

**NOTICE OF MEETING
CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS PLANNING COMMISSION**

Thursday, May 5, 2011 4:00 PM

COUNCIL CHAMBERS
CITY HALL - 420 N. Pokegama Ave.
Grand Rapids, MN 55744

AGENDA

- | <u>Item</u> | <u>Time</u> | <u>Discussion/Action</u> |
|-------------|-------------|---|
| 1. | 4:00 | Call to Order |
| 2. | | Setting of Agenda- <i>This is an opportunity to approve the regular agenda as presented or add/delete an agenda item by a majority vote of the Commissioners present.</i> |
| 3. | | Approval of Minutes

A. Approve minutes of the April 7, 2011 - 4:00 pm regular meeting. |
| 4. | | General Business

A. Begin formal review of the Final Draft of the updated Comprehensive Plan, and consider adopting a resolution, establishing a date to conduct the Planning Commission's public hearing. |
| 5. | | Public Input

<i>Individuals may address the Planning Commission about any non public hearing item or any item not included on the Regular Meeting Agenda. Speakers are requested to come to the podium, state their name and address for the record and limit their remarks to three (3) minutes.</i> |
| 6. | | Miscellaneous/Reports/Announcements/Updates |
| 7. | | ADJOURN |

NEXT REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

June 2, 2011

PLANNING COMMISSION:

Dale Yelle	March 2008 - March 2012
Shane McKellep	March 2009 - March 2013
Julie Fedje-Johnston	March 2009 - March 2013
Lee Anderson	March 2010 - March 2014
Mark Gothard	March 2010 - March 2014
Ron Niemala	March 2010 - March 2014
Michael Twite (Chairperson)	March 2010 - March 2014

STAFF:

Rob Mattei (Community Development Director)
Eric Trast (Community Development Specialist)
Aurimy Groom (Recorder)
Chad Sterle (City Attorney)

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

*NOTICE OF MEETING
PLANNING COMMISSION*



CITY OF
GRAND RAPIDS
IT'S IN MINNESOTA'S NATURE

Meeting Agenda Full Detail

Thursday, May 5, 2011

4:00 PM

Council Chambers

Planning Commission

*COUNCIL CHAMBERS
CITY HALL - 420 N. Pokegama Ave.
Grand Rapids, MN 55744*

Call To Order**Call of Roll**

Setting of Agenda - This is an opportunity to approve the regular agenda as presented or add/delete an agenda item by a majority vote of the Commissioners present.

General Business

11-1502 Approve minutes of the April 7, 2011 - 4:00 pm regular meeting.

Attachments: [April 7th,2011](#)

11-1503 Begin formal review of the Final Draft of the updated Comprehensive Plan, and consider adopting a resolution, establishing a date to conduct the Planning Commission's public hearing.

Attachments: [PC Staff Report Est. PH 5-5-11](#)
[5-5-11 Resolution -PC Call for Hearing](#)
[Final Darft Comp Plan combined](#)

Public Input**Miscellaneous\Updates****Adjourn****PLANNING COMMISSION:**

Lee Anderson

Mark Gothard

Ron Niemala

Michael Twite - Chairperson

Dale Yelle

Shane McKellep - Vice Chair

Julie Fedje-Johnston

STAFF:

Rob Mattei (Community Development Director)

Eric Trast (Community Development Specialist)

Aurimy Groom (Recorder)

Chad Sterle (City Attorney)



CITY OF
GRAND RAPIDS
IT'S IN MINNESOTA'S NATURE

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

Legislation Details (With Text)

File #: 11-1502 **Version:** 1 **Name:**
Type: Minutes **Status:** General Business
File created: 4/28/2011 **In control:** Planning Commission
On agenda: 5/5/2011 **Final action:**
Title: Approve minutes of the April 7, 2011 - 4:00 pm regular meeting.
Sponsors:
Indexes:
Code sections:
Attachments: [April 7th,2011](#)

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
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Approve minutes of the April 7, 2011 - 4:00 pm regular meeting.

Grand Rapids Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
April 7, 2011 – 4:00 p.m.
Grand Rapids City Council Chambers
420 North Pokegama Avenue, Grand Rapids, Minnesota

Pursuant to due notice and call thereof, a regular meeting of the Grand Rapids Planning Commission was held Thursday, April 7, 2011 at 4:00 p.m. Upon a call of roll, the following members were present: Commissioners: Ron Niemala, Julie Fedje-Johnston, Shane McKellep, Michael Twite, Dale Yelle. Absent: Mark Gothard, Lee Anderson.

Staff present: Rob Mattei, Eric Trast, Attorney Sterle

SETTING OF REGULAR AGENDA: Approved without addition.

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER YELLE, SECOND BY COMMISSIONER FEDJE-JOHNSTON TO APPROVE THE AGENDA WITHOUT ADDITION. The following voted in favor thereof: Fedje-Johnston, Niemala, Yelle, McKellep, Twite. Opposed: None, passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER NIEMALA, SECOND BY COMMISSIONER YELLE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 3, 2011 REGULAR MEETING. The following voted in favor thereof: Yelle, Niemala, McKellep, Fedje-Johnston, Twite. Opposed: None, passed unanimously.

Consider a recommendation to the City Council regarding amendments to the City of Grand Rapids Municipal Code that would restrict the permanent residency opportunities for persons designated by the State of Minnesota, as Sexual Offenders ~~or~~ Sexual Predators.

Community Development Director Mattei provided background information. City Attorney Sterle reviewed the draft ordinance with the Commissioners. Attorney Sterle made the following amendments to the draft ordinance:

- (b) *Definitions.* The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this article, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:
1. *Designated offender* means any person who has been convicted of a designated sexual offense, regardless of whether adjudication has been withheld, in which the victim of the offense was less than 16 years of age and who ~~or~~ has been categorized as a Level III sex offender under Minnesota Statute § 244.052 or successor statute.

(c) *Sexual Offender and Sexual Predator Residence Prohibition; Penalties; Exceptions.*

4. Penalties. A person who violates this section shall be punished by a fine not exceeding \$1,000.00 or by confinement for a term not exceeding 90 days, or by both such fine and confinement guilty of a misdemeanor. Each day a person maintains a residence in violation of this ordinance constitutes a separate violation.
5. Exceptions. A designated offender residing within a prohibited area as described in (540.03 Subd. 1) does not commit a violation of this section if any of the following apply:
 - e. The residence is also the primary residence of the person's parent, grandparent, sibling, spouse, or adult child.

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER MCKELLEP, SECOND BY COMMISSIONER YELLE THAT IN THE PUBLIC'S BEST INTEREST, THE PLANNING COMMISSION DOES HEREBY FORWARD A FAVORABLE RECOMMENDATION TO THE CITY COUNCIL REGARDING THE DRAFT TEXT AMENDMENTS ADDING SECTION 42-107 SEXUAL OFFENDERS OR SEXUAL PREDATORS, TO ARTICLE IV *OFFENSES INVOLVING PUBLIC MORALS*, OF CHAPTER 42 *OFFENSES AND MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS*, OF THE GRAND RAPIDS MUNICIPAL CODE OF ORDINANCES WITH THE AMENDMENTS FROM CITY ATTORNEY STERLE. The following voted in favor thereof: Twite, Niemala, McKellep, Fedje-Johnston, Yelle. Opposed: None, passed unanimously.

Consider a recommendation to the City Council regarding the vacation of both a temporary easement for public street right-of-way and utility purposes and a minimum maintenance road(Temporary 16th Street SE and 2nd Avenue SE).

Community Development Director Mattei provided background information. The staff review committee had no concerns or objections regarding the vacation.

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER FEDJE-JOHNSTON, SECOND BY COMMISSIONER NIEMALA THAT, BASED ON THE FINDINGS OF FACT PRESENTED HERE TODAY, AND IN THE PUBLIC'S BEST INTEREST, THE PLANNING COMMISSION DOES HEREBY FORWARD TO THE CITY COUNCIL A RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE THE VACATION OF PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY DESCRIBED AS:

That part of the NW SW, Section 28, Township 55N, Range 25W, described as follows: Commencing at the NW corner of said NE SW; thence N 89 degrees 45 minutes 26 seconds E, assumed bearing along the N line of said NE SW a distance 50.00 ft. to the easterly right of way line MN TH #169; thence S 0 degrees 11 minutes 00 seconds E, 690.00 ft. along said right of way line; thence N 89 degrees 45 minutes 26 seconds E 300.00 ft.; thence S 0 degrees 11 minutes 00 seconds E, 270.13 ft. to the point of beginning of the tract to be described; thence continue S 0 degrees 11 minutes 00

seconds E, 66.00 ft.; thence N 89 degrees 45 minutes 26 seconds E 319.30 ft.; thence N 0 degrees 30 minutes 26 seconds E, 66.01 ft.; thence S 89 degrees 45 minutes 26 seconds W 320.10 ft. to the point of beginning. (containing 0.48 acres)

-and-

An easement for road purposes across part of the NE SW of Section 28, Township 55N, Range 25W; said easement is described as follows: Commencing at the NW corner of said NE SW; thence N 89 degrees 45 minutes 26 seconds E, assumed bearing along the N line of said NE SW a distance 50.00 ft. to the easterly right of way line MN TH #169; thence S 0 degrees 11 minutes 00 seconds E, 690.00 ft. along said right of way line; thence N 89 degrees 45 minutes 26 seconds E 300.00 ft.; thence S 0 degrees 11 minutes 00 seconds E 336.13 ft.; thence N 89 degrees 45 minutes 26 seconds E 279.30 ft. to the point of beginning of an easement to be described: thence continue N 89 degrees 45 minutes 26 seconds E, 40.00 ft.; thence S 0 degrees 30 minutes 17 seconds W 270.06 ft. to the northerly right of way line of 17th Street SE; thence S 89 degrees 44 minutes 27 seconds W 40.00 ft. along said right of way line; N 0 degrees 30 minutes 17 seconds E, 270.07 ft. to the point of beginning. (containing 0.25 acres)

Commissioner Fedje-Johnston read her considerations for the record.

1. Is the easement needed for traffic purposes?
No, the area is a parking lot or an undeveloped back lot.
2. Is the easement needed for pedestrian purposes?
No, there is no pedestrian traffic in this area, pedestrian traffic is on Pokegama Avenue and 2nd Avenue SE.
3. Is the easement needed for utility purposes?
Public Utilities will be acquiring an electric utility easement from Grand Rapids GM through a separate process this will allow access to the underground electric distribution system.
4. Would vacating the easement place additional land on the tax rolls?
Vacating the easement would allow for orderly development of Lot 1, Block 1 Swanson's Addition.
5. Would vacating the easement facilitate economic development in the City?
Vacating the easement would have a slight impact on economic development, in that the Lot 1, Block 1 could potentially be developed. Furthermore access to Grand Rapids Ford dealership and L&M would be easier if 15th Street SE is developed in the future.

The following voted in favor thereof: McKellep, Yelle, Twite, Niemala, Fedje-Johnston. Opposed: None, passed unanimously.

Legistar Software Training.

IT Director Eric Scott provided a demonstration using the legistar software. The goal is to have the Planning Commission up and running by July at the latest.

Comprehensive Plan Update Project.

Staff is working with the consultant to pull together a draft document. The final public meeting will be held on May 3rd, 2011 in the upper lobby at the IRA Civic Center.

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER NIEMALA, SECOND BY COMMISSIONER FEDJE-JOHNSTON TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 4:43 P.M. The following voted in favor thereof: Yelle, McKellep, Niemala, Fedje-Johnston, Twite. Opposed: None, passed unanimously.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be on Thursday, May 5, 2011 at 4:00 p.m. unless otherwise noticed.

Respectfully submitted:

Aurimy Groom, Recorder



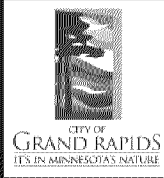
CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

Legislation Details (With Text)

File #:	11-1503	Version:	1	Name:	Begin formal review of the Final Draft of the updated Comprehensive Plan, and consider adopting a resolution, establishing a date to conduct the Planning Commission's public hearing.
Type:	Agenda Item	Status:			General Business
File created:	4/28/2011	In control:			Planning Commission
On agenda:	5/5/2011	Final action:			
Title:	Begin formal review of the Final Draft of the updated Comprehensive Plan, and consider adopting a resolution, establishing a date to conduct the Planning Commission's public hearing.				
Sponsors:					
Indexes:					
Code sections:					
Attachments:	PC Staff Report Est. PH 5-5-11 5-5-11 Resolution -PC Call for Hearing Final Darft Comp Plan combined				

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
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Begin formal review of the Final Draft of the updated Comprehensive Plan, and consider adopting a resolution, establishing a date to conduct the Planning Commission's public hearing.
 See attached staff report.



Planning Commission Staff Report

Agenda Item # 4A	Community Development Department	Date: 5/5/2011
Statement of Issue:	Begin formal review of the Final Draft of the updated Comprehensive Plan, and consider adopting a resolution, establishing a date to conduct the Planning Commission's public hearing.	
Background:	<p>The City of Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee has completed work on an updated Comprehensive Plan for Grand Rapids. For the last year, the Committee has been meeting monthly and engaging the public in a discussion of issues, long-range goals, and action priorities for the City to focus on over the next 20 years.</p> <p>As part of the Comprehensive Plan adoption process, the City has chosen to conduct two public hearings (one at the Planning Commission and one at the City Council), in addition to the Community Meeting which was conducted May 3rd at the Civic Center. <i>A summary of the Community Meeting will be provided at the meeting.</i></p> <p>It is anticipated that the Planning Commission will review the Draft Comprehensive Plan during the month of May. At the regular June meeting, the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing and consider forwarding a recommendation to the City Council for the Plans final adoption.</p> <p><i>Please review the Draft Plan and contact staff, Brian Ross- Project Consultant, or Commissioners Twite or Niemala with specific questions or comments.</i></p>	
Considerations:		
Recommendation:		
Required Action:	Approve a motion to adopt the attached resolution establishing a public hearing on June 2, 2011, for the purpose of gathering public comment on the Draft Comprehensive Plan.	

Commissioner _____ introduced the following resolution and moved for its adoption:

**CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS
PLANNING COMMISSION**

RESOLUTION NO. 11-01 P.C.

**A RESOLUTION
CALLING FOR A PUBLIC HEARING TO RECEIVE PUBLIC COMMENT
ON THE DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

WHEREAS, the City of Grand Rapids initiated the process to update its Comprehensive Plan, and

WHEREAS, the Draft Comprehensive Plan was received by the Planning Commission on May 5, 2011.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS, MINNESOTA:

1. A Public Hearing shall be held on the Draft Comprehensive Plan on the 2nd day of June, 2011, in the council chambers located at the Grand Rapids City Hall at 4:00 p.m., and the Clerk shall give published notice of such hearing as required by law.

Adopted by the Grand Rapids Planning Commission this 5th day of May, 2011.

Michael Twite, Chairperson

ATTEST:

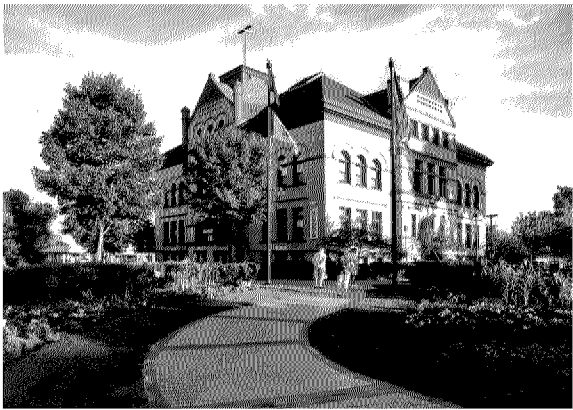
Shane McKellep, Vice-Chairperson

Commissioner member _____ seconded the foregoing resolution and the following voted in favor thereof: _____ ; and the following voted against same: _____ ; whereby the resolution was declared duly passed and adopted.

Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan

Adopted May 2011

FINAL
DRAFT



CITY OF
GRAND RAPIDS

IT'S IN MINNESOTA'S NATURE



City of Grand Rapids DRAFT Comprehensive Plan

May 2011

We wish to acknowledge the following people who were instrumental in guiding the Comprehensive Plan process. Also, thank you to the citizens of Grand Rapids for their vision and contributions to this plan through enthusiastic participation in the community survey and focus groups.

Grand Rapids City Council

Dale Adams

Mayor

Joe Chandler

Council Member

Dale Christy

Council Member

Gary McInerney

Council Member

Ed Zabinski

Council Member

Grand Rapids Planning Commission

Michael Twite

Chair

Shane McKellep

Vice-Chair

Lee Anderson

Commissioner

Julie Fedje-Johnston

Commissioner

Mark Gothard

Commissioner

Ron Niemala

Commissioner

Dale Yelle

Commissioner

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Frank Allen

Business- Downtown
Retail/Service

Meghan Bown

Healthy Lifestyle Interests

Joe Chandler

Grand Rapids City Council

Marn Flicker

Residential (rural resident)

Mark Gothard

Residential (urban resident)

Ben Hawkins

Education

Mark Hawkinson

Builder/Developer

Joe Maher

Business- Manufacturing

Tara Makinen

Residential (urban resident)

Gary McInerney

City Council

Mark Miner

Business- Non-downtown
Retail/Service

Jack Mooty

Environmental Interests

Ron Niemala

Planning Commission

Ruth Pierce Versaw

Social Services Representative

Barb Sanderson

Residential (urban resident)

Colleen Swanson

Health Care Industry

Mike Twite

Planning Commission

Diane Weber

Economic Development
Organization

Ross Williams

Residential (urban resident)

Cheri Zeppelin

Tourism/Hospitality Industry



Comprehensive Plan Technical Advisory Committee

Erika Herr

Minnesota Department of
Natural Resources

Dale Anderson

Grand Rapids
Civic Center/ Park and
Recreation Director

Doug Learmont

Mining representative

Jeff Davies

Grand Rapids
Public Works Director

Jerry Culliton

Grand Rapids
Housing & Redevelopment Authority
Executive Director

Jim Denny

Grand Rapids
Chief of Police

Lori Dowling

Itasca County
Board of Commissioners

Matt Romanik

Itasca County
Airport Manager

Steve Flaherty

Grand Rapids
Fire Chief

Tom Pagel

Grand Rapids
City Engineer

Anthony Ward

Grand Rapids
Public Utilities Commission
General Manager

With assistance from

Rob Mattei

Grand Rapids
Community Development Director

Eric Trast

Grand Rapids
Community Development Specialist

CR Planning, Inc.

Brian Ross, Project Manager
Jean Coleman
Diane Desotelle

Cunningham Group

Suzanne Rhees

Spack Consulting, Inc.

Mike Spack



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Chapter 1 – Introduction

A comprehensive plan is the official long-range policy document for the City, guiding zoning and land use ordinances, investments in public infrastructure, economic development programs, natural resource use and protection, housing policy, and other issues. The comprehensive plan is a policy document that provides the legal foundation for the city’s ordinances, programs, and capital investment plans. The plan portrays the community’s desired future and guides decision-making by elected and appointed officials on how development, conservation, and public investment take place within the city.

Comprehensive plans identify the community’s desired future looking out 20 years, or in this case, to the Grand Rapids of 2030. The desired future is described with a future land use map and supporting written goals and objectives. Plans typically have three important parts –background information to define “what is,” maps and goals to define the “desired future condition,” and a set of implementation actions to bridge between “what is” and the “desired future.”

Grand Rapids’ 2003 Comprehensive Plan provided a foundation for this current Plan. The 2003 Plan was updated because many policies and recommendations no longer reflected current needs, concerns, and issues of Grand Rapids residents and businesses.

The Comprehensive Plan update took place over the past year guided by a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee serving as advisors to the Planning Commission and the City Council which adopt the Plan. The public was involved through a community survey, focus groups, and public meetings. Background studies were updated from the 2003 Comprehensive Plan. A vision, set of values, and guiding principles were created to guide the choices for future land use, community services, natural resources and open space, transportation investments, and economic development policies.

Chapter 2 describes the process undertaken by the City of Grand Rapids in creating this updated Comprehensive Plan.

Chapter 3 presents the Vision Grand Rapids’ residents have for their community. Community values and guiding principles that support choices about the future and how to achieve it are also included.

Chapter 4 illustrates the future land use types and locations that are anticipated through implementation of this Plan.

Chapter 5 connects us to the future vision for the City by providing goals, objectives, and implementation steps necessary to achieve the vision.

**Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 462, Section 355
ADOPT, AMEND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; INTERIM
ORDINANCE.**

Subdivision 1. Preparation and review.

The planning agency shall prepare the comprehensive municipal plan. In discharging this duty the planning agency shall consult with and coordinate the planning activities of other departments and agencies of the municipality to insure conformity with and to assist in the development of the comprehensive municipal plan. In its planning activities the planning agency shall take due cognizance of the planning activities of adjacent units of government and other affected public agencies. The planning agency shall periodically review the plan and recommend amendments whenever necessary. When preparing or recommending amendments to the comprehensive plan, the planning agency ... must consider adopting goals and objectives that will protect open space and the environment.



Chapter 2 – Planning Process

This Chapter provides an overview of the process used to create the 2011 Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan, a description of the Steering Committee, and a summary of public involvement undertaken during the update of the Plan.

A. The Update Process

In 2003, the City of Grand Rapids adopted a new Comprehensive Plan after a year-long process of background studies, engaging residents and businesses, and detailed discussion. The 2003 Comprehensive Plan was the first long range plan completed by the city since 19___. Since adoption, many 2003 Plan goals have been met, including public investment in new street connections, new economic development initiatives, an updated zoning ordinance, and additional planning efforts such as the Riverfront Framework Plan and Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan. However, changing conditions, including newly annexed areas and manufacturing closures, created challenges and opportunities not envisioned during the creation of the 2003 Plan. In 2010 the City Council initiated an update to the Comprehensive Plan.

A Steering Committee of residents and businesses was appointed to guide the Plan Update and make recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council. Members of the Steering Committee are listed on page ___. Using the 2003 Plan as a spring board, the Steering Committee worked with a team of consultants to: update background studies; integrate small area plans created for the downtown and riverfront areas; consider the plans of neighboring communities; review and revise the vision, values, and principles; choose a future land use map; and prepare goals, objectives, and implementation actions. Throughout the process, the Steering Committee sought public input through a community survey, focus groups, and public meetings.

2003 Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan

The 2003 Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan process identified a community vision, community values, and guiding principles. The vision, values, and principles guided the Plan recommendations for land use and development. City residents and businesses were integrally involved in the development of the 2003 plan.

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan content was organized around four topics: Community Facilities and Services; Transportation; Economic Development; and Land Use. Each topic area presented a set of goals, objectives, and implementation strategies for each objective. An implementation section described: implementation tools available to the City; a recommended plan update protocol; and an implementation matrix identifying a timeframe and organizations responsible for the implementation of each actionable item contained in the plan. Background studies provided an inventory of existing conditions and a discussion of issues and problems.

The Steering Committee for the plan update considered all pieces of the 2003 Plan in light of changed conditions and updated background information. Technical Committee members identified completed actions from the 2003 Plan and remaining actions that should be brought forward into the updated plan.

Grand Rapids Small Area Plans

As a result of the 2003 Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan, two small area plans were undertaken by the City of Grand Rapids. The plans were reviewed and incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan update. The Riverfront Framework Plan and Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan are summarized below.

Riverfront Framework Plan, 2009

Originally prepared in 2000, The Riverfront Framework Plan was updated in 2009. The 2000 plan focused on the area north and south of the river on both sides of Pokegama Avenue, identifying a series of public and private redevelopment and improvement projects to better connect the community to the riverfront. Many of these projects were underway or had been completed by the time of the 2009 update, including: redevelopment of Grand Itasca Hospital into mixed-income housing; redevelopment of Grand Rapids Clinic into an assisted living and senior housing facility; and development of the new public library with performance area and fishing pier on the north bank of the River. The 2009 plan builds on these accomplishments and provides a vision for the next generation of projects. It complements the recommendations contained in the 2006 Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan and the 2007 Housing Market Analysis.

The plan includes goals for both public and private improvements. Public improvement goals are:

- Achieve greater utilization of the riverfront as a central feature and economic asset of the community.
- Provide and improve the physical and visual access to the riverfront.
- Create a riverfront park that integrates the north and south sides of the river.
- Promote and improve the festival area and performance stage along the river.
- Integrate design themes and linkages between the Downtown Central Business District and the riverfront.
- Develop a looped trail system that will integrate the riverfront with the Central Business District, adjacent neighborhoods, open space amenities, and the YMCA.





Private improvement goals include: redeveloping several remaining key blocks; providing adequate expansion area and coordinated planning with the Blandin Paper Company; protecting the quality of life and property values of existing riverfront neighborhoods; and attracting new housing opportunities in the central portion of the City, focusing on owner-occupied condominiums and market-rate apartments and affordable housing options.

Key improvements proposed in the plan include:

- Changes to the North Riverfront Park to create a waterfront plaza with performance stage and amphitheater, linked by strong pedestrian axes to Pokegama Avenue the Public Library and KAXE radio studio.
- Redevelopment of vacant parcels on 2nd Street for office and mixed use.
- Improvements to South Riverfront Park to open up views to and across the river, improve bicycle and pedestrian access, and enhance the existing canoe launch area.
- A new pedestrian bridge that would link North and South Riverfront parks. This is a long-term improvement, complemented by short-term improvements to the sidewalks on the Pokegama and Horn bridges, including widened sidewalks separated by bollards from the roadway, overlooks, and interpretive signage.
- Construction of multi-family mixed-income housing in the Canal Street neighborhood, complementing existing single-family housing.
- Implementation of streetscape, landscape and parking standards throughout the Highway 2 commercial frontage in order to improve circulation and attractiveness of this area.

Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan, 2006

The Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan follows and draws upon several previous plans, including the initial Riverfront Framework Plan (2000), the CBD Development Plan (1989) and the CBD Redevelopment Plan, An Amendment to the City’s Comprehensive Plan (1996).

The plan focuses on the area bounded by the Mississippi River, 6th Street, NE 3rd Avenue and NW 6th Avenue, centered on the Central School Square and the “100% intersection” of Highway 169 (Pokegama Avenue) and Highway 2 (4th Street North). It includes guiding principles for downtown redevelopment, more detailed plans for five “opportunity sites,” a detailed parking study, and proposed improvements to the major road corridors that connect Downtown to the larger city and region.

Guiding principles include statements that Downtown is “a place of character and quality,” “well-connected,” and “the best place for small business.” Housing is identified as the future of Downtown. The downtown land use plan indicates a primarily commercial core, a civic core east of Pokegama Avenue, a substantially industrial riverfront, and mixed use and transitional areas on the north and south edges. Redevelopment of two centrally located blocks (Blocks 36 and 37) for mixed use is also intended to provide housing opportunities.

Reconstruction of 1st Avenue West is proposed with a similar design to that already used for 1st Avenue East, creating a pedestrian and bicycle corridor on the west side of Downtown. Pokegama Avenue is also identified as a pedestrian/bike corridor providing access to Downtown from the south. The plan also proposes improvements to wayfinding, riverfront and regional trails and community facilities.

The opportunity sites identified in the plan are:

- Block 19, which includes the Pokegama Hotel, has now been successfully redeveloped for mixed use.
- Blocks 36 and 37 are located on the south side of Highway 2 opposite the Central School Square and north of the railroad tracks; both are proposed for mixed use, with small “gateway” plazas at their corners.
- Block 29 contains City Hall and the police station; the plan proposes adding housing with underground parking.
- Blocks 17 and 18 – identified as potentially affected by Blandin expansion; improvements focus on enhancement rather than redevelopment, retention of off-street parking, and creating improved connections to the riverfront.

In the area of public realm improvements, the plan recommends placing new buildings at a 15 foot setback from the curb in order to provide space for wider sidewalks and street trees.

The parking study indicates that the supply of parking is adequate, but its distribution and duration need improvements. Proposed changes include permit parking, employee parking, and a designated lot for RV/trailer parking.

Implementation tools proposed include public financial assistance through use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, special assessments and special service districts, in addition to land use controls and design guidelines.



Comprehensive Plans of Neighboring Communities

Grand Rapids is the center of a metropolitan cluster of four cities; Grand Rapids, LaPrairie, Coleraine, and Cohasset. The cities are connected east to west and all except for LaPrairie having incorporated or annexed out to the township lines. In addition to these cities, Grand Rapids shares its southern boundary with Harris Township, which has a substantial amount of development along the Highway 169 corridor and around Lake Pokegama. Several of the cities share infrastructure and municipal services with Grand Rapids, including wastewater, water, roads, electric services. Furthermore, as the economic and cultural center of these communities, Grand Rapids is critically interconnected with these communities; choices made by these communities affect the sustainability of community, gray, natural, and economic infrastructure.

These four neighboring communities all conduct their own comprehensive planning processes. Summaries of each community’s plan and notable issues discussed in the plans are noted below.

City of LaPrairie Comprehensive Plan, 2008

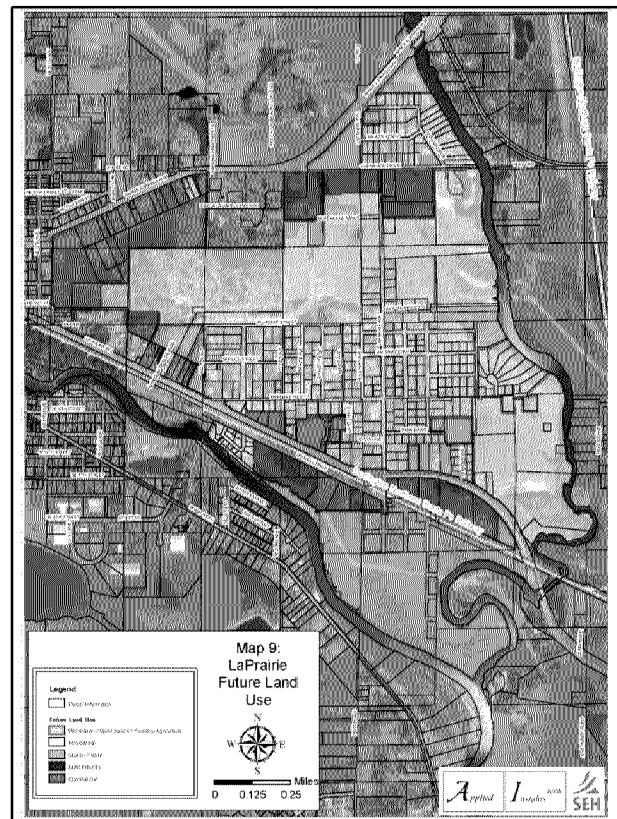
LaPrairie, like Grand Rapids, has grown through annexation, most recently annexing portions of Grand Rapids Township extending as far north as Trunk Highway 169. The city’s development pattern is primarily large lot residential, with a grid pattern of interconnected streets interspersed with some large tracts of undeveloped land. Commercial and light industrial uses are concentrated along Highway 169 and Highway 2. The city is crossed by railroad, pipeline and powerline corridors, limiting development potential in some areas.

LaPrairie provides water and sanitary sewer throughout its core area, both purchased from the Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission. The Glenwood Acres area south of Highway 169 at the Mississippi River is not served by utilities.

Issues identified in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan include:

- Need for moderate rent senior rental housing units (identified originally in the 1999 Itasca County Housing Study), possibly a cottage-style design.
- Floodplain delineation and enrollment in the Federal Flood Insurance Program are needed for newly-annexed areas
- How and when will utilities be extended throughout the city? Community survey showed support for merging utilities with Grand Rapids.

The land use plan focuses on development of the Hoolihan Farm / Grand Rapids Township property (a large tract between the residential core and





Highway 169) for large-lot single-family detached housing, potentially with some cottage-style “active” senior housing, along with a second tier of commercial development south of Highway 169. The concept includes new through roads designed for local traffic and non-motorized recreational trails.

City of Cohasset Comprehensive Plan, 2007

The City of Cohasset resulted from the merger of the former Village of Cohasset and Bass Brook Township. The former village is the City’s downtown, located along Trunk Highway 2 a few miles west of Grand Rapids.

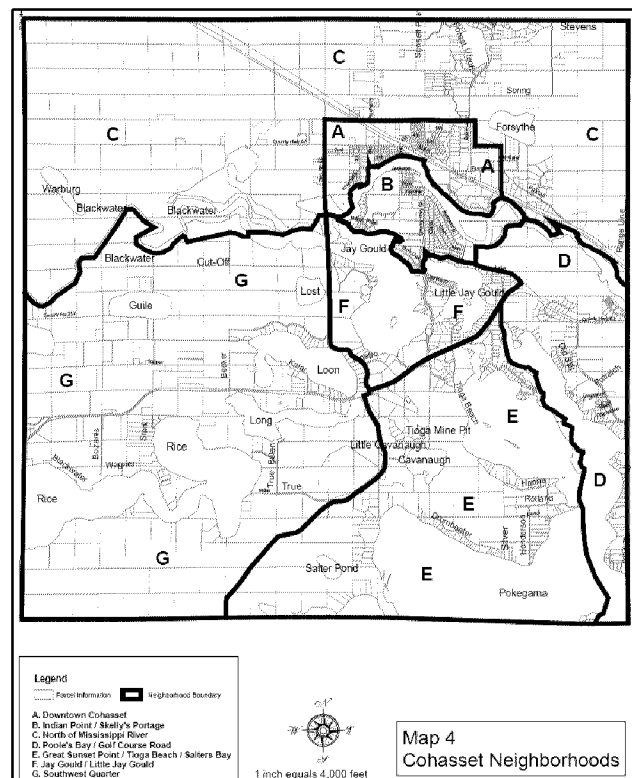
Issues identified in the plan include:

- Decline in the property taxes paid by Minnesota Power’s Clay Boswell electrical generating plant
- Water quality and rural wastewater treatment: The South Central Itasca County Wastewater Management Plan (2005, ARDC) identified areas of potential concern for pollution from septic systems (ISTS) within a six-community area including Cohasset. Three areas of concern were wholly or partially within Cohasset, all on the east side of the city close to the Grand Rapids boundary. Since the assessment, the South Central Itasca County Intergovernmental Planning Board formed a Wastewater Initiative Team to address potential contamination issues. Strategies being considered were extension of central sanitary sewer service for some areas and creation of a sanitary district to improve management of ISTS in others.
- Historic differences between residents of the village center and residents of rural and lakeshore areas in how they view the city and its role and functions.

Primary community goal: To retain and strengthen Cohasset’s historic pattern of an interwoven village center and surrounding rural and lakeshore area.

The plan lacks a future land use map, but divides the city into generalized neighborhoods and/or land use categories and establishes goals and policies for each:

- **Downtown Cohasset:** distinctive core business district; upgrading of existing housing, encouragement of new housing; retention of core community functions; continued light industrial development; improved Mississippi River access.
- **Northern Cohasset:** innovative approaches to wastewater treatment to encourage residential development of large tracts; recreational trails to improve connections to downtown Cohasset.
- **Suburban Southeast Cohasset** (abutting much of Grand Rapids’ western border): encourage additional residential development with central sewers; retain existing commercial areas along CR 63.





- **Pokegama Lakeshore:** lakeshore redevelopment with greater compliance with shoreland regulations; explore options of enhancement of Tioga mine pit lake and tailings mound area.
- **Rural Cohasset:** retain essential rural character, combining rural and lakeshore residential development with some agricultural and forestry activity; surface water quality protection; no extension of public water and sanitary sewer.
- **Industrial and Commercial Development:** industrial focused on power plant and Cohasset Industrial Park; commercial within downtown and along Highway 2 to Grand Rapids. Support continuation and expansion of industrial park and power plant; improve appearance of Highway 2 corridor.

City of Coleraine Comprehensive Plan, February 2010

This plan was developed as part of the Itasca County Community Planning Initiative, consisting of a simultaneous planning process for five communities, also including the cities of Marble, Keewatin, Calumet and Bovey. The process consisted of training of local officials and staff, followed by a public visioning session and two public meetings to identify strategies and action steps.

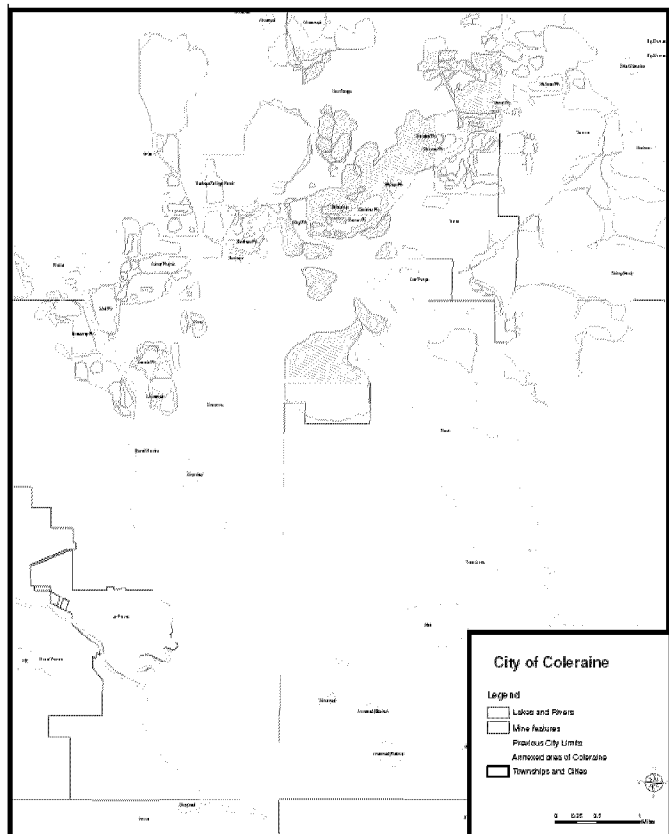
Coleraine was originally planned as a “model city” by the Oliver Mining Company beginning in 1904. Well-planned residential neighborhoods, an extensive park system and a vibrant downtown helped to keep the community stable.

The plan notes that through the annexation of the East Grand Rapids Township section (6,176 acres) in August 2009, the population of Coleraine increased by 600 residents and 235 households, for a total (estimated) population of 1,710 by the end of 2009.

The plan consists of goals and strategies in the areas of housing, transportation, utilities, agricultural, natural and cultural resources, economic development, intergovernmental cooperation and land use. There is no future land use map.

Strategies include:

- Pedestrian improvements, including a safe crossing of Highway 169
- Improve access to the Mesabi Trail with a signed connection to the downtown
- Plan for a new wastewater treatment facility in partnership with Bovey and Taconite





- Work with neighboring communities on recreational development of the Canisteo Pit Lake on the City’s northern boundary (this regional resource is relevant to Grand Rapids)
- Downtown revitalization and highway corridor enhancement strategies
- Zoning ordinance updates; adopt subdivision regulations

Harris Township Comprehensive Plan, 2006

Harris Township, bordering Grand Rapids to the south, is defined by its rural character, ease of access to Grand Rapids, and Pokegama Lake, with extensive lakeshore development.

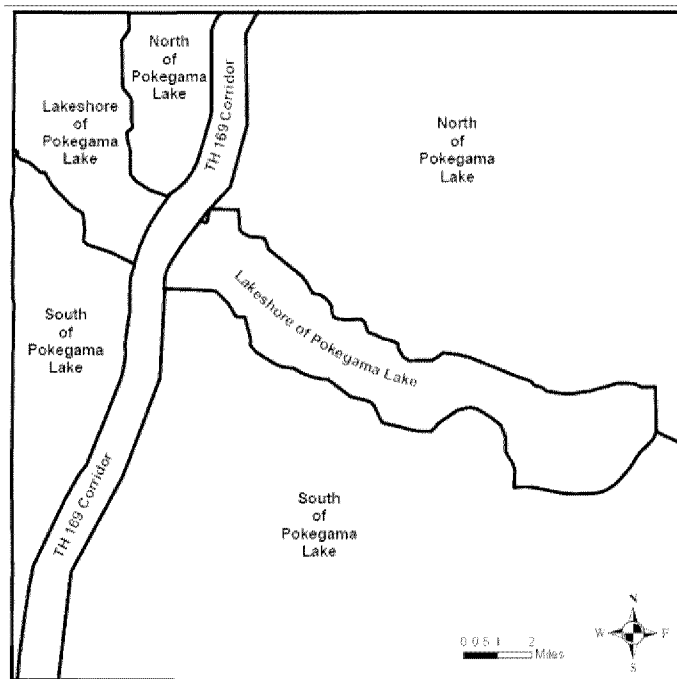
Issues identified in the plan include:

- Loss of defining rural open space and sense of rural character
- Southward growth of Grand Rapids; increased traffic and development pressure
- Concern over Rural Residential zoning (Itasca County zoning) leading to more suburban development patterns; spot commercial development
- Second home cabin conversions to year-round homes

Goals of the plan include remaining a rural, predominantly residential community. The plan does not include a future land use map, but includes conceptual policies for four sub-areas of the city – North of Pokegama Lake, South of Pokegama Lake, the Lakeshore, and the Highway 169 Corridor.

Policies include:

- **North of Pokegama Lake:** rural residential with a preference for conservation or cluster design techniques
- **South of Pokegama Lake:** farms, forestry and large-lot residential; consideration of non-zoning techniques such as purchase of development rights
- **Lakeshore:** residential development along entire lakeshore except for wetlands and public lands; improved shoreland management standards; solutions for failing septic systems
- **Highway 169 Corridor:** viewed as “scenic southern gateway to Grand Rapids,” limited to large lot, less intensive commercial development



The plan also recommends modifications to Itasca County zoning to promote conservation design, encourage clustered wastewater treatment systems, and create an “agriculture/forestry preservation overlay district” for the area south of Pokegama Lake and east of Highway 169, with residential density no greater than 4 units per 40 acres.



B. Steering Committee

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was key to development of the 2011 Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan. Steering Committee members were recruited to represent a broad range of stakeholder groups. Officially appointed by the City Council, the Steering Committee worked closely with the project consultant team and City staff in the development of the Comprehensive Plan in order to ensure that the Plan’s vision, values, principles, goals, objectives, and strategies reflected the diversity of interests and needs in Grand Rapids. The Committee was the decision-making entity throughout the process and forwards a recommended plan to the Planning Commission and City Council for final review and adoption.

In addition to attending many meetings, reading background materials, and commenting on content, Steering Committee members were also a primary point of communication to and from other community members. Steering Committee members were very successful in recruiting residents and business owners to participate in focus groups and respond to the community survey. Some members even facilitated focus groups. Following is a list of Steering Committee members and the group they represented.

Frank Allen Business- Downtown Retail/Service	Jack Mooty Environmental Interests
Meghan Bown Healthy Lifestyle Interests	Ron Niemala Planning Commission
Joe Chandler Grand Rapids City Council	Ruth Pierce Versaw Social Services Representative
Marn Flicker Residential (rural resident)	Barb Sanderson Residential (urban resident)
Mark Gothard Residential (urban resident)	Colleen Swanson Health Care Industry
Ben Hawkins Education	Mike Twite Planning Commission
Mark Hawkinson Builder/Developer	Diane Weber Economic Development Organization
Joe Maher Business- Manufacturing	Ross Williams Residential (urban resident)
Tara Makinen Residential (urban resident)	Cheri Zeppelin Tourism/Hospitality Industry
Gary McInerney City Council	
Mark Miner Business- Non-downtown Retail/Service	



C. Public Involvement

Community Survey

As part of the Comprehensive Plan process, the City of Grand Rapids completed a community survey to assess the priorities and opinions on a number of issues being addressed in the Plan update. A similar survey was completed for the 2003 Plan.

A community survey is a tool that allows the City to solicit input from a broad cross-section of community residents on a variety of topics. Surveys also have limitations in regard to the depth of questions and the difficulty in clarifying answers. When used with other public outreach or involvement tools, surveys can validate or challenge other results. The 2010 community survey was conducted to assess the priority issues to be addressed in the Plan and to assess the validity of results from the public meetings and Steering Committee decisions. The 2010 survey was conducted in late Summer/early Fall of 2010, after the initial public meeting, several news stories, and completion of the Steering Committee’s updates to the Community Vision, Values, and Guiding Principles.

The survey asked questions concerning the draft Vision, Values and Principles, and also laid some groundwork for creating the Future Land Use Map and the Plan’s new goals and objectives. The Community Survey was developed with direct oversight by the Steering Committee.

The survey was sent to each property address in the City of Grand Rapids. In addition the survey was distributed in several rental buildings and a notice was placed on the City website. Approximately 3,700 surveys were distributed, and approximately 1,100 were returned, for a return rate of almost 30 percent.

Each question that solicited a quantitative response is reported below. Question 4 was a qualitative (open ended) question and is briefly summarized.

Section 1: Information on survey respondents

Which best describes your residency:

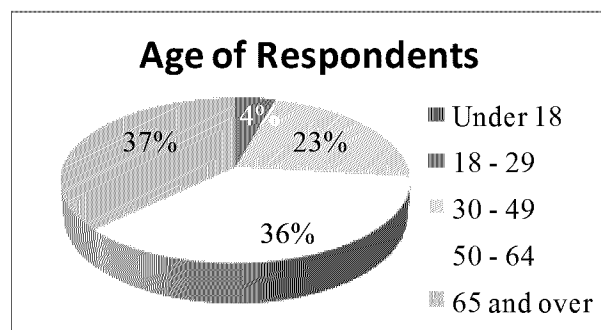
- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Year-round resident | 94% |
| 2. Seasonal resident | 2% |
| 3. Nearby non-resident (live outside City) | 3% |
| 4. Distant non-resident (live outside region) | 2% |
| 5. Visitor | 2% |

Do you own property or a business in Grand Rapids?

- | | |
|-------------------|-----|
| 1. Business owner | 4% |
| 2. Property owner | 85% |
| 3. Neither | 12% |

Which best describes your household:

- | | |
|---------------|-----|
| 1. Home-owner | 92% |
| 2. Renter | 6% |
| 3. Student | 0% |
| 4. Other | 2% |



Which describes your age:

- | | |
|----------------|-----|
| 1. Under 18 | 0% |
| 2. 18 – 29 | 4% |
| 3. 30 - 49 | 23% |
| 4. 50-64 | 36% |
| 5. 65 and Over | 37% |



Summary: A large majority of respondents (94%) are year-round residents; 92% are homeowners, and a large majority (85%) are property owners. Business owners make up only 4% of respondents, and renters only 6%. Another striking feature is the predominance of respondents over 50 years of age, and the very small percentage (4%) of young adult respondents. As the surveys were mailed to each property address, rather than each person, the predominance of older adults in the survey results is not surprising. Young people and young adults tend not to be property owners. As a consequence, however, these results should be viewed primarily as a survey of households and property owners rather than a survey of residents or the entire population.

Section 2: Vision/Values/Principles

Question 1 - *The Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan will guide City decisions to achieve multiple goals, including economic development, community enhancement, sustaining natural resources, and protecting neighborhoods. These goals are expressed in the City’s Vision Statement, Community Values, and Guiding Principles.*

How would you prioritize among the general goals in the Vision/Values/Principles? Please review the following statements and identify how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

Strongly Agree - 5 Strongly Disagree -1

1. The City should make investments to compete for new industries to locate in Grand Rapids.	Avg – 4.00	SD – 1.14
2. The City’s economic development investments should prioritize business retention and assisting entrepreneurs	Avg – 3.99	SD – 1.00
3. The City should keep taxes down first, even if public services might be cut	Avg – 3.35	SD – 1.31
4. The City should protect natural resources and restore water quality, natural spaces, and habitat	Avg – 4.03	SD – 1.10
5. The City should work to improve housing options and neighborhood stability	Avg – 3.75	SD – 1.10
6. The City should improve opportunities for recreational activities and healthy living choices	Avg – 3.58	SD – 1.13
7. The City should invest in long-term maintenance of existing public infrastructure	Avg – 4.07	SD – 0.89
8. No changes are necessary - Grand Rapids is a fine community just the way it is	Avg – 3.60	SD – 1.30
9. Grand Rapids needs to grow in order to stay relevant	Avg – 2.51	SD – 1.23

Avg – Average level of agreement Highest - _____ Lowest - _____

SD – Standard Deviation (how much disagreement there was, higher means more disagreement among respondents)

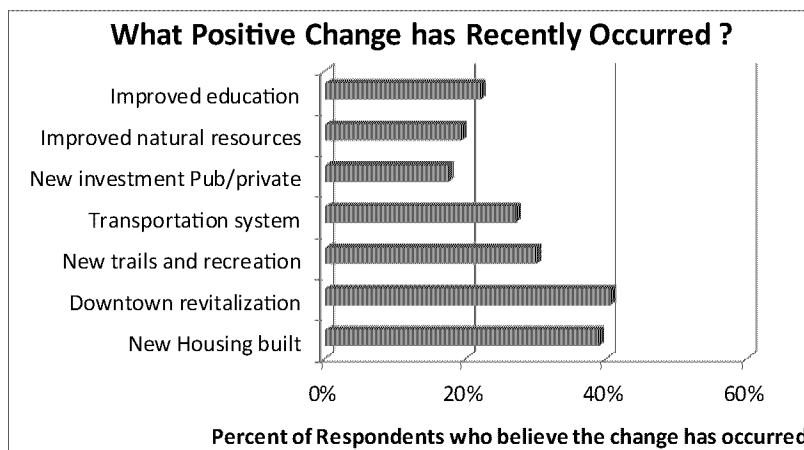
Summary: Respondents showed a high level of agreement with most the statements with the exception of statement 9 (Grand Rapids needs to grow in order to stay relevant). Statement 9 had by far the lowest average score. This statement and statement 8. (No changes are necessary) are largely opposing concepts, and both had a high level of disagreement among responses (standard deviation greater than



1.2) The second lowest average was Statement 3 (keep taxes down even if public services must be cut), which also was the most controversial (essentially tied with Statement 8).

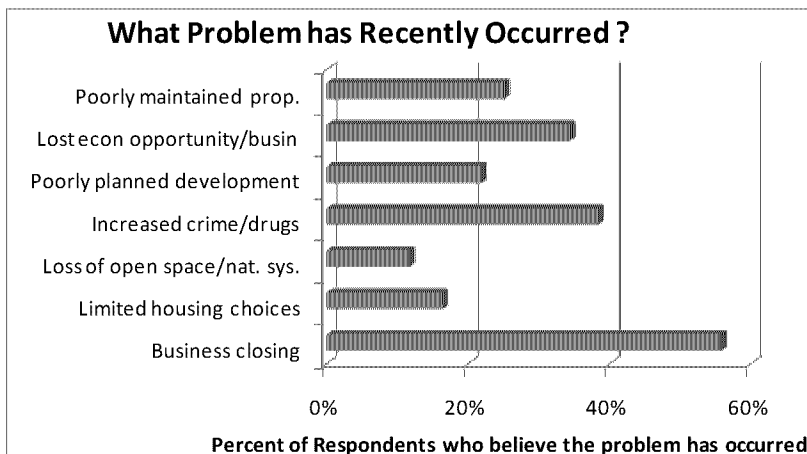
Several statements ranked at the top level of support: 1. Make investments to compete for new industries, 2. Business retention; 4. Natural resources protection; and, 7. Long-term maintenance of existing public infrastructure.

Question 2 - Over the past five years, what has happened in Grand Rapids that you liked or found to be a positive step forward for the community? Circle no more than three, add items if you believe something is missing.



Comment: The two highest-scoring choices were (1) new housing and (2) downtown revitalization, both with about 40%. This indicates that the City’s efforts in these areas (both important elements of the 2003 Plan) are viewed as successful. Also notable is that trails and recreation and transportation system improvements were selected by about 30% of respondents as positive changes.

Question 3 - What has happened in the last five years that you would characterize as a problem, or something to be changed? Circle no more than three, add items if you believe something is missing





Summary: By far the most common response (55.8%) was (1) Businesses closing. Issue 3 (lost economic opportunities) also drew significant attention (34% of respondents) The concern with economic stability is reflected in focus group and public comment results. Increased crime or drug use was also cited by a high percentage of respondents, consistent with other survey questions.

Question 4 - What one thing do you think should be done in the next five years to make Grand Rapids a better place?

Summary: This open-ended question had a response rate of 74%, generating almost 800 responses that covered a wide variety of topics. The responses varied from general statements about issues to comments about specific locations, businesses, or regulations. The Steering Committee took on the initial analysis of these responses, so as to be able to see the actual content rather than a summary of the responses. The responses were presented separate from the other questions, and each Committee member reviewed approximately 60 responses. The responses were grouped into categories, and then each Committee member discussed the category of responses that they had reviewed. The categories were then compiled and condensed into a manageable number of groups. The major themes are discussed below.

Economic opportunity. The single largest category of responses were simple two to five word statements that said “Create more jobs.” The focus on job creation and developing more economic opportunity for residents is consistent with other survey and focus group results. Several variations on this theme included recommendations to promote or attract industry, assist small businesses, expand elements of Grand Rapids’ tourism industry, and improve the viability of downtown businesses.

Economic choice. Another broad set of response categories related to economic quality of life – the kinds of goods and services that respondents thought would make the City a better place to live. Respondents made a number of suggestions for certain categories of retail stores that they believed the City was lacking. The suggestions varied from specific stores, to restaurants, to service industries. These responses expressed that part of the City’s economic development mission is to enable residents and visitors to have a wider choice of goods and services.

Fiscal responsibility. Another theme that included several categories of responses was ensuring fiscal responsibility in managing City government, property tax rates, efficiently run programs, and infrastructure investments. Many comments focused on keeping property taxes down, but there was also a category that emphasized ensuring sufficient investment in important infrastructure or programs was being made. This dichotomy is reflected in other survey question results, such as the property tax issues in Question 3 (which had the highest level of disagreement of any question).

Transportation issues. The final major theme was related to transportation issues. Transportation is clearly perceived as an important function of City government, and categories of responses included improving road surfaces, improving traffic flow, improving access to particular destinations or parts of the City, enabling better and safer pedestrian and bicycle movement, and offering better transit options.



Question 5 - The draft Community Values section of the Comprehensive Plan include the following 11 values that are important to Grand Rapids. Please identify how important each of these values are to you. Importance Very Important -5 Not Important- 1

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1. Small Town Feeling: The small town feeling must be nurtured as the community changes and welcomes an increasingly diverse population. Growth of the urban area should not diminish the quality of the surrounding rural areas. | Avg – 4.04 SD - 1.06 |
| 2. Housing Diversity: Quality, affordable housing is a basic need. Housing diversity is enabled when neighborhoods are connected to cultural, recreational, economic, natural, education, and transportation systems. | Avg – 3.78 SD - 1.17 |
| 3. Cultural and Recreational Opportunities: Cultural and recreational opportunities contribute to our quality of life, define Grand Rapids as a regional creative destination, and enhance our City’s role as a center of state tourism. | Avg – 3.83 SD - 1.09 |
| 4. Fiscal Responsibility: Being accountable to our community means managing our financial resources wisely by encouraging sustainable growth and development, efficient provision of services and programs, and fully accounting for costs associated with public decisions. | Avg – 4.55 SD – .72 |
| 5. Safety – Neighborhoods and Streets: Safety means that our children have safe environments in which to grow, neighborhoods are crime-free, and residents and visitors can walk, bicycle, and drive in safe, regulated traffic environments. | Avg – 4.68 SD - .65 |
| 6. Healthy Living: Creating healthy living opportunities requires careful management of our built environment (housing, roads, other infrastructure) our natural systems (recreation, natural resources), and other local amenities (economic systems, education, local food systems, health care). | Avg – 4.24 SD - .93 |
| 7. Accessible Movement: Street design should accommodate travel with equal ease by car, bicycle, or on foot, and public transportation provides mobility to those without cars. | Avg – 4.10 SD - 1.03 |
| 8. Sustainable Built Infrastructure: The provision and maintenance of high-quality drinking water and wastewater utilities; efficient energy systems; technology infrastructure; and transportation systems is necessary to sustain the economy and maintain a high quality of life. | Avg – 4.47 SD – 2.02 |
| 9. Sustainable Natural Infrastructure. Our natural environment and natural resources are a defining and valued characteristic of our community. Development should enhance natural systems, and sustainable natural systems promote a sustainable economic base. | Avg – 4.00 SD - 1.03 |
| 10. Education: Education includes workforce development, continuing education, and information access, in addition to traditional schools. The more that education is integrated into the community, the better all other aspects of the community will function. | Avg – 4.30 SD - .93 |
| 11. Economic Opportunities. A healthy, growing economy provides opportunities for large and small businesses, rewards entrepreneurship, and provides well-paid and meaningful careers to residents. | Avg – 4.43 SD - .85 |

Avg – Average level of agreement Highest - _____ Lowest - _____
 SD – Standard Deviation (how much disagreement there was, higher means more disagreement among respondents)



Summary: There is a consistently high level of support for each of the community value statements – something that makes sense if the values are truly expressive of the community. The only value statement with a score of less than 4 out of 5 is (3) Cultural and Recreational Opportunities. Also noteworthy is the high degree of consistency in many responses, with standard deviations of 1.0 or less. The significant exception is (8) Sustainable Built Infrastructure, with a remarkable SD of 2.02.

Question 6 - Promoting all eleven values will sometimes put two or more values into conflict. Review the eleven Community Values and identify two of these values that you believe are likely create conflict.

Community Value # _____ Community Value # _____

Question 7 - Which two of the eleven values do you believe are most complementary?

Community Value # _____ Community Value # _____

Summary: Response rates to these questions were very low for Question 6 (39%), and also low for Question 7 (57%). The general conclusion to be drawn from these response rates are that respondents did not see many conflicts between the Community Values (hence the 39% response rate). Many more respondents found values that were complementary, although a significant number also left the question blank.

Analysis of the responses (which values were in conflict or were complementary) yielded widely diverging opinions and only a few patterns from which to draw conclusions. Furthermore, most of the differences between values were small and thus care should be taken in interpreting results.

The number of times that each Community Value was identified as being in conflict or being complementary was totaled for each question. Comparing the number of occurrences in Question 6 and 7 revealed some differences, as shown below:

Analysis of Questions 6 and 7

Value #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Question 6 - Conflicts	144	30	18	82	18	4	14	20	46	3	21
	12	19	14	31	24	15	18	45	48	7	164
Total occurrences	156	49	32	113	42	19	32	65	94	10	185
Percent Occurance	19.6%	6.1%	4.0%	14.2%	5.3%	2.4%	4.0%	8.2%	11.8%	1.3%	23.2%
Question 7 - Complements	134	37	54	76	90	55	13	33	15	61	17
	9	14	19	19	97	77	42	43	67	51	143
Total occurrences	143	51	73	95	187	132	55	76	82	112	160
Percent Occurance	12.3%	4.4%	6.3%	8.1%	16.0%	11.3%	4.7%	6.5%	7.0%	9.6%	13.7%
% Difference between Questions	7.3%	1.8%	-2.2%	6.0%	-10.8%	-8.9%	-0.7%	1.6%	4.8%	-8.4%	9.5%

Values in conflict

- **Value #11 (Economic Opportunities)** – most likely to conflict with other values (23% of respondents), followed closely by **Value #1 (Small Town Feeling)** with 20% of respondents seeing conflicts.
- **Value #10 (Education)** – least likely to conflict with other values (1% of respondents), followed by **Value #6 (Healthy Living)** with only 2% of respondents seeing conflicts.



Values that are complementary

- **Value #5 (*Safety-Neighborhood and Streets*)** – most likely to complement other values (16% of respondents)
- **Value #2 (*Housing Diversity*)** – least likely to complement other values (4% of respondents), followed closely by **Value #7 (*Accessible Movement*)** with 5% of respondents seeing it complement other values.

Comparing the results of Questions 6 and 7, two values were perceived as having stronger complementary characteristics or stronger potential for conflict than the rest of the Community Values.

- **Value #5 (*Safety-Neighborhood and Streets*)** is the Community Value most likely to be complementary to other values and also not in conflict with other values.
- **Value #11 (*Economic Opportunities*)** is the Community Value most likely to be in conflict with other values and also not to complement other values.

Section 3: Future Land Use and Infrastructure

The Comprehensive Plan will identify where future development should occur in the City and what parts of the City are prioritized for redevelopment.

Question 8 - Please circle which of the following land uses you believe should, if supported by the market, expand into undeveloped areas of the City over the next 20 years. Circle no more than three land uses.

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Residential neighborhoods | 29% |
| 2. Industrial development | 36% |
| 3. New commercial development areas along highways | 31% |
| 4. Mixed use areas that include residential integrated with commercial or industrial | 23% |
| 5. Public facilities (schools, sport arenas) | 12% |
| 6. Health care facilities | 10% |
| 7. Parks, recreation, and protected green space | 35% |
| 8. The City should not emphasize new development in undeveloped or areas | 23% |

Summary: Respondents expressed a strong preference for expansion of some of the City’s most common existing land uses: industrial development and parks and green space being the most favored, and new highway commercial development and new residential neighborhoods closely behind. Support for new mixed use areas is somewhat lower, and support for health care and public facilities is the lowest, at 10-12 percent. About significant percentage (23%) of respondents do not support new development in undeveloped areas, which corroborates with other results of this survey, focus group results, and public comments.



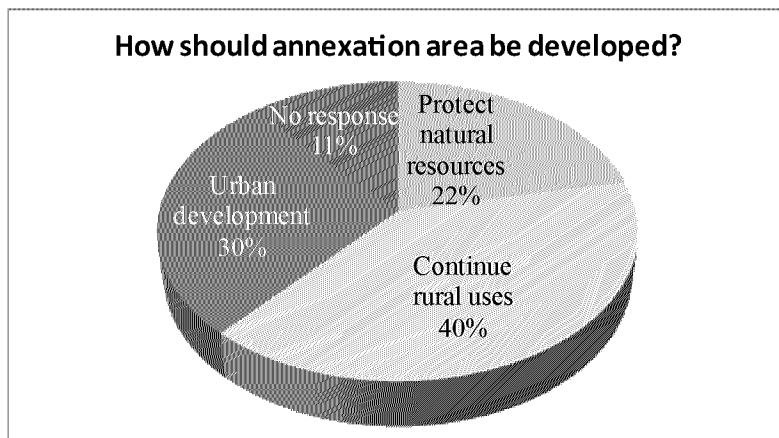
Question 9 - Which of the following areas do you believe provide redevelopment (changes to existing developed areas of the City) opportunities over the next 20 years? Circle no more than three areas.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Existing commercial areas along highways | 35% |
| 2. The downtown | 41% |
| 3. The vacant Ainsworth OSB facility and site | 53% |
| 4. Encourage conversion of some commercial or industrial areas to mixed use development (residential with small commercial) | 15% |
| 5. Existing neighborhoods need newer housing or housing rehabilitation | 18% |
| 6. Vacant lots in existing neighborhoods and large lots that could be subdivided | 12% |
| 7. The Mississippi riverfront | 22% |
| 8. The current mix and distribution of land uses is fine – no changes | 10% |

Summary: Over half the responses identified the vacant Ainsworth site (the bulk of which is the recently designated IEDC Eco-Industrial Park) as the primary redevelopment opportunity. The downtown and existing commercial areas also received strong support as redevelopment opportunities. There was relatively little interest for neighborhood infill or mixed use conversion, with some support (about 22%) for the Mississippi riverfront as a potential redevelopment area. The concept of redevelopment was strongly supported, with only 10% of respondents saying no redevelopment was needed.

Question 10 - With recent annexations, Grand Rapids includes large areas that are undeveloped or lightly developed. Select the one statement that most closely reflects your opinion about these rural areas.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Undeveloped or lightly developed areas should be protected for economic natural resource use (forestry, mining) or recreational uses - | 22% |
| 2. Allow some light or selective new development, but encourage continued rural land uses - | 40% |
| 3. Prioritize undeveloped areas for eventual development with housing, businesses, or industry - | 27% |



Summary: The greatest share of responses – about 40% – supported the idea of continued rural land use with some selective new development. Prioritizing undeveloped areas for eventual development was supported by 27%, while the smallest number of responses supported economic natural resource or recreational use of rural areas. The preference for continued rural use is consistent with other survey and focus group

results. Most residents do not see the rural annexation areas as an urban reserve or an opportunity to promote development outside the existing urban area. Residents continually express a strong preference for retaining the rural character of the recently annexed areas.



Focus Groups

An important part of the public engagement process for the Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan was a series of focus groups conducted by the consultant team and the Steering Committee. City staff and Committee members organized fifteen focus groups over a five week period midway in the Comprehensive Plan process. Some of the focus groups included people with a similar association or point of view, others were mixed affiliation. The size of the groups varied from four to ten people each. The focus groups were:

1. Residents of Grand Rapids (two groups)
2. Non-profit organizations
3. Educational professionals
4. Students
5. Older citizens
6. Younger adults
7. Chamber of Commerce
8. Downtown Business Association
9. Land use, energy and water conservation
10. Faith community leaders
11. Riverfront Committee
12. Tourism and arts
13. Medical industry representatives
14. Leaders from surrounding communities

Focus Group Process. While the affiliations and points of view of the participants were quite varied, each group was asked to respond to a specific set of question related to the future land use and development patterns for Grand Rapids. Each group was presented with background material (primarily alternative maps of future land use and a map of existing land use) and given a short amount of time to consider the maps. The focus group facilitator introduced and explained the maps, explained the purpose of the focus group process, and then followed the same script for questions and for engaging the group.

The scripted questions are noted below:

Question 1: When you initially looked at the future land use alternatives maps, where was the first place on the map that you looked to see how it was treated or categorized? What was your reaction to what you saw?

Question 2: Take a moment to compare the two alternatives. Would you say they have significant differences, or do they look like they are basically similar? What do you think are the most significant differences?

Question 3: Do you prefer Alternative A or Alternative B? Why?

Question 4: The future land use maps are goals that the City will seek to achieve over the next 20 years.

- A. Is there one place shown on either of the alternatives for which you particularly like or don't like what is portrayed on the map?
- B. Point out where it is.
- C. Briefly explain why you like or don't like it.



Question 5: There are some locations on the maps in which the proposed land use differs considerably from the existing use. For instance, both alternatives show an expansion of residential neighborhoods and an increase in the amount of industrial and business park land compared with existing land uses. Do you consider encouraging redevelopment of existing developed areas a necessary or reasonable goal for Grand Rapids take?

Question 6: The Comprehensive Plan addresses a variety of issues including but not limited to the City's future land use pattern. Examples include transportation issues, natural resource use and protection, economic development, water/wastewater/energy infrastructure, and community character and quality of life.

- A. What are the important issues that you believe the Plan should address?
- B. Is your issue affected by the pattern of development shown on the future land use map?

Each focus group had an assigned facilitator and a recorder, usually a Steering Committee member. City staff or the consultant team served as facilitators or recorders for four of the groups. The instructions for facilitators did allow for the group to depart from the script when issues deemed important by the group departed from the issue of future land use patterns. Several groups did depart from the map-focused discussion, as noted below:

Focus Group Results. The results from the focus groups included many responses or opinions that were similar across all groups, and a fewer number that showed a diversity of opinions. The diversity of opinion within each group was somewhat less than between groups, although many groups did see strong differences of opinion on some specific issues or preferences for future development and land use patterns. A brief summary of the range of responses is provided below. The summary does not convey the full level of detail discussed by the Committee, but does provide an indicator of the issues raised by participants.

The Steering Committee reviewed and discussed the results of the focus groups and made a number of recommendations for map changes and language for goals and objectives based on the results. The focus group results, along with the results of the community survey, were a touchstone for the Steering Committee in all subsequent deliberations and decisions.

Question 1: When you initially looked at the future land use alternatives maps, where was the first place on the map that you looked to see how it was treated or categorized?

In nearly all groups, the participants looked first where they lived or where their business was located. The participants in focus groups with a particular geographic focus (the Central Business District Association and the Riverfront Commission) looked first to those areas. Nearly all respondents felt that these places were adequately represented in the Future Land Use map, with a few exceptions where commercial land uses were expanded into existing residential areas.

Some participants did look first to areas other than home or business. The places other than home or business that drew the most interest included:

- The new Highway 38 industrial park on Alternative B
- The City's downtown area
- The green areas throughout the City
- The changes proposed along or near Golf Course Road

- The Highway 169 commercial corridor south
- The medical campus

Question 2: What significant differences do you see between the two alternatives?

Many participants thought the two scenarios were fairly similar. However, even when they found the two scenarios similar, participants noted that the alternatives were sometimes subtly different, but that the differences were important. The most controversial or important differences between the alternatives, as noted by participants, included:

- *New industrial park on Highway 38 (Alternative B)*. The industrial area on Highway 38 in Alternative B was the most discussed difference. Those focus groups with a business or commerce affiliation tended to endorse the proposal as recognizing the need for a location for a large industrial facility should that economic opportunity arise. Most other groups did not like the proposed location, although most also added that the concept of having a place for locating a large industrial facility was a good strategy to include in the Comprehensive Plan.
- *Riverfront green spaces (Alternative A)*. The resource management areas shown along the Mississippi River (most prominent in Alternative A) were an important distinction to many participants. The proposed green space was, however, almost uniformly endorsed by the groups who noted it.
- *Downtown expansion (Alternative B)*. The expansion of the existing downtown area to the east along the River was also noted as an important difference. The Riverfront and Central Business groups paid the most attention to this proposal, but it also drew significant attention from some resident groups. The concept of expanding the downtown was generally supported, but criticism was also expressed regarding whether downtown could sustain an expansion. Strong pro and con statements were also noted regarding the appropriateness of those particular areas for new commercial land uses.
- Other noted differences included:
 - *Medical Campus expansion*. Most people who commented on this thought the expansion was a positive step. Some, however, did prefer the larger Neighborhood Mixed Use designation rather than the Medical Campus expansion.
 - *Alternative A has more green space, Alternative B has more sprawl*. More “green space” (primarily the Resource Management land use category) was frequently pointed out as an important difference, and was almost universally accepted as a positive step for the Comprehensive Plan. Sprawl was viewed as a negative, although some groups also endorsed the concept of allowing expansion of the urban service area to accommodate demand for new housing.
 - *Multi-family expansion versus suburban areas expansion*. This difference was noted by some of the residential focus groups. Some concerns were expressed about the character of both Multi-Family Residential and Suburban Residential. Most discussion agreed of a likely need for more Multi-Family Residential given the ongoing demographic changes in the region. Concerns noted good design and seamless integration of Multi-Family into the adjoining neighborhoods. Suburban Residential expansion had similar character-related concerns, including concerns about ensuring connectivity with surrounding areas.

Question 3: Which alternative is preferred?

Participants' responses to this question were very mixed, both within focus groups and across groups. As noted in the discussion for Question 2, most participants liked elements of both alternatives. Alternative B was favored for reasons that included more housing growth options, emphasizing new industrial growth, better use of neighborhood mixed uses, and encouraging redevelopment and vitality along the river. Alternative A was favored for a greater medical campus expansion, no industrial park on Highway 38, more green space and less sprawl.

Of the 15 groups, a few groups found the question unfair – they wanted more time to consider the alternatives before being asked to prefer one.

Question 4: Is there one place shown on either of the alternatives for which you particularly like or don't like what is portrayed on the map?

Areas that were called out as particularly good ideas included:

- Riverfront – the new commercial development ideas (restaurants, facing the river, economic) and increased green space combination
- Green corridors/buffers for parks and trails along waterfronts
- Expanded medical campus
- Highway 169 - the commercial corridor, promotes economic expansion
- Downtown mixed use areas
- Expanded urban services for residential expansion
- Emphasis on encouraging infill and a wider mix of densities and uses.

Areas that were called out as particularly troubling included:

- Highway 38 industrial park
- Downtown was not clearly more livable and walkable.
- No changes to the Highway 169 commercial corridor to give it more diversity and character.
- Affordable housing was not identified in the downtown.
- Resource management category in the rural areas included too many conflicting land uses.

Question 5: Do you consider encouraging redevelopment of existing developed areas a necessary or reasonable goal for Grand Rapids take?

Not all the groups discussed this question. However, those that did almost exclusively endorsed the concept of infill and redevelopment as more important than opening up more land for development in the City's rural areas. The reasons for this preference were quite varied. Some were concerned that extending sewer, water, and roads would put upward pressure on taxes. Others were concerned with retaining the rural character of the City's rural areas, while still others saw redevelopment and infill as a means of enhancing the City's existing neighborhoods and commercial areas through better building design, more green space, and improved connectivity.



Question 6: What are the important issues that you believe the Plan should address?

This question offered the opportunity to discuss non-mapped issues. Many groups did not wait to be asked this question, but instead moved to it via earlier questions.

Different groups responded quite differently to this question. Some believed that the future land use map captured most of what was important. Most groups, however, discussed issues that could not be mapped but that they believed should be part of the Plan.

Livability and Character

- Important issues that the Comprehensive Plan should address are: sprawl, infrastructure, quality of life, and attracting young people to live and work in Grand Rapids.
- Quality of life encompasses many facets including quality public services, reasonable taxes, economic/educational/creative opportunity, and cultural diversity.
- The map does not address character and quality issues about commercial areas that “look like a dump,” poor housing quality, and the image of Grand Rapids (In Minnesota’s Nature).
- Retaining the City’s small town feel, including both:
 - keep developed areas compact
 - not so dense feels like an inner city
- Annexed areas that are rural should be treated differently in the long run than areas reserved for expansion. That is, zoning and land use rules should acknowledge this difference.
 - Preserve natural features in newly annexed areas.
 - Rural uses such as livestock need to be accommodated.

Sustainability

- Sustainable practices in City operations and development practices will attract people to Grand Rapids (e.g. Green Step Cities Program).
- The Plan needs to address energy goals.
 - Develop and promote prototype alternative energy practices (e.g. build an affordable model energy efficient home).
 - Set energy and water rates to encourage conservation and discourage waste.
 - Use renewable energy for city buildings.
 - Install Dark Sky exterior lighting in the city.
 - Get more recycling through contract with Waste Management, Inc.
- Expand green space within the city’s urban areas.
- Ensure that development faces the riverfront and promotes other green corridors
- Protect and restore natural resources
 - Trees are an important part of Grand Rapids’ environment. Create a plan for expanding tree cover and replacing old trees as they die, e.g. old pines in parks.
 - Control deer in city limits, provide wildlife corridors in and out of the city.
 - Develop a monitoring plan for dealing with septic systems and wells in newly annexed areas.
 - Address the issue of runoff from County Fair Grounds parking area that degrades water quality.
- Address schools in the Plan.
 - Elementary schools may be needed in future; at 20 acres per site requires planning now.
 - The schools need to do a better job of incorporating sustainable practices, particularly recycling.



Neighborhoods and Housing

- Provide for central gathering spots in each neighborhood. Create neighborhood icons, cultivate the distinct feeling within neighborhoods and the sense of place and community.
- While expansion is good, ensure that development is staged to maintain a connected development pattern and efficient use of infrastructure.
- Set goals for affordable housing, especially in downtown.
- Low income housing should be considered/maintained when re-development occurs. Respectful, inclusive, affordable for improved living arrangements.

Transportation

- The Plan needs to address the transportation corridors (Hwy 169 and 2) – consider a ring road for safety and to move traffic that is just passing through
- Transportation and traffic flow issues should be given more consideration. Intersection of 4th Street and Pokegama is an issue and affects traffic flow now and in future.
- Infrastructure such as bridges should be covered in the Plan —Will we need to have more bridges if more development is located on south side of river, particularly in regard to emergency access.
- Too much land is consumed by parking lots. Consider adjusting parking stall requirements for business, thus limiting the size of parking lots.
- Better use the airport or better use the land it sits on. Review airport usage and work for more flights or if not, move it to alternative site
- Continue to improve trails and non-motorized transportation options. The City should be increasingly pedestrian/bike friendly and safe:
 - Trails, walkways, bikeways important
 - Develop a bicycle map
 - Better connect neighborhoods using trails, multi-modal streets
 - Improve problem intersections for pedestrians, such as Golf Course Road and 169, 169 and 2
- More people living in Grand Rapids will mean greater need for discouraging private vehicle traffic. This relates to having better public transportation and encouraging bicycle and foot travel.

Economic Development

- The Plan needs to prioritize industrial expansion and attracting a diversity of industry.
- Recognize the need for balance between maintaining resources and economics success.
- Diversify the economy outside mining and timber (e.g., Ely is no longer limited to timber and mining, Grand Marais had 5 musical events in one night)
- Tourism is a way to help Grand Rapids boom. Promote ecotourism and similar growing niches.
- Recognize the arts and culture as an economic asset. Promote and celebrate Grand Rapids' arts.
- Potential expansion of the mill for new markets (not just paper, but other products) could create changes and impacts not being discussed.
- Invest in downtown
- Promote downtown mixed use
 - Promote development that can accommodate homes and jobs at the same place.
 - Develop hotel or lodging in downtown area so people can actually see the city rather than the Highway commercial strips.
- Work more closely with LaPrairie on economic expansion issues
- Encourage business friendliness.
- Access to medical services is of growing importance. Consider the need for satellites from the Medical Campus and easing of transportation barriers from outlying areas.

Chapter 3 – Community Vision, Values, and Guiding Principles

This Chapter presents the vision for Grand Rapids in 2030, supporting community values, and principles to guide implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

A. Vision Statement

A community vision is an expression of possibility, an ideal future that the community hopes to attain. The vision sets the stage for where the community, as a whole, desires to go. By creating the foundation for underlying goals, objectives, implementation strategies, and policies, the vision statement directs future action and helps bring that desired future into reality. The vision statement presented below describes what community members would like Grand Rapids to be in 2030.

Grand Rapids is a unique blend of small town hospitality and character with big city conveniences and opportunities. Grand Rapids offers an excellent quality of life to residents of the region with outstanding educational opportunities, excellent medical care, exceptional cultural, natural, and recreational amenities, and an unequaled sense of community spirit. Grand Rapids provides all residents safe, friendly, affordable housing and inclusive neighborhoods that retain and enhance nature in the City. Residents and visitors can move around the City with equal ease by car, bicycle, walking, or other mode of transportation. Grand Rapids welcomes and supports a diverse mix of thriving businesses and industry that provide quality jobs, promising careers, and economic vitality. Grand Rapids is a welcoming gateway to Minnesota's Northwoods tourism.





B. Community Values

Community values are the fundamental principles and beliefs that guide a community-driven process toward the realization of the community’s vision statement. Community values describe the enduring beliefs about what is right, good and desirable and provide the foundation for making Grand Rapids a positive place to live. Each of the following values is recognized to shape the other values, and therefore the values should be considered comprehensively rather than individually.

Small Town Feeling

The notion of ‘small town feeling’ means living in a friendly vital neighborhood where people know and care about each other, have an unequalled sense of community, a sense of investment in the neighborhood and the city, and convenient access to shops, businesses, and the rest of the City. The small town feeling must be nurtured as the community grows and must welcome an increasing cultural diversity as our population changes. This small town feeling is dependent on the relationship between the City and its surrounding rural areas. Growth of the urban area should not diminish the quality of the surrounding rural areas.

Housing Diversity

We value a variety of housing types in our community to meet the needs of all residents, no matter their stage in life. Quality, affordable housing is a basic need. Housing diversity is enabled when neighborhoods are connected to cultural, recreational, economic, natural, education, and transportation systems.

Cultural and Recreational Opportunities

We value the availability and quality of artistic, cultural, and recreational opportunities. Cultural and recreational opportunities contribute to our quality of life, define Grand Rapids as a regional creative destination, and enhance our City’s role as a center of state tourism.

Fiscal Responsibility

Being accountable to our community means managing our financial resources wisely. This core value is expressed in many ways, including encouraging sustainable growth and development, efficient provision of services and programs, and fully accounting for costs associated with public decisions.

Safety – Neighborhoods and Streets

Safety is a priority for us, especially in our homes, our neighborhoods, and on our streets. Safety means that our children have safe environments in which to grow and residents and visitors can walk, bicycle, and drive in safe, regulated traffic environments.

Healthy Living

Providing opportunities for healthy living is a core value. Creating healthy living opportunities requires careful management of our built environment (housing, roads, other infrastructure) our natural systems (recreation, natural resources), and other local amenities (economic systems, education, local food systems, health care).



Accessible Movement

We understand and support the need for residents and visitors to move around our City with equal ease by car, bicycle, or on foot. Streets design should accommodate all modes of transportation and public transportation provides mobility to those without cars.

Sustainable Built Infrastructure

The provision and maintenance of high-quality grey infrastructure is necessary to foster investment in a sustainable economy and maintain a high quality of life. Grey infrastructure includes: drinking water and wastewater utilities; energy systems; technology infrastructure; and surface and air transportation systems.

Sustainable Natural Infrastructure

Our natural environment and natural resources are a defining and valued characteristic of our community. People, economy, and natural systems are connected in all aspects of daily life. Development should enhance natural systems, and sustainable natural systems should promote a sustainable economic base.

Education

We value and promote equal access to quality, lifelong, educational opportunities for all residents. Education includes workforce development, continuing education, and information access, in addition to traditional schools. The more that education is integrated into the community, the better all other aspects of the community will function.

Economic Opportunities

A strong diversified economy is a prerequisite to the full realization of all other values. We value a healthy, growing economy that provides opportunities for large and small businesses, rewards entrepreneurship, and provides meaningful careers to residents.





C. Guiding Principles

Guiding principles reflect the community vision and values by setting standards that can guide the development of the Comprehensive Plan. The principles demonstrate how distinct values frequently overlap and create complex decisions from seemingly straightforward values. Additionally, the guiding principles can be carried beyond the plan to provide guidance to decision-makers in implementing the plan.

1. ***Direct growth and development to locations that serve community vision and values.***

Recognize that development and redevelopment activities should be guided to appropriate locations in order to realize the community's vision. Choices about where and how growth occurs will define community character for decades, affect the cost and quality of public services, and shape future development markets.

2. ***Harmonize change with the existing community fabric and natural systems.***

Change is inevitable but opportunities and risks can be managed to protect and sustain community and natural infrastructure. Change can be structured to enhance rather than detract: creating synergies between new and existing businesses, transforming buildings to be more sustainable, designing new housing or commercial buildings to match existing scale.

3. ***Promote local economic vitality.***

Support activities and investments that promote the creation of and sustaining of careers and wages, provision of a diversity of services and goods, and long-term business investment and market expansion.

4. ***Sustain Grand Rapids' neighborhoods.***

The City's neighborhoods and the social networks that connect neighborhood residents require conscious attention and support. Integrate housing with other land uses, design appropriate transportation infrastructure, protect community character in public and private development decisions, enhance natural systems and create connected green spaces.

5. ***Enhance healthy lifestyles, families, and community.***

Direct public and private investment to create opportunities for healthy choices. Physical systems such as designing complete streets and programmatic development such as social services and educational programs can be designed to make healthy choices easier.

6. ***Enhance Grand Rapids' regional role.***

The City is the commercial and service center for the surrounding region, serving surrounding communities and rural areas, and in turn is supported by them. Investment in regional infrastructure such as information technologies and both commercial and recreational regional transportation are critical, as is intergovernmental coordination, to sustain the City's regional benefits.

7. *Practice community participation.*

Community participation is a necessary part of sustainable growth and development. Regular and routine communication with residents, businesses, and visitors should direct and help create support for City investments, regulatory actions, and management choices.

8. *The Comprehensive Plan is the foundation for City actions.*

The Plan should be followed, updated every five years, and progress is reported to the public.





Chapter 4 – Future Land Use

Land Use - Looking Back

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan included an assessment of existing land use, zoning, and annexation areas. The land use element was one of the four major topic areas of the 2003 Plan. The background included:

- An assessment of existing land uses within the City limits by zoning category.
- A description of existing development standards in both the City and in the planned annexation areas regulated by Itasca County
- An examination of developed and undeveloped land by zoning category in both the City and the annexation areas.

County zoning jurisdiction over annexation areas was transferred to the City five years in advance of each scheduled annexation. In 2007 the City rewrote its zoning ordinance and changed many of the districts described in the 2003 Plan, including adding new rural districts to cover the annexation areas. By January 1, 2010, the annexation process was complete and the City boundaries extend to the old township boundary lines except in the east where the Prairie and Mississippi rivers (and the City of LaPrairie) bound Grand Rapids.

Existing Land use

During the creation of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan the analysis of the City's existing land uses was constrained by several factors. The City was mid-way through the annexation process of Grand Rapids Township and was considering land that was not yet under City jurisdiction and zoning districts that were not necessarily designed for use in rural areas. The 2003 Plan analyzed existing land use by zoning category, including both land within the City and the planned annexation areas within Grand Rapids Township. Zoning categories, however, do not reflect the current land use, but rather the preferred land use on a forward-looking basis. For instance, land that was zoned residential may include non-conforming non-residential uses, undeveloped land in uses that do not have buildings (agriculture, forestry), and non-residential public uses that may be allowed within residential areas (such as schools and churches). This method does not recognize land that is zoned in advance of development, the actual use of land within transitional or mixed-use districts such as the Medical District, or vacant land.

The 2003 land use inventory includes an accurate picture of the percentage of developed and undeveloped land within the City's 2003 boundaries: this area was approximately 57 percent developed and 43 percent undeveloped. Land within the annexation area was categorized based on the Itasca County Zoning Ordinance then in effect. Much of this area was undeveloped (including tax forfeit lands and lands in public ownership) or in forestry or recreational use.

As part of the 2011 Comprehensive Plan update, an improved existing land use map was created that allowed a better picture of the current land uses in the City. Rather than use the zoning map to identify existing land use, the analysis took a different

“Developed” and “undeveloped” land

Land is considered “developed” when the primary land use is a built structure. Undeveloped land does not imply that the land is unused or vacant. Rather, “undeveloped” means that the primary land use does not include a built structure. Forestry, mining, agriculture, parks and recreation, can all be classified as undeveloped land.



approach: existing land use was categorized based on County tax classifications, existing GIS mapped characteristics, aerial photo interpretation and fieldwork. An initial map was created that grouped tax classifications and GIS data layers into 17 land use categories. Aerial photo cross-referencing indicated that parcel tax data identifying vacant or undeveloped parcels is more than 90% accurate. Additional cross-referencing and ground-truthing enhanced the data on existing land use which resulted in the attached Existing Land Use Map.

Table 4-1. Existing Land Use, 2010

Land Use Category	Acres	% of Total
Agriculture	30	0%
Commercial	383	2%
Forestry	3,454	22%
Industrial	366	2%
Institutional	1,228	8%
Manufactured Home Park	85	1%
Mining and Extractive	304	2%
Open Water	1,116	7%
Public Parks	680	4%
Public Lands	1,303	8%
Residential	3,325	21%
Residential - Multifamily	209	1%
Residential - Seasonal	73	0%
Right-of-Way	839	5%
Transportation and Utilities	1,014	7%
Unknown	61	0%
Vacant/ Undeveloped	1,098	7%
TOTAL	15,566	100%

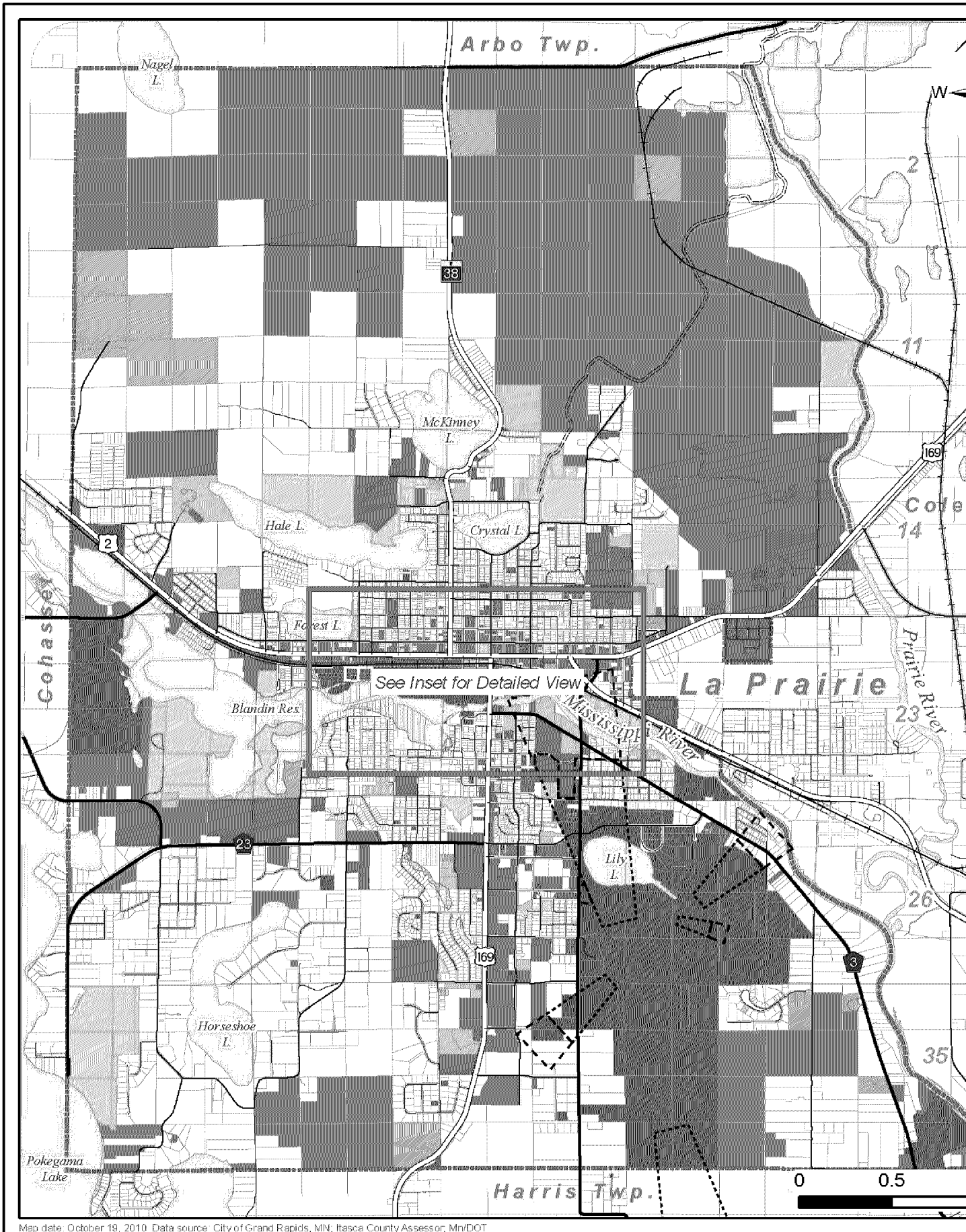
Source: City of Grand Rapids GIS

With the annexation complete, the distribution of lands uses within the City limits has changed considerably since 2003. The large areas with rural land uses, such as forestry and non-City-owned public lands, now comprise large percentages of the total land base (30%). As shown in Table 4-1, the ‘forestry’ land use has almost as many acres as residential land uses. Much of the land in the Public Lands category is County-managed tax forfeit land that is also managed for commercial forestry or aggregate extraction.

The Vacant/Undeveloped category, which comprises 7% of the City’s total land base, is based on a somewhat different characterization of land use than other categories. Vacant or undeveloped parcels are those that are taxed as a developed land use that normally would have buildings (residential, commercial, industrial). These parcels, however, have

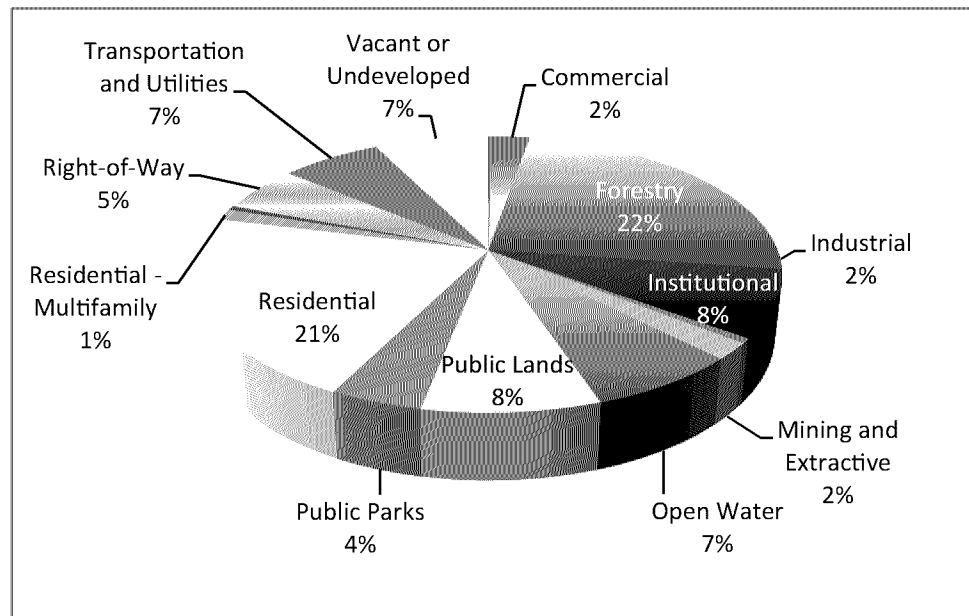
no development on them and are thus characterized as vacant. The vacant/undeveloped category should be distinguished from land use categories that typically do not have structures (forestry, agriculture, public lands). Most of the vacant parcels are undeveloped residential properties (totaling 863 acres). Another 194 acres are currently taxed as commercial, but have no commercial development on them, including some large parcels along the Highway 169 commercial corridor at the south end of the City, but also smaller parcels in other commercial areas of the City.

The Vacant/Undeveloped category indicates that significant opportunities for commercial and residential development exist within the developed portion of the City. Some of these vacant sites are constrained by environmental conditions (wet soils, steep slopes) or ownership considerations (residential homes with double lots, commercial businesses holding adjacent parcels for potential expansion). But approximately 34% of commercially taxed lands, and 20% of residential taxed lands, are currently vacant.



The 'public lands' land use category, comprising 8% of the City's total land base, is primarily County-managed tax-forfeit land that the County manages for forestry, aggregate, and some recreation uses. Millions of acres across northern Minnesota went tax-forfeit back in the first half of the 20th century, and were originally (after going tax-forfeit) controlled by the State of Minnesota. State statute granted most of these lands to the county, and some restrictions apply on how and whether counties can sell these lands.

Chart 4-1. Existing Land Use, Percent of Total Land Base, 2010



Land Use and Zoning

As noted above, zoning districts are not necessarily consistent with land use districts. Zoning districts are frequently distinct from both current land use districts and the future land use districts. Each of these maps (current land use, zoning, future land use) serve distinct purposes as noted below:

- *Existing Land Use* – identify the land uses currently on each parcel (or at least predominant to an area) irrespective of what is allowed or preferred going forward. The Existing Land Use map simply shows what is.
- *Zoning* – identify the preferred and permitted land uses for development and redevelopment for each geographic area in the City. The Zoning map shows what is allowed to happen today on a parcel by parcel basis.
- *Future Land Use* – identify the generally preferred end result of the development and redevelopment process at a specific point in time 20 years from the present. The Future Land Use map shows the long-range desired future condition on a generalized basis, less geographically specific than zoning and on a much longer time frame.

Since the adoption of the 2003 Plan, the City has updated its zoning ordinance to reflect the 2003 Plan priorities. The new ordinance included some changes in the zoning districts, in addition to recognizing new types of land uses, making the ordinance consistent with state requirements and statutes, new standards to ensure development and redevelopment was consistent with the priorities of the 2003 Plan vision, community values, and guiding principles.



The current Grand Rapids Zoning Ordinance consists of 18 zoning districts, 14 additional districts specific to shoreland areas, and five overlay districts. One district, the Mixed Use district and its Shoreland equivalent, is not yet used. The zoning map showing the location of all other districts (as of January, 2010) is attached.

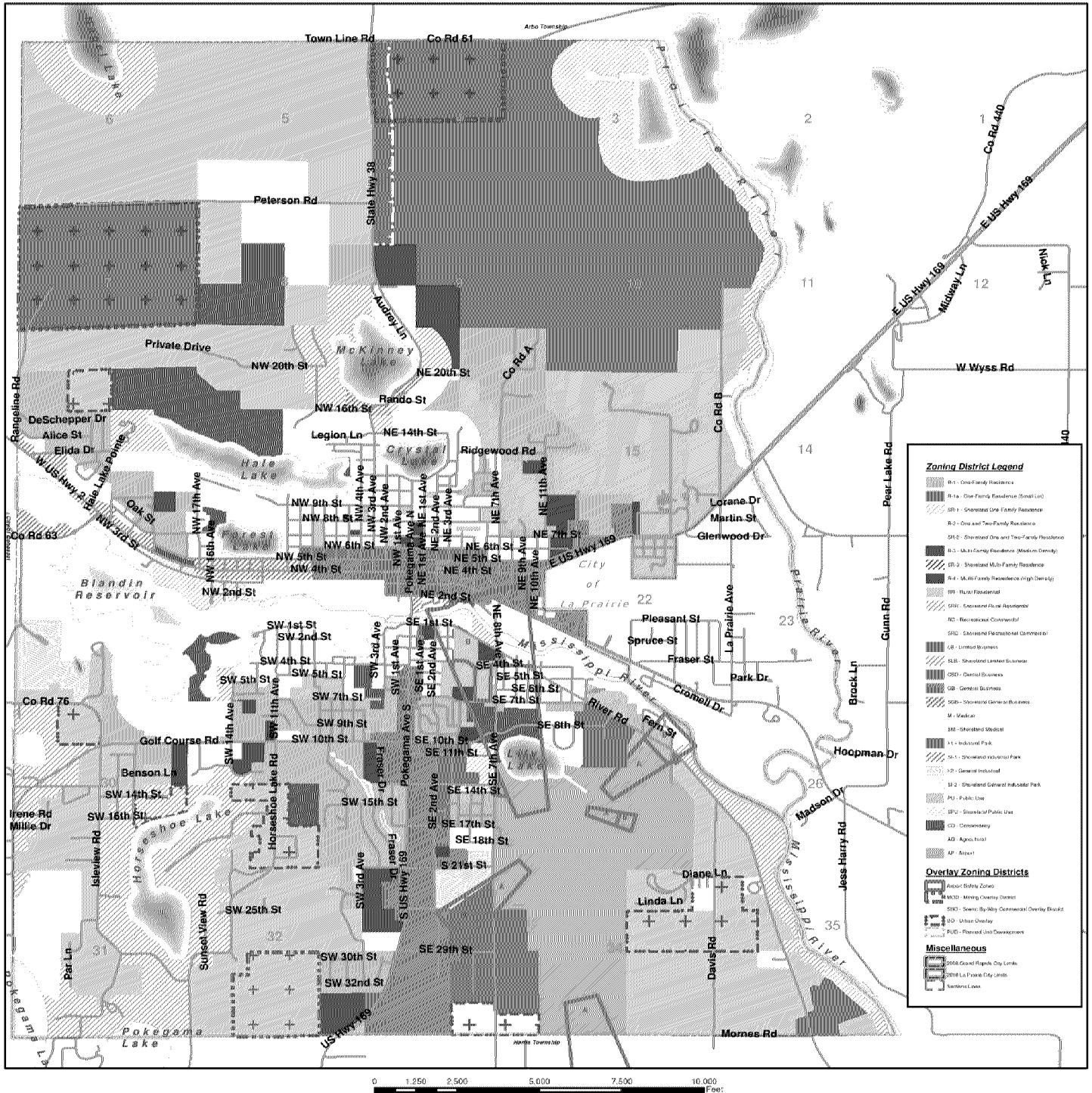
Table 4-2. Zoning Districts, 2010

Map Code	District	Shoreland Version	
		Map Code	Description
RR	Rural residence district	SRR	Shoreland rural residence
R-1	One-family residence district	SR-1	Shoreland one-family residence
R-1a	One-family residence district (small lot)	SR-1a	Shoreland one-family residence (small lot)
R-2	One- and two-family residence district	SR-2	Shoreland one- and two-family residence
R-3	Multiple-family residence district (med. density)	SR-3	Shoreland multiple-family residence (med. density)
R-4	Multiple-family residence district (high density)	SR-4	Shoreland multiple-family residence (high density)
LB	Limited business district	SLB	Shoreland limited business
GB	General business district	SGB	Shoreland general business
CBD	Central business district		
MU	Mixed use district	SMU	Shoreland mixed use
M	Medical district	SM	Shoreland medical
RC	Recreational Commercial district	SRC	Shoreland recreational commercial
I-1	Industrial park district	SI-1	Shoreland industrial park
I-2	General industrial park district	SI-2	Shoreland general industrial park
CD	Conservancy district		
PU	Public use district	SPU	Shoreland public use
AG	Agricultural district		
AP	Airport district		

Source: City of Grand Rapids



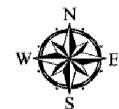
Figure 4-1. Grand Rapids Zoning Map



COPY

Official Map is located in the office of the Zoning Administrator, Located at Grand Rapids City Hall, 420 N Pokegama Ave For questions please call (218) 326.7601

**City of Grand Rapids
Official Zoning Map**



**CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS
ITS IS MINNESOTA'S NATURE**



Table 4-3. Land Available for Development (Dec. 2010)

District Type	Parcels	Mean Parcel Size (sq. ft.)	Total Area (sq. ft.)	Definition of Parcels Included in Analysis	Undeveloped % of Total (sq. ft.)
Central Business	Undeveloped	11	11,461	Undeveloped property (no buildings) that are: not owned by City, County or State for parking or roadway and that are large enough to develop.	6.1%
	Total	195	10,628		
Limited Business	Undeveloped	18	25,070	Vacant/non-developed parcels (building value = 0) less tax exempt	20.0%
	Total	131	17,198	2,252,942	
General Business	Undeveloped	48	112,937	Vacant/non-developed parcels (building value = 0) excluding parcels equal or less than 10,500 square feet and those that owned by government or Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) for ROW.	25.8%
	Total	464	45,316	21,026,853	All parcels, less those that are government or BNSF owned for ROW and less those that are undeveloped and smaller than 10,500 square feet.
R-3 & SR-3	Undeveloped	15	397,550	R-3 = Multi-family (medium density), SR-3 = Shoreland multi-family (medium density)	40.3%
	All Parcels	77	192,255		14,803,669

In December of 2009, City staff conducted an analysis of land available for development within key zoning districts (undeveloped land is distinct from vacant buildings). As can be noted in Table 4-3, undeveloped land is readily available in most of these zoning districts. Undeveloped areas within these zoning districts are the priority areas for development – these areas have city utilities, are connected to the transportation network, and are generally located near compatible land uses. However, while a parcel may be undeveloped, that does not mean it is on the market. Over time most of the undeveloped parcels will be available, but at a given point in time only a portion can be purchased for development.



Future Land Use Categories and the Future Land Use Map

The Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map presents a geographic representation of the City’s preferred future land use scenario. The map summarizes the community’s discussion of how development, preservation, and public realm investment should play out over the next twenty years. Being able to see a picture of the end result is helpful in directing the myriad of large and small decisions and investments over the next twenty years. While the map does not identify the implementation process or interim results it does show the end point, sometimes called the ‘desired future condition,’ of the next twenty years of development activity and land use decisions.

The land use map is intended to be used in conjunction with the written content of the Plan. The map shows the geographic layout of Grand Rapids’ preferred land uses in twenty years, but does not capture the full detail of Comprehensive Plan policies, identify the full range of recommended strategies, or present any staging of development priorities. The vision, values and principles, along with the Plan’s land use policies, and the recommended strategies provide additional direction on staging of growth, on priorities within land use categories, and on implementation preferences.

What is “Land Use”?

The Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan uses the concept of “land use” to describe how the City looks and functions now and in the desired future. “Land use” is related to, and sometimes confused with, other policy and regulatory elements such as zoning districts, land cover, building types, and economic and natural infrastructure. Distinct from these other elements, land use describes literally how the land is being used. A building can be put to residential, commercial, institutional, even industrial uses, and still look largely the same. A piece of land can have no building on it, but can have very different uses; working forest, protected habitat, agricultural crops, residential lawn, storage for iron mining tailings or for heavy equipment. A parcel covered by trees can be used for park, working forest, or residential side lot.

Land use is not necessarily consistent with zoning, land cover, or natural system functions.

What is a “Land Use Category”?

A land use category is a group of land uses that are similar or that have been determined by the community to be complementary. Determining which land uses are complementary is a critical component of the comprehensive plan process. The Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan includes 15 land use categories that the Steering Committee and general public believe reflect the preferred norms for Grand Rapids. For instance, residential land uses are all similar, but the Committee determined that the land use categories needed to recognize differences among residential land uses. For that reason, traditional neighborhoods on a street grid are distinct from lower density suburban style neighborhoods on cul-de-sacs or non-grid street systems. Both of these residential neighborhoods are distinct from areas with substantial amounts of multi-family residential buildings.

The Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee determined a set of land use categories that reflect the Plan’s vision, values and goals. The Committee made these decisions using information and input provided through public meetings, surveys, and other outreach, in addition to technical feedback from staff, consultant team, and the Technical Advisory Committee. These decisions can be rooted in



general policies about how broad groupings of land use (residential, commercial, industrial, open space) should be separated into land use categories that define Grand Rapids' desired future.

Residential Land Use Policy

Residential land uses have always been the single most prominent land use in Grand Rapids. The City has always grouped residential land uses into several categories that distinguish the intensity of use and the differing connections that residential land uses have to the City's transportation system, natural infrastructure, and economic base. The distinct residential land use categories used in the Comprehensive Plan are critical to recognizing these differences and the differing character of Grand Rapids' neighborhoods. The Comprehensive Plan uses four residential land use categories to sustain neighborhood character, housing value, and household quality of life: Traditional Neighborhood, Suburban Residential, Multi-Family Residential, and Rural Residential. The distinction between Traditional Neighborhood and Suburban Residential is a new element of the Plan, and reflects the differing form, mix of uses, and relationship to the built and natural infrastructure.

Traditional Neighborhood

Traditional Neighborhood areas are primarily single family neighborhoods with a smattering of other small multifamily, institutional, and open space uses. Traditional Neighborhoods are laid out in a grid street pattern with a high degree of connectivity, emphasize pedestrian and bicycle modes of transportation, and are located near commercial nodes or corridors.





Commercial Land Use Policy

Commercial land uses include an extremely wide variety of small and large businesses, businesses with high intensity uses and businesses with low intensity uses. The Comprehensive Plan vision, values and principles are best served by recognizing these important distinctions and creating separate land use categories for different types of commercial land uses. These differences need to be incorporated into zoning and land use decision making processes. Consequently, the Grand Rapids Future Land Use map includes three distinct categories of commercial land uses: Downtown Mixed Use, Neighborhood Mixed Use, and Highway Commercial. Of these three, two (Downtown and Highway Commercial) are already acknowledged in the City’s policies and land use regulation.

Neighborhood Mixed Use is a new commercial land use category that helps create synergy with the City’s transportation, neighborhood character, and economic diversity goals.

Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU)

Neighborhood Mixed Use areas are primarily small businesses with relatively low land use intensity that are compatible with and sometimes integrate directly with residential land uses, are designed to be pedestrian-friendly, and fit into small building footprints. NMU areas are located in or adjacent to higher density residential land uses (Traditional Neighborhood or Multi Family Residential), but typically away from other commercial areas. Floor to Area Ratios (FARs) are between 0.8 and 1.5, and building heights are consistent with the surrounding residential neighborhood. NMU businesses are distinct in intensity from downtown or highway commercial businesses that have a higher potential nuisance impact on nearby residential land uses.

Industrial Land Use Policy

In the past, Grand Rapids has grouped all industrial uses into a single land use or zoning category. As business uses and the local economy have evolved, however, a single category no longer supports the City’s economic development needs nor the desired mix of uses in and around industrial areas. The Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan uses three categories of industrial land uses to meet the City’s long term vision, values, and principles: Industrial - Traditional Workplace; Industrial Park; and Business Park/Limited Industrial. Of these three, the new land use category is Business Park/Limited Industrial. The Traditional Workplace category includes traditional industrial uses but specifically recognizes the unique characteristics of the Blandin UPM site, located at the nexus of heavy rail access, highway access, water, the downtown, a separation from most residential uses, and land available for industrial redevelopment.

Business Park/Limited Industrial

Business Park/Limited Industrial areas are primarily small and lower intensity industrial uses, commercial land uses that are similar to wholesale businesses, and businesses that have a mix of uses including office and back office operations, storage, assembly, and limited retail. BP areas include businesses that are inappropriate for industrial parks, but create few synergies by being located with retail establishments, including small wholesale businesses, back-office operations, mail-order operations, materials suppliers, and professional offices.

Open Space Land Use Policy

Open Space refers to land that has little or no built environment or infrastructure. Open space land uses have always had a significant presence in Grand Rapids, reflecting the City's natural resource based economic identity and the City's overall character, as emphasized in the City's logo and identity system. After the annexation of the township, Grand Rapids now has more land in forestry and natural resource industry use than in residential housing. Open Space has become a much more important element of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Open Space land uses include several types of non-built uses, such as forestry, parks and trails, public and private recreation areas, agriculture, and community gardens, in addition to private lands with some buildings on very large lots. The Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan has two land use categories that comprise the open space system: Parks and Recreation; and Resource Management. Resource Management is a new land use category that designates natural resource use as the primary value for the area, while recognizing that other secondary land uses also need to be accommodated in rural areas.

Resource Management

Resource Management areas include public and private land uses that are focused primarily on natural resource industry uses, conservation areas, and recreation uses. This designation includes some parcels with buildings, but only when the predominant land use is oriented to natural landscapes or natural resource use. Forestry, mining, agriculture, and conservation areas that allow for some economic use are included in this category.

Resource Management areas include both those areas that are held in 'urban reserve' (intended for eventual expansion of urban land uses), and areas intended to remain in rural and natural resource




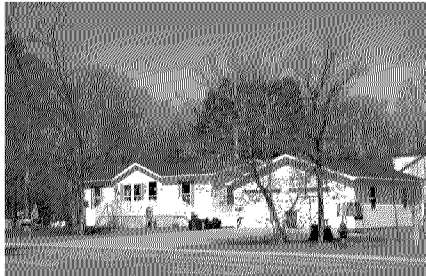
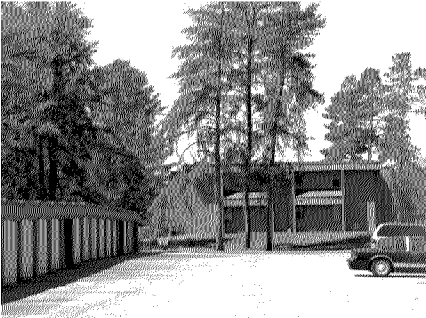
Other Land Uses

The Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan has several other land use categories: Institutional; Transportation and Utilities; and Medical Campus. These future land use categories match fairly well with the categories in the Existing Land Use map and the zoning descriptions for these uses. In addition to these land use categories, small land uses such as trails, new streets, utilities, and small parks are assumed to be land uses that will exist within all the land use categories, and thus are not noted separately as secondary land uses on the future land use table.


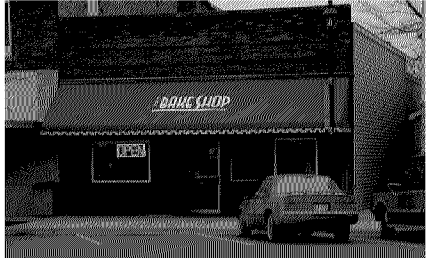










Table 4-4. Grand Rapids Future Land Use Categories

Category / Description	Primary Land Use	Potential Secondary Land Uses	Other aspects, zoning considerations
<p>Traditional Neighborhood / Traditional Residential – street grid, moderate lot sizes, walking distance from larger commercial nodes; stable residential areas.</p> 	<p>Single-family residential; other housing with similar densities</p>	<p>Other residential types such as duplex, limited multi-family buildings at the scale of the neighborhood, neighborhood scale institutions including churches, pocket parks, community gardens.</p>	<p>Consideration needed for new development that is farther removed from existing commercial nodes to incorporate NMU or DMU opportunities.</p>
<p>Suburban Residential – sewered areas, newer homes, typically not on a grid street pattern, typically lower density than traditional neighborhood.</p> 	<p>Single-family residential</p>	<p>Duplex and triplex, accessory dwelling units, neighborhood scale institutions including churches, parks, community gardens, limited home-based businesses.</p>	<p>New development should use trails to ensure pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, encourage trail creation in existing areas.</p>
<p>Multi-Family Residential – encompass the scattered sites that already exist, provide for some expansion of MFR areas.</p> 	<p>Apartments, condos, townhouses (outside of downtown or mixed use areas).</p>	<p>Parks, recreational or community amenities, assisted living, manufactured home communities.</p>	<p>Consider adjacent uses to create synergy, such as commercial and related institutional uses. Consider integration with transit and non-motorized travel infrastructure.</p>







Category / Description	Primary Land Use	Potential Secondary Land Uses	Other aspects, zoning considerations
<p>Rural/Large Lot Residential – on-site septic, limited street connections.</p> 	<p>Single-family residential with on-site wastewater system.</p>	<p>Forestry, agriculture, recreation, rural home-based businesses, limited commercial uses compatible with primary use.</p>	<p>Will require additional definition and standards for secondary uses.</p>
<p>Neighborhood Mixed Use – small mixed use areas adjacent to or within residential areas.</p> 	<p>Mixed use buildings, offices, small scale commercial uses compatible with residential</p>	<p>Residential buildings.</p>	<p>Allowed uses and building design need to be clearly defined to ensure compatability with residential uses.</p>
<p>Downtown Mixed Use /Town Center – small to mid-size commercial and retail centers that are adjacent to and integrated with residential areas.</p> 	<p>Mix of uses encouraged. Retail, office, institutional, civic, entertainment, lodging, high-density residential, vertical mixed use.</p>	<p>Parks, recreational or community amenities</p>	<p>Consideration of form-based zoning.</p>
<p>Highway Commercial / Commercial Corridor – small scale to big box retail and commercial that is oriented to the City's highways.</p> 	<p>Larger-scale commercial (retail and other) uses, lodging</p>	<p>Commercial recreation</p>	<p>Could require design standards or some segregation of uses (big box, pedestrian-oriented, auto-focused)</p>



Category / Description	Primary Land Use	Potential Secondary Land Uses	Other aspects, zoning considerations
<p>Medical Campus – areas with institutional (large scale) medical uses and aggregations of smaller medical businesses.</p> 	<p>Hospital, medical offices and related services</p>	<p>Related commercial, lodging, parks and recreation, assisted living facilities.</p>	<p>Clear regulatory connection needs to be created for integrating secondary uses.</p>
<p>Industrial – Traditional Workplace - Paper and other industries in city center – part of greater Downtown and integrated with rail and highway infrastructure.</p> 	<p>Industrial, office, services. Facilities needing access to rail infrastructure.</p>	<p>N/A (In proximity to downtown retail and services).</p>	
<p>Industrial Park – Traditional industrial park uses, primarily heavy/intensive uses such as manufacturing and warehousing.</p> 	<p>Production/manufacturing, warehouse, large-scale wholesale with trucking, transfer facilities</p>	<p>Office/administrative associated with primary uses. Retail outlets associated with and secondary to primary uses.</p>	<p>Clear regulatory standards defining appropriate mix of uses and relationship between primary and secondary uses.</p>
<p>Business Park / Limited Industrial – Industrial and non-retail uses that are less intense than heavy manufacturing.</p> 	<p>Offices, limited production, small wholesale uses</p>	<p>Low visibility/limited retail, services such as child care, education, training facilities.</p>	<p>Will require zoning district modification or new district. Clear definition of preferred mix of land uses needed.</p>



Category / Description	Primary Land Use	Potential Secondary Land Uses	Other aspects, zoning considerations
<p>Institutional / Civic – Larger campus-style institutions, mostly but not exclusively public and non-profit sector.</p> 	<p>Religious, educational, government institutions</p>	<p>Residential multi-family that is related to the institutional use.</p>	
<p>Resource Management - Includes County-owned tax-forfeit lands managed for forestry, gravel, trail; private lands managed for minerals or forest products.</p> 	<p>Forestry, agriculture, sand and gravel, other mining, trails and recreational uses</p>	<p>Very low density residential that can be isolated from resource extraction and management.</p>	<p>May require use of multiple zoning districts to ensure separation of incompatible land uses. May require creation of overlays</p>
<p>Parks and Recreation – public and private lands dedicated to long-term recreational uses.</p> 	<p>Public and semi-public parks, recreational areas, trails, water access points, golf courses.</p>	<p>Shooting ranges, outdoor racetracks.</p>	<p>Includes both public and private ownership, and thus does not translate directly to a zoning district.</p>
<p>Transportation and Utilities – includes most public land dedicated to transportation infrastructure and long term utility needs.</p> 	<p>Airport, roads, railroad, other rights-of-way including electric transmission and inter-regional pipelines</p>	<p>None</p>	

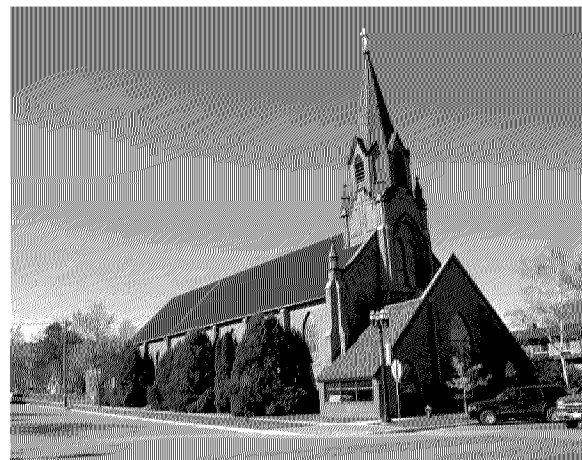
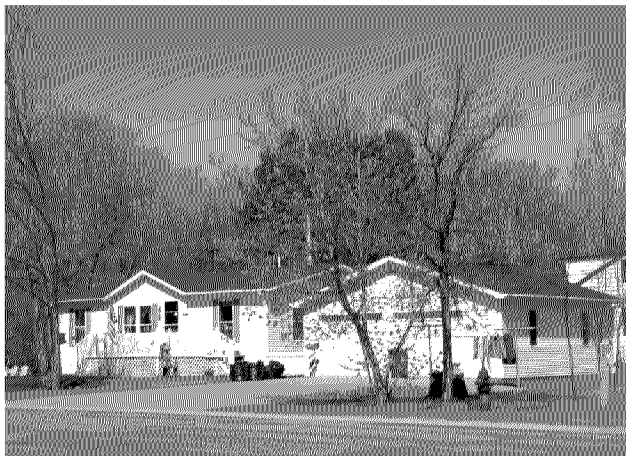


What is a Land Use Map?

The Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan includes two types of “land use” maps; the Existing Land Use map, and the Future Land Use map. These two maps both show land use, but there are some important distinctions to be made between them.

Existing Land Use Map. The Existing Land Use map shows the City existing land use landscape. Existing land uses are described on a parcel specific basis. The City has a record of the type of land use on each individual tax parcel, which can then be grouped into categories to accurately show existing land uses. The Grand Rapids Existing Land Use map shows this landscape using 15 land use categories, including a category for “vacant” land.

Future Land Use Map. The Future Land Use map is a snapshot of the preferred mix of land uses at a point 20 years in the future. The future land use map is therefore more conceptual than the Existing Land Use map. The future land use map shows the City’s future landscape assuming the vision and goals of the Comprehensive Plan are met. Boundaries between land use districts are not intended to be precise; the view of the City is from 20,000 feet rather than from on the ground. The actual boundaries will be shaped by the market conditions, demographic changes, and economic events that occur over the next 20 years.





Grand Rapids’ Future Land Uses

Chart 4-2 shows the distribution of the City’s area by Urban and Rural uses. Almost a third of the City is in the Resource Management category, and another 14% in rural residential. Grand Rapids future development pattern will thus leave almost half the City in rural land uses.

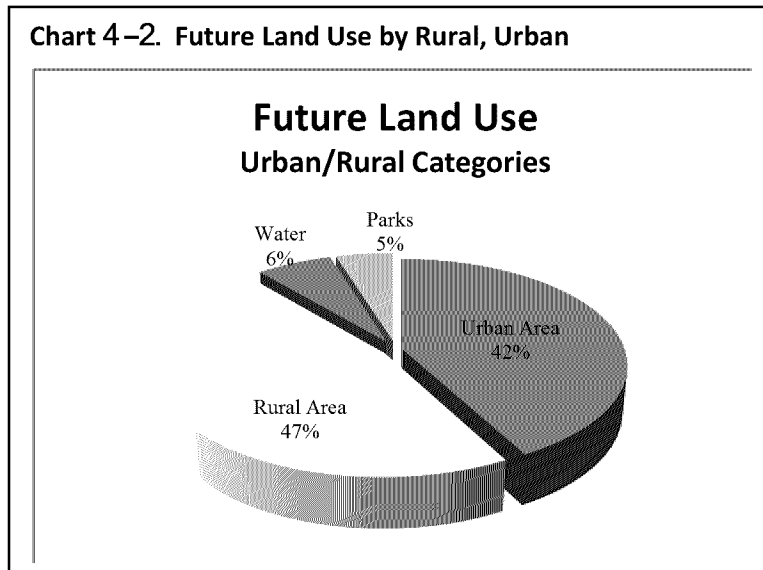


Table 4-5 and Chart 4-3 (next page) shows the City by Future Land Use Category. Residential housing other than rural housing comprises 22% of the City. Most City residents will live in the more compact areas of the City (Multi-Family and Traditional Neighborhood). The Suburban Residential area is 9% of the City’s area but is likely to be developed at a somewhat lower density.

Industrial and Business park areas make up almost 4% of the City’s land, enough to provide for continued industrial expansion for years to come. Mixed Use categories include the Neighborhood Mixed Use, Downtown Mixed Use, and Medical Campus area. These areas can include varying types of commercial and service businesses in addition to some housing and institutional uses, and make up two percent of the City. The other commercial land use category, Highway Commercial, is four percent of the City’s area.

Transportation and Utilities is composed primarily of the airport and associated safety zones, making up six percent of the City’s area. Institutional areas also make up six percent and include the Itasca Community College, governmental buildings, and large churches and schools.

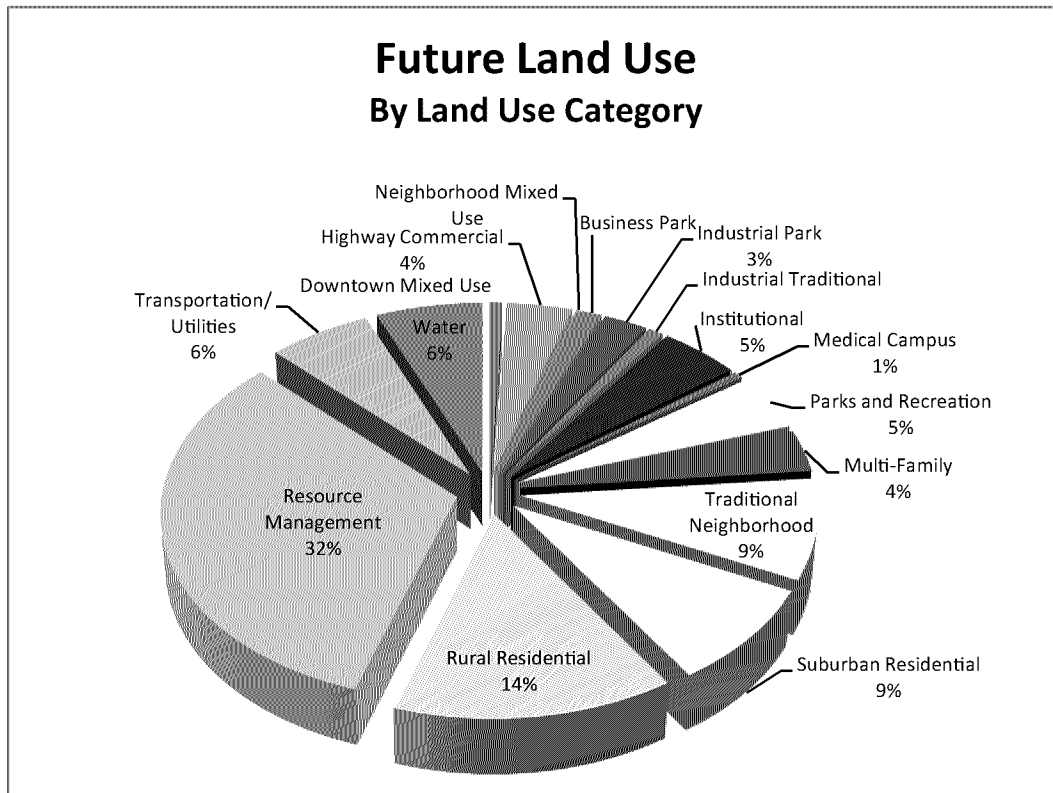
Table 4-5 Future Land Use by Total Area

Future Land Use Category	Acres	% of Total
Downtown Mixed Use	114	0.7%
Highway Commercial	601	3.9%
Neighborhood Mixed Use	39	0.3%
Business Park	188	1.2%
Industrial Park	402	2.6%
Industrial Traditional	136	0.9%
Institutional	738	4.8%
Medical Campus	91	0.6%
Parks and Recreation	735	4.8%
Multi-Family	548	3.6%
Traditional Neighborhood	1,343	8.8%
Suburban Residential	1,313	8.6%
Rural Residential	2,169	14.2%
Resource Management	4,946	32.4%
Transportation/ Utilities	939	6.1%
Water	969	6.3%
Total	15,270	

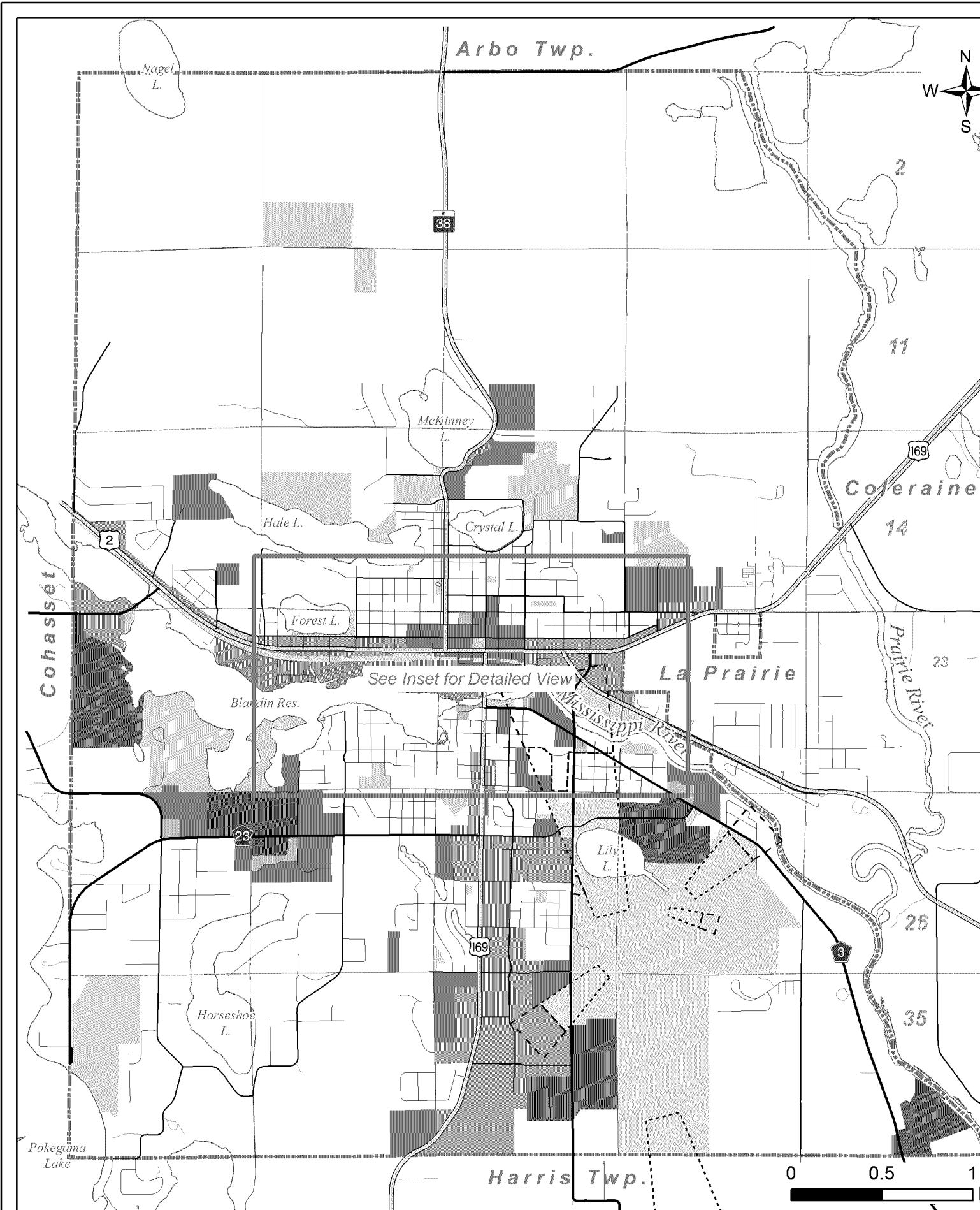
Parks and Recreation and open water total 11% of the City.



Chart 4-3. Future Land Use by Category



The full future Land Use Map is on the following page.



Map date: April 11, 2011 Data sources: City of Grand Rapids, MN; Mn/DOT; CR Planning



Key Development and Redevelopment Sites

Some key development and redevelopment parcels that were addressed during the planning process on the Future Land Use Map including the following sites.

St. Joseph School and Church site – The full city block immediately north of the downtown was the location of the St. Joseph Church and school for many years. The blocks to the east are zoned for multi-family housing. This site has the characteristics for a Neighborhood Mixed Use redevelopment within the 20-year term of this Plan.

Riverview School Site – The former Riverview School site is located a few blocks south of Mississippi River at SE 3rd Street and SE 4th Avenue. This area is targeted for redeveloped as multi-family housing that can be integrated into the Traditional Neighborhood area and include amenities such as a redeveloped playground or park on the site of the old school playground.

Former Primary Treatment Plant Site – The primary wastewater treatment plant is being replaced with a new facility. The old plant site will include a small area for wastewater pumping, but is available for redevelopment in the near future. The site, located along the Mississippi River, connected to riverfront park and trails, is an ideal location for higher end high density housing. Part of the site along River Road can also accommodate a neighborhood mixed use commercial area, and the redevelopment process should leave a resource management buffer along the River that connects to the park.

Industrial Parks – The Future Land Use Map shows several recent additions to the City's industrial park areas and the planned (already zoned) expanded industrial areas west of the Blandin/UPM facility. The industrial areas were assessed to make sure that sufficient land was ready for both routine industrial expansion and the potential for a large facility looking for a shovel ready site.

Housing and Neighborhood Diversity – The planning process was cognizant of the City's and region's changing demographics, the potential for expansion of natural resources industries in the area, and potential changes in in-migration patterns. One of the goals in creating the future land use map was to ensure plan provided for a range of housing types and to accommodate a diversity of inter-connected neighborhoods. These goals required particular attention to creating multiple opportunities for redevelopment (particularly for multi-family areas) near to walkable commercial areas and job centers.

Protecting Natural Infrastructure – A clear response in both the community survey and the focus group process was the importance of building in increased connections to open space and greater integration of natural systems into the City's urban areas. Part of that sentiment was expressly directed to the urban rivers and lakes that were not treated as amenities as Grand Rapids developed in the past. The Future Land Use map includes resource management shore areas in those parcel targeted for development or redevelopment along lakes or the Mississippi River over the next 20 years. Improved treatment of the River is also consistent with the City Riverfront Plan that was adopted after the 2003 Plan.



Future Land Use – Goals, Objectives, and Implementation Priorities

Grand Rapids has achieved many land use goals of its 2003 Plan. Some priorities, however, remain unfulfilled and new priorities have arisen since 2003. The 2010 Plan process included significant public outreach around land use issues and the creation of a future land use map. Issues identified in public meetings, the community survey, the focus group process, and the engagement of stakeholders in the Steering committee include the following:

- *Recognize the City's evolving demographics.* As noted in the Demographics section, the City is facing the same unprecedented aging trend that is seen throughout Minnesota and across the United States. Land use patterns can be greatly affected by such changing demographics as demand for various housing types and urban amenities shifts. The City has already seen an increase in demand for accessible housing, for smaller housing units, and residential areas that are better connected to health care, commercial areas, and recreational amenities.
- *Prepare for economic expansion.* As described in both the Demographics and Economic Infrastructure sections, the City needs to be prepared for another round of expansion in natural resource industries. Such an expansion could bring new demand for housing, industrial, and commercial land uses.
- *Maintain balance of urban and rural character within the City.* The City's recent annexation of large rural areas of Grand Rapids Township changes the land use management decisions faced by staff, Planning Commission, and City Council. Public comment clearly favors maintaining the rural character of areas in the City's north, southwest, and southeast.
- *Staging development.* The uncertainty about the rate of economic expansion and market demand requires the City to strike a balance between ensuring sufficient land is zoned for development and the risk of inefficient and disconnected sprawl.
- *Improve urban integration with natural infrastructure.* Public comment demonstrated a clear preference for improving the connection of the City's urban area to the natural infrastructure within and adjacent to the urban area. Sentiment is strong for better utilization of and protection of rivers, lakes, urban forest, and other elements of the City's natural infrastructure.
- *Protect natural infrastructure supporting economic base.* As noted in the Natural Infrastructure section, Grand Rapids has important mineral, recreational, and forestry resources within City limits. These resources need to remain part of the portfolio of natural resource feedstocks for industry and tourism.
- *Improve urban integration with the transportation system.* Land use goals and transportation infrastructure are integrally linked. Concepts such as "complete streets" and pedestrian-orientation can be extended from the 2003 Plan and enhanced by new studies.
- *Better capture of land use synergies.* Traditional separation of land uses into residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional categories fails to recognize how a selective mix of uses across these categories improves livability and economic sustainability. The City has an opportunity to create new distinctions and new mixes between traditional categories.
- *Incorporate character and design in land use categories and regulation.* The design of neighborhoods and commercial areas affects livability and economic viability. The City has an opportunity to identify and encourage design for development and redevelopment that recognizes characteristics affecting livability, visual character, function, and connectivity.

To help define the City's land use goals, the Steering Committee crafted the Future Land Use Map and a sequence of goals and objectives that reflect the Plan's community vision, values, and guiding principles.



As described below, the Comprehensive Plan is not simply the Future Land Use map, nor just a set of goals, objectives and strategies. The different elements of the Plan work together and must be considered comprehensively rather than in isolation.

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan Land Use section included five goals:

- Goal 1: Provide a sound basis for orderly development by establishing proper relationships among agricultural, commercial, industrial, residential, and other land uses.
- Goal 2: Provide physical accessibility throughout Grand Rapids.
- Goal 3: Preserve Community Landmarks
- Goal 4: Protect the Edge of the Wilderness National Scenic Byway Corridor
- Goal 5: Ensure that riverfront development meets the needs of current and future Grand Rapids Residents

Each Goal had a number of objectives. Goal 1 had eight objectives, Goals 2 through 5 had only one or two objectives. All of these goals, and many objectives, were still consistent with the City’s Community Vision, Values, and Guiding Principles and the 2010 Plan incorporates the goals and objectives into a new goal hierarchy.

Goal 1: Provide for orderly development by establishing proper relationships among agricultural, commercial, industrial, residential, and other land uses.

The fundamental basis for land use planning, and a primary element of sustainable development, is recognizing the synergies and conflicts between different land uses, and the need for a diverse set of land use areas.

The City has also identified five objectives that help define Land Use Goal 1.

- a. *Ensure that development and redevelopment is orderly, following the patterns established in the Future Land Use Map.* The Future Land Use map portrays the development and redevelopment patterns that are consistent with the Community Vision, Values and Principles. Implementing the pattern in a staged and efficient process will sustain the City’s community, economic, and natural infrastructure.
- b. *Ensure that development avoids the close proximity of conflicting uses and maximizes synergy among uses.* Recognize conflicts and synergies in setting and administering land use regulation. Look beyond the similarity of uses (i.e. small commercial and large commercial) to maximize synergies (i.e.

Community Vision

“Grand Rapids is a unique blend of small town hospitality and character with big city conveniences and opportunities. . . “

Community Values

Fiscal Responsibility

Being accountable to our community means managing our financial resources wisely. This core value is expressed in many ways, including encouraging sustainable growth and development, efficient provision of services and programs, and fully accounting for costs associated with public decisions.

Guiding Principles

Principle 1. Direct growth and development to locations that serve community vision and values.

Recognize that development and redevelopment activities should be guided to appropriate locations in order to realize the community’s vision. Choices about where and how growth occurs will define community character for decades, affect the cost and quality of public services, and shape future development markets.

- small commercial and multifamily residential).
- c. *Promote the best use of land, from the community's long-term perspective, for new development and redevelopment.* The City will consider the long-term consequences of development decisions as well as the value of development proposals under today's market conditions.
 - d. *Give preference to long-term community and market benefits in Resource Management land use areas.* Resource management areas are designed as such due to the frequently multi-generational consequences of development in these areas that might diminish resource value. Development should be secondary to protection of economic or natural resources and interim uses should not diminish resource management or extraction and natural system function.
 - e. *Stage new development or expansion of the City's urban service area.* The Future Land Use Map shows an end point 20 years out. Redevelopment and infill development should have preference over development on green field sites within the City and especially areas that will require expansion of City services. Meaningful staging will also require working with surrounding communities (adjacent townships and cities) to ensure a cohesive land use pattern for the region.

Goal 2: Promote commercial development that serves local and regional markets. A diversity of commercial land uses offers multiple benefits to residents and visitors and enhances economic sustainability.

The City has identified two objectives to define Land Use Goal 2.

- a. *Recognize distinct classes of commercial development that serve different markets and are compatible with different land uses.* Different commercial uses serve distinct markets and perform best when clustered with uses that serve similar markets or require similar infrastructure.
- b. *Provide opportunities for neighborhood commercial nodes that are compatible with residential land uses.*





Goal 3: Provide for industrial retention and expansion. Land use goals need to provide ready opportunity for basic industries to locate in Grand Rapids and to expand.

The City has identified two objectives to define Land Use Goal 3.

- a. *Recognize distinct classes of industrial development and direct industrial development to the appropriate land use areas.* Different industrial uses require different types of public and transportation infrastructure. Rail access, for instance, is difficult infrastructure to build new, and sites with rail access should be reserved for industrial uses that gain value from it.
- b. *Reserve sufficient industrial area for new large and small industrial projects.* The Future Land Use Map provides for new industrial investment of a variety of types, and should be reflected in land use regulation.

Goal 4: Protect and enhance the diversity and livability of residential areas. A diversity of residential land uses allows for lifecycle housing choices and options within a variety of housing markets. Grand Rapids’ housing options stretch across the entire residential land use transect, from rural to dense multi-family.

The City has identified four objectives to define Land Use Goal 4.

- a. *Integrate different types of residential housing while retaining character of distinct neighborhoods.* Allowing for some variety of housing within neighborhoods will promote inclusive and economically integrated neighborhoods. Variety of housing options can be achieved while enhancing neighborhood character.
- b. *Promote the development and retention of traditional neighborhoods in and adjacent to the urbanized area.* Traditional neighborhoods are the largest residential land use category on the Future Land Use Map, and likely to be where most residents will live.
- c. *Promote neighborhood identity, pride, and sense of place.* Grand Rapids has distinct neighborhood character throughout the City. Regulation and land use decision-making should explicitly attend to character and sense of place.
- d. *Allow uses and activities appropriate to the character of the residential district.* All land use and zoning districts ideally have multiple uses. In creating and managing land use regulation, recognize and allow secondary land uses that enhance livability or character, while retaining the primary use as residential.

Community Values

Housing Diversity

We value a variety of housing types in our community to meet the needs of all residents, no matter their stage in life. Quality, affordable housing is a basic need. Housing diversity is enabled when neighborhoods are connected to cultural, recreational, economic, natural, education, and transportation systems.

Guiding Principles

Principle 4. Sustain Grand Rapids’ neighborhoods.

The City’s neighborhoods and the social networks that connect neighborhood residents require conscious attention and support. Integrate housing with other land uses, design appropriate transportation infrastructure, protect community character in public and private development decisions, enhance natural systems and create connected green spaces.

Goal 5: Promote development of mixed-use areas. All land use categories include a mix of uses, as do many zoning districts, but the City has relatively few fully mixed use areas. Mixed use development has



been demonstrated to be extremely efficient in use of public infrastructure and provides market options that are currently limited in Grand Rapids in an era likely to see growing demand for mixed use development. Mixed use land use categories include downtown mixed use, neighborhood mixed use, and medical campus.

The City has identified three objectives to define Land Use Goal 5.

- a. *Encourage new, planned mixed-use developments, in which the attributes of traditional neighborhoods and small commercial are merged.* Mixing uses is much less controversial in new developments. New mixed use development should explicitly include both residential and commercial land uses, incorporating design and performance standards as necessary to limit nuisances.
- b. *Promote the full mix of uses in existing mixed use areas, as identified in the land use categories.* The land use categories define primary and secondary land uses within each land use category. Multiple zoning districts may need to be applied in some of these areas to achieve the targeted mix of uses.
- c. *Support the development and expansion of Grand Rapids' medical campus.* The viability of the medical campus area is enhanced when the Neighborhood Mixed use and Multi-family land uses are integrated into and around the medical campus, as portrayed on the Future Land Use Map.

Goal 6: Balance open space and environmental preservation with the Grand Rapids' development needs. Development and environmental preservation goals can successfully be integrated with careful design and recognition of natural system functions, as described in the Natural Infrastructure section. Open space within the urban fabric creates synergies with almost every other type of land use. Natural systems, if designed into developed areas, help sustain and add value to the development over time.

Guiding Principles

Principle 2. Harmonize change with the existing community fabric and natural systems.

Change is inevitable but opportunities and risks can be managed to protect and sustain community and natural infrastructure. Change can be structured to enhance rather than detract: creating synergies between new and existing businesses, transforming buildings to be more sustainable, designing new housing or commercial buildings to match existing scale.

The City has identified three objectives to define Land Use Goal 6.

- a. *Protect and preserve existing open space and natural systems and encourage expanded access of urban and rural open spaces.* Grand Rapids has many critical natural systems throughout the City; few places in the City are without natural system or open space considerations. Development and redevelopment efforts can incorporate open space and natural systems, and even restore degraded systems when so targeted during the development process.
- b. *Provide sufficient opportunities for public use activities within Grand Rapids.* The Future Land Use Map identifies a wide variety of open space and recreational areas. Parks and public open spaces are important elements in residential and commercial areas.

Community Vision

“Grand Rapids provides all residents safe, friendly, affordable housing and inclusive neighborhoods that retain and enhance nature in the City. . . “



- c. *Facilitate the conservation goals of the Blandin conservation easement.* The City has hundreds of acres of lands under permanent protection for conservation and forest management purposes. Regulation and administrative review of land use and development activities in and around the conservation areas should contribute to the conservation goals of the easements.

Goal7: Provide physical accessibility throughout Grand Rapids. Access to and among different types of land use is critical to a functioning community. Access needs to include pedestrian, bicycle and non-motorized, and motorized vehicles.

The City has identified five objectives to define Land Use Goal 7.

- a. *Encourage the development of pedestrian and bicycle pathways that link the community together in a cohesive manner, in addition to providing motorized vehicle access.* As described in the Natural Infrastructure section, pedestrian and bicycle pathways are a key element to sustainable development goals. Incorporate planned pathways in new developments and subdivisions, and create processes to extend pathways to existing developed areas.
- b. *Connect rural residential and suburban land uses to the urban form.* Rural residential and suburban residential development frequently leaves these neighborhoods isolated from the rest of the community. Creating pedestrian, bicycle, and motorized connections to the rest of the City is important to sustaining these neighborhoods over time.
- c. *Encourage the provision of access to residents and visitors with disabilities.* Ensure that street, neighborhood, and commercial area planning and design accommodates access for people with disabilities.
- d. *Integrate the Complete Streets study results into the Comprehensive Plan.* As described in the Transportation section, the Complete Streets study being completed by MnDOT will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan when applying Complete Streets principles to Grand Rapids. The results and recommendations can be integrated into the Comprehensive Plan to support building a multi-modal transportation network.
- e. *Connect businesses with surrounding land uses to increase access.* Connectivity and multi-modal strong across

Community Values

Healthy Living

Opportunities for healthy living is a core value. Creating healthy living opportunities requires careful management of our built environment (housing, roads, other infrastructure) our natural systems (recreation, natural resources), and other local amenities (economic systems, education, local food systems, health care).



transportation should be all land use categories.



Goal 8: Preserve historic and natural community landmarks. Grand Rapids’ natural, historic, and cultural heritage is embodied in buildings, places, and views through the City. Recognizing those places as unique contributors to Grand Rapids’ sense of place will enhance livability and help retain the community character celebrated in Grand Rapids’ vision statement.

The City has identified three objectives to define Land Use Goal 8.

- a. *Promote the preservation of those sites, buildings, structures, objects and natural resources that are associated with the historical and cultural development of Grand Rapids.* Historic and cultural elements are a critical component of Grand Rapids’ identity.
- b. *Protect the visual integrity of the Edge of the Wilderness National Scenic Byway.* Protecting the Scenic Byway will retain the rural and scenic character of the northern entrance to Grand Rapids.
- c. *Integrate the visual and natural functions of the Mississippi River into riverfront development.* Riverfront development needs to actively incorporate, protect, and where possible, restore the River and shore areas.





Implementation Priorities

The 2003 Plan included a number of implementation priorities for the land use goals and objectives. A number of these recommended strategies and actions were completed over the ensuing years, including a complete rewrite of the City’s zoning ordinance. A few actions were not completed and are included in this updated Plan. Moreover, the new Plan includes new natural resource priorities and opportunities, including some new responsibilities assigned to the City by State and Federal agencies. Additional implementation priorities are added to address these changes.

The following actions implement the goals and objectives described above and the land use policies that accompany the Future Land Use Map. These implementation priorities must also be understood within the context of the Community Vision, Values, and Principles and the goals, objectives, and implementation priorities in other sections of this Plan.

Development and Land Use Regulation

- Continue to evaluate new development for compatibility with and sensitivity to existing land uses, particularly in evaluating applications for rezoning, variances, and conditional use permits.
- Continue to use the subdivision approval process to connect new development to surrounding lands and neighborhoods and to mitigate potential nuisances created by either existing or proposed land uses.
- Create staging criteria for evaluating whether rezonings are warranted or if extensions of urban services are an efficient use of tax dollars and land.
- Continue to work with Harris Township, Arbo Township, Cohasset, Coleraine, and LaPrairie to stage development from a regional perspective and minimize land use conflicts at political boundaries.
- Zoning Districts
 - Create a new zoning district or modify an existing district to allow development that matches the Neighborhood Mixed Use land use category, as described in the Future Land Use categories.
 - Create a new zoning district or modify an existing district to distinguish Business Park land uses, as described in the Future Land Use categories, from other commercial and industrial land uses.
 - Remove mineral extraction and other resource management activities from the list of permitted used under the Industrial zoning district. Distinguishing between resource extraction/management and industrial development recognizes that some forms of industrial development are

Conservation Subdivision

“‘Conservation subdivision’ is a method of subdivision characterized by common open space and clustered compact lots, with the purpose of creating greater community value through open space amenities for homeowners and protection of natural resources . . . “

Source: MnDNR, Conservation Subdivision Provisions for Local Land Use Regulations

“The practice of conservation subdivision allows communities to capture the opportunities of development while minimizing the risks to natural resources, economic resources, and community character. Generally, conservation subdivision allows landowners to develop parcels by clustering residences on smaller lots than would otherwise be allowed while protecting open space, agriculture, or sensitive natural resources. . .”

Source: Minnesota Model Conservation Subdivision Ordinance 2009, MnPCA



- inappropriate for areas with valuable natural resources.
- Create a new zoning district to implement the goals of the Resource Management land use category. Set different standards for distinct types of resource management including protection of mineral resources, forestry, and conservation areas. Consider developing a conservation design subdivision process to minimize the impact of development on protected resources.
- Create development and management standards for resource management areas in urban areas along lakes and the Mississippi River.
- Commercial Development
 - Modify commercial and related business zoning districts to recognize and distinguish the different types of commercial development identified in the future land use categories and policies.
 - Implement the Downtown Plan in economic development activities, modifications to development regulation, and administrative review of development and redevelopment proposals.
 - Ensure that commercial zoning and development regulations are sufficiently flexible to encourage redevelopment and expansion of existing commercial land uses within commercial corridors.
 - Consider standards and locations for temporary economic uses such as farmers' markets.
- Industrial
 - Make zoning map amendments as necessary for industrial land uses, to create shovel ready sites and a clear path to industrial expansion.
 - In transition areas around industrial and business park areas, protect existing industrial infrastructure from encroachment by incompatible development.
 - Mitigate negative impacts to residential and commercial areas that are located near industrial uses.
- Design Standards
 - Establish appropriate transition uses and consider design standards in commercial and mixed use districts that are adjacent to residential districts. Neighborhood Mixed Use design standards could include pedestrian-friendly design elements, high levels of fenestration, smaller building footprints, lighting and sign standards and performance standards for uses to ensure compatibility with residential uses.
 - Consider pedestrian design standards throughout the City, including commercial retail areas such as the Highway Commercial category.

Pedestrian Oriented Design Elements

Design standards that will enhance the appearance, pedestrian character and safety, and economic viability of specific districts and corridors include:

☑ Building Placement	☑ Entrance Orientation
☑ Facade Articulation	☑ Façade Modulation
☑ Door ,Window Openings	☑ Service Area Screens
☑ Equipment Screening	☑ Materials
☑ Parking Design	☑ Parking Landscaping

Source: Minnesota Model Design Standards for Pedestrian-Oriented Districts and Corridors, MnPCA 2009



- Establish design standards that preserve the aesthetic character and function of established neighborhoods, consistent with the policies and characteristics noted in the future land use categories and Future Land Use Map.

Incorporate Connectivity and Access Development Considerations

- Enhance neighborhood safety and promote healthy living by creating greenbelts, arterial sidewalks, bicycle paths/routes among residential neighborhoods and between residential and commercial and institutional destinations. Recognize different needs of urbanized and rural areas, but plan for connections in both.
- Ensure that development and redevelopment standards create connections between residential land use districts and zoning districts, including continuation of subdivision standards requiring a designated ROW for connecting to adjacent parcels.
- Enforce the accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Minnesota State Building Code regarding development and redevelopment.
- Strictly enforce rights-of-way access laws for public streets and sidewalks, including crosswalks, curb ramps, street furnishings, parking, and other components of public rights-of-way.

Support Neighborhoods in Capital and Land Use Decision-Making

- Develop standards or indicators that allow evaluation of whether neighborhood amenities are distributed equitably throughout the community to assist in capital planning and land use decision-making. Maintain existing neighborhood open space and public space amenities and consider options in capital planning and land use development and redevelopment in neighborhoods with less access to amenities.
- Provide open space that is easily accessible to residents at the neighborhood level.
- Seek to provide a range of housing options throughout Grand Rapids through some mixing of housing uses within residential land use areas and through improved connectivity between different housing areas.

Support a Mix of Land Uses

- Modify residential zoning districts to allow for the mix of land uses described in the future land use categories.
- Review and, if appropriate, modify the mixed use zoning standards for compatibility with the Neighborhood Mixed Use land use category.
- Establish development standards for mixed-use districts that include an interconnected street pattern with sidewalks, smaller blocks, and open space or natural infrastructure.
- Consider appropriate encouragement or assistance for developers to engage in mixed-use development in mixed-use districts.
- Continue to group medical uses, including medical offices and residential care, with related commercial and residential uses.
- Consider the potential impacts of development upon open space and natural resource preservation when hearing rezoning requests that would intensify use.

Sustain Open Space and Natural Infrastructure

- Update the Park Master Plan, including a forest management plan for maintaining urban woods, in order to preserve, expand, and coordinate green space and to protect the broader public interest.
- Protect and preserve existing trees and encourage the planting of additional trees in suitable locations to meet the needs of current and future residents and visitors.
- Mitigate potential conflicts between activities associated with public use districts and adjacent uses.
- Update Shoreland standards to meet goals of Resource Management areas within the urban areas, including the use of low-impact development standards as noted in the Natural Infrastructure section of the Plan.

Support Community Landmarks in Land Use Planning and Administration

- Establish a community landmark preservation commission or similar group. Charge this commission with developing a community landmark preservation plan that defines landmarks, sets criteria, inventories assets, and identifies appropriate protection tools.
- Continue to enforce the Scenic Byway Commercial Overlay District. Protect existing trees adjacent to byway and (re)plant trees as needed.
- Implement the Riverfront Framework Plan recommendations in development and redevelopment activities within and adjacent to the Plan area and in infrastructure planning and public right-of-way management.
- Encourage the continued viability of the Itasca County Fairgrounds. Balance the ongoing use of the County Fairgrounds for a variety of community activities while recognizing the need to integrate the Fairgrounds into the overall community fabric.





Chapter 5 – Goals, Objectives, Implementation Priorities

This Chapter presents the goals, objectives, and implementation priorities for achieving the vision for Grand Rapids in 2030.

A. Introduction - The Infrastructure Approach

The Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan update uses an “infrastructural perspective” to examining the non-land-use elements of the Plan. The infrastructural approach to planning incorporates two concepts. First, it recognizes that multiple layers of systems - including built system like streets and natural systems like drainage and non-physical systems like sense of community – are all equally necessary for sustaining the well-being of the community. Second, it assumes that all systems are long-lived – that today’s actions have ramifications well into the future, frequently even beyond the planning horizon of the Comprehensive Plan.

For instance, decisions about where housing and what kind of housing will be built frequently is treated as a function of today’s market demand. Housing is, however, almost always infrastructural – the houses built tomorrow will probably still be there in 50 years. Virtually every home built will be in the community far longer than the people who choose to build it. When people move out of the community, they do not take their house with them. Therefore, the community has an interest in assuring that housing development is done in a way to sustain the community over the long run.

The same can be said for economic development decisions, decisions that impact natural systems, and decisions that affect social and community systems. The infrastructure approach requires the community to treat economic, natural, and social systems as having a past and extending indefinitely into the future. Systems, moreover, must be maintained or they will malfunction or stop functioning altogether. The goals, objectives, and implementation priorities of this Plan assumes that infrastructure requires some level of community attention to maintain its function over time.

Each of the following sections is considered as an infrastructural layer of the Plan. For this reason, many elements are referred to as infrastructure. Natural resources are natural infrastructure, systems that have critical functions requiring maintenance, protection, and regular investment in order to sustain the community. Economic assets are economic infrastructure, components in a system that requires protection and support. Public services, utilities, transportation, education are all community infrastructure that is integrated with other infrastructure and necessary for the community to survive.

Each of the following sections begins with a look back at what has happened in the City since the last Comprehensive Plan, and the trends that the City now faces that might be different than anticipated a decade ago. The “looking back” subsection provides an inventory of information, data, and trends that recognize the historic decisions that define the City’s current position or status, the place from which we look forward toward implementing the vision for 2030. Each section then describes that look forward, relating the Grand Rapids of today to the desired Grand Rapids of 2030. The “looking forward” subsection identifies issues, lays out goals and objectives, and recommends implementation priorities for achieving the community vision, values, and principles.



B. Demographics

The 2003 Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan included an analysis of the historic demographic changes in Grand Rapids, based on what was then recently released 2000 Census data. The community inventory for this update incorporates by reference the analysis and presentation completed in 2003, and focuses on the changes that have occurred since 2003, including current demographic forecasts. Since this comprehensive plan update is taking place at the same time as the 2010 U.S. Census, with results not available until after completion, this demographic update relies on interim surveys and estimates to assess population and household trends since 2000. These surveys and estimates were used in the Annual Estimates of City and Township Population, Households and Persons per Household, 2000 to 2008, from the State Demographic Center¹.

The changing demographics of Grand Rapids are affected by the City's annexation of the majority of Grand Rapids Township. The City began an orderly annexation process with the Township in 2000, with annexations occurring at two-year intervals. The completion of this process in 2010 has tripled the physical size of the City and increased its population from approximately 7,700 in 2000 to approximately 11,000 in 2010. The new community inventory re-examines the historic population from the standpoint of the 2010 City boundaries, treating the City of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Township as a single entity. However, the analysis is complicated by the fact that the area of Grand Rapids Township was not annexed in its entirety: the eastern portion was annexed into the City of Coleraine (in which approximately 600 people currently live). Combining City and Township population and household data overestimates the historic and current population of the area now within City boundaries, but provides a consistent baseline for looking at historic demographic trends and assessing future trends.

Historic Trends

According to the State Demographic Center, the combined population and number of household in Grand Rapids City and Township have increased in the past decade. Table 5-1 shows population totals for City and Township from 1980 to 2008 (estimated). Township population and City population have shifted throughout the decade primarily through annexation, with the total population remaining largely stable over time (an increase of approximately 30 people or 0.2 percent overall).

Table 5-1. Population and households, Grand Rapids City and Township, 1980 – 2008

Area	1980	1990	2000	2008 est.	Percent Change			
					1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2008	1980-2008
Population								
City of Grand Rapids	7,934	7,976	7,764	9,690	0.5%	-2.7%	24.8%	22.1%
Grand Rapids Twp.¹	3,179	3,199	3,378	1,450	0.6%	5.6%	-57.1%	-54.4%
City and Township²	11,113	11,175	11,142	11,140	0.6%	-0.3%	0.0%	0.2%

¹ Minnesota Department of Administration. Office of Geographic and Demographic Analysis. Office of the State Demographer, August 3, 2009. <http://www.demography.state.mn.us/resource.html?Id=19243>



Area	1980	1990	2000	2008 est.	Percent Change			
					1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2008	1980-2008
Households								
City of Grand Rapids	3,046	3,380	3,446	4,380	11	0.2	27.1	43.8%
Grand Rapids Twp. ¹	1,279	1,363	1,199	573	n/a	-12	-52.2	-55.2%
City and Township ²	4,325	4,743	4,645	4,953	n/a	-2.1	6.6	14.5%

¹ Excluding the City of La Prairie and the City of Grand Rapids.

² Excluding the City of La Prairie.

Source: US Census Bureau and State Demographic Center

As shown in Table 5-1, while population numbers have remained largely constant, household numbers have increased significantly within the combined City and Township, by about 600 households or almost 15%. An increase in households is typical of many communities in the past several decades, due to decreasing average household size, which in turn is related to the general trends of smaller families and the aging of the population as a whole. Itasca County’s ratio of persons per household declined from 2.64 in 1990 to 2.42 in 2000. The household size in Grand Rapids is likely to be even smaller; households in the rural areas around Grand Rapids tend to have larger household sizes than those within the City, since the City provides more housing options for small households such as single individuals and seniors.

As shown in Table 5-2, population in most of the surrounding cities is estimated to have increased slightly since 2000, with the greatest increases in the cities of Cohasset and Coleraine, while population within Harris and Arbo townships declined slightly.

Table 5-2. Population in Grand Rapids Area and Itasca County, 1980-2000

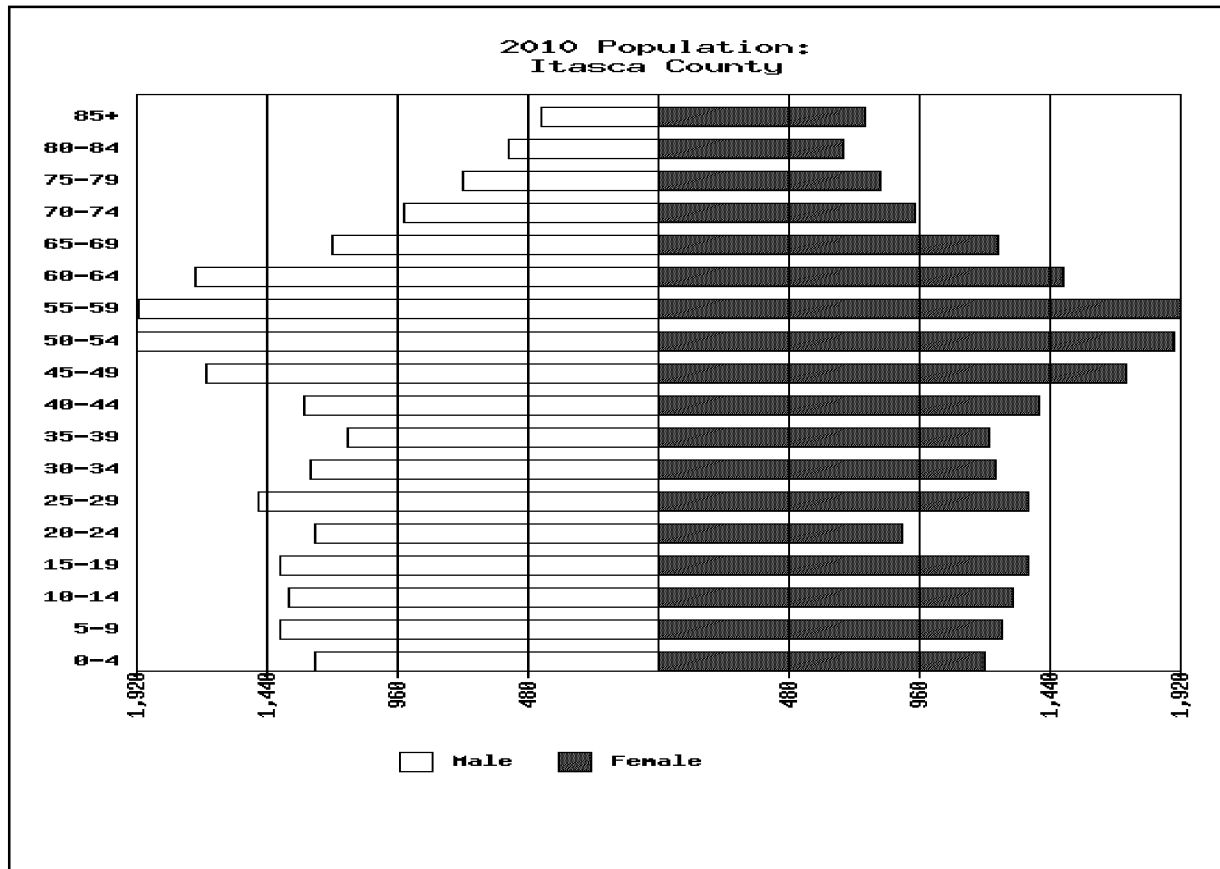
Area	1980	1990	2000	2008 est.	2000 persons per household	Percent change 2000-2008
City of Grand Rapids	7,934	7,976	7,764	9,690	2.15	24.8
Grand Rapids Twp. ¹	3,179	3,199	3,378	1,450	n/a	-57.1
City and Township ²	11,113	11,175	11,142	11,140	2.30	0
Cohasset	1,871	1,970	2,481	2,612	2.58	5.3
Coleraine	1,116	1,041	1,110	1,141	2.51	6.6
La Prairie	n/a	438	605	627	n/a	3.6
Harris Township	3,007	2,888	3,328	3,300	2.58	-0.8
Arbo Township	784	832	898	849	2.57	-5.5
Itasca County	43,069	40,863	43,992	44,379	2.43	0.9

Source: US Census Bureau and State Demographic Center, National Historical Geographic Information System (1980 data), Minnesota Geospatial Information Office



The age structure of the population was the primary demographic factor highlighted in the 2003 Comprehensive Plan. The 2003 Plan noted that both within the City and the surrounding region, the population in two age ranges – age 45-64 and age 65 and over – was growing rapidly relative to the population as a whole. This aging trend is typical of many parts of Minnesota, as the Baby Boom generation “population bulge” moves through the age structure. A population pyramid based on estimated population for Itasca County shows a continuation of this pattern through 2010,² with the largest population cohort in the 45 – 64 age range.

Chart 5-3. Age Structure of Population in Grand Rapids Area and Itasca County, 1980-2000



Source: US Census Bureau and State Demographic Center

² Source: <http://www.lmic.state.mn.us/datanetweb/php/DemProjection/PopPrjReport.php>



Other relevant characteristics of the combined City’s population and housing, as measured by the 2000 census, include the following:

- The population was predominantly white; the most common other race was American Indian, with 195 people or 1.7% of the population, while 126 people, or 1.1%, identified as of two or more races.
- Approximately 10.5% of the population fell below the poverty level, as did about 8% of families.

Table 5-4. Population and Housing Characteristics, Combined City and Township of Grand Rapids, 2000 Census

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Population under 18</i>	<i>2,796</i>	<i>23.8</i>
<i>Population 65 and over</i>	<i>2,300</i>	<i>19.6</i>
<i>Total housing units</i>	<i>5,134</i>	
<i>Occupied housing units</i>	<i>4,884</i>	<i>95.1</i>
<i>Owner-occupied</i>	<i>3,314</i>	<i>67.9</i>
<i>Renter-occupied</i>	<i>1,570</i>	<i>32.1</i>
<i>Vacant housing units</i>	<i>250</i>	<i>4.9</i>

Source: US Census Bureau and State Demographic Center

Population Forecasts

The Office of the State Demographer generates 25-year population projections for cities and townships that are extrapolations from the county forecasts. These projections were last published in 2007. The County is projected to see an increase in population by 2035 from 2000 Census levels of 10.5%, or about 4,600 people. Projections for the combined Grand Rapids City and Township, in contrast, show a slight decline through 2035, dropping approximately 3% from the 2000 Census year population to a population of 10,810.

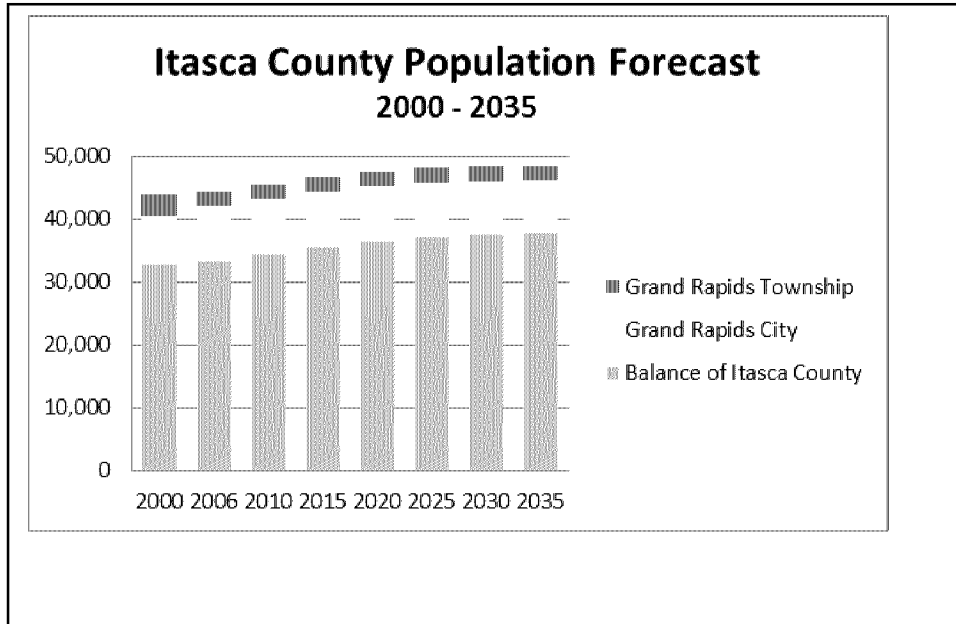
However, the extrapolated population for the City, as published by the State Demographer, does not attempt to incorporate changes in development patterns, annexation areas, or address one-time events such as the Essar steel mill. The 2006 Student Enrollment Projection for ISD 318 also examined the forecast information for the County and incorporated assumptions about a large project such as the Essar Mill into the population forecast. This forecast can serve in the Comprehensive Planning process as an indicator for what a more aggressive growth rate.

The Independent School District (ISD) 318 forecast estimated that a single large development project such as the Essar Mill could increase the 2020 County population by between 1,290 and 2,140 people over the Demographic Center forecast. This changes the forecast increase (by 2020) in the County from 4% to between 7 and 9 percent. To create a high-end City forecast, assume that the economic base remains stable, and the City population grows at an annual rate consistent with the ISD 318 report through 2030. Using this proxy for a high-end City forecast, the 2030 population of the combined City/Township area would increase between 16 and 22% from the 2008 Demographer estimate, or between 1,780 and 2,370 people.



This high end forecast is rooted in some unlikely assumptions, particularly that the economic growth from the Essar Mill would sustainability continue through 2030. The forecast is, however, useful for framing the planning goals in regard to potential changes in the community.

Chart 5-5. Population Forecast, Itasca County, 2000-2035



Source: US Census Bureau and State Demographic Center

Household Types

The State Demographer forecasts the number of households in Itasca County to increase more substantially by 2035. From a baseline of the 2005 estimate, the Demographer forecasts an increase in number of household of over 21%, or 3,865 households. A commensurate increase in Grand Rapids would see 1,000 new households by 2035 to a total household count of almost 6,000. An increase of 1,000 households over the next 25 years period (2010 – 2035) is more than Grand Rapids realized over the previous 30 year period (1980 – 2010), with approximately 650 new households. For planning purposes, however, the types of households that are increasing and the resulting need for new housing units is likely to be considerably different than in the previous 30 year period, as described below.

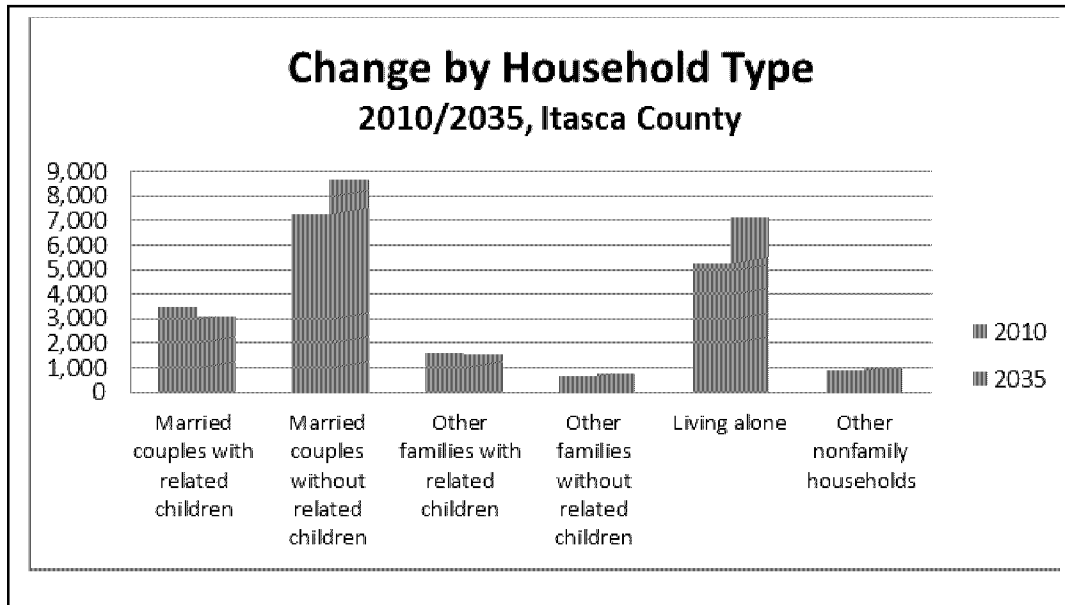
If the high-end population forecast is also considered, the number of households in Grand Rapids would increase by approximately another 750 to 1,000 households. These households would likely be somewhat more likely to include children and to demand traditional single-family homes.

As noted in the 2003 Plan, the primary demographic change in the population over the next 25 years will be the large increase in the number of older individuals. As shown in Chart ___ the State Demographic Center forecasts a decline or no change in every age cohort for Itasca County up to age 65 over the next 25 years. In the age cohorts older than 65, the forecast shows substantial percentage increases, over a 100% increase for the oldest age cohorts. In 2010, people over 65 years of age comprise about 18% of



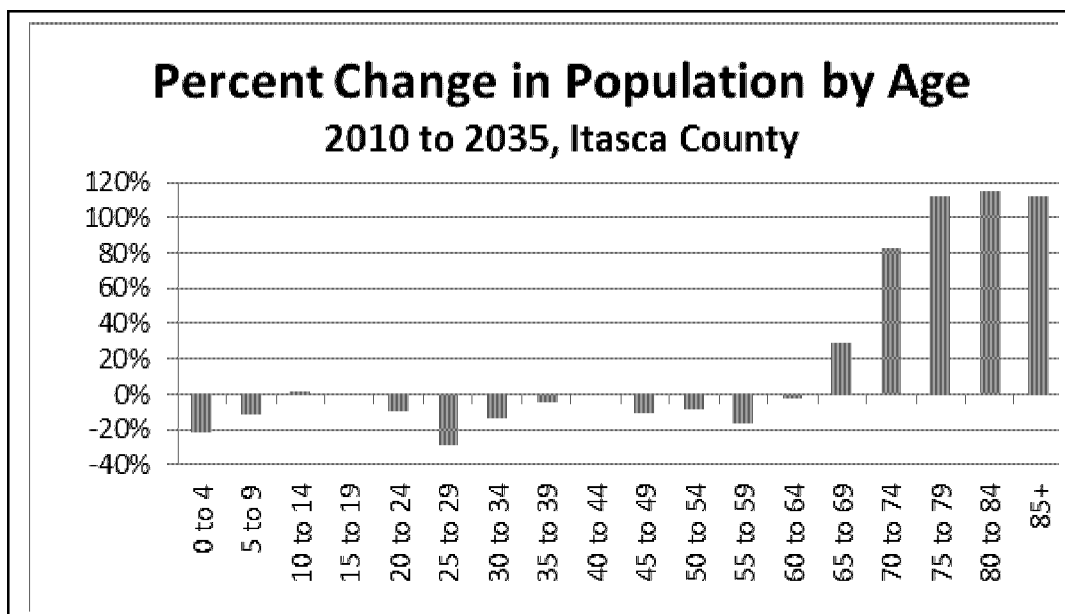
the total County population. By 2035, people over 65 are expected to comprise over 30% of the total County population. The percentage of people aged over 65 in the City of Grand Rapids is likely to be even higher, as the City housing stock and amenities are better suited for older residents.

Chart 5-6. Household Type Change, Itasca County, 2010-2035



Source: US Census Bureau and State Demographic Center

Chart 5-6. Change in Population by Age, Itasca County, 2010-2035



Source: US Census Bureau and State Demographic Center



Demographics – Looking Forward

Demographic changes in a community usually occur incrementally, rather than in sudden and unexpected events. Grand Rapids is seeing some of these incremental changes within the community, and the changes are forecast to continue through the comprehensive plan planning horizon. In particular, the trend toward older residents and smaller households, noted in the 2003 Plan, will continue to have important ramifications for economic development, housing, and infrastructure needs well into the future. This and other demographic issues noted in the demographic inventory are described below.

- ***Aging of the population.*** The median age of the population is expected to continue its rise for the next 20 to 30 years. The percentage of city residents who are over 65 years in age will go from 18% to 30% by 2035. An older population demands different types of goods and services, needs different transportation options, and resides in different types of housing than a population of young adults or families.
- ***Uncertain population growth.*** The population of Grand Rapids and the surrounding area has grown over the recent decade, but at a very slow rate. Forecasts project a continued slow rate of growth for the County over the next 25 years. Several factors could, however, change the growth rate and result in an increase in population. The most prominent event is the expansion of well-paying natural resource industries, particularly mining. The range of population growth scenarios (high growth and low growth scenarios) is therefore fairly wide, making for difficult long-term planning for housing and other infrastructure.
- ***Shrinking household size.*** Related to the aging issue is the issue of significant changes in average household size. Older people are much less likely to have children, and much more likely to live alone, than young or middle-aged individuals. The shrinking household size and the growth in the retirement-age population will likely result in a demand for considerably different type of new housing than Grand Rapids has seen over the previous 30 years. Even if the high-end forecast occurs, the overall aging of the population will substantially change the demand for housing and other services by 2030.
- ***Growth in number of households.*** While population growth is uncertain, the number of households is almost sure to increase over the next 25 years. But an increase in number of households does not necessarily translate into a growth in total household income or ability to financially support City infrastructure and services. The City may face the need for serving more households without a commensurate increase in revenue.
- ***Increasing cultural diversity.*** The City population will likely continue to see an increase in the cultural and ethnic diversity of the population over the next 25 years. A changing cultural mix will also affect housing, school, and other government services.



C. Housing Infrastructure

Housing Infrastructure – Looking Back

Housing is both a type of land use and a basic human need that affects and is affected by demographic, land use and transportation trends. The buildings that provide our shelter also define our neighborhoods and enhance or detract from the sense of community. Moreover, housing is infrastructural in that once built it will typically define neighborhoods and community for generations – today’s housing decisions will shape the opportunities of residents, businesses, and local officials for decades to come. Providing an appropriate range of housing types for populations with varying needs and income levels is typically a central goal of community planning.

Housing in the 2003 Comprehensive Plan

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan does not include a separate housing element; rather, the issue of affordable housing is considered as a component of the Economic Development plan element. Housing trends are discussed in the context of other demographic trends, as follows:

The expansion and promotion of affordable housing as an important element in retaining and attracting younger workers and families was explicitly discussed during focus group meetings. The discussions concerned the aging population of Grand Rapids as was identified in the economic overview and the implications that aging population has for both the long-term viability of the community and the availability of a large enough pool of workers to meet the needs of local employers into the future. Goal five, ‘provide affordable housing opportunities’, and its associated objectives, strategies, and action steps directly addresses this concern.

The background inventory of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan discussed housing issues primarily as part of the community survey, which included several questions on housing:

- *What is your opinion of the overall appearance of housing in Grand Rapids?*

The vast majority of respondents (75%) selected “average,” while almost 15% selected “very good;” the remainder selected “poor” or “no opinion.”

- *Do you feel there is an adequate amount of affordable housing in Grand Rapids?*

The majority (49%) did not feel that there was an adequate supply of affordable housing, while 18% felt that there was; the remainder answered “do not know.”

- *What type of housing do you feel is needed in Grand Rapids?*

Many respondents identified more than one housing type. Responses are listed below. Only 4.4% indicated that no new housing was needed.

- Single-family rental housing: 22%
- Multifamily rental housing: 15%
- Single-family owner-occupied housing: 28%
- Senior housing: 24%
- Other: 6%



Housing in the Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan, 2006

One strategy of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan was the creation of a sub-area plan for the Downtown. The Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan was completed and adopted by the City Council in 2006. The plan identifies housing as “the future of Downtown.” The downtown land use plan designates two centrally located blocks for mixed use, including housing, as well as mixed use and transitional areas north and south of the downtown core. Housing is proposed for several specific sites, including the block where City Hall is located and Block 19. In general, multi-family housing types are envisioned for downtown locations.

Housing in the Riverfront Framework Plan, 2009

Another component of the 2003 Plan was to update planning and design preferences for the Mississippi River corridor that forms the southern boundary of the downtown. The initial Riverfront Framework Plan, completed in 2000, identified several housing projects that are now complete, including redevelopment of the former Grand Itasca Hospital into mixed-income housing, and the former Grand Rapids Clinic into an assisted living and senior housing facility. Additional housing redevelopment is not a primary focus of the 2009 plan update, although it recommends construction of multi-family mixed-income and market-rate housing in the Canal Street neighborhood to complement existing single-family housing and take advantage of the riverfront amenities in this somewhat isolated neighborhood.

Other Studies

Since 2003 additional housing studies have been completed for Grand Rapids and the greater Iron Range. These include:

- Housing Market Analysis and Demand Estimates for Grand Rapids, 2003
- Market Analysis for Housing Located in Downtown Grand Rapids, 2007
- Iron Range Housing Market Analysis, As of 2nd Quarter 2008

The **2003 Market Analysis and Demand Estimates** and **2007 Market Analysis for Housing Located in Downtown Grand Rapids** conducted by Maxfield Research looked at housing demand in Grand Rapids drawing from a primary market area of several nearby townships and municipalities and a secondary market which included all of Itasca County. The 2007 study focused specifically on six different redevelopment opportunity blocks within the downtown which were identified in the 2006 *Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan*.

2003 Market Analysis and Demand

- The largest increases in population are expected to occur in the 55 to 64 age cohort as baby boomers age into their 60s. A corresponding increase in demand is expected for multifamily housing for empty nesters, active seniors, and people wishing to downsize from single family homes. This could include townhomes, condominiums, market rate rental, and market rate independent senior living.
- Approximately 85% of the ownership demand for single family homes will come from people outside of Itasca County looking for lakefront property and higher priced homes.



- There is an unmet demand for new entry level homes priced under \$120,000. The City may want to provide incentives to builders to better meet this demand, or developers might explore methods for reducing development costs (i.e. smaller lot sizes, zero lot-line developments)
- About 20% of total housing demand is expected to be for rental units. The City of Grand Rapids is best suited to provide the majority of these rental units for the market area
- Opportunities for additional housing development were identified in four areas within Grand Rapids: Lakeshore Place, Forest Park West, Grand Rapids Middle School Site and the Hospital Site. These sites were determined to be well suited to the types of housing need identified in the study.

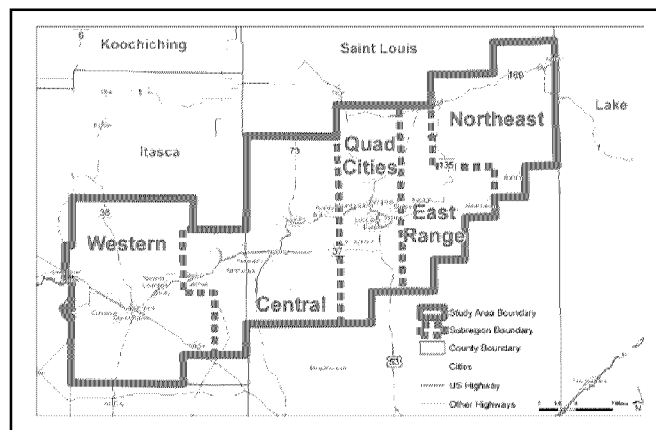
2007 Downtown Analysis

- Downtown Grand Rapids has several strengths (i.e. existing commercial district, walkability, natural amenities) which make it well suited for multi family housing. One weakness is the perception that downtown has little to offer potential residents.
- Block 19, located between 2nd and 3rd Streets N and Pokegama and 1st Avenues E, is the best suited for the first phase of redevelopment. This site was determined to have the best potential for housing due to its proximity to the river and historic buildings as well as best positioning relative to traffic.
- Based on analysis of demographics and housing demand the best use for this site would be affordable senior rental housing. A 40 unit building would be expected to lease-up within four to five months of initial occupancy.

Iron Range Housing Market Analysis, 2008

The Iron Range Housing Market Analysis (Bonestroo, 2008) looked at 31 communities and 54 townships straddling Highway 169 from Itasca County to the east edge of St. Louis County. The region was divided into five subregions based on an assumption that few people are willing to drive over 50 miles for jobs, schools or shopping. Grand Rapids is located in the Western Subregion. The goal was to create a dynamic analytical tool to project housing needs in the Iron Range based on different economic development scenarios. Three job growth scenarios were tested to estimate housing needs from 2008 to 2013:

- Low Job Growth – Included three development projects that were underway or imminent.
- Medium Job Growth – Include the projects from the Low scenario as well as two projects that appeared likely to move forward in the next couple of years.
- High Job Growth – Included all Low and Medium growth projects as well as three more tentative projects.

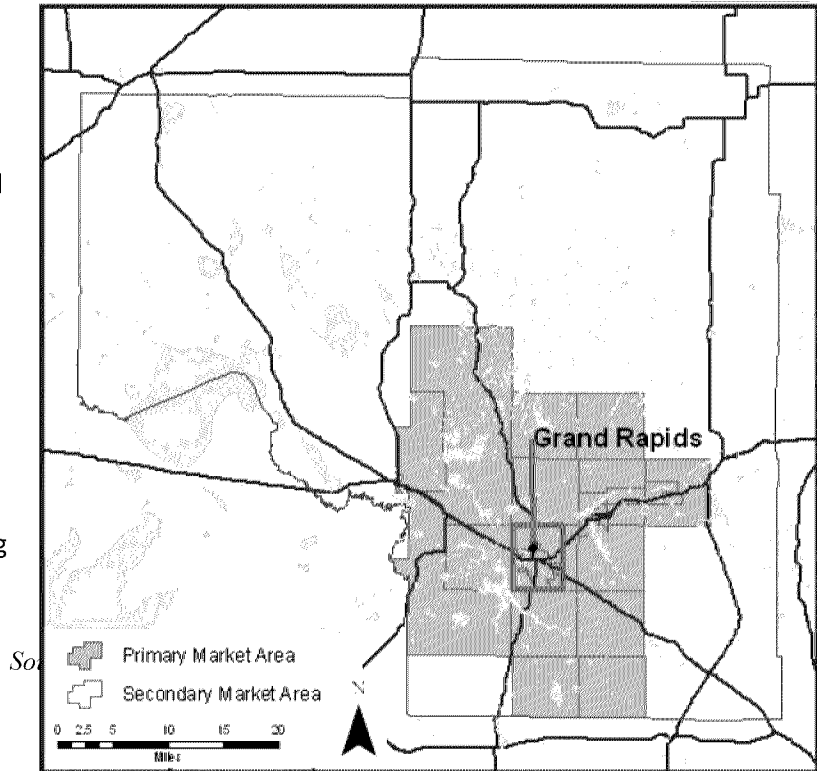


Source: *Housing Demand Model, Iron Range Housing Market Analysis*



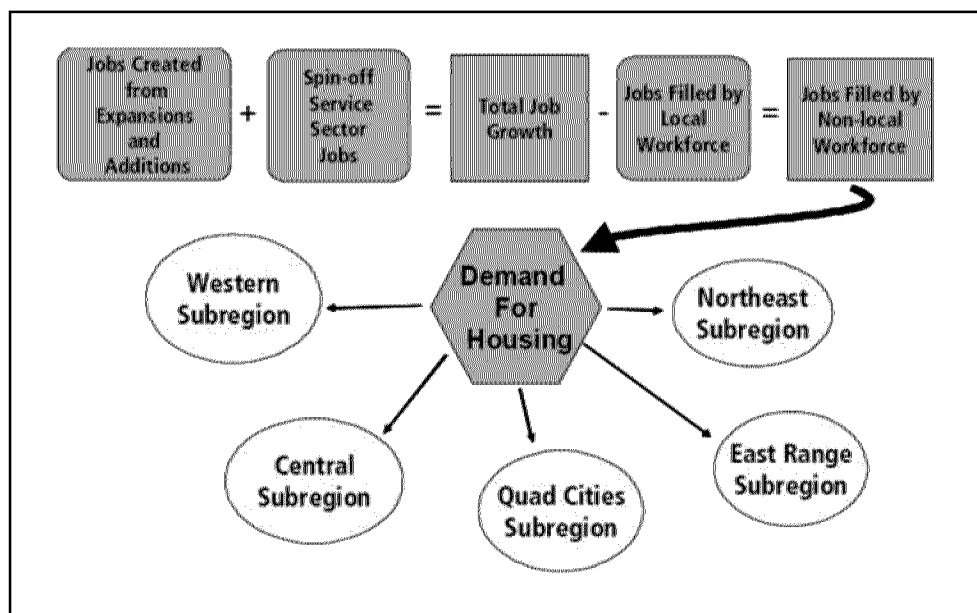
Key findings:

- The Western Subregion is estimated to need 606 to 811 additional permanent housing units by 2013 based on low, medium and high job growth scenarios. Increases in permanent job numbers are expected to come from Minnesota Power and Excelsior Energy projects.
- The Western Subregion is estimated to need 100 to 240 peak temporary housing units based on low, medium and high job growth scenarios. Increases in temporary job numbers are also expected to come from Minnesota Power and Excelsior Energy projects.
- Data in the model is time sensitive and will quickly become outdated; therefore



Source: Primary and Secondary Market Areas, Iron Range Housing Market Analysis

the model is designed to be updated with new information over time. The methodology also included a number of assumptions. The authors suggest that many of the assumptions be revisited any time the model is to be used in the future to assess whether they remain valid.



Source: Primary and Secondary Market Areas, Iron Range Housing Market Analysis



Current Housing Information

The American Communities Survey (ACS), released in December 2010, includes information based on surveys taken between 2005 and 2009. Because these figures are based on samples, they may have a high margin of error, particularly in places with a low population, and are should be viewed as estimates.

Grand Rapids falls into two large census tracts that take in outlying cities and townships: Tract 9809 includes portions of the city north of Highway 2, as well as La Prairie, most of Cohasset, most of Arbo Township, and a small portion of the Deer River unincorporated territory. Tract 9807 includes the southern portion of the city and areas to the east, including portions of La Prairie and Harris Township.

The ACS indicates that median housing value has increased in both tracts since 2000, as it has throughout Minnesota. However, because the ACS is based on surveys taken between 2005 and 2009, this increase may mask more recent declines in housing value.

The increase of 45% in median housing value in Tract 9807 may be related to increases in seasonal housing in surrounding areas, including recently annexed areas, as well as new suburban development. Monthly rents have shown parallel but smaller increases.

Trends in Development

Recent building permit data indicate moderate growth in construction of new single-family dwellings and multifamily units, combined with demolition and removal of smaller numbers of units:

Table 5-11. Residential Development, 2007-2009

	2007	2008	2009
New residential units – single-family with multifamily)	29	18	15
New residential – multifamily	0	6	36
Demolitions and removals of units	6	0	11
Total new units	23	24	40

Source: City of Grand Rapids

Since 2005, 98 assisted living units have been added to the housing stock in three separate developments. The largest of these was completed in 2010, River Grand Assisted Living, and has 62 units and is located just across the Mississippi River and east of downtown.

Table 5-12. Changes in Housing Value and Rent

	Tract 9809 (northern)	Increase since 2000	Tract 9807 (southern)	Increase since 2000
Median Housing Value	\$138,900	36%	\$162,500 45%	45%
Median Monthly Rent	\$644 up 20%	20%	\$597 up 20%	20%

Source: City of Grand Rapids



In 2000, 67.9% of the city's 4,884 occupied housing units were owner-occupied, while the remaining 32.1% were renter-occupied. Since then, approximately 100 multi-family units have been added, in addition to new single family homes. The multi-family developments, which include senior housing and market rate apartments and townhomes, are diversifying the city's housing infrastructure and responding to the demographic trends of an aging population and smaller households.

Community Survey Findings

In the recent community survey, 39% of respondents saw “new housing built” as a positive step forward for the community. (This was one of the two top choices; the other was “downtown revitalization,” with 40% of respondents.) Similarly, the issue of “limited housing choice” was identified as a problem by only 16.4% of respondents.

Survey respondents' showed a strong interest in seeing more affordable housing. There was fairly strong agreement (average of 3.75 of a possible 5 points) with the goal statement that “The City should work to improve housing options and neighborhood stability.

Housing and Redevelopment Authority

The Grand Rapids Housing and Redevelopment Authority (GRHRA) is a seven (7) member board made up of City residents. The GRHRA's primary responsibility is managing five rental properties (five sites with seven buildings) consistent with the GRHRA's mission.

The GRHRA funded or cofounded the 2003 housing study and the 2007 Downtown housing study. The Authority has an ongoing interest in ensuring sufficient housing options are available and that housing is affordable to workers, seniors, and families across economic cycles and demographic changes.

The five properties managed by the GRHRA include two market rate buildings with a total of 96 units, two public housing buildings with a total of 92 units, and a recent acquisition (Crystal Lake Townhomes) that is a project-based Section 8 building with 48 units. The GRHRA acquired the Crystal Lake Townhomes in 2010 and is in the process of administering a \$2.5 million renovation of the entire facility.

Grand Rapids Housing and Redevelopment Authority

Mission Statement - The mission of the Grand Rapids Housing & Redevelopment Authority is to serve the citizens of Grand Rapids by:

- Providing affordable housing opportunities in a safe environment
- Revitalizing and maintaining neighborhoods and a strong urban core
- Forming effective partnerships to maximize social and economic opportunities

The mission shall be accomplished by a fiscally responsible, creative organization committed to excellence in public service.



Housing - Looking Forward

The housing inventory, the results of the community survey and the focus group process, and discussions with the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee has identified a number of housing issues to be addressed in the Plan: Issues include:

- The population growth and housing demand based upon the job growth scenarios identified in the *Iron Range Housing Market Analysis* have not yet materialized, but should be considered as a real future scenario. Economic recovery will certainly occur within the Plan's time frame and is likely to bring some job growth within the 2010-2015 period. Planning how to provide for or encourage the diversity of housing that may be needed for new temporary and permanent workers and families is a necessary contingency.
- As outlined in the Demographics section of this plan, while population numbers have remained largely constant since 1990, household numbers have increased significantly within the combined City and Township, by about 600 households or almost 15%. Itasca County's ratio of persons per household declined from 2.64 in 1990 to 2.42 in 2000. The household size in Grand Rapids is likely to be even smaller; households in the rural areas around Grand Rapids tend to have larger household sizes than those within the City, since the City provides more housing options for small households such as single individuals and seniors.
- Given the aging of the City's population, mirroring that of Minnesota and the nation, demand for non-single-family housing types will likely continue to increase, particularly for older residents. The Future Land Use Plan designates sufficient land area for a great variety of multi-family housing, including townhouses, apartments and condos, and various senior housing options.
- In addition to housing type and affordability, the Plan should also consider issues of neighborhood character and livability. Focusing new housing development in and around downtown and existing neighborhoods will contribute to neighborhood connectedness and prevent the formation of isolated "pods" of a single housing type.
- Connecting new housing to job centers, through transportation tools or by strategic location choices, is a critical element to sustaining the community.
- Attending to the growing need for rental housing as demographics change.
- Rehabilitation of existing housing, the quality of all the City's housing stock, remains a top priority and will continue to need attention and funding.



Community Vision

Grand Rapids provides all residents safe, friendly, affordable housing and inclusive neighborhoods that retain and enhance nature in the City.

Housing Goals

2003 Plan Goals and Objectives

The 2003 Plan included one explicit housing goal and several housing and neighborhood objectives under the first Land Use goal:

Economic Development Goal 5: Provide affordable housing opportunities.

Land Use Goal 1: Provide a sound basis for orderly development by establishing proper relationships among agricultural, commercial, industrial, residential, and other land uses.

Objective 4: Protect and enhance the affordability, livability, and viability, of Grand Rapids’ residential neighborhoods.

Objective 5: Encourage new, planned mixed-use developments, in which the attributes of traditional neighborhood development dominate.

Each goal had multiple objectives and each objective had associated strategies and action steps.

2011 Plan Goals and Objectives

The 2011 Plan update creates a new hierarchy of goals and objectives, but incorporates the 2003 Plan goals and objectives into the updated housing section, as well as introducing new goals and objectives that address the new challenges and opportunities described in the inventory above.

Housing Goal 1: Facilitate the development of a diverse housing stock.

Grand Rapids has diversity in its housing stock, with a variety of single family homes, urban to rural neighborhoods, and multi-family housing from market-rate apartments to subsidized senior facilities. The City’s population is growing more diverse and the need for a wide variety of housing will continue into the future.

The City has identified **objectives** to define Goal 1.

- a. **Guide residential development to reflect a pattern of interconnected housing types.** The Future Land Use Map shows a mix of residential housing land use areas that are intended to transition smoothly. Protect neighborhood character that adds value to housing infrastructure and fosters the small town feeling that is important to residents and visitors.

Guiding Principles

Principle 4. Sustain Grand Rapids’ neighborhoods.

The City’s neighborhoods and the social networks that connect neighborhood residents require conscious attention and support. Integrate housing with other land uses, design appropriate transportation infrastructure, protect community character in public and private development decisions, enhance natural systems and create connected green spaces.



- b. **Allow secondary uses in each residential land use area.** Neighborhoods are enhanced when there is a mix of housing types. As described in the Future Land Use Map categories, all residential areas should include both a primary and preferred housing type and some secondary housing types.
- c. **Encourage mixed use development that integrates housing and compatible commercial land uses.** The Future Land Use Map categories include mixed use categories (neighborhood mixed use, downtown mixed use) in which higher density residential uses are combined with commercial uses in either the same building (vertical mixed use) or in the same development (horizontal mixed use). Recognition that different commercial uses serve distinct markets and have distinct risks relative to housing will allow the City to capture synergy between residential and commercial uses.

Housing Goal 2: Provide a mix of affordability in the City’s housing infrastructure.

Providing affordable housing is a primary support for economic development initiatives. All workers must be able to live well in order to sustain economic development efforts. Young households and students need starter or short-term housing options, young families need affordable homes, and seniors need housing that can be afforded on a fixed income.

The City has identified **objectives** to define Goal 2.

- a. **Guide residential development to reflect a pattern of interconnected housing types.** The Future Land Use Map shows a mix of residential housing land use areas that are intended to be interconnected rather than isolated by income or other demographic.
- b. **Provide for lifecycle housing.** A sustainable community is one that has housing for people at all phases of life, from young to old, single-person to family, over a variety of incomes. In particular, the City will continue to see a need for more senior housing choices.
- c. **Use a range of tools to sustain affordable housing options.** Market mechanisms, public management, non-profit management, and various hybrids of these options can all contribute to ensuring affordability in the City’s housing infrastructure.
- d. **Maintain quality of housing stock.** Investment in existing housing stock is necessary to sustain the City’s housing infrastructure over time. The City should continue to remove barriers to reinvestment and rehabilitation, and to look for funding opportunities that can leverage private investment.

Community Values

Housing Diversity

We value a variety of housing types in our community to meet the needs of all residents, no matter their stage in life. Quality, affordable housing is a basic need. Housing diversity is enabled when neighborhoods are connected to cultural, recreational, economic, natural, education, and transportation systems.



Housing Goal 3: Recognize the City’s distinct neighborhoods and neighborhood character.

The city has a wide variety of residential neighborhoods, from rural areas to fairly dense urban blocks. Neighborhoods have connection to natural amenities, such as lakes and rivers, commercial assets, and large institutions such as Itasca Community College. Land use decision should recognize the positive characteristics of each neighborhood as development, infrastructure, and programs have the potential to change neighborhood character.

The City has identified **objectives** to define Goal 3.

- a. **Consider context, including lot and building design, when integrating new development into existing neighborhoods.** Many perceived conflicts between development rights and existing uses of adjacent properties can be mitigated through sensitivity to design.
- b. **Engage a broad spectrum of stakeholders in sub-area plans and large developments.** Big changes can create big changes. People affected by decisions should ideally have an opportunity to shape the decisions and have a sense of ownership over them.
- c. **Maintain and improve neighborhood sense of safety.** Consider perceptions about neighborhood safety in development and redevelopment actions. Development and redevelopment can enhance perceived safety or detract from it.

Guiding Principles

Principle 2. Harmonize change with the existing community fabric and natural systems.

Change is inevitable but opportunities and risks can be managed to protect and sustain community and natural infrastructure. Change can be structured to enhance rather than detract: creating synergies between new and existing businesses, transforming buildings to be more sustainable, designing new housing or commercial buildings to match existing scale.

Community Values

Safety – Neighborhoods and Streets

Safety is a priority for us, especially in our homes, our neighborhoods, and on our streets. Safety means that our children have safe environments in which to grow and residents and visitors can walk, bicycle, and drive in safe, regulated traffic environments.





Implementation Priorities

The 2003 Plan included a number of specific recommendations for implementing the Plan’s housing and neighborhood goals and objectives. While some of the strategies and actions were completed, some are ongoing and still have relevance to the updated goals and objectives. Furthermore, new housing issues and needs call for additional implementation actions to be included in the updated Plan.

The following long and short term actions implement the goals and objectives described above. Actions are thus directed by and constrained by the goals and objectives. Implementation actions must be understood within the context of the overall Plan: Community Vision, Values, and Principles; Future Land Use Map and Policies; and, Goals and Objectives.

Affordable Housing

1. Obtain periodic reports and updates from the City’s Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA).
2. Ensure that the City and HRA work with affordable housing organizations and advocates for low-income households such as Itasca County HRA and KOOTASCA Community Action to track housing trends and maintain ongoing dialogue on current housing trends and issues.
3. Work creatively and collaboratively with partners in housing to structure financial options for affordable housing. Work with the GRHRA to ensure adequate long-term affordable housing.
4. Support the improvement of existing housing conditions and redevelopment strategies for housing in poor condition. Seek SCDP housing rehabilitation funds.
5. Proactively identify and support areas for development of new housing.
6. Investigate development of the community land trust model for equity-based protection of affordable housing.
7. Build relationships with major area employers to promote public/private partnerships in the development of affordable housing.

The Community Land Trust Model

Community land trust organizations use two key mechanisms to ensure homes remain affordable over time. First, they retain ownership of the land, while the homeowner owns the building. The ability to stabilize land costs keeps homes affordable while providing homeowners the same benefits as market rate homeownership. Second, community land trusts use a shared equity model that gives the land trust a share in the equity when homes are sold. This allows homeowners to build equity and gives future homeowners access to ownership at an affordable price.

Source: Minnesota Community Land Trust Coalition Factsheet

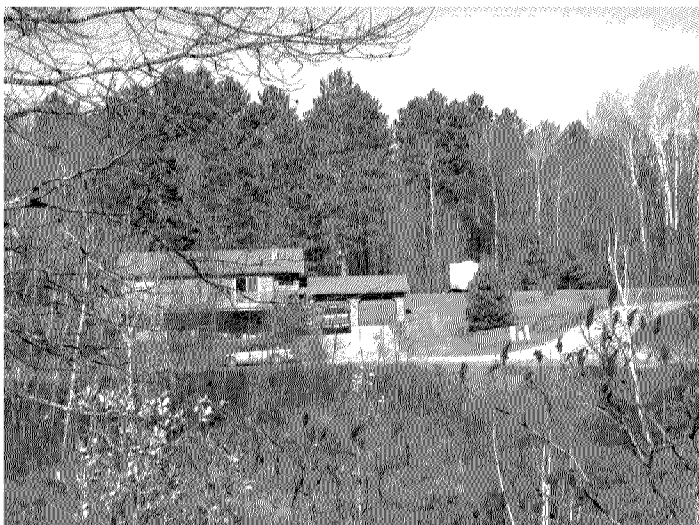


Diversity and Market Demand

1. Plan housing development contingencies that include aggressive economic growth scenarios, as noted in the Iron Range Housing Analysis. Planning for contingencies should address limiting financial and quality of life impacts on existing residents and businesses and minimizing risks to natural resources and systems.
2. Stage “green-field” residential development consistent with the Future Land Use Map and policies. Consider fiscal impacts to existing residents and businesses when considering extending utilities to accommodate new development.
3. Consider that new housing will be multi-generational, rather than responding only to current market conditions, in development review and permitting.
4. Make residential zoning map changes consistent with the Future Land Use Map to create a diverse yet integrated housing landscape.
5. Assist the development of housing in the downtown and Mississippi riverfront to maximize community benefits.

Neighborhood Character

1. Consider creating design standards that emphasize the existing neighborhood fabric.
2. Allow secondary land uses within neighborhoods, but consider reasonable limits to protect neighborhood character.
3. Continue to engage neighborhood residents in development decisions and plans.





D. Public Infrastructure and Community Services

Public Infrastructure and Community Services – Looking Back

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan includes an inventory and description of the publicly-owned utilities and other community facilities in Grand Rapid, which are considered in this Plan as the City's gray infrastructure. Several changes have taken place with the City's gray infrastructure, but the system is largely the same as it was in 2003. In addition to managing the City's publicly built infrastructure, the City manages many programs, regulations, and policies to serve the public's need, and collaborates with other local governments and state agencies to provide other services. These services include education, public safety (other than emergency services that are covered elsewhere), economic development, and management of facilities and rights-of-way.

Gray Infrastructure

The roads, utilities, water and wastewater systems, and social and cultural facilities that sustain current and future development while securing the community's health, safety, and quality of life.

City Departments and Commissions

The organizational structure of the city facilities has not changed significantly since 2003. Four separate entities are engaged in overseeing the City's gray infrastructure and the services associated with the infrastructure:

- *Public Utilities Commission* - The PUC consists of five members that are appointed by the City Council but have independent authority from the Council. The PUC oversees electric distribution; water production, treatment, transmission and distribution; and, wastewater collection and treatment for the City of Grand Rapids. The PUC also provides electric, wholesale water and wastewater treatment services to the City of La Prairie, wastewater treatment services to the City of Cohasset, water and wastewater services to Itasca Community College, and electric power distribution to select rural areas.
- *Public Works Department* – Public Works as responsibility for the maintenance and administration of most city facilities along with street lights and the stormwater utility.
- *City Engineer* - The City Engineer is responsible for capital improvements and long-term planning for facilities and utilities.
- *Community Development Department* - Community Development provides a number of services in long-range planning, safety enforcement, and economic development. Many of the policy and regulatory tools that are used to implement the Comprehensive Plan are managed by the Community Development Department, including zoning, subdivision, building code and building safety and economic development



Public Utilities Commission

The 2003 Plan described the various utility systems in Grand Rapids, including the various capacities and numbers of customers served. The system has expanded to some extent since 2003, as described in the public utilities section.

In September 2007, the Commission contracted with Collaboration Unlimited to assist with the development of a Strategic Business Plan (SBP). Work on the development and implementation of the strategic goals continued through the end of 2008. The SBP communicates the overarching Strategic Framework that provides broad and enduring guidance to the more focused Annual Business Plan that consists of operational goals, financial goals, and resource requirements. The Plan begins with a vision to the year 2015. Strategic Objectives have been prepared for a five-year implementation period from 2008-2012.

The Commission contracted with an independent consultant to benchmark utility operations. The comparison, using generally accepted industry measures of productivity, efficiency and service levels, showed that GRPUC performs better than average in almost all categories when compared to other municipal utility operations. According to the published report, GRPUC also compared favorably when benchmarked with standard national industry data as reported by the American Water Works Association, and the American Public Power Association.

Drinking water, wastewater, and electric utilities and are publicly owned and managed by the PUC. The telephone, information services (fiber optics), cable television, and natural gas service are privately owned and managed utilities with franchises granted by the City for use of public rights-of-way. Changes or additions that have occurred to both public and private utilities since 2003 are noted in the descriptions for each of these services below.

Public Works Department

The Public Works Department has responsibility for managing City-owned buildings, facilities, and infrastructure. The Department's management responsibilities include:

- Road rights-of-way (City/County/Mn/DOT)
- Buildings and facilities maintenance
- Cemetery maintenance
- Storm sewer maintenance
- Fleet maintenance
- Central Business District Maintenance
- Snow and ice control
- Park maintenance
- Traffic control
- Athletic field maintenance

The Public Works Department also supports inter- and intra-governmental units such as:

- Independent School District 318
- Other City departments (i.e. libraries)
- Itasca County
- State of Minnesota



City Engineer

The City Engineer is responsible for planning for and implementing capital projects. Responsibilities include:

- Road and street improvements, including adding capacity, improving safety, and rebuilding
- Utility improvements, such as building new or rebuilding existing stormwater management facilities, wastewater and water mains
- Planning for new trail or improved trails and sidewalks
- Rail crossing safety projects, working with the railroad companies (which are independent of the City)
- Managing the City's Geographic Information System (GIS)
- Capital projects such as new buildings or major reconstruction or remodeling
- Designing energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in public facilities and lands
- Managing the City's MPCA Stormwater Permit (MS4 Permit)

Community Development Department

The Community Development Department works with residents, businesses, developers and other private and public entities to promote a safe, desirable and economically viable environment for the citizens and businesses of Grand Rapids. The services provided by the Community Development Department can be broadly categorized into three general areas:

- **Economic Development:** The Community Development Director serves as the point of contact and staff support for the Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority. The Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority (GREDA) is a public body governed by Minnesota Statute and Enabling Resolutions enacted by the City Council of the City of Grand Rapids. The mission of GREDA is to promote the growth of the Grand Rapids economy through efforts focused on business recruitment and attraction, and business retention and expansion.
- **Long Range Community Planning and Zoning:** Planning in the City of Grand Rapids is centered on a Comprehensive Plan and specific zoning and subdivisions ordinances that execute the Comprehensive Plan. The focus of these ordinances is to provide for orderly development and redevelopment in the City. The Community Development Director serves as the zoning administrator and staff support for the Grand Rapids Planning Commission.
- **Building and Property Maintenance Code:** Building Safety Division staff reviews building plans and permit applications, issues building permits, and conducts a wide range of field inspections.

To ensure buildings are constructed to minimum standards for safety and durability Grand Rapids has adopted the Minnesota State Building Code. Building Safety Division staff reviews building plans and permit applications, issues building permits, and conducts a wide range of field inspections to ensure compliance with state and local building and zoning codes.

Fire safety inspections are completed, as needed, throughout the community. Many code violations are minor in nature, however, they can easily be the main cause of a fire in your home or business. The Building Safety Division is responsible for ensuring the proper installation of life safety requirements, fire alarms, extinguishing systems, and to assist with pre-fire scene planning for the volunteer firefighters. The Fire Inspector also conducts routine fire inspections for commercial, industrial, and apartment buildings to ensure public safety and health and to obtain updated information on hazardous materials for the safety of the building occupants, the volunteer firefighters, and for our community.



The Grand Rapids Fire Department works closely with residents and business owners providing fire safety information including building maintenance, fire code and property maintenance standards, and fire drills in public buildings. These inspections help ensure the safety of the occupants and keep the building ready for future progress.

Infrastructure and Services

Road Right of Way

Road right-of-way maintenance includes street sweeping, storm sewer maintenance, pothole patching, tree trimming, and boulevard maintenance such as sidewalks, general mowing and trail maintenance. The Public Works Department maintains 93 miles of roads throughout Grand Rapids. The city's snow and ice control policy is now available on the city's website. Transportation planning, including implementation of the "Complete Streets" policies are led by the City Engineer and discussed at greater length in the Transportation section. Maps showing the City's road network are also provided in the Transportation section.

Facilities Maintenance

The Facilities Maintenance Division within Public Works was created to ensure that the city buildings are maintained and repaired. The division ensures cost-effectiveness and that both the exterior and the interior of city buildings are kept in good condition. Some of the buildings maintained are:

- IRA Civic Center
- Fire Hall
- Central School
- Blandin Park beach house
- City Hall
- Pokegama Golf Course clubhouse
- GRSC concession/washrooms
- Library
- Four warming houses
- Airport terminal
- Grand Rapids Township Hall

The Division also manages some other non-City public buildings, such as school district buildings.

Cemeteries

As of January 1, 2010, the City assumed the responsibility of ownership and maintenance of the Itasca Calvary and Old Soldiers Lane cemeteries. Old Soldiers Lane Cemetery was the first cemetery in the township and the last burial was on April 9, 1971. There will be no more burials at this facility.

Itasca Calvary Cemetery was established at the turn of the 20th Century. The cemetery covers 40 acres and has approximately 9,213 burials with another 3,228 sites purchased. Currently, 1,011 platted sites are available for purchase and approximately 15 acres of the 40 acres is undeveloped. The facility sees an average of eighty burials per year.

The City is currently reviewing the need to expand the Veterans plot area. 115 burial sites are currently available for purchase.



Libraries

The Grand Rapids Area Library is a welcoming place that builds an informed, engaged and enlightened community by helping children develop a love of reading, supporting lifelong learning, connecting individuals, and enriching leisure time.

The Library is located downtown on the north bank of the Mississippi River at 140 NE 2nd St – between the Blandin Foundation and KAXE. Constructed in 2000 – key features of the 26,500 square foot facility include ample parking, community meeting rooms, designated study spaces, and extraordinary views of the Mississippi River.

Library materials, services, and programs are an important community resource for all ages. As of 2010, the Grand Rapids Library held 74,841 books and magazines, 3,221 audio items, 3,963 video items. Circulation for the library in 2010 was 203,188 items. The library also answered 11,340 reference queries in 2010.

The library offers entertaining and informative programs for adults, teens and children – including regular story times for small children. In 2010, 7,102 children and adults attended 232 library programs.

The Library offers a wide range of materials and resources for children, teens, and adults including:

- Books in hardcover, paperback, and large print
- 20 computers with Internet access
- Wireless Internet access
- DVDs
- Books and music on CD
- Interlibrary loan service
- Online resources in the library and online at www.grandrapids.lib.mn.us including:
 - Educational databases for adults and children
 - Health information and reference
 - Automobile and small engine repair information
 - Downloadable audio and eBooks via the Arrowhead Library System at www.arrowhead.lib.mn.us

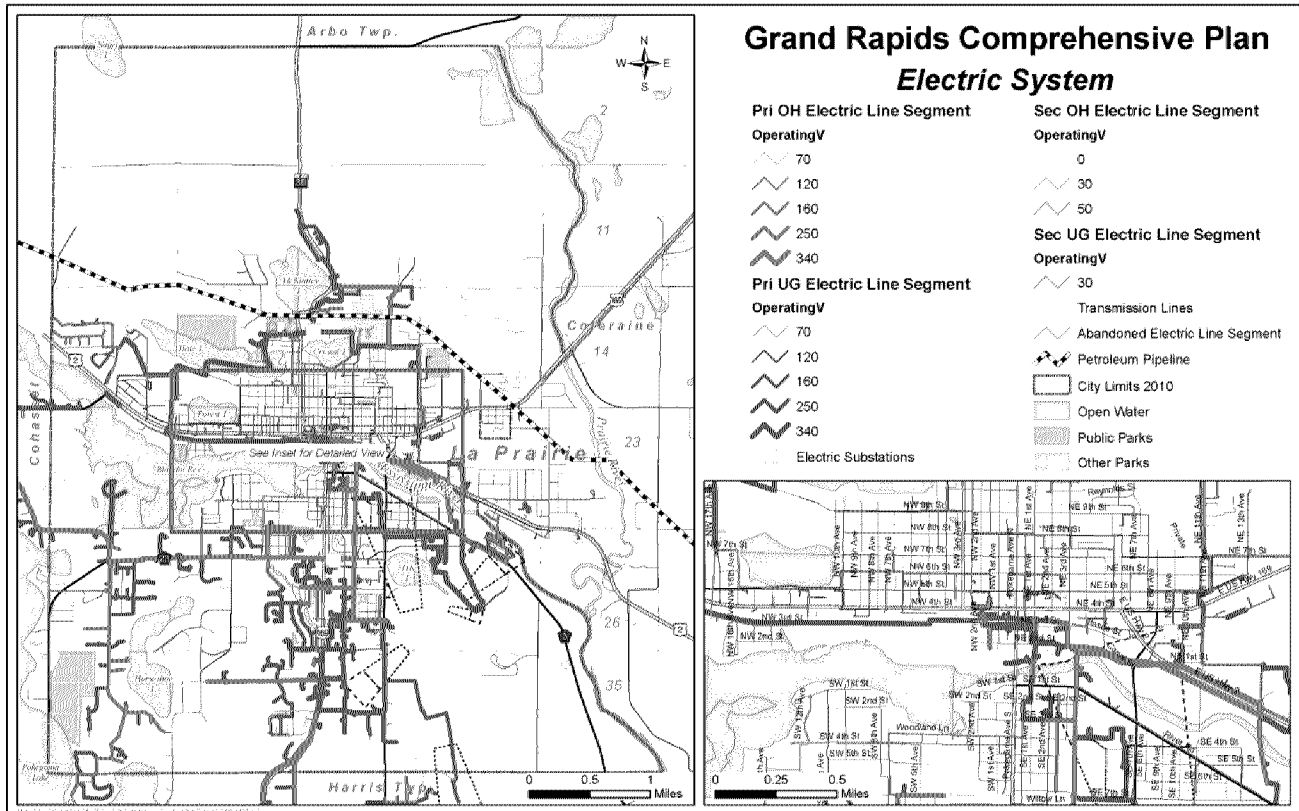
Grand Rapids Area Library is part of the Arrowhead Library System (ALS) which serves northeastern Minnesota via 29 member community libraries along with special services for rural residents – Bookmobile and “Mail-A-Book”.

Electric System

Grand Rapids has a municipally owned and operated electric utility that is managed by the Grand Rapids Public Utility Commission. As described in the 2003 Plan, the electric utility provides electric distribution service to all Grand Rapids residents and businesses, with the exception of businesses that have a direct high-voltage connection to Minnesota Power, the regional investor-owned electric utility. Figure ___ shows the local electric distribution and transmission system and substations. Regional transmission lines shown on this map are owned by Minnesota Power.



Figure 5-13. Grand Rapids Electrical System



As can be noted in Figure ____, the electric system serves a wider area than the water/wastewater system. With the annexation of Grand Rapids Township, the city now has a number of homes and businesses that are not served by the municipal electric utility. These properties will be merged into the municipal utility’s service area over time, as the utility acquires the distribution lines on city rights-of-way and folds these customers into the municipal customer base.

The PUC provides electrical power distribution to 5,315 city customers, 1,199 rural customers, and 339 off-peak customers as shown in Table ____. Wholesale electric service is purchased from Minnesota Power under an exclusive contract that expires in 2013. Power is received at 115-kilovolts (kV) and converted to 22.9 kV. The 115 kV to 22.9 kV substation is jointly owned by the Grand Rapids PUC and Minnesota Power, allowing the PUC to purchase wholesale power at a reduced rate. The distribution system is made up of approximately 257 overhead and 169 underground conductor miles. The PUC is responsible for all construction, operation, and maintenance of the electric distribution system.

Table 5-14. PUC Customers by Electric Service Class

	2000 Number of Meters	2009 Number of Meters
City Residential	3,518	4,192
City Commercial	905	1,117
Rural Residential	1,454	1,023
Rural Commercial	181	176
Industrial	5	6
Off-Peak	83	339
Total Number of Meters	6,146	6,853

Source: Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission



The electricity purchased by the utility, the amount of electric revenue and the number of meters serviced for the past five years are shown in Table 5-__.

Table 5-15. Kilowatt Hour Sales, Electric Revenues and Customer Meters

Year	kWh Purchased	Total Revenues	Number of Meters
2009	175,360,400	13,226,944	6,853
2008	180,044,840	12,369,743	7,221
2007	171,377,400	11,515,707	6,958
2006	169,938,920	10,489,735	6,915
2005	167,745,544	9,872,370	6,885

Source: *Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission*

In 1997 the PUC entered into an agreement with the City of Grand Rapids regarding property taxes and electric utility services. The agreement was amended in December 2009. The agreement provides the terms and conditions under which the PUC will make payments in lieu of taxes to the City and how the City will pay for PUC supplied services. Currently, the PUC transfers 4.48 mills per kilowatt hour sold at retail to the City as an in-lieu-of-tax payment, which equates to approximately 7% of retail electric revenues with a minimum transfer of \$823,000 per year.

The City worked with the PUC to make a number of investments to use electric energy more efficiently. Building and lighting energy efficiency improvements include the following:

- Wired metered systems so that ½ of the lights shut down between 11:00 p.m. and 5:30 a.m.
- Installed photo eyes with atomic time clocks to shut down unmetered street lights from 11:00 p.m. to 5:30 a.m.
- Install LED fixtures on light poles beginning 2011.
- Retrofitting traffic signal lights with LED lights.
- Installed variable speed drive motors in the Arena and Library.

Natural Gas

Natural gas service is offered through much of the urban service area by a private regulated utility, Minnesota Energy Resources – Northern Minnesota Utilities (MER-NMU). MER-NMU was purchased by Integrys Energy Group in 2006. The change in ownership has not changed the service received by city residents or businesses. The City of Cohasset also owns and operates a natural gas system that serves properties located on County Highways 76 and 23 on the western side of Grand Rapids.

Telecommunications and Information Systems

Grand Rapids has a state of the art communications network. The city is part of the Paul Bunyan Telephone Cooperative service territory, providing local regulated telephone service. A variety of companies, including MediaCom and Qwest, offer alternative local phone and competitive information services, such as internet access, long distance service, and video services. 2005 saw expansion begin to Grand Rapids and by 2007, Paul Bunyan's first all fiber optic network expansion project was completed. All locations within the City of Grand Rapids now have services available and can join the cooperative with service provided over one of the first all fiber optic networks in the state.



Wastewater Infrastructure

The service boundaries and system size for the wastewater treatment infrastructure have not changed significantly since 2003. Figure 5- shows the City’s centralized sanitary sewer system.

Wastewater collection and treatment services are provided to approximately 3,108 customers, as well as one industrial customer - Blandin Paper. The Itasca Community College and the cities of Cohasset and LaPrairie also receive service from Grand Rapids. The wastewater collection system within Grand Rapids is made up of 12 sewage lift stations and 57 miles of sewer main, included both forced and gravity systems. Treatment facilities consist of the Industrial Screening/Pumping Station, the Industrial Treatment Plant, and the Secondary Treatment Plant. The PUC is currently relocating the Industrial Treatment Plant from its location along the Mississippi River to a location east of the airport at 2300 River Road. These facilities treat an average of 9.0 million gallons of waste effluent per day, 7.5 million gallons per day from industrial users, and 1.5 million gallons per day from domestic users. The current capacity of the secondary wastewater treatment facilities is approximately 15.2 gallons per day.

Table 5- shows the total influent of wastewater treated for 2000 and 2009 within the PUC area.

Table 5-16. Domestic Influent, Revenue and Customer Counts

Year	Domestic Influent Flow (gal)	Total Revenue	Number of Customers
2009	473,000,000	1,147,116	3,109
2008	507,000,000	1,112,009	3,168
2007	504,000,000	1,100,136	3,213
2006	490,000,000	768,500	3,239
2005	481,000,000	801,175	3,271

Source: Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission

The domestic and industrial wastewater influent for 2000 and 2009 are shown in Table 5-.

Table 5-17. Wastewater Influent 2000-2009 (millions of gallons)

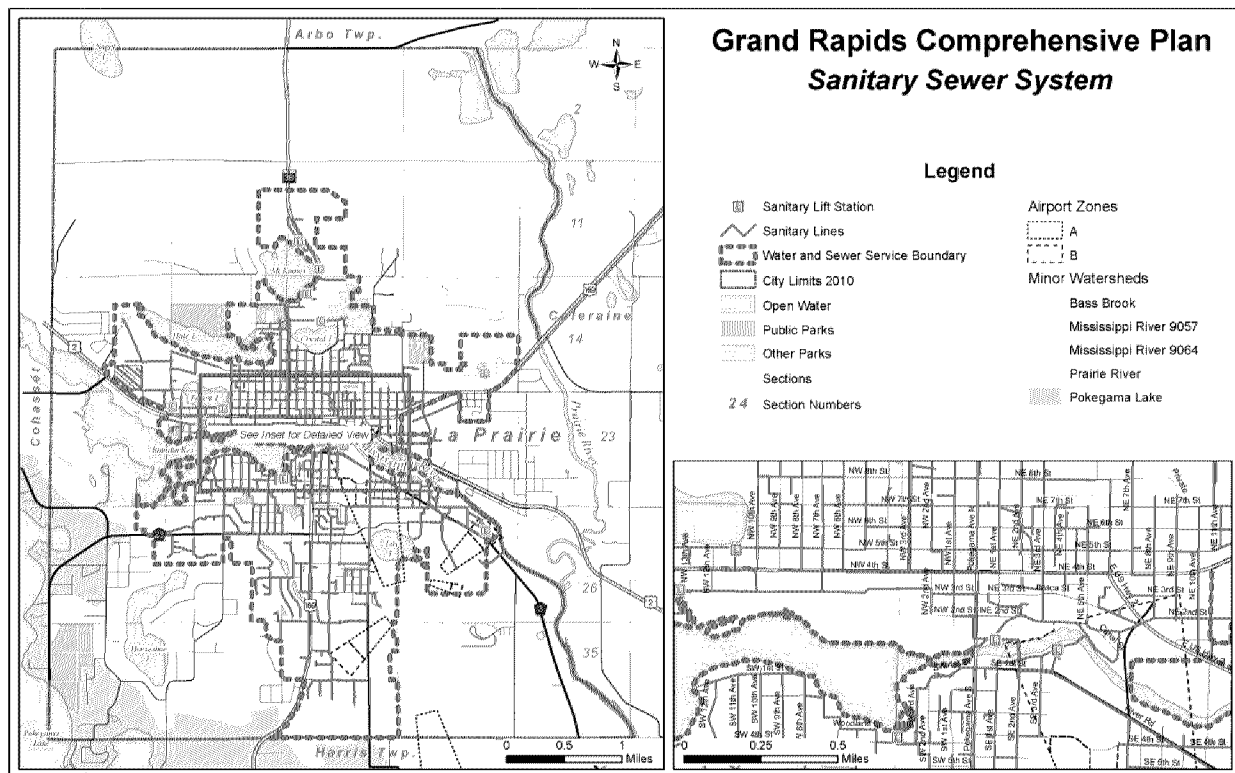
	2000	2009
Domestic Flow (gallons)	513.0	473.0
Industrial Flow (gallons)	4,034.0	2,556.0
Total Influent (gallons)	4,547.0	3,039.0

Source: Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission



The City’s centralized wastewater infrastructure is part of the City’s “gray infrastructure” system, but has critical relationships to the City’s natural infrastructure and economic infrastructure. As discussed in the Natural Infrastructure section, the City’s rural areas (outside the service boundary) rely on soils to treat wastewater. Service extensions outside the existing service boundaries are much more costly when topography will not allow for use of gravity systems or requires river crossings. The interaction of these variables affects the City’s ability to cost-effectively develop new industrial or residential areas to capture economic opportunities and respond to housing demand.

Figure 5-18. Grand Rapids Sanitary Sewer System



Stormwater Infrastructure

The stormwater system includes natural and constructed stormwater elements. The constructed systems includes 45.7 miles of storm sewer main, 73.5 miles of ditches, 703 culverts, 20 detention ponds, 2 treatment units, 1 infiltration pond, and 26 rain gardens, all of which are under the City’s jurisdiction and maintenance. Natural systems include soils that allow for infiltration, vegetation that disperses and absorbs rain water (including the urban forest), and natural drainage, both surface and subsurface.

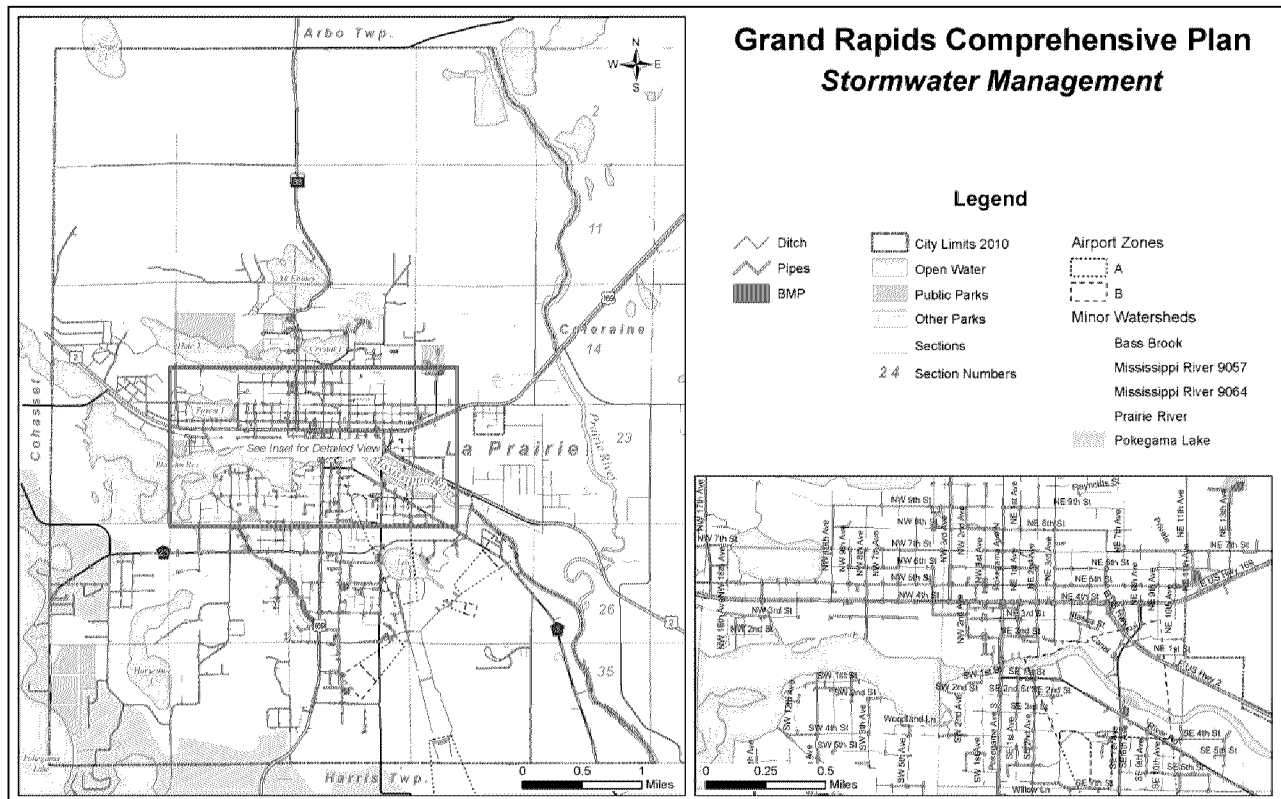
The City operates its storm sewer system under an Authorization to Discharge Storm Water Associated with MS4 under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Disposal System Permit Program with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. This permit was originally issued on July 1, 2007, and will be renewed on July 1, 2011. One of the requirements of the current permit required the city to implement a Storm Water Protection Ordinance. In order to fund the requirements of the MPCA permit, maintain the storm sewer system, and eliminate special assessments for the reconstruction of



storm sewer systems, the City created a Storm Water Utility. The utility charges a monthly fee based on impervious areas and typical run-off coefficients. The utility also provides storm water credits for on-site Best Management Practices such as detention/retention ponds, rain gardens, and green/timber spaces.

Figure 5- shows the extent of the stormwater conveyance system and location of best management practices in the city. The stormwater conveyance system extends outside the boundaries of the water and sewer service boundary. Additional discussion of this system is found in the Natural Infrastructure section.

Figure 5-19. Grand Rapids Stormwater Management

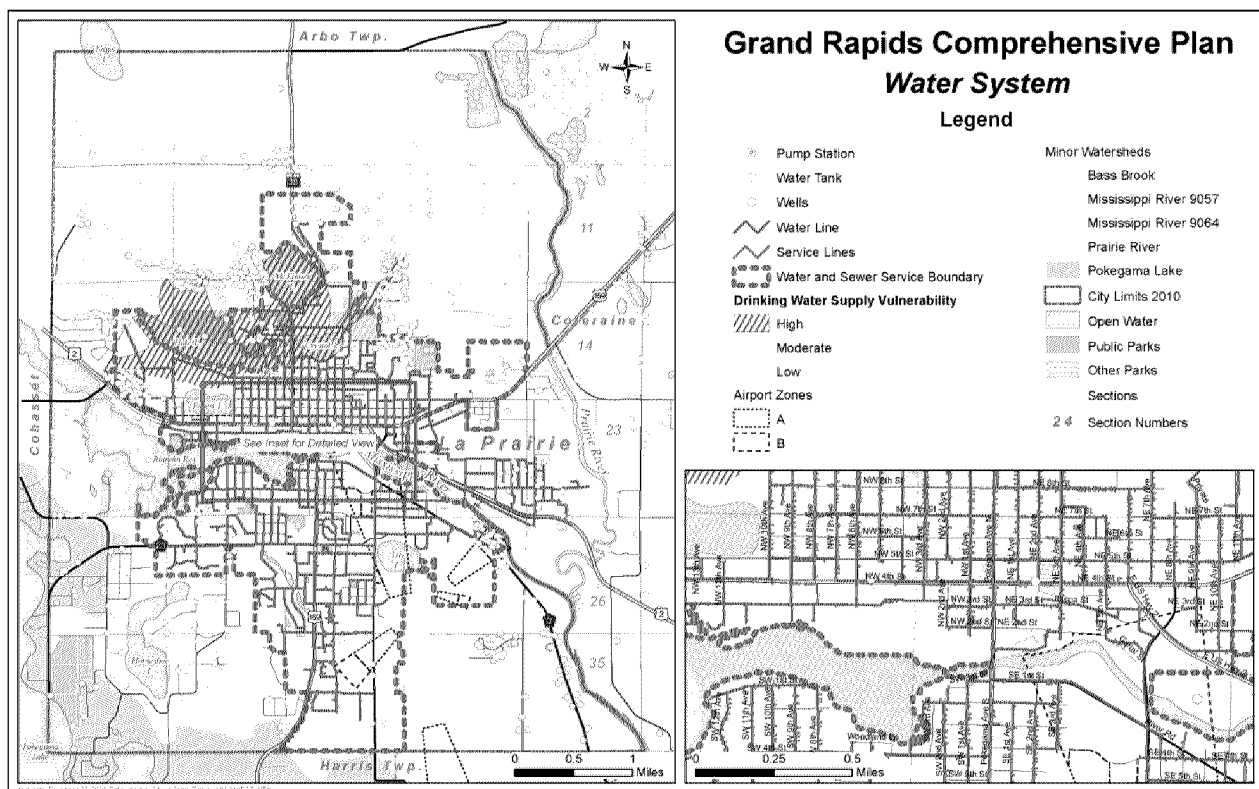




Drinking Water Infrastructure

The City’s centralized drinking water system is comprised of water supply wells, treatment facilities, pumping stations, water storage tanks, and water delivery mains. The Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission provides water for 3,115 city customers, the City of LaPrairie, and the Itasca Community College. Water for Grand Rapids comes from five primary wells with a combined pumping capacity of 1,600 to 2,500 gallons per minute. Treated water is stored in a 0.5 million gallon underground water reservoir and pumped to the distribution system with high service pumps. The distribution system contains three 0.5 million gallon elevated storage reservoirs and 55 miles of cast and ductile iron distribution mains consisting mostly of 6”, 8” and 12” pipe. Average water demand is approximately 1.2 million gallons per day with peak demand of 2.1 million gallons per day.

Figure 5-21. Grand Rapids Water System



The water supply system has expanded slightly since the 2003 Plan, primarily into the residential areas on the west end of the City north of Highway 2. Other than this extension, the service boundaries and system size are essentially the same as in 2003 (system is mapped on Figure 5-). The map also shows other elements of the drinking water supply system, including locations of wells (both drinking water and other types of wells), minor watersheds, and the source water vulnerability areas.



The water production, revenue and number of customers for the past five years are shown in Table5-_.

Table 5- 20. Water Production, Revenue and Customer Counts

Year	Gallons to System	Total Revenue	Number of Customers
2009	435,536,000	1,403,625	3,115
2008	468,470,000	1,412,272	3,219
2007	456,612,000	1,400,847	3,267
2006	439,160,000	1,425,864	3,288
2005	459,382,000	1,482,556	3,322

Source: Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission

One important element not discussed in the 2003 Plan was the Wellhead Protection Plan required by the Minnesota Department of Health (completed in 2005). These areas were defined by the Minnesota Department of Health for public water supplies across Minnesota as those areas where land activities could pose a risk to the drinking water supply. A number of variables were used in a hydrologic model to predict how, for instance, a hazardous material spill could result in contamination of the water supply. High risk areas are those areas where surface contamination could affect the water supply fairly quickly. The high, medium, and low risk areas for those areas that can potentially affect water supply are portrayed as “vulnerability” areas. The high vulnerability areas in Grand Rapids are centered around Crystal, McKinney, and Hale lakes. These areas are discussed in more detail in the Natural Infrastructure section.

The annexation of much of Grand Rapids Township has created a large area within City boundaries that is not served by the water system. Residences and businesses in these areas generally use individual private wells for water supply. The City does not have plans to extend service to these areas unless health or safety issues demand extension for existing residences, although some expansion is planned in the southwest portion of the City to improve reliability.

Table 5-22. Grand Rapids Drinking Water Well Information

Unique Well No	Well ID	Depth	Well Use	Aquifer	Aquifer Sensitivity	Well Sensitivity	SWPA
00161444	Well #6	140.0	Primary	Glacial Deposits	High	Does not create a pathway for contamination	Yes
00127276	Well #4	157.0	Primary	Glacial Deposits	High	Same as above	Yes
00228862	Well #3	180.0	Primary	Glacial Deposits	High	Same as above	Yes
00228873	Well #2	572.0	Primary	Bedrock	High	Same as above	Yes
00228870	Well #1	176.0	Primary	Glacial Deposits	High	Same as above	Yes

Source: Minnesota Department of Health Website, /mdh-agua.health.state.mn.us/



Education - School District 318

Schools within the City of Grand Rapids are part of the Independent School District 318 (ISD 318). The administrative offices are located in Grand Rapids. ISD 318 currently employs 227 full-time teachers as well as a full-time support staff of 224. Enrollment is approximately 3,750 students and is anticipated to grow to about 4,100 by 2020-2021 barring significant economic changes in growth or decline.

ISD 318 encompasses most of Itasca County, covering an area of nearly 2,000 square miles (Figure 5-_), the largest provider of public education in the county encompassing providing educational opportunities at 14 learning sites. The district serves the communities of Balsam, Bigfork, Cohasset, Effie, Grand Rapids, Squaw Lake, Togo, Warba and Wawina. Within Grand Rapids there are 3 elementary schools (Forest Lake, Murphy, and Southwest), one middle school, built in 2003 (Robert J. Elkington), and one high school (Grand Rapids High School).

The annual operating budget is \$44 million dollars. In recent and projected years, school funding has been flat and continues to fail to keep up with raising costs. As a result of this, ISD 318 has been reducing costs while increasing class size. If additional funds from the State Legislature are not received, ISD 318 will consider an operating referendum. Currently, there are no plans for consolidating schools or school districts. As the space needs and educational delivery methods of ISD 318 evolve, building configurations and locations may change over time. School district and city officials should meet on a regular basis to communicate plans that may impact educational facilities and neighborhoods within the city. One effort to address this is a joint powers district formed by seven area school districts called Itasca Area Schools Collaborative (IASC). Members

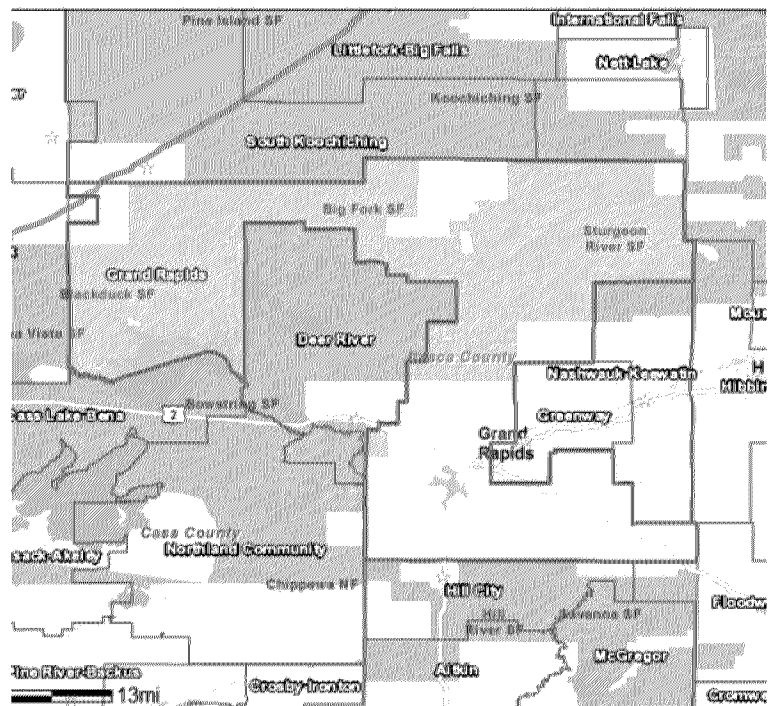


Figure 5-23. Independent School District 318 Boundaries

include ISD 318 and school districts from Deer River, Northland Schools, Hill City, Greenway, Nasauk / Keewatin and Floodwood. IASC members are focusing on collaborating on issues that might make each school district operate more efficiently. In addition to the buildings listed in the above table, ISD 318 leases space at the Itasca community College for the Area Learning Center, the Itasca Juvenile Center for children in placement and the Itasca Resource Center for Early Childhood programs.



Post-Secondary Education

Itasca Community College (ICC) is located on the eastern edge of the city limits of Grand Rapids. ICC is a two-year public college offering a wide variety of programs and courses. The college was ranked as the 5th best two-year college in the nation in 2010 by the Washington Monthly. ICC has a strong reputation for its associate arts degree which allows students to complete their first two years of a four-year degree. ICC is also nationally recognized for their engineering program which leads into an opportunity to complete a four-year degree through the Iron Range Engineering program. Also, ICC has quality programs in nursing, natural resources, psychology, class act teacher preparation, early childhood and customized training, among others. The school has an enrollment of more than 1,300 students and is a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system which is comprised of 32 state universities and community and technical colleges serving the higher education needs of Minnesota.



Public Infrastructure and Community Services – Looking Forward

The Public Infrastructure and Community Services inventory, the results of the community survey and the focus group process, and discussions with the Comprehensive Plan Technical Committee has identified a number of issues to be addressed in the Plan:

- **Maintaining service quality.** Grand Rapids residents and businesses have given high marks to the City-provided utility services. Maintaining good service quality was a clear priority from the community survey respondents. Targeted investments and regular maintenance are an important goal for keeping service levels high.
- **Keeping utility costs low.** Utility costs can squeeze household and business budgets. Keeping costs low without degrading service quality is a delicate balance for utility managers. Increasing demand puts upward pressure on all rates.
- **Economic use of gray infrastructure.** Giving priority to development and redevelopment within the existing service boundary allows the City to capture economic benefits without incurring the costs of extending services. However, in order to capture economic growth opportunities, some extension of the City's gray infrastructure may be needed. The City has identified areas where infrastructure extensions are needed to enhance the service reliability of existing customers, and places where extension is relatively easy given topography and capacity within other infrastructure (community, transportation, natural).
- **Proactive and reactive extension of gray infrastructure.** Extending centralized services to the former Ainsworth industrial site (designated on the land use map for industrial redevelopment) is extremely costly. On-site capacity is available, and sufficient other industrial land with services now exists to serve industrial expansion for some time. At some point, however, circumstances may require extension of services. Speculative extension without a source of outside funding is risky, putting upward pressure on the service costs of existing customers.
- **Maintaining and improving information technology and infrastructure.** Communications and information technology has, since 2003, become an increasingly important component of economic development and to meeting quality of life expectations. Grand Rapids has a fiber optic delivery system throughout most of the City. Continuing to improve capability will enable Grand Rapids to maintain and extend its competitiveness.
- **Challenges and opportunities for sustainable energy use.** Grand Rapids has local supply and demand-side resource that can provide energy to local and regional markets. Since the 2003 Plan, energy markets have become increasingly uncertain in regard to fuel supply, environmental regulation, and risk associated with capital intensive projects. Transitioning energy systems and capturing the opportunities of local energy resources presents a number of difficult infrastructural decisions for the City.



Community Vision

Grand Rapids offers an excellent quality of life to residents of the region with outstanding educational opportunities, excellent medical care, exceptional cultural, natural, and recreational amenities, and an unequaled sense of community spirit. . . .

Public Infrastructure and Community Services Goals

The Comprehensive Plan update looks at the goals and objectives for Public Infrastructure and Community Services recognizing that these cannot be considered in isolation from the rest of the city’s vision, values, and guiding principles. The goals and objectives for Public Infrastructure and Community Services are identified below.

Public Infrastructure Goals

2003 Plan Goals and Objectives

The 2003 Plan included two public utility goals with objectives and each objective had associated strategies and action steps.

Public Utility Goal 1: Meet the basic needs of Grand Rapids citizens with cost effective and quality services.

Public Utility Goal 2: Facilitate healthy growth and prepare for long-term development within the City of Grand Rapids.

2011 Plan Goals and Objectives

The 2010 Plan update creates a new hierarchy of goals and objectives, but incorporates the 2003 Plan goals and objectives into the updated Public Infrastructure and Community Services section, as well as introducing new goals and objectives that address the new challenges and opportunities described in the inventory above.

Public Infrastructure Goal 1: Provide cost effective and quality City services.

The City’s grey infrastructure of built utilities and facilities, enhanced by the City’s natural and economic infrastructure, is critical to sustaining economic stability and community health. Providing high quality services in the most efficient and sustainable manner is a primary Comprehensive Plan goal.

Community Vision

Grand Rapids is a unique blend of small town hospitality and character with big city conveniences and opportunities . . .



The city has identified five **objectives** to define Goal 1.

- a. ***Sustainably operate and maintain drinking water infrastructure and facilities.*** Protection of water supply, delivery of quality potable water, and appropriate management demand-side management of water usage will help sustain the community over time.
- b. ***Sustainably operate and maintain wastewater collection and treatment facilities.*** Economical wastewater management should meet regulatory standards, protect surface waters, and enable sustainable economic and community development.
- c. ***Sustainably operate and maintain the storm sewer utility and the gray and natural infrastructure components of the stormwater system.*** Stormwater management is becoming increasingly complex in regard to regulation standards and cost management.
- d. ***Sustainably operate and maintain Grand Rapids energy system.*** Sustainable energy systems need to be affordable, reliable, and efficient. In addition to traditional sources of energy, Grand Rapids has local resources that can be used for both supply and demand side initiatives that will enhance sustainable provision of energy to businesses and residents.
- e. ***Continue to provide effective, low cost communication and information services.*** Grand Rapids is a leader in providing broadband information services, and should continue to seek opportunities for enhancing service to residents and businesses.

Public Infrastructure Goal 2: Plan for expansion of public utilities to facilitate healthy and sustainable community growth.

Some expansion is likely to be needed over the next 20 years in order to support new development. Expansion decisions should meet the triple bottom line of sustaining the local economy, environment, and community fabric.

The City has identified **objectives** to define Goal 2.

- a. ***Design infrastructure and facilities that sustain or restore natural systems.*** Natural and gray infrastructure should be designed to be complementary.
- b. ***Ensure adequate service for future business and residential demand without degrading or diminishing service to existing users.***
- c. ***Use technology enhancements where practical and appropriate to support growth.*** For example, place new electrical systems underground, consider on-site alternatives to expensive centralized service extensions such as community septic systems, invest in demand-management.
- d. ***Establish criteria for prioritizing projects in the City’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).*** The community should understand why priorities are set and the rationale behind decision.
- e. ***Maintain and enhance open and on-going dialogue in the community.*** To ensure quality service, information needs to flow to

Guiding Principles

Principle 1. Direct growth and development to locations that serve community vision and values.

Recognize that development and redevelopment activities should be guided to appropriate locations in order to realize the community’s vision. Choices about where and how growth occurs will define community character for decades, affect the cost and quality of public services, and shape future development markets.

Guiding Principles

Principle 7. Practice community participation.

Community participation is a necessary part of sustainable growth and development. Regular and routine communication with residents, businesses, and visitors should direct and help create support for City investments, regulatory actions, and management choices.



and from utility and service customers.

- f. **Maintain and enhance open and on-going cooperative efforts with other governments, private-sector utilities, and community organizations.** Grand Rapids’ utility serves surrounding communities and the City is similarly served by the private sector.
- g. **Enhance and expand access to communications and information networks.** Information networks are a critical component of business competitiveness and residential quality of life.

Community Services Goals

2003 Plan Goals and Objectives

The 2003 Plan included one community facility goal and one education goal related to community services. Each goal had associated objectives and each objective had associated strategies and action steps.

Community Facilities Goal 1: Ensure the most efficient use of public assets to create and maintain the city’s physical and service infrastructure.

Education Goal 1: Seek to maintain high level of educational excellence and a positive learning environment for all citizens, young and old.

2011 Plan Goals and Objectives

The new hierarchy of goals and objectives in the 2011 Plan incorporates the 2003 Plan goals and objectives and introduces new language to address new challenges and opportunities. New challenges and opportunities came from the Community Survey, the community focus group process, and discussions in the Plan Steering Committee.

Community Services Goal 1: Efficient use of public asset in providing services.

Using public assets efficiently is a primary component of the Comprehensive Plan. The City should continue to evaluate efficiency of use and investment, and set clear criteria for making decisions.

Community Values

Fiscal Responsibility

Being accountable to our community means managing our financial resources wisely. This core value is expressed in many ways, including encouraging sustainable growth and development, efficient provision of services and programs, and fully accounting for costs associated with public decisions.

The City has identified **objectives** to define Goal 1.

- a. **Protect the public interest through fiscally responsible practices.** Develop a decision-making and policy framework for public expenditures that reflects a business plan format.
- b. **Sustain critical City operations that contribute to quality of life.** Hard questions on how to balance quality of service and fiscal impacts are inevitable. Sustaining the basic public assets requires investment and maintenance.



Community Service Goal 2: Provide services to protect public health, safety and general welfare.

Public health, safety and general welfare are the fundamental reasons that cities are granted regulatory authority and oversight. City regulation, including administration of the building and fire codes, land use planning and implementation of land use policies, and oversight of nuisances should improve and protect health, safety and general welfare.

The City has identified **objectives** to define Goal 2.

- a. **Continue to administer building and fire code programs and regulations.** Building and fire codes ensure buildings are safe for families, employees, and patrons.
- b. **Continue to provide City services that enhance the general welfare.** The City library, recreational programs, and other quality of life services are important for sustaining the community.
- c. **Clearly tie regulations, programs and other services to health, safety and general welfare goals.** Regulation is a tool to achieve Comprehensive Plan goals. Clearly demonstrating the link between Plan goals and regulatory efforts will make for better administrative decisions and clarify to those being regulated the desired result.
- d. **Periodically review regulations and programs for effectiveness.** Assess whether regulations and programs are achieving the desired goals, and modify, replace, or eliminate regulatory or programmatic efforts that do not advance City goals.

Communities Services Goal 3: Educational excellence for all.

The goals of ensuring economic opportunity and offering a high quality of life are directly linked to educational opportunity. The City supports providing educational opportunities for all residents.

The City has identified **objectives** to define Goal 3.

- a. **Ensure the provision and maintenance of adequate educational infrastructure.** Educational infrastructure includes both human and physical capital; infrastructure is both buildings and facilities and high quality teachers and administrators.
- b. **Continue and enhance working relationships between city staff and the school district.** Planning and investment between City and School District need to be coordinated
- c. **Support and promote activities to further early childhood education.** Early childhood education helps set the foundation for life.
- d. **Improve opportunities and quality of continuing education.** Determine the needs of continuing education in the community and

Community Values

Education

We value and promote equal access to quality, lifelong, educational opportunities for all residents. Education includes workforce development, continuing education, and information access, in addition to traditional schools. The more that education is integrated into the community, the better all other aspects of the community will function.

Community Values

Cultural and Recreational Opportunities.

We value the availability and quality of artistic, cultural, and recreational opportunities. Cultural and recreational opportunities contribute to our quality of life, define Grand Rapids as a regional creative destination, and enhance our City’s role as a center of state tourism.



identify actions/activities the city could undertake to improve the quality of and opportunities.

- e. ***Proactively address the need for extracurricular activities within the community.***
Education is not just about classrooms, but having opportunities to apply learning in the community. Cultural and recreational activities help play that role.

Implementation Priorities

The 2003 Plan included a number of specific recommendations for implementing the Plan’s community services and public infrastructure goals and objectives. While some of the strategies and actions were completed, some are ongoing and still have relevance to the updated goals and objectives, and others are incomplete and need to be rolled into the new Plan. Furthermore, new infrastructure and service issues and needs call for additional implementation actions to be included in the updated Plan.

The following long and short term actions implement the goals and objectives described above. Actions are thus directed by and constrained by the goals and objectives. Implementation actions must be understood within the context of the overall Plan: Community Vision, Values, and Principles; Future Land Use Map and Policies; and, Goals and Objectives.

Implementation priorities are presented in four categories: public infrastructure, community facilities, education, and community services.

Public Infrastructure Implementation Priorities

1. Recognize and address the development and land use implications of the Drinking Water Vulnerability Areas when reviewing development proposals. Consider a formal process for mitigating risk for development in the Drinking Water High Vulnerability area.
2. Consider demand-side management programs to sustain Grand Rapids' drinking water supply sources.
3. Participate in regulatory processes to address impaired waters and continue to incorporate a range of best management practices in new developments and in public rights-of-way during street and trail construction.
4. Exceed (within cost constraints) State and Federal effluent discharge standards for wastewater treatment systems.
5. Continue to explore opportunities to use waste heat from industrial operations in a district energy system or related system.
6. Continue to adopt local government best practices for improving energy efficiency in public buildings, encouraging private sector investment in local renewable energy, bio-fuels, and energy efficiency resources, and improving Grand Rapid’s energy sustainability. Take advantage of technical and informational assistance for best practices through programs such as Minnesota GreenStep Cities, Star Community Index, U.S Green Building Council standards, or similar programs.
7. Continue to investigate solar energy potential on the Library and the potential for wind energy installations in the City’s rural areas.



8. Complete and implement the design for utilizing waste heat from the UPM/Blandin plant for heating the Library.
9. Identify potential environmental and natural resource conflicts concerning new facilities or upgrades to existing facilities prior to design phase. Consider criteria that identify and recognize environmental constraints, as described in the natural infrastructure section.
10. Maintain awareness of new wastewater treatment technology, including systems applicable in rural areas of the City.
11. Establish criteria and adopt and maintain an infrastructure plan as a part of the City Capital Improvement Plans (CIP) and the GRPUC CIP.
12. Take into account proven technology and competitiveness when reviewing, renewing, or assigning franchises.
13. Encourage partnerships among appropriate parties that provide the most effective, lowest cost communication services.
14. Continue to engage the public in dialogue on public utility planning and service assessment. Develop an outreach/education strategy to promote better understanding of improvement projects and their relationship to quality of life and the greater good of the community.
15. Continue to provide customer service training to City and public utility staff.

Community Facilities Implementation Priorities

1. Use a variety of tools in investment and management decisions to meet fiscal responsibility goals, including fiscal impact analysis, cost-revenue analysis, lifecycle cost analysis, impact on fees, and capital budgeting analysis.
2. Use business planning procedures for facilities management to place responsibility and accountability on department heads for efficient budget expenditures, all under the guidance of the City Council or appropriate Commission or Board.
3. Recognize that fiscally self-sustaining facilities and programs should be a management goal, but that some facilities and programs contribute substantially to or are essential to maintaining quality of life even if operations do not pay for themselves. Consider creating qualitative and quantitative criteria for measuring efficiency and investment priorities.

Community Services Implementation Priorities

1. Continue to look for efficiencies in managing regulatory processes to ensure prompt response to reasonable requests.
2. Emphasize a service orientation in all interactions with the public and train City staff in the goals that programs and regulation should achieve.
3. Continue to support quality-of-life services including schools, library, and recreational activities. Build partnerships with private and public entities to provides programs and services more cost effectively while finding opportunities to enhance services.



Education Implementation Priorities

1. Develop an understanding of current and future school district infrastructure needs that recognizes temporary “bubbles” in the number school age children. Consider intergovernmental solutions to long-term, infrastructural, investments.
2. Continue to manage facilities to minimize lifecycle costs and to improve the learning environment.
3. Continue to support safe routes to school goals, including safe walking routes to and from school through the provision of appropriate sidewalk infrastructure and strategically placed stoplights and “dark sky” compliant lighting, crosswalks, signage, and crossing guards.
4. Involve school district staff in planning efforts and participate in district planning initiatives.
5. Work with continuing education providers to determine the needs of continuing education in the community and identify any actions/activities the City could undertake to improve the quality of and opportunities for continuing education.
6. Proactively address the need for extracurricular activities within Grand Rapids.



E. Emergency Services Infrastructure

Emergency Services – Looking Back

Emergency services, including police, fire, and ambulance and other emergency responders, are a critical component of the community's public service infrastructure. The 2003 Comprehensive Plan gave an extensive summary of emergency services, including:

- Law enforcement services and crime prevention programs
- Fire protection and hazardous materials response
- Ambulance services
- Disaster relief

The primary change since the 2003 Plan is the completed annexation of Grand Rapids Township. Understanding emergency services in the context of land use planning becomes more important for the 2010 Plan update. Extensions of the urban area have potential ramifications on the cost of providing emergency services and the response time of each service. The former Township areas were served by Grand Rapids emergency services prior to annexation other than law enforcement provided by the County Sherriff. Over the long run, however, service expectations can change for rural residents who pay City taxes. Existing service obstacles can also be exacerbated by growth in some areas of the City. The train tracks separate portions of the City from one another, requiring a separate fire station down by the airport to meet emergency response services. Currently, there are no planned bypasses or underpasses to alleviate the emergency service issues associated with the railroad crossing.

Law Enforcement Protection

The role of law enforcement protection is to ensure public safety through the protection of people and their property. Fair and effective law enforcement has the outcome of enhancing the quality of life within a community. Furthermore, the perception of a low crime rate and an adequately funded and efficient law enforcement service can help make a community an attractive place for businesses and families to locate. The mission of the City of Grand Rapids Police Department (GRPD) is to enhance the quality of life throughout the City of Grand Rapids by working cooperatively with all citizens to preserve the peace, enforce the law, reduce the perception of fear and provide for a safe and caring environment. The police department headquarters are located in City Hall and the police garage is located next to the fire department. The police impound building is located near the Showboat landing at the former Public Works garage, an area that has been designated for future expansion of Blandin/UPM paper company

The annexation of Grand Rapids Township increased both population and service territory; the geographic area of the City increased by 194%. The GRPD has 21 full-time personnel including: one Chief of Police, one Assistant Chief, four Patrol Sergeants, two Investigators, two School Liaison Officers, seven Patrol Officers, one K-9 Officer, a Community Assistance Office and two Secretarial/Dispatch staff. The department is also supported by a 15-member Volunteer Police Reserve Unit. In addition, the GRPD has mutual-aid agreements with every law enforcement agency within Itasca County.



Police Reserves

In addition to the full-time police force, the Grand Rapids Police Reserve unit assists the department with a force of civilian volunteers. The Police Reserves assist with traffic direction and crowd control, assisting officers at accident and crime scenes, area saturation during special events in the City, assisting at City events such as parades and sporting events, and participating in ride-alongs with officers. In addition, several police officers along with members of the Police Reserves use bicycles to patrol neighborhoods and the downtown area.

Crime Prevention and Safety Education Programs

There are a number of other crime prevention and safety education programs in the City of Grand Rapids including the following:

- Citizens Academy
- National Night Out
- Neighborhood Watch
- Operation Identification
- Child Safety Seat checks
- Crime Prevention Tips
- Crime Mapping

The GRPD is present in the schools. Three officers from the GRPD teach Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) at the middle school to the fifth grade classes. Officers from the GRPD go to schools one day a week for 10 weeks and teach a curriculum on how to resist drugs and violence. The GRPD also provides two school liaison officers to ISD #318 that alternate duty at the middle school and senior high school. These officers are responsible for handling juvenile complaints and investigations.

Table 5-__ . City of Grand Rapids Historical Part I Crime Offenses

Type of Offense	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Murder	0	0	0	0	0
Rape	4	5	10	24	11
Robbery	1	3	0	0	0
Aggravated assault	9	13	10	10	68
Burglary	10	39	30	29	7
Larceny	27	285	279	271	119
Motor vehicle theft	1	3	11	17	7
Arson	1	0	0	1	1
Total Part I Offenses	57	348	340	352	213

* Data Not Available

Source: GRPD

Table__ identifies the number and type of Part II offenses reported by the GRPD between 2001 and 2009. The FBI identifies Part II offenses as all offenses other than Part I crimes, juvenile offenses, and traffic violations. Part II offenses include forgery and counterfeiting, fraud, embezzlement, buying, receiving, or possessing stolen property, vandalism or destruction of property, weapons violations, prostitution and commercialized vice, sex offenses, narcotics offenses, liquor law violations, gambling violations, offenses against family and children, driving under the influence, disorderly conduct, vagrancy, and all other offenses.

**Table 5-___. City of Grand Rapids Historical Part II Crime Offenses**

Type of Offense	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Other assaults	37	163	131	133	92
Forgery and counterfeiting	10	13	22	16	265
Fraud	7	43	48	79	26
Embezzlement	0	0	0	0	0
Stolen property	0	2	2	2	3
Vandalism	13	130	150	86	46
Weapons offenses	1	2	0	1	2
Prostitution	1	3	0	0	0
Other sex offenses	1	6	9	3	0
Narcotics offenses	18	34	35	44	36
Gambling offenses	0	0	0	0	0
Offenses against family or children	0	7	7	4	0
Driving under the influence	79	108	94	112	104
Liquor laws	9	45	37	39	29
Disorderly conduct	17	228	224	246	119
Other offenses (except traffic)	55	215	181	188	121
Total Part I Offenses	248	999	940	953	843

* Data Not Available

Source: GRPD

Fire Protection

Adequate fire protection is an essential service within any community, often saving lives and property. Manpower, equipment, and a good emergency response system are important for both current Grand Rapids resident and for prospective residents and businesses.

The City of Grand Rapids Fire Department (GRFD) provides fire protection to the greater Grand Rapids area, including the City of La Prairie, and the townships of Trout Lake, Arbo, Blackberry, Harris, Splithand, Wabana and the unorganized townships. The GRFD no longer serves Wildwood Township, now covered by the Hill City Fire Department, nor the area east of the Prairie River, now covered by the Coleraine Fire Department. The annual budget increased from \$314,000 in 2002 before the annexation to \$579,000 in 2010. Much of the increase is due to changes in the formula that determines contract amounts for the townships. The GRFD has mutual-aid agreements with each community in Itasca County, plus Hill City and Jacobson, located in Aitkin County. The GRFD service territory covers about 272 square miles.

The GRFD is made up of 30 part-time firefighters with the option to carry up to 2 firefighter trainees. In 2008, a part-time fire inspector was added to assist in enforcing the fire code. In 2009, an honorary fire chaplain position was added, but the GRFD only pays for the training, uniforms, pager, and personal protective equipment for this position. The City has two fire stations, one each on the north side and the south side. The north fire station contains seven fire engines and the south station contains two engines. The fire department averages about 206 calls for service per year including fire calls, rescues, and hazardous material spills and leaks with a chemical assessment team. The average response time varies, depending on the location of the incident. In 2009, the average response time to incidents within the city limits of Grand Rapids was 5.9 minutes and the average response time to the areas farthest



from services was 15.3 minutes. The Grand Rapids Fire Department also is contracted as one of the State’s Regional Hazardous Materials Response Teams.

Table 5- __. City of Grand Rapids Fire Department Annual Calls

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Calls	211	199	234	209	197	174	182	172

Source: GRFD

Emergency Medical Services

Like fire protection, emergency medical response is an essential service within any community. The ambulance provider is Meds-1, the first rural, non-urban, advanced-life support (ALS) provider in northern Minnesota. Meds-1 is located in the northwest quadrant of the city and employs 38 people, of whom 13 are full-time and 26 are part-time or seasonal employees. Meds-1 has four ambulances, three of which are ALS /critical care units and one is a basic unit. Three of the four ambulances are owned by Itasca County.

The primary service area (PSA) for Meds-1 is roughly the 1,028 square miles. The PSA is designated by the Minnesota Emergency Medical Services Board and includes portions of both Aitkin and Itasca County. Meds-1 also has mutual aid agreements with some neighboring communities. Primary funding for Meds-1 comes from Medicare Part B, which helps pay for medical services such as physicians, ambulance services, outpatient therapy and other professional services. Meds-1 draws additional subsidies from Itasca and Aitkin counties, as well as a fee for call subsidy.

Meds-1 also provides event stand-by and medical support within the service area. These required services provides personnel and equipment, but no ambulance to support such activities as athletic events, county fairs, community-wide festivals, and any event requiring on-site EMS medical support as dictated by insurance or licensing. These operations occur weekly in the PSA and include multiple patient contacts not listed in the call volume data. For example, they routinely treat in excess of 70 patients with wide-ranging issues at the Itasca County Fair (non-billed services).

Meds-1 covers an approximate call radius of 25 to 30 miles. The average response time is 6.2 minutes for 54.6% of call requests (call from 911 to time on scene) and 9.8 minutes for 26.7% of call requests. Table 4 provides a history of annual calls for emergency medical services.

Table 4: Emergency Medical Services Annual Calls

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Calls	2,101	2,349	2,438	2,557	2,662	2,790	2,850	3,064

Source: Meds-1



Emergency Services – Looking Forward

Emergency Services Goals

2003 Plan Goals and Objectives

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan included one goal related to emergency services and three objectives.

Emergency Services Goal 1: Ensure the safety and security of the Grand Rapids community.

2011 Plan Goals and Objectives

The 2011 Plan update retains this emergency services goal and creates new objectives that address the new service territory, expansion issues, and economic situation.

Emergency Services Goal 1: Ensure the safety and security of the Grand Rapids community.

A community's sense of safety and security often hinges on the quality of emergency services. Quality emergency services require planning and assessment of risks prior to emergency events.

Community Values

Safety – Neighborhoods and Streets

Safety is a priority for us, especially in our homes, our neighborhoods, and on our streets. Safety means that our children have safe environments in which to grow and residents and visitors can walk, bicycle, and drive in safe, regulated traffic environments.

The City has also identified several **objectives** that define the Emergency Services goal.

- a. **Provide for police patrol visibility in residential areas and newly annexed areas of Grand Rapids.** Visibility of emergency service providers, especially police, creates a sense of security within the community.
- b. **Ensure adequate emergency service response times.** Grand Rapids has some particular challenges to maintaining adequate response times to calls for emergency services, including separation of the community by the railroad and large rural areas to the north and the southwest of the urban city.
- c. **Continue to promote inter-agency cooperation (mutual-aid) in providing services to Grand Rapids and surrounding communities.**

Grand Rapids is not only the regional economic center, it provides services to both City residents and residents and businesses in nearby communities. Capturing opportunities for inter-agency cooperation makes better use of limited funding, reduces upward pressure on taxes and fees, and generally provides for better service.

Community Values

Fiscal Responsibility

Being accountable to our community means managing our financial resources wisely. This core value is expressed in many ways, including encouraging sustainable growth and development, efficient provision of services and programs, and fully accounting for costs associated with public decisions.



Implementation Priorities

The 2003 Plan included specific recommendations for implementing the Plan’s emergency service goal and objectives. Most of the strategies and actions are ongoing considerations and are thus incorporated in the new Plan.

The following long and short term actions implement the goal and objectives described above. Implementation actions must be understood within the context of the overall Plan: Community Vision, Values, and Principles; Future Land Use Map and Policies; and, Goals and Objectives.

Implementation priorities are organized into long and short term action categories. Long-term actions are more general in nature and are expected to be undertaken five or more years out. Short-term actions are fairly specific and are expected to be undertaken within three years and completed within five years.

1. Establish criteria for determining what constitutes an adequate level of staffing to meet a designated level of service, including response times and visibility in the community. Review patrol officer staffing decisions within the context of the affect on measurable criteria. Consider community policing practices to improve visibility.
2. Ensure public safety through adequate traffic enforcement. Establish criteria for determining what constitutes an adequate level of traffic enforcement.
3. Establish methodology for measuring level of service for fire response and capability. Review funding and staffing decisions within the context of measureable criteria, including response times and ability to address specific risks emergency risks.
4. Develop a methodology for evaluating development proposals in rural areas that addresses the impact such development will have on emergency services and the ability of emergency service systems to response to emergencies.
5. Continue dialogue and planning with other public and private sector entities and businesses on emergency and hazardous response planning. Create or update response plans for hazardous response to industrial and natural disasters.
6. Continue to coordinate with surrounding communities on emergency service protection to maximize service coverage and minimize costs.
7. Plan for the relocation of the police impound building in order to prepare the site for industrial expansion in the area.



A. Natural Infrastructure

Natural Infrastructure - Looking Back

What is natural infrastructure?

Natural infrastructure includes all systems that relate to natural resources and contribute to an improved public life. Natural infrastructure considers the full range of natural resource uses including economic, environmental, health, cultural, and aesthetic. This broad view leads us to include surface water, groundwater, stormwater, wastewater, drinking water, mineral resources, geology, topography, soils, natural areas, open space, green spaces in urban areas, habitat, vegetation, scenic views, and parks and trails in natural infrastructure.

Natural Infrastructure

The network of open space, watersheds, woodlands, managed forest, wildlife habitat, parks, mineral deposits and natural areas that provide vital services and resource that contribute to the economic health and quality of life for our communities.

Why include natural infrastructure in a comprehensive plan?

Understanding the City's natural resource infrastructure is the first step in planning where development should be encouraged or discouraged and how best to design for maximum value to the community's values. For example, houses built on unstable or wet soils without consideration given to those soils results in wet basements, cracked foundations, or unsafe structures. Beyond avoiding hazards, communities also value natural infrastructure for the health benefits it provides such as access to recreation and safe drinking water. Biological diversity and protection of ecological services are also provided by natural infrastructure. Economic activities such as mining, forestry, and agriculture are dependent on natural infrastructure. Finally, communities value natural infrastructure for quality of life benefits such as provision of scenic views and open spaces within developed areas. Understanding natural infrastructure is important in order to plan for development that respects the integrity of natural systems and incorporates natural features into development. Successful communities plan for where people can live, businesses can thrive, while protecting or enhancing natural resources.

This background assessment presents natural infrastructure information that was used in the future land use map and goals and objectives to:

- Define where to encourage protection of natural resources
- Define where to encourage development
- Define where natural systems can work with development and define neighborhoods
- Define how natural resources can be protected in development areas

Natural Infrastructure in the 2003 Comprehensive Plan

The background inventory of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan describes natural infrastructure in several sections but does not present a unified picture of current natural infrastructure. For example, the drinking water and wastewater systems are described in the Community Facilities and Services inventory. However, surface water quality is not discussed nor is the location of drinking water resources and natural areas described or mapped. Park and recreation facilities are fully described, but



not mapped. Finally, undeveloped land is described in detail by subarea in the Land Use background inventory, however, the natural infrastructure qualities of the undeveloped areas are not described or mapped.

Two sub-area plans completed as part of the 2003 Plan implementation effort do identify some natural infrastructure and set policies for building on natural assets in the development and redevelopment process.

Natural Infrastructure in the Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan, 2006

The Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan calls for implementation of trail connections from the surrounding area to the downtown to businesses. The primary “green space” in the downtown area is the Old Central School site and portions of the riverfront. These areas along with proposed re-development and extensions of trail corridors and corner lots calls for designs that incorporate trees and landscape features not only for aesthetics, but for stormwater protection, water quality enhancement, and shading and transpiration that counteracts the urban heat island of concrete and buildings. Vegetation, rain gardens, green roofs, energy efficient buildings and other sustainable development will benefit the City’s natural resources and the residents/visitors quality of life in the downtown area, the City’s connection to the river, and the greater natural resource infrastructure.

Natural Infrastructure in the Riverfront Framework Plan, 2009

The Riverfront Framework Plan is designed to incorporate natural resource infrastructure and trail connections along the waterfront on both the north and south side. Much of the study area along the north side of the river lies within the 100-year floodplain including the Public Library and the Rotary Tent. The 100-year and 500-year floodplains on the south side are limited to the river’s edge and areas already dedicated to open space. The proposed implementation plan will benefit the City’s natural resources infrastructure along the river’s corridor and enhance residents’ and visitors’ quality of life.

2011 Natural Infrastructure background assessment

In the 2011 Comprehensive Plan Update, the City of Grand Rapids has chosen to organize natural resources and natural systems as natural infrastructure. This choice recognizes the contribution of natural infrastructure to the physical, social, and economic health of the community. The choice also acknowledges the equal status of gray and natural infrastructure in land use choices.

Updating the 2003 background inventory, this section brings together information on parks and recreation, open space, water and wetland resources, topography, geology, vegetation, and drinking and wastewater systems to form a cohesive natural infrastructure picture. Paired with housing, transportation, and land use information, a portrait of Grand Rapids’ future has emerged.

Surface Water

As shown on Figure1, Grand Rapids citizens enjoy over 1,200 acres of open water within city boundaries. The Mississippi River flows through the heart of the city with the Blandin Reservoir forming a city landmark. The Prairie River flows along the northeast portion of the city’s border. North of downtown lie McKinney, Crystal, and Hale Lakes with Nagel Lake straddling the northern boundary of the city. The southern half of the city includes Lily, Horseshoe Lakes and a portion of Pokegama.

Grand Rapids residents use these water bodies for recreation and enjoy lake and river views from their homes. Recognizing the positive recreational and aesthetic attributes of water, the Grand Rapids

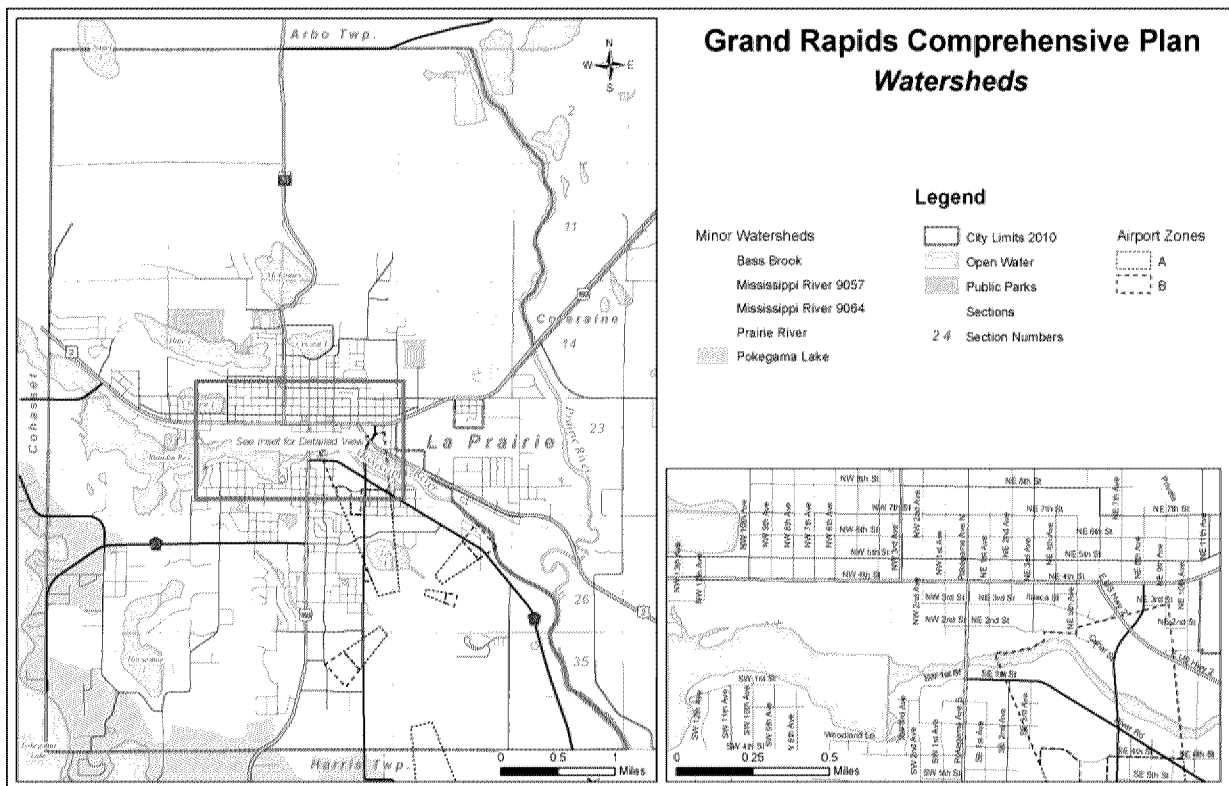


Riverfront Plan redirects attention to the Mississippi River as an asset for the community. Future land use choices should consider the impact of development choices on water quality and quantity. Crystal, McKinney and Hale lakes are located within city drinking water recharge areas. The Blandin Reservoir and Mississippi River through the city are listed as impaired waters for excess mercury by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Horseshoe Lake was listed in 2010 as impaired for excess nutrients and a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) analysis will occur at some point in the future. Excess nutrients, however, typically come from residential turf management, stormwater runoff, and agricultural practices which can be influenced by local land use choices.

Watersheds

The City’s watershed system is also shown on Figure 1. The City of Grand Rapids lies within the Mississippi River – Grand Rapids major watershed and 5 minor watersheds: Bass Brook; Prairie River; Pokegama Lake; and two minor watersheds of the Mississippi River - #9057 and 9064. Watersheds are areas of upland that drain to a specific lake or a portion of a river. A minor watershed is a smaller watershed defined within a major watershed. Activities on the land within a watershed affect the quality and quantity of the receiving lake or river. Activities within watersheds of impaired waters are of particular interest because of the potential for managing these activities to improve the water quality. For example, stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces such as parking lots, structures, and roads can add sediments and pollutants to lakes and rivers. Slowing down or diverting stormwater runoff can reduce sediments and pollutants in lakes and rivers. The Mississippi River 9064 minor watershed drains to Horseshoe Lake which is listed as an impaired water as noted above.

Figure 5-__ Grand Rapids Watersheds



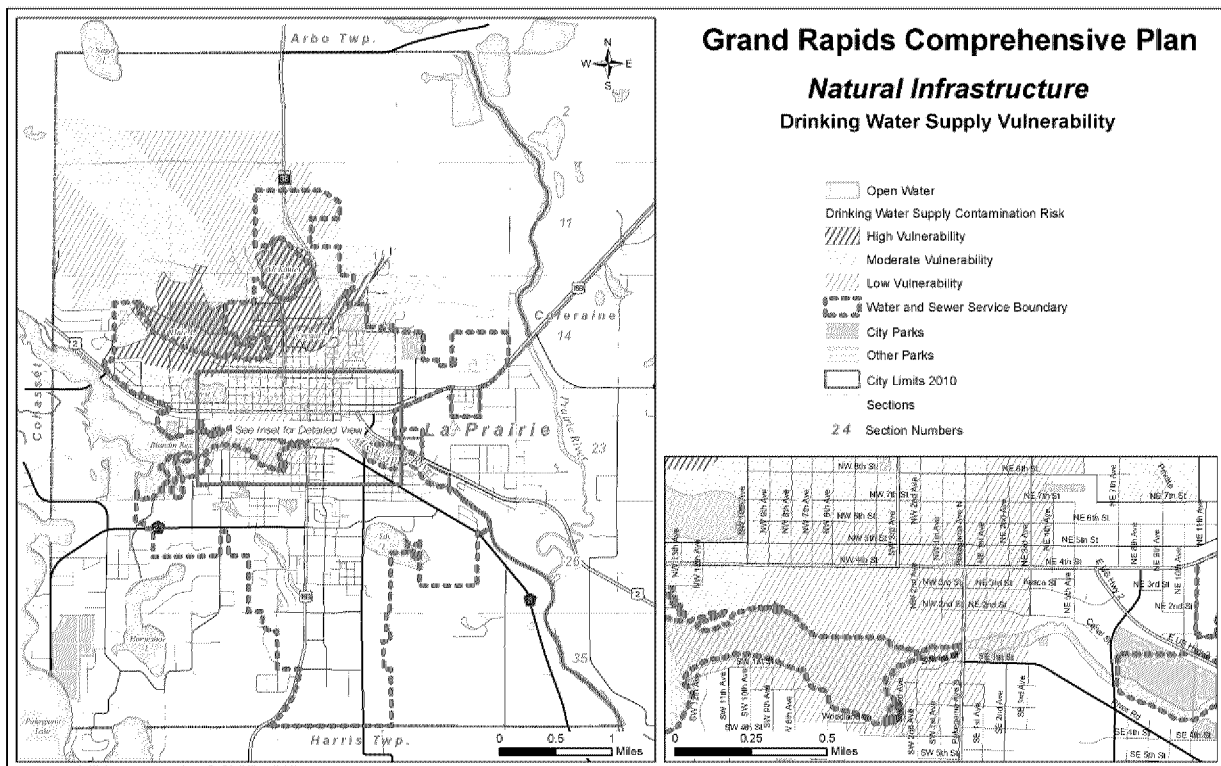


Drinking Water Supply

An adequate supply of clean drinking water is important to the health of citizens and to economic development activities. The drinking water sources are a critical component of Grand Rapids’ natural infrastructure. The treatment, pumping, and delivery are part of the gray infrastructure system. The City’s gray infrastructure is discussed in the Public Infrastructure and Community Services section. The drinking water resource, however, is a critical natural resource and part of Grand Rapids’ natural infrastructure. The Plan thus considers the vulnerability of the City’s drinking water resource as part of its natural infrastructure.

Figure 2 shows the Drinking Water Supply Vulnerability (DWSV) areas as defined by the Minnesota Department of Health. Vulnerability is based on factors including geologic sensitivity, type of wells, and water chemistry. High vulnerability areas (835 acres) indicate areas where pollutants travel quickly into drinking water supplies; moderate (1,766 acres) and low (1,618 acres) vulnerability areas indicate longer travel times. The City of Grand Rapids has adopted a wellhead protection plan for the management of risks within DWSV areas. DWSV areas and the wellhead protection plan should be considered as future development choices are made. Land use activities that have a high risk of contributing pollutants should be located in areas outside of DWSV areas.

Figure 5-__. Grand Rapids Drinking Water Supply Vulnerability





Wastewater Management

Managing the collection and treatment of sanitary wastewater are primary functions of the City of Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission. Wastewater management is primarily grey, rather than natural, infrastructure, as most of the City's wastewater treatment is composed of wastewater collection and treatment facilities. Properties outside the service boundary use on-site treatment systems (septic systems) which rely on soils to treat wastewater and are part of the City's natural infrastructure. Itasca County, rather than Grand Rapids, oversees the on-site wastewater systems in the City's rural areas.

Details of the centralized wastewater system and a map showing system components are provided in the Public Infrastructure and Community Services section.

Stormwater Management

Grand Rapids has seven lakes and two rivers within its corporate boundaries. The surface waters of the City's natural infrastructure system are greatly affected by the City's stormwater management system. Figure __ shows the extent of the stormwater management system in Grand Rapids, which is a combination of natural and grey infrastructure. The watersheds, natural drainageways, and infiltration areas, and vegetation (including urban forest) are natural, while pipes, constructed conveyances, and holding ponds are grey infrastructure. Discussion of the constructed elements of the stormwater system are included in the Public Infrastructure and Community Services section.

The City of Grand Rapids created a stormwater utility in 2004 to help manage and pay for infrastructure related to rain runoff and the City's surface water obligations under the Clean Water Act. A stormwater management plan was completed in 2007 and approved by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The stormwater management plan describes the six National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) stormwater permit control measures being implemented by the City's stormwater utility.

These control measures are:

1. public education and outreach;
2. public involvement and participation;
3. illicit discharge detection and elimination;
4. construction site stormwater runoff control;
5. post-construction stormwater management;
6. pollution prevention/good housekeeping for municipal operations.

The City of Grand Rapids Public Works Department maintains 45 linear miles of storm sewer pipe and eight storm water retention ponds. Since 2003 the City has also installed 26 rain gardens in addition to detention ponds and sediment basins as stormwater best management practices. On-site management of stormwater is the preferred management method, which generally uses the natural rather than constructed elements of the stormwater system.



In addition to the park and recreation facilities in Grand Rapids, a number of regional facilities outside the City limits draw tourists to the area and into Grand Rapids. These resorts, golf courses, trails, and ski areas contribute to Grand Rapids' role as a gateway to Minnesota's northern natural and recreation areas, as conveyed in the Grand Rapids logo and identity "It's in Minnesota's Nature. . ."

Figure 5-___. Grand Rapids Parks and Trails

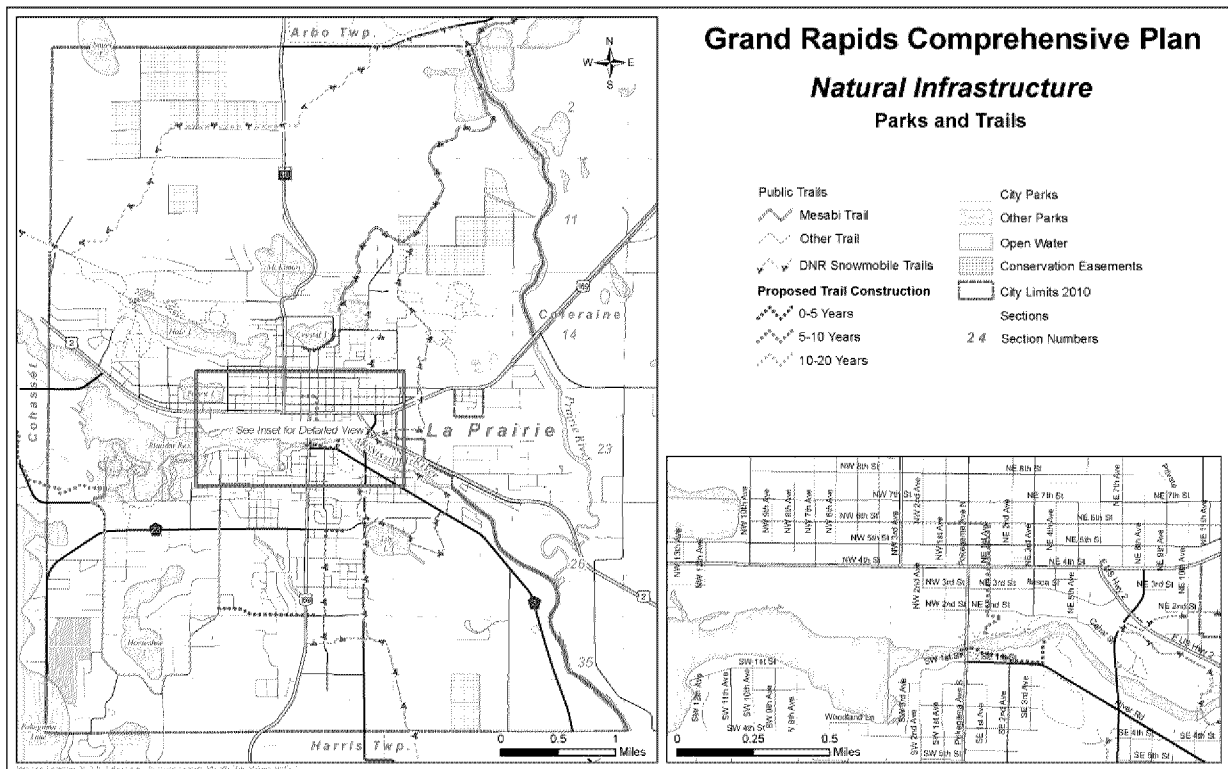




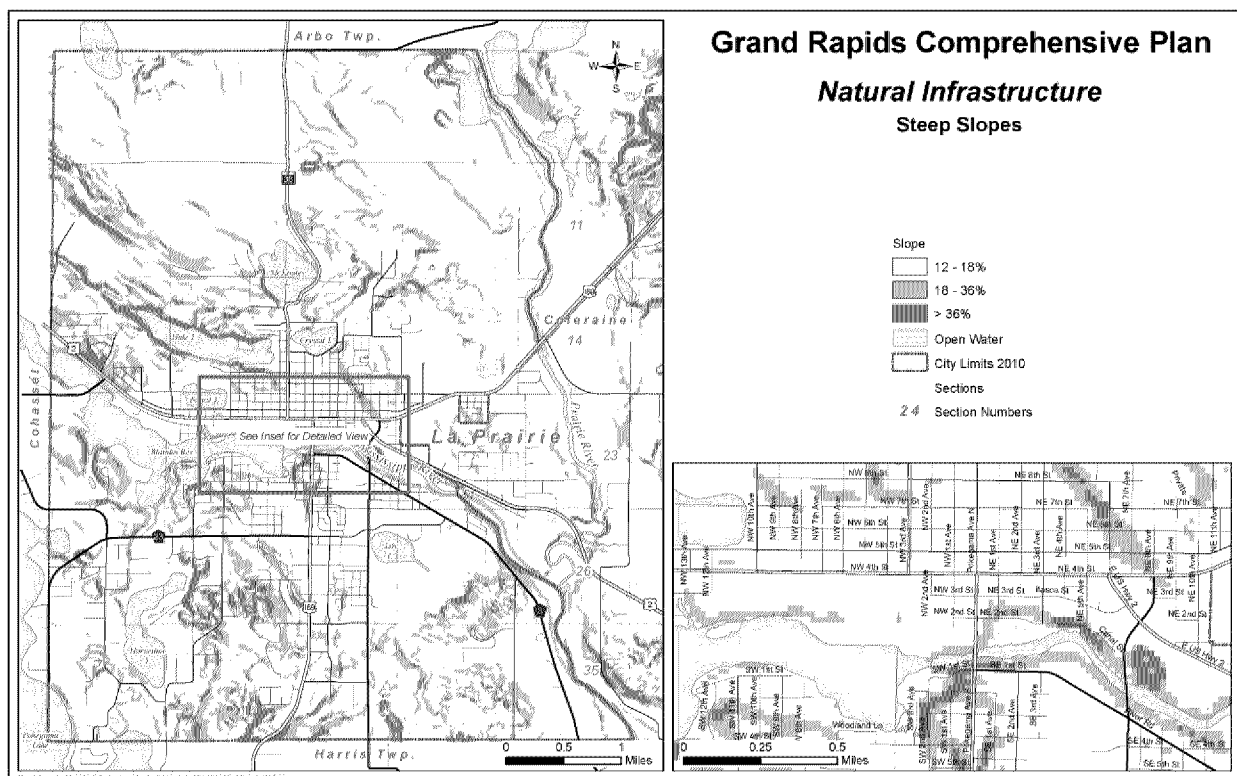
Figure 5-___. Grand Rapids Parks

Park Name	Location	Amenities
American Legion Memorial Park	TH 38 & 14 th St	Baseball field, CC ski trails, Park and Recreation offices, football field, picnic and park area, horseshoe area, and Ryan Flood Memorial Basketball Court
Blandin Beach (Forest Lake)	10 th Ave & 6 th ST NW	Playground and park area, picnic area, fence beach swimming area, raft and diving boards
Old Central School	Pokegama Ave & 4 th St NW	Picnic and park area, amphitheater, yellow brick road, flower gardens, shops, and entertainment
Cody Siem Memorial Skate Park	16 th Street NW	Tier I & II equipment for ages 8 and over, picnic tables
Grand Rapids Sports Complex	1100 NE 11 th Ave	Four softball fields, regulation soccer field, practice area, picnic, park/play area, and concessions
Grussendorf Park	8 th Ave & 6 th St SW	Playground, picnic, & park area, tennis courts, softball field, hard court area, basketball court, hockey rink & warming house
Lost Creek Park	4 th Ave & 8 th St NW	Playground, picnic & park area, creek runs through park
Maplewood Park	5 th Ave & 14 th St SE	Playground, picnic and park area
Minnesota Shooting Sports Education Center	483 Peterson Road	Educational training, train the trainer programs, 4-H Shooting Sports, NRA programs, and supervised recreational shooting
Mesabi Trail		From the fairgrounds north to Ely
McGowan Park	1 st Ave & 13 th St SW	Playground, picnic and park area
Mississippi River Bridge Crossing	From Oakland Park to Veteran's Memorial Park	Non-motorized bridge crossing in summer, snowmobile crossing in winter
Newton Sliding Hill	4 th Ave & 7 th St NE	Sliding Area
Pokegama Golf Course	3910 Golf Course Road	18-hole municipal course on the shores of Pokegama Lake, also Pokegama Park Place beach
Oakland Park	11 th Ave & 4 th St SE	Playground, picnic & park area, softball field, bridge crossing access, practice soccer area
Riverfront Trails	Pokegama Ave & 1 st St SE	Trail beginning at Blandin Park and follow along the Mississippi River
Showboat Landing (Syndicate Park)	16 th Ave & 3 rd St NW	Picnic and park area, fishing platform, performance area
Skogebo Park	1 st Street SW	Picnic area along river
Steamboat Landing	303 SE 1 st St	Picnic and park area, river access
Sylvan Landing	12 th Ave & 1 st ST SW	Picnic and park area, boat landing
Veteran's Memorial Park	7 th Ave NE & TH 2	Playground, picnic & park area, two sheltered pavilions, electricity, water, volleyball, and horseshoes court, bridge crossing access
Willow Park	4 th Ave SE	Playground, picnic, and park area
IRA Civic Center	1401 McKinney Lake Rd	Trade shows, receptions, exhibition events, concerts, meetings and conventions

Steep Slopes

Ridges with slopes of greater than 35% are found throughout the city. Figure ___ shows the location of steep slopes within the City of Grand Rapids. Steep slopes, when developed without consideration, can cause substantial on-site problems including slumping, erosion, and structural cracking problems. Off-site impacts from such development can include increased volume and velocity stormwater runoff, visual impacts to community character, and fragmentation of habitat. This contributes to increased pollutant loads to water bodies, greater risk of introduced and exotic species, and depletion of high quality habitat and aesthetically pleasing views of the City. Consideration of slope is also important for road construction and development.

Figure 5-___. Grand Rapids Steep Slopes



Aggregate and Mineral Resources

Grand Rapids is located on top of geological formations that contain significant aggregate deposits and mineral resources. Aggregate is used in road-building and development. Access to a local source of aggregate reduces cost for construction projects. Figure ___ illustrates aggregate deposits in southeastern Itasca County. Gravel deposits underlay most of the City. Deposits of significant quality



correspond with current gravel mining activity in sections 3, 4, and 7, in the northern half of the city as shown on the Figure _____. Additional high-quality deposits lie along the southern border of the city.

The Mesabi Iron Formation also runs through an extensive area in the northern half of the City as shown on Figure _____. This 2,600 acre geological resource provides an economic resource throughout the region. Iron mining has occurred in the past in the northeastern corner of the City and west of the City in and near Cohasset. The iron formation lies under many other natural systems including lakes, rivers, wetlands, forested areas, drinking water supply vulnerability areas, and steep slopes. Iron deposits are also associated with aggregate deposits in the city. Reserving future extraction opportunities for both aggregate and iron deposits should be considered as development choices are made. Mining interests are actively investigating resources in and around Grand Rapids.

Figure 5-___. Mine Lands and Iron Ore Resources of the Grand Rapids Area

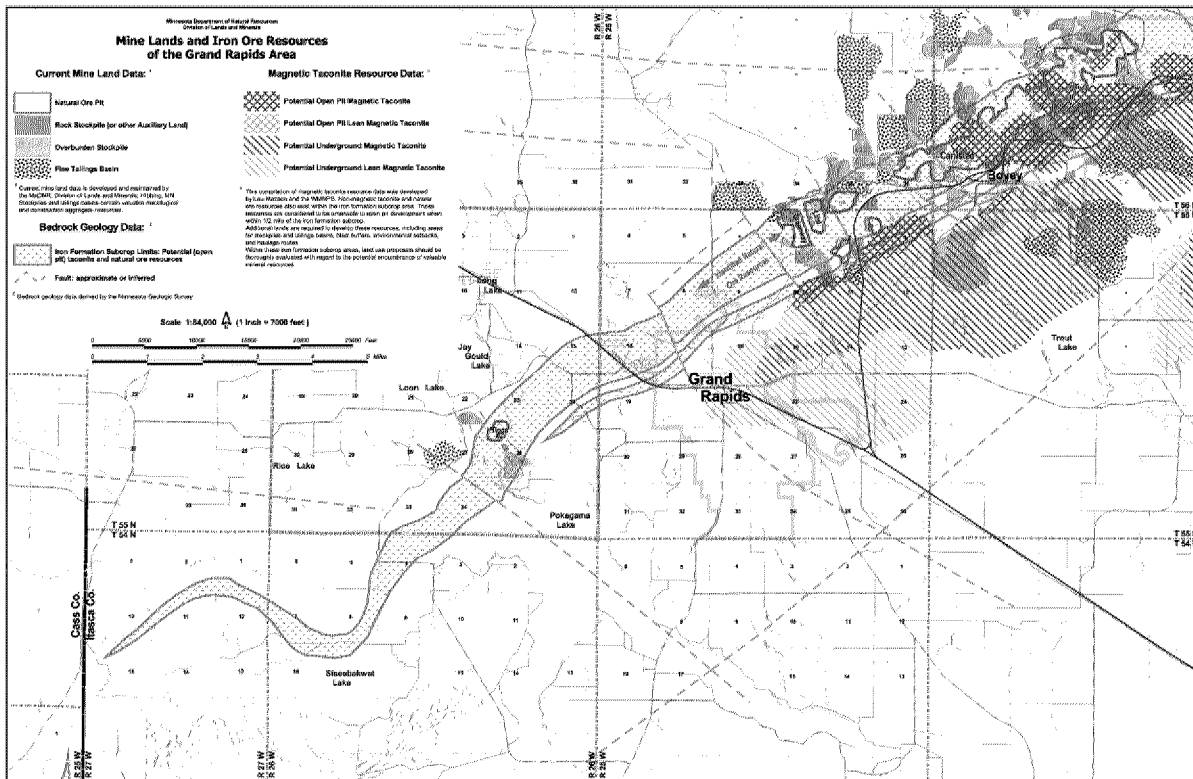
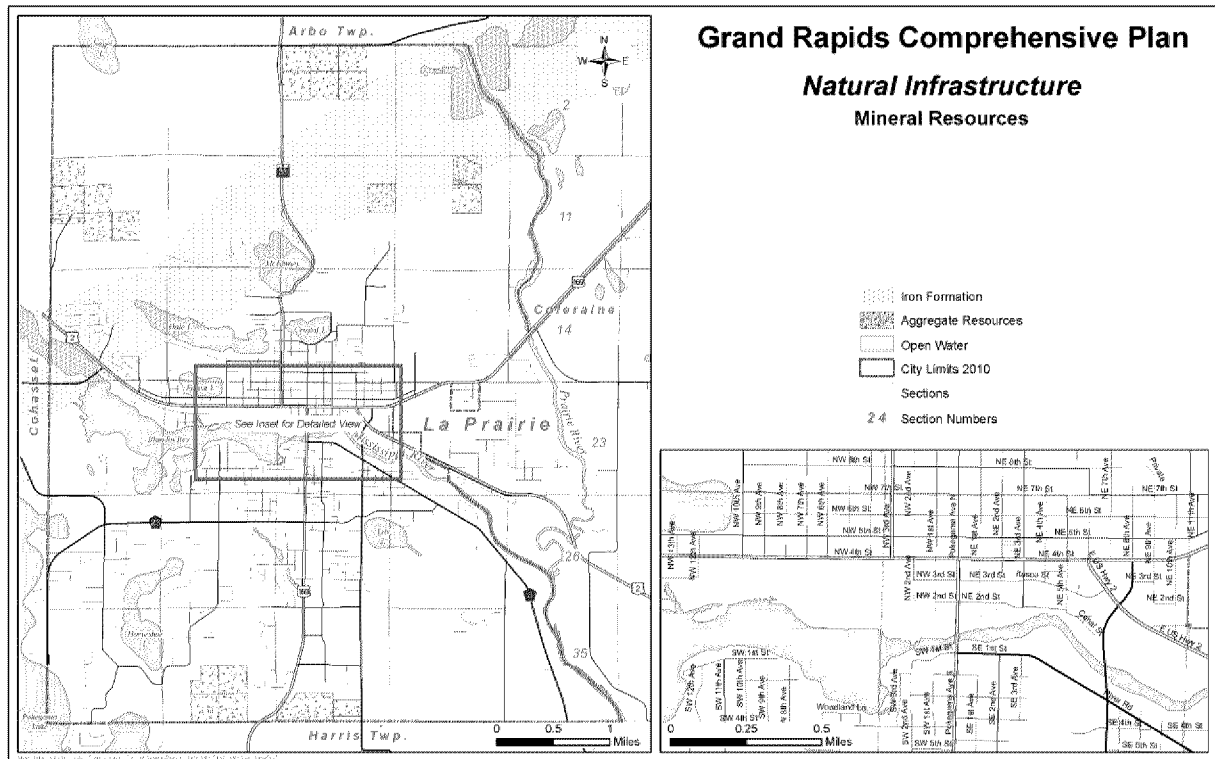


Figure 5-___. Grand Rapids Mineral Resources



Urban Forest

The City’s public and private urban areas, including residential, commercial, and industrial land uses within the urban service area, are part of the City’s urban forest areas. The urban forest helps create and maintain the northwoods character of the City, adds value to property, provides stormwater management value, and provides edge habitat for public and park lands. The City has required retention of trees within the development process as a means of retaining the character of neighborhoods and creating visual buffers. The City also maintains the urban forest on public rights-of-way and public lands within the City. An aerial photograph demonstrates the extent of the urban forest, showing the areas where the urban forest is contiguous with natural areas on the edge of the developed City, and those areas where the urban forest has not been maintained or where conditions are not conducive to trees.



Open Space and Forested Land

The Existing Land Use map shows large areas of forested land within the city boundaries. The majority of this forested land lies in the northern half of the city. As portrayed in Figure ___ (Parks and Trails) a significant portion of forested land is protected from development by conservation easements. Grand Rapids has over 900 acres of protected forest land within its borders under conservation easements which prohibit future development and preserve the land for sustainable forest management and open space use. The Existing Land Use map also shows hundreds of acres of public land that is not park land. Much of this is forest land held by Itasca County and managed for forestry. These forested parcels currently provide a natural landscape and support economic activity valued by residents.

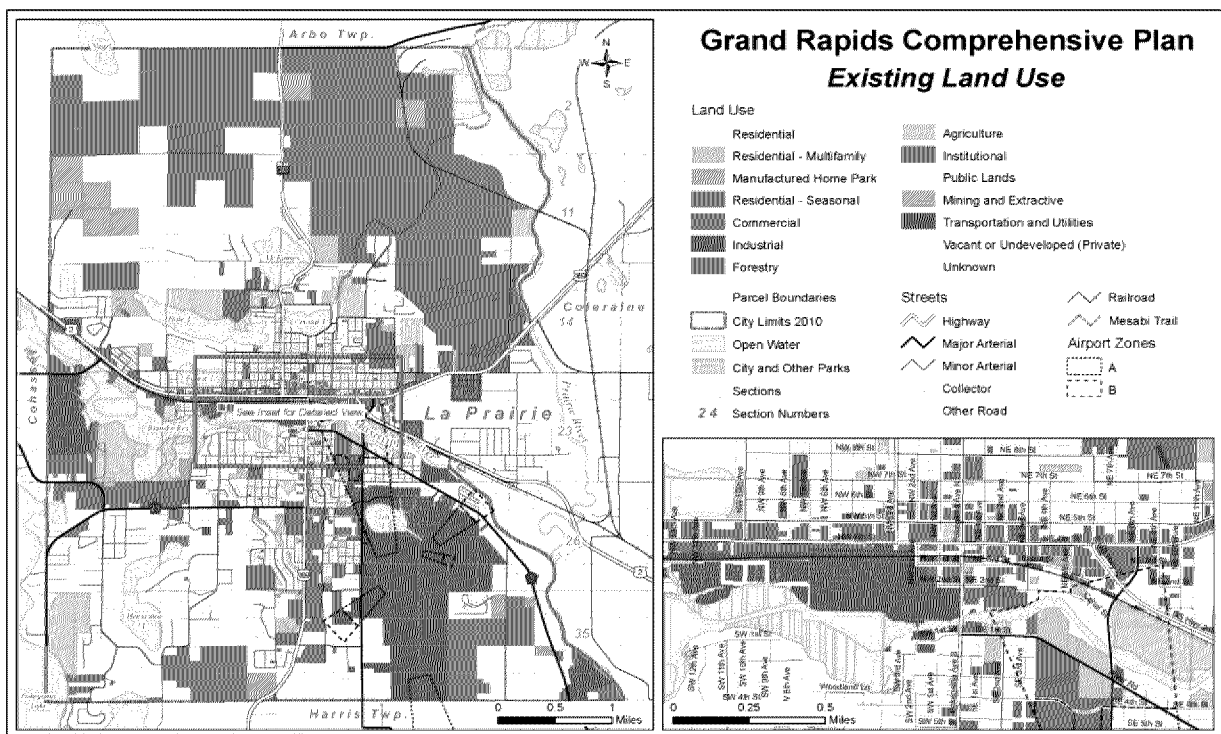


Figure 5-___. Grand Rapids Existing Land Use



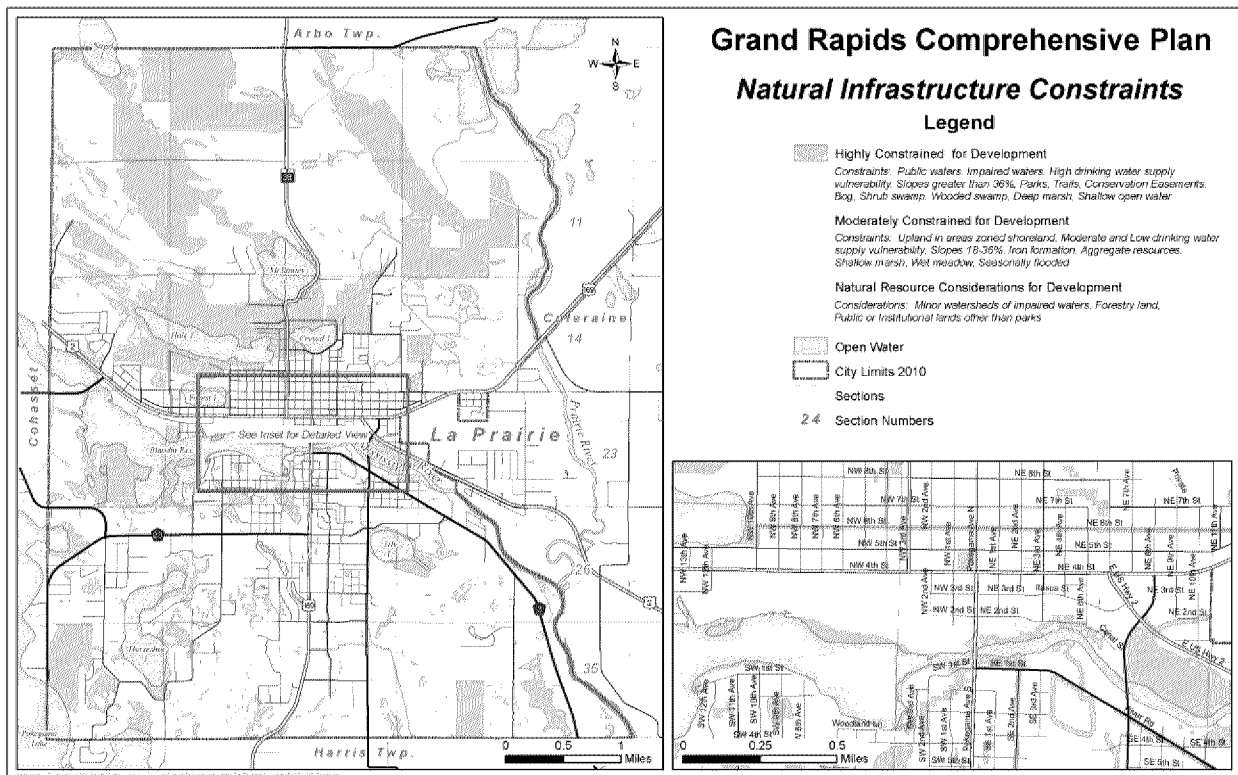
Composite Natural Infrastructure

Figure ___ displays many of the natural infrastructure layers on one map to allow analysis of areas most constrained for development. The map was created by setting priorities, some based on sensitivity of the resource to other activities and land uses, some on decisions by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The map key describes the sensitivity assignment. Most of the City lies within one of the sensitivity levels for natural infrastructure, demonstrating the inter-relationship of natural infrastructure and the City’s other infrastructural elements.

The sensitivity designations are intended to indicate sensitivity, but not that any particular area should be protected. Sensitive natural infrastructure can coexist with other types of resources if the sensitivity is taken into consideration.

The northeast quarter of the city is most constrained from a natural infrastructure perspective. However, other areas of the city have specific natural infrastructure values that should also be considered. The information on this map will be used in conjunction with current land use information, housing needs, and economic development needs to make choices about future land use that implements the City’s vision and values.

Figure 5-__. Grand Rapids Natural Infrastructure Constraints





Natural Infrastructure – Looking Forward

A number of natural infrastructure goals have been achieved since the 2003 Plan, particularly with the continued expansion of trails, green space associated with new development, and improving the stormwater management system to protect water quality. The 2010 Plan sets a number of new natural resource goals that use new information now available and reflect the continued community priority of integrating nature into the urban fabric.

The natural infrastructure inventory, the results of the community survey, and the results of the focus group process helped identify a number of issues to be addressed in the Plan:

- **Addressing water quality issues in land use decisions.** The City has water bodies that are designated as impaired, a situation that will require attention to watershed functions, continued implementation of the Stormwater Plan, and consideration of opportunities to restore drainage, infiltration, and buffer systems.
- **Protecting mineral resources for future use.** The City's mineral resources are valuable feedstocks to the region's economic engine. Aggregate is vital to road and housing development, iron ores sustain the established taconite and fledging steel industry. Some land uses are compatible with protecting access to minerals, while other land uses make extraction economically unfeasible. With the annexation of significant mineral resources in the northern part of the City, long-term decisions about the appropriate mix of resources will present challenges for years.
- **Protecting timber and pulp resources.** Paper and wood-based products are an important base of the City's economic base, and the forestry resources in the City are a new consideration in land use and economic development decisions. The annexation of Grand Rapids Township leaves the City in a position where there are as many acres in forest product production as there are in residential housing. This land is in private ownership, corporate ownership, and public (County) ownership. Decision-makers must prepare for choices about appropriate and economic use of forest lands in the City's rural areas.
- **Protecting scenic and recreational areas.** Grand Rapids has important scenic and recreation resources within City boundaries, and the annexation added additional areas. Highway 38 is designated as a scenic byway in addition to being an important highway for movement of goods and bordering the City forest and mineral rich lands. With the urban service area the City has scenic lakes and parks, including the Forest History Center and associated lands. Blandin Reservoir is both a visual asset and an economic asset.
- **Continued interest in integrating natural elements into the City.** Grand Rapids' community branding effort ("It's in Minnesota's Nature") was clearly reflected in public outreach during the planning process. Community member expressed a great deal of interest in continuing to build the City urban forest, improve its connection to the Mississippi River, and connect people to green spaces.
- **Topographical and hydrological sensitivity.** The City has widespread wetland and steep slope areas that both constrain the extension of infrastructure and development and that provide natural system benefits. Decision-makers need to make informed decisions about what is a sustainable choice for development or preservation within the context of these limitations.
- **Drinking water supply vulnerability areas.** Grand Rapids' drinking water supply is fairly vulnerable to surface water contamination at several points in recharge and well areas. Some of



these areas are within the City’s urban service area. Some of the areas are in residential neighborhoods with a significant number of wells that are potential sites for contamination. These present dilemmas for both the City and the Public Utilities Commission in managing development and infrastructure.

- **Addressing rural character in annexed areas.** Unlike most cities, Grand Rapids annexed a large area of land for reasons other than creating an urban reserve for future expansion. Some of the annexed areas will probably ultimately have urban services and urban density development. Very large areas, however, will only see rural development, or no development at all. The City must attend to a very different set of development and character issues for an area that comprises a significant portion of the City’s land area.

Natural Infrastructure – Goals and Objectives

The Comprehensive Plan update looks at the goals and objectives for natural infrastructure recognizing that these cannot be considered in isolation from the rest of the city’s vision, values, and guiding principles. The goals and objectives for natural infrastructure are provided as a new category that did not exist in the 2003 Comprehensive Plan to reflect the importance of natural infrastructure as an environmental, economic, and social asset that connects all aspects of a sustainable community.

Natural Infrastructure Goals

2003 Plan Goals and Objectives

Although the 2003 Plan did not address natural infrastructure directly, it included several goals and objectives relating to natural infrastructure.

Parks and Recreation Goal 1: Provide and facilitate affordable recreational opportunities for all demographics to support physical and social needs within Grand Rapids.

Land Use Goal 4: Protect the Edge of the Wilderness National Scenic Byway Corridor.

Transportation Goal 3: Provide a safe, convenient, efficient, continuous, and aesthetically pleasing transportation environment that is conducive to both recreational bicycling and using the bicycle for a commuting purpose.

Land Use Goal 1, Objective 7; Balance open space and environmental preservation with Grand Rapids development needs.

2011 Plan Goals and Objectives

The new natural infrastructure section for the 2011 Plan update creates a hierarchy of goals and objectives and incorporates the 2003 Plan goals and objectives and that address the new challenges and opportunities described in the inventory above.



Natural Infrastructure Goal 1: Protect natural infrastructure economic assets.

Mineral resources, aggregate deposits and timber and pulp resources support Grand Rapids economic base and sustain the region’s economic viability. Inappropriate development can fragment resource areas or make harvesting resources more expensive. The City must be clear and concise as to where protection of these resources is a priority and the best management practices necessary to sustain this element of natural infrastructure. The City has identified the following objectives to help define Goal 1.

- a. **Protect mineral resources in land use decisions.** The City has potentially important mineral resources, including both iron ore and aggregate, that can support industrial investment in the region. The City should ensure that land uses above and adjacent to mineral deposits will allow for eventual economic removal and use of these mineral resources.

Guiding Principles

Principle 2. Harmonize change with the existing community fabric and natural systems

Change is inevitable but opportunities and risks can be managed to protect and sustain community and natural infrastructure. Change can be structured to enhance rather than detract: creating synergies between new and existing businesses, transforming buildings to be more sustainable, designing new housing or commercial buildings to match existing scale.

- b. **Support continued management of forest lands for timber and pulp.** The City has significant managed forest areas, public and private, within city boundaries. Protecting the ability of local industry to harvest forest resources, and supporting sustainable forestry practices, will support economic and natural resource goals.

- c. **Recognize synergy between recreational assets and other natural infrastructure goals.** Recreation and associated tourism is a basic industry, and natural assets can be used for some recreational activities without disturbing long-term forestry or mining resources. Habitat or eco-system conservation is similarly compatible with protection of economic resources.

- d. **Support environmental permitting policies and actions.** Environmental permits are a very important component to enforce the sustainability of the natural resource and the health and safety of the community. The city should work with the other public agencies to expedite and facilitate protective policies and practices for these markets.

- e. **Encourage education and research to explore useful products that use natural resources in a closed-loop system.** Encourage educational institutions and research facilities to help create methods and products that sustain the community economically, socially, and environmentally both now and in a climate altered environment.

Natural Infrastructure Goal 2: Integrate the natural infrastructure within the urban core of the city.

Support natural infrastructure within the urban environment by protecting and restoring wildlife corridors, ecosystems, water quality, and recreational opportunities for the immediate area and within the context of protecting the Mississippi River watershed and lake watersheds. The City has identified the following objectives to help define Goal 2.

Community Vision

Grand Rapids provides all residents safe, friendly, affordable housing and inclusive neighborhoods that retain and enhance nature in the City. . . . Grand Rapids is a welcoming gateway to Minnesota’s Northwoods tourism.



- a. **Create or protect buffers along the riverfront and lakes areas.** Buffer provide for water quality protection, enhance habitat, and provide recreational and visual benefits.
- b. **Support and enhance the urban forest.** Forests are a major component of the native ecosystems in the area and can be integrated into the urban fabric. Even in urban areas forests provide habitat, water quality and quantity protection, shade, and an aesthetically pleasing and social environment for the community.
- c. **Define the natural system infrastructure within future development and re-development areas.** Urban areas development design standards must take into consideration public water supply protection, wastewater treatment system best management practices, urban forestry requirements, and stormwater quality and quantity for natural infrastructure protection.
- d. **Educate businesses, residents, and visitors on the importance of protecting the natural infrastructure.** This includes providing recycling and trash containers, information on keeping invasive species out of the area’s waterways and natural areas, protecting water quality, and preparing for ecosystem changes in light of climate change.

Community Values

Sustainable Natural Infrastructure

Our natural environment and natural resources are a defining and valued characteristic of our community. People, economy, and natural systems are connected in all aspects of daily life. Development should enhance natural systems, and sustainable natural systems should promote a sustainable economic base.

Natural Infrastructure Goal 3: Integrate the natural infrastructure within the rural areas.

Support natural infrastructure within the rural environment by preserving highly vulnerable natural resource areas and protecting and restoring ecosystems, water quality and quantity protection, and recreational opportunities for the surrounding area as well as for the larger context of which Grand Rapids practices contribute.

The city has identified objectives to help define Goal 3.

- a. **Provide buffers along the waterways and wetlands.** This will help provide natural resource protection and recreational enjoyment.
- b. **Support re-forestation and other native ecosystem restoration in the context of climate change.** These systems support ecological sustainability, water quality and quantity protection, and an aesthetically pleasing and social environment for the community.
- c. **Define the natural system infrastructure within future development and re-development areas.** Rural development design standards must take into consideration septic system best management practices, private wells water source, trees and vegetation removal, and water quantity and quality for natural infrastructure protection.
- d. **Educate businesses, residents and visitors on the importance of protecting the natural infrastructure.** This includes information on keeping invasive species out of the area’s

Guiding Principles

Principle 1. Direct growth and development to locations that serve community vision and values.

Recognize that development and redevelopment activities should be guided to appropriate locations in order to realize the community’s vision. Choices about where and how growth occurs will define community character for decades, affect the cost and quality of public services, and shape future development markets.



waterways and natural areas, protecting water quality, and preparing for ecosystem changes in light of climate change.

Natural Infrastructure Goal 4: Provide support and management of the city's parks and trails.

The city's parks and trails systems enhance the city's natural infrastructure, support the economic infrastructure, and provide for the social, mental, and physical well-being of the community.

The city has identified objectives to help define Goal 4.

- a. **Promote bicycle and pedestrian connectivity within neighborhoods and between destinations.** Maintain and improve connections to the pedestrian, biking, and recreational trails. Connecting all neighborhoods and commercial areas will enable greater multi-modal travel and enhance recreational options.
- b. **Improve access to motorized trails.** Continue to maintain snowmobile trails and improve connections within the City to motorized trails.
- c. **Support, manage, and promote parks within City boundaries.** Grand Rapids has a variety of parks and recreational areas within City limits. Continue to maintain parks, support information and educational programs for all types of recreation and all ages, and work with other entities to enhance the park system.
- d. **Work with adjacent local governing units and the State.** Support the ongoing improvement and maintenance of state trails and work to provide connections between cities and townships.

Community Values

Cultural and Recreational Opportunities

We value the availability and quality of artistic, cultural, and recreational opportunities. Cultural and recreational opportunities contribute to our quality of life, define Grand Rapids as a regional creative destination, and enhance our City's role as a center of state tourism.



Implementation Priorities

The 2003 Plan included implementation priorities for the parks, trails, and natural resource goals and objectives. While some of the recommended strategies and actions were completed, others are incomplete and need to be rolled into the new Plan. Furthermore, the new Plan includes new natural resource priorities and opportunities, including some new responsibilities assigned to the City by State and Federal agencies. Additional implementation priorities are added to address these changes.

The following long and short term actions implement the goals and objectives described above. Implementation priorities must be understood within the context of the overall Plan: Community Vision, Values, and Principles; Future Land Use Map and Policies; and, Goals and Objectives.

Economic Natural Resources

1. Incorporate long term protection of mining and forestry resources into zoning and other development regulations.
2. Within the subdivision process, develop a conservation design process for rural residential and resource management areas that allows development while protecting natural systems and economic resources consistent with those land use categories in the Future Land Use map. Consider also addressing lake shoreland areas to create a single conservation subdivision process.
3. Create a wellhead protection overlay for drinking water wells that identifies and limits land uses that put drinking water systems at risk within the high vulnerability areas. The Wellhead Protection Management area, identified in the Wellhead Management Plan defines an area where the City should adhere to best management practices for protection of groundwater. Consider setting standards to mitigate risks to drinking water supply in all vulnerability areas.

Surface Water Quality

1. Continue to implement the stormwater management plan including educational efforts on stormwater protection in urban and rural areas and encouragement of aggressive on-site management of stormwater where such management is appropriate.
2. Incorporate low-impact development practices in sensitive subwatersheds and shoreland development, particularly on Resource Management areas identified on the Future Land Use Map and in shoreland areas under public ownership. Consider restoration of shoreland buffers as part of development or redevelopment.
3. Expand the use of raingardens and infiltration techniques along roads and when redeveloping gray infrastructure.

Low Impact Development (LID)

LID is an approach to land development (or re-development) that works with nature to manage stormwater as close to its source as possible. LID employs principles such as preserving and recreating natural landscape features, minimizing effective imperviousness to create functional and appealing site drainage that treat stormwater as a resource rather than a waste product. By implementing LID principles and practices, water can be managed in a way that reduces the impact of built areas and promotes the natural movement of water within an ecosystem or watershed.

Source: U.S. EPA,
www.epa.gov/owow/NPS/lid/#fact



4. Proactively work with business organizations to comply with Stormwater Utility standards. Investigate opportunities for design assistance, cofunding of watershed and buffer restoration, and publicly recognizing successful efforts.
5. Continue to work with the DNR and the Minnesota Department of Health in controlling Eurasian Milfoil in McKinney and Crystal lakes to prevent its spread to Hale Lake and the Mississippi River.

Urban Forest and Greening of the City

1. Protect existing trees adjacent to roads in urban right-of-way corridors and replant trees as needed.
2. Restore and enhance the urban forest in urban redevelopment, both commercial and residential.
3. Support urban forest development and greening standards for the Complete Streets recommendations.
4. Implement the Riverfront Framework Plan recommendations.
5. Monitor and take steps toward curtailing the spread of invasive plant species such as buckthorn.

Parks and Trails

1. Continue to seek funding for new trail connections within the urban fabric, including a new pedestrian crossing of the Mississippi River. Consider funding for trail planning, trail design, and trail maintenance. Design the trails to follow best management practices to reduce sedimentation and erosion and be accessible to all.
2. Work with LaPrairie to improve trail and pedestrian connections between the cities, particularly into the downtown and the Mississippi River trail system.
3. Support MnDOT's ongoing effort to designate and improve the Mississippi River Trail.
4. Properly close and seal wells and environmental borings in the High Vulnerability Drinking Water Management areas.
5. Supply areas that have access to City water.
6. Continue to work with pipeline and transmission entities, particularly in the Drinking Water Supply Management areas (DWSMAs) to minimize risk of contamination.
7. Continue to improve connections between established residential areas and park and recreation areas.
8. Continue to hold biennial meetings with recreation leaders to discuss facility needs and determine programming specifics.
9. Determine a route for connecting snowmobile trails on the southwest and southeast of the City.
10. Continue to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian trail search corridors into development approvals and road planning and investment. Emphasize trails that incorporate landscaping and are separate from roadways.
11. Define needs for park expansion, particularly in annexed areas, to allow for parkland dedication formula revision.
12. Encourage DNR development of the McKinney Lake carry-in boat access and recreation area.



G. Economic Infrastructure

Economic Inventory – Looking Back

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan included extensive background summary and analysis of Grand Rapid's economic base and economic studies completed outside the comprehensive plan process. The background section included:

- A detailed summary of previous work, including the *Northeast Minnesota Industry Cluster Study*, the Itasca County Economic Summit of 2001, and the Jobs 2020 private sector initiative;
- A summary of current conditions in regard to major employers, labor force characteristics, economic development activities and organizations;
- Analysis of economic trends, including job data, sales data, and other data looking back as far as 1980 and ending in 2000;
- A “location quotient” analysis, a standardized economic assessment tool for identifying the concentration of industries in a specified geographic area. The analysis compares the geographic area (Itasca County) to a larger geographic scale, usually the state or nation, to identify local industry concentrations.
- A “shift-share” analysis, a standardized economic assessment tool for identifying the causes of growth in the local (Itasca County) economy (conducted by the University of Minnesota as part of the 2001 Rapids Power Impact Research Report. The analysis examines how local industries changed due to national trends, trends within the industry itself, and trends attributable to local conditions.

These analyses and summaries provide the foundation for this community inventory which looks primarily at the changes that have occurred between 2000 and the present.

Key findings from the 2003 Plan Economic Development Background Report included the following:

- Natural resources continue to provide economic opportunity via mining, forest products, and tourism. The City outperforms the State and nation in employment and wages paid in these industries, although the relative strength of these industries in Itasca County was declining.
- The services sector was easily the most significant growth industry in the 1990s. Much of the growth was attributable to national and industry, rather than local, factors. However, Grand Rapids position as a regional center allowed it to capture this growth, a competitive advantage relative to other communities. A significant portion of the service industry growth, and the most competitive area of growth, was in health care and related subsectors.
- The construction industry was a large growth sector for Itasca County in the 1990s. Local competitive advantage enabled this industry to grow faster than the state and nation. Most of the construction activity associated with housing occurred outside Grand Rapids. As a regional center, however, Grand Rapids gained significant benefit from construction activity in both the housing and commercial construction sectors.



Other Studies

Since 2003, a number of studies and summits on (or addressing) economic development have been completed. A sampling of those efforts include the following:

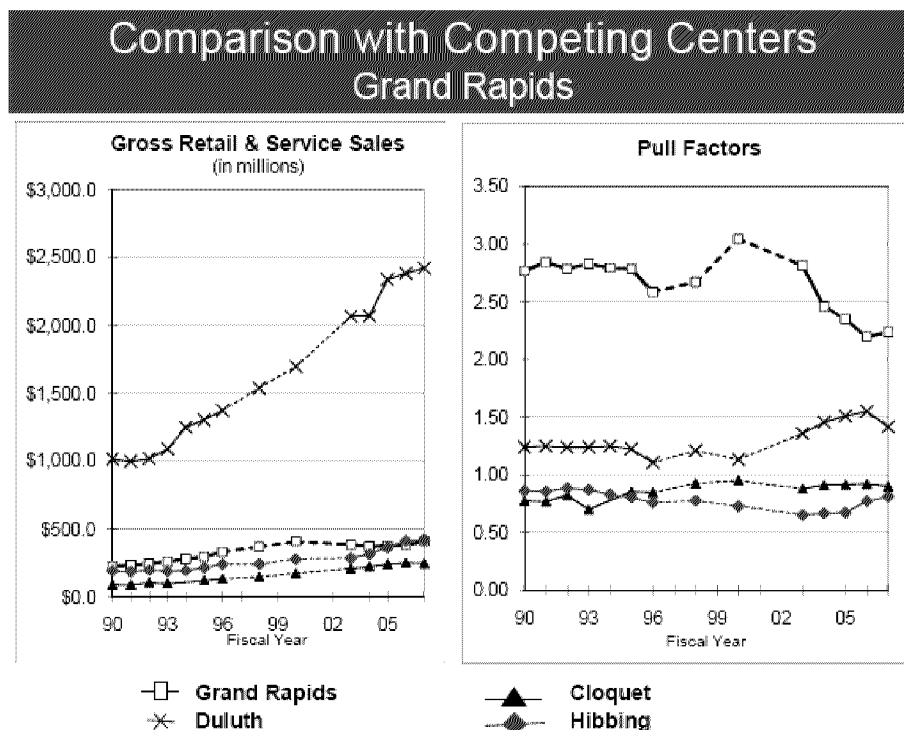
- Retail Trade Analysis for Grand Rapids, 2003 and 2007
- Itasca Area Search Conference, 2009
- Target Industry and Industrial Park Plan, 2005
- Grand Rapids Downtown Plan
- Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority Annual Reports/Plans (2007, 2008)
- Itasca Economic Development Corporation Annual Reports (2006 – 2009)

In addition to the above reports and studies on economic development, other studies and plans have been completed that affect important segments of Grand Rapids’ economic infrastructure. Some of those studies and plan include:

- Housing studies (Grand Rapids, 2003; Grand Rapids downtown, 2007; Iron Range, 2008)
- Grand Rapids Riverfront Plan, 2009
- Grand Rapids Park and Recreation Plan, 2001
- Grand Rapids Area Brandprint

The **2003 and 2007 retail trade analyses** completed by the University of Minnesota Extension Service are detailed reviews of Grand Rapids and Itasca County based on sales and use tax data. The analysis includes summaries of the data and calculations of “pull factors” by retail market segment that are compared against nearby communities and other regional centers. “Pull factor” refers to the ability of a community retail hub to “pull” in demand from outlying areas. The conclusions of the retail trade analyses include:

Figure 5- . Retail Trade Analysis Comparison with Competing Centers



Source: 2007 Retail Trade Analysis Report



- Grand Rapids has a strong retail pull in nearly every retail segment, reflecting its role as a regional center. The pull factors were particularly strong for General Merchandise, a category of retail sales that also saw substantial overall growth between 2004 and 2007, and that compromised over 25% of all retail sales in Grand Rapids. Building materials showed the same pattern as general merchandise – strong pull factor, large portion of total retail sales (22%), and strong growth between 2004 and 2007.
- Grand Rapids has a diverse retail base. Very few retail segments showed the City to lack capacity for meeting market demand. While some market segments would be better served by increased competition, overall capacity was quite good. Some small segments, such as electronics, had a weak pull factor but nearly every segment was pulling in market from outside the City.
- Grand Rapid’s retail pull is more substantial than nearby communities, including Hibbing, Cloquet, and Duluth. The historic trend is that Grand Rapid’s retail pull is declining, but the overall pull is still considerably higher than other retail centers.

The Target Industry and Industrial Park Plan, completed in 2005, included an input/output assessment of potential industrial recruitment opportunities and an assessment of the Blandin West JOBZ site. The recruitment targets were businesses that could supply or purchase from existing industrial businesses.

The study identified Grand Rapid’s strengths and weaknesses for attracting the industrial investment. Strengths included a high quality of life, trainable and high quality labor force, sufficient utility capacity, and excellent telecommunications capacity. Weaknesses included lack of suitable buildings, lack of sufficient number of improved sites with rail access, and labor costs that, while not high, do not distinguish the City from competing areas.

The final part of the study provided alternative designs and actions steps for creating an industrial park with utilities, road and rail access, and spec buildings at the West Blandin JOBZ site. The recommendations were designed to meet some of the weaknesses identified in the report.

Economic Development Assistance and Programs

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan noted three entities with economic development focus in Grand Rapids:

- Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority
- IDC Jobs 2020 (Now the Itasca Economic Development Corporation)
- Chamber of Commerce

These three entities still work and collaborate in and around Grand Rapids on economic development activities. The IDC Jobs 2020 changed its legal name to the Itasca Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) in 2005, but continues to provide economic development assistance, financing, marketing and recruitment.

The Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority continues to play the primary economic development role within the City. GREDA has completed a number of successful ventures since 2003 including the following projects:

- Raised funds for and completed the Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan (2006) and the Riverfront Plan (2009)
- Management and expanding the City’s industrial parks to ensure the availability of fully improved sites for industrial expansion and recruitment
- Redevelopment of specific key downtown properties, such as those located within Block 37

- Restructuring the Commercial Building Improvement Loan program (CBIL) in 2006 and administering over \$200,000 in loans. The fund was recapitalized in 2009 with a \$175,000 loan from the Blandin Foundation.
- Administering the City's JOBZ sites and application process
- Securing outside funding (over \$2.3 million) for economic development projects in the downtown and industrial parks
- Supporting a proactive business retention and expansion program, working with the Chamber of Commerce, to help existing businesses stay competitive.

A number of other regional entities are engaged in economic development activities in and around Grand Rapids, often collaborating with GREDA, IEDC, and other local partners. These organizations include:

- The Northspan Group Inc.
- Area Partnership for Economic Expansion (APEX)
- Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB)
- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)



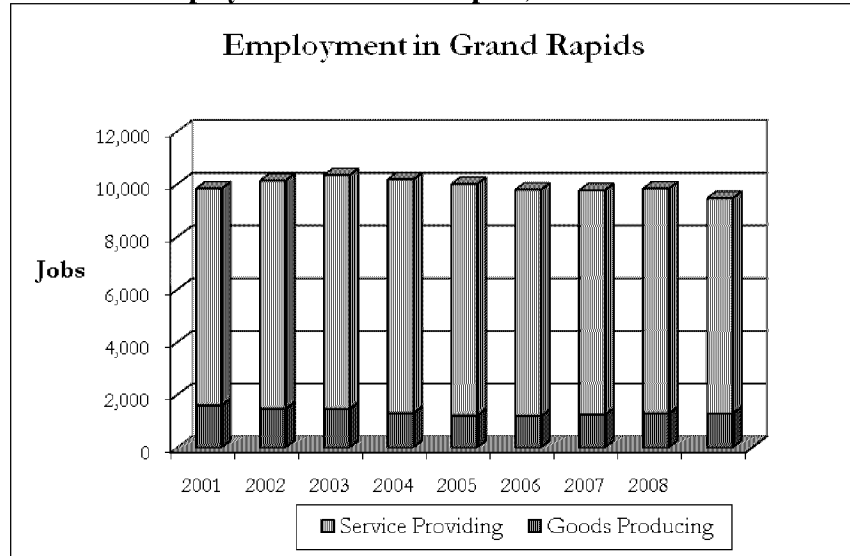


Economic Base

In analyzing Grand Rapid’s economic base, the 2003 Plan separated businesses into two general sectors, basic and non-basic, consistent with economic base theory of local economic development. Basic industries are those that “export” goods or services, bringing dollars into Grand Rapids from the larger region, state, or nation. Non-basic industries are those that primarily “circulate” dollars within Grand Rapids rather than look to markets outside the city. The forest products and mining industries are clear examples of basic industries. K-12 schools, personal services (hair dressers, auto repair), and grocery stores are examples of non-basic industries. The distinction is obviously imperfect, but provides a useful framework for considering economic activity in a way that leads directly to distinct types of economic development strategies.

Businesses can also be separated into the categories of “goods-producing” and “service-providing.” These categories are related to the basic/non-basic categories. Goods producing industries are almost always considered “basic.” Service-producing industries include almost all “non-basic” economic activity, but also include basic industries such as tourism and health services, which are arguably a basic industry for a regional center such as Grand Rapids. Much of the available economic data are segregated into the goods/services categories, allowing for ready analysis and easy comparisons across years and between cities.

Chart 5- . Employment in Grand Rapids, 2001-2009



Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

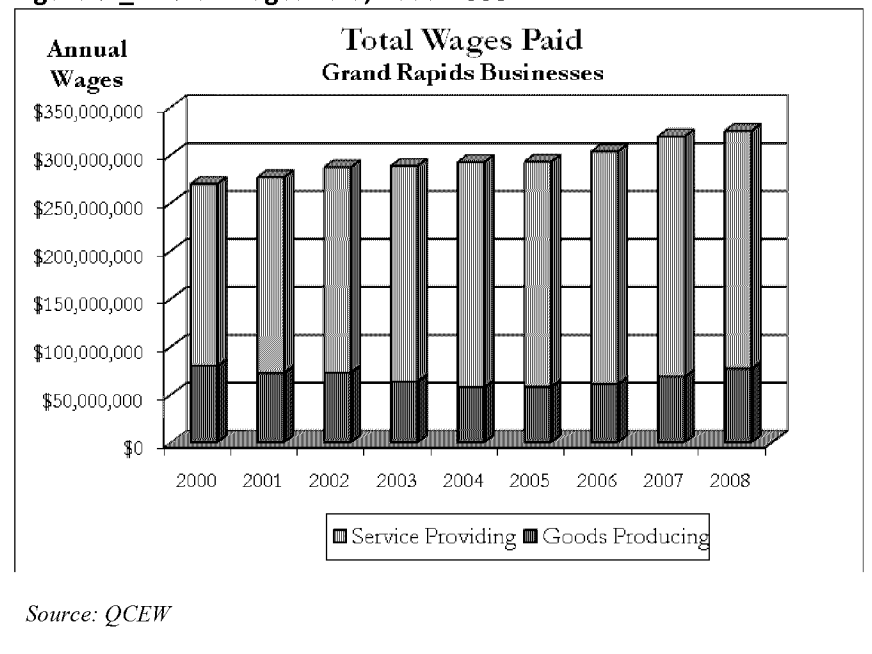
The primary source of data for all these analyses (used in both 2003 and for the current inventory) is the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) based on business unemployment insurance filings. These data do not include self-employment or agriculture, but typically capture 98% of economic activity statewide.

As can be noted from Chart 5-___, service providing industries provide the vast majority of jobs within Grand

Rapids, between 84 – 88 percent of all jobs. However, as demonstrated in Figure 5-___, the picture changes somewhat when wages, rather than number of jobs, are considered. Goods-producing industries account for between 20 – 25 percent of total wages paid.



Figure 5-_. Total Wages Paid, 2000-2008



Another point to note is that good-producing and service providing industries provide diversity value to the community. The low point for goods-producing industries within the recent past was 2005, when this category was only 12% of total jobs and 19% of total wages. By 2008, this sector comprised almost 14% of total jobs and 24% of total wages. The percentage increase was due to the goods-producing sector remaining stable between 2005 and 2008, a period during which the service industry was seeing

substantial loss of employment and wages. During the early part of the decade (2000-2004) the service sector was growing, while the goods sector was shrinking.

Labor Force

The 2003 Plan summarized characteristics of the labor force, including educational attainment, wage

Table 5- . Annual Labor Force

Year	Grand Rapids	Rest of Itasca County	Total Itasca County
2000	5,695	15,958	21,653
2001	5,854	16,528	22,382
2002	5,981	16,811	22,792
2003	5,979	16,605	22,584
2004	4,419	18,152	22,571
2005	4,289	18,140	22,429
2006	5,747	16,527	22,274
2007	5,845	16,446	22,291
2008	5,805	16,380	22,185
2009	6,071	17,007	23,078

Source: LAUS, MnDEED

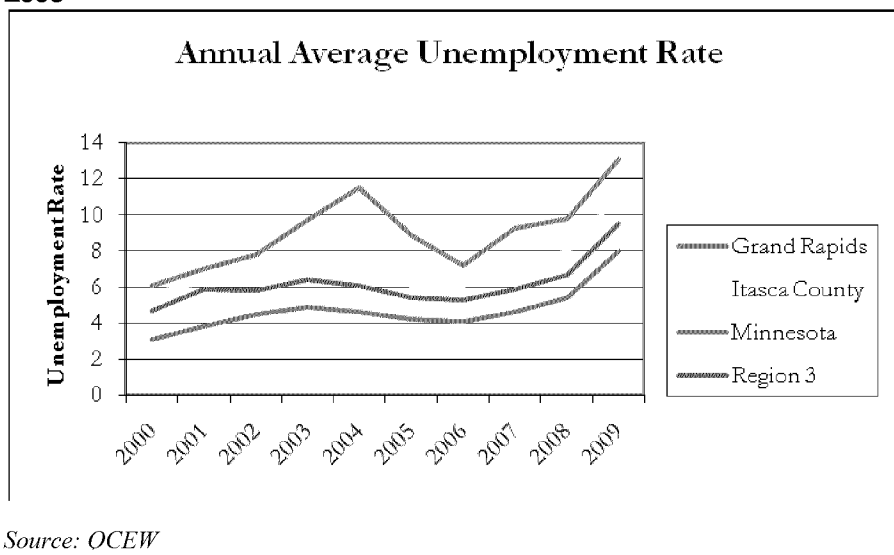
earnings by City residents, and occupations of City residents. Much of these data come from the decennial census, and thus are now 10 years old. New census data from the 2010 census will be released in 2011.

Estimates by the State Demographer for Itasca County indicate that educational attainment, household wage earnings, and head of household occupations have not changed significantly over the last ten years.

The size of the annual labor force in Grand Rapids fluctuated considerably over the last ten years, shrinking from 2000 to 2005 by almost 25%, then growing to exceed the size of the 2000 labor force. The labor force in the rest of the County showed exactly the opposite trend. This trend is likely attributable to annexations. The overall County



Figure 5- . Average Unemployment Rate, 2000-2009



Source: OCEW

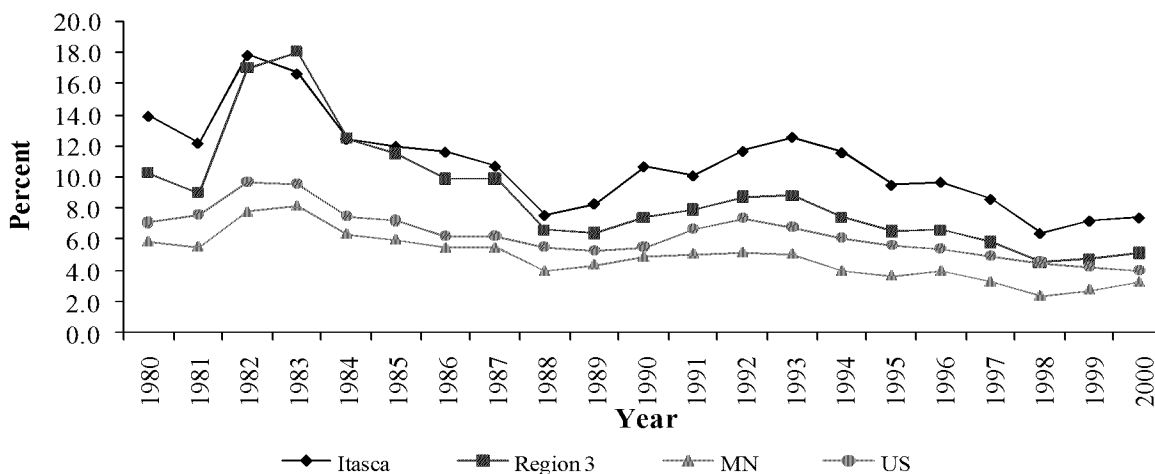
labor force showed a clear shrinking trend from 2002 until 2008, then increased substantially in 2009. A declining size in the labor force is consistent with the aging trend in the overall population.

Table 5-__ does not, however, indicate the degree to which businesses in Grand Rapids employ people who live outside the City boundaries. This can be seen in that the total number of City jobs far exceeds the size of the City's labor force (approximately 6,000 workers, approximately 9,000 jobs).

Unemployment

Charts 5-__ and 5-__ respectively show the unemployment patterns reported in the 2003 Plan and the pattern since that time. The two figures demonstrate the cyclical patterns of employment in Grand Rapids and Itasca County. The general trend from 1980 to 2000 (Figure 5-__ from the 2003 Plan), shows the volatility of County unemployment, with extremely high unemployment in the early 1980s, declining unemployment with another significant bump in the early 1990s, and then trending down for the rest of the decade. In Figure 4, the County unemployment rate stays above the Region and State, but still relatively low compared to historic levels until the start of the current recession in 2008. Grand Rapids unemployment shows a much greater volatility than all the other entities over the last ten years.

Figure 5-_. Comparative History of Unemployment Rates



Source: 2003 Comprehensive Plan



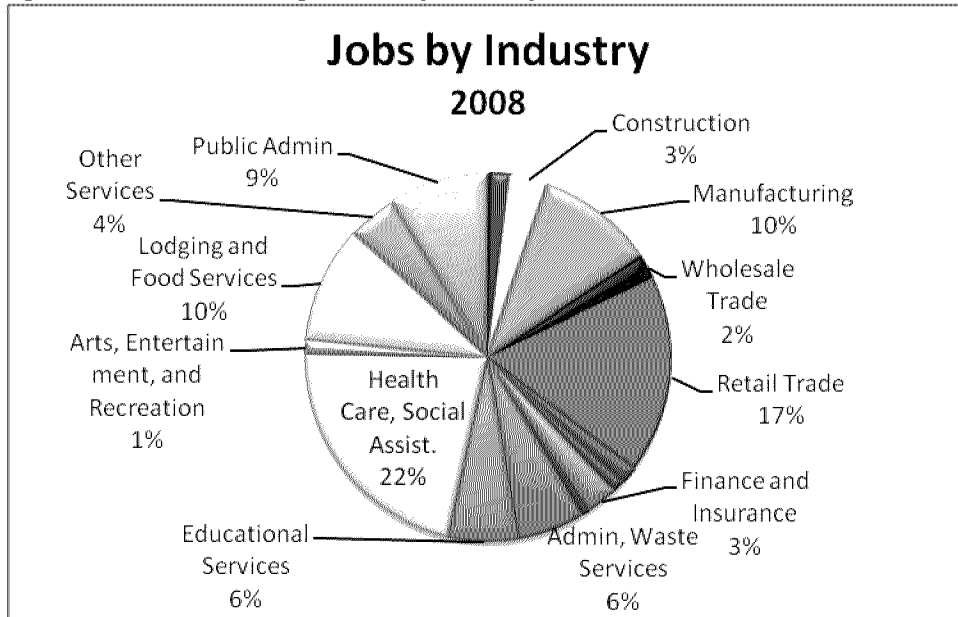
Jobs

Figure 5- shows the number of jobs by major industry group in Grand Rapids. The 2008 data do have some data suppression (about 3% of the data are suppressed by the State in order to protect the

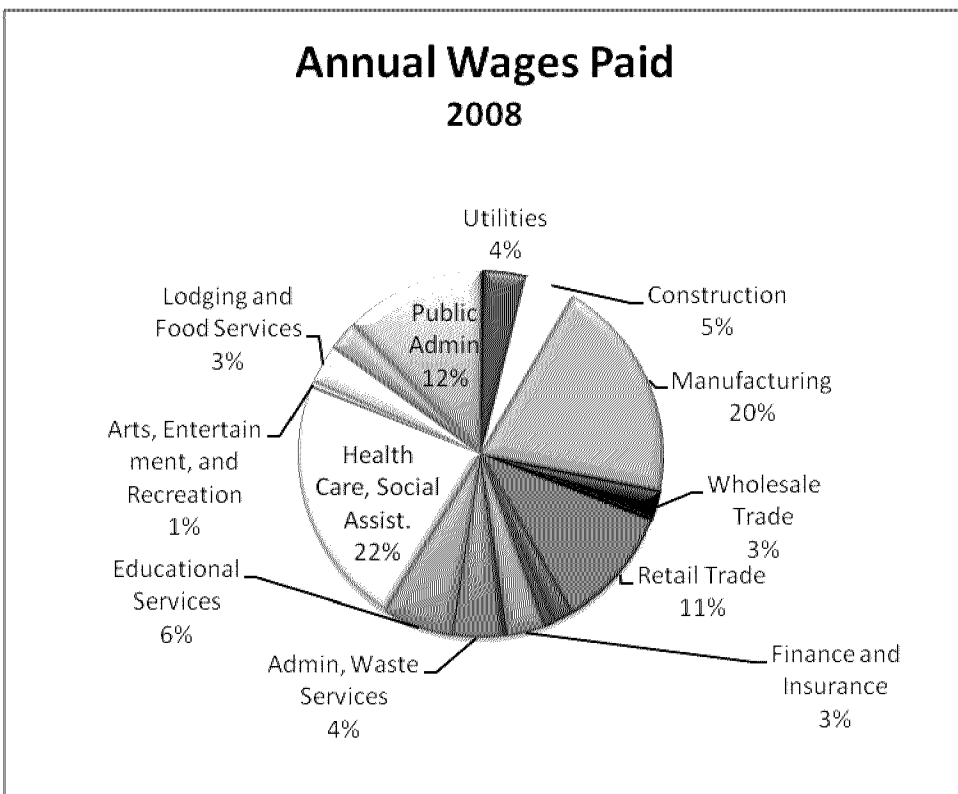
employment information for specific companies). However, the relative portion of each industry within the pie chart is fairly accurate. The industry with the largest number of jobs is Health Care/Social Assistance, with Retail Trade having the second highest portion of jobs. Manufacturing is fairly high at 10%, approximately the same as the Lodging/Food Services industry.

Figure 5- also shows another view of businesses in Grand Rapids, showing the distribution of wages by industry group. Health care still is the most significant industry in the City. However, some significant differences can be noted, such as the reversal of retail trade and manufacturing in prominence. Manufacturing is the second most prominent industry,

Figure 5- . Jobs and Wages Paid by Industry, 2008



Source: QCEW



Source: QCEW



with 20% of total wages paid. Public services (primarily government jobs, including public schools) comprise 9% of total jobs and 12% of total wages. Lodging/Food Services is nine percent of total jobs, but only 3% of total wages paid, due to the seasonal nature of that industry and the traditionally lower wages paid for these type of service sector jobs.

Both graphs demonstrate the diversity of the Grand Rapids economy. Health Care/Social Assistance is the only industry that is highly prominent in both jobs and wages paid. Only five industries comprise more than 10% of either total jobs or total wages. A wide array of industries in the under ten percent group contribute similarly to the economic base. The two most prominent industries (manufacturing and health care) are quite distinct from each other in regard to exposure to regional or national economic trends. One is a goods-producing industry, one is service-providing. These two industries will tend to growth or shrink based on factors independent from the other.

Employers

Tables 5-__ and 5-__ identify the major employers in and around Grand Rapids in 2009 and 2002 respectively. Some important changes can be noted, such as the change in employee counts for two major natural resource based employers - UPM/Blandin reduced jobs by 42% and the Potlatch OSB facility is now closed. A new major retailer, Cub Foods, has opened up. Grand Itasca Medical Center increased jobs by 55%, but this is primarily attributable to consolidation of two employers (Itasca Medical Center and the Grand Rapids Medical Association). However, the list has not changed

Table 5-__ . Major Employers, 2009

Employer	Products/Services	Employee Count
Grand Itasca Medical Center	General Medical, Surgical Hospitals	600
Ind. School District #318	Elementary & Secondary Schools	600
UPM/Blandin Paper Company	Pulp, Paper & Paperboard Mills	517
Itasca County	General Government Support	310
City of Grand Rapids	General Government Support	270
All Season Vehicle	Transportation Equip. Manufacturing	225
Arrowhead Promotion	Other Support Services	200
Wal-Mart	Department Stores	185
Itasca Community College	Junior Colleges	135
Cub Foods	Grocery Stores	125
Itasca County Nursing Home	Nursing Care Facilities	120
Target	Department Stores	120
Saw Mill Inn	Hotels (exc. Casino Hotels) & Motels	115
L & M Supply	Hardware Stores	107
K Mart	Department Stores	100

Source: DEED Community Profile, 2010

substantially between the 2003 Plan and 2010.

The two tables are a snapshot or indicator of change rather than a comprehensive listing of employees. The data are self-reported and changes from year to year are sometimes not noted. For example, the City of Grand Rapids appears in 2009 as a major employer absent from the 2002 list. This is not attributable to a large increase in jobs, but rather a simple omission in 2002.

Table 5-_. Major Employers, 2002

Employer	Products/Services	Employee Count
UPM/Blandin Paper Company	Paper Mills	900
Ind. School District #318	Elementary and Secondary Schools	600
Itasca Medical Center	General Medical, Surgical Hospitals	386
Arrowhead Promotion	Business Services	315
Itasca County	Government Offices	310
Wal-Mart	Department Stores	185
Grand Rapids Medical Assoc	General Medical & Surgical Hospitals	171
Potlatch	Paper Mills	162
All Season Vehicle (ASV)	Transportation Equipment	120
Itasca County Nursing Home	Skilled Nursing Care Facilities	120
Target	Department Stores	120
Itasca Community College	Junior Colleges	106
K Mart	Department Stores	100
Northprint International Inc	Commercial Printing	100
MN Diversified Industries	Manufacturing Industries	80

Source: DEED Community Profile, 2002

Industrial Land

As noted above, a major component of the City's economic infrastructure is its industrial parks and businesses. The City owns and manages four industrial parks within City boundaries and the Itasca Development Corporation owns and manages the new 200 acre eco-industrial park on the site of the old Ainsworth OSB plant. Additional land in the northern part of the City (recently annexed from Grand Rapids Township) is currently zoned for industrial land uses, and a JOB-Z site was designated by the Township in this area prior to annexation.

City staff conducted an analysis examining the historic rate of consumption for industrial land in and around Grand Rapids and the approximate buildout, based on historic absorption rates. The buildout of existing industrial parks and remaining available, buildable land is shown in Tables 5-__ and 5-__.

Table 5-__. Previously Developed City/GREDA Industrial Property

Plat	Plat Year	Total Acreage	# of Businesses
Industrial Park One	1969	31.8	17
Industrial Park Two	1992	31.7	4
Industrial Park East	1999	5.2	1
Industrial Park East 1st Add.	2001	32.2	2
Airport S. Industrial Park - Phase 1	2007	1.7	1
Total		102.6	25

Source: Grand Rapids Community Development

Plat	Plat Year	Total Acreage	# of Sites
Industrial Park East	1999	14.5	8
Airport S. Industrial Park - Phase 1	2007	11.6	5
Airport S. Industrial Park - Phase 2	2009	8.1	6
Total		34.2	19

Source: *Grand Rapids Community Development*

The historic average rate of buildout (or absorption) is between 3.4 and 4.2 acres per year, the higher figure being the rate seen in Grand Rapids more recently (since 1992). At the higher rate, the existing sites with utilities in the industrial parks will be fully built-out by 2018. Furthermore, the existing industrial part sites cannot accommodate a larger facility, one of the key findings in the 2005 Target Industry and Industrial Park Plan, summarized above in this section.

In addition to the sites with utilities, the City (and the City of Cohasset) has over 200 acres of land owned by the City or County economic development authorities (EDAs), as shown in Table 5-_. These sites were the Ainsworth OSB plant, and are primarily now part of the Eco-Industrial Park managed by IEDC. While this area is not served by City utilities, it does provide important capacity for meeting industrial development goals, in particular for projects that would require larger parcels than is available in the other industrial parks.

Table 5-_. Current Inventory of GREDA/IEDC Owned, Undeveloped, Industrial Property no Utilities

Site Description	Total Acreage	# of Sites
GREDA - IEIP Site	25.0	1
IEDC - IEIP Site (Grand Rapids)	134.5	1
IEDC - IEIP Site (Cohasset)	63.5	1
Total	223.0	3

Source: *Grand Rapids Community Development*

Finally, an analysis of industrial development potential must also consider nearby industrial park land that is available for development. Industrial development is regional in nature in that it brings direct and indirect benefit to more than just the local government that is the beneficiary of an increase in tax base. Basic industries employ people from multiple communities and provide multiplier effects throughout the region. Table 5-_ shows the available industrial park land outside Grand Rapids including both land with utilities and raw land.

Table 5-_. Current Inventory of Private and Public Industrial Sites in Surrounding Communities

Site Description	Total Acreage	# of Sites
Cohasset Industrial Park w/Utilities	17.1	5
Cohasset - Blandin Woodyard JOBZ	60.0	1
Cohasset Industrial Park Expansion Area	334.0	1
Coleraine Eagle Ridge Technology Park	7.5	3
Coleraine South JOBZ	60.0	1
Coleraine Industrial Park	3.9	1
Total	482.5	12

Source: *Grand Rapids Community Development*

The NorthSpan Group has also assessed industrial park lands for the entire region. The report summarizes industrial park capacity and available land for an eight county region across northeastern Minnesota. Over 3,500 acres of land are available in 57 different industrial parks. Most of the land has access to utilities. While some of these industrial parks are not within the same industrial development market as Grand Rapids, industrial development is frequently a regional, rather than local, market.

The data show that substantial reserves of land are thus available in the region for industrial development, and reserves are currently available locally, assuming historic absorption rates. In order to be positioned for larger scale industrial growth, however, the local need for more sites with utilities is also clear. The area has potential mismatch between sites with utilities and the long-term demand for large shovel-ready sites in the immediate Grand Rapids locality.





Economic Infrastructure – Looking Forward

Grand Rapids has achieved many economic development elements of its 2003 Plan. Some goals, however, remain elusive, and the economic transformations since 2003 have raised new challenge as noted in the economic infrastructure inventory. The issues noted in the inventory include:

- *Continued need to diversify the City's economic base.* Economic development efforts must navigate potential conflicts or tradeoffs between enhancing competitive advantage (building the industries in which Grand Rapids has substantial infrastructure or local feedstocks) and increasing economic dependence on one industry or one market.
- *Balancing between regional retail centers and Grand Rapids' downtown.* The City is and will continue to be a regional center for retail goods and a variety of services. What role should the downtown play in City's and the region's economic development? Is the downtown more than just another commercial cluster? How does the City ensure that appropriate private sector capital flows to the downtown?
- *Anticipating and preparing for cycles in the natural resource based industries.* The paper, pulp, and mining industries have long been a competitive segment of the region's economic base. These industries also go through cycles of investment and decline that create economic upheaval when large numbers of jobs are lost or gained. The planned Essar steel plant is an example of such an opportunity. What needs to happen to minimize risk and capture opportunities associated with these industries?
- *Positioning the City and the region for large scale industrial development.* What role do the industrial parks play in the economic development of the entire community, and is the industrial infrastructure adequate for capturing opportunities? To what extent are new subsidies and infrastructure development warranted?
- *The need for strategic infrastructural investments in education.* Educational infrastructure provides for job training and is a substantial quality of life indicator. Industry will invest when the workforce is well trained, the public schools are high quality, and the community is invested in creating opportunities for all residents. School closings or scaling back this infrastructure has potential economic consequences, as does new investments in educational infrastructure.
- *The role of medical services in economic vitality.* Medical services are the City's largest industry in both providing jobs and in total wages. The medical campus helps makes Grand Rapids a regional economic center, and substantially adds to the City's quality of life. What role does the medical "industry" have in economic development considerations?
- *Recognizing the value of tourism.* Recreational assets have benefits for both the tourism industry and present one of the region's competitive opportunities. Are there opportunities to sustain the City's economic infrastructure by enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors?

Grand Rapids EDA

The Mission of the Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority (GREDA) is to advance the growth of our local economy through efforts focused on business recruitment, retention and expansion.

As the City's economic development agent, the GREDA strives to provide a high level of service to businesses, in order to encourage economic investment and prosperity in the City of Grand Rapids and the surrounding region. The GREDA works closely with businesses to: identify creative solutions to challenging problems, generate enhanced opportunities for growth, and help them achieve their short- and long-term goals.

Source: 2008 Annual Report



- *Developing artistic and cultural assets.* Economic sustainability overlaps with other elements of sustainability, such as quality of life. A thriving artistic and cultural community creates economic diversity, enhances community image, and is a primary indicator of community stability. How can the City support artists and cultural entrepreneurship? Where in economic development priorities do such entrepreneurs fit?

To help define the City’s economic goals, the Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority, working with the Steering Committee, crafted the following visions, goals, and objectives for economic development and for comprehensively addressing Grand Rapids economic infrastructure.

Economic Vision

A long-term vision is a description of how a successfully implemented plan will transform the everyday landscape, how the goals, objectives, vision statement look within the physical world. The long-term vision provides a reference point to keep even short-term actions on task, and to ensure that today’s decisions do not unduly limit tomorrow’s possibilities.

Community Vision

“Grand Rapids welcomes and supports a diverse mix of thriving businesses and industry that provide quality jobs, promising careers, and economic vitality. Grand Rapids is a welcoming gateway to Minnesota’s Northwoods tourism.”

The Comprehensive Plan presents the long-term economic vision in several ways:

1. Addressing economic outcomes in the Community Vision, Community Values, and Guiding Principles
2. Portraying economic land uses on the future land use map, and
3. Describing economic priorities in a hierarchy of goals, objectives, and strategies in this section of the Plan

Economic development is an important component of the Comprehensive Plan. In order to ensure that the Comprehensive Plan is useful in guiding economic development choices, the GREDA Commissioners provided their long-term vision of economic development and their understanding of how to connect economic goals to the other components of the Comprehensive Plan.

Economic Goals

The Comprehensive Plan update looks at economic infrastructure and the associated goals, objectives, and strategies recognizing that economic development cannot be considered in isolation from the rest of the City’s vision. The economic infrastructure goals must be considered within the context of the City’s other goals, and to be a component of the City’s Vision, Values, and Guiding Principles.

The long-term vision and outcomes discussion provides a starting point for identifying economic development goals. Goals are generalized outcomes that identify components of the desired future condition. Part of the vision and outcome discussion was to identify why and how economic

Community Values

Economic Opportunities

A strong diversified economy is a prerequisite to the full realization of all other values. We value a healthy, growing economy that provides opportunities for large and small businesses, rewards entrepreneurship, and provides meaningful careers to residents.



development was helping to achieve the City’s long-term vision. This became the new hierarchy of goals and objectives for the 2010 Comprehensive Plan.

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan Economic Development section included six goals:

- Goal 1: Retain and enhance existing businesses
- Goal 2: Use the City’s available resources to strengthen economic clusters
- Goal 3: Development of the Riverfront
- Goal 4: Develop and Enhance the City’s Business/Industrial Districts
- Goal 5: Provide affordable housing opportunities
- Goal 6: Maintain the Comprehensive Plan as the guide for achieving planned growth and development

Each goal had between 2 and 5 objectives, and each objective had associated strategies and action steps. The 2010 Plan update creates a new hierarchy of goals and objectives, but incorporates the 2003 Plan goals and objectives into the updated economic infrastructure section, as well as introducing new goals and objectives that address the new economic challenges and opportunities described in the economic inventory.

Goal 1: Create jobs and income. The City’s economic infrastructure sustains the City’s households and the households of many people in surrounding communities. Building the City’s economic base is not an end in itself, but rather is a primary component for achieving many of the community’s goals. Creating economic opportunity for current and future residents is a primary Comprehensive Plan goal.

Guiding Principles

Principle 3. Promote local economic vitality.
 Support activities and investments that promote the creation of and sustaining of careers and wages, provision of a diversity of services and goods, and long-term business investment and market expansion.

The City has also identified several objectives that help define Economic Infrastructure Goal 1.

- a. *Ensure that job creation efforts include high-wage/high-quality jobs.* In order to support and sustain their households, residents need to have economic opportunities that pay a good wage and provide benefits that households need. While not all jobs need to be high-wage, the City should emphasize the creation of high-wage, high quality jobs.
- b. *Enable the expansion of existing businesses.* Creating jobs by expanding existing businesses is the most productive way to expand economic opportunity. The City will undertake business expansion initiatives and support business expansion efforts of others.
- c. *Recruit new businesses that add jobs and income opportunities.* Businesses in other regions looking for expansion opportunities and entrepreneurs who create new businesses can contribute to creation of jobs and income opportunities. The City should take strategic actions that encourage outside investment in Grand Rapids and entrepreneurship from within the community.

Goal 2: Enhance the local quality of life. A vibrant economic base should provide for a high quality of life for residents and visitors. A high quality of life simultaneously encourages outside investment in Grand Rapids economic infrastructure. Taking steps to improve quality of life is thus both an important goal and a key strategy for meeting other economic development goals.

The City has identified the following objectives that help define Economic Infrastructure Goal 2.



- a. *Provide affordable housing opportunities.* Housing that is safe, affordable, connected to the community is essential to maintaining residents' quality of life. The City will work to ensure that a range of housing options is available in the local market, and will consider how well affordable workforce housing is located relative to job centers. The City will work with governmental, non-profit, and private entities to accommodate the variety of incomes and household types in Grand Rapids.
- b. *Develop a thriving downtown.* The downtown is more than a collection of businesses. More than any other place, the downtown is the symbol of the community, the place that visitors and residents alike think of as the heart of the City. The City will treat the downtown as critical economic infrastructure and recognize the relationship between the downtown and the rest of the community in land use, infrastructure, and economic development activities.
- c. *Better utilize the River as an economic asset.* The Mississippi River centers and defines much of Grand Rapids. The River is an economic, natural resource, and cultural asset to the community. The City will encourage economic use of and redevelopment along the River that also protects its natural and cultural significance.
- d. *Support arts, recreation, and educational assets.* Economic infrastructure has substantial overlap into Grand Rapids' lifelong educational system, recreational assets, and artistic venues. The City recognizes both the substantial quality of life implications of decisions regarding these assets and the economic benefits of infrastructural investments in education, recreation, and the arts.
- e. *Encourage a mix of local services and retail goods adequate to meet regional demand.* Quality of life is enhanced when City residents, residents of nearby communities, and visitors have a diverse mix of retail and service options to meet their needs. Grand Rapids can strength its role as a regional retail and service center by enhancing the quality of life for residents of the regional area. The City will encourage a diverse range of retail and service businesses to improve quality of life.

Quality of Life and Economic Development

The notion of quality of life is associated with good schools, cultural and recreational amenities, the beauty of the natural environment, and affordable housing, among others. The concern for quality of life as it influences economic development is expressed in the objectives, strategies, and action steps associated with goal three, 'development of the riverfront', goal four, 're-development of a viable downtown', and goal five, 'provide affordable housing opportunities' . . .

Source: 2003 Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan,

Guiding Principles

Principle 6. Enhance Grand Rapids' regional role.

The City is the commercial and service center for the surrounding region, serving surrounding communities and rural areas, and in turn is supported by them. Investment in regional infrastructure such as information technologies and both commercial and recreational regional transportation are critical, as is intergovernmental coordination, to sustain the City's regional benefits.

Guiding Principles

Principle 2. Harmonize change with the existing community fabric and natural systems.

Change is inevitable but opportunities and risks can be managed to protect and sustain community and natural infrastructure. Change can be structured to enhance rather than detract: creating synergies between new and existing businesses, transforming buildings to be more sustainable, designing new housing or commercial buildings to match existing scale.



Goal 3: Build the City's economic sustainability. An economic base that is fraught with risk and uncertainty is not sustainable over time. An economic base that is not in sync with the City's non-economic goals ultimately detracts from economic growth. Improving economic sustainability means reducing risks associated with known economic cycles and regional economic uncertainties. Economic sustainability also requires understanding and addressing the relationship between the City's economic base, social and neighborhood assets, and natural infrastructure.

The City has identified the following objectives that help define Economic Infrastructure Goal 3.

- a. *Increase diversity of economic base.* The City's industrial economic base is closely associated with natural resource industries and specific national markets. Encouraging investment in industries that are independent of these cycles and markets will lower risks associated with an economic downturn.
- b. *Improve utilization of local resources, assets, and goods.* The City and region has valuable resources that have economic value. Use of local resources rather than equivalent non-local resources makes the region's economic infrastructure more productive and less subject to forces beyond the City's control. The City will strive to improve economic sustainability through improved utilization of local resources.
- c. *Support the City's historic competitive strengths, including established heavy industry and manufacturing.* Economic sustainability requires that the City understand and support its competitive strengths. Natural resource industries, particularly the paper and pulp industry, will remain critical to creating economic opportunity for current and future residents.
- d. *Support investment in regional assets such as medical services.* The 2003 Plan helped usher in the integration and expansion of medical services into the medical campus. Supporting this economic infrastructure helps maintain the City's position as a regional economic center.
- e. *Support investments with tourism value.* While diversity of the economic base is a critical component of economic sustainability, the City recognizes the competitive assets in its established economic clusters, including the tourism industry.

Implementation Priorities

The 2003 Plan included a number of specific recommendations for implementing the Plan's economic goals and objectives. While some of the strategies and actions were completed, some are ongoing and still have relevance to the updated goals and objectives, and others are incomplete and need to be rolled into the new Plan. Furthermore, new economic priorities and opportunities call for some additional implementation actions to be included in the updated Plan.

The following long and short term actions implement the goals and objectives described above. Actions are thus directed by and constrained by the goals and objectives. Implementation actions must be understood within the context of the overall Plan: Community Vision, Values, and Principles; Future Land Use Map and Policies; and, Goals and Objectives.

The Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority Implementation priorities are organized into long and short term action categories. Long-term actions are more general in nature and are expected to be undertaken five or more years out. Short-term actions are fairly specific and are expected to be undertaken within three years and completed within five years.



Short Term Economic Implementation Strategies

Seek more funding (such as the Small Cities Development Program) to expand and create programs enhancing/rehabilitating existing commercial buildings, and market the programs to an expanded target area, consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.



1. Consistent with the desired mix of land uses as discussed in the Comprehensive Plan, engage in direct marketing and solicitation of private development interest to create value on property that Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority (GREDA) controls.
2. Develop new promotional efforts to market GREDA industrial parks and vacant commercial properties. Support marketing and recruitment efforts of others for new industrial tenants to the Eco-Industrial Park.
3. Continue to support actions that market Grand Rapids' identity in regional and statewide markets, particularly in key tourism markets.
4. Promote and assist private investment interest in privately held priority sites identified within the *Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan* and *Riverfront Framework Plan*.
5. Improve visibility of GREDA and GREDA available sites, incentive programs and Grand Rapids community assets, through the development of a new website.
6. Apply for Minnesota "shovel ready" certification from DEED for industrial sites.
7. Continue to develop ongoing funding and support for GREDA in order to assure ongoing implementation of economic development goals.
8. Develop business retention programs citywide to sustain businesses in their existing spaces, or to find new appropriate space for businesses looking to expand.
9. Continue to link economic development initiatives to the Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives, including consistency with the Future Land Use Map and the policy preference to supporting and creating high quality, high wage jobs.
10. Develop a long term strategy for Block 36.
11. Attract RV park developers to sites within the City, consistent with the Future Land Use Map.
12. Enhance vitality of Central School block.
13. Consider methods of facilitating public realm investments and seek partners in developing new artistic and cultural assets.
14. Continue support for events and temporary land uses in the downtown that create community gathering places, such as the farmers market.

Shovel Ready Site Certification

Shovel ready sites certify that the most time-consuming technical and regulatory aspects of development are already complete.

The certification gives your community a competitive edge by making the sites more attractive to companies and site-selection consultants looking for locations for business startups, expansions or relocations.

Source: Positively Minnesota, DEED



Long term implementation strategies are described below. Some priorities may be a reaffirmation of ongoing efforts, while others require significant investigation and planning before being implemented.

Long-Term Economic Implementation Strategies

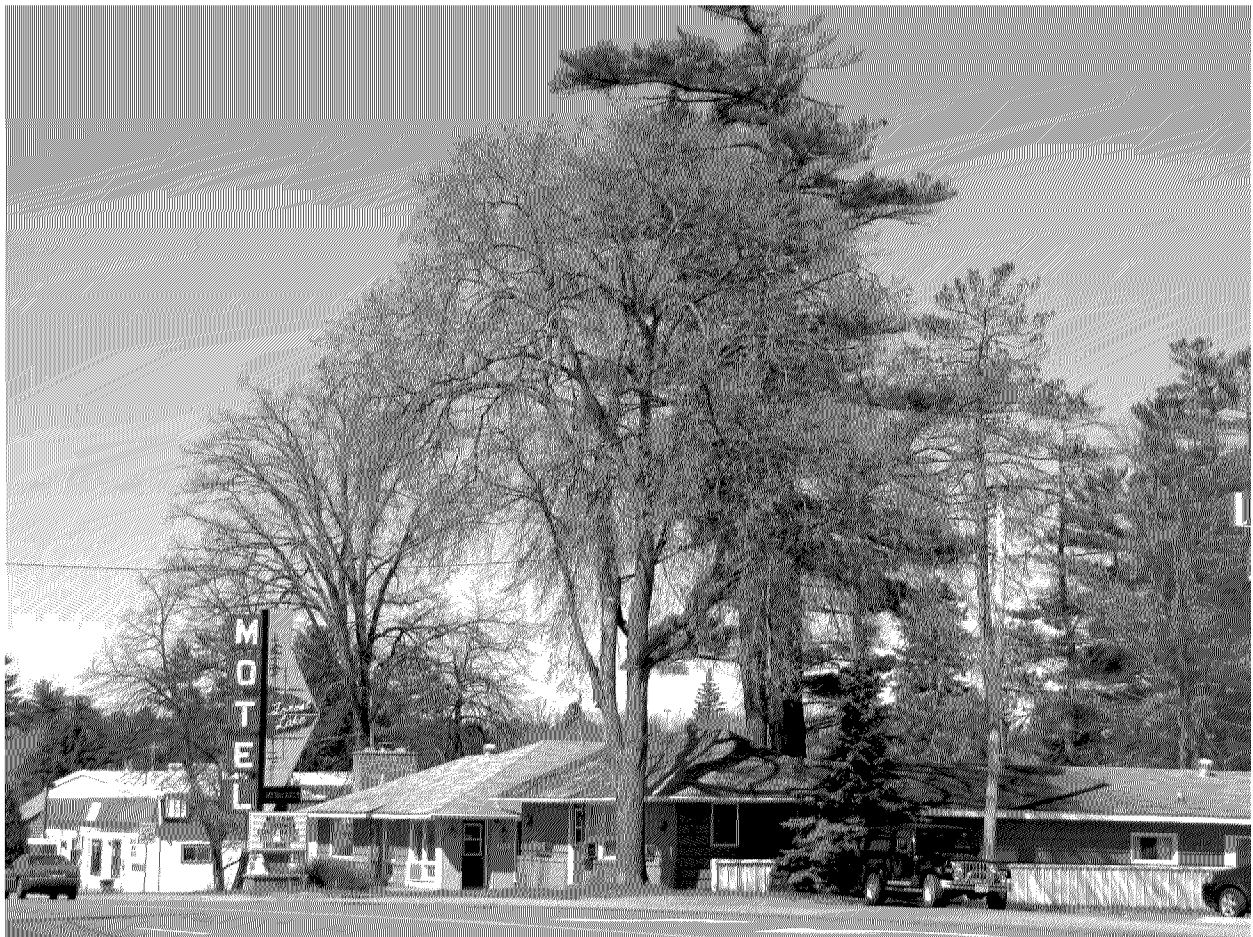
1. Continue to prioritize high quality, high wage jobs in economic incentive programs.
2. Work with Itasca Community College to develop additional educational infrastructure to support economic opportunity goals, such as developing and enhancing programs to support the region's natural resource industries.
3. Investigate competitive opportunities to use Grand Rapid's information and communications infrastructure to develop businesses that have a national market.
4. Support continual investment in medical technology, training, and marketing to enhance Grand Rapids position as the regional center for medical services.
5. Create programs or other support to ensure that opportunities for entrepreneurs (capital, space, technical assistance, etc.) match the evolution of the local and regional markets.
6. Assess expansion and retention needs for existing businesses and re-commission expansion/retention programs to meet the evolving markets and barriers faced by existing businesses. Encourage existing businesses to meet the evolving demand for services and goods that accompanies the demographic changes occurring in Grand Rapids.
7. Consider opportunities for additional regulatory efficiencies to minimize barriers to business expansion.
8. Work with State and local partners to identify under-used local resources and facilitate entrepreneurial efforts to treat waste products as a resource, including waste heat and waste materials from industrial operations. Consider opportunities for programs supporting new markets such as bio-energy.

Business Retention and Expansion

GREDA views regular interaction with resident companies, such as through a Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program of structured interviews, as an important component of the Grand Rapids area economic development action plan. The importance of BRE is underscored by a well-known statistic: "up to 80 percent of new jobs and capital investment in any community is generated by existing businesses."

Source: GREDA 2008 Annual Report

9. Support manufacturers' efforts to diversify product lines and create complementary products with distinct markets from existing products.
10. Encourage public and private sector entities to re-commission the identity system and marketing goals.
11. Recognize the City's art and entertainment assets as a critical component of meeting economic development goals. Consider programs to encourage artistic and cultural entrepreneurs.
12. Conduct additional analysis on how job characteristics match with household and labor force needs. Variables to assess can include; the percentage full-time year-round compared to seasonal/part-time; "living wage" and lower pay scale; benefits and no benefits; number of heads of households in the City who are in the labor force, number of minors who are in the workforce, and commuting patterns of people who work within the City.
13. Implement recommendations of the Downtown Plan and consider recommissioning the Plan to reflect new market and land use circumstances.





H. Transportation Infrastructure

Transportation - Looking Back

The City of Grand Rapids recognizes that the transportation system within the City needs to serve the mobility and accessibility needs of all of its residents, businesses, and visitors. This includes pedestrians, bicyclists, snowmobiles, and ATVs in addition to automobiles, trucks, trains, airplanes, and buses. The City also recognizes the need to provide safe mobility for people of all ages and abilities within the City limits. To meet these needs, this section of the Comprehensive Plan presents the City's plan for developing a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes of transportation.

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan included an extensive discussion of transportation planning concepts and how these might be applied in Grand Rapids, including functional classification of roads, walkability and pedestrian interaction with roads and automobile traffic, access management, and traffic forecasts. The Transportation section of the 2003 Plan also included descriptions of and recommendations for rail, air, and transit modes. These concepts are still relevant, and have been incorporated into much of the road and transportation planning since 2003.

Roadways and Motorized Vehicles

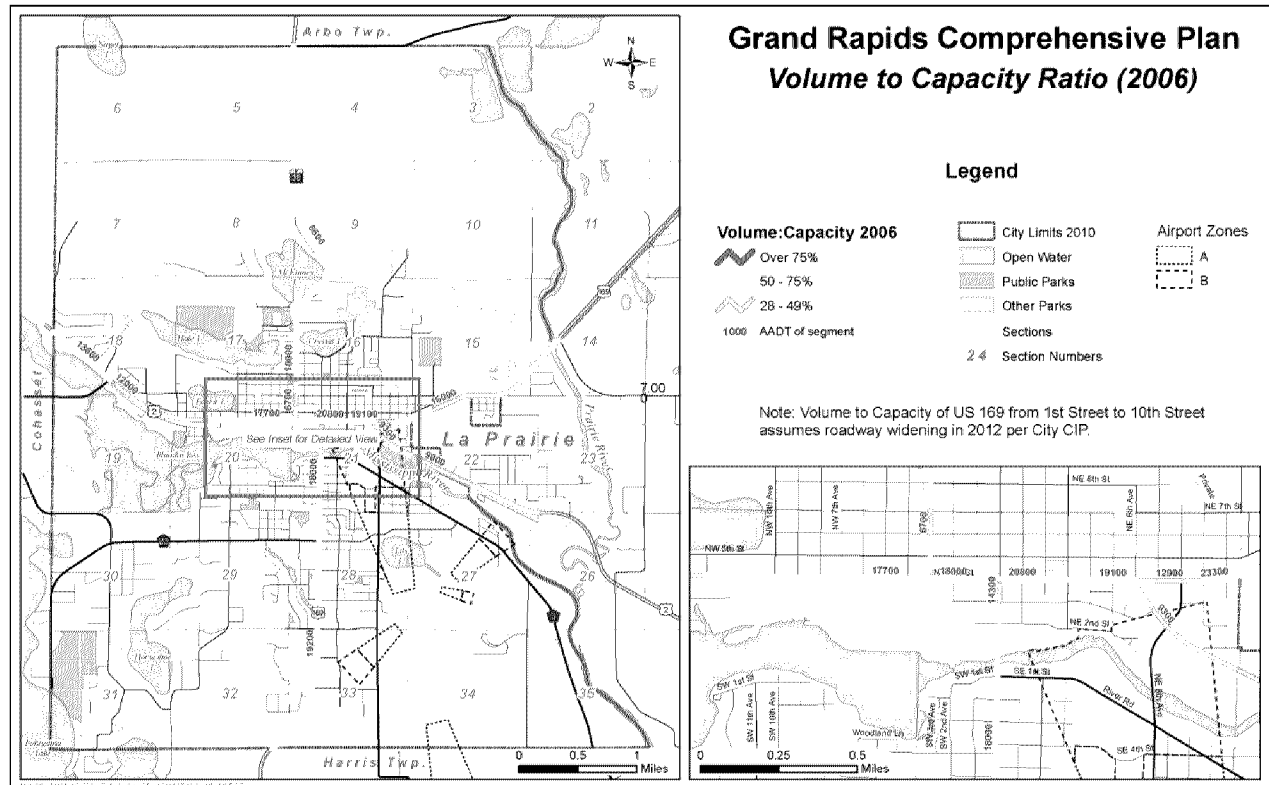
Since 2003 new traffic counts have been completed and MnDOT released a new traffic forecast for 2030. These data were analyzed and the results are presented below.

Daily Automobile Traffic Volumes and Corridor Capacity, 2006. In 2006 daily traffic volumes were measured on roads within Grand Rapids. Based on planning level calculations from the *Highway Capacity Manual* the following capacity thresholds are identified for roadways (the boundary between Level of Service D and E):

- 5 Lane Capacity – 27,000 vehicles per day
- 4 Lane Capacity – 20,000 vehicles per day
- 3 Lane Capacity – 13,500 vehicles per day
- 2 Lane Capacity – 8,500 vehicles per day

Although local two lane roads have a theoretical capacity of 8,500 vehicles per day, researchers at the University of California at Berkley found the quality of life along a residential street significantly degrades if the street carries more than 1,000 vehicles per day. For local, residential streets it is recommended the City attempt to maintain daily traffic volume levels lower than 1,000 vehicles per day.

The 2006 daily traffic volumes were divided by their theoretical capacities to calculate a volume to capacity ratio. Figure 5-__ shows annual average daily traffic volumes and the volume to capacity ratio for each corridor. In 2006 no corridors had traffic volumes that consumed more than 75% of the corridor's capacity.



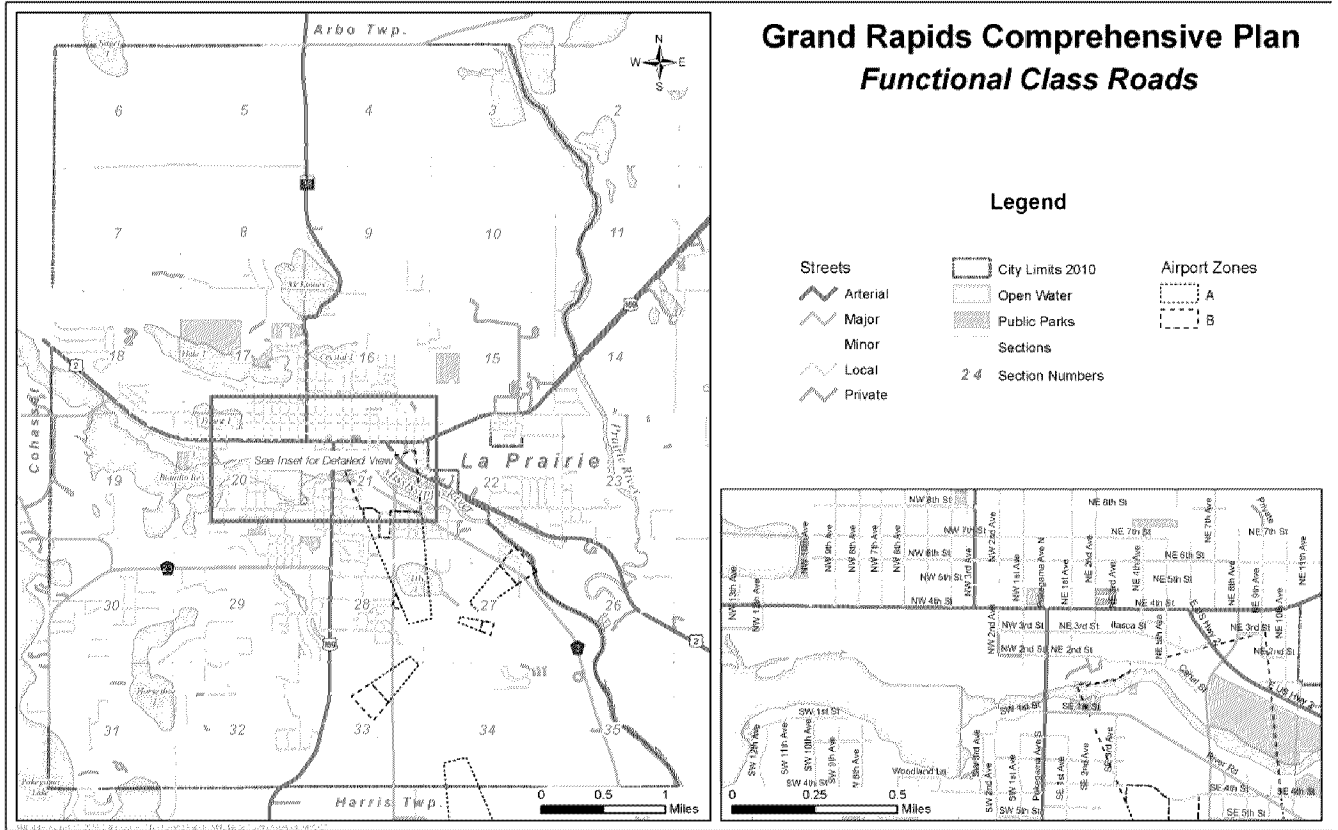
2010 Roadway Functional Classification System Assessment. All roadways within Grand Rapids should provide safe transportation for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. However, the transportation system needs a backbone of streets meant to carry higher volumes of vehicles across the region. These road corridors are classified as Principal Arterials and Minor Arterials. Within Grand Rapids, these corridors are jurisdictionally State and County roads. In order for these roads to carry higher traffic volumes at higher speeds, cross streets and driveways (access points) should be limited. Arterials typically comprise about 10% of the mileage within a city’s transportation system.

Collector roadways provide connectivity between local city streets and the arterial roadway system. They are intended to balance mobility and access, typically at lower speeds than the arterial corridors. Collectors typically comprise about 25% of the mileage within a city’s transportation system and are a mix of County and City streets.

The remaining 65% of the mileage within a city’s transportation system are local City streets. These roads have the lowest speed limits and the most access points. Their purpose is to facilitate short trips between homes/businesses and the collector/arterial system. Each type of roadway is identified within a roadway functional classification system. Figure 5- shows the Grand Rapids Functional Class Road Map.



Figure 5-_. Grand Rapids Functional Road Classification

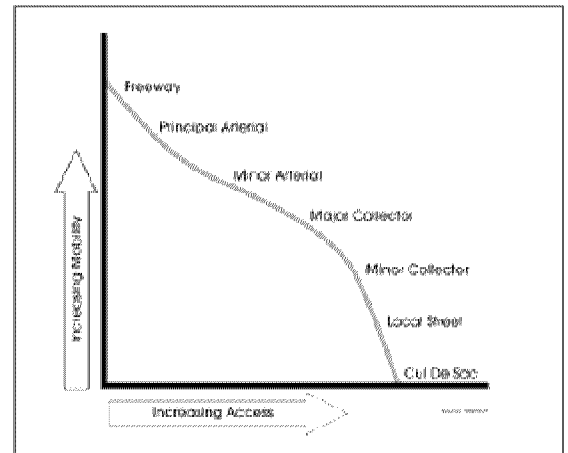


The functional classification system attempts to balance resident needs for access and mobility. Figure 3 shows the conceptual relation of access and mobility along each classification of roadway. To protect the mobility of arterials and collectors, access is limited along the corridors dependent on their classification. Grand Rapids is aware both Mn/DOT and Itasca County have access management guidelines for their roadways. The City acknowledges these guidelines and will work with these agencies to support access management within Grand Rapids. This includes facilitating cross access agreements and other cooperative measures along arterials.

Limiting driveways and public intersections provides a safer system for pedestrians and bicyclists. The City follows generally accepted spacing guidelines for its roadways and attempts to minimize the size and number of driveways along collectors and local streets within its jurisdiction.

Based on historical traffic data trends, Mn/DOT's State Aid Office has assigned a 20 Year growth factor of 1.2 to Itasca County. This represents a 0.92% annual compounded growth rate, which was applied to the 2006 AADTs in order to forecast 2030 AADTs. These forecasts along with their associated volume to capacity ratios are shown in Figure 5-_. Based on these forecasts, it is recommended the following corridors be monitored for possible improvements:

Figure 5-_. Access/Mobility Diagram



Source: MN/DOT

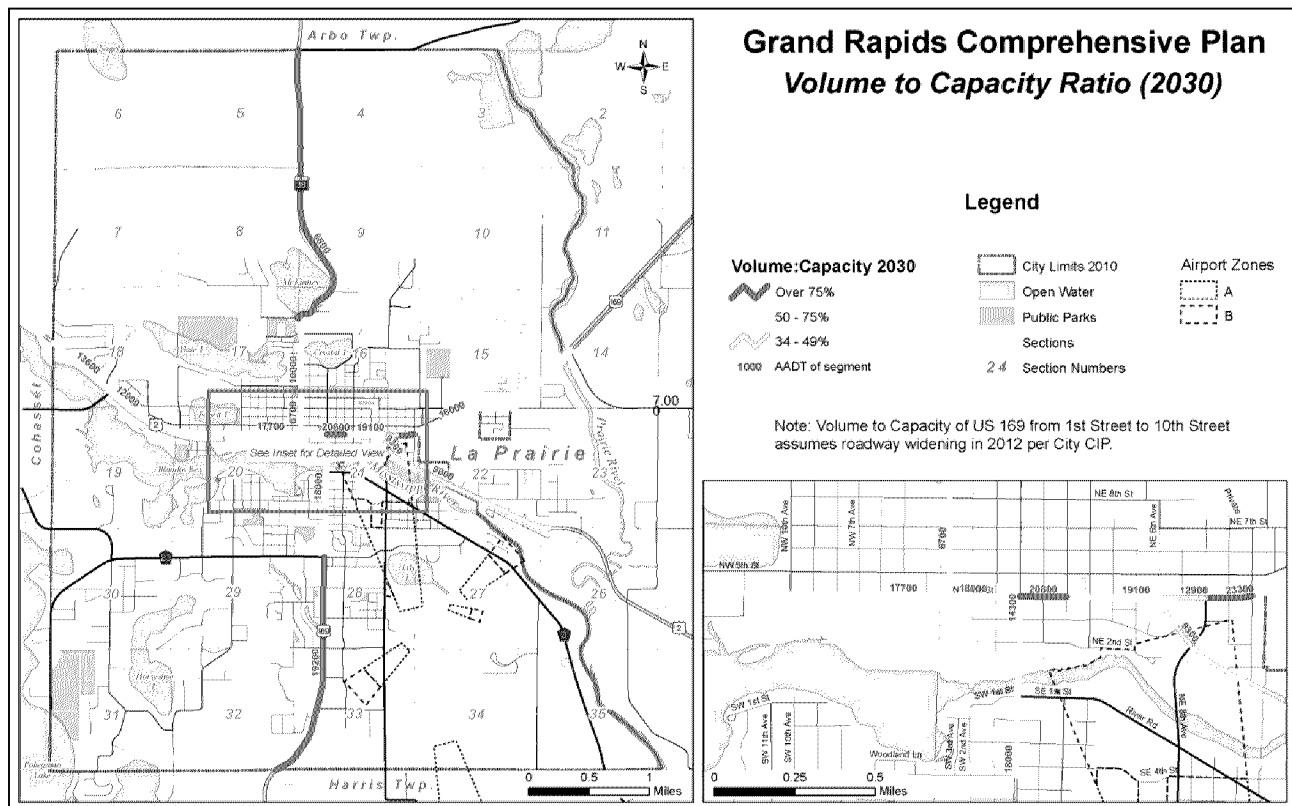


- Highway 169 east of the junction with Highway 2,
- Highway 169 south of County Road 23/10th Street, and
- The Highway 38 corridor near McKinney Lake.

No corridors are forecast to have a volume to capacity ratio greater than 100% in 2030, meaning transportation improvements may not be necessary in Grand Rapids to fix systemic capacity problems. In fact, a few of the road corridors appear to be wider than they need to be. In the future, prioritizing streetscaping and bicycle/pedestrian improvements on such segments could be accomplished without adverse impacts to vehicle flow. Furthermore, before contemplating any road widening projects to add additional capacity, the City should consider possible improvements to the traffic signal systems along those road corridors.

The City is currently undertaking a “Complete Streets” study in conjunction with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the University of Minnesota. The Complete Streets goal is to create integrated multi-modal design of streets and creation of policies that place appropriate value on motorized and non-motorized access to public right-of-ways. The Complete Streets study will reference and be consistent with Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives, and should provide tools for addressing the capacity opportunities in road corridors as noted above.

Figure 5-_. Projected Volume to Capacity, 2030



In 2009 the signals along Highway 2 from Highway 38 to First Avenue East were connected and synchronized. New innovations in updating traffic signal timing plans, additional interconnecting with communications cables, and making minor modifications to the signals left turn phasing indications are proven to be effective means of adding capacity to roadway corridors.

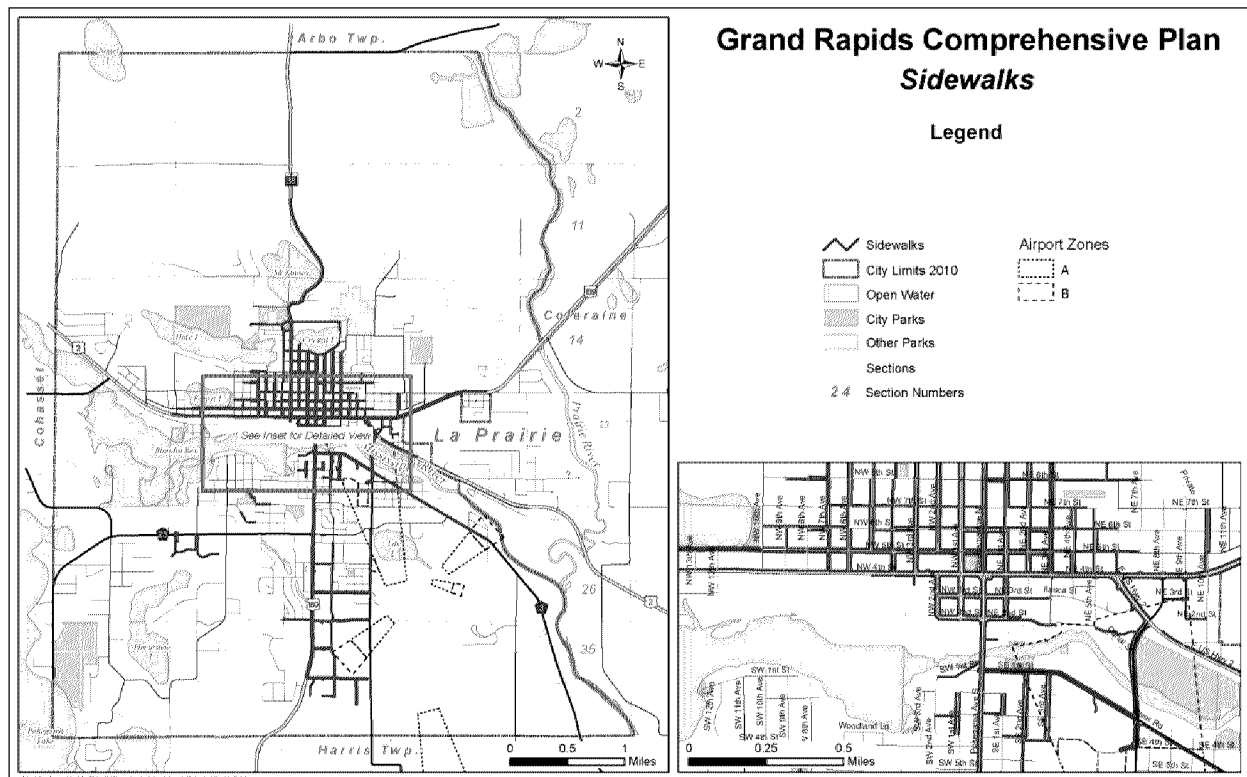
Pedestrians and Bicycles

The overall transportation goal of the Grand Rapids 2003 Comprehensive Plan was to improve the walkability of the City. That goal of promoting pedestrian activity as a viable alternative to automobile use remains a key element of this Comprehensive Plan. Residents need to get from one place to another, and yet some do not have access to automobiles, cannot use automobiles, or prefer the healthier option of bicycling or walking. Transportation planning should consider the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders, and automobiles recognizing that all forms of transportation must be intermodal. Almost every trip includes a pedestrian component between its origin and destination.

Historic transportation planning recognized that an efficient transportation infrastructure must include an integrated system of roadways, but the importance of providing infrastructure for alternative modes of transportation including bicycle lanes, trails and sidewalks, was rarely given the same importance. Yet the safety and mobility of pedestrians and bicyclists is dependent upon well-designed and well-planned facilities. The City can create safe, comfortable and inviting pedestrian and bicycling environments by integrating walking and biking facilities into all appropriate roadway construction and reconstruction projects. Encouraging residents to choose walking as a mode of transportation has the additional benefits of improving individual health and vitality.

Though automobile dependent developments have affected walkability in some areas of the City, the downtown area is walkable, and the City has improved pedestrian access since 2003. A map of sidewalks in the City is shown in Figure 5-_, showing the older sections of town to have sidewalks, but other areas to be largely bereft of sidewalks.

Figure 5-_. Sidewalks





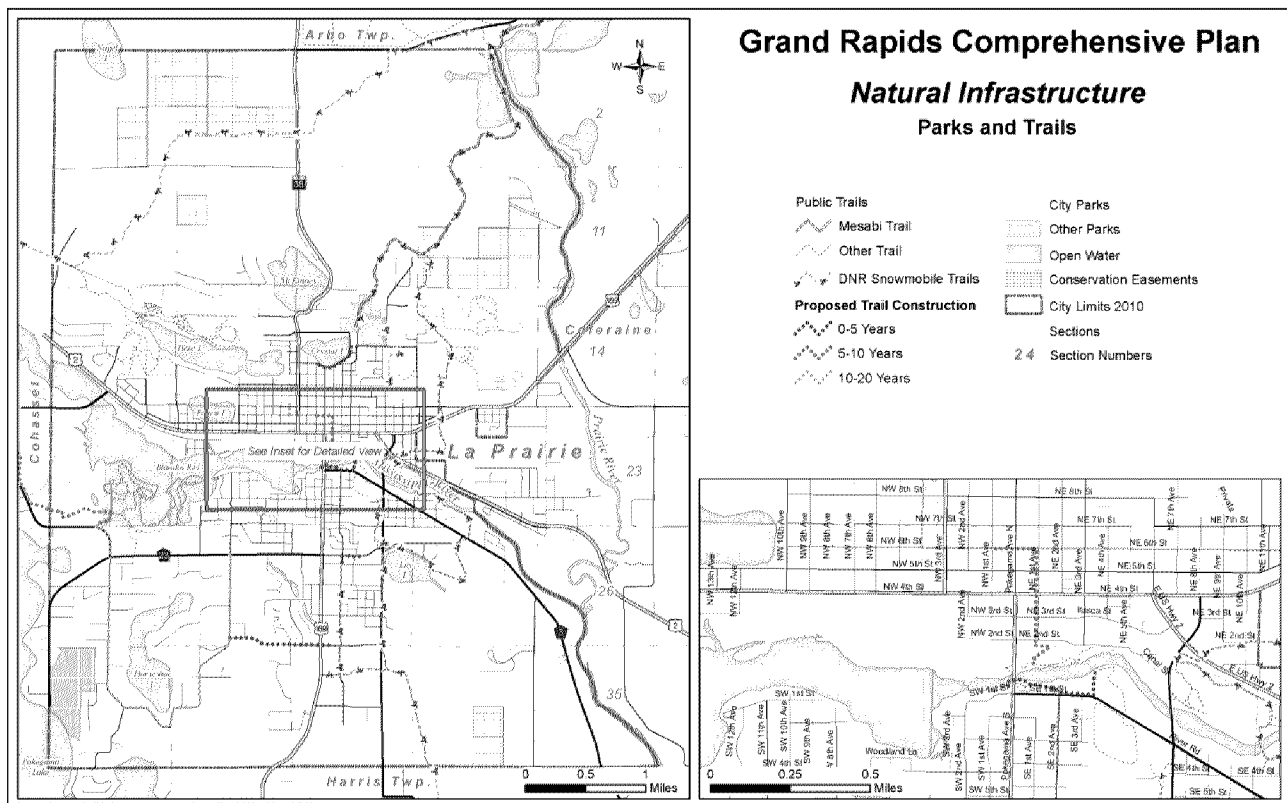
The confluence of highways and rail corridors in the downtown continue to present pedestrian challenges including Highways 169 and 2 and the railroad right-of-way that serves the Blandin/UPM plant. The community survey and focus groups identified that people perceive the downtown to be fragmented from the standpoint of pedestrian access.

Other areas of the City have varying levels of pedestrian access and walkability. Sidewalks are required in new developments and are common in traditional neighborhoods near to the downtown and River. A number of neighborhoods and neighborhood extensions developed in the last 40 years are less likely to have sidewalks or other pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Specific improvements for pedestrian and bicycle use are planned for Golf Course Road, SE 4th Street, and along the Mississippi River. Figure 5- shows the existing and proposed trails. Proposed trails are approximate, actual alignments will vary.

The physical beauty of Grand Rapids makes it a great city for bicycling. The Mesabi Trail is the city's well-known connection to regional bicycle trails. Grand Rapids also has a City trail system that is being expanded, a planned designated route along the Mississippi River, and planned connections to the trail system in and around the Forest History Center.

In order to have a usable bicycle system, Grand Rapids must integrate bicycle facilities with roadway design whenever appropriate. Bicycle facilities include both on-road and off-road components. The on-street facilities are located along arterial and other selected corridors and are located in the right-of-way or along easements. The off-street facilities are located off the right-of-way and near residential areas or natural areas.

Figure 5-_. Parks and Trails 2030





Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation

Recommendations



Trails

- ❖ Recognize the value of trails as effective means to connect neighborhoods to other neighborhoods and to key community facilities. Further, update the existing trails plan to accomplish this objective and to address such issues as the provision of safe and effective east-west and north-south routes through the community, and, a system of designated “feeder” routes connecting neighborhoods to regional trail systems.

Source: 2001 Park Facilities and Recreation Programming Analysis, P. 9

The City is currently conducting a Complete Streets study funded by the U.S. Transportation Research Boards that will guide the City in accommodating all travel modes within the public right-of-way. The Complete Streets study will integrate the Comprehensive Plan visions for an expanded multi-modal transportation network and provide recommendations for planning, design, and policy.

As part of the Complete Streets process, the City is considering general guiding principles in developing bikeways and pedestrian connections. Design parameters for bikeways favor direct, flat routes with adequate lane width, lower traffic volumes, and controlled speed of motorized vehicles. Bicycle routes should have adequate road markings, signage, and be sufficiently maintained.





Aviation

The Grand Rapids/Itasca County Airport is a general aviation airport that is open to the public 24 hours a day and used for corporate and private air traffic. It has about 15,000 aircraft operations per year. The Airport is primarily used for general and transient aviation flights. The facility has the capability to serve executive and private transportation needs benefiting the community, as well as the materials and delivery needs of the city’s industries.

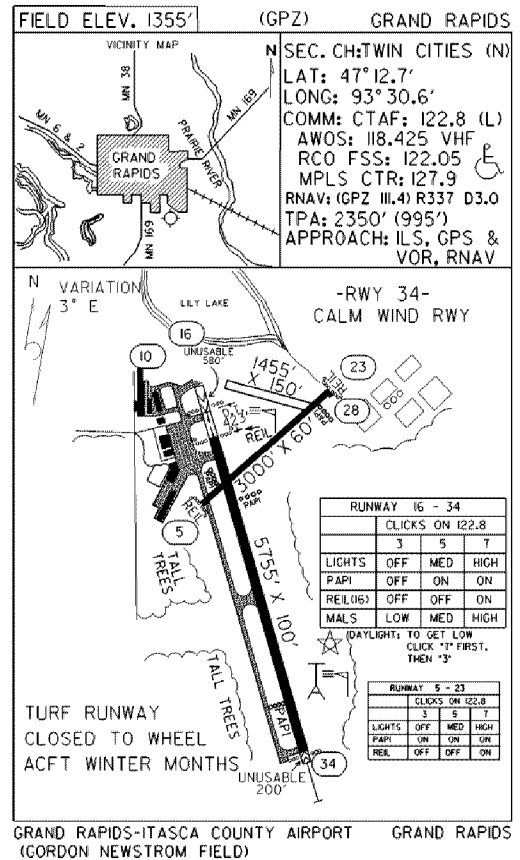
The Grand Rapids Airport is located 2.5 miles southeast of downtown on 1,400 acres. The Village of Grand Rapids opened the airport in 1933 with a single grass strip runway. Since that time there have been many improvements and added amenities including paving and construction of hangars and other buildings. Since 2003 improvements have included:

- Lighting upgrades in 2005
- Paving of a second runway (a crosswind runway) and associated lighting upgrades in 2008
- Updated Airport Overlay Zoning to correspond with runway/lighting changes

Currently the airport supports a variety of uses including military, government (forestry, DNR, State of MN, FAA, etc.), flight training, air charter service, corporate traffic, daily UPS delivery, medical transport, fire fighting, search and rescue, and private pleasure operations. There are approximately 65 aircraft based locally, which includes privately owned float and ski planes which are located primarily at private properties. There are approximately 15,000 annual aircraft arrivals and departures, down from the 21,000 reported in 2003.

At the time of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan Grand Rapids was being served by Mesaba Airlines with twice daily flights to St. Cloud and on to Minneapolis/St. Paul on planes with 30-34 seats. In March of 2004 Northwest, Mesaba Airlines’ owner, chose to discontinue service to Grand Rapids due to financial constraints. Passenger numbers had dropped significantly since the 2001 terrorist attacks and a subsequent change in flights which added a stop in St. Cloud, making flights less convenient for travelers. Since that time Mesaba service to St. Cloud has also been discontinued. Because of the loss of commercial passenger service the Grand Rapids –Itasca County Airport chose not to renew its certification under Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 139 (Certification for airports serving scheduled and unscheduled aircraft of greater than 9 seats) because the cost of maintaining the certification standard was not appropriate with the types of operations taking place. The airport maintains its GPZ designation on the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS), making it eligible for passenger service if an airline is interested in providing such service. Certification could be reinstated within 90 days.

The loss of passenger service constitutes a significant change in transportation options for Grand Rapids residents. The nearest airport with passenger service is now the Chisholm-Hibbing Airport approximately 40 miles northeast of Grand Rapids. As of August 2010 there were three daily trips





BNSF is the major transporter of finished products from Blandin Paper in Grand Rapids. The BNSF line carries grain, coal, and wood products and has an average of four trains per day according to MnDOT's Freight Railroad Map. Another BNSF line connects Grand Rapids to the Iron Range and carries similar cargoes. This line sees an average of one train per day.

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes that the importance of rail service as a viable transportation mode and supports the continued maintenance of existing and potential industrial rail access to Grand Rapids designated industrial sites. Rail activities should be monitored in an effort to determine the impact of potential service or design changes in the City.

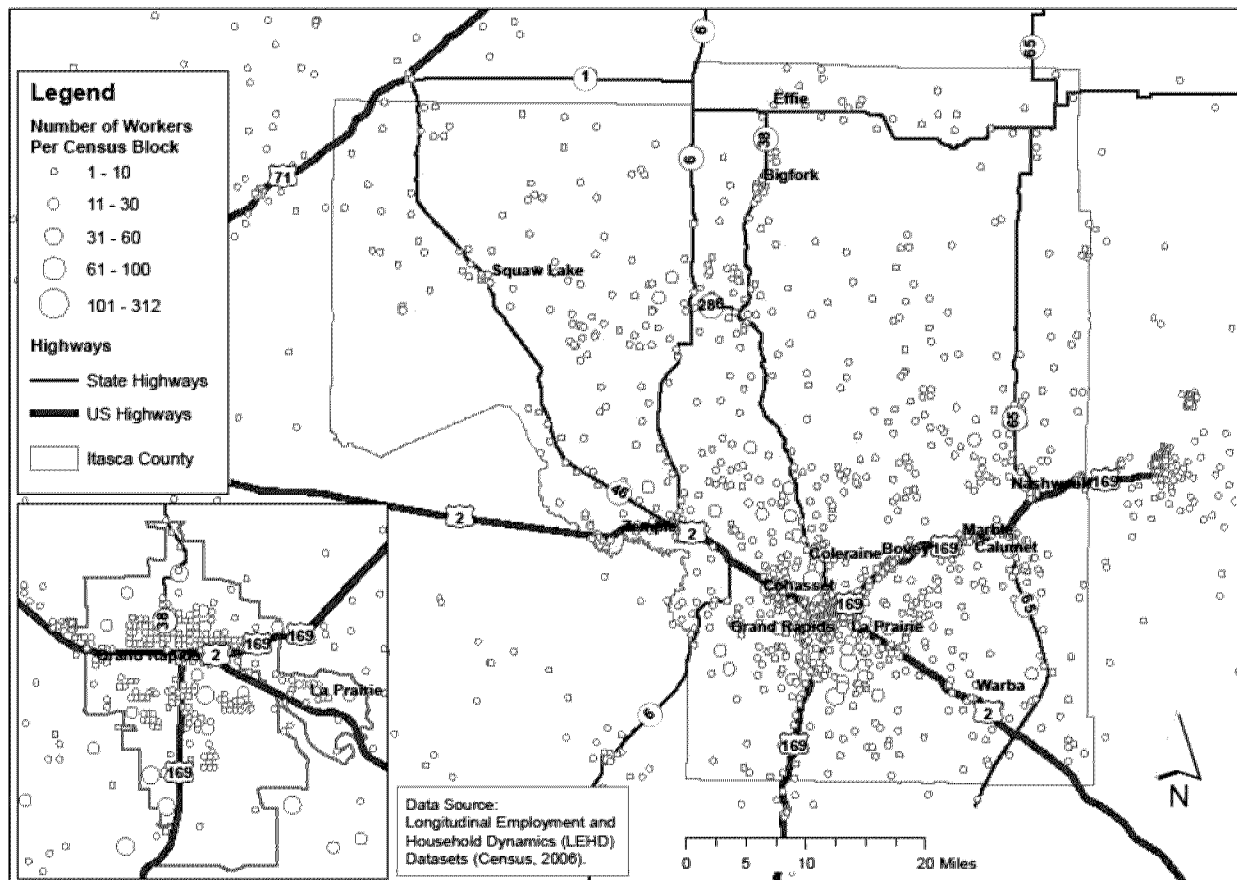
The City is in the process of completing the recommended rail crossing improvements from the 2003 Comprehensive Plan. This includes the closures of at-grade rail crossings at 12th Avenue NW and 5th Avenue NE along with the implementation of signals and cross arms at 19th Avenue NW and 3rd Avenue NW. These improvements will result in head end train speeds increasing from 12 mph to 30 mph, reducing closure times of at-grade rail crossings along with the ability to create a "quiet zone" through town so that trains will no longer blow their horns.

Transit

Transit is an important component of the transportation network in Grand Rapids and Itasca County. The primary transit provider for Grand Rapids is Arrowhead Transit, which operates in the seven county region of northeast Minnesota. The agency provides coordinated public transportation service with several flexible routes to choose from by using Dial-A-Ride. Transit connects residential areas with major shopping areas, public buildings, employment centers, health care facilities, and tourist attractions. Funding for the system comes through the Arrowhead Economic and Opportunities Agency. No significant changes in the transit systems have been implemented since the 2003 Comprehensive Plan.

Itasca County Area Transportation Study. In 2009 the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs conducted an intensive attitudinal study about transportation needs and priorities for Itasca County. A number of Grand Rapids institutions and organizations were involved in the study.

Figure 5-_. Residential Patterns of Low-Wage Workers Whose Jobs are Located in Itasca County



Source: *Itasca County Transportation Study*, p.5

The investigators held a series of focus groups, listening sessions, and one-on-one interviews, and also conducted background research that included demographic analysis, mapping of the “mis-match” between the location of jobs and where the workers lived, and a national scan of best practices in providing rural transportation.

The study made a number of recommendations ranging from improving bike routes and awareness of public transportation, to improving bus service linking Itasca County to Duluth and launching an online carpool service. The recommendations fall into five functional categories:

1. Policy and Administrative changes
2. Communications, Education and Outreach changes
3. Opportunities for Coordination and Cooperation
4. Operations, Maintenance and/or Service Improvements
5. Cost Sharing or Saving Opportunities

Some of these recommendations are part of the ongoing Complete Streets study, and others are being adopted as elements of this Comprehensive Plan update.



Transportation – Looking Forward

Based on a review of the transportation infrastructure and issues that remain from the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, there are a number of issues that Grand Rapids faces as it looks to the future. The 2010 Plan process included significant public outreach in which transportation priorities were discussed by residents and businesses. Issues identified in public meetings, the community survey, the focus group process, and the engagement of stakeholders in the Steering committee are listed below.

Pedestrian/bicycle

- Responses from the community survey and focus groups indicated a strong interest in expanding bicycle and pedestrian access throughout the City’s urbanized area. The City has paid considerable attention to building multi-modal infrastructure in recent years, but perceptions remain that non-motorized access is limited.
- Residents and business owners expressed a need for safer and more welcoming pedestrian access, while maintaining traffic flow. Neighborhoods need to be linked with activity centers and schools, and safer crossings for pedestrians in the downtown will add value to the downtown economic cluster.

Transit

- Current funding structures and fare levels are unlikely to sustain extension of transit service to more locations in the face of increased need as the population ages. Creative solutions, including those recommended in the 2009 Itasca County Transportation Study and other alternatives to auto dependency need further investigation.

Aviation

- Lack of regularly scheduled commercial passenger air service limits access and opportunity, but the airport remains an important asset and transportation link for private business travel, cargo, and charter flights. Recognizing the infrastructural value of the airport and fully utilizing this asset remains a high priority.

Roadways

- Several Trunk Highways converge in downtown, along with the active rail line. Balancing pedestrian flow, traffic and truck flow, and at grade rail crossings creates conflicts between different transportation goals. Balancing these goals and finding win-win solutions continues to be a significant challenge.
- Maintaining and enhancing street connectivity is a challenge in some areas of the City where historic development patterns did not accommodate extension of the street grid. Creating connections after the fact is both controversial and expensive. Opportunities to make connections are present during development or redevelopment, but such opportunities are ad hoc and not in the optimal locations.
- Better enforcement of traffic laws could be effective in keeping the streets safe for children and pedestrians.



Rail

- Working with the BNSF railroad is an ongoing process in addressing train speed, safety, noise pollution, and emergency access. Yet rail access is a critical component of Grand Rapids' economic competitiveness and sustaining existing businesses.

Land use/transportation integration

- *Coordinating origins and destinations in land use planning.* Land use planning and transportation planning are not coordinated well through market mechanisms. After the fact fixes, such as instituting and maintaining transit or para-transit service, are rarely financially self-sustaining. Creating a better mix of complementary land uses will better connect people to destinations.
- The ability to move more people without costly expansion of roadway capacity can be achieved by reducing travel demand by encouraging rideshare, walking, bicycling, and carpooling.
- *Shifting demographics.* Another challenge is that the City is faced increasing needs for mobility and accessibility for an aging population that will likely have less access to automobiles. The disparate relationship between housing and commercial and service destinations in some parts of the City could create problems in the future.

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan Transportation section included seven goals:

Goal 1: Maintain a safe and efficient city wide transportation system that meets the local and regional access needs of Grand Rapids citizens, industries, and visitors.

Goal 2: Strive to become a “walkable” city.

Goal3: Provide a safe, convenient, efficient, continuous, and aesthetically pleasing transportation environment that is conducive to both recreational bicycling and using the bicycle for a commuting purpose

Goal 4: Work with Arrowhead transit to continue to maintain, and enhance the transit system

Goal 5: Provide an aviation facility to meet the needs of passengers, the City, commercial airlines, and general aviation in a safe and efficient manner

Goal 6: Maintain the function of the street system for current users, emergency response efforts and for use by future generations

Goal 7: Promote safe and efficient rail service to Grand Rapids

Each Goal had between one and four objectives. These goals, and many of the transportation associated objectives, are still consistent with the City's Community Vision, Values, and Guiding Principles. The 2010 Plan incorporates these goals and objectives into a new goal hierarchy.

Transportation Goals

The Comprehensive Plan update looks at the goals and objectives for transportation recognizing that these cannot be considered in isolation from the rest of the city's vision, values, and guiding principles. Although several transportation system improvements have occurred since the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, the City's commitment to providing transportation options for all residents and visitors means that many of the 2003 transportation goals are retained for this Comprehensive Plan update.



Transportation Goal #1: Maintain a safe and efficient city-wide transportation system

The local transportation infrastructure meets local and regional access and mobility needs for Grand Rapids citizens, industries, and visitors. Public right-of-ways are designed for efficient and safe movement for all modes and economic purposes.

- a) *Incorporate the results of the Complete Streets study to better create and retain streets that promote a mix of uses such as car travel, transit, and bicycling.* The Complete Streets study will assist in making design and policy recommendations for the full range of travel modes.
- b) *Promote land use policies that limit access as necessary to maintain safe and efficient operation of the existing road system.* Access management includes both road design issues (spacing of curb cuts and access points) and thoughtful land use planning that does not create the need for access at inappropriate locations.
- c) *The street layout of new developments shall continue to be coordinated with the streets and parking of surrounding areas, including Suburban Residential and Highway Commercial areas.* The City should continue to require new development to ensure connectivity with existing and future surrounding areas and consider alternatives to cul-de-sacs that improve connectivity while retaining privacy characteristics of cul-de-sacs.
- d) *Protect road system investments and ensure efficient use of the road system by giving high priority to operational maintenance, safety improvements, and capacity improvements that are cost-effective and improve the level of service.* Prioritizing maintenance and enhancements of the existing road systems is a fiscally responsible path.

Community Values

Sustainable Built Infrastructure

The provision and maintenance of high-quality grey infrastructure is necessary to foster investment in a sustainable economy and maintain a high quality of life. Grey infrastructure includes: drinking water and wastewater utilities; energy systems; technology infrastructure; and surface and air transportation systems.

Transportation Goal #2: Strive to become a Walkable City

Properly planned and designed pedestrian facilities allow Grand Rapids residents and visitors to walk rather than drive for short trips. Promoting walking as a transportation mode contributes to better personal health and increases the capacity of the city’s transportation infrastructure by taking vehicles off the road.

- a) *Construct and maintain facilities, services, and programs that encourage walking.* Grand Rapids is building both pedestrian infrastructure and programmatic efforts through organizations such as “Get Fit Itasca” to encourage walking and biking. Continue to build more inviting pedestrian environments with benches, trashcans, planters and other streetscape amenities.
- b) *Educate the general public on the importance of the sidewalk and bikeway system and its safe use.* Transforming driving habits to increase the number of trips by walking and bike will maximize the value of both roads and pedestrian infrastructure.

Guiding Principles

Principle 5. Enhance healthy lifestyles, families, and community.

Direct public and private investment to create opportunities for healthy choices. Physical systems such as designing complete streets and programmatic development such as social services and educational programs can be designed to make healthy choices easier.



Transportation Goal #3: Promote bicycling for commuters and recreational riders

A safe, convenient, efficient, continuous, and aesthetically pleasing transportation environment is conducive to encouraging bicycle use for recreational and work-related purposes.

Community Vision

“Residents and visitors can move around the City with equal ease by car, bicycle, walking, or other mode of transportation.”

- a) *Improve pedestrian and bicycle access to and between local destinations, including public facilities, schools, parks, open space, employment districts, and shopping centers.* Creating access is the first step to enabling more bicycle use.
- b) *Promote bicycling as an alternative mode of transportation.* Encourage wide use of bike-walkways and educate cyclists, pedestrians, and motorists about safe use of bicycles.
- c) *Maintain existing trails and bike routes.* Trails and bike routes have maintenance needs that may be distinct from maintenance needs of automobile lanes. Conduct regular safety assessments to better address barriers, perceived and real, that limit use of bicycles.

Transportation Goal #4: Maintain, expand and enhance the transit system

Travel by transit is part of an overall system that recognizes the multi-modal nature of travel where all transit trips begin and end with a walking trip. As the population ages, people will seek alternatives such as transit to using private automobiles. Ensuring that the City is prepared to creatively expand transit options will help meet future demand for alternatives other than the automobile.

Community Values

Accessible Movement

We understand and support the need for residents and visitors to move around our City with equal ease by car, bicycle, or on foot. Streets design should accommodate all modes of transportation and public transportation provides mobility to those without cars.

- a) *Work with Arrowhead Transit and other transit or para-transit organizations to expand and improve service.* In response to community growth and to enhance transit accessibility and convenience, maintain a dialogue with transit providers to strategically expand service and co-promote transit options. Education efforts can include items suggested in the 2009 Itasca County Transportation Study.
- b) *Consider strategic investments or pilot programs to test alternatives to existing transit systems.* The Itasca County Transportation Study recommended a number of potential alternatives to traditional transit services including car-sharing and bike-sharing programs.
- c) *Consider transportation criteria for standards in land use regulations.* Transit friendly infrastructure and programs can be encouraged through use of Travel Demand Management (TDM) plans for new or expanded facilities that create jobs. Direct assistance with such TDM plans and implementation can create competitive advantages for employers and the City in attracting outside investment.

Transportation Goal #5: Provide an airport that safely and efficiently meets local and regional demands

The Grand Rapids-Itasca County airport is an economic development generator that meets the needs of passengers, the City, charter airlines, airport-dependent businesses, and general aviation flyers. The airport needs to be treated as long-term economic and transportation infrastructure that has inter-generational value.

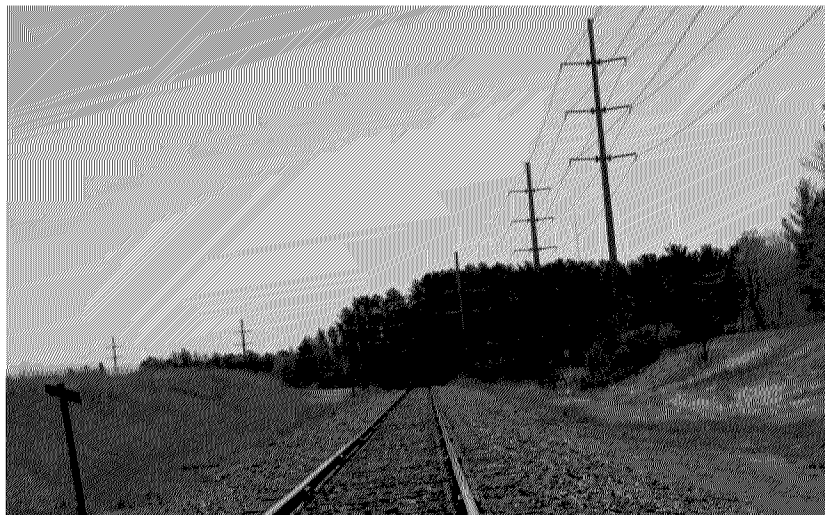


- a) *Guide future airport development so that it will satisfy aviation demand.* Work with the airport to create new value in the existing airport facilities.
- b) *Support airport economic development activities.* Economic development in and around the airport will support the long-term viability of airport infrastructure.
- c) *Create infill development around the airport that is compatible with airport use.* A number of sites are available for development in the “B” airport zone. Work with the Airport authority to maximize value such that airport uses are supported in the long-term.

Transportation Goal #6 Promote safe and efficient rail service to Grand Rapids

Overall, the state of Minnesota continues to move more freight tonnage than the national average. Continued uncertainty regarding future petroleum prices makes rail capacity an excellent transportation hedge, as rail is an energy efficient means of transporting the area’s extracted natural resources and industrial outputs. Integrating the rail system safely into the City’s street, highway, and pedestrian systems provides a challenge that can be met through careful planning and investment.

- a) *Protect the existing railroad system and encourage improvements that could benefit potential industrial development.* Access to rail is a key advantage in sustaining existing industrial capacity and attracting new industrial investment.
- b) *Continue to work with BNSF and rail users to integrate rail operations with the rest of the City’s transportation infrastructure.* Rail access and use can conflict with some land uses and other transportation modes. Resolving or minimizing those conflicts is necessary to sustaining rail access over time.





Implementation Priorities

To advance the goals of the Transportation Plan, the Comprehensive Plan recommends the following action steps, organized by Transportation Goal:

Maintain a safe and efficient city-wide transportation system

- Continue to implement the five-year Capital Improvement Plan projects (2009 – 2013).
- Continue to maintain roadways to allow for the planned functionality and performance at reasonable levels of service.
- Improve road access to allow for multiple routes or access points into developed areas of the City. In particular, areas in the southeast quadrant of the City around Horseshoe Lake have limited or circuitous access that creates potential problems for emergency access and potential congestion. Identify potential problems and start drafting long-term solutions.
- Take advantage of street resurfacing projects as an opportunity to install or enhance sidewalks, bicycle lanes, raised medians, and painted crosswalks, where feasible.
- Implement the recommendations of the Complete Streets Study.
- Use traffic calming design, where appropriate, to promote transportation choice, to reduce the negative impacts of car travel, alter driver behavior, and improve conditions for non-motorized street users.
- Increase street tree plantings and landscaping in medians and along arterials to calm traffic, soften the effects of arterial streets, and where appropriate, provide separation between pedestrians and other modes of transportation.
- Consider creating standards for residential development that distinguish the road connectivity options for Suburban Residential and Traditional Neighborhood areas, consistent with the Future Land Use Map categories.
- Consider standards (in addition to the existing subdivision standards) for development or redevelopment that enhance connectivity of streets, sidewalks, and trails.

Strive to become a Walkable City

- Continue to require the inclusion of sidewalks in all new development. Require a variance from the sidewalk requirement for those cases where sidewalk requirements are not feasible. Sidewalks should be placed near property lines with space for a boulevard where grass and trees planted in regular intervals can be planted.
- Create maintenance standards for bike lanes and City-maintained pedestrian ways that recognize and address the barriers to use that are maintenance related. Consider regular maintenance such as sweeping, snow removal, and safety assessments of existing sidewalks, trails, and bicycle lanes.
- Work with property owners to maintain walkways with surfaces free of obstructions and trash, gravel, snow, and other hazards. Consider special tools such as Special Assessment Districts for critical areas with multi-modal transportation infrastructure such as the downtown.
- Continue to plan for bicycle lanes and sidewalks or off-road non-motorized trails when new roads are planned and in all reconstruction plans for city streets.
- Continue to connect sidewalks to create direct paths to destinations.
- Continue to monitor traffic and pedestrian patterns to determine needs.



- Create trail ROW requirements for Suburban Residential land use areas

Promote bicycling for commuters and recreational riders

- Extend the separated trail system into new neighborhoods as the city grows. Connections should be made to schools, parks, and other activity areas.
- Link existing trails to form a continuous network, especially when new development occurs. While trail systems are usually implemented one section at a time, long-range planning should be emphasized so continuous corridors are eventually created.

Maintain, expand and enhance the transit system

- Work with transit providers to promote transit services and educate the public about transit options, including the specific recommendations in the 2009 Itasca County Transportation Study.
- Incorporate transit considerations into “complete streets” designs and policies.
- Investigate options for working with new large employers or in the development or expansion of job centers through Travel Demand Management planning.

Provide an airport that safely and efficiently meets local and regional demands

- Enforce airport safety zone restrictions through the zoning ordinance to prevent hazards or obstructions to planned air space and citizens.
- Support efforts to enhance the airport’s revenue stream through new or expanded services.
- Encourage public use of the airport terminal for meetings, informational gatherings, and special events.
- Encourage airport attractions to increase tourism in Grand Rapids and enable the town to be a frequent stop for small plane travel.
- Expand and improve airport facilities to better serve existing users and attract new users.

Promote safe and efficient rail service to Grand Rapids

- Review the land use plan, zoning and subdivision standards along the existing rail corridor to ensure appropriate land uses and site design to avoid encroachment and noise issues.
- Minimize at-grade crossings of the track for new projects.
- Continue to coordinate with the railroad companies to provide appropriate signage, traffic controls and public education to minimize train crossing accidents in the community.
- Develop a long-range railroad crossing master plan.