

COVER PAGE

FAIRMONT FORWARD

2040 Comprehensive Plan

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- Steering Committee
 - Adam Smith
 - Chantill Kahler Royer
 - Char Kahler
 - Ed Willett
 - Ian Bents
 - Judy Bryan
 - Kathi Smith
 - Leanne Zarling
 - Liz Wheeler
 - Randy Lubenow
 - Rod Halverson
 - Ron Kopishke
 - Scott Unke
 - Tom Mahoney
- City Staff
 - Cathy Reynolds, City Administration
 - Peter Bode, Planning and Zoning
 - Chief Michael Hunter, Police Department
 - Nick Lardy, Parks and Streets
 - Troy Nemers, Public Works/Engineering
 - Linsey Preuss, Economic Development
- Planning Commission
 - Ron Davison
 - Tom Lytle
 - Tom Mesich
 - Jon Omvig
 - Adam Smith
 - Liz Wheeler
- City Council
 - Mayor Debbie Foster
 - Councilor Tom Hawkins
 - Councilor Bruce Peters
 - Councilor Ruth Cyphers
 - Councilor Randy Lubenow
 - Councilor Wayne Hasek
- Consultants
 - WSB

Plan Overview

Comprehensive Plan Overview

The Comprehensive Plan provides the opportunity for the community to plan for its future in an interconnected and holistic manner. Fairmont's new Comprehensive Plan serves as a guidebook for action for the next 20 years.

The Comprehensive Plan seeks to address three simple questions:

- What can be done to ensure Fairmont is a great place to live and work now and in the future?
- What are the aspirations to improve the community, address issues, and remain competitive?
- Who needs to be a part of ensuring Fairmont's success and what role can they play?

A Vision for the Future

The comprehensive plan is a consensus-based blueprint for Fairmont's future. The plan encapsulates the vision the community has for its future and includes aspirations, goals, and realistic approaches to tackle issues and barriers, leverage assets, bring people together, and spark conversations. The vision laid out in this document is one that will see success through partnerships. Simply put, city government will not be able to address all the great ideas generated as part of the planning process. This plan identifies a variety of tools in the toolbox, recognizing that different issues will require different solutions. The plan identifies not just expensive projects, but also planning and study efforts, policy revisions, new business and government practices, strong partnerships, and public engagement and education, as means to achieving the shared vision. Upon adoption, the comprehensive plan will serve as a guiding document for appointed and elected officials, city staff, businesses, residents, and community groups.

Past Planning Efforts

Fairmont has a long history of planning for and guiding its future. These past planning efforts influence and guide the planning of today.

- 1934: Adoption of first zoning code. Two zoning districts exist – commercial and residential.
- 1946: Planning Commission is formed to investigate and implement planning through revised zoning and subdivision controls after community seeks a more sophisticated system for land planning.
- 1950: Land use plan and revised zoning ordinance adopted.
- 1968: Continued growth sparks renewed interest in update land use controls to reflect changing development trends. Fairmont adopts its first Comprehensive Plan to serve as a guide for development of the City.

- 1969: New land use and subdivision regulations adopted to reflect a desire to control land use through a hierarchical approach to land use.
- 1986: Again, the City Code and Plan are modified to reflect changing times and technology.
- 2008: Fairmont again updates its Comprehensive Plan to reflect changes in technology, demographics, housing, recreation, and culture.
- 2018: The City begins the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan for 2040

Planning Process

Careful to include the voices of the community and lay out a vision for the future, the process to update the City's Comprehensive Plan took nearly two years. Starting in 2018, the City began the process of exploring issues, analyzing data, setting goals, and identifying opportunities for action.



Plan Values

“The Comprehensive Plan is...”

- **Visionary:** Central to planning for the future is envisioning what could be, without limitation. The comprehensive plan balances hopes, dreams, and aspirations, with the other values below to create a guidebook to encourage the community to think big.
- **Future-oriented:** This plan looks out twenty years in the future to the year 2040 and attempts to acknowledge and address the trends and changes that are likely to influence the way we live, work, move, and communicate. While no one can predict the future, we can do our best to harness change to our advantage.
- **Strategic:** With limited resources in a constantly changing world, it's important the community addresses its vision in a strategic manner. They say the best way to “eat an elephant” is one bite at a time. With a full menu of strategies laid out in this plan, the City and its partners must be strategic in applying resources and tackling implementation. The City will need to be nimble and willing to change direction when new ideas and new data present themselves, while keeping the other plan values in mind.
- **Inclusive:** Fairmont is a diverse place with people of all ages, races, incomes, abilities, and perspectives. The community is strongest when it comes together. It's even stronger when all people feel safe, welcome, and included.
- **Collaborative:** The easiest pathway to success is through efforts which bring people together across divisions or silos. City government will be unable to address every issue and idea generated as part of the planning process. It will require the efforts of volunteers, community groups, faith-based organizations, businesses, residents, and other government agencies in close coordination with city government which will produce results in an efficient, effective, and lasting manner.
- **Community-Centered:** This plan is centered around what makes Fairmont such a great place – its people. At its core, this plan and government exist to improve the quality of life for those that live, work, and visit Fairmont.

Community Priorities and Focus Areas

As part of the planning process the City heard from hundreds of residents, businesses, and stakeholders. Several priorities, ideas, and concerns were shared – all with merit and importance. A handful of ideas, listed below, were heard consistently from the community. These Community Priorities serve as the foundation of this plan.

- Revitalize Downtown to be a central gathering place
- Further study redevelopment and catalytic sites and districts
- Determine the needs of existing businesses and create a strategic plan to retain them in the community
- Develop and implement methods to attract a new workforce, spur new businesses, and grow existing businesses
- Upgrade and reconstruct aging roads, sewer, water, and other infrastructure
- Create new bike and pedestrian trails
- Establish Fairmont as a regional hub for medical services
- Increase the population of Fairmont
- Preserve, protect and rehabilitate the existing housing stock, housing values, and neighborhoods
- Provide recreational opportunities for all residents
- Protect the visual beauty and water quality of the lakes
- Provide new parks and recreational facilities
- Protect people, property, and health through strong public safety
- Create a welcoming and inclusive community for all that call Fairmont home

Fairmont's Assets

Fairmont is a great place nestled in a beautiful setting. The community's assets provide a solid foundation for this plan and the future efforts the community will undertake to achieve the vision laid out in this plan.

1. People
2. Lakes
3. History
4. Industry – Agribusiness, Medical, Education
5. Downtown
6. Connections

Fairmont's Opportunities

Like all communities, there are opportunities for improvement. This plan identifies the places, spaces, and issues which Fairmont should tackle in the next twenty years to improve the economy, quality of life, and infrastructure.

1. Revitalization of Downtown
2. Repurposing industrial sites for a strong second life
3. Expanding recreational amenities
4. Fostering diversity and inclusion among residents and city staff
5. Employing placemaking strategies to improve spaces and boost tourism
6. Welcoming a changing economy and tap into local innovation

Big Ideas for the Future

Building upon the priorities of the community, this plan outlines 12 Big Ideas for Fairmont's future success. These Big Ideas sum up the dozens of policies and strategies outlined in this plan.

- 1. Spread the positive narrative of Fairmont's future**
Fairmont has so many assets – its friendly people, the natural beauty of the Chain of Lakes, its historic downtown, walkable communities, and a strong business base. Building off its assets, Fairmont's potential is endless. Being an advocate for itself, the Fairmont community can more aggressively tell its story to others. A positive story, hometown pride, and improved reputation, while intangible, are important to attracting new investments and improvements to the city.
- 2. Bring people together**
When people come together to address an issue anything is possible. And with more people at the table, the work becomes lighter. City government can play the role of facilitator, convener, and leader by fostering partnership and collaboration.
- 3. Leverage Fairmont's natural setting**
Known as the City of Lakes, natural spaces are central to Fairmont's history, culture, and economy. Summers and winters alike are spent on the lakes. Fairmont is blessed to have the Chain of Lakes and other natural spaces which set it apart from other communities in southern Minnesota. By better utilizing the lakes to its advantage, Fairmont can draw visitors, encourage real estate investment, provide spaces for its residents to gather and recreate, and protect water quality and the environment.
- 4. Revitalize underutilized areas**
Like many communities and despite its many assets, parts of Fairmont have struggled with changes in the economy, disinvestment, and time. Giving a boost to these areas through special attention, investment, and programs will lift the entire community. These underutilized areas are primed for addressing the community's housing needs, providing gathering spaces, and incubating new businesses. Through creative and innovative measures, the community can breathe new life into these forgotten spaces, reducing the need to invest in new infrastructure and expanding the footprint of urban development.
- 5. Embrace the new economy**
With automation, changes in demographics and workforce, consolidation, changing buying habits, retail disruption, and advancements in technology, the economy is changing and changing rapidly. Unfortunately, complex regulations can slow a community's ability to harness and tap into change. Fairmont will actively embrace changes in the economy by reducing unnecessary regulation, providing a high quality of life, and welcoming new ideas and innovations.
- 6. Create a supportive workforce environment**
By taking a comprehensive approach to economic competitiveness, Fairmont will set itself up for job growth and improved quality of life. Economic development is more than jobs creation, and in today's world housing, childcare, and education are some of the biggest barriers to growth.
- 7. Provide a safe and connected transportation system**
The transportation of goods and services keeps our world moving. A well balanced and connected transportation system will help the community thrive and provide

opportunities for a healthy and active lifestyle. By considering the needs of all users, Fairmont can create a transportation system that serves business, young people, seniors, the differently abled, and tourists all at the same time.

8. Strategically encourage growth and redevelopment

The continued expansion of infrastructure and services into greenfields is an expensive endeavor. The City has an abundance of opportunities for redevelopment and growth within existing neighborhoods. By using existing infrastructure, the City can lower taxing burdens on everyone.

9. Ensure safe neighborhoods

Everyone deserves a safe, healthy, and welcoming neighborhood. The City and County provide excellent police and safety services. Taking an approach which considers proactive steps towards health and safety will preserve resources and protect Fairmont's people and property.

10. Provide a variety of housing choices

Affordable and attainable housing is becoming increasingly hard to come by for a larger segment of the population as rents, land values, and construction costs continue to rise. Additionally, demographic shifts have meant smaller household sizes. Fairmont can take an approach which welcomes a mix of housing types that better meet the needs of the people that live in the community now and may move to the community in the future. While there will always be a desire for single-family homes, Fairmont should explore the possibility of duplexes, triplexes, small apartments,

11. Foster a sense of belonging and a welcoming and neighborly atmosphere

As more people look to counter the isolation of today's modern society by finding opportunities to gather and connect, Fairmont is presented with an opportunity to improve its intangible assets. A civil, welcoming, and polite community is something we all want, but sometimes eludes us. It's the communities that foster a sense of belonging and support tolerance and respect that will thrive.

12. Position Fairmont as a Regional Center

Fairmont is uniquely positioned within Martin County and its corner of southern Minnesota to continue to serve as a regional center for jobs, retail, entertainment, and culture. Fairmont can take a more aggressive role in maintaining and expanding its position as a regional center.

Goals

Land Use

LU 1	Revitalize priority areas	Big Ideas 4, 5, 8, 12
LU 2	Utilize lakeshore land as a community asset in a sustainable and accessible manner	Big Idea 3
LU 3	Continue contiguous growth of developed areas of the City as opposed to “leapfrog” or non-contiguous development	Big Idea 8
LU 4	Update development regulations to support community goals	Big Ideas 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11
LU 5	Position the Downtown as the heart of the community	Big Ideas 2, 4, 8, 11
LU 6	Actively promote high-quality construction and design to improve the visual aesthetics of the community	Big Ideas 1, 4, 11, 12

Housing & Neighborhoods

HN 1	Promote a full range of housing types and styles to meet the various needs of Fairmont’s current and future population	Big Ideas 6, 8, 10, 12
HN 2	Encourage new growth in appropriate and strategic locations	Big Ideas 4, 8, 10
HN 3	Encourage and incentivize redevelopment and infill of Fairmont’s existing neighborhoods	Big Ideas 4, 8, 10
HN 4	Promote and support Fairmont’s neighborhoods	Big Ideas 2, 9
HN 5	Address issues of affordability	Big Ideas 6, 10
HN 6	Require safe, healthy, high-quality housing	Big Ideas 6, 9, 10

Transportation

T 1	Maintain and improve the City’s existing transportation infrastructure	Big Ideas 7, 8
T 2	Stay abreast of innovations in transportation, maintain a flexible approach to innovations, and monitor changes	Big Ideas 5, 7
T 3	Balance the needs of all transportation users	Big Ideas 2, 6, 7, 11
T 4	Coordinate transportation planning in a manner that addresses safety, design, economic development, and sustainability	Big Ideas 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12
T 5	Elevate Transportation Partnerships	Big Ideas 1, 7, 12

Economic Development

ED 1	Retain and expand Fairmont’s economic base	Big Ideas 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12
ED 2	Attract new industrial users, retail, employers, and a skilled workforce	Big Ideas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

ED 3	Foster the local economy	Big Ideas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
ED 4	Support a sustainable economy	Big Ideas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
ED 5	Address childcare shortage	Big Ideas 5, 6
ED 6	Address housing shortage	Big Ideas 5, 6, 10
ED 7	Support post-secondary education and workforce development	Big Ideas 5, 6
ED 8	Market the city's unique assets for economic growth	Big Ideas 1, 2, 3, 12
ED 9	Maximize effectiveness of FEDA	Big Ideas 2, 5

Parks & Recreation

PR 1	Provide High Quality Parks and Recreational Facilities	Big Ideas 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 11
PR 2	Leverage the City's Natural Resources to Drive Economic Development	Big Ideas 1, 2, 3, 6, 12
PR 3	Plan a park system that is accessible to all	Big Ideas 2, 11
PR 4	Provide passive park spaces, open space, and natural areas	Big Ideas 2, 3, 11
PR 5	Protect, preserve, and enhance Fairmont's water resources	Big Ideas 3, 8
PR 6	Protect, preserve, and enhance Fairmont's open space and other natural resources	Big Ideas 3, 8

Public Infrastructure & Services

IS 1	Maintain existing drinking water system	Big Ideas 6, 8
IS 2	Maintain sanitary system	Big Ideas 6, 8
IS 3	Plan for changes to climate and major rainfall events to preserve resources, improve quality of life, and protect the public	Big Ideas 3, 6, 8
IS 4	Main electrical system	Big Ideas 6, 8
IS 5	Collaborate with the public and partner agencies to provide accessible facilities which meet the needs of a variety of user groups	Big Ideas 3, 8
IS 6	Update and maintain facilities and operations on an ongoing basis through regular capital improvement planning and annual budgeting	Big Ideas 2, 6, 8
IS 7	Develop and encourage public and private renewable energy production systems	Big Ideas 2, 3, 5, 6, 8
IS 8	Promote and integrate resource efficient systems into public and private facilities	Big Ideas 2, 3, 5, 6, 8
IS 9	Develop community systems and policies for hazard prevention and mitigation	Big Ideas 2, 3, 7, 9, 11
IS 10	Improve public safety	Big Ideas 2, 7, 9, 11

IS 11	Promote public health in public and community spaces	Big Ideas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
IS 12	Maintain a high quality of life through regular, fair and consistent code enforcement	Big Ideas 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11

Using the Plan

A Living Document

The Comprehensive Plan anticipates changes in Fairmont over the next several decades. Changes in attitudes, trends, technology, and the economy are bound to happen. To best serve the community's future, this document needs to remain flexible and may need to be amended from time to time. That being said, a great deal of thought, time, and energy went into the creation of this Plan, and the same effort must go into any amendments.

Some amendment efforts will be driven by the City as further study and public input provide additional information, inputs, and guidance. These efforts may include small area plans, corridor and transportation studies, parks master plans, marketing efforts, or infrastructure plans.

In other instances, private development may drive consideration of amendments. Most often, a proposed development may not meet existing land use guidance. In this case, the City will review the and evaluate whether or not the plan should be amended to allow the development to occur. In such cases, the City should consider the Plan's vision, values, and community priorities to determine the appropriateness of the change. In adopting this Plan, the City of Fairmont makes a commitment to use the Plan as a means of evaluating a variety of private and public projects. This evaluation requires using a series of questions to consider the merits of the project:

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

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

Implementation

The Comprehensive Plan provides a long-range vision for the community. Turning that vision into reality takes careful and strategic action. The plan serves as a guidebook for future actions that will move Fairmont towards the vision it desires. The Implementation chapter at the end of this plan outlines a list of projects, policies, plans, programs, practices, partnerships, and promotional activities the community can tackle in the near and long-term future.

While the comprehensive plan is a City document, the vision outlined is owned by the entire community, and it will take the action of government, business, nonprofits, volunteers, and the people of Fairmont – working together – to achieve the goals outlined in this plan.

Measurements of Progress

The City should periodically review its progress on implementing the Comprehensive Plan. The City could also consider developing a set of indicators to help measure the progress of the Plan. City staff, the Planning Commission, City Council and other Boards should periodically review progress on this Plan and make adjustments accordingly. Progress made towards goals should be shared with the community and celebrated. And work that remains should help guide the City's strategic planning efforts.

City Background

Community Character

Fairmont is a classic small town, nestled in the plains of southern Minnesota. The City is characterized by rolling plains, lakes and wooded areas.

The City's historic downtown and chain of lakes provide a beautiful man-made and natural setting for recreation, gathering, and economic prosperity.

Downtown Plaza, the city's historic Main Street offers a unique variety of retail, businesses, restaurants, and civic buildings in a walkable setting. This asset provides the City with opportunities to meet modern-day expectations for places to gather with friends and family that many communities aren't as lucky to have.

The same can be said for the City's chain of five lakes. The lakes provide a beautiful setting and sense of pride for Fairmont. Nearby creeks provide an opportunity for additional parks, trails, and housing in a natural, active setting.

Fairmont's mix of housing includes historic neighborhoods in a walkable grid system to the north, south, and east of Downtown. Larger homes ring many of the community's lakes with newer housing in the south and west. The beautiful tree-lined neighborhoods are an asset the community can leverage; however, some attention is needed as housing ages. Maintenance and repair are of particular need on the City's north side.

The City's mix of businesses serve the region's need for retail, service, and industry. In addition to the historic downtown, a commercial corridor exists on the City's east side along State Street and near the interchange with Interstate 90. A number of large-scale industrial sites line the railroad tracks which bisect the community. As changes to retail, manufacturing, and food processing have taken place nationally, the impact locally is changing the City's environment with vacant buildings and sites dotting the community. Multiple redevelopment and infill opportunities exist within the City's existing infrastructure which should be prioritized.

Fairmont's biggest asset is its people. Fairmont is a community of 10,000 with a strong past and a positive future. The people of Fairmont are hard-working, industrious, and family-focused. When the people of Fairmont come together, they can accomplish anything.

Fairmont's Past

Dakota Country

For countless generations along the wooded shores of lakes and rivers, the Dakota people settled southern Minnesota. They harvested wild rice, maple sugar, and cultivated gardens. They were semi-nomadic people, spending most of the year in villages populated with Bark Long Houses. The Dakota social stratification was based upon a matrilineal structure. Social order was maintained through a complex set of kinship laws and a tiospaye (village clan) system. Each village was autonomous and had its own chief. The village chiefs voted democratically for a "Speaker of the Nation", who would represent the People in all formal settings. In the 1600s, the French were the first European explorers to make contact with the Dakota, trading furs, food, and other resources.

Foundation

As a European settlement, Fairmont's history can be traced back to the days before Minnesota became a state. In 1826, a fort was established which served as an army post and trade center on the site now covered by the Martin County Courthouse. The first permanent settlers were E. Banks Hall and William H. Budd. In June 1857, these men built their homes on lakes that still bear their names. Mr. Budd recorded that in January of that year, twenty men, nine women and twenty-three children lived in the Fairmont area.

Fairmont was platted in October 1857, by the Des Moines and Watonwan Land Company, by whom the name was applied. The City was named for the rolling hills which surrounded the adjacent lakes. The original name was Fair Mount, but this was later changed to Fairmont. Fairmont had the first post office in Martin County, dedicated on October 9, 1858, with William Budd as the first postmaster.

Troubled Times

Fairmont faced a difficult period in the 1860s and 1870s, including closure of Fort Fairmont, conflicts with the local Sioux Indians, and the "Grasshopper Plague" of 1879-1877, which forced many farmers from their land. This gloomy picture was brightened by the arrival of English colonists during the same period. They came to develop new methods of growing beans, spent their money lavishly, built a number of beautiful homes and brightened the hillsides with their scarlet foxhunting expeditions.

Growth and Modernization

The Southern Minnesota Railroad was completed to Fairmont in 1878 and marked the beginning of a new period of development for the area. In 1896, the first switchboard and telephones were installed in Fairmont providing services for 35 subscribers. Electricity became available in 1890 from a privately-owned plant which provided service from sun up to 10:00 p.m. The City purchased the generating plant in 1902. City water became available in 1897 from Budd Lake, but it was unfiltered. The initial filtration plant was built in 1924.

Industrial development of note began in 1909 when Fairmont Railway Motors was established to make small farm engines. These engines became useful on railway hand cars. Agriculture related industries, such as the Fairmont Canning Company and Stokely-Van Camp added to Fairmont's industrial growth.

Fairmont Today

From the mixed agriculture-industrial-based economy, Fairmont has grown and prospered into one of the state's leading rural communities. Adding to the steady growth and stability of the Fairmont economy are several leading industries which have settled in the community.

Fairmont has also situated itself to be a leading regional health care center with the continued growth and expansion of the Fairmont Medical Center – Mayo Health System, Center for Specialty Care, Dulcimer, REM, Goldfinch Estates, United Health District, MRCI and Lakeview Methodist Health Care Facility.

Fairmont is restructuring its claim as a retail trade center as well. More than 880 different businesses are active in the corporate limits of Fairmont today. Some of the largest business and employers include Mayo Clinic Health System – Fairmont, Hy-Vee, Walmart, Fairmont Foods, 3M, Avery Weigh-Tronix, ADS Hancor, Green Plains, CHS, and Kahler Automation. Expansions and renovations at CHS, Mayo Clinic and Great Plains transportation accounted for the most valuable permits in 2019, bringing over \$21M in investment to the community. In total, commercial permits in 2019 were valued at more than twice the previous three-year average even subtracting the very large CHS permit.

While Fairmont remains a strong and vibrant community, the community is facing a number of internal and external issues which present current and future obstacles. The city's population is aging and shrinking, however recent trends point to new immigrant populations and the return of young families as a positive change. This comprehensive plan seeks to address and plan for change in a manner which meets the needs of all community members.

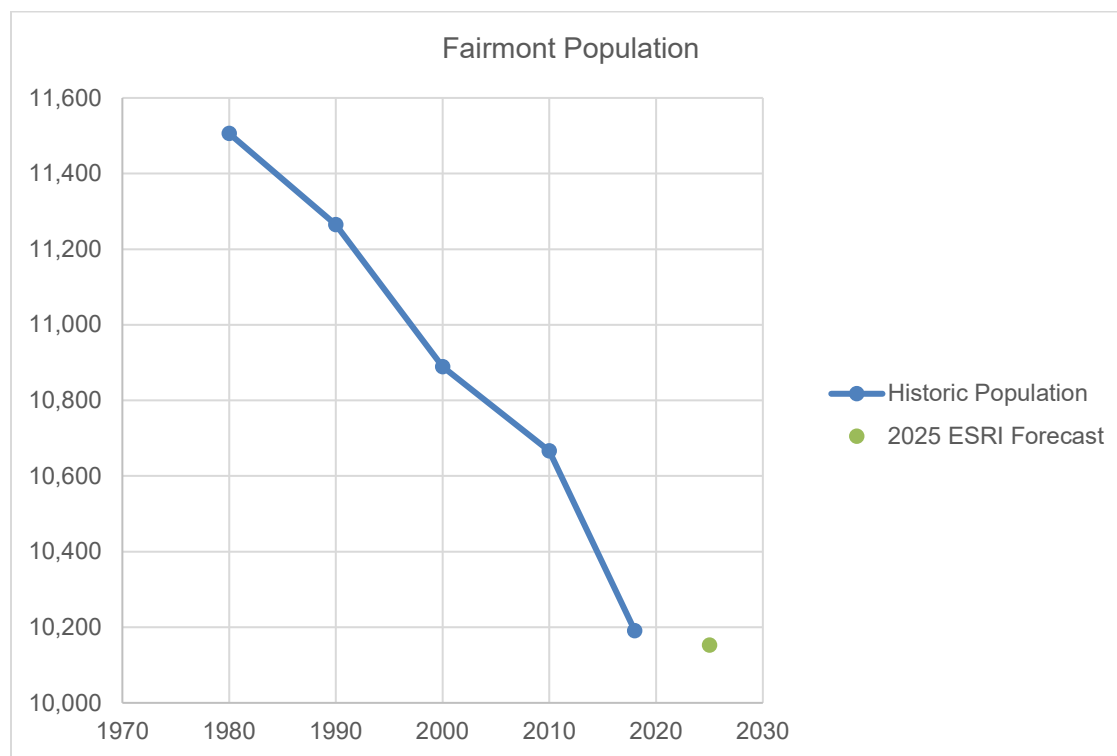
About Fairmont – Community Demographics

Overview

Fairmont will continue to face a changing community composition. On trend with Greater Minnesota, the population has steadily declined since 1980 and this trend is expected to continue. Immigrants have not been attracted to the City, which is in contrast to other areas of Minnesota that have seen immigrant population increases. Additionally, the community is aging. Household income is slightly lower as compared to both Martin County and the State. The City of Fairmont will continue to have opportunities to adapt to, embrace, and act on these significant changing demographics. The following section provides greater detail into these key insights.

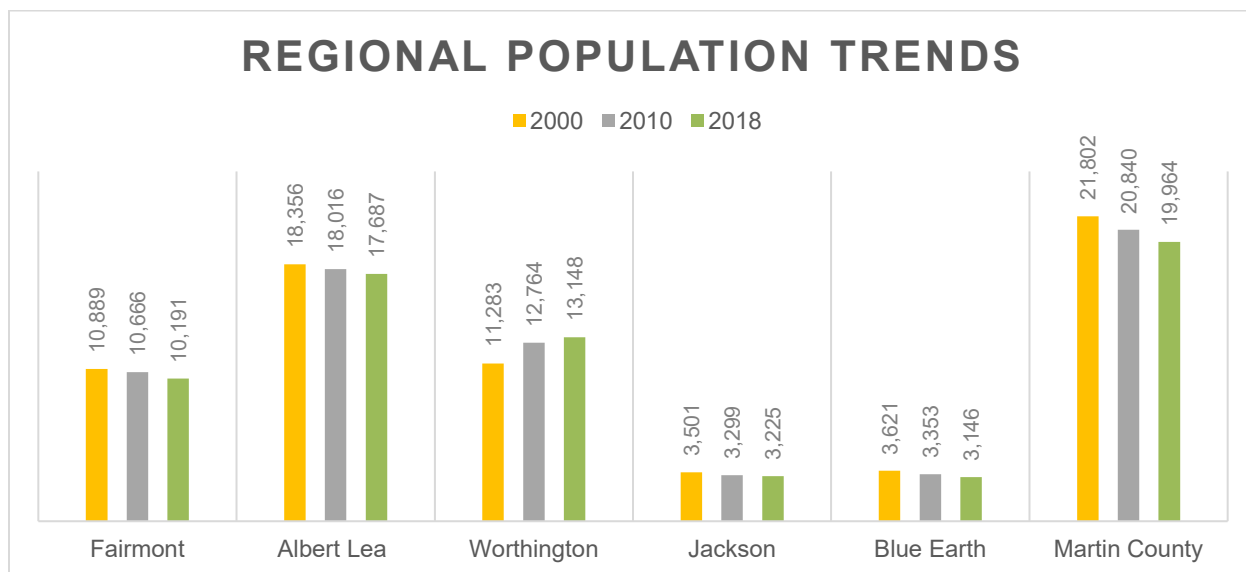
Population

The City of Fairmont has seen continued population decline over the past 38 years. 2010 census data indicates the population at 10,666, and recently released 2018 ACS data estimates the population at 10,191. Between 2010 and 2018 the City experienced a 4.5 percent decline in population. This decline is estimated to continue in the future with the 2025 population estimate of 10,153.



Source: U.S. Census & ACS Survey, 2018 (2014-2018), Esri

The trend of population decline is trending among other cities in the southwest portion of the state. During the first decade of the 2000s, towns close to Fairmont experienced population decline from anywhere between 2 and 7 percent. One town that did not experience a population decline during this time was the city of Worthington which saw its population grow by 13 percent due to the near doubling of its Latino population.



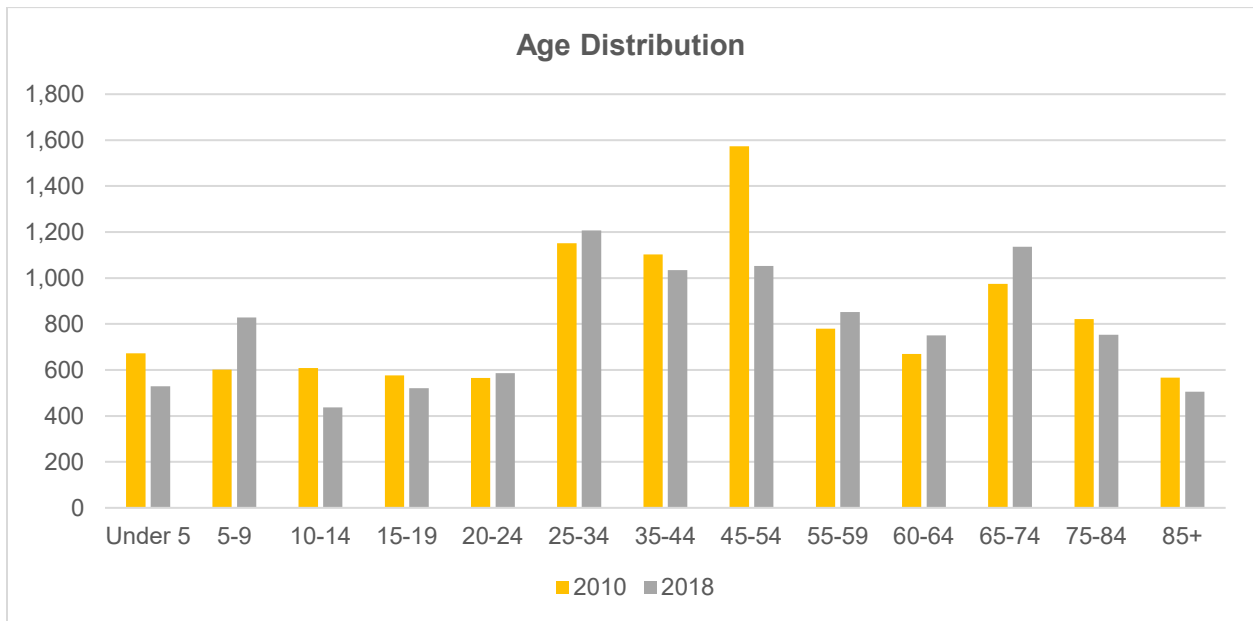
Source: U.S. Census & ACS Survey, 2018 (2014-2018)

Age

Between 2010 and 2018, Fairmont saw their population get younger, as the median age for the City dropped from 45.5 to 44.5. The following chart shows the increase or decline of different age groups (cohorts) in the City over a ten-year period (based on the cohort's percentage of the entire population). Cohorts with populations that decreased included the following age groups: under 5, 10-14, 15-19, 45-54, and 85 and above. The population of the 45-54 cohort decreased by approximately a third. Meanwhile, the cohort of those aged 5 to 9 saw the biggest increase.

Cohort	2010	2018	Change	% Change
Under 5 years	673	529	-144	-21.4%
5 to 9 years	601	828	227	37.8%
10 to 14 years	609	437	-172	-28.2%
15 to 19 years	577	520	-57	-9.9%
20 to 24 years	565	586	21	3.7%
25 to 34 years	1,151	1,207	56	4.9%
35 to 44 years	1,103	1,035	-68	-6.2%
45 to 54 years	1,574	1,053	-521	-33.1%
55 to 59 years	780	852	72	9.2%
60 to 64 years	670	750	80	11.9%
65 to 74 years	975	1136	161	16.5%
75 to 84 years	821	753	-68	-8.3%
85 years and over	567	505	-62	-10.9%
Total	10,666	10,191	-475	-4.5%

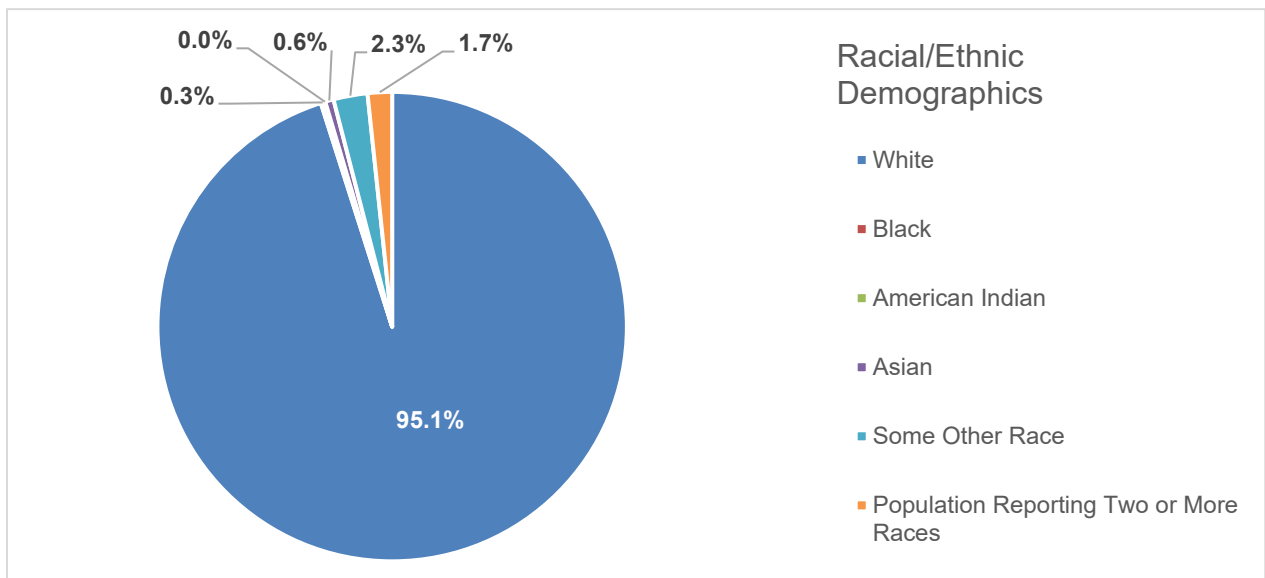
Source: U.S. Census & ACS Survey, 2018 (2014-2018)



Source: U.S. Census & ACS Survey, 2018 (2014-2018)

Race and Ethnicity

Racial makeup of the City is fairly homogenous with 95 percent of the population identifying as white only. The Hispanic population slightly increased from 564 in 2010 to 688 in 2018.



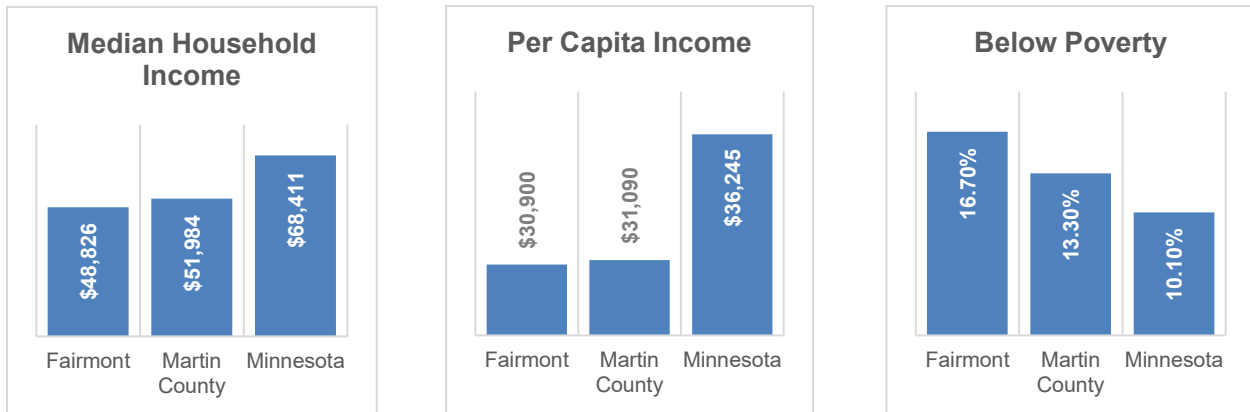
Source: ACS Survey, 2018 (2014-2018)

Families

Over half (57 percent) of the households in the City of Fairmont are categorized as families, meaning that groups of two or more people who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption are residing together.

Income

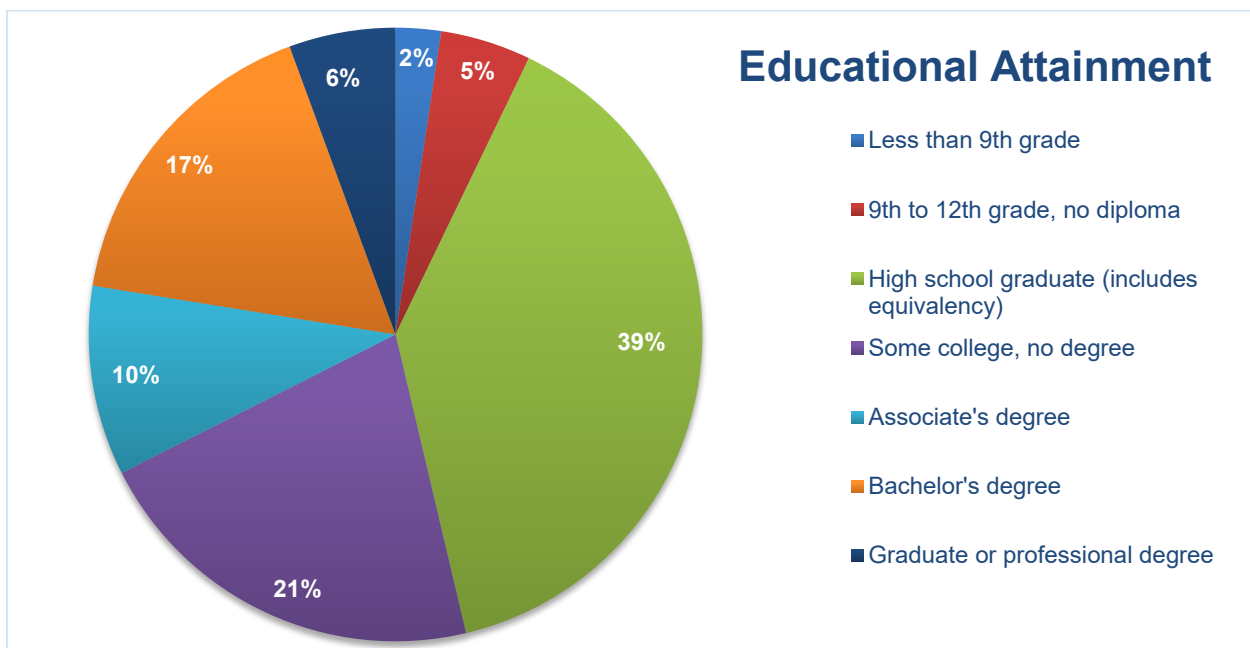
Fairmont’s median household income and per capita income are lower than both Martin County and the state of Minnesota. The City’s poverty rate is slightly higher than that of the state.



Source: ACS Survey, 2018 (2014-2018)

Education

Approximately 23 percent of the population of the City has a 4-year degree or higher; about 93 percent have graduated from high school.



Source: ACS Survey, 2018 (2014-2018)

Macro Trends & Changes

Many communities across the United States are currently experiencing societal macro-trends. It is valuable for the City of Fairmont to remain aware of the larger forces at play, as it will better position the City to adapt to and be proactive in addressing the issues that are part our ever-evolving world. The following is more information about macro-trends.

- **Agricultural consolidation:** Over the past three decades in the U.S., farm production and acreage has shifted to much larger operations, especially in crop production. This is happening while the number of very small farms grow. This is an important consideration for Fairmont because its economy is largely based in the agriculture industry.
- **Decreasing household size:** The U.S. average household size has decreased consistently from 5.79 people per household in 1790 to 2.58 in 2010. This trend has implications for how Fairmont will plan into the future in terms of its land use and housing.
- **Migration:** Domestic migration is on the rise, and it is being fueled in part by a long-time trend of younger adults moving from rural areas to cities with better job opportunities. Fairmont is likely experiencing this trend and is one explanation for population decline in the City.
- **Automation & Connected Autonomous Vehicles:** A global macro-trend for manufacturing, transportation, and other industries to move towards replacing human labor with automation and machines is a reality. This potentially rapid shift will impact many aspects of a community, particularly the business industry, transportation sector, and is important for land use considerations.
- **Retail Decline, Service Sector Growth:** As retail continues to move online, brick and mortar stores have been evolving to offer a more unique shopping experience that customers seek out today. Retail vacancies have also been steadily increasing as a result of e-commerce. An increasing percentage of U.S. jobs and growth in the economy is expected to be in the service sector.
- **Substance Abuse:** Substance abuse is on the rise, especially in rural and small-town America. Communities should not ignore this issue. A strong sense of community and other forms of social support can help reduce substance abuse.
- **Social Isolation:** Isolation, loneliness, and disengagement is becoming more prevalent in our society, with the rates being higher in the younger population. Similar to substance abuse, strong social connections and support are key to mitigating isolation, and communities must keep this in mind for how their environments are planned for and built.
- **Changing Climate:** Average temperatures across the globe are rising; summers are getting hotter and winters are getting colder. A shifting climate will have direct physical, environmental, social, and economic impacts on all communities. Communities can prepare Climate Action Plans to set goals for reducing carbon emissions or Resiliency Plans that help communities bounce back after unexpected events.

Public Input

▪ **August 29, 2018 - 1st Steering Committee meeting - SWOT**

We began the planning process with a “SWOT” analysis, the identification of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats with the steering committee. The results of the process showed the types of issues, concerns and opportunities this group sees for the future of the City. The results from the SWOT analysis are available for review on the City’s web site.

From the SWOT results, goals and objectives were drafted and placed in the Comprehensive Plan categories of: Public Infrastructure, Transportation/Active Living, Land Use, Community Resources, Housing & Neighborhoods, Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Natural Resources, Downtown, Commercial & Industrial. Also, steering committee members provided words and concepts to begin a vision statement and indicated on a map of the City where there were issues and opportunities.

▪ **September/October 2018 - Visioning and Goals & Objectives**

The drafted goals and objectives were reviewed & prioritized by different groups (as follows). Further, we collected visioning statements from these same groups.

- October 2 Planning Commission
- October 5 Homecoming Football Game Popup
- October 11 Law Enforcement Supervisors
- October 16 City Management Staff
- October 23 Public Utilities Commission

The pop-up community engagement was conducted at the Homecoming football game on October 5th. Boards with the drafted statements were on display and game attendants were asked to indicate which goals and objectives they thought were a priority for the City to pursue. In addition, the vision statements started by the steering committee were displayed on a board and attendants added to that. Results from the public “pop-up” event are attached here.

Worksheets which correspond to the boards used at the popup were distributed to the different groups (staff, boards and commissions). Respondents indicated their opinion for ranking each goal/objective statement and provided additional ideas for the community vision.

▪ **Steering Committee Meetings**

Following the establishment of the plan’s vision, goals, and objectives, the steering committee reviewed the various planning chapters.

- January 8, 2019 – Land Use Plan
- March 12, 2019 – City Infrastructure and Services
- August 6, 2019 – Transportation, Parks and Recreation
- November 5, 2019 – Draft Land Use

Land Use

Vision

Fairmont is a place which thrives. The City's historic downtown serves as the heart of the community while its chain of lakes serve as its lungs. There is a purposeful balance of residential neighborhoods, commercial districts, and industrial areas. Historic buildings are preserved and maintained while new buildings provide high-quality architecture that reflects the City's history and future ambitions. The City explores strategic expansion while supporting infill development, reuse, and redevelopment within existing neighborhoods.

Introduction

The Land Use Chapter describes existing land use patterns and provides a vision for future development and redevelopment in the City. The plan guides growth and change while maintaining what makes Fairmont a great place to live and do business, including its historic Downtown, the lakes, and its small-town character.

The Land Use Plan serves as the foundation for updating the City's Zoning Code, Zoning Map, Subdivision Regulations, and other implementation tools.

The Land Use Plan guides city staff, the Planning Commission, City Council, property owners, and other interested parties in decisions relating to the type, location, and density of current and future development in the community. This includes building design and orientation, site design, management of parking, signage, and lighting, and the impact and influence of various uses on each other.

Issues & Opportunities

Issues

- A changing real estate market shows less demand for retail and office space and more demand for storage and warehouse space.
- There are underutilized buildings and parcels located in developed areas of the City.

Opportunities

- Underutilized buildings and parcels identified above can accommodate growth and provide opportunities for innovative redevelopment that breathes new life into distressed areas.
- The market reflects a demand for diversity of housing and improvement of what housing exists today.
- The community wants more retail and commercial options.
- The trend towards mixed use and higher density is accelerating. This development approach allows for reduction of sprawl, conservation of resources, redevelopment of existing neighborhoods, and support for walkable community design.
- There is high demand for historic buildings and neighborhoods in tree-lined, walkable settings.
- Annexation is an option for the City to bring more area into municipal boundaries and extend services to properties in a fiscally prudent manner.

Existing Conditions

Existing Plans & Studies

Annexation Plans

Leading up to adoption of the previous comprehensive plan in 2009, there were several annexation plans prepared and approved by the City of Fairmont that identified several areas around the City for annexation. Two properties were located along I-90 near major interchanges along the City's northside. Three others were also identified in a different plan completed in 2009. One was located in the northwest corner of the City beyond the CHS Inc. property, another area running south from County Road 26 to Lake Aires Road along County Road 39, and the third lying southeast of the Highway 15/Johnson Street intersection. This comprehensive plan and its future land use map reflect the intended uses of those properties as described in the annexation plans.

Fairmont Market Square Community Design Workshop

Completed in January 2017, this planning process was a collaboration between Southwest Minnesota Sustainable Development Partnership, Project 1590, and the Center for Sustainable Building Research. This workshop focused on Fairmont Market Square in Downtown Fairmont because of its historic and cultural importance to the community and its potential to be a treasured amenity to complement the nascent interest in Downtown. The workshop resulted in a report that offered a preferred design alternative for the Square subsequent to community input.

2009 Comprehensive Plan

The previous comprehensive plan adopted many land use goals that have guided the City for the past 11 years. Some of those goals include:

- Provide for orderly and efficient growth of Fairmont as a regional center
- Continue contiguous growth of developed areas of the City as opposed to "leapfrog", or non-contiguous development
- Maintain land use densities at an optimum level to prevent overloading of public facilities
- Encourage commercial redevelopment in the downtown and older commercial areas of Fairmont
- Encourage commercial and residential land use in areas where there is adequate facilities and those two uses complement one another
- Continue protection of lake shores through sound land use planning and enforcement
- Promote pedestrian and bike infrastructure as part of all developments

Trends & Data

Over the past decade, there have been several national trends influencing land use planning and urban development in general. A big trend has been the recovery from the global recession of 2008. Nationally, unemployment has decreased considerably to a rate below what existed pre-2008, home values have risen, government finances have stabilized, there is greater access to capital to finance construction, and communities in general are seeing greater investment.

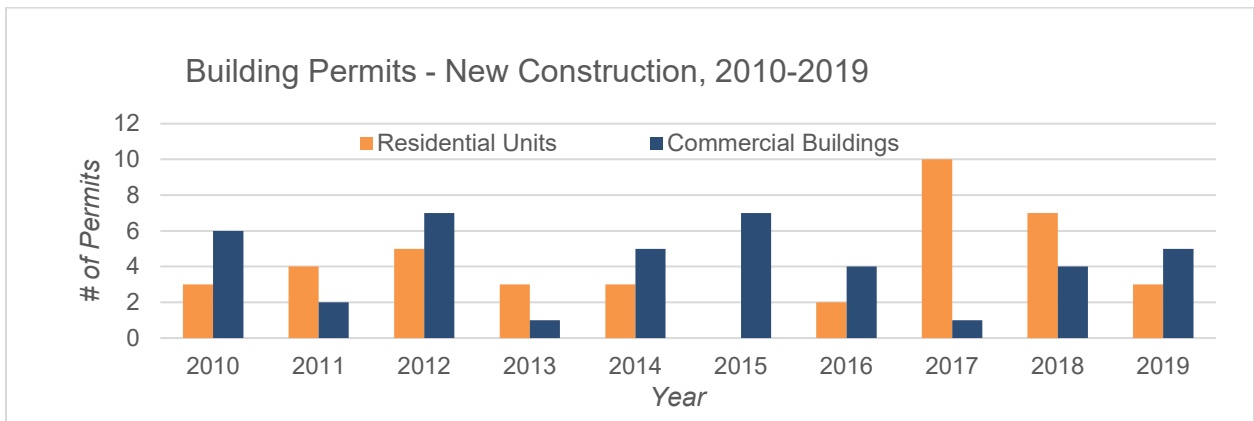
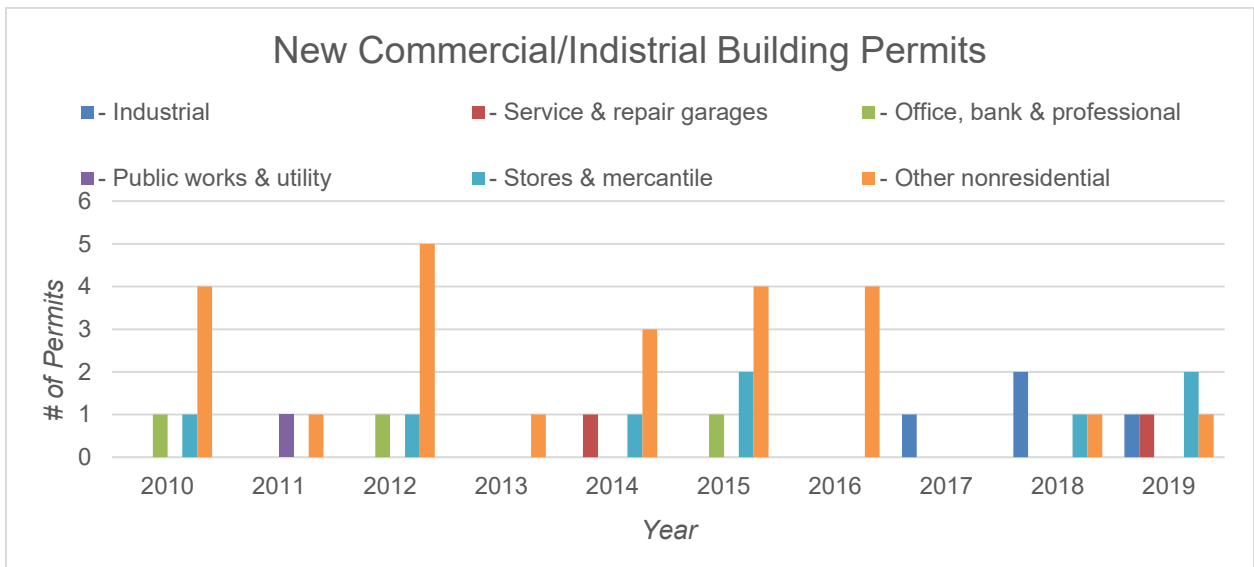
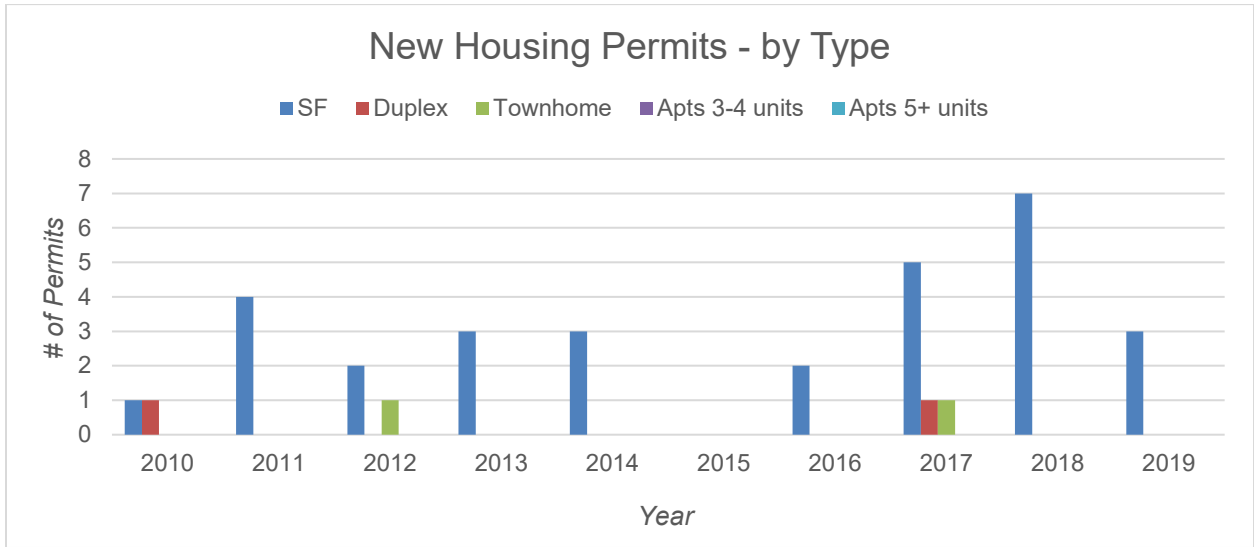
Continuing from the previous decade, there is increasing expansion of online retail. While this has opened opportunities for many entrepreneurs that could eschew the expense of a physical location in favor of an online marketplace, this trend has created challenges for brick-and-mortar

stores, from large shopping malls to small, independent retail outlets. This dynamic is felt in Fairmont as several big box retailers, such as Kmart and JC Penney, have closed. In addition to JC Penney, Five Lakes Center has other storefronts that are vacant. Some retailers have been able to adjust to this new reality and repositioned their business to be conducted entirely online or a hybrid of online and in-person. Nonetheless, retail occupancy has been negatively impacted by the growing trend of online commerce. “Buy local” campaigns have started to promote local, independent establishments to address these larger retail trends and improve communities’ economic conditions.

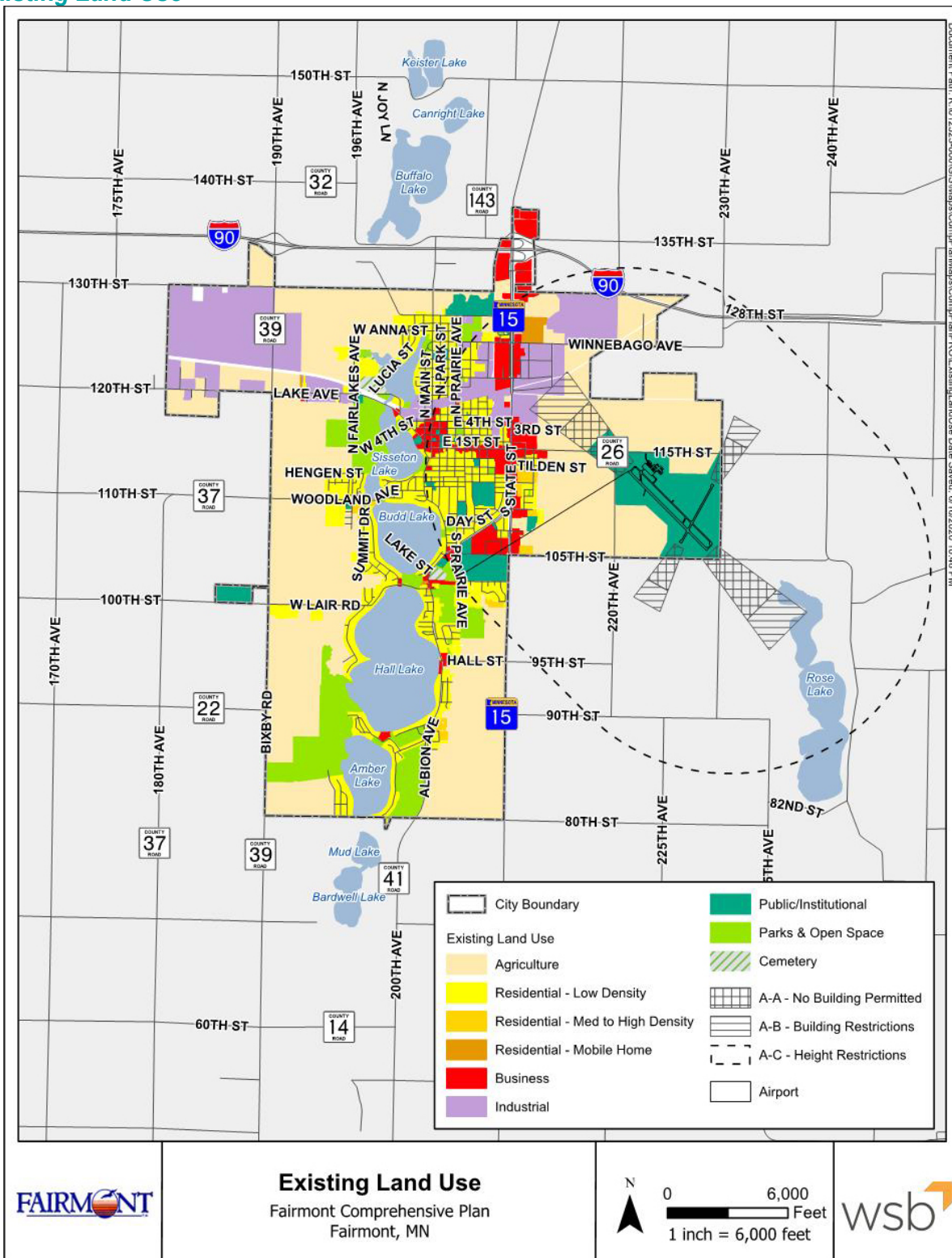
A countervailing trend to the expansion of online retail seen has been the renewed interest in downtowns and downtown living seen broadly at the national level. Millennials and empty nesters have been at the forefront of this phenomenon as downtowns are increasingly recognized for the amenities prized by those demographic groups. Well-designed downtowns are compact and able to host a greater amount and diversity of food and cultural establishments within walking distance, reducing the need for downtown residents to own a vehicle. Because of their amenities, they even attract many visitors living outside of the downtown. Because of this, downtown retail has benefited from the burgeoning interest in downtown living. Other non-retail businesses have noticed this trend and amplified its impact by relocating headquarters to downtown so they can increase access to a larger pool of talent. In Fairmont, there is increased interest in its Downtown. An obstacle for Downtown Fairmont is remodeling buildings so can comply with building code to accommodate more residents.

The growing popularity of downtown living coincides with local governments promoting infill development within their communities. This strategy reduces the need to extend services further out from established neighborhoods, which in turn saves money by avoiding installation of those services, reduces liabilities from having to maintain those extensions, preserves “greenfields” on the fringes from development, and strengthens existing areas by focusing development closer to the core of the city. Fairmont has that core that adheres to more traditional development patterns. Other development, specifically that located closest to the lakes, exhibit a suburban development pattern.

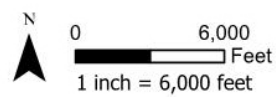
Building permit data for Fairmont reveals the pace of new construction over the past decade. From 2010 to 2019, there were no residential buildings bigger than a townhome constructed. Within that same time, 30 single-family homes, 2 duplexes, and 2 townhomes were constructed. Within that decade, 42 permits were approved for new commercial/industrial building construction. Construction activity for those new non-residential buildings varied over the years, peaking in years 2012 and 2015; years 2013 and 2017 saw the least new non-residential construction. Overall, 2010-2019 decade so slightly more new non-residential construction than residential.



Existing Land Use



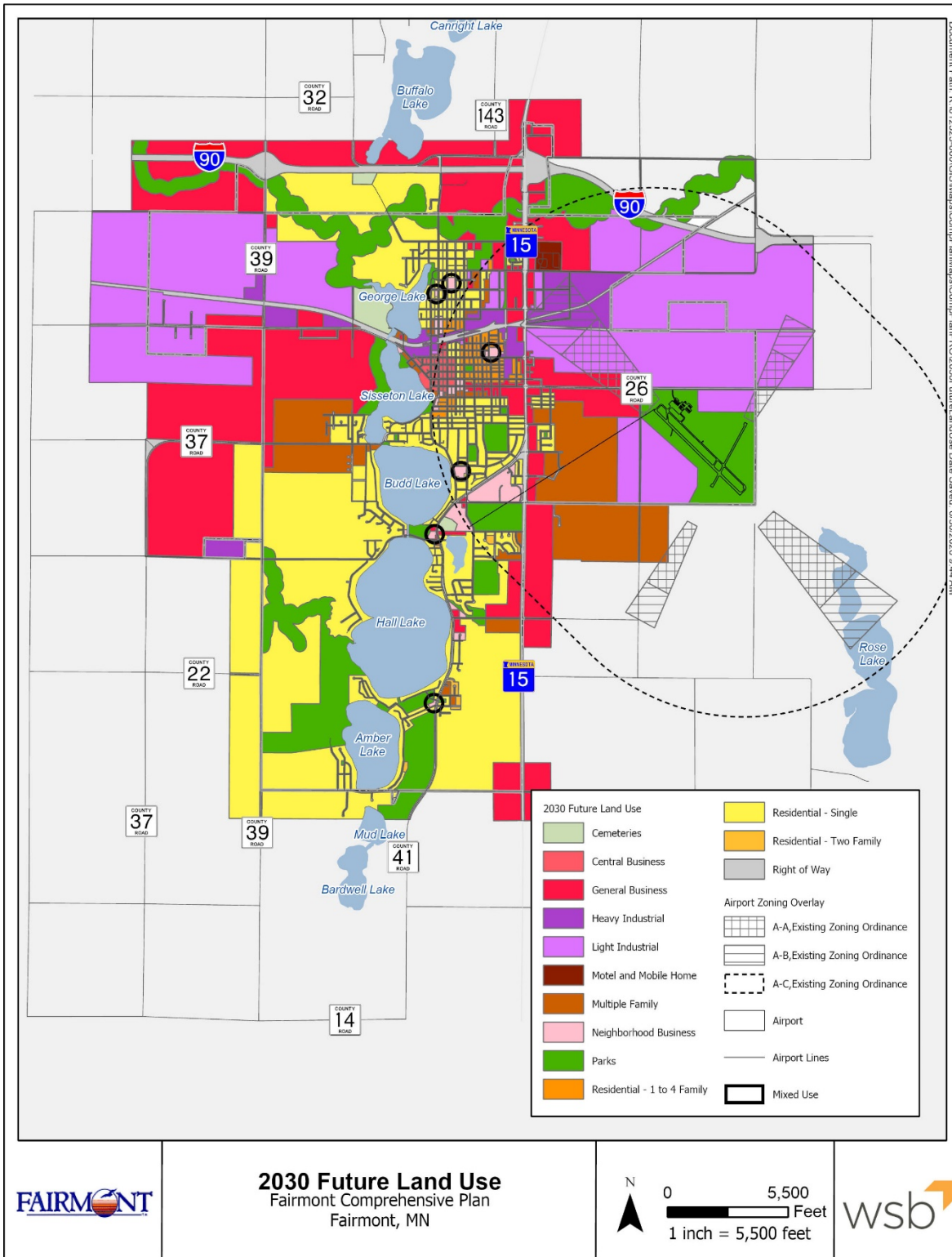
Existing Land Use
Fairmont Comprehensive Plan
Fairmont, MN



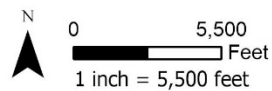
Areas by Existing Land Use Category

Land Use Category	Acres
Agriculture	4,559
Residential - Low Density	1,189
Residential - Med to High Density	64
Residential - Mobile Home	37
Business	385
Industrial	1,137
Public/Institutional	713
Parks & Open Space	727
Cemetery	46

Planned 2030 Land Use



2030 Future Land Use
Fairmont Comprehensive Plan
Fairmont, MN



Areas by 2030 Future Land Use Category

Land Use Category	Acres
Residential - Single	3,529
Residential - Two Family	19
Residential - 1 to 4 Family	89
Multiple Family	968
Motel and Mobile Home	36
Neighborhood Business	120
Central Business	39
General Business	3,077
Heavy Industrial	365
Light Industrial	3,425
Parks	1,997
Cemeteries	84
Right of Way	1,404

Land Use Topics

Future Land Use

A key purpose of a comprehensive plan is to incorporate forecasted population growth, housing needs, and development opportunities into future land use decisions. The Future Land Use Map is the primary way to do that. Updating the City’s Land Use Plan offers Fairmont the opportunity to anticipate the physical landscape and development patterns that will best meet the needs of the community. City officials can then make forward-thinking decisions that direct land use in a way that moves the community closer to the goals in Chapter 1.

Land Use Categories

P&OS	Parks & Open Space	Development Characteristics	
A designation for public parks, private outdoor recreational uses and protected resources. Development is primarily limited to structures that are accessory to the outdoor use. Uses are geared towards offering a variety of active, passive and natural spaces. Cemeteries and public infrastructure needs (e.g. water towers, storm water ponds) that are compatible with the open space use are also within this district. This district may include limited private recreational opportunities.	Height Range	0-2 stories for buildings, other structures should be built to minimize impacts	
	Building Form & Design	Buildings should be designed to be accessible to all users, to maximize views, and to incorporate light and landscaping.	
	Density	NA	
	Transportation	Neighborhood parks should be oriented towards active transportation (bike and walk) with minimal off-street parking. Community parks should have off-street parking lots and access to the trail and sidewalk system.	
	Uses		
	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks • Athletic facilities • Trails • Natural and open space 	
Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public infrastructure and utilities • Parking • Private recreation and business operations (ex. boat rentals, restaurants, campground, history museum) 		

PI	Public & Institutional	Development Characteristics	
Uses which serve the community’s social, educational, health, cultural, or recreational needs. Public and quasi-public uses including government facilities and utilities, and the airport are included in this district.	Height Range	1-5 stories	
	Building Form & Design	Buildings should be designed to be accessible to all users, to maximize views, and to incorporate light and landscaping.	
	Density	NA	

Larger public and private schools, places of worship and similar “campus” type of establishments are in these districts.	Transportation	Adequate parking should be provided based on use and need. Facilities should be designed near to the primary street with access to the trail and sidewalk system.
	Uses	
	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public buildings • Public infrastructure and utilities • Schools • Clinic/hospital • Community center • Airport
	Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking • Open space

TRN	Traditional Residential Neighborhood	Development Characteristics	
Fairmont’s older neighborhoods are characterized primarily by early and mid-20th Century single-family homes, with some blocks including small scale apartment buildings and attached townhouses. Parks and places of worship are also present. Existing housing stock should be preserved and improved; however, there are opportunities for single-lot infill development, which should be of compatible scale and character with surrounding homes. New development should be designed on a grid or slightly modified grid, with buildings oriented to the street, parking in the rear or side, and adequate trail access. Lots should be smaller.	Height Range	1-3 stories	
	Building Form & Design	A mix of buildings, primarily single-family, duplex, and small multifamily buildings on smaller lots.	
	Density	3-10 units per acre	
	Transportation	Built in a traditional grid fashion with access via sidewalk, trail, and car. Parking should be to the side or rear of primary building.	
	Uses		
	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-family homes • Small format multifamily residential 	
	Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small format commercial uses • Public and quasi-public gathering spaces • Institutional uses 	

SRN	Suburban Residential Neighborhood	Development Characteristics	
	Height Range	1-3 stories	

<p>This land use designation is intended to provide for the lowest density available residential in the city. Typical housing styles for these areas will be single family detached, but some duplexes and townhomes may also be appropriate. Parks and open space type uses will also be present but commercial will be very limited.</p>	Building Form & Design	Larger single-family homes on larger lots
	Density	2-5 units per acre
	Transportation	Auto-oriented in nature, but trails should be provided to connect neighborhoods to nearby parks, schools, and other nodes of activity
	Uses	
	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-family estate or large lot homes
	Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional uses • Public and quasi-public gathering spaces

DT	Downtown	Development Characteristics	
<p>Downtown Fairmont is the community's historic core and has an identity that is unique from the city's other commercial centers. This is the most traditionally "urban" development pattern in Fairmont, with vertically integrated uses in attached buildings and a close sidewalk orientation. Preservation and revitalization of historic structures is a key objective. Targeted redevelopment of underutilized, nonhistorical sites should be sensitive to the historic form and scale of the downtown.</p>	Height Range	1-3 stories along Downtown Plaza. Up to 5 stories for infill redevelopment in other areas.	
	Building Form & Design	Small format, historic buildings with first floor active space (retail, office, service) and second floor residential or office. Buildings are oriented to the primary street.	
	Density	10-30 units per acre, up to 100 units per acre in mixed use infill buildings	
	Transportation	Parking should be to the rear of the building if located along Downtown Plaza. In other areas, parking should be oriented to the side or rear of buildings. The downtown is oriented to the pedestrian.	
	Uses		
	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail • Restaurants, bars, and nightlife • Office • Services • Multifamily housing • Public facilities • Parks 	
	Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public and quasi-public gathering spaces • Outdoor dining • Parking • Makerspace 	

MUN	Mixed Use Neighborhood	Development Characteristics		
<p>This land use district is intended to provide for a mix of uses for an urban village concept which includes small commercial, residential and institutional uses all within a walking distance of each other. Allowed mix of uses include both horizontally (a mix of uses across properties in the district) as well as vertically (buildings with a mix of commercial on the first floor and residential on upper stores).</p> <p>Older, first-generation shopping centers are candidates for adaptive reuse and redevelopment to meet modern market needs. As newer shopping centers age, they will also be candidates for adaptive redevelopment into more dense, mixed use centers, particularly where access to trails and transit is provided. Site improvements should emphasize design quality, connectivity and efficient use of infrastructure.</p>	Height Range	1-3 stories		
	Building Form & Design	Existing forms vary. Redevelopment should be oriented to primary streets and have pedestrian access. Outdoor gathering spaces and pocket parks are encouraged. Scale and mass should be designed to be in harmony with surrounding neighborhood context while serving as a neighborhood node of activity.		
	Density	10 – 40 units per acre		
	Transportation	As neighborhood centers, these areas should provide adequate trail and sidewalk access, however adequate parking should be provided as not to impact neighbors.		
	Uses			
	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small format retail • Restaurants • Small offices • Multifamily residential 		
Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public and quasi-public gathering spaces • Outdoor dining • Parking • Institutional uses 			

MUC	Mixed Use Corridor	Development Characteristics	
<p>Older, primarily commercial corridors with a wide range of land uses and development patterns. These corridors have either fully developed or partially redeveloped in the first wave of automobile-oriented design, and currently consist of extensive surface parking, numerous vehicular curb cuts, and inconsistent development</p>	Height Range	1-5 stories	
	Building Form & Design	Existing forms vary. Redevelopment should be oriented to primary streets and have pedestrian access.	
	Density	15-60 units per acre	
	Transportation	Walkable-orientation. Active uses on the first floor. Parking should be oriented to the side or rear.	
	Uses		

patterns. Older, underutilized sites are candidates for reuse and redevelopment with improved access management, higher quality architecture and site design, and more pedestrian-friendly building placement.	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial (retail, dining, services) • Office • Mixed use buildings • Multifamily residential
	Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking • Institutional uses • Public and quasi-public gathering spaces • Outdoor dining

MUE	Mixed Use Employment Center	Development Characteristics		
Mixed employment centers include existing business parks and industrial spaces, intermixed with housing, and are located along rail lines in historic areas of Fairmont. These employment centers are opportunities to introduce additional “front-of-house” office components to existing industrial facilities, and to integrate commercial support services and employee-serving amenity businesses. Workforce-oriented housing may be appropriate within mixed employment centers, provided it is well-integrated and not situated to create conflicts between residential and non-residential land uses. Historic industrial buildings should be preserved when possible as they are great candidates for re-use into commercial and retail spaces. New employment centers should be designed to incorporate a mix of uses in a walkable, high-quality district.	Height Range	1-4 stories		
	Building Form & Design	Varies, generally large format buildings designed for flexible interior layout. Office and public uses should be oriented towards primary streets. Historic buildings should be preserved when possible.		
	Density	10 – 40 units per acre		
	Transportation	Automobile and freight connections. Oftentimes rail connections and spurs. Trail and sidewalk connections to maintain walkable Parking should be scaled to specific use and employment expectations.		
	Uses			
	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light and advanced manufacturing • Agribusiness • Office • Retail, entertainment, and restaurant/brewery • Multifamily residential • Makerspaces and arts studios 		
Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warehouse and distribution • Public and quasi-public gathering spaces • Parking • Railroads and right of way • Outdoor storage 			

C	Commercial	Development Characteristics
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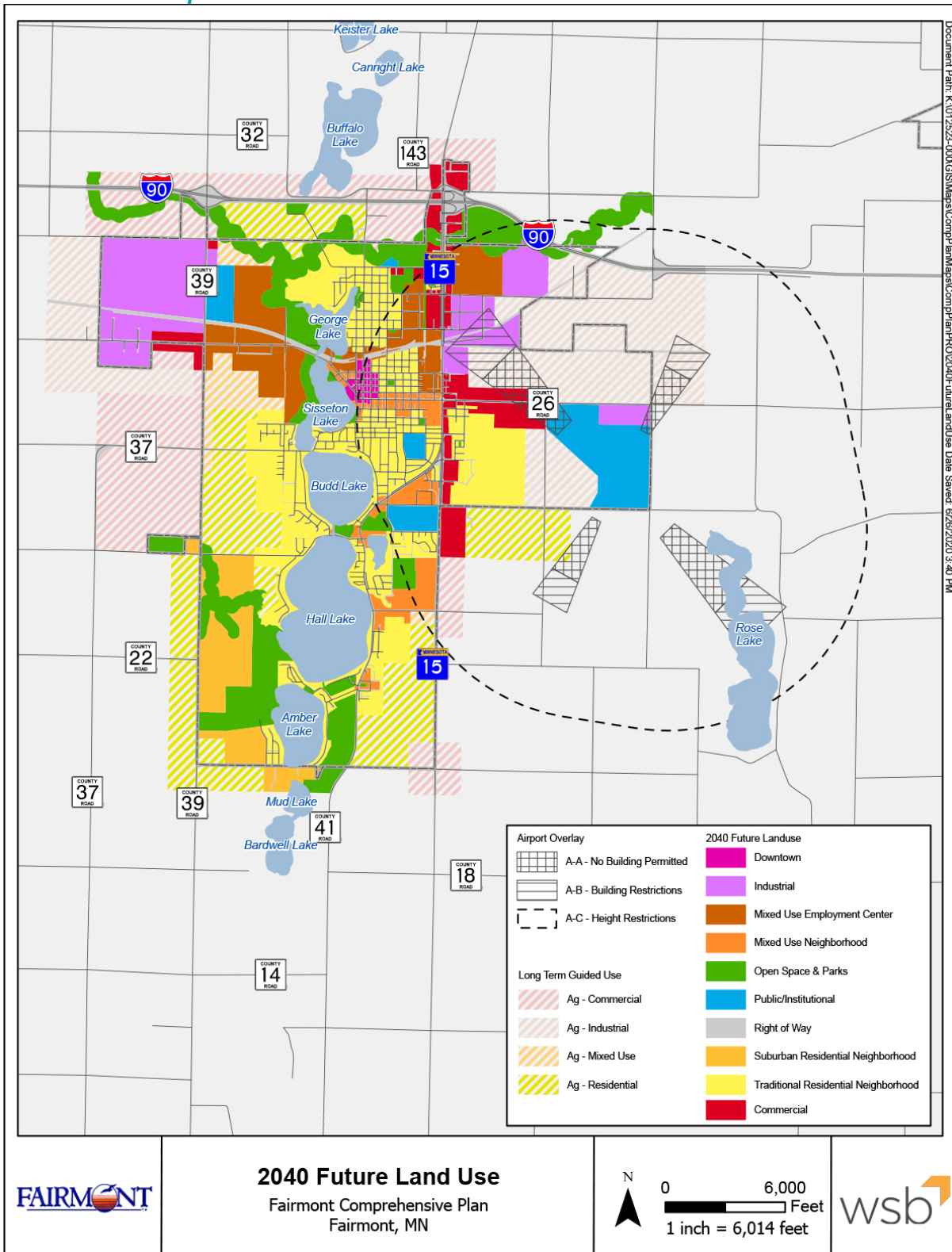
<p>Located at gateways and along auto-oriented corridors in the city, these areas are reserved for commercial use only. General commercial, retail, business services and automobile-oriented commercial uses are typical here. Light manufacturing and offices development may also be present. Underutilized and vacant sites should priority redevelopment and reuse sites.</p>	Height Range	1-3 stories or up to 40 feet
	Building Form & Design	Varies, a mix of small format stores, large big box, and strip mall. Buildings are typically auto-oriented and setback from the street, however, attention should be paid to design, landscaping, and site design to ensure a high-quality community aesthetic and to create a positive impression of the community.
	Density	NA
	Transportation	Typically auto-oriented, but site planning should consider trail and transit connections.
	Uses	
	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail • Service and medical • Office • Restaurant •
Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light manufacturing • Parking • Outdoor dining 	

I	Industrial	Development Characteristics	
<p>The Industrial districts will include both light and heavy industry including manufacturing, processing and warehouses. Some general commercial and office use may also be appropriate here. Older, underutilized sites are candidates for reuse and redevelopment with improved access management, higher quality architecture and site design, and more pedestrian-friendly building placement. Residential and public spaces are discouraged from these areas. Industrial uses should limit impacts to neighboring uses through landscaping and setbacks. Historic industrial buildings are great candidates for</p>	Height Range	1-3 stories or up to 50 ft	
	Building Form & Design	Varies, generally large format buildings designed for flexible interior layout. Office and public uses should be oriented towards primary streets.	
	Density	NA	
	Transportation	Automobile and freight connections. Oftentimes rail connections and spurs. Over time, access via trail should be incorporated. Parking should be scaled to specific use and employment expectations.	
	Uses		
	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light and advanced manufacturing • Warehouse and distribution • Heavy industrial 	
Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office 		

re-use into commercial and retail spaces. New industrial buildings may require tall ceiling heights to accommodate internal movements and storage.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail, entertainment, and restaurant/brewery • Exterior storage • Parking • Open space
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A	Airport	Development Characteristics	
		Height Range	
		Building Form & Design	
		Density	NA
		Transportation	Automobile and freight connections are critical to the success of the airport's operation
		Uses	
		Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airport • Runways • Hangars and warehouse
		Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated business • Outdoor storage

2040 Land Use Map



Areas by 2040 Land Use Category

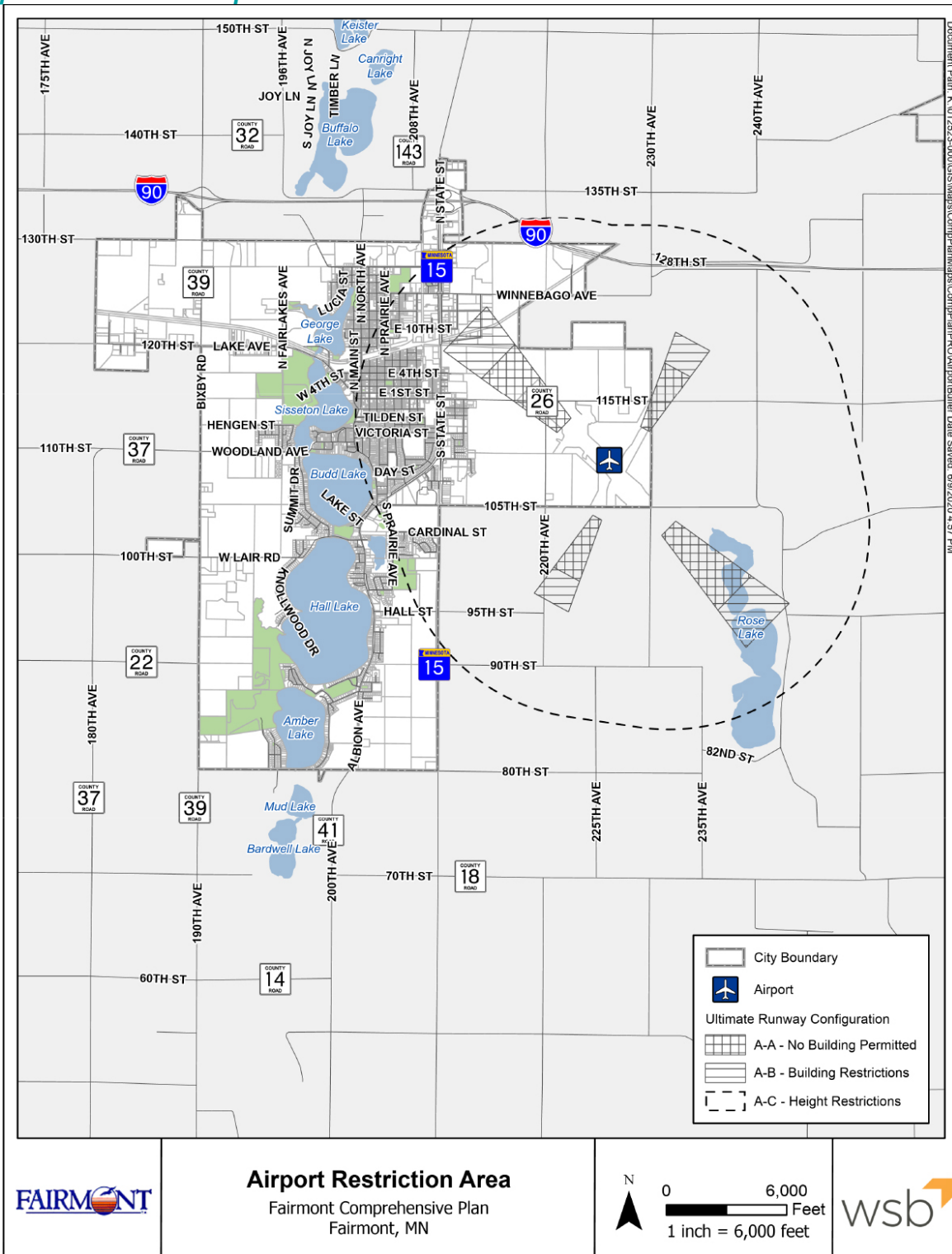
Land Use Category	Acres
Downtown	41
Industrial	1,077
Mixed Use Employment Center	788
Mixed Use Neighborhood	302
Open Space & Parks	1,174
Public/Institutional	573
Suburban Residential Neighborhood	434
Traditional Residential Neighborhood	1,957
Commercial	504

Ag - Commercial	41
Ag - Industrial	965
Ag - Mixed Use	258
Ag - Residential	959

Airport

Airport airspace is currently protected and managed in accordance with State of Minnesota standards and zoning practices. In order to preserve current airport operations and funding, it is very important that the City conform to state land use requirements and procedures in any airport zoning area. It should be noted that high-occupancy development uses are limited in the first 5,500 feet of the approach area at both ends of Runway 13-31. This land use limitation area extends approximately to the intersection of Indus Street and 8th Street and includes a portion of the UP Railroad. Relative to the use of and potential interest in rail access, as described in the preceding section, some higher occupancy business uses directly adjoining the railroad may be affected by the airport zoning. However, low occupancy uses (such as warehousing) and spur development and operations would normally be acceptable. There is undeveloped land available at the airport and, this property can be available for certain business and industrial purposes, particularly those having air service and airfreight needs. There is no existing city sanitary sewer service, and city water service is limited to domestic consumption only. Development of landside business enterprises at the airport will require utility extensions but should be considered as an option for appropriate prospects. Such businesses can significantly support and promote increased utilization of long-term investments at the airport.

Airport Restrictions Map



Design and Aesthetics

Increasingly, community design and aesthetics and the impression a city's buildings, infrastructure, and public spaces leaves on residents, employees, and visitors, is playing a bigger and bigger role in economic success and livability. As much an art as a science, communities must find a way to balance design needs with economic realities, while recognizing that investments in high-quality design, architecture, and landscaping pay dividends through improved sense of place, economic expansion, improved reputation, expanded tourism, and community pride.

As a City with a historic downtown and highly desirable walkable neighborhoods, Fairmont should work to preserve, improve, and renovate its historic structures. These historic assets provide a sense of place that, if lost, cannot be replaced and are hard to replicate. The City should leverage its historic buildings and unique architecture and design to produce an improved community aesthetic and brand. New buildings can be designed to reflect the regional design. Fairmont's industrial buildings, especially its older industrial buildings, present great opportunities for improvement, reuse, and renovation. Many communities have seen successful projects which bring in arts studios, condos/apartments, and community gathering spaces to former factories and manufacturing spaces.

Study Areas

Study Areas have been identified where a change of land use is being considered and unique existing features, public ownership, or development constraints are present. The designated underlying land use designation provides guidance as in the rest of the City, but master planning or small area studies may be appropriate in these areas to consider the multiple issues prior to making development decisions.

Study Area 1 – Center Creek

The area to the north and west of George Lake presents some opportunity to develop along lakeshore. The land use guidance of this area should be flexible enough to allow for large-scale proposals like campgrounds.

Study Area 2 – Harsco Rail

Close to Downtown Plaza, this formerly-heavy industrial area could be reused as commercial space or industrial-themed amenities. Challenges here include proximity to the railroad, a large building that was purposed for heavy industrial use that would need to be retrofitted or demolished. The area presents the opportunity for redevelopment in conjunction with a vibrant Downtown.

Study Area 3 – Downtown

Downtown Plaza, the heart of the city, presents opportunities to revitalize the heart of the city. Many beautiful historical buildings are available for reuse and many are home to a number of businesses. These buildings present significant challenges in bringing up to code. Downtown is laid out with a one-way plaza down the center with wide and accessible sidewalks for walkability throughout the district.

Study Area 4 – Blue Earth Ave Corridor

The Blue Earth Avenue corridor hosts many neighborhood businesses as well as some single-family residential homes. The corridor is a major thoroughfare which connects State Street to Downtown Plaza. There are transportation and use planning opportunities along this corridor.

Growth Strategy

The City will support new development of the type described in this plan and in areas shown on the Land Use Map when:

- Necessary facilities including drinking water, sanitary sewer, storm water management, and transportation elements are present or proposed as part of the development.
- Development plans provide for the protection of natural or other community resources present on or near the site. Protection of the lakes and water quality in general as significant community resources will especially be considered.
- A full range of transportation elements is provided including sidewalks and trails.

The City will coordinate closely with developers so that those provisions are included in development plans.

Placemaking

It is a community's unique and inviting spaces that makes a city stand out, bring people together, builds a positive reputation, and drives the modern economy. Placemaking is both an approach for improving spaces and a final product of a place that is inviting and people-centered.

Placemaking can range from a simple store sign, bench, or mural to more complicated projects like the proposed downtown market, but what's most important is that placemaking builds off existing assets, reimagines a space that is more active, vibrant, and inviting, and brings community together to solve problems using a community's culture and heritage. Placemaking has been proven to drive economic development by revitalizing underused spaces, driving tourism, and providing unique and active spaces for retailers, office workers, and shoppers alike.

Using the concept of "Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper" placemaking can also be a tool to test an idea without endless study or major infrastructure investments. Pilot placemaking can be used to examine the potential for redesigning a street, can bring a temporary pop-up shop to a vacant storefront, or engage people in a short-term pocket park. Placemaking can be an excellent tool to maintain momentum and move public opinion with minimal investment.

Eleven Principles of Creating Great Community Places

In the book "*How to Turn a Place Around*," the nonprofit organization Project for Public Spaces identified 11 key elements in transforming public spaces into vibrant community places, whether they're parks, plazas, public spaces, streets, sidewalks or the myriad of other outdoor and indoor spaces that have public uses in common. These elements are:

1. The Community is the Expert
2. Create a Place, Not a Design
3. Look for Partners
4. You Can See a Lot Just by Observing
5. Have a Vision
6. Start with the Petunias: Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper
7. Triangulate
8. They Always Say "It Can't be Done"
9. Form Supports Function
10. Money is Not the Issue
11. You are Never Finished

Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances

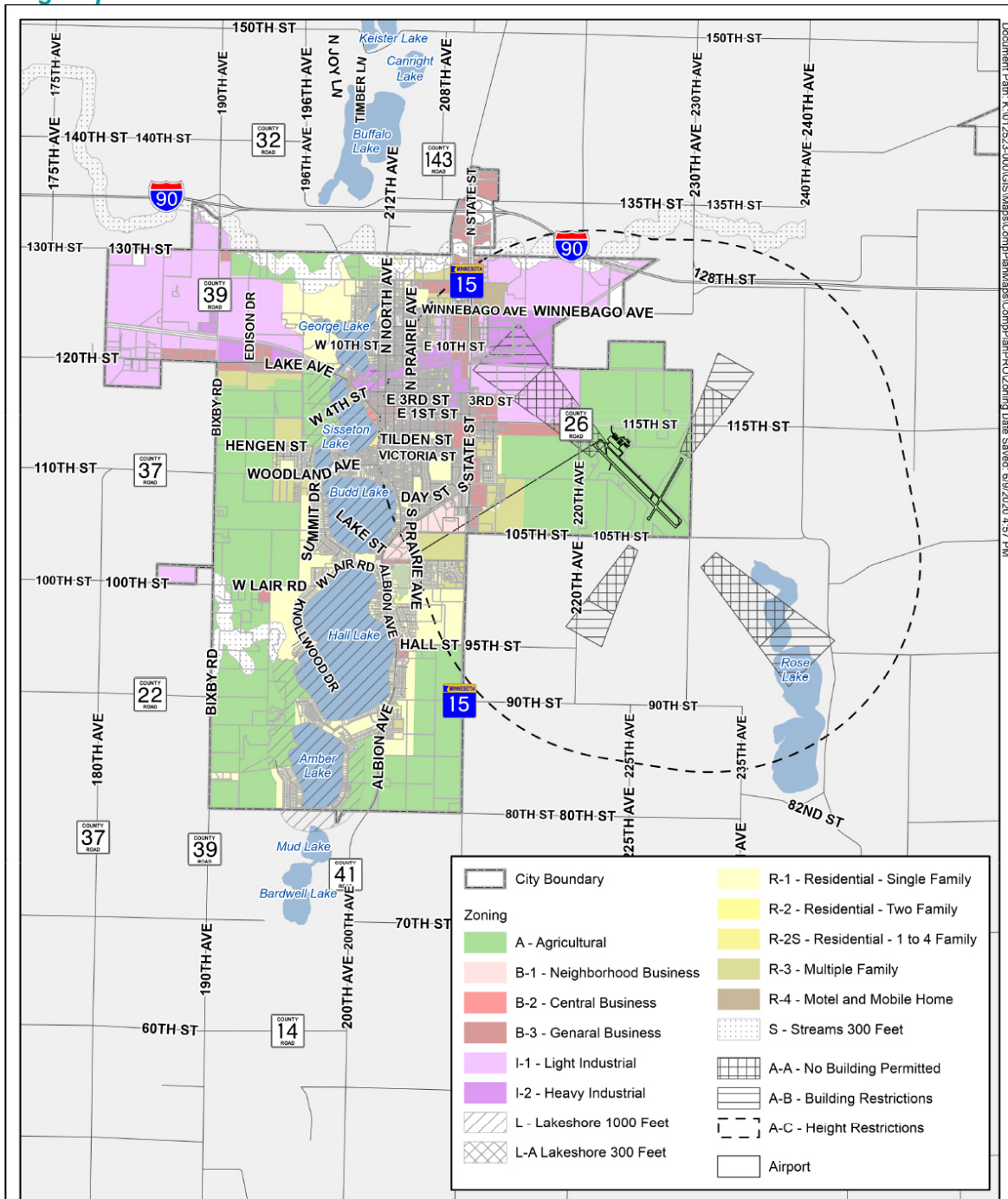
Cities are granted the authority to use three main land development tools: comprehensive plans, zoning regulations, and subdivision regulations.

Comprehensive Plan	Zoning	Subdivision
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A comprehensive plan is an expression of the community's vision for the future and a strategic map to reach that vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Zoning allows a city to control the development of land within its community - the type of structures that are built, the density of structures, and the uses in which land is put to use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developers or land owners who seek to subdivide larger tracts of land into smaller parcels for development and/or sale must follow subdivision regulations which specify standards related to size, location, grading, and improvement of lots, structures, public areas, trails, parks, streets, street lighting, and utilities

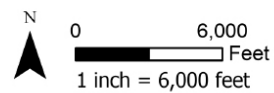
The comprehensive plan guides decision making and is the first step in adopting zoning and subdivision regulations. The comprehensive plan serves as the foundation for both regulatory tools by providing a legal rational basis for adoption and implementation. Therefore, it is important for these three tools to work together.

With the adoption of a new vision and land use guidance, it is important that Fairmont review its zoning and subdivision regulations to ensure consistency with the comprehensive plan. With the adoption of a new land use map and land use categories, it will be important for the City to update its zoning and subdivision codes so that the vision set forth in this plan can be implemented.

Zoning Map



Existing Zoning
Fairmont Comprehensive Plan
Fairmont, MN



Goals & Strategies

LU 1. Revitalize priority areas (Big Idea 4, 5, 8, 12)

LU 1-1. Encourage the redevelopment or reuse of vacant or underutilized sites, areas, or districts

LU 1-2. Explore tools to support private development such as low-interest loans, tax increment financing and tax abatement

LU 1-3. Actively market priority sites to new users, businesses, real estate agents, and developers

LU 1-4. Utilize small area studies and/or a master planning process for areas of the City where there are unique features, development constraints or public ownership/interest of land under development consideration

LU 1-5. Actively participate in the redevelopment and revitalization of blight sites

LU 1-6. Integrate City and Housing & Redevelopment Authority staff to support redevelopment efforts

LU 2. Utilize lakeshore land as a community asset in a sustainable and accessible manner (Big Idea 3)

LU 2-1. Coordinate land use and design with park and trail planning to provide recreation opportunities, preserve natural features, and protect water quality

LU 2-2. Preserve and enhance natural features and existing resources, as development and redevelopment occur throughout the City. (Big Idea 3)

LU 2-3. Prioritize development that preserves natural features and integrates greens spaces and gathering spaces into site design

LU 2-4. Explore the adoption of cluster development tools

LU 3. Continue contiguous growth of developed areas of the City as opposed to “leapfrog” or non-contiguous development. (Big Idea 8)

LU 3-1. Encourage infill and redevelopment

LU 3-2. Encourage growth contiguous to existing development

LU 3-3. Limit growth in areas without existing infrastructure

LU 4. Update development regulations to support community goals (Big Idea 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11)

LU 4-1. Maintain densities and development patterns similar to existing patterns which give Fairmont its unique sense of place and small-town atmosphere. (Big Idea 8)

LU 4-2. Adopt design guidelines which reflect unique design characteristics of historic, modern, and future neighborhoods with emphasis on the Downtown and historic neighborhoods

LU 4-3. Align the city's subdivision and zoning codes with the goals of the comprehensive plan

LU 4-4. Update the city's subdivision and zoning code to be easy to understand, plain language, web-based, and rich with graphics and tables.

LU 4-5. Study the impacts of advancements in technology and changing business realities. Update the subdivision and zoning code to meet current and future needs while protecting city and community resources, and providing a pro-business environment

LU 4-6. Foster integrated and collaborative teams to address development-related issues from a multidisciplinary perspective

LU 5. Position the Downtown as the heart of the community (Big Idea 2, 4, 8, 11)

LU 5-1. Create a strategic plan for downtown revitalization, one that will consider both physical and economic development issues as well as the cultural assets present in the area.

LU 5-2. Encourage high quality design and preserve historic assets

LU 5-3. Foster community gathering spaces, both private and public.

LU 5-4. Support community events, festivals, and other opportunities to bring people together, to celebrate, and to support businesses

LU 5-5. Explore opportunities to uniquely brand and market Downtown Fairmont to locals and visitors. This could include public art, education, placemaking

LU 5-6. Review parking strategies in the Downtown to encourage additional visitors and shoppers

LU 5-7. Aggressively pursue redevelopment projects that will attract office workers, visitors, and new residential units to the Downtown

LU 5-8. Support the Martin County Justice Center project

LU 6. Actively promote high-quality construction and design to improve the visual aesthetics of the community

LU 6-1. Improve community gateways to showcase the city in a more attractive and impactful manner

LU 6-2. Develop greenspace throughout Fairmont's neighborhoods, especially in the community's low-income and under-resourced neighborhoods

LU 6-3. Facilitate, through architectural design and other strategies, a sense of cohesiveness and community

Housing & Neighborhoods

Vision

A changing population demands a new approach to housing, of which Fairmont is well-positioned to address. Recognizing the need for a variety of housing types, the city and its partners undertake projects a variety of projects which encourage the development of new housing product and the continued maintenance and rehabilitation of aging housing stock. The mix of housing choices provides opportunities for aging residents to remain in the community, encourages young families to stay or relocate to Fairmont, and provides everyone from teachers to restaurant waitstaff to cashiers a place to call home. All of Fairmont's unique neighborhoods are safe, welcoming places to raise a family, build a life, and socialize.

Introduction

The Housing Chapter describes existing housing patterns and provides a vision for future development, redevelopment, and reinvestment in the City's housing supply. The chapter, in coordination with the Land Use Chapter, guides growth and change while maintaining what makes Fairmont a great place to live and do business.

The Housing Chapter, in coordination with the Land Use Plan, guides city staff, the Planning Commission, City Council, property owners, and other interested parties in decisions relating to the type, location, and density of future housing development in the community.

The Housing Chapter serves as the foundation for updating the City's Zoning Code, Zoning Map, Subdivision Regulations, and other housing implementation tools.

Issues & Opportunities

Issues

- Housing costs are out of reach for many people – both rental and homeownership
- Competing costs – day care, health care, education/student loans, transportation, food, etc. – compete for limited discretionary funds
- Some neighborhoods are experiencing decline and limited maintenance
- Housing options are limited or mismatched to population needs
- Limited housing construction over the past decade

Opportunities

- New housing products, especially mid-range products like townhomes, duplexes, and courtyard housing, provide more options and can ease the burden of costs.
- New senior housing could begin to ease the burden of housing supply and begin to rotate housing supply.
- Reinvestment in existing housing can improve the quality, aesthetics, and safety of the City as a whole.
- Fairmont's historic and walkable neighborhoods are attractive to today's modern buyer
- Partnerships with non-profit sector and other government agencies can help tackle housing issues, such as a homogenous housing stock and growing housing costs.

Existing Conditions

Existing Plans & Studies

Fairmont engaged Community Partners Research, Inc. to conduct an analysis of housing conditions and needs of the City. The initial study was released in 2013, and an updated version was completed in January of 2020. The studies included demographic analysis, current housing stock and inventory analysis, housing needs, housing trends, a market analysis for housing development, and housing recommendations and findings. The following information are highlights from each study, focusing on the findings and recommendations section.

Housing Study (2013)

This study focused on specific recommendations for housing development in the near-term after the study was published. It also included program ideas and initiatives to address housing needs. The 2020 Update noted that the program ideas and initiatives outlined in this version are still relevant today, and to refer to the 2013 study for these specifics.

Housing Study Update (2020)

The updated analysis of the overall housing needs of Fairmont was initiated in 2019 and was released in January 2020. The focus of the update was on development and preservation issues, with less content about programs and initiatives, covered in the 2013 study. The programs and initiatives are still relevant, and the City should refer to the 2013 study for details.

The Housing Study Update confirms the trend of a declining population in Fairmont, stating that the City will lose populations and households over the next five years. The housing unit availability will be an issue impacting limited population growth.

Yet, even with a declining population, there is still potential to add housing units between 2020 and 2025. Demand for housing unit development can be attributed to household growth, replacement of lost units, and pent-up demand from existing households.

The final recommendations are grouped into the three categories in the table following.

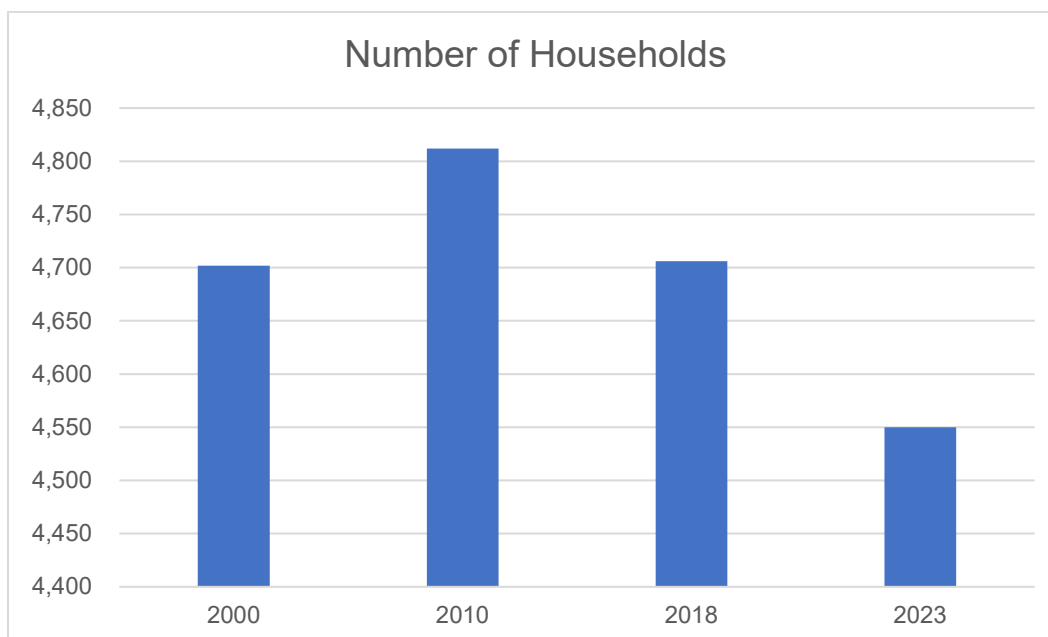
Rental Housing Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop 36 to 42 traditional market rate rental units 2. Promote the development/conversion of 18 to 22 affordable market rate rental housing units 3. Develop 20 to 24 income-restricted moderate rent housing units 4. Monitor senior assisted living supply and demand 5. Potential demand for 10 additional memory care beds by 2024 6. Potential demand for 30 to 42 additional light services senior rental units
Home Ownership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Demand for 4 to 6 moderate-to-higher-priced homes constructed annually 8. Promote the construction of 2 to 3 affordable homes per year 9. Attached single-family housing should continue to gain market share 10. Monitor demand for additional condominium development 11. Develop additional lot phases as needed 12. Coordinate with agencies/non-profits that develop affordable housing 13. Consider the creation of housing construction incentives
Housing Rehabilitation and Preservation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Promote rental housing rehabilitation programs 15. Promote owner-occupied housing rehabilitation programs 16. Continue to demolish dilapidated structures

The study further details findings and more specific recommendations for each of the 16 general recommendations in the previous table, including information about price range, design styles, and who should be responsible for the development of new housing units. For example, the finding that the percentage of senior citizen households will increase is a key consideration for the type of rental housing type that should be developed. A summary of the findings and recommendations begins on page 74 of the 2020 Housing Study Update.

Trends & Data

Number of Households

Similar to the historic and projected decline rate of population, the number of households is projected to decline by 2.2% by 2018 and by another 3.43% in the year 2030.



Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Household Tenure

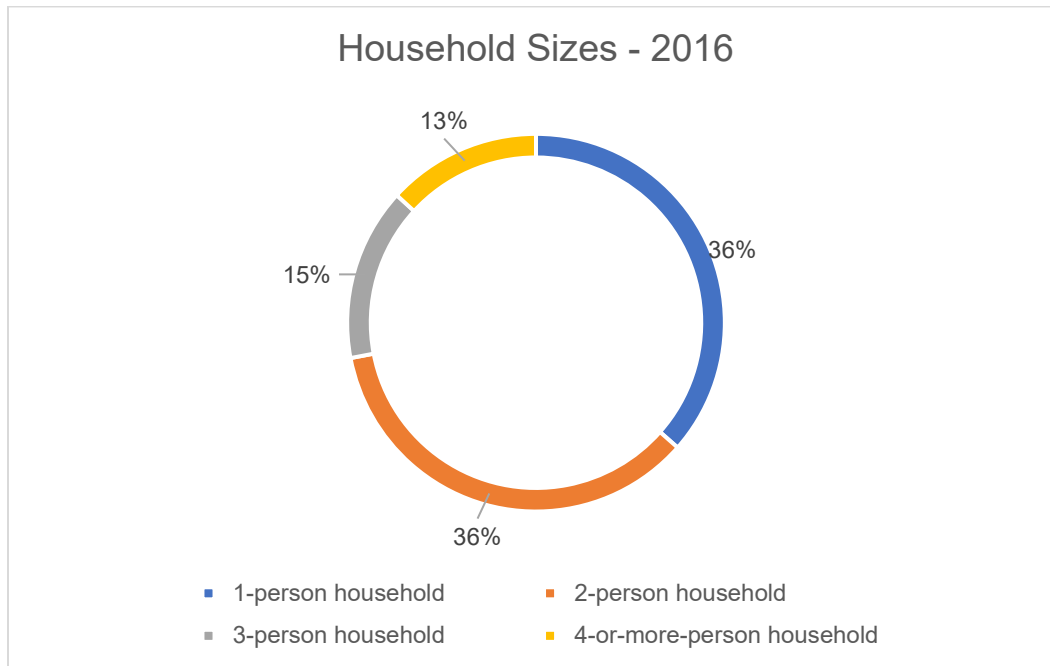
The following table summarizes the trends in housing units by occupancy status and tenure. The data shows that the percentage of owner-occupied housing units are decreasing over time, while the percentage of renter-occupied housing units and vacancy rates increase over time. This is part of a macro-trend of decreasing homeownership rates among younger households under age 35. The increase in percent of vacancy rate can be attributed to the declining population in Fairmont.

	2010 Census		2018		2023	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Housing Units	5,251	100%	5,222	100%	5,235	100%
Owner-Occupied	3,342	63.6%	3,199	61.3%	3,176	60.7%
Renter-Occupied	1,470	28.0%	1,507	28.9%	1,382	26.4%

Vacant	439	8.4%	516	9.9%	677	12.9%
Source: ESRI Business Analyst						

Household Size and Type

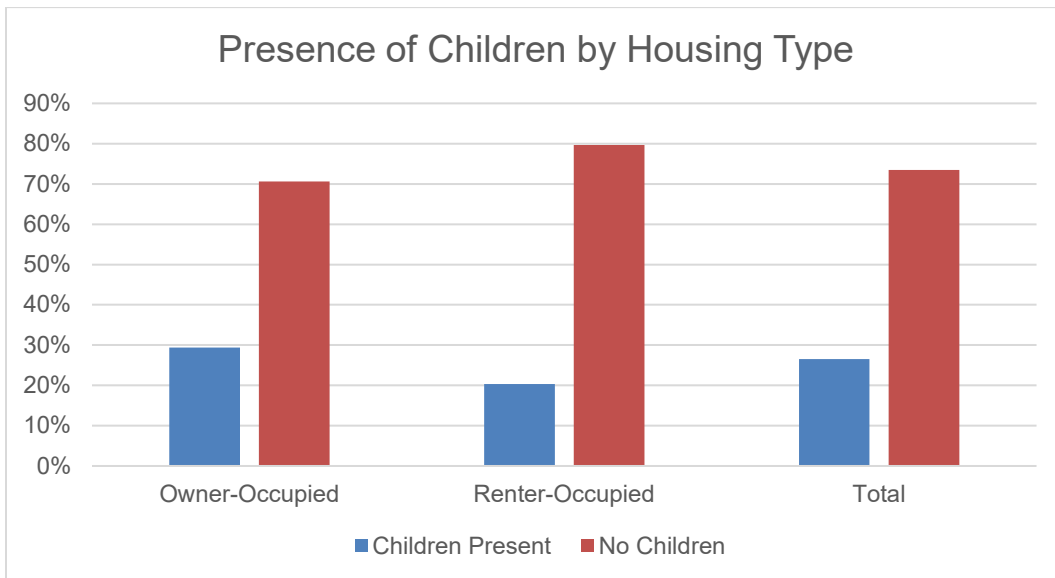
The vast majority (72%) of households in Fairmont consist of one or two people, with children being present in only 26.5% of households. This presents a significant shift from the City’s historic perception of households, families, and housing need. Household sizes are decreasing nationally, and this trend of growing smaller and childless households holds true for Fairmont.



Source: ACS Survey, 2016 (2012-2016)

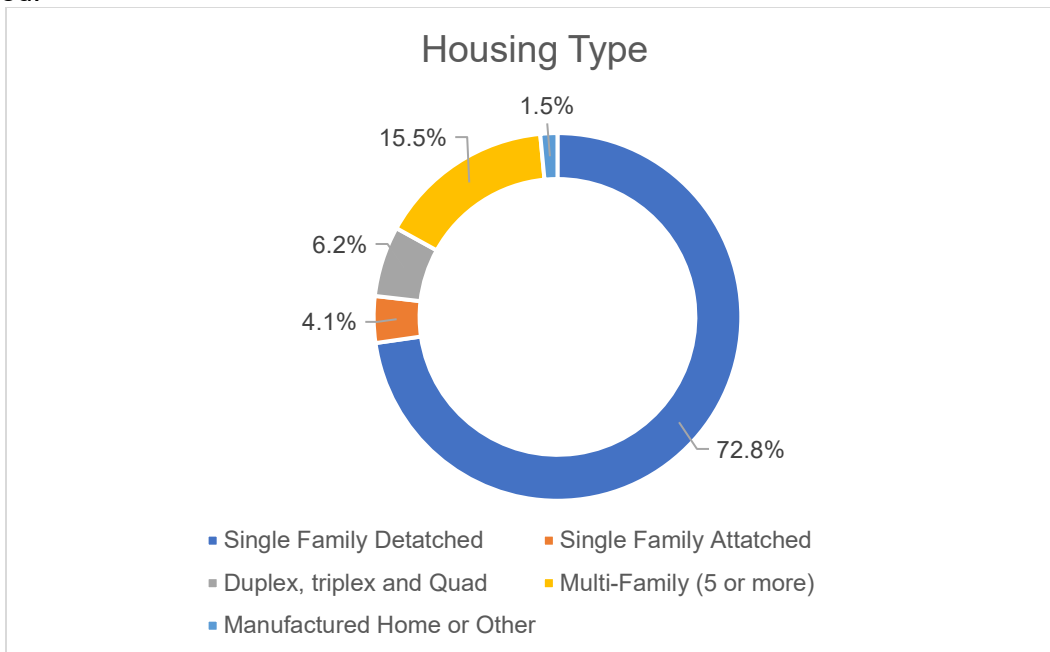
As would be expected, the City’s owner-occupied housing is occupied at a higher percent by married couples and families, while the rental housing is occupied at higher percentages by a population that tends to be single and younger. That being said, there are families living in rental units as well as single people living in homes they own.

FAMILY TYPE AND PRESENCE OF CHILDREN	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied	Total
Children Present	29.40%	20.30%	26.50%
No Children	70.60%	79.70%	73.50%



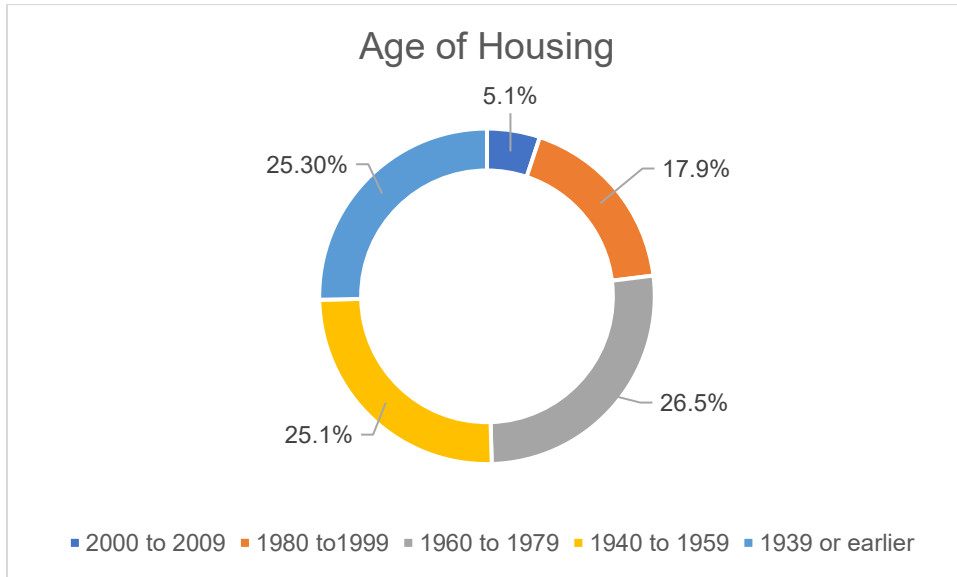
Housing Stock

Of the housing units available in the City of Fairmont, nearly three-quarters are single-family detached.

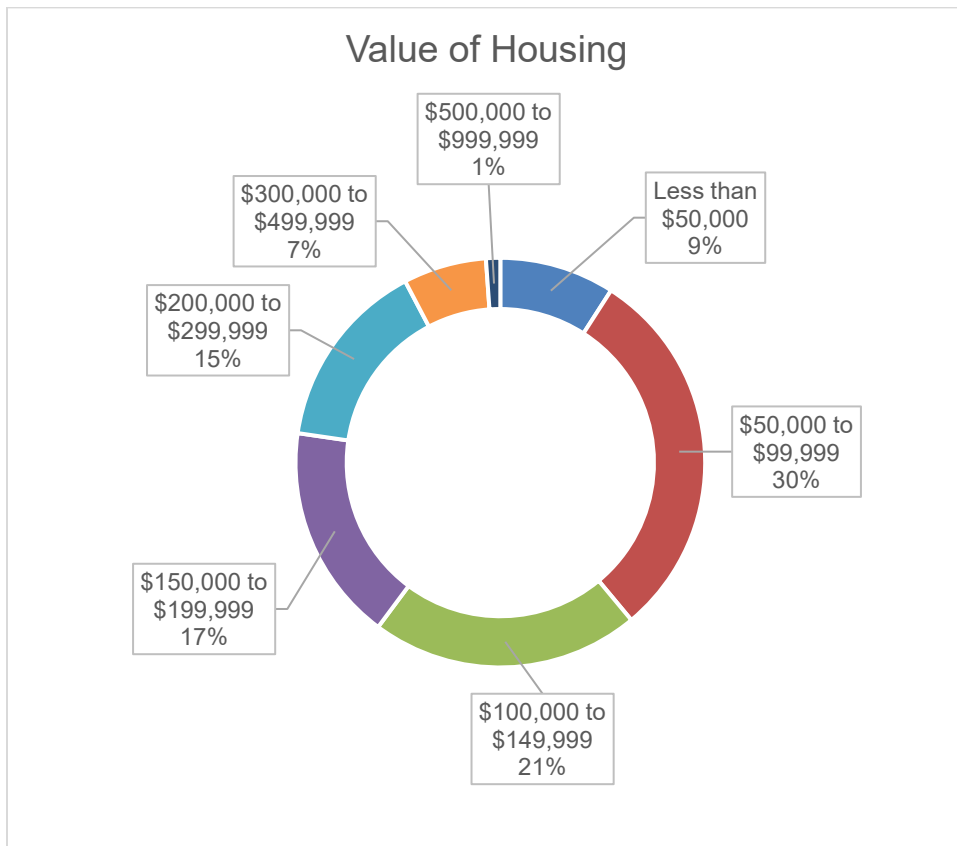


Source: ACS Survey, 2016 (2012-2016)

The City’s housing stock is aging. No new homes have been built since 2009.



Source: ACS Survey, 2016 (2012-2016)



Source: ACS Survey, 2017

Housing Topics

Housing Affordability

The City's housing stock is largely affordable to the average household. A slight majority (51 percent) of housing is valued under \$150,000. That being said, housing costs continue to rise, mirroring national trends. Low wages, childcare costs, education costs and debts, and health care costs contribute to a complicated economic picture for many families leaving less money for housing. Financing limitations and down payment amounts add an additional burden which puts homeownership out of the reach of many.

The City will need to use a variety of tools to address growing affordability concerns. Removing regulatory barriers and guiding land in a manner which encourages new housing products and multifamily housing can help to set the stage for the private market to take action. The City will also need to consider financial tools such as tax increment financing (TIF), housing bonds, grants, site assembly, land banking, and fee waivers, to name a few.

Housing for All

A one-size-fits all approach to housing simply does not work. Unfortunately, many cities have taken this approach, which has led to a mismatch between people's housing needs and the housing that's available within a community. On one side of the equation, more people are living alone which has resulted in a national decrease in household sizes. On the other end of the spectrum, many young families - particularly those from certain racial and ethnic populations - have larger families. The City will need to take a multi-pronged approach to address housing needs. This includes a mix of rental, for-sale, small, and large units.

Whitetail Ridge

In collaboration with Fairmont Area School ISD 2752, a housing development with 20 residential lots evolved. The school-owned site was sold to the City of Fairmont for \$1 with the agreement that the district would receive \$10,000 with each lot sold. The City invested into the building of infrastructure, such as streets, utilities, and sidewalks. Lots are quickly selling and construction should begin soon.

Maintenance and Upkeep

Sustaining a strong and healthy housing stock is critical to meeting the City's housing goals and maintaining strong neighborhoods. Regular maintenance, upkeep, and investment is necessary, especially as housing ages. Unfortunately, maintenance can be difficult for low-income, senior, and rental populations. The City needs to prioritize housing maintenance through tools such as code enforcement, education, supportive programs and incentives, and partnerships with non-profit organizations and other government agencies.

Rental Housing

Rental Housing Ordinance

In order to establish reasonable health and safety levels for local residential rental units, the City of Fairmont implemented a simple and cost-efficient Rental Housing Ordinance in 2013. The purpose of the ordinance is to protect public health, safety, and general welfare by:

- Promoting safety from fires and accidents

- Allowing fair administration and enforcement of the Ordinance for all residential rental units
- Regulating all residential rental units
- Providing minimum standards for maintenance of rental units
- Providing minimum standards for basic equipment and facilities
- Reducing environmental hazards to health
- Assisting landlords and tenants in dealing with rental issues

The ordinance requires all rental housing units to be licensed with the city. The ordinance requires an annual inspection of health and safety issues, which helps to maintain the City's housing stock and ensure people have safe and sanitary living conditions. Additionally, the ordinance provides an avenue for tenants to file complaints with the City following unresponsive action by landlords.

Strong Neighborhoods

Fairmont has many unique neighborhoods, which serve as the backbone of social and civic life. Unfortunately, isolation and loneliness are growing public health concerns as people have fewer opportunities to connect with each other. Not surprisingly, people are looking for ways to build relationships and foster a sense of belonging. Working to build social infrastructure will benefit the entire community, foster civic activities, improve health and safety, and make Fairmont an even better place to live and do business. The City should partner with nonprofits, volunteers, and community leaders to foster strong neighborhoods, programming, and community identity.

Goals & Strategies

HN 1. Promote a full range of housing types and styles to meet the various needs of Fairmont's current and future population (Big Idea 6, 8, 10, 12)

HN 1-1. Identify and encourage a variety of senior housing products, including garden and patio homes, villas, active senior complexes, and assisted living

HN 1-2. Establish a system for on-going assessment and analysis of housing stock and housing need, including the collection and sharing of data between the Community Development Department and County Assessor.

HN 1-3. Develop a coordinated housing strategy through a detailed Housing and Neighborhoods Plan.

HN 1-4. Explore opportunities to encourage smaller housing units, non-traditional housing developments, culturally- and generationally appropriate housing, and missing middle housing.

HN 1-5. Promote and pursue projects that increase homeownership opportunities

HN 1-6. Actively pursue funding opportunities to support the expansion of housing choices in the community

HN 1-7. For projects receiving public financial support, require the projects to meet the general intent of this plan by providing a mix of housing options

HN 2. Encourage new growth in appropriate and strategic locations (Big Idea 4, 8, 10)

HN 2-1. Protect lowlands and floodplain areas from residential development.

HN 2-2. Encourage new development that is mixed use, connected, and amenity-rich to meet today's market expectations, encourage community ties, and support a healthy lifestyle

HN 2-3. Support market-driven development, however limit the use of incentives for greenfield development to preserve public resources, reduce sprawl, and encourage redevelopment and infill development

HN 2-4. Consider new development types and changing market trends such as cluster housing, co-op style housing, small lot, and accessory dwelling units

HN 3. Encourage and incentivize redevelopment and infill of Fairmont's existing neighborhoods (Big Idea 4, 8, 10)

HN 3-1. Consider City-sponsored investment and innovative tools such as land purchasing and land bank

HN 3-2. Promote historic and walkable nature of neighborhoods adjacent to downtown to young people and empty nesters

HN 3-3. Update the zoning code to reflect the historic nature of Fairmont's older neighborhoods in a manner which protects history, encourages walkability, and promotes private investment

HN 4. Promote and support Fairmont's neighborhoods (Big Ideas 2, 9)

HN 4-1. Identify and name the City's unique neighborhoods as a means for people to connect with neighbors, build pride, and organize

HN 4-2. Encourage and support the development of neighborhood organizations

HN 4-3. Support the growth of social connections through neighborhood programs, activities, and events

HN 4-4. Promote Fairmont as a welcoming and inviting place to live by encouraging civility, neighborliness, and a friendly environment

HN 5. Address issues of affordability (Big Idea 6, 10)

HN 5-1. Consider using city resources to support affordable housing projects

HN 5-2. Study possible regulatory barriers to affordable housing production

HN 5-3. Set the stage for the private market through flexible land use and zoning tools. Anticipate the need for creative strategies to manage existing and future stock of affordable units.

HN 5-4. Partner with private and nonprofit developers to produce new affordable units, rehabilitate existing units, and maintain naturally-occurring affordable housing units.

HN 5-5. Encourage income-based and market rate rental housing

HN 5-6. Partner with local nonprofit and governmental agencies such as HRA, Southwest Minnesota Partnership, and Minnesota Valley Action Council (partners in SCDP) to address housing affordability

HN 5-7. Educate the public on issues of affordability

HN 5-8. Support and encourage maintenance and improvement of naturally occurring affordable housing while maintaining affordability

HN 5-9. Support first time homebuyers in their journey to homeownership through programs, education, and outreach targeted towards a diverse mix of the community

HN 6. Require safe, healthy, high-quality housing (Big Idea 6, 9, 10)

HN 6-1. Develop design guidelines to support new or renovated housing that contributes to the physical character of the neighborhood, healthy living, and environmental and economic sustainability

HN 6-2. Regularly inspect housing and address code enforcement issues through enforcement, partnerships, and supportive programs

HN 6-3. Support housing maintenance assistance programs, particularly for lower-income households

HN 6-4. Explore appropriate staffing levels necessary to meet housing and neighborhood needs

Transportation

Vision

Fairmont's transportation system is efficient, effective, and sustainable. To support this type of system, the City maintains or reduces traffic through strategic and holistic planning which considers land use, expected growth, and transportation needs simultaneously. Another important strategy to promoting an efficient, effective, and sustainable transportation system is offering residents a choice of travel mode. The City supports an interconnected system of roadways, trails, sidewalks, and transit that provides opportunities for all people and safe choices to those unable to drive due to age, ability, income, and interest. Infrastructure needs will be evaluated periodically and updated for inevitable changes in technology and the advancement of driverless technologies and shared mobility. Being prudent stewards of limited financial resources, the City expands the transportation system only when circumstances demand and prioritizes improvement and maintenance of existing infrastructure.

Introduction

The Transportation Chapter describes the existing transportation system and provides a vision for future improvement and expansion. The chapter, in coordination with the other chapters, guides how goods, services, and people will move about the city and region. The Transportation Chapter covers all aspects of the transportation system, including all users and all modes. The following are high-level goals and strategies identified by the City that provide a framework for maintaining and improving their multimodal transportation system to systematically attain their identified transportation vision over time.

The Transportation Chapter addresses the transportation system in a comprehensive and people-centric manner. Transportation is much more than roads and cars, and includes considerations for people walking and biking, air travel, freight and rail, and transportation by water. The chapter guides city staff, City Council, property owners, and other government agencies in decisions relating to the type, location, and design of future transportation improvements.

Issues & Opportunities

Issues

- As driving decreases with age, Fairmont’s aging population requires the need for transportation options beyond driving.
- Maintaining the community’s existing transportation infrastructure can be challenging and expensive.
- A better east-west connection is needed on the north side of the City.

Opportunities

- There is a growing interest in active transportation options such as biking and walking.
- Cities with strong active transportation networks can improve the physical and economic health of the community.
- Active living programs and infrastructure attract younger residents, businesses, and tourists.
- Existing trails are an asset which can be expanded to improve recreational opportunities and general-purpose commuting.

Existing Conditions

Existing Plans & Studies

Active Transportation Plan (2017)

Fairmont’s Active Transportation Plan (ATP) evaluates the City’s walking and biking trails and identifies trail improvement target areas within the City in need of future investments to improve connectivity and use of the overall trail system. This plan is used as a basis for funding requests and implementation prioritization of future trail projects by the Park Board and City Council.

The primary goal of the ATP is to support active living throughout the community by providing alternatives to automobile transportation by linking people to jobs, shopping and schools via the City's trail network. [Map can be viewed on page ___](#).

ADA Transition Plan (2018)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), enacted on July 26, 1990, is a civil rights law prohibiting discrimination against individuals on the basis of disability. Title II of ADA pertains to the programs, activities and services public entities provide. As a provider of public transportation services and programs, Fairmont must comply with this section of the Act as it specifically applies to public service agencies. Per Title II, Fairmont performed a self-evaluation in 2017 of its current transportation infrastructure policies, practices, and program to identify what policies and practices impact accessibility and examine how the City implements these policies. The goal of the self-evaluation is to verify that, in implementing the City's policies and practices, the department is providing accessibility and not adversely affecting the full participation of individuals with disabilities.

The ADA Transition Plan describes previous practices for expanding accessibility as part of capital improvement projects. It goes on to detail the City's policy for maintaining pedestrian facilities in the public right of way, responding to accessibility improvement requests, and the process for scheduling those improvements.

Lake Avenue Corridor Study (2019)

The Lake Avenue Corridor Study examined Lake Avenue/Blue Earth Avenue from West 4th Street to South Park Street. At the time of the study, this 4-lane undivided corridor had poor pavement, tight curves, challenging grades, complex intersections, aging signal infrastructure, a lack of ADA compliance and a lack of separation of pedestrian facilities from moving traffic. The study looked at potential improvements to address these identified needs. The study determined that mobility, safety and queuing issues are present along the corridor and made the following recommendations in response to these issues:

- Reconstruct the corridor from the existing 4-lane undivided section to a 3-lane section
- Construct a mini roundabout at Downtown Plaza and Blue Earth Avenue
- Construct a potential future mini roundabout at Park Street and Blue Earth Avenue
- Construct a realigned West 1st/North Main/Lake Avenue intersection with a median
- Construct a revised Profinium Bank Driveway further south of Lake Avenue/Blue Earth Avenue on South Main Street

Results of the 2020 and 2040 Build operations and queuing analysis showed that with the reduction of lanes from 4-lane undivided to the 3-lane configuration on Lake Avenue/Blue Earth Avenue and the intersection changes outlined above, the intersections along this corridor will continue to operate better than the No Build scenarios with all intersections operating at LOS A and minimal delays. These proposed improvements also provide improved safety, better walkability, new pavement and a bike facility. Estimated project costs for these improvements are \$4.7 million, which also included needed watermain, sanitary sewer and storm sewer improvements. These improvements occurred in the summer of 2020 [\(verify schedule with City staff\)](#).

Trends & Data

Fix-it-First

There is well documented evidence that transportation funding at the local, state and federal levels has historically been grossly inadequate to maintain the existing transportation system. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic people are driving less and State and federal gas tax and other traditional transportation revenue streams are trending significantly lower than in past years. As a result, industry trends for MnDOT and local governments will continue a “fix it first” transportation investment approach. This approach will strategically focus limited transportation funding on replacing deteriorated pavements and structurally deficient bridges and addressing high crash locations before considering system expansion.

Asset Management

Sound asset management is a key component of a “fix it first” transportation investment strategy. Asset management provides a solid foundation from which to monitor the transportation system and optimize the preservation, upgrading and timely replacement of roadway assets through cost-effective management, programming and resource allocation decisions. It is a systematic process of maintaining, upgrading and operating physical assets cost-effectively throughout their life cycle through scheduled Capital Improvement Program (CIP) investments. Sound asset management also includes identifying and following access management guidelines that govern the spacing of full and partial access points along existing roadways to maximize safety and mobility.

Sustainability/Livability

A sustainable and livable transportation system refers to any means of transportation that is “green” and has low impact on the environment. Examples of sustainable and livable transportation include walking, biking, transit, carpooling, car sharing and electric or other “green” vehicles. The City of Fairmont’s aging population will particularly benefit from increased walking, biking and transit options provided under a sustainable/livable transportation investment strategy. These multimodal transportation options should be implemented as stand-alone projects and incorporated into planned roadway projects whenever practicable and feasible. The City’s planned partnership with Southern MN Municipal Power Agency in 2020 to install two electric vehicle charging stations will also advance sustainability and livability goals.

Resilience

A resilient transportation system is defined as the ability of a transportation system to move people around in the face of one or more major obstacles to normal function. These obstacles can include extreme flooding or other weather-related events, major accidents and equipment or infrastructure failures such as road washouts. A resilient transportation system will proactively address flood vulnerabilities of the transportation system through urban stormwater management, culvert inspections and erosion prevention.

Land Use & Economic Development

The design of transportation systems should consider the connection to land use and economic development when replacing existing infrastructure or constructing new transportation facilities. Retrofitting or replacing existing infrastructure in already developed areas should be sensitive to adjacent land uses and consider streetscaping, bicycle, pedestrian and transit needs. As existing roads are extended and new roads are constructed in growth areas, right-of-way

preservation, appropriate spacing of collector and minor arterials, access spacing and multimodal needs should also be considered.

Roadways Functional Classification

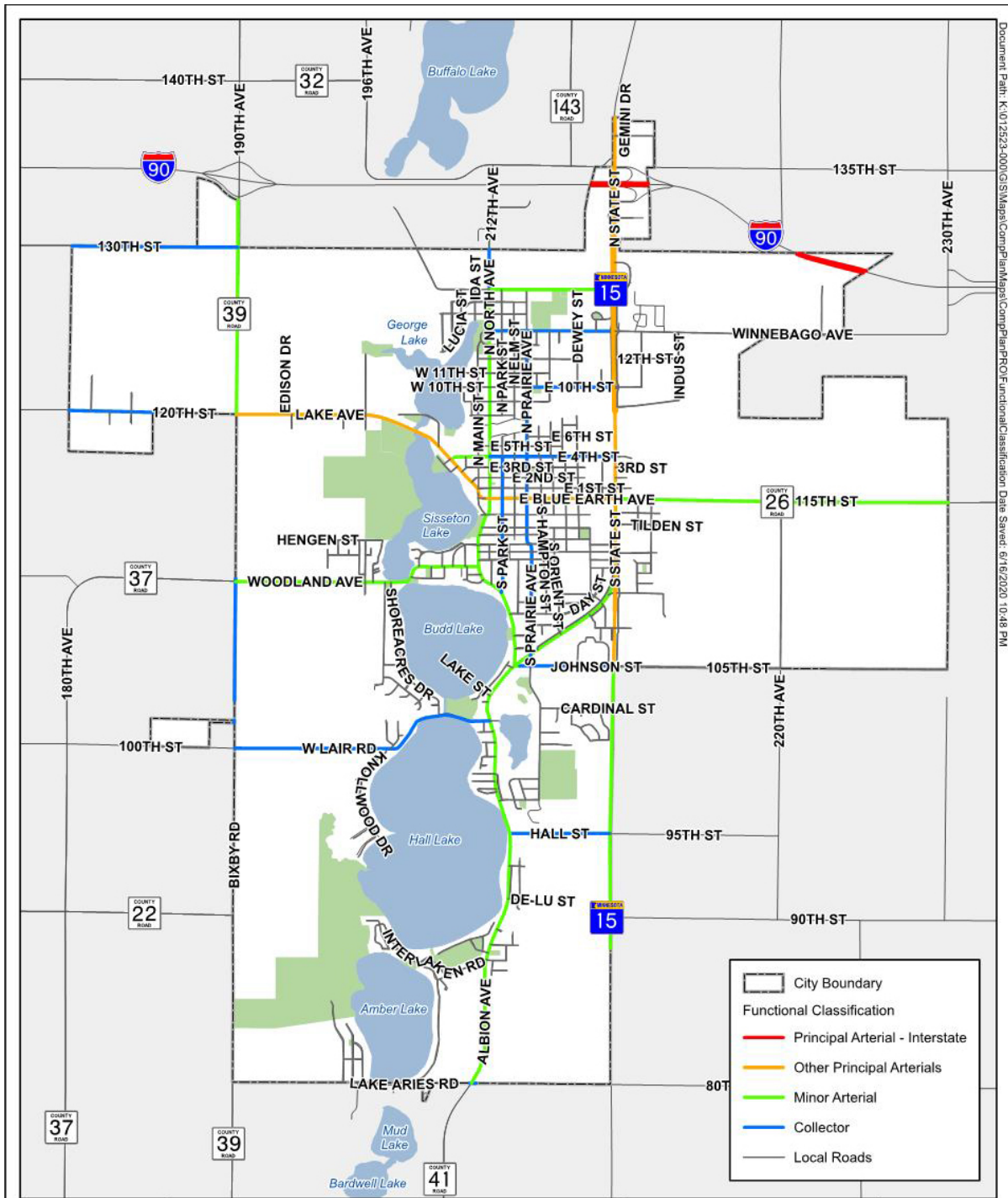
The functional classification system organizes a roadway and street network that distributes traffic from local neighborhood streets to collector roadways, then to minor arterials, and ultimately the principal arterial system. Roads are placed into categories based on the degree to which they provide access to adjacent land and mobility for through traffic. Functional classification gives an indication of the relative hierarchy of roadways in the transportation network.

MnDOT has urban and rural functional classification definitions for out-state Minnesota. These urban and rural classifications have different characteristics relative to density and types of land use and travel patterns. MnDOT's urban functional classification definitions currently apply in the incorporated area of Fairmont. Essentially, roadway classifications increase one level within an out-state urban area. Rural definitions currently apply to all permanently rural and/or unincorporated areas around Fairmont outside of the planned urban growth boundary.

The MnDOT classification process for out-state Minnesota is an outgrowth of federal transportation planning guidelines. These guidelines differ somewhat from functional classification of roads in fully metropolitan areas such as the seven-county Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, where functional classification is simplified to one set of designations. The net impact of the MnDOT process is that roadways in communities such as Fairmont may be "over-classified" by about one level as compared to traditional urban transportation planning practices, particularly for roads classified as minor arterials and major collectors.



Functional Classification



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Functional Classification
Fairmont Comprehensive Plan
Fairmont, MN

N
0 4,000 Feet
1 inch = 4,000 feet

Principal Arterials

Principal arterials typically connect large urban areas to other large urban areas or they connect metro centers to regional business concentrations via a continuous roadway without stub connections. They are designed to accommodate the longest trips. Their emphasis is focused on mobility rather than access, and as such private access should not be allowed or should be limited to the extent necessary to assure full mobility and safety. To the fullest extent possible, they connect only with other Principal Arterials, interstate freeways, and select Minor Arterials and Collector Streets. Principal Arterials are responsible for accommodating thru-trips, as well as trips beginning or ending outside of the Fairmont.

- Interstate 90
- TH 15/State Street (north corporate limits to Johnson Street)

Minor Arterials

Minor arterials typically link urban areas and rural Principal Arterials to larger towns and other major traffic generators capable of attracting trips over similarly long distances. Minor Arterials service medium length trips, and their emphasis is on mobility as opposed to access in urban areas. They connect with Principal Arterials, other Minor Arterials, and Collector Streets. Connections to Local Streets should be avoided if possible, and private access should not be allowed. Minor Arterials are responsible for accommodating thru-trips, as well as trips beginning or ending outside the Fairmont area.

- TH 15/State Street (Johnson Street to south corporate limits)
- Blue Earth Avenue/Lake Avenue and CSAH 26
- CSAH 39/Bixby Road (I-90 to CSAH 26/Lake Avenue)

Major Collectors

Major collectors typically link neighborhoods together within a city or they link neighborhoods to business concentrations. In highly urban areas, they also provide connectivity between major traffic generators. A trip length of less than 5 miles is most common for Major Collector roadways. A balance between mobility and access is desired. Major Collector street connections are predominately to Minor Arterials, but they can be connected to any of the other four roadway functional classes. Local access to Major Collectors should be provided via public streets and individual property access should be avoided. Major Collector streets are predominantly responsible for providing circulation within a city such as Fairmont and are typically spaced approximately ½ to 1 mile apart in urbanizing areas.

- South State Street and Albion Avenue (from TH 15 at Adams to south corporate limits)
- Albion Avenue/Downtown Plaza/North Avenue (from Johnson Street to Winnebago Avenue)
- North Avenue/CSAH 41 (north of Winnebago Avenue) to CSAH 32 and CSAH 41
- Woodland Avenue
- Lair Road
- Winnebago Avenue (North Avenue to TH 15)
- CSAH 39/Bixby Road and CSAH 20/Lake Aires Road

Minor Collectors

Minor collectors typically include city streets and rural township roadways, which facilitate the collection of local traffic and convey it to Major Collectors and Minor Arterials. Minor Collector streets serve short trips at relatively low speeds. Their emphasis is focused on access rather than mobility. Minor Collectors are responsible for providing connections between neighborhoods and the Major Collector/Minor Arterial roadways. These roadways can be designed to discourage shortcut trips through the neighborhood by creating jogs in the roadway (i.e. not direct, through routes).

- Fourth Street (TH 15 to Lake Avenue) – Primary east-west business and residential collector
- Prairie Avenue (Johnson Street to Winnebago Avenue) – Primary north-south residential collector
- Johnson Street – Primary access to high school and hospital/clinic
- Park Street (Albion Avenue to Fourth Street) – Alternate access to Downtown business area
- Tenth Street – Business and industrial area collector
- Margaret Street – Primary truck route for municipal operations to City Public Works facility.
- Hall Street – Low volume east-west collector/connector between TH 15 and South Albion

Local Streets

Roadways of this classification typically include city streets and rural township roadways, which facilitate the collection of local traffic and convey it to collectors and Minor Arterials. Their emphasis is to provide direct property access.

Future Westside Collector

Fairlakes Avenue is currently about a third of a mile long and stubbed at both its northern and southern ends. It has some utilities installed to follow an alignment of a future westside collector. As development occurs adjacent to the existing alignment, the future construction of this corridor should be reviewed and its extension analyzed. Included in this analysis are estimated traffic generation, parking needs, and potential multi-modal uses.

Future Eastside Collector

As agricultural areas east of Highway 15 are developed, there will, ultimately, be a need for a minor north-south collector between Blue Earth Avenue (CSAH 26) and Johnson Street to divert through-traffic away from the existing residential areas. This function is currently provided, to a limited degree, by Burton Lane but will need to be relocated and extended to better serve future Eastside development patterns. A new north-south collector has been contemplated in planning and routing for the Eastside Sanitary Interceptor and Eastside Storm Sewer projects, but because of uncertainties in development timing, stormwater management siting and topography, no specific collector route has yet been finalized. Ultimate development planning will need to consider the need this collector. Inherent in this concept is the need to ultimately improve that part of Johnson Street lying west of the future north-south collector and also to address, as part of overall community and county planning, the impact of further development in unincorporated areas lying south of Johnson Street on city infrastructure.

The timing and function for each of these collectors will likely be driven by development in each corridor and available funding sources, public and private (developer). However, the City should work with property owners to identify right-of-way corridors and reserve routing that will both meet public transportation goals and accommodate cost-effective private development.

Future East-West Collector on North Side of City

As the City grows to the west, a new future east-west collector roadway will be needed on the north side of the City extending West Anna Street from Holland Street, just north of George Lake, toward the Martin County Fairgrounds and the City's industrial park. A specific route has not been established for this connection and will need to be identified through future study. This connection would provide needed access for planned future residential mixed use in this part of the City. The timing of the extension would be driven by future development. The City should work with property owners to identify right-of-way that will meet public transportation goals and accommodate cost-effective private development.

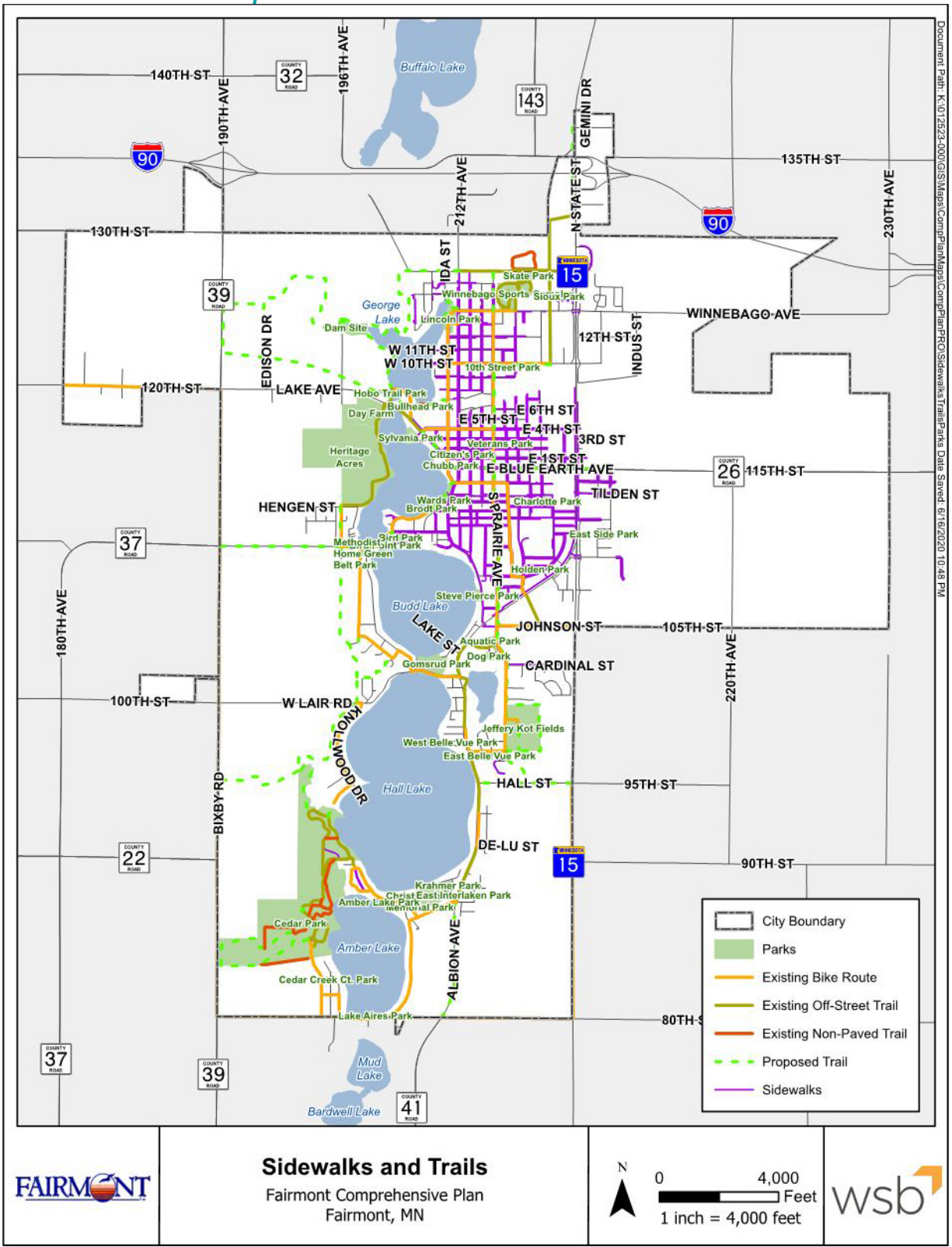
Sidewalks and Trails

The City has developed the start of a sidewalk and trail network to accommodate bicycling, walking and other non-motorized forms of transportation. City sidewalks are maintained by the adjacent property owners. Sidewalk additions and extensions are required for new development in most situations. In an effort to reduce initial capital costs, sidewalks have been required on only one side of the street. Existing paved and unpaved trails are also dispersed throughout the City in various locations.

Future Improvements

City staff should work with Council to discourage removal of any sidewalk segments and rather look to add sidewalk to fill in gaps, specifically in residential neighborhoods. In accordance with the ATP, the City should also continue to add multi-purpose trails adjacent to existing streets and within City parks. New trail segments should continue to be added during planned street reconstruction projects. Standalone trail projects can also be initiated by local community groups or City staff. Funding for these projects should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and approved as funding is made available by the Park Board and City Council. Sidewalk and trail projects should continue to be reviewed with the City's capital improvement program and ATP.

Sidewalks and Trails Map



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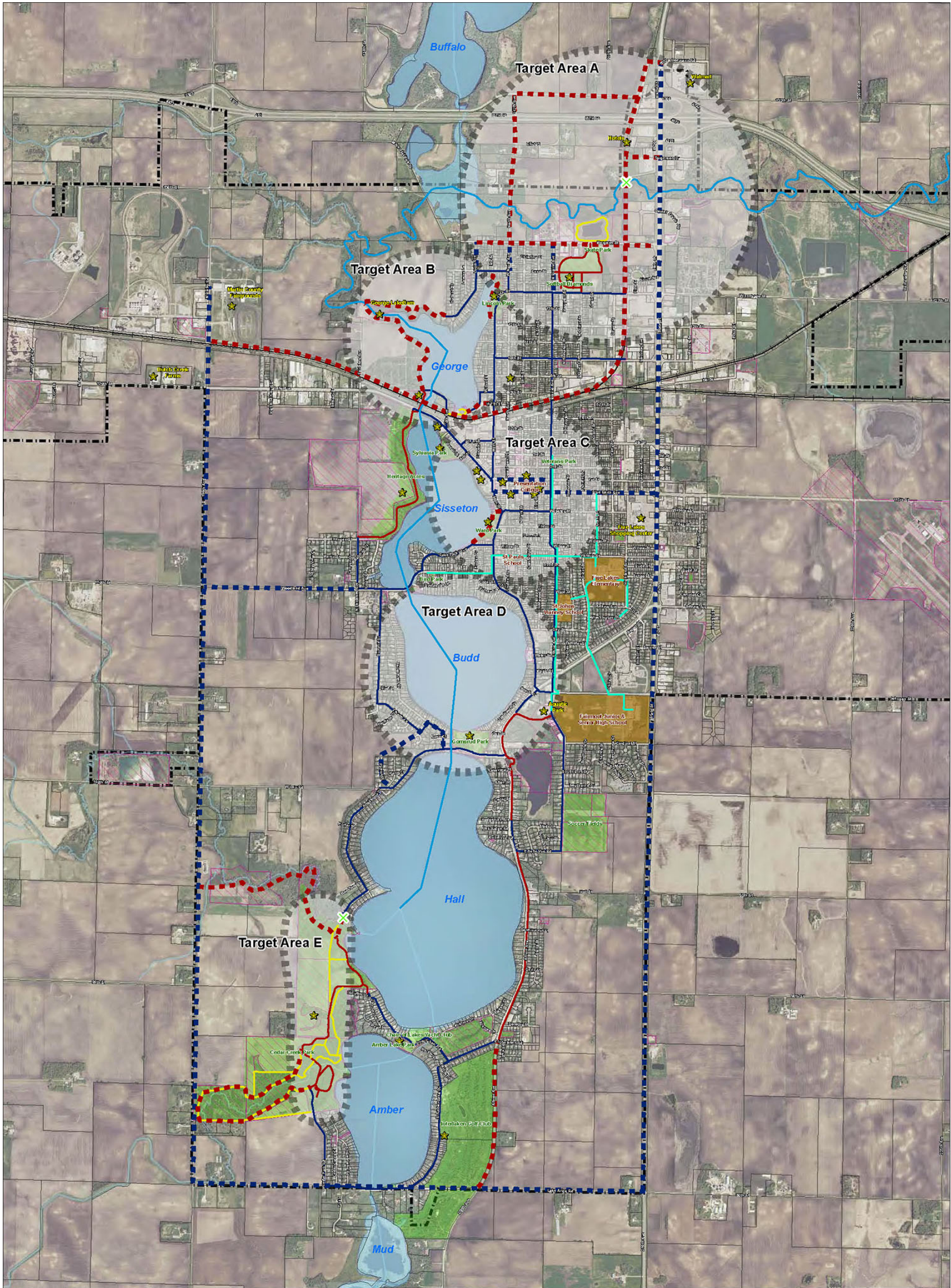


As identified in the ATP, new trail connections should address the following:

- Connecting residential neighborhoods to key destinations (schools, shopping downtown, commercial areas, parks, and recreational facilities)
- Completing links to create trail loops around the lakes
- Removing trails from the roads (off-road trails) for increased safety and user experience, where possible

Five target areas (shown on the following page) were identified as part of the planning process for potential future trails:

- Target Area A – Connections between the Winnebago Avenue Sports Complex, hotels, Wal-Mart and across Interstate 90
- Target Area B – Connections around George Lake
- Target Area C – Connections to and within the downtown area
- Target Area D – Connections around Budd Lake
- Target Area E – Connections to and within the Cedar Creek Park area



Legend

- Proposed Street Trail
- Proposed Off Road Trail
- Grade Separated Pedestrian Crossing Needed
- Existing Off Road Trail
- Existing Street Trail
- Existing Non-Paved Trail
- Safe Routes To School
- Points of Interest
- Parks
- School Boundary
- Creek
- Parcels
- City Owned Parcels
- City Limits
- Railroad

Source: City of Fairmont, MnDNR, MnGeo (2011 Imagery)



**ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN
Proposed Improvement
Target Areas**

Figure 2

*Identified through PMT meeting on May 8, 2013

July, 2013

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The following provides a comprehensive list of the proposed off-road trail improvements currently under development by the City:

1. Old railroad corridor from the east-west connection with Torgerson Drive north to Goemann Road.
2. North Avenue from Margaret Street north over I-90, east along 135th Street to TH 15
3. Old railroad corridor from Margaret Street north to east-west connection with Torgerson Drive (includes a bridge over the creek).
4. East-west connection from old railroad corridor to TH 15 at Torgerson Drive
5. Margaret Street from Lucia Avenue to TH 15.
6. Lincoln Park from the south side of the park at Main Street along George Lake to Ida Street.
7. Northwest side of George Lake from existing on-street trail on Lucia Avenue through undeveloped area to Center Creek.
8. West side of George Lake from Center Creek (near the Dam) south to Hobo Trail and the railroad.
9. Rail Corridor from County Road 39/190th Avenue to Margaret Street.
10. South side of George Lake from Bullhead Park to Main Street.
11. Ward Park from Lake Park Boulevard, along Sisseton Lake to Main Street.
12. Cedar Creek Park north end trail connection to the west through the City owned property to County Road 39/190th Avenue.
13. Knollwood Drive connection to Cedar Creek Park (includes a bridge over the creek).
14. Natural surface trails within Cedar Creek Park upgraded to paved off-street trails.
15. Albion Avenue from Lake Aires Road to Interlaken Road.

Transit

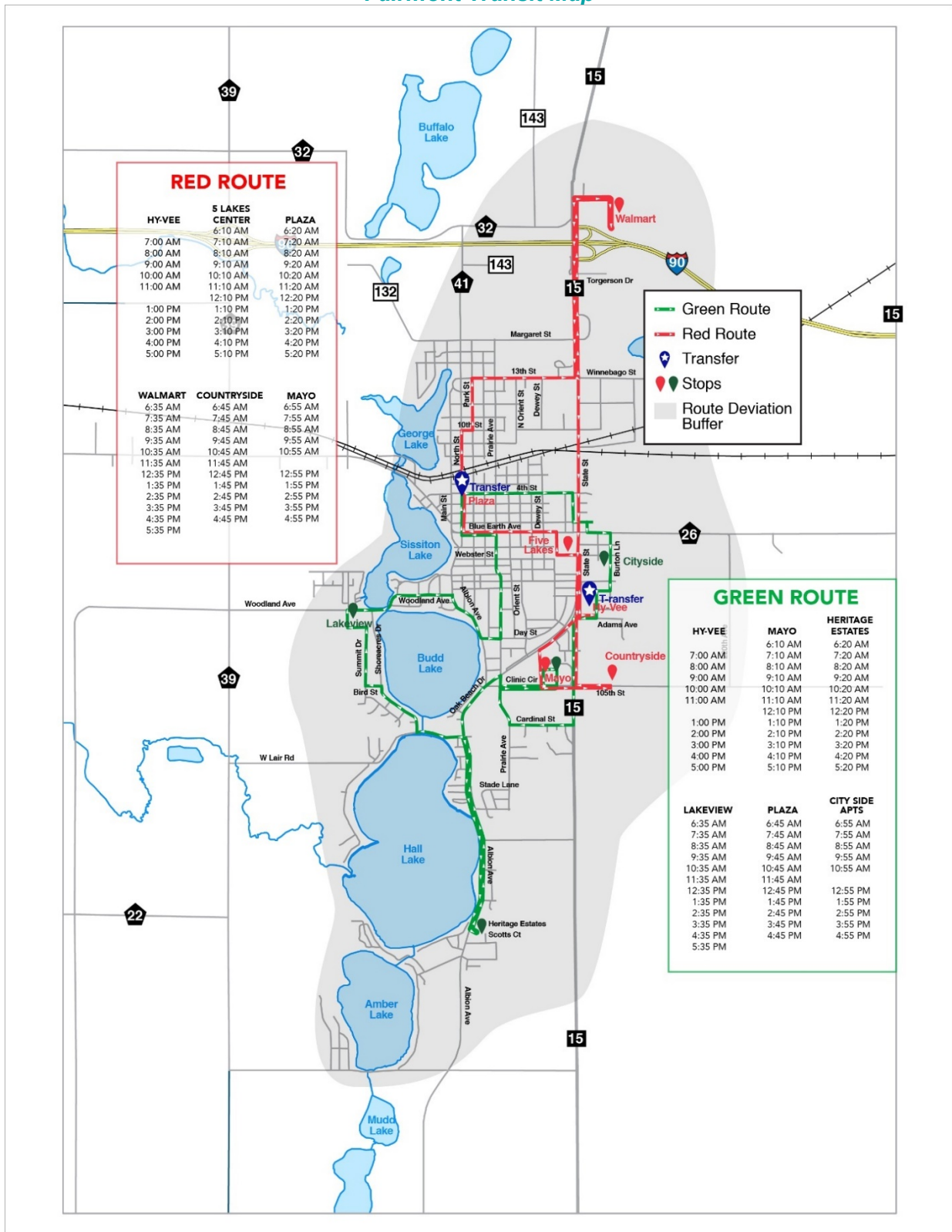
All local transit service is operated by Prairie Lakes Transit – a collaborative effort of Martin and Faribault Counties with funding assistance from the State. No City funding or City management is presently provided. However, the City should continue to work with Prairie Lakes and accommodate their needs as the future of public transit evolves.

Prairie Lakes operates two routes in Fairmont. The Red Route provides access to northern and western Fairmont with designated stops at Walmart, Countryside, Mayo Clinic, Hy-Vee, 5 Lakes Center, and Downtown Plaza. The Green Route provides a loop through southern Fairmont with designated stops at Hy-Vee, Mayo Clinic, Heritage Estates, Lakeview, Downtown Plaza, and City Side Apartments. Transfers between Red and Green routes occur at either the Downtown Plaza or Hy-Vee stops. Transfers are provided free of cost.

Prairie Lakes Transit operates on a deviated route to provide maximum accessibility. This system allows passengers receive pickup or drop off a quarter of a mile from the designated route. Additionally, the Gold Route provides intercity connections between Fairmont and Blue Earth. Service is limited to mornings, mid-day, and evening shifts.

Future Improvements With a growing elderly population, the City should, in coordination with the Prairie Lakes Transit, monitor local transit needs as well as legislatively authorized local transit funding sources to assure that an adequate demand response transit system is available for transit dependent populations.

Fairmont Transit Map



Airport

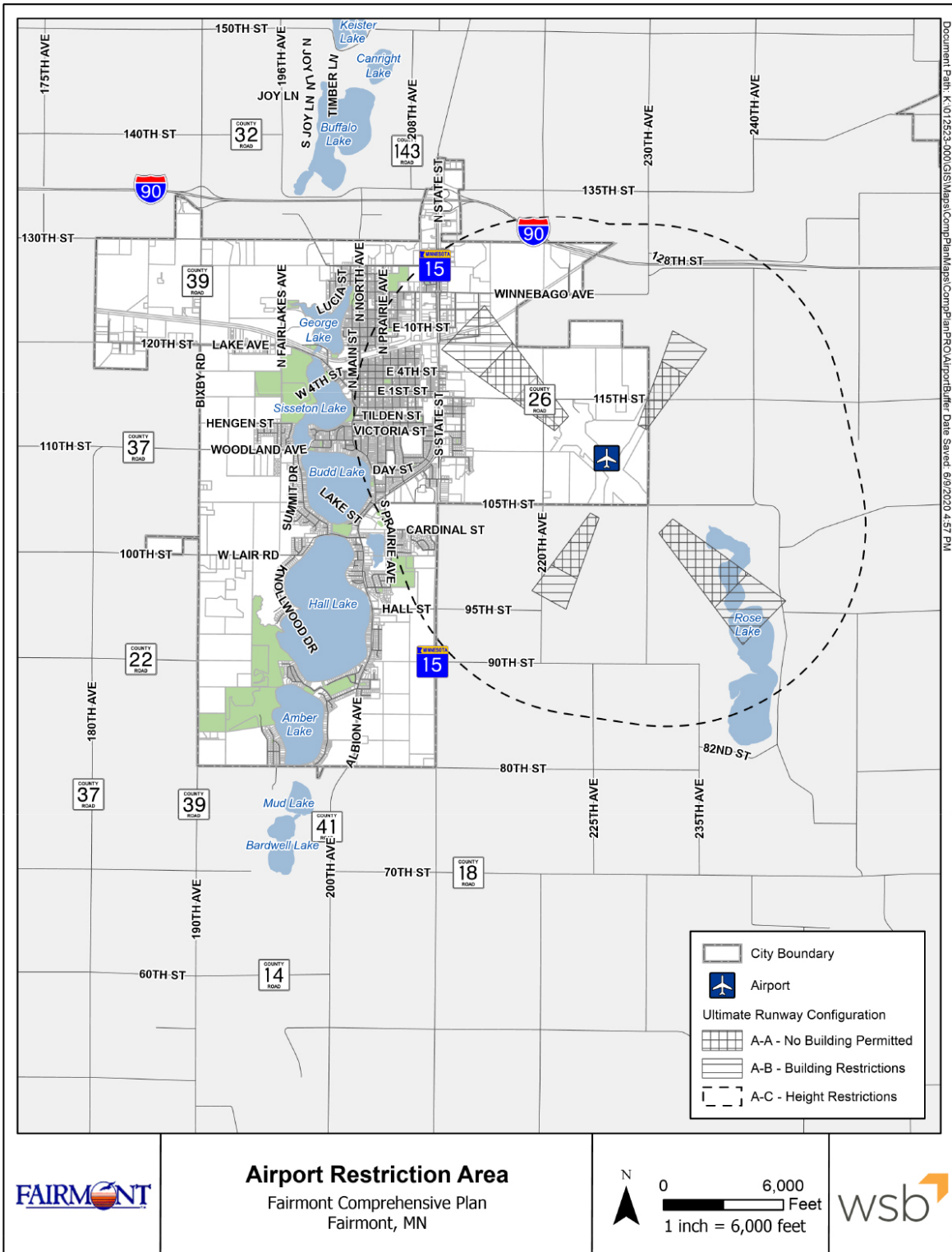
The Fairmont Municipal Airport (KFRM) is located 1.5 miles east of TH 15 on CSAH 26. With the largest runway facility and most technically equipped airport in south central Minnesota, the facility provides general aviation services for the region. As of 2017, the airport accommodates approximately 9,400 take-offs and landings per year or about 26 operations per day.

Approximately 53 percent are transient aviation, 38 percent local aviation, 7 percent air taxi, and 1 percent military. The facility serves a wide range of aircraft, including corporate jet and other aircraft for local businesses. Approximately 30 aircraft are currently based at the airport. A newly constructed 7-unit T-hangar is scheduled to be available in 2020 to increase the available aircraft storage.

The airport advisory board (AAB) provides input on operations and capital needs. The AAB works with City staff to make recommendations to the City Council for budgetary consideration.

Future Improvements

The completion of the T-hangar in 2020 will mark a significant milestone for the airport. The City has significantly invested in the airport over the last 10-12 years to reach a point where all major infrastructure projects have been accomplished. Future projects will include existing building maintenance and renovation, in addition to pavement surface maintenance and rehabilitation. The AAB continues to explore options for adding a business on site and for flight training. The City should be willing to support partnerships that may expand the options for either of these goals.



Freight

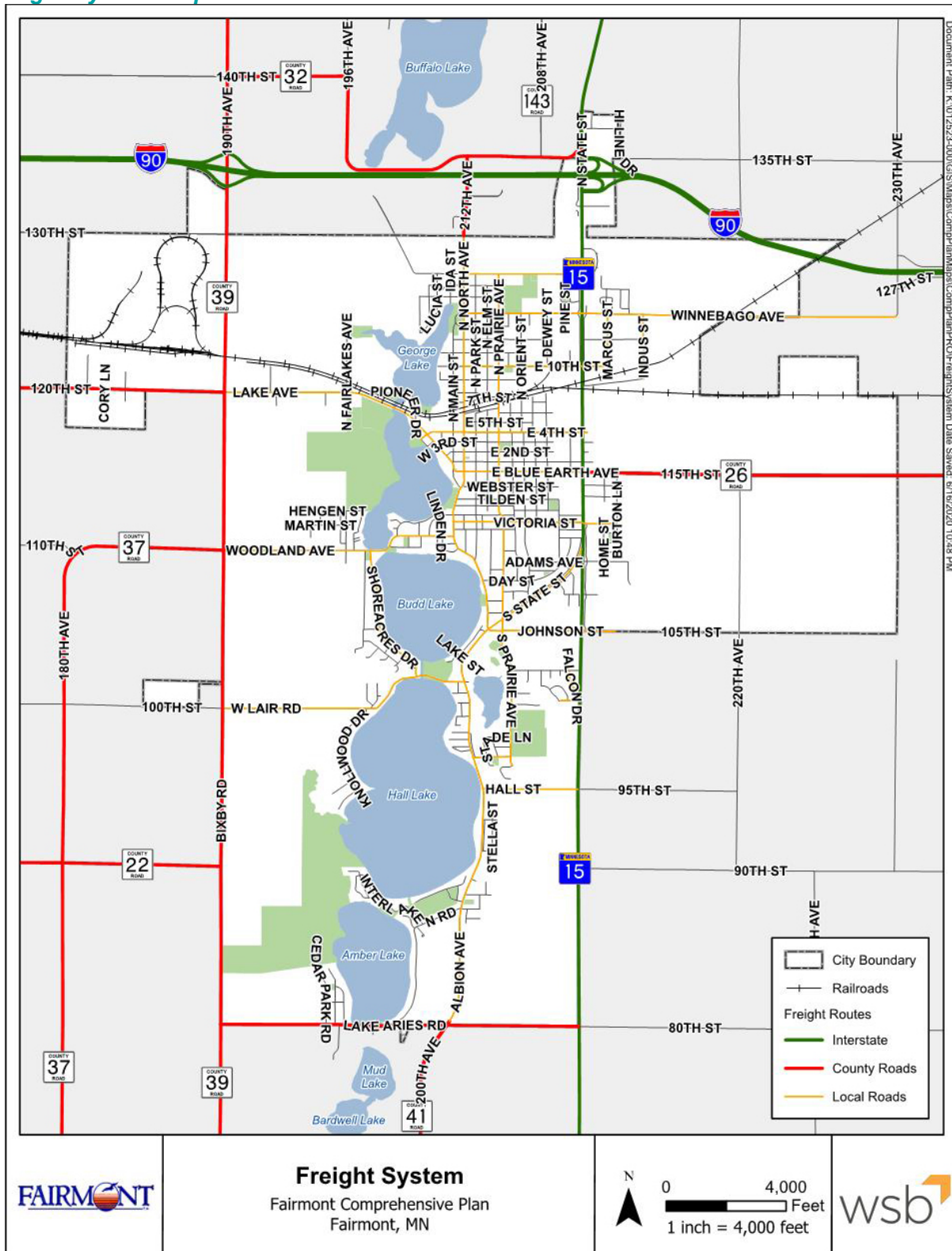
Freight is accommodated by interstate, air, and rail. For instance, Interstate 90 provides access to southern Minnesota and the rest of the country. Fairmont is served by three interchanges with I-90 at Bixby Road/CSAH 39 and State Street/TH 15.

The Fairmont Municipal Airport provides transportation of goods via air. Union Pacific and Canadian Pacific provide transportation for many of the agriculture-based local industries.

Future Improvements

Railroad crossings in the City are maintained as needed. Coordination with rail companies for improvements is often initiated by the rail companies. The State Office of Freight identifies crossings on the State Aid system that require additional safety measures. The City continually works with the rail to minimize traffic disruptions from parked, loading, or unloading trains. Future coordination to address these crossings requirements and restrictions is necessary.

Freight System Map



Conclusion and Next Steps

The purpose of this Transportation Plan is to set a multimodal vision for the City of Fairmont. Goals strategies have been identified collaboratively with City leaders, various agency stakeholders and the public to execute the City's transportation vision over time. The vision and associated strategies outlined in this plan were established by considering industry trends, existing and forecasted conditions, City of Fairmont priorities and needs and a variety of other factors.

As the owners of the transportation network in Fairmont (i.e. City of Fairmont, Martin County and MnDOT) advance their respective Capital Improvement Programs (CIPs), this plan is intended to serve as an important resource and reference in establishing priorities and advancing projects for implementation. Advancing these projects from a planning to implementation phase will require collaborative discussions among facility owners, adjacent communities, residents and others. These discussions will require technical support in the form of detailed traffic studies, preliminary and final designs, environmental review and right-of-way preservation. Securing necessary local, state and federal funding to implement the identified strategies will also require a collaborative effort of City leaders, Martin County and MnDOT, depending upon the project at hand.

Economic Development

Vision

A business-friendly environment and a beautiful place to call home - Fairmont will remain a vibrant community with a diverse local economy based in agriculture, healthcare, and retail. The community will support economic development through balanced and strategic growth between greenfield development on the edges of the City and infill and redevelopment opportunities in the City's unique and historic neighborhoods. The City will continue to position itself as a regional center. The City will maintain a strong labor pool through workforce development, housing and daycare options that meet the needs of the community, and by cultivating a high quality of life. Businesses and young families will be attracted to the community amenities, access to nature, and welcoming atmosphere.

Introduction

The Economic Chapter describes the City's workforce, employment, and business environment. The chapter, in coordination with the other chapters, guides how the community can advance wages, improve quality of life, expand business and the employment base, and workforce development.

Increasingly, the success of our economy is tied to people's ability to secure attainable housing, childcare, and an education. Quality of life and sense of place are driving factors in many communities seeing revitalization and expansion. Additionally, changes to the workplace, technology, and the way we shop, move, communicate, and gather is changing the way we work and how businesses operate.

The Economic Development Chapter addresses the business and economic environment in a comprehensive and people-centric manner. Economic development is much more than buildings and businesses, and includes considerations for people, their skills, ability to grow in their careers, secure long-term employment, and start and grow businesses. The chapter guides city staff, City Council, businesses owners, and other government agencies in decisions relating to the efficient and effective strategies to advance the local economy.

Issues & Opportunities

Key to a successful economic development strategy are provision of childcare, workforce recruitment and retention, and new commercial/industrial growth. Some particular focus areas in Fairmont include the following:

Issues

- How do we address distressed housing/neighborhoods?
- The evolving nature of industry and retail have left many sites vacant and underutilized.
- Growth may be limited by regional draw, consolidation, and internet sales.
- The high cost and limited supply of housing and childcare have impacted and limited economic growth and contributed to labor shortage issues.

Opportunities

- The City's historic and walkable neighborhoods could be a draw to new residents and business investment if marketed accordingly.
- The City's core industries hold much potential for its future growth and economic vitality.
- Investment in the quality of place can spur economic development and housing production.
- Tourism focused on recreation and biking could be an economic generator that spills over into other industries.

- “Love local” is a business movement that promotes independent local businesses, which can be leveraged to create a retail/restaurant scene in Fairmont.
- Consumer preferences are shifting to seek out “experiences” within their spending habits, which could pair well with Fairmont’s historic downtown and system of recreational trails.

Existing Conditions

Existing Plans & Studies

Fairmont Economic Development Authority “FEDA” 2018-2021 Strategic Plan

The FEDA strategic plan outlines six major economic development components:

- **Retention-expansion:** Provide the necessary human and financial resources to be successful in retaining and expanding our local businesses and industries of all sizes.
- **Financing:** Develop the best possible toolbox of financial tools available for attracting and growing area businesses of all types.
- **Workforce Development:** Develop, retain, and attract talent to the Fairmont area to sustain and grow Fairmont area businesses.
- **Recruitment:** Continue to work toward attracting businesses and people to Fairmont.
- **Site Development:** Have property available for businesses to easily access for future growth and attraction.
- **Housing:** Ensure Fairmont has a good inventory of safe, and quality housing for all income levels to attract people to Fairmont and retain those existing residents.

As would be expected, these components from the FEDA plan align with the issues that have been identified as facing the community for future development.

Fairmont Market Square

In 2017, the Fairmont Market Square vision session was initiated by Rural Advantage and the Fairmont Market Square committee to explore increasing consumer interest, sales volume, and the number of vendors at the city’s existing farmers market. The idea was to provide a space of activity, small shops, entertainment, recreation, learning, social interaction, local food and drink. The goal was to take advantage of the City’s natural beauty and historic downtown to provide a new space for growth, recreation, energy, and engagement.

The session recommends a vision of a multi-use redevelopment of a full city block on the north end of downtown. The preferred vision includes retail storefront, an arts and food hall, farmers market pavilion, housing, senior center, park, gardens, amphitheater, and walkways.

Project 1590

Project 1590 stems from a small group of Fairmont residents dedicated to improving the quality of life and create a unique, healthy, and vibrant community. The group has identified several community-generated ideas to improve Fairmont.

- Bacon Capitol USA
- Beautify and Maintain our Waterways
- Focus on Fairmont
- Destination Downtown Fairmont

- Enhance Fairmont’s Natural Water Park
- Expand our Multi-Purpose Trail System
- Fairmont Community Center
- Kids Just Want to Have Fun

Trends & Data

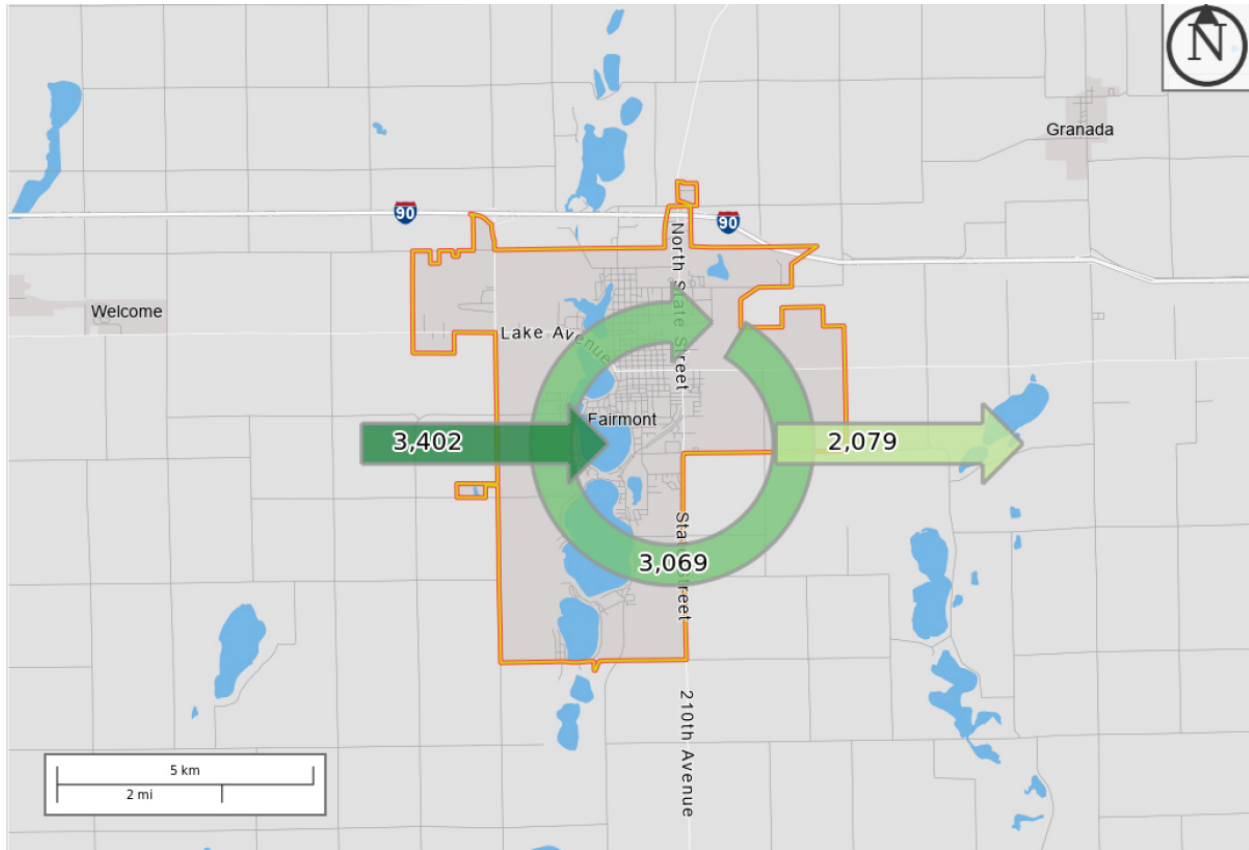
In 2018, the estimated number of Fairmont residents who were employed was 4,988 (49 percent of the City’s population). Most of these individuals (24.1 percent) work in educational services, health care, or social assistance. The percentage of individuals in Fairmont working in manufacturing is 15.2 percent, which exceeds the state average of 13.5 percent. The unemployment rate of 2.1 percent is lower than state average of 3.3 percent.

EMPLOYED POPULATION 16 YEARS AND OVER

Industry	Employed	Percentage
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1,202	24.1%
Manufacturing	759	15.2%
Retail trade	497	10.0%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	468	9.4%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	391	7.8%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	346	6.9%
Construction	333	6.7%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	271	5.4%
Public administration	199	4.0%
Other services, except public administration	183	3.7%
Wholesale trade	153	3.1%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	133	2.7%
Information	53	1.1%
Total	4,988	100.0%

Source: ACS Survey, 2018 (2014-2018)

Of the City’s employed population 16 years and over, about 62 percent live and work in the City. The other 38 percent leave the City for work. Another 3,402 workers come into the City to work there from across Southwestern Minnesota and Iowa.



Source: US Census "On The Map" (2017)

Of those individuals coming into Fairmont for work, the following table shows where they live:

Where Fairmont Workers Live		
Location	Count	Share
All Workers	6,471	100.0%
Fairmont, MN	3,087	49.8%
Sherburn, MN	155	2.5%
Blue Earth, MN	120	1.9%
Welcome, MN	115	1.9%
Truman, MN	104	1.7%
Trimont, MN	80	1.3%
Mankato, MN	63	1.0%
Ceylon, MN	59	1.0%
Granada, MN	52	0.8%
Armstrong, IA	39	0.6%
All Other Locations	2,323	37.5%

Source: US Census "On The Map" (2017)

Economic Development Authority

The Fairmont Economic Development Authority (FEDA) “maintains Fairmont as a quality community through business retention, expansion, and favorable business climate.”

The Economic Development chapter of the comprehensive plan allows for the EDA to integrate the economic development strategies into the plan for the development of the entire community. The primary directive of the Fairmont EDA is to maintain Fairmont as a quality community through business retention, expansion, and favorable business climate. The EDA has developed 6 core activities to provide for the continued strength of the community into the future.

These core activities can then be incorporated into the issues that have been identified for the comprehensive plan to allow for the successful development and growth of the community.

During the community steering committee meetings, the group identified areas and issues that should be included in the comprehensive plan to allow for the continued strong development of the City. These issues, using the core activities identified by the EDA, are then used to develop the goals and strategies to solve the issues facing the community.

Economic Development Authority Mission Statement:

We support the successful growth and pride of the Fairmont area businesses and citizens.

Core Activities:

1. Business Assistance
2. Business Visits
3. Business Incubator Building
4. Building and Site Inventory
5. Business Attraction
6. Revolving Loan Fund (RLF)

Economic Development Topics

Promotion of Redevelopment, Revitalization, and Reuse

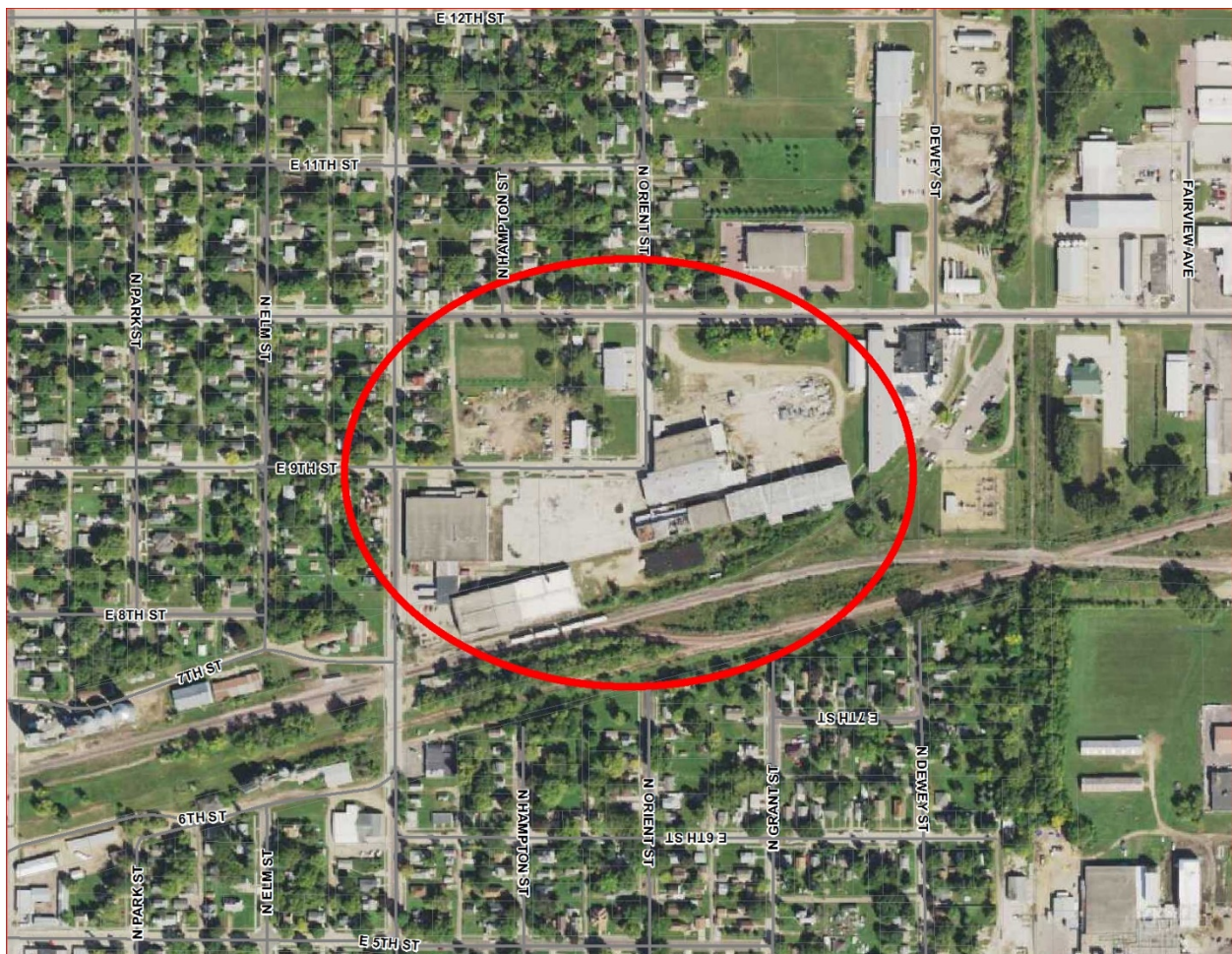
Also key to a successful economic development strategy are provision of childcare, workforce recruitment and retention, and new commercial/industrial growth. Some particular focus areas in Fairmont include the following:

Priority Revitalization Sites

Fairmont's Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee has identified 6 sites that will be a priority for redevelopment, revitalization or reuse to prevent the decay of the structures and the negative effect that vacant properties can cause to surrounding properties. Many of these sites are currently included or adjacent to the areas that have been identified by the steering committee as study areas for the future development and redevelopment. The inclusion of these sites allows for a more comprehensive planning for their future uses. These sites can be grouped into two different groups with one being currently retail-oriented and industrial-oriented areas. The future uses may be different than the current uses and the grouping may change as the sites are redeveloped or revitalized. The sites are listed below with a brief description and background to help identify the plans for the sites.

Prairie Ave Facility

This industrial site is approximately 17.3 acres and is the former location of the Fairmont Foods facility. It is located just north of the central business district and abuts a short haul rail line. The property does have single-family housing on two sides that would limit the intensity of future industrial development. The housing in the area has been identified as having the potential to be redeveloped to meet the demand for current housing amenities. However, the access to the rail and transportation corridors could allow for a light manufacturing use for a portion of the site. The location of the site would also lend itself to the development of mixed-use with a strong housing component. The site is located on the edge of Study Area 3.



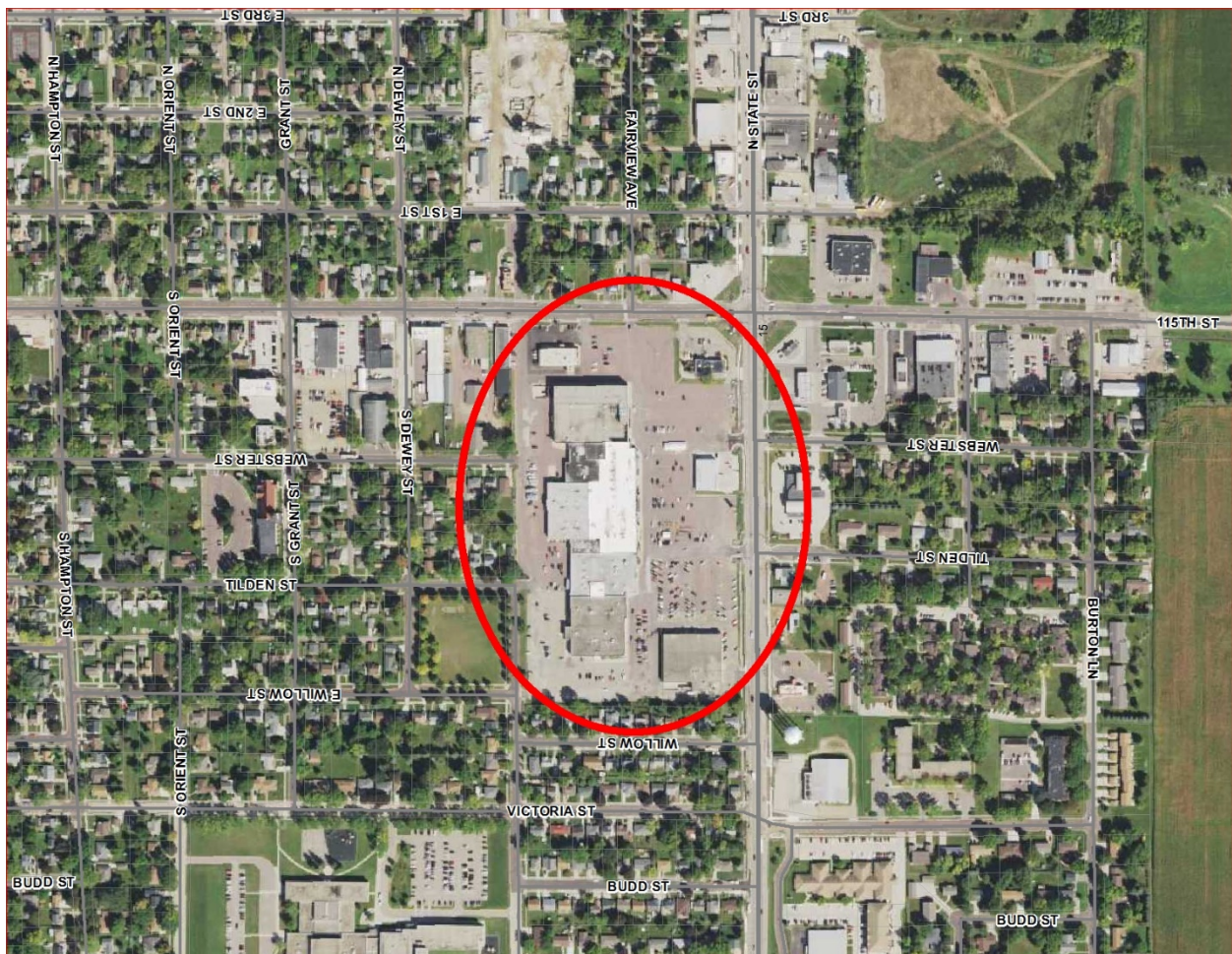
Large Rail Facility

This industrial site is approximately 13.6 acres and is the former location of the Harsco Rail Car manufacturing facility. The acreage does not include a 100-foot-wide corridor that runs from the edge of the property to 190th Avenue paralleling Lake Avenue. The site includes two primary buildings that consist of approximately 246,000 square feet of space. The primary building was built in 1900 with the secondary building constructed in 1979. The reuse of the buildings would be limited due to their advanced age and the potential for contamination. Due to the site's proximity to downtown and Lakes George and Sisseton, the area (after the completion of any required remediation) may be better suited for a mixed-use type of development and not as a traditional industrial site. The site is included in Study Area 3.



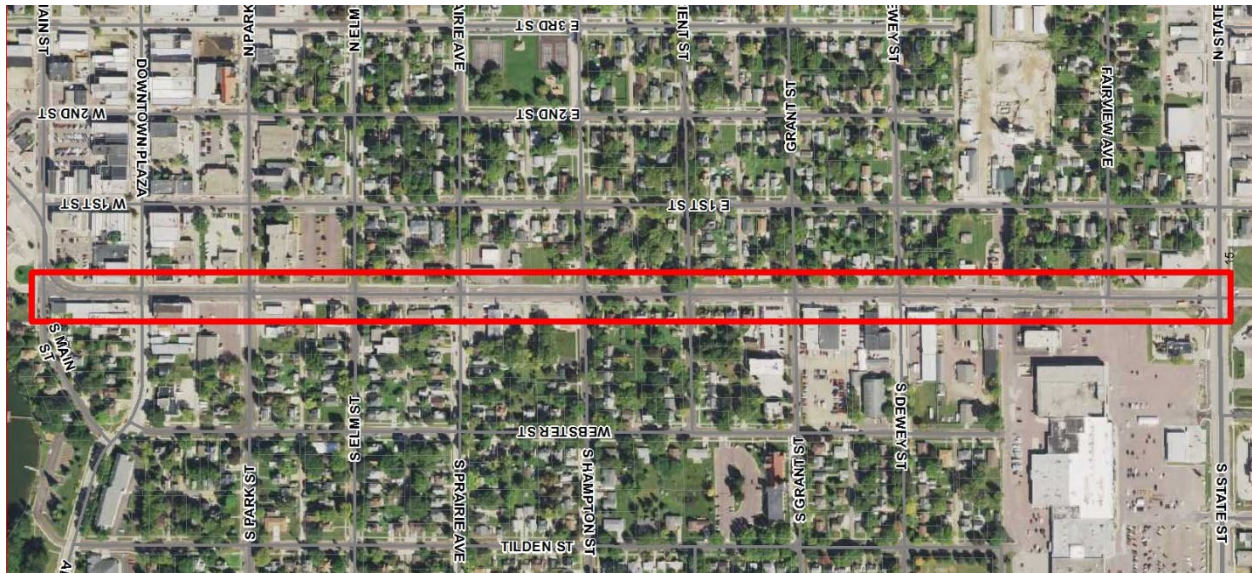
Five Lakes Centre

This retail site is approximately a 17.7-acre site that is currently occupied by an aging mall that was built in the mid-1970s. The structure is predominately empty with the closing of the JCPenney store that was the primary anchor tenant. The site does have retail pads around it that are currently occupied by going concerns. The site has good access to both State Street (TH 15) and Blue Earth Avenue. This location will allow for the development of several potential uses. The building could be repositioned to meet some of the needs of the City with a new use, which has occurred in other communities with shuttered shopping centers. These uses could include multi-family housing, senior housing, or other amenities desired by the City. Due to the location along Blue Earth Avenue, the site is part of Study Area 5.



Blue Earth Avenue Streetscape

Blue Earth Avenue is a street that was developed to provide access from State Street (Highway #15) and downtown Fairmont. That section of street is 0.82 miles (4,306 feet) in length. The street was developed as a wide thoroughfare with retail type of businesses lining the corridor like many streets throughout the country. As shopping patterns have changed and the demand for retail space has adjusted, the potential development of the corridor has also shifted to a mixed-use scenario that would have a mix of both commercial and housing opportunities. The entire length of the street is currently included in the proposed study area #5.



Near State and Tilden

The site is comprised of 2 parcels that are a total of 0.75 acres located along State Street (State Highway #15) with 2 access points. In the past the facility has been used as a Gas Station/Convenience store and appears to have had some remediation completed. The Property to the east of the site is owned by the Fairmont HRA and is the location of the garages for a housing development that is owned by the HRA. While the site has good visibility from State Street, the changes in consumer behavior may limit the potential future uses for the site. The site is near the Blue Earth Avenue study but is not included in that study area.



Child Care

Community Solution Action Plan for Child Care

Recognizing the impacts of childcare on the local economy, the Rural Child Care Innovation Program (RCCIP) and the City of Fairmont laid out a plan to address the local childcare shortage. The plan identifies barriers to childcare, the impacts to the local economy, and opportunities for action. This report was released in May 2019 and will be used as a map for the

continued development of solutions to the childcare storage and crisis in the community and region.

The four goals identified in the report were:

1. Engage the private sector
2. Renovate SMEC into family childcare spaces
3. Create funding for new and existing providers to grow and increase quality
4. Provide training opportunities for childcare program

The Community Solution Action Plan for Child Care report showed a shortage of 81 childcare slots in Fairmont and a total shortage of 172 slots in Martin County. This shortage is expected to grow as economic growth continues and more people move to the City.

The analysis revealed that the childcare shortage has severely impacted parents living in Fairmont. Nearly 40 percent of survey respondents declined employment or withdrew from the workforce due to childcare issues. Absence from work (when a provider is closed for the day), inability to work a flexible schedule, inability to work different shifts, and tardiness to work hinders the ability of parents to advance their careers. Additionally, the cost of childcare, which can range from \$5,700-10,200 based on age, is limiting to many families. Further adding to the difficult situation, the childcare business operates on small margins and is a low-wage employer.

Some of the major factors contributing to the childcare shortage in Fairmont include:

- Increase in dual-working families
- Attraction of new employees to the area
- Difficulties of being a childcare provider
- Lack of resources for childcare providers
- More young families are looking to make their home in Fairmont
- Job opportunities ebb and flow
- High range of wage levels, with many families struggling to afford quality licensed childcare

The complete report is attached to the comprehensive plan as **Appendix XX**.

Housing

Housing costs have drastically risen in the past decade, far outpacing the rate of increase in wages and income, as supply wanes, demographics change, and land and construction costs skyrocket. For many rural communities, the ability to attract and retain employees is limited due to the lack of available and affordable housing in the community. Given Fairmont's relative isolation from other communities and their housing supply, it is critically important for Fairmont to pursue additional workforce housing options if the local economy is to remain competitive. Housing policy is addressed in the Housing Chapter, but as strategies are pursued it is important to remember the interconnectedness between housing and economic development.

Education

K-12 Schools

A community with strong schools is a vibrant community. And a community with an educated and skilled workforce is more likely to have a diverse and thriving economy. Fairmont's schools and educational opportunities are fantastic, but there is always room for improvement.

Continued partnership between the Fairmont School District and the City of Fairmont will produce endless results. Further coordination with the business community could expand upon those possibilities while preparing the community for a changing economy.

Post-Secondary

Employer-Sponsored Opportunities

Businesses are getting more creative in workforce attraction, skill-building, and retention. The Fairmont Area Life (FAL) team has been working on ways to help communicate local career opportunities in Martin County. In 2018, FAL launched a CareerWise flyer with the intent of informing high school students and their parents of the in-demand jobs in our area as well as employer sponsored tuition reimbursement programs, on-the-job training, apprenticeship and internship opportunities and even job shadowing. CareerWise is being disbursed at local high school events and used as a tool by school staff.

The City and business community should continue to explore innovations to education and on-going training to better match skills to employer needs.

Workforce Retention and Attraction

Fairmont has a picturesque setting amidst a chain of five lakes, thus offering a wide array of recreational opportunities. Its historic downtown provides a unique setting for retail, culture, and gathering, while the City's commercial corridors east side and Blue Earth Avenue provide convenience, food, and employment opportunities. By focusing its efforts, Fairmont has an opportunity to build on its assets to foster a greater sense of place and improved quality of life, which, in turn, will help grow the local economy and attract workers.

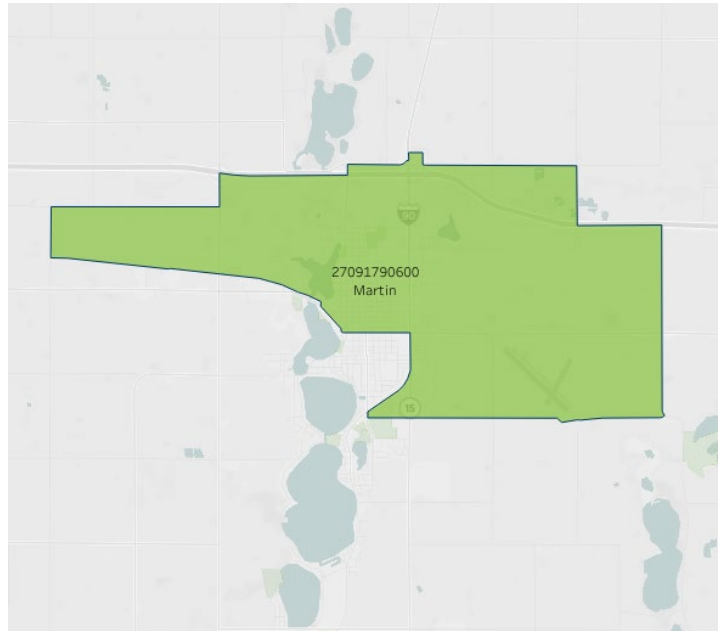
New Industrial and Commercial Growth

New Industrial Park

FEDA obtained a real estate purchase option for a 38-acre parcel of undeveloped land at the intersection of Bixby Road and I-90. This site provides maximum accessibility and visibility to Interstate 90, presenting a great opportunity for business growth. In 2018, FEDA negotiated and executed easements and completed preliminary infrastructure engineering, which allows the risk of project complications to be reduced drastically. The City was awarded Business Development Public Infrastructure (BDPI) funds from the State to assist funding infrastructure costs to prepare the site for shovel-ready projects and eventual development.

Opportunity Zones

As requested by FEDA and the Martin County EDA, Governor Dayton designated a census tract that is located in the City of Fairmont as an Opportunity Zone. Opportunity Zones are a new community development program that was established by Congress in the Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2017 to encourage long-term investments in low-income communities. Investors are eligible to receive a temporary tax deferral for capital gains invested in an Opportunity Fund and a permanent exclusion from taxable income of capital gains from the sale or exchange of an investment in a qualified opportunity zone fund if the investment is held for at least 10 years.



Martin County's Opportunity Zone covers a large portion of north and west Fairmont, including downtown, the northern half of Blue Earth Avenue, the airport, and State Street.

Adapting to a Changing Economy

AgriBusiness

One of the targeted industries for the community will be agribusinesses that will help not only the economy within the City limits but also the surrounding area to allow for the continued success of Fairmont as a regional center. This focus is demonstrated by the recent work completed for the expansion of the CHS facility. The \$100 million project, while not adding a significant number of jobs, it will allow for the more efficient operation of the facility and cementing the company's relationship with the community and area.

AgriGrowth

The Minnesota AgriGrowth Council is a nonprofit, nonpartisan member organization representing the agriculture and food systems industry. Formed in 1968, AgriGrowth's strategic approach to public policy advocacy, issues management and collaboration seeks to foster long-term sustainability, competitiveness, and business growth. AgriGrowth also strives to serve as a trusted information source, bringing together its members to address critical challenges and provide solution-oriented outcomes. AgriGrowth's industry-wide perspective is essential in a state where the agriculture and the food sector are the second largest economic driver.

FEDA became a member of AgriGrowth in 2017 to extend business recruitment efforts within the agribusiness industry. AgriGrowth offers FEDA great networking opportunities and hosts several events representing a broad spectrum of food systems and agriculture.

Coordinated Marketing Strategy

Promoting Fairmont’s many assets and opportunities – to businesses, employees, residents, and tourists – will contribute to a stronger economy. The City and its many partners should continue to collaborate and partner on marketing strategies which promote Fairmont.

- Fairmont Area Chamber of Commerce
- Minnesota Marketing Partnership
- Visit Fairmont
- Fairmont Area School District

Partnerships

Economic development is never completed in a vacuum but requires the development of multiple relationships with other organizations. These relationships, as demonstrated with the CHS project, allow for the entire community, area and state to benefit from the successful completion of projects. Some of the groups that the FEDA has developed relationship with are:

- AgriGrowth
- Fairmont Area Chamber of Commerce
- Area Career Exploration (ACE) Committee
- Greater Minnesota Partnership
- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
- Minnesota Valley Action Council
- Small Business Development Center
- Green Seam
- Southern Minnesota Workforce Council
- Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation
- Visit Fairmont
- Region Nine Community and Economic Development Committee
- Project 1590

Using the groundwork that has been completed by the FEDA and integrating it with the Big Ideas that were developed with the community involvement process for the comprehensive plan, the following goals and strategies have been developed.

Downtown and the Local Economy

Downtown as a Destination

Across the country, communities with historic and walkable downtowns are seeing new life, revitalization and investment as people and markets have begun to turn their attention – and wallets – towards places with a unique sense of place and deep roots in history. On the other hand, placeless commercial development, designed in a manner which could be placed anywhere in the country, are seeing disinvestment and growing vacancies.

Creating Vibrant Downtowns

As outlined in the book, “Heart of the City: Creating Downtowns for a New Century,” the author Alexander Garvin outlines six objectives which can benefit any downtown of any size.

1. Establish a distinctive image.
2. Provide easy access to downtown and convenient circulation within it.
3. Create an ample public realm.
4. Sustain a “livable downtown environment” to attract and keep people there.
5. Reduce the cost of doing business downtown.
6. Make it easy to alter land uses, build new buildings, and remodel existing ones.

Fairmont is extremely fortunate to have a historic downtown that, for the most part, remains in place and in good condition. The City should leverage this asset through focused efforts to improve the downtown district. With unique buildings and commercial spaces, there's an opportunity for additional retail, restaurants, coffee shops, art studios, entertainment, and breweries. Even the addition of a few unique and independent spaces can spark additional investment, interest, and activity.

Finally, through public-private partnerships, the community should consider additional gathering spaces and amenities that will continue to improve downtown Fairmont's unique sense of place. Businesses, customers, and tourists alike are drawn to place where others are gathered, where there is activity and life.

Goals & Strategies

ED1. Retain and expand Fairmont's economic base (Big Idea 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12)

ED 1-1. Continue to assist, promote, and support existing businesses to develop a healthier economic environment

ED 1-2. Continue FEDA staff site visits

ED 1-3. Create connections with supply chains

ED 1-4. Continue participation in community initiatives, serve on community boards, and regularly coordinate with partnerships

ED 1-5. Educate businesses about existing resources and opportunities

ED 2. Attract new industrial users, retail, employers, and a skilled workforce (Big Idea 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12)

ED 2-1. Provide a high quality of place and attract a skilled workforce through amenities, parks, walkability

ED 2-2. Target business recruitment efforts towards businesses which will support the community's unique character, will meet a gap in service or product, and/or provides high quality jobs

ED 2-3. Create redevelopment-ready sites through cleanup, removal, and/or reuse of vacant buildings and sites

ED 2-4. Continue to provide site selector services to new and expanding businesses.

ED 3. Foster the local economy (Big Idea 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12)

ED 3-1. Provide events, programming and activities to celebrate the community year-round

ED 3-2. Prioritize redevelopment efforts in Downtown, Blue Earth Avenue, TH 15 corridor, and other target areas

ED 3-3. Maintain momentum from public participation and design process by pursuing market square project

ED 3-4. Partner to attract local and independent restaurants, retail, and entertainment/gathering space

ED 3-5. Support innovation and synergy between like-minded or related businesses within Fairmont

ED 3-6. Efficiently prioritize job creation through expansion and retention of existing businesses

ED 4. Support a sustainable economy (Big Idea 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12)

ED 4-1. Support living wage jobs

ED 4-2. Promote environmental stewardship

ED 4-3. Review government regulations for unintentional barriers to sustainable economic development and develop strategies to remove unnecessary red tape

ED 5. Address childcare shortage (Big Idea 5, 6)

ED 5-1. Engage the private sector in strategies that result in additional childcare slots, possibly including employer-sponsored care

ED 5-2. Explore renovation of space at the Southern Minnesota Educational Campus into family childcare spaces

ED 5-3. Partner with businesses, nonprofits, and community volunteers to create a fund for current and new childcare providers to incentivize new providers, invest in existing providers, and create access to training and professional development.

ED 6. Address housing shortage (Big Idea 5, 6, 10)

ED 6-1. Educate the public and business community about the strong connection between housing and economic development

ED 6-2. Address the goals and strategies of the Housing Chapter as a way to improve and support the local economy

ED 7. Support post-secondary education and workforce development (Big Idea 5, 6)

ED 7-1. Support efforts to provide on-going and continual learning opportunities for the area's workforce

ED 7-2. Continue partnerships with area schools, government agencies, and business community to support a wide range of post-secondary options, including formal education, vocational programs, apprenticeships, and training programs

ED 8. Market the city's unique assets for economic growth (Big Idea 1, 2, 3, 12)

ED 8-1. Foster coordinated community-wide marketing strategy with area partners

ED 8-2. Create a business inventory, inclusive on Chamber members and non-members

ED 8-3. Improve Fairmont's brand within the region as a fun, livable, active, and business-friendly community

ED 8-4. Leverage the community's interstate accessibility to attract business investment

ED 9. Maximize effectiveness of FEDA (Big Idea 2, 5)

ED 9-1. Review the role of FEDA board members and board structure

ED 9-2. Engage businesses in the process of establishing FEDA's long-term plans

ED 9-3. Continue creating and sharing annual economic report. Begin creating and sharing quarterly reports with the public.

ED 9-4. Ensure adequate support to staff and board members, including resources, education, and training

Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources

Vision

Nestled around five lakes, Fairmont is well positioned to leverage its natural setting to improve the quality of life and health of its residents and provide an amenity-rich environment which attracts modern-day businesses and tourists alike. The City provides opportunities for active and passive recreation and programming that meet the needs of a diverse and changing population. The protection of its natural resources reduces strain on infrastructure and guards the community from the threat of increased intensity and regularity of extreme heat, storms, floods, ice, and snow.

Introduction

The Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Chapter describes the City's public, natural, and recreational spaces and the way we use these special resources. The chapter, in coordination with the other chapters, guides how the community can provide quality facilities, programs and events, and infrastructure for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

Increasingly, a growing desire for passive parks and access to natural spaces and bodies of water has driven changes to parks spaces across the country. Likewise, recreational and athletic programming – and related facilities – have evolved as demographics change and the country diversifies.

The Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Chapter addresses the public and natural resources that make Fairmont the livable community it is. As the way people use parks and public spaces changes, the community will need to use new and innovative strategies to meet the needs of a variety of users and populations. Preserving Fairmont's natural resources for future generations is critical to the long-term preservation and success of Fairmont's character, social connectedness, and local economy. The chapter guides city staff, City Council, the Park Board, and other government agencies in decisions relating to the efficient and effective strategies to advance the local economy.

Issues & Opportunities

Issues

- Shifts in demographics, behaviors, preferences, and attitudes are changing the way people use parks and recreation facilities.
- Many people have limited time and financial resources to take advantage of parks, recreation, and athletic activities.
- Participation in and preferences for specific sports is changing.
- Maintenance and operations expenses continue to rise and outpace funding.

Opportunities

- There is potential to develop a City-owned campground.
- The City's natural assets and park facilities present an opportunity to benefit from tourism dollars, visitors, and community events.
- There is space to creatively integrate more passive and natural park spaces into the existing network.

- The development of a new Community Center would establish an attractive, state-of-the-art facility.
- People are spending more dollars on experiences, presenting an opportunity for public and private partnerships.
- Publicly available Wi-fi offered at specific parks would be a beneficial service.

Existing Conditions

Existing Plans & Studies

Community Center Feasibility Study (2016)

The feasibility study explored possible community center locations and design considerations. The study explored options for pool, field house, fitness, ice arena, community, and administrative facilities. Three sites were considered, with the Mayo Clinic site being the preferred alternative. Approximately 12 acres of land is needed. Total costs are expected to be near \$20 million for construction and \$1.8 million for annual operations.

Active Transportation Plan (2017)

Fairmont's Active Transportation Plan (ATP) evaluates the city's walking and biking trails and identifies trail improvement target areas within the City in need of future investments to improve connectivity and use of the overall trail system. This plan is used as a basis for funding requests and implementation prioritization of future trail projects by the Park Board and City Council.

The primary goal of the Fairmont ATP is to support active living throughout the community by providing alternatives to automobile transportation by linking people to jobs, shopping and schools via the city's trail network.

Potential Economic Impact of a City-Owned Campground in Fairmont, Minnesota (2019)

This study examines the potential of a city owned lakeside campground. Understanding how the campground may affect the local economy is an important component of the planning process. University of Minnesota Extension conducted an economic impact analysis to analyze the potential economic impact of building a campground in Fairmont. Major findings of Extension's analysis include:

- A majority of city or county owned campground operators had between 20 and 30 sites designed for recreational vehicles (RVs) with electrical hook and all charged between \$24 and \$30 per night to use the campground.
- Current visitors to Fairmont had a high awareness of the city's lakes and parks, which suggests a city-owned campground/park on one of the lakes would be well positioned for visitor marketing.
- Extension developed five campground user scenarios. The number of campground users varied with each scenario, with the highest for one scenario attracting 4,392 visitors and the lowest attracting an estimated 2,160.
- The average campground user was estimated to spend \$71 per day (including their campground fee) while camping in the proposed city owned campground.

Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities

There are a total of 29 park and recreation facilities within Fairmont. The facilities are listed below with the approximate location, size, and amenities offered at each.

PARK	AREA	AMENITIES
1. Amber Lake Park	3 acres	Open air shelters, restrooms, picnic tables, grills, electrical outlets, boat ramps, fishing piers, playground equipment, winter parking
2. Aquatic Park	3.5 acres	Sand play lot, rental shelter, open air shelter, restrooms, picnic tables, electrical outlets, and playground equipment
3. Bird Park	1.4 acres	Picnic tables and playground equipment
4. Bird Point	0.4 acres	Fishing piers
5. Brodt Park	0.1 acres	Fishing pier
6. Bullhead Park	1.8 acres	Picnic tables and fishing piers
7. Cedar Creek	0.5 acres	Playground equipment and basketball courts
8. Cedar Creek Park	260 acres	All-season shelter house available with reservations, seating for 90, a full kitchen, air conditioning, and restrooms; snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, paved bike/walking paths, two 18-hole disc golf courses, nature trails, and primitive camping, and fishing piers
9. Charlotte Park	2.2 acres	Picnic tables and playground equipment
10. Christanson Park	18.5 acres	Picnic tables and winter parking
11. Day Farm / Heritage Acres	161 acres	Agricultural interpretive center with native shoreline planting demonstration project and a paved bike/walking path
12. Dog Park	1.5 acres	Off-leash areas with designated areas for both small and all dogs, a paved walking path, shade structures, water
13. East Belle Vue Park	1.2 acres	Picnic tables and playground equipment
14. East Side Park	0.9 acres	Picnic tables and playground equipment
15. Gomsrud Park	13.5 acres	Swimming beach, large playground, 5 sand volleyball courts, basketball courts, horseshoe, and pickleball, inclusive handicap accessible playground
16. Hobo Trail Park	2.5 acres	Floating bridge with historical markers along its nature trail
17. Holden Park	0.5 acres	Picnic tables and playground equipment
18. Jeffrey Kot Fields	40 acres	6 regulation (1 lighted) soccer fields, 3 practice soccer fields, a concession stand
19. Lake Aires Park	0.2 acres	Fishing pier
20. Lincoln Park	8 acres	Livingston Log Cabin and shelter house
21. Methodist Home Green Belt	1.2 acres	Picnic tables
22. Steve Pierce Park	1.7 acres	Picnic tables, fishing piers, and winter parking
23. Sylvania Park	4.1 acres	Restrooms, picnic tables, grills, fishing piers, and playground equipment

24. Tenth Street Park	1.0 acre	Picnic tables and playground equipment
25. Sioux Park	0.7 acres	Picnic tables and playground equipment
26. Veterans Park	2.2 acres	Basketball and tennis courts, playground equipment, and picnic tables
27. Ward Park	4.0 acres	Open air shelter, restrooms, picnic tables, boat ramps, fishing piers, and playground equipment
28. West Belle Vue	0.1 acre	
29. Winnebago Avenue Sports Complex	22 acres	Lighted softball fields, lighted baseball fields, a concession stand, restrooms, a paved bike/walking path, and a lighted off-street skate park

Parks and Recreation Topics

Parks for All

Invest in accessibility to improve use of city park facilities. Future park additions should aim to be inclusive to all. Renovations of existing parks should prioritize addressing accessibility issues and related deficiencies as funding allows.

Safe and Connected Spaces

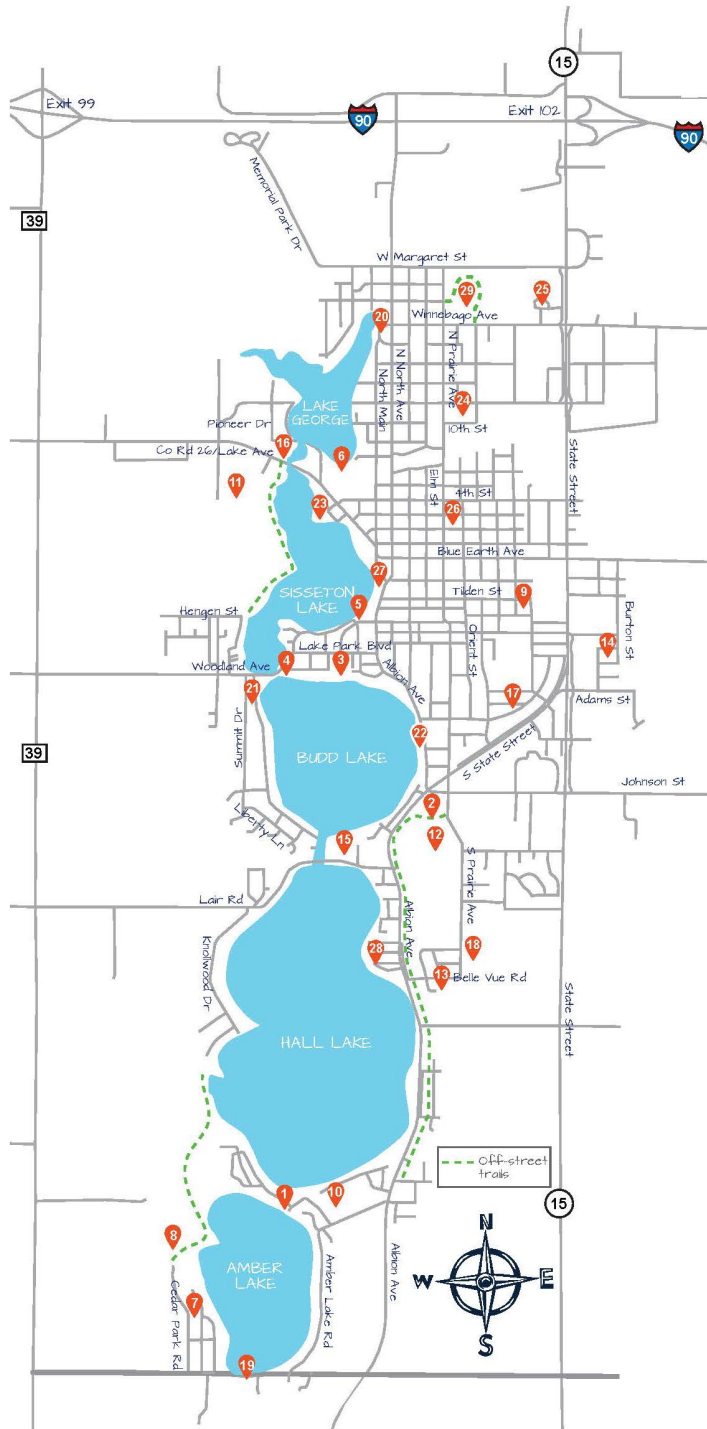
Continue to work with Public Safety to provide a presence in city parks and promote safety on the lakes.

Parks as Tourism

Work with Visit Fairmont and Chamber of Commerce to promote parks facilities and lake recreation opportunities to a broader audience.

Coordinated Programming

Collaborate with Community Education and Recreation and possibly the YMCA to provide the variety of activities that the residents demand.



Future Natural Resources Topics

Lakes and Water

The City is fortunate to have nearly 1,200 acres of lake area within the City's limits. They are divided into 5 distinct lakes: Amber, Hall, Budd, Sisseton, and George. The opportunities for the water enthusiast is further improved by 4 of the 5 lakes being connected by navigation channels. These channels allow access for users to 1,000 acres of water without having to get out of your boat. The Fairmont Lakes Foundation (FLF) exists to promote good stewardship of the lakes and streams. The City should continue working with the FLF to advance this stewardship initiative and promote access through water recreation opportunities.

City will continue to provide and maintain public fishing opportunities as well as multiple boat landings and associated parking to accommodate the boating/fishing/recreation community. Future improvements to be considered include:

- Gomsrud Park boat landing renovations
- Invasive species protection and prevention
- Water quality projects (stand-alone and enhanced storm sewer projects)

Agricultural Land

The City is surrounded by heavy agricultural land uses. These areas serve as the watershed for the City's lakes. As farming practices change, the City will need to monitor these changes and how they may affect the water quality of the lakes. Continued partnering with the Soil and Water Conservation District on projects within the City's limits will be beneficial to lake users. The City may also need to consider projects outside its boundaries that would have an impact on stormwater runoff within its watershed.

Goals & Strategies

PR 1. Provide High Quality Parks and Recreational Facilities (Big Idea 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 11)

PR 1-1. Conduct a Parks and Recreation Master Plan process to provide a detailed parks and recreation strategy and recommendations for the parks system in accordance with Comprehensive Plan recommendations

PR 1-2. Continue to improve and install educational and directional trail system signage

PR 1-3. Require dedicated park and open space in new developments. Update design guidelines, subdivision requirements, and zoning code to ensure the amount and quality of public open space on development parcels

PR 1-4. Explore funding opportunities to ensure the city's park system is well maintained and to provide for regular updates and improvements of facilities

PR 2. Leverage the City's Natural Resources to Drive Economic Development (Big Idea 1, 2, 3, 6, 12)

PR 2-1. Establish unifying design elements and branding across all parks

PR 2-2. Coordinate with business community and visitor's bureau to advertise the City's unique parks and natural setting to tourists and regional visitors

PR 2-3. Collaborate across city departments to ensure broad success of parks and trail systems

PR 2-4. Explore development of trail system around the system of lakes

PR 2-5. Provide opportunities for people to gather, celebrate, and enjoy culture, music, and food

PR 3. Plan a park system that is accessible to all (Big Idea 2, 11)

PR 3-1. Ensure park and facility designs are accessible to the broadest range of individuals regardless of difference in age, ethnicity, mobility level, income, etc.

PR 3-2. Considerations may include type and design of facilities, access to parks via transit, discounted or sliding scale programming fees, signage in multiple languages, etc.

PR 3-3. Update or add playgrounds to increase the types and amounts of activities children of all ages and abilities can partake in. Improvements may include nature play areas, play structures design for accessibility, digital interactive elements, continuous play design and/or immersive educational play

PR 3-4. Provide a mix of events and programs geared towards all ages, interests, and cultures

PR 4. Provide passive park spaces, open space, and natural areas (Big Idea 2, 3, 11)

PR 4-1. Target the most beautiful, unique, historically significant and/or environmentally sensitive areas for growth when purchasing/allocating land for parks

PR 4-2. Encourage native, drought resistant, edible and pollinator friendly landscapes on park properties

PR 4-3. Enhance landscaping, trees and natural settings in existing active parks to provide shade, interest and ecological benefits

PR 4-4. Explore development of park and trail system along Center Creek

PR 5. Protect, preserve, and enhance Fairmont's water resources (Big Idea 3, 8)

PR 5-1. Preserve and restore rivers, streams and wetlands to provide floodwater retention, groundwater recharge, nutrient assimilation, wildlife habitat, shoreline protection and safe drinking water

PR 5-2. Continue to improve existing drainage infrastructure and promote use of alternative stormwater design solutions such as rain gardens, pervious hardscaping and on-site stormwater treatment

PR 5-3. Identify and follow best practices for groundwater use and protection

PR 5-4. Implement existing plans and strategies, including Comprehensive Surface Water Management Plan and enforce the Shoreland and Floodplain Ordinances and Wetland Conservation Act

PR 5-5. Consider adopting and using Minnesota's Minimal Impact Design Standards (MIDS) to address site stormwater runoff and pollution

PR 5-6. Develop a plan to minimize invasive and exotic plants and animals

PR 6. Protect, preserve, and enhance Fairmont’s open space and other natural resources (Big Idea 3, 8)

PR 6-1. Preserve the region’s farmland through strategic growth and development patterns

PR 6-2. Conduct a Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment

PR 6-3. Develop policies to prevent habitat fragmentation and altering of high-quality natural areas

PR 6-4. Maintain a healthy urban tree canopy. Continue to expand the urban tree canopy through street and park projects and encouragement of tree planting on private lands by property owners.

Public Infrastructure & Services

Vision

The overall health and well-being of the Fairmont community relies not on one agency or organization; rather, it is a combination of many systems working together to ensure the community is able to live long, healthy lives. Those systems include public health agencies, healthcare providers, public safety agencies, education and youth development organizations, recreation and arts-related organizations, and economic and environmental organizations. Supporting those systems and facilitating their synergy is Fairmont's public infrastructure. It keeps the lights on, the water running, and the community safe for those organizations to remain effective and diligent in their service to the public.

Introduction

The investments cities make beyond land use have a direct impact on the quality of life for residents. Infrastructure impacts the walkability of a city, which allows people to lead healthier lives. Facilities provide residents safe spaces to gather and opportunities for lifelong learning. Investments in police and fire personnel, training and equipment provide a sense that the community is a safe place to live, work, and play.

Issues & Opportunities

Issues

- Southern Minnesota Education Campus (SMEC) and other city-owned facilities are underutilized
- Fire station facility requires updates
- Storm sewer needs must be reevaluated in light of updated rainfall data
- Electric distribution system is limited in ability to handle large developments
- Additional resources are needed for more police officers to address safety concerns

Opportunities

- A new community center is being evaluated with a potential YMCA partnership
- A new public works facility is scheduled for completion between years 2020 and 2021
- The City is implementing a comprehensive advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) network and associated software
- As expressed through the Active Transportation Plan, the City supports a healthy, active lifestyle throughout the community and is committed to investments that promote active modes of transportation
- Renewable energy systems offer alternatives to traditional sources, adding diversity to the community's energy portfolio, reducing reliance on existing energy infrastructure, and potentially offering a new revenue stream for landowners interested in leasing land to accommodate wind and solar energy infrastructure

Existing Conditions

Existing Plans & Studies

The following is a list of plans and studies that guide the development and maintenance of facilities and resources within the City of Fairmont.

- Storm Drainage Master Plan (1996)
- Fairmont Water Treatment Plant Facility Plan (2009)
- Water Distribution Modeling (2013)
- Fire Station Feasibility Report (2015)
- Public Works Facility Feasibility Report (2015)
- Fairmont Regional Wellness Center Study (2016)
- Surface Water Assessment (2019)
- Potential Economic Impact of a City-Owned Campground in Fairmont, Minnesota (2019)
- WWTP Facility Plan (2020)

Fairmont Public Utilities

The Fairmont Public Utilities is a municipal utility serving about 11,000 residential and commercial customers. The customer base consists of approximately 4,997 residential, 843 commercial, and 17 industrial users. The utility provides electric, water, sewer, and storm sewer services to customers within city limits and over 200 rural customers. The utility is governed by a five-member commission appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council.

Public Infrastructure & Services Topics

Drinking Water

Water for the City of Fairmont is supplied by surface water drawn from Budd Lake. The City maintains 83 miles of water mains within its distribution system. In 2013, the city completed construction of a \$31 million state-of-the-art water treatment plant including a new intake facility located on the shore of Budd Lake. Once the water from Budd Lake is treated and softened, it is store in three elevated and two ground storage tanks.

Future Improvements

- Closure of the existing lime ponds
- Replace existing ground storage tanks
- AMI meter replacement
- Evaluate power plant water tower

Sanitary Sewer

The City of Fairmont's Wastewater Treatment Plant is an activated sludge system, which can handle a daily flow of 11.6 million gallons of effluent. Plant effluent water is pumped within the treatment plant to be reused wherever it is needed, eliminating the need for the City to use costly municipal water in its plant. Wastewater is collected through a system utilizing 75 miles of sewer lines and 29 lift stations.

Future Improvements

- Prioritize lift station repairs and renovations
- Upgrade bio-solids handling and UV disinfection systems

Storm Water Management

The City of Fairmont is located in the Blue Earth River watershed and its storm sewer system discharges directly to our chain of lakes, which ultimately flow to the Blue Earth River. The storm sewer system consists of approximately 42 miles of storm piping. The pollutants carried off of the City's streets, parking lots and property can affect the water quality in our lakes and rivers, which are used for public recreation, aquatic life, and most importantly, consumption.

The City is responsible for maintaining a Minnesota General National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit for Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s).

To comply with the NPDES Permit, the City is enforcing a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (SWPPP). The City's SWPPP includes best management practices (BMPs) designed to reduce negative impacts on water quality to the maximum extent possible. The SWPPP includes 6 control measures:

1. Public Education and Outreach
2. Public Participation and Involvement
3. Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination
4. Construction Site Runoff Controls
5. Post-Construction Stormwater Management
6. Pollution Prevention/Good Housekeeping for Municipal Operations

Future Improvements

- Maintain ordinances to meet the requirements of the MS4 Permit
- Update storm drainage master plan for Atlas 14 rainfall data

Water Quality Initiatives

The City is partnering with the Fairmont Lakes Foundation (FLF) and the Martin County Soil and Water Conservation District (MCSWCD) to address water quality within the chain of lakes. In 2019, the City will be awarded two grants totaling over nearly \$1.5 million to improve water quality from the runoff within the Dutch Creek watershed. This watershed is the second largest that feeds the City's chain of lakes. These lakes serve as the source for the City's drinking water. The grant funds will be implemented with construction projects beginning in 2020 and extending through 2023. In addition, future grant funding is pending from the EPA through the MCSWCD to provide additional treatment measures within the Dutch Creek watershed. These large projects in addition to the City's local stormwater ordinance and MS4 permit requirements will offer many benefits in the future to improved water quality in the chain of lakes.

Electrical Distribution (Line Department)

Electricity for the City of Fairmont comes from 140 miles of overhead and underground lines, 5 miles of 69KV transmission line, and 3 substations. In 2014, the City constructed a new Electric Distribution Warehouse to increase the reliability of the electric distribution system for many years to come.

Fairmont is a member of Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, SMMPA, a not-for-profit joint-action agency. Through the agency, the eighteen-member communities invest in long-term sources of reliable and affordable power. Power generation from SMMPA comes from several sources include coal, natural gas and diesel plants as well as wind, solar and methane facilities. SMMPA just released a notice of its plan to be 80 percent carbon-free by 2030.

Future Improvements

- Create electric distribution model and infrastructure recommendations
- AMI meter installation
- Load management updates
- Transformer replacement at Fairmont Energy Station
- Construction of a new substation

Public Facilities

- City Hall - Offices for the City's administrative government
- Water Treatment Plant - Raw water intake building
- Wastewater Treatment Plant - Wastewater shop and engineering building
- Line Department Buildings - Offices, shops, four outbuildings
- Public Works Building - Vehicle storage, maintenance, and salt storage

- Liquor Store - the community's liquor store
- SMEC - Potential to host post-secondary school options

Future Improvements

Community Center Building

The primary goals of this study were to investigate the feasibility of planning and locating a community center within Fairmont and the ability of this facility to serve the needs and desires of the City of Fairmont. Oertel Architects and Bolton and Menk as the design team was tasked with the following to evaluate the overall feasibility of this project in the City of Fairmont and the surrounding region:

- Review previous studies conducted over the years
- Review the wants and desires of residents collected by the 1590 Group
- Develop a space needs building program based on those wants and desires
- Assign sizes and shapes to those space needs
- Evaluate spatial relationships between facility uses
- Develop very early schematic facility layouts to evaluate potential sites
- Evaluate potential sites
- Provide a preferred schematic site layout
- Provide an initial, total project construction cost estimate
- Provide initial recommendations on funding for construction and on-going operation of a new facility

Police

The City of Fairmont has 17 full time officers as well as two Records Technicians, and one Animal Control/Code Enforcement Officer. The City of Fairmont also has a Civil Service Commission which is comprised of three community members who are responsible for providing civilian assistance and oversight to the Fairmont Police Department with regards to personnel related issues including initial hiring, promotions, and other civil service related activities. The Police Civil Service Commission adheres to the rules and regulations set for the in the Police Civil Service Commission policy book. Police Civil Service Commission members are appointed to a three-year term at the approval of the City Council.

Fire

The Fairmont Fire Department is a volunteer/paid on call fire department. Located at the junction of Interstate 90 and U.S. Highway 15, in south central Minnesota, and protects a response area of approximately 228 square miles and 15,000 residents. In addition to responding to calls within city limits, the Department assists with emergency efforts of the surrounding townships of Center Creek, East Chain, Fairmont, Fraser, Pleasant Prairie, Rolling Green, Rutland and Silver Lake. All firefighters receive extensive training, and some are experienced in more technical fields such as Advanced Auto Extrication and Technical Rescues, such as confined space, high level, grain bin and water.

Safety Council

Fairmont has a Safety Council that serves as the committee to receive complaints and suggestions from citizens regarding traffic and pedestrian safety issues, and other items which pertain to general safety and make recommendations to the Council. The Safety Council meets

once per month to develop solutions to complaints in consultation with the Chief of Police, Director of Community Development and the Director of Public Works. They also make recommendations to the City Council in any area affecting the general health and well-being of the community.

Medical

The City of Fairmont is well-served by medical services, having XX hospitals and medical centers within City limits, including Mayo Clinic Health System services. Based on feedback received by the community, they would like to see Fairmont become a regional hub for medical services. A larger medical presence in the City has the potential to promote the reputation of Fairmont to a larger audience, attract investment, spur economic development, and generate more revenue to improve City services.

Community Health

Community health can be measured by a myriad of indicators. In general, it is important for Fairmont to decide and prioritize what is important to the City and community and come up with a strategy for improvement. The best way to understand a community's health needs and to find opportunities for improvement is to start by monitoring or collecting data about the current health status. Below are some examples of desired "big picture" health goals that contribute to a healthy community, that also tie into many other aspects of this Plan:

- Healthy housing for all household sizes and incomes
- Access to affordable healthy foods
- Reduced exposure to air pollutants, hazardous materials, and/or nuisances
- Increased physical activity
- Increased access to greenery
- Increased safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists
- Increased personal safety
- Climate resilient communities

Goals & Strategies

Drinking Water

IS 1. Maintain existing drinking water system (Big Idea 6, 8)

IS 1-1. Regularly evaluate and assess water distribution system for efficiency, effectiveness, and safety

IS 1-2. Continue planned maintenance and improvement projects

IS 1-3. Perform necessary maintenance and replacement of equipment at water treatment plant

IS 1-4. Right size and balance growth expectations with the redevelopment efforts to preserve and utilize existing infrastructure

IS 1-5. Continue working with the Minnesota Department of Health on the Source Water Protection Plan and implementation

Sanitary Sewer

IS 2. Maintain sanitary system (Big Idea 6, 8)

IS 2-1. Evaluate wastewater collection system

IS 2-2. Continue planned maintenance and improvement projects

IS 2-3. Complete facility plan and implement maintenance renovations at wastewater facility

Storm Water Management

IS 3. Plan for changes to climate and major rainfall events to preserve resources, improve quality of life, and protect the public (Big Idea 3, 6, 8)

IS 3-1. Update storm water management plan utilizing Atlas 14 rainfall standards

IS 3-2. Continue to implement water quality improvements to reduce nitrates within the Chain of Lakes and other watershed bodies

IS 3-3. Partner with the MCSWCD and FLF

IS 3-4. Implement storm water improvements, especially within floodplains

City Electrical

IS 4. Main electrical system (Big Idea 6, 8)

IS 4-1. Maintain distribution system and perform necessary maintenance.

IS 4-2. Complete system model to identify distribution needs and improvements for added system load

Public Facilities

IS 5. Collaborate with the public and partner agencies to provide accessible facilities which meet the needs of a variety of user groups (Big Idea 2, 6, 8)

IS 5-1. Provide barrier-free public facilities to accommodate people with disabilities, in accordance with ADA requirements, while improving existing non-compliant facilities over time

IS 5-2. Regularly engage with the public, school district, county, businesses, and other stakeholders to review and plan for public facilities needs

IS 5-3. Continue to evaluate future community center needs and opportunities

IS 6. Update and maintain facilities and operations on an ongoing basis through regular capital improvement planning and annual budgeting (Big Idea 2, 6, 8)

IS 6-1. The capital improvement plan shall be reviewed annually to address items identified within the Comprehensive Plan

Resiliency

IS 7. Develop and encourage public and private renewable energy production systems (Big Idea 2, 3, 5, 6, 8)

IS 7-1. Reserve and preserve appropriate public space for renewable energy production

IS 7-2. Integrate renewable energy systems into city projects and in partnership with private business

IS 7-3. Conduct education and outreach efforts to promote the use of renewable energy production systems

IS 8. Promote and integrate resource efficient systems into public and private facilities (Big Idea 2, 3, 5, 6, 8)

IS 8-1. Promote on-site composting facilities in business and residential settings

IS 8-2. Explore community-wide organics recycling, composting, and other waste reduction opportunities

IS 8-3. Incorporate water-reduction technologies in city-owned buildings and facilities

IS 8-4. Establish a policy for fuel efficiency standards for city fleet vehicles

IS 8-5. Conduct an energy audit of city-owned buildings in order to improve their environmental sustainability

IS 8-6. Allow for and encourage green roofs on residential and commercial buildings

IS 8-7. Allow for and encourage electronic vehicle charging stations

IS 8-8. Encourage adaptive reuse of existing/historic buildings

Safety

IS 9. Develop community systems and policies for hazard prevention and mitigation (Big Ideas 2, 3, 7, 9, 11)

IS 9-1. Develop strategies and policies to ensure an organized approach to disaster recovery, including close partnership with Martin County Emergency Management

IS 9-2. Facilitate public education to promote general awareness of city's disaster response plan

IS 9-3. Develop water management policies to ensure an adequate water supply during periods of severe drought

IS 9-4. Develop a flood preparedness strategy to address more frequent and severe flooding

IS 9-5. Develop municipal response plan to address extreme heat and localized flooding events.

IS 9-6. Incorporate strategies to stop the spread of possible infectious diseases

IS 10. Improve public safety (Big Ideas 2, 7, 9, 11)

IS 10-1. Regularly review and address right-sizing of Public and Fire departments to address and accommodate population and job growth, including review of staffing and resource levels

IS 10-2. Provide neighborhood groups training, networking and organizational opportunities to increase relationship building, coordination, and collaboration in addressing crime and safety

IS 10-3. Continued participation in events to build relationships between public safety and the community, especially youth, people of color, and low-income

IS 10-4. Use Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies to improve public safety and security

IS 10-5. Work to address potential gaps between the perception and reality of crime

IS 10-6. Partner with other city departments, government agencies and community groups to proactively address crime through innovative measures

Public Health

IS 11. Promote public health in public and community spaces (Big Idea 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12)

IS 11-1. Adopt smoke-free policies for city buildings and parks

IS 11-2. Support goals and strategies set forth in the Parks, Trails and Open Space, Land Use, Housing, and Transportation sections

IS 11-3. Identify and remove barriers to local food systems in zoning code and land use policy

IS 11-4. Support access to healthy foods through neighborhood grocery stores, community gardens, farmers markets, food shelves, and other access points

IS 11-5. Take a comprehensive perspective of community health and consider the impacts and connections of health to housing, transportation, jobs, education, and park access

IS 12. Maintain a high quality of life through regular, fair and consistent code enforcement (Big Idea 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11)

IS 12-1. Allocate the resources necessary to maintain code enforcement and compliance

IS 12-2. Address issues proactively by regularly educating the community of code enforcement issues

IS 12-3. Proactively check for property maintenance issues and concerns

IS 12-4. Coordinate management of quality of life issues across departments through regular communication and team work

Implementation

Implementation Overview

The city's comprehensive plan provides a long-range vision for the community, while also serving as a guide for how the community can turn that vision into reality over time. The plan establishes high-level community priorities, a broad set of recommended goals, strategies and tactics to address those priorities, and big ideas to inspire the community to action.

Some recommendations in the plan may be relatively easy to accomplish in a short period of time but implementing the plan and its many recommendations will not happen all at once, and most objectives will likely be reached incrementally. Indeed, many recommendations and envisioned opportunities are highly aspirational, and will require the community to prioritize what it wants to achieve, how quickly it wants to do so, and how it wants to allocate resources toward the goal. Implementation of priority initiatives will require concentrated efforts among a variety of interested parties, from city government and elected officials, to private entities, community organizations, and other government agencies over the course of many years.

This plan is a starting point for those activities, which might include additional studies and more focused planning initiatives, the creation of new task forces or implementation partnerships, fund raising and capital programming, and many other targeted efforts. Fairmont has experienced a great deal of change over the past few decades, which has brought with it challenges related to economic development, growth, and maintenance of infrastructure. Understandably, concerns about the community's identity and what the future holds exist as well.

This plan is designed to guide Fairmont toward harnessing change and maximizing opportunities for all of our residents and stakeholders. With strategic investments and partnerships, thoughtful policy development, on-going community engagement and deliberate decision-making, Fairmont can position itself as a community of choice in the years to come.

Implementation Tools

The comprehensive plan will be implemented through a variety of tools including:

- **Projects** that improve public infrastructure and facilities, including roads, sewers, parks, trails, sidewalk, utilities, and public facilities such as City Hall, fire stations and the community center
- **Policies** as rules and regulations that govern the community,
- **Plans** that provide detailed strategic study of an area, topic or issue
- **Programs**, initiatives or other offerings which may include events, support or education
- **Practices** or ways the city does work, whether formal policies or informal practices
- **Partnerships** that, with additional hands, make the work lighter and engage across silos
- **Promotion**, including public education and engagement which involves working with the community to build awareness of an issue, provide education, and engage in finding solutions

Projects

The city is responsible for constructing, maintaining and replacing its streets, parks, facilities, infrastructure and equipment. Fairmont Forward presents a set of possible projects that the city and its partners could undertake to improve the livability and vitality of the community. As the community decides to take on any of these improvements, they must be included in, and budgeted for, in a Capital Improvement Program and the city's annual budget.

Capital Improvement Program

A Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is a five-year plan to provide and maintain public facilities for the residents and businesses of Fairmont, balanced against constraints of available resources. Capital improvements are the projects that require the expenditure of public funds for the acquisition, construction or replacement of the infrastructure necessary for communities. Capital planning is critical to the continuation of essential public services, as well as being an important component of a community's economic development program. The city should update and adopt a new five-year CIP on an annual basis. Upon adoption, the capital improvement planning process should mirror the goals of Fairmont Forward.

Priority Projects

Many projects rated as high priorities by the community are recognized in the 12 Big Ideas for Fairmont. As the community strives to implement the Big Ideas, several transportation, parks, economic development, placemaking, and infrastructure projects will be involved.

The City should prioritize identifying the critical projects needed to catalyze implementation of the Big Ideas and incorporate them into the CIP. Other projects that may be included as priorities in the CIP will be identified as the high priority plan goals are being studied and implemented. Goal statements from the plan that were identified as high priority and also include projects as part of their implementation are marked in the implementation matrix at the end of this section.

Policies

Fairmont Forward lays out an aspirational vision for the community. However, it is the rules and regulations documented in the City Code which set the legal framework for implementing the vision on a day-to-day basis. The City Code is a set of adopted ordinances which regulate all components of the community. The following outlines some of the City Code amendments which will need to be made or explored in order to implement Fairmont Forward.

Zoning & Subdivision Code

The city of Fairmont exercises its zoning authority to regulate the use and development of land within the city. Zoning is intended to promote and protect the health, safety and welfare of the community and its residents.

The zoning code, adopted by the City Council, defines the current rights that owners have for their properties by dividing the city into zoning districts. The ordinance regulates the types of uses which can occur in each zoning district, as well as the specific building and development standards for each zoning district (residential, commercial or industrial). The district boundaries are depicted on a zoning map.

The subdivision code establishes the regulations, requirements and procedures for platting of land within the city. Much like the zoning code, the subdivision code is intended to protect the health, safety and well-being of the community.

The subdivision code outlines the city's design standards for new development, including standards for grading, erosion control, storm sewer, sanitary sewer, utilities, street lights, streets and alleys, sidewalks and trails, lots and blocks, and parks and landscaping. In conjunction with study and review of the zoning code, the city will explore necessary changes and updates to the subdivision code.

The city should update its zoning and subdivision codes to meet current market expectations, realities, land use patterns and community aspirations and to be in alignment with Fairmont Forward. After some study, the city may pursue a wholesale overhaul of its zoning and subdivision codes. In many ways, the existing development code is cumbersome, outdated and difficult to use and understand.

Plans

Strategic Planning

The comprehensive plan lays out a wide-sweeping and aspirational vision for the next 20 years. To implement the plan in a reasonable and realistic manner, it will be important for the city to conduct regular strategic planning that identifies priorities, analyzes new and shifting data trends and circumstances, assesses available resources and continually engages the community. The City Council will be encouraged to continue its history of outlining priorities on an annual basis. From the stated priorities, staff shall create an annual work plan for each department to execute the priorities.

Functional Area Plans

Fairmont Forward's chapters outline the general direction for the city's land use, housing, parks, transportation and infrastructure. The comprehensive plan does not, nor is it intended to, provide a deep analysis or plan for each of these planning elements. Functional area plans or system plans are intended to serve as more detail-oriented and specific plans, focused on expanding and addressing the goals as outlined in the comprehensive plan. The city should explore conducting plans in the following areas:

Small Area Plans

The various sections of this plan outline changes city-wide with some direction provided for specific areas or neighborhoods. Small area plans are like a comprehensive plan, yet different in scale, identifying more granular issues, opportunities and action items. Areas identified for additional include:

1. Lakeview West
2. Center Creek
3. Harsco Rail
4. Downtown
5. Blue Earth Avenue Corridor

Parks, Recreation & Trail Plan

The city's parks and natural setting are one of its most admired assets. To strategically harness and leverage these assets, the city should conduct a parks master plan process. The plan would review and update plans for the park system, coordinate recreational programming efforts with local partners, provide maintenance, operations, and budgeting plans, study communications and branding efforts, and explore connections to the water, trail improvements and natural and open space preservation, and placemaking and programming opportunities.

Transportation Plan(s)

Providing transportation options and a safe and balanced transportation system is a priority of the community. Achieving the transportation goals laid out in Fairmont Forward will require some careful planning. The city should undertake a process in which it reviews its transportation plans and policies, likely leading to the adoption of a Complete Streets policy. Any study of the transportation system should build upon the city's existing Active Transportation Plan.

Safety around the city's schools was specifically raised as a concern. The city expects to partner with other agencies to pursue a city-wide Safe Routes to School plan.

Housing Plan

The affordability of housing has consistently been raised as a concern of the community. The city should consider further studying housing issues, exploring opportunities to set the stage for more housing options and reduce costs, including regulatory barriers.

Environmental Stewardship

The city should explore opportunities to be better stewards of the environment and natural resources through the GreenStep Cities program. In addition to the GreenStep Cities Program, the city should continue to grow its collaborative relationship with the community partners in restoring natural areas along the Chain of Lakes, preserving historical areas and sensitive environments.

Economic Development

The city's businesses provide job opportunities, fun and interesting things to do, goods and services necessary for modern life and a strong tax base. It is important for the city to foster economic growth. The city should explore opportunities to improve its economic development services, programs and initiatives. As the workforce, workplace, and economy changes, the city will need to regular adapt and adjust.

Community Engagement

Engaging the community in matters of public policy is critical to the success of public endeavors. Engagement builds pride and ownership in the community and reveals new and innovative ideas, projects and programs. The city should explore opportunities to better engage and communicate with the public.

Programs

The city offers a variety of programs to its residents including civic, social, educational and recreational. Fairmont Forward lays out several possible program improvements for which the city will explore.

Programs the city should continue, improve, or introduce include:

- Community events and festivals such as Interlaken Heritage days, farmers market, athletic tournaments, and cultural, history, and music festivals
- Coordinated events with the Visitors and Convention Bureau, School District, Martin County, neighborhood groups, nonprofits, and the business community
- Transportation policy education and safety programs such as Safe Routes to School
- Education and networking programs for entrepreneurs, business owners and developers such as Business Round Table
- Recreation programs identified in the upcoming Parks & Recreation master planning efforts
- Community education programs identified as priorities through other planning processes or community feedback
- Environmental education programs concerning community services such as stormwater management, recycling, aquatic ecology, or other priorities identified in allied plans

Practices

To provide services in an efficient and effective manner, while maintaining high-quality customer service and supporting the needs of all residents requires a careful and strategic approach. How the services are provided is as important as what services are offered. Additionally, the internal operations and functionality of the city are critical to being a high functioning organization. The city should explore its policies – formal and informal – to better serve the public and its employees.

Community Engagement

As previously described, engaging the community is necessary and critical to the success of projects as well as a best practice of good government. The city should explore opportunities to better engage the community, including residents of all backgrounds, experiences, ages, races, income levels, language and geography.

Communications

External Communications

The City of Fairmont communicates with residents, businesses and media through a variety of mediums, including the city's newsletter, website, government access cable television channel, e-newsletter, social media, news releases and various other sources. The city should continue to stay abreast of new mediums and ways to reach its residents and businesses.

Internal Communications

To function as one unit, it is important for the city to have strong internal communications. With a staff of hundreds across multiple departments, it is important, although sometimes difficult, to share information, news and resources across silos and work units. The city will explore opportunities to increase and improve internal communications.

Human Resources and Administration

As of 2019, the city employs approximately XXX full-time, XXX part-time and more than XXX seasonal employees. As workplace and employee expectations and needs change, the city should adjust accordingly to remain a competitive and supportive workplace. The city should consider necessary changes to its internal human resource process and procedures.

Partners

Fairmont Forward represents a comprehensive and community-wide plan for the future. While it is a document of the City of Fairmont, the plan will be realized when it is owned, adopted, and executed across silos, demographics, and roles. The success of Fairmont relies on everyone who lives and works in the community.

As an organization, the City has limited financial and non-financial resources. Simply put, it can't do it alone with the resources it has available. Additionally, there are areas in which the City may not be the most logical organization to lead an effort. For example, the School Districts community education efforts, the business community's tourism and business promotion efforts, and the County's maintenance of its own trails, streets, and social services.

More can be done, however, when people join together. The City should explore new and innovative partnerships to achieve more with less. Through partnerships, everyone can work smarter, not harder. Potential partnerships include, but are not limited to:

- County, regional, and state government
- Public and private schools
- Faith-based communities
- Business and tourism groups
- Neighborhood groups and nonprofits
- Health care
- Recreation and athletic associations
- Bike and pedestrian advocates
- Environmental stewardship groups

Promotion

In addition to the services it provides, the city regularly educates and engages the community on a variety of issues from public safety to government services to community happenings. The city should continue to explore and leverage opportunities to educate and engage the community.

Education and engagement opportunities include:

- Informational updates and opportunities for hands-on participation in any future planning effort, policy update or initiation of new program or service
- Continued use of e-newsletter and press releases for community outreach
- Embedded feedback systems in city services such as regular surveys on websites, in water/utility bills, and made available at the community facilities
- Use of pilot projects and programs to inform the public of possible improvements
- Partnership and coordination with community education providers to address community needs

Funding Sources

Government Funds

The city maintains 24 individual governmental funds. Information is presented separately in the city's annual budget and budget report. The major funds include the General Fund, Economic Development Authority Special Revenue Fund, the Capital Improvements budget, Community Center and Ice Arena, City Hall Fund and TIF District No. 17 Capital Project funds.

The City should regularly monitor legislative initiatives such as use of local option sales taxes, transportation utility, transit taxes as well new or as changes in existing funding programs and adapt local funding policies as appropriate best utilize its resources for community improvements.

Housing Funding

Economic Development Funding

Transportation Funding

- A. MSAS System. The State of Minnesota, through the gas tax and license fees, collects funds to be used to construct and maintain the State's transportation system. Most of the funds collected are distributed for use on the State's Trunk Highway (TH) system, the County State Aid Highway (CSAH) system and the Municipal State Aid Street (MSAS) system. Of the funds available they are distributed 62% TH, 29% CSAH and 9% MSAS. Cities with a population above 5,000 are eligible to receive a portion of the MSAS funding. Funds are allocated based on a mileage "needs" and population formula. Fairmont currently (2008) receives approximately \$567,000 annually in state aid funding for use on its 19.7 miles of designated state aid routes (\$538,000) and maintenance (\$29,000).
- B. Federal Funding. Fairmont may apply for federal funds for highways through the Surface Transportation Program of the Federal Highway Trust Fund, through MnDOT's Areas Transportation Partnership (ATP). Solicitation occurs approximately every two years, with federal funding covering 80% of a project's cost. This funding is generally very competitive although there is a reasonable effort to rotate funds through all counties and MSAS cities in the District. In the past, MSAS cities could expect consideration for federal funding at about seven year intervals. With recent funding limitations and greater demand, as well as increasingly tighter project eligibility standards, all projects must be highly competitive with all other District-wide requests. Types of projects funded include highway reconstruction, safety projects, trails which are part of projects, transit and park-and-ride projects. Fairmont received federal funding for the Center Creek and Aquatic park trail in 2003 under federal T21 program enhancements funding. Current federal SAFET-LU program criteria emphasize funding for projects focused on safety improvements.
- C. Assessments. Fairmont currently funds approximately one-third of its annual capital improvement program with property assessments administered under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 429. A special assessment policy was developed in 1990 to guide local assessment practices. The assessment process recognizes the special benefit to impacted property owners, measured in increased value of properties due to improved transportation and other infrastructure. Based on operation of the public input portion of the assessment process, the current policy appears to be working satisfactorily. With increasing project costs and

improvement needs, assessment practices will need to be continually reviewed to assure that, in addition to funding needs, statutory and other legal obligations are met.

- D. **Utility Fees.** The public utility portion of transportation projects - including sanitary sewer, watermain and storm sewer facilities - has been financed locally using utility fees. This funding source recognizes the importance of the total infrastructure and spreads costs to user based on utility uses. The adequacy of each fund's utility rates is evaluated on an annual basis. Owing to significant needs at the City's wastewater and water treatment facilities, a lesser portion of these fees may become available for use on roadway reconstruction projects or, alternatively, water and sanitary sewer fees may need to be increased to cover those additional needs. Also, with growing statutory and other regulatory stormwater management requirements, it is anticipated that increases will be needed in storm water utility rates to cover those obligations.
- E. **Property Taxes.** A significant portion of the City's transportation costs are financed through general obligation bonding and property taxes to cover principal and interest payments on the bonds. The nature of this component of project funding is to recognize the general city-wide benefit for transportation infrastructure and to distribute a portion of project costs to all property owners in the community, not just those directly benefited by the current work.
- F. **Mn/DOT Cooperative Funds.** The State of Minnesota has funds available to assist with cooperative projects that increase safety and mobility. Solicitations are due in October each year for construction the following year.
- G. **Minnesota Railroad-Highway Grade Crossing Safety Improvement Program.** This program is available to increase the safety at at-grade railroad crossings. Funds may be used for the installation of warning devices, signal installation and upgrades, signs and pavement markings, crossing closures, roadway relocations, lighting, crossing alignments and grade improvements and grade separations.
- H. **MN Department of Natural Resources Grants.** Various federal and state grants are available for the development or reconstruction of trails. Typically grants require a 50% match and illustration that the trail is not only of local importance but also of regional significance. Grant programs through the DNR for trail projects include the Federal Recreational Trail Grant Program, Regional Trail Grant Program, Outdoor Recreation Grant Program, and Local Trail Connections Program.
- I. **Developers.** Developers have been required to fund, as part of the development process, all or most of the cost of new local streets included in new projects and may also portions of arterial and collector roadways attributable to their project.

Proprietary Funds

The city maintains three different types of proprietary funds. Enterprise funds are used to report the same functions presented as business-type activities. The city uses enterprise funds to account for its sewer, storm drainage and refuse operations. Internal service funds are an accounting device used to accumulate and allocate costs internally among the city's various functions. The city uses internal service funds to account for its fleet of vehicles and mobile equipment, its major buildings, the replacement park assets, information technology items, insurance funding and for employee compensated absences. All of these services predominantly benefit governmental, rather than business-type functions.

Implementation Matrix

[Insert from Excel]