

# Buffalo 2040 Community Plan

City of Buffalo, Minnesota

July 2023



City of  
*Buffalo*  
Minnesota



## Acknowledgements

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*For a full account of community engagement comments  
please contact city staff*

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# 01 Introduction



# Introduction to the Community Plan

The 2040 Community Plan is an update to the 2007 Comprehensive Plan that also references a separate 2040 Downtown Plan focusing solely on the Buffalo Central Business District. The 2007 Plan rightfully focused on “preserving the small-town character” of Buffalo, though growth and development has continued along both the State Highway 55 and 25 corridors and further east of Lake Pulaski. Since then, the City has endured the economic recession that began in 2008, the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020, and is now addressing the large-scale redevelopment of the old Wright County Government Center campus in the downtown along Buffalo Lake – a rare redevelopment opportunity that may take several years to be realized. And though downtown is still the heart of the City, new investment will continue along the highway corridors and around the new County government center on the northwest side of Buffalo. The City is also anticipating new commercial business and industrial uses to be developed and has identified multiple areas for that purpose outside of existing city limits. In all, Buffalo is a city of lakes that give it character, pattern, and recreational spaces. With its long history of tourists frequenting lakefront resorts, it is essential to both preserve and enhance the character and charm of this ‘small town on the lakes’ while looking forward to new growth and investment.

## City’s Vision Statement

Buffalo strives for excellence by providing superior services and a safe environment to live, work and play. The City and its stakeholders will meet the changing needs of the community through innovation and collaboration.

*Source: City of Buffalo 2021 Vision and Goal Setting Report*

## Community Plan Vision Statement

Our family-friendly small town is a vibrant, welcoming community for all ages; we will strive toward an economic and environmentally sustainable future together.

## Authority to Plan

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

# References to Other Adopted Policies & Policies

- + MS4 Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan – November 2022
- + Wright County Market Area Profile, Center for Community Vitality, University of MN – March 2022
- + Downtown 2040 Plan – April 2021
- + Buffalo Housing Plan, Housing Policy with Market Conditions - 2018
- + City of Buffalo Historic Context Study - June 2011
- + City of Buffalo Comprehensive Plan – 2007

# Engagement & Public Participation

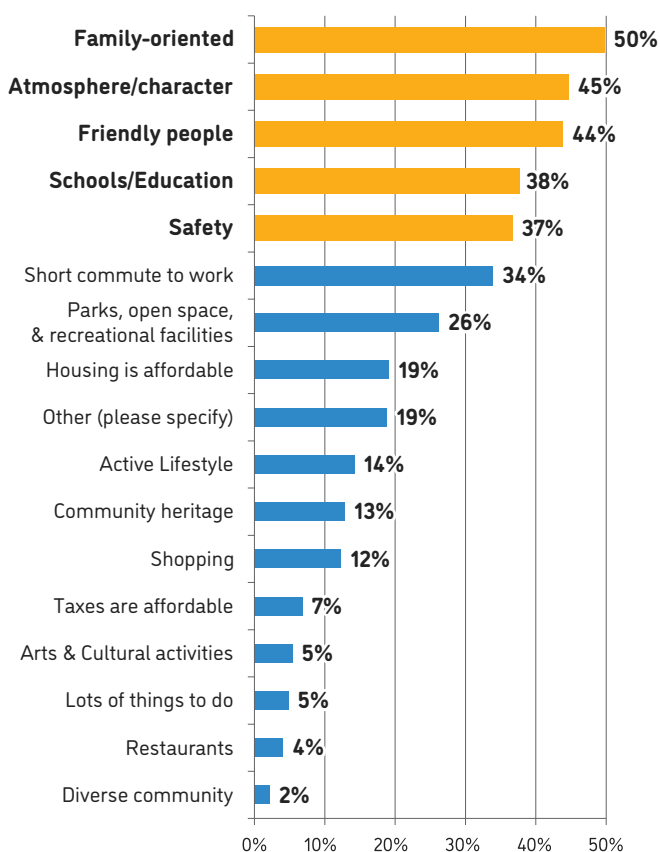
The engagement process included two open house events over a 12-month period and pop-up booth operated by city staff and members of the consulting team. At key milestones during the process a survey was conducted to gather feedback about issues, concerns, and preferences; as the planning process progressed survey questions focused

on the location of growth areas, land use, transportation, parks & trails, and overall goals, through which over 1,000 responses were submitted. A twelve-member Task Force helped guide the update, with six meetings over the course of a year. The Planning Commission, City Council, and Park Board were also engaged at key points in the process.



Top Left: November 2021 Community Open House; Bottom Left: June 2022 Task Force Meeting; Right: September 2022 Street Party of Hope Engagement Booth

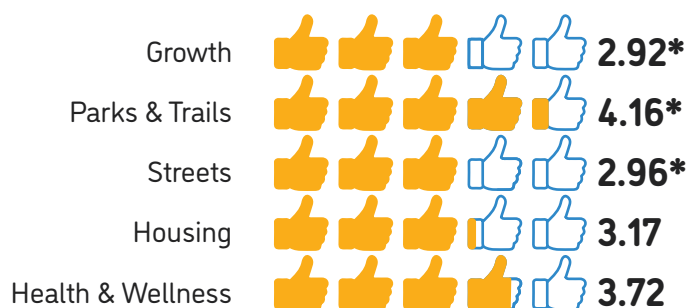
### Top Reasons Respondents Love Living in Buffalo



### Top Five Priorities for Buffalo



### Response to Draft Community Plan

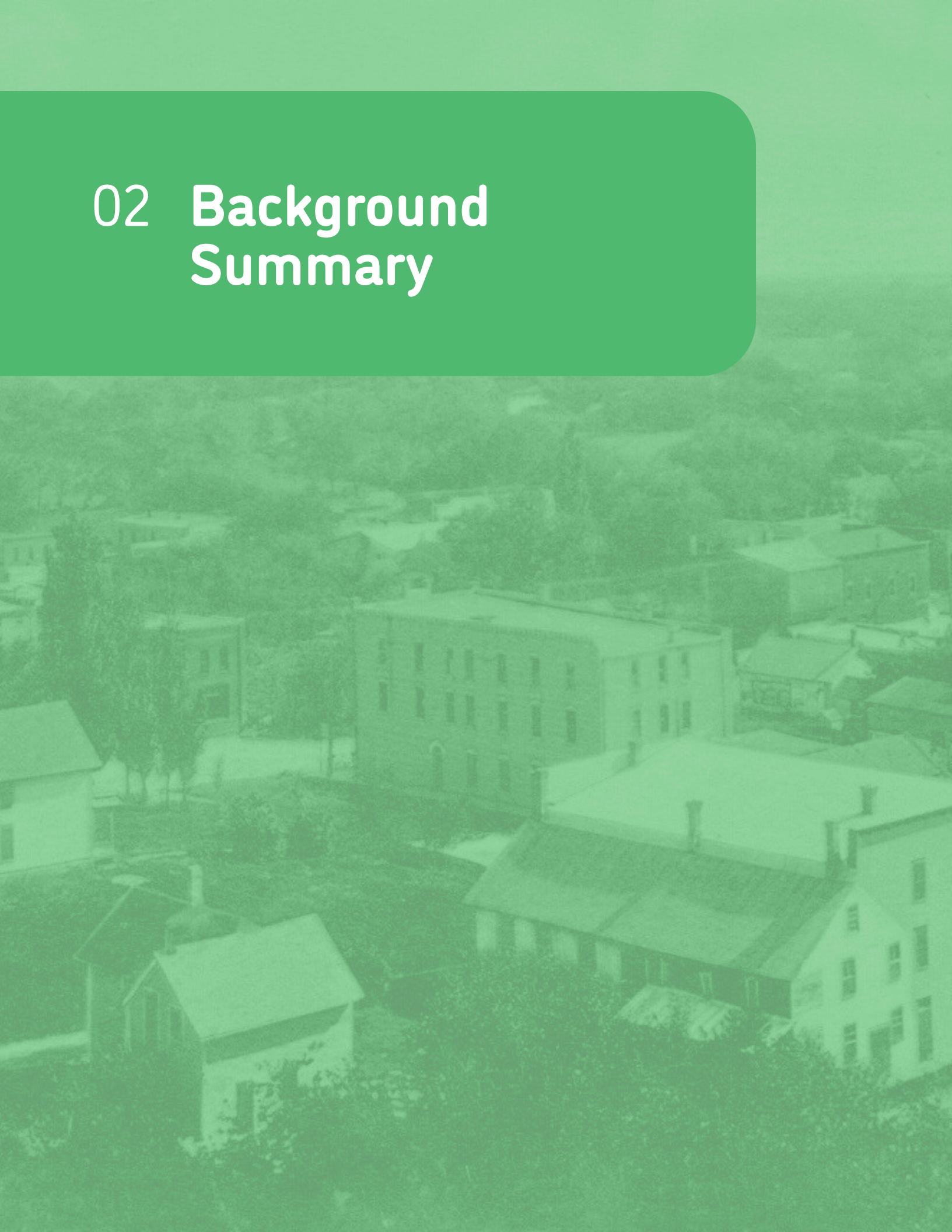


\*Weighted average of Sept. 2022 & Nov. 2022 engagement efforts

Figure 01.1 Community Engagement Summary



## 02 Background Summary





# Brief History



Historic image of downtown Buffalo

Buffalo is situated between Buffalo Lake to the south and Lake Pulaski to the north. The City is strategically situated in the central part of Wright County and is 60 miles northwest of Minneapolis. This area of Wright County was crossed by glaciers several times, which scoured out depressions that formed the irregular hills and valleys. Many of the valleys filled with water and became the lakes of today. Buffalo is also part of the “Big Woods”, a 40-mile-wide band of deciduous trees that started 100 miles northwest of the Twin Cities and continued south to Mankato.

In 1680, most of Minnesota and parts of the current states of North Dakota and South Dakota were occupied by the Mdewakanton band of Dakota Indians. The Dakota lived in villages in the summer and broke up into smaller groups in the winter to follow deer and other animals. For more than 300 years, a band of the Dakota had a summer village between the Lakes of Buffalo and Pulaski, fishing, hunting and gathering cranberries. Around 1740, the Ojibwa, armed with weapons from the French, pushed across Lake Superior, driving the Dakota from their strategic locations at Mille Lacs and Sandy Lake to the southern half of Minnesota. From then on, the Dakota became a people of

the prairie until their expulsion from the state following the Sioux Uprising in 1862.

The U.S. government signed a treaty with the Winnebago Indians of Iowa in 1846 that moved the Winnebago from Iowa to Minnesota. A Winnebago village covered the area now occupied by the Buffalo downtown business district. They lived in this area until 1855 when their treaty was revoked, and Chief Winnisheik again had to lead his people to a new territory, this time farther west to the Blue Earth River.

In 1850, the townsite was claimed by French fur-trader, Edmund Brissett, and by 1856 the town was platted. However, with no railroad service to transport their crops and products to market, the early settlers struggled just to maintain a subsistent way of life. The village remained small and isolated for a number of years. A number of early settlers left Buffalo in search of work, and many property claims were abandoned from 1858 - 1860. The first commercial center focused around Grey Street (*1st Street South*). Development increased in 1867 when the County Seat moved from Monticello to Buffalo. A second commercial district developed around the courthouse when it moved to the west side of town in 1878. Significant development did not occur until the Soo Line reached Buffalo in 1887. Around this time, the downtown moved again to its present location on the northeast corner of Buffalo Lake. The boom years of the 1900's relied on tourists coming to stay at lake resorts, local farmers (*flour mill and creamery*), county offices, and rail service. The City has continued to grow as residents and businesses are attracted to its natural environment and business-friendly values.

*Source: Excerpts and paraphrased from: City of Buffalo Historic Context Study, Prepared for the City of Buffalo, MN by Patrick Smith Historic Preservation Consultant, June 2011*

# Population & Demographics

## Buffalo Population/Household Projections

This data is based on MN State Demographer population projections for the State and County and interpolated for Buffalo's trend in share of State and County Population. Household estimates are based on County persons per household estimates, adjusted for the expected increase in senior households.

The State Demographer's estimates are based largely on modified birth- and death-rate natality and mortality, and make negligible accommodations for intra-state migration trends or factors.

Generally, early family formation age groups (18-40) seek lower cost housing opportunities, and the narrative describes a significant shift to exurban Twin Cities areas in providing those housing opportunities. It is likely that this factor will increase Buffalo's share of intra-state migration housing beyond the natality/mortality growth factors. Moreover, Buffalo's educational reputation, government centers, and health care infrastructure will continue to fuel housing development in the community.

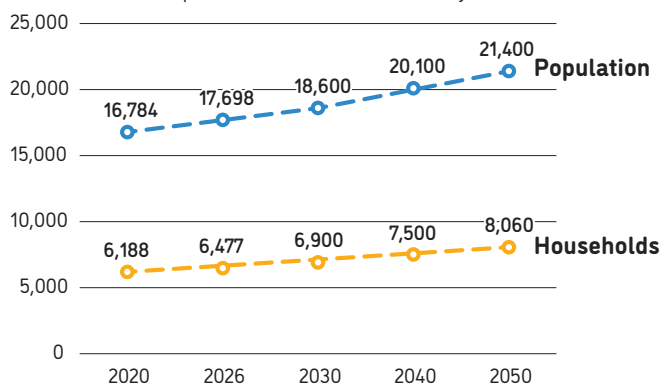
We believe this projection to be a lower threshold estimate and does not likely account for upward shift in out-migration from the Twin Cities area counties reflected in the post-pandemic narrative above.

This data is updated with American Community Survey data from the US Census Bureau for 2021.

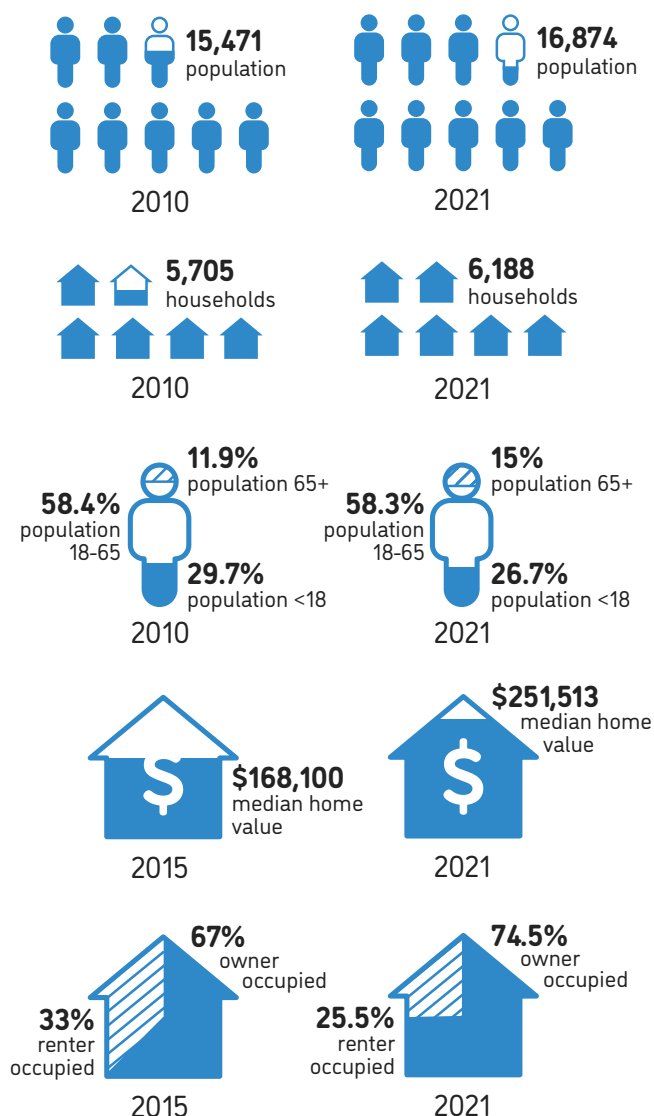
Some examples of the data investigated are included to the right.

Source: Northwest Associated Consultants & State of Minnesota

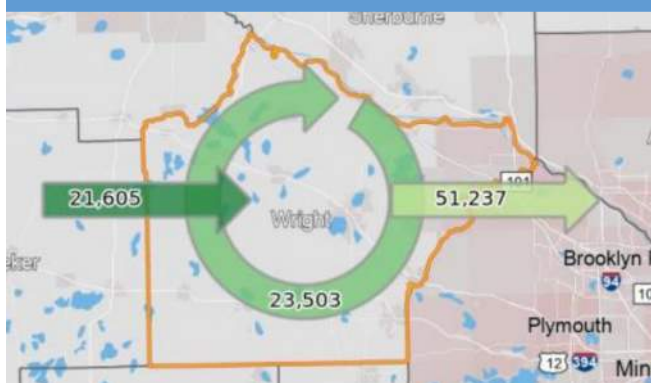
**Table 02.1** Population & Household Projections



**Figure 02.1** US Census Data Visualization

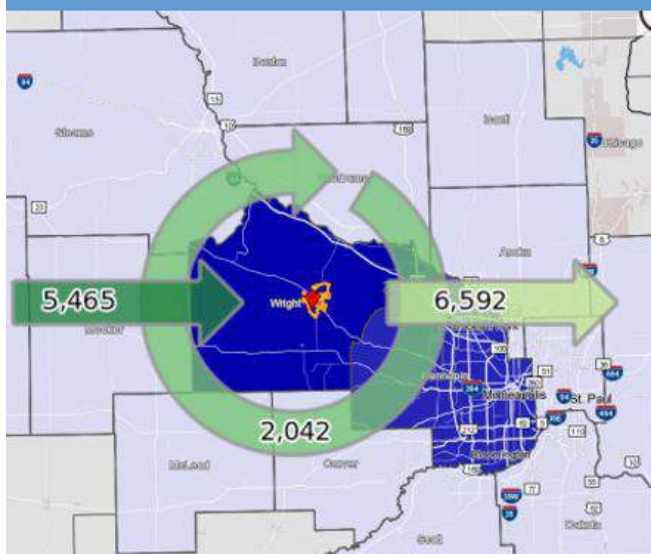


Wright County has a net out-flow of 29,632 workers



**Figure 02.2** U.S. Census Bureau's Worker In-flow, Out-flow Map for Wright County (2019)

In 2015, Buffalo had a worker out-flow of 6,592 workers



**Figure 02.3** U.S. Census Bureau's Worker In-flow, Out-flow Map for Buffalo City (2015)

## Economic Background for Wright County

Below is summary data for Wright County that showed an increase in population and jobs over the past several years while Buffalo experienced similar trends. As the county seat, Buffalo is host to 450 employees of the Wright County Government Center; other large employers in Buffalo include Allina Health (425), School District 877 (378) and Functional Industries (360).

- + As of 2021, the region's population increased by 7.2% since 2016, growing by 9,569. The population is expected to increase by 5.2% between 2021 and 2026, adding 7,429.
- + From 2016 to 2021, jobs increased by 4.2% in Wright County, MN from 48,933 to 50,992. This change outpaced the national growth rate of 0.4% by 4.6%. As the number of jobs increased, the labor force participation rate decreased from 74.5% to 69.2% between 2016 and 2021.
- + Wright County, MN had a November 2021 unemployment rate of 1.89%, decreasing from 3.86% 5 years before.
- + 21.1% of Wright County, MN residents possess a Bachelor's Degree (0.8% above the national average), and 13.8% hold an Associate's Degree (5.1% above the national average).
- + The top three industries in 2021 are Education and Hospitals, Restaurants and Other Eating Places, and Local Government (excluding Education and Hospitals).
- + Retail Trade is the largest industry by jobs in Wright County with 7,320 jobs. Followed by Government (6,737), Health Care (6,168), Manufacturing (6,127), and Construction (5,392).

Source: University of Minnesota Extension, Center for Community Vitality

## 03 Land Use

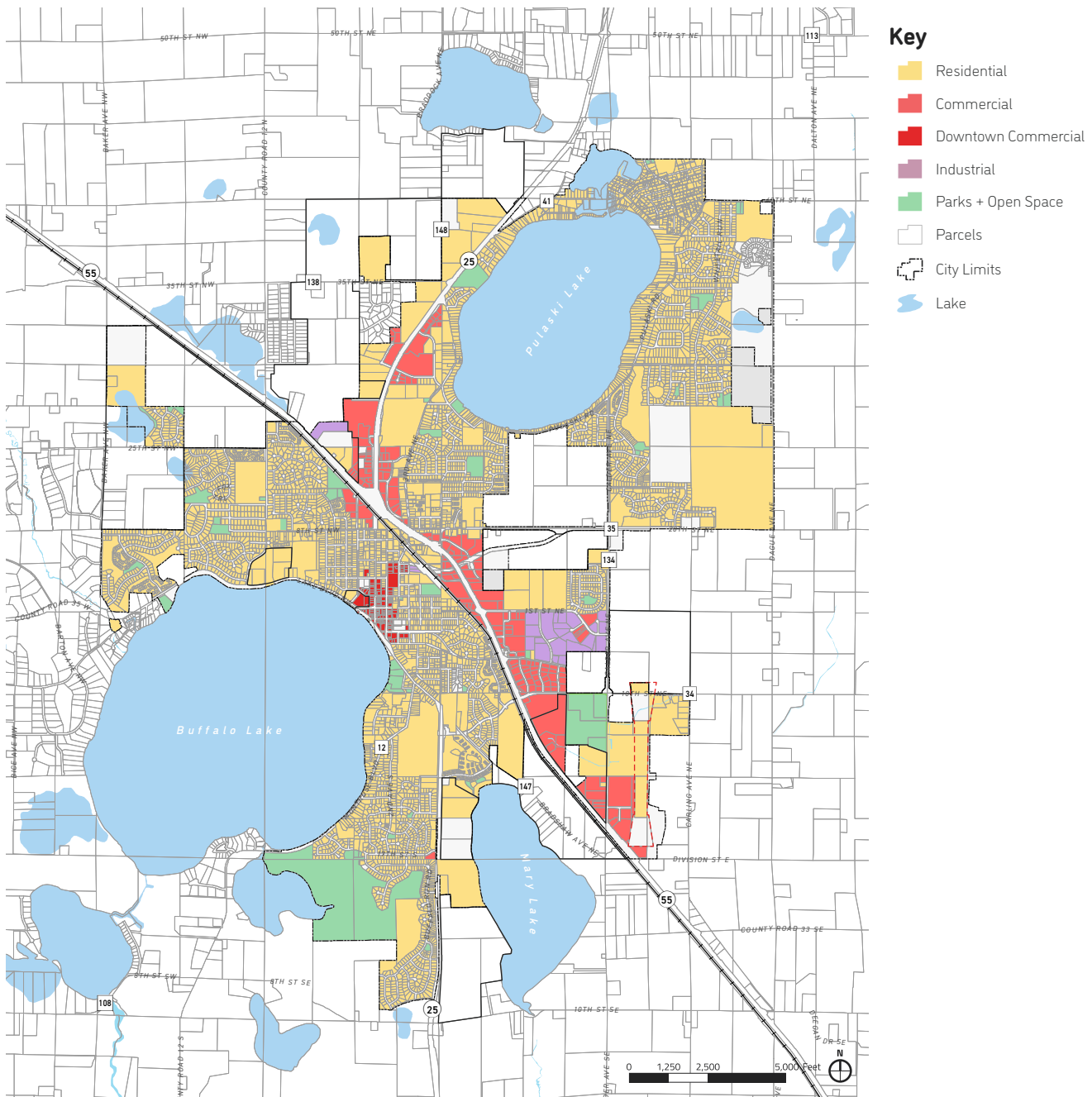




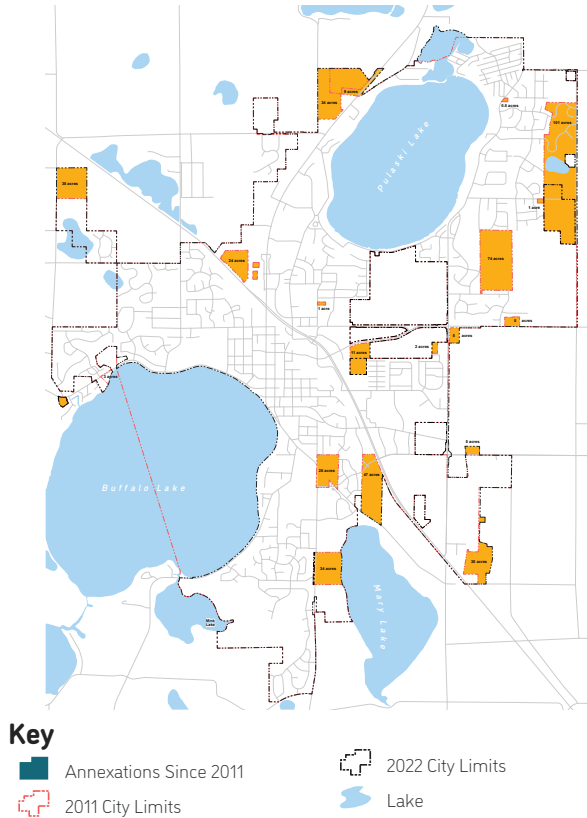
## Existing Land Use

The existing land use map generalizes Buffalo's development pattern into commercial, residential, industrial, and parks/open spaces. Southwest of Highway 55 and along the railroad corridor are where the first neighborhoods of Buffalo evolved, including the downtown. This area consists of a connected street and block pattern focused around the northeast edge of Buffalo Lake; later increments occurred around Lake Pulaski. The commercial land use pattern

is strongly influenced by Highway 55 running generally east-west and Highway 25 which runs north-south. These two commercial corridors include a variety of restaurants, service businesses, schools, a hospital, and several large-format retail centers that each contain a grocery store. Outside of Buffalo's downtown, most of the remaining land within the City is either residential, parks/open space, or water/wetlands.

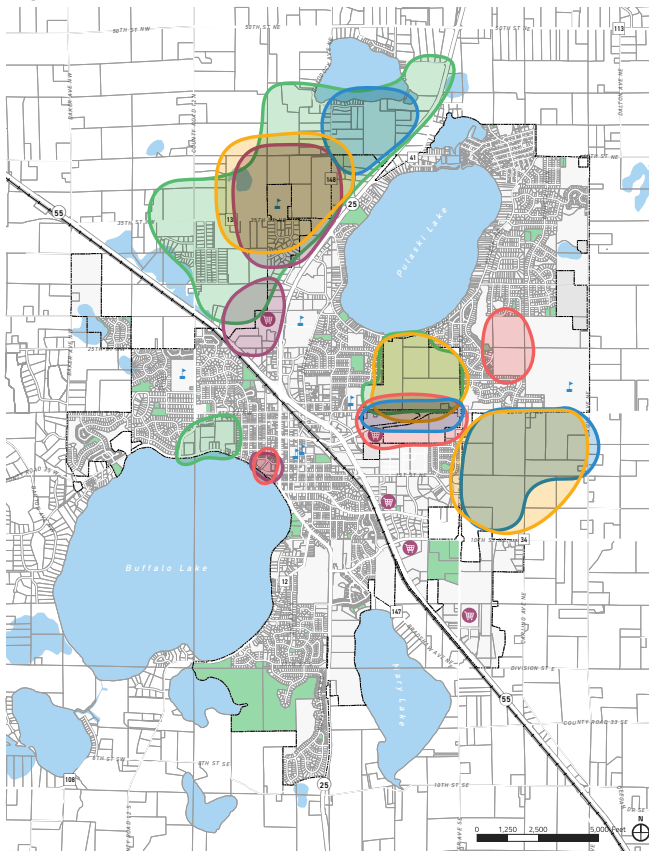


**Figure 03.1** Existing Generalized Land Use

**Figure 03.2** Annexations Since 2011

## Recent Growth & Development

Since 2011, Buffalo has annexed 442 acres primarily for residential land use. The geographic pattern of these annexations show them to be located throughout the City which is a function of the City Council's policy of seeking a petition from a land-owner prior to annexation into the City. The recent annexations on the northeast corner of Buffalo includes the Greenbriar Hills development, which once completed will include 214 single-family villas and detached townhouses. The large annexation just off Highway 25 in the northwest part of the City includes the new Wright County Government Center, which is likely to generate additional interest in annexation and demand for development nearby. While not requiring annexation, the newest multi-family developments in Buffalo include both the Havenwood and Alo Apartments, which when combined provide over 150 units of market-rate, affordable, senior, and assisted-living housing options to city residents.

**Figure 03.3** Preferred Growth Areas (*Council & Task Force*)

## Preferred Growth Areas

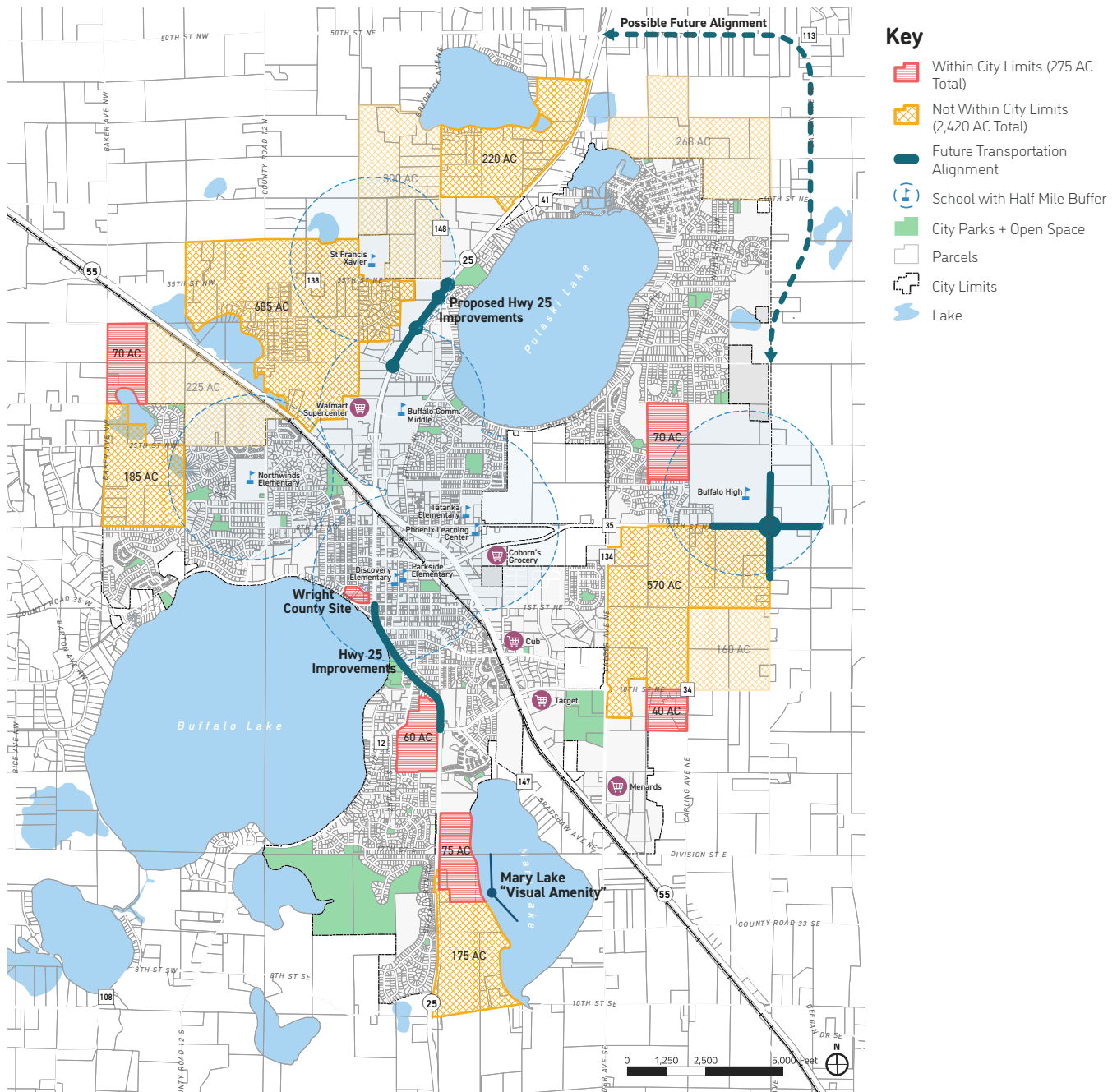
The planning process for the 2040 Community Plan included discussions with the Community Plan Task Force and the Buffalo City Council to gauge where future development would be best located. **Figure 03.3** provides a composite of these preferences by both groups and served as a key influence in guiding the future land use plan.

The colored circles on **Figure 03.3** indicate Task Force and Councilmember responses when asked for their recommendation on the top three areas for future growth and development within and outside of city limits. In general, responses supported additional growth in the northwest area of the City west of the new Wright County Government Center; undeveloped areas south of Lake Pulaski and east of Highway 55; and strategic areas of Buffalo's downtown.

# Areas of Potential Change

The Community Plan process considered a variety of land areas contiguous with the City limits when evaluating where future growth could potentially occur. The areas identified

were either largely contiguous to city limits (*shown in yellow on **Figure 03.4***) or were already within city limits but remain undeveloped.





## Proposed Land Use Plan

The Proposed Land Use Plan prioritizes development in areas that are:

1. Undeveloped and currently within Buffalo City limits
2. Strategic development opportunities, including key redevelopment sites
3. Contiguous to Buffalo city limits where extending infrastructure is most cost efficient

A significant portion of Buffalo's expected future growth is shown in parcels situated along the western edge of the City, areas near the new Wright County Government Center, and undeveloped land throughout the City that may support additional residential growth (*and can easily connect via existing stub-out streets*). Though most of the residential land use is guided for single family development, a number of areas are guided for mixed-residential development

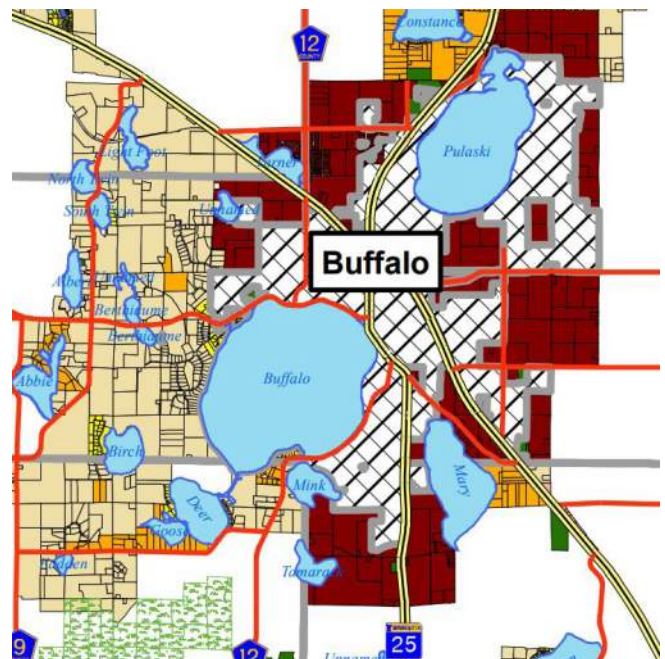
that would support a variety of housing types, including multi-family. Another significant land use addition with the updated 2040 Plan is an area referred to as "Business Flex" just northwest of the Highway 55/Highway 25 intersection that will support employment and industrial uses in the future. A second area planned for industrial use is located just north of the airport. Developable areas situated on Mary Lake and Lake Constance present an opportunity to add to prominent public realm investments that could provide real estate value and public access to highly valuable lakefronts. Similarly, the land surrounding St Francis Xavier School provides an opportunity to develop residential neighborhoods that support convenient and safe walking and biking routes to school. Finally, the 2040 land use plan will focus on undeveloped parcels surrounded by existing city limits as desirable areas for future growth.

## Annexation & Transition Areas

The City of Buffalo will continue to follow the Wright County policy for how transition areas in the surrounding townships are annexed, which states that the majority of growth shall be directed toward cities within the County. In order to accommodate this continued growth, cities will likely need to annex land and provide municipal services to land not yet annexed into city limits. While the County is not advocating more annexation than is needed to accommodate a reasonable amount of growth, the purpose in establishing these transition areas is to properly manage the land at the urban/rural fringe while considering future uses of land within a city.

As stated in Wright County, "Cities Policy 4: Annexation," the County will support annexation of land to a municipality if:

- + The annexation is consistent with the municipal and County land use plans;
- + The area to be annexed is a logical expansion of the municipality;
- + It is demonstrated with specific plans that development at urban densities is imminent; municipal services (*central sewer and water, paved roads*), provided by the annexing municipality, will be available at the time



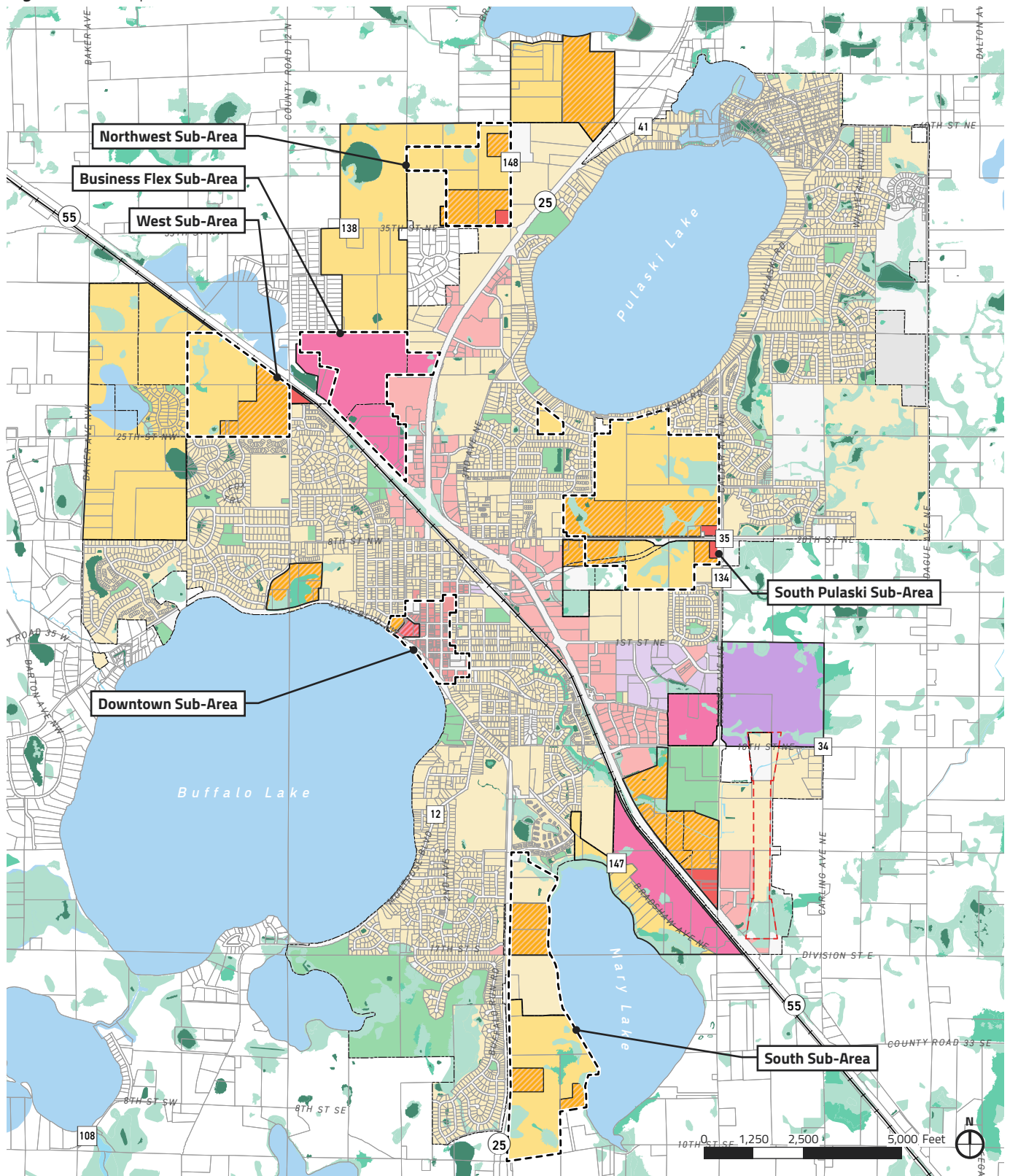
**Figure 03.5** Wright County Transition Areas

of development; planning for stormwater runoff and protection of natural resources will be completed prior to development; the annexation of additional land is necessary to accommodate development, and the supply of developable land within the City is limited.

Source: Wright County Land Use Plan (adopted February 2011)

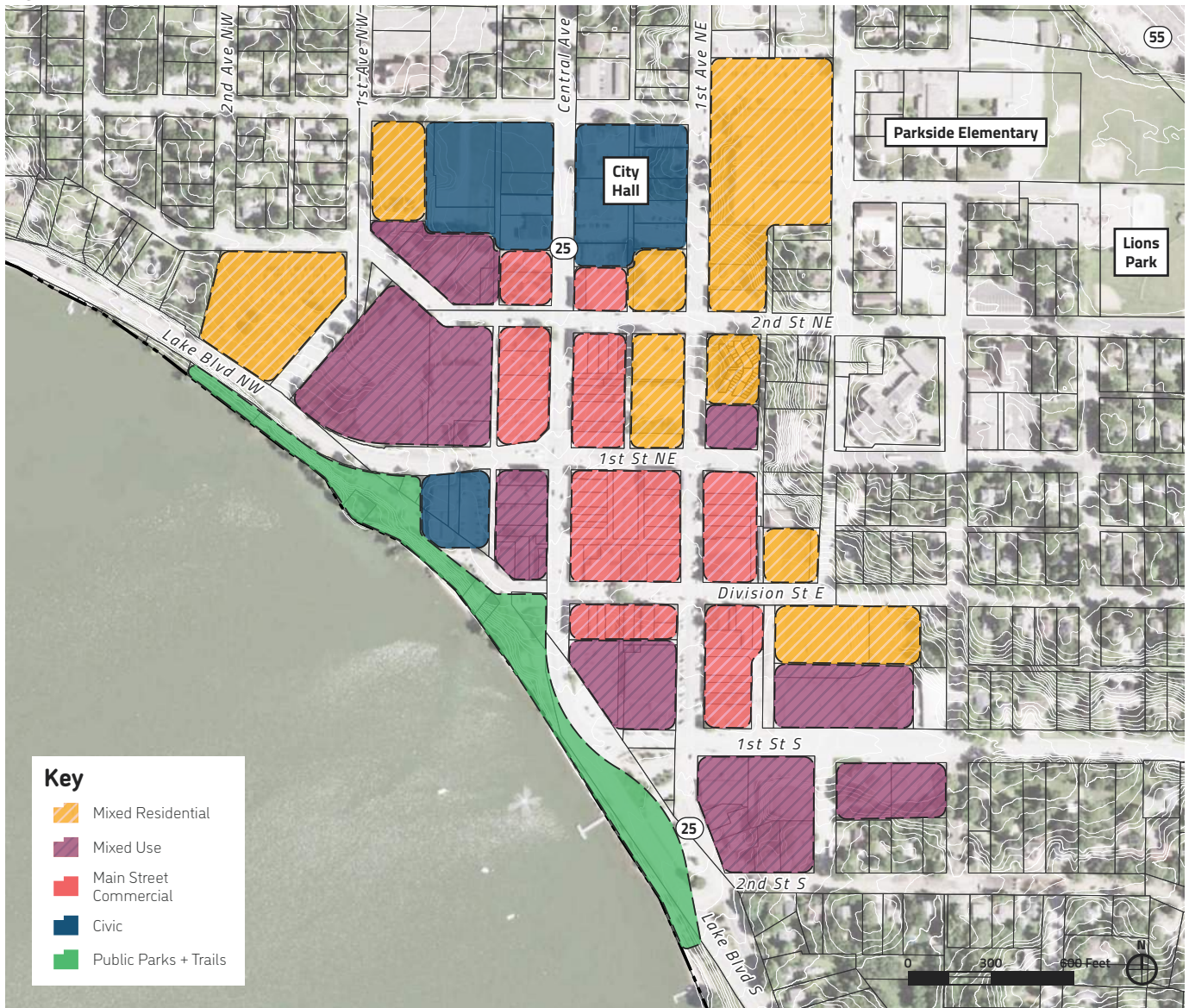


**Figure 03.6** Proposed Land Use



**Key**

- |                           |                    |                       |                                   |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Single Family Residential | Employment         | Parcels               | Freshwater Pond                   |
| Mixed Residential         | Industrial         | Airport Approach Zone | Freshwater Emergent Wetland       |
| Commercial                | Parks + Open Space | City Limits           | Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland |
|                           |                    | Lake                  |                                   |

**Figure 03.7** Downtown Sub-Area

## Downtown Sub-Area

The 2040 Downtown Vision's Plan prioritized the utilization of the lakefront as a continuous public open space feature that connects the downtown area with Buffalo Lake and adds a walkable and bikeable amenity to the City. This coincides with the downtown continuing to serve as a pedestrian-oriented shopping destination in Buffalo centered on Division Street, 1st Ave S and 1st St NE ("Wide street"). With this in mind, the Downtown Sub-Area is the only sub-area where the plan supports mixed-use development, including several parcels that have views or connections to the lake like the former Wright County Government Center site. The western-most parcels of the former Government Center site are guided mixed-residential; any new development in this

location will need to be sensitive (*in height and scale*) to the existing neighborhood. The Downtown Plan also suggests that this area could become the next "neighborhood" in Buffalo and anticipates more mixed-residential and multi-family developments that provide future housing options for residents while supporting the businesses in downtown. The City of Buffalo Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA) currently owns multiple parcels in the downtown that can strategically support the long-term land use plan proposed.

If adopted, this sub-area plan within the 2040 Buffalo Community Plan would supplement any land use guide included in the 2040 Downtown Vision's Plan.



## Downtown Historic Context

In evaluating the proposed Downtown Sub-Area plan, it is important to consider historic contexts to understand Buffalo's past development and to determine preservation efforts the City may utilize to preserve these buildings and/or structures. Below are various preservation activities that the City's Heritage Preservation Advisory Board should explore implementing in the future.

- + **Historic Preservation Plan** – A Historic or Heritage Preservation Plan is usually the first step in a city's preservation efforts. A historic preservation plan reviews all the preservation tools in more detail; provides a public forum to decide which preservation efforts should be used; explains historic preservation's terminology; outlines the legal basis for historic preservation; and prioritizes the preservation actions to be taken.
- + **Survey** – A survey would examine in more detail key residential, commercial, and industrial buildings to determine any historic significance.
- + **Local Historic Register** – Resources that are of local importance should be listed on a Local Historic Register. Historic Preservation Ordinances only effect buildings on a Local Register, not the National Register. For example, this Register could include all buildings that Swan Bratt designed and constructed given his importance to Buffalo; the Beutner's Drug Store given the Beutner family's long history in Buffalo; and the Masonic Lodge or State Bank of Buffalo given their architectural integrity.
- + **Design guidelines** – Design guidelines for key areas of the City give City Staff, officials and building owners an understanding on preferred preservation practices for improvements to commercial buildings with historical significance.

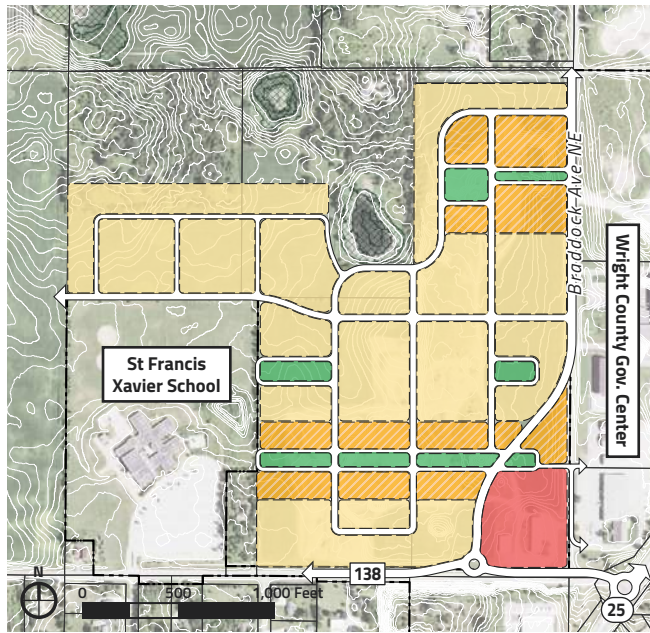
*Source: Excerpts and paraphrased from: City of Buffalo Historic Context Study, Prepared for the City of Buffalo, MN by Patrick Smith Historic Preservation Consultant, June 2011*



Building improvements highlight a historic building with proper color, materials, window types, and shopfront glazing. The Adara Home Health building is a good example of how owners and operators invested in their facilities with help from the City. Brick is a very common material in downtown and should be considered for most commercial and multi-family buildings.



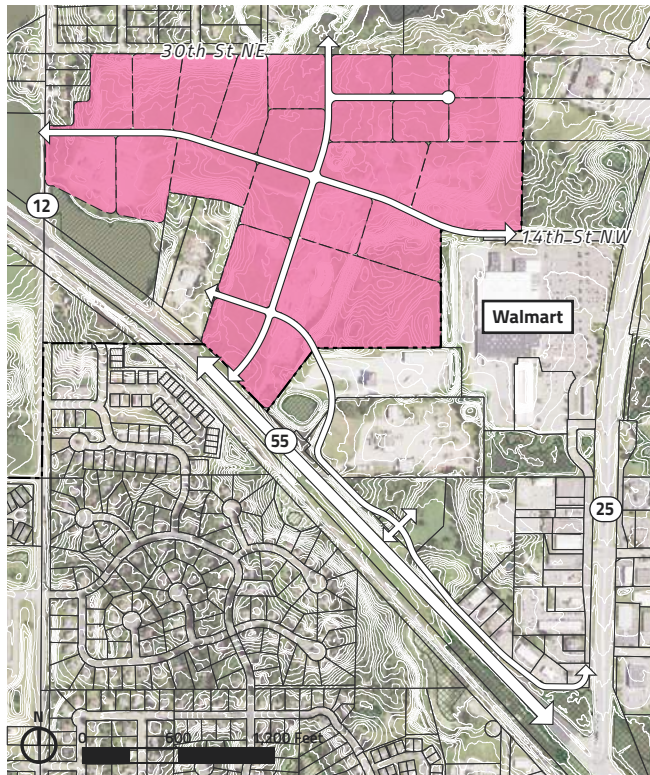
Streetscape Details – Picking up on the black wrought iron of the Buffalo enclosure (at the former theater building) could be a theme to use for defining limited planting areas at street corners that would visually blend into the streetscape. This material could be used for benches, other street furnishings, outdoor dining boundaries, and parking lot edges.

**Figure 03.8** Northwest Sub-Area**Key**

- Single Family Residential
- Mixed Residential
- Commercial
- Parks, Open Space, + Trails

## Northwest Sub-Area

Land use for this sub-area just west of the new Wright County Government Center on Buffalo's northwest side is primarily residential, with a small commercial/retail area shown at the northwest corner of 35th St NE and Braddock Ave NE. Mixed-use residential uses include the potential for multi-family development fronting prominent open space and neighborhood-scale park areas as shown in **Figure 03.8**. The sub-area would be connected by a street pattern that may be extended west should the City see additional demand for growth in this area. A key feature of this sub-area is the guiding of residential development within walking distance of St. Francis Xavier School, with the land use pattern east of the school campus contiguous and organized around a "safe routes to school" plan that features a direct walking path to the school.

**Figure 03.9** Business Flex Sub-Area**Key**

- Business Flex

## Business Flex Sub-Area

Land use for this sub-area is focused on providing the City with additional opportunities to support business, employment, light manufacturing, and light industrial uses. This area is shown divided into a variety of parcel shapes and sizes with access from three existing streets: County Road 12 N to the west; Highway 55 to the south; and Highway 25 to the east via 14th Street NW (*just north of the Walmart*).



## West Sub-Area

Land use for this sub-area consists primarily of single-family residential with mixed-use residential located to the east and convenient access from County Rd 12 N. This development pattern is intended to connect to existing stub-out streets located south and west of the parcel while responding to the existing topography, wetlands, and wooded areas. Northwinds Elementary School is located just south of this area, and so it will be important to ensure walking and biking facilities are designed alongside new streets to allow for safe and convenient connections to the school.

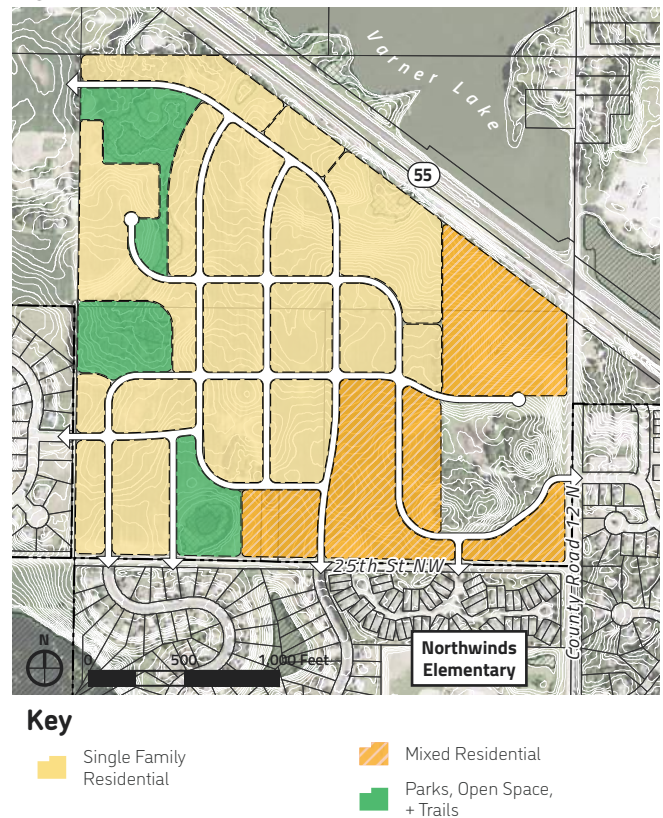
## South Pulaski Sub-Area

This sub-area includes a couple of major farm acreages that have been kept in the township for decades. A potential change in ownership provides an opportunity to think about future growth and development in this very strategic location of the city. Griffing Park Rd is a key connection that would be extended east to Calder Avenue; other stub-out streets would provide additional connections north, south, east and west. It is anticipated that most of this area would be developed for single family residential. Mixed use residential uses are shown north of Willems Way. Park, open space and recreation uses could be included in the long term vision of this sub-area.

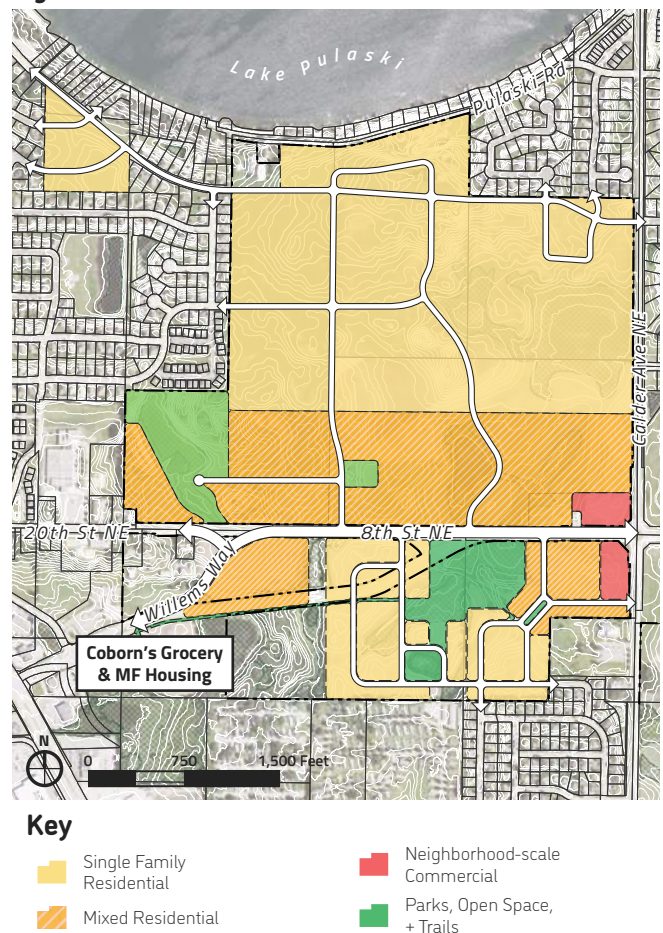
Proposed land uses for this sub-area include single-family, mixed-residential, and neighborhood-commercial uses. A key component of this sub-area is the relocation of the Willems Way intersection with 20th Street NE, providing for an improved intersection alignment that yields more developable land in the long term. This area includes several wetlands and environmental features that the land use pattern is cognizant of - and in some cases - highlights as prominent open space. New streets tie into the existing grid at 6th Street NE and 13th Avenue NE. An important east-west pedestrian connection is shown that encourages safe walking and biking to the Coborn's Market for residents nearby.

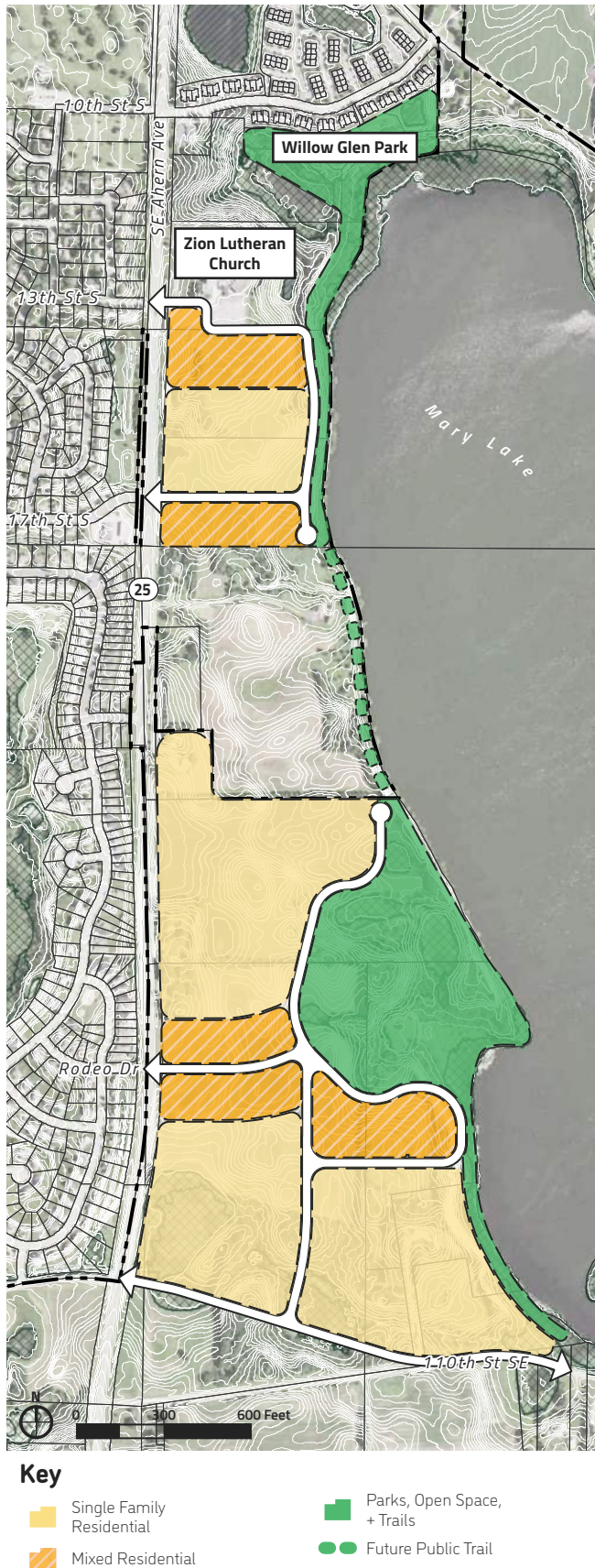
A small neighborhood-commercial area is also possible at the southwest intersection of 8th Street NE and Calder Avenue NE as shown in **Figure 03.11**.

**Figure 03.10** West Sub-Area



**Figure 03.11** South Pulaski Sub-Area



**Figure 03.12** South (*Mary Lake*) Sub-Area

## South Sub-Area

Land use for the South (*Mary Lake*) sub-area is guided for single-family and mixed-residential organized around prominent public realm features, including a multi-use trail along the edge of Mary Lake that connects to the existing Willow Glen Park to the north. The northern portion of this area includes street connections that align with 13th Street S (and through part of the Zion Lutheran Church parcel) and 17th Street S.

The southern portion of this area continues these lakefront public features that circumvent existing wetland and environmental features. Single-family residential is the predominate land use in this sub-area, with street connections west to Rodeo Drive and south to 100th Street SE.



## 04 Housing





## 2018 Housing Chapter Update

Since the Housing Study was published in 2018, recovery in the housing industry began in earnest, gradually increasing housing unit production and values. Housing development in Buffalo and the entire Twin Cities metro region showed steady growth through 2018 and 2019. By March of 2020, however, the novel coronavirus first reported in late 2019 was declared a global pandemic. While building and construction were considered essential services, much of the economy shifted to a closed and “socially-distanced” footing.

Even though demand for housing had not stalled, the ability to supply new housing was severely impacted by supply chain interruptions of raw materials. Coupled with a hit to labor force participation, housing prices rapidly increased while the supply of new homes continued to falter. Redfin, a real estate data and market aggregator, reported that homes for sale in Minnesota reached just over 30,000 in the summer of 2017 and was still at 24,000 in the summer of 2019. By February of 2022, however, the supply statewide was just 11,000 homes for sale.

This constrained supply has had a predictable impact on prices. Again, according to Redfin, median sales price for single-family homes remained at \$204,000 in February of 2017; that number increased to more than \$320,000 statewide in 2022, an annual increase of nearly 10 percent. Moreover, the industry reported an extreme imbalance between homebuyers and sellers, with more than 60% of homes sold over the stated asking price in 2021. In the Twin Cities, the median sales price rose to more than \$350,000, with an average sales price of nearly \$500,000.

Real estate industry investment advisers predict continued short supply of housing for the foreseeable future while price appreciation is expected to slow.

However, the industry expects continued upward housing demand in the greater Twin Cities market for a number of reasons, including a strong job market fueling continued new home demand; an increase in household formation as the area recovers from the pandemic-induced shutdowns;

and a strong, balanced regional economy relative to other areas of the upper Midwest.

Naturally, several factors impact the distribution of new housing development around the Twin Cities region. In mid-2021, the Minneapolis Star Tribune conducted an annual inventory of its “Hottest Real Estate Markets” in the 13-county Twin Cities region. The inventory was based on Minnesota Association of Realtors data and surveyed approximately 270 distinct communities and neighborhoods that conducted at least 70 sales transactions in the previous year. Of these 270 localities, 115 were separate cities. Buffalo ranked at number 40, based on increases in sales, price, and decreasing time a home would remain on the market before being sold.

This trend was propelled by a lower but rising overall price and price per square foot, and a shift in work location as the pandemic fueled a move to remote work. Those trends are all likely to continue, even as the pandemic recedes.

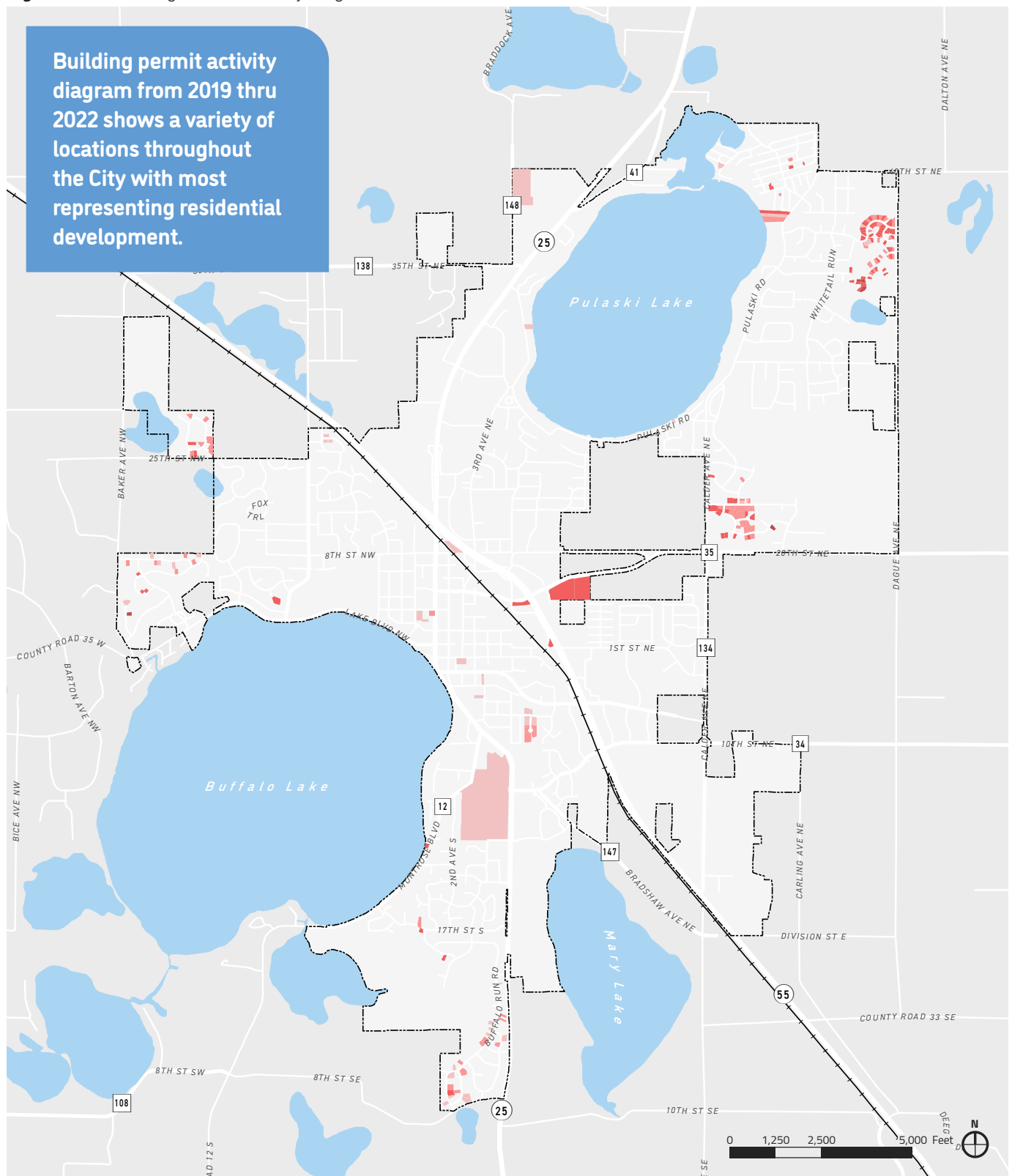
Bisnow, a platform that tracks the commercial real estate industry, recently reported that half of all companies plan to require full-time in-person work within the next year. Moreover, Bisnow reports that there is a strong backlash amongst employees who seek continued remote work opportunities, a factor that has changed recruitment strategies for several large employers.

In summary, the post-pandemic housing landscape has likely been changed in a substantive way, setting the stage for a strong long-term housing market in communities like Buffalo who have already been experiencing that trend. As supply-chain disruptions ease and construction materials costs moderate, the competitiveness of Buffalo’s housing market opportunities should continue to sustain a strong growth pattern.

### Major Trends Identified

1. Increasing number of seniors, including as a percentage of overall population.
2. Increasing percentage of home ownership.
3. Increasing percentage of single-family housing.

**Figure 04.1** Building Permits Activity Diagram



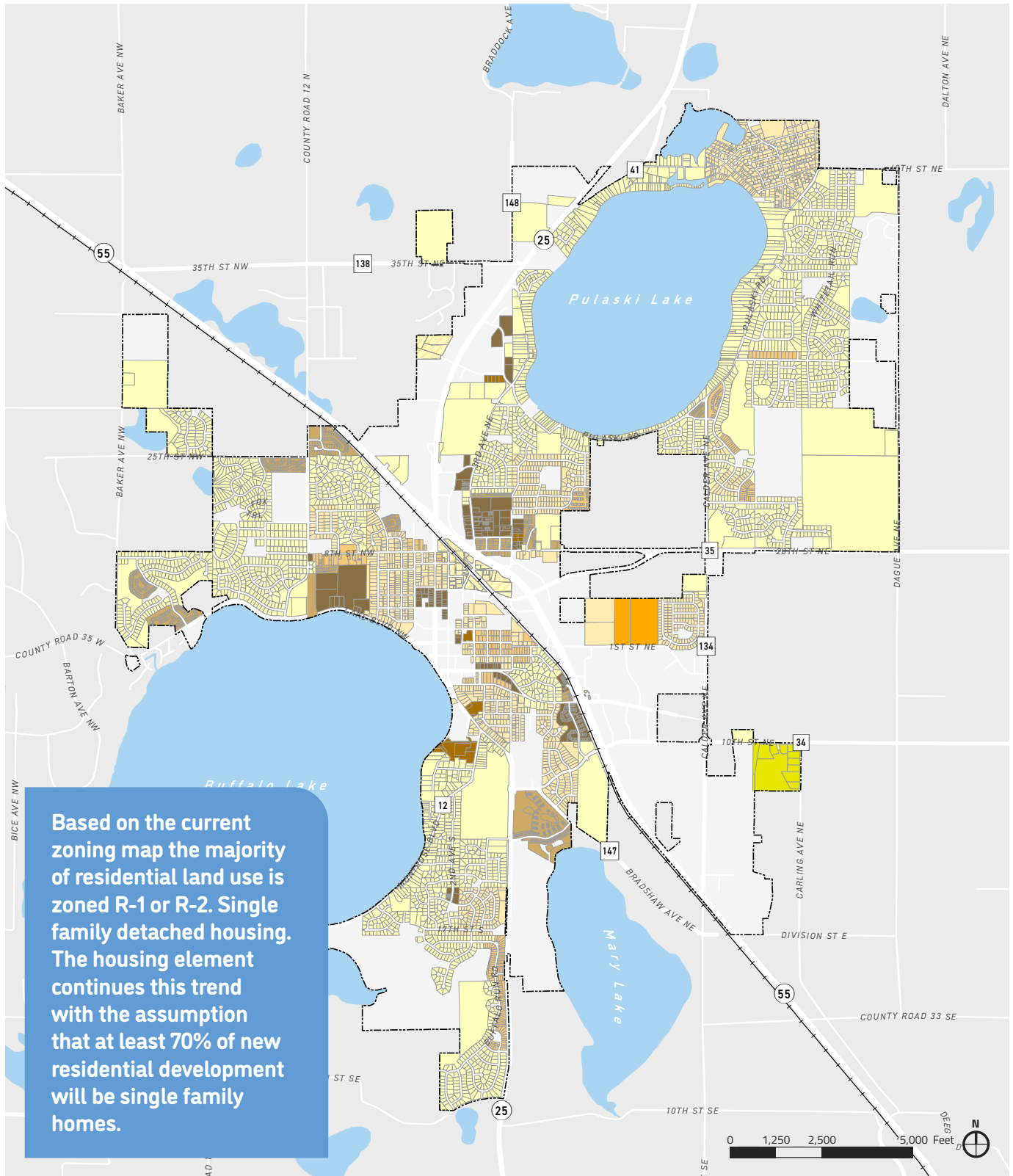
**Key**

- 2019 Construction Permit
- 2020 Construction Permit












- 2021 Construction Permit
- 2022 Construction Permit

- City Limits
- Lake

### Figure 04.2 Residential Zoning



## Key

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
|  PUD Planned Unit Development |  R-2 Single Family Urban |  R-4 Townhouse, Quadraminium, Low Density Multi-Family |  R-7 Residential Special Purpose & High Density |  R-MH Manufactured Housing |
|  R-1 Single Family Suburban   |  R-3 Single & Two Family |  R-6 High Density Multiple Family                      |  R-A Rural Transitional                         |  City Limits               |
|  |   |   |   |  Lake                      |

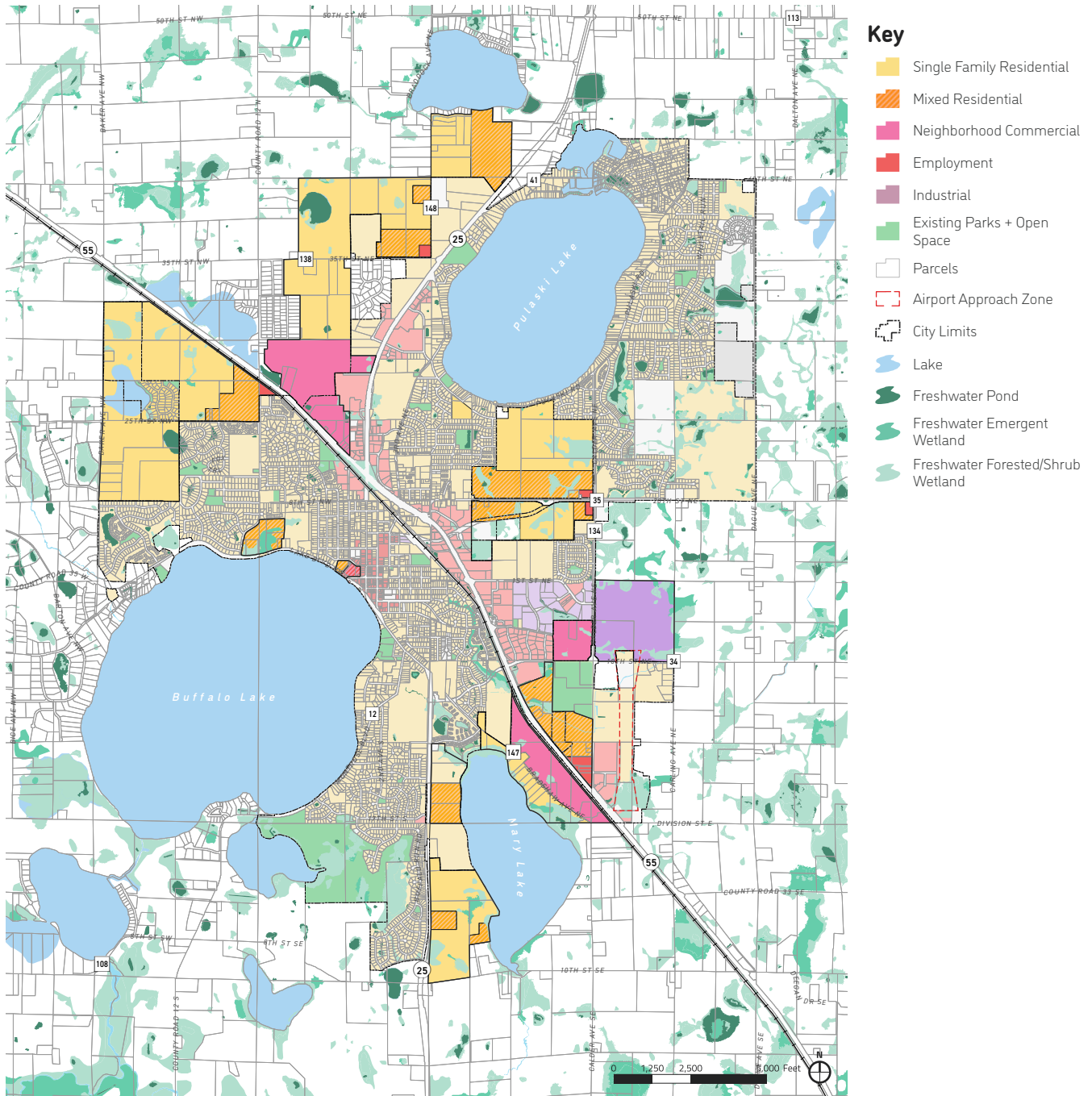


# Housing Growth

The 2040 Community Plan places an emphasis on housing growth that can accommodate the anticipated population growth of 3,316 residents by 2040, which would be another 1,312 households. The plan, therefore, guides the housing for these new residents on the percentages in **Table 04.1** to accommodate the expected residential growth within residential types shown in **Figure 04.3**.

**Table 04.1** Types of Proposed Residential Growth

Residential Type	% of Res. Growth	Dwelling Units/Acre	Total Acres
Single Family Residential (consistent with current R-1 zoning)	70%	3.6	<b>255</b>
Mixed Residential (attached & detached residential)	20%	6	<b>44</b>
Multi-Family Residential (consistent with R-4, R-5, & R-6 zoning)	10%	30	<b>4.3</b>



**Figure 04.3** Proposed Land Use

# 05 Thoroughfare & Movement



## Existing Conditions

The existing street network and overall development pattern in Buffalo evolved around the location of Buffalo Lake and Lake Pulaski. A more traditional, connected street pattern grew along the northeast shore of Buffalo Lake and later in relation to the railroad corridor, while Highways 55 and 25 have also influenced the development pattern by providing access for much of the commercial/retail/restaurant uses in the City. North of Highway 55,



*Settlers Parkway is a good example of a newer street that incorporates planted medians and buffers, attractive lighting and a multi-purpose trail; this street sets a good precedent for similar streets in the future (Image from Google).*

more recent development has exhibited parcel-by-parcel access for highway and auto-oriented uses alongside more suburban residential housing that rely on a collector and arterial road network. In general, the City has encouraged a connected street network while reserving stub-out streets for future connections. As of 2018, for example, there were at least 47 stub-street curb cuts that will allow for future street extensions/connections as the City grows.

## Trailblazer Transit

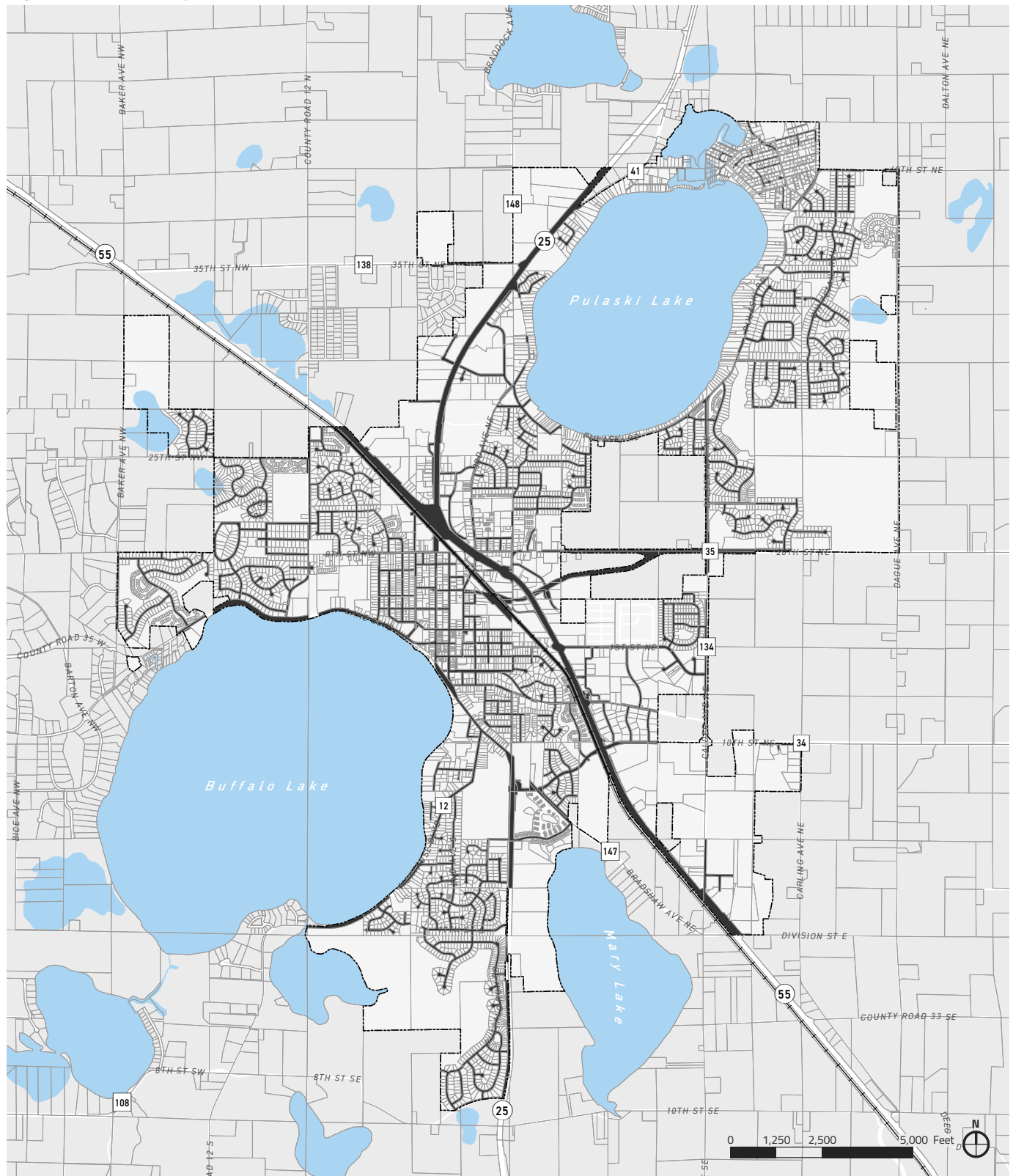
Trailblazer Transit is a public transit system in Buffalo that provides an affordable transportation option to people of all ages. Professional transit operators, employed by a government organization called Trailblazer Joint Powers Board, utilize elevator-equipped buses to provide Dial-A-Ride service throughout Sibley, McLeod, and Wright Counties with limited service into other neighboring cities. To ensure greater mobility for Buffalo residents, it is important to promote this critical resource to the public at large.



*The TH 25 rebuild in downtown Buffalo will create a safer pedestrian crossing environment, re-organize parking while adding green space to the downtown splash pad, and realign traffic lanes to realize more open space at the lake edge. (Image from Bolton & Menk)*



**Figure 05.1** Street Right-of-Way (ROW) Network



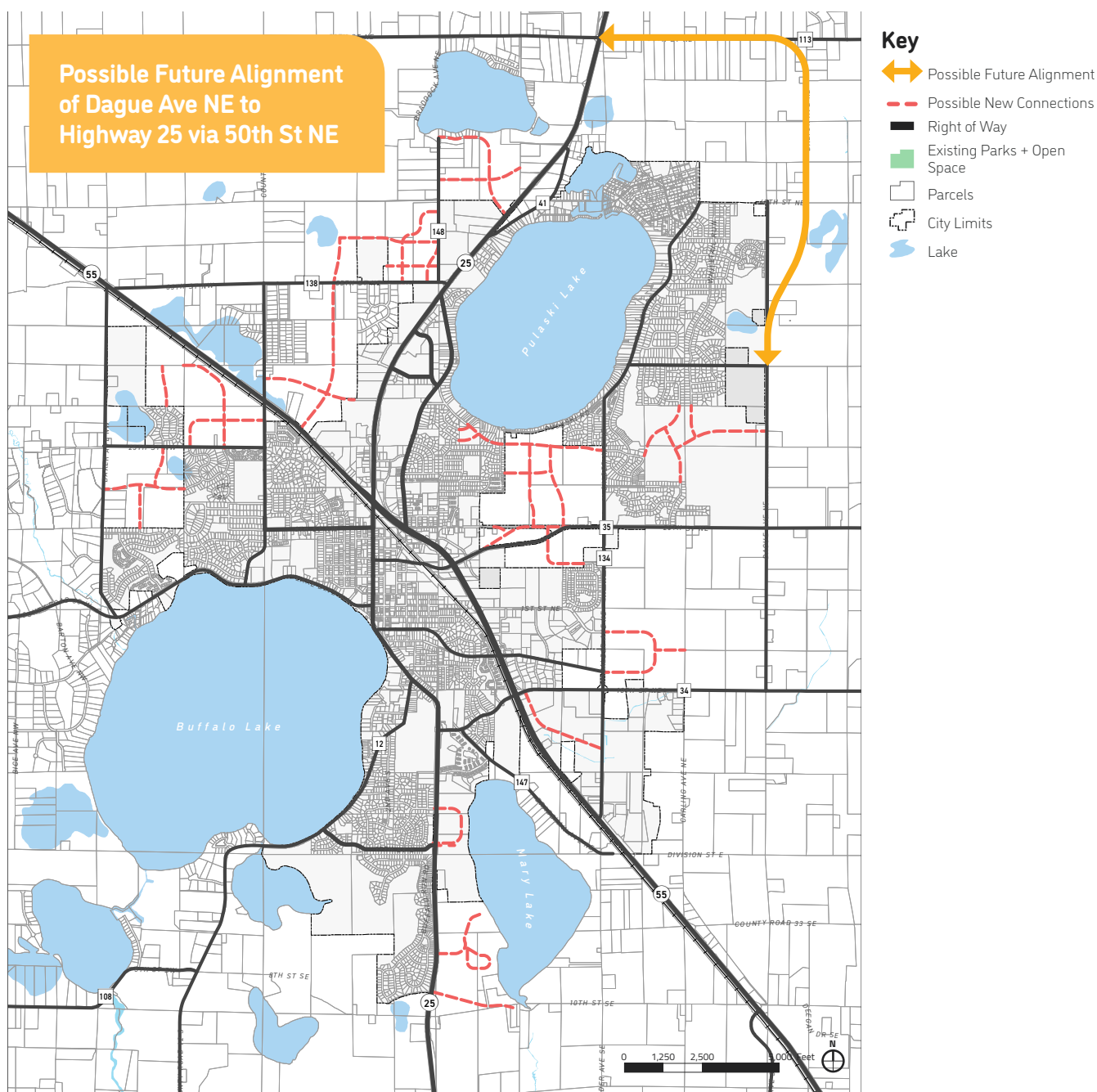
**Key**

- Right of Way
- Parcels
- City Limits
- Lake

# Proposed Network Connections

The proposed street network in the 2040 Community Plan is based on the areas of potential development shown in the Land Use Plan, while building on 20 existing stub-out street curb cuts to incrementally add to the City's overall street connectivity. The future street network should be as multi-modal as possible to accommodate walkers, safe

routes to school for schoolchildren, bicyclists, and other non-motorized modes of movement. A goal of the future thoroughfare plan is to connect destinations like schools, parks, lakefront areas, retail, and public institutions in a thoughtful and safe manner.



**Figure 05.2** Proposed Street Systems

## 06 Parks & Trails





## Parks & Trails

playground equipment and picnic shelters. The focus of the Buffalo Park & Recreation Department is to further develop, preserve, and maintain the current parks, trails, and recreation programs.





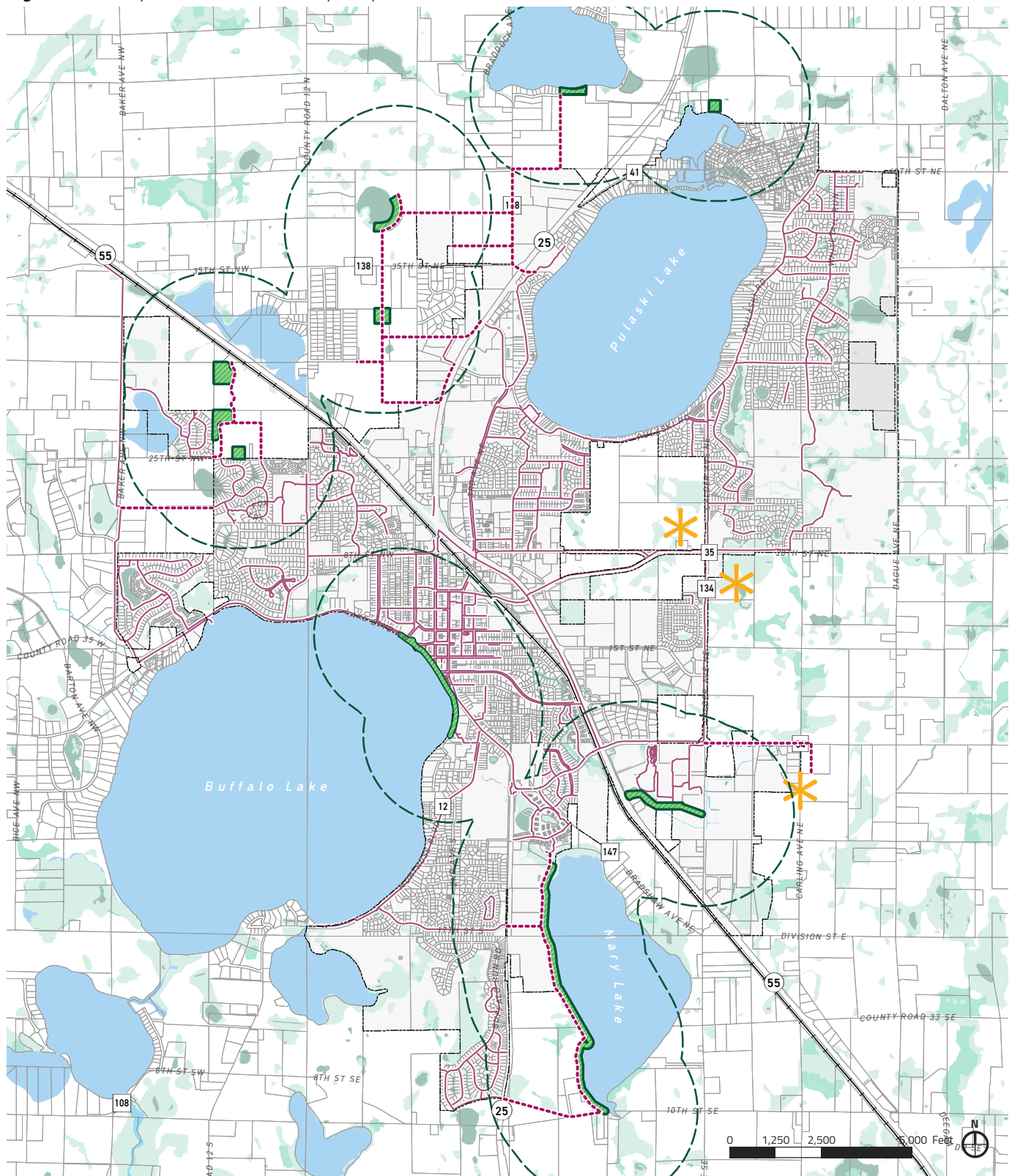
Rendering of the proposed "Andrew's Splash Pad" in West Pulaski Park

## Proposed Parks & Trails

The 2040 Community Plan anticipates incremental growth over the next 20 years that will add users to the existing parks and trails facilities as new development comes online. Therefore, the 2040 Plan emphasizes maintaining the current parks and trails system for all users; long-term, the Plan also recognizes the need for additional organized play and ball fields that will require an area of 40-80 acres. Specifically for the City's trails network, the Plan is focused on connecting the City's parks and open space to better support movement for bikers, runners and walkers. Some key aspirations include:

- + Realizing a contiguous lakefront green space on Buffalo Lake, from Sturges Park to the lake edge of the former Wright County government center site;
- + Supporting local stakeholders in an effort to add a community splash pad in the West Pulaski Park;
- + Preserving the western lakefront of Mary Lake for a public path and trail network that connects to Willow Glen Park;
- + Connect trail segments in new neighborhoods with existing schools and residential developments to create a 'safe route to schools' network;
- + Utilize prominent parks and open space as value-added amenities in new neighborhoods, such as dedicating the lakefronts and related open spaces for all residents as opposed to putting these desirable community features into private parcels (*e.g. areas like Lake Constance and Little Pulaski Lake that are still undeveloped*).

**Figure 06.2** Proposed Parks, Trails, & Open Space



**Key**

- |                              |   |                |                                   |
|------------------------------|---|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Half Mile Buffer             | Potential Location for Active Parks/Recreation Fields | Existing Trail | Freshwater Pond                   |
| Potential Parks + Open Space | Existing Parks + Open Space                           | Parcels        | Freshwater Emergent Wetland       |
| Proposed Trail               | City Limits   | Lake           | Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland |



# 07 Environment, Energy, & Infrastructure

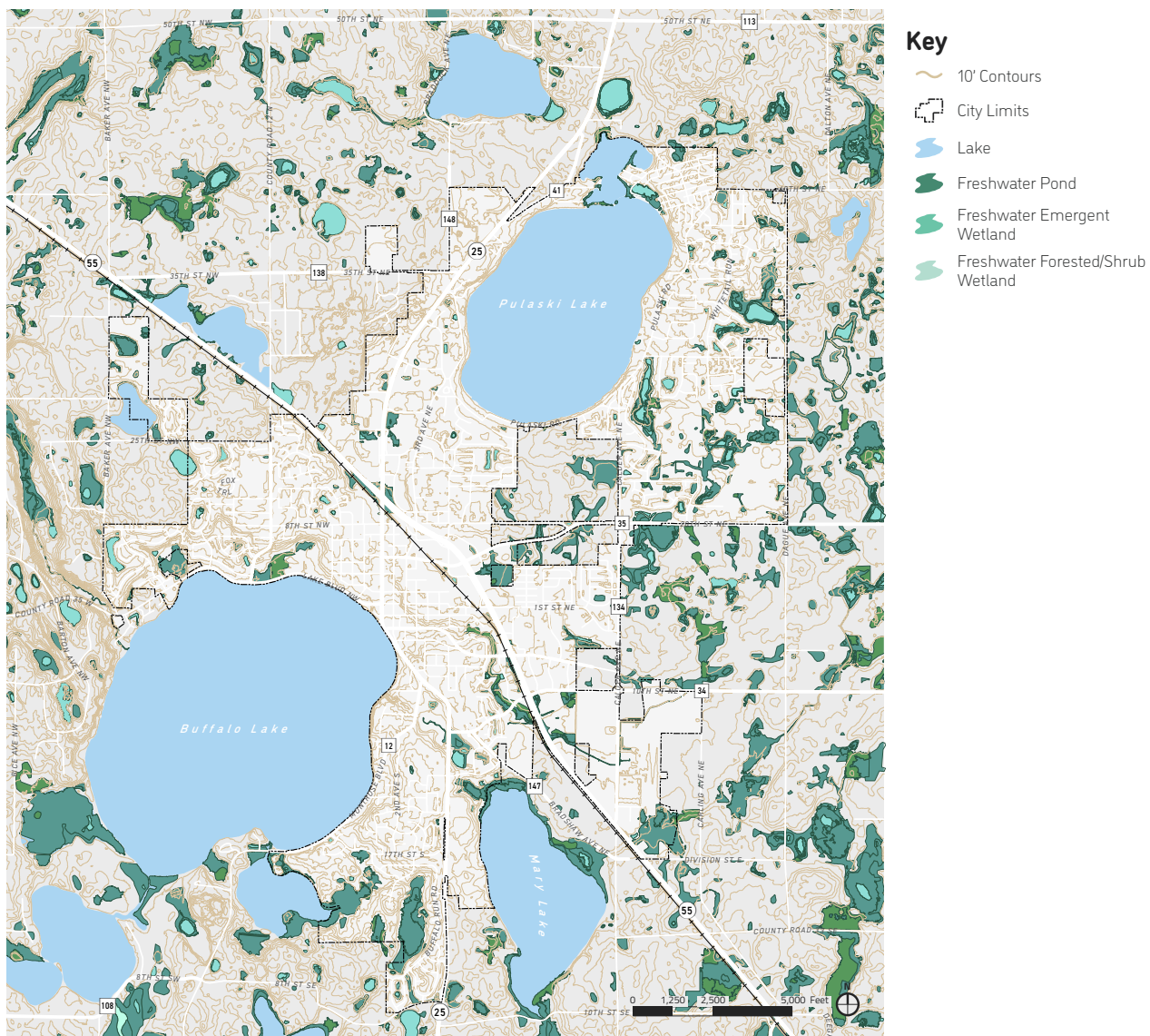


# Environmental Conditions

In developing this 2040 Community Plan, there are several environmental conditions that should be considered when planning for the City's future. The entire study area is within the watershed area of the North Fork of the Crow River.

**Figure 07.1** illustrates waterbodies identified on the National Wetlands Inventory. To the northwest of Buffalo there are considerable wetlands that are smaller in size, which would allow development to better avoid direct wetland conflicts and enable a more environmentally compatible land use pattern.

The area's aggregate resources include sand, gravel, and other similar materials, with a heavy concentration of aggregate-bearing soils to the west and north of Buffalo along Highways 25 & 55. As development occurs, the demand for aggregate becomes more acute as it requires material for road building, concrete and bituminous mixes, and other construction needs - putting Buffalo in a great position to capitalize on this increased demand.



**Figure 07.1** Environmental Conditions



## Buffalo Lake

While Buffalo Lake is a major asset to residents and the City's downtown, it is currently high in phosphorus and thus experiences algae blooms and poor water quality, limiting recreational uses of the lake. Specifically, the lake exceeds the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's water quality deep lake standards for total phosphorus, chlorophyll a, and Secchi disk water clarity. The two largest phosphorus sources are upstream lakes (40%) and internal load (34%), with watershed drainage contributing 17%. The Mill Creek, for example, flows through several lakes including Light Foot Lake before reaching Buffalo Lake.

Additional monitoring is needed to determine what methods would be most effective in reducing phosphorus and improving water quality in Buffalo Lake. Adaptive management could be used to adjust future strategies based on responses to phosphorus reduction methods and treatments. Lake improvement strategies under consideration include:

- + Internal phosphorus load reduction
  - Ongoing rough fish management in Buffalo Lake to reduce stirring up the bottom sediments and

releasing phosphorus; this may also be needed in Light Foot Lake

- Alum treatment of Buffalo Lake once upstream sources have been reduced
- + Upstream Lake phosphorus load reduction by alum and ionization treatment of Light Foot Lake
- + Drainage area phosphorus reductions - stormwater retrofits, agricultural best management practices and education projects; each project would contribute a small reduction in phosphorus and may not be as cost effective as the internal load and upstream reductions

Relevant stakeholders for these proposed efforts to improve Buffalo Lake's water quality include lakeshore property owners, local fishing groups, park visitors and lake users. Possible partners in lake improvement efforts include the Wright County Soil & Water Conservation District, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, North Fork Crow River Watershed District, Wright County, carp harvesting companies, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and agricultural landowners.

## Community Facilities

Early in 2023, the City completed a Facilities Master Plan that provided a comprehensive evaluation for 12 City-owned facilities, including: City Center (*City Hall, Police, Community Center*), Wine & Spirits (*Hwy. 55*), Utilities Services Campus, Streets & Park Maintenance, Civic Center, Water Reclamation and the Buffalo Library. Also assessed were the Downtown Water Treatment Plant (*office and garage spaces*), Centennial Fire Station, Airport (*arrivals and departures office space*) and Wines and Spirits (*downtown*). 10 of the 12 buildings were considered in good condition and functionally adequate, however they also were determined to be undersized for current and/or project needs (*including operations, workflow, programming and capacity for staff, vehicles and equipment*).

Going forward, the Master Plan identified four principles to guide investment and improvements to these facilities:

- + Fiscal Responsibility
- + Communication & Dialogue
- + Long-Term Stewardship of Physical Assets
- + Support Operations & Service Delivery

A 'city center' plan considered various options associated with the City hall, police, and community center buildings. Based on the study, the police station, city hall and streets/utilities facilities were identified as the highest priorities for investment over the next decade. If the City were to invest in all three facilities, the study projected a general cost of approximately \$38.5 million. In addition, the study also suggested if a new community center would be built on the City center campus, it would ideally be a 1 story building of 13,511 SF (*23,778 SF for parking*) on a site of 2-3 acres to allow for future growth.

Source: Oertel Architects, Kraus Andersons & BKV Architects



## Energy Utilities

Buffalo Municipal Utilities (*BMU*) – the utility provider owned-and-operated by the City of Buffalo – purchases wholesale power from a 12-member agency called the Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (*MMPA*), who provides a diverse generation purchasing portfolio and in turn purchases power from other sources within the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (*MISO*). Historically, the City's energy sources have come from both coal and natural gas; due to the decommissioning and closure of coal plants however, natural gas has become the leading source for electric generation. Greener energy solutions are growing and improving, but unfortunately do not yet have the same production consistency or cost-effectiveness as fossil fuels. It is important to note for all forms of energy generation that when a spike increase occurs in each energy market, it directly impacts the cost of wholesale power by increasing the Power Cost Adjustment, thus increasing the cost of electricity to city customers. These price fluctuations can be substantial, with natural gas in 2022 beginning the year at roughly \$4 / MMBtu (*a unit*

*measurement of energy*) before spiking to \$9 / MMBtu; for comparison, BMU's price for natural gas in 2021 at this time was \$2.5 / MMBtu. With this volatility in mind, BMU strives to provide the best service possible and encourages the use of MMPA energy programs and rebates by residents to save money by decreasing energy usage.

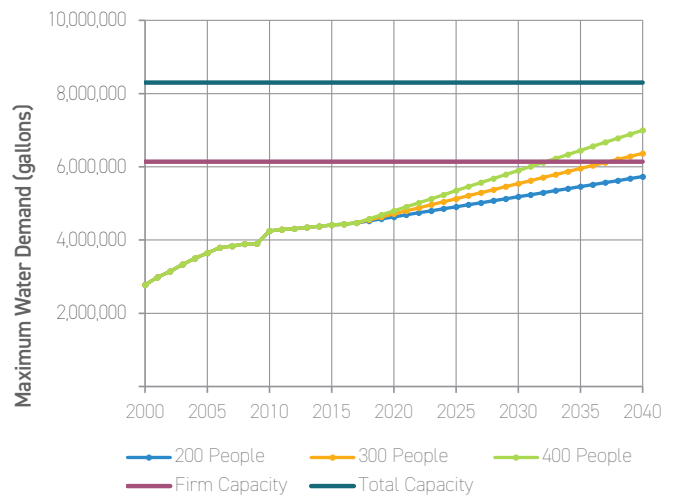
Looking to the future, BMU will continue to convert overhead power lines to an underground power configuration – focusing first on the areas that are difficult to reach and maintain – with the intention of completing this process within the next 15 years. Major electric buildouts are also planned in the future, including the long-term extension of service to the Bella Vista Phase II housing development on the city's western edge as well as other areas that have been slated for residential, commercial, and industrial growth and development. As the City's electric territory expands, an additional electric substation is also expected to be added to the electric grid to provide the city with a robust system and reliable power.

## Water & Sanitary Sewer

The City of Buffalo's Water Treatment Plant (WTP) south of the city limits was built in 1982 with an addition in 1998, and a complete media and underdrain replacement project in the spring of 2022. Through these upgrades the treatment plant and wastewater collection system have continually improved its operations to ensure it meets all EPA and MPCA regulations.

In addition to the improvements above, the WTP has recently undergone improvements in its pretreatment process and is in the planning stages of oxidation ditch and clarifier renovations, while remaining cognizant of future federal and state regulation requirements that may require the addition of a filtration treatment system for phosphorous removal. The wastewater collection system is also utilizing a phased approach in planning for future improvements to its lift stations and collection system, focusing on the areas with the highest need first and planning over time to improve the system while minimizing its impacts on the budget. In light of this 2040 Community Plan, the expected future growth throughout the city has brought about further discussions regarding this future demand and potential increased storage upgrades that may be needed. A capital improvement plan for the WTP was written in May 2019 analyzing three different population growth rates: 200 new residents per year, 300 new residents per year, and 400 new residents per year. Recent years have shown the city is growing between these last two rates, or between 300 and 400 people per year. A typical city resident uses 100 gallons of water per day, with the per-capita usage increasing to 275 gallons of water per person per day during the peak demand in the summer months. To assess the future water needs, the 2019 report used historical demands and the three population rates to determine the average and peak usage in **Figure 07.2**.

As this population growth rate of 300 to 400 people per year would require a new well between 2032–2037, this growth will also result in the WTP nearing its capacity in a similar time frame. Therefore, planning for a new facility should begin well ahead of time as it will take approximately 5 years from a site selection for a new plant to begin operation, and the City should consider budgeting to investigate potential well and water treatment plant sites in the meantime.

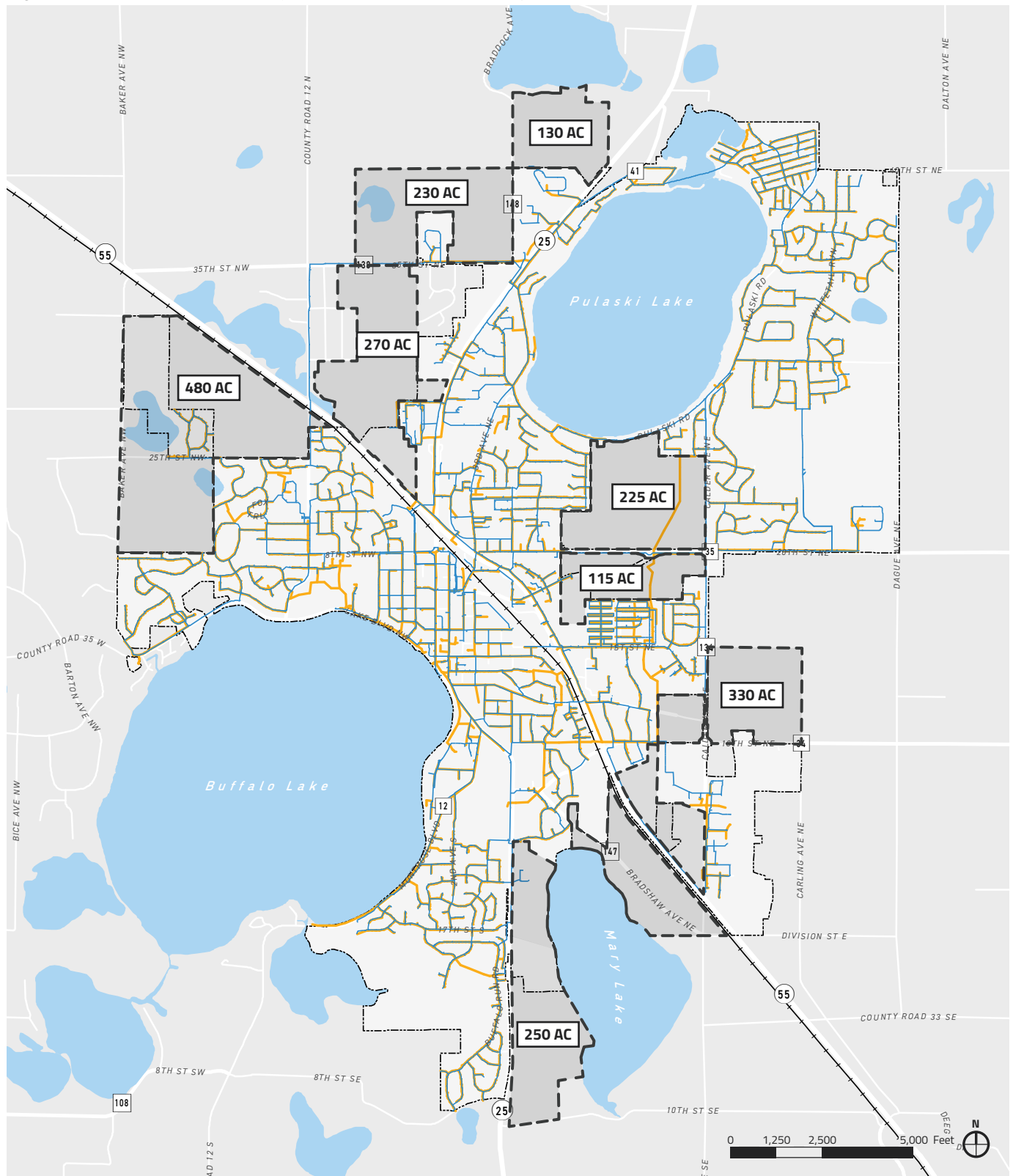


**Figure 07.2** City of Buffalo Future Maximum Day Water Demand with Varying Population (*Image from Bolton & Menk*)

Buffalo's Water Utility has taken a similar approach to the WRP by proactively maintaining its wells and distribution system. Working closely with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), MN Department of Natural Resources and the MN Department of Health, the city's water department strives to conserve the city's water resources and ensure all rules and regulations are met to provide safe reliable drinking water. As regulation standards evolve to determine the type of treatment that will be necessary to mitigate additional contaminants, the Water Utility staff expect new standards to be released for the mitigation and removal of Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and chloride. The removal of PFAS currently requires granular activated carbon and/or membrane filtration, while chloride removal requires lime softening. It is important to note that both treatments are different from our current treatment method (*gravity filtration*) and thus would require additional investment by the City to incorporate these new standards.

Much like the need for a new well and WTP, the projected population growth would also increase the need for water storage either through an additional water tower or reservoir. The remaining water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater infrastructure from 1939–1944 is tentatively scheduled for reconstruction in 2026. Replacement of this older infrastructure will allow for improvements in drinking water, fire and environmental protection, as well as energy savings for the community.

**Figure 07.3** Water Main & Sanitary Sewer Service Area with Proposed Growth Areas



**Key**

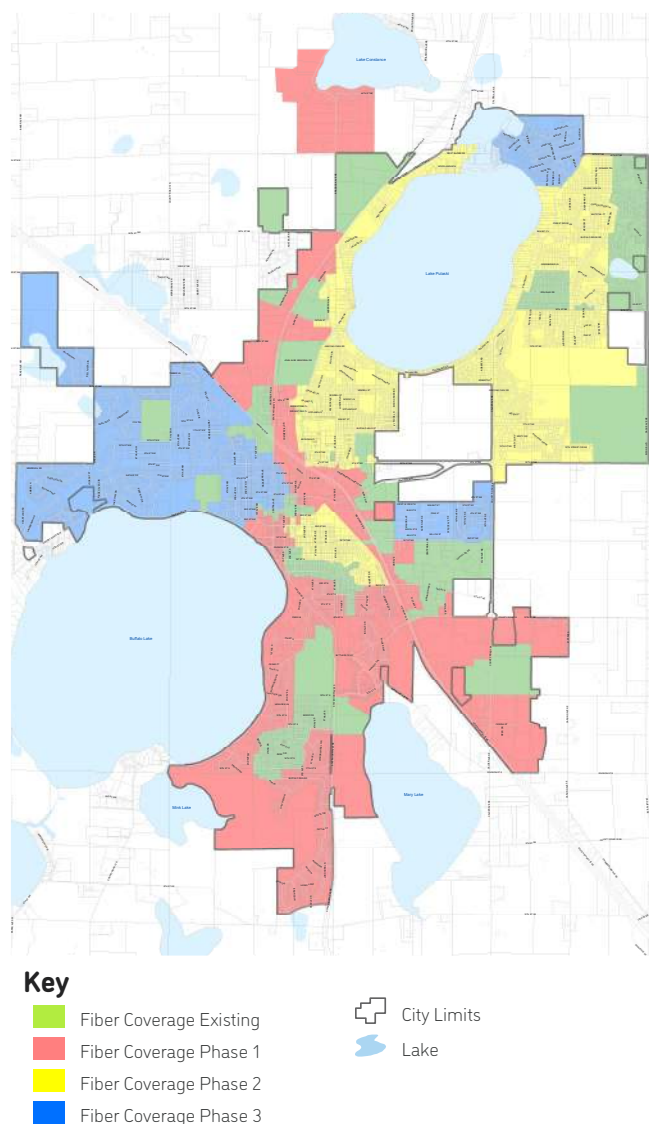
- Water Main
- Sanitary Main

Proposed Growth Areas

- City Limits
- Lake



**Figure 07.4** Fiber Phasing Map (Source: COB Engineering Department)



## Buffalo Fiber

The City of Buffalo will be embarking on a fiber buildout project to provide high-speed, reliable internet access to its residents and businesses. With this additional investment, fiber optic cables will be installed throughout the City's infrastructure, connecting homes, schools, and businesses to the network.

Buffalo Fiber has identified several key benefits to the fiber buildout project, including increased economic development opportunities, improved access to online education and healthcare resources for residents, and better communication and collaboration within the community in regard to this utility. With a greater build-out of fiber, the community at large will have access to superior internet speeds of 1 - 10 Gbps, and increasing as the community needs faster services.

Funding for this build-out will be through a combination of public and private investments, including local and State grants that would help offset the costs of the initial build-out. To ensure the success of the project, Buffalo Fiber will develop a comprehensive plan that includes detailed timelines, cost projections, and performance metrics, as well as strategies for engaging with the community and addressing any concerns or challenges that may arise during the buildout process. While in the works since 2019, this significant investment will begin in 2024 and is expected to conclude by 2029 with a complete City-wide buildout.

The City of Buffalo recognizes that the fiber build-out project is a significant undertaking and will require the support and cooperation of the entire community. By working together, this fiber investment will bring significant benefits to the community and position the City for long-term growth and success.

# Resiliency

Urban resilience is the capacity of a city's systems, businesses, institutions, and individuals to survive, adapt, and thrive no matter what chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience. By strengthening its facilities/assets and understanding the risks that threaten its stability, a city can prepare for the unexpected and improve the well-being of its citizens so that it can prosper in spite of rising challenges. To that end, the 2040 Community Plan prioritizes the following actions to ensure the City's resiliency:

## Ten Essentials for Making Cities Resilient Checklist

1. Organize for disaster resilience. Put in place an organizational structure with strong leadership and clarity of coordination and responsibilities. Establish Disaster Risk Reduction as a key consideration throughout the City's Strategic Plan.
2. Identify, understand, and use current and future risk scenarios. Maintain up-to-date data on hazards and vulnerabilities. Prepare risk assessments based on participatory processes and use these as the basis for urban development of the City and its long-term goals.
3. Strengthen financial capacity for resilience. Prepare a financial plan by understanding and assessing the significant economic impacts of disasters. Identify and develop financial mechanisms to support resilience activities.
4. Pursue resilient urban development and design. Carry out risk-informed urban planning and development based on up-to-date risk assessments with particular focus on vulnerable populations. Apply and enforce realistic, risk compliant building regulations
5. Safeguard natural buffers to enhance the protective functions offered by natural ecosystems. Identify, protect and monitor natural ecosystems within and outside the City geography and enhance their use for risk reduction
6. Strengthen institutional capacity for resilience. Understand institutional capacity for risk reduction including those of governmental organizations; private sector; schools and volunteer organizations, to help detect and strengthen gaps in resilience capacity.
7. Understand and strengthen societal capacity for resilience. Identify and strengthen social connectedness and culture of mutual help through community and government initiatives and multimedia channels of communication.
8. Increase infrastructure resilience. Develop a strategy for the protection, and update the maintenance of critical infrastructure. Develop risk mitigating infrastructure where needed.
9. Ensure effective preparedness and disaster response. Create and regularly update preparedness plans, connect with early warning systems and increase emergency and management capacities.
10. Expedite recovery and build back stronger. Establish post-disaster recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction strategies that are aligned with long-term planning and providing an improved city environment.

Source: The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction





# Implementation

While the 2040 Community Plan recognizes that change and growth will happen over time and incrementally, the following goals and strategies are intended to guide appointed and elected leaders with land use, infrastructure, and investment policy decisions to prepare for this growth.

**Land Use** – A number of areas and sub-areas are guided to support growth and development over the next 20 years. Some of these areas will develop before others and the understood City policy is that land will be annexed as owners petition the City. Future development is focused primarily on residential uses, and it will be important for the City to anticipate where new investments are made with regard to utilities and infrastructure. Downtown Buffalo includes blocks that exhibit historic context; it will be critical to maintain this environment with tools that can support new businesses, assist with building renovations and encourage downtown vitality.

**Housing** – This Community Plan guides more single family residential in the foreseeable future in areas near existing city utilities, while recognizing the need for other affordable housing options. Additionally, a mixed residential land use category allows a variety of detached and attached housing to be developed in a more connected and market-supportive pattern.

**Throughfare & Movement** – The movement network will grow incrementally as new residential, commercial, and industrial uses are implemented with the goal to better connect residents with destinations, schools and employment in a safe and multi-modal manner. The City has a robust stub-street network that will support a connected street network; looped trails, paths and sidewalks should be implemented with street improvements.

**Parks & Trails** – The Plan anticipates improvements and additions to the park and trail system as new development is staged. The need for more active recreational and sports fields will need to be balanced with maintaining and improving the existing system.

**Environment, Energy & Infrastructure** – Buffalo Lake is a major focus for water quality improvement that will depend on key stakeholders working from a commitment to a consolidated policy that implement's necessary changes. Water treatment is another system that will need improvements in the coming years as the City grows, including the exploration of a new well and treatment facility.

**Zoning** – There are new land use categories that will need to be more-closely aligned with the official zoning controls, such as mixed use and mixed residential in downtown. Given the expected growth in the future, now is the time to revisit the zoning code in order to support new urban growth patterns and avoid legal non-conforming uses.

# Goals & Strategies

**Goal #1** Prioritize development in areas where existing infrastructure is already in place.

## Strategies

- 1.1 Require new developments to connect and extend street, water, and sanitary sewer infrastructure necessary to both serve their project and allow for future development of the neighboring properties.
- 1.2 Preserve right-of-way and easement corridors for future streets and utilities.
- 1.3 Explore development incentives that prioritize infill development / redevelopment utilizing existing public infrastructure.
- 1.4 Encourage connectivity among new and existing developments through pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

**Goal #2** Develop a Lake Improvement Plan to improve the quality of Buffalo Lake.

## Strategies

- 2.1 Continue to study the water quality of Buffalo Lake and Lake Pulaski.
- 2.2 Work with Wright County, watershed, and property owners to identify and implement regulations and strategies that make Buffalo Lake safe, inviting and environmentally-sound.
- 2.3 Encourage year-round use of Buffalo Lake and Lake Pulaski while exploring opportunities to increase their access to the general public.

**Goal #3** Promote walkable and interconnected neighborhoods to maintain the small town feel of Buffalo.

## Strategies

- 3.1 Prioritize walkability and mobility in key areas of the City that see increased pedestrian traffic (*downtown, near schools, etc.*).
- 3.2 Coordinate pedestrian improvements with the City's Pavement Management Plan to sync existing investments and projects.
- 3.3 Encourage resident investment and upkeep in older residential neighborhoods of the City through State-backed assistance programs when available, such as the Small Cities Development Program through MN DEED.
- 3.4 Limit the use of culs-de-sac or dead-end streets and require collector streets to connect through proposed developments to provide multiple streets in which to circulate traffic.
- 3.5 Require new development construct connected trails and sidewalks to existing and future adjoining developments.

**Goal #4** Continue to support and enhance downtown.

## Strategies

- 4.1 Support the creation of additional retail storefronts in the downtown.
- 4.2 Work with the Chamber of Commerce to advertise any vacant storefronts downtown to businesses that may serve the needs of both residents living south of the railroad tracks and the general public.
- 4.3 Build on the downtown design guidelines stated in the 2040 Downtown Plan to address current conditions and community preferences while responding to Buffalo's traditional physical form and character.
- 4.4 Consider the implementation of a downtown improvement district or seek a dedicated revenue stream for downtown improvements and upkeep.
- 4.5 Encourage activity and vitality in the downtown both during the day but especially during the evening.

**Goal #5** Identify sites historic to Buffalo residents and seek to preserve them where possible.

### Strategies

- 5.1 Promote public education, awareness, and appreciation of historic and cultural resources in the City.
- 5.2 Task the Heritage Preservation Advisory Board and residents with identifying, documenting, and evaluating historic, architectural, and archaeological resources in the City, and recommend the issuance of awards and recognitions for historic preservation.
- 5.3 Encourage the nomination and designation of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that incorporate heritage preservation.
- 5.4 Seek to preserve when possible the authentic design qualities of historic buildings and encourage reuse and reinvestment.
- 5.5 Support the recognition of residential districts that encompass historical significance. Assist the Heritage Preservation Advisory Board with the creation of a Century Homes program.

**Goal #6** Encourage resident - City engagement through a variety of mediums.

### Strategies

- 6.1 Continue to explore alternative ways to inform the public of City projects and actions.
- 6.2 Seek youth engagement and opportunities for activity for young residents and families.
- 6.3 Explore the creation of a Citizen Academy to connect residents with Departments tasked with various City functions.
- 6.4 Consider the creation of a Youth Advisory Commission to provide a forum for youth engagement directly with City officials.

**Goal #7** Conserve natural resources and settings; manage, enhance, and preserve land and water resources and the natural environment by avoiding development on high-value farmlands, wetlands and floodplains.

### Strategies

- 7.1 Consider adoption of slope preservation and tree canopy preservation ordinances to protect the natural areas and City's watersheds from over-development.
- 7.2 Prohibit development within the floodplain where appropriate and encourage use of greenspace in new developments.
- 7.3 Protect wetlands from unmitigated negative impacts, support healthy watersheds, and enhance existing natural areas.
- 7.4 Prioritize the planting of native vegetation along rivers, wetlands and within public open spaces in city limits. Strive for the incorporation of native plantings on City-owned land wherever feasible.
- 7.5 Explore the City's participation in the Minnesota GreenStep Cities program through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA).

**Goal #8** Retain and attract residents including young professionals, families, and retirees by supporting a range of housing options.

### Strategies

- 8.1 Revise zoning and subdivision ordinances as needed to encourage a wider range of housing types, including mixed-use / multi-family buildings, modular homes and prefabricated housing that blend into surrounding neighborhoods.
- 8.2 Explore opportunities to increase densities in otherwise low-density new development to increase housing diversity and promote greater affordability.
- 8.3 Support policies that encourage duplex and quadplex residential units for new and existing developments when it will blend in with surrounding neighborhoods, while advocating for homeownership.
- 8.4 Support the development of housing that serves a diverse population. Reduce barriers to housing development opportunities.



**Goal #9** Ensure that public facilities and services meet the needs of residents and businesses, especially as new development increases demand for those facilities and services.

### Strategies

- 9.1 Develop a first responders and essential services expansion plan to accommodate anticipated growth.
- 9.2 Maintain a strong relationship with Trailblazer Transit to provide for greater ride frequency to key areas of the City and encourage use by residents.
- 9.3 Incorporate the findings of the 2023 Facilities Study to evaluate future investments in City facilities.
- 9.4 Continue to evaluate the need for a multi-use community center and the benefits it will bring to all users of the community.

**Goal #10** Plan for and support accessibility to traditional and alternative modes of transportation effectively throughout the City, including walking and cycling.

### Strategies

- 10.1 Prioritize maintenance and improvement of transportation infrastructure to support business and employment growth.
- 10.2 Maintain and continually update the City's Pavement Management Plan. Promote infrastructure resiliency and seek environmental sustainability.
- 10.3 Coordinate transportation plans with township, county, and state plans.
- 10.4 Support multi-modal transportation facilities that prioritize safety. Encourage development of environmentally friendly, non-vehicular transportation options.
- 10.5 Pursue a grade-separated railroad crossing within city limits to alleviate congestion and improve access between the northern and southern areas of the City.

**Goal #11** Develop and support a comprehensive system of safe, aesthetically pleasing, and useful parks, trails and open spaces that serve all needs and users in the community.

### Strategies

- 11.1 Increase accessibility to trails, parks, and open spaces and prioritize the connections between existing trails.
- 11.2 Prioritize the development of a variety of parks and green spaces in future development with an emphasis on public realm improvements around common features, such as lakefronts and creek corridors.
- 11.3 Collaborate with other governments, agencies, and organizations to connect the City's recreational trails to the Wright County regional trail and bike networks.
- 11.4 Focus on a trail system that enhances the community's walkability and provides safe access to community parks, schools, and regional trail systems.
- 11.5 Update the Parks and Trails Plan for the City to encourage additional trail connections and investment in community parks, including Bentfield - Mills.

**Goal #12** Strengthen the local economy and increase opportunities for growth and investment of new businesses, employment, manufacturing, and industrial development.

### Strategies

- 12.1 Coordinate existing community plans to direct development incentives, annual budgets, and capital improvement planning towards projects that grow the City's economy.
- 12.2 Support the development of public and private partnerships that aid existing and potential businesses.
- 12.3 Market Buffalo as a premier place to grow families and businesses. Improve visibility of and access to businesses.
- 12.4 Invest in fiber to the home.
- 12.5 Explore the acquisition and development of a new industrial / business park that provides substantial employment opportunities, incorporates high-quality buildings, and delivers the highest return on investment.

**Goal #13** Invest in high-quality education by supporting the creation of opportunities within public and private entities to provide youth with professional experiences.

**Strategies**

- 13.1 Continue to partner with the Buffalo-Montrose-Hanover School District and Wright County Economic Development Partnership (*WCEDP*) to provide these tools where it already exists.
- 13.2 Explore workforce-development initiatives that channel the available workforce to job vacancies with existing and future employers.

**Goal #14** Encourage art and wayfinding within the community.

**Strategies**

- 14.1 Support and partner with local artists to showcase art, specifically in the downtown and where appropriate.
- 14.2 Consider art and artists when adding to and improving the community with wayfinding and artistic signs, placards, and markers.