fast.
- Engaging young people/young professionals – training and volunteerism
- Commercial areas on the outskirts of town – especially south of Highway 14
- Light rail – connections with other metropolitan areas
- Strong business attraction
- Connect both sides of I-35
- Attract young families with amenities such as breweries, restaurants, etc...
- More childcare options

What do you want LESS of in Owatonna?

- Less people working from home.
- Rise in fees to use parks/baseball fields, etc.
- Working in silos – help each other to meet goals.
- Less regulation, especially for small businesses (x1)
- Streamlining local procedures (x1)
- Less people leaving the community because of high taxes.
- Fewer Mexican restaurants – wider variety of restaurants (x1)
- Less big manufacturing business – more support for local business
- Less of the same – more engaged with Somali/Hispanic community
- Less empty buildings – remove barriers (x1)
- Less congestion. Beltway has been discussed in the past and could be revived.
- Fewer apartment buildings – other options
- Homelessness – more housing options that are deeply affordable.
- Less negative speculation
- Less taxes (x3)
- Smaller government/fiscally responsible (x2)
- Less divide in diversity – inclusive with ALL communities, especially the large Hispanic and Somali communities
- Potholes (x1) – this is getting better.
- State mandated programs
- Less crime, especially with growth
- Law enforcement
- Less corporate non-local decision-making – especially in healthcare, industrial, County

## General Comments/ Opportunities

- Want more Community – less communities – we are all Owatonna. Embrace diversity.
- More events that bring people to Owatonna – maybe need an event center?
- Off season events and things to do. A community center may help with this. Owatonna need to think bigger than Downtown Thursday and have something for peoples to do 52 weeks/yr.
- The City does not have Uber. It was tried for a little while and the consistency of rides was not enough to support. In order to be successful Owatonna needs people to know that Uber is an option -promotion is key.
- Development of I-35 and Highway 14 is an opportunity.
- Owatonna should promote the new development and transformation that has happened widely.
- Owatonna has an opportunity to capitalize on the river – although it needs to be cleaned up.
- There are areas that have opportunity for reuse and redevelopment including cemstone site, canning company, and industrial land along the river.
- Public transportation within Owatonna and to other cities/regions – this is especially important for attracting young people.
- Colleges attract young people – need something that will do that in Owatonna.
- A riverwalk could be an amenity.
- There is a need to brainstorm with a range of young people from right out of high school to age 30 – Y-Pro group could be a good way to do this.
- Sidewalk and bike path gaps – there is an opportunity to address these when roads are reconstructed.
- Need more support for entrepreneurship among diverse communities – this is one of the reasons why there are so many Mexican restaurants. Entrepreneurship and small business offer opportunities for immigrant communities.
- There are issues with the business incubator. It needs to do more and be more helpful, and also be promoted more.
- Curate and support small business
- Engage people who have left the community and ask them why the left.
- Is Owatonna ready to be an event center? Does it have the population to support an amenity like this and the infrastructure in place?
- Need childcare to support workers and population growth.
- Can childcare be integrated into industrial park? What can we do to support and recruit childcare providers?
- Private/public partnership for childcare – Dakota IA is a good example.
- What do young people want for housing – ownership vs rental, apartment/condo vs single-family etc...

## Threats

- Employees need places to live. If Owatonna is able to offer employees a home with a mortgage, they are more likely to stay long-term.

- Need more contractors in the City as this limits home building.
- Is Owatonna ready for Electric vehicles?
- Owatonna needs to think of long-term trends – EV's, transgender bathrooms etc.
- Renewable Energy is an opportunity, but the inability to send power back to the grid is a threat – could be much more efficient this way.
- Sentiment that Owatonna is anti-growth.
- Safety and strain on resources with more growth – police, fire etc.
- Owatonna needs willing partnerships.
- Generally, Owatonna should grow – maybe pick a percentage per year and set goals accordingly.
- Owatonna needs to plan its infrastructure for growth.
- In order to build all the amenities people are asking for, Owatonna needs to grow to support them.

# Imagine Owatonna – 2050 Comprehensive Plan

## Alternative Learning Center Focus Group – 9.12.2023

### **Owatonna Alternative Learning Center Student Focus Group**

Stantec Planner Lauren Walburg and Owatonna Community Development Manager Greg Kruschke facilitated a focus group meeting with students from the Owatonna Alternative Learning Center at the Owatonna Public Utilities building on Tuesday morning, September 12, 2023. Invitations to the focus group were initiated by Brian Coleman, Owatonna High School Career Pathways program director, who attended and listened in on the meeting. Additionally, two teachers from the school attended and participated in the meeting. Thirteen students attended and participated in the discussion

The attendees introduced themselves – most have lived in Owatonna for their entire life. The themes that emerged from the discussion centered on issues including things to do in Owatonna, employment and connectivity.

### **Special Places**

The attendees were asked to start by naming special places in Owatonna, which included the following places:

- Bowling Alley – especially the arcade
- Mayo Clinic
- Target
- Central Park – especially events with live music
- Fairgrounds
- S’Cream ice cream
- Soccer Complex
- Parks

### **More Of – Things That Work Well**

The attendees were asked what they wanted more of in Owatonna – what was good and should continue, what they liked:

- Skate park is an amenity, needs updates and maintenance
- Stores including: Music/record store, car dealership/mechanic, pet store, dispensary, bulk store like Costco or Sams Club
- More affordable apartments downtown
- Skate park
- DVS services in Owatonna to take drivers test
- More connected sidewalk system
- More parks and trails
- Fast Casual restaurants
- Shopping Mall
- Places to hang out for young people

- Old High School property is an opportunity for redevelopment – incorporate art
- More public art
- More road maintenance
- Car track – off roading opportunities
- More job training/shadowing opportunities
- More education on trades such as welding
- Community Center

### **Less Of – Improvement Needed**

The attendees were asked to list things that they wanted less of or that needed improvement. This list included:

- Finding jobs can be a challenge – especially for young people under 18 or with extracurriculars that limit available hours
- Housing cost is an issue, especially apartments
- Better maintenance at Kohlmeier Lake swimming beach
- Trail maintenance needs improvement – more native plantings
- Less young people leaving Owatonna – ability to afford housing is a key issue
- Less costly daycare
- Snow removal, especially on sidewalks

# Imagine Owatonna – 2050 Comprehensive Plan

## Hispanic Focus Group – 9.13.2023

### **Hispanic Focus Group**

Stantec Planner Phil Carlson facilitated a focus group meeting with members of the Owatonna Hispanic community at the Owatonna Public Library the afternoon of Wednesday, September 13, 2023.

In attendance were six people with connections to the Owatonna Hispanic community, plus Community Development Director Troy Klecker. The meeting was conducted partly in English and partly in Spanish.

Three of the participants are employed at Lakeside Foods (which employs many recent immigrants) – one is a manager at Lakeside and a longtime Owatonna resident, two have been in the U.S. less than two years. Another participant is connected with the local Headstart program. Another is from Rochester, but was at the meeting his father, an Owatonna resident.

### **Themes/Issues**

The key issues that came up frequently in the conversation were the need for public transportation, the need for better and easier access to health care, the need for Spanish language access in many places, and the desire for community connection and activities. The issues are linked by the fact that many Hispanic community members do not own cars, have limited income, limited or no medical insurance, and may have limited proficiency in English, but still have a strong wish for connection to others.

### **Special Places**

The attendees were asked to introduce themselves and to name their favorite special places in Owatonna:

- Parks, trails – Morehouse Park, Manthey Park, playgrounds, baseball fields
- Downtown – stores, parade, farmers market, bagel shop, Blast Soft Serve
- Lake Kohlmier

### **More Of**

The participants were asked to say what they want more of in Owatonna – things they like and that work well. Sometimes the discussion veered into things that aren't working well.

- Sports – cost: often parents can't afford
- Public bus system (mentioned by all)
- Skyway
- Hospital – better access to health care
- Child care (expensive now)
- Spanish language access at DMV and other services
- Housing – lack of affordable housing, limited inventory, difficult to get references and background checks without documents, work history, or previous housing in U.S.
- Resources/materials for starting out in the community – language skills, bilingual materials in education and health care system

## **Less Of – Improvement Needed**

The attendees were asked to list things that they wanted less of or that needed improvement. Sometimes the discussion went to things they like and want more of.

- Community has gotten close – they want to see more community. One participant said that the city has gone in an “awesome direction” since he was a child, greatly improved in many areas.
- More diversity and acceptance, more politeness – less rudeness
- West Hills gym is closed
- Want YMCA or similar – places for kids to go and things to do
- High school – use existing gym for adults
- Bus – public transportation needed
- Rent – need ID, passport, etc., very difficult
- Health care – insurance, ask for documents
- Steele County Free Clinic – now Health Finders
- Less separated group events – want to be together
- Rochester has Hispanic vendors – child care, education, social justice, etc. is better, more developed there
- Celebrate culture!
- Police have come a long way – no profiling, accept the Mexican consular document as ID

## **Wish List 2050**

The participants were asked to say what would be on their “wish list” for an ideal Owatonna in 2050, if resources were available. A community center topped the list of almost all present – indoor meeting rooms, playground, social activities, gym, etc., but the need for basic services was ever present – health care, transportation, housing, education.

### Wish List

- Community Center – YMCA, activities for kids, teens – parents work and have little money
- Create future leaders
- Day care that is accessible
- Everything equal – hard to open a business, get a license, permit, etc.
- Public transportation
- Health care
- Housing, better, more affordable
- University, community college
- Rail system – Owatonna-Rochester-Twin Cities
- More stores in Owatonna – why go to Mankato, Rochester, Twin Cities
- Opportunities for new people – education, prepare people, vo tech, ESL

# Imagine Owatonna – 2050 Comprehensive Plan

## Nonprofit Organizations Focus Group – 9.12.2023

### **Owatonna Nonprofit Organization Focus Group**

Stantec Planner Lauren Walburg and Owatonna Community Development Manager Greg Kruschke facilitated a focus group meeting with representatives from local nonprofit organizations at the Owatonna Public Utilities building on Tuesday afternoon, September 12, 2023. Invitations were sent to about 45 individuals from different nonprofit organizations in the community. About 25-30 individuals participated in the discussion.

The attendees introduced themselves – a wide variety of service providers, education, housing and other related special interest nonprofits were represented. The themes that emerged from the discussion centered on issues related to creating a welcoming environment in Owatonna, need for a community center/gathering place and a desire for more transparent communication and partnerships.

### **More Of – Things That Work Well**

The attendees were asked what they wanted more of in Owatonna – what was good and should continue, what they liked:

- Hub for communication of events, resources – an online welcome center
- More shopping opportunities including: clothes (esp. for men and children), hobbies and interests, music stores, Nike outlet
- Shopping Mall – could be an indoor mall or a strip mall
- Community Center with amenities such as sport courts, playground, indoor gym, kitchen, after school programming, childcare, meeting and event space, indoor pool, walking track
- Potential to partner with school district on community center
- Intergenerational gathering space
- Limited access (sidewalks and trails) on Old Kenyon Road and near McKinley High School – road between 26<sup>th</sup> and Dane is an issue
- Can old high school be apartments?
- More affordability – make sure that deep affordability is included in this
- More single-person, smaller footprint affordable housing options
- Transition housing for young people
- Entry level homes – potential zoning code tweaks such as ADU's, lot sizes
- More housing for larger families
- More partnerships and collaboration
- More small commercial nodes
- Welcoming center

### **Less Of – Improvement Needed**

The attendees were asked to list things that they wanted less of or that needed improvement. This list included:

- Mexican and pizza restaurants
- Less expensive housing – need for affordable homeownership – could be multifamily or single-family
- Less crazy drivers – more traffic calming and safety elements especially on roads with no sidewalks
- Less only industrial areas – allow housing where appropriate
- Less perception issues with apartments
- Less division and fear of change

### **Wish List 2050**

- Community Center (x3)
- Apartments and Senior Complex
- Indoor pool
- Higher education opportunities
- Welcoming community
- Homeless shelter
- City council/government that represents the demographic makeup of the community
- Anyone who wants to live in Owatonna can afford to
- YMCA/YWCA
- Childrens services at the library
- Interaction between kids of all ages, sex, race, orientation..
- Accurate representation in leadership
- Collaboration, partnerships and communication
- Four year higher education opportunities in Owatonna
- Places for youth to gather
- Culture of inclusivity
- Community with a continuum of care
- Something like Edinborough Park with multigenerational housing
- Sustainable transportation system
- More restaurants on the southside
- Community welcoming center with a hub for nonprofits
- Partnerships
- Every child comes to kindergarten ready, and come third grade can read at an age-appropriate level
- More listening sessions and focus groups
- More acceptance
- Transparency in city decisions
- Owatonna knows who it is, and why people would want to live and work here
- Housing, homeless shelter
- Teen center
- Affordable daycare
- More education for community on inclusiveness

# Imagine Owatonna – 2050 Comprehensive Plan

## Park Board & Guests – 8.14.2023

### **Park and Recreation Focus Group**

Stantec Planner Phil Carlson facilitated a focus group meeting of the Owatonna Park Board with other invited guests on issues related to parks, trails and recreation. The meeting was held at a regular Park Board meeting at West Hills Social Commons the afternoon of Monday, August, 14, 2023.

In attendance were four members of the Park Board and twelve others who were invited because they represented a particular area of interest – youth soccer, seniors pickleball, biking, trails, youth swim program, city employees, etc. The City representatives were Parks and Recreation Director Jenna Tuma, Community Development Manager Greg Kruschke, and City Council Member Kevin Raney.

### **More Of – Special Places**

The attendees were asked to name the special places in the Owatonna park and trail system, although they could include any place in Owatonna, not just the parks and trails. This is similar to the question “More Of” used in other engagement events.

- The themes that emerged overall in discussing the special places in Owatonna were the connectivity of the trail system and the natural resources that Owatonna is blessed with. The desire to extend connectivity to regional destinations – Rochester, Faribault, etc., was mentioned several times as was the hope that Lake Kohlmier and other areas might be combined into a regional park. There was a comment with specific examples of how the park/trail network bolsters economic development, attracting businesses and employees. There was general agreement that most neighborhoods are served with good park and trail facilities.

### Most named features

- Trails
- Kaplan Woods
- Water park

### Other features

- Connectivity
- North Straight River trail
- Manthey Park, Baseball
- Morehouse Park
- Lake Kohlmier
- Community parks generally
- Quality of all parks
- Beauty of natural resources in Owatonna

## **Less Of – Improvement Needed**

The attendees were then asked to list things that they wanted less of or that needed improvement. One of the most common issue mentioned was the need for indoor spaces – classrooms, gym, etc. – especially in winter, but year-round as well. Many others noted the need for more trail connectivity and regional trail connections, especially west of I-35. A splash pad was noted by several people.

### Most named issues

- Indoor space – class, gym, pool
- Trails, including regional connections and facilities serving the west side
- Splash pad
- Indoor pool
- Gaps in park service (neighborhoods not close to parks)
- Make sure new residential development has park facilities
- Teens need a place to hang out
- Path to new high school
- More pickleball courts – indoor and outdoor
- Trail to clinic
- Good access for elderly at all facilities
- More soccer fields and facilities – can't host a tournament
- Maintenance – need resources to keep what we have in good condition
- Sports tourism complex – ball fields, indoor facilities, with adjacent hotels, restaurants, shopping

## **Wish List 2050**

The participants to say what would be on their “wish list” for an ideal Owatonna in 2050, if resources were available. A community center topped the list of almost all present – indoor meeting rooms, playground, social activities, gym, etc. It would add to the quality of life in Owatonna and provide opportunities for inter-generational activities. Also at the top of everyone's list was a connected trail system that is safe and accessible, expanded in all directions.

### Wish List

- Community Center
- Trail system, connected in all directions and looped in the city
- More of the same – keep improving, we do it all well
- An interesting, exciting downtown business environment that is visually beautiful (more public art) – the feeling that you can get whatever you want in Owatonna
- Dome over turf fields (now pay Shattuck and Dundas to play soccer in their domes)
- Amphitheater concert venue
- Safety and connectivity
- “Wow” factor – something unique and special to attract families to live here and tourists to visit
- Sports tourism complex – outdoor and indoor facilities

# Imagine Owatonna – 2050 Comprehensive Plan

## Seniors Focus Group – 8.31.2023

### **Owatonna Seniors Focus Group**

Stantec Planner Phil Carlson and Owatonna Community Development Manager Greg Kruschke facilitated a focus group meeting of Owatonna Seniors (those over 65 years of age) at the Owatonna Public Utilities building on Thursday morning, August, 31, 2023. In attendance were four area seniors, all women, from an invited guest group of over sixty.

The attendees introduced themselves to the discussion – one had lived here 70 years – her whole life – another her whole life except for 5-10 years elsewhere, another for 50 years, and the fourth for the last 13 years. All live in Owatonna now.

### **Special Places**

The attendees were asked to name the special places for them in Owatonna:

- Morehouse Park and walking trails
- West Hills Social Commons
- Music in Central Park
- Water Park
- Coffee shop
- Bagel Shop
- Kaplan Woods
- Par 3 Golf Course
- Library
- Trails

### **More Of – Things That Work Well**

The attendees were asked what they wanted more of in Owatonna – what was good and should continue, what they liked. The predominant themes were parks, trails, walking, shopping, and community activities:

- Parks (several named this)
- Education
- Boutiques downtown
- Music downtown (add winter activities)
- County Fair
- Snow plowing – good job
- Police and Fire – good relations, respectful
- Walking
- People – friendly
- Theater
- Volunteer opportunities

## **Less Of – Improvement Needed**

The attendees were asked to list things that they wanted less of or that needed improvement. Specifics were noted, but also a feeling that seniors' wishes and needs weren't given their due, that seniors are "on the low end of the totem pole".

- Community Center – badly needed, no central place for activities now
- Teens – more to do
- Old high school – what will be done with it (Greg explained the current plans to keep part, raze part, and hold onto vacant property for now)
- Ordinance violations – clean up trash houses, junk, cars, etc.; noise is also an issue.
- Some parks don't feel safe after dark ("creepy", transients)
- Water Park doesn't work well – discipline needed of young people

## **Wish List 2050**

The participants were asked to say what would be on their "wish list" for an ideal Owatonna in 2050, if resources were available. A community center topped the list of all present – indoor meeting rooms, playground, social activities, gym, etc. It would add to the quality of life in Owatonna and provide opportunities for inter-generational activities. Also on everyone's list was a connected trail system that is safe and accessible, expanded in all directions.

### Wish List

- Community Center (or YMCA like Northfield)
- Teenagers – places to be, things to do
- Full-time senior director/advocate (all felt their needs and wishes weren't heard and acted on)
- Grocery store with more variety (Trader Joe's, Whole Foods)
- Senior task force
- Another east-to-west crossing of the river and railroad
- Restaurants that stay open into the evening

# Imagine Owatonna – 2050 Comprehensive Plan

## Somali Elders Focus Group – 8.31.2023

### **Owatonna Somali Community Elders Focus Group**

Stantec Planner Phil Carlson and Owatonna Community Development Manager Greg Kruschke facilitated a focus group meeting of Somali elders at the Owatonna Public Utilities building on Thursday afternoon, August, 31, 2023. Invitations to the focus group were initiated by Brian Coleman, Owatonna High School Career Pathways program director, who attended and listened in on the meeting. Eleven Somali men attended and participated, including Ibrahim Hussein, founder of the Somali American Cultural Society of Owatonna; Ali Hassan Farah, imam of the Owatonna mosque; and one 16-year-old high school student.

The attendees introduced themselves – most have lived in Owatonna for many years, some for 20-30 years. The themes that emerged from the discussion centered on education and housing: the importance of education for the younger generation and the need for more affordable housing for Somali families.

The Owatonna mosque serves some 300 families. Imam Ali Farah came to Owatonna in 2003 and the mosque was opened in 2008.

### **Special Places**

The attendees were asked to start by naming special places in Owatonna, but almost all moved directly into a discussion of key issues of importance to them in Owatonna. Nevertheless, the following places were mentioned:

- Soccer fields
- Lake Kohlmier
- Mosque
- New High School
- Kaplan Woods
- Office (Ibrahim Hussein said this is where he gets to meet and help people)
- Home

### **Discussion - Issues**

The following issues and themes emerged from the discussion:

#### Education

Almost all attendees mentioned the importance of education and the need to maintain the quality of primary and secondary education in Owatonna, but also the desire to have a local college here – a community college or vocational school – so that students don't have to leave Owatonna for Rochester, Mankato, the Twin Cities, or elsewhere for higher education. This was closely related to the desire to create and maintain community in Owatonna so that young people don't leave once they graduate high school. Many mentioned Owatonna as a great place to raise kids and want to maintain the connection and community.

The emphasis on education in the Somali community is understandable in part because so many Somali immigrants are highly educated themselves – many are college graduates, some with masters and PhDs. They also understand that the path to higher education here includes mastery of English, so support for language skills is an essential part of the issue.

### Housing

The need for affordable housing for families was mentioned as often as education. Many recent immigrants have modest incomes and large families and need apartments with three or more bedrooms at affordable rents, something that is not often available. Many were hopeful for the future, but also expressed the pain of needing decent housing and education in order to realize that hope.

### Community & Connections

Many expressed the desire to connect with others in Owatonna – events, gathering places, a community center, and in other ways large and small. This ranged from playgrounds for younger children and places/activities for teens, to opportunities for interaction with the larger community, and recreation and activities of all kinds, outdoor and indoor, in a community center. As part of community connections, several mentioned the respectful relationship and good work of the Owatonna police department.

### **More Of – Things That Work Well**

The attendees were asked what they wanted more of in Owatonna – what was good and should continue, what they liked:

- Education, community/vocational college
- Housing (for families, affordable)
- Good jobs
- Community center (like YMCA) - indoor dome for soccer, swimming pool, playgrounds
- Recreation (including things Owatonna could be famous for – sailboats on the Straight River?)
- A book store
- More diversity (including economic diversity, e.g., in the financial system to take into account Muslim restrictions on paying interest)
- Somali language in the schools and elsewhere, bilingual teachers (St. Cloud has many)
- Inter-faith meetings
- Give feedback to the Somali community (the Somali community has often been asked to give feedback to the mainstream Owatonna community)
- Community – open, welcoming, smiling faces, have coffee

### **Less Of – Improvement Needed**

The attendees were asked to list things that they wanted less of or that needed improvement. The list was short:

- Education needs improvement (college here)
- Lower property taxes
- More community gatherings with the Mayor and City Council, 2-3 times a year to talk and listen
- Make sure comp plan has concrete implementation steps – who will do what by when

Phase 2 Public Engagement -  
Spring/Summer 2024

## 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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 (x32)
- 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 needs 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.
- Better together is a good concept, however, becoming too diverse leads to an adverse effect.
- Yes I think the vision for Owatonna provides for the current and future planning for the city.
- Honestly, it sounds pretty generic, not much different than any other community might say. Nothing really inspiring there.
- Potentially, hard to predict future.
- yes, it will be a journey but an exciting one.
- Yes, good perspective for years ahead.
- I believe this is a good start. There needs to be a vision for the future for the town and i think this is a good start.
- We have to reduce our property taxes. Most of these visions make me think they will increase.
- Yes, As a long time resident the future growth promoting young people will prevent us from becoming another retirement town.
- Yes, resoundingly.
- no you are just over taxing and driving people out.

**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.

- A larger focus on natural systems and the environment; protect water quality; stream restoration and habitat development. Ensure that underserved communities have access to active and passive parks.
- yes, I like the of more opportunities for trails for walks.
- Yes, they are an important part of the future.
- Yes, recreation is a benefit to all who choose to utilize it.
- nervous about adding camping areas, other yes.
- Yes to a certain extent, I believe a lot of people enjoy the parks and trails, but it does not necessarily mean everyone enjoys them to the same degree.
- yes like adding pickleball courts.
- The Parks and Trails are a golden book in Owatonna.
- Not enough. Parkland dedication funding should be a huge goal! And connections should be goal #1!
- Yes, continue growth into new parts of the city but maintain what is there as Owatonna is known for beautiful parks and trails.
- yes Owatonna takes great pride in the parks and trails.
- Should focus on bicycle tourism more.
- Yes! Love the parks and trails.
- We have a great trail system, I think there is a better use for the money then worrying about that in the given moment.
- Need continued expansion.
- As long as our property taxes go down. We are already paying for the nicest high school in the state.
- Green space makes the town continue to feel rural.
- Yes support outside activity as much as possible.
- More focus on clean water, stormwater and runoff. Maple Creek has far too much runoff from parking lots and poor land management. Replant more trees in our parks. More rain gardens to deal with runoff.
- Yes, we have great amenities, but we do need more neighborhood centric facilities and better ways to get there (multi-modal).
- Trails to surrounding communities and Rice Lake State Park.
- I would like to see the current gaps in the trail system completed.
- Pay to develop the kaplan's woods mountain bike trail to attract visitors. It is too short and not challenging enough to attract bikers. You could easily bring good people who spend money in the community to Owatonna if there was investment in this trail. There is a HUGE potential at Kaplans. Look at Lebanon Hills, Theodore Wirth, Tioga, Cuyuna or any of the other outstate destinations that are flourishing due to the popularity of mountain biking. Most trails are north of the metro, it would be a destination for a ton of people to head south an hour and have premier trails. This is easily possible.
- More development along the rivers edge.
- Yes, an entire city loop!
- south side trail to include high school.
- Larger park on the east side of town.

- Complete the trail/sidewalk between East University and 18th Street along Bixby Road.
- I feel we're on the right track regarding trails.
- The city needs more dog parks or maybe a dog park within the existing city park.
- Connect to the regional trails and increase single track MB trails to gain regional status and make it worthy of a visit from another community.
- Trail connection north of 26th st, quarry area.
- Trails to the West of Owatonna.
- We need total connectivity for our trail system to work. Fix the trails that are constantly under water!
- As the East side of the city expands, is there anyway you could incorporate some man-made ponds/lakes? Then have a couple of beaches on them. Then you could also have a park there with a small outdoor venue for attractions. Rochester has some areas like this and it always brings people out and together. The lakes also support the local wildlife. Adding small ponds in-between residential neighborhoods is also a great way to add some nature to the town. Could help with water management as well.
- More trails would be good.
- Support all neighborhoods having walkable access to a park.
- I'd like to see the trail system being explored for existing significant corridors with either on road or off-road facilities.
- Connections across I-35 and HWY 14.
- Trail along Kenyon Road. New subdivisions should be required to install sidewalks along all roadways.
- Trails on east side of town north to south trail. regional park on S E part of town.
- maintain what we have.

**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 29<sup>th</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup> 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 or 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 infrastructure.

- 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.
- Generally yes. More focus on VMT reduction and non-motorized. Emphasize road diets to support pavement management and funding. Our roads are shockingly wide.
- Yes, 29th Ave. on the east side of the city is needed immediately.
- yes, please do the new north to south road on the east side of town.

- Owatonna needs a 24 hr taxi service or promoted UBER or LYFT services.
- yes, heavy emphasize on prioritizing road maintenance.
- Yes, need east side corridor completed for development and growth on the east side. Current residents opposed to use of 29th Avenue but if best route, support use of it. They purchased property and built knowing their property was next to public right-of-way and anticipate their might be public improvements made.
- People will not give up their vehicles so infrastructure will have to adapt to that demand.
- Trail access to the upcoming East Side corridor.
- More and more we are seeing people biking, walking or taking the bus, so yes this will help.
- Yes, good future vision.
- We also need smart traffic lights to stop wasting gas and time while waiting. Helps the climate too. Or traffic lights could be set to blinking red in one direction during off peak hours.
- When I see all the school buses running all over, I don't believe their is no real concern for the environment.
- Get 29th avenue done at it's current model!
- As long as our property taxes go down.
- Yes improve and promote local transportation especially to downtown areas and also places of work.
- Yes, more robust maintenance, traffic calming measures to promote safety for all modes of transportation and efficient transportation design.
- look at round about at cherry street and mineral springs road.
- keep 29th avenue where it has been platted!

**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.
- Yes, as a business owner myself I like the idea and the opportunity for more jobs.
- I think attracting business and expanding a commercial tax base is important to help offset the high taxes we have on residents.
- Seems in line for what is to come.
- To a certain degree, welcoming more business, and larger businesses would definitely help with the economic development.
- Owatonna's Future has the ability to write the next chapter.
- While supporting business development in the city, it should be included that new and expanding businesses support park and trail funding.
- Yes, housing and quality of life considerations are high priorities.

- Yes. Adding educational programs or institutions would also assist in accomplishing the goals.
- Yes, Owatonna is in a good position for growth in the coming decades.
- Growth isn't always good. It comes with its own set of issues. Without SUSTAINABLE growth, we risk ending up with a SIGNIFICANT income disparity among citizens.
- Yes, but also need to see a 4-year Degree College in town.
- Yes. Always looking for businesses to come to Owatonna.
- Unfortunately, there is a stigma of Owatonna not being so small business friendly. I have heard people say there's too many rules and regulations. People complain about inspections and permit processes. And if you're not a big corporation or a downtown there is no assistance. However, I have been through the permit process and certifying a business in the city of Owatonna. I had a great experience. The city employees I worked with were professional, helpful and knowledgeable. So in this regards I believe I am a community steward because I talked about my positive experience with my business and the city. Work to reduce any actual or perceived regulatory barriers to development in Owatonna is ideal.
- Yes, but a public safety center needs to be the number one priority.
- Yes except there should be a goal of constrained growth of about 10% per decade. Growth that is too fast is disruptive, can be expensive, and can lead to poor decisions.
- yes expand the tax base - increase the size of the pie.
- As long as our property taxes go down.
- Yes promote economic development and make outside entities want to come to Owatonna.
- Yes, attracting the workforce is a huge need.
- Can't just focus on the downtown area.
- Need to embrace small business not ignore it!
- it will never happen.

**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 than 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.
- Generally yes. More emphasis on the climate action planning. More robust community engagement on all projects/important initiatives.
- Yes, consideration for alternative sources needed. Consider solar panel field atop large buildings?

- I've never seen Lake Kohlmier or the Straight River as an amenity.
- They're okay, but we need to focus more on waterways — turning them from storm sewers to natural assets that help the city. Also: we need to rethink the mosquito spraying program.... Very bad for wildlife, with little benefit to people.
- Yes, clean water bodies is essential in MN and well planned growth with City infrastructure is key to sustainability.
- building narrower roadways will help with flooding and future infrastructure costs.
- I want to leave Steele county as soon as my son graduates.

**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 26<sup>th</sup> 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.
- Eliminate single family zoning.
- As long as the goal to provide to self-sustaining, market rate paying, gainfully employed persons, yes.
- yes, would love to see area by quarry expand with restaurants with outdoor patios.
- Yes, however I believe Owatonna needs more infrastructure to support the growing population, such as restaurants and if Owatonna wants to compete with other "major" cities, would need something along those lines to support people to work and also enjoy vs driving to Rochester, Mankato, or the cities etc.
- Yes, good to see consideration for growth and development.
- I would have preferred more single family developments.

- High density housing might benefit some citizens, but most people want to "own" their own property. Rentals / high density housing only benefits the owners of the property and 'residents' build no equity.
- Yes - would like to see more low-density residential areas to attract buyers to Owatonna market.
- Yes, the goals are good.
- Yes, but would like to see more houses being built.
- I think that the housing goals seem to be relative to what Owatonna will need in the foreseeable future. I believe that the east side corridor is something that is important to the town, the thing is, if it is currently proposed to run right on the edge of city limits, are we hurting ourselves by making a boundary for the town with no room for the town to grow further to the east. right now, the town only has two realistic directions to go, north and east which is stated above. I think there needs to be some more research into the east side corridor so that it doesn't land lock the city from future use to the east side of the corridor.
- No, the community center needs to be justified on costs (auto build and to staff, create programming and to maintain). It should be paid for primarily by those who use it. Will that be affordable for the users?
- Absolutely not, we are building a future slum city with all the apartments going up.
- As long as my property taxes go down.
- Yes, the growth in the northwest will help bring in new homeowners and renters.
- Housing is definitely really important for Owatonna to grow and maintain that growth. Support new affordable housing and also create incentives for young adults to want to move here.
- No - need more senior housing.
- Yes, Owatonna needs more nodes of mixed use development, particularly on the east side of the City to support the residentially dense part of the City.

***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.
- Less cars, more people, create place.
- Needs to be more pedestrian friendly.
- love redeveloping the areas by the river.
- Welcoming to the wonderful City of Owatonna.
- Continued growth but not over crowding.
- Bridge Street can be an open book to the rest of the story.
- Need better traffic controls, more retail.
- create multiple avenues for access from downtown to industrial park.
- Needed as is I-35 city entrance.
- Adding larger retail businesses would help.
- Hope you were able to enjoy it when it was a two lane street with a tree canopy.

- Growth opportunity to small town Owatonna.
- The grand corridor to downtown Owatonna.
- Single lane traffic and business development.
- Bridge to Industry for non-motorists.
- Modern, flashy, picturesque, sustainable, entertaining, well-kept.
- a vibrant entry to downtown Owatonna's aging industry.
- More means of transportation.
- At some point, it's not going to be big enough.
- Be careful what you wish for!
- well planned.
- Mixed use at it's finest.
- Don't take eyes off road busy.
- Clean it up.
- Welcoming entry proudly showcasing Owatonna pride.
- Over the bridge to great places.
- A warm vibrant community welcome.
- Revitalized gateway to downtown with beautification.
- expansion for additional commercial use.
- Need to limit curb cuts
- mixed use slow the speed down!

***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.
- Immense potential to be a destination.
- Great place for emerging small businesses.
- Demolition is a great starting point.
- north of downtown needs to be revitalized.
- Community growth is equal to success.
- Possible art and small business district.
- The older the book the better the story.
- Provide better recreational opportunities, better traffic.
- need to examine age and structure of current buildings to meet goals.
- Need cosmetic improvements, link residential areas.
- Transition area towards residential and commercial.
- Too many railroad tracks and downtown stops @ Rose Street.
- With change comes better business opportunities.
- Where Lakeside used to be located.
- Redevelop into multi-use property opportunities.
- Rediscover what has been lost.

- Flashy, attractive, shopping-hub, entertaining, modern, lively.
- aging industrial area rebuilt modern useage.
- Industrial and commercial.
- Re-develop the land use.
- Be careful what you wish for!
- great vision.
- Ruined by metal structure facades.
- Continue to update and promote development.
- Move out polluting businesses.
- Opportunity only if Lakeside would relocate.
- Northtown is your next amazing chapter.
- A cozy throwback to old memories.
- Reinvesting and redevelopment supporting downtown amenities.
- develop into safer less sightly uses.
- Area has needed this for years.
- residential at best. explore other options.

***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.
- Great neighborhoods make happy people.
- Great potential on the east side.
- Mixed use neighborhoods are bad.
- Nothing good comes from something bad.
- very exciting to see.
- more single family options and small business.
- More recreation funding, opportunities, parks, trails.
- single family homes, plus townhomes, one level, for seniors.
- Good plan, pocket area neighborhoods.
- Why not add more low density?
- There's room for mixed use near the high school.
- Welcome to the hometown of Owatonna.

- Little hubs making a big difference.
- Ensure that groceries and necessities are available.
- Ditch the car, walk for health.
- Well-kept, modern, limited, attractive, contemporary.
- opportunity to live, shop, work near home.
- Up and coming living areas.
- It is necessary.
- Sounds very woke to me.
- Okay but use common sense.
- A diverse town is happy town.
- Promotes access for business for nearby neighborhoods.
- Trust that concept is our future.
- This isn't a dream, its home.
- Diverse pools of thriving activity.
- Mixed use nodes support neighborhood needs.
- hard to vision this as harmonious.
- only works if density is there.
- put 29th avenue where it is mapped out.

# Final Plan Comments

**From:** [Greg W. Kruschke](#)  
**To:** [Carlson, Phil](#); [Walburg, Lauren](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Feedback on Owatonna 2050 Comprehensive Plan Draft  
**Date:** Wednesday, September 18, 2024 10:33:30 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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First comment.

Greg

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**From:** Linaker, Kathleen <kathleen.linaker@riverland.edu>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 17, 2024 1:20:12 PM  
**To:** Greg W. Kruschke <Greg.Kruschke@owatonna.gov>  
**Cc:** Douglass, James E <james.douglass@riverland.edu>; Sherman, Holly M <holly.sherman@riverland.edu>; Conley, Heather <heather.conley@riverland.edu>; Tryhus, Christy <christy.tryhus@riverland.edu>; bissonette.matt@riverland.edu <bissonette.matt@riverland.edu>  
**Subject:** Feedback on Owatonna 2050 Comprehensive Plan Draft

Dear Mr. Kruschke and the Owatonna Planning Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the Owatonna 2050 Comprehensive Plan. Riverland Community College appreciates the City's forward-thinking approach to addressing the future needs of the community. We would like to offer the following suggestions to further strengthen Riverland's role in the plan:

**1. Skilled Workforce Development:**

We encourage the inclusion of more specific language around the importance of skilled workers in Owatonna's economic development. Riverland Community College is uniquely positioned to support the city's goals by offering both credit and non-credit training programs that prepare individuals for high-demand skilled trades. We also have strong partnerships with local employers and Owatonna High School (OHS) and would welcome the opportunity to further collaborate in creating pathways for students and community members to enter the skilled workforce. There is also an opportunity for new academic programs that would support Owatonna's goals to invest in green energy and sustainability.

**2. Collaborative Educational Partnerships:**

The partnership between Riverland and Owatonna High School is an exciting initiative that provides students with access to career and technical education. We believe this initiative aligns with the goals of the plan and can serve as a model for further collaboration. Highlighting this partnership and others like it in the plan would showcase the city's commitment to offering diverse educational opportunities that meet the evolving needs of the workforce.

### 3. **Transportation and Accessibility:**

We also encourage the inclusion of expanded public transportation options to Riverland's Owatonna campus. Improving transportation access would help ensure that all residents, especially those without personal vehicles, could participate in the educational programs and workforce training we offer. This would support broader community participation and align with the city's goals of inclusivity and accessibility.

Riverland Community College is committed to supporting the long-term vision of Owatonna and looks forward to continuing our collaboration to ensure the city thrives into 2050 and beyond. We are happy to discuss these ideas further and contribute to the plan's implementation in any way that may be helpful.

Sincerely,  
Kat

**Kat Linaker, DC, PhD** (She/Her) | President

Riverland Community College | Austin, Albert Lea, & Owatonna Campuses

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*A member of Minnesota State*

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**From:** [Greg W. Kruschke](#)  
**To:** [Carlson, Phil](#); [Walburg, Lauren](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Imagine Owatonna Plan  
**Date:** Monday, September 23, 2024 1:03:22 PM

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Comment #2

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**From:** Lyssa Lynn <lyssalynn13@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 23, 2024 12:45 PM  
**To:** Greg W. Kruschke <Greg.Kruschke@owatonna.gov>  
**Subject:** Imagine Owatonna Plan

Hi Greg,

I've read the Imagine Owatonna Plan and plan to submit comments, but I think I found a couple of typos that I wanted to make you aware of so they can be corrected.

Page 19: County View should read Countryview (missing an r)

Page 117:

The largest employer in the county was Federated Mutual Insurance Company with 1,205 employees, operating in the insurance industry. Viracon, Inc. a manufacturing company, was the second largest employer with 1,350 employees.

- I'm assuming the Federated employee number is inaccurate making this statement very confusing.

Hopefully these can be corrected in the final document.

Thanks,  
Melissa Zimmerman

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precauciones adicionales.

**From:** [Greg W. Kruschke](#)  
**To:** [Carlson, Phil](#); [Walburg, Lauren](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Imagine Owatonna Plan Comments  
**Date:** Monday, September 23, 2024 2:24:59 PM

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### Comment #3

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**From:** Lyssa Lynn <lyssalynn13@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 23, 2024 2:12 PM  
**To:** Greg W. Kruschke <Greg.Kruschke@owatonna.gov>  
**Subject:** Imagine Owatonna Plan Comments

Please submit the following to the Imagine Owatonna Plan as official comments:

I'm pleased to see that residents' feedback has been acknowledged, and the current plan has been updated to address concerns that were initially overlooked by the limited focus groups. It's encouraging that alternative transportation has become a higher priority. However, the concept of "nodes" remains questionable. There are a few locations where this approach could succeed, such as downtown, north of downtown, the southeast area near the high school, and 34th Ave if the East Side Corridor (ESC) is built there. Lining 34th Ave with businesses would present a great opportunity, making logical sense as the Stantec architect leading the project has suggested. This could also define one of the envisioned nodes. These areas would be ideal for high-density housing that supports nearby businesses, offers walkability, and is conveniently located for other residents. Other proposed nodes would benefit from being centered around parks or other entertainment opportunities for residents, particularly youth and young families. If the vision for these nodes is more than just salons and dog groomers, and fills the gaps for attracting and retaining residents, this concept could be successful.

I would have liked to see broader participation in the focus groups. Even among the minority groups selected, the numbers were low, gathering input from only around 60 people, with nonprofits being the largest group. Considering that a few key nonprofits seem to also be making decisions, I question the integrity of this representation. The limited numbers in these invite-only groups highlight communication breakdowns between the city and a majority of the residents. It was heartening, though, to see numerous responses to the plan, which led to adjustments like elevating alternative transportation as a priority.

That said, the plan still falls short in addressing the overwhelming desire from all focus groups to offer more activities for youth and new residents. This is critical for retaining and attracting residents, reducing drug use and homelessness, fostering local pride, and keeping local dollars in the community. We need to support private businesses that provide year-round

entertainment for all residents. This goes beyond community centers, sports, and parks. We need activities such as children's museums, trampoline parks, indoor climbing spaces, animal-related attractions, etc. These appeal to youth, younger families and seniors who want to engage with their grandchildren. Such attractions would not only bring visitors but also benefit residents and give people reasons to stay.

Additionally, when the planning commission asked the Stantec professional for the best approach to managing high-density housing, his expert opinion was that these areas should be planned and clustered, rather than being built randomly, as has been the case in Owatonna. Clustered high-density housing supports surrounding businesses and helps them remain sustainable. The best locations included downtown and N Cedar to support local businesses, the area near the new high school for its proximity to both the school and Highway 14, and the new rentals near Lowe's, which are ideally situated for current and future development and box retail. This strategy makes sense and should be explored as a future goal for planning.

Residents from all groups have called for affordable housing—homes that people can actually afford, not just subsidized housing. With a significant industrial workforce, incomes are not high enough to make the average \$350,000 home affordable. We may need to consider building smaller starter homes like those from the 1950s. According to the Maxfield housing report, there is demand for all types of affordable housing, and the demand for high-density housing would be met by apartment complexes currently in the pipeline. These have been built, yet high-density housing continues to be the focus, with unaffordable rents and units that are too small for larger families. We need to find ways to make homes more affordable, which will, in turn, make rent more affordable as well. Ownership opportunities, potentially including high-density options, should be a priority.

Looking at projected population growth, it has taken Owatonna 160 years to reach approximately 25,000 residents. The projections suggest a nearly 50% increase in just 25 years, with 15% of that growth expected in the next five years. What major changes are expected to drive such a rapid increase? Given Federated's size and contributions to Owatonna, what role are they playing in these projections and in the demand for nodes and the ESC location, which comes at the cost of existing residents' safety? Is Federated anticipating major expansions? So far, we haven't even reached the projected growth from the last plan, falling short compared to the 3% growth trend predicted and 2010 population numbers.

While this plan is a good start, it misses key areas such as affordable childcare, healthcare options, road safety—both new and existing roads, connections to surrounding areas, and higher education opportunities. A community center is vital, but it needs to be done right—not just a donation that doesn't fully meet residents' needs as that creates substantial costs for

residents'. For any plan to be successful, residents' voices must be heard and their needs prioritized. Currently, there are significant communication breakdowns and a lack of transparency from the city. Residents need opportunities to be heard and to voice concerns early in the process, so they can truly make a difference. At present, there is no forum for this, which contributes to the feeling that the city will proceed with its own agenda regardless of residents' concerns. We need to change that, starting with transparency and early communication. Plans are valuable, but without clear communication, they are ineffective. Let's make Owatonna's future successful by prioritizing residents' input every step of the way.

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**From:** [Greg W. Kruschke](#)  
**To:** [Carlson, Phil](#); [Walburg, Lauren](#)  
**Subject:** FW:  
**Date:** Monday, September 23, 2024 2:27:28 PM

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#### Comment #4

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**From:** Cindy Fowler <cfchevy@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 23, 2024 1:43 PM  
**To:** Greg W. Kruschke <Greg.Kruschke@owatonna.gov>  
**Subject:**

Dear Greg,

Thank you for providing this opportunity to provide feedback on Owatonna parks and trails. Owatonna citizens are very fortunate to have access to the natural areas that have been preserved in Owatonna. The parks and trails that I heavily utilize are Kaplans Woods and the trail system that runs between Cashman Park/26<sup>th</sup> Street and Kaplans Woods. I have lived in Owatonna the past ten years and have heavily utilized these specific parks and trails. I've enjoyed hiking, bird watching, as well as plant and animal observation on a regular basis. My concern with the master plan is the potential of various activities disrupting these natural areas along the trails. I am concerned adding two disc golf courses and more dog parks will degrade the health and esthetic quality of these areas. I have also observed other community members of all ages utilizing these parks and trails for many of the same activities. Many I have spoken too are not aware of this plan and have expressed concern as well. I'm not understanding why the disc golf cannot remain at Mineral Springs Park? The damage is already done, why bring the damage to an area that will not fair any better with erosion and will actually do worse? We already have a dog park, why do we need more? My wish for Owatonna in the next 20-30 years is for decision makers to have the foresight to recognize the importance of maintaining these natural areas in their natural state for community members to engage in "passive" recreation. We all need places to go for our health and well-being and to decompress from our life stresses. Community members have come to depend on these parks and trails to maintain their quality of life. Once we lose these precious natural areas, they are gone. Please consider these concerns when finalizing the 2050 Comprehensive Plan. Thank you.

Cindy Fowler

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

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**From:** [Greg W. Kruschke](#)  
**To:** [Carlson, Phil](#); [Walburg, Lauren](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Input for imagine owatonna public comments.  
**Date:** Monday, September 23, 2024 8:58:50 PM

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**From:** Gale Jorgensen <watersprite57@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 23, 2024 3:56:23 PM  
**To:** Greg W. Kruschke <Greg.Kruschke@owatonna.gov>  
**Cc:** Gale Jorgensen <watersprite57@yahoo.com>  
**Subject:** Input for imagine owatonna public comments.

I'd like to see people embrace all cultures, races, viewpoints here in Owatonna rather than saying 'this is the way it's always been and always shall be and saying I'm an Owatonna and I go back to the settling of this community - your new what do you know - your not an owatonna you don't count. "Excuse me I pay taxes here too- by that I am an owatonna. I'd like people to be curious, and to reach out to others and encourage Citizen involvement rather than just the same old cliques from their glory days at OHS. For this to happen there needs to be an attitude adjustment at the top and a way to reach out to new residents.

For Owatonna to grow and prosper, I see the dire need for mass transit to Rochester Mankato and the Twin Cities metro area.

Not more roundabouts in existing residential neighborhoods, esp not in the historic ones where people tend to gaze on the grand old homes. Roundabouts take away street parking, safety of children, and access to residents property whether it be driveways, alleys, metro mobility; handicap parking / ramps, as well as delivery and care services.

Part of mass transit could be the creation of bike trails, not in a way where it interferes with daily driving, but in a way that enhances the population's ability to get to and from work, School, parks, especially for the children and that's where it should start that the children have the ability to ride their bikes to school into the parks with their parents, or without depending on the age that they can get to their athletic events

We are in dire need of a community center with a pool and programming for people of all ages. Swimming is an amazing activity and it's a very social. It promotes health in ways that is everyone no matter of their age, body type or skill level can participate in. The healthier our population is the healthier our community will be.

We have an amazing resource that is so overlooked and that's our history. It's the history not only of our community, but especially of a very significant architect who gave our nation a philosophy of thought that beautiful well designed buildings were for everyone not just the elites of the community. That people deserve good design, that form follows function. And at the twilight of his life Louis H Sullivan created a series of jewel box banks here in the Midwest, with the Bennett family as his patron.

And that movement of equalitarianism in housing started here in the Midwest. Louis H Sullivan was a mentor to Frank Lloyd Wright, who continued Sullivan's work on a massive scale, and further promoted this idea of great design and affordable homes. They both designed catalogue home plans for the masses- and we see in the 1950s and 60s ranch houses a continuation of these thoughts.

Warehousing people in high density housing as cheap factory labor is not of that spirit. But could we as a community foster smaller scale homes where the homeowner could do upgrading later so that homeownership could be realized. Instead of high rise rental units, could we have condos, co ops done in a thoughtful way - not placed randomly were ever we might have a tax forfeited lot?

Also we could promote his architectural rockstar status . We could shamelessly use to enhance our community to solicit funds and energy talent from the world of architecture and design designers to benefit our homeless population, our young families with their starter homes . this should be Sullivan's greatest legacy. he himself was homeless at the end of his life. We might He struggled with his own addictions as does so many in our community.

We don't need more chains stores , restruant we need to foster those who want to be entrepreneurial , sole proprietorships and this is an extremely hard thing to do. But owatonna was founded on risk taking. We need to have a community of unique things. For example , our shoe store of high quality comfort shoes is a unique thing you have to travel into the cities, Schuyler food shoes to find the same amount and quality of shoes in this regard. We have the ability to foster so many small, tiny businesses and encourage them to grow, and as they grow, we grow as we prosper , we all prosper. Just as we did in the last two centuries.

In addition To have our downtown be prosperous again I believe we have to redo that downtown parking. That's nothing but a joke and a good day people can't parallel park in the Midwest as a whole, and certainly not in Owatonna, and they don't even have the courtesy to leave a note, this will not attract people who want to hold a national car meet and see their car scratched. This area is not handicap accessible . This will not encourage people to come to our community to shop to browse to to lollygag. This should be a community where we say.

“ Come and experience the big “ O “ and then stay and raise a family.

Thank you , for your time and consideration , Gale Jorgensen 249 east main st . Owatonna , Mn 55060

Sent from my iPhone

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**From:** [Carlson, Phil](#)  
**To:** [Greg W. Kruschke](#)  
**Cc:** [Walburg, Lauren](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Owatonna comp plan comments?  
**Date:** Wednesday, September 25, 2024 10:32:43 AM

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Greg,

Three online comments.

**Phil Carlson AICP**

Associate  
He/Him/His

Direct: 612 712-2028  
Mobile: 612 202-6474  
[Phil.Carlson@stantec.com](mailto:Phil.Carlson@stantec.com)

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**From:** Polacek, Joe <Joe.Polacek@stantec.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 25, 2024 9:10 AM  
**To:** Carlson, Phil <Phil.Carlson@stantec.com>  
**Cc:** Walburg, Lauren <Lauren.Walburg@stantec.com>  
**Subject:** RE: Owatonna comp plan comments?

Still 3 responses

1. I think the most important thing we have going for us is the cooperative effort of the school district, business community, city and county government so young people have meaningful career opportunities and can choose to stay in Owatonna.
2. I agree housing is concern. I also hear that Minnesota building codes significantly increase construction costs in our state. What can local governments do to address this issue?
3. How do you plan to fund the community rec center?

**Joe Polacek AICP**

Urban Planner

Direct: 612.712.2111  
[joe.polacek@stantec.com](mailto:joe.polacek@stantec.com)

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**From:** Carlson, Phil <[Phil.Carlson@stantec.com](mailto:Phil.Carlson@stantec.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 24, 2024 3:31 PM  
**To:** Polacek, Joe <[Joe.Polacek@stantec.com](mailto:Joe.Polacek@stantec.com)>  
**Cc:** Walburg, Lauren <[Lauren.Walburg@stantec.com](mailto:Lauren.Walburg@stantec.com)>  
**Subject:** Owatonna comp plan comments?

Joe - any last minute commutes on the Owatonna website? Let me know.

Phil

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# Appendix C - Infill and Redevelopment Incentives

# Infill and Redevelopment Incentives

The city has expressed interest in encouraging more infill and redevelopment in areas of the city already served by infrastructure and services. While the city has seen some infill development, there are inherent challenges to overcome when pursuing infill and redevelopment projects. This analysis provides best practices the city could explore to overcome these challenges.

To create policies and incentives that encourage and incentivize infill and redevelopment, it is helpful to understand some of the challenges to this type of development. Policies can then be targeted to address specific challenges developers may face. Challenges to infill and redevelopment include, but are not limited to:

- Small parcels with fragmented ownership
- Higher capital costs associated with higher value land and acquisition costs, demolition, and replacement of outdated infrastructure
- More limited financing options
- Potential for existing environmental contamination
- Longer regulatory approval process

## Best Practices

To address these challenges, the city should explore best practices which address each of these barriers to infill and redevelopment. The following analysis summarizes best practices the city could consider.

### Smaller parcels with fragmented ownership

- Work with property owners to assemble and acquire land.
- Develop and maintain a list of potential infill and redevelopment sites. Prioritize underutilized parcels or developments that are located close to existing everyday destinations and well connected via bike/ped/transit.
  - Doing this with STEP analysis – transform and strengthen sites.
- Provide flexible development standards for regulations such as lot size, setbacks, or parking requirements.
  - [El Paso, TX Code Ordinances § 20.10.280 \(2017\)](#) - side, front, and rear setback requirements of the base zoning district may be reduced up to 100% by city council for infill developments.
- Provide opportunities in the land development code to increase density either at key sites through a zoning overlay or in exchange for city-desired elements such as climate-friendly design elements.
  - Example: [Auburn, WA Municipal Code § 18.25.040 \(2009\)](#) - residential infill developments are permitted increased maximum density and allowable building height.

### Higher Capital Costs/Limited Financing Options

- Reduced application or utility connection fees.

- Provide city-led infrastructure upgrades.
- Waive sewer/water/infrastructure fees and/or development impact fees OR...
- Create deferred payment options for these fees, which helps developers because it reduces the need for more short term construction loans with high interest rates vs. longer-term permanent. financing.
  - Example: [Surprise, AZ Code of Ordinances § 109-48 \(2016\)](#) - establishing an infill incentive district where certain new residential developments can receive a 100% waiver of development impact fees.
  - Example: [Avondale, AZ- Code of Ordinances § 19-61 \(2014\)](#) - Avondale established an infill incentive program aimed at certain neighborhoods in order to reinvigorate existing historic areas and support new mixed-use development that would promote the historic identity of the area.<sup>[18]</sup> The neighborhoods targeted by the infill incentive program contain many vacant or underutilized areas and exhibit at least one of the following characteristics: high vacancy rates, larger number of older buildings, and continued decline in population in relation to the City as a whole.<sup>[19]</sup> Qualified residential projects on residentially-zoned property within the infill incentive district are subject to reduced fees. New residential construction projects receive a 50% reduction in the normal planning and permit fee as well as the development impact fee.<sup>[20]</sup> Rehabilitation or remodeling projects are allowed a 50% reduction in planning and permit fees and are not subject to development impact fees.<sup>[21]</sup> Qualified commercial projects have the same incentives as residential projects, but with the added benefit of additional incentives being available subject to approval by the city council.<sup>[22]</sup> These additional incentives are based on additional criteria, such as high-wage job creation.<sup>[23]</sup>
- Provide tax abatement or tax increment financing for redevelopment or infill projects.

### **Potential for environmental contamination**

- Apply for Community-wide EPA Brownfield Grant to identify, assess, and cleanup properties with environmental concerns. Use this as a tool to incentivize and reduce costs of redevelopment.
- Provide site assessment guidance for developers looking to redevelop on a brownfield site.
- Conduct area-wide planning, which is an allowed activity under the EPA brownfield grant. This can be done as a City-led initiative in areas that may be more challenging or need more planning before development can occur. This can also be done in partnership with a developer or property owner to plan for development at key catalyst sites and meaningfully engage with the community prior to beginning the development review process.
- Stantec's brownfield program has helped many cities take advantage of these funds and navigate the process of managing the grant. A few key examples of success that our planning team worked on in Mankato, MN:
  - Studio 5 Mixed Use Development in Downtown Mankato. This project involved a key catalyst site Mankato's historic downtown. The site had contamination that was related to its historic use as a dry cleaner. The grant helped the city and developer complete environmental surveys and assessments and leveraged

these opportunities to obtain a MN DEED cleanup grant. These funds were combined with TIF from the city to redevelop the property as a mixed use development with 19 apartments and two ground-floor commercial spaces. The project has won several awards, including a MN Brownfields Economic Impact award.

- More information: <https://www.mankatomn.gov/about-mankato/business/programs-and-resources/brownfields>
- Riverside North Areawide Plan. This plan was done for an aging commercial corridor and gateway into the city along I-35. The area had several underutilized sites, some privately owned and some owned by the city. The area-wide plan included recommendations for several key catalyst sites, as well as transportation and public realm improvements. One of the catalyst sites has since begun the redevelopment process as intended in the plan.
  - Areawide Plan: <https://www.mankatomn.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/10794/637436095377470000>
  - Subsequent Redevelopment Project: [https://www.mankatofreepress.com/news/local\\_news/dutlers-bowl-redevelopment-slated-to-start-by-fall/article\\_f7e9b9c2-e749-11ec-98d4-efab8d1807ba.html](https://www.mankatofreepress.com/news/local_news/dutlers-bowl-redevelopment-slated-to-start-by-fall/article_f7e9b9c2-e749-11ec-98d4-efab8d1807ba.html)
- Jefferson Quarry Redevelopment Plan. This plan was done for a fully-extracted quarry north of downtown along the Minnesota River and south of US Highway 14. The plan envisioned a mixed use neighborhood and explored how the quarry may be served by roads and utilities, add to the parks and open space network and be an amenity for adjacent residential neighborhoods. This plan was done in partnership with the property owner and developer who will carry the project forward through the development review process.
  - Areawide Plan: <https://content.mankatomn.gov/files/Jefferson-Quarry-Redevelopment-Plan.pdf>

### **Longer regulatory approval process**

- Expedited development review, or for certain parts of the development review process
- Review historic variance requests and make land development code more flexible to avoid additional processes and public hearing associated with variances
- Review conditional use permits and work to allow more uses by right, avoiding lengthy conditional use permit processes and public hearings

Sources:

APA <https://www.planning.org/blog/9227414/infill-development-supports-community-connectivity/#:~:text=Identify%20incentives%20that%20encourage%20developers,mixed%2Duse%20requirements%20that%20increase>

Sustainable Development Code <https://sustainablecitycode.org/brief/encourage-infill-development/>