

Community *Perspectives*



COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Introduction

In the formulation of a Comprehensive Plan, the City must identify the issues and opportunities that will influence its planning goals and policies. To define the scope and direction of the Delano 2040 Comprehensive plan, initial interviews were conducted with the City Council, City Advisory Committees and City Staff.

The following is a presentation of community perspectives related to existing conditions within the City as well as opinions on future community growth. Through the interview process a broad range of topics were discussed. There was strong consensus on many topics, however, where opinions differed on specific topics, both sides of the issue are presented. The following perceptions and issues present topic areas that will require specific attention as the Comprehensive Plan proceeds.

Spirit of Delano.

Delano has experienced moderate growth over the past ten years, bringing new families into the community. The City Council and Advisory Committees represent a combination of long-time residents and new residents providing perspectives on the historic growth, and elements that have attracted the new families to choose Delano as their preferred place to live. The interview participants expressed great pride and satisfaction in Delano's small-town atmosphere, spirit, and identity. These traits are greatly valued and were identified as a community strength. Interviewees described the City's small-town characteristics as follows:

1. Delano promotes diversity in the social and economic composition of its households. The City has attracted community-minded people who want to contribute to the quality of life within the City. This is exhibited in strong volunteerism in the City's advisory committees, civic organizations, sports organizations, and social groups. These groups have residents actively involved in City decisions, events, improvements, programs, and planning. Private volunteer contributions supplement the City efforts in improving public spaces or planning community events. This social element was cited as a significant influence for new families choosing Delano as their place to live.
2. City and Civic events were identified as significantly contributing to Delano's small-town character and spirit of community. The Fourth of July, Oktoberfest, Old Fashioned Christmas, street dances, sports tournaments and other local events bring residents together to recreate, entertain, and celebrate in Delano.



3. Delano is a family-based community with attractive neighborhoods, quality housing stock, quality schools and an attractive park system. These elements are much appreciated by those interviewed and must continue to be emphasized in future community planning. Specific areas of need are community trails and sidewalks that connect neighborhoods and provide links to destinations within the City.



4. The following physical community attributes were specifically identified as contributing to Delano's small-town atmosphere and community appeal.
 - a. The school district was frequently identified as one of the City's strongest assets. The interviewees stressed the quality of both the physical facilities and the provided education. Newer residents indicated that the quality of schools was a major contributing factor in selecting Delano as their place to live.
 - b. Delano's historic downtown represents a very attractive focal point for the community that distinguishes Delano from other cities.
 - c. Quality well maintained residential neighborhoods.
 - d. Delano's Park system, with an emphasis on Central Park. Central Park is unique to Delano offering high quality amenities and provides a location for community events, sport league play and sport tournaments.



e. The location of community buildings (City Hall, Senior Center, Library, License Office, Fire Hall, Heritage Center) in Delano's downtown contribute to the appearance, activity and function of the area.



5. Many of the interview participants emphasized that Delano is a freestanding self-sustaining community providing quality housing, commercial shopping and entertainment opportunities, and industrial growth that provides local employment opportunities. The planning and development of the City's land uses has made Delano unique and distinctive. "We are distinctly Delano! We do not have to be like any other community. People want to live here and invest in the community both financially and socially."
6. Concern was expressed that future growth may detract from the City's small-town atmosphere/community spirit. The interview participants in the comprehensive planning process emphasized the need to retain the qualities described above by managing and guiding future community growth.

Pace Of Growth.

Based on U.S. Census data between 2000 and 2020, Delano added 992 new housing units. Interview participants were asked if they were comfortable with this pace of growth. The majority responded that they were comfortable with the community growth provided the following elements are achieved.



1. The elements that comprise Delano's small-town atmosphere are to be preserved and emphasized. New growth must continue to contribute to the economic and social identity of the City.
2. The new growth must pay its own way regarding the construction of new utilities, streets, parks, and new services that are needed to support new households.
3. The new growth will not create a financial burden for existing residents. It is recognized that with continued growth will come the need for more City-wide improvements that will go beyond developer responsibilities. City-wide improvements to utilities, collector and arterial streets, community buildings, and parks will be required to serve the growing population. The City-wide improvements must be planned, budgeted, and scheduled in a manner that allows the City to manage capital outlay and limit their impact on local taxes.
4. The pace of residential growth must be managed in coordination with the school district to avoid overburdening the local schools and the need for planned expansion of school buildings and facilities.
5. The new residential development must be of high-quality subdivision design, housing construction, and neighborhood amenities.
6. There is a need for greater housing diversity, (attainable rental and owner-occupied housing, age restricted housing, housing with services, different housing types and styles.)
7. New growth will build local markets that would support in-place and new businesses. Strong local markets would attract new businesses not currently available in Delano.
8. Economic development is a priority of the City. New residential growth is needed to support the employment base for local businesses and industries.

Some of the interview participants raised the following concerns on the pace of growth.

1. Rapid future growth can work contrary to the small-town identity that Delano values. People that have moved to the community value the community's amenities, and spirit that Delano currently offers.



2. The pace of growth must be within the City's ability to continue to provide a high level of quality services to the expanding population. With growth, comes the need for expanded City services (administration, public safety, public works, and social programs) within an effective and financially efficient manner.
3. The impact of continued growth on public safety. Some of the interviews expressed that growth may create the need to preserve a safe environment.
4. The expense of City-wide needed improvements. These improvements will be the responsibility of the City and not individual development. The impact of these City-wide improvements on local taxes is a concern.
5. The impact of continued growth on the Delano School District, (facilities, class sizes, programs, sports).
6. Growth contributes to the City's transportation issues related to the street system, traffic congestion, traffic safety, and commuter travel time.

Regardless of the participants' positions pertaining to pace of growth, most recognize growth is a positive for the community, and believe that the following policies must be pursued to manage future growth.

1. New growth must be accompanied by a community focus on retaining the characteristics that define its strengths – community involvement, volunteerism, and contributions to a high quality of life.
2. The new residential growth must pay its own way regarding the construction of new utilities, streets, parks, trails, and new services that will be needed to support the new households.
3. The new growth will not create a financial burden for existing residents.
4. The new residential development must be of a high quality in subdivision design, neighborhood amenities, and housing construction.
5. New growth areas that capitalize on in-place City infrastructure will be a priority over the extension of utilities to new areas without these facilities.



Natural Environment

Through the interviews the following natural environment issues and comments were provided.

1. The Crow River was identified as both a strength and weakness for the community. The positive elements attributed to the river is its creation of a natural attractive greenway through the city. Those interviewed want to emphasize and enhance the river through the following efforts:
 - a. There is a need for a clean-up of the sections of the river to remove debris, stabilize the riverbanks and revegetate the riverbank with attractive landscaping.
 - b. Continue to develop Creamery /Sculpture Walk Park west of the river as an attractive passive park that offers trails and rest areas providing views of the river corridor.
 - c. Plan for the expansion of Riverfront Park along River Street south of Bridge Avenue to be designed to provide improved access to the river with attractive park amenities that complement and enhance Delano's historic downtown.
 - d. Some have suggested that the City improve access to the river as a means of expanding its recreational use. This could provide business opportunities such as canoe rentals for river trips.



2. The river presently is a detriment to the community in the following ways:
 - a. The river presents a physical barrier that divides the City, providing limited crossing points. This creates obstacles for transportation, streets, and trail planning. The City must continue to improve pedestrian and bicycle river crossings to provide trail connections throughout the City.
 - b. Seasonal flooding of Crow River has presented physical and financial difficulties for property owners and the City. While the City has an effective flood emergency preparedness plan, severe flood events place a burden on City volunteers, staff, and municipal finances. To mitigate flooding, the City will seek to implement the following:
 - The City must continue to provide floodplain protection to the older, flood vulnerable areas of the City.
 - The City will prohibit development within the 100-year floodplain in newly annexed growth areas identified in the Extraterritorial Land Use Plan. These areas will be maintained in their natural state, providing attractive trail corridors and greenways.
 - Build emergency flood protection features (such as movable flood walls) into the design of River Front Park in Downtown Delano.
 - Explore opportunities to expand flood storage capacity of the floodplain, both inside and outside the City in conjunction with new development or redevelopment projects.
3. Environmental impacts outside of the City have tremendous impacts on the water levels, water quality, and ability to interact with the river in Delano.
 - a. Changing climate condition, agricultural impacts from activities like drain tiling of fields and reduction in wetlands have resulted in greater fluctuation in water levels. During periods of high precipitation or snow melt, river levels bounce to higher levels than historically observed. Likewise, during periods of drought, water levels and flow are very low.
 - b. The City will work with other jurisdictions in the watershed to promote environmental practices that will protect water quality and moderate water



levels to support biodiversity, enhance recreational uses, and improve overall aesthetics.

- c. The City will implement measures within its jurisdiction to improve water quality and support more consistent water levels within the river.
4. Protect wetland and natural drainageways within the community. Incorporate these natural areas into the City's comprehensive stormwater management system.
5. Preserve and protect woodlands and significant trees as an amenity for residential development.

RESIDENTIAL

The following responses were provided regarding future residential housing:

1. The participants recognize that Delano has high quality residential neighborhoods. There was consensus among the participants that new residential growth has been well planned, and housing has been held to a high standard of design and materials. In planning neighborhoods, there is consensus that the City must continue to maintain strong performance standards to outline its expectations for future residential neighborhoods. Suggestions include:
 - a. The provision of neighborhood parks, trails, and sidewalks within new neighborhoods.
 - b. Avoid isolated neighborhoods. Provide interconnections between neighborhoods with streets, sidewalks, and trails. Provide trail connections between neighborhoods and destinations within the larger community.
 - c. Require neighborhood amenities (i.e., standardize City street lighting, landscaping, and buffer yards along collector and arterial streets, distinctive street designs, trails, and sidewalks).



Maintain building construction standards for medium- and high-density housing (i.e., exterior building materials, garage requirements, underground apartment parking, and density incentives).



2. Most interviewed indicated that Delano's housing stock and residential neighborhoods were in good condition. However, select areas of the older portions of the City have homes that display aging conditions. The City must continue to monitor the condition of its housing stock. Emphasis must be given to the ongoing maintenance, renovation, and modernization of existing homes. Some participants expressed support for the City's Scattered Site Residential Redevelopment program as a means of removing blighted homes and encouraging reinvestment in the older residential neighborhoods of the City. Others expressed opposition to this program, citing that it is another City expenditure and that it removes opportunities for the private market to undertake these projects.
3. The interviews identified the following housing needs in Delano:
 - a. There is a need for more affordable housing within the City that is reflective of local incomes and pay scales. Concerns were expressed that the City does not have an adequate supply of affordable housing, starter homes, or rental opportunities for working class households and young families. The provision of attainable housing is seen as a need in the City's continued pursuit of economic development in commercial and industrial land uses.



In providing future attainable housing, the City is not willing to compromise quality of construction or neighborhood design.

- b. The City in responding to attainable housing is willing to establish opportunities for greater housing diversity (i.e., small lot single family, townhomes, twin homes, and apartments). The participants also expressed a need for additional market rate apartments.
- c. The need for additional local senior housing was identified. The availability of senior housing with a variety of support services will allow longtime residents to address their housing and care needs without leaving the City.



COMMERCIAL

The following comments were offered pertaining to future commercial development in Delano:

1. Most Comprehensive Plan interview participants view the Delano historic downtown business area as an integral part of the community's identity and small-town character. In this respect, they support the maintenance and redevelopment within downtown as a means of keeping it a commercial focal point of the community. Most agreed that the role of downtown is changing with regard to the type and amount of retail businesses. The future commercial focus of downtown will likely include specialty retail, service businesses, professional offices, government services, and entertainment businesses that can effectively function in the historic buildings within the downtown area.
2. The historic architecture of Delano's downtown is viewed as a community asset that makes this area uniquely distinct. The downtown contributes to



Delano's identity. Private building renovations and the introduction of new businesses were cited as being very positive, improving the appearance and function of several downtown buildings, bringing new vitality to the downtown area. The private reinvestment in the existing buildings and the introduction of new development that complements downtown historic architecture and businesses has generated interest and excitement for



additional private and public improvements to further enhance the Delano Downtown.

3. City buildings such as the City Hall, Fire Station, and the Delano Public Library within the downtown area are seen as a positive means of keeping downtown as a City focal point and bringing customer traffic to the area.



4. Other suggestions for enhancing the downtown area includes:

- Enhance Riverfront Park south of Bridge Avenue to provide an attractive public park and streetscape along River Street.
- Consider improvements to the Crow River that provide improved management of the river, bank stabilization, and enhance the interaction with Downtown.
- Providing financial incentives for downtown private reinvestment such as revolving loan funds, reduced SAC and WAC charges, tax increment financing, or tax abatement for downtown improvements.
- Continue to implement the Downtown Architectural Guidelines to promote the historic architecture in any building renovation or new construction.
- Clean up and/or redevelop the alleys to enhance the appearance of downtown, create expanded public parking, and improve the area for truck deliveries and services.
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian access to the Delano Downtown through the provision of sidewalks and trails.



g. Develop a wayfinding sign plan to direct people to downtown destinations and public parking lots.



5. The City's highway commercial development received mixed reviews regarding conditions and uses. The Delano Crossing commercial area and the new development sites are viewed as being positive, however, a number of older commercial sites along Highway 12 are in need of some maintenance and upkeep. All interview participants expressed the need to promote high quality site design and building architecture through adherence to the City's commercial zoning performance standards.



6. The majority of the interview participants expressed a desire for a greater variety of commercial businesses within the City. The most frequent businesses mentioned included big box general merchandise, entertainment, restaurants, and an alternative grocery store.
7. Interview participants were divided on the need for a big box retail. People in favor of a big box expressed interest in shopping locally for items not available within the community. They currently need to travel to Buffalo or the metropolitan communities for a Target, Wal Mart, or Fleet Farm. The people favoring a big box indicated that they want the store in Delano.

Participants opposed to a big box expressed concern over the impact that this type of retailer would have on Delano's other retailers. They also cited that the big box retail is contrary to the small-town identity that Delano values. These residents indicated that they are not concerned with traveling outside the community for big box shopping opportunities.
8. The 2040, plan must identify locations for new commercial growth. The interview participants were asked if they would support new commercial growth east of the City in land currently in Independence. The responses were positive provided the land was detached from Independence and brought into the City of Delano. Under this scenario the land would be part of Delano with the City controlling the development review and would benefit from the property taxes. Most would not be supportive of providing utility service to a commercial area in Independence for commercial businesses that would compete with and may damage Delano businesses.
9. There is a need for redevelopment of select commercial properties along Highway 12:
 - a. The relocation of the concrete plant away from the Highway 12 corridor was suggested. Redevelopment of the metal buildings along the south side of Highway 12 was identified as being an important effort to improve these underutilized commercial sites and to enhance this important gateway to Delano.
 - b. The clean-up and redevelopment of the Highway 12 west corridor was identified as a community need. The undeveloped area along West River Road is available for expanded commercial land use in the form of expanding existing businesses or introducing new commercial development or redevelopment.



- c. The City has a limited supply of undeveloped commercial property along Highway 12. Redevelopment of blighted or underdeveloped properties along the entire corridor can provide opportunities in areas already supported by infrastructure for commercial development.

INDUSTRIAL

1. The interview participants noted that the City's industrial growth has been a grand success. The interview discussion revealed an appreciation for past City economic development efforts that have produced quality industrial parks attracting valuable industries to Delano.



2. Many of the participants expressed a need to encourage in-place expansion of the City's existing industries and the continued expansion of the Delano West Metro Business Park. The stated benefits of City's industrial growth included a balanced tax base, local employment opportunities, and local spending by both the companies and their employees. An expressed priority is the need for the City to retain existing industries looking for expansion.
3. In discussing the Delano West Metro Business Park, the following suggestions were offered:
 - a. The City continues to work with private property owners in this area of the City to allow the phased acquisition of land for the industrial park expansion. A phased acquisition plan is needed to avoid land use conflicts; allow for the logical extension of streets and utilities, plan for potential rail



access, while allowing the City to manage the timing and expense of land acquisition. Phased land acquisition reduces the City's financial exposure.

- b. The business park is located at the entrance of Delano. In this respect, the industrial park's appearance along Highway 12 is a critical concern. To address this, performance standards and business park design must provide an attractive highway corridor.
4. The City shall continue to work with the Burlington Northern Railroad to provide Rail access into the Delano West Metro Business Park.
5. The City's focus on industrial development and its historical success leads to additional challenges to support job growth. As manufacturers grow and expand in town, the need for employees grows as well. To support industrial expansion, the City shall focus on the elements that support job growth, including attainable housing, childcare facilities, educational opportunities, local medical facilities, and high-quality amenities that contribute to a high quality of life.

TRANSPORTATION

1. The most frequently identified challenge the City will face as it continues to grow will be transportation. New growth will generate more traffic using existing streets not designed for the expanded traffic volumes. Physical barriers of the Crow River, Highway 12, and the Railroad dictate street layouts and travel patterns creating pinch points resulting in traffic congestion. The City's growth to its west and southwest and single School District Campus in the northeastern part of the City have created traffic concerns about congestion, traffic speeds entering the city, and traffic safety for both automobiles and pedestrians.
2. Major concerns were expressed over traffic volumes, speeds and safety on the County roads entering the City. Specific intersections identified include County Road 30 intersections with County Road 16 and Highway 12, and the Highway 12 and Bridge Street intersection. Traffic entering and leaving the City on the County roads are traveling at a higher rate of speed that is not compatible with local traffic, pedestrians, and bicyclists trying to access or cross these County roads. County Road 30 west and County Road 16 south of Delano were the most frequently cited as examples for traffic safety concerns. The following suggestions were offered to address these concerns:





- a. Reduce traffic speeds beyond the City boundaries. Post electronic speed indicator signs along County Roads entering the City posting the speed limit and making motorists aware of the change in speed limits.
- b. Some have suggested that street design using landscaped center medians or traffic circles at intersections be considered as a means of announcing the entrance to the City and to reduce travel speeds.
- c. Examine intersection design and signalization at select intersections to control speeds, provide some interruption of traffic for ease of local street access, and/or improve crosswalks and pedestrian signage.
- d. Provide trail and sidewalk separation from the County Road travel surfaces to provide safe separation between pedestrians/bicycle traffic and automobiles.
- e. Work the MN DOT to lengthen the stop time on Highway 12 at the signalized intersections to allow a longer duration for traffic on local streets to access Highway 12 during peak travel times.



- f. As the City continues to grow, the City must plan for major collector streets, that will provide alternative travel routes away from existing congested intersections, dispersing traffic to desired destinations and commuter routes.
3. In looking to the future growth areas, it will become critical to establish a hierarchy of street functional classifications (i.e., local, collector and arterial streets). The arterial and collector street corridors must be protected from direct lot access to preserve them for through traffic movement. This will influence subdivision design.
4. Isolated neighborhoods are to be discouraged. New subdivisions shall be integrated with existing neighborhoods or other new subdivisions by interconnected local streets, trails, sidewalks, and parks. This suggestion provides two benefits:
 - a. The integrated neighborhoods create a sense of community.
 - b. Interconnected neighborhoods will decrease the traffic burden on collector and arterial street corridors.
 - c. The trail system is also perceived as an amenity that will contribute to the enjoyment of the new neighborhoods and overall City.
5. The majority of the interview participants expressed support for the City's comprehensive trail/sidewalk system. Sidewalks within neighborhoods and continued growth of the City-wide trail system is desired. Many expressed the need for expanded trail connections to link the residential neighborhoods to the major destinations within the city (school campus, downtown, highway commercial sites, city parks, etc.) Along with the trail system, wayfinding signage was suggested to direct trail users to the city destinations and attractions.
6. The safe accommodation of both pedestrian and bicycle traffic during a time when automobile traffic volumes are significantly growing is seen as a priority. Most interview participants expressed the need for safer pedestrian and bicycle routes over Highway 12 and the Crow River, including grade separated crossings.
7. A few of the interview participants questioned the cost of developing the trail system, specifically the planned pedestrian river crossing, citing other priorities requiring attention not receiving the same level of funding.
8. In consideration of future expansion of Delano Public Schools, explore in partnership with the District alternatives for expansion off the current main campus that help diversify traffic impacts.



UTILITIES / PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

1. With City growth, infrastructure must be expanded. The consensus opinion is that new growth must pay its own way. In this regard, new residential growth shall occur with developer-installed improvements (roads, stormwater management, utilities, trails, sidewalks, and lighting). Additionally, new development shall contribute to financing community-wide services through appropriate development fees.
2. The City facilities (i.e., City Hall, Fire Station, sanitary sewer, municipal water, municipal utility) are in excellent condition and have the capacity to accommodate growth. The City's Public Works operations are in need of additional functional space and plans are in process for a new facility. However, continued growth will require city-wide improvements in transportation, utility infrastructure, public buildings and services that will be a City expense. Through the interviews the following capital improvements were identified as future needs. There is concern regarding the impact that these capital improvements will have on the City taxes. The planning, timing, and budgeting for these improvements must be sensitive to the anticipated tax burden they will place on the residents and businesses in the City.
 - a. Transportation:
 - 90th Street Bridge Crossing the River south of the City.
 - 90th Street major collector street design and improvements.
 - McKinley Parkway improvements and extension from Highway 12 to Darrow Avenue, including railroad crossing and 72nd Street realignment.
 - Future intersection improvements at McKinley Parkway and Highway 12.
 - Improvement of 72nd Street from a rural design to a paved street.
 - Intersection improvements at County Roads 30 and 16.
 - Bridge Avenue/Highway 12 intersection streetscape improvements in conjunction with MnDOT 2028/29 Pavement Preservation project through town that will also address intersection improvements at Bridge Avenue, CR 30, 5th Street, Tiger Drive, and County Line Road.



- The street and intersection improvements must include pedestrian safety improvements.
- River Street Streetscape improvements.
- Railroad access into the Delano West Metro Business Park.

b. Public Buildings / Structures:

- New Public Works building
- Future new fire station west of the river.
- Second water tower/wells
- Electric Distribution substation
- Improvements to Heritage Center
- Improvements to the Delano Library building and site.
- Improvements to Riverside Commons Building and site.
- School District facility needs.

c. Parks and Trails:

- Acquisition and development of a major community park south of downtown
- Multi-modal trail River and Highway 12 Crossings
- Infill trail connections
- Wayfinding sign plans
- Development of additional winter recreational opportunities, including organized and recreational activities

d. Economic Development / Redevelopment:

- Continued acquisition of land for the Delano West Metro Business Park.
- Street and Utility improvements for the Delano West Metro Business Park.
- Continued Scattered Site Residential Redevelopment.



- Redevelopment of targeted sites: northwest corner of the Bridge Avenue/Highway 12 intersection; select Highway 12, commercial sites, etc.

3. Some of Interview participants have expressed concerns for the high utility fees and charges (i.e., electrical, water, sewer, SAC/WAC). High fees and charges may present an obstacle to land uses desired by the City (Attainable housing or high water using industries).
4. Participants identified Central Park and the community's neighborhood parks as attractive recreational facilities in Delano. However, with the expanding residential growth comes the need for additional neighborhood park planning. Continued attention must also be given to existing City neighborhood parks to ensure quality park maintenance and improvements.
5. The impact of new growth on the local schools was raised as an issue. In discussion with the School District Superintendent the current school campus has capacity for growth. Future school facilities planning may give attention to securing an elementary school site west of the river as the community and school district population continues to grow. With expansion and growth of school facilities, the City must consider transportation impacts of site locations for additional students and facility development.

ADMINISTRATION

1. The interviews revealed a high level of satisfaction with City services and City Staff. Complements were offered pertaining to City Staff willingness and responsiveness in meeting with residents and addressing their concerns.
2. With growth the City will need to expand City Staff to respond to the needs of its residents and businesses. The interview participants recognize this need but expressed concern that the city must maintain a high level of service quality.
3. Interview participants believed that the City and its neighborhoods are well planned and designed resulting in high quality housing, commercial and industrial development. The current review process from city staff, planning commission, and council review is working for the City.



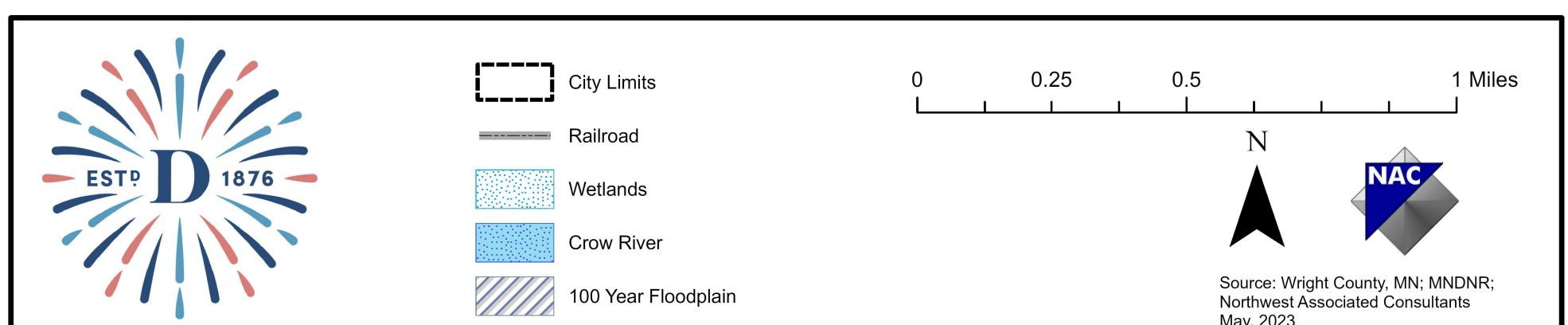
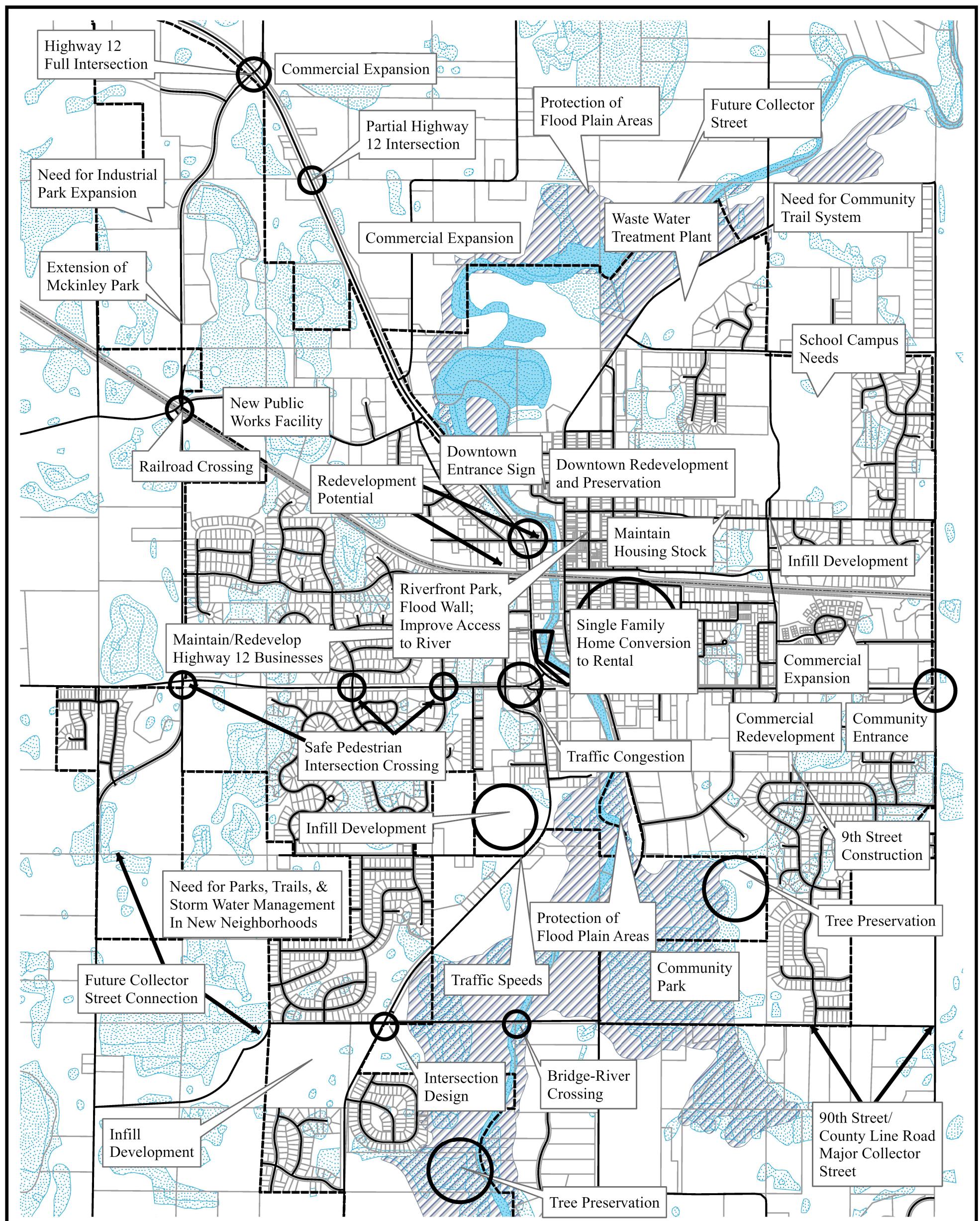
4. The interview participants were very complementary of the City staff and DMU staff in their upkeep and maintenance of City streets, utilities, parks, and public areas.
5. Interview participants expressed the need for more transparency in the government decision-making process. The need to post the minutes of the council and advisory committee meetings to keep residents informed of on-going issues, projects, and expenditures.
6. Some interview participants expressed concerns about the impact that growth will have on public safety within the community. With a growing population, concerns about crime and the need for a continued focus on public safety.



Insert issues map City



Comprehensive Plan City Issues





Insert Extraterritorial Issues Map



Comprehensive Plan Extraterritorial Issues

