

Chapter 3: Land Use & Growth Management



INTRODUCTION

The Land Use & Growth Management Chapter is a roadmap that helps guide City officials and staff on how to make policy decisions related to land use and future growth. These policies may influence the type, location and density of future development within the community. This chapter is intended to result in orderly and efficient development that utilizes land efficiently and makes the most of the community's resources. It offers guidance on key initiatives for the community which is consistent with the City's vision and goals. The City has used its various planning efforts that guide land use to inform this chapter, ensuring it accommodates growth and applies the desired qualities of the community.

Another important aspect of this chapter is that it serves as the foundation for reviewing the City's Zoning Ordinances, Zoning Map, Subdivision Regulations and other implementation tools.

Implementation of the Land Use Plan produces several important implications:

- **Uses.** Every parcel is placed into a specific land use category. Each category includes a description of the type of land use or uses intended for that category. This description should match with the types and forms of development currently found in North Mankato and desired for the future.
- **Relationships.** Much like a jigsaw puzzle, the true picture comes from how each piece fits together into a whole. The Land Use Plan guides how elements of the built and natural environment come together in North Mankato. These relationships will determine how North Mankato will look, function and feel.
- **Actions.** The Land Use Plan sets the framework for public actions and investments. Utilities, streets, parks, and facilities are all influenced by the form and pace of development.

PREVIOUS AND ONGOING LAND USE RELATED PLANS AND EFFORTS

Several past and ongoing efforts focused on land use in North Mankato have been reviewed as part of developing this chapter. Those efforts are listed below.

North Mankato Comprehensive Plan (2015)

The precursor to the 2023 North Mankato Comprehensive Plan Update, this plan provides the initial comprehensive land use analysis and inventory for the City of North Mankato.

Belgrade Avenue Master Plan (2017)

Belgrade Avenue serves as a gateway to North Mankato and is a critical part of the community. The Belgrade Avenue Master Plan identifies redevelopment, streetscaping, and placemaking opportunities throughout the CBD.

Commerce Drive Area Development Plan (2019)

The 2019 Commerce Drive Area Development Plan process identified a vision for the corridor that includes fostering a greater diversity of businesses, fostering business relationships, emphasizing the importance of the corridor for the City, increasing walkability through streetscaping and land use density, and providing redevelopment scenarios for future consideration. All of these aspirations would combine to strengthen Commerce Drive as a destination.

Northwest Growth Area Plan (2020)

The Northwest Growth Area is located adjacent to the US Highway 14/County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 41 interchange northwest of existing City of North Mankato limits. The Plan provides a guide for development in the area to ensure the right mix of uses is planned and integrated in a way that complements those already being developed and at a capacity that the area can support.

Webster Avenue Area Plan (2021)

The Webster Avenue Area Plan examines land uses surrounding Webster Avenue identifying a redevelopment and revitalization strategy based on a shared vision of the area.

North Mankato Housing Study (2021)

The North Mankato Housing Study provides a snapshot of housing in North Mankato, measuring residential development for all densities, identifying deficiencies, and establishing goals for future development to ensure North Mankato is capturing its share of housing construction among neighboring communities.

Lookout Drive Area Plan (2023)

The Lookout Drive Area Plan ran concurrently with the Lookout Drive Corridor Study to identify a vision for land use surrounding Lookout Drive. The plan identifies future opportunities for housing, economic development, non-motorized transportation, and area design.

Greater Mankato 2040: Transforming Tomorrow Together (2023)

In April of 2023, Greater Mankato Growth (Greater Mankato's chamber of commerce) began the Greater Mankato 2040 (GM2040) planning and visioning project aimed at exploring the future strategic positioning of the Greater Mankato region in a fast-changing world. Housing availability, talent creation and retention, and next generation livability were identified as Key Drivers for transformation.

INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Existing Land Use Characteristics

Figure 3-1 illustrates the location, amount, and types of existing land uses in the City of North Mankato in 2023. The inventory reflects general development patterns and is intended for general planning purposes only. **Table 3-1** summarizes the amount and type of existing land uses in North Mankato.

Table 3-1. Summary of Existing Land Use 2023

Existing Land Use	Gross Acres*	Net Percent of City
Low Density Residential	1,317	41.4%
Low Density Small Lot Residential	92	2.9%
Medium Density Residential	190	6.0%
High Density Residential	75	2.3%
General Commercial	85	2.7%
Neighborhood Commercial (Includes the CBD)	12	0.4%
Institutional	229	7.2%
Light Industrial	84	2.6%
Heavy Industrial	354	11.1%
Open Space/Park	479	15.1%
Vacant/Undeveloped	265	8.3%
Total	3,182	100%

**Gross acres determined by City staff based on Nicollet County parcel data and North Mankato land use designations.*

The following provides a general description of each of the existing land uses in North Mankato.

A. Low Density Residential

Low Density Residential is the largest land use within the City of North Mankato in terms of total acres, making up almost half of the City's area with 1,317 acres or 41.4%. This land use is largely characterized by single-family homes with densities of 1 to 5 dwelling units per acre. One of the greatest strengths of the City of North Mankato is the quality and variety of its single-family homes, which helps make it such an attractive community for families. The City has an abundance of older single-family homes, mostly in Lower North, that have been well preserved and provide a classic "small town" feel to these neighborhoods. Alternatively, there has been an abundance of new single-family and two-family home construction, mostly in Upper North, which provides a more modern style of home. Ensuring older housing stock continues to be well maintained is a priority, as is the ongoing efforts to add new housing units. This balance between old and new ensures a quality and variety of housing stock is available throughout the City.

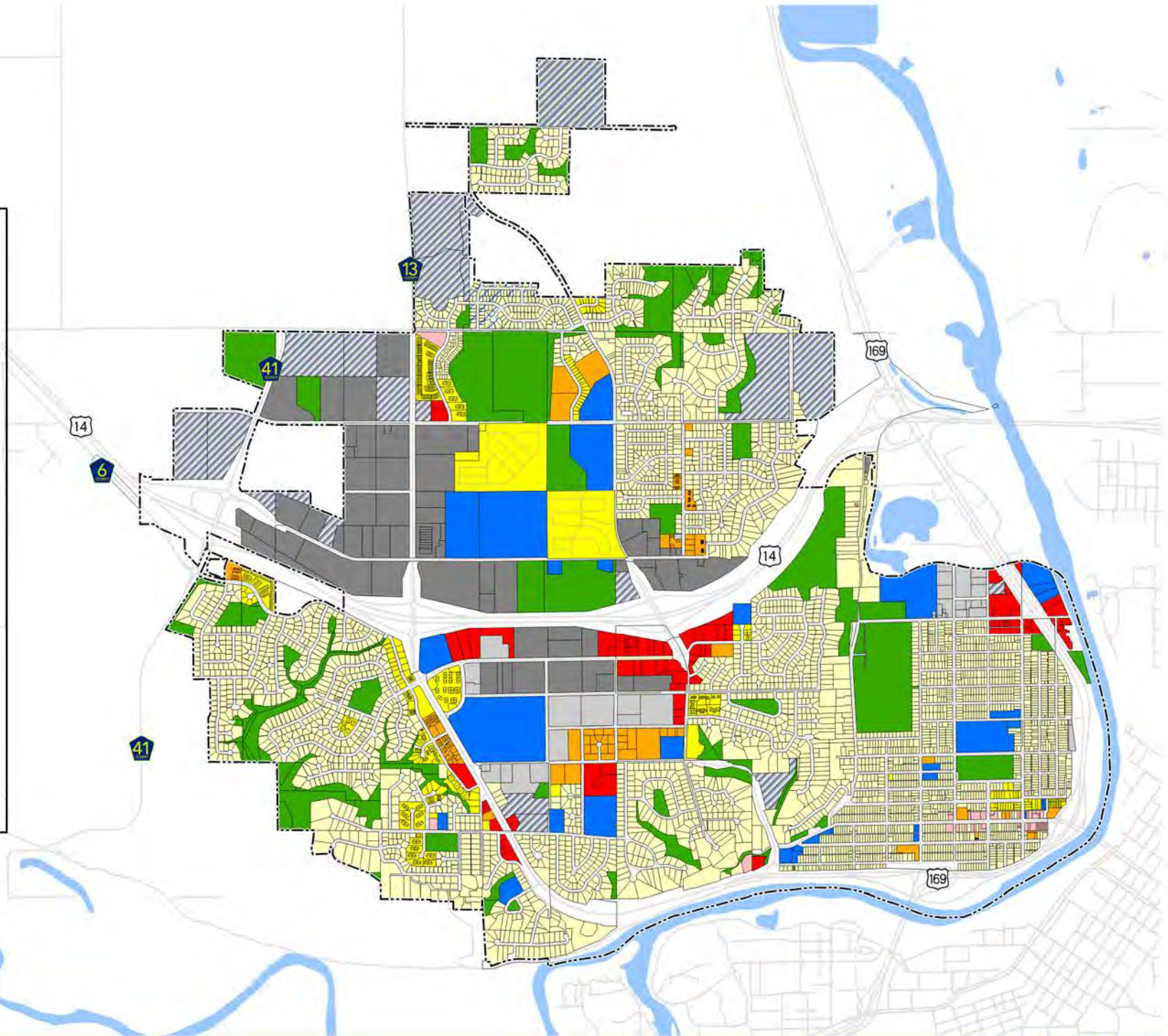


Legend

Existing Land Use

-  Low Density Residential
-  Low Density Small Lot Residential
-  Medium Density Residential
-  High Density Residential
-  Neighborhood Commercial
-  General Commercial
-  Institutional
-  Light Industrial
-  Heavy Industrial
-  Open Space/Park
-  Vacant
-  Right of way
-  City Limits

0 0.4 Miles





B. Low Density Small Lot Residential

Low Density Small Lot Residential makes up 92 acres or 2.9% of the City's area. It includes single-family detached dwellings on smaller lots with smaller side yard setbacks as those used in the Low Density Residential land use areas. Densities targeted in this category average 1 to 8 per acre. The only zoning district that would correspond to this land use designation is the R-1S, One Family Dwelling, Small Lot District. It is expected that single-family development in this category will offer entry level housing opportunities.



C. Medium Density Residential

Medium Density Residential makes up 190 acres or 6.0% of the total acreage in the City. Medium Density Residential is mostly characterized by townhome style development, duplexes, and small-scale apartment and condo buildings with densities of 5 to 10 dwelling units per acre.



D. High Density Residential

High Density Residential land use consists of all forms of multi-family attached housing units such as apartment buildings and condominiums. High density residential has densities of over 10 dwelling units per acre. In 2023, roughly 75 acres or 2.3% of North Mankato was classified as high-density residential use. High Density Residential units may be rental units or may be owner-occupied and can provide housing options for all income levels. In some cases, high-density residential units in North Mankato are exclusively for seniors, while in other cases there are no limitations for who can live in the development.



E. Neighborhood Commercial

Neighborhood Commercial uses generally serve the nearby surrounding areas and are intended to allow residents to meet some of their basic needs within a close proximity to where they live. These uses are generally smaller in nature and may be mixed in with residential uses. Examples of some Neighborhood Commercial uses might include bakeries, drug stores, banks, coffee shops, post offices and similar types of uses. Roughly 12 acres or 0.4% of North Mankato is classified as Neighborhood Commercial land use.

F. General Commercial

The General Commercial designation is intended for more intense commercial uses that may draw from a wider geographic area. It includes a broad range of commercial uses that are generally larger in size, require more parking spaces, and may not be compatible adjacent to residential uses in some cases. Examples of General Commercial uses might include department stores, restaurants, offices, health care services and similar types of uses. Many residents currently travel to Mankato to meet most of the needs generally served by this land use category. In 2023, roughly 85 acres or 2.7% of North Mankato was classified as General Commercial use.



G. Light Industrial

The Light Industrial land use includes all forms of businesses with manufacturing, distribution, warehousing or other industrial uses that are less intense and may have fewer negative impacts to surrounding properties generally associated with industrial uses such as noise, odor, dust or low-quality aesthetics. Light Industrial land use makes up approximately 84 acres or 2.6% of the City.



H. Heavy Industrial

Similar to the Light Industrial land use category, Heavy Industrial land uses are all forms of businesses with manufacturing, distribution, warehousing or other industrial uses. Heavy Industrial uses may be more intense than the types of uses in the Light Industrial land use category and may be less compatible with residential and commercial uses. Heavy Industrial Land uses may exhibit more of the impacts generally associated with industrial uses such as noise, odor, or dust or storage of equipment. Heavy Industrial land use makes up approximately 354 acres or 11.1% of the City.



I. Public/Institutional

Public/Institutional uses make up approximately 229 acres or 7.2% of area in North Mankato. These uses include all government buildings, schools (including colleges), libraries, and religious institutions. These types of uses are generally mixed in with residential or commercial uses.



J. Park and Open Space

The Park and Open Space category contains public parks and open spaces and all property owned by the City that is preserved as natural land. Approximately 479 acres or 15.1% of land in 2023 is allocated to the Park Open Space land use. Park and Open Space uses are intended to provide a variety of recreational opportunities for all residents of the community. The City of North Mankato is generally well served by the amount and placement of existing park facilities.



K. Vacant/Undeveloped

Vacant/undeveloped land refers to land that is in an undeveloped state, but that is guided and zoned for future development. In 2023, roughly 265 acres or 8.3% of North Mankato consisted of vacant/undeveloped land.



KEY LAND USE ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

With over 3,180 acres of land, an analysis of the existing land use illustrates several important issues about current and future development:

Land Supply and Demand

A. Infill Development and Annexation

The “vacant/undeveloped” category includes all of the non-developed land uses within City limits. Most remaining vacant land supply is located north of Highway 14, including several properties in the northwest that are guided for industrial/commercial uses and land located in north-northeast portions of the City that is guided for low-density residential use.

Opportunities exist for potential annexation of land beyond City limits as much of the land is currently agricultural, very flat, and quite suitable for development. The Northwest Growth Area Study provides land use guidance for this area as the City considers future land annexation. To continue the orderly growth of the City, the City should work with Belgrade Township to initiate an orderly annexation agreement as a proactive measure for the future annexation of property adjacent to the City.

B. Commercial and Industrial Development

Commercial and industrial uses represent 16.8% of total land use (18.4% of non-vacant uses) and there are significant development opportunities for these uses in the northwest portion of the city.

Most of the existing commercial uses in the community would generally be characterized as neighborhood commercial uses that serve the immediate surrounding area. North Mankato is lacking in community-scale, general commercial uses and residents typically travel to the City of Mankato for these types of goods and services. Considering general commercial uses as well as new neighborhood commercial nodes will be necessary as the community continues to grow north-northwest, especially as residents are pushed farther from Mankato commercial uses. North Mankato may be able to attract the types of businesses that residents currently travel to Mankato for, such as larger retailers, as this growth occurs.

The City has a strong and growing industrial presence. Industrial uses supply a significant number of jobs for residents. The City anticipates, and data supports, that continued growth of industrial uses westward, north of Highway 14 will be successful. Heavy industrial uses should be evaluated for compatibility with adjacent land uses. Controls should be in place to protect against negative impacts to neighboring property. The Northwest Growth Area Study begins to consider solutions to this with a residential/commercial/industrial flex zone that would guide the transition from low-density residential to industrial.

C. Redevelopment

The City also has some redevelopment opportunities identified in small area plans developed for key locations throughout the City. The City should continue to evaluate the community to ensure the highest and best of land is pursued through strategic redevelopment of underutilized and/or blighted properties to enhance City character.

Development and Neighborhood Character

A. Lower North

As mentioned in the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, the older housing stock in Lower North Mankato provides a small-town character that isn't found in Upper North. Homes were developed prior to the 1960s on a typical grid pattern and many have been well maintained, preserving the historic character. The Central Business District on Belgrade Avenue is also part of Lower North Mankato. Continuing to preserve the small-town feel of Lower North and the CBD will be both challenging and should be a priority in the future. The City has established design guidelines for the CBD to maintain character and encourage cohesive architectural design, however, more will need to be done to encourage property owners to find value in preservation and contribute to that end.

B. Upper North

Areas west of Lake Street developed later and generally follow more of a suburban style layout with a series of arterials and residential streets. These newer residential subdivisions tend to have winding streets, which result in varying lot shapes and sizes. Cul-de-sacs are also common in many of these neighborhoods. Generally, these newer subdivisions have larger lots and are desirable for families. The City should continue to provide strong family oriented residential neighborhoods but also consider needs for increased higher-density neighborhoods.

C. Housing Density

The largest land use category in the City is low density residential. Data from the 2021 North Mankato Housing Study states that North Mankato represents 23% of the population of Greater Mankato but is capturing 32% of single-family housing construction. This indicates the City is strong in this category and is capturing more than its share. It's anticipated this trend will continue in the near term. The four residential categories account for 52.6% of the total land use in the City. Residential uses make up 57.4% of all non-vacant land use.

The 2015 Future Land Use Plan lacked guidance for higher-density multi-family development. According to the 2021 Housing Study, the City was only capturing 15% of single-family attached and 6% of multi-family in the Greater Mankato housing market. A large inventory of low density, single-family homes has drawn a significant number of residents to the community who prefer large-lot, low density neighborhoods and are opposed to higher density residential development. Greater Mankato Growth, the area's chamber of commerce, has also suggested that a lack of available work-force housing is deterring some industries from locating in North Mankato.

The City will need to thoroughly examine new locations for higher-density, multi-family development. This may require building community acceptance by educating residents on the City's obligation to provide multi-family options, associated benefits it can bring, and broadening perspectives to lessen negative perceptions of higher-density residential.

Business Districts

North Mankato is served by several business districts that meet a variety of community needs. Land use in these districts should be frequently reviewed through updates to small area plans to ensure the highest and best uses of land are being considered and areas are on course to thrive. More information on North Mankato business districts is included in **Chapter 9: Business District Redevelopment**.

A. Central Business District (CBD)

Downtowns have made a comeback as cities realize the value they provide in creating identity and sense of community. Although not the geographic center of the City, the CBD has many attributes of a traditional, “Main Street” downtown. It is pedestrian oriented in nature with greater commercial and residential densities and some buildings built to the sidewalk. It serves as a premier gathering place for community events throughout the year such as Blues on Belgrade, Bells on Belgrade, and Bier on Belgrade. Parking for area uses and events is typically on-street, in the rear of buildings, shared among several users, or in nearby public parking lots. Access to Highway 169 and a bridge connection to Mankato also make the CBD one of the main gateways into the City.

Since the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, infill development and site redevelopment identified in the Belgrade Avenue Master Plan has occurred, shifting the character of the downtown closer to a shared community vision of the area. The City should continue to focus on improvements to the CBD that optimize the pedestrian environment, including encouraging a mix of uses such as small shops, restaurants, office, and service uses, and higher housing densities. This, combined with streetscaping improvements such as improved lighting, façade improvements, trees and other vegetation, outdoor seating, traffic calming lane configurations, and additional public art will enhance downtown vibrancy. Buildings should be built no more than ten feet from front lot lines and parking should be in the rear of buildings where possible. Long and narrow lots should be preserved to encourage smaller store fronts. The City should also continue efforts begun with the establishment of design guidelines to preserve many of the existing buildings that give the downtown its cherished character.

B. Commerce Drive Business District

The Commerce Drive Area Development Plan identifies a vision for Commerce Drive that includes streetscaping and redevelopment options that would make the business district more of a destination. A 2019 road resurfacing project improved the pedestrian realm by widening sidewalks to multi-use paths, realigning property access for traffic safety, and creating seating nodes and public art sculptures. The City should continue to look for opportunities for redevelopment that would expand commercial and even residential uses in the area, making it more of a destination. This may include encouraging or incentivizing some more industrial-type uses to relocate to the Northport Industrial Park to open options for commercial-retail development and other mixed-use type development.

C. Lookout Drive Business District

The Lookout Drive Business District is located near the Lookout Drive/Marie Lane intersection. This location is situated close to South Central College and many residential neighborhoods. The business district is very auto oriented. Properties in the district have large parking lots and Lookout Drive through this area is five lanes with center turn-lane. The Lookout Drive Corridor Study and Lookout Drive Area Plan provide a vision for the district and broader corridor that the City can begin initiating. Improvements are aimed at creating a more inviting, walkable environment that is safer for all modes of traffic and has increased commercial and residential development.

Vacant land nearby is zoned R-4 Multiple Dwelling which could accommodate multi-family development to increase supply of affordable housing and provide student housing options. The 2015 Future Land Use Plan identifies general commercial development along Lookout Drive,

stemming from this intersection. The City should look for opportunities to expand commercial/residential development here as land becomes available.

D. Webster Avenue Business District

The area surrounding Webster Avenue contains many uses including commercial, light industrial, residential, institutional, and parks and open space. The Webster Avenue Area Plan was completed in 2021 to establish a vision for the corridor. At the time of this plan, the site previously known as the Norwood Inn was a major redevelopment opportunity as the most prominent site in the area. In the past, the site functioned quite well as a Best Western hotel. The City anticipates this site will continue to be commercial use, perhaps including some higher-density residential uses mixed in. Other vacant properties in the district provide opportunities for development also. Other redevelopment opportunities may arise as the industrial presence is aging and lacking in quality design. Some would like to convert this area to an entertainment district, building on the success of the Mankato Brewery that is located there.

Other opportunities include potential redevelopment of the Public Works Yard and development and redevelopment of properties across Highway 169.

Northport Industrial Park

The City will continue to expand its industrial base in the Northport Industrial Park which has been quite successful. Industrial businesses supply roughly 3,000 jobs in North Mankato as reported by the 2020 Decennial Census. Continuing to attract industry to this area is viewed as an opportunity that will help ensure the long-term economic health of the community, as they tend to provide higher wage jobs than most retail businesses.

The Northport Industrial Park is conveniently located near two interchanges with Highway 14 including the Lookout Drive interchange and the CSAH 41 interchange which provide access to many sites that are fully serviced and ready to build.

The Future Land Use Map shown in **Figure 3-2** guides several parcels in the Northport Industrial Park for Commercial/Industrial Mixed Use. Given prime access to Highway 14 and anticipated nearby residential growth, these parcels may be attractive for commercial development that would fill the commercial gaps in the community today. The City acknowledges that these sites would also be appropriate for industrial use and believes this land use designation provides some flexibility.

Recreation Opportunities and Facilities

One of the greatest strengths of the City of North Mankato is the quality and quantity of existing park space. The City of North Mankato currently has an extremely healthy ratio of nearly 20 acres of park space per 1,000 residents. In addition, a wide variety of quality recreational programs are offered for both adults and youth. Opportunities exist to strengthen North Mankato as a recreational center within the region.

A. Athletic Complexes/Facilities

Caswell Park is one of the premier softball complexes in the nation, having hosted numerous state, regional and national tournaments since opening in 1987. The City continues to improve this facility to ensure continued success.

The Caswell North Soccer Complex hosts several local and state soccer tournaments and has become the location for youth football for Greater Mankato. This complex continues to grow, with more programs added and new fields constructed, including an artificial turf field.

The City is also targeting an indoor recreational facility on the Caswell Park site, continuing efforts begun during the 2015 Comprehensive Plan. Many residents and sports organizations have requested a facility for year-round activities. The indoor recreation facility would further enhance North Mankato as a recreational destination.

B. Community/Regional Parks

The City is well served by existing park facilities. There are approximately 479 acres of Park and Open Space uses. General guidelines for parks and open spaces suggest cities should strive for 10.5 acres of municipal, developed park land per 1,000 residents and that 90% or more of residents should be within one-half mile of a park or protected green space.

Some key Community/Regional Parks in North Mankato include:

Benson Park

Benson Park is a natural resources themed community park and destination with habitat restoration, natural resource education, nature-based play and water quality improvements, a natural amphitheater, outdoor classrooms, demonstration areas, and more.

Spring Lake Park

Spring Lake Park is another significant park in the community with a variety of amenities and has something for everyone. Continuing to maintain and strengthen these existing facilities is a priority of the City.

As the City grows, new park and facility locations will need to be identified. **Chapter 8: Parks, Trails and Recreation** provides more information on future park and recreation development.

Institutional Considerations

Independent School District (ISD) 77 owns the parcel of land just east of the Caswell North Soccer Complex. As of January 2023, ISD 77 has plans to locate an elementary school in this location, but that plan is not certain. The lot is currently guided as a Central Redevelopment District. The City will need to consider how to appropriately guide the property if ISD 77 chooses not to locate the school there.

VISION FOR LAND USE

The City of North Mankato is a complete community that provides a well-balanced and wide range of places to live, work, shop and play. Land uses make efficient use of existing infrastructure, contribute to a strong local economy, preserve natural resources and contribute to a high quality of life.

Residential Uses

A diverse housing stock allows people at any stage in their life to be able to find a home in North Mankato. Older housing is well maintained while new development respects the character of existing neighborhoods.

Commercial and Industrial Uses

A significant amount of commercial and industrial uses can be found within the City that allow residents to work in North Mankato, while also being able to meet all of their day-to-day needs. Commercial and industrial uses are compatible with their surrounding land uses.

Public/Institutional

Public and institutional uses are viewed as valued resources to the community and contribute to making

North Mankato a better place to live and do business.

Parks and Open Space

Quality parks and open space are within close proximity to all residents, providing recreational opportunities to encourage an active lifestyle. A wide variety of community facilities are provided to serve a range of interests.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following is the primary goal for land use followed by a series of objectives and policies intended to influence future land use decisions in a direction that is aligned with the Vision Statement.

GOAL 1: Maximize the use of land within the City of North Mankato in a way that strengthens the local economy, preserves natural resources, and ensures a high-quality of life for all residents.

Objective 1.1: Preserve and enhance the business environment in North Mankato business districts.

Policy 1.1.1: Encourage and promote the renovation and rehabilitation of existing buildings within business districts.

Policy 1.1.2: Connect businesses with façade improvement grants and loans as the City becomes aware of new resources.

Policy 1.1.3: Make infrastructure improvements that enhance the pedestrian realm such as lighting and seating.

Policy 1.1.4: Explore opportunities for creating a public plaza within the CBD as a central gathering place for community activities.

Policy 1.1.5: Consider expanding parking options in the CBD through either acquiring and converting property or constructing a multi-level parking garage.

Objective 1.2: Use land in a manner that strengthens the economy of North Mankato.

Policy 1.2.1: Expand the amount of property guided for industrial and commercial use in the northwest portions of the City within the industrial park.

Policy 1.2.2: Continue to identify all areas prime for redevelopment and analyze the best use for each property. Work to re-zone these properties and amend this plan as appropriate.

Policy 1.2.3: Increase the number of residential housing units in the City to improve the local market for commercial opportunities.

Policy 1.2.4: Target locations for medium- and high-density residential uses to resolve deficiencies identified in the 2021 North Mankato Housing Study while providing more affordable workforce housing options that will attract new industries.

Policy 1.4.8: Target innovative housing solutions that include characteristics and amenities that are future-oriented to attract and retain talent.

Policy 1.2.5: Actively work to infill vacant land.

Policy 1.2.6: Consider a new mixed-use zoning district to accommodate commercial and industrial uses.

Objective 1.3: Protect and preserve natural resources for long term environmental sustainability and the enjoyment of residents.

Policy 1.3.1: Work with landowners to either obtain property or ensure protection of natural areas with high ecological value.

Policy 1.3.2: Work with the watershed district to ensure that all ground and surface water ordinances are consistent with the recommended standards.

Policy 1.3.3: Discourage “leapfrog” patterns of development.

Objective 1.4: Use land in a manner that ensures a high quality of life for residents.

Policy 1.4.1: Target General Commercial growth that provides community-scale commercial amenities such as large retailers as residential development continues in North Mankato.

Policy 1.4.2: Ensure small area plans continue to be updated to ensure the highest and best use of land is identified and considered throughout the community.

Policy 1.4.3: Maintain a ratio of 15-20 acres of park land per 1,000 residents as the City’s population continues to grow.

Policy 1.4.4: Review and encourage methods of development which promote linkages to recreational facilities using trails and sidewalks.

Policy 1.4.5: Evaluate land uses for compatibility with adjacent land uses by ensuring controls are in place that protect against negative impacts to neighboring property.

Policy 1.4.6: Consider options for preserving older housing stock and features that support a small-town feel.

Policy 1.4.7: Develop an orderly annexation agreement with Belgrade Township.

Policy 1.4.8: Gauge community interest in establishing community gardens on publicly owned green space with plots that can be rented by residents lacking space on personal property.

LAND USE PLAN

The land use plan provides the framework for the growth and development of the City. The land use plan serves as a guide for the character and intensity of development and will be supported by other land use controls and public actions taken pursuant to the Comprehensive Plan.

The land use map appears in **Figure 3-2: Future Land Use**. The plan illustrated by this map evolved from inputs and evaluations received through the planning process completed in 2023. The Plan builds on the existing community pattern to achieve the desired vision for the future of North Mankato. Where the Future Land Use map guides property for something different than the existing zoning, zoning approvals such as variances and conditional use permits should not be considered inconsistent with the comprehensive plan if otherwise deemed appropriate.

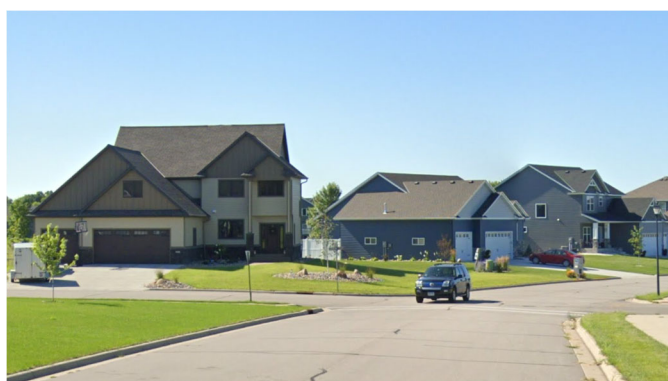
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Low Density Small Lot Residential	183	2.6%
Medium Density Residential	151	2.2%
High Density Residential	88	1.3%
Neighborhood Commercial	19	0.3%
General Commercial	166	2.4%
Central Business District	20	0.3%
Central Redevelopment District	62	0.9%
Commercial/Industrial Mixed Use	325	4.7%
Light Industrial	81	1.2%
Heavy Industrial	1,622	23.4%
Institutional	209	3.0%
Open Space/Park	1,484	21.4%
Total	6,931	100%

**Gross acres determined by City staff based on Nicollet County parcel data and North Mankato land use designations.*

Low Density Residential

The land use in this category is single-family detached homes. The City anticipates, and trends suggest, this is where the majority of new housing units will be added over the next 20 years. One of the biggest strengths of the City of North Mankato is its attractiveness to young families. Part of this attraction is due to the amount of quality single-family homes. Continuing to add new housing units will provide more opportunities for all





Legend

 City Limits

Future Land Use


 Low Density Residential


 Low Density Small Lot Residential

 Medium Density Residential


 High Density Residential


 Neighborhood Commercial


 General Commercial

 Central Business District


 Central Redevelopment District


 Commercial/Industrial Mixed Use

 Heavy Industrial

 Light Industrial

 Institutional

 Open Space/Park

 Right of way

0 0.5 Miles



families to locate in North Mankato, while making older housing more affordable. Several areas in Upper North are expected to see new low-density residential development. Densities targeted in this category are 1 to 5 dwelling units per acre with an overall average of 3.5 dwelling units per acre. However, an important policy of this Plan is that the allowable density of each neighborhood will be based on the desired character of the neighborhood. The primary zoning district that would generally correspond to this land use designation would be the R-1 One Family Dwelling District. As shown on **Figure 3-2**, most areas guided for residential development outside the current City limits are shown as low density residential. Should it be determined in the future that any area guided for low density residential is better suited for medium or high-density residential development, the Planning Commission and City Council will openly consider amendments to the Future Land Use Map.

Low Density Small Lot Residential

The land use in this category is single-family detached dwellings on smaller lots with smaller side yard setbacks as those used in the Low-Density Residential land use areas. Densities targeted in this category average 1 to 8 per acre. The only zoning district that would correspond to this land use designation is the R-1S, One-Family Dwelling, Small Lot District. It is expected that single-family development in this category will offer entry level housing opportunities.



Medium Density Residential

Medium density residential uses are typically in the form of townhomes, duplexes, and small-scale apartment and condo buildings. Advantages of these types of housing are that less property maintenance may be required since yards are smaller and some medium density developments may have associations that handle lawn care and snow removal. As a result, these types of housing tend to be very attractive to seniors. As part of the community engagement process, some residents felt there was a shortage of quality medium density housing. Providing enough medium density housing options helps residents stay within the City of North Mankato as they age to different stages in their lives. As a



result of the Northwest Growth Area Plan, the City is targeting property adjacent to CSAH 6 for medium density residential. Densities targeted in this category are over 5 dwelling units and up to 10 dwelling units per acre. The primary zoning districts that would generally correspond to this land use designation would be the R-2 One- and Two-Family Dwelling District and the R-3A Medium Density Residential District.

High Density Residential

The High-Density Residential land use category consists of multiple family attached housing oriented in a vertical fashion, more commonly referred to as apartments and condominiums. Housing units may be owner or renter occupied. High density housing is an efficient land use because it contains more dwelling units per acre than other residential uses.

High density residential uses are located in places with compatible adjacent land uses and where the local street system will accommodate the traffic. Ideally, they are located near commercial uses or employment centers to maximize the number of people who can walk or use alternative modes of transportation. Residential areas near the downtown suitable for redevelopment may be prime locations for new high-density housing.

Because high density housing is generally associated with renting, it may be a very attractive option for recent graduates looking to live in North Mankato. Providing enough quality high density residential housing is essential for providing a diverse housing stock and the City will need to prioritize this in the future. The densities targeted in this category are over 10 dwelling units per acre. The primary zoning districts that would generally correspond to this land use designation would be the R-3 Limited Multiple Dwelling District and the R-4 Multiple Dwelling District.

Commercial

A. Neighborhood Commercial

Areas guided for Neighborhood Commercial are those intended to serve the nearby surrounding area. Neighborhood commercial uses are small scale businesses that are generally compatible with residential uses. These uses may include bakeries, drug stores, coffee shops, banks, small offices and similar uses. Residential properties suitable for redevelopment should be analyzed as potential neighborhood commercial uses. Single family homes located in and adjacent to the CBD may be especially well suited for this.

B. General Commercial

General Commercial land uses are those that may have a wider draw beyond the nearby surrounding area. They are larger in size than Neighborhood Commercial uses and are intended to serve the entire community and potentially adjacent communities as well. They are generally clustered together and situated along arterial roadways. North Mankato has traditionally been underserved with these types of commercial uses but may create demand for some additional general commercial uses as the population continues to grow. Because residents in the northern parts of the city are generally farthest from the City of Mankato, it is anticipated that there will be demand for additional commercial uses as this area continues to grow and develop.

Properties at all corners, except for the northwest corner of the intersection of Lor Ray Drive and Howard Drive have been guided for General Commercial use despite having a different existing land use. The City values these existing uses and will wait to rezone these properties until the current property owners are prepared to sell or redevelop the sites so as to not make these uses non-conforming. In the case of the existing industrial businesses at this intersection, the City may consider negotiating a land swap for property in the Northport Industrial Park. The City views General Commercial as the best use for these sites long term.

The City anticipates redevelopment opportunities east and west of Lookout Drive between Carol Court and Commerce Drive. Redevelopment of this area could incorporate new General Commercial uses in the future. See Chapter 5: Economic Development for more details.

The property at the northeast corner of Pleasant View Drive and CSAH 41, adjacent to the Highway 14 interchange, is guided for future commercial development based on its proximity to Highway 14 and the Pleasant View Drive roundabout. In addition to existing city regulations, commercial signage and lighting proposals for commercial uses on the site should minimize the effect of their presence on the surrounding residential neighborhood. In addition, the use of landscaping berms and trees should be incorporated along the east side of the property and the south side from Raymond Drive to the east property line. In an attempt to direct commercial traffic to the Pleasant View Drive roundabout, appropriate signage will be installed by the City.

C. Central Business District

The Central Business District is generally the property adjacent to Belgrade Avenue between Highway 169 and property just west of Center Street. This land use category is a mixed-use district for a combination of residential and commercial uses. It has historically served as the City's Central Business District and, ideally, will contain a wide mix of commercial uses which bring people to the area for a variety of different reasons. Although a number of single-family homes currently exist in the Central Business District, new residential development should be consistent with medium or high-density districts. Increasing the residential population in the downtown will help support a healthy business environment and allow more people to be able to walk to their destinations.



Buildings should be located close to the street and parking should be located in the rear or side of properties. Streetscape improvements that enhance the pedestrian realm, such as street trees, outdoor seating, public art, street lighting, should be prioritized here. The City should continue to work with business owners and encourage façade improvements by connecting them to grant and funding opportunities.

A number of the community's small businesses are located here. It is also the location for several community events throughout the year. Rather than guiding individual parcels for a specific use, this district provides flexibility in that it envisions commercial, residential, or a combination of both.

Industrial

A. Light Industrial

Light Industrial uses include all forms of businesses with manufacturing, distribution, warehousing or other industrial uses that are less intense and may have fewer of the negative impacts to surrounding properties generally associated with industrial uses such as noise, odor, dust or low-quality aesthetics. As a result, these uses can be in closer proximity to residential, commercial, park and open space uses, without causing as many negative impacts as might occur with Heavy Industrial uses.

B. Heavy Industrial

Heavy Industrial uses also include manufacturing, distribution, warehousing or other industrial uses; however, these uses are generally more intensive than light industrial uses. This means that the nature of activity typically requires more land, generates more noise and truck traffic, and may involve outdoor storage. Areas guided as new Heavy Industrial are located in the Northport Industrial Park, located north of US Highway 14 and near Lookout Drive.



The new interchange at CSAH 41 and US Highway 14 improves access to other sites and minimizes the number of semi-trucks on arterial roadways. In addition, there is a significant amount of undeveloped land to the northwest that is currently outside the City limits, which could be added in the future.

C. Commercial/Industrial Mixed Use

This land use designation is intended to provide flexibility in that it allows for commercial or industrial uses. There are many uses already in the City of North Mankato that may be appropriate in either an industrial or commercial zoning district. This plan calls for the creation of a new zoning district that accommodates this existing mix and provides flexibility depending on market demand by allowing for a wider variety of uses. There are two key areas guided for this land use designation: north of the interchange at Highway 14 and CSAH 41 in Northport Industrial Park and along the north side of Commerce Drive between Lor Ray Drive and Lookout Drive.

Despite much of the surrounding area being guided for Heavy Industrial, the Commercial/Industrial Mixed-Use area north of the interchange at Highway 14 and CSAH 41 is intended to accommodate commercial uses that may also wish to locate in this area due to the proximity of the interchange. There are few other parcels north of Highway 14 that are guided for commercial use on the Future Land Use Map. Therefore, this area provides an opportunity to provide additional commercial uses where they may be underserved. For the Commercial/Industrial Mixed-Use area along Commerce Drive, this designation is intended to accommodate the existing mix of uses that may be appropriate in either a commercial or industrial zoning district and supports a continuation of these types of uses.

In developing a new commercial/industrial mixed use zoning district, the City must determine the types of commercial and industrial uses that can easily coexist. Therefore, any permitted industrial uses should be those more closely associated with light industrial uses; those being uses that are cleaner from an aesthetic standpoint and have fewer impacts to adjacent properties. Due to the location of these mixed-use areas along key roadways with high visibility,

commercial uses envisioned would be those more closely aligned with General Commercial uses. These types of uses have a wider draw than Neighborhood Commercial uses, may be larger in scale, and generate higher traffic volumes.

Central Redevelopment District

This specialized land use designation applies specifically to the property located on the west side of Lor Ray Drive between Howard Drive and Carlson Drive. This site currently contains Camelot Park, a manufactured home community. The manufactured home community is an asset to the broader community in that it is well maintained and provides an affordable housing option for residents. The City supports the continuation of this use until the property owner chooses to redevelop. Should this occur, the City views the redevelopment of this property as a significant opportunity due to the key location of the property. In the event of redevelopment, a mix of uses is envisioned, including a combination of park, regional multi- sport facilities, institutional, residential, and commercial land uses. The exact layout and quantity of each type of use is not known at this time and a future planning study should be performed prior to site redevelopment. Redevelopment of this area could be a great opportunity for a public/private partnership between the City, school district, and private developers.



Park and Open Space

This land use category includes all City parks, as well as natural preserve areas such as woods and wetlands. As new residential subdivisions develop, sufficient park and open space should be added to serve new residents.

The property located at 1955 Howard Drive West, West Central International is currently used and guided for industrial purposes. The northernmost portion of the property is currently undeveloped. In the future, if the property owner were interested in subdividing the property, the City may be interested in acquiring this property for additional park land space to contribute to the Caswell Park regional park area; however, the City also supports a continuation of industrial uses at the site should the property owner desire to do so.

Required Zoning Changes

The City has adopted zoning regulations for the purpose of carrying out the policies and goals of the land use plan element of the Comprehensive Plan. The application of zoning districts and the specific regulations should support the objectives of the Plan. As a result, an outcome of adopting the plan will be the review and modification of the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map as necessary.

The land use plan provides the basis for guiding zoning decisions that will be made by the City and private property owners. Minnesota Statutes Section 462.357 states that “...the planning agency shall study and propose to the governing body reasonable and practical means for putting the plan into

effect. Subject to the limitations of the following sections, such means include, but not limited to, zoning regulations, for the subdivision of land, an official map...”

This statute anticipates that the zoning regulations will be reviewed and updated to ensure implementation of the land use plan. In a broad sense, this review of the zoning ordinance should examine the following:

The regulations for each zoning district should be reviewed to determine if they fit with the intent of the Comprehensive Plan.

Zoning districts should be examined in relationship to the land use designation. Changes in zoning districts may be needed to match zoning with land use.

The City will need to thoroughly review and update its Ordinances to address inconsistencies and conflicts to integrate the concepts described in this Comprehensive Plan. Updating the Zoning Ordinance will be a large undertaking that will require significant input, time and energy.

One of the policy decisions the City will need to make is how to implement the land use plan through the zoning map. Unlike the Metropolitan Land Planning Act (Minnesota Statutes Section 473), which requires consistency between the land use plan and zoning in cities within the Twin Cities metropolitan area, North Mankato may choose to take a number of implementation strategies. Each has varying implications for existing property uses and current zoning. The strategies include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Keep current zoning in place until such time as the use terminates or redevelopment is initiated.
- Rezone property to a zoning district compatible with a land use plan category.
- Develop an interim strategy to address current use situations as they relate to long term objectives.