

City of International Falls Comprehensive Plan

~ a place of possibilities ~

DRAFT for Public Review
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City of International Falls

- » Bob Anderson, Mayor (to September 20, 2019)
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Neighborhood and Community Partners

- » Backus Community Center
- » Coffee Landing Cafe
- » Koochiching Economic Development Authority (KEDA)
- » Menards Stores
- » Stewart's Super One
- » Voyage Forward

We dedicate this Comprehensive Plan to the memory of Mayor Bob Anderson, who started the effort of creating this future vision for the City of International Falls.

We recognize his love for our city, our community and our people, and present this Plan as a tool to achieve the improvements in prosperity, quality of life and happiness he envisioned.

Project Steering Team

- » Paul Nevanen, Planning Commission
- » Matthew Gouin, Planning Commission
- » Pam Oveson, Island View Realty
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Vision, Purpose and Background

1.1 Purpose

The International Falls Comprehensive Plan is a tool and resource to guide the efforts of citizens, elected officials, and staff as they work together, harnessing trends and change, toward realizing a shared vision for their city's future.

Change is a constant in the life of cities. Economies fluctuate, populations move, businesses ride the fortunes of larger trends.

A comprehensive plan is a tool that helps orient the priorities and policy decisions of a community as it rides the sometimes challenging conditions of larger trends to steer toward its citizens and leaders' envisioned destination.

This Comprehensive Plan for the City of International Falls provides a set of recommendations - developed from a community-led and community-centered vision and set of values - to guide the evolution of the city. The plan outlines specific objectives and policies to improve community vitality, quality of life, and success.

The plan's recommendations provide guidance for the city's current and future investments, and its growth and development over the next twenty years, with the understanding that these recommendations must be reviewed and updated in cycles of five to ten years so they remain relevant to the actual conditions existing at that time and to the citizens' desires and vision. The plan's overall goal is to improve the daily experience and quality of life for all who live in, do business in or visit International Falls, and to ensure a thriving community well into the future.



Moving with gusto toward the same goal is nothing new to residents of International Falls. Image: at the annual "Freeze Yer Gizzard" Blizzard Run.

"Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."

~ John F. Kennedy

1.2 Future vision

The plan's vision is a *statement describing the future* of International Falls after the plan's recommendations are implemented. It was developed from the comments and ideas gathered through the plan's community engagement process, and refined through work with the plan's Project Steering Team.

Our aspirational vision statement:

International Falls is an innovative, prosperous, and family-friendly community where all residents can access economic opportunity and stable jobs, a wide variety of housing options, safe and walkable neighborhoods, a vibrant downtown, and unparalleled natural areas and recreational spaces.

The city is a vital and attractive place, filled with opportunities for individuals and organizations - from aspiring entrepreneurs to artists to laborers and knowledge workers to multi-national corporations. It is a thriving year-round destination and renowned for the prosperity, happiness, and high quality of life that its residents enjoy.

1.3 Community goals

The list of community goals (what International Falls residents wish their community to be, do or offer) were derived from the comments and ideas gathered through the plan's community engagement process:

High quality of life

A healthy, safe, attractive and happy community that welcomes and develops new ideas and opportunities while offering year-round beauty, connection and enjoyment. Its high quality of life keeps current residents and businesses here, and attracts new residents, visitors and economic opportunity.

A thriving economy

Living in International Falls means the opportunity to have a good job and to build a prosperous, healthy life through hard work. The city fosters entrepreneurship, and traditional industries like timber, tourism, and cold weather testing thrive alongside new and innovative technology, manufacturing, and other start-ups.

A complete, self-sufficient community

International Falls offers a full range of retail and service options that make daily life convenient for its residents and businesses, and keep and recirculate dollars in its local economy, building the foundation for continued prosperity.

Family-friendly neighborhoods

The city offers healthy, safe and family-friendly neighborhoods which are well connected to schools, parks and businesses by roads, trails and sidewalks. Young people have consistent access to engaging and constructive community-based activities. Residents have access to high quality facilities and amenities which provide year round use and enhance their quality of life.

Affordable, attractive and available housing

A variety of attractive, safe and affordable housing options are available for individuals and families, and all residents can find and afford the housing they need through the different stages of their lives.

Preserving our community's heritage

The city and its residents value its history, culture and assets, including its natural environment, its heritage of settler and native cultures, its urban landscape and its industrial history. The community works to preserve this history and heritage for the benefit of residents, visitors and future generations.

Land use for community prosperity

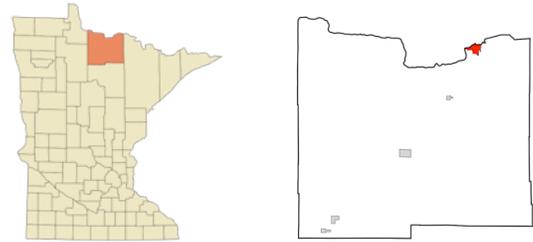
Land use decisions are evaluated for their long-term prospects for building community prosperity. Land is used efficiently and sustainably to support high quality of life. Land uses are thoughtfully allocated to foster a variety of housing options and attractive development, business-friendly land uses that support economic development, and to improve access to the city's natural assets.

Transportation for community success

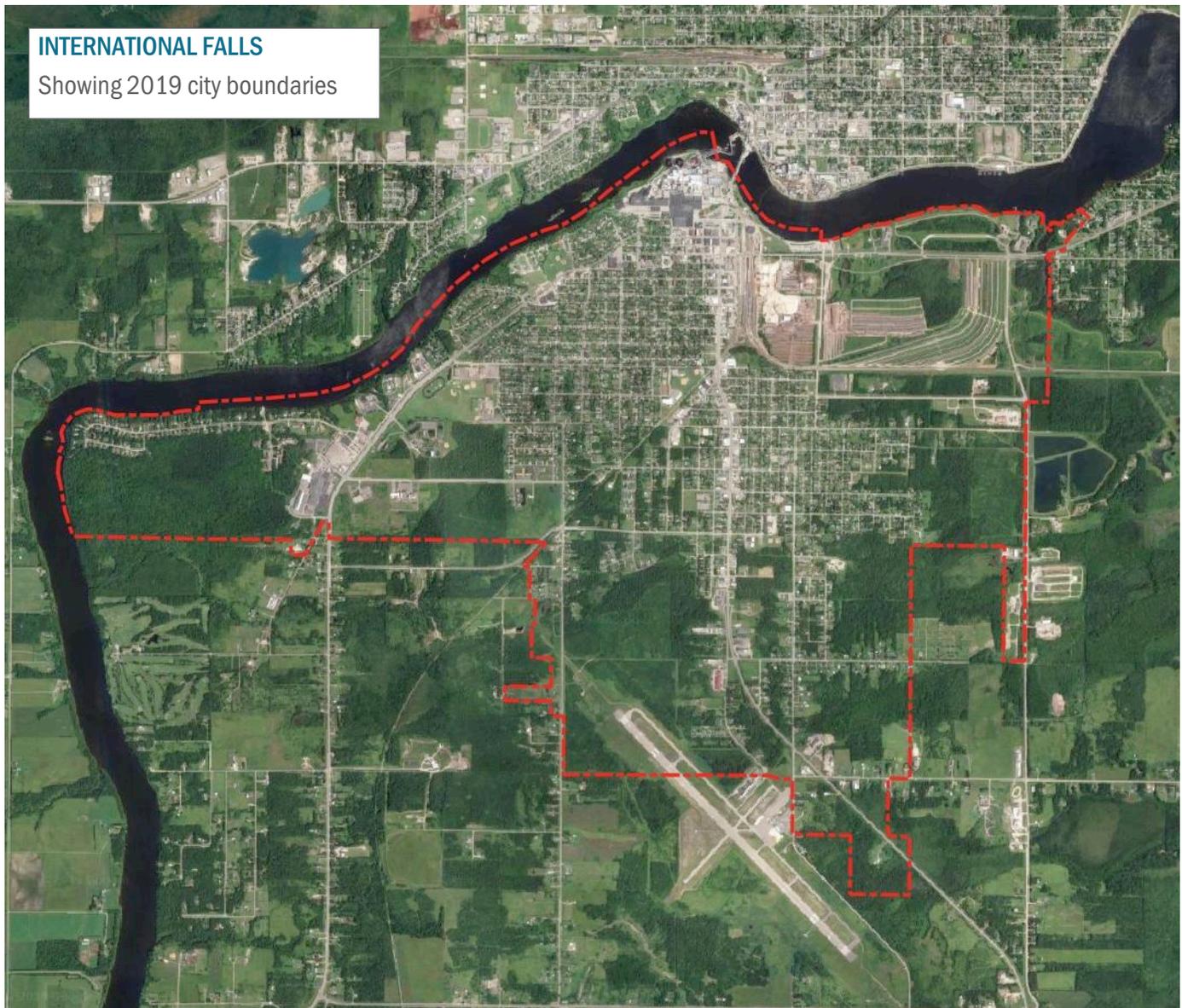
Transportation serves residents' needs by providing multiple options, including walking and biking, to reach daily destinations. Commercial users are served by efficient networks for cargo transport that foster their connection to markets and success.

1.4 Geographic area

Located in the northeast corner of Koochiching County, International Falls is the largest city in the county (both in population and land area) and holds the county seat. It sits along the Rainy River, which forms part of the northern border between the United States and Canada. Known for its natural resources, forest products industry, and tourism destinations, it includes a land port of entry and is adjacent to the second-busiest international rail port in the United States.



View of the county's location within the state, and of the city's location within it (in red).



1.5 Community history

International Falls has experienced many changes throughout its history. Understanding its trajectory can help to more clearly see its assets and opportunities for the future.

Beginnings

What is now International Falls was first inhabited by indigenous Native American peoples as early as two thousand years ago. By the mid-1600s the area became known to explorers, voyageurs and missionaries. In 1895 the area of the city was platted and named “Koochiching” (“at the place of inlets”). Koochiching village was incorporated in 1901, and in 1903 its name was changed to International Falls in recognition of the falls located there and the village’s proximity to Canada. In 1909, International Falls was incorporated as a city.

The arrival of industry

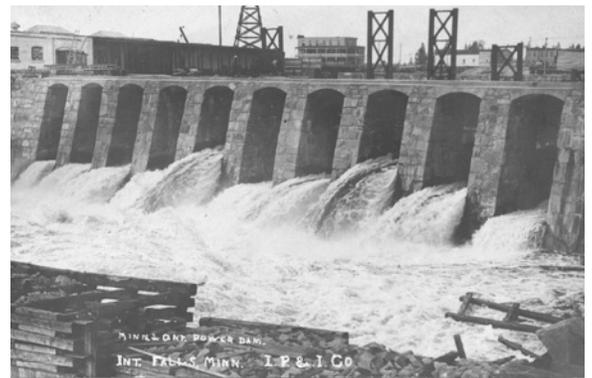
Sensing opportunity in the area’s abundant timber resources, industrialist E.W. Backus, president of the Minnesota and Ontario (“Mando”) Paper Company and the Ontario & Minnesota Power Company, began construction of a hydroelectric dam on the Rainy River in 1905 to provide electricity for the area and power his company’s mills. In 1910, the paper mill began operations and brought employment, commerce and population growth to the area. The International Bridge, connecting the city to the town of Fort Frances, Ontario, was constructed in 1912 and helped cement the city’s role and position.

In the following years, other industries related to forest products sprang up in the city: from other lumber operations to mills and manufacturers like Insulite (making home insulating materials from sawdust and paper pulp).

The city’s northern location and vigorous winters also led to the establishment of cold-weather testing facilities for a variety of industrial and manufactured products.



International Falls in 1912. The photo includes the caption “The City of Destiny.” Minnesota Historical Society (MHS).



The hydroelectric dam in 1915. Image courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society (MHS).

Economic challenges

As a small town with a handful of large employers and a location that is remote to other major centers in the state, the city has experienced large shifts in economic fortunes as a result of larger trends and consolidation in its main industries.

In 1965, local ownership of the paper mill ended when Mando was sold to Boise Cascade Corporation. In 1985, the Insulite mill (also owned by Boise) was closed, ending approximately 800 jobs. In 2013, 265 jobs were ended at the paper mill prior to its sale to Packaging Corporation of America.

Growing through annexation

By 1980, the city's population had been decreasing since the 1960s (from a peak of 6,778 residents at the 1960 Census). Seeking to weather the economic challenges brought on by the Insulite mill closing (which had also greatly affected the fortunes of the adjoining city of South International Falls) both cities saw opportunities to reduce costs and gain a more stable financial footing by consolidating as a single entity.

In January 1989 International Falls and South International Falls became one city. The consolidation increased the city's geographic area and population (8,324 residents in the 1990 Census). Underlying issues, however, continued to drive population decline and by 2000 the newly consolidated city's population had declined by about 20% to 6,700 residents.

Diversifying the economy and looking to the future

Nurturing the relationship with key industries and employers like the paper mill while also vigorously working to diversify the local economy, improve quality of life and support aspiring entrepreneurs has yielded many successes and helped to reduce the loss of employment and population.

Success stories like the recruitment of Optum/UnitedHealth's billing center (150 jobs), local start-ups (like Greentech Manufacturing or more recently, Swanky Sweet Pea, which started out of downtown and now has nationwide sales), and civic initiatives like Voyage Forward point to the great potential to successfully navigate the city's future.



*The Insulite mill (behind the bandshell) in the 1950s.
Minnesota Historical Society (MHS).*



The International Falls area offers a wealth of opportunities to entrepreneurs who are ready to capitalize on the area's many assets. Image: Greentech Manufacturing, a family-owned business making industry-leading outdoor furnaces, air handlers and unit heaters - selling worldwide and based right in the city.

1.6 Previous and current planning documents

A thorough review of applicable current and previous city and county planning documents was completed as part of the preparation of this plan. Taken together, these documents provide a foundation for understanding current conditions and potential strategies for International Falls and the surrounding area.

Comprehensive Plan (1966)

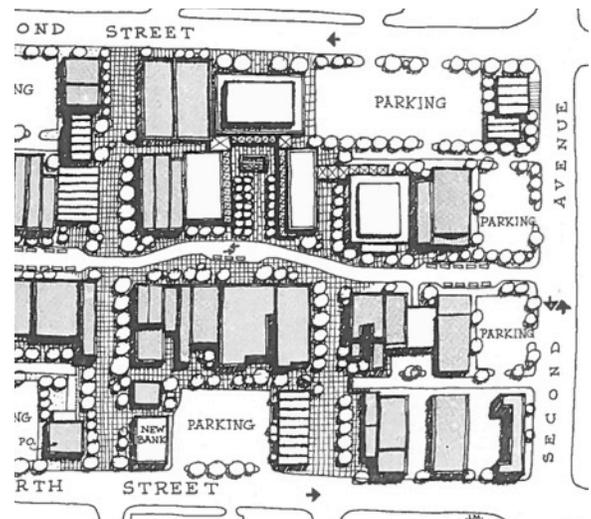
The city's most recent comprehensive plan was completed in 1966. It provided guidance for land use, traffic circulation and transportation, community facilities, community appearance, downtown area revitalization, and for a capital improvement program.

The plan was completed by the firm of Aguar Jyring Whiteman Moser, under the direction of Charles Aguar, a prominent planner who played a key role in most of the major planning and zoning activities in northeastern Minnesota in the 1960s.

Though it was completed more than fifty years ago, many of its observations, key goals and recommendations are still relevant for the city and its future.

Some of the issues noted in the 1966 plan included:

- » International Falls' privileged position and competitive advantage as "the only community in extreme northern Minnesota which is developed as a complete shopping and trade center"
- » Negative impact of growing "sprawl" development outside of the downtown, and recognition of the increased costs for servicing and accessing these locations
- » Negative traffic safety implications of strip development along heavily traveled roadways due to conflicting turning movements to and from these businesses, as well as negative impact to the roadways' traffic carrying capacity
- » Identification of substandard housing conditions as a key issue for the city - the plan considered that about 13% of all



Plan for the city's downtown, from the 1966 Comprehensive Plan.

Did you know?

When the 1966 Comprehensive Plan was completed, International Falls was at the peak of its population trajectory, with 9,250 residents within its immediate area.

Based on previous growth, the 1966 plan anticipated almost 15,000 residents by 1980. Because of larger trends affecting the region, the actual population that year was about 8,400 residents.

Today, the city's population is about 6,100 residents.

area housing units were in “bad or dilapidated” condition warranting demolition, with an additional 7% noted as “deteriorating” and requiring repair

- » Identification of parks as an opportunity for economic development and as a driver for quality of life, with recognition that access to community parks in the city was “far below ... other cities” - the plan recommended providing an indoor (year-round) recreational facility as well as small playgrounds throughout the city (“tot-lots”)
- » Need for an indoor (year-round) recreation facility for the community (it recommended locating a new hockey arena and indoor sports center “just south of 15th Street, near Industrial Avenue”)

Key goals

Key goals from the 1966 plan include:

- » Provide a wide range of housing choices and development of new residential neighborhoods to offer a high quality residential environment
- » Improve the appearance of the central business district and focus commercial development into compact centers
- » Diversify the city’s economic base and reserve land for industrial and manufacturing job opportunities
- » Improve quality of life by providing public/semi-public sites for use as educational, cultural, and health facilities
- » Offer an integrated network of circulation for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods
- » Preserve the beauty of the city’s area and work to make the urban landscape more attractive
- » Integrate local urban planning with county-wide planning

Economic Adjustment Strategy for Koochiching County and International Falls (2015)

Newmark Grubb Knight Frank (NGKF) is one of the nation’s most respected economic development and commercial real estate advisors.

In 2014 NGKF was hired by the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) and Koochiching County to complete an Economic Adjustment Strategy for Koochiching County and the City of International Falls.

The study, completed in 2015, included deep consideration of demographic, industry, marketing and economic trends relevant to the region, and was also based on numerous interviews with commercial interests and operators.

The study provided action step recommendations and an accompanying implementation plan. Its recommendations (which are a prominent component of this plan’s Economic Development chapter) were organized into the following categories:

- » Structure and Operations
- » Business Retention and Expansion
- » Marketing
- » Infrastructure and Recruitment Readiness
- » Workforce Development
- » Entrepreneurship and Small Business
- » Professional Development
- » Business Recruitment
- » Cross Border Partnerships

The study provided some key insights for International Falls, including an exhaustive list of tactics and strategies for each of the identified categories. Below is a selection of important insights and strategies from the study.

Education

The study identified a gap in skills needed for important potential industries like logistics and information technology. Rainy River Community College was also identified as a key retention tool for 18 to 24 year olds. By developing attractive, local career opportunities through the affordable community college system, more local youth could be retained. There is currently a significant out-migration of young adults from the city.

Labor Shed

For every person who arrives to work in Koochiching County, 1.75 people leave the county for work. Developing and retaining economic activity within the County for current residents is an important goal, as this will help keep and recirculate dollars in the local economy and build prosperity.

Development / redevelopment opportunities

Twelve development sites were identified within International Falls, 10 of which were rated as locations with high or medium-high potential for development.

Trade and Economic Development

- » The Koochiching County Foreign Trade Zone no. 257, coupled with the Multi-Modal Distribution Center site are key opportunities as both have rail service capability.
- » Work ethic in the City and County are rated highly in the study based upon feedback from the community and business leaders.

The Economic Development chapter of this plan includes key recommendations from the study.

Functions & Tactics	Priority
Form a new non-government, cooperative regional economic development partnership	● ● ● High
Join the Local Chambers Grow Minnesota BRE meetings and develop a robust BRE program within the new Regional EDP	● ● ● High
Conduct a minimum of 60 (5 a month) face-to-face meetings with existing industry	● ● ● High
Renew membership and continue to attend the Minnesota Marketing Partnership's site selector events to develop and strengthen relationships with these recruitment allies and attend trade shows and marketing events	● ● ● High
Establish an expedited development process	● ● ● High
Begin participation in the ACT Work Ready Communities program including the National Career Readiness Certificate testing	● ● ● High
Continue to groom potential entrepreneurs and small businesses through the Koochiching Economic Gardening Program	● ● ● High
Attend all local Minnesota Marketing Partnership meetings and events	● ● ● High
Work with Ft. Frances on cross border job fairs and business expos to determine the skill levels of their workforce. Adding their numbers to Koochiching County's data demonstrates a larger workforce availability and diversified skill set along with buying power, educational training providers, and other key socio-economic statistics that help tell the region's story	● ● ● High
Emphasize the proximity of Voyageurs National Park, which is a unique and important tourism asset for the entire cross-border region	● ● ● High

The "Top 10 Recommendations and Implementation Indicators" from the 2015 Koochiching County & International Falls Economic Adjustment Strategy.

The highest-priority recommendation, a new Regional Economic Development Partnership (EDP), would consolidate economic development and marketing functions across city, county and state agencies and work jointly with other partners (including Fort Frances) to market the region.

Voyage Forward (2013 to today)

Voyage Forward is a remarkable and ongoing effort joining resident participation and leadership with city and county agency support for the goal of furthering prosperity across the cities of Koochiching County, including International Falls.

The initiative was first begun in 2013 to explore opportunities for responding to job reductions and plant closings in the region while growing the area’s economy and building community resilience and leadership.

The initiative received initial funding from the City of International Falls and Koochiching County along with a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce. Citizens were at the core of the effort, with numerous community surveys, in-person “community listening” events and focused engagement with young people. Ten key objectives (“Destiny Drivers”) were developed summarizing the goals and priorities collected through these efforts,. The Destiny Drivers are intended to focus the direction of the city and county going forward.

The Destiny Drivers are an integral part of the community’s actions moving forward, and their guidance is included as part of the ongoing work of the Koochiching Economic Development Authority (KEDA), International Falls Chamber of Commerce, and the International Falls - Ranier and Rainy Lake Convention and Visitors Bureau. For example, the chamber pursues business retention and expansion efforts through their “Grow Minnesota” visits, community events, retail promotion, and monthly business lunch and learn activities. KEDA has also developed a strategic plan for cold weather testing operations and growing jobs through assisting entrepreneurs in the Small Business Development Center and the KoochCo Loan Program.

Citizen participation remains a key component of the ongoing efforts, with an active and engaged core team of “Destiny Driver Champions” working to coordinate and implement work related to each Driver.



Voyage Forward is an effort of residents and government to propel the region forward.

Voyage Forward's “Destiny Drivers”

- » Quality of Life: Create a quality of life environment which provides for a healthy and engaged community for residents in all phases of life
- » Attract and retain people
- » Develop a skilled, trained, and educated workforce that meets the needs of the area
- » Expand the Voyage Forward and KEDA marketing partnership
- » Grow and diversify businesses and jobs
- » Invest in and maintain quality infrastructure
- » Create a uniformly attractive county and a means to explore it
- » Position the region as a quality tourism destination
- » Develop an organizational framework to facilitate, communicate, and sustain the work and mission of Voyage Forward
- » Maximize opportunities for cooperation with Fort Frances and other Canada connections

More at www.voyageforward.org

Housing study (2019)

The Koochiching Economic Development Authority (KEDA) commissioned a study of the housing needs and conditions for the county overall and for the individual cities in the county, including International Falls. The study, completed by Community Partners Research, Inc., includes a highly detailed analysis of the city's current housing stock and future needs.

The study:

- » Provides updated demographic data
- » Provides an analysis of the current housing stock and inventory
- » Determines gaps or unmet housing needs
- » Examines future housing trends that the cities in the county and Koochiching County can expect to address in the coming years
- » Provides a market analysis for housing development
- » Provides housing recommendations and findings

The recommendations included in this plan's Housing chapter reflect the conditions and recommendations included in the study. The chapter of the 2019 housing study pertaining to International Falls is included as Appendix 4 of this plan.

Zoning and land use regulations

The city's current zoning and land use regulations were developed in 1979 and have been modified as needed over the years. **A new set of land use regulations have been developed as part of the project to develop this Comprehensive Plan.** The new regulations work in concert with the recommendations of this document and provide the legal framework to make its recommendations a reality. They are included as Appendix 1 of this plan.

Coordination and consistency with the Koochiching County Comprehensive Land Use Plan (2001)

The county's land use plan is intended to guide land use decisions made by the County Board, County Planning Commission, and County Officials over the next 25 years, and to provide a planning framework for the cities located within it.

Key goals and objectives of the county plan include:

- » Focus on economic growth and diversification of employment and industry
- » Maintain and enhance quality of life within the county
- » Strengthen where possible local control of the county's resources and promote intergovernmental cooperation
- » Address changing needs of the county's population as it decreases overall and ages
- » Leverage "slow growth" if / as it occurs

According to Minnesota Statute 462.3535, a city's plan must be consistent with its county comprehensive plan.

In turn, and according to Minnesota Statute 394.432, if the city's plan is deemed consistent, then it can be included into the county's comprehensive plan.

Recommendations in the International Falls 2019 Comprehensive Plan have been reviewed for consistency and agreement with goals and stipulations of the 2001 Koochiching County Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Other important planning documents

Several other planning documents contribute information and recommendations to this plan. Among these are:

Voyage Forward Market Area Profile (2016)

A comprehensive retail analysis for International Falls and its surrounding area, including Fort Frances, Ontario and a small portion of St. Louis County. The study was conducted by the University of Minnesota Extension Center for Community Vitality and was commissioned by Voyage Forward and the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC).

Economic Impact of Rainy River Community College on Koochiching County (2017)

A study conducted by the University of Minnesota Duluth on the economic benefit of the Rainy River Community College (RRCC) on the local economy. The study found that RRCC provides a significant positive impact on the county's economy through its annual operations and student and visitor spending.

In 2016, the total impact of all RRCC operational expenditures and those related to its students and visitors was estimated to have supported, either directly or indirectly, 99 jobs and contributed to more than \$8 million in local economic activity.

Minnesota Housing Finance Agency Koochiching County Profile (2014)

A housing and general demographic profile of the county, including International Falls and other cities. The study was developed by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA).

Safe Routes to School Plan (2016)

Recommendations for walk/bike connectivity in the city are informed by the recommendations in this study, which focuses on safe connections to city schools and parks. Route and intersection recommendations from the SRTS plan are included as Appendix 4 of this plan.

Which businesses do we grow?

Recommendations from the Voyage Forward 2016 Market Area Profile

Three types of activities or store formats were the most highly ranked in the study:

- » General merchandise: Sales tax and business mix analysis show a gap in general merchandise; local resident survey shows the demand. The primary store category residents are patronizing in other communities is general merchandise.
- » Clothing: This is the second highest demanded store type. Customers are shopping at clothing stores frequently when in other communities; sales tax data shows that the community is losing clothing sales to other cities.
- » Tourism Attraction: The business community ranked tourism attraction or tourism-based business second after industrial development, recognizing the importance of visitor dollars to the community. Business owners report over 40% of their sales coming from tourists or seasonal residents. Local residents also suggested that the community build on its strength with visitors, focusing retail development on types of businesses which would be appreciated by locals and visitors alike.

Download the complete report at <https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/198815/Voyage%20Forward%20MAP%20with%20Appendix%203.7.16.pdf>

Demographic Profile

Population characteristics and trends offer an indication of a community's future needs and provide a foundation for recommendations affecting land use, housing, transportation, and parks and public facilities, among others.

Projections for future households, for example, are used to determine a community's future needs for new housing units - and for the new land that will be needed to accommodate it.

The need for new housing (and new land) then guides and provides impetus for changing existing land uses into types that accommodate those housing needs, or for annexing lands adjoining the community where housing can be located.

In turn, these projections for population and households help guide investment decisions for school facilities, water and wastewater services, and other services provided by the city.

Because of the key role population projections play in committing a city's financial resources to meet future demand, it is important to carefully study current conditions and historical trends, and consider two or three potential scenarios - typically selecting the most conservative scenario to avoid overcommitting resources too far ahead of the actual need.

Careful consideration of population trends and projections is even more important in a community like International Falls, where consistent decreases in population have been evident for several decades. This decrease has led to a steady erosion of the city's tax base, and forces a disciplined approach for avoiding or reducing potential future obligations while working to address other population-related issues (general aging of the city's population, lack of adequate housing) and, - most importantly of all - for steadily improving quality of life for present and future residents so population loss can be stabilized and eventually reversed.



Development in a community responds to growth in population and households.



One of the key tasks of a comprehensive plan is to provide direction for future actions based on a realistic, evidence-based understanding of likely future conditions - and based on that understanding, to develop frameworks that allow for "best case" outcomes to occur.

2.1 Population trends

Historical trends

Koochiching County’s population has been generally declining since its peak in 1960 (18,190 people) to an estimated 2018 population of 12,440 people (a decrease of 32% since 1960).

In this same timeframe, the population of the state of Minnesota has grown from 3.4 million (1960) to 5.7 million (2018 estimate) - an increase of 68%.

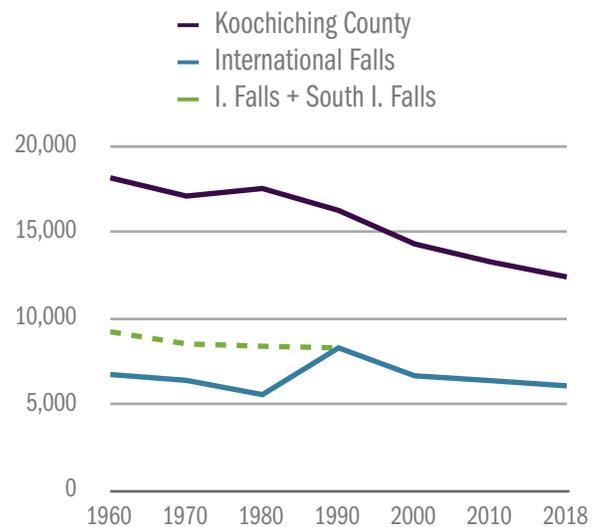
As the principal city in Koochiching County, International Falls’s population trends mirror the county’s: its 1960 population was 6,778 people (not including the adjoining community of South International Falls, which it annexed in 1989) to a peak of 8,324 following annexation and decrease to 6,121 in 2018.

Population by year, 1960 to 2018

Year	Koochiching Co.	International Falls	South International Falls
1960	18,190	6,778	2,479
1970	17,131	6,439	2,116
1980	17,571	5,611	2,806
1990	16,299	8,324	N.A.
2000	14,355	6,703	N.A.
2010	13,311	6,424	N.A.
2017	12,776	6,121	N.A.

Data source: US Census Bureau Decennial Census and ACS 2017

Population trends in Koochiching County and International Falls, 1960 to 2018



Population trends in Koochiching County and International Falls, from 1960 to 2018.

It is important to note that the population increase shown for International Falls in 1990 is due to the annexation of South International Falls, which occurred in 1989 and which added to the city’s geographic extent and to its population count.

A more accurate picture of the city’s population decrease emerges when considering that the combined population for International Falls and South International Falls (shown in the chart as the dashed green line pre-annexation, with the same geographic extent as today) in 1960 was 9,257 people - and exhibits a continuous decrease in population of 34%, starting in 1960, to today’s 6,121 residents.

Future trends

Given previous population trends, what can be expected to occur over this plan’s planning horizon (the next twenty years)?

According to the Minnesota Demographic Center (MnDC), the county’s population is expected to continue to decrease over the next twenty years and beyond:

	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050
Koochiching	13,311	11,931	10,570	9,489	8,597

Source: Minnesota Demographic Center

MnDC has not currently published population projections for International Falls. However, estimates at the county level are available, and can be used to derive projections for the city based on the city’s historical share of the total population of the county. In addition, linear and exponential functions can be fitted onto population counts for the city (including South International Falls for figures before annexation) to develop additional estimates.

Applying a city population factor of 50% to the county estimates, and linear and exponential projections based on 1960 to 2010 census figures, the following estimates can be prepared:

Projected population for International Falls

Projection method	2020	2030	2040	2050
City / county share	5,966	5,285	4,745	4,299
Linear	5,990	5,400	4,850	4,300
Exponential	6,050	5,600	5,200	4,850

* Derived using projection method 1 described in this section

All three projections are within a few percentage points of each other. The “Linear Projection” method is selected for providing a realistic potential scenario for the development of this plan’s recommendations and for quantifying future needs and potential solutions.

Ratio between city and county population, 1960 to 2018

Year	Koochiching Co.	International Falls + South I Falls	Ratio city / county
1960	18,190	9,257	0.51
1970	17,131	8,555	0.50
1980	17,571	8,417	0.48
1990	16,299	8,324	0.51
2000	14,355	6,703	0.47
2010	13,311	6,424	0.48
2017	12,776	6,121	0.48

Data source: US Census Bureau

Since 1960, the International Falls / South International Falls area has represented about 50% of the county’s population.

What the population projections mean

Given current regional trends and conditions, the population of International Falls is anticipated to continue decreasing over the next thirty years.

Fewer people and households will result in decreased tax revenues for the city, a reduced labor force, loss of skills and reduced business opportunities.

A decrease in resources and investments may also result in decreased quality of life for residents, and additional incentive to migrate out.

Working to improve quality of life will help retain existing residents and attract new ones. Focusing on this approach may help address population trends.

2.2 Current population and economics

Population and households

Population	International Falls		Koochiching County	
	Count	%	Count	%
Total population	6,121	100%	12,776	100%
» Children (all persons under 18)	1,238	20%	2,445	19%
» School age children, teenagers and young adults (ages 5 to 24)	1,493	24%	2,784	22%
» Senior adults (persons over 65)	1,258	21%	2,839	22%
Households	2,660	100%	5,629	100%
» Family households	1,625	61%	3,606	64%
» Non-family households	1,035	39%	2,023	36%

Data source: US Census ACS 2017 5-year estimates

Ethnicity

Population	International Falls		Koochiching County	
	Count	%	Count	%
Total population	6,121	100%	12,776	100%
White	5,744	94%	12,129	95%
Black or African American	115	2%	129	1%
American Indian	290	5%	623	5%
Asian	45	1%	68	1%
Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	0	0%	0	0%
Other race	0	0%	173	1%
Hispanic / Latino of any race	0	0%	20	0%

Data source: US Census ACS 2017 5-year estimates

Census household or family?

- » A “household” is a person or group of people occupying a housing unit
- » A “family household” consists of a householder (the person who owns or rents the housing unit) and one or more people living together in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption
- » A “non-family household” is a person living alone or a householder who shares the home with non-relatives only

Key population findings

- » The city’s population, mirroring regional trends, is expected to continue to decrease over the next thirty years
- » According to 20-year projections from the Minnesota State Demographer, Koochiching County will lose 20% of its current population by 2040
- » Even while the overall population decreases, the number of residents who are 65 and older is expected to increase by 22%.

Income

Economics	International Falls	Koochiching County
Individual (per capita) income	\$23,430	\$26,804
Median household income	\$41,241	\$47,131
Median family income	\$53,420	\$61,463
Persons living in poverty	25%	17%
Families living in poverty	17%	12%
Children in poverty	35%	24%

Data source: US Census ACS 2017 5-year estimates

Per capita income in the city is about 90 percent of the amount in Koochiching County, and about two-thirds of the amount in Minnesota. Similarly, median household income is about 90 percent of the amount in Koochiching County and about three-fifths of the amount in Minnesota.

Poverty in the city is much higher than in the county and the state overall, with the rate of people living below the poverty line running about 1.5 times the rate in Koochiching County and more than double the rate in Minnesota.

About 35% of all children living in the city experience poverty - about 1.5 times the rate in the county and more than two times the rate in the state overall.

Employment

Employment	International Falls
Population 16 years and older	5,063
In labor force	3,013
Employed	2,732
Unemployed	281
Unemployment rate	9%

Data source: US Census ACS 2017 5-year estimates

Occupations

Sector	Count	%
Total civilian employed population	2,732	100%
Management, business, science, and arts	833	30%
Service	475	17%
Sales and office	753	28%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance	214	8%
Production, transportation, and material moving	457	17%

Data source: US Census ACS 2017 5-year estimates

This is a brief selection of employment and economics data - **please consult the Housing and the Economic Development chapters of this plan to view additional data relevant for those topics.**

Community Participation & Engagement

3.1 Overview of engagement activities

Community engagement was a key part of the process for developing the comprehensive plan. A cross-section of the city’s residents participated in pop-up workshops, listening sessions, and online tools. Community ideas and aspirations were used to serve as the foundation for the plan and inform its policy directions and recommendations.

Types of engagement activities completed

Four main types of activities were used to gather community ideas for the plan:

- » In-person engagement at community locations and events
- » Online engagement
- » Engagement from related initiatives
- » Engagement with the Project Steering Team (PST)

In-person engagement

Seven in-person engagement events were conducted, including pop-up sessions and listening sessions where the project team “took the meeting to the people” by going to community locations and special events.

Pop-up events engaged over 200 residents. Events included:

- » Pop-up engagement sessions at Stewart’s Super One, Coffee Landing Cafe, Backus Community Center, and Menards
- » Listening session with the Voyage Forward Committee
- » Presentation and listening session with the Koochiching Economic Development Authority



By the numbers

In-person events

- » 7 events
- » Approximately 200 participants

Online engagement

- » Website: active for eighteen months
- » Online survey: 330 respondents

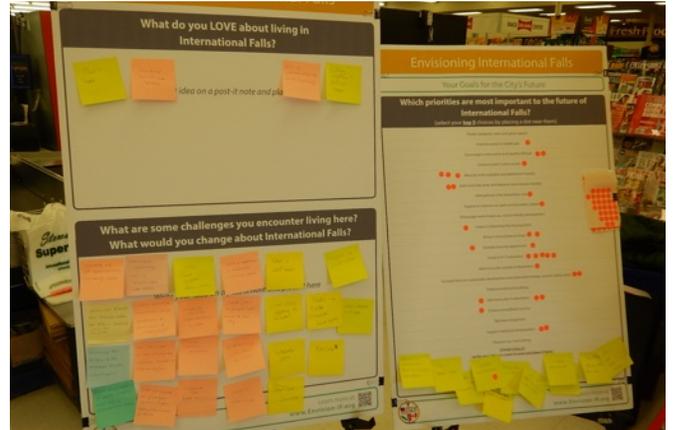
Over 500 people participated in this plan’s engagement activities

The plan also includes ideas and comments from 1,000 students and residents gathered by Voyage Forward

Photos from in-person engagement activities



Community conversation at Backus Community Center.



Boards with comments gathered at Stewart's Super One.



At a meeting with Voyage Forward. Information gathered by that community initiative helped expand this plan's engagement.



During pop-up meeting at Coffee Landing Cafe.



Project Steering Committee members providing their ideas at a March 2017 meeting.



At the October 27 2017 meeting of the Project Steering Committee.

Online engagement

A robust online component helped to increase the reach of the project by making it easier and more convenient for more people to stay informed and contribute ideas to the plan - simply by connecting to the plan’s engagement materials from their computer or mobile device, on their own schedule and without needing to attend a meeting or event.

Two main types of online engagement activities were completed as part of this project:

Project website

The project website was available at www.envision-IF.org throughout the duration of the study. The website served as a central repository for information and updates for the project, and provided access to the study’s online engagement tools.

The website was visited by about 2,000 unique visitors during the plan’s engagement phase.

Online survey

This comprehensive, 30-question survey was available through the International Falls website, and promoted through in-person engagement efforts as well. The survey was available for two months.

The survey asked a variety of questions related to the goals and priorities to be addressed by the plan. A total of 333 people provided responses to the survey, with 240 of those respondents completing a survey all the way to the end.

Nearly 90 percent of all respondents live within International Falls, and more than 95 percent of all respondents live within Koochiching County.



Community Vision and Values for the future of International Falls

After a robust community engagement process, a Community Vision and set of Community Values statements were developed. These statements will serve as the foundation for the International Falls Comprehensive Plan, guiding goals and strategies. You can download the vision and values statements with the link below.

[Vision + Values Download File](#)

What is this project about?

The City of International Falls is working with you to develop a comprehensive plan for the future of the city. The City wants your opinion on questions like:

- What do you value in International Falls today?

The project website received about 2,000 unique visitors during the plan’s engagement phase.



Residential Development

2. Which types of housing are most needed in International Falls?
Please select up to three of the provided choices.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-family dwellings | <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-built (modular) housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing for Seniors | <input type="checkbox"/> More affordable housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lodging for visitors | <input type="checkbox"/> Single-family detached housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Programs to help homeowners improve or maintain their home's condition | <input type="checkbox"/> Townhomes / Attached single-family housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Residential units above storefronts or offices (i.e., mixed use development) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other - Please tell us: <input type="text"/> |

3. Where is additional housing most needed?
Please select one of the following options.

- In the downtown area
- In town but not necessarily in the downtown area

The online survey received 333 responses.

Envision International Falls

www.envision-IF.org

Visit the comprehensive plan website for more information, and to learn how you can get involved!



Business card-sized fliers with the project website were distributed at several events and locations to invite visitors to the online tools.

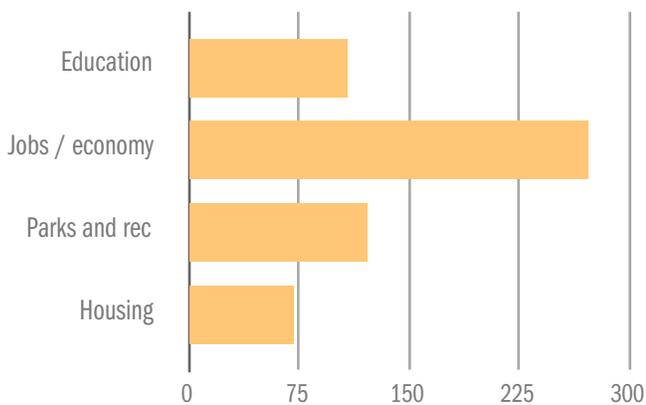
3.2 Guidance received: what we learned

The plan’s in-person and online engagement activities provided a wealth of data and insights to the project team. This chapter highlights some of what we learned.

This is a brief selection of responses received during the plan’s community engagement process. **Please consult Appendix 3 of this plan to view all questions and comments received.**

Main issues

Top priorities for the city (grouped)

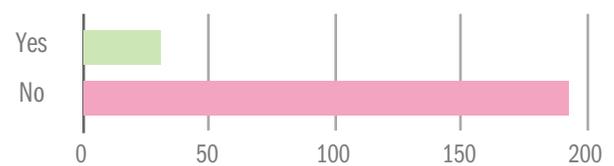


The key issues identified by participants in the plan’s public engagement process were:

- » Economic development, including availability of careers and well-paid employment opportunities
- » Investing in housing, including developing new housing units, and developing and supporting programs to help homeowners improve or maintain their home’s condition
- » Investing in education, from K-12 to college opportunities
- » Expanding and improving the city’s park and recreation system, and improving walking and biking in the city

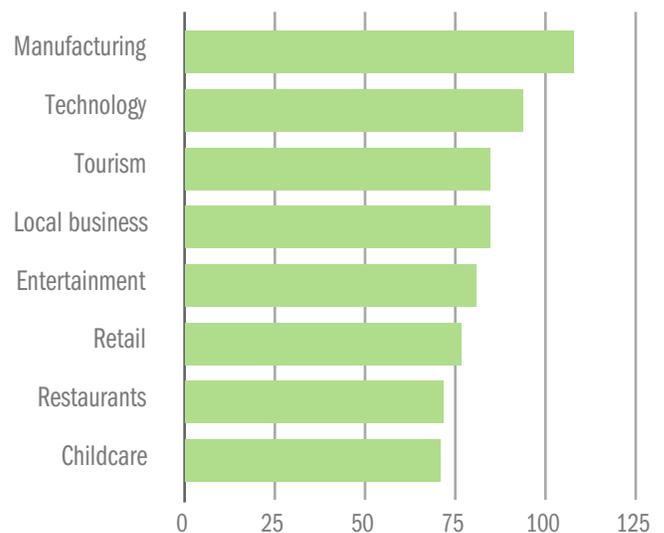
Economic development

Does International Falls offer adequate employment opportunities?



Participants expressed strong dissatisfaction with the range of employment options they could find in the city.

Top industries or businesses desired for the city (top 8)



Participants identified a variety of options for the top responses. “Any industry that offers higher-paying jobs” was the most popular answer. Availability of childcare as a contributor for parents’ opportunity to seek and maintain employment was also noted.

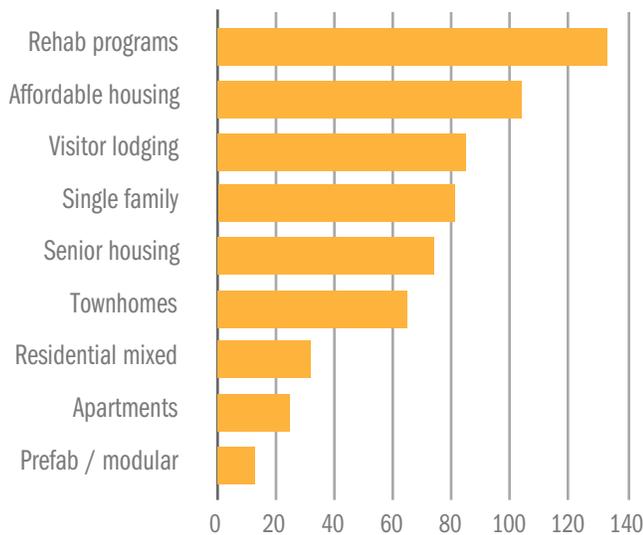
Housing

Were you able to find adequate housing the last time you moved in the city?



A significant portion of respondents (about one third) answered that they were not able to find adequate housing, indicating a need to develop additional options. A typical comment received states “major difficulties finding quality, mid-range single-family home for a working, middle-class married couple”. Similar comments were received from young adults looking for apartment housing.

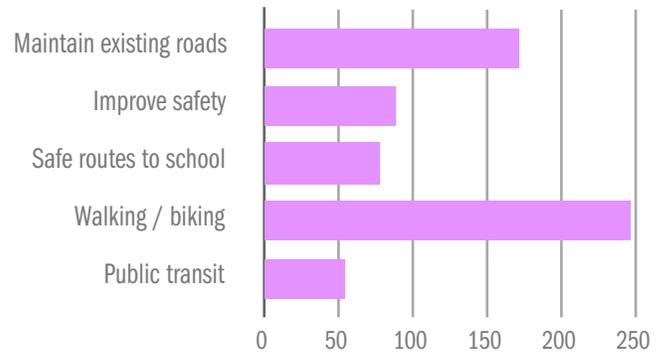
Which housing improvements are needed?



Housing rehabilitation programs to help homeowners improve or maintain their home’s condition were the top response, closely followed by requests to expand the supply of affordable housing in the city.

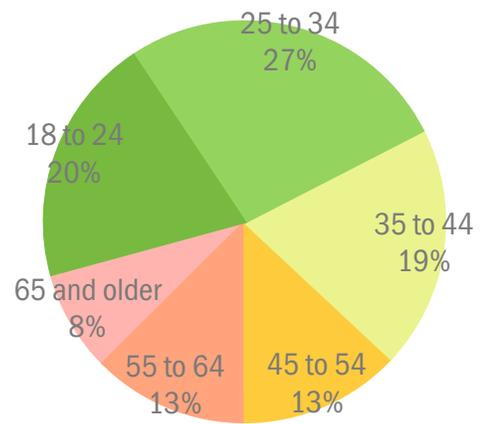
Transportation

Which should be the city’s transportation priorities? (grouped)



Participants strongly prioritized maintaining existing roads and infrastructure before constructing new facilities. Walking and biking investments, including Safe Routes to School improvements were also strongly supported by participants.

Survey participation



The survey was well-distributed and received good participation from all age ranges of city residents - and was successful in capturing comments from the young adult demographic (18 to 24, and 25 to 34) that will be a key audience for and shaper of city initiatives if the long-running population trends noted in Chapter 2 are to be improved.

Plan Elements and Recommendations

The purpose of the International Falls Comprehensive Plan is to serve as a tool to facilitate improvement in the quality of life, enjoyment, and opportunity its residents, businesses and visitors experience.

The city's comprehensive plan is based on a framework that:

- » Recognizes the city's many existing assets, and leverages them as part of the plan's foundation for future success,
- » Responds to the different conditions, contexts and opportunities that exist in specific locations within the city,
- » Listens to, considers and responds to residents' and leaders' visions and aspirations for the future, and
- » Moves toward implementation in sustainable, incremental steps that offer stable improvement and a platform for next actions.

How the plan's recommendations are organized

This chapter presents recommendations for policies, systems and actions that are within the purview of the city and partner agencies, and where the city can lead, support or convene the work needed to implement the plan's vision. The plan's recommendations address:

- » Land use and zoning
- » Housing
- » Transportation
- » Economic development
- » Parks and recreation
- » The arts
- » Environmental and cultural resources, including community and historic assets
- » Utilities
- » Civic engagement



City vitality, resident quality of life and community success are the key purpose of the plan.

The plan's vision

This is what the plan is intended to achieve over the next twenty years:

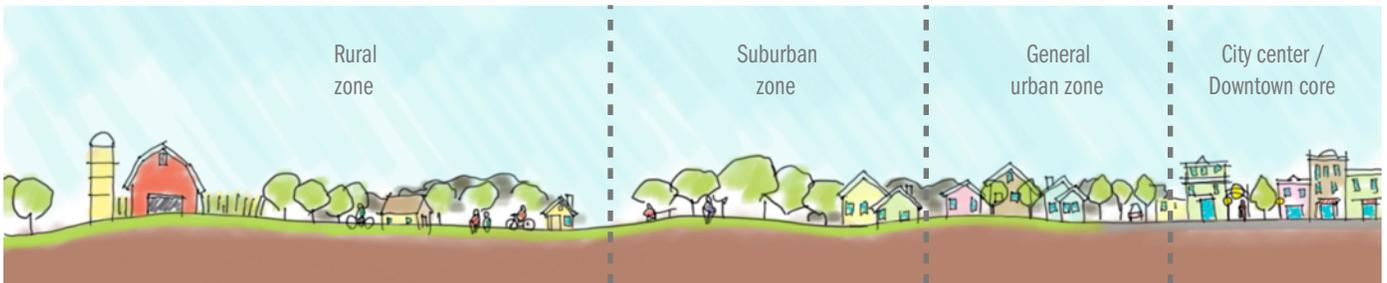
International Falls is an innovative, prosperous, and family-friendly community where all residents can access economic opportunity and stable jobs, a wide variety of housing options, safe and walkable neighborhoods, a vibrant downtown, and unparalleled natural areas and recreational spaces.

The city is a vital and attractive place, filled with opportunities for individuals and organizations - from aspiring entrepreneurs to artists to laborers and knowledge workers to multi-national corporations. It is a thriving year-round destination and renowned for the prosperity, happiness, and high quality of life that its residents enjoy.

4.1 Framework

The comprehensive plan addresses several inter-related systems. This chapter presents a brief framework for the plan’s policy recommendations.

Conditions, contexts and opportunities



The International Falls transect.

Activities and land uses vary across a city’s landscape. Structures, opportunities and assets are not uniformly distributed, and sometimes share certain characteristics depending on where they are located. For example, buildings in a city’s downtown have more in common with each other (in materials, uses and how they are sited) than with buildings in the same city’s suburban locations.

Recommendations that respond to the specific conditions and contexts of the place where they apply within a city can be more useful. A tool for describing the changes in conditions in a city is called a transect.

Each transect zone presents a similar type or intensity of land use. Because their settings and contexts are different, and the activities and roles that each zone plays in the overall function and experience of the city is different, a recommendation that may be helpful and appropriate in the downtown core may not be as helpful in suburban residential areas of the same city. Similarly, a recommendation that may be helpful when thinking about residential development in a suburban zone may not work or fit with overall plan goals if applied in the downtown.



In the International Falls downtown core.



In the urban zone.



In the International Falls suburban zone.



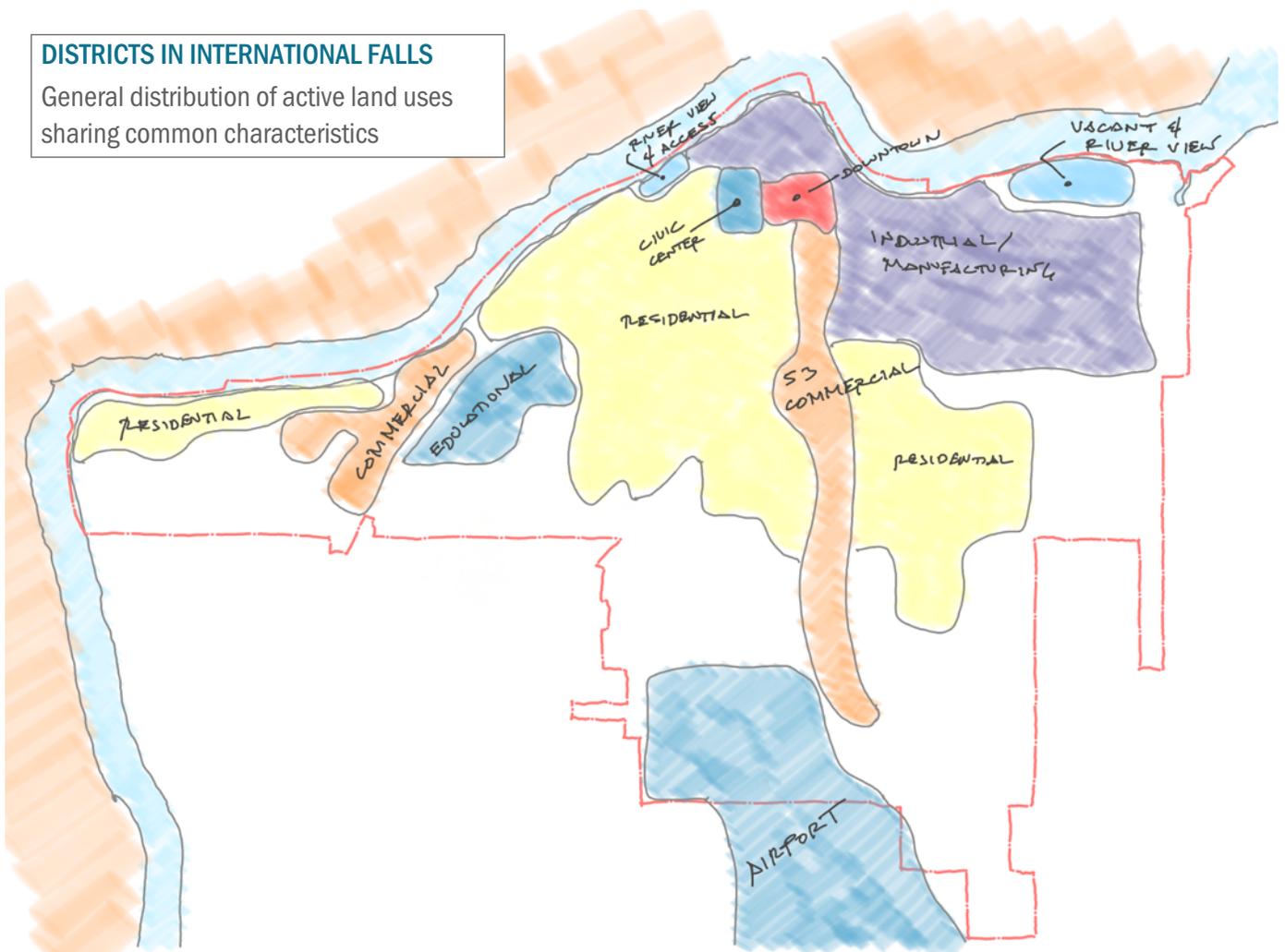
In the rural zone - mostly located outside of current city boundaries.

City districts

Another way of understanding the characteristics of a city is to look at it from a bird's eye perspective (rather than through a cross-section) to identify districts within it.

Just like with the transect, the districts themselves don't have to be exactly defined, but rather reflect some common characteristics that can help organize recommendations and thinking toward future action.

A framework of simplified districts can be helpful when thinking about next locations for development, or types of development that may be sought in specific areas of the city. This framework can also help orient more specific changes in the city's future land use and zoning regulations.



General distribution of identifiable, active land uses in the city.

Planning in the context of population decrease

Most comprehensive plans and city planning processes are premised on the steady growth of a community's population - new residents and households grow the need for new housing, expanded community facilities, intensified land use, and annexation of adjoining land. This growth, in turn, increases tax base and revenues collected, and allows the community to grow its services and improve quality of life for its residents.

The situation in International Falls is quite different. As explained in Chapter 2 ("Demographic profile") the decline in population in International Falls is not a recent phenomenon nor a statistical blip - it is an established trend that has gone on uninterrupted since 1960 (sixty years ago) and is projected to continue well beyond 2050.

First, it is important to understand that this is in fact part of much larger trends affecting the county (Koochiching County's population shows the same trajectory) and the region overall. Distance to markets and larger cities, outmigration to larger urban centers, and the shifting role of manufacturing and the natural resource industries that the region and county depend on have all affected the county's fortunes and the city's as well.

This does not mean, however, that the city is without recourse or resources, that residents have to give up on their expectations of a continually improving city, or that it lacks assets which it could leverage to improve quality of life for its residents and achieve the vision they aspire to.

Rather, it means that the city must, first of all, carefully and dispassionately absorb the meaning and potential impact of those population projections:

- » Population will continue to decrease for at least the next thirty years
- » Property tax revenues can't be expected to significantly increase over that time
- » The population decrease is due to larger trends and factors outside of the city's control or influence

Those basic facts, as difficult to contemplate as they may be, are useful as a foundation for the city's next steps because they clarify, using the best information available, what the city can realistically expect in terms of growth and revenue over the next several years.

Far from reducing the city and its residents to passive inaction, this clarity empowers each and every one of the residents of International Falls to take stock of their community's many assets and work with their fellow citizens to craft the uniquely local and responsive approaches and solutions that will help the community become what its residents have envisioned.

Leveraging assets

All communities have assets in place that provide a foundation for improvement and can help them achieve their vision.

Recognizing assets, however, can sometimes be difficult because, since they currently exist and are part of the community's everyday background, they can be easily overlooked and go unnoticed.

International Falls has numerous assets in place - many of which are recognized by its residents and visitors, but also many others which may be less noticeable because they include familiar elements in combination with other city characteristics, or with larger trends and conditions.

For example: International Falls' "small town feel," walkable downtown and health and educational institutions are familiar elements to current residents and perceptive visitors. What may be less apparent is that this specific combination is attractive to developers who are building new compact and walkable development in smaller cities throughout the country - and are, in the process, helping to revitalize local economies.

As baby boomers age, they are seeking places where they can remain active, enjoy close-knit communities, and access cultural opportunities and lifelong learning. Smaller college towns have become the ideal setting for the compact, mixed use apartments sought by seniors. This is bringing new vitality to downtown districts, improving cities' tax bases, and reinforcing the walkable, pedestrian-oriented qualities that make downtowns and nearby residential neighborhoods attractive for a wide range of households.

What are some of International Falls' community assets? Here's a brief list, compiled from comments



Small cities are attracting new development. Image: new mixed-use development in St. Joseph (pop. 6,800) near St. Cloud.

from community engagement for the plan, from the comparative economic analysis that was part of the NGKF study, and from Voyage Forward:

- » Family-friendly neighborhoods
- » Wide variety of activities and public events
- » Beauty and serenity of the natural environment
- » Many cultural and arts programs
- » Abundance of natural and wildlife resources and hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation; Voyageurs National Park
- » Active industry and manufacturing, Foreign Trade Zone and available land for commercial and industrial development
- » Access to road, air and rail transportation
- » High quality city services
- » Strong educational systems with quality opportunities from pre-school through college; Rainy River Community College
- » Businesses that provide friendly, quality service
- » Opportunities as border community and strong relationship with Fort Frances
- » Opportunities for community involvement, including Voyage Forward

4.2 Land use

Land use refers to the activities that take place on the parcels that make up a community's land area. Changing over time, land uses respond to market forces and to directions set forth in the city's land use planning policies, including its comprehensive plan, zoning regulations, and other policy documents - and also reflect larger economic, social and structural trends.

Vision and goals

Future vision

Land use policies and practices support lasting prosperity and quality of life for residents and visitors. Compact and efficient land use provides a variety of conveniently located and accessible housing options; industry and business have access to the space they need to grow and thrive; downtown is vital and prosperous; natural and open spaces are protected, and the uses of land are arranged and intermixed to support beautification, development, and the health and well-being of the community.

Goals

- » Strengthen the vitality, attractiveness and prospects of the city's downtown
- » Create the conditions to make an array of housing options and employment opportunities possible
- » Address distribution of city services and consider annexation and municipal expansion where financially sustainable
- » Encourage flexible, connected, and efficient management of growth
- » Improve the city's overall urban image, and implement the Highway 53 corridor urban design guidelines
- » Preserve and enhance general quality of life with thoughtful land use decisions



Aerial view of land uses in the city.

About this chapter

This section provides guidance for the city's future land use and development decisions so they match community vision and values, and includes a future land use map, showing uses that are anticipated to change in the future.

In some cases, future uses are different from what occurs today. The transition of these properties from their current use to the depicted use is expected to occur over time, in response to market demands, as property owners voluntarily sell, develop, or change the use of their land. Other recommendations will be implemented through planning, zoning and subdivision ordinances, public improvements, and public and private partnerships.

Existing conditions

Urban form and development patterns

Due to its pattern of development, presence of natural barriers and prominent role of industry, International Falls presents a somewhat unusual arrangement of land uses with a variety of conditions even within its relatively small size.

The papermill occupies the northernmost and most prominent location in the city - along the Rainy River, adjacent to the city's downtown and separating one from the other. The downtown, a relatively compact (but proportionate to the city's size) business district, includes a variety of handsome and recently-rehabilitated buildings as well as a number of vacant buildings and empty lots.

A civic core (which includes City Hall, the library, the County Courthouse, and Smokey Bear Park) is located just west of downtown. Several churches and the Backus Community Center are located immediately southwest of this civic core.

There are two main residential areas in the city: the first area is principally south and west of the downtown (within 3/4 of a mile from City Hall). The second area is principally south and east, begins at a distance of about 2/3 of a mile from City Hall, and extends for about another 2/3 mile - this area corresponds to what was previously the city of South International Falls (which was annexed in 1989). The two residential areas do not overlap, as they are separated by Highway 53, a major transport and commercial corridor into the city, and by an abandoned railroad line which is now used as a recreational / snowmobile trail (the Voyageur / Blue Ox Trail).

Industrial uses are predominant in the city's landscape - around one third of the city's land hosts industry and manufacturing uses. In addition to the papermill located in the northernmost area of the city, extensive railyards, lumber storage, and trucking storage and staging areas form a boundary for eastward expansion of residential or commercial



Downtown International Falls.



View north into downtown.



Residential district in South International Falls.

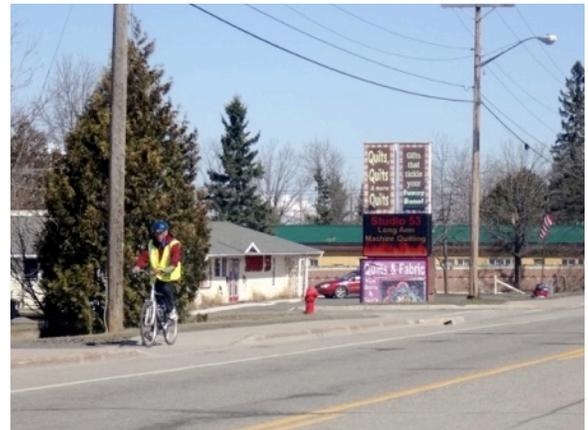
uses (especially from the downtown and the first residential area) and block access to the river.

The two main roadways in the city (Highway 53 and MN11/US71) provide the organizing structure for the city's commercial uses.

Highway 53 is the principal north-south access into the city, bringing visitors and trade to the city itself and into Canada. In addition, it connects to MN11, which runs east to provide access to Ranier and Voyageurs National Park. A variety of auto-oriented retail, including fast food, motels, gas stations, auto-parts and similar businesses line Highway 53 into the city. Arrangement of structures is oriented to automobile access (parking to the front of the lot, larger lot sizes, little architectural detail or landscaping), and structures are generally not in good condition. The land use pattern becomes somewhat more compact when closely approaching downtown's main street (Third Street).

MN11/US71 moves generally southwest from the city's downtown. Closer to downtown, it hosts some medium-large commercial and institutional uses (Backus Community Center, Stewart's Super One Foods and Cine 5) as well as some larger-lot / lower density residential uses. Continuing southwest past 11th Street, the road is lined by larger institutional and commercial uses, including the city's High School and athletic fields, Rainy Lake Medical Center, the AmericInn Hotel, and the county's wastewater treatment plant - as well as Rainy River Community College, and the "big-box" retail district that includes Kmart (scheduled to close December 2019), Menards and County Market stores. A frontage road at this location, and the large and prominent parking lots included as part of these larger uses accentuate the automobile-oriented pattern of development in this part of the city and which is only about 1.5 miles from the downtown.

Notably, the city's 1966 Comprehensive Plan (the most recent plan available) identifies the challenges (and potential growth) of areas of "considerable sprawl, or uncontrolled, scattered development ... found along major highway routes leading southward."



Approaching the city from the south on Highway 53, approximately 1.25 miles from downtown.



Traveling on Highway 53 northbound, about 2/3 mile from downtown.

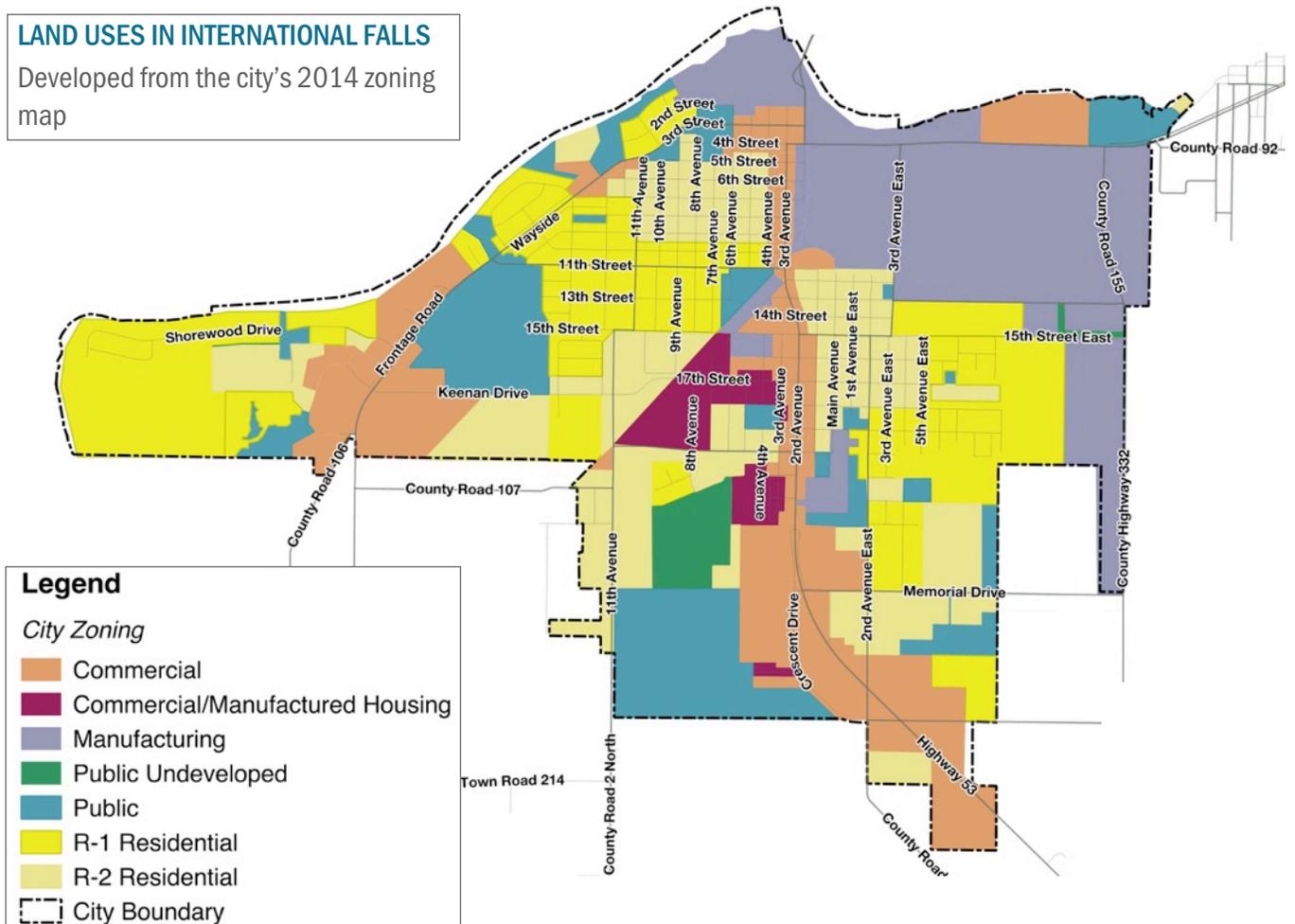


View of parking lot and stores in the city's "big-box" district along MN11/US71.

Current land uses

About a third of the city's land parcels are occupied by manufacturing/industrial uses, with commercial corridors extending through the middle of the city along Highway 53, and along the western entrance to the city on MN11/US71. Single family residential land use is found throughout the city, with areas containing both single and multi-family uses being similarly scattered. Public uses include schools, parks and the site of Rainy River Community College.

The most recent land use plan is from the city's 1966 Comprehensive Plan. The most recent zoning map, which describes the current distribution of land uses, was updated in 2014.

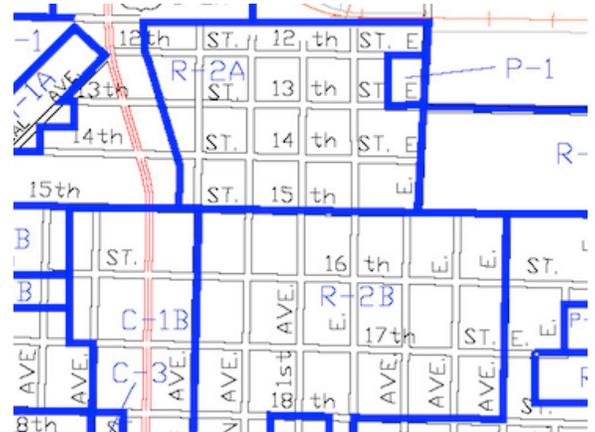


Current zoning

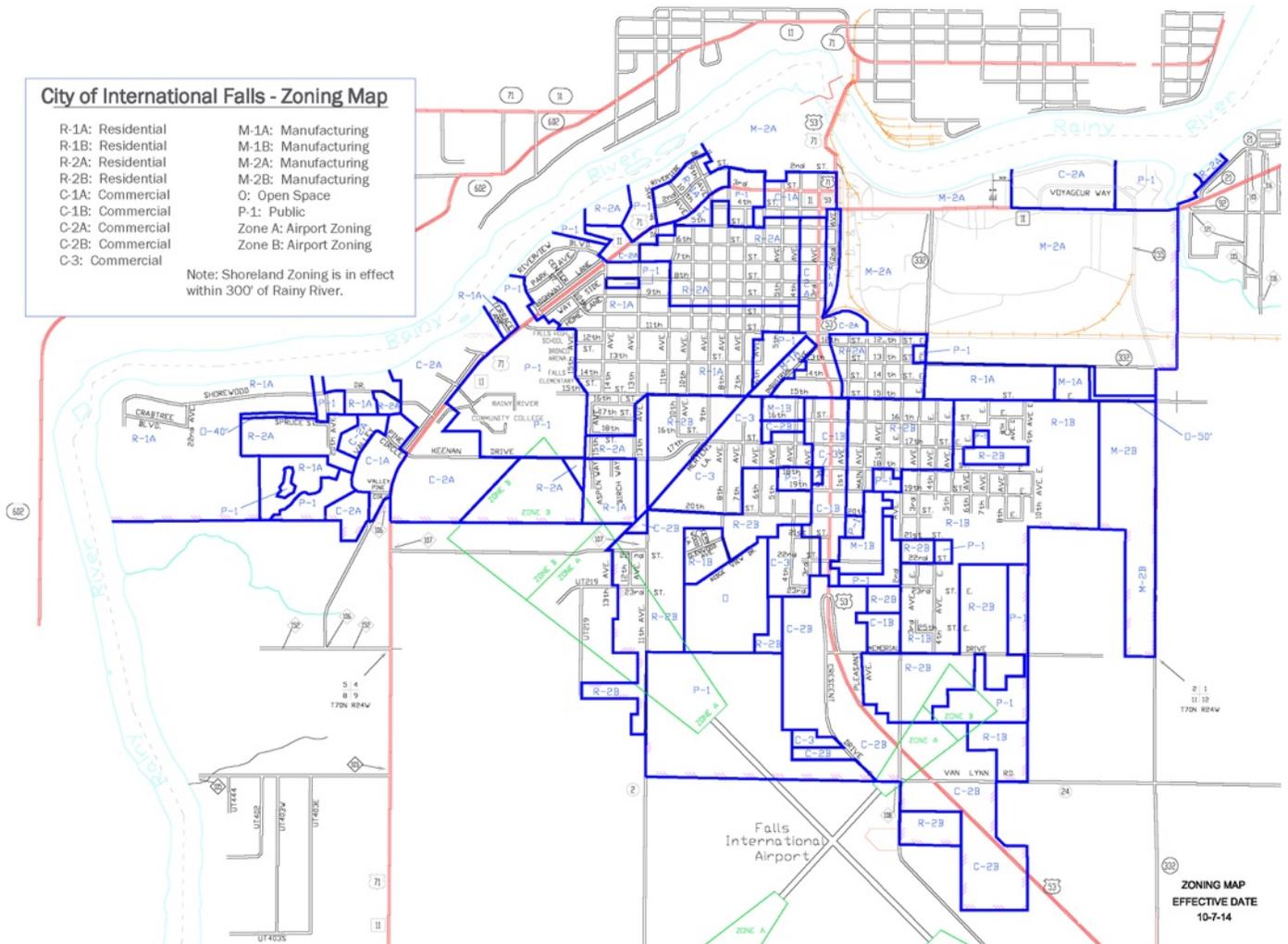
Land uses in the city closely align with the zoning districts established in the Land Use Regulations and Zoning Map of 1979 and amended as needed since then (the Zoning Map was most recently updated in 2014). The Zoning Ordinance is being updated as part of this comprehensive plan.

A and B zoning categories

The “A” and “B” zoning categories used to describe Residential, Commercial and Manufacturing uses in the Zoning Map reflect the annexation of South International Falls in 1989. All “B” zoning categories reflect South Falls zoning that was relatively equivalent to that of International Falls, denoted as “A”.



Detail from the Zoning Map showing “A” and “B” categories for a residential district in the city.



The city's 2014 Zoning Map.

Current zoning categories

Zoning District	Lot Area	General Description
R-1A	7,000 sq.ft.-1st unit; 4,000 sq. ft.-2nd unit	Single and two-family residences. Other community-oriented land uses (parks, churches, schools) permitted.
R-1B	9,000 sq.ft.-1st unit; 5,000 sq. ft.-2nd unit	Single and two-family residences. Other community-oriented land uses (parks, churches, schools) permitted.
R-2A	4,600 sq.ft.-1st unit; 2,000 sq. ft.-2nd unit; 1,500 sq. ft. each added unit	Multi-unit residences including apartments, townhomes, etc.
R-2B	6,000 sq.ft.-1st unit; 3,000 sq. ft.-2nd unit; 2,000 sq. ft. each added unit	Multi-unit residences including apartments, townhomes, etc. District intent is residential.
C-1A	No minimum	Compact shopping area for general offices and retail sales. Also allows all R-2A uses.
C-1B	No minimum	Compact shopping area for general offices and retail sales. Also allows all R-2B uses.
C-2A	No minimum	Areas intended for businesses that serve the motoring public. Also allows for all C-1 uses.
C-2B	No minimum	Areas intended for businesses that serve the motoring public. Also allows for all C-1 uses.
C-3	6,000 sq.ft.-1st unit; 3,000 sq. ft.-2nd unit; 2,000 sq. ft. each added unit	Commercial and multiple dwelling residence district suitable for the location of multiple dwelling structures as well as mobile home parks and single-family mobile homes located on private lots.
M-1A	10,000 sq.ft.	Industrial uses that do not adversely affect adjacent businesses or residences.
M-1B	10,000 sq.ft.	Industrial uses that do not adversely affect adjacent businesses or residences.
M-2A	15,000 sq. ft.	To create industrial areas to accommodate a wide variety of industry which may operate to their maximum advantage.
M-2B	15,000 sq. ft.	To create industrial areas to accommodate a wide variety of industry which may operate to their maximum advantage.
O	2.5 acres	Protects and enhances vital natural resources, maintains a buffer between incompatible land uses or restricts development in areas not yet suitable or capable of sustaining development.
P-1	No minimum	Public services, intended to promote the general health and welfare of the citizens.

Opportunity: New land use plan and zoning map and ordinance

Development of this new Comprehensive Plan offers the opportunity to update the city's land use policy documents, including the city's land use plan, its zoning map and ordinance, and its subdivision regulations so they more accurately reflect current conditions and guide future decisions toward the vision described by its citizens and leaders.

Completing these updates simultaneously, as the city is doing, provides the opportunity to coordinate goals and efficiently use all of these tools to move toward the plan's vision. This includes:

Assessment of existing land uses

The city's land use map identifies the present location and distribution of the residential, commercial and public activities (the "land uses") that take place within its boundaries.

Determination of future land uses

The Future Land Use Plan makes recommendations for how the type and location of land uses should change over the next twenty years to respond to and make possible the vision the community has set out for itself.

In some cases, future land uses on a parcel are different from what occurs today. The transition on these parcels from their current use to their desired future use is expected to occur over time, in response to market demands, as property owners voluntarily sell, develop, or change the use of their land. Other recommendations will be implemented through planning, zoning and subdivision ordinances, public improvements, and public and private partnerships.

Land use vs. zoning

- » **Land Use** identifies the preferred end result of development and redevelopment over the next 20 years. The Future Land Use Map shows the long-range desired future for the City. Land Use is *policy* and *aspirational*.
- » **Zoning** identifies the permitted, conditional, interim and prohibited uses and regulation for development and redevelopment for each geographic area in the City. The zoning map shows what are permitted uses and designated districts for developers and landowners. Zoning is *Regulation* and *Law*.

The new land use plan also provides an opportunity for optimizing land use categories so they reflect the types of uses desired and the existence of districts or other focus locations in the city. For International Falls, this is also an opportunity to harmonize land use categories from previous consolidations or annexations.

Zoning ordinance

The zoning ordinance is the city's legal instrument for regulating and enforcing land uses within the city, and for establishing specific districts or focus areas.

The zoning ordinance defines how property in specific areas of the city can be used - for example, where housing or industry can be located, and for establishing development characteristics like lot size, and the siting and height of structures.

The zoning ordinance is informed by the future land use plan and is a key tool for its implementation.

Zoning map

The zoning map is developed from the zoning ordinance and shows the location of permitted uses and designated districts.

Updated land use categories

These are the updated land use categories in the new Land Use Plan and the city's new Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map:

Zoning District	Name / Type	Purpose / Description
R-1	Large-lot Residential	To provide suitable areas within the community for the location of large-lot residential dwellings of single- and two-family occupancy.
R-2	Residential	To provide suitable areas within the community for residential dwellings of single- and two-family occupancy.
R-3	Multi-family Residential	To provide a multiple-dwelling residential district suitable for the location of apartment buildings, townhouses, condominiums, and other rooming or residential structures.
R-R	Rural Residential	To allow for relatively large lot single-family residential areas, which have been or will be developed without municipal sanitary sewer and water services and that permit some form of hobby farms or agricultural uses.
R-M	Manufactured Home Park	To allow manufactured or mobile home communities in appropriate areas of the City.
C-1	Downtown	To recognize the existing Downtown area of the City and to stabilize, maintain, and enhance the unique commercial character of downtown, which is characterized by small lot sizes with no setbacks and historic buildings, and contains small business, retail and restaurant oriented uses.
C-2	Highway 53 Commercial	To focus improvement on the Highway 53 corridor establishing suitable areas within the City for the location and/or expansion of businesses providing highway-oriented retail goods and services.
C-3	General Commercial	To provide for a variety of commercial uses, including more intensive uses not permitted in the Downtown Business District. This district is intended to permit a wide variety of commercial uses designed to cater to the needs of the entire community and surrounding areas.
LI	Light Industrial	To create industrial areas that are acceptable to the City and that do not adversely affect adjacent business or residences. Uses will not create any offensive noise, dust, heat, smoke, odor, or other objectionable influences to adjacent property owners. In the interest of general health, residential uses are not permitted.
IN	General Industrial	To create industrial areas to accommodate a wide variety of industry which may operate to their maximum advantage.
P-1	Public / Semi-public	To provide land areas within the City for the establishment of public services, utilities, city, federal, state, school district and religious uses that are necessary for the health and welfare of the citizens.

Future land uses / proposed zoning map

The future land use map organizes the plan’s land use recommendations - including location of housing, industry and commerce - within the city’s extent.

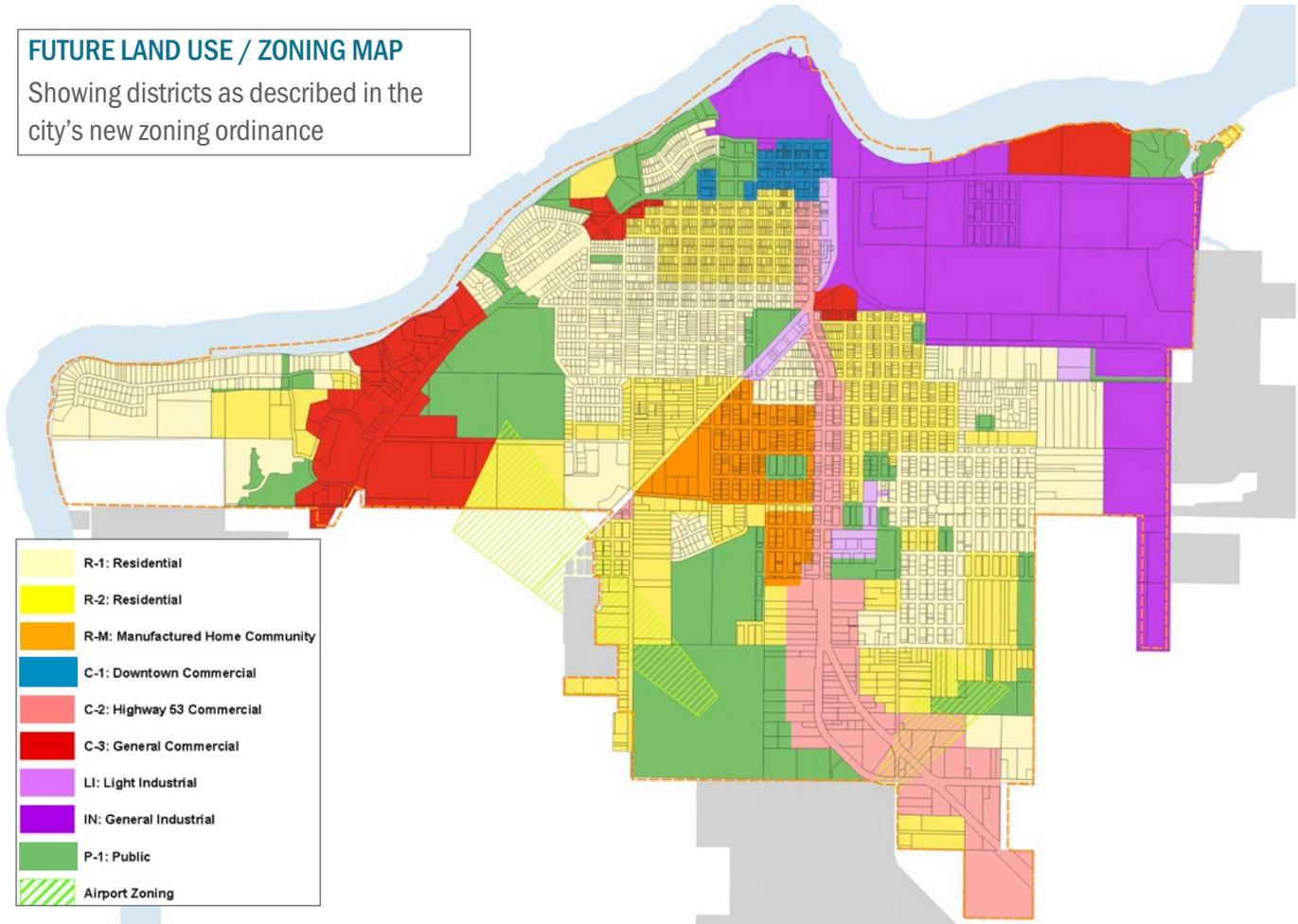
The future land use map is the foundation for the city’s zoning map. As both maps are being prepared at the same time, their recommendations, in terms of distribution and location of land uses, are identical. The new Zoning Ordinance provides additional details about the characteristics of each of the uses depicted on the map, including allowed, prohibited and conditional activities for the land uses shown.

Please consult this plan’s Appendix to review the Zoning Ordinance.

Implementation of future land uses

The map on this page summarizes the guidance offered by this comprehensive plan for the city’s future land uses and development.

In some cases, future uses are different from what occurs today. The transition of these properties from their current use to the depicted use is expected to occur over time, in response to market demands, as property owners voluntarily sell, develop, or change the use of their land. Other recommendations will be implemented through planning, zoning and subdivision ordinances, public improvements, and public and private partnerships.



Opportunity: Annexation of adjacent lands and parcels

The city is exploring annexation of land parcels to the south and east of International Falls. Annexation would allow the city to grow its taxable land, but it would also increase the city's maintenance and service obligations.

The city currently owns several land parcels immediately outside its boundaries, including portions of the airport, and has been working to annex them. The plan recommends completing a financial cost-benefit analysis on the implications of the annexation and proceeding to annex these lands if warranted. Recommended timeline for completion of this process is within the next two years (by July 2021).

In addition, there are several locations along MN11 between the city boundary and MN332 (the "Papermaker" neighborhood) where city water has already been provided. The plan recommends completing a financial cost-benefit analysis on the implications of annexation of these lands and then proceeding to annex them if warranted. Recommended timeline for completion of this process is within the next six years (by July 2025).

City leaders have also expressed an interest in completing annexation of other lands generally north and east of MN332 to the Rainy River. Many parcels in this area are already served by city services and have agreed to proceed with annexation. Many of these lands currently host agricultural uses. The plan recommends completing a cost-benefit analysis on the implications of annexation of these lands and then proceeding to annex them if warranted. Recommended timeline for completion of this process is within the next ten years (by July 2029).

Provision of services outside city limits

In some cases, the city has extended water and/or sanitary sewer service to parcels outside of its current jurisdictional boundaries. In these cases, the city has increased its maintenance and service obligations without increasing its tax base. To maintain a stable and sustainable ratio of obligations to income, this plan strongly recommends against provision of city services to locations outside its boundaries (unless these are contracted for and sold for a price that allows the city to recover its costs, including capital costs).

In general, the plan proposes this process for responding to requests for providing city services outside of current city boundaries:

- 1) Complete a cost-benefit analysis on the implications of the annexation of the parcels where services are sought
- 2) Annex the parcels if the cost-benefit analysis shows it to be beneficial to the city
- 3) Once the parcels are annexed, provide full city services

In specific cases, providing city services may be warranted if:

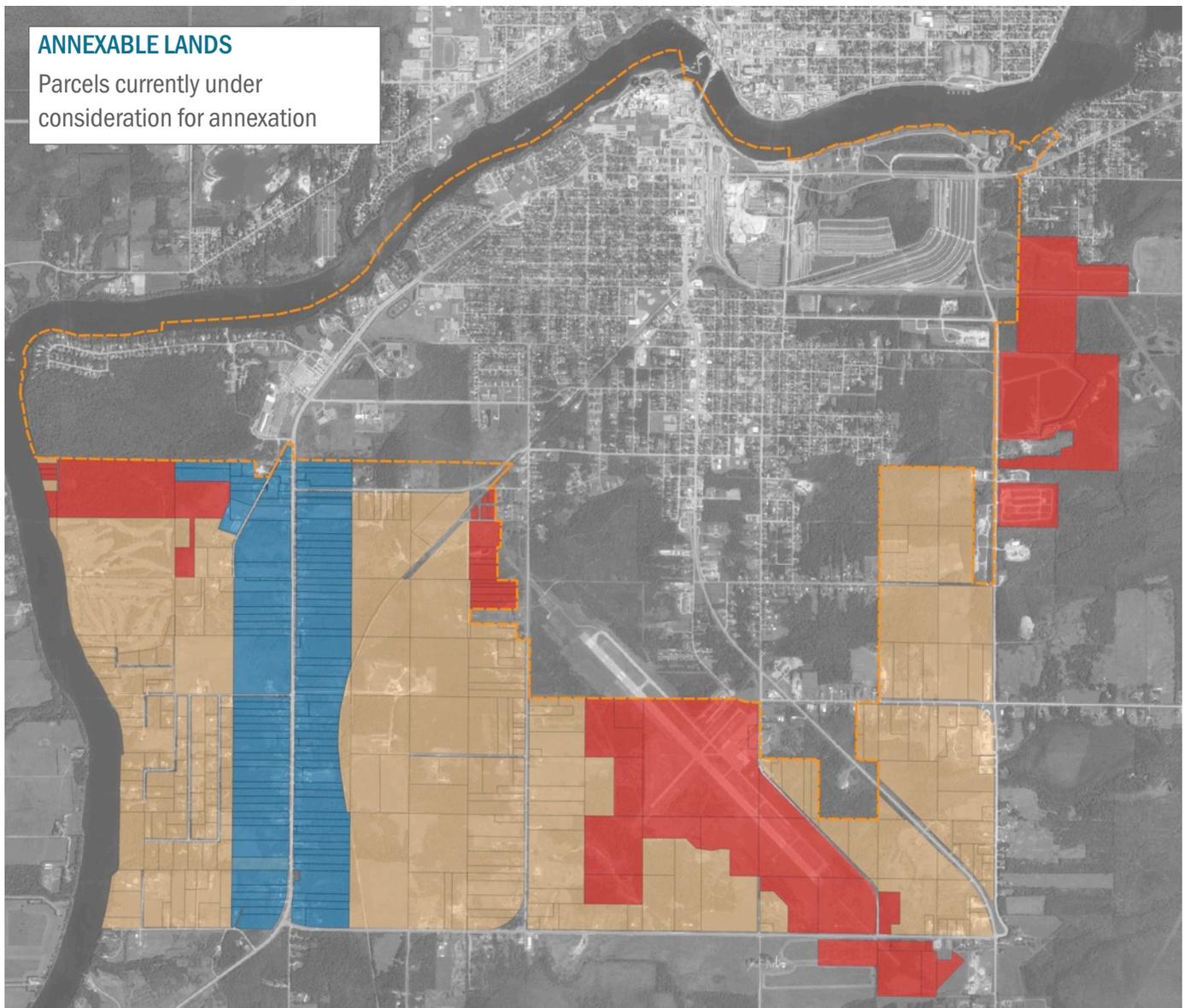
- 1) A detailed analysis on the cost of providing the services is performed
- 2) An agreement for providing those services to the other party at a cost that allows the city to recover all its expenses, including applicable capital costs, is accepted by both parties

The plan recommends the city develop and enforce a strict policy requiring the annexation of parcels to be served by city water or sewer services before the infrastructure to provide those services is developed.

Potentially annexable lands and parcels

These are the areas under potential consideration. They include:

- » **Group 1 (shown in red):** The majority of these are lands currently owned by the city. They total 952 acres, equivalent to approximately 25% of the city's current land area. An annexation process has been ongoing for several years. Timeline for potential annexation: July 2021.
- » **Group 2 (shown in blue):** These lands are currently outside the city, but most have city water services. The city does not collect property tax on these lands. Timeline for potential annexation: July 2025.
- » **Group 3 (shown in light orange):** Many parcels have access to city water and sewer services. The city does not collect property tax on these lands. A significant portion of land uses are agricultural. Timeline for potential annexation: July 2029.



Recommendations for the annexation process

- » Develop process to annex parcels which are currently served by city services but are located outside of the city's limits.
- » Develop cost-benefit analysis for any potential annexation that weighs the long-term obligations to be incurred (including maintenance of infrastructure for streets, water and other provided services) vs. potential tax revenue gains.
- » Develop a strict policy requiring the annexation of parcels to be served by city-provided services *before* the infrastructure to provide those services is provided.
- » Consider the impact of expanding the city's geographic boundary vs. efforts to concentrate economic activity, development and vitality in the city's core areas.
- » Consider long-term prospects for servicing an expanding geographic area in view of population projections that anticipate a continuing decrease in the city's population.

Strengthening coordination with the county

City leaders have noted that there are opportunities for better coordination with the county regarding limiting residential development in areas outside the city. Closely working with the county to adopt a unified stance will help reduce potential future requests for provision of services outside the current service area, and will help protect the area's agricultural and natural assets.

Other potential annexation or merger opportunities

In the past, city leaders have considered working with Rainier to explore a process for potentially merging the two cities. This plan recommends more formally exploring that possibility, including developing a detailed economic analysis that outlines potential costs and benefits for each city and their residents, and considering short, medium and long-term gains and costs associated with that possibility.

Opportunity: Re-valuing the center

A city's downtown (which is often also called its "center") is one of a community's key assets. It's a foundational piece for a city's identity and a repository of its architectural legacy, of the development of its business community, and of its history since the time of its settlement.

An active, attractive, healthy and vital downtown has a powerful impact on a community - from the pride and connection its residents feel, to the convenience it affords to those looking for goods and services, to the opportunities it offers aspiring entrepreneurs, to the pull it exerts on travelers and tourists visiting a city for the first time.

International Falls' downtown has many unique assets and well-preserved buildings and is conveniently located but suffers from relatively low visitation and vitality.

Though there are some notable draws and successes in downtown there are also many opportunities for leveraging downtown's assets, reactivating local business development, attracting visitors and helping downtown reclaim its rightful place as an active, attractive and vital destination in the region.

Downtown's assets

Some of downtown's current assets include:

- » Walkable and historic grid development pattern
- » Connection with and proximity to city's civic core, Smokey Bear Park, and County Courthouse and offices
- » Existing cafes, restaurant-bars, professional offices and services
- » Decorative sidewalks, planters and street trees
- » Convenient supply of parking



The city's downtown holds a rich and varied architectural legacy - but it also has many vacant spaces and lacks activity.

Current issues

- » Low levels of pedestrian activity, commercial activity, and general feeling of vitality
- » Lack of "draw" or anchor stores bringing people into downtown with regularity - like a grocery or hardware store
- » Empty / underutilized storefronts
- » Some buildings in need of rehabilitation
- » Several large off-street surface parking lots working against walkability and visual interest

Opportunities

Leveraging downtown's existing assets can help reactivate it and position it as an economic driver for the city's future success. Some actions may include:

- » Focus on a "placemaking" strategy for bringing people, activity and interest back downtown
- » Application for registration as a Historic District
- » Participation in the National Main Street program
- » Development of a downtown master plan
- » Development of urban design standards for downtown as well as other commercial districts
- » Intentional steering and encouragement of development and business toward the downtown

Opportunity: Rehabilitation of Highway 53

The Highway 53 corridor is the main entryway into the city. Functional and maintenance concerns have prompted MnDOT to develop a rehabilitation project for the corridor. This \$13 million project is currently in the concept finalization phase and is expected to begin construction in 2020.

The roadway and streetscape investments included in the project offer a great opportunity to support improvements in land use and economic development along the corridor.

Parcels along the corridor have great visibility and traffic access for business or other commercial use. Coordination of setbacks and landscape types can improve the corridor's inconsistent aesthetics. Mixed-use development with residential and commercial uses can be established closer to downtown, focusing and densifying growth.

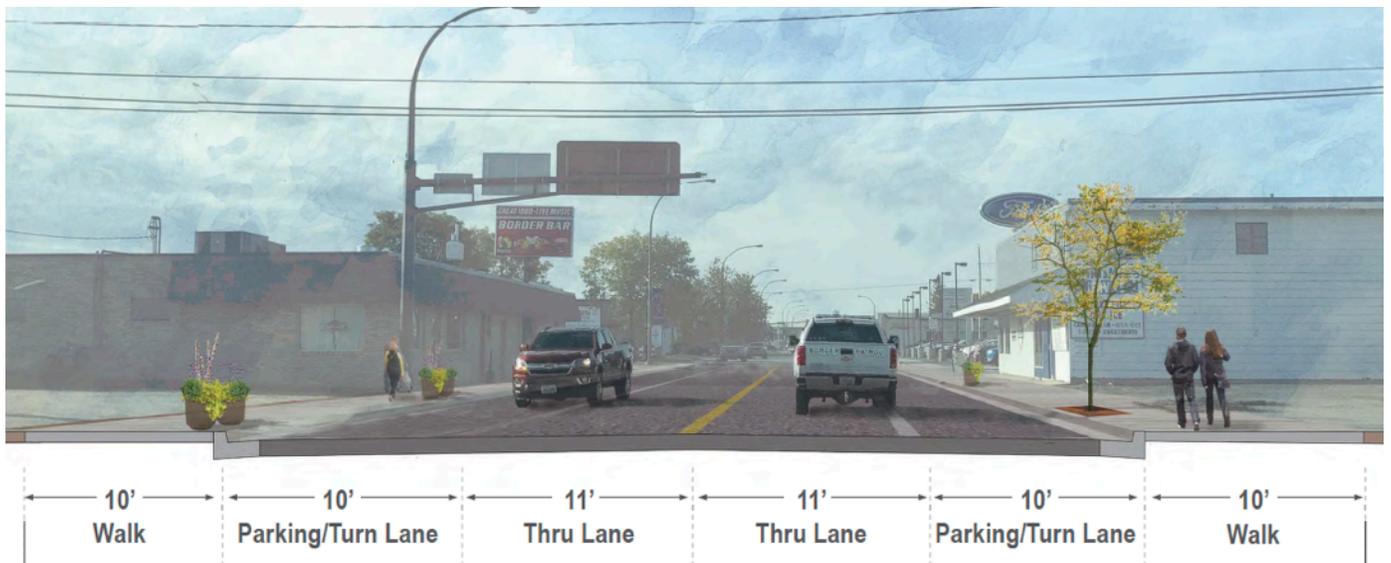
The city's new zoning ordinance includes a new "Highway 53 Corridor" district to support the location and/or expansion of businesses providing retail goods and services. This zoning district, in addition to focused overlay districts or incentive zones could also be used to encourage intensification of land use and improvement of the corridor's image and function.



Mid-rise mixed-use development, includes apartments over a supermarket, Minneapolis.

What we heard: from the plan's engagement

"One of my biggest pet peeves is ... 53 coming into town ... the entrance to our town is not appealing at all!"



View of the proposed reconstruction near the city's downtown. Expanded sidewalks and plantings would be provided. Image courtesy of MnDOT.

Opportunity: Redevelopment sites and new Federal Opportunity Zone

The Koochiching Economic Development Authority (KEDA) and the city have identified several potential redevelopment sites in and near area of the city. These sites are zoned primarily for commercial or industrial uses. Five of the sites are publicly-owned while the remaining eight are privately-owned.

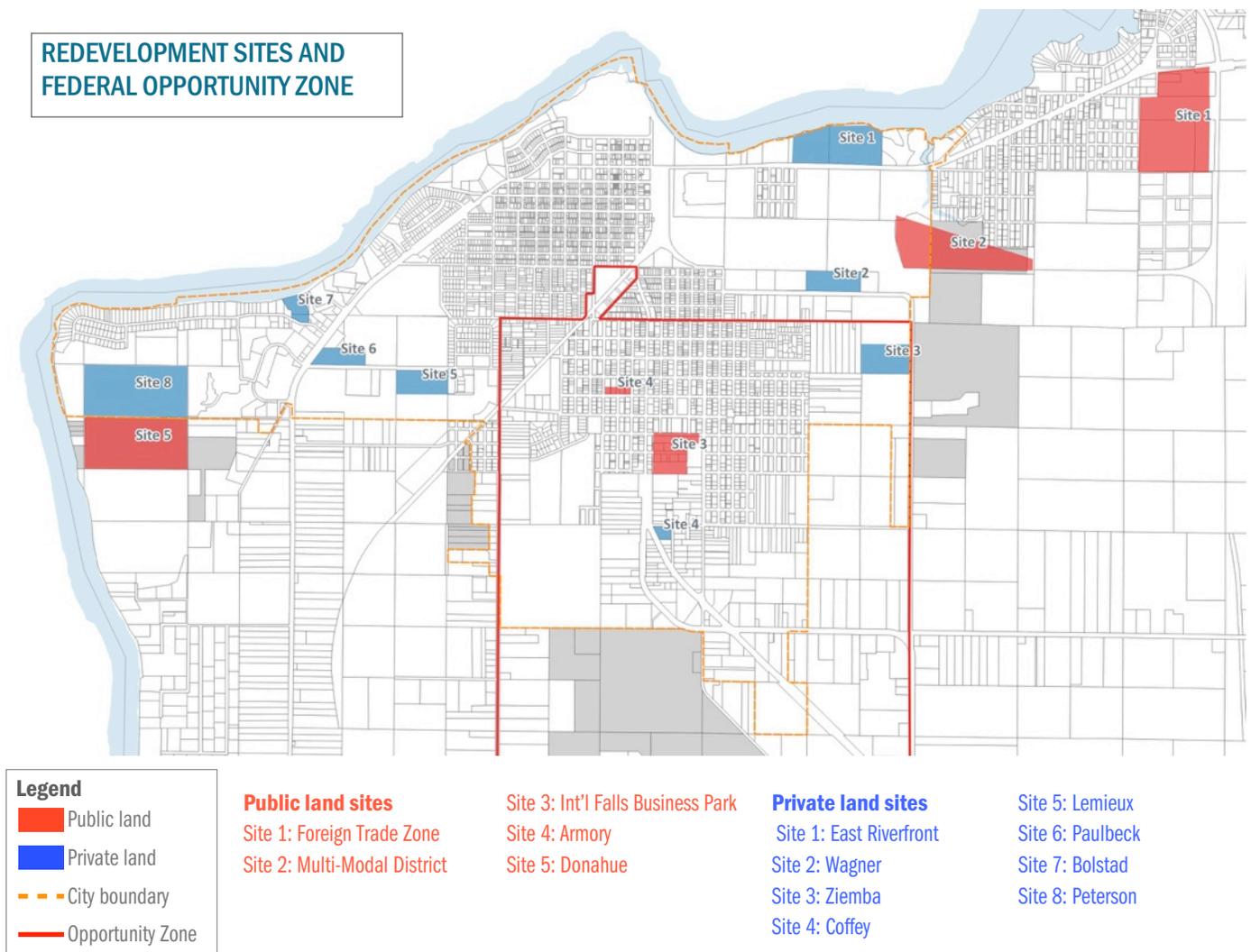
In addition a new **Federal Opportunity Zone** has been designated for the city.

There may be cases where the zoning classification for individual sites or for locations within the city may need to be modified to make them consistent with

city goals and increase their attractiveness to potential investors.

Several of the sites include lands which are currently outside of the city’s boundaries. As discussed elsewhere in this chapter, annexation of those parcels should occur *before* provision of services to those locations.

A detailed description of the redevelopment sites and the Opportunity Zone is provided under the Economic Development chapter of this plan.



Opportunity: Addressing winter through urban design and planning

Winter is a big part of International Falls's identity, and is a long part of the year in the Minnesota / Ontario borderland.

Cold temperatures and early nightfall can sometimes feel like difficult barriers to overcome when working to increase public life, community vitality and feeling of year-round quality of life - which are important for attracting new residents and businesses to a community.

Planning and design can play an important role in orienting development, design and programming priorities so public life can continue and even grow through the winter.

An example from Canada: the Edmonton Winter Design Guidelines

The City of Edmonton, in Alberta, Canada, has recently developed a Winter Design Guide that aims to guide planning, development and maintenance practices in that city. As Edmonton's winter climate is similar to that of International Falls, many of those recommendations may be applicable to the city's planning and development practices.

According to the guide, the five main principles of planning and design for winter cities are:

- » Incorporate design strategies to block wind, particularly prevailing winds and downdrafts
- » Maximize exposure to sunshine through orientation and design
- » Use color to enliven the winter landscape
- » Create visual interest with strategic use of creative lighting
- » Design and provide infrastructure that supports desired winter life and improves comfort and access in cold weather

The guide is available for download at www.edmonton.ca/city_government/documents/PDF/WinterCityDesignGuidelines_draft.pdf



Smooth races as part of Icebox Days in downtown.
Image: International Falls Chamber of Commerce.



Active uses and spaces attract people year-round.
Image: Edmonton Winter Design Guidelines.



Walkability and compactness are useful qualities for vitality. Image: Edmonton Winter Design Guidelines.

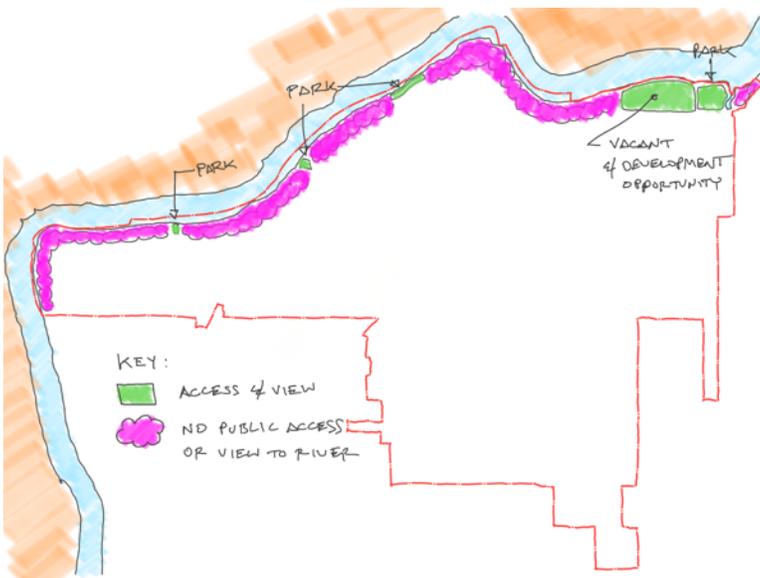
Opportunity: Reconsidering the river

One of the city's best assets is its proximity to the beautiful Rainy River. Yet the river is relatively difficult to view or access within the city limits.

About one third of river-fronting land in the city is dedicated to industrial uses and is not accessible to residents or tourists traveling through the city, especially near the downtown. About another third of river frontage is part of single-family residential land and is similarly inaccessible. Of the remaining third, about one half is part of large scale commercial or institutional uses and also inaccessible.



The Rainy River, seen from Riverside Drive. Image courtesy of Eric and Noelle at Blogspot.com.



Current conditions: most of the city's riverfront is not accessible for views or public access from the city.

As uses along the riverfront change over time, it will be important to consider the need for and benefit of expanding public access to the river - either through new recreational opportunities like walking paths and trails, or through opportunities for development that leverage the city's spectacular setting to attract tourism, boost business and expand economic opportunity.

Most importantly, connecting to the river will provide social and environmental benefits that will accrue to all residents and increase the city's attractiveness and quality of life.

What we heard: from the plan's engagement

"I'd remove all the trailers from the riverside on 11/53 and turn it into a walking /biking park ... Ft. Frances has a gorgeous river bank, with docks and benches ... [we have] semi-trailers ..."



Along the Fort Frances riverfront trail, La Verendrye Parkway.

Opportunity: Land Port of Entry

The US General Services Administration (GSA) is planning to reconfigure the current US Customs and Border Protection facility at the US-Canada border. The current facility, built in 1993, will be replaced with a new and expanded facility to accommodate increased cross-border traffic, additional staffing and services, and new technologies.

Though the project presents an opportunity for the city to benefit from increased cross-border traffic and improved cross border connectivity for businesses and visitors, the proposed configuration would impact operations for Packaging Corporation of

America and the Minnesota, Dakota, and Western Railway, while also permanently restricting access to the Rainy River at this location.

Construction was originally planned to start in 2021, but in summer 2019 GSA advised the city that plans were being put on hold.

This plan recommends the city's continued engagement in the update process for the feasibility study, and exploration for opportunity for expanding walking / biking and recreational access to the Rainy River at this location.



Configuration of the new Land Port of Entry facility as depicted in the 2011 Final Environmental Impact Statement. As of summer 2019, construction plans have been put on hold.

Recommendations

Goal 1: Strengthen the vitality, attractiveness and prospects of the city's downtown

- » **Strategy 1.1:** Placemaking and activation
 - Develop a “placemaking” strategy, including inexpensive programming and “tactical urbanism” measures for bringing people, activity and interest back downtown
- » **Strategy 1.2:** Leverage downtown's assets
 - Apply for registration as a Historic District (please see <https://savingplaces.org/stories/10-steps-to-establish-a-local-historic-district> and <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm>)
 - Join and participate in the Minnesota and National Main Street programs
- » **Strategy 1.3:** Downtown planning and design
 - Develop a Downtown Master Plan
 - Develop urban design standards for downtown (as well as other city districts)
- » **Strategy 1.4:** Refocus development toward downtown
 - When development and business opportunities arise, work with proposers to consider downtown as first location
 - Work with KEDA / Economic Development Partnership / Chamber of Commerce to actively market downtown spaces and locations
 - Develop a downtown business incentive plan to encourage businesses to locate within downtown instead of outer locations
- » **Strategy 1.5:** Streetscape and walkability
 - Continue to invest in maintenance and upkeep of lighting, paving, seating, landscaping, and plantings

- » **Strategy 1.6:** Activate housing in the district
 - Work with building owners to support rehabilitation of living spaces above storefronts

Goal 2: Facilitate industrial and commercial development to grow employment opportunities

- » **Strategy 2.1:** Market the city's unique development opportunities and advantages
 - Publicize and disseminate information about the identified redevelopment sites
 - Highlight redevelopment sites within the newly designated Opportunity Zone in the city
- » **Strategy 2.2:** Maintain flexibility to expand industrial and manufacturing opportunities and attract development and investment while protecting quality of life
 - Work creatively with developers to respond to their needs regarding land uses while keeping in mind the purpose of investment is to support increases in quality of life for the city's residents
 - Provide ease and flexibility for potential industrial and manufacturing companies to occupy appropriate areas of the city
 - Land uses should remain compatible with adjoining residential and local land uses
- » **Strategy 2.3:** Strategic commercial development
 - Promote commercial development that serves regional, cross-border, and local markets
 - Provide opportunities for diverse commercial land uses that support the needs of residents and tourists
 - Leverage cross-border partnerships to achieve superior commercial services

Goal 3: Consider annexation and municipal expansion where financially sustainable

Work to maintain a well-planned and fiscally sound community by carefully considering annexations that are consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan

- » **Strategy 3.1:** Annexation of already-served parcels
 - Develop and follow a process to annex parcels which are currently served by city services but are located outside of the city's limits
- » **Strategy 3.2:** Process for potential annexations
 - Develop a cost-benefit analysis for any potential annexation that weighs the long-term obligations to be incurred (including maintenance of infrastructure for streets, water and other provided services) vs. potential tax revenue gains
 - Develop a strict policy requiring the annexation of parcels to be served by city-provided services *before* the infrastructure to provide those services is provided
 - Consider the impact of expanding the city's geographic boundary vs. efforts to concentrate economic activity, development and vitality in the city's core areas, including downtown
 - Consider long-term prospects for servicing an expanding geographic area in view of population projections that anticipate a continuing decrease in the city's population

Goal 4: Encourage flexible, connected, and efficient management of growth

- » **Strategy 4.1:** Smart Growth principles
 - Follow Smart Growth principles (<https://smartgrowth.org/smart-growth-principles/>) when considering the city's growth or intensification of land uses

Goal 5: Encourage development of housing and increase the livability of residential districts

Enhance residential livability by encouraging mixed-use development, expanding the variety of housing types, and supporting neighborhood identity initiatives

- » **Strategy 5.1:** When residential development proposals are received ensure that:
 - They respond to the goals and needs noted in the Comprehensive Plan and the 2019 Housing Study
 - They consider a variety of housing types, including elder facilities, workforce housing options, multi-family, townhome and accessory housing options while retaining distinct neighborhood character
- » **Strategy 5.2:** Invite housing development
 - Connect with non-profit and for-profit housing developers to invite their consideration of the city as a market for their services
- » **Strategy 5.3:** Enforcement of city ordinances
 - Maintain livability of residential districts by communicating and enforcing city ordinances
- » **Strategy 5.4:** Neighborhood identity
 - Identify, designate and name distinct neighborhoods within the City to provide a sense of localized community identity, recognize distinct architectural identities, and promote residents' sense of place within their neighborhood
 - Develop a role for neighborhood organizations to contribute to programming or engagement efforts and inform city policies or actions
 - Identify and provide initial funding to support neighborhood organizations
 - Improve neighborhood amenities to improve neighborhood quality of life

4.3 Housing

More than simply shelter, homes, whether rented or owned, are the places where individuals and families rest, regroup, grow and connect - and where the bonds that build communities spring from.

Housing is a key building block of household and community economic development, work force policy, wellbeing, and quality of life. Housing is one of the principal uses of a city's land area, is an important consumer of city services, and a key source of local tax capacity.

Access to quality housing shapes a person's and a family's quality of life. For a community, the availability of a range of housing options in attractive neighborhoods is a key consideration for young people's decisions to stay in town, for new residents to consider moving into that community, and for businesses seeking to relocate or grow.



International Falls has many attractive homes and neighborhoods.

Vision and goals

Future vision

International Falls offers a variety of attractive, safe and affordable housing options for individuals and families. All residents can find and afford the housing they need through the different stages of their lives.

Goals

- » Ensure all International Falls housing meets or exceeds standards established in City ordinances
- » Strive for a variety of housing types and styles
- » Ensure a wide array of quality workforce housing options for current and future community members

Koochiching County Housing Study (KCHS, 2019)

KEDA commissioned a study of the housing needs and conditions for the county overall and for the individual cities in the county, including International Falls.

The study was completed by Community Partners Research, Inc. and includes detailed analysis and recommendations for the city's current and future housing.

Information from the report is extensively referenced in this section of the plan. The report is included as Appendix 4.

Existing conditions

To understand the housing situation in a community - including how it matches with current needs and what is needed for the future - it's important to know data and trends about the housing stock itself (the number and type of units, its condition and price) and about the population that relies on that housing for its residential needs.

In this section information about the International Falls housing stock is presented along with demographic data and projections that supplement the information found in Chapter 2 (“Demographic Profile”) in this plan.

Total number of housing units

There are 3,085 units of housing in International Falls. This is about 40% of all of the housing units in the entire county (7,903 units total).

Housing occupancy

Type	Number	Percent of total
Occupied	2,660	86%
Vacant	425	14%
TOTAL UNITS	3,085	100%

Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2017 5-year estimates

About 86% of the 3,085 existing housing units (ownership and rental) are occupied. This is about 20% higher than the rate in the county. The vacancy rate is about half of the county rate.

Occupancy type for occupied housing units

Type	Number	Percent of total
Owner occupied	1,840	69%
Renter occupied	820	31%
TOTAL UNITS	2,660	100%

Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2017 5-year estimates

Of the 2,660 occupied housing units, about 70% are occupied by owners (about 9/10 of the county rate, and similar to the state rate) and 30% by renters (about 1.5 times higher than the county rate).

Vacancy rate by year and housing type

“Decent and affordable apartments at my age (21) are hard to find with my wage. Every apartment I looked at that I could afford was very run down ... very old with utilities that don't work well or at all.”
~ Participant in the plan's engagement

Type	2012	2017
Vacancy rate for owner-occupied units	3%	9%
Vacancy rate for renter-occupied units	2%	0%

Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2017 5-year estimates

Over the last five years, the vacancy rate for rental housing has decreased to zero (this is according ACS 2017 data, which has a margin of error of +/- 2%).

Industry standards indicate that a healthy rental housing vacancy rate (meaning there is enough availability so people have choices in where they live, but not so much availability that landlords have trouble finding tenants) is 5 to 7 percent. Even given

the margin of error of the current estimate, the vacancy rate is below an advisably healthy rate.

Over the same five years, the vacancy rate for owner-occupied units has increased to 9 percent.

Pricing and affordability of housing

For rental housing

Monthly rent as percent of household income	Number of households	Percent of total
< 15%	65	9%
15% to 20%	26	3%
20% to 25%	60	8%
25% to 30%	98	13%
30% to 35%	127	17%
> 35%	371	50%
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	747	100%

Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2017 5-year estimates

Two thirds (67%) of all city households living in rental housing spend more than 30% of their monthly income on rental costs and are thus considered to be cost-burdened.

Households whose housing costs exceed this 30% threshold of affordability are likely to struggle to pay for other basic needs, forcing difficult trade-offs - including dropping health care coverage, doing without child care, or skipping meals to save on costs - which may result in negative outcomes in their wellbeing.

The 2017 median monthly rent in the city was \$574.

For ownership housing

Of the city's 1,840 owner-occupied units, approximately 55% (1,018 units) have a mortgage, while the remaining 45% (822 units) are paid for and no longer have a monthly mortgage payment.

For the owner-occupied units which still have a mortgage payment, monthly mortgage costs as a percentage of household income are:

Monthly mortgage as percent of household income	Number of households	Percent of total
< 20%	592	58%
20% to 25%	151	15%
25% to 30%	90	9%
30% to 35%	31	3%
> 35%	154	15%
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	1,018	100%

Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2017 5-year estimates

About one fifth (18%) of all city households living in ownership housing with an active mortgage spend more than 30% of their monthly income on mortgage costs and are cost-burdened.

The 2017 median monthly mortgage cost in the city was \$862.

The 2017 median value of owner-occupied housing units in the city was \$86,500, about 80 percent of the value in Koochiching County (\$108,300) and about two-fifths of the value in Minnesota overall (\$199,700).

Types of existing housing



Single family home east of downtown.



24 unit apartment building near Shorewood Drive..



Mobile home park.



Living space above storefronts in the downtown.



Multi-family apartment building in the southern side of the city.



Home along Shorewood Drive, east of downtown..

Housing units per type of housing structure

Type	Number	Percent of total
1 unit, detached	2,074	67%
1 unit, attached	55	2%
2 unit structure	102	3%
3 or 4 unit structure	243	8%
5 to 9	73	2%
10 to 19	82	3%
20 to 49	93	3%
50 or more	96	3%
Mobile home	259	8%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	8	0%
TOTAL UNITS	3,085	100%

Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2017 5-year estimates

Single-family housing makes up the majority of the units of housing in the city at almost 70%. Multi-unit housing (two or more units in a structure) makes up about 22% of the housing units (about twice as much as in Koochiching County, and similar to the state rate).

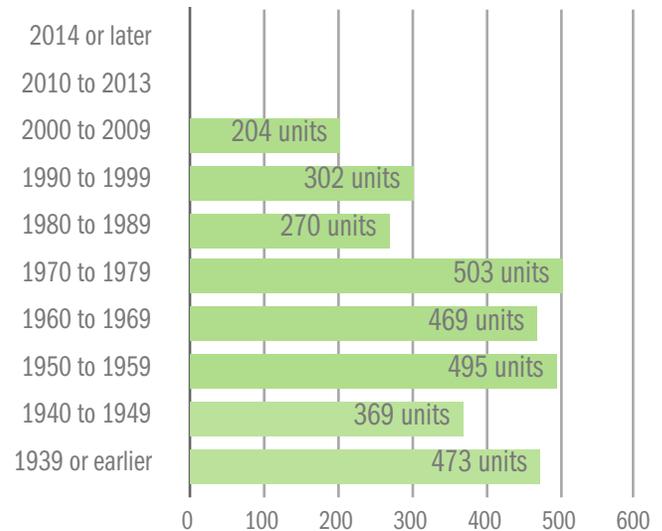
About 13% of housing units are provided in multi-unit buildings of “Middle Size” configuration (duplexes, fourplexes, and apartments provided in buildings similar in size to a large house, often integrated into blocks with primarily single-family homes).

About 11% of all housing is provided in apartment complexes larger than 10 units.

Mobile homes make up about 8% of the housing units in the city, about 4/5 of the rate in the county but more than twice the state rate.

Age of housing stock

Year built



Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2017 5-year estimates

The age of a city’s housing stock has an impact on the condition of housing and its desirability in two key ways:

- » As homes age they can be expected to require more maintenance. If adequate maintenance is not provided, their functional and aesthetic qualities can be expected to degrade.
- » The types of housing options available (size, configuration and location) may differ from current needs, and may not match the needs of age or demographic groups looking for housing in the city.

Slightly more than 40% of the city’s housing stock was built before 1960 (sixty years ago). About one quarter of the city’s housing stock was built after 1980. No new housing has been built in the city since 2010.

By comparison, Minnesota’s overall housing stock is much newer, with over 40 percent built after 1980.

The lack of relatively newer development in the city means that the types of housing options are limited, and that housing in many parts of the city (especially in the older core districts) is in need of investment and rehabilitation, with conditions in some cases in violation of city ordinances.

Condition of housing

“As a young adult and recent graduate with a bachelors degree, I find that the housing stock is limited. The houses up for rent are in very poor condition ... it deters young people and families from coming to this community to work and live.”

~ Participant in the plan’s engagement

Issues related to the condition of housing were frequently brought up by city leaders and by participants in the plan’s engagement.

Types of issues frequently discussed range from light cosmetic and repair issues to larger structural repairs, including:

- » Overall appearance
- » Structural condition
- » Type and condition of housing exterior
- » Yard appearance (existence of outdoor storage)

The recently completed Koochiching County Housing Study (2019) included a visual survey of single family / duplex homes in International Falls.

Houses in two city neighborhoods were inspected by visual means, and then rated on a four point scale:

- » **Sound:** House is in good, ‘move-in’ condition, with only minor code violations, if any.
- » **Minor Repair:** House is in generally good condition and requires less extensive repair, such as one major improvement. Houses in this condition are good candidates for rehabilitation programs.

- » **Major Rehabilitation:** House needs several major improvements such as roof, windows, sidings, or structural/foundation repair. Houses in this condition may or may not be economically feasible to rehabilitate.
- » **Dilapidated:** House needs major renovation to become safe and sanitary housing. Some properties in this category may be abandoned and may be candidates for demolition and clearance. This was the lowest rating used.

The two neighborhoods studied were:

- » **Neighborhood #1:** Between 6th Street on the north and 10th Street on the south, and 3rd Avenue on the east and 9th Avenue on the west.
- » **Neighborhood #2:** Between 6th Street on the north and 10th Street on the south, and 9th Avenue on the east and 13th Avenue on the west.



Location of the neighborhoods surveyed for the housing conditions inventory.

These are two of the oldest neighborhoods in the city and the 552 houses reviewed represent about one quarter of all single family / duplex houses in the city.

Although the study’s findings may not be equally applicable for the totality of houses in the city, the study points out general trends and important

existing issues as well as potential strategies for addressing them.

Condition of housing units reviewed

Condition	Number	Percent
Sound	136	25%
Minor repair	239	43%
Major rehabilitation	150	27%
Dilapidated	27	5%
TOTAL UNITS SURVEYED	552	100%

Source: Koochiching County Housing Study (2019)

Some of the key findings from the observations are:

- » 75% of houses surveyed require at least one major repair
- » At least 40% of the houses surveyed would be good candidates for housing rehabilitation programs
- » At least 5% of the houses surveyed may be considered to be beyond repair



Interior of the Good Samaritan Society’s facility in International Falls., providing housing and related services for older adults. Image courtesy of Pope Architects.

Meeting the housing needs of older adults

Slightly more than 20 percent of the International Falls population is currently over the age of 65. That proportion is projected to grow over the next 20 years as baby boomers age.

Housing opportunities will need to evolve to match the needs of this growing demographic group. For example, it will be important to provide options for housing units that are smaller and easier to maintain than traditional single-family homes. It will also be important to develop related “wraparound” health and assistance services, including meals, housekeeping, transportation, and health care options.

As the population ages and as retirees who grew up in the area return from larger metropolitan areas, there may be an increased demand for alternative, age-appropriate living arrangements. Ensuring that these options are ready and available when people need them will require close coordination between the city, for-profit and nonprofit developers, healthcare service providers, and community service agencies.

Assessment of strengths for housing development

Adapted from the 2019 Koochiching County Housing Study by Community Partners Research, Inc.

- » **Regional center:** International Falls offers employment opportunities, retail and service options, health services, professional services, governmental services and recreational facilities for the areas that surround it.
- » **Affordable housing stock:** The city has a large stock of affordable, existing houses. Median home value in the city is approximately \$78,450. This existing stock, when available for sale, provides an affordable option for home ownership.
- » **Diverse housing stock:** The city has a mix of housing options, including rental housing units for various household types, owner-occupied homes and senior housing with a variety of services.
- » **Desirable location for seniors and retirees:** The city is an attractive option for seniors as a retirement location. With health care, specialized housing, and retail and government services, the city offers attractive amenities for seniors.
- » **Educational system:** The city offers a public K-12 school system and access to Rainy River Community College.
- » **Health facilities:** Excellent health facilities including clinics and a hospital, as well as nursing home and senior housing with services.
- » **Infrastructure:** Water and sewer infrastructure can accommodate future expansion.
- » **Commercial development:** The city's commercial district is adequate to meet daily needs.
- » **Backus Community Center:** Backus offers area residents access to art and cultural opportunities, meals, exercise and fitness options, programs and events, volunteer opportunities, among others.
- » **City and County Housing and Redevelopment Authorities:** The International Falls and Koochiching Housing and Redevelopment Authorities provide and administer affordable housing opportunities in the city and county, including Woodland Park Apartments and the Housing Choice Voucher Program.
- » **Commuters:** More than 1,600 workers commute into the city each day. These commuters are a potential market for future housing construction.
- » **Koochiching Economic Development Authority (KEDA):** KEDA is active in addressing economic development, community development and housing needs.
- » **KOOTASCA Community Action:** KOOTASCA is the designated Community Action Agency for Koochiching County and is a certified Community Housing Development Organization (CHODO). It is active in addressing the area's housing needs and in funding for housing projects and programs.
- » **Natural amenities:** Surrounded by lakes and forest, the city includes numerous recreation opportunities.
- » **Ports of Entry:** Located at the border with Canada, there are three international Ports of Entry in the city's market area, including the International Bridge, the Ranier Rail Port, and the Falls International Airport. Many tourists and vacationers travel through the city to enter Canada and other locations through these Ports.
- » **Voyageurs National Park:** Vacation and tourism destination that provides numerous recreational and educational opportunities.

Assessment of barriers or limitations for housing development

Adapted from the 2019 Koochiching County Housing Study by Community Partners Research, Inc.

- » Age and condition of the housing stock: While the existing stock is very affordable, some of it is in need of substantial improvements to meet expectations of potential buyers.
- » Lower incomes limit housing choices: Household and family incomes for International Falls are lower than statewide medians. While this income level matches up well with prices for existing ownership and rental housing in the city, it does not match well to the prices needed for new housing construction.
- » Lower paying jobs: Many jobs in the city are at the lower end of the pay scale and these workers have limited housing choices.
- » Value gap deters new owner-occupied construction: Recent residential sales indicate that the median priced home in the city is valued at approximately \$78,450. This is below the comparable cost for new housing construction, which will generally be around \$175,000 or more for a stick-built home with commonly expected amenities. This creates a “value gap” between new construction and existing homes which can work against speculative building and deter customized construction (unless owners are willing to accept a potential loss on their investments).
- » Low rent structure: The city’s rent structure / rental pricing is low, which makes it difficult to construct new rental housing.
- » Limited land availability: The city is largely landlocked, which limits residential development opportunities.
- » Competition with rural and lake lots: Attractive rural and lake lots and acreages are easily available outside of city limits.
- » Lack of new housing construction: New housing construction has been limited over the past several years.
- » Lack of buildable lots: There are only a few remaining buildable lots available for new housing construction inside the city.
- » Distance from large regional centers: The closest large regional center (Duluth) is 163 miles from the city. Some households desire or need to be close to a large regional center for employment, medical services, etc.
- » Job losses: The city’s largest employer has significantly fewer employees than it had at peak employment.
- » Population and household losses: The city is projected to continue to lose population and households over the foreseeable future, continuing a long-term pattern.
- » Weather: The city is perceived by some to experience cold weather. This may be a deterrent for some households.

Opportunity: Rehabilitation of existing housing

Improving the condition of housing in the city is an important priority for renters, owners and city leaders.

Housing rehabilitation programs to help homeowners improve or maintain their home's condition were the top response received in the plan's engagement to questions regarding housing priorities.

The 2019 Housing Study (which included a Housing Conditions Survey that reviewed approximately one

quarter of all single family / duplex houses in the city) indicates that:

- » 75% of houses surveyed require at least one major repair
- » At least 40% of the houses surveyed would be good candidates for housing rehabilitation programs

This plan recommends expansion of existing programs and partnerships (including with KOOTASCA Community Action, Koochiching County HRA, International Falls HRA, KEDA, USDA Rural Development, MHFA and others) to increase the availability and reach of rehabilitation programs and funds.

Examples: Effective rehabilitation programs



All images courtesy of KOOTASCA Community Action.

Opportunity: Allowing development of accessory (“carriage”) housing units

An accessory housing unit (“ADU”), also known as a “carriage house” or a “granny flat,” is an additional unit of housing - with its own cooking, sleeping, and sanitation facilities - located on the same lot as a single- or two-family home.

An ADU can be housed within a separate structure (typical for a carriage house), or within the primary structure on the lot (as in a duplex). There are generally two restrictions governing development of ADUs:

- 1) **Homesteaded property:** The property owner must reside in either the main house or in the ADU as their primary residence
- 2) **Size:** The ADU must be smaller in area compared to the main dwelling to which it is accessory

Allowing the construction of ADUs on owner-occupied lots and with appropriate siting and architectural controls, can accomplish several goals:

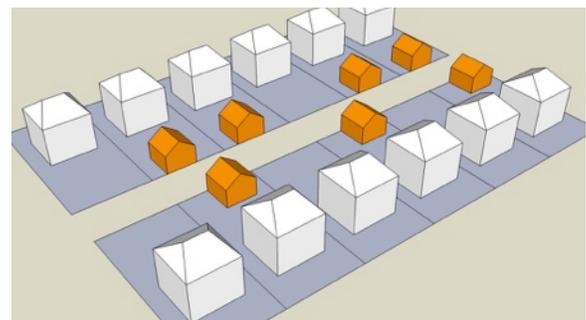
- » Increase housing opportunities by providing an increased number of apartment rental units
- » Increase homeownership opportunities by providing potential homeowners with an additional source of income that lowers their effective mortgage payments
- » Increase safety in area neighborhoods by providing additional “eyes on the street,” especially along alleys
- » Bring more residents to a community, helping support existing and potential businesses
- » Provide attractive housing options for area residents who no longer need a full-sized home but would like to continue to live in their neighborhoods

For these reasons, ADUs are strongly supported by organizations working to increase housing options like the Family Housing Fund and AARP.

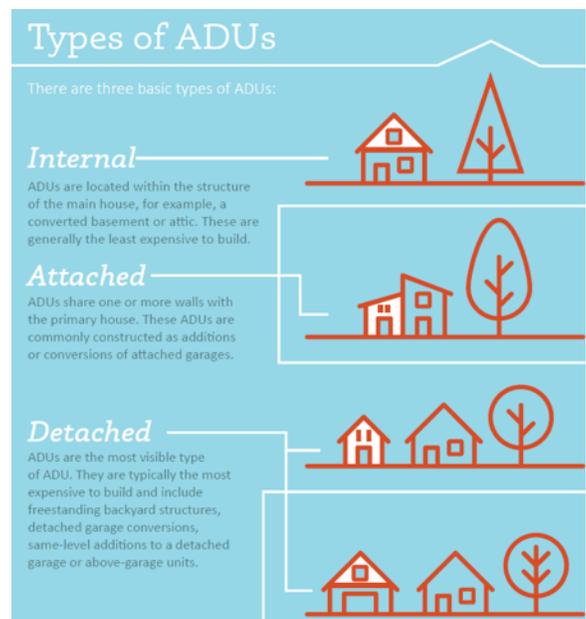
ADUs are currently not allowed in International Falls. This plan recommends including them as a new housing option.



Living unit above a detached garage in Portland, Oregon. Image courtesy of AARP.



Carriage housing (shown in orange) along an alleyway.



Types of ADUs. Image courtesy of Family Housing Fund.

Opportunity: Recommendations from the 2019 Koochiching County Housing Study (KCHS)

The 2019 Housing Study, completed by Community Partners Research, Inc., includes detailed analysis and recommendations for improving rental and ownership housing conditions and development.

Content in this section is adapted from the KCHS study. The study is included as Appendix 4 of this plan.

General recommendations, strategies and approach for housing opportunities

- » Maintain realistic expectations for housing development: Large-scale residential growth has not occurred in the recent past and is not likely to occur in the near future. The scale of activities proposed for the future should be comparable with and match the area's potential for growth.
- » Proactive community involvement: New home and apartment construction is more likely to occur if there is proactive support from the city and local, regional and state housing agencies, economic development agencies and the private sector.
- » Maintain and protect the existing housing stock: The city's future prospects are heavily dependent on the city's appeal as a residential location. The condition of the existing housing stock is a major factor in determining the city's long-term viability. Rehabilitation efforts are needed to preserve the city's existing housing stock, one of its major assets.
- » Maintain and protect other existing city assets and resources: The city has numerous assets including its K-12 school system, the community college, its downtown and commercial district, its parks, library and museum, trails and recreational and tourism opportunities, health facilities including clinics and a hospital, and large and midsize employers and work opportunities, among others. These are strong assets that help make the city a desirable place to live, and are key components to its long-term success and viability. These assets must be publicized, protected and improved.
- » Develop a realistic action plan with goals and time lines: The City of International Falls should prioritize its housing issues and establish goals and time lines to achieve success in addressing its housing needs.
- » Access all available resources for housing: The City of International Falls has resources to draw on including the Koochiching County HRA, International Falls HRA, KEDA, USDA Rural Development, MHFA, and others. These resources should continue to be accessed as needed to assist with housing activities.

Summary of recommendations for improving rental and ownership housing conditions and development

Adapted from the 2019 Koochiching County Housing Study by Community Partners Research, Inc.

Rental housing development

- » Develop 20 to 24 general occupancy market rate rental units
- » Promote the development / conversion of 8 to 10 affordable market rate rental housing units
- » Develop 18 to 20 subsidized / moderate rent housing units
- » Preserve the existing supply of subsidized housing
- » Develop 14 to 16 additional senior with services units
- » Develop a mixed-use commercial/housing project
- » Continue to use the Housing Choice Voucher Program
- » Student Housing: work with college as needed

Home ownership

- » Utilize and promote all programs that assist with home ownership
- » Consider the development of a purchase / rehabilitation program

New construction

- » Lot availability and lot development
- » Strategies to encourage residential lot sales and new home construction
- » Promote townhouse and twin home / duplex development
- » Coordinate with agencies/nonprofits that develop affordable housing
- » Strategies to develop new affordable homes

Housing rehabilitation

- » Promote rental housing rehabilitation programs
- » Promote owner-occupied housing rehabilitation programs
- » Develop a Neighborhood Revitalization Program
- » Develop a Rental Housing Registration and Inspection Program

Other housing initiatives

- » Encourage employer involvement in housing programs
- » Acquire and demolish dilapidated structures
- » Strategies for downtown redevelopment
- » Create a plan and continue coordination among housing agencies
- » Develop home ownership and new construction marketing programs and strategies
- » Housing assistance programs for homeless and hard to house populations
- » Develop mobile home programs and policies

Restarting a housing supply idea from recent time

“We should also get the High School Building Trades program started again as they built one new home in Int'l Falls every year. It gave skills to the kids and provided affordable new housing for the people that were selected. Win, Win, Win. Tax base, affordable housing, and new stock!”

Recommendations

Goal 1: Adopt the recommendations of the 2019 Housing Study

- » Strategy 1.1: Use the recommendations of the Housing Study as a foundation for City actions to address and improve housing supply and conditions

Goal 2: Ensure all housing meets or exceeds standards established in City ordinances

- » Strategy 2.1: Building code enforcement
 - Work collaboratively with property owners, including landlords and homeowners, to bring all residential properties up to code
 - Includes increased inspection enforcement at point of sale, increased rental housing inspection, and creating individual property owner plans to address violations and achieve code-appropriate property standards
- » Strategy 2.2: Housing preservation and rehabilitation
 - Identify city homes in need of rehabilitation and preservation, and work with owners and tenants to promote access to the Rehabilitation Loan/Emergency and Accessibility Loan Program provided by MHFA, which provides rehabilitation loans up to \$27,000 on up to 15-year terms

Goal 3: Encourage development of a variety of housing types and styles

- » Strategy 3.1: Flexible zoning for supply, diversity, and density
 - Administer the newly updated land use plan, zoning ordinance and zoning map to support development of a variety of housing types throughout all areas of the community

- Adopt the land use plan map and policies presented in this comprehensive plan, which will guide the community toward a range of housing types and densities.
- » Strategy 3.2: Housing for the aging and elderly
 - Partner with the Koochiching Economic Development Authority, the HRAs, and the Rainy River Medical Center to identify and partner with a developer of specialty age-appropriate housing for the elderly
- » Strategy 3.3: Allow development of accessory dwelling units (ADUs)
 - Consider modifying zoning ordinance to allow development of accessory dwelling units
- » Strategy 3.4: High School Building Trades
 - Work with ISD 361 to explore the restart of the High School Building Trades program

Goal 4: Ensure a wide array of quality workforce housing options

- » Strategy 4.1: Support the development and preservation of affordable housing
 - Recent data shows that more than two-thirds of all renters are cost burdened, meaning there is a need for strategies that improve affordability for all community members
 - Work with the ARDC, the Koochiching County HRA, and private developers to ensure that there are sufficient units accessible at a range of price points for all current and future residents
- » Strategy 4.2: Ensuring non-discrimination
 - Review and update rental license permitting language as needed to ensure non-discrimination against individuals and families seeking housing

4.4 Transportation

Mobility (“the ability to move freely and easily”) offers a useful perspective for thinking about transportation issues and decisions. In International Falls, this means looking at transportation through two lenses: through the lens of resident mobility, and through the lens of commercial and industrial needs and infrastructure.

Vision and goals

Future vision

The International Falls transportation system ensures safe and efficient movement for all kinds of users - from residents and visitors who walk, bike or drive to industrial operators who rely on the efficient movement of freight and commodities. The city supports active living and active transportation, adapts its infrastructure to an aging population, maintains its existing infrastructure, and is efficiently connected to road, rail and air networks to expand its reach and connection with people and markets.

Goals

- » Develop a comprehensive, integrated plan for infrastructure investment to create a connected network for all modes of transportation.
- » Institute a maintenance and repaving program for aging roads.
- » Establish a mutually beneficial partnership between International Falls and the railroads, particularly Canadian National Railroad, and the Minnesota Dakota & Western short-line railroad.
- » Ensure the long-term regional and international significance of the Falls International Airport



Walkability and access are important for residents and business districts. Image: Northfield, Minnesota.



Cargo mobility is a key consideration for manufacturing, agriculture and forest products industries.

Existing conditions

Pedestrian network

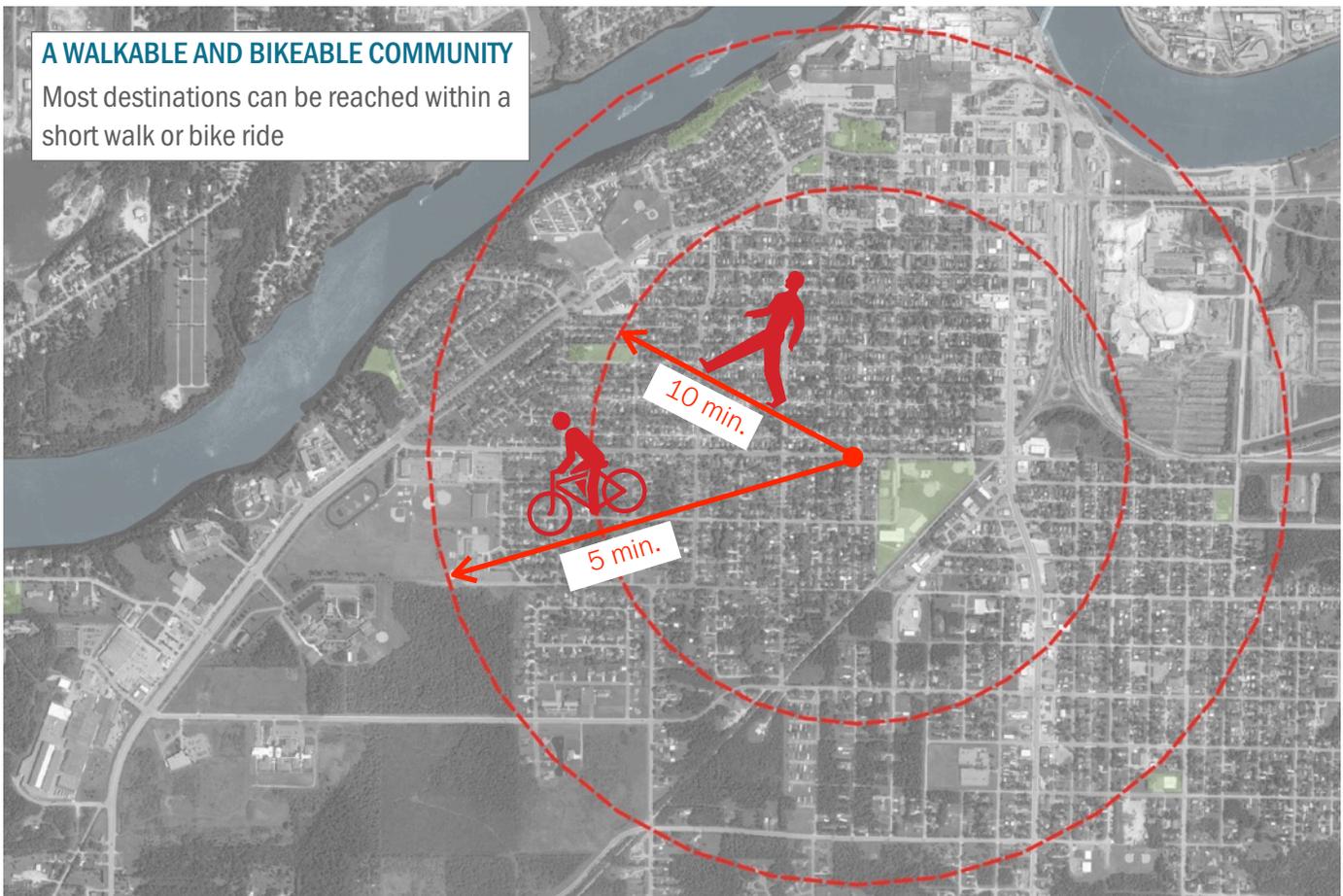
Walking is the most elemental form of transportation, free and accessible for people through the widest range of ages, incomes, and physical abilities. It is also a foundation for individual health and well-being.

International Falls has, for the most part, a well-developed pedestrian network. Sidewalks exist in the majority of the older parts of the city, though in some recently-developed areas they are not provided. Some International Falls neighborhoods and commercial areas present difficult conditions for walking due to long crossing distances, high speed traffic and disconnected land uses.

Bicycle network

Bicycling is a useful, healthful and affordable transportation option offering mobility and connectivity for residents of all ages. In a city the size of International Falls, it can provide practical connection to everyday needs.

International Falls does not currently have a bicycle network connecting local destinations; however, it does offer two important regional trails (the Rainy Lake Recreation Trail - a paved trail connecting the city to nearby Ranier, and the Voyageur / Blue Ox trail - an unpaved facility on a former railway corridor), as well as a new trail along MN332.



Transit system

Public transit is an essential component of mobility for individuals and households who do not have access to an automobile or who are not able to drive.

Public transit in International Falls is provided by Arrowhead Transit, a service of the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC). It includes dial-a-ride and regular weekday and weekend bus service. The dial-a-ride service averages between 2,000 to 2,500 passengers per month.

Arrowhead Transit provides scheduled service to Bemidji every Wednesday. Service to Duluth is also available but only runs if at least five people sign up to ride.

No other intercity routes or service to or from International Falls is available (i.e., no Jefferson Line or Greyhound bus service). This poses barriers to out of town travelers, and especially to students attending Rainy River Community College from other Arrowhead communities. Arrowhead Transit offers free rides to college students during the first month of school each year to entice ridership.

Roadway network: Motor vehicle and truck cargo

Three major highways provide regional connectivity for International Falls: US Highway 53, US71/MN11, and MN11 East. These highways gather the majority of automobile and truck traffic into and through the city, and also lead and connect to the International Bridge and land port of entry into Canada. The city's 34 miles of streets include County State Aid Highways (CSAH) and Municipal State Aid (MSA) streets.

Generally, traffic volumes in the city's major roadways are moderate, with no roadway exceeding 8,500 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT), and the majority of roadways in the city being well below that level. Generally, a two-lane roadway (one direction each way) is considered adequate for carrying up to 10,000 motor vehicles per day.

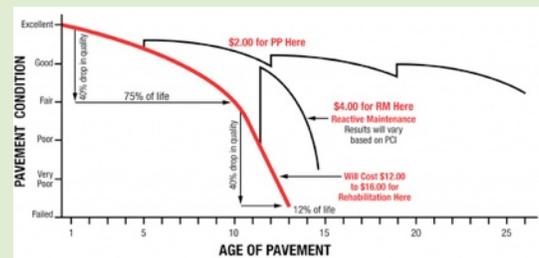
Maps showing traffic volumes and roadway classification are provided over the next two pages.



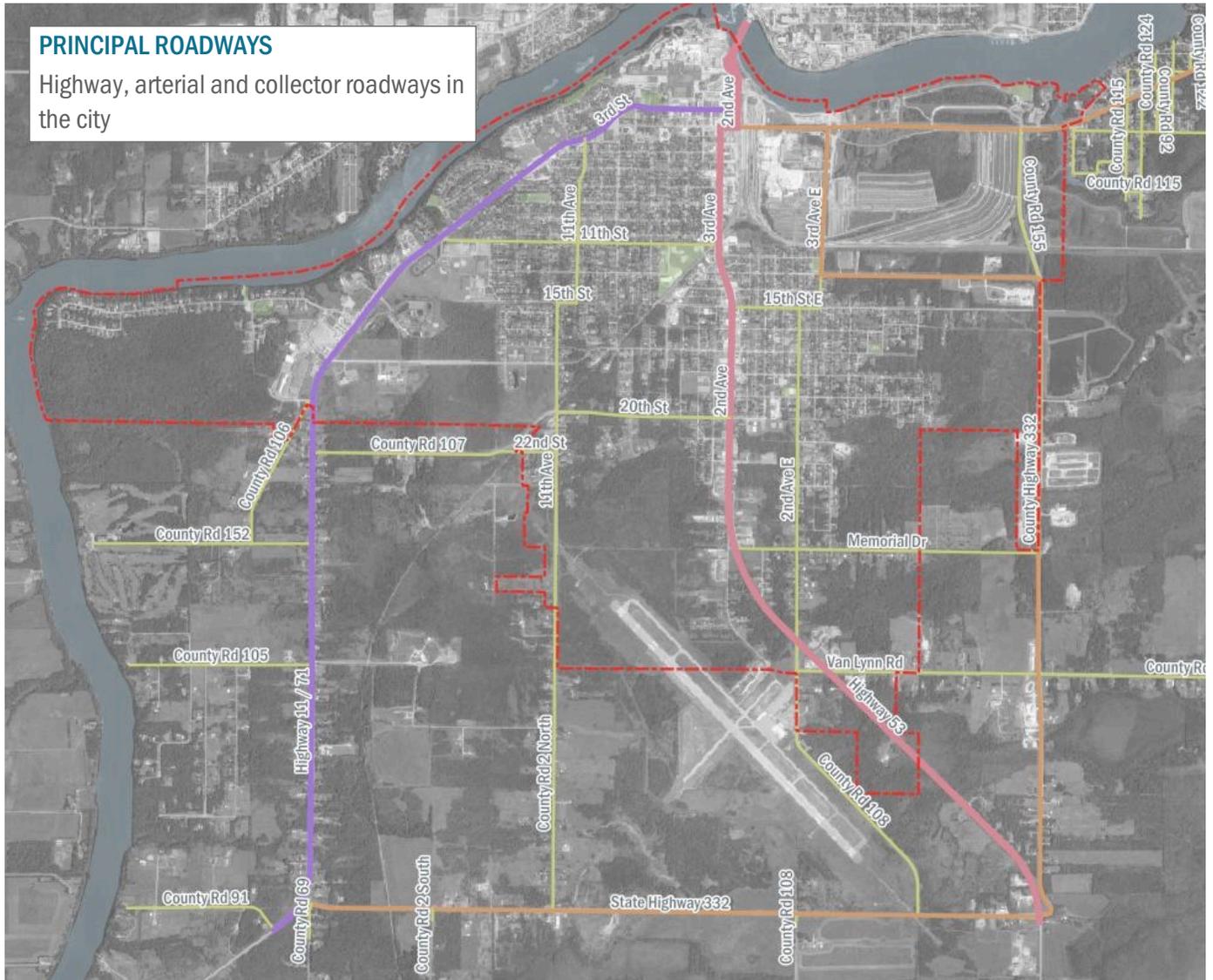
Arrowhead Transit providing service in International Falls.

Assessing and improving the condition of International Falls streets

Engineering consultant Widseth, Smith, Nolting (WSN) was hired to analyze street conditions in the city. About ten miles, or more than one quarter of all roadways in the city were classified as being in need of the most attention. Repairs are estimated to cost about \$4,272,000.



Costs for pavement preservation (in black) vs. reactive maintenance (in red). Timely repairs save money in the long-term by extending pavement life and enhancing safety, appearance, and maintaining pavement quality.



Highway 53 (US53)

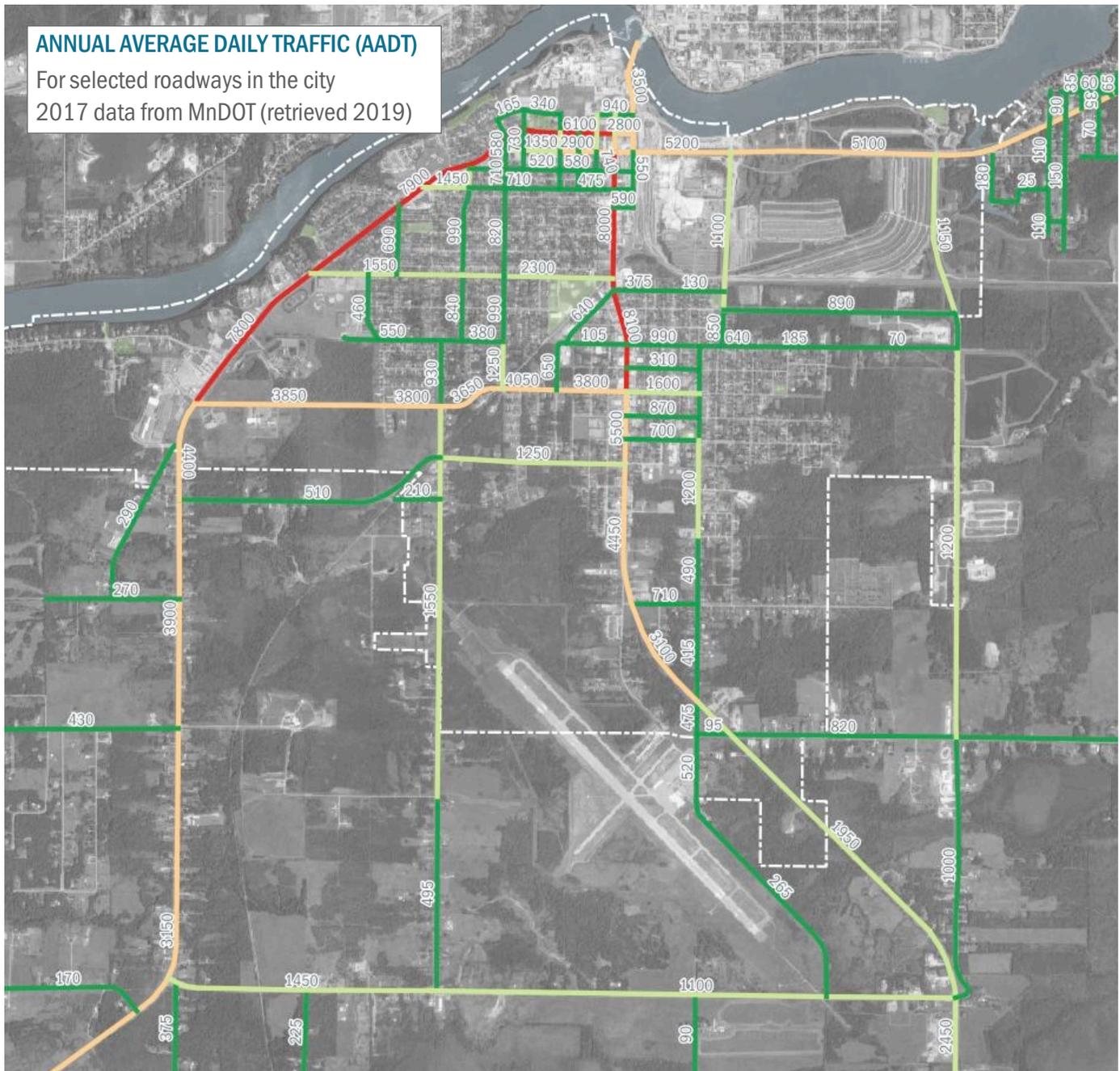
Highway 53 is the primary route for vehicle traffic coming from the south. Carrying visitors into the city, it also connects to the Land Port of Entry and Canada. Highway 53 also connects visitors to MN11, which runs east towards Voyageurs National Park. Currently the route hosts a variety of adjacent land uses, including commercial, industrial, open space, and residential.

There is limited uniformity in landscaping and design across building lots. A MnDOT project to develop

Visual Quality Standards for rehabilitation of the road is currently ongoing, with the goal of improving the visual appeal and traffic flow along the corridor.

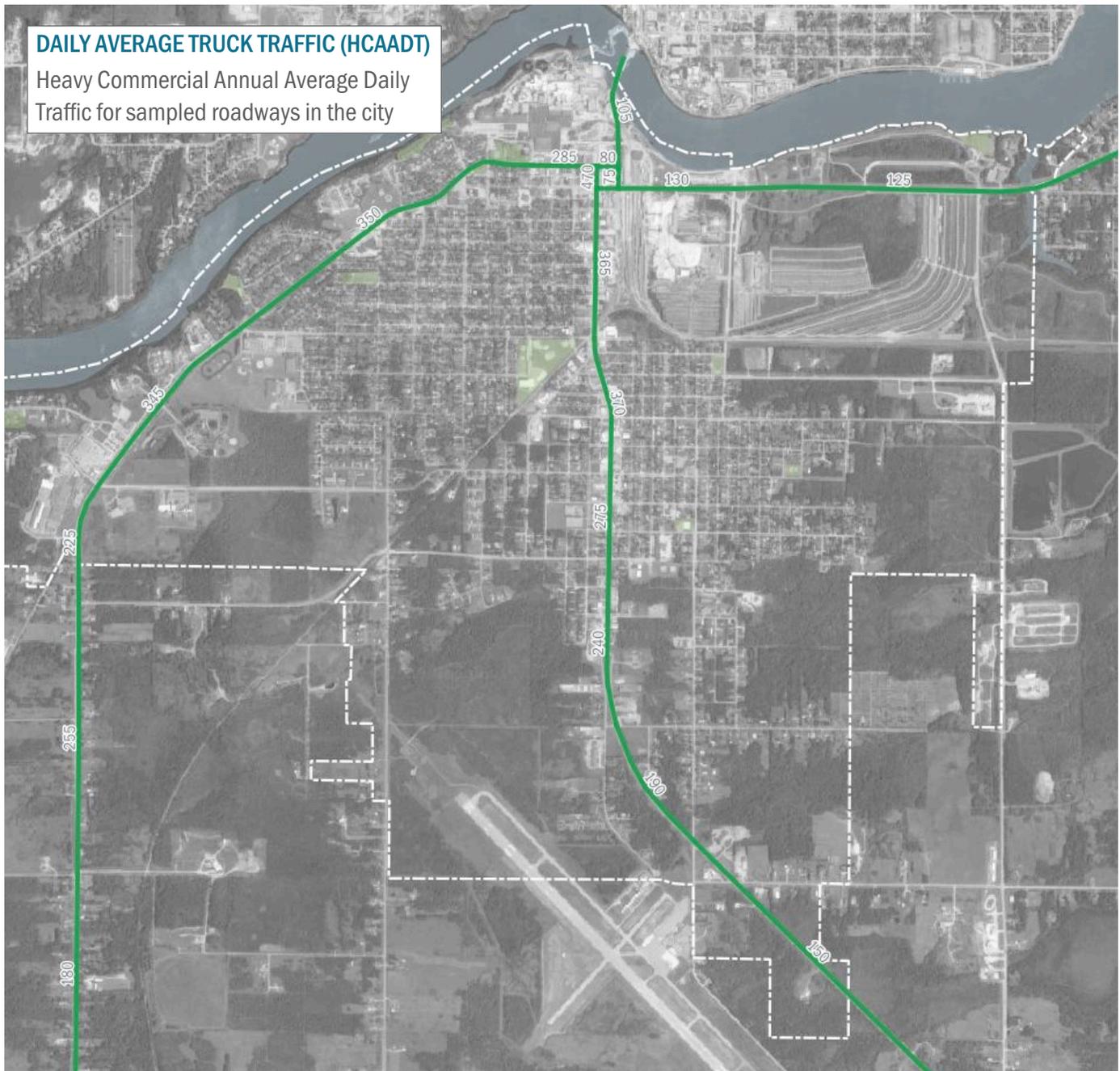
Highway 71 (MN11/US71)

Highway 71 is a primary arterial roadway serving a variety of businesses including Stewart’s Super One, Menards, AmericInn, Kmart, County Market, Hardees, and Border State Bank. Institutions and organizations along Highway 71 include Falls High School, Rainy River Community College, Rainy Lake Medical Center, and the International Falls Journal.



Maps showing annual average daily traffic (AADT) for roadways in and around International Falls. Lower volume roadways are shown in deeper green, higher volume roadways in red. In general, most roadways in the city have low to moderate volumes of traffic. Highways 53 (AADT 8,100) and 11/71 (AADT 7,100) carry the highest level of traffic in the city. A two lane roadway section (one lane each direction) can easily carry 10,000 AADT.





Map showing annual average daily traffic (AADT) for roadways in and around International Falls. Lower volume roadways are shown in deeper green, higher volume roadways in red. In general, most roadways in the city have low to moderate volumes of traffic. Highways 53 (AADT 8,100) and 1171 (AADT 7,100) carry the highest level of traffic in the city. A two-lane roadway section (one lane each direction) can easily carry 10,000 AADT.

Railway network

The Minnesota, Dakota & Western (MD&W) Railway (a subsidiary of PCA) is a short-line railroad serving the paper industry between International Falls and Fort Frances by providing rail service across the International Bridge. It connects to the Canadian National (CN) Railroad that passes through Ranier.

The railway switches pulpwood, chemicals and other raw materials used in the papermaking process and moves finished paper products for interchange with CN. MD&W has a fleet of 2,000 freight cars, four locomotives and four miles of track, as well as an International Falls car and locomotive shop staffed by 30 employees. In 2018, the railway handled approximately 10,000 railcar loads of materials.

Air transport system

Falls International Airport (Einarson Field, INL) is operated by the city and county under a joint powers agreement. The airport is included in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems for 2017–2021, and is categorized as a primary commercial service airport with more than 10,000 enplanements per year.

The airport is one of nine key airports in the state of Minnesota and is an international port of entry with customs and immigration services available.

The airport offers daily commercial air service to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP) and offers a 1.4 mile main runway with Instrument Landing System (ILS) and Visual Approach Slope Indicator (VASI) landing systems. The airport also operates a seaplane base on the Rainy River.

The airport recently underwent a two-phase, four year renovation of the Terminal Building costing over \$18 million to provide improved facilities and services for domestic and international passengers. A \$44 million, four phase, four-year project to reconstruct the main runway and adjoining taxiway is currently underway and is set for completion for 2022.



View of the MD&W locomotive shop and facility, located in International Falls.



The recently-upgraded interior of Falls International Airport.

Opportunity: Biking in International Falls

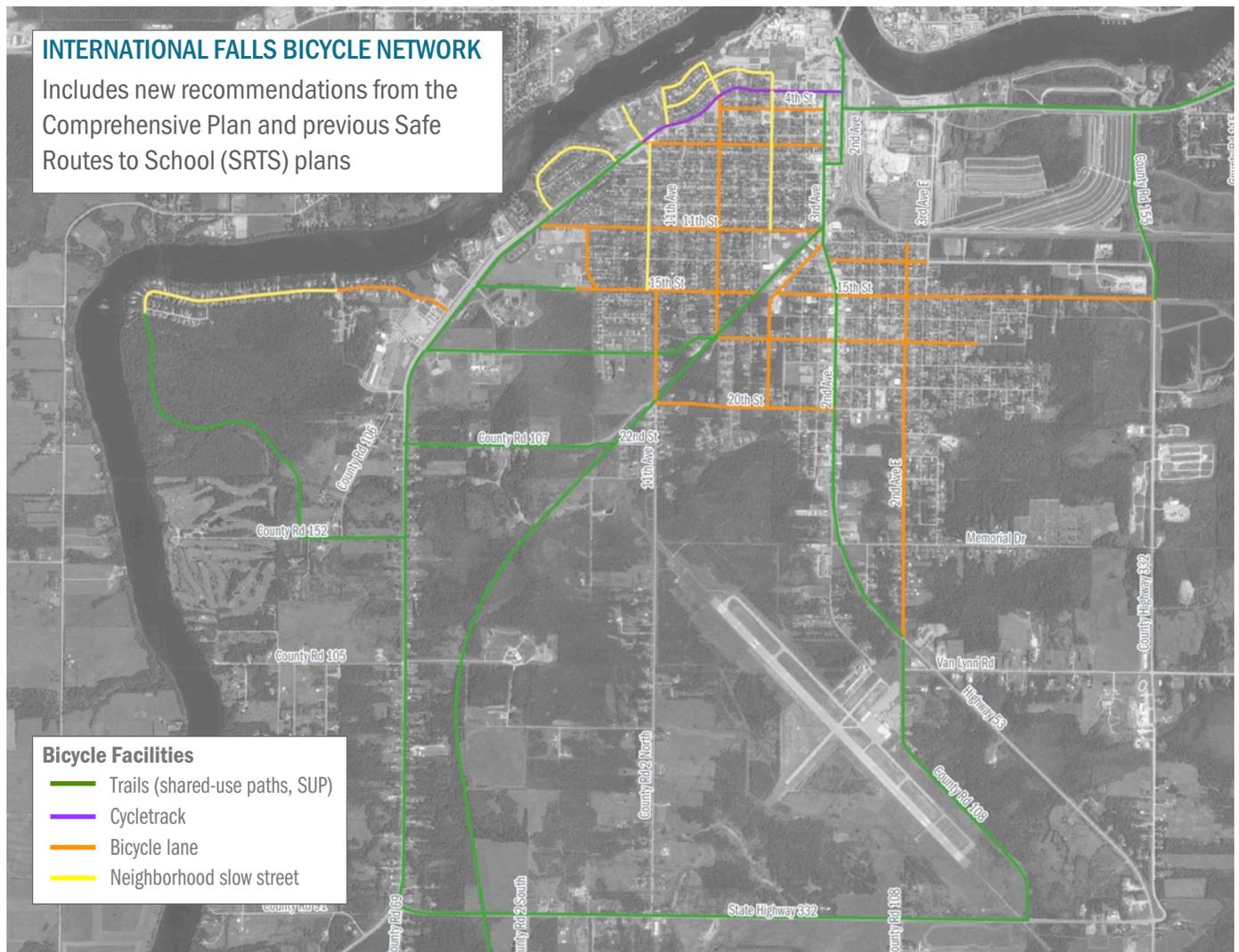
Two key regional trails, the Voyageur (Blue Ox) Trail and the Rainy Lake Recreation Trail, connect to International Falls. In addition, extensive Safe Routes to School (SRTS) planning activities were completed by ARDC.

There is a great opportunity to better connect the existing trails and the planned SRTS infrastructure through the city and use these assets as a backbone for a high-quality network of routes that connect residents to schools, parks, businesses and other destinations, and attract bicycle tourists, and enhance quality of life year-round.



Trails provide a great opportunity for residents to stay healthfully active and connect to destinations throughout their community.

Potential bicycle network



Components of the city's bicycle network

The city's future bicycle network would be made up of the following types of facilities:

Shared-use paths

A shared-use path (SUP, often also known as trail) provides a shared space for people walking and biking that is separate from motor vehicle traffic. Shared-use paths work better when they include fewer intersections with motorized traffic.

Shared-use paths are often provided along busier roadways where on-street bicycle facilities would be less comfortable or not feasible, and at locations along streams and railroads, and through parks. SUPs provide increased separation from motor vehicle traffic and are also used at parks and natural assets to provide more scenic routes.

Neighborhood Slow Streets

Most residential streets in International Falls feature low traffic volumes and speeds. Neighborhood Slow Streets (also known as Neighborhood Greenways or Bike Boulevards) are designated residential streets that are lightly modified to calm motor-vehicle traffic and prioritize bicycle travel.

Neighborhood Slow Streets use some or several types of traffic calming elements (bump-outs, traffic circles, speed tables, or others) to make walking and biking easier and safer by reducing motor-vehicle speeds and improving safety for users of all modes. Route signs and pavement markings help highlight the street as a bikeway.

Bicycle lanes

Bicycle lanes designate a portion of the roadway for preferential use by bicycle riders. Lanes are defined by barriers, striping, pavement markings and/or signage. Bike lanes separate bicyclist and motorist travel flows and increase bicycle rider and driver comfort.



The MNI I trail is a shared-use path that provides space away from traffic for people walking and biking.



Most residential streets can be easily and inexpensively converted into Neighborhood Slow Streets.



A cycletrack (or protected bike lane) is a bike lane that is physically separated from automobile traffic.

Two types of bicycle lane facilities are recommended for consideration in the city:

- » Cycletrack, or separated / protected bicycle lanes
- » Conventional bicycle lanes

Separated / protected bicycle lane

Separated / protected bike lanes are on-street facilities that offer a designated space for bicycles and that are separated from motor-vehicle travel lanes by a buffer distance and by vertical elements like bollards, planters, or concrete walls.

This type of facility offers the highest level of traffic separation and user comfort, and invites greater use of bicycling by a wider range of the population.

Conventional bicycle lane

Conventional bicycle lanes are on-street facilities that offer a designated space for bicycles and that are adjacent to motor-vehicle travel lanes.

Bicycle lanes can be made more comfortable by increasing their distance from motor-vehicle travel lanes through the addition of a buffering space. When provided next to on-street parking, they sometimes also include a buffer space between the bicycle lane and parked cars.

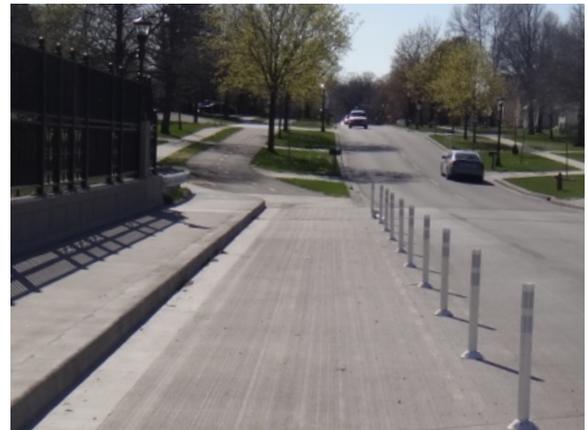
Other network components

Bicycle parking

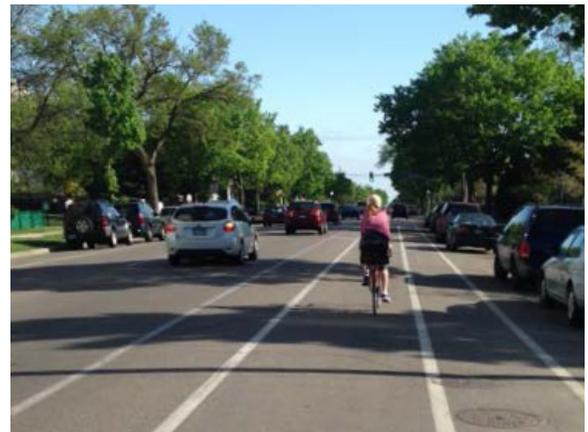
Visible, secure bicycle parking is essential for making bicycling a viable travel option to destinations around the city. The two best options for bicycle parking are the “Inverted U” and “Post and loop” types.

Parking areas should be visible and prominent, located near a building’s main entry, and located clearly and conveniently along a bicycle riders’ natural path to access a site.

Key locations include schools, parks, and neighborhood commercial nodes. Destinations near bicycle trails should include bicycle parking.



Separated / protected bicycle lanes can be quickly and inexpensively deployed using plastic bollards and paint.



Bicycle lane that includes a buffer space on each side of the rider.



“Inverted U” bicycle parking rack.

Wayfinding

A comprehensive and user-friendly wayfinding system is an key component of successful pedestrian and bicycle networks. Fortunately, a working wayfinding system can be deployed quickly and inexpensively.

Wayfinding elements include signs, markings and maps and informational kiosks. They help make a bicycle network more easily understandable and usable, and encourage residents and visitors to use the walking and biking facilities that are provided to connect to local destinations, including businesses and parks. Over the long term, a comprehensive identity for the trails and bikeways in International Falls can be used to brand the city's system and communicate its attractiveness to travelers.



Wayfinding sign with direction, destination and distance information.

Economic benefits of investing in biking

Stimulates local economies and creates jobs

- » Walkable, bikeable places attract bicycle tourists and other travelers who spend on average \$18-\$80 per day in the community.
- » Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure projects create 8 to 12 jobs per \$1 million of spending. By comparison, road infrastructure projects create 7 jobs per \$1 million of expenditures.

Improves recruitment of talent and workers

- » Over 75% of millennials say it is important for their city to offer opportunities to live and work without relying on a car.
- » CEOs recognize that bikeable places attract top talent. Companies are relocating their offices to more bikeable areas to better attract the well-educated 25 to 35-year-olds they seek to hire.

Increases sales for retail businesses

- » Retail revenue per hour of occupied parking is higher for bike parking (69¢ per square foot) than for auto parking (19¢ per square foot).
- » People who walk or bike to businesses spend less per visit but visit more often, resulting in more money spent overall each month compared to customers who arrived by car.

Increases commercial and residential property values

- » Reducing traffic speeds by 5–10 mph can increase residential property values by approximately 20%.
- » In communities across the United States, a one-point increase in Walk Score (which assigns a value to addresses based on walkability) is associated with a \$700-\$3,000 increase in home values.

Source: Regional Active Transportation Plan for Benton, Sherburne, Stearns and Wright Counties, Minnesota.

Opportunity: Mobility hub

Shared-use mobility is an approach to transportation that improves travel options for a community's residents by providing access to transportation options that are shared among users - including carshare, bikeshare, public transit, scooters, carpools, taxis and app-based ride-hailing services, shuttles and more.

Shared-use mobility systems decrease total transportation costs for individual users, and help support the growth of pedestrian and bicycle-oriented facilities and uses in communities.

Shared-use mobility systems are not just for large cities: smaller communities and travel destinations like college towns, national parks, tourist destinations and small towns, can be successful locations for these innovative options.

A Mobility Hub is a transportation facility that brings together all the elements of the shared-use mobility model: convenient access to multiple modes of transportation, walkability, and density of uses and destinations. International Falls, with its compact size, attractive downtown, border location, and high number of visitors, is well suited for this transportation model.

Exploring the development of a Mobility Hub, or at the very least inviting providers of shared-use mobility options (bikeshare, scooters, carshare and ride-hailing apps) to offer some of their options in the city could help make travel in and around International Falls easier and more convenient - for both residents and visitors.

Access to a Mobility Hub could also help city households keep more of their income - for example, by helping a three-car household become a two-car household, or helping a two-car household become a one-car household.



Bikeshare systems and scooter rentals are some of the options included in the shared-use mobility model.



A mobility hub brings car-sharing, ridesharing, public bikes and scooters and electric vehicle charging to a single location that is convenient to a community's residents. Image courtesy of Sophia von Berg.

Electric vehicle (EV) charging

Availability of electric vehicle charging stations can be a tool to attract travelers to specific locations in a community.

Working with mobility providers to offer charging infrastructure in or near the downtown (especially if combined as part of other travel services in a Downtown Mobility Hub) may be a useful strategy to increase visitation and potential customers to local businesses.

Opportunity: Improving and/or relocating the International Bridge

For many years, area residents have expressed interest in making improvements to the current International Bridge connecting International Falls with Fort Frances and the rest of Canada.

The future relocation of the Land Port of Entry provides an opportunity to plan for a publicly-owned International Bridge that would maintain the existing traffic patterns that are important for local businesses while providing a safer, more attractive, and toll-free International Boundary crossing.

Issues with the current International Bridge include:

- » Expense of tolls (which total over one thousand dollars per year for some households and work against closer employment, shopping and economic integration between International Falls and Fort Frances - and which also makes the crossing less attractive for tourists)
- » Location of the crossing: initially sited to facilitate movement between the paper mills, the current configuration complicates cross-border movement and customs operations, forcing all international traffic to drive through the paper mills area, creating congestion and unsafe conditions for people driving, walking or bicycling
- » Potential capacity and maintenance issues for the existing bridge facility

The closing of the Fort Frances mill opens up opportunities to reconsider the location of the International Bridge and for acquiring right-of-way to facilitate development of a new crossing that also provides opportunity for improving the configuration of the US Customs Land Port of Entry facility that was initially planned in 2011 but which was recently (in summer of 2019) placed on hold.



Potential location for the new International Bridge.



The new bridge and associated facilities could become a tourist attraction in their own right.

A location directly across from the former Resolute mill may offer substantial benefits to both the International Falls and the Fort Frances communities. In addition, the structure itself, as well as trails and visitor center developed around it could become a signature facility in the area and a prominent tourist attraction.

Coordination between Federal, State, Provincial and Local governments would be needed to acquire the land and begin work for future funding to build the bridge. This may also be an opportunity to eliminate the need for tolling and the barrier to cross-border integration it presents.

Opportunity: Connecting to the continent's rail transportation network

(Adapted from the NGKF recommendations)



The rail crossing at International Falls / Ranier is the busiest rail crossing on the US northern border, and a key component of CN Rail's network connecting ports in western Canada with Chicago and Texas.

Nearly 20% of U.S. imports cross at this location, including containerized goods from Asia and bulk goods from Canada.

Local short-track railroad Minnesota Dakota & Western (MD&W) provides a proven option to move freight from truck to rail and then interconnect with CN Rail on a daily basis.

Currently, MD&W's largest customer is the PCA mill but they also provide service to smaller industrial customers in the city. The company currently puts 18 cars on and takes 18 cars off of the CN Rail line at the switch in Koochiching County every day.

This conduit to the CN line could accommodate more customers who need short-track access to the "hook and haul" service provided by CN in order to gain access to the entire continent by rail.

Opportunity: Falls International Airport / Einarson Field

(Adapted from the NGKF recommendations)



Falls International Airport is a US Port of Entry with customs clearance and the the 2nd longest runway in Minnesota at 7,400 feet in length.

The airport receives a federal annual operating subsidy through the Essential Air Services (EAS) program. SkyWest, a Delta Airlines partner, flies one daily flight two days a week and two flights daily five days a week to the Minneapolis - St. Paul airport (MSP).

Although there are no scheduled international flights it is a "24/7" international airport giving it an advantage over MSP, which can only receive and clear international flights during daytime hours.

Freight is not currently handled at the airport. Duluth International is the nearest airport with scheduled air cargo service. Small package freight is a current opportunity for the airport, especially for high-value and/or time-sensitive goods.

This international airport with an extra long runway and US Customs clearance is a competitive advantage for the city.

Recommendations

Goal 1: Develop an integrated and connected multimodal network

- » Strategy 1.1: Adopt a Complete Streets policy
 - Calming traffic, decreasing intersection crossing distances, and expanding pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure will help create a more healthy, livable and attractive community
- » Strategy 1.2: Pedestrian, Bicycle and Trails plan
 - Develop a comprehensive Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan for the city
 - Integrate trail connectivity to key bike, ATV and snowmobile trails in the surrounding area
- » Strategy 1.3: Wayfinding
 - Develop one or several trails kiosks downtown and near main access points to help residents and visitors connect to trails and destinations in and around the city
- » Strategy 1.4: Increase transit options
 - Work with Arrowhead Transit and Rainy River Community College to enhance transit service
 - Work with bus and transit companies to activate bus service to the city
- » Strategy 1.5: New International Bridge
 - Work with partners to explore opportunities for developing a new bridge at a new location

Goal 2: Institute a maintenance and repaving program for aging roads

- » Strategy 2.1: Implement a proactive, preventative approach to roadway maintenance
 - Follow the recommendations of the WSN report
 - Use the Street Assessment and Evaluation Report to begin implementation of road reconstruction projects

Goal 3: Coordinate partnership with area railroads

- » Strategy 3.1: Short-line rail access
 - Coordinate with MD&W to leverage short-line rail access and expand connection of local firms to global transportation networks

Goal 4: Coordinate partnership with area hauling, trucking and logging services

- » Strategy 4.1: Collaborate for efficient transportation
 - Work closely with trucking companies to ensure operational issues are promptly resolved and services can proceed efficiently

Goal 5: Ensure the long-term regional and international significance of the Falls International Airport.

- » Strategy 5.1: Airport upkeep and enhancement
 - Continue to pursue funding opportunities for airport upkeep and enhancement, including FAA's Airport Improvement Program (AIP), private funding, and MnDOT Office of Aeronautics (continuing partnerships for airport planning and state and local funding of non-eligible costs)
- » Strategy 5.2: Cargo / freight operations
 - Work with air cargo operators to market the potential for operations, especially small package freight for high-value and/or time-sensitive goods

4.5 Economic development

A prosperous economy is part of a community's foundation for a high quality of life for its residents. Business opportunity, access to employment and good-paying jobs, and both local startups and established industries all contribute to a healthy economy.

Vision and goals

Future vision

Living in International Falls means having multiple options for stable and well-paid employment, and building a prosperous, healthy life. Doing business in International Falls means having access to a well-educated and hardworking workforce, to the land and space needed for thriving businesses and industry, and to a transportation network that efficiently connects with markets and suppliers. Being an aspiring entrepreneur in International Falls means having support and access to resources that can help turn an idea into a real startup and growing it to success.

Goals

- » Support the growth and development of existing local businesses
- » Establish and expand affordable, high capacity, fast technology infrastructure
- » Invest in local economic incubation
- » Strengthen the industrial/manufacturing sector by attracting new businesses



The International Falls area offers a wealth of opportunities to entrepreneurs who are ready to capitalize on the area's many assets. Image: Greentech Manufacturing, a family-owned business making industry-leading outdoor furnaces, air handlers and unit heaters - selling worldwide and based right in the city.

"80% of all economic growth in a community comes from its existing business base and it costs 100 times more to recruit new business, making the retention and expansion of existing businesses a top priority for any economic development initiative"

~ from the NGKF Report

Existing conditions

Employment and industry

According to US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) figures, there were approximately 3,644 jobs in International Falls in 2015 (the most recent year available). In the same year, the total number of jobs in Koochiching County was 4,791. Approximately 3/4 of all jobs in the county are located in the city.

Principal employers

The principal employers in the county (those with twenty or more employees) are:

Business	Number of employees
Packaging Corporation of America	582
School District 361	250
Local governments (County and City)	207
Rainy Lake Medical Center	181
United Health Group	150
US Customs and Border Protection	150
Good Samaritan	100
Menards	85
Littlefork Medical Center	67
County Market Grocery & Liquor	66
Wagner Construction	69/100 seasonal
Rainy River Community College	59
Kmart	58
Voyageurs National Park	51/100 seasonal
Essentia Health	53
Northstar Publishing	30
Keep Enterprises	30
Shannon's Plumbing & Heating	23

Data source: City of International Falls

Major employers in the city include Packaging Corporation of America, School District 361, local government, and the Rainy Lake Medical Center.

Employment by business sector

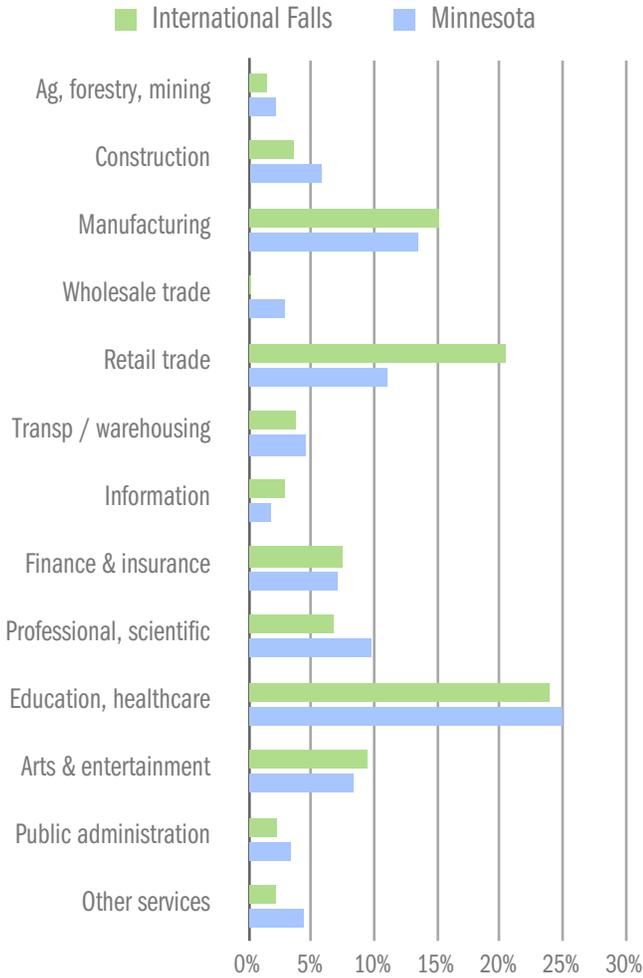
Industry sector	Number of employees	% of all jobs in the city
Manufacturing	695	22%
Trade, transportation, utilities	722	23%
Information	74	2%
Professional and business services	97	3%
Education and health services	339	11%
Leisure and hospitality	353	11%
Other services	87	3%
Public administration	375	12%
Miscellaneous	352	11%
TOTAL, ALL SECTORS	3,094	100%

Data source: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development 2016

Employment in International Falls rests primarily on two business sectors: the manufacturing sector, and the trade, transportation and utilities sector.

Together, these two business sectors make up nearly 1/2 of all jobs in the city. International Falls provides the majority of employment opportunities for almost all the major industry sectors in the county, especially for the manufacturing, information, and public administration sectors.

Employment by business sector in comparison to Minnesota overall (percentage of workers per industry)



Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2017 5-year estimates

US Census data (ACS 2017 table DP03) can be used to compare employment in business sector between the city and Minnesota overall (the totals differ from MnDEED tables because of how industries within sectors are grouped).

Generally, retail trade (with its generally lower wages) is more strongly represented in the city’s economy than the state overall. Manufacturing is slightly more represented, while construction industries, wholesale trade, and professional sectors are less represented.

Total annual wages earned per business sector

Industry sector	Annual wages
Manufacturing	\$50,307,453
Trade, transportation, utilities	\$17,516,757
Information	\$2,462,725
Professional and business services	\$2,333,678
Education and health services	\$16,507,970
Leisure and hospitality	\$4,629,755
Other services	\$1,054,181
Public administration	\$19,464,466
Miscellaneous	\$15,362,263
TOTAL, ALL SECTORS	\$129,639,248

Data source: Mn DEED Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) 2016.

The manufacturing sector, and trade, transportation and utilities sector account for slightly more than 1/2 of all the wages earned in International Falls. Education and health services, and public administration are also high generators of employment wages. Leisure and hospitality, and professional and business services are relatively smaller contributors to wages in the city.

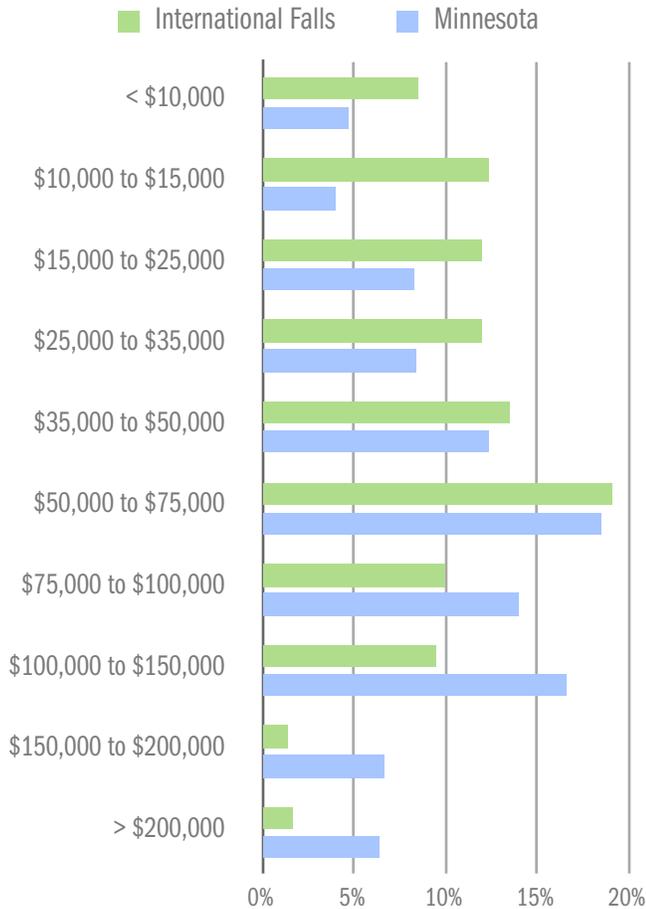
Type of employment

Type	Number	Percent of total
Private wage and salary worker	2,252	82%
Government worker	347	13%
Self employed	133	5%
Unpaid family worker	0	0%
TOTAL WORKERS	2,732	100%

Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2017 5-year estimates

Income: workers and households

Income per **HOUSEHOLD** (percentage of households at each level)

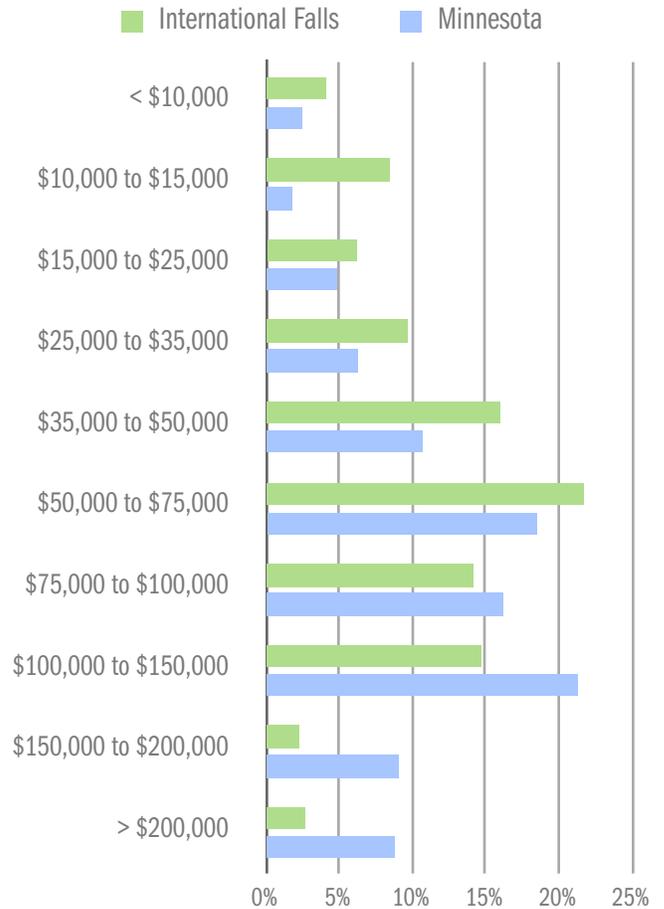


Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2017 5-year estimates

The city’s median household income is \$41,241, about 90 percent of the amount in Koochiching County (\$47,131) and about three-fifths of the amount in Minnesota (\$65,699).

Households include both “family households” (two or more people living together in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption) and “non-family households” (a person living alone or two or more unrelated people living in the same housing unit).

Income per **FAMILY** (percentage of families at each income level)



Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2017 5-year estimates

The city’s median family income is \$53,420, about 85 percent of the amount in Koochiching County (\$61,643) and about two-thirds of the amount in Minnesota (\$82,785).

Poverty in the city is much higher than in the county and the state overall - about 37% of all families with children (more than one out of three families) living in the city experience poverty - about 1.5 times the rate for the county (26%) and more than three times the rate in the state overall (11%).

Economic development SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

(Adapted and condensed from the NGKF study)

Strengths

- » Family-friendly neighborhoods
- » Wide variety of activities and public events
- » Beauty and serenity of the natural environment
- » Many cultural and arts programs
- » Abundance of natural and wildlife resources and hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation; Voyageurs National Park
- » Active industry and manufacturing, Foreign Trade Zone, available land for commercial and industrial development
- » Access to road, air and rail transportation
- » High quality city services
- » Strong educational systems from pre-school through college; Rainy River Community College
- » Businesses that provide friendly, quality service
- » Opportunities as border community
- » Opportunities for community involvement, including Voyage Forward

Weaknesses

- » Community brand as “Icebox of the Nation”
- » Geographic location & distance from major cities
- » Declining and aging population
- » Lack of regulated/licensed, flexible child care options
- » Lack of economic growth and new job creation
- » Shortage of skilled and post-secondary educated workers, shortage of appropriate job skills training
- » Need quality housing options at all price points
- » No ready-to-occupy, existing & available commercial and industrial buildings
- » Lack of economic development policies and incentives guidelines
- » Lack of quality hotel options
- » Wetland constraints on growth & costs to remediate
- » Lack of retail offerings
- » High timber pricing

Opportunities

- » Improving educational systems and learning options, - Rainy River College (Vo-Tech: law enforcement, cosmetology, welding), explore four-year programs
- » Voyage Forward initiative & resident support of economic development and diversification
- » Supporting local entrepreneurship and nurturing existing local businesses
- » Tourism, Arts, Culture, Community Events & Activities - better and increased promotion
- » Healthcare facilities and availability of services
- » Increasing exports to Canada (products and services)
- » Diversification of jobs, skill levels and union/non-union jobs
- » Strengthening business retention / enhance workforce development and planning
- » Stargazing/Research Telescope!

Threats

- » Contraction or loss of PCA and the associated satellite industries
- » Over-reliance on a single industry, lack of diversity in industry and business
- » Wage disparities between PCA and other employers
- » Loss of hunting, fishing or opportunities for outdoor recreation (from natural disasters, inadequate management, disease, etc.)
- » Canadian currency exchange rate fluctuation
- » Reduction or loss of tourism
- » Loss of essential air service subsidy, downsizing of service to airport
- » Loss or reduction of policy or funding support from state or federal government
- » Aging of population profile (natural aging plus loss of youth population)
- » Health and sustainability of forest / wood resources
- » Harmful regulations re forest management practices

Opportunity: Focusing on “target industries” for economic growth

The Newmark Grubb Knight Frank (NGKF) study identifies two general types of targets for economic development efforts in Koochiching County:

Target Group 1: Local opportunities and economic gardening

First implementation priority

Sectors that should be **grown organically** and locally through

- » Business Retention and Expansion (BRE)
- » Small Business Growth
- » Entrepreneurship

Target Group 2: Recruitment of outside businesses

Sectors that are worth **pursuing through investment attraction**

- » Marketing and Recruitment
- » Business Development
- » National and International Initiatives

The target list and strategies were developed through extensive research and were based on the specific conditions presented by the county’s unique local economy. As the county’s principal location for economic activity and employment (approximately 3/4 of all jobs in the county are located in International Falls) the recommendations from the study are particularly applicable to the city’s economic development efforts.

The recommendations are selected from the entirety of potential options, and respond to:

- » How well they align with existing local industries and with potential opportunities to develop / grow economic clusters
- » How they fit within the existing local capacity (in term of existing assets and resources)
- » How they match existing local labor in terms of headcount, skills, and education
- » Matching between industry skill requirements and available training resources
- » Geographic and supply chain adequacy
- » Expected cost and business climate suitability

A summary of the target industry recommendations are presented here.

Industry / sector target: Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	
Local focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Greenhouse, Forest Nursery & Floriculture Production » Aquaculture and/or Aquaponics » Other Animal Husbandry » Timber Tract Operations (Small and Mid-Sized Operations)
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Timber Tract Operations (Small and Mid-Sized Operations) » Forest Nurseries & Gathering of Forest Products
<i>Subsector for recruitment</i>	<i>Timber and Forestry in Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting sector</i>
<i>Rationale for recruitment in this subsector</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The county's strongest industry cluster and knowledge base » Raw material available for certain standing species and all tops and limbs » Maximizes use of available resources while diversifying employment base with other small and mid-sized employers

Industry / sector target: Manufacturing	
Local focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Fruit & Vegetable Preserving & Specialty Food Manufacturing » Other Wood Product Manufacturing » Bakeries & Tortilla Manufacturing » Other Food Manufacturing (Spices, Ice, etc.) » Cutlery & Handtool Manufacturing » Printing & Related Support Activities » Furniture & Kitchen Cabinet Manufacturing
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Food & Beverage Manufacturing » Other Wood Product Manufacturing » Converted Paper Product Manufacturing » Cutlery & Handtool Manufacturing » Boiler, Tank & Shipping Container Manufacturing » Basic Chemical (Bio / Cellulosic) Manufacturing (** with PCA collaboration)
<i>Subsector for recruitment</i>	<i>Wood Products in Manufacturing sector</i>
<i>Rationale for recruitment in this subsector</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The county's strongest industry cluster and knowledge base » Select raw material available » Maximizes use of available resources while diversifying employment base with other small and mid-sized employers. » Large products are a good candidates for rail freight

<i>Subsector for recruitment</i>	<i>Hand Tools in Manufacturing sector</i>
	» Wood is used as a key component for many hand tools
<i>Rationale for recruitment in this subsector</i>	» Excess wood and alternative tree species can be used from the nearby wood basket » A low volume, premium product opportunity within a growing industry

<i>Subsector for recruitment</i>	<i>Food & Beverage Manufacturing in Manufacturing sector</i>
	» Capitalize on the high water quality and abundant supply
<i>Rationale for recruitment in this subsector</i>	» Large advantage to bottling at the source » Premium product opportunity by leveraging Minnesota water source and offsetting any cost disadvantages

Industry / sector target: <u>Professional, Scientific & Technical Services</u>	
Local focus	» Scientific Research & Development Services ("Cold Box 2.0")
Recruitment	» Scientific Research & Development Services in Cold Weather Testing
<i>Subsector for recruitment</i>	<i>Cold Weather (Lab) Testing in Professional, Scientific & Technical Services</i>
<i>Rationale for recruitment in this subsector</i>	» <i>Makes use of existing climate conditions</i> » <i>Opportunities to expand beyond vehicles and grow the types of non-destructive testing that could be performed</i>

Industry sector target: <u>Tourism, Hospitality & Food Services</u>	
Local focus	» Travel Accommodations (Bed & Breakfast) » Recreational Vehicle (RV) Parks & Recreational Camps » Scenic & Sightseeing Transportation Services (Water, Air, Land) » Non-scheduled Air Transportation (Flight Schools; Tourism; etc.)
Recruitment	» Travel Accommodations (Hotels & Motels) » Recreational Vehicle (RV) Parks & Recreational Camps
<i>Subsector for recruitment</i>	<i>Travel Accommodations in Tourism, Hospitality & Food Services</i>
<i>Rationale for recruitment in this subsector</i>	» <i>Focus on the natural beauty of the area, Voyageurs National Park, and recreational opportunities</i> » <i>Focus on hospitality companies accustomed to the seasonality of the Minnesota weather, and experience with both hotels and campgrounds</i> » <i>Include companies who handle vacation hotels rather than business hotels</i>

Industry / sector target: Wholesale Trade

Local focus	» Transportation Industry Training (Rail, Truck) » Batch Manufacturing for Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order
Recruitment	» Transportation Industry Training (Rail, Truck)

Industry / sector target: Other Commercial Services

Local focus	» Commercial & Industrial Machinery & Equipment Repair & Maintenance » Additive (“3D”) Printing to Mail Order
Recruitment	» Commercial & Industrial Machinery & Equipment Repair & Maintenance

Subsector for recruitment *Commercial Equipment & Machinery Build, Service and Repair | in Other Commercial Services sector*

Rationale for recruitment in this subsector

- » *Build on small manufacturing requirements in the region and across the Midwest. The region is still an agricultural and manufacturing hub with diverse equipment and machinery needs*
- » *Import/Export is important so the border presence and FTZ status are advantages*

Industry / sector target: Public Administration

Local focus	» Expanded Program Offerings via Rainy River Community College - Academic - Technical - Athletic
Recruitment	» Field Offices for State of MN Departments & Agencies

Industry / sector target: Construction

Local focus	» Highway, Street & Bridge Construction
Recruitment	» none recommended

Industry / sector target: Media, Arts, Entertainment & Recreation

Local focus	» Amusement Parks & Arcades (Go-Karts; Paint Ball; etc.)
Recruitment	» Motion Picture & Video Industries » Gambling (** State and/or First Nation collaboration)

Source: Newmark Grubb Knight Frank (NGKF)

Opportunity: Federally designated Opportunity Zone sites

Opportunity Zones are a new community development program established through the Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2017 to encourage long-term investments in low-income and urban communities nationwide.

International Falls has been designated as an Opportunity Zone, with a very large (3,200 acre) area that includes significant portions of the Highway 53 Corridor, the airport, previously-identified redevelopment sites, residential locations, and areas currently under consideration for annexation.

Why Opportunity Zones are attractive to investors

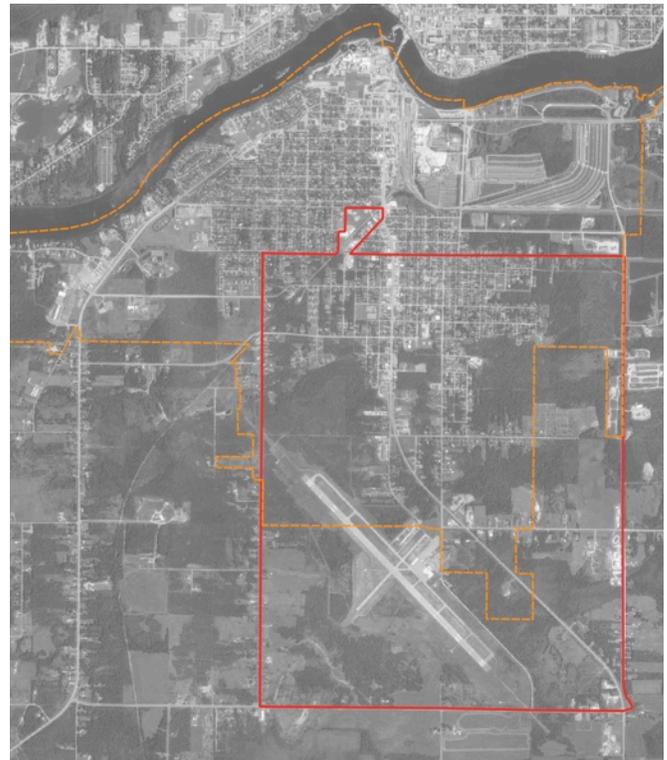
When an investor sells an asset they generate a capital gain on which they must pay taxes.

If the investor reinvests that capital gain within 180 days into a designated Opportunity Zone, they are eligible - depending on the amount of time they keep their investment in place - to reduce their initial capital gains obligation by 15%, and the tax on gains from their Opportunity Zone investment to \$0.

The longer an investor leaves their money in place within an Opportunity Zone, the more their capital gains tax liability is reduced:

- » After five years: reduction of taxes by 10%
- » After seven years: reduction by 15%
- » After 10 years no taxes due on gains from their Opportunity Zone investment

Investments can be used for virtually any type of development or business activity - including business startup, rehabilitation of housing, development of



View of the city's federally designated Opportunity Zone (outlined in red).

distribution centers or warehouses, development of workforce housing, and other potential opportunities.

Potential benefits to International Falls

Investors and brokers describe Opportunity Zones as one of the most beneficial tax reforms in decades for their interests - which means that there could be significant potential to attract new investment to International Falls and other communities that are part of this program.

Vigorous marketing of the city and its many assets might attract new investment opportunities. It may also be useful to consider implications from the Opportunity Zone designation in the city's conversations regarding annexation.

Opportunity: Redevelopment sites

The Koochiching Economic Development Authority (KEDA) worked with the city to identify and track potential redevelopment sites in and near the area of the city. These sites are zoned primarily for commercial or industrial uses, and were also reviewed by the NGKF study.

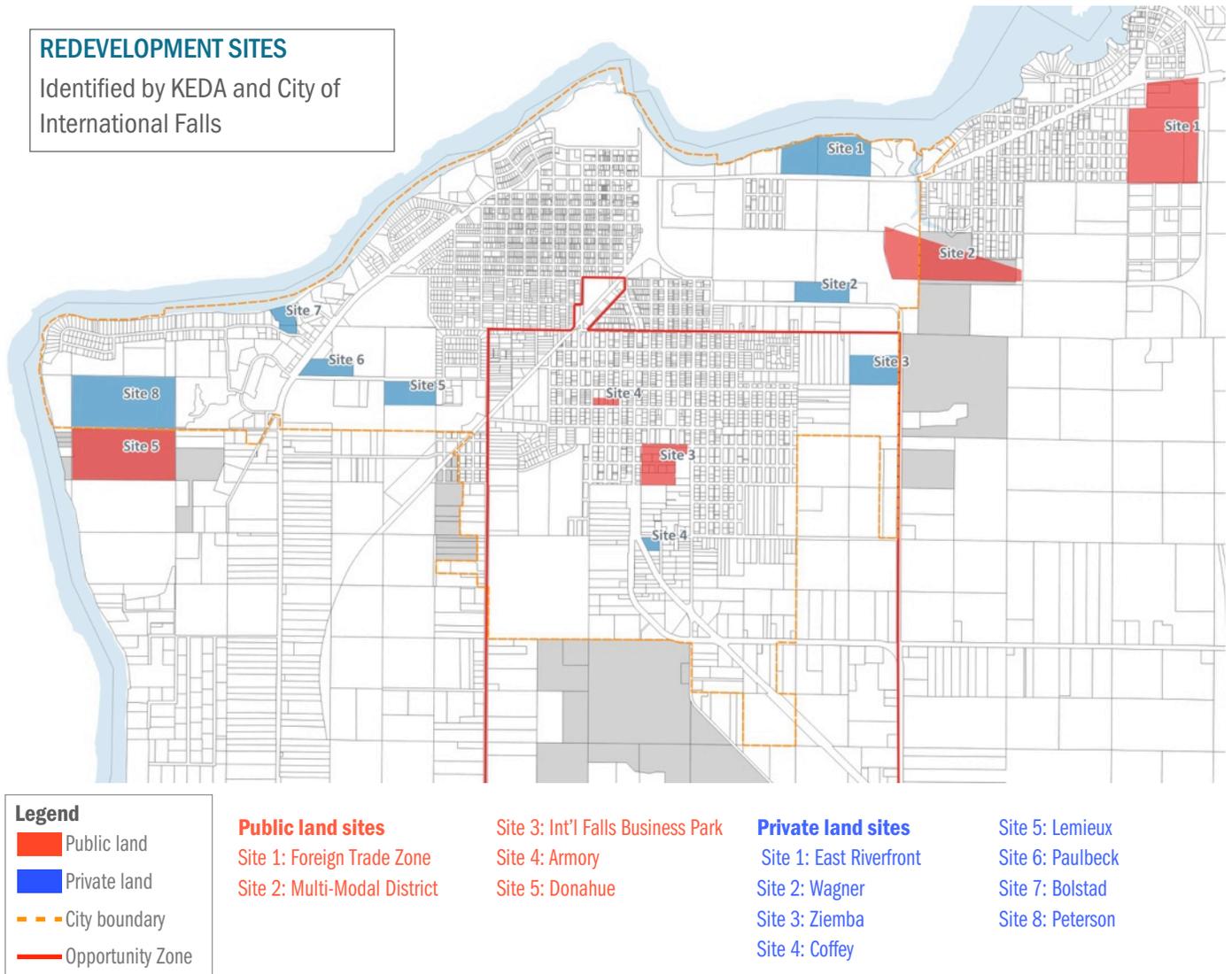
Development sites fall into two categories: publicly-owned and privately-owned. There are five publicly-owned parcels and seven privately-owned sites.

Marketing the redevelopment sites

“A detailed and branded Property Feature Sheet should be developed for every available site. It should be available in a handout and digital copy as well as placed on the Economic Development Partnership’s website and other regional and state websites.”

~ from the NGKF study

Map of redevelopment sites



Publicly-owned sites

There are five publicly-owned redevelopment sites in and around International Falls.

Public site #1: Foreign Trade Zone site



Large (100 acre) site adjacent to CN Rail main line, siding and access road. Though outside the city, its development as a trade hub could have important implications for the city. Undeveloped / greenfield site currently jointly owned by the city and county.

Public site #2: Multi-modal Distribution Center



Large (64 acre) site owned by the International Falls EDA and partially within the city. Sits along Highway 155 / 332 and includes a rail spur into the property. Undeveloped / greenfield site currently zoned M2-A manufacturing.

Public site #3: Business Park site



The business park site is owned by KEDA and is located within the city's federal Opportunity Zone, near the airport and along Highway 53. It is four acres of greenfield and includes utilities. It is zoned M1-B Manufacturing.

Public site #4: Armory site

The site of the former Armory is envisioned as an ideal location for a data center or other similar technology use and is within the city's federal Opportunity Zone.

Public site #5: Donahue site



Large (74 acre) site located near the river and straddling the city's present boundary at its western end. Undeveloped / greenfield site. Scheduled for annexation by 2021, and zoned as residential.

Privately-owned sites

There are eight privately-owned redevelopment sites in and around International Falls.

Private site #1: East Riverfront site



Large private site (48 acres) adjacent to and with Rainy River / Lake access, served by a walking and biking trail connecting to the city's downtown and eastward to Ranier. Next to Irv Anderson Park and amphitheater. Ideal for a residential and restaurant / entertainment / hotel development. Undeveloped / greenfield site currently zoned C-2 commercial.

Private site #2: Wagner site



This 30 acre site is located near Highway 332. Conversations with the current owner indicate potential for either commercial or manufacturing uses. Ensuring that this site retains flexibility for both

will support developer interest and investment in the area. Undeveloped / greenfield site currently zoned M2-A manufacturing.

Private site #3: Ziemba site

Large site (22 acres) adjacent to Highway 332. Undeveloped / greenfield site currently zoned M2-B manufacturing and located within the city's federal Opportunity Zone.

Private site #4: Coffey site

Former restaurant site on Highway 53, four acres and zoned C-2 commercial. Utilities already sited and located within the city's federal Opportunity Zone. Conversations with the current owner indicate interest in potential development of a corner store and pizza shop, with additional area used for recreational boat storage.

Private site #5: Lemieux site

Eighteen acre site located on Keenan Drive. Undeveloped / greenfield site currently under Airport Zone B.

Private site #6: Paulbeck site

Twelve acre site located on Keenan Drive. Undeveloped / greenfield site currently zoned C-2 commercial. Utilities available.

Private site #7: Bolstad site

Small (7 acre) site located near the city's big-box commercial district and Rainy River Community College, with views to river. Undeveloped / greenfield currently zoned C-2 commercial.

Private site #8: Peterson site

Large (94 acre) site along the Rainy River. Undeveloped / greenfield site currently zoned R-1 residential.

Recommendations

Goal 1: Retain, attract and grow business

- » **Strategy 1.1:** Adopt the recommendations of the NGKF study
 - Use the study's recommendations to coordinate business development and recruitment
- » **Strategy 1.2:** Develop a "shop local" campaign
 - A strong local economy will attract new companies and businesses, and support the ongoing vitality of the city
- » **Strategy 1.3:** Support and enhance existing businesses
 - Seek opportunities to learn about and solve barriers to retention of businesses like a Business Mentorship Program or Business Retention Program.
- » **Strategy 1.4:** Develop and distribute key informational resources, such as guidelines and best practices, to support decision-making and viability of existing businesses
- » **Strategy 1.5:** Directory of locally-owned businesses
 - Work with the Chamber of Commerce to expand the function of the current directory of local businesses to allow residents and other businesses to easily find what they need from their local shops. For an example, please see www.ppna.org/shop-powderhorn
- » **Strategy 1.6:** Support focused redevelopment in downtown
 - Development in the downtown area should be consistent with the area's existing character, emphasize a pedestrian-oriented scale for development, and link to existing pedestrian and bicycle networks
 - Downtown redevelopment should include retail, professional services, arts and entertainment, and housing
 - Mixed-use developments are recommended for incorporating multiple uses and creating a people-centered environment
- » **Strategy 1.6:** Support the redevelopment of the Highway 53 area
 - Rehabilitation and redevelopment of the Highway 53 area will increase commerce and tourism, as well as efficient transportation across the city
 - Rehabilitation will also prioritize safe mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists
- » **Strategy 1.7:** Attract larger businesses
 - Use the recommendations from the NGKF study to create strategic plans to attract large businesses that require a large employee base
 - If possible, businesses should consider brownfield sites to revitalize existing urban areas
- » **Strategy 1.8:** Develop a pipeline of trained interns and potential new staff into existing and new businesses
 - Partner with Rainy River Community College to connect students and recent graduates with local employers, and support the staffing needs of new and growing businesses
- » **Strategy 1.9:** Support the development of business incubators for local start-ups
 - Business incubator spaces provide small spaces that are affordable to start-up businesses
 - Work with local developers and property owners to develop a business incubator in the walkable downtown area of the city (attractive to software or tech start-ups), as well as in the

industrial areas of the city (attractive to manufacturing start-ups)

Goal 2: Focus on competitiveness

- » Strategy 2.1: Establish and maintain public and private partnerships
 - Collaborate with private entities, when possible
- » Strategy 2.2: Provide business incentives
 - Consider comprehensive incentives to support healthy growth of existing businesses and encourage them to remain in the city, and to attract new businesses
- » Strategy 2.3: Review land use and zoning standards
 - Zoning standards should reflect current needs of community while creating new opportunities for residential and commercial growth
- » Strategy 2.4: Attract technology innovation
 - Partner with technology companies to provide additional resources for existing businesses, and attract new businesses and professionals
- » Strategy 2.5: Seek grant opportunities
 - Public community-based projects should be partly funded by outside grants
- » Strategy 2.6: Market redevelopment and investment opportunities
 - Widely advertise and publicize the city's Opportunity Zone and the identified redevelopment sites
 - Develop information sheets and disseminate widely through the development and investment community
- » Strategy 2.7: Coordinated marketing campaign
 - Develop a focused and compelling marketing campaign that provides a unified message and presents a dynamic image of the city

Goal 3: Provide a high quality life

- » Strategy 3.1: Preserve community character
 - Increase the use and vitality of downtown
- » Strategy 3.2: Encourage community pride
 - Public events and art, vibrant open spaces, City marketing efforts, conservation of natural resources, and preservation of "small-town" character should focus on developing strong community pride
- » Strategy 3.3: Invest in a high-quality education
 - Support opportunities within public and private entities to provide young people with positive professional experiences
 - Continue to partner with the School District and Rainy River Community College

Goal 4: Retain and attract residents

- » Strategy 4.1: Accommodate a variety of housing types
 - Accommodate housing for all ages, including a variety of housing types, including single-family, multi-family and mixed-use developments.
- » Strategy 4.2: Recruit a variety of businesses
 - Seek opportunities to recruit a variety of businesses in a range of industries - for example, including technology businesses to create new employment opportunities and attract outside professionals
 - Follow the recommendations of the NGKF study
 -

4.6 Parks and recreation

Parks, trails and opportunities for recreation are a key component for quality of life in a community. Stewardship of the city’s current assets, and planning for their improvement, are important steps for the city’s future success.

Parks and trails play a vital role in the social, economic, and physical well-being of a community’s residents. They provide access to recreational opportunities, increase property values, spur local economies, improve safety, and mitigate stormwater runoff and other environmental threats.

Parks and trails bring beauty, connection, and health into a city’s everyday life, and are powerful tools for improving quality of life and building more vibrant communities.



On the trail along State Highway 11, connecting International Falls and Ranier.

Vision and goals

Future vision

International Falls plans, maintains, and operates a parks and recreation system that welcomes and engages residents and visitors through abundant beauty, recreational opportunities, social connection, and fun and learning for all people. The parks and recreation system is connected to the city’s neighborhoods, daily destinations and natural assets, and meets the needs of individuals, families, and the community.

Goals

- » Maintain a sufficient amount of public land to meet the recreational needs of existing and future residents
- » Assure that private development will adhere to City standards for open space and for environmental sustainability
- » Offer the community a citywide interconnected trail system with access to parks and regional trails that meet recreation and transportation needs

Assets in the city

The opportunities for recreation that a community offers are an important component of the enjoyment and quality of life that its residents can access.

International Falls offers numerous parks, walking, biking and snowmobile trails, opportunities for boating, fishing and hunting, and numerous natural and woodland areas in its immediate vicinity.

These are also a great asset for inviting visitors into the city and building economic activity and employment.

Existing conditions



City parks

The city owns and operates twelve parks within the city limits. One additional park (City Beach) is located east of the city. The city also owns and operates two boat launches providing public access to the Rainy River.

Different activities and opportunities are distributed through different parks - e.g., playground equipment is provided at some but not all parks, some are green spaces only, and programming and organized sports opportunities are provided at specific locations.

City parks include:

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1) Burlington Park | 12) Riverview Park |
| 2) Carson Lupie | 13) Shorewood Park |
| 3) Centennial Park | 14) Smokey Bear Park |
| 4) City Beach | 15) Tony Rizzo Field |
| 5) Eighth Avenue Park | |
| 6) Eighth Street Park & Rink | |
| 7) Green Acres Park | |
| 8) Holler Rink, Fields & Basketball Court | |
| 9) Irvin N. Anderson Amphitheater | |
| 10) Kerry Park | |
| 11) Riverside Park | |

It should also be noted that the ISD 361 schools campus offers park facilities for the use of neighboring families when school is not in session. However, these facilities are not owned, maintained or programmed by the city.

Gaps in parks access

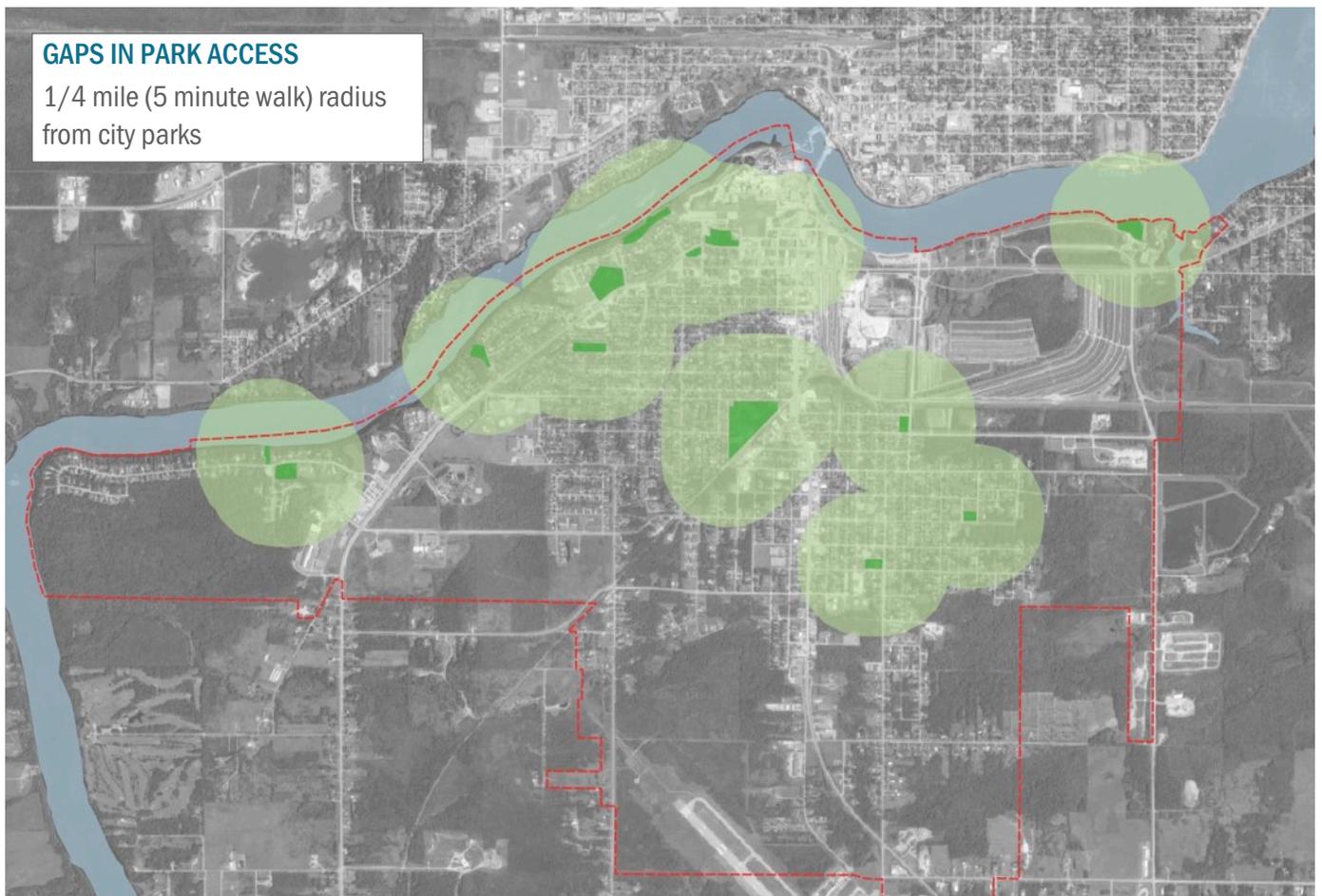
There are some gaps in park access in the city, where parks are farther than a five minute walk from residences.

Generally, a five minute (1/4 mile) walk distance to parks is desired by families walking to nearby residential playgrounds. Ready access to neighborhood recreational amenities is an important component of resident satisfaction and of real estate valuation for residential districts.

The map below provides a view of those areas, though it does not take into account the differences in equipment (for example, playground equipment) that may or may not be available at each location. Developing such a summary as part of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan may be helpful for future planning of programming and playground equipment and conditions inventories.



At a concert at the Smokey Bear Park bandshell.



Designated bow and arrow hunting areas

Hunting is a big part of Minnesota tradition and outdoor recreational activities. The designation of selected areas within the city limits for hunting with bow and arrow are currently under study.

These areas are intended primarily for deer hunting to address increased encroachment of the deer population in developed areas of the city.

The opportunity to provide space for hunting within city limits increases the potential range of outdoor recreational activities that are conveniently available to city residents.

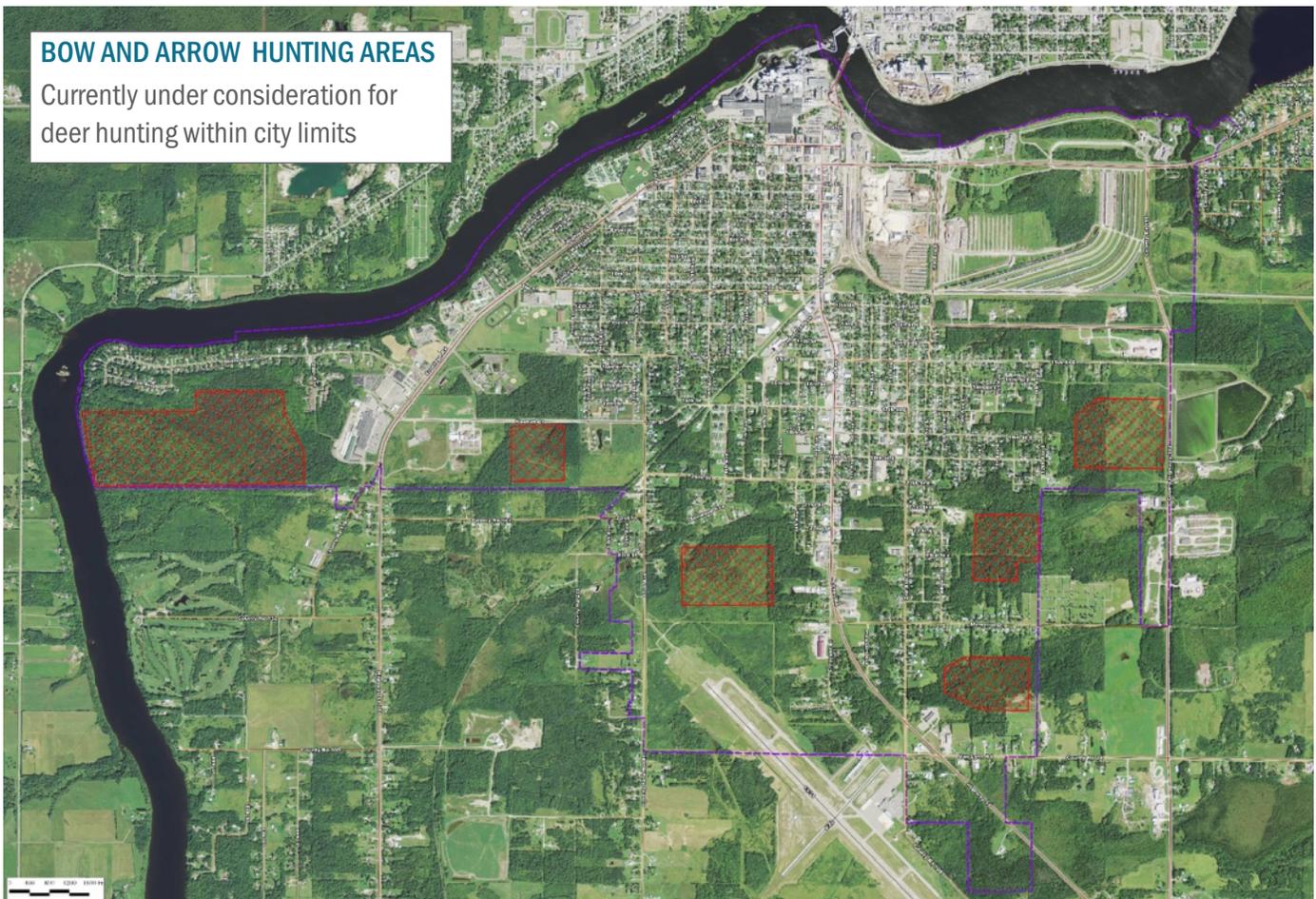
A question about this opportunity was included in the plan’s community engagement survey. Keeping in

mind the limitations of the survey (it was not intended to provide a statistically significant random sample of the city’s population and was not meant to be representative of overall sentiment), responses generally were:

- » 30% in favor
- » 40% not in favor
- » 30% not sure

The new zoning ordinance included as part of the development for this plan addresses regulations and restrictions applicable to the new hunting areas.

The map below indicates the proposed locations for deer hunting within the city limits.



Opportunity: A sports center for year-round use

Numerous residents and city leaders have discussed the possibility of developing a sports and fitness complex that includes indoor facilities and could be used year-round.

The facility would serve as a sports hub for local residents and families and also as a draw for hosting regional high school and collegiate tournaments. The center could capitalize on International Falls' renown and tradition for winter sports, and also provide for other activities and recreational opportunities for the rest of the year.

This idea was discussed as far back as the city's 1966 Comprehensive Plan, which noted that parks are an important driver for residents' quality of life and economic development and that access to community parks in the city was "far below ... other cities."

That plan recommended providing an indoor (year-round) recreational facility including a new hockey arena and indoor sports center.

Many other communities, including Fort Frances, offer similar facilities to their residents. In the case of Fort Frances, their Memorial Sports Center offers:

- » Two ice surfaces
- » 25 meter (75 ft) length pool
- » Two glass back squash courts
- » Weight room with universal and free weights
- » Fitness room with treadmills, steppers and bikes
- » Community auditorium
- » Conference room

An example from another Minnesota city

Grand Marais (population 1,360) developed a new 38,000 s.f. YMCA year-round facility in 2015 by partnering with Cook County, the Cook County School District and the YMCA of Duluth.

The facility has proven to be a fantastic success and great asset to the community. Facilities include a full court gymnasium, a pool and aquatics center, multipurpose meetings spaces, weights and cardio areas, and an aerobics studio.



Image courtesy of JLG Architects.

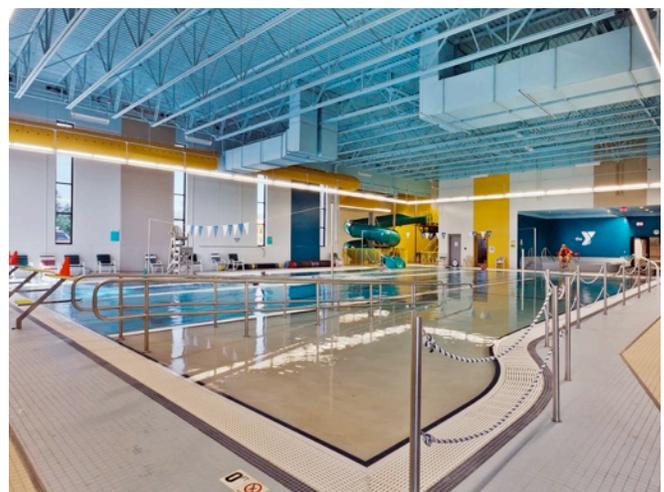


Image courtesy of JLG Architects.

Recommendations

Goal 1: Park system planning

- » Strategy 1.1: Develop a Master Park Plan to ensure adequate parks, facilities, open spaces, and trails are provided for the community
 - Use the Master Park Plan to guide implementation of any proposed projects
 - Study the potential of public / private partnerships to establish and operate facilities and programs

Goal 2: Provide parks and indoor / outdoor recreation areas

- » Strategy 2.1: Enhance quality of life for current and future generations by providing adequate parkland, natural areas, and indoor / outdoor recreation areas to fulfill future needs
- » Strategy 2.2: Use the existing and future park and natural areas to shape future land use and development decisions
- » Strategy 2.3: Develop a year-round indoor arena to provide access to sports and community activities for children, young people and families
- » Strategy 2.4: Review condition of existing facilities and develop updates as needed
 - Consider addition of splash pad / spray facilities at local parks
 - Review condition of Kerry Park and explore upgrades to Kerry Park Arena

Goal 3: Create and maintain an interconnected trail and sidewalk system for recreation and transportation

- » Strategy 3.1: Develop a pedestrian and bicycle plan that summarizes existing walk / bike issues and offers strategic guidance and solutions for improving user safety, comfort, convenience and

connectivity and growing use of walking and biking for everyday travel in the city

- » Strategy 3.2: Provide a trail and sidewalk system that emphasizes a connection with the natural environment while also providing connection to urban and suburban areas in the city
- » Strategy 3.3: Tie the various parks into the interconnected trail system effectively and link the trail system to those of the adjacent area and any regional park and trail systems

Goal 4: Provide for the conservation and preservation of natural resources

- » Strategy 4.1: Preserve natural resources as valuable open space and an important aspect of the city
- » Strategy 4.2: Ensure that natural environments and ecological systems are protected and well-managed within the city

Goal 5: Provide residents with activities and programs throughout the City

- » Strategy 5.1: Establish a plan to communicate and inform residents about issues pertaining to the parks system
 - Promote active interaction with residents to ensure recreational programming and appropriate facility development
- » Strategy 5.2: Promote ongoing volunteer opportunities through athletic, youth and civic organizations to assist in maintenance and programming in city parks

4.7 Natural and cultural resources

International Falls' natural environment and the history and culture of the peoples who have inhabited it are an asset for its future.

Nature and history are the foundation of place. International Falls' environmental resources - including the Rainy River, Rainy Lake, and surrounding forest land - are what first brought people to the area. The city's history intertwines a heritage of logging, milling and fishing that began in the late 19th century with the history of Native people who lived on this same land for centuries.

Through time, people's activities have left physical marks on the city and its surrounding area - buildings, structures, paths, and numerous archaeological sites are fragile, valuable remnants of a past that is important to the identity of International Falls. Protecting these natural and cultural assets are important priorities in the plan.

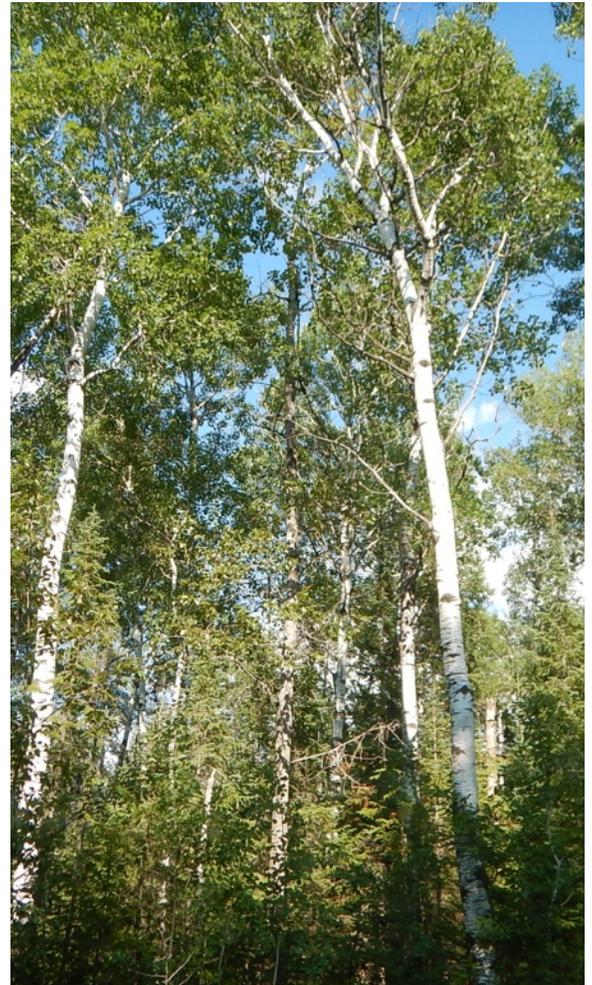
Vision and goals

Future vision

International Falls values its natural environment, resources and heritage, and works to preserve them for the benefit of current and future residents and visitors.

Goals

- » Identify, preserve and promote important cultural resource sites throughout International Falls
- » Assure that private development will adhere to City standards for open space and for environmental sustainability



The natural environment and the resources it provides are a key reason for the city's development. The beauty and access to recreation that it offers residents is a key reason why they stay.

Existing conditions

Environmental resources

The state of a city's natural environment has implications for how land use decisions are made, and for how preservation and development are balanced. International Falls has thrived because of its ability to make use of its natural resources. Over a century ago, using the water fall and dam to power a paper mill that worked with the products derived from its forests was the key to the region's success.

The city includes low-lying marshes and swamp land, which makes some areas within and just outside the city difficult to develop. Much of the city's land is designated as wetland depressions, requiring that almost all new development go through additional approval processes.

Wetland designation areas

In January of 2014 the City of International Falls adopted a Comprehensive Wetland Protection and Management Plan. The purpose of the plan is to assist the City in more efficient and effective utilization of its 6.4 square miles of land base.

The plan recommends a mechanism that balances the need for economic growth with a strategy for wetland preservation. The field inventory provided in the plan identified 344 acres of forested wetland and 322 acres of "scrub shrub" wetland, as well as 73 acres of "emergent" wetland for a total of 739 acres of wetland.

The wetland plan proposes that impacts on wetlands of less than 10,000 square feet would not require a Local Government Unit permit but would require a US Army Corps of Engineers Pre-Construction Notification. Projects over the minimum square footage would require both a Local Government Unit permit and a US Army Corps of Engineers permit.

Cultural resources

Cultural resources are the features, structures, objects, or locations that are deemed by the community to have historical and cultural value.

Cultural resources may include buildings associated with specific events or people who had an impact on the area's development. Examples could include homes where notable people grew up, Native American artifacts or sites, geologically-notable sites, and other resources that are critical to maintaining and enhancing International Falls' historic character.

Identified cultural resources

Cultural resources in and around International Falls include:

- » The city's downtown has many handsome and well-preserved buildings. The downtown may be eligible for designation as an Historic District.
- » The papermill administrative offices, owned by PCA. The mill was the engine for the city's growth over much of the last hundred years. The original offices have historic value to the city.
- » The International Falls Public Library is an anchor building in the city's civic core.
- » Prehistoric burial mounds, including Grand Mound (located about 15 miles southwest of the city).
- » Notable homes throughout the city. Homes would need to be specifically identified and discussed by a cultural resources commission.
- » Notable International Falls residents, including: Bronko Nagurski, other former NHL Players, former town leaders, business leaders, and other notable figures.
- » The Koochiching Museums, including the Historical Museum and the Bronko Nagurski Museum, both located in the city's civic core.

Recommendations

Goal 1: Support the continuing role of timber and forest industries in the local economy

- » Strategy 1.1: Balance industry and ecosystem needs
 - Develop and work with partners to ensure the needs of timber processors and producers are met while balancing the need to retain the integrity of the natural resource base
- » Strategy 1.2: Collaboration with forest industries
 - Work with established and prospective forest industry partners to ensure that the development and maintenance of public infrastructure needed for successful operations is adequate for industry's needs
- » Strategy 1.3: Manage forest resources
 - Use the city's influence and work with partners to support ecologically responsible forest management and timber practices in and around the city's area
- » Strategy 1.4: Employment and training
 - Continue to work with local industry and educational institutions, including Rainy River Community College, to increase access to job training and create a pipeline to employment with local forest industries

Goal 2: Identify, preserve and promote cultural resource sites

- » Strategy 2.1: Establish a cultural resources commission
 - Create a cultural resources preservation commission tasked with identifying, cataloging, and supporting the preservation of key cultural resources in the city
- » Strategy 2.2: Landmark identification

- Work with the newly formed cultural resources preservation commission and with state and federal landmark preservation programs to identify and protect buildings, statues, and other places as culturally and historically relevant.
- » Strategy 2.3: Adaptive reuse
 - Commit to the principle of adaptive reuse to ensure that architecturally and historically-significant resources can continue to support economic activity in the city while preserving their cultural integrity
- » Strategy 2.4: Education around cultural resources
 - Work with community organizations including the city's public schools, St. Thomas Aquinas Church and School, Backus Community Center, Rainy River Community College, the Koochiching Museums, and others to provide cooperative educational efforts regarding cultural resources
- » Strategy 2.5: Marketing and promotion
 - Work with Minnesota Tourism, the city's Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development partners to publicize and promote visitation to the city's cultural resources

4.8 The arts

The arts and artistic activity can play an important role in connecting people with each other, in building economic activity, and in building community vitality and excitement.

The arts reflect the culture and interests of a community's residents, assert and express their identity, and announce their contributions to the places where they live. The arts and the artistic process increase awareness, connection and engagement between people.

Artistic activity is hopeful because it helps people see themselves as producers (of culture, art, ideas) rather than simply as consumers. While "consumers" lack power - they use what others make, "producers" create and can make change in the places where they live, bringing improvement that addresses their needs and aspirations.

That change in thinking and attitude is one of the most important benefits the arts and culture bring communities, and goes beyond the now widely acknowledged (and important) role that artistic activity has in spurring economic activity, tourism, and engagement.

Goals

- » To recognize, support and promote artistic activity already taking place around the city
- » To attract new artists and artistic activity to the city and make International Falls an active, arts-infused center for arts and culture in the region
- » To make artistic activity accessible to artists and non-artists alike
- » To use art-making as a tool for connection between people - regardless of ethnic, cultural, or generational differences - using arts-based community development ("ABCD") strategies to improve and enhance the environment of the city for the benefit of all residents, businesses and people in the area



"Autumn," a metal and glass sculpture in the city's civic center by Eric "Erickson" Kulig. This piece as well as several other pieces nearby are a notable addition to the city's civic core.

What we heard: from business engagement

"Our walls are covered from head to toe with artwork from local artists. And the best part, they're ALL for sale! Come grab one for yourself and bring a piece of International Falls into your home!"

~ Coffee Landing Café

Existing conditions

International Falls hosts a large number of art venues and events for a city of its size.

Art events and galleries

The city's **Arts and Crafts Fair** is held yearly in August and in conjunction with the International Falls Bass Championship (IFBC), which brings visitors throughout the US and Canada to the city. About 2,500 daily visitors stroll through the approximately fifty vendor booths to view and purchase a variety of handcraft and fine arts items, including sculpture, painting and photographs. The fair lasts for the duration of the Bass Championship event (three days) and features many local artists and performances.

Coffee Landing Café in the city's downtown provides display and sales space for numerous works by area painters and photographers, as well as display space for books written by local authors. In addition, musicians regularly perform in the shop's stage.

Arts centers and institutions

Backus Community Center, housed in the city's former junior high, hosts a variety of arts-related programs and workshops - including arts and painting classes, and theater and writing workshops. Receiving over 30,000 visits by adults and children during the year, Backus is a home for the arts, culture, youth programs and community services. The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2004.

ISD 361 (the city's public school district) offers numerous arts, music and performance classes as part of its curriculum for kindergarten through Grade 12 students. In addition, the district offers a broad range of opportunities for adults interested in exploring arts and crafts through its Community Education program.



The Arts and Crafts Fair is held as part of the International Falls Bass Championship (IFBC). Image courtesy of IFBC.



From the 2017 production of Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory by Borealis Bards, staged at Backus Community Center. Image courtesy of Borealis Bards.



Duluth band Paper Parlor performing at Coffee Landing Café. Image courtesy of Coffee Landing Café.

Recommendations

Goal 1: Raise the visibility of the city's arts assets and artistic activity taking place in the city

- » Strategy 1.1: Arts and architecture walks
 - Work with partners to establish tours of the city's arts and architecture assets
- » Strategy 1.2: Publicize the arts production of city residents
 - Support local art fairs, work with businesses with high tourist and traveler visitation to highlight work of local artists (Coffee Landing Café currently does this)
- » Strategy 1.3: Encourage public art
 - Support projects that directly involve young people and area residents in the creation and installation of art in the public realm of the city
 - Support opportunities for arts-making activities, festivals and celebrations. Include public arts-making workshops as part of improvements or investments to the public realm

Goal 2: Establish a high-visibility arts center

- » Strategy 2.1: Seed the startup of an arts practice and instruction space in the downtown
 - Work with foundations and other partners to start a high-visibility arts venue in downtown
 - The venue would be a permanent art space for community workshops, shows, and residencies, which could host artists from across the world, show work all year round, and host community conversations

Goal 3: Serve the housing needs of artists

- » Strategy 3.1: Encourage the development of artist housing
 - Live-work spaces that include connected residential and commercial (gallery or storefront) uses within a single unit are typically favored by artists
 - Availability of these spaces can help attract artists and artistic activity to the city



WPA mural at the city's post office by renowned artist Lucia Wiley. Image courtesy of LivingNewDeal.org



"Winter," one of several sculptures by Eric Kulig in the libraries sculpture garden.



Mural commemorating the former Border Theater on its site in the city's downtown. Image by Explore Mn.

4.9 Utilities

High quality utility and public infrastructure systems are key requirements for a city that provides high quality of life for its residents and supportive conditions for business startup and success.

A strategic plan to manage sewer, water resources, and other systems ensures a community is able to meet its current and future needs without compromising quality of service or degrading its natural environment. Achieving a sustainable development pattern requires that public water, sanitary sewer, storm sewer and other systems be well-managed.

Vision and goals

Future vision

International Falls plans and maintains its facilities and public utility systems to efficiently and cost-effectively provide services to its residents, supporting high quality of life, protecting its assets and building value for the community. Public facilities and utility systems are located, designed and programmed to meet the needs of all citizens.

Goals

- » Continue to provide excellent utility services to residents and businesses
- » Proactively maintain existing infrastructure
- » Ensure environmentally sustainable water and stormwater management
- » Consolidate sewer collection across the region



Utilities and infrastructure systems - whether municipal, like water, or private, like telecommunications and broadband - have great impact on both quality of life and economic development.

Existing conditions

Utility services in International Falls are at an important time in their trajectory. A shrinking population, increased regional water service demands, considerations related to annexation, ongoing maintenance, and necessary infrastructure upgrades are all issues that need to be carefully considered in the coming years. Adequate planning will ensure that the utility system continues to provide excellent service to current and future residents.

Water treatment plant

The city's water treatment plant produces, stores and delivers the city's drinking water. The water plant has capacity to produce up to 2 million gallons of water per day. It currently runs at under one third of its capacity, producing 600,000 gallons per day. Daily production has been reduced to match decreased local demand as the city's population has decreased and as new water saving measures in homes have been implemented, including modern appliances and plumbing systems. According to Water Treatment Plant Chief Operator Bruce Wilson, at the height of its use the plant produced about 1.2 million gallons per day on hot summer days.

The plant has ample capacity to accommodate more than twice the current need and use. A project to paint and upgrade the existing 500,000 gallon ground storage water tank at the water treatment plant was completed in 2017.

Sale of water outside International Falls

International Falls sells its water to other municipalities and to individuals living outside of International Falls with cisterns, including the City of Ranier, MN, and to residents of unincorporated areas of Koochiching County. City water officials estimate that International Falls is not currently receiving sufficient revenue from its sale of water to cover necessary system upgrades and deferred maintenance.



Interior of the city's water treatment plant.

Did you know?

In a blind taste test sponsored by the American Water Works Association (AWWA):

- » Water from the International Falls water plant won "Champion" in the Great Minnesota State Fair Tap Water Taste Test in 2013.
- » At the national water competition, International Falls' water came in second place.

Sanitary sewer system

The wastewater treatment facility is operated by the North Koochiching Area Sanitary District (NKASD). NKASD treats wastewater from International Falls, Ranier, and the East Koochiching Sanitary Sewer District (EKSSD). Currently, the sanitary sewer treatment plant offers a treatment capacity of 3.0 million gallons per day (mgd) in wet weather and 1.34 mgd in dry weather. The ten year average annual flow through the plant is 383 million gallons, or 1.05 mgd.

Inflow and infiltration

Inflow and infiltration refers to the excess flow of clear water into the city's sewer collections system from outside sources like sump pumps or leaks into the system from cracked pipes or other deteriorating infrastructure. Significant inflow and infiltration can cause problems as they may, when added to normal sewer load, exceed a city's treatment capacity.

In International Falls, high inflow and infiltration levels pose risks for potential sewer backups, increased costs, and environmental contamination. The city is working to assess this issue through consistent monitoring, including measuring how the sanitary sewer system is affected during heavy rains, and will continue to work with the NKASD, MPCA and other partners to minimize inflow and infiltration.

Electric service

Electric service in International Falls and its surrounding area is provided by Minnesota Power (a private company that is a division of Allete, Inc.). The company operates the regional power system that provides electricity for a 26,000-square-mile electric service area in northeastern Minnesota, and supplies retail electric service to 145,000 customers and wholesale electric service to 16 municipalities.



*NKASD wastewater treatment facility. Image courtesy of
Widseth Smith Nolting.*

Broadband

High-speed Internet access is readily available in the city, providing opportunity for high-tech businesses and start-ups to consider locating in the area.

Four firms supply broadband services in International Falls: Frontier Telephone Company, Paul Bunyan Communications, MidContinent Communications, and the Northeast Service Cooperative. Fiber lines are located around and throughout the city. While the city itself is now served by broadband, most of the of county is unserved.

Preparing for EVs (electric vehicles)

As the number of electric vehicles increases, availability of charging stations may help serve residents and attract travelers to specific locations in the city.

Working with electric service and mobility providers to offer EV charging in or near the downtown (especially if combined as part of other travel services in a Downtown Mobility Hub) may be a useful strategy to increase visitation and potential customers to local businesses.

Recommendations

Goal 1: Ensure environmentally sustainable water and stormwater management

- » Strategy 1.1: Improve storm water facilities
 - Provide adequate storm water facilities for conveyance, flow control, and pollution reduction
- » Strategy 1.2: Resources and natural systems
 - Manage stormwater as a resource for watershed health and public use, while protecting stormwater management capacity of natural resources
- » Strategy 1.3: On-site stormwater management
 - Encourage on-site stormwater management through facility investments and land use decisions
- » Strategy 1.4: Partnerships
 - Coordinate partnerships across municipalities to enhance stormwater practices and watershed health

Goal 2: Cost-efficient, sustainable utility services

- » Strategy 2.1: Review sanitary sewer system needs and costs before considering annexation
 - Prepare financial and operational studies to determine cost implications of extending services to potential land annexations
- » Strategy 2.2: Utility connections
 - Do not provide sewer or water connection to properties outside of the city's municipal boundary
 - Require that properties currently served by city utilities but outside of city boundaries agree to a) annexation into the city, or b) pay full cost of

connection to the city's systems, including capital costs

Goal 3: Prepare for electric vehicles

- » Strategy 3.1: Investigate electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure
 - Work with partners to investigate potential service models and locations for electric vehicle charging infrastructure
 - Determine locations and configurations that can serve to attract travelers to downtown

Goal 4: Expand high-speed internet opportunities

- » Strategy 4.1: Work with private sector partnerships to enhance broadband and fiber deployments
 - Maintain information on fiber-optic internet locations to identify areas that need connection or improvement to high-speed service
 - Review status of service to areas located within the city's Opportunity Zone and redevelopment sites

4.10 Community participation and engagement

Residents who are active and engaged members of their community are more likely to stay, invest in their neighborhoods and start businesses. Growing participation, engagement and communications is an important city goal.

Resident perception that city policies and actions respond to community priorities is a component of quality of life. Engaging residents and businesses helps to grow feelings of ownership and investment, and supports city efforts in providing quality services, facilities and programs.

International Falls seeks to grow resident participation and involvement in community conversations to ensure decisions enjoy community support and lead to better results for all.

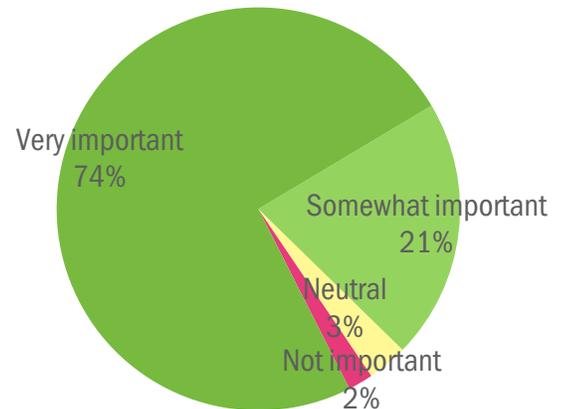
The city will work collaboratively with community partners, including civic organizations, public and private schools, and businesses to support and increase engagement and communication throughout the community and grow participation by a broader cross-section of residents.

Recommendations

Goal 1: A proactive, responsive and accessible city

- » **Strategy 1.1:** Invest in technology to improve communication and provide efficient and responsive services and high quality customer service - for example, to submit applications and permit requests online, adding an online property search tool/interactive map to the city website, providing a “shop local” web resource, or developing an events calendar (in addition to the existing city meetings calendar).
- » **Strategy 1.2:** Ensure city documents and online information are easily located and available to the public - for example, for marketing of available properties and buildings online, and maintaining planning documents and information, like economic development resources and plans.

From the online survey: How important is it to include the public in planning for the city?



About 85% of all participants in the plan's engagement thought that including the public in the city's planning was important or very important. By contrast, only 5% of participants thought that it was neutral or not important.

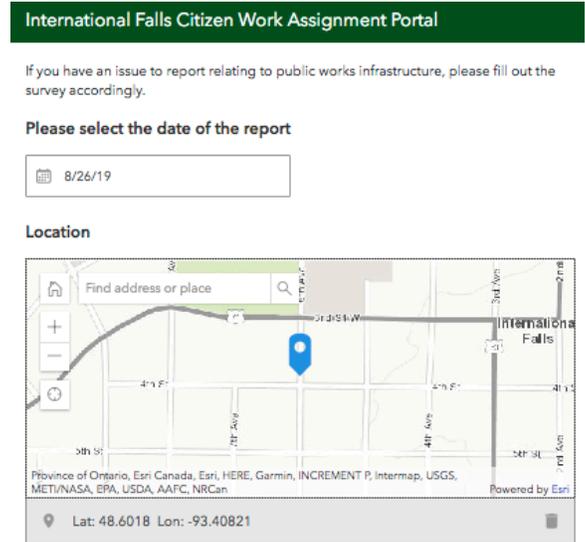
- » **Strategy 1.3:** Continue to proactively build and maintain trust between city government/police and the community through activities like annual bike rodeos or walk/bike to school events
- » **Strategy 1.4:** Expand information on community events, city council activities, and other news as part of regular communications with residents, and continue to publicize them through the city's social media platforms. Work with the International Falls Area Chamber of Commerce to develop a consolidated online event calendar.

Goal 2: Expand opportunities for civic participation

- » **Strategy 2.1:** Actively publicize opportunities to serve on city advisory committees and boards to expand resident participation on development of city policies, programs and procedures.
- » **Strategy 2.2:** Partner with the local business community, local schools, faith based organizations, and student and community organizations to increase awareness of opportunities to serve on city advisory committees and boards.
- » **Strategy 2.3:** Expand the use of social media to share information regarding current city initiatives and opportunities to serve on city advisory committees and boards.

Goal 3: Invite young people to participate

- » **Strategy 3.1:** Collaborate with local schools and organizations to expand opportunities for young people to participate in city advisory committees and boards. Work with ISD 361 to develop civic participation as a requirement for graduation from high school.
- » **Strategy 3.2:** Provide city internship opportunities for young adults that result in meaningful participation in city government.
- » **Strategy 3.3:** Develop a "Young People's Advisory Board" to advise the city on issues relevant to the city, including retention of 18 to 24 year olds. Seek youth participation on other steering/advisory committees and city boards.



The city's current "report a problem" tool allows residents to easily bring issues to the city's attention.

Building good habits of civic engagement

"Fort Frances High School requires all students to complete at least 40 hours volunteering with recognized civic activities or organizations. Working with ISD 361 we can help setup similar activities that build volunteerism, civic pride and good habits and experiences for developing good people and citizens."



Young people are often eager to participate in planning for their city's future.

Implementation Plan

The process to develop the International Falls Comprehensive Plan engaged hundreds of residents, businesses, and visitors in a broad and deep conversation about the future of the community. Once the Plan is finalized and approved, the work of implementing its recommendations will become the key component for success.

This chapter of the comprehensive plan provides a process and direction for:

- » Establishing accountability for implementation
- » Monitoring progress towards implementation goals
- » Updating the plan's contents and recommendations
- » Developing regulations and procedures when needed
- » Involving the community in the work of making the plan a reality

The chapter includes the following sections:

- » ***Using this plan in the city's daily business:*** Summary of basic actions to ensure the plan is being used as part of the city's process of decision-making and action.
- » ***Updating the plan:*** Outline of a process to be used to help the plan stay responsive to changing trends and circumstances, including criteria to consider when evaluating potential changes to the plan.
- » ***Implementation actions:*** Recommendations for goals and actions to setup the framework for implementation of the plan.
- » ***Implementation matrix:*** A set of tables listing implementation goals and strategies, as well as priorities and involved parties, for each of the recommendation subject areas of the plan.



The purpose of plans is action. Setting up a good implementation framework will help the plan achieve its vision.

What do the plan's Goals and Strategies mean?

Goals are the short and long term aims that a Comprehensive Plan sets out for a city to achieve. Each goal is a broad statement that encompasses a desired outcome in general terms.

Strategies are the projects, programs, or policies that are needed to achieve each goal.

Each goal in this plan includes a list of potential strategies that should be considered in working to achieve each goal.

The purpose for each goal and strategy? To help achieve the vision and dreams of International Falls citizens and leaders.

5.1 Using the plan in the city's daily business

The Comprehensive Plan is meant to be a living document. To help it fulfill its role in guiding the city's future actions, it needs to be included in the city's daily work.

The Comprehensive Plan is meant to be used on a daily basis as decisions are made regarding land use, development / redevelopment / intensification, capital improvements, and other situations affecting the community.

The Plan can be used in the following ways:

Budgets and work programs

City departments and administrators should consult the plan when preparing work programs and budgets. Many of the plan's strategies can be implemented through this process.

Development approvals

Development approval of proposals, such as rezoning and subdivision plats, are a key means of implementing the Comprehensive Plan.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

The Capital Improvement Plan should align with the goals of the plan's land use policies and infrastructure recommendations.

Economic incentives

Economic incentives considered as part of other plans and initiatives should be reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with the land use recommendations.



Making the plan a daily guide for the city's actions will help achieve the community's vision.

Private development decisions

Property owners should have an understanding of the Comprehensive Plan and the Future Land Use Plan when submitting proposals to the city. City decision-makers will be using these documents to guide their deliberations and approvals.

Future interpretation

In the event that a major item of the Plan is not clear, the Planning Commission will provide a written interpretation of the item. The Planning Commission can call upon outside experts for their advice.

5.2 Updating the Plan

This plan is envisioned to guide the evolution of the city over the next twenty years. Although much care has been taken to respond to community ideas and anticipate trends, it is likely that as the city evolves and conditions change the plan will require some modifications over its intended lifespan.

The following recommendations are presented to help make the process of update and modification easier and more transparent and accessible.

Key parties

- » City Administrator
- » City Planning Commission (PC)
- » City Council

Process

The Comprehensive Plan should be reevaluated every two years to ensure that implementation of its recommendations is proceeding as planned, and to review opportunities for making updates or improvements to its recommendations. The Zoning Administrator, City Administrator and the Chair of the Planning Commission should maintain responsibility for this process, and determine the appropriate level of response to requests for potential changes.

Generally, three main processes are contemplated for updating the Comprehensive Plan:

- » Updates resulting from the plan's periodic re-evaluation
- » Updates recommended or requested by the Planning Commission or City Council
- » Updates recommended or requested by city residents or business owners



A community's plan needs to remain flexible to accommodate new opportunities and priorities.

Decision-making and incorporation into plan

Depending on the origin of the recommendations as described above, these are the steps that are recommended for gaining approval and adopting changes to this document:

Updates resulting from the plan's periodic re-evaluation

The Planning Commission (PC) manages the process of re-evaluation of the entire plan every two years. If the PC or City Council determines that an update may be needed, it brings the proposed changes to a vote within its body. If approved, the proposed changes are brought to the City Council for their consideration and approval. If the City Council approves, the changes are made to the plan and included as an Addendum.

Updates recommended or requested by the Planning Commission

The Planning Commission agenda for all future meetings will include a recurring item for "Updates to the Comprehensive Plan." Changes to the plan can be brought forward by any member of the Planning Commission. The proposed change is introduced and discussed at the initial meeting, and the discussion and vote are finalized at the next meeting of the Planning Commission. If approved, the proposed change is brought to the City Council for their consideration and approval. If the City Council approves, the change is made to the plan and included as an Addendum.

Updates requested by residents

The Planning Commission reviews the change proposed by the public. After research and deliberation, it brings the proposed change to a vote within its body. If approved, the proposed change is brought to the City Council for their consideration and approval. If the City Council approves, the change is made to the plan and included as an Addendum.

Criteria to consider when evaluating potential changes to the plan

- » The change is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.
- » The change does not create an adverse impact on public facilities and services that cannot be mitigated. Public facilities and services include roads, sewers, water supply, drainage, schools, police, fire and parks.
- » Development that would result from the proposed change does not create an adverse impact that cannot be mitigated on surrounding properties. Such development should be consistent with the physical character of the surrounding neighborhood or would upgrade and improve the area.
- » The change allows a more viable transition to the planned uses on adjacent properties than the current land use.
- » The change does not create a significant adverse impact on the natural environment including trees, slopes and groundwater that cannot be mitigated by improvements on the site or in the same vicinity.
- » There is a change in city policies or neighborhood characteristics that would justify a change.
- » The change corrects an oversight or error made in the original plan.
- » There is a community or regional need identified for the proposed land use or service change.
- » The change helps the city meet its life-cycle and affordable housing objectives.
- » The change does not create adverse impacts on landmarks or other historically significant structures or properties that cannot be mitigated.

5.3 Implementation tasks and timeline

Implementing the plan will require setting up committees and task groups to help prioritize goals and build community participation and momentum.

Goal 1: Engage a broad cross-section of residents, business owners, and visitors as part of the implementation process

- » **Strategy 1.1:** Establish a “Plan Implementation Committee” made up of local residents, businesses, employees, advocates, young people and seniors to advise the city on implementation priorities and phasing.
- » **Strategy 1.2:** Establish an ongoing communication program to provide information to the public about the Plan. The public should have opportunity to become familiar with ongoing opportunities to implement the Plan and understand their role in the process. The City’s website, Facebook and other social media pages can be excellent channels for information.
- » **Strategy 1.3:** Ensure that copies of the final Comprehensive Plan are available online, at the public library and at community destinations. The purpose is to make the plan available to residents and businesses so property owners can familiarize themselves with the plan elements and recommendations, and tailor their proposals to better fit the community’s vision.



A plan implementation committee can work with the city to provide guidance on priorities.

Goal 2: Monitor and evaluate the implementation process

- » **Strategy 2.1:** Prepare annual reports that summarize the implementation actions completed. City staff prepare the report, highlighting key strategies completed over the course of the year. Reports can also identify areas of delay that need to be addressed. Any potential changes or additions to the plan can also be identified in this report.
- » **Strategy 2.2:** Provide a summary of the annual report to the general public. Information regarding the status of plan

elements will be summarized and available for the public on the city's website.

- » Strategy 2.3: Create press releases and social media blasts that highlight and acknowledge significant accomplishments relative to the plan and its strategies.

Goal 3: Provide resources to implement the Plan

- » Strategy 3.1: Update the Capital Improvement Plan to ensure that it matches the recommendations outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.
- » Strategy 3.2: Prepare departmental budgets and programs that reflect the goals and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan.
- » Strategy 3.3: Secure funds for the strategies listed as high-priority. Funding can come from, but does not have to be limited to, the City, external agencies or other governmental sources, taxes, or private sector investment. This strategy should take place alongside annual budget cycles and should maximize non-municipal resources.

Goal 4: Require future decisions in the community regarding development, capital improvements, and budgeting to coincide with the Comprehensive Plan

- » Strategy 4.1: Require approvals of zoning requests to follow the policies in the Comprehensive Plan and the updated Zoning Ordinance.
- » Strategy 4.2: Include reference to the plan in all staff reports related to policy, programs, and budgets.
- » Strategy 4.3: Establish a line of communication between the Planning Commission and the City Council regarding the Comprehensive Plan. Communication must be clear and frequent. Ensuring that interpretation of the plan is consistent will be critical to the plan's implementation.

Goal 5: Update the Plan

- » Strategy 5.1: Use the process outlined in Section 5.2 of this plan to update the Comprehensive Plan. Provide support to the Planning Commission as needed to gather and allocate the necessary resources for completing plan updates.
- » Strategy 5.2: Convene a "Comprehensive Plan Update" task force as needed to focus on addressing specific topics or initiatives not currently included in the plan.
- » Strategy 5.3: Plan review and update
 - Review the entire Comprehensive Plan every two years, and update specific sections or content as needed
 - Update the entire Comprehensive Plan every ten years

Contents

The following appendices contain documents and information referenced in plan chapters or recommended for adoption as part of the Comprehensive Plan

- » Appendix 1: New zoning and land use regulations (2019)
- » Appendix 2: New subdivision ordinance (2019)
- » Appendix 3: Community engagement report
- » Appendix 4: Housing study