

Thomson Township

2040 Comprehensive Plan



Town of Thomson, Minnesota
Comprehensive Plan Update

OUR TOWN - OUR FUTURE

TOWN OF THOMSON
RESOLUTION 2022-07
ADOPTING THE THOMSON TOWNSHIP
2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

WHEREAS, the Town Board of Supervisors has caused to be prepared a Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Thomson, and;

WHEREAS, a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was formed, and several public meetings were held to collect citizen input, and;

WHEREAS the Planning and Zoning Commission has reviewed the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and made the recommendation to adopt the plan;

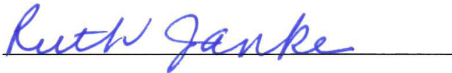
NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Thomson Board of Supervisors does hereby adopt the Thomson Township 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

This Resolution was passed the 19th day of May 2022.

Those voting in favor: Ruth Janke, Bill Gerard, Terry Hill, Tony Compo

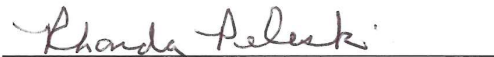
Those voting against: None

Those absent or abstaining: Jason Paulson



Ruth Janke, Chairperson

Attest:



Rhonda Peleski, Clerk/Treasurer

Acknowledgments

Steering Committee Members

John Bergman
Marv Bodie
Gary Bonneville
Tony Compo
Bill Gerard
Jim Gottschald
Terry Hill
Ruth Janke
Scott Nigon
Jason Paulson
Rhonda Peleski
David Pritchett
Dale Reed
Greg Stoewer
Robert Stokes
Manny Umpierre, Jr.

Township Staff

Rhonda Peleski - Clerk/Treasurer
Leah Pykkonen - Deputy Clerk/Treasurer
Dan Stangle - Zoning Official/ Code Enforcement

Date of Public Hearing for Comprehensive Plan : May 17, 2022

Date of Adoption by Thomson Township Board of Supervisors: May 19, 2022

MSA Professional Services, Inc

Christopher Janson, AICP
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Chapter 01



Introduction and Overview

This chapter discusses the role of the plan, the planning area boundaries, regional context and key community indicators.





Plan Overview

Thomson Township is a well-planned, safe, prosperous and fiscally responsible community, built by citizens and businesses who value education, health, public safety and who enjoy its natural beauty, rural character, and location in the region. As residents and businesses come and go, and economic trends rise and fall, changes will occur. Thomson Township continues to place value on long-range planning to ensure the community of today evolves to meet the anticipated needs of the future. The purpose of this 2040 Comprehensive Plan for Thomson Township is to establish a shared vision for the community to guide future actions and decisions and assist in projecting and managing growth, change, public improvements and development in the community. This guidance provides predictability and consistency over time, which encourages investment. We plan so that we can act and react in a changing world with a confident understanding of our common values and goals.

The difference between this Comprehensive Plan and a zoning ordinance is that the former sets forth the objectives and goals of the community with respect to land use, while the latter is a regulatory device through which the plan's goals and policies are carried out or achieved. Other ordinances, such as subdivision regulations, are also utilized to carry out the goals of a Comprehensive Plan.

The Township's future growth, to be guided by this Comprehensive Plan, will be driven by the Township's

reputation as a leader in K-12 education as well as its proximity to services, higher education, commerce, innovation and tourism. The region's abundance of quality recreation and cultural opportunities also adds to the quality of life experienced by residents.

This plan is an active part of the community's efforts to attract people and businesses to the Township's unique rural feel and development opportunities. The content within this plan sets to create the best version of the Township for future generations to live, work, play, stay, and learn.

The organization of the plan is based on the planning process and is divided into five chapters plus several important appendices.



Town of Thomson, Minnesota
Comprehensive Plan Update

OUR TOWN - OUR FUTURE



Plan Organization

Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

This chapter examines the role of the plan, the planning area boundaries, regional context and key community indicators.

Chapter 2: Plan Process and Engagement

This chapter outlines the planning process, a description of public participation methods and a summary of feedback from all engagement activities.

Chapter 3: Community Elements - Vision, Goals, and Objectives

This chapter presents a vision for the future of Thomson Township and describes the goals and strategies to achieve that vision. The elements of community infrastructure, housing, recreation, transportation, employment & economy, agricultural & natural resources, and intergovernmental collaboration are all addressed.

Chapter 4: Land Use and Growth Management

This chapter considers Thomson Township's future growth forecast, existing land use, land use goals and strategies, the future land use map, how to amend the future land use map, design recommendations, and guidelines for buildings and sites.

Chapter 5: Implementation and Action Plan

This chapter outlines how the vision and goals of the plan are implemented in everyday decisions and annual goal setting and budgeting, and how the Plan should be amended when necessary.

Appendix A: Community Profile

This appendix incorporates a summary of current conditions and recent trends in Thomson Township.

Appendix B: Maps

This appendix includes several maps created during the planning process for the 2040 Thomson Township Comprehensive Plan.

Appendix C: Survey Results

This appendix consists of the full results of two community-wide surveys included in the community engagement step of the planning process.

The Plan as a “Living Guide”

This Comprehensive Plan update is an effort to reinforce the long standing planning priorities of the Township while recognizing changing conditions, trends, and new issues. At its best, the Township’s Comprehensive Plan reflects a shared vision for the future of Thomson Township.

Comprehensive Plans are a general and broad analysis of the interconnections between cultural, geographical, and natural components within the Township. They also provide guidelines for continued development. Technology, economic drivers, and demographic changes that affect how land is managed and utilized in the Township. Although this Comprehensive Plan attempts to address many possible future uses, it may not capture all of them.

If this Plan does not mention a proposed land use, it shall not be assumed the Township is not supportive of the proposed land use. As new land uses are introduced, using the goals and vision of this plan, the Township will be in a great position to better review land use proposals. This plan will help citizens and local leaders work together more efficiently to guide future growth and development within the township. The plan provides broad recommendations to guide and manage growth and development. These broad recommendations come in the form of goals and objectives which express the communities aspiration for the future.

This planning document is a “living” guide for growth and change in Thomson Township. The Plan provides specific recommendations that directly manage community growth and development. To utilize the full potential of the plan, it should be used to:

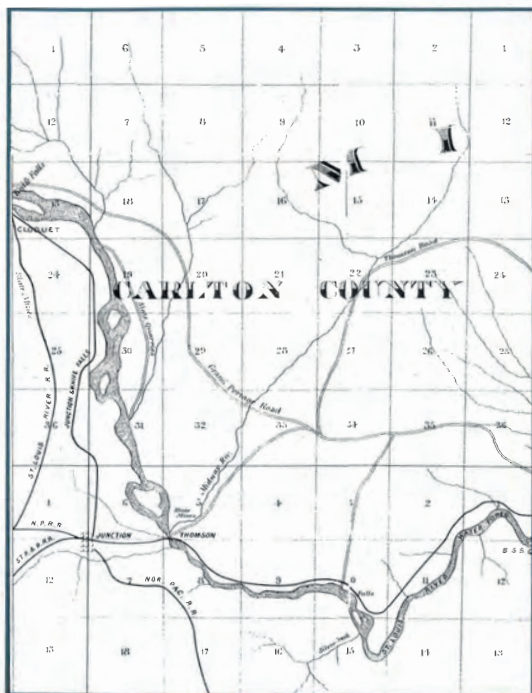
- 1. Guide township officials and staff to assist with a variety of land use planning and growth planning tasks.*
- 2. Guide businesses, property owners, and residents in assisting them in determining potential property use, land use changes in the surrounding area, and understanding infrastructure improvements.*
- 3. Guide developers with property acquisition and the coordination of plans with Township goals, regulations and infrastructure plans.*
- 4. Assist and coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions on issues and topics of mutual interest.*



History of Thomson Township

Thomson Township is located in the northeast corner of Carlton County, nestled in the northern part of Minnesota. Native American people occupied this area for 10,000 years before European settlement began. The majority of settlers were Finnish and their culture is reflected in the traditions of the community. These immigrants began settling the area from the 1870's to the early 1900's and today the population reflects the "melting pot" nature of the area as persons of other nationalities and heritage have moved in.

Thomson Township, with an area of 39.9 square miles is located west of Duluth, MN. The St. Louis River forms the western and southern border of Thomson Township. A revered waterway known as Gichi Gami-ziibi (Great-lake River) to the Ojibwe people, the river and its estuary were an important hub of trade and settlement for centuries before Europeans first made contact. When settlers came and began to extract resources, the St. Louis became the heart of whatever trade was booming. In the late seventeenth century, it was used for the fur trade, and one of the main arteries of the timber trade, until the timber boom slowed with the Great Depression of the 1930s, then industry picked back up again during the mid twentieth century; this time it was minerals that were sought as the immense deposits of the Iron Range were mined.



As the population grew, the river was dammed and harnessed for hydroelectric purposes, spinning great turbines and powering the towns and industry of the region. Within its relatively short length (194 miles) from its source to Lake Superior, and the brief time frame of 300 years since European contact and colonization, the St. Louis River is emblematic of historical patterns of growth and development.

Once a state leader in dairy farming, Thomson Township has seen barnyards, hayfields and cow paths to give way to new housing developments, hobby farms, a plethora of outdoor recreation and natural landscape and the flourishing school district. Esko Public Schools and scholars have been the pride of the community for generations. The independent school district has become a model for others, and it continues to reap state and regional awards for academic and extracurricular excellence.

Community Overview

Thomson Township is located in Carlton County, Minnesota. Thomson Township is situated between two larger communities: Cloquet (Pop. 11,938), and the Duluth MN and Superior Area (Approx. Pop. 115,000). Thomson Township is in a great location for residents who want a rural feel and an easy commute to nearby larger communities for work, entertainment, and services. Thomson Township strives to provide a high quality of life and remain a safe and attractive community.

Thomson Township will continue to be a vital, safe community with a healthy environment that evokes community pride and supports a healthy and prosperous life for those who chose to make Thomson their home.

The planning area for this Comprehensive Plan includes all lands in the Township and is outlined in red on the map to the right.



Esko School District



Hermantown

Proctor

THOMSON

Esko

Esko Historical Museum

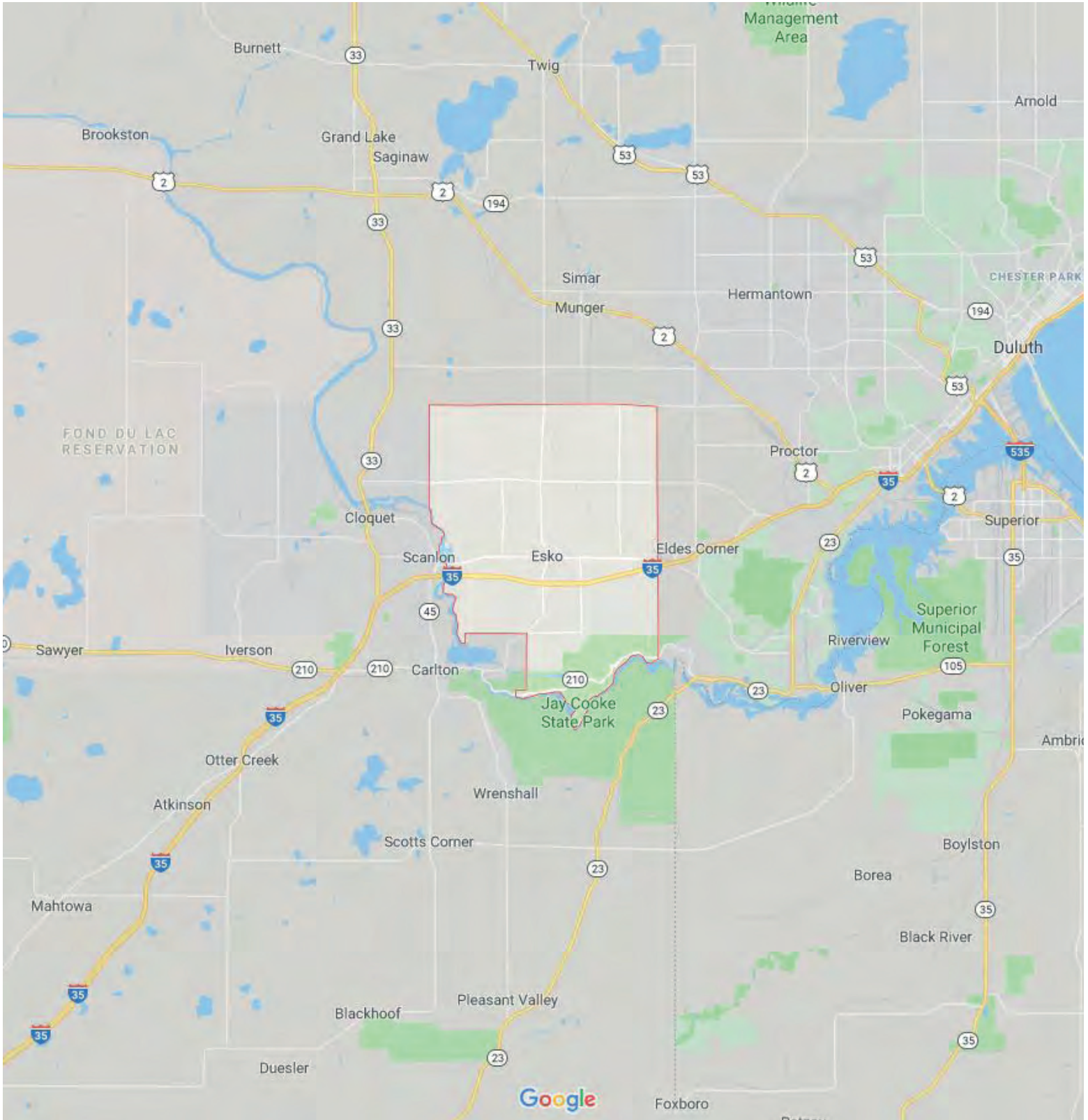


Jay Cooke State Park



Regional Context

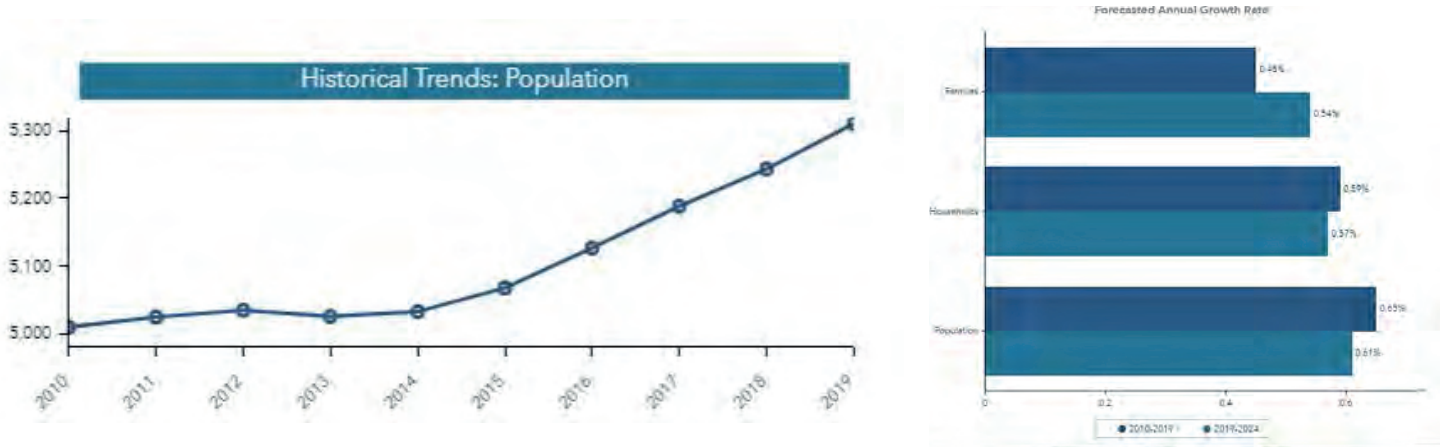
Thomson Township is located within the Northeast corner of Carlton County, Minnesota. Thomson Township is in a great location for residents to reside in a rural area and easily commute to nearby areas for work, entertainment, and play. Thomson Township strives to provide a high quality of life and remain a great location to live and do business in the Duluth and Cloquet areas. Thomson Township is about 16 miles from the City of Duluth which has a population of about 85,000, 3 miles from Scanlon and 5 from Cloquet which have a combined population of about 13,000, and 140 miles north on Interstate 35 of the Minneapolis/Saint Paul area.



Key Community Indicators

Population

A careful examination of population trends in Thomson Township provides a foundation for the land use planning process and implementation of the plan. Understanding past and future population growth is an important step towards appropriate resource allocation. According to the US Census, Thomson Township has increased in population from 4,376 in 2010 to an estimated 5,310 in 2019. The number of households has also increased for the Township from 1,527 in 2010 to an estimated 1,931 in 2019. The Township's population and number of households are projected to continue growing through 2024 as shown in the chart below.



Income

The average number of people per household in Thomson Township stayed at a steady 2.75. This is a little higher than the state average and not surprising because the community's school district is a large attraction for new families. This is important to know as it gives a measure of your population in terms of average persons through household unit and the relation to the average income of the area. This is a good measure of economic vitality of the community. The average household income is \$75,000. This is much higher than Carlton County and the State of Minnesota. The chart below represents the percentage difference of income of Thomson Township. The orange bars that go to the left show that Carlton County has a higher percentage of that income range than Thomson Township and the blue bars that go to the right show that Thomson Township has a higher percentage of an income range than Carlton County.

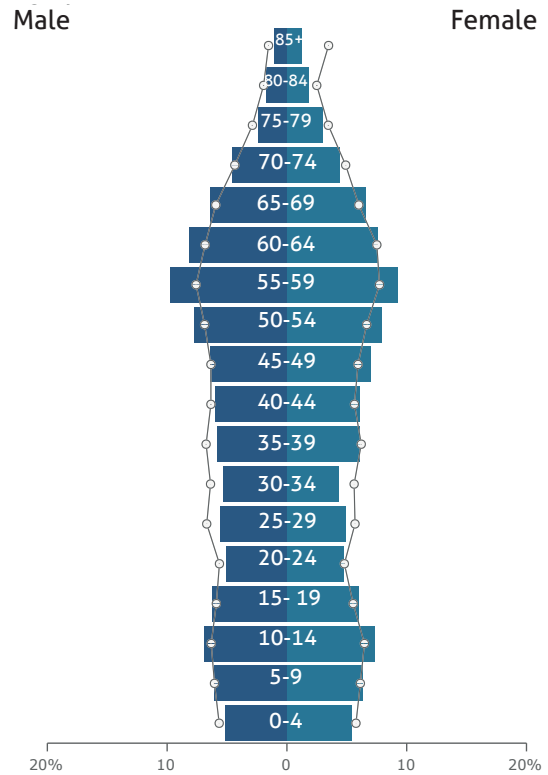
Households by Income

Indicator	Value	Difference	
<\$15,000	4.5%	-7.0%	
\$15,000 - \$24,999	4.2%	-4.9%	
\$25,000 - \$34,999	4.6%	-4.2%	
\$35,000 - \$49,999	11.3%	-2.5%	
\$50,000 - \$74,999	25.1%	+3.3%	
\$75,000 - \$99,999	19.9%	+4.1%	
\$100,000 - \$149,999	22.3%	+8.7%	
\$150,000 - \$199,999	5.0%	+1.3%	
\$200,000+	3.0%	+1.2%	

Comparison to Carlton County

Age Distribution

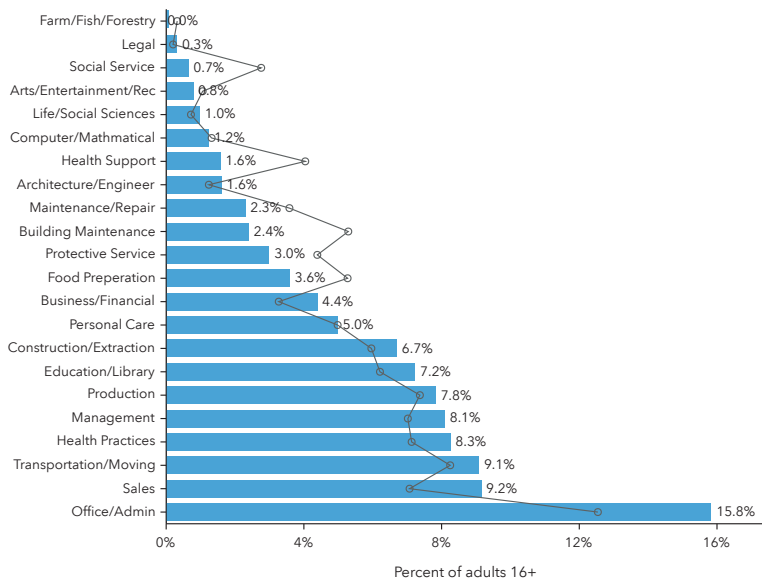
Age distribution is an important data set for the township to know so that it can be aware which age groups are larger and adapt to the needs of different age groups throughout the community. In 2019 the median age in the Township was 43.7, which is significantly higher than the state average of 37.8. Notably, the Township of Thomson has lower number of persons between 20-39 at 5% compared to the State's 7%. Thomson Township has a higher percentage of persons 55-59 at 9.8% compared to the State's 7% as well as the age groups 60-74. This higher percentage of seniors offers advantages for Thomson Township but also presents important challenges when it comes to planning for schools, housing, community facilities, healthcare, and transportation.



Employment

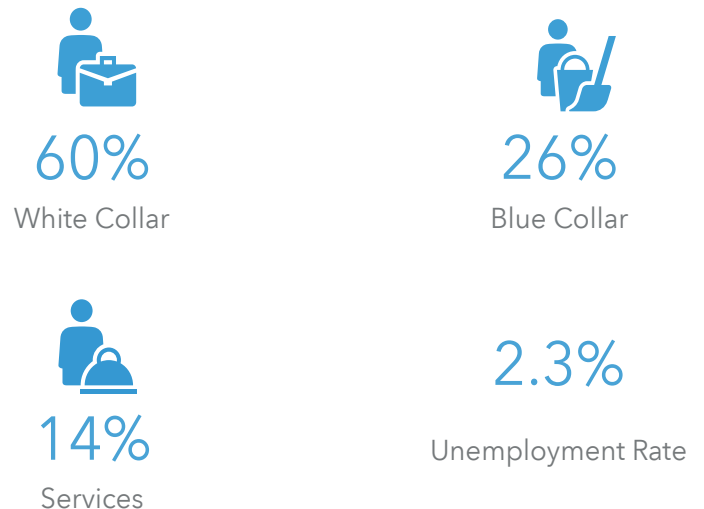
Employment information is an important indicator of current economic conditions and potential economic growth opportunities for the residents and businesses of Thomson Township. The majority of Thomson Township's residents have jobs classified as white collar positions, followed by blue collar and services. The unemployment rate is very low, and estimated 2.3%. The largest labor force is Office/Administration followed by Sales. The Office/Administration sector is in line with the County but there are many other categories that are much smaller in the area than the county such as Health Support, and Social Services. It is also known that many workers commute to the surrounding region for work.

Labor Force By Occupation



Dots show comparison to Carlton County

EMPLOYMENT



Chapter 02



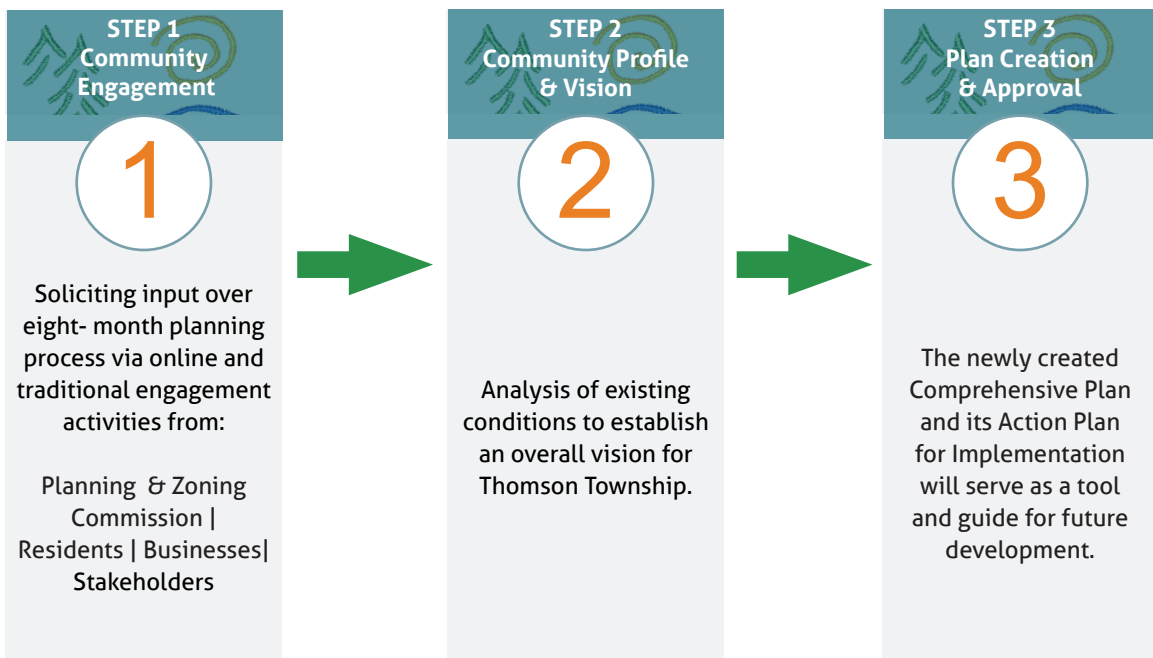
Plan Process and Engagement

This chapter outlines the planning process, a description of public participation methods and a summary of feedback from all engagement activities.





Thomson's Comprehensive Planning Process

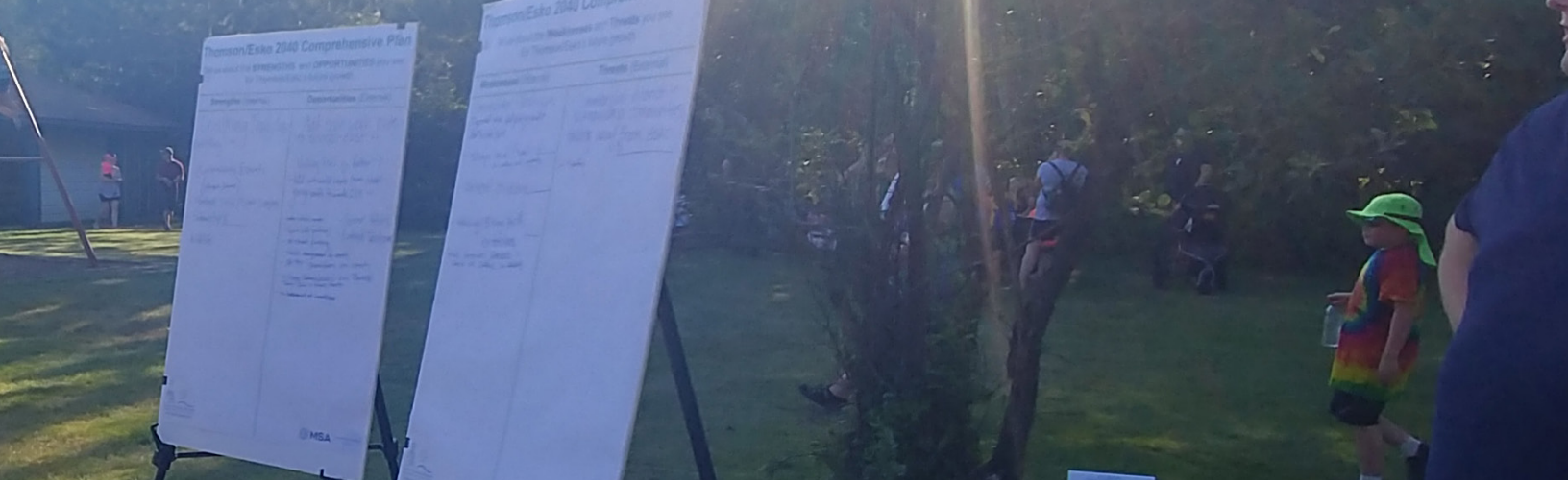


Successful community planning, development and infrastructure investment requires community input and involvement. A transparent public participation process is the foundation to a successful plan. The planning process for the development of the 2040 Thomson Township Comprehensive Plan included seeking the involvement of residents, business owners, and other stakeholders across the community to create a vision and set goals for growth and improvement.

Great engagement is essential to creating a plan and gathering support for successful implementation of a plan's goals and actions.

The development of the 2040 Thomson Township Comprehensive Plan included the following engagement activities to help develop a vision, establish goals, and develop actions for implementation:

- Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
- Public Workshop with (SWOT) Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats Analysis
- SWOT Community Survey
- Pop-Up Meeting At National Night Out
- Feedback Session at Senior Luncheon
- Key Stakeholder Interviews
- Draft Plan Review open House
- Draft Plan Review Survey



Planning Process Time-line



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AUGUST

- Community Input Workshop
- Pop-Up Event
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Senior Luncheon Feedback Session



OCTOBER

- Steering Committee Meeting #3
- Draft Plan Review Open House

DECEMBER

- Steering Committee Meeting #5

FEBRUARY 2020 - JULY 2021

- Break for COVID-19

JULY 2019

- Steering Committee Meeting #1
- Launch Public Engagement Tools



SEPTEMBER

- Steering Committee Meeting #2

NOVEMBER

- Steering Committee Meeting #4



JANUARY 2020

- Steering Committee Meeting #6

AUGUST 2021 - MAY 2022

- Public Comment Session
- Public Hearing for Adoption
- Adoption by Township Board

Public Engagement Activities

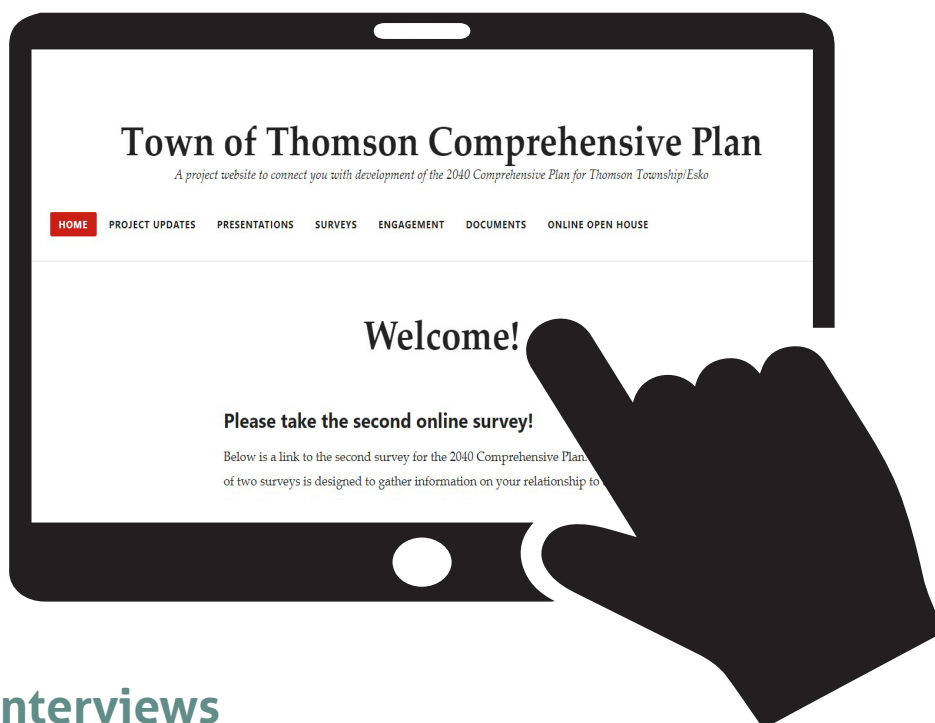
The public engagement process is integral to the results of the plan and guides future implementation of the goals and policies recommended in this document. Various engagement methods were performed to provide multiple opportunities for stakeholders to provide quality feedback. The methods ranged from community surveys available to all, community meetings, pop-up meeting, media postings, and stakeholder focused group interviews. There were multiple stages of input varying in type in order to receive quality feedback. In the beginning word of the project was spread to create awareness and excitement. From that momentum feedback was gathered in various types to help form the plan goals and policies.

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was established provide the team with guidance and input, monitor the process and ensure that the established goals and objectives of the process are being accomplished. The Committee was the primary review and advisory body throughout the planning process. Five meetings of the Committee were held during the planning process and all were open to the public. All presentation materials were posted on the project website for public access.

Plan Website

A project website was developed where posts and feedback were shared such as the project schedule, draft documents, meeting notices and copies of presentation materials. The website also provided a venue to share comments throughout the planning process, and provide an easy way for citizens to contact the project team with questions. This aspect of the communication and participation strategy was important for transparency, as well as sharing information with stakeholders.

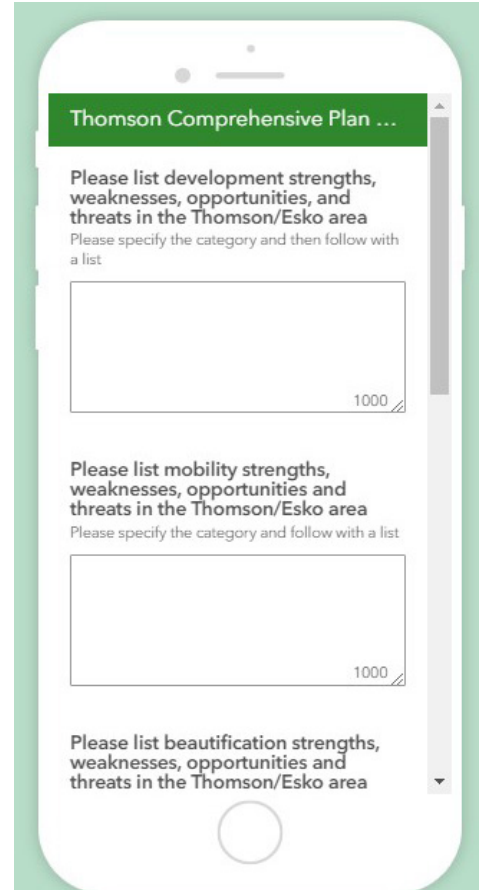
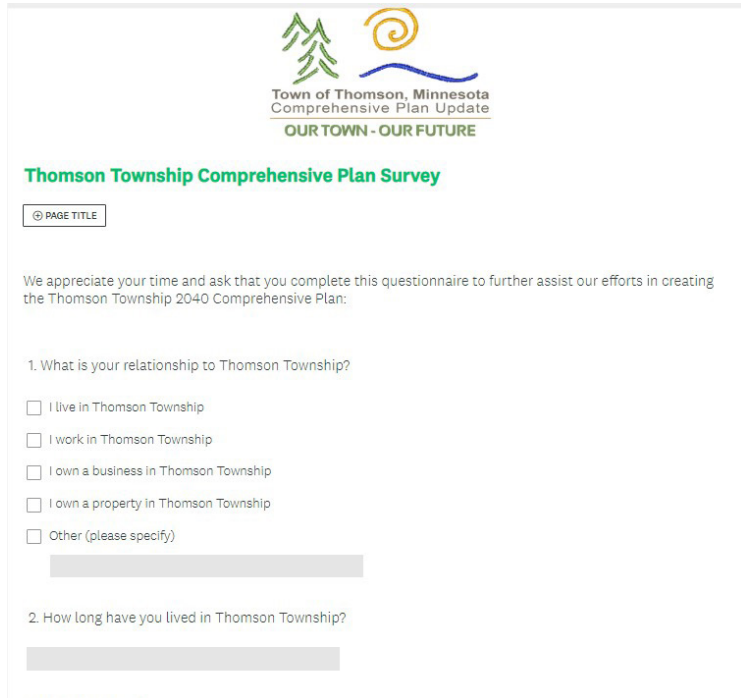


Stakeholder Interviews

The planning process included interviews with stakeholders from across the community including staff, officials, the school district, community leaders, members of community organizations, business leaders and other interested community members. The interviews were tasked with gaining a better understanding of the growth plans and preferences of departments, institutions, organizations and businesses. An increased understanding of stakeholder preferences allows the Comprehensive Plan to more adequately represent all viewpoints regarding issues, opportunities, barriers and trends affecting future growth.

Community Survey

Two community surveys were created and available to community members. One was an initial data gathering tool in the form of a SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. The breadth of the questions allowed us to analyze big and small picture information about the Township and community members views and thoughts in the three categories of beautification, development and mobility. This was administered through ESRI's Survey123 as it allowed people to use the mapping feature for certain answers. The second survey was sent out after the community draft plan open house. This survey was to gather demographic data as well as learn what citizens hope to get out of the comprehensive plan and process. This was administered through the Online survey site "Survey Monkey". Participants were invited to respond via a link through the project website as well as fliers that were distributed at the draft plan open house.



Community Workshop

A community workshop was held on August 8, 2019 at the Township Hall. This was a collaborative planning process designed to harness the talents and energy of the planning team along with members of the steering committee, and community members. At the workshop, citizens shared their opinions on the future of the Township within three topic areas: (1) Beautification, (2) Development, and (3) Mobility. The purpose of the workshop was to achieve the following:

- Kick start the creative planning process
- Capitalize on the history and knowledge of key stakeholders and members of the community
- Build consensus for preliminary plan concepts



SWOT Analysis Feedback Overview

SWOT Survey

The development of a community wide survey served as an essential tool, especially to reach those who could not attend the Community Workshop, and to give individuals an anonymous platform to voice opinions and concerns. This first survey was developed as a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis tool and the result have been incorporated into the overall SWOT analysis results that follow in this chapter. The link was provided on the project website and fliers with the link were distributed at public events and Town Hall. There were also paper copies available at Town Hall for those who preferred to complete a printed survey.

Below are the three categories used throughout the public engagement process to assist with gathering feedback for the development of the plan's goals, policies and actions for implementation.

1. Beautification

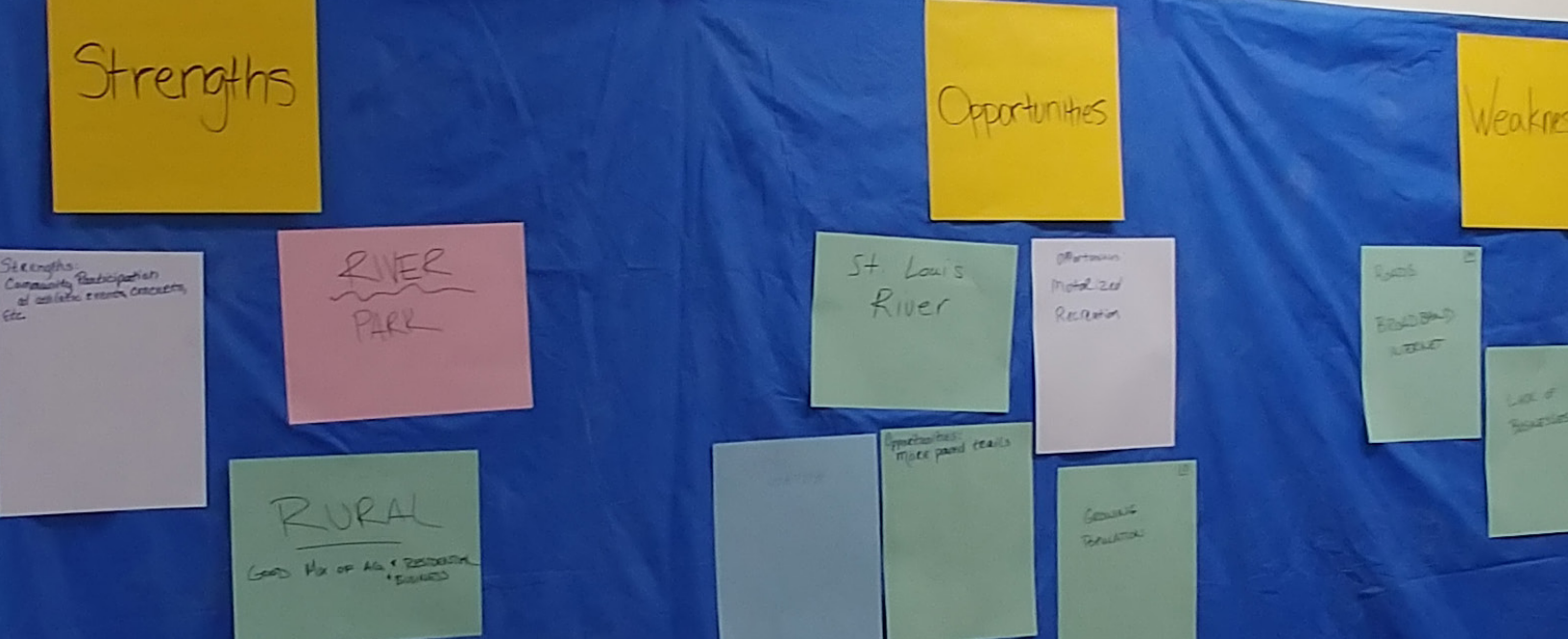
2. Development

3. Mobility



Overall Questions to be Answered Throughout the Comprehensive Planning Process?

- Which areas of Thomson Township provide an opportunity for redevelopment?
- What do you envision the Highway 61 corridor to look like in the future?
- What will be great about Thomson Township in 20 years? What obstacles will it have to overcome?
- In 20 years what will attract families to the area?



What We Heard

The following is a summary of what residents of Thomson Township had to say about the general elements that were identified from the SWOT survey, stakeholder meetings, pop-up meeting, and community workshop.

Improve the Overall Maintenance and Attractiveness of the Township

Overall maintenance and community image play a large role in establishing community character. Road improvements and paving was brought up consistently throughout the process. Many also expressed a need for exterior/facade improvements on many buildings in commercial areas.

Protect, Enhance and Grow Recreation Opportunities

Residents value their proximity to area rivers, lakes, woods and other natural features. Respondents seek to establish and expand access to waterways and improve the Northridge Park. There were many ideas on how to better utilize the park area as well as suggestions for pocket parks around the township.

Expanded Community-Based Utilities

Respondents often when asked about the weaknesses of Thomson Township mentioned water and sewer utilities across the community. They expressed concern with filling the business park without a public potable water source. The installation of a public water service and an expansion of available sewer service would also attract development. Broadband access was also mentioned as a need.

Offer More Diverse Housing Options

A concern with residents is the lack of one level, low maintenance housing such as townhouses and other similar housing products. A majority of the existing homes in the community are single-family detached homes on larger lots that require a lot of care and upkeep. The rental options in the community are limited which is a concern for younger people that might not be able to afford an acreage with a single-family detached home, but want to live in Thomson Township.

Maintain Safe Attractive Neighborhoods

Safe was a word consistently used when residents were describing the strengths of the community. All around a safe place for kids to walk and bike from school and play outside without worry. The biggest concern with safety was safe routes to school does not extend all directions from the school and some children do not have the safest walking or biking route.

Investment in Commercial Areas

Residents felt that there has not been enough investment in the commercial area along Highway 61. There is not enough businesses to provided a good tax base and without water or additional sewer utility, additional commercial development is unlikely.



Pop-Up Event

The evening of August 6th was National Night Out and Thomson Township had a community gathering at North Ridge Park. The project team took advantage of the beautiful night and spread the word about the Comprehensive Plan, the SWOT survey, and asked residents to give their thoughts on the future of Thomson Township. Their feedback is shown in the photos below.

Thomson/Esko 2040 Comprehensive Plan

Tell us about the **STRENGTHS** and **OPPORTUNITIES** you see for Thomson/Esko's future growth

Strengths (Internal)	Opportunities (External)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walking Trail/loop Everything!! - Community Events (Street Dance) - Football Field / Sport Complex - Schools! - Wildlife - Safe Community - STRONG COMMUNITY! - I-35 Corridor - Fire Station 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Add safe walk route to school-east - BIKE TRAIL - Walking trail go farther - Add safe walk route from school going south towards I-35 - better school zones - Sport field parking - on street parking - traffic management for events - Better shoulders on roads - WIDER SHOULDERS ON ROADS - Fix PARKING LOT AT COMPLEX - Water access (river) - More School parking - Splash pad - Potential Partnerships with other communities - Car Wash - Tax free opportunity for new Esko Businesses

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Thomson/Esko 2040 Comprehensive Plan

Tell us about the **Weaknesses** and **Threats** you see for Thomson/Esko's future growth

Weaknesses (Internal)	Threats (External)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stormwater drainage - Improved larger kid playground at Northridge park. - Shop local (small) - current childcare - Cell phone coverage - Walking / Biking Path extensions - POOR INTERNET SPEEDS - LACK OF CAFE IN AREAS - Make this park more usable (should be able to have street dance here) - USE STREET! - lack of modern commercial district - lack of use with I-35 proximity - Property tax increases - Traffic Safety/Speed - Walking Loop should all be 30 (to rocky Rd.) - PAV = All Roads! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commercial district in surrounding communities taking away from Esko - Safety - Neighboring communities using prime I-35 land that we could utilize

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Beautification

Overall the engagement participants felt that Northridge Park and the access to Jay Cooke State Park were strengths in the community. Participants like the improvement and expansion of trails that has occurred and many young families supported the new housing developments in the area. There were some concerns about blighted properties and junk in yards throughout the township, especially along the main drag for visibility purposes. There was also a sense that the commercial district looks tattered and unwelcoming to people passing through. There is an opportunity to improve on the welcome signs as well as wayfinding signage from Interstate 35 and to community amenities within the community.

Strengths

- Community participation at athletic events and community events
- River
- Park (5)
- Rural, good mix of residential/AG/commercial
- Divided Highway 61

Opportunities

- Township water service
- More paved trails
- Growing population
- Motorized recreation and trails
- St. Louis river
- Interstate visibility

Weaknesses

- Lack of businesses
- Lack of money and funding
- Roads
- Not enough trails
- Only one park
- Blighted properties
- I-35 exit is not inviting
- No street lights
- Wayfinding signage
- Haphazard development
- Street signs

Threats

- "Camping" ordinance unenforced
- Growing population
- Highway 61 commercial properties



Development

A wide variety of development opportunity in the community is a hot topic. There has been positive growth in the population and housing in Thomson Township and continued growth in both is forecasted. An expressed desire for mixed used development could benefit both commercial and multi-family housing growth. Seniors, graduates and new families have expressed a desire for more affordable housing options. The Business Park was mentioned as a strength throughout the process and there are still lots available. Stakeholders also mentioned that there is land available behind the liquor store that would increase visibility of the Township and add more tax-base if it were to be developed.

Strengths

- Retail by the freeway
- Easy freeway access
- Business Park
- Lots of space
- Proximity to Duluth and Cloquet
- Paved roads required in new developments

Opportunities

- I-35
- One level housing/apartments
- Continue trail from school going south and east
- Broadband
- Centralized Community Center

Weaknesses

- Housing Accessibility
- Lack of senior housing options (one level living)
- Infrastructure IE Roads
- Broadband
- Retail business do not get a lot of traffic
- Ability to attract large businesses
- Utilities
- Resistance to change
- Safe access to school from southern part of town
- I-35 Noise
- Blight
- Road Conditions in certain areas
- Lack of affordable housing/rentals

Threats

- High Density
- Escalating Property Prices



Mobility

The access and close proximity to Interstate 35 is an asset for the community. Proximity to Duluth, Cloquet and Scanlon are also assets for the Township in terms of convenience to goods and services. Another strength that many enjoy throughout the area is the trail system. A majority of workshop participants would like to see this expanded throughout the community and altered for multi use of ATV's and in the winter snowmobiles. Many feel that a weakness of mobility for the community is public transportation. There is a need for more sidewalks which could be trails as well and repairs to the roads/paving in some areas. Many feel there are unsafe traffic conditions that need to be addressed to better separate, and traffic calming such as flashing lights as the intersection on approaches Highway 61, as well as flashing speed limit warning signs leading up to the park.

Strengths

- Uber and Lyft service the area
- Safe walking and biking paths
- Scanlon Park and Ride
- Public Works Staff
- Canosia Road direct route to Highway 53
- Bus line to Duluth and Cloquet
- I-35 access

Opportunities

- Fix/pave roads
- Adopt an ATV ordinance
- More walking trails or sidewalks
- Extend the current trails
- Water trail

Weaknesses

- Need more access to I-35
- Lack of public transportation options
- Bad roads
- No bus service for non-drivers
- Poor river access (Midway and St. Louis)
- EMS access
- Lack of trails outside of central area
- Rural area requires personal transit

Threats

- Potential narrowing of Highway 61
- Climate/snow
- Through traffic tearing up roads

Development Survey Feedback

Development was a strong topic within the survey responses. The main themes were expansion, stability, and current land use.

Strengths

This category was balanced between respondents finding the small bedroom community feel as a strength and others who saw the expanding population and want for new development as a strength. Many felt that the business park is a strength for the community and this type of development is good for the Township. Another strength mentioned frequently was the availability of land for development.

Opportunity

Respondents felt that the commercial area near the school held opportunity for new small development such as a coffee shop or another restaurant. It was also mentioned that there is development opportunity behind Esko Liquors along Interstate 35 which would increase visibility of the community. As well as opportunity to develop more trails or natural resources amenities.

Threats

A threat that was mentioned frequently was more development, many people feel that progressively advancing it is the best option for the future of Thomson Township. Others feel that not moving it beyond a bedroom community is a threat and that more variety in development types would be beneficial. Another threat that was mentioned frequently was the school and their model for expansion or what they would do if the population increased in terms of enrollment and open enrollment.

Weaknesses

Many felt that the perception of the Township of being far away is deterring businesses from coming to the area. Also large property owners found the 5 year split rule to be a weakness to development as well. The lack of more affordable housing and senior living options were mentioned as well

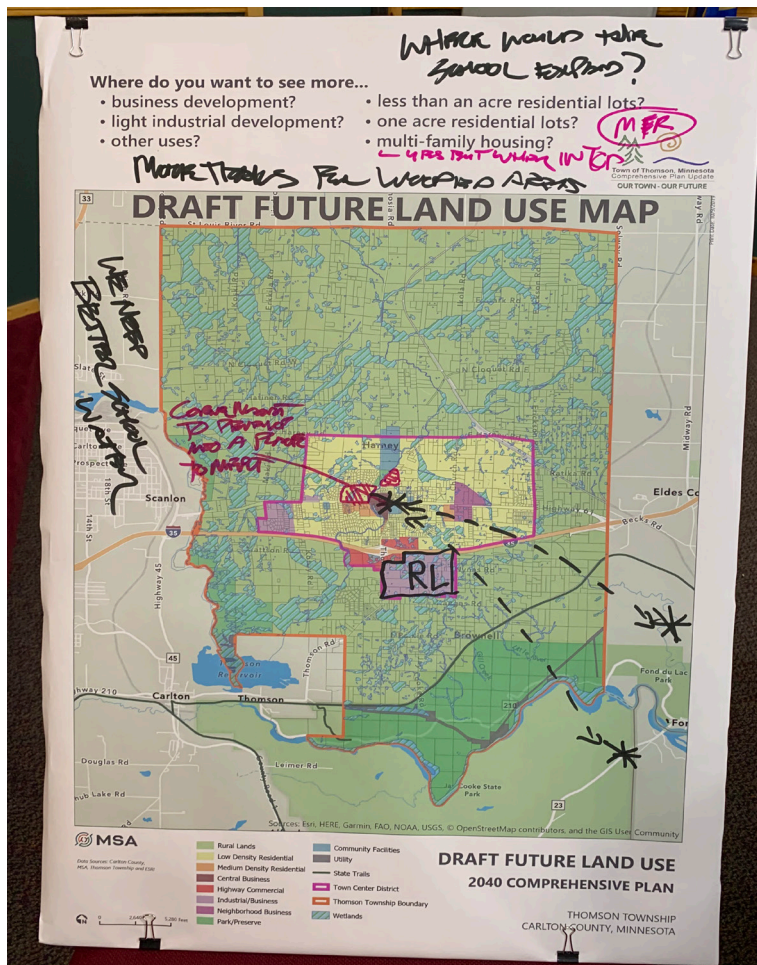


Draft Plan Review Open House

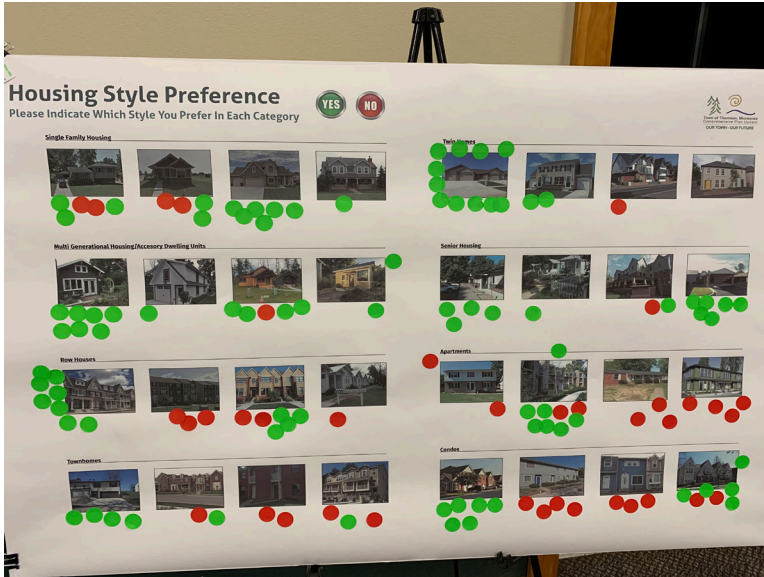
The Draft Plan Open House was held on Wednesday October 9th from 6PM - 8PM at the Thomson Town Hall. It was well attended by the community. There was a short presentation about the planning process and the draft plan document. Stations were placed around the room with informational posters and members of the project team to answer any questions and lead discussions with community members. These stations included the project time-line and process, community goals, housing and commercial development preference boards, existing and future land use maps, transportation and parks and recreation.

Future Land Use Station

The Future Land Station was one of the more popular stations at the Draft Plan Review Open House. There were many great discussions that revolved around the existing land use map and the draft future land use map. Participants, staff and the project team recorded their thoughts and concerns regarding the future develop of the Township on draft maps. Several of these comments are shown below. The feedback from the Draft Plan Review Open House and will be considered in the development of the final future land use and implementation plans.



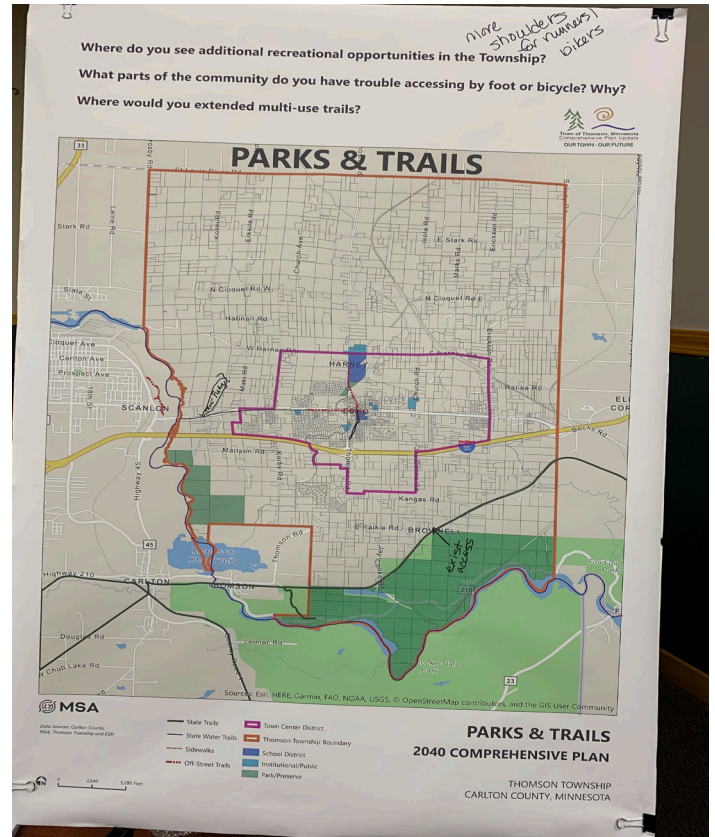
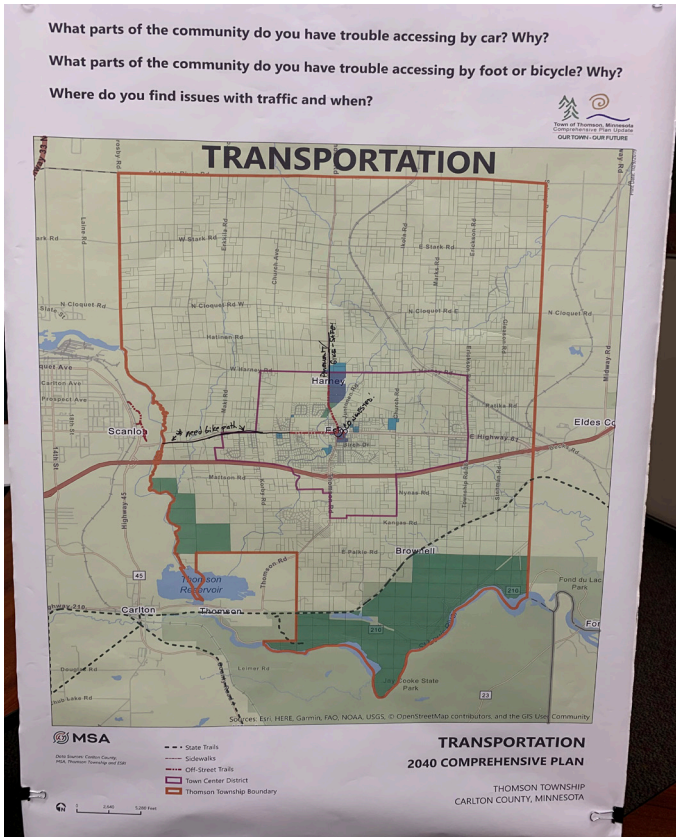
Visual Preference Boards Station



These board provided the public with an opportunity to see some examples of different development and put a green dot if they liked an example and a red dot if they did not want to see that in the community. For the most part people were on the same page but there were some ties for different development structures.

Transportation and Parks and Recreation Station

This station provided a visual drawing board for attendees to draw and pinpoint areas of transportation issues and opportunities, same goes for the parks and trails board. Many drew in trail extensions for bike and pedestrian use. Almost every participant wanted to see a trail extension west along Highway 61 to connect in Scanlon and Cloquet.



Draft Plan Review Survey

A second survey was released after the Draft Plan Review Open House to gather feedback about the goals and overall direction of the overall plan. The results of that survey are summarized below and the entire results are in Appendix B.

Q: List three changes that you think would have the potential to improve the quality of life you currently enjoy/desire.

local park business paved development services water
township trails city roads rural sewer tax lower taxes areas



Q: What are the three greatest concerns you have about the future growth and development of Thomson Township?

want will town Township lack opportunities live high school lots
development industries taxes businesses growth
land housing much Losing Subdividing community feel parks
city water



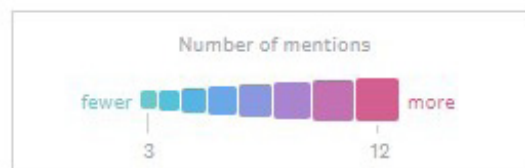
Q; What top three issues do you think the Comprehensive Plan should give guidance on?

without Infrastructure water Keeping areas access school
transportation businesses expansion roads community
housing development growth natural



Q: How did you find out about the 2040 Thomson Township Comprehensive Plan update and planning process?

township paper Esko Corner

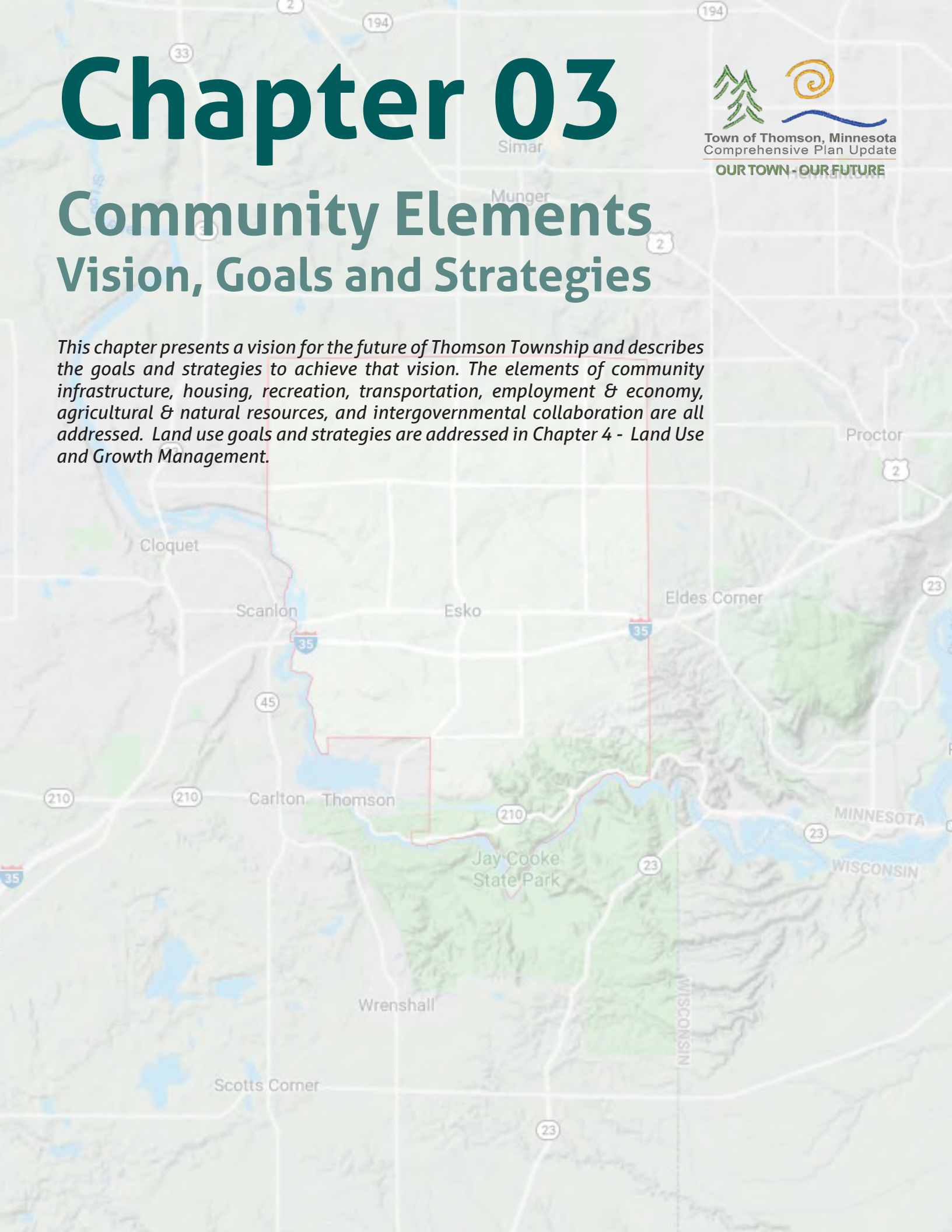


Chapter 03



Community Elements Vision, Goals and Strategies

This chapter presents a vision for the future of Thomson Township and describes the goals and strategies to achieve that vision. The elements of community infrastructure, housing, recreation, transportation, employment & economy, agricultural & natural resources, and intergovernmental collaboration are all addressed. Land use goals and strategies are addressed in Chapter 4 - Land Use and Growth Management.



Community Vision

An aerial photograph of Thomson Township, Michigan. The image shows a paved road curving through a lush green landscape. A river flows through the center, crossed by a small bridge. In the background, there are green fields, a baseball field, and some buildings. The overall scene is rural and scenic.

Thomson Township is a friendly, safe community with exceptional schools, committed to economic growth and prosperity that ensures the preservation of the rural character for current and future generations.

Thomson Township's Goals for a Better Future

Each of the following elements of this chapter, as well as the Land Use Goals and Strategies of Chapter 4, contains goals and strategies established through the planning process based on public engagement activities, Steering Committee input, and the Community Profile.

This section defines goals and strategies as follows:

Goal

A long term target that states what the community wants to accomplish. Written in general terms, the statement offers a desired condition through implementation.

Strategy

A strategy is a statement that identifies a course of action to achieve a goal. They are more specific than goals and are usually attainable through planning and implementation through direct action.

The goals of this chapter are summarized below and then expanded along with corresponding strategies on the following pages.

Community Infrastructure

1. Maintain reliable, quality services, utilities, and facilities to encourage growth and reinvestment.
2. Ensure that public facilities and services meet the needs of residents and businesses, especially as new development increases demand for those facilities and services.

Recreation

1. Develop and support a comprehensive system of safe, aesthetically pleasing and useful parks, preserves, green-way corridors and trails that are geographically located throughout the community.
2. Continue partnerships with Carlton County, the State of Minnesota, adjacent cities and townships, school districts, churches and civic organizations to provide recreation facilities and programs.

Housing

1. Strengthen housing and community character by encouraging the maintenance and improvement of the existing housing stock and properties throughout the community.
2. Retain and attract people including young professionals, families, and retirees by supporting a range of housing options.

Transportation

1. Provide guidance for safe, efficient, coordinated and convenient multi-modal transportation system that is integrated with anticipated land use and development plans, and that protects and enhances natural resources.
2. Develop a comprehensive system that provides mobility for alternative modes of transportation effectively throughout the Township.

Economy & Employment

1. Improve visibility and access to business in Thomson Township.
2. Support strategic economic growth within the Town Center area and provide additional retailers, businesses and services for the community.
3. Revitalize as needed and continue to focus on Town Center (Esko) and the Highway 61 corridor as the commercial heart of the community.
4. Provide long range development guidelines for development and reinvestment along Highway 61.

Intergovernmental Collaboration

1. Thomson Township will maintain mutually beneficial relationships and partnerships with neighboring townships, counties and municipalities as well as state and federal agencies.

Agricultural & Natural Resources

1. Manage, enhance and preserve unique land and water resources by preserving the natural environment by avoiding development on high value wetlands and floodplains.
2. Protect and enhance the natural settings unique to the character of the township.
3. Address incompatibility between agricultural and residential land by protecting existing active farms in the Rural Lands.

Resiliency

1. Encourage sustainable practices throughout the community including development and infrastructure methods.



Community Infrastructure Goals & Strategies

Public and private utilities are a fundamental need for growing and sustaining a community and important to the residents of Thomson Township. Without utilities, the continued suburban growth of the Township would stall. The current lack of a public potable water system and lack of access to broadband are concerns for some residents and seen by some as road blocks for future development. Others expressed a desire for the expansion of the public sanitary sewer system beyond its current footprint. Below are some goals and strategies to help overcome these challenges and other related to the community's infrastructure.

Community Infrastructure Goal #1

Maintain reliable and high quality services, utilities, and facilities to encourage growth and reinvestment.

Strategies:

1. Require industrial wastewater pretreatment and pollution prevention as industrial development occurs in the township.
2. Maintain adequate surface drainage and stormwater facilities so Thomson Township is a safe and environmentally conscious community by completing a stormwater management plan for the Township.
3. Investigate the feasibility of providing potable water as a utility to Township residents.
4. Add site and building design guidelines for new development in the Town Center District (see Chapter 4 - Design Guidelines).
5. Continue to lobby county and state officials to provide expanded broadband access throughout the Township.

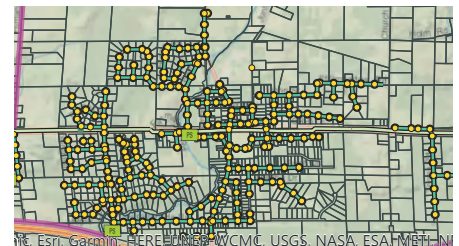


Community Infrastructure Goal #2

Ensure that public facilities and services continue to meet the needs of residents and businesses, especially as new development increases demand for those facilities and services.

Strategies:

1. Encourage logical, cost-efficient expansion of utilities to serve new developments in the Town Center Area and seek to partner with petitioners and surrounding property owners to finance extensions.
2. Determine the capacity of development on the current sewer line for service expansion and capacity increases that will be needed to serve the forecasted population, household, and business growth.



Recreation Goals & Strategies

Thomson Township's easy access to recreation ranks very high on the list of contributions towards and improved quality of life. Many survey respondents and meeting attendees cited parks, trails, waterways and natural areas of the Township as important strengths of the community. These recreational strengths provide residents and visitors with a higher quality of life and they will help keep the Township growing and thriving. Additionally, recreational opportunities add economic value and positively affect property value, tourism and commerce. Below are some goals and strategies to support recreation, parks and trails in Thomson Township.

Recreation Goal #1

Develop and support a linked system of safe, aesthetically pleasing and useful parks, preserves, green-way corridors, and trails that are geographically located throughout the community.



Strategies:

1. Assess the park and trail system to identify areas of the Town Center District that are under served by current parks and trails.
2. Plan for trail linkages to important community facilities, recreational assets, and neighborhoods.
3. Explore the use of demonstration projects for potential pedestrian and bike crossings in the community.
4. Through the development review process encourage new development that preserves natural features and expands recreational access for the neighborhoods, Township residents and visitors.
5. Expand the functionality and access to parking at Northridge Park.
6. Plan for water trail access

Recreation Goal #2

Establish and continue partnerships with Carlton County, the State of Minnesota, adjacent cities and townships, school districts, churches and civic organizations to provide recreation facilities and programs.



Strategies:

1. Promote regional recreational activities and outdoor events, especially those taking place in or near Thomson Township.
2. Provide directional signage to and information about the Township's recreational assets for visitors, employers, and potential residents.
3. Work with regional, county and state organizations to create a well connected regional trail system.

Housing Goals & Strategies

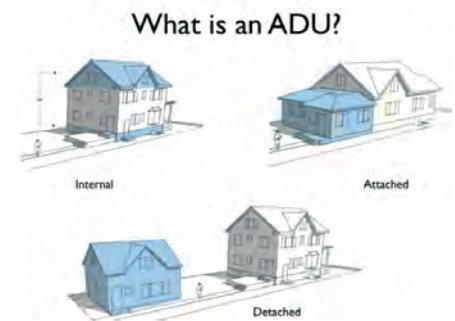
As the Township grows and changes, housing demand will change to meet the needs of the market and desires of the current and potential residents. Housing is included in a comprehensive plan to provide guidance for Township staff, officials and developers when considering additions to and renovations of the Township's housing stock. Character, market needs, and quality are important considerations when evaluating housing growth.

Housing Goal #1

Strengthen housing and community character by encouraging the maintenance and improvement of the existing housing stock and properties throughout the community.

Strategies:

1. Actively enforce code violations related to housing standards and property maintenance in accordance with existing ordinances.
2. Consider adopting International Property Maintenance Code to further assist with development and enforcement of standards.
3. Encourage and support the creation of neighborhood and home owner associations and locally led neighborhood organization efforts to improve housing, property maintenance and safety.
4. Explore other housing density criteria instead of the current lot size based limits; take into account land use, topography, scenic views, and access to roads.
5. Consider allowing Accessory Dwelling Units, which are different than "tiny houses" in rural areas to allow flexible dwelling choices for elderly or other family members wanting to stay with family on rural homesteads.



Housing Goal #2

Retain and continue to attract people including young professionals, families, and retirees by supporting a range of housing options.

Strategies:

1. Explore participating in a regional Housing Needs Assessment to review current housing conditions, document current housing supply, define market demands, and decipher regional trends in an effort to better sync new housing development with current and future needs.
 - Periodically analyze the housing needs of the region and promote appropriate programs, regulations, and incentives to meet these needs.
 - If necessary, modify current land development regulations to expand the options for permitted housing types based on the Housing Needs Assessment.
2. If future utilities allow for smaller lots, consider reducing the minimum lot sizes and setbacks to allow for more affordable market rate single-family housing on smaller lots in select areas of the Town Center District, and where it may be beneficial.
3. Support Planned Unit Development and Conservation Subdivision that integrate a range of housing types, densities and costs, consistent with the character and vision of the Township.



Life cycle housing is essential to keeping the elderly population in the area. One level duplexes are a great way to attain this.

Transportation Goals & Strategies

A community's mobility network is perhaps the most defining feature and should be able to facilitate all modes of movement. Transportation is about the ability to readily and safely gain access to work, school, shopping, recreation, medical care and social gatherings. Thomson Township is fortunate to have easy access to Interstate 35, Highway 61 and the greater Duluth region. The Township's future transportation network should anticipate the needs of users of different types of transportation methods and ensure efficiency and safety across the system.

Transportation Goal #1

Provide guidance for safe, efficient, coordinated and convenient multi-modal transportation system that is integrated with anticipated land use and development plans, and that protects and enhances natural resources.



Adding pedestrian crossing warning signs on Canosia Road like shown here will help with traffic calming and awareness.

Strategies:

1. Manage access and design of transportation network in order to effectively maintain the safety and functional integrity of Township Streets.
 - Analyze future road extensions and connections for future development areas to maintain proper street connections.
 - Develop corridor plans before significant development or growth occurs to seek the appropriate balance among competing issues such as efficiency, safety for all users, property access and impacts on land uses.
2. Ensure new street networks adjacent to existing neighborhoods allow access to and from the established community.
3. Require traffic impact studies prior to approving new development that would significantly impact the Township's transportation network. Phase street improvements following a prioritized improvement plan to upgrade the existing Township roads.

Transportation Goal #2

Develop a comprehensive system that provides mobility for alternative modes of transportation effectively throughout the Township.



Strategies:

1. Complete a trail and recreation plan to help plan and identify funding for off-street trail network expansion.
2. Continue to pursue establishing safe routes to schools from surrounding neighborhoods, build on trails along Highway 61 and Thomson Road.
3. Work with regional and state organizations to create a well connected regional trail system.
4. Request the installation of sidewalks in commercial areas of the Town Center District when properties are redeveloped.
5. Evaluate the need to address alternative transportation modes and alternatives as the township grows and adds new infrastructure.

Employment and Economy Goals & Strategies

Economic development is realized through the growth and retention of jobs, a diversity of business types, and increase in buying power, investment in the built environment, and a general improvement in the community's quality of life. Creating economic prosperity requires the collaborative efforts of public and private entities and the support of the community overall.

The Township recognizes the economic success and a focus on workforce development requires extensive collaboration with other public entities - the Township will be an active partner in these efforts and will avoid duplication of services for efficiency purposes. Support for these efforts may include staff time, funding, policies, endorsement and promotion of projects.

Employment and Economy Goal #1

Improve visibility and access to business in Thomson Township.

Strategies:

1. Promote Thomson Township regionally as a unique place and welcome commerce and visitors as they spend time in Thomson Township.
2. Development of a cohesive way-finding signage to direct visitors and residents in the community to places of interest and commerce area.
3. Promote Highway 61 corridor and Cansioa Road/Thomson Avenue as the primary commercial routes for tourism and local commerce for visitors.



Employment and Economy Goal #2

Support strategic economic growth within the Township area and provide additional retailers, businesses and services for the community.

Strategies:

1. Focus on the Town Center District as a the primary economic growth area.
2. Explore feasible ways to provide additional utilities in the Town Center District, like potable water and additional sewer, that will benefit economic growth opportunities.
3. Establish design guidelines for businesses to address landscaping, aesthetics, lighting, noise, parking and access.
4. Maintain strategies to promote sustainable economic development:
 - Support public-private partnerships and work pro-actively with private business and land owners to facilitate investment in the community.
 - Support the needs of the growing population with actively assisting new business opportunities to the Township via programs, space and infrastructure.
 - Maintain an adequate supply of land for commercial and industrial development.



Employment and Economy Goal #3

Revitalize as needed and continue to focus on Town Center (Esko) and the Highway 61 corridor as the commercial heart of the community.



Strategies:

1. Ensure the Town Center District area is easily accessible and available to residents, visitors, and prospective businesses.
2. Establish a Town Center/Esko district design committee for recommendations to review development proposals.
3. Encourage the rehabilitation of existing structures to be visually appealing to attract residents and visitors.
 - Explore grants expand other financial opportunities to enhance the existing Town Center District business structures.
 - Support the re-purposing of existing commercial structures that have historic architectural character.

Employment and Economy Goal #4

Provide long range development guidelines for development and reinvestment along Highway 61, Thomson Road, and Interstate 35.



Strategies:

1. Complete a corridor plan focused on establishing a vision for new development and reinvestment along Highway 61 in the Town Center District; Request assistance from Carlton County and MN DOT.
2. Expand existing trails system east, west and south to Towns Center boundaries along Highway 61 in conjunction with a Parks and Trails Assessment and development or redevelopment of properties.
3. Develop a concept plan to help guide new development surrounding Thomson/Canosia Road and Interstate 35.

Agriculture and Natural Resources Goals & Strategies

Thomson Township has many natural areas that are vital to the well being of the community and the health of the regional ecosystems. There is also productive agriculture in the Township that provides economic growth and wealth. This section outlines the goals and strategies for preserving, protecting and restoring natural and agricultural resources. These systems are often interconnected and these strategies address water, land, wildlife, air, vegetation, food systems, and the welfare of the Township's resources.

Agriculture and Natural Resources Goal #1

To manage, enhance and preserve unique land and water resources by preserving the natural environment by avoiding development on high value wetlands and floodplains.

Strategies:

1. Protect floodplains as defined by FEMA and designated on FIRM maps from incompatible development.
2. Continue to protect wetlands from unmitigated negative impacts.
3. Support healthy watersheds
 - Preserve the natural character of the watershed through green space acquisition, floodplain regulations, and drainage corridor and buffer protection.
 - Support and encourage sustainable agricultural practices to protect watershed and water resource health.



Agriculture and Natural Resources Goal #2

Protect and enhance the natural settings unique to the character of the Township.

Strategies:

1. Continue to require areas of greenspace in new developments to provide for preservation and aesthetics.
2. Consider requiring conservation and/or comparable restoration of natural features during the development process including replacement of trees and natural waterways.
3. Explore ways of supporting and promoting community gardens, farmers markets and other similar community based food projects.



Agriculture and Natural Resources Goal #3

Address incompatibility between agricultural and residential land by protecting existing active farms.

Strategies:

1. Focus new small-lot residential development, commercial development and industrial development to the area within the Town Center District.
2. Support farming and other harvesting and agricultural operations throughout the Township.
3. Support conservation subdivisions and other resource aware development practices in the rural lands outside the Town Center.



Intergovernmental Collaboration Goal & Strategies

Successful and economically vital communities are built from collaborative efforts among city businesses and organizations. They also form relationships with regional organizations, the State of Minnesota and federal agencies. This section suggests the Townships strategy on collaboration with those entities and provides guidance on reaching out to new partners and maintaining existing relationships.

Intergovernmental Collaboration Goal

Thomson Township will maintain mutually beneficial relationships and partnerships with neighboring townships, counties and municipalities as well as state and federal agencies.



Strategies:

1. Coordinate with Carlton County and surrounding townships to review proposed land use changes, transportation system changes, and utility changes that will have an impact on Thomson Township.
2. Continue to support Esko Community Schools in their growth and community engagement activities.
 - Support the school districts plans for building and site improvements.
 - Partner with the school on land use, utility and transportation improvement planning.
 - Continually engage the school district regarding community activities.

Resiliency Goal & Strategies

Resiliency Goal

Encourage sustainable practices throughout the community including development and infrastructure methods.



Strategy:

1. Encourage energy efficiency in buildings, lighting and infrastructure.
2. Promote education and awareness regarding hazards and risks in the community.
3. Protect and support the development practices that allow for the capture of sunlight for solar energy.

Chapter 04

Land Use and Growth Management



This chapter covers Thomson Township's future growth forecast, existing land use, land use goals and strategies, the future land use map, how to amend the future land use map, design recommendations, and guidelines for buildings and sites.



Township Growth Forecast

This section of Chapter 4 focuses on growth forecasting to be utilized in determining future land use needs. Growth forecasting predicts outcomes of when, where and how much population and household growth Thomson Township can expect in the next 5, 10 and 20 years.

According to United States Census, between 2010 and 2019 the population of Thomson Township increased by approximately 301 people to an estimated 5,310 people. This is an increase of about 0.65% per year or 6% over the 9 year timespan.

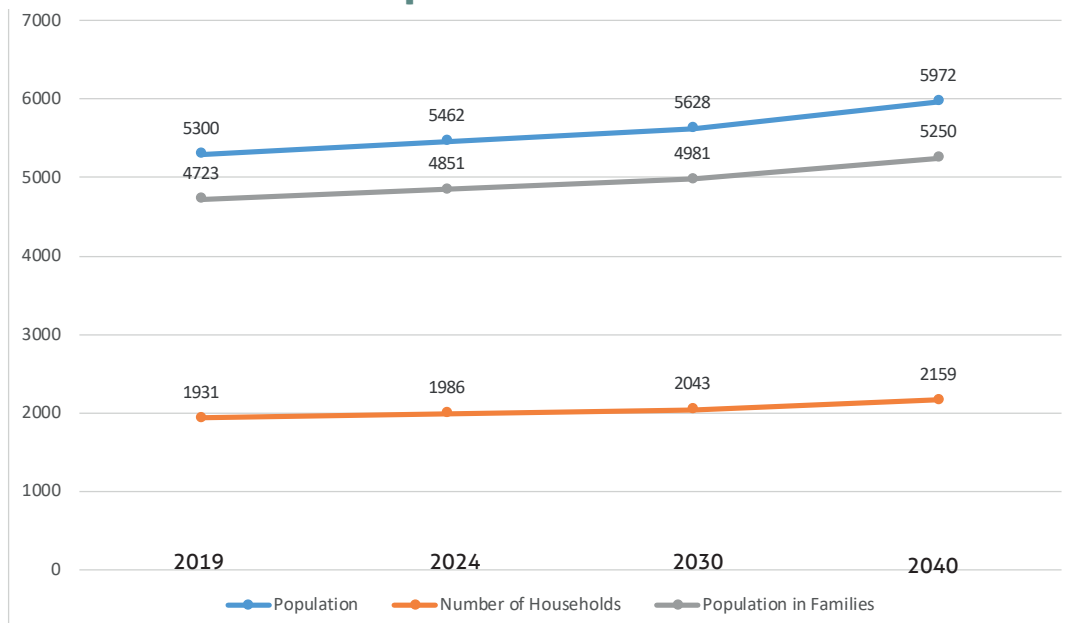
The forecasted annual growth rate of 0.61% for Thomson shows that there will be continued overall population growth but the 0.61% projected annual growth rate through 2024 is slightly lower than the 0.65% annual growth rate experienced from 2010-2019. The number of households is projected to grow at a slightly reduced rate of 0.57% annually to 1,986 households and the number of people living in families is expected to grow to 4,851 in 2024.

The charts below shows projected growth of populations, households and people in households to 2040 utilizing the 2019-2024 projected growth rates from the United States Census.

2019-2024 PROJECTED GROWTH					
	2010-2019		2019-2024		
	Growth Rates	2019 Estimate	Growth Rates	Growth Amounts	2024 Estimates
Population	0.65%	5300	0.61%	162	5462
Number of Households	0.59%	1931	0.57%	55	1986
Population in Families	0.45%	4723	0.54%	128	4851

2025-2040 PROJECTED GROWTH						
	2025-2030			2031-2040		
	Growth Rates	Growth Amounts	2030 Estimates	Growth Rates	Growth Amounts	2040 Estimates
Population	0.61%	167	5628	0.61%	343	5972
Number of Households	0.57%	57	2043	0.57%	116	2159
Population in Families	0.54%	131	4981	0.54%	269	5250

Thomson Township Growth Forecast 2019-2040



Existing Land Use in Thomson Township

57.39%

AGRICULTURAL/
FOREST/VEGETATION



27.65%

SINGLE FAMILY
RESIDENTIAL



10.64%

PARK/PRESERVE



1.52%

UTILITY



1.42%

VACANT/
UNDEVELOPED



0.41%

INDUSTRIAL



0.37%

COMMERCIAL



0.36%

SCHOOL DISTRICT



0.23%

INSTITUTIONAL/
PUBLIC



0.02%

MULTI-FAMILY
RESIDENTIAL



Thomson Township is approximately 24,843 acres or about 39 square miles in size. The following table and map shows the current land use in Thomson Township by existing land use category, as observed in September of 2019. The largest category is Agriculture/Forest/Vegetation at about 57% of total land. Agriculture/Forest/Vegetation properties are those primarily outside of the Town Center District that may or may not contain a built structure but did not have a registered homestead on the property.

The next highest percentage use of property in Thomson Township is Single Family Residential at about 27% of the total area of the Township. These properties have noticeable single family housing on the property and most are registered homesteads. Smaller lot single family property in Thomson Township is primarily located in the Town Center District where sanitary sewer service is available and large single family property is scattered over the more rural areas of the Township. Multi-Family Residential uses account for only 0.02% of the developed property in the Township and might be an area with increased growth pressure in the future.

Park/Preserve is the third largest land use category at about 11% of the Township's area. This is primarily due to the presence of a large portion of Jay Cooke State Park in the southern portion of the Township and other Minnesota Department of Natural Resources property along the St. Louis River south of Interstate 35. Also interesting is that Wetland Areas, as mapped and defined by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, cover about 3% of the Township area and present both challenges and benefits to future development.

Vacant property makes up approximately 1.4% of the area of Thomson Township. Most of the vacant property is within the Town Center District. Most of the property defined as Vacant appears to be unimproved and could see improvement within the 20 year planning forecast period. Some properties within the Town Center District and beyond that are classified as Agriculture/Forest/Vegetation could also be considered Vacant as they could have development potential.

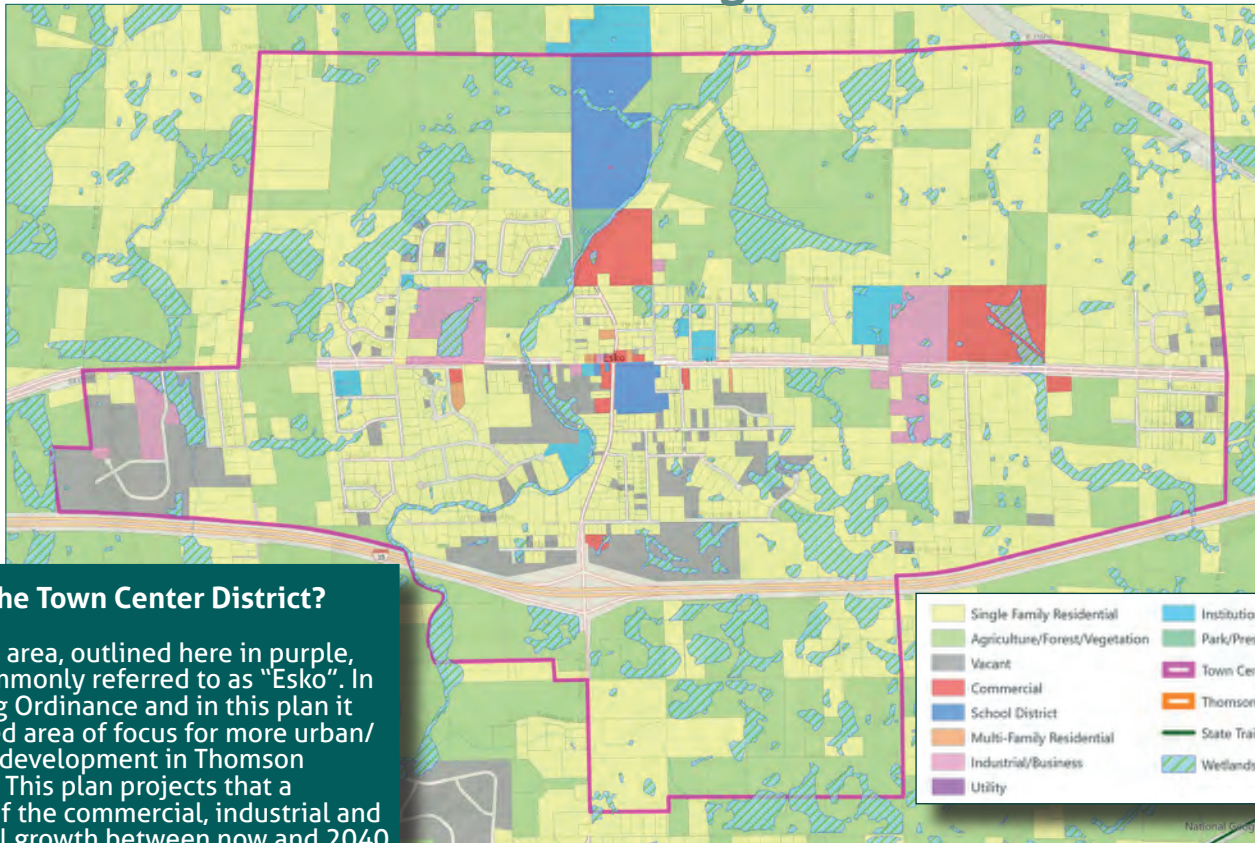
THOMSON TOWNSHIP 2019 EXISTING LAND USE

Land Use Category	Acres	% of Total Acres	Acres per 100 People
Agricultural/Forest/Vegetation	14,257	57.39%	269.0
Single Family Residential	6,869	27.65%	129.6
Park/Preserve	2,643	10.64%	49.9
Utility	376	1.52%	7.1
Vacant	352	1.42%	6.7
Industrial	101	0.41%	1.9
Commercial	92	0.37%	1.8
School District	90	0.36%	1.7
Institutional/Public	57	0.23%	1.1
Multi-Family Residential	5	0.02%	0.1
Total	24,843		Estimated 2019 Population - 5,300
Wetland Areas	717	2.88%	

The chart above and Existing Land Use Map to the right, detail the current use of property within the Township. The map below provides a closer look at the existing use of property in the Town Center District. Most of the more intense uses of property, smaller lot residential growth, and commercial/industrial growth has occurred in this district. Mostly rural land with some low density housing development exists outside the Town Center District.

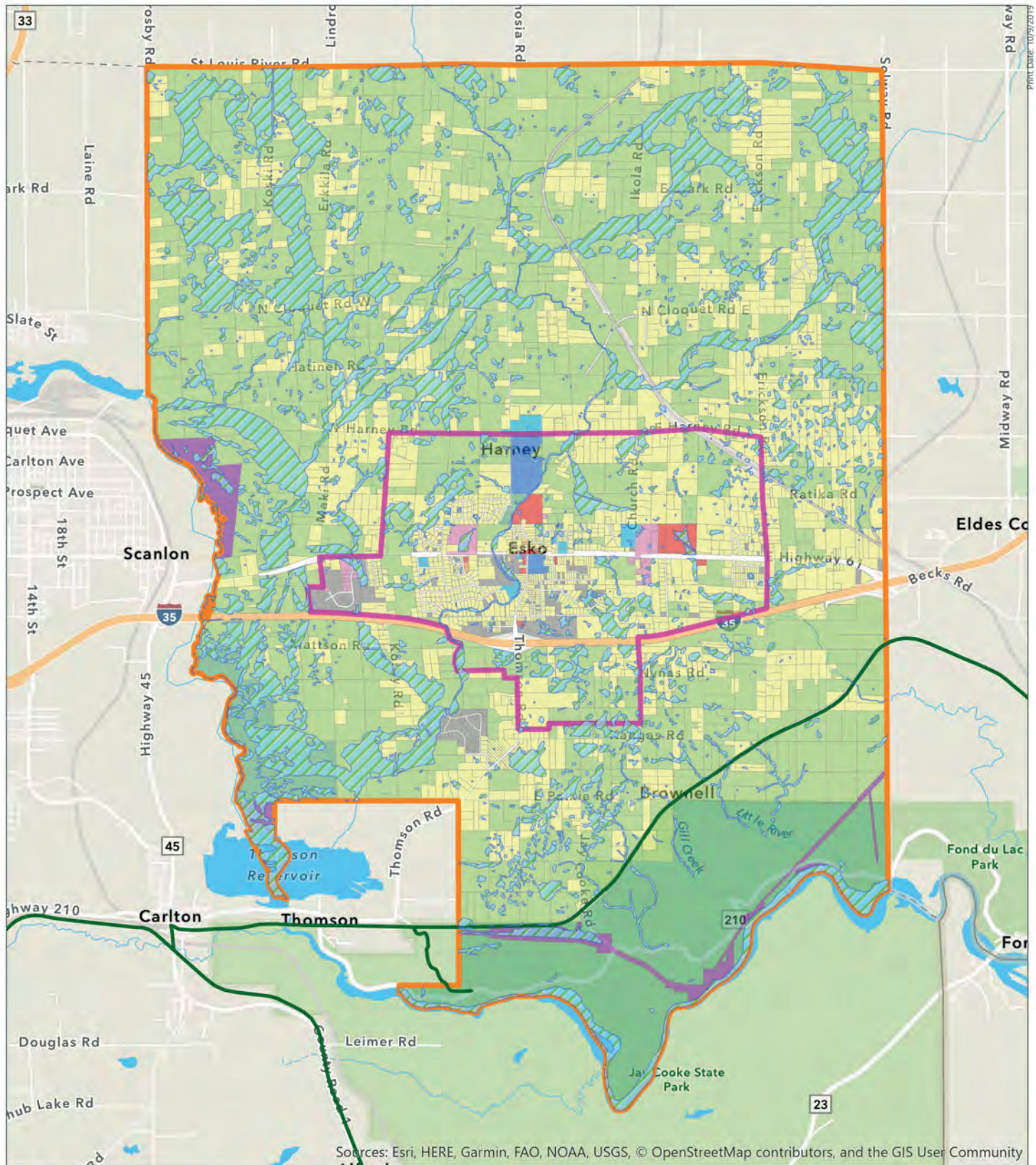
Many properties in the Town Center District are served by the Township’s public sewer. Within the district are Winterquist Elementary School, Esko High School, the Esko Light Industrial Park, three churches and many businesses and service providers. The chart and the map provide a clear picture on the current character of development types in the community but the picture is ever-changing as uses come and go.

Town Center Existing Land Uses



What is the Town Center District?

This is the area, outlined here in purple, that is commonly referred to as “Esko”. In the Zoning Ordinance and in this plan it is a defined area of focus for more urban/suburban development in Thomson Township. This plan projects that a majority of the commercial, industrial and residential growth between now and 2040 will occur within the Town Center District.



Data Sources: Carlton County, MSA, Thomson Township and ESRI

- Single Family Residential
- Agriculture/Forest/Vegetation
- Vacant
- Commercial
- School District
- Multi-Family Residential
- Industrial/Business
- Utility
- Institutional/Public
- Park/Preserve
- Town Center District
- Thomson Township Boundary
- State Trails
- Wetlands

EXISTING LAND USE 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

THOMSON TOWNSHIP
CARLTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA



Land Use Goals and Strategies

The Thomson Township 2040 Comprehensive Plan promotes good development and reinvestment in property that will contribute to the overall quality of life of the community. Within the Town Center District, urban development is encouraged that supports Thomson Township's small town character and takes advantage of neighboring business, access to Interstate 35, and available sanitary sewer. Limiting potential land use conflicts in the Town Center District will continue to be a challenge. This land use plan, both map and text, provides guidance on both the anticipated and the unknown challenges facing Thomson's Town Center District as it continues to develop.

Outside the Town Center, in the more traditionally rural areas of the Township, this plan will support and provide guidance for supporting development patterns that are characterized by large forested areas, farms and agricultural areas, large rural lots, and rural levels of community services. The plan supports conservation subdivisions and transitional rural development concepts, particularly along major access roads and the fringe of the Town Center District. Overall, growth in the rural areas of the Township will continue to follow rural land use development patterns and continue to support the character of these more rural areas.

The following goals and strategies are focused on future growth of Thomson Township and should be reviewed when considering development and reinvestment petitions where use of a property will change or intensify.

Land Use Goal #1

Establish a cohesive land use pattern that ensures compatibility and functional relationships among activities.

Strategies:

1. All future land development shall be consistent with Thomson Township's 2040 Comprehensive Plan and adopted development regulations.
2. Support development that builds on community strengths such as quality homes, connected neighborhoods, transportation access, agricultural production, regional parks, environmental quality, open space, strong residential neighborhoods, quality local government, and park amenities that define the community's rural identity.
3. Property values shall be protected through the harmonious relationship of operating land uses, roads, and natural features.
4. Relate land use development to transportation systems of the Township and region; ease of access to and from the Township to the greater region is a crucial contributor to economic success and quality of life.
5. Support sufficient lot area and setback requirements for new development along major streets and highways to establish attractive street corridors, buffer yards and screening of adjacent land uses, natural noise barriers, and safe roadway intersections.
6. Provide land use transitions through site design, separation, and buffering or screening between distinctly different types of land uses.
7. Support changes in types of land use that occur either at center or mid-block points so that similar uses front on the same street, or at borders of areas separated by major man-made or natural barriers.
8. Encourage industrial site designs that integrate the facility with natural features of the land and provide an aesthetically attractive appearance.



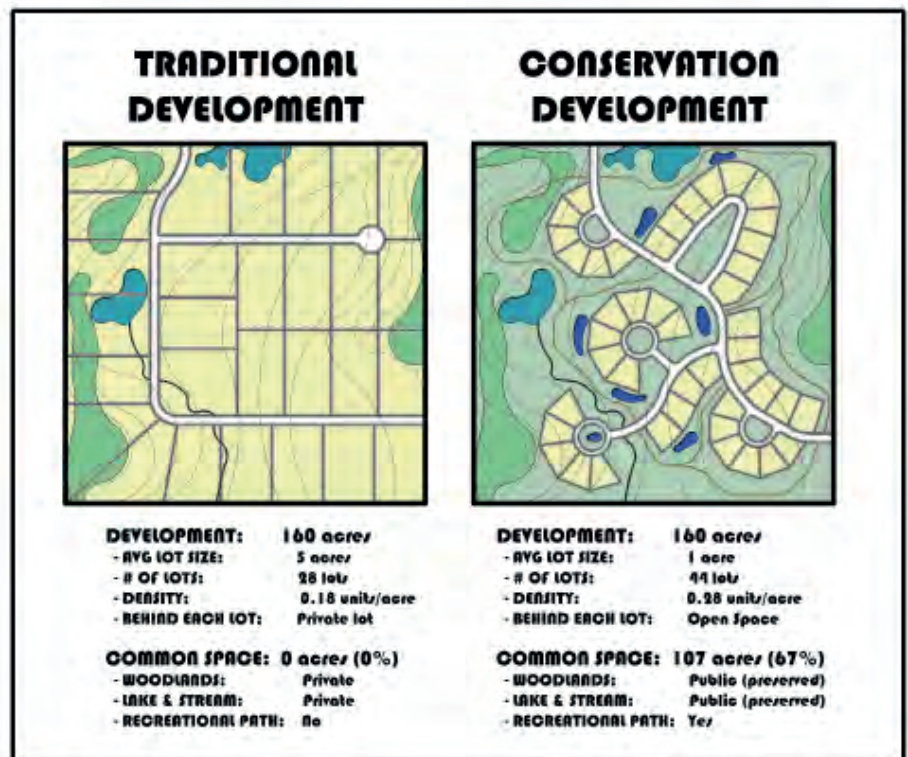
9. Ensure that intensification of land use activity and development is accompanied by sufficient corresponding increases in related supportive and service facilities such as parks, off-street parking, on-site wells, sanitary sewer system extension or on-site individual sewage treatment systems, fire and police protection, etc.
10. Provide information by request to local property owners of the regulations and programs that may assist them in the maintenance or renovation of their properties.
11. Examine requested land use changes in relation to adjoining land uses, site accessibility, utility availability, and consistency with the Township's Comprehensive Plan and development regulations.
12. All development proposals shall be analyzed on an individual basis from a physical, economic and social standpoint to determine the most appropriate uses within the context of the community as a whole.

Land Use Goal #2

Support the preservation of agricultural and significant environmental natural features by promoting conservation subdivisions and planned unit developments outside the Town Center District.

Strategies:

1. Require a natural resource inventory with all new subdivision applications that identifies wetlands, floodplains, water-bodies, steep slopes, and significant tree cover.
2. Request that the new subdivision's features (i.e., street layout, lot configuration, building placement) are designed in a manner that is least disruptive to the land's natural features.
3. Support conservation subdivisions in areas of environmental significance to create greenway corridors and/or conservation areas to preserve high value environmental areas. Conservation subdivisions should meet the following criteria:
 - Utilize Planned Unit Development zoning as a tool supporting conservation subdivisions.
 - Maintain an overall Rural Residential density and minimize the impact of a site's natural features.
 - Include reserve land resources for efficient future urban development and require ghost platting on preliminary plats.
 - Identify the land characteristics required to support future urbanization.
 - Allow no more than 25% of the developable land in a project to be developed, reserving larger future urbanization parcels.
 - Provide, as a condition of approval, for the ability to rezone future urbanization parcels to a residential zoning classification at densities consistent with Township Board policy at such time that urban services are available.



Land Use Goal #3

Identify and reserve land within the Town Center District for commercial development that will provide goods and services to Thomson Township residents and the region.

Strategies:

1. Locate new commercial uses along primary transportation corridors and adjacent to major intersections within the Town Center District to take advantage of roadway access, utilities, visibility and commerce occurring within the district.
2. Coordinate commercial land use planning with the access spacing guidelines of the Township, Carlton County and the Minnesota Department of Transportation to ensure safe ingress and egress to the commercial sites while minimizing the disruption of roadway traffic.
3. Highway commercial developments must be approved respective of future highway improvements and right-of-way needs with regard to setbacks, lot size, access, frontage roads, and parking.
4. Spot or uncoordinated linear commercial development shall be discouraged in favor of a unified development pattern.
5. Commercial and service centers shall be developed cohesively promoting highly interrelated and coordinated units with adequate off-street parking and appropriate regulated points of access.
6. Direct property access to highways shall be discouraged and the development of a frontage or backage road system shall be encouraged.
7. Protect residential neighborhoods from commercial land uses through proper site design including, but not limited to, building orientation, setbacks, landscaping, controlled lighting, and controlled access.
8. Visual pollution from signs, utility lines and dilapidated structures is to be eliminated through the strict enforcement of Township ordinances.
9. Promote commercial site clean up through community promotion of good practices and code enforcement where necessary.
10. Restrict outdoor storage or sales on commercial sites to approved designated and screened areas of the site.





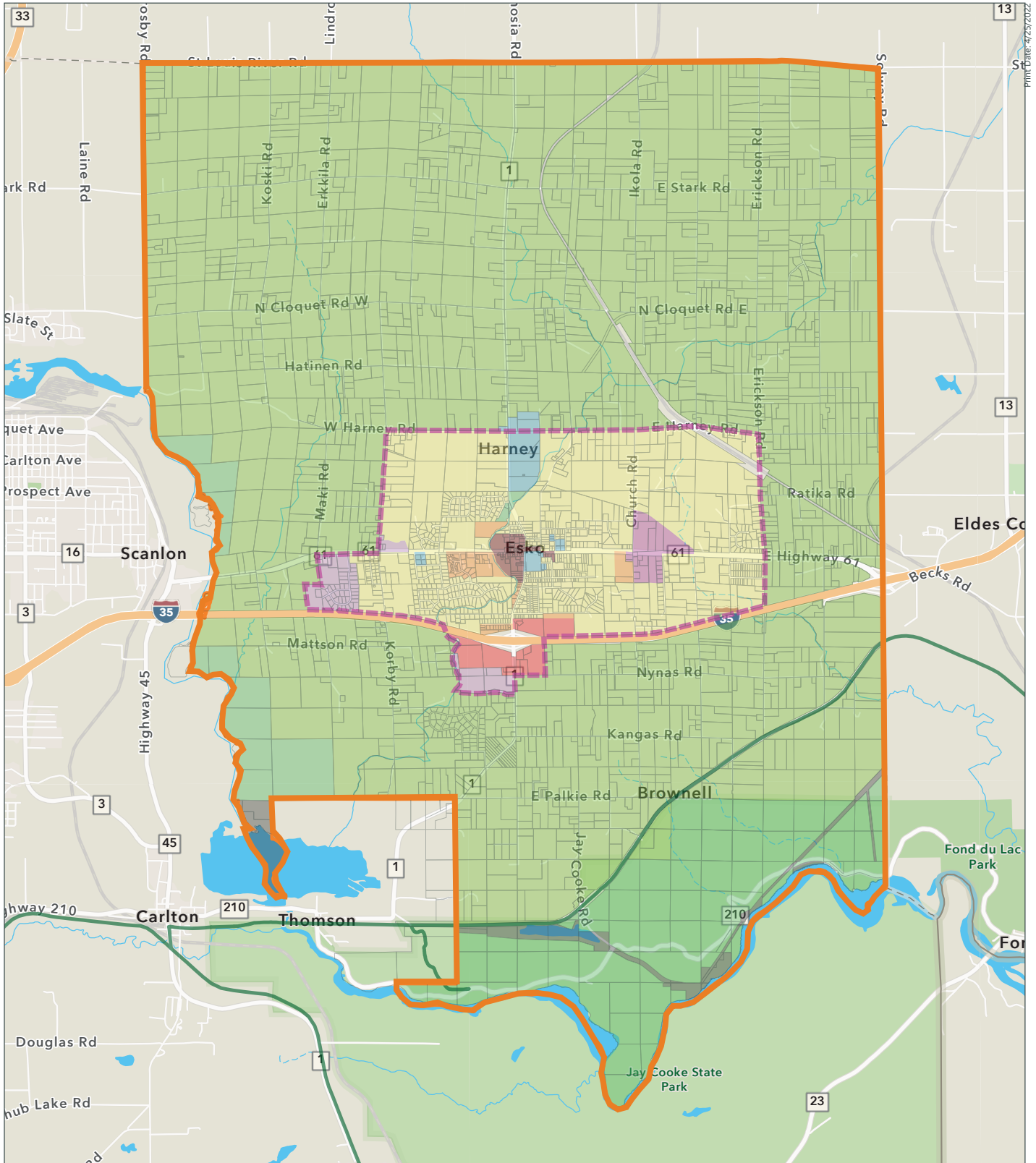
Land Use Goal #4

Identify and reserve land for future industrial/warehousing as a means of expanding the Township's tax base and providing local employment opportunities.

Strategies:

1. Continue to support and promote the Esko Industrial Park as an established area for industrial and business investment.
2. Identify areas for additional industrial growth that provides the following locational characteristics:
 - The site should be reasonably level and offer a site area that is capable of accommodating industrial buildings and required ancillary activities (i.e., parking, shipping and receiving, outdoor storage, etc.).
 - The site soils should be well drained and capable of bearing heavy loads.
 - The site should be flood-free.
 - The site should take advantage of available community transportation facilities such as Interstate 35, Highway 61, Thomson Road and other major thoroughfares.
 - The site should be protected from residential encroachment or other incompatible land use neighbors.
3. Industrial areas should allow for further future industrial expansion.
4. New industrial sites must have sufficient lot area to accommodate building pads, required setbacks, utilities, screening, private wells, and sanitary sewer system connections or on-site treatment.
5. Industrial development shall provide adequate off-street parking and loading facilities.
6. Outside storage of equipment and materials shall be screened and landscaped to eliminate any visual impact.
7. Existing industrial uses and new industrial development shall not cause pollutants or contaminants to be emitted into the surrounding environment in excess of State and Federal regulations.
8. Promote the development of transitional land use between industrial land uses and residential uses to provide buffering and separation in an effort to establish compatible land use patterns.

Future Land Use In Thomson Township



Data Sources: Carlton County, MSA, Thomson Township and ESRI

- Rural Lands
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Interchange Business
- Central Business
- Neighborhood Business
- Industrial
- Community Facilities
- Park Reserve
- Utility
- Proposed Revised Town Center District
- Thomson Township Boundary
- State Trails



FUTURE LAND USE 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

THOMSON TOWNSHIP
CARLTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA

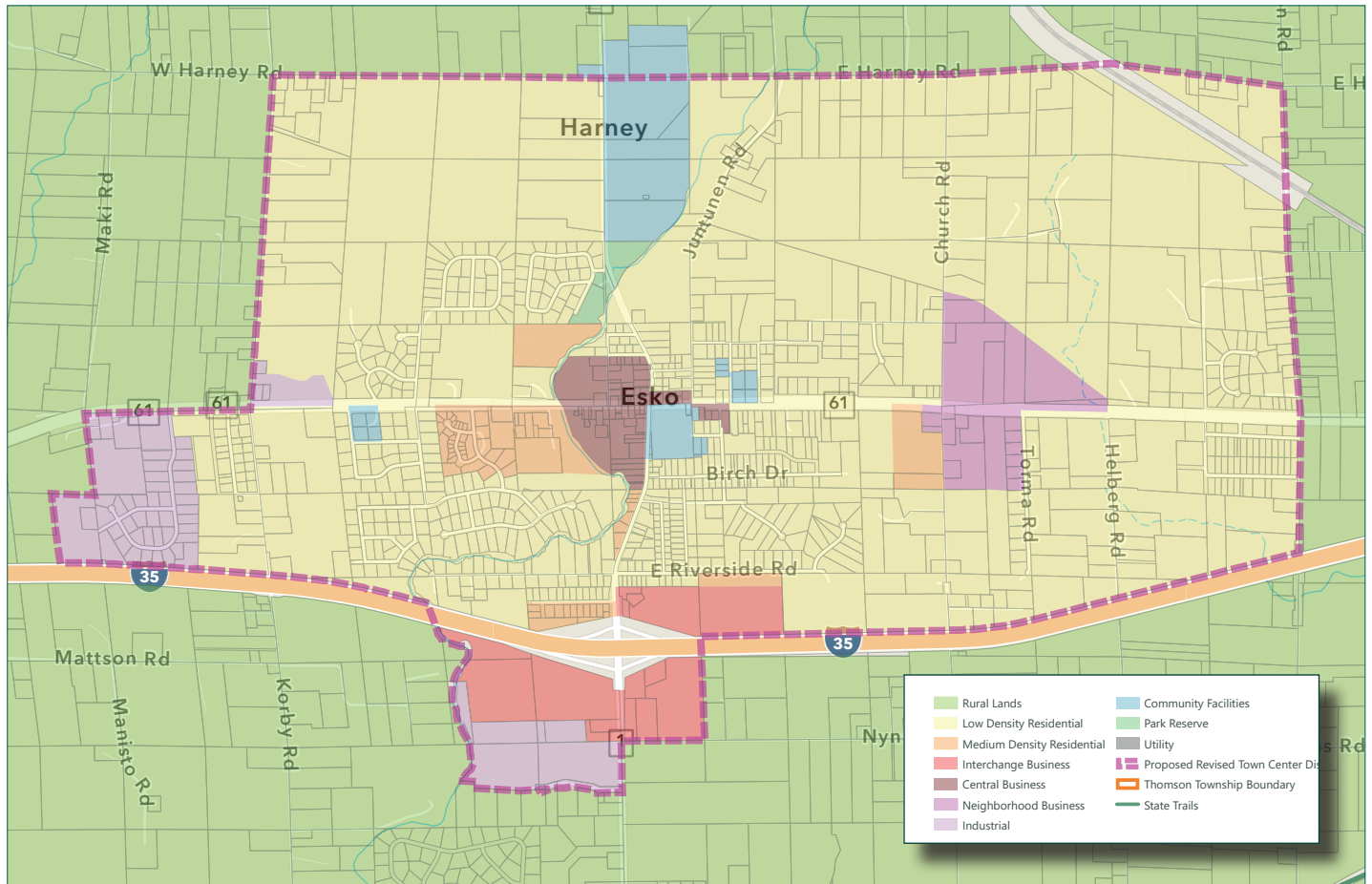
THOMSON TOWNSHIP 2040 FUTURE LAND USE

Land Use Category	Acres	% of Total Acres	Acres per 100 People
Rural Lands	18,491	74.2%	309.6
Low Density Residential	2,777	11.1%	46.5
Park/Preserve	2,638	10.6%	44.2
Utility	277	1.1%	4.6
Interchange Business	141	0.6%	2.4
Industrial	180	0.7%	3.0
Community Facilities	133	0.5%	2.2
Neighborhood Business	110	0.4%	1.8
Medium Density Residential	115	0.5%	1.9
Central Business	61	0.2%	1.0
Total	24,923		Projected 2040 Population - 5,972

The chart above and Future Land Use Map to the left detail the proposed use of property within the Township for 2040. The map below provides a closer look proposed use of property in the Town Center District. Most of the Township's future suburban style growth, including smaller lot residential growth and business growth, will be directed towards the Town Center District. There is also a slight modification to the boundaries of the Town Center District, shown as a dashed purple line on these maps. Rural lands will include some single-family housing, farmsteads, agriculture operations, forests, preserves, and other natural areas.

The Land Use Categories in the chart above and included Future Land Use maps present a difference in categories from the Existing Land Use Map and chart - this is by design. The future land use categories purposely do not directly reflect the existing land uses of 2019 as the Future Land Use map is a visual estimation of what land use might look like in 2040 for Thomson Township.

Town Center Future Land Uses





Using the Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map (opposite) identifies categories of similar use, character and density. These categories are described in the subsequent pages, including explanation of the Township's intent, as well as design and development strategies.

This map, and the corresponding text, are to be consulted whenever development is proposed. Development shall be consistent with the use category shown on the map and the corresponding text.

Amending the Future Land Use Map

It may, from time to time, be appropriate to consider amendments to the Future Land Use Map. The following criteria should be considered before amending the map.

Agricultural

The total number of acres of agricultural land may continue to decrease in Thomson. The population of the Township is projected to continue growing and additional property may be petitioned for rezoning to accommodate the development needed to support the growing population. This anticipated growth must be balanced against the goals of preserving agricultural land for the purposes of resource protection and maintaining agricultural contributions to the region.

Compatibility

The proposed development, or map amendment, will not have a substantial adverse effect upon adjacent property or the character of the area, with a particular emphasis on existing residential neighborhoods. A petitioner should indicate approaches that will minimize incompatibilities between uses.

A "Petitioner" refers to anyone that comes before the Township with a request to amend the Future Land Use Map in this Comprehensive Plan.

Natural Resources

Proposed development should not include a negative or unmitigated impact on important natural features such as wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, scenic vistas or significant woodlands. The proposed building envelope is not located within the setback of floodplain zones (raised above regional flood line) or shoreland

Where uses in this map differ from the current use, it is not the general intent of the Township to compel a change in use. Except in rare instances when the Township may actively facilitate redevelopment of a priority site, the Township use of this map will be only reactive, guiding response to proposals submitted by property owners and petitioners.

zones. The proposed development will not result in undue water, air, light, or noise pollution in order to attribute to the rural character of Thomson Township. Petitioners shall indicate approaches that will preserve or enhance the most important and sensitive natural features of the proposed site.

Emergency Vehicle Access

The lay of the land will allow for construction of appropriate roads and/or driveways that are suitable for travel or access by emergency vehicles.

Ability to Provide Services

Provision of public facilities and services for new development will not place an unreasonable financial burden on the Township. Petitioners may demonstrate to the Township that the current level of services in the Township, or region, including but not limited to school capacity, transportation system capacity, emergency services (police, fire, EMS), parks and recreation, storm water, and potentially sewer services or water services, are adequate to serve the proposed use. Petitioners shall also demonstrate how they will assist the Township with any shortcomings in public services or facilities.

Public Need

There is a clear public need for the proposed change or unanticipated circumstances have resulted in a need for the change. The proposed development is likely to have a positive fiscal or social impact on the Township.

Adherence to Other Portions of this Plan

The proposed development is consistent with the general vision for the Township and the goals and strategies of this Plan.

Future Land Use Categories

The future land use categories identify areas of similar use, character and density. These classifications are not zoning districts - they do not legally set performance criteria for land uses (i.e. setbacks, height restrictions, density, etc.). The strategies listed with each category are provided to help landowners and Township officials make design decisions during the development review process that are consistent with the intent of the land use category. The significant categories also feature design recommendations.

The eight categories designated on the 2040 Future Land Use Map are:

- **RL** - Rural Lands
- **LDR** - Low Density Residential
- **MDR** - Medium Density Residential
- **CB** - Central Business
- **IB** - Interchange Business
- **NB** - Neighborhood Business
- **I** - Industrial
- **CF** - Community Facilities
- **P** - Park/Preserve
- **U** - Utility

Rural Lands (RL)

The Rural Lands category is intended to preserve land and rural character in areas deemed unlikely or infeasible for urban development prior to 2040. Preferred uses in these areas include open space, farming, farmsteads, agricultural businesses, forestry, quarries, and limited rural residential on well and septic. The primary zoning district for RL areas is Agricultural (LA3) District. The maximum density for dwelling units in the RL area is .222/acre. Conservation Subdivisions are encouraged in the RL areas of Thomson Township, likely as Planned Unit Developments.



Low Density Residential (LDR)

Low Density Residential areas are located within the Town Center District of Thomson Township and are intended for housing with a maximum density of 1 unit per acre. The primary zoning district for LDR areas is Town Center Living Area One (LA1) District. New development in LDR areas will consist of single family units, suburban in character, and served by the Township's public sanitary sewer.



Medium Density Residential (MDR)

Medium Density Residential areas are located within the Town Center District of Thomson Township and are intended for multi-family housing units with a maximum density of 12 units per acre. The primary zoning district for MDR areas is Town Center Living Area Two (LA2) District. Development in MDR areas will be served by the Township's public sanitary sewer and include single-family attached duplexes/ twin-homes, townhouses, row houses, apartment buildings, and senior housing.



Central Business (CB)

Central Business areas are located within the Town Center District intended for a full range of commercial land uses that preserve the small town character of Thomson's business district. The primary zoning district for CB areas is Town Center Commercial (TCC) District.



Interchange Business (IB)

Located around the Interstate 35 and Thompson Road interchange, this category was created to accommodate the unique growth and type of development associated with the Township’s interchange on Interstate 35. This district will provide land appropriate for highway-commercial uses, well designed for the capacity of large volumes of traffic. It also provides the opportunity for light industrial business development or a mix of uses within a site or structure. New development within this district should be developed through the use of Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning with Highway Commercial (HC) or Business Park (BP) districts as base districts.



Neighborhood Business (NB)

Neighborhood Business areas are located within the Town Center District and are intended for a limited range of commercial uses that provide convenient commercial services to residents at a neighborhood scale. The primary zoning district for NB areas is Town Center Neighborhood Commercial (TCNC) District.



Industrial (I)

The Industrial areas are intended for office, office-industrial, transportation, warehousing, storage and potentially other commercial uses exhibiting industrial characteristics. The primary zoning district for IB areas is Business Park (BP) District.



Community Facilities (CF)

The Community Facilities land use designation includes public or semi-public facilities including but not limited to: governmental offices, police and fire facilities, clinics, educational institutions, and places of worship



Parks/Preserve Recreation (PR)

The Parks/Preserve land use designation includes active or passive parks such as playing fields, playgrounds, community centers, State Parks, and other appropriate recreational uses as well as includes undeveloped lands, trails, water areas and environmentally sensitives areas.



Utility (U)

The Utilities land use designation accommodates land used or dedicated for public and private utilities, including pipelines, utility lines, power lines, water and wastewater facilities, electrical substations, broadband, and telephone.



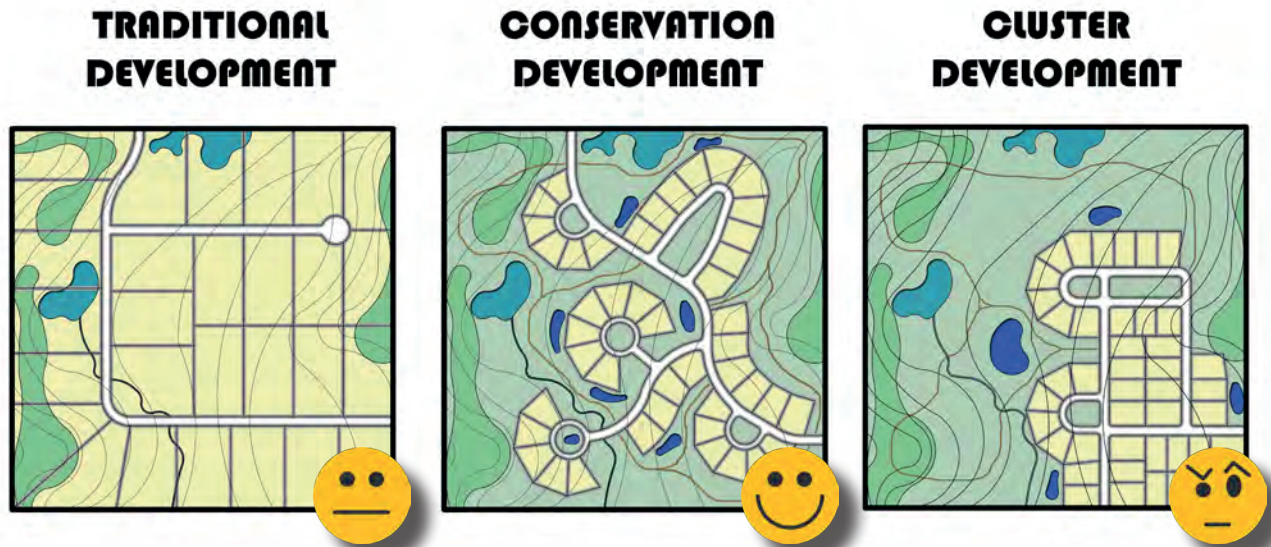
Design Recommendations

Rural Lands

The Rural Lands category is intended to preserve land and rural character in areas deemed unlikely or infeasible for urban development prior to 2040. Preferred uses in these areas include open space, farming, farmsteads, agricultural businesses, forestry, quarries, and limited rural residential on well and septic.

Rural Land Use Strategies

1. Rural residential subdivisions are strongly encouraged to utilize conservation design strategies that minimize the disruption of natural features and rural character.



Low Density Residential

The Low Density Residential areas are intended for housing with densities that range up to one unit per acre. New development in LDR areas will consist of single family units, suburban in character, and served by the Township's public sanitary sewer.

LDR Land Use Strategies

1. Sanitary sewer and other available urban services will be required for all new development, including stormwater management systems.
2. Though low density housing is the predominant use in most neighborhoods, healthy, balanced neighborhoods may also include other uses that support the needs of residents, including:
 - Parks and recreational facilities
 - Small municipal, utility and institutional facilities
 - Community centers
 - Places of worship
3. Infill development will protect the character of existing residential areas. Where possible, infill development should be single-family homes and should be built within areas that are already zoned and compatible for this type of residential use.

Design Strategies

The Township encourages residential projects (new construction and remodeling) to incorporate design strategies that will maintain neighborhood property values over time and enhance the social function and safety of the neighborhood.

Relationship to the Street: Buildings and sites should be designed to establish visual and physical connections between the public realm of the street and the private realm of the home, with layers of increasingly private space in between.

Consider the following techniques (see graphic):

- The front door should face the street and there should be a clear route to the door from the street or sidewalk (A)
- There should be windows on the street facade (B)
- Building setbacks will vary according to building type and street type (C)
- Incorporate a covered front porch, or at least a raised stoop, preferably covered (D)
- When appropriate for the style of the area, utilize low fences, hedges, or other landscaping to establish a layer of privacy behind the sidewalk (E)



This graphic illustrates how a single-family homes can use varying techniques to create a relationship with the street.

Relationship among buildings: Buildings within a neighborhood should be both cohesive and varied.

Consider the following techniques:

- Homes along a street should utilize similar setbacks to establish a consistent “street wall”.
- Home sizes may vary along a street, but should utilize design techniques such as similar roof line heights and deeper setbacks for portions of wider houses to minimize apparent size variations.
- The mix of architectural themes or styles should generally be consistent within a neighborhood, but repeated use of identical floorplans or colors is strongly discouraged, especially for adjacent buildings.

Remodeling and additions: Changes and additions to existing structures should complement the design of the existing structure.

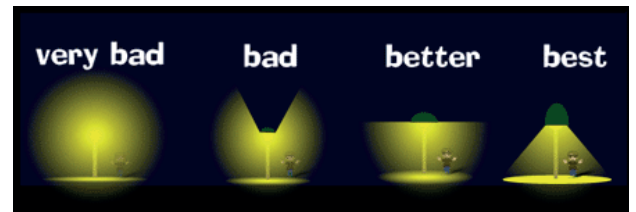
Consider the following techniques:

- Select window types and proportions that match the rest of the house.
- New exterior materials should match, or be complementary, to existing materials.
- Avoid enclosing covered porches, when possible. If enclosing a covered porch, maintain the appearance of a porch, rather than attempting to blend the porch seamlessly with the rest of the house.

Garages: Two to three stall garages are encouraged in all residential zones.

Landscaping: Provide generous landscaping, with an emphasis on native plant species.

Lighting: Exterior lights should be full-cut-off fixtures that are directed to the ground to minimize glare, light trespass and light pollution (see graphic). Limited up-lighting is acceptable for architectural accentuation, flag lighting, and to highlight key civic features (e.g. church steeples).



The upper graphic illustrates the different types of lighting techniques from no cutoff to full-cutoff. The lower images provide good examples of a full-cut-off light fixture.

Medium Density Residential

Medium Density Residential areas are intended for housing at densities up to 12 units per acre. Development in MDR areas will be served by the Township's public sanitary sewer and include single-family attached duplexes/twin-homes, townhouses, row houses, apartment buildings, and senior housing.

MDR Land Use Strategies

1. MDR could be an alternative for someone that wants to own but needs to meet a lower price point than new detached housing stock.
2. MDR uses are an appropriate transition use between commercial areas and Low Density Residential areas.
3. Multi-family residential units are scattered throughout the Town Center District. This type of housing provides an alternative dwelling unit for those who are not interested in purchasing a larger lot home in Thomson Township.

Design Strategies

The Township encourages residential projects (new construction and remodeling) to incorporate design strategies that will maintain neighborhood property values over time and enhance the social function and safety of the neighborhood.

Relationship to the Street: Buildings and sites should be designed to establish visual and physical connections between the public realm of the street and the private realm of the building, with layers of increasingly private space in between.

Consider the following techniques (see graphic):

- The front door should face the street and there should be a clear route to the door from the street or sidewalk (A)
- There should be windows on the street facade (B)

Building setbacks will vary according to building type and street type (C)



Relationship among buildings: Buildings within a neighborhood, or within a single development, should be both cohesive and varied.

Consider the following techniques:

- When adjacent to lower density residential buildings, larger buildings should incorporate strategies to minimize the apparent size of the building, including flat roofs instead of pitched roofs, deeper setbacks for upper stories, and/or variation in the depth of setback along the building facade.
- The mix of architectural themes or styles should generally be consistent within a neighborhood or development, but there should be variation in floor plan, facade design, and color choice to avoid monotony.

Garages: Two stall garages are encouraged in all residential zones.

Landscaping: Provide generous landscaping, with an emphasis on native plant species.

Lighting: Exterior lights should be full-cut-off fixtures that are directed to the ground to minimize glare, light trespass and light pollution. Limited up-lighting is acceptable for architectural accentuation, flag lighting, and to highlight key civic features (e.g. church steeples).

Common Open Space: Provide gardens, grass areas, and playgrounds to serve the needs of residents.

Service Areas: Trash and recycling containers located or screened so that they are not visible from a public street. Screening should be compatible with building architecture and other site features. Commercial areas are intended for retail, service, and office uses that serve neighborhood, community and regional markets. Examples include large retail and service businesses, offices, clinics and health care facilities, hotels, restaurants and entertainment businesses, storage, and automobile sales and services. The type and size of use will be determined by location and market forces.



Commercial

Commercial areas are intended for retail, service, and office uses that serve neighborhood, community and regional markets. Examples include large retail and service businesses, offices, clinics and health care facilities, hotels, restaurants and entertainment businesses, storage, and automobile sales and services. Thomson Township's commercial areas include: Central Business, Highway Commercial, Neighborhood Commercial land use categories.

Land Use Strategies

1. Commercial areas should generally be served by a contiguous sidewalk network, and safe bike routes.
2. The Township encourages and supports investment in small neighborhood commercial uses and sites in existing neighborhoods. Sites deemed no longer viable for commercial use should be considered for redevelopment with housing.
3. Way-finding signage to key downtown locations is critical, especially for visitors. The Township will develop a signage system from primary entry points to key locations throughout the community.
4. Highway commercial use is typically characterized by grocery stores, car lots, convenience stores and other commercial uses that require efficient highway infrastructure and adequate space for parking a significant amount of vehicles.

Design Strategies

The Township encourages for all commercial projects the use of design strategies that will maintain property values over time. This section offers different strategies for highway settings and neighborhood settings in some categories.

Relationship to the Street: The building should be designed such that the primary building facade is oriented towards the street (toward the larger street on corner lots) and should have a public entrance.

Architectural Character: The building should be designed using architectural elements that provide visual interest and a human scale that relates to the surrounding neighborhood context. For commercially zoned districts in the neighborhood Township clusters or the Town Center, new development shall be compatible with height and scale of surrounding buildings and present a two-story facade appearance.

Building Materials: The building should be constructed of high quality, long lasting finish materials, especially along prominent facades with frequent customer traffic.

Building Projections: Canopies, awnings, and/or gable-roof projections should be provided along facades that give access to the building (see graphic).

Signs: Signs should be not larger or taller than necessary based on the context of the site. Signs are subject to the sign ordinance and all permanent signs require a permit.

Highway Commercial: Desired sign types include building-mounted, monument. Signs are subject to the sign ordinance and all permanent signs require a permit.

Neighborhood Commercial: Desired sign types include building-mounted, window, projecting, monument and awning.

Parking: Front yard parking should be limited; side yard, rear yard, or below building alternatives are preferred. Shared parking and access between properties is encouraged to minimize curb cuts and make more efficient use of land and paved surfaces. Landscaping and trees should be incorporated into all surface parking areas to improve aesthetic and environmental performance. Vegetative buffers should be provided between pedestrian circulation routes and vehicular parking/circulation. Access drive lanes should be separated from parking stalls to reduce congestion. (see side bar)

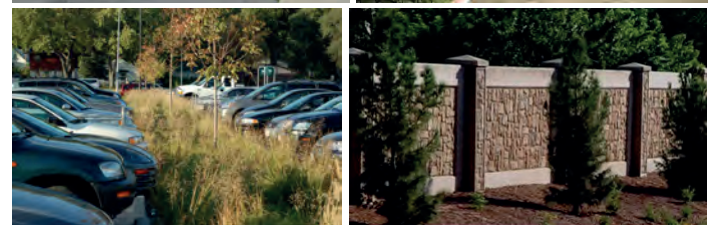
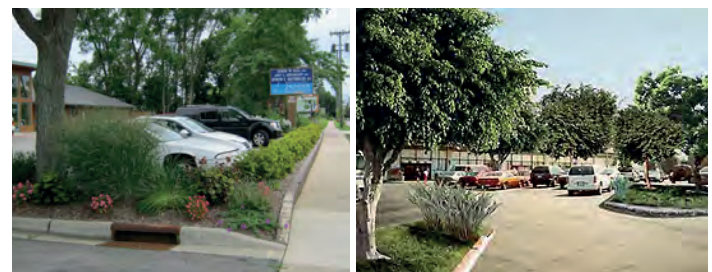
Landscaping: Generous landscaping should be provided with an emphasis on native plant species. Landscaping should be placed along street frontages, between incompatible land uses, along parking areas, and in islands of larger parking lots. Use trees and low bushes in and around parking areas to partially obscure



Awnings (left) or canopy structures (right) help define the building entrances and provide visual interest along the street frontage.



The above concept illustrates shared parking between two developments connected by an access drive, and includes vegetative buffers along all pedestrian routes.



The examples above illustrate ways to landscape parking areas, including along the street frontage, in parking islands and medians, and between incompatible land uses.

views of parking while retaining visual connections to maintain personal safety. (see side bar)

Lighting: Exterior lights should be full-cut-off fixtures that are directed to the ground to minimize glare and light pollution, and especially to avoid light trespass to nearby residential property. Limited uplighting is acceptable for architectural accentuation, flag lighting, and to highlight key civic features (e.g. church steeples).

Stormwater: Rain gardens, bio-retention basins, permeable pavement and other stormwater management technologies should be utilized to filter pollutants and infiltrate runoff.

Service Areas: Trash and recycling containers, street-level mechanical, rooftop mechanical, outdoor storage, and loading docks should be located or screened so that they are not visible from a public street. Screening should be compatible with building architecture and other site features.

I - Industrial

Industrial - Business Park areas are intended for office, office-industrial, transportation, warehousing, storage and potentially other commercial uses exhibiting industrial characteristics.

Land Use Strategies

1. Industrial areas should be located near regional transportation routes.
2. New industrial development/sites shall be designed so they are compatible with the character of the surrounding commercial or industrial developed properties and limit negative impacts on surrounding developed properties.

CF - Community Facilities

Public and institutional areas are intended for churches, schools, cemeteries, art and cultural facilities, local government facilities and other parcels that are owned by a public or quasi-public entity. This category does not include parks and recreation areas.

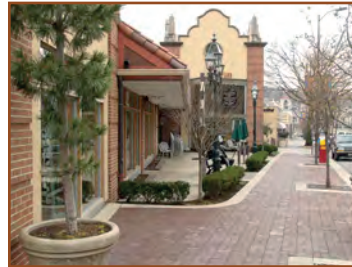
Land Use Strategies

1. Decommissioned public properties should be reused or redeveloped in ways compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.
2. New community facilities should follow the outlined design strategies in this chapter so that they add value to the character of the neighborhood, the area they are within and the nature of the township. And can function as their operations require, while limiting negative impacts on surrounding developed properties.

Design Guidelines for Buildings and Sites

Based on public feedback from the planning process this plan recommends the adoption of more detailed design guidelines for the Multi-Family Residential, Central Business, Neighborhood Commercial, Community Facilities, and Highway Commercial areas within the Town Center District. These pages present the basic categories that should be addressed by any such guidelines and some specific sample guidelines to inform the development of adopted standards.

Street Relationship: Design the building such that the primary building façade is orientated towards the street and the required setback space created could provide an outdoor seating area, a hardscape plaza, or similar pedestrian space. Provide a public entrance on the primary façade.



Required building setbacks from the street allows extra room for a larger pedestrian zone.

Lighting: Pick fixtures that complement the character of the building. Illuminate parking lots and pedestrian walkways uniformly and to the minimum level necessary to ensure safety. Lighting should be energy efficient and should render colors as accurately as possible. Preferred light types include: LED, fluorescent, and high-pressure sodium.



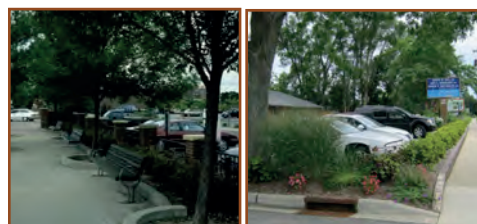
Examples of full cutoff fixtures that minimize glare and light pollution.

Parking: Place parking on the side or back of the building, wherever feasible. Provide shared parking and access between properties to minimize the number of curb cuts. Provide vegetative buffers between pedestrian circulation routes and vehicular parking/circulation. Access drive lanes should have adequate throat depths to allow for proper vehicle stacking.



An example of parking being shared between two developments with parking limited to the side or rear yards (no front yard parking).

Landscaping: Provide generous landscaping, with an emphasis on native plant species. Landscaping should be placed along street frontages, between incompatible land uses, along parking areas, and in islands of larger parking lots.



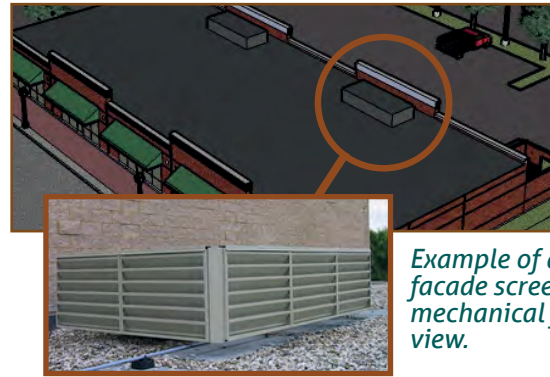
Trees and shrubs within and around parking areas greatly improve the aesthetic appearance and overall pedestrian experience.

Stormwater: Use rain gardens and bio-retention basins on-site (i.e. in parking islands) in order to filter pollutants and infiltrate runoff, wherever feasible. Consider using permeable surfaces, pervious asphalt, pervious concrete, and/or special paving blocks.



Examples of permeable surfaces.

Service Areas: Trash and recycling containers/ dumpsters, street-level mechanical, rooftop mechanical, outdoor storage, and loading docks should be located or screened so that they are not visible from a public street. Screening should be compatible with building architecture and other site features.



Example of a building facade screening rooftop mechanical from ground view.

Scale & Articulation: Design the building using architectural elements that provide visual interest and human scale that relates to the surrounding neighborhood context and the downtown’s overall character.



Desired vertically-proportioned buildings.

Windows, Doors & Garages: Buildings should activate the street by providing significant visibility through the street-level facade to activities/displays within the building. Clearly define door entryways and design garage doors to be screened from street view (i.e. not on street facade, landscaping, walls), to the greatest extent possible.



An example of large windows providing significant visibility into the building.

Building Projections: Canopies and awnings should be provided along facades that give access to the building.



A good example of mounted awnings placed below the horizontal expression line.

Signage: Use pedestrian-scaled sign types: building-mounted, window, projecting, monument, and awning. Signs should not be excessive in height or square footage.



Free-standing and roof signs are not conducive for a downtown, pedestrian-friendly district.

Colors & Materials: Use high-quality, long-lasting finish materials such as kiln-fired brick, stucco, and wood. All exposed sides of the building should have similar or complementary materials and paint colors as used on the front façade.



Examples of secondary facades continuing the design quality, material palette, and color palette of the primary facade.

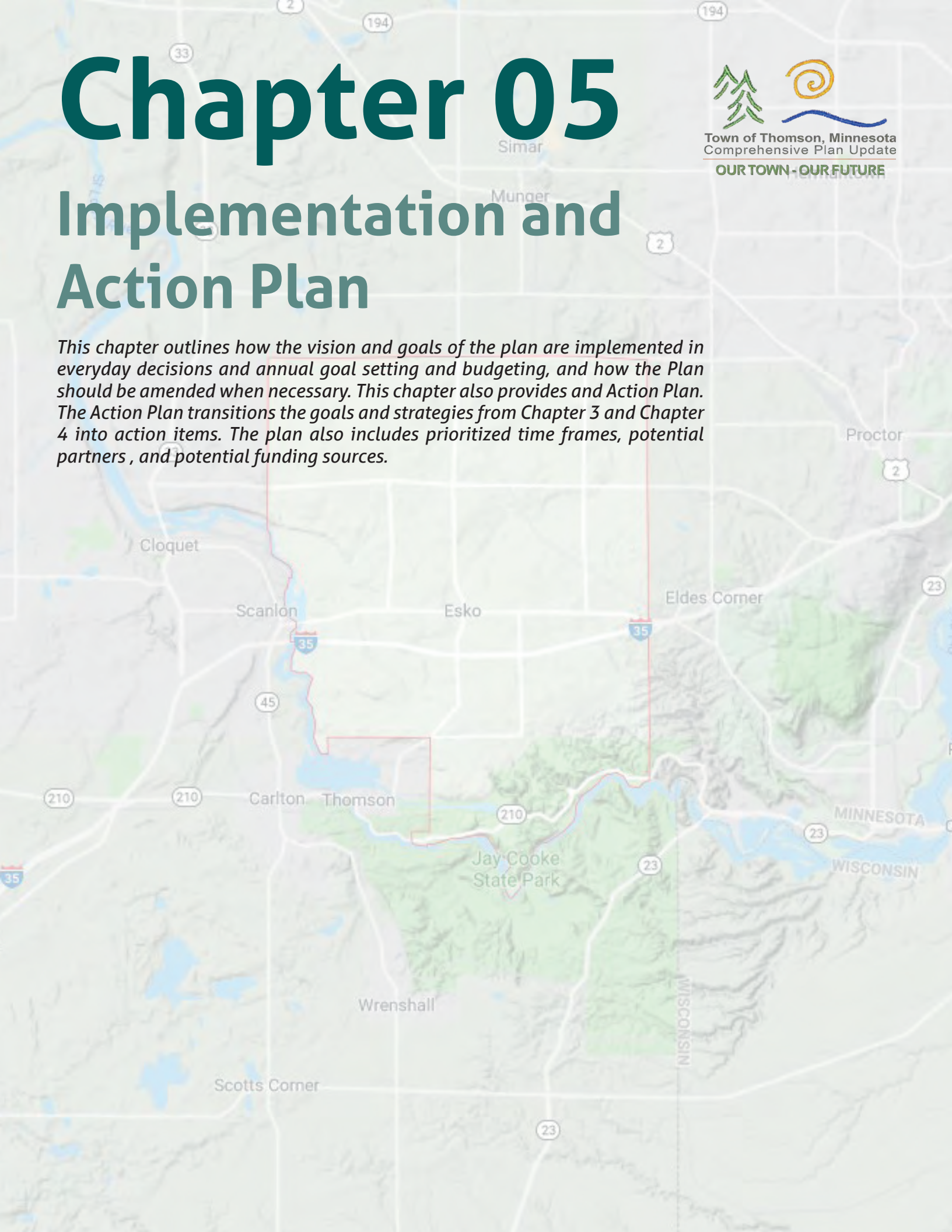


Chapter 05

Implementation and Action Plan



This chapter outlines how the vision and goals of the plan are implemented in everyday decisions and annual goal setting and budgeting, and how the Plan should be amended when necessary. This chapter also provides and Action Plan. The Action Plan transitions the goals and strategies from Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 into action items. The plan also includes prioritized time frames, potential partners, and potential funding sources.



Guiding Daily Decisions

Township Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility for implementing this plan lies primarily with the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Township Board and the Township Staff.

Township Board

Town Board sets priorities, approves budgets and tax rates, and often has the final say on key aspects of public and private development projects. The value and legitimacy of this plan is directly related to the degree to which Board members are aware of the plan and expect Township actions to be consistent with this plan. Each Board member should have a copy of this plan and be familiar with the major goals and objectives described herein. The Township Board should expect and require that staff recommendations and actions both reference and remain consistent with this plan.

Planning and Zoning Commission

Land use and development recommendations are a core component of this plan, and the Planning and Zoning Commission has a major role in guiding those decisions. Planning and Zoning Commission members shall each have a copy of this plan and shall be familiar with the content, especially Chapter 4: Land Use. It is generally the responsibility of the Planning and Zoning Commission to determine whether proposed projects are consistent with this plan, and to make decisions and recommendations that are consistent with this plan. In cases where actions that are inconsistent with this plan are deemed to be in the best interest of the Township, the Planning and Zoning Commission should initiate efforts to amend the plan to better reflect Township interests. This will help to reinforce the legitimacy of the plan as an important tool in guiding Township decision making.

Township Staff

Township staff have a significant influence on the selection and completion of all kinds of capital and operational projects. It is imperative that Township Staff know about, support, and actively work to implement the various strategies and actions in this plan.

Specifically the following people should consult and reference the comprehensive plan during goal-setting processes, during planning for major public projects, and in the review of private development projects:

- Township Clerk
- Township Zoning Official
- Public Works

These key staff members are expected to know and track the various goals, strategies and vision laid out in this plan, and to reference that content as appropriate in communications with residents, business owners and elected and appointed officials. All other staff members should be aware of the plan and the connections between the plan and Township projects. The purpose of this extra effort is to strengthen staff recommendations and reinforce the plan as relevant tool integral to Township functions, and decision making.

Education and Advocacy

Implementation of this plan also depends on the actions and decisions of entities other than Township government. Some responsible parties that the Township does not control or direct include but are not limited to

- Esko School District
- Carlton County
- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Arrowhead Regional Planning Commission

It is necessary to persuade these entities to be active partners in the implementation of the vision, goals, strategies of this plan.

The following Township activities can support this effort:

- Share this plan with each organization, including a memo highlighting sections of the plan that anticipate collaboration between the Township and the organization.
- Take the lead role in establishing a collaboration for key or crucial initiatives of the Township that require regional collaboration
- Know and communicate the intent of relevant objectives and strategies - partner organizations need to understand and buy into the rationale before they will act.
- Utilize the goals and vision from the plan to support request for monetary support for Township efforts.

Utilizing Existing Tools

Many of the strategies identified in this plan presume the use of existing Township ordinances and programs. The Townships key implementation tools include:

Operational Tools

- Annual Goal-Setting Process
- Annual Budget Process
- Capital Improvement Plan (Recommended)

Regulatory Tools

- Building and Housing Codes
- Zoning Ordinance
- Subdivision Regulations
- Carlton County Ordinances
- State Regulations
- Federal Regulations

Funding Tools

- User Fees
- Tax Abatement
- County Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) Districts
- Development Fees
- State and Federal Grant Programs

Surrounding Area Comprehensive Plans

- Carlton County

Guiding Annual Decisions

Annual Report

To provide lasting value and influence, this plan must be used and referenced regularly, especially during budgeting and goal setting processes. To inform the annual processes, Township staff will prepare a concise Comprehensive Plan Annual Report from the Township Board with input from the planning commission, including the following information.

- Action items in progress or completed during the prior 12 months (celebrate successes!)
- Staff recommendations for action items to pursue during the next 12 months, including removing or adding items.
- Town actions and decisions during the past 12 months not consistent with the plan (if any).
- Staff recommendations for any amendments to the adopted plan.

Link to Annual Goals and Budget

The most important opportunity for this plan to influence the growth and improvement of the Township is through the annual goal-setting, budgeting and capital planning processes. These existing annual efforts determine what projects will and will not be pursued by the Township, so it is very important to integrate this plan into those processes every year.

The compilation of actions in the next section is a resource to support decisions about how and where to invest the Township's limited resources. The Annual Report should draw from these actions and decisions.

The Planning Commission should make formal recommendations for the Board's consideration, identifying those choices and commitments most likely to further the goals and objectives identified in this plan.

The following process and schedule is recommended.

June

Staff completes the Annual Report

July

Planning and Zoning Commission considers Annual Report and makes formal recommendation to the Township Board regarding action items to pursue and amendments.

August

Departments gather and consider the report and the Planning and Zoning Commission recommendations, complete goal setting exercises. Council holds a public hearing and considers adoption of any comprehensive plan amendments.

September

Township Board Goal Setting

October

Budget preparation process

December

Budget Adopted

Action Plan

The Action Plan detailed on the following pages is designed as a guide to help Township officials, community leaders, and private investors prioritize opportunities and address issues with the Township and the surrounding area. The desired vision for the Township cannot be created over night. However, by incrementally implementing the recommendations within this plan, the Township can achieve the desired outcomes set forth in this comprehensive plan.

Potential Funding Sources

Below are several of the broad funding sources available to help offset costs to complete the projects listed in this plan.

General Township Funding

It is assumed that some general funds/borrowing will be required to assist with the completion of projects or as a matching sources for state or federal grants.

Special Assessments

Particular projects that benefit individual properties (e.g. water, sewer, or sidewalk installations) could be funded through special assessments whereby the Township recoups initial design and construction costs through increased real estate taxes on those properties for a set period of time.

Revenues

Projects related to drinking water, sanitary sewer, and storm water could be funded using system revenues or fees collected from system users across the community.

Private

Donations, Developers/Impact Fees - Some of the wayfinding projects could be partially or fully funded through private donations or public fund raising. Funding for other infrastructure projects can also be offset by using funds from impact fees the Township collects as part of the approval of new development.

State and Federal Grants

There are many different state or federal grants that many be able to offset the costs of some of the identified projects. Only those programs most likely to award funding to are listed.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Tax increment financing is a program where the additional taxes generated from a development in a TIF district would go towards specified public improvements in a community. This program helps waylay the impacts of new development on a community while improving the attractiveness of the Township.

Action Plan

This action matrix is a tool for township staff and officials to utilize when planning action steps or projects for the community. This is useful when determining budget allocations for the next year keeping track of project completion, and providing partners and funding sources that should be explored in the project planning process for potential assistance.

	Action
Community Infrastructure	1.a Study the feasibility of providing a potable water system for the Township
	1.b Add site and building design guidelines for new commercial development
	1.c Ensure the current ordinance for sewer in new and existing neighborhoods is sufficient and enforced
	1.d Evaluate the current capacity of the sanitary collection system to determine and guide expansion needs
	1.e Monitor satisfaction with public infrastructure and seek adjustments as necessary to maintain adequate service levels
	1.f Support and advocate for private broadband expansion within the Township
	1.g Explore establishing a stormwater utility to provide a dedicated revenue stream for stormwater facility maintenance and expansion
	2.a Evaluate the potential for a local rehabilitation program to address fair to poor housing conditions in the current housing stock
Housing	2.b Consider allowing Accessory Dwelling Units in rural areas
	2.c Monitor zoning standards to ensure there are no barriers to affordable housing by ensuring a variety of housing types as utilities allow
	2.d Support and participate in a Housing Needs Assessment for the region
	2.e Continue to monitor and encourage property maintenance
	3.a Consider trail extensions and linkages around the Township working with regional partners
Recreation	3.b Ensure development preserves natural features and expands recreational access for residents
	3.c Evaluate water trail access feasibility and explore additional access locations along both rivers
	3 d Pursue grants to update/construct community recreation facilities
	3.e Create a signage plan to inform visitors of recreation assets, both local and regional
	3.f Explore reconfiguring parking and trail access at Northridge Park

Priority				Potential Partner	Funding Resources
2022-2024	2025-2030	2031-2040	On Going		
	✓			Carlton County, Township Engineer, City of Cloquet, School District	General Fund, Revenues, Grants, TIF
	✓			Consultant, Business Owners	General Fund
			✓		
	✓			Township Engineer, WLSSD	General Fund, Revenues
			✓	Township Engineer	
			✓	Businesses, School District, County, State, Utility Providers	Revenues, Grants
		✓			
		✓			
✓				Consultant	
			✓		
		✓		ARDC, Carlton County	
			✓		
			✓	County and Surrounding Cities	
			✓	MNDNR	
	✓			MNDNR, Township Engineer	
			✓	Planning Commission, Consultant	
	✓			Consultant	
✓				Township Engineer	

Action Plan Continued

	Action
Land Use	4.a Ensure that new subdivisions and land use development proposals include an inventory of natural resources; including features like: wetlands, natural areas, native vegetation, views, water features, existing drainage features, greenspace, etc
	4.b Identify areas for additional business growth in the township
	4.c Evaluate conservation subdivision options that integrate a range of housing types, densities and costs
	4.d Ensure new industrial/business sites must have sufficient lot area to accommodate, required setbacks, utilities, screening, private wells, and sanitary sewer system connections or on-site treatment
	4.e Coordinate commercial land use planning with regional transportation and land use plans
Transportation	5.a Analyze future road extension locations and connections for future development
	5.b Develop a corridor plan through the Town Center District before significant development or change occurs
	5.c Continue to support existing plan and analyze potential safe routes to school routes while expanding the trail network in the Township
	5.d Consider requesting traffic and mobility impact studies with all new commercial, industrial institutional and major subdivision development proposals
	5.e Complete a Trail and Recreation Plan
Economy and Employment	6.a Create and enhance entry features to the community and to the central area (i.e. signage, banners, etc.)
	6.b Focus marketing efforts on businesses and new industries that attract quality businesses
	6.c Create and enforce site design standards for businesses to address landscaping, aesthetics, lighting, noise, parking, and review site plans
	6.d Continue to support ways to provide additional utilities and funding, to help benefit economic growth
	6.e Review future land use map annually and ensure there is an adequate supply of land for commercial and industrial development
	6.f Explore revising development ordinances to allow more flexibility for emerging and future technologies that would assist with expanding educational, employment, and economic growth opportunities township-wide

Priority				Potential Partner	Funding Resources
2022-2024	2025-2030	2031-2040	On Going		
	✓				
			✓		
			✓		
			✓		
			✓	MNDOT, ARDC	
			✓	MNDOT, Township Engineer	
		✓		ARDC, Consultant	
			✓	MNDOT, Carlton County	
			✓		
	✓			ARDC, Consultant	
	✓				
			✓		
	✓			Consultant	
			✓		
			✓		
	✓			Esko Public Schools, Area Businesses, Housing Developers	

Action Plan Continued

	Action
Natural Resources	7.a Evaluate current zoning and subdivision regulations to ensure proper protection for green space, waterways, shorelines, wetlands, steep slopes and floodplain areas
	7.b Create a committee for and continue to support community gardens, farmers markets, food pantries and other similar community-based food projects
	7.c Support and encourage conservation subdivisions and other resource aware development practices in the rural areas outside of the Town Center
Intergovernmental	8.a Coordinate with Esko Community School District in their growth plans by partnering with the school on land use, utility and transportation planning
	8.b Continually engage in communication with the schools district regarding community activities
	8.c Communicate clearly with Carlton County and surrounding townships to establish mutually agreeable development goals and objectives
Resiliency	9.a Promote awareness regarding hazards and risks in the community.
	9.b Encourage efficient buildings and infrastructure in the Township

Priority				Potential Partner	Funding Resources
2022-2024	2025-2030	2031-2040	On Going		
			✓	ARDC, Consultant	
			✓		
			✓		
			✓	Esko Community Schools	
			✓	Esko Community Schools	
			✓	Carlton County Staff and Board of Commissioners	
			✓		
			✓		

