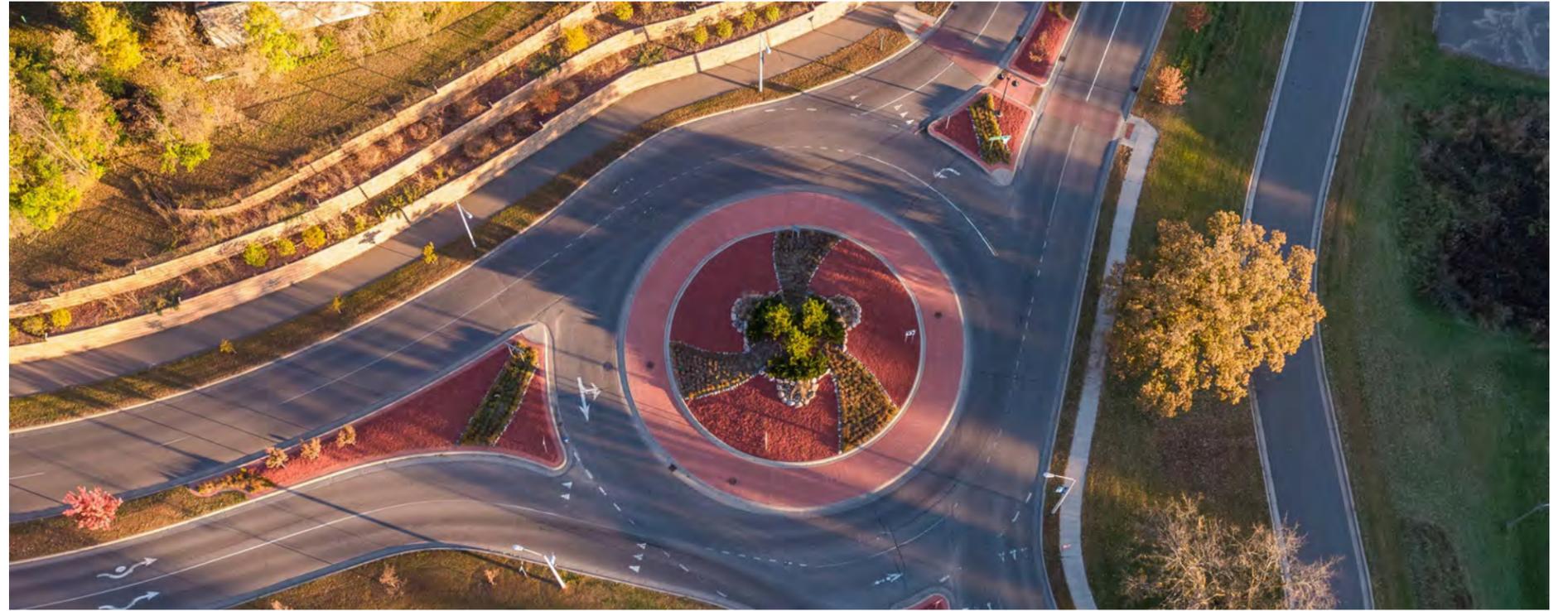


# Executive Summary

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
UPDATE 2035

# Executive Summary



## IMAGINE BRAINERD 2035

The Imagine Brainerd, 2035 Comprehensive Plan Update supports a development pattern that strives to meet current needs without creating environmental, economic, and social burdens on future generations. The city is committed to maintaining or enhancing economic opportunity and community well-being while protecting and restoring the natural environment upon which economies, communities and people depend.

Providing high quality service for residents, businesses and visitors is an important part of operating a successful city. Maintaining a high level of satisfaction about the quality of service, knowledge, courteousness, and responsiveness all while experiencing an increased demand for services is important to the City of Brainerd. The City of Brainerd is committed to high quality service that meets and exceeds the needs and expectations of Brainerd residents.

The City's core functions foster an environment where residents can live peacefully in safety and where commerce can develop and thrive. The City strives to maintain the right blend of services to support a vibrant and healthy community by maintaining public infrastructure systems, by planning; and by regulating zoning and land uses.

Additionally, the City of Brainerd is committed to

stewardship of cultural, historical and natural amenities such as land and water resources, parks and open spaces, as well as the Brainerd library, all of which contributes to a high quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors.

The goals and policies outlined in the plan that follows is the result of great effort on the part of city staff, consultants, and thousands of volunteer hours from members of the steering committee. The amount of thought, effort and consideration that these groups and individuals poured into the development of this plan is nothing short of impressive.

The residents of Brainerd also provided a treasure trove of valuable input that informed the steering committee throughout the planning process; giving them insights into the opportunities and challenges facing Brainerd. The community input provides the foundation of this plan; every decision the steering committee made developing this plan was made based on, and in alignment with the extensive community engagement. Through resident input, the steering committee heard the reasons why we live, work, play, and stay in Brainerd. In a word, the steering committee heard about the Livability of Brainerd.

Therefore, a major theme of this plan is the concept of "Livability". The idea that development should maintain or enhance economic opportunity and community well-being while protecting and restoring the natural environment upon which people and economies depend.

Livability means taking into account the aesthetics of a place. It means incorporating parts of the local culture, the community's history, its food, its arts and its local brews; so that residents and visitors find the community to be welcoming, and inviting; an enjoyable place to live, work, play, learn, and stay.

## CITY ROLE

The City of Brainerd, like other municipalities in Minnesota and across the nation, provides a variety of essential services to create vibrant, healthy, and safe communities. The role of city government interfaces with and compliments the efforts of other State, and local units of government including Crow Wing County, other municipalities such as Baxter, the surrounding townships of Crow Wing, Long Lake, Oak Lawn, as well as the First Assessment area, Central Lakes College and Independent School District 181.

Municipalities support and maintain public infrastructure, transportation and economic development assets; the City

ensures public safety to protect its citizens; maintain public information; and implement a broad array of programs in a cost effective and efficient manner.

## CAPTURING MOMENTUM

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.](#)

## PLANNING ELEMENTS

The plan is broken into six core planning elements. Each chapter provides a variety of goals and policies meant to help achieve the vision statement and guiding principles:

- Land Use
- Housing
- Mobility
- Economic Development
- Parks & Recreation
- Facilities & Infrastructure

## 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 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.

### 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

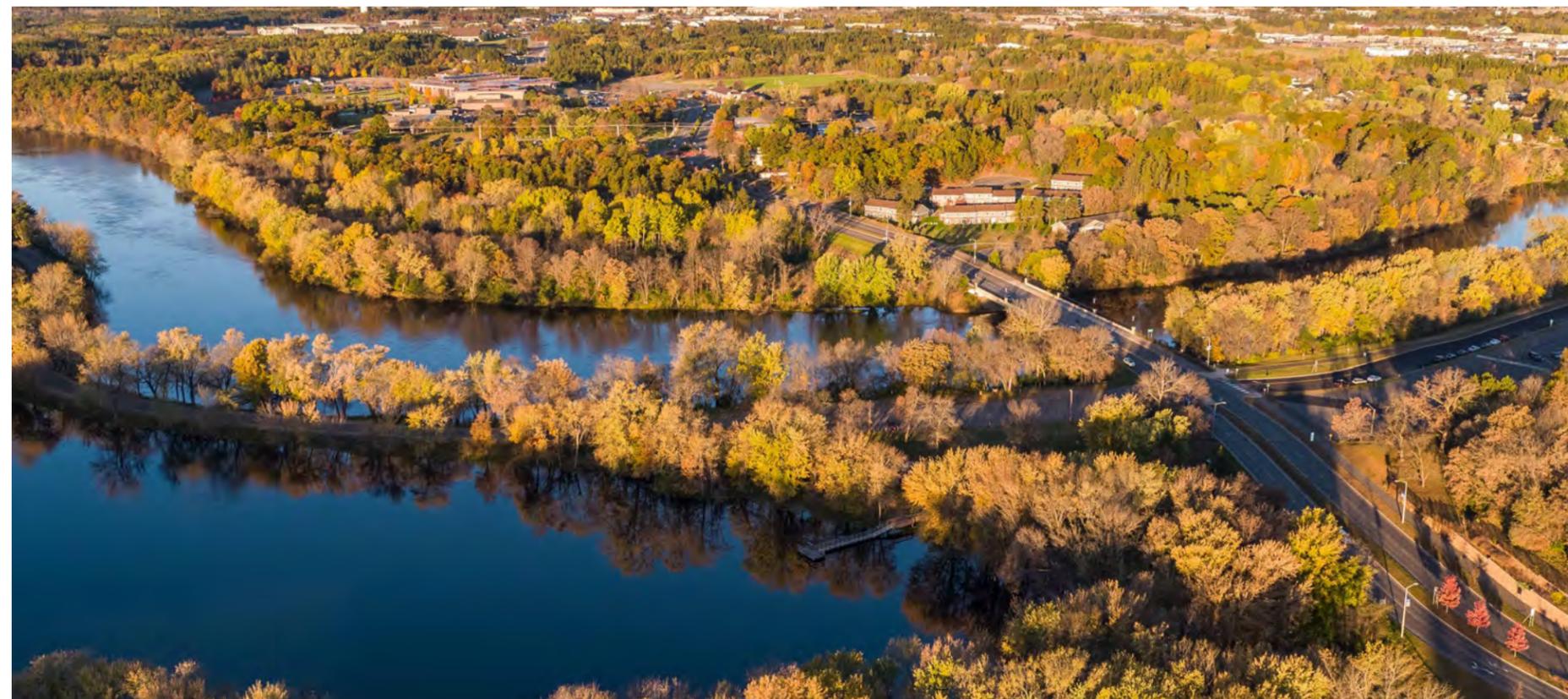
Respondents seek ways to improve and provide adequate employment offerings for a variety of income levels. A diverse economy provides a wealth of investments and employment opportunities. Survey respondents support a concerted effort to support existing businesses to expand employment opportunities and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

### 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.



## 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.