



JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Cerro Gordo County, City of Clear Lake, and City of Mason City

2024



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**CERRO GORDO
COUNTY**

**CITY OF
CLEAR LAKE**

**CITY OF
MASON CITY**

Preparing this Comprehensive Plan
was a joint effort coordinated by the
**North Iowa Corridor Economic
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Cerro Gordo County,
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*Cover photos courtesy of
Vision Mason City, Main
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Cerro Gordo County*



An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood. The foreground and middle ground are filled with a dense canopy of green trees. Several houses are visible, including a large two-story house with a prominent front porch and a swimming pool in the lower left. In the background, a line of wind turbines is visible on the horizon under a clear sky. The overall image has a teal or cyan color cast.

THE NORTH IOWA CORRIDOR IN 2023

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

PURPOSE

The 2023 North Iowa Corridor Joint Comprehensive Plan (the Plan) has three primary purposes to guide decision-making for Clear Lake and Mason City, and the unincorporated areas of Cerro Gordo County over the next 15-20 years:

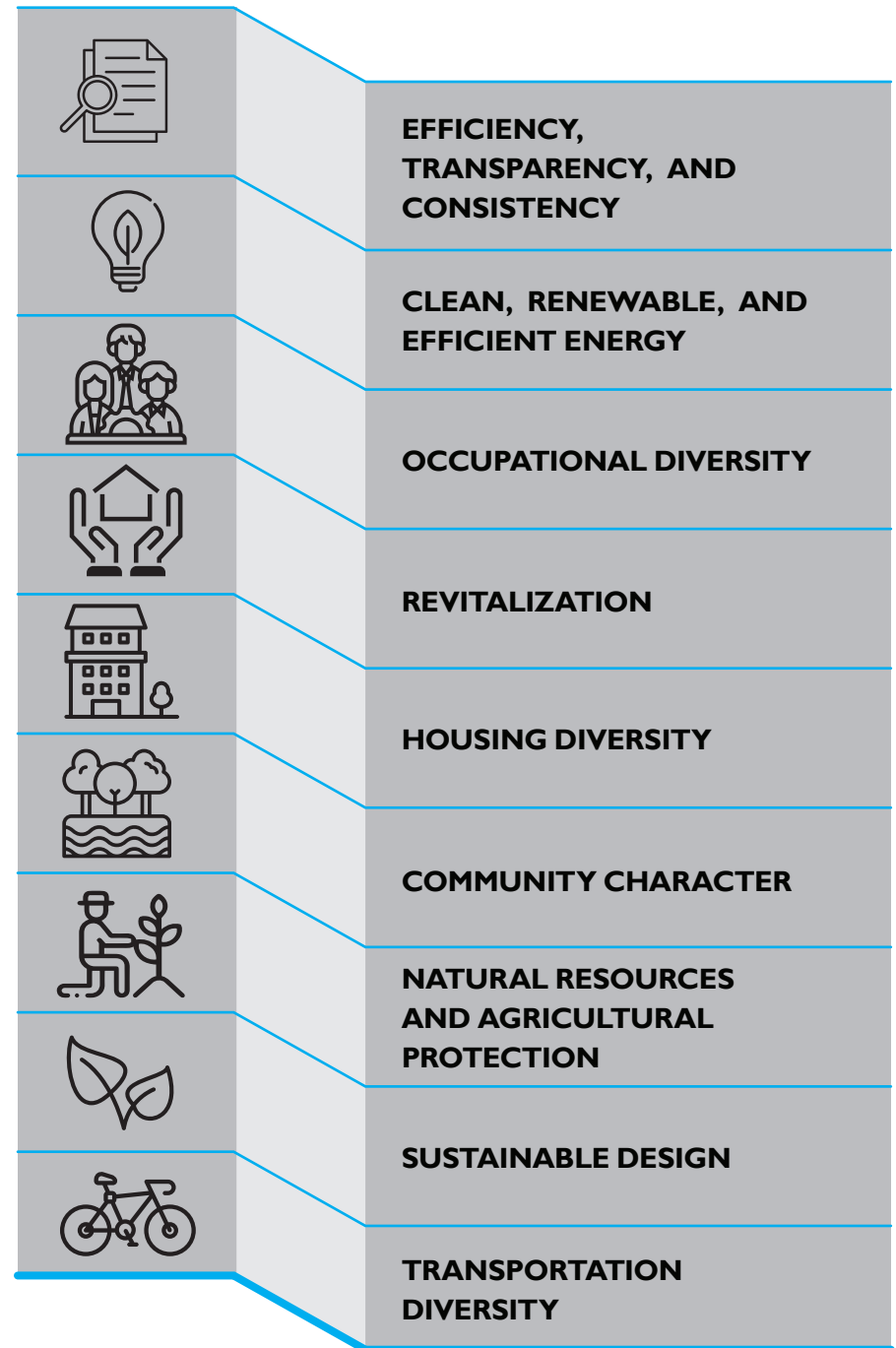
- A. Provide an essential legal basis for land use regulation.**
- B. Present a unified and compelling vision for the North Iowa Corridor, derived from the aspirations of its citizens.**
- C. Establish the policies necessary to fulfill that vision.**

PLANNING GEOGRAPHIES

- A. Regional aspects (application of policies county-wide)**
- B. Community aspects (applications specific to Cerro Gordo County, Clear Lake, and Mason City)**

IOWA SMART PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Iowa Code 18B lists ten smart planning principles that form the umbrella that all policies fit underneath. Future chapters explain these principles:



ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

1 BASIC FRAMEWORK

A review of existing conditions with special attention to demographic, population, and economic trends.

2 COMMONALITIES

An exploration of common opportunities, challenges, and possibilities pertinent to the growth, development, and investment in the North Iowa Corridor.

3. PLAN ELEMENTS

LAND USE

EXCEPTIONAL PLACES

MOBILITY

PARKS, RECREATION, & NATURAL RESOURCES

HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC FACILITIES

The Land Use element guides the framework for the physical development of the North Iowa Corridor with respect to existing neighborhoods, business districts, and the transportation system (existing and future). Elements include detail on how to implement the vision established through the public engagement process. Separate sections include each of the topic areas above.

4 ACTION STRATEGY

A guide on exactly how to begin implementing the Plan including priorities, partnerships, and funding mechanisms.

5 APPENDICES

Expanded information on a variety of topics such as complete survey responses and data tables.

Each element expresses an overall vision statement, goals and objectives, and policies and actions.

- **What are Vision Statements?**
The future we envision for the North Iowa Corridor
- **What are Goal and Objectives Statements?**
The outcomes we desire for each element
- **What are Policies and Actions?**
The initial strategies to achieve our goals and objectives

PAST PLANNING EFFORTS

The North Iowa Corridor Joint Comprehensive Plan came together from a collaborative effort between the City of Clear Lake, the City of Mason City, unincorporated Cerro Gordo County, and the North Iowa Corridor Economic Development Corporation.

Planning for a desired future is not new to organizations in the North Iowa Corridor. Vision North Iowa was a significant collaborative effort in 2018 that clarifies an economic development strategy through 2023. Many of the ideas from Vision North Iowa are reflected in this Plan. Other planning efforts shaping the North Iowa Corridor include

CITY OF MASON CITY

- 2006 Comprehensive Plan
- 2007 Downtown Plan
- 2014 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan
- 2017 Comprehensive Plan Update
- 2017 Airport Master Plan
- 2020 Willow Creek Master Plan
- 2022 IA 122 Corridor Feasibility Study
- 2022 Housing Initiative

CITY OF CLEAR LAKE

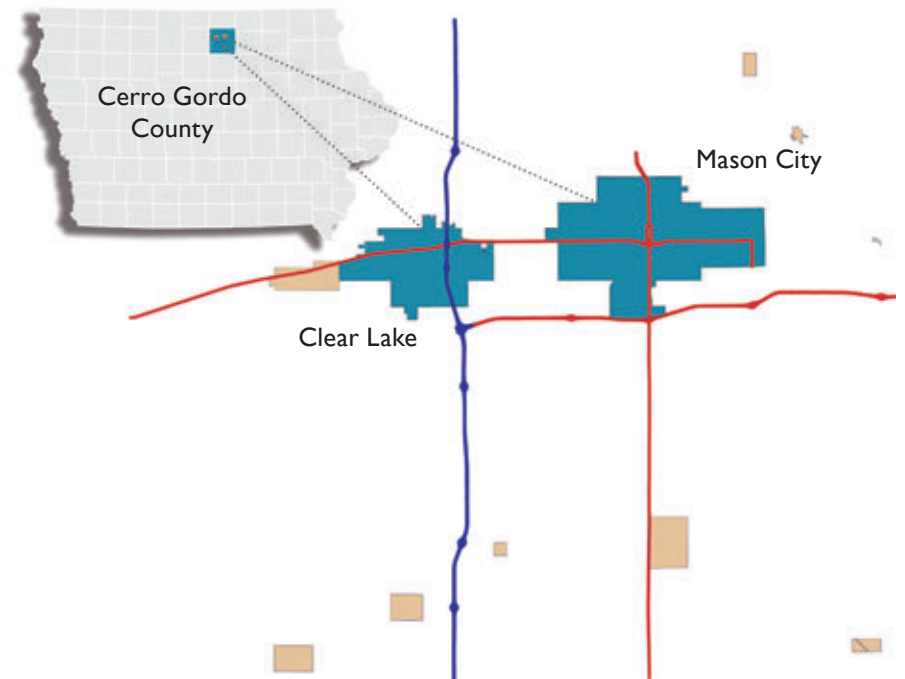
- 2008 Comprehensive Plan
- 2015 Clear Lake Watershed Management Plan
- 2017 Strategic Plan
- 2022 Surf District Master Plan Update

CERRO GORDO COUNTY SPECIFIC

- 2001 Recreational Trails Plan
- 2004 Comprehensive Plan

COUNTY WIDE

- 1999 Common Ground Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan for Joint Development
- 2018 Hazard Mitigation Plan (& 2024 Update)
- 2018 Vision North Iowa
- 2020 Community Health Improvement Plan
- 2021 Long Range Transportation Plan
- 2022 Housing Needs Assessment



Leaders of these organizations recognize that building momentum together on a common vision is better than working separately. What's good for one is good for the others. Thus, the joint comprehensive planning effort came to fruition in 2023.

Readers of the Joint Comprehensive Plan will find the Plan is:

- **Long range.** Typical horizon is 15-25 years.
- **Aspirational.** Written to inspire and describe goals—not an ordinance or code.
- **General.** Policies provide broad guidance for more detailed plans.
- **Comprehensive.** All encompassing in terms of geography and topics.
- **Internally Consistent.** All policies and maps support each other.
- **Not Zoning.** The Plan is flexible, long range, and general. Zoning is prescriptive, immediate, and parcel specific. Zoning decisions are informed by the vision, goals, policies, and actions of the North Iowa Corridor Plan.

PLANNING TOGETHER

The vision, goals, and policies are a direct reflection of the process that was followed to create the Plan. Listening and talking with residents, employees, and employers from December 2022 through October 2023 influenced the direction of the Plan.

- Public Open House Kick-off Events
- Listening Sessions
- Public Open House Design Studios
- Online Surveys
- Online Website Postings and Mapping Comments
- Local Joint Planning Committee Meetings

INPUT THEMES

The North Iowa Corridor's appeal becomes stronger when people **EXPERIENCE** the region. This begins with getting people off of the highways to explore the area's amenities such as cultural activities and stories, special districts, and scenery. Leveraging these resources will lead to attracting and retaining people to the region. "People tend to stay once they live here for an extended time," said a resident. This happens through:

- Having good, high-paying jobs.
- Providing superior housing options, including quality rentals that enable people to test out the community.
- Positive word of mouth.

The North Iowa Corridor's **BIG CHALLENGE** is stabilizing its trend of population decline. Most people living in and experiencing the North Iowa Corridor share its positive aspects. Yet despite these impressions, the region as a whole must pursue actions that can attract people to the area. Recurring themes from the public include:

- Working together improves the North Iowa Corridor.
- The Interstate is crucial to the North Iowa Corridor's existence.
- Transform Highway 18, Highway 122, and other corridors between Clear Lake and Mason City.
- Elevate recreation opportunities as a signature feature for quality of life.
- Improve housing options and opportunities.
- Leverage the area's economic momentum.
- Adapt to new technologies.

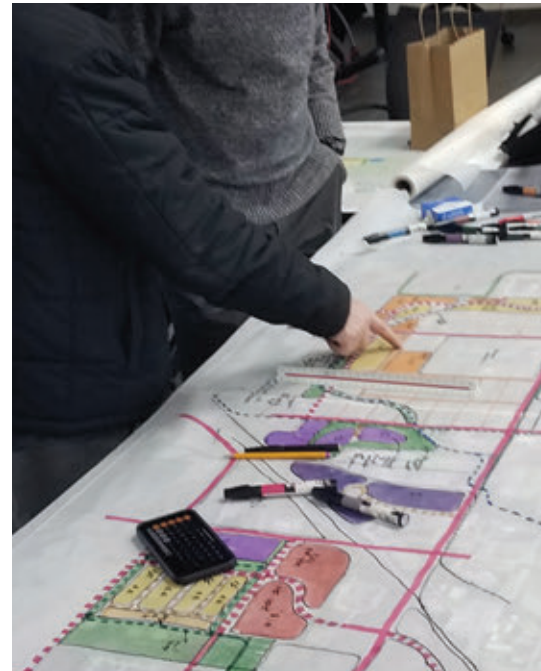
1,192

event attendees
and unique website
visitors



282

survey respondents



70+

listening session
participants



359

open comments
(surveys, comment
cards, notes, and
website responses)



INPUT THEMES



WORKING TOGETHER IMPROVES THE NORTH IOWA CORRIDOR

The shared resources of the area are for all jurisdictions to enjoy, and most people are glad to see the joint relationships between them. At the same time, Cerro Gordo County, Clear Lake, and Mason City cannot be generalized together. Showing unity while focusing on individuality is a priority for this plan.



THE INTERSTATE IS CRUCIAL TO THE NORTH IOWA CORRIDOR'S PROSPERITY

The communities in the North Iowa Corridor benefit from the convenience to Interstate 35. Residents and businesses like being close to Des Moines and the Twin Cities. The exits from Interstate 35 do not invite visitors to come and explore what the North Iowa Corridor has to offer. Key ideas to build positive first impressions from participants include:

- Add significant signage or features at exit points that are not “anywhere U.S.A.” Build on the commonalities of Clear Lake and Mason City, such as music and recreation themes.
- More obvious wayfinding. People need to easily understand the features just a short drive away.
- Enhanced property appearances through building upkeep to more greenery.
- Vehicle charging stations with opportunities to take transit to downtowns.



Photo from Google streetview

TRANSFORM HIGHWAY CORRIDORS BETWEEN CLEAR LAKE AND MASON CITY

Getting people off the Interstate and telling them where to go is great, but now what. The corridors into Mason City and Clear Lake provide additional opportunities for positive impressions. Ideas include:

- Highway 18 towards Clear Lake is top of most people's minds as a misrepresentation of what Clear Lake symbolizes. Beautify Highway 18 in Clear Lake, starting with general landscaping and upkeep.
- Similarly, Highway 18/122 leading into Mason City is viewed by most as underused and ripe for new uses. Find innovative ways to fill vacant spaces on Highway 18/122 in Mason City.
- 4th Avenue S/255th Street/19th Street SW should not be forgotten as a secondary route into each city.

INPUT THEMES



ELEVATE RECREATION AS A SIGNATURE FEATURE

The North Iowa Corridor's unique recreational opportunities are far ahead of other areas in Iowa. Investments in grant applications in Mason City and the lake restoration and Wellness Center in Clear Lake are necessary pursuits happening in 2023. North Iowa Corridor stakeholders should market its recreational assets as its brand. Shared ideas for expanding recreation include:

- Regional trails to places like Osage and Cedar Falls.
- ATV and UTV trails.
- Continued investment in water quality and river access throughout the county.
- More places to camp.
- A trail around Clear Lake.
- Recreation corridors on 19th Street, 255th Street, and 4th Avenue S between Mason City and Clear Lake.



IMPROVE HOUSING OPTIONS

Many local experts and general residents express that housing options are the single highest barrier to growth. Nuances in housing needs vary across the county, but overall low supply is widespread across all income levels and stages in life. Examples noted include:

- Employers recruiting employees with high-paying jobs who prefer to rent first. Unfortunately, few local rental options lead to long commutes from other cities where they may choose to live permanently, or the recruits do not take the job in the first place.
- Land and housing prices influence where people choose to live. For example, Clear Lake housing prices are much higher than in the area. As a result, people choose to live in other communities.
- High-end custom homes are the least risky for builders and the most prevalent new homes being constructed. Therefore, there is little new variety in housing types being built in North Iowa for households of different incomes, ages, and abilities.



LEVERAGE THE AREA'S ECONOMIC MOMENTUM

Employers stress that business is good. Nearly all have job openings and many would expand if they knew they could hire and retain a stable influx of employees.

ADAPT TO NEW TECHNOLOGIES

There is support and concern for how the cities and county should respond to emerging technologies like industrial wind plants, solar infrastructure, and electric vehicle charging stations. A consideration for promoting sustainable practices and preserving valuable agricultural land and character needs continued input in implementing the Plan.

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

MAJOR THEMES

Cerro Gordo County, known as the North Iowa Corridor for this Plan, has a history of robust industries, a plethora of recreational opportunities, and nationally known cultural attractions. Its location on Interstate 35 gives the area a large market reach for employment, retail, and tourism. The influx of workers and tourists, along with the characteristics of day-to-day residents, begins to inform future priorities and how these priorities may have changed since the 2004 Cerro Gordo County Comprehensive Plan, 2008 Clear Lake Comprehensive Plan, and 2006 Mason City Comprehensive Plan.

SNAPSHOTS

Population
Housing
Economy
Land Atlas



PHOTO COURTESY OF VISIT MASON CITY AND MAIN STREET MASON CITY



POPULATION

Trends in population represent people's preference or ability to live in the area. A declining or growing population shapes priorities for attraction and retention, housing needs, service provision, and ultimately decisions on future land use.

The ages, races, and genders of people living in the North Iowa Corridor inform how goals should accommodate different needs and preferences. Broader regional and national trends inform policy needed to attract and retain future populations within emerging demographic categories.

HOUSING

The availability and quality of housing is at the heart of attracting future residents and businesses. Comparing the current quality, cost, supply, demand, and accessibility of housing to peoples' preferences will identify gaps that are barriers to living in the North Iowa Corridor.

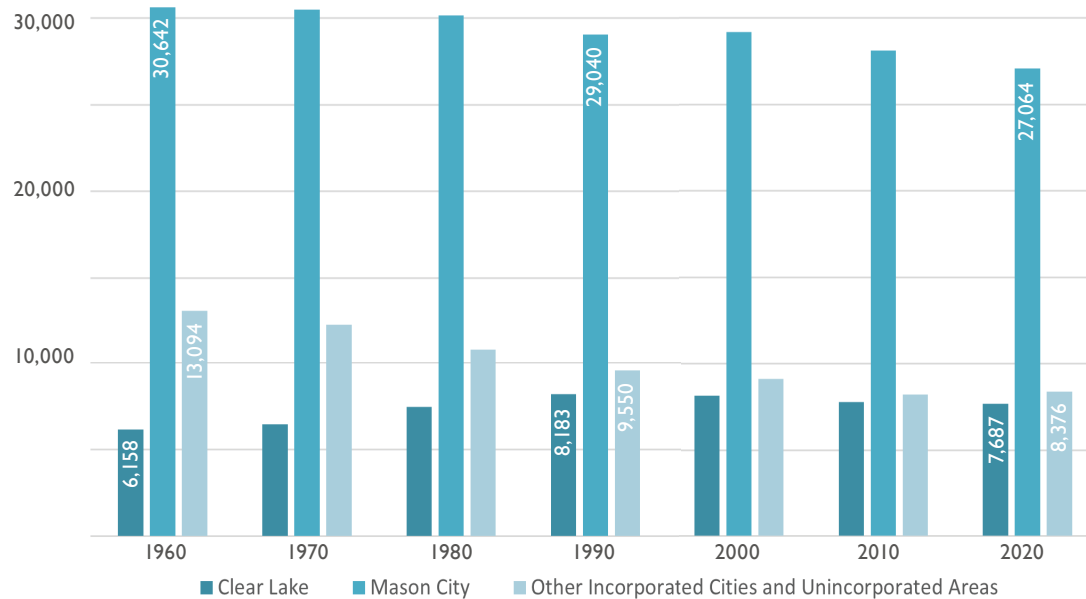
ECONOMY

Employment opportunities, household incomes, and commuting characteristics inform growth potential for workers and land related to business expansion. Additionally, tourism and local spending are critical components of an economy that supports public projects, local businesses, and image of the North Iowa Corridor.

LAND ATLAS

The location of various built and natural land features provides the framework to plan for future housing, business, recreational, and service needs. There are opportunities to improve the function of land uses in the North Iowa Corridor and areas to protect and preserve from change.

POPULATION SNAPSHOT



HISTORIC POPULATION TRENDS

Understanding the dynamics of population trends is important when planning future initiatives to retain and attract residents. Cerro Gordo County's total population has been declining from 1960 through 2020. Mason City represented 65% of the county's total population loss from 2010 to 2021. The North Iowa Corridor is mostly white followed by Hispanic or Latinx populations.

Clear Lake and Mason City make up 80% of the county's population.

Cerro Gordo County's 2020 population was 43,127.

Figure 1.1: Population Change Comparison from 1960-2020

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

DEMOGRAPHICS

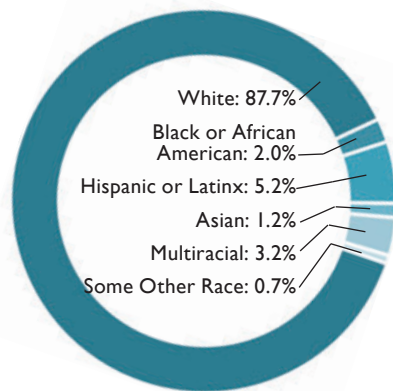


Figure 1.2: Cerro Gordo County by Race in 2020

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

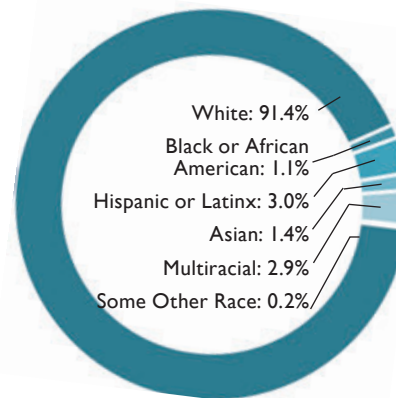


Figure 1.3: Clear Lake by Race in 2020

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

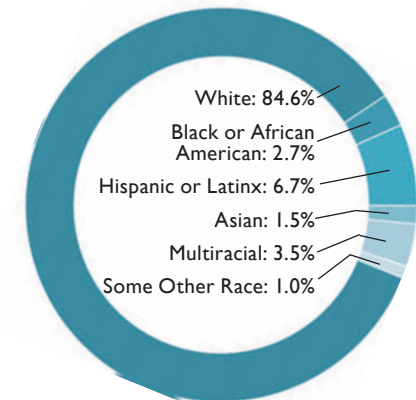


Figure 1.4: Mason City by Race in 2020

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

AGE COHORT COMPARISON

Based on an analysis of expected births and deaths from 2010 to 2020, four age groups in Cerro Gordo County experienced higher than anticipated growth, whereas six cohorts did not.

- **Above anticipated levels of growth suggest that people moved to the county.** Reasons might be the county's ability to meet the needs of families with children and retiring adults.
 - The population aged under 14 grew more than expected from 2010 to 2020.
 - The population of adults aged 45-64 and 75-84 grew more than anticipated from 2010 to 2020. Residents of these ages may have been returning to the area to be near their families or choosing to relocate back to the area.
- **Below anticipated levels of growth for ages 20 to 44 could indicate several challenges in retaining and attracting family households and young professionals in the area.** Challenges might include:
 - Educational or employment opportunities may be less desirable than other places.
 - Housing may be limited to larger, more expensive options that are unsuitable for one to two individuals.
 - Current trends suggest a preference for waiting to start families, the practice of intergenerational living, and an overall need for more housing variety to meet demands.

RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY AND MIGRATION

Net migration between Cerro Gordo County and other counties is low or negative, suggesting that residents move away more than the county attracts.

- **International In-Migration.** The majority of the population born outside of the U.S. relocated before 2010. Between 2015 and 2019, approximately 153 people moved to Cerro Gordo County from Europe, Central America, and Asia. Of 833 foreign-born residents, 44.7% were born in Asia.
- **County to County Migration.** In Iowa, residents most often relocate to Cerro Gordo County from Lake County, Illinois, and Hamilton County, Iowa. Residents from Cerro Gordo County tend to migrate to the Des Moines metro area and nearby Floyd County, Iowa, and Hancock County, Iowa.

Despite a downward trending population, between 2020 and 2021 Cerro Gordo County, Clear Lake, and Mason City had an estimated growth of 513 people. This shows a potential positive retention and outlook for the planning area based on recent efforts.

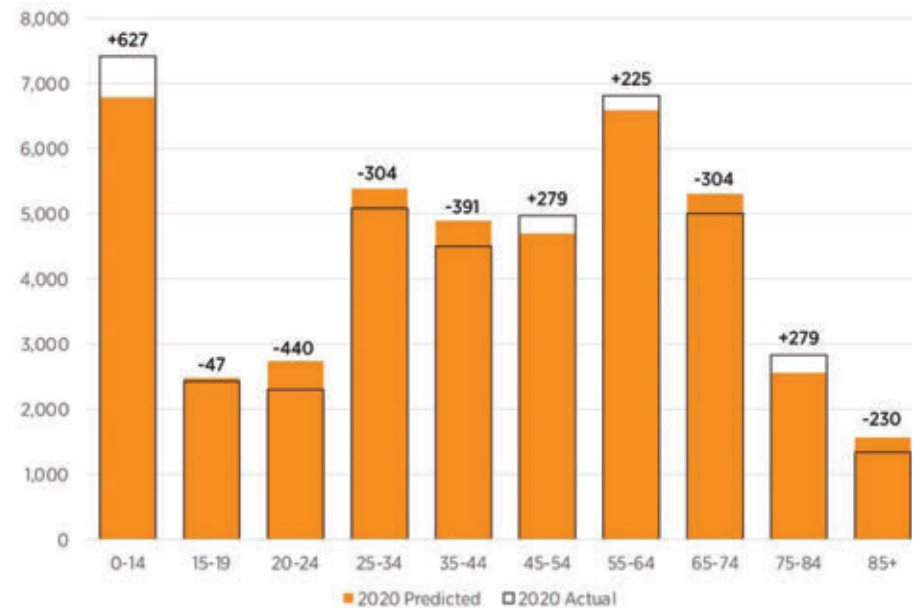


Figure 1.5: Age Cohort Comparisons - Predicted versus Actual Population
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

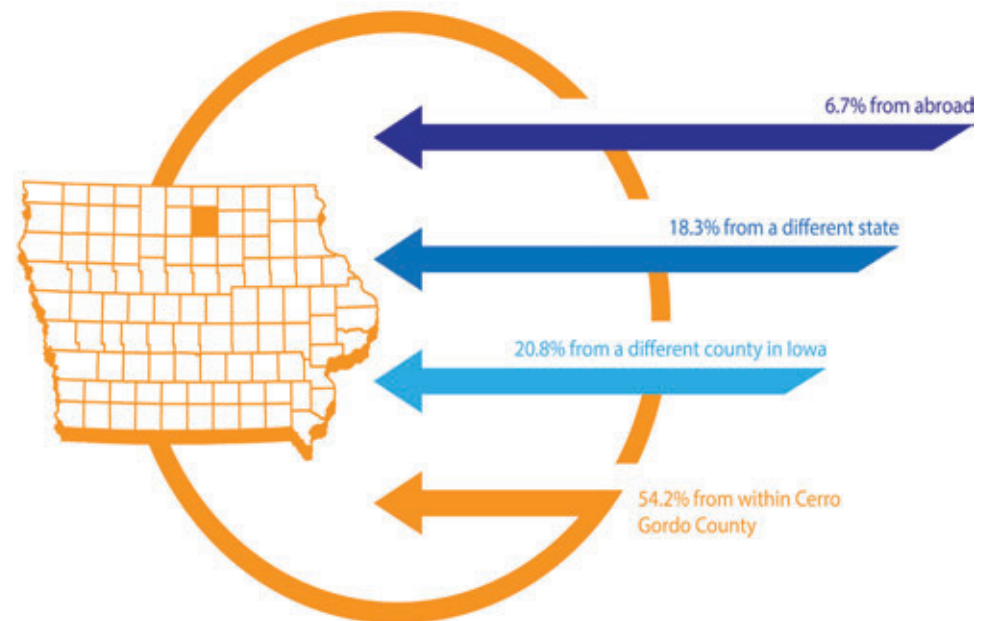


Figure 1.6: Cerro Gordo County In-Migration 2020-2021
Source: 2017-2021 American Community Survey

HOUSING SNAPSHOT

HOUSING OCCUPANCY AND TYPES

Being able to offer a variety of quality housing will ensure communities can meet future demand. The current conditions and type of housing in Cerro Gordo County are similar to those of Iowa.

- **Occupancy.** There are 22,589 housing units in Cerro Gordo County.
 - 69.6% of units are owner-occupied.
 - 30.4% of units are renter-occupied.
 - Almost 15% of all housing units are vacant. This vacancy rate is higher than typical. A higher vacancy rate shows opportunity in the market for options and possible concerns with the desirability or quality of housing.
- **Housing Type.** Unincorporated Cerro Gordo County, Clear Lake, and Mason City are mostly one-unit structures.
- **Age of Housing.** The largest quantity of housing was built before 1960. An older housing stock often creates challenges for residents, developers, and the housing market. Structural deficiencies and construction under outdated code requirements cause potential safety issues for prospective buyers and renters.



CERRO GORDO COUNTY

69.6% Owner-Occupied Units
\$93,000 Median Home Value
\$1,159 Median Monthly Housing Cost

30.4% Renter-Occupied Units
\$711 Median Monthly Rent
18.5% Utilities Included in Monthly Rent

CLEAR LAKE

72.6% Owner-Occupied Units
\$130,400 Median Home Value
\$1,459 Median Monthly Housing Cost

27.4% Renter-Occupied Units
\$636 Median Monthly Rent
18.7% Utilities Included in Monthly Rent

MASON CITY

64.9% Owner-Occupied Units
\$112,500 Median Home Value
\$1,077 Median Monthly Housing Cost

35.1% Renter-Occupied Units
\$733 Median Monthly Rent
19.8% Utilities Included in Monthly Rent

Figure 1.7: Housing Statistics at a Glance
Source: 2017-2021 American Community Survey

TABLE 1.1: HOUSEHOLD TRENDS

	Family Size 2010	Family Size 2020	Owner- Occupied 2010	Owner- Occupied 2020	Renter- Occupied 2010	Renter- Occupied 2020	Vacancy 2010	Vacancy 2020
Cerro Gordo County	2.74	2.74	71.6%	69.6%	28.4%	30.4%	14.7%	14.9%
Clear Lake	2.76	2.78	75.0%	72.6%	25.0%	27.4%	5.8%	9.6%
Mason City	2.74	2.69	63.2%	64.9%	36.8%	35.1%	22.1%	24.4%
Iowa	2.97	2.98	73.3%	71.2%	26.7%	28.8%	6.4%	8.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Family dynamics are a unique aspect of communities that influence potential needs. Some communities may have more intergenerational living arrangements, suggesting a need for adaptable housing that offers a variety of accessible configurations. Other communities may have more families comprising only 1-2 people and suggest a need for smaller living units.

- The average family size in Cerro Gordo County is 2.74, slightly smaller than Iowa's average family size of 2.99.
- 33% of households include a person 65 years old or older.
- 34% of grandparents are responsible for their grandchildren, demonstrating the potential for housing that is accessible to a variety of ages.

CONSTRUCTION TRENDS

CERRO GORDO COUNTY

Construction in the unincorporated areas is mostly on rural acreages or in areas around existing city limits. Nearly all construction has been single-family homes.

CLEAR LAKE

Of the 240 housing units built in Clear Lake between 2013 and 2021, 41.3% were multi-unit structures, typically duplex or twin home structures.

MASON CITY

Mason City has the highest share of new multifamily unit construction and average annual unit construction. Based on geography and current infrastructure, Mason City has the largest capacity to build and create a variety of newer housing.

Based on Mason City's Housing Initiative (2023):

- 173 multifamily units were constructed between 2013 and 2021. The largest portion of these units, 133, were built as a part of The River project south of downtown, and 32 senior condo units were built as a part of the Prairie Place project in 2015.
- The median and average permit valuations of single-family and twin home units show a higher median valuation for 2018, 2020, and 2021. A higher median than average valuation demonstrates the housing markets' success in offering homes priced favorably to their construction costs.

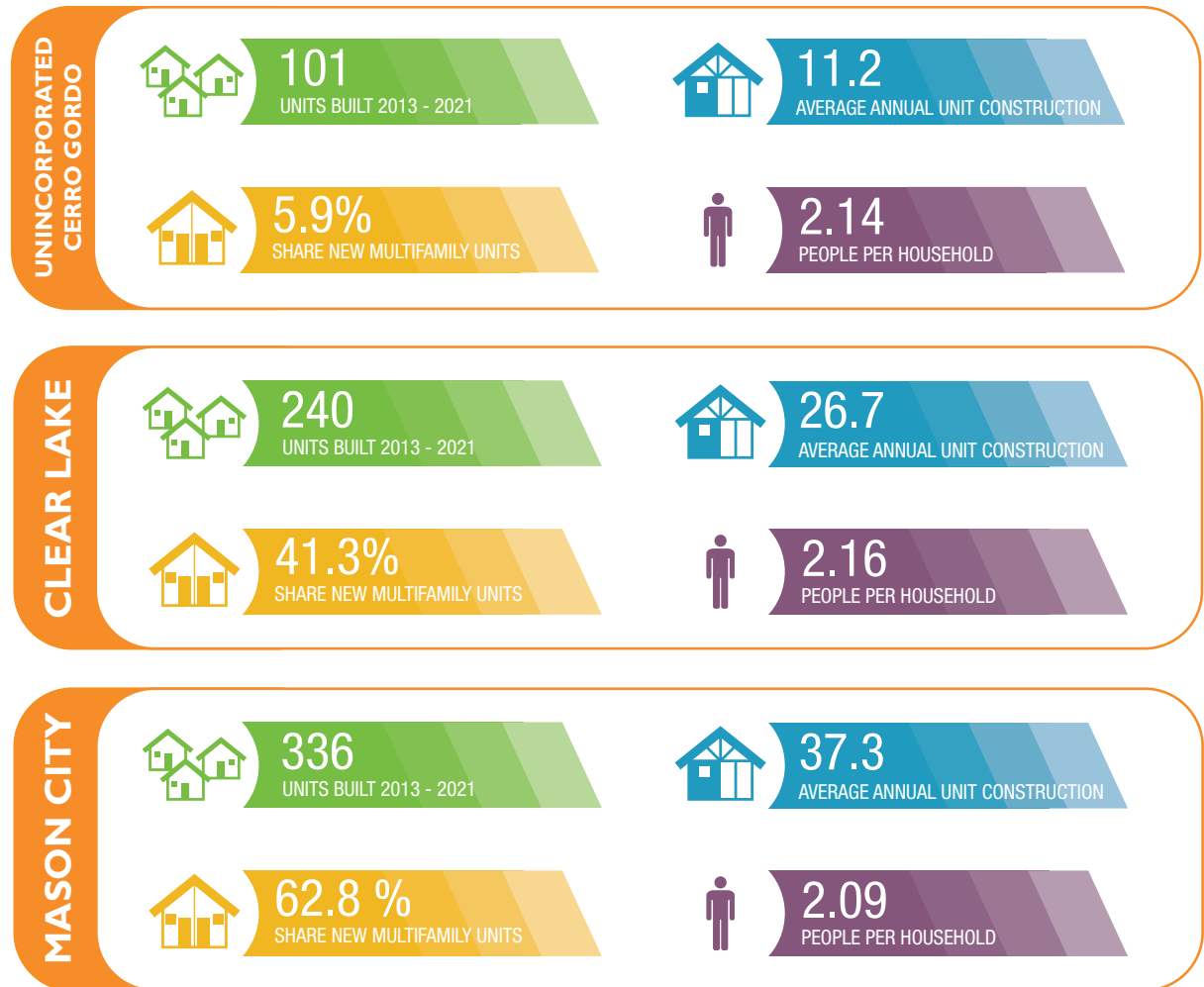


Figure 1.8: Residential Construction Activity (2013-2021)

Source: Local jurisdictions

HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

- **Most households in the North Iowa Corridor make under \$75,000 a year.** Many of these are retirees on fixed incomes. However, many working age households fall in this income range as well.
- **Most households that rent are experiencing a rise in rent that is higher than rises in household incomes since 2010.** Mason City saw higher household income rises than rent since 2010. Rent increases in Clear Lake to align more with regional markets is a primary reason for the difference.
- **Home values are increasing significantly in Clear Lake when compared to other areas of the North Iowa Corridor.** Participants in the planning process reiterated the rising home values in Clear Lake and its growing unaffordability. Conversely, the slow growth in home values in Mason City shows the possible lack of new construction and the overall older housing stock.

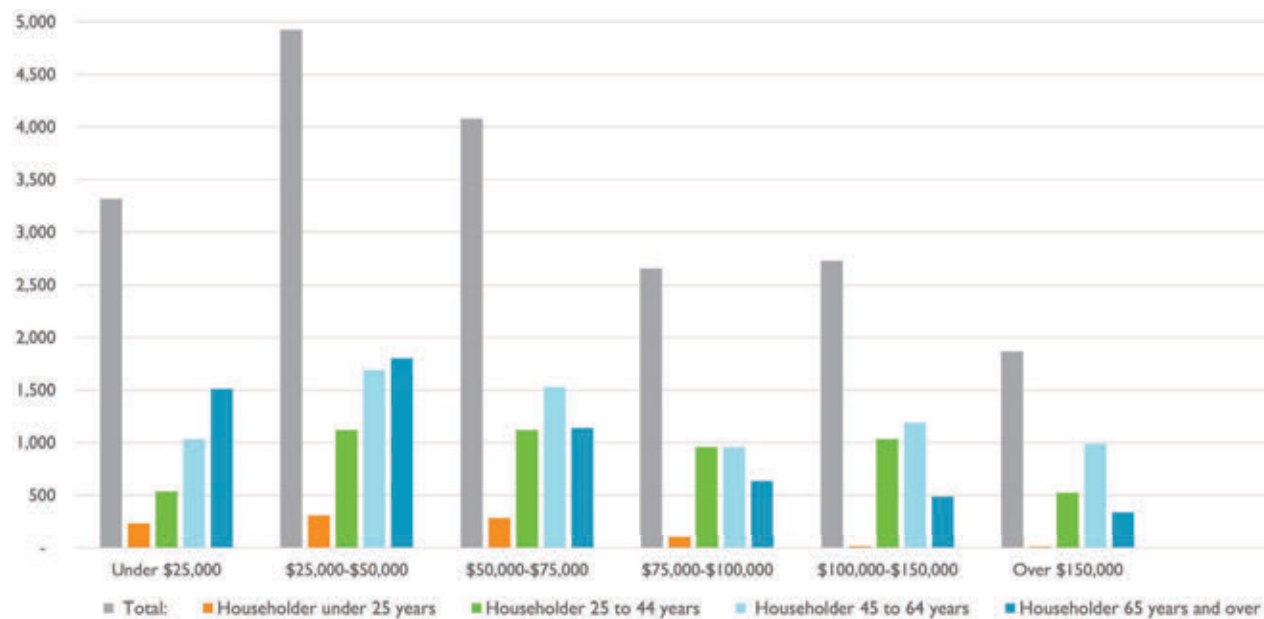


Figure 1.9: Householder Income by Age - Cerro Gordo County

Source 2017-2021 American Community Survey

TABLE 1.2: INCOMES AND HOUSING COSTS

	Median Household Income	% Change 2010-2021	Median Home Value	% Change 2010-2021	Median Gross Rent	% Change 2010-2021
Cerro Gordo County	\$58,271	30.2%	\$133,400	23.6%	\$762	35%
Clear Lake	\$61,036	29.2%	\$191,000	41.9%	\$676	33%
Mason City	\$56,009	37.6%	\$112,500	15.6%	\$733	29%
Iowa	\$65,429	33.9%	\$160,700	34.8%	\$845	37%

Total CPI inflation from 2010-2021 was about 25%

Source: 2017-2021 American Community Survey

AFFORDABILITY ANALYSIS

Housing affordability is a primary concern for quality of life because the home you live in is typically your single largest regular expense. Figure 1.10 evaluates affordability by the number of housing units available to different income levels and the quantity by price of homes that match those households spending 30% of their income on housing in Cerro Gordo County.

- For households who make under \$25,000 there appears to be a relative balance of owner and rental options in their affordable price range.
- Many owner and renter units are priced in ranges that are affordable for households earning between \$25,000 and \$50,000. However, fewer units are priced in an affordable range for people making over \$50,000.
 - Fewer homes priced within affordable ranges for an income range push higher income earners into the available housing stock affordable for lower income earners. This limits the availability of lower priced housing options for those who need affordable units.
 - Cerro Gordo County currently offers a higher percentage of rental units over owner units to those who make less than \$25,000 at affordable rents below \$500. Keeping these rental options available can persuade those who buy homes to purchase options that are closer to their affordable ranges.

Building higher priced units that are newer can encourage households that are making above \$50,000 to consider housing prices above their current living conditions.

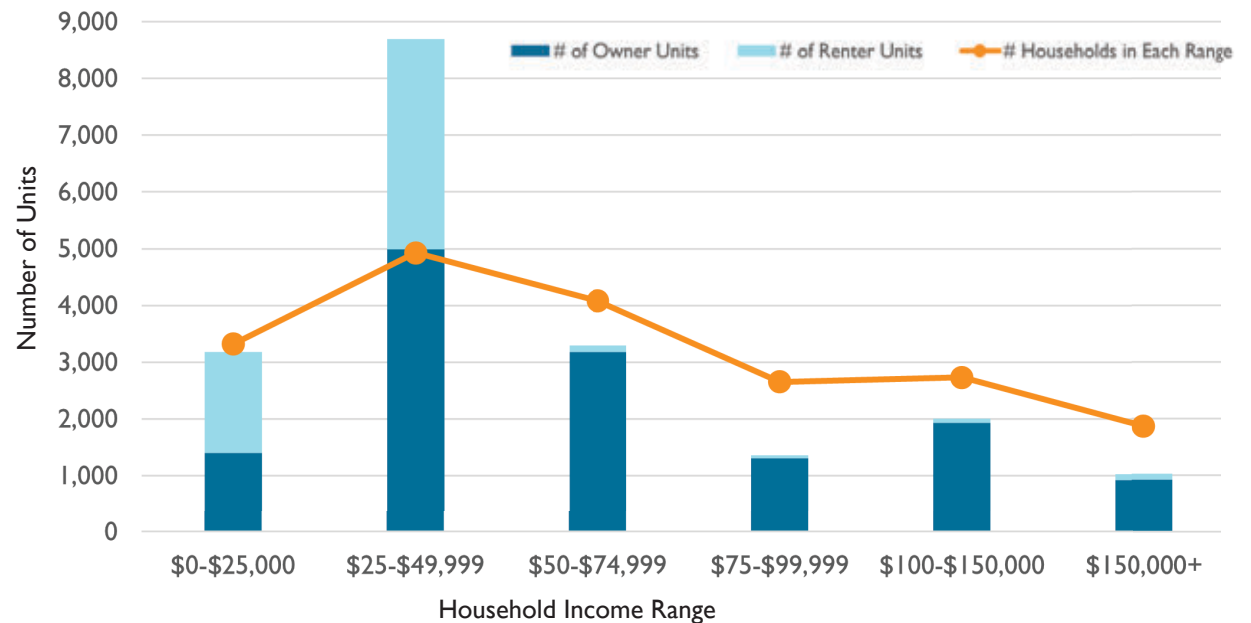


Figure 1.10: Housing Affordability and Availability

Source 2017-2021 American Community Survey

ECONOMY SNAPSHOT

Education and Health Care are strong employment sectors.

Mason City supports more manufacturing while Clear Lake supports more arts and entertainment.

BUSINESS SECTOR HIGHLIGHTS

- **Small business and entrepreneurship.** The NIACC John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center (JEPC) is a business incubator that supports developing local, homegrown businesses in nine Iowa counties. A location on the North Iowa Area Community College campus in Mason City provides an environment and resource for those interested in starting a business.
- **Major employers.** Notable employers within the county are Cargill, Curries ASSA ABLOY, Mason City Community School District, MercyOne, and Smithfield.
- **Retail and tourism.** Clear Lake and Mason City each have their unique tourism draws. Clear Lake continues to have the larger influx of seasonal tourism around lake recreation. Mason City provides most of the retail spending capture in the North Iowa Corridor.
- **Economic development programs.** The North Iowa Corridor Revolving Loan Fund, North Iowa Corridor Small Business Revolving Loan Fund, and the micro, angel, and venture capital funds, are financial resources for interested stakeholders. The North Iowa Corridor Economic Development Corporation and its jurisdictions have a history of successful grant pursuits, including 56 businesses receiving a total of \$1,110,989 from the IEDA Small Business Grant as of May 11, 2020. In 2022, IEDA announced \$96 million in funding available to invest in small businesses through the American Rescue Plan Act.

CERRO GORDO COUNTY



Education and Health Care
23.2%



Manufacturing
15.4%



Retail
13.1%



Unemployed
2.1%

CLEAR LAKE



Education and Health Care
28.1%



Arts and Entertainment
12.5%



Retail
12.3%



Unemployed
1.8%

MASON CITY



Education and Health Care
21.7%



Manufacturing
15.4%



Retail
14.2%



Unemployed
2.5%

LABOR FORCE

2.1% UNEMPLOYMENT

26% OF AGES 25
AND OLDER HAVE A
BACHELORS DEGREE
OR HIGHER

EMPLOYMENT DISTRIBUTION

8,706 WORKERS COMMUTE
INTO CERRO GORDO
COUNTY FOR WORK
EVERY DAY.



LABOR SHED

88.5% OF COUNTY
RESIDENTS AGES 16 AND
OVER WORK WITHIN
CERRO GORDO COUNTY

ECONOMIC CLUSTERS

HEALTHCARE & SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
RETAIL TRADE
MANUFACTURING

ECONOMIC GROWTH FIELDS

TRANSPORTATION,
WAREHOUSING, UTILITIES
ADMINISTRATIVE, SUPPORT,
WASTE MANAGEMENT,
REMEDIATION SERVICES
ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT,
RECREATION

Figure 1.11: Top Employment Industries and Unemployment
Source 2017-2021 American Community Survey

PHYSICAL ATLAS

Land Use
Environment
Mobility
Parks and Recreation
Economic Development
Public Infrastructure and Facilities

2023 LAND USE AND CHARACTER

Land use is the central element of the Plan because it establishes the overall physical configuration of the North Iowa Corridor, specifically the mix and location of uses and the systems that support them.

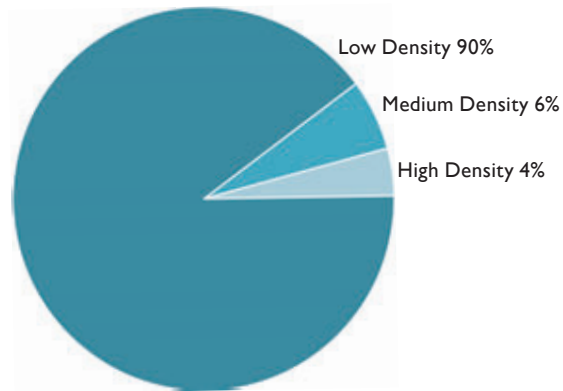


Figure I.12: 2023 Residential Land Distribution in Cerro Gordo County

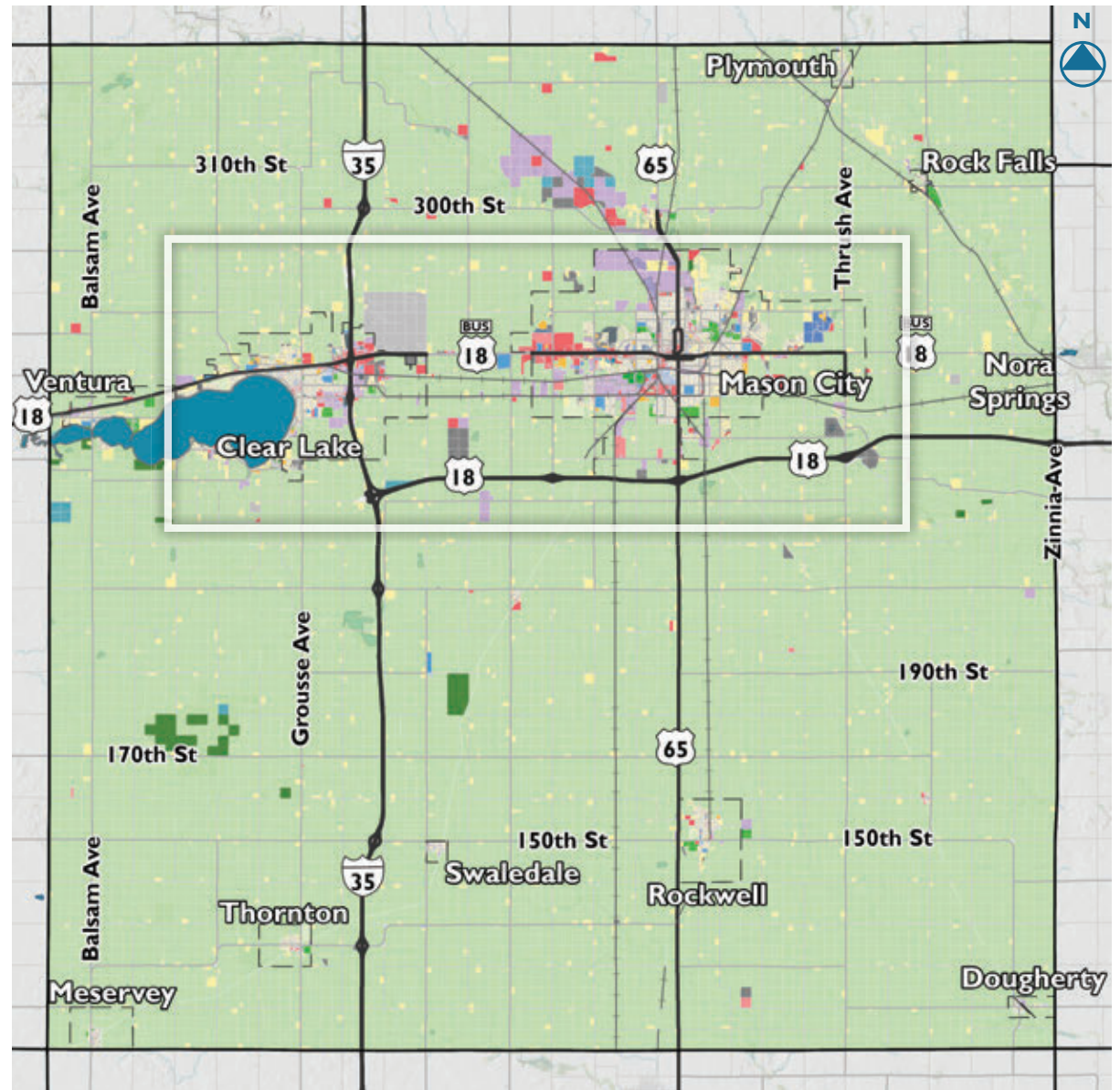
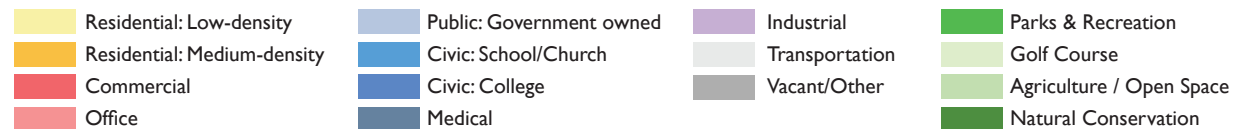
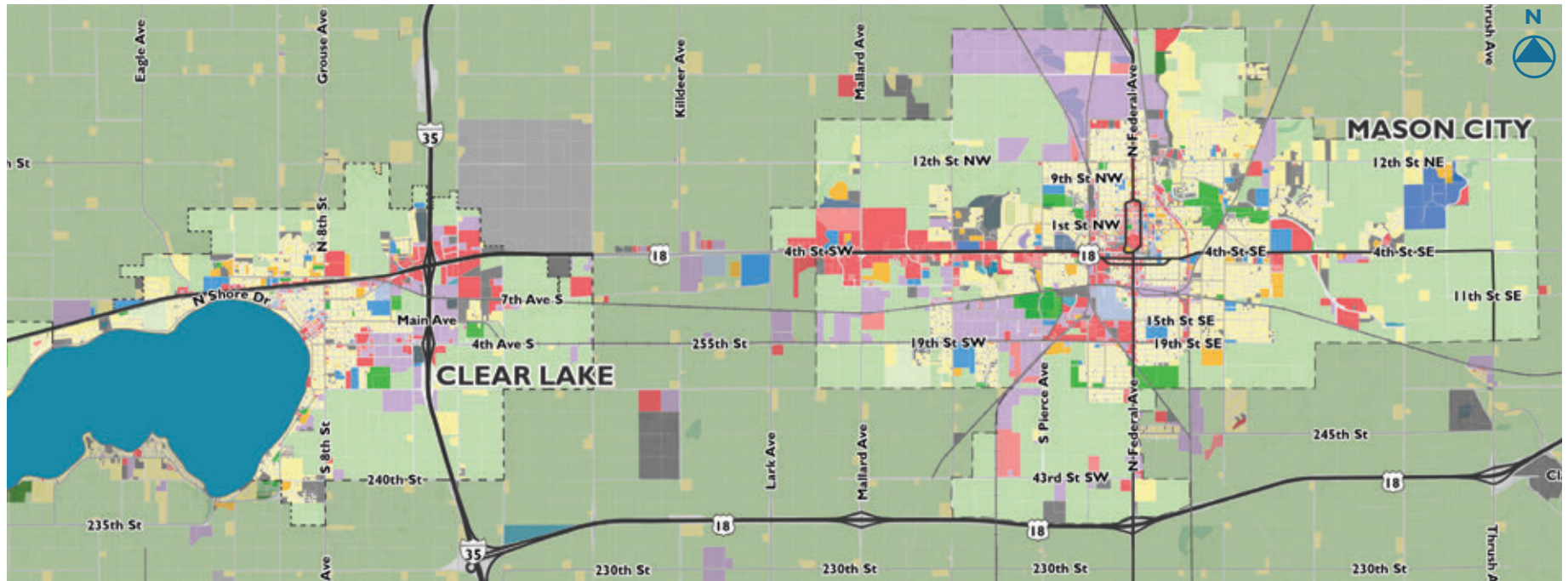


Figure I.13: Cerro Gordo County 2023 Land Use





| Figure 1.14: Clear Lake and Mason City 2023 Land Use

RESIDENTIAL

- About 43% and 55% of developed land in Mason City and Clear Lake is residential, respectively. Developed land does not include agricultural land. In most communities, residential land is the largest share of developed land. In Mason City, the higher proportion of industrial uses lowers the percentage of residential land.
- Of the residential land in Mason City and Clear Lake, approximately 88% is dedicated to low density single-family uses, 5% multifamily, and 5% in medium density 2-4 unit buildings.
- About 38% of the developed land in Cerro Gordo County outside of Mason City and Clear Lake is residential, primarily in the form of single-family homes.

COMMERCIAL

- Several commercial and office clusters are dispersed throughout Mason City and Clear Lake, accounting for 10%-12% of total developed land.
- Each city's downtown has a mix of commercial uses, including restaurants, bars, shops, and offices.
- The major highway corridors are another focus area for many commercial and office uses.

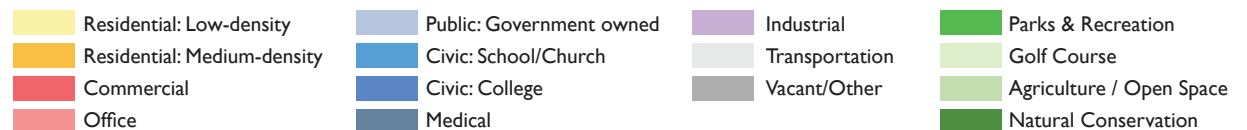
INDUSTRIAL

- Most industrial land is located along highway or railroad corridors to maximize mobility access.
- Mason City and areas of the county are the primary drivers of industrial land use in the North Iowa Corridor.

- The intensity and impact of industrial uses varies greatly across the North Iowa Corridor. These are essential uses for the economic health of the North Iowa Corridor.

PARKS, CIVIC, PUBLIC, AND INSTITUTIONAL

- Civic, public, and institutional uses include government facilities, college grounds, the airport, schools, parks, and religious facilities.
- In Mason City and Clear Lake, civic uses comprise about 16% of all developed land.
- Parks account for the greatest share at about 9% of land. A large portion of non-agricultural land in the county is for parks (35%).



ENVIRONMENT

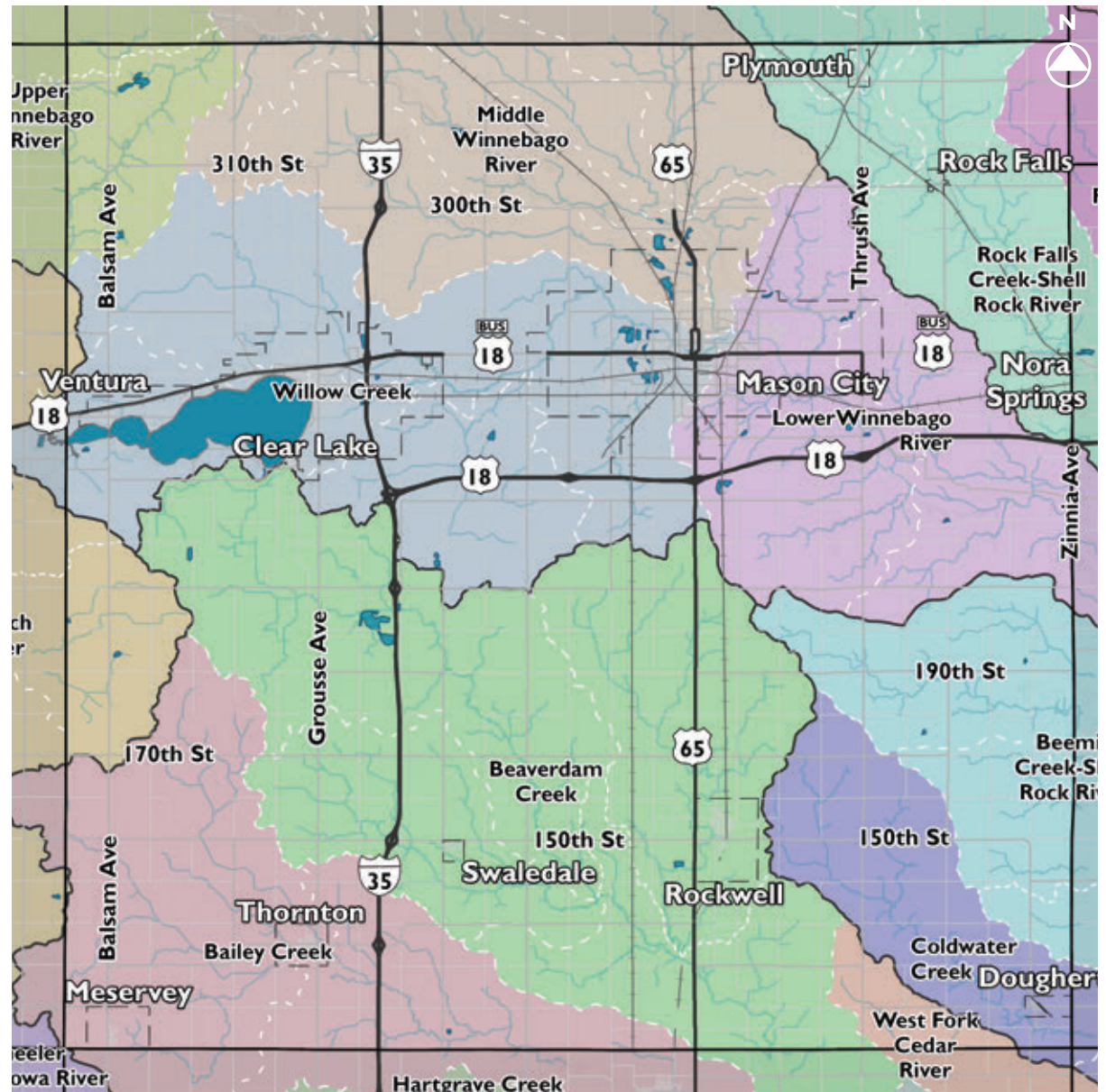
The North Iowa Corridor is rich in environmental resources. Rivers, wetlands, forests, and lakes cater to various recreational interests, while rich soil provides the foundation for local agriculture production. With these resources come constraints on develop-able areas to protect these features and mitigate future hazards on the built environment. In the North Iowa Corridor, the environmental constraints primarily include:

WATERSHEDS AND SLOPES

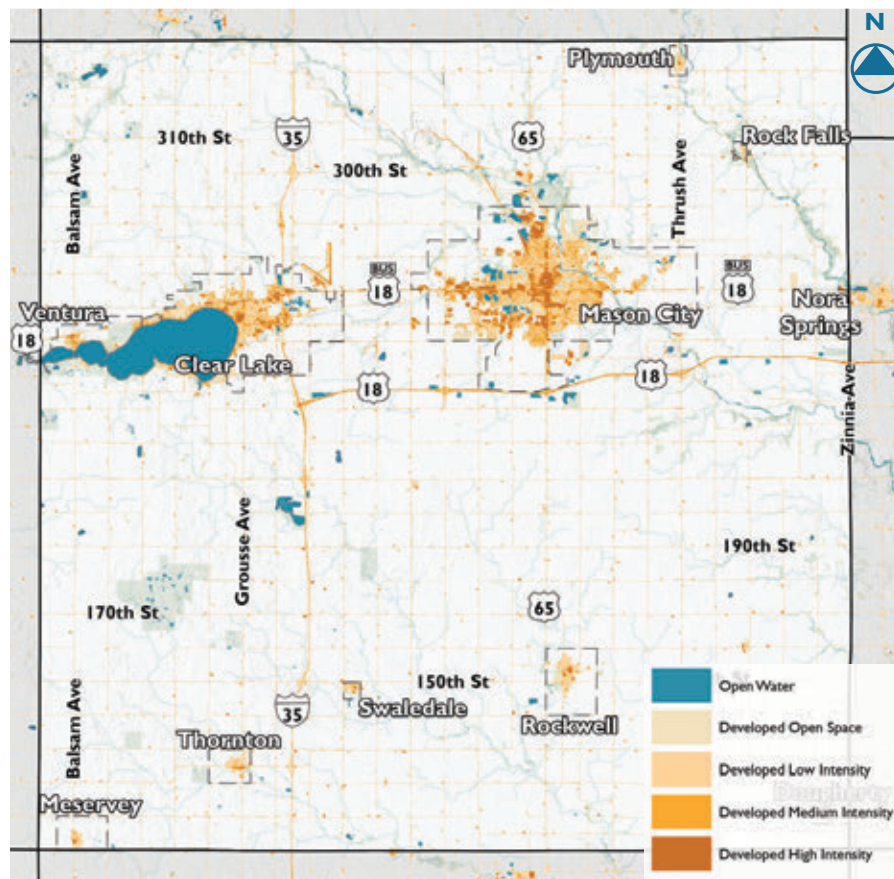
- **Watersheds are where water drains in an area.** Watersheds show areas impacted locally by stormwater runoff from a larger area and demonstrate the integrated nature of waterways.
- **Slopes directly impact flooding, erosion, development suitability, and habitat.** Much of rural Cerro Gordo County is flat with low-lying topography, but even modest slopes of 6% can significantly impact development. Minimizing development in areas with steep slopes (greater than 8%) will help prevent excessive erosion and stabilize stream corridors.

VEGETATION

- **Vegetation and land cover are major resources that can help manage stormwater, prevent erosion, and provide a more appealing physical environment.** In most instances, encroaching development should preserve native vegetation to protect the habitat and provide for migratory birds and wildlife habitat.



| Figure 1.15: Watersheds in Cerro Gordo County



| Figure I.16: Land Cover

WETLANDS, RIVERS, AND LAKES

- **Several wetlands are scattered throughout the county.** Wetlands are essential to the hydrological ecosystem because of their water-cleansing properties. Wetland mapping is an important strategy to look at hydric (wet) soils and sensitive areas. Individual site assessment is often needed to verify water resource conditions.
- **Rivers, streams, and creeks run primarily northwest to southeast in the county.** They are typically within a floodplain. Several, such as the Winnebago and Shell Rock rivers, are navigable for canoeing and kayaking.
- **Clear Lake is the North Iowa Corridor's most well-known recreational feature.** Watershed management projects will ensure water quality remains high.



| Figure I.17: Floodplains and Wetlands

FLOODPLAINS

- **Floodway.** A regulatory floodway means the channel of a river that must be reserved to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water's surface elevation more than a designated height. No development is allowed.
- **1% Flood Area.** An area prone to inundation by a 100-year flood event (an event with a 1% annual probability). These areas are severely limited for development and are subject to additional requirements. It is difficult to mitigate these issues responsibly and these areas should continue to be studied.
- **0.2% Flood Area.** An area prone to inundation by a 500-year flood event (an event with a 0.2% annual probability). These areas are limited for development, but issues can typically be mitigated responsibly without significant negative impact on the overall flow of water.

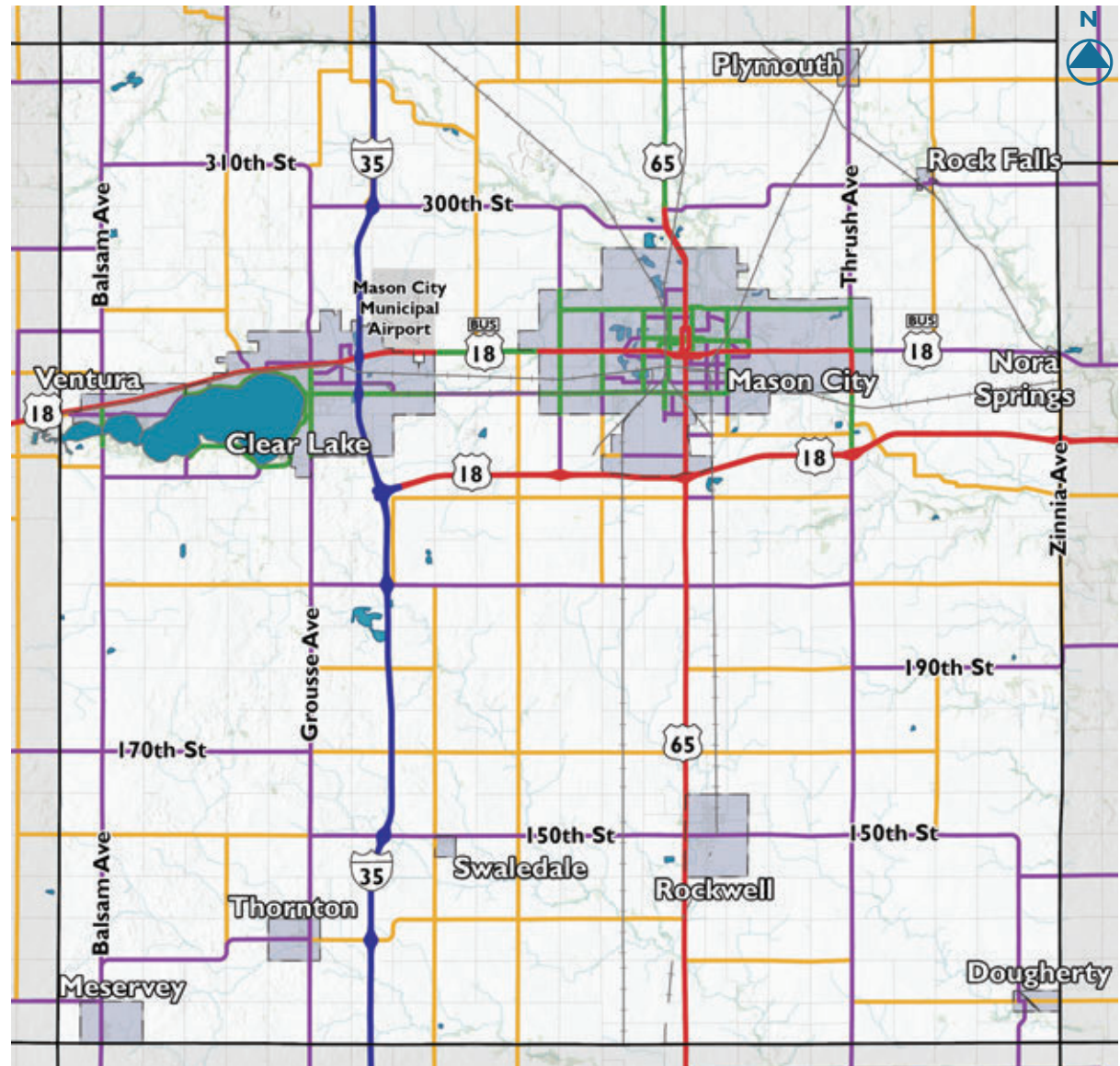
MOBILITY

The mobility system includes any mode of transportation, including walking, bicycling, personal devices, driving, buses, rail, and aviation. Mobility is directly linked with the character of a community and its land use.

ROAD SYSTEM

Roads provide transportation routes for people and goods via motorized vehicles and bicycles in some places. Functional classifications are used for general transportation planning efforts and are references for construction standards and transportation program eligibility. Types include:

- **Interstate.** A divided, limited access road with no direct land access and no at-grade crossings or intersections.
- **Other Principal Arterials.** Allow traffic flow through the urban area and between major destinations. They carry a high proportion of urban travel since movement, not access, is the primary function.
- **Minor Arterials.** Collect and distribute traffic from principal arterials and interstates to streets of lower classification and, in some cases, allow traffic to directly access destinations.
- **Major and Minor Collectors.** Provide land access and traffic circulation within and between residential neighborhoods and commercial and industrial areas and distributes traffic movements from these areas to the arterial streets.
- **Local (not shown on the map).** Offer the lowest level of mobility but the highest level of local property access. Local roads comprise the largest percentage of street mileage and provide direct access to adjacent land uses, including private property and low-volume public facilities.



| Figure 1.18: Functional Classification Road System

- Interstate
- Other Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- - - - - Railroad

PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM

Sidewalks serve many neighborhoods in Mason City and Clear Lake but need improvement.

Sidewalks provide walking connections and define safe routes for pedestrians. Sidewalks are also critical for walkable commercial districts where outdoor dining and displays are encouraged as amenities.

BICYCLE SYSTEM

People ride bicycles for transportation and recreation. Jurisdictions are working to ensure that all areas in cities are well-connected via a variety of bike routes. Mason City has been particularly successful and is a case study for other cities to emulate.

TRANSIT SYSTEM

Transit services are limited and include Mason City Transit, Cerro Gordo County Public Transit, and the Region 2 Transit System.

- Mason City Transit is a fixed-route service running on half-hour headways within the city. The system also contracts with Region 2 service for eligible patrons who need paratransit services.
- The Region 2 Transit System is the second and the most extensive in the Region. Region 2 Transit directly operates the Cerro Gordo Public Transit service. Participating local governments provide local support through taxes, general funds, or levies as decided at the local governmental level, and fares.

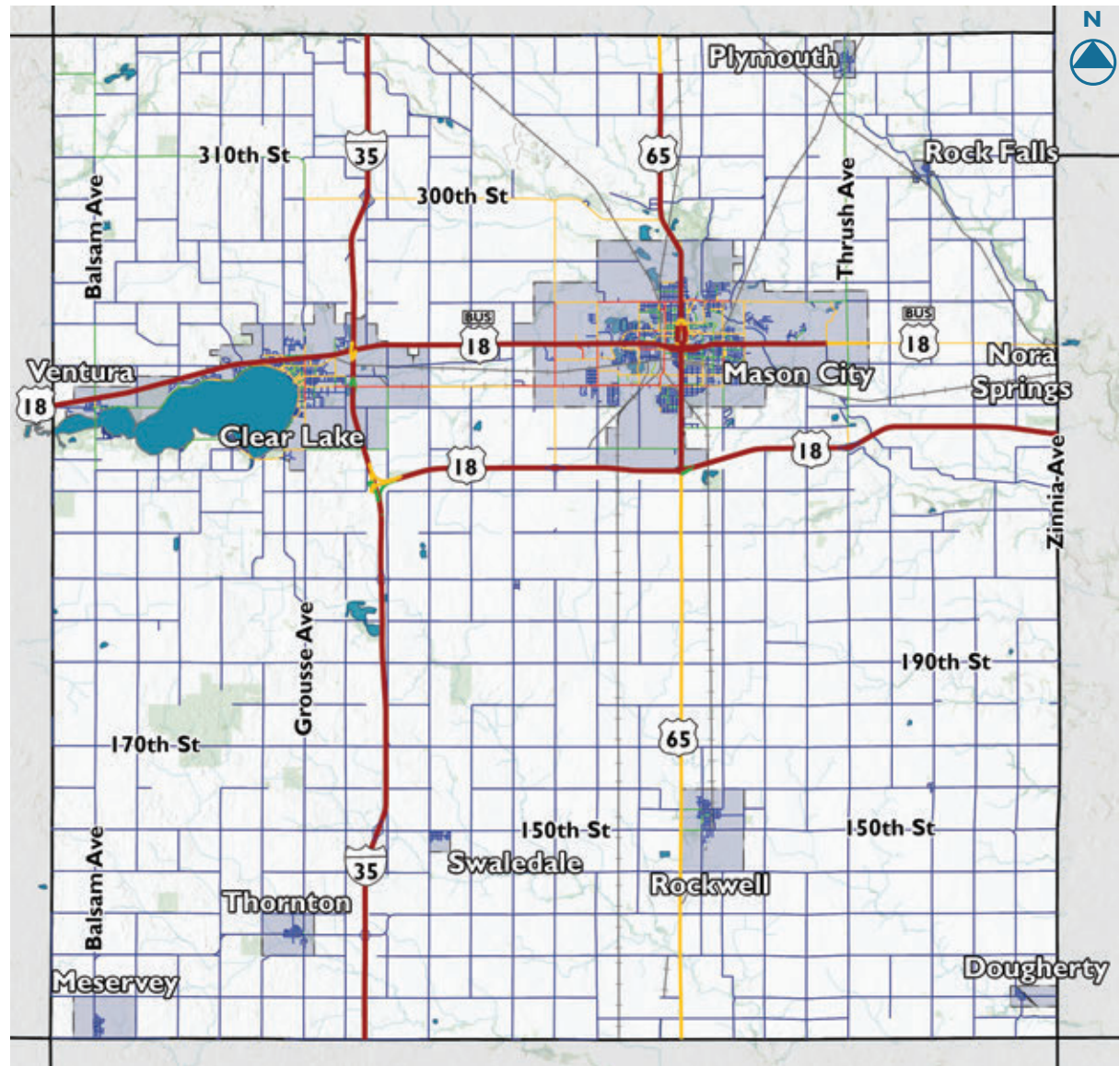
RAIL SYSTEM

Consists of two Class I railroads and two commercial short-lines. The facilities include the only electric traction freight line still operating in the country. The rail lines are owned by Canadian Pacific Railway, Iowa Northern Railway Company, Progressive Rail, and Union Pacific Railroad Company.

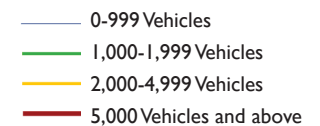
AVIATION

The Mason City Municipal Airport is the public aviation facility in the North Iowa Corridor.

The facility is located on the Highway Business 18 corridor with 3,500 passengers reported in 2020.



| Figure 1.19: Annual Average Daily Traffic Counts (AADT)



PARKS AND RECREATION

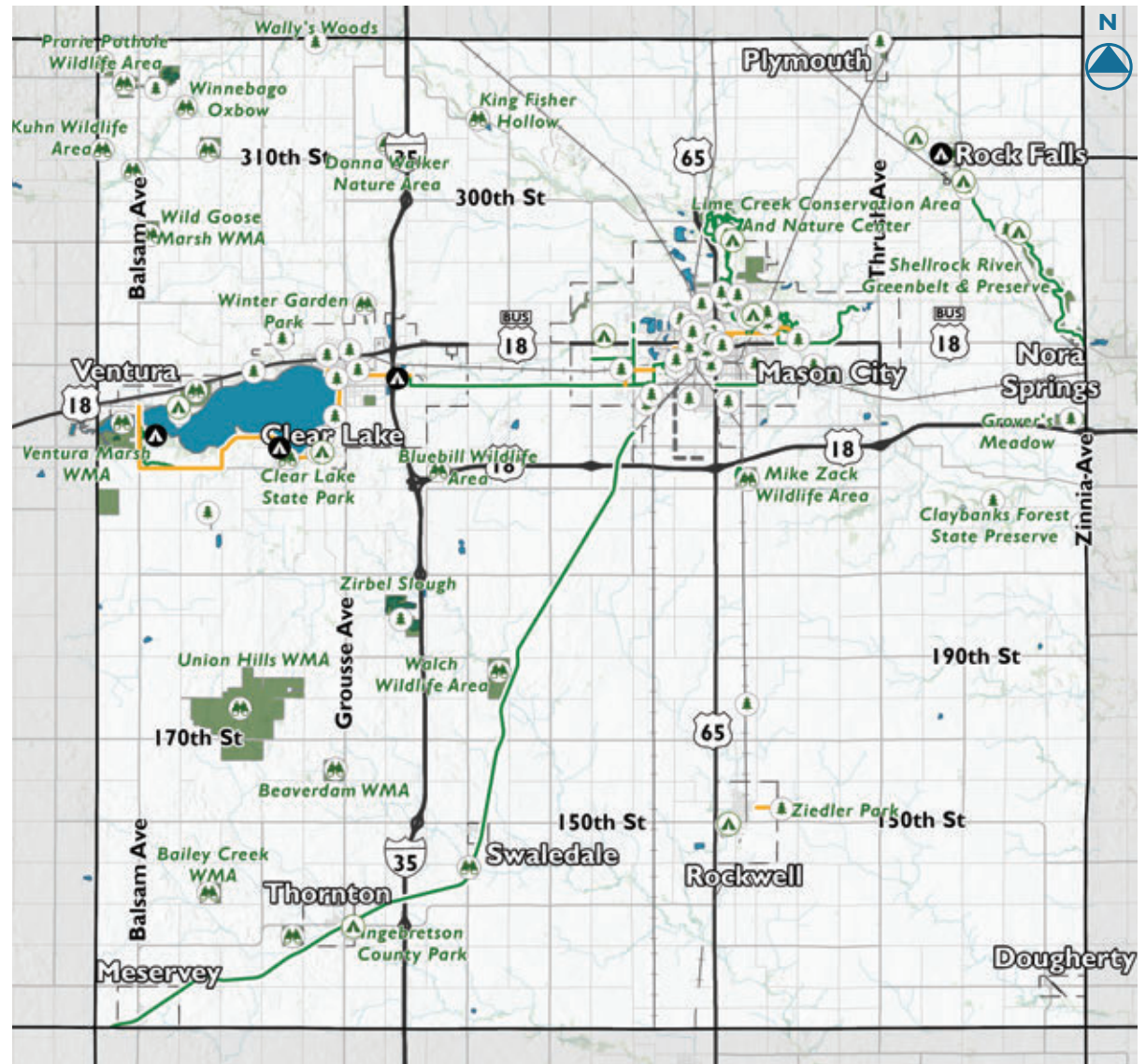
Parks and recreation opportunities are a substantial contributor to quality of life. Leaders and residents in the North Iowa Corridor know this. As the most visible municipal amenity, the public park, trail, and recreation system provides a direct service to residents that is relatively easy to measure. Facilities prominent in the North Iowa Corridor include parks, trails, recreation centers, pools, and natural features for boating, fishing, camping, and wildlife viewing.

There are five primary classifications of park spaces in the North Iowa Corridor.

- Campgrounds
- Parks
- Wildlife Areas
- Bicycle Trails and Routes
- Water bodies

Classifications help define roles in the overall system, demonstrate relationships with each other, highlight deficiencies, and assist in developing an improvement strategy.

The analysis of park and facility needs in the following section includes public and private facilities that are open to the public. Private golf courses and school facilities are excluded, although each does provide additional resources on a membership basis.



| Figure 1.20: 2022 Parks, Recreation, and Trail System

- ▲ Private Campground
- ▲ Public Campground
- ▲ Park
- ▲ Wildlife Area
- Off-Street Trail
- On-Street Bike Route
- Water bodies



REGIONAL PARKS

These parks serve communities within a one-hour drive and are usually larger than 100 acres, but do not have to be. Parking is included on-site. Typical uses include natural or highly specialized outdoor recreation areas such as golf courses, water sports, or camping.

DISTRICT PARKS

These parks are usually between 50 and 100 acres to meet a broad range of active, passive, and programmed athletic needs and serve a large geographic segment of the community. Parking is generally included on-site. These parks attract visitors within a half-hour drive. Typical uses include natural scenic areas, hunting areas, major sports facilities, specific unique attractions, and water bodies.



COMMUNITY PARKS

These parks generally offer unique activities and are usually over 30 acres and up to 50 acres. Parking is generally included on-site. Typical uses include major sports facilities, unique attractions, many natural features, swimming pools, and water bodies.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Neighborhood parks generally serve one or more surrounding neighborhoods with a service radius of up to a half-mile and are anywhere from two to 30 acres. Some of these parks are undeveloped, while others provide active uses, including some programmed activities. Access is primarily by walking and by bicycle, with some on-site parking. Typical uses include sports fields, courts, and playgrounds.



POCKET-PARKS

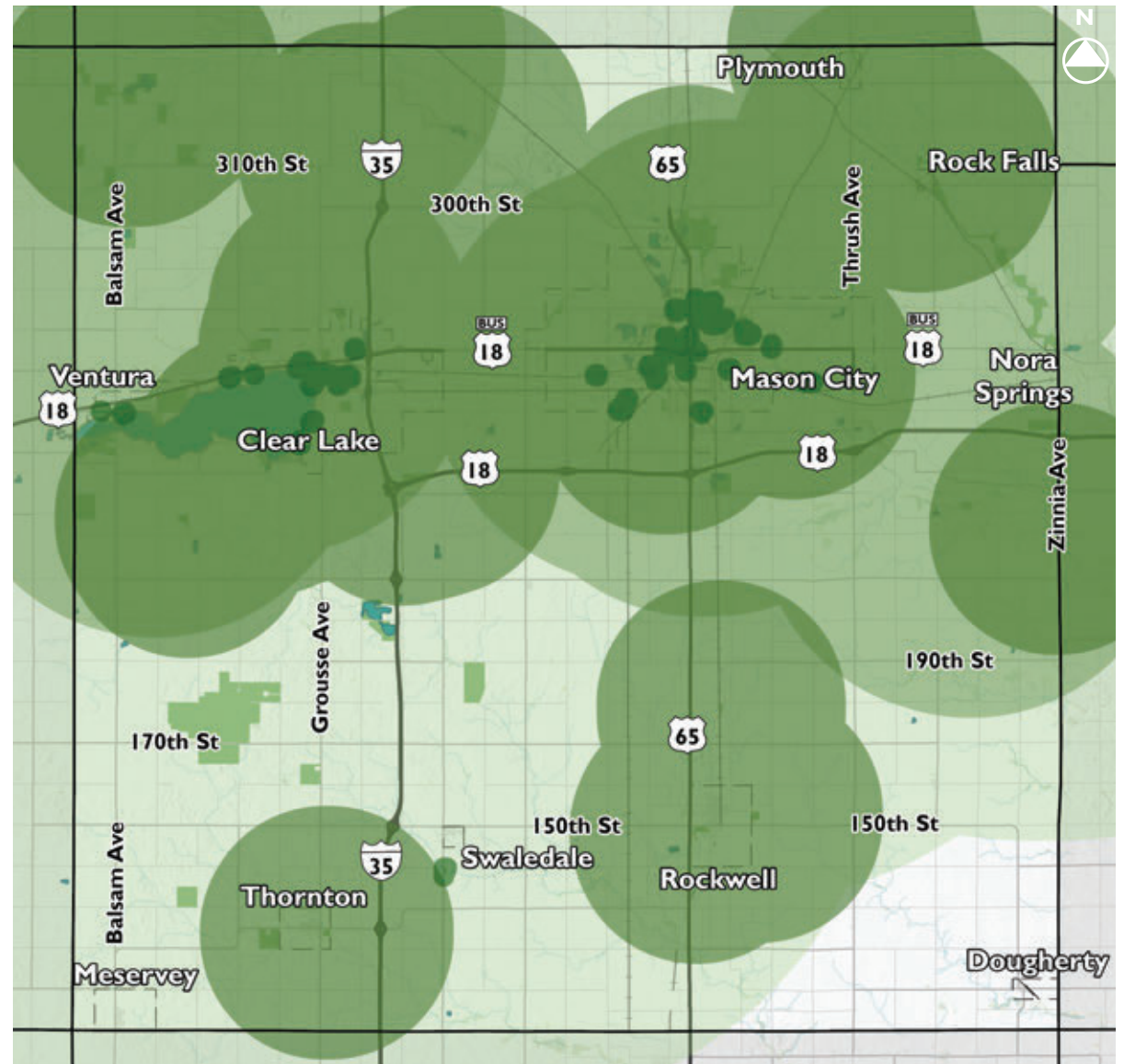
Pocket-Parks are intended to serve adjacent or nearby residences, encompassing about a quarter-mile service area radius, and are usually an acre or less. Access is primarily pedestrian and by bicycle, with no on-site parking. Typical uses include open space, pick-up games, and ice skating. There are no programmed activities at these parks.

PARKS SERVICE AREAS

The adequacy of park facilities in terms of geographic distribution is often reviewed under a standard service radius of a quarter mile for Pocket Parks, half a mile for Neighborhood Parks, three miles for Community Parks, five miles for District Parks, and ten miles for Regional Parks.

Although the actual service area of a park is also determined by natural and man-made barriers, straight-line distances from a park's boundary provide an adequate initial analysis to compare park location to population centers.

Most neighborhoods are geographically close to a park. However, future sections in the Plan will show there are barriers to accessing some park spaces.



| Figure 1.21: 2022 Parks and Recreation System Service Areas

CERRO GORDO COUNTY PARK AND FACILITY INVENTORY – 2023

Based on the size of parks in acres, unincorporated Cerro Gordo County has four Neighborhood Parks, 13 Community Parks, four District Parks, and nine Regional Parks covering over 3,190 acres distributed across the county. The classifications come from national standards based on park acreages. However, certain amenities can create larger demand even if the park is smaller. For example, campgrounds may have the size of neighborhood park but draw visitors from a regional area. Ingebretson, Linn Groven and Wilkinson Parks are examples in Cerro Gordo County.

PARKS STRENGTHS

- A good variety of parks that meet and exceed national standards.
- Successful regional parks that attract people from all around.
- Parks with wildlife and natural preserve areas.
- Good distribution across the various towns.
- Strong park system.

PARKS CHALLENGES

- Lack a variety of sports fields and training opportunities.
- Flooding issues.
- Weak connectivity between parks.
- Limited water activities.
- Different levels of maintenance.
- Increasing cost of maintenance.
- Long distances between different parks.

PARKS OPPORTUNITIES

- Design trails that connect the varying recreational facilities.
- Attract more people to live in the area by having successful parks.
- Demand and growth in organized sports and interest in the North Iowa Corridor.

TABLE 1.3: CERRO GORDO COUNTY 2023 PARK AND FACILITY INVENTORY

	CERRO GORDO COUNTY	Acreage	Summer Sports								Winter Sports				Water Activities				Recreation									
			Baseball Fields	Basketball Courts	Golf	Horseback Riding	Hanna Equipment	Soccer Fields	Softball Fields	Volleyball	Tennis Courts	Horserace Pits	Pickleball	Skiing	Ice Fishing	Hockey	Swimming	Skiing	Fishing	Swimming	Swimming	Swimming	Swimming	Swimming	Swimming	Swimming	Swimming	Swimming
Neighborhood Park	1 Stille Wildlife Area	5																										
	2 Preuss Nature Area	7																										
	3 Sisters Prairie Trail	8																										
	4 Trolley Trail	10																										
	5 Limestone Prairie Preserve	10																										
Community Park	6 Blazingstar Prairie	10.5																										
	7 Kingfisher Hollow	15																										
	8 Mallard Marsh	17																										
	9 Goranson Access	20																										
	10 Prairie Land Trail	21																										
	11 Ingebretson Park	23																										
	12 Donna Walker Nature Area	25																										
	13 Strand Park	33																										
	14 Spring Creek Preserve	34																										
	15 White Wildlife Area	34																										
	16 Blue Wing Marsh	34																										
District Parks	17 Linn Grove Park	38																										
	18 Blue-Bill Wildlife Area	40																										
	19 Claybanks Forest	56																										
	20 Haugen Wildlife Area	75																										
Regional Park	21 Wilkinson Pioneer Park	80																										
	22 Winnebago Oxbow	80																										
	23 Prairie Pothole Wildlife Area	110																										
	24 Grover's Meadow	120																										
	25 Ring Neck Wildlife Area	148																										
	26 Mike Zack Wildlife Area	153																										
	27 Kuhn Wildlife Area	227																										
	28 Walch Wildlife Area	303																										
	29 Zirbel Slough	330																										
	30 Shellrock River Greenbelt Preserve	590																										
	31 Lime Creek Conservation Area	540																										

CLEAR LAKE PARK AND FACILITY INVENTORY – 2023

Clear Lake has three Pocket Parks, eight Neighborhood Parks, five Community Parks, and one District Park covering 296 acres. No Regional Parks are in Clear Lake. Most parks are located north of the lake near most of the population.

PARKS STRENGTHS

- Parks attract a lot of people to the region.
- Year round events that keep people coming.
- Water activities for different ages and needs.
- Well maintained and renovated.
- Strong parks system that is expanding.
- Good accessibility.
- Parks connect to nearby land uses and add value.
- Approximately a half mile of public shoreline.





























PARKS CHALLENGES

- Not all parks are on the same level of maintenance or popularity.
- Flooding issues.
- Limited public access to the lake. Less than 18% of the shoreline of Clear Lake is publicly owned.
- Parking can be challenging during events.
- Increasing cost of maintenance.

PARKS OPPORTUNITIES

- Design walking and biking paths to accommodate varying recreational users.
- Leverage the success of parks to enhance business opportunities around them.
- Incorporate technology for power and water consumption to enhance sustainability.
- More aquatic activities.
- Use social media to advertise events in the park.

TABLE 1.4: CITY OF CLEAR LAKE 2023 PARK AND FACILITY INVENTORY

CLEAR LAKE			Acreage	Summer Sports										Winter Sports					Water Activities				Recreation								
				Baseball Fields 	Basketball Courts 	Golf 	Horseback Riding 	Fitness Equipment 	Soccer Fields 	Softball Fields 	Volleyball 	Tennis Courts 	Horseshoe Pits 	Pickleball 	Skiing 	Ice Fishing 	Hockey 	Skating 	Shooting 	Beach 	Boat/ Canoe Launch 	Fishing 	Swimming 	Benches 	Grills 	Nature Area 	Trails 	Hunting 	Children Play Area 	Camping 	Shelter 
Pocket Park	1 Triangle Park	0.34																					X					X			X
	2 Country Club Heights Park	0.4		X				X															X					X		X	
	3 DAR Park	0.8																					X					X		X	
Neighborhood Park	4 Marian Park	1.2	X												X	X							X					X		X	
	5 Fieldstone Park	1.3																					X					X	X	X	
	6 Armour Pugh Memorial Park	2																					X	X			X	X	X		
	7 City Gardens of North Iowa	2.5																					X		X	X		X		X	
	8 Clear Lake City Park	3												X	X		X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X		X	X		
	9 McGowan Park	3									X												X	X					X		
	10 Tourist Park	4.3									X								X				X	X			X	X	X		
11 Pine Tree Park	5		X							X									X			X	X			X	X	X			
Community Park	12 Clear Lake State Park	31												X	X		X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
	13 Lions Field	39	X	X				X	X	X													X			X			X		
	14 Lehigh Marsh WMA	41																							X	X					
	15 Bluehill Wildlife Area	46																							X	X					
	16 Clear Lake Pond WMA	46																								X	X				
District	17 Winter Garden Park	69																							X	X	X				

MASON CITY PARK AND FACILITY INVENTORY – 2023

Mason City has four Pocket Parks, eighteen Neighborhood Parks, nine Community Parks, three District Parks, and two Regional Parks, covering 700 acres distributed across the city. Most of these parks are in the central and east-central parts of the city, with few to no parks towards the west.

PARKS STRENGTHS

- Accommodates different needs of the community.
- Abundant sports fields.
- Numerous areas within parks dedicated to conservation.
- 90% with good/excellent park condition.
- Strong visitor experience.
- Good parking and accessibility provision.






























PARKS CHALLENGES

- Travel distance between parks.
- Flooding issues.
- Lack of winter activities.
- Insufficient resources for maintaining the parks.
- Security concerns.
- Increasing costs of maintenance.
- Increased labor and material costs.

PARKS OPPORTUNITIES

- Design walking and biking paths to accommodate varying recreational users.
- Provide more public events.
- Incorporate arts in the parks to create cultural value.
- Offer more aquatic activities.
- Use social media to advertise park events.

TABLE 1.5: CITY OF MASON CITY 2023 PARK AND FACILITY INVENTORY

			Summer Sports												Winter Sports					Water Activities			Recreation											
MASON CITY			Acreage																															
Pocket Park	1 North of City Hall	0.2																																
	2 KUD Park	0.2																																
	3 Lewis Kipper Park	0.3																																
	4 South Washington Park	1		X																														
Neighborhood Park	5 Kiwanis Park	1.2		X							X																							
	6 Morgan Park	1.2	X																															
	7 Waterworks Park	2.7		X					X																									
	8 Central Heights Park	2.3		X																														
	9 SE Waterworks Park	2.4	X	X						X																								
	10 Brookview Park	2.5																																
	11 Central Park	2.6																																
	12 Norris Park	2.8																																
	13 South Penn Bridge Area	2.8																																
	14 Gooch Park	3.4																																
	15 Ashbury Park	3.9																																
	16 West Park	5											X																					
	17 Murphy Park	5.2																																
	18 Monroe Park	5.7		X					X																									
	19 Averydale Access	5.7																																
	20 Chodor Preserve	6																																
	21 West Haven	6.6		X																														
	22 Newman Elementary Playground	9.2		X																														
	23 Ray Korick Park	9.6							X																									
	Community Park	24 Blair Meadows Preserve	11																															
		25 Parker's Woods Park	13		X				X				X	X																				
		26 Winnebago Trail	19																															
		27 Hickoin Park Baseball Complex	19.5	X							X																							
28 Norris Softball Complex		21.7								X																								
29 Fredrick Handford Park		23	X							X																								
30 Willow Creek Preserve		23																																
31 Evans Preserve		27																																
32 MacNiders Woods Park		29																																
District Park		33 East Park	59		X				X			X	X	X	X								X											
	34 Georgia Hanford Park	63	X	X	X			X			X											X												
	35 Lester Milligan	81														X						X	X	X										
Regional Park	36 Highland Park Golf Course	138			X																													

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development is an all encompassing term for efforts that foster a positive business environment, attract local spending, and increase local investment. The North Iowa Economic Development Corporation and Vision North Iowa Economic Development Strategic Plan guide each jurisdiction's economic development strategy.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

- Clear Lake Chamber
- Clear Lake Tourism
- Iowa Works
- John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center
- Main Street Mason City
- Mason City Chamber
- North Iowa Area Community College
- North Iowa Corridor Economic Development Corporation
- United Way
- Visit Mason City

KEY BUSINESS INVESTMENT AREAS

- A. Downtown Clear Lake
- B. Downtown Mason City
- C. Indianhead South Certified Site
- D. Clear Lake Industrial Park
- E. Indianhead West

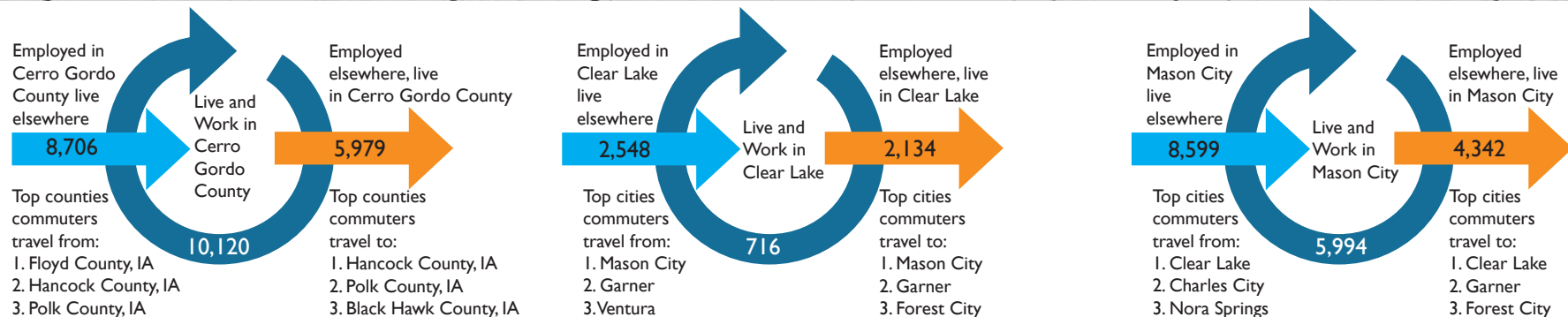
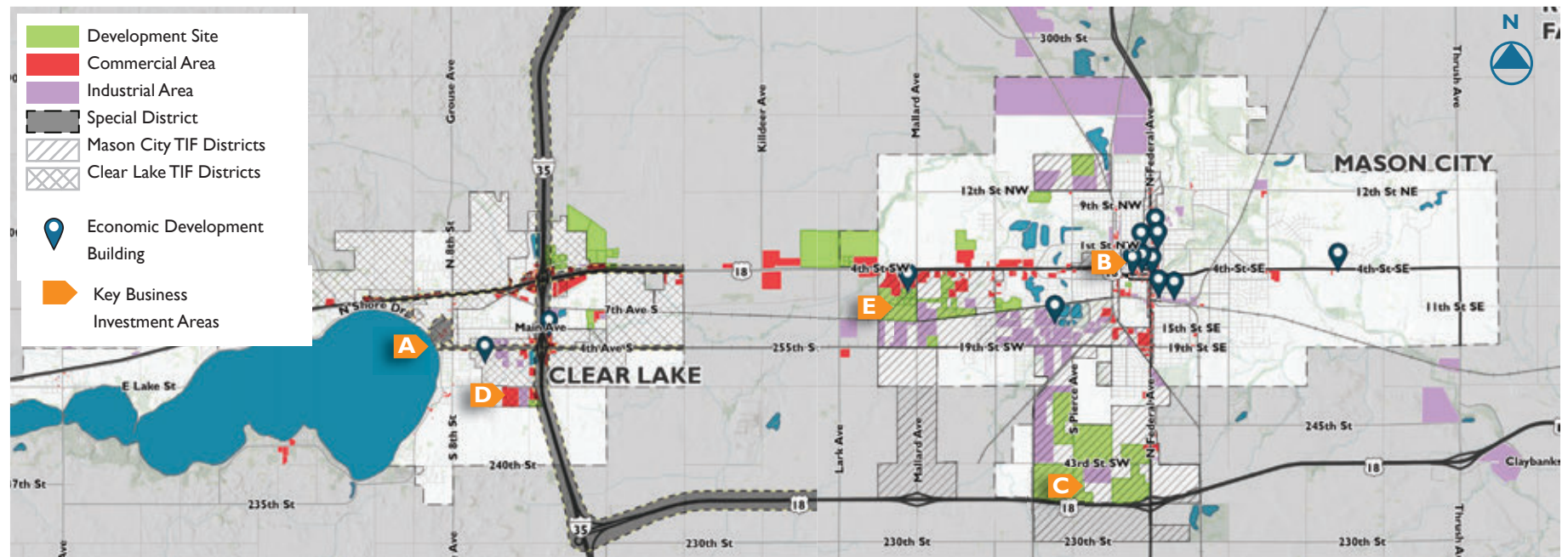


Figure 1.22: Economic Development Areas and Inflow and Outflow Commuting
Source: City of Clear Lake, City of Mason City, Census On The Map, 2020

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES

Infrastructure is the lifeblood of a community. It is the basic service that provides for the quality of life of its current citizens and allows for continued population, business, and development growth. Infrastructure needs to be maintained, expanded, and adapted as technologies change.

CERRO GORDO COUNTY FACILITIES

Most public services to county residents come through joint partnerships with other agencies. Fire protection, emergency management, waste management, and public health services all include agreements with other jurisdictions or agencies to manage.

- **Infrastructure services.** Consistent with rural development, water, sewer, and stormwater management are contained on-site for most properties.
- **Public Safety.** For comprehensive planning purposes, there are no immediate needs for new facility locations within the unincorporated county area. The County Sheriff's office is located along Highway 18/122 between Mason City and Clear Lake and serves the unincorporated areas and several smaller cities in the county. Each community provides fire protection throughout the county based on a service radius.

CLEAR LAKE FACILITIES

- **Water System.** The City of Clear Lake water supply is provided by three shallow water wells, and three elevated storage tanks provide storage with a total capacity of approximately 2.3 million gallons. Daily usage is about one million gallons for about 3,900 residential and commercial properties. The distribution system consists of roughly 52 miles of water mains, 800 water valves, and 375 fire hydrants.
- **Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure.** The sanitary sewer system includes 52 miles of sanitary sewer mains and serves 3,500 properties. The Clear Lake Sanitary District provides treatment for the residents of Clear Lake and Ventura, as well as those residents of Cerro Gordo County living near the Lake. The facility's current design capacity is based on construction in 1996. Since

then, the facility has undergone several repairs and improvements, including SBR Tank inner wall rehabilitation, pretreatment system improvements, and sanitary sewer lining. The facility has an average dry weather flow of 6.5 million gallons of wastewater per day (MGD) and an average Maximum Wet Weather flow, which is the maximum flow received during any 24-hour period during wet weather conditions, of 9.4 MGD.

- **Storm Sewer.** Storm sewers are designed to convey runoff from typical smaller storm events and do not convey water at the same rate for larger storm events. Most of Clear Lake is serviced by storm sewers, emptying into local waterways. The City has mandatory stormwater treatment requirements for new development and employs other best management practices in existing neighborhoods and throughout the watersheds to improve water quality. The City invests in measures that minimize infiltration of stormwater runoff into the sanitary sewer system to prevent it from being conveyed to the treatment plant unnecessarily.
- **Public Safety.** Police and fire services are managed by the city.

MASON CITY FACILITIES

- **Water System.** The City of Mason City water supply is provided by nine water wells, and storage is provided by five elevated storage tanks and one below ground storage tank with a total capacity of approximately nine million gallons. Daily usage is about five million gallons for about 12,000 residential and commercial users.
- **Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure and Water Reclamation Facility.** The facility was originally constructed in 1953 and has undergone several updates through 2010. Various minor age-related equipment replacements have occurred since the

last major construction project. An updated Facility Plan is currently being prepared. The collection system consists of two wastewater pumping stations, one stormwater pumping station, and 300 miles of sanitary sewer mains. The facility treats 6.5 million gallons of wastewater daily (MGD). Over the last ten years, the average Maximum Wet Weather flow, the maximum flow received during any 24-hour period during wet weather conditions, is 17.2 MGD, 80% of the design capacity.

- **Storm Sewer.** Storm sewers are critical to managing runoff after rain or snow melt. Most of the community is serviced by storm sewer infrastructure, which empties into local waterways. Storm sewers are designed to convey runoff from typical smaller storms and do not convey water at the same rate for larger storms. The City has mandatory stormwater treatment requirements for new development and employs other best management practices in existing neighborhoods and throughout the watersheds to improve water quality. The City invests in measures that minimize infiltration of stormwater runoff into the sanitary sewer system to prevent it from being conveyed to the treatment plant unnecessarily.
- **Public Safety.** Police and fire services are managed by the city.



THE NORTH IOWA CORRIDOR 2023 FORWARD

Planning must consider many factors to establish likely paths for future growth and development demand. When based on market viability and community needs, a future population and land use forecast provides a baseline for the extent of land use and mobility planning. The North Iowa Corridor can see growth again by being realistically visionary and proactive towards the community goals.



POPULATION POSSIBILITIES

Figures 2.1 through 2.3 show population forecast scenarios for Cerro Gordo County (exclusive of Clear Lake and Mason City), Clear Lake, and Mason City. Four different possible growth rates determine these scenarios.

- **Two of these projections display the loss that may occur if population growth follows the historical trends.** These include rates from 2010 to 2020 (5-year historical rates) and 2000 to 2020 (10-year historical rates).
- **Two scenarios display possible growth based on expectations with planning efforts.** The scenarios factor in positive recent building rates and anticipation that growth will improve with infrastructure, planning, and efforts to improve quality of life.

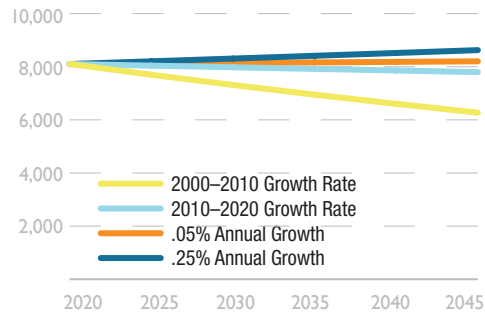


Figure 2.1: Cerro Gordo County, excluding Mason City and Clear Lake, 2045 Growth Possibilities

Excluding Mason City and Clear Lake, the population in the remainder of Cerro Gordo County has declined. This is common in many rural areas across the United States. Limited building activity translates into a static population if there is no out-migration of residents or changes in household size. However, the North Iowa Corridor Plan uses an annual population growth rate of 0.25% for land planning purposes. The positive growth forecast considers:

- Rural living options still desirable for many households.
- Stabilizing of the housing stock in smaller towns.
- Development that may happen without annexation into Mason City or Clear Lake.

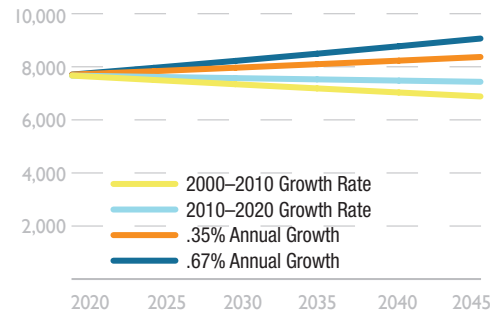


Figure 2.2: Clear Lake 2045 Growth Possibilities

Clear Lake has the highest population growth projected because of increased building activity and prime areas for retirement and tourism surrounding the lake. The current building activity with no out-migration of residents or change in household sizes would translate to a 0.67% annual population growth rate. The North Iowa Corridor Plan uses an annual population growth rate of 0.35% for land planning purposes. The positive growth forecast includes:

- Proactive strategies for housing demand.
- School district open enrollment data suggesting additional demand.
- Momentum that builds to a growth rate jump in years 2030-2040.
- Focus on strategic growth areas.
- Room to allow flexibility in the land use plan.
- Consideration for the transient population; planning for a lot of new growth might need further discussion.

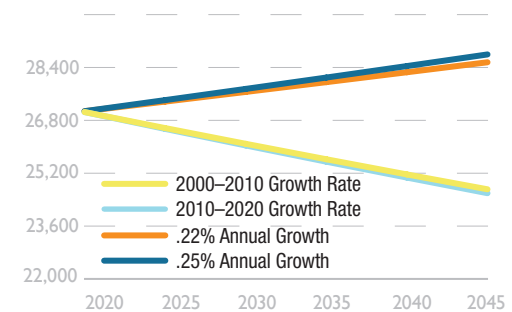


Figure 2.3: Mason City 2045 Growth Possibilities

The current population of Mason City is trending downward. However, recent housing building activity shows demand for units. With no out-migration or household size change, the recent building activity would translate to a 0.22% annual population growth rate. The North Iowa Corridor Plan uses an annual population growth rate of 0.25% for land planning purposes. The positive growth forecast includes:

- Proactive strategies for housing demand.
- Momentum that builds to a growth rate jump in years 2030-2040.
- Focus on strategic growth areas and no decline in population.
- Room to allow flexibility in the land use plan.

LAND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Population growth must be supported by new places for people to live, work, and play. Therefore, an increase in population directly correlates to the demand for new development or redevelopment of residential uses and non-residential uses.

RESIDENTIAL LAND NEEDS

Estimates of future residential land needs require assumptions about housing preferences. The North Iowa Corridor, regardless of jurisdiction, should be planning for and accommodating various housing types for all stages of life. The mix of new residential acres for planning purposes through 2045 includes:

- 50-70% low density
- 30% medium density
- 20-30% high density

Keep in mind that higher densities require less land for the same number of units. This housing mix results in a planning need for at least 840-1,075 acres of new, redeveloped, and infill residential land in Mason City, Clear Lake, and other areas of Cerro Gordo County to provide market flexibility. Refer to the Housing and Neighborhoods section for further discussion of housing goals.

The relative residential land distribution for each jurisdiction's planning purposes:

CLEAR LAKE:

- 140-170 acres low density
- 40-60 acres medium density
- 20-40 acres high density

MASON CITY:

- 325-375 acres low density
- 100-125 acres medium density
- 50-60 acres high density

THE REMAINDER OF CERRO GORDO COUNTY:

- 125-175 acres low density
- 30-50 acres medium density
- 10-20 acres high density

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEEDS

Commercial and industrial land needs are difficult to project accurately since one large business could change the market dramatically. Additionally, the North Iowa Corridor's position on key transportation routes is conducive to many types of commercial and industrial uses. Therefore, the forecasts do not stipulate a "destiny" or provide a ceiling on growth. Still, they should be used as a general guideline and a metric for growth related to expected trends.

Considering employment trends, the existing commercial land use for the population, and residential land uses, the North Iowa Corridor as a whole should plan for 180-245 acres of new commercial land through 2045.

A similar method for industrial land needs shows that the North Iowa Corridor should plan for a minimum of 720-815 acres through 2045 for more flexibility and space depending on the use.

The relative commercial and industrial land distribution for each jurisdiction's planning purposes:

CLEAR LAKE:

- 30-50 acres commercial
- 70-90 acres industrial

MASON CITY:

- 100-125 acres commercial
- 375-400 acres industrial

THE REMAINDER OF CERRO GORDO COUNTY (SOME MAY BE ANNEXED BY CITIES OVER TIME):

- 50-70 acres commercial
- 275-325 acres industrial

LOW DENSITY = UNDER EIGHT DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE
MEDIUM DENSITY = SEVEN TO FOURTEEN DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE
HIGH DENSITY = OVER FOURTEEN DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE

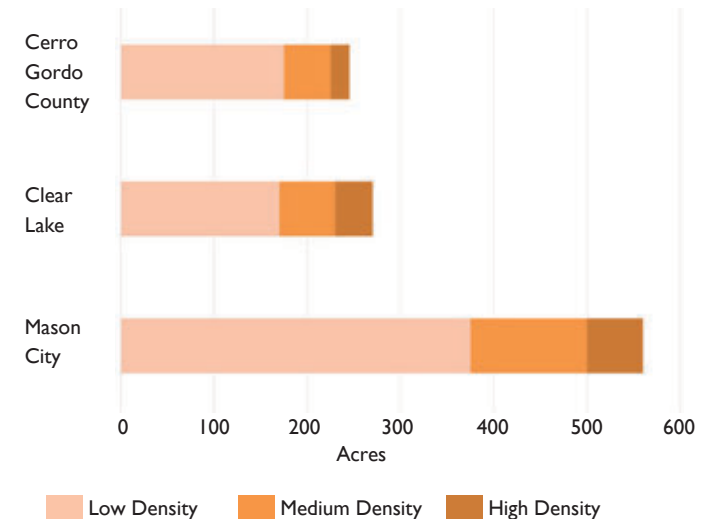


Figure 2.4: Relative Acres of Residential Development to Plan for the Future

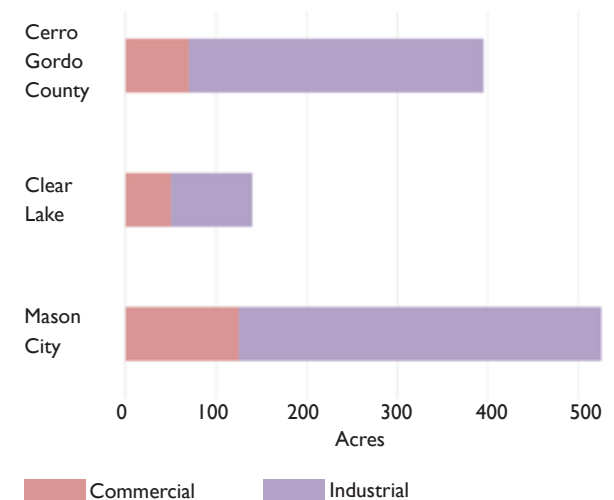


Figure 2.5: Relative Acres of Commercial and Industrial Development to Plan for the Future

PARK NEEDS

The forecasts consider minimum requirements to support the population, maintain current level of service, and not prevent new parks and recreational spaces from becoming available.

One method to determine the future needs for parks is to examine existing facilities compared to recognized standards by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA). At a minimum, the “core” park system should have spaces close to homes, including community parks, neighborhood parks, and pocket parks. **The core system should provide 6.25 to 10.5 acres of developed open space per 1,000 population.**

Other parks are organized under regional space. **The expanded regional recreation system should provide 15 to 20 acres of developed or undeveloped open space per 1,000 population.**

Jurisdictions should be planning to incorporate acres of new parkland through 2045 that does not include greenways and areas primarily used for flood protection unless accessible for recreational use. See the Parks, Recreation, and Natural Space section for details on distribution and location.

CERRO GORDO COUNTY PARK NEEDS

With a 2020 population of 8,376 distributed among the various towns and unincorporated areas:

- The county exceeds national standards in total parkland and has sufficient acreage for community and regional parks.
- Cerro Gordo's 385 acres of Close to Home Space provides a ratio of approximately 45.9 acres per 1,000 residents, which is well over the NRPA standard recommendation.
- Cerro Gordo's 2,812 acres of Regional Space provides a ratio of approximately 335.7 acres per 1,000 residents, which significantly exceeds the NRPA standards (note, these areas also serve Clear Lake and Mason City populations).

CLEAR LAKE PARK NEEDS

With a 2020 estimated population of 7,685:

- Clear Lake needs to add park space to meet the current and future park space demand.
- Clear Lake's 227 acres of Close to Home Space provides a ratio of approximately 29.5 acres per 1,000 residents, almost three times the NRPA standard recommendation.
- Clear Lake's 69 acres of Regional Space provides a ratio of approximately 9.0 acres per 1,000 residents, which does not meet NRPA standards. However, other spaces are available just outside city limits in the county.

MASON CITY PARK NEEDS

With a 2020 estimated population of 27,064:

- The city meets or exceeds national standards in total parkland and appears to have sufficient acreage for community parks, assuming that they are in the appropriate locations and provide the desired recreation services.
- Mason City's 260 acres of Close to Home Space provides a ratio of approximately 9.6 acres per 1,000 residents, which is on the higher side of the standard.
- Mason City's 441 acres of Regional Space provides the NRPA standard at a ratio of approximately 16.3 acres per 1,000 residents.
- Pocket Parks can come with some maintenance difficulties related to multiple small sites and their small service area. Most cities discourage the development of pocket parks. Unless the Downtown Association or a well-organized neighborhood association can assume responsibility for maintaining these small pocket park areas, Mason City is not encouraging them, although there is a current deficiency.

TABLE 2.1: PARK SERVICE STANDARDS BASED ON 2020 POPULATIONS AND 2045 PROJECTION

	Close-to-Home Park Space				Regional Park Space		
	Pocket	Neighborhood	Community	Acres / 1,000 residents	District	Regional	Acres / 1,000 residents
Recommended Acres / 1,000 people	0.25-0.5	1-2	5-8	6.25-10.5	5-7	5-10	15-20
Cerro Gordo County							
Existing Acreage	0	40	344.5	45.9	291	2,521	335.7
2045 Recommended (ex. Clear Lake and Mason City)	1.8-3.8	8-16	40-64		40-56	40-80	
Clear Lake							
Existing Acreage	1.5	22.5	203	29.5	69	0	9.0
2045 Recommended	1.8-3.8	7.5-15	37.5-60		37.5-52.5	37.5-70	
Mason City							
Existing Acreage	2	72	186	9.6	203	238	16.3
2045 Recommended	7-14	27-54	135-216		135-189	137-270	

Combined, Clear Lake and Mason City should be planning for neighborhood parkland as the communities expand.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROACTIVE PLANNING

The North Iowa Corridor has strong prospects for employment and a recent influx of new recreational opportunities. Despite the area's declining population, jurisdictions and organizations can leverage these assets to persuade people to visit or join the community as a resident.

Collaboration happening in the public and private sectors is necessary to achieve a growing population relative to jobs and housing. Even so, many unforeseen situations can affect the growth trajectory.

LAND AVAILABILITY

Private property owners decide whether to sell or develop their land. Typically, with higher demand for land, the price rises and entices transitions away from undeveloped land. However, a property owner may want to avoid developing for a variety of reasons. Conversations with these owners and the jurisdictions affected should be continual to understand impending development potentials.

DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

The population in North Iowa Corridor is aging. Larger scale trends in birth rates and aging may lead to changes in the population growth rate, housing units needed, or both.

CLIMATE MIGRATION

There is evidence that some people living in areas with extreme heat, drought, and flooding are moving to more "climate resilient" areas like the upper Midwest. An increase in this trend could mean additional long-term growth potential in the North Iowa Corridor.

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

Technological advancements are progressing at an astounding rate. The Plan cannot predict the number of new technologies in the planning horizon and their influence on development, positively or negatively. In 2023, automated vehicles, buildings, and utilities, appear to be the future.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Inflation throughout late 2021 and continuing into 2023 had many leading economists concerned about a looming recession. As of the summer of 2023, the recession prospects have diminished. However, combating inflationary pressures is leading to the highest mortgage rates since 2008 and a slowing of the housing market. Recessions are likely when planning over a long time frame. These periods can affect forecasts depending on their severity and length.

OPPORTUNITIES

GATEWAYS

Creating a sense of arrival to a destination through design.

ENHANCEMENT CORRIDORS

Directing resources towards areas in rights-of-way along streets.

WATER TRAILS

Unifying water and nature as a regional asset.

PARKS AND PRESERVES

Investing in gathering spaces.

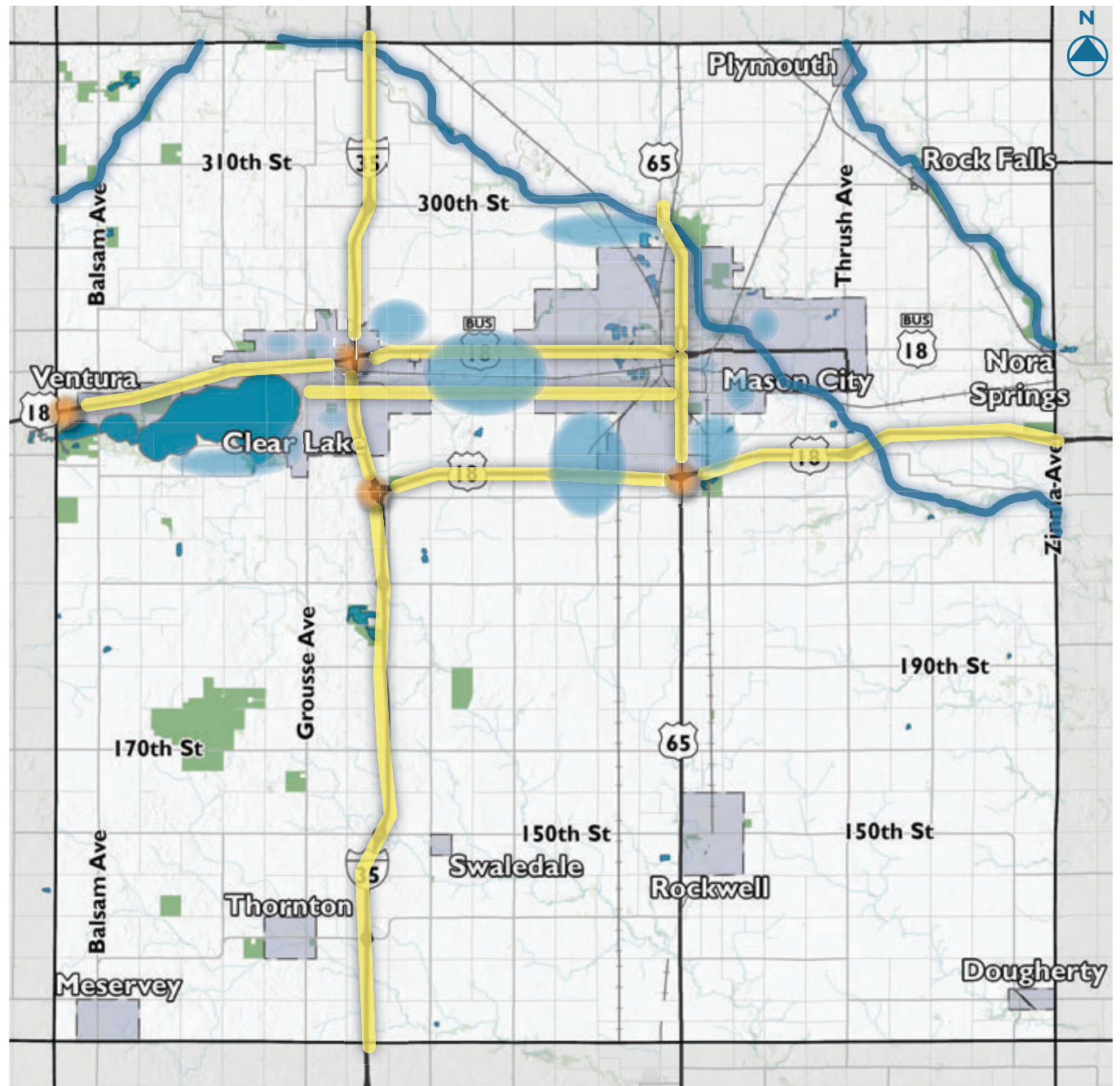
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS

Managing growth for efficient investments in streets, utilities, and community needs.

EVOLVING TRANSITIONAL AREAS

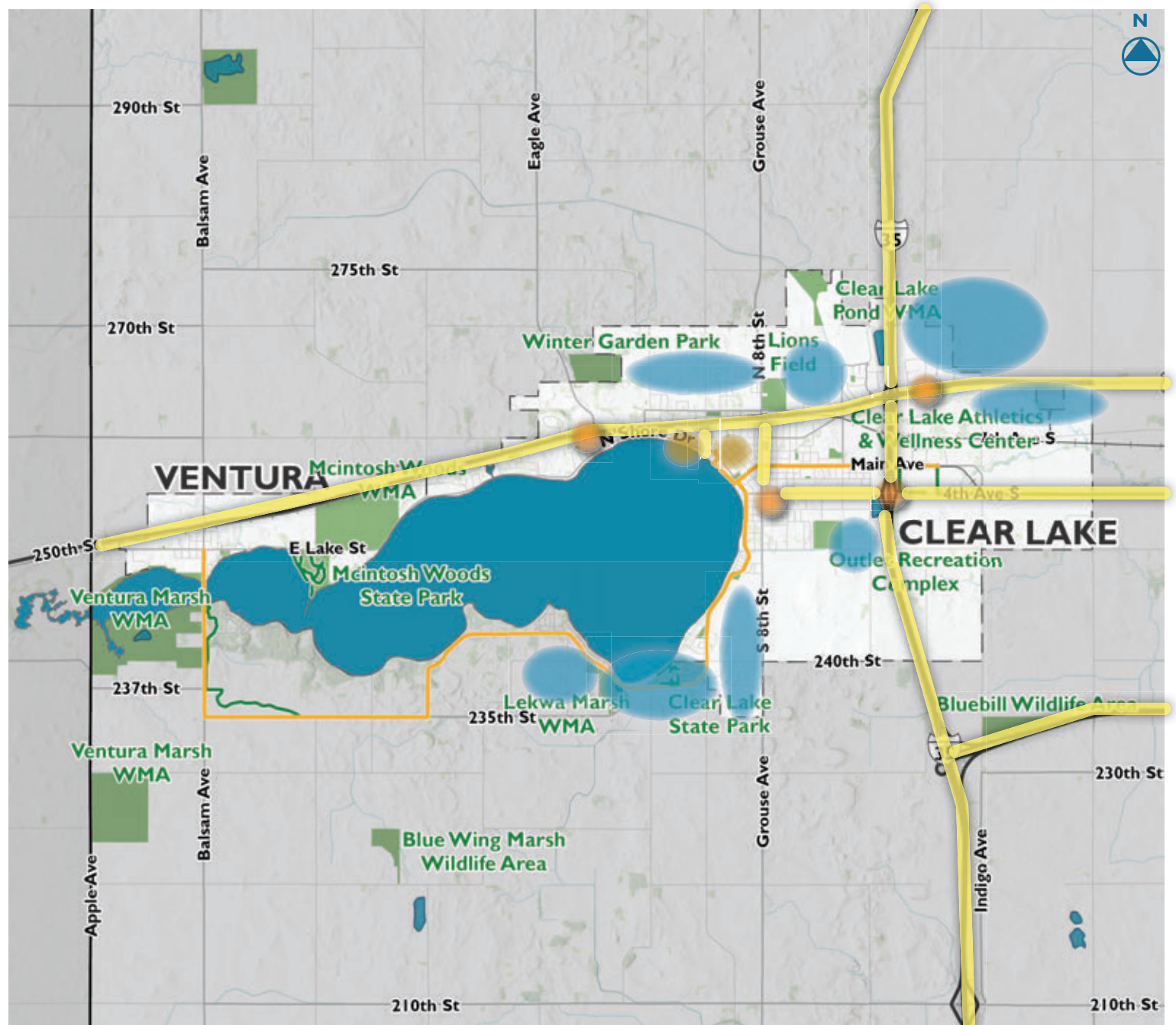
Reinvesting in areas of the community that can become special places.

-  REGIONAL GATEWAYS
-  PRIMARY ENHANCEMENT CORRIDORS
-  WATER TRAILS
-  PARKS AND PRESERVES
-  DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS



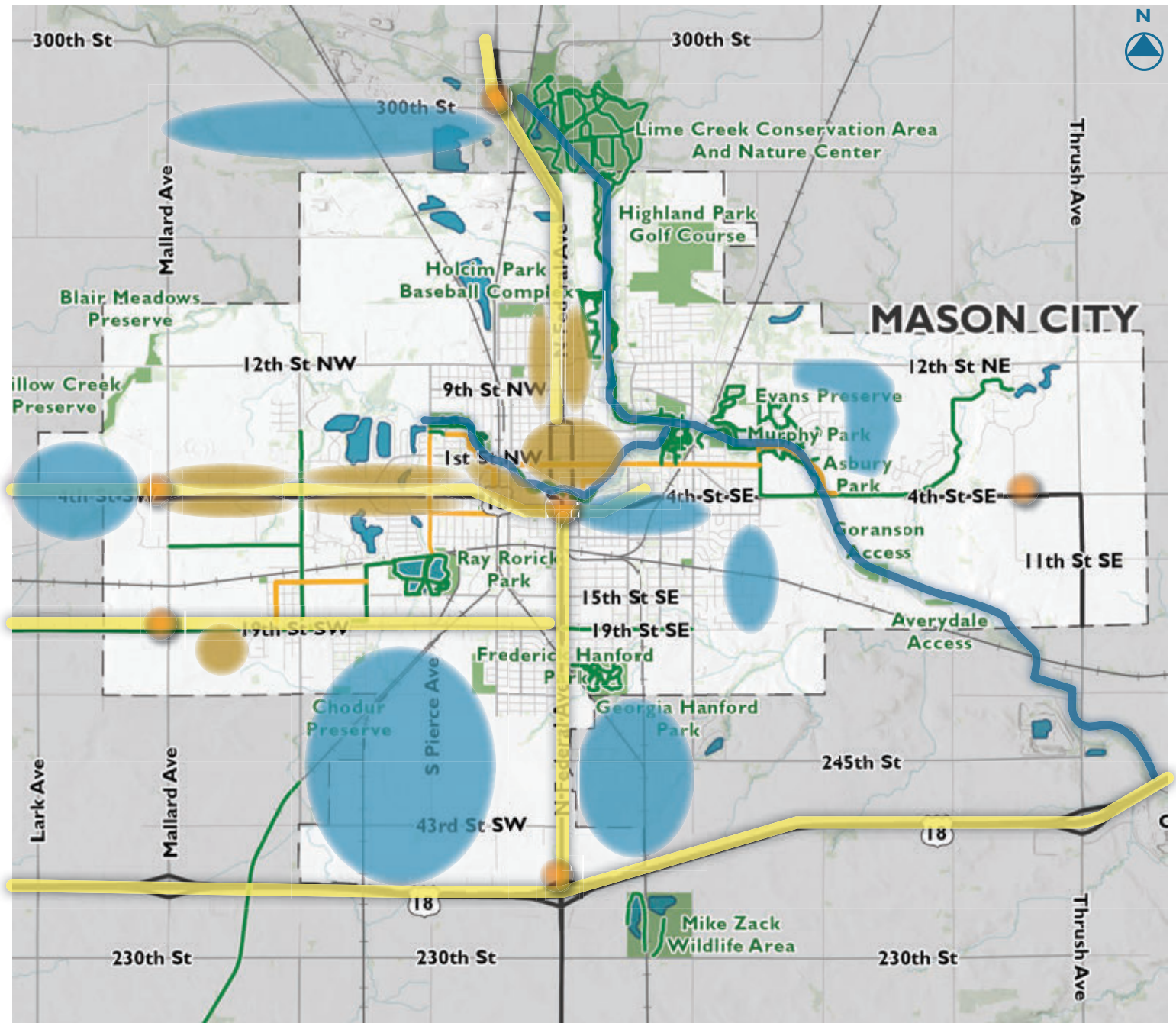
| Figure 2.6: Cerro Gordo County Planning Framework

-  COMMUNITY GATEWAYS
-  PRIMARY ENHANCEMENT CORRIDORS
-  WATER RESOURCE
-  PARKS AND PRESERVES
-  DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS
-  EVOLVING/ TRANSITIONAL AREAS



| Figure 2.7: Clear Lake Planning Framework

-  COMMUNITY GATEWAYS
-  PRIMARY ENHANCEMENT CORRIDORS
-  WATER RESOURCE
-  PARKS AND PRESERVES
-  DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS
-  EVOLVING/ TRANSITIONAL AREAS



| Figure 2.8: Mason City Planning Framework

THE PATH TO TOMORROW

IOWA SMART PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The North Iowa Corridor future land use plan and elements in the next chapters are grounded in the ten Smart Planning Principles set by the State of Iowa. These principles provide the framework for how and where development should occur and policy decisions should be made moving from today to tomorrow.



1. COLLABORATION

North Iowa Corridor Leaders will make decisions in a transparent and collaborative manner. This requires:

- Being proactive with opportunities for input from all citizens and affected entities of decisions.
- Partnering with community groups to integrate community themes and unique features and amenities into developments.
- Showing unity but also focusing on the individuality of each area in the North Iowa Corridor.
- Coordinating with other jurisdictions when making changes to the North Iowa Corridor Plan.



2. EFFICIENCY, TRANSPARENCY, & CONSISTENCY

Policy, actions, and capital investment in the North Iowa Corridor will equitably improve quality of life and community expectations. This means:

- Water, sewer, emergency, and public safety level of service will not decrease with population or land use changes.
- Decisions will involve evaluating the social and economic impacts on a diverse range of households and businesses.



3. CLEAN, RENEWABLE, AND EFFICIENT ENERGY

The North Iowa Corridor will prepare to evaluate new energy sources that bring value and coordinate with local assets. This means:

- Evaluating alternative energy sources in infrastructure, public facilities, and private developments that save costs, are more efficient, and improve the environment.
- Proactively researching and planning for technological energy advancements appropriate in urban and rural development.
- Balance decisions related to such technologies with existing attributes, attractions, and priorities such as agricultural production, recreation, and landscapes.



4. OCCUPATIONAL DIVERSITY

The North Iowa Corridor will seize economic opportunities that result in diverse, balanced, and sustainable economic growth; an innovative and entrepreneurial mindset; and an enhanced quality of life. This means:

- Commitment to increasing the educational attainment, skills, and well-being of current and future generations of North Iowans.
- Smart, sustainable, and equitable economic growth while promoting opportunities near accessible housing and transportation.
- Increasing economic advancement through collaboration, innovation, and an entrepreneurial mindset.
- Leveraging new industry sectors in harmony with existing leading industry sectors.



5. REVITALIZATION

Policy will emphasize full use of existing infrastructure for development to enhance the character of corridors and neighborhoods. Revitalization means:

- Using public investments to promote private development or reinvestment.
- Promoting investment in established areas with existing capital assets, rather than solely at the fringe.
- Continuing to respect the character of the surrounding neighborhoods.



6. HOUSING DIVERSITY

Developments within the North Iowa Corridor incorporate a variety of housing types with a range of housing choices. Housing choice means:

- Choices at a variety of price points.
- A mix of owner and renter entry level housing options to retain new residents.
- Home styles that accommodate people of different ages and physical and mental abilities.
- Encouraging designs that are new to the market.
- Ensuring that housing choice also includes location near services that improve quality of life.
- Considering housing as a community need and asset.



7. COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The North Iowa Corridor will preserve and enhance the unique characters across the county. This requires:

- Conserving rural county character and functionality with respect to agricultural production by guiding new development toward existing developments.
- Directing new commercial developments toward existing municipal centers with full municipal services (water, sewer, roads, etc.) and avoiding strip single-use commercial development.
- Enhancing the quality of development by creating unique, diverse, compact, and mixed-use developments rather than homogeneous subdivisions.



8. NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION

The North Iowa Corridor will protect and steward the environment and natural resources. This requires:

- Honoring each area's unique natural heritage.
- Protecting the quality of water resources.
- Encouraging development that identifies and preserves important natural resources and takes advantage of these characteristics to add value.
- Promote the importance of natural resource conservation through the development of water, bike, and pedestrian trails.
- Maintaining floodplain land while emphasizing food production, urban agriculture, and/or other compatible uses such as low-impact recreation or habitat restoration.



9. SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Infrastructure and development in the North Iowa Corridor will use logical methods to promote efficiency and longevity. This means:

- Using contiguous and compact development to help preserve the character of growth and reduce costly infrastructure extensions.
- Considering environmental features for preservation over development, meant for passive or active public spaces.
- Improvements to community facilities that will be financially and environmentally sustainable for the jurisdictions and their residents.



10. TRANSPORTATION DIVERSITY

Local mobility systems in the North Iowa Corridor will provide continuity between developments. A good mobility system:

- Keeps developments connected while routing heavy regional traffic around residential developments.
- Has major mobility corridors that are multi-modal.
- Promotes better emergency service provision and evacuation routes.
- Moves traffic efficiently while positively adding to the character of surroundings.



A teal-tinted photograph of a desk workspace. In the foreground, a black calculator sits on a large architectural blueprint that shows a grid-like land use plan with various shaded and outlined sections. To the left of the calculator, two pens are visible. In the background, a black office chair is partially visible. The overall scene suggests a professional or academic setting focused on planning or design.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The future land use plan is the basis of planning for the future of the North Iowa Corridor in the context of the entire Joint Comprehensive Plan. The future land use map shows the vision for growth and development in the North Iowa Corridor and stems from economic trends, environmental conditions, and public input.

PLAN ELEMENTS

LAND USE

EXCEPTIONAL PLACES

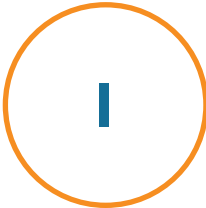
MOBILITY

PARKS, RECREATION, & NATURAL RESOURCES

HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC FACILITIES

Three important points for anyone using the Future Land Use Plan.



PROPERTY OWNERS INITIATE

The future land use map sometimes depicts new land uses for privately owned properties. The transition of these properties from their current use to the depicted use is expected to occur over time in response to market demands as property owners voluntarily sell, develop, or change the use of their land.



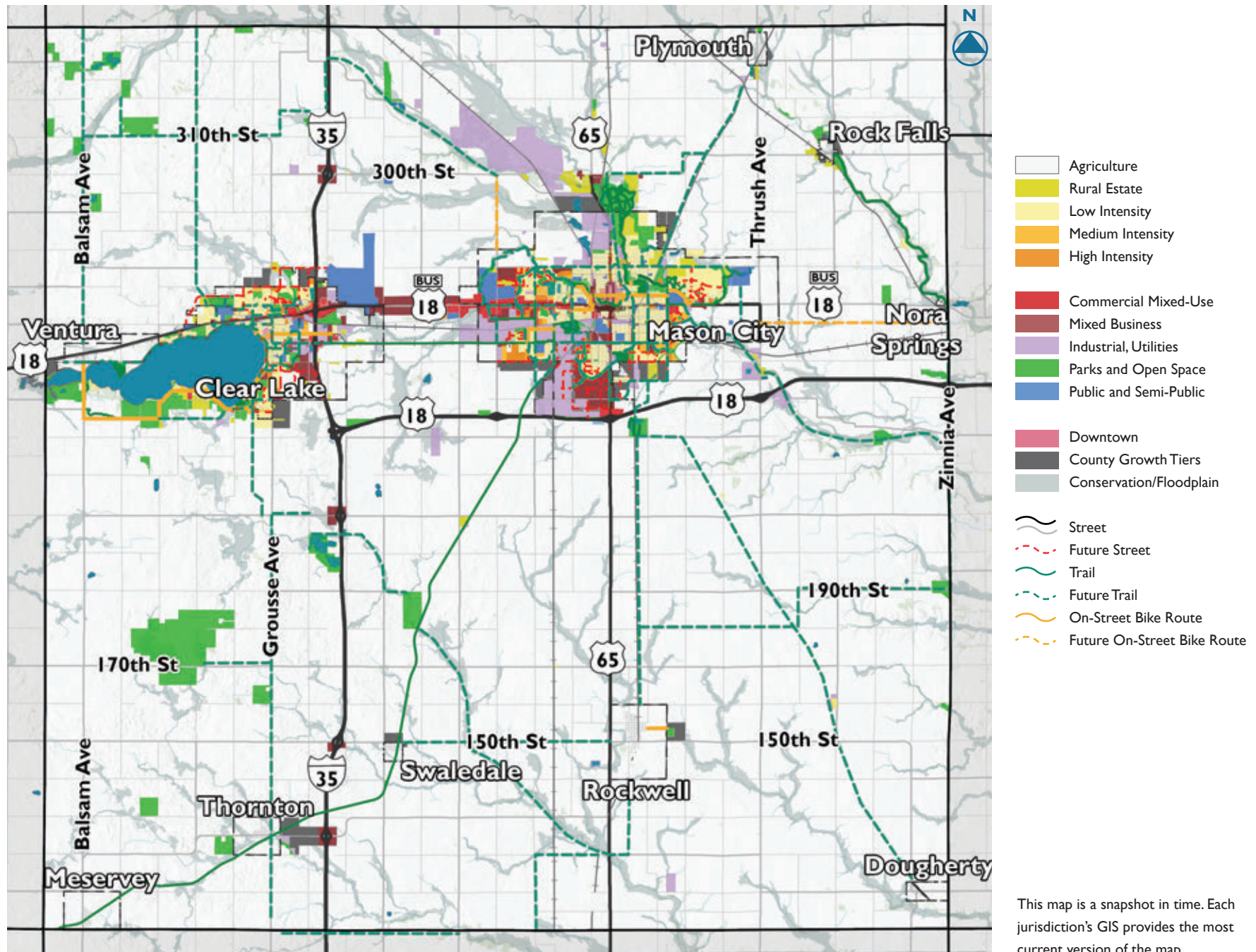
THE PLAN IS A GENERALIZED MAP

The future land use map should be interpreted generally and is not intended to provide the specificity or the rigidity of a zoning map or engineering document. The map should guide the zoning map with the Plan elements through an informed prediction and planning process.

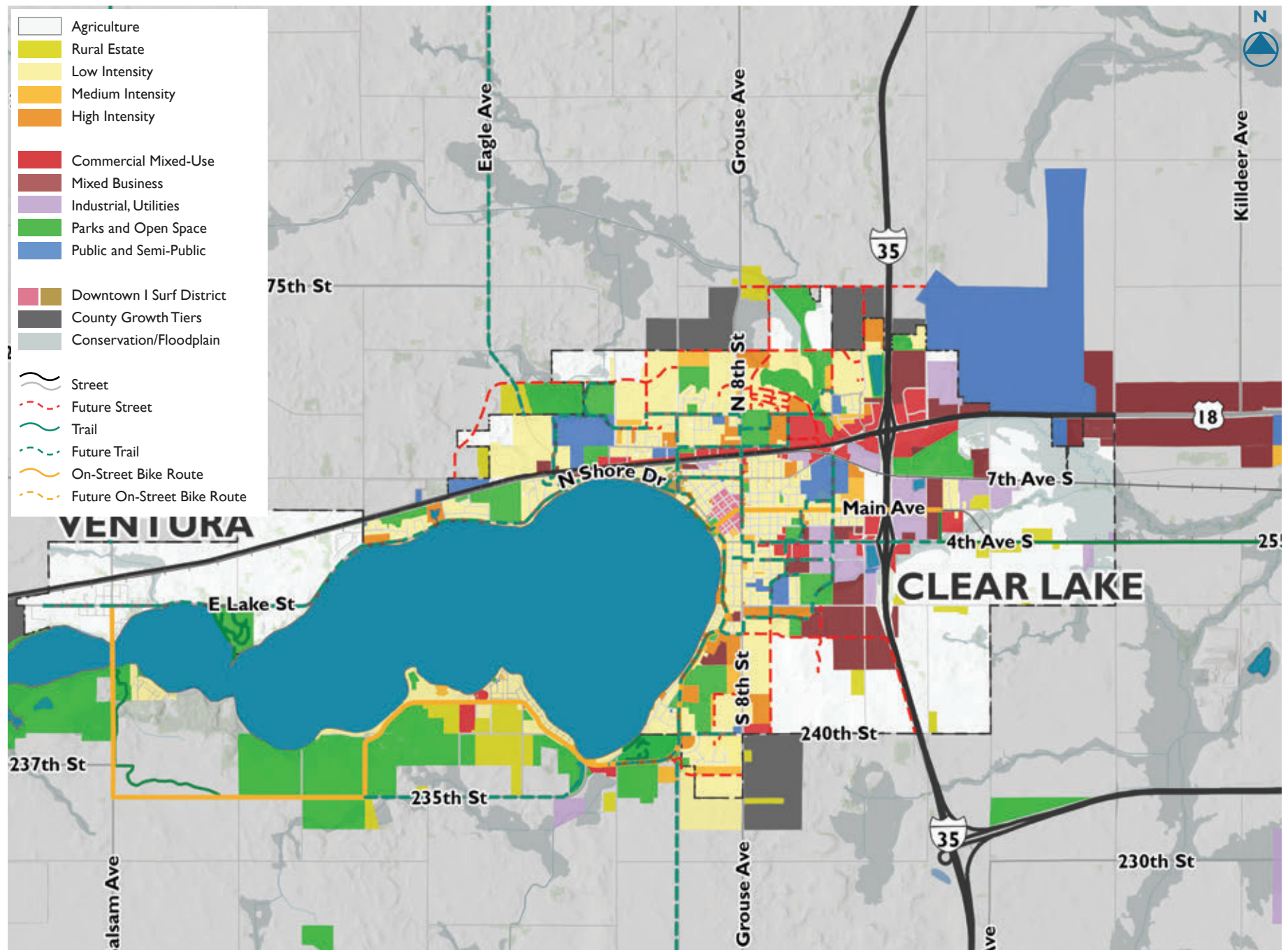


THE PLAN IS A BASIS FOR LAND USE DECISIONS

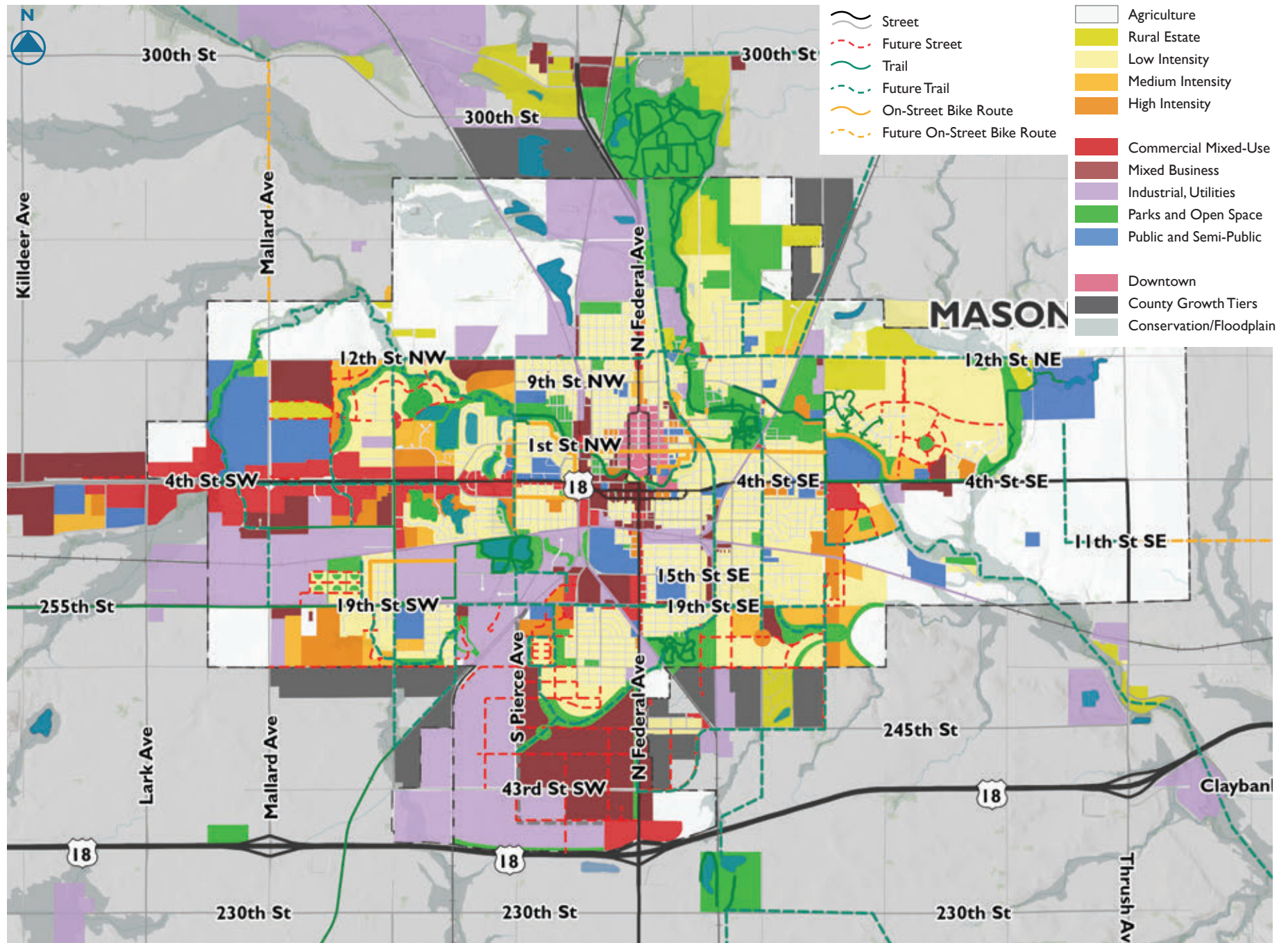
The future land use plan with the Plan elements is the basis for decisions by Planning and Zoning Commissions, City Councils, County Board of Supervisors, and private developers. The Plan is a critical part of the approval process for development proposals and zoning decisions.



| Figure 3.1: North Iowa Corridor Future Land Use Map



| Figure 3.2: Clear Lake Area Future Land Use Map



| Figure 3.3: Mason City Area Future Land Use Map

AGRICULTURE



DESCRIPTION

- Areas with existing farms and crop cultivation. These areas are not proposed for change in most unincorporated areas within the planning horizon.
- Rural farmstead residences for living and agriculture support functions are permitted. Extremely low residential densities, typically below one unit per 20 acres.

GOALS

- Preserve land for agricultural production and associated functions in unincorporated areas and as interim uses within city limits.
- Ensure that agricultural uses contribute to quality of life in the North Iowa Corridor.
- Near cities, the designation can act as a holding zone until the extension of city infrastructure makes urban development feasible.

FORM & COMPATIBILITY GUIDELINES

- Agricultural zoning districts would apply. During zoning and site plan review, evaluate proposals for separation distances adequate to minimize noise, glare, and hazards that would impair the quality of open space.
- Preserve natural areas as passive open space following planned greenways or support of larger natural preservation areas. Areas may be designated for conservation, including floodplains and steep topography.
- Urban encroachment, including large lot subdivisions, should be discouraged.
- Allow for uses in agricultural districts that provide value-added agricultural opportunities where appropriate. Expansion of agri-tourism is major area of importance that is coming from the state level. (i.e. appropriate special uses, outdoor recreation, etc.)

RURAL ESTATE



DESCRIPTION

- Extremely low residential densities that maintain rural character even if using conventional subdivision techniques.
- The designation applies to areas where conventional large lot subdivisions have been established.
- Most houses use individual wastewater systems and are unlikely to experience extensions of urban services.

GOALS

- Provide locations to accommodate demand for acreage residential development that does not limit logical long-term urban growth of cities.
- Promote sustainable development within or near cities where the environment makes urban development impossible.

FORM & COMPATIBILITY GUIDELINES

- Any interim large lot residential development should not obstruct future urban development.
- Development design should protect sensitive environmental features such as steep slopes and natural drainage patterns. Techniques might include conservation subdivision designs.
- Encourage community stormwater systems for rural development with multiple lots, including green infrastructure elements.
- Make development design decisions by planning for cumulative similar development in the general area.

LOW INTENSITY



DESCRIPTION

- Areas with lower-intensity (LI) development on urban services.
- Compared to denser areas, LI has more space and separation of uses but still encourages efficient transportation and walkable environments.
- Low-intensity areas can include a horizontal mix of primarily residential with accessory uses and limited non-residential uses at compatible lower densities and scales.
- Uses might include detached residential units, duplexes/attached units, small lot residential, accessory dwelling units, civic functions, parks, and limited personal services.

GOALS

- Conserve general neighborhood character.
- Allow establishment of new inclusive neighborhoods with non-residential uses that primarily serve neighborhood residents.
- High level of internal mobility connectivity and links to surrounding development.

FORM & COMPATIBILITY GUIDELINES

- Any new development should remain contiguous to existing development.
- Densities should be higher at transition points with other more intense uses or designations.
- Developments should provide connectivity within and between developments for motorists and pedestrians.
- Traffic and higher intensity uses should be directed away from these areas and along major thoroughfares.

MEDIUM INTENSITY



DESCRIPTION

- More variety in housing arrangements and more allowance for limited non-residential uses.
- Increased density allows more opportunities for social interaction.
- Medium intensity areas include a mix of residential and non-residential uses at compatible moderate densities (up to 12-14 units per acre) and scales, although there may be opportunities for vertical mixed-use.
- Uses might include detached residential units, duplexes/attached units, small lot residential, townhomes, small apartments, accessory dwelling units, civic functions, parks, and limited commercial services.

GOALS

- Allow a mixture of residential and non-residential uses in limited scale developments or within established neighborhoods.
- High level of internal mobility connectivity and links to surrounding development.
- Maintain the character and scale of primarily residential development.

FORM & COMPATIBILITY GUIDELINES

- Position land uses to create a smooth internal transition from lower to higher intensity uses.
- Densities should be higher at transition points with other more intense uses or designations.
- Developments should provide connectivity within and between developments for motorists and pedestrians.
- Non-neighborhood traffic generating uses are appropriate on collector or arterial streets.

HIGH-INTENSITY



DESCRIPTION

- These areas have increased activity and more diverse and complementary uses that draw people from outside the immediate area, but still primarily a residential focus.
- High-intensity areas include more services with a horizontal and vertical mix of high-density residential and non-residential uses of compatible densities and scales.
- Uses might include duplexes/attached units, small lot residential, townhomes, multi-plexes, apartment complexes, accessory dwelling units, civic functions, parks, offices, and commercial services.

GOALS

- Increase opportunities for social interaction by locating diverse and complementary uses nearby.
- Create positive relationships between residential and non-residential uses in neighborhood design.
- Offer the maximum level of opportunity for housing variety and proximity to services.

FORM & COMPATIBILITY GUIDELINES

- Position land uses to create a smooth internal transition from lower to higher intensity uses.
- Densities should be higher at transition points with other more intense uses or designations.
- Developments should provide connectivity within and between developments for motorists and pedestrians.
- Locate at sites with access to amenities, transportation routes, or activity centers.
- Avoid developments that form complexes disconnected from the surrounding neighborhoods.

COMMERCIAL MIXED-USE



DESCRIPTION

- These areas include a variety of commercial and office uses.
- The designation may allow residential units above commercial uses and incorporate residential uses, typically at higher densities.
- These areas focus on non-residential activity and may include freestanding commercial uses such as shopping centers on larger lots.
- Uses might include mixed-use residential complexes, civic functions, pocket parks, offices, a broad range of commercial services, destination and recreation commercial uses, and limited production facilities.

GOALS

- Maximize positive interactions between complementary commercial ventures.
- Move away from solely auto-oriented design to improve visitor experiences.
- Maintain a primarily non-residential focus for adequate supply of commercial land that attracts customers/employees to the area.
- Promote horizontal and vertical mixing of uses.

FORM & COMPATIBILITY GUIDELINES

- Developments should provide connectivity within and between developments both for motorists and pedestrians.
- Access to major amenities, transportation routes, or activity centers.
- Landscaping, buffering, changes in building form, and screening should be used to minimize negative effects on residential neighborhoods.
- Larger commercial or office uses should cluster around arterial streets.
- Large developments should feature unobtrusive monument signs, integrate landscaping into street frontages and site designs, and minimize the number of driveway access points.

MIXED BUSINESS



DESCRIPTION

- These areas have a broad range of larger footprint commercial and light industrial uses.
- Quality site design permits these areas on visible corridors and centers.
- Uses might include destination and recreation commercial uses, large-scale stores and services, auto related services, large offices, mixed-use residential complexes, outdoor storage, indoor manufacturing, warehousing facilities, technology centers, office/industrial flex spaces, distribution, and similar scale uses.

GOALS

- Provide attractive and well-functioning settings for many enterprises.
- Maintain a primarily non-residential focus for adequate supply of land for employment enterprises that draw customers and employees from outside the immediate area.
- Promote horizontal and vertical mixing of uses in new commercial development and redevelopment areas.

FORM & COMPATIBILITY GUIDELINES

- Should have access to arterial streets while providing pedestrian/bike access to adjacent streets and trails.
- Ensure truck traffic and transportation capacity are adequately addressed in siting new large industrial facilities.
- Developments should provide connectivity within and between developments for motorists and pedestrians.
- Landscaping, buffering, changes in building form, and screening should be used to minimize negative effects on neighborhoods.
- Large developments should feature unobtrusive monument signs, integrate landscaping into street frontages and site designs, and minimize the number of driveway access points.

INDUSTRIAL / UTILITIES



DESCRIPTION

- Areas reserved for larger business and industrial development essential to North Iowa's economic base but are not as complementary to standard urban development.
- The designation includes public and semi-public facilities with industrial operating characteristics, such as public utilities, maintenance facilities, and public works yards.
- Uses might include a range of industrial enterprises, including those with significant external effects such as extraction, heavy materials production, and uses with significant outdoor operations.

GOALS

- Provide well-functioning settings for a range of industrial enterprises that support the local economy.
- Buffer higher impact industrial uses from residential neighborhoods.

FORM & COMPATIBILITY GUIDELINES

- Ensure truck traffic and transportation capacity are adequately addressed in siting new large industrial facilities.
- Easy access to highways, rail access, and water/sewer service.
- Development abutting lower intensity designations should be held to higher design standards to ensure compatibility between uses and possible adjacent residential uses.
- Establish operational standards upon approval that consider traffic, noise, lighting, and air quality.
- Include heavy landscaping screening, large buffers, height limitations, and strict ambient noise requirements next to park and open space uses.

PARKS / OPEN SPACE



DESCRIPTION

- Areas with valuable natural features that exist or would make good recreational spaces.
- Areas intended for parks can be developed with recreational features, while open space areas are more appropriate for habitat preservation with only passive recreation uses.

GOALS

- Preserve natural areas for enjoyment by residents and visitors.
- Enhance the North Iowa Corridor's inventory of recreational amenities and quality of life features.
- Ensure parks and open spaces are accessible to all abilities and ages.
- Prevent development in current or potential future environmental hazard areas, such as floodplains.

FORM & COMPATIBILITY GUIDELINES

- Any development should be recreational and low impact in nature (such as park shelters or ball fields) while complementary to the purpose of the wider area as open natural space.
- Require adjacent uses to use design techniques to minimize its influence on the park's character, including visual, auditory, and other pollutants.
- More intense recreation uses, like sports complexes, should be treated like comparable commercial uses for the traffic and compatibility issues that they can generate.

PUBLIC / SEMI-PUBLIC



DESCRIPTION

- Areas to provide space for educational, institutional, assembly, and other public or semi-public uses with large footprints that might attract heavier vehicle and pedestrian traffic, including hospitals, schools, libraries, and public buildings.

GOALS

- Increase opportunities and accessibility to spaces for social and cultural interaction.
- Promote the integration of uses that support community life into neighborhood development.
- Reasonably manage the non-residential nature of certain public uses that might conflict with residential uses.

FORM & COMPATIBILITY GUIDELINES

- Facilities should be held to the same standard for site design and connectivity as any private enterprise of similar intensity.
- Public or semi-public uses may be permitted in a number of areas, including residential areas. Individual review of proposals requires an assessment of operating characteristics, project design, and traffic management.

O: CONSERVATION/ FLOODPLAIN



DESCRIPTION

- Areas that should be preserved as natural green space. These areas are primarily defined by floodplains, wetlands, and publicly owned lands, but also include some areas acting as buffers between incompatible land uses.

GOALS

- Prevent development in current or potential environmental hazard areas such as floodplains.
- Ensure practices are in place to comply with State and Federal standards to qualify for certain resiliency programs.

FORM & COMPATIBILITY GUIDELINES

- Generally follow local floodplain ordinance design standards and the State of Iowa Stormwater Management Manual.
- Maintain trees or other natural landscaping on the periphery to the extent possible to help retain natural filtering and protection from pollutants.

O: DOWNTOWN

SEE EXCEPTIONAL
PLACES ELEMENT



PHOTO COURTESY OF VISIT
MASON CITY AND MAIN STREET
MASON CITY

DESCRIPTION

- A primarily mixed-use area that characterizes the original cores of Mason City and Clear Lake.
- These designations should use space mostly for residential and uses for surrounding neighborhoods, community, and regional draw such as retail, services, and entertainment. Limited office space can be permitted.

GOALS

- Invest in these areas as major community destinations for retail, services, and entertainment.
- Maintain the historic structure of downtown development patterns and features.

FORM & COMPATIBILITY GUIDELINES

- Apply historic preservation practices where appropriate.
- Follow the building form and scale of surrounding developments, although exploring opportunities for larger scale is possible with additional input.
- Avoid prominent surface parking lots and building separation from the street.
- Reinforce design standards and goals with enhanced building materials, large windows, pedestrian orientation, and design articulation.

O: COUNTY GROWTH TIER



DESCRIPTION

- Tier 1 Criteria
 - Areas next to reserved street extensions.
 - Being feasibly served with urban services takes a relatively minor investment.
 - There may have been development interest in the recent past.
 - The area is outside of natural features such as wetlands and floodplains.
- Tier 2 Criteria
 - Land within the 2-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction of communities.
 - Areas not immediately next to reserved street extensions.
 - Areas less desirable than Tier 1 areas because of topology, street extensions, utility service, agricultural yield, or other relevant factors.
 - Not to be developed until adjacent to existing urban areas to prevent “leapfrog” development.
 - Outside of natural features such as wetlands and floodplains.

Opportunities may arise through donated land, agricultural farm sales, or other situations that may shift Tier 1 and Tier 2 priorities. However, overall development policies should still encourage the conservation of natural features, preservation of prime agricultural land, and development next to existing infrastructure.

GOALS

- Preserve long-term development options for efficient growth with full urban services.
- Avoid impediments to future land annexation supporting urban and contiguous development.
- Allow reasonable interim use of land consistent with agricultural and adjacent land uses.

FORM & COMPATIBILITY GUIDELINES

- Require a minimum lot size large enough to prevent or discourage development of rural subdivisions while maintaining a rural agricultural character.
- Permit a variety of rural land uses and low-impact agriculture. Consider location criteria of other high intensity uses.

LAND USE COMPATIBILITY GUIDES

Growing efficiently and in a way that contributes to a higher quality of life requires interconnected land uses that complement each other and allow a variety of housing and transportation choices. A proven market-based land use planning model directs growth through land use intensity rather than single-use areas.

Table 3.1 summarizes the types of land uses compatible with each designation. Along with the Smart Planning Principles listed at the beginning of the Plan, development in each future land use designation should consider:

- **Mixed Land Uses.** All residential areas allow a mix of housing types and varying levels of non-residential development. However, overall intensity and density aligns with the intent of the underlying land use designation.
- **Environmental Preservation.** Sensitive natural features should always be protected. The Future Land Use map reserves major sensitive areas as parks or open spaces. The Plan may not designate all sensitive areas but growth within all future land uses should accommodate natural features.

All areas should also include stormwater best management practices, given the intensity of development.

- **Active Mobility.** The Future Land Use map identifies future road networks and proposed trail routes for efficient mobility and to regional systems. Growth areas should include interconnected pathways, even if not explicitly shown on the map. Connections may include complete streets, internal connections within developments, and greenway trails.

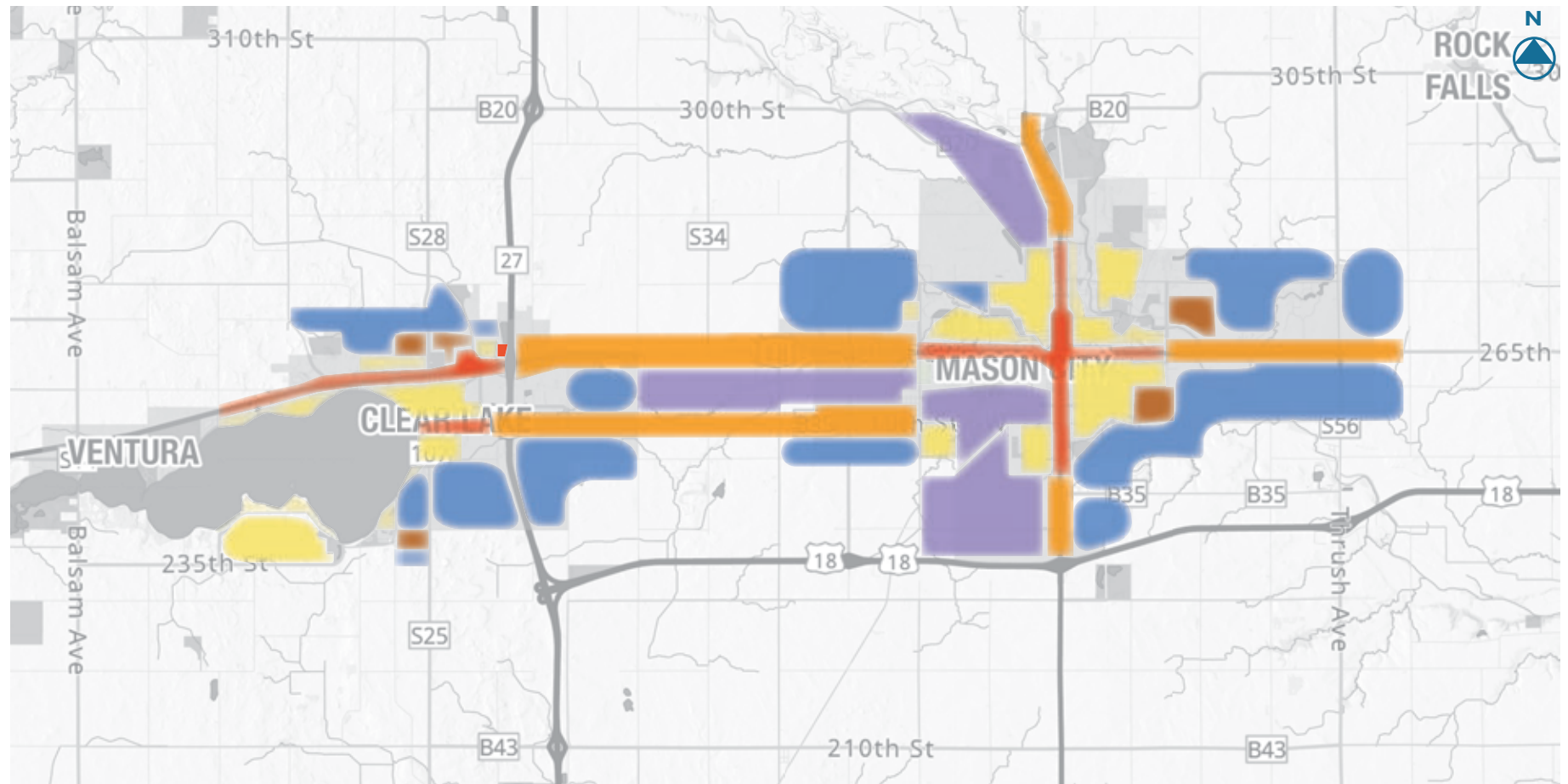
TABLE 3.1: LAND USE COMPATIBILITY

	Agriculture (AG)	Rural Estate (RE)	Low Intensity (LI)	Medium Intensity (MI)	High Intensity (HI)	Commercial Mixed-Use (CMU)	Mixed Business (MB)	Industrial/ Utilities (I)	Parks/ Open Space (P)	Public/ Semi Public (PUB)
Traditional Land Use Types										
Agriculture	●	●							○	
Rural residential		●								
Low-density residential			●	○						
Medium-density residential			●	●	○					
High-density residential				●	●	○				
Rural commercial		●								
Neighborhood commercial			○	●	●	●				
Community commercial				○	●	●				
Regional commercial						●	●			
Low/medium intensity office			○	●	●	●				
High-intensity office					●	●	●			
Limited industrial						○	●	●		
Heavy industrial								●		
Parks and open space	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Major public/civic facilities					○	○	○		○	●
Residential gross density range (dwelling units per acre)	<40	<40	3-8	7-14	14+	14+	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

● = Permitted ○ = Permitted with special review

POLICY AREA DIRECTIONS

The policy areas for the North Iowa Corridor provide design guidance to the character of different areas and draw on the Smart Planning Principles, future land use designations, and land use compatibility guides. Each policy area shares common challenges and opportunities for applying the Plan's policies and actions.



| Figure 3.4: Transitional and Urban Policy Areas



AGRICULTURE:

Balance Existing and New Types of Agriculture

The planning framework provides the spectrum of rural features to preserve and balance with new assets.

- Aligns with the Agriculture Future Land Use designation.
- Permit land divisions only to allow splitting off an existing home site or farmstead from a farm area.
- Consider factors other than only the suitability of a site for agricultural uses due to a Corn Suitability Rating or a LESA score prior to transitioning from crop production.

RURAL ESTATE:

Maintain Space for Rural Living

Several places within the county and some in city limits have nodes of acreage development with a handful to a dozen or more residences. Rural estates are not widely occurring and will not transition to other uses in the near future.

- Aligns with the Rural Estate Future Land Use designation.
- Permit land divisions only to allow splitting off an existing home site or farmstead from a farm area.

URBAN TRANSITION:

Provide access to Services, Market for Growth

These areas are next to existing city limits or just inside city limits where urban development has yet to reach. Sporadic development patterns can lead to a disconnected feeling in these areas but clearly indicate the movement toward urban development.

- In undeveloped areas designated for future residential uses, require bulk standards that prevent or discourage the development of rural subdivisions but still maintain agricultural possibilities until residential development.
- Limit high intensity agricultural and extraction uses that may prevent future neighborhood development.
- In the county, aligns with the Tier Overlay Future Land Use designations.
- See the Exceptional Places and Housing and Neighborhoods Plan elements for policies and actions.

PRODUCTION AND ENTERPRISE:

Serve as Centers of Employment

Near transition areas or major transportation infrastructure. These areas are vital to the local economy and feature large lots and facilities. These centers may seem uninviting if proper planning is not taken to liven the public realm and building design.

- See the Exceptional Places Plan element for further detail.

HIGHWAY CORRIDOR:

Welcome and Leverage Visibility

These highly visible areas are how most people will experience the North Iowa Corridor. Wide cross-sections grant many opportunities to frame that experience, while careful adjacent land use planning can provide useful access for businesses.

- Limit high intensity agricultural and extraction uses that detract from the view of these corridors.
- Manage the size and visibility of commercial signage along corridors and focus signage toward the major corridor.
- See the Exceptional Places and Mobility Plan elements.

URBAN CORRIDOR: **Compact Community Services**

Most residents experience the urban corridors daily. Denser commercial development with some residential mixed in creates more opportunities to live near services. Some areas can provide more functional spaces for a variety of activities.

- Allow and encourage transitions of underused parking lots, vacant sites, obsolete buildings, and marginal uses that do not contribute to the character of these corridors.
- See the Exceptional Places, Housing and Neighborhoods, and Mobility Plan elements for details.

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD: **Compact Places to Live**

Most of these residential areas have been in place for a long time with mature trees, established character, and a grid street system. These are areas to preserve and emulate for future neighborhoods.

- See the Housing and Neighborhoods and Mobility Plan elements for details.

MODERN NEIGHBORHOOD: **Promote Mobility and Variety**

New residential development may be outside of a traditional grid street system and limit variety in housing types. Encouraging the evolution of this typology area to include variety is a priority in the future.

- See the Housing and Neighborhoods and Mobility Plan elements for details.

HISTORIC MIXED-USE: **Places of Walkable Commerce**

Several special places in the North Iowa Corridor add special character and experiences. Most notable are Downtown Mason City, the North End Commercial Neighborhood in Mason City, Downtown Clear Lake, and the Surf District in Clear Lake.

- Aligns with the Downtown Overlay Future Land Use designation.
- See the Exceptional Places Plan element for policies and actions.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE: **Places to Conserve and Enjoy**

The North Iowa Corridor is rich in natural resources. These areas are important for tourism and recreation and must be balanced with development to conserve for the future.

- Creation of new parcels within these areas for new development is prohibited. Property divisions for land conservation purposes are permissible with approval.
- Align with the conservation overlay and parks/open space Future Land Use designations.
- See the Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources Plan element.



EXCEPTIONAL

PLACES

BUILDING
COMMUNITY



PLAN ELEMENTS

LAND USE

EXCEPTIONAL PLACES

MOBILITY

PARKS, RECREATION, &
NATURAL RESOURCES

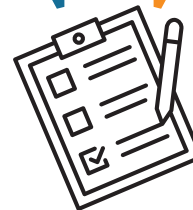
HOUSING &
NEIGHBORHOODS

INFRASTRUCTURE
& PUBLIC FACILITIES

Creating exceptional places means elevating strategic areas of the North Iowa Corridor as premier environments for living, leisure, and business development.

45% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS FELT THE IMAGE OF DOWNTOWNS AND BUSINESS CORRIDORS IS ABOVE AVERAGE.

83% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS FELT DEVELOPMENT AND REUSE SHOULD BE A TOP FIVE FOCUS FOR NORTH IOWA IN THE NEXT TEN YEARS.



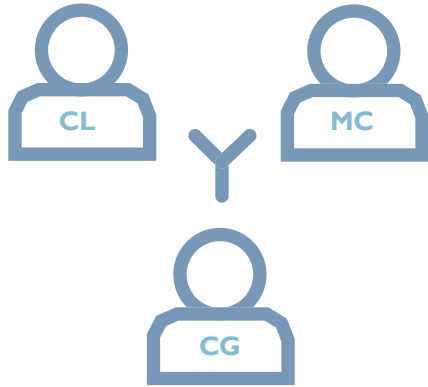
VISION

The North Iowa Corridor will have unique places that improve quality of life, attract and retain people, and promote economic development

OVERALL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1. Enhance the experience when entering cities and the North Iowa Corridor**
- 2. Bring people together through physical and social connections**
- 3. Develop a positive identity of the North Iowa Corridor and share with others**
- 4. Create Neighborhoods and Commercial Centers that are attractive, functional, and active**
- 5. Encourage investment in the North Iowa Corridor through reliable expectations and value**

POLICIES AND ACTIONS PREVIEW



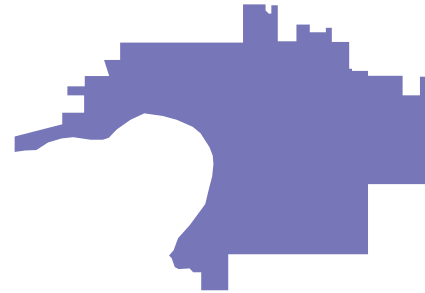
SHARED

1. Partner to implement and regularly update the Vision North Iowa Economic Development Plan.
2. Complete studies for critical economic corridors or sub-areas.
3. Stimulate private investment through public initiatives.
4. Incorporate arts and culture into public projects and support private efforts to enhance cultural features.
5. Promote cohesive development patterns and character enhancements in the Common Ground area.



CERRO GORDO

1. Accommodate rural industries with long-term city growth plans while not overstraining services.
2. Manage land use growth and improve mobility systems in the South Shore area.



CLEAR LAKE

1. Implement the Surf District Plan.
2. Enhance the experience of the 8th Street Corridor.
3. Continue to enhance Downtown as the premier gathering place in Clear Lake.
4. Preserve historic resources for future generations.
5. Improve mobility around City Park.



MASON CITY

1. Balance the effects of industrial uses in the southwest growth area,
2. Improve the experience of the Federal Avenue Corridor.
3. Target neighborhoods and corridors to pursue infill development and connectivity.
4. Define strategies to leverage Downtown assets for new uses of underused spaces.
5. Preserve historic resources for future generations.

EXCEPTIONAL PLACES IN THE NORTH IOWA CORRIDOR

Places attract people and communities retain people for many different reasons. What is an important quality of life element to one person may not be for another. However, important components include stable housing, unique parks and recreation, high quality job opportunities, and an attractive physical environment (urban or rural).

Creating exceptional places means elevating strategic areas of the North Iowa Corridor as premier environments for living, leisure, and business development. Policies and actions require many focuses to build on the future land use and other planning element goals in the North Iowa Corridor Plan.

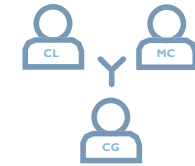
Each jurisdiction has unique aspects that are already great places. The common policies and actions help propel new spaces and enhance existing places for tourism, business attraction, and workforce attraction and retention. The North Iowa Corridor Economic Development Corporation will be a critical leading partner to advance many of these common objectives.

SPECIAL STUDIES AND PLANS OF REFERENCE

- 2022 Surf District Plan Update, Clear Lake
- 2020 Willow Creek Master Plan, Mason City



SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS



I. PARTNER TO IMPLEMENT AND REGULARLY UPDATE THE VISION NORTH IOWA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The goals from the 2018 Vision North Iowa document are below. Many aspects of that plan remain valid and essential for the North Iowa Corridor. Some future strategies and actions under the goals of the Vision that came up often during the joint comprehensive planning process include:

Building a Regional Community

- Create a favorable brand and image for the region and launch a marketing campaign. Ensure residents, members, and partners all talk about the North Iowa Corridor consistently and positively.

People, Place, and Prosperity

- Promote and enhance existing talent retention and attraction outreach efforts.
- Launch new talent retention and attraction initiatives aimed at former residents and alums to support employers in talent recruitment efforts.
- Champion and source potential placemaking projects to create needed community amenities for young professionals and families. Leverage the success of past revitalization projects to catalyze this process.
- Cultivate relationships with real estate developers, landowners, local businesses, and community partners to address shortages in affordable mid-level housing.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship

- Create an environment that retains and attracts startups, entrepreneurs, and small businesses in the North Iowa Corridor.

Business Development and Marketing

- Enhance the North Iowa Corridor's image as an attractive, affordable, and safe place to live and do business through targeted promotion (traditional and nontraditional media channels).
- Identify and invest in new sites, buildings, and infrastructure, and leverage existing real estate, transportation, and infrastructure assets to support the growth of existing employers and the attraction of new businesses.

Vision North Iowa 2018 Regional Prosperity Strategy

PURPOSE STATEMENT

Vision North Iowa: Working together to improve the lives of all North Iowans.



VISION STATEMENT

North Iowa works together in a collaborative and transparent manner to seize economic opportunities that result in diverse, balanced, and sustainable economic growth, an innovative and entrepreneurial mindset, and an enhanced quality of life.

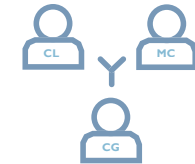
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

People, Transparency, Resolution, Balance, Growth, Place

GOALS

1. **Building a Regional Community.** Establish a regional mindset that unifies North Iowans around a community vision.
2. **People, Place, Prosperity.** Create an environment that retains, equips, and attracts a strong, diverse talent pipeline and increases prosperity for all North Iowans.
3. **Innovation and Entrepreneurship.** Advance the regional economy by retaining, expanding, and attracting high-growth companies. Leverage existing assets to strengthen the culture of entrepreneurship and expand the innovation ecosystem.
4. **Business Development and Marketing.** Ensure smart, sustainable, and shared economic growth by strategically promoting the region as a destination for business investment, relocation, and expansion.

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS



2. COMPLETE STUDIES FOR CRITICAL ECONOMIC CORRIDORS OR SUB-AREAS

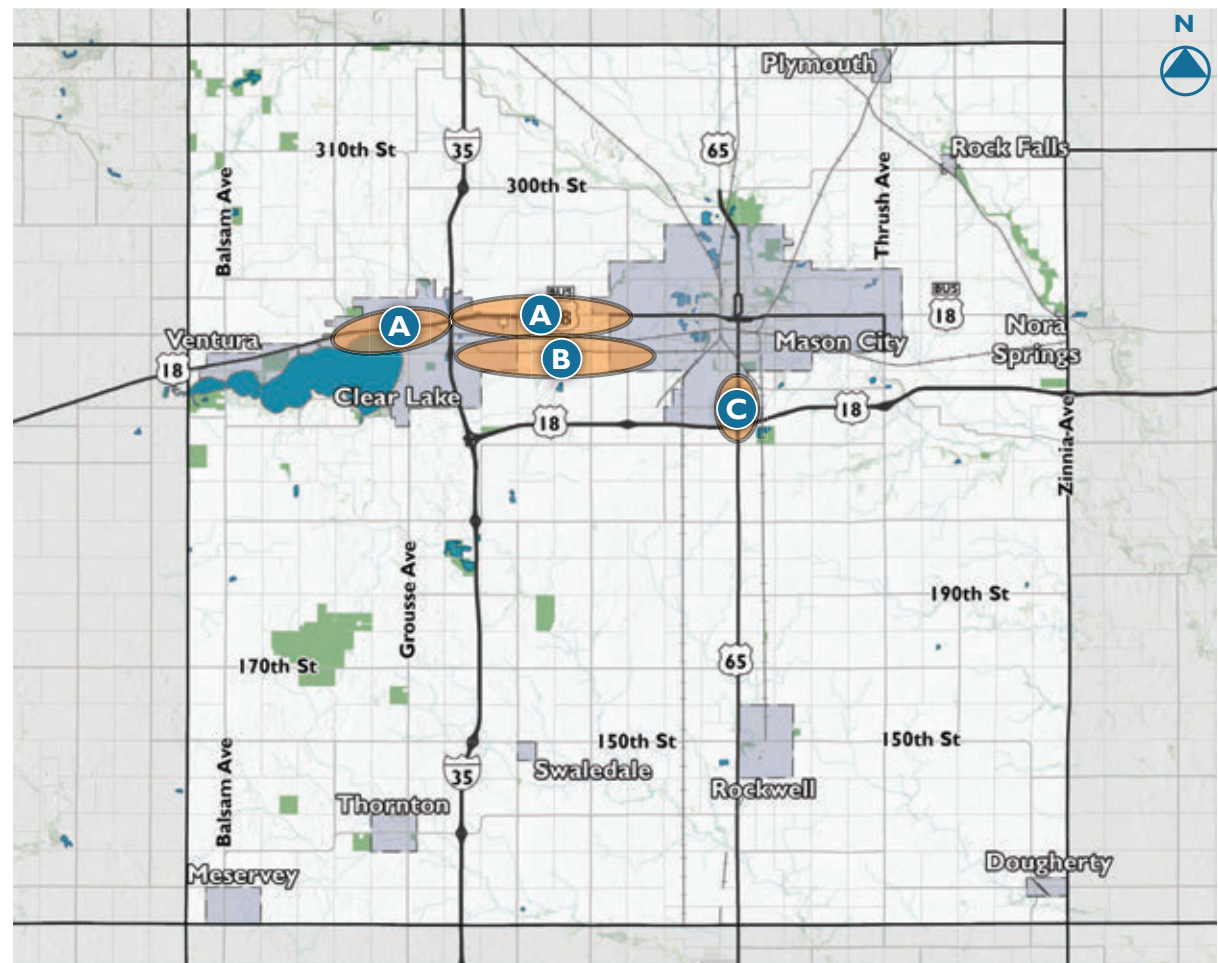
Some corridors necessitate more detailed study than what can be covered in this Plan. Future areas of land use and mobility study, in order of priority, include:

- A. Highway 18/I22, Clear Lake to Mason City.
- B. 4th Avenue to 255th Street to 19th Street.
- C. Highway 65 and railroad expansion in the industrial park.

3. STIMULATE PRIVATE INVESTMENT THROUGH PUBLIC INITIATIVES

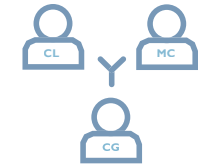
Partnerships between the private and public sectors are not new to the North Iowa Corridor when opportunities arise. However, sometimes upfront public investments are needed alone to stimulate change. Initial investments in the public realm can create conditions for economic growth that are unlikely to happen spontaneously.

Public investments in streets, water, sewer, parks, and civic facilities should remain at the forefront as tools to promote private development. When strategically located, a new park or public building can stimulate residential development, while targeted infrastructure improvements in business centers or older neighborhoods can attract new industry or infill development on vacant or underused lots. Any infrastructure extension should be done with the goal of maximizing private investment, thus supporting the long-term costs associated with any infrastructure or facility.



| Figure 4.1: Candidate Corridor Study Areas

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS



4. INCORPORATE ARTS AND CULTURE INTO PUBLIC PROJECTS AND SUPPORT PRIVATE EFFORTS TO ENHANCE CULTURAL FEATURES

Art and culture help the public environment come alive. Cultural displays add to the aesthetics of a community and create a unique aspect special to a jurisdiction over other communities outside of the North Iowa Corridor. Elements of art can also become items of community involvement where residents can take part in creating the elements.

Opportunities for visible art in the North Iowa Corridor:

- The major corridors through wayfinding, gateway features, and natural landscapes.
- Street corners into neighborhoods or districts.
- Mixed-use environments such as downtowns and commercial centers.
- Public parks, centers, and spaces.
- The area around schools.



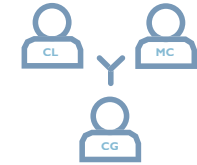
A series of wayfinders and icon features can display a theme between cities and evolve over the course of the trail. Ideas could be similar to ideas for the Highway 18/122 corridor but at a smaller scale.



Additional resting points are needed in addition to softening the relationship between the trail and the county road.

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS

COMMON GROUND AREA

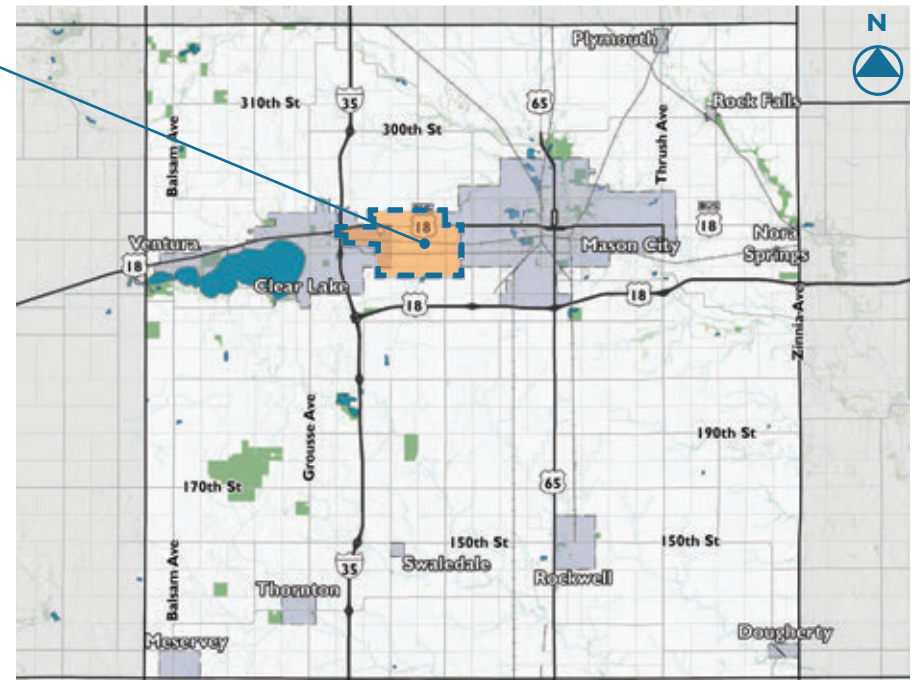


5. PROMOTE COHESIVE DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS AND CHARACTER ENHANCEMENTS IN THE COMMON GROUND AREA

Planning for a Common Ground area is a concept that has been introduced previously for the North Iowa Corridor. A framework was initially developed through the 1999 “Developing Common Ground” Joint Development Plan. The 1999 plan was not fully adopted, but many of the directions from it are still valid and reaffirmed by the North Iowa Corridor Plan.

The Common Ground Area is shown to the right and in more detail on the next page.

An efficient and consistent development pattern is essential in the area as cities and businesses grow. Encouraging this promotes an overall vision for economic development, service provisions, and visual character while avoiding individual site uses and design in the Common Ground area.



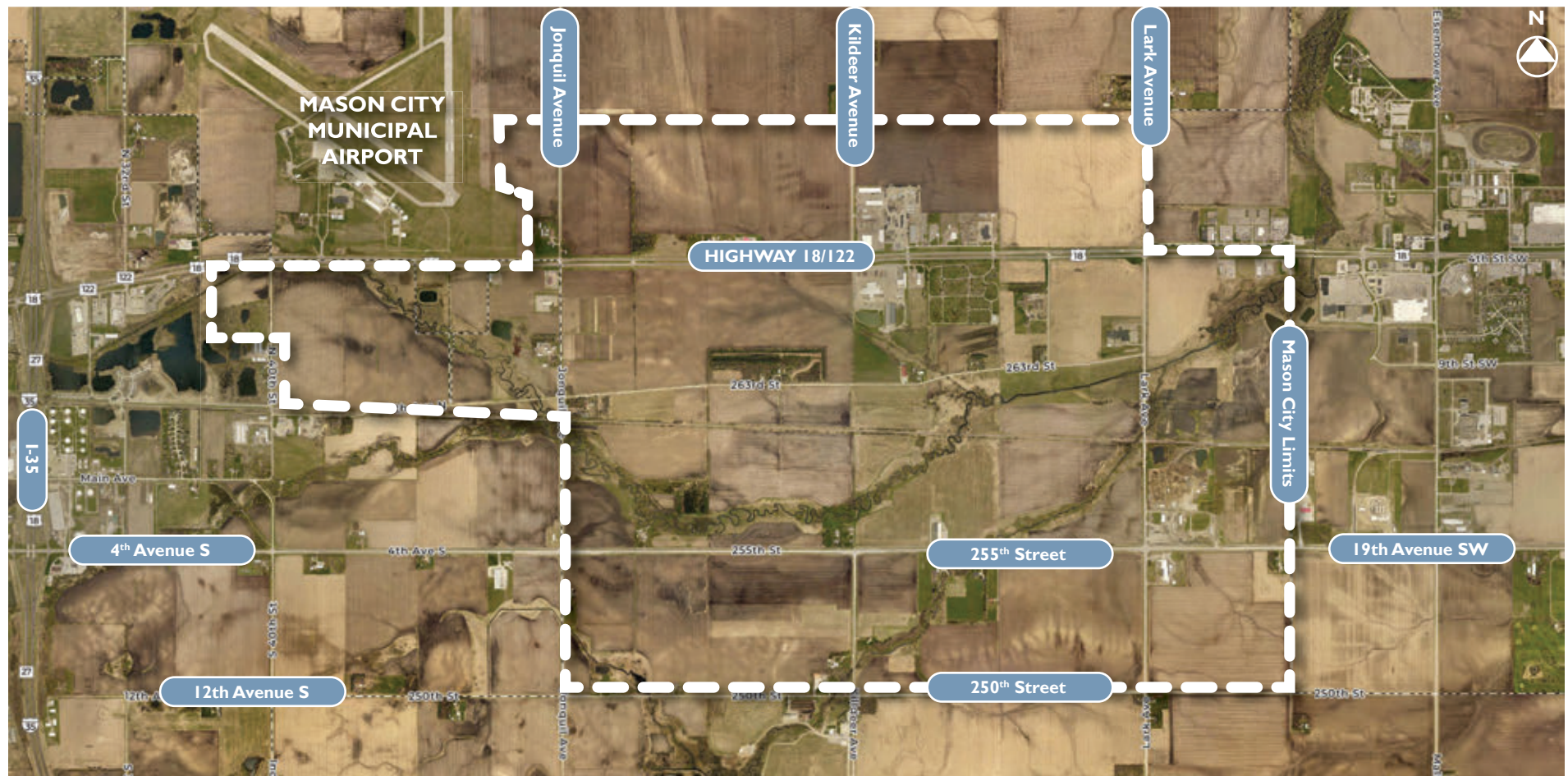
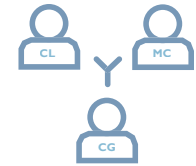
| Figure 4.2: Common Ground Area Context in North Iowa

COMMON GROUND AREA GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- A positive user experience along corridors through visual design, landscaping, and cultural components.
- Safe, efficient, and connected mobility systems.
- Support a common understanding of the overall development direction of the area
- as improvements are phased over time.
- An experience and development approach that balances the character and context of surrounding land uses.
- Development that is compatible with future growth plans and public utility provisions.
- Natural space preservation and recreational connections where appropriate.
- Transparent and predictable decision-making to manage development.

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS

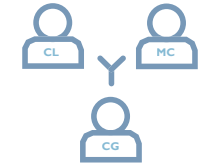
COMMON GROUND AREA



| Figure 4.3: Common Ground Area Boundary

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS

COMMON GROUND AREA



COMMON GROUND POLICY & ACTION APPROACH

The policy and action approach starts by creating a formal agreement between Cerro Gordo County, the City of Clear Lake, and the City of Mason City to regulate land uses, mobility approaches, character enhancements, and responsibilities for implementation. While this Plan provides a common vision and guidance, a more formal agreement such as a 28E agreement would ensure consistent implementation as staff and leadership change.

COMMON GROUND IMPLEMENTATION

- **Incorporate a policy in a formal agreement that defines approval of each jurisdiction for future land use changes, zoning changes, and site plan approval.** Each jurisdiction should meet to coordinate review and approval authority. Each jurisdiction should direct any development applications to the North Iowa Corridor Economic Development Corporation to help facilitate the process. On the next pages are possible approaches for a development or plan-related request.

28E AGREEMENTS EXAMPLES IN IOWA

Iowa City's Fringe Area Agreement

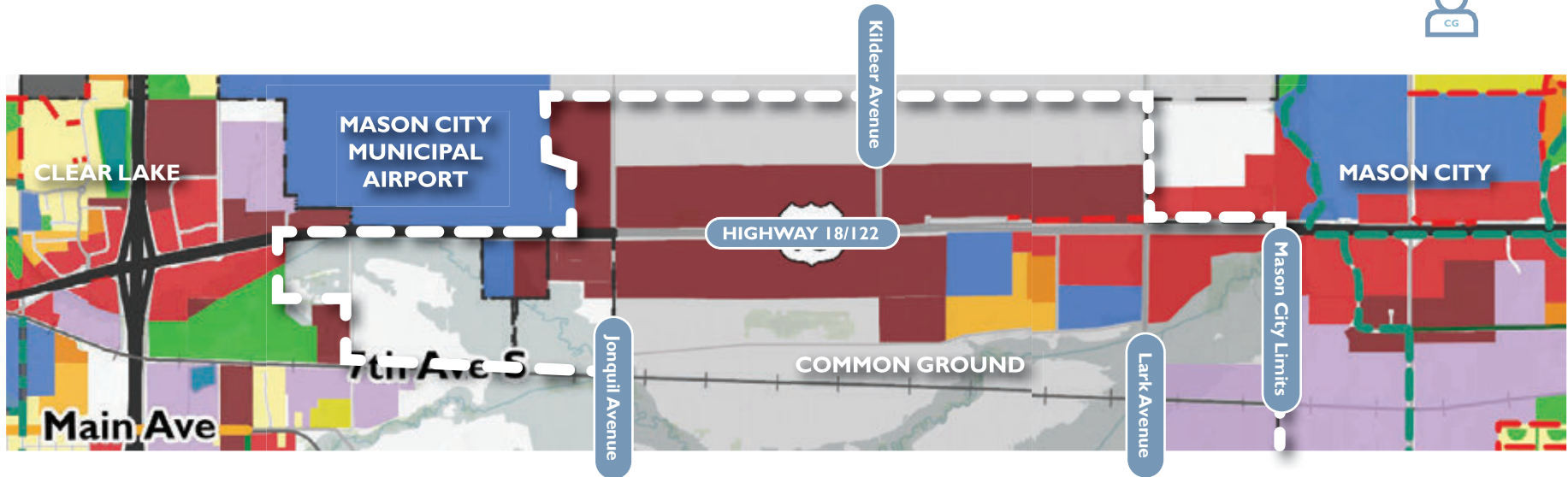
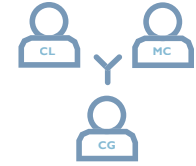
- Land in Johnson County within two miles of Iowa City's boundaries is considered "Iowa City's Fringe Area."
- Any subdivisions within the Fringe Area must be reviewed and approved by both Johnson County and Iowa City.
- Anyone pursuing development within this fringe area should simultaneously file a development application with both Johnson County and Iowa City.
- The purpose of the Fringe Area Agreement is to protect and preserve the area's natural resources and direct development to areas that can best accommodate continued growth and development.

Ames Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

- The Ames Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (AAMPO) is comprised of members from the City of Ames, Story County, Boone County, the Ames Transit Authority, the Iowa Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Federal Transit Administration.
- The Organization has set boundaries that encompass Ames, Gilbert, and parts of Story County and Boone County.
- The AAMPO's purpose is to assist all member entities in planning pursuits, ensuring that planning decisions made for one entity are also in the best interest of all members of the AAMPO.

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS

COMMON GROUND AREA



COMMON GROUND LAND USE

Interim land uses can remain as existing uses such as agricultural.

- **Future applicable land uses can include:**

- Nodes at Highway 18/122 intersections with Jonquil Avenue, Kildeer Avenue, and Lark Avenue:
 - » Mixed Business
 - » Commercial Mixed-Use
- Adjacent to highway and arterial corridors:
 - » Mixed Business
 - » Commercial Mixed-Use
 - » Public/Semi-Public
- Other areas:
 - » Industrial/Utilities
 - » Public/Semi-Public
 - » Parks and Open Space
 - » Conservation (floodplains and floodplain buffers)

- **Adopt a common zoning plan for each jurisdiction in the Common Ground area.**

- **Determine a method to apply subdivision regulations for areas outside city limits in the Common Ground area.** At a minimum, subdivision regulations should have common standards for street design, lots, access management, stormwater management, and pedestrian systems. Design standards for items such as utility improvements will need to be decided amongst the jurisdictions considering proximity to city service boundaries. Any design standards that are not common across jurisdictions should have provisions that require design to feasibly adapt to city level standards in the future.
- **Use the design guidelines in this Plan as a starting point for creating formally adopted joint design guidelines among each jurisdiction.** The goal is for a positive appearance of private development sites to complement character investments in the public right-of-way areas.
- **Use the annexation policies in the Implementation chapters of this Plan as an agreed upon understanding between jurisdictions for when city annexation is appropriate.** All three jurisdictions should provide written approval for annexations in the Common Ground area using agreed upon criteria that align with the Plan vision and future land use map.

- ✓ Agriculture
- Rural Estate
- Low Intensity
- Medium Intensity
- High Intensity
- ✓ Commercial Mixed-Use
- ✓ Mixed Business
- Industrial, Utilities
- ✓ Parks and Open Space
- ✓ Public and Semi-Public
- Downtown
- ✓ Conservation/Floodplain
- Future Street
- Future Trail

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS

COMMON GROUND AREA

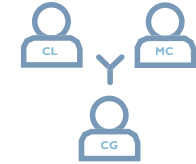
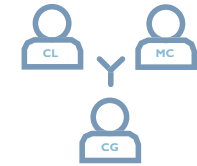


TABLE 4.1: RECOMMENDED DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

COUNTY		CITY
Future Land Use Map Change	<p>Approval from all three jurisdictions required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advances the vision and goals of the Plan. Advances a logical pattern of development based on changing conditions or community goals. Maintains the overall vision for the Common Ground area. 	<p>Approval from all three jurisdictions required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advances the vision and goals of the Plan. Advances a logical pattern of development based on changing conditions or community goals. Maintains the overall vision for the Common Ground area.
Subdivision Platting	<p>Approval granted by County under adopted procedures. Review and comment provided by each City as allowed by state law.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed upon subdivision standards, or most strict standards of the Cities and County apply. For infrastructure and utility improvements, the site should have the ability to adapt to City service standards in the future if not provided at the time of approval. 	<p>Approval granted by the respective City under adopted procedures. Review and comment provided by the County.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed upon subdivision standards, or most strict standards of the Cities and County apply. City infrastructure and utility service standards required.
Site Development Plan	<p>Approval granted by County under adopted procedures. Review and comment provided by each City.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligns with the design standards for the Common Ground area incorporated in the Plan. Aligns with additional agreed upon site design standards through a formal Common Ground area agreement. Written notification provided to each City. 	<p>Approval granted by the respective City under adopted procedures. Review and comment provided by the County.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligns with the design standards for the Common Ground area incorporated in the Plan. Aligns with additional agreed upon site design standards through a formal Common Ground area agreement. Written notification provided to the County and other City.
Rezoning or Conditional Use Permit Request	<p>Approval granted by County under adopted procedures. Review and comment provided by each City.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligns with the Plan goals and future land use map. Is compatible with future land uses in the area. The site is designed to feasibly be able to accommodate city services in the future. Written notification provided to each City. 	<p>Approval granted by the respective City under adopted procedures. Review and comment provided by the County.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligns with the Plan goals and future land use map. Is compatible with future land uses in the area. There are or can be adequate public services to the site. Written notification provided to the County and other City.

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS

COMMON GROUND AREA



MOBILITY

Some mobility enhancements are subject to the Iowa Department of Transportation regulations and require continued coordination for items such as setbacks and sight obstructions.

- **Highway 18/122 - Implement access management policies that increase roadway safety and functionality.** Access management relates the points of access along the road from private property and intersecting roads. Managing access improves safety for motorists and pedestrians while providing clarity to customers entering and exiting property. Design should include:
 - A frontage road with adequately spaced intersections that parallels both sides of the highway across the area that incorporates pedestrian facilities.
 - Secure access for street extensions to connect between developments rather than one access point to individual sites.
 - Use of local collector streets to provide sites along Highway 18/122 north and south access to alternate corridors.
 - Standards that otherwise comply with adopted urban roadway best practices, such as the Iowa Statewide Urban Design and Specification Manual (SUDAS).
 - Consistent standards for when right-turn and left-turn lanes are permitted.
- **4th Avenue S/19th Street SW - Leverage the Trolley Trail as a common recreational and cultural connection between Clear Lake and Mason City.** While the Highway 18/122 corridor provides a business and economic development character, the corridor a mile to the south offers a different experience. The Trolley Trail spans the

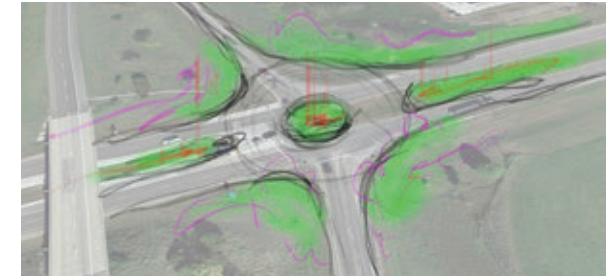


Figure 4.5: Appleton, WI Interchange Approach (left)
Many Interstate interchanges in Wisconsin use a round-a-bout for the exit and enter approach. Along with improved safety, they offer opportunities for signage, community art, and landscaping. The cities should work with the Iowa DOT to explore options for the exit of Interstate 35 onto Highway 18/122.

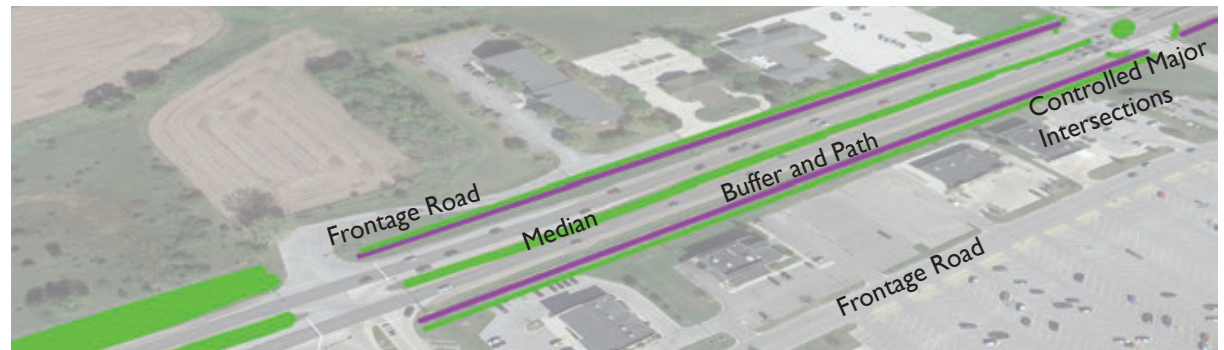


Figure 4.6: Common Mobility Cadence in the Highway 18/122 Corridor
The IA 122 Corridor Feasibility Study completed for the City of Mason City in 2022 provides a set of good recommendations that could be applied more broadly across the corridor with further study. Highway 18/122 in Mason City is planned for improvement with roundabouts from Lark Avenue to Cerro Gordo/Winnebago Way.

5.5 mile corridor and links park spaces and trails in Clear Lake to those in Mason City.

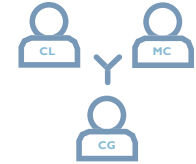
Design approaches include:

- A common recreation theme through art and wayfinding in an interpretive cadence can be a fun way to better enhance the trail experience between each city.

- Further definition of trail street crossings with vertical striping or colored pavement.
- More resting places and buffers from the street for pedestrians and cyclists with benches, covered shelters, and shade.
- Streetscaping elements are explored in the character section on the next pages.

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS

COMMON GROUND AREA



CHARACTER

Character elements include improvements that add visual appeal along mobility routes. There are seven exit points off Interstate 35 in Cerro Gordo County. The most used exits are US 18/IA 27, County Road B35, and US 18/IA 122, where thousands of people exit daily. While the reason each vehicle exits the Interstate differs, the visual impression is consistent. Several actions will help improve first impressions and, more importantly, create lasting positive impressions of the North Iowa Corridor.

- **Theming Elements.** Continue a theme of visual elements (structural or natural) between the prominent features to ensure travelers that they are continuing on the correct route and create a rhythm of anticipation for reaching an important destination.
- **Public Realm Design Standards.** Apply design standards for sites next to major corridors based on the character of the corridor segment.
- **Maintenance.** Focus on enhancement improvements and facilities that are relatively easy to maintain.
- **First Impression Point Strategies.** Combining these elements can create a visual theme for the east/west corridors between Clear Lake and Mason City. Consistency in theme and appearance is critical to creating a memorable visual impression for roadway users.
 - Tier 1 Base Elements
 - » Roadside Wildflowers
 - » Right-of-Way Edge Shrubs
 - » Roadside Trees
 - Tier 2 Structural Elements
 - » Lighting at Key Intersections
 - » Gateways and Public Art
 - » Interstate Entrances
 - » Community Entrances
 - Tier 3 Structural Elements
 - » Tourism Signage (public, private)
 - » Right-of-Way Edge Enhanced Fencing
 - » Lighting between Intersections
- **Lighting Enhancements.** Little of Highway 18/122 between Clear Lake and Mason City is lit at night. Poorly lit intersections lead to more issues seeing oncoming or entering vehicles to the Highway, where traffic speeds are 50+ miles per hour. Functional lighting fixtures should be explored at intersections in addition to “first impression” elements that add visual appeal at different times of the day.
- **Building and Site Design Guidelines.** Consider design standards for high-quality building facade materials. High-quality materials go beyond appearance. Property owners see direct benefits from increased individual property values, desirability, and market demand. Benefits include a better impression for visitors, a revamped image, and an increased tax base. Site design guidelines might include parking lot placement, landscaping provisions for parking areas, signage design, and sidewalk/trail connections.

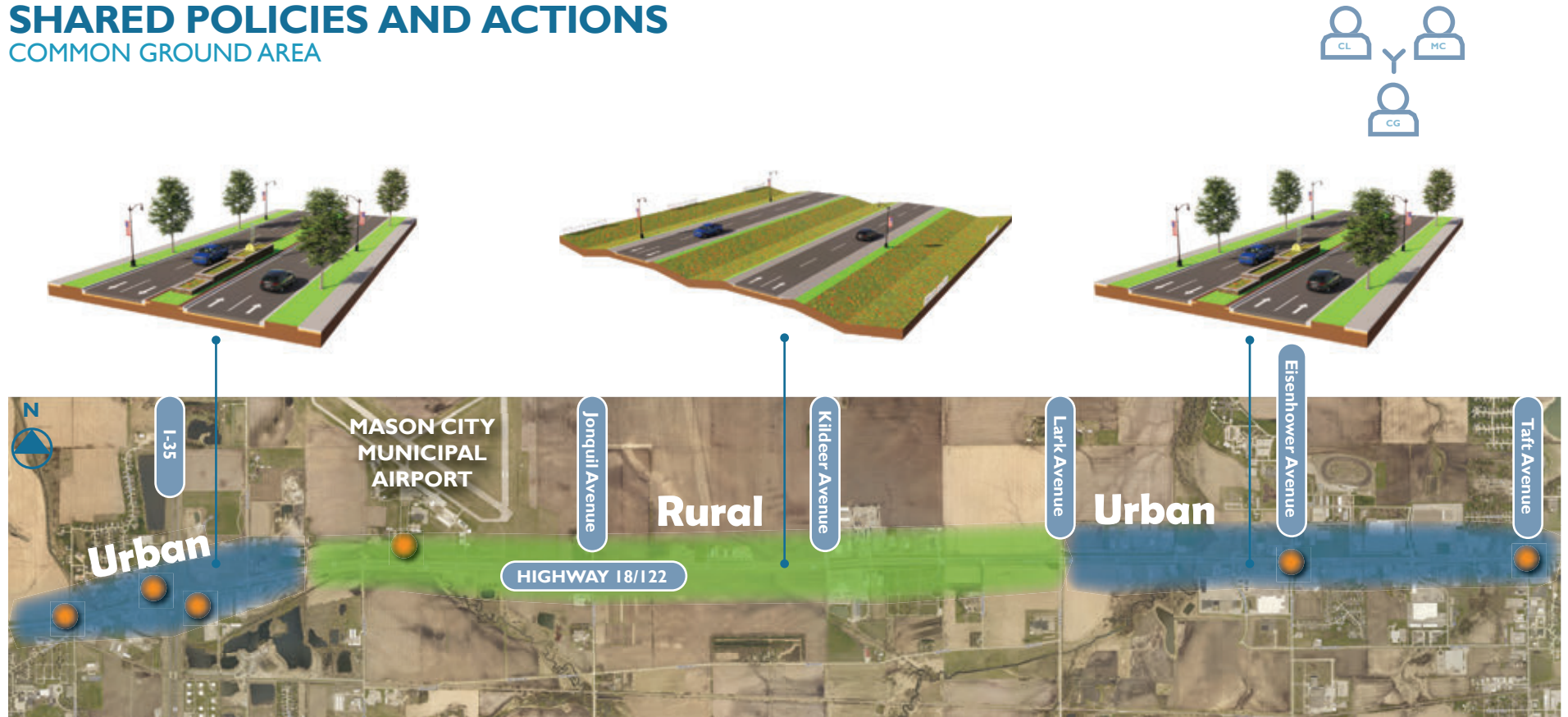


| Figure 4.7: 4th Avenue SW Corridor Approach

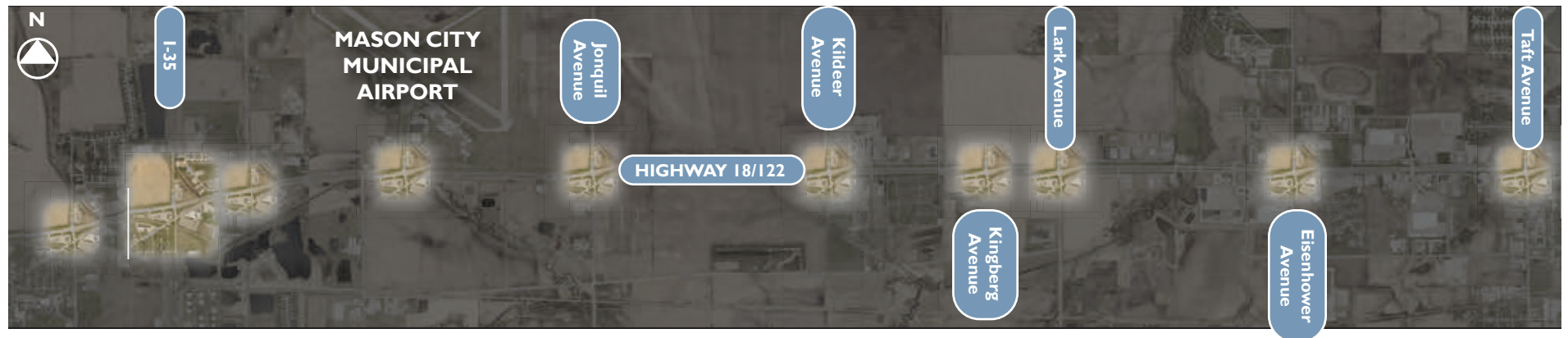
● Theming Elements

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS

COMMON GROUND AREA



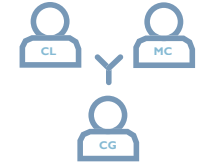
| Figure 4.8: Existing Highway I8/I22 Character Context and Gateways



| Figure 4.9: Highway I8/I22 Lighting Enhancement Points

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS

COMMON GROUND AREA



Urban Roadway Character Approach Examples

- Curb and sidewalks
- Buildings closer to the street than rural sections
- Narrower center median
- More landscaping, signage, and utility facilities like light poles frame the corridor



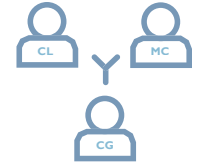
A diversity of native low level plantings.



Integration of themed structural features to add welcoming character features. Use medians for visual enhancements and unique lighting.

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS

COMMON GROUND AREA



Rural Roadway Character Approach Examples

- No curb with drainage ditches on the side and center medians
- Wider paved shoulders
- Wider distances between the street and adjacent buildings



A diversity of native low level plantings. Plantings can be visually appealing year-round but also function to filter stormwater runoff.



A second layer of plantings can focus on functional purposes as natural snow fences parallel to the highway.

CERRO GORDO POLICIES AND ACTIONS



Economic development opportunities for areas in the County should align with long-term land use and mobility directions.

I. ACCOMMODATE RURAL INDUSTRIES WITH LONG-TERM CITY GROWTH PLANS WHILE NOT OVERSTRAINING SERVICES

Any significant business expansion or growth in the county will likely happen in the Common Ground area, near existing city limits, or along major transportation routes. In the past, development in the county may have focused only on the subject development site. However, with this Plan, any new economic development prospects should look beyond the site to accommodate future mobility connections, land use directions, and serviceability. The principles for the Common Ground area and future land use map can be used to guide development review in other unincorporated areas.

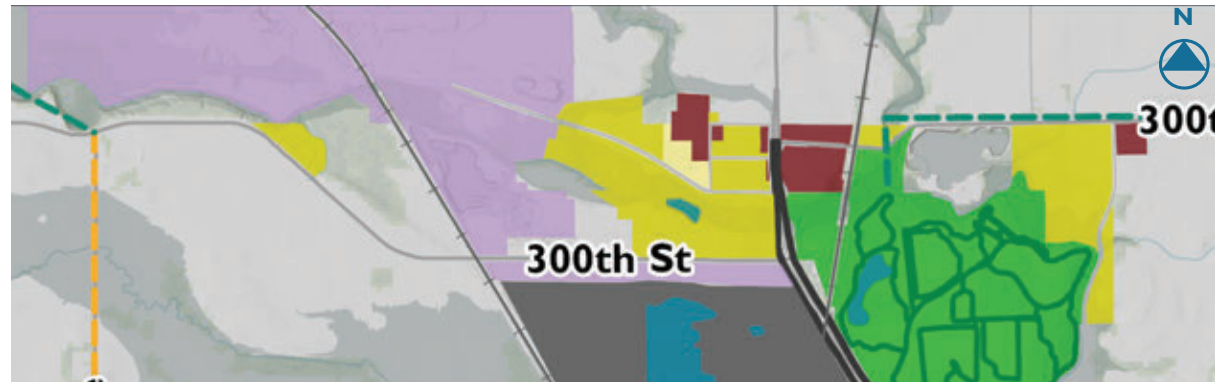
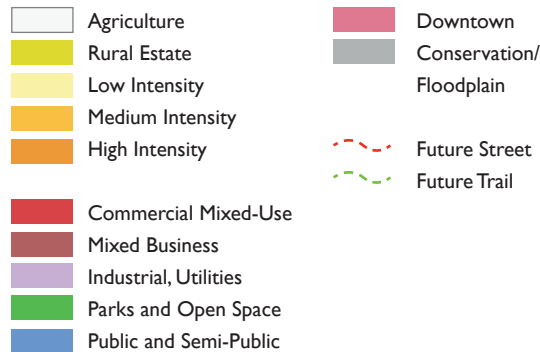


Figure 4.10: Cerro Gordo County Future Land Use North of Mason City

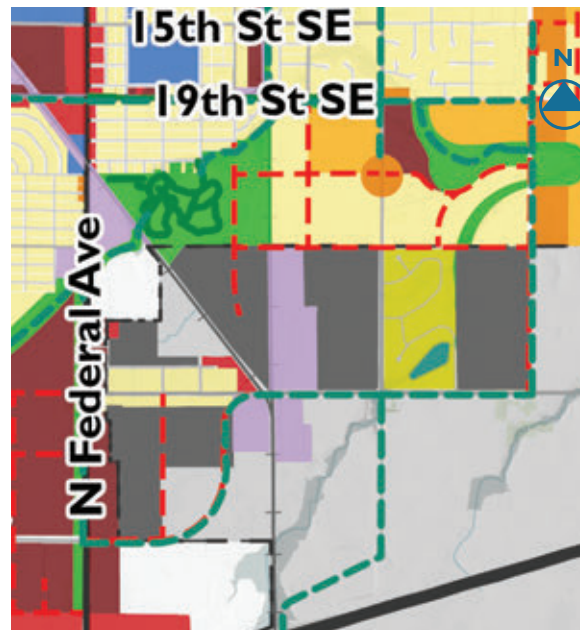


Figure 4.11: Cerro Gordo County Future Land Use Southeast of Mason City

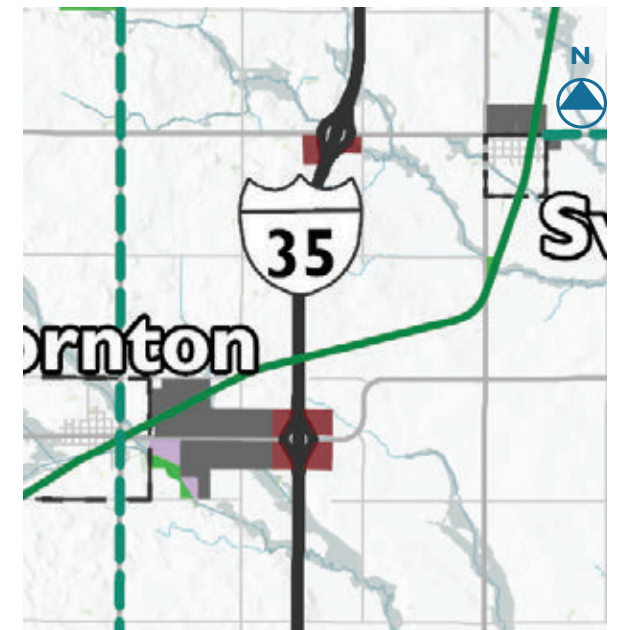


Figure 4.12: Cerro Gordo County Example Interchange Mixed Business Sites

CERRO GORDO POLICIES AND ACTIONS



2. MANAGE LAND USE GROWTH AND IMPROVE MOBILITY SYSTEMS IN THE SOUTH SHORE AREA

The South Shore area is a neighborhood on the south and southeast side of Clear Lake in unincorporated Cerro Gordo County. The area is a mix of residential homes and lake oriented businesses and attractions. The area's challenges relate to improving active transportation safety and promoting compatible land use development.

SOUTH SHORE AREA GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Improve walking and cycling comfort through the area and to recreational destinations.
- Balance market demand for infill development with the character of existing neighborhoods.
- Leverage existing gathering spots and commercial destinations as neighborhood activity centers.
- Conserve and preserve natural resources.
- Low- and medium-intensity neighborhood expansion while considering neighborhood character and addressing drainage and adequate street connections.



CLEAR LAKE POLICIES AND ACTIONS

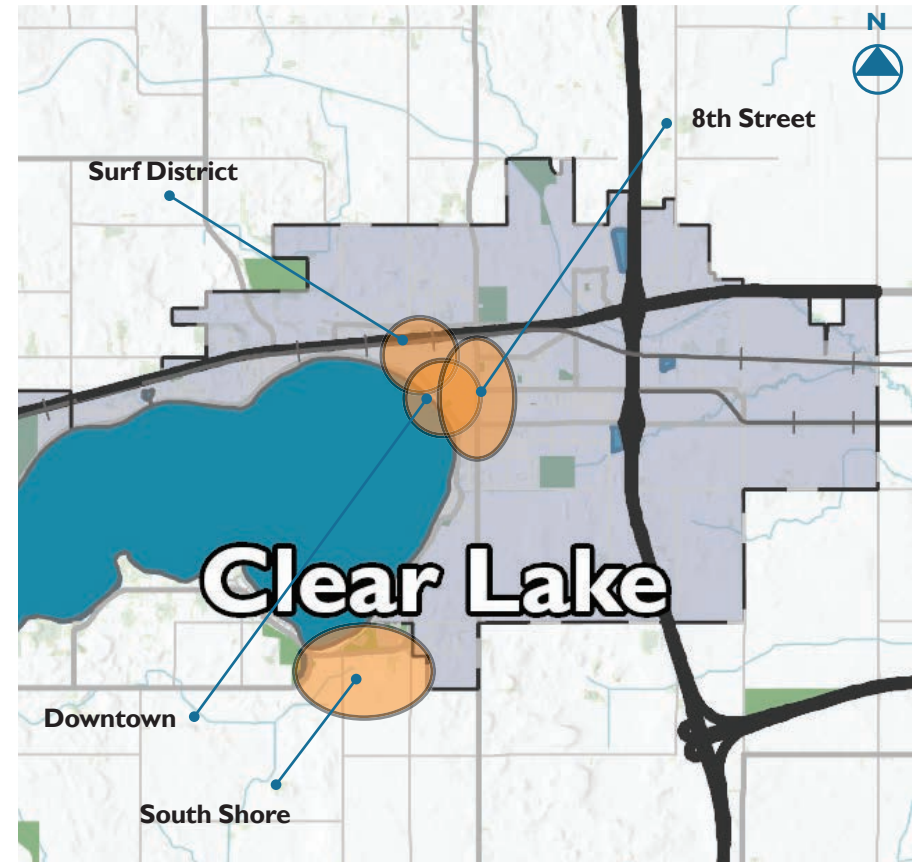


I. IMPLEMENT THE SURF DISTRICT PLAN

The 2006 City of Clear Lake Comprehensive Plan included a subarea plan for an area around the Surf Ballroom. In 2022, the City of Clear Lake did an update to the subarea plan to leverage State grant funding for various projects. In 2023, planning and design for many of the projects were underway which will significantly transform this area in Clear Lake. This section summarizes the broad Surf District Plan elements in the context of this Plan.

SURF DISTRICT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Leverage the significance of the Surf Ballroom and create a network of connections to its surroundings to transform the area into a stronger Surf District.
- Offer more memory-making experiences for visitors.
- Provide opportunities for economic development to create a stronger national destination.



| Figure 4.13: Surf District Context Map



CLEAR LAKE POLICIES AND ACTIONS



| Figure 4.14: 8th Street Corridor Strategy

2. ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE OF THE 8TH STREET CORRIDOR.

North and South 8th Street is a primary north/south corridor in Clear Lake that leads people to downtown. Upgrading the corridor will elevate people's first impression of Clear Lake. Providing financial incentives for property owners to elevate the area's appearance of the roadway can stimulate other private investments.

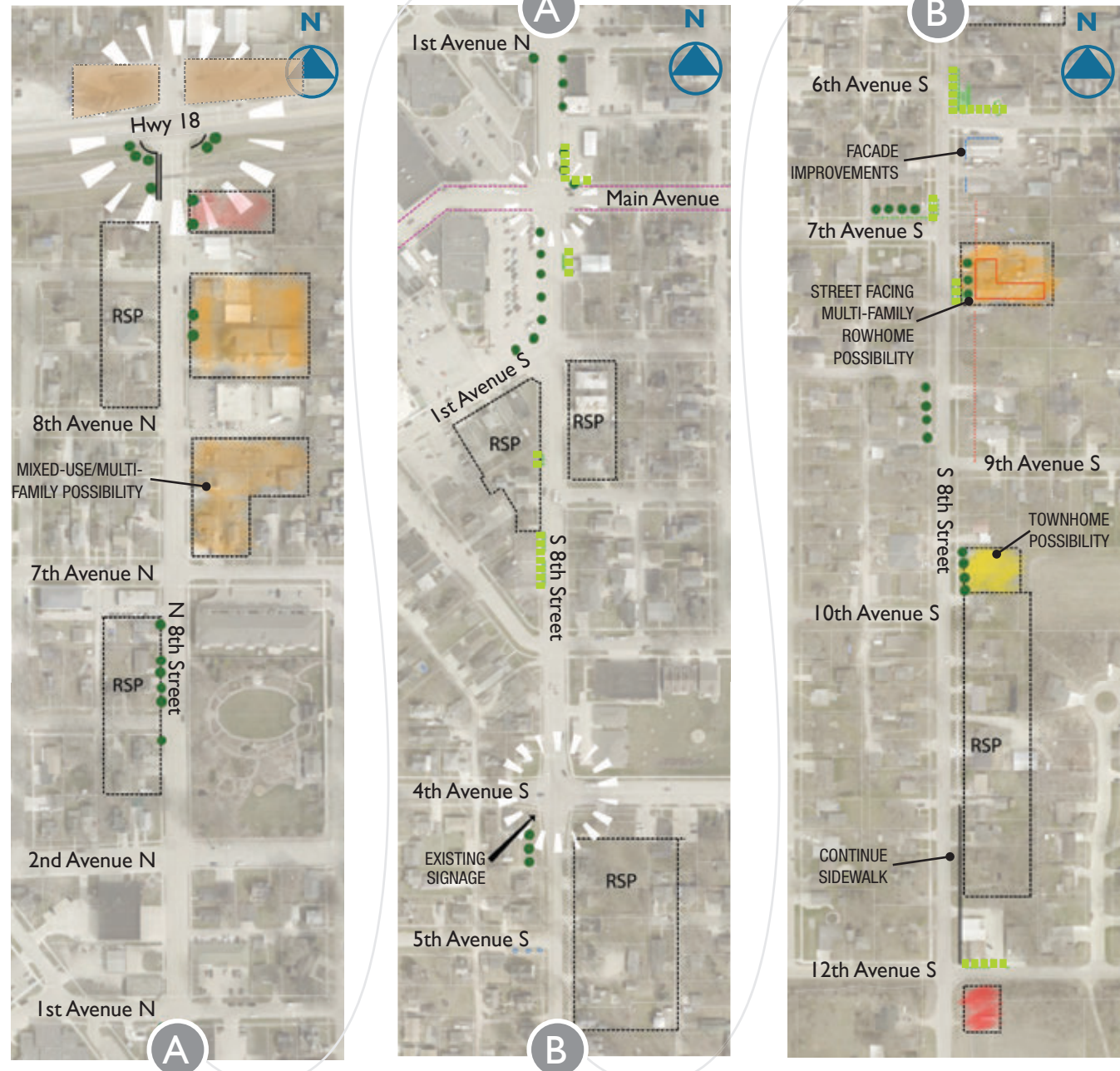
LAND USE ELEMENTS

- Strategic sites to add new housing arrangements and fill market needs.
- Targeted residential conservation and restoration programs.

MOBILITY ELEMENTS

- Define and consolidate driveways on 8th Street where possible.
- Welcome signage, art, and landscaping features at the Highway 18 entry point.
- Tree and landscaping plantings at strategic locations to improve visual entryways and soften parking lots facing 8th Street.

- Possible Land Use Redirection
- Possible Property Assembly
- Intersection enhancements
- RSP** Restoration, Stabilization and Preservation
- Manage access points
- Tree Plantings
- Sidewalk improvements



CLEAR LAKE POLICIES AND ACTIONS



3. CONTINUE TO ENHANCE DOWNTOWN AS THE PREMIER GATHERING PLACE IN CLEAR LAKE

Downtown Clear Lake is a community focal point that continues to see investment. Many parts of downtown recommendations from the 2008 Clear Lake Comprehensive Plan are complete. The strategy for Downtown Clear Lake should focus on:

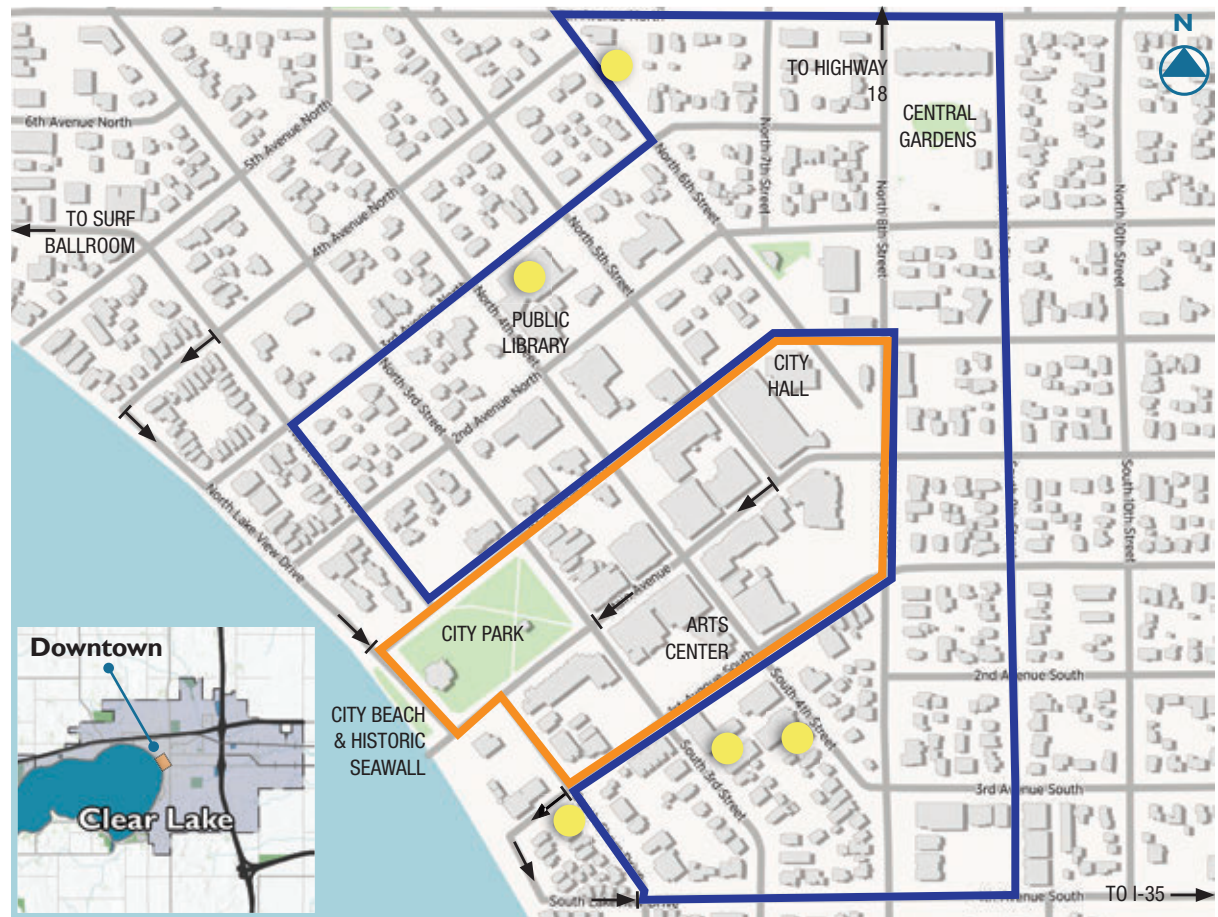
- **Updating the downtown plan.** Improving downtown is never done and the City should launch a modest update of the plan.
- **Improve bike/ped circulation.** People walk, bike, and drive to City Park using North and South Shore Drive, 1st Avenue N, and Main Avenue. The amount of pedestrians and bicyclists warrants additional safety features, such as striped crosswalks, speed tables, and wayfinding.
- **Introduce more housing downtown.** Housing opportunities near downtown should continue to focus on attached housing, multi-unit, and/or mixed-use structures. Vacant sites are limited, but infill and redevelopment may be in demand over time.
- **Leverage public spaces and lake access.** Continuously maintain and upgrade facilities like City Beach and Clear Lake City Park with the bandshell.
- **Retain and recruit businesses.** Continue focus as a commercial service center with unique commercial retailers and service-oriented uses rather than traditional retail stores. Support retention of existing commercial storefronts.

4. PRESERVE HISTORIC RESOURCES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Preserving and adapting older buildings and public places to new uses invites design creativity; in addition to being a green solution, this approach preserves the history, scale, community character

and fabric of Downtown. For Clear Lake, focus includes:

- Continue to work with the Historic Preservation Commission to evaluate properties for submission to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Administer review of changes to historic structures.



| Figure 4.15: Downtown Clear Lake

Core District Support District Redevelopment/Reuse Opportunity

CLEAR LAKE POLICIES AND ACTIONS



5. IMPROVE MOBILITY AROUND CITY PARK

City Park, the bandshell, and the public beach are iconic features of Clear Lake's downtown. They tie into the business district. Walkers, bikers, and drivers staying on North and South Shore Drive must circumnavigate City Park.

In the summer especially, the area around City Park is very popular and often faces traffic congestion, parking challenges, and lots of pedestrian activity across streets. The North Iowa Corridor Plan does not include a traffic study of the area. However, the following approaches to functional operations should be further evaluated before implementation. Traffic counts will help determine the most appropriate applications.

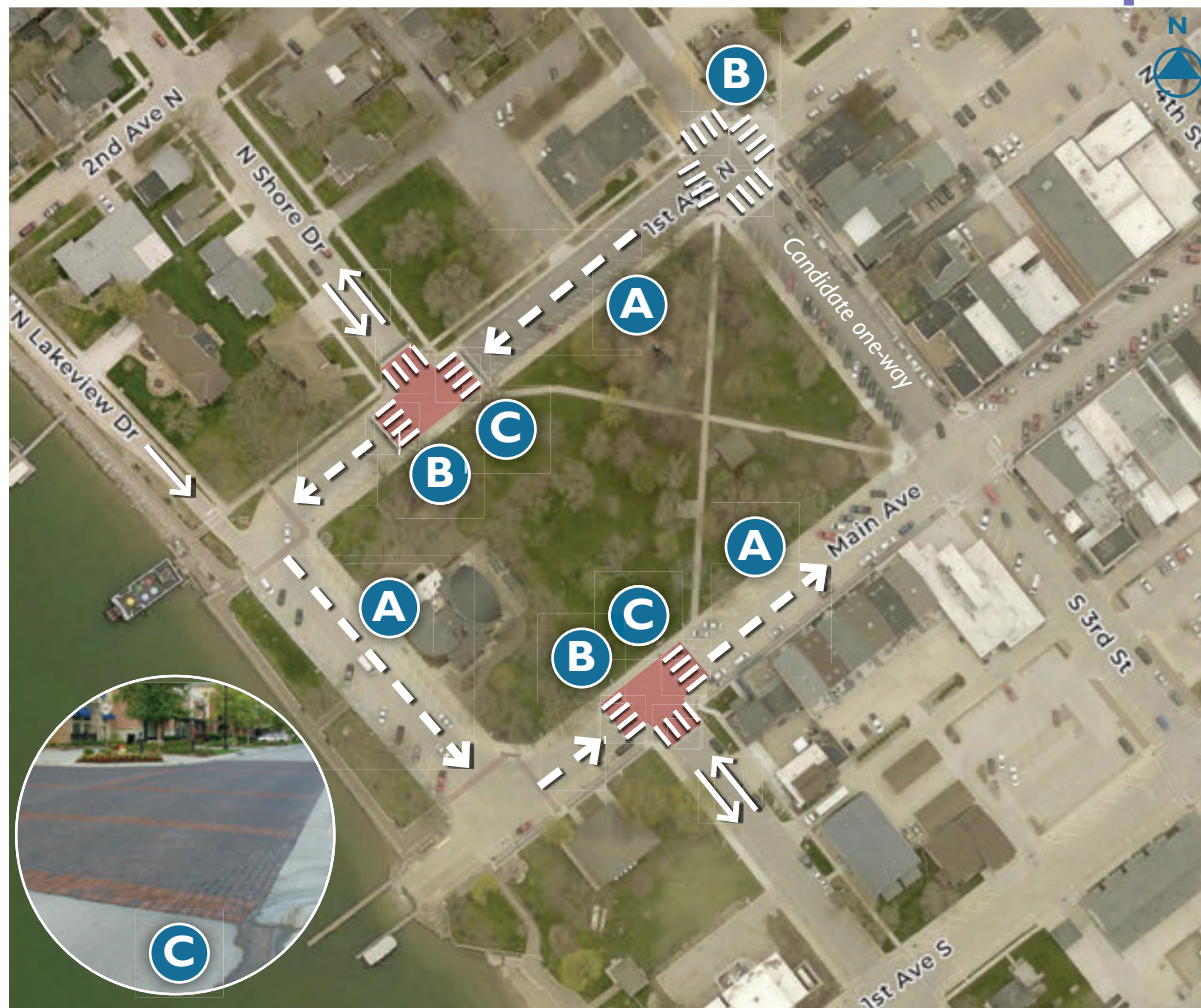
A. Study transitioning streets around City Park from two-way to one-way. Not all streets would have to be one-way. For example, it may be desirable to have N 3rd Street remain two-way. Traffic counts would help clarify patterns. Several considerations for one-way streets include:

Pros:

- Pedestrians only have to look in one direction.
- Boat ramp use will be simplified. Vehicles putting in boats will not cross paths.
- There is no opposing left turn traffic.
- Reduced conflict points.
- If a single lane one-way is used, the additional area in the right-of-way can be used for parking, trails, etc.
- One-way streets work well in congested areas.

Cons:

- Special consideration needs to be taken for turn movements and signage at alleyway intersections.
- One-way streets can result in higher vehicle travel speeds and reduced safety for pedestrians.
- Travel distance will increase for some users.



| Figure 4.16: Clear Lake City Park Mobility Enhancement Concept

- Some drivers may go the wrong way.
- If using two lanes of one-way traffic, on-street parking will be less confusing. On-street diagonal spaces would have to transition to parallel spaces.

B. Mark all crosswalks around the park with vertical high-visibility markings.

C. Add contrasting color or pavement on the street areas at the North and South Shore Drive mid-block pedestrian crossings. Installing elevated pavement like a speed table would also reinforce the pedestrian crossing.

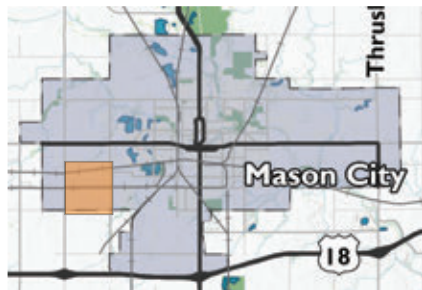
MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS



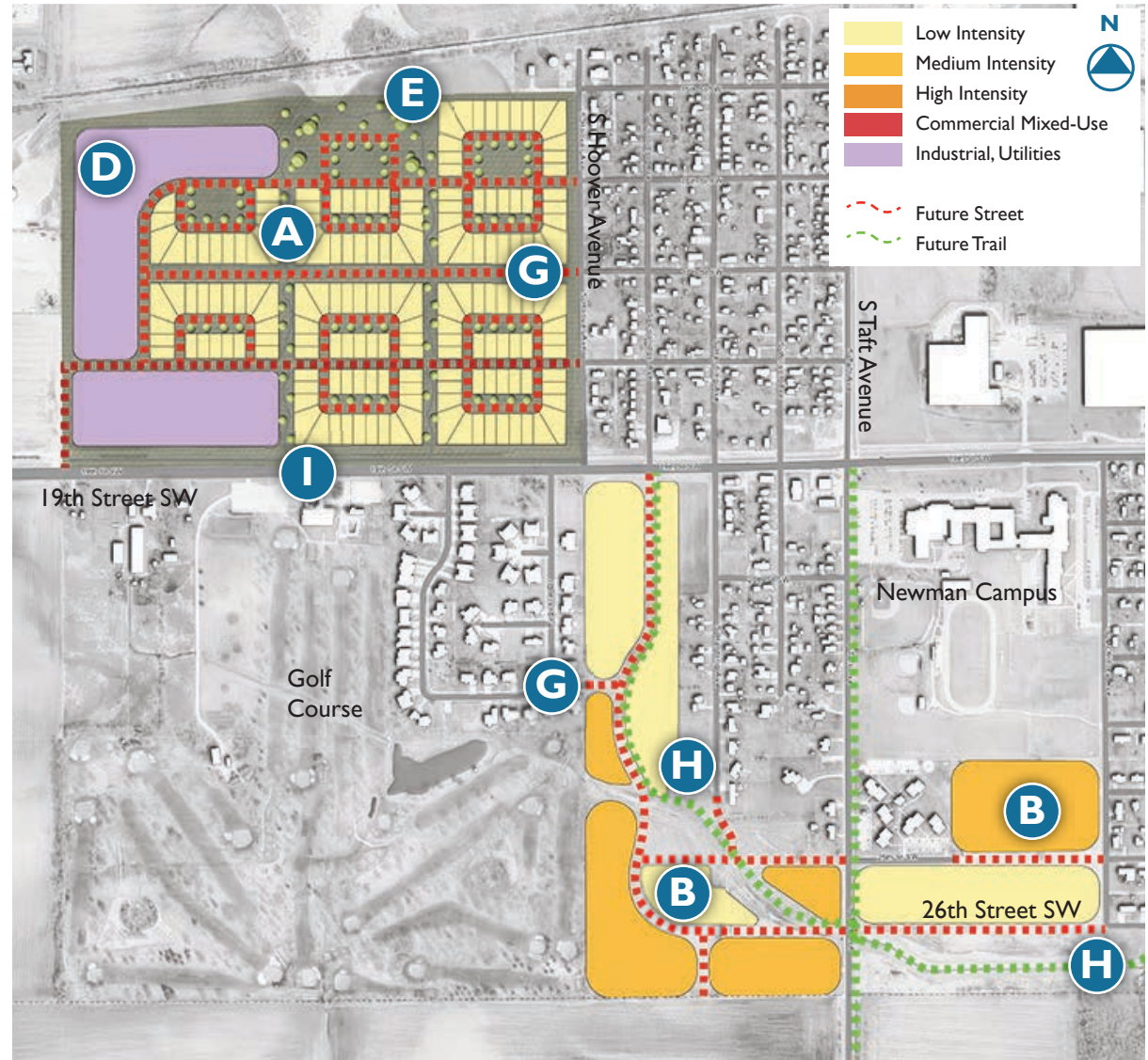
I. BALANCE THE EFFECTS OF INDUSTRIAL USES IN THE SOUTHWEST GROWTH AREA

SOUTHWEST GROWTH AREA GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Expand business and industrial enterprise opportunities.
- Encourage new infill neighborhood growth around community amenities.
- Accommodate various housing types and arrangements different from others in Mason City.
- Conserve and preserve natural features.
- Connect infill development opportunities.



Context Map



| Figure 4.17: Mason City Southwest Growth Subarea Concept - West

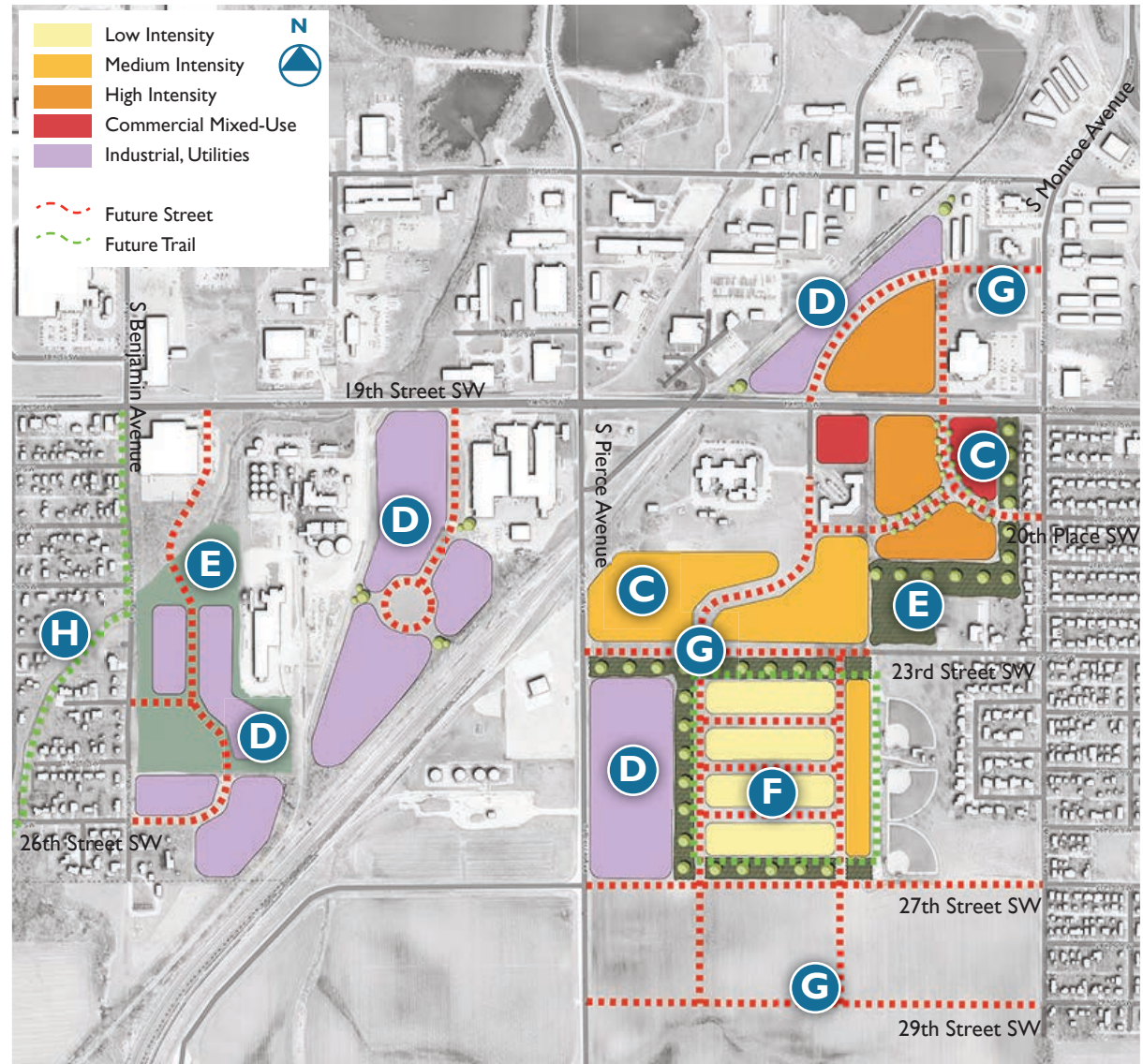
See next page for east side concept >>>

MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS



LAND USE ELEMENTS

- A. A new neighborhood west of Central Heights that could offer a unique arrangement of small lot residential with pods of integrated common open space and green corridors.
- B. Residential neighborhood infill at low to medium intensity around the golf course and Newman Campus.
- C. Community commercial and mixed-use nodes at transition intersections that serve area residents with convenience services.
- D. Industrial enterprise expansion along rail lines.
- E. Integrated greenways and natural buffers as transitions from industrial to residential uses.
- F. A new low intensity neighborhood west of Frederick Hanford Park.
- G. Local street connections and extensions that support infill development.
- H. Expanded greenway trails from the golf course to neighborhoods.
- I. Expanding opportunities to express 4th Avenue/19th Street SW as a recreational trail corridor up to the Newman Campus.



| Figure 4.18 Mason City Southwest Growth Subarea Concept - East

<<< See previous page for west side concept

MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS

2. IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FEDERAL AVENUE CORRIDOR

FEDERAL AVENUE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Respect past development patterns and existing businesses.
- Improve the overall image of the district, including the streetscape and pedestrian environment.
- Increase safety and function by reducing or eliminating access conflicts, including vehicle driveways over pedestrian crossings.
- Make more effective use of vacant or inefficiently used land by promoting high quality development and redevelopment.
- Increase the number of people living along or near the corridors by allowing residential uses.

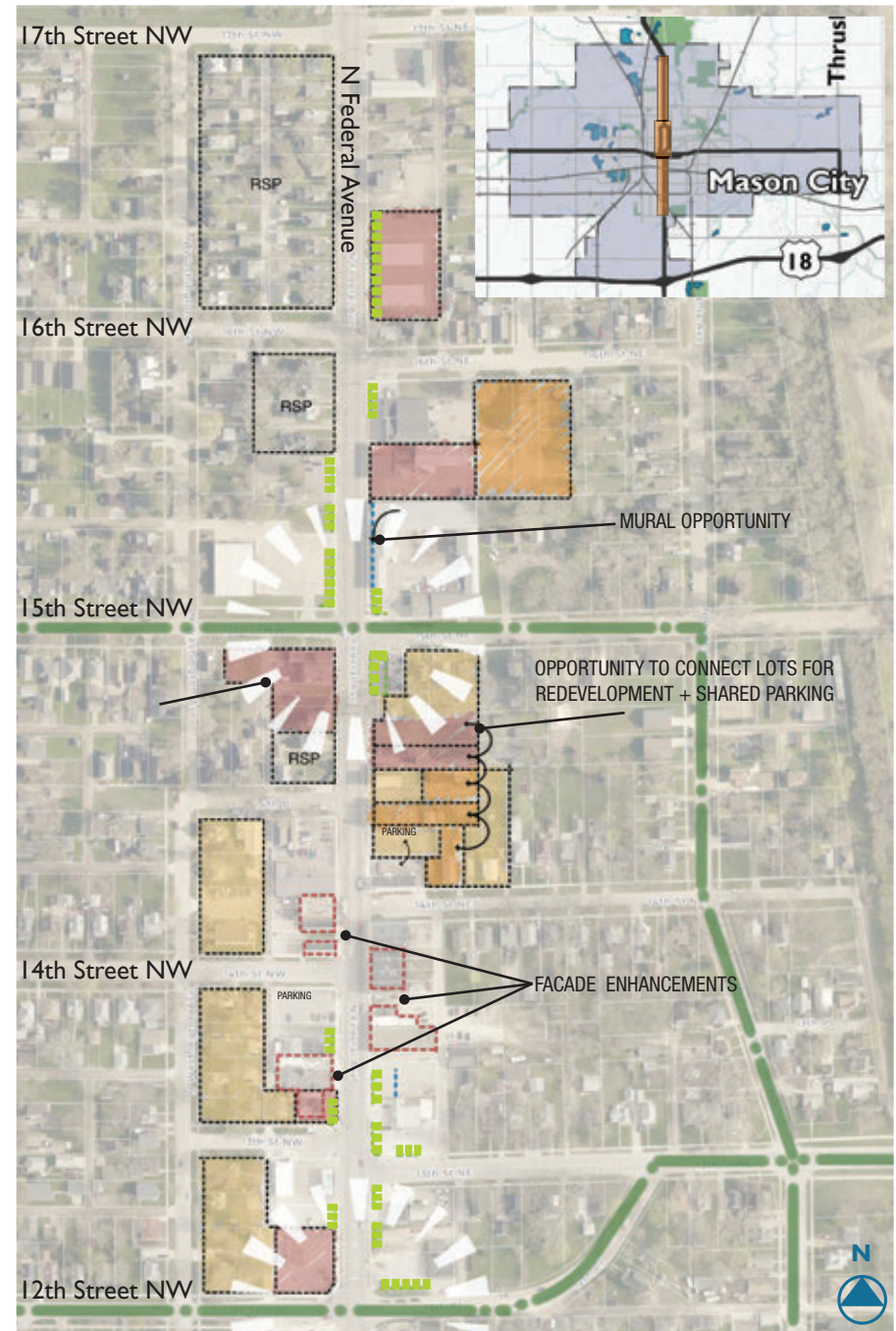
LAND USE ELEMENTS

- Changes in land use at several intersections.
- RSP Targeted residential conservation and restoration programs.
- Possible reassembly of properties in the rear of N Federal Avenue block frontages for mixed-use or new housing arrangements.

MOBILITY ELEMENTS

- Streetscape landscaping enhancements at various locations.
- Infill sidewalk gaps at 14th Street.
- Closing and consolidating unneeded access points from N Federal Avenue.
- Provide safe pedestrian crossings on North Federal Avenue to allow access to amenities and services on both sides of the corridor.






- Possible Land Use Redirection
- Possible Market Demand for Property Assembly
- Intersection enhancements
- RSP Restoration, Stabilization and Preservation
- Manage access points
- Tree Plantings
- Sidewalk improvements

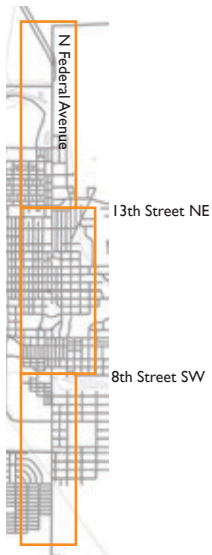


| Figure 4.19: Mason City Federal Avenue - 12th Street NW to 17th Street NW

MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS

Figure 4.20: Mason City Federal Avenue

-  Possible Land Use Redirection
-  Intersection enhancements
- RSP Restoration, Stabilization and Preservation
-  Manage access points
-  Tree Plantings
-  Sidewalk improvements



MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS



3. TARGET NEIGHBORHOODS AND CORRIDORS TO PURSUE INFILL DEVELOPMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

There are many areas for development on vacant lots to help meet needs for housing and business growth. Additionally, the changing market of large commercial and office spaces may open opportunities for reusing larger parking areas or obsolete buildings. This section outlines several possibilities. Other potential infill sites in Mason City or elsewhere in the North Iowa Corridor can emulate the general principles these opportunities show.

NEIGHBORHOOD AND CORRIDOR INFILL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Leverage trails for neighborhood connectivity.
- Stabilize neighborhood character through strategic infill.
- Use topography and greenways to optimize development potential.
- Promote desirable reuse and development patterns along major highway corridors.
- Create efficient parking and alternative street connections.



Figure 4.21: Infill Example - Land Use Change to Residential



Figure 4.22: Infill Example - Commercial Corridor Underused Space

MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS



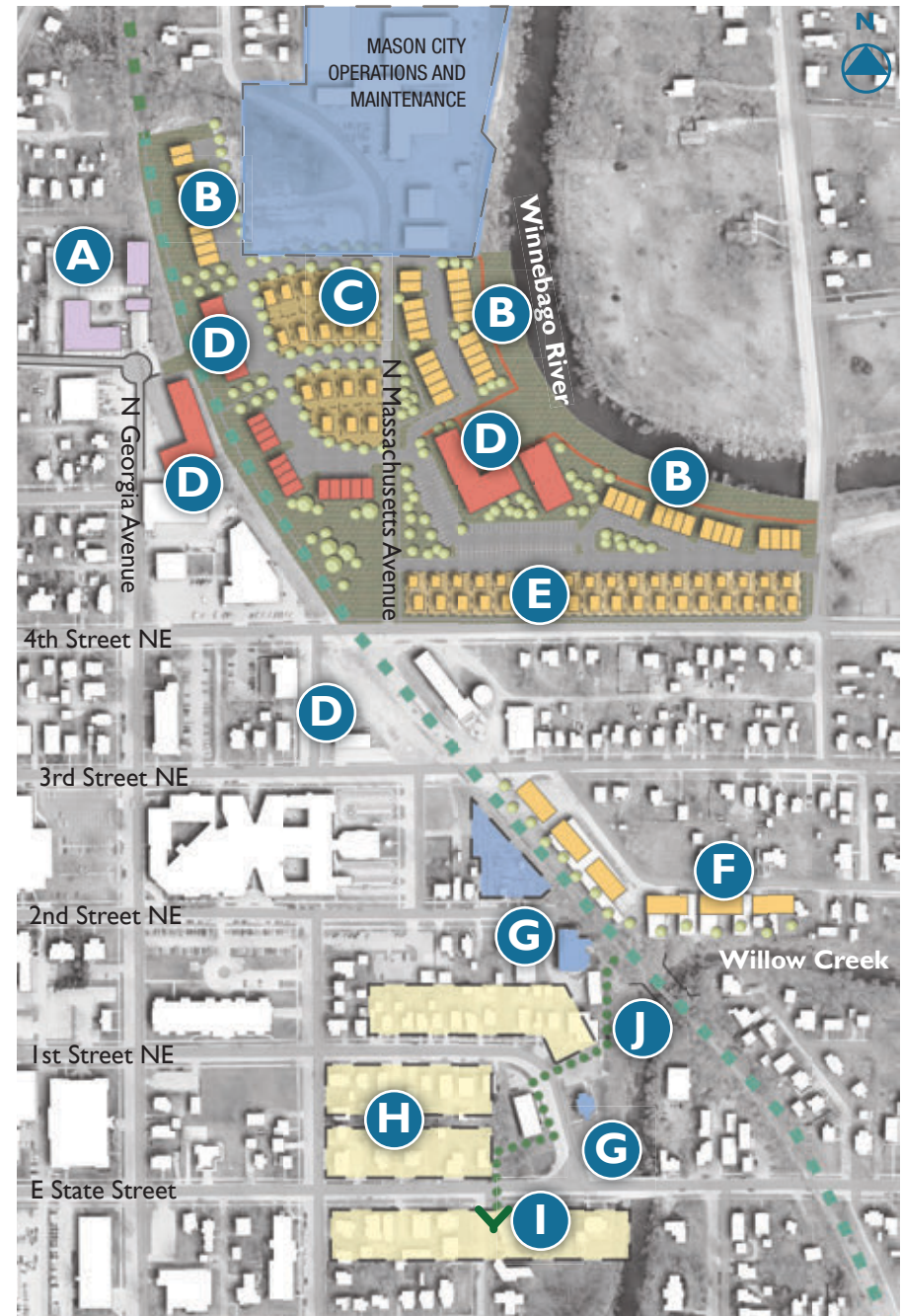
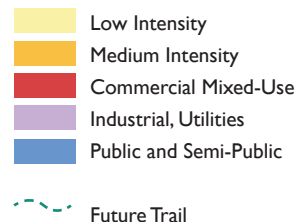
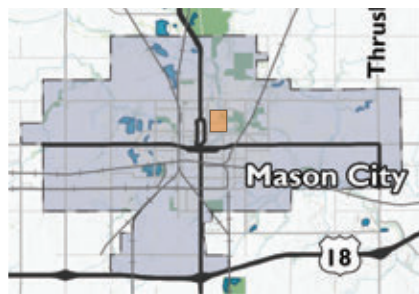
HIGH LINE TRAIL INFILL AREA

LAND USE ELEMENTS

- A. Reinvestment or redevelopment of a business park node operating today.
- B. Medium intensity residential uses abutting the future trail and river.
- C. Smaller lot single-unit residential development on old industrial site.
- D. Commercial mixed-use opportunities on infill sites that are oriented towards the trail.
- E. Example of an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) style residential development that could be a model for other areas of the North Iowa Corridor.
- F. A four-plex/row home arrangement that leverages views of the Willow Creek greenway and future trail.
- G. Maintenance of nearby existing non-residential uses like the Stockman House and other established businesses.
- H. Reinvestment policy for existing residential areas.

MOBILITY ELEMENTS

- I. Future trail route with spur connections to adjacent neighborhoods.
- J. A spur pedestrian route to the Stockman House and Rock Glen area.



| Figure 4.23: Mason City High Line Trail Area East of Downtown

MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS



HIGHWAY REDEVELOPMENT PROTOTYPES

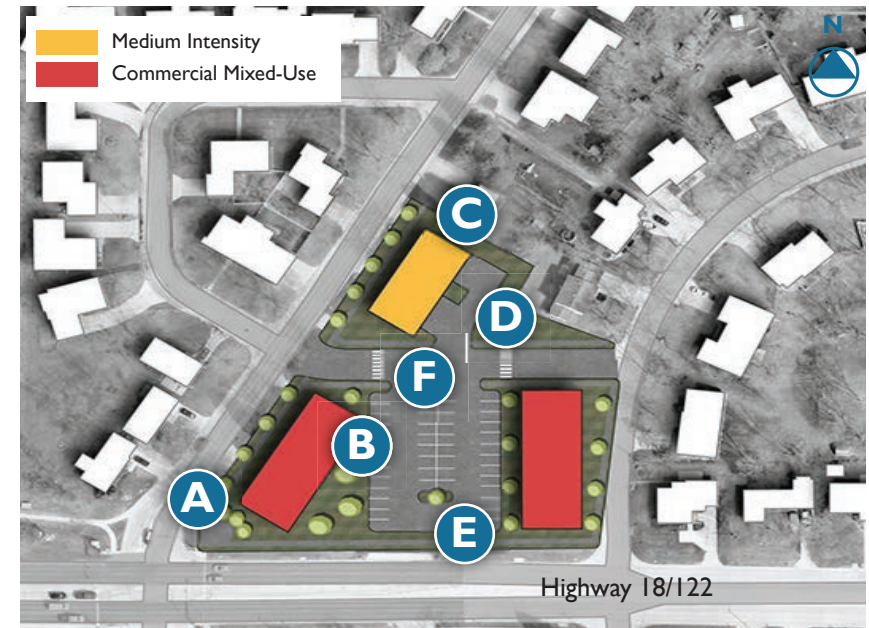
LAND USE ELEMENTS

- A. Maintain non-residential or mixed-use building frontage along the major arterial.
- B. Place parking behind or on the side of buildings for visual appearance from the major arterial.
- C. Use medium intensity residential uses such as townhomes and local street separations to transition to lower density neighborhoods.
- D. Create opportunities for landscaping and gathering spaces along parking and travel lanes.

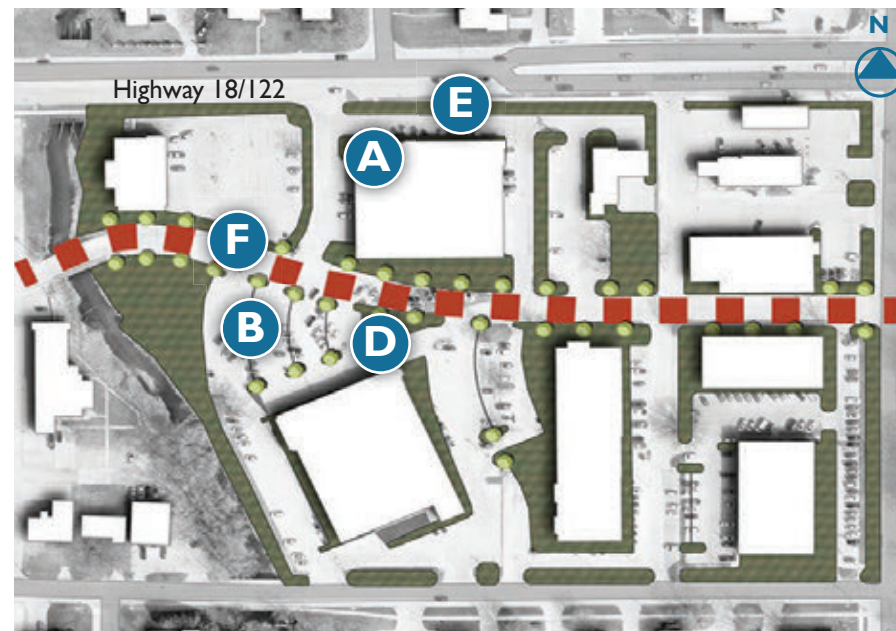
MOBILITY ELEMENTS

- E. Maintain sidewalks and paths along streets.
- F. Require cross property connections to divert the number of access points onto the major arterial. No new access points to the highway.

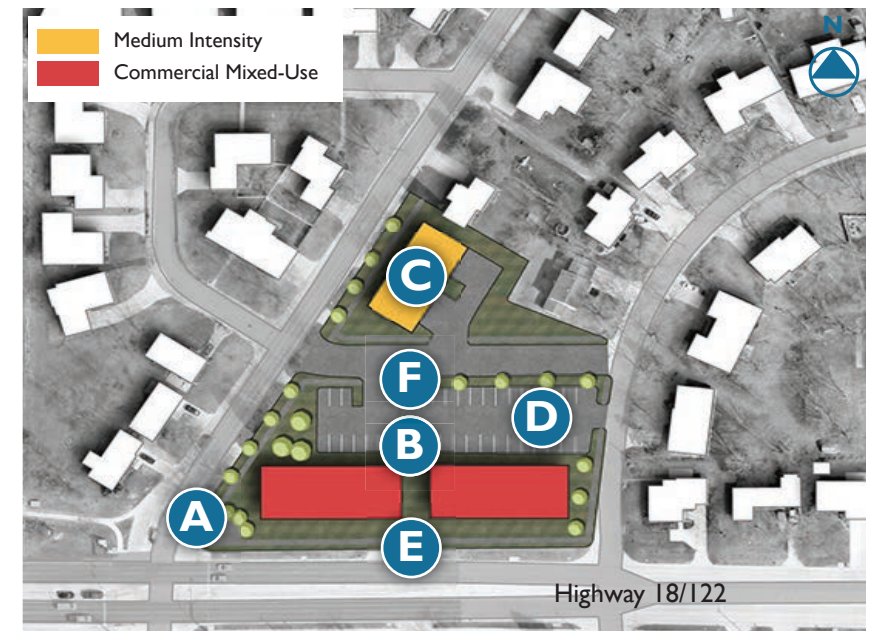
Extra parking lot space could be adapted for paths and cycle tracks to connect pedestrian and bicycle mobility systems.



| Figure 4.25: Example Redevelopment on Highway 18/122 in Mason City



| Figure 4.24: Alternative Cross-Connectivity and Parking Example on a Highway Corridor



| Figure 4.26: Example Redevelopment on Highway 18/122 in Mason City

MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS



4. DEFINE STRATEGIES TO LEVERAGE DOWNTOWN ASSETS FOR NEW USES OF UNDERUSED SPACES.

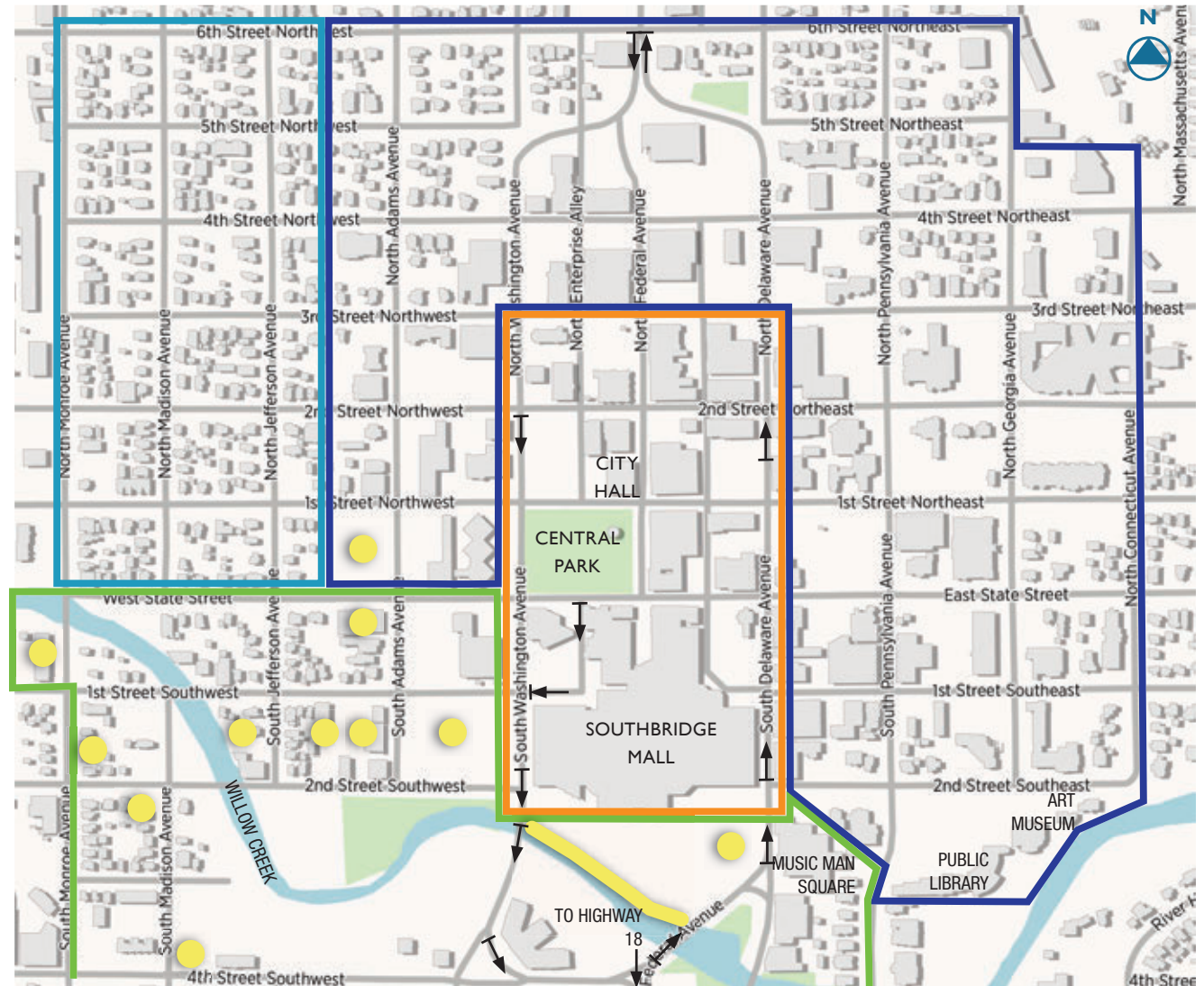
Activity, planning, and investment in Downtown continue to be a priority for the City. Updates to the 2007 Downtown Plan for Mason City should focus on strategies to:

- Continue and expand programs that invest in converting vacant upper stories into usable space, particularly for residential uses. Leverage programs under the Forest Park Urban Renewal Area as possible.
- Enhance connections into Downtown, such as the Willow Creek Corridor.
- Review regulations for allowing possible reuse of office spaces for other uses.
- Advance strategies to incorporate NIACC and health care operations into the downtown environment
- Attract and support events Downtown.
- Build the downtown quality of life for an active, attractive, safe, and secure environment that recruits and retains businesses.

5. PRESERVE HISTORIC RESOURCES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Mason City knows that historic preservation is an opportunity for reinvention and can reinvigorate areas with a spirit that may be harder to create with new buildings. For Mason City, historic preservation focuses on:

- Continue to work with the Historic Preservation Commission to evaluate properties for submission to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Administer review of changes to historic structures.



| Figure 4.27: Downtown Mason City Development Strategies

- CORE DISTRICT
- SUPPORT DISTRICT
- WILLOW CREEK PLAN
- NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT AREA
- REDEVELOPMENT/ REUSE OPPORTUNITY

MOBILITY



PLAN ELEMENTS

LAND USE

EXCEPTIONAL PLACES

MOBILITY

PARKS, RECREATION, &
NATURAL RESOURCES

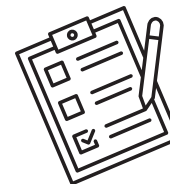
HOUSING &
NEIGHBORHOODS

INFRASTRUCTURE
& PUBLIC FACILITIES

Mobility means any method for a person or material to travel from one place to another, including cars, freight vehicles, railroads, transit vehicles, bicycles, electric devices, walking.

OVER A THIRD OF PUBLIC INPUT MAPPING COMMENTS WERE RELATED TO MOBILITY IDEAS, IMPROVEMENTS, AND SAFETY.

HIGHWAY 18/I22, NORTH SHORE DRIVE, SOUTH SHORE DRIVE, AND TRAIL CONNECTIVITY WERE THE MOST CITED MOBILITY IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED.



VISION

A mobility system that provides an efficient, safe, and comfortable experience for users to reach their intended destinations

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Elevate the aesthetics of users' surroundings through mobility corridors

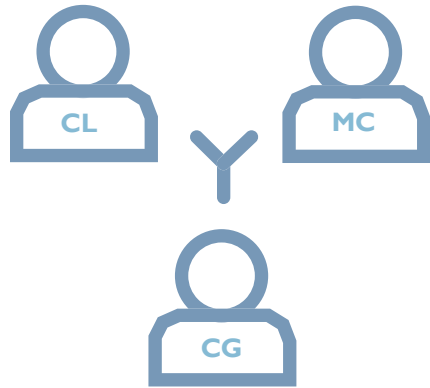
2. Reliably connect community amenities and destination centers

3. Implement a mobility system that is sensitive to the surrounding context

4. Provide quality access to regional mobility systems that spur economic development

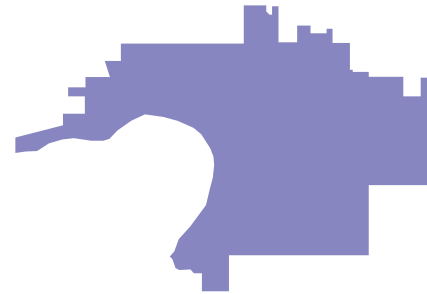
5. Maintain an adequate mobility level of service with future development

POLICIES AND ACTIONS PREVIEW



CERRO GORDO

1. Regularly review and update county road standards as appropriate.
2. Use county road sections as opportunities to build environmental diversity and visual appeal.
3. Improve safety and multi-modal accessibility on South Shore Drive.
4. Use the trail plan to consider multi-mobility enhancements on county roads.



CLEAR LAKE

1. Use a Complete Street approach when building new streets and developments.
2. Build the wayfinding system as growth occurs.
3. Implement the future transportation plan and fill critical system gaps.



MASON CITY

1. Use a Complete Street approach when building new streets and developments.
2. Build the wayfinding system as growth occurs.
3. Implement the future transportation plan and fill critical system gaps.

SHARED

1. Maintain regular communication with the Iowa Department of Transportation on projects and needs.
2. Use the future transportation plan to guide arterial and collector street extensions as growth occurs.
3. Schedule and budget for future transportation studies to match land use growth.
4. Require all new residential development to provide multiple local street and pedestrian access points.
5. Develop design standards for highly visible collector and arterial streets.
6. Prepare for new transportation modes and explore opportunities to improve transit service.

MOBILITY IN THE NORTH IOWA CORRIDOR



Mobility efficiency is top of mind for most people because we spend a significant portion of our lives traveling. Aspects of mobility are intertwined with every aspect of the built environment. Therefore, there are parts of many other sections of this Plan that contribute to the vision and goals for mobility in the future.

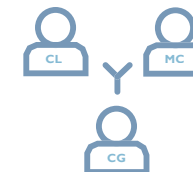
The policies and actions in this element focus mainly on the functional elements of the mobility system, while other elements detail character and site specific improvements to the system in the North Iowa Corridor.

The North Iowa Corridor's mobility systems can be much more than getting people from point A to point B. Common policies across the North Iowa Corridor should strive to improve the visual experience of traveling along first impression corridors. Localized policies for decision-makers should focus on completing connection and safety improvements in all mobility systems. The future land use plan is strongly built around the mobility framework to stimulate growth and promote economic development in the North Iowa Corridor.

MOBILITY STUDIES AND PLANS OF REFERENCE

- 2023 Clear Lake RAISE Grant - 4th Avenue S
- 2022 IA 122 Corridor Feasibility Study Mason City
- 2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- 2021 Regional Long Range Transportation Plan
- 2020 Mason City Willow Creek Master Plan
- 2017 Mason City Municipal Airport Master Plan
- 2014 Mason City Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS



Rules are in place to ensure a minimum level of transportation connectivity for public safety. It is up to the local jurisdictions to think beyond these minimum standards to create better connected and efficient mobility systems. People travel across jurisdictional boundaries, and thus, many policies and actions should require shared responsibility for a cohesive North Iowa Corridor mobility system.

1. MAINTAIN REGULAR COMMUNICATION WITH THE IOWA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION ON PROJECTS AND NEEDS.

Implementing the future mobility plan involves other jurisdictions - namely the Iowa Department of Transportation. Interstate 35 and Highways 122, 18, and 65 are critical routes that spur economic development and frame first impressions of the North Iowa Corridor to visitors. Continuing regular communication on conditions, needs, and improvements is a high priority. The roundabout improvements to Highway 18/122 in Mason City are a great example of cooperation and communication when implementing a major street design new to the North Iowa Corridor.

An important resource for applying complete street improvements in rural areas and constrained environments such as North and South Shore Drive is the Federal Highway Administration Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks report, 2016.

NETWORK IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

The potential mobility network shown in Figure 5.1 on the following pages does not show every street that would be needed for future development. The local street pattern should be determined as development occurs because understanding the exact path of these streets may vary depending on the details of projects. As the proposed streets, sidewalks, and paths are constructed, five basic principles should guide the process for every jurisdiction.

1. ENHANCE CONNECTIVITY.

New streets should line up with existing streets and connect new developments to existing ones using multiple entrances. Single access cul-de-sacs should be avoided unless environmental factors preclude other options.

2. BUILD COMPLETE STREETS.

Streets should accommodate multiple modes of transportation, including public transit, walkers, and bicyclists. While not every street will be appropriate for all features, streets should consider sidewalks, bicycle lanes, bicycle pavement markings, bicycle signage, or design that reduces traffic speeds. All new streets should have sidewalks on both sides for new local streets and evaluation of wide bike paths on new arterial and collector

streets. Street design should support safe access to bus stops where transit routes exist via sidewalks and crossings and allow space for waiting areas as more transit services become possible.

3. PROMOTE CHARACTER.

Streets are the largest public space and should be designed to reflect a high quality image of the community. Streets provide the first impression for many visitors and influence how residents view their community daily. Landscaping, street furniture, public art, green boulevards, and other attractive street features should be considered an investment in community character and a tool for economic development.

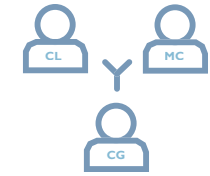
4. CONTEXT.

Street design should consider the context around it. For example, is the street in a residential neighborhood or a commercial center? This can affect decisions like the width of the street, landscaping, and design of pedestrian features. Street design should keep traffic at an appropriate level by using calming devices such as landscaped islands, crosswalks, and pavement variation.

5. SAFETY.

The guidelines above contribute to a safer environment for all modes of transportation. Street design should minimize conflicts and increase awareness of users, particularly at intersections, where the highest interaction of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists occurs.

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS



2. USE THE FUTURE TRANSPORTATION PLAN TO GUIDE ARTERIAL AND COLLECTOR STREET EXTENSIONS AS GROWTH OCCURS

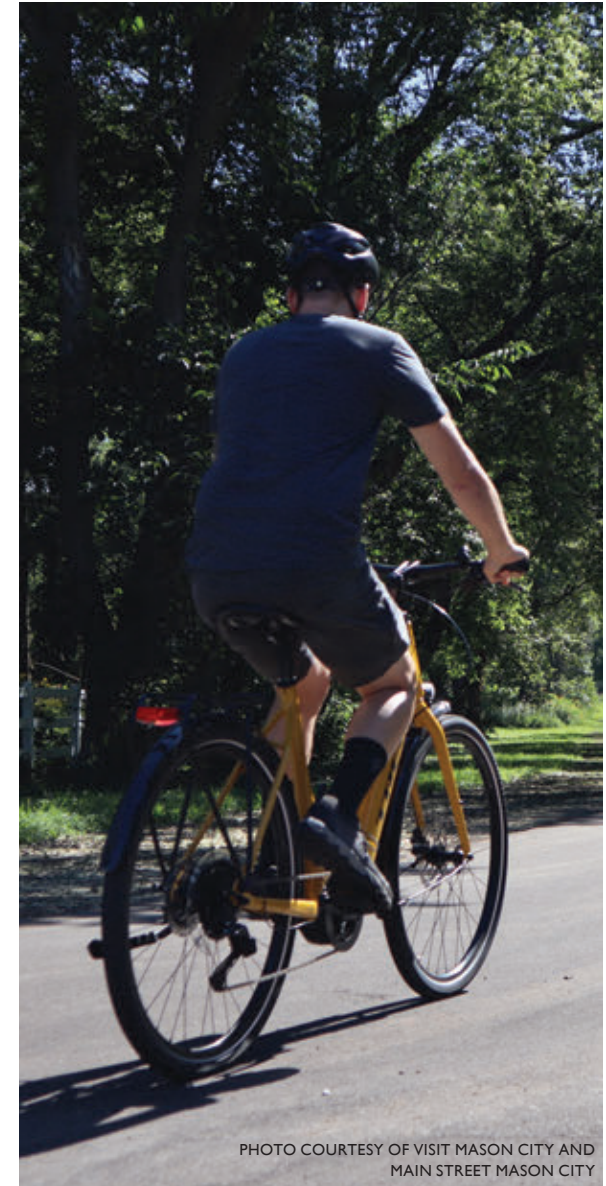
Land use and transportation must be coordinated for a coherent plan so that systems meet future needs. There are three important points about the future transportation plan in Figure 5.1. Much like the future land use plan, the transportation plan is:

- A. Big Picture.** The map does not show every street needed for future development. Each jurisdiction should determine the local street pattern as development occurs.
- B. Flexible.** While the routes shown in Figure 5.1 have been carefully thought out, the exact path of these streets may vary depending on the details of development as it occurs. The priorities are to maintain the principle of connectivity, to provide access to key connecting points, and to follow the general path shown on the map. Minor modifications can be made as needed on a case-by-case basis. Detailed engineering studies will be needed before undertaking any new road construction.
 - The map shows arterial and collector streets. These streets have a higher status than the local streets. The routes should be given significant weight when making development decisions, while local streets are more flexible.
- C. Transparent with Property Owners.** Many new streets shown on the map run through privately owned property, and implementation will depend on the decisions of the property owners. Jurisdictions should reach out to property owners in these key areas to discuss plans for the future.

3. SCHEDULE AND BUDGET FOR FUTURE TRANSPORTATION STUDIES TO MATCH LAND USE GROWTH

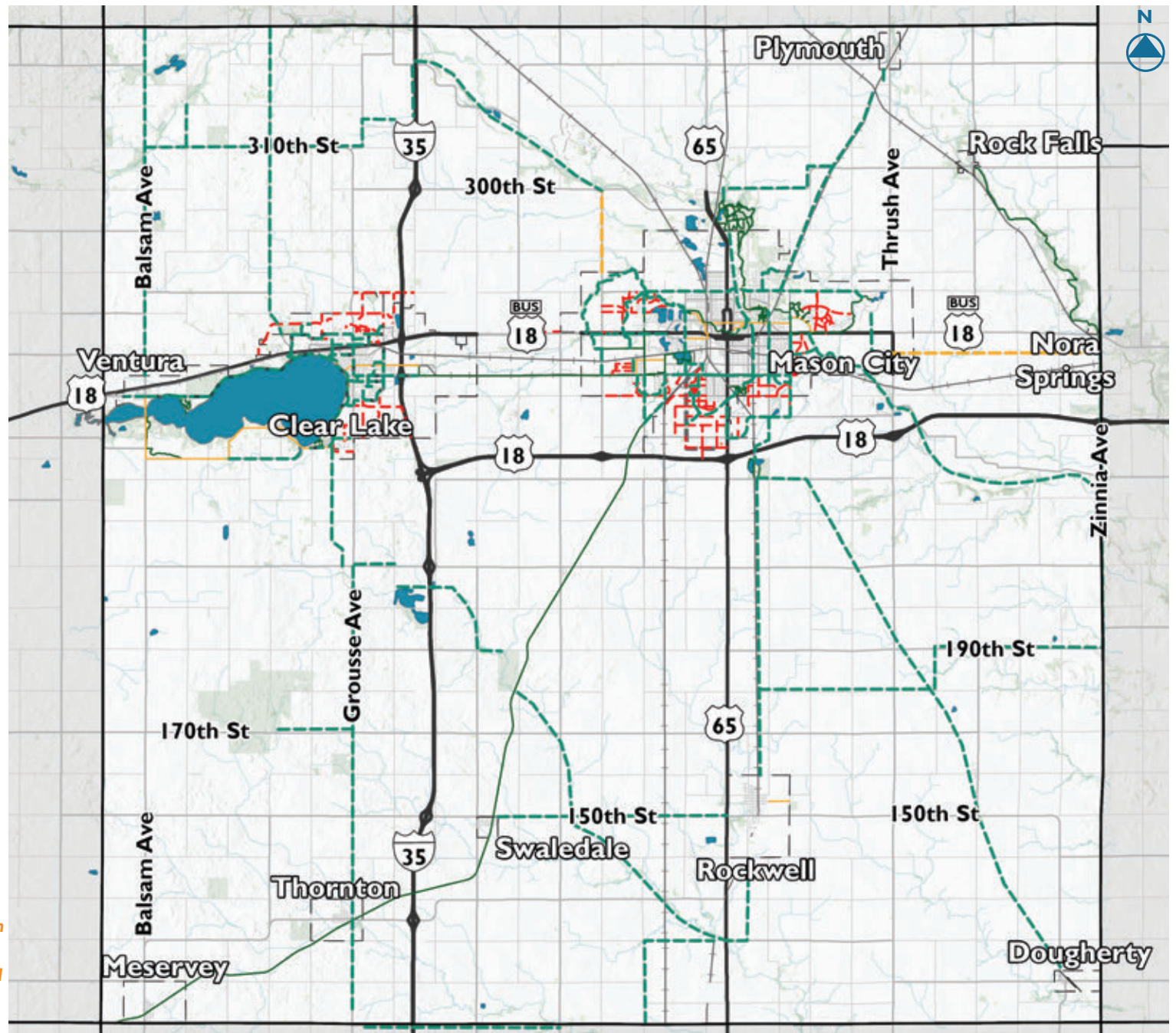
While using the future transportation plan as the guide, funding must be devoted to make improvements when ready. The schedule and budget approach should:

- A. Acquire right-of-way for expansion of the system into growth areas.** Jurisdictions should work with developers and property owners to reserve right-of-way for major streets before development. This right-of-way should accommodate planned or possible future multi-modal facilities, utilities, and future expansion. Developers should leave room to extend streets to future adjacent development by leaving stub streets or empty lots where extensions are planned or needed.
- B. Provide a dedicated funding source for arterial and collector street development.** A reliable and innovative funding program is necessary to meet the ongoing demand for major roadway projects. The jurisdictions should identify and align those sources with project priorities in capital improvement plans.



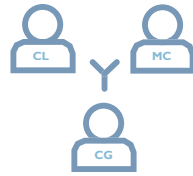
- Major Arterial
- Existing Street
- Existing Trail
- + + + + Existing Railroad
- Proposed Street
- Proposed Trail
- Rail Extension
- [- - -] City Limits

See the Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources Plan element for the detailed trail plans. Details excluded here for map clarity.



| Figure 5.1: North Iowa Corridor Future Transportation Plan

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS



4. REQUIRE ALL NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT TO PROVIDE MULTIPLE LOCAL STREET AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESS POINTS

Multiple connection options to neighborhoods benefit emergency access while significantly improving walkability and efficiency of future development. Figures 5.2 and 5.3 show how local street connectivity can benefit or hinder neighborhood development.

- **Regulations review.** Review regulations for ways to improve connectivity and safety by changing subdivision and development standards to require or reserve space for multiple mobility connections.

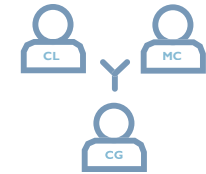


| Figure 5.2: Distance to Destination Examples - Mason City



| Figure 5.3: Distance to Destination Examples - Clear Lake

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS



5. DEVELOP DESIGN STANDARDS FOR HIGHLY VISIBLE COLLECTOR AND ARTERIAL STREETS

Along with the visual elements for major corridors in the Exceptional Places element of this Plan, there should be standard functional design and access management standards for corridors to prevent congestion and maintain the level of service. The Iowa Department of Transportation manages some corridor design elements which will require their approval to implement.

ACCESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Access management relates the access points along a road from private property and intersecting streets. Managing access improves safety for motorists and pedestrians while providing clarity to customers entering and exiting the property.

- A. Construct roads behind buildings and rear property lines for traffic to access parallel developments.
- B. Limit direct access to major arterial streets to only the major intersections.
- C. Investigate stoplight efficiency to optimize traffic signal timing and phasing.
- D. Align entrances on opposite sides of the street to prevent turning conflicts for vehicles. Aligning entrances also assists customers with crossing streets to access businesses more easily.
- E. Consolidate areas with continuous curb cuts that create large conflict zones of vehicles potentially entering and existing.

6. PREPARE FOR NEW TRANSPORTATION MODES AND EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE TRANSIT SERVICE

Spaces for vehicles, scooters, electric bicycles, and personal transportation devices are changing rapidly. For example, it is estimated that by 2040, one-third of the world's vehicles and over half of all new vehicles sold will be electric. Additionally, several electric personal mobility devices like scooters, hoverboards, and electric bikes add speed and convenience for short trips. New technologies may change how transportation spaces function. Standard design and planning should incorporate:

- A. Updates to pavement marking, signing, and temporary traffic control standards as updated by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).
- B. A local expert or resource shared between jurisdictions on technology advances and how to prepare for electric and automated vehicles.
- C. Pilot programs for connected vehicle infrastructure technologies to gain experience.
- D. Signal phase and timing readiness into traffic signal construction and upgrade projects.
- E. Complete Street strategies when rethinking right-of-way design for different mobility types.
- F. Opportunities for non-traditional transit options that use these new technologies.

There are limited transit options in the North Iowa Corridor. As of 2023, transit service is primarily provided through on-call services with limited hours by Region 2 Transit. Mason City does have a robust fixed route system that serves parts of the city.



Considerations for improving future transit options include:

- Explore investing additional resources in existing assisted transportation programs and staffing resources. Funding sources include capital budgets, state and federal funding, and other available grants.
- As mobility demand evolves with demographic shifts, transit demand will increase. Leaders must continue discussing options with regional partners to keep efforts relevant and a priority in regional planning efforts.

CERRO GORDO POLICIES AND ACTIONS



The County maintains a series of paved streets, gravel roads, and recreational trails. The Iowa Department of Transportation manages the most significant road projects in the unincorporated area. The County's primary action is to maintain, monitor, and adjust its mobility system as necessary for safety or connection improvements.

1. REGULARLY REVIEW AND UPDATE COUNTY ROAD STANDARDS FOR BEST PRACTICES AS APPROPRIATE

Updates to monitor in the future include standards for transportation enhancements, considerations for new technologies, and access management provisions.

2. USE COUNTY ROAD SECTIONS AS OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD ENVIRONMENTAL DIVERSITY AND VISUAL APPEAL

Even beyond the major corridors, the concepts for rural roadway character along Highway 18/122 and 4th Avenue/19th Street in the Exceptional Places element can apply more broadly to increase biodiversity of landscapes in the North Iowa Corridor and better filter stormwater runoff from roadways and farm fields.

3. IMPROVE SAFETY AND MULTI-MODAL ACCESSIBILITY ON SOUTH SHORE DRIVE

The subarea plan for the South Shore Drive neighborhood in the Exceptional Places element details mobility improvements. The need to improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists will only increase with increased demand for property near the lake.

4. USE THE TRAIL PLAN TO CONSIDER MULTI-MOBILITY ENHANCEMENTS ON COUNTY ROADS

The Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources element details a long-term trail plan for the county area. While trail usage throughout the unincorporated area will be primarily recreational, they can provide commuting potential for the avid cyclist, especially between Clear Lake and Mason City. Part of the trail plan includes signing paved and gravel road segments for connections to alert motorists to watch out for cyclists, and cyclists to watch out for motorists. Future investments to explore could include wider paved shoulders and periodic resting shelters off the roadway.

CLEAR LAKE & MASON CITY COMMON POLICIES AND ACTIONS



There are common planning best practices that should be used regardless of the city to improve quality of life, safety, and mobility options.

I. USE A COMPLETE STREET APPROACH WHEN BUILDING NEW STREETS AND DEVELOPMENTS

Cities should regularly review and update development regulations so that urban road improvements serve multiple functions and users. When feasible, most arterial or collector streets should include “Complete Streets” features like pedestrian paths, landscaped medians, landscaping between streets and sidewalks, buried utilities, and street trees. Traits that support a complete system include:

- A. Street connectivity.** Development with high street and sidewalk connectivity allows more direct and shorter travel distances in all directions.
- B. Intersection/barrier treatments.** A pedestrian friendly transportation system integrates measures to safely and conveniently cross barriers such as major streets, railroads, and major developments.
- C. Mixing land uses.** A mix of origins and destinations within a reasonable walking distance makes traveling without a car a viable option more often.
- D. Trails and pathways.** Often a strong recreational amenity, trails are often used for recreation first and transportation a distant second. However, trails and pathways can bypass barriers or fill a “gap” that may be missing in the street system.

E. Narrow lot widths. In residential and commercial developments, the width of parcels directly correlates with the time a walker or bicyclist must travel to reach a destination. Time and distance directly affect whether an individual can (considering mobility issues) and will (considering convenience issues) choose to travel without a car.

F. Clear pathways through the site. Upon arrival at a destination, there should be a clear pathway for a bicyclist or pedestrian to navigate through the site (often a parking lot and drive aisle) to the entrance of the facility or bicycle parking areas. Clearly defined pathways should provide pedestrians and bicyclists a safe, convenient, and visible route across automobile traffic.

G. Bicycle racks. Appropriate bicycle parking, including site location and rack design, must be included to make any new development bicycle friendly.

Beyond design and regulations, the programming to increase people’s comfort with walking and biking is also important. The number of active transportation partnerships in the North Iowa Corridor is impressive for any size of community, and Mason City is leading the way. Programs such as the Blue Zones initiative encourage breaking the initial barrier for some to consider walking or biking to more destinations. Other programming initiatives to showcase routes or educate about using facilities could include:

- A. Public art walks, history tours, or programs.
- B. School district partnerships for walking groups such as “Walking School Buses.”

ECONOMICS OF COMPLETE STREETS

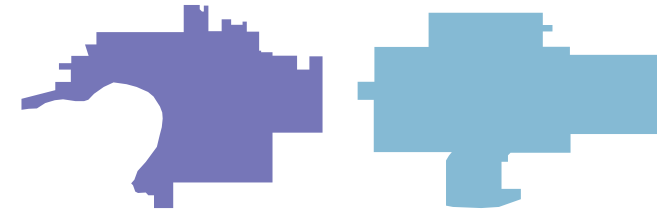
A robust library of research shows evidence that streets for all users have economic benefits.

- **Spur Private Investment.** The investment that communities make in implementing Complete Streets policies can stimulate greater private investment, especially in retail districts.
- **Raise Property Values.** Networks of streets that are safe and accessible for people on foot or riding bikes have higher property values, and residents pay less for transportation.
- **Help Reduce Crashes.** Comprehensive safety improvements for pedestrians reduce crashes for all mode types.

Source and policy resources: Smart Growth America, Complete Street Coalition smartgrowthamerica.org/completestreets.

- C. Business walking or biking participation awards.
- D. Temp. street closures for walking or biking events.
- E. Consider applying for Walk or Bicycling Friendly Community designation.** In addition to recognition as a good bicycling environment, many observers consider Walk and Bicycle Friendly Community status to indicate overall community quality. As such, it is a significant community marketing tool and reinforces substantial efforts in balanced transportation development.

CLEAR LAKE & MASON CITY COMMON POLICIES AND ACTIONS



2. BUILD THE WAYFINDING SYSTEM AS GROWTH OCCURS

The mobility system should be intuitive. Navigating the system may be easy for those who live in the North Iowa Corridor. However, navigation is not intuitive for the thousands visiting Clear Lake and Mason City destinations. Therefore, signage and markers should make the system as intuitive as possible for everyone. The graphic design and branding should be unique to each city and the following general improvements should occur over time to build on current efforts:



A. Priority entryway corridors. As community entryways, certain corridors as indicated in the Exceptional Places Plan element should welcome visitors as the gateway to the cities. Community gateways are the transportation routes where virtually all residents and visitors first experience the North Iowa Corridor. Gateway treatments may include:

- Themed Art Sculptures
- Landscaping
- Welcome Signage

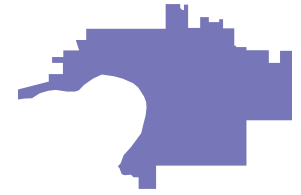
B. Follow a consistent theme in all elements of the system. The theme for all street and pedestrian scale signage should remain the same so travelers know they are on the right path when following the procession of sign directions.



C. Pedestrian and bicycle routes. Include signs along designated routes that give narrative directions and distances to citywide destinations (lower priority destinations can be listed at shorter distances), building entrances, and detour routes when a site is under construction.

- Mason City, in particular, has implemented a robust active transportation wayfinding system. However, the route numbering systems on the signage are unfamiliar to visitors and can be confusing without text descriptions for directions and destinations.

CLEAR LAKE POLICIES AND ACTIONS



3. IMPLEMENT THE FUTURE TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND FILL CRITICAL SYSTEM GAPS

The future transportation plan in Figure 5.4 on the next page shows the future improvements for Clear Lake, including:

- A. Northwest Connector From 260th Street to Eagle Avenue.** This connection is for long term planning as demand for residential development in the area grows. The connection provides an alternative to Highway 18.
- B. North Side Connections.** As residential development grows, new street connections west of Buddy Holly Place to Village Road and north from existing cul-de-sac developments to 270th Street are essential for efficiency.
- C. Emerald Edge Expansion Area.** Reserve connections from the new Emerald Edge development along Highway 18 north to eventually connect with 275th Street and west to connect with N 8th Street.
- D. Northeast Connections.** Existing street stubs on N 24th Street and N 20th Street should ensure that new streets connect to north and west street systems as development occurs and not result in cul-de-sac development.
- E. South Side Connections.** Maintaining a continuous system that avoids cul-de-sacs is appropriate to maximize development potential. These include extensions south from 12th Avenue S and east/west between S 8th Street and 24th Street. A frontage road that parallels Interstate 35 would also provide a connector route for current and future business traffic to avoid residential streets.

Off-street Trail Expansions. See the Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources Plan element for details.

Figure 5.5: Future Active Transportation Plan identifies possible improvements, including:

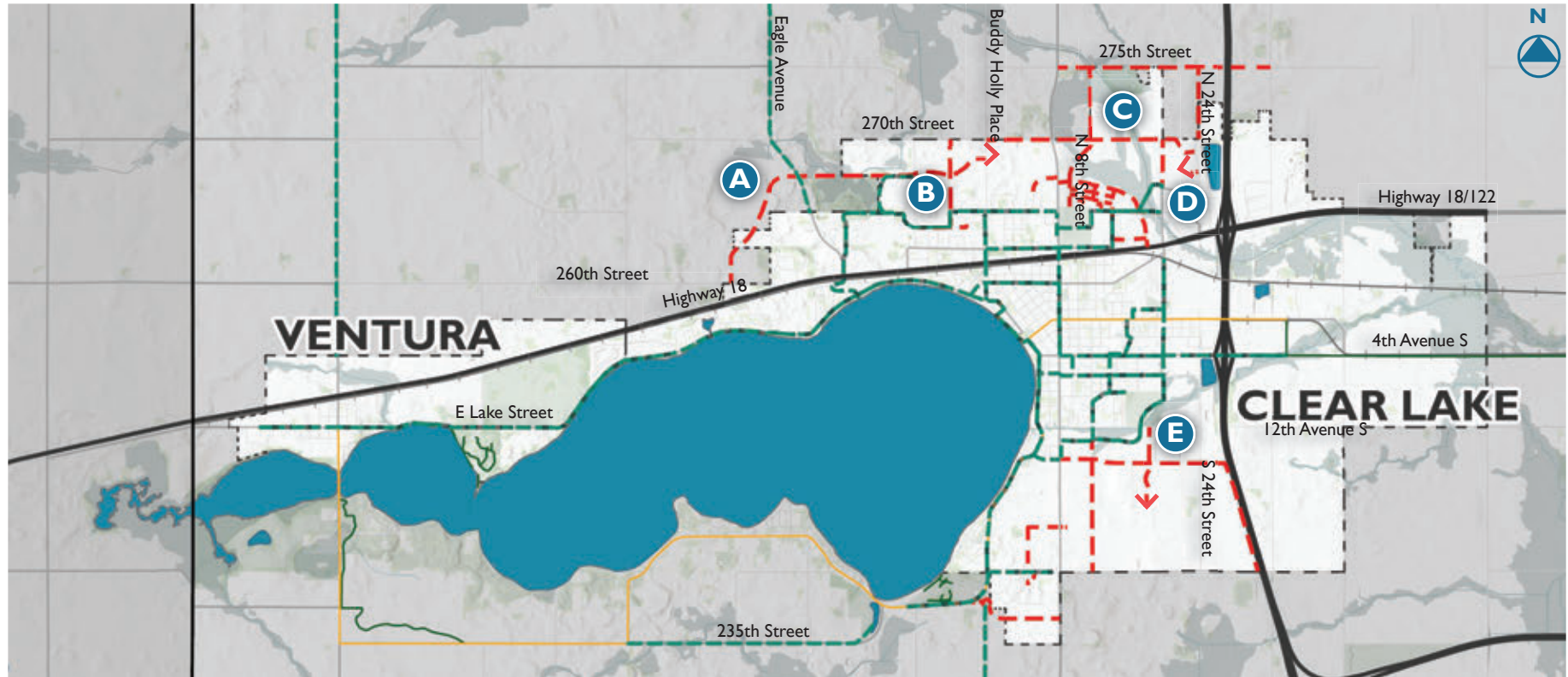
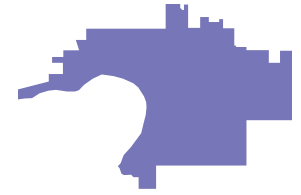
- A. A sidewalk on the north side of North Shore Drive from Clark Road to 34th Street W.** The width would be limited, a path may have to meander, and portions might be adjacent to the street curb given existing overhead utility lines. Still, it would provide a pedestrian route from Ventura. A sidewalk exists on the south side of North Shore Drive from 34th Street W to Fairway Drive, then continues on the north to the end of the golf club.
- B. Curb extensions from the golf club property to 19th Street W.** Space for a sidewalk is extremely limited in this segment because of private property lines and utility pole placement. The only option for a dedicated pedestrian route would be to extend pavement from the curb on the north side of the street for a limited width sidewalk, which would not be ADA accessible in some places and require walking on the street at some private driveway entries.
- C. Incomplete sidewalk segments continue on the south side at 19th Street W.** Working with property owners, segments should be sought to create a complete paved sidewalk to reach the complete sidewalk system at W 7th Avenue.
- D. Shared street/bicycle boulevard on South Lakeview Drive and South Shore Court.** These narrow and low volume streets already act as a route to the State Park trail. A critical objective of the mobility plan for Clear Lake is the environment of North and South Shore

Drives. These streets are the primary routes for navigating the lake in the summer. All types of mobility heavily use them with posted speed limits up to 35 mph in some segments and 24-26 foot pavement widths. North and South Shore Drives are signed as “share the road” routes in some places and equipped with painted on-street bike lanes in others. The right-of-way width, utility placement, and existing private development prohibit adding a trail width path adjacent to the roadway in almost all locations.

- E. Install a paved sidewalk along South Shore Drive from South Shore Court to Lakeview Drive.** Direct pedestrians through neighborhoods on the north side of South Shore Drive as much as possible or implement a sidewalk along South Shore Drive to the Tanglefoot Girl Scout Camp.
- F. Highway 18 crossings.** Enhancing crossings at Highway 18 for pedestrians will improve overall safety. Clear Lake expects population growth north of Highway 18. Therefore, improving the safety for pedestrians is critical. Existing crossings can be improved by installing high-visibility crossing markings, phased walk signals, and sidewalks leading up to the intersection. For example, the sidewalk on N 20th Street leading north from the High School ends before the intersection. Investing in a grade-separated crossing through local and grant funds would provide the safest and greatest benefit. Several locations for a pedestrian bridge or tunnel should be evaluated.

See the Federal Highway Administration Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks report, 2016

CLEAR LAKE POLICIES AND ACTIONS



| Figure 5.4: Clear Lake Future Transportation Plan

Existing Proposed

- Major Arterial
- Street
- Trail
- Railroad or Extension
- On-Street Bike Facility/Route

- A. Northwest Connector From 260th Street to Eagle Avenue
- B. North Side Connections
- C. Emerald Edge Expansion Area
- D. Northeast Connections
- E. South Side Connections

CLEAR LAKE POLICIES AND ACTIONS

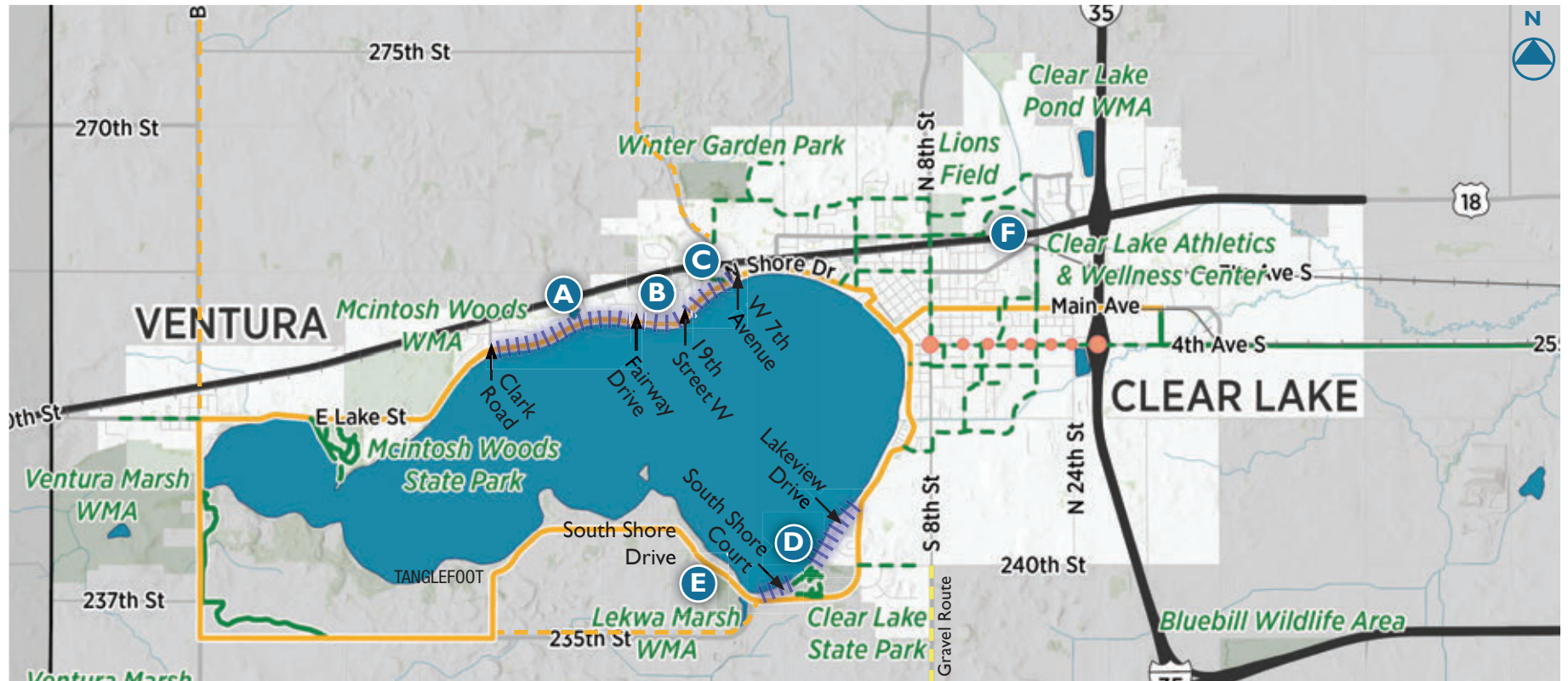
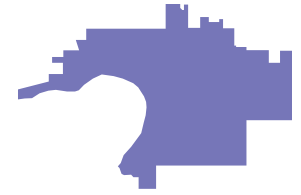


Figure 5.5: Clear Lake Active Transportation Concepts

- Proposed Trails
- Off-Street/Greenway Trail
- On-Street Trail Route
- Proposed On-Street Trail Route
- 4th Street Concept
- Parks
- ||||| Sidewalk Infill

- A. A sidewalk on the north side of North Shore Drive from Clark Road to 34th Street W
- B. Curb extensions from the golf club property to 19th Street W
- C. Incomplete sidewalk segments continue on the south side at 19th Street W
- D. Shared street/bicycle boulevard on South Lakeview Drive and South Shore Court
- E. Install a paved sidewalk along South Shore Drive from South Shore Court to Lakeview Drive
- F. Highway 18 crossings

CLEAR LAKE POLICIES AND ACTIONS



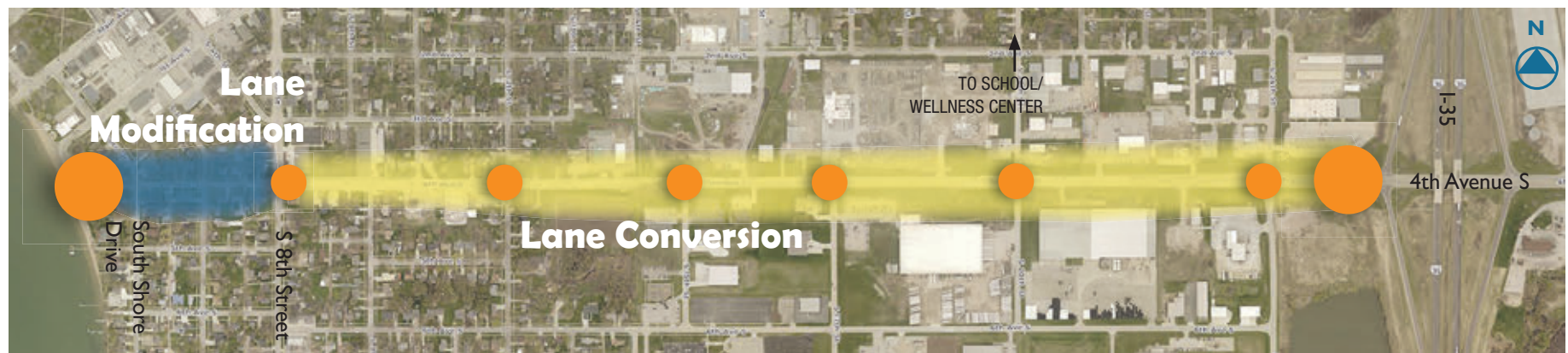
HIGH PRIORITY ACTIONS AND CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES

- **Use 4th Avenue as a model application for Complete Streets principles.** The 4th Avenue corridor is a secondary entryway into Clear Lake and connects to Mason City (see the Exceptional Places Plan element). At exit 193 on Interstate 35, people traveling along 4th Avenue experience little welcome and an environment common to other exit corridors throughout the country. There is no indication that a significant lake is a short distance to the west and many cultural amenities in Mason City to the east.

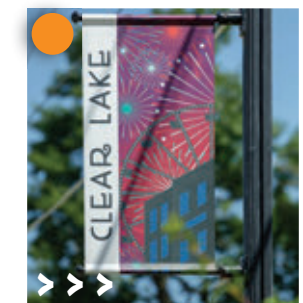
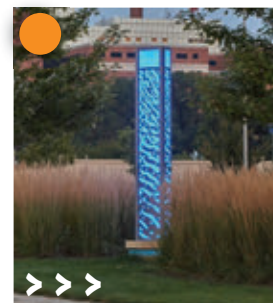
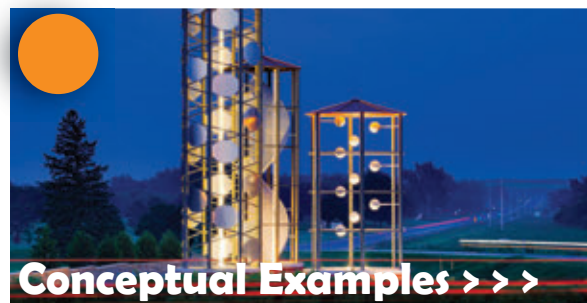
The City of Clear Lake was awarded a Federal RAISE Grant in 2023 for planning and preliminary design to convert 4th Avenue from 4-lane to 3-lane with a center turn lane, bike lanes, sidewalks, street lighting enhancements, banners, and trees.

4TH AVENUE CORRIDOR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Accommodate all mobility users through Complete Street principles.
- Enhance the arrival experience from the Interstate 35 exit into the community.
- Improve the comfort of the street corridor for travel.
- Add facilities for safe pedestrian and bicycle use through and across the corridor.



| Figure 5.6: 4th Avenue S Corridor Placemaking Ideas



CLEAR LAKE POLICIES AND ACTIONS



| Figure 5.7: 4th Avenue, West of 8th Street



Two vehicle lanes.

A two way bike lane on one street side.

Standard sidewalks on both sides of the street.

| Figure 5.8: 4th Avenue, East of 8th Street



Three lanes with a center turn lane.

Standard bike lanes in both directions.

Standard sidewalks on both sides of the street.

| Complete Street strategies for 4th Avenue include:

- Slow traffic into Clear Lake through lane reductions and/or streetscaping enhancements.
- Add separated facilities for cyclists and pedestrians along at least one side of the street. Connect the facilities with the existing Trolley Trail to the east.
- Amend the bike and pedestrian facilities based on street context as 4th Avenue approaches the lake.
- Incorporate the overall themes of the North Iowa Corridor through a similar approach as the Highway 18/122 corridor with wayfinding, banners, art, and lighting installations.
- 8th Street intersection enhancements to direct cyclists to across lane changes.

MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS



3. IMPLEMENT THE FUTURE TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND FILL CRITICAL SYSTEM GAPS

Figure 5.9 on the following page shows the future transportation plan for Mason City that identifies future connections in the network, including:

- A. Northwest Growth Area.** Extensions from N Roosevelt Avenue and 4th Street NW should provide through access to new developments around N Eisenhower Avenue and 12th Street NW. New streets east of N Taft Avenue should focus on connecting to N Pierce Avenue while navigating the floodplain area.
 - Completing lane configuration improvements on Highway 18/122.
- B. Northeast Growth Area.** Several streets are ready for extension into future new neighborhoods. Critical connections include through routes from:
 - Multiple routes from 12th Street NE to 4th Street SE, with one going via Missouri Avenue.
 - Asbury Drive to Brandywine Road.
- C. Southwest Growth Area.** Priorities are about continuing a street system that creates connections to support growth and business access to major arterial routes. See the Exceptional Places Plan element for details on this growth area. Priority through connections include:
 - 245th Street to 240th/43rd Street.
 - Multiple routes from S Federal Avenue to S Pierce Avenue, south of a greenway buffer from residential uses.

- Continuation of residential streets from S Jefferson Avenue, S Monroe Avenue, 23rd Street SW, and 29th Street SW to new growth areas and looping to S Pierce Avenue.
- Streets west off South Pierce Avenue to loop south to 43rd Street SW.
- East/west connectivity from S Benjamin Avenue to Mallard Avenue.
- Connecting Country Club Drive to S Harding Avenue for greater mobility.

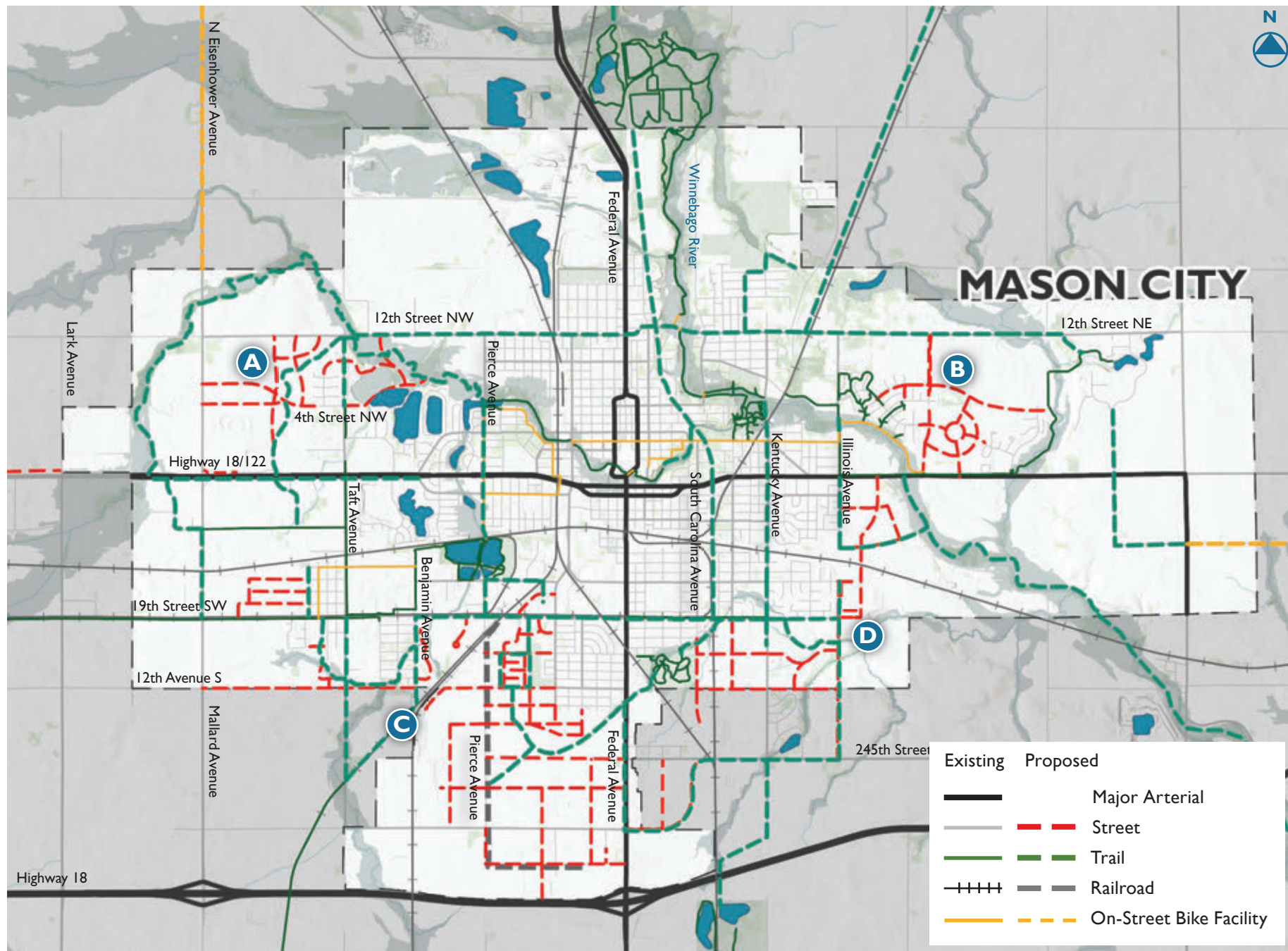
D. Southeast Growth Area. Enhance connections to improve emergency response and growth possibilities. Connection priorities include:

- Continuation of S Illinois Avenue south to 245th Street.
- Continuation of S Carolina Avenue for a through route connection to Kentucky/Quail Avenue.
- An east/west street that would connect future extensions of S Illinois Avenue and S Carolina Avenue.

HIGH PRIORITY ACTIONS AND CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES

- **Continue implementing the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.** Mason City is making great strides in active transportation improvements to become a premier destination for bicyclists. This plan should be updated by 2029 (originally authored in 2014).
- **Study and budget for an additional north-south connection east of Kentucky Avenue.** Consider floodplains, available right-of-way, and adjacent uses.

- **Consolidate driveways and improve streetscaping along Federal Avenue and Highway 18/122.** Resolving traffic conflicts along these streets results in managing access to the roadways. See the Exceptional Places Plan element.



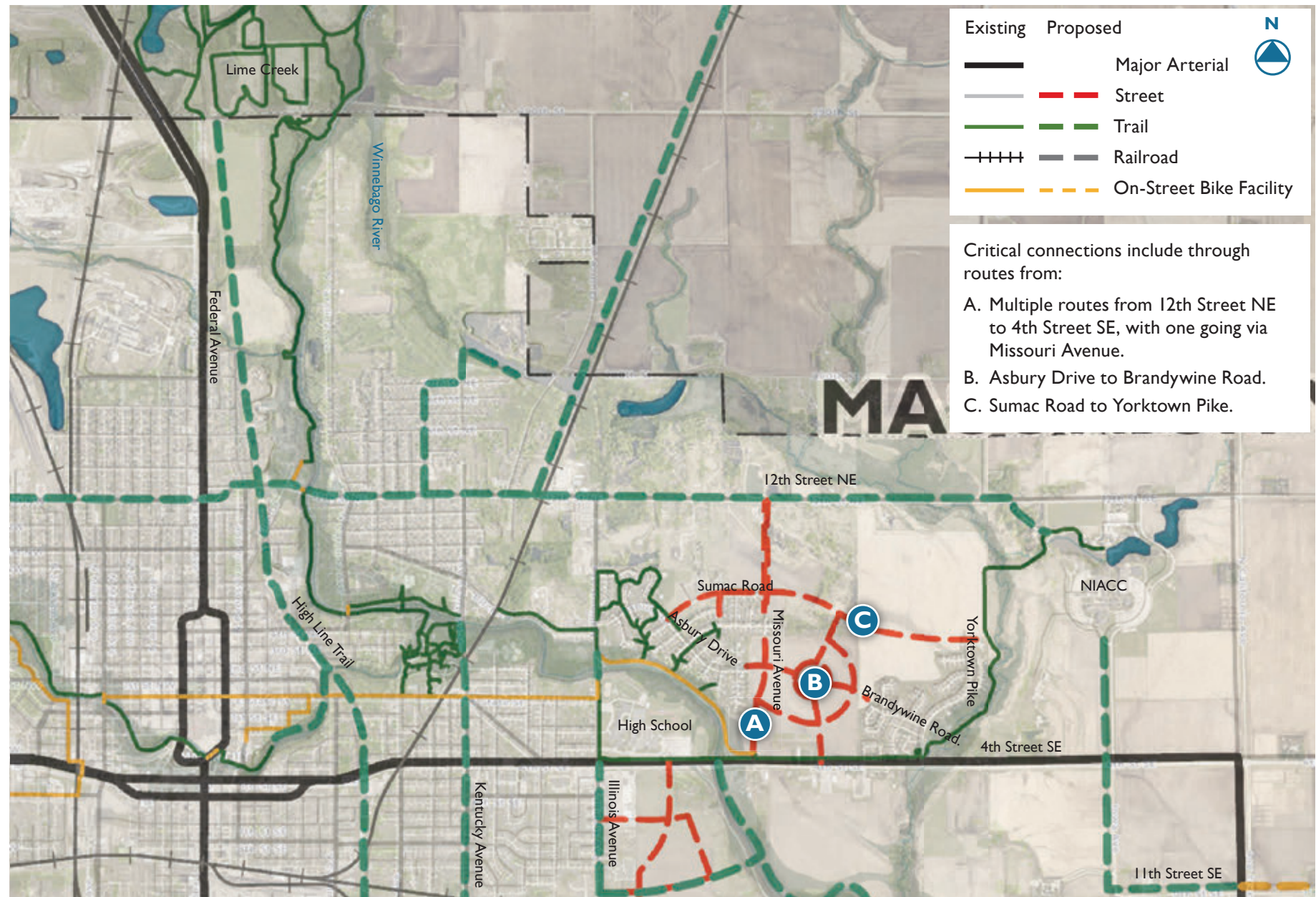
| Figure 5.9: Mason City Future Transportation Plan

MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS - NORTHWEST



Figure 5.10: Mason City Future Transportation Plan - Northwest

MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS - NORTHEAST



| Figure 5.11: Mason City Future Transportation Plan - Northeast

MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS - SOUTHWEST

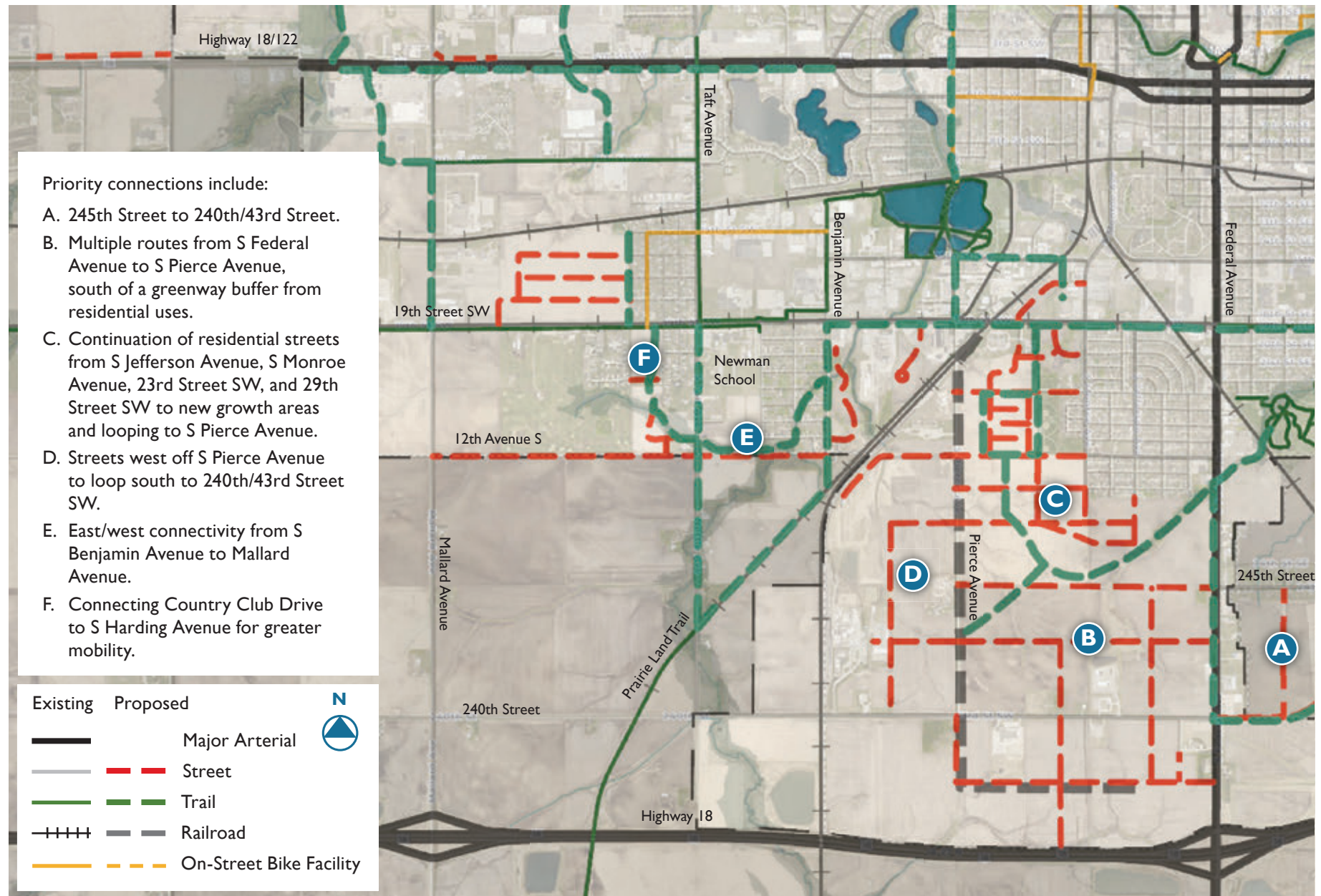
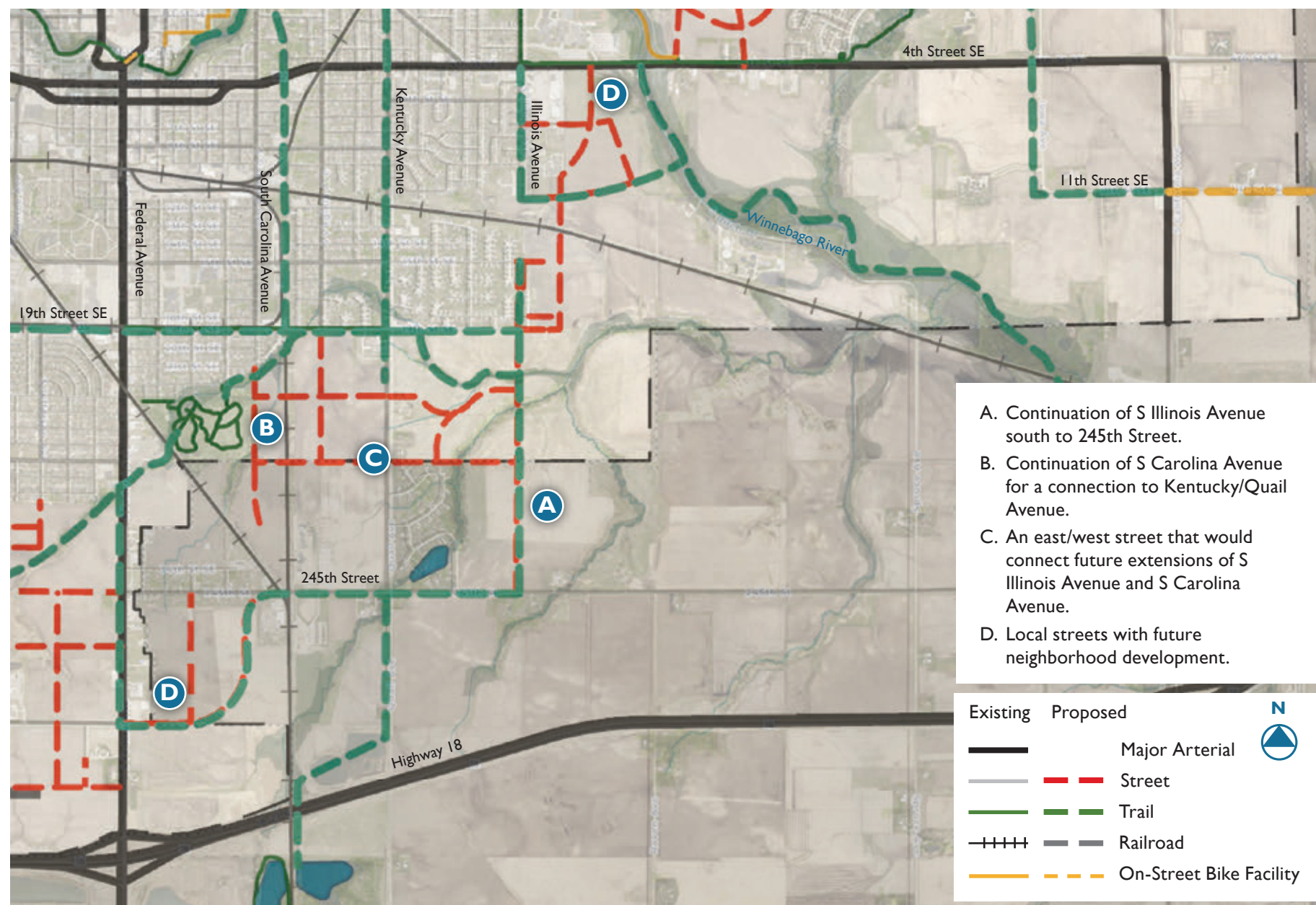


Figure 5.12: Mason City Future Transportation Plan - Southwest

MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS - SOUTHEAST



| Figure 5.13: Mason City Future Transportation Plan - Southeast

PARKS, RECREATION, & NATURAL RESOURCES



PLAN ELEMENTS

LAND USE

EXCEPTIONAL PLACES

MOBILITY

**PARKS, RECREATION, &
NATURAL RESOURCES**

HOUSING &
NEIGHBORHOODS

INFRASTRUCTURE
& PUBLIC FACILITIES

Parks, recreation, and natural resources are fundamental to attracting and retaining residents.

35% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS INDICATED OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL OR CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES ARE A REASON THEY CHOOSE TO LIVE IN NORTH IOWA.

44% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS FELT PARKS AND OPEN SPACES SHOULD BE A TOP FIVE FOCUS FOR NORTH IOWA IN THE NEXT TEN YEARS.



VISION

North Iowa Corridor's parks, recreation, and natural resources system is a premier amenity in Iowa and the region that builds on accessibility to unique natural and built features

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Grow and adapt recreational opportunities with population growth

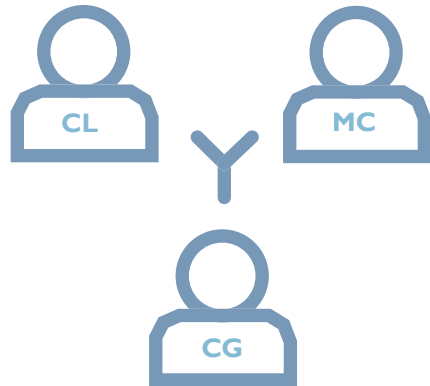
2. Have accessible and convenient recreational experiences throughout the North Iowa Corridor

3. Logically connect destinations to a regional pedestrian and bicycle system

4. Aim for all city residents to be within walking distance of a park or recreation area

5. Leverage water trails as a tourism attraction

POLICIES AND ACTIONS PREVIEW



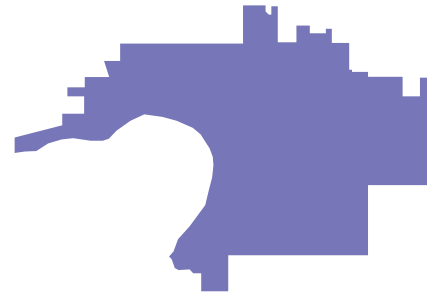
SHARED

1. Develop new park and recreation facilities that meet the needs of future growth.
2. Enhance existing facilities to provide amenities and the basic elements that residents need.
3. Seek other funding mechanisms to strategically phase park and recreation improvements over time.
4. Connect parks across jurisdictions with trails.
5. Develop sustainable standards for facilities that minimize maintenance demands.



CERRO GORDO

1. Identify strategies to enhance knowledge, use, and accessibility of county recreational areas.
2. Expand access to water trails and market regional opportunities.
3. Enhance and grow existing recreational assets.
4. Maintain and expand the trail system.



CLEAR LAKE

1. Preserve existing and create future facilities.
2. Connect existing parks and trails to future growth areas.
3. Enhance shoreline access and gathering spaces.



MASON CITY

1. Preserve existing and create future facilities.
2. Connect existing parks and trails to future growth areas.
3. Expand ways to interact with the waterways.

PARKS, RECREATION, AND NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE NORTH IOWA CORRIDOR



PHOTO COURTESY OF VISIT MASON CITY
AND MAIN STREET MASON CITY

Parks and recreation opportunities are one of the North Iowa Corridor's best known assets to retain and attract people.

During the planning process, participants continually stressed the importance of well-maintained parks, recreation opportunities, and more recreational programs and trails as an important growth element for the North Iowa Corridor.

Each jurisdiction in the North Iowa Corridor brings a unique set of assets to the available experiences that create a paradise for recreation enthusiasts. Beyond traditional parks, experiences include water sports, river boating, mountain biking, bird watching, top tier trails, indoor sports, nationally known historical and cultural landmarks, and much more.

TERMINOLOGY

Discussions of parks, recreation, and natural resources may use terms interchangeably. The following list defines certain terms to use with the North Iowa Corridor Plan.

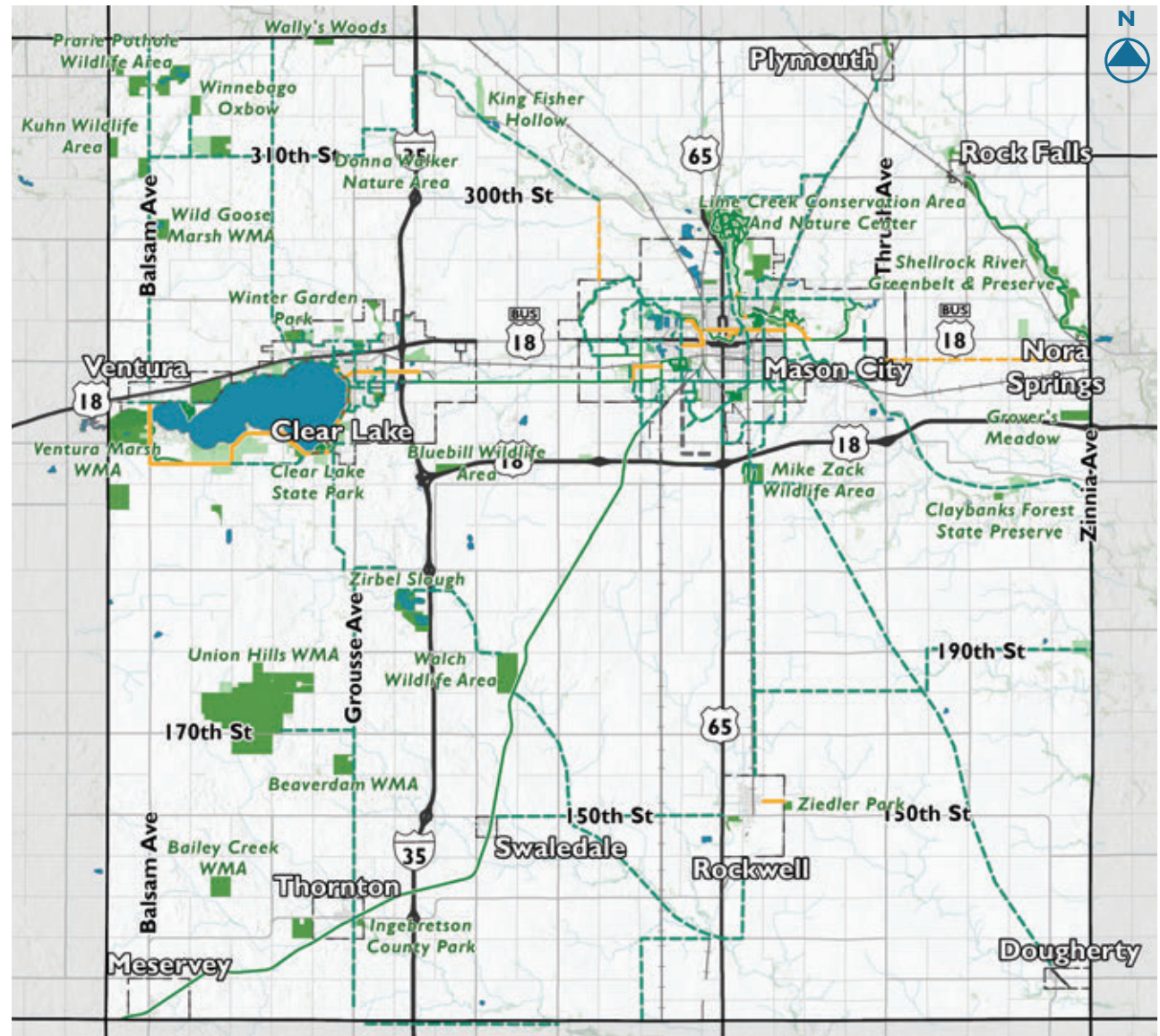
- » **Active Park Facility/Area.** Tends to have spaces and landscapes that are groomed for use by visitors, with built features such as playgrounds or sporting facilities.
- » **Passive Park Facility/Area.** Tends to be a space that is disturbed as little as possible to protect and preserve ecological features of the landscape but still allow public access.
- » **Recreational Facility.** Typically an indoor or partially indoor space for programmed activity such as gyms, indoor sports, physical fitness studios, and similar uses for the public. These facilities are not exclusive but may require a reasonable membership fee.
- » **Natural Resource.** Any environmental feature that brings value to the North Iowa Corridor or warrants protection from development to mitigate floods, preserve species, or retain natural beauty.

The approach to the future parks, recreation, and natural resources system focuses on the following:

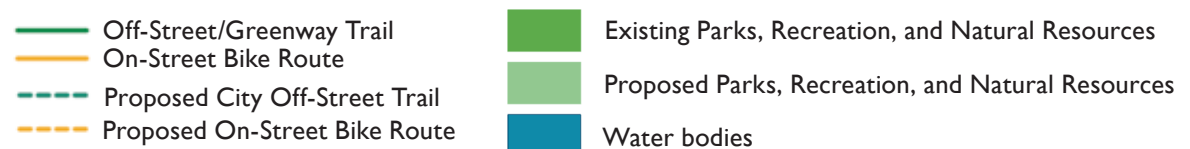
- **Existing Parks.** Use varying features and enhancements to make each resource stand out as a different experience among the parks in the community and region.
- **Existing Trails and Paths.** Improve safety, comfort, and connections on existing paths for walking and biking.
- **Existing Recreation Facilities.** Keep standalone sites outside of parks that provide indoor recreation such as community or wellness centers, courts, or school facilities open for public use.
- **Trail and Path Expansion.** Complete the most critical links for connectivity with the most appropriate facilities to fill the critical links for connectivity.
- **Access to Parks.** Ensure each household can reach parks by foot or bike if they choose and show people how to get there.
- **New Facility Areas.** Distribute various facilities within new growth areas based on needs.
- **Regional Context.** Plan for how each space fits into the larger regional parks system.

Any future policies and actions for future parks and recreation spaces should consider four criteria:

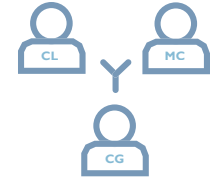
- **Classification.** Categories reflect the activities parks provide.
- **Service Area.** The service radius of each facility is used to identify geographical gaps in service.
- **National Standards.** Levels of service are determined by using National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) standards and guidelines. Note that these are guidelines and not prescriptive, given the local context of each situation.
- **Inventory and Assessment.** Current facilities and recommended improvements.



| Figure 6.1: North Iowa Corridor Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources Map



SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS



The parks, recreation, and natural areas are the jewel of the North Iowa Corridor. Coordinating and sharing responsibilities will ensure maximum exposure and accessibility for residents and visitors.

1. DEVELOP NEW PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF FUTURE GROWTH

Variety is critical for a truly inclusive park system. Decisions for locating new parks and recreational spaces should evaluate several criteria:

- **New growth and service gaps.** Residents should expect the current or better level of service in the future as land develops.
- **Opportunities that align with the vision of the North Iowa Corridor Plan.** The jurisdiction should work with partners to meet the community-supported vision if opportunities arise, such as land donations.
- **Budget for development of existing land.** Each jurisdiction must be ready to assist in developing projects in needed areas related to parks or natural resource preservation when the private sector proposes development or at least reserves the land.
- **Visibility and accessibility.** Areas that have, or can have, good access by all modes of transportation are high priority locations for parks and recreation. This includes accessibility within facilities for all ages and abilities.
- **Environmental features.** Floodplains and greenways are opportunities to enhance stormwater protection, connect residents to the region's ecosystem, and expand the park and natural resource system. Some parks should be kept passive with natural tree and landscape cover to maintain sound stormwater control.
- **Recommendations from future parks master plans.**

2. ENHANCE EXISTING FACILITIES TO PROVIDE AMENITIES AND THE BASIC ELEMENTS THAT RESIDENTS NEED

Existing park and recreation spaces are crucial to residents' quality of life and visitor attraction. These spaces provide opportunities for interaction, meetings, and community character.

Recreational spaces and facilities can last through the next planning horizon if taken care of and updated occasionally. When left in disrepair, people won't want to live next to them, the space becomes unappealing to visitors, and the area can become unsafe. All neighborhoods should have close and easy access to a well-maintained public recreational facility. At a minimum, the following actions should continue or be planned:

- **Budget adequately based on a routine assessment of maintenance needs.** An evaluation of maintenance needs and priorities will help ensure that funds are adequate and targeted to address critical needs.
 - The assessment should begin with updating existing or creating new master parks plans to develop and maintain a thorough inventory of the conditions, including maintenance and replacement needs, of existing parks and facilities. The inventory, policies, and actions in this Plan can be a starting point.
 - Establish a maintenance standard across jurisdictions to set criteria and investment priorities for consistent park user expectations across the North Iowa Corridor.

- **Evaluate recreational trends, demands, and facilities; adapt facilities appropriately.** Evaluate changing interests and research to ensure the recreational system continues to meet the needs and desires of residents and serves as visitor attractions. Evaluation often occurs through regular conversations with special interest groups and advocates. One example is the trend in the early 2020s to transition from tennis courts to pickle ball courts.
 - Technology can help with evaluation by tracking the various ways parks are used. The resulting valuable data will help identify which areas may need repairs or improvements.
- **Invest in existing public facilities near neighborhoods that have limited options within walking distance.** Many households rely on recreational opportunities within walking distance for morning or evening activities.

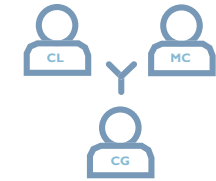
3. SEEK OTHER FUNDING MECHANISMS TO STRATEGICALLY PHASE PARK AND RECREATION IMPROVEMENTS OVER TIME

The North Iowa Corridor has a history of leveraging outside sources to fund local improvements. These efforts should remain important. Past examples include:

- Iowa Economic Development Authority
- Federal grants
- Philanthropy

Future efforts could explore funding a joint grant administrator position to facilitate applications across jurisdictions.

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS



4. CONNECT PARKS ACROSS JURISDICTIONS WITH TRAILS

Trails and greenways can be one of the best ways to expand recreation access to the widest audience. For the North Iowa Corridor, land use policies should:

- **Require buffers along drainage ways.** Additional buffering along drainage-ways provides natural resource protection and creates corridors unobstructed from development that can include trails and passive access to nature.
- **Develop public private partnerships for trail development and maintenance.** Local government funding will continue to compete with other service needs. As the jurisdictions in the North Iowa Corridor know, state and federal programs exist that often look for established partnerships before granting funding. Continuing to find and build new partnerships between jurisdictions should advance opportunities to expand connections.
- **Require sidewalks in new developments and infill sidewalks where there are active transportation gaps.** Off-street trails cannot be put everywhere, and many people will still need a route to get from their house to the trail. For areas in Clear Lake and Mason City, installing sidewalks is important to provide a safe route from a resident's doorstep to destinations like trails, schools, and parks.
 - While sidewalks may not seem necessary in unincorporated areas, development happening near city limits should be able to add sidewalks in the future when growth approaches.

More details for specific connections are listed under each jurisdiction.

5. DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE STANDARDS FOR FACILITIES THAT MINIMIZE MAINTENANCE DEMANDS

Jurisdictional budgets are limited and maintenance of public recreational facilities often becomes a lower priority when essential services need investment. Upfront investments in amenities and designs that have proven lifecycle savings will reduce staff resources to maintain and extend the time between new investments. Examples include:

- Consider the amount of groomed turf areas in parks that require regular mowing to reduce associated staff time and costs.
- Evaluate trail materials used for initial construction and resurfacing. Paved trails cost less to maintain over time than gravel/limestone trails, and concrete trails tend to cost less to maintain than asphalt trails. Although each paved surface has its benefits and drawbacks, there are times when low-cost interim surfaces are necessary.
- Limit the location of built park features within floodplains. All structures that must remain in the floodplain should be developed with resilient materials not damaged when flooded.
- Use a common catalog of structural design elements and signage that can be purchased in bulk and used for repairs/replacements over time.
- Conduct studies to determine the net benefits of investing in renewable energy sources in park facilities to offset operational energy costs.
- Continue efforts to improve water quality to retain the safe recreational use of water resources and lessen the investments and costs associated with using water for community services.

TRAILS AND RECREATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- **Ensure a connected trail system that provides access to most recreational areas and communities in the county, including routes from existing facilities around Clear Lake and Mason City.**
- **Market recreational attractions as a combined destination for visiting the North Iowa Corridor.**
- **Support unique recreation opportunities that cater to various users and experiences.**
- **Commit to becoming a national and regional cycling destination.**
 - Example: Bird watching touring routes with an app or resource to guide users.
 - Example: Events such as races like the UNBOUND Gravel endurance cycling race held in Emporia, Kansas, which draws thousands of participants each year.

CERRO GORDO POLICIES AND ACTIONS



County resources are more passive, dispersed, and backed with fewer staff resources. However, the county assets provide a valuable inventory of recreational options for the North Iowa Corridor. Plans for county parks and natural areas should focus on making full use of these resources while protecting the environment.



I. IDENTIFY STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE KNOWLEDGE, USE, AND ACCESSIBILITY OF COUNTY RECREATIONAL AREAS

There are many opportunities to get outdoors in the unincorporated areas of Cerro Gordo County. Even if most of the opportunities lean passive, there can be something for everyone to enjoy. However, often the largest barrier is simply knowing.

The County has a different park planning situation than Clear Lake and Mason City because people are naturally visiting or living in the cities, whereas spaces in the county are often not near other places people go. The goal is not to overrun the county's natural resources with visitors. However, building awareness of the resources in the county has elevated importance of contributing to the brand of the North Iowa Corridor. People expect and rely on good technology to help them make plans, choose options, and learn about possibilities. A beginning approach for the County to take is to:

- **Expand and enhance what's possible through websites.** The Cerro Gordo County Conservation website has a wealth of information that is presented in various formats for users. As of 2023, the website does not appear to have any broken links and is up-to-date. Ways to access information will continue to evolve, and so should the website or other modes of communication.
- **Keep current with technology to expand the reach of resources.** Social media is as good or better than word-of-mouth at getting people interested in places. There are many ways to engage people through various app-based tools to show them the broader resources in Cerro Gordo County and share with their family and friends.

CERRO GORDO POLICIES AND ACTIONS



2. EXPAND ACCESS TO WATER TRAILS AND MARKET REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Two of Cerro Gordo County's largest connecting resources are the Winnebago River and Shell Rock River. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) designates over 26 miles of the Winnebago River as a water trail, meaning there are adequate access points and depth for recreational navigation along the river and other efforts for managing water quality. However, none of the Winnebago or Shell Rock River is designated in Cerro Gordo County. Access points to the north, south, and within the county create an attractive regional paddling experience.

Water trail efforts in Cerro Gordo County might include:

- **Adding launch points at strategic locations.** The best points are in existing parks, along or near trails, and calmer water flow points on the river.
- **Working regionally and across jurisdictions to obtain more IDNR designated miles of water trails in Cerro Gordo County.** Continuing investments in dam removal will be necessary.
- **Marketing the water trail system as an attractive regional paddling experience.**

3. ENHANCE AND GROW EXISTING RECREATIONAL ASSETS

Along with water recreation are many other great natural resources in county areas. Many of these natural resources offer recreational opportunities that are less invasive than development and highlight the rural country experience. A consistent program should maintain and elevate user experiences through signage, accessibility, and variation in activities. Activities in the county recreational program should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Hiking
- Camping
- Cycling
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Snowmobiling
- Cross country skiing
- Shooting sports
- Disc golf courses
- Picnicking
- Bird watching



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CERRO GORDO COUNTY

CERRO GORDO POLICIES AND ACTIONS



WIDE SHOULDER



GREENBELT OR
DRAINAGEWAY TRAILS



RAILROAD ROUTES



SIGNAGE

4. MAINTAIN AND EXPAND THE TRAIL SYSTEM

Figure 6.2 shows a trail system that connects various parks and natural areas in the county. Any approach will require long-term communication with property owners, cities, and the IDOT. The system creates many opportunities for cycling, trails, touring, and camping by connecting different marshes and park areas.

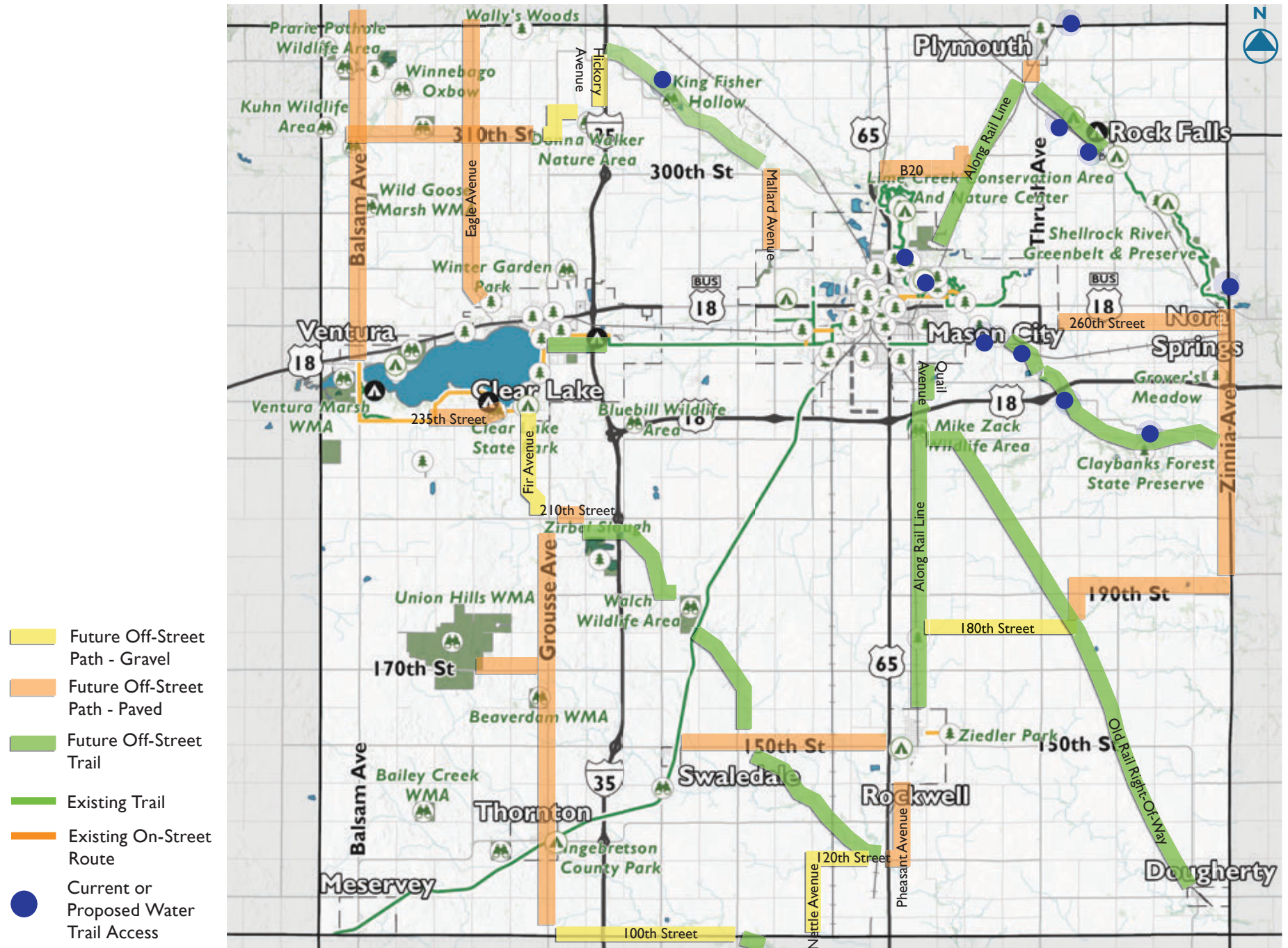
The naming convention of north/south roads using tree and bird names can play a marketing role in establishing a “bird watching” tour across the different natural resources.

PRIMARY RECREATIONAL TRAIL ROUTES

- Routes on existing paved roads become safer bicycling routes for more users by widening shoulders with rumble strips to separate vehicle traffic from the shoulder area. Some cyclists already ride on county roads. The widened shoulder provides a travel lane for the cyclists.
- Off-road trail routes leverage greenbelts and drainage ways to create connections between natural resource areas.
- Spur routes off the Prairie Land Trail to destinations.

SECONDARY ROUTES

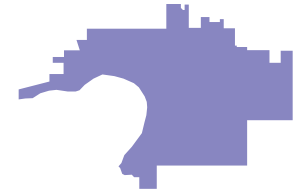
- Add safety signs to alert motorists of the presence of cyclists and other slow moving vehicles. While not designated routes, secondary routes are logical connections between destinations that cyclists and slow moving vehicles are lawfully permitted to use. Signage intends to protect the safety of vulnerable users.



| Figure 6.2: Cerro Gordo County Recreational Trail Plan

CLEAR LAKE POLICIES AND ACTIONS

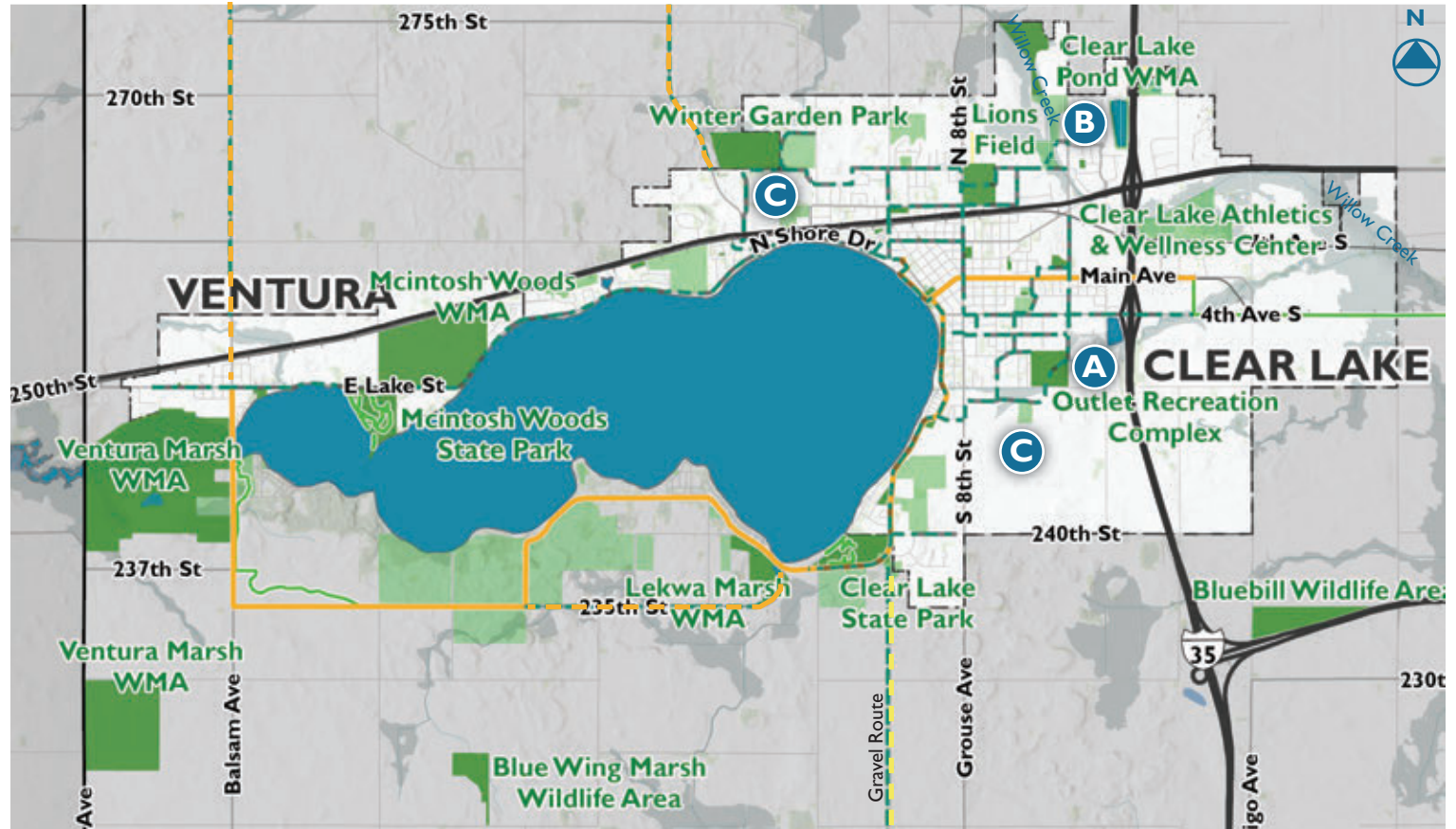
Using the future land use map as a guide, planning for parks and recreation should seek to increase the number of households with close access to parks and recreation as cities grow. The lake will continue to be the focal feature of recreation in Clear Lake. However, Clear Lake should continue to expand its recreational variety with amenities for many ages and abilities. The Wellness and Recreation Center completed in 2022 is a great example.



I. PRESERVE EXISTING AND CREATE FUTURE FACILITIES

Target areas for parks and recreation enhancement and natural resource preservation according to the future land use map. Initial areas include:

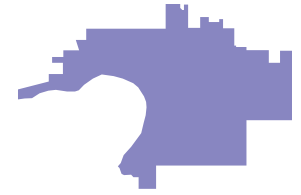
- A. Outlet Recreation Complex. Complete a master plan to better use the space for recreational fields and other activities, including parking allocation.
- B. Preserve natural buffers along Willow Creek.
- C. Ensure space is reserved for neighborhood scale parks as growth occurs in the following locations:
 - East of Village Road.
 - Growth areas south of the Outlet Recreation Complex.



| Figure 6.3: Clear Lake Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources Map

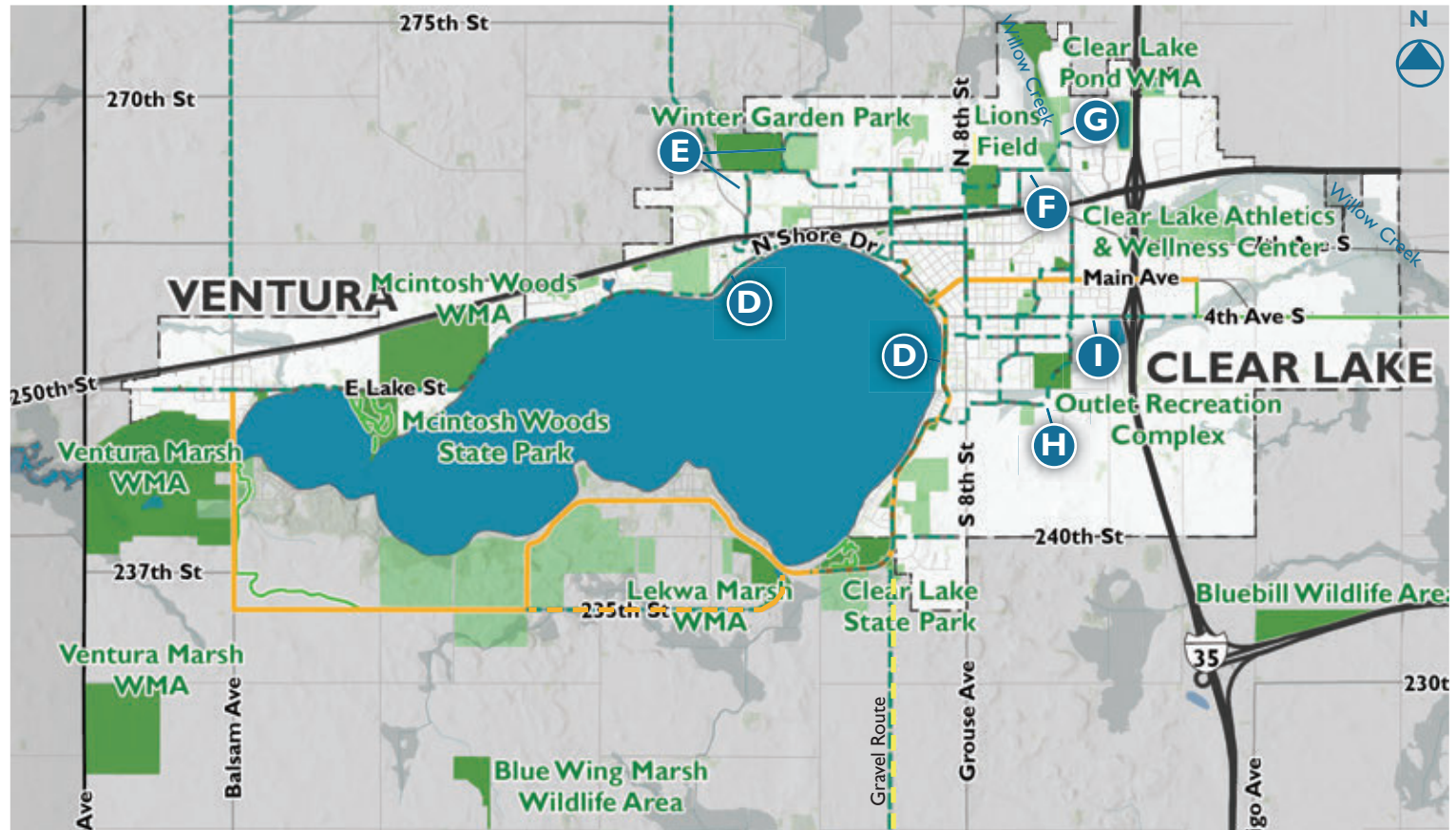
- Off-Street/Greenway Trail
- On-Street Bike Route
- - - Proposed City Off-Street Trail
- - - Proposed On-Street Bike Route
- Existing Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources
- Proposed Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources
- Water bodies

CLEAR LAKE POLICIES AND ACTIONS



2. CONNECT EXISTING PARKS AND TRAILS TO FUTURE GROWTH AREAS

- D. North and South Shore Drive Complete Streets as detailed in the Mobility element of this Plan.
- E. Paths to natural areas to the north and south.
- F. Routes from Lions Field east and west to near term growth areas.
- G. A trail crossing at Willow Creek to connect proposed future park areas.
- H. Continuation of a trail system through the Outlet Recreation Complex to the north and southwest.
- I. Tolley Trail extension to the 4th Avenue corridor west of I-35.



| Figure 6.4: Clear Lake Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources Map

3. ENHANCE SHORELINE ACCESS AND GATHERING SPACES

- **Continually investigate opportunities for more public amenities adjacent to the lake while keeping with best environmental practices.** Lakefront property is an opportunity and a challenge for Clear Lake. The higher values of private property increase tax revenue for the City to pursue projects. However, private property limits the space for public access to the lake, which is a primary reason many people visit Clear Lake.

- Off-Street/Greenway Trail
- On-Street Bike Route
- - - Proposed City Off-Street Trail
- - - Proposed On-Street Bike Route
- Existing Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources
- Proposed Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources
- Water bodies

MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS

Using the future land use map as a guide, planning for parks and recreation should seek to increase the number of households with close access to parks and recreation as the city grows.

Priority biking opportunities, historic parks, river experiences, and indoor recreation facilities are just some of the excellent features of parks and recreation in Mason City. Expanding and enhancing these resources should be a top quality of life effort in the future.



I. PRESERVE EXISTING AND CREATE FUTURE FACILITIES

Target areas for parks and recreation enhancement and natural resource preservation according to the future land use map.

- A. Consider expansion of Dustin Colby Park to the west and/or south as development occurs to better serve the neighborhood population.
- B. Expand reserved park space along Chelsea Creek, expanding the Chodur Preserve for more recreational opportunities.
- C. Expand Georgia Hanford Park to the east with development considering additional facility needs in the area.

D. Reserve and require space for a neighborhood scale park:

- East of S Illinois Avenue along the Mason Creek greenway as growth occurs.
- Northeast of Asbury Park to serve existing and future residential development.

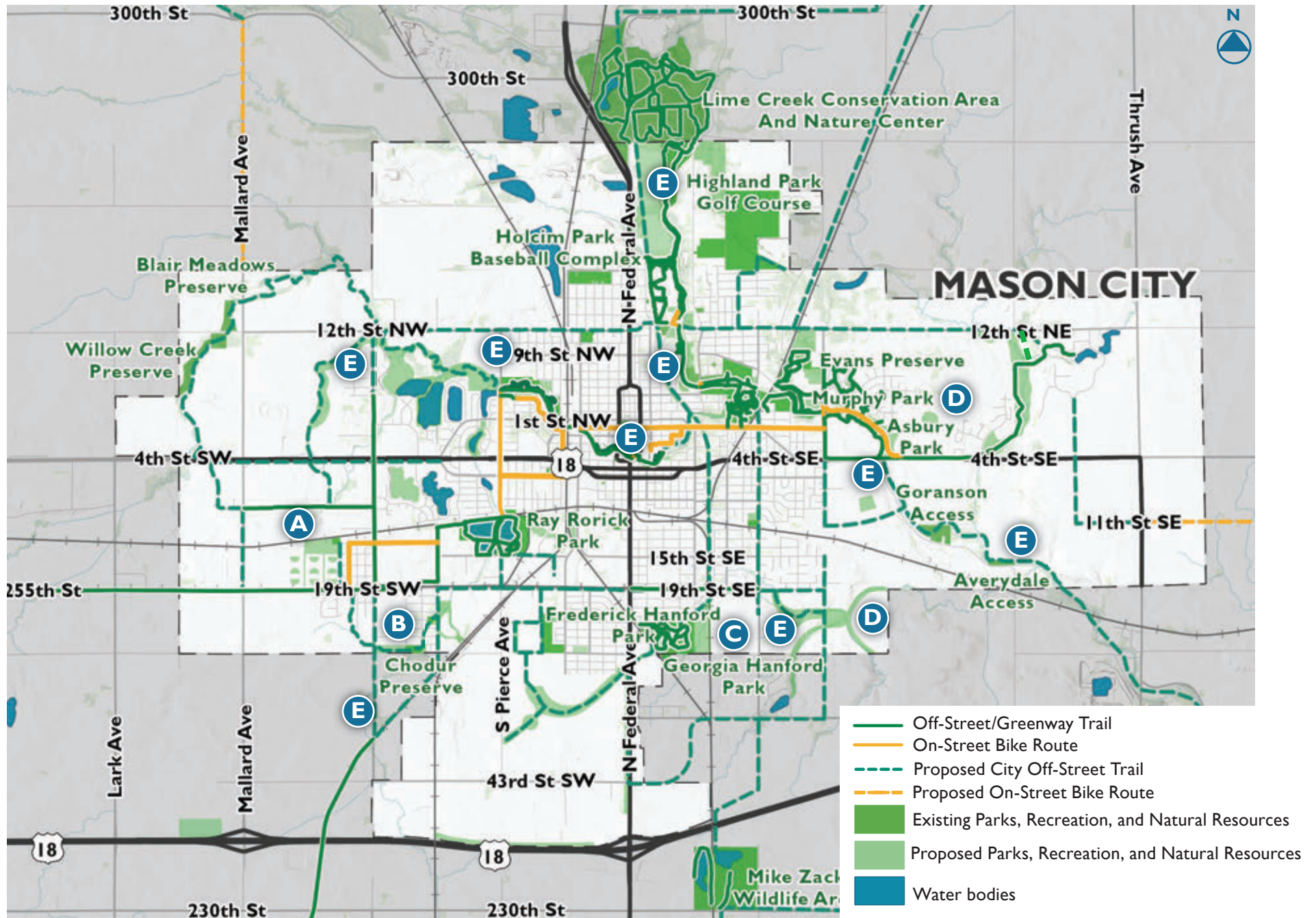
E. Successfully complete and build upon the 2022 Destination Iowa Grant projects. These include:

- Illinois bridge improvement and wide side path just north of the High School.
- Prairie Land Trail connector.
- Various shelter, trail, and bouldering facilities near the Bike Park, High Line Trail, and Single Track Trails.
- High Line Trail construction.
- Mason City Riverwalk in downtown.

- Bike Park and Pump Track near the Winnebago River south of Lime Creek Park.
- Murphy Park Trail and bridge to connect to the Muse Norris Softball complex.
- Crossing safety improvements at various locations to include lights, warning devices, and audible crossing indicators.

SYSTEM-WIDE

- **Identify opportunities to enhance the safety and convenience of the park system through urban design and enhancement initiatives.** Provide more visibility, especially at night, to enhance safety and security in the parks.
- **Provide more winter recreation activities.**



| Figure 6.5: Mason City Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources Map

MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS



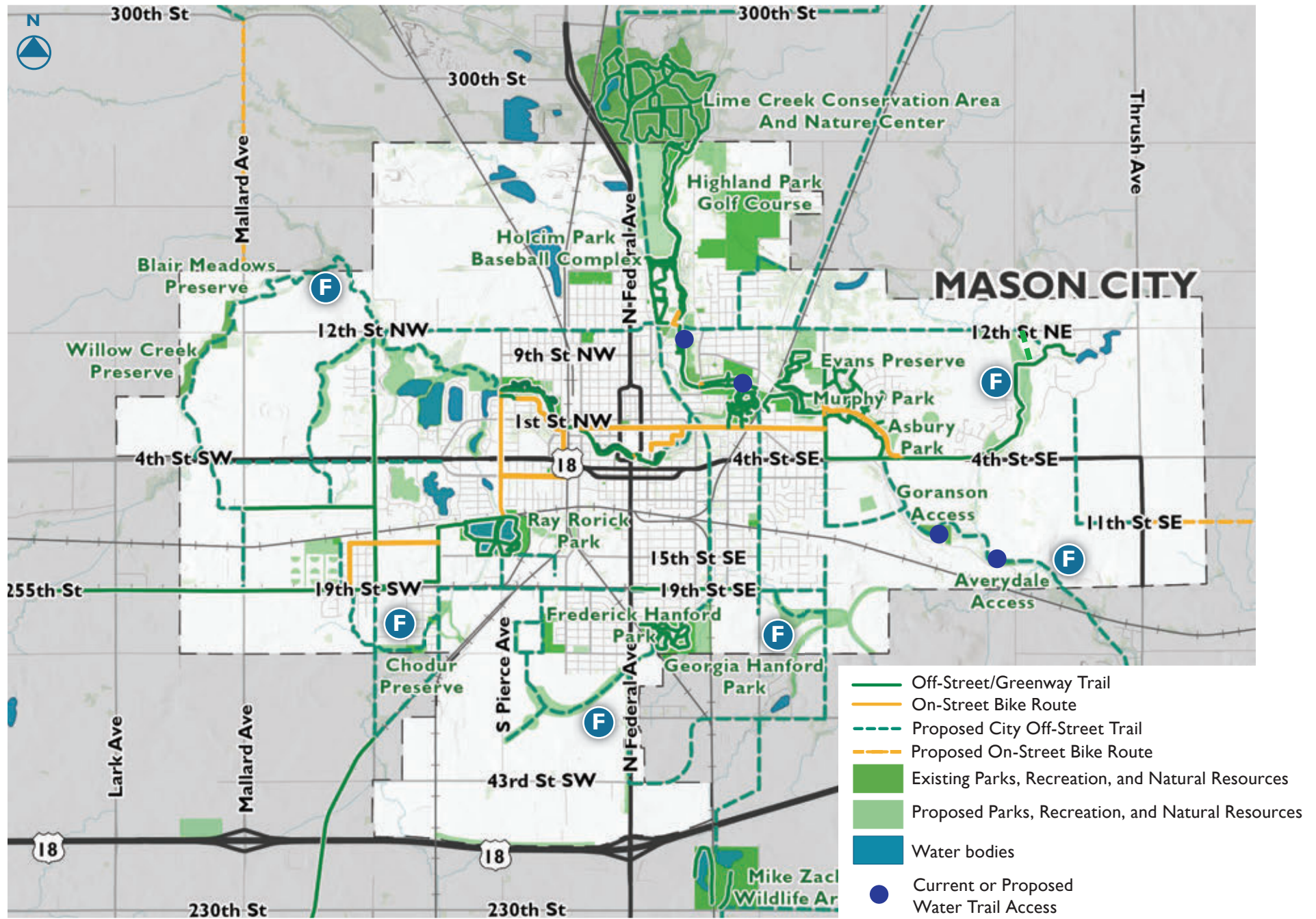
2. CONNECT EXISTING PARKS AND TRAILS TO FUTURE GROWTH AREAS

- F. Preserve natural buffers along creeks and rivers and expand trails along waterways when possible. The distance from the waterway and type of trail will vary according to space, soil stability, and property ownership, but these areas offer ideal river greenway corridors to connect resources throughout the city. Opportunities include:
- Willow Creek for a complete system of trails that connects parks and preserves such as Sunset Lake, Blair Meadow Preserve, and Willow Creek Preserve.
 - Mason Creek for a complete system of trails that connects parks and preserves such as Georgia Hanford Park, Frederick Hanford Park, and eastern growth areas.
 - Chelsea Creek.
 - Ideal Creek.
 - Winnebago River.

3. EXPAND WAYS TO INTERACT WITH THE WATERWAYS

The Winnebago River and Willow Creek are unique natural resources in Mason City. Their path through Mason City puts many households within walking distance to them. Ways to bring these waterways more distinctly into the parks and recreation system include:

- **Continuing to invest in regional water trail launch points.** There are a few accessible canoe and kayak launch points on the Winnebago River in Mason City and others planned. A launch point becomes a destination for boaters to enter or exit the river. Maintain the tree lined stream banks while increasing access. Existing trees and shrubs help maintain the stream bank and slow stormwater runoff. Monitor areas where stream bank restoration efforts will help stabilize erosion.



| Figure 6.6: Mason City Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources Map

HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS



PLAN ELEMENTS

LAND USE

EXCEPTIONAL PLACES

MOBILITY

PARKS, RECREATION, &
NATURAL RESOURCES

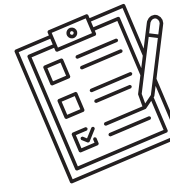
HOUSING &
NEIGHBORHOODS

INFRASTRUCTURE
& PUBLIC FACILITIES

A home is much more than a place to live. It is a place to feel safe, build social connections, and make your own. Home is a neighborhood that welcomes and provides stability.

26% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS FELT AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS THE MOST IMPORTANT CHALLENGE FACING NORTH IOWA.

48% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS FELT MORE DIVERSE HOUSING OPTIONS SHOULD BE A TOP FIVE FOCUS FOR NORTH IOWA IN THE NEXT TEN YEARS.



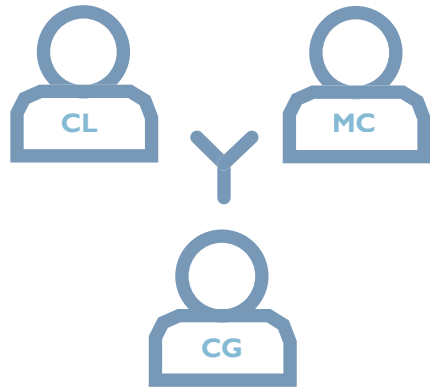
VISION

**Developments within the North Iowa Corridor
incorporate a variety of housing types for a range of
housing choices**

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| 1. Simultaneously pursue new and infill development to build neighborhoods and grow efficiently | 2. Permit a range of density across the North Iowa Corridor through mixing uses and reusing obsolete spaces | 3. Grow an inventory and variety of quality and attainable housing options for residents at all stages of life | 4. Maintain the existing housing stock through public and private investment to reinforce positive neighborhood character | 5. Foster an attractive and welcoming place for diversity and inclusion of residents and business owners of all demographic backgrounds | 6. Connect all neighborhoods with mobility options, public spaces, parks, and commercial services |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|

POLICIES AND ACTIONS PREVIEW



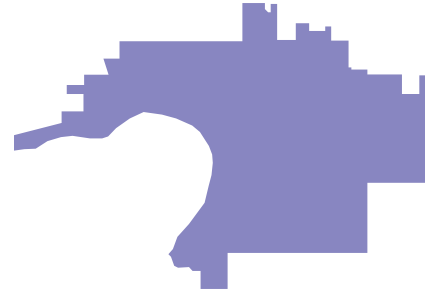
SHARED

1. Balance urban to rural character with neighborhood development.
2. Continue to evaluate the market and adjust policies and actions to respond to demands.
3. Allow and encourage mixing of different housing and complementary use types across more areas.
4. Continue to expand efforts for housing rehabilitation programs and code enforcement.
5. Promote the efforts of the North Iowa Corridor Housing Development Corporation or other not-for-profit organizational structure to lead gap financing for housing development.



CERRO GORDO

1. Preserve the character of rural subdivisions.
2. Follow urban development patterns for new development in transitional areas and near incorporated area boundaries.
3. In rural areas, steer any new residential development to be adjacent to existing rural subdivisions.
4. Use conservation subdivision practices for rural development next to parks or natural resource areas.
5. Follow the guidelines for the South Shore Area Plan.



CLEAR LAKE

1. Target infrastructure improvements to the highest risk neighborhoods - street quality, appearance, drainage.
2. Regularly evaluate incentive models to attract products that meet community needs.
3. Assertively expand and attract contractors.
4. Expand the inventory of developable lots for residential uses, especially at workforce housing price points.
5. Monitor rental inventory and short-term rental influences on neighborhood stability.



MASON CITY

1. Target infrastructure improvements to the highest risk neighborhoods - street quality, appearance, drainage.
2. Regularly evaluate incentive models to attract products that meet community needs.
3. Assertively expand and attract contractors.
4. Identify infill lots or parts of lots for affordable and workforce housing units.
5. Create neighborhood subarea plans/strategies to conserve quality neighborhoods.

HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS IN THE NORTH IOWA CORRIDOR



The aspirations for neighborhoods in the North Iowa Corridor are common among all jurisdictions. However, the housing market and neighborhood development patterns are quite different across the Corridor.

The future land use plan and Iowa Smart Planning Principles provide the basic framework for creating healthy, connected, and efficient neighborhoods. The vision, goals, and policies help frame specific aspirations for the future to assist in decision-making and programming for housing related efforts.

HOUSING FOR ALL

People of different ages, social characteristics, races, and abilities can comprise a household. All housing policies, ordinances, and programs should go through an evaluation of their influence on encouraging or discouraging diversity and inclusion in the North Iowa Corridor.

Research shows that some policies still influence diversity and inclusion in communities. The effects reduce the ability to grow as an enriching place for all people and backgrounds. This includes celebrating and representing the range of backgrounds and cultures that currently live or want to live in the North Iowa Corridor.

HOUSING STUDIES AND PLANS OF REFERENCE

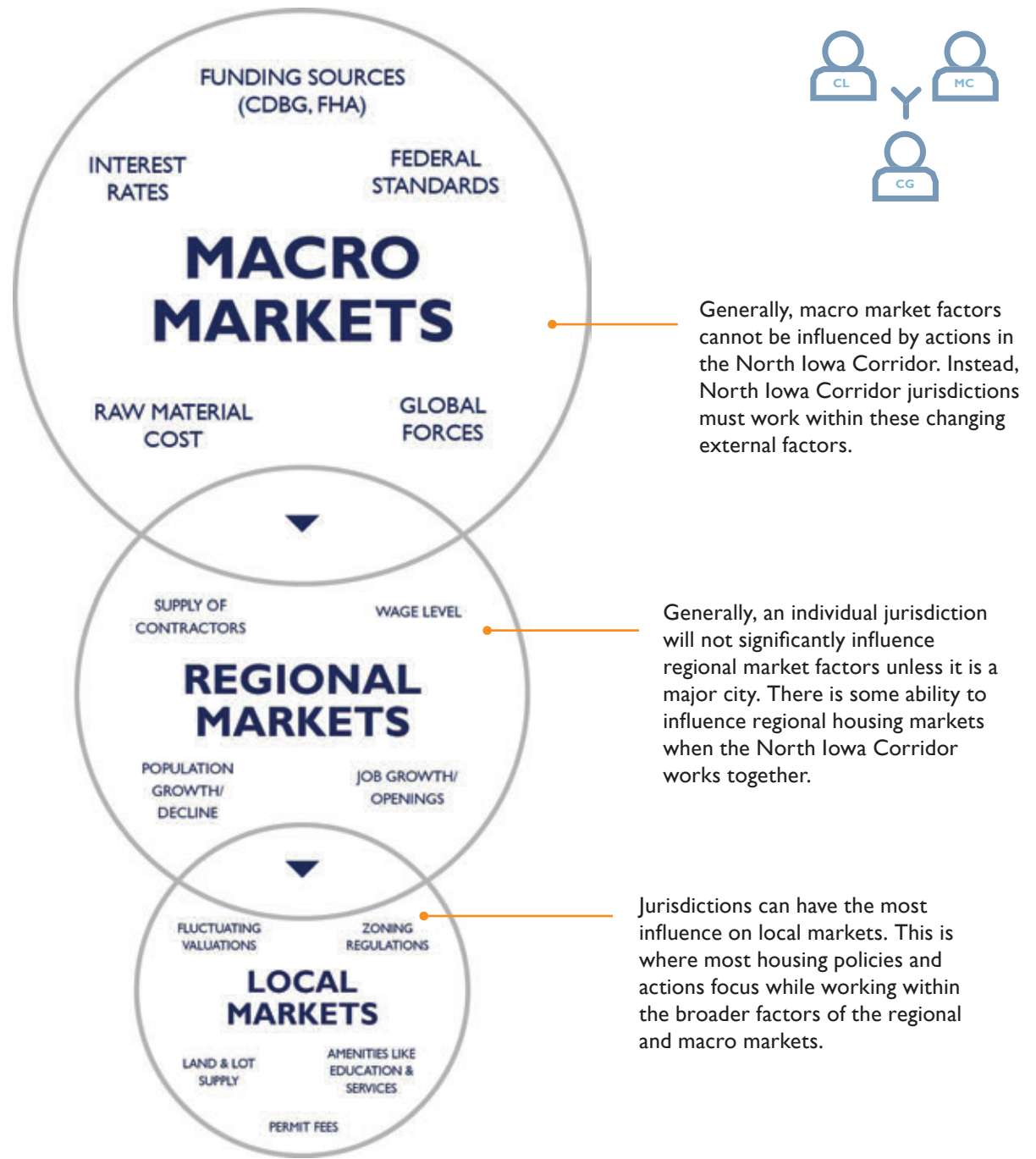
- 2022 Mason City Housing Initiative
- 2022 Cerro Gordo County Housing Needs Assessment
- 2020 Cerro Gordo County Community Health Improvement Plan
- 2018 Vision North Iowa Regional Prosperity Strategy

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS

Shared items are elements common to all jurisdictions. Stakeholders in the North Iowa Corridor want to attract more young people and families while allowing people to age comfortably within their community. All jurisdictions and partners should use these policies and actions in coordination or locally to advance this Plan.

I. BALANCE URBAN TO RURAL CHARACTER WITH NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Each jurisdiction should pursue these shared policies and actions within the context of each neighborhood and community setting. As development transitions from rural to transitional to urban settings, the approach to applying policies for neighborhood development should continue to follow the contextual principles of the future land use plan and other elements of the North Iowa Corridor Plan.



| Figure 7.1: Housing Market Determinants

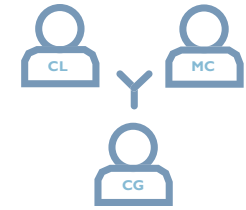
SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS

2. CONTINUE TO EVALUATE THE MARKET AND ADJUST POLICIES AND ACTIONS TO RESPOND TO DEMANDS

Many market forces and consumer preferences can change in the future. Flexibility is designed into the future land use designations so policies can adapt accordingly for future updates. Some current housing trends to address in housing policy include:

- **The aging population and provision of Universally Designed units.** Universal Design means that every aspect of a home, from the bathroom to the garage, is more convenient and comfortable for everyone, not labeled by age or ability. Jurisdictions should consider Universal Design standards that apply to a portion of units within future subdivisions or projects with a substantial number of units.
- **Conversion of spaces for housing.** The pandemic accelerated looming trends in occupancy rates for office, commercial, and parking space use. The trend is settling and opportunities for new housing uses in overbuilt commercial spaces are happening.
- **New construction methods.** The rising cost of housing production is leading to different production methods. Many approaches, like 3D construction and modular housing, are still being tested for larger scale applications. However, as building codes get updated, so too should planning standards.
- **Co-living arrangements.** People might look for more ways to split costs as housing gets more expensive. This means more non-traditional living arrangements and units. Policies should allow for a variety of living arrangements within housing developments.

The images on the right are examples of less common housing types in the North Iowa Corridor. The images do not prescribe specific design but offer a general understanding of what the term means in the context of housing policy.



MANUFACTURED HOME

A HOME BUILT OFF-SITE AND TRANSPORTED TO THE LOT FOR UTILITY HOOK-UPS.



MODULAR HOME

SIMILAR TO A MANUFACTURED HOME BUT PIECES ARE BUILT OFF-SITE AND ASSEMBLED ON-SITE.



MIXED-USE

A STRUCTURE/SITE WITH MORE THAN ONE TYPE OF USE OCCUPYING THE SPACE. THIS IS TYPICALLY A MIX OF RESIDENTIAL AND NON-RESIDENTIAL USES.



ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT

A SEPARATE LIVING UNIT WITH A SMALL FOOTPRINT IN A STRUCTURE, GARAGE, OR ATTACHED SPACE TO THE MAIN LIVING UNIT.

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS

3. ALLOW AND ENCOURAGE MIXING OF DIFFERENT HOUSING AND COMPLEMENTARY USE TYPES ACROSS MORE AREAS

Housing variety in terms of style, occupancy, and price point could help the North Iowa Corridor attract more young professionals and allow residents to stay in the North Iowa Corridor through all phases of life. For example, a young resident or couple could live in an apartment or townhome when first starting their career, then move to a single unit house as they want more space, and finally transition to a rental or condo four-plex in retirement, all within the North Iowa Corridor. Areas within the county can also allow this type of housing variety within rural settings.

Ways to achieve a broader housing mix across character areas include:

- **Follow the future land use guides and update zoning accordingly.**
- **Allow mixing of land uses in specific areas or zoning districts to allow mixed-uses in designated half-mile nodes.**
- **Direct investments and redevelopment dollars toward mixed-use projects.**
- **Explore modifying selected single-unit zoning districts to permit accessory dwelling units and duplexes on lots that meet specific design criteria.** Where these standards already exist in some places, monitor the frequency of use to see where barriers might still persist.
- **Coordinate with private developers to discuss barriers to building different housing types, mixed-use, and mixed density developments.** Developers often have the best insight into where a code or regulation does not align with market demands and can help identify issues. The public and private sectors should work together to identify additional barriers and create a plan to overcome them.

4. CONTINUE TO EXPAND EFFORTS FOR HOUSING REHABILITATION PROGRAMS AND CODE ENFORCEMENT

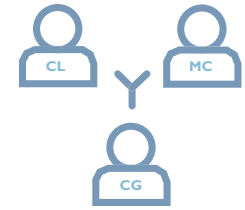
For any jurisdiction, the best source of affordable housing is the existing housing stock. Maintaining those units and the complementary services provided in established neighborhoods is essential to ensure a continued supply of safe and affordable housing. Strategies should ensure the stability and livability of housing.

- **Focus on areas with regular repair orders, existing affordable housing, and community institutions.** These areas should receive equal incentive treatment as newer growth areas where visible to most visitors to improve the image and character of the community.
- **Leverage partnerships in addition to multi-jurisdictional efforts.** There are a number of State programs that North Iowa Corridor communities already use. The North Iowa Area Council of Governments (NIACOG) administers several programs, and many other organizations share housing goals that should continually evolve to target housing programs.

5. PROMOTE THE EFFORTS OF THE NORTH IOWA CORRIDOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION OR OTHER NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE TO LEAD GAP FINANCING FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

A division of the North Iowa Corridor Economic Development Corporation, the North Iowa Corridor Housing Development Corporation was created to address the area's significant need for housing. The Corporation takes the lead to carry out action plans identified in the 2022 Mason City Housing study, and aims to apply them more broadly in the North Iowa Corridor.

The existing Development Corporation should grow in scope over time to address housing challenges across the county. This non-profit can accept an assortment of funding sources, implement a variety of housing programs, and work on behalf of its partner organizations to strengthen the housing market for the benefit of all.



CERRO GORDO POLICIES AND ACTIONS



The unincorporated areas of Cerro Gordo County do not have many consolidated residential areas. Most of the housing stock are farmsteads or large lot subdivisions under ten lots. The one exception is the area along the south shore of Clear Lake.

The primary objective for future housing and neighborhoods in the unincorporated area is to maintain rural landscapes and design new housing developments proposed near cities to be compatible with urban service standards and street connections.

I. PRESERVE THE CHARACTER OF RURAL SUBDIVISIONS

The few rural subdivisions spread throughout the county outside of the south shore of the Clear Lake area offer housing for those seeking more land for personal preferences or occupational needs. The North Iowa Corridor Plan does not intend for these areas to change in the future unless homes and properties become in disrepair or a danger to the public welfare.

2. FOLLOW URBAN DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT IN TRANSITIONAL AREAS AND NEAR INCORPORATED AREA BOUNDARIES

When following the Iowa Smart Planning principles, development proposed in areas that could reasonably be served by incorporated area facilities in the planning horizon should generally have a design that:

- Follows the principles and policies of the future land use map.
- Limits the number of acreage lots that would disrupt future mobility networks and the ability to grow compact neighborhoods through future street connections and not create isolated subdivisions.
- Discourages using cul-de-sacs unless to protect natural resources or reserve space to extend the street in the future.
- Considers residential joint stormwater management that could be tied into city systems when appropriate.
- Creates or reserves space for future walking paths and connections to adjacent areas.



CERRO GORDO POLICIES AND ACTIONS



3. IN RURAL AREAS, STEER ANY NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT TO BE ADJACENT TO EXISTING RURAL SUBDIVISIONS

The future land use plan does not intend to prevent owners of large homesteads or agricultural parcels from splitting off a lot or two for housing their families or workers. However, new rural residential subdivisions should only be allowed strategically to limit reductions in agricultural production and possible conflicts between residential neighborhoods and farm operations. Preferable locations for any new rural residential subdivisions include:

- Near existing incorporated areas (see previous policy and future land use map directions).
- Next to existing rural subdivisions.
- At major street intersections.
- Next to recreational features or parks where buffering from agricultural uses is beneficial.

4. USE CONSERVATION SUBDIVISION PRACTICES FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT NEXT TO PARKS OR NATURAL RESOURCE AREAS

Conservation subdivision principles protect and preserve natural features while allowing housing opportunities. Principles require protecting open space, stream corridors, and environmental resources by following future land use map principles and Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources Plan elements.

Conservation easements are a legal mechanism to ensure resource protection. They are for landowners to place voluntary restrictions on the future use of their land and generally require a landowner to sell, permanently relinquish, or donate the rights of development. Tax benefits may be available for some easements.

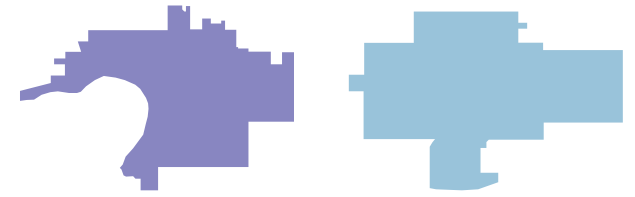
5. FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES FOR THE SOUTH SHORE AREA PLAN

See the Exceptional Places Plan element regarding special considerations for the established neighborhoods in the county on the south shore of Clear Lake.

The short-term rental policy directions on the following pages for Clear Lake may apply to the South Shore Area.



CLEAR LAKE & MASON CITY COMMON POLICIES AND ACTIONS



As cities, Clear Lake and Mason City have common policies supporting high-quality neighborhoods that do not apply to the unincorporated areas. The existing housing stock, prices, and growth trends will warrant some decision-making approaches only specific to one city.

1. TARGET INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS FOR STREET QUALITY, APPEARANCE, AND DRAINAGE TO THE HIGHEST RISK NEIGHBORHOODS

Reinvestment in a neighborhood often needs to begin with the infrastructure that holds it together. This can include addressing street quality, appearance, efficiency of drainageways, and stormwater run-off. When these facilities are in poor condition or cause regular and visible problems, residents see fewer reasons to invest their money in maintaining their home. Available resources are never sufficient to address all of these problems, but prioritization can ensure dollars are used in a more productive way.

To identify neighborhoods with the most infrastructure needs and greatest capacity for housing development, City staff should consider the following:

- Intensity of code violations and demolition orders.
- Existing support capacity from neighborhood stakeholders and/or local organizations.
- The availability of community institutions like parks, schools, places of worship, or community centers.
- Links to surrounding neighborhoods and access to commercial services.

2. REGULARLY EVALUATE INCENTIVE MODELS TO ATTRACT PRODUCTS THAT MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS

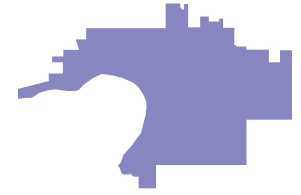
- **Evaluate City programs and development standards that encourage diverse housing types, tenure, and price points within developments over a certain size.** This includes considering financial incentives and land acquisition for lower priced housing than currently exists in Clear Lake or Mason City. City participation in infrastructure or other development costs can also create additional housing opportunities.
- **Consider development criteria when providing housing assistance.** Incentives to projects with a residential component, whether from the City or the economic development community, should consider housing developments that blend price points for different household income levels.

3. ASSERTIVELY EXPAND AND ATTRACT CONTRACTORS

The Mason City housing study calls out this objective, which also applies to Clear Lake. The severe shortage of workers to build and repair homes requires a short-term and long-term approach that includes strategies to attract existing contractors interested in working in the area and training future generations to replenish the aging workforce.



CLEAR LAKE POLICIES AND ACTIONS



The housing market in Clear Lake is much different than in Mason City and other parts of Iowa. The seasonal nature of many properties and the increased values near the lake create a higher priced market for owners and renters.

4. EXPAND THE INVENTORY OF DEVELOPABLE LOTS FOR RESIDENTIAL USES, ESPECIALLY AT WORKFORCE HOUSING PRICE POINTS

Current lot development costs, which include installation of water, sewer, stormwater, and streets, make it difficult to produce lots on which housing affordable for more people can be built because the private development community must recoup these costs in the home's final sale. For the construction of lower price point housing, densities will have to be increased and/or lot development costs will have to be shared or mitigated.

5. MONITOR RENTAL INVENTORY AND SHORT-TERM RENTAL INFLUENCES ON NEIGHBORHOOD STABILITY

Short-term rentals have benefits and drawbacks:

BENEFITS

- Gives individual property owners a way to supplement their mortgage.
- Supports the tourism market with more options for people visiting the area.
- Can provide a short-term option besides a hotel for someone just moving to an area but still looking for more permanent housing.
- Provides a way to use unique spaces or units that might otherwise be difficult to rent full-time.

DRAWBACKS

- Can incentivize conversion of long-term rentals into short-term rentals which can obtain higher annual rents.
- Could destabilize neighborhood social connections if too many homes and units are converted to short-term rentals.
- Do not provide the same level of taxes for infrastructure support that might otherwise be obtained from similar uses like hotels and apartments with many guests.

Criteria to consider when drafting a policy include (within State regulations, if they change in the future):

- A system to ensure that new short-term rentals comply with necessary code and inspection standards.
- Establish a monitoring system for staff. Several platforms are available that track short-term rental listings, which can be compared with property owners that submit a local permit.

MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS



Mason City completed a housing study in 2022 that guides many policies, actions, and investments in the near term. The housing study should be updated in 2028 to assess market changes, if not sooner. The following actions reiterate the North Iowa Corridor planning process and expand on the Mason City housing study.

4. IDENTIFY INFILL LOTS OR PARTS OF LOTS FOR AFFORDABLE AND WORKFORCE HOUSING UNITS

Reference the Exceptional Places Plan element for specific examples in Mason City. Realizing production on infill lots typically requires public intervention. A strategic approach should include:

- **Assembling lots.** Most developers need more capital, time, and resources to assemble lots from multiple property owners. In areas with a concentration of infill sites or just one large infill development, preparation of a redevelopment plan by the City should guide developers and builders. Cities have done this through multiple approaches, including direct purchase and ownership of sites before transitioning to a developer through a proposal process or non-profit development corporation.
- **Incentive options.** Infill lots may have site issues, such as dilapidated structures that need to be removed. Site issues and the scattered nature of vacant lots can make infill development challenging. The adjacency of lots that allows for easier movement of resources and supplies between job sites is an important component of affordable housing development. Removing or reducing certain site preparation fees or providing a privately funded pool of money to offset these costs can begin to eliminate hurdles.
- **Infrastructure and street improvements.** As mentioned previously, these improvements should not be hurdles to developing new affordable housing and mixed-use environments. Infill sites usually have infrastructure, but these facilities sometimes need updating and improvements.
- **Public facilities.** Parks, schools, community centers, sidewalks, trails, and other amenities can provide anchors proven to create private development response and support neighborhoods. Targeting areas near amenities could mean higher success.
- **Code enforcement.** Poor property maintenance and nuisances can degrade the value of surrounding property and discourage reinvestment, offsetting investments in infill over time.

MASON CITY 2022 HOUSING INITIATIVE:

Housing Development Strategy and Best Practices

- Increase Diversity of Housing Options.
- Residential Improvements Should Follow Infrastructure Improvements.
- Further Expand Code Enforcement to Clean Up Neighborhoods.
- Target New Development of Affordable/ Workforce Units on Infill Lots.
- Need to Expand/Attract Availability of Contractors.
- Create Community Development Corporation (CDC) to Fill the Gap in Affordable Housing Development.
- Seek Alternative Incentives to Support the Development of Workforce Housing.
- Review/Update City Ordinance to Allow for Cottage Courts and Tiny Housing, Where Necessary.
- Seek Ways to Revise City Review Process, Permit Fees.

MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS

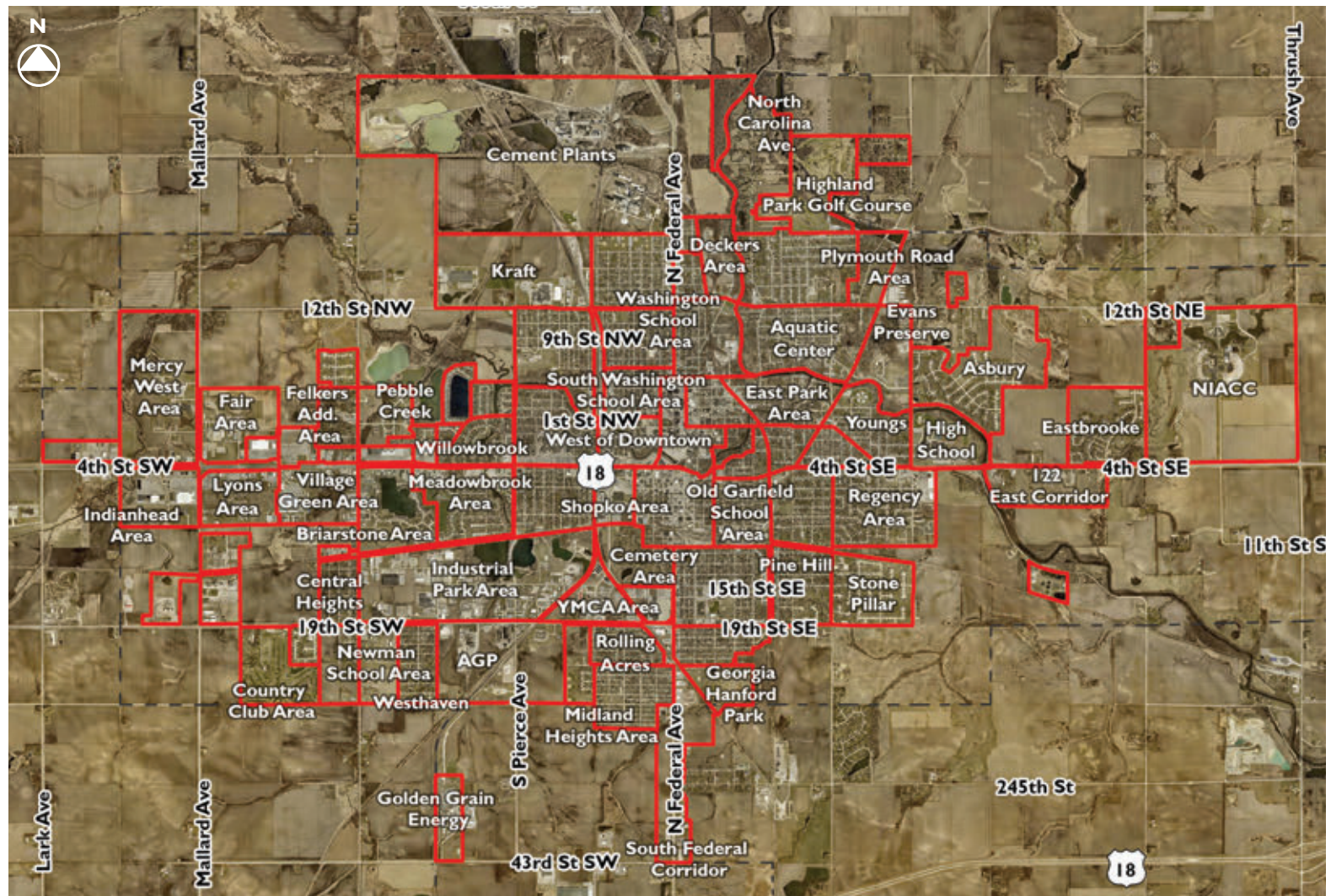


5. CREATE NEIGHBORHOOD SUBAREA PLANS/STRATEGIES TO CONSERVE QUALITY NEIGHBORHOODS

A plan for each specific neighborhood can create more efficient action as City resources and staff get stretched or turn over. Like downtown strategies, these neighborhood plans don't always have to be traditional land use plans. Many neighborhoods are better served with a strategic plan for programming, neighborhood involvement and monitoring conditions.

Mason City may also consider establishing formal areas for empowerment. This could follow urban renewal area boundaries or Census tracts but does not have to. Once specific neighborhoods are identified, the City can create added incentives such as waiving fees related to the construction of buildings in the area or entering into agreements to refund sales tax for sales made within the area for a set period to help fund site redevelopment costs.

The Blight Task Force being formed in 2024 can provide the initial target strategies



| Figure 7.2 Mason City Neighborhoods

INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC FACILITIES



PLAN ELEMENTS

LAND USE

EXCEPTIONAL PLACES

MOBILITY

PARKS, RECREATION, &
NATURAL RESOURCES

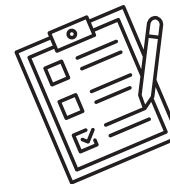
HOUSING &
NEIGHBORHOODS

INFRASTRUCTURE
& PUBLIC FACILITIES

Infrastructure and public facilities provide the foundation that supports everyday life. The provision of these services in a cost-efficient manner is a chief public responsibility.

83% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS RATED QUALITY AND SATISFACTION WITH COMMUNITY SERVICES AVERAGE OR ABOVE.

53% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS FELT STREET/ UTILITY IMPROVEMENTS SHOULD BE A TOP FIVE FOCUS FOR NORTH IOWA IN THE NEXT TEN YEARS.



VISION

The North Iowa Corridor has state of the art facilities that maximize level of service for a high quality of life and supportive business environment

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Take proactive approaches to sustainability to extend the lifespan or lower the lifecycle costs of facilities

2. Support cooperative regional efforts to improve water quality

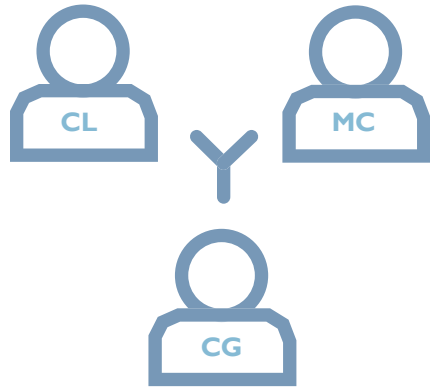
3. Create private sector investment, reinvestment, job creation, and high quality of life through strong public facilities and infrastructure

4. Maintain an inventory of public facilities to benefit all ages and abilities

5. Support land use, infrastructure, and mobility patterns for the efficient and cost-effective delivery of emergency services

6. Invest in infrastructure improvement projects that achieve the intent of the North Iowa Corridor Plan

POLICIES AND ACTIONS PREVIEW



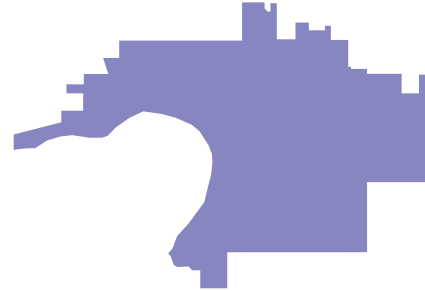
SHARED

1. Evaluate and budget to maintain all facilities in a good state and to adapt existing facilities to changing needs.
2. Budget for studies to evaluate facility needs every 5-7 years.
3. Promote cooperation and coordination between jurisdictions for utility and service provision.
4. Communicate regularly with existing community partners to identify future land needs, services, and locations.
5. Evaluate and plan for context sensitive opportunities to incorporate renewable energy that saves costs, is more efficient, and improves the environment.



CERRO GORDO

1. Encourage collaboration.
2. Promote conservation of energy resources.
3. Preserve community character and quality of life.
4. Emphasize preservation of natural resources and agricultural land.
5. Explore internet broadband to rural areas.



CLEAR LAKE

1. Plan for how to implement citywide fiber and Wi-Fi access.
2. Maintain high quality infrastructure capacity to the Industrial Park and plan for expansions.
3. Continue to fill gaps in the sidewalk system.
4. Study water service possibilities to the South Shore area.



MASON CITY

1. Continue to invest in improvements at the Municipal Airport as potential market demands warrant.
2. Seek additional opportunities to use renewable energy resources to power public facilities.
3. Promote the use of renewable energy for large scale industrial users, including co-generation facilities.
4. Continue to fill gaps in the sidewalk system.
5. Analyze future water and sewer capacity needs to serve an expanding South Industrial Park and new neighborhoods.

INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC FACILITIES

IN THE NORTH IOWA CORRIDOR



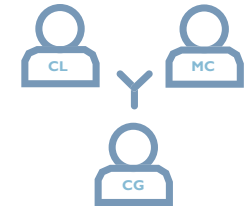
PHOTO COURTESY OF VISIT MASON CITY AND
MAIN STREET MASON CITY

A first priority for decision-makers is to provide basic services to the community: police, fire, emergency services, water, waste disposal, storm drainage, and transportation.

Other services like libraries and parks, while not essential to people's safety, are vital investments in residents' well-being. Still others, like education, are provided by other agencies and require partnerships with the government.

Many policies and actions across the North Iowa Corridor relating to infrastructure provision are similar across jurisdictions. Some differences exist between urban and rural service needs and specific quality of life projects. Nonetheless, a transparent and coordinated approach among jurisdictions and quasi-governmental partners will ensure the most efficient and effective use of investments.

SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS



Shared items are elements common to all jurisdictions. All jurisdictions and partners should use these policies and actions in coordination or locally to advance the North Iowa Corridor Plan. Each jurisdiction has common responsibilities to maintain a certain level of service for residents and businesses. Continual evaluation and maintenance is the minimum level of ongoing action for the future. There are opportunities for each jurisdiction to leverage advancements in public service provision to increase efficiency, lower costs, and improve resident quality of life.

1. EVALUATE AND BUDGET TO MAINTAIN ALL FACILITIES IN A GOOD STATE AND TO ADAPT EXISTING FACILITIES TO CHANGING NEEDS

Most residents are proud to live in the North Iowa Corridor, whether all their lives or as transplants. Public facilities are important to continuing this satisfaction.

Place emphasis for public facility investment on quality design within a budget. Public funds should be used prudently with an eye to quality design, operations, and service needs that speak to the pride residents have in the North Iowa Corridor.

2. BUDGET FOR STUDIES TO EVALUATE FACILITY NEEDS EVERY 5-7 YEARS

With growth comes the need to evaluate facility needs beyond annual maintenance schedules. Detailed engineering or planning studies for utility systems and public safety facilities that occur twice a decade or more often as needed ensure each jurisdiction is informed and proactive in improvements.

3. PROMOTE COOPERATION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN JURISDICTIONS FOR UTILITY AND SERVICE PROVISION

See the Common Ground area policies in the Exceptional Places Plan element.

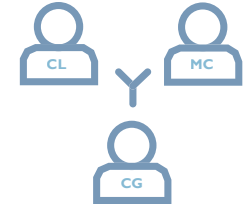
4. COMMUNICATE REGULARLY WITH EXISTING COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO IDENTIFY FUTURE LAND NEEDS, SERVICES, AND LOCATIONS

Many public and private use facilities can significantly drive the market and transportation conditions. For example, a new school or a facility can attract new growth and also create congestion. Therefore, cooperation between the jurisdictions and significant landowners is important. Regular communication partners include:

- School Districts. To understand growth plans and identify sites with good vehicle and pedestrian connections that generally align near residential areas on the future land use map.
- North Iowa Area Community College.
- North Iowa Area Council of Governments (NIACOG). In the past, NIACOG has helped the area with joint planning efforts like the multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan and Federal transportation improvements plan.
- Cerro Gordo County Public Health. The organization itself will not require additional land, but they are essential partners in decisions for land use patterns and needed services using tools like the North Central Iowa Community Health Assessment.



SHARED POLICIES AND ACTIONS



5. EVALUATE AND PLAN FOR CONTEXT SENSITIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO INCORPORATE RENEWABLE ENERGY THAT SAVES COSTS, IS MORE EFFICIENT, AND IMPROVES THE ENVIRONMENT

The costs of installing renewable energy systems continue declining to be competitive with traditional energy systems. The understanding of these systems is also increasing. Using renewable energy in some public facilities helps defray utility costs in the long run and adds a visible display of efforts to preserve the environment.

Each jurisdiction should tailor their policy for small and large scale renewable energy projects based on the context of their community. Policy and regulatory considerations for incorporating renewable energy opportunities include:

- A. Adopt or revise zoning regulations according to Iowa Code that reflect impact mitigation and long-term management based on the scale and location of proposed facilities.
- B. Ensure that residences and roadways are appropriately buffered from utility installations based on best planning practices.
- C. Support small-scale consumer renewable energy and private ownership as accessory uses.
- D. Evaluate and plan for opportunities to incorporate renewable energy sources into existing or new public property.
- E. Avoid large expanses of facilities that affect stormwater management, habitat preservation, and visual variety.
- F. Avoid installations that would take up large portions of potential growth areas, referenced on the future land use map.
- G. Discourage facilities that would detract from cultural resources, recreational opportunities, or agricultural production.
- H. Limit utility scale renewable energy facilities in residential growth areas, along major arterial streets, and on prime agricultural land.
- I. Ensure property and soils can and will be brought back to original conditions after the energy use leaves.
- J. Encourage or require concurrent land uses with wind energy and solar energy installations. Examples might include alternative crop production, animal grazing, or pollinator habitat.
- K. Consider requiring fiscal, cost of services, environmental, habitat, migration, aviation, or other impact studies for large scale facilities.
- L. Create an evaluation system to protect the most productive farmland from development.

IOWA SMART PLANNING PRINCIPLES REFERENCE (PAGES 46-47)

1. COLLABORATION
2. EFFICIENCY, TRANSPARENCY, AND CONSISTENCY
3. CLEAN, RENEWABLE, AND EFFICIENT ENERGY
4. OCCUPATIONAL DIVERSITY
5. REVITALIZATION
6. HOUSING DIVERSITY
7. COMMUNITY CHARACTER
8. NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION
9. SUSTAINABLE DESIGN
10. TRANSPORTATION DIVERSITY

CERRO GORDO POLICIES AND ACTIONS



Maximizing agricultural production and preserving farmland are the top priorities. Facilities mostly relate to road maintenance, public safety, and coordination with utility providers. Therefore, aside from the shared policies and actions, the County should focus on maintaining quality services and anticipating future technologies that may create more efficient systems.

Many directions and considerations of the Iowa Smart Planning Principles (pages 46-47) relate to public facilities and infrastructure and can be exemplified through the following policies and actions:

1. ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION

Provide opportunities for public input, listen to what is communicated, evaluate risks versus benefits, and set public facility and infrastructure policy based on local input. Respect people and their time through use of efficient methods. Earn and maintain trust by being consistent and transparent.

2. PROMOTE CONSERVATION OF ENERGY RESOURCES

Maximizing agricultural production and preserving farmland are the top priorities. In addition to providing food, local agriculture is a key contributor to renewables like ethanol and biofuels.

3. PRESERVE COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Uphold the rural, scenic style of the unincorporated county community. Promote activities and development that respond to local values regarding the physical character of the community. Maintaining rural character and quality of life for county residents will also be appealing to tourists as they travel to the North Iowa Corridor for a peaceful and unique stay.

4. EMPHASIZE PRESERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL LAND

The distinctive natural resources available in Cerro Gordo County are appealing and provide opportunities for residents and visitors to experience a positive connection with the outdoors. Agricultural land provides farmers with a means to produce crops and livestock that feed society and contribute to renewables. Responsible use and preservation of natural resources and agricultural land drives the North Iowa Corridor economy through direct and indirect spend.

5. EXPLORE INTERNET BROADBAND TO RURAL AREAS

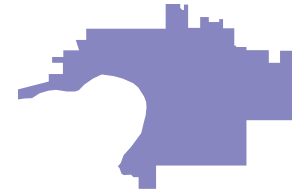
Providing broadband services will enable the county to better serve residents and the business community.



IOWA CODE, CHAPTER 335: THE FOUNDATION FOR COUNTY ZONING

- Make regulations in accordance with the Plan.
- Design regulations to preserve the availability of agricultural land.
- Consider the protection of soil from wind and water erosion.
- Encourage efficient urban development patterns.
- Lessen congestion in the street or highway.
- Secure safety from fire, flood, panic and other dangers.
- Protect health and the general welfare.
- Provide adequate light and air.
- Prevent the overcrowding of land.
- Avoid undue concentration of population.
- Promote the conservation of energy resources.
- Promote reasonable access to solar energy.
- Facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks, and other public requirements.
- Consider the character of the area, the peculiar suitability of such area for particular uses, conserving the value of buildings, and encouraging the most appropriate use of land throughout the county.

CLEAR LAKE POLICIES AND ACTIONS



1. PLAN FOR HOW TO IMPLEMENT CITYWIDE FIBER AND WI-FI ACCESS

Access to the internet is no longer an optional service for a household. Internet access is a necessary utility for quality of life. Many communities are adding free internet access in public spaces and upgrading to the fastest service possible to each business and household is a significant attraction for residents and economic development.

2. MAINTAIN HIGH QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY TO THE INDUSTRIAL PARK AND PLAN FOR EXPANSIONS

Extending city infrastructure, including water and sewer lines, is an expensive part of land development and economic development. Only the upfront cost of expansion is typically considered by developers. The City should evaluate the cost-benefit or appropriateness of infrastructure extension to growing industrial areas and future neighborhood development to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being used efficiently.

3. CONTINUE TO FILL GAPS IN THE SIDEWALK SYSTEM

First priorities should include gaps that would connect to the city trail system, within walking distance of schools, and around parks.

4. STUDY WATER SERVICE POSSIBILITIES TO THE SOUTH SHORE AREA

Most areas within the South Shore subarea plan in the Exceptional Places Plan element are not served by city water. The intensity of development and demand for new growth warrants evaluating whether businesses and households are better served under city water services. This includes quality and cost of service.



MASON CITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS



1. CONTINUE TO INVEST IN IMPROVEMENTS AT THE MUNICIPAL AIRPORT AS POTENTIAL MARKET DEMANDS WARRANT.

In 2024, the Mason City Municipal Airport was undergoing construction of a new terminal. This new service capacity is a great economic development and quality of life advancement for the North Iowa Corridor. Future decisions and directions for the Common Ground area in the Exceptional Places Plan element should avoid land use conflicts with Airport operations. More proactive investments in the facilities should be scheduled for study at regular intervals.

2. SEEK ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO USE RENEWABLE ENERGY RESOURCES TO POWER PUBLIC FACILITIES

As stated in the shared policies and actions of this Plan element, the appeal of incorporating renewable energy into developments continues to increase. Using renewable technologies in public projects can demonstrate possibilities to private owners and increase long-term savings for the City in many instances.

3. PROMOTE THE USE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY BY LARGE SCALE INDUSTRIAL USERS, INCLUDING CO-GENERATION FACILITIES

The City should use the policy considerations under the shared policies and actions in this Plan element to work with private property owners (or business) wanting to develop a larger scale renewable energy system. Policies should encourage opportunities for public and private benefits.

4. CONTINUE TO FILL GAPS IN THE SIDEWALK SYSTEM

First priorities should include gaps that would connect to the city trail system, within walking distance of schools, and around parks.

5. ANALYZE FUTURE WATER AND SEWER CAPACITY NEEDS TO SERVE AN EXPANDING SOUTH INDUSTRIAL PARK AND NEW NEIGHBORHOODS

Extending city infrastructure, including water and sewer lines, is an expensive part of land development and economic development. Only the upfront cost of expansion is typically considered by developers. The City should evaluate the cost-benefit or appropriateness of infrastructure extension to growing industrial areas and future neighborhood development to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being used efficiently.







THE NORTH IOWA CORRIDOR: MOVING FORWARD

The Plan articulates many policy and regulation recommendations to help the community achieve the vision expressed by community leaders and residents. Moving forward, the collaboration between jurisdictions should continue through:

- *Annual Action Program*
- *Annual Evaluation*
- *Plan Updates*
- *Leadership and Partners*
- *Annexation Policy*
- *Implementation Schedule*

The Plan is a comprehensive guide for future public decisions, but this document by itself does not implement any policies or actions directly. Additional action is needed to implement the recommendations of this Plan. Implementation will require partnerships among public entities, the development community, private property owners, and North Iowa Corridor residents. This chapter guides the Plan's implementation.

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

USING COMMON LANGUAGE AND BRANDING

Working together, like was done to create this Plan, must not be understated. While each jurisdiction has unique aspects to pursue alone, a common language and message about the North Iowa Corridor should remain - its brand. A brand is really a package of expectations. This starts with the future land use plan where designations are the same across jurisdictions. Other common branding elements for implementing the Plan include efforts by the North Iowa Corridor Economic Development Corporation (NICEDC) and partners, which might include:

- A. Coordinating marketing packages or campaigns to promote the Plan and North Iowa Corridor to attract business and residents.**
- B. Educating those who interface with residents and businesses to speak confidently on the history and assets across the North Iowa Corridor, not just the jurisdiction in which they live.**
- C. Rebranding the NICEDC's interface and website to better match the vision of this Plan.** Include a link to the NICEDC's website on all jurisdictions' websites.
- D. Actively promoting implementation of the Plan on social media, digital newsletters, and other promotional opportunities.** Use the NICEDC account or a new account managed jointly.
- E. Using general word of mouth in everyday conversations to expand and leverage the North Iowa Corridor brand.**

ANNUAL ACTION PROGRAM

- **Define an annual action and capital improvement program that implements the recommendations of the Plan.**

The actions of this Plan will require funding and other continuous support. City and County staff should work with the Planning and Zoning Commissions, City Councils, and Board of Supervisors to define an annual action and capital improvement program that implements the Plan's recommendations.

Elements of this program could be coordinated among jurisdictions and should occur during existing capital improvement planning and budgeting processes. Each jurisdiction should complete this annual process before the beginning of each budget year and include the following:

- A 1-year work program for the upcoming year that is specific and related to the respective jurisdiction's financial resources. The work program will establish which recommendations the jurisdiction will address during that year.
- A 3-year strategic program that provides for a multi-year perspective, aiding the preparation of the annual work program.
- A longer-term capital improvement program that fits into current capital improvement programs.

ANNUAL EVALUATION

Undertake an annual evaluation of the Plan, with a full update every 8-12 years.

Staff should undertake an annual evaluation of the Plan in each jurisdiction and through a collaborative workshop with all three jurisdictions. This evaluation should include a written report to the Planning and Zoning Commissions and the elected offices. The evaluation should:

- Summarize key land use developments and decisions during the past year and relate them to the North Iowa Corridor Plan.
- Review actions taken by the jurisdiction during the past year to implement the Plan's recommendations.
- Define any suggested changes to make to the North Iowa Corridor Plan.
 - This Plan is dynamic and can adapt in response to changing conditions, resources, and opportunities. The Plan was created through a public process. Therefore, any official changes to the Plan should be made through a public process. Amendments should comply with the spirit of the goals and principles, as articulated throughout.

PLAN UPDATES

Many parts of the Plan involve collaboration between North Iowa Corridor jurisdictions. While many policies and actions are specific to one jurisdiction, many others affect all. Therefore, updating the Plan requires continual collaboration and communication between staff and leaders in each jurisdiction. Below is a process for updating the Plan given the unique joint planning effort:

UPDATE TO A PORTION SPECIFIC TO ONE JURISDICTION

Future Land Use Map

- Approval by that jurisdiction with communication to other jurisdictions about the map update and distribution of the new plan. Other jurisdictions should formally acknowledge the change.

- Changes in the Common Ground area should follow the procedures in the Exceptional Places Plan element.

Policy or Action

- Approval by that jurisdiction with communication to other jurisdictions about the update and distribution of the new plan. Other jurisdictions should formally acknowledge the change.
- Changes in the Common Ground area should follow the procedures in the Exceptional Places Plan element.

UPDATE TO A PORTION AFFECTING MULTIPLE JURISDICTIONS

Future Land Use Map

- Coordinate staff communication and formal approvals. Follow the procedures in the Exceptional Places Plan element.

Policy or Action

- Coordinate staff communication and formal approvals. Follow the procedures in the Exceptional Places Plan element.

LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERS

For greater success, each jurisdiction needs to partner with other entities interested in implementing the Plan's recommendations. Partnership activities involve:

- Maintaining communication and continued coordination between the North Iowa Corridor jurisdictions and related governmental jurisdictions.
- Using a variety of funds to implement the common policies and actions of the Plan.
- Cerro Gordo County, Clear Lake, and Mason City must continue to evaluate land use proposals for compatibility with future urban development at the urban fringes.

Even though the primary audience of the Plan are the elected officials, staff, and the Planning and Zoning Commissions, other groups to involve

are similar to those that took part in the planning process. The implementation tables recommend which group should take the lead in carrying out the recommendation and potential partners.

- **Responsibilities: Elected/Appointed Officials.** Decision-makers must be conscious of the rights of others. Decisions should expand choices and opportunities for all persons, including the disadvantaged, and promote economic integration. Officials include the City Councils, Board of Supervisors, and City/County Boards and Commissions.
- **Responsibilities: City and County Staff.** In addition to the responsibilities for officials, staff should continue seeking meaningful input from the public when developing plans and programs. The Plan is rooted in a public engagement process. The goals, policies, and actions represent the aspirations of the community as a whole. Recommendations from staff to decision-makers should provide accurate information on planning issues affecting all people.

This designation of "leadership" is not meant to be exhaustive or to exclude any group that would like to take the lead on a project or policy. Any group or resident is invited to work with the jurisdictions to support implementing this plan. However, this list can serve to guide the expectations of the groups listed here.

ANNEXATION POLICY

One of the important regulatory tools that cities can use when addressing growth and development is annexation. Iowa state law prescribes the process by which communities can annex land. Clear Lake's and Mason City's annexation policies should take into consideration the following and include early communication with County staff:

- A. Protection of Future Growth Areas.** To effectively guide growth and development, future growth areas might need to be managed through annexation. Annexation will allow Clear Lake and Mason City to extend their zoning and subdivision jurisdiction to guide development. This joint planning effort further clarifies expectations for all jurisdictions.
- B. Public Services.** Public service issues can provide compelling reasons for annexation. Areas for consideration should include:
 - Areas that are served by municipal infrastructure. Clear Lake's or Mason City's sewer and water system should not be extended without a 28E Agreement that includes future options for annexation.
- C. Community Unification.** Establishing unified transportation and open space systems while maintaining a common commitment to the city's future is important when considering annexation.
- D. Opportunistic Market Forces.** Opportunities may arise under changing market conditions for a new subdivision or commercial growth at locations outside of city limits. These opportunities are a valid consideration for annexation to provide city service.

- E. A Positive Cost Benefit Analysis.** The economic benefits of annexation, including projected tax revenues, should compensate for the additional cost of extending services to newly-annexed areas. The review policy for annexation should include the following:
 - Estimated cost impact and timetable for providing municipal services.
 - The method by which the City plans to finance the extension and maintenance of municipal services.
 - Identified tax revenues from existing and probable future development in areas considered for annexation.
 - Calculated added annual operating costs for urban services, including public safety, recreation, and utility services, offered within newly-annexed areas.
 - Communication with County staff on impacts to the county.

Decisions about annexation should be based on more than one consideration. All considerations should be evaluated and a plan should be in place to ensure development satisfies the goals and objectives of the Plan, including those of the County. For example:

- Adjacency to existing infrastructure.
- Ability to fulfill a community need.
- A strategy to add new civic and park uses.
- Protection of environmental features.
- Ability to be reached by emergency services.
- Economic development opportunities.

ANNEXATION PROCESS

The annexation policy provides guidelines for decision-making that help minimize unnecessary conflicts and expenditures. Clear Lake and Mason City should consider the following procedure when annexation is deemed beneficial or necessary.

A. Pursue Voluntary Annexation. “Voluntary annexation” provisions of Iowa annexation law are preferred in the North Iowa Corridor. Avoid annexing areas under “involuntary” procedures if possible. The drawbacks of involuntary annexations include:

- More complex annexation process.
- Confrontation with landowners.
- Susceptibility to court challenges, which add delays and expenses.
- Costly extension of city services is mandated within a short time period (3 years), even if development is not imminent.
- It may be appropriate to pursue involuntary annexation for any areas already receiving city services.

In contrast, the benefits of voluntary annexation are:

- Allows the City to promote areas for development without having to install costly infrastructure ahead of that development. The annexation/infrastructure extension plan is required but becomes a negotiated process between the property owner, developer, and the City.
- Does not require the City to choose among potential annexation areas. Instead, the private market determines development timing and location.
- Simpler process, less controversial, and generally more productive.

To make the voluntary annexation approach work, Clear Lake or Mason City must:

- Enact this process.
- Use “80/20” annexation (where the owners of up to 20 percent of the land did not voluntarily apply for annexation) when appropriate.

B. Initiate Outreach to Property Owners.

Initiate ongoing communication with interested owners in the annexation priority areas. Communicate the potential benefit of annexation, including that extending city services/ infrastructure greatly enhances the development potential and maximizes its sale value.

C. Wait to Zone. Annexation areas should only be zoned for future uses once the areas are voluntarily annexed and a negotiated development deal is accomplished. Discussion of appropriate zoning, consistent with the Future Land Use Map, should be a part of the negotiation process.

D. Place Priority on Contiguous Parcels.

Annexation priority should go to parcels contiguous to current city boundaries and not create islands, as required by Iowa law.

E. Continue use of agreements between adjacent jurisdictions. These agreements set expectations for growth in the area.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

TABLE 9.1: IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE - SHARED

Policies and Actions	Type	Time Frame	Plan Reference Page
Land Use			
Establish a 28E Agreement in the common ground	Policy	<3 Years	54
Exceptional Places			
Partner to implement and regularly update the Vision North Iowa Economic Development Plan	Action	Ongoing	71
Complete studies for critical economic corridors or sub-areas	Action	<7 years	72
Stimulate private investment through public initiatives	Action	Ongoing	72
Incorporate arts and culture into public projects and support private efforts to enhance cultural features	Policy and Action	Ongoing	73
Promote cohesive development patterns and character enhancements in the common ground area - including 28E agreement	Policy	Ongoing	74
Mobility			
Maintain regular communication with the Iowa Department of Transportation on projects and needs	Policy	Ongoing	103
Use the future transportation plan to guide arterial and collector street extensions as growth occurs	Policy	Ongoing	104
Schedule and budget for future transportation studies to match land use growth	Action	Ongoing	104
Require all new residential development to provide multiple local street and pedestrian access points	Policy	Ongoing	106
Develop design standards for highly visible collector and arterial streets	Action	<3 years	107
Prepare for new transportation modes and explore opportunities to improve transit service	Action	<3 years; Ongoing	107
Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources			
Develop new park and recreation facilities that meet the needs of future growth	Policy and Action	Ongoing	128
Enhance existing facilities to provide amenities and the basic elements that residents need	Policy and Action	Ongoing	128
Seek other funding mechanisms to strategically phase park and recreation improvements over time	Action	Ongoing	129
Connect parks across jurisdictions with trails	Policy and Action	Ongoing	129
Develop sustainable standards for facilities that minimize maintenance demands	Policy and Action	<3 years	129

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

TABLE 9.2: CONTINUED: IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE - SHARED

Policies and Actions	Type	Time Frame	Plan Reference Page
Housing and Neighborhoods			
Balance urban to rural character with neighborhood development	Policy	Ongoing	145
Continue to evaluate the market and adjust policies and actions to respond to demands	Policy	Ongoing	146
Allow and encourage mixing of different housing and complementary use types across more areas	Policy	<3 years	147
Continue to expand efforts for housing rehabilitation programs and code enforcement	Action	Ongoing	147
Promote the efforts of the North Iowa Corridor Housing Development Corporation or other not-for-profit organizational structure to lead gap financing for housing development	Action	<3 years; Ongoing	147
Infrastructure and Public Facilities			
Evaluate and budget to maintain all facilities in a good state and to adapt existing facilities to changing needs	Action	Ongoing	159
Budget for studies to evaluate facility needs every 5-7 years	Action	Ongoing	159
Promote cooperation and coordination between jurisdictions for utility and service provision	Policy	Ongoing	159
Communicate regularly with existing community partners to identify future land needs, services and locations	Action	Ongoing	159
Evaluate and plan for context sensitive opportunities to incorporate renewable energy that saves costs, is more efficient, and improves the environment.	Policy and Action	Ongoing	160

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

TABLE 9.3: IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE - CERRO GORDO COUNTY

Policies and Actions	Type	Time Frame	Plan Reference Page
Land Use			
Zoning and subdivision ordinance re-write - Revise renewable energy ordinance	Policy	<3 years <3 years	61
Exceptional Places			
Accommodate rural industries that coordinate with long-term city growth plans while not overstraining services	Policy	Ongoing	83
Manage land use growth and improve mobility systems in the South Shore area	Policy and Action	<3 years; Ongoing	84
Mobility			
Regularly review and update county road standards for best practices as appropriate	Policy	Ongoing	108
Use county road sections as opportunities to build environmental diversity and visual appeal	Policy and Action	Ongoing	108
Improve safety and multi-modal accessibility on South Shore Drive	Policy and Action	<3 years	108
Use the trail plan to consider multi-mobility enhancements on county roads	Action	<5 years	108
Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources			
Identify strategies to enhance knowledge, use, and accessibility of county recreational areas	Policy and Action	<3 years; Ongoing	130
Expand access to water trails and market regional opportunities	Action	<5 years; Ongoing	131
Enhance and grow existing recreational assets	Action	Ongoing	131
Maintain and expand the trail system	Action	Ongoing	132
Housing and Neighborhoods			
Preserve the character of rural subdivisions	Policy	Ongoing	148
Follow urban development patterns for new development in transitional areas near incorporated area boundaries	Policy	Ongoing	148
In rural areas, steer any new residential development to be adjacent to existing rural subdivisions	Policy	Ongoing	149
Use conservation subdivision practices for rural development next to parks or natural resource areas	Policy	Ongoing	149
Follow the guidelines for the South Shore Area Plan	Policy	Ongoing	149
Infrastructure and Public Facilities			
Encourage collaboration	Policy	Ongoing	161
Promote conservation of energy resources	Policy	Ongoing	161
Preserve community character	Policy	Ongoing	161
Emphasize preservation of natural resources and agricultural land	Policy	Ongoing	161
Explore internet broadband to rural areas	Action	<3 years; Ongoing	161

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

TABLE 9.4: IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE - CLEAR LAKE

Policies and Actions	Type	Time Frame	Plan Reference Page
Exceptional Places			
Implement the Surf District Plan	Action	< 3 years	86
Enhance the experience of the 8th Street Corridor	Policy and Action	<5 years	87
Continue to enhance downtown as the premier gathering place in Clear Lake	Policy and Action	Ongoing	88
Preserve historic resources for future generations	Policy	Ongoing	88
Improve mobility around City Park	Action	< 3 years	89
Mobility			
Use a Complete Street approach when building new streets and developments	Policy	Ongoing	109
Build the wayfinding system as growth occurs	Policy	Ongoing	110
Implement the future transportation plan and fill critical system gaps	Action	Ongoing	111
Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources			
Preserve existing and create future facilities	Action	Ongoing	134
Connect existing parks and trails to future growth areas	Action	Ongoing	135
Enhance shoreline access and gathering spaces	Action	Ongoing	135
Housing and Neighborhoods			
Target infrastructure improvements for street quality, appearance, and drainage to the highest risk neighborhoods	Action	Ongoing	150
Regularly evaluate incentive models to attract products that meet community needs	Policy	<3 years; Ongoing	150
Assertively expand and attract contractors	Policy and Action	<3 years	150
Expand the inventory of developable lots for residential uses, especially at workforce housing price points	Action	<3 years	151
Monitor rental inventory and short-term rental influences on neighborhood stability	Policy	Ongoing	151
Infrastructure and Public Facilities			
Plan for how to implement citywide fiber and wi-fi access	Action	<3 years	162
Maintain high quality infrastructure capacity to the Industrial Park and plan for expansions	Action	<5 years; Ongoing	162
Continue to fill gaps in the sidewalk system	Action	<7 years	162
Study water service possibilities to the South Shore area	Action	<5 years	162

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

TABLE 9.5: IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE - MASON CITY

Policies and Actions	Type	Time Frame	Plan Reference Page
Exceptional Places			
Balance the effects of industrial uses in the southwest growth area	Policy	Ongoing	90
Improve the experience of the Federal Avenue Corridor	Policy and Action	<3 years; Ongoing	92
Target neighborhoods and corridors to pursue infill development and connectivity	Action	<3 years; Ongoing	94
Define strategies to leverage downtown assets for new uses of underused spaces	Policy and Action	Ongoing	97
Preserve historic resources for future generations	Policy	Ongoing	97
Mobility			
Use a Complete Street approach when building new streets and developments	Policy	Ongoing	109
Build the wayfinding system as growth occurs	Policy	Ongoing	110
Implement the future transportation plan and fill critical system gaps	Action	Ongoing	116
Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources			
Preserve existing and create future facilities	Action	Ongoing	136
Connect existing parks and trails to future growth areas	Action	Ongoing	138
Expand ways to interact with the waterways	Action	<5 years	138
Housing and Neighborhoods			
Target infrastructure improvements for street quality, appearance, and drainage to the highest risk neighborhoods	Action	Ongoing	150
Regularly evaluate incentive models to attract products that meet community needs	Policy	<3 years; Ongoing	150
Assertively expand and attract contractors	Policy and Action	<3 years	150
Identify infill lots or parts of lots for affordable and workforce housing units	Action	<5 years	152
Create neighborhood subarea plans/strategies to conserve quality neighborhoods	Action	<7 years	153
Infrastructure and Public Facilities			
Continue to invest in improvements at the Municipal Airport as potential market demands warrant	Action	Ongoing	163
Seek additional opportunities to use renewable energy resources to power public facilities	Action	Ongoing	163
Promote the use of renewable energy by large scale industrial users, including co-generation facilities	Policy	Ongoing	163
Continue to fill gaps in the sidewalk system	Action	<7 years	163
Analyze future water and sewer capacity needs to serve an expanding south industrial park and new neighborhoods	Action	<3 years	163

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APPENDIX

- Summary of process and engagement
- Expanded survey results
- Expanded map atlas

EXPANDED PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS

The following pages show the public survey questions and responses referenced on page II. All open ended responses from the survey and public engagement events can be made available upon request.

Q1: Where do you live?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Mason City	41.33%	112
Clear Lake	37.27%	101
Elsewhere in Cerro Gordo County	12.92%	35
Other (please specify the ZIP code)	8.49%	23
TOTAL		271

Q2: Where do you work? If retired or not employed, please skip this question.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Mason City	64.17%	154
Clear Lake	19.58%	47
Other (please specify city or county)	11.25%	27
Elsewhere in Cerro Gordo County	5.00%	12
TOTAL		240

Q3: What challenge is the most important to address in the North Iowa Corridor? (select one)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Available workforce	28.34%	70
Affordable housing	27.13%	67
Population stability	25.10%	62
Other (please specify)	9.72%	24
Sustainability and climate change	5.67%	14
Jurisdictional relationships	4.05%	10
TOTAL		247

Q4: If you live in Clear Lake, Mason City or Cerro Gordo County, why do you choose to live here? (check all that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Born/raised in North Iowa	52.89%	128
Proximity to work	44.63%	108
Proximity to family/friends	43.39%	105
Cost of living	23.55%	57
Outdoor recreation opportunities	22.31%	54
Cultural attractions and the arts	11.16%	27
Other (please specify)	10.74%	26
Educational opportunities (yourself or family)	10.33%	25
Housing options	6.61%	16
TOTAL		546

Q5: What should the North Iowa Corridor focus on most in the next 10 years? (choose your top FIVE)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More development and reuse of existing buildings	82.94%	209
More job opportunity and growth	74.21%	187
Tourism attractions (sports, outdoor recreation)	58.73%	148
Stronger appearance and function downtowns and business corridors	56.35%	142
Street and utility improvements	53.17%	134
More diverse housing options	48.41%	122
Better parks and open spaces	43.65%	110
Better alternative transportation (transit, pedestrian/bicycle safety)	36.51%	92
Renewable energy projects	27.78%	70
Other (please specify)	18.25%	46
TOTAL		1260

EXPANDED PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS

Q6: Please rank your top five focuses from the previous question from 1 (least important) to 5 (most important)

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
More diverse housing options	35.34% (41)	24.14% (28)	15.52% (18)	12.07% (14)	12.93% (15)	116	8.57
More job opportunity and growth	31.07% (55)	21.47% (38)	16.38% (29)	14.69% (26)	16.38% (29)	177	8.36
[Insert text from Other]	35.56% (16)	13.33% (6)	20.0% (9)	6.67% (3)	24.44% (11)	45	8.29
Tourism attractions (sports, outdoor recreation)	20.14% (28)	17.99% (25)	20.86% (29)	25.90% (36)	15.11% (21)	139	8.02
More development and reuse of existing buildings	12.12% (24)	21.72% (43)	25.25% (50)	24.24% (48)	16.67% (33)	198	7.88
Stronger appearance and function downtowns and business corridors	11.59% (16)	22.46% (31)	23.19% (32)	26.09% (36)	16.67% (23)	138	7.86
Better parks and open spaces	16.19% (17)	20.0% (21)	19.05% (20)	16.19% (17)	28.57% (30)	105	7.79
Street and utility improvements	14.17% (18)	19.69% (25)	22.05% (28)	16.54% (21)	27.56% (35)	127	7.76
Better alternative transportation (transit, pedestrian/bicycle safety)	16.67% (15)	12.22% (11)	18.89% (17)	27.78% (25)	24.44% (22)	90	7.69
Renewable energy projects	13.85% (9)	18.46% (12)	15.38% (10)	21.54% (14)	30.77% (20)	65	7.63

Q7: On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being poor and 5 being excellent), how would you rate the North Iowa Corridor in regards to Community Image and Values?

	1 POOR	2 FAIR	3 AVERAGE	4 GOOD	5 EXCELLENT	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Reputation of Clear Lake	2.17% (5)	1.74% (4)	13.48% (31)	40.43% (93)	37.39% (86)	4.78% (11)	230	4.15
Amount of civic involvement and volunteerism	3.93% (9)	11.79% (27)	33.62% (77)	31.00% (71)	14.85% (34)	4.80% (11)	229	3.43
Quality and satisfaction with community services	2.17% (5)	9.13% (21)	39.57% (91)	35.65% (82)	9.13% (21)	4.35% (10)	230	3.42
Image of downtowns and business corridors	3.88% (9)	12.93% (30)	34.91% (81)	37.50% (87)	7.76% (18)	3.02% (7)	232	3.33
Welcoming attitude to new arrivals	5.17% (12)	12.07% (28)	35.34% (82)	30.60% (71)	8.62% (20)	8.19% (19)	232	3.28
Reputation of Cerro Gordo County	3.91% (9)	13.48% (31)	38.70% (89)	32.61% (75)	7.39% (17)	3.91% (9)	230	3.27
Reputation of Mason City	23.04% (53)	31.30% (72)	25.22% (58)	13.48% (31)	4.35% (10)	2.61% (6)	230	2.43

EXPANDED PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS

Q8: Rate your satisfaction with recreational opportunities for the following age groups:

	SATISFIED	DISSATISFIED	NO OPINION	TOTAL
Young children (under age 5)	49.78% (114)	22.27% (51)	27.95% (64)	229
Elementary children (age 5-12)	54.82% (125)	23.68% (54)	21.49% (49)	228
Teens (age 13-17)	33.19% (76)	41.05% (94)	25.76% (59)	229
Adults (age 18-65)	51.74% (119)	39.13% (90)	9.13% (21)	230
Older adults (age 65+)	44.10% (101)	25.76% (59)	30.13% (69)	229

Q10: Which area do you visit most for shopping, restaurants, entertainment, etc.?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Mason City	59.23%	138
Clear Lake	30.47%	71
Elsewhere (please specify the city)	10.30%	24
TOTAL		233

Q9: On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being poor and 5 being excellent), how would you rate the North Iowa Corridor in regards to the economy?

	1 POOR	2 FAIR	3 AVERAGE	4 GOOD	5 EXCELLENT	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Support for new business	7.83% 18	16.52% 38	30.43% 70	32.61% 75	5.65% 13	6.96% 16	230	3.13
Success of business districts	6.96% 16	16.09% 37	34.78% 80	33.91% 78	3.04% 7	5.22% 12	230	3.11
North Iowa's overall economy	8.26% 19	17.39% 40	34.35% 79	33.91% 78	3.04% 7	3.04% 7	230	3.06
Ability to attract and retain new employees	22.17% 51	25.65% 59	36.09% 83	10.0% 23	1.74% 4	4.35% 10	230	2.41

EXPANDED PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS

Q11: What three words best describe the North Iowa Corridor?

Examples of open ended responses include: welcoming, fun, safe; clean, quiet, unpleasant, needs some help, hard working, outdated, change resistant, entertaining, stable, traditional, simple.

Q12: How old are you?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
35-44	28.70%	66
45-54	25.65%	59
25-34	14.78%	34
65-74	12.17%	28
55-59	7.39%	17
60-64	6.96%	16
19-24	2.17%	5
75-84	2.17%	5
Under 19	0%	0
85+	0%	0
TOTAL		230

Q13: What is your employment status? (check all that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Employed Full-Time	80.35%	184
Retired	11.35%	26
Employed Part-Time	5.68%	13
Other (please specify)	3.49%	8
Unemployed	1.31%	3
Student	0.44%	1
TOTAL		235

Q14: What is the total annual income of all residents living in your household?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
\$100,000 - \$149,999	28.95%	66
\$150,000 - \$175,000+	28.07%	64
\$50,000 - \$74,999	16.23%	37
\$75,000 - \$99,999	12.28%	28
\$25,000 - \$49,999	10.53%	24
Don't Know	3.51%	8
Less than \$25,000	0.44%	1
TOTAL		228

Q15: Do you own or rent your home?

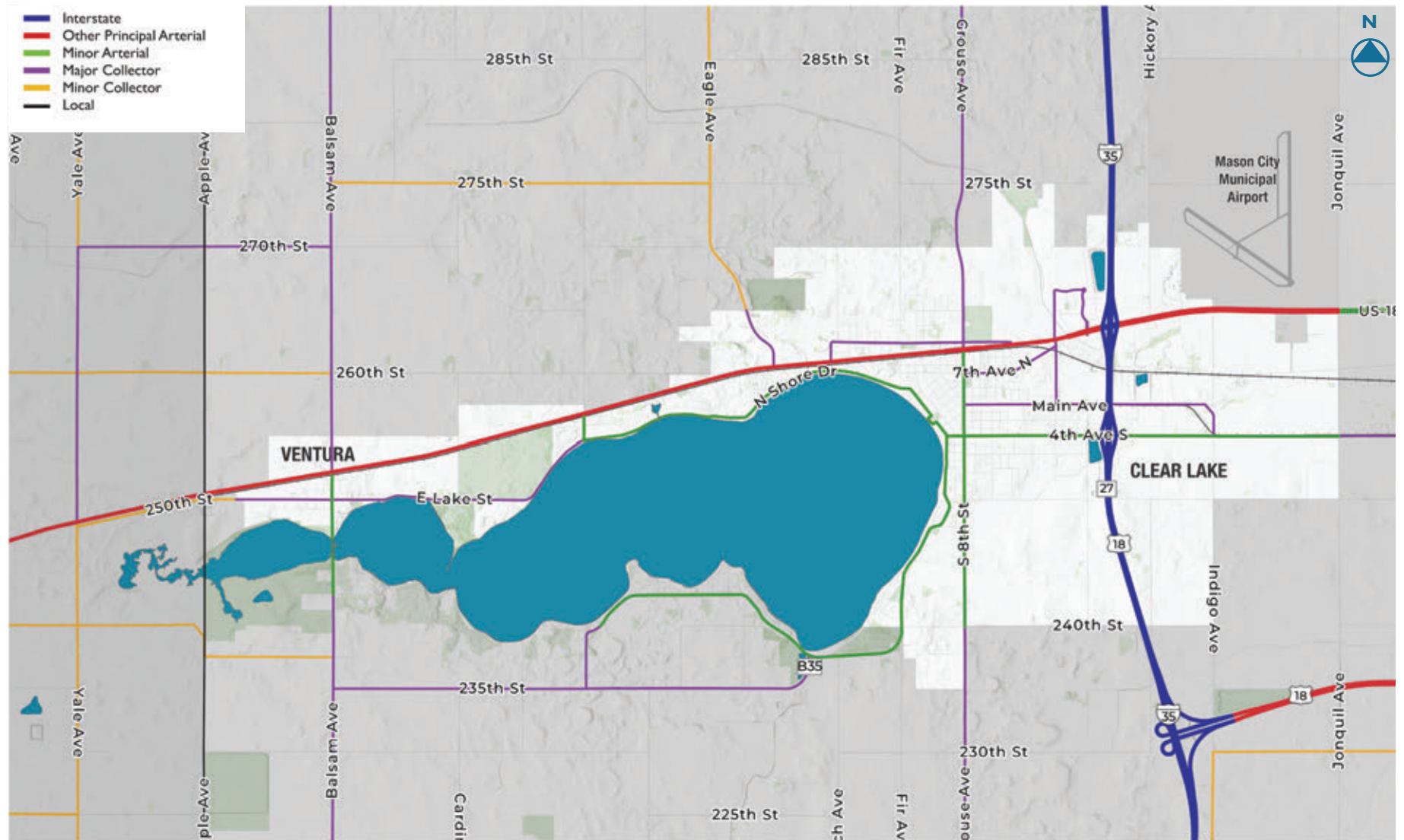
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Own	90.91%	210
Rent	6.49%	15
Live with grown children (for rent or free)	0.87%	2
Other (please specify)	0.87%	2
Rent-to-Own	0.43%	1
Live with parents (for rent or free)	0.43%	1
TOTAL		231

Q16: What is your race? (check all that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
White or Caucasian	93.04%	214
Prefer not to answer	5.22%	12
Hispanic or Latino	1.30%	3
Asian or Asian American	1.30%	3
Black or African American	0.87%	2
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	0
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0%	0
Another race	0%	0
TOTAL		234

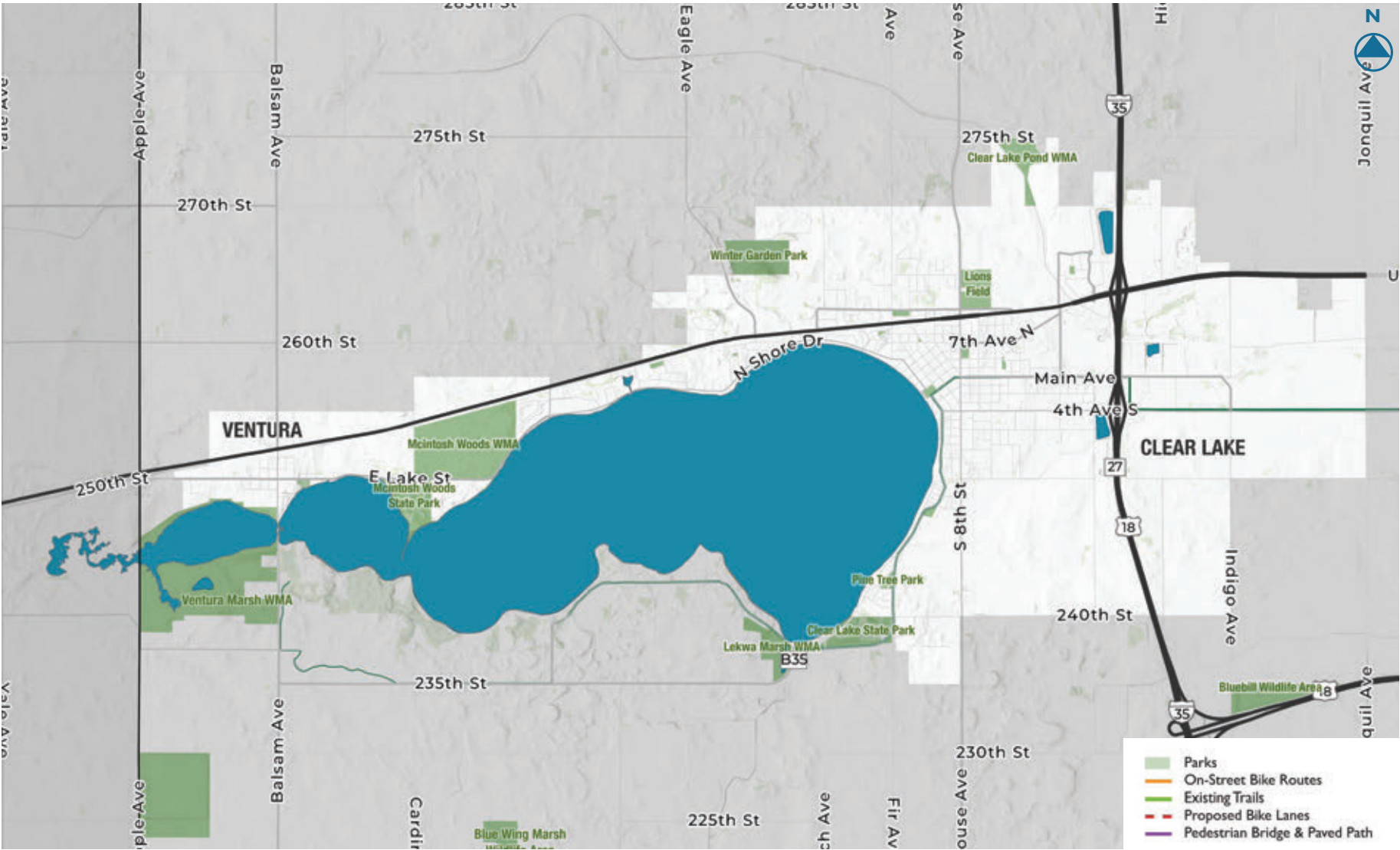
EXPANDED MAP ATLAS

The maps on the following pages were used during public engagement events and inform the Plan's policies and actions.



| Figure A.1: 2023 Functional Classification Road System - Clear Lake

EXPANDED MAP ATLAS



| Figure A.2: 2023 Parks and Pathways - Clear Lake

EXPANDED MAP ATLAS

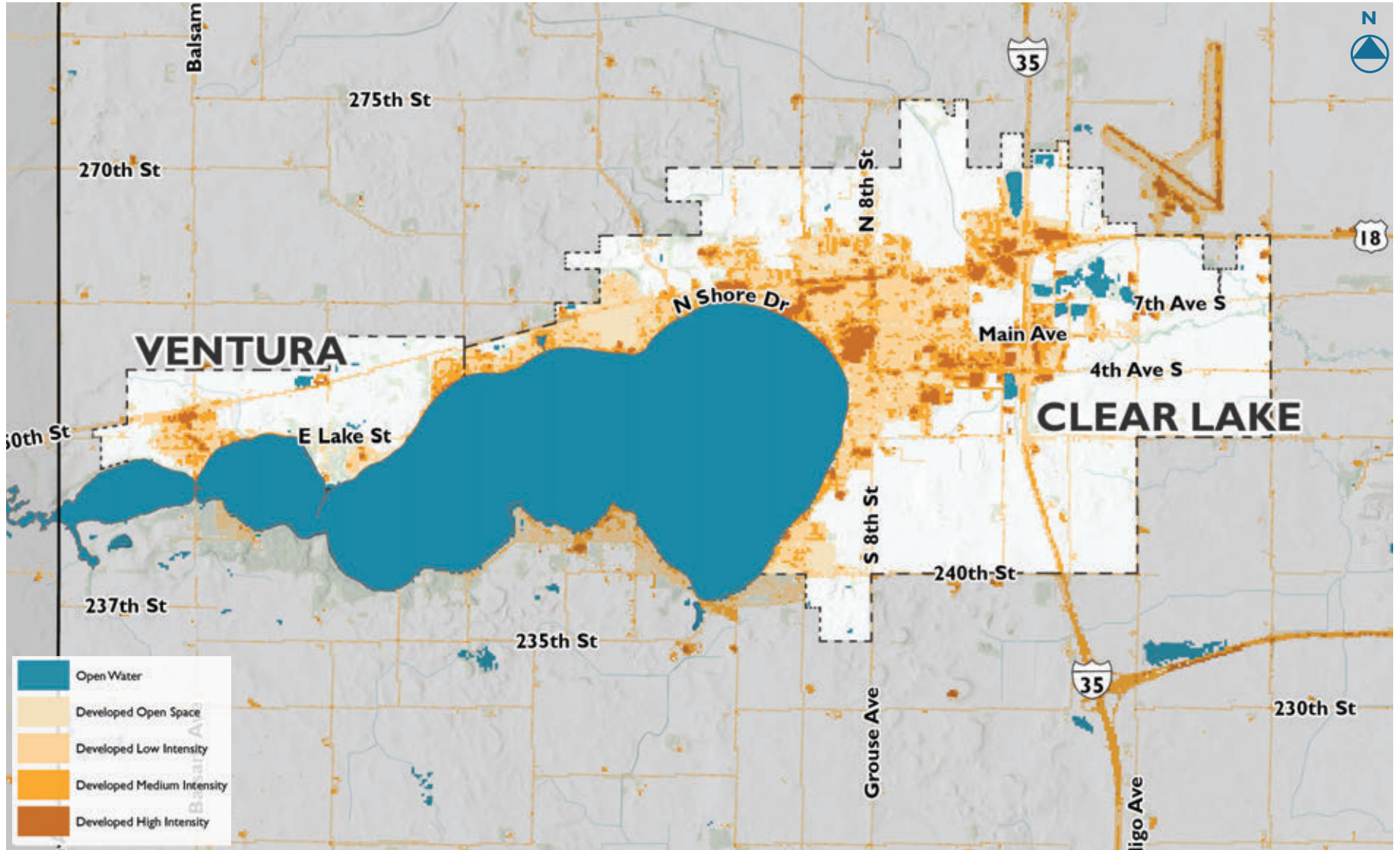
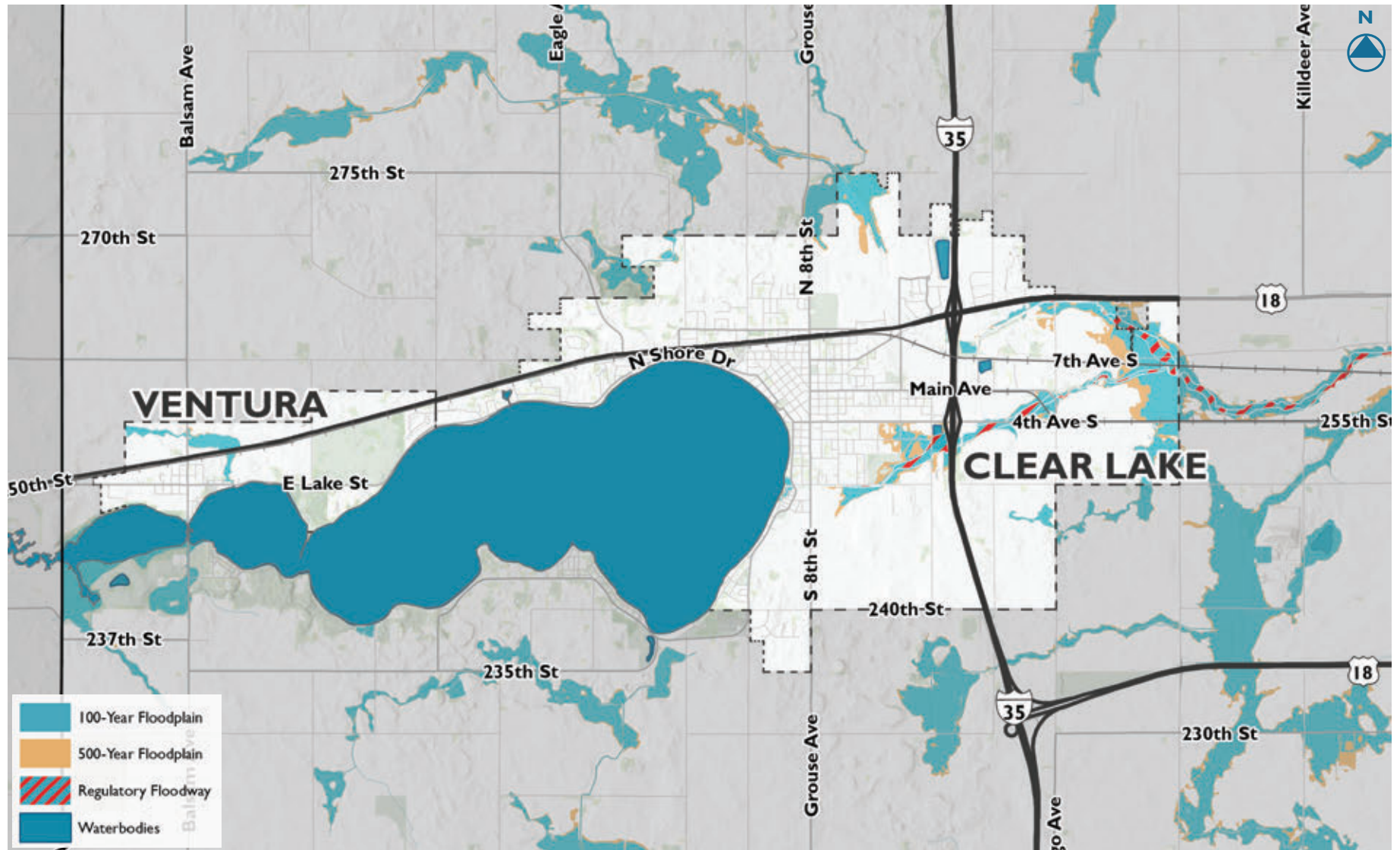


Figure A.3: 2023 Land Cover - Clear Lake

EXPANDED MAP ATLAS



| Figure A.4: 2023 Floodplain Map - Clear Lake

EXPANDED MAP ATLAS

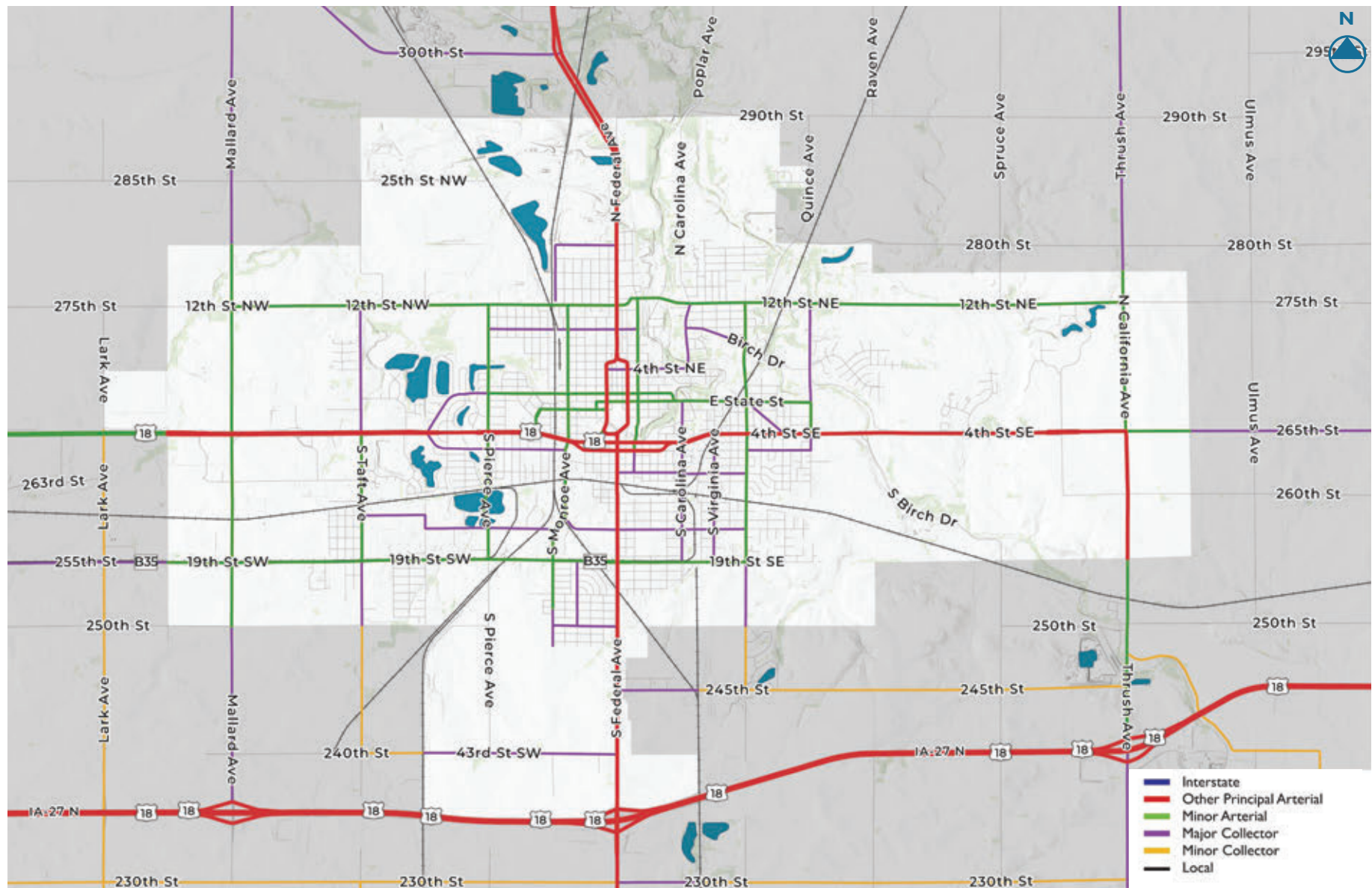
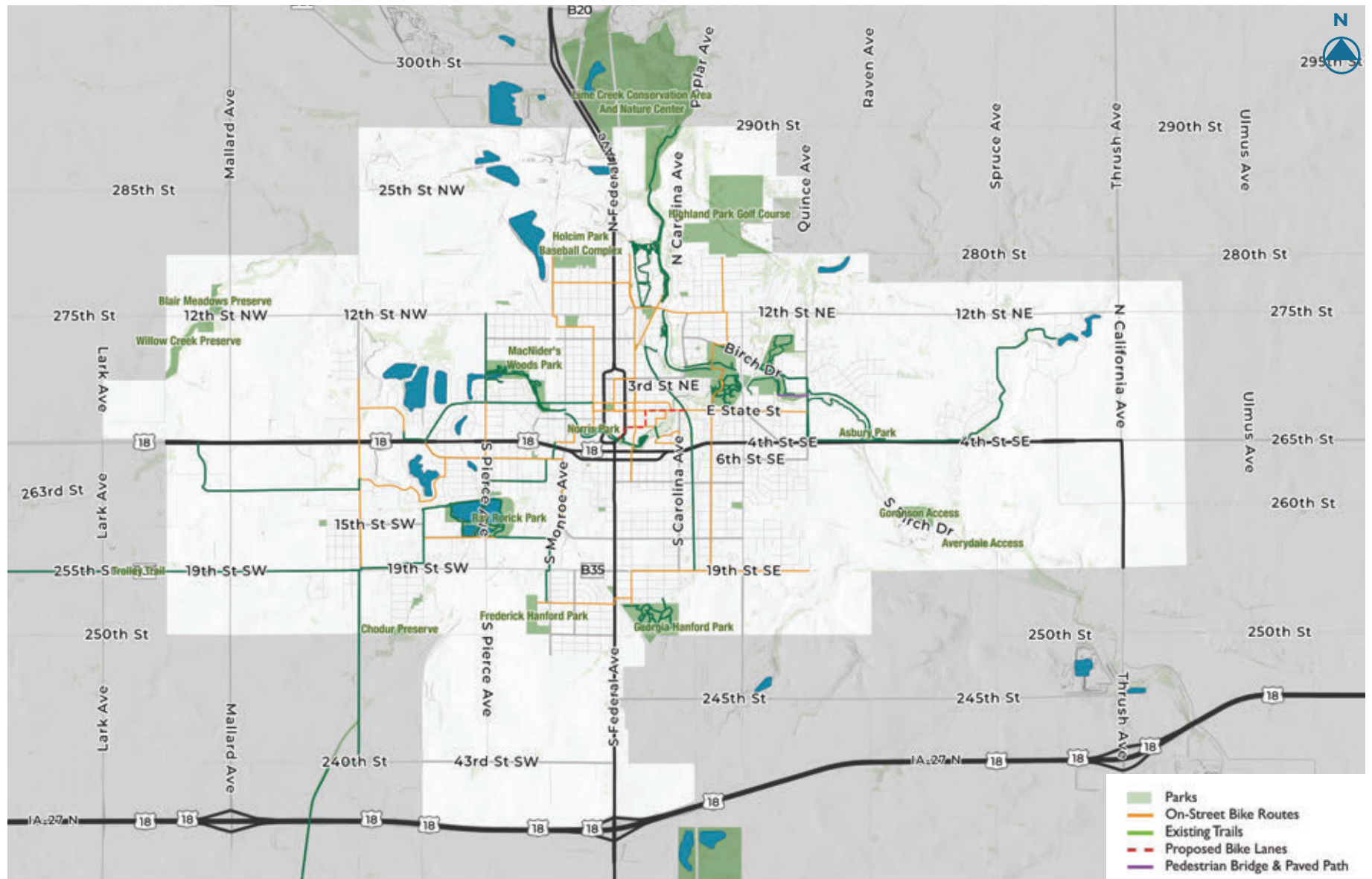


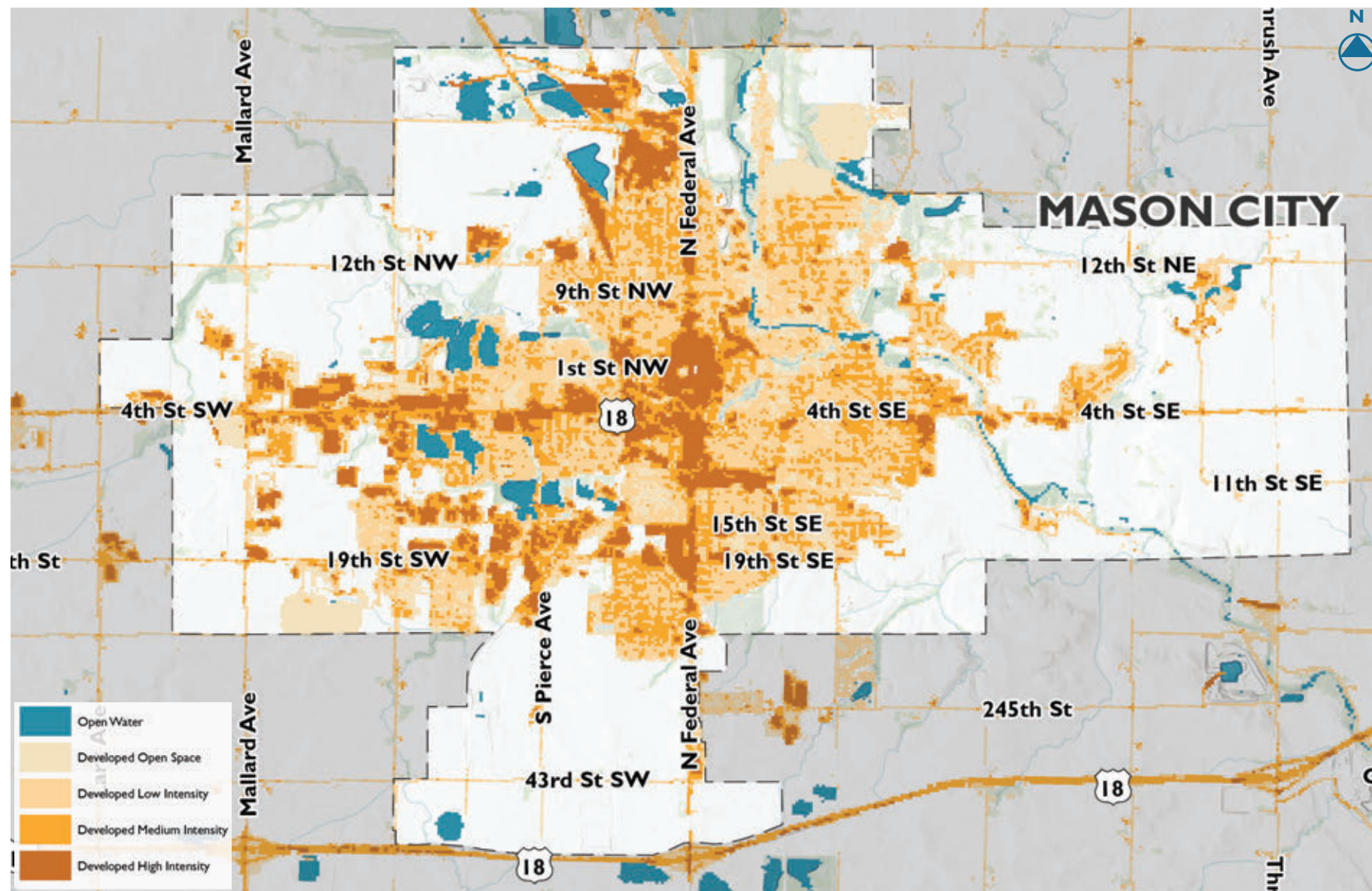
Figure A.5: 2023 Functional Classification Road System - Mason City

EXPANDED MAP ATLAS



| Figure A.6: 2023 Parks and Pathways - Mason City

EXPANDED MAP ATLAS



| Figure A.7: 2023 Land Cover - Mason City

EXPANDED MAP ATLAS

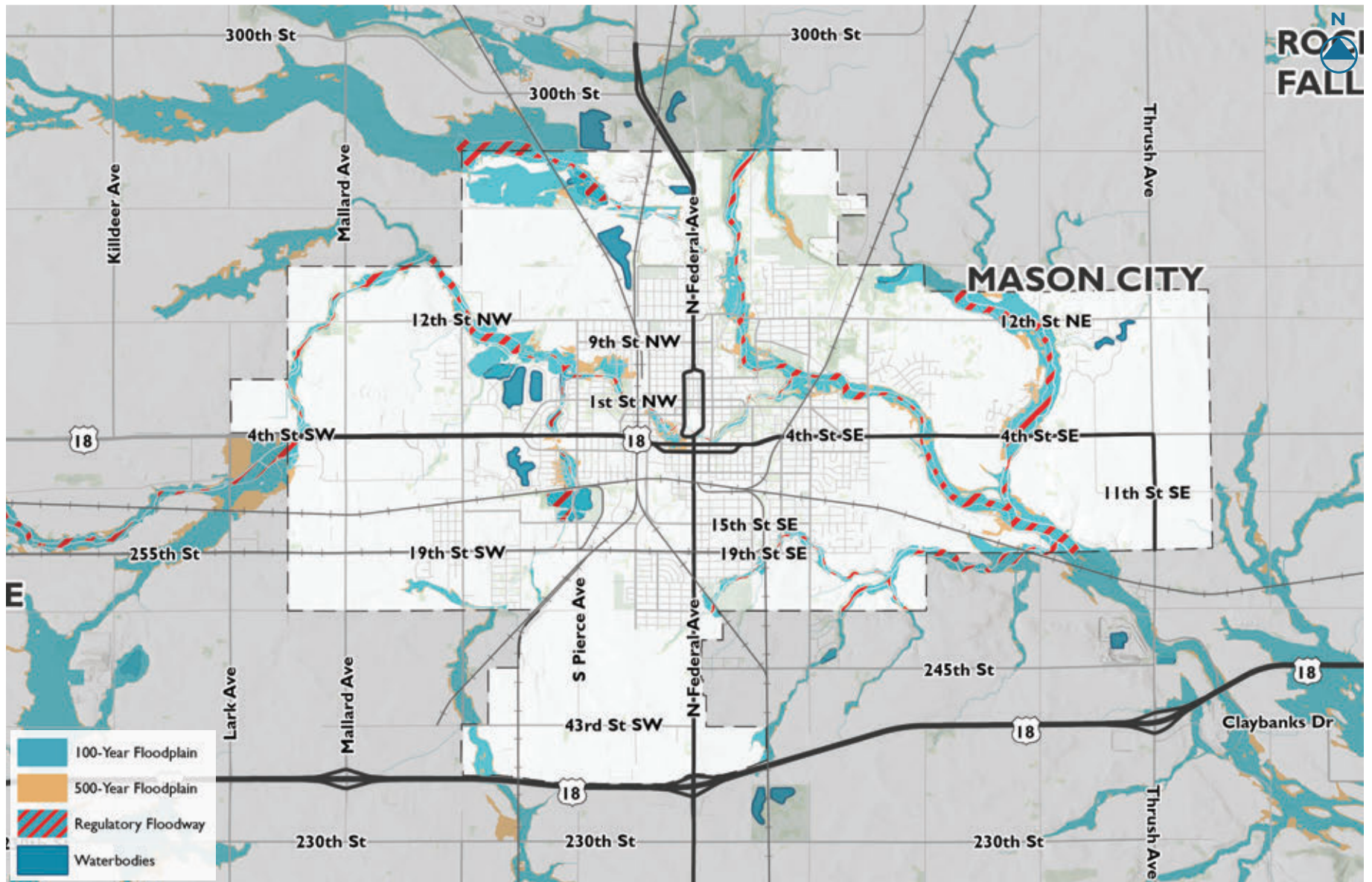


Figure A.8: 2023 Floodplain Map - Mason City

