

# Comprehensive Plan Turtle Lake, North Dakota

March 2020



# Turtle Lake Comprehensive Plan

City of Turtle Lake, North Dakota

Prepared by:



March 2020

SRF No. 12399

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Appendix A – Survey Summary

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# Introduction

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## What is the Comprehensive Plan?

Turtle Lake's Comprehensive Plan is a long-range planning document conveys the City's vision for future land use, development, public infrastructure, and other elements of the community. It guides city leaders as they apply municipal ordinances and policies and make public investments. It also establishes expectations for citizens, landowners, and the regional development community regarding land use and development.

### Statutory Planning Requirement

The North Dakota Century Code enables municipalities to zone all land within their jurisdiction and extraterritorial area (40-47-01). Legal exercise of this authority requires completion and adoption of a comprehensive plan (40-47-03). The Future Land Use Map the basis for city zoning. Because this map was created with public input and review, zoning decisions which are consistent with the Plan are legally defensible.

## Vision for the Plan

This plan has a primary focus on economic development. For several decades, Turtle Lake's population has trended toward decline, and the population is aging. The City is intent on reversing these processes by creating and attracting reinvestment and employment opportunities.

## How to Use this Document

The Comprehensive Plan is organized into five sections

1. Goals and Objectives
2. Land Use
3. Transportation and Utilities
4. Economic Development
5. Implementation

**Goals and Objectives** provide the foundation for the Plan. This section describes the type of community that Turtle Lake would like to be.

**Land Use** identifies growth areas and the types and arrangement of future land uses that are envisioned for each. The Future Land Use Map is a key element of the Comprehensive Plan, which the City will use to guide future zoning decisions and the subdivision process.

**Transportation and Utilities** builds from the Land Use section, identifying conceptual roads and utility improvements that will be needed to develop growth areas as indicated on the Future Land Use Map. The Future Land Use Map was created with City infrastructure in mind.

**Economic Development** describes strategies, tools, and creative solutions for creating and attracting increased business activity. A market-receptive land use plan, sound infrastructure investments, housing development, and quality-of-life all play a role in creating the type of community that encourages growth.

**Implementation** integrates all elements of the Plan. It outlines specific action steps to help the City carry out the Plan. It estimates the level of effort/cost for each item, provides a general timeline for completion, and defines overall priorities.

## Public Involvement

Public involvement is what gives the Plan its power. Because the Plan was created with public input and review, City decisions and adopted policies which further the goals of the Plan are reasonably justified. The planning process was led by a Project Steering Committee. A series of public meetings were conducted to set goals and objectives and draft the Future Land Use Map. In addition, a community survey was instrumental in gathering feedback from a broad cross-section of community residents, especially the youth.

## Project Steering Committee

The Steering Committee met four times during development of the Plan to help inform and guide major milestones, such as the future land use map, goals and objectives, or the implementation actions. Committee members included the City Auditor, two City Commissioners, a Chamber of Commerce representative, the School District Superintendent, a Park District representative, and active business owners.



## **Amending the Plan**

The Plan can be amended if new development opportunities arise or if there is shift in public sentiment. If, for example, a property needs to be rezoned but the rezoning is inconsistent with the future land use map, the City can revise the Plan following a public hearing. If conditions change significantly or a significant change is needed, the Plan should be updated in its entirety.

# Goals and Objectives

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<b>1. Develop and expand local and regional development networks.</b>
A. Maintain and strengthen connections with area cities, townships, McLean County, State agencies, and other funding partners.
B. Improve connections with area developers and professional contractors.
C. Establish an engaged community group to oversee implementation of the Plan, help coordinate resources, and maintain momentum.
<b>2. Be proactive and prepared for development opportunities.</b>
A. Relax zoning and related regulations where possible to permit all potential development types which will help carry out the intent of this Plan.
B. Acquire and assemble parcels to prepare for development/redevelopment, using the future land use plan in this document as a guide.
C. Ensure that available land for development will be adequately served by all necessary infrastructure.
D. Maintain an active community/government presence on social media.
E. Pursue ways to improve signage/advertisement from regional highways to advertise local business and business potential.
F. Keep the City website up to date, with a focus on promoting local assets.
<b>3. Retain and expand local businesses to meet community needs.</b>
A. Inventory businesses, staffing, facilities, and equipment to identify gaps that need to be resolved.
B. Encourage supportive businesses and organizations that can share facilities and equipment.
C. Support the grocery store so that it has the resources and capacity to serve the community long-term.
D. Collaborate with other organizations to create a dine-in restaurant with weekend hours and an expanded menu.
<b>4. Revitalize Main Street.</b>
A. Pursue acquisition of vacant opportunity sites.
B. Pursue annual grants from the North Dakota Main Street CDBG program and other funding sources.
C. Avoid new development which detracts from existing Downtown businesses.
D. Program community activities and events in Downtown.
E. Demolish obsolete structures and prioritize suitable buildings for reuse.
<b>5. Rehabilitate aging residential and commercial properties.</b>
A. Prioritize focus area(s) for rehabilitation.
B. Create a dedicated funding pool for rehabilitation, such as a revolving loan fund.
C. Target 1-2 residential or commercial properties per year for rehabilitation.

<b>6. Be a family-friendly community.</b>
A. Provide an indoor activity space(s) for kids.
B. Ensure there is dedicated space for local day care.
C. Ensure the school has the capacity and resources to provide an excellent education.
D. Organize and develop extracurricular activities for children and teens.
<b>7. Encourage active lifestyles.</b>
A. Construct a community walking/biking trail.
B. Construct a splash pad or small wading pool.
C. Re-establish recreational sports or related league(s) with neighboring communities.
D. Organize community recreation outings or events (e.g., hunting, camping, fishing).
E. Ensure that existing sidewalks are compliant with ADA requirements and safely passable year-round.
<b>8. Provide a high quality of life for senior residents.</b>
A. Create 10-20 accessible senior housing units in the next 10 years.
B. Ensure that housing rehabilitation projects include, where practical, retrofits which are accessible to older residents.
C. Ensure that hospital staff have the resources and capacity to provide excellent care.
D. Create meaningful opportunities for retired residents to contribute to the community's success.
<b>9. Develop student and workforce skills.</b>
A. Connect students and workers with access to training, trade, and professional networks.
B. Collaborate with the McLean County agriculture extension office to engage farmers with students and encourage innovation in the agricultural sector.
C. Create a community space for co-crafting, machining, artistry, or other activities.
<b>10. Maintain and improve City infrastructure cost-effectively.</b>
A. Create a simple and transparent 5-10 year public infrastructure improvement plan that is updated on a regular basis, using this Plan to help program infrastructure projects.
B. Ensure that projects are coordinated and cost is shared with the Park District, State DOT, McLean County, Bureau of Reclamation, and other agencies where possible.

## Land Use Plan

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Land Use is a key consideration for community growth. To encourage development of any type, direction must be provided for how land will be used. This chapter summarizes existing land use and zoning and provides the City's Future Land Use Map.

### Existing Land Use

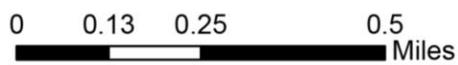
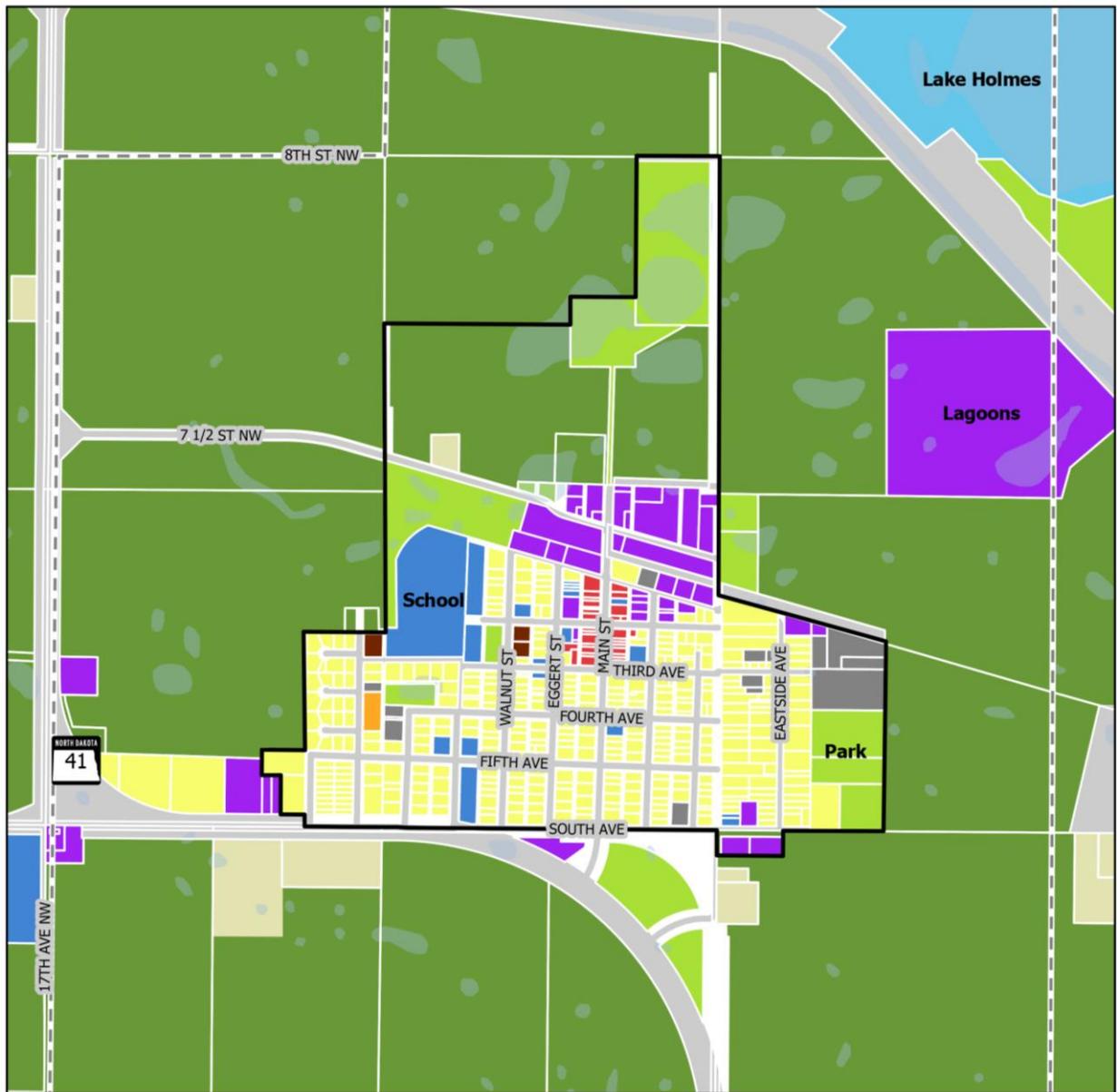
Within Turtle Lake, land is primarily used for residential, commercial, and industrial activities. Sometimes the distinction between common land use types is blurred, and parcels may be used for multiple purposes (e.g., commercial/industrial). This is common in rural counties and small towns.

**Figure 2** depicts existing land uses within the City and its extraterritorial area in 2019. **Table 1** summarizes the existing land use types and acreages.

**Table 1. Existing Land Use Categories**

Color	Land Use	Description	Acres Shown
	Agricultural	Active farmland surrounding the city	
	Park/Open Space	Park, playground, constrained open space	138
	Farm Residence	Rural farm residence on subdivided parcel	21
	Single Family	Detached homes	100
	Single Family Attached	Twin homes	1
	Multifamily	Rental apartments (fourplex)	1
	Public/Civic	School, fire station, city hall, churches, etc.	21
	Commercial	Local businesses, focused around Main Street	5
	Industrial/Utility	Agricultural facilities, storage, utilities	74
	Vacant Lot	Platted residential lot without a structure	12
	Right of Way/Easement	Roads, drain, etc.	--
	Open Water	Lakes and ponds; Lake Holmes recreation area	--

Figure 2. Existing Land Use



Key

<b>Existing Land Use</b>		Single Family Attached	Public/Civic	Wetland
Agriculture	Multifamily	ROW/Easement	<b>Boundaries</b>	
Park/Open Space	Commercial	Vacant Lot	City Limits	
Farm Residence	Industrial/Utility	Open Water	Projected 1/2 Mile ETA	
Single Family				

## Zoning

**Figure 3** shows the current Zoning Map. The current Zoning Ordinance includes five districts – four residential districts plus commercial/industrial (**Table 2**). Three residential districts – R1, R2, and R3 – use cumulative zoning. This means that all uses permitted in R1 are also permitted in R2, etc. A fourth district, MH, is used for mobile homes. Mobile homes are now more commonly known as manufactured homes and are built to conform to federal code—the HUD code—no matter where they are delivered. A modular home conforms to the building codes that are required at the specific location where they will be delivered.

### Zoning for Affordable and Flexible Housing Options

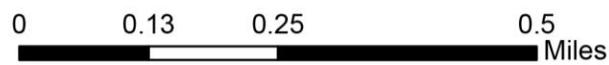
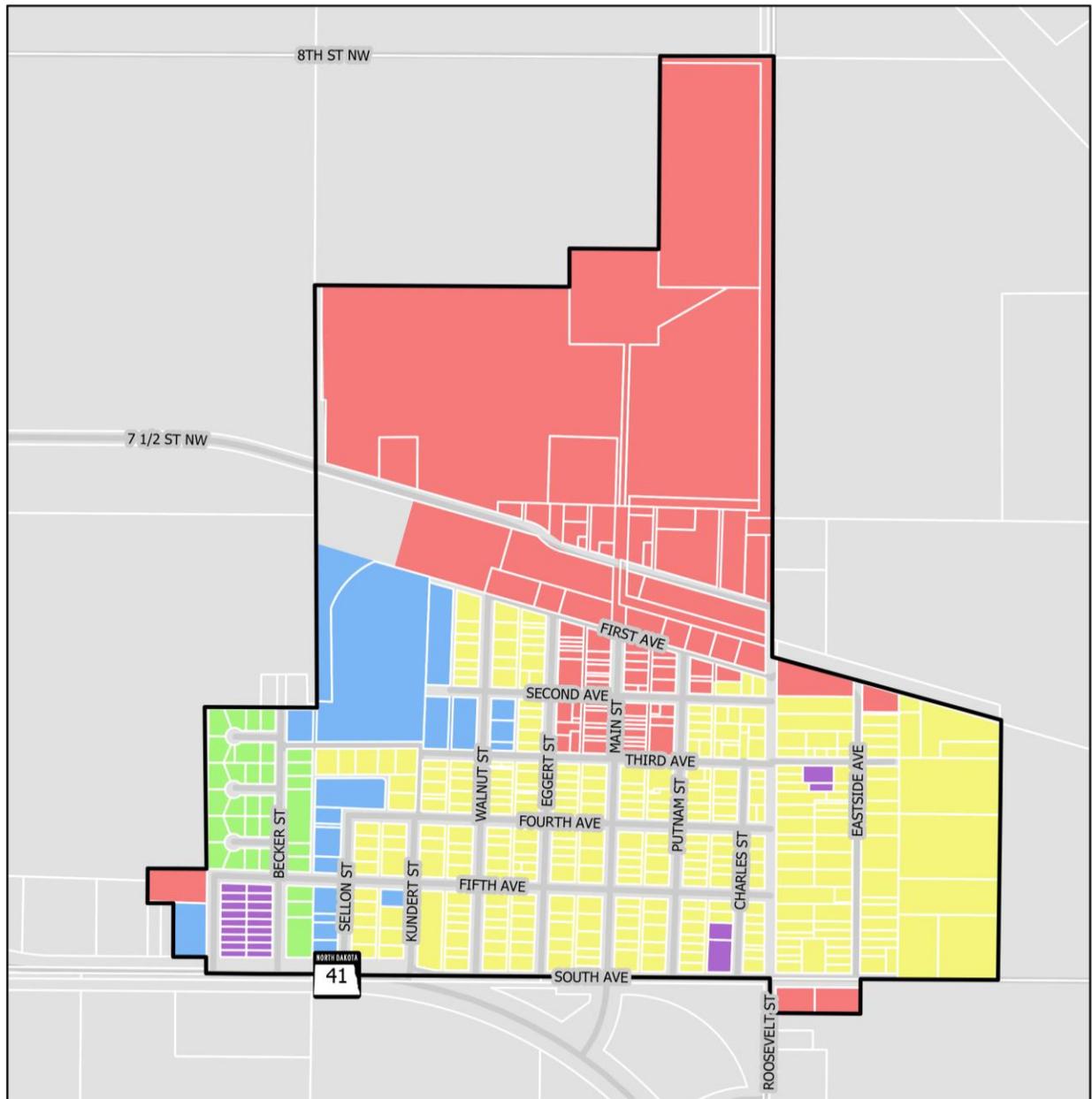
The City should consider updating the ordinance to make a distinction between mobile homes which predate 1976 and manufactured housing. It should also be made clear that modular homes are permitted in all residential districts. Modular homes can resemble traditional stick-built homes, but they can cost less to produce, and they provide flexibility to fit in older and newer parts of the City, easily conforming to different lot sizes.

The Commercial District serves as a catchall for non-residential uses and non-public uses. This includes light manufacturing, warehousing, and storage. It is common for properties to serve a combination of industrial and commercial functions, but some uses create more significant “spillover” impacts that affect surrounding properties. The City could consider establishing an Industrial District for properties which would largely apply to property north of First Ave.

**Table 2. Existing Zoning**

Color	Zone	Description	Acres
	R1 – Single-Family Residential	Permits single-family homes, nursing homes, and public uses (parks, schools, churches, city administration offices, etc.)	11
	R2 – Two-Family Residential	Two-family dwellings and uses permitted in R-1	97
	R3 – Multi-Family Residential	Apartments, clubs, hotels/motels, and uses permitted in R1/R2.	27
	C – Commercial	Retail stores, offices, restaurants, storage and warehouse buildings, wholesale businesses, etc.	141
	MH – Mobile Home (Manufactured Housing)	Single-family mobile homes.	4

Figure 3. Existing Zoning



Key

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  R1 |  MH          |
|  R2 |  C           |
|  R3 |  City Limits |

## Land Use vs. Zoning

What is the difference between land use and zoning?

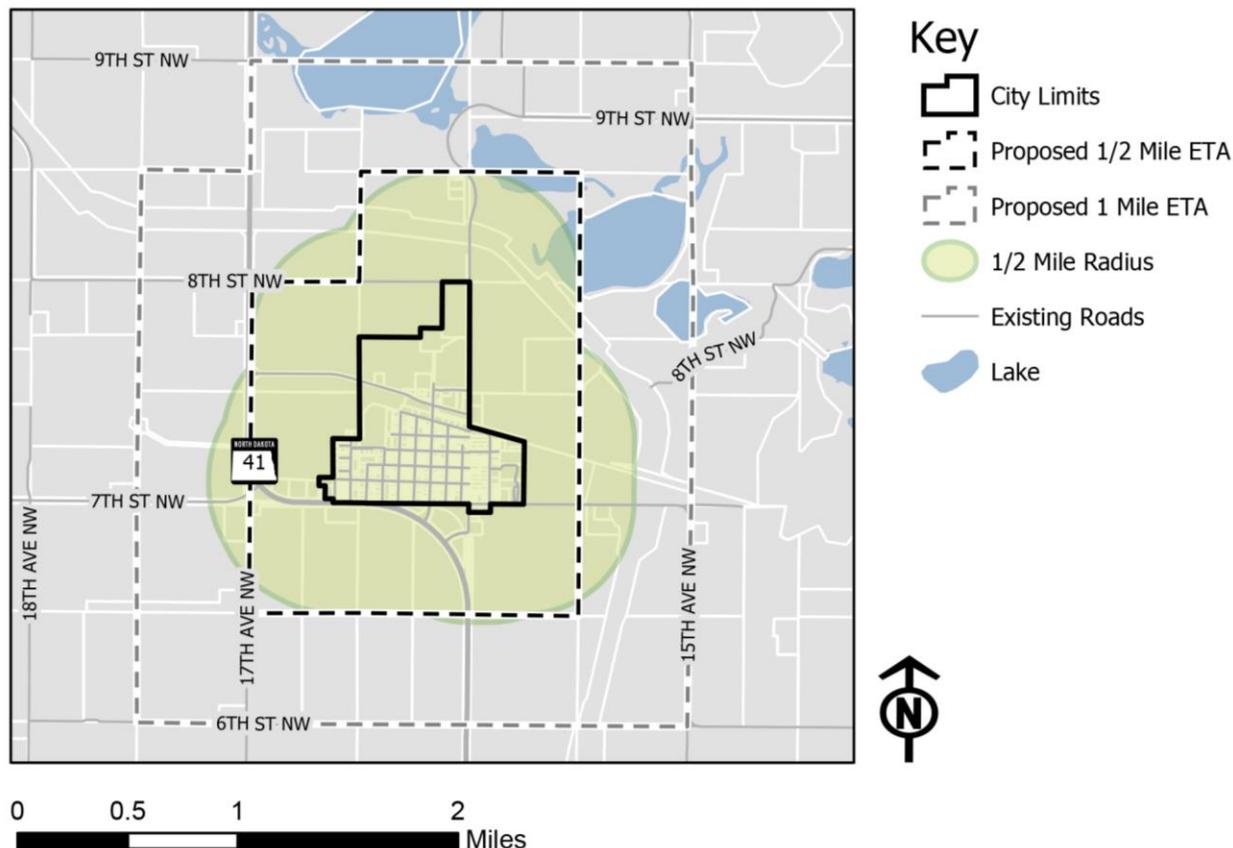
- The Future Land Use Map and Comprehensive Plan should be used to guide zoning. The City Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map are the regulatory tools to implement the Plan– unlike the Plan, they are legally binding.
- The Future Land Use Map is flexible. It is likely that some areas will not fully develop (or even develop at all) before the Plan needs updating, but it is important to identify a variety of developable locations of sufficient size to provide flexibility for the City to respond to market conditions.
- The City should strive for consistency between its Zoning Map and Future Land Use Map, but rezoning should only occur as needed. Initially, some tracts within the ETA will remain zoned as Agricultural, until extension of water and sewer services is feasible or advisable. Once this occurs, zoning can be amended to districts which are consistent with the Future Land Use Map.

## Extraterritorial Area

As an incorporated municipality with fewer than 5,000 people, Turtle Lake can, by State statute, exercise planning and zoning authority to an extraterritorial area (ETA) up to ½ mile beyond its city limits. The City may also share jurisdictional authority with McLean County to an area up to 1 mile from city limits. However, all future growth areas which are shown on the Future Land Use Map are contained within the proposed 1/2-mile ETA.

**Figure 4** shows a ½-mile ETA and a 1-mile ETA for planning purposes. The proposed ETA boundaries were determined by calculating a ½-mile radius and a 1-mile radius around the city limits and drawing each ETA to the nearest quarter-section corners. (The ½-mile radius is shown for reference in Figure 4.) These boundaries would still need to be formalized through an agreement with McLean County. The North Dakota Century Code requires a zoning transition meeting with McLean County to discuss future zoning districts and mapping of the area. Open lines of communication will benefit all parties.

**Figure 4. Proposed Extraterritorial Areas**



The ETA boundaries are dynamic. Once the City’s boundary changes through recordation of annexation plats with the County Recorder’s Office, the ETA boundaries may be extended if the City desires. Some areas within the designated radius will be excluded from the ETA – for example, the City does not have zoning authority of Bureau of Reclamation lands, so the ETA would not be extended north or east. However, if city limits were to extend southward to accommodate development south of and along Highway 41, it might make sense for the southern boundary of the ETA to shift farther south as well. This would give the City more control over land use and the overall appearance of the corridor.

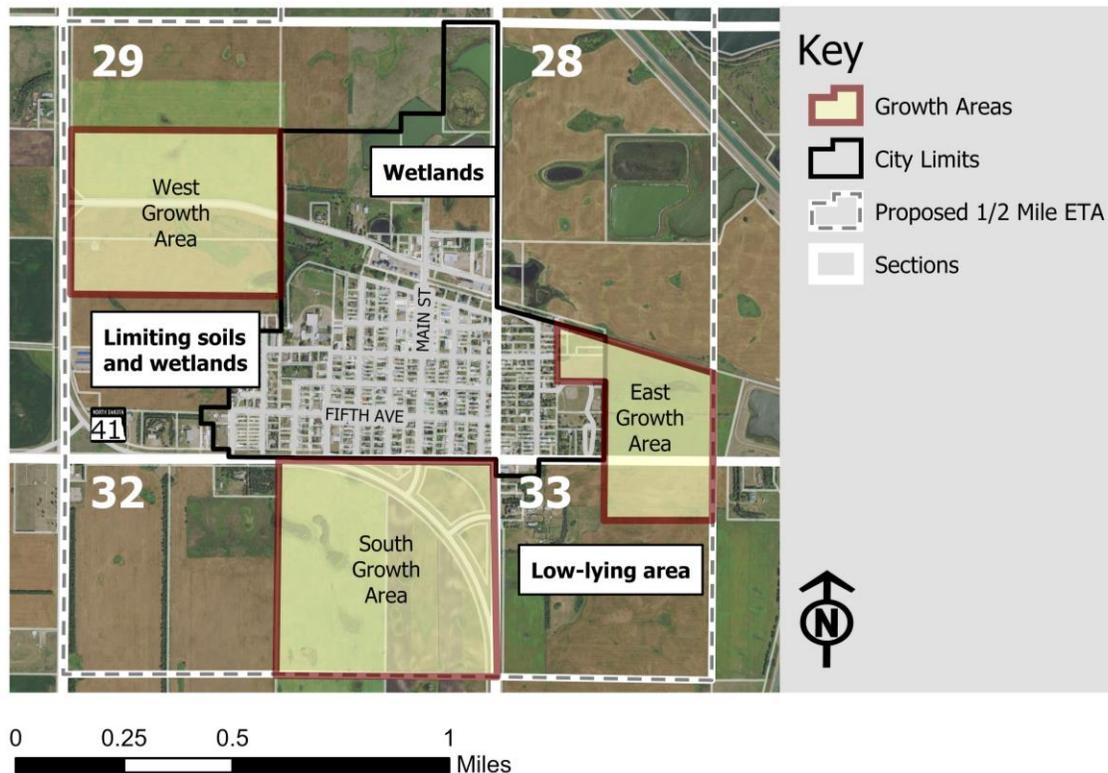
### **What is the Purpose of the ETA?**

The advantage of the ETA is that it ensures that development which occurs on the City’s fringes is consistent with the rest of the City, so that if the City grows to that location, there are few if any zoning or building code enforcement issues.

## Growth Areas

The City has reviewed several areas within its ETA to determine their development potential. Based on this review and discussions with potential developers, the most suitable growth areas have been identified. **Figure 5** shows three areas with minimal constraints to development (the West, South, and East Growth Areas). Other locations have wetlands, limiting soils, or topographical challenges that would significantly limit development. Constrained areas are shown as Open Space on the Future Land Use Map.

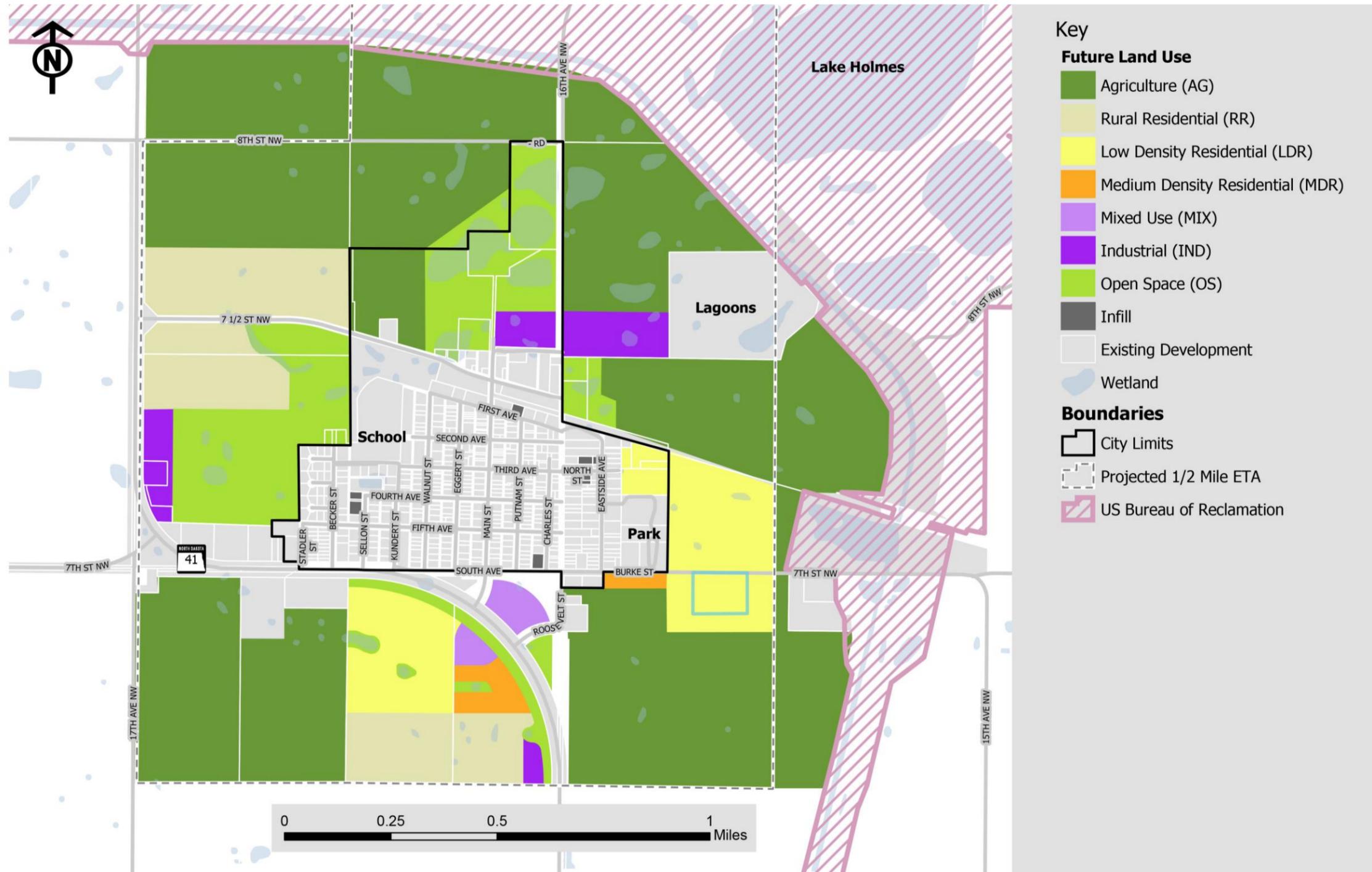
**Figure 5. Priority Growth Areas**



## Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map guides municipal zoning. It can be used strategically to encourage desired development. However, the City should be wary of rezoning large growth areas from agricultural use if development is not occurring. Even when a property is rezoned, the use of the land may remain unchanged for an extended period – typically until sale of the property triggers new development or redevelopment.

Figure 6. Future Land Use Map



**Table 3. Future Land Use Categories**

<b>Color</b>	<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Acres Shown</b>
	Agriculture (AG)	Active farmland surrounding the city	815
	Rural Residential (RR)	Individual sewer/septic residential (minimum 1-acre lot)	133
	Low Density Residential (LDR)	Detached homes (sewered)	111
	Medium Density Residential (MDR)	Twin homes	13
	Mixed Use (MIX)	Commercial and/or high density residential	12
	Industrial (IND)	Storage/warehousing, light manufacturing	39
	Open Space (OS)	Nonfarmed and undeveloped land	180
	Infill	Infill of vacant parcels	3
	Existing Development	No change indicated	380
<b>Total</b>			<b>1,686</b>

## Future Land Use Categories

### Agriculture (AG)

The Agriculture (AG) category provides for family farms, farm dwellings, and other structures which are necessary for agricultural activities (e.g., grain silos). Commercial livestock operations are prohibited within the ETA.

### Rural Residential (RR)

The Rural Residential (RR) category provides for large-lot, unsewered residential development. The Rural Residential category enables residential development in areas which would be difficult to connect to the City’s sewer system. In the short-term, this will allow for some development to occur on the City’s periphery without having to rely on costly sewer extensions or waiting for intervening areas to develop first.

All septic systems must be approved by First District Health. The minimum lot size on which a septic system may be installed is 1 acre, although First District Health, may approve smaller lots which utilize a community

wastewater treatment system. Lots larger than 1 acre are needed in areas with soil limitations. The McLean County Ordinance requires a minimum lot of 65,000 square feet (1.49 acres) when there are slight sewage disposal limitations and 80,000 square feet (1.84 acres) when there are severe sewage disposal limitations.

### **Low Density Residential (LDR)**

The Low Density Residential (LDR) category provides for traditional single-family homes that are served by urban roads, sewer, and other infrastructure. Density could range from 2-4 units per acre (1/4- to 1/2-acre lots). The community has expressed a desire for larger lots which can accommodate conventional detached single family homes.

A single-family neighborhood could also include public buildings or amenities, such as a church or park. However, these types of institutional uses are not sited on the Future Land Use Map.

### **Medium Density Residential (MDR)**

The Medium Density Residential (MDR) category provides for attached single-family housing types, including twin homes, as well as small multifamily buildings (duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, etc.). This type of housing should be a key part of the City's housing stock moving forward, as it can be an affordable housing option. Accessible, affordable townhomes are well-suited for older residents who can no longer maintain or afford their current homes but want to remain in the area.

### **Mixed Use (MIX)**

The Mixed Use (MIX) category provides for multiple uses in a highway-oriented setting. Appropriate uses include highway commercial, high-density residential/senior housing, or a public-use facility. Multiple commercial businesses could be combined within one site or building to lower development costs. This should be encouraged and may be required in order to make development feasible.

The Future Land Use Map shows one mixed-use location on Highway 41. This area has excellent highway access as well as sightlines down Main Street. It should be developed with care to attract highway motorists while creating a "gateway" to downtown. The community would like to see a bar and grill in this location.

## Industrial (IND)

The Industrial (IND) category provides for light manufacturing, warehousing, or outdoor storage of machinery and equipment. Community infrastructure, such as a utility substation, could also be included. Some industrial areas need access to water and sewer, but others may not. The nature and intensity of each use will determine the level of services which are required.

## Open Space (OS)

The Open Space (OS) category identifies areas with development constraints, such as wetlands or access challenges. An open space buffer should also be maintained on Highway 41 so that motorists have sufficient visibility and space to safely travel and access adjacent properties.

## Infill

In addition to new development, Turtle Lake will pursue opportunities to infill vacant parcels and improve existing structures. Focused infill takes advantage of existing connections to water, sewer, and the roadway system, which can significantly reduce the costs of development. It also can help the City improve the appearance of languishing areas and encourage additional investment and community efforts.

## Existing Development

The light gray area on the Future Land Use Map indicates existing development. No land use changes are proposed for these areas. However, incremental changes may occur as part of community infill or redevelopment efforts. Refer to **Figure 2**, Existing Land Use, to see specific land use classifications for existing development.

## Amending the Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map is not set in stone. From time to time, the Future Land Use Map may need to be amended to facilitate a rezoning (e.g., residential to commercial). A land use amendment can be performed concurrently with the zoning change. The process of amending the Future Land Use Map is as follows:

1. **Identify the inconsistency/desired land use change.** Prepare a sketch of the proposed land use change.

2. **Discuss issues with City staff responsible for planning, engineering, and zoning administration.** A preliminary meeting with surrounding property owners may be advisable.
3. **Require the property owner to apply for a land use plan amendment if they wish to move ahead with their proposal.** Public notice similar to that of a zoning change should be required prior to any public hearing.
4. **Provide an analysis of the proposed change.** Is the proposed land use compatible with existing land uses and existing zoning regulations? Is it compatible with surrounding future land uses or not? Does it result in the need for changes to existing or planned streets and utilities? Answering these questions provides a basis for City decisions.

# Transportation and Utility Plan

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## Regional Highways

Turtle Lake is located on North Dakota State Highway 41, approximately 16 miles east of US Highway 83. US Highway 83 is a major regional highway and provides critical access and exposure for businesses and industry, creating an economic advantage to cities located within the highway corridor.

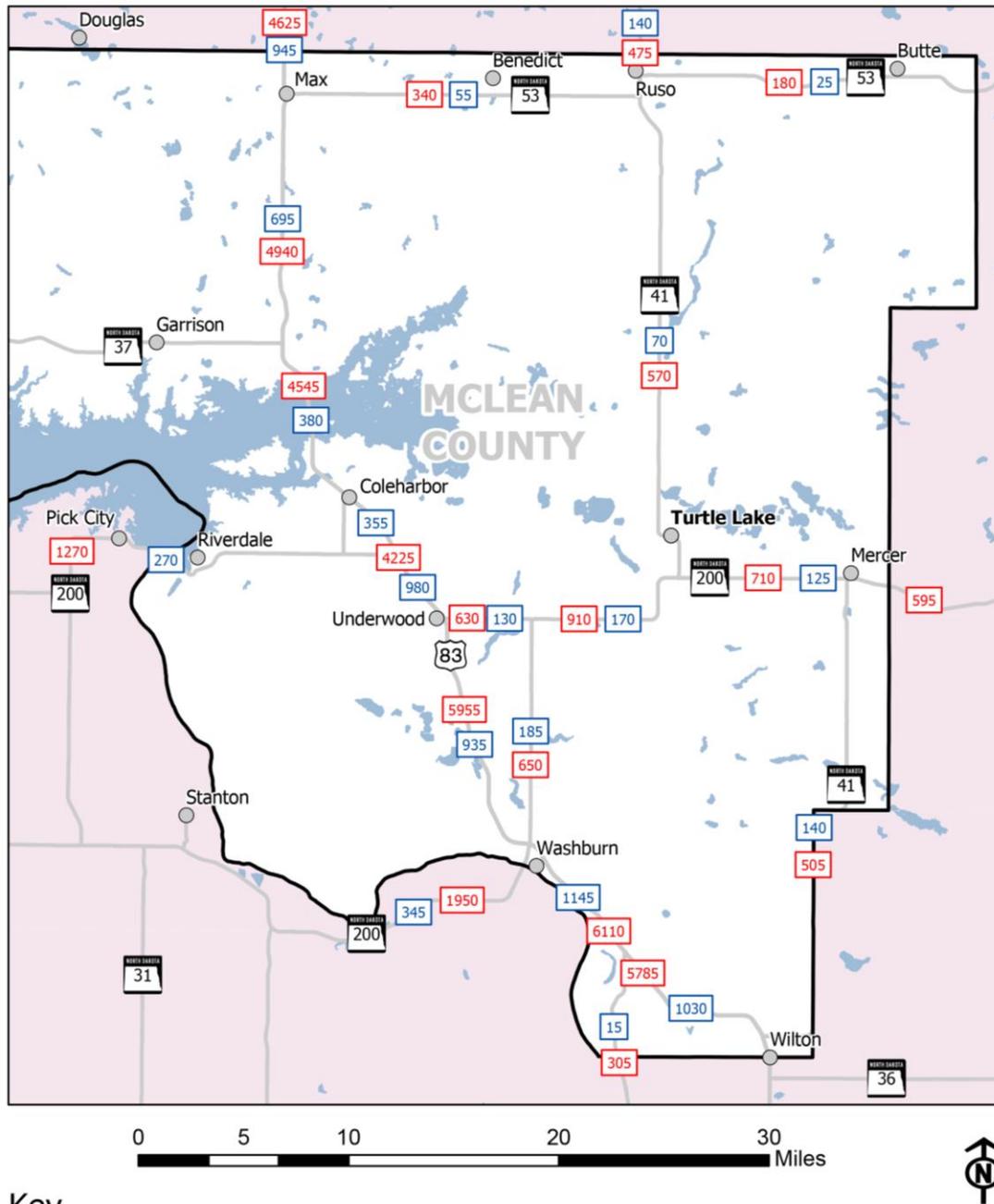
**Figure 7** summarizes average daily traffic (ADT) and truck volumes on regional highways. The data are based on counts conducted by the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) in 2016. Traffic volumes have not changed substantially since that time. US Highway 83 moves 4,000-6,000 vehicles per day through Washburn, Underwood, and Coleharbor. By contrast, traffic volumes on State Highway 41 are approximately 600-700 vehicles per day.

## Crash History

A crash analysis can help identify potential roadway safety issues and guide safety improvements. If crashes are clustered at a segment or intersection, it may be an indication that safety improvements are needed. It is especially important to document and monitor crashes which result in fatalities or serious injuries.

**Figure 8** maps crashes in and around Turtle Lake from August 1, 2009 to July 31, 2019. Fifty-six (56) crashes were documented during the decade. There was one fatal crash in 2016, which occurred near the canal north of town. This crash occurred in clear, dry conditions during sundown. Alcohol was a factor and the occupant was not wearing a safety belt. Given these circumstances, the fatal crash is an outlier and no further analysis is warranted. Based on low travel volumes and low crash rates, no specific road safety improvements are proposed.

Figure 7. Highway Traffic Volumes

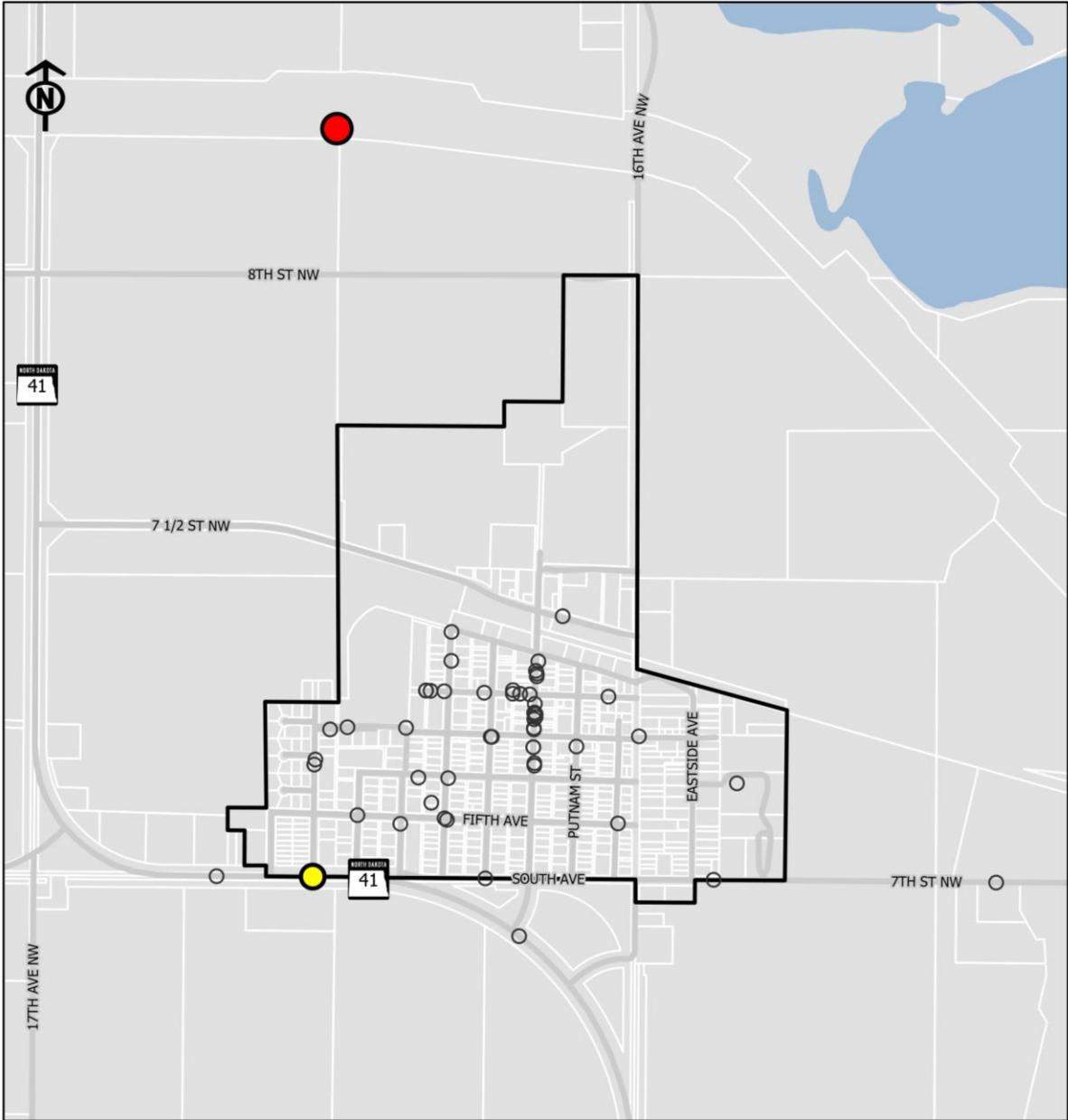


Key

- 000 Average Daily Traffic
- 000 Average Daily Truck Traffic

Source: NDDOT Traffic Highway Traffic Counts (2016)

Figure 8. Crash History



Key

- Crash Severity**
- Fatal
- Serious Injury
- Other
- ▭ City Limits
- Lake

Source: NDDOT  
August 1, 2009 - July 31, 2019

## Future Network

**Figure 9** shows conceptual road, sidewalk, and trail extensions that are consistent with the Future Land Use Map. The figure can be used as a guide when platting new lots and subdivisions.

Because the City has limited means to construct new roads, the Future Land Use Map and Future Travel Network were designed so that some development can occur in the short-term without the need for significant infrastructure investments. For example, in the East Growth Area, lots could be platted on South Ave/7<sup>th</sup> Street NW in the initial phase of development, allowing for some of the Low Density Residential and Medium Density Residential areas to be completed before side streets are constructed.

### Access and Connectivity

Turtle Lake has a traditional roadway grid, which provides a high level of continuity and connectedness throughout the community. It is important to bear in mind that future street alignments may deviate from Figure 9 – alternative configurations are possible. However, the alignments shown would provide two points of access to every lot, which is important from a safety standpoint.

The Main Street Extension should be aligned generally as shown. Since this street would be needed to develop the South Growth Area, the City should pursue right-of-way acquisition in the near term. To develop the South Growth Area, the Main Street intersection would need to be converted to a 4-way intersection. Any access modification on Highway 41 requires planning and coordination with NDDOT. The City should share this concept with NDDOT now.

Figure 9. Future Travel Network

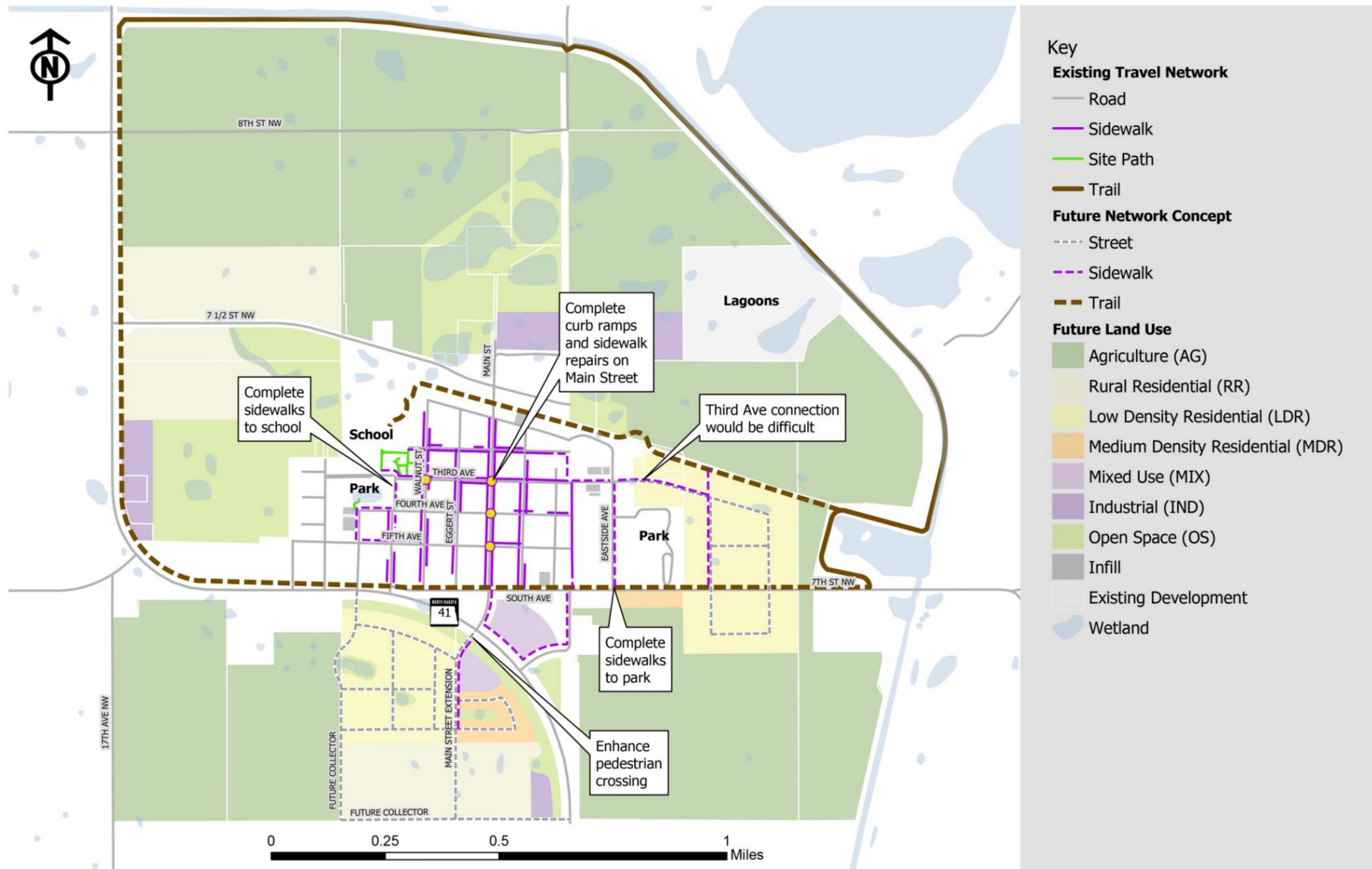
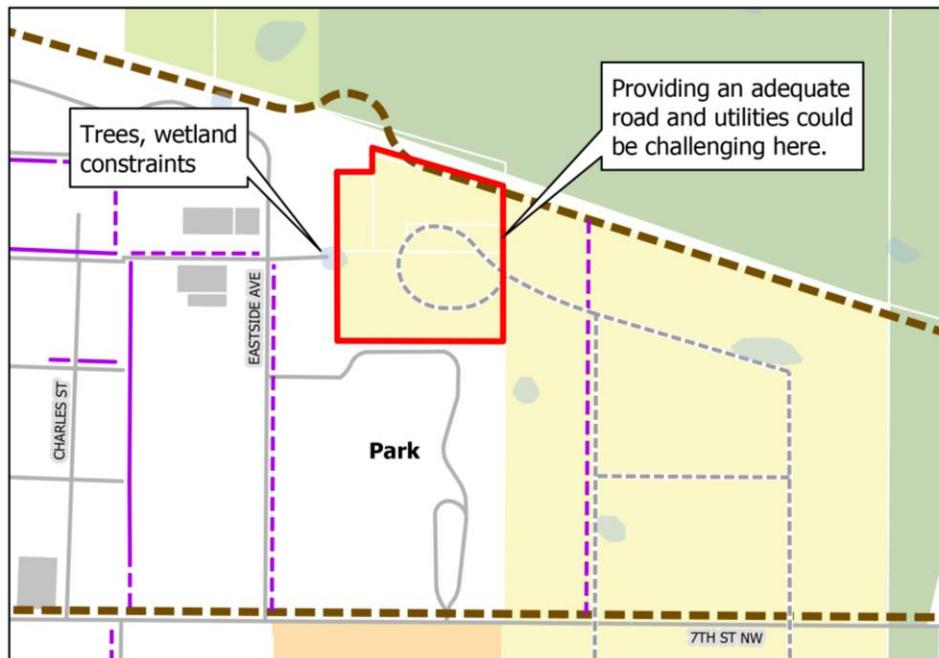


Figure 9 shows a full extension of Third Ave to the East Growth Area. This would be desirable from the standpoint of connectivity, emergency access, and utility service connections. However, a forested area would need to be at least partially cleared to make this connection, and adjacent landowners would likely have some concerns. If the Third Ave. extension is not feasible, a cul-de-sac or looped road (See **Figure 10**) could be constructed, but this is not ideal. Alternatively, the City may wish to leave this area undeveloped or use it to expand the Park.

**Figure 10. East Growth Area Alternative**



### Access Management

Access management refers to controlling the number and spacing of intersections and driveways on higher volume roads. In Turtle Lake, this concept applies to State Highway 41. Currently, six City streets intersect with Highway 41. In addition, several private driveways take access from the highway. In the future, some intersections may need to be closed or consolidated to improve spacing and limit the number of conflict points.

## Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Turtle Lake is a compact community with a traditional roadway grid that supports walking and biking. Main Street has complete sidewalks, although there are some intersections which lack curb ramps and other locations where the sidewalk has deteriorated. Other streets have partially completed sidewalk sections, which presents a challenge to pedestrians who do not feel comfortable walking in the road. The City should follow the below goals to improvement the sidewalk system.

### Sidewalk Improvement Goals

- Maintain and improve existing sidewalks, focusing on streets which already have extended sidewalk continuity, such as Main Street and Third Ave.
- Provide complete sidewalks to all public facilities and other important destinations, such as the school and the park.
- Fill in short gaps first.
- Install ADA-compliant curb ramps at key intersections and destinations.
- Provide sidewalk connectivity on future collector streets which serve new growth areas (i.e., Main Street Extension).

## Trail Improvements

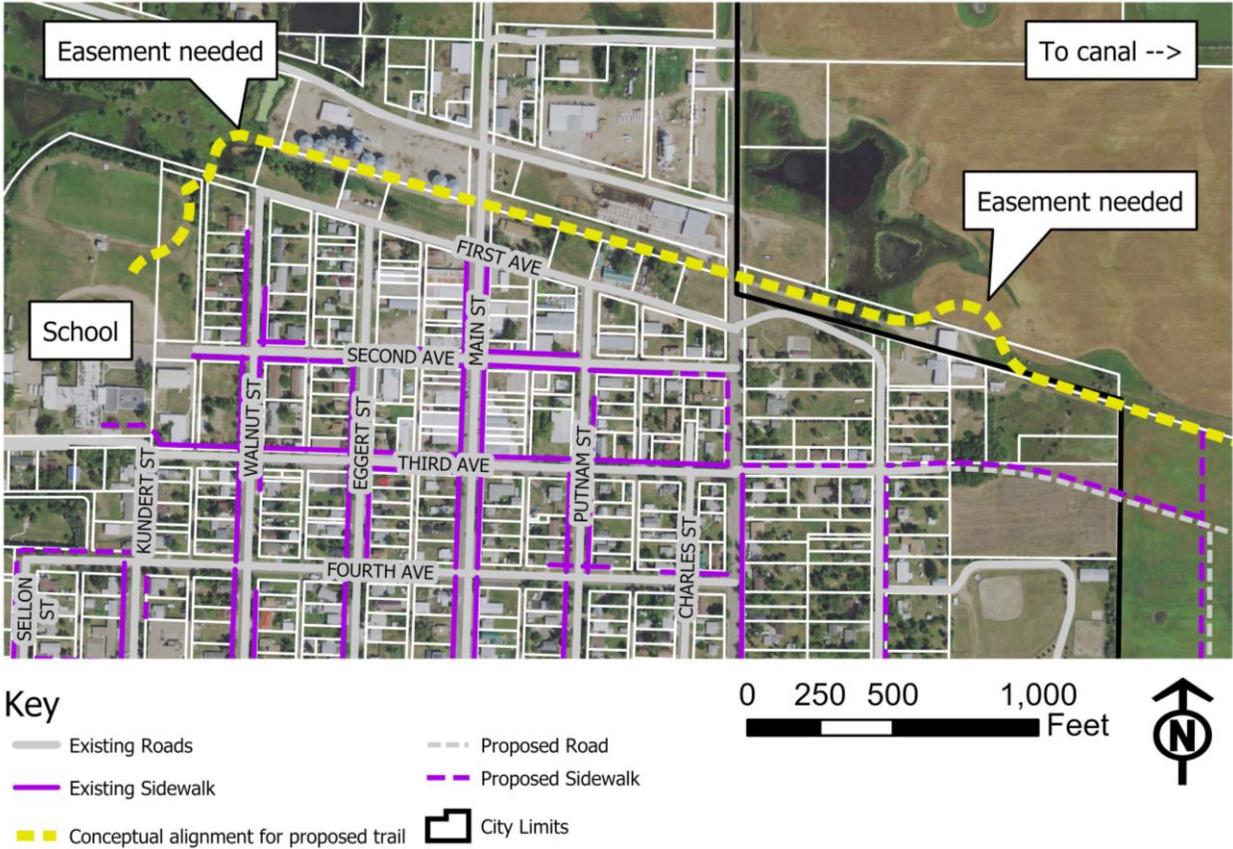
There is strong community support for a shared use path or trail. The community envisions a continuous trail loop along Highway 41 and the McClusky Canal. There is an existing gravel trail/access road along the canal. This route does not need significant improvements but may need minor maintenance. The shared-use path along Highway 41 would be a significant bicycle/pedestrian improvement. This would be a significant amenity for current and future residents to enjoy.

### Stop Along the North Country Scenic Trail (NCT)

The North Country National Scenic Trail (NCT) was authorized by Congress in 1980. This premier footpath stretches more than 4,600 miles across seven northern states from upstate New Hampshire to its western terminus at Lake Sakakawea State Park. The NCT follows the current gravel path on the north side of the City along the McClusky Canal. The City has an opportunity to promote its location along the trail, as a way point for travelers, and a trailhead for those looking to explore a short segment of the path.

Residents also discussed a second, shorter trail segment which would connect the East Growth Area to the school (**Figure 11**). This trail segment would make use of the existing railroad right-of-way where possible but would require new easement agreements for completion. The trail could link to a future community garden/orchard, which has been discussed for the City property immediately north of the Senior Center, north of First Avenue and east of Main Street.

Figure 11. Conceptual Trail Alignment

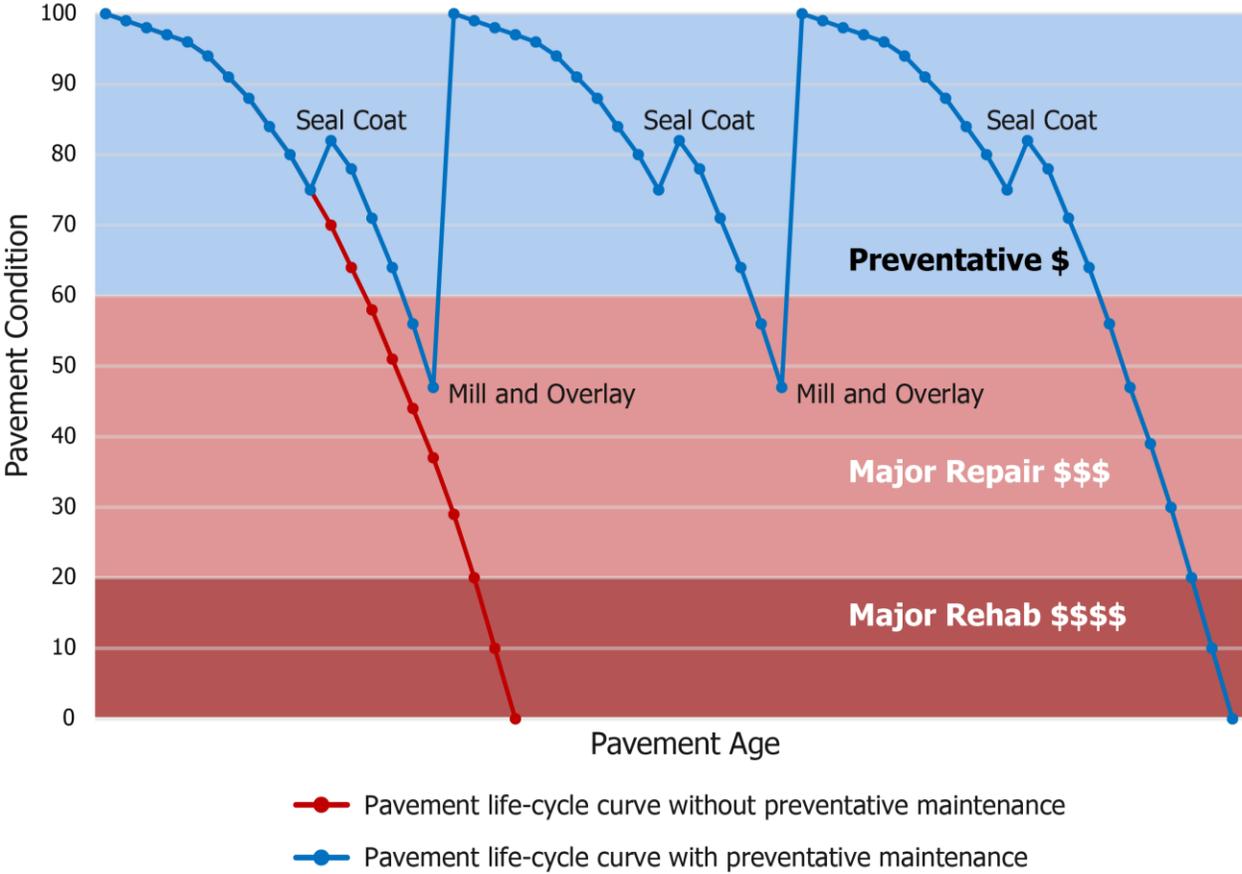


Roadway System Preservation

System preservation is a major focus for transportation investments. Pavement preservation is a key component of system management. Pavement preservation includes street maintenance activities that extend the life of the pavement and optimize available funding. It may seem counter-intuitive, but streets prioritized for maintenance attention should be ones which are already in fair condition. It is far more cost-effective to maintain roads in good working order than to let them deteriorate to the point where more extensive fixes are needed. With a “worst-first” approach, improvements are much more expensive.

Figure 12 illustrates the relationship between preventative maintenance, major repairs, and pavement life.

Figure 12. Lifecycle Road Maintenance and Repair



**Pavement Preservation Goals**

- Work with McLean County engineering to assess roadway quality and maintain a system a system-wide inventory of roadway quality in the City.
- Develop an appropriate life-cycle timeframe for all City Streets.
- Focus on maintaining “fair condition” roads to prevent them from falling into “poor condition”.
- Prioritize pavement preservation over more expensive reconstruction fixes.

## Other Transportation Infrastructure

### Airport

Turtle Lake Municipal Airport is a public airport located about 1 mile southwest of the city. The runway is a 0.6-mile grass strip.

There are several regional options for commercial flights, including the airports in Bismarck, Minot, Dickinson, and Williston. Bismarck and Minot airports are located within a 1-hour drive.

### Transit

Rural transit can provide a vital service for residents who cannot drive or who choose not to drive. McLean County is served by [West River Transit](#), which provides trips every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday from Turtle Lake to Bismarck for a cost of \$9. When elderly residents lose their ability to drive, their access to services and social opportunities is diminished. Rural transit can help meet some of their needs, as can community ridesharing and home delivery. It is critical for Turtle Lake to maintain basic services so that aging residents aren't forced to move out of the community.

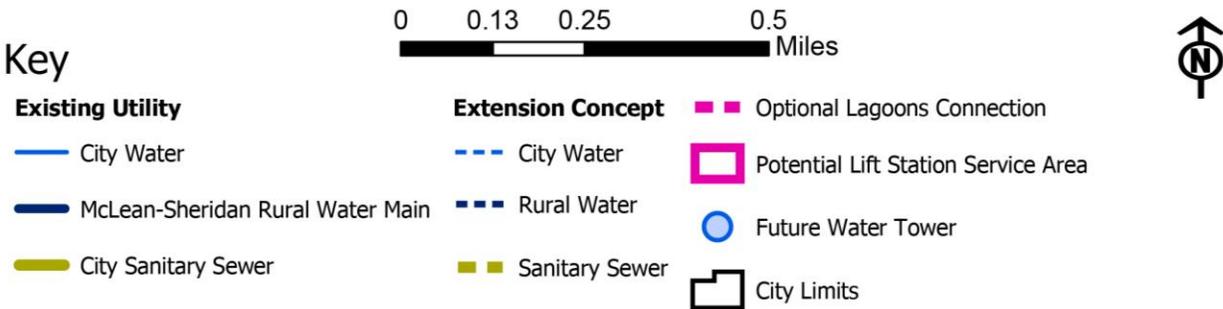
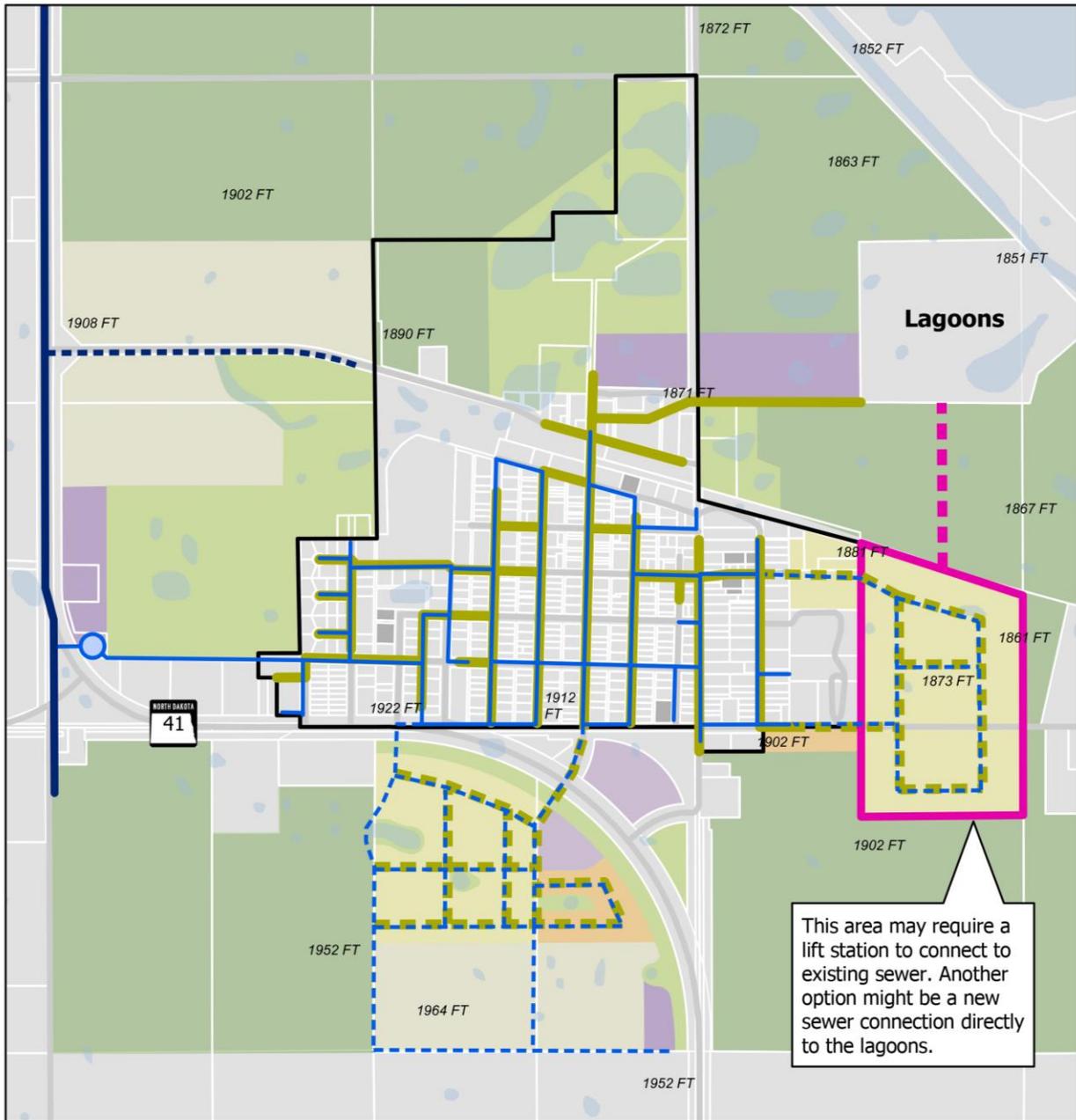
## Utilities

Water and sanitary sewer are essential services that enable economic development. Turtle Lake provides sanitary sewer service for residential and commercial lots and most industrial areas. Likewise, all existing development south of 7 ½ Street NW (County Road 12) is connected to the City's water distribution system. Strategic planning of public utility extensions can encourage development that might not otherwise occur.

**Figure 13** shows the existing water and sewer systems and conceptual extensions that would be needed to support future land uses. Key points include:

- The West Growth Area, guided for Rural Residential, would not be connected to the City's water system, but would receive service from the McLean-Sheridan Rural Water system via the rural water line that parallels Highway 41. Rural lots would also utilize private septic or a shared community wastewater system.
- Figure 13 displays the elevation, in feet, at several points within the City and its growth areas. Portions of the East Growth Area lie 15-20 feet below existing development, so a lift station would probably be required to connect to the existing sewer system via 7<sup>th</sup> Street NE or Third Ave North. Alternatively, the City should evaluate the feasibility of constructing a new sewer connection directly to the lagoons if this eliminates the need for a lift station and results in a more efficient system.

Figure 13. Future Utilities Concept



# Economic Development

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## Guiding Principles

The following principles outline Turtle Lake’s economic development strategy.

### **Turtle Lake is a homegrown community...**

Turtle Lake is a hardworking and resourceful community. We support new development opportunities but understand that success is built from the ground up. We must coordinate our resources and personal efforts to support local enterprise and business expansion. In a small town, everyone has a responsibility to help the community achieve its vision. Successful implementation begins with the community. Developers are not going to come knocking on the door – we must actively pursue development opportunities and remain committed to our goals.

### **...that is developing around its strengths...**

Turtle Lake’s strongest assets include the hospital, local businesses, school, and churches. Many of our residents work in healthcare or education, providing critical services that support our high quality of life. We are a close-knit community. We are surrounded by good farmland and scenic recreation areas. Our lakes are a regional fishing destination. It is critical to retain our successful businesses and institutions and develop around our strengths.

### **...through active coordination and collaboration...**

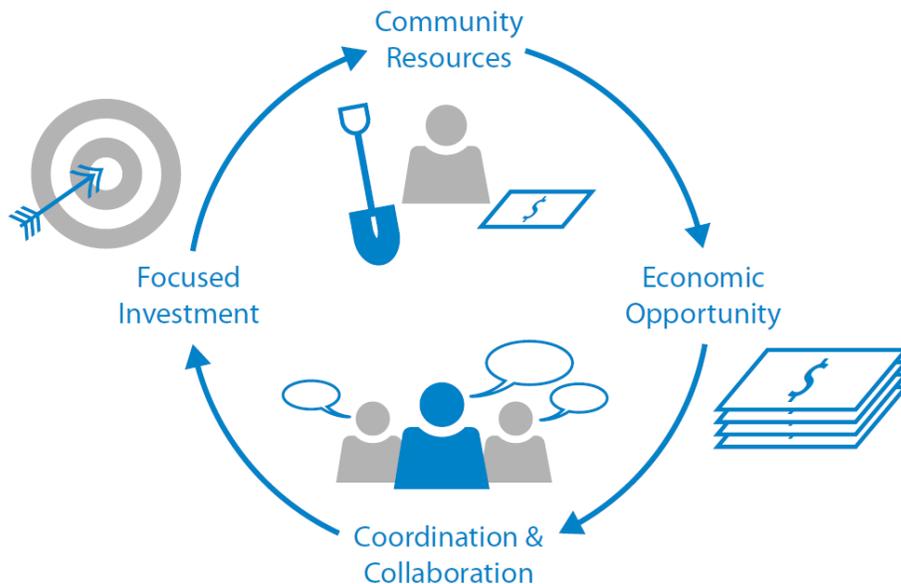
Good communication and coordination among community groups and supporting agencies ensures that all available resources support Turtle Lake’s vision. With limited financial resources, coordination and communication are essential to help Turtle Lake achieve its community goals at minimal cost by avoiding redundancy, conflicting efforts, or spreading resources too thin.

### **...and focused investments.**

Housing and business development are desired outcomes for Turtle Lake, but they should not be the sole focus of our planning efforts or the only measurement of success. Even in periods of slow growth or population decline, Turtle Lake’s businesses, residents, and government continue to invest in the community. Focused investments provide the foundation for success. Our community is built one step at a time. Investments of time, money, and other resources are most effective when targeted to an area or project that is

big enough to produce meaningful change, but small enough to ensure completion within a reasonable timeframe, with tangible, visible improvements that create momentum. Over time, focus areas can be expanded to build on our successes.

**Figure 14. Community Development Framework**



Coordination, collaboration, and focused investment help us capitalize and expand our resources to develop our economic opportunities.

## Stimulating Private Investment

The goal of economic development is to develop community resources and policies to stimulate private investment. Traditionally, this has meant establishing business-friendly tax policies or other incentives. More recently, communities are learning that the quality of life they provide is equally if not more important. Turtle Lake's school, recreation areas, community spirit, and other assets serve a critical purpose in this regard – the City has a strong foundation on which to build. Maintaining a presentable appearance is also important. These are also focal points of North Dakota's Main Street Initiative.

## Regional Focus

Economic development plans are typically focused at a regional scale. This is because local economies operate within regional markets, which are linked by shared resources, a regional labor pool, and integrated trade and transport networks. **This is important for Turtle Lake, since it serves those who**

**live in the surrounding unincorporated County and those who recreate on surrounding lakes.**

Turtle Lake does not exist within a vacuum. Its prospects for future development are tied to McLean County, neighboring communities, the lakes, and the broader region of western North Dakota. Turtle Lake is not an engine for growth. Through smart planning and investment, however, the City can position itself to benefit from regional growth – for example, by providing workforce housing or other amenities that respond to the needs of a growing region.

## **Thinking Like a Business**

The community survey provided valuable feedback for understanding the types of businesses and amenities that residents would like to see – a bar and grill, for example. However, it is equally important to think about the types of businesses that are likely to be successful. What would it take to open a business in Turtle Lake?

Operating certain businesses, like restaurants, is typically a full-time job that requires the owner to make a profit. The prospects for profit and appetite for development are framed by risk. There may be substantial initial investments and high overhead. Higher startup and/or operating costs will need to be offset by higher revenue. Businesses in Turtle Lake face considerable risks, as they must contend with a small market area, the challenge of shipping/receiving products or supplies in a rural area with limited highway access, and the competition from other communities which possess economic advantages (better highway access, larger markets, more capital, etc.) To be successful, entrepreneurs need to minimize risk. It helps if the business person can reasonably anticipate the market for their goods or service and has a sound business model to execute their plan. They may also have to invest their own labor or be willing to absorb temporary losses while the business gets its footing.

### **SBA 7a Community Advantage Program**

A risky startup may have trouble securing a business loan. This state program reduces the risks for entrepreneurs and lenders alike by insuring 75-85 percent of loans up to \$250,000. The program is intended for underserved communities like Turtle Lake.

It may be helpful to conduct a market study. Knowing the market, prospective startups can identify gaps to fill. Often, people will drive longer distances for specialty products or a unique experience. The community could research business categories of interest to learn the following:

- The types of specialty businesses that are available in Underwood, Washburn, and other neighboring cities.
- The driving distance to the nearest business of interest.
- The total number of similar businesses in the area.

## Two Paths to Development

There are two alternatives for pursuing business development in Turtle Lake:

1. **Recruit new businesses/residents to set up shop in the city.** This path involves active promotion of available sites, buildings, and market opportunities, marketing the City's quality of life, coordination with developers, and potentially financial incentives.
2. **Business development by current residents of Turtle Lake or the surrounding community.** The advantage here is that current residents are already invested in the community. They can rely on existing relationships and sources of income to support their venture and provide a fallback plan. Because of this, they may be more willing to experiment to find creative solutions.

While the City will continue to pursue the first approach, the second is likely to be more successful, at least in the short run.

## Steps to Success

Whether it's a local startup or a business recruitment, opening a successful business takes careful planning. It is important to cultivate relationships, secure financing, start small, be open to experimenting, and integrate the business within the community. How might this apply to a new restaurant?

**Cultivate relationships:** Chances are the future owner/operator is someone who lives in town or somewhere nearby. Would the owner of the bar and grill in Underwood consider expanding? Can Turtle Lake leverage social media to pursue its interest or identify a local champion? Are there people in the community with the expertise, time, and energy to help get the business up and running?

**Secure financing/incentives:** For a larger project, the City may need to combine financing from multiple sources. Could it leverage financing from the North Dakota Department of Commerce to supplement a personal business loan? Is there funding available from McLean County or a regional economic development agency? The community might consider starting a revolving loan fund. It could also offer tax relief or other incentives to the owner?

**Start small and experiment:** Consider how someone would pilot the idea. Would a bar and grill have to share space initially with another business or facility? Maybe it begins with a food truck, which could easily operate with limited hours to start. Starting small sets realistic expectation and helps a business owner minimize risk. It also establishes early momentum and creates an early opportunity to celebrate success.

**Integrate the business within the community:** Successful local businesses feel like part of the community. Perhaps the business can partner with an educational program or job training service to construct or operate the restaurant. Perhaps it partners with local farmers, ranchers, or North Dakota brewers. Could the community help develop space and reduce costs by incorporating the business into a community rehabilitation project? Developing these types of connections strengthens community and may introduce new opportunities for growth.

## Creative Uses

Not all uses require such a high level of investment and commitment. Small-scale operations can add vitality to a community with less risk involved. Some spaces can be managed with little income, overhead, and staffing, so they aren't as constrained by the profit motive. The following examples function less like businesses and more like public uses or community cooperatives:

- Art studio/artist space
- Mini library
- Workshop/makerspace
- Self-serve fitness center
- Retail incubator

These types of uses could perhaps find a home in a small space Downtown that might not be sufficient for larger businesses. They may be steppingstones to larger enterprise and selling points to new residents. There are several [case studies of creative uses that have found success in small towns](#).

## Main Street ND: Putting Main Street to Work

The appearance of a community provides a signal to potential businesses and residents. An active Downtown indicates that a community is thriving and open for business. The community survey showed that residents prioritize improving the look and feel of Downtown. The City can improve the look of Downtown through streetscaping and façade improvements. The footprint of Downtown is small – just a few blocks – so an impact can be made with small improvements such as:

- Decorative street lamps
- Planters
- Additional seating
- Improved signage
- New paint, cladding, or window repairs
- Awnings
- Sidewalk/curb repairs

**Figure 15**, developed by the Main Street Initiative, shows key ingredients for a strong downtown. These items are relevant to communities of all sizes. Access to arts and culture, quality of life attractions, community gathering spaces, and engaged youth are important elements in any community. Available development sites, along with flexible ordinances and permitting, create the opportunity for community growth. Access to health services, high-speed internet and wireless communication networks, and other community infrastructure are strong selling points. Micro-retail can bring life to underutilized spaces.

Figure 15. Main Street Ingredients



Source: North Dakota Main Street Initiative

**North Dakota Main Street Initiative**

North Dakota’s Main Street Initiative defines the State’s vision for economic development. Its goal is to attract and retain a competitive 21<sup>st</sup> Century workforce by directing investment into North Dakota cities. It envisions thriving downtowns as essential to community vitality, with a critical role to play in recruiting and retaining skilled workers. Programmatic funding is available through the CDBG Main Street allocation, which Turtle Lake has used.

## Taking Stock

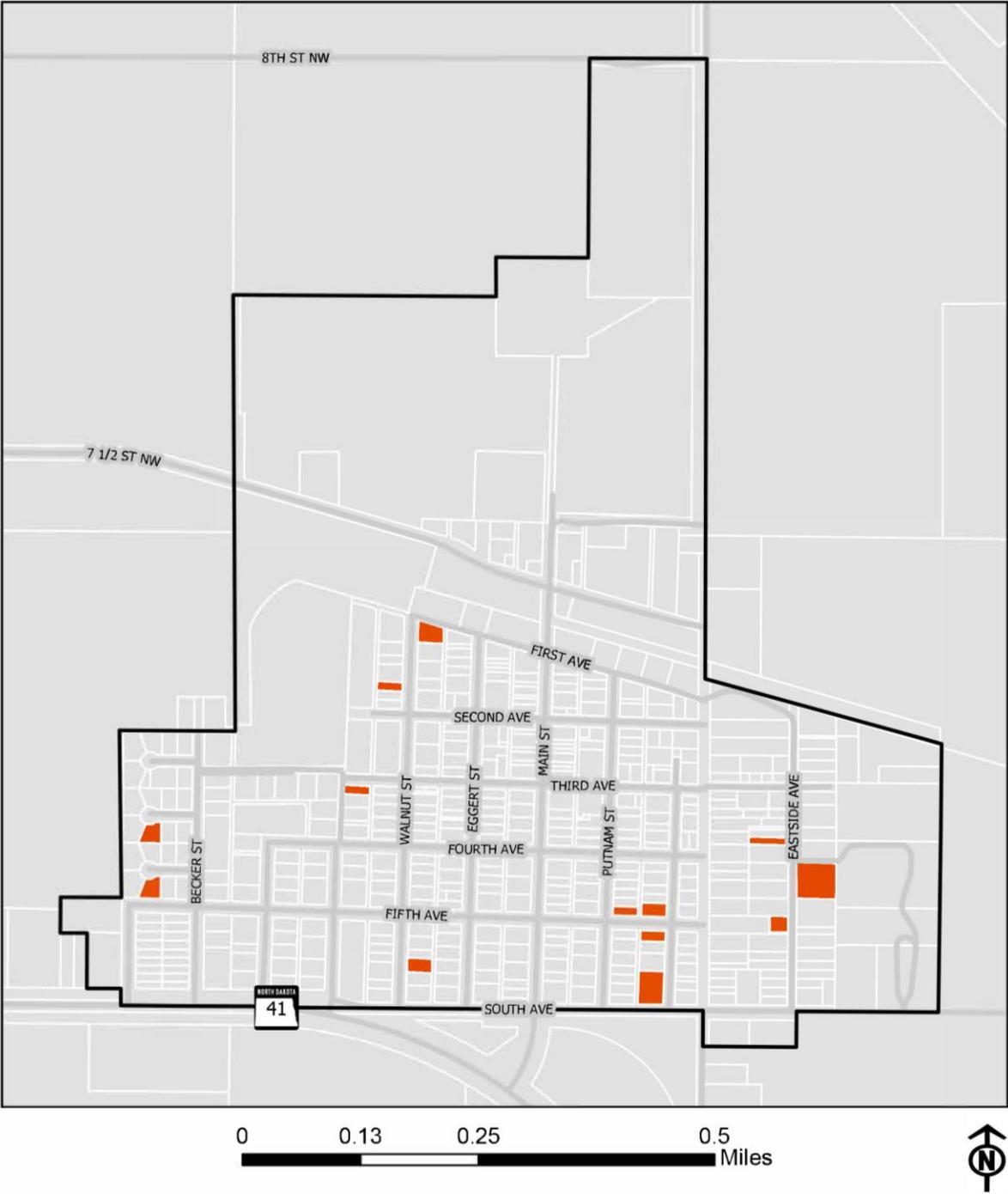
To focus its Downtown revitalization efforts, Turtle Lake should catalog the status of every building. Reviewing the ownership and occupancy status of each property will help the community understand its options for property acquisition, reuse, rehabilitation, demolition, etc. Which buildings are not up to code? If rehabilitation is a possibility, the City should try to estimate the extent of needed improvements. Which buildings need new lighting, wiring, plumbing, roofing, flooring, painting/resurfacing, HVAC, etc.? Are significant structural repairs needed? Does the community have enough expertise, resources, and commitment from local labor to perform these improvements?

## Housing is Key!

It sounds obvious, but Turtle Lake cannot grow nor attract new businesses if it doesn't provide suitable homes for its new residents. Providing quality housing that fits the needs of target demographics is an important piece of the overall economic development strategy. A small study or wider survey might help the City in discussions with developers, so that it has a clearer idea of what will sell and it can position itself to fill regional housing needs.

**Rehabilitation of existing housing and infill development** is a smart first step to expand and renew the housing supply. Housing rehab and infill projects improve community aesthetics and inject new life into established neighborhoods. The Future Land Use Map, Transportation Plan, and Utilities serve to position the City to plan for future housing subdivisions. Refer to **Figure 16** for developable residential lots and targeted rehabilitation sites as of March 2020.

Figure 16. Housing Rehabilitation and Infill Opportunities



**Key**  
[Orange Square] Housing Rehabilitation and Infill Opportunities

## Absentee Landlords

One challenge is the number of the absentee landlords. Many property owners do not live in the City. Some may live out of state. Without effective policy, absentee owners have little motivation to improve or sell their property. Vacant property ties the City's hands and restricts opportunities for community development.

Ideas to help activate business fronts on Main Street:

- Strictly enforce all building codes for health and safety purposes and require compliance.
- Adopt design standards that set certain façade standards or signage requirements to eliminate blank facades.
- Pursue public improvements/streetscaping that benefit adjacent properties and special assess absentee owners along with active owners.
- Create a Business Improvement District that requires participation from all property owners in Downtown.

Before adopting any of these policies the City should consult an attorney.

## Funding Sources and Programs

**Table 4** describes several funding sources and programs that can be utilized to stimulate economic development. Many of these programs could be used in combination. Typically, it takes several sources of funding to develop a project, including personal financing/labor, loans, grants, and gap financing to make up the difference. In addition to outside funding sources, the City can make development more attractive by providing tax breaks, waiving utility connection fees, and removing hurdles for project permitting.

**Table 4. Funding Sources and Programs**

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Application</b>
Tax abatement	Reduction or exemption from municipal taxes and/or state taxes for a specified period.	Property tax incentive for new business startups or residential development that meets certain criteria (e.g., affordable housing)
Renaissance Zone	North Dakota program which leverages state and local tax incentives to encourage investment within a defined area.	Property acquisition, rehabilitation, construction, lease, utilities
CDBG Main Street Fund	State funding allocation, up to \$100,000 per year for eligible districts	Downtown revitalization, façade improvements, streetscaping, property acquisition
North Dakota Development Fund	Coordinates various public and private financing sources; provides flexible financing through unique loans and equity investments	Funding is available to any primary sector business except production agriculture. Examples include tourism, manufacturing, and investor-owned agriculture.
Local Option Sales Tax	Used by over 80 communities (cities and counties) in North Dakota, including Turtle Lake.	Revenue for administration, marketing, loan financing, or other economic development incentives
SBA 7a Community Advantage Program	Financing for small business startups in underserved communities.	The SBA insures 75-85 percent of loans up to \$250,000, which gives lenders more confidence to offer financing to riskier startup businesses.
Business Improvement District (BID)	Self-supporting community finance mechanism	Funds services/amenities which cannot be provided by the government (local or state), such as planning, beautification, event creation, streetscaping, or marketing.
Revolving Loan Fund	A self-supporting fund which uses interest and principal payments on old loans to issue new ones. North Dakota has a Regional Rural Revolving Loan Fund which Turtle Lake may qualify for.	Gap financing measure to developer expand small business. Possible uses include acquisition, new construction, landscaping, façade/building renovation, landscaping, equipment

<b>Think outside the box: 15 creative actions for small-town development</b>
Create a public tool library and conduct a shop class.
Create a rentable garage or workshop.
Rent out idle machinery and equipment.
Convert an empty building into a workspace for entrepreneurs and existing small businesses, such as artists/artisans or telecommuters.
Develop an annual entrepreneurship project for kids or adults.
Create a community orchard.
Use a closed restaurant, school, or church with a commercial kitchen to support a food-based startup.
Let two different eateries split hours/days in the same building.
Make space for truck or trailer-based businesses in the City.
Create a mobile meat processing business.
Implement local delivery service.
Create a recreation library to promote local fishing and other activities.
Publicize products, services, materials, or wastes that businesses need to buy, sell, or pay to dispose of.
Ask businesses that are based in rural areas if they would like to open an outpost in town.
Prepare a promotional community video.
Construct a shell building on Main Street to improve aesthetics. Work with potential occupants (build to suit).
Work with a consultant to improve City website for search engine optimization (SEO).

Table adapted from "101 Ways to Start More Tiny Businesses in Your Town" by Becky McCray with [www.saveyour.town](http://www.saveyour.town)

# Implementation

## The Comprehensive Plan Committee

- The success of this Plan will rely on a Comprehensive Plan Committee appointed by the City Commission.
- As part of the Plan adoption, it is recommended that the Commission appoint a committee representing important local stakeholder, much like the Plan’s steering committee.
- The Comprehensive Plan Committee should meet at least quarterly and focus on attacking 3-5 issues at a time (following the priorities in the table below).
- The Committee needs to select individuals or groups to take on each implementation task shown in the below table.

## Implementation Tasks

Key

**Timeline** – Short Term (1 year), Mid Term (2-5 years), Long Term (6+ years)

**Investment/Cost** – Direct cost or equivalent labor hours (staff time)

Low (up to 4 hrs or \$2,000); Medium (41-100 hrs or \$2,001 - \$5,000); High (101+ hrs or \$5,001+)

**Priority** – The Plan Steering Committee ranked the below action steps.

<b>Economic Development &amp; Housing</b>			
<b>Action Step</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Investment/Cost</b>	<b>Priority</b>
<i>The City will expand its efforts to advertise/promote its willingness to buy property for new residential development.</i>	<i>Short Term</i>	<i>Low/Medium</i>	<i>Added after ranking</i>
Update the City’s website. Modify for search engine optimization (SEO) and acquire a consultant to assist with SEO. The Comprehensive Plan Committee needs to identify the main areas of focus, such as promoting the school, recreation, the market, etc.	Short Term	High	1
Continue to pursue funding from North Dakota’s Main Street CDBG program on an annual basis.	Ongoing	Medium (Build from existing program/relationships)	2
Identify a “website champion” – one person or a group responsible for keeping the City website up to date. Should also include updating city social media accounts.	Ongoing	Low/Medium	3 (tie)

<b>Use direction from this Plan to activate buildings/property on Main Street controlled by absentee landlords.</b>	Mid Term	Medium/High	3 (tie)
<b>Collaborate with the School District to enhance career/vocational training with a focus on construction and related vocations</b> - Start small with Park District projects.	Short/Mid Term	Medium/High	4
<b>Market recreational tourism opportunities</b> - Use website and other means to promote access to the North Country Scenic Trail	Short Term	Low	5 (tie)
<b>Create a community “brand” with a logo to help market the community.</b>	Short/Mid Term	Low/Medium	5 (tie)
<b>Low-cost, high-impact Main Street improvements</b> - Seek funding from the ND Department of Transportation and from local sources for Main Street improvements.	Mid Term	Low	6 (tie)
<b>Install new and improved community signage along Highways 41 and 200</b> - Identify locations to improve and/or install new signage that identifies the community from Highways 41 and 200.	Short Term	Low	6 (tie)
<b>Market recreational tourism opportunities</b> - Use website and other means market Turtle Lake as a hunting and fishing destination, promoting seasonal events and related activities.	Short Term	Low	6 (tie)
<b>Consolidate property on Main Street and develop a building where businesses can rent or purchase their own space to improve as necessary.</b>	Mid Term	High	7 (tie)
<b>Install new and improved community signage along Highways 41 and 200</b> - Install identified improvements	Mid/Long Term	Medium/High	7 (tie)
<b>Collaborate with the School District to enhance career/vocational training with a focus on construction and related vocations</b> - Work toward housing rehabilitation and construction projects.	Long Term	High	7 (tie)
<b>Create and maintain a list of volunteer opportunities in the community to share with all residents. Mail to all residents.</b>	Short Term	Low	7 (tie)
<b>Rehabilitate targeted residential properties (Target 1-2 properties per year)</b> - Capitalize on Lewis and Clark Development Group funding assistance for rehabilitation.	Short/Mid Term	Medium	8
<b>The City Commission and Chamber of Commerce will work together to develop closer relationships with major regional employers such as Great River Energy, Blue</b>	Short Term/Ongoing	Medium/High	9 (tie)

Flint Ethanol, and the Falkirk Mining Company. Discussions with employers will focus on how the employers and the City (could also include other cities in the County) can work together to improve housing for current and future workforce and create a higher quality of life for residents (infrastructure investment, recreation, etc.). Establish a group that meets on a regular basis.			
Rehabilitate targeted residential properties (Target 1-2 properties per year) - Pursue acquisition of vacant and other properties in disrepair.	Ongoing	Medium/High	9 (tie)
Provide City staff and leaders with the tools and training to facilitate economic development, reaching out to the ND Department of Commerce and/or the Lewis and Clark Development Group for assistance.	Short Term	Medium	10 (tie)
Low-cost, high-impact Main Street improvements - Work with property owners, the Chamber of Commerce, and ND Department of Transportation to develop a plan for low-cost, high-impact improvements to Main Street right of way.	Short Term	Medium	10 (tie)
Create 10-20 accessible housing units targeted for the aging demographic in the next 10 years.	Long Term	High	11
Evaluate the usefulness of Renaissance Zone status to facilitate property reinvestment and rehabilitation.	Short Term	Low	12

<b>Land Use</b>			
<b>Action Step</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Investment/Cost</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Update zoning and related ordinances - Ensure City ordinances provide flexibility for Rural Residential and Mixed Use categories.	Short Term	Low/Medium	1
Update zoning and related ordinances - Amend the Zoning Code to distinguish between Commercial and Industrial	Mid Term	Low/Medium	2 (tie)
Update zoning and related ordinances - Evaluate opportunities for modular housing as a cost-effective, flexible alternative to stick-built homes. Ensure City ordinances do not restrict construction of modular housing.	Short Term	Low/Medium	2 (tie)

<b>Transportation and Utilities</b>			
<b>Action Step</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Investment/Cost</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Repair deteriorated sidewalks on Main Street. Provide ADA accessible curb ramps at all intersections.	Short Term	High	1 (tie)
Work with the School District and property owners adjacent to the school to gauge feasibility of sidewalk improvements near the school. Pursue Safe Routes to School funding if projects may be possible.	Mid Term	Medium	1 (tie)
Inventory surface quality of city streets and develop a fiscally constrained plan for roadway maintenance/reconstruction. Coordinate with McLean County Highway Department.	Mid Term/Ongoing	Medium	2
Stimulate single family home development by either promoting existing low property taxes or lowering infrastructure and utility assessment costs further. Reach out the Lewis and Clark Development Group and Department of Commerce for grants to reduce infrastructure and utility costs.	Short Term/Ongoing	Low	3

<b>Parks/Recreation</b>			
<b>Action Step</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Investment/Cost</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Develop shared use path as shown in Figure 9 (Future Travel Network) - Pursue necessary easements with current residents in the community.	Long Term	High	1
Develop shared use path as shown in Figure 9 (Future Travel Network) - Pursue additional funding through the Outdoor Heritage Fund	Mid Term	Medium	2
Develop shared use path as shown in Figure 9 (Future Travel Network) - Coordinate with NDDOT regarding desire to construct a shared-use path with their ROW (along Hwy 41). Aim to have the project identified and funded in the State's Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program.	Short Term	Low	3
Create community orchard/garden at identified location(s) (refer to Plan).	Mid Term	Medium/High	4
Develop a splash pad	Mid Term	High	5