



IMAGINE BRAINERD

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
UPDATE 2035

FINAL
City Council

ADOPTED: MONTH, 2019

Acknowledgements

CITY COUNCIL

Ed Menk, Mayor
Kevin Stunek
Sue Hilgart
Jan Lambert
David Pritschet, Council President
Kelly Bevans
Dave Badeaux
Gabe Johnson

PLANNING COMMISSION

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Michael Duval
Chuck Marohn
Justin Burslie
Jan Lambert
Christopher Foley
Theresa Woodward

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David Chanski, Community Development Director
Corky McQuiston, Police Chief
Tony Sailer, Parks Director
Jennifer Bergman, HRA Director
Paul Sandy, City Engineer

STEERING COMMITTEE

Rick Fargo
Chuck Marohn
Jan Lambert
Brian Moon
Laine Larson
Mike Higgins
Jeff Grunenwald
Mike Larson
Staci Headley
Timothy Boeder
Pam O'Rourke
P.J. Severson

THANK YOU

A special thank you to those residents, visitors, and workers who took time out of their busy lives to participate in crafting a vision for the future of Brainerd. Your guidance was instrumental in creating the vision for the City of Brainerd. A special thank you to steering committee members who collaborated with their teammates, provided input and guidance, and served as advisors throughout this process.

PLANNING TEAM

Region Five Development
Commission (R5DC)
Sourcewell

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VISION STATEMENT

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



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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



Land Use

Goals & Policies

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

Policies:

1. Deploy smart growth principles to achieve economic, environmental, and community aspirations:
 - i. Mix land uses.
 - ii. Take advantage of compact design.
 - iii. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
 - iv. Create walkable and bikeable neighborhoods.
 - v. Foster distinctive, attractive neighborhoods with a strong sense of place.
 - vi. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.
 - vii. Strengthen and direct development toward existing neighborhoods.
 - viii. Provide a variety of transportation options.
 - ix. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective.
 - x. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.
2. Develop complete neighborhoods that meet the needs of all people within a comfortable walking or bicycling distance.
3. Allow a mix of land uses in appropriate locations, leading to lively neighborhoods.

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

Policies:

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

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

Policies:

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

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

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

Efforts to implement the plan's vision, goals, and strategies begun at adoption. This living document should be used for the day-to-day activities of city officials and staff and should reference the document as needed to justify specific actions. This plan should be easily accessible to elected and appointed officials and city staff, and should be explicitly referenced in land use decisions. Comprehensive Plans are generally intended to provide direction for ten to twenty-year time horizons, however, plans are most effective when updated every five years.

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

1. **GUIDE CITY OFFICIALS AND STAFF TO ASSIST WITH A VARIETY OF TASKS:**
 - Communication of the city vision for the future.
 - Establishment of regulatory changes and permitting.
 - Acquisition and use of land.
 - Capital improvement planning.
 - Development and infrastructure decisions.
2. **GUIDE BUSINESSES, PROPERTY OWNERS, AND RESIDENTS IN ASSISTING THEM IN:**
 - Determining potential property use.
 - Understanding possible land use changes in the surrounding area.
 - Establishing reasonable land use expectations.
 - Understanding future infrastructure improvements.
 - Improving and investing in property.
3. **GUIDE DEVELOPERS WITH PROPERTY ACQUISITION AND THE COORDINATION OF PLANS WITH CITY GOALS, REGULATIONS, AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLANS.**
4. **ASSIST AND COORDINATE WITH NEIGHBORING JURISDICTIONS WITH ISSUES AND TOPICS OF MUTUAL INTEREST.**

Community Character

Goals & Policies

GOAL 1: Preserve and repurpose historic assets.

Policies:

1. Seek small-scale opportunities to reinforce local history and identity through incentives and programs.
2. Develop local preservation initiatives.
3. Make downtown a destination within the community.
4. Transform historic sites to serve today's contemporary needs through adaptive reuse.
5. Support the transition of businesses in the community and provide new business owners the tools and programs necessary to rehabilitate old structures.
6. Strike a balance between preserving historic structures and building new within all land uses.

GOAL 2: Enliven the community through intentional community design.

Policies:

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

GOAL 3: Enhance the city's unique identity where the appropriate blend of historic and modern structures co-exists.

Policies:

1. Communicate a design vision through guidelines or standards for structures, site design, building materials, and other requirements meant to accentuate the community image.
2. Collaborate with developers and builders on future development and/or redevelopment proposals to ensure high-quality design.
3. Identify historic structures and strongly encourage preservation through incentives and programs.
4. Seek small-scale ways to integrate community identity, fused with local history.
5. Encourage the adaptation of declining historic sites to serve modern-day contemporary needs.

Housing

Goals & Policies

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

Policies:

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

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

Policies:

1. Identify the historic nature of each neighborhood throughout the city.
2. Encourage the creation of neighborhood associations.
3. Encourage energy efficiency and sustainability in home renovation and new construction.
4. Support development and infrastructure improvements that complement the unique architectural styles and development patterns that define individual neighborhoods.
5. Develop friendly, safe, and welcoming neighborhoods that encourage interaction through all stages of life.
6. Seek ways to encourage mixed-use development/redevelopment in and around the downtown area.

GOAL 3: Ensure quality living conditions for all residents.

Policies:

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

Mobility

Goals & Policies

- **GOAL 1: Maintain, develop, and adapt a dynamic multimodal transportation system within Brainerd that seamlessly accommodates all users.**
Policies:
 1. Balance the competing needs and safety of local traffic, bicycles, and pedestrians, and ensure the efficient transfer of freight through the City of Brainerd.
 2. Consider innovative designs, signage, technologies, and access management to ensure mobility and reduce congestion.
 3. Continue to maintain and celebrate Brainerd's expansive trail network and consider opportunities to expand the network through logical local, regional, or statewide connections.
- **GOAL 2: Continue to work collaboratively with MnDOT, federal and state agencies, neighboring cities, the private sector, residents, and other agency partners to improve the mobility network in the region.**
Policies:
 1. Expand the local road system thoughtfully, strategically, and sustainably where growth and demand dictate.
 2. In consideration of fiscal constraints and long-term maintenance, prioritize the maintenance of the existing transportation network, and only expand thoughtfully and strategically.
- **GOAL 3: Elevate consideration of other modes of transportation such as public transit, bicyclists, and pedestrians to the same level of automobile users.**
Policies:
 1. Recognize, respond to, and prioritize the increased demand for public transit.
 2. Implement the top two to three goals and strategies of the five-year transit plan.
 3. Consider ways to leverage the Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) to maximize ridership and efficiency.
 4. Identify the most pressing challenges facing Brainerd/Crow Wing Public Transit and take steps to address them.
- **GOAL 4: Commit to creating remarkable bike and pedestrian connections from neighborhoods to the downtown that are safe, efficient, and aesthetically pleasing.**
Policies:
 1. Thoughtfully consider opportunities for additional bicycle and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.
 2. Invest in community-wide signage to help residents navigate the community and to destinations (universally compliant).
 3. Work with residents to collectively reinvest and reimagine public spaces that are in the heart of the community.
- **GOAL 5: Utilize the airport to provide a convenient global gateway that safely and efficiently generates economic vitality in a sustainable and responsible manner.**
Policies:
 1. Determine ways to maximize the customer experience within the Passenger Terminal Building through arts, entertainment, and improved communication devices.
 2. Continue relationships with expanding airlines and seek air service through another hub city.
 3. Work with area economic developers to attract new aeronautical businesses and airport tenants for the development of additional land along the extended taxiway.
 4. Utilize the airport to provide a convenient global gateway that safely and efficiently generates economic vitality in a sustainable and responsible manner.

Economic Development

Goals & Policies

- **GOAL 1: Support infill and redevelopment throughout Brainerd as a strategic component of growth.**
Policies:
 1. Drive infill development and redevelopment towards areas where current infrastructure is present, or places where high levels of blight or disinvestment exists.
 2. Invest in community improvements that will spur and support revitalization or redevelopment.
 3. Evaluate the near and long-term fiscal impacts of annexation and development proposals.
 4. Reclaim underutilized infrastructure within the city (industrial sites, rail lines, parking lots, blighted structures, vacant blocks).
- **GOAL 2: Support our workforce and help them thrive.**
Policies:
 1. Collaborate with local partners and stakeholders to address industry workforce needs, creating a career and education pathway for residents of all ages.
 2. Encourage access to advanced education or certification programs, workforce development, and job training opportunities.
 3. Support the ability to enable residents to work within close walking and biking distances from where they live.
 4. Expand transit opportunities to the various business clusters, or concentrated areas with high business density, throughout the community.
 5. Support the expansion of transit hours of operation in an effort to support our workforce during all shift times.
- **GOAL 3: Help local businesses grow and attract new businesses in our neighborhoods, along our main corridors, and in our downtown.**
Policies:
 1. Support current businesses through a variety of programs, resources, and offerings.
 2. Attract new businesses best suited for the community's assets, increasing local employment options and building the city's tax base.
 3. Encourage entrepreneurs to start their own business.

Park & Recreation

Goals & Policies

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

Policies:

1. Add green space and public plazas in a manner that makes them conveniently accessible to all residents and prioritizes function and aesthetics.
2. Enhance the natural environment throughout the community.
3. Collaborate with landowners, developers, and other partners to link parks, neighborhoods, and public spaces with a network of greenways and multiuse trails.

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

Policies:

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

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

Policies:

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

Facilities & Infrastructure

Goals & Policies

GOAL 1: Improve the overall image of the city.

Policies:

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

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

Policies:

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

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

Policies:

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

Public Safety

Goals & Policies

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

Policies:

1. Make efficient use of existing facilities to ensure access to emergency services for all residents and visitors.
2. Strategically plan for and implement maintenance and expansion in a fiscally and environmentally responsible manner.
3. Continuously seek to eradicate crime through innovative and contemporary strategies, including preventative, proactive, and responsive measures.
4. Sustain fire protection through a combination of up-to-date facilities and fleet vehicles, technology, outreach, and community engagement initiatives.
5. Build, secure, and maintain efficient public facilities that enhance the character and priorities of Brainerd and its neighborhoods.

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

Policies:

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

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

Policies:

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

Natural Resources

Goals & Policies

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

Policies:

1. Identify corridors along the Mississippi River and other streams or wetlands that could accommodate low-impact developments, such as trails or greenspaces, in order to preserve these natural resources for future generations.
2. Utilize greenways to connect residents and neighborhoods to open spaces and natural areas.
3. Preserve natural open spaces for habitat and scenic recreational qualities of the city.
4. Encourage best management practices for managing runoff.

GOAL 2: Increase access to open space.

Policies:

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

01

Introduction

OVERVIEW

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

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

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

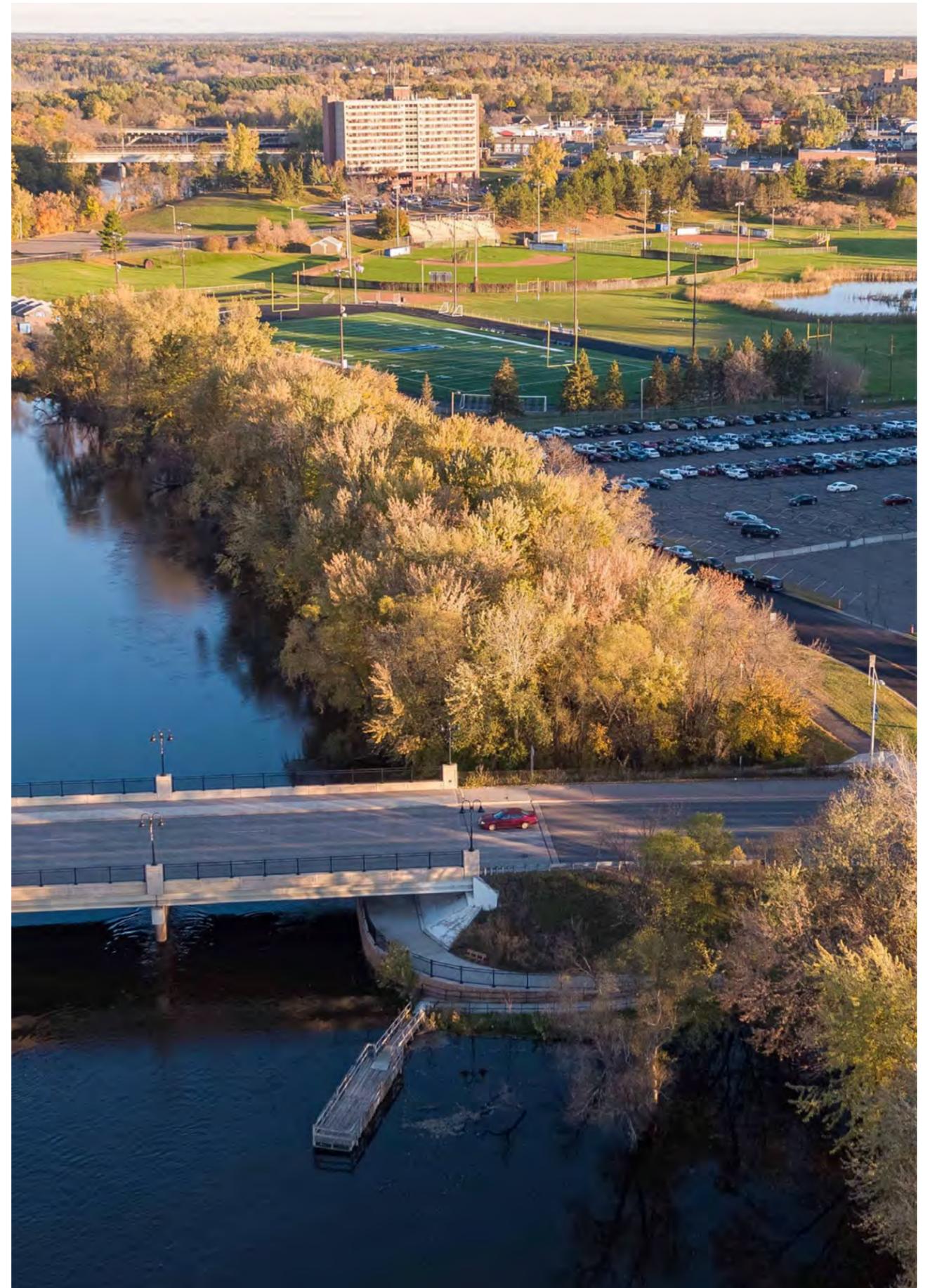
with centralized courtyards. A vital part of the city's identity is to capture and preserve the bits of history and seek ways to integrate modern architecture to meet the needs of all residents who seek to call Brainerd home.

HISTORY

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

“I HAVE LIVED IN BRAINERD FOR TWENTY YEARS AND IT REMAINS IN MY HEART. I WANT IT TO THRIVE!”

“BRAINERD HAS A LONG AND RICH HISTORY THAT IT NEEDS TO DIG INTO AND BUILD UPON. ITS PEOPLE ARE HARD-WORKING, FRIENDLY, AND WILLING TO COME TOGETHER FOR A COMMON GOAL IF PRESENTED IN A WAY THAT RESONATES FOR THEM.”



COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

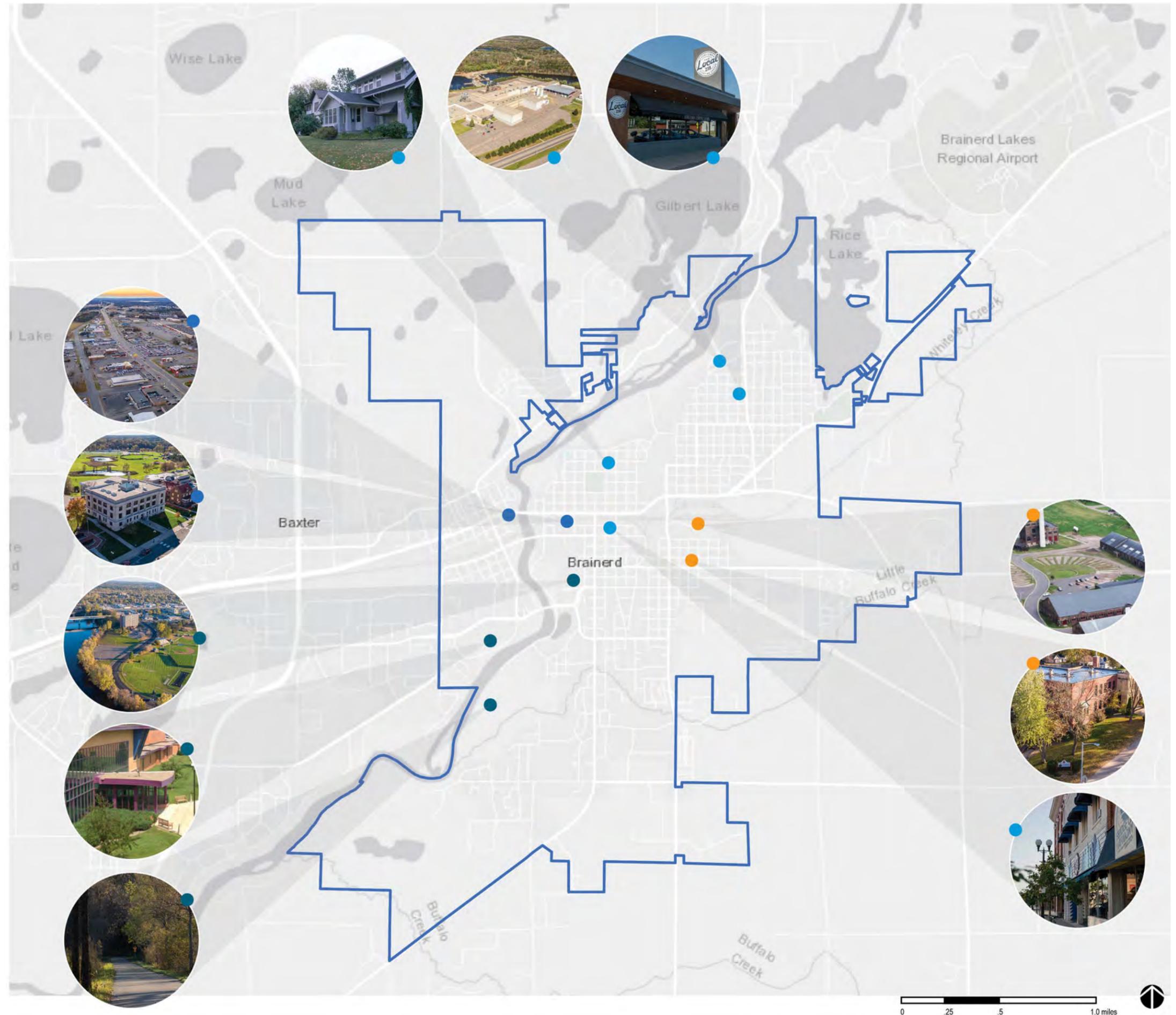
Brainerd is located roughly 60 miles north of St. Cloud on Highways 10 and 371; roughly 120 miles north of the Twin Cities. Brainerd is the largest city in Crow Wing County and serves as the county seat. The community lies at the intersection of the major east-west and north-south highways in Central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

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

Home to 13,440 people (ACS 2016), the surrounding area nearly doubles in population during the summer months. Residents of the city have nearly 400 lakes within the Brainerd Lakes Area, as well as a multitude of year-round recreational sport opportunities to participate in. Brainerd's beautiful setting, progressive nature and prime location make it a community with great potential, and significant assets to build on over the next 15 years.

Photo Inventory:

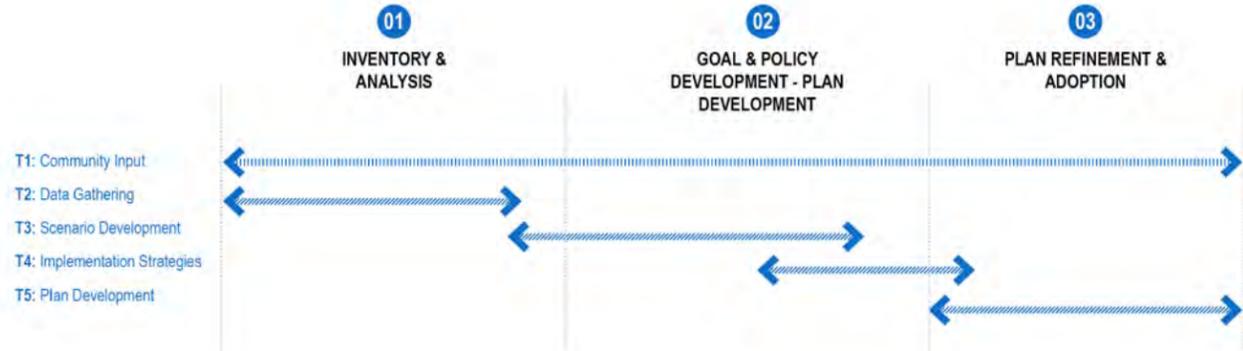
1. Historical Brainerd neighborhood
2. Brainerd Industrial Center
3. The Local 218—local restaurant
4. The North Pacific Center—Event and conference center
5. Lincoln Elementary—ISD 181
6. Downtown Brainerd
7. Trails at Rotary Riverside Park
8. Central Lakes College
9. Mississippi River
10. Crow Wing County Government Center
11. Highway 210 Corridor



PROCESS

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

“USE OUR GREAT NATURAL RESOURCES AND GOOD SCHOOLS AS AN ATTRACTIVE TOOL TO BRING IN BUSINESSES THAT WILL PROVIDE GOOD, FULL-TIME WITH BENEFITS, YEAR-ROUND JOBS.”



COMMUNITY INPUT

The process to update the 2019 Comprehensive Plan began in 2017 when a Community Survey Panel was formed to begin surveying community input efforts for the plan's completion. The panel was made up of 300 volunteers and were tasked to complete a total of 7 surveys that touched on a multitude of topics pertaining to long-range planning and the community character of the city. A steering committee was formed, comprising of 13 sector representatives, to provide oversight and serve as an advisory body for this project. A city-wide community survey was conducted to learn of residents, visitors, and workers' preferences on community character and livability. Four neighborhood meetings were held in the different wards to identify assets and needs at the neighborhood level. A total of 5 focus groups were held to dig deeper into issues in the community. Finally, a community design session was held to glean further input on preferences and priorities for the future of the city. It's estimated that over 1,500 points of contact were made with residents, visitors, and employees in the city. Collectively, the input formed the foundation of the plan and influenced the goals, policies, and strategies meant to implement the



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



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



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



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



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



WHAT WE HEARD

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

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD MATTERS

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

MAINTAIN SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS

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

OFFER SUITABLE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS

Survey participants seek an array of housing options that meet their income, size, and quality needs. Various concerns were voiced on the quality of rental units and concerns with the inventory of available units within the City of Brainerd.

IMPROVE THE IMAGE OF THE HOUSING STOCK

Blighted houses and vacant storefronts play a role in the image of the community. Survey participants support a coordinated effort to address blight, revitalize neighborhoods, and improve housing conditions.

PROVIDE ADEQUATE JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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

IMPROVE THE OVERALL MAINTENANCE AND THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE CITY

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

PROTECT AND ENHANCE OUR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

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

INVEST AND REVITALIZE DOWNTOWN

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

YOUR PLAN AS A WORKBOOK

Each of the sections of this plan has many uses and applications. The community profile data, and corresponding report, can be useful in the preparation of grant applications. The policy framework located throughout each planning chapter should be consistently referred to by the city council as they review permit applications and requests for public improvements. The city boards and commission should use the action plan in the implementation chapter as a starting point in each year's budgetary process. Concurrent with budgeting appropriations, the policy framework and action plan should assist the city in developing an annual work program to guide staff in a manner that is consistent with the content in the plan. Finally, developers and landowners should refer to the goals and strategies of the plan when considering development or redevelopment opportunities.

Your plan is a living document, one that should be periodically reviewed to ensure that the city is tackling the plan's priorities. Use this plan as a workbook of sorts, a place where you should feel comfortable making notes, editing, identifying content and highlighting important sections. Throughout the plan you'll find areas where checkmarks left blank, meant for you to complete once you've completed that task. Mark those tasks with a "check." These notes and comments are extremely important for when the city is ready to amend or update this plan in the future.

QUICK ACTION GUIDE

- Read the community survey panel responses and make notes and comments throughout the document.
- Make notes in the ward summary report.
- Identify a set of ways and methods to share the content of this plan outward.
- Make a template for yearly reporting.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES & OBSTACLES (SWOO)

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

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

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

WEAKNESSES	OBSTACLES
Housing types	Community appearance
Affordable housing option	Railroad
High paying jobs	Highway 210
Neighborhood safety	Lack of vision
Overall image of city	NIMBY
Overall maintenance	Crime and safety
Code enforcement	Walkability
Crime and safety	Underutilized community history
Walkability	High rental rates
Downtown environment	Lack of youth activity
High number of rentals	Downtown redevelopment
Exterior housing maintained	Funding
More retail opportunities	Aging infrastructure and cost
Blight	Low paying jobs
Public transit	
More restaurant offerings	

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

AUTHORITY TO PLAN

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

"In essence, a comprehensive plan is an expression of the community's vision for the future and a strategic map to reach that vision."

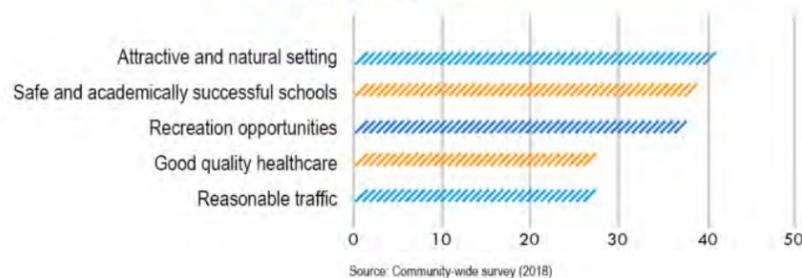
- League of Minnesota Cities

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

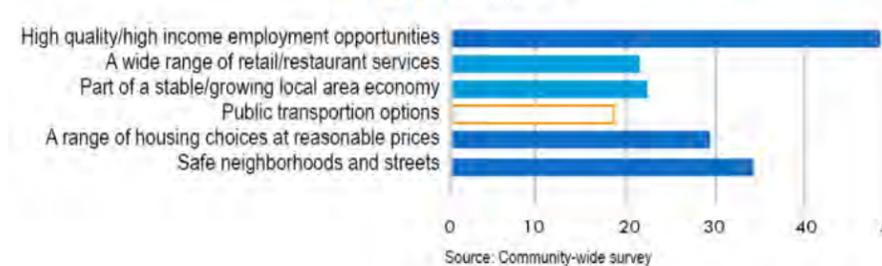
- Preserve important natural resources, agricultural land, and other open lands.
- Create opportunity for residents to participate in guiding a community's future.
- Identify issues, stay ahead of trends, and accommodate change.
- Ensure that growth makes the community better, not just bigger.
- Foster sustainable economic development.
- Provide an opportunity to consider future implications of today's decisions.
- Protect property rights and values.
- Enable other public and private agencies to plan their activities in harmony with the municipality's plans.

The Comprehensive Plan references a variety of maps. These maps can be found on the city's website within the various city departments; Community Development, Engineering, Parks and Recreation, and Housing and Redevelopment Authority. Visit ci.brainerd.mn.us to locate these maps.

Q11 | What are some of the things that make Brainerd a great place to live?



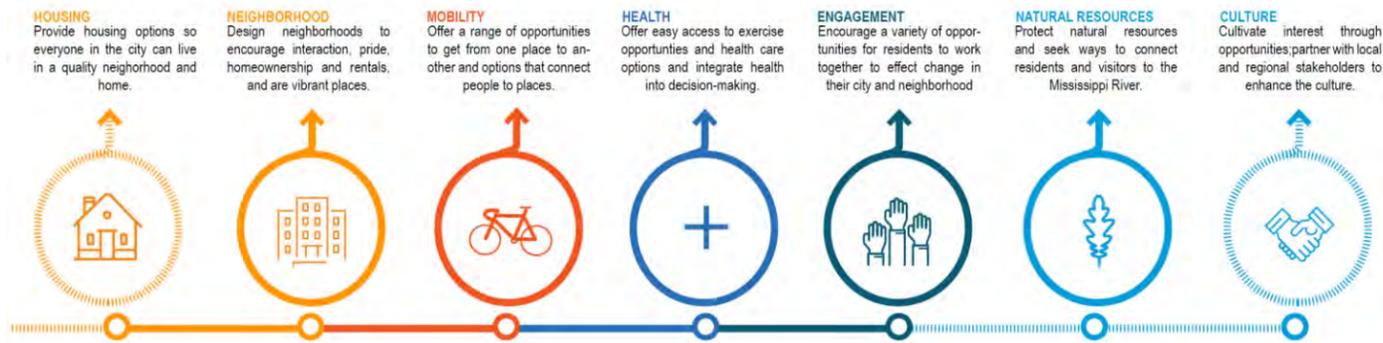
Q7 | What areas need the most improvement in Brainerd?



TRENDS

Livability

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



Age-Friendly Communities

The city will take active strides to become an age-friendly community, one that provides opportunities for people of all ages. As the city plans for the future, city leaders acknowledge that our population is aging. The median age of Brainerd residents is 32.7 (American Community Survey (ACS), 2016)), which is significantly lower than that of Crow Wing County and surrounding cities. This provides the city a very unique opportunity and responsibility to apply sound planning practice and policies to improve our city to serve a broad spectrum of needs and ability – helping us become the city of choice in our region.

By being intentional in our policies and design, the city can provide opportunities for all residents to “age in place” and thrive at every age (and stage) and economic level in life. By strategically preparing for an aging population, the city can take an active step in supporting its residents by focusing on areas such as housing, community engagement, volunteering, and caregiving. In addition, the city can put policies in place where people are within walking distance of work, live in walkable neighborhoods, utilize transit, offer housing options, and places where residents can stay in their homes as long as possible. Brainerd residents have spoken on the importance on becoming a great place for people of all ages and economic levels.

“...PEOPLE WANT BRAINERD TO BE A FAMILY PLACE. A GOOD, WHOLESOME TOWN TO RAISE A FAMILY IN, TO OWN A BUSINESS IN.”



Demographics

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

BRAINERD'S YOUTHFUL POPULATION

The total population estimate for the city of Brainerd in 2016 is 13,440. Of those residents, 18 percent of the population is under the age of 19 and 16 percent of the population is over the age of 65. Despite the assumption that Brainerd is an aging population the median age is 32, it's comparably lower than neighboring communities and the county. As an example Nisswa (49), Crosslake (60), Baxter (39), whose median ages are all higher than Brainerd.

HISTORIC HOUSING STOCK

Reflective of its history, 21 percent of the city's housing stock was built prior to 1939; the largest percentage of houses. Many of those homes are centrally located in the city. There is a total of 6,433 housing units in the city. Houses built between the years 1950-1959 make up the second largest percentage at nearly 15 percent.

RISING HOUSHOLD INCOME

In 2015 (ACS), the Brainerd median household income (MHI) is \$32,154 which is an increase of 9 percent since 2010. The MHI is lower than the county's which in 2015 was \$45,435. Incremental improvement has been accomplished. Since 2000, the city has experienced an increase of nearly 20 percent.

GROWING POPULATION

According to data from a variety of sources, the City of Brainerd is expected to grow through 2030 with a change of 13 percent, estimating the population will be 15,200. Crow Wing County is also expected to steadily increase in population through 2040 (Crow Wing County Housing Study, 2015).

EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY

The leading occupation, despite assumption of a blue-collar community, is the *educational services, health care, and social assistance* industry. This industry alone employs nearly one-quarter of Brainerd residents.

Sources for data is the American Community Survey (ACS) 2016 and Crow Wing County Housing Study.

02 Land Use



Overview

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

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

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

Community image: Identify and leverage the tangible and intangible characteristics that form the identity of the community.

Neighborhood investment: Develop programs and target investments to create vibrant, walkable neighborhoods that have access to open spaces and are interconnected through a trail network.

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

Existing Land Use

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

Residential

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

Commercial

Commercial areas make up a relatively small portion of Brainerd's total land area equaling 7 percent of the city's total developed area. Commercial uses are concentrated primarily in the downtown along major transportation corridors, particularly Business Highway 371 and TH 210.

Industrial

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

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

Public & Semi-Public

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

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

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

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

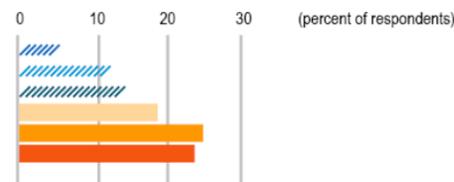
Community Input

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

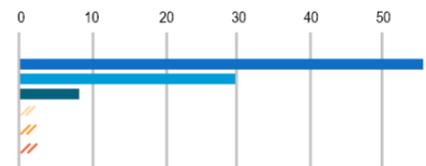
Mix of lot sizes and housing types

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

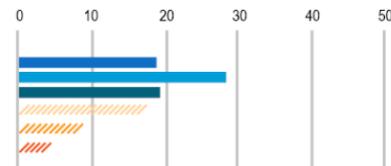
SMALL LOTS - 7,000 SQ. FT. or LESS



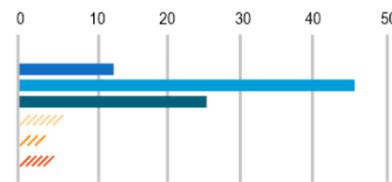
NEW DEVELOPMENT SHOULD HAVE SIDEWALKS:



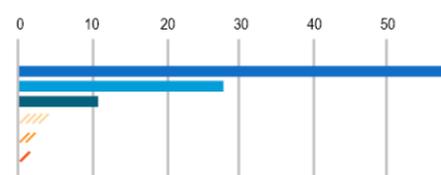
NEW DEVELOPMENT SHOULD HAVE A MIX OF SINGLE FAMILY, DUPLEX, AND MULTI-FAMILY



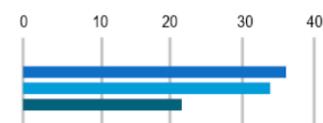
MEDIUM LOTS - 7,001-12,000 SQ FT.



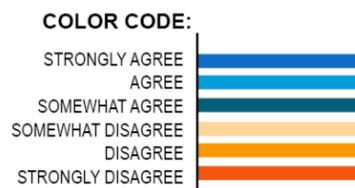
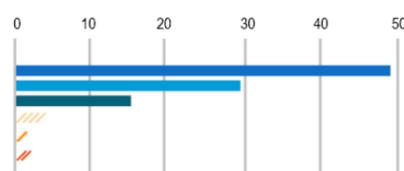
NEW DEVELOPMENT SHOULD HAVE TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE:



MIXTURE OF LOT SIZES



NEW DEVELOPMENT SHOULD HAVE PARKS WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE:



“WONDERFUL SMALL NEIGHBORHOODS OF SINGLE FAMILY HOMES, GROUP LIVING SETTINGS... GREAT ARTS SCENE DOWNTOWN.”

“HOPEFUL FOR THE FUTURE WITH THE CHAMBER'S EFFORTS AND THE SCHOOL DISTRICT'S WORK TO INCLUDE A COMMUNITY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER THAT WILL BRING PEOPLE TO BRAINERD.”

Code enforcement

Nearly 73 percent of survey participants would like to see code enforcement increase as they feel not enough enforcement is being done. Feedback from the community design session indicated that residents wish to see housing conditions improve, neighborhood blight be addressed, and exterior maintenance of structures be enhanced.

Natural resource preservation and opportunities

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

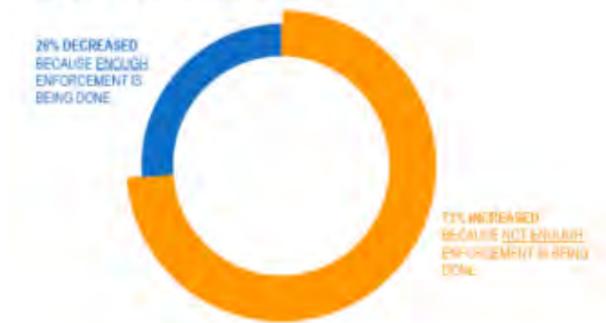
Downtown redevelopment

Brainerd's downtown plays a critical role in the economy and social aspect of the city's identity. Residents seek a collaborative approach to improving the physical, social, and economic conditions of the downtown. When the community survey panel was asked if it was important to invest and redevelop downtown as a mixed-use destination, 65 percent agreed, and 24 percent somewhat agreed.

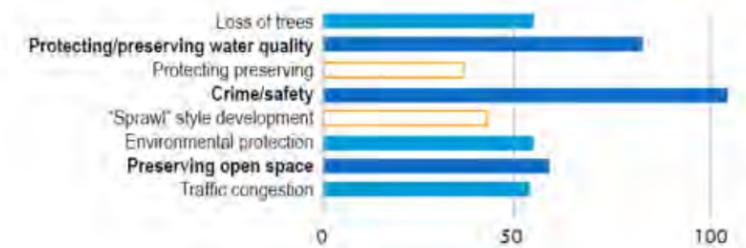
Neighborhood investment

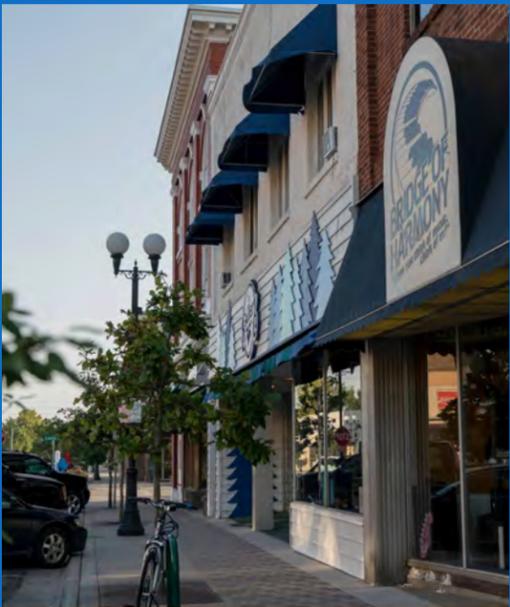
The city has a diverse collection of neighborhoods and this became evident during the ward meetings. Ward meeting respondents noted concerns over housing-related matters such as exterior façade condition, property maintenance, and code enforcement. The community survey panel responses showed support toward future growth in existing neighborhoods over the next ten years.

Q5 | SHOULD THE AMOUNT OF CODE ENFORCEMENT BE:



Q6 | From the following list, select the 3 issues you are most concerned about in terms of city growth:





SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES



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

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

Tools

Smart Growth Principles

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

- Conserve resources by reinvesting in existing infrastructure and historic buildings.
- Design neighborhoods that have homes near daily services and amenities and provide motorized and non-motorized options.
- Provide a range of housing types, encouraging lifecycle housing and options for residents and families of all income levels.
- Enhance neighborhoods and involve people in decision making.
- Create vibrant places to live, work, play, stay, and learn.

By integrating this set of principles, the city can leverage and utilize land efficiently, take active strides to become environmentally sustainable, and transition the city's regulatory framework to enhance the quality and character of the community. This set of principles will aid the city in being proactive in terms of future growth, while building off a set of existing elements.

Form-Based Codes

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

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

Infill and Redevelopment

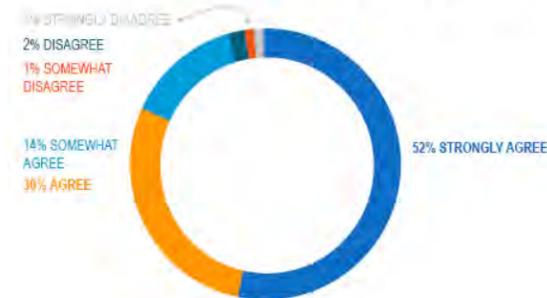
Redevelopment is a key goal within the land use, housing, and economic chapters. As a part of the community engagement process, residents noted the importance of building within, rather than extending our growth footprint outward. Infill and redevelopment will be a key practice in addressing vacant and blighted parcels, as well as a means to direct development to targeted areas to generate revenue and advance the city's vision. This type of redevelopment strategy utilizes prior infrastructure investments and consumes less land. This practice can result in:

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

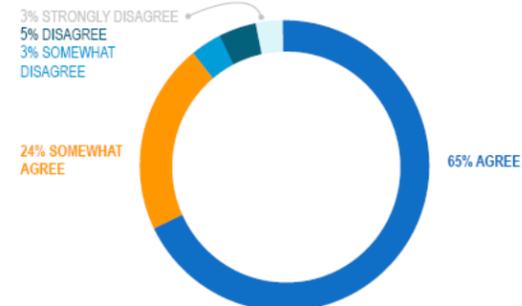
Redevelopment is often a complicated task with many partners involved in the process. Infill and redevelopment practices require collaboration with a multitude of partners ranging from various agencies and cities to property owners, adjacent property owners, and developers.

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

Q2 | Development and redevelopment of existing neighborhoods (residential and non-residential) in the should be a priority over the next 10 years?

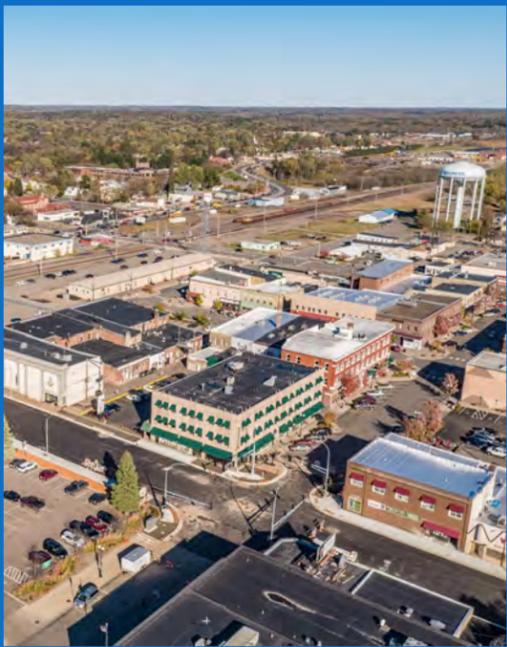


Q4 | It is important to invest and development Downtown Brainerd as a mixed-use destination:



“BRAINERD HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE COMMUNITY WITH CHARACTER; THIS IS HARD TO DESCRIBE. BRAINERD HAS THE HISTORY OF THE AREA, SOMETHING ‘NEW’ CAN’T HAVE.

...
FOR ME PERSONALLY, BRAINERD HAS ALWAYS HAD A STRONG ‘CITY’ VIBE EVEN THOUGH IT WAS SMALL AND RURAL. ITS ARTIST VIBE, OLDER VIBE, HISTORICAL VIBE, IS WHAT GIVES IT’S CHARACTER.”



Future Land Use

The land use plan and associated map describe the different future land use designations for the city and its planned growth areas. The designations govern zoning and the city's future land use form. They provide a general framework for growth and development within Brainerd and its growth areas at full development. The plan text provides the policies, standards, and principles to guide the city's future physical form and function, and serves as the basis for updating the zoning ordinance and other development controls that are enforceable under the city's powers.

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

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

A set of future categories has been identified to guide growth and development within Brainerd. This set of categories address a range of land use types that exist throughout the city today, as well as land uses likely to occur in the future. The categories used in this plan are similar to those outlined in the 2004 comprehensive plan, but with more detail in the residential categories to reflect a wider range of densities.

! Both the plan text and map will help determine whether proposed changes to zoning are consistent with the comprehensive plan. Land use and densities are proposed as maximum allowed and not precluding lower-intensity land uses or densities. Recommended land uses are defined for gross areas, not on a per-parcel basis.

! Once a future land use map is created from the text outlined in this section, the Future Land Use Map does not share the **same legal weight as the city's Zoning Map**. The Future Land Use Map should be considered a guide and should be used to influence future land use decisions, **not** regulate the activities in specific zones.

FUTURE LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS

CATEGORY		Overview	Features and Criteria	Density
RESIDENTIAL	Rural residential / agricultural	Agricultural uses, low-density residential, development land.	Type: Low-density homes, undeveloped land, wetlands, agricultural, vacant.	2-5 acres per dwelling
	Low-density residential	Encompasses most of the city's existing single-family detached residential neighborhoods.	Type: Single-family detached units, low-density attached homes; duplexes, twin homes.	2-4 units/acre
	Medium-density residential	Provides a variety of housing options.	Type: Single-family detached, townhomes, apartments, row-houses.	4-8 units/acre
	High-density residential	Townhouses, apartments, condominiums, rooming houses, and other dwellings that house more than one family in one building.	Type: Apartments, townhomes, rowhouses, condos, senior living.	8+ units/acre
COMMERCIAL	Downtown Commercial	Pedestrian-oriented businesses, mixed-use high-density retail, service, office, governmental, public uses.	Type: Mix of uses, commercial, office, upper-level residential.	-
	General Commercial	General retail uses adjacent to the arterial highway network and highway-oriented businesses.	Type: Auto-oriented commercial development; mix of uses, office use, large-scale retail, service.	-
	Mixed Use	Intended to create walkable, mixed-use nodes that provide neighborhood goods and services.	Type: Higher-density apartments, mixed-use buildings, retail, commercial, offices, institutional, and public.	-
INDUSTRIAL	Industrial	Intended to provide a series of industrial uses, separated from other businesses and concentrated in a location.	Type: Manufacturing, warehousing, assembly, truck terminals, other businesses that provide goods and services, but not directly to the public; separate from other businesses.	-
	Public/Semi-Public	Contains publicly-owned uses that benefit the community.	Type: City/county buildings, public utilities, private institutions, schools, publicly owned buildings.	-
	Park and Open Space	Parks and open spaces meant for recreation.	Type: Parks, wildlife areas, outdoor recreational facilities, greenways, golf courses, campgrounds.	-

Rural residential/agricultural: This category is to protect currently undeveloped land from inappropriate, unneeded urbanization. This category includes very low-density residential development and agricultural uses until such a time when urban services are available.

Low-density residential: This category provides for a variety of housing options, including single-family detached homes, with the possibility for twin homes or other low-density attached homes.

Medium-density residential: This category provides for a mix of housing options including single-family detached and attached twin homes and lower-density townhomes.

High-density residential: This category allows a mix of uses, such as townhomes, row houses, apartments, condominiums, and senior housing options.

Mixed use: This category is intended to provide a mix of commercial, residential, and public uses to foster a pedestrian environment.

Central business district: This category applies to traditional downtown Brainerd, encouraging businesses that facilitate a pedestrian-oriented environment. This category encourages high-density retail, mixed, service, office, governmental, and public uses.

Commercial: This category applies to commercial development outside of the central business district, providing services and retail and serving the adjacent neighborhoods, community, and regional needs.

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

Public/Semi-Public: This category identifies portions of the city that should contain uses that benefit the public. This includes all publicly owned uses (schools, city buildings, etc.) and private institutions (hospitals, churches, etc.).

Park/Open space: This category identifies portions of the city that contain parks and open spaces.

Gateway district: This category identifies portions of the city that are located at major entrances to the city and require higher-quality design elements and building construction for new commercial

FISCAL IMPACT ANALYSIS



A focus of this plan is infill development and neighborhood investments, transitioning the city to provide for a more walkable, mixed-use development style. Fiscal impact analysis focuses on the fiscal sustainability around the type of growth. Fiscal impact analysis is a policy that is adopted by the unit of government and requires that new development be analyzed to calculate its short- and long-term impacts on local government expense and revenues. A fiscal impact analysis can be completed for a variety of scales, such as a single-family house, multiple buildings, a proposed development or redevelopment, or on growth projections

Leverage the following tools and practices to advance the goals and policies in this section:

Smart Growth Principles: A set of framework designed to create walkable and sustainable communities.

Infill and Redevelopment: A practice of building within rather than extending the city's footprint outward.

Form-Based Codes: Address the relationship and form of buildings, rather than the use.

02.1 Community Character

Overview

History is infused throughout the city, in the neighborhood schools, the grid-like street network, the downtown, and historic homes. The surrounding environment and river link to a high quality of life for Brainerd residents and were noted as leading pieces. This chapter seeks to maintain a positive community image, one specifically tailored toward improving existing places and helping them thrive.

The directives of this sub-chapter focus on design attributes of the city, programming, and branding elements. By identifying a set of framework, guided by public input, the city can take active strides to strategically and thoughtfully create thriving public spaces, neighborhoods, and places.

Input

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

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

Downtown Revitalization: Residents support a coordinated effort to rehabilitate and invest in the downtown. The downtown plays an important role in the economic and social elements of Brainerd's identity. Survey respondents identified rehabilitating the downtown as one of the greatest concerns when it comes to

growth and development (46 percent). Survey participants seek a collaborative approach to improve the physical, social, and economic condition of the downtown.

Emphasize natural resources: Survey respondents noted their passion for improving the natural resources within the city, championing the Mississippi River, and supporting opportunities and expansion of amenities in the general area. The city should seek ways to integrate open space into new development proposals, as well as identify existing redevelopment opportunities and greenway identification.

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

Trends

Tactical Urbanism

This term refers to small-scale demonstration projects meant to experiment and gather input on potential design changes.

“CHARACTER IN A COMMUNITY IS A STRONG EMPHASIS ON WHERE THE CITY HAS BEEN AND A HINT OF WHERE IT’S GOING. I THINK USING THE TOWN’S HISTORY ESPECIALLY IN THE DOWNTOWN SHOULD BE AN EMPHASIS.”



Tactical urbanism refers to a city, organizational, and/or citizen-led approach to neighborhood building using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions to catalyze long-term change (Tactical Urbanism Guide). There's a multitude of tactics meant to study and facilitate conversation around complex design issues. Below is a series of examples that the city should consider in the upcoming years:

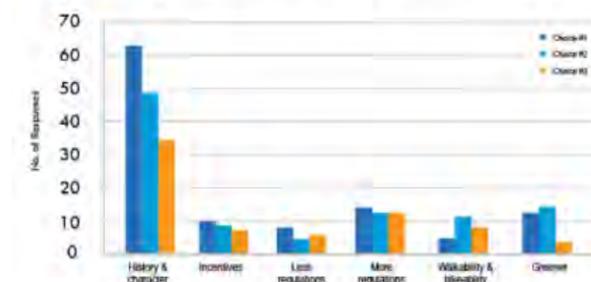
- new trail alignment or protected bike lane
- enhanced pedestrian crossings
- pop-up town hall or city council meeting
- open street events
- park(ing) day

Placemaking

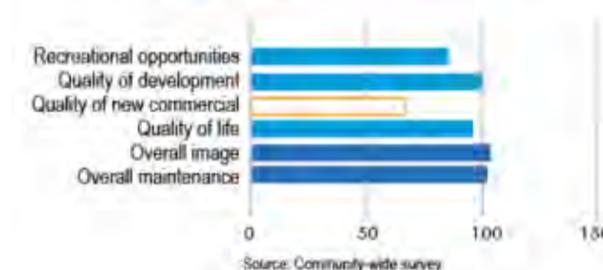
An important element of this chapter is to strategically position the city from a project-based development approach towards a place-based development tactic. *Placemaking* can be a springboard for community development – and revitalization.

Placemaking inspires people and community leaders to reimagine and reinvent public spaces within their communities. *Placemaking* refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value (Project for Public Spaces). Placemaking does much more than promote better use of urban design; it focuses on creative use patterns, concentrating on the social, cultural, and physical attributes that define a place.

Q7 | What are 3 things you think would improve the quality and design of new commercial development in the city?



Q1 | What are the top 5 priorities the city should improve on?





“FINDING RENEWAL.
HISTORICAL COMMUNITY AREA.
NORTHWOODS, NATURAL,
ECLECTIC, OPPORTUNITY
LADEN, SMALL TOWN FRIENDLY.”

“...IT VARIES FROM NEIGHBORHOOD
TO NEIGHBORHOOD, BUT FOR THE
MOST PART WE ARE A COMMUNITY OF
GENEROUS, GIVING PEOPLE THAT ARE
QUICK TO HELP EACH OTHER OUT.”



FUTURE CONDITIONS

Design Guidelines

A group of illustrations and text can serve as a visionary tool that provides suggested and descriptive elements for the built environment. This guide will be an important tool for the City of Brainerd to successfully implement this plan. Such guidelines can help preserve the historic character of the city as well as help with consistency and overall community image. Traditional design guidelines are meant to have room for flexibility and innovation and differ in scale.

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

Historic preservation

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

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

Signage

Private and public signage plays a significant role in the overall image of the city. Without clear standards and regulations, signs (both public and private) could diminish the overall image of districts, neighborhoods, and corridors. The city's local ordinances need to balance the varying objectives of public and private entities, while striving to develop a local flavor, identity, and theme.

- ✓ Develop a guideline document that highlights the standards and design of the signage ordinance. Develop different standards for 1) significant neighborhood nodes and the downtown, 2) main corridors, and 3) areas outside of those districts. Make it easy for applicants to find this tool on the city's website

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

- ✓ Develop a city-wide wayfinding master plan

Corridor Enhancements

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

- ✓ Design gateway features on the city's main arterial roads

Downtown

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

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

DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY



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

Eleven principles for creating great community places:

1. The community is the expert.
2. Create a place, not a design.
3. Look for partners.
4. You can see a lot just by observing.
5. Have a vision.
6. Start with petunias: lighter, quicker, cheaper.
7. Triangulate.
8. They always say, "It can't be done!"
9. Form supports function.
10. Money is not the issue.
11. You are never finished!

03 Housing



Overview

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

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

With Brainerd being the hub of Crow Wing County, it is important that all the needs of current and future residents are met. Brainerd offers residential housing as well as rural residential housing, in the city limits of Brainerd. This asset and the ability to satisfy these needs make Brainerd different from surrounding cities and will ultimately increase Brainerd’s brand of being the hub of the region.

Existing Conditions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Existing Plans and Boards

Housing and Redevelopment Authority: The purpose of the housing and redevelopment authority is to provide affordable housing and redevelopment opportunities to strengthen neighborhoods and the community.

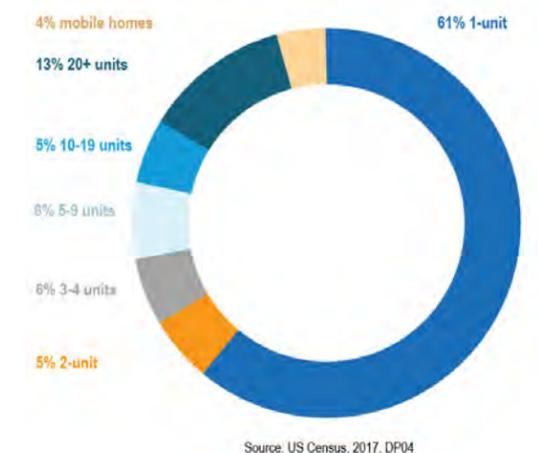
Existing Housing System

Housing inventory can change year to year, but having a full understanding of the current inventory along with future needs will assist Brainerd in both attracting and retaining residents. Brainerd is unique in having a near 50-50 split between owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units. This could be because of a handful of reasons including: rent is considered low in Brainerd with the average rent being \$703 when compared to Baxter’s average rent of \$957, and it is cheaper to rent than to have a mortgage payment, which in Brainerd averages a \$976 per month. According to the *Housing Needs and Analysis Study* by the Crow Wing County HRA, by 2020 the estimated percent of

renters in Brainerd will jump from 50.5 percent to 57 percent, which equates to around 100 new renters in Brainerd (ACS).

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

City of Brainerd Units in Structure



Source: US Census, 2017, DP04

“BRAINERD IS A TRADITIONAL URBAN TOWN WITH WALKABLE NEIGHBORHOODS SURROUNDING THE DOWNTOWN.”



Photo credit: Missing Middle Housing

MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING



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

Missing middle buildings typically have a footprint not greater than a large, single-family home. This makes it easy to integrate them into neighborhoods and are a good tool to transition to a higher-density and walkable context. These housing types provide a diverse array of options like duplexes, fourplexes, and bungalow courts that effortlessly fit into low-rise, neighborhoods that seek walkability, local-serving retail, and public transportation options. This housing typology will help address affordability and seek to solve the mismatch between the available housing stock, the shift in demographics that are occurring, and the growing demand for walkability.

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

-Missing Middle Housing

The aging of existing homes in Brainerd was brought up regularly during public engagement sessions. The discussions were mainly focused around exterior deterioration, causing harm to the housing stock, and not looking aesthetically pleasing to potential new residents. The figure below shows that 59.3 percent of the houses in Brainerd were built before 1970. The national average for homes built before 1970 is 38.9 percent, far below Brainerd's stock.

Construction Year of Housing Units		
Year Built	Estimate	Percent
Total Housing Units	6,488	100.00%
2010 or later	104	1.60%
2000 to 2009	622	9.59%
1990 to 1999	683	10.53%
1980 to 1989	517	7.97%
1970 to 1979	630	9.71%
1960 to 1969	890	13.72%
1950 to 1959	924	14.24%
1940 to 1949	658	10.14%
1939 or earlier	1,460	22.50%

US Census, ACS 2017 DP04

That being said, old homes provide character to a community and neighborhoods that cannot be accomplished with brand-new homes. During each ward meeting, residents noted their love and appreciation for their neighborhood. Whether it be the social or physical traits, history, family heritage, or location to amenities, residents voiced their opinions on ways to improve their neighborhoods to help bring new residents to town and maintain the community character. Residents championed the history of Brainerd and the need to improve the exterior facades of the neighborhoods where they live. They exhibited a passion to improve the aesthetics and appearance of housing units, which in turn will build stronger neighborhoods and a sense of place.

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

Comparison of Housing Units (2000-2016)



Life-cycle Housing Options

Housing needs of a community relate to the demographic profile of the household. Households generally transition through several lifecycle stages that include entry-level households, first-time homeowners, move-up buyers, empty nesters, and seniors. The following section provides an overview of each household.

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

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

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

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

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

CWC Housing Study

Maxfield Research Inc. was engaged by the Crow Wing County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (Crow Wing County HRA) to conduct a comprehensive housing needs assessment for Crow Wing County.

The goal of this study is to identify current and future housing needs for County jurisdictions and encourage and support the development of needed housing.

Comparison of Occupancy of Housing Units (2000-2016)

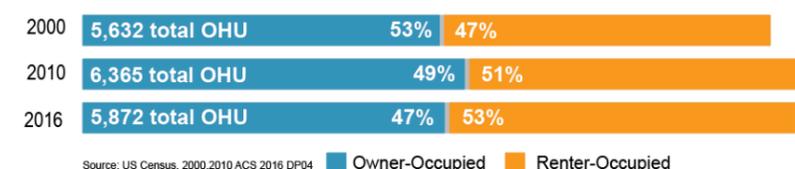


Photo credit: AARP

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADU's)



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

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

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

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

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

-AARP



Life-cycle Housing

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

Programming

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

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

Neighborhood Associations

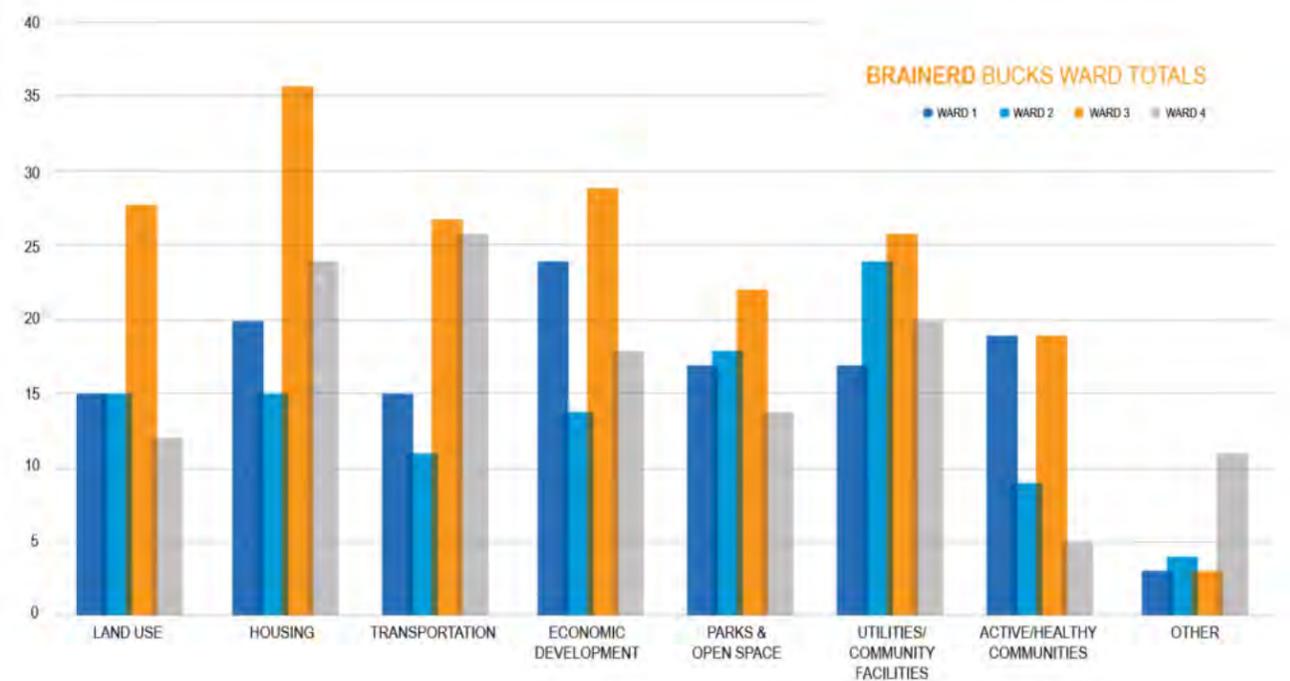
Groups like neighborhood associations or organizations can play an active role in developing neighborhood capacity, rehabilitation, and branding. This volunteer group will work together to build stronger neighborhoods. The city could leverage these groups of volunteers to address concerns like blight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

Maintenance and Rehabilitation

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

Future Opportunities

During each ward meeting, residents noted their love and appreciation for their neighborhood. Whether it be the social or physical traits, history, family heritage, or location to amenities, residents voiced their opinions on ways to improve their neighborhoods to help bring new residents to town and maintain the community character. The following figure shows that housing was one of the most important topics at all of the ward meetings:



Residents championed the history of Brainerd and the need to improve the exterior facades of the neighborhoods where they live. The quality of rental units oftentimes led conversations. Residents have a passion to improve the aesthetics and appearance of housing units, which in turn will build stronger neighborhoods and a sense of place.

Suggestions from community engagement:

WHAT WE HEARD HOUSING	YES	NO	PRIORITY
Additional housing options for all different housing types, needs, and incomes.	8	0	1st
Improve rental housing maintenance.	4	0	2nd-1q
Increased number of large lot, single-family homes.	3	0	3rd-1q
Respond to the demand for senior and millennial housing options.	3	0	
Improve housing conditions, neighborhood blight, and exterior maintenance.	7	0	3rd-1q
Code enforcement and maintenance of housing stock.	3	0	2nd-1q

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

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

Survey participants seek an array of housing options that meet their income, size, and quality needs. Various concerns were voiced about the quality and inventory of available rental units within the city. Safe, well-maintained housing is critical for Brainerd’s community character. Survey participants support a coordinated effort to address blight, improve housing conditions, and increase availability.

04 Mobility



Overview

A community's mobility network is perhaps its most defining feature. A community's transportation network must be able to facilitate all modes of movement to a community, through a community, and within a community. A community's transportation network must also take into consideration the interplay among modes of transportation such as aviation, freight, rail, transit, automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian. Furthermore, a community's transportation network must anticipate the needs of the users of each of these modes. But perhaps foremost, the network must seek to ensure efficiency and safety.

In summary, a community's transportation networks must safely and efficiently facilitate movement, integrate various modes, and anticipate needs and future system demands, all while maintaining existing infrastructure and managing limited resources.

“SIDEWALKS THAT ARE USER FRIENDLY, BARRIER FREE, AND SAFE FOR ALL USERS TO GAIN A DEGREE OF COMMUNITY THROUGH SHARED SPACES.”

This chapter focuses on describing the existing transportation network, identifying key transportation commissions and plans, reviewing the top priorities from the community engagement plan, and finally, outlining the transportation goals identified by the planning team through the planning process.

Existing Transportation Network

Pedestrian

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

In addition to the city's sidewalk network the city continues to maintain, expand, and improve its trail network, building upon the Paul Bunyan Trail (PBT), the Buffalo Hills Trail, the Cuyuna Lakes Trail, and other paved trails off of Canturbury Drive near Thiesse Drive. Two significant barriers came up frequently from residents throughout the planning process. These barriers include the difficulty that pedestrians experience when attempting to cross either TH 210 or South Sixth Street, particularly near downtown, but all along each corridor. The high level of average annual daily traffic (AADT) and the speed of traffic on these two corridors creates an uncomfortable environment for pedestrians to cross.

Furthermore, given that these two corridors intersect near downtown, the two corridors act as a barrier blocking downtown off from the rest of the community on two sides from pedestrian traffic.

Bicycle

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

However, given varying degrees of skill and comfort, many bicyclists are not comfortable or knowledgeable enough about bicycle safety and laws to enter a roadway and engage with and navigate through vehicular traffic. One of the goals of the Brainerd Nonmotorized Transportation Plan is to embrace nonmotorized transportation alternatives, including bicycling. Therefore, the city has taken steps to increase the number of bicycle infrastructure options available throughout town, including implementing several recommendations from the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan. Recommendations in the plan include the designation of specific bike routes, installation of bike lanes, sharrows, multi-use trails, and wayfinding signage.

Just like for pedestrians, bicyclists benefit from the city's efforts to continue to maintain, expand, and improve its trail network,

building upon the Paul Bunyan Trail (PBT), the Buffalo Hills Trail, the Cuyuna Lakes Trail, and other paved trails off of Canturbury Drive near Thiesse Drive.

Road and Bridge

The City of Brainerd maintains approximately 83.06 miles of streets (80.28 paved, 0.17 bridge, and 2.61 un-paved), of which 19.21 miles are covered under state aid rules and eligible for state aid funding. The city also maintains 16.26 miles of alleys, 2.73 of which are paved and 16.26 which are unpaved.

Comprehensive pavement management system is based on a 0-4 scale (0 being pavement that has completely failed and 4 being pavement that was just constructed). The city rates its pavements on three-year cycles. The City of Brainerd employs a variety of pavement management techniques to maintain the nearly 81 miles of paved streets, including chip sealing, crack sealing, patching, etc.)

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

Major Collectors		
Route	Termini	Jurisdiction
Industrial Park Road/County Road 117	13 th St. SE/Co. Rd. 45 to East City Limits	County
Bluff Avenue	N. 4 th St. to N. 7 th St.	City
Fir Street	N. 7 th St. to N. 11 th St. and Evergreen Ave	City
Wright Street	S. 6 th St. to CSAH 45	City
H Street	4 th Avenue to Mill Ave/CSAH 3	City
Riverside Drive (CSAH 20)	Jackson St. to Beaver Dam Rd.	City
North 4 th Street	Washington St./TH 210 to Bluff Ave	City
South West 4 th Street	W. Laurel St. to E. College Dr.	City
Beaver Dam Road	CSAH 20 to Wise Rd./CSAH 49	County
CSAH 45	S. city limits to Co. Rd. 117	County
Front Street	S. 6 th St. to S. 8 th St	City
H Street	Mill Avenue/Co. Rd. 3 to Gillis Ave	City
Evergreen Avenue	1 st Avenue to Fir	City
Fir Street	Evergreen Ave. to N 8 th St.	City
North 8 th Street	Fir St. to Washington St/TH 210	City
South 8 th Street	Washington St./TH 210 to Oak St.	City
Willow Street	SE 13 th St. to S 6 th St./Business 371	City
Highland Scenic Drive/CSAH 48	W. Laurel St. to city limits	City
South West 4 th Street	W. Laurel St. to W. College Dr.	City
Laurel Street	S. 8 th St. to Business 371	City
Minor Collector		
Route	Termini	Jurisdiction
H Street	Mill Avenue/Co. Rd. 3 to 13 th Ave	City
South 8 th Street	Oak St. to Broadway St.	City
Broadway Street	S. 8 th St. to Willow St.	City
South 9 th Street	Vine St. to Willow St.	City
Vine Street	S. 4 th St. to S. 6 th St.	City
East College Drive	River to Quince St.	City
4 th Avenue	E. Washington St./TH 210 to H St. NE	City
N Street	Mill Ave/CSAH 3 to 13 th Ave	City
13 th Avenue	E. Washington St./TH 210 to N. St.	City
Riverside Drive (CSAH 20)	Beaver Dam Rd. to city limits	City
East River Road	Washington St. /TH 210 to E. College Dr.	City
Local Roads		
Route	Termini	Jurisdiction
All other roads, not listed in Brainerd City limits are classified as "local roads"		

Functional Classification

Functional classification is the grouping of streets and highways into classes or systems according to the character of service they are intended to provide. Basic to this process is the recognition that most travel involves movement through a network of roads. Functional classification defines the role that any particular road or street plays in serving the flow of trips through an entire network.

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

State Aid for Local Transportation (SALT)

To support the state's system of streets, roads and bridges, MnDOT distributes funds for highway maintenance and construction to counties, cities and townships based on a formula determined by the Legislature. SALT works closely with local levels of government to ensure the state maintains a safe, effective and coordinated highway network.

In addition to funding support, staff from SALT provides technical assistance in highway and bridge design, construction and maintenance, authorizes grants for bridge construction, coordinates local federally funded projects and provides overall management of the state aid system.

SALT links MnDOT with city and county engineers to transfer technical expertise and determine ways to improve the state's highway system.

Aviation

The Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport (BRD) provides low-cost, reliable air service in the Lakes Area. For business travelers and vacationers, the BRD airport provides direct flights to and from Brainerd. The BRD airport has an ample parking lot that is free to use, well-lit, safe, and conveniently located just outside the terminal doors.

Delta Air Lines, operated by SkyWest, operates daily service in and out of BRD airport, which, when coupled with the Wings Café, free wi-fi and many transportation options, such as rental car agencies, taxi cab services, and the county transit makes BRD Airport one of the more complete terminals north of the Twin Cities. In addition, a variety of other aviation-related businesses, as well as a full-service fixed base operator, are also located at the Airport.

Rail

While the city of Brainerd does not own, operate, or maintain any rail infrastructure, rail has played an integral role in Brainerd's founding, history, and development. This remains true today with the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railway running east and west through the heart of the city. While the presence of the railroad in and through Brainerd has facilitated the transport of countless barrels of oil, countless tons of freight, goods and commodities, as well as acting as a major employer in Brainerd, it can also pose significant transportation challenges for local units of government as they manage efficiency and safety, particularly at rail crossings.

Freight

The City of Brainerd has several ways to classify its roadways, including by tonnage. The city has developed a road restriction map showing which of its roadways are classified as four-ton roads and 10-ton roads. This is an important classification for the growth and economic development of the city of Brainerd. One of the reasons the city maintains an adequate network of 10-ton roads is to ensure access and mobility for businesses requiring the transfer of freight within the city of Brainerd.



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

Existing Transportation Plans and Commissions

The City of Brainerd recognizes the need to plan for the future needs and development of the city's transportation network. Therefore, the city has established the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), the Walkable Bikeable City Committee, and the Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport Commission. These two groups are dedicated to analyzing, planning, developing plans, and making recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council.

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

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

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

Five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

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

Nonmotorized Transportation Plan

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

ADA Transition Plan

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

- Employment
- State and Local Government Services
- Public Accommodations
- Telecommunications
- Miscellaneous Provisions

Five-Year Transit System Plan

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

Safe Routes to School Plan

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

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

The SRTS plan was developed through the efforts of a planning team developed by the city and in conjunction with the Region 5 Development Commission (R5DC). To date the City of Brainerd has successfully implemented several sidewalk projects in and around Garfield and Lowell elementary schools.



Community Input

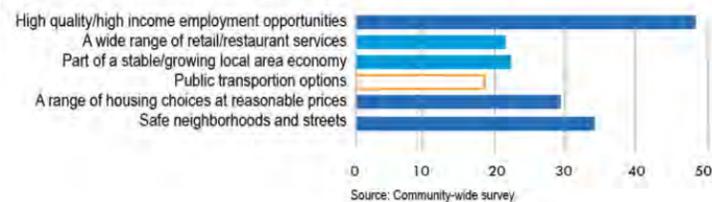
As a part of the community design session, residents identified a series of priorities as it relates to transportation. Participant's noted their preference to increase walkability throughout the city and to connect our neighborhoods, downtown and the Mississippi River.

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WHAT WE HEARD | TRANSPORTATION

	YES	NO	PRIORITY
Need for increased walkability.	17		☑
Connect our neighborhoods, downtown and the Mississippi River.	18		☑
Address the barriers that separate us from our destinations (TH HWY 210, South 6th Street).	8		
Improve public transit opportunities.	5		
Improve the aesthetics of our gateway corridors.	10		

Q7 | What areas need the most improvement in Brainerd?



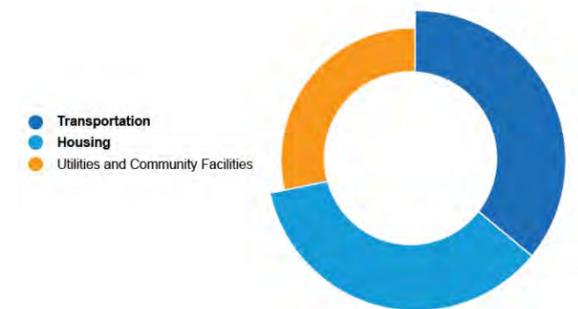
“KEEP PROMOTING MOBILITY WITH SIDEWALKS AND BIKE PATHS!”

During the neighborhood meetings, ward four which is generally identified as the southeast quadrant of Brainerd, identified transportation as it's number one planning element. Meeting participants noted street maintenance, the need for more sidewalks, and transit as areas where they felt investment was needed. In the larger context of the four neighborhood meetings, the general discussion of walkability was identified as one of the leading themes from the outreach process. Residents noted that existing walking and biking opportunities do exist within their neighborhoods, which speaks to the vastness of the network. Residents use these networks to either connect them to nature and area green spaces or to the downtown. Barriers such as Washington Street, sidewalk maintenance, gaps in the network or no sidewalks at all, and snow removal were all noted as barriers that deter them from utilizing the network from time to time.

Both the findings and the recommendations identified in this plan are based on and in alignment with a robust community engagement plan that included surveys, interviews, neighborhood ward meetings, several focus groups, and a community visioning session. The major themes from the community engagement done through this planning process include:

- The need to continually improve public transportation.
- The need to improve bike and pedestrian crossings of TH 210 and South Sixth to create connections between neighborhoods and downtown.

WARD 4 | Responses Spring, 2018



“I BELIEVE PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE MORE OPTIONS FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION THAT ARE AFFORDABLE, ESPECIALLY THOSE ON A LIMITED INCOME.”

05

Economic Development



Overview

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

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

Economic health is an important component of a healthy and thriving community. A strong commercial and industrial base provides jobs to community residents, contributes to a city's tax base, and can be a source of psychological strength to a community. This can best be explained when one compares a downtown area of boarded-up buildings to one with a thriving business sector. The community with the vacant or boarded-up buildings appears lifeless, while the one with the strong downtown community is lively, busy, and thriving.



Source: ESRI, 2017

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

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

Ongoing Initiatives

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

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

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

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

AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THIS CHAPTER IS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY, ULTIMATELY IMPROVING LIVABILITY.

Major Employers in Brainerd

Entity	Industry	Employees
Essentia Health – Central Region	Healthcare	1,500
Brainerd School District	Education	897
Ascensus	Tech services	500
Crow Wing County	Government	442
Bang Printing	Manufacturing	210
Anderson Brothers Construction	Construction	260
CLC	Education	261
City of Brainerd	Government	200
Bethany Good Samaritan	Healthcare	175
Woodland Good Samaritan	Healthcare	175
Minnesota Care	Healthcare	145
Northstar Plating	Manufacturing	110
Avantech	Manufacturing	60
Lexington	Manufacturing	100
CTC	Communication	60
BTD	Manufacturing	20
TDS	Communication	150

Source: BLAEDC – Does not specifically separate employers into cities, or address number of offices.

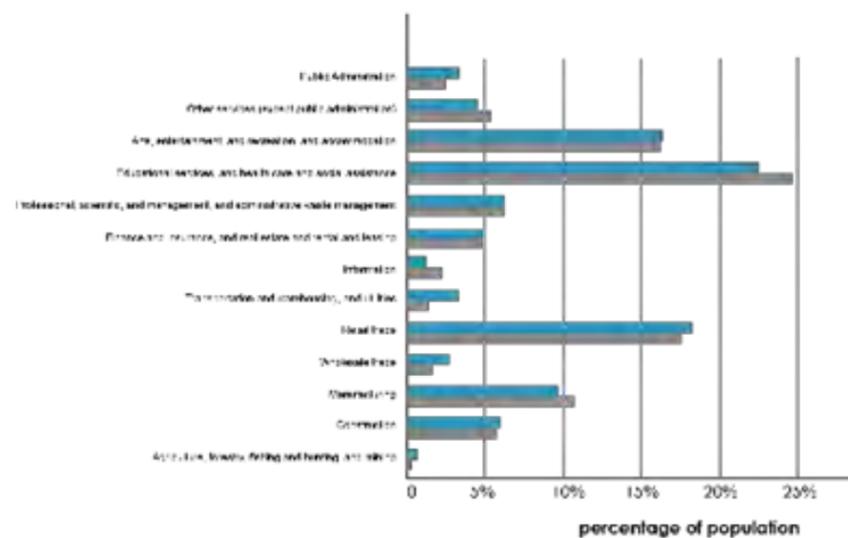
Existing Conditions

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

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

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

BRAINERD | Industry
2010-2016



Source: US Census ACS 2016 5yr DP03

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



Community Input

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

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

In addition to these elements, quality-of-life attributes were also identified that support a thriving economic environment such as:

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

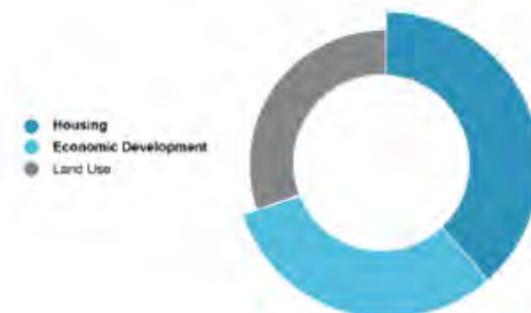
As a part of the community wide survey, when participants were asked, "What areas need the most improvement in Brainerd?" the leading area was high-quality/high-income employment opportunities with nearly 49 percent of the responses. With a tie, residents also seek to provide a wide range of retail/restaurant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

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

WARD 1 | Responses
Spring, 2018



WARD 3 | Responses
Spring, 2018



Framework

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

Support Our Local Businesses

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

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

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

- ✓ Supporting existing businesses could include actions such as: adding or improving infrastructure, encouraging new or redeveloped housing to meet the needs of workers who do not live in Brainerd.
- ✓ Attracting new businesses will be most effective when tailored to the industries that are best suited for the City of Brainerd.



Support Our Workers

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

- ✓ Bring jobs closer to residents by increasing transportation investments through bike, pedestrian, and public transportation facilities.
- ✓ Identify the education and skill needs of the local workforce and that of the skills needed for potential growth industries.

Support Quality of Life Enhancements

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

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

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

- ✓ Encourage business growth in specific locations such as the historic downtown or other core activity centers.
- ✓ This strategic growth can help improve the overall quality of life for residents (current and future, workers, and visitors).
- ✓ Attract businesses that provide retail and service options that meet the daily needs of residents of the downtown and residential neighborhoods.

Tourism

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

Arts, Culture + Music

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

Historical Significance

- Preserve historic sites, structures, and landmarks, and take active strides to restore such amenities throughout the city.
- Promote the offerings of the downtown district, and market the business offerings that meet the traveler and consumer's needs.
- Integrate wayfinding and signage throughout the community that help share the story of Brainerd's history.

Outdoor Recreation

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

Improve Mobility

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

Help Existing Places Thrive

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

Workforce Development

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

LOCAL PROGRAMMING

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

Business mentorship program: Formalized program that connects experienced business owners and entrepreneurs with emerging business professionals.

Business incubators: Collaborative, supportive flex spaces to offer services and facilities for solo business owners and support entrepreneurs, remote workers, and start-ups.

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

Historic building rehab kit: A resource list that assists business owners with local financing options, typical rehabilitation projects, and contractors to help preserve the historical integrity of landmark structures – often on a local heritage preservation structure list.

Revolving loan fund: Seed money used as an investment tool, where earnings from payback are then reinvested.

Neighborhood identity and branding: A process meant to develop a unifying image, idea, or brand that reflects the character of the neighborhood.

Historic preservation: A practice meant to identify historical and cultural places throughout the city and set specific policies and procedures to guide preservation, restoration, and redevelopment efforts.

Housing rehab program: A program that offers affordable loans and assistance to qualified homeowners for home repairs

06 Park & Recreation



Overview

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

Economic value The city's park system provides a valuable service to the Brainerd Lakes area, which can be measured in terms of its effect on the local economy. As the city continues to improve undeveloped parkland and make upgrades and improvements to existing assets there are numerous benchmarks with which to measure the total economic value of the Brainerd park system. These include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Existing Trail Network

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

Mississippi River Trail

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

Paul Bunyan State Trail

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

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

“THE PROGRESS WITH THE TRAIL SYSTEMS AND PARKS WITHIN BRAINERD SHOULD CONTINUE!”

Buffalo Hills Trail

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

Cuyuna Lakes State Trail

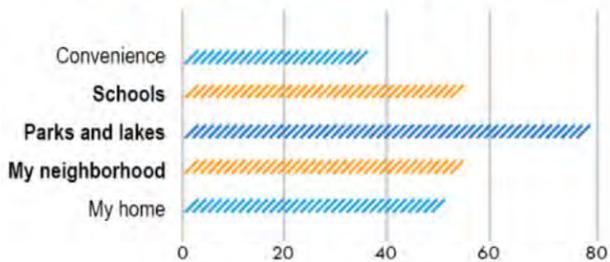
As a local trail segment, the Cuyuna Lakes Trail connects bicycles from the Paul Bunyan Trail through the city and along the river. This local trail segment seeks to expand its mileage and become the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail and the corridor planning is underway.

The official Cuyuna Lakes State Trail is 8 of paved trail within the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area from Crosby to Riverton. One mile passes through the City of Aitkin along State Highway 169. Abandoned by mining companies more than 35 years ago, the state recreation area contains six natural lakes, plus an additional 15 deep lakes that were former mine pits.

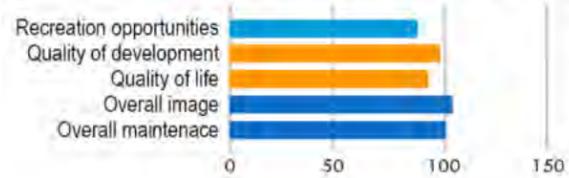
Community Input

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

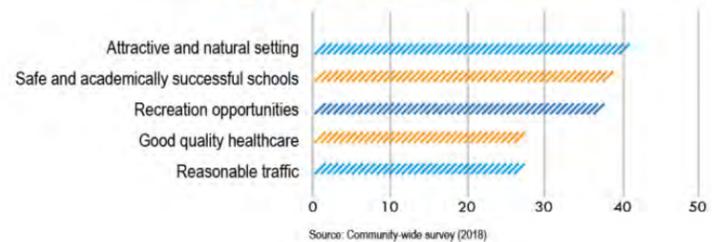
Q9 | What are 3 things you like most about living in the City of Brainerd?



Q1 | Pick and rate your top 5 priorities on which the city should improve:



Q11 | What are some of the things that make Brainerd a great place to live?



Park and open spaces play an integral part in future development. As a part of the community survey we asked residents about future development and concerns related to future growth. Participants noted protecting and preserving water quality as the second highest element and preserving open space as the third. Community-wide survey participants were asked about the elements that make Brainerd a great place to live. This question sought to understand the quality of life elements that could be leveraged as assets to build upon. Participants noted the attractive and natural setting as the number one element that makes Brainerd a great place to live. Recreational opportunities is noted as the second leading element.

Existing Park Network

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

The following is a list of parks in the city limits and encompasses a total of 408 acres. The below inventory does not include recreational facilities that are a part of school grounds, or recreation/amusement businesses like go-carts or miniature golf.

Bane Park (11 acres)

Features: Baseball/softball diamonds (3), concessions, grills, hockey rink, picnic tables, playground, restrooms, skating rink, warming house.
Address/ Location: 1717 S. Seventh Street

Triangle Park (<0.5 acres)

Features: Playground.
Address/ Location: 723 Fir Street

Buffalo Hills/Lions Park (19 acres)

Features: Baseball/softball diamonds (2), grill, pavilion, picnic tables, playground, restrooms.
Address/ Location: 101 Buffalo Hills Lane

O'Brien Park (4 acres)

Features: Open space park
Address/ Location: 2424 Pine Street

Gregory Park (11 acres)

Features: Basketball court, fountain, gazebo, historic bandstand, pickle ball courts (2), tennis courts (5), playgrounds (2), restrooms, skating rink, tennis court, warming house.
Address/ Location: 424 N Fifth Street

Mill Avenue Park (8 acres)

Features: Baseball/softball diamond, hockey rinks, restrooms, skating rink
Address/ Location: 1401 Mill Avenue

Gustafson Park (1.5 acres)

Features: Grass ball fields (4).
Address/ Location: NE Ninth Avenue and N Street

Trailside Park (112 acres)

Features: Parking, paved trail, currently undeveloped, largest city-owned park.
Address/ Location: Beaver Dam Road

Hitch Wayne Park (2 acres)

Features: Undeveloped
Address/ Location: 1201 S. Seventh Street

Kiwanis Park (37 acres)

Features: Canoe launch, fishing (Boom Lake and Mississippi River), gazebo, paved trail pavilions (2), playground, restrooms, Buster Dog Park.
Address/ Location: 1101 East River Road

Jaycees Park (14 acres)

Features: Baseball/softball diamonds (2), concessions, grill, pavilion, playground, restrooms
Address/ Location: 1600 Rosewood Street

Memorial Park (28 acres)

Features: Baseball/softball diamond, concessions, playground, restrooms, soccer field.
Address/ Location: 1700 Mill Avenue

Lum Park (38 acres)

Features: Beach, boat landing, disc golf, fishing, grill, pavilion, picnic shelters, playground, restrooms, RV campsite, sand volleyball court.
Address/ Location: 1619 N.E. Washington Street

Rotary Riverside (145 acres)

Features: Overlooks, nature trails, natural-passive spaces.
Address/ Location: East River Road



Classification

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

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

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

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

- Triangle.

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

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

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

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

- Buffalo Hills/Lions Park, Gregory, Jaycee's, Kiwanis, Memorial, Rotary Riverside, Lum.

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

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

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

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

Open Space: This classification is broadly defined and can include woodlands, wetlands, floodplains, slough, open fields, etc.

Future Opportunities

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

The National Recreation and Park Association recommends a ratio of 10 acres per 1,000 for cities in Brainerd's population range. The City of Brainerd excels with a high parkland ratio of 30.15 acres per 1,000 residents, which can also be described as 405 park acres for the city's current 13,428 residents.

Q1 | List 3 places you'd be proud to show a visitor:

- 1 NP CENTER (56)
- 2 GREGORY PARK (49)
- 3 KIWANIS PARK (47)
- 4 LUM PARK (30)
- 5 TRAILS (CITY-WIDE) (30)
- 6 CLC (22)
- 7 WATER TOWER (19)
- 8 MUSEUM / COURT HOUSE (16)
- 9 MISSISSIPPI RIVER (14)
- 10 DOWNTOWN (14)
- 11 HIGH SCHOOL (13)
- 12 FRANKLIN ARTS CENTER (12)
- 13 LIBRARY (11)

It's vital to serve all residents and neighborhoods with park and recreational facilities. As additional areas are identified for redevelopment, it is crucial to identify new areas that need to be served by park and recreational facilities.

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

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

Residents value their location to area lakes, trail networks, and natural features. Survey respondents see access to these amenities as one of the most important aspects of their community. Residents also see recreational opportunities as Brainerd's greatest asset. Survey respondents also expressed that people are more attracted to the Brainerd Lakes Area rather than Brainerd itself, which was the backbone of responses indicating that more trails need to connect to surrounding cities in order to get more people to visit Brainerd. Besides connecting trails to other cities, it was also indicated that there needs to be a connection of trails between the parks throughout the city for easy access and improved safety.



TRAIL TOWN MODEL OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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

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

06.1 Natural Resources



Overview

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

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

Existing Conditions

Water Quality

Water quality involves more than just taste and looks. Several biological and chemical factors bear the determination if water is “healthy.” The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) manages the sampling and monitoring of Minnesota’s surface waters. The MPCA collects water quality data from state, local, and federal agencies, as well as citizens. Of all the lakes and the Mississippi River, only the river is listed on the impaired waters list for mercury.

Wetlands

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

Groundwater

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

Lakes

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

The area lakes around the city are recognized as some of the best sport fishing waters in the nation. Although the rivers offer their fishing assets, they are little used by anglers compared to

the vast array of lakes. Conservatively speaking, there are over 30 prime walleye lakes within a 40-mile circle around Brainerd. Larger lakes noted for walleye fishing are Mille Lacs, Gull, Pelican, and the Whitefish Chain (2004 Brainerd Comprehensive Plan).

Mississippi River

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

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

Watershed

A watershed is defined as an area of land from which all water drains to a given point. It’s a ridge or stretch of high land dividing an area drained by different rivers or river systems. Unlike

boundaries of political subdivisions such as counties, cities and townships, which are mainly straight and uniform, watershed borders zigzag across the natural lay of the land. Crow Wing County lies within the Mississippi River Headwaters Drainage Basin and contains parts of five major watersheds. Within each are minor or sub-watersheds, all of which flow into the Mississippi. The City of Brainerd lies within the Mississippi River – Brainerd sub watershed. According to the 2015 Watershed Health Report compiled by the MN Department of Natural Resources, the watershed received a 63 out of 100 for a health rating. This rating is very similar to other watersheds in northcentral and northeastern parts of the state.

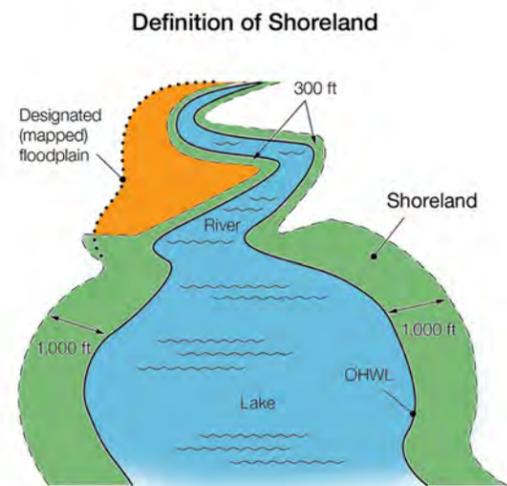
“USE OUR GREAT NATURAL RESOURCES AND GOOD SCHOOLS AS AN ATTRACTIVE TOOL TO BRING IN BUSINESSES THAT WILL PROVIDE GOOD, FULL-TIME WITH BENEFITS, YEAR-ROUND JOBS.”



Shoreland Areas

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

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



Minnesota GreenStep Cities Program

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

Community Input

As a part of the outreach process, nearly 79 percent of community survey participants note that parks and lakes was the single most important aspect of living in the city. Participants also noted that in terms of future city growth, protecting and preserving water quality was the second highest priority the city should focus on. Participants also noted that preserving open space was the third most important issue around concerns of future city growth.

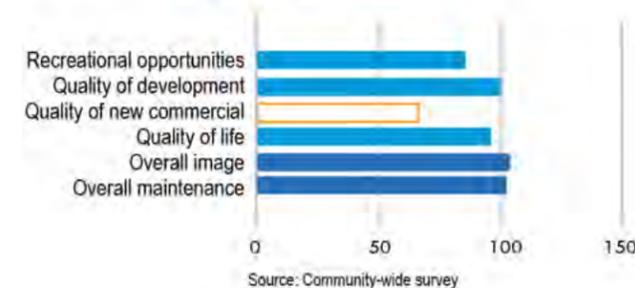
WHAT WE HEARD PARKS & NATURAL RESOURCES	YES	NO	PRIORITY
We love our trail network, but improve walkability within our neighborhoods and to downtown.	12		👍
Improve our trail network and wayfinding.	11		👍
We cherish our natural resources and seek to increase access.	8		
Extensive park system but can always strive to improve.	3		

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

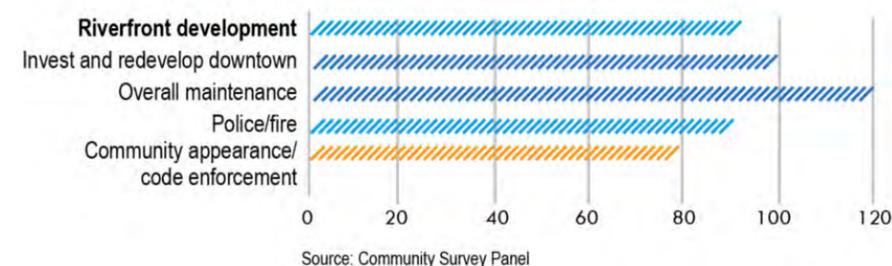
Residents would like to see recreational opportunities enhanced, through trail connections, greenway development, a centralized civic space and public improvements along the Mississippi River, and improved access to the Mississippi River. When asked to prioritize public improvement, survey participants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

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

Q1 | What are the top 5 priorities the city should improve on?



Q1a | Please identify 5 public improvement priorities for how your taxes should be used:



GREENWAYS



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

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

07

Facilities & Infrastructure



Overview

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

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

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

Because transportation-related infrastructure is covered under the transportation chapter, roads, bridges, sidewalks, and trails are not dealt with in this chapter.

Existing Municipally Owned Facilities and Infrastructure Structures

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

Existing Infrastructure

- City water network: Water towers, pumps, pipes, hardware
- City sewer/wastewater network: Pipes, culverts, drains, hardware
- City electrical grid hardware: Light poles, power poles, cables, wires, conduits, circuits

Existing Critical Private Infrastructure

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

Existing Plans and Commissions

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

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

Cable TV Advisory Committee: This committee is charged with monitoring the performance of the cable TV franchise in carrying out the compliance of financial and technical provisions. The group advises and makes recommendations to the City Council regarding the present and future use of the cable communications system within the city. It promotes the use of the public educational and governmental access channels by increasing the public awareness of their availability and potential and by stimulating and promoting public interest and participation. It takes appropriate action to assure nondiscriminatory access to the public, educational, and governmental access channels.

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

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



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

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

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

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

Raingardens:

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

Bioswales:

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

Sewer

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

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

Water

Providing a safe and adequate water supply system is vital for community growth and sustainability. Protecting and distributing drinking water that meets the acceptable standards is an essential function performed by the city. Additionally, water pressures need to be maintained for convenience and health to meet the varying demands among local residents and appropriate pressures is important for fire protection.

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

Stormwater

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

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

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

Renewable Energy

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



Photo Credit: Crow Wing County Soil and Water Conservation District

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

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

Strategic Investments

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

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

—Strong Towns

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

Community Input

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

- ✔ **Increase connectivity to adequate and affordable broadband and other infrastructure development throughout the community by:**
 - Coordinating with public and private utility companies when major road reconstruction projects are being planned to update/install infrastructure.
- ✔ **Support façade improvements while keeping the historic look of infrastructure.**
 - Consider a historic preservation program
- ✔ **Continue to maintain roads**
 - Continue to maintain, execute, and update the five-year road maintenance plan.
 - Continue to seek funding opportunities for road projects through sources such as:
 - Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP)
 - Transportation Economic Development (TED)
 - Transportation Economic Development Infrastructure (TEDI)

07.1 Public Safety

Overview

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

Existing Conditions

Brainerd Fire Department

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

The fire department's leadership structure includes a fire chief, who is responsible for the operations of the department and provides leadership to staff. The department also has a deputy chief/fire marshal, who provides fire code enforcement. In addition, an administrative specialist provides records and office support to the fire department.

In addition, two battalion chiefs and five captains are among the ranks of 37 firefighters serving the Brainerd Fire Department. By the numbers, the department covers 300 square miles, responds to an average of 450 calls annually, and serves 35,000 residents. In addition, the firefighters train over 3,700 hours a year and reach 10,000 children and adults annually with public education.

Brainerd Police Department

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

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

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



Crow Wing County Emergency Management

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

Existing Public Safety Plans and Commissions

Police and Fire, Civil Service Commission — Per Minnesota statutes, the Police and Fire Civil Service Commission has control and supervision over members of the city police and fire departments, advises City Council on police and fire personnel matters, and conducts civil service testing for full-time police officers and firefighters.

Crow Wing County Hazard Mitigation Plan

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

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

**“NEIGHBORS KNOW THEIR
NEIGHBORS AND PEOPLE
WORK TOGETHER TO KEEP
THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS
SAFE.”**



08 Implementation

Community Input

What We Heard:

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

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

Safe Neighborhoods

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

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

“SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS AND STREETS ARE IMPORTANT TO ME BECAUSE OUTSIDE OF MY HOME I DON'T HAVE CONTROL OF ANYTHING.

.....
BUT, IF MY CITY AND PUBLIC OFFICIALS HAVE SAFETY IN STREETS AND NEIGHBORHOOD PRIORITY, I CAN RELY SOMEWHAT ON THEM TO HELP ALLEVIATE ANY FEARS FOR PERSONAL SAFETY.”

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

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

Strategies

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

- Connect the plan's implementation to the capital improvement plan (CIP) process.
- Connect the plan's strategies to the annual budgeting process.
- Establish organization cooperation.

- Identify funding sources for plan implementation.
- Establish implementation benchmarks and targets.
- Report annually on implementation progress.
- Adjust the plan as necessary based on evaluation.

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

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

LAND USE		
STRATEGY	SUB-STRATEGY	PRIORITY
Update city ordinances to reflect the changes in the plan	-	High
Complete a future land use map that reflects the content within this plan	Amend the comprehensive plan as necessary.	High
Formalize a downtown association	-	Medium
Review, analyze, update, and implement the suite of plans accordingly and consider new plans as they are adopted	Non-motorized transportation plan	Medium
	Downtown Plan	
	Mississippi River Partnership Plan	
Develop new planning documents	Develop an annexation strategy or growth management plan	Medium
	Conduct an Age-Friendly Community Plan	
Consider the formation of a Heritage Preservation Commission	Advance local preservation initiatives through local, state, and federal programs	Low
Conduct a series of small area plans to promote reinvestment and stimulate growth	Evaluate the potential land uses from city limits to the airport	Medium
	Conduct a small area plan of the "river to rails" corridor and formalize this initiative	
Deploy a form-based code for the 1) Kingwood street corridor and 2) Oak Street and 13 th node	Pilot these areas, or others that meet a set of criteria, to test this new regulatory framework	Medium
Via the city's website, show the progression of city planning initiatives, benchmarking, and long-range planning progresses	Develop performance measures and benchmarks and share progress outward	High
Create policies that promote infill development and redevelopment	Clearly identify infill/growth areas	High
	Prioritize infill and adaptive re-use in the downtown	
Identify locations for special use districts or overlays	Consider the implementation of an "art" or "innovation" district	Low
Enact a policy that studies the fiscal impacts of development applications	Determine the complexity of the application that warrants a financial impact review	Medium
Take active steps to complete the MN Greenstep Cities program	-	Medium

COMMUNITY CHARACTER		
STRATEGY	SUB-STRATEGY	PRIORITY
Undergo a marketing and branding initiative		High
Improve city-wide signage and wayfinding	Develop a wayfinding plan with incremental steps and funding approaches towards completion	Medium
Boost enforcement of city codes and ordinances	Enforce property maintenance codes	High
Leverage social media to market opportunities and existing success stories outward	-	Medium
Improve the aesthetics of the main corridors	Develop design standards for the 210 corridor, 6th street, and downtown	Medium
Consider creating design guidelines in both the general commercial and downtown areas	-	Medium
Implement an adaptive re-use policy	-	Medium
Integrate public art throughout the community in strategic locations	Create a community-wide art mural program	Low
Develop a downtown beautification program	-	Medium
Utilize tactical urbanism to evaluate pilot programs for implementation that improve walkability	-	Low

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

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

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

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

NATURAL RESOURCES		
STRATEGY	SUB-STRATEGY	PRIORITY
Review and revise subdivision ordinances to reflect the content of the plan	-	High
Review and revise site design guidelines to align with the policies of this plan	-	High
Complete a natural resource inventory	Specifically identify greenways, corridors, and sensitive environmental features for protection	Medium
	Identify invasive species	Medium
Conduct an evaluation of city-wide opportunities to integrate low impact development solutions	Study areas in the community where green infrastructure solutions can be constructed	Low
Develop a best management practice guide or education series around water quality Clearly identify greenways and corridors that should be preserved	Partner with CWC SWCD on projects and programming needs	Low
	Develop a long-range plan that creates a greenway corridor throughout, or around, the city	Medium
	Identify a nature or passive trail network	

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

PUBLIC SAFETY		
STRATEGY	SUB-STRATEGY	PRIORITY
Foster neighborhood capacity building to develop a neighborhood watch program	-	Low
Continue to work with the school district with current and long-range planning efforts	-	Low
Promote and expand existing program whereby private business voluntarily share closed circuit security camera footage with law enforcement.		Low
Continue partnerships and programs with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) such as Safe Routes to School (SRTS) and Towards Zero Deaths (TZD)	-	Low