

07

CITY OF BUFFALO MINNESOTA
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



preserving our
small town character

C i t y o f B u f f a l o , M i n n e s o t a



C o m p r e h e n s i v e P l a n

2 0 0 7

"Preserving Our Small Town Character"

Northwest Associated Consultants, Inc.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Executive Summary	1
Inventory	
Introduction	7
Socio-Economic Profile	7
Population and Housing Growth Trends	8
Age of Population	10
Household Income	11
Employment	12
Education	13
Housing Inventory	17
Tenure	17
Housing Costs	17
Age of Housing Stock	18
Single Family Housing	18
Multifamily Housing	19
Low Income and Affordable Multifamily Housing	19
Senior Housing	20
Environmental Conditions	21
Transportation	27
Introduction	27
Principal Arterials	27
Minor Arterials	27
Major Collectors	28
Minor Collectors	28
Local Streets	28
Average Daily Traffic Counts	29
Planned Road Improvements	29
Airports	31
Railroads	31
Public Transit	33
Land Use	34
Introduction	34
Existing Land Use	34

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Issues	
Social/Economic Issues	37
Environmental Issues	37
Land Use and Zoning Issues	38
Housing Issues	39
Transportation Issues	39
Community Facilities Issues	40
Economic Development Issues	41
Land Use Plan	
Introduction	43
General Concept Plan	43
Future Land Use	44
Growth Management Plan	
Introduction	49
Growth Management Policies	49
Planning Districts	59
General Land Use Policies	69
Residential	69
Commercial	71
Industrial	72
Energy and Resource Conservation Plan	73
Community Facilities	76
<u>List of Tables/Charts</u>	
Population and Households 1990 to 2030	8
Buffalo vs. Wright County Population 1990 to 2030	9
Population by Age 1990 to 2010	10
Household Income 1999	11
Median Household Income 1999	11
Employment by Occupation 2000	12
Travel Time to Work 2000	12
Educational Attainment 2000	13
Primary Spoken Language	14
Non-English Speaking Students ISD #877	15
Occupied Housing Units 2000	17
Housing Costs Buffalo vs. Wright County 2005	17

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Age of Housing Stock	18
Average Daily Traffic Volumes 2000 to 2004	29
Existing Land Use	34
Existing Land Use Chart	34
 <u>List of Maps</u>	
Aerial Photo	2
Building Permits 2000 – 2005	16
Watershed Map	23
National Wetlands Inventory Map	24
Floodplain Map	25
Aggregate Resources Map	26
Transportation Map	32
Generalized Land Use Map	35
Land Use Plan	48
Planning District Map	59
Planning District 1	60
Planning District 2	61
Planning District 3	62
Planning District 4	63
Planning District 5	64
Planning District 6	65
Planning District 7	66
Planning District 8	68

FRAMEWORK FOR THE 2007 BUFFALO COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The 2007 Buffalo Comprehensive Plan provides a framework for the future growth of the City to an expansion population of approximately 30,000, about double the City's current size. A timeline for reaching this population is not established – the Plan does not create a specific “goal” of incremental growth to that size. Because of the growth in Wright County and the greater Twin Cities area, the City has prepared this Plan to ensure that as the community’s population increases, it does so with both the long-term and historical interests of the community in mind.

In the aerial photograph on the following page, a study area is illustrated that identifies the potential growth areas for the City over the next several years. Growth options include the following concepts:

- A general concentric growth from the existing City, outward in all, or many, directions.
- Growth along the existing Highway corridors, relying on the Trunk Highway system to form the backbone of the future transportation system.
- Growth in a specific direction, relying on a concentration of growth around a new framework of infrastructure.

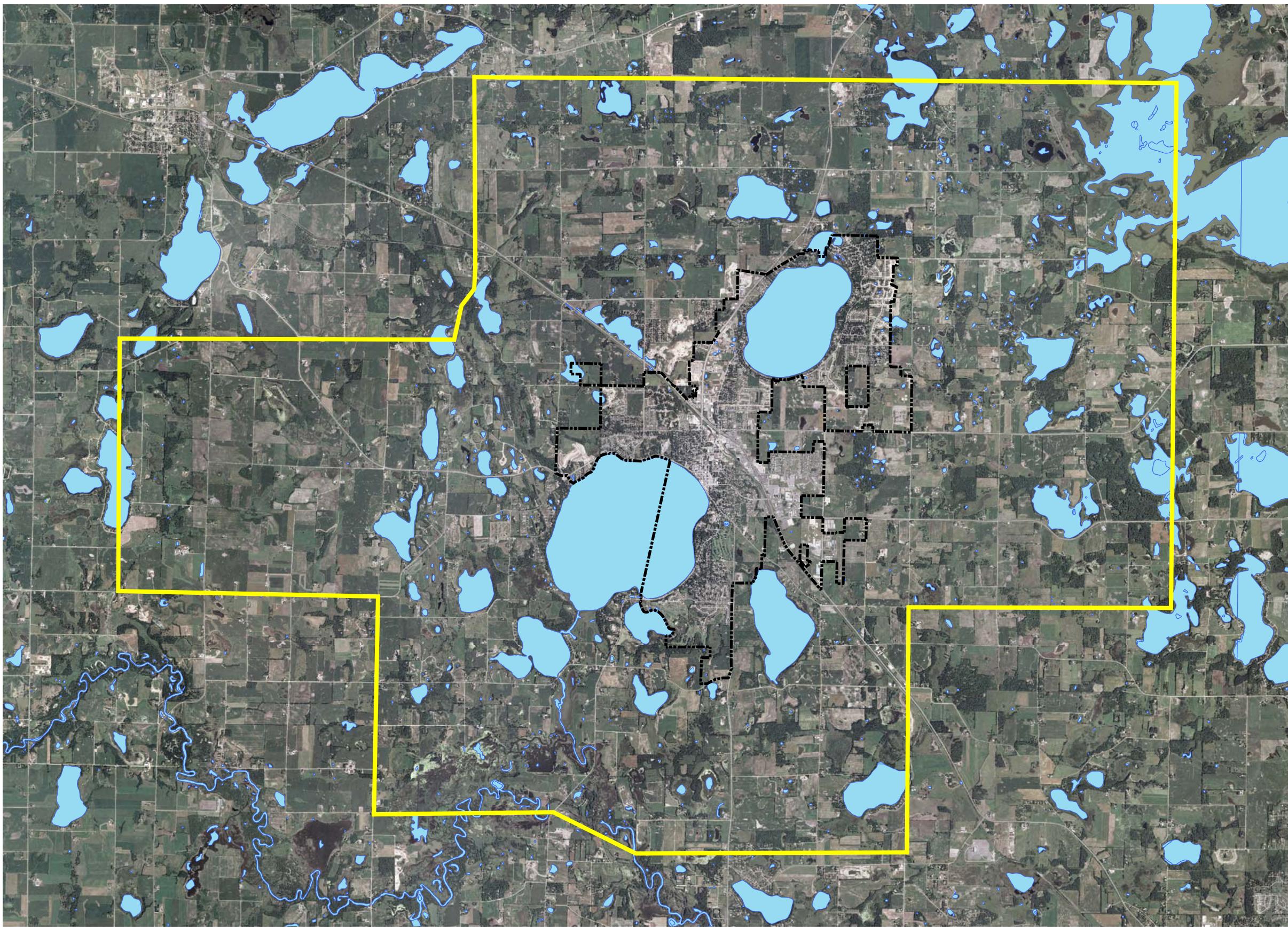
To decide between these three options, a large study area was reviewed. The area includes all of Chatham Township to the west, a portion of southeastern Maple Lake Township to the northwest, all of Buffalo Township to the north and east, a portion of Rockford Township to the southeast, and a portion of Marysville Township to the southwest.

With the exception of Marysville, the City has had annexation agreements with each of these Townships over the years of varying scope and duration. It is presumed that reasonable agreements would be possible with any or all of these jurisdictions if growth in that direction is foreseen. Since annexation will be necessary for any significant growth of the community, orderly annexation agreements should be considered that provide for a reasonable and predictable process of adding to the City’s territory.

At some point, it should be acknowledged that Township government may no longer be efficient or economical, given the growth demands in Wright County. This is not the same as saying that rural uses will need to go away. It is entirely reasonable to expect that even in incorporated areas, large tracts may be preserved for agriculture or other rural uses. It will be necessary to be able to have these types of discussions as Wright County continues to grow as a member of the greater Twin Cities Metropolitan Area.

Buffalo Comprehensive Plan Update 2007

Buffalo
CITY OF BUFFALO, MINNESOTA



FSA Color Orthophotos 2003-2004

- Comp Planning Boundary
- City / Township Boundary
- Lakes

0 0.5 1 2 Miles



Sources: City of Buffalo, Wright County,
MN DNR, NAC, Inc.

Resulting from the review of the growth data, the City's utility service capacity, the environmental considerations in the area, and most significantly, the transportation issues in the Buffalo area, the proposed growth plan for Buffalo is the third of the options identified above.

There are many reasons for this choice, and are summarized as follows:

- Concentric growth does not do a good job of accounting for existing traffic or infrastructure expansion. Since roads and utilities are essentially linear, a pattern that attempts to expand in all directions at one time requires an over-investment in trunk facilities.
- Concentric growth funnels traffic generation through a series of collector corridors which are expensive to maintain and develop, but which create degraded residential neighborhoods due to noise and traffic congestion points.
- A concentric growth pattern does not facilitate the development of new arterial routes, relying instead on the already congested arterials in the community.
- A linear pattern following the existing Trunk Highways is more efficient from a utility service standpoint, but results in an over-reliance on the existing arterials for local trips.
- The linear pattern extends growth far along arterial routes, leaving parts of the community detached from others due both to road patterns and distance.
- The linear pattern results in a “shallow” development pattern, resulting in significant impacts of noise and traffic on new and existing neighborhoods.
- The single direction pattern provides for a pattern of new growth that minimizes transportation impacts on existing neighborhoods.
- The single direction pattern provides for the development of a new arterial route that can be designed to carry newly-generated traffic, as well as the potential for easing exiting traffic issues in other areas.
- The single direction pattern can be designed to mitigate negative impacts of new arterial roadways through design features that require attention to these issues prior to construction, rather than retro-fitting the roadway onto an existing land pattern.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For these reasons, the Plan promotes a single direction growth pattern that places the growth area to the east of Buffalo. This area does not have the environmental constraints of other areas (aggregate deposits, wetland and floodplain concentration, etc.), and provides for an effective transportation solution on several levels.

The primary feature of the Plan is a new arterial roadway that will link the south and north extremities of the Buffalo area. This new roadway traverses currently undeveloped countryside from County Road 12 on the south, crossing State Trunk Highway 25 with a specific location to be chosen, then heads north along the east side of the community, again through undeveloped areas. A crossing of State Trunk Highway 55 and the Canadian Pacific Railroad is projected to be a potential grade-separated interchange, and would serve as a sort of “gateway” entry point to the Buffalo community on the east. Continuing north, the roadway crosses County Highway 34, County Highway 35, 40th Street NE, and eventually turns northwest to reconnect with Highway 25 in the vicinity of the intersection with County 113.

It is important to note that this new arterial roadway is not designed to become a “bypass” of the existing downtown area, nor is it planned to re-route the Trunk Highway 25 label. Instead, this new route is design to permit traffic volume relief in the existing corridor – especially for those trips that do not benefit the downtown commercial markets. These trips are essentially regional – large trucking operations or similar traffic – that serve only to disrupt downtown turning movements and add to congestion, but do not add to market share for downtown retailers. The primary function of this new arterial will be to serve traffic growth in the area so it does not overwhelm the existing Trunk Highway’s ability to serve either the region or local Buffalo travelers.

The Plan envisions a creative design for this roadway, emphasizing the community’s connection with its rural surroundings. As such, major intersections may be designed as landscaped roundabouts. The road would include a natural landscaped median, and the Plan calls for extraordinary development setbacks from this route on both sides. With minimal crossings, it should serve as a parkway route, and will include attractive bicycle and pedestrian facilities, rather than squeezing non-motorized users into a small zone along a crowded highway.

Of course, the new parkway serves a major transportation function as well. As regional traffic along Highway 25 continues to build, local traffic in Buffalo has continued to see increased congestion levels, interfering with the enjoyment of Buffalo’s traditional small-town environment. While it is clear that at 30,000 (or even 15,000) Buffalo is no longer really a “small town”, there are many aspects of the community that retain the feel and attraction of the community’s past.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Highway 25 traffic is eroding that attraction. The new parkway provides an opportunity to redirect non-local traffic around the congested downtown and 55/25 intersection areas, as well as to collect traffic from new growth and allow it to filter into the community at several major points. A companion aspect of the parkway is to limit land uses in these areas to residential only. In this way, the parkway will not open up commercial development lands to compete with the existing commercial triangle framework that has been established over the past 15 years or so.

The temptation for new commercial development in these areas will be strong, and there is little doubt that there will be significant pressure to alter the land use patterns and allow commercial development to “capture” the potential market along this roadway. The focus of this Plan, however, is to capitalize on the substantial base of existing commercial development, grow new commercial areas from the existing locations, and make attractive, efficient improvements to the City’s infrastructure (including transportation) to enhance local traffic movements.

As a final component of this concept, the City believes that the open spaces created as a part of the new parkway are environmentally beneficial. The space created for the parkway route will preserve the opportunity to protect existing water resources, provide for large areas of native plant associations, and preserve, or establish, areas for wildlife habitat without the common compromise that major roadways usually bring to urban areas. It is the City’s position that this type of roadway design will benefit property values of those adjoining developments, and as such, much of the expense of land and construction will be expected to be borne by that development.

The Plan relies on annexation for the continued growth of the community. Whenever the topic of annexation is raised, conflicts seem to quickly follow. It is in the interest of the City and its adjoining Township neighbors to actively work on agreements to manage the need for new urban land. These agreements must recognize the need for permanent rural areas to have access to local commerce with the need to mitigate intrusions that urban development can have on rural lifestyles.

As a policy, however, it is not considered to be realistic to establish a “no-growth” scenario. Even in the rural areas of Wright County, growth continues to be an issue as land is converted from agriculture to rural residential. To minimize the “sprawl” effect of growth, the City believes that urban densities should predominate to serve the growth demands in Wright County, with permanent rural areas established well beyond the boundaries of the City.

At the same time, Buffalo intends to grow vertically within its existing boundaries. The long-standing focus of the downtown area has been to concentrate new high-density residential and commercial development, serving both to minimize outward growth, and

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

strengthen the downtown's traditional role as a commercial center. This policy continues to be a major focus of the City's Plan. However, to avoid losing all semblance of the traditional small-town feel of the area, the concentration of growth in the existing City limits must be balanced with the reality of outward expansion. It is the objective of the City, through this Comprehensive Plan, to grow vertically with respect for the City's small-town heritage, and grow horizontally with respect for the natural environment and surrounding rural land use patterns.

INTRODUCTION

The City of Buffalo has continued to experience significant growth since the last Comprehensive Plan Update which was conducted in 1996. The growth that the City is currently experiencing is expected to continue and, as such, the City's Comprehensive Plan becomes even more important in order to manage this growth.

The demographic, environmental, and land use inventories provide the basis of information on which the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan is established. This Inventory includes compiling and analyzing base data including demographic makeup of the community, existing land use, transportation patterns, features of the natural environment and community facilities such as parks, emergency services and utilities. Another important part of the Inventory is the history of the community particularly with regards to development and availability and use of resources.

Analysis of each category of data identifies strengths and weaknesses of the community, trends in development and need for new facilities and resources. This analysis provides a list of issues which the City can prioritize and address as a part of the comprehensive planning and strategic planning efforts. Whether these issues are physical, environmental or land use related, and/or demographically or economically based, the City can use this list of issues identified in the inventory process to establish its goals and policies for the next 10 years, or until the next Comprehensive Plan Update is necessary.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

Population and Household Growth Trends

The following tables population and household growth trends for the City of Buffalo from 1990 to 2000 with projections for 2010, 2020 and 2030. Figures are also given for Wright County for comparison purposes.

City of Buffalo Population and Households 1990 to 2030						
	U.S. Census		Estimate	Projections		
	1990	2000	2005	2010	2020	2030
Population	6,856	10,097	13,251	16,650	24,750	31,270
Households	2,445	3,702	4,983	6,190	9,167	11,712
HH Size	2.80	2.73	2.66	2.69	2.70	2.67

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; MN State Demographer ; NAC, Inc.

The City of Buffalo's population added over 3,000 people during the 1990s. That growth rate was matched in just years in the first half of the current decade, and should be matched again by 2010. This projection expects Buffalo's growth to result in a near doubling of the population by 2030, perhaps sooner if growth rates accelerate beyond the recent pattern.

The number of households is projected to increase at about the same rate as the number of people within the City of Buffalo through 2030. However, Buffalo's household size is anticipated to decrease gradually over the next 20 to 30 years. This is not unusual though, as the majority of households across the country continue to get smaller due to the aging population, increased divorced rates and married couples' decisions to have fewer children than previous generations.

Households are projected to increase at a slightly faster pace than population as the household size is projected to continue to decline through 2030. As more housing units are added, household growth will increase more so than population growth since one housing unit represents a household. Population growth will continue as housing units are added, however, population growth is not as directly related to the addition of housing units as household growth is.

City of Buffalo vs. Wright County Population 1990 to 2030						
	U.S. Census		Estimate	Projections		
	1990	2000	2005	2010	2020	2030
Wright County	68,710	89,986	110,836	109,710	126,410	139,010
City of Buffalo	6,856	10,097	13,251	16,650	24,750	31,270
% of County	9.98%	11.2%	12.0%	15.2 %	19.6%	22.5%
Source : U.S. Census Bureau ; MN State Demographer						

The City of Buffalo is projected to maintain a fairly consistent percentage of the County's population from 2010 to 2030 as just over 10 percent of the total county population. This table shows an increasing percentage of County population over time, but it is based on State Demographer projections that appear to be substantially lower than reality. The projections for the City are based on expectations for building construction and historical trends.

Characteristics which have contributed to Buffalo's stable growth include:

- ◆ Location in close proximity to the Twin Cities Metropolitan Core. The outer-ring suburbs of the Twin Cities Metro Area and beyond experienced rapid growth during the 1990s as the Metro Area continued to expand outward.
- ◆ Access to regional employment opportunities and commuter routes. Buffalo's close proximity to the Twin Cities Metro Area provides residents with a multitude of employment opportunities within a reasonable commuting distance from their homes. Employment opportunities within the Metro Area are easily accessible to residents of Buffalo because of the city's location near major highway arterials. The Metropolitan Core is easily accessible to Buffalo residents primarily via Highway 55 and Interstate 94.
- ◆ Affordable housing and small town character. Due to its location in the far western suburbs of the Twin Cities, Buffalo has more affordable housing opportunities. There is a greater supply of vacant land available for development, which allows housing costs to remain lower than in the more fully-developed, higher populated suburbs. Because Buffalo is less populated and less developed, it offers residents the appeal of a small town but with nearness to the services and amenities of a large metropolitan area.

Future growth within Buffalo is expected to be strong as the Twin Cities Metro Area continues its outward expansion and the appeal of a smaller town with more affordable housing drives development in the outer-ring communities.

Age of Population

As the following table indicates, the City of Buffalo has continued to have a relatively young population since 1990. Over 30 percent of the population was under the age of 20, both in 1990 and 2000. It is anticipated that the older age groups will increase at a rate greater than that of the Under 20 age group through 2010, however, the Under 20 age group will continue to increase steadily as well. Having a high Under 20 population indicates the existence of many families in the community. This younger age group places demands on the City for resources including schools and parks, as well as a variety of housing options, such as move-up housing.

The greatest increases in population from 1990 to 2000 occurred among those ages 45 to 54. People in this age group, also known as the Baby Boomers, were born between the years 1946 and 1964 and began aging into their late 40s and early 50s in 2000. This group will become more of a factor beginning in 2010 as the oldest Baby Boomers near retirement age and are in need of more age-specific services, such as retirement housing and increased medical care.

City of Buffalo Population by Age 1990 to 2010								
	U.S. Census				Forecast		% Change	
	1990		2000		2010		'90 - '00	'00 - '10
Age:	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Under 20	2,286	33.3%	3,217	31.9%	5,078	30.5%	40.7%	36.8%
20-24	469	6.8%	609	6.0%	999	6.0%	29.9%	40.4%
25-34	1,268	18.5%	1,706	16.9%	2,564	15.4%	34.5%	27.0%
35-44	914	13.3%	1,607	15.9%	2,747	16.5%	75.8%	64.4%
45-54	544	7.9%	1,147	11.4%	2,165	13.0%	110.8%	107.1%
55-64	398	5.8%	669	6.6%	1,199	7.2%	68.1%	72.6%
65-74	397	5.8%	473	4.7%	749	4.5%	19.1%	31.7%
75 & Over	580	8.5%	669	6.6%	1,149	6.9%	15.3%	42.9%
Total	6,856	100.0%	10,097	100.0%	16,650	100.0%	47.3%	31.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; MN State Demographer ; NAC, Inc.

Household Income

The greatest percentage of households (28 percent) in Buffalo had household incomes between \$60,000 and \$100,000 as determined by the 2000 Census. Buffalo had slightly smaller percentages of households in all income levels above \$25,000 than in Wright County in 1999.

Household Income 1999				
	Wright County		City of Buffalo	
	Households	% of Total	Households	% of Total
Less than \$15,000	2,572	8.2	341	9.2
\$15,000 to \$24,999	2,675	8.5	419	11.3
\$25,000 to \$34,999	3,433	10.9	525	14.2
\$35,000 to \$44,999	3,579	11.4	376	10.1
\$45,000 to \$59,999	5,507	17.5	616	16.6
\$60,000 to \$99,999	9,657	30.7	1,050	28.3
\$100,000 to \$199,999	3,542	11.3	349	9.4
\$200,000 or more	450	1.4	34	0.9
Total	31,450	100.0	3,710	100.0

The lower median incomes in Buffalo compared to Wright County can be attributed to the fact that the majority of Buffalo's population consists of younger families, adults ages 25 to 44 and children. Since most adults do not reach their peak earning years until ages 45 to 54, median family incomes in Buffalo are likely to increase during the next decade or so.

Increases in median family incomes will occur due to the aging of the baby boomer population as well as increases in cost of living and inflation.

According to the U.S. Census, the median household income in the City of Buffalo in 1999 was \$49,573. This figure was slightly lower than the median income for Wright County as a whole in 1999.

Median Household Income 1999	
City of Buffalo	\$49,573
Wright County	\$53,945
Source: U.S. Census Bureau	

Employment

The following two tables display the occupations and commuter times to work for the City's population over the age of 16 in 2000.

The majority of Buffalo residents were employed within Management, Professional and Related and Sales and Office positions as of 2000. The remainder of employed persons living in Buffalo primarily worked in sales and office positions as well as service, production and transportation industries. There were very few Buffalo residents who worked in the Farming, Fishing and Forestry industries.

Employment by Occupation Workers Age 16 & Over 2000		
Occupation	No. of Persons	% of Total
Management, professional and related	1,583	30.4%
Service	766	14.7%
Sales and office	1,402	27.0%
Farming, fishing and forestry	13	0.2%
Construction, extraction and maintenance	524	10.1%
Production, transportation and material moving	914	17.6%
Total	5,202	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Although nearly 30 percent of Buffalo residents in 2000 drove less than 15 minutes to get to their job, the majority of working residents had to travel 15 minutes or more to get to their place of work. About 45 percent of residents commuted at least 30 minutes to get to work. Buffalo is considered to be somewhat of a "bedroom" community to the Twin Cities Metro Area as most residents who live in Buffalo must drive quite a distance to their jobs.

Travel Time to Work Workers Age 16 & Over 2000		
Travel Time to Work	No. of Persons	% of Total
Less than 5 minutes	303	5.9%
5 to 14 minutes	1,459	28.5%
15 to 29 minutes	903	17.6%
30 to 44 minutes	1,025	20.0%
45 to 59 minutes	798	15.6%
60 minutes or more	491	9.6%
Work from home	148	2.9%
Total	5,127	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Education

According to the 2000 Census, over 30 percent of Buffalo's population completed high school. Another 25 percent obtained a post secondary degree. Overall, there were 5,485 people, or 88 percent, who completed four years of high school and/or attended or finished a post secondary degree program.

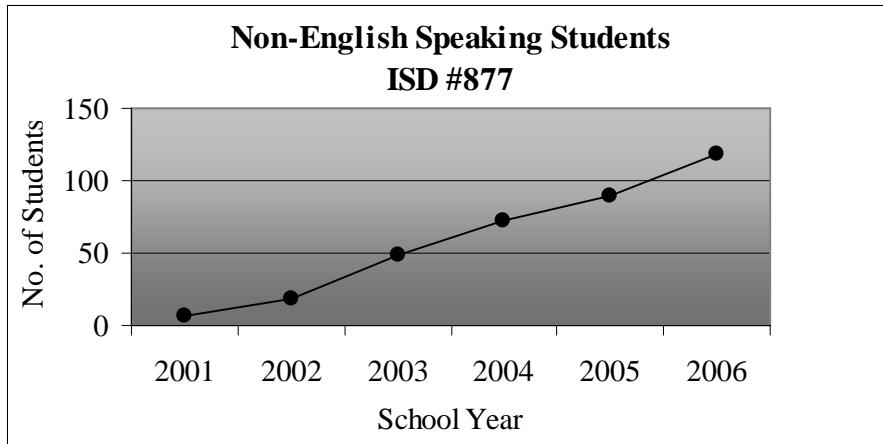
Educational Attainment Age 25 & Over 2000		
	No. of People	% of Total
Elementary/Junior High/Senior High:		
0-11 Years	767	12.3%
High School Graduate*	1,975	31.6%
Post Secondary:		
<1 Year, no degree	629	10.1%
1+ Years, no degree	971	15.5%
Associate Degree	455	7.3%
Bachelors Degree	1,094	17.5%
Masters Degree	254	4.1%
Professional School Degree	83	1.3%
Doctorate	24	0.4%
Total	6,252	100.0%
* Includes equivalent (i.e., GED)		
Source: U.S. Census Bureau		

Buffalo is located within the Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose School District, otherwise known as Independent School District #877 (ISD 877). ISD 877 is comprised of six elementary schools, four of which are located in Buffalo, one middle school and one high school, both of which are located within the City of Buffalo. Additionally, the school district operates Phoenix Learning Center which provided supplemental and independent study programs for kindergarten through high school students. The following table displays student enrollment by language spoken for ISD 877 from 2000 through 2006.

Primary Spoken Language Buffalo School District Students 2000 to 2005																		
	2000-2001			2001-2002			2002-2003			2003-2004			2004-2005			2005-2006		
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
BULGARIAN																		
CEBUANO							1	0.02%	1	0.02%	1	0.02%	1	0.02%	1	0.02%	1	0.02%
CHINESE									1	0.02%	1	0.02%	1	0.02%	4	0.07%		
CUTCHI									2	0.04%	2	0.04%	2	0.04%	2	0.04%	2	0.04%
ENGLISH	4,733	99.87%	4,863	99.61%	5,005	99.03%	5,146	98.62%	5,320	98.34%	5,312	97.81%						
FINNISH	1	0.02%	2	0.04%	2	0.04%	3	0.06%	4	0.07%	4	0.07%						
FRENCH									1	0.02%	2	0.04%	1	0.02%				
GERMAN							2	0.04%	4	0.08%	2	0.04%						
HINDI											1	0.02%	1	0.02%				
HMONG							1	0.02%	6	0.11%	15	0.28%	23	0.42%				
HUNGARIAN							1	0.02%										
ITALIAN									1	0.02%								
JAPANESE									2	0.04%	2	0.04%						
LAOTIAN																		
LEBANESE									1	0.02%								
PORTUGUESE																		
ROMANIAN																		
RUSSIAN	1	0.02%	3	0.06%	10	0.20%	11	0.21%	11	0.20%	11	0.20%	14	0.26%				
SERBO-CROATIAN			2	0.04%	2	0.04%	2	0.04%	4	0.07%								
SLAVONIAN					1	0.02%												
SLOVAK											1	0.02%						
SPANISH	4	0.08%	12	0.25%	28	0.55%	37	0.71%	40	0.74%	48	0.88%						
THAI						1	0.02%											
UKRAINIAN											1	0.02%	1	0.02%				
VIETNAMESE											1	0.02%	1	0.02%				
Total	4,739	100.0%	4,882	100.0%	5,054	100.0%	5,218	100.0%	5,410	100.0%	5,431	100.0%						

Source: MN Dept. of Education – Data Center

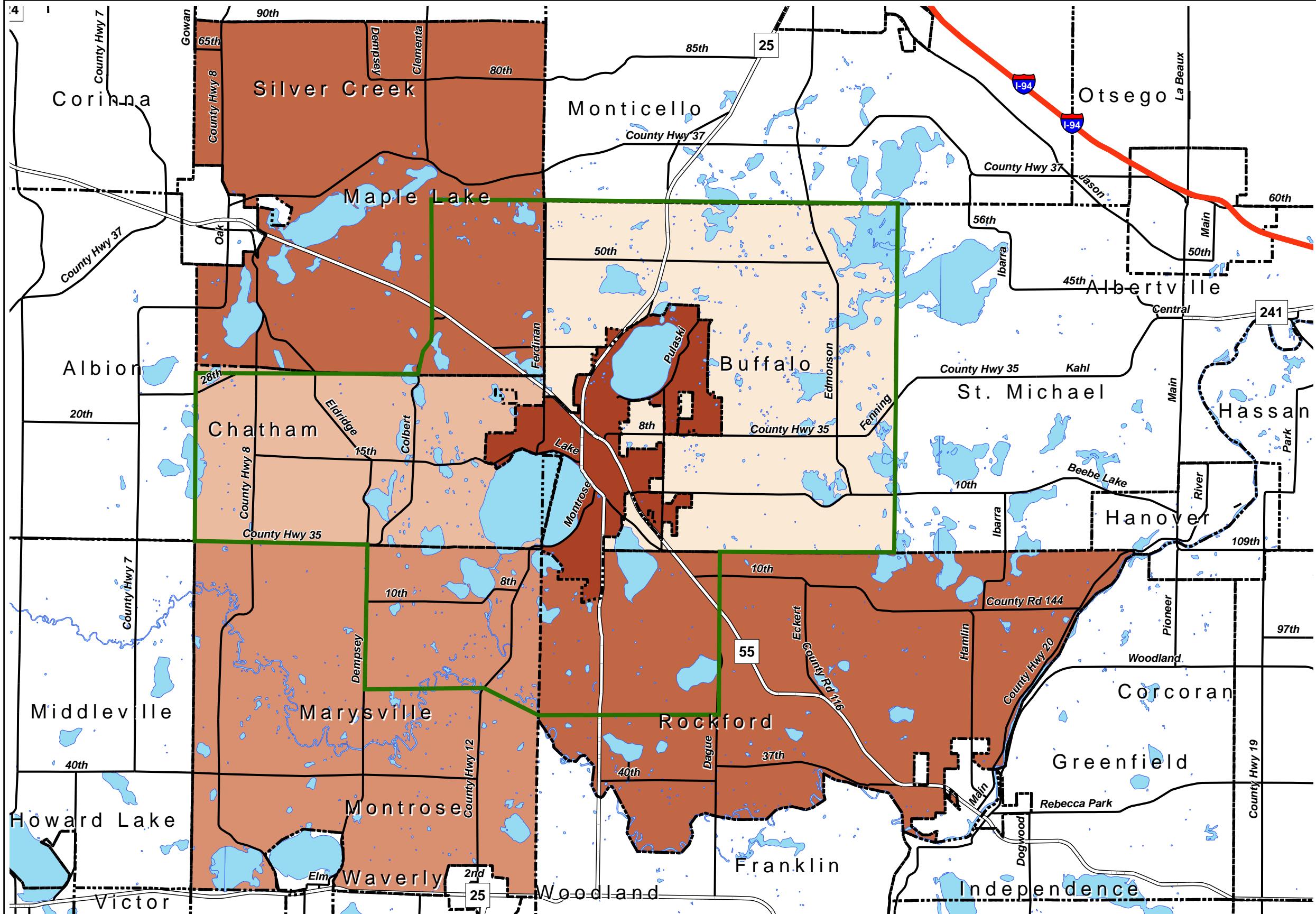
In 2000, ISD 877 had a total of 4,739 students, of which 99.9 percent spoke English as their primary language. In 2006, ISD 877 had a total of 5,431 students and 97.8 percent of them spoke English as their primary language. From school years 2000-2001 to 2005-2006, the school district increased by nearly 700 students, or about 15 percent. While only a two percent increase in the number of non-English speaking students during the past five years, ISD 877 is seeing gradual increases in the numbers of non-English speaking students. Since 2000, the school district has experienced slight increases primarily in the Hmong, Russian and Spanish student population. Spanish students were the most prevalent non-English speaking students enrolled in the Buffalo School District in 2006 with a total of 48 students.



Buffalo Comprehensive Plan Update 2007

Buffalo

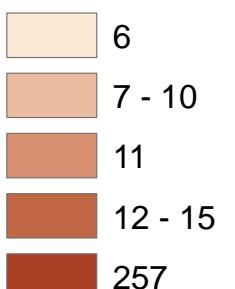
CITY OF BUFFALO, MINNESOTA



Building Permits (Dwellings) 2000 to 2005

-  Comp Planning Boundary
-  City / Township Boundary
-  Lakes / Rivers

Average Permits Per Year:



A scale bar representing 4 miles. It features a horizontal line with tick marks at 0, 1, 2, and 4. The segment between 0 and 4 is filled with a dark gray color, while the segments before 0, between 1 and 2, and after 4 are white.



**Sources: City of Buffalo, Wright County,
MN DNR, NAC Inc.**

HOUSING INVENTORY

Based on 2000 Census data and the number of residential building permits issued since 2000, the City of Buffalo has a total of approximately 5,953 housing units as of 2005. Of these 5,953 units, roughly 65 percent of them are single family units. The remaining units are two-family and multifamily units making up around 19 percent and 16 percent of the total housing units, respectively.

Tenure

As of 2000, the majority of the occupied housing units within the City of Buffalo were owner-occupied units. It can be assumed, in consideration of the City's existing land use patterns, that the percentage of owner-occupied housing units has remained relatively high through 2006.

Occupied Housing Units 2000		
	No.	% of Total
Owners	2,657	71.8%
Renters	1,046	28.2%
Total	3,703	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Housing Costs

The median sale price for a single family home, townhome or condominium in Buffalo in 2005 was \$215,250. This number was considerably less than the median sale price for such homes in Wright County as a whole. When the previous Comprehensive Plan Update was conducted in 1996, Buffalo's median and average sale prices of homes were slightly above that of Wright County. As Wright County has continued to experience rapid growth and construction of new homes, many of them large homes on larger lots, the County's median and average sale price of homes has surpassed that of the City of Buffalo.

Housing Costs City of Buffalo vs. Wright County 2005				
	No. of Sales	Avg. Sale Price	Median Sale Price	Avg. Days on Market
Buffalo	341	\$250,640	\$215,250	76
Wright County	2,019	\$270,270	\$255,400	76

Source: Regional Multiple Listing Service of Minnesota, Inc.

There were 341 homes sold in the City of Buffalo in 2005, which represented about 17 percent of the total number of homes sold in Wright County in 2005. While Buffalo's population accounts for roughly 12 percent of the total population in Wright County as of 2005, the number of homes sold in Buffalo accounted for a slightly higher percentage of the total number of homes sold in the County. This is representative of the fact that Buffalo is a rapidly developing and growing community, particularly when compared to other communities in Wright County.

Age of Housing Stock

As shown in the following table, as of 2000, the majority of Buffalo's existing housing stock was constructed during the 1990s. However, given that the City has issued building permits for a total of 1,539 housing units since 2000, the greatest number of housing units in the City has been constructed since 2000. The fewest number of housing units in Buffalo were constructed between 1950 and 1960.

Age of Housing Stock City of Buffalo		
Year Built:	No. of Units	% of Total
1990 to 2000	1,257	32.5%
1980 to 1989	691	17.8%
1970 to 1979	731	18.9%
1960 to 1969	398	10.3%
1950 to 1959	252	6.5%
Pre-1950	543	14.0%
Total	3,872	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Single Family Housing

Single family residential housing is located throughout the City of Buffalo. The largest concentrations of single family housing are located to the east of Lake Pulaski, east of Buffalo Lake as well as to the northwest of Buffalo Lake. The majority of Buffalo's single family housing is within the R-1, Suburban Single Family zoning district. The R-1 District has a minimum lot size of 12,000 square feet. Developments in this district average approximately 2.5 units per acre. The City also has a fair amount of single family subdivisions within the R-2, Single Family Urban District. These subdivisions are required to have a minimum lot size of 8,000 square feet, resulting in an overall density of approximately 3.5 units per acre.

Much of City's more recent single family housing has occurred to the east of Lake Pulaski. These areas are almost exclusively single family in nature, although there are a few small pockets of attached and detached townhouse development. To the south of Lake Pulaski is a larger area of small-lot single family and attached housing. In this area, a significant supply of additional land is yet to be developed, although utilities are available to serve the area.

Recently, new single family development has been occurring to the south of the Wild Marsh Golf Course, and along the west boundary of the City into Chatham Township. The amenities present in both areas have led to higher value housing, for the most part. There has been a limited mix of attached and detached townhouse development as a part of each of these projects.

Multifamily Housing

The majority of the City's multiple family housing has been developed in an area between 3rd Avenue NE and 6th Avenue NE, north of Highway 55. The concentration of multiple family development in these areas has led to some concerns over development quality, and the ability to maintain project value. Most of the higher density development in these areas is more than 20 years old, with more recent projects tending to be townhouse-style construction as more moderate densities.

The City's previous Comprehensive Plan sought to disperse high density housing to other locations around the community in an effort to head off continued concerns over this housing style. There are some areas reserved for multiple family housing along some of the higher volume transportation routes, however the market for multiple family housing has not supported much new development of this type in the past ten years. It is expected that as markets change, it will continue to be important to provide appropriate locations for multiple family housing in support of the local industrial and commercial economies.

Low Income and Affordable Multifamily Housing

The City's stock of affordable housing consists of housing in several categories. A large amount of affordable single family housing exists in some of the older traditional neighborhoods in the community. In these areas, there is a mix of owner- and renter-occupancies. Particularly in the areas around the downtown core, rental conversions of existing housing stock have provided a supply of affordable housing near commercial services.

The multiple family housing in the 3rd Avenue NE area includes a mix of market rate and subsidized projects, the vast majority of which are renter-occupied. With the lack of new multiple family housing projects in the past several years, the supply of affordable rental housing may become an issue for local economic development.

Senior Housing

The senior housing market has been historically dominated by higher density projects in the downtown area, or near the long-standing nursing home facilities south of the downtown. Some senior-only housing was also developed near the hospital area between 3rd Avenue NE and Highway 25. In more recent years, the majority of “senior” housing has consisted of single-level townhouse development, most of which is owner occupied. These projects are designed to be occupied by independent seniors who do not need special care.

As the population continues to age, it is expected that senior housing providing higher levels of care will be in demand. This is a function both of the aging of the existing population, as well as the in-migration from other areas to take advantage of the health services in Buffalo. The two areas that have been the focus of assisted care senior facilities – the downtown and the hospital area, are the most likely locations to focus this style of housing. When assisted care housing is proposed for other areas of the community, transportation services will need to be provided.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

There are several environmental conditions in the study area that affect the planning for the City's future. In the following maps, several factors are illustrated that impact potential growth, and the ability to efficiently serve that growth with utilities, transportation, and other services.

The first map illustrates the generalized watershed areas that affect the central Wright County area. As can be seen from that map, the entire study area is within the watershed area of the North Fork of the Crow River. The Mississippi River watershed lies to the north of the study area, including Monticello, Otsego and cutting through Maple Lake, while the South Fork of the Crow River watershed lies to the south, including Delano and parts of Hennepin County.

The second map illustrates waterbodies identified on the National Wetlands Inventory. These wetlands have been identified using aerial photography, but do not include all areas that may be identified as wetlands under Minnesota's Wetland Conservation Act. Nonetheless, the map provides a reliable depiction of potential wetland issues that growth may raise. For instance, to the south of Deer Lake, extending to the Crow River is an extensive complex of wetlands that will make both development and infrastructure construction an issue. To the southwest of the City, both lakes, topography, and wetlands make development programming a more difficult (and as a result, expensive) task.

To the east and north of the community are areas of many, but smaller, wetland areas. In these areas, development can more easily avoid direct wetland conflicts, and result in a more environmentally compatible land use pattern.

The third map also shows difficulties in extending development to the south, given the extensive flood plain areas that lie south of Buffalo and Deer Lake. The existing drainage pattern to the North Fork of the Crow River creates a significant barrier in road and building construction in this area.

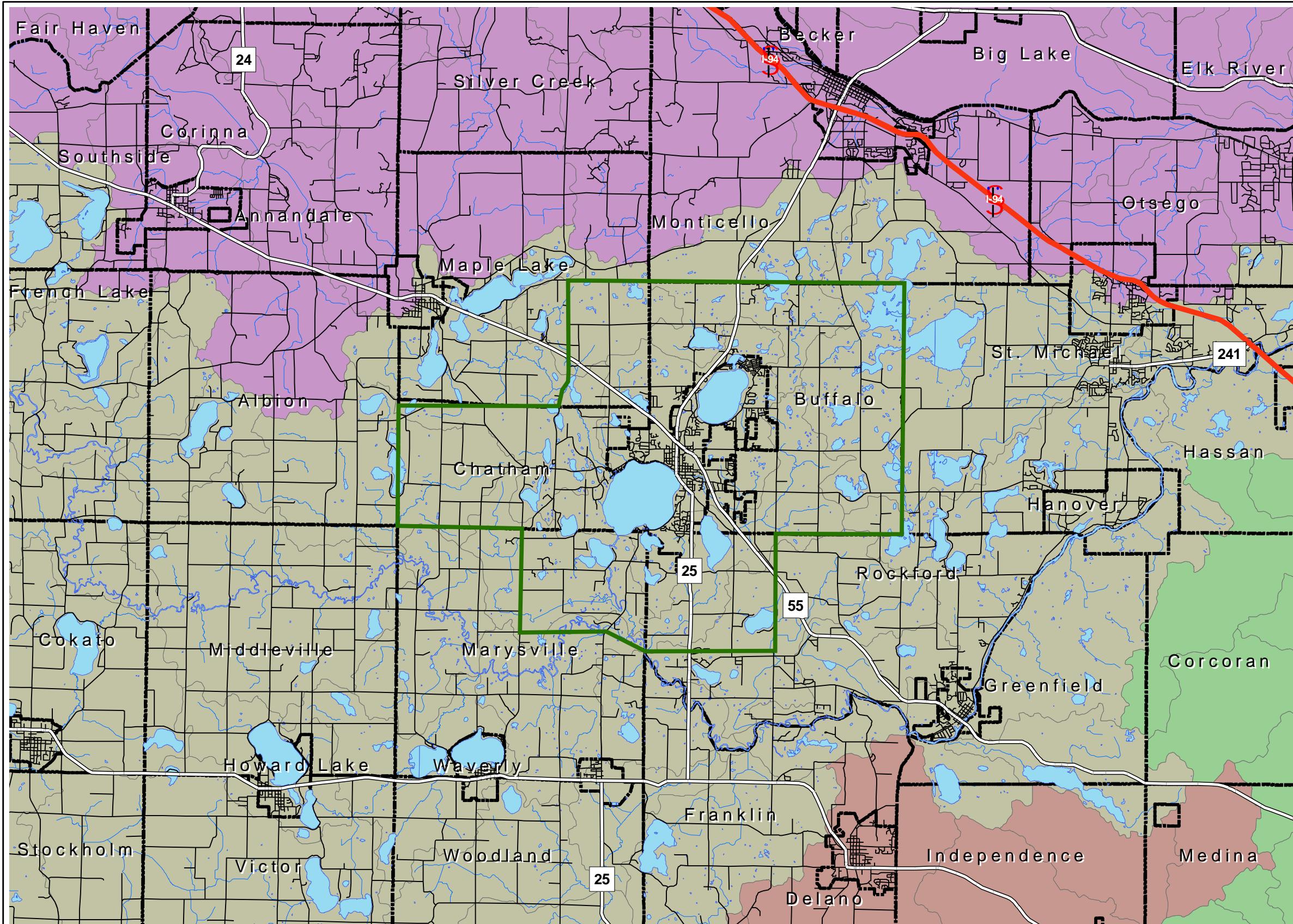
The fourth map in this series is a map of the study area's aggregate resources, including sand, gravel, and similar materials. Gravel mining locations are also marked on the map. As can be seen, there is a heavy concentration of aggregate-bearing soils to the west and north of Buffalo, especially stretching along State Highway 25. As urbanization expands, the demand for aggregates becomes more acute as development requires material for road building, concrete and bituminous mixes, and other construction needs.

It is important that these materials be accessed prior to development. Once development has covered these resources, it is uneconomical to retrieve them, meaning that aggregates will need to be transported in from farther away.

As can be seen from the map, the areas to the east of Buffalo do not contain the aggregate-bearing soils. Construction in these areas would not need to factor in the mining potential of the existing properties.

Buffalo Comprehensive Plan Update 2007

Buffalo
CITY OF BUFFALO, MINNESOTA



Watershed Map

- Comp Planning Boundary
- City / Township Boundary
- Lakes
- Streams

Minnesota Watersheds

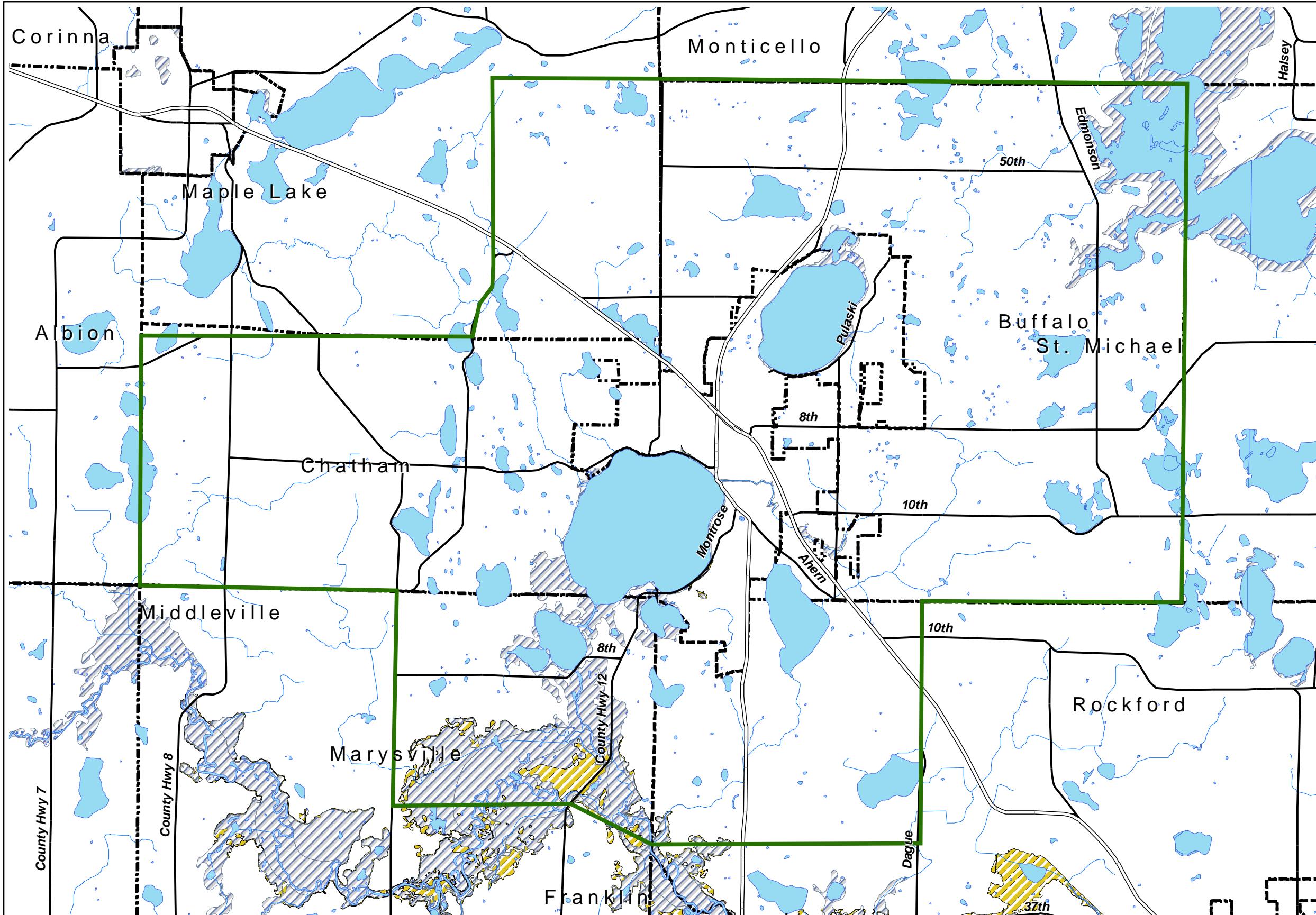
- Miss. River-St. Cloud
- Mississippi River
- North Fork Crow River
- South Fork Crow River

0 1 2 4 Miles



Sources: City of Buffalo, Wright County, MN DNR, NAC, Inc.

Buffalo Comprehensive Plan Update 2007



FEMA Flood Plain Map

- Comp Planning Boundary
- City / Township Boundary
- Lakes
- Streams
- 100 Flood Plain
- 500 Year Flood Plain

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

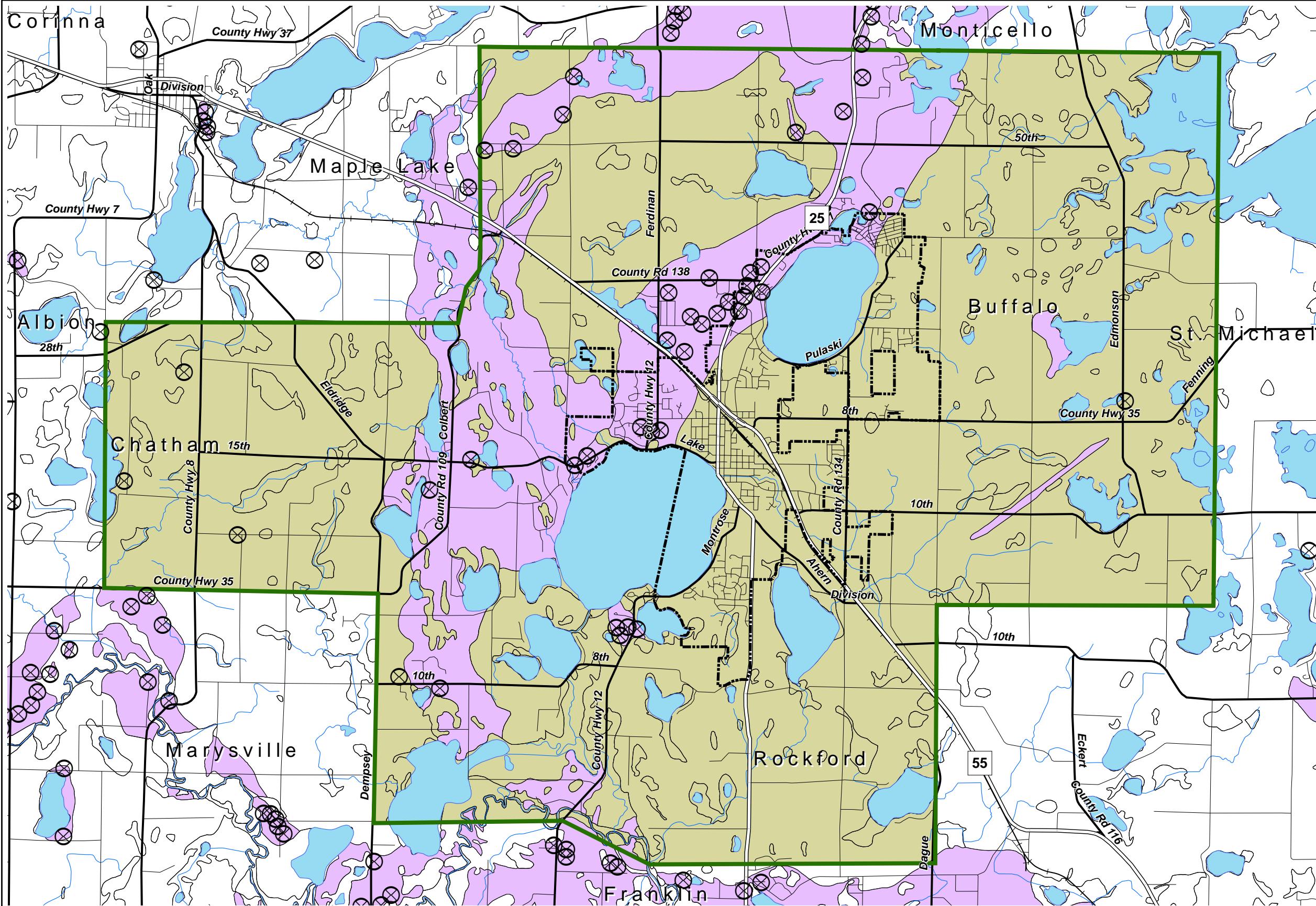


Sources: City of Buffalo, Wright County, MN DNR, NAC, Inc.

NAC NORTHWEST ASSOCIATED CONSULTANTS, INC.
4800 Olson Memorial Highway, Suite 202, Golden Valley, MN 55422
Telephone: 763.231.2661 Facsimile: 763.231.2661 plannero@nacplanning.com

Buffalo Comprehensive Plan Update 2007

Buffalo
CITY OF BUFFALO, MINNESOTA



Aggregate Resources (Land and Minerals)

- Comp Planning Boundary
- City / Township Boundary
- Lakes
- Streams
- Gravel Pit Locations
- Potentially Significant Aggregate Deposits

0 0.5 1 2 Miles



Sources: City of Buffalo, Wright County, MN DNR, NAC, Inc.

TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

The primary mode of transportation provided by the City is streets for motor vehicles. Other modes that exist have been provided by other agencies, although the City has recently become involved in attempting to facilitate a commuter bus service into Minneapolis. The significance of these existing, developing and future networks in terms of economic, social and recreational considerations, makes them vital to comprehensive planning.

The functional classification system for the City's streets and highways, developed as a part of the Wright County Transportation Plan, is based on anticipated usage five to ten years in the future. The City of Buffalo contains a principal arterial roadway (Trunk Highway 55), a minor arterial roadway (Trunk Highway 25 and some County highways), and several major and minor collector roadways, as well as a series of local/neighborhood streets.

Principal Arterials

Principal arterials are major transportation arteries. Their primary function is to connect large population concentrations to other large population centers in the state. These roadways are designed for high speed movement and for high vehicle volumes, including commercial traffic, and are intended to for longer trips. The principal arterial roadway located in the City of Buffalo is State Highway 55. Highway 55 has recently been upgraded to a four-lane divided highway from the eastern boundary of the City to Highway 25 on the west. Future plans include further expansion to four lanes to the west past County Highway 12, and intersection improvements throughout the length of the highway.

Of significance for Buffalo, Highway 55 has been the focus of intensive study for long-term expansion to four lanes to the east. The four lane design currently ends in Medina, except for a short stretch of four-lane design through the City of Rockford. This project has, while still a long-term objective, has multiple agency support, and funding has been provided for right-of-way acquisition and further planning.

Minor Arterials

Minor Arterials also place more emphasis on mobility than on providing land access. Minor arterials typically connect cities and other major activity centers to each other and to the principal arterials. They may also provide relief for congestion on parallel principal arterials. The City of Buffalo contains three minor arterial roadways: County State Aide Highway 35 (CSAH 35) as it extends west of Highway 55, State Highway 25 as it travels north of

Highway 55 and County State Aide Highway 12 (CSAH 12). Additionally, State Highway 55 becomes a minor arterial roadway west of CSAH 12.

Highway 25 between Buffalo and Monticello is scheduled by the State of Minnesota for an upgrade to four lanes in 2009 and 2010. This upgrade is likely to increase the use of this route as an access to Interstate 94 through Monticello. Planning is being done at this time to identify intersection locations and consolidation of access points along the corridor. Also providing access to Interstate 94 is County Highway 35 to the east through St. Michael. The State of Minnesota has just completed upgrading Trunk Highway 241 from St. Michael to I-94, leaving County Highway 35 as a two-lane link between the two cities. As a designated minor arterial on the County's Transportation Plan, it would be reasonable to expect an eventual upgrade of this route in the future. On the Buffalo end, the City and County have completed a reconstruction and rerouting of County 35 on either side of its intersection with Highway 55. The City is currently working on extension of this route into the downtown area across the Canadian Pacific rail tracks.

Major Collectors

Major collectors are roadways which have emphasis on both mobility and land access. Major collectors characteristically connect neighborhoods within and between sub-regions. For example, within the City of Buffalo the major collector roadways are: State Highway 25 as it extends south of County Road 147, portions of CSAH 35 west of Highway 25, County Road 134 and County Road 34.

Of these, much of the north half of County Road 134 has been turned back to the City of Buffalo for jurisdiction and maintenance. Over time, it is expected that this will continue for the road's full length between Highway 55 and Lake Pulaski.

Minor Collectors

Minor collectors provide service between major collector and minor arterial streets and facilitate critical connections to sub-regions, relieving local streets of heavy traffic. Minor collectors also provide for limited direct lot access when necessary. The City of Buffalo contains many minor collector roadways as shown in the map on page ____.

Local Streets

All other roadways that do not fall into one of the previously mentioned categories are classified as local streets. Local streets' primary function is to provide property access. Generally, local streets are city or township roads, however, on occasion, short segments of county roads may be classified as a local street.

Average Daily Traffic Counts

The following table displays average daily traffic counts for key roadways in the City. These figures are compiled by Minnesota Department of Transportation on an annual basis. The average daily traffic volumes on Highway 55 and Highway 25 have increased substantially during the four year period shown on the table. The greatest traffic volume increases occurred on Highway 55 for vehicles traveling west on Highway 55 (west of Highway 25) and for vehicles traveling west on Highway 55 (east of Highway 25).

Average Daily Traffic Volumes City of Buffalo 2000 to 2004				
	2000	2002	2004	% Change '02-'04
Intersection of Highway 55 and Highway 25:				
NW Quadrant:				
Highway 55	10,300	11,800	12,400	20.4%
Highway 25	13,800	16,600	18,100	31.2%
NE Quadrant:				
Highway 55	15,400	16,200	19,000	23.4%
Highway 25	-----	-----	-----	-----
SW Quadrant:				
Highway 55	17,000	17,200	21,000	17.6%
Highway 25	12,800	13,000	15,400	20.3%
SE Quadrant:				
Highway 55	10,500	10,500	11,400	8.6%
Highway 25	7,000	7,000	8,600	22.9%
Source: Minnesota Dept. of Transportation – Office of Transportation Data & Analysis				

Planned Road Improvements

In addition to those elements discussed above, the primary improvement contemplated by this Plan is the construction of a future parkway along the eastern boundary of the City. This parkway will serve as an alternative minor arterial roadway providing the primary access to major arterials for new development in this area, as well as alleviating some of the inter-regional traffic that must travel through the core of the community at present.

The design of the parkway is planned as a unique transportation element for Buffalo. The plan contemplates a connection to County Highway 12 on the south and west, with access at Highway 25, an eventual interchange facility at Highway 55 and County 33, access at County

Highway 34, County Highway 35, 16th Street/30th Street NE, 40th Street NE, and reconnection with Highway 25 on the north at County Highway 113.

Connections to the various intersection locations may be designed as roundabouts. Both Wright county and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) are working on roundabout options as alternatives to traffic signals, due to increased traffic flow, traffic speed calming at regular intervals, reduced implementation cost, and reduced crash data. The planning for this parkway in a newly developing area would provide an excellent opportunity to implement the roundabout design.

Other features of the parkway would include travel lanes separated by a broad landscaped median. The landscaping could consist of varying vegetation options from a natural prairie cover to a more cultured landscape pattern. In addition, the plan anticipates that the parkway will be set in a broad right of way that includes bicycle and pedestrian trailways, room for additional woodland tree planting, and stormwater management ponding. Beyond the right of way, the land use plan contemplates extraordinary setback areas to reinforce the historical rural context of the area. Sample cross-sections and other illustrations are included in this Plan to define the concept.

The parkway is a transportation element, park and trail element, environmental conservation element, visually appealing travel route, and a cultural heritage element rolled into one. It is more common to squeeze major roadways into the least amount of land possible. As a result, these roadways contribute to the visual blight of some types of urban development, and often result in a substandard environment for adjoining residential neighborhoods. By planning for a separate route that will be encompassed by future development, the City has the opportunity to design the facility to accomplish the transportation mission, but avoid many of the problems often associated with such roadways.

As noted above, the intersection of the new parkway and Highway 55 would best be designed as a grade-separated interchange. At the eastern-most limits of the growth area, this feature would serve as a gateway element on this side of Buffalo. One of the difficulties with highway entrances from countryside into a City is the ability to define an entry and avoid uncontrolled strips of highway-focused development – development that usually suffers from a lack of visual appeal. The interchange bridge concept allows the new roadway to create an entry statement for the urban edge. The bridge itself offers the chance to create a dramatic architectural statement to traffic entering the Buffalo community.

In summary, the east-side parkway provides the City with an opportunity to both resolve a traffic concern and create an environment that will promote a higher quality of neighborhood as the City grows. Concepts for implementation of this idea are included in the Implementation section of the Comprehensive Plan.

Airports

As shown on the Transportation Map, Buffalo is situated near a number of airport facilities, including the Buffalo Municipal Airport. Approximately one hour away is the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, which serves as the region's major airport. Several smaller airports and runways are located throughout the greater Twin Cities Area, including the Maple Lake Airport about six miles to the west..

The Buffalo Municipal Airport started as a landing strip in the mid-1960s and was not paved or lighted until the 1980s. The Airport houses a growing number single-engine aircraft and new hangar construction is common. The City recently constructed a new flight operations building, and continues to invest in airport improvements, although the runway length is likely a fixed element due to surrounding development.

Railroads

The Canadian Pacific (Soo Line) Railroad bisects the City and parallels Highway 55. According to Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT), the trains traveling through Buffalo travel 40 to 60 miles per hour and there are more than two dozen trains per day. The railroad is the CP main line between its west coast terminal and Chicago.

Canadian Pacific has indicated that they intend to construct a double-track on this line for its full length. It is presumed that this will lead to a long-term increase in rail operations.

Since the railroad constructed an additional siding east of Buffalo a few years ago, the primary railroad complaint – trains sitting on sidings in town across local streets, blocking traffic for 20 minutes or more – have decreased significantly. One of the most commonly voiced complaints now relates to whistle blowing at intersections. This issue is regulated by Federal law, and the City occasionally looks into the opportunity to minimize or eliminate whistle blowing.

Buffalo Comprehensive Plan Update 2007



Transportation Map

-  Comp Planning Boundary
-  City / Township Boundary
-  Lakes
-  State Highways
-  County Roads
-  Major Roads
-  Rail Lines
-  Proposed Road
-  Proposed Intersection

0 0.5 1 2 Miles



Sources: City of Buffalo, Wright County, MN DNR, NAC Inc.



NORTHWEST ASSOCIATED CONSULTANTS, INC.

4800 Olson Memorial Highway, Suite 202, Golden Valley, MN 55422
Telephone: 763-221-2555, Facsimile: 763-221-2561, plawyers@comcast.net

Public Transit

The City of Buffalo has an in-town transit services operated by Wright County. The “River Rider” bus service runs Monday through Friday from approximately 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The service allows for trips throughout the City as well as trips to nearby communities Albertville, Otsego, Montrose and St. Michael.

The City has also been working with a company to provide commuter bus service between Buffalo and Minneapolis. This service is in the early stages, and has not yet proven its financial feasibility, although as the community grows, the market for this transportation option should grow as well.

By 2009, the Northstar Commuter Rail service is scheduled to begin between downtown Minneapolis and Big Lake, a distance of 14 miles from Buffalo. This rail option will connect to the Hiawatha Light Rail line in Minneapolis, providing access to MSP international airport, as well as the Mall of America in Bloomington. A prospect for further transit consideration would be participation in a transit option that would provide service between Buffalo and the Big Lake rail station.

LAND USE

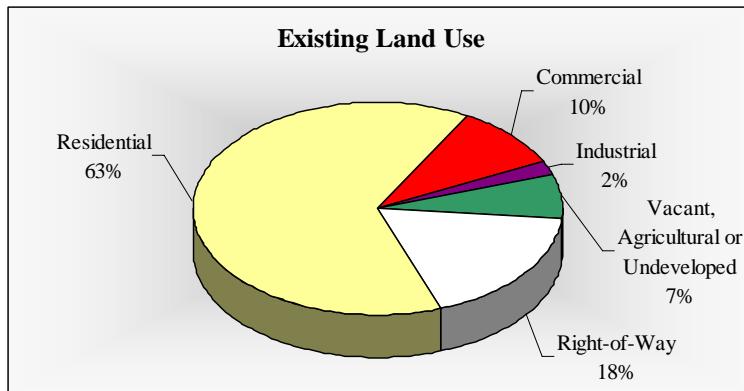
While the analysis below generalizes the land use distribution in Buffalo, the numbers are useful in estimating land consumption for future development. For the residential land use category (which includes parks and institutional uses), the existing rate of land consumption will require approximately 12,000 acres to build out to the 30,000 population mark, the planned capacity of the City's sanitary sewer treatment facilities. It is a reasonable expectation that to provide reasonable land area for a doubling of the population, land absorption will double the current area. With this information, the Plan can project the geographic area of expansion, and create a future planning area with some degree of reliability.

Existing Land Use

The following table shows the City's existing land use as defined by general land use category based off of current zoning. An analysis was performed using parcel areas and underlying zoning districts to determine the approximate area totals for each land use category.

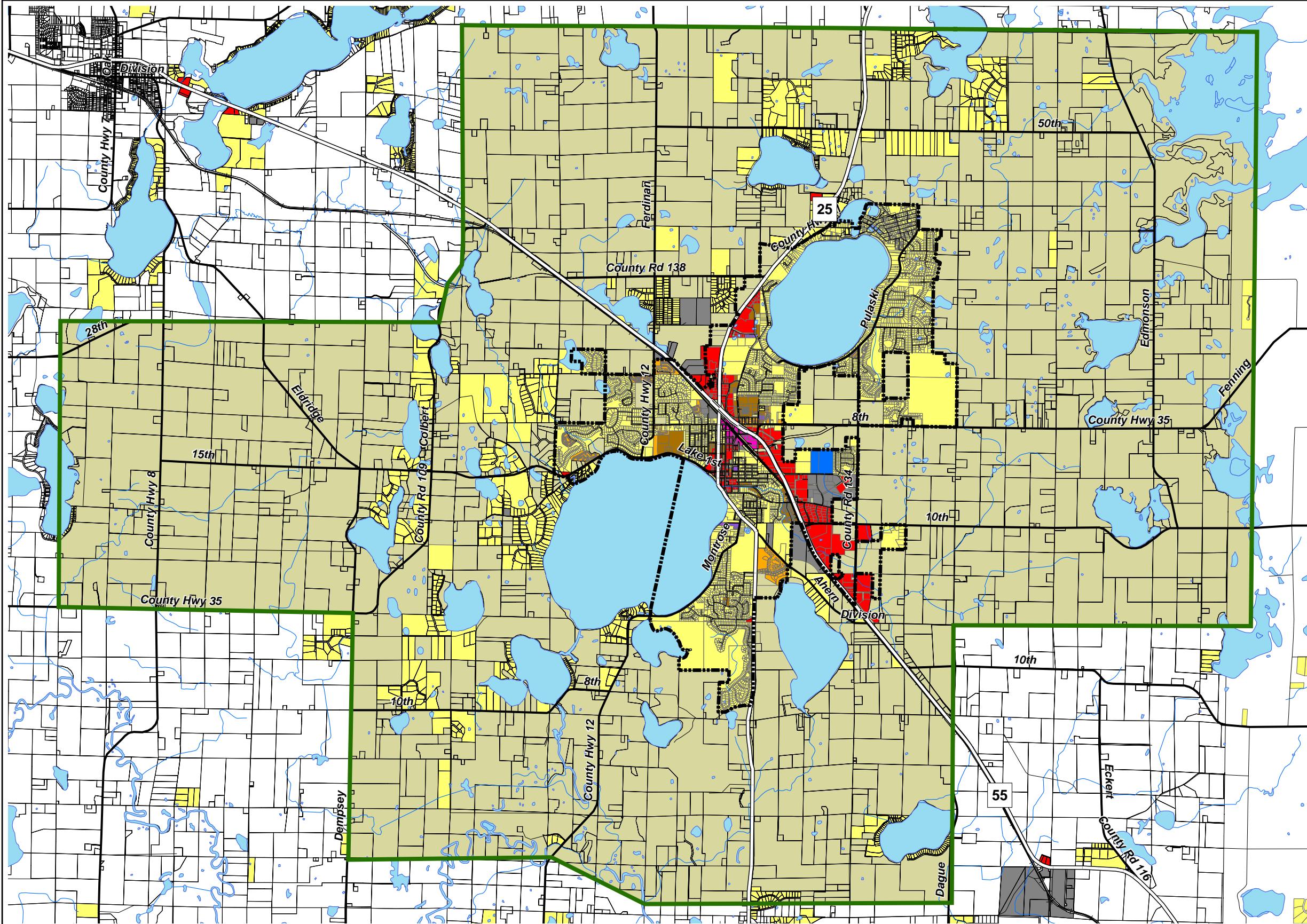
Existing Land Use		
	Acres	% of Total
Agricultural	297.85	6.7%
Residential	2,831.36	63.7%
Commercial	402.81	9.1%
Industrial	91.0	2.0%
Other	25.49	0.6%
Right-of-Way	798.15	17.9%
Total	4,446.66	100.0%

Source: City of Buffalo; NAC, Inc.



As shown in the above table and illustration, the majority of Buffalo's land is occupied by residential land uses.

Buffalo Comprehensive Plan Update 2007



Buffalo

Generalized Land Use

Legend for the Comp Planning Boundary map:

- Comp Planning Boundary (Green Box)
- City / Township Boundary (Cloud-like shape)
- Lakes (Blue irregular shape)
- Streams (Wavy line)
- General Agricultural (Light Green)
- Commercial (Red)
- Industrial (Grey)
- Planned Unit Development (Magenta)
- Low Density Residential (Yellow)
- Medium Density Residential (Orange)
- High Density Residential (Brown)
- Special Purpose Residential (Purple)
- Manufactured Housing (Blue)

0 0.5 1 2 Miles



Sources: City of Buffalo, Wright County, MN DNR, NAC, Inc.



NORTHWEST ASSOCIATED CONSULTANTS, INC.

4800 Olson Memorial Highway, Suite 202, Golden Valley, MN 55422

The relationship between land uses and zoning districts in Buffalo shows that a number of discrepancies exist. For example, the golf courses east of Buffalo Lake are classified as open space commercial recreational uses, but are actually zoned R-1, Single Family Suburban District. Similarly, public and semi-public land uses such as the municipal airport, civic center, schools and parks are zoned anywhere from A-1, Agricultural District to B-5, Central Business District.

Residential land uses conform in most instances to their respective zoning district, but generally, only in the less established, less centralized areas. Established residential neighborhoods are often confronted with legal non-conforming uses, particularly near Buffalo's downtown area, where land uses and zoning consistency is most dissimilar. The City's highway commercial corridors and industrial parks usually exhibit the best relationship between land use and zoning.

Social/Economic Issues

- ◆ The number of households within the City of Buffalo has dramatically increased since 2000. This increase is an indication of households wanting and being able to afford larger living spaces, as well as a reflection of the increasing population and the decreasing number of people per household.
- ◆ The greatest increase in population from 2000 to 2010 is expected to occur among people ages 45 to 54 (an increase of 50.8 percent). During the 2000s, this same population group more than doubled in size. This has particular significance for the City of Buffalo with regards to the level of services provided, including health care, transportation and housing as this population group continues to age.
- ◆ Established objectives, goals and policies must be in place to ensure the availability of alternative residential options for people of all income and age levels in response to the growing population and, in particular, the increased older adult and senior populations.
- ◆ Adequate land for residential development must be provided in various residential zoning districts in order to provide for various housing options.
- ◆ The City must recognize that the increased population growth is occurring among many different races and ethnic groups. Resources must be available for these groups with an importance placed on providing information and resources for non-English speaking residents.

Environmental Issues

- ◆ Preservation of environmentally sensitive areas is critical to maintaining a balanced community.
- ◆ It is important to be mindful of how new developments are implemented, as they put pressure on existing drainage patterns. Flooding problems can occur if new developments are not carefully reviewed and monitored.
- ◆ Soil conditions, drainage ways and wetlands are development limitations and therefore, must be dealt with in a City-wide comprehensive manner.
- ◆ Storm drainage systems and runoff must be carefully monitored to control pollution and erosion particularly for properties near lakes where timing allows for less absorption and treatment before runoff flows into the lakes.

- ◆ Management of Lake Pulaski and Buffalo Lake are multi-jurisdictional processes which can complicate development, stormwater control and recreational resource provision.

Land Use and Zoning Issues

- ◆ Incorporation and utilization of the full range of zoning classifications within the current Zoning Ordinance is crucial to maintaining a balanced community.
- ◆ Restrict commercial development along Highway 55 to those uses which are well designed and attractive commercial and service uses.
- ◆ Continue to encourage full utilization of Highway 55 and Highway 25 commercial frontage, as well as secondary frontage in this corridor.
- ◆ Address conversion of areas northwest of Highway 55 and 25 to industrial uses, and plan for buffering from existing rural residential development.
- ◆ Work to resolve existing land use relationships and possible transition to commercial service uses in the Highway 55/Canadian Pacific Railroad area in relation to proposed service road improvements in the vicinity.
- ◆ Continue to encourage business warehousing uses in the area south of County Road 34 and east of Highway 55. The conversion of some of these areas to a more retail focus may be appropriate, depending on traffic circulation and access.
- ◆ Existing development patterns around the northern end of Lake Pulaski must be identified in relation to annexation requests, redevelopment and provision of public services.
- ◆ Address and reevaluate appropriate zoning and guided land uses within Shoreland areas subject to Shoreland regulations.
- ◆ Continue developing methods to coordinate land uses and development pressures south of Lake Pulaski with regards to annexation, provision of services and orderly development.
- ◆ Continue monitoring the need for redevelopment within R-6 Zoning Districts to accommodate high density development close the Downtown.

Housing Issues

- ◆ The provision of quality and affordable housing continues to be of great importance particularly that of senior housing as the Baby Boom generation ages into their later 60s beginning in 2010.
- ◆ Improvements to housing conditions and appearances in the central area of the City will also continue to be important, especially as continued improvements to the downtown area occur.
- ◆ Redevelopment opportunities must continue to be considered throughout the City in order to eliminate substandard housing and provide new housing opportunities to potential residents and alternatives to existing residents.
- ◆ Continued focus and increasing attention on high-quality housing at all market levels will be necessary to ensure upgrading of housing conditions.

Transportation Issues

- ◆ The safety of pedestrians is of particular concern at congested intersections on the major thoroughfares, railroad crossings and near the Civic Center. Grade separated crossing should be considered wherever practical as non-motorized travel increases.
- ◆ Traffic in the downtown and through Highway 25 will need to be addressed. Although rail crossing interference has been lessened, certain periods continue to result in major backups, particularly at Highways 25 and 55.
- ◆ Businesses along both Highway 55 and 25 will need to address access changes, including architectural improvements due to multiple frontages.
- ◆ Parking within the central downtown area continues to be an issue. With the City's inventory showing adequate parking in the downtown area, a public relations effort may be justified to educate business owners and customers on parking options.
- ◆ Continued improvements to the airport may create new and/or expanded business in Buffalo, which would affect the City's service capacity and would increase the local labor force and tax base.

- ◆ With the improvements to Highway 55, many of the access issues have been resolved, however, additional highway improvements to the east and west will be necessary to resolve skewed intersections and make other safety improvements.
- ◆ Highway 25 access issues have been largely resolved, however, intersection congestion and stacking issues will continue to require attention and traffic levels increase.
- ◆ Access from Highway 25 to the west should be addressed to ease congestion at the intersection of Highway 25 and Highway 55.

Community Facilities Issues

- ◆ The City should encourage development of vacant land only when utilities are readily available to those areas.
- ◆ City must continue to endorse orderly expansion of any and all public utilities to developing areas.
- ◆ Future utility needs due to anticipated development must be carefully evaluated so that they are not premature and/or they have the ability to handle increased demand.
- ◆ The City should continue to phase out all existing individual septic systems when City sewer service becomes available.
- ◆ Water system needs and capabilities must be evaluated for future developments and potential annexations in order to assure property capacity and storage.
- ◆ The City's adopted Comprehensive Storm Drainage Plan must consulted and adhered to for all new developments in order to maintain proper drainage within the City.
- ◆ Future storm sewer needs for anticipated development and annexations and related environmental impacts must be analyzed and planned for now.
- ◆ Electrical system and gas service expansion to developing areas must be orderly and cost effective.
- ◆ Preservation of natural and scenic areas throughout the City continues to be vital to the image and aesthetics of the City of Buffalo.

- ◆ Maintenance of existing park lands and development of future park and recreation areas.
- ◆ Provide for open space conservation within developing areas as well as the City as a whole through continued facilitation of the City's park dedication process.
- ◆ Examination of school enrollment trends must be thorough in order to accurately anticipate and facilitate necessary expansions, cut backs and allocation of resources.
- ◆ Ongoing assessments of City and regional needs for all types of health care are crucial to the planning of appropriate health care facilities and resources.
- ◆ Park and trail system expansion will require re-evaluation as the City continues to grow. These assets have been among the most highly prized, including both lake-related and local park use, as well as extensive use of the City's trails. Continued focus on expansion and grade separation will help to ensure long-term enjoyment and minimization of conflicts.

Economic Development Issues

- ◆ Maintaining a commitment to annual strategic planning is essential to enhancing economic development in Buffalo. Implementation of economic development strategies are critical to the successful broadening of the City's retail and service industries.
- ◆ Continued strong private and public participation in the City's downtown redevelopment programs is important to the success and outcome of the program.
- ◆ Continued efforts to assemble land for redevelopment and provision of adequate parking are crucial for the economic vitality of the downtown area.
- ◆ Consider a comprehensive review of downtown redevelopment opportunities, including private and public investments, to promote growth and success of the downtown business community.
- ◆ Add economic development focus on commercial land uses in the highway commercial corridor areas. As growth continues, interest in the Highway 55/County Highway 35 area will increase.
- ◆ Review existing commercial development in the highway commercial corridors for redevelopment issues and needs. Some areas show signs of needed public

- improvements, buildings that are approaching the end of their useful lives, and lack of amenities that were not commonly developed when highway commercial development occurred in the 1960s and 1970s.
- ◆ The on-going use of tax increment financing will be essential to the continued economic growth and reinvestment within the community.

LAND USE PLAN

Introduction

Based upon the foundation established by the policy plan, this section provides a framework to guide and direct future land development within the City of Buffalo. The Land Use Plan is a narrative and graphic description that provides the background and rationale for land use designations as represented on the Proposed Land Use Map. The Land Use Plan is divided into two sections: General Concept Plan and Land Use Elements.

General Concept Plan

- ◆ Preservation of certain agricultural areas plus the accommodation of urbanization. As one travels into the City of Buffalo, the transition from rural to urban character must be gradual.
- ◆ Establish and maintain a strong sense of neighborhood and community. Concerns, preferences and density in and around the neighborhood shall be identified to ensure compatible development. The sense of neighborhood can be achieved by:
 - Establishing a sense of continuity and focus
 - Neighborhoods which relate well within themselves as well as to adjacent neighborhoods and the community as a whole
- ◆ Setting design standards for each neighborhood exclusive for its use and yet tied into overall community goals can help facilitate a more desirable community.
- ◆ Provide neighborhood plans – these complement the Comprehensive Plan by providing necessary details that enable the community to take actions.
- ◆ The intensity of land uses should decrease as distance increases from an activity center. As a means of maintaining the integrity of the residential neighborhoods, providing a population base for commercial activities and providing alternative housing types. Medium and high density residential development should surround the commercial core.
- ◆ Establish and maintain attractive, high quality living and working environments for residents.

Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Plan is a conceptual illustration of how future development will be distributed as Buffalo grows over the next 20 to 30 years. This timeframe is not fixed. As noted early in the Plan, it is not the intent of the Plan to prescribe a growth rate, but rather to establish parameters for quality, quantity, and location of growth as it comes.

With that in mind, the Future Land Use Plan provides for land use categories that are somewhat distinct between the existing developed portion of the community and the future growth area. Within the existing community, the land use pattern shows more discreet types of land use, based on a zoning pattern that identifies several different types of land use. In the future land use area, categories have been collapsed to allow some for some flexibility on the part of the City to direct the specifics of a development on a case by case basis. Some of the parameters for those decisions are listed in the following section, as well as the Policy section of the Plan in a later chapter.

Low Density Residential

Within this category, the predominant land use will be detached single family homes, and the City's R-1 zoning district will be the major zoning designation for development regulations. Planned Unit Development design may be utilized where unique environmental features support a more flexible design approach, however, the use of PUD will be entirely discretionary on the part of the City, and the intent and procedural requirements of the City's PUD ordinances will be rigorously applied.

Within this category, the City may allow a moderate mix of housing types, provided that gross residential densities do not exceed 3.0 units per acre. The City's policy will be to permit development of up to 25% of the total unit count of any individual development to be on R-2 lot sizes, or in attached townhouse-style development. The decision to allow these alternative land use types will be entirely discretionary on the part of the City – no developer has a vested right to expect this as a part of any development.

When these alternative housing styles are allowed, the City shall require the developer to incorporate specific, quantifiable amenities into the development plan. Substantial architectural enhancements will be a minimum component of the amenity package. Likewise, enhancements to the quality and quantity of open space are likely to be expected. Extraordinary attention to natural environmental detail may also qualify a project for PUD consideration. Without such elements, the City can not make a finding that the flexibility that PUD provides is justified.

Medium/High Density Residential

The Plan sets aside specific locations for medium to high density residential development, most of which occur near the intersections of higher volume transportation routes. While this pattern can result in residential development that suffers from the impacts of high traffic, the Plan recommends additional setback and buffering requirements for these areas in an effort to mitigate any negative impacts.

While the Zoning Ordinance does not distinguish between occupancies, the Plan policies would recommend that senior-oriented multiple housing be located in areas of more services, including commercial and/or medical. The medium/high density residential areas shown on the outskirts of the land use plan are more appropriately developed for family housing.

For most of these areas, townhouse development should be mixed with multiple family residential housing. Average densities in these areas should be at or above ten units per acre. The City should be careful about allowing the areas designated for this land use to be consumed by medium density housing styles only. There are few opportunities to provide for higher density development, given the needed support services and the avoidance of neighborhood conflicts. As such, it is important to ensure that the appropriate high density areas are developed to their maximum capacity.

Commercial

Commercial land uses in the Plan area shown to concentrate along the Highway 55 corridor, west of the interchange with the new parkway. Much of the existing commercial property in the City has been developed. As a result, the City recently designated the new stretch of County 35 east of Highway 55 as a commercial district to support a broad variety of commercial uses in a pattern of more traditional building-forward design.

New commercial areas are designated on the Plan adjacent to Highway 55 between the Menards area and the proposed interchange, as well as accessible land across the railroad area from Highway 55 where a storage business has been operating under Township regulations. In addition to these areas, commercial land uses are designated along the west side of Highway 25 across from the Hospital and Buffalo Clinic area.

The commercial designation is a broad category, including everything from office and general retail use to showroom, auto sales and service, and other large facilities. Because of the concentration of commercial along the Highway 55 and Highway 25 corridors, aesthetic and architectural issues are important in order to ensure that the commercial areas of the City create a positive presentation to visiting traffic.

As a fundamental component of Buffalo's future, it is acknowledged that the Highway 55 - Highway 25 - Highway 35 areas will provide the majority of the area's commercial services for the foreseeable future (and beyond). The City's focus on downtown re-development should not come at the expense of attention to the needs of good planning and provision for the important highway commercial districts, nor should the two areas be viewed as competitive with each other. Both are critical in maintaining the high standard of quality and environment to which Buffalo residents have become accustomed, whether that means an essential link to Buffalo's heritage and small-town character, or the provision of contemporary commercial services to residents, workers, and travelers.

Industrial

The industrial land use category is a broad category as well, encompassing some businesses that create objectionable noise, visual unsightliness, truck traffic, dust and fumes, and many other impacts that do not mix well with any other uses. Other industrial uses are more office and low volume traffic generators with few visible physical impacts. The City's various industrial zoning districts distinguish between some of the uses, but further refinement could help to properly locate those uses that have similar characteristics.

There are two areas of industrial concentration in the community at this time. The largest is the Centennial Industrial Park. There is another 40 acres of land in this area that would facilitate an expansion of that park. To the west of the City limits is an area that includes a mix of industrial uses and a large gravel mining operation. The land use plan designates this large area for future industrial development. Because there are some existing rural residential subdivisions in the west area, it may be appropriate to encourage the office-oriented users to locate nearest the boundaries of the district.

Rural/Open Space

The Rural and Open Space category encompasses a number of different land use types, but is primarily intended to preserve land from urban development. Some of these areas are recreational in nature, and others are environmentally difficult to develop. The majority of the land on the City's land use map with this designation is intended to be preserved for rural use for the foreseeable future.

The impact of this designation is that a distinct urban edge is created, beyond which the City would anticipate that agricultural uses predominate. Wright County's land use plan, currently in process, projects a large rural use area, but at this time a definition of this term has not been established.

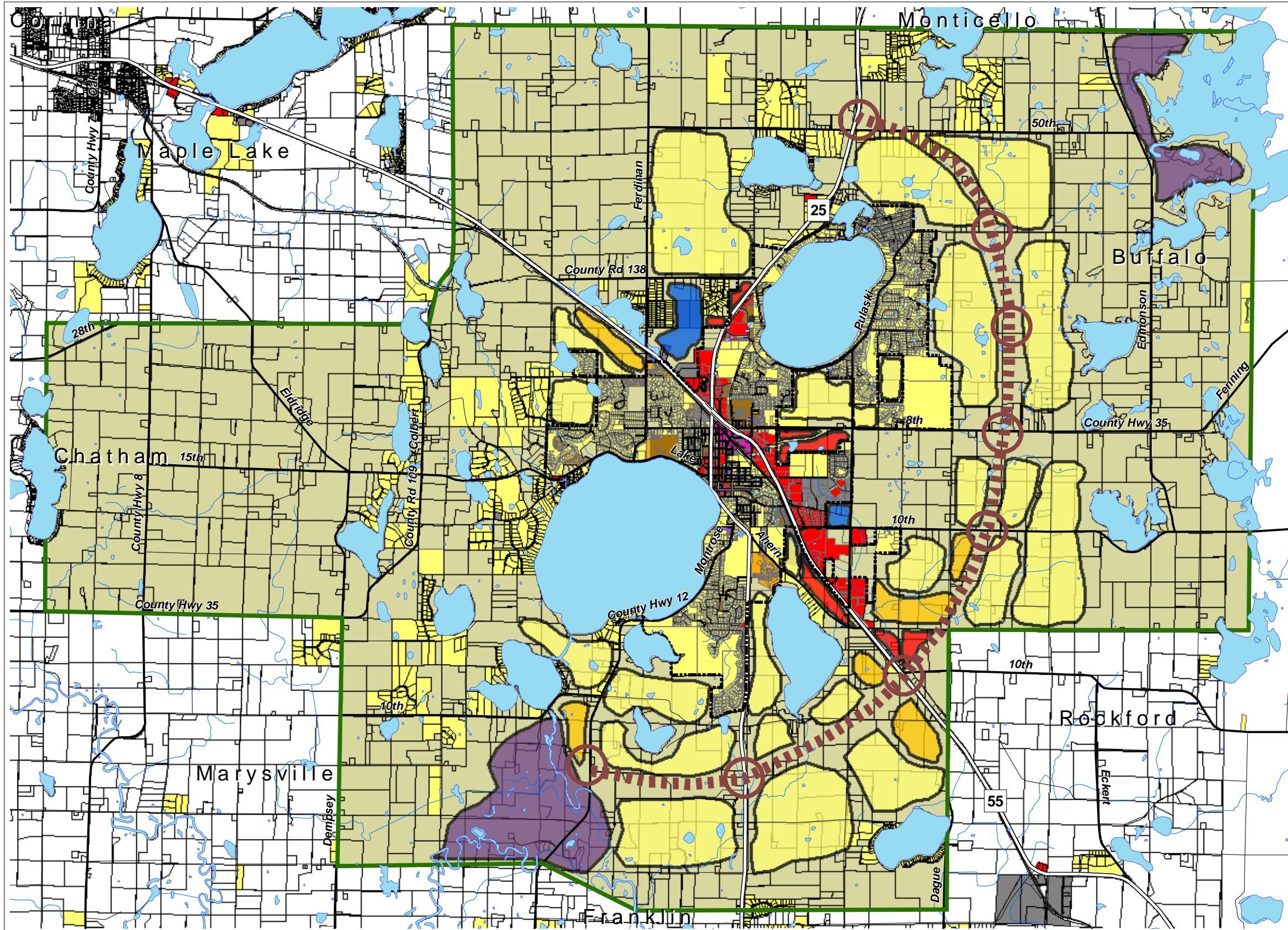
In the short term, the City would not worry about the potential for rural subdivisions in this area. However, from a longer term perspective, rural subdivision development creates an artificial border to urban growth, and raises public costs of service, particularly for school growth and transportation. To the extent that the rural designation remains in agriculture, no conflict is seen. It is true that farming operations adjacent to urban areas can raise complaint issues, however, there are limited compatibility problems between the two uses. In any case, the edge between urban land use and agriculture is going to occur somewhere on the map, and these issues will inevitably come up regardless of where the line is drawn.

The County's current planning policies encourage the preservation of agriculture and rural uses, and direct urban land uses to within the municipal boundaries. The City supports these policies. Buffalo encourages the County and neighboring Townships to preserve the areas around the City's growth district for agricultural uses, and to deny the development of rural subdivisions. Orderly growth is priority for Buffalo, and many of these areas will not be subject to development pressure until well into the future. Because the City's long term economic vitality depends on the ability to grow into the unincorporated areas, it will be critical that artificial obstructions to orderly growth are not permitted.

Not Suitable for Development

There are numerous environmentally sensitive areas that are included in the future land use plan. The City of Buffalo is committed to preserving and protecting these areas as the City grows into them. However, there are some larger contiguous areas that due to a combination of factors do not support the potential for any development, even low-impact development. The future land use plan shows two such areas. One is to the northeast adjacent to Pelican Lake. The other is to the south, adjacent to Deer Lake. These areas create specific barriers that the land use plan uses as limits for a long-term development boundary.

Buffalo Comprehensive Plan Update 2007



Buffalo
CITY OF BUFFALO, MINNESOTA

Land Use Plan:

- Commercial
- Commercial / Industrial
- Low Density Residential
- Medium/High Density Residential
- Not Suitable for Development
- Rural / Open Space
- Proposed Road
- Proposed Intersection
- Comp Planning Boundary
- City / Township Boundary
- Lakes
- Streams

0 0.5 1 2 Miles



Sources: City of Buffalo, Wright County, MN DNR, NAC, Inc.

NAC NORTHWEST ASSOCIATED CONSULTANTS, INC.
4300 Olson Memorial Highway, Suite 202, Golden Valley, MN 55422
Telephone: 763.231.2555 Facsimile: 763.231.2561 planners@nacplanning.com

LAND USE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN

Introduction

One of the many concerns for the City of Buffalo's residents, officials and staff continues to be the loss of the City's "small town feel". As the population continues to increase, the results have been a concentration of development which is more urban in character. The Growth Management Plan aims to identify areas in the City where growth can continue in a positive manner without sacrificing the small town feel of the community. The Growth Management Plan policies are outlined in the following paragraphs.

Policy A: Residential subdivision design must preserve important natural features and promote Buffalo as a distinct free-standing community, not merely a satellite suburb of the Twin Cities Metro Area.

- ◆ Developers must design subdivisions which preserve farmlands, wetlands, natural lakes and other natural features.
- ◆ Design of new subdivisions must include amenities which establish a rural small town feel.
- ◆ Areas east of Lake Pulaski and southeast of Buffalo Lake are some of the areas in the City which would be subject to this type of development.
- ◆ Areas available for single family development must address transportation impacts beyond the provision of direct local streets. Since the majority of new growth will extend into unincorporated, undeveloped land, development will need to be prepared to provide both land and funding for collector and arterial street routing. Without this agreement, land will be considered premature for development.
- ◆ Areas available for multifamily development will be limited, and scattered to avoid an over-concentration of high-density housing. This will help to maintain the predominance of lower density housing, helping to preserve a smaller character to these areas.
- ◆ Multiple family development will need to address architectural issues to incorporate these larger buildings into the lower density neighborhoods where they will be located. Large-box design will not be permitted for new multiple family housing projects.

- ◆ Multiple family housing design should pay special attention to land use and site planning, encouraging an overall impression of openness and green space, particularly in areas outside of the downtown area.

Policy B: Development in and around the downtown area will reflect the character of the small town architecturally and in intensity of uses. This policy will promote a greater density of land use around the downtown area, both commercially and residentially.

- ◆ Areas close to Downtown and areas adjacent to Highway 55 commercial uses have been identified as medium to high density uses. Transition of land use must be gradual and it is preferred that the high density residential uses be located adjacent to active commercial areas. Where medium density housing is considered, adequate transition and buffering may be required based on development type.
- ◆ Development of streetscape and architectural design guidelines to provide for a more cohesive commercial district helping to give the Downtown an identity for both local residents and out-of-town visitors.
- ◆ Redesign of areas with traffic congestion, planning for the shortage of commercial expansion space, revising the existing land use designations to eliminate land use transition conflicts and optimizing the use of underdeveloped lakeshore and infill of underutilized commercial parcels should be encouraged.
- ◆ The development of medium and high density residential at the perimeter of the commercial development to provide separation of commercial development and single family development. This would provide a transition between incompatible uses and provide housing alternatives for those wishing to live near the commercial centers.
- ◆ Redevelopment of scattered single family residential within the core areas to commercial or high density residential uses.

Policy C: Commercial development shall be concentrated in appropriate locations, rather than allowed to extend unimpeded along transportation routes. The application of this policy creates a commercial “triangle” between the hospital/Wal-Mart area, the downtown area and the Target area.

- ◆ These three anchor locations should contain the spread of commercial development and the high intensity uses mentioned in other policies.

- ◆ The “big box” retail stores have a profound planning impact on the community. Standards and guidelines that contribute to the small town feeling should be encouraged, including architecture and site planning.
- ◆ Extension of commercial uses along Highway 55 to a fixed eastern limit will be important to create a defined terminus to urban expansion.

Policy D: Creative approaches to the use of land, both in and outside of the high density “triangle”, will be required. A characteristic of suburban sprawl is the lack of identifiable place.

- ◆ Setting design standards for street and building design can enhance the physical environment in the City.
- ◆ New residential subdivisions, especially those utilizing a PUD design process, will be evaluated as to their variety and diversity of housing materials, colors, architectural styles and details, and other factors.
- ◆ New commercial development will be required to integrate architecture and site planning techniques that are reflective of the City’s traditional small-town character.
- ◆ Traditional town planning concepts, sometimes referred to as “new urbanism” will be encouraged in all areas. Architecture will be given a high value in determining whether alternative land uses are to be considered.
- ◆ Site planning that minimizes the use of large, unbroken parking lots will be required. Commercial developments will be required to hide parking areas and place buildings in such a way that the buildings are emphasized to passing traffic.
- ◆ Building architecture should be the predominant site identifier, rather than freestanding signage. The City will value the utilization of low-profile monument signage where freestanding signs are to be considered.

Policy E: The City should work to provide coordinated, orderly development of extra-territorial areas. For some of these areas, this will be mean preservation of rural uses, rather than urban development. This policy suggests active cooperation with surrounding Townships and Wright County to assure that the City and rural areas will not conflict.

- ◆ In an effort to sustain a small town atmosphere, it is important that many rural and agricultural lands be protected from urban encroachment.

- ◆ As seen in the Proposed Land Use plan, the areas at the edge of the City Limits are proposed to be low density residential.

Some of the other elements that create the desired environment are density management and the feeling of safety and neighborliness. A part of growth management is retaining a balance of land uses within the community, assuming that a primary goal is preservation of a small town distinct from surrounding communities.

What the City desires and requires is high quality development. Urban sprawl uses land inefficiently and creates developments which have no connection to other neighborhoods or to the community as a whole. A primary growth management technique in Buffalo will be to require developments to demonstrate design which creates a sense of neighborhood and develops a connection to the community.

To address these policies, the proposed land use plan has been prepared to guide the growth of the City to a size that is roughly double that of the current community. The majority of the growth is programmed to lie east of the existing City limits. In this area, there are few existing land use obstructions, and the ability to create neighborhoods that have excellent transportation access, as well as the opportunity to create a new arterial route that will avoid overburdening the existing road system was a key factor in choosing this area.

The City's utility services are programmed to serve a population of this size, but currently provide flexibility in either east or west routing. In analyzing options for growing east or west, the Plan looked at transportation needs, environmental conditions, existing development interference, utility service, and other factors. The easterly growth direction is superior for many reasons, including both efficiency of service and the ability to provide transportation facilities that will serve the City into the future.

The proposed plan does not establish a timeline for development, although based on growth patterns in the past several years, a "build-out" period of 20 to 30 years would be a reasonable range of expectation.

The neighborhoods themselves are intended to be developed in predominantly low density, single family land use patterns. As a component of each individual project, the City may permit a mix of residential types, including small-lot single family and attached townhouse development to a maximum level of 25% of the housing stock. This mixed housing option is designed to accomplish a number of objectives:

1. Adds diversity to the housing stock in individual neighborhoods, avoiding sameness, both in architectural style and color.

- 2. Helps to disperse detached and attached townhouse projects in small quantities throughout the community, rather than contributing to an over-concentration in one area.
- 3. Maintains an overall low density pattern, despite the introduction of these alternative housing styles in single family neighborhoods.
- 4. Helps to maintain property values of townhouse project by integrating them into single family areas where housing maintenance and property values are highest.
- 5. Provides for an off-set to land developers, given some of the extraordinary costs they will have to absorb as a part of the growth into the undeveloped areas.

The additional costs of development in this area will relate to the construction of a new minor arterial roadway that connects the new east side with Highway 25 on the north to Highway 55, Highway 25, and County 12 on the south. Connections are also programmed for four separate east-west roadways, providing inter-regional access to the east and to the west into Buffalo proper.

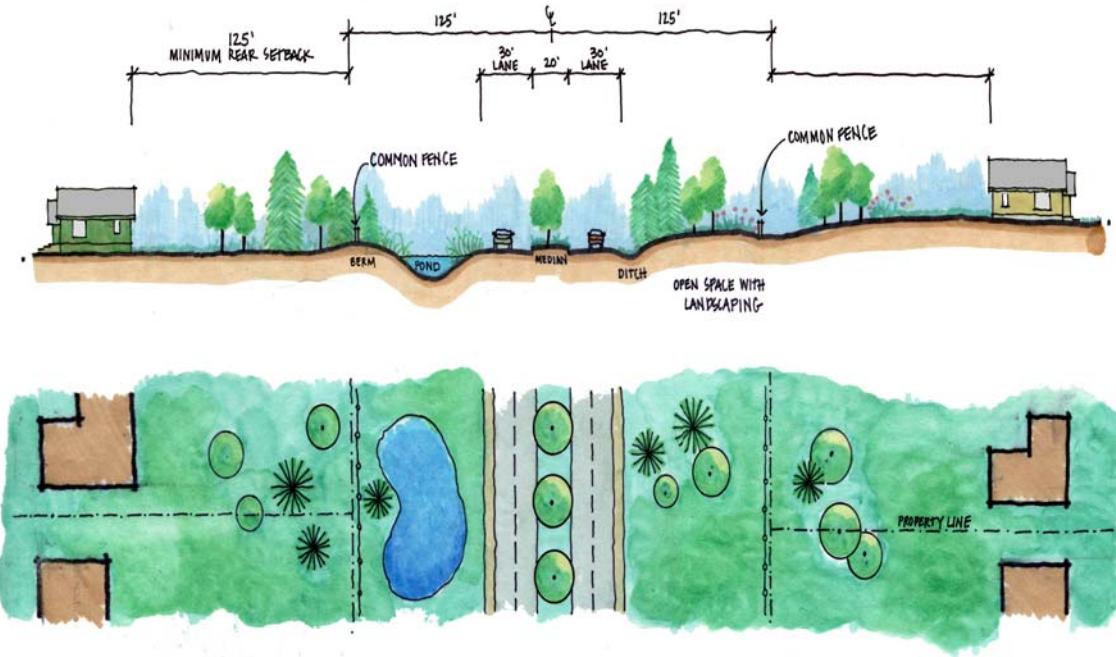
The roadway is more than the standard collector or arterial highway. There are numerous design and land use decisions relating to its location, and its access. First, the plan is designed to promote residential uses almost exclusively. The only encroachment of commercial land use is at one quadrant of the interchange with Highway 55, continuing the retail uses in that area. The remainder of the frontage will be residential, with some multifamily residential programmed at certain locations.

The purpose of this pattern is two-fold. First, the plan refocuses the City's land use goal of containing commercial development to the Highway 55/25 areas and the downtown. It is often too easy to allow commercial uses to continue unabated along highway corridors, resulting in (usually) unattractive strip-type development, and a lack of "place-making" – that is, there is no sense of arrival to communities with this land use pattern. The land use pattern here intends to prohibit extension of development outside of the gateway location. A key part of this policy will be relying on the County's rural-preservation policies in areas outside of the City's boundaries. Annexation agreements and land use involvement in these areas will be an important aspect of the City's efforts in this regard.

The second reason for this pattern is to enable the City to avoid land use conflicts created by commercial or industrial uses, near major roadways, and the fact that the landscape is dominated by residential neighborhoods. In this plan, residential uses will not need to be concerned about buffering from adjacent incompatible uses.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN

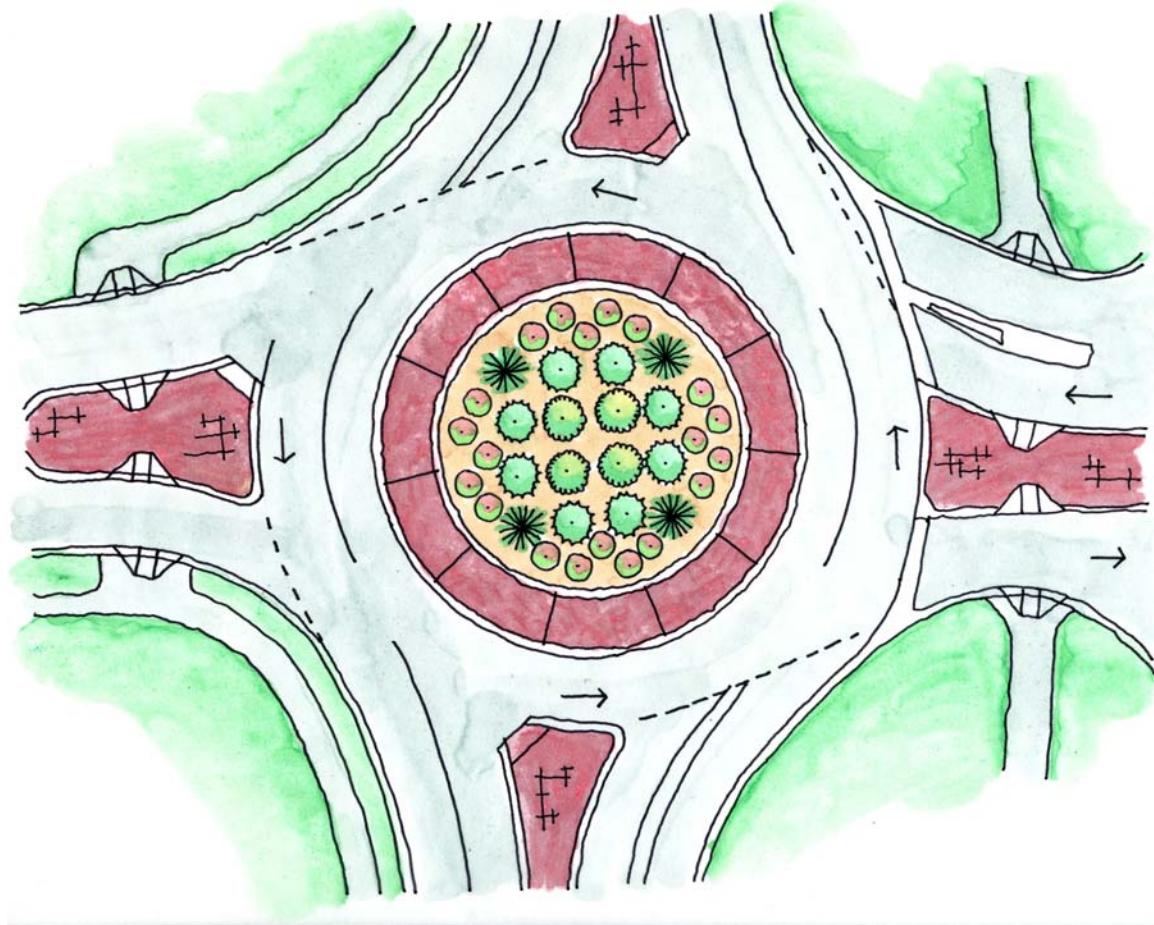
The design of the roadway is also important to meet the plan objectives. Rather than the common major roadway, abutted on both sides by closely built development, this roadway is planned to be a broad parkway with a divided, landscaped median, together with extensive open space on either side of the parkway corridor. As noted previously, the City struggles with the conflict between healthy growth, loss of rural and small town environment, and the other impacts of urbanization. By retaining an exceptionally broad open corridor, the roadway plan provides several elements to address this conflict.



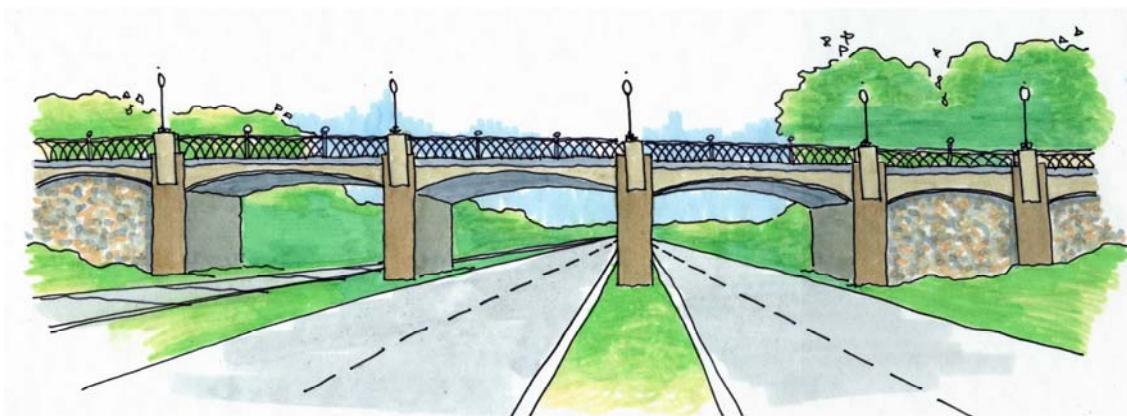
The longer views from the parkway itself will help retain the historical views of the countryside. While those views will not be as pastoral as those of the existing rural areas, the intent is to mitigate the urban visual impact where possible. Within the corridor, there will be room to handle stormwater, include rain gardens, accommodate broad pathways for pedestrian and bicycle use, and even include grading and berthing that focuses views to avoid the sea of rooftop problem common in most suburban housing areas.

Landscaping within the corridor should include a variety of plant associations, including broad expanses of prairie and wildflowers, as well as forested land. The large corridor will allow for the retention of much of the natural landscape where the parkway penetrates existing woodlands or wetland areas. Illustrative details of the parkway concept are provided on the previous page.

A focus of the parkway plan is to incorporate roundabout traffic control at major intersections. Roundabouts are gaining popularity in many areas, including both the County and State highway departments. They have proven to be less costly to install and operate, move higher volumes of traffic with less disruption, reduce crashes, and can be more aesthetically pleasing. As a part of this plan, the roundabout construction should include a higher level of cultured landscaping, and architectural or sculptural features that create an entry statement at these intersection points. As one of the most heavily traveled routes, the roundabout at County Highway 35 (St. Michael Road) should be grandest. An illustration of this concept is provided below.



The most important gateway for the community, of course, is along Highway 55. A key component of the parkway plan is a grade-separated interchange in this location. The plan would envision an architecturally significant gateway at this point, spanning both Highway 55 and the CP railroad, with full interchange access. It will be important for this feature to avoid the very plain, or even ugly, construction style of many interchange bridges. An illustration of a potential bridge style is shown below. This concept is intended to serve as a starting point, not to prescribe a specific design. Nonetheless, it is believed that a bridge design that creates a dramatic entryway is an important component of the Plan.



The concept of a ring road, or similar roadway plan, has been discussed for some time, in various forms. The plan incorporated in this document did not attempt to create a full ring around the west side of the community at this time. Due to the number of existing rural subdivisions, lakes, wetlands, and other factors, it is difficult to find a route that would serve the City's purposes. Perhaps more importantly, a full ring would require a much greater population to use and build it. It was felt that the City's infrastructure plans provide for development that would support the option programmed here, but not both options at this time.

Nonetheless, a west-side route may be needed in the long term. As such, a future phase of this project should be retained for consideration, and the City should continue to work with the surrounding Townships and the County to preserve a route. This cooperation would implicate land use controls that allow for future urbanization, since it is development that will be required to pay for the facility.

The nature of the subdivisions that abut the new parkway will be required to meet a new standard of design. First, they will need to provide a larger amount of right of way than what is typical in standardized suburban development. Since these new subdivisions could not be accommodated without the construction of this new road, the costs are directly attributable to the development. From an implementation standpoint, this will require that annexation agreements account for the increased costs of right of way acquisition and parkway construction. The City will need to devise an equitable method of apportioning the parkway construction costs, based on provision of right of way, and assessment of financial costs for those not abutting the road. Developers who object to the costs will need to abandon their development plans, since new growth of this magnitude is premature without the roadway improvements.

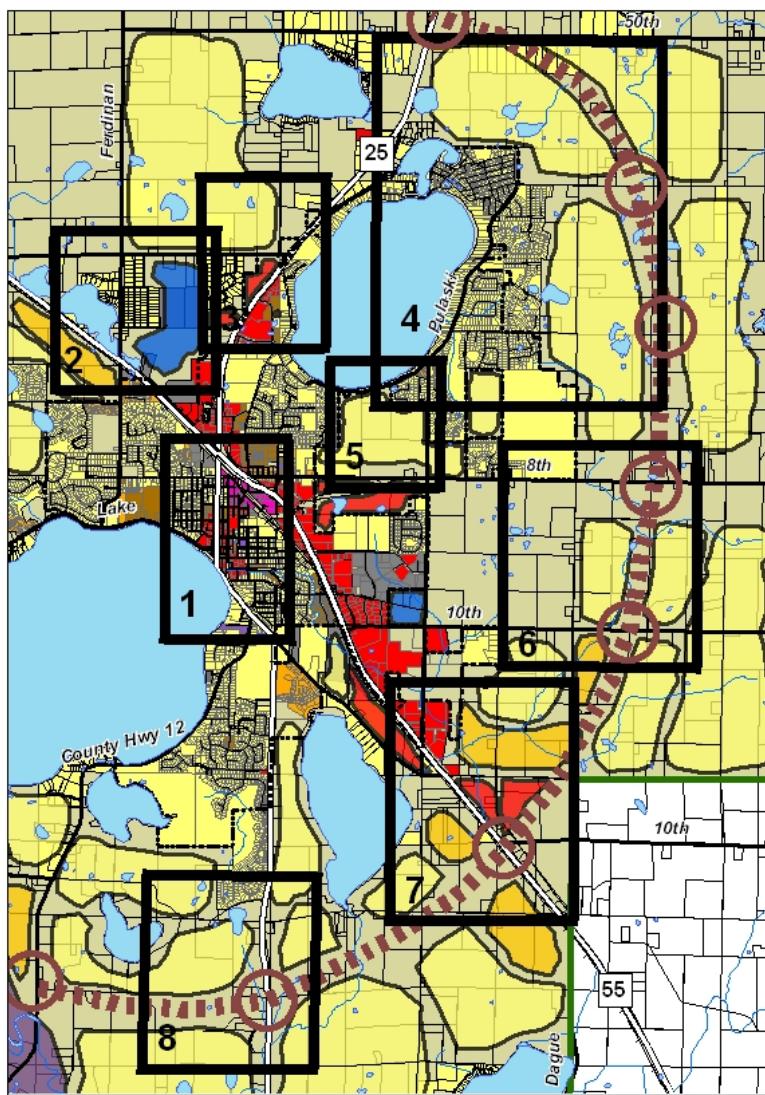
In addition to the large right of way, residential development backing up to the parkway will be required to provide extraordinary rear yard building setbacks to preserve the sense of openness and views. A zoning change will be necessary to limit the use and building setbacks within the rear yards of lots abutting the parkway corridor. In addition to this component, the City should consider a consistent fencing style at the parkway perimeter that evokes the traditional rural landscape to avoid a series of mismatched fences along the road.

The plan projects a continuation of this broad setback (although not necessarily the same parkway design) along the County 35 corridor from St. Michael. It is the intent of this Plan to preserve rural views and open space environment, even agricultural uses, as far into the urban core as possible.

Finally, it is important to note that this parkway does not replace or eliminate the need for development to provide other collector or local streets within, or at the perimeter of, new development. All levels of new roadway construction need to be provided for any new subdivision to be developed.

Planning Districts

Based on the Future Land Use Plan, a more detailed look at various portions of the community is provided in this section. Whereas the general principles noted previously apply to all new development in Buffalo, the following sections identify and explain specific aspects of the plan, based on unique location or development aspects of that area. The Planning Districts do not encompass the entire community. Where a Planning District detail is not prepared for a certain neighborhood, the general principles apply and a continuation of the existing land use is anticipated. The City Council may, on a case by case basis, make recommendations for exceptions to the existing pattern that are consistent with the overall planning objectives.



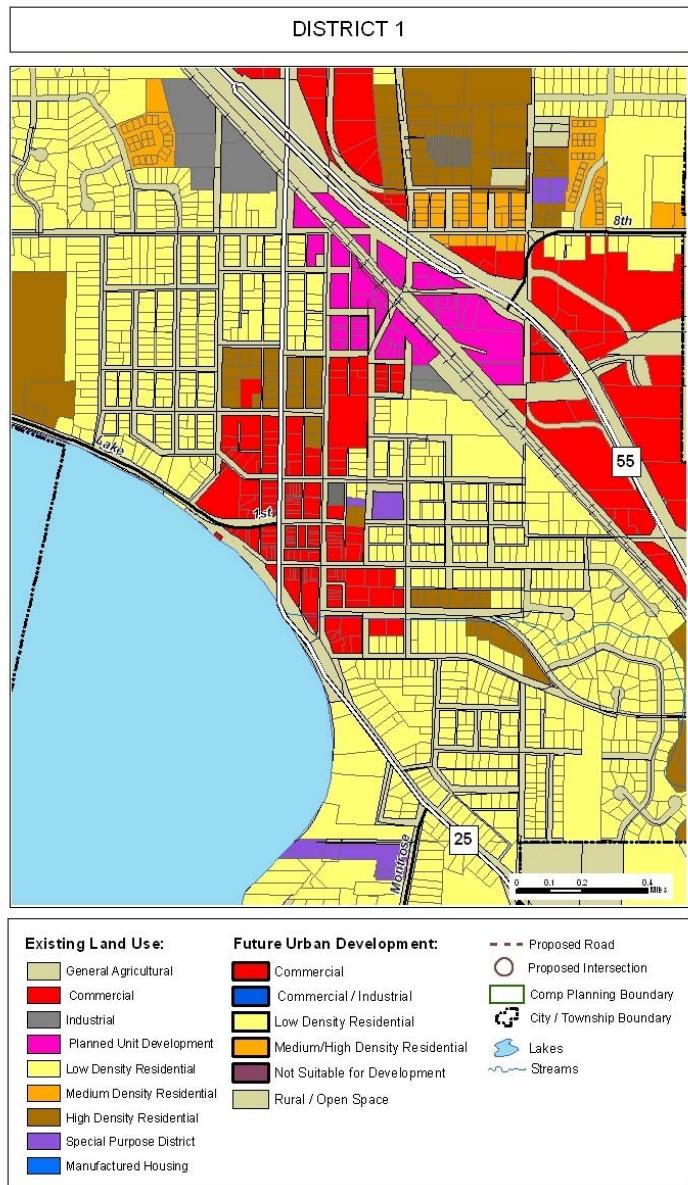
District 1

District 1 is essentially the original developed portion of the community, including the downtown area, "Soo Lane" area, and the residential neighborhoods surrounding it. The land use pattern includes a solid commercial core area, a mixed commercial/industrial area along the Highway 55/CP Rail frontage, mid-high density housing around the downtown and north of 8th Street NE,

Few changes are anticipated to this basic pattern. The historical grid layout contributes to the connection with the City's small town roots, and preservation of the downtown district is of primary importance. Gradual increases to residential density in the downtown would continue to help build commercial market for the retailers in the area. A more specific study of downtown land use and circulation patterns would be beneficial.

Of particular concern will be how to protect the qualities of the traditional single family areas, while allowing for an intensification of neighboring uses. It will be important to identify the specific qualities that make the neighborhoods attractive to residents, as well as to gain an understanding of the needs of the downtown. As in the past, the needs of the downtown will continue to depend on the vision for the district – what role is the downtown to play in the Buffalo community?

A part of this answer is incorporated in the City's "Downtown Buffalo Visions" document, drafted and approved during the summer of 2007. This document provides a guide for long-term planning and re-development in the downtown area that will help to preserve the City's small town character and heritage.



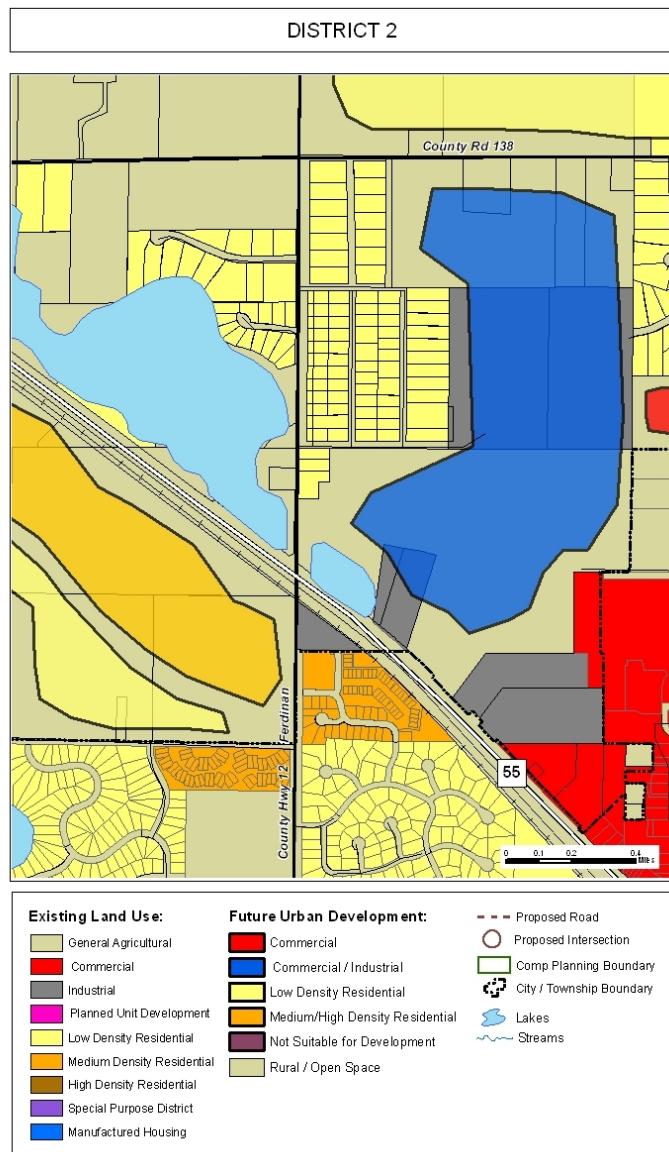
District 2

This district constitutes the growing northwest region. A large part of this district includes territory that is not currently a part of the City's boundaries. Residential growth is shown to the south of the CP Railroad line, and the bulk of the property north of Highway 55 is shown to be industrial.

For the residential areas, it will be important to create a reasonable buffer between the railroad and the housing areas. Techniques should be introduced to minimize the impacts of noise. While residential use is not ideal in such areas, the transportation network does not support the introduction of non-residential uses, given the dominance of existing residential land use and the new Northwinds Elementary School.

Improvements to the Highway 55/County Highway 12 intersection will continue to be an important factor in this district, improvements that are necessary now, and will be even more critical as further development occurs, and Highway 55 traffic increases. Signalization of this intersection is in the plans.

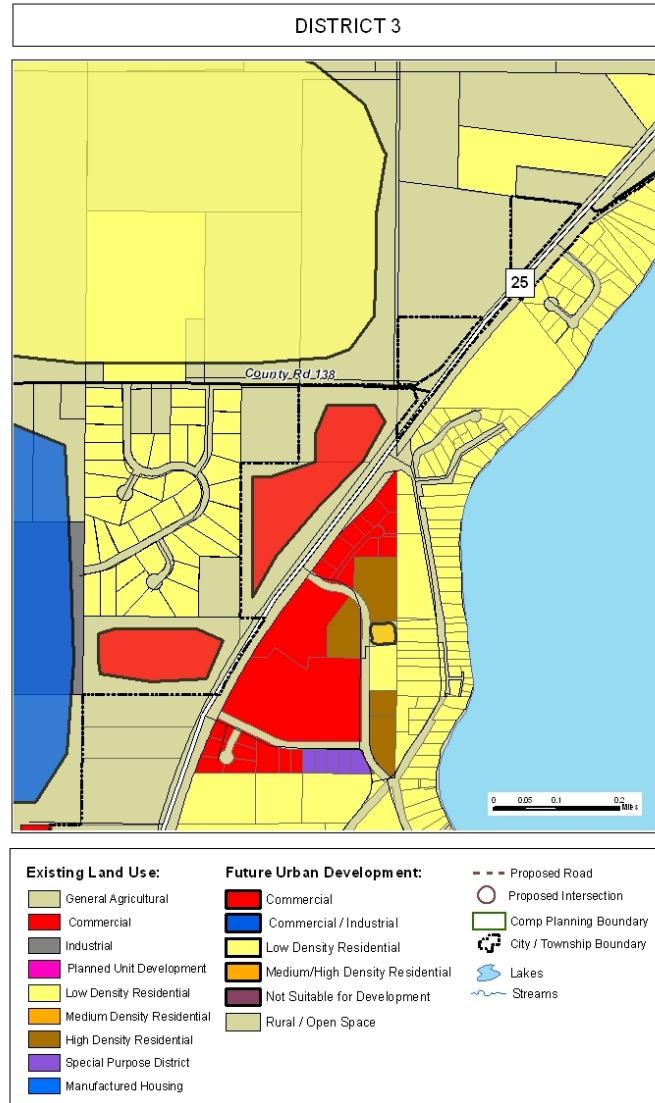
From a land use standpoint, the primary issue north of Highway 55 will be mitigating the impacts of industrial uses on adjoining rural residential subdivisions. In the near term, much of this area is programmed for aggregate mining. As the aggregate resources are exhausted, a conversion to more common industrial uses would be appropriate. Buffering and setback considerations, as well as access issues will need to be addressed as industrial uses grow in the area.



District 3

The land uses in District 3 are shown to follow the existing pattern, with the extension of commercial uses along Highway 25 across from the Hospital District. The most appropriate commercial style in this area would be an expansion of the office district from the east side of the highway to the west. With the continued growth of the hospital and clinic uses, it will be critical to be able to provide land for support medical services and other office development in the immediate area. To the east of the hospital area, medium to high density housing is shown. This is an area where senior multifamily housing would be appropriate, given the proximity to medical facilities.

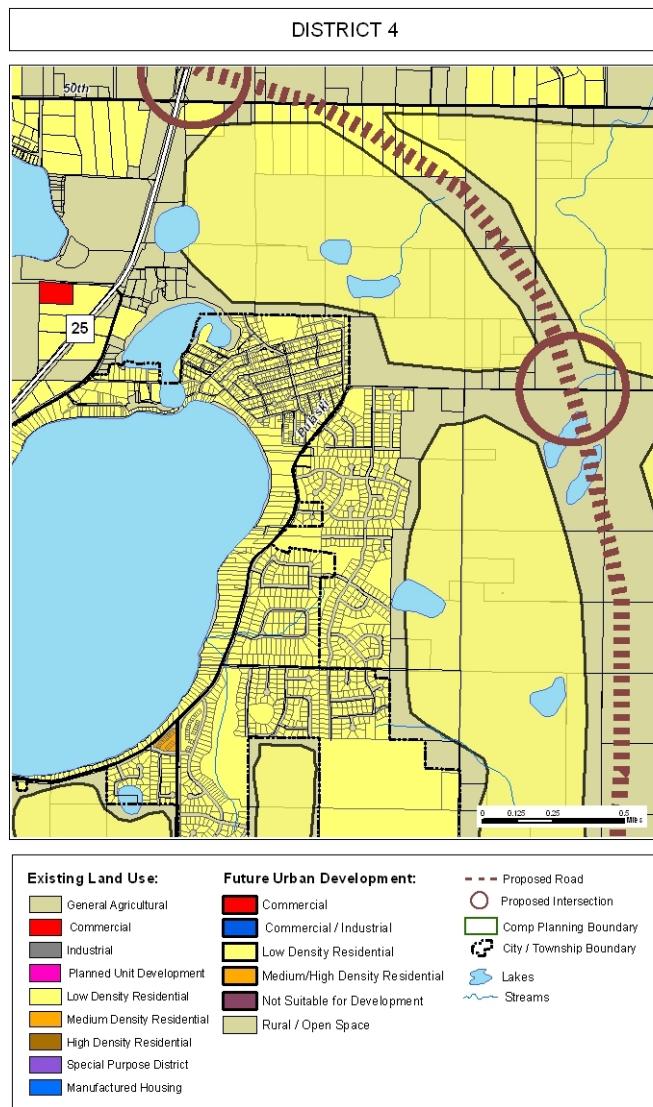
To the north of County 138, a large area of low density residential is shown (west of Braddock Ave. NE). This area is not programmed for high density housing. Between Braddock and Highway 25, the County is currently planning to construct a new location for the County's Law Enforcement Department, including a relocation of its Jail and Court Services from the downtown location. This development will also fuel additional need for commercial services, including space for law firms and similar private services that support the public uses. The future land use in this area will need to be sensitive to Highway 25 access issues, as well as concerns related to existing rural residential traffic.



District 4

One of the major centers of growth in Buffalo over the past 5-10 years has been the areas to the east of Lake Pulaski. District 4 shows a continuation of low density residential development in this area, and illustrates a portion of the new parkway that is programmed for the east side growth area of the community. The majority of the land shown for future residential in this district is beyond the City's current boundaries. As such, annexation and careful planning will be necessary to ensure that the growth pays for itself in terms of both infrastructure investments and development quality.

As discussed in other sections of this Plan, the parkway design is intended to ensure that long, open views are preserved from the road that will evoke the openness of the existing countryside. This is to be contrasted with the more common collector/arterial design that allows for narrower rights of way and development that encroaches directly on the road corridor. Also shown in this District is one of the intersection locations with the parkway at 40th Street NE (the current Township Road designation). These intersections should be designed to emphasize their gateway aspect to the urbanize area, utilizing a roundabout intersection design with extensive landscape improvements.



It is anticipated that the future low density residential areas in District 4, and all along the east parkway corridor, will include the requirement for right of way provision and extraordinary building setbacks. In addition, properties in this corridor will need to contribute to the construction costs of the roadway as a price for the ability to annex and develop at urban densities. It is acknowledged that there will be unique costs to developers as a result. To create some level of off-set for this cost, the City will consider an allowance

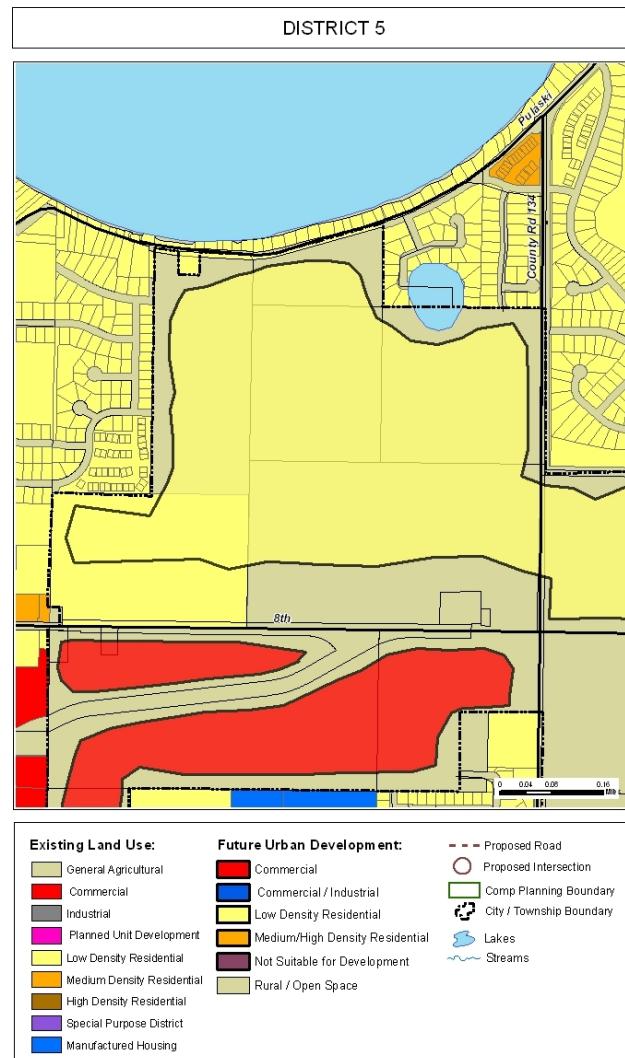
for up to 25% of a project's units to be constructed under a townhouse design, either attached or detached. Normal single family densities in these areas would likely not exceed 2.5 units per acre. The City will be willing to consider projects that reach 3.0 units per acre as a trade-off for the costs of the parkway and the additional building setbacks.

District 5

District 5 encompasses the undeveloped areas south of Lake Pulaski, including a residential designation to the north of County Highway 35 and 8th Street NE, and commercial designation of the lands astride the County Highway, south of 8th Street. The plans illustrate the preference for an area of open space along the 8th Street alignment, continuing the uncluttered viewshed along County Highway 35 that is also a part of the parkway design.

The low density residential designation infers densities up to 3.0 units per acre. Given the proximity of this area to the future alignment of the Griffing Park Road and 8th Street NE, some additional medium density may be appropriate, subject to the City's heightened expectations for architectural and site planning quality. Overall density in this area should not exceed 4.0 units per acre, presuming the introduction of some medium density development.

The City conducted a special study for the commercial land south of 8th Street, known as the CSAH 35 Design Study. Included in that study were a conceptual land use and development plan, and a set of development standards for use in the district. That study and those standards are incorporated into this Plan by reference.



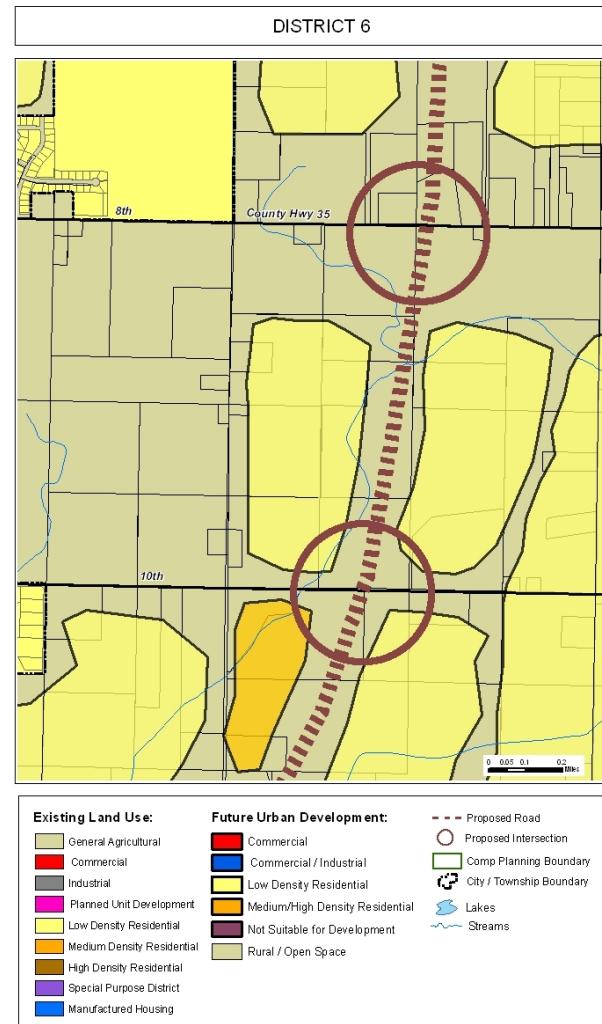
District 6

This district is a “snapshot” of the new parkway area to the east of Buffalo. As noted, in the District 4 discussion, low density residential land uses predominate in this district, with the flexibility to provide some additional unit counts for townhouse style development on a scattered basis.

At the southwest quadrant of County 34 and the new parkway, an area of medium to high density residential is shown. The property is surrounded by the parkway on the east, Dague Avenue on the west, and County 34 on the north. This area should consist of attached multiple family housing, and given its proximity to road access, development should be constructed at an overall minimum density of 10 units per acre. Since there are no other services in the area, this should be family housing, rather than senior-focused residential.

The district illustration shows major intersections at both County Road 35 and County Road 34. In addition to the 40th Street NE intersection shown in District 4, and another at 30th Street NE/16th Street NE, there will be four major local access intersections to the parkway along its length between Highway 55 on the south and Highway 25 on the north.

The primary traffic carrier of the four roadways is County Highway 35. It is this intersection that should be designed to be the most visually significant. As with the additional setbacks along the parkway, County 35 should maintain the same open space design emphasis. The other three cross streets should maintain additional setbacks, but are of lesser importance from the standpoint of community entrances.



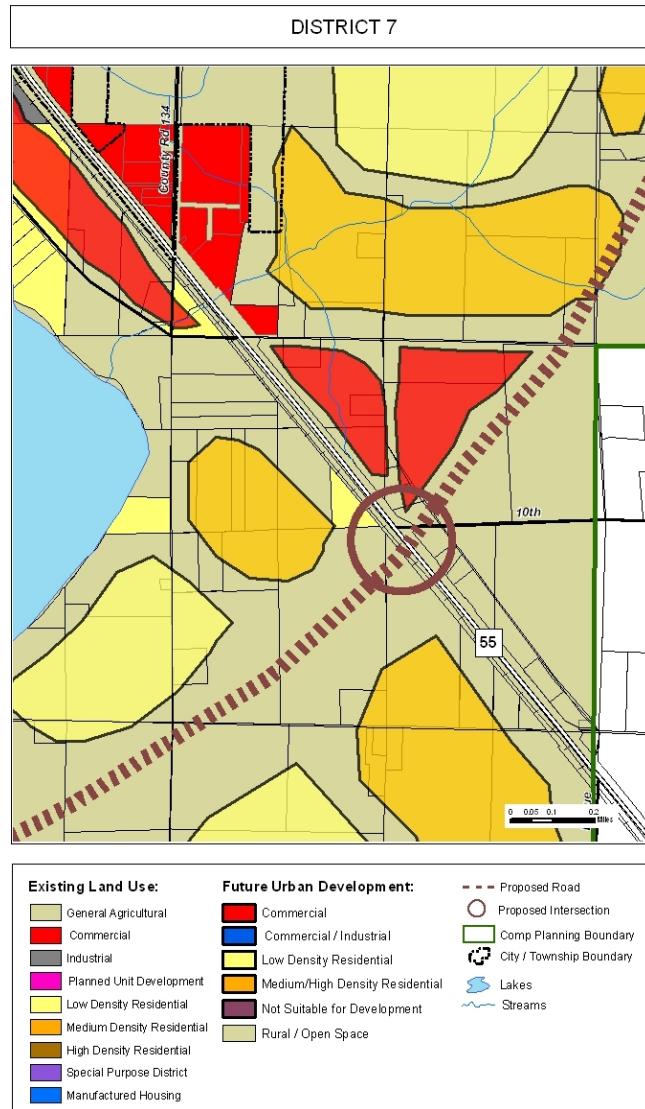
The location of the parkway was chosen based on a number of factors. Some discussion in the community of an east-side major collector had focused on Dague Avenue/Bison Boulevard. This roadway already abuts the high school, and would penetrate a major residential development on the north side of Lake Pulaski. As traffic grows on this route, it will have an increasingly negative impact on the land uses that it serves. In the long run, its potential service as a major roadway will be compromised due to a lack of adequate right of way and the traffic issues already present on that alignment.

The new location was identified to best serve the expected new growth in the City without compromising either the City's goal of maintaining a connection to its rural setting, or of impacting the neighborhoods through which it is routed. New development will be able to plan for the design requirements of the parkway on the front end, and the parkway can become an asset rather than a detriment.

District 7

At the southeast entrance to the community, the intersection of Highway 55 and the new parkway is proposed. The program would anticipate the construction of a grade-separated interchange that would span both the future four-lane Highway 55 and the CP railroad.

Interchanges are major architectural features. In many locations, they are plain, or even visually disruptive. However, in this location, an interchange bridge of that creates an architecturally positive impression can have a dramatic impact on the entrance to the City. Many smaller communities suffer from the assortment of unplanned and unregulated commercial development that occurs along the major highways leading into town. The parkway project and a potential bridge access at Highway 55 gives the City an opportunity to resolve that issue by creating an entry



gateway that separates the rural countryside leading in to the City and urbanized area beyond the gateway.

To accomplish this design will require a number of cooperative ideas. First, the interchange bridge needs to be visually attractive – much more than the basic structural concrete and steel railings seen on many standard bridges. This by itself provides the opportunity to stand out from other places.

Second, the City will need to work with the County and Township to prohibit strip highway development outside of the gateway location. Already, Rockford Township has some commercial development along Highway 55, and the Township is seeking more as a part of its place in Wright County's Comprehensive Plan. Avoiding this type of the development will be key in preserving the potential impact of the gateway concept.

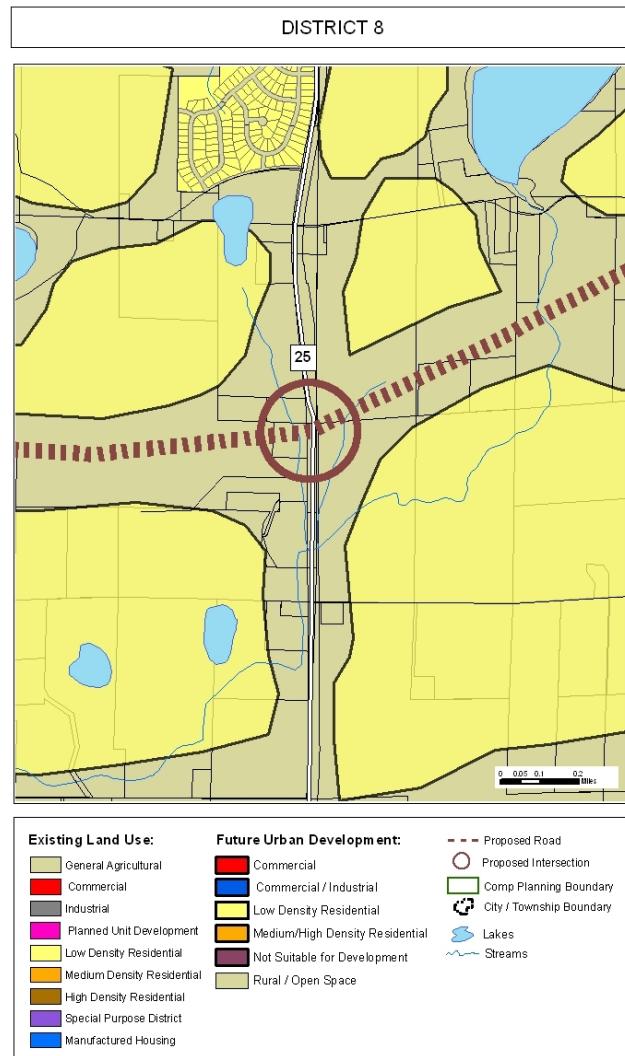
Finally, the City will need to coordinate with both Mn/DOT and CP Rail to align the bridge, and its access ramps in a way that facilitate traffic movements, minimize the amount of land needed, and preserve local access to the area.

Due to the location of the railroad, Highway 55 access will occur on the northeast side of the highway interchange. As the parkway crosses the railroad, the land use switches back to a residential pattern. It is anticipated that the areas closest to the interchange area would be dominated by multiple family structures. To the southeast, low-rise buildings would be critical to avoid the perceived spread of development outside of the parkway corridor. Additional setbacks from the railroad, together with planting, berming, and other buffering, would be critical in this area. To the northwest of the parkway, higher density would be expected. As the parkway continues to the west, access locations may be expanded beyond those identified along the east side.

District 8

South of Buffalo, the parkway is programmed to connect Highway 25 to points both east and west. The parkway design extends to the east to the interchange with Highway 55. To the west, a connection to County Highway 12 is programmed. Land uses throughout this area are shown to be low density residential in nature.

The intersection with Highway 25 is shown to be located near the 20th Street South intersection. Design of this intersection is not programmed, however as a major entrance to the City from the south, an attractive intersection design should be planned. This Plan would advocate for introduction of the roundabout design used along the east side of the community for both Highway 25 and County Highway 12. As with those east side areas, large building setbacks should be required here to minimize the visual impact of development from the travel corridor.



GENERAL LAND USE POLICIES

Land Use Elements

Residential

- ◆ Establish guidelines to protect residential neighborhoods from encroachment or intrusion of incompatible, high intensity uses through the use of buffers and the allowance of appropriate uses.
- ◆ Encourage a full range of housing in the community.
- ◆ As the population ages, different housing types and styles will be necessary to meet changing physical and lifestyle needs of the population.
- ◆ Need for quality development and amenities are required to ensure and maintain a high standard of living within the City of Buffalo.
- ◆ Ensure that areas programmed for residential uses are protected from intrusions that degrade the potential quality of the neighborhood. These would include visual intrusions, traffic, noise, and similar elements.

Multiple Family Housing

- ◆ Locate near activity centers and among higher traffic roadways.
- ◆ Offer a comprehensive range of housing choices.
- ◆ Multiple family housing is a major tax generator for the community.
- ◆ Multiple family housing contributes to commercial development viability.
- ◆ Senior housing should be located in areas with proximity to services, either commercial or medical, or both. In areas without such services, senior housing should only be considered in conjunction with transportation facilities.
- ◆ Multiple family housing should be designed with new focus on site planning and open space, utilizing extraordinary setbacks and landscaping to enhance this style of development.

Medium Density Housing

- ◆ Medium density housing may be utilized as a transitional land use and should be located between low density housing and high density housing or commercial uses.
- ◆ Medium density housing provides alternative housing options to the City's current and future residents.
- ◆ The City should encourage and support innovative medium density housing styles.
- ◆ The City should discourage scattered or "leap frog" development with no relationship or connection to the surrounding environment and uses.
- ◆ Medium Density housing may be incorporated into areas of low density development. In such areas, the architectural style should be designed to complement the dominant low density buildings.

Low Density Housing (Single Family)

- ◆ Location of single family housing should be in close proximity to places of work and to leisure activity areas.
- ◆ Proximity should be balanced by strong efforts to buffer incompatible land uses and/or land use impacts. Negative impacts should be indicators of the need for additional buffering, or a potential relocation of the proposed use.
- ◆ Accessibility to transit and thoroughfare routes is important to ensure efficient traffic flow and traffic planning.
- ◆ Developers should consider the activity patterns and residential preferences of various categories households when configuring subdivision design.
- ◆ Single family subdivisions should include smaller open spaces and should be within walking distance of community facilities.
- ◆ Residential areas should be protected from externally generated traffic.
- ◆ Residential areas should be protected from incompatible uses.

- ◆ Single family housing should be offered in various densities and architectural styles to preserve the widest variety of housing choice.

Commercial

- ◆ Commercial uses should be located within close proximity to one or more major traffic thoroughfares.
- ◆ Commercial sites should be large enough to accommodate anticipated parking and other ancillary needs.
- ◆ Multi-tenant commercial projects should include a complete offering of uses including eating and entertainment facilities and branch business and financial services to minimize the need for single-stop commercial trips.
- ◆ Commercial sites should be large enough to accommodate on-site transfers for transit routes.

Highway Orientated Development

- ◆ Provide services to travelers as well as City residents.
- ◆ Land use areas should be adequate to meet expected long range development needs and phasing programs.
- ◆ Appropriate land use in areas with high accessibility
- ◆ Spot, or premature highway oriented commercial development should be discouraged.
- ◆ Whenever possible, major street access should be at the periphery.
- ◆ City should strictly limit “strips” of highway commercial by concentrating development around nodes.
- ◆ Commercial development should include “four-sided” architecture to provide attractive and inviting building fronts to all exposures.

Central Business District (CBD)

- ♦ Should be oriented to take full advantage of the lakefront.
- ♦ Expansion of the downtown commercial uses should be focused towards the lakefront location.
- ♦ Higher intensity use of the downtown area should include high density housing and other mixed land uses.
- ♦ Encourage and enhance the CBD commercial, civic and recreational opportunities.
- ♦ Adopt high quality development standards.
- ♦ Encourage safe and convenient pedestrian movement.
- ♦ Maintain community character.

Industrial

Manufacturing Areas

- ♦ Manufacturing land uses should be encouraged where there are large open sites.
- ♦ Direct access to commercial transportation facilities.
- ♦ May include development of an industrial park.

Wholesale (and related) Use Areas

- ♦ Need direct access to trucking routes.
- ♦ Suitability for development of integrated centers.
- ♦ Utilities and services should be available or feasible.

ENERGY AND RESOURCE CONSERVATION PLAN

Introduction

Planning for use of energy and other resources is vital in order to reduce costs of service and promote environmental values. As energy consumption continues to increase with population growth in the City, resource planning and conservation will become an increasingly important factor in maintaining the community's vitality. The City of Buffalo, as a provider of energy, water, solid waste management services, and communication to much of its citizenry, has identified energy and resource conservation as a significant goal for the future and has already implemented an energy conservation program. A delicate balance must be maintained that enables citizens to meet their current resource needs and yet also preserve resources and energy for future generations.



City of Buffalo

Energy Conservation Program

The Energy and Resource Conservation Plan aims to identify further measures that the City and citizens of Buffalo can implement locally to improve present and future energy prospects. This goal applies to existing residents, as well as to the planning for new growth. Through continued efficient and sustainable management of its own resource use and support for public resource conservation efforts, the City of Buffalo expects to serve as a leader in accomplishing this goal.

It is the finding of the City of Buffalo that resource conservation will grow as a factor in maintaining Buffalo's position as a vital economic growth center. It is further the intent of this section that energy and resource conservation techniques become a regular component of development project design and evaluation. The Energy and Resource Conservation Plan policies are outlined in the following paragraphs:

Policy 1: Land and uses developed on the land shall be managed and controlled to maximize the conservation of all forms of energy and other resources.

- The development and use of local renewable energy resources and alternative energy systems shall be encouraged in all projects within the City, public and private, including but not limited to, the utilization of solar energy, wind energy, and water power.
- An evaluation of energy impacts should be conducted for major land development proposals.

ENERGY AND RESOURCE CONSERVATION PLAN

- ◆ The location and design of buildings, roads, and other land uses and their effects on energy and resource consumption should be considered with proposals, including life-cycle costing.
- ◆ The City may establish design standards that promote energy conservation for buildings, roads, and other land uses.
- ◆ The City will identify, monitor, and protect existing and possible sites of energy and water supply.
- ◆ Other factors that affect energy and water consumption, such as driving distance and transportation methods, shall be considered with proposals.
- ◆ Developers should indicate efforts and forms of energy conservation in their development designs. Development may be evaluated for approval or denial based upon resource conservation measures in the project.
- ◆ In cases where density is increased or other flexible zoning techniques are used, such as Planned Unit Developments, or where the City deems appropriate, the above-mentioned methods shall be mandatory.

Policy 2: When possible, all forms of construction shall utilize energy and resource conservation methods, including minimization of solid waste.

- ◆ Energy conservation principles shall be encouraged throughout the whole building process, from site layout to material selection.
- ◆ The use of energy-efficient building materials shall be encouraged, including HVAC equipment, windows, etc.
- ◆ The use of recycled and/or recyclable materials shall be encouraged in all construction. Durable construction materials shall be a priority to avoid the need for redevelopment and replacement.
- ◆ The installation of ENERGY STAR utility, appliance, and mechanical equipment shall be encouraged.
- ◆ The use of water-saving plumbing fixtures shall be encouraged.
- ◆ The use of renewable energy/solar heating and cooling shall be encouraged.

ENERGY AND RESOURCE CONSERVATION PLAN

Policy 3: The use of technology to conserve energy and other resources shall be considered as a part of any development project, public or private.

- ◆ The use of renewable energy shall be encouraged.
- ◆ The use of active and passive solar systems shall be promoted.
- ◆ The use of automatic lighting controls, such as dimmers, timers, or motion sensors, shall be encouraged.
- ◆ “Green building” techniques shall be encouraged, including: resource-efficient site planning and design; resource-efficient material selection; water conservation methods; healthy indoor air quality; and proper operation and maintenance procedures for buildings.

Policy 4: Energy efficiency shall be a priority when making decisions affecting City operations.

- ◆ The City’s reliance on imported non-renewable energy sources shall be reduced.
- ◆ The development of renewable energy sources shall be promoted.
- ◆ Reusing and recycling materials will be a priority for the City Departments, including incorporating innovative programs.
- ◆ The communication between citizens, utilities, local governments, and state and federal agencies concerning energy-related issues and programs shall be continued.
- ◆ The City shall look for opportunities to provide information and technical assistance to its citizens regarding resource conservation and its benefits.
- ◆ The City shall continue to lead through the implementation of energy conservation methods in construction of City facilities.
- ◆ When possible, the City shall continue to purchase fuel-efficient and hybrid vehicles.

TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The City of Buffalo has a separate Transportation Plan. Please see this Transportation Plan document for more information about the City's transportation policies and future plans. Those Plans are incorporated into this Comprehensive Plan by reference.

PARKS AND TRAILS PLAN

Buffalo has a separate Parks and Trails Master Plan, which is incorporated into this Plan by reference. The City is considering an update to that plan to account for the recent growth of the community, as well as the future growth programmed in this document.