



PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA

City of Brainerd, Minnesota
City Hall, 501 Laurel Street, Council Chambers
Wednesday, April 15, 2026 @ 5:00 PM

The public is invited to attend these meetings in person.

Attend by Phone: 1-469-250-2695 Meeting Access Code: 438 982 961#

Per MN Statutes 13D.02 Subd 1 Commissioners may participate by interactive technology.

Meetings are broadcast on CTC ch 8, Charter ch 181, YouTube, AppleTV, Roku, and Amazon FireTV

1. **Call To Order**

2. **Roll Call**

___ M. Duval ___ D. Gorham ___ J. Grecula ___ D. Peterson ___ T. Erickson ___ VACANT ___
VACANT

3. **Pledge of Allegiance**

4. **New Business**

A. **Comprehensive Plan Kick-Off - Bolton & Menk Presentation**

5. **Adjourn**

Visit the City's Website at www.ci.brainerd.mn.us

MISSION

"Provide high quality, cost effective public services and leadership in creating a sustainable city"



Real People. Real Solutions.

MEMORANDUM

Date: DRAFT 4/8/2026

To: City of Brainerd

From: Robin Caufman
Sarah Swedburg

Subject: Brainerd Comprehensive Plan Update: Review and Diagnosis

The goal of this 2026 update is to enhance the current Comprehensive Plan: align with current community goals and ensure they are being properly implemented while increasing the threshold in which a mandatory EAW is required for residential development. The following memo outlines the issues and content that will need to be addressed in this update.

Updated data

The current Comprehensive Plan was done before the 2020 Census data was available. We will update the population, housing, household, and economic data to reflect more current data and align with the data included in the City's recent Wastewater Treatment Facility Plan.

Review and prioritize goals

The Brainerd Comprehensive Plan covers nine topic areas with 2 to 5 goals identified in each topic. Each goal has up to seven policies or strategies that support each goal, which results in over 120 goals and policies. The implementation chapter identifies additional strategies related to each topic. Having these many goals can be difficult to manage and see progress. We propose prioritizing the goals and policies and developing a manageable road map for the city that provides direction and a way to measure progress.

To begin the work of updating the implementation plan, we asked the Planning Commission, City Council, and senior level staff for input on the existing goals and policies. This information will be compiled and used to provide insight into the work that has been accomplished, prioritize the continued work, and identify if anything is missing.

Accessibility and useability

The city did not have a native file of the current comprehensive plan, so we exported the layout into a MS Word document and formatted it using a style guide. This will allow us to easily edit and update the document. Further, it is now in a format that is ADA/Screen reader accessible. We had to delete the photos, graphics, and charts because they did not translate well through the conversion process.

Keeping them out for now allows us to focus on content and to make it a manageable working document. We will add back photos and graphical elements before we go out for public comment later this summer.

In addition to the formatting of the document, we also recommend moving content around to make it easier to use. For example, natural resources are oftentimes towards the end of a comprehensive plan. We propose moving it to be the second chapter, because the city's geology, water, and vegetation make up the foundation the city has to work with to create a sustainable community.

We also propose breaking up the goals and moving them to the appropriate chapter instead of having them all at the beginning of the plan. By doing this, each chapter has the goals, public input, existing conditions, and future plans for that subject area. This makes it easier for people to find all the information about one topic in that chapter instead of having to go through sections to find information.

EAW Review

Minnesota Rules 4410.4300 Subp. 19. Residential Development states:

D. 250 unattached units or 375 attached units in a city within the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area that have adopted a comprehensive plan under Minnesota Statutes, section 473.859, or in a city not located within the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area that has filed with the Environmental Quality Board (the "EQB") a certification that it has adopted a comprehensive plan containing the following elements:

1) a land use plan designating the existing and proposed location, intensity, and extent of use of land and water for residential, industrial, agricultural, and other public and private purposes;

The city's current comprehensive plan includes future land use. In this comprehensive plan update. We recommend adding a current land use map to the land use chapter and the location, intensity, and extent of the water system for the current and future land uses to the infrastructure chapter.

2) a transportation plan describing, designating, and scheduling the location, extent, function, and capacity of existing and proposed local public and private transportation facilities and services;

The city's current comprehensive plan lists the current roads, functional class, and jurisdiction. In this update, we will further develop the mobility chapter to include maps that visually depict the location, extent, function, and capacity of existing roads. Utilizing the future land use, we will also identify areas where improvements are needed to the transportation network

3) a sewage collection system policy plan describing, designating, and scheduling the areas to be served by the public system, the existing and planned capacities of the public system, and the standards and conditions under which the installation of private sewage treatment systems will be permitted;

The city **has/does not have** a sewage collection system policy plan. As part of this comprehensive plan update, we will ensure all the statutory requirements of this sewage collection system policy plan are met.

4) a capital improvements plan for public facilities; and

The city **has/does not have** a capital improvement plan (CIP) for public facilities. We will develop a high-level capital improvement plan that identifies and prioritizes needed improvements to support the city's future land use plan.

5) an implementation plan describing public programs, fiscal devices, and other actions to be undertaken to implement the comprehensive plan, and a description of official controls addressing the matters of zoning, subdivision, private sewage systems, and a schedule for the implementation of those controls. The EQB chair may specify the form to be used for making a certification under this item.

The updated implementation chapter will include a detailed matrix that identifies goals, strategies, priorities, and resources for implementation. The matrix will also identify the internal or external leaders of each implementation item. This will help the city to prioritize strategies and track progress by having a lead point person or department responsible for implementation.

Other chapters

Other than tweaks to the goals and policies and updating the population, housing and jobs data, the following chapters will have minimal edits or changes:

- Community Character
- Economic Development
- Parks and Recreation
- Public Safety



IMAGINE BRAINERD

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
UPDATE 2040

DRAFT 4/8/2026

Acknowledgements

CITY COUNCIL

- Dave Badeaux, Mayor
- Mike O’Day, Council President
- Kelly Bevans,
- Tad Erickson
- Gabe Johnson
- Jeff Czczok
- Kevin Yeager
- Kevin Stunek

PLANNING COMMISSION

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- Don Gorham, Chairman
- Justin Grecula, Vice Chairman
- David Peterson
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- Jessie Dehn, City Engineer/Public Works Director
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How to Use this Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is a leading policy tool that provides a series of steps to help achieve the shared community vision. This plan will help citizens and local leaders work together more efficiently to guide future growth and development within the city. The plan represents a shared vision for the future and a strategic roadmap to achieve it. The plan provides broad recommendations to guide and manage growth and development. These broad recommendations take the form of goals and policies that express the city's aspirations for the future.

Efforts to implement the plan's vision, goals, and strategies began upon adoption. This living document should be used for the day-to-day activities of city officials and staff and referenced as needed to justify specific actions. This plan should be easily accessible to elected and appointed officials and city staff, and should be explicitly referenced in land use decisions.

Comprehensive Plans are generally intended to provide direction over 10 to 20 years; however, they are most effective when updated every 5 years.

The plan provides specific recommendations that directly manage the city's growth and development. To utilize the full potential of the plan, it should be used to:

Guide city officials and staff to assist with a variety of tasks:

- Communication of the city vision for the future.
- Establishment of regulatory changes and permitting.
- Acquisition and use of land.
- Capital improvement planning.
- Development and infrastructure decisions.

Guide businesses, property owners, and residents in assisting them in:

- Determining potential property use.
- Understanding possible land use changes in the surrounding area.
- Establishing reasonable land use expectations.
- Understanding future infrastructure improvements.
- Improving and investing in property.

Guide developers with property acquisition and the coordination of plans with city goals, regulations, and infrastructure plans.

Assist and coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions on issues and topics of mutual interest.

1 Introduction

VISION STATEMENT

We seek to provide high-quality, year-round recreation, a strong workforce, and a variety of life experiences that support a welcoming place to live, work, play, stay, and learn for all.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Continue enhancing Brainerd’s neighborhoods in ways that encourage safety and a sense of community.
- Champion the range of employment opportunities available in the Brainerd Lakes Area (BLA).
- Promote the development and redevelopment of housing for a range of densities, types, and price points.
- Highlight, maintain, and enhance the recreational assets and opportunities located within Brainerd.
- Celebrate the unique qualities, attributes, and identities of Brainerd’s neighborhoods.
- Expand and enhance high-quality rental property opportunities in Brainerd by continuing to encourage best practices and accountability.
- Be active in a vibrant downtown, support existing businesses, new business development, housing, and cultural events, all tied to Brainerd’s historic character.
- Maintain and enhance infrastructure and recreational assets by considering both form and function.

OVERVIEW

This plan seeks to capture the critical momentum at this current juncture in the City of Brainerd. This plan sets forth a path to advance a different model of place for the city and to actively promote our role as the region's hub, building on our assets and strengths. Brainerd boasts a long list of iconic historic properties, notable neighborhoods, and a vibrant art community, and this plan provides a set of tools to help local places thrive. The city's distinct places play a role in the economic competitiveness, giving the City of Brainerd an edge over rival communities in Crow Wing County and beyond. In taking active strides to create the best Brainerd, people will be drawn to the city's distinctive and vibrant places and walkable neighborhoods. The content within this plan is set to create the best version of our city for future generations to live, work, play, stay, and learn.

The city is nestled in the heart of lakes country and welcomes a booming tourist population in the summer months. With a ballooning summer population, the city has an opportunity to leverage this base by attracting visitors by building on its assets. Located right on the Mississippi River, this national amenity offers a variety of active and passive recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. Brainerd's beautiful setting, progressive nature, and prime location make it a community with significant growth and change potential over the next 15 years.

Brainerd is home to over 18,000 workers per day, fueling medical, education, governmental, and professional office occupations. This is a drastic change from the city's historical backbone, where the majority of employment was in the railroad and paper mill in the prior century. Much of north and northeast Brainerd dates back to the 19th century, and a significant portion of the housing stock was built before 1930. Many of the original platted streets can

still be found throughout the city, along with centralized courtyards. A vital part of the city's identity is to capture and preserve the bits of history and seek ways to integrate modern architecture to meet the needs of all residents who seek to call Brainerd home.

HISTORY

The city was founded in 1870, when the Northern Pacific Railroad's crew determined that their crossing over the Mississippi River should occur here. As the city grew, it developed a prominent image as the railroad and wood-products center of north central Minnesota. Extensive railroad shops and yards dominated the city's industrial makeup for many years. To this day, the railroad plays a significant role in the city through its active main line. Much of the community's history and very existence can be traced to the railroad.

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

Brainerd is located roughly 60 miles north of St. Cloud on Highways 10 and 371; roughly 120 miles north of the Twin Cities. Brainerd is the largest city in Crow Wing County and serves as the county seat. The community lies at the intersection of the major east-west and north-south highways in Central Minnesota. Trunk highways 371, 210, 18, and 25 all converge within the community, connecting the entire state to this regional hub. Passersby visit the city from Fargo to Duluth, folks navigate east-west along this main thoroughfare, and tourists travel throughout the region to reach their recreational destinations.

The city is 8.4 square miles in size, containing 0.5 square miles of water in the various lakes, streams, wetlands, and the Mississippi River.

Home to 13,440 people (ACS 2016), the surrounding area nearly doubles in population during the summer months. Residents of the city have nearly 400 lakes within the Brainerd Lakes Area, as well as a multitude of year-round recreational opportunities. Brainerd's beautiful

setting, progressive nature, and prime location make it a community with great potential and significant assets to build on over the next 15 years.

PROCESS

The Comprehensive Plan update process began in 2017 when a large group of volunteers signed up to partake in a set of citywide community surveys. The comprehensive planning process is based on a three-pronged approach (1) inventory and analysis 2) goal and policy development, and plan preparation, 3 plan refinement and adoption, which is spread out over five larger tasks.

Authority to plan

The State of Minnesota gives its communities the legal authority to adopt a Plan under the Municipal Planning Act, Statute Sections 462.351 to 462.353. These statutes create a single, uniform procedure that applies to all cities (462.351-462.359). The Comprehensive Plan provides the legal framework for enacting land-use controls and other municipal actions to implement long-term growth and development regulation strategies. The city's land use (zoning) ordinances and official zoning map should be updated to conform to the Comprehensive Plan pursuant to adoption.

“In essence, a comprehensive plan is an expression of the community’s vision for the future and a strategic map to reach that vision.”
- League of Minnesota Cities

Comprehensive planning is an important tool for cities to guide future land development and ensure a safe, economical environment for residential, commercial, industrial, and public activities. In addition, planning can help:

- Preserve important natural resources, agricultural land, and other open lands.
- Create an opportunity for residents to

participate in guiding a community’s future.

- Identify issues, stay ahead of trends, and accommodate change.
- Ensure that growth makes the community better, not just bigger.
- Foster sustainable economic development.
- Provide an opportunity to consider future implications of today’s decisions.
- Protect property rights and values.
- Enable other public and private agencies to plan their activities in harmony with the municipality’s plans.

Trends & Demographics

Livability

This plan strives to improve the livability of our community. For the context of this plan, a livable community is defined as “one that is safe and secure, has affordable and appropriate housing and transportation options, and has supportive community features and services” (AARP). Taking a multifaceted approach towards improving livability is key. Residents view livability differently, so taking a holistic approach to assessing the city’s livability is important, as every part of Brainerd has unique strengths. A set of frameworks should catalyze the city to measure and improve livability. The following framework should be viewed as core concepts and a general set of guidelines meant to achieve a high standard for livability in the city. These concepts help define what livability means to the City of Brainerd:

Age-Friendly Communities

The city will take active strides to become an age-friendly community, one that provides opportunities for people of all ages. As the city plans for the future, city leaders acknowledge that our population is aging. The median age of Brainerd residents is 32.7 (American Community Survey (ACS), 2016), which is significantly lower than that of Crow Wing

County and surrounding cities. This provides the city with a unique opportunity and responsibility to apply sound planning practices and policies to improve our city, serving a broad spectrum of needs and abilities, helping us become the city of choice in our region.

By being intentional in our policies and design, the city can provide opportunities for all residents to “age in place” and thrive at every age (and stage) and economic level in life. By strategically preparing for an aging population,

the city can take an active step in supporting its residents by focusing on areas such as housing, community engagement, volunteering, and caregiving. In addition, the city can put policies in place that ensure people are within walking distance of work, live in walkable neighborhoods, use transit, offer housing options, and have places where residents can stay in their homes for as long as possible. Brainerd residents have spoken on the importance of becoming a great place for people of all ages and economic levels.

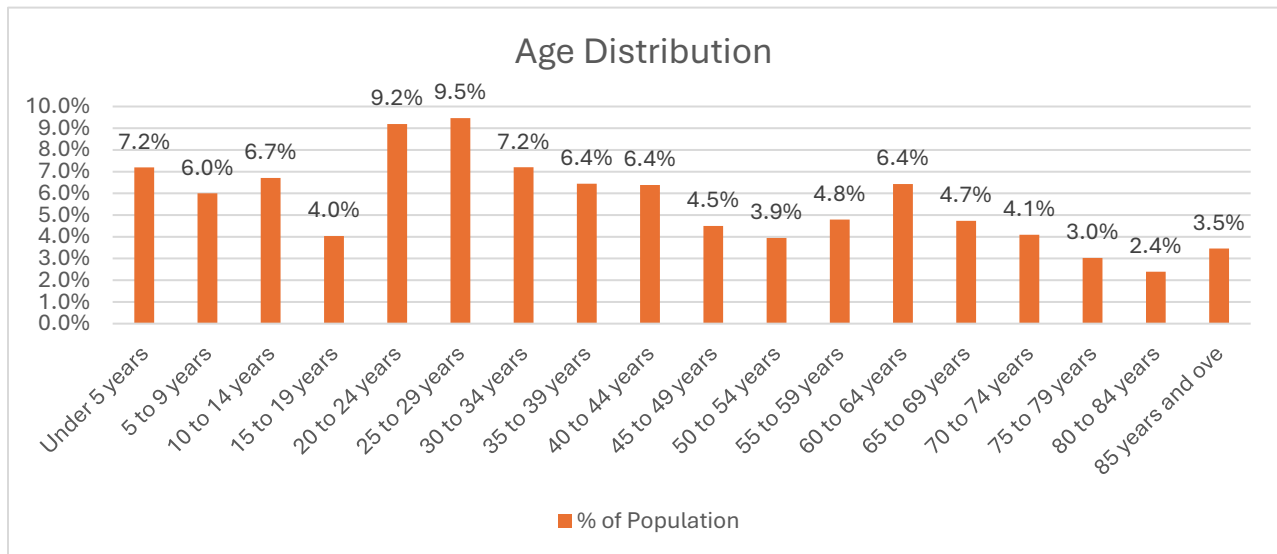
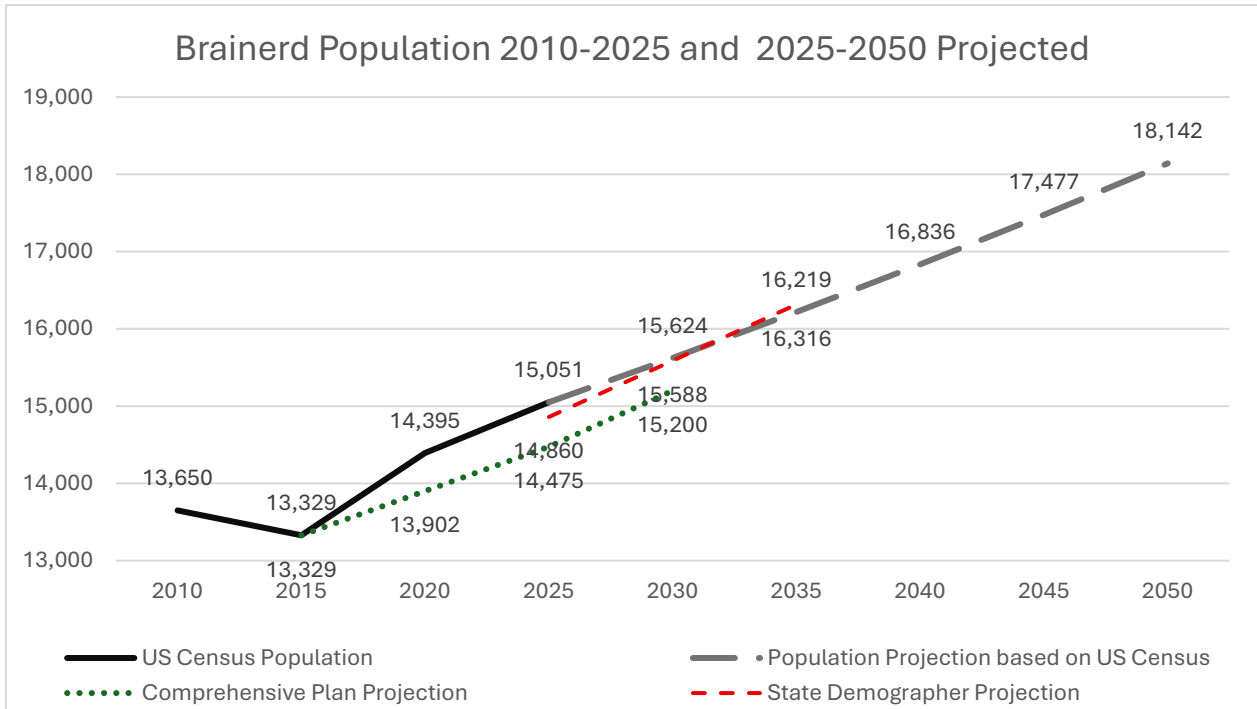


Figure 1: AACS 2023 Community Survey

Identifying trends in population growth and other demographic data is a very important part of the comprehensive planning process. It can provide clues to future growth patterns and indicate which types of housing and public facilities may be needed. For example, an increase in young couples with children would require starter housing, new parks and schools, and new or upgraded community facilities; whereas, an increase in the elderly population would lessen the need for schools and increase the need for specialized housing. This section identifies high-level trends in the community:

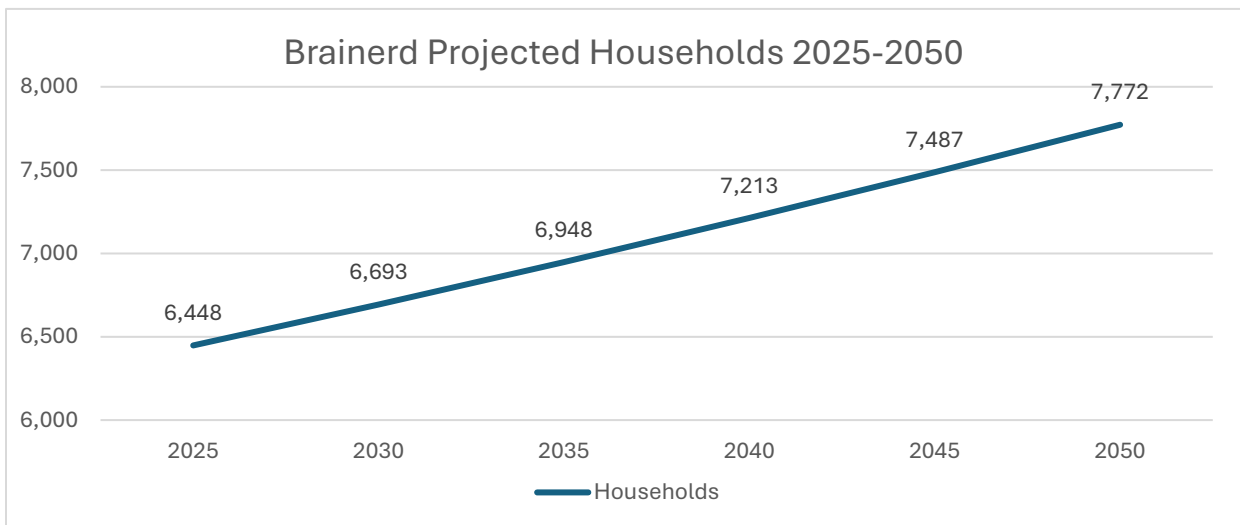
Population Growth

According to US Census data, the city’s population increased from 13,650 to 15,051 between 2010 and 2025, a nearly 1,500-person increase. This leads to an average increase of 100 people per year. According to the US Census data, the city has an annual growth rate of 0.75%, approximately .15% higher than Minnesota’s average. At this rate, the city could expect to grow to 18,142 people by 2050. That equates to an increase of 3,091 people or a net average annual growth of 122 people over the next 25 years. This is comparable to the growth projections from the 2021 Comprehensive Plan and the state demographer’s projections. The state’s demographers estimate a growth rate of around 0.92%. At this rate, the city could expect a population of 18,607 in 2050. That equates to an increase of 3,556 people, or a net average of 142 people over the next 25 years.



Housing Stock

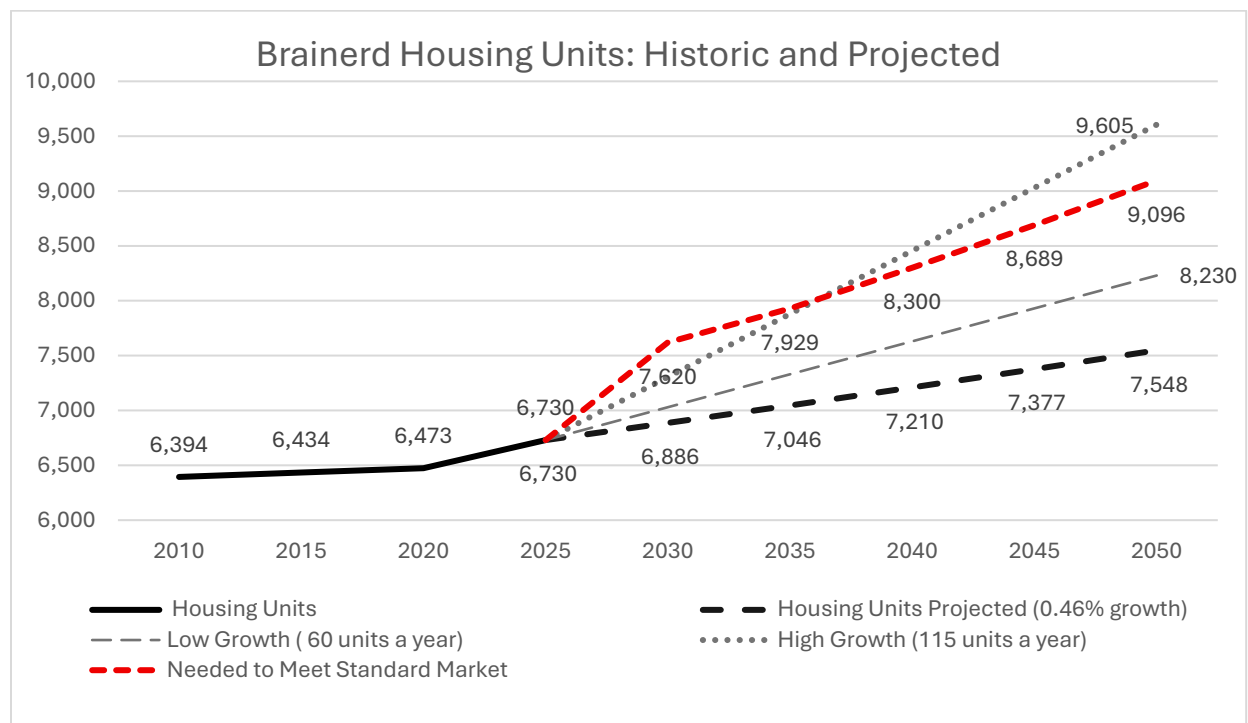
In 2025, according to US Census data, Brainerd had 6,448 households and an average household size of 2.21 people. Based on population projections, if the city maintains an average of 2.21 people per household, it will have 7,772 households, or 1,324 more, by 2050.



There are more housing units than residential households because the region is desirable for cabins and summer homes. The difference between the total number of housing units and households represents homes that are for sale, vacant, or owned as cabins or second homes. Specifically, seasonal homes account for 154 units or 2.44% of the housing stock. From 2015 to 2025, Brainerd's housing growth rate was 0.46% annually. At that rate, the city would have 7, 548 housing units by 2050, or an additional 818 units.

Using building permits or the rate of development to project housing growth, City staff expect 10 to 15 single-family homes and 50 to 100 multifamily housing units per year through 2050. That would result in a range of 1,500 to 2,875 new homes. Using a third method to project housing, based on population projections and applying a 2.21 people per household, 5% vacancy rate, and 2.44% seasonal units, yields a middle ground of 9,096 units by 2050. See the graph below for a comparison of the forecasts.

INSERT EXPLANATION OF THE DIFFERENT PROJECTIONS



Economy and Employment

The 896 businesses in Brainerd employ 12,473 people. Three sectors dominate the labor force: health care, retail trade, and manufacturing, accounting for 48.7% of all workers in these areas.

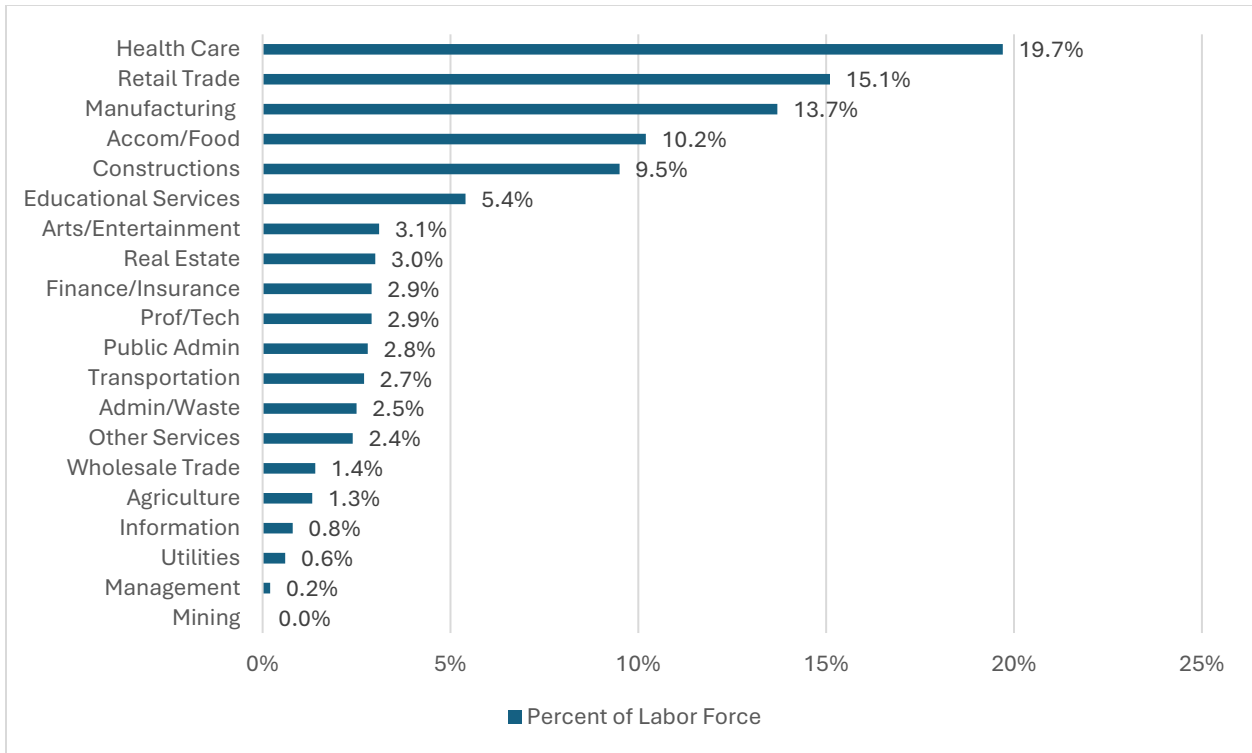


Figure 2: Esri Business Analyst, ACS 2024

Annual job growth in Crow Wing County is 2.48%. At this rate, the city could grow from 12,473 jobs to 23,012 jobs by 2050. However, the labor force is growing by only 1.56%, which may limit job openings to those that the city's 18,367 workers can fill.

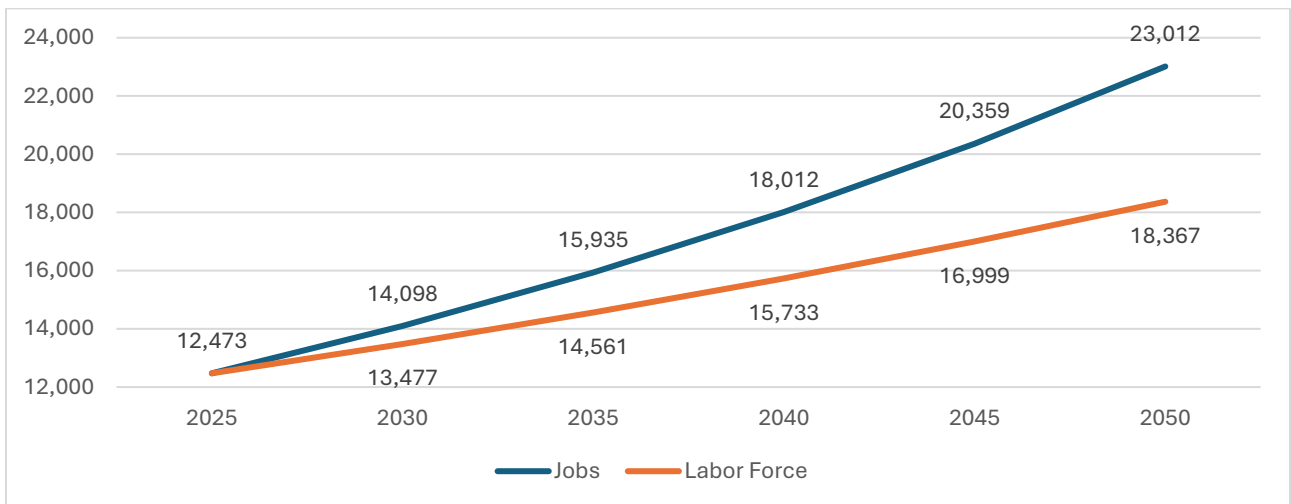


Figure 3: MN DEED County Profile Crow Wing County

2 Natural Resources

Overview

Brainerd is situated in the heart of one of the prime recreational areas in the state of Minnesota. More than 400 lakes are estimated to be within 20 miles of the city. The greatest economic impact from tourism generated by the environmental setting is in the summer months, with fishing, biking, and golfing, with numerous championship golf courses within 15 to 30 minutes of the city. Winter activities such as ice fishing, skiing, and snowmobiling also draw vacationers to the area during the winter season.

The lakes are of many ecological types, and no two are exactly alike. Some are best suited to fish, some to waterfowl, and others to aquatic life. All provide scenic and recreational value. This sub-chapter addresses the existing conditions within the city, as well as future opportunities to enhance the water quality of the various natural resources throughout the city.

Goals & Policies

GOAL 1: Protect and preserve our waterways, wetlands, and wooded areas, and identify threats to native species within and around the city.

Policies:

1. Identify corridors along the Mississippi River and other streams or wetlands that could

accommodate low-impact developments, such as trails or green spaces, to preserve these natural resources for future generations.

2. Utilize greenways to connect residents and neighborhoods to open spaces and natural areas.
3. Preserve natural open spaces for habitat and scenic recreational qualities of the city.
4. Encourage best management practices for managing runoff.

GOAL 2: Increase access to open space.

Policies:

1. In concert with surrounding communities and county government, become a world-class destination by connecting trails, the Mississippi River, history, and culture.
2. Provide access for residents and visitors to walk and enjoy a variety of open and natural spaces found within Brainerd.
3. Engage in partnerships with local stakeholders and champions that build on the value of the natural resource system.
4. Develop education and outreach programs that teach residents the importance of preserving our natural resources.
5. Collaborate with all layers of government on the restoration and management of natural resources.

Community Input

As a part of the outreach process, nearly 79 percent of community survey participants note that parks and lakes were the single most important aspect of living in the city.

Participants also noted that in terms of future city growth, protecting and preserving water quality was the second-highest priority the city should focus on. Participants also noted that preserving open space was the third most important issue around concerns of future city growth.

Consistently throughout the public engagement process, we learned of residents' passion for natural resources and spoke about their strong connection to the water and the environment. It's no surprise that three out of four people note that parks and lakes were the single most important aspect of living in the city. For the purposes of this chapter, the goals focus on the natural environment within city limits, but time and time again, people referenced their location in the lakes region as an important element.

Residents would like to see recreational opportunities enhanced through trail connections, greenway development, a centralized civic space, and public improvements along the Mississippi River, and improved access to the Mississippi River. When asked to prioritize public improvement, survey participants noted the riverfront development as the third leading public investment overall.

Through the improvement of active and passive recreational spaces, the city can take active strides to improve aspects of quality of life for residents while intentionally attracting visitors.

Existing Conditions

Water Quality

Water quality involves more than just taste and looks. Several biological and chemical factors bear on the determination of whether water is

“healthy.” The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) manages the sampling and monitoring of Minnesota’s surface waters. The MPCA collects water quality data from state, local, and federal agencies, as well as citizens. Of all the lakes and the Mississippi River, only the river is listed on the impaired waters list for mercury.

Wetlands

Most of the city's wetlands follow the area of the Mississippi River and the Whitley’s and Little Buffalo creeks. As you follow the creeks to their eventual connection to the Mississippi River, pockets of wetlands exist throughout. These areas provide excellent filtration for water before entering the rivers, animal habitat, and scenic corridors for nature observers.

Groundwater

Subsurface geology and groundwater are important considerations for all communities as they are the source of drinkable water. The actions of humans and forces at work above ground have a direct impact on our groundwater resources.

Lakes

Either partially or entirely within the city are Boom Lake, Gilbert Lake, and Rice Lake/Reservoir. Boom is a small lake on the southern edge of town near the Mississippi. Boom Lake is surrounded by a city park as well as various walking and biking trails. Gilbert and Rice are on the northern edge of town, with Rice Lake being a backwater of the river due to the dam at the site of the former paper mill.

The area lakes around the city are recognized as some of the best sport fishing waters in the nation. Although the rivers offer their fishing assets, they are little used by anglers compared to the vast array of lakes. Conservatively speaking, there are over 30 prime walleye lakes within a 40-mile circle around Brainerd. Larger lakes noted for walleye fishing are Mille Lacs,

Gull, Pelican, and the Whitefish Chain (2004 Brainerd Comprehensive Plan).

Mississippi River

Starting at the northern side of the city and meandering within, the Mississippi River is one of the city's prominent natural resources. The river provides the connection to the natural environment that many citizens desire.

Some protection of the resource was created outside the city limits. The Mississippi River Headwaters Board (MHB) began in 1980 as a result of a grassroots effort by the counties as an alternative to federal control of the Mississippi River corridor. The MHB jurisdiction applies to the unincorporated areas of the counties along the Mississippi River and headwater lakes. Therefore, everything within city limits does not fall in this jurisdiction, but this entity would make a great partner for projects along the river corridor so that its efforts do not just stop at the city limit line.

Watershed

A watershed is defined as an area of land from which all water drains to a given point. It's a ridge or stretch of highland dividing an area drained by different rivers or river systems. Unlike boundaries of political subdivisions such as counties, cities, and townships, which are mainly straight and uniform, watershed borders zigzag across the natural lay of the land. Crow Wing County lies within the Mississippi River Headwaters Drainage Basin and contains parts of five major watersheds. Within each are minor or sub-watersheds, all of which flow into the Mississippi. The City of Brainerd lies within the Mississippi River – Brainerd sub-watershed. According to the 2015 Watershed Health Report compiled by the MN Department of Natural Resources, the watershed received a 63 out of 100 for a health rating. This rating is very similar to other watersheds in the northcentral and northeastern parts of the state.

Insert paragraph re each of the watershed plans

and links to the plans

Shoreland Areas

The history of Minnesota's Shoreland Management Program dates back to 1969 with the passage of the Shoreland Management Act. Minimum development standards — such as structure setbacks, height limits, impervious surface limits, lot requirements, vegetation removal, and land alteration requirements — are established in state rules (Minnesota Rules, part 6120.2500 - 6120.3900) and administered through local ordinances.

Shorelands typically contain important habitat and erodible soils, which present a high risk to surface water pollution if not anchored with natural deep-rooted vegetation. Many of these areas are highly sensitive to development. Shoreland standards are designed to accommodate development around sensitive water bodies in a sustainable way — reducing impacts on water quality and preserving the natural character of the water body” (MN DNR).

Minnesota GreenStep Cities Program

The City of Brainerd joined this program in 2015. The GreenStep Cities is a voluntary challenge and program that seeks to help cities achieve their sustainability and quality of life goals. The core framework of this program is based on a series of best practices that address 1) land use, 2) buildings and lighting, 3) transportation, 4) environmental management, and 5) resilient economic and community development. A total of 29 best practices exist that help communities focus on cost savings, quality of life, and energy use reductions that ultimately lead to a culture of innovation. Each best practice can be implemented by completing one or more specific tasks from a list of four to eight actions. The City of Brainerd has completed the first two steps in the program, with a total of five steps.

Goals are in the comprehensive support and align with the best practices outlined through

this program.

Greenways

A greenway is a linear space established along a corridor, such as a riverfront, stream, valley, or other natural or landscaped system. Greenways may connect open spaces, parks, nature reserves, cultural features, or historic sites with populated areas and to one another. Greenways may or may not include a bikeway, shared-use path, or multi-use trail.

The social benefits of greenways can create places for people to meet and serve as connectors to places, neighborhoods, and other parks. The health benefits of linear parks combine both physical exercise and mental benefits from interacting with nature. Brainerd can capitalize on the vast amount of green space and sensitive environmental areas by drawing people to a linear park network that interconnects neighborhoods and the citywide park network.

3 LAND USE

Overview

Land use is traditionally the central element of the comprehensive plan as it 1) establishes the physical development and configuration of the city, 2) defines the location and mix of land uses, and 3) establishes the infrastructure that supports each land use. The land use plan is a collection of policies. Public and private decision makers depend on it to guide real estate transactions, site plans, project design, and the review and approval process. The first section of this chapter reviews and analyzes the city's existing development patterns. The second half of the chapter presents a set of development frameworks to achieve the community's future land-use preferences.

This plan will focus on four major concepts to help guide development, redevelopment, and infrastructure investments:

Historic preservation

Preserve and protect historically significant buildings and landmarks that add to the city's social and cultural identity.

Community image

Identify and leverage the tangible and intangible characteristics that define the community's identity.

Neighborhood investment

Develop programs and target investments to create vibrant, walkable neighborhoods with access to open spaces and interconnected through a trail network.

Targeted revitalization

Strategically identify areas for reinvestment and revitalization to promote the redevelopment of districts.

Goals & Policies

GOAL 1: Support mixed-use development that is focused on integration instead of the separation of land uses.

Policies:

6. Deploy smart growth principles to achieve economic, environmental, and community aspirations:
 - 1.1. Mix land uses.
 - 1.2. Take advantage of the compact design.
 - 1.3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
 - 1.4. Create walkable and bikeable neighborhoods.
 - 1.5. Foster distinctive, attractive neighborhoods with a strong sense of place.
 - 1.6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.
 - 1.7. Strengthen and direct development toward existing neighborhoods.
 - 1.8. Provide a variety of transportation options.
 - 1.9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective.
 - 1.10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.
7. Develop complete neighborhoods that meet the needs of all people within a comfortable walking or bicycling distance.

8. Allow a mix of land uses in appropriate locations, leading to lively neighborhoods.

GOAL 2: Through thoughtful planning, maintain the unique identity of the city and all the appropriate land uses that support it.

Policies:

1. Support development that enhances the identity and community character of Brainerd.
9. Ensure appropriate transitions between rural and urban areas through appropriate land use practices.
10. Promote reinvestment in the city's main highway corridors and downtown.
11. Help existing places thrive.
12. Encourage mixed-use neighborhoods that are walkable and bikeable, ones that provide the daily services that residents need within walking distances of their homes.
13. Maintain the appropriate blend of historical and modern structures.
14. Encourage development proposals that seek to rehabilitate historic structures through adaptive reuse.

GOAL 3: Support and invest in incremental enhancements of quality of life.

Policies:

1. Endorse a vibrant downtown and support investment within our corridors.
15. Encourage and attract stores and services for the daily needs of our community.
16. Ensure a wide range of housing types for all income levels.
17. Provide equitable access to parks, open spaces, and recreation opportunities.
18. Take strides to become a pedestrian-friendly community.
19. Preserve our natural resources and spaces, specifically the Mississippi River

Community Input

The city strives to become the best version of itself and to improve the sense of place throughout the city. As a part of the community input process, participants noted that the following list is important to them in terms of redevelopment, investment, and listed priorities for the future:

Mix of lot sizes and housing types

When asked about their preferred lot sizes, approximately 67 percent of participants agreed that a mix of lot sizes is needed within the city. This mixture includes an appropriate amount of small (7,000 square feet or less), medium (7,001-12,000 square feet), and large (12,001-20,000 square feet). When asked about preferences regarding new residential developments, participants noted their support for a mix of single-family, duplex, and multi-family options.

Code enforcement

Nearly 73 percent of survey participants would like to see code enforcement increased, as they feel it is insufficient. Feedback from the community design session indicated that residents wish to see housing conditions improve, neighborhood blight addressed, and the exterior maintenance of structures enhanced.

Natural resource preservation and opportunities.

When asked about concerns related to future city growth, residents noted protecting and preserving water quality, preserving open space, and loss of trees as the second, third, and fourth leading concerns. Residents feel that new developments should have sidewalks, trails, and open spaces, and be within walking distance of a park.

Downtown redevelopment

Brainerd's downtown plays a critical role in the city's economy and social identity. Residents

seek a collaborative approach to improving the downtown's physical, social, and economic conditions. When the community survey panel was asked if it was important to invest and redevelop downtown as a mixed-use destination, 65 percent agreed, and 24 percent somewhat agreed.

Neighborhood investment

The city has a diverse collection of neighborhoods, as evidenced by the ward meetings. Ward meeting respondents noted concerns about housing-related matters, including exterior façade condition, property maintenance, and code enforcement. The community survey panel responses showed support for future growth in existing neighborhoods over the next 10 years.

Existing Land Use

A land-use inventory was completed to analyze existing development patterns and the quantity of each land use within the city. The current development patterns reflect the city's history and original settlement. The kind of development, and where and how it's allowed, should reflect the community's needs and desires. The city has 7 general land-use districts and 14 categories. The following chart provides an overview of each category.

Residential

Comprising 43 percent of the city's total developed area, residential development is the largest land use type in the city. Low-density homes (single- and two-family residential) consume the vast majority, over 84 percent, of the city's residential land.

Commercial

Commercial areas make up a relatively small portion of Brainerd's total land area, equaling 7 percent of the city's total developed area.

Commercial uses are concentrated primarily in the downtown along major transportation

corridors, particularly Business Highway 371 and TH 210.

Industrial

Industrial uses make up a moderate portion of the city's land area. Approximately 13 percent of the city's developed area is used for industrial purposes. The largest concentration is along the city's southeastern portion.

Public & Semi-Public

Comprising 25 percent of the city's developed area, public and semi-public land uses make up an important portion of the city's total acreage. The largest area devoted to public use is south and west of the downtown, including: the Crow Wing County Government Center, ISD 181 high school, and elementary school.

Water

Open water comprises approximately 6 percent of the total city. The primary water feature in Brainerd is the Mississippi River. Rice, Boom, and Gilbert lakes are also important water features within the city. These water bodies, along with the numerous wetland areas, are among the city's prime scenic and recreational features, and efforts to preserve them should be continued and enhanced where appropriate. Parks:

Brainerd has 430 acres of parks and open space, accounting for nearly 5 percent of the city's developed land. A total of 14 neighborhood, community, and regional parks are scattered throughout the city.

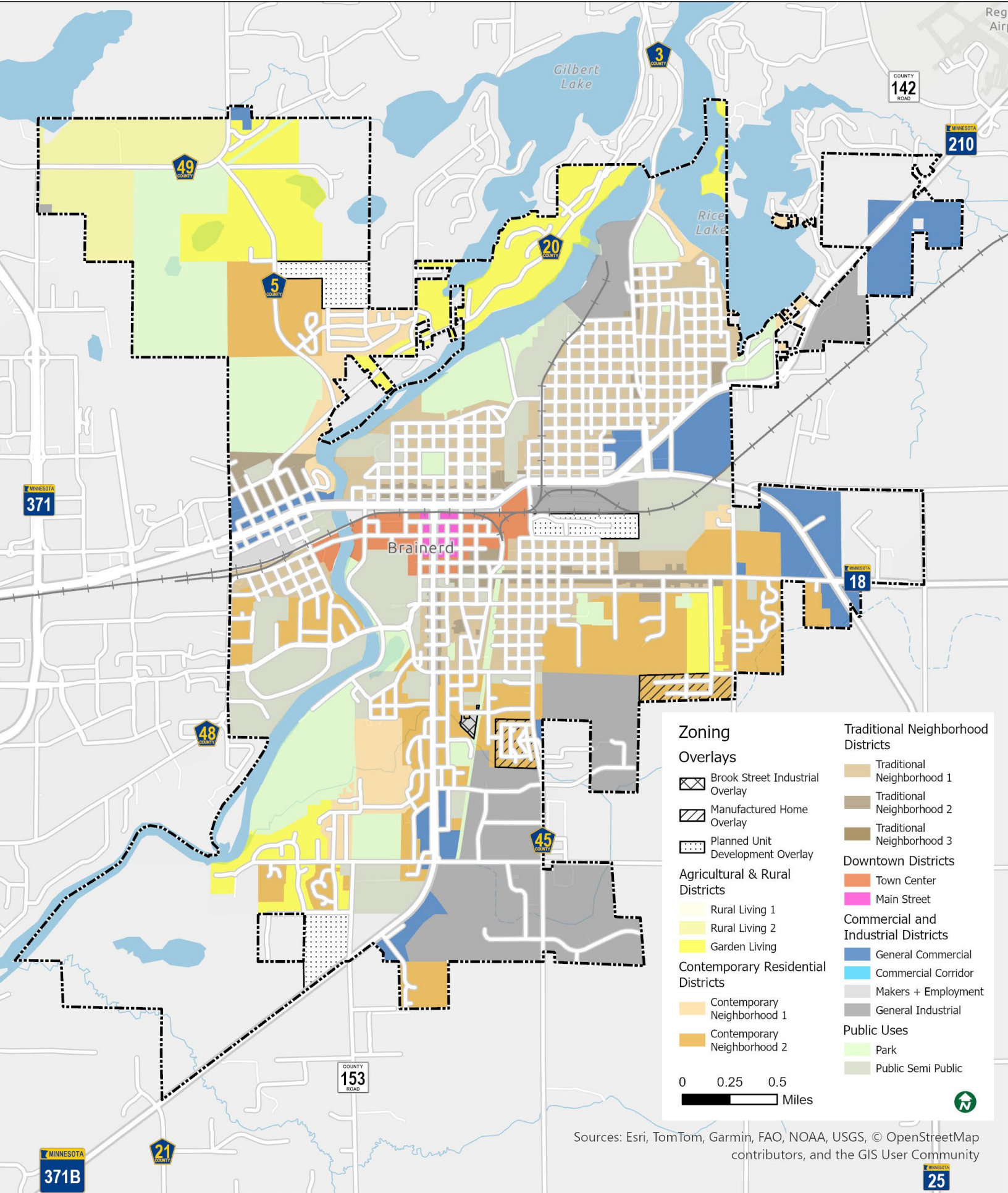
Vacant

Vacant/undeveloped land comprises 29 percent of the city's total land area. However, it is worth noting that a fairly large portion of this area (34 percent) is wetland.

Single-Family	Houses, private cabins, and other dwellings that house only one family, or one group of people, in one building that is located on off-lake parcels.
Two-Family	Duplexes (either side by side or up and down).
Multi-Family	Townhouses, apartments, condominiums, rooming houses, and other dwellings that house more than one family in one building.
Manufactured Homes	Manufactured homes, manufactured home parks, and trailer homes, if they are permanently located on the site.
Downtown Commercial	All businesses, retail stores, services, and professional offices, such as attorneys, real estate, insurance, etc., in the downtown area.
General Commercial	Retail stores, restaurants, banks, hotels, motels, lumber yards, business and professional offices, medical and dental clinics, or veterinary clinics, gas stations, and other businesses serving the public in the city.
Industrial	Manufacturing, warehousing, assembly, truck terminals, mining, quarries, and other businesses that provide goods and services but not directly to the public. Note on the maps the specific kind of business on each parcel, e.g., Lexington Manufacturing, factory, bakery (wholesale), printing plant, etc.
Public/Semi-Public	All publicly owned uses, such as schools, city buildings, county buildings, water towers, pumping stations, sewage treatment plants, sanitary sewers, etc., as well as public utilities, such as power plants, electrical substations, telephone companies, etc. Includes private institutional uses, such as hospitals, colleges, private schools, churches, monasteries, cemeteries, etc.
Park and Open Space	All public parks, open spaces, walking trails, and recreational areas. Also includes campgrounds, golf courses, whether public or private.
Water	Rivers and lakes, at their normal water lines (natural).
Vacant	All platted vacant land with no actively used buildings.

Current Zoning

The 2019 Comprehensive Plan included a zoning map. This update is not making significant changes to the city’s zoning districts. The following page shows the existing zoning at the time of this update. For the most current zoning map, check with the Zoning Administrator or visit the city’s website.



Tools

Smart Growth Principles

The future land use map is built on the following principles:

- Mix land uses;
- Take advantage of compact design;
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices;
- Create walkable and bikeable communities;
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place;
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas;
- Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities;
- Provide a variety of transportation options;
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective;
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

How we develop in the future will impact the daily lives of our residents, workers, and students, as well as those of future generations. By leveraging a set of creative strategies, the city can seek to preserve its assets while reusing already developed land. Smart growth principles strive to:

- Conserve resources by reinvesting in existing infrastructure and historic buildings.
- Design neighborhoods that have homes near daily services and amenities and provide motorized and nonmotorized options.
- Provide a range of housing types, encouraging lifecycle housing and options for residents and families of all income levels.
- Enhance neighborhoods and involve people

in decision-making.

- Create vibrant places to live, work, play, stay, and learn.

By integrating this set of principles, the city can leverage land more efficiently, take active steps toward environmental sustainability, and transition its regulatory framework to enhance the community's quality and character. This set of principles will help the city be proactive about future growth while building on existing elements.

Form-Based Codes

Form-based codes (FBC) address the relationship, form, and mass of buildings as well as the scale and types of streets and blocks. Conventional zoning focuses on separating land uses and imposing density restrictions. Form-based codes are tools to foster walkable, pedestrian-oriented development. The most notable distinction between form-based codes and conventional zoning codes is that FBCs seek to establish physical development patterns, rather than separate incompatible land use types.

The city is taking active steps to become an age-friendly community where people of all ages can thrive. Form-based codes can advance this goal, as their true intent is to break down zoning districts that regulate the density (or type) of houses and address this holistically. These new regulations create places with a variety of housing types, services, and transportation options. The city offers housing for young people, families, seniors, and people with disabilities, as well as affordable housing. But with conventional zoning, building walkable places is truly limited. Form-based codes can create communities and neighborhoods where people can “age in place” and thrive in a walkable community.

Infill and Redevelopment

Redevelopment is a key goal within the land use, housing, and economic chapters. As a part

of the community engagement process, residents noted the importance of building within, rather than extending our growth footprint outward. Infill and redevelopment will be key practices for addressing vacant and blighted parcels and for directing development to targeted areas to generate revenue and advance the city's vision. This type of redevelopment strategy utilizes prior infrastructure investments and consumes less land. This practice can result in:

- Efficient utilization of land resources.
- More compact patterns of land use and development.
- Reinvestment in areas that are targeted for growth and have existing infrastructure.
- More efficient delivery of quality public services.

Redevelopment is often a complex process involving many partners. Infill and redevelopment practices require collaboration with a wide range of partners, including various agencies and cities, property owners, adjacent property owners, and developers.

Public participation is key to a successful infill development project. Residents are passionate about their neighborhoods, citing them as a major factor in the city's livability and quality of life. To build support and trust for a future project, work alongside developers to include residents in the process. This collaboration will lead to community buy-in and support during approval processes, thereby strengthening the neighborhood's fabric.

A focus of this plan is infill development and neighborhood investments, transitioning the city toward a more walkable, mixed-use development style. Fiscal impact analysis focuses on the fiscal sustainability of the type of growth. Fiscal impact analysis is a policy adopted by the unit of government that requires new development to be analyzed to calculate its short- and long-term impacts on

local government expenses and revenues. A fiscal impact analysis can be conducted at various scales, including a single-family house, multiple buildings, a proposed development or redevelopment, or growth projections.

Future Land Use Plan

The future land use plan and map illustrate the various future-oriented land use designations for the city and its planned growth areas. The designations influence zoning regulations and the city's future land use form. Collectively, these classifications provide a general framework for growth and development within Brainerd and its growth areas at full development. The plan text provides the policies, standards, and principles to guide the city's future physical form and function. It serves as the basis for updating the zoning ordinance and other development controls that are enforceable under the city's powers.

This plan is intended to serve as a guide for the Planning Commission and City Council on land-use-related actions and decisions. Residents, business owners, and landowners must understand that the policies and maps in this chapter are intended to direct development to areas where facilities and services are available and where adjacent land uses are compatible. The future land use plan should not be used for site-specific decisions and does not preclude lower-intensity land uses or densities. This decision-making tool must be viewed as general in nature.

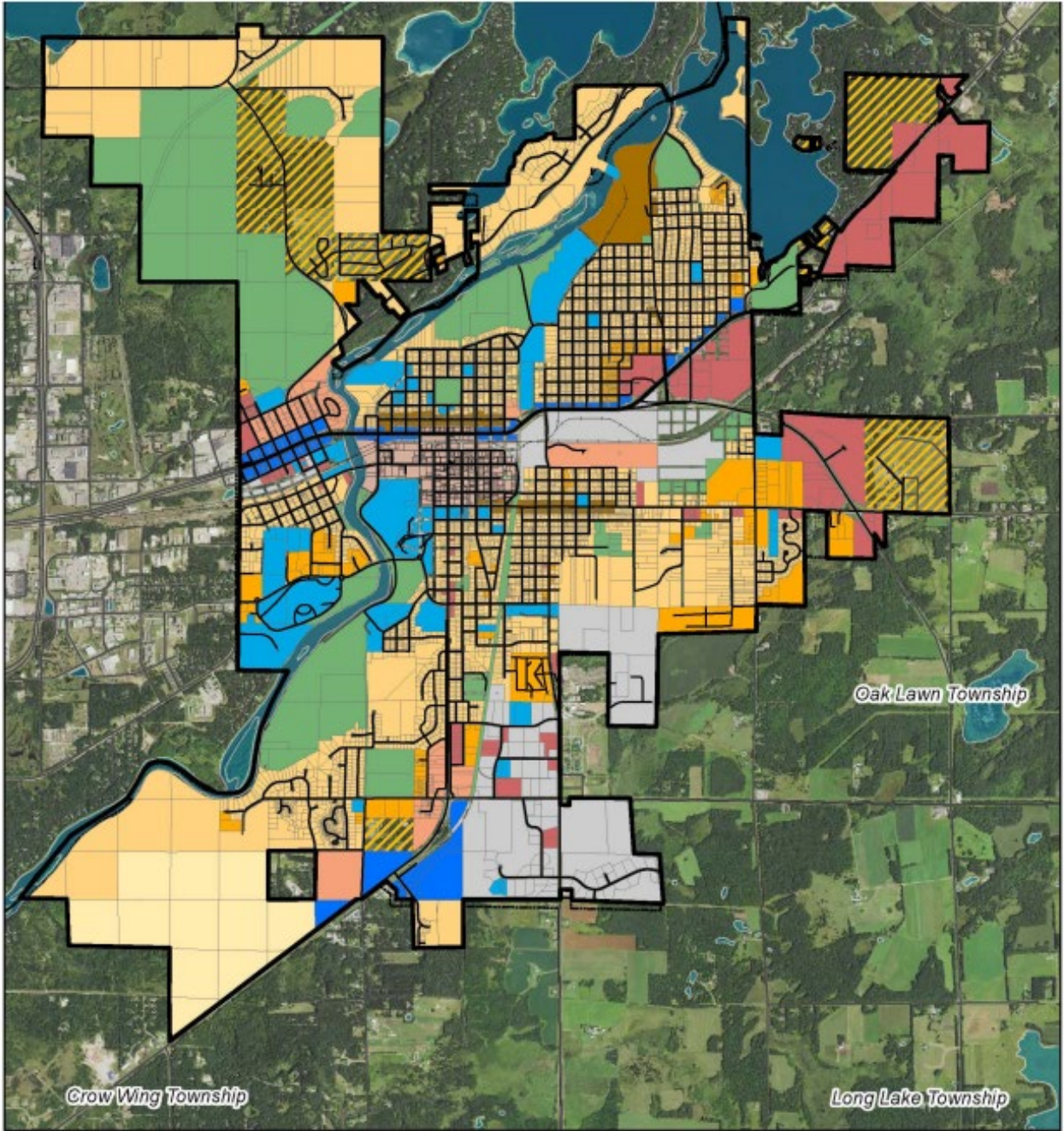
Five major elements define the physical character of the city: 1) development pattern, 2) road network, 3) neighborhood form, 4) future growth pattern of community facilities and open spaces, and 5) locality and nature of major business centers. Several guiding principles have been established for each element:

A set of future categories has been identified to guide growth and development within Brainerd.

This set of categories addresses a range of land uses that exist throughout the city today, as well as those likely to occur in the future. The categories used in this plan are similar to those outlined in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan, but with more detail in the residential categories to reflect a wider range of densities.

Future Land Use Categories

The following categories introduce the intent behind the various future land use districts. These categories describe the general use, character, and form and offer a variety of descriptions that will influence policy direction for future zoning actions, infill development strategies, infrastructure investments, and future planning studies.



FUTURE LAND USE MAP

Legend

- Rail
- Road Network
- Lakes and Hydro Features
- Township
- City Limits

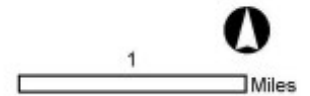
Parcels

- Parcel boundary

Future Land Use Categories

- Development Reserve
- Low-Medium Density
- Medium-High Density
- Mixed Residential
- Public, Semi-public, Institution
- Park and Open Space

- Gateway District
- Mixed Commercial-Residential
- Neighborhood Mix
- Downtown
- Commercial
- Industrial



CATEGORY	OVERVIEW	DENSITY
Development Reserve	This district takes an active step in preserving land from rapid development. This land use is the lowest density allowed within the community, and at the time of annexation or development, it has limited street connections and on-site septic systems.	3-4 du/acre <i>Joint Board approved</i>
Low- to Medium-Density Residential	This category contains a blend of low- to medium-density lots, ranging from larger to smaller, to facilitate a variety of housing needs and development. Traditional neighborhoods have grid-like streets, whereas more suburban-style residential developments have many layouts and are located at the fringe of the community.	4-9 du/acre
Medium- to High-Density Residential	Contains a mixture of medium- to high-density residential areas intended to accommodate a variety of housing types and create walkable neighborhoods.	10-20+ du/acre
Mixed Residential	The intent is to promote neighborhoods with a variety of housing types and densities within a single development, not dominated by any singular type.	4-12 du/acre
Mixed Commercial Residential	An intermediate district between the Gateway District and the Neighborhood Mix. Meant to encourage a blend of medium to high-density housing types and commercial uses, where the purpose is focused on walkability and deters auto-oriented commercial uses. Business uses will support the daily needs of residents while providing services to the broader community.	9-20+ du/acre
Neighborhood Mix	This category includes a mix of low-intensity business uses and a range of residential densities. Development comprises small areas with a mix of uses, located adjacent to or within residential neighborhoods, to provide these amenities in a walkable context.	9-20+ du/acre
Downtown	The intent is to emphasize the core of the city's social, civic, and cultural life. This classification is meant to be a unique, historic, mixed-use district. This district is a place to explore local food, culture, and history, and to live and work.	-
Commercial	The district supports economic growth and employment hubs that offer a variety of commercial uses. This district is near arterial and collector streets.	-
Gateway District	The purpose of this district is to provide a welcoming travel throughout the city's main highway corridor. The intent is to provide prominent, evident architectural and design standards that highlight the community's identity and support highway- and light-commercial-related businesses.	-
Industrial	Intended to provide a series of industrial uses, separated from other businesses and concentrated in a general district.	-
Public/Semi-Public	Contains publicly owned uses that benefit the community.	-
Park and Open Space	Parks and open spaces are meant for recreation and provide environmental benefits to the community.	-

Development Reserve (DR)

3-4 dwelling units per acre or limited to the Joint Powers Board

The purpose of this category is to protect undeveloped land from rapid growth before urban services become available. This category should include the lowest density allowed in the city. Secondary uses could include agricultural uses until services are available, forestry, and recreation.

Low- to Medium-Density Residential (LMR)

4-9 dwelling units per acre

This category provides for housing options that include one- and two-family dwellings, such as duplexes (stacked and side-by-side), twin homes, townhouses, and attached and detached single-family dwellings. Low- to medium-density residential could include both older neighborhoods with smaller lots within the city and large, new subdivisions and planned growth areas.

Medium- to High-Density Residential (MHR)

10-20+ dwelling units per acre

This category provides a mix of housing options at higher density, such as twin homes, duplexes (side-by-side and stacked), triplexes, fourplexes, row houses, townhouses, cottage courts, courtyard buildings, multiplexes, apartments, condos, senior housing, manufactured home parks, and other multi-family developments. This also includes lesser intensity residential density types. The purpose of this category is to provide a buffer between lower residential densities and higher intensity land uses.

Mixed Residential (MR)

4-12 dwelling units per acre

This category is intended to promote neighborhoods with a variety of housing types and densities within a single development. A

range of housing types are appropriate within this category: single-family, twin homes, duplexes (side-by-side and stacked), triplexes, fourplexes, row houses, townhouses, cottage courts, courtyard buildings, multiplexes, apartments, condos, and other housing typologies that align with the development's intent. No single type should dominate any given area.

Neighborhood Mix

9-20+ dwelling units per acre

This category includes a mix of low-intensity business uses, such as office and limited commercial, that serve the everyday needs of residents and are located within or adjacent to neighborhoods, providing neighborhood amenities. This category also includes low-, medium-, and high-density residential uses, such as single-family homes (attached and detached), twin homes, townhomes, row houses, duplexes (stacked and side-by-side), triplexes, fourplexes, bungalow courts, cottage courts, courtyard buildings, multiplexes, and apartments. This future land use category aligns with form-based code principles.

Mixed Commercial-Residential (MCR)

9-20+ dwelling units per acre

This district is intended to support a mix of housing densities and commercial uses that are not automobile-dependent and to serve as a buffer between high-intensity commercial uses and lower-density residential neighborhoods. In this district, housing, jobs, retail, and service uses will be in proximity, allowing residents to live close to their jobs. This category focuses on an appropriate blend of these uses, seeking a balance between commercial and residential, with no single type dominating any given area. This category reflects the continued trend toward integrating residential and nonresidential development in walkable settings, places where transit is available, and providing alternative circulation opportunities. This future land-use category would benefit

from sub-area and master planning efforts, as well as targeted walkable infill development.

Appropriate uses within this district could include both vertical and horizontal mixed-use development, where a focus is on walkability and strong pedestrian connections to support a pedestrian-friendly environment. This district should guide medium to high-density residential development. Appropriate commercial uses would include clinic and health service-related uses, offices, professional services, hotel/lodging, retail, institutional, civic, and entertainment.

This category applies to commercial development outside of the central business district, providing services and retail, and serving the adjacent neighborhoods, community, and regional needs. Supported uses include auto-oriented commercial development; a mix of uses, office use, large-scale retail, and service-oriented businesses.

This category applies to the larger downtown Brainerd district, encouraging businesses that facilitate a pedestrian-oriented environment. This category encourages retail and commercial services, higher-density residential, live/work, service, office, governmental, and public uses. The zoning ordinance controls residential density. Higher-density, mixed-use buildings and apartments are encouraged in the downtown core, with an appropriate transition to lower residential densities along the periphery.

Development in downtown should seek to preserve historic structures, rehabilitate buildings, focus on adaptive reuse, and promote mixed-use development. New development or rehabilitation projects should utilize high-quality building materials that complement the historic architecture. This district will encourage active street frontages and ground-floor uses in the downtown core, maintain a high-quality streetscape, and preserve and showcase the district's character. The grid-street

development patterns should continue and be encouraged for all new development projects. Building setbacks, heights, and orientations should be consistent with and proportionate to those of neighboring structures.

Gateway District (GD)

This category identifies portions of the city located at major entrances and along major transportation corridors. This district intends to design a thoroughfare corridor that reflects the community's character. This district will have higher-quality design elements, building construction, and architectural guidelines for new commercial development. This category supports a variety of commercial development types, such as civic, medical, auto-oriented, retail, and professional office.

Industrial (I)

This category is intended to provide a series of industrial uses, separated from other businesses and concentrated in a specific location. Uses include manufacturing, warehousing, assembly, and other similar businesses that provide goods and services.

Park and Open Space (PO)

This category identifies portions of the city that contain parks and open spaces. This category also seeks to preserve sensitive environmental resources, such as river corridors, habitats, trails, and other natural features important to the city's and neighborhoods' image.

Public, Semi-Public, Institution (PSI)

This category identifies portions of the city that should contain uses that benefit the public and provide a variety of value to residents. This includes all publicly owned uses, such as schools, city buildings, county and state buildings. In addition, this district includes private institutions such as hospitals, churches, and similar institutions.

Future Growth Areas

A key principle of the Future Land Use Plan is centered on targeted growth and identifying development areas throughout the city. Significant deliberation and discussion informed a variety of sites, ranging from open-space corridors to residential neighborhoods and commercial areas. The following is an overview of each selected “site.”

Northwest:

Support a blend of residential uses from low-density to medium-high-density development. This would include single-family homes, attached dwellings, townhomes, and other housing types. No single housing type should dominate; rather, a variety of typologies should foster walkable, interconnected neighborhoods.

West Brainerd:

This development area should focus on a mix of commercial, medium-density, and higher-density residential. This district aims to provide a blend of commercial uses to meet people's daily needs. This development area will serve as a buffer between residential neighborhoods and the Highway 210 corridor.

Mississippi River Greenway Corridor:

Focus on preserving green space, conservation efforts, and providing access to a variety of parks and open spaces.

East Brainerd:

This site should provide a mix of housing densities to support the development of walkable neighborhoods. This would include single-family homes, attached dwellings, townhomes, and other housing types. No one housing type should dominate.

210 Corridor:

As a key gateway to the city, redevelopment opportunities should focus on vacant properties. This development area supports a

variety of infill commercial and redevelopment opportunities to transform this corridor into a vibrant thoroughfare, one that supports the needs of motorists, provides a variety of housing types, and a mix of commercial land uses. This corridor would benefit from new and improved development and design standards. Strategic redevelopment will support a pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly corridor and ensure that all modes of transportation can use it safely.

Business 371:

This development area will continue to develop as a health-care district with office and office-service uses. Infill development and redevelopment opportunities should support smaller-scale retail that can serve the nearby industrial employment base. The corridor can support a mix of uses and serve as a neighborhood district. Design guidelines should be developed to help influence the aesthetics, streetscape, site, and architectural character, and overall experience of this corridor.

Kingwood Street Corridor:

The corridor will include a mix of low-intensity business uses and a variety of residential densities and typologies. Through strategic infill development, the corridor will be transformed into a walkable streetscape, designed to serve residents' everyday needs and connect them to neighborhood amenities.

Downtown:

This development area encompasses the historic Brainerd area and the broader limits of the downtown district.

Guide infill development within the general district, specifically live/work, retail, professional offices, and high-density residential. Strive to keep government buildings downtown as they create a cohesive district. Focus on placemaking and the importance that art and culture have in building a social center

for the community.

Oak Street Corridor:

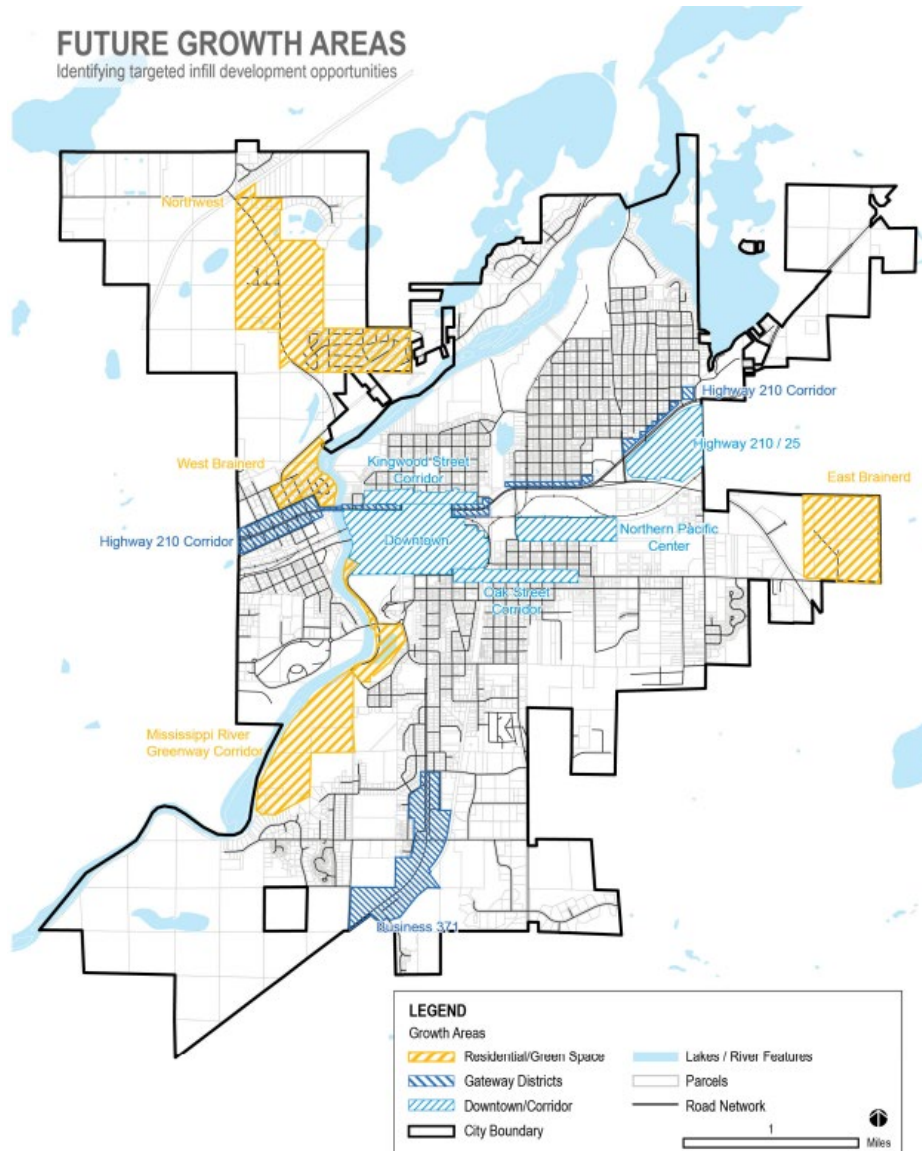
This development area will create a neighborhood node, providing services to support residents' daily needs. Development should include a mix of housing densities and neighborhood commercial uses. Underutilized sites and parcels should be targeted for redevelopment, and appropriate parcels should be combined to support a mix of residential uses and densities. This corridor will be transformed into a walkable thoroughfare, supporting all modes of transportation and needs.

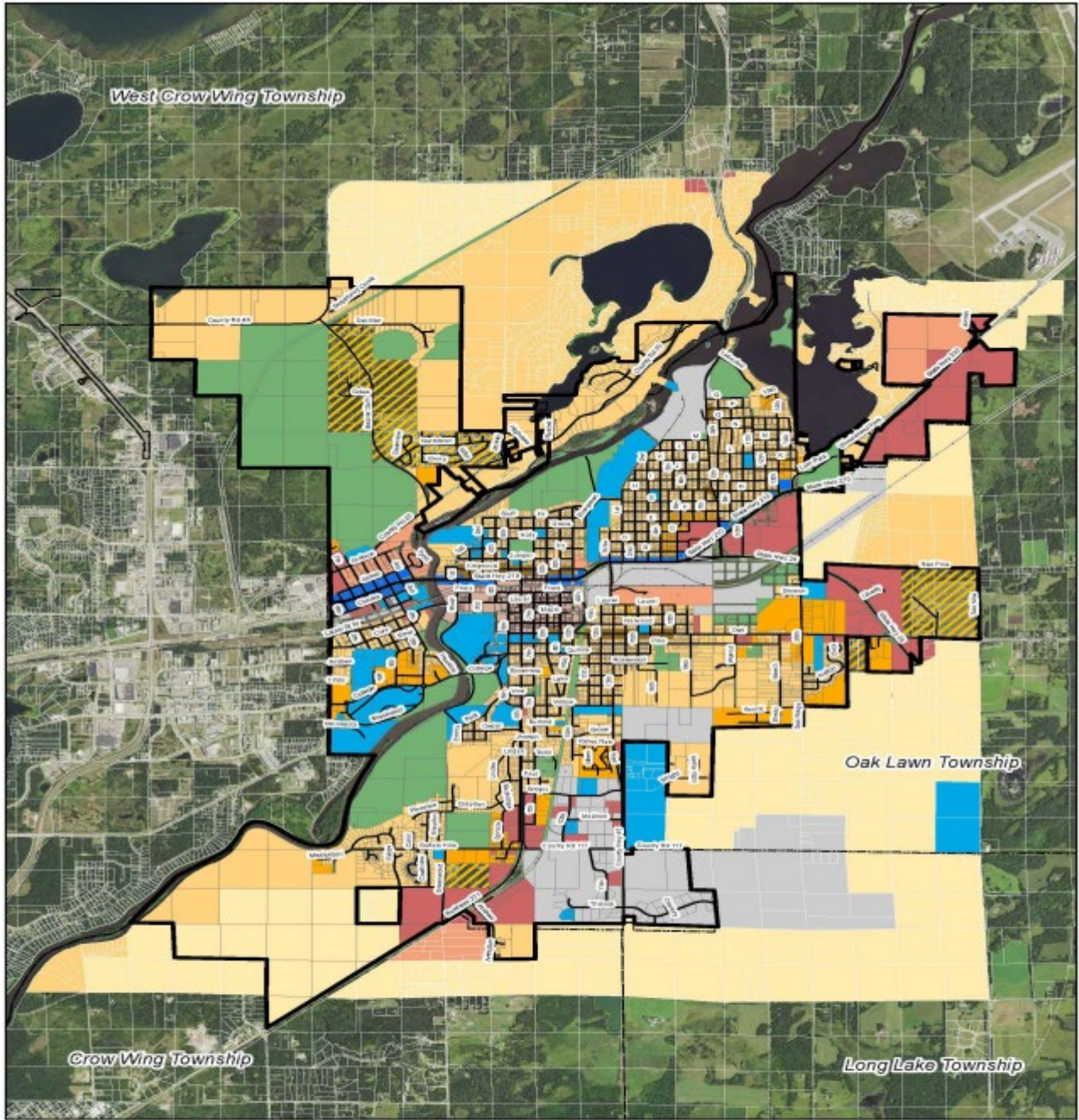
Northern Pacific Center:

Support the development of mixed commercial-residential development within the Northern Pacific Center Campus.

Highway 210/25:

This development area serves as a gateway for targeted commercial development. This redevelopment site should remain a strong commercial node in the future, supported by aesthetic parking, access improvements, and improved site circulation.





FUTURE LAND USE MAP

Legend

- Rail
 - Road Network
 - ▭ City Limits
 - ▭ Township Boundary
 - Parcels**
 - ▭ Parcel boundary
- | FLU CATEGORIES | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Development Reserve | Gateway District | Mixed Commercial-Residential |
| Low-Medium Density | Neighborhood Mix | Downtown |
| Medium-High Density | Commercial | Industrial |
| Mixed Residential | Public, Semi-public, Institution | |
| Park and Open Space | | |



Future Development Considerations

The content within the future land use plan highlights future land use categories and targeted growth areas. This framework will serve as the legal foundation for decision-making. Other elements should also be considered and incorporated during the development process, such as the themes identified throughout the chapter and planning practices and principles that lead to resilient and sustainable communities. The following considerations stem from the smart growth principles outlined in this chapter. These considerations can inform policy and regulations or may be used during the development review process.

Walkability:

Proactively planning for walkability can help lead to improved health, environmental conditions, and community building. Planning starts before the development review process. By identifying dedicated pathways, corridors, and sidewalk networks, the city can provide safe, comfortable spaces for pedestrians – for all abilities. Then, planners and review staff can ensure these plans are transferred over to design and redevelopment proposals.

The focus should be on prioritizing pedestrians over vehicles in new developments and mitigating the negative impact of parking lots on walkable environments.

Natural Resource Planning:

Preserving and protecting sensitive environmental features within the city is a critical function of the planning process. Maintaining unique landscape features and valuable natural resources provides numerous community benefits and can continue to foster a walkable, bicycle-friendly environment. Identifying critical landscape features and

character is an important step for a community to take towards conservation. Managing stormwater to preserve streams and water bodies is the single best way to mitigate negative impacts. By integrating green infrastructure practices into development proposals, the city can achieve water quality goals and ensure that runoff water becomes a resource rather than a waste product.

Compact Neighborhoods:

Compact building design ultimately saves money, energy, and time while producing livable places and communities. Compact buildings use land more efficiently, allowing people to live closer to work, school, and businesses. This helps to reduce travel times and limit single trips. Compact building development also provides space for parks, trails, and environmental amenities. Historic neighborhoods feature a variety of residential densities and small lots, which contribute to a strong sense of place. These walkable neighborhoods contribute to the unique character championed by this project. The city should consider the long-term consequences of sprawl-like development patterns and the pressure this type of development places on infrastructure costs, police and fire protection, roads, and intrusion on critical farmland, natural areas, and wildlife habitat.

Mix of uses:

A blend of mixed uses was highlighted during the community engagement process. An approach to integrate a mixture of land uses is common in a downtown setting. Integrating mixed-use development into neighborhoods also benefits by providing neighborhood-scaled services within a walkable distance, meeting daily needs. Sub-area planning efforts will be beneficial for areas identified as mixed commercial and residential. The intensity of commercial uses and residential densities within a neighborhood should be considered during the development review process.

Design Standards:

Design standards are an important tool for regulating the character of development, architectural materials, specific design requirements, and, sometimes, site design standards. These regulations go beyond standard setback and height requirements. Standards can be applied to the larger community or specific districts and areas in the city. Design standards are recommended for the gateway district's future land-use category and the Business 371 future growth area. Design standards help craft a community's character and its look and feel. It's an important tool in a city's development tool set.

Neighborhood Design:

Character and historic image were highlighted during the community engagement process. Design and character of Brainerd's neighborhoods are unique identifiers that should be preserved and enhanced. Neighborhood and design should be considered part of the development process. New residential development areas should establish the same sense of place and character found in traditional neighborhoods. Subdivision design standards can help define this vision and outline regulations to create neighborhoods with a strong sense of place.

4 Community Character

Overview

History is infused throughout the city, in the neighborhood schools, the grid-like street network, the downtown, and historic homes. The surrounding environment and the river contribute to a high quality of life for Brainerd residents and were noted as key factors. This chapter seeks to maintain a positive community image, specifically tailored to improve existing places and help them thrive. The directives of this sub-chapter focus on the city's design attributes, programming, and branding elements. By identifying a set of frameworks, guided by public input, the city can take active strides to strategically and thoughtfully create thriving public spaces, neighborhoods, and places.

Goals & Policies

GOAL 1: Preserve and repurpose historic assets.

Policies:

1. Seek small-scale opportunities to reinforce local history and identity through incentives and programs.
2. Develop local preservation initiatives.
3. Make downtown a destination within the community.
4. Transform historic sites to serve today's contemporary needs through adaptive reuse.
5. Support the transition of businesses in the

community and provide new business owners with the tools and programs necessary to rehabilitate old structures.

6. Strike a balance between preserving historic structures and building new within all land uses.

GOAL 2: Enliven the community through intentional community design.

Policies:

1. Provide flexible spaces for programming and events.
2. Transform downtown as the social hub of the community and the region.
3. Enhance community connections, making Brainerd the hub of the region.
4. Become a year-round, 24/7 community: a place where you can live, work, play, stay, and learn.
5. Become the hub for cultural events, experiences, public art, and music.

GOAL 3: Enhance the city's unique identity by fostering the appropriate blend of historic and modern structures.

Policies:

1. Communicate a design vision through guidelines or standards for structures, site design, building materials, and other requirements meant to accentuate the community image.
2. Collaborate with developers and builders on future development and/or redevelopment

- proposals to ensure high-quality design.
- 3. Identify historic structures and strongly encourage preservation through incentives and programs.
- 4. Seek small-scale ways to integrate community identity, fused with local history.
- 5. Encourage the adaptation of declining historic sites to serve modern-day contemporary needs.

Input

As part of the public input process, the following themes have been identified regarding community design.

Overall Image

As part of the community input process, residents loudly expressed their desire to improve the city's overall image. Residents seek to address property maintenance violations, improve the aesthetics of the gateway corridors, and improve the exterior facades of residential homes.

Downtown Revitalization

Residents support a coordinated effort to rehabilitate and invest in the downtown. Downtown plays an important role in the economic and social aspects of Brainerd's identity. Survey respondents identified rehabilitating downtown as one of the greatest concerns regarding growth and development (46 percent). Survey participants seek a collaborative approach to improve the physical, social, and economic condition of the downtown.

Emphasize natural resources

Survey respondents noted their passion for improving the city's natural resources, championing the Mississippi River, and supporting opportunities and the expansion of amenities in the general area. The city should seek ways to integrate open space into new development proposals, identify existing

redevelopment opportunities, and identify greenways.

Community brand:

Project participants wish to see a community branding initiative that captures the essence of the city's history and natural features, making Brainerd a unique community in our region. This new vision for the city should capture the culture and history, but also acknowledge the vast year-round activities.

Trends

Tactical Urbanism

This term refers to small-scale demonstration projects meant to experiment and gather input on potential design changes. Tactical urbanism refers to a city-, organizational-, and/or citizen-led approach to neighborhood building that uses short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions to catalyze long-term change (Tactical Urbanism Guide). There are many tactics for studying and facilitating conversation about complex design issues. Below is a series of examples that the city should consider in the upcoming years:

- new trail alignment or protected bike lane
- enhanced pedestrian crossings
- pop-up town hall or city council meeting
- open street events
- park(ing) day

Placemaking

An important element of this chapter is to strategically position the city from a project-based development approach towards a place-based development tactic. *Placemaking* can be a springboard for community development – and revitalization.

Placemaking inspires people and community leaders to reimagine and reinvent public spaces within their communities. *Placemaking* is a collaborative process by which we can shape

our public realm to maximize shared value (Project for Public Spaces). Placemaking does much more than promote better use of urban design; it focuses on creative use patterns, concentrating on the social, cultural, and physical attributes that define a place.

FUTURE CONDITIONS

Design Guidelines

A group of illustrations and text can serve as a visionary tool, providing suggested and descriptive elements for the built environment. This guide will be an important tool for the City of Brainerd to implement this plan successfully. Such guidelines can help preserve the city's historic character and maintain consistency and a strong community image. Traditional design guidelines are meant to allow for flexibility and innovation and to differ in scale.

- Develop a set of design guidelines that address the downtown, general commercial, and industrial, as well as mixed-use districts

Historic preservation

The city can take strides by protecting historically significant structures, landmarks, and landscapes to enhance its cultural and social value. By conserving and preserving historic assets, we can help retain that tangible connection to previous generations and celebrate the specific architectural and artistic significance. Additionally, these historic buildings play a significant role in Brainerd's identity and create a sense of place that is often impossible to re-create with new construction.

- Encourage adaptive reuse by working with local entities and partners
- Identify a list of local properties that should be preserved.
- Adopt a preservation ordinance

Signage

Private and public signage play a significant role

in shaping the city's overall image. Without clear standards and regulations, signs (both public and private) could diminish the overall image of districts, neighborhoods, and corridors. The city's local ordinances need to balance the varied objectives of public and private entities while developing a local flavor, identity, and theme.

Develop a guideline document outlining the standards and design requirements of the signage ordinance. Develop different standards for:

- significant neighborhood nodes and the downtown,
- main corridors, and
- areas outside of those districts.

Make it easy for applicants to find this tool on the city's website.

Wayfinding signage (directional and informational) is extremely important in developing a walkable and bikeable community. This public signage can reflect and celebrate the community's heritage and image as well. This plan emphasizes improving the aesthetics of the city's main corridors. Signage should suggest points of interest throughout the city and serve as a navigation tool for visitors.

- Develop a citywide wayfinding master plan
- Corridor enhancements

Our road networks serve as the backbone of our community. Visitors and passersby often experience Brainerd only by driving through it. Often, this serves as the first impression of our city. The city has an opportunity to design the elements within the corridor strategically. Signage, streetscaping, lighting, and landscaping in key locations along the city's main corridors, as well as at important gateways, should be strategically designed to reflect the city's brand, easily orient drivers, and indicate that they are in the City of Brainerd.

- Design gateway features on the city's main

arterial roads

Downtown

Downtown serves as the city's social and cultural hub. One important element identified during the outreach process is that residents would like to see the city build on Brainerd's historical character. Many elements in this chapter are tied directly to the central business district. Several properties in downtown Brainerd contribute to the city's cultural identity, and efforts should be taken to preserve these landmarks or identify adaptive reuse opportunities.

- Formalize a central gathering space that can be flexible to adapt to a multitude of civic uses, e.g., farmers' market, pop concert, performances, etc.
- Site elements such as seating, outdoor cafes, public art, banners, sidewalk striping, pedestrian refuges, community gardens, and murals are examples of "fast" improvements that can be accomplished in a short period of time.
- Seek opportunities to infuse the downtown with public art, sculptures, and murals

DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY



The city should consider leveraging placemaking to empower residents and community stakeholders to have a voice in local projects. During the 20th century, the planning process suppressed residents' ability to voice their ideas and aspirations about places within communities. Placemaking can be a tool to break down silos by expanding the lens of planners, designers, and engineers and broadening their focus beyond professional disciplines and agendas. Grass-roots efforts, such as placemaking, can be a tool to alleviate some of the pressure and rigid regulations around project development.

Eleven principles for creating great community places:

- 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 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!

5 Housing

Overview

For many, housing is the single most important factor in a person's quality of life. For a new resident or visitor, it also provides a visual indicator of the community's character, including prosperity and vitality. From a city's perspective, housing is typically the largest user of land and city services; it is also a significant base for local taxes. Having a clear understanding of current housing inventory (number and types) and current and future population projections will assist Brainerd in providing sufficient housing units to meet the needs of current and future residents.

Brainerd is a community of neighborhoods with safe, attractive, and affordable housing options to serve residents throughout their lives. To this end, Brainerd will support policies that preserve and enhance the character of existing neighborhoods while encouraging diverse housing options in all neighborhoods— new and old.

With Brainerd being the hub of Crow Wing County, all the needs of current and future residents must be met. Brainerd offers residential housing, including rural residential housing, within its city limits. This asset and the ability to satisfy these needs make Brainerd different from surrounding cities and will ultimately strengthen Brainerd's brand as the region's hub.

Goals & Policies

GOAL 1: Provide a diverse mix of housing choices for all stages of life, income ranges, and ownership/rental preferences.

Policies:

1. Complement Brainerd's entry-level and affordable housing options by encouraging other move-up and mid-to upper-end, market-rate housing options.
2. Expand home ownership and rental opportunities through rehabilitation and new construction.
3. Rehabilitate and/or replace substandard housing with units that are decent, safe, healthy, affordable, and of appropriate size to meet the city's current and future housing needs.
4. Facilitate the maintenance of existing housing and rental units to ensure they are in decent, safe, and healthy condition.
5. Ensure an adequate supply of quality and affordable housing units for current and future residents.

GOAL 2: Encourage the preservation and historical significance of existing neighborhoods.

Policies:

1. Identify the historic nature of each neighborhood throughout the city.
2. Encourage the creation of neighborhood associations.
3. Encourage energy efficiency and sustainability in home renovation and new construction.
4. Support development and infrastructure improvements that complement the unique architectural styles and development

patterns that define individual neighborhoods.

5. Develop friendly, safe, and welcoming neighborhoods that encourage interaction through all stages of life.
6. Seek ways to encourage mixed-use development/redevelopment in and around the downtown area.

GOAL 3: Ensure quality living conditions for all residents.

Policies:

1. Encourage continued and timely enforcement of all maintenance codes, and continue to monitor and inspect all properties.
2. Promote the maintenance and rehabilitation of all properties.
3. Monitor properties in foreclosure and keep an inventory of tax-forfeited parcels.
4. Engage residents (owners and renters) to become engaged in their neighborhood, which can lead to retention.

Community Input

Robust feedback was gathered from the community design session in November 2018. Below is a list of suggestions gathered from community engagement completed throughout the planning process:

- Better code enforcement
- Follow policies better
- More housing to attract new residents
- Upkeep of homes
- Provide diverse housing
- Improve housing quality
- Improve rentals
- Affordable, quality housing or both lower- and middle-income earners
- Protect residential zoning

Survey participants seek an array of housing options that meet their income, size, and quality needs. Various concerns were voiced about the quality and inventory of available

rental units within the city. Safe, well-maintained housing is critical for Brainerd's community character. Survey participants support a coordinated effort to address blight, improve housing conditions, and increase availability.

Existing Conditions

City of Brainerd offers the following seven residential districts that provide a range of housing choice and densities:

Rural Residential District: for large lots, single-family residential uses, and open space areas in environmentally sensitive and high natural amenity areas.

Single-Family Estate Residential District: to provide for larger, urban lots in areas containing unique natural features and amenities.

Single-Family Residential: to allow areas of low-density, single-family, detached dwellings and to preserve the quiet, single-family neighborhoods.

Single-Family Residential: to allow and preserve areas of quiet neighborhoods of one- and two-family homes.

Medium-Density Residential: to provide for low-to medium-density housing through the mixture of one- and two-unit dwellings and medium-density, multiple-family dwellings.

High-Density Residential: to provide for areas of high-density residential housing, including senior housing.

Manufactured Housing District: to provide a separate district for manufactured housing parks, distinct from other residential areas.

Existing Plans and Boards

Housing and Redevelopment Authority: The purpose of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority is to provide affordable housing and

redevelopment opportunities to strengthen neighborhoods and the community.

Existing Housing System

Housing inventory can change year to year, but having a clear understanding of current inventory and future needs will help Brainerd attract and retain residents. Brainerd is unique in having a near 50-50 split between owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units. This could be because of a handful of reasons, including: rent is considered low in Brainerd, with the average rent being \$703 when compared to Baxter's average rent of \$957, and it is cheaper to rent than to have a mortgage payment, which in Brainerd averages \$976 per month. According to the Housing Needs and Analysis Study by the Crow Wing County HRA, by 2020, the estimated percentage of renters in Brainerd will jump from 50.5 percent to 57 percent, which equates to around 100 new renters (ACS).

Another large part of the existing housing network is the 6,488 total housing units in Brainerd, according to the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS). Of these 6,488 housing units, 5,831 are occupied (90 percent), and 657 are vacant (10 percent). A breakdown of the 6,488 housing units is shown in the following figure.

Missing Middle Housing

One strategy in responding to the demand for walkable urban living is to integrate “Missing Middle Housing” concepts. Missing Middle Housing is not a new type of building; rather, it is a range of building types that existed pre-1940 and were a fundamental building block.

f options, such as duplexes, fourplexes, and bungalow courts, that effortlessly fit into low-rise neighborhoods seeking walkability, local-serving retail, and public transportation. This housing typology will help address affordability and address the mismatch between the available housing stock, the demographic shift, and the growing demand for walkability.

Types: duplex; side-by-side, duplex; stacked, bungalow court, carriage house (ADU), fourplex, multiplex; small, townhouse, live/work, and courtyard apartments.

-Missing Middle Housing

The aging of existing homes in Brainerd was

1990 to 1999	683	10.53%
1980 to 1989	517	7.97%
1970 to 1979	630	9.71%
1960 to 1969	890	13.72%
1950 to 1959	924	14.24%
1940 to 1949	658	10.14%
1939 or earlier	1,460	22.50%

US Census, ACS 2017 DP04

That being said, old homes add character to communities and neighborhoods that brand-new homes cannot. During each ward meeting, residents noted their love and appreciation for their neighborhood. Whether it be social or physical traits, history, family heritage, or proximity to amenities, residents shared ideas for improving their neighborhoods to attract new residents to town and maintain the community's character. Residents championed Brainerd's history and the need to improve the exteriors of the neighborhoods they live in. They exhibited a passion for improving the

Missing middle buildings typically have footprints no larger than a large single-family home. This makes it easy to integrate into neighborhoods; they are a good tool for transitioning to a higher-density, walkable context. These housing types provide a diverse array o

frequently raised during public engagement sessions. The discussions were mainly focused on exterior deterioration, which harms the housing stock and is not aesthetically pleasing to potential new residents. The figure below shows that 59.3 percent of the houses in Brainerd were built before 1970. The national average for homes built before 1970 is 38.9 percent, far below Brainerd's stock

Construction Year of Housing Units

Year Built	Estimate	Percent
Total Housing Units	6,488	100.00%
2010 or later	104	1.60%
2000 to 2009	622	9.59%

aesthetics of housing units, which, in turn, will build stronger neighborhoods and a sense of place.

Brainerd has a high rental rate: in 2016 (ACS), 53 percent of the city's housing units were rentals.

Lifecycle Housing Options

A community's housing needs are related to its household demographic profile. Households generally transition through several lifecycle stages, including entry-level households, first-time homeowners, move-up buyers, empty nesters, and seniors. The following section provides an overview of each household.

Entry-Level Households: People in the 18-24 age cohort typically rent a house or apartment because they do not have the income needed to purchase a home. Many people in this age category move frequently, making them more

hesitant to purchase.

First-Time Homeowners: This group is typically in their 20s and 30s and are usually transitioning from renting apartments or joint living conditions. Traditionally they are often young families or single individuals. These homeowners are prone to moving within several years of their first home purchase due to increased financial resources, occupation advancement, and family structure changes.

Move-Up Buyers: Move-up buyers are typically in their 30s and 40s and are transitioning from a small, less expensive home that they had purchased at an earlier time. This is an important age group in terms of an economic growth perspective.

Empty Nesters: Empty nesters are typically in their 50s and 60s. Often, their children have moved out of their homes and the square footage is much larger than needed. Empty nesters often want to live in a smaller house, such as a townhome, that requires less maintenance and upkeep.

Seniors: Those in their 70s and older are looking for low-maintenance, manageable, or assisted living housing. As the population ages, Brainerd should continually ensure that it has adequate housing to meet the needs of seniors.

CWC Housing Study

The Crow Wing County HRA recently adopted the Crow Wing County Workforce Housing Study in 2020. This study analyzed the county's housing market, with specific emphasis on middle-income or "workforce" housing.

According to the report, middle income refers to households earning between \$20,000 and \$50,000 per year (or \$10-\$25) per hour. The report identifies strategies and recommendations to close the housing gap for middle-income residents in the county. One of those recommendations is to incentivize the construction of single- and multi-family housing affordable to this segment of the population.

The plan highlights six priority recommendations: 1) Identify opportunity sites, 2) Create or enhance a Down Payment Assistance Program, 3) Assist with rehabbing older homes, 4) Amend the Tax Forfeited Property Land policy, 5) Use the Housing Trust Fund to incentivize new construction, 6) host developers onsite to build interest.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's)

People are seeking walkable neighborhoods that offer a mix of housing and transportation options that are close to jobs, schools, entertainment, shopping, and parks. Coupled with an aging population and a decrease in households with children, we will continue to see the demand for smaller homes in more compact neighborhoods.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's) are small houses or apartments that exist on the same property lot as a single-family residence. Accessory dwelling units play a major role in serving a national housing need.

This traditional home type is re-emerging as an affordable and flexible housing option that meets the needs of older adults and young families alike. ADU's come in many shapes and styles including:

- Detached
- Attached
- Interior (upper level)
- Interior (lower level)
- Above garage
- Garage conversion

ADUs can house people of all ages. An individual's housing needs change over time, and an ADU's use can be adapted for different household types, income levels, and stages of life.
-AARP

Lifec-cycle Housing

As Brainerd takes steps to become an age friendly community, strategic actions should be taken to offer a variety of housing choices that meet the need of a changing demographic.

Communities with a variety of housing options will attract households of diverse sizes, incomes, and ages. Such places enable people to remain in their community as they age, providing transitional opportunities such as staying in their home or moving to housing in line with their changing needs. Brainerd's median age is very low for the county (32), and the city could take strides to attract older generations and age cohorts by responding to their housing needs. Ideally, Brainerd should have high-quality options for people of all income levels. The need for assisted living or residential nursing care should never preclude someone from living in a community of his or her choice.

Programming

Upkeep and home maintenance can be physically and financially challenging. Affording basic home repair can be a challenge for low-income residents, and home repairs could be difficult for people who have trouble getting around. Brainerd could consider starting low-cost or no-cost programs to help residents with a low income or those living on disability to maintain their homes.

Pride of one's neighborhood and property plays a role in the community image. This sense of pride leads to personal value and gratification in maintaining and caretaking of buildings and grounds. Similar constraints are present when applied to rental housing. The ability to finance repairs and maintenance comes from rent income, which is dependent on the market; which can sometimes lead to activities being deferred.

Neighborhood Associations

Groups like neighborhood associations or organizations can play an active role in developing neighborhood capacity, rehabilitation, and branding. This volunteer group will work together to build stronger neighborhoods. The city could leverage these groups of volunteers to address concerns like blight and deferred maintenance on dwellings and businesses. Small pools of funding could be made available by either proposals, or managed through the neighborhood association to support or solicit small-scale, community-led improvement projects like public art, tactical urbanism, parks, gardens, etc. Neighborhood groups could also assist in fundraising and financing to address redevelopment/reinvestment needs in particular areas.

Maintenance and Rehabilitation

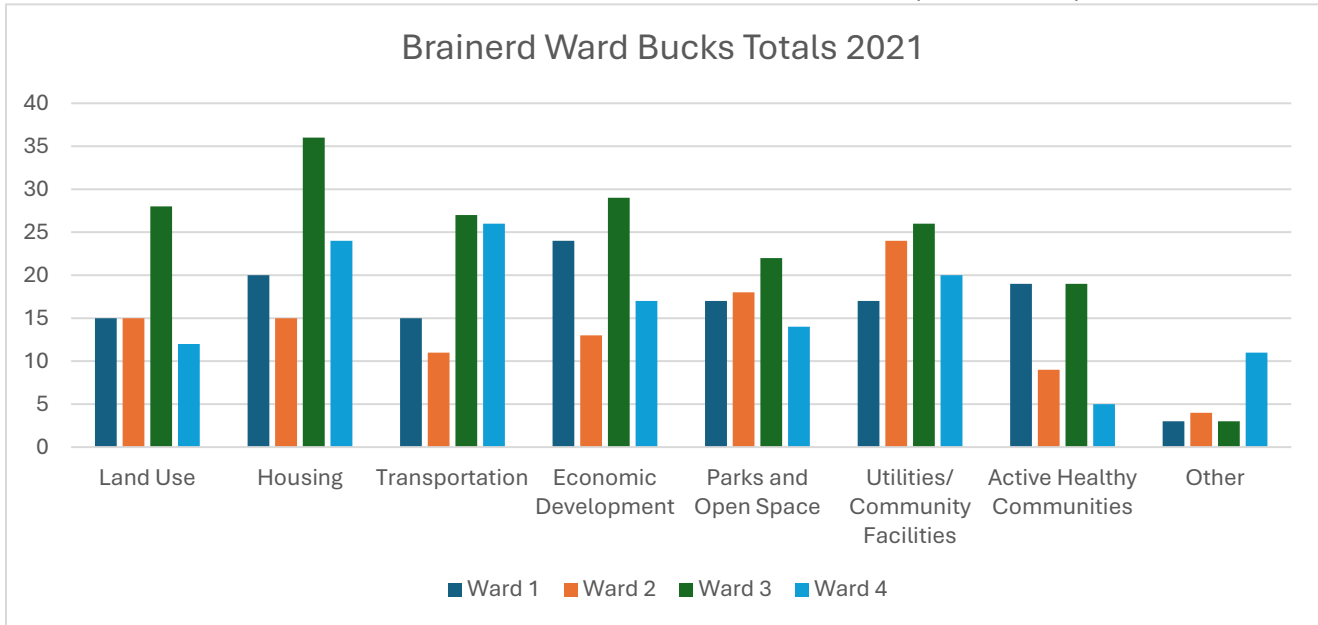
Improvements of the existing housing stock will help maintain the aesthetic of the neighborhood and will support the historic aspect that Brainerd's neighborhoods proudly reflect. Individual homeowners may lack the skill or ability to complete projects on their own; either building or grounds. City programs can be developed to take an active role in maintenance and rehabilitation of neighborhoods. Programs should seek to remove barriers for rehabilitation and maintenance by connecting homeowners with contractors, technical support for those who want to pursue improvements, financial programs, and assistance including historic preservation and restoration. Such programs could include a housing rehabilitation toolkit, workshops, partnerships to provide consultation, or as advanced as a housing redevelopment program to identify and mitigate housing blight/deterioration.

Future Opportunities

During each ward meeting, residents noted their love and appreciation for their neighborhood. Whether it be the social or physical traits, history, family heritage, or location to amenities, residents voiced their

ward meetings:

Residents championed the history of Brainerd and the need to improve the exterior facades of the neighborhoods where they live. The quality of rental units oftentimes led conversations. Residents have a passion to improve the



opinions on ways to improve their neighborhoods to help bring new residents to town and maintain the community character. The following figure shows that housing was one of the most important topics at all of the

aesthetics and appearance of housing units, which in turn will build stronger neighborhoods and a sense of place.

6 Mobility

Overview

A community's mobility network is perhaps its most defining feature. A community's transportation network must be able to facilitate all modes of movement to a community, through a community, and within a community. A community's transportation network must also take into consideration the interplay among modes of transportation such as aviation, freight, rail, transit, automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian.

Furthermore, a community's transportation network must anticipate the needs of the users of each of these modes. But perhaps foremost, the network must seek to ensure efficiency and safety.

In summary, a community's transportation networks must safely and efficiently facilitate movement, integrate various modes, and anticipate needs and future system demands, all while maintaining existing infrastructure and managing limited resources. This chapter focuses on describing the existing transportation network, identifying key transportation commissions and plans, reviewing the top priorities from the community engagement plan, and finally, outlining the transportation goals identified by the planning team through the planning process.

Goals & Policies

GOAL 1: Maintain, develop, and adapt a dynamic multimodal transportation system within Brainerd that seamlessly accommodates all users.

Policies:

- 1) Balance the competing needs and safety of local traffic, bicycles, and pedestrians, and ensure the efficient transfer of freight through the City of Brainerd.
- 2) Consider innovative designs, signage, technologies, and access management to ensure mobility and reduce congestion.
- 3) Continue to maintain and celebrate Brainerd's expansive trail network and consider opportunities to expand the network through logical local, regional, or statewide connections.

GOAL 2: Continue to work collaboratively with MnDOT, federal and state agencies, neighboring cities, the private sector, residents, and other agency partners to improve the mobility network in the region.

Policies:

1. Expand the local road system thoughtfully, strategically, and sustainably where growth and demand dictate.
2. In consideration of fiscal constraints and long-term maintenance, prioritize the maintenance of the existing transportation network, and only expand thoughtfully and strategically.

GOAL 3: Elevate consideration of other modes of transportation such as public transit, bicyclists, and pedestrians to the same level of automobile users.

Policies:

1. Recognize, respond to, and prioritize the increased demand for public transit.
2. Implement the top two to three goals and strategies of the five-year transit plan.
3. Consider ways to leverage the Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) to maximize ridership and efficiency.
4. Identify the most pressing challenges facing Brainerd/Crow Wing Public Transit and take steps to address them.

GOAL 4: Commit to creating remarkable bike and pedestrian connections from neighborhoods to the downtown that are safe, efficient, and aesthetically pleasing.

Policies:

1. Thoughtfully consider opportunities for additional bicycle and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.
2. Invest in community-wide signage to help residents navigate the community and to destinations (universally compliant).
3. Work with residents to collectively reinvest and reimagine public spaces that are in the heart of the community.

GOAL 5: Utilize the airport to provide a convenient global gateway that safely and efficiently generates sustainable, responsible economic vitality.

Policies:

1. Determine ways to maximize the customer experience within the Passenger Terminal Building through arts, entertainment, and improved communication devices.
2. Continue relationships with expanding airlines and seek air service through

another hub city.

3. Work with area economic developers to attract new aeronautical businesses and airport tenants for the development of additional land along the extended taxiway.
4. Utilize the airport to provide a convenient global gateway that safely and efficiently generates economic vitality sustainably and responsibly.

Community Input

As a part of the community design session, residents identified a series of priorities as it relates to transportation. Participants noted their preference to increase walkability throughout the city and to connect our neighborhoods, downtown and the Mississippi River. During the neighborhood meetings, ward four which is generally identified as the southeast quadrant of Brainerd, identified transportation as its number one planning element. Meeting participants noted street maintenance, the need for more sidewalks, and transit as areas where they felt investment was needed. In the larger context of the four neighborhood meetings, the general discussion of walkability was identified as one of the leading themes from the outreach process.

Residents noted that existing walking and biking opportunities do exist within their neighborhoods, which speaks to the vastness of the network. Residents use these networks to either connect to nature and area green spaces or to the downtown. Barriers such as Washington Street, sidewalk maintenance, gaps in the network, or no sidewalks at all, and snow removal were all noted as barriers that deter them from utilizing the network from time to time.

Both the findings and the recommendations identified in this plan are based on and in alignment with a robust community engagement plan that included surveys, interviews, neighborhood ward meetings, several focus groups, and a community

visioning session. The major themes from the community engagement done through this planning process include:

- The need to continually improve public transportation.
- The need to improve bike and pedestrian crossings of TH 210 and South Sixth to create connections between neighborhoods and downtown.
- Continue to improve upon the current trail network.

Existing Transportation Network

Pedestrian

The City of Brainerd owns and maintains a fairly extensive sidewalk network throughout town. The sidewalk network is most widespread in and around the downtown and in the neighborhoods in the north. The sidewalk network is less complete in the northwest, northeast, and southeast portions of town.

In addition to the city's sidewalk network, the city continues to maintain, expand, and improve its trail network, building upon the Paul Bunyan Trail (PBT), the Buffalo Hills Trail, the Cuyuna Lakes Trail, and other paved trails off of Canterbury Drive near Thiesse Drive. Two significant barriers came up frequently from residents throughout the planning process. These barriers include the difficulty pedestrians experience when attempting to cross either TH 210 or South Sixth Street, particularly near downtown, but along each corridor. The high average daily traffic (AADT) and traffic speeds on these two corridors create an uncomfortable environment for pedestrians crossing. Furthermore, because these two corridors intersect near downtown, they act as barriers, blocking pedestrian traffic from the rest of the 19.21 miles are covered under state aid rules and eligible for state aid funding. The city also maintains 16.26 miles of alleys.

community on both sides.

Bicycle

According to state statute (169.222 OPERATION OF BICYCLE), every person operating a bicycle shall have all of the rights and duties applicable to the driver of any other vehicle. Therefore, bicyclists can use and enjoy all 83 miles of the City of Brainerd's owned and managed roadway.

However, given varying degrees of skill and comfort, many bicyclists are not sufficiently knowledgeable or confident in bicycle safety and laws to enter a roadway and engage with and navigate vehicular traffic. One of the goals of the Brainerd Nonmotorized Transportation Plan is to embrace nonmotorized transportation alternatives, including bicycling. Therefore, the city has taken steps to increase the number of bicycle infrastructure options available throughout town, including implementing several recommendations from the Nonmotorized Transportation Plan.

Recommendations in the plan include the designation of specific bike routes, installation of bike lanes, sharrows, multi-use trails, and wayfinding signage.

Just like for pedestrians, bicyclists benefit from the city's efforts to continue to maintain, expand, and improve its trail network, building upon the Paul Bunyan Trail (PBT), the Buffalo Hills Trail, the Cuyuna Lakes Trail, and other paved trails off of Canterbury Drive near Thiesse Drive.

Road and Bridge

The City of Brainerd maintains approximately 83.06 miles of streets (80.28 paved, 0.17 bridge, and 2.61 unpaved), of which

Comprehensive pavement management system is based on a 0-4 scale (0 being pavement that has completely failed and 4 being pavement that was just constructed). The city rates its

pavements on three-year cycles. The City of Brainerd employs a variety of pavement management techniques to maintain the nearly 81 miles of paved streets, including chip sealing, crack sealing, patching, etc.)

recognition that most travel involves movement through a network of roads. Functional classification defines the role that any particular road or street plays in serving the flow of trips through an entire network.

Functional Classification

Functional classification is the grouping of streets and high-ways into classes or systems according to the character of service they are intended to provide. Basic to this process is the

The functional classification of Brainerd’s Road Network is shown in the table and map below. For additional information on functional classification or to view the most recent functional classification maps:

Principal Arterials

Route	Termini	Jurisdiction
Business Highway 371/S. 6th	S. city limits to Washington St./TH 210	Local
Trunk Highway 210	W. city limits to E. city limits	State

Minor Arterials

Route	Termini	Jurisdiction
Mill Avenue/County Road 3	TH 210 to N. city limits	County
South East 13th Street/CSAH 45	Co. Rd. 117 to E. Washington Street/TH 210	County
Trunk Highway 25	E. Washington St./TH 210 to city limits	State
Oak Street	S. 6th St./Business 371 to city limits	City
West Laurel Street	River to Highland Scenic Dr./CASH	
South West 4th Street TH 210	W. Laurel St. to W. Washington St./ City	
Laurel Street	Business 371 to River	City
CSAH 20	W. Washington St./TH 210 to Jackson St.	County
South West 4th Street	W. Washington St./TH 210 to W. Laurel St.	City
West College Drive	CSAH 48 to River	City
Industrial Park Road/County Road 117	S 6th St. to 13th St. SE/Co. Rd. 45	County

Major Collectors

Route	Termini	Jurisdiction
Industrial Park Road/County Road 117	13th St. SE/Co. Rd. 45 to East City Limits	County
Bluff Avenue	N. 4th St. to N. 7th St.	City
Fir Street	N. 7th St. to N. 11th St. and Evergreen Ave	City
Wright Street	S. 6th St. to CSAH 45	City
H Street	4th Avenue to Mill Ave/CSAH 3	City
Riverside Drive (CSAH 20)	Jackson St. to Beaver Dam Rd.	City
North 4th Street	Washington St./TH 210 to Bluff Ave	City
South West 4th Street	W. Laurel St. to E. College Dr.	City
Beaver Dam Road	CSAH 20 to Wise Rd./CSAH 49	County

Route	Termini	Jurisdiction
CSAH 45	S. city limits to Co. Rd. 117	County
Front Street	S. 6th St. to S. 8th St	City
H Street	Mill Avenue/Co. Rd. 3 to Gillis Ave	City
Evergreen Avenue	1st Avenue to Fir	City
Fir Street	Evergreen Ave. to N 8th St.	City
North 8th Street	Fir St. to Washington St/TH 210	City
South 8th Street	Washington St./TH 210 to Oak St.	City
Willow Street	SE 13th St. to S 6th St./Business 371	City
Highland Scenic Drive/CSAH 48	W. Laurel St. to city limits	City
South West 4th Street	W. Laurel St. to W. College Dr.	City
Laurel Street	S. 8th St. to Business 371	City

Minor Collectors

Route	Termini	Jurisdiction
H Street	Mill Avenue/Co. Rd. 3 to 13th Ave	City
South 8th Street	Oak St. to Broadway St.	City
Broadway Street	S. 8 th St. to Willow St.	City
South 9th Street	Vine St. to Willow St.	City
Vine Street	S. 4 th St. to S. 6 th St.	City
East College Drive	River to Quince St.	City
4th Avenue	E. Washington St./TH 210 to H St. NE	City
N Street	Mill Ave/CSAH 3 to 13 th Ave	City
13th Avenue	E. Washington St./TH 210 to N. St.	City
Riverside Drive (CSAH 20)	Beaver Dam Rd. to city limits	City
East River Road	Washington St. /TH 210 to E. College Dr.	City

Local Roads

All other roads, not listed in Brainerd City limits are classified as “local roads”

The purpose of the Brainerd TAC is to monitor and advise changes to the operations of the city's intra- and inter-city bus service, to make recommendations to the City Council and/or other decision-making bodies regarding changes to enhance, and improve the service to its riders.

The purpose of the Brainerd Walkable Bikeable City Committee is to provide recommendations to the planning commission and city council regarding ways to make Brainerd a more walkable and bikeable city.

The purpose of the Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport Commission is to control, operate, and manage the jointly owned city/county airport operations. It establishes policy to ensure that quality aviation-related services are provided to the Brainerd Lakes regional area.

In addition to these transportation-related commissions, the city regularly updates several transportation plans to guide decision-making. These plans including the following:

Five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

The City of Brainerd's Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a five-year investment guide for the construction and/or improvement of city streets, sanitary sewers, and storm sewers. City staff have prepared the plan to assist the City Council in long-range planning of capital infrastructure upgrades and to give a big-picture perspective on the continuing need to fund a transportation and utility system that serves the constituents of Brainerd and uses their tax dollars in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

Nonmotorized Transportation Plan

The plan seeks to outline the value and benefits to the city that can be derived from providing additional nonmotorized transportation options.

ADA Transition Plan

The adoption of an ADA Transition Plan by all public agencies with greater than or equal to 50 employees is a requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) enacted on July 26, 1990. ADA is a civil rights law prohibiting the discrimination against individuals on the basis of a disability. ADA consists of five titles outlining protections in the following areas:

- Employment
- State and local government services
- Public accommodations
- Telecommunications
- Miscellaneous provisions

Five-Year Transit System Plan

The goal of this five-year planning process is to facilitate and develop identification of transit system strengths and weaknesses, challenges and opportunities, including unmet needs and anticipated or desired future transit service changes.

Safe Routes to School Plan

The Brainerd/Baxter Safe Routes to School Plan (SRTS) is intended to provide a framework on which to continue building a community in which more students have the opportunity to safely walk or bike to and from school when and where it is safe to do so.

The SRTS plan is intended to increase opportunities to walk and bike to school and, first and foremost, lead to a safer active transportation environment, improved physical and mental health, improved student concentration and study skills, a reduction in negative behavioral issues, as well as improvements to the local sidewalk and trail networks.

The SRTS plan was developed through the efforts of a planning team developed by the city and in conjunction with the Region 5

Development Commission (R5DC). To date the City of Brainerd has successfully implemented several sidewalk projects in and around Garfield and Lowell elementary schools.

7 Economic Development

Overview

A primary focus of this chapter is to create a new identity, one that reclaims the city's role as the economic hub of the region. Brainerd is entering a different time, as is its workforce. Since the 2004 comprehensive plan, the city's workforce has increased and has seen further growth in various sectors. The chart on the right illustrates the leading industries of employment among Brainerd residents in 2016.

These sectors represent nearly 57 percent of the city's workforce. During the day, Brainerd welcomes a population of 18,450 (ESRI, 2017). A deeper dive into the inflow and outflow report from the Census in 2015 reveals an influx of 7,522 workers into the city who live outside of Brainerd city limits. A total of 3,934 live in the city but are employed outside of the city. A total of 1,757 then live and work in town. Brainerd is the regional service center of the region and the hub for medical, education, government, and professional offices. Readers may be surprised that the following industries employ the largest percent of workers in the city (ESRI, 2017).

Economic health is an important component of a healthy and thriving community. A strong commercial and industrial base provides jobs to community residents, contributes to a city's tax base, and can be a source of psychological strength to a community. This can best be explained when one compares a downtown

area of boarded-up buildings to one with a thriving business sector. The community with the vacant or boarded-up buildings appears lifeless, while the one with the strong downtown community is lively, busy, and thriving

Improving job opportunities and growing and supporting local businesses were among the top concerns as a part of the community outreach process. Providing pedestrian- and automobile-oriented commercial development, additional opportunities, and choices on specific retail offerings were leading weaknesses identified in the 2004 plan and remain a concern and focus today.

This chapter builds off a set of smart growth economic development strategies. This approach seeks to build upon existing assets, takes incremental actions to strengthen a community, and builds long-term value to attract a range of investments.

Goals & Policies

GOAL 1: Support infill and redevelopment throughout Brainerd as a strategic component of growth.

Policies:

1. Drive infill development and redevelopment towards areas where current infrastructure is present, or places where high levels of

- blight or disinvestment exist.
2. Invest in community improvements that will spur and support revitalization or redevelopment.
 3. Evaluate the near and long-term fiscal impacts of annexation and development proposals.
 4. Reclaim underutilized infrastructure within the city (industrial sites, rail lines, parking lots, blighted structures, vacant blocks).

GOAL 2: Support our workforce and help them thrive.

Policies:

1. Collaborate with local partners and stakeholders to address industry workforce needs, creating a career and education pathway for residents of all ages.
2. Encourage access to advanced education or certification programs, workforce development, and job training opportunities.
3. Support the ability to enable residents to work within close walking and biking distances from where they live.
4. Expand transit opportunities to the various business clusters, or concentrated areas with high business density, throughout the community.
5. Support expanding transit hours of operation to support our workforce during all shift times.

GOAL 3: Help local businesses grow and attract new businesses in our neighborhoods, along our main corridors, and in our downtown.

Policies:

6. Support current businesses through a variety of programs, resources, and offerings.
7. Attract new businesses best suited for the community's assets, increasing local employment options and building the city's tax

base.

8. Encourage entrepreneurs to start their own businesses.

Ongoing Initiatives

A series of ongoing initiatives, programs, and plans has sparked local excitement across various corridors, neighborhoods, and sites. Countless volunteer hours and local leadership have taken aggressive steps toward cultivating new ideas to enhance the quality of life in Brainerd.

River to Rail Initiative: A collaborative meant to build on the current momentum to revitalize Brainerd's community district and create a narrative that encourages investment and planning along the corridor from the Mississippi River to the NP Center.

Mississippi Riverfront Committee: A committee dedicated to advancing the economic, recreational, and cultural opportunities of the Mississippi River, transforming it into a multifaceted amenity that meets the needs of residents and visitors.

Cuyuna Lakes Trail Association: A nonprofit taking strides to advance the planning, design, and construction of the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail through Brainerd.

Community Input

As a part of the public engagement process, the following commonalities were identified:

- Need for adequate employment for a variety of income levels.
- Need to capitalize on and improve Brainerd's brand.
- Invest and revitalize downtown Brainerd.
- Work with existing businesses to expand employment opportunities.
- Attract new businesses to the city.

In addition to these elements, quality-of-life

attributes were also identified to support a thriving economic environment such as:

- Offer more suitable, affordable housing options.
- Improve the image of the housing stock.
- Protect and enhance our recreation opportunities.

As a part of the communitywide survey, when participants were asked, “What areas need the most improvement in Brainerd?” the leading area was high-quality/high-income employment opportunities with nearly 49 percent of the responses. With a tie, residents also seek to provide a wide range of retail/restaurant services (21 percent), as well as be a part of a stable and growing local economy (21 percent).

Economic development was an important topic during the ward meetings, particularly in wards one and three. Economic development ranked as the highest planning element in ward one, generally located in the southwest quadrant of Brainerd. Participants specifically identified 1) appearance and code enforcement, 2) downtown development, and 3) better job opportunities so we can retain residents as the most important issues. Ward three, generally comprised of the northeast quadrant of Brainerd, voted economic development as the second leading topic.

Ward meeting participants felt that 1)
Major Employers in Brainerd

Entity	Industry	Employees
Essentia Health Central Region	Healthcare	1,496
Brainerd School District	Education	900
Crow Wing County	Government	471
Cub Foods/Super Valu (3 Stores)	Retail	335
CLC	Education	300
Anderson Brothers Construction	Construction	260
City of Brainerd	Government	206
Bang Printing	Manufacturing	200
Bethany Good Samaritan	Healthcare	195

Source: BLAEDC – Does not specifically separate employers by city or address the number of offices.

downtown development and 2) appearance/code enforcement were the most important issues.

Existing Conditions

Nearly 60 percent of Brainerd residents are in the workforce. When planning for the future, it’s important to understand the economic profile of our residents.

Retail trade and educational services, health care, and social assistance industries employ nearly 41 percent of the city’s workforce (ACS, 2016). In addition, nearly 16 percent of workers are employed in the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services industries. Collectively, nearly 57 percent of Brainerd’s workforce is employed in these three categories.

Since 2010, the city has seen growth in retail trade (3 percent), wholesale trade (71 percent), public administration (36 percent), and transportation, warehousing, and utilities (123 percent) industries. Although the city has seen prospective growth in key industries, the city has also experienced a decrease in the information (44 percent) and other services (17 percent) industries. As an industry leader, the educational services, health care, and social assistance segments have experienced a 9 percent drop since 2010.

Median household income (MHI) plays a role in workforce development, industry recruitment and expansion, and quality of life. The MHI for the City of Brainerd is \$32,154, nearly 41 percent less than that of Crow Wing County, which, as of 2016, is \$45,435 (ACS 2016). The city's MHI experienced a 9 percent increase between 2010 and 2016. However, it remains lower than neighboring cities in Crow Wing County.

Framework

The following provides an overview of the three core concepts that will help to build on the city's existing community assets and embrace the smart growth approach to economic development.

Support Our Local Businesses

The city can contribute toward economic development by supporting and expanding existing businesses and attracting new businesses. The city can do this in several ways:

- Help businesses create jobs.
- Encourage entrepreneurship.
- Seek to diversify the tax base.
- Take strides to improve quality of life through new services and amenities.

The city should take active steps to understand the current composition and location of businesses and jobs, and identify emerging entrepreneurs. Targeting key economic sectors for growth can allow the city to direct its time, resources, and efforts strategically. Supporting existing businesses could include actions such as:

- Adding or improving infrastructure,
- encouraging new or redeveloped housing to meet the needs of workers who do not live in Brainerd.
- Attracting new businesses will be most effective when tailored to the industries

that are best suited for the City of Brainerd.

Support Our Workers

Workforce development is vital to ensuring that residents can fairly and successfully compete for employment. It's also essential to ensure that residents can benefit from economic prosperity. Having a workforce with a wide range of skills and education levels can help local businesses grow and attract new businesses. By offering learning and education opportunities for a wide range of jobs, workforce development efforts may reduce the need for workers to commute long distances for employment. The city should identify how well the skills and education levels of Brainerd residents align with the needs of existing and growing industries. This will provide insight into what the city could do to match workers with business needs.

Bring jobs closer to residents by increasing transportation investments through bike, pedestrian, and public transportation facilities.

Identify the education and skill needs of the local workforce and the skills needed for potential growth industries.

Support Quality of Life Enhancements

By focusing on improving the city's quality of life, we can position ourselves to attract new economic growth and better serve our residents, visitors, workers, and businesses. A variety of factors can improve quality of life, such as:

- Prosperous commercial district
- Thriving downtown
- Green and open spaces
- Variety of transportation choices
- Art and cultural opportunities
- Public transit
- Community resources
- Medical facilities
- Academic institutions

Aesthetic improvements, such as green infrastructure and pedestrian realm enhancements, also enhance quality of life. This element also focuses on identifying key development and redevelopment sites, including brownfields and infill sites, in the city's core.

Encourage business growth in specific locations such as the historic downtown or other core activity centers.

This strategic growth can help improve the overall quality of life for residents (current and future, workers, and visitors).

Attract businesses that provide retail and service options that meet the daily needs of residents of the downtown and residential neighborhoods.

Tourism

Brainerd has the opportunity to build on assets such as history, the art and music scene, and its natural resources and trail networks to draw visitors to the community. This unique set of attributes can serve as economic drivers:

Arts, Culture + Music

- Highlight and enhance the existing art facilities and partners in the city, the various performance theaters, and the Franklin Arts Center.
- Support public murals and public art (on a major scale) throughout the community, with an overall theme that builds off the city's character.
- Promote the music offerings of local musicians, orchestras, concerts, and music festivals.

Historical Significance

- Preserve historic sites, structures, and

landmarks, and take active strides to restore such amenities throughout the city.

- Promote the offerings of the downtown district, and market the business offerings that meet the traveler and consumer's needs.
- Integrate wayfinding and signage throughout the community that help share the story of Brainerd's history.

Outdoor Recreation

- Highlight the vast trail network (both local and state opportunities).
- Promote the active and passive opportunities on the Mississippi River.
- Endorse the active living culture within the city.
- Adopt the trail town model of economic development.

Improve Mobility

Seek to make Brainerd interconnected to help visitors and tourists navigate the community. Additionally, strategically plan for the improvement of the motorized and nonmotorized transportation modes throughout the city. If the city focuses on fluid movement, visitors will feel more comfortable exploring and hopefully will be enticed to return or stay longer.

Help Existing Places Thrive

This plan outlines numerous actions to help preserve and take care of the city's existing assets and investments including the downtown, the Mississippi River, infrastructure, parks, and other places that the community values. By focusing on existing assets and identifying historic structures or locations worth preserving or reusing, the city can leverage the economic value of these prior investments. These can be the foundation for helping existing places thrive.

Workforce Development

A workforce with a wide variety of skills and education levels can help local businesses grow but also attract new businesses. Local and regional agencies should help identify the city as to how well the skills and education of the city's workforce align with the needs of existing and growing industries. Additionally, these entities can provide insight and guidance into what the city can do to help local workers better match businesses' needs.

Local programming

The following is an overview of economic development programs that can be developed to aid in economic development activities within the city:

- Business mentorship program: Formalized program that connects experienced business owners and entrepreneurs with emerging business professionals.
- Business incubators: Collaborative, supportive flex spaces to offer services and facilities for solo business owners and support entrepreneurs, remote workers, and start-ups.
- Business retention program: a formal

program of meetings with local business owners and city staff meant to learn of business needs, long-term plans, and how the city can support their vision.

- Historic building rehab kit: A resource list that assists business owners with local financing options, typical rehabilitation projects, and contractors to help preserve the historical integrity of landmark structures – often on a local heritage preservation structure list.
- Revolving loan fund: Seed money used as an investment tool, where earnings from payback are then reinvested.
- Neighborhood identity and branding: A process meant to develop a unifying image, idea, or brand that reflects the character of the neighborhood.
- Historic preservation: A practice meant to identify historical and cultural places throughout the city and set specific policies and procedures to guide preservation, restoration, and redevelopment efforts.
- Housing rehab program: A program that offers affordable loans and assistance to qualified homeowners for home repairs.

8 Park & Recreation

Overview

The parks, trails, and open space system is an important element in the quality of life in Brainerd. It offers recreational opportunities. It preserves and makes lakes, woodlands, open fields, wetlands, and waterways accessible. It provides places and pathways that draw people to Brainerd to live, work, play, and stay. Brainerd has developed an excellent parks and recreational system that includes quality recreational facilities, neighborhood and community parks, and a citywide network of trails.

Goals & Policies

GOAL 1: Brainerd will maintain a quality parks system that meets the recreational needs of a variety of users.

Policies:

1. function and aesthetics.
2. Enhance the natural environment throughout the community.
3. Collaborate with landowners, developers, and other partners to link parks, neighborhoods, and public spaces with a network of greenways and multiuse trails.

GOAL 2: Brainerd will collaborate with local community partners to maximize the value and impact of the park system.

Policies:

1. Provide opportunities to partner with public and private entities to enrich the lives of residents, visitors, and students.
2. Provide opportunities to partner with wellness providers to utilize the park system and encourage active living to improve community health.

GOAL 3: Seek ways to expand event programming for each park to highlight the unique qualities of each neighborhood.

Policies:

1. Work with area artists to integrate public art into neighborhood parks.
2. Expand outdoor programming and tailor it to the demographic needs of the neighborhoods.
3. Enhance and expand sports facilities and/or programming.
4. and expand year-round recreation activities, including active and passive options for all ages and abilities.
5. Seek ways to enhance or expand health and wellness initiatives for families and residents of all ages.

Community Input

As a part of the community-wide survey, participants noted a series of common threads that relate to parks and recreation. General recreation opportunities and abundant natural resources were identified as common themes. Residents value their location near area lakes, trail networks, and natural features. Survey respondents see access to these amenities as one of the most important aspects of their community. Participants also noted their passion for improving the natural resources within the city, championing the Mississippi River as a cherished amenity, and supporting opportunities to expand existing parks, sensitive environmental areas, and greenways in the general area.

Park and open spaces play an integral part in future development. As a part of the community survey we asked residents about future development and concerns related to future growth. Participants noted protecting and preserving water quality as the second highest element and preserving open space as the third.

Communitywide survey participants were asked about the elements that make Brainerd a great place to live. This question sought to understand the quality of life elements that could be leveraged as assets to build upon. Participants noted the attractive and natural setting as the number one element that makes Brainerd a great place to live. Recreational opportunities are noted as the second leading element.

Community Value

Economic value

The city's park system provides a valuable service to the Brainerd Lakes area, which can be measured in terms of its effect on the local economy. As the city continues to improve undeveloped parkland and make upgrades and improvements to existing assets, there are

numerous benchmarks with which to measure the total economic value of the Brainerd park system. These include:

Property value

Homes that are near parks have been shown to have higher property values. This, in turn, can generate additional tax revenue for the city.

Tourism value

Brainerd includes several parks and facilities that attract residents or tourists throughout the region. Visitors who come to Brainerd for a park facility may also visit local shops and restaurants, increasing sales tax revenue.

Direct use

Direct use value involves the willingness of a park visitor to pay to participate in activities and enjoy facilities for activities such as team sports, bicycling, walking, and picnicking. Because these facilities are offered for free or at a discount, the direct use is a measure of how much the public has saved if it were to use a private facility of similar caliber.

Health value

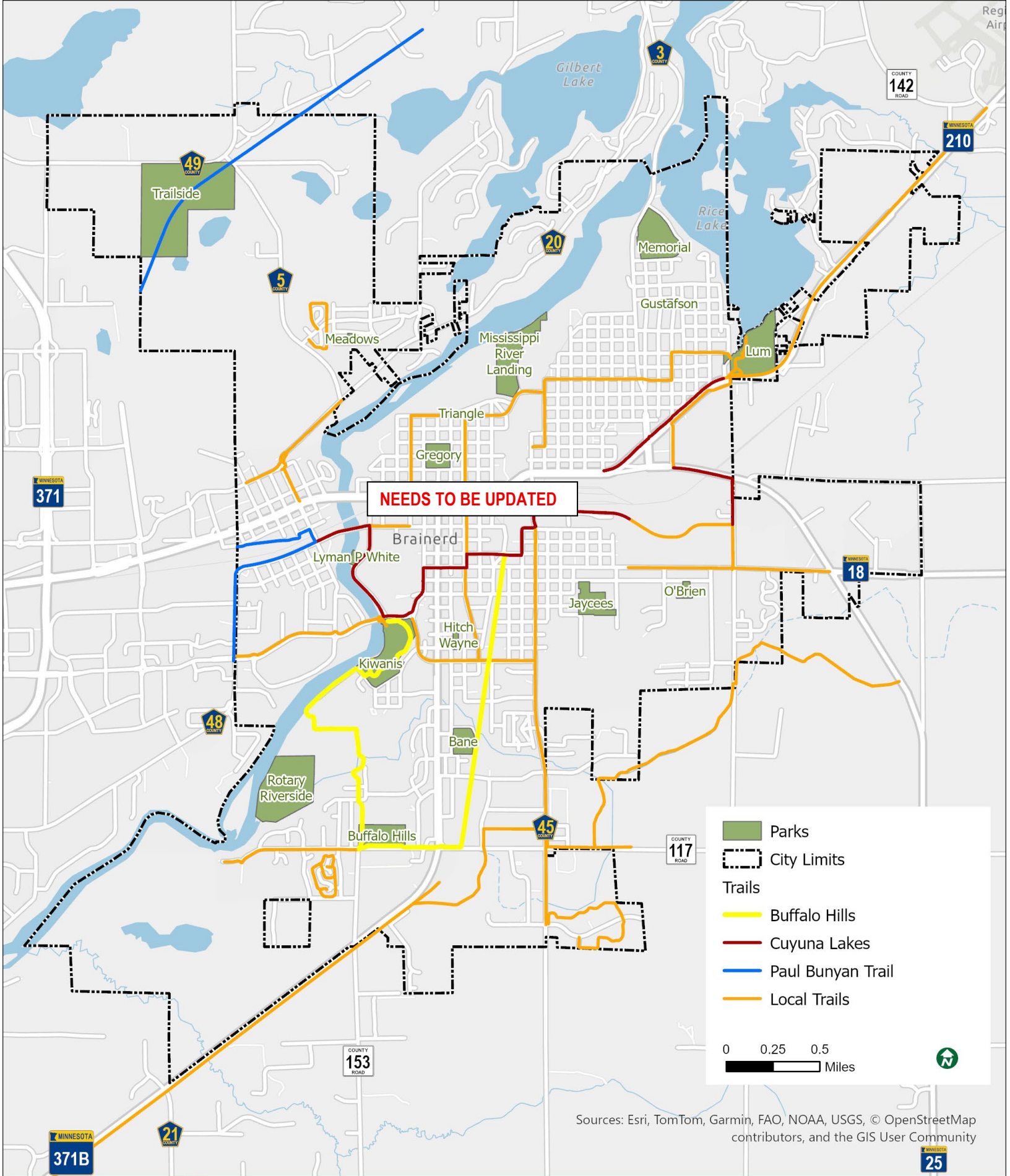
Park access has been shown to increase levels of physical activity. Active lifestyles are associated with lower levels of heart disease, diabetes, and other medical conditions, which can result in lower medical costs. In addition, the natural vegetation within parks improves local air quality, creating a healthier urban environment.

Community connections

In addition to places that provide recreational opportunities, local parks provide community connections. Parks can define a community, allowing for community cohesion and a place to hold events and connect with fellow community members. Parks can create a better sense of place for both residents and visitors.

Stormwater and floodplain management

Parks generally include large areas of pervious, natural surface. As such, they deserve a dual role as an effective stormwater and floodplain management tool and areas for public open space and trail alignments.



Comprehensive Plan

City of Brainerd, MN

March 2026

Existing Trail Network

Brainerd is known for having exceptional recreation opportunities, and the abundant trails for biking, walking, and running play a major role in that. Whether you are looking to bike around the neighborhoods or take a trail through Brainerd's scenic areas, the opportunities are nearly endless. Brainerd is home to trails that wind through forests, wrap around lakes, and allow residents and visitors to simply enjoy the natural environment. Listed below are the two major trails that cut through Brainerd:

Mississippi River Trail

This 3,000-mile-long trail runs from Itasca State Park, where the Mississippi River begins, and runs alongside the river all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico. The trail relies mainly on road shoulders and low-traffic roads but also utilizes state and regional trails.

Paul Bunyan State Trail

Stretching from Brainerd to Bemidji, this 119-mile rail-trail is one of the longest rail-trails in the country. Passing through forests, riding along lakes and rivers, and riding through meadows make this trail one of the most popular in the entire state. The trail can be accessed from the southern endpoint in Crow Wing State Park for those looking to get on the trail in Brainerd.

Along with the two major trails that come through Brainerd, there is also a local trail network that includes the Buffalo Hills Trail and Cuyuna Lakes Trail.

Buffalo Hills Trail

A city trail in Brainerd with connections to MRT, Cuyuna State Trail (segment), and Paul Bunyan State Trail. From East River Road and Kiwanis Park to Buffalo Hills Park, then along former spur line past Bane Park to Oak Street. Bicycle/walking trail with a small share of the road segment.

Cuyuna Lakes State Trail

A local trail segment, the Cuyuna Lakes Trail connects bicycles from the Paul Bunyan Trail through the city and along the river. This local trail segment seeks to expand its mileage and become the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail and the corridor planning is underway. The official Cuyuna Lakes State Trail is 8 miles of paved trail within the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area from Crosby to Riverton. One mile passes through the City of Aitkin along State Highway 169. Abandoned by mining companies more than 35 years ago, the state recreation area contains six natural lakes, plus an additional 15 deep lakes that were former mine pits.

Existing Park Network

The City of Brainerd has an abundance of parks and trail facilities within the community. The city's park department has promoted the growth and maintenance of the community's parks through a variety of on-site activities. In addition, the entire region provides numerous recreational activities that benefit the city and the region as a whole. Park linkages should be considered wherever development and/or projects are discussed to increase connectivity.

The following is a list of parks within the city limits, totaling 408 acres. The inventory below does not include recreational facilities on school grounds or recreation/amusement businesses such as go-carts or miniature golf.

Park and Trail Classification

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA), in partnership, have developed park and trail system standards to serve as guidelines for communities as they develop their park and trail systems. The following outlines park classifications based on the Level of Service (LOS). For the purpose of this plan, the following classifications will serve only as general guidelines and a tool to plan for future

park needs.

The categories of this hierarchy include mini parks, neighborhood parks, and community parks. Park service adequacy is evaluated in three ways:

- **Facilities by classification:** Parks are classified into different categories to determine the levels and areas they serve.
- **Facilities by Geographic Distribution:** The service radius of each facility is analyzed to identify geographical gaps in service.
- **Facilities in Relation to Population Service Standards:** National standards for the provision of park and recreation facilities are applied to the present system.

Mini-park

The smallest park classification used to address unique recreational needs (i.e., pocket park) is the mini-park. The location criterion is less than a quarter mile distance in a residential setting. The size criterion is 2,500 square feet to one acre.

- Triangle.

Neighborhood Park

This park system serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. The neighborhood park provides both active and passive recreational opportunities for all age groups living in the surrounding neighborhoods. The location criterion is a quarter-mile to a half-mile

mile in the service area needs. The typical size is 5 to 10 acres.

- Wayne Hitch, Bane, O'Brien, Mill Avenue, Gustafson.

Community Park

This park classification is larger in size and serves a broader focus. Typically, a neighborhood park provides recreational opportunities to residents living a quarter- to a half-mile from the facility. This classification provides both active and passive recreation opportunities. The location criteria should serve two or more neighborhoods with a half-mile to three-mile service radius. The recommended size is between 30 and 50 acres (size may be determined as needed to accommodate desired uses).

- Buffalo Hills/Lions Park, Gregory, Jaycees, Kiwanis, Memorial, Rotary Riverside, Lum.

Special Use Park

This classification covers a broad range of parks and recreational facilities oriented toward a single purpose, such as social, cultural, or historical. Examples include arboretums, public gardens, or performing arts facilities.

- No classifications at this time; identifies the ability for future development.

Greenways

Greenways link park networks together in an effort to create a cohesive system that emphasizes the natural environment. The locale of these networks is primarily based on the availability of land. Typical greenways are linear in nature and follow natural corridors.

- No classifications at this time; identifies the ability for future development.

Open Space

This classification is broadly defined and can include woodlands, wetlands, floodplains, sloughs, open fields, etc.

Name	Size (acres)	Address	Features
Bane Park	11	1717 S. 7 th St	Baseball/Softball diamonds (3), concessions, grills, hockey rink, picnic tables, playground, restrooms, skating rink, warming house
Buffalo Hills/Lions Park	19	101 Buffalo Hills Ln	Baseball/Softball diamonds (2), grills, pavilion, picnic tables, playground, restrooms
Gregory Park	11	424 N 4 th St	Basketball court, fountain, gazebo, historic bandstand, pickleball courts (2), tennis courts (5), playground (2), restrooms, skating rink, warming house.
Gustafson Park	1.5	9 th Ave NE & N St	Grass Ballfields (4)
Hitch Wayn Park	2	1201 S 7 th St	Undeveloped
Jaycees Park	14	1600 Rosewood St.	Baseball/Softball diamonds (2), Concessions, grills, pavilion, playground, restrooms
Lum Park	38	1619 Washington St NE	Beach, Boat landing, Disc golf, fishing, grills, pavilion, picnic tables, playground, restrooms, RV Campsites, Sand volleyball court
Triangle Park	<0.5	723 Fir St	Playground
O'Brien Park	4	2424 Pine St	Open space park
Mill Avenue Park	8	1401 Mill Ave	Baseball/Softball diamonds, hockey rink, restrooms, skating rink
Trailside Park	112	Beaver Dam Rd	Parking, Paved trail, undeveloped, the largest city-owned park
Kiwanis Park	37	1101 E. River Rd	Canoe launch, fishing, (Boom Lake and Mississippi River), Gazebo, paved trail, pavilions (2), playground, restrooms, soccer field
Memorial Park	28	1700 Mill Ave	Baseball/Softball diamonds, Concessions, playground, restrooms, soccer field
Rotary Riverside Park	145	E. River Rd	Overlooks, Nature trails, natural-passive spaces.

Future Opportunities

Most see Brainerd as an aging city, but with a median age of 33 years old, that seems to be misconstrued. With the median age so young, this further supports the need for more parks and recreation opportunities.

The National Recreation and Park Association recommends a ratio of 10 acres per 1,000 for cities in Brainerd's population range. The City of Brainerd excels with a high parkland ratio of 30.15 acres per 1,000 residents, which can also be described as 405 park acres for the city's current 13,428 residents. It's vital to serve all residents and neighborhoods with park and recreational facilities. As additional areas are identified for redevelopment, it is crucial to identify new areas that need to be served by park and recreational facilities.

The Community Survey Panel was an electronic survey taken by 300 people (187 residents, 113 nonresidents) with questions surrounding Brainerd. Above are the results of the question, "What are three things that you like most about living in Brainerd?" By far the most popular answer was parks/lakes, which indicates what both residents and nonresidents are looking for when they come to Brainerd.

The community survey asked residents to indicate their opinions regarding the park and trail network. Responses indicated the existing networks serve the residents well but offered areas of improvement and possible additions.

Residents value their location near area lakes, trail networks, and natural features. Survey respondents see access to these amenities as one of the most important aspects of their community. Residents also see recreational

opportunities as Brainerd's greatest asset. Survey respondents also expressed that people are more attracted to the Brainerd Lakes Area rather than Brainerd itself, which was the backbone of responses, indicating that more trails need to connect to surrounding cities in order to get more people to visit Brainerd. Besides connecting trails to other cities, it was also indicated that there needs to be a connection of trails between the parks throughout the city for easy access and improved safety.

Trail Town Model Of Economic Development

Communities are realizing the economic potential of trails as highly desirable destinations that drive people to their communities, bringing dollars to the places they serve. In addition to preserving critical open space and providing important transportation options, trails and greenways attract visitors from near and far. These visitors help facilitate job growth in tourism-related opportunities such as restaurants, local stores, and lodging. Brainerd can leverage the "trail town" model of economic development, which places trails as the centerpiece of a tourism-centered strategy for small-town revitalization.

Through careful planning and partnership, communities are realizing the full potential of linking trails and businesses. In addition to helping promote small-town revitalization, trails are increasingly being used to help more urban communities revitalize underutilized corridors. Trails are aiding in building strong and healthy communities with increased property values for area residents and improved economic opportunities for local businesses.

9 Facilities & Infrastructure

Overview

Reliable, clean running water, a dependable sanitary sewer system, and safe, reliable electricity are usually not the first things residents think about when asked what they like about their city. However, these functions are the foundation of any successful city, and without them, the development of a city would stall. The fact that we often take these services for granted is a testament to how well the services are provided. For example, we rarely consider the complex process involved in delivering these services to our fingertips unless there is a problem.

This chapter focuses on municipally owned facilities and infrastructure. However, certain services and infrastructure are provided by the private sector, and this chapter will identify those services, such as natural gas, propane, and fiber-optic broadband internet.

This chapter will identify and describe many municipal facilities and infrastructures. It will discuss existing plans and commissions as well as identify the areas of greatest concern based on public input gathered through the community engagement plan. Finally, this chapter will outline the facilities and infrastructure goals.

Because transportation-related infrastructure is

covered under the transportation chapter, roads, bridges, sidewalks, and trails are not dealt with in this chapter.

Existing Municipally Owned Facilities and Infrastructure Structures

- City Hall (Laurel Street)
- Brainerd Public Utilities Administration Building (Highland Scenic)
- Wastewater treatment facility (Highland Scenic)
- Water treatment plant (Emma Street)
- City substations
- Mississippi Hydro-Electric River dam
- Police Department Building (East River Road)
- Fire Department Building #1 (East River Road)
- Fire Department Building #2 (Mill Avenue)
- City garages
- Streets Maintenance Facility (Thiesse Drive)
- Parks Maintenance Facility (Lum Park)
- Parks: Bane, Buffalo Hills, Jaycee, Kiwanis, Lum, Memorial, Rotary, and Gregory

Existing Infrastructure

- City water network: Water towers, pumps, pipes, hardware
- City sewer/wastewater network: Pipes,

culverts, drains, hardware

- City electrical grid hardware: Light poles, power poles, cables, wires, conduits, circuits

Existing Critical Private Infrastructure

- Fuel: Natural gas, Excel Energy, CenterPoint Energy
- Propane: Several local providers
- Oil: Several local providers
- Broadband: Charter Communications, Consolidated Telecommunications Company (CTC), CenturyLink

Goals & Policies

GOAL 1: Improve the city's overall image.

Policies:

1. Maintain public infrastructure and facilities to attract and maintain residents.
2. Increase connectivity to adequate and affordable broadband and other infrastructure development throughout the community.

GOAL 2: Preserve the history and small-town feel of Brainerd.

Policies:

1. Support orderly, efficient growth while protecting historical areas.
2. Support façade improvements while keeping the historic look of the infrastructure.
3. Preserve, enhance, and integrate greenscapes into the built environment.

GOAL 3: Provide quality water/power and wastewater systems that support new and existing development and redevelopment, all while being adaptive to change.

Policies:

1. Coordinate infrastructure replacement projects with other road and infrastructure improvement projects.

2. Encourage the use of stormwater best management practices to improve local and regional water quality.
3. Promote education and incentive programs to conserve water quantity and quality.
4. Ensure adequate water/power supply to meet the long-term needs of the community.
5. Steer city development to energy and resource conservation by promoting renewable energy sources, protecting our water supply, and leveraging the hydroelectric dam

Community Input

Just like in other sections of this plan, the facilities and infrastructure goals were based on and in alignment with feedback gathered through the planning processes community engagement plan. The community engagement plans included surveys, interviews, neighborhood ward meetings, several focus groups, and a community visioning session, and therefore reflect the opinions of members of the public. A summary of the findings from the community engagement plan regarding facilities and infrastructure is below:

Increase connectivity to adequate and affordable broadband and other infrastructure development throughout the community by:

- Coordinating with public and private utility companies when major road reconstruction projects are being planned to update/ install infrastructure.

Support façade improvements while keeping the historic look of the infrastructure.

- Consider a historic preservation program

Continue to maintain roads

- Continue to maintain, execute, and update the five-year road maintenance plan.
- Continue to seek funding opportunities for road projects through sources such as:

- Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP)
- Transportation Economic Development (TED)
- Transportation Economic Development Infrastructure (TEDI)

Existing Plans and Commissions

Five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP):

The City of Brainerd’s five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a five-year investment guide for the construction and/or improvement of city streets, sanitary sewers, and storm sewers. City staff has prepared the plan to assist the City Council in long-range planning of capital infrastructure upgrades and to give a big picture perspective on the continuing need to fund a transportation and utility system that serves the constituents of Brainerd and uses their tax dollars in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. The most recent (as of the time of publication of this plan) version of the City of Brainerd five-year Street and Sewer Capital Improvement Plan can be viewed [here](#).

Public Utilities Commission

The Public Utilities Commission controls, operates, and manages public utilities that are now or may hereafter be owned and operated within the city.

Cable TV Advisory Committee

This committee is charged with monitoring the performance of the cable TV franchise in carrying out compliance with financial and technical provisions. The group advises and makes recommendations to the City Council regarding the present and future use of the cable communications system within the city. It promotes the use of the public educational and governmental access channels by increasing the public awareness of their availability and

potential, and by stimulating and promoting public interest and participation. It takes appropriate action to ensure nondiscriminatory access to the public, educational, and governmental access channels.

Parks & Recreation Board

The Parks and Recreation Board has control and supervision of all parks and parkways within the City of Brainerd. It establishes the recreation policy and conducts and supervises recreation areas, facilities, services, and programs for all types of public recreation.

Brainerd Public Library Board

The purpose of this board is to represent the interests of the people of the City of Brainerd in providing library services. This board is also responsible for the maintenance of library property and grounds.

Green Infrastructure

A new generation of practices has emerged to effectively manage stormwater while simultaneously adding to the community’s sense of place, building vibrant and attractive communities. Green infrastructure comes in a multitude of forms, such as bioswales, rainwater-harvesting barrels, rain gardens, permeable pavement, conservation areas, and many others.

Green infrastructure is a resilient approach to managing wet weather impacts, designed to reduce and treat stormwater at its source while delivering environmental, social, and economic benefits.

Unlike a single-purpose gray stormwater infrastructure network – conventional piped drainage and water treatment systems – green infrastructure uses vegetation, soils, and other elements to restore the natural process needed to manage the water.

Rain gardens

Rain gardens are versatile features that can be installed in almost any unpaved space. Also known as bioretention, or bio-infiltration, cells are shallow, vegetated basins that collect and absorb runoff from rooftops, sidewalks, and streets. This practice mimics natural hydrology by infiltrating, evaporating, and transpiring—or “evapotranspiring”—stormwater runoff.

Bioswales

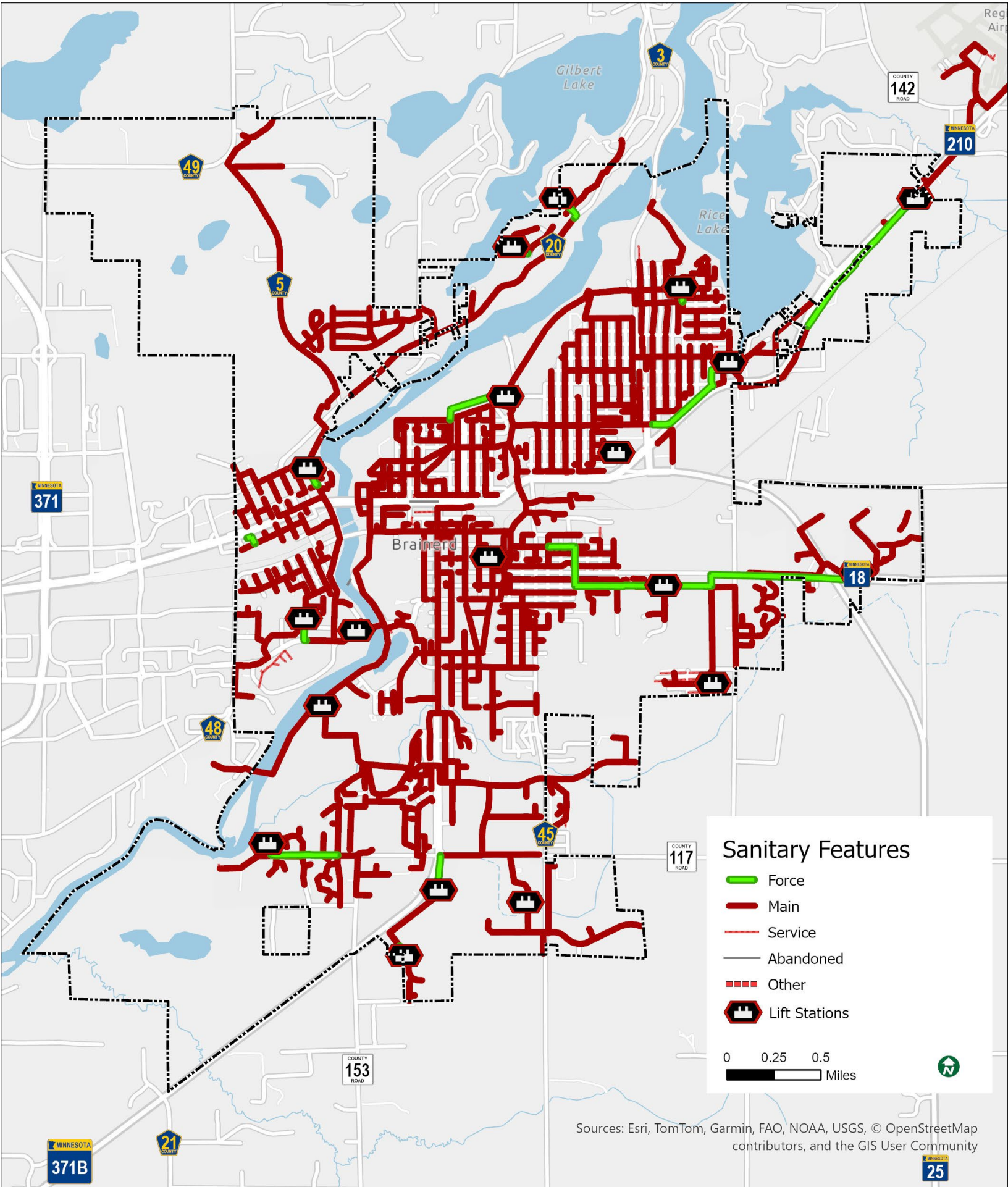
Bioswales are vegetated, mulched or vegetated channels that provide treatment and retention as they move stormwater from one place to another. Vegetated swales slow, infiltrate, and filter stormwater flows. As linear features, they are particularly well-suited to being placed along streets and parking lots.

Sewer

Future land development patterns must closely align with a cost-effective wastewater service strategy. When it comes time for future development, the city should be certain in identifying locations for lift stations, sanitary sewer interceptors, and force mains to support a sustainable development pattern. It’s vital that the city ensure that these costs are equitably distributed and services are provided in a planned, phased approach that encourages development.

The city operates and maintains approximately 76 miles of sanitary sewer. All pipes range in size, with the smallest pipes in the system being 6 inches and the largest being 27 inches. The current average age of the city’s sewer system is about 50 years old. The current oldest sewer in the system was constructed in 1904, and the newest sewer in the system was constructed in 2016.

INSERT DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT SEWER SYSTEM; FUTURE PLANS, REFERENCE SEWER



Sanitary Features

- Force
- Main
- Service
- Abandoned
- - - Other
- Lift Stations

0 0.25 0.5
 Miles

Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

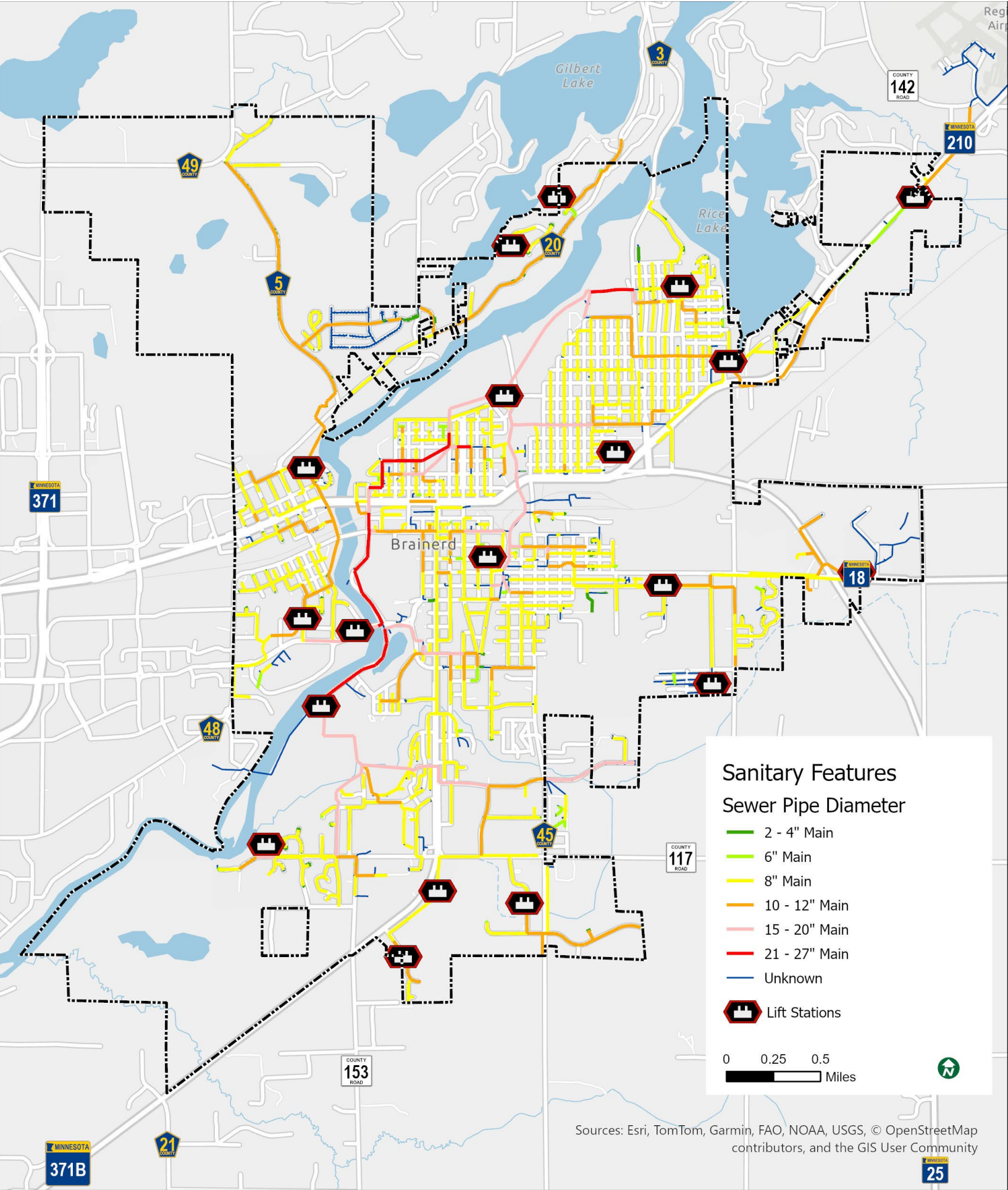


Comprehensive Plan

City of Brainerd, MN

Sanitary Sewer

April 2026



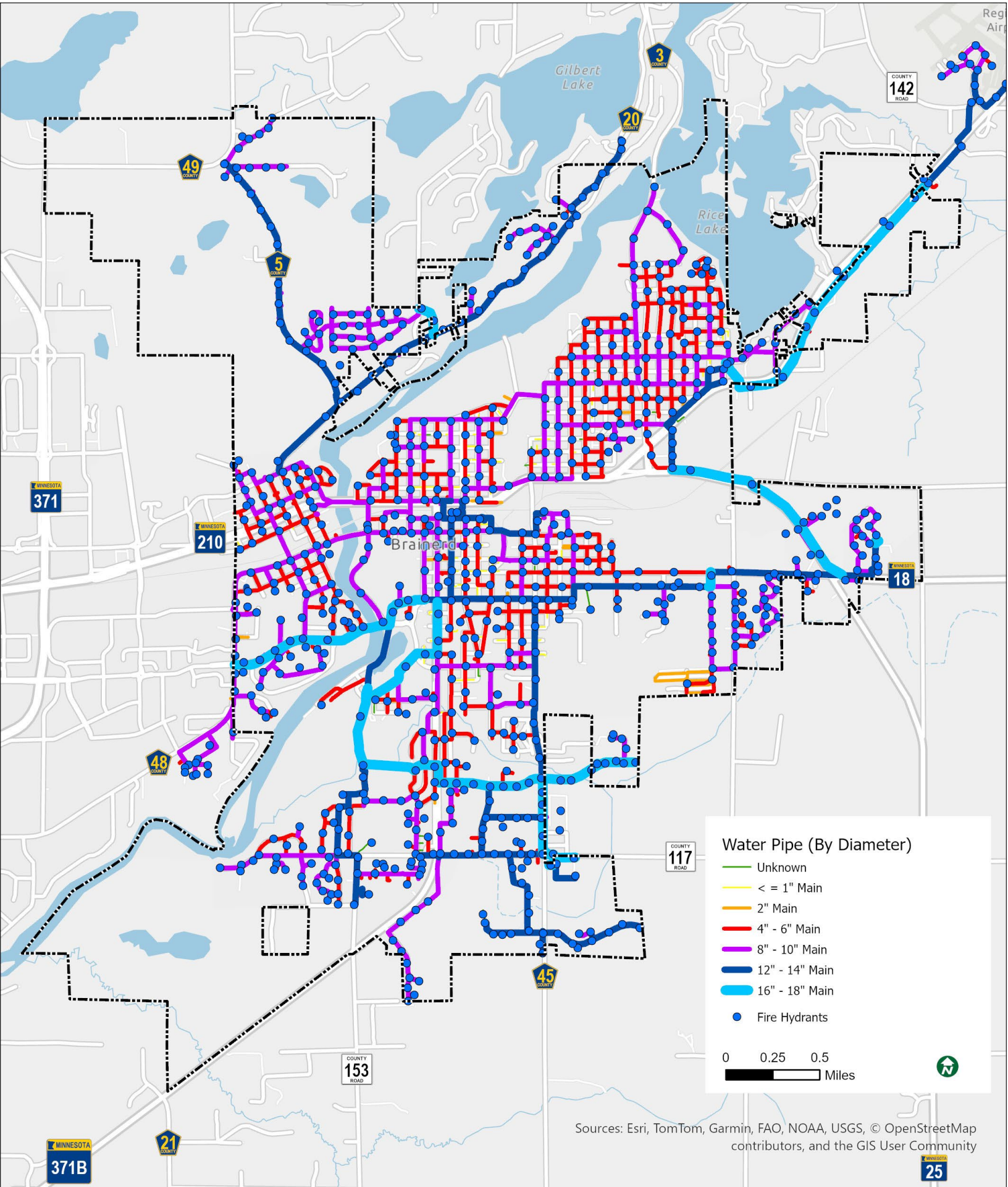
Water

Providing a safe and adequate water supply system is vital for community growth and sustainability. Protecting and distributing drinking water that meets the acceptable standards is an essential function performed by the city.

Additionally, water pressures need to be maintained for convenience and health to meet the varying demands among local residents, and appropriate pressures are important for fire protection.

Protection: Groundwater is the source of drinking water in the city. Along with surface water like streams, rivers, and lakes, this is known as *source water*. Brainerd Public Utilities (BPU) treats water that is used for consumption. Protecting source water from contamination can reduce treatment costs. Protecting source water also reduces risks to public health from exposure to contaminated water. The city can seek to develop zoning requirements to ensure adequate buffers are in place for certain commercial and industrial uses. The city can also protect source water areas by implementing land use controls such as acquisition and conservation easements.

INSERT DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM; FUTURE PLANS, REFERENCE WATER SUPPLY PLAN



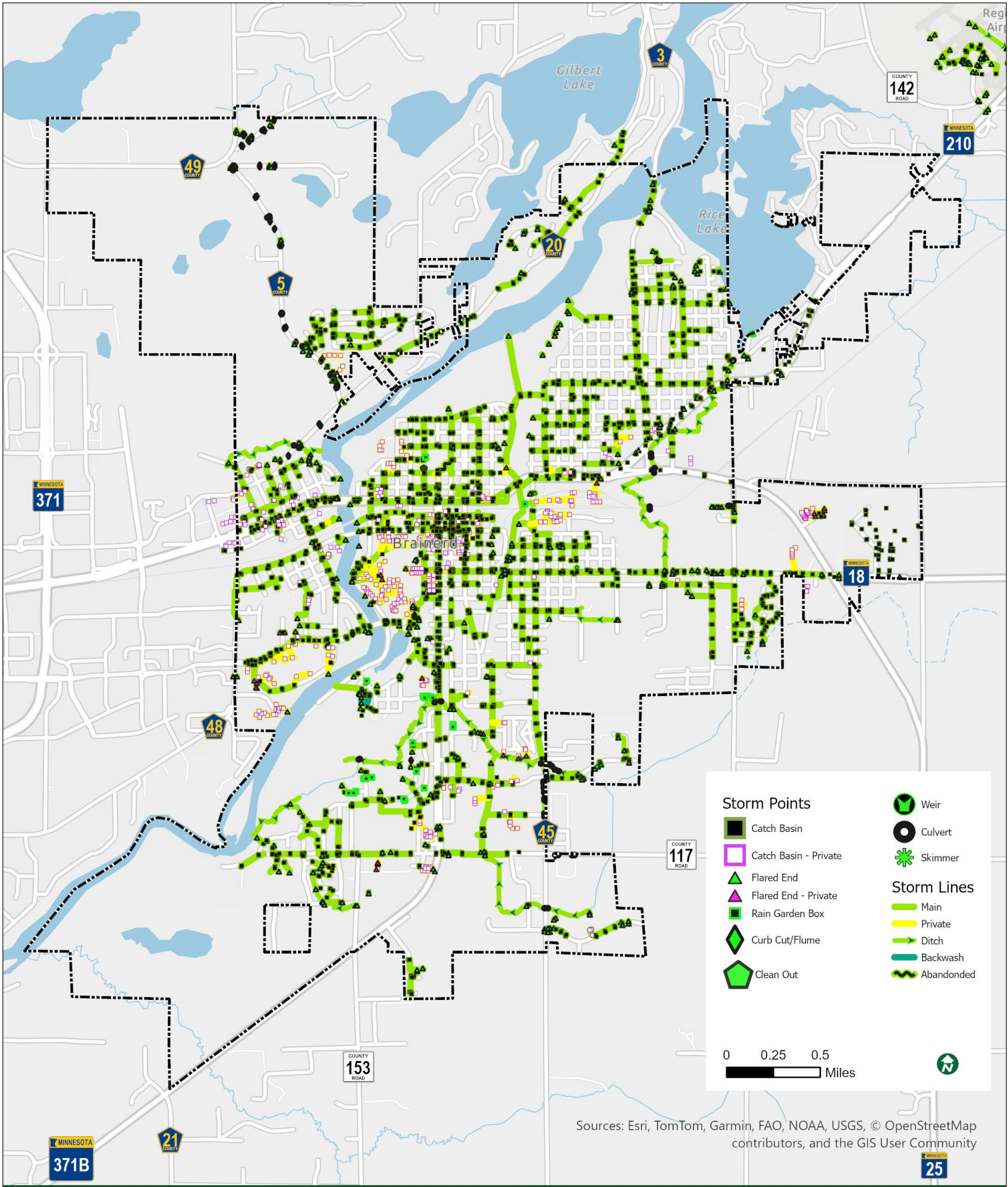
Stormwater

The framework that seeks to guide future development patterns can only be actually achieved when issues surrounding stormwater management and environmental protection are a core focus in the planning process. A typical stormwater system consists of a network of pipes, catch basins, retention ponds, and ditches. Wetlands and other natural and environmental systems play a vital role in effective stormwater management.

Almost all stormwater from the city drains into the Mississippi River, either directly or through local lakes, reservoirs, streams, and ditches. A few small portions within the southwestern portion of the city are landlocked basins. The entire drainage area of the city is located within the DNR minor watershed “Mississippi River – Brainerd.” Roughly 55 percent of the river drains directly into the Mississippi River. Buffalo Creek receives nearly 25 percent of the stormwater from the city, while the remainder generally drains to Rice Lake.

Brainerd utilizes the stormwater management ordinance and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) that identifies a series of best management practices and objectives to advance water management goals.

INSERT DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT STORMWATER SYSTEM; FUTURE PLANS, REFERENCE STORMWATER PLANS



Comprehensive Plan

City of Brainerd, MN

Sanitary Sewer

April 2026

Renewable Energy

The Brainerd hydroelectric dam not only controls river flow and regulates flooding, but it also provides hydroelectric power to the city. In an effort to advance energy goals, the city purchased the hydroelectric dam on the north end of the city on the Mississippi River after the close of Wausau Paper in 2014 to

leverage renewable energy and lower electric rates for residents. It's estimated that the hydroelectric service provides more than 1 million dollars worth of electricity, nearly 10 percent of what was previously purchased through a utility provider. In addition to renewable energy, the dam helps foster a healthy natural environment downstream through the control of water levels. Brainerd Public Utilities is currently seeking to relicense the Brainerd dam through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, a process that takes five years to complete.

Renewable energy is energy that's generated from natural sources such as sunlight, wind, geothermal, and water. It's energy that is generated from natural processes that are continually replenished and is constantly renewed. The city can play an active role in renewable energy initiatives through policy and planning efforts. Infrastructure and utilities for energy, transportation, water, and wastewater all have important roles in addressing energy issues.

Strategic Investments

One challenge faced by communities across the

nation is the cost of maintaining infrastructure. As communities grow, they also increase the amount of infrastructure they build, pay for, and ultimately must maintain. Oftentimes, communities will pay for and build infrastructure in anticipation of future growth. Both of these scenarios can lead to potential financial risks. As Charles Marohn, author and founder of the Strong Towns blog, succinctly notes:

“For generations, North American communities have been growing—or at least, they've been building. But as we've paved endless roads, raised countless buildings and put more and more infrastructure in the ground, we've given almost no thought to whether future generations will be able to afford to maintain the world we'll leave them with—or how many of the things we build are making our communities worse places to live today.”

—Strong Towns

With this warning in mind, this plan update seeks not only to grow but to thrive today, with the future in mind. This document lays out a long-term vision to do this through a variety of innovative, fiscally and socially responsible, pro-growth goals and policies that seek to address both the multi-faceted challenges and the boundless opportunities that exist for the city of Brainerd, its residents, businesses, and visitors.

10 Public Safety

Overview

Public safety is perhaps the most important foundational element of a successful community. Public safety enhances the sense of community by establishing a sense of safety and security. Law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services ensure residents and visitors can live, conduct, and transact business and recreate and lead peaceable lives, knowing that they, their loved ones, their livelihoods, and their personal property are safe, secure, and protected. Furthermore, all individuals can be assured that they will be provided the assistance needed in case of a crisis event or an emergency arises within the city of Brainerd.

Goals & Policies

GOAL 1: Brainerd will protect and provide for the safety of residents and visitors.

Policies:

1. Make efficient use of existing facilities to ensure access to emergency services for all residents and visitors.
2. Strategically plan for and implement maintenance and expansion in a fiscally and environmentally responsible manner.
3. Continuously seek to eradicate crime through innovative and contemporary strategies, including preventive, proactive, and responsive measures.
4. Sustain fire protection through a combination of up-to-date facilities and fleet vehicles, technology, outreach, and community engagement initiatives.

5. Build, secure, and maintain efficient public facilities that enhance the character and priorities of Brainerd and its neighborhoods.

GOAL 2: Evaluate and improve Brainerd's emergency management.

Policies:

1. Ensure equal access to emergency services throughout the city.
2. Seek new or emergent emergency management initiatives or opportunities.
3. Continuously seek education opportunities for emergency personnel and key city staff to ensure emergencies are dealt with expertly when (not if) they happen.
4. Conduct a vulnerability assessment.

GOAL 3: Continue to seek out and foster partnerships to better prepare the public and city staff for emergencies and natural disasters in the context of a changing climate.

Policies:

1. Actively participate in the Crow Wing County Hazard Mitigation five-year planning process.
2. Seek resources and opportunities available through Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM).
3. Seek resources and opportunities available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Community Input

A community survey completed in conjunction with the updating of the comprehensive plan requested input from residents regarding all aspects of this plan. From those questions, respondents were asked a number of questions about public safety, and a summary of the results follows:

- Need more police and fire personnel
- Larger police presence and drug enforcement
- More community-building activities with the police and fire departments
- A community that feels safe will create a domino effect and attract new residents, businesses, and tourists
- Better sense of safety downtown

Public safety is an essential component of the health and prosperity of Brainerd residents. Survey respondents noted that improved safety and lower crime rates are the most important. Although it was common to hear the need for improved

Safety throughout the community engagement process was also common to hear how satisfied residents were with the service. The Community Survey Panel consisted of a series of electronic surveys taken by 300 people (187 residents, 113 nonresidents) with questions regarding Brainerd. Survey respondents' satisfaction rates for both the police department and fire department were the two highest-scoring services in Brainerd.

Existing Conditions

Brainerd Fire Department

The Brainerd Fire Department provides fire and rescue services, hazardous materials response, as well as emergency medical services for not only Brainerd residents, but also for the city of Baxter, unorganized territory/first assessment, and the five townships of Crow Wing, Long

Lake, Oak Lawn, Nokay Lake, and St. Mathias.

The fire department's leadership structure includes a fire chief, who is responsible for the operations of the department and provides leadership to staff. The department also has a deputy chief/fire marshal, who provides fire code enforcement. In addition, an administrative specialist provides records and office support to the fire department. In addition, two battalion chiefs and five captains are among the ranks of 37 firefighters serving the Brainerd Fire Department. By the numbers, the department covers 300 square miles, responds to an average of 450 calls annually, and serves 35,000 residents. In addition, the firefighters train over 3,700 hours a year and reach 10,000 children and adults annually with public education.

Brainerd Police Department

Brainerd residents and visitors receive law enforcement primarily from the Brainerd Police Department, but also through coordination with the Crow Wing County Sheriff's Department, the Minnesota State Patrol, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA), as well as other state and federal law enforcement agencies.

The Brainerd Police Department is a full-service, modern police agency with 23 sworn officers, six full-time support staff, and three part-time service staff. They respond to nearly 19,000 incidents per year in a semi-urban city of over 13,000 residents. Brainerd officers patrol nearly 17 square miles and provide transportation security for the Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport.

Brainerd officers serve their community in a variety of ways, including: patrol, investigations, Bicycle Patrol, Bomb Squad, Community Service Officers (CSO), Crime Prevention Unit, Investigation Division, Police K-9, Drug Unit, Patrol Division, Tactical Team, special assignments, and records management.

Crow Wing County Emergency Management

Crow Wing County Emergency Management coordinates with local, state, and federal agencies to preserve life, property, and the well-being of Crow Wing County citizens from natural, technological, and man-made disasters. By coordinating with Crow Wing County Emergency Management, Brainerd avails itself to additional emergency management resources, such as the Allied Radio Matrix for Emergency Response (ARMER)/800MHz, additional fire prevention programs, National Incident Management System (NIMS), the Incident Command System (ICS), and Hazard Mitigation Planning.

Existing Public Safety Plans and Commissions

Police and Fire, Civil Service Commission — Per Minnesota statutes, the Police and Fire Civil Service Commission has control and supervision over members of the city police and fire departments, advises City Council on police and fire personnel

matters, and conducts civil service testing for full-time police officers and firefighters.

Crow Wing County Hazard Mitigation Plan

The purpose of a hazard mitigation plan is to protect the health, safety, and economic interests of residents by reducing the impacts of natural, technological, and human-related hazards through hazard planning, awareness, and implementation. Plans serve as the foundation for hazard mitigation activities within a jurisdiction and provide a path towards continuous, proactive reduction of vulnerability to the most frequent hazards that result in repetitive and often severe social, economic, and physical damage.

Implementation of plan recommendations will help reduce injuries, loss of life, and destruction of property due to hazardous conditions. The ideal end-state is total integration of hazard mitigation activities, programs, capabilities, and actions into normal, day-to-day governmental functions and management practices.

Implementation

This chapter will serve as the action plan for prioritizing the goals and policies within each chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Once the plan is adopted, a new cycle of continuous work begins. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide many of the city's goals and decisions each year.

This section summarizes the recommendations and policies and provides an implementation schedule that city staff, committees, the Planning Commission, and the City Council can use to develop recommended timeframes for executing individual projects and initiatives. This section of the plan is intended to provide the city with a tool to bridge the gap between planning and implementation. Ideally, this chapter would be used and revised annually at the annual budget meeting to align the city's planning and investment priorities.

Strategies

Strategies are concrete initiatives intended to carry out an idea, goal, policy, or action identified throughout the plan. The following tables provide a summary of major action items to be carried out over the next 10-year time horizon. The strategies should be woven into the daily activities of the local jurisdiction and its various departments, and they are highly encouraged to be included in budgeting and capital improvement programming. In an effort to measure and report on the progress, the following general principles will support implementation efforts:

- Connect the plan's implementation to the capital improvement plan (CIP) process.
- Connect the plan's strategies to the annual budgeting process.
- Establish organizational cooperation. Identify funding sources for plan implementation.
- Establish implementation benchmarks and targets.
- Report annually on implementation progress.
- Adjust the plan as necessary based on evaluation.

An essential component of ensuring this plan is a living document is to review it annually and, collectively, identify and determine the priorities outlined in it. City leadership and staff should review the plan yearly and make amendments as necessary.

As items are completed, new goals and policies should be identified and implemented. Some of the following recommendations may require substantial cooperation with others, including other units of government, the private sector, and partnerships with area stakeholders. In addition, other city departments, administration, or City Council priorities may affect the completion of these key action items.

Land Use

STRATEGY	SUB-STRATEGY	Lead	PRIORITY	Status
Update city ordinances to reflect	-		High	

the changes in the plan.				
Formalize a downtown association.	-		Medium	
Review, analyze, update, and implement the suite of plans accordingly, and consider new plans as they are adopted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonmotorized transportation plan • Downtown Plan • Mississippi River Partnership Plan 		Medium	
Develop new planning documents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an annexation strategy or growth management plan. • Conduct an Age-Friendly Community Plan 			
Consider the formation of a Heritage Preservation Commission	Advance local preservation initiatives through local, state, and federal programs		Low	
Conduct a series of small area plans to promote reinvestment and stimulate growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the potential land uses from the city limits to the airport • Conduct a small area plan of the “river to rails” corridor and formalize this initiative. 		Medium	
Deploy a form-based code for the 1) Kingwood street corridor, 2) Oak Street, and 13th node	Pilot these areas, or others that meet a set of criteria, to test this new regulatory framework.		Medium	
Via the city’s website, show the progression of city planning initiatives, benchmarking, and long-range planning progress.	Develop performance measures and benchmarks, and share progress outward		High	
Create policies that promote infill development and redevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly identify infill/growth areas • Prioritize infill and 		High	

	adaptive reuse in the downtown.			
Identify locations for special use districts or overlays	Consider the implementation of an “art” or “innovation” district		Low	
Enact a policy that studies the fiscal impacts of development applications.	Determine the application's complexity that warrants a financial impact review.		Medium	
Take active steps to complete the MN GreenStep Cities program.			Medium	

Community Character – continue formatting the rest of the tables

STRATEGY	SUB-STRATEGY	PRIORITY
Undergo a marketing and branding initiative.		High
Improve citywide signage and wayfinding.	Develop a wayfinding plan with incremental steps and funding approaches towards completion.	Medium
Boost enforcement of city codes and ordinances	Enforce property maintenance codes	High
Leverage social media to market opportunities and existing success stories outward.		Medium
Improve the aesthetics of the main corridors	Develop design standards for the 210 corridor, Sixth Street, and downtown	Medium
Consider creating design guidelines in both the general commercial and downtown areas.		Medium
Implement an adaptive re-use policy.		Medium
Integrate public art throughout the community in strategic locations	Create a community-wide art mural program	Low
Develop a downtown beautification program.		Medium
Utilize tactical urbanism to evaluate pilot programs for implementation that improve		Low

walkability.		
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Housing

STRATEGY	SUB-STRATEGY	PRIORITY
Amend the comprehensive plan to include the updated housing study information.		High
Support infill development		High
Identify housing needs for seniors, young families, and the workforce.		High
Encourage housing rehabilitation	Develop a low-interest façade improvement program for low- and mid-income households.	High
Conduct a market study.		Medium
Work with community partners to target market gaps.		Medium
Promote neighborhood capacity building.		Medium
Ensure local land use controls and permitting procedures do not discourage housing development.		Medium
Utilize targeted incentives to catalyze improvements within the neighborhoods.		Low

Mobility

STRATEGY	SUB-STRATEGY	PRIORITY
Conduct a walking audit every 3-5 years to measure progress.		Low
Actively implement the walkable, bikeable city plan.		Medium
Use tactical urbanism and/or demonstration projects to identify and study pedestrian and bicycle improvements.		Low
Launch a bike-share program in coordination with area partners.		Low
Achieve silver status through the League of American Bicyclists.		Low
Hold yearly street events alive.		Medium
Extend and increase the capacity of roadways that enhance		Low

circulation, mobility, and anticipated growth and development.		
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Economic Development

STRATEGY	SUB-STRATEGY	PRIORITY
Offer a variety of shovel-ready sites.	Create and publish a vacant lot /vacant buildings map; update as necessary.	Medium
Explore business improvement district options for the downtown.		Medium
Appropriately budget funds for economics development and marketing		Medium
Keep a log of blighted or vacant properties	Drive investment and businesses to strategic infill locations	High
	Develop a policy that seeks to require blighted properties to be mitigated before land transfer.	Medium
Allocate appropriate staff time to implement programs, activities, pursue funding, and track results.		High
Develop a strategic economic development plan.		High
Collaborate with U of M Extension on an economic futures workshop	Understand the impact that industries make on the city, and identify appropriate industries for recruitment efforts	High
Develop a set of programs to help grow and promote business development	Business mentorship program	Medium
	Revolving loan fund	
	Façade improvement program	
	Create an economic development toolkit.	
	Business assistance program	
Enhance the downtown retail environment.	Utilize tactical urbanism to improve the public realm and promote events	High
	Promote downtown streetscape and public realm enhancements.	

Support businesses in the downtown that promote entrepreneurship and small businesses	Leverage the “maker economy” and seek ways to grow this industry in the downtown.	Medium
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Parks And Recreation

STRATEGY	SUB-STRATEGY	PRIORITY
Conduct a series of long-range plans.	Complete a signage and wayfinding system	Medium
	Complete a bicycle and pedestrian plan.	Medium
	Develop a long-range plan for the entire park and open space network, specifically focusing on maintenance.	High
Seek revenue-generating sources within the parks and facilities.		Medium
Incorporate maintenance and improvement costs into future park system decisions.		Low
Join the 10-minute walk campaign through the Trust for Public Land.		Medium
Increase the amount and type of recreational opportunities	Diversify the recreation options within the city	Low
Enhance safe walking and cycling routes.		Medium
Expand trails to connect to other destinations and area attractions.		High

Natural Resources

STRATEGY	SUB-STRATEGY	PRIORITY
Review and revise subdivision ordinances to reflect the content of the plan.		High
Review and revise site design guidelines to align with the policies of this plan.		High
Complete a natural resource inventory.	Specifically identify greenways, corridors, and sensitive environmental features for protection.	Medium
	Identify invasive species	Medium

Conduct an evaluation of citywide opportunities to integrate low-impact development solutions.	Study areas in the community where green infrastructure solutions can be constructed	Low
Develop a best management practice guide or education series around water quality	Partner with CWC SWCD on projects and programming needs	Low
Clearly identify greenways and corridors that should be preserved	Develop a long-range plan that creates a greenway corridor throughout, or around, the city	Medium
	Identify a nature or passive trail network	Medium

Facilities And Infrastructure

STRATEGY	SUB-STRATEGY	PRIORITY
Promote energy efficiency and the use of renewable resources	Take strides to complete applicable strategies in the GreenStep Cities program	Low
Ensure that adequate infrastructure is provided to areas targeted for growth (residential, commercial, and industrial)		Medium
Continue to research and explore methods for funding options		High
Prioritize infrastructure investments within existing neighborhoods and potential areas of growth		High
Encourage the use of stormwater best management practices to improve local and regional water quality.		Medium

Public Safety

STRATEGY	SUB-STRATEGY	PRIORITY
Foster neighborhood capacity building to develop a neighborhood watch program		Low
Continue to work with the school district on current and long-range planning efforts.		Low
Promote and expand existing		Low

<p>programs whereby private businesses voluntarily share closed-circuit security camera footage with law enforcement.</p>		
<p>Continue partnerships and programs with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), such as Safe Routes to School (SRTS) and Towards Zero Deaths (TZD)</p>		<p>Low</p>

Appendix A

Community

Input

The process to update the 2019 Comprehensive Plan began in 2017, when a Community Survey Panel was formed to gather community input for the plan's completion. The panel consisted of 300 volunteers tasked with completing seven surveys covering a range of topics related to long-range planning and the city's community character. A steering committee, comprised of 13 sector representatives, was formed to provide oversight and serve as an advisory body for this project. A city-wide community survey was conducted to learn about residents, visitors, and workers' preferences on community character and livability. Four neighborhood meetings were held across the wards to identify neighborhood-level assets and needs. A total of five focus groups were held to dig deeper into issues in the community. Finally, a community design session was held to gather additional input on the city's future preferences and priorities. It's estimated that over 1,500 points of contact were made with residents, visitors, and employees in the city. Collectively, the input formed the foundation of the plan and influenced the goals, policies, and strategies to implement the community's overall vision.

WHAT WE HEARD

The following list is a summary of the elements that were identified from the community surveys, focus groups, ward meetings, and community design sessions:

Your neighborhood matters

Residents identified many similarities between their neighborhoods and also identified many differences. The City of Brainerd boasts a diverse collection of neighborhoods, and at the request of its residents, should be celebrated, supported, and enhanced.

Maintain safe neighborhoods

Survey respondents noted that improved safety and lower crime rates are the most important. Traditionally, a comprehensive plan does not serve as a crime prevention plan; the contents can address socio-economic conditions behind crime and chemical dependency.

Offer suitable, affordable housing options

Survey participants seek an array of housing options that meet their income, size, and quality needs. Various concerns were raised about the quality and availability of rental units within the City of Brainerd.

Improve the image of the housing stock

Blighted houses and vacant storefronts shape the community's image. Survey participants support a coordinated effort to address blight, revitalize neighborhoods, and improve housing conditions.

Provide adequate job opportunities

Respondents seek ways to improve and provide adequate employment offerings for a variety of income levels. A diverse economy provides a wealth of investments and employment opportunities. Survey respondents support a concerted effort to support existing businesses to expand employment opportunities and attract new businesses to the city.

Improve the overall maintenance and the attractiveness of the city

Overall maintenance and community image play a significant role in the city's character. Survey respondents see a collaborative effort to enforce city codes, address property maintenance violations, and improve city gateways and the visual appeal of the main corridors.

Protect and enhance our recreation opportunities

Residents value their location near area lakes and natural features. Respondents seek to improve access and connections to amenities in the general area.

Invest and revitalize downtown

Brainerd's downtown plays an important role in the city's economic and social identity. Residents seek a collaborative approach to improving the physical, social, and economic condition of the downtown.



INTERVIEWS: AT THE BEGINNING OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE PROCESS, PROJECT MANAGERS MET INDIVIDUALLY WITH CITY COUNCILORS, PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS, AS WELL AS STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND DISCUSSED SEVERAL WIDE RANGING TOPICS REGARDING THE CURRENT STATE OF BRAINERD AS WELL AS THE FUTURE OF BRAINERD.



FOCUS GROUPS: CITY STAFF AND PROJECT MANAGERS MET WITH A VARIETY OF FOCUS GROUPS TO DISCUSS PERTINENT COMMUNITY ISSUES FACING BRAINERD RESIDENTS, BRAINERD BUSINESSES, AND THE COMMUNITY. WE MET WITH THE FOLLOWING GROUPS: 1) A GROUP OF MILLENNIALS 2) CLC STUDENT SENATE 3) LANDLORDS 4) A GROUP OF SENIORS AND 5) REAL ESTATE AGENTS.



COMMUNITY SURVEY PANEL: AS A PART OF THE PLAN UPDATE, A GROUP OF CITIZENS, COMPRISING OF NEARLY 300 INDIVIDUALS, HAVE VOLUNTEERED TO TAKE A SERIES OF SURVEYS OVER THE COURSE OF ONE YEAR. THE RESPONSES FROM THEIR EFFORTS ARE HELPING US IN ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS.



WARD (NEIGHBORHOOD) MEETINGS: IN AN EFFORT TO UNDERSTAND YOUR NEEDS AS A RESIDENT, WE HELD A SERIES OF WARD MEETINGS IN MARCH/APRIL OF 2018. PARTICIPANTS SHED LIGHT ON WHAT MAKES THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD HOME.



CITY-WIDE COMMUNITY SURVEY: A CITY-WIDE SURVEY WAS COMPLETED AND WAS MEANT TO STUDY TWO PARTICULAR AREAS: LIVABILITY AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT. A TOTAL OF 660 RESPONSES WERE GATHERED.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES & OBSTACTLES (SWOO)

A key element in a long-range planning process is identifying the city’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and obstacles. Collectively, and through a nontraditional approach, the steering committee along the many lines of input from the community survey, helped form a complete analysis. The following charts captures the common responses to the four different categories:

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
Historic buildings	Better access to the river
Small town feel	Walkability and bikeability
Park network	Build upon the rich history
Natural setting and open spaces	Downtown improvements
School district	Mississippi Riverwalk
Support for small businesses	Opportunity for growth
Community events	Recreational options
Historic downtown	Community image
Neighborhoods	Tourism
Central Lakes College	Become a regional hub for employment
Paul Bunyan Trail	Preserve the water tower
Lakes	Collaboration with CLC to retain students
Northern Pacific Center	Business growth
Community character	Riverfront, mixed-use development
Variety of small businesses	River to rail corridor improvements
Natural resources	
Essentia	

Many people in the community felt that the greatest strength of the community was the Mississippi River and the environment. It was felt that these features should be taken advantage of through expanding connectivity and the local and regional trail network. Brainerd participants are proud of the educational systems within the community and medical facilities that serve a regional base.

Through this evaluation, concerns related to housing and maintenance and image of community were brought to the surface. The community is concerned about the “look” of the city. The historic industrial fabric gives a distressed appearance. Housing plays a significant role in the quality of life of Brainerd residents. The existing housing stock has a high percentage of rental units which help fill a vital need for affordable housing in the city. Exterior residential façade maintenance and the role it plays in the image of the city is important to residents.