

MEEKER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

*Revised
October 2008*



**Prepared by Meeker
County and the
Mid-Minnesota
Development Commission**

Meeker County Comprehensive Plan Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction and Profile of Meeker County	Ch. 1 Pg. 1
Justification for Updating the August 2000 Land Use Plan	2
Location of Meeker County	2
Meeker County's History	4
Population Profile	7
Historic Population Levels	7
Population by Age Groups	9
Household Numbers	10
Population Projections	11
Household Projections	12
Chapter Two: Natural Resources	Ch. 2 Pg. 1
Climate	1
Geology	1
Watersheds and Topography	1
Middle Fork of the Crow River Watershed	1
Clearwater River Watershed	2
North Fork of the Crow River Watershed	2
Sauk River Watershed	2
South Fork of the Crow River Watershed	2
Water Resources	2
Impaired Waters	4
Wetlands	6
Wellhead Protection	8
Soils	9
Presettlement Vegetation	10
Chapter Three: Meeker County's Current Land Use	Ch. 3. Pg. 1
Meeker County's Current Zoning	1
Article 11 – A-1 Agricultural Preservation District	1
Article 13 – R-1 Suburban Residential District	1
Article 14 – R-2 Rural Residential District	2
Article 15 – C-1 Commercial District	2
Article 16 – C-2 Neighborhood Commercial District	2
Article 17 – I-1 General Industry District	2
Article 18 – UE-O Urban Expansion Management Overlay District	2
Shoreland Management Overlay District (SM-O)	4
Recreation River Management Overlay District (RR-O)	4

Table of Contents continued ...

Clearwater River Watershed Management Overlay District (CR-O).....	4
Housing.....	5
Existing Housing.....	5
Meeker County Public Housing.....	8
Meeker County Parks	10
Transportation.....	12
Highways	12
Railroads	14
Mass Transit.....	15
Airports	16
Maintenance of the Transportation Network	16

Chapter Four: Community Profiles..... Ch. 4 Pg. 1

How to Use the Community Profiles.....	1
A Profile of Cedar Mills	2
A Profile of Cosmos	4
A Profile of Darwin	6
A Profile of Dassel	8
A Profile of Eden Valley	10
A Profile of Grove City	12
A Profile of Kingston	14
A Profile of Litchfield	16
A Profile of Watkins.....	18
Summary of the Community Profiles.....	20

Chapter Five: Township Profiles Ch. 5 Pg. 1

How to Use the Township Profiles.....	1
Acton Township	2
Cedar Mills Township	4
Collinwood Township	6
Cosmos Township	8
Danielson Township.....	10
Darwin Township.....	12
Dassel Township.....	14
Ellsworth Township.....	16
Forest City Township	18
Forest Prairie Township.....	20
Greenleaf Township	22

Table of Contents continued ...

Harvey Township	24
Kingston Township	26
Litchfield Township	28
Manannah Township	30
Swede Grove Township.....	32
Union Grove Township	34
Summary of the Township Profiles	36
Chapter Six: Current and Emerging Issues.....	Ch. 6 Pg. 1
Agriculture Issues	1
Economic Development Issues.....	2
Environmental Issues.....	3
Parks and Recreation Issues	4
Rural Housing Issues	5
Transportation Issues.....	6
Urban Growth Issues	7
Other Issues	8
Chapter Seven: Goals, Objectives, Policy Guidelines.....	Ch. 7 Pg. 1
Action Steps Acronyms & Definitions.....	1
Goal One: Citizen Participation and Intergovernmental Cooperation.....	2
Goal Two: Economic Development	3
Goal Three: Natural Resources.....	5
Goal Four: Transportation	9
Goal Five: Land Use Planning.....	12
Goal Six: Public Investments	14
Goal Seven: Public Awareness.....	15
Chapter Eight: Implementation.....	Ch. 8 Pg. 1
Goal One: Citizen Participation and Intergovernmental Cooperation.....	1
Goal Two: Economic Development	1
Goal Three: Natural Resources.....	1
Goal Four: Transportation	3
Goal Five: Land Use Planning.....	3
Goal Six: Public Investments	3
Goal Seven: Public Awareness.....	4
Miscellaneous Implementation Steps (not goal specific).....	4

Table of Contents continued ...

Chapter Nine: Future Land Use Plan.....	Ch. 9 Pg. 1
Section One: Zoning.....	1
Section Two: Other Official Planning Documents and Efforts.....	2
Meeker County Comprehensive Water Plan.....	2
Watershed District Management Plans.....	2
Meeker County Hazard Mitigation Plan.....	2
State Highway 15 Corridor Study.....	2
Access Management Ordinance.....	3
Greenleaf, Cedar, and Sioux Lakes Area Conservation District.....	3
Section Three: Official Future Land Use Map.....	3
Land Use Plan Summary.....	4

List of Maps

Map 1A: Meeker County’s Location, Cities, and Townships.....	Ch. 1 Pg. 3
Map 2A: Meeker County Watersheds.....	Ch. 2 Pg. 3
Map 2B: USFWS National Wetlands Inventory.....	Ch. 2 Pg. 7
Map 2C: Soils.....	Ch. 2 Pg. 11
Map 2D: Presettlement Vegetation.....	Ch. 2 Pg. 12
Map 3A: Meeker County Zoning Map.....	Ch. 3 Pg. 3
Map 3B: Meeker County Parks & Recreational Areas.....	Ch. 3 Pg. 11
Map 3C: Meeker County Functional Classification.....	Ch. 3 Pg. 13
Map 4A: City of Cedar Mills Current Land Use.....	Ch. 4 Pg. 3
Map 4B: City of Cosmos Current Land Use.....	Ch. 4 Pg. 5
Map 4C: City of Darwin Current Land Use.....	Ch. 4 Pg. 7
Map 4D: City of Dassel Current Land Use.....	Ch. 4 Pg. 9
Map 4E: City of Eden Valley Current Land Use.....	Ch. 4 Pg. 11
Map 4F: City of Grove City Current Land Use.....	Ch. 4 Pg. 13
Map 4G: City of Kingston Current Land Use.....	Ch. 4 Pg. 15
Map 4H: City of Litchfield Urban Growth.....	Ch. 4 Pg. 17
Map 4I: City of Watkins Current Land Use.....	Ch. 4 Pg. 19
Map 5A: Acton Township Zoning.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 3
Map 5B: Cedar Mills Township Zoning.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 5
Map 5C: Collinwood Township Zoning.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 7
Map 5D: Cosmos Township Zoning.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 9
Map 5E: Danielson Township Zoning.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 11
Map 5F: Darwin Township Zoning.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 13
Map 5G: Dassel Township Zoning.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 15
Map 5H: Ellsworth Township Zoning.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 17

Table of Contents continued ...

Map 5I: Forest City Township Zoning	Ch. 5 Pg. 19
Map 5J: Forest Prairie Township Zoning	Ch. 5 Pg. 21
Map 5K: Greenleaf Township Zoning	Ch. 5 Pg. 23
Map 5L: Harvey Township Zoning	Ch. 5 Pg. 25
Map 5M: Kingston Township Zoning	Ch. 5 Pg. 27
Map 5N: Litchfield Township Zoning	Ch. 5 Pg. 29
Map 5O: Manannah Township Zoning	Ch. 5 Pg. 31
Map 5P: Swede Grove Township Zoning	Ch. 5 Pg. 33
Map 5Q: Union Grove Township Zoning	Ch. 5 Pg. 35

List of Tables

Table 1A: Time-line of “Major Events” in Meeker County’s History	Ch. 1 Pg. 6
Table 1B: Six County Area Gain in Population since 1970 (U.S. Census)	Ch. 1 Pg. 8
Table 1C: City, County, & State Population by Age Groups in 2000 (U.S. Census)	Ch. 1 Pg. 9
Table 1D: Median Population Age for Meeker County and its Cities (1990 & 2000)	Ch. 1 Pg. 10
Table 1E: Meeker County Population, Households, and Average Household Size Since 1970 (U.S. Census)	Ch. 1 Pg. 10
Table 1F: Population Projections for Meeker County	Ch. 1 Pg. 11
Table 1G: Household Projections for Meeker County	Ch. 1 Pg. 12
Table 2A: 2008 Section 303 (d) List of Impaired Waters (Meeker County)	Ch. 2 Pg. 5
Table 2B: Status of Wellhead Protection	Ch. 2 Pg. 9
Table 2C: Meeker County Soils	Ch. 2 Pg. 10
Table 3A: 2000 Housing Characteristics for Meeker County and Minnesota (2000 U.S. Census)	Ch. 3 Pg. 6
Table 4A: Cedar Mills	Ch. 4 Pg. 2
Table 4B: Cosmos	Ch. 4 Pg. 4
Table 4C: Darwin	Ch. 4 Pg. 6
Table 4D: Dassel	Ch. 4 Pg. 8
Table 4E: Eden Valley	Ch. 4 Pg. 10
Table 4F: Grove City	Ch. 4 Pg. 12
Table 4G: Kingston	Ch. 4 Pg. 14
Table 4H: Litchfield	Ch. 4 Pg. 16
Table 4I: Watkins	Ch. 4 Pg. 18
Table 5A: Acton	Ch. 5 Pg. 2
Table 5B: Cedar Mills	Ch. 5 Pg. 4
Table 5C: Collinwood	Ch. 5 Pg. 6

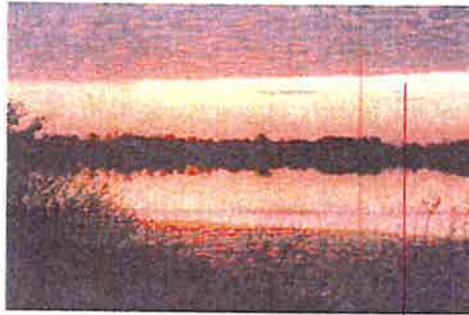
Table of Contents continued ...

Table 5D: Cosmos.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 8
Table 5E: Danielson.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 10
Table 5F: Darwin.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 12
Table 5G: Dassel.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 14
Table 5H: Ellsworth.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 16
Table 5I: Forest City.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 18
Table 5J: Forest Prairie.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 20
Table 5K: Greenleaf.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 22
Table 5L: Harvey.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 24
Table 5M: Kingston.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 26
Table 5N: Litchfield.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 28
Table 5O: Manannah.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 30
Table 5P: Swede Grove.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 32
Table 5Q: Union Grove.....	Ch. 5 Pg. 34
Table 8A: MCPA 303d List of Impaired Waters: Meeker County, 2008.....	Ch. 8 Pg. 2

List of Figures

Figure 1A: Population Data for Meeker County Since 1930 (U.S. Census).....	Ch. 1 Pg. 7
Figure 3A: Total Housing Units Comparison for Meeker County Townships, Cities, and Meeker County from 1990 to 2000 (U.S. Census).....	Ch. 3 Pg. 5
Figure 3B Meeker County Housing Unit Construction by Decade & 3C: (2000 U.S. Census).....	Ch. 3 Pg. 7
Figure 3D: Meeker County Median Housing Values in 1990 & 2000 (U.S. Census).....	Ch. 3 Pg. 8

Chapter One: Introduction and Profile of Meeker County



*Sunrise on Butternut Lake
~Photo by Amy Wilde~*

This document establishes a Comprehensive Plan for Meeker County. The primary purpose of the Plan is to provide a “vision” for growth and development by outlining what Meeker County residents would like to see occur in the future. This Plan accomplishes that in two ways. First, Chapter Seven establishes the County’s Goals, Objectives, and Policy Guidelines. These prescriptions describe how land use decisions should be made on a day-to-day basis. Second, Chapter Eight outlines which activities should be completed by the County to ensure the Plan is implemented properly.

The entire Plan is written with a 20-year time frame. This period of time was decided as a “manageable” amount of time to plan for, although the Plan will be enforced until it is either revised or ultimately replaced. The following information is included in this Comprehensive Plan:

County Profile – Chapter One provides a profile of Meeker County, including information on the County’s history, social-demographic information, and future population and household estimates.

Natural Resources – Chapter Two introduces the natural resource base of the area, including topography, water features, and soils information.

County Land Use – Chapter Three examines Meeker County’s existing land use. Housing, agriculture, transportation, and recreational areas are the major types of land use examined.

Community Profiles – Chapter Four presents a community profile for each of the nine cities located in Meeker County.

Township Profiles – Chapter Five presents a township profile for each of the County’s 17 townships (North Kingston and Kingston Townships are combined).

Current and Emerging Issues – Chapter Six describes what types of local and multi-jurisdictional planning issues will shape the County in the future.

Goals, Objectives, and Policy Guidelines – Chapter Seven outlines what specific approaches the community will take to guide land use decisions. The goals have been organized into seven topic areas. The seven goals are used as a framework for the objectives and policy guidelines that, in turn, provide specific information on how decisions will be made by County officials on a day-to-day basis.

Implementation – Chapter Eight establishes a temporary work plan to implement the goals, objectives, and policy guidelines found in Chapter Seven.

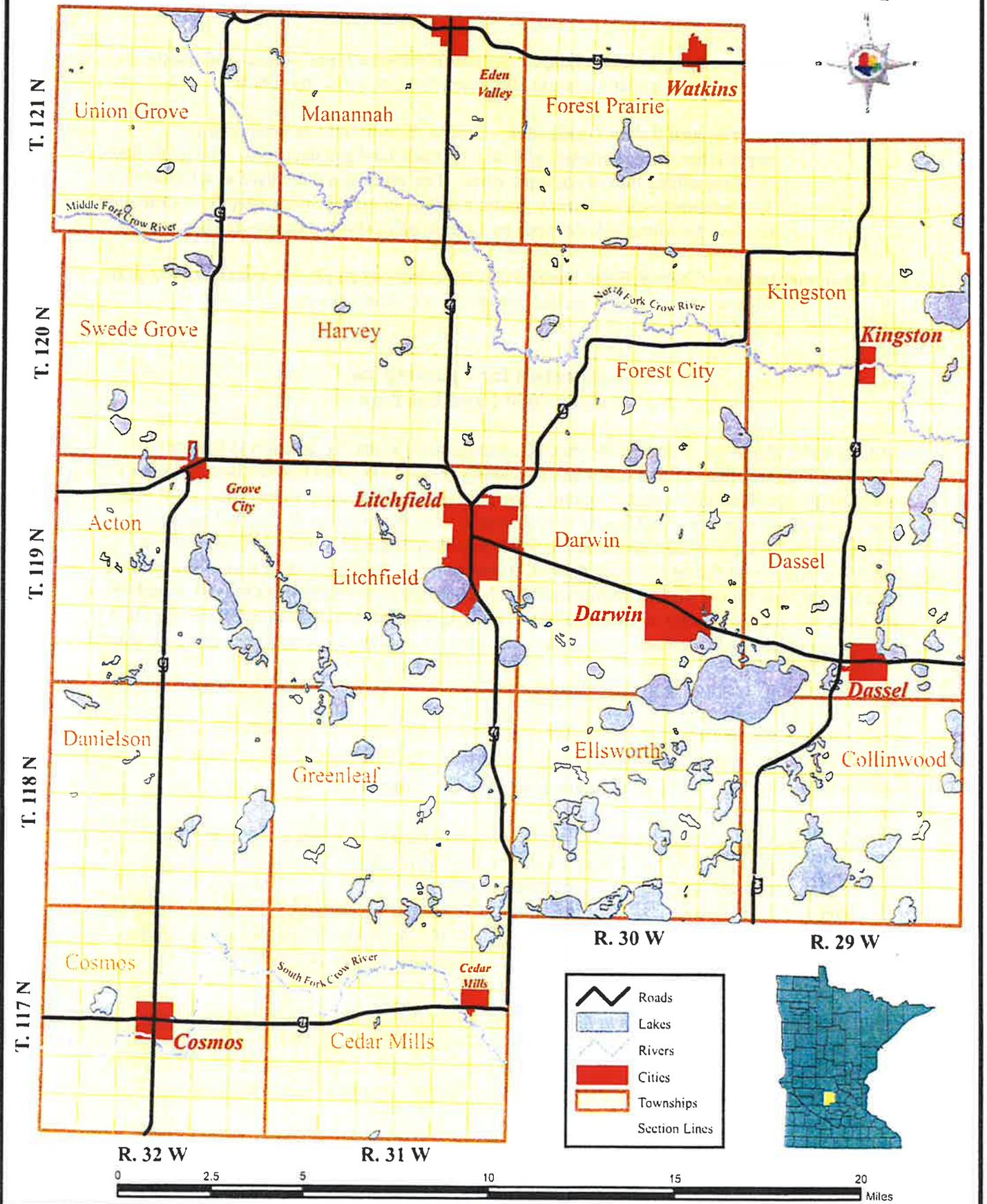
Justification for Updating the August 2000 Land Use Plan

In May 1998, the Meeker County Board of Commissioners made the decision to update the County's Comprehensive Land Use Plan, previously dated 1978. The County Board formally adopted the new Plan on August 15, 2000. The primary land use component of the 2000 plan was the addition of a new "A-3 Zone," which would've allowed either A-1 or A-2 agriculture land to be rezoned for residential clusters. After experiencing difficulty in creating clearly objective criteria for the new zoning district, it was decided, through a variety of meetings, that establishing one zoning district countywide (with a number of development options) would be the most fair for the County's residents. As a result, it was decided in 2006 to update the 2000 Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The update was then adopted by the County Board on October 7, 2008.

Location of Meeker County

Meeker County is located in central Minnesota, approximately 40 miles west of the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area. As Map One shows, the County has 9 cities and 17 townships (North Kingston and Kingston Townships are combined in this Plan). The County is characterized by numerous lakes, rolling hills, and vast agricultural land. The County shares borders with Stearns County to the north, Wright County to the east, McLeod County to the southeast, Renville County to the southwest, and Kandiyohi County to the west.

Map 1A: Meeker County's Location, Cities and Townships



Meeker County's History

On February 23, 1856, the Minnesota State Legislature made Meeker County a governmental unit. It is believed the County got its name from the Honorable B. B. Meeker, a citizen of St. Anthony (although this has never been confirmed). The first County Board of Commissioners met in May 1856. This meeting was comprised of only two people: John W. Huy and Thos. Skinner. There was supposed to be a third member, Dr. Frederick Noah Ripley, who met his end after getting caught in a spring snow storm near a lake near Litchfield that now bears his name. This was a time of great expansion throughout most of the State of Minnesota, including Meeker County. From 1856 to 1859, the population of the State rose from 32,000 to around 150,000.

The first city in the County was Forest City, which was incorporated in March 1856. By May of the same year, Forest City was named the County Seat, and the first deed was recorded in Section 28 of Kingston Township on September 11. The County's first public election took place in October in several places around the County. County Commissioners were elected along with a County Surveyor and Register of Deeds. The first Post Office in the County was also opened in 1856 in Forest City and soon after a sawmill followed. In 1858, a sawmill was also started in Greenleaf and a flourmill in Cedar Mills. By 1870, eight flourmills operated throughout Meeker County.

The County's first assessment and tax levy was made in 1858. The County's assessed valuation was \$181,571. The first County Treasurer was elected in the following year. In 1860, the first U.S. Census was conducted in Meeker County. There were 928 people living in the County at that time. Of this number, 572 were native born Americans and 356 were immigrants.

Much of the County's early development was influenced by the Native Americans. In 1862, the "Sioux Uprising" resulted in the building of a number of stockades where many of the County's cities are currently located. In addition, many people began to move to the area after the Civil War. As the railroad expanded west from Minneapolis and St. Paul, the railroad acquired land from the communities as "payment" for the opportunities the railroad brought to each community.

As the County Seat, Forest City felt confident that the railroad would have to go through their community and so they didn't offer much land. The same was true for the other communities in the northern part of the County. Two businessmen from Darwin (which was called Rice City at the time), on the other hand, saw the importance of the railroad and made an offer to the railroad that was accepted. As a result, the new towns of Dassel, Darwin, Litchfield, and Grove City were platted in 1869. By the end of winter, the railroad was in place up to Dassel. Incidentally, Dassel, Darwin, and Litchfield all got their names from railroad executives.

With the railroad's decision to go to the south of Forest City, there was some pressure to move the County Seat to a city located on the rail line. A special election was held and Litchfield was chosen. This had a direct and devastating effect on Forest City. For example, today Litchfield has an estimated population of 6,562, while Forest City is too small to be incorporated.

The County had its boundaries changed by the State Legislature for the last time in 1870, as the Townships of Cedar Mills and Cosmos were taken away from Renville County. Later that year, the City of Cosmos was formed. A new rail line was built in 1886 that served the areas between Litchfield and St. Cloud. It was put in by the Soo Line. There were already many settlements in the area, but with the new rail line Eden Valley and Watkins were incorporated into Cities.

The late 1800s saw the beginning of the dairy industry in Meeker County, which currently is considered to be one of the County's major employers. Dairy farming was encouraged by the State because it was already apparent at that time that the soil was becoming less productive. Dairy farming would help supplement the farmers' income while giving the soil a chance to become more fertile. The Danielson Creamery (in Danielson Township) was started in 1890 and was one of the first cooperative creameries in the State.

The first organized telephone company in Meeker County started in 1898 in Litchfield. Seven years later, Eden Valley got its first telephone service. In 1903, the U.S. Post Office came to Meeker County and also opened an office in Litchfield beginning with seven routes. The deliveries were done with horse drawn buggies and sleighs, except when the snow got too deep and it had to be delivered by horseback. There was a Countywide vote in 1915 on the future of alcohol in Meeker County. There was a large voter turnout that resulted in Meeker County going "dry." This resulted in the closing down of the Litchfield brewery located on Lake Ripley.

With the First World War in 1917, farm prices jumped dramatically because of the increased demand and much of the farm labor leaving to work in defense plants. As the war ended in 1918, a bad strain of flu spread throughout Meeker County, which resulted in the deaths of many people. The Farmers Cooperative Electric Company was organized in 1921. This was an attempt to get electricity into the rural areas of the County. It started slow, but after 10 to 15 years, the benefits of electricity to farming were realized and its use began to spread.

By the beginning of 1932, unrest among the County's farmers was on the rise due to very low prices. Many of the farmers began to organize in an attempt to get better prices through strikes, closing creameries, and preventing livestock deliveries. This was the beginning of the Depression in Meeker County. A drought that lasted three years made matters even worse. Although the Second World War didn't start for America until December 1941, the draft came to Meeker County early that year and men began leaving to train for service. It wasn't until the War ended in 1946 that local people who had served all over the world began to return to the area. 1946 also saw the return of deer hunting in Meeker County. It had been closed for a long time because of over hunting which severely depleted the County's deer population. The State Conservation Department also began a campaign of carp removal from the County's lakes in 1951. Over 3,000 pounds were taken out of Lake Willie alone.

In 1951, Highway 7 was constructed, running through Cedar Mills and Cosmos. In 1953, by a vote of 3 to 1, liquor was legalized again in the County. By 1954, nearly half of the cities in Meeker County had a municipal liquor store. Table 1A below provides a summary of the "major" historical events that occurred in Meeker County since 1855.

One of the best ways to compare the County's rate of population growth is to examine the growth rates of neighboring counties. Table 1B accomplishes this by including demographic information for Kandiyohi County to the west, Stearns County to the north, Wright County to the east, McLeod County to the southeast, and Renville County to the southwest. The Table includes U.S. Census data for each County from 1970 to 2000.

**Table 1B:
Six County Area Gain in
Population since 1970 (U.S. Census)**

County (Major City)	1970	1980	1990	2000	1970-00 Change	Percent Change
Kandiyohi (Willmar)	30,548	36,763	38,761	41,203	10,655	34.9
McLeod (Hutchinson)	27,622	29,657	32,030	34,898	7,276	26.3
Meeker (Litchfield)	<i>18,387</i>	<i>20,594</i>	<i>20,846</i>	<i>22,644</i>	<i>4,257</i>	<i>23.2</i>
Renville (Olivia)	21,139	20,401	19,673	17,154	-3,985	-18.9
Stearns (St. Cloud)	95,400	108,161	118,791	133,166	37,766	39.6
Wright (Buffalo)	38,933	58,681	68,710	89,986	51,053	131.1
Six County Area	232,029	276,237	300,801	339,051	107,022	46.1

Table 1B shows that, with the exception of Renville County, all of the counties that share a border with Meeker County have experienced a solid gain in population since 1970. For example, Wright County's population more than doubled in less than 20 years (131% gain). Notice that Meeker County experienced the lowest percent change in population (23%) among the Counties that gained new residents. Nevertheless, the 23 percent gain means that, over 30 years, the County gained one new resident for nearly every four residents living in the County in 1970.

The high level of increased population gain in the neighboring Counties will eventually "catch-up" with Meeker County. The primary reason for this is due to Meeker County's "rural character," which will ultimately attract new housing developments. However, the increasing development pressure in the neighboring Counties has already begun to be noticed in Meeker County. The trend should become even more noticeable as the larger metropolitan areas continue to expand, especially in the north and east due to the proximity of St. Cloud and the Minneapolis suburbs.

Population by Age Groups

Table 1C provides a breakdown of the populations of Meeker County's cities, the County as a whole, and the State of Minnesota by age categories for the year 2000. While Meeker County's total population has witnessed steady growth in recent years, the rate of population growth among the elderly (65 and older) has been significantly higher. In 1970, the County's elderly population was 2,777 persons. By 2000, this population grew by 33.2 percent, to a Census count of 3,699 persons. The State's Demographers Office projects the percent increase in elderly population will continue to grow at a larger rate than that of the total population over the next 30 years (*Minnesota's Changing Counties: The Next 30 Years*). It is during this time frame that the "baby boomers" will reach their retirement age. This is a strong indicator of the increasing need for many senior-related services, including senior housing and transit services.

**Table 1C:
City, County and State Population
by Age Groups in 2000 (U.S. Census)**

City	Age Under 18	Age 18-24	Age 25-44	Age 45-64	Over 65
Cedar Mills	12	3	16	9	13
Cosmos	121	46	156	123	136
Darwin	75	19	69	69	44
Dassel	296	92	334	235	276
Eden Valley	217	113	226	134	176
Grove City	173	61	146	124	104
Kingston	28	17	35	27	13
Litchfield	1,649	554	1,676	1,330	1,353
Watkins	225	71	225	137	222
Meeker County	6,109	1,666	5,968	5,202	3,699
State of Minnesota	1,286,894	470,434	1,497,320	1,070,565	594,266

A close examination of Table 1C reveals that, although the 65 and older category may be outpacing the other categories in growth rates, most cities in Meeker County have many residents who are between the age of 25 to 44 and 18 and under. The only category that was seriously low in 2000 was the 18 to 24 category, which suggests that many high school graduates move out of the County to pursue a college education. In addition, St. Cloud, Willmar, Hutchinson, and the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area attract people due to higher paying jobs.

Another way to document Meeker County's aging population is to examine how the population's median age has changed throughout the years. Table 1D provides this information for Meeker County and its cities.

**Table 1D:
Median Population Age for
Meeker County and its Cities (1990 & 2000)**

City	1990	2000	City	1990	2000
Cedar Mills	32.5	40.8	Grove City	33.6	35.8
Cosmos	40.0	41.5	Kingston	33.4	36.7
Darwin	41.1	38.5	Litchfield	36.2	38.5
Dassel	38.0	38.6	Watkins	36.8	38.4
Eden Valley	37.2	33.7	Meeker County	34.9	38.3

Table 1D reveals the median population for the County increased from 34.9 in 1990 to 38.3 in 2000. However, a close examination of each city's median population age reveals that not all cities aged in population. Two, out of the County's nine cities, actually had a decrease in median age over the ten-year time-span. The primary difference in the County's overall increase is due to an aging population in the County's largest cities, especially in Litchfield (representing 29 percent of the County's 2000 population).

Household Numbers

An increase in the County's population naturally means an increase in the number of households located in Meeker County. Table 1E shows exactly how the number of households has increased as the County has gained population since 1970. Although knowing the total number of people and households is important, these numbers allow an average County household size to be established (i.e., the average number of people living in each household). Notice that since 1970, the average household size in Meeker County has decreased from 3.17 people per household to an average size of 2.58 people per household in 2000. This trend is important because it shows that even more housing units will be needed in the future to accommodate the County's increasing population.

**Table 1E:
Meeker County Population, Households, and
Average Household Size Since 1970 (U.S. Census)**

Year	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	18,387	20,594	20,846	22,644
Households	5,792	7,178	7,655	8,590
Average Household Size	3.17	2.87	2.72	2.58

Population Projections

The information presented up to this point in the chapter helps to pinpoint a reliable range of population projections for the County for the next 20 years. Chapters Four and Five provide detailed population and household projections for each city and township located in Meeker County. These projections should be used to plan for each of those identified areas. However, Table 1F presents three population projections for the entire County based on its historic level of growth since 1960. In addition to the historic-based projection (provided by the State Demographer), Table 1F includes population projections that are based on fast and very fast annual rates of population gain. The fast projection is 150 percent of the County's historic rate of growth. Likewise, the very fast projection is 200 percent of the County's historic growth rate. The combination of the historic, fast, and very fast population projections provide a reliable range of possibilities that could occur in Meeker County over the next 20 years.

**Table 1F:
Population Projections
for Meeker County**

<i>Historic Population</i>	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
		18,887	18,387	20,594	20,846
County's Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on Historic Growth	23,520	24,520	25,540	26,470	3,826
Fast Annual Growth (150%)	23,958	25,458	26,988	28,383	5,739
Very Fast Annual Growth (200%)	24,396	26,396	28,536	30,296	7,652

Table 1F suggests that Meeker County would gain an additional 3,826 residents by the year 2020, if it simply experienced the same growth rate as in the past. This many new people would have a significant impact on the County's natural and man-made resources. Although this many new people would cause many growth-related problems, the very fast annual population projections suggest an even worse situation. Table 1F shows a total of 7,652 new people for this estimate. With most of Meeker County's neighbors experiencing rapid development pressures, the fast and very fast annual growth rates should be considered for planning purposes.

One aspect of Table 1F needs to be understood: it is not the summation of the population and household projections presented in Chapters Four and Five (City and Township Profiles). The primary reason the numbers do not add up is because Table 1F is merely a set of population projections based on Countywide data since 1960. Conversely, the population projections for each city and township are based on the assumption that some future population gain is possible even if the unit of government has lost population in the past. In other words, Table 1F takes into

account that some areas of the County will actually lose population while other areas of the County will more than make up for the losses (see the text box below).

Household Projections

The information presented in Table 1F is needed to help establish Meeker County's household projections. By dividing the population estimates by the County's projected average number of people per household, Table 1G presents a range of household estimates for Meeker County over the next 20 years. The Table suggests that between 1,998 and 3,528 new households are likely to be established by the year 2020.

**Table 1G:
Household Projections
for Meeker County**

<i>Historic Households</i>	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
		5,439	5,792	7,178	7,655
Projections (2.5 people per unit)	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the Last 40 years (100%)	9,408	9,808	10,216	10,588	1,998
Fast Annual Growth (150%)	9,583	10,183	10,795	11,353	2,763
Very Fast Annual Growth (200%)	9,758	10,558	11,374	12,118	3,528

A Note about Population and Household Projections!!!

A population projection is a well-informed estimate about how many people could potentially live in an area in the future. One of the best indicators used to make a reliable estimate is the area's historic level of growth. For example, if a community has grown by an average of 2 percent a year for the last 20 years, it is often assumed that this average rate of growth will continue into the future.

The difficult part of making population projections is determining whether past trends will continue and, if not, how they will change. The future population of a community derives from its present population plus births and net migration minus any deaths. Therefore, any factor that influences births, deaths, or migration will alter the projected population. In addition, the community's population can also change simply by altering its boundary through annexation. Finally, several things can affect the community's attractiveness to both current and potential residents: ease and cost of commuting to employment areas; employment opportunities within the community; local housing supply and housing costs; and the community's overall aesthetics (lakes, scenery, etc.).

As a result of the complexity of making population projections, they should be viewed with apprehension. To help compensate for their uncertainty, the population projections used in this Comprehensive Plan provide a low, medium, and high range of possibilities.

Chapter Two: Natural Resources

Meeker County is located in Central Minnesota between the corn belt to the south and the lakes region to the north. As a result, the County has both strong agricultural and vast natural resource characteristics. This Chapter examines these characteristics, including sections on the County's climate, geology, topography, presettlement vegetation, water resources, and soils.

Climate

The County is located in the Continental Climate Zone, which is characterized by a wide range of seasonal temperatures. The average high in Meeker County is 72 degrees Fahrenheit and the average low is 16 degrees Fahrenheit. The average annual precipitation in the County is 27 inches, approximately one-third of which occurs during the growing season. Snowfall in winter months averages approximately 47 inches.

Geology

Much of Meeker County's landscape has been influenced by glaciation. As a result, much of the County is covered by glacial drifts, consisting of till (a mixture of sand, silt, and clay, along with gravel cobbles and boulders), lake sediments (particle sizes consisting mostly of silt and clay) and outwash (gravel and sand-sized particles). These inter-layered deposits of till, lake sediments, and outwash range in thickness from around 200 feet in the extreme northern part of the County, to nearly 400 feet in the central and southern parts of the County. The glacial drift is underlain by undifferentiated igneous and metamorphic rocks, mostly gneiss, granite, and schist. In places, a thin layer of cretaceous sediments overlays the igneous and metamorphic rock.

Watersheds and Topography

There are five major watersheds in Meeker County: the Clearwater River Watershed, the Middle Fork of the Crow River Watershed, the North Fork of the Crow River Watershed, the Sauk River Watershed, and the South Fork of the Crow River Watershed. All of these watersheds are part of the Upper Mississippi River Drainage Basin. Map 2A shows the locations of these watersheds and the boundaries of the minor watersheds within each of them. The topography of the County's five major watersheds is briefly summarized below:

Middle Fork of the Crow River Watershed – The Middle Fork of the Crow River Watershed was delineated in 2005 from the North Fork of the Crow River Watershed. It occupies a little over 10% of the area of the original North Fork of the Crow River Watershed and its characteristics are similar. The area of this watershed is about 28,006 acres.

Clearwater River Watershed – The topography of the Clearwater River Watershed is typified by rolling moraines, characterized by knolls and hills of irregular size and shape, intermingled with swales and numerous closed depressions. Relief in morainic areas of the watershed ranges from 5 feet to less than 50 feet. The highest elevation within Meeker County is found within this watershed, at 1,250 feet above sea level. This watershed contains 30,566 acres.

North Fork of the Crow River Watershed – The topography of this watershed is characterized by rolling moraines and glacial outwash and lake plains. Moraines are found in northern and eastern portions of the watershed. The central portion of the North Fork of the Crow River Watershed consists of glacial outwash plains and glacial lake plains of mostly silty and clayey sediment. Relief within the watershed ranges from less than 5 feet to approximately 100 feet in the eastern and northwestern portions of the County. The lowest elevation (1,000 feet above sea level) within Meeker County is found at the point where the North Fork of the Crow River exits the County. This watershed contains approximately 241,670 acres.

Sauk River Watershed – The Sauk River Watershed is dominated by a rolling moraine topography. Topographic relief generally ranges from 5 feet to less than 50 feet. The area of this watershed is 10,118 acres, the smallest in Meeker County.

South Fork of the Crow River Watershed – Rolling moraines and glacial outwash and lake plains dominate the topography of the South Fork of the Crow River. Moraines are found in the southern portion of the watershed, while glacial outwash and lake plains are found in the northern portion. Relief within the South Fork of the Crow River Watershed ranges from 5 feet to less than 50 feet. This watershed contains 102,009 acres.

Water Resources

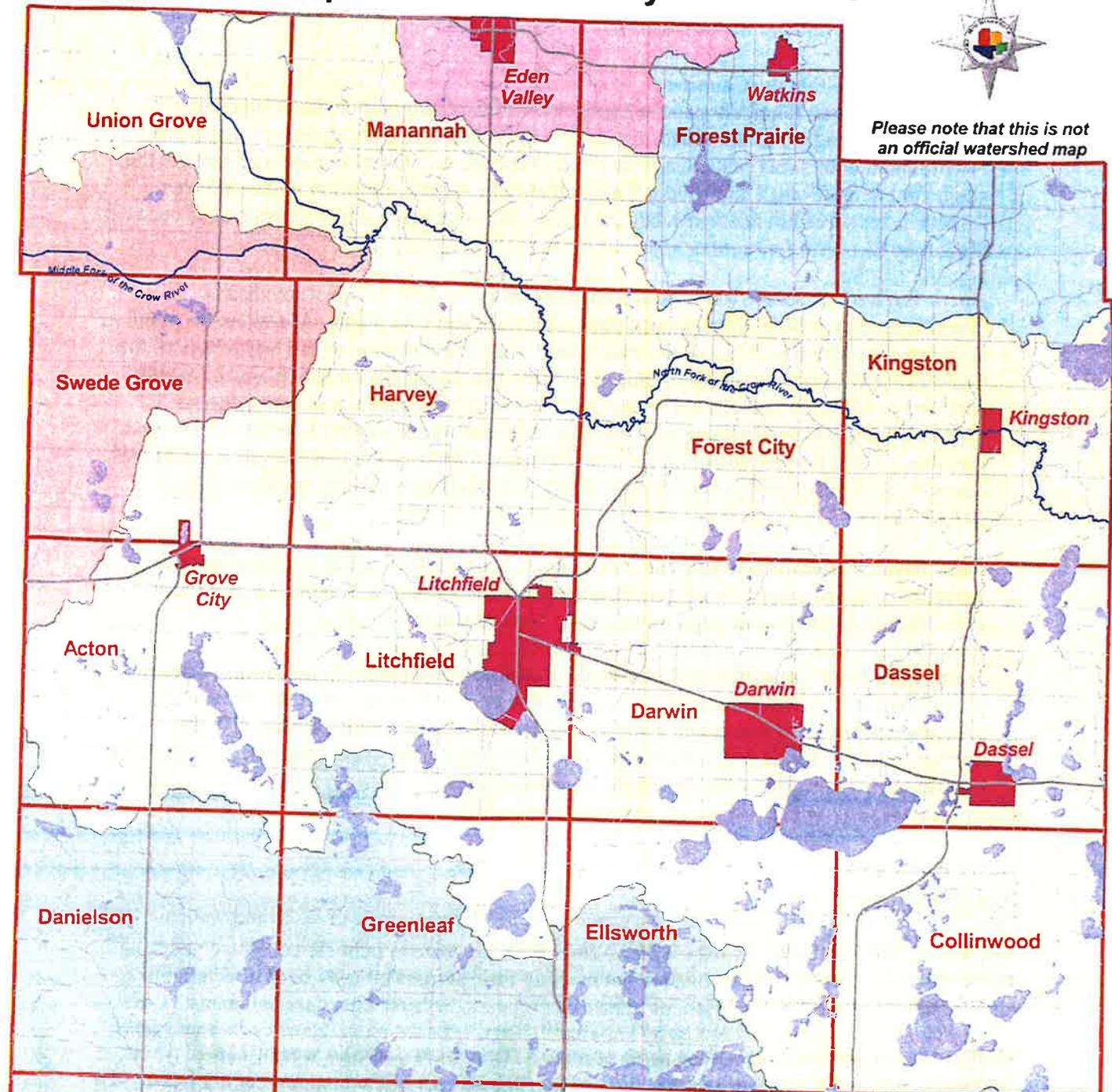
The County has abundant surface water resources with a large number of lakes and wetlands and numerous stream systems. Of the precipitation that the County receives each year (26-28 inches), 1 to 2½ inches becomes surface runoff. The surface water bodies receive this runoff and act as a temporary reservoir.

Meeker County has 144 lakes of ten acres or more. These lakes cover an area of 22,942 acres (359 square miles), which represents approximately 5.6 percent of the total area of the County. The lakes within the County are located mostly in the moraine areas. For the purpose of general analysis, there are two basic types of lakes within the County: “high to moderate” recreational use and “low” recreational use. “High to moderate” recreational use lakes are those which experience high to moderate amounts of water oriented uses such as swimming, fishing, hunting, trapping, boating, or water skiing. “Low” recreational use lakes would be those that experience low amounts of these activities.

Map 2A: Meeker County Watersheds



Please note that this is not an official watershed map



LEGEND		Watersheds	
	Highway		Clearwater River
	River/Stream		Middle Fork of the Crow River
	Township		North Fork of the Crow River
	Section		Sauk River
	City		South Fork of the Crow River
	Lake		

There are 44 lakes within the County that have surface areas greater than 150 acres. These lakes can be considered to be relatively permanent since they maintain somewhat consistent water levels from year to year. Furthermore, these lakes experience “high to moderate” recreational use. The remaining 93 lakes in the County are considered to be of “low” recreational use. Many of these lakes are quite small and shallow, and some may only contain water during part of the year. These lakes serve as excellent wildlife habitat and are largely underdeveloped and, therefore, may be useful for hunting and trapping, but are not used extensively for swimming, boating, and fishing.

In addition to the many streams and ditches in the County, there are also three main rivers, all branches of the Crow River. The Upper Fork empties out of Koronis Lake in Union Grove Township and meanders in a southeasterly direction until it leaves the County through Kingston Township. The Middle Fork drains out of Green Lake in Kandiyohi County and enters the County in the southwestern part of Union Grove Township and joins the North Fork in Manannah Township. The South Fork of the Crow River enters the County on the western side of Cosmos Township and exits on the eastern side of Cedar Mills Township. This river originates out of Little Kandiyohi Lake also in Kandiyohi County.

Meeker County’s shale, sandstone, and clay bedrock is covered by ground moraine deposits of glacial drift material. Aquifers within this glacial drift are of two main types: surficial drift aquifers (which are unconfined and usually shallow) and buried drift aquifers (which are pockets of confined sand and gravel separated by glacial till). Surficial drift aquifers are very localized and usually do not cover a wide area. Buried drift aquifers are usually found at deeper depths.

The County updated its Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan in 2008. The Plan provides a detailed look at the water resources of the County and is in accordance with the 1986 Comprehensive Local Water Management Act from Minnesota State Statutes. A copy of the Plan is available through the County Administrator’s Office.

Impaired Waters

Section 303(d) of the Federal Clean Water Act requires the State to publish, every two years, an updated list of streams and lakes that are not meeting their designated uses, such as drinking water, fishing, swimming, irrigation, or industrial purposes, because of excess pollutants. The list, known as the Section 303(d) List of Impaired Waters, is based on violations of water quality standards. For each pollutant that causes a waterbody to fail to meet State water quality standards, the Clean Water Act requires the states to conduct a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study. A TMDL study identifies all point and nonpoint sources of each pollutant in a waterbody, which fails to meet water quality standards.

The 2008 Section 303(d) List of Impaired Waters for Meeker County is found in Table 2A. According to the Table, a total of seven river reaches and seven lakes are due to be included on the list. A number of these reaches and lakes are listed multiple times for different pollutants. The absence of a waterbody or watercourse from the 303(d) List does not necessarily mean it is meeting its designated uses. It may be that the reach or lake has either not been sampled or there is not enough data to make an impairment determination.

**Table 2A:
2008 Section 303 (d) List of Impaired Waters (Meeker County)**

Rivers & Streams	ID	Affect Use	Pollutant	Target start/ Completion
Clearwater River; Clear Lake to Lk Betsy	07010203-549	Swimming	Fecal Coliform	2004/2009
Clearwater River; Clear Lake to Lk Betsy	07010203-549	Aquatic Life	Low Oxygen	2004/2009
Crow River, North Fk; Lk Koronis to Middle Fk Crow R	07010204-504	Aquatic Life	Impaired Biota	2010/2017
Crow River, North Fk; Lk Koronis to Middle Fk Crow R	07010204-504	Aquatic Life	Mercury FCA	2002/2015
Crow River, North Fk; Middle Fk Crow R to Jewitts Cr	07010204-507	Aquatic Life	Mercury FCA	2002/2015
Crow River, North Fk; Jewitts Cr to Washington Cr	07010204-506	Aquatic Life	Mercury FCA	2002/2015
Crow River, North Fk; Washington Cr to Meeker Co line	07010204-555	Aquatic Life	Mercury FCA	2002/2015
Crow River, South Fk; Headwaters to Hutchinson Dam	07010205-540	Aquatic Life	Impaired Biota	2010/2017
Crow River, South Fk; Headwaters to Hutchinson Dam	07010205-540	Aquatic Life	Mercury FCA	1999/2011
Crow River, South Fk; Headwaters to Hutchinson Dam	07010205-540	Aquatic Life	Turbidity	2010/2017
Grove Creek; Unnamed Cr To Middle Fk Crow R	07010204-514	Aquatic Life	Impaired Biota	2010/2017
Grove Creek; Unnamed Cr To Middle Fk Crow R	07010204-514	Aquatic Life	Low Oxygen	2010/2017
Jewitts Creek; Headwaters to N Fk Crow R	07010204-585	Aquatic Life	Ammonia	2006/2011
Jewitts Creek; Headwaters to N Fk Crow R	07010204-585	Aquatic Life	Impaired Biota	2006/2012
Jewitts Creek; Headwaters to N Fk Crow R	07010204-585	Aquatic Life	Low Oxygen	2011/2015
Unnamed Creek; T120 R31W S32, south line to Jewitts Cr	07010204-552	Aquatic Life	Impaired Biota	2006/2012
Lakes	ID	Affect Use	Pollutant	Target start/ Completion
Big Swan Lake	47-0038	Aquatic Life	Mercury FCA	2002/2015
Clear Lake	47-0095	Swimming	Excess Nutrients	2008/2013
Dunns Lake	47-0082	Swimming	Excess Nutrients	2008/2013
Dunns Lake	47-0082	Aquatic Life	Mercury FCA	2002/2015
Hope Lake	47-0183	Swimming	Excess Nutrients	2019/2022
Lake Arvilla	47-0023	Aquatic Life	Mercury FCA	2002/2015
Lake Betsy	47-0042	Swimming	Excess Nutrients	2008/2012
Lake Francis	47-0002	Aquatic Life	Mercury FCA	2002/2015
Lake Jennie	47-0015	Aquatic Life	Mercury FCA	2002/2015
Lake Minnie-Belle	47-0119	Aquatic Life	Mercury FCA	2002/2015
Lake Washington	47-0046	Aquatic Life	Mercury FCA	2002/2015
Long Lake	47-0026	Aquatic Life	Mercury FCA	2002/2015
Long Lake	47-0177	Swimming	Excess Nutrients	2019/2022
Richardson Lake	47-0088	Aquatic Life	Mercury FCA	2002/2015
Richardson Lake	47-0088	Swimming	Excess Nutrients	2008/2013
Spring Lake	47-0032	Aquatic Life	Mercury FCA	2002/2015

Wetlands

The term wetland refers to a low depression in the landscape, covered with shallow and sometimes intermittent water. Wetlands are also commonly referred to as marshes, swamps, potholes, sloughs, shallow lakes, and ponds. Some have surface water only in the springtime during thaws or after rainstorms, while others may form permanent shallow lakes that rarely dry up. Wetlands are classified according to their depth of water, total area, and seasonal life span.

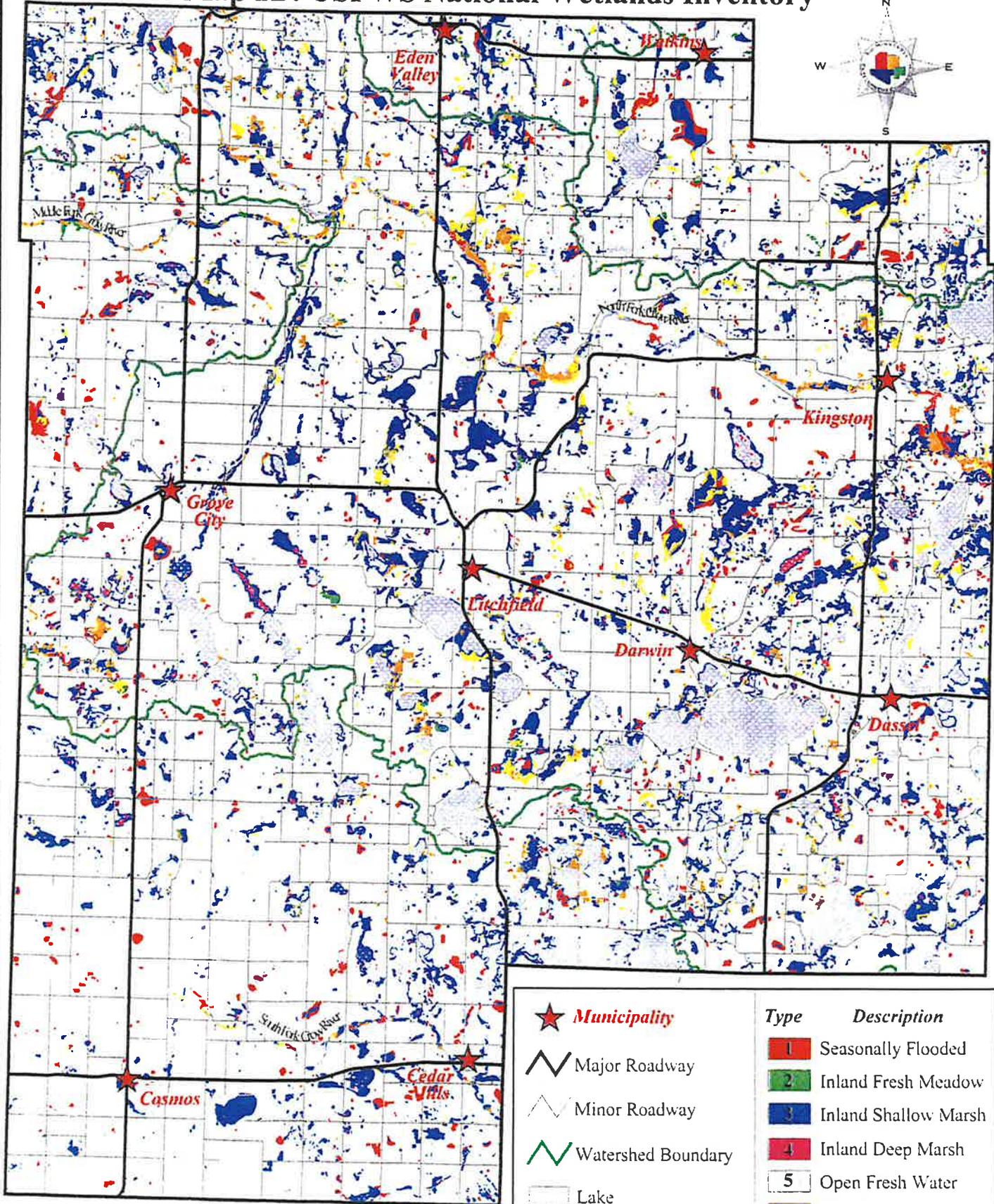
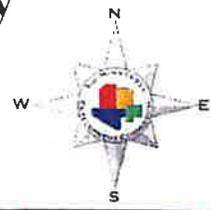
Originally, wetlands were located nearly throughout the entire County. With the advent of intensive agriculture practices and the application of land drainage techniques, many of the wetlands located on lands that were flat and suited to agricultural use have been drained. Because of this, there are now relatively few wetlands in the flat till plain areas of the County. Most of the remaining wetlands are found in the moraine areas of the County where the wetlands have either been preserved or where drainage is not economically feasible.

Most of the County's remaining wetlands were identified in the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Wetlands Inventory. This Inventory classifies all wetlands into eight different wetland types. A description of each of the USFWS wetland types is provided below.

- Type 1 Seasonally Flooded Basin or Flat:** soil that is covered with water or is waterlogged during variable seasonal periods, but usually is well drained during much of the growing season.
- Type 2 Wet Meadow:** soil that is usually without standing water for most of the growing season, but is waterlogged within a few inches of the surface.
- Type 3 Shallow Marsh:** soil that is usually waterlogged early in the growing season, often covered with as much as six or more inches of water.
- Type 4 Deep Marsh:** soil that is usually covered with six inches to three feet or more of water during the growing season.
- Type 5 Shallow Open Water (Lake):** shallow ponds and reservoirs are included in this type. Water is usually less than ten feet deep.
- Type 6 Shrub Swamps:** soil that is waterlogged during the growing season and is often covered by as much as six inches of water.
- Type 7 Wooded Swamps:** soil that is usually waterlogged at least within a few inches of the surface and is covered with as much as one foot of water.
- Type 8 Bogs:** soil that is usually waterlogged and supports a spongy covering. They normally occur in shallow basins, on flat uplands, and along sluggish streams.

Wetlands, which are regulated and protected under Minnesota Law include, and are limited to, all Type 3, 4, and 5 wetlands that have not been designated as "protected waters." Any work done below the ordinary high water mark of protected waters and wetlands requires a permit from the Department of Natural Resources. National Wetlands Inventory maps are available through the Meeker County Planning and Zoning Office (refer to Map 2B).

Map 2B: USFWS National Wetlands Inventory



		Type	Description
★	Municipality	1	Seasonally Flooded
⚡	Major Roadway	2	Inland Fresh Meadow
⚡	Minor Roadway	3	Inland Shallow Marsh
⚡	Watershed Boundary	4	Inland Deep Marsh
□	Lake	5	Open Fresh Water
—	River	6	Shrub Swamp
		7	Wooded Swamp

Wellhead Protection

Wellhead protection, which is administered by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), is a means of safeguarding public water supply wells by preventing contaminants from entering the area that contributes water to the well or wellfield over a period of time. A public water supply is defined as a system that provides piped, drinking water for human use to 15 or more service connections or to 25 or more persons for at least 60 days a year. The wellhead protection area is determined by using geologic criteria, such as the physical characteristics of the aquifer and the effects which pumping has on the rate and direction of groundwater movement. A management plan is developed for the wellhead protection area that includes inventorying potential sources of groundwater contamination, monitoring for the presence of specific contaminants, and managing existing and proposed land and water uses that pose a threat to groundwater quality.

The long-term goal of the MDH is to implement wellhead protection measures for all public water supply wells. However, due to the large number of public water supply wells (13,000), the diversity of geologic conditions in Minnesota, and current resource constraints, wellhead protection will be implemented in phases. The MDH began implementing wellhead protection measures in 1996, beginning with new community wells. Existing community wells and other types of public water supply wells will be phased in between June 1998 and June 2003. All public water suppliers will be required to:

1. Maintain the isolation distances from potential contamination sources defined in the State Well Code;
2. Monitor noncomplying sources located on their property; and
3. Report to MDH other violations to the isolation distance, or ask a local governmental unit to regulate these sources.

In addition to maintaining the isolation distances, owners of community and nontransient noncommunity wells, when either notified by MDH or when a new well is added to a municipal water supply system, must develop a wellhead protection plan which includes:

1. A map of the wellhead protection area,
2. A vulnerability assessment of the well and the wellhead protection area,
3. An inventory of potential sources of contamination within the wellhead protection area,
4. A plan to manage and monitor existing or proposed potential source(s) of contamination, and
5. A water supply contingency strategy.

Table 2B displays the Status of Wellhead Protection in Meeker County. To date, the City of Litchfield, as well as the First District Association and Towmaster Trailers, participate in the MDH Wellhead Protection Program. The City of Eden Valley is expected to be conducting a wellhead protection plan in the near future. The remaining water suppliers within the County will be phased in based on priority, which is identified by their MDH assigned State ranking.

Through the State ranking system, the lower the ranking assigned to a community, the higher the priority for the community to participate in the Wellhead Protection Program.

**Table 2B:
Status of Wellhead Protection**

Water Supplier	Rank	Status
City of Litchfield	NA	Currently in the MDH Wellhead Protection Program
First District Association	NA	Currently in the MDH Wellhead Protection Program
Towmaster Trailers	NA	Currently in the MDH Wellhead Protection Program
City of Eden Valley	NA	*Expected to conduct wellhead protection plan
City of Dassel	489	Expected to be phased in based on ranking
City of Watkins	500	Expected to be phased in based on ranking
City of Cosmos	515	Expected to be phased in based on ranking
City of Darwin	541	Expected to be phased in based on ranking
Johnson Brothers, Inc.	628	Expected to be phased in based on ranking
Grove City	1022	Expected to be phased in based on ranking
St. John's Lutheran School	1226	Expected to be phased in based on ranking
Sparboe Summit Farms	1343	Expected to be phased in based on ranking

* *Due to new well construction*

Soils

Soils develop from the breakdown of rock minerals and from plant and animal remains that are intermixed with them. The changing of rock into soil is an extremely long process, acting over thousands of years. This process has formed the County's soils from deposits originally left by the glaciers. As an agricultural County, soils are one of its most valuable resources.

Meeker County has a wide variety of soil types due to the wide variety of glacial material from which they were formed. In addition, the County's varying landforms (i.e., till plains, out-wash plains, moraines, etc.) all contribute to a wide variety of soil characteristics. Also important in the formation of the County's soils are climate, vegetation, and topography. In general terms, the County contains four broad soil groups. These four groups are further broken down into 18 soil associations for the region. Table 2C lists the soil groups and the 18 major soil associations. Map 2D shows the locations of these soil associations.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is currently working on a soil survey for Meeker County. When finished, the survey will provide a guide for locating soil types throughout the County. Descriptions of each soil type as well as major characteristics of those soils will be provided along with the completed soil survey.

**Table 2C:
Meeker County Soils**

- I. Nearly level to steep loamy and clay soils formed in glacial till on uplands.
 - A. Canisteo – Okoboji – Nicollet
 - B. Clarion – Hamel – Storden
 - C. Harps – Hamel – Storden
 - D. Cokato – Storden – Muskego
 - E. Swede Grove – Grove City – Manannah
 - F. Wadenill – Swede Grove – Muskego
 - G. Koronis – Forest City – Houghton
 - H. Koronis – Houghton – Forest City
 - I. Cosmos – Kandiyohi – Corvuso
 - J. Cosmos – Strout – Kandiyohi
 - K. Danielson – New London – Strout

- II. Nearly level to gently sloping, clayey and silty soils in lake basins.
 - A. Collinwood – Waldorf – Shorewood
 - B. Madelia – Truman – Kingston

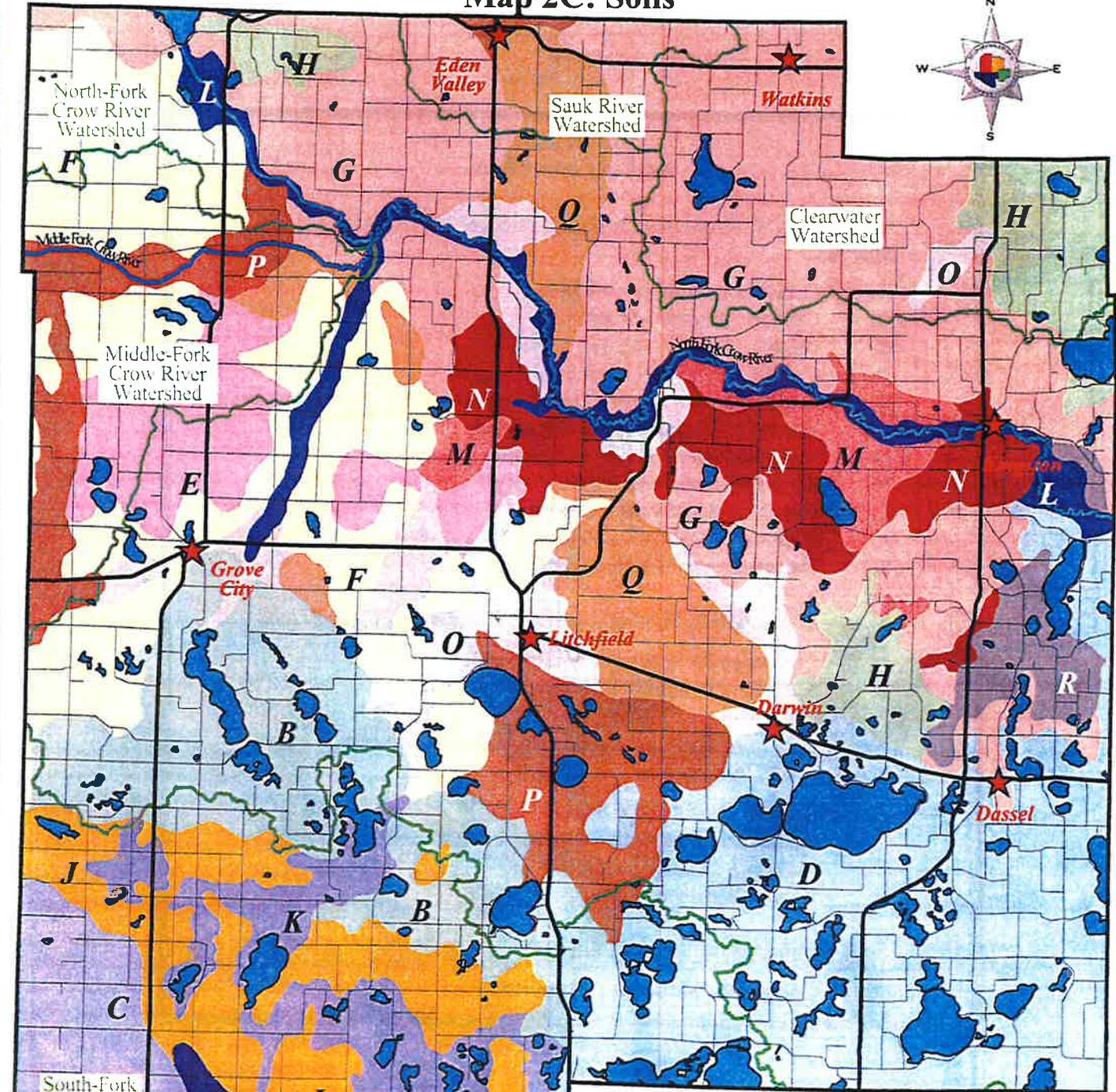
- III. Nearly level to rolling loamy and sandy and organic soils on outwash plains, stream terraces
 - A. Sparta – Darfur – Litchfield
 - B. Kanaranzi – Esterville – Biscay
 - C. Fieldon – Litchfield – Darfur
 - D. Hawick – Esterville

- IV. Soils on floodplains and stream terraces.
 - A. Cohoctah – Muskego – Esterville

Presettlement Vegetation

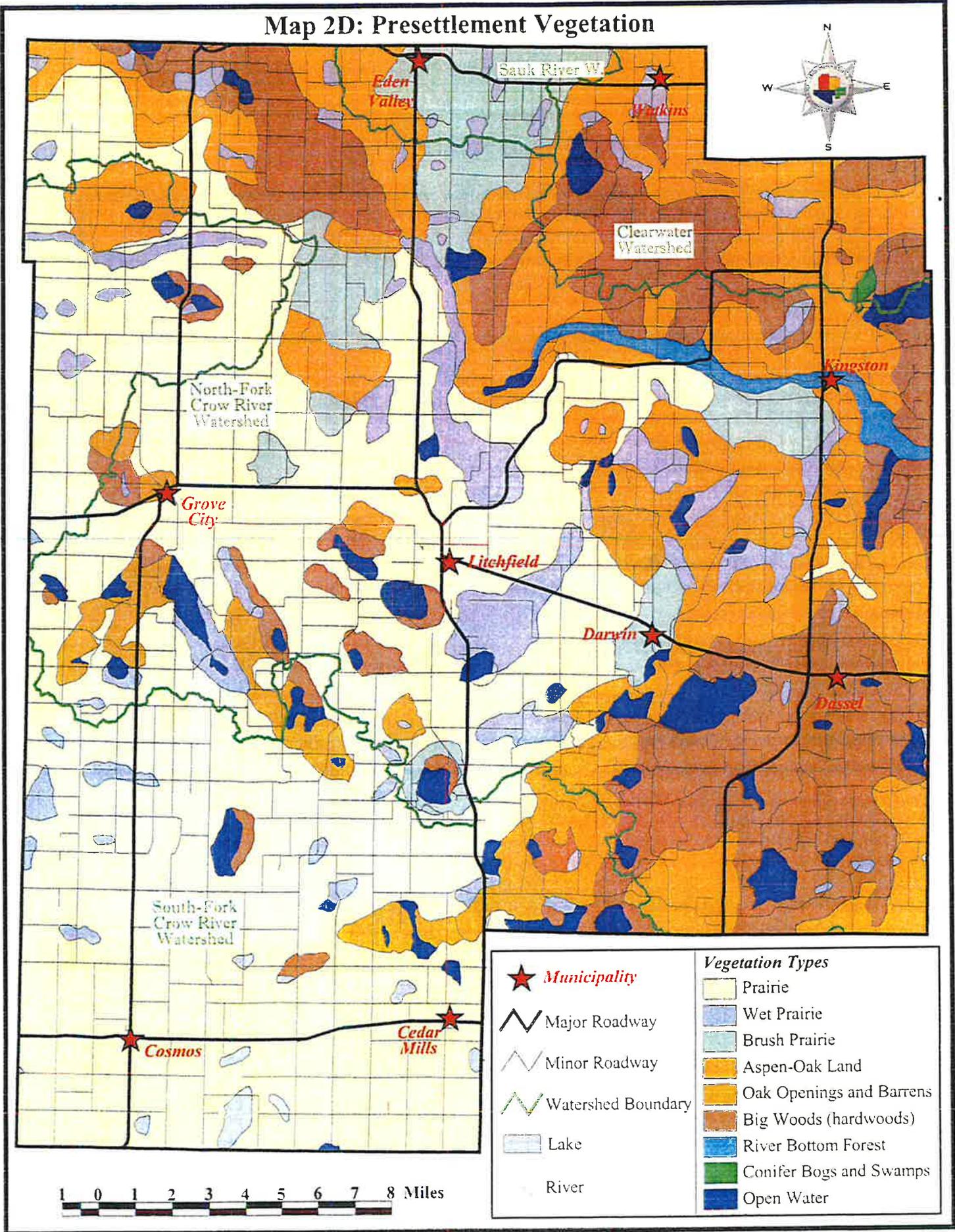
The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has inventoried the original vegetation of Meeker County through its Presettlement Vegetation Database. Presettlement vegetation was determined by analyzing the detailed maps and records of early surveyors (circa 1895). The purpose of the database is to “analyze presettlement vegetation patterns for the purpose of determining natural community potential, productivity indexes, and patterns of natural disturbance.” Map 2D presents the presettlement vegetation of Meeker County. Before settlement, Meeker County was predominately covered with upland prairie and prairie wetland vegetation; however, large stands of hardwood trees were commonly found throughout the northern and eastern parts of the County.

Map 2C: Soils



Nearly Level to Steep Loamy and Clayey Soils Formed in Glacial Till on Uplands	Nearly Level to Gently Sloping, Clayey and Silty Soils in Lake Basins
A Association 1	M Association 12
B Association 2	N Association 13
C Association 3	
D Association 4	Nearly Level to Rolling Loamy and Sandy and Organic Soils on Outwash Plains, Stream Terraces
E Association 5	O Association 14
F Association 6	P Association 15
G Association 7	Q Association 16
H Association 8	R Association 17
I Association 9	
J Association 10	
K Association 11	
Soils On Floodplains and Stream Terraces.	
L Association 18	
	Lakes
	Rivers
	Cities
	Major Roads
	Minor Roads
	Watershed

Map 2D: Presettlement Vegetation



Chapter Three: Meeker County's Current Land Use

It is imperative to understand Meeker County's current land use patterns before decisions should be made regarding the County's future land use. This Chapter examines Meeker County's current zoning districts; housing, parks, and recreational areas; and transportation land uses. In addition, a County-wide Zoning Map and Parks and Recreational Areas Map are included in the Chapter.

Meeker County's Current Zoning

Meeker County's zoning districts are intended to provide for the most appropriate uses of land, while promoting orderly growth and development. Zoning districts shape current land use patterns by permitting certain uses and requiring conditions be met prior to altering the landscape. Meeker County's zoning districts directly impact and guide the current land uses illustrated on the township maps in Chapter Five. Meeker County has seven basic zoning districts and four overlay districts that regulate land use (see Map 3A). The following provides a brief description of the intent of each zoning district in Meeker County.

ARTICLE 11 - A-1 AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION DISTRICT

INTENT. The intent of the A-1 Agricultural Preservation District is to provide a district whose primary purpose is to (1) maintain, conserve, and enhance agricultural land which has historically been tilled, (2) protect the land from unnecessary urban encroachment and control scattered non-farm development, (3) protect and preserve natural resource areas and retain major areas of natural ground cover for conservation purposes, (4) stabilize increases in public expenditures for public services such as roads, road maintenance, snow removal, schools, police, and fire protection.

ARTICLE 13 - R-1 SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

INTENT. The intent of the R-1 Suburban Residential District is to provide a district with the primary purpose of (1) allowing low density residential development as an orderly expansion of existing urban residential development where urban services can be readily extended and provided, (2) encourage low density residential development in existing unincorporated communities, and (3) provide a district that will allow low density residential development and on-lot utilities in natural environment areas and which will retain the environmental quality of the natural area.

ARTICLE 14 - R-2 RURAL RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

INTENT. The intent of the R-2 Rural Residential District is to provide a district with the primary purpose of (1) allowing large lot residential development and on-lot utilities where urban services cannot be economically extended, and (2) accommodate low-density residential development in areas not conducive to or not being utilized for intensive agricultural purposes.

ARTICLE 15 - C-1 COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

INTENT. The intent of the C-1 Commercial District is to provide a district with the primary purpose of (1) accommodating certain commercial activities not compatible with the predominantly retail uses of the urban areas and (2) grouping together those uses which require accessibility to roadways to function successfully at standards which will not impair the traffic-carrying capabilities of those roadways.

ARTICLE 16 - C-2 NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

INTENT. The intent of the C-2 Neighborhood Commercial District is to provide a district with the primary purpose of (1) allowing retail, service, and general commercial uses in the existing small unincorporated urban communities in the county and (2) satisfy those basic shopping and service needs which occur daily or frequently within the community.

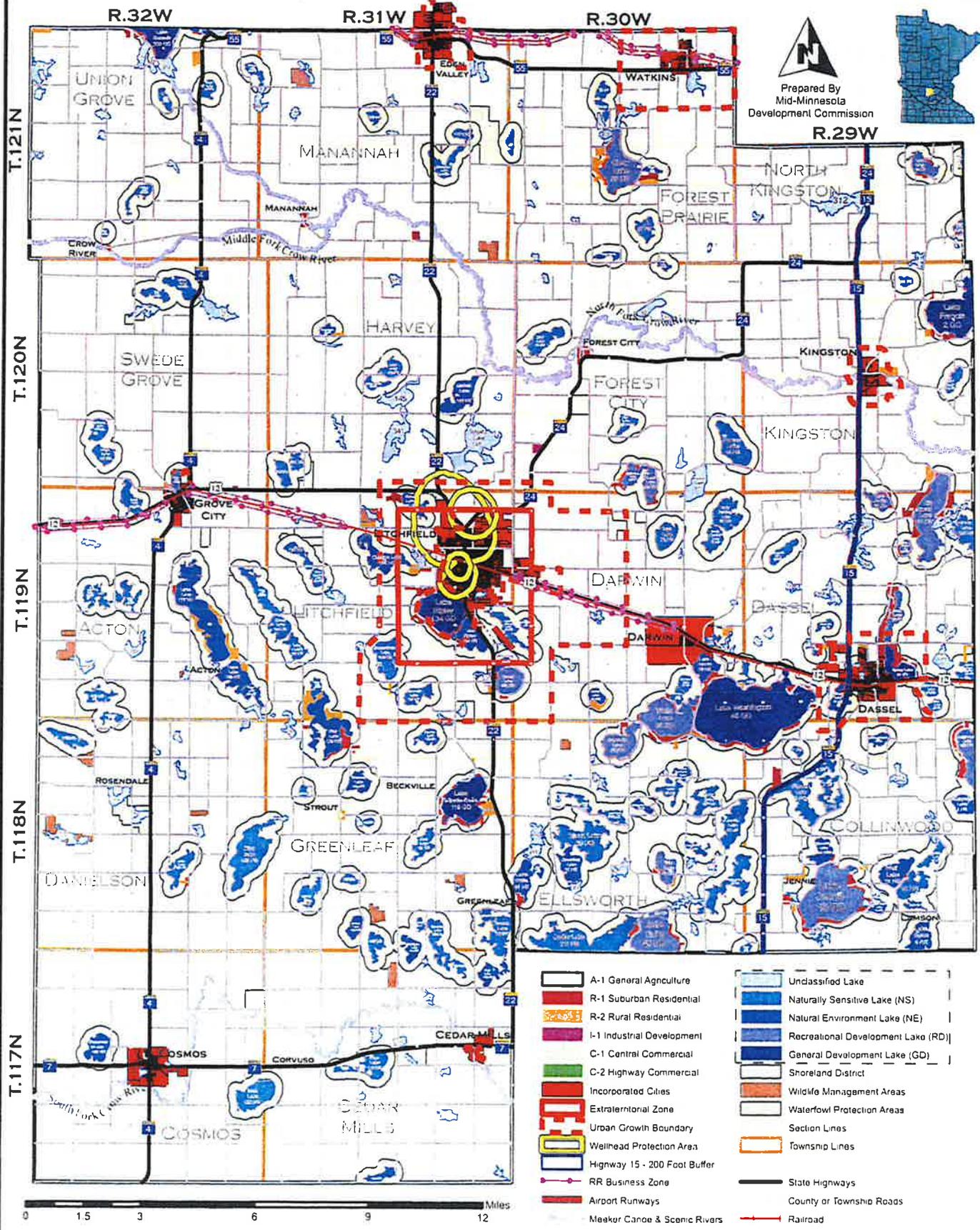
ARTICLE 17 - I-1 GENERAL INDUSTRY DISTRICT

INTENT. The intent of the I-1 General Industry District is to provide a district whose primary purpose is to (1) allow limited industrial development adjacent to existing urban areas or on major transportation routes, (2) encourage development that is compatible with surrounding or abutting districts, (3) encourage development in areas where adequate public utilities and transportation facilities are available, and (4) provide for development standards that will not impair the value and enjoyment of surrounding land uses because of air pollution, noise, vibrations, odors, glare, fire, and explosion hazards, etc.

ARTICLE 18 - UE-O URBAN EXPANSION MANAGEMENT OVERLAY DISTRICT

INTENT. The intent of the UE-O Urban Expansion Management Overlay District is to provide a district with the primary purpose of (1) conserving, for a period of time, land for agricultural and other open space land uses, (2) allowing limited urban growth adjacent to incorporated communities which will not adversely disrupt future development patterns and the provision of services, (3) deferring that development where it is not economically feasible to extend the necessary urban services, (4) preventing unplanned leap-frog development inconsistent with the County and/or affected communities' future land use plans, and (5) providing a process whereby an orderly transition from rural to urban uses can be achieved in a manner mutually beneficial to the County and the City.

MAP 3A: ZONING MAP



Shoreland Management Overlay District (SM-O)

The uncontrolled use of shoreland areas in Meeker County affects the public's health, safety, and general welfare, not only by contributing to the pollution of public waters, but also by impairing the local tax base. Therefore, it is in the public's best interest to provide for the wise subdivision, use, and development of shorelands of public waters. The Legislature of Minnesota has delegated responsibility to local governments of the State to regulate the subdivision, use, and development of the shorelands of public waters, and thus preserve and enhance the quality of surface waters, conserve the economic and natural environmental values of shorelands, and provide for the wise use of waters and related land resources. This responsibility is hereby recognized and assumed by Meeker County. Lot area and width standards depend on the lake or river's classification, if the lots are sewerred or unsewerred, if the lots are riparian or nonriparian, and the number of units in the dwelling.

Recreation River Management Overlay District (RR-O)

The intent of the RR-O Recreation River Management Overlay District is to provide a district with the primary purpose of preserving and protecting the North Fork Crow River and its adjacent lands, which possess outstanding scenic, recreational, natural, historical, scientific, and similar values. This shall be accomplished by controlling bluffland and riverland development in a manner consistent with MN Statutes, Sections 103F.301-103F.345, MN Rules, parts 6105.0100-6105.0250, and the Management Plan for the North Fork of the Crow River in MN Rules, parts 6105.1000-6105.1130. Every lot or tract in an RR-O District must contain an area not less than that area necessary to meet the lot area requirements of the basic zoning district. Lots abutting the North Fork Crow River must not be less than two acres above the ordinary high water mark.

Clearwater River Watershed Management Overlay District (CR-O)

The intent of the CR-O Clearwater River Watershed Management Overlay District is to denote a district with the primary purpose of (1) recognizing that the Clearwater River Watershed District's Board of Managers have certain powers and authority to regulate certain activities related to the water resources of the District, (2) coordinating the requirements of the County's Zoning Ordinance with the requirements of the adopted rules and regulations of the Clearwater River Watershed District and (3) expediting permit procedures as required by this Ordinance with those procedures required by the Clearwater River Watershed District. All uses allowed as permitted uses in the applicable basic zoning districts are permitted in the CR-O Districts. A permit from the Watershed District Managers is required for some work done in the CR-O District.

Housing

Based on the population projections in Chapter One, Meeker County is expected to experience steady population growth for the next 20 years. With the County's sound economic base and centralized location to the large employment centers of St. Cloud, Hutchinson, Willmar, and the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, housing availability will continue to be one of the County's most important planning issues. The County's rural landscape offers many natural settings that attract residential development. In keeping up with the demand for housing, it will be important for the County to focus its residential land use efforts on a wide variety of housing stock for all income and age groups. Furthermore, the location of additional housing needs to be re-evaluated on a regular basis. This could be partially accomplished by conducting housing studies.

Existing Housing

The 2000 U.S. Census was the last official count of housing in Meeker County. The Census reported 9,821 total housing units, including all single-family houses, mobile homes, rental units, and vacant dwellings. The 1990 Census reported 9,139 total housing units in Meeker County. As a result, the growth in total housing units in Meeker County from 1990 to 2000 was 682 dwellings, representing a 7.5 percent increase. Figure 3A compares the total number of housing units for all Meeker County townships and cities and Meeker County as a whole from 1990 to 2000.

Difference Between Housing Units and Households

The U.S. Census reports statistics for both total housing units and households. Housing units are the total number of livable dwellings that are available. Households refer to the total number of occupied housing units.

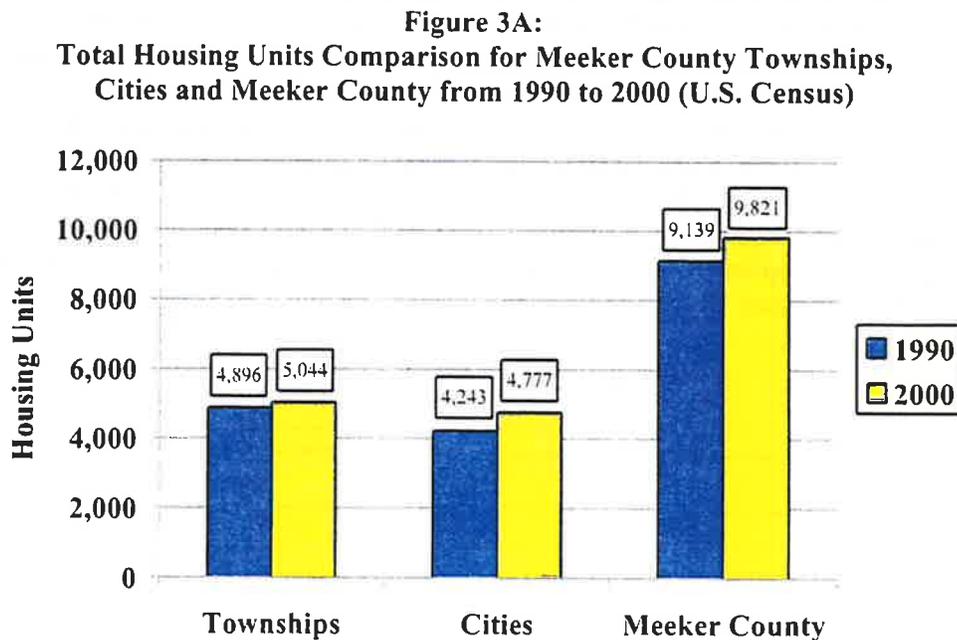


Figure 3A illustrates that more housing units were located in Meeker County townships than municipalities in both 1990 and 2000. The number of housing units in all Meeker County townships grew by 148 (3.0 %) from 1990 to 2000. In comparison, the total number of housing units for all Meeker County cities grew by 534 units (12.6 %). One factor contributing to the higher level of housing units in the townships is the County's many lakes, wetlands, and wooded areas that offer attractive locations to build homes. Future growth in these areas will ultimately reach a point that most of Meeker County's natural environmental areas will have residential developments, unless the County collaboratively prevents this from occurring.

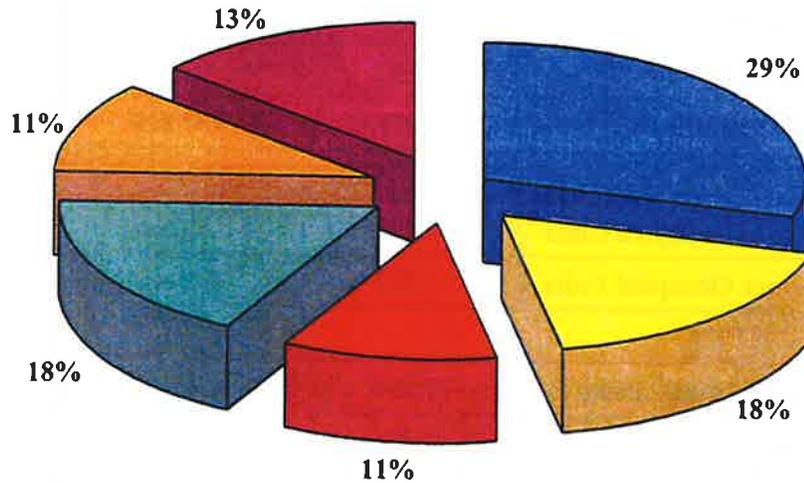
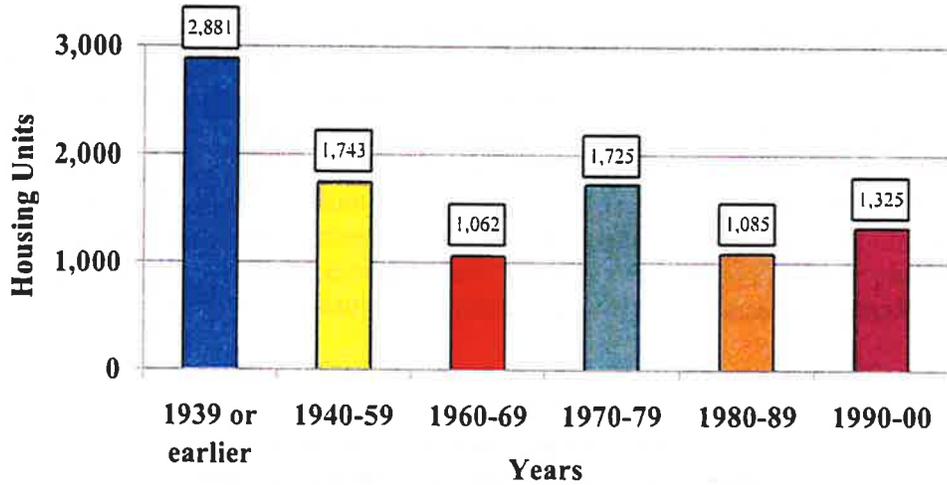
Table 3A provides housing characteristics for Meeker County and the State of Minnesota based on the 2000 Census. In 2000, 87 percent of the total housing units in Meeker County were occupied, leaving 13 percent vacant. In comparison, 92 percent of housing units statewide were occupied, with the remaining 8 percent unoccupied. Of those occupied units in Meeker County, nearly 82 percent were owner occupied. This was substantially higher than Minnesota's average of 75 percent owner occupied. In addition, single-family housing made up 81 percent of the total housing stock in Meeker County, compared with only 73 percent throughout the State. The higher percentages for Meeker County in these two categories is likely due to the significant number of housing units available in Meeker County's townships (see Figure 3A).

**Table 3A:
2000 Housing Characteristics for
Meeker County and Minnesota (2000 U.S. Census)**

Characteristic	Meeker County	Minnesota
Occupancy		
Occupied Units	8,590	1,895,127
Vacant Units	1,231	170,819
Occupancy Status		
Owner Occupied Units	7,018	1,412,865
Renter Occupied Units	1,572	482,262
Type of Unit		
Single-Family Units	7,984	1,507,378
Duplex	222	62,137
3 or More Units	807	397,537
Mobile Homes	787	93,618
Other	21	5,276

Figures 3B and 3C show the breakdown of housing construction by decade for Meeker County. As the Figures illustrate, a large portion of Meeker County's housing was built before 1940 (29 percent of total housing units) and during the 1970s (18 percent of total housing units). Housing units constructed during the 1990s represented 13 percent of those in Meeker County.

**Figures 3B & 3C:
Meeker County Housing Unit Construction
by Decade (2000 U. S. Census)**

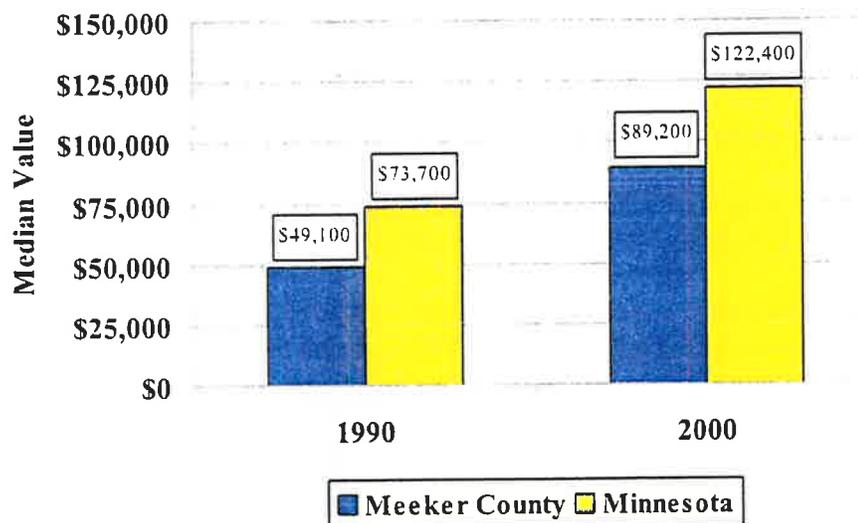


■ 1939 or earlier ■ 1940-59 ■ 1960-69 ■ 1970-79 ■ 1980-89 ■ 1990-00

Figure 3D shows the median housing value for owner occupied housing in Meeker County and for the State. The median value of housing in Meeker County increased from 1990 to 2000 by 50 percent, while the median value for housing in Minnesota increased by 37 percent. The 2000 median value of housing units in the County was 60 percent of the State's median value, up from 55 percent in 1990.

There are several factors that contributed to the County's above average gain in median housing value. The two primary factors are the County's centralized location to many employment centers (St. Cloud, Willmar, Hutchinson, and Twin Cities Metropolitan Area) and the County's vast natural features (lakes, rivers, wooded areas, etc.). These factors create a greater demand for housing and, therefore, increase the amount that people are willing to pay for housing.

**Figure 3D:
Meeker County Median Housing
Values in 1990 & 2000 (U.S. Census)**



Meeker County Public Housing

Meeker County has three organizations that provide public housing opportunities to citizens. These organizations are the Meeker County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), the Meeker County Development Corporation, and the Heartland Community Action Agency. Each of these organizations is briefly described in the following text.

The *Meeker County HRA* is a public body that provides low-income housing opportunities in the County. As of April 2000, the Meeker County HRA owned 25 public housing units in the County. Seventeen of the units are made up of an apartment facility in Dassel that houses predominately senior citizens. The remaining eight units are two and three bedroom houses

located in Cosmos (four dwellings) and Grove City (four dwellings). All of the HRA units are rented to individuals and families who meet low-income housing standards.

The *Meeker County Development Corporation* is a countywide economic development organization that maintains 28 housing units in the County (8 units in Watkins, 4 units in Cosmos, and 16 units in Litchfield). All of the units are single-story, four-plex apartment buildings. Each unit is 1,100 to 1,300 square feet in size, with two or three bedrooms and an attached garage. Unlike the HRA housing, these units are fair market rental units that are available to individuals and families of any income level. Monthly rent for these units is as follows:

- \$530 per month in Cosmos
- \$540 per month in Watkins
- \$550 per month in Litchfield for a two bedroom unit
- \$595 per month in Litchfield for a three bedroom unit
- \$38 per month in Litchfield for the rent of an additional garage
- All utilities are paid by the renter

The Meeker County Development Corporation finances the four-plex apartments with bonds. The bond payments are then paid with the rents that are collected.

The *Heartland Community Action Agency* is a private, non-profit corporation governed by a Board of Directors and serves Kandiyohi, Meeker, McLeod, and Renville Counties. The Agency administers housing programs for heating fuel assistance, housing counseling, Minnesota Housing Finance Agency loans, and rental assistance. The rental assistance program helps low-income families rent decent housing at prices they can afford. A family can expect to pay 30 percent of their gross monthly income for rent. The portion of the rent not paid by the family is paid by the rental program as a direct payment to the landlord. As of April 2000, 80 to 90 housing units in Meeker County were occupied by families receiving rental assistance. Funding for the program comes from Federal housing vouchers and eligibility for rental assistance is based on family size and yearly gross income.

Meeker County Parks

Meeker County currently has nine County parks. Map 3B shows the location of these parks, along with some of the County's other recreational areas. The following provides a description of each park.

Clear Lake Park – is located three miles south of Watkins on County Road 2. It includes a picnic area, swimming beach, hiking trails, picnic shelter, bathrooms, and water. The park is 34.4 acres in size.

Spring Lake Park – is located one mile north of Dassel, just east of County Road 4. The park includes picnic shelters, playground equipment, water, a basketball court, a softball field, and bathrooms. There are boat landings on Spring Lake and Long Lake, and there is a fishing dock on Long Lake. The park is 13 acres in size.

Shaw Memorial Park – is located in Forest City, along the Crow River, near the Old Mill dam site. The park has picnic shelters, water, bathrooms, playground equipment, a softball field, a basketball court, and an ice skating rink during the winter.

Thompson Park – is located one mile west of Cosmos on Lake Thompson. The park includes picnic shelters, playground equipment, water, bathrooms, a fishing dock, a ball field, and a sand volleyball court. The park is 22 acres in size.

Koronis Regional Park – is located on the southwest shore of Lake Koronis. The park has bathrooms with showers and overnight camping with electricity. Other features include: playground equipment, a swimming beach, a boat landing, several picnic shelters, a lookout tower, two ball fields, a volleyball court, a shuffleboard court, a horseshoe court, a basketball court, marked hiking trails, and two shelters with kitchen facilities. There is a caretaker on-site to make shelter reservations and camping arrangements. The park is 62 acres in size.

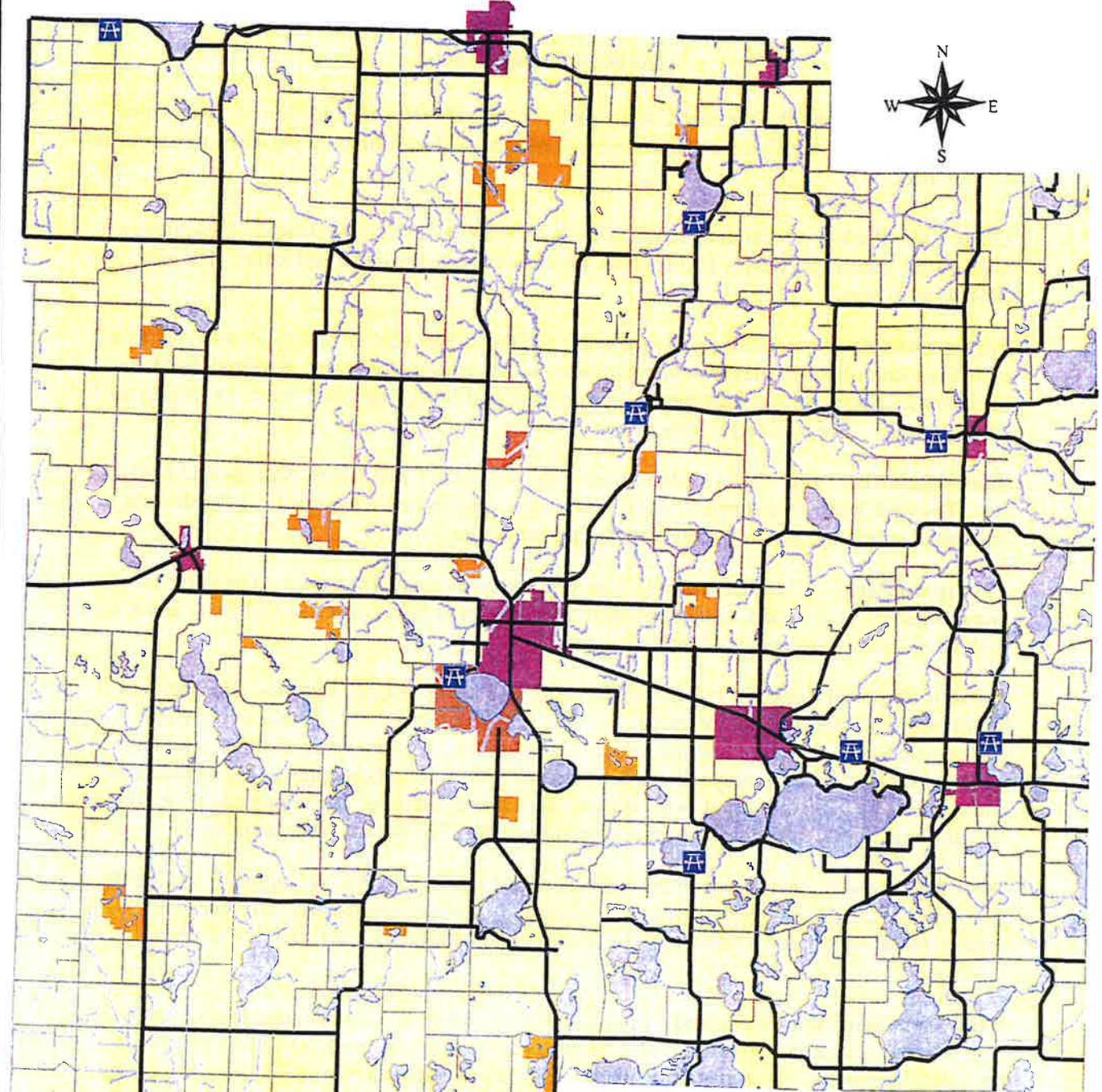
West Ripley Park – is located on the west shore of Lake Ripley, on the south side of Litchfield. The park has a large picnic shelter, a boat landing, playground equipment, two sand volleyball courts, horseshoe courts, a fishing pier, a water pump, bathrooms, a bike path, and a boat landing.

Lake Manuella Park – is located five miles south of Highway 12 on County Road 9 on the east side of Lake Manuella. The park boasts an excellent swimming beach, as well as picnic facilities, bathrooms, and a changing house. The park is 2 acres in size.

Finish Memorial Park – is located just west of Kingston on County Road 27, along the Crow River. The park has a tennis court, playground equipment, water, bathrooms, a canoe landing, and a shelter. The park is 17 acres in size.

Darwin-Dassel Park – is located two and one-half miles west of Dassel on Highway 12. At 160 acres, this park is Meeker County's largest. The park contains a sledding hill that provides a beautiful lookout over the area. The park also features two and one-half miles of trails for hiking, cross-country skiing, and horseback riding. Along with bathrooms, the park has shelters and picnic tables on the hill and the southern area of the park.

Map 3B: Meeker County Parks & Recreational Areas



Legend

- County Parks
- Lakes
- Cities
- Unpaved Roads
- Paved Roads
- Luce Line Recreational Trail
- Rivers, Streams & Ditches
- Wildlife Management Areas
- Waterfowl Protection Areas

Woodland Park – is located approximately four miles north of Dassel on Highway 15. Most of this 80-acre park is wooded with rolling terrain and two deep ponds. It has two miles of trails for hiking and horseback riding.

Transportation

The purpose of any transportation system is to move goods and people efficiently. An efficient and balanced transportation system includes highways, railroads, mass transit, and aeronautics. While the most influential mode of transportation is the automobile, the other types of transportation play an important role in the overall transportation system.

Highways

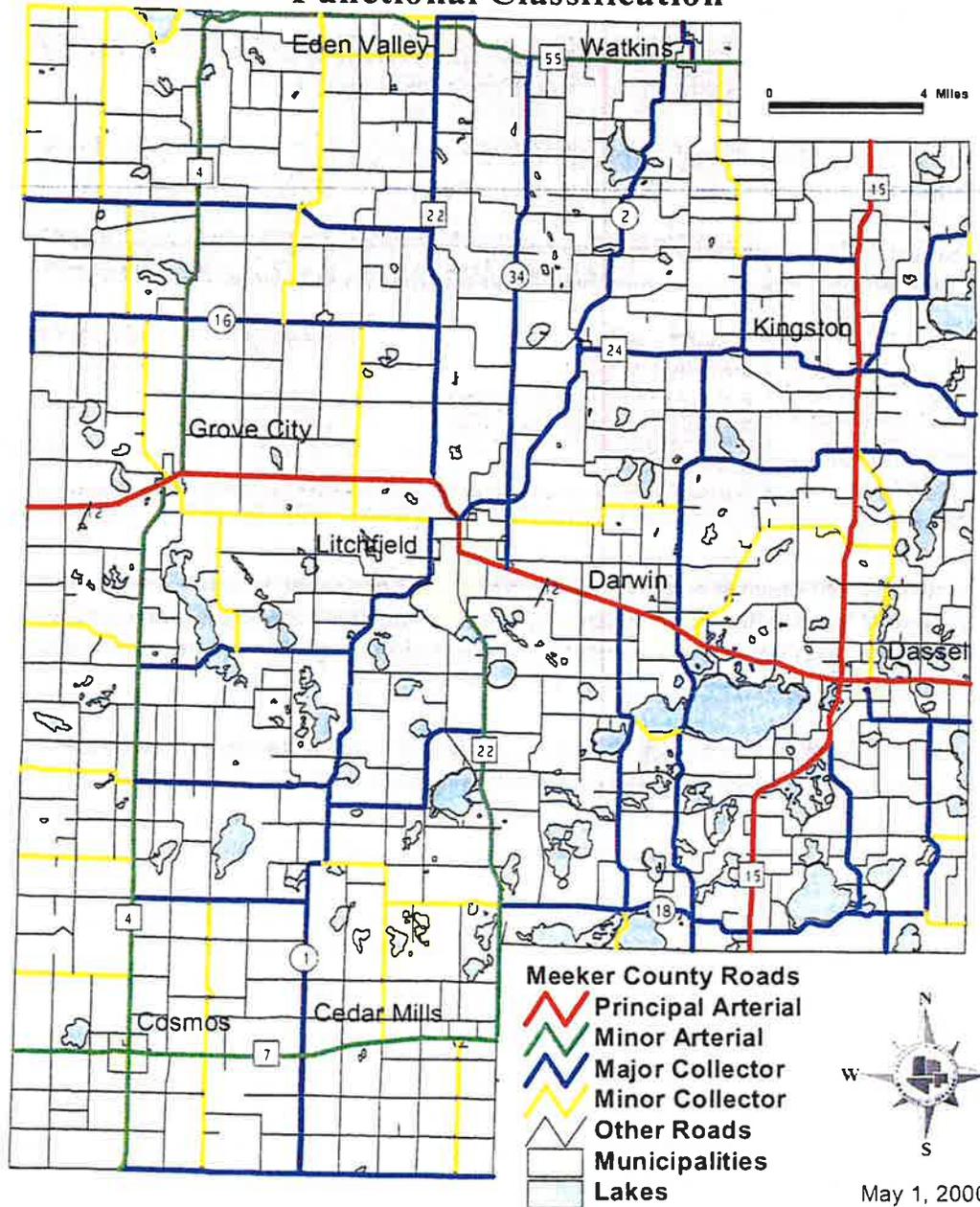
The current highway network in Meeker County has been built in response to an ever-increasing public demand for improved travel mobility. The local units of government and MnDOT are all responsible for assuring that the total highway system operates properly and the roads owned by the different levels of government are integrated into the overall highway system. Meeker County is well served by an extensive roadway network, which connects the County with the rest of the region and Minnesota. State, county, city, and township roadways all are included in the roadway network. It is the primary means of transportation for goods and persons within the County and to points outside.

The Functional Classification System is a method used to describe the main function each road performs in the highway network. It is essentially a hierarchy of roads using criteria that describes the function that a particular road performs in a highway network (typically access and mobility). There is a general agreement among the public that the responsibility for the most important roads should be assigned to the highest level of government. In this fashion, the greatest resources for road maintenance and construction are devoted to the most heavily traveled roads. It follows that less traveled roads become the responsibility of lower levels of government. Map 3C shows the Functional Classification of roads in Meeker County. These roads are defined as:

Principal Arterial- These highways provide an integrated network of routes that carry the highest traffic volumes, serve the longest trip movements, and provide for statewide or interstate travel. They serve all major urbanized areas and population centers. Principal arterial routes provide for through movement with minimum interference.

Minor Arterial- These highways link cities, larger towns, and other major traffic generators, such as major resort areas, to each other and to principal arterial routes. They form an integrated network that provide for movements within the State and between counties.

Map 3C: Meeker County Functional Classification



Major Collectors- These routes provide service to the County Seat and larger cities not served by the higher systems. They predominately serve trips within the County and link locally important traffic generators with their service areas and other nearby larger cities with higher order routes.

Minor Collectors- These routes link smaller cities and locally important traffic generators and provide developed areas reasonable access to a higher functioning roadway.

Local Roads- The rural local roads primarily service relatively low traffic volumes and short distance trips.

To the right is a text box that contains a breakdown for Rural Functional Classification Systems. Listed is the suggested breakdown and what actually exists in Meeker County.

Road Type	Suggested	Meeker County
Principal Arterial	2- 4%	4%
Minor and Principal Arterials	6-12%	9%
Major and Minor Collectors	20-25%	25%
Local Roads	65-75%	66%

In order to protect the integrity and prolong the lifespan of the roads, weight restrictions are imposed on paved roads in Meeker County. These year-round weight restrictions should not be confused with spring weight restrictions, which are intended to restrict weights on roads when they are most vulnerable to damage (spring is a critical period for roads because the soils and aggregate materials are weak while the frost leaves the road). By State law, all county and township roads are automatically reduced to 5-ton per-axle weight limit (unless posted otherwise) at the same time as spring road restrictions are placed on state highways.

Railroads

There are two active rail lines in Meeker County. The Canadian Pacific/Soo (CP/Soo) Line operates a class four rail line on the northern edge of the County, running on the northern side of State Highway 55 through the communities of Eden Valley and Watkins. The CP/Soo rail line owns approximately 1,100 miles of line, or about 23 percent of the total rail mileage in the State. The other rail line in Meeker County is operated by Burlington Northern/Santa Fe (BNSF). It is a class four rail line along U.S. Highway 12, through the communities of Grove City, Litchfield, Darwin, and Dassel. BNSF owns approximately 1,900 miles of rail line within Minnesota, which is almost 40 percent of the total mileage in the State.

Class	Freight Speed	Passenger Speed
One	10 mph	15 mph
Two	25 mph	30 mph
Three	40 mph	60 mph
Four	60 mph	80 mph

The efficiency of a railroad is affected by the physical condition of the railroad lines. The Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) track classification is based upon the physical characteristics of the roadbed, track geometry, and track structure. There are four different track classifications with maximum freight and passenger speeds. Characteristics related to the roadbed include drainage and vegetation. Track geometry includes gauge, alignment, elevation, and surface. Track structure involves ballast, ties, rail, spikes, joints, and switches. These characteristics determine the allowable operating speeds on a rail line.

The weight restriction of a particular line has a great effect upon the movement of grain traveling through the County. The most efficient means for rail shipment of grain is by 100-ton hopper cars. Such cars have a gross weight of 263,000 pounds. Without access to a rail with strength to handle these hopper cars, a shipper must choose between small rail cars or truck transportation. Both the CP/Soo and BNSF rail lines are designated to handle over 263,000 pounds, sufficient for the 100-ton hopper cars. As a result, the CP/Soo and BNSF rail lines both bear over 10,000,000 gross tons of freight annually.

MnDOT's Office of Freight, Rail, and Waterways has identified both the rail lines in Meeker County as primary rail lines. Primary rail lines make national and international connections between producers and markets and ensure protection of the current and future broad economic interests of the State.

A key element in rail transportation is the availability and capacity of elevators, especially considering the importance of grain movement in Minnesota. There are four grain elevators with access to rail lines in Meeker County that are licensed to buy and/or sell grain. Considering the importance of the rail lines and how much they handle in freight shipments, the elevator's role in the rail network is significant. To the right is a text box listing the four grain elevators that are adjacent to rail lines in the County.

Location	Storage/Capacity	RR Cars
Darwin	198,000 Bu	4
Eden Valley	103,000 Bu	-
Grove City	213,000 Bu	14
Litchfield	553,000 Bu	54

Mass Transit

Mass transit is considered to be an essential public service. Mass transit provides for increased capacity on heavily traveled roads, provides transportation access to the handicapped or those otherwise unable to drive, supports dense land use development, decreases dependence on car use, and helps to prevent the creation of additional air pollution from diminished individual car use.

Meeker County has one mass transit provider, the Meeker County Public Transit (MCPT). MCPT started serving the public in August of 1995. It started with one bus, but after one year a second bus was added. The buses run from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. The transit program continues to grow with an expected ridership of over 24,000 passenger trips.

Airports

The only airport in Meeker County is the Litchfield Municipal Airport. It is classified by the MnDOT Office of Aeronautics as an Intermediate System, having a paved and lighted runway less than 5,000 feet, capable of accommodating all single-engine and most twin-engine aircraft, as well as some light jet aircraft. The Federal Aviation Administration classifies the airport as a basic utility airfield, which can accommodate 95 percent of the general aviation fleet operating at under 12,500 pounds gross weight. While the Litchfield Municipal Airport does not offer regular commercial passenger service, the Office of Aeronautics projects that the airport will have about 6,700 general aviation passengers originating from or connecting to the airport in the year 2000. The County and the City of Litchfield need to limit development in areas adjacent to the airport by preventing encroachment of incompatible land uses and maintaining runway protection zones.

Maintenance of the Transportation Network

The transportation network in Meeker County represents a huge investment of taxpayer dollars and is essential in supporting many aspects of Meeker County's economy. If some of the elements of this network are neglected or poorly managed, substantial re-investment may be needed to restore capacity and performance. Listed below are some common planning practices that, when used, can promote efficiency and prolong the effective life of the entire transportation system.

Access Management

Access management is an effort to maintain the effective flow of traffic on all roads while accommodating the access needs of adjacent land development. Essentially, it is a tool that limits the number, spacing, and design of accesses along highways. Access management, when used properly and consistently, can provide for safer roadways, more efficient movement of traffic, improve cost-effectiveness and coordinated and managed growth along major roadways. Unfortunately, there are no commonly accepted and consistently applied guidelines for managing accesses. Existing access management practices and definitions of appropriate access levels vary throughout the state. However, MnDOT is in the process of developing access spacing guidelines; the County should consider adopting these access spacing guidelines when they are finished.

Road Weight Restrictions

Due to the cost of constructing and maintaining a 9- or 10-ton road, few roads in Meeker County are built to that capacity. The majority of the paved roads in the County are built to handle 5- or 7-ton per-axle vehicles. However, it is not uncommon for a new development to be built in a rural area adjacent to a road that is not sufficient to handle heavy commercial traffic, with the end result being the developer asking that the road be upgraded at County expense. The result of this is that finite government resources are being used on roads that normally would not merit the upgrade. Therefore, the County should create an ordinance that prohibits development that requires a 9- or 10-ton roadway from locating in areas not currently served by a 9- or 10-ton roadway, unless that development is willing to pay for the expense of upgrading the necessary roads.

Chapter Four: Community Profiles

This Chapter provides a community profile for each of the 9 cities located in Meeker County. The profiles include information on the city's residents and number of households, along with a description of the city's major roadways and surrounding natural resources. The population and household information presented uses the 1960 to 2000 Census records. This time-span is used to help establish a slow-, historic-, and fast-based population and household estimate for each city for the next 20 years. In addition, a Current Land Use Map is included that shows where each city's residential, industrial, retail/commercial, public, and recreational areas are located. The maps also show urban growth areas (if any were identified) and an aerial photograph of the City's surrounding landscape.

How to use the Community Profiles

There are two main features included in each community profile. The first is a table that presents the city's population and household numbers since 1960. The second feature is a current land use and urban growth area map. The population and household information is used to establish a "historic-based" rate of population gain or, in some cases, a historic-based rate of population loss. This rate (either positive or negative) is then applied over the next 20 years to show a historic-based population projection.

Realizing that many factors can influence an area's population level, the tables also present what each city's future population would be if either a "slow" or "fast" population gain or loss occurred. The slow annual growth rate was established at 50 percent of the city's historic-based rate. For example, if a city gained 80 new residents over the last 20 years, the slow projection would estimate that the city would gain another 40 people over the next 20 years. Similarly, the fast annual growth rate was established at 150 percent of the city's historic-based rate. In the previous example, the city's fast projection would estimate that the city would gain 120 new residents over the next 20 years (80 multiplied by 150%). Therefore, each community profile contains a slow, historic, and fast-based population projection for the years 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2020.

The information presented in the second major feature of each community profile, the current land use map, was provided by each of the cities during the planning process. As the name suggests, the maps show the location of each city's major types of land use (i.e., residential, commercial, etc.). In addition, some cities identified where they could logically grow in the future, referred to as the city's "urban growth area." The primary purpose of these areas is to identify where joint planning efforts need to be made by the city, the township(s) and the County. In conclusion, urban growth areas only identify *potential* future growth and, more importantly, all land use decisions that need to be made regarding these areas should be collectively discussed by the three levels of local government.

A Profile of Cedar Mills

The City of Cedar Mills is located approximately 12 miles south of Litchfield and 8 miles west of Hutchinson. Cedar Mills is Meeker County's smallest city, with 47 residents and 23 households. The DNR Luce Line Recreational Trail passes through Cedar Mills. This trail stretches 63 miles from the western metro suburb of Plymouth to the City of Cosmos in west-central Minnesota (located eight miles west of Cedar Mills).



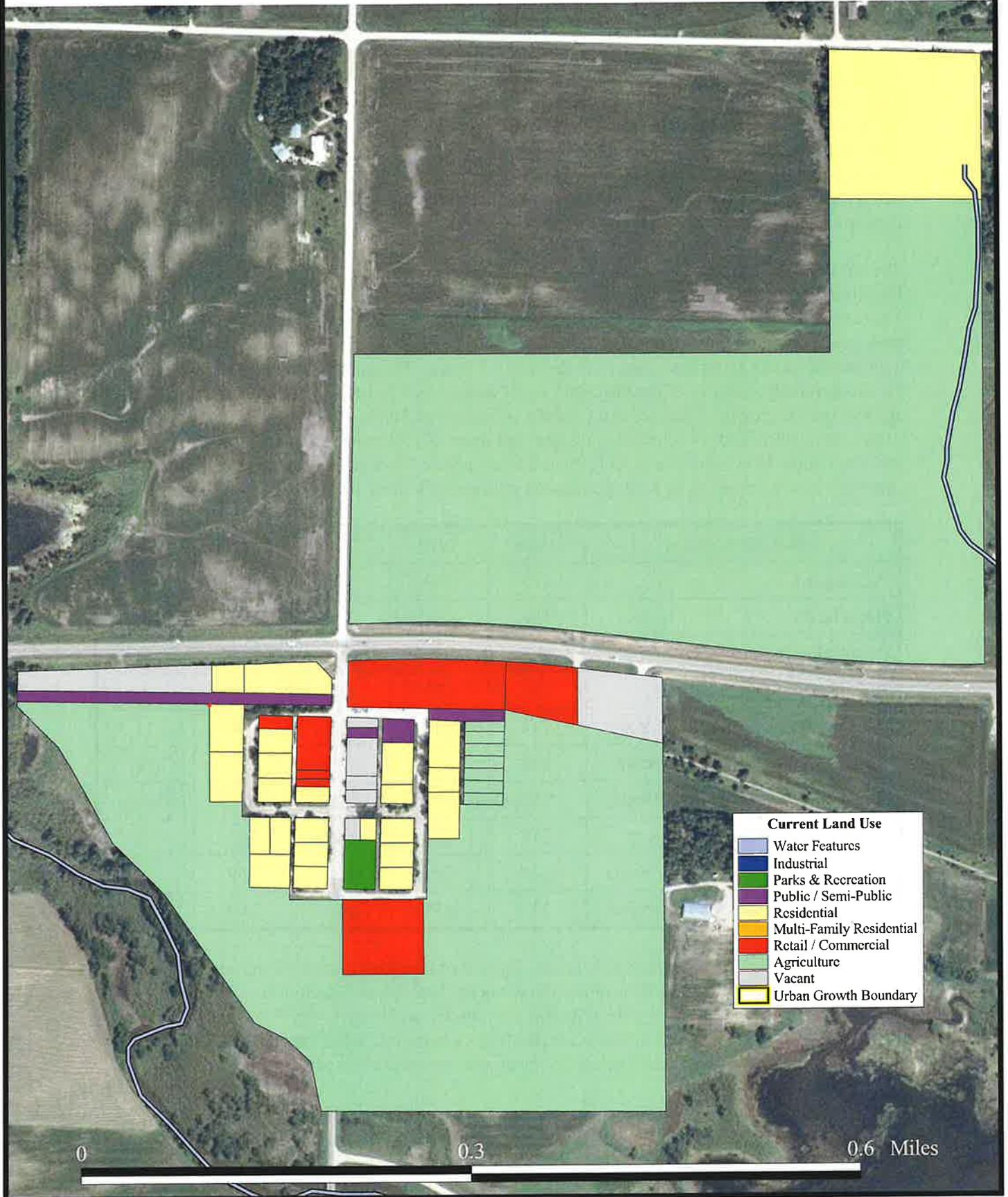
Cedar Mills' population has been steadily declining since 1930, except for a gain of 7 people between 1980 and 1990. The population projections based on information from the last 45 years, suggest that Cedar Mills will most likely continue to lose residents over the next 15 years. However, the City recently invested in a new public sewer and water system. With this accomplished, Cedar Mills may see some demand for both new housing and business developments. Cedar Mills also has the advantage of being located on Highway 7 within close driving distance to Litchfield (12 miles) and Hutchinson (8 miles). The primary benefits Cedar Mills would provide to potential residents are a small town atmosphere, low housing costs, and an attractive rural environment.

Table 4A: Cedar Mills	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	96	81	73	80	53
Households	27	28	25	30	26
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
State Demographer Estimates	47	43	40	37	-10
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	48	42	37	32	-15
Above Average Growth Projections	57	61	65	69	22
Households Based on 2.04 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	23	21	20	18	-5
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	24	21	18	16	-7
Above Average Growth Projections	28	30	32	34	11

According to Map 4A, Cedar Mills has an extensive amount of land that is currently being used for agricultural purposes. This is because most of the City's residential developments have occurred south of Highway 7. This trend will most likely continue due to the addition of the new sewer and water system in the southern portion of the community.

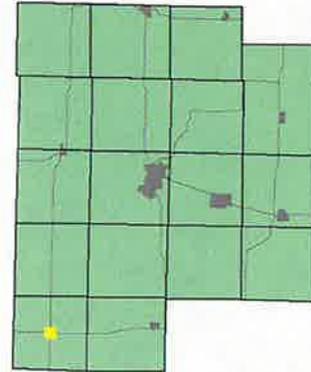
Map 4A: City of Cedar Mills Current Land Use

No Urban Growth Area Was Identified



A Profile of Cosmos

The City of Cosmos is located approximately 21 miles southwest of Litchfield, near the Renville/Meeker County border. Cosmos is Meeker County's sixth largest city, with 579 residents and 238 households. The Luce Line Recreational Trail passes through Cosmos and ends near Thompson Lake (situated approximately a half a mile to the west). Thompson Lake is also the location of Thompson Park, one of Meeker County's largest parks.

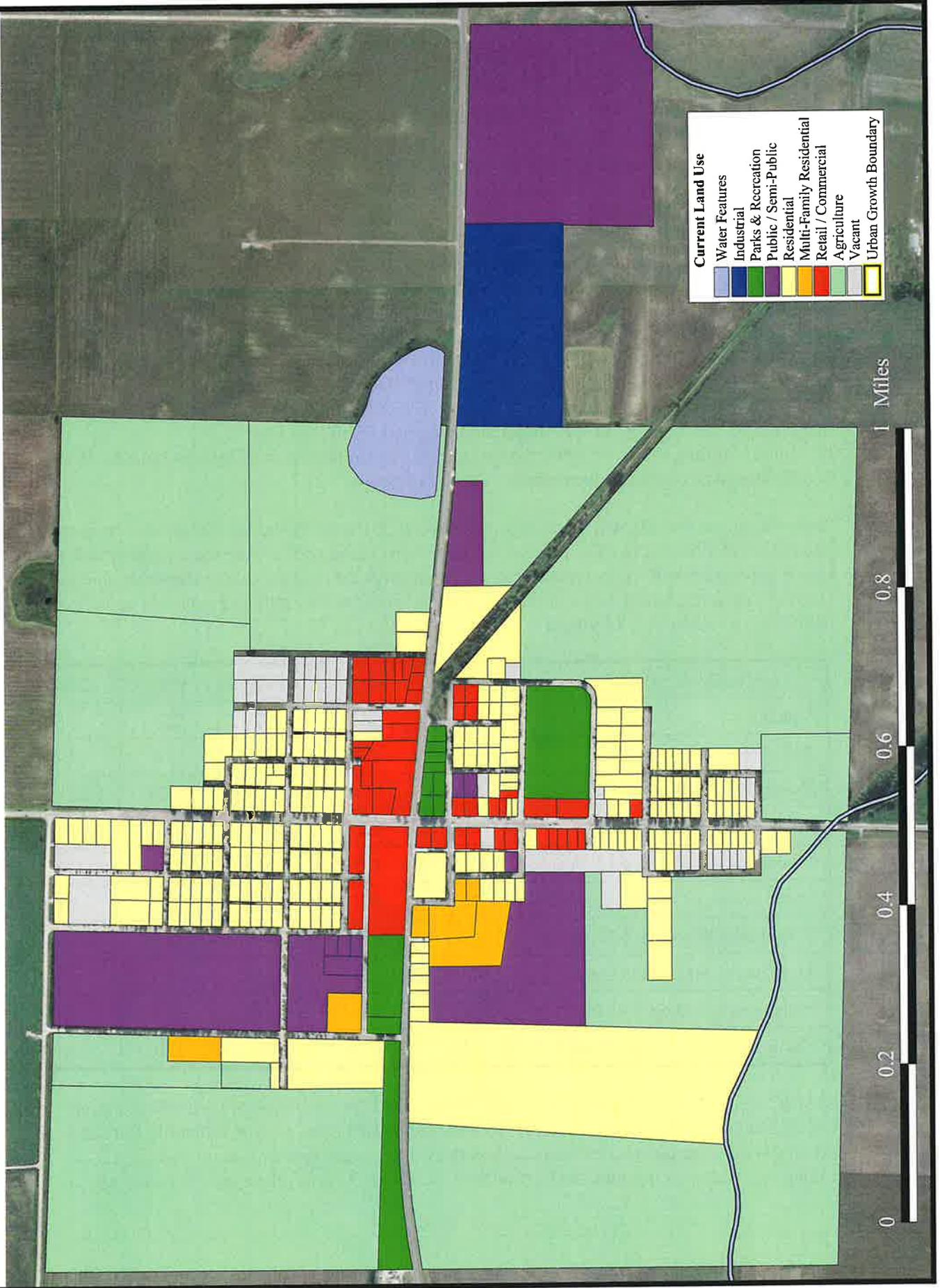


The City's population had been growing steadily until recently. The 2005 State Demographers figure of 579 residents is about 5 percent lower than the 1990 population. However, the population projection, based on information from the last 40 years, suggests that Cosmos will resume gaining new residents over the next 15 years. The population projections in Table 4B show a likely scenario of the City gaining 51 people and 21 households if it continues with its historic rate of growth. The fact that Cosmos is located on Highway 7 and is within a reasonable commute to Litchfield, Hutchinson, and Willmar may also influence the City's growth in the years to come. However, Cosmos is situated in an area of Meeker County that is expected to experience either negative or slow population gain over the next 15 years.

Table 4B: Cosmos	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	487	570	571	610	582
Households	159	192	225	255	240
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
State Demographer Estimates	579	575	570	565	-14
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	594	606	618	630	51
Above Average Growth Projections	600	618	635	653	74
Households Based on 2.43 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	238	237	235	233	-5
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	244	249	254	259	21
Above Average Growth Projections	247	254	261	269	31

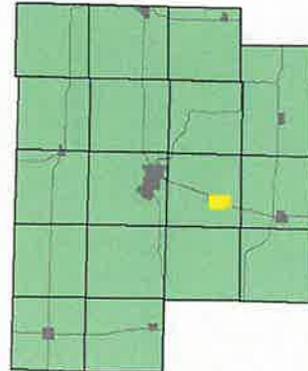
Map 4B shows that Cosmos has a substantial amount of land being used for agricultural purposes. In addition, there are currently many vacant lots that are platted for residential development. For these reasons, the City did not identify an Urban Growth Area for the next 20 years. The City will consider, however, expanding its corporate boundary on a case-by-case situation. The City currently has adequate sewer and water reserves to accommodate future growth.

Map 4B: City of Cosmos Current Land Use
No Urban Growth Area Was Identified



A Profile of Darwin

The City of Darwin is located ten miles east of Litchfield along Highway 12. Darwin is Meeker County's third smallest city, with 292 people and 126 households. Lake Darwin and Turtle Lake are partially located within the City's corporate boundary and Lake Washington is located approximately a half mile to the southeast. Lake Washington is the County's largest lake, attracting numerous people due to its fishing and recreational opportunities.



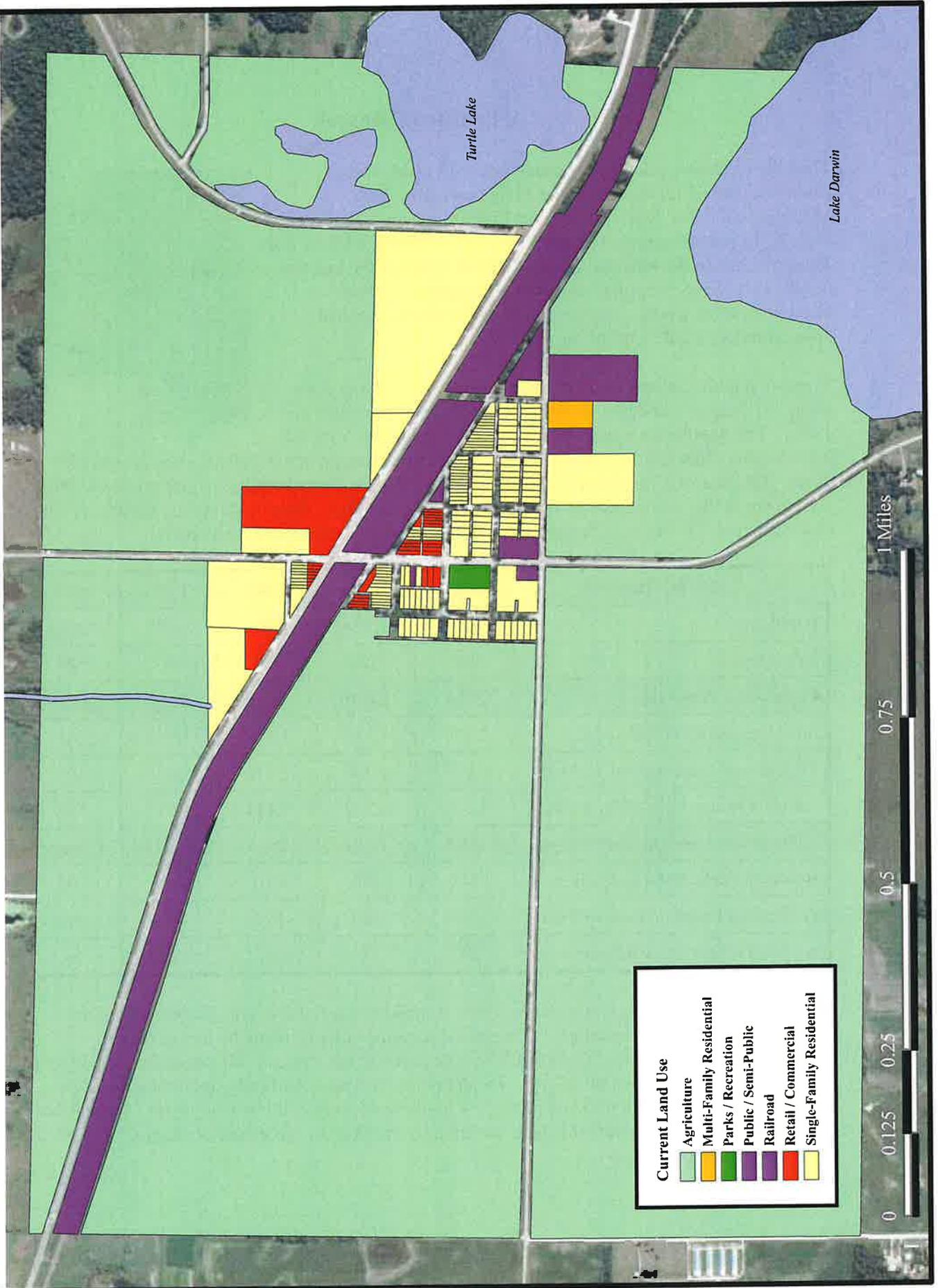
Darwin is famous for being the home of the world's largest "ball of twine," (at least until 1994). Francis Johnson started the ball in 1950 by wrapping twine around two fingers. By 1979, the ball measured 11 feet high by 40 feet around and weighed 17,400 pounds (8.7 tons). Unfortunately, in 1994, the ball lost its "world largest title" by the Guinness Book of World Records to a plastic one made by a group of people.

Table 4C shows that Darwin's population peaked at 361 in 1970 and has declined to its current population of 292 people. The population projections based on this information indicate that the City's population will likely remain fairly constant over the next 15 years. However, due to Darwin's close proximity to Litchfield and Hutchinson, the City may experience a larger gain in population over the next 15 years.

Table 4C: Darwin	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	273	361	282	252	276
Households	86	69	133	110	119
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
State Demographer Estimates	292	306	320	332	40
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	276	277	277	278	-14
Above Average Growth Projections	277	277	278	278	-14
Households Based on 2.32 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	126	132	138	143	17
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	119	119	119	120	-6
Above Average Growth Projections	119	119	120	120	-6

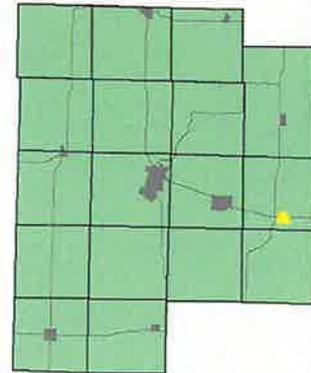
Map 4C shows Darwin's current land use. Notice the City has plenty of undeveloped land within its current corporate boundary. This should be sufficient enough to handle Darwin's urban growth over the next 20 years, unless the City expands greatly due to Litchfield's influence. With this in mind, the City did not identify a 20-year urban growth boundary.

Map 4C: City of Darwin Current Land Use
No Urban Growth Area Was Identified



A Profile of Dassel

The City of Dassel is located approximately 14 miles east of Litchfield and 45 miles west of the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area. Dassel is Meeker County's second largest city with 1,313 persons and 549 households. Dassel shares borders with Sellards Lake to the west and Spring Lake to the east (the location of Meeker County's Spring Lake Park). In addition, Lake Washington, the County's largest recreational lake, is located approximately a mile west of the City.

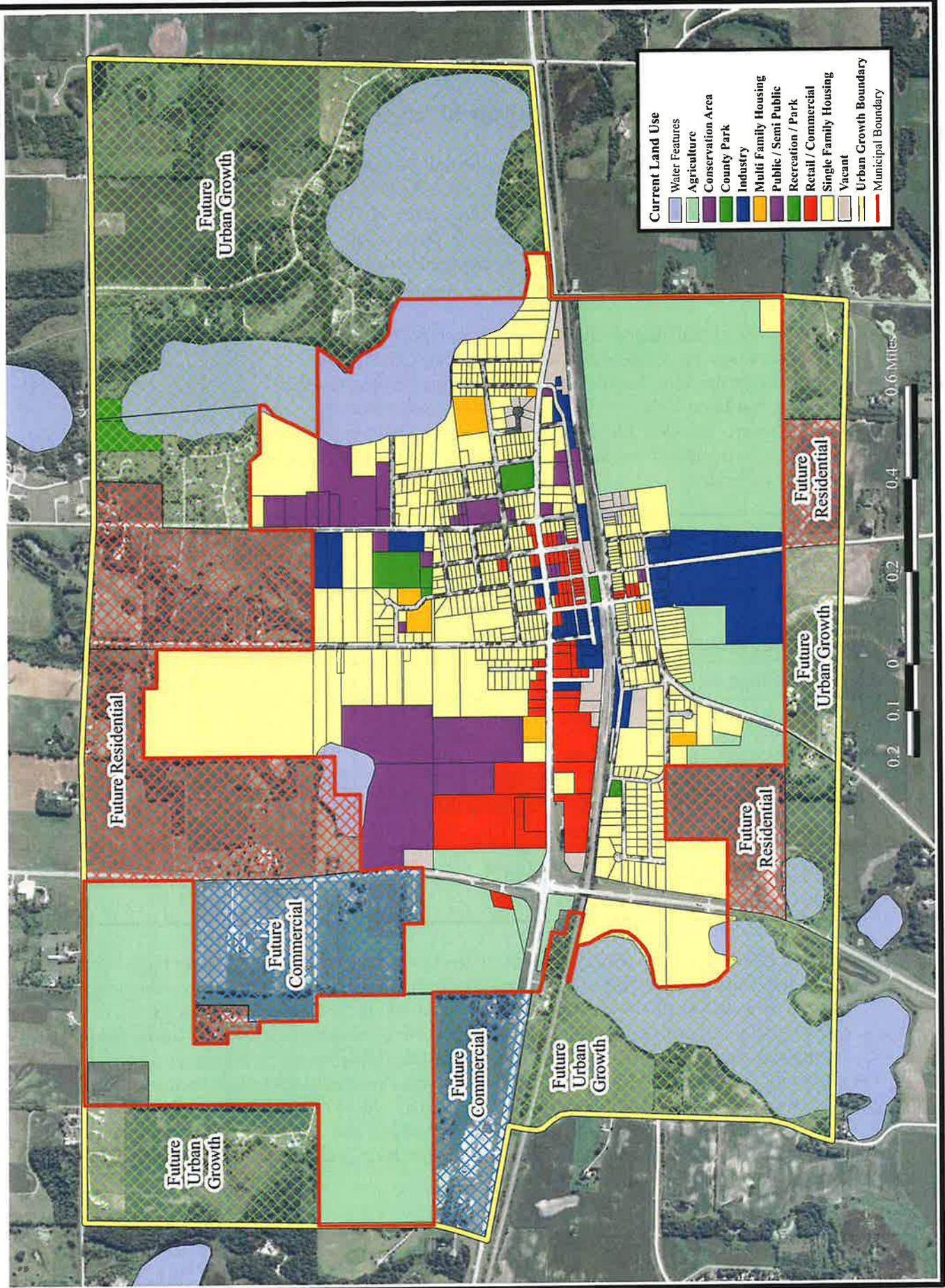


Dassel's population has been growing since 1930, with only one period of decline within the last seven decades (between 1950 and 1960). The population projections based on information from the last 45 years indicates that Dassel will likely continue to gain new residents over the next 15 years. The "historic" population prediction estimates that Dassel will gain approximately 105 people while the "fast annual growth" estimate suggests that Dassel could gain as many as 198 new residents. However, a close look at Map 4D reveals an interesting situation.

Table 4D: Dassel	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	863	1,058	1,066	1,082	1,233
Households	298	354	397	447	515
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
State Demographer Estimates	1,313	1,395	1,478	1,555	242
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	1,279	1,326	1,372	1,418	105
Above Average Growth Projections	1,302	1,372	1,441	1,511	198
Households Based on 2.39 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	549	584	618	651	102
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	535	555	574	593	44
Above Average Growth Projections	545	574	603	632	83

Map 4D shows that many residential lots are located in Dassel Township just outside of the City's current corporate boundary. If a request for annexation is made by any of these homeowners, it is likely that Dassel will be able to fulfill the request. This decision could greatly skew Dassel's rate of population gain. Incidentally, the City is currently upgrading its sewer system to be able to accommodate the City's future residential and business needs. Furthermore, the City will only incorporate this land if a friendly annexation agreement is reached between the City and Dassel Township.

Map 4D: City of Dassel Current Land Use



A Profile of Eden Valley

The City of Eden Valley is located approximately 14 miles north of Litchfield and 30 miles south of St. Cloud. The City is located in both Meeker and Stearns Counties, at the intersection of State Highways 55 and 22. Eden Valley is Meeker County's fourth largest city (counting the total population living in both counties), with 900 residents and 373 households.

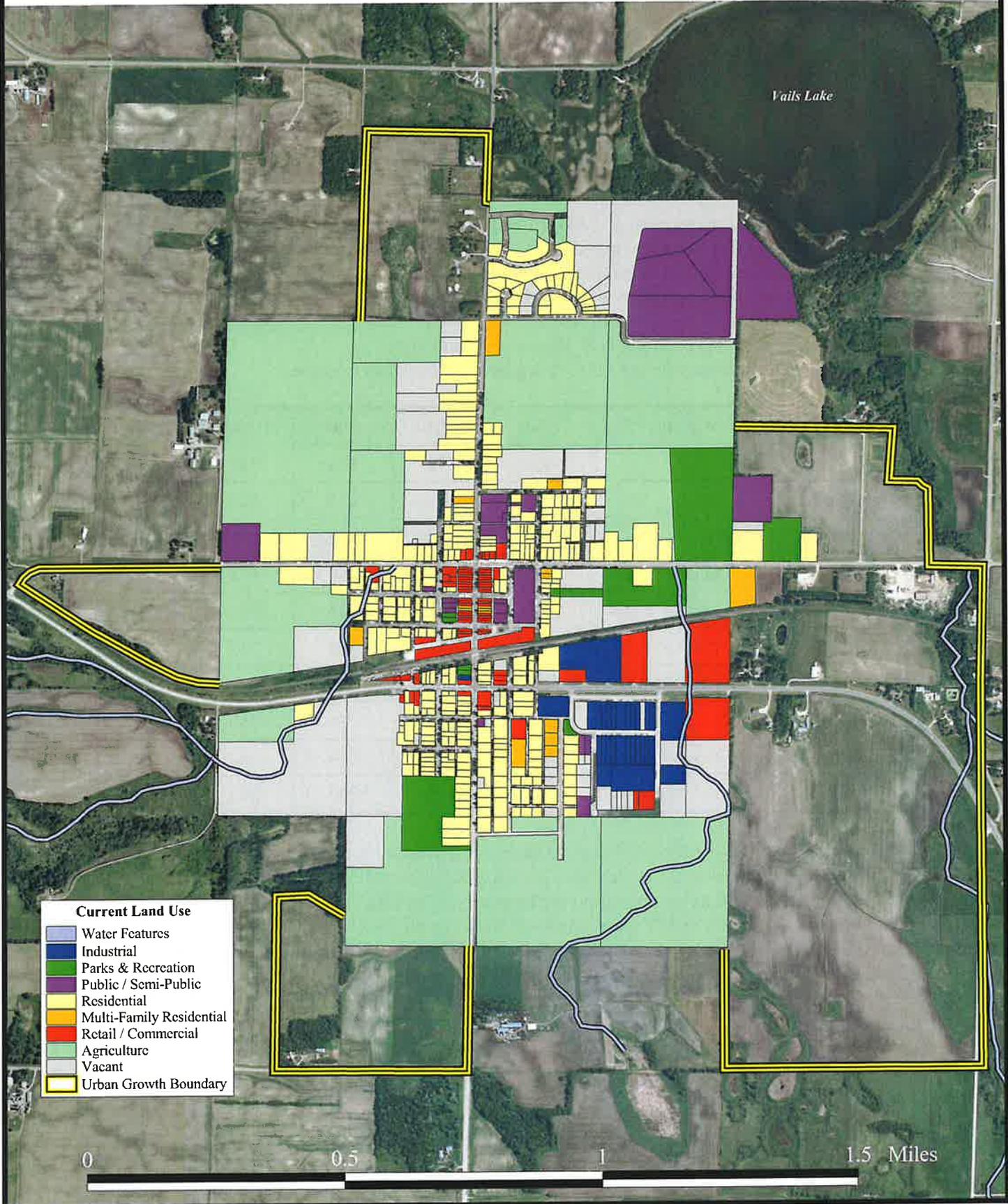


Eden Valley's population declined slowly between 1960 to 1990, before experiencing a substantial rebound in 2000. The City's population projections, based on information from the last 45 years, suggests that Eden Valley will likely continue to grow over the next 15 years. The City's location on two major highways and close proximity to Litchfield and St. Cloud will likely be substantial factors influencing future growth with the community.

Table 4E: Eden Valley		1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population		793	776	763	732	866
Households		180	248	301	306	360
Population Projections		2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
State Demographer Estimates		900	960	1,019	1,078	178
Projections Based on Last 40 Years		875	884	893	903	3
Above Average Growth Projections		880	893	907	921	21
Households Based on 2.41 People		2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer		373	398	423	447	74
Projections Based on Last 40 Years		363	367	371	375	2
Above Average Growth Projections		365	371	376	382	9

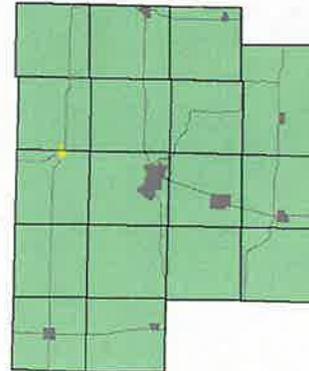
Map 4E shows that Eden Valley is prepared to expand both east and west along Highway 55 and north and south along Highway 22. The light green areas in the Map also show where the City can develop land within its current corporate boundary (these areas are currently being used for agricultural purposes). Furthermore, there appears to be numerous pockets of vacant land spread throughout the community. The City should also carefully plan all development within close proximity to the railroad, since new railroad crossings are rarely authorized by the railroad companies. Finally, since Eden Valley has identified a large Urban Growth Area, the City should maintain a good communication level with Manannah Township (located in Meeker County) in order to help assure that any future annexation is done so without conflict and with an orderly annexation agreement.

Map 4E: City of Eden Valley Current Land Use



A Profile of Grove City

Grove City is located approximately 7 miles west of Litchfield and 20 miles east of Willmar. Grove City is Meeker County's fifth largest city, with 628 residents and 265 households. Grove Lake is located within the City's corporate boundary, and Long Lake is situated within two miles to the south.

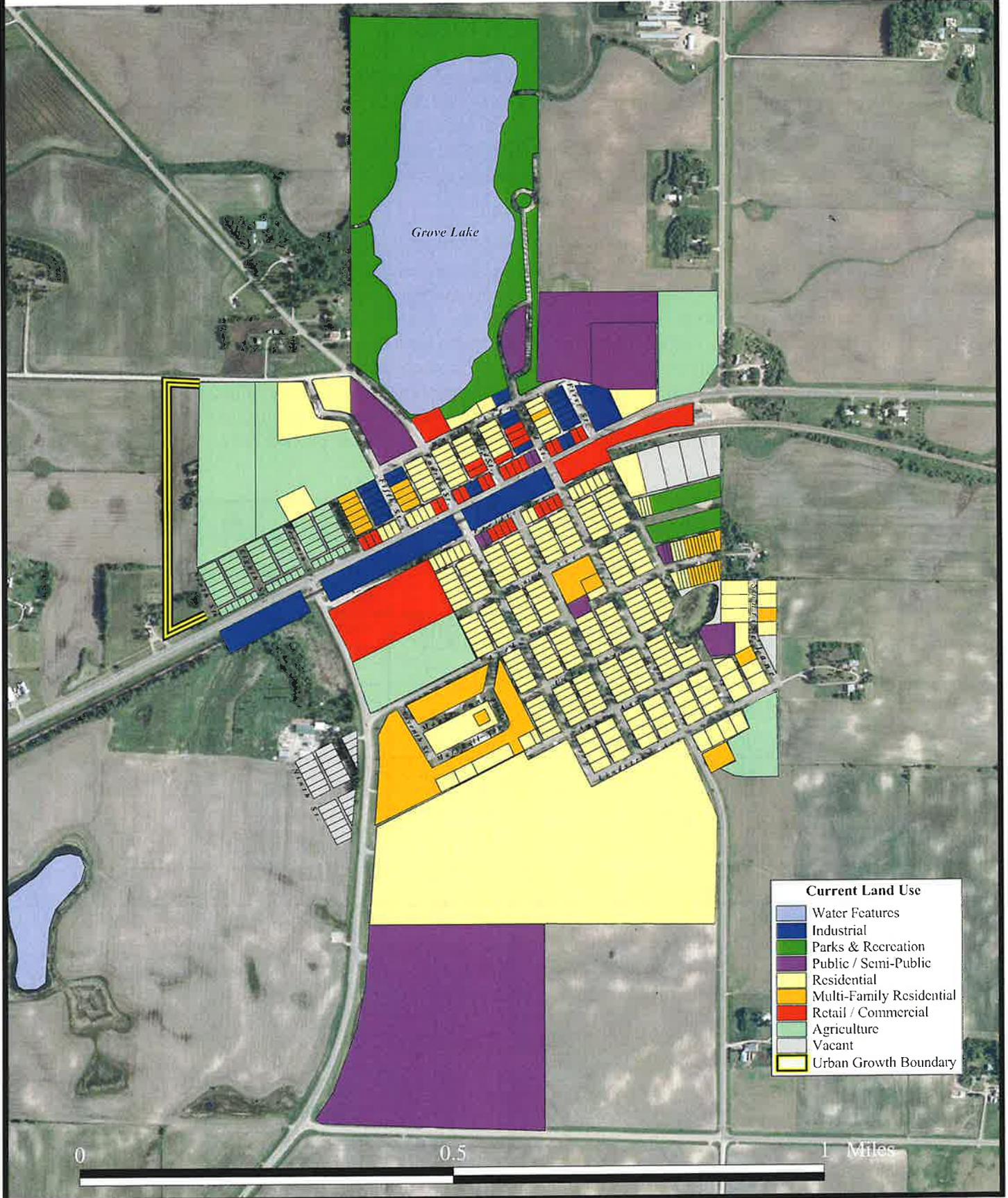


Grove City's population has been growing since 1930, with a slight dip in 1990. Grove City's current population is its highest level ever. For this reason, population projections suggest that the City will likely grow at a modest rate over the next 15 years. The fact that Grove City is within a reasonable proximity to both Willmar and Litchfield and is located along U.S. Highway 12 and State Highway 4 should help to promote the City's growth in the years to come.

Table 4F: Grove City	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	466	531	596	547	608
Households	170	180	234	223	257
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
State Demographer Estimates	628	644	660	675	47
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	626	644	661	679	51
Above Average Growth Projections	635	661	688	715	87
Households Based on 2.37 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	265	272	278	285	20
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	264	272	279	287	22
Above Average Growth Projections	268	279	290	302	37

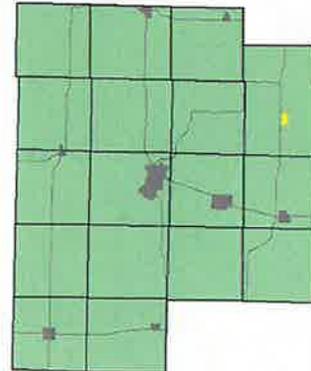
Map 4F shows that Grove City will need to annex land in the future to accommodate the City's projected population. This is because the City currently does not have much vacant or agricultural land within its current corporate boundary. The City should maintain good communication with Acton Township and work out a tentative orderly annexation agreement. Finally, in the event the City plans on developing to the north in the future, Swede Grove Township should be consulted early in the planning process.

Map 4F: Grove City Current Land Use



A Profile of Kingston

The City of Kingston is located in the northeast portion of Meeker County, approximately three miles from the Wright County border. It is situated along State Highway 15 within two miles of Lake Francis, a large recreational lake. The 2005 State Demographer places Kingston as Meeker County's second smallest city with 117 residents and 47 households.



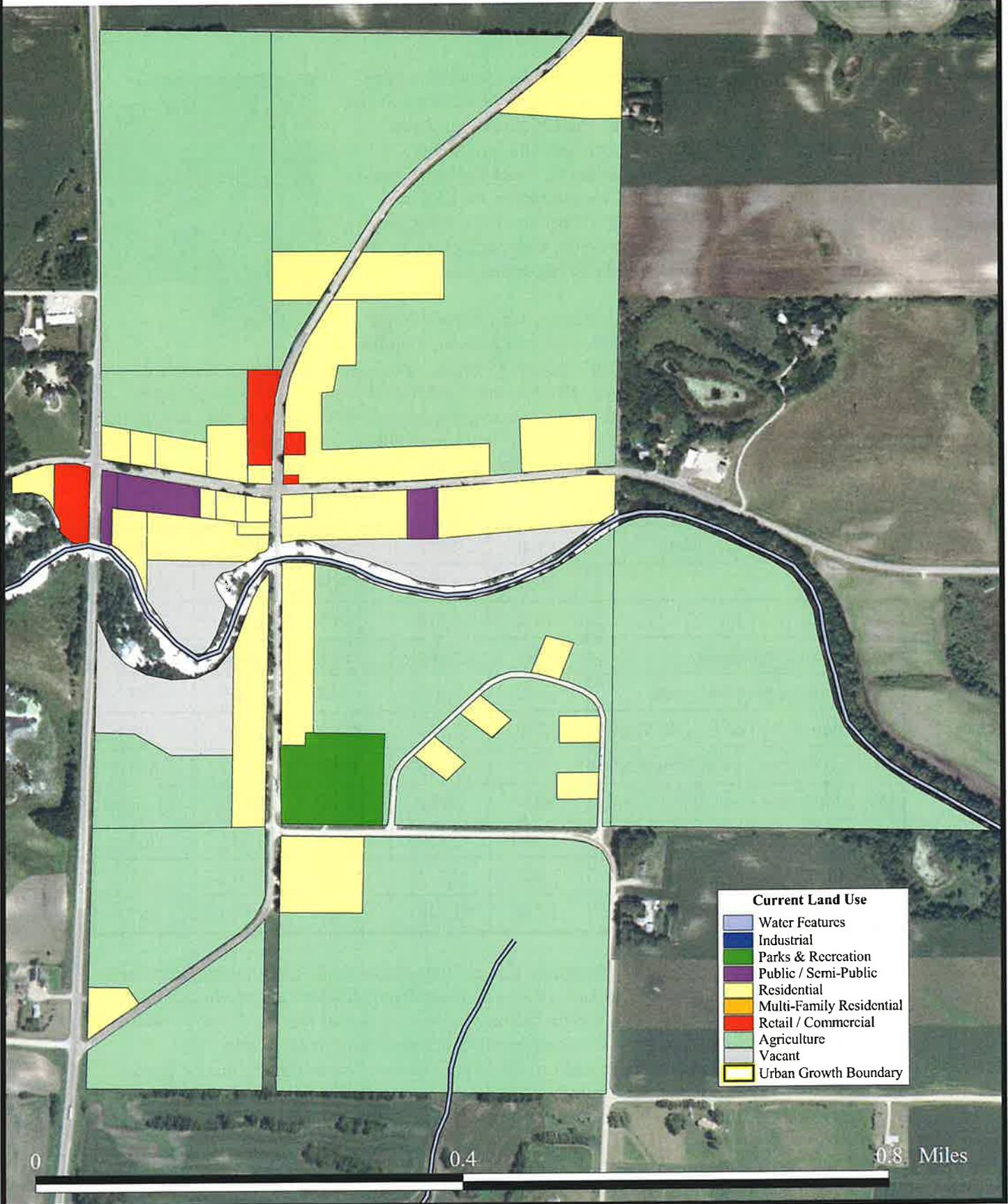
Kingston's population reached a peak in 1980 with 141 residents, but has declined to its current level of 117 people. Based on the last 30 years, Kingston's population will most likely make a modest rebound in the next 15 years. The fact that Kingston is within a reasonable proximity to Litchfield and St. Cloud, and is located on a major highway, may spur its growth in the years to come. More importantly, Kingston is located close to Wright County, which is currently experiencing a rapid rate of population gain. Although the projection presented in Table 4G doesn't suggest a significant influx of new people, Kingston will most likely be influenced by residential developments in Kingston Township.

Table 4G: Kingston	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	NA	115	141	131	120
Households	NA	48	60	47	48
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
State Demographer Estimates	117	114	112	109	-8
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	121	121	122	123	6
Above Average Growth Projections	121	122	123	124	7
Households Based on 2.50 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	47	46	45	44	-3
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	48	48	49	49	2
Above Average Growth Projections	48	49	49	50	3

Map 4G shows that Kingston currently has a lot of agricultural land within its corporate boundary. In the event that the population and housing "explosion" from Stearns and Wright Counties reaches this part of Meeker County, the City will be well situated to accommodate future residential and commercial developments. With this in mind, an urban growth area was not identified by the City for future growth and development.

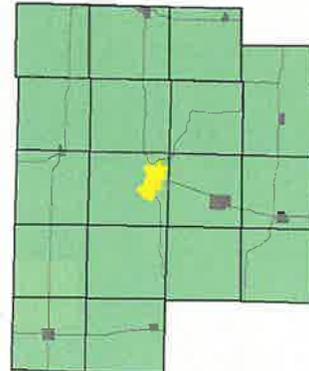
Map 4G: City of Kingston Current Land Use

No Urban Growth Area Was Identified



A Profile of Litchfield

The City of Litchfield is approximately 40 miles southwest of St. Cloud, 25 miles east of Willmar, 20 miles north of Hutchinson and 45 miles west of the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area. Litchfield is Meeker County's County Seat and largest city, with 6,812 residents and 2,725 households. Lake Ripley serves as the southwestern border of the City and numerous lakes are situated within a couple of miles. Furthermore, the Lake Ripley Game Refuge also shares borders with the City and covers an area that is approximately two miles wide by two miles long.



Litchfield's population has been steadily growing. From 1960 to 2005, the population of Litchfield has grown 34 percent. Population projections, based on information from the last 45 years, indicate that this growth trend will easily continue into the next 15 years. The fact that Litchfield is within a close proximity to Willmar, Hutchinson, and St. Cloud, and is on a major highway, will ultimately help to spur its growth in the years to come. Table 4H suggests that Litchfield can expect approximately 492 new residents and 197 households within the next 15 years, based on their historic rate of growth.

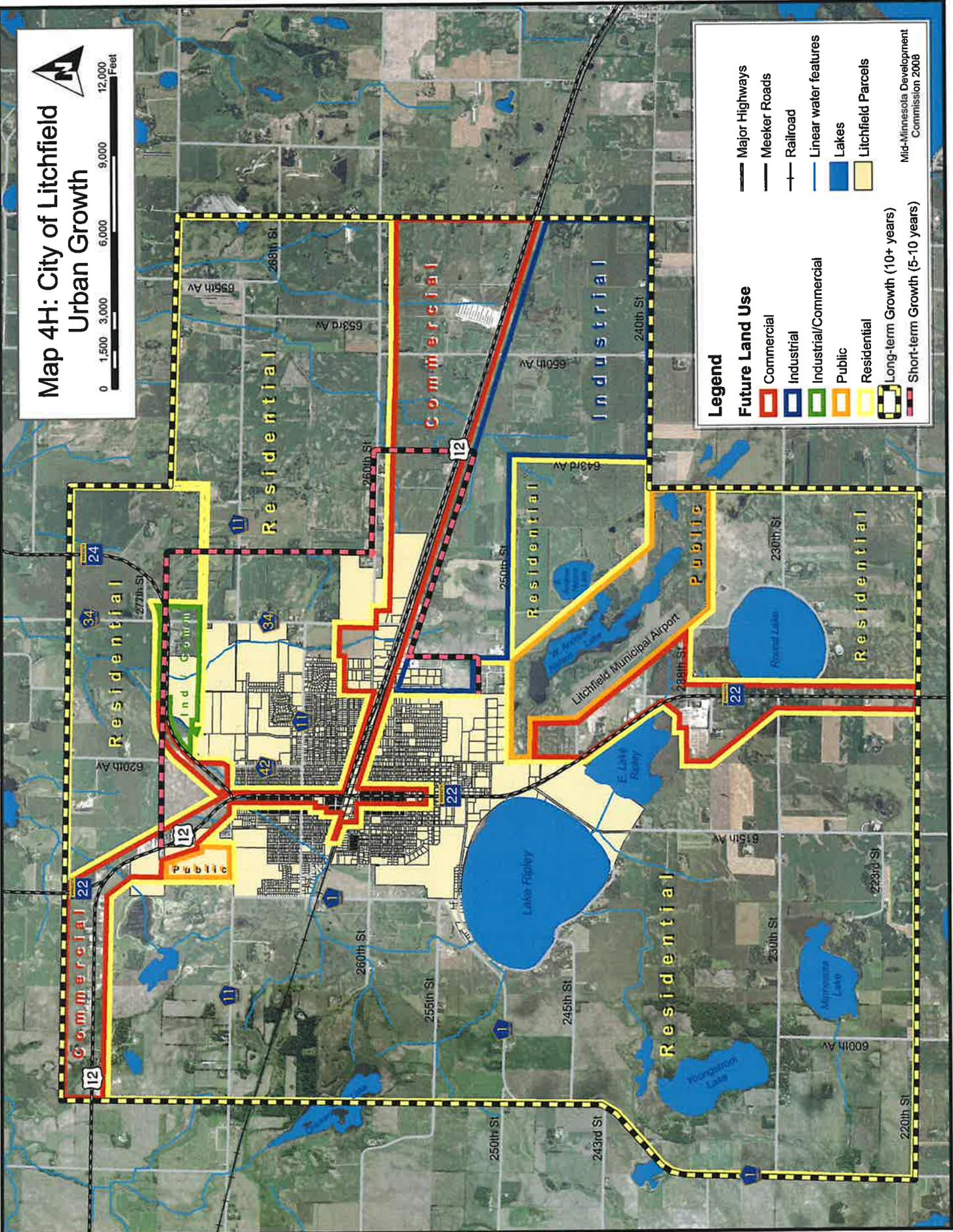
Table 4H: Litchfield	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	5,078	5,262	5,904	6,041	6,562
Households	1,655	1,810	2,283	2,406	2,624
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
State Demographer Estimates	6,812	7,072	7,338	7,579	767
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	6,748	6,933	7,119	7,304	492
Above Average Growth Projections	6,840	7,119	7,397	7,675	863
Households Based on 2.50 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	2,725	2,829	2,935	3,032	307
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	2,699	2,773	2,848	2,922	197
Above Average Growth Projections	2,736	2,848	2,959	3,070	345

Map 4H shows that a railroad, U.S. Highway 12, and State Highway 22 all run through the heart of the City. Most of the City's retail and commercial establishments are located along either Highway 12 or 22. Litchfield also operates the only airport located in Meeker County. Notice that Map 4H defines an urban growth area in nearly every direction for Litchfield. It is imperative that the City of Litchfield and Litchfield and Darwin Townships maintain a good communication process regarding future land use in the areas identified as the City's urban growth area.

Map 4H: City of Litchfield Urban Growth



0 1,500 3,000 6,000 9,000 12,000
Feet



Legend

Future Land Use

- Commercial
- Industrial
- Industrial/Commercial
- Public
- Residential
- Long-term Growth (10+ years)
- Short-term Growth (5-10 years)

Major Highways
 Meeker Roads
 Railroad
 Linear water features
 Lakes
 Litchfield Parcels

Mid-Minnesota Development
Commission 2008

A Profile of Watkins

The City of Watkins is located approximately 18 miles northeast of Litchfield, along State Highway 55. The City is located within a mile of the Stearns County border and is approximately 25 miles from St. Cloud and 60 miles from the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area. Watkins is Meeker County's third largest city with 894 residents and 341 households.

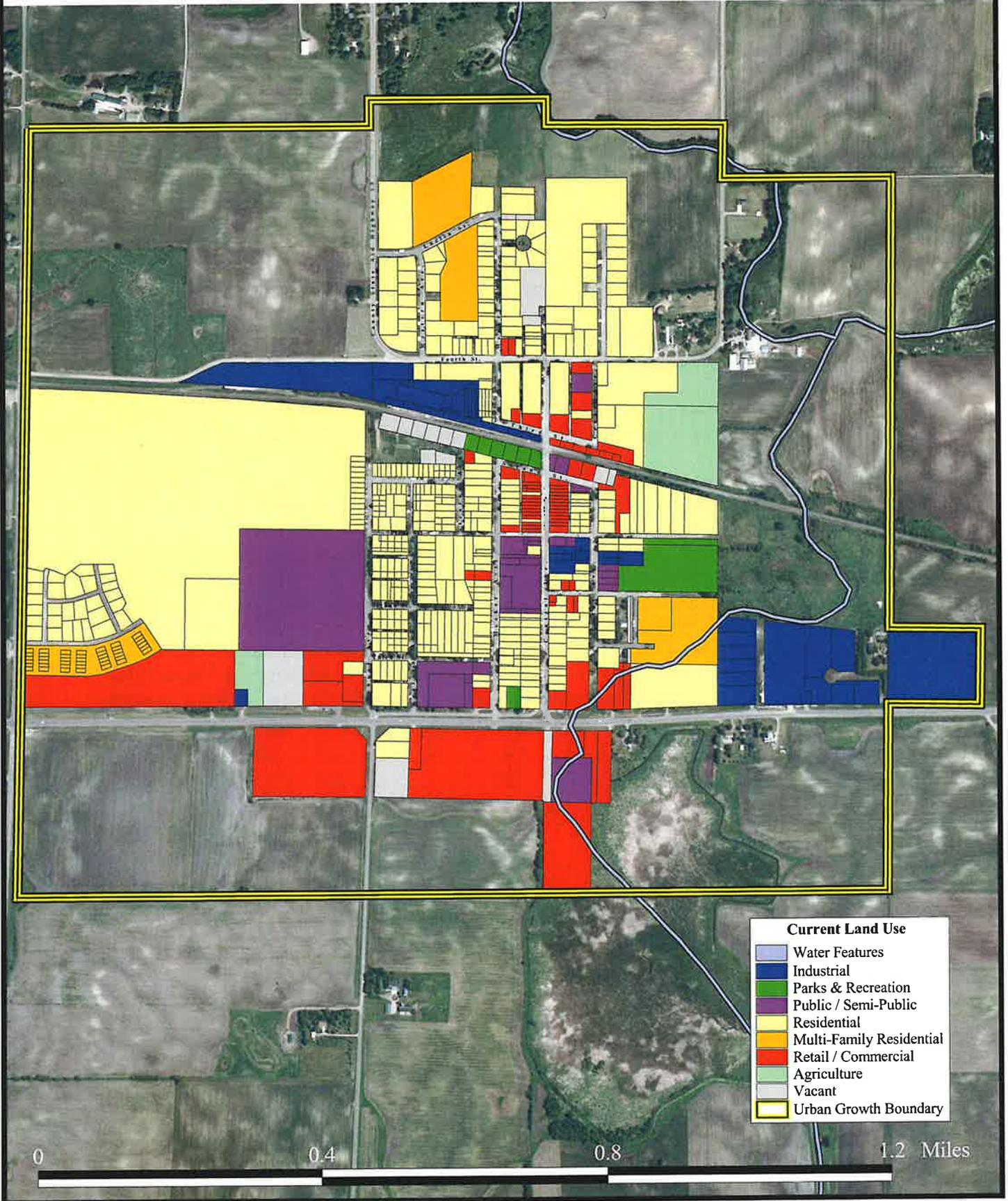


Historically, Watkins has been gaining population, except for a minor dip between 1970 and 1980. The fact that Watkins is within a reasonable commute to both Litchfield and St. Cloud, is located on a major highway, and since 2001, have started a number of new residential and commercial subdivisions, may translate into a higher rate of population gain than what it has experienced in the past. Although Table 4I only shows a high increase of 88 new residents, the St. Cloud region is currently one of the fastest growing areas in the State. This means that Watkins is seriously planning for the likelihood that many new residents will decide to move to the City.

Table 4I: Watkins	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	744	785	757	849	880
Households	207	223	282	317	336
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
State Demographer Estimates	894	910	928	943	49
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	897	914	931	948	54
Above Average Growth Projections	906	931	957	982	88
Households Based on 2.62 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	341	347	354	360	19
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	342	349	355	362	21
Above Average Growth Projections	346	355	365	375	34

Map 4I shows that Watkins currently has land within its corporate boundary that is either designated as agricultural or vacant, some of which is currently under development for residential and commercial use. Watkins has also identified a generous urban growth area that extends in all directions from the City. With the likelihood of new residential and business development, the City has recently updated its Comprehensive Plan and Subdivision and Zoning Ordinances. These measures will help ensure that Watkins grows in an orderly fashion in the future.

Map 4I: City of Watkins Current Land Use



Summary of the Community Profiles

The information presented in Chapter Four suggests that many of Meeker County's cities will continue to gain population over the next 20 years. The following five factors will influence future growth in these communities the most:

1. **Location of Meeker County** – Meeker County is almost completely surrounded by areas that are experiencing rapid development.
2. **Strong Economic Base** – Meeker County continues to expand its strong industrial base. At the same time, many of the County's service-oriented businesses are flourishing.
3. **Capacity to Grow** – Many of Meeker County's cities have the sewer and water capacity to adequately handle future growth.
4. **Available Housing** – With the exception of only a few communities, Meeker County's cities currently have either available housing or suitable building sites.
5. **Rural Character/Community Size** – One of Meeker County's strengths is that it has many communities that offer a high quality of life in a rural environment.

These characteristics each contribute to the likelihood that Meeker County's cities will continue to gain population at a rate much higher than historic rates of growth. As the surrounding metropolitan areas continue to expand, more and more people will be searching for either places to commute from and/or places to work and raise families. Those cities that plan for the future will ultimately have the control over what their community looks like as it evolves. For this reason, all of the cities in Meeker County were asked to identify their urban growth areas. If a city identified an urban growth area, it appears on the city's current land use and urban growth area map.

Chapter Five: Township Profiles

This Chapter is similar to Chapter Four except that Meeker County's townships are profiled rather than its cities. The profiles include information on the township's residents and number of households, along with a description of the township's major roadways and natural resources. The population and household information presented uses 1960 to 2000 Census records. This time-span is used to help establish a slow-, historic-, and fast-based population and household estimate for each township for the next 20 years. In addition, a current zoning map is included that shows the township's "current land use" and the location of any urban growth area (if one exists in the township).

How to use the Township Profiles

There are two main features included in each township profile. The first is a table that presents the township's population and household numbers since 1960. The second feature is a current zoning map, used to give perspective on the township's current land use. The population and household information is used to establish a "historic-based" rate of population gain or, in some cases, a historic-based rate of population loss. This rate (either positive or negative) is then applied over the next 20 years to show a historic-based population projection.

Realizing that many factors can influence an area's population level, the tables also present what each township's future population would be if either a slow or fast population gain or loss occurred. The slow annual growth rate was established at 50 percent of the township's historic-based rate. For example, if a township gained 80 new residents over the last 20 years, the slow projection would estimate that the township would gain another 40 people over the next 20 years. Similarly, the fast annual growth rate was established at 150 percent of the township's historic-based rate. In the previous example, the township's fast projection would estimate that the township would gain 120 new residents over the next 20 years (80 multiplied by 1.5). Therefore, each township profile contains a slow-, historic- and fast-based population projection for the years 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2020.

Another important feature of the township profiles are maps showing how the township is currently zoned. This provides the best picture of the township's "current land use." Although the zoning information and the actual current land use does not match up perfectly in reality, the zoning information does provide the best knowledge of how the land is currently being used. The zoning information was provided by the County Planning and Zoning Office. The only future land use information presented on the maps is for those cities that identified a 20-year urban growth area. These areas are represented by the heavy yellow and black lines on the maps. The primary purpose of these areas is to identify where potential urban growth might occur and where joint planning efforts need to be made by the city, the affected townships and Meeker County.

Acton Township

Location: West central, bordering Kandiyohi County

2005 Population: 371

2005 Households: 152

Major Roads: U.S. Highway 12, State Highway 4, County Road 11

Water Features: Long Lake and Hope Lake

Special Features: Grove City



Acton Township has gained 28 new households over the last 45 years, despite a loss of 8 households from 1990 to 2005. Since 1970, the township's population has declined from 862 to 371 (a city annexation usually explains this type of rapid population loss). The township's population could slowly rebound over the next 15 years due to its close proximity to the cities of Litchfield and Willmar and its many water features. As Map 5A reveals, most of Acton Township is zoned A-1 Agricultural. The only exception to this is around Long Lake and Grove City, where a good percentage of the area's population resides. There are also several seasonal cabins that would not be considered part of the township's official population.

Table 5A: Acton	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	479	862	475	444	381
Households	124	277	135	160	156
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	371	361	351	340	-31
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	369	357	344	332	-39
Above Average Growth Projections	384	387	390	394	23
Households Based on 2.44 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	152	148	144	139	-13
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	151	146	141	136	-16
Above Average Growth Projections	157	159	160	161	9

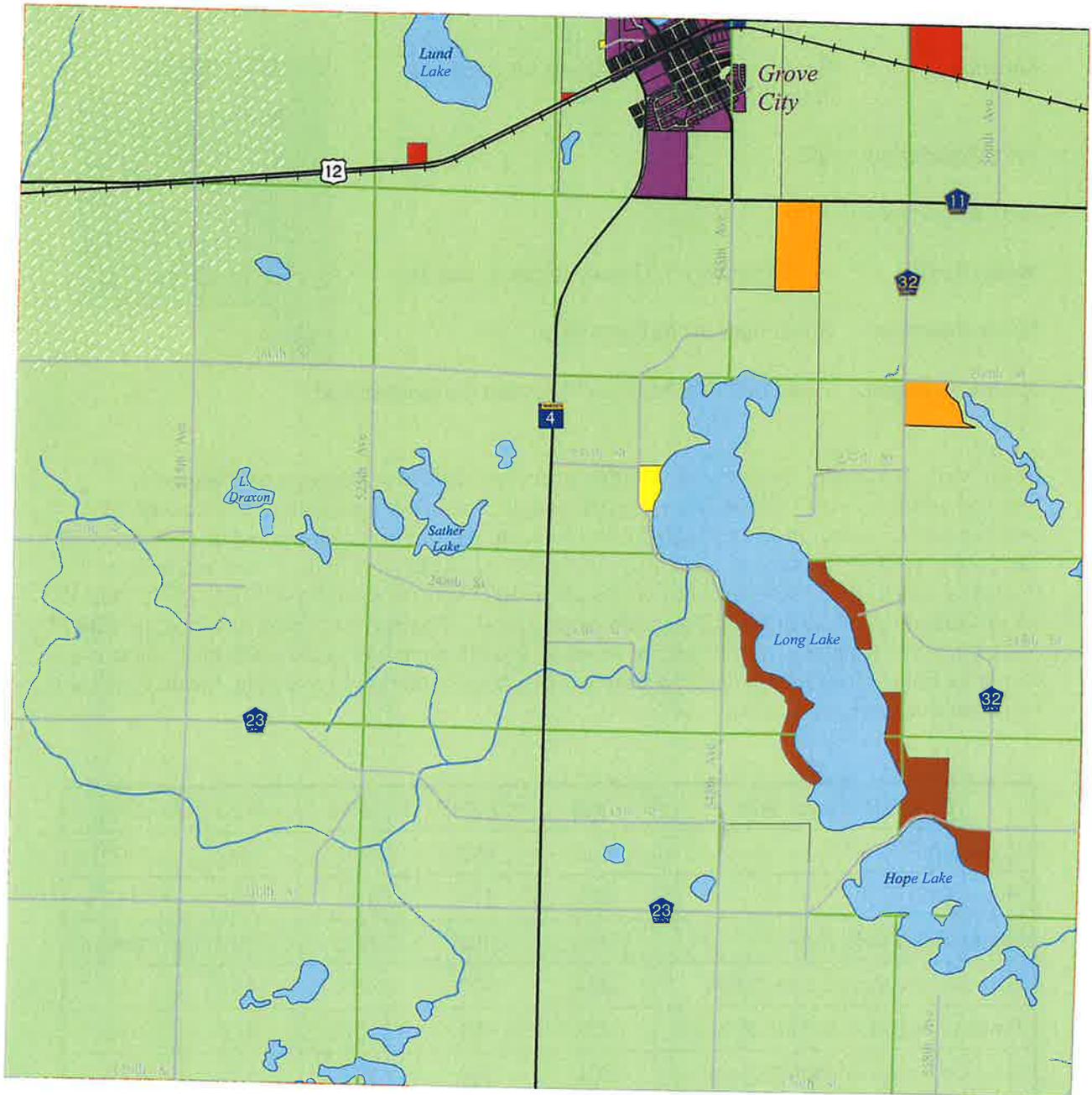
Map 5A: Acton Township Zoning



0 0.2 0.4 0.8 1.2 Miles

Swede Grove

Harvey

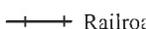


Litchfield

Danielson

Greenleaf

Zoning Districts

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
|  A-1 (Agricultural Preservation) |  Railroad |  Lake |
|  C-1 (Commercial) |  Section Line |  Municipality |
|  C-2 (Neighborhood Commercial) |  River / Ditch |  Wildlife Area |
|  I-1 (General Industrial) |  Unpaved Road | |
|  R-1 (Suburban Residential) |  Paved Road | |
|  R-2 (Rural Residential) |  Urban Expansion | |

Watershed Districts

- | |
|--|
|  Clearwater |
|  N. Fork Crow River |
|  Sauk |
|  M. Fork Crow River |

Cedar Mills Township

Location: Southwest corner, bordering McLeod and Renville Counties

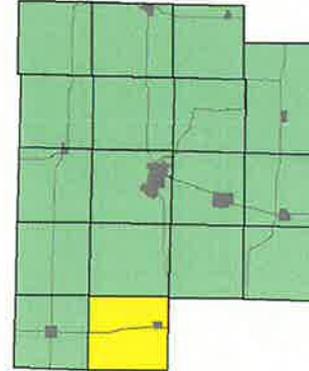
2005 Population: 495

2005 Households: 176

Major Roads: State Highway 7, County Roads 1, and 26

Water Features: South Fork of the Crow River

Special Features: Cities of Cedar Mills and Corvuso (unincorporated)



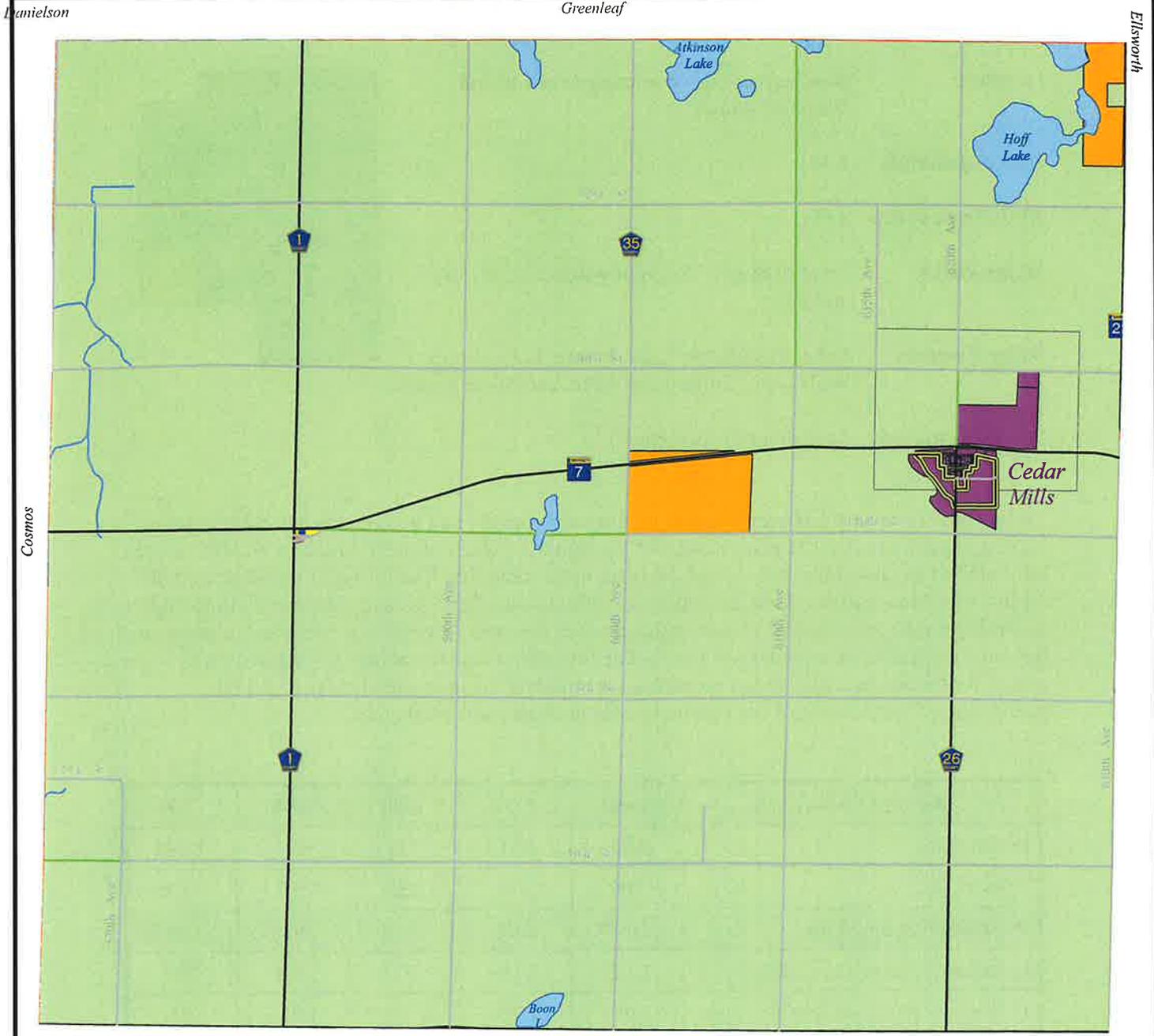
Cedar Mills Township, located in the southwest corner of Meeker County and adjacent to McLeod and Renville Counties, has experienced a decline in both population and households over the last 45 years. In 2005, Cedar Mills Township was the sixth least populated township in the County with 495 residents. Although the number of households in the Township has not fluctuated much since 1960, the 176 households in 2005 was the lowest total since 1970. Map 5B reveals that most of Cedar Mills Township is zoned A-1. The only exception to this is the City of Cedar Mills, which has also identified an urban growth boundary to the south of its current corporate limits. In addition, the Township has two large Waterfowl Protection Areas, which are indicated in orange on the Map.

Table 5B: Cedar Mills	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	663	602	569	580	499
Households	178	170	181	179	177
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	495	492	489	484	-11
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	479	458	438	417	-78
Above Average Growth Projections	504	509	514	520	25
Households Based on 2.82 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	176	174	173	172	-4
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	170	162	155	148	-28
Above Average Growth Projections	179	181	182	184	8

Map 5B: Cedar Mills Township Zoning



0 0.2 0.4 0.8 1.2 Miles



Zoning Districts

- A-1 (Agricultural Preservation)
- C-1 (Commercial)
- C-2 (Neighborhood Commercial)
- I-1 (General Industrial)
- R-1 (Suburban Residential)
- R-2 (Rural Residential)
- Railroad
- Section Line
- River / Ditch
- Unpaved Road
- Paved Road
- Urban Expansion

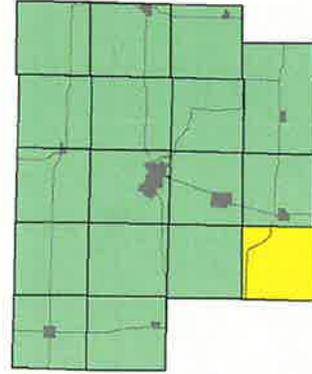
- Lake
- Municipality
- Wildlife Area

Watershed Districts

- Clearwater
- N. Fork Crow River
- Sauk
- M. Fork Crow River

Collinwood Township

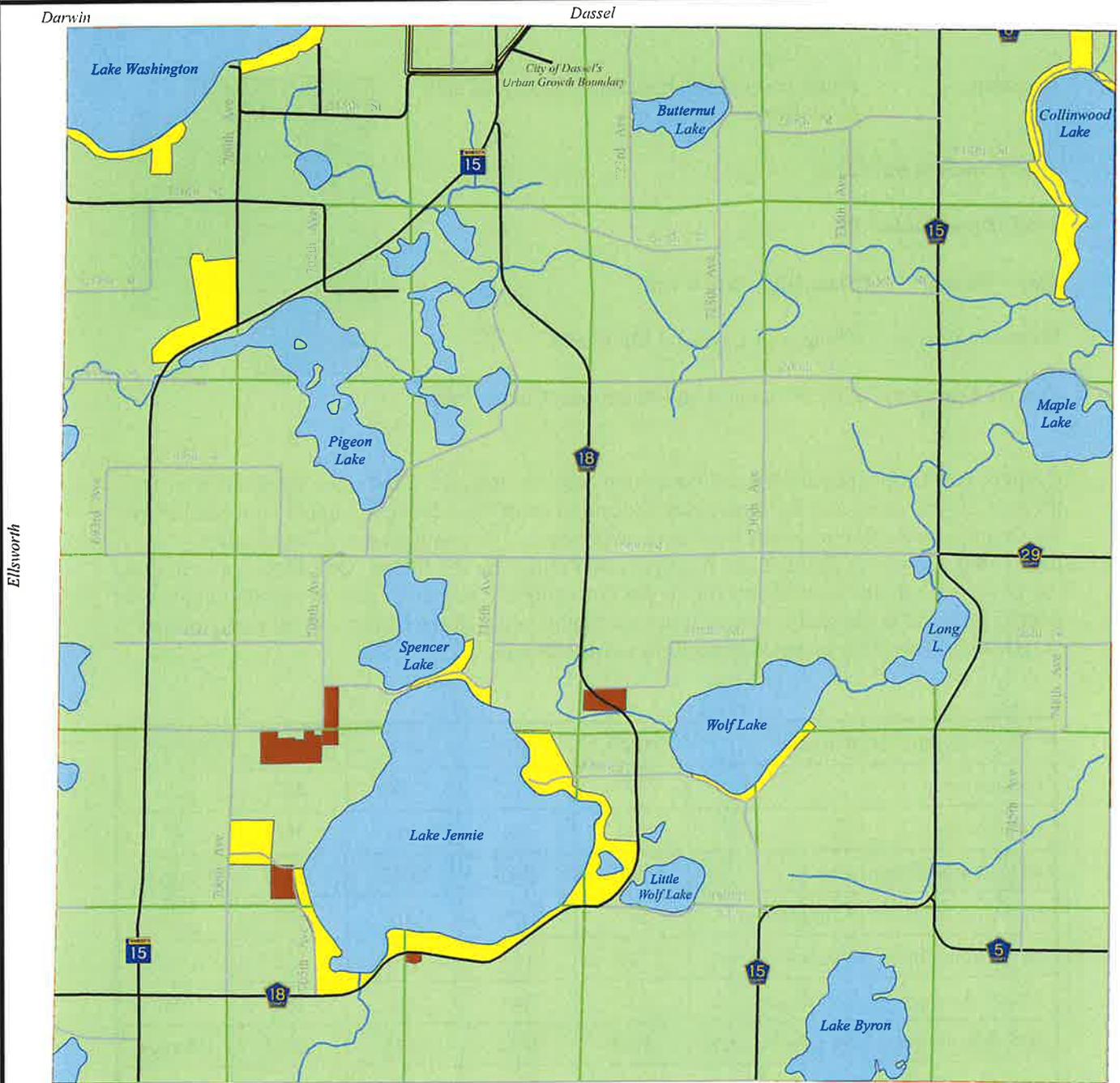
- Location:** Southeast corner, bordering McLeod and Wright Counties
- 2005 Population:** 1,121
- 2005 Households:** 393
- Major Roads:** State Highway 15, County Roads 5, 15, 18, and 29
- Water Features:** Lake Washington, Lake Jennie, Lake Byron, Wolf Lake, Collinwood Lake, and Silver Creek
- Special Features:** Lamson (unincorporated)



Collinwood Township has been steadily gaining both people and households since 1960, to its current population of 1,121 people and 393 households. Much of the township's growth can be attributed to its close proximity to employment hubs, including Hutchinson, Litchfield, and the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, as well as its many lakes. Table 5C suggests that Collinwood Township could gain another 93 new residents over the next 15 years if it continues to grow at the same rate it has over the last 40 years. The township is mostly zoned A-1 Agricultural, except for the residentially zoned properties surrounding the area's many lakes. A high percentage of the township's population resides in these residential areas.

Table 5C: Collinwood	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	683	551	735	848	1,037
Households	206	175	255	299	364
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	1,121	1,219	1,318	1,410	289
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	1,081	1,126	1,170	1,214	93
Above Average Growth Projections	1,103	1,170	1,236	1,303	182
Households Based on 2.85 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	393	428	462	495	102
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	379	395	411	426	33
Above Average Growth Projections	387	411	434	457	64

Map 5C: Collinwood Township Zoning



Zoning Districts

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| A-1 (Agricultural Preservation) | Railroad |
| C-1 (Commercial) | Section Line |
| C-2 (Neighborhood Commercial) | River / Ditch |
| I-1 (General Industrial) | Unpaved Road |
| R-1 (Suburban Residential) | Paved Road |
| R-2 (Rural Residential) | Urban Expansion |

- | |
|---------------|
| Lake |
| Municipality |
| Wildlife Area |

Watershed Districts

- | |
|--------------------|
| Clearwater |
| N. Fork Crow River |
| Sauk |
| M. Fork Crow River |

Cosmos Township

Location: Southwest corner, bordering Kandiyohi and Renville Counties

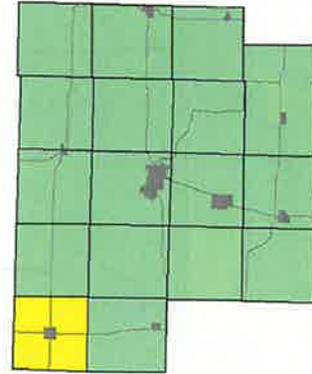
2005 Population: 217

2005 Households: 88

Major Roads: State Highways 4 and 7

Water Features: Thompson Lake and Mud Lake

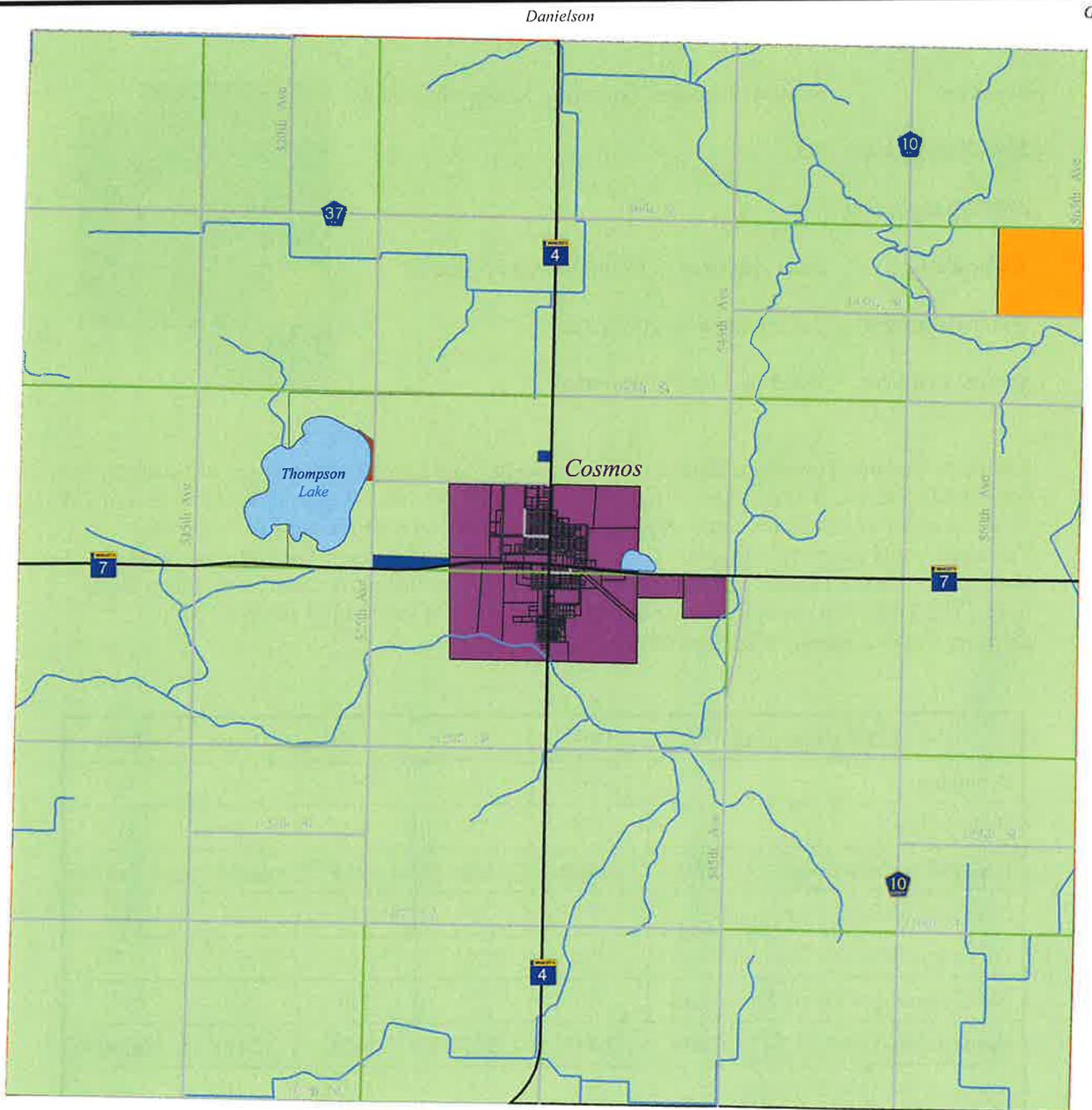
Special Features: City of Cosmos and Thompson County Park



Cosmos Township's population and household numbers have declined since 1960, to its current level of 217 residents and 88 households. Cosmos Township is the least populated township in the County, losing 260 residents over the last 45 years. The population and household predictions show both positive and negative possibilities for the future. One statement regarding the Township's future should be valid: if the Township experiences a gain in population over the next 15 years, it is not likely to be as much as in other areas of the County. According to Map 5D, Cosmos Township is zoned entirely A-1 Agricultural.

Table 5D: Cosmos	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	477	312	274	267	229
Households	111	82	90	93	93
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	217	209	201	193	-24
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	198	167	136	105	-112
Above Average Growth Projections	237	245	252	260	43
Households Based on 2.46 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	88	85	82	78	-10
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	80	68	55	43	-45
Above Average Growth Projections	96	100	102	106	18

Map 5D: Cosmos Township Zoning



Zoning Districts

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| A-1 (Agricultural Preservation) | Railroad | Lake |
| C-1 (Commercial) | Section Line | Municipality |
| C-2 (Neighborhood Commercial) | River / Ditch | Wildlife Area |
| I-1 (General Industrial) | Unpaved Road | |
| R-1 (Suburban Residential) | Paved Road | |
| R-2 (Rural Residential) | Urban Expansion | |

Watershed Districts

- | |
|--------------------|
| Clearwater |
| N. Fork Crow River |
| Sauk |
| M. Fork Crow River |

Danielson Township

Location: Southwest corner, bordering Kandiyohi County

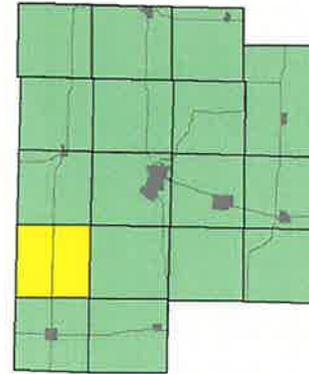
2005 Population: 328

2005 Households: 111

Major Roads: State Highway 4, County Road 22, and 28

Water Features: Belle Lake and King Lake

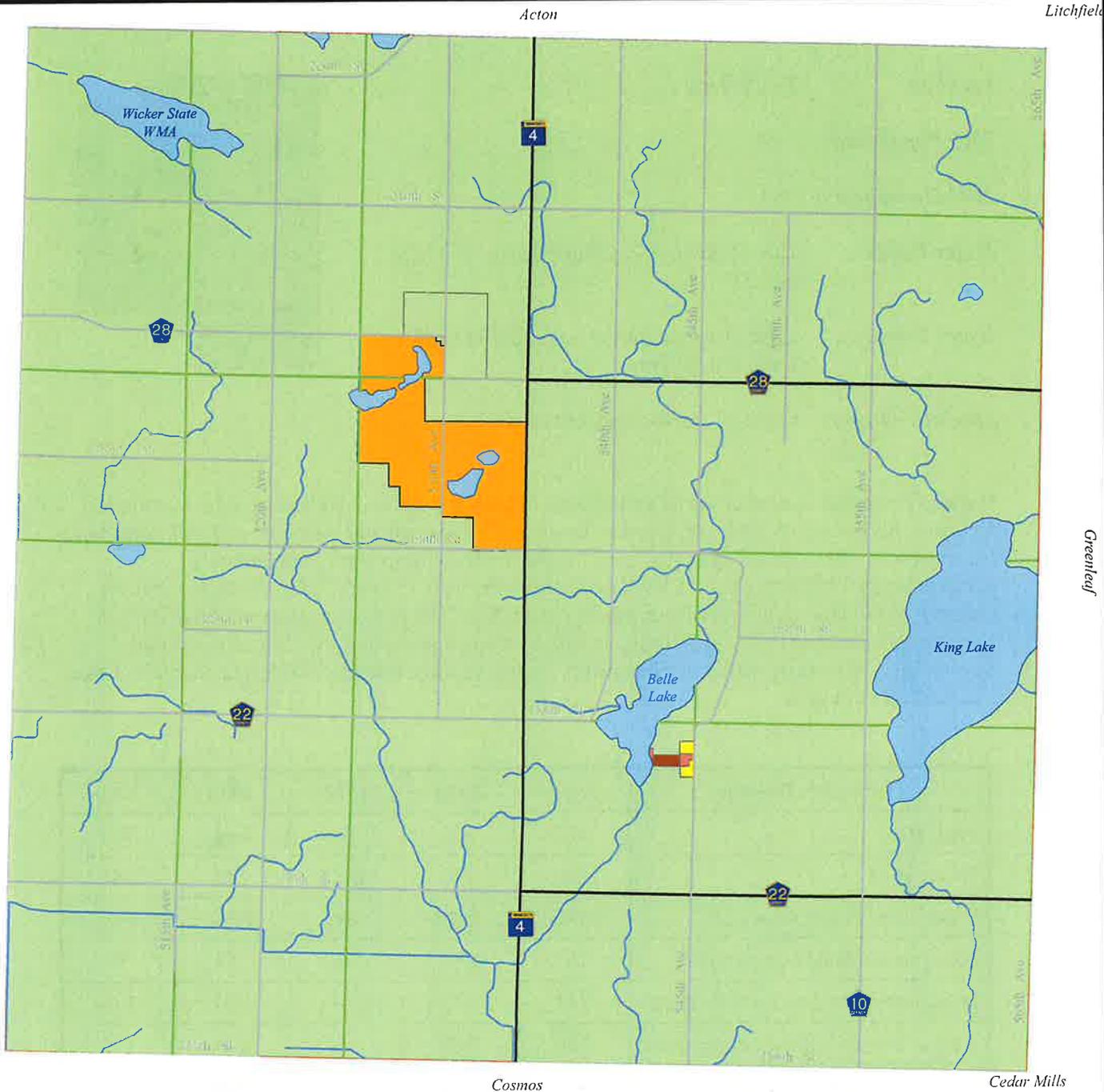
Special Features: Rosendale (unincorporated)



Similar to Cosmos Township, Danielson Township has lost a significant amount of residents and households over the past 45 years. Table 5E reveals that the Township experienced a loss of 139 residents and 14 households since 1960. Projecting this trend over the next 15 years, the Township could potentially lose an additional 71 residents. Danielson Township is zoned primarily A-1 Agricultural, with a small amount of commercial and residential land near Belle Lake. The Township contains a large wildlife area, which is located just south of the unincorporated community of Rosendale.

Table 5E: Danielson	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	467	351	357	344	327
Households	125	97	116	109	111
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	328	327	325	324	-4
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	310	292	275	257	-71
Above Average Growth Projections	331	336	340	345	17
Households Based on 2.95 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	111	111	110	110	-1
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	105	99	93	87	-24
Above Average Growth Projections	112	114	115	117	6

Map 5E: Danielson Township Zoning



Zoning Districts

- | | |
|---|---|
|  A-1 (Agricultural Preservation) |  Railroad |
|  C-1 (Commercial) |  Section Line |
|  C-2 (Neighborhood Commercial) |  River / Ditch |
|  I-1 (General Industrial) |  Unpaved Road |
|  R-1 (Suburban Residential) |  Paved Road |
|  R-2 (Rural Residential) |  Urban Expansion |

Watershed Districts

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
|  Lake |  Municipality |  Clearwater |
|  Wildlife Area |  N. Fork Crow River |  Sauk |
| |  M. Fork Crow River | |

Darwin Township

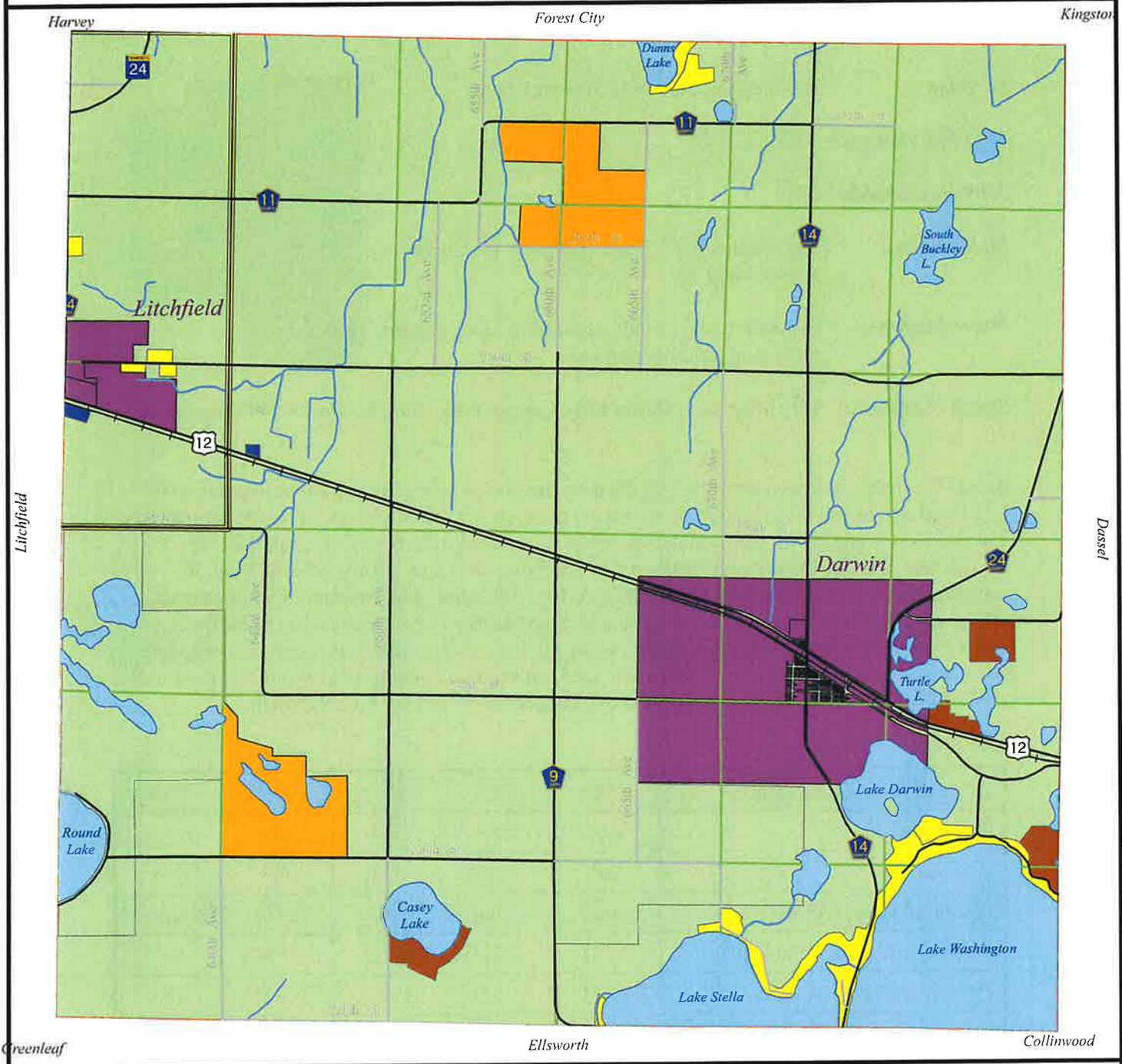
- Location:** East central
- 2005 Population:** 719
- 2005 Households:** 283
- Major Roads:** U.S. Highway 12, County Roads 9, 11, 14 and 24
- Water Features:** Lake Darwin, Smiley Lake, Stella Lake, and Lake Washington
- Special Features:** Cities of Darwin and Litchfield



Darwin Township has experienced an increase in both population and households over the last 45 years. According to Table 5F, Darwin Township has gained 247 residents and 167 households from 1960 to 2005. Based upon this growth, Darwin Township is projected to gain approximately 115 people and 45 households over the next 15 years. Map 5F shows that the majority of the land in Darwin Township is zoned A-1. The Map also illustrates that Darwin Township includes the City of Darwin, as well as a small portion of the City of Litchfield. Several lakes also exist within the Township, including Lake Darwin, Smiley Lake, Stella Lake, and Lake Washington.

Table 5F: Darwin	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	472	552	606	663	713
Households	116	148	201	243	281
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	719	733	746	758	39
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	743	773	803	834	115
Above Average Growth Projections	758	803	849	894	175
Households Based on 2.54 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	283	289	294	298	15
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	293	304	316	328	45
Above Average Growth Projections	298	316	334	352	69

Map 5F: Darwin Township Zoning



Zoning Districts

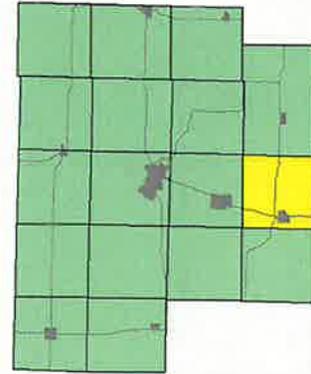
- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| A-1 (Agricultural Preservation) | Railroad |
| C-1 (Commercial) | Section Line |
| C-2 (Neighborhood Commercial) | River / Ditch |
| I-1 (General Industrial) | Unpaved Road |
| R-1 (Suburban Residential) | Paved Road |
| R-2 (Rural Residential) | Urban Expansion |

Watershed Districts

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| Lake | Clearwater |
| Municipality | N. Fork Crow River |
| Wildlife Area | Sauk |
| | M. Fork Crow River |

Dassel Township

- Location:** East central, bordering Wright County
- 2005 Population:** 1,537
- 2005 Households:** 525
- Major Roads:** U.S. Highway 12, State Highway 15, County Roads 4 and 24
- Water Features:** Big Swan Lake, Long Lake, Mud Lake, Spring Lake, and Lake Washington

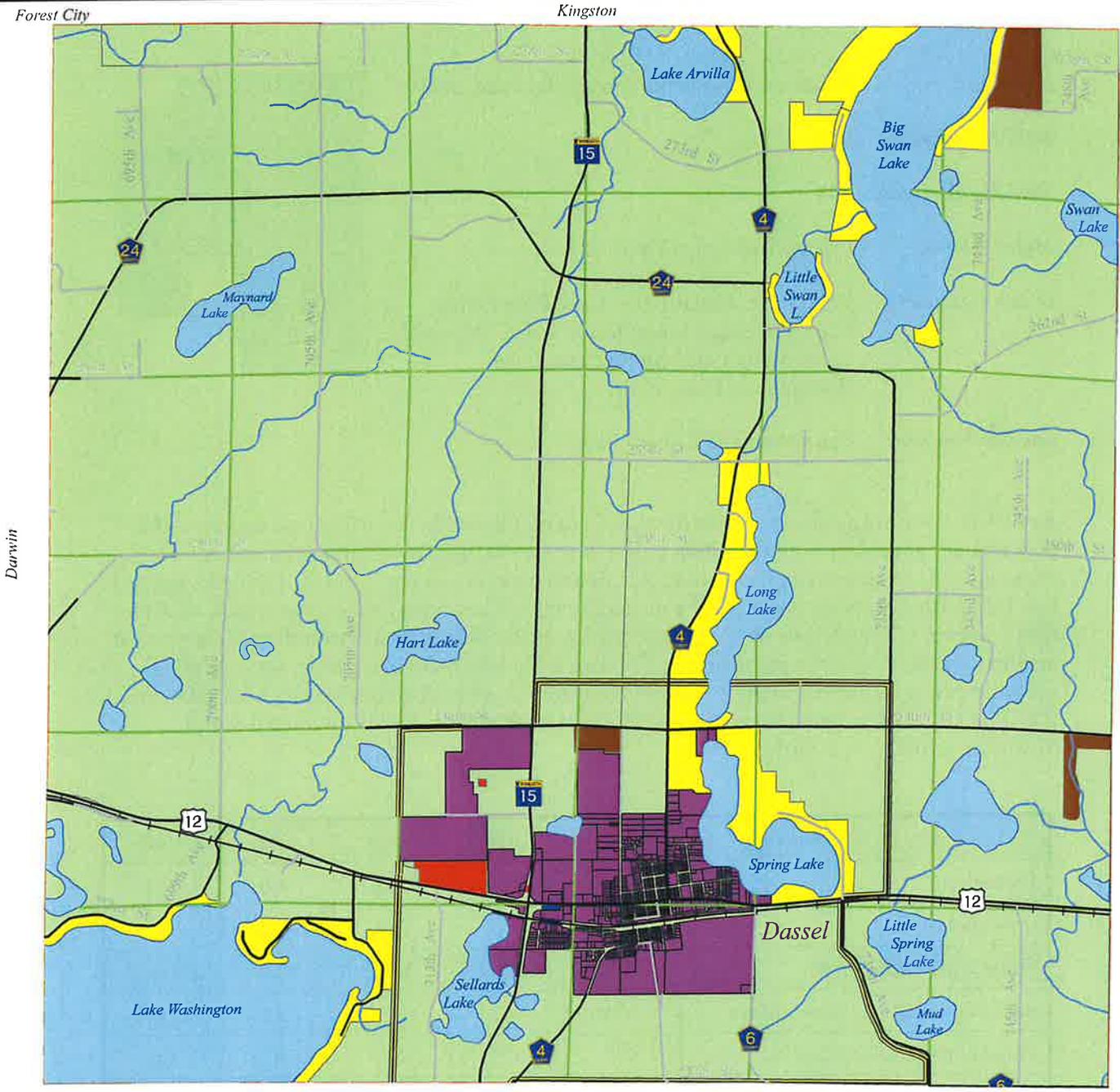


Special Features: City of Dassel, Spring Lake County Park, and Darwin-Dassel County Park

Dassel Township has been growing rapidly over the last 35 years, to its current population of 1,537 and 525 households. Dassel is the most populous township in the County, gaining almost 950 residents since 1970. The population projections listed in Table 5G indicate that the township is likely to grow between 19 and 36 percent over the next 15 years. As Map 5G reveals, Dassel Township is zoned primarily A-1 Agricultural, with residentially zoned areas around several lakes. In addition, according to Map 5G, the City of Dassel has identified an urban growth boundary which extends in nearly all directions for the City's current corporate boundary. Due to the many problems associated with rapid residential development, Dassel Township and the City of Dassel should work cooperatively to plan future growth.

Table 5G: Dassel	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	639	581	967	1,000	1,361
Households	201	196	321	348	464
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	1,537	1,725	1,915	2,094	557
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	1,451	1,542	1,632	1,722	185
Above Average Growth Projections	1,496	1,632	1,767	1,903	366
Households Based on 2.93 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	525	589	654	715	190
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	495	526	557	588	63
Above Average Growth Projections	511	557	603	649	124

Map 5G: Dassel Township Zoning



Zoning Districts

- A-1 (Agricultural Preservation)
- C-1 (Commercial)
- C-2 (Neighborhood Commercial)
- I-1 (General Industrial)
- R-1 (Suburban Residential)
- R-2 (Rural Residential)
- Railroad
- Section Line
- River / Ditch
- Unpaved Road
- Paved Road
- Urban Expansion

- Lake
- Municipality
- Wildlife Area

Watershed Districts

- Clearwater
- N. Fork Crow River
- Sauk
- M. Fork Crow River

Ellsworth Township

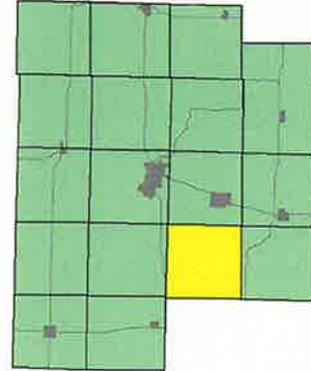
Location: Southeast central, bordering McLeod County

2005 Population: 904

2005 Households: 348

Major Roads: County Roads 9, 14 and 18

Water Features: Belle Lake, Cedar Lake, Lake Erie, Fallon Lake, Greenleaf Lake, Jewett Lake, Manuella Lake, Sioux Lake, Stella Lake, Lake Washington, Lake Willie

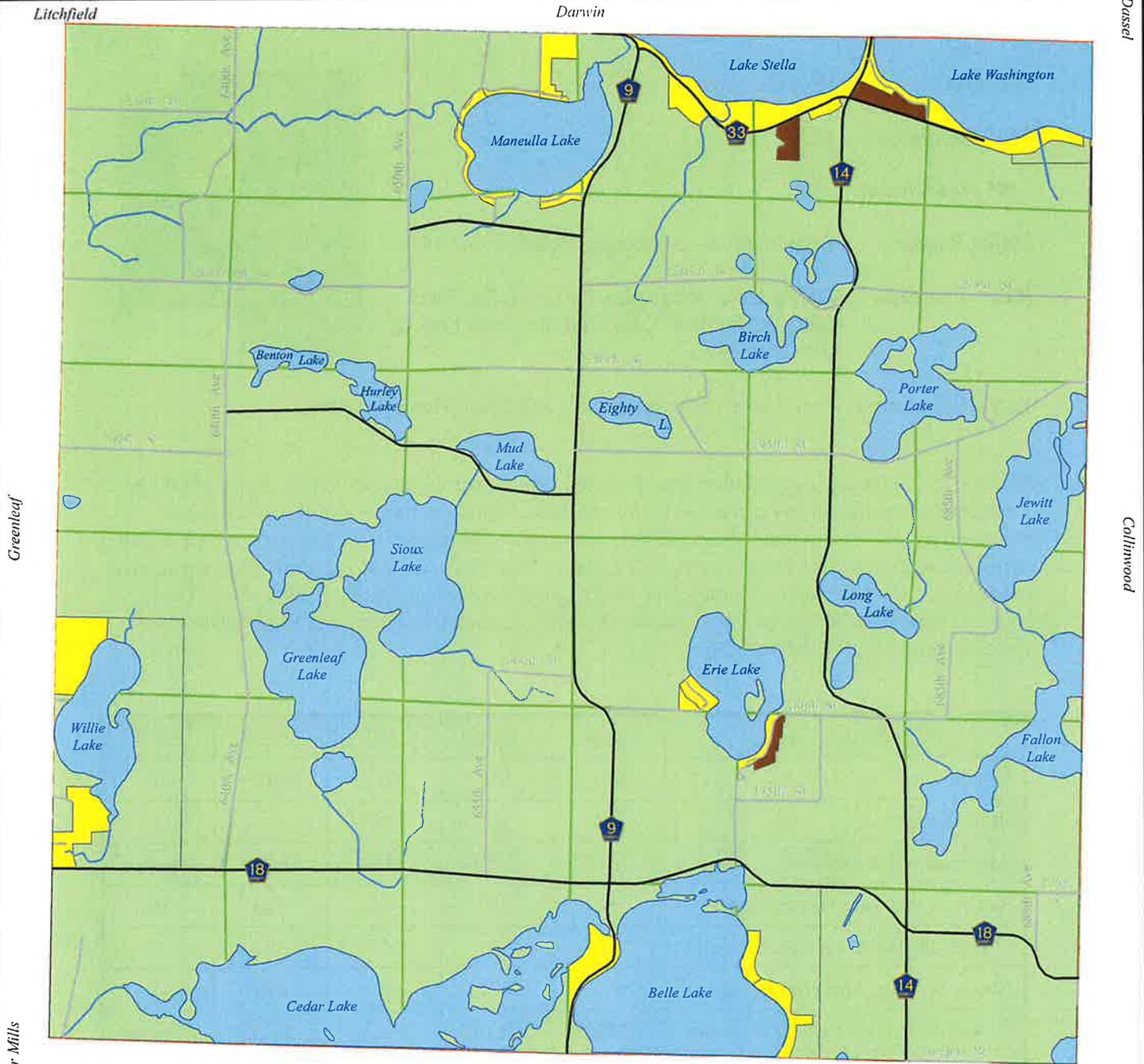


Special Features: Lake Manuella County Park

Similar to other townships in eastern Meeker County, Ellsworth Township has experienced a high amount of growth over the last 45 years. Since 1960, the Township has gained an additional 391 residents and 215 households. Based upon this rate of growth, Table 5H projects that Ellsworth Township stands to gain an additional 121 residents and 46 households over the next 15 years. This estimate may be conservative, as the Township has experienced its greatest amount of growth over the past decade. The Township is attractive to people because of its many lakes and its close proximity to employment hubs, including Hutchinson, Litchfield, and the Twin Cities Metropolitan area. Map 5H indicates that the vast majority of Ellsworth Township is zoned A-1 Agricultural.

Table 5H: Ellsworth	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	513	524	632	700	854
Households	133	154	214	244	328
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	904	977	1,051	1,119	215
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	897	939	982	1,025	121
Above Average Growth Projections	918	982	1,046	1,110	206
Households Based on 2.60 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	348	376	404	430	82
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	345	361	378	394	46
Above Average Growth Projections	353	378	402	427	79

Map 5H: Ellsworth Township Zoning



Zoning Districts

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| A-1 (Agricultural Preservation) | Railroad |
| C-1 (Commercial) | Section Line |
| C-2 (Neighborhood Commercial) | River / Ditch |
| I-1 (General Industrial) | Unpaved Road |
| R-1 (Suburban Residential) | Paved Road |
| R-2 (Rural Residential) | Urban Expansion |

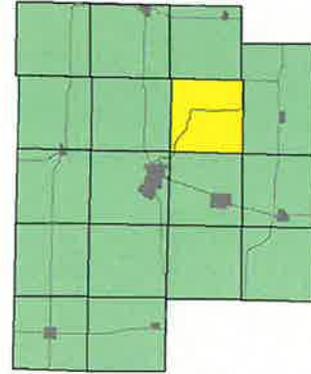
- | |
|---------------|
| Lake |
| Municipality |
| Wildlife Area |

Watershed Districts

- | |
|--------------------|
| Clearwater |
| N. Fork Crow River |
| Sauk |
| M. Fork Crow River |

Forest City Township

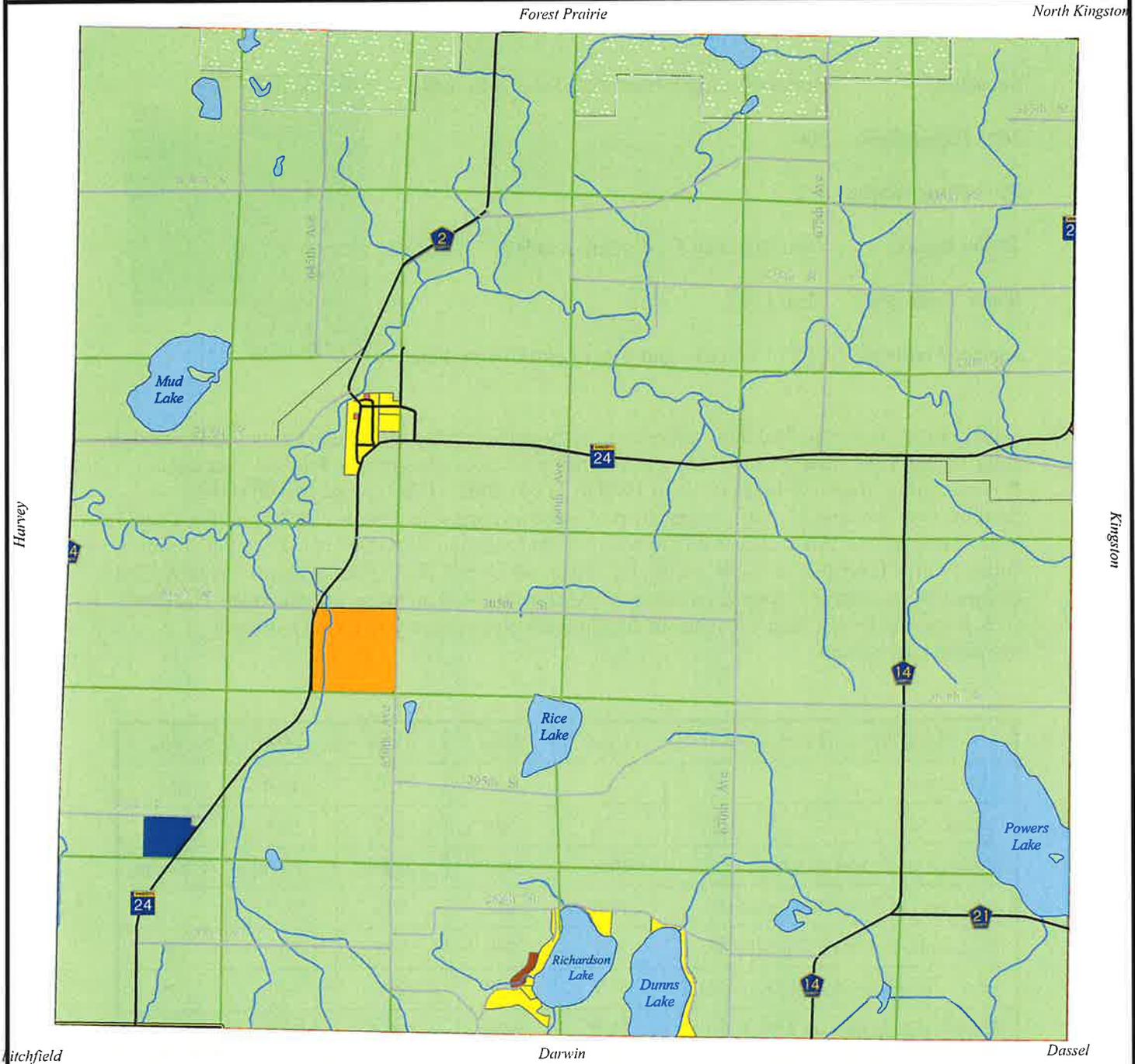
- Location:** Northeast central
- 2005 Population:** 693
- 2005 Households:** 242
- Major Roads:** State Highway 24, County Roads 2, and 14
- Water Features:** Dunns Lake, Mud Lake, Powers Lake, Rice Lake, Richardson Lake, and the North Fork of the Crow River
- Special Features:** Forest City (unincorporated) and Shaw Memorial Park



Forest City Township's population has remained stable over the last 45 years. Since 1960, the Township's population has increased by 56 residents, while the number of households has increased by 77. This phenomenon is likely the result of smaller household sizes, which is being experienced in many other rural parts of the State. Map 5I shows that the Township is primarily zoned A-1, however, some commercially and residentially zoned property does exist. These areas are found within Forest City (unincorporated), surrounding Dunn and Richardson Lakes, and adjacent to State Highway 24.

Table 5I: Forest City	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	637	597	661	638	666
Households	165	161	197	218	233
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	693	720	748	773	80
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	670	673	677	681	-12
Above Average Growth Projections	671	677	682	688	-5
Households Based on 2.86 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	242	252	262	270	28
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	234	235	237	238	-4
Above Average Growth Projections	235	237	238	241	-1

Map 5I: Forest City Township Zoning



Zoning Districts

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| A-1 (Agricultural Preservation) | Railroad |
| C-1 (Commercial) | Section Line |
| C-2 (Neighborhood Commercial) | River / Ditch |
| I-1 (General Industrial) | Unpaved Road |
| R-1 (Suburban Residential) | Paved Road |
| R-2 (Rural Residential) | Urban Expansion |

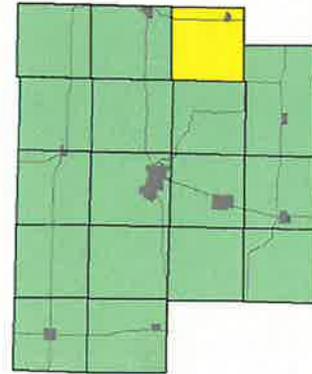
- | |
|---------------|
| Lake |
| Municipality |
| Wildlife Area |

Watershed Districts

- | |
|--------------------|
| Clearwater |
| N. Fork Crow River |
| Sauk |
| M. Fork Crow River |

Forest Prairie Township

- Location:** Northeast corner, bordering Stearns County
- 2005 Population:** 906
- 2005 Households:** 312
- Major Roads:** State Highway 55, County Roads 2, 17, and 34
- Water Features:** Clear Lake
- Special Features:** City of Watkins and Clear Lake County Park



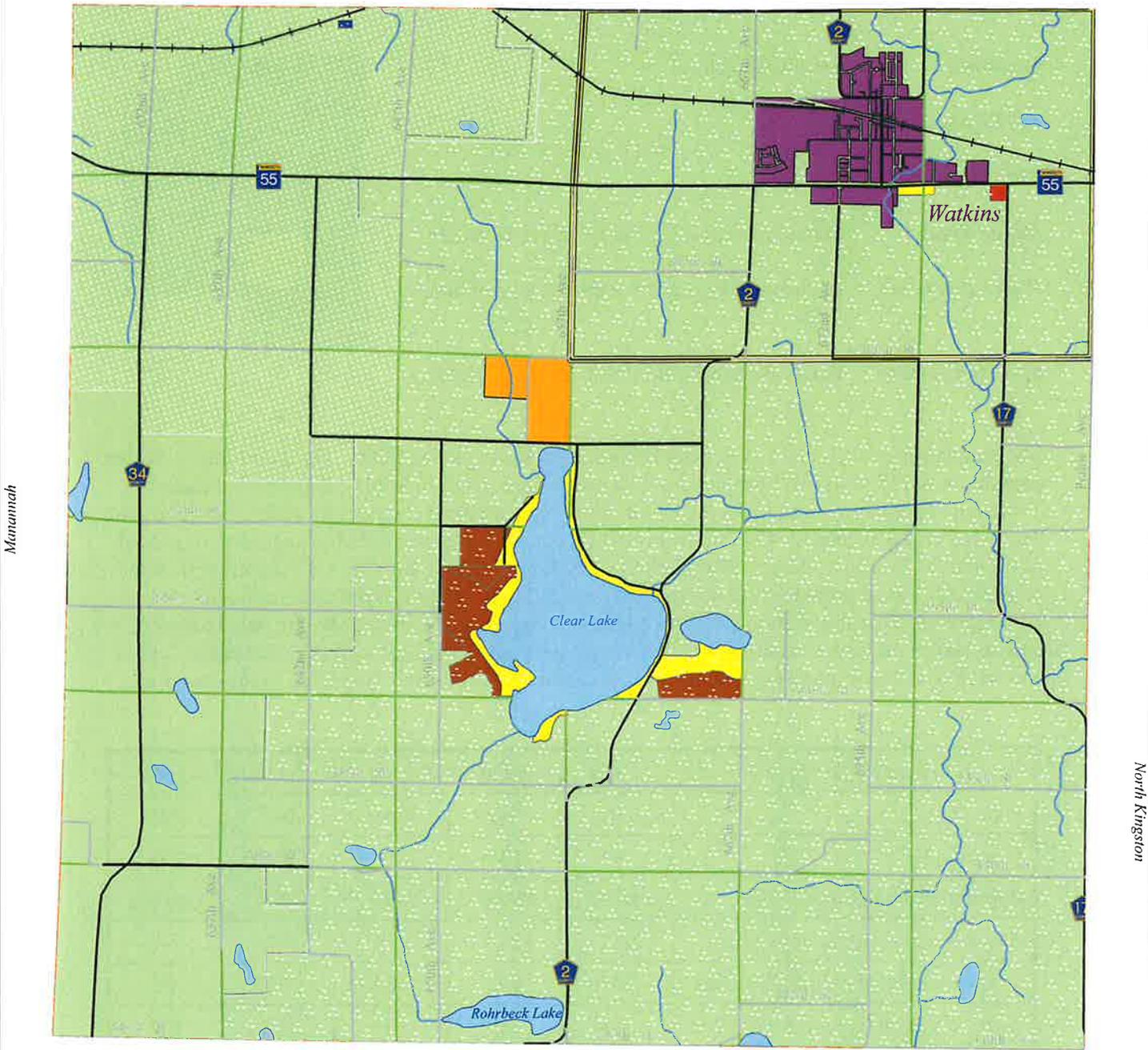
Forest Prairie Township had 906 residents in 2005, making it the fourth most populated township in the County. The Table shows how the Township's housing has nearly doubled over the last 45 years, going from 173 households in 1960 to 312 in 2005. This type of growth should continue over the next 15 years, primarily due to growth pressure from St. Cloud and the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. According to Map 5J, the predominant zoning classification within Forest Prairie Township is A-1 Agricultural. Also, notice that the City of Watkins has identified land around its current corporate boundary to be considered as an urban growth area. The City of Watkins and Forest Prairie Township should work cooperatively to form an orderly annexation agreement.

Table 5J: Forest Prairie	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	787	745	920	830	869
Households	173	178	220	271	300
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	906	932	959	983	77
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	879	890	900	910	4
Above Average Growth Projections	884	900	915	931	25
Households Based on 2.90 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	312	321	331	339	27
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	303	307	310	314	2
Above Average Growth Projections	305	310	316	321	9

Map 5J: Forest Prairie Township Zoning



0 0.2 0.4 0.8 1.2 Miles



Zoning Districts

- | | |
|---|---|
|  A-1 (Agricultural Preservation) |  Railroad |
|  C-1 (Commercial) |  Section Line |
|  C-2 (Neighborhood Commercial) |  River / Ditch |
|  I-1 (General Industrial) |  Unpaved Road |
|  R-1 (Suburban Residential) |  Paved Road |
|  R-2 (Rural Residential) |  Urban Expansion |

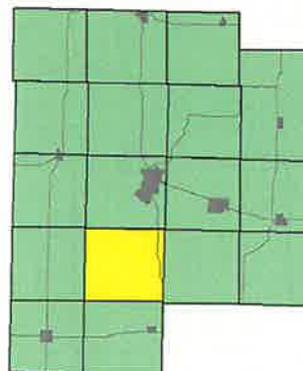
- | | |
|---|--|
|  Lake |  Municipality |
|  Wildlife Area | |

Watershed Districts

- | |
|--|
|  Clearwater |
|  N. Fork Crow River |
|  Sauk |
|  M. Fork Crow River |

Greenleaf Township

- Location:** Southwest central
- 2005 Population:** 715
- 2005 Households:** 293
- Major Roads:** State Highway 22, County Roads 1, and 28
- Water Features:** Evenson Lake, Lake Minnie Belle, and Star Lake
- Special Features:** Beckville and Strout (both unincorporated)



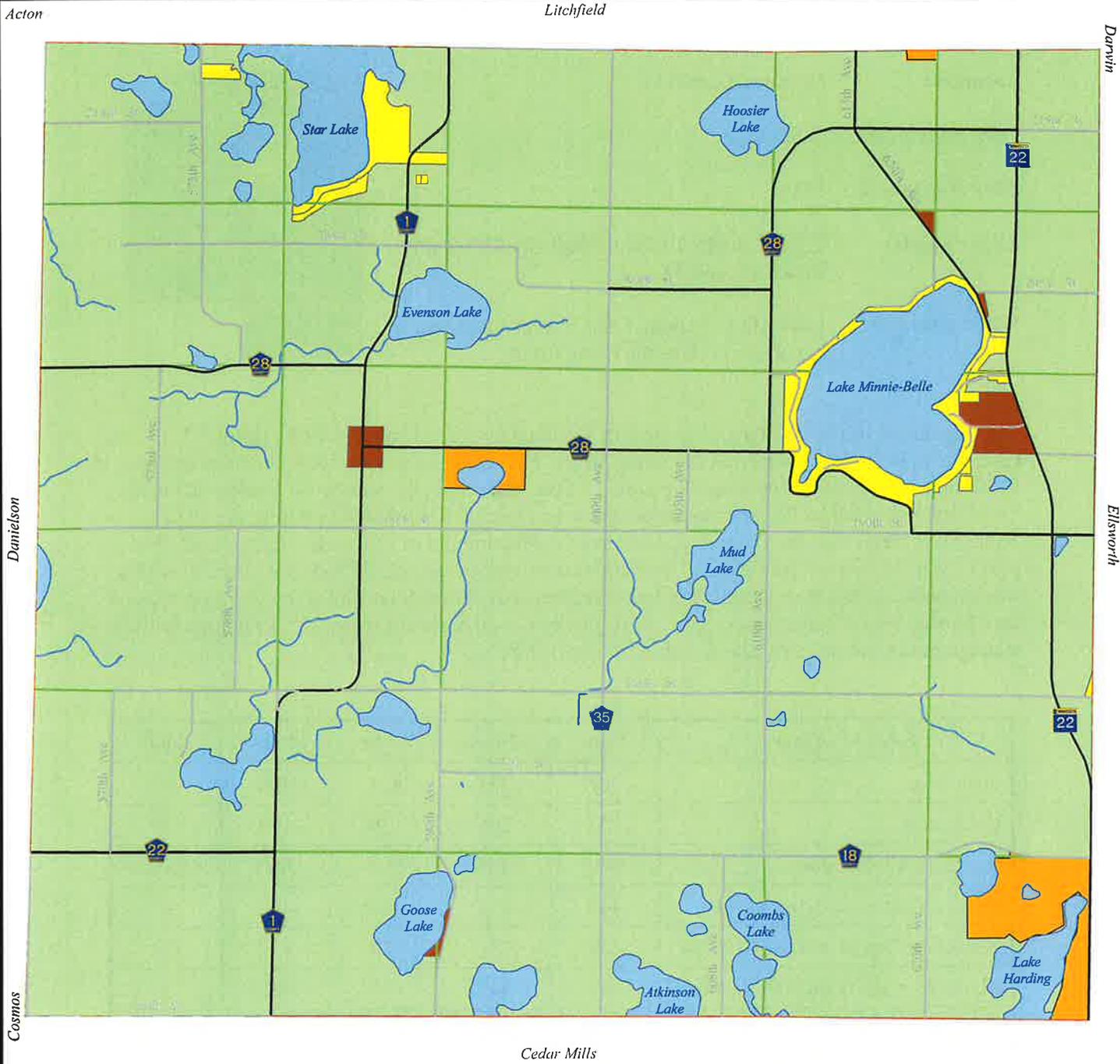
The population of Greenleaf Township has been fluctuating since 1960. The Township's current population is 715 with 293 households. The projections given in Table 5K indicate that the Township's population and households will likely increase over the next 15 years. However, the Township could exceed its 45-year average if it continues to experience the same rate of growth as it did over the last 15 years. Although the Township is zoned mostly A-1 Agricultural, some residentially zoned land does exist, especially around Lake Minnie Belle and Star Lake. Although the Township will most likely continue to grow at a fairly steady rate, the Township's current stance on future development is to review each proposal on a case-by-case basis. This approach will factor into each land use decision what is best for the Township in the long-run.

Table 5K: Greenleaf	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	582	509	664	647	726
Households	143	142	219	232	298
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	715	737	759	779	64
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	744	762	780	798	83
Above Average Growth Projections	753	780	807	834	119
Households Based on 2.44 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	293	302	311	319	26
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	305	312	320	327	34
Above Average Growth Projections	309	320	331	342	49

Map 5K: Greenleaf Township Zoning



0 0.2 0.4 0.8 1.2 Miles



Zoning Districts

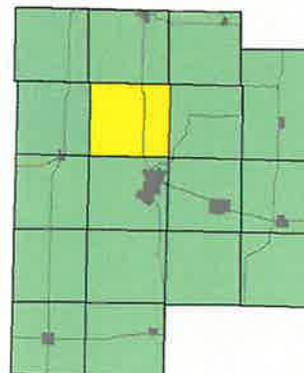
- A-1 (Agricultural Preservation)
- C-1 (Commercial)
- C-2 (Neighborhood Commercial)
- I-1 (General Industrial)
- R-1 (Suburban Residential)
- R-2 (Rural Residential)
- Railroad
- Section Line
- River / Ditch
- Unpaved Road
- Paved Road
- Urban Expansion

Watershed Districts

- Lake
- Municipality
- Wildlife Area
- Clearwater
- N. Fork Crow River
- Sauk
- M. Fork Crow River

Harvey Township

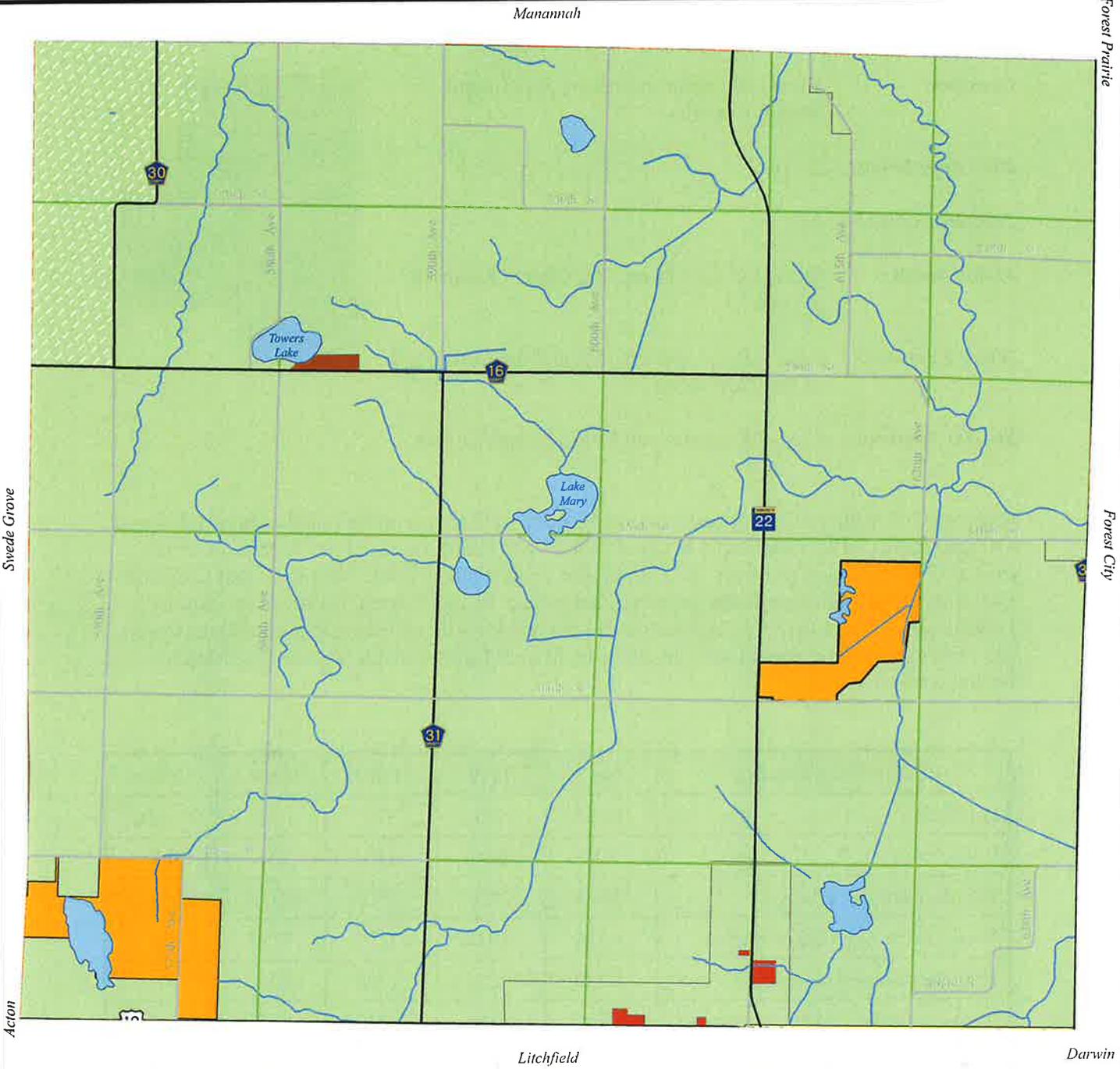
- Location:** Northwest central
- 2005 Population:** 448
- 2005 Households:** 144
- Major Roads:** U.S. Highway 12, State Highway 22, County Roads 16, and 31
- Water Features:** Lake Mary, Schultz Lake, Tower Lake, and the North Fork of the Crow River



The population of Harvey Township steadily declined between 1960 and 1990, losing 93 residents over the 30-year period (equaling 19%). However, the population rebounded in the 1990s and early 2000s, regaining 40 people. At the same time, the number of households in the Township increased by 24, after experiencing a decrease of 10 households during the 1980's. Table 5L projects that the Township could lose a small amount of residents over the next 15 years. Map 5L shows that Harvey Township is overwhelmingly zoned A-1 Agricultural, with a small amount of R-2 Residential land found southeast of Tower Lake and some C-1 Commercial land located near the intersection of U.S. Highway 12 and State Highway 22. Two large wildlife management areas are also found within the Township.

Table 5L: Harvey	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	501	374	431	408	445
Households	127	104	130	120	143
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	448	458	468	477	29
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	438	431	424	417	-31
Above Average Growth Projections	447	449	450	452	4
Households Based on 3.11 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	144	147	150	153	9
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	141	139	136	134	-10
Above Average Growth Projections	144	144	145	145	1

Map 5L: Harvey Township Zoning



Zoning Districts

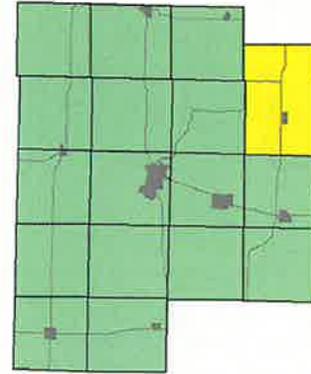
- A-1 (Agricultural Preservation)
- C-1 (Commercial)
- C-2 (Neighborhood Commercial)
- I-1 (General Industrial)
- R-1 (Suburban Residential)
- R-2 (Rural Residential)
- Railroad
- Section Line
- River / Ditch
- Unpaved Road
- Paved Road
- Urban Expansion

Watershed Districts

- Lake
- Municipality
- Wildlife Area
- Clearwater
- N. Fork Crow River
- Sauk
- M. Fork Crow River

Kingston Township

- Location:** Northeast corner, bordering Stearns and Wright Counties
- 2005 Population:** 1,334
- 2005 Households:** 430
- Major Roads:** State Highway 15 and 24, County Roads 19, 21, and 27
- Water Features:** Lake Betsy, Lake Francis, and the North Fork of the Crow River
- Special Features:** City of Kingston and Finish Memorial Park



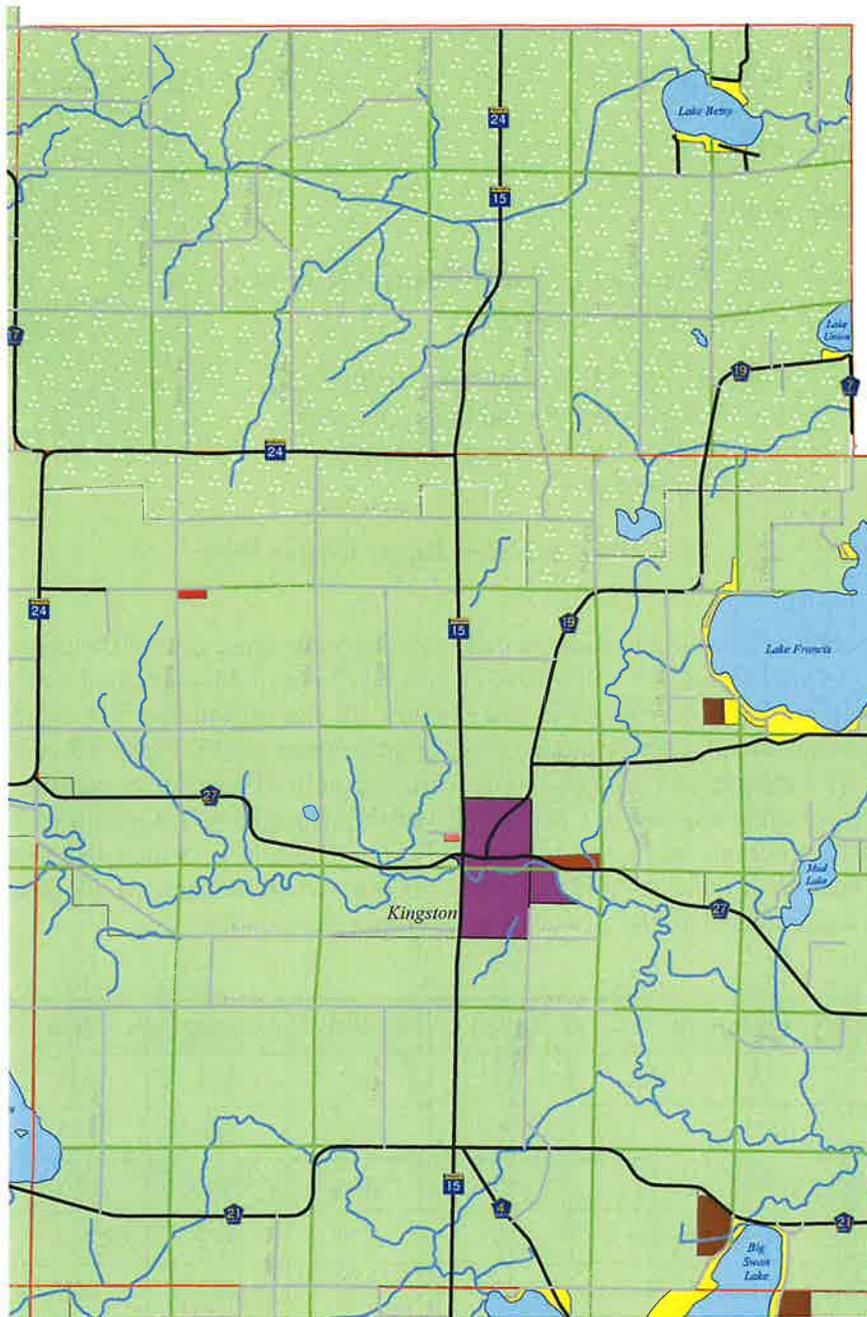
Kingston Township has been steadily growing since 1970 to its current population of 1,334 and 430 households. The Township's location to the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area is a major source of development pressure. The population projections in Table 5M reveal that Kingston Township should continue to see growth over the next 15 years. Map 5M illustrates that the Township is zoned mostly A-1 Agricultural, with residentially zoned areas around Lake Betsy, Lake Francis, and Big Swan Lake. In addition, Map 5M shows that Kingston Township has several water features.

Table 5M: Kingston	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	1,153	955	971	1,064	1,266
Households	326	276	315	358	409
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	1,334	1,430	1,527	1,617	283
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	1,280	1,294	1,308	1,323	-11
Above Average Growth Projections	1,287	1,308	1,330	1,351	17
Households Based on 3.10 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	430	461	493	522	92
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	413	417	422	427	-3
Above Average Growth Projections	415	422	429	436	6

Map 5M: Kingston Township Zoning



0 0.4 0.8 1.6 2.4 Miles



Zoning Districts

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| A-1 (Agricultural Preservation) | Railroad |
| C-1 (Commercial) | Section Line |
| C-2 (Neighborhood Commercial) | River / Ditch |
| I-1 (General Industrial) | Unpaved Road |
| R-1 (Suburban Residential) | Paved Road |
| R-2 (Rural Residential) | Urban Expansion |

- | |
|---------------|
| Lake |
| Municipality |
| Wildlife Area |

Watershed Districts

- | |
|--------------------|
| Clearwater |
| N. Fork Crow River |
| Sauk |
| M. Fork Crow River |

Litchfield Township

- Location:** West central
- 2005 Population:** 842
- 2005 Households:** 300
- Major Roads:** U.S. Highway 12, State Highway 22 and 24, County Roads 1, and 11
- Water Features:** Lake Harold, Minnesota Lake, Lake Ripley, East Lake Ripley, Round Lake, Star Lake, Thoen Lake, West Hanson Lake, and Youngstrom Lake



Special Features: City of Litchfield and West Ripley County Park

Litchfield Township has experienced an overall population increase during the last 45 years, with the exception of a slight decrease in the 1990s. This can be partially explained by the growth of the City of Litchfield and a decreasing average household size during that time period. Litchfield Township should continue to experience an increase over the next 15 years, gaining approximately 75 residents and 26 households, based upon the Township's historic growth levels. Map 5N reveals that most of Litchfield Township is zoned A-1 Agricultural, with scattered pockets of commercially and residentially zoned property. Notice also that Map 5N identifies the location of the City of Litchfield's urban growth boundary, which extends outward in nearly in all directions from the City's existing corporate boundary.

Table 5N: Litchfield	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	591	682	817	745	808
Households	153	179	260	273	288
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	842	876	912	944	102
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	835	862	889	917	75
Above Average Growth Projections	849	889	930	971	129
Households Based on 2.81 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	300	312	325	336	36
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	298	307	316	326	26
Above Average Growth Projections	302	316	331	346	46

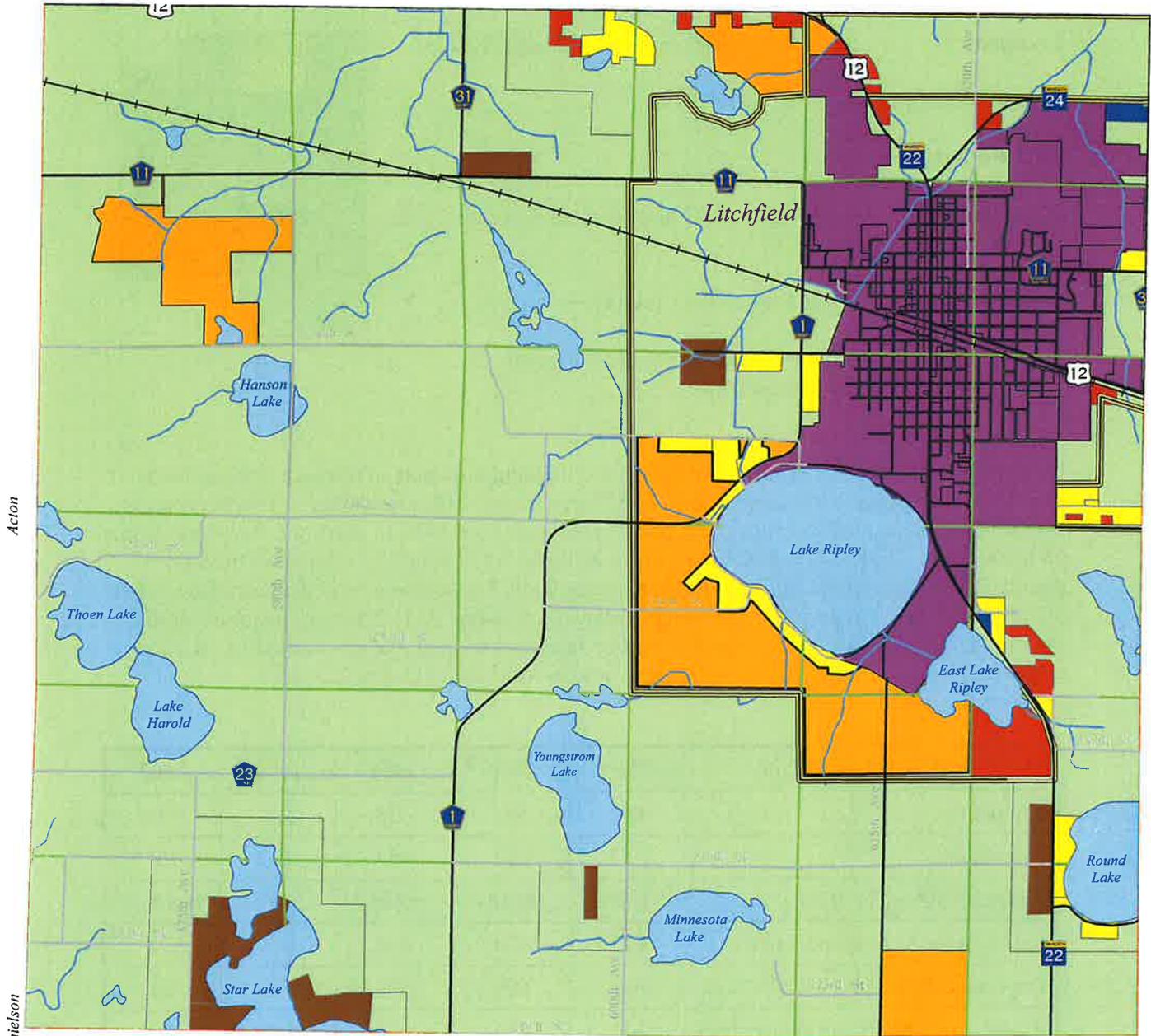
Map 5N: Litchfield Township Zoning



Swede Grove

Harvey

Forest City



Acton

Darwin

Danielson

Ellsworth

Greenleaf

Zoning Districts

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| A-1 (Agricultural Preservation) | Railroad |
| C-1 (Commercial) | Section Line |
| C-2 (Neighborhood Commercial) | River / Ditch |
| I-1 (General Industrial) | Unpaved Road |
| R-1 (Suburban Residential) | Paved Road |
| R-2 (Rural Residential) | Urban Expansion |

- | |
|---------------|
| Lake |
| Municipality |
| Wildlife Area |

Watershed Districts

- | |
|--------------------|
| Clearwater |
| N. Fork Crow River |
| Sauk |
| M. Fork Crow River |

Manannah Township

Location: Northwest corner, bordering Stearns County

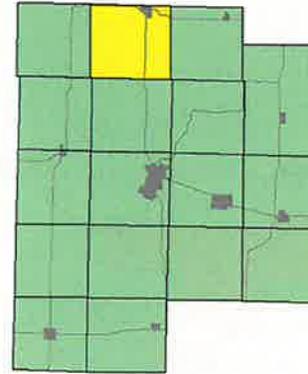
2005 Population: 627

2005 Households: 213

Major Roads: State Highway 22 and 55, County Roads 3, 30, and 36

Water Features: North Fork of the Crow River

Special Features: City of Eden Valley and Manannah (unincorporated)



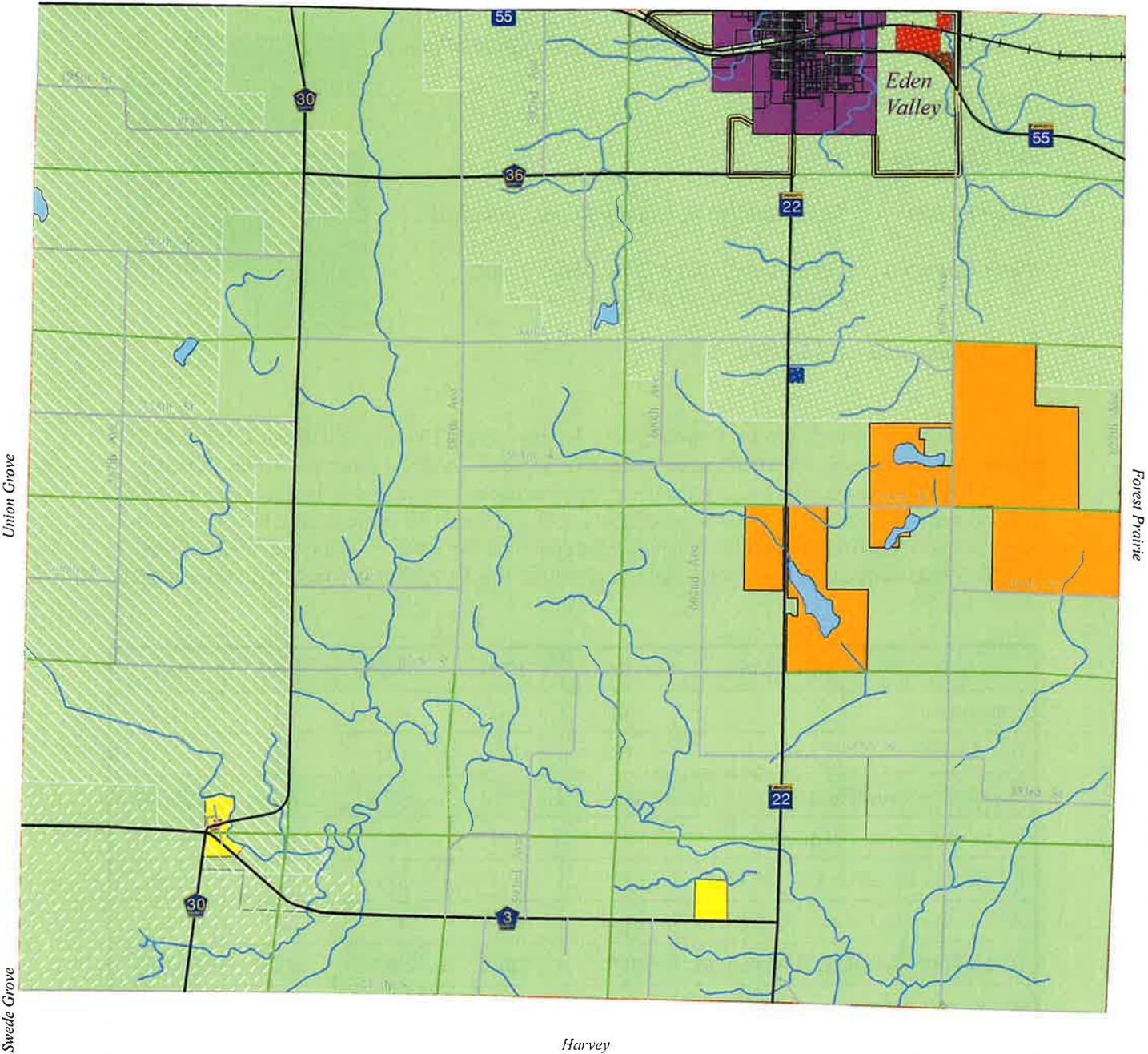
Manannah Township has experienced a decrease in population and an increase in households over the last 45 years, to its current level of 627 people and 213 households. Table 5O reveals that although Manannah Township has lost 26 residents from 1960 to 2005, the Township gained 56 households. Based upon projections given in Table 5O, it is unlikely that the Township's population and household figures will change drastically between now and the year 2020. Map 5O illustrates that a majority of Manannah Township is zoned A-1. The only major exception to this is the City of Eden Valley, which is located in sections 2 and 3 of the Township. Also, a large complex of wildlife management areas lies east of State Highway 22.

Table 5O: Manannah	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	653	598	628	649	610
Households	157	153	184	202	207
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	627	634	640	646	19
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	605	599	594	589	-38
Above Average Growth Projections	611	613	614	616	-11
Households Based on 2.95 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	213	215	217	219	6
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	205	203	201	200	-13
Above Average Growth Projections	207	208	208	209	-4

Map 50: Manannah Township Zoning



0 0.2 0.4 0.8 1.2 Miles



Zoning Districts

- A-1 (Agricultural Preservation)
- C-1 (Commercial)
- C-2 (Neighborhood Commercial)
- I-1 (General Industrial)
- R-1 (Suburban Residential)
- R-2 (Rural Residential)
- Railroad
- Section Line
- River / Ditch
- Unpaved Road
- Paved Road
- Urban Expansion

Watershed Districts

- Lake
- Municipality
- Wildlife Area
- Clearwater
- N. Fork Crow River
- Sauk
- M. Fork Crow River

Swede Grove Township

Location: Northwest corner, bordering Kandiyohi County

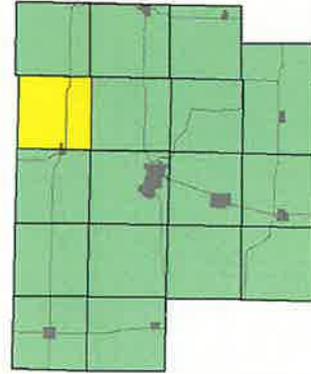
2005 Population: 418

2005 Households: 133

Major Roads: State Highway 4, County Roads 16, and 25

Water Features: Grove Lake, Helga Lake, Miller Lake, Peterson Lake, and Wilcox Lake

Special Features: Grove City



The population of Swede Grove Township has declined since 1960, to its current level of 418 people and 133 households. Compared to most of Meeker County's other townships, Swede Grove Township is not situated in a location that is expected to see strong rural residential development in the near future. The projections listed in Table 5P indicate that the population could possibly continue to drop as much as 9 percent over the next 15 years, potentially losing another 39 residents. Map 5P shows that a majority of the Township is zoned A-1 Agricultural.

Table 5P: Swede Grove	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	484	435	409	437	414
Households	129	110	131	133	132
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	418	421	423	425	7
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	405	397	388	379	-39
Above Average Growth Projections	416	419	421	423	5
Households Based on 3.14 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	133	134	135	135	2
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	129	126	124	121	-12
Above Average Growth Projections	132	133	134	135	2

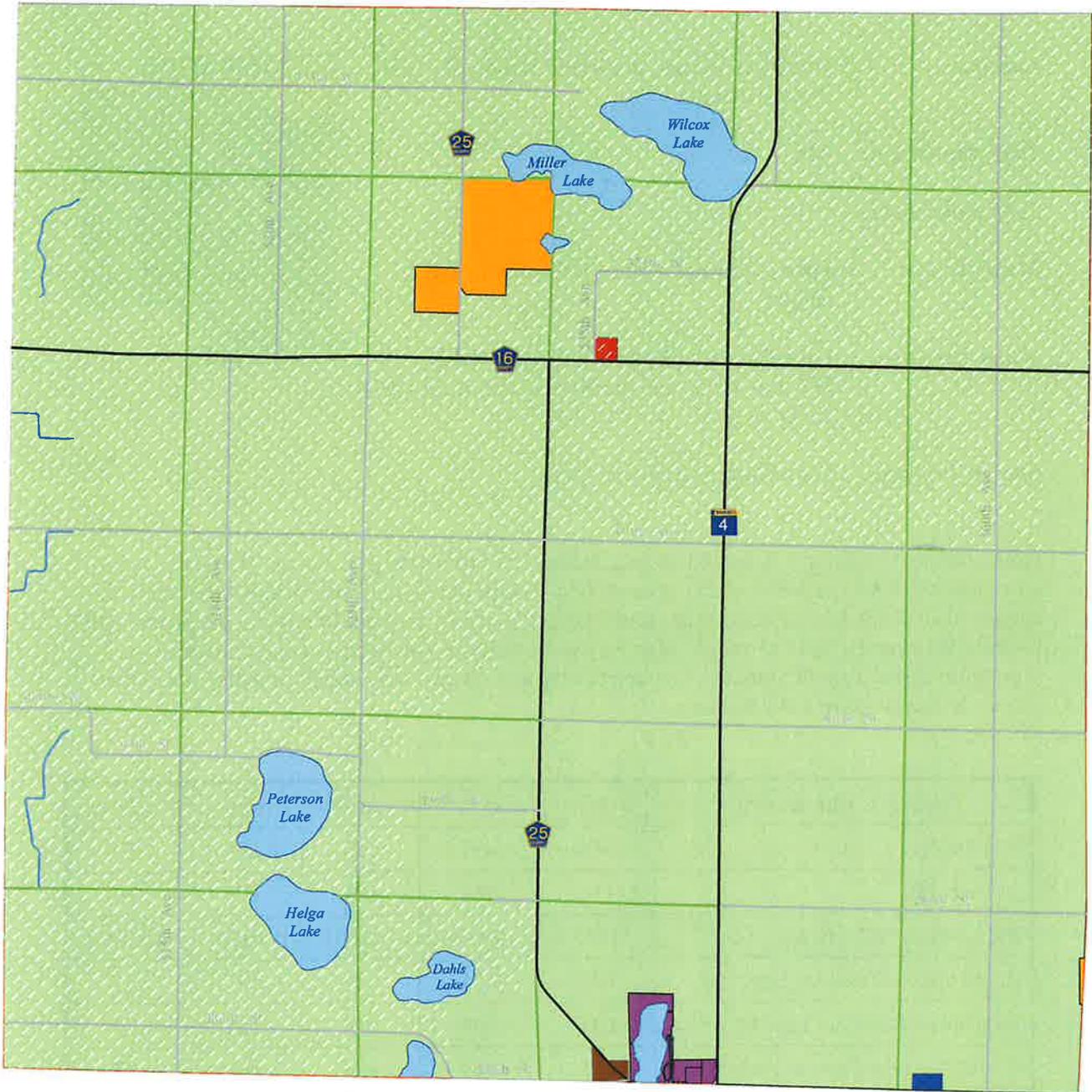
Map 5P: Swede Grove Township Zoning



0 0.2 0.4 0.8 1.2 Miles

Union Grove

Manannah



Harvey

Acton

Litchfield

Zoning Districts

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| A-1 (Agricultural Preservation) | Railroad |
| C-1 (Commercial) | Section Line |
| C-2 (Neighborhood Commercial) | River / Ditch |
| I-1 (General Industrial) | Unpaved Road |
| R-1 (Suburban Residential) | Paved Road |
| R-2 (Rural Residential) | Urban Expansion |

- | |
|---------------|
| Lake |
| Municipality |
| Wildlife Area |

Watershed Districts

- | |
|--------------------|
| Clearwater |
| N. Fork Crow River |
| Sauk |
| M. Fork Crow River |

Union Grove Township

Location: Northwest corner, bordering Kandiyohi and Stearns County

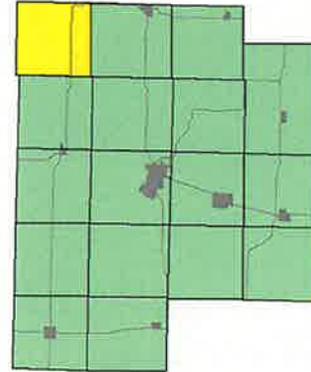
2005 Population: 628

2005 Households: 231

Major Roads: State Highways 4 and 55, County Roads 3 and 20

Water Features: Lake Emma, Lake Koronis, West Lake, Whitney Lake, and the North Fork of the Crow River

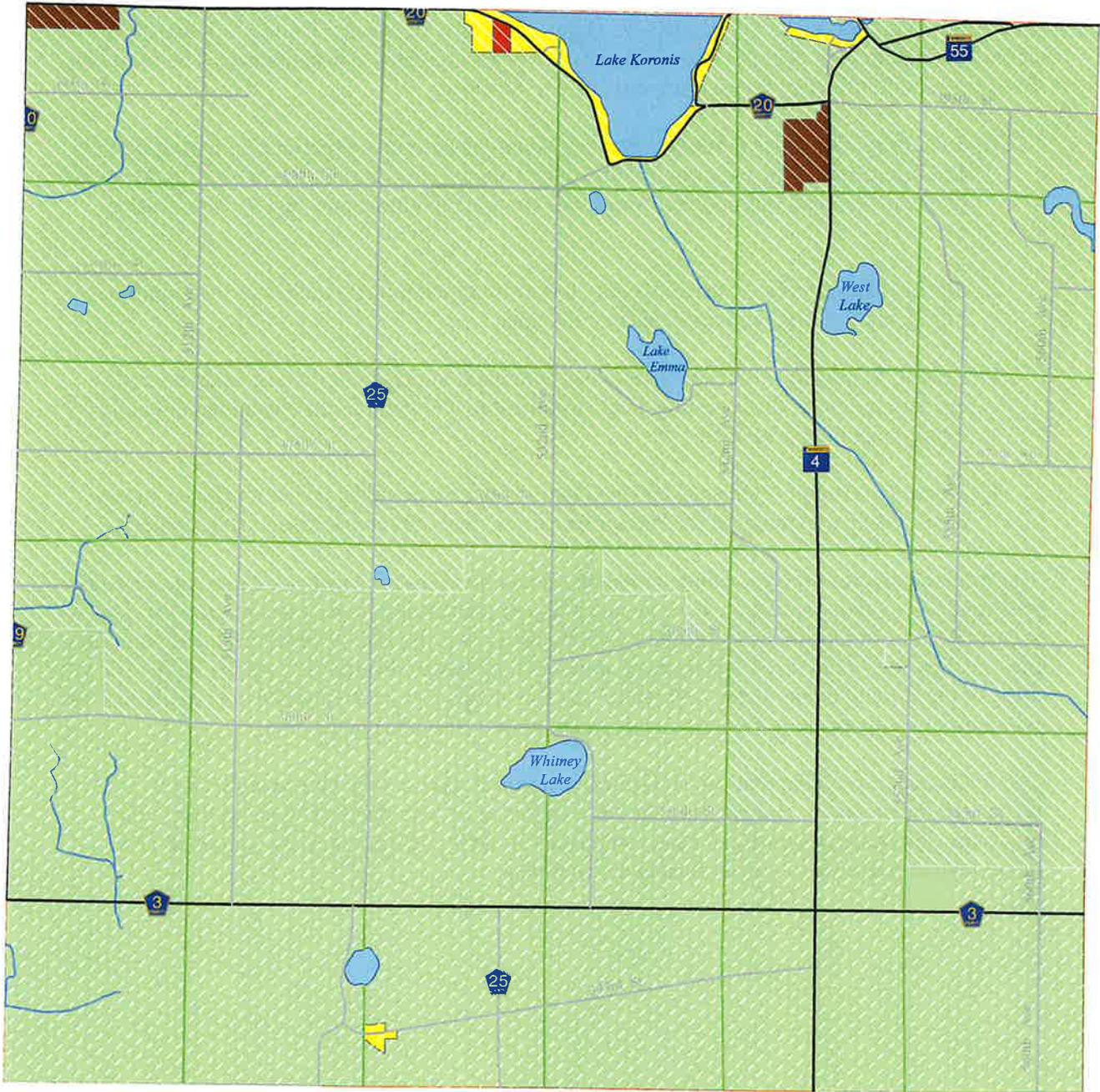
Special Features: Lake Koronis Regional Park



Union Grove Township has gained 54 people and 75 households over the last 45 years, to its current level of 628 people and 231 households. The population projections listed in table 5Q suggest that Union Grove Township should expect to see an increase of another 23 people and 8 households over the next 15 years. Map 5Q shows that the Township is zoned mostly A-1 Agricultural, but a small amount of commercially and residentially zoned property does exist, primarily surrounding Lake Koronis.

Table 5Q: Union Grove	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	574	494	616	608	625
Households	156	132	194	208	230
Population Projections	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	628	635	641	647	19
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	631	638	644	651	23
Above Average Growth Projections	635	644	654	663	35
Households Based on 2.72 People	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change
Based on the State Demographer	231	233	236	238	7
Projections Based on Last 40 Years	232	235	237	239	8
Above Average Growth Projections	233	237	240	244	13

Map 5Q: Union Grove Township Zoning



Manamohi

Swede Grove

Zoning Districts

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| A-1 (Agricultural Preservation) | Railroad |
| C-1 (Commercial) | Section Line |
| C-2 (Neighborhood Commercial) | River / Ditch |
| I-1 (General Industrial) | Unpaved Road |
| R-1 (Suburban Residential) | Paved Road |
| R-2 (Rural Residential) | Urban Expansion |

- | |
|---------------|
| Lake |
| Municipality |
| Wildlife Area |

Watershed Districts

- | |
|--------------------|
| Clearwater |
| N. Fork Crow River |
| Sauk |
| M. Fork Crow River |

Summary of the Township Profiles

The information presented in Chapter Five shows that many of Meeker County's Townships could continue to gain population over the next 15 years at a fairly constant pace. The following five factors will influence future township growth the most:

1. **Location of Meeker County** – Meeker County is currently experiencing high growth in Litchfield and in the eastern portions of the County. In addition, the expanding St. Cloud and Minneapolis Metropolitan Areas will continue to attract new residents to Meeker County.
2. **Natural Resources** – Meeker County has a strong natural resource base that continues to attract both tourists and residents into the area.
3. **Strong Economy** – Meeker County has continued to expand its strong business and agricultural base, thus creating an environment that attracts further development and employment opportunities.
4. **Rural Character** – One of Meeker County's largest strengths is that it offers a strong rural setting *and* many of the "urban amenities" that attract residential development.

These characteristics each contribute to the likelihood that most of Meeker County's townships will continue to gain population at a rate much higher than their historic rates of growth. This is especially true for those townships that lost population over the last 20 years. In these situations, the "smaller household size" was more of an issue than "fewer dwellings." As the higher growth areas of the County begin to get "saturated," the townships that have experienced population loss will present an opportunity for new development in less crowded areas.

The fundamental problem that decision-makers currently face is how best to attract new residential development and preserve the rural character of why people choose to live in the townships. Fortunately, both can be accomplished if the tough questions are examined now, rather than in response to uncoordinated development.

Chapter Six: Current and Emerging Issues

A key element to a comprehensive plan is being able to address the current and emerging issues of the County. The issues facing Meeker County now, and in the future, will largely dictate the development that will occur and the planning that will need to take place.

The goal of Chapter Six is to take an inventory of the current and emerging issues in Meeker County. This inventory of issues is not intended to remain constant for the next 20 years. Some of these issues may become lower in priority as planning measures are taken by the County to address them. Also, additional issues will likely become apparent and should be added to the list as growth and development occur.

Although many of the following issues emerged throughout the Comprehensive Planning process, a public meeting was held in an effort to gather a list of current and emerging issues and concerns from local officials and citizens. The issues discussed at the public meeting have been grouped into the following categories: Agriculture, Economic Development, Environmental Protection, Parks and Recreation, Rural Housing, Transportation, Urban Growth, and Other Issues. These issues provide the framework for the goals, objectives, and policies found in Chapter Seven.

Agriculture Issues

- ***Protection of agricultural activities and land*** - Agricultural activities are an important part of Meeker County's economy. The loss of small family farms and the increase in "corporate" farming activities has greatly impacted the landscape and economy of the County. Also, as urban and residential growth occurs, the demand to develop agricultural land will increase.
- ***Feedlot ordinance enforcement*** - The regulation of animal feedlots is done in an effort to protect natural resources and to prevent non-compatible land uses from occurring opposite of each other (i.e. feedlot located near a housing subdivision). The size and location of animal feedlots will greatly impact future growth and development in Meeker County.
- ***Expanding existing agricultural operations*** - The ability to expand current agricultural activities is regulated by land use controls such as zoning and feedlot ordinances. In addition to urban growth and rural housing development, future planning efforts need to allow for increased agricultural activities as well.
- ***Water quality*** - The polluting of ground and surface water is a concern associated with manure, fertilizer, and pesticide applications in agricultural activities.
- ***Housing densities*** - The increased density of housing in agriculture areas presents a problem to farmers as it takes land out of production and reduces the potential amount of crops that can be raised.

- ***Animal waste storage and application*** - The storage and application of animal waste is an important issue due to the potential for water pollution and odor nuisances. Monitoring of waste storage facilities and application practices and regulating land uses near feedlots can help prevent these problems.
- ***Transportation of agricultural equipment and products*** - Roadways need to be constructed and/or maintained to handle heavy loads produced from agricultural activities.
- ***“Coming to the nuisance”*** – “Coming to the nuisance” is a result of one land use developing near a non-compatible land use (i.e. rural housing being built next to a feedlot). Land use planning measures need to be implemented to prevent urban and residential land uses and agricultural activities from occurring too close to one another.
- ***Wetlands and drainage*** - Strict compliance and enforcement of wetland laws needs to occur in an effort to preserve these environmentally sensitive areas.
- ***Maintenance of ditches*** - Water ditches greatly impact the productivity of agricultural land by moving excess water from these areas. The maintenance and dredging of these ditches requires a cooperative effort between the County and all ditch users.

Economic Development Issues

- ***Location of industrial and commercial zones*** - The location of industrial and commercial businesses is regulated through zoning. In order to provide infrastructure to these businesses and prevent prime farmland and other resource areas from being developed, industrial and commercial zones need to be located near cities, adjacent to railroads and/or highways.
- ***Focus business growth in municipalities*** - Municipalities often have areas designated for industrial and commercial growth. These areas should be used for business development prior to developing new areas.
- ***Assist cities in developing infrastructure to attract industry*** - The costs of providing new infrastructure often limit communities in attracting new business. Economic development assistance from the County in helping cities plan for business development would help increase the tax base of the entire County.
- ***Preferred businesses*** - When attempting to attract new businesses to the County, the size, type, wages, jobs, and utility demand of the prospective companies should be taken into consideration. It is important that new businesses are compatible with current and future land use plans and that they create a positive impact on the economy.
- ***Promote agriculture as an industry*** - Agricultural activities make up an important part of the County’s economy as it provides a significant number of jobs and accounts for a large portion of the tax base.

- **Promote tourism/agriculture tourism** - The County's many lakes provide tourism opportunities in Meeker County. Tourism is an important part of the economy as it produces jobs and results in additional money being spent in businesses throughout the County. Agriculture tourism provides an alternative source of income for those individuals involved in agriculture activities.
- **Business retention** - Although attracting new business to the County is beneficial, it is important to retain the jobs and tax base created by existing businesses. For the County's economy to grow, existing businesses must be financially healthy as new businesses start.

Environmental Issues

- **Feedlot size and location** - The size, quantity, and location of feedlots needs to be closely regulated through the County's Zoning Ordinance.
- **Waste Disposal** - The location and monitoring of landfills is important because of the potential for water and soil pollution and odor nuisances for County residents.
- **Shoreline management** - The County has numerous lake and river shorelines. Development of these environmentally sensitive areas needs to be closely monitored and regulated to preserve their natural character. Countywide shoreland management needs to be a cooperative effort between the County, townships, cities, and the DNR.
- **Coordination of conservation programs** - The Countywide promotion of conservation programs (Conservation Reserve Program, Reinvest In Minnesota, etc.) would help ensure the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands.
- **Chemical application** - The application of agricultural and lawn chemicals poses a potential threat to groundwater and surface waters. Chemical application standards and alternatives to chemical use would help reduce the potential for this pollution.
- **Industrial/commercial pollution** - Strict enforcement of clean air and water regulations by industrial and commercial businesses can help reduce pollution concerns in the County. Through land use controls, noise pollution in these areas can be controlled by not allowing residential development near commercial and industrial areas.
- **Maintain aesthetics and natural areas** - The County's many lakes, rivers, wetlands, and wooded areas provide many benefits to the County's residents. Land use controls need to preserve these areas for all to enjoy.
- **Wetlands** - Wetlands provide numerous benefits including improved water quality, flood water holding areas, and wildlife habitat. Land use decisions need to account for the importance of wetlands and must follow the regulations that protect these areas. The DNR should be consulted on any wetland issue.

- ***Strong septic system controls*** - In order to protect ground and surface water resources, strong septic system controls need to be implemented and enforced.
- ***Drinking water protection*** - The creation and implementation of wellhead protection plans under the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1996 should be encouraged throughout the County. The long-term impact of Countywide wellhead protection planning will support the protection of both public and private water sources.
- ***Gravel pits*** - Gravel pits provide a valuable mineral resource in Meeker County. However, issues such as dust, noise, truck hauling, and the alteration of the landscape are concerns associated with gravel pits. Residential setback standards from gravel mining are being implemented to help minimize the conflicts between these land uses. Reclamation standards and controls can be used to restore gravel pits back to a natural state.
- ***Redevelopment of shoreland*** - Shoreland, and the waterbodies they surround, are environmentally sensitive resources that provide aesthetically appealing locations for housing. As a result, many small cabins are now being replaced by year-round homes and undeveloped shoreland is being developed with houses. Land use and septic regulations in Meeker County need to address the growing demand to develop shoreland. Keeping the natural landscape next to shoreland and waterbodies is a priority.

Parks and Recreation Issues

- ***Need for additional camping opportunities*** - Increased camping opportunities can attract tourists and provide recreational opportunities for the County's residents. Through proper land use regulations, camping can occur in wooded and other natural areas without destroying that area's natural qualities.
- ***Protect the environment*** - Land use regulations can allow for the use of natural resources without negatively impacting their natural character. Environmentally sensitive areas can lose their natural and recreational qualities when incompatible or intensive land uses occur on or near them.
- ***Create more open spaces*** - The creation and preservation of open spaces helps to maintain and enhance the aesthetics of the landscape, provides habitat for wildlife, and creates recreational opportunities for people. As development pressures increase, it will become increasingly important to preserve and create new open spaces in an effort to protect the benefits these areas provide.
- ***Recreation trails and paths*** - Trails and paths provide recreational opportunities during all seasons of the year. Bicycling, walking, running, snowmobiling, skiing, and nature observation are some of the recreational benefits associated with trails and paths.
- ***Historic preservation*** - Historic preservation provides a unique identity for the County, can be used as an educational tool, and is beneficial in promoting tourism.

- **Promote tourism** - Meeker County's lakes and other natural amenities provide tourism opportunities in the County. The creation of additional parks and recreation areas can help promote tourism, improve the economy, and create jobs.
- **Public lakeshore and river accesses** - The creation of beaches and boat landings on lakeshores and rivers can provide recreational opportunities for people. Lakeshore and river development and alteration requires working in cooperation with the DNR.
- **Number, size, and quality of County parks** - County parks provide recreational opportunities and protection for natural resources. The number, size, and quality of County parks should be sufficient to provide recreational opportunities for all residents.
- **Opportunities for private parks** - Private parks provide increased tourism opportunities in the County. Land use controls need to allow for the development of privately owned parks, while limiting the alteration of the natural areas they are located on.
- **Shooting ranges** - Shooting ranges offer a recreational opportunity to people. It is important that these ranges are located in an area that will not pose safety concerns and a noise nuisance to nearby citizens.

Rural Housing Issues

- **Septic systems** - The use of septic systems is a growing concern due to the pollution potential from failing systems. Close monitoring of septic systems and the promotion of rural housing clusters that use one central septic system are increasingly important issues.
- **Location of rural housing** - The location of rural housing is an important land use issue that must take into account the preservation of agricultural land, protection of environmentally sensitive areas, and the avoidance of non-compatible neighboring land uses. The rights of property owners versus the protection of natural resources must be considered in determining housing density regulations. In an effort to preserve farmland and natural areas and still allow increased rural housing, concepts such as conservation subdivision development should be encouraged.
- **Defining prime residential land** - Defining prime residential land is a difficult process, as each stakeholder tends to have a different definition. The use of zoning criteria can help determine what land should be developed for housing.
- **Building code enforcement** - The use and enforcement of a building code is a tool that can assist in providing safe and quality housing for residents in the County.
- **Natural resource protection** - Meeker County's many lakes, rivers, wetlands, and wooded areas provide attractive locations for rural housing. An important issue in Meeker County will be to determine the density and lot size of housing that is allowed in, or near, these environmentally sensitive areas.

- ***Flood zones*** - The building of housing in flood zones presents water problems for the homeowner when it floods and increases the chances for pollutants to enter rivers and streams.
- ***Impact of housing on lakes*** - Lakes are attractive places to build homes. However, if not done properly, septic systems and shoreline alterations can adversely impact a lake.

Transportation Issues

- ***Communication with MnDOT on projects*** - The maintenance and upgrades to the State maintained highways is vital to the growth and development of Meeker County. MnDOT's future plans for these highways should be consistent with the future transportation and land use plans of the County.
- ***Network with neighboring counties*** - The transportation systems of neighboring counties provide accessibility to and from Meeker County. Also, projects involving State highways are often a regional issue that requires cooperation between counties and MnDOT.
- ***Identify high traffic areas*** - High traffic areas present safety concerns and high maintenance costs for the County.
- ***Future roads need to follow infrastructure*** - Municipalities place water and sewer infrastructure in areas they plan to develop. Future construction of County roads in and near municipalities should be consistent with the development plans of the cities.
- ***Maintenance*** - The maintenance of roads is an expensive, but necessary, component of the County's transportation system. Road restrictions and preventive maintenance work helps to prolong the life of roads. Capital improvements planning for roadway maintenance needs to account for increased traffic as Meeker County grows.
- ***Safety concerns*** - Growth in Meeker County will result in increased traffic. Proper traffic controls such as signing, traffic lights, and access management regulations can help create safer roadways.
- ***Transit connection to the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area*** - As urban sprawl continues west from the Twin Cities, more Meeker County residents will seek employment opportunities there. Commuter ride sharing programs and other public transit possibilities would help reduce traffic congestion, thus making roads safer to travel and creating less maintenance costs.
- ***Inventory of the current transportation system and analysis of future needs*** - An inventory and analysis of the current transportation system in the County would help to determine what kind of roads need to be built or reconstructed and where that should take place.

- **Community development issues** - County and State highways run through or near every municipality in the County. These highways are vital to the economies and growth potential of these cities. Any future upgrades or construction of new highways in or near municipalities should be discussed with the city.
- **Access management** - The number of access points onto roads can greatly impact the flow of traffic and cause safety concerns. Access management principles can be implemented to help reduce traffic congestion and reduce the potential for accidents.
- **Construct roads to handle emergency service vehicles** - The construction and reconstruction of roads in the County should be done in a way that makes them easily accessible for emergency service vehicles.

Urban Growth Issues

- **Urban growth areas** - The land surrounding a city where the municipality anticipates growth to occur is an urban growth area. As these areas develop, the need for annexation sometimes occurs. Cooperation between cities and townships on identifying urban growth areas and discussing the need for orderly annexation is and will be an important issue as the County experiences growth.
- **Population projections** - Determining the projected population of the County will help determine what future land uses are going to occur. Population projections by city and township help determine where growth and land use changes will likely take place.
- **Housing needs** - The need to provide housing to accommodate the needs of all age and income groups is and will be an issue cities and the County will face as growth occurs.
- **Urban sprawl from the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area** - Urban sprawl from the Twin Cities has already greatly impacted neighboring Wright County and, to some extent, McLeod County. Also, Stearns County to the north has experienced considerable growth in the St. Cloud Area. Meeker County is already experiencing development pressure due to the growth occurring in these areas.
- **Extra-territorial areas** - Municipalities have the authority to extend subdivision regulations to areas beyond their corporate limits. Communication and cooperation between cities, townships, and the County is important in determining the proper use of land in these areas.
- **Infrastructure needs** - As urban growth continues, the demand to extend infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) will increase. Demand for infrastructure can place financial pressures on cities when proper planning has not occurred.
- **Redevelopment** - By redeveloping land currently in cities, there is less of a demand to develop beyond municipal boundaries. As a result, agricultural land and natural resources remain undeveloped.

- ***Fringe development*** - Development often occurs on land just beyond a city's boundary. As this occurs, the extension of infrastructure and the need for annexation of land are issues that often arise.
- ***Orderly development of streets*** - When urban growth occurs, additional streets are needed. These streets need to be laid out in an orderly manner to make the most efficient use of available land and to reduce traffic problems.
- ***Community development issues*** - Urban growth in cities creates many issues. The need for schools, streets, highways, expanding water and sewer treatment facilities, and police and fire protection are only a few of the issues that cities are faced with when urban growth occurs.
- ***Building code enforcement*** - As in rural areas, building code enforcement is needed in municipalities in order to provide safe and quality housing.
- ***Development along rail lines*** - Railroads offer a means of moving manufactured and agricultural goods. Municipal zoning needs to locate industrial parks and agricultural processing facilities near rail lines in order to make use of this mode of transportation.

Other Issues

- ***Bituminous/gravel crushing*** - The crushing of bituminous and gravel is a necessary part of road construction and gravel mining. Efforts should be made to minimize noise and dust nuisances from these areas.
- ***Communication and wind towers*** - Land use controls regulating the location of communication and wind towers can prevent them from being aesthetic nuisances and from creating problems for airports and surrounding land uses.
- ***Conflict resolution*** - Intergovernmental cooperation and communication between units of government can often eliminate conflicts.
- ***Technology advances*** - Improved technology can help business activities and provide added services and educational opportunities to residents in the County.
- ***Ordinances easily understood and consistently applied*** - Ordinances should be written in a clear and concise way that creates no doubt on the actions that are allowed or required. Ordinances also need to be consistently applied in all cases in an effort to avoid conflicts and legal disputes.
- ***Salvage yards*** - Through enforcement of zoning and nuisance ordinances, salvage yards can be located in the County without negatively impacting neighboring land uses.

Chapter Seven: Goals, Objectives, Policy Guidelines

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan establishes Meeker County’s goals, objectives, and policy guidelines. They will be used to help make land use and planning decisions by everyone responsible for the County’s future. The goals have been organized into seven topic areas. The seven goals are used as a framework for the objectives and policy guidelines that, in turn, provide specific information on how decisions will be made by County officials on a day-to-day basis (i.e., “findings of fact” in zoning decisions). If a policy guideline identifies that the County should proactively be doing something, rather than a pure policy statement, the policy guideline should also be considered an action step. Most action steps identify who is responsible for implementing the activity.

Throughout the Comprehensive Plan, goals, objectives, and policy guidelines are defined in the following way:

Goal: This is an idealistic statement with the intent of being achieved at some undetermined future date. Goals are purposely general in nature.

Objective: Objectives are action-oriented and can be measurable (i.e., if a date, dollar amount, etc. is included). Objective statements always begin with an action verb. There may be more than one objective for each goal.

Policy Guideline: These statements support the action of the objective. The statements are recommendations qualified by the word “should.” Policy guidelines can also be converted into action work plans.

Action Steps Acronyms & Definitions

CB = County Board

CA = County Administration

TWNS = Meeker County Townships

EDA = Economic Development Authority/MCDC

SWCD = Soil and Water Conservation District

PC = Planning Commission

P&Z = Planning & Zoning Office

Cities = Meeker County’s Cities

CE = County Engineer

WD = Watershed District

Goal One: Citizen Participation and Intergovernmental Cooperation

To promote cooperation among citizens, governmental units, and agencies to work toward the most efficient, cost-effective, and successful delivery of services.

Objective A: Keep the public advised of important planning issues and events.

- Guideline 1: The nature and consequences of important planning issues should be explained to the public and the media (P&Z).
- Guideline 2: Use the Internet and other multi-media, when feasible, to keep the public informed on key County activities and issues (P&Z).
- Guideline 3: The County should hold public meetings periodically to identify issues and to discuss the nature of important planning issues (CB, PC).
- Guideline 4: The County Board should appoint Task Forces to properly address key issues (CB).
- Guideline 5: Residents should have ample time to provide input into important community decisions (CB, PC).

Objective B: Use the Planning Commission to advise the County on issues of growth and development.

- Guideline 1: Members should have a wide variety of experiences and should represent a geographical, demographic, and cultural balance of the County (CB).
- Guideline 2: The Planning Commission should meet with the County Board at least annually to discuss important planning and zoning issues (PC, CB).

Objective C: Proactively work with governmental agencies to equitably administer various statutes, regulations, and County Ordinances.

- Guideline 1: The County should periodically update and adopt a Comprehensive Plan to establish a framework within which governmental, public, and private interests can effectively follow established policies (CB, P&Z).
- Guideline 2: The Comprehensive Plan should identify issues, goals, objectives, policy guidelines, and action steps.
- Guideline 3: Government programs and ordinances should be coordinated among units of government so they are efficiently provided to the public (P&Z).

Objective D: Meet on a regular basis as needed with local units of government, including cities, townships, and various governmental agencies.

Guideline 1: Meetings should be held as needed to discuss important planning issues and to determine what opportunities exist to solve any conflict. These meetings should occur with Meeker County's municipalities and townships at least once every year (CB, P&Z, PC).

Guideline 2: Cities and townships should be consulted on major land use issues and decisions, especially ones that affect land in designated Urban Growth Areas or land that is adjacent to the cities (P&Z).

Guideline 3: Assistance should be provided to municipalities and townships, where necessary, in implementing planning goals and sustainable development activities (P&Z).

Goal Two: Economic Development

To create sustainable economic development strategies that retain, enhance, and create economic opportunities.

Objective A: Encourage the expansion, continuation, and development of business, technology, housing, and tourism.

Guideline 1: An inventory of existing business and housing needs and trends should be made periodically (EDA).

Guideline 2: Encourage business and residential developments that are environmentally friendly (P&Z).

Guideline 3: Businesses should be given planning assistance to expand or improve their operations, including the awareness of existing financing tools (EDA).

Guideline 4: Redevelopment and reclamation of existing commercial and industrial areas should take priority over creating new developments, when feasible (EDA, Cities).

Guideline 5: Marketing strategies should be encouraged that promote the use of goods and services produced or provided in the County (EDA).

Guideline 6: Marketing strategies should be developed that promote the County as a place to work and live, focusing on available commercial and residential lots (EDA).

- Guideline 7: Encourage local government units to develop and plan for infrastructure necessary to retain and expand businesses (EDA).
- Guideline 8: Groundwater supply limitations should be recognized and evaluated prior to major development (EDA).
- Guideline 9: Businesses should be encouraged to implement sustainable business practices (EDA).
- Guideline 10: Agricultural activities should be considered an existing industry and plans should be implemented to promote agricultural related business (PC, CB, EDA, P&Z, Cities).
- Guideline 11: Assistance in retaining or expanding existing businesses should be emphasized (EDA).
- Guideline 12: Business and industrial expansion should be encouraged in existing municipal areas in an effort to preserve agricultural land and natural resources (PC, CB, P&Z, Cities).

Objective B: Encourage a diversified type and number of businesses.

- Guideline 1: A diversified tax base offering a large number and wide variety of employment opportunities at different education and skill levels should be promoted (EDA).
- Guideline 2: Recruitment of new business and industry should take into consideration its size, type, wage, jobs, utility demand, and compatibility with existing land uses and natural resources (EDA).
- Guideline 3: Encouragement and preference should be given to industrial and commercial interests with long-range commitment to the County (EDA).
- Guideline 4: Farmers should be encouraged to diversify and add value to commodities (i.e., bio-fuels, specialty products, etc.).

Objective C: Promote tourism as an existing and growing industry.

- Guideline 1: Programs, activities, and events that draw visitors to Meeker County should be encouraged (EDA, Cities).
- Guideline 3: Promotion of tourism should include provisions for protecting the County's natural resources.
- Guideline 4: Tourism should be coordinated with existing entities, such as State parks and trails (EDA).

Guideline 5: Residential development near Wildlife Management Areas should be discouraged by establishing buffer zones for gun safety and habitat purposes (PC, CB, P&Z).

Guideline 6: The County's primary entrance corridors should portray a positive image of Meeker County with proper signage, a County theme, etc. (EDA).

Objective D: Assist in providing recreational and outdoor opportunities.

Guideline 1: The County should create a parks and recreation study (including trails) that examines both existing and potential recreational opportunities. Potential improvements and/or projects should be identified (CA, CB).

Guideline 2: Both active and passive recreation areas should be encouraged.

Guideline 3: State and Federal programs should be used to help protect wildlife and fish habitat (CA, SWCD).

Objective E: Help develop and improve the human and natural resources of the County.

Guideline 1: Efforts should be made to prevent the out-migration of area youth and to best utilize the older citizens of the community.

Guideline 2: The County and private enterprise should work together to achieve and retain a skilled and highly trained labor force.

Guideline 3: "Quality of life" indicators should be recognized as measures of the County's economic success.

Guideline 4: The County should actively seek funds for a variety of business, people, and natural resource needs (EDA).

Guideline 5: Planning should occur to protect agricultural lands as a natural and economic resource (PC, CB, P&Z).

Goal Three: Natural Resources

To protect, preserve, and enhance the area's natural resources, including tillable agricultural land, wooded areas, water (both surface and groundwater), native vegetation, and scenic areas.

Objective A: Create reasonable standards for environmental protection.

- Guideline 1: Land use activities should not greatly impact the area's natural resources (PC, CB).
 - Guideline 2: Land use plans and ordinances should minimize the impacts on tillable agricultural land, wetlands, wooded areas, aggregate resources, and other unique natural resources (PC, CB).
 - Guideline 3: The County should make land use decisions that help to protect and utilize aggregate resources with an emphasis on minimizing residential and environmental conflicts (PC, CB).
 - Guideline 4: The disturbance or removal of natural resources, such as mining, should be performed in a manner that will minimize the impact on the environment and efforts should be made to return any disturbed area back to an environmentally beneficial state that is compatible with the surrounding landscape (PC, CB, P&Z).
 - Guideline 5: All gravel pits should have closure requirements and reclamation plans that are closely monitored and enforced by the County (P&Z, PC, CB).
 - Guideline 6: The County's Aggregate Resource Map should be incorporated into making land use decisions with an emphasis on protecting the resources (PC, CB).
 - Guideline 7: The County should work with all watershed management-like organizations in developing and implementing water management activities, which are consistent with the County's Water Plan (P&Z, CE, SWCD).
- Objective B: Reduce priority pollutants to acceptable levels (i.e., soil erosion, storm water, wastewater, etc.).
- Guideline 1: Point and non-point pollution sources should be identified and abated, especially in wellhead protection areas (P&Z, SWCD).
 - Guideline 2: The County should support the proper location, design, installation, and maintenance of septic systems, along with proper upgrading, as needed (P&Z).
 - Guideline 3: Managed/cooperative wastewater treatment systems should be encouraged in rural areas with high-density housing (P&Z).
 - Guideline 4: Erosion and stormwater management provisions should be enforced (P&Z, CE, SWCD, Cities).

- Guideline 5: Recycling programs and proper solid waste disposal should be encouraged and supported (CA, Cities).
- Guideline 6: Individual Sewage Treatment Systems inspections should be conducted to determine imminent health threats (P&Z).
- Guideline 7: The County should help promote programs that can minimize soil erosion (SWCD).
- Guideline 8: Construction sites should be protected with temporary and permanent erosion control measures (P&Z, SWCD).
- Guideline 9: Erosive areas should be protected with appropriate conservation measures (P&Z, SWCD).
- Guideline 10: All projects should be held accountable for minimizing water runoff and soil erosion (P&Z, SWCD).
- Guideline 11: Land use practices should be implemented that minimize runoff (P&Z, SWCD).
- Guideline 12: The County should provide incentives to landowners to plant trees and shrubs that will provide protection from blowing and drifting snow (SWCD).
- Guideline 13: Residents should be given incentives to plant buffer strips (SWCD).
- Guideline 14: State cost-share programs should be used to assist in the installation of conservation practices (SWCD, annually).
- Guideline 15: The County should apply for grant dollars and utilize the Agriculture Best Management Practices (BMP) Loan Program to assist in BMP implementation (SWCD).
- Guideline 16: The County should proactively participate in getting waters off the MPCA's Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) listing of impaired waters.
- Guideline 17: The County should cooperate to inventory and prioritize potential contaminant sources, such as conducting a Level II Feedlot Inventory, ISTS inspections, etc. (CB).

Objective C: Enhance the quantity and quality of surface water resources.

- Guideline 1: Ordinances should be implemented that regulate land use near surface water, wellhead protection areas, wetlands, and in flood plains (P&Z, PC, CB).

- Guideline 2: The need for flood reduction measures should be planned for, evaluated, and implemented (P&Z, SWCD, PC, CB).
- Guideline 3: The County should pursue the development of an accurate floodplain map in both digital and paper formats (CB).
- Guideline 4: Conservation programs, such as buffer strips and wetland restorations, should be promoted near surface water and on suitable lands (SWCD).
- Guideline 5: The County should work closely with watershed districts and Clean Water Partnerships in an effort to protect water resources (P&Z, SWCD).
- Guideline 6: The County should work with willing landowners on restoring natural water management resources, where practical (SWCD).
- Guideline 7: Wetland preservation activities should be encouraged in response to a demonstrated need and as a part of a complete natural resource management effort which considers water conservation, recreation, and preservation of wildlife habitat (SWCD).
- Guideline 8: Increased emphasis should be placed upon shoreland management in an effort to minimize the impacts on these environmentally sensitive areas.
- Guideline 9: Encourage temporary and permanent retention and settling basins to enhance surface water quality (SWCD, P&Z).
- Guideline 10: Encourage the restoration of drained wetlands by willing landowners (SWCD).
- Guideline 11: The entire County should be designated as a high priority wetland area for the consideration of grants and the implementation of various programs.
- Guideline 12: The County should provide engineering recommendations for the placement and replacement of culverts on roads, driveways, and public ditches (CE, TWNS).
- Guideline 13: Stormwater retention basins for runoff retention and water quality treatment should be encouraged rather than using natural wetlands.

Objective D: Enhance the quantity and quality of groundwater resources.

- Guideline 1: The County should work with the surrounding Counties to have the DNR conduct a regional hydrogeologic atlas for the region.
- Guideline 2: Groundwater quality and quantity should be closely monitored (SWCD).

- Guideline 3: The County should continue to assist with the development and implementation of wellhead protection plans (P&Z, SWCD).
- Guideline 4: Water testing should be promoted and problems should be analyzed (CA, P&Z, SWCD).
- Guideline 5: Sensitive groundwater recharge areas should be identified and proactively protected (P&Z, SWCD).
- Guideline 6: The County should encourage the proper abandonment of storage tanks and direct landowners to the appropriate agencies for removal and cleanup assistance (CB).

Objective E: Raise public awareness on a number of key natural resource issues.

Please refer to “Goal Seven: Public Awareness” at the end of this Chapter

Goal Four: Transportation
 To provide and preserve a balanced mix of transportation options that safely and efficiently move people and goods.

Objective A: Support a public and private balanced transportation system that encompasses air, highway, rail, public transit, and pipeline systems which economically move people and products.

- Guideline 1: The planning for the transportation system should focus on helping meet the County’s economic and social needs (CE, TWNS).
- Guideline 2: The consideration of both direct and indirect impacts should be evaluated for each major transportation project (CE).
- Guideline 3: Public transportation and ride sharing should be given a high priority (CB).
- Guideline 4: Consideration should be given to the aging and disabled populations when designing transportation programs (CB, Cities).
- Guideline 5: Encouragement should be given towards the development of pedestrian and bicycle friendly facilities to help provide balance to the transportation system (CB, CE, TWNS, Cities)
- Guideline 6: Long range planning should address a variety of transportation issues, with special consideration given to issues associated with inter-regional corridors (PC, CE).

- Guideline 7: Planning and design standards should address both the aesthetic and functional needs of the County (CE).
 - Guideline 8: Flood control benefits should be incorporated into future road and bridge enhancements, when feasible (CE, TWNS, SWCD).
 - Guideline 9: The County should promote the designation of State Highway 15 as an Inter-regional Corridor (CE, CB).
 - Guideline 10: Safety improvements should be supported at railroad crossings where the improvements are warranted.
 - Guideline 11: Setback distances from the rail line should be considered to help facilitate future rail use (PC).
- Objective B: Encourage the maintenance, reconstruction, and construction of a highway and street system capable of providing for the safe, convenient, and economical movement of persons and commodities.
- Guideline 1: Highway and street improvements should include consideration for sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, and beautification (CE, Cities).
 - Guideline 2: Safety improvements, including signing or traffic lights at intersections with high traffic volume, should be made in anticipation of problems rather than in reaction to them (CE).
 - Guideline 3: The County should continue to seek funds to assist with bridge replacements (CE).
 - Guideline 4: Programs or projects with the potential for reducing damage to highways caused by frequent heavy loads should be encouraged and supported (CE).
 - Guideline 5: Programs or projects designed to improve highway safety should be supported, including ones to lessen highway congestion.
 - Guideline 6: The County should coordinate the placement of signs in an effort to keep Meeker County safe and attractive (P&Z).
 - Guideline 7: The County should evaluate the County's roadway system to possibly better serve the residents of Meeker County by transferring jurisdictional responsibilities of certain roadways in response to changing population densities throughout the County. This is referred to as a jurisdictional study and one should be completed every five years or as needed (CB, CE, TWNS, Cities).
- Objective C: Invest strategically in transportation infrastructure to enhance the vitality of the County.

- Guideline 1: Priority should be given to the preservation and maintenance of the existing transportation system.
- Guideline 2: Current and planned right-of-ways for transportation system improvements should be identified and preserved (CE).
- Guideline 3: Transportation services should be developed that are consistent with local land use plans as well as with other development plans (CE, P&Z, Cities).
- Guideline 4: Public and private partnerships in all forms of transportation investments should be encouraged (CE).
- Guideline 5: Recreational trails should be an important part of the overall transportation plan and should be developed and/or enhanced where needed (CE).
- Guideline 6: Cul-de-sac development should be discouraged to help maintain a system of interconnected roads unless they are the only feasible option.
- Guideline 7: Consideration should be given to classify appropriate segments of County Roads and Trunk Highways as scenic with planted areas to buffer developed land.
- Guideline 8: The County should work with Mn/DOT to develop and implement sound access management guidelines to protect the integrity of the designed roadway system.
- Guideline 9: All new developments should mitigate impacts directly related to new access points (P&Z).
- Guideline 10: New, private, direct access to the County's major highways should be strongly discouraged. Adjacent roadways should be used whenever applicable (CE, CB).

Objective E: Develop a safe and financially responsible transportation plan (CE).

- Guideline 1: Safety should always be the top priority in transportation planning.
- Guideline 2: Create a roadway management system with a consistently updated comprehensive inventory of roadways and bridges to assist in the prioritization of projects (CE).
- Guideline 3: A multi-year road improvement program should be continued as part of a capital improvement program to include maintenance, safety upgrading, paving, and reconstruction work prioritized by year, along with costs and methods of financing (CE).

- Guideline 4: Transportation impacts should be examined before land use decisions are made, including the decision if existing roadways are suitable for the proposed land use or if improvements will be needed (P&Z, CE).
- Guideline 5: Efficiency in transportation services should be encouraged or promoted.
- Guideline 6: The location of commercial, industrial, and residential developments should be planned to minimize traffic conflicts.
- Guideline 7: Rural development should be encouraged to locate near appropriate transportation corridors (PC, CE, P&Z).

Goal Five: Land Use Planning

To establish a community-based land use process that recognizes that we have the responsibility and tools to shape good land use decisions, while setting clear guidelines and treating people fairly.

Objective A: Encourage a balanced and harmonious use of land consistent with natural features and surrounding land use plans.

- Guideline 1: The County's Zoning Ordinances should be reviewed periodically and updated as needed (P&Z, PC, CB, ongoing).
- Guideline 2: Local units of government and State agencies should be consulted on important land use issues (P&Z).
- Guideline 3: Urban growth boundaries should be identified and joint planning should occur to account for growth in those boundaries (Cities, TWNS, P&Z, PC).
- Guideline 4: Land use decisions should not interfere with the City of Litchfield's Airport Master Plan (PC, CB).
- Guideline 5: Orderly annexation agreements should be encouraged and required, where appropriate (Cities, TWNS, PC, CB).
- Guideline 6: Residential, commercial, and industrial growth should have adequate sewer, water, and transportation infrastructure (Cities, TWNS, PC).
- Guideline 7: The impact of land uses upon sensitive environmental and unique scenic areas when making land use and zoning decisions should be considered (PC, CB).

Guideline 8: Open space planning should be encouraged for rural and non-farm housing (PC).

Guideline 9: Advertising signs should be regulated to maximize public safety (PC, P&Z).

Guideline 10: Zoning regulations should minimize the impacts on tillable agricultural land, environmentally sensitive areas, and unique areas from urban and non-agricultural growth (PC).

Guideline 11: Regulations for nuisances and pollutants should be closely monitored and enforced in an effort to provide for a safe and healthy living environment for all residents (P&Z, PC).

Guideline 12: The placement and impacts of wind turbines should be regulated (PC).

Guideline 13: Existing ground water data should be analyzed to assist in making land use decisions (SWCD, PC).

Guideline 14: Variances should be granted only when a true hardship exists (BOA).

Guideline 15: The County should actively identify land with scenic, historic, and unique value and should develop a plan to successfully protect these areas (P&Z, PC).

Guideline 16: The Historical Society should be consulted on important planning issues to ensure that areas with historical significance are preserved (P&Z, PC).

Guideline 17: Whenever possible, the County's land use decisions should be consistent with municipal comprehensive plans (Cities, TWNS, P&Z, PC).

Objective B: Help assure an adequate and affordable housing supply that provides a convenient, safe, and aesthetically appealing living environment.

Guideline 1: The County should consult and cooperate with appropriate agencies on important housing-related issues (EDA).

Guideline 2: The County should conduct and/or participate in various housing studies periodically to assess the quality, quantity, type, and need for housing (EDA).

Guideline 3: The County should enforce clear development standards for new residential subdivisions (P&Z, PC, CB).

- Guideline 4: The Subdivision Ordinance should require stormwater management (including the use of infiltration basins, swales, waterways, constructed wetlands, etc.).
- Guideline 5: Existing public and private institutions should be involved in housing efforts as much as possible.
- Guideline 6: Conventional (non open-space) residential subdivisions should be encouraged in areas that are or will soon be supplied with municipal services (PC, CB, P&Z, Cities).
- Guideline 7: Conservation subdivisions with open space should be allowed, where appropriate (P&Z, PC, TWNS).

Objective C: Create a comprehensive and accurate Geographic Information System (GIS) database for the County to assist in land use decisions.

- Guideline 1: A GIS needs assessment should be periodically conducted (CB).
- Guideline 2: The County should support future and expanded uses in GIS, including the development of a Countywide parcel map (CB).
- Guideline 3: GIS data (i.e., biological surveys, wellhead protection areas, floodplains, etc.) should be used to assist in making land use decisions (P&Z, PC, CB, CE).
- Guideline 4: Current Urban Growth Areas should be kept on file in the GIS database and displayed on the County's Zoning Map (Cities, P&Z).
- Guideline 5: The County's current land use and zoning maps should be regularly updated (Cities, TWNS, P&Z).

Goal Six: Public Investments

To account for the full environmental, social, and economic costs of public investments while making the best use of existing infrastructure to minimize costs.

Objective A: Facilitate the development of basic infrastructure and services to as many of the residents of the County as possible without creating any substantial economic or environmental problems.

- Guideline 1: The County should assist in providing quality and efficient law enforcement and emergency management to all residents (CB).

Guideline 2: Sanitation and landfill management and development should be done to account for increased waste produced from new development and growth (CA).

Guideline 3: The County should support good telecommunication services.

Guideline 4: The County should work with State and Federal agencies to maximize compatible use of publicly owned lands (P&Z).

Objective B: Conduct capital improvements programming and budgeting to achieve desired types and levels of public facilities and services.

Guideline 1: A periodic inspection and maintenance schedule should be developed and implemented for all County property and facilities (CA).

Guideline 2: Plans for proposed new, upgraded, or expanded services and facilities should be coordinated with applicable units of government and agencies.

Guideline 3: Public facilities and services should not be duplicated.

Objective C: Continue and support the maintenance of a Countywide ditch system.

Guideline 1: The ditch system should be maintained so that it effectively manages the movement of water using best management practices to minimize pollution and sediment (CE, SWCD).

Guideline 2: The installation of filter strips should be enforced where appropriate and encouraged elsewhere (SWCD).

Guideline 3: A countywide drainage management plan, identifying potential improvements and upland storage opportunities (along with corresponding funding mechanisms) should be explored (CB).

Goal Seven: Public Awareness

To support research and provide information on the County's important fiscal, environmental, and social issues.

Objective A: Provide residents access to educational materials on the County's key planning issues.

Guideline 1: The County should assist with providing information on rural issues (P&Z).

- Guideline 2: The many benefits of wetland protection and restoration should be promoted through available programs (SWCD).
- Guideline 3: Proper septic system design, operation, and benefits to the environment should be promoted (P&Z).
- Guideline 4: The importance of recycling should be promoted (CA).
- Guideline 5: Education efforts should be supported regarding manure management, nutrient management, and residue management plans, along with the application of other potential pollutants (SWCD).
- Guideline 6: Educational programs that promote soil conservation should be offered (SWCD).
- Guideline 7: The preservation and restoration of upland storage areas should be promoted (wetlands, low-lying areas, basins).
- Guideline 8: Educational efforts to control or reduce the effects of accelerated storm water runoff should be promoted.
- Guideline 9: The County should promote the proper sealing of abandoned wells.
- Guideline 10: The County should promote wellhead protection on all private wells and assist with implementation for those who are interested (SWCD).
- Guideline 11: A fact sheet should be developed on each of the County's major planning and zoning documents (i.e., Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, etc.).

Chapter Eight: Implementation

The Comprehensive Plan is an official planning and policy document for the County. Its primary purpose is to help guide land use decisions over the “life” of the Plan. However, without proper implementation, the goals, objectives, and policy guidelines will have little impact on growth and development in Meeker County. Several implementation steps will need to be taken by the County. To assist the County in the identification of these activities, Chapter Eight establishes a temporary work plan for the County to follow. The identified implementation steps are organized under the County’s seven goal areas found in Chapter Seven.

Goal One: Citizen Participation and Intergovernmental Cooperation

1. Annually review the County’s Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, and Comprehensive Plan to identify potential changes and update as needed. This should be placed on the agenda of the Planning Commission and County Board (Objective C, Guideline 1, Pg. 2).
2. Meetings should be held as needed to discuss important planning issues and to determine what opportunities exist to solve any conflict. These meetings should occur with Meeker County’s municipalities and townships at least once every year (Objective D, Guideline 1, Pg. 3).

Goal Two: Economic Development

3. The County should create a parks and recreation study (including trails) that examines both existing and potential recreational opportunities. Potential improvements and/or projects should be identified (Objective D, Guideline 1, Pg. 5).

Goal Three: Natural Resources

4. The County’s aggregate resource map should be incorporated into the County’s decision-making process (Objective A, Guideline 3, Pg. 6).
5. All gravel pits should have closure requirements and reclamation plans that are closely monitored and enforced by the County (Objective A, Guideline 5, Pg. 6).
6. The County should proactively participate in getting waters off the MPCA’s Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) listing of impaired waters (Objective B, Guideline 16, Pg. 7).

**Table 8A: MCPA 303d List of Impaired Waters:
Meeker County, 2008**

Reach	Pollutant	Project Goal Start/End
<i>Big Swan Lake</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	2002/2015
<i>Clear Lake</i>	Excess Nutrients	2008/2013
<i>Hope Lake</i>	Excess Nutrients	2019/2022
<i>Lake Arvilla</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	2002/2015
<i>Lake Betsy</i>	Excess Nutrients	2008/2012
<i>Lake Francis</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	1999/2011
<i>Lake Jennie</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	1999/2011
<i>Long Lake</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	1999/2011
<i>Long Lake</i>	Excess Nutrients	2019/2022
<i>Spring Lake</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	1999/2011
<i>Washington Lake</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	1999/2011
<i>Dunns Lake</i>	Excess nutrients	2008/2013
<i>Dunns Lake</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	1999/2011
<i>Richardson Lake</i>	Excess nutrients	2008/2013
<i>Richardson Lake</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	1999/2011
<i>Lake Minnie-Belle</i>	Mercury & Fish Consumption Advisory	1999/2011
<i>North Fork Crow River</i>	Biota, Mercury	Unknown
<i>South Fork Crow River</i>	Biota, Mercury, Turbidity	Unknown
<i>Grove Creek</i>	Biota, Low Oxygen	Unknown
<i>Jewitts Creek</i>	Ammonia, Biota, Low Oxygen	Unknown
<i>Unnamed Creek</i>	Biota (near Jewitts Creek)	Unknown
<i>Clearwater River</i>	Fecal Coliform, Low Oxygen	Unknown

7. The County should cooperate to inventory and prioritize potential contaminant sources (Objective B, Guideline 17, Pg. 7). *This could be accomplished proactively through the use of Federal and State grants and programs.*
8. The County should pursue the development of an accurate floodplain map in both paper and digital formats (Objective C, Guideline 3, Pg. 8).
9. The County should work with the surrounding counties to have the DNR conduct a regional hydrogeologic atlas for the region (Objective D, Guideline 1, Pg. 9).
10. The County should continue to assist with the development of wellhead protection plans (Objective D, Guideline 3, Pg. 9).

Goal Four: Transportation

11. The County should evaluate the County's roadway system to possibly better serve the residents of Meeker County by transferring jurisdictional responsibilities of certain roadways in response to changing population densities throughout the County. This is referred to as a jurisdictional study and one should be completed every five years or as needed (Objective B, Guideline 7, Pg. 11).
12. The County should work with Mn/DOT to develop and implement sound access management guidelines to protect the integrity of the designed roadway system (Objective C, Guideline 8, Pg. 11).

Goal Five: Land Use Planning

13. The County should actively help to facilitate orderly annexations by discussing the need for them with the affected townships and municipalities, where appropriate. Orderly annexation agreements should be discussed as a condition in all Urban Growth Areas (Objective A, Guideline 5, Pg. 13).
14. The County should support future and expanded uses in GIS, including the development of a Countywide parcel map (Objective C, Guideline 2, Pg. 14).
15. The County's current land use and zoning maps should be regularly updated (Objective C, Guideline 5, Pg. 14).

Goal Six: Public Investments

16. A countywide drainage management plan, identifying potential improvements and upland storage opportunities (along with corresponding funding mechanisms), should be explored (Objective C, Guideline 3, Pg. 15).

Goal Seven: Public Awareness

17. A fact sheet should be developed on each of the County's major planning and zoning documents (Objective A, Guideline 11, Pg. 16).

Miscellaneous Implementation Steps (not goal specific)

18. The **Meeker County Soil Survey** was completed in 1999. The County should consult this document before making important land use decisions.
19. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is currently conducting a **Biological Survey for Meeker County**. The goal of the survey is to identify significant natural areas and to collect and interpret data on the distribution and ecology of rare plants, rare animals, and native plant communities. Once completed, the information provided in the report should be used to help guide future land use decisions.
20. **Amendment Process** – The plan can be amended by the recommendation of the Planning Commission to the County Board of Commissioners, or the County Board can propose an amendment to the Plan by resolution to the Planning Commission. Either way, a public hearing shall be held annually to review any and all recommendations for amendment and said public hearing will occur at the first Planning Commission meeting in December of the year. After the public hearing the Planning Commission shall review the plan with the input of the public, township supervisors, and municipalities. After review, the Planning Commission shall make a recommendation for amendments, if any, to the County Board for approval.

Chapter Nine: Future Land Use Plan

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan establishes Meeker County's Future Land Use Plan. It accomplishes this in three ways. First, the County's approach to zoning is outlined. Second, the County's other official documents and planning efforts are highlighted. Finally, a Future Land Use Map is provided and described.

SECTION ONE: ZONING

Due to increased rural residential development pressures, the Planning Commission and County Board examined Meeker County's long-term zoning needs in Fall and Winter of 2006. The overwhelming conclusion was that Meeker County's Zoning Ordinance was not effectively achieving the goals, objectives, and policy guidelines outlined in Chapter Seven. Not only was development occurring haphazardly, the County's agricultural community was slowly losing prime farming locations. To make matters worse, the new rural residential development was often found to be incompatible with the well established farming way-of-life, especially near feedlots. As a result, a number of key revisions were needed to the Ordinance.

Rural Residential Zoning

The new zoning ordinance will focus on having one single family dwelling per quarter-quarter section, with four additional options. First, up to three additional dwellings may be transferred onto a quarter-quarter section by following the County's Transfer of Development Rights provisions found in Article 12A of the County's Zoning Ordinance. Second, up to two additional dwellings may be built per quarter-quarter section if each parcel gets a conditional use permit, only uses a maximum of one acre of tillable land, and each parcel has a five-acre minimum permanent easement. Third, owners of at least twenty acres of land within a quarter-quarter section may sell one additional building lot if the parcel was purchased as a separate parcel after October 19, 2001. Finally, all further subdivisions must be re-zoned and platted according to the County's Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances.

Shoreland Zoning

Increased development pressure around lakes have raised concerns about water quality and impacts on lake use. The State's existing shoreland standards do not adequately address these concerns based on local resource conditions and needs. Meeker County recognized this five years ago and proactively adopted a fourth lake classification, called Natural Sensitive, to help protect the County's most fragile lake areas. Statewide efforts are currently being made to have all counties adopt similar shoreland standards. After reviewing the DNR's "Alternative Shoreland Management Standards", the Planning Commission and County Board proposed to again take the lead on adopting tougher lakeshore development standards. The two main changes are focused around larger riparian lot sizes and increased shoreland setbacks. This received widespread support at a recent countywide public hearing on the proposal.

**SECTION TWO:
OTHER OFFICIAL PLANNING DOCUMENTS AND EFFORTS**

Meeker County Comprehensive Water Plan

The County's current Comprehensive Local Water Plan was adopted in January 2003 and will continue to guide the County in water resource management through 2012. While the creation of the document was entirely voluntary, various State grants require an approved Plan, including the Natural Resources Block Grant (NRBG). In accordance with M.S. Chapter 103B, the Plan inventories ground and surface water resource data, as well contains an implementation plan to address current and emerging issues. The County's Water Planning Taskforce oversees the implementation of the Plan. The Taskforce meets annually in January to discuss water planning activities, as well as prioritize the County's NRBG requests. The formal recommendations of the Taskforce are then forwarded to the County Board of Commissions for approval.

Watershed District Management Plans

There are four watershed districts within the County. These district, which are primarily found in the northern half of the County, were formed to address water resource related issues in the following watersheds: Clearwater River, Middle Fork Crow River, North Fork Crow River, and Sauk River Watershed District. Each of these districts is considered to be a separate local unit of government and has the statutory authority to levy taxes and adopt regulations. In accordance with M.S. Chapter 103D, each District has adopted a Watershed Management Plan. Like the aforementioned County Water Plans, these plans inventory pertinent water resource data and contain steps for implementation.

Meeker County Hazard Mitigation Plan

The County currently has a draft All-Hazard Mitigation Plan ready to adopt. The purpose of the Plan is to identify all natural and man-made disasters that could occur in Meeker County, and adequately address concerns before they occur. Once adopted, the County will need to take a look at ways to incorporate the various mitigation measures into the County's Comprehensive Plan. For example, the County may need to develop a strategy to best protect the County's flood prone areas.

State Highway 15 Corridor Study

With increased population growth over the last couple of decades, and with future trends showing further growth, Trunk Highway 15 is not meeting the increased demands placed on it. As a result, a Highway 15 Coalition was formed in 2004 to advocate for improvements on the highway for safe and efficient travel. The Coalition's Action Plan is seeking \$1 million in federal dollars to conduct a corridor study. The study will determine community priorities for the corridor, identify safety and access needs and recommend steps to preserve the corridor through wise land use

decisions and access management. Those who conduct the study will also work with local planning and zoning authorities to identify necessary setbacks and preservation areas. In addition, there is the need to work with Mn/DOT on the possible purchase of right-of-way and “officially map” segments to accommodate future construction. As a result, Meeker County will be taking a look at establishing 200-foot setbacks on all new developments along the corridor.

Access Management Ordinance

Over the past couple of years, the Minnesota Department of Transportation has been working with various counties on establishing reasonable assess management provisions, to be adopted by local governmental units. These provisions adequately space out the number of assess points along the County’s major roadways. For example, along U.S. Highway 12, a one-mile spacing of assess points will be encouraged. The use of frontage and backage roads, along with directing access points to the side roadways, are the primary tools used to implement these ordinances. The overall intent is to minimize traffic accidents and congestion. Meeker County currently has a draft Assess Management Ordinance it is proposing to adopt.

Greenleaf, Cedar, and Sioux Lakes Area Conservation District

There has been interest expressed by landowners a multiple partners in protecting the undeveloped land around Greenleaf, Cedar, and Sioux lakes. The conversation has ranged from creating a new State Park to simply establishing a conservation area. There is currently a bill in the State Legislature to appropriate funds to create a study of the area, with a strong emphasis on citizen participation. The purpose of the plan would be to identify conservation opportunities for the area and to address any concerns expressed by the public.

SECTION THREE: OFFICIAL FUTURE LAND USE MAP

One of the primary justifications for revising the November 2005 Comprehensive Plan was to create a Future Land Use Map. The previous plan relied on the maps provided in Chapters Four and Five, the community profiles for each of the cities and townships. The maps display how each township is zoned and identifies the cities’ urban growth areas. The problem, however, was that a countywide map was not created and no where was any map referred to as a “Future Land Use Map.” As a result, Meeker County’s new Future Land Use Map was created as part of this planning process (the map is found following the text of this Chapter). The key changes and/or additions are highlighted below:

Zoning Districts

The County’s current zoning districts are displayed on the map. Some of the individual township maps found in Chapter Five needed to be updated due to a few rezonings that had taken place since November 2005.

Shoreland Districts

The County's updated lake classifications are displayed on the map, including the following types:

1. General Development (least restrictive)
2. Recreational Development
3. Natural Environment
4. Natural Sensitive (most restrictive)

Railroad Industrial Zoning

The County's Industrial district was expanded with a 600-foot buffer around the County's existing railroad lines. This was done in the recognition of how valuable this land is to railroad-intensive industries. The County's Zoning Ordinance will need to be examined to protect against any unforeseen disadvantages due to these changes.

Urban Growth Areas

Each of the cities in Meeker County was given the opportunity to re-identify their Urban Growth Boundaries. These areas need to be established through municipal comprehensive plans and simply identify where each city most like will grow in the future. Extraordinary planning measures and cooperative efforts between the cities, townships, and the County need to be made in these areas. For example, the County does not want to make a bad land use decision that will negatively affect how a city can expand. An increasing number of cooperative arrangements between local jurisdictions have been made throughout the State. Meeker County is committed to exploring all options in order to ensure that intergovernmental cooperation remains a high priority.

Land Use Plan Summary

Collectively, the information presented in this Chapter shall serve as the County's roadmap to making future land use decisions. As problems and opportunities arise with land use issues, it is anticipated that this Chapter will be revised in the future to reflect prevailing future land use philosophies.

