

City of Milaca

Comprehensive Plan



The Milaca Comprehensive Plan

City of Milaca

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2006	2007
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2007

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Introduction and Purpose

This is an update of the comprehensive plan prepared by the City of Milaca in 1998. Ongoing city planning has helped make Milaca a desirable place to live, work and play. It has provided certainty and direction to homeowners and investors and helped the City make cost-effective investments in streets, parks and utilities.

This plan recognizes and takes advantage of the fact that Milaca's two greatest physical assets – the Rum River and Highway 169 – will continue to attract and shape growth. Consequently, the Milaca community is well positioned to accommodate growth in housing and businesses and to serve that growth with roads, utility lines and parks.

The elements of this plan are:

- Analysis of Conditions
- Land Use Plan
- Transportation Plan
- Park System Plan

The purpose of a comprehensive plan is to establish policy direction for those elements over which the City has jurisdiction. These include the pattern of land development and public facilities such as streets, utilities and parks. Land development is regulated through the City's zoning ordinance and map, which is prepared or amended with guidance from the comprehensive land use plan map and policies. Any change in the pattern of land use or in the development of a property is initiated by the owner, not the City. The City's role in the land development process is to administer the regulations of the zoning ordinance and to consider public comments on those aspects that are discretionary, such as amendments to the zoning ordinance or map. The City also has jurisdiction over the construction of streets and utilities that serve land development.

Analysis of Conditions

This section of the *Milaca Comprehensive Plan* summarizes the major conditions, trends and issues in the subjects of:

- Demographics
- Land use
- Natural resources
- Road system
- Park system
- Public utilities

In addition, the results are summarized of an issue identification session held with members of the Milaca City Planning Commission and invited civic leaders and members of the public.

The analysis focuses on identifying the major planning issues. The issues pose questions that should be answered by the Plan Elements. Interrelationships among issues will be sought, and the major or root issues will, hopefully be identified. By framing the issues in the form of questions, the community is compelled to clearly describe the problem or opportunity. This process will focus the comprehensive plan on the most important matters and help it be strategic and concise.

Demographic Trends

Characteristics in 2000

These conclusions and observations may be drawn about the Milaca population (in April, 2000) from Table 1:

- **Population:** Milaca is the second largest city in Mille Lacs County and the County seat.
- **Household Composition:** Milaca has a higher percentage of single-persons and single-person households than Mille Lacs County or the State of Minnesota.
- **Household Size:** The average size of a household or a family in Milaca is lower than that of the county or the state.
- **Age:** The median age of the Milaca population is higher than that of the county or the state. (This can be expected to change as more young families move into Milaca as the city grows.)
- **Housing Vacancy:** Milaca has a relatively low percentage of vacant housing units but a higher than normal percentage of rental units in the housing stock.
- **Detached Housing Units:** The percentage of single-family homes in Milaca is higher than the county but lower than the state.

- **Unemployment:** The unemployment rate is significantly higher than the statewide average and incomes are substantially lower.
- **Poverty:** The percentage of families and individuals living under the defined poverty level is higher in Milaca than in Minnesota as a whole, although the numbers are small. The percentage of female-headed households in poverty is lower than that of the state, but once again small in absolute numbers.
- **Industries:** Compared to the state average, Milaca has a higher percentage of workers employed in manufacturing, retail trade and education but lower in agriculture, wholesale trade, transportation, finance-insurance-real estate.

Table 1
Key Demographic Characteristics, 2000

Characteristic	City of Milaca	%	Mille Lacs County	%	State of Minnesota	%
Population	2,580		22,030			
Households	1,113		8,638			
Median Age	40.3		38.0			35.4
Under 18	581	22	5,522	25		26
Average household size	2.14		2.53			2.52
Average family size	2.82		3.03			3.09
Housing Units	1,164		10,467			
Vacant	49	4		17		8.3
Rental		35		20		
In labor force	1,135		11,272			
Unemployment rate		3.6		3.5		2.9
Median household income	26,964		36,977		47,111	
Median family income	40,739		44,054		58,864	
Per capita income	17,005		17,656		23,198	
Single-family homes	561	48	3,791	36		68
Median value of SF homes	77,700		91,000		122,400	
Occupation						
Mgt, professional	329	31		24		36
Service	165	16		16		14
Sales and office	225	21		23		26
Farming, fishing, forestry	12	1		1		1
Construction	87	8		11		8
Production, transportation	243	23		25		15
Industry						
Agriculture	16	1		4		3
Construction	68	6		8		6
Manufacturing	198	19		22		16
Wholesale trade	12	1		2		4
Retail trade	155	15		12		12
Transportation, utilities	36	3		5		5
Information	24	2		2		3
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	47	4		4		7
Professional, mgt., admin.	25	2		3		9

Analysis of Conditions and Issues

Characteristic	City of Milaca	%	Mille Lacs County	%	State of Minnesota	%
Education, health	310	29		20		21
Arts, entertainment, food	88	8		9		7
Public administration	21	2		3		3
Families below poverty level	66	10		7		5.1
With female head	13	12		22		19
With children under 18	13	19		27		25
Individuals below poverty level	372	16		10		7.9
Housing units in structure (Dec. 2004)						
1	728	61		70		68
2	37	3		2		3
3 or 4	49	4		2		2
5 to 9	77	7		2		2
10 to 19	68	6		2		4
20 +	125	10		4		11
Mobile home	108	9		14		5
Total	1,194	100				
Year structure built						
1999 to March 2000	19	2		3		2
1995 to 1998	122	11		9		7
1990 to 1994	74	6		8		7
1980 to 1989	118	10		13		14
1970 to 1979	168	14		20		18
1960 to 1969	115	10		10		12
1940 to 1959	228	20		15		19
1939 or earlier	315	27		21		21

Source: US Census of Population, 2000

Population Forecast

State Demographer: According to the State Demographer, Milaca is forecast to grow at the same annual percentage rate during the 2005 to 2025 period as it did during the 1990 to 2000 period, 1.7 percent per year. That forecast is only about 30 net additional people per year, or an annual average of about 10 net new housing units. Thus, the State Demographer forecasts a year 2020 population of 3,344 and year **2025** level of **3,500**.

Recent Trends: However, the pace of housing construction in the 2000 through 2004 period (a time of rapid housing growth throughout the region, state and nation) has averaged 21 units per year (not counting mobile homes and assisted living units). If that rate were sustained until **2025**, the City's population in that year would be **3,712**, approximately 400 people or 160 housing units higher than what the State is predicting.

Table 2
New Housing Units in Milaca, 2000 – 2004

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Average
New Housing Units	10	28	22	24	19	21

Note: These figures do not include manufactured housing, which obtains building permits from the city or county in which it is constructed. They also do not include assisted-living units for the elderly, which is considered commercial construction. Source: City of Milaca

Table 3
Annual Population Growth Rates, Historic and Forecast

	Percentage Annual Growth Rate	
	1990-2000	2005-2025
Milaca	1.7	1.7 to 2.1
Mille Lacs County	1.3	1.9

Source: McCombs Frank Roos Associates, Inc., 2005

Wastewater Treatment Facility Plan: For purposes of estimating the needed size of the proposed new wastewater treatment plant, City officials forecast in 2005 a year 2020 population of 3,600, which could be extended to a year **2025 population of 3,950**. That forecast was based on the population growth trend of Mille Lacs County.

Conclusion: Therefore, for purposes of land use planning, it is predicted that the year **2025** Milaca population will be in the range of **3,700 to 4,000**, an annual rate of increase of 1.6 to 2.5 percent.

Table 4
Population History and Forecast

	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	2005	2025
Milaca	1,940	2,100	2,200	2,355	2,580	2,662	3,950
Mille Lacs County	15,700	18,400	18,700	19,800	21,800	24,300	32,300

Source: Minnesota State Demographer, 2002; McCombs Frank Roos Associates, 2005.

Growth in the County: The growth rate in Mille Lacs County as a whole is forecast to increase to 1.9 percent annually from the 1.3 annual rates seen during the 1990s. This indicates a rising rate of rural non-farm housing in the county, a trend witnessed in many counties ringing the Twin Cities. Studies have shown that new rural housing lessens the demand for housing construction in cities such as Milaca and tends to increase public costs for the county, township and school district beyond the increase in property tax revenue. In addition, there has been strong growth in many freestanding cities around the Twin Cities metro area that have a municipal wastewater treatment plant and good highway access, such as Milaca.

The rate of growth in households and housing units should be monitored by City officials and if a dramatic, sustained increase beyond this forecast occurs, this Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed as to its implications.

Natural Resources

Rivers and Brooks

The Rum River is the defining natural characteristic of Milaca, one of its most important amenities.

The Rum is designated by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources as a Wild and Scenic River and protected through special zoning regulations adopted by the City of Milaca consistent with model regulations promulgated by the DNR. The floodplain of the Rum River and other streams are protected by the City's floodplain and shoreland ordinances.

For decades, the Rum River formed the western boundary of Milaca. Sewer and water utilities have been extended west of the river, and it is no longer a major impediment to urban growth to the west. Recently, housing and other development has occurred west of the river, particularly along the Minnesota Highway 23 corridor.



The Rum River adjacent to Recreational Park.

Streams running through Milaca include:

- Chase Brook, in the northwest portion of Milaca; drains to the Rum River
- O'Neill Brook in the northeast; drains to the Rum River
- Vondell Brook, on the east side of the city.

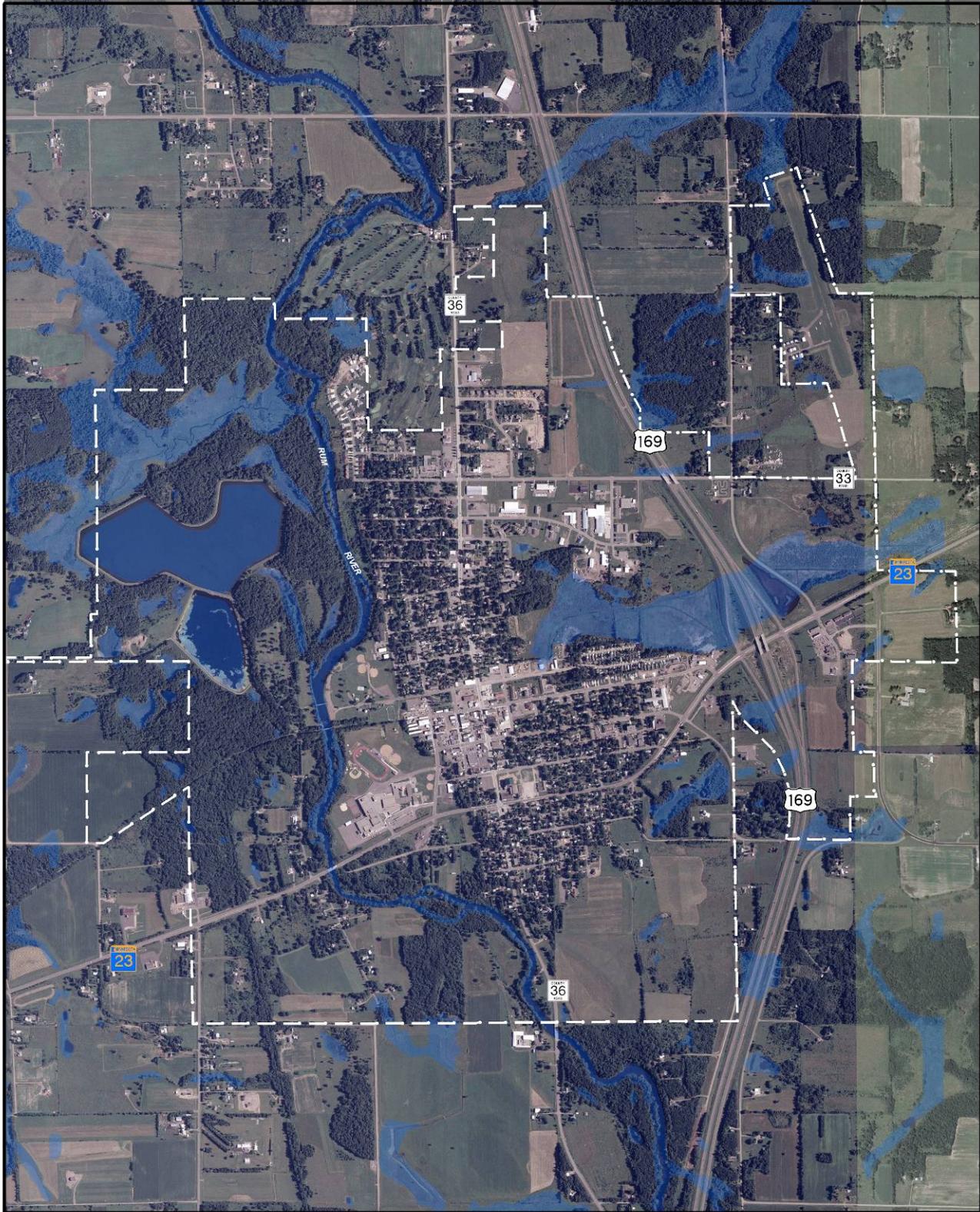
Chase and O'Neill Brooks join the Rum River at approximately the same point on the north side of the city, north of the municipal wastewater treatment ponds.

Wetlands and Floodplains

The pattern of wetlands in and around Milaca is illustrated by Figure 1, Aerial Photo, on page 7. The greatest concentrations of wetlands are along the streams but there is also a significant wetland parallel to the abandoned railroad tracks. These important features are protected by regulations adopted by the County, the DNR and/or the US Army Corps of Engineers. (Mille Lacs County administers the wetland and shoreland regulations in the City of Milaca.)

There are several areas of floodplain associated with the Rum River and the creeks. A City ordinance regulates the type and intensity of land development there with the intention of reducing or preventing loss of property or life during periods of high water, protecting the natural characteristics of the streams, and reducing the extent and severity of downstream flooding.

Obviously, the extensive wetlands, floodplains and publicly-owned property northwest of the city present a major impediment to growth in that direction. However, growth opportunities are strong in other directions, particularly the southwest, south and southeast, because of soils, utilities, access, land use patterns and natural amenities.



2003 FSA Aerial

 CITY BOUNDARY
 NWI-WETLANDS

0 250 500 1,000 1,500 Feet

Figure 1
Aerial Photo

East of Highway 169, soils, access and land use patterns are conducive to further commercial and industrial development.

Soils and Farmlands

Soil conditions in and around Milaca outside the mapped wetlands and floodplains are generally good for constructing buildings and roads.

On the perimeter of Milaca, soils that are prime for agriculture are most prevalent in the southeast near the Rum River where relatively level conditions exist on the outwash plain. Those soils are underlain by sand and gravel and lack the dense hard pan that limits drainage in many locations near Milaca.



Prime farmland in southeastern Milaca.

Wooded Areas

There are significantly-sized areas of mature forest west of the Rum River, both north and south of Highway 23, some of which are owned by the City as part of its wastewater treatment pond system, some of which is limited in development by virtue of being designated wetland, floodplain, shoreland and/or Wild and Scenic River corridor. A smaller wooded area exists along O'Neill Brook northeast of the city.

These woods are a major amenity for residential growth when not encumbered by any of the water protection designations.



A wooded area along the Rum River near Central Avenue S. on the south side of Milaca.

Land Use and Growth Management

Milaca grew up around the intersection of four transportation features – US Highway 169, State Highway 23, the railroad line and the Rum River. The historic pattern of Main Street shops, railroad industries and grid-pattern residential neighborhoods occurred on the upland locations east of the Rum River. Several large areas of undeveloped open space were created by the wetlands and river floodplains along with the publicly-owned land designated for wastewater treatment west of the river. (See Figure 1, page 7.)

Residential Neighborhoods

Most of the housing in Milaca is set in a pattern of rectilinear lots and blocks along shaded streets. The attractive streetscape created by having porches on the front and garages to the rear coupled with relatively high density gives Milaca its charming traditional small town look and feel. The conditions of the housing stock vary from very good and attractive to extensive deferred maintenance.

In recent time, housing development has accelerated on the fringes of the communities on larger lots and curvilinear street patterns. For the first time, a residential plat was approved east of Highway 169, opening a major new area for housing growth. Housing west of the river has been served by private, on-site wastewater treatment and wells, but municipal sewer lines are now available there, and further west side residential growth can occur on smaller parcels. In 2005, the first sewer residential plat was approved west of the Rum River.

A new trend in Milaca land use is the neighborhood of single-story townhouses and duplexes along the Rum River, some of which abut the Milaca Golf Club course (and some which were located in the Wild and Scenic River zoning district). These are designed and predominately marketed for “empty-nesters,” retirees and other childless couples, and the grounds are maintained by a homeowners’ association.

A sizable area of manufactured housing exists along the north side of First Street E. including a variety of sizes of homes, providing affordable housing.

Land Use Conflicts

Some conflicts in the pattern of land use have occurred that allowed industrial or commercial development near residential neighborhoods. These may have been the result of the changing impression of what is the long-term “edge” of the community coupled with an insufficient forecast of housing growth. For example, the industrial area along Eight Street NE was once on the far perimeter of Milaca but now there is housing to the north. Additional land along Sixth Avenue NE is zoned for industrial development adjacent to land zoned for housing.

A reverse example of land use conflict is the residential neighborhood that was approved east of Highway 169 and north of Minnesota 23 in a location that was guided in the 1998 plan for industry and business. That decision will cause the future land use for that quadrant near the municipal airport to be reconsidered.

Commercial Development

Commercial development is occurring in the southeast quadrant of the interchange of Highways 169 and 23, which is a natural location for that pattern. Housing should not be allowed in that vicinity (contrary to the 1998 plan), and the road and intersection pattern should be planned carefully to nurture further investment there.

Parks

Milaca has six parks, which are further described on page 15 of this Analysis of Conditions. The locations of five of them are shown on Figure 2, Existing Land Use (page 11).

Government and Schools

The City has created a new government center along First Street E, on the eastern edge of the downtown, which will include the recently-constructed City Hall and a new City library. The Mille Lacs County courthouse and offices are located in Milaca six blocks east of the City Hall along Second Street SE, in a government and health care campus.

The Milaca school district has established a large campus for an elementary and high school along the Rum River west of downtown north of Highway 23. This central location serves the city and county well.

Milaca has a municipal airport, which is located northeast of the community. This facility, with its grass runway, is suited for small, private aircraft.

Railroad Corridors

The Burlington Northern Railroad once served Milaca but that line, which ran parallel to Highway 23 and branched on the west side of town, has been abandoned. The right-of-way is intact except through the heart of the city where it has been sold to adjacent property owners. West of the downtown, the City owns the corridor and allows it to be used as a snowmobile trail. The branch line that once ran south has been abandoned and the land sold to adjacent property owners.

Zoning Pattern

Milaca administers a zoning ordinance and map that closely reflects the pattern of existing land use. Of special note is the C-1, Conservation, district that protects the large wetland areas and the major publicly-owned forests, and the C-2, Wild and Scenic River, district that lines the Rum River to a depth of 300 feet and enforces the State protections of that resource.

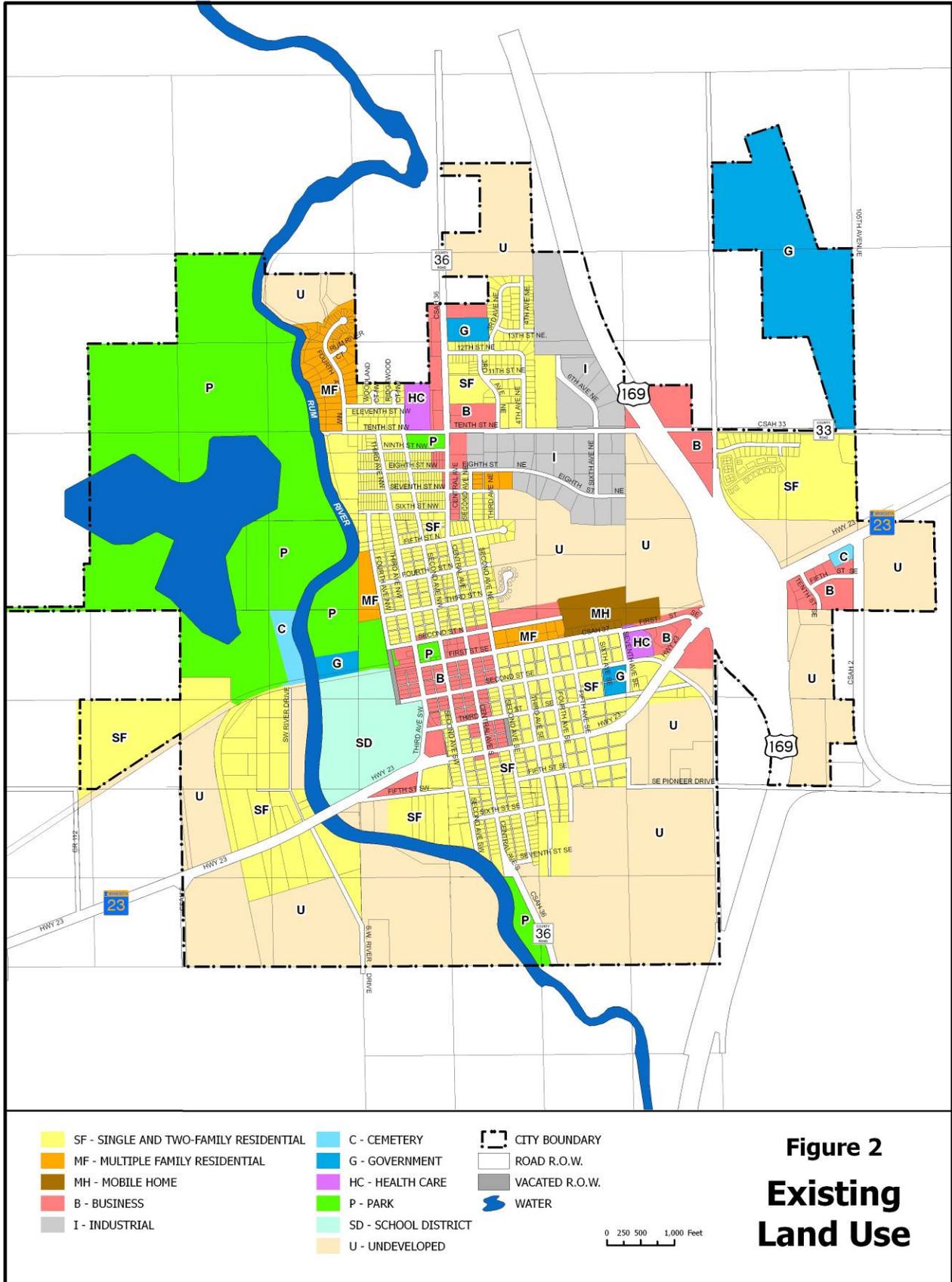


Figure 2
Existing
Land Use

Development Opportunity Sites

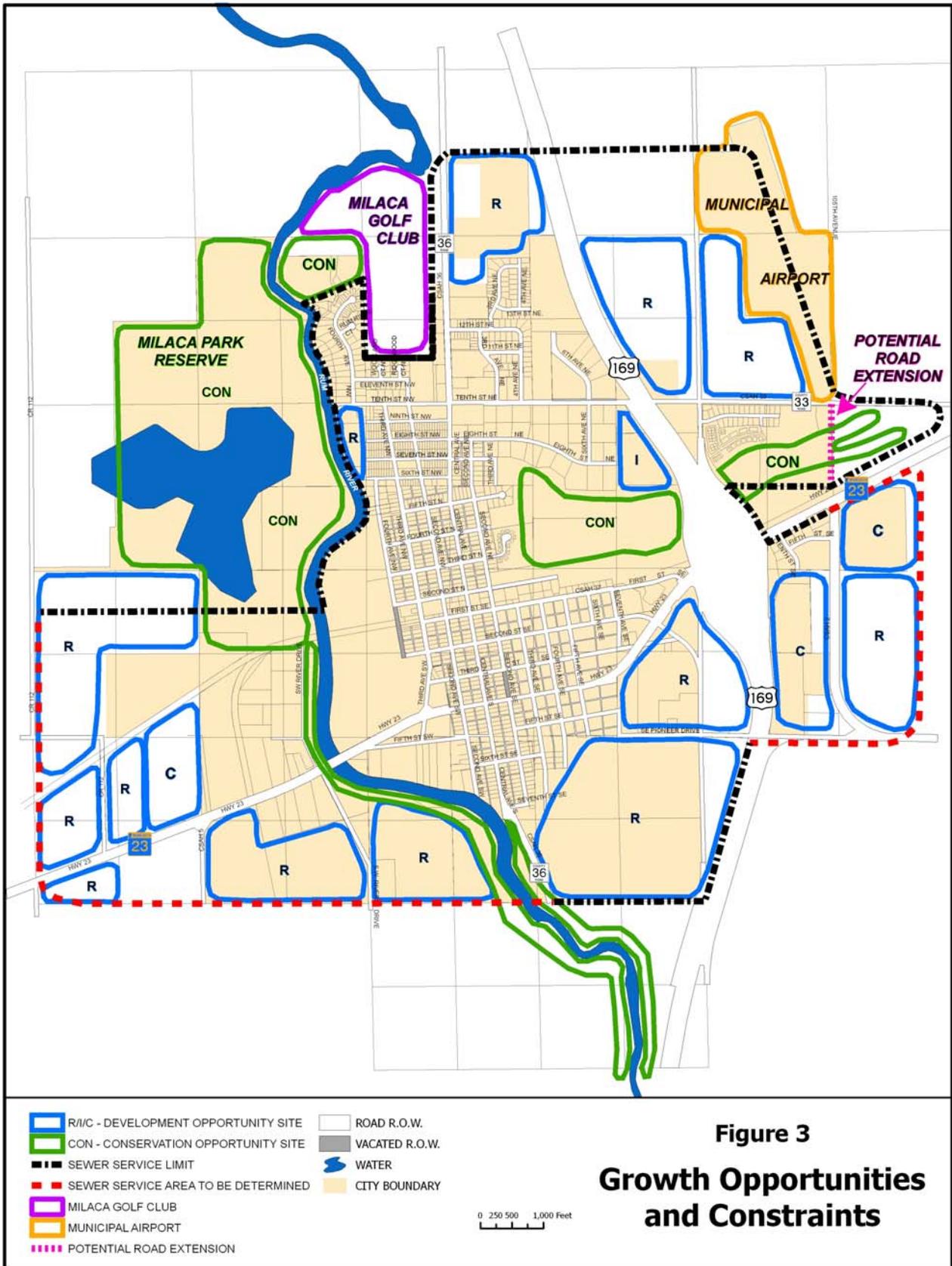
The City of Milaca appears to include enough land that is undeveloped and not restricted by protective regulations (wetlands, floodplains, shorelands) or public ownership to accommodate its residential growth needs for at least the next twenty years. However, some of these potential development sites may not currently be available because of the land owners' reluctance to sell their property at this time. Other properties could be annexed to the City and served by municipal water and sewer lines upon petition from the landowners or other means established by State law. Annexation could serve to keep market prices for land in a competitive balance.

Figure 3 (page 13) illustrates the location of possible development opportunity sites along with municipal utility service areas.

There are several attractive locations in or near Milaca that are suited for future residential expansion:

- **North:** East of Central Avenue N. (CSAH 36), opposite the Milaca Golf Club
- **Southeast:** South of Pioneer Drive and east of Central Avenue S. (CSAH 36), with views to the river
- **South:** East and west of Southwest River Drive
- **Southwest:** North and south of Highway 23, west of the city boundary

Unfortunately, some prime residential areas on the fringe of Milaca have been divided into "acreage" lots that are too small to be easily re-subdivided but too large to economically serve with municipal sewer and water lines. These consume valuable land and force municipally-serviced plats further out. The City should ensure that no more harmful sprawl developments occur in its long-term path of growth by either annexing land or convincing the County to plan and zone such properties in a way that prevents it. Fortunately, there are only a few instances of this problem around Milaca.



Road System

State and County Highways

Access to Milaca is provided by US Highway 169 and Minnesota Highway 23, which runs west to St. Cloud and east to Mora and I-35. This excellent regional access bodes well for long-term economic and residential growth.

Highway 169 formerly ran through the heart of the city but was relocated to its current alignment as a divided expressway.

County State-Aid Highway (CSAH) 36 is designated along Central Avenue through the downtown. That road provides a beautiful entry drive into Milaca from the south along the Rum River.

CSAH 33 (Tenth Street NE) runs through the industrial park and provides a link under Highway 169, one of only two crossings of Highway 169 in Milaca.

CSAH 37 is designated on First Street E and CSAH 2 on Second Street SE.

Approximately one mile north of the City, CSAH 9 runs east-west and intersects Highway 169.

CSAH 5 provides a link to the south west of the Rum River parallel to Highway 169.

Local Streets

The local street system in Milaca is mostly a grid pattern and nearly every street is interconnected with others; there are very few cul-de-sac streets. This means that driving pressure on the arterial roads is lessened, and bicycling and walking are improved. Most streets have sidewalks and boulevard trees. The old neighborhoods also have alleys, which allows the front of the house, facing the street, to present a porch and a pleasant façade to the street rather than a large, blank garage door and driveway. A pattern of interconnected local streets should be continued in the new neighborhoods.

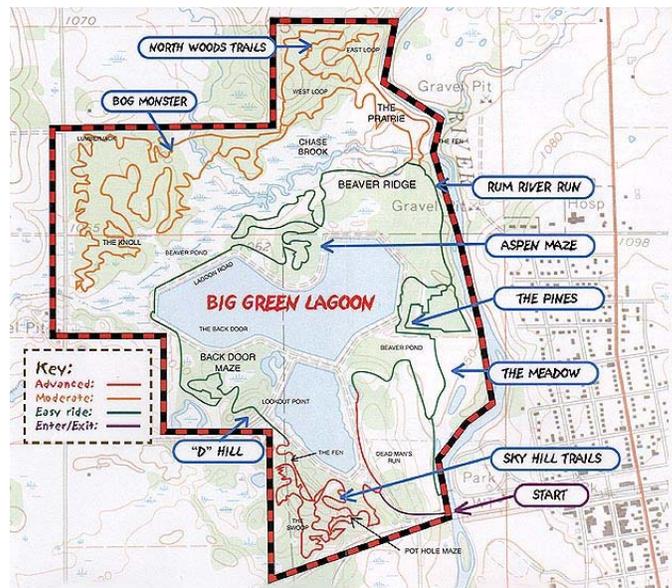
Planned Road System Improvements

The 1998 *Milaca Comprehensive Plan* designated several future local or collector streets on the perimeter of the community, but those recommendations should be revisited for feasibility and supplemented to reflect growth since then.

Park System

There are six parks in Milaca as illustrated by Figure 2, Existing Land Use (page 11):

1. Milaca Park Reserve: 100 acres; wooded open space, water and off-road bicycle trails
2. Recreational Park – 20 acres – east side of the Rum River
3. Trimble Park – 4.5 acres; Second Street NW and Second Avenue NW
4. Rieneke Park – 4.5 acres; Central Avenue North at Tenth Street NW
5. Riverview Park – 10 acres; east side of the Rum River near the southern City limits
6. Boulder Ridge Park – 2.5 acres; east of Highway 169 and north of Highway 23 (planned as part of the neighborhood subdivision but not yet acquired as of 2006)



Milaca Park Reserve

After the new municipal sewage treatment plant is built southwest of the city and the lagoon in Milaca Park Reserve is no longer used as a sewage treatment pond, the City will perform soil correction work and the ponds will gradually revert to a natural condition. They will then become more suitable as a centerpiece of the park.

The former Burlington Northern Railroad corridors in the southwestern quadrant of the City are now owned by the City and allowed to be used as snowmobile trails.

The major park system questions for Milaca are:

1. Where to locate future neighborhood parks?

2. Whether there will be a need for a single, large community athletic complex for sports such as soccer, softball and baseball?

Public Utilities

The present service areas for the sanitary sewer system are illustrated by Figure 3, Growth Opportunities and Constraints (page 13). For the most part, these limitations are based on current physical and engineering limitations. However, in the southeast and southwest quadrants of the community, the sewer service limits will be determined by investment decisions determined jointly by the City and prospective developer(s) regarding the location and timing of lift stations and trunk lines.

- In the southwest, in particular, the future limits will be determined by the decision as to where to locate the lift station that will pump sewage up to the planned treatment facility southwest of the City.
- There exists a sewage lift (pump) station in the southeast quadrant that serves the commercial properties there as well as the gravity flow from the City of Bock.

The City of Milaca is planning to build a new wastewater treatment plant southwest of the community to accommodate future demand and meet water quality discharge regulations. A regional system with the Cities of Pease, Foreston and Bock plus Borgholm Township was under discussion in 2005.

Until 2007, Milaca provided drinking water from a treatment plant located along the Rum River at the south end of Recreational Park. The plant did not have sufficient capacity to accommodate forecast needs so construction began on a new facility in 2006 (completed in 2007) southwest of the City. The geographic service area of the lines and elevated pressure tanks exceed the present service area of the sanitary sewer system.

Identified Problems and Opportunities

Members of the Milaca City Planning Commission met on July 11, 2005, along with approximately 20 other individuals from local businesses, organizations and public agencies (including adjacent townships and the County) to begin the process of updating the *Milaca Comprehensive Plan*. The session included an exercise to identify and discuss problems confronting the community along with positive possibilities for the future. The outcome of that exercise is summarized below.

Problems

Growth

- Growth constraints are created by the presence of the Rum River and its floodplain, the municipal airport and the Milaca Park Reserve. However, these constraints are minor and there remains plenty of other property to accommodate forecast urban growth.
- Proper zoning is needed in the adjacent townships to preserve large tracts for subdivision to City-sized lots and service with City utilities.

Downtown

- Lack of downtown business district growth
- Downtown parking

Economic Development

- Lack of an economic development strategy
- More and better-paying jobs needed.

Transportation

- Local residential streets are too narrow.
- Transportation and transit difficulties for senior citizens
- Traffic control and excess speeds
- Excessive traffic growth.

Public Facilities

- Public schools are full to their maximum.
- Lack of parks in perimeter neighborhoods.
- Lack of youth recreation facilities; nothing for them to do; town closes early.
- Surfacewater drainage; localized flooding; Rum River floodplain flooding.

Housing

- Residential lot sizes are too small.
- Insufficient choice in housing, especially in apartments.

Intergovernmental Coordination

- Lack of coordination, communication and joint planning between the City and Mille Lacs County.
- Lack of communication between the City and its two adjacent townships.
- Planning and paying for public facilities; need regional cooperation on major utilities (e.g., sanitary sewage treatment).
- Difficult to coordinate the plans of the many agencies that are involved in development.
- Insufficient membership in service clubs and other volunteer organizations; people, especially those with children, are very busy and overwhelmed by other responsibilities.

Opportunities and Assets

Natural Features

- The beautiful Rum River.

Growth

- Growth can be managed and sustainable.
- There are several locations where City sewer and water lines can be extended to serve new subdivisions for housing or business.

Urban Design

- Milaca should retain or build a sense of “place.” It should retain its traditional small town look and feel while it grows. It should have features that give people a reason to get off Highway 169 and investigate.
- Residential neighborhoods should have narrow streets, trees and sidewalks. The garages should not be visually dominant. (Alternative view: the streets should be wide.)
- The rural atmosphere of Milaca should be retained.

Transportation

- Good regional transportation access via Highways 169 and 23 as well as County State-Aid Highway 36 and 5.

Downtown

- The downtown, which still has some shops, including a grocery store. Downtown provides a sense of place to Milaca.
- A strong downtown should be retained. There should be retail shops, a Post Office, banks and a grocery store. It should be walkable and interesting.

Public Facilities

- The municipal airport is a facility not found in many cities of the size of Milaca.
- The Milaca Park Reserve is a large and beautiful area with a highly-regarded system of off-road bicycling paths. It will become an even better park when the sewage treatment facility is relocated.
- The park system should be enlarged on the perimeter of the community to serve new growth.
- The park system should have large athletic fields where tournaments could be held, a place for a community gathering, and neighborhood parks that people can walk to.

Social

- Community spirit should be retained.
- The several churches help build a positive spirit and contribute to community health.

Several possible role models for Milaca were proposed: Mora, Hinckley, Aitkin, Little Falls and Cambridge. Another suggestion was simply to create a Better Milaca, a city that in unique onto itself.

Major Planning Issues

The following issues should be discussed, debated and resolved during the course of this planning process:

Land Use and Development

- In which directions should the city expand?
- Should the land use plan for the area east of Highway 169 be revised to show housing instead of employment north of Highway 23 and employment instead of housing south of Highway 23?
- Should Milaca plan for long-term residential growth west and north of the wastewater treatment plant property?

Natural Resources

- Should the City adopt its own wetland preservation ordinance and assume regulation of wetlands from Mille Lacs County?

Parks

- Where should additional neighborhood park land be acquired?
- Should the City acquire a large site for a future community athletic complex for sports such as soccer, softball and baseball?
- Should the City proactively purchase land in advance of neighborhood development to ensure that it obtains the most appropriate sites?
- Should the abandoned railroad corridors be improved as bicycle paths?

Road System

- Where should new collector roads be built on the perimeter of the city?

Public Utilities

- What investments should the City make to extend the limit of sanitary sewer service in the southwestern and southeastern quadrants of the community? (Southwest: south of Highway 23 and west of the Rum River. Southeast: east of Highway 169 and south of Highway 23).

Milaca Land Use Plan

Land Use Plan Overview

The Land Use Plan provides guidance for public and private decisions about the future use of land and the structures built upon the land. The chapter addresses all land currently within the City, as well as land presently outside of the City, but which may be annexed into the City in the foreseeable future or which may influence the growth of the City. The purpose of the chapter is to encourage the orderly development of Milaca, create an attractive and efficient urban environment for the benefit of the larger urban area, and protect the City's capacity for the future expansion of its tax base.

The chapter includes both a map of the preferred land use pattern and the set of related objectives and policies needed to achieve the desirable long-term future for the Milaca community. The key provisions of the other chapters of the *Comprehensive Plan* critical to the physical development of Milaca are integrated into the Land Use policies.

The Land Use chapter translates the community vision for future growth into a recommended physical pattern of neighborhoods, commercial and industrial areas, roads and public facilities. Land Use policies seek to influence the location, type, amount, and timing of future growth through private real estate development, public investment in infrastructure and community facilities, and conservation of natural areas. In addition, the chapter policies are intended to ensure that the environment and other long-term public interests are given adequate consideration, and to prevent or mitigate the negative effects of incremental, ad hoc, and laissez-faire market decisions.

The Land Use Plan will be used by the City in making decisions about annexations, private development proposals, and the location, size, and timing of public improvements. The chapter will also be the basis for preparing more specific sub-area or sketch plans for smaller subsections of the community, such as residential neighborhoods, business districts or key perimeter future growth areas.

The chapter objectives and policies will be implemented through intergovernmental agreements with adjacent government jurisdictions, through the City's Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances, and through the administration of those ordinances by the City Council, Planning Commission, and City staff.

However, the Land Use chapter should not be construed as a final blueprint for specific site development, nor a prospective zoning map. The identification of preferred land uses does not imply that rezoning a specific area is immediately appropriate. While the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances must be consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan*, the rezoning process is separate from the planning process and must consider the timing of

zoning decisions, availability of similar land, and the impact of the rezoning decision on other City goals, objectives, and policies.

Land Use Plan Issues

- In which directions should the City expand?
- Should the land use plan for the area east of Highway 169 be revised to show housing instead of employment north of Highway 23 and employment instead of housing south of Highway 23?
- Should Milaca plan for long-term residential growth west and north of the current wastewater treatment plant property?
- Should additional land be planned for linear parks along the Rum River?
- What should Milaca do to protect its perimeter growth options?
- What should the City do, if anything, to improve the quality of future multiple-family housing?

Land Needs

The Land Use Plan map needs to guide sufficient area for land development to accommodate at least 20 years of forecast growth in households and jobs. Additional planned areas need to be shown so as to provide longer term expectations and to provide flexibility in the market.

The land use plan map, Figure 4 (page 29), provides more than enough land within the City of Milaca to cover the needs of the 2005 through 2025 period. The staging of land development in the perimeter of the community will be driven by private investors.

Milaca forecasts a need for approximately 2,400 acres of land for urban development during the 2005 to 2025 period.

**Table 5
Forecast of Land Needs, 2005 to 2025, City of Milaca**

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	Increase from 2005
Total Population	2,580	2,662	3,000	3,333	3,666	4,000	1,338
Additional Households by:			135	135	135	135	540
Additional Acres for Housing, Businesses, Parks, Streets, etc. *			600	600	600	600	2,400

* Assumes housing development at an average of 3.0 units per gross acre; assumes that housing is 60 percent of the total acreage need. This table is based on Table 4 (page 4) from the Analysis of Conditions chapter.

Land Use Goal

Accommodate growth and redevelopment in a way that maximizes land values while creating an attractive community, protecting prior and future investments, and sustaining environmental quality.

Summary of Land Use Objectives

Objective 1 – Sustainable Growth. Grow by investing in established areas, carefully planning new neighborhoods, providing attractive public amenities and protecting environmental resources.

Objective 2 – The Land Use Plan Map. Regulate land use consistently with the Land Use Plan map, Figure 4, and the policies of this plan.

Objective 3 – Perimeter and Regional Growth. Achieve compact and cost-effective perimeter growth for the long-term future.

Objective 4 – New Residential Neighborhoods. Reinforce or create neighborhoods with a diversity of housing, attractive public spaces, compatible land uses and a sense of identity.

Objective 5 – Established Neighborhoods: Maintain or revive the traditional urban character of these neighborhoods and promote continuous public and private reinvestment to ensure that they remain attractive places to live.

Objective 6 – The Riverfront. Guide riverfront land use to parks, housing, offices and hospitality businesses.

Objective 7 – Major Roadway Corridors. Plan land use along major road corridors in a manner supportive of the functional classification of the road.

Objective 8 – Environmental Resources: Safeguard and improve environmental features as a means of promoting sustainable urban development, revitalization and quality of life.

Objective 9 – Redevelopment: Restore underutilized properties to viable commercial, residential or recreational opportunities.

Objective 10 – Site Design: Improve standards for site planning and design, including building and parking placement, pedestrian connections, signage and landscaping.

Objective 11 – Inappropriate Land Use: Reduce land use conflicts through redevelopment of blighted, vacant or underutilized properties, enhanced buffering or screening, and improved building and site design.

Objective 12 – Economic Development: Plan locations for industries, offices and retail businesses.

Objective 13 – Municipal Expansion: Work to maintain a well-planned and fiscally sound community by including all appropriate land areas within the City boundaries.

Objective 14 – Regional Planning. Build regional land use planning relationships that help accomplish the *Milaca Comprehensive Plan*.

Objective 15 -- Land Use Plan Implementation: Use this plan as a basis for reviewing development applications, as a guide for neighborhood or district plans, and as the foundation for amending the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances.

Land Use Objectives and Policies

Objective 1 – Sustainable Growth

A central idea in this plan is that previously established districts ought to be maintained or renewed as new investments occur in fringe locations. Growth on the perimeter of the city should be compact and adjacent to prior development, and some new housing or businesses should occur as redevelopment.

Policies:

- 1. Compact and Contiguous Growth:** Guide growth in Milaca to locations either contiguous to or within presently urbanized areas. Land use should be either urban and compact or rural and very low density. This would serve to:
 - Promote efficient use of serviced land
 - Promote continued investment in older areas
 - Limit public and private expenses
 - Protect sensitive environmental resources
 - Preserve rural character and prime farm land
 - Conserve nearby fringe areas for future urbanization when public sewer and water service become available
 - Reduce driving
 - Enable increased use of transit and bicycling
 - Preserve the distinction between urban and rural areas
 - Create a stronger sense of community.

- 2. New Neighborhoods:** Include in new neighborhoods a variety of types of housing (both detached and attached), local streets sized to encourage appropriately slow traffic speeds, street trees and sidewalks, parks and greenways within walking distance, and small commercial areas that accommodate not just cars but also bicyclists and pedestrians.

- 3. Infill and Reinvestment:** Provide various incentives for the re-use or more intensive use of locations that were not previously developed, locations that have been built upon but cleared and locations that are underutilized or highly deteriorated. Some part of the future growth in jobs and housing will be captured in the older parts of the city to keep those areas vital and to use prior public investments.

Incentives may include planning and zoning, and improving roads, utilities and parks. Prime locations for infill and redevelopment activity include the riverfronts, the downtown and its edges, portions of the older residential neighborhoods, and portions of the major road corridors such as Central Avenue.

- 4. Older Neighborhoods:** Keep existing neighborhoods, including residential and commercial areas, attractive and economically vital by providing high-quality streets, parks, street trees, fire, police and other public services, by enforcing local ordinances related to maintenance and upkeep, by assisting redevelopment and by requiring new development to be attractive and respectful of its neighbors.

5. **Maintaining Growth Forecasts:** Work with Mille Lacs County and the Milaca School District to update its twenty-year forecast of population, households and jobs for the sake of planning roads, utilities, parks and schools.
6. **Leadership on Regional Land Use:** Continue to participate in and initiate discussions about sensible land use planning in the Highway 23 and Highway 169 corridors.
7. **Annexation:** Use annexation as one of the means by which to create a compact, attractive and sustainable urban area that is distinct from the nearby rural area. Milaca will encourage annexation petitions by providing high quality public infrastructure and progressive planning. See also Objective 13, Municipal Expansion (page 45).

Objective 2 – Planned Land Use Map

Regulate land use consistent with the Land Use Plan map, Figure 4 (page 29), and Objective 3, Perimeter and Regional Growth.

A proposed pattern of future land use for Milaca and its immediate area is illustrated by Figure 4 (page 29) and is based on the other objectives and policies of the *Milaca Comprehensive Plan*. This pattern is generalized and not exact. It will be used by City staff and officials to make recommendations and decisions about land development and rezoning requests.

The land use plan map should be used in conjunction with the policies from this chapter, the Parks Plan and good judgment. Table 6 (page 27) provides a more detailed description of each category along with criteria to evaluate the appropriateness of specific uses relative to each land use category.

Policies:

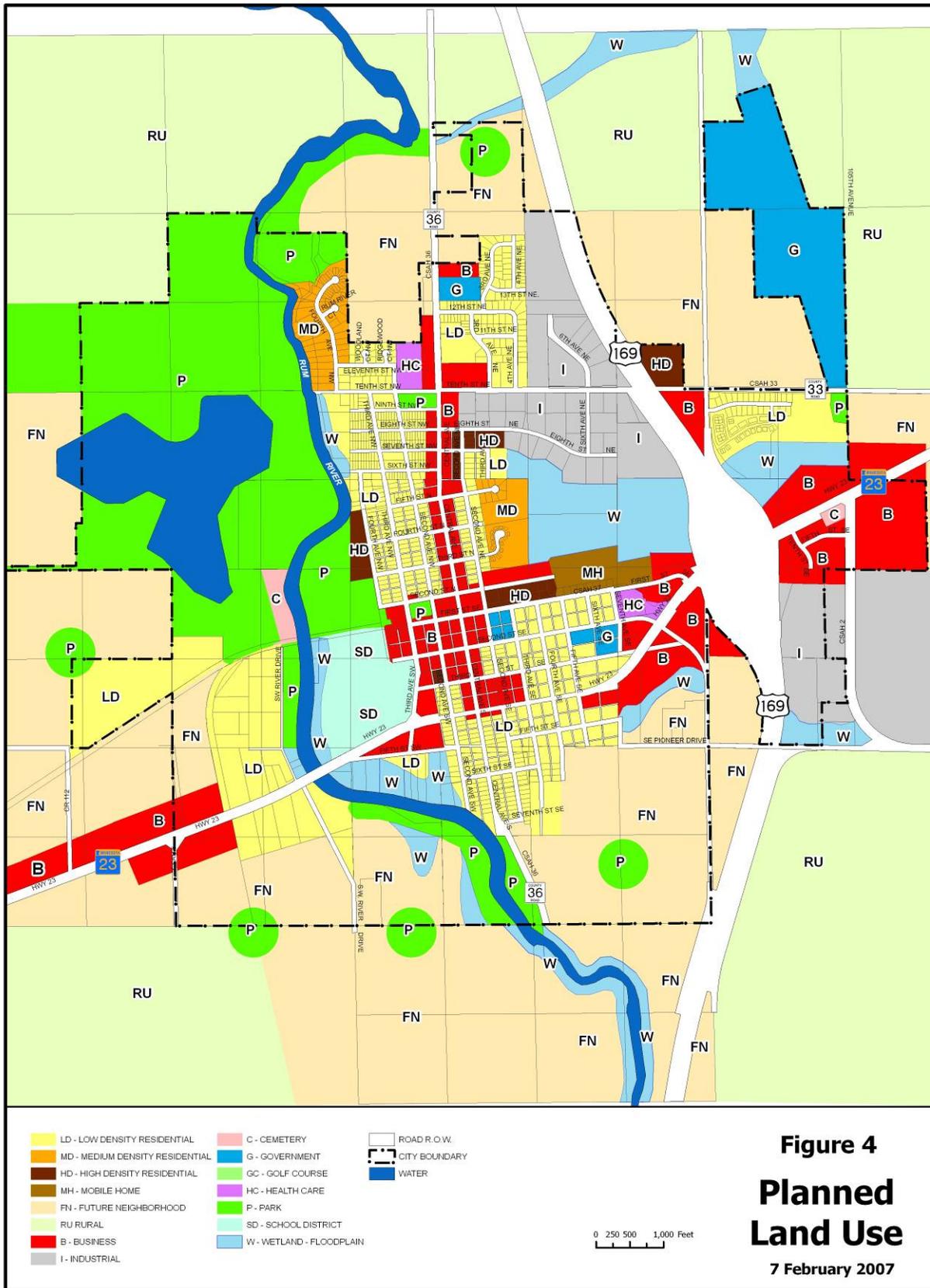
1. **Land Use Plan Map and Categories:** Officially adopt and follow the land use pattern shown by Figure 4 (page 29). The categories of the land use plan map are described below.

**Table 6
Land Use Plan Categories and Proposed Zoning Map Categories**

Land Use Plan Map Category	Land Uses	Potential Zoning Districts
Low-Density Housing	The Low Density Housing category includes single-family housing and two-family housing. Allowable densities range from approximately 2.5 to 4 housing units per gross acre, with minimum single-family lot sizes of 10,000 square feet. Includes places of worship.	R-1, Single-Family Residential; R-2, One- and Two-Family Residential;
Medium- and High-Density Housing	Small-lot detached houses, duplexes, townhouses. 4-, 6- and 8-unit buildings with individual exterior entrances, and all forms of apartment buildings are included in this category. The density is expected to be greater than 6 housing units per net acre. Includes places of worship.	R-2, One- and Two-Family Residential; R-3, Multiple-Family Residential.
Mobile Home	Manufactured housing meeting federal construction requirements.	B-4, Manufactured Homes on Rental Lots
Future Neighborhood	Future Neighborhood indicates locations where housing and supportive development are expected to occur. The exact arrangement of residential densities and types will be determined through negotiation with land development applicants. The City intends that there be a mixture of types of housing in these locations.	Any residential zoning district.
Rural	Farms and very low density housing (one house per 20 acres or less dense).	Mille Lacs County zoning districts
Business	Businesses providing retail trade or services for individuals or businesses. Includes hospitals.	B-1, Central Business District; B-2, General Business District.
Industrial	Light industrial buildings, office-showroom, office-warehouse and manufacturing-related warehousing on landscaped sites.	I-1, Light Industrial District.
Cemetery	Private or public cemeteries.	R-1, Single-Family Residential;
Government	Offices or other facilities for local, county or state government.	HG-1, Health and Government Buildings District.
Golf Course	Private golf courses.	R-1, Single-Family Residential *
Health Care	Facilities for health clinics, nursing homes or hospitals.	HG-1, Health and Government Buildings District.
Park	Public parks. Locations of future parks shown on Figure 4, Planned Land Use, are only conceptual.	R-1, Single-Family Residential *
School District	Includes public and private schools and colleges.	P, Public Properties District

Land Use Plan Map Category	Land Uses	Potential Zoning Districts
Wetland – Floodplain	State or federally-designate wetlands; federally-mapped floodplains.	Wild and Scenic Rum River Protection Area; Floodway, Flood Fringe or General Flood Plain Districts.

* This does not imply that the public parks would be developed with housing. The parks are owned by the City for the purpose of parks. It is common to give parks a zoning designation, and Milaca does not have a “parks” district. If the Milaca Golf Course were to ever decide to apply for development approval, low-density housing would be an appropriate zoning designation at which to begin that discussion.



Objective 3 – Perimeter and Regional Growth

An important planning issue facing Milaca is how to ensure that the City's urban extension is compact, cost-efficient, and designed for lasting value. The policies for the objective on perimeter and regional growth provide the framework within which the City will work to achieve perimeter growth that is as compact as possible and proceeds outward in a staged fashion. The policies seek to address perimeter growth both through setting minimum standards for non-sewered development and providing planning incentives for desirable growth patterns. This plan emphasizes regulating (through Mille Lacs County) unsewered development in the Growth Management Area.

However, a second aspect of managing perimeter growth is how to attract appropriate development to the recommended locations for future growth. It is in the City's interests, as well as that of the broader region, that future growth in the city be orderly and compact, provide better access with less traffic, minimize land consumption, and preserve open space and natural resource areas.

The *Comprehensive Plan* policies identified below take a holistic approach to perimeter growth by both establishing minimum development standards to prevent inefficient development and initiating growth incentives to attract and direct appropriate development, including commercial, industrial, multi-family, and single-family housing, to the preferred locations in the Growth Management Area. The City's initiatives will seek to combine joint planning, extraterritorial subdivision regulation and intergovernmental agreements.

Policies:

- 1. Perimeter Growth Area:** Take proactive steps to guide and influence land development outside the City boundary in those locations designated on Figure 4 (page 29), Planned Land Use, as:
 - Future Neighborhood,
 - Industrial or
 - Business

In those locations, adopt long-range plans for land use, roads, parks and the sequential extension of City sewer and water lines.

Seek the cooperation of the County and adjacent township governments to accomplish mutually beneficial growth management objectives consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan*. Those objectives include compact and well-designed urban edge growth, the economic extension of City utilities and roads, and the preservation of nearby rural land use and productive farmland from premature development. Request the County to adopt zoning regulations that help keep large tracts open for future subdivision to City-sized lots and service by City sewer and water lines.

Review proposed plats within one-quarter to one-half mile of the City boundary to ensure that the City's comprehensive plan for roads can be accomplished.

2. **Existing Urban Area:** The Urban Area is comprised of those areas in which infilling is encouraged because they are already fully served by urban facilities or can be served by extending laterals from existing sewer or water trunk lines.
3. **Requirements for Future Non-Farm Housing in the Growth Management Area:** Seek cooperation from and formal agreement with Mille Lacs County and the Townships of Milaca and Borgholm to achieve one or more of the following growth management approaches on the perimeter of the City.

These approaches are judged to be necessary in order that compact and cost-effective urban growth may proceed on the perimeter of Milaca over the long-term and in order to preserve working farms and rural character until the time that the land is converted to urban use.

A. Annexation and City Utilities

Request that Mille Lacs County allow additional non-farm housing plats in the Growth Management Area if they are **served by City of Milaca sewer and water lines and annexed to the City**. Grant municipal utility service only to properties that have agreed to annex to the City. Criteria for achieving staged annexation plans are presented under Policy 9 of this section, and policies for reviewing subdivision and rezoning applications are presented under Objective 15, Land Use Plan Implementation.

Allow three types of exceptions to the municipal sewer and water service requirement as described by approaches B, C and D.

B. Large Lots with Private Utilities

Allow new non-farm housing in the Growth Management Area with private septic systems and wells if the minimum lot size is **20 acres** or larger.

C. Small Lots with Set-Aside Open Space and Planned City Service

Allow small lots with set aside open space for subdivisions that comply with the City's subdivision regulations and meet these criteria:

- The average density of the overall site is no greater than **2 houses per 40 acres**.
- The proposed lot layout for the overall parcel locates houses on sites that have the least impact on environmentally sensitive areas and are less well suited for farming and agriculture.
- The remainder of the overall site is not developed with lots and roads and is covered by a conservation easement or County zoning regulation that precludes further development until such time as urban sanitary sewer service is available and used.
- The proposed lot layout for the overall site provides for the future efficient resubdivision to urban densities and the cost-effective and orderly extension of public streets and utilities.
- Each lot meets the requirements of Mille Lacs County for on-site sewage treatment and private wells.

For example, a 40-acre site meeting the above criteria might be able to create 2 one-acre lots for initial development, leaving 38 acres for subsequent development once sewers are extended.

D. Clustered Houses with Community Utilities and Planned City Service

Allow small lots served by private, shared on-site wastewater treatment facilities for subdivisions that meet these criteria:

- The subdivision is approved by Mille Lacs County
- The average minimum lot size for the overall site is not greater than **2.5 acres**.
- Each lot is served by a wastewater treatment service compliant with the regulations of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. All sewer lines must meet the standards of the City of Milaca.
- Each lot is served by a private non-community or community water supply system. All water lines must meet the standards of the City of Milaca.
- The remainder of the overall site is not developed with lots and roads, and areas containing common on-site wastewater treatment facilities, water supply facilities or stormwater ponds are covered by a conservation easement that precludes further development until Milaca sanitary sewer service is available and used.
- A plan is approved showing how the site could be resubdivided for City-sized lots, City utilities and City streets.

For example, a 40-acre parcel meeting the above criteria may be able to create 13 small lots for initial development served by shared on-site wastewater treatment and water supply technologies while leaving the remainder of the parcel in conservation easement for subsequent urban development once Milaca sewers are extended.

For any **buildable lot of record** that exists at the time the County or Town zoning ordinance is amended to implement this policy, allow at least one house if requirements for sewage treatment, water well and access are met.

- 4. County Zoning Regulations:** Request Mille Lacs County to zone land within at least the Growth Management Area in a manner consistent with the objectives of this plan. That is, land within the Growth Management Area should be zoned for farming or rural non-farm housing development with a minimum lot size of 20 acres or a density not greater than 2 houses per 40 acres. (Refer to Policy 1 and Figure 4 for the location of the Growth Management Area.)
- 5. Commercial or Industrial Development:** Allow commercial or industrial development in the Growth Management Area only in locations that are annexed to the City and served with City sewer and water lines. Exceptions to this policy may include agricultural service businesses and businesses that need large amounts of open, unimproved land.

6. **Rural Area:** The Rural Area is far enough from the border of Milaca that it is not a growth management concern to the City.

Allow land use regulation in the Rural Area to be determined by the County and each Township. The *Milaca Comprehensive Plan* will not seek to guide those decisions.

7. **Utilities Staging Plan:** Trunk sanitary sewer and water lines should be extended either by the City or private land developers according to the preferred general order of priority indicated below:

Short Term: Areas that are not presently served but only require minor extensions of trunk sewer or can be easily served by lateral lines.

Medium Term – A: Areas that are not currently served but are expected to receive development pressure and a need for trunk line service to accommodate development during the next five to ten years.

Medium Term – B: Areas that are not currently served but are expected to receive development pressure and a need for trunk line service to accommodate development during the next 10 to 15 years.

Long Term: Areas that may need trunk sewer service for anticipated urban development but are not anticipated to be served in the near future.

Solicit comments from the adjacent Townships on this utilities and annexation staging plan. Consider annexation petitions consistent with that general plan of staged and orderly development; possibly including property that may not be developed immediately, in order to effectively manage perimeter growth.

8. **Highway 23 Corridor:** The City of Milaca has been studying (in 2006 and 2007) the feasibility of entering into a joint powers agreement with nearby Cities and Townships to build a new wastewater treatment plant southwest of Milaca.

As part of that agreement, request that the City of Foreston participate (along with Milaca Township and Mille Lacs County) in preparing and adopting a plan for the Highway 23 corridor between Milaca and Foreston. Address land use, utilities and roads with the intent of promoting compact, efficient and attractive urban growth and discouraging semi-rural sprawl.

9. Review Criteria for Subdivision or Rezoning Applications in the Growth Management Area:

- **Official Map:** Is the proposal consistent with the City's Official Map of roads, utilities, drainage and parks?
- **Land Use Plan:** Is the proposed land use in conformance with the City's plan?
- **Residential Density:** Is the residential density in conformance with the City's land use plan?
- **Jointly Adopted Plan:** Is the proposal consistent with any plan for land use or zoning that has been jointly adopted by the City of Milaca and a township?
- **Resubdivision:** Can the property be easily resubdivided into urban-sized parcels? Has a drawing been submitted showing how this is feasible? Will buildings be located in conformance with the resubdivision plan?
- **Design Standards:** Does the design of the proposed roads, utilities and drainage conform to the City's standards if the site is within one of the Utility Staging Areas?
- **Public Utilities:** Can public sewer and water be economically retrofitted?
- **Private Sewage System:** Is the proposed private sewage treatment system adequately sized and designed relative to the soils, slope and forecast sewage volume?
- **Access Management:** Does the spacing of driveways and public street intersections conform to the City's access management guidelines?
- **Future Public Roads:** Can public road access be easily provided in the future to the portions of the tract not adjacent to the county or township road?
- **Environmental Protection:** Does the proposal conform to the City's regulations for the protection of slopes, trees and water quality?

10. Environmental Protection: Protect or restore sensitive or unique natural resources such as floodplains, steep slopes, major wooded areas, major vistas, streams, wetlands, water quality, shorelines and riverbanks through regulation and/or City investment.

11. Prime Farmland: Minimizing the loss of land that is classified by government agencies as prime for agriculture is one of several considerations in this plan. The City of Milaca seeks to minimize the loss of this irreplaceable natural resource by promoting compact urban development and discouraging large-lot sprawl outside its borders.

Milaca believes that it is in the interest of both the City and its neighboring townships to keep locations outside the urban area agricultural and rural rather than semi-residential and semi-rural. Additionally, the City believes that urban growth served

by sewer and water lines is an effective way to reduce the pressure on rural areas of subdivision into oversize residential lots, thus minimizing the loss of farmland and rural visual character. Therefore, Milaca expects to approve landowners' petitions for annexation and development consistent with this comprehensive plan.

The regulatory techniques advocated by this plan to protect farmland include:

- Zoning land for no more than 2 houses per 40 acres (small lots, low density)
- Clustering houses onto sites that are not prime for farming, are wooded, or are difficult to farm because of size or access.

12. Sustainable Growth: Foster the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan through voluntary joint planning efforts with the County and townships for larger undeveloped tracts of land in the Growth Management Area. The intent would be to prepare sub-area plans for sewer service basins and identify future land use, street networks, general location and sizing of utilities, and areas to preserve from development. The sub-area plans should be consistent with the following principles:

- Mix land use
- Take advantage of existing community assets
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
- Foster walkable, close-knit neighborhoods
- Promote distinctive, attractive communities that have a strong sense of place
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas
- Strengthen and encourage growth in existing communities
- Provide a variety of transportation choices
- Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective
- Encourage citizen and stakeholder participation in development decisions

Objective 4 – New Residential Neighborhoods

Reinforce or create neighborhoods with a diversity of housing, attractive public spaces, compatible land uses and a sense of identity.

Creating attractive new neighborhoods and maintaining the better qualities of the older neighborhoods are aims that support the objective of sustainable growth. In addition, properly accommodating some townhouses and apartments in each district or neighborhood can help support these housing options avoiding the deleterious effects of inappropriate design.

Policies:

- 1. Compact Growth:** Encourage new neighborhood development that is generally more compact and dense than recent past patterns. Design each new neighborhood to include both detached and attached forms of housing.
- 2. Variety within Each New Neighborhood:** Encourage in each major neighborhood a range of housing types, densities, and building configurations including single-family detached, townhouses, apartments and more specialized types such as senior housing or live-work units. (A major neighborhood is defined as approximately one square mile in size or as demarcated by major geographic features such as a highway or river.) Give favorable consideration to applications that include two or more types of housing without overlooking other legitimate concerns. Use

the Planned-Unit Development zoning district to allow or require greater variety and better design.

It is expected that the development industry will continue to respond with proposals that include more than one type of housing in the larger projects, resulting in neighborhood variety.

Locate attached and multifamily housing in transitional spaces between commercial and single-family areas, and at high-amenity locations near streams, parks and greenways. When combining housing types, it is preferable for the transition between types to occur at the rear rather than the front (i.e. across a courtyard or parking area rather than across the street).

3. **Links to Previously Established Neighborhoods:** Link new neighborhoods visually and functionally to the established portions of Milaca via street connections.
4. **Mixed- and Multiple-Use Residential and Commercial Development:** Consistent with the plan policy of generally increasing the compactness of urban development, combine housing in the same building or closely integrated on the same site with retail or office space, particularly in the downtown.
 - Promote the development of well-designed moderate-density housing adjacent to shopping, parks and employment centers.
 - Advance the understanding and acceptance of urban density and traditional urban patterns among businesses and designers; promote traditional urban patterns as a means of enhancing neighborhoods and reducing traffic congestion.
 - Emphasize mixed- and multiple-use buildings with windows and doors fronting public sidewalks, interesting façade materials, multiple-story buildings, high density, attractive public and useable spaces, parking in secondary locations or in structures, links to green spaces and bicycle routes, and transit service.
5. **Review of Medium- and High-Density Housing Applications:** Consider these factors in its review of medium- and high-density housing:
 - Adequate utility and street capacity
 - The ability of a given area or neighborhood to absorb additional density
 - Adequate access
 - Proximity to services and employment opportunities
 - Proximity to schools and natural amenities
 - Compatibility with adjacent development
 - Suitability of the site for construction
 - Other matters of public interest as determined by the City Council.
6. **Land Use Incompatibilities:** Use Code enforcement, buffering and screening to try to reduce if not eliminate problems due to incompatible land uses. Many of Milaca's older neighborhoods have long been affected by incompatible land uses, such as industrial plants, materials or equipment storage, freight lines or truck routes in close proximity to residential uses. There is often no easy way to resolve these incompatibilities in the short term.

- 7. Minor Residential Streets:** Create a totally interconnected system with future minor or local residential streets and build them appropriately narrow. Provide public street access in each cardinal direction unless impractical because of natural, environmental or similar conditions.

The street system is a fundamental element of the neighborhood design. The street pattern controls traffic flow, determines the ease of pedestrian and bicyclist movement, defines views and vistas, orients the user, unites the community, and creates a physical framework into which houses and other buildings are placed.

The function of minor residential streets should not be to move as much auto traffic as fast as possible but rather to move autos at appropriately slow speeds to and from the home while also encouraging bicycling and walking and creating an attractive forecourt for the housing.

Minor (local) streets should be built no wider than 32 feet (as measured to the *back* of the curbing) so as to encourage slow traffic speeds that enhance the safety and enjoyment of other users.

**Table 7
Characteristics of New Residential Streets**

Type of Street	Street Width *	Right-of-Way Width	Traffic Direction	Parking	Planting Strip**	Sidewalk	Utilities
Local	32'	60'	Two ways	Both sides	8' with trees	1 @ 5'	Private utilities located behind the sidewalk for electricity, telephone, cable TV. Sewer and water under the street.
Collector	36'	70'	Two ways	One side	10' with trees	1 or 2 @ 5'	

* All dimensions are in feet to the back of the curb.

** Minimum distance.

- 8. Collector Streets:** Collector streets should be planned for each future neighborhood at the “sketch plan” phase and should link across neighborhoods to arterial roads and other collector roads. Planners should continue to work with each land developer to plan the general alignment of collector streets beyond the limits of smaller subdivisions to ensure neighborhood-wide continuity.

- 9. Sidewalks:** Continue to require that residential developers include a five-foot concrete sidewalk on one side of each new local and collector street.

- 10. Street Trees:** Trees regularly spaced along the street are a key ingredient for giving streets a residential character and making them feel more comfortable. Street trees add greenery, provide shade, give a street a lived-in feeling and contribute to neighborhood character.

Trees should be planted in the public right-of-way between the curb and the sidewalk, along every street, including commercially-oriented arterial roads and local residential streets. Landscaping along the streets should be a joint public and private

effort that could take advantage of both the public right-of-way and the private setback space.

Objective 5 – Established Neighborhoods

Maintain or revive the traditional urban character of these neighborhoods and promote continuous public and private reinvestment to ensure that they remain attractive places to live.

The majority of urban development that will exist in Milaca by the year 2025 is already in place. These private and public improvements represent a tremendous investment and are essential to the quality of life and financial security of many people. In addition, the historic fabric of the community provides a sense of place and a physical environment that is nearly irreplaceable.

One of the strengths and beauties of older neighborhoods is the close-knit, compact mixture of different forms of housing. It is this urban pattern that will help make Milaca and its older neighborhoods distinct, livable and competitive with other locations that are designed primarily for the automobile. New building technologies may be appropriate, but many elements of the traditional neighborhood will be respected and emulated.

Policies:

- 1. Neighborhood Protection:** Milaca will continue to try to protect the best aspects of established areas from negative effects such as excessive auto traffic or incompatible, unbuffered land uses. Simultaneously, blighted, deteriorating or obsolete activities will be phased out and those sites improved according to a plan. Guided by the planning and urban design principles of the *Milaca Comprehensive Plan*, private and public investments will aim to enhance or strengthen a sense of neighborhood identity in all established areas.
- 2. Public-Private Coordination:** Coordinate public sector actions and investments to promote private maintenance and renewal of established residential areas. Blight and abandonment will not be regarded as unavoidable characteristics of older neighborhoods. Instead, the continual process of change will help keep those locations vital and desirable.
- 3. Context-Sensitive Redevelopment and Infill:** Encourage infill development in older traditional neighborhoods that respects the characteristics of those neighborhoods, in keeping with the prevalent housing styles in each neighborhood.

This principle does not imply that all housing will be of the same type (i.e., detached or duplex) but that older and newer housing will share many design elements. Redevelopment and infill are keys to strengthening older neighborhoods and will always be done in a manner that responds to and builds on the strengths of those neighborhoods.

- 4. Land Use Incompatibilities:** A few of Milaca's older neighborhoods have long been affected by incompatible land uses, such as industrial plants, materials or equipment storage, freight lines or truck routes in close proximity to residential uses. There is often no easy way to resolve these incompatibilities in the short

term. In general, improved code enforcement, buffering and screening can reduce if not eliminate problems due to incompatibilities.

5. **Historic Preservation:** Historic or architecturally significant buildings in established neighborhoods will be preserved because they express the city's heritage and add beauty and charm to their surroundings. Preservation does not necessarily involve historic designation but can be achieved through public actions that maintain neighborhoods (e.g., land use planning, zoning, attractive parks, street maintenance, support for job growth) and private maintenance of the housing.
6. **Planning and Design:** The City will prepare specific plans for a neighborhood or district in which a need for additional guidance beyond this comprehensive plan is identified. A neighborhood or district plan might involve a more detailed or updated land use plan, or a plan for public improvements such as new streets, lighting, street trees and/or parks. When preparing plans or implementing public improvements, the neighborhood policies in this chapter will be observed.

Objective 6 – Riverfront

Guide waterfront land use to parks, housing and similar land uses that take advantage of the river.

The pattern and design of land development or open space along the riverfront is an important objective in Milaca because of the great length of river edge in the community.

Policies:

1. **Rum River Land Uses:** Plan the frontage of the Rum River to take advantage of river views with land uses such as housing, parks and trails.
2. **Protection:** Continue to protect the aesthetic and natural qualities of the Rum River corridor by continuing to apply Zoning Code Chapter 153, Floodplain Management, and Chapter 154, Wild and Scenic Rum River Protection Area.
3. **Public Access:** Acquire additional land along the Rum River for public park. There are two locations where the riverfront linear park could be extended:
 - East of SW River Drive just south of the former railroad corridor
 - Along the west bank of the river south of Highway 23 (south of the existing houses).

Objective 7 – Major Roadway Corridors

Plan land use along the major road corridors in a manner supportive of the functional classification of the road and consistent with the objectives of the Community Physical Character Plan.

Every community struggles with the challenge of land use and urban design in the narrow band on either side of a major road. These corridors are highly visible to all the community and contribute strongly to the image and appearance of the city. Businesses covet the access and visibility the road provides but the community has an interest in protecting the function of the road while avoiding the sometimes unattractive aspects of linear commercial development.

Policies:

- 1. Road Corridor Land Use Planning:** The edges of arterial roads will be planned for any appropriate and acceptable variety of land uses, ranging from single-family housing to shopping centers, as long as the roadway access guidelines presented in the Transportation chapter of this *Comprehensive Plan* are followed. Generally speaking, access efficiency and visibility should tend to guide more intensive land uses to the edge of major roads and land uses that generate less traffic to minor roads.

While housing developers may not view the edge of an arterial road as the most desirable environment, it is not necessary to line every stretch of arterial frontage with commercial or multiple-family development. In fact, allowing some low-density neighborhoods along arterial roads is both necessary and desirable. However, if housing is located along an arterial road, its access must conform to the access management guidelines, meaning that intersections will be widely spaced and there will be no direct driveway access allowed.

- 2. Redevelopment Techniques:** There is a range of possible responses by the City to the problems created by inappropriate land use and access along minor arterial roads. Make the choice of methods on a case-by-case basis.

A. “Live with It”: The least desirable option but one that many cities must adopt for a period of time is to live with the negative effects on the roadway and the land development. However, there are costs associated with this option such as lost development opportunities, traffic accidents and congestion.

B. Planning and Zoning: The City could plan and zone the inappropriate locations for office, multi-family housing, a small shopping center or a similar use that might offer possibilities for improved access spacing and control. While this option has little direct cost to the City, it also depends on a willing and aggressive private sector for implementation. Small office buildings for professionals or corporations have often succeeded in these settings and can be compatible neighbors with an adjacent residential neighborhood.

With the many locations of concern, this alternative is a necessary first step to change (which does not preclude Option D).

C. Site Improvements: Site improvements may reduce somewhat the negative relationship between housing and a major road. For instance, housing may be protected from the deleterious effects of traffic, parking lots and commercial buildings by landscaping, setback, building orientation and size.

The road function may be protected by combining or closing access points and/or changing the access design.

D. Acquisition and Redevelopment Assistance: The City may assist private developers in acquiring blighted property, relocating residents, and clearing buildings in order to stimulate new development under the powers granted by Minnesota Statutes. Several financial tools are available such as Tax Increment Financing, federal Community Development Block Grant funds, general obligation bonds, and others.

E. Right-of-Way Acquisition and Improvement: The City, perhaps in conjunction with the County or the Minnesota Department of Transportation, could acquire and clear inappropriate land development along one side of a roadway and add it to the public road right-of-way. The land could be devoted to landscaped open space, a sidewalk and a bicycle path to benefit the corridor travelers and the adjacent residents. If this option were selected, it would be less costly if the City did not prematurely zone the land for more intensive use.

Objective 8 – Environmental Resources

Safeguard and improve environmental features as a means of promoting sustainable urban development, revitalization and quality of life.

Policies:

- 1. Water Resource Protection:** Continue to protect the function and integrity of streams, floodplains and wetlands during the site plan and subdivision review process by applying Zoning Code Chapter 153, Floodplain Management, and Chapter 154, Wild and Scenic Rum River Protection Area. Also, coordinate with Mille Lacs County and the US Army Corps of Engineers to help enforce their wetland protection regulations.
- 2. Prime Agricultural Lands:** Continue to strive to minimize the loss of agricultural lands to development in Milaca and Borgholm Townships by promoting compact, contiguous, sewerd urban development and reducing incentives for semi-rural sprawl on multi-acre residential lots.

Avoiding urban development on prime farmland will be one of several factors in fringe land use planning but not the sole or primary factor. In its growth management plan, Milaca will also consider:

- Maintaining a compact and regular pattern of growth and boundaries
- Minimizing infrastructure and service costs
- Designing attractive neighborhoods
- Responding to market demands for development.

The City recognizes that development on farmland close to presently built-up areas can help avoid the loss of productive farmland elsewhere.

3. **Greenways:** Extend greenways with pedestrian and bicyclist trails along the Rum River as shown on Figure 4, Land Use Plan (page 29), both for recreation, non-motorized transportation and environmental protection. The greenways, being linear public open space, provide natural vegetation, flood storage and runoff filtration.
4. **Parks:** As noted in the Parks Plan, manage portions of some of its parks in a more natural manner, allowing some grass to grow wild, removing invasive plant species and reintroducing lost plant species.

Objective 9 – Redevelopment

Restore underutilized urban and waterfront properties to viable commercial, residential or recreational opportunities.

Continuous redevelopment is essential to sustaining the vitality of the community. This major task must, of course, be led by the private sector, but the City can provide incentives and guidance such as the land use plan, zoning ordinance, roads and trunk utilities.

Policies:

1. **Redevelopment Program:** Engage in a continuous process of assisting the redevelopment of deteriorated or highly incompatible properties or districts.

Milaca will support redevelopment primarily by planning and zoning certain sites for more intensive or different land uses than their present use. In special circumstances, the City will use tools such as tax increment financing to support redevelopment when it can be demonstrated that the monetary and other benefits to the City strongly justify the investment risk.

Process: Prepare a plan for identified locations as the threshold of redevelopment assistance approaches. Those plans will address market forces, land use patterns, building conditions, traffic circulation, property acquisition, relocation and clearance, public finance, urban design and public participation.

Tools: Determine the financial or other tools that the City may use to assist redevelopment by a study for each area, and these tools may change as the years go by. However, at this time, they include: zoning, private investment, tax increment financing, street or utility improvements, general obligation bonds, state or federal roadway improvement funds, and state redevelopment grants (not presently available), and state or federal brownfields remediation funds.

Objective 10 – Site Design

Improve standards for site planning and design, including building and parking placement, pedestrian connections, signage and landscaping.

The details of private site design, including landscaping, lighting and signs, are critical to the overall appearance of the city. Milaca has improved its zoning regulations in this regard but can do more.

Policies:

- 1. Connections:** Maximize visual and physical linkages between adjoining land uses that are similar or can coexist compatibly, such as offices and retail or high-density housing. Encourage pedestrian movement between adjacent sites rather than multiple trips by car. Where uses are less compatible (such as industrial and residential uses), provide adequate landscape buffers and screens to soften the transition between them.
- 2. Efficiency:** Encourage sites to share functional site design elements such as shared access, shared parking, coordinated landscaping, linked open space, and surface water detention areas, when such elements support a more efficient and attractive development pattern.
- 3. Landscaping:** Require planting plans for all new multi-family residential, commercial and industrial developments. Add landscaping requirements to the zoning ordinance.
- 4. Sensitivity to Context:** Design new development to respect surrounding development, whether this includes quiet low-density residential neighborhoods, traditional storefronts or major institutions such as the hospitals. New development should emulate the desirable qualities of traditional urban settings while protecting the integrity of existing neighborhoods.
- 5. Parking Design:** Whenever possible, locate parking lots behind or to the side of buildings or in block interiors wherever possible in order to reduce the visual impact of surface parking. Landscape and screen all parking lots and parking structures in order to improve their appearance from surrounding streets and properties.

Objective 11 – Economic Development

Milaca will plan suitable locations for industries, offices and retail businesses.

Policies

1. **Industry and Offices:** Act to provide locations for industrial and office development in both central and fringe locations that have good transportation access.

The Land Use Plan map guides land east of Highway 169 and south of Highway 23 for industrial, office and commercial development.

Central locations may require public assistance with redevelopment and brownfields remediation, and the City recognizes the importance of keeping such locations in productive use and of removing blight that threatens housing.

2. **Retail Locations:** Plan for retail and service businesses along the Highway 23 corridor and along Central Avenue, including downtown.
3. **All Commercial Locations:** Continue to diligently apply the provisions of the zoning ordinance that enhance the appearance and function of new commercial developments. These provisions include landscaping, sign control, rear buffering, joint parking, appropriate access locations, shared access, sidewalks, façade materials, window and door orientation, and mixed- or multiple-use projects.

Objective 12 – Inappropriate Land Use

Reduce land use conflicts through redevelopment of blighted, vacant or underutilized properties, enhanced buffering or screening, and improved building and site design.

Certain land use relationships can be harmful to one or both types of development. Comprehensive city planning and zoning try to minimize such problems in order to safeguard the value of properties and build an attractive community.

Policies:

1. **Zoning Amendments:** In order to prevent new land use incompatibilities and to potentially remedy existing incompatibilities, consider amending its zoning code to:
 - Adopt performance-based criteria to measure and determine appropriate land use intensity. Such criteria might include: traffic generation, hours of operation, building design and buffering.
 - Adopt landscaping and screening standards for the zoning ordinance to buffer different uses and parking areas from public sidewalks and streets.
 - Adopt building design guidelines regarding appropriate scale and materials for new infill developments and building expansions.

- 2. Property Acquisition:** Consider acquisition of private property, on a case-specific basis, to eliminate land use incompatibilities or deteriorated properties and encourage redevelopment consistent with the planned land use for the area.

In many situations, land use incompatibilities result from incremental changes that have occurred over time as economic trends and development standards have changed. In those cases, the Milaca Economic Development Authority may need to purchase certain properties to eliminate severe land use incompatibilities. This should be done on a case-specific basis and will require careful scrutiny of the costs and benefits involved in such action. Financial tools the City might use for property acquisition and relocation include tax-increment financing and federal Community Development Block Grant funds.

- 3. Neighborhood Planning:** Continue to implement the recommendations of adopted neighborhood plans and prepare specific plans for other neighborhoods or districts where a need for additional guidance is identified.

A neighborhood planning process should engage the residents and protect neighborhoods from effects such as excessive traffic, blighted properties or land use incompatibilities. The neighborhood plans should outline strategies to address those issues and capitalize on opportunities to enhance the neighborhoods. When preparing neighborhood plans or implementing public improvements, the objectives and actions described in this comprehensive plan should be observed.

Objective 13 – Municipal Expansion

Work to maintain a well-planned and fiscally sound community by including all appropriate land areas within the Milaca boundaries.

The City of Milaca has expanded its area of jurisdiction by approving a series of annexation petitions over the past several decades.

Consistent with the principles set forth in the Land Use and Utilities Plans, urban development should occur in areas served by utilities, appropriate streets and other public facilities. These and other facilities and services will be provided by the land developer in coordination with the unit of government best equipped and staffed to do so, which is the City.

The City of Milaca will identify locations where sewer and water lines can be extended to serve growth, will prepare land use and other plans consistent with the intention to provide for and capture new investment, and will consider the municipal fiscal impact of annexations proposed by the landowners.

Municipal annexations could produce several regional benefits:

- 1.** Regional economic efficiency could be enhanced and spending reduced through less duplication of services and facilities.
- 2.** Growth management could be improved and orderly development promoted.

3. Redevelopment and reinvestment could be promoted.
4. Governmental efficiency could be enhanced through rational and simplified city boundaries.
5. Potential for interjurisdictional conflict could be reduced.
6. Opportunities could be provided for fringe-area residents to have a voice in city decisions that affect them.
7. Social unity could be enhanced, and distinctions between residents of different jurisdictions could be reduced.

Policies:

1. **Rationale for Annexation:** Consider annexing land within the Milaca Growth Management Area because:
 - Municipal services are required for sustainable urbanization, and the City is most capable of providing those services.
 - A fiscally-sound City is critical to the economic well-being and quality of life of the regional community, and annexing new commercial and industrial real estate is key to achieving long-term fiscal health.
2. **Utilities:** Extend sewer and water lines beyond the existing municipal boundary only upon annexation of the property to the City of Milaca.
3. **Consent Annexation Policy:** When sanitary sewer service is requested for properties outside of Milaca, require immediate annexation of those properties adjacent to the City if services can be provided economically. Properties that are not adjacent to the City limits will require agreements for future annexation.

If the property for which sanitary sewer service is requested is vacant and requires sanitary sewer for development, plans will first be submitted to the City to determine if sewer service should be provided and if annexation is required. Properties abutting the City will be annexed prior to development to avoid confusion in the permitting process unless the City determines that annexation is not in its best interest.
4. **City-Initiated Annexation Policy:** The City of Milaca has no plans to initiate petitions for an annexation referendum at the present time. However, in the future a situation may arise in which the City feels that it is strongly in its interest to do so in order to protect its economic base or natural environment.
5. **Legislative Advocacy:** Participate in legislative advocacy organized by the League of Minnesota Cities to devise annexation laws that provide incentives for, and remove legal impediments to, creating compact and efficient fringe urban growth.

Objective 14 – Regional Planning

Build regional land use planning relationships that help accomplish the *Milaca Comprehensive Plan*.

Milaca has an interest in seeing that sound planning takes place in all its neighboring communities in order to stretch public dollars, create an attractive urban area and help boost the entire county economy.

Policies:

- 1. Coordination and Cooperation:** Promote intergovernmental cooperation and coordination in land use and other planning. In particular, improve the communication among Milaca and the several adjacent townships on matters of land planning, infrastructure planning and development reviews.
- 2. Planning Leadership.** Encourage (and cooperate with) Mille Lacs County and the Townships of Milaca, Borgholm, Milo and Bogus Brook to adopt plans and zoning consistent with the preservation of agriculture, protection of natural resources and cost-efficient urban growth.
- 3. Annual Regional Planning Meeting:** Host meetings at least annually with Mille Lacs County and the nearby cities and townships to discuss land use and development issues. The aim of those meetings should be to open the lines of communication, reduce barriers to cooperation, exchange information and promote sound planning. Seek public participation in those meetings and newspaper coverage of the topics.

Objective 15 – Land Use Plan Implementation

Use this plan as a basis for reviewing development applications, making utility or road investments, judging annexation petitions, improving the zoning ordinance and preparing neighborhood or district plans.

This land use plan will only be as good as its application. While the policies and map of this and other chapters are a good foundation for future decisions, much work remains to be done. Detailed neighborhood and small-area plans will be needed, and they will take direction from the *Milaca Comprehensive Plan*. Finally, sound judgment by the staff and steady political leadership will be needed to implement this plan on a daily basis.

Policies:

- 1. Coordination with Mille Lacs County:** The City of Milaca will urge Mille Lacs County to adopt a land use plan, zoning regulations and a zoning map that support the policies under Objective 3, Growth Management Area, of this Land Use Plan (pages 30 through 35).
- 2. Sidewalks and Street Trees:** Amend the Milaca subdivision ordinance to require narrower local residential streets with sidewalks and trees in future residential neighborhoods.

3. Zoning Ordinance Amendments: Perform a comprehensive review of the zoning ordinance and improve it. At a minimum, these elements should be addressed:

- R-1 District: Disallow additional houses that are not served by the City’s sanitary sewer system.
- R-3 District:
 - Permitted uses: Delete rooming houses and boarding houses.
 - Conditional uses: Delete nursery schools, funeral homes, clubs and lodges, and clinics and hospitals.
- Site plan review:
 - Add a requirement that all site plans for commercial, industrial and multiple-family residential developments must be reviewed by the staff.
 - Improve the requirements for landscaping and screening, trash handling, architectural standards, tree preservation, exterior lighting, surfacewater management and erosion control.
- Billboards: Disallow additional billboards.

4. Development Review Process: Make land use and development decisions in a reasonable, responsible, predictable manner based on approved plans and ordinances.

City staff and the Planning Commission will strive to review development applications as expeditiously as possible while allowing the necessary public comment. Staff will continue to make applicants aware early in the process of the requirements of all applicable ordinances and plans so as to avoid later stumbles or delays.

At the same time, staff will strive to work with applicants to ensure that the planning and design aims of the comprehensive plan are implemented. This may involve interpreting objectives or guidelines that are not clear-cut and specific, and persuading developers to amend their designs to satisfy community aims not expressly stated in the zoning ordinance but contained in the *Milaca Comprehensive Plan* or neighborhood plans.

When reviewing development or rezoning applications, or when preparing small-area or neighborhood plans, consult the policies of the *Comprehensive Plan*.

5. Neighborhood and Small-Area Plans: Prepare plans for developed neighborhoods and for future urban areas on the perimeter of the community.

Design land development in large tracts and whole neighborhoods rather than piecemeal. Prepare “sketch plans” for square-mile areas showing collector roads, floodplains and wetlands, as well as showing land use in greater detail than does this *Comprehensive Plan*, in order to guide developers, who may negotiate the revision and refinement of such plans during the development application process. Sketch plans may be prepared by the City’s consultants in conjunction with City staff, landowners and the land developer who made the initial plat application for part of the area in question.

6. Growth Monitoring: Prepare a map of the current pattern of land use that covers the City plus the Growth Management Area. Keep that map up to date.

Transportation Plan

Plan Overview

The purpose of the Milaca Transportation Plan is to guide public policy in regard to the evolution of the overall transportation system, and specifically recommend objectives and actions that are consistent with the land use and urban design components of the *Comprehensive Plan*.

Private interests take the lead in the development of land, and land developers build all of the local and collector streets then give them to the City. Arterial roads such as the County and State routes are built by those units of government. Subsequently, the City, County and State maintain their elements of the road system.

Transportation Issue

The major planning question facing Milaca in terms of the transportation system is:

- Where should new collector roads be built on the perimeter of the city?

Goal

Improve the City transportation system to ensure the safe and efficient movement of people and goods, while enhancing neighborhood livability and resident quality of life.

Summary of Objectives

Objective 1 – Thoroughfare System: Work with land developers and Mille Lacs County to build and maintain a road system that is cost-effective, safe and attractive.

Objective 2 – Neighborhood Streets: Design neighborhood streets with features for automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian travel, while limiting the impacts of traffic.

Objective 3 – Pedestrian Environment: Improve pedestrian connections to create a continuous and seamless pedestrian system, and enhance the pedestrian environment to create a more walkable community.

Objective 4 – Bicycle Network: Continue to build a connected bicycle route and trail network that is viable, convenient, and safe, and which will encourage both utilitarian and recreational bicycling.

Transportation System Objectives and Policies

Objective 1 -- Thoroughfare System

Work with land developers and Mille Lacs County to build and maintain a road system that is cost-effective, safe and attractive.

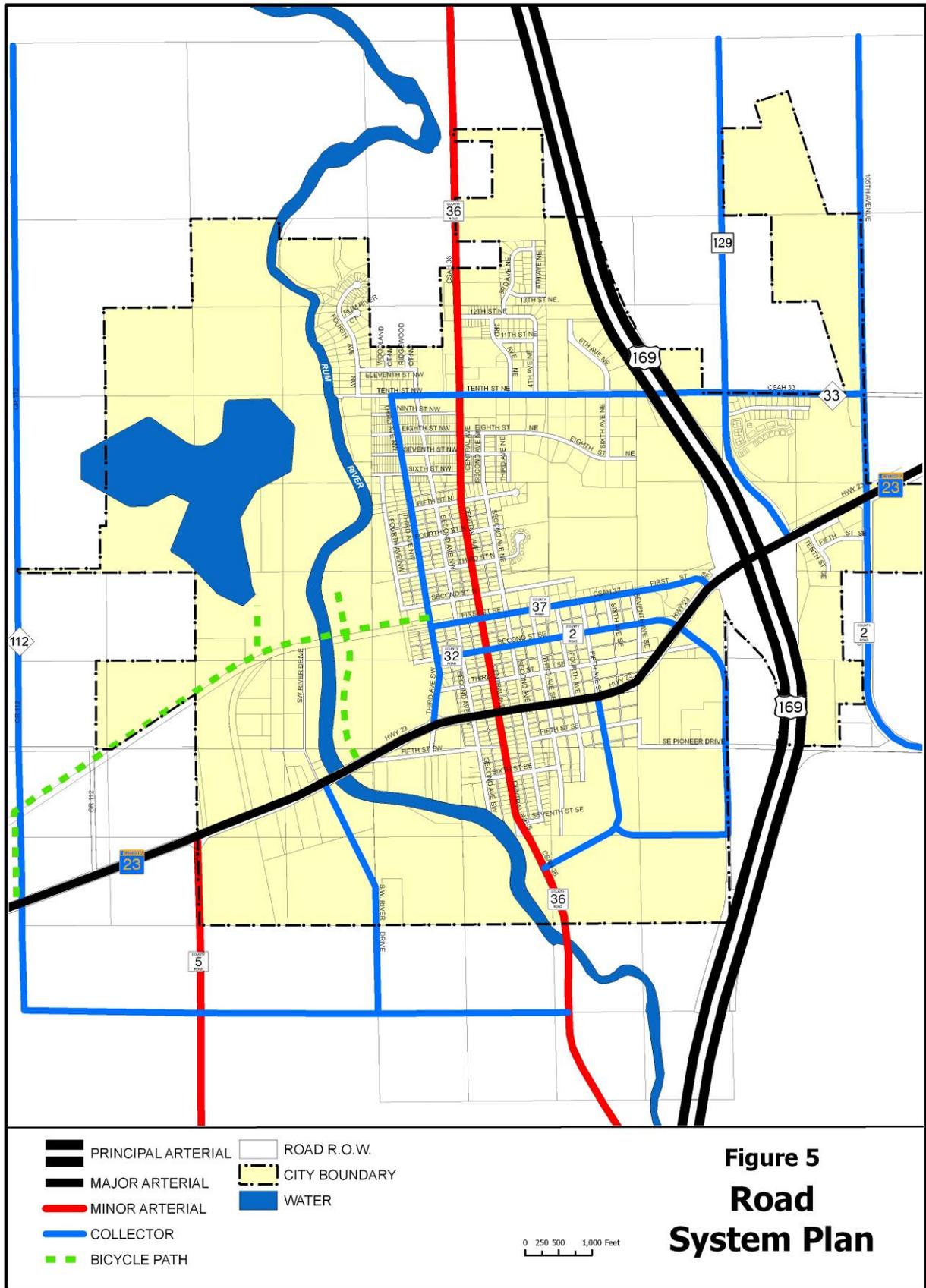
Policies:

- 1. Functional Classification System:** Milaca will officially adopt the functional classification plan for roads illustrated by Figure 5 (page 51) in order to plan for and reserve the rights-of-way for new and improved roads. The right-of-way and pavement dimensions shown in Table 8 (below) will be followed.

**Table 8
Desired Characteristics of Road Classes**

	Principal Arterial	Major Arterial	Minor Arterial	Collector	Local
Example	US Highway 169	Minnesota Highway 23	County State-Aid Highway 36 (Central Avenue) County State-Aid Highway (CSAH) 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10th Street NE • 1st St. SE • 2nd Street SE • 3rd Avenue NW • 5th Avenue SE • SW River Drive • 105th Avenue / CSAH 2 • 10th Avenue NE / Township Road 129 • County Road 112 • Township Road 173 	All other streets
Jurisdiction	Federal and State	State	County	County, City or Township	City
Right-of-Way Width	200' – 300'	80' to 100'	70' to 90'	60' – 68'	60
Pavement Width	88'	32' to 44'	32' to 44'	36'	32' (measured to the back of the curb)
Number of Lanes	4	2 to 5	2 or 3	2 or 3	Not striped
Parking	Prohibited	Prohibited in most locations.	Varies. Both sides or none.	Both sides	One or both sides
Planting Strips	None	8 to 15 feet	8 to 15 feet	8' – 10' with trees	8' with trees
Sidewalks	None	Varies	Varies. Both sides or none.	One or both sides @ 5'	1 @ 5'
Bicycle Provisions	Prohibited	None	May include striped lanes @ 5'	Varies. Striped lanes @ 5' possible.	Not striped
Traffic Speeds	55 – 70 mph	30 to 45 mph	30 to 45 mph	30 mph	30 mph
Traffic Volumes	Over 20,000 average daily	6,000 to 15,000 average daily	2,500 to 6,000 average daily	500 to 2,500 average daily	Up to 1,000 average daily.

Source: McCombs Frank Roos Associates and Bonestroo, Rosene, Anderlik & Associates, 2006.



- 2. Rights-of-Way for Future Roads and Improvements:** The City will adopt and enforce an Official Map of road rights-of-way based on this Transportation Plan and more detailed alignment studies.

Based upon the adopted Transportation Plan and Official Map, sufficient land should be acquired in advance of or at the time of land subdivision for the expected road needs. Acquisition will be accomplished through required dedication by the landowners and, in some cases, purchase by the City, County or State.

The City's right-of-way width standards should include sufficient land for the needs of the road, utilities, landscaping, lateral clearance and, in most instances, sidewalks. Space for bicycle paths or on-street lanes may increase right-of-way needs.

Milaca will use the guidelines presented in Table 8 (page 50), when reviewing proposed plats or land splits in its Extraterritorial Subdivision Review area to ensure that sufficient right-of-way is dedicated for future roads, trails, utility and drainage needs.

- 3. New Collector Roads:** The City will plan for new or improved collector, minor and principal arterial roads to serve future land development, as illustrated by Figure 5 (page 51).

The exact alignment of the future collector streets in the southeast neighborhood will be determined through the subdivision design process, but they should connect to surrounding streets approximately as indicated on Figure 5 (page 51).

The future collector street indicated in the southwestern neighborhood (outside the City borders) should follow the Quarter-Quarter Section lines indicated by Figure 5 (page 51).

- 4. Access Management:** The City should adopt and follow the roadway access management guidelines presented on Table 9 (page 53) for future growth areas. These guidelines require greater spacing between access points, increased restrictions on turning movements and increased access control (e.g., signals versus stop signs) on arterial facilities. These access guidelines seek to improve safety and operations by reducing vehicle conflicts, providing better spacing between conflict points, and providing better guidance to drivers with respect to access locations. Additional strategies that can supplement these guidelines include:
- Protect the functional area of intersections
 - Ensure adequate sight distance
 - Avoid offset access points
 - Avoid skewed intersections that limit the line of sight
 - Install left-turn lanes where appropriate
 - Consider providing shared access
 - Consider consolidating existing access points
 - Consider partial access points to limit conflicts

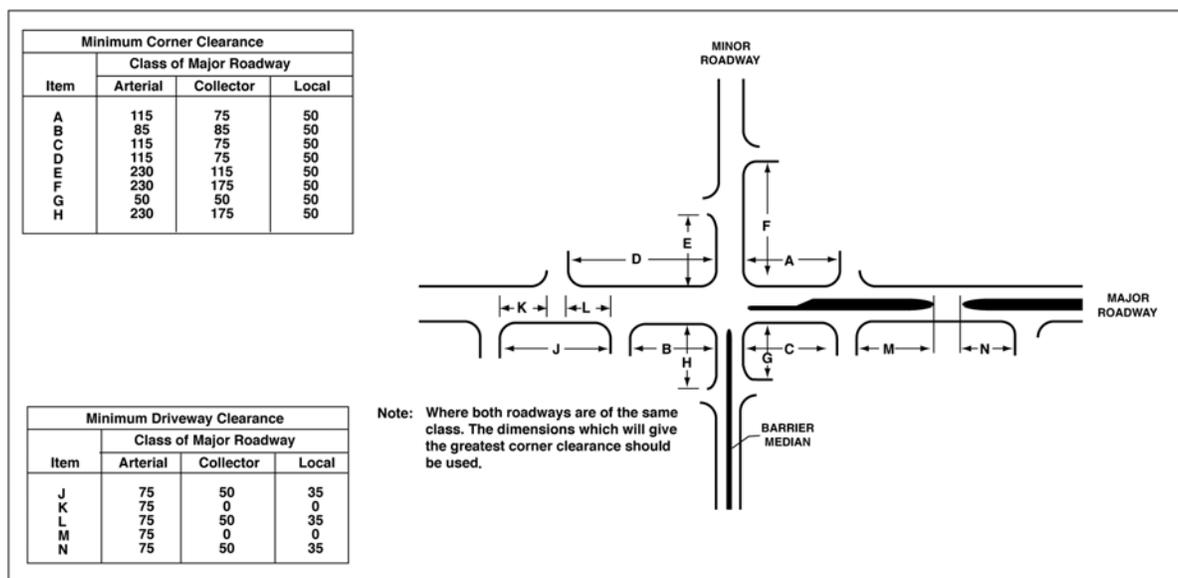
Table 9: Recommended Access Management Guidelines for Future Growth Areas

Roadway	Primary Full Movement Intersection Spacing	Conditional Secondary Intersection Spacing	Signal Spacing
Minor Arterials	1/2 mile	1/4 mile	1/2 mile
Collectors	1/4 mile	1/8 mile	1/4 mile

Table 9 focuses on the future urban growth areas as defined by the Land Use Plan because existing developed areas of the City are often difficult to retrofit. In already developed areas, the implementation of an access management program usually must wait for a major reconstruction project along the targeted road. Major existing corridors can capitalize, however, on the access management strategies listed in the bullets above.

In addition to access management policies, driveway spacing is also important for the design and function of the roadway. Locating driveways away from major intersections can greatly improve the function of the intersection as well as increased safety benefits. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has produced various reports dealing with access management and spacing issues. Figure 6, below, depicts FHWA recommended guidelines related to driveway spacing near intersections.

**Figure 6
Driveway Location and Spacing Details**



- 5. Neighborhood Effects:** Capacity improvements, when and where determined necessary, should be designed to minimize negative impacts to neighborhoods. Desirable mitigation features may include street trees, designs for appropriate speeds, and possibly roundabouts in place of four-way stops where appropriate.

Objective 2 – Neighborhood Streets

Design neighborhood streets with features for automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian travel while limiting the impacts of traffic.

Policies:

1. Local Street Design: The design of new local streets should provide for traffic movement while ensuring a safe, attractive, and pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly neighborhood environment. The street design presented in Figure 7 (page 55) provides 32-feet (measured between the backs of the curbing) and allows for two-side parking and two-way traffic.

Table 10, below, lists design dimensions for new residential streets. New cul-de-sacs should only be allowed where topography limits access to properties from the interconnected street system.

New local street design may integrate traffic-calming designs, particularly where the demand for on-street parking is light. Using traffic calming designs such as neckdowns at intersections and/or mid-block parking bays will help slow traffic, while still providing on-street parking on both sides of the street.

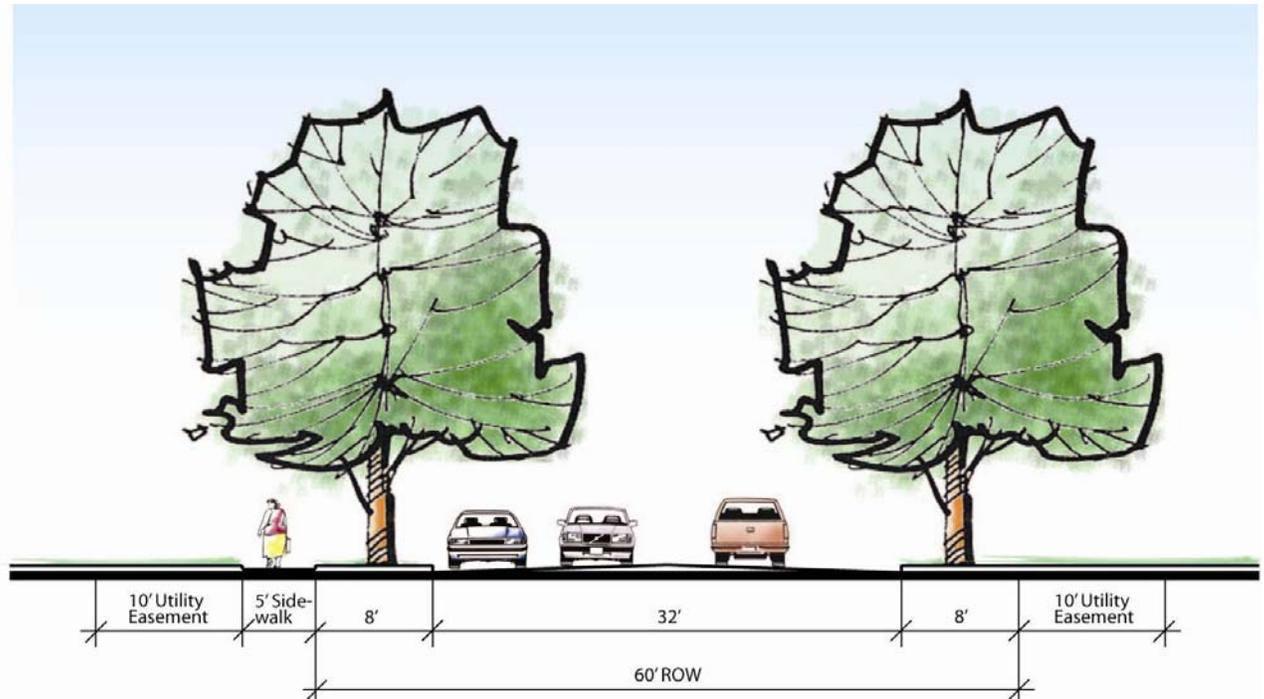
Table 10: Characteristics of Future Residential Streets

Type of Street	Street Width *	Right-of-Way Width	Traffic Direction	Parking	Planting Strip**	Sidewalk	Utilities
Local	32'	60'	Two ways	Both sides	8' with trees	1 @ 5'	Private utilities located behind the sidewalk for electricity, telephone, cable TV. Sewer and water under the street.
Collector	36'	70'	Two ways	One side	10' with trees	1 or 2 @ 5'	

* All dimensions are in feet to the back of the curb.

** Minimum distance.

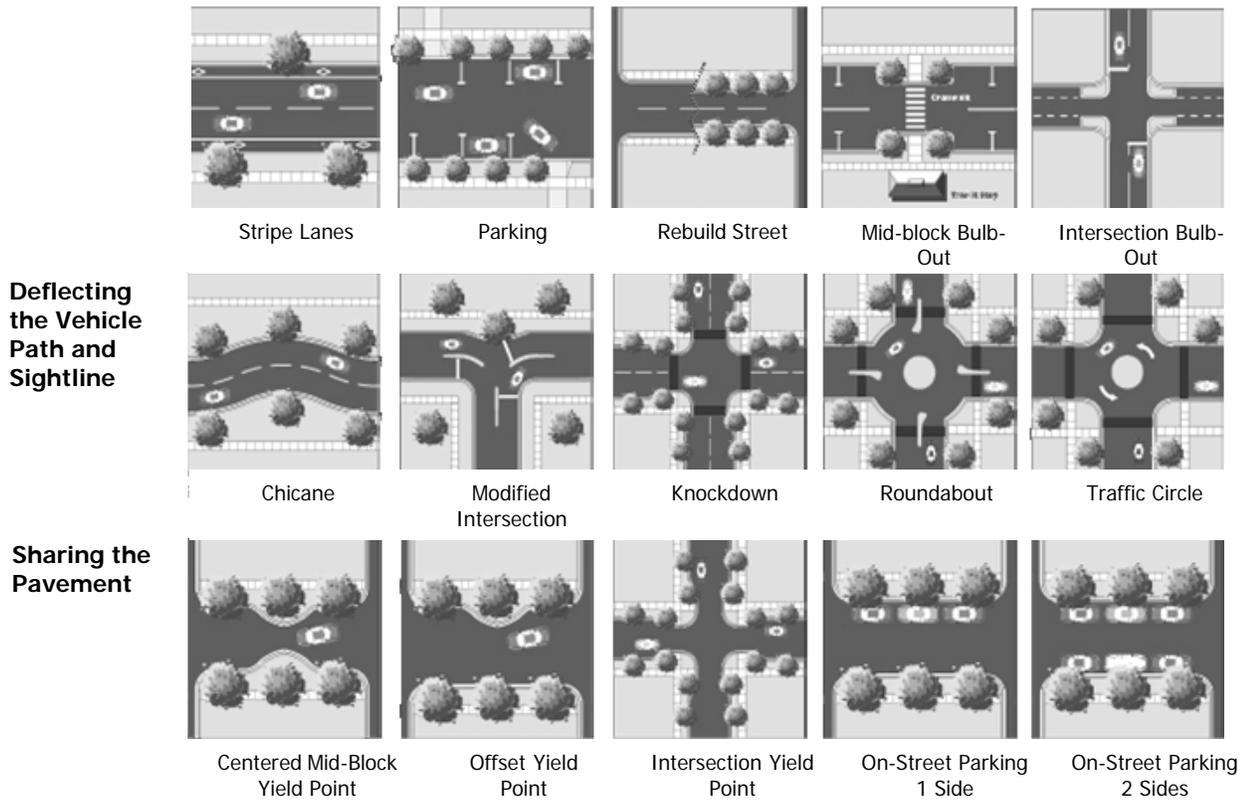
Figure 7
Recommended Local Residential Street Design



2. **ADA-Compliant Streets:** All streets should meet established guidelines required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Extra costs associated with creating ADA compliant streets during construction are minimal. A plan and budget should be in place for retrofitting existing streets with appropriate pedestrian ramps and related facilities.
3. **Traffic Calming:** Utilize appropriate traffic calming strategies on local streets and other streets where deemed appropriate. Measures may need to be taken to calm traffic in areas where excessive speeding is a problem, particularly where pedestrians are especially vulnerable, such as near schools and parks. A wide variety of traffic calming strategies are available as previously discussed and the City should institute a process for addressing traffic calming needs.

A traffic-calming program would provide residents with a process to work with neighbors toward addressing negative traffic impacts in their neighborhoods. Various traffic calming techniques are shown by Figure 8 on the next page.

Figure 8
Traffic Calming Techniques



Objective 3 – Pedestrian Environment

Improve pedestrian connections to create a continuous and seamless pedestrian system and create a more walkable community.

Pedestrian issues should not be underestimated or undervalued. Similar to the road network, pedestrian facilities need to be viewed as a system providing for seamless and comfortable pedestrian movements throughout the community. For example, subdivision sidewalk requirements will have only limited value if sidewalks end abruptly at the subdivision boundary or at the first major road. Further pedestrian network planning should be coordinated with adjacent jurisdictions to avoid gaps in the system.

Implementing the land use plan's policies in conjunction with the transportation plan and urban design recommendations will be essential in creating a more pedestrian-friendly and walkable Milaca.

Policies:

- 1. Sidewalks:** Sidewalks should be built along one side of all new local and collector streets. There should also be sidewalks along both sides of Central Avenue between 10th Street NE and 6th Street SE. Sidewalk connections and crosswalks at major intersections should be completed in coordination with new development.

Sidewalks should be a minimum of five feet wide in residential areas and wider in commercial areas. Sidewalks along local streets should be the expense of the land developer while the cost of sidewalks along collector or arterial streets should be partially borne by the City. It is important that neighborhoods have an interconnected sidewalk system and that major gaps from the past be retrofitted, at least along collector and minor arterial streets.

- 2. Pedestrian System Plan:** The City should develop a more detailed plan that identifies and ranks in priority sidewalk and pedestrian needs (e.g. pedestrian ramps, crosswalks, etc.). The plan should include an implementation process and program for funding pedestrian improvements in existing neighborhoods and developments. Improvements should be ranked according to pedestrian benefits, safety, access to schools, parks and other major pedestrian generators.

Roads serve many users and uses, and road funding mechanisms need to reflect a multi-modal approach to transportation infrastructure.

- 3. Pedestrian Crossings:** At a minimum, pedestrian crossings should comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by providing appropriately designed pedestrian ramps. Pedestrian crossing design should be a priority in the design and construction or reconstruction of functionally classified roads.

Pedestrian crossing improvements on major roads near schools, parks and other high pedestrian activity areas should be a high priority. Striping and curb extensions ("bump-outs") are two techniques that could be used to help pedestrians cross streets at intersections.

- 4. Urban Design:** The City should work to create pedestrian-oriented environments by implementing this Plan's land use and urban design recommendations.

Sidewalks by themselves will not induce walking. More important are an appropriate mix of land uses and densities, the quality and design of the built environment, pedestrian scale streetscapes, and pedestrian comfort.

Creating pedestrian environments between buildings even in auto-oriented commercial areas can encourage more walking between buildings. At a minimum, sidewalks or pedestrian areas should provide connections between buildings within developments. Providing pedestrian amenities (e.g., trees, planters, street furniture, awnings, building windows, etc.) are also desirable.

- 5. Traffic Calming:** Use appropriate traffic calming strategies in high pedestrian activity areas. Measures may need to be taken to calm traffic in areas where pedestrians are especially vulnerable, such as near schools and parks. A wide variety of traffic calming strategies are available, as previously discussed.
- 6. Downtown Pedestrian Environment:** The pedestrian environment is particularly important in downtown, where the scale of development and access to a variety of shops, restaurants, and businesses make walking an attractive alternative. The City should maintain the sidewalk and trail system throughout downtown, and ensure that redeveloped areas include sidewalks and street crossings.
- 7. Sidewalk Maintenance and Snow Removal:** Pedestrian walkways should be maintained for use throughout the entire year. The City should enforce sidewalk snow removal and maintenance ordinances and budget for the maintenance and snow removal of major, high-traffic sidewalks.

Objective 4 – Bicycle Network

Continue to build a connected bicycle route and trail network that is viable, convenient, and safe, and which will encourage both utilitarian and recreational bicycling.

Policies:

- 1. Off-Road Paths:** Maintain a crushed limestone path in the former railroad corridor that runs west from downtown for bicycling, walking and running and for snowmobiling. There should be paved links north into the mountain-biking network of the Milaca Park Reserve and south to the schools site and Highway 23.
- 2. Bicycle-Friendly Street System:** Continue to build a local residential street system that is interconnected and appropriately narrow. This will provide a street network that is compatible for bicycling. Also, ensure that any street grates are bicycle-safe.

Park System Plan

Park System Plan Overview

Milaca faces challenges to the management of its park system on two fronts: first, to improve or maintain what it already has, and secondly, to provide new parks for future neighborhoods on the perimeter of the community. At the same time, the City wishes to extend its limited system of off-road paths and maintain (improve where possible) its stewardship of the natural resources that exist in parks and other public open spaces.

The park system is a major investment for Milaca and a vital element of its quality of life. This plan establishes policies for acquiring new parks and for designing and maintaining existing sites.

Because the city is blessed with the Rum River, waterfront public access is an opportunity that can be leveraged for quality of life and urban development. Now that the river is used much less for industry or transportation than it was decades ago, parks and other land uses have become more appropriate riverfront land uses.

Another major asset in the local park system is the Milaca Park Reserve – 100 acres of riverfront woods and ponds with an extensive mountain-bike trail system.

Park System Issues

The major park system questions for Milaca are:

1. Where should future neighborhood parks be located?
2. What is the best means of acquiring land for future parks – dedication by the land developer during the platting process or purchase by the City in advance of receiving a subdivision application?
3. Should the City create a single, large community athletic complex for sports such as soccer, softball and baseball?

Park System Goal

Expand the park system into new neighborhoods while improving the conditions in the older parks.

Summary of Park System Objectives

The following objectives were established for the Milaca Park System Plan.

Objective 1 – New Parks: Plan, acquire and develop additional parks to help meet the outdoor recreation needs of the community’s population, protect environmentally sensitive areas, provide sites for environmental education and improve urban design.

Objective 2 – Park Improvements and Maintenance: Continue to improve existing parks so they meet current recreation needs, are visually appealing and help sustain the natural environment.

Objective 3 – Waterfront Access: Improve public enjoyment of rivers and streams in Milaca by creating new park land, acquiring easements for access and protection of open space, and linking existing parks with paths where possible.

Objective 4 – The Role of Parks in Urban Design: Locate and design parks to enhance the quality of residential neighborhoods and commercial districts, reflect Milaca’s cultural heritage and honor civic life.

Objective 5 – Bicycling and Walking: Extend the off-road path system and complement it with pedestrian sidewalks in all the neighborhoods and downtown.

Objective 6 – Ecology and Environment: Plan and design parks to protect environmentally sensitive features, reduce negative environmental effects and serve as models of land stewardship.

Objective 7 – Citywide Facilities and Recreation Programs: Systematically refine park system facilities and recreation programs to meet changing outdoor recreation needs, meet safety and access guidelines and achieve other objectives of this plan.



The pedestrian and bicyclist bridge over the Rum River at Recreational Park.

Park System Objectives and Policies

These statements provide general guidance to the expansion, improvement and stewardship of the park system.

Objective 1 – New Parks

Plan, acquire and develop additional parks to help meet the outdoor recreation needs of the community's population, protect environmentally sensitive areas, provide sites for environmental education and improve urban design.

Several new park sites are proposed in conjunction with the plan for future land use and the forecast growth of households and population.

Policies

- 1. New Park Locations:** Land for new parks will be acquired in the approximate locations and sizes illustrated by Figure 4, Planned Land Use (page 29), and listed in Table 11 on the next page. The means of acquisition will be according to Policy 2, below.

Five future Neighborhood Playgrounds are proposed in perimeter locations plus linear parkland along the Rum River. These sites should be developed consistent with the recommendations shown in Table 11 on the next page.

The locations, sizes and configurations shown by Figure 4, Planned Land Use (page 29), are approximate and will be adjusted during the acquisition process. City staff will negotiate with land owners and developers to specify the location and configuration of each park with the aim of acquiring the approximate amount of land indicated by Table 11 and satisfying the area needed to accommodate the planned facilities. Street access, the length of public street abutting each park and the relationship to adjacent buildings will also be negotiated in that process.

Table 11
Development Program for the Planned Parks

Park Location	Classification	Acres	Recommended Components
Five perimeter neighborhoods	Neighborhood Playground	6 each	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Softball field (not lighted) or youth soccer field (not lighted) • Children's play equipment • Basketball court • Picnic shelter • Open space
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SW River Drive ▪ Future southwest neighborhood 	Special Use - Riverfront		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open space • Pedestrian and bicyclist paths • Benches and tables.

2. Acquisition and Improvement of Neighborhood Playgrounds: The City of Milaca will continue to apply its ordinance requiring that some combination of land and/or cash be dedicated by anyone subdividing property, with such land or money being applied to parkland acquisition and/or park improvements. Thus, land for future parks will be acquired during the platting process. Cash given during subdivision should be earmarked for land acquisition or improvements in or near the area from which it came.

If the land dedication process is not sufficient to acquire sites of sufficient size and quality as recommended by this plan, then the City will use General Funds to acquire additional property.

Milaca will attempt to acquire land for new Neighborhood Playgrounds before the vicinity is platted if possible. This may be done by identifying specific sites and acquiring land using General Funds or bond proceeds. Alternatively, such lands should be acquired during the platting process using the proposed new park land or cash dedication ordinance. In either case, it will be important to have a good idea of the approximate location, size and facilities desired for each park so that the City can act decisively and wisely when an opportunity presents itself.

It is judged appropriate to require land developers to dedicate land or money during the platting process because those resources will go to create Neighborhood Playgrounds that will benefit the residents who ultimately bear those costs. This is considered more equitable than requiring people all across the city to pay for a new neighborhood park that might not benefit them. On the other hand, the proposed Special Use Riverfront Parks, which do have citywide benefit, ought to be financed through the General Fund.

3. Components of Future Neighborhood Playgrounds: Each new Neighborhood Playground will be built with some of these basic components:

- Multi-purpose open play area
- Children's play equipment
- Basketball court
- Picnic shelter

Additional elements may be added at later times depending on identified neighborhood or wider district needs, and the availability of funding.

4. Riverfront Parks: The City will continue to extend public parks, plazas, walkways and overlooks along the Rum River. In some locations, existing development may make this impossible in the foreseeable future, but newly-developing sites should include some public access along the waterfront. (Refer also to Objective 6, Riverfront, in the Land Use Plan, page 39.)

5. Neighborhood Playground Location and Design: When a neighborhood playground is not associated with a school, it should be located near the middle of a defined residential service area rather than near its edge along an arterial road.

6. Coordinating Locations for New Park Sites: Long-range plan for major stormwater drainage detention and retention facilities and school sites should be a consideration when siting new parks. Some economies in land acquisition, grading and site development may be gained by siting these facilities together on one large tract of land rather than on smaller individual parcels. It is important that the amount of land needed for a particular park site is not sacrificed in combining such multi-use areas.

Objective 2 – Park Improvements and Maintenance

Continue to improve existing parks and greenways so they meet current recreation needs, are visually appealing and help sustain the natural environment.

Policies

1. **Five-Year Improvements Plan:** Milaca will prepare and update five-year plans that list specific actions to improve individual parks, that ranks them in priority and by year, and that indicates the possible funding source. Included with each five-year plan should be an updated list, map and description of the parks in the system.

The criteria used to identify and rank in priority improvement projects are:

- **Coordination:** Does the improvement coordinate well with other work currently committed for or recently accomplished at that park?
- **Physical Need:** What is the physical condition of the facility relative to other needs in the system? Is there a safety hazard?
- **Service Deficiencies:** How seriously deficient is the park system relative to that type of facility?
- **Neighborhood or District Planning:** How well would the improvement add to an overall improvement campaign in that neighborhood or district? Is it supported by a neighborhood plan?
- **Geographic Balance:** Would the improvement help to balance parks spending across the City in that year?
- **Funding Source:** Are special sources of funding available for certain areas of the City or for certain projects?

Objective 3 – Waterfront Access and Trails

Improve public enjoyment of rivers and streams in Milaca by creating new park land, acquiring easements for access and protection of open space, and linking existing parks with paths where possible.

One of the major assets of Milaca is the public open space (more than a mile in length) along the Rum River. For quality of life, economic development, sustainable property values and environmental protection, the community owes it to itself to provide public access to the Rum River with continuous public open space.

Policies

- 1. Waterfront Public Open Space:** To the extent feasible, the City will acquire corridors along the rivers for public open space and parks, provide walkways and bicycling paths within that green space, protect key environmental features such as wetlands or floodplains, use environmentally-sensitive bank stabilization techniques rather than heavily engineered devices, and create visual and functional linkages between the waterfronts and nearby neighborhoods or districts.

In addition, a large portion of the edge of public linear open space should abut local streets rather than private lots in order to extend the benefits of that open space into the larger neighborhood.

The City will concentrate on negotiating the acquisition of land (or at least a pedestrian easement) along sites where riverfront development is about to occur.

- 2. Walking and Bicycling:** Milaca will build paths for walking and bicycling in its riverfront parks where conditions permit. Care will be taken to protect the ecological integrity of the floodplains and wetlands. In some locations, benches, overlooks and occasional larger park nodes will be included.



Public linear open space along the Rum River at the south entrance to the community.

Objective 4 – The Role of Parks in Urban Design

Locate and design parks, greenways and parkways to enhance the quality of residential neighborhoods and commercial districts, reflect Milaca’s cultural heritage and honor civic life.

Parks are a major and highly visible public investment that can have a significant positive effect on the appearance of a community and its quality of life. This section of the Parks System Plan recommends ways that existing or future parks should be used to help create better neighborhoods, promote revitalization and build an attractive community.

Policies

1. **A Network of Green Spaces:** Milaca will continue to build a system of green open spaces for recreation, urban beauty and natural protection that are linked by linear parks (greenways), off-road paths and on-street bicycle lanes.
2. **A System of Civic Spaces:** The City will regard the park and greenway system as one element of a larger system of civic spaces. Through high quality design and stewardship, these civic features will sustain the quality of life, private investment and economic competitiveness of Milaca. The system elements should be designed to complement one another visually and functionally, and should be interconnected for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians. Other elements of this system include:
 - Parks of all types
 - Plazas
 - Public schools
 - Civic buildings such as City Hall and the library
 - Local residential streets, sidewalks and street trees
 - Minor arterial or collector roads
 - Bridges
 - Off-street and on-street bicycle lanes
 - The river
3. **Neighborhood Quality:** In addition to providing amenities for residents, parks should be used to improve the level of private investment in nearby housing and create lasting value in neighborhoods. These public spaces should be regarded as visual assets and designed as such. Each park should:
 - Be open to the neighborhood on at least half of its perimeter
 - Include generous landscaping to soften and direct views
 - Provide both active spaces and quiet, natural areas
 - Use civic buildings such as a gazebo or picnic shelter as a focal point
 - In a school-park situation, be designed in coordination with the facilities provided by the school.
 - Include off-street parking designed in careful relation to the topography, plantings and views so as to minimize its visual effect. No more off-street parking should be provided than is reasonable in addition to on-street parking.

At the same time, the City should strive to ensure that development that occurs next to parks is compatible with these open space areas.

4. **Civic Pride and Local Heritage:** The City will design and maintain parks and other public spaces as the highest expression of civic pride and local heritage. Parks should be beautiful as well as functional so that current generations will enjoy their use and future generations will appreciate what they represent. Parks should be inspiring and represent the best of Milaca.
5. **Park Buildings:** Buildings and facilities in parks should follow a consistent architectural theme reflecting local materials, building practices, cultural heritage and user needs. Buildings should be classic in proportions and materials, adaptable, and long-lasting. If necessary, may be preferable to delay construction than to install a structure that is not of sufficient quality.
6. **Associated Furnishings:** Care should be taken in selecting associated park furnishings such as benches, bicycle parking, fences, signs or trash containers. They should complement the design of the major buildings and require relatively low levels of maintenance.
7. **Quiet Spaces:** Parks should include quiet spaces for strolling or sitting wherever the landscape allows. Some locations in the park system should be managed to retain their wooded or otherwise natural characteristics to invite exploration and discovery. Such places offer a small refuge from the bustle of the urban environment and offer opportunities to connect with nature on a daily basis.

Objective 5 – Bicycling and Walking

Extend the off-road path system and supplement it with pedestrian sidewalks in future neighborhoods.

There are two short stretches of former railroad corridor remaining on the west side of Milaca. Although there is little chance of creating an extensive network of off-road paths, these two corridors could provide bicycling access among downtown, future west-side neighborhoods, future riverfront parks and the Milaca Park Reserve.

Policies

1. **Corridor Preservation:** Milaca will preserve in public ownership the former railroad corridor west of the Rum River.
2. **Park Access:** Access to the parks and waterfront greenways should be improved by linking them with off-road paths and on-street striped bicycling lanes wherever feasible.

Objective 6 – Ecology and Environment

Plan and design parks and greenways to protect environmentally sensitive features, reduce negative environmental effects and serve as models of land stewardship.

Parks can and should provide benefits in addition to outdoor recreation such as protecting environmentally sensitive areas and connecting people to nature on a daily basis. This section describes several ways that the City will manage its parks and greenways in an ecologically responsible manner while meeting other objectives.

Policies:

- 1. Natural Preservation and Stewardship:** Identify, preserve and enhance existing valuable natural areas such as wetlands or major wooded areas and provide for appropriate public use. Identify such lands prior to the neighborhood development process.

As a primary land owner of riverfront properties and other environmentally sensitive areas, the City should set a good example of land stewardship and urban design with its parks and other public facilities.

- 2. Milaca Park Reserve:** Improve and sustain the natural qualities of the Milaca Park Reserve. The relocation of the municipal sewage treatment plant will open a major opportunity to improve water quality, eliminate motorized traffic, reduce erosion, remove invasive species and generally restore the natural ecology of the site.

The use of the area for mountain biking will continue to create minor amounts of erosion but that can be minimized and mitigated through maintenance, signage and policing.

- 3. Manage Drainageways Naturally:** Drainage swales and creeks are important for their ability to provide wildlife habitat and movement paths, cost-effectively manage stormwater, reduce flooding and serve as visual amenities. Drainageways in parks should be identified and maintained in a natural state. Mowing should be discouraged, and environmentally sensitive methods of bank protection should be used rather than engineered approaches, particularly along the Wild and Scenic Rum River.

The City will also try to incorporate neighborhood detention ponds into parks for the sake of park aesthetics, water quality and land efficiency. This however, should be done without losing the amount of land needed for active park uses.

- 4. Use Sustainable Plantings:** The City will work to judiciously reduce the amount of park area devoted to mowed turf and introduce in its place plant species that require less maintenance, provide habitat for birds, small animals and insects, and that improve the quality of water runoff. Invasive, non-native plant species should be controlled.

- 5. Link Open Spaces:** Major intact natural areas should be linked by corridors of native woods and grasses for the sake of wildlife habitat and movement, and urban aesthetics. Landscape elements that can be used for such links include streams and stream edges, fencerows and hedgerows, drainage swales, roadside ditches with natural vegetation, floodplains and wetlands.
- 6. Retain Unmanaged Places:** Keep a few wooded or other natural areas in the park system at a very low level of management in order to provide places for people to explore on their own and experience a rudimentary bit of wildness. The biggest example of this philosophy is, of course, the Milaca Park Reserve.