

The city of

# THIEF RIVER FALLS

Minnesota



## 2040 Comprehensive Plan



Prepared by: Northwest  
Associated Consultants, INC



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# TRANSPORTATION





## **INTRODUCTION**

The Transportation Plan is the planned extension, connection and overall improvement of the existing transportation system present in Thief River Falls today. It examines this system in regard to how it will continue to develop, and in how it will serve the land use patterns of the community. For Thief River Falls, it is especially important to recognize how the transportation system supports both residents and commercial/industrial entities (railroads, freight traffic). For these groups, an effective transportation system maximizes the efficiency of land access and mobility but require differences in consideration and design. This plan will examine these factors of access and mobility in regard to a number of traffic modes: vehicle traffic, rail traffic, air traffic, and pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

## **TRANSPORTATION GOALS AND POLICIES**

In recognizing the ongoing projects within the community and the need for future growth, transportation planning will attempt to achieve the following goals using the policies listed below.

### **Roadways Goals and Policies**

**Goal 1:** Develop a comprehensive street system that effectively moves automobile traffic through the City.

**Policies:**

- A. Plan transportation facilities to function in a manner compatible with adjacent land use.
- B. Consider the mobility needs of all persons in the planning and development of the transportation system.
- C. Establish and maintain a line of communication between local, county, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation in order to ensure that planned improvements are consistent with the goals and objectives of the community.
- D. Work with the County to identify future County Highway system routes in and around the City including needed bridges and railroad crossings.
- E. Ensure that all components of the transportation system are maintained and developed to the highest standards to insure against detrimental impact upon community growth.

- F. Focus the transportation system on activity centers within the community and in neighboring communities.
- G. Work with Pennington County to develop strategies and street designs that will reduce traffic speeds on County roads as the motorists enter Thief River Falls.
- H. Develop a long term plan for an arterial and collector street system within the City's extraterritorial growth area that establishes alternative traffic routes through and around the City and provides some traffic relief for existing high volume intersections.
- I. As the City grows, utilize subdivision code to preserve appropriate street ROW widths based on the anticipated functional classification of the street.
- J. Use best practices of access management by limiting access along major collector and arterial roads and limiting intersections where possible.

**Goal 2:** Establish a street system that connects isolated neighborhoods and promotes the safe and convenient interchange of traffic.

**Policies:**

- A. Pursue an infill growth pattern that connects isolated residential neighborhoods with the rest of the community with streets, sidewalks, or trails.
- B. Evaluate future growth with regard to anticipated traffic generation and its impact on existing roadway and travel patterns.
- C. Require proper visibility, design and control of all intersections to promote safety.
- D. Design local or residential streets to prevent penetration by through traffic and properly direct traffic to collector or arterial streets.
- E. Where feasible and practical, eliminate and prevent any on-street parking which conflicts with moving traffic or creates hazards on major collector or arterial streets.
- F. Provide complete street systems to eliminate isolated neighborhoods and dead end streets and allow for inter-connections between neighborhoods.
- G. Where feasible and practical, include provisions for other transportation modes (i.e., bicycles, pedestrians, etc.) and utility construction in street improvement plans.

**Goal 3:** Upgrade and improve substandard streets.

**Policies:**

- A. Establish a phased program to improve hazardous and/or poorly designed intersections and access points so as to increase the safety of both motorized and non-motorized traffic.
- B. Continue to evaluate and rate the condition of City streets as a means of prioritizing street repair, reclamations, and reconstruction.
- C. Improve street safety through the appropriate use of street lighting and sign controls.
- D. Investigate opportunities for sidewalks, trails, or on-street bike lanes in conjunction with any street reclamation or reconstruction project.
- E. Include the City street management plan as part of the annual capital improvement program and City budget.
- F. Utilize the downtown plan to improve the street and sidewalk areas around downtown.

**Bike/Pedestrian Goals and Policies**

**Goal 1:** Maintain the high quality of existing pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks, crosswalks, and off-street trails.

**Policies:**

- A. Plan ahead for budgeting and labor purposes the repaving and patching of trails or sidewalks at least 5 years into the future.
- B. Ensure sidewalks are clear of snow and ice during the winter, per code enforcement.
- C. Utilize code enforcement in cases where a private property owner is infringing on the public sidewalk in such a way as to impede foot traffic.
- D. Ensure that pedestrian crossings on heavily traveled streets are clearly marked and lighted.

**Goal 2:** Explore new opportunities to expand and connect the pedestrian and bicycle systems of the City.

### **Policies:**

- A. Utilize the downtown street resurfacing project as an opportunity to widen sidewalks along certain block faces and explore new bike connections within the downtown.
- B. Create a bike master plan to identify future on grade bike improvements, and plan for their inclusion in future public works road projects.
- C. Partner with local schools, civic institutions and businesses to encourage biking as a mode of transportation via events and marketing (safe routes to school).
- D. Where feasible, provide pedestrians separated rights-of-way apart from all forms of moving motor vehicle traffic.
- E. Require sidewalks along local streets within new subdivisions to be constructed as part of the subdivision improvements.
- F. Give priority to the establishment of pedestrian and bicycle facilities in areas in and surrounding schools, churches, parks and service or commercial centers.
- G. Pursue available grants that may assist Thief River Falls in financing its community trail system.

### **Rail Goals and Policies**

**Goal 1:** Continue to allow for safe and efficient freight shipping along existing railways, while diminishing impact on other residents and businesses.

### **Policies:**

- A. Work with Canadian Pacific and Minnesota Northern on accomplishing future railway improvements and maintenance
- B. Explore potential locations for additional grade separated rail crossings along the Canadian Pacific Railway.
- C. Seek to improve the appearance of the railyard located along Atlantic Ave.
- D. Cooperatively ensure that the on-grade railroad crossings are maintained to prevent hazardous situations in regard to street conditions, signing, and visibility.

- E. Pursue industries that benefit from rail service to take advantage of its availability.
- F. Work with Canadian Pacific and relocate its grain loading site.

### Airport Goals and Policies

**Goal 1:** Improve the Airport to more efficiently serve the commercial shipping needs of the local business community, as well as local residents.

**Policies:**

- A. Work with the joint airport commission to complete a Master Plan determining improvement needs and costs associated to determine a fair tax assessment for local communities and users.
- B. Continue to work with existing passenger carrier lines to provide long-distance transportation options for local residents.
- C. Plan for expansion and growth of the airport when identifying land use areas and development possibilities surrounding the airport area.
- D. Understand the land use impact of the airport expansion, airport zoning and the types of uses it may limit or outright prohibit.
- E. Expand taxing authority to region wide beneficiaries.

### Streets

Thief River Falls existing street grid and roadway system has been shaped in large part by the City's physical barriers, natural or manmade. These include the Thief and Red Lake Rivers, The Canadian Pacific and Minnesota Northern railroads, as well as the locations of US Highway 59, and State Highways 1 and 32. These have largely dictated the shape of the street system and where access to arterial streets have been located, and already present issues in terms of traffic slow down and blockages. As the City continues to grow, these barriers must be incorporated into the plan for growth. This could mean building a bridge connection over the river or creating new collectors to help move people through the City or provide alternative travel routes when a larger road is blocked or congested. In this respect, the Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the need to coordinate transportation system planning with its Land Use Plan to identify future alternative travel corridors, secure necessary rights-of-way, and to provide some traffic relief on the existing system to preserve the function of the City's overall transportation network.

In addressing the City's transportation concerns, Thief River Falls has undertaken planning and transportation efforts as a means of being prepared for future transportation improvements:

- The City is planning to add river crossings on the east side of the City in order to provide alternative access routes between the main part of the City and the residential areas northeast of the river. In addition, a southern river crossing is planned to be added just east of Sanford hospital connecting CSAH 8 and CSAH 16.
- Adding roundabouts to calm traffic and increase intersection safety along the shared western portion of Highways US 59 and MN 1.
- Addressing and potentially simplifying the frontage road situation along US Highway 59 in the Southeastern portion of the City.
- The City, along with Canadian Pacific and Pennington County, is exploring the potential shift of grain loading activity from its current location within the City to a location far enough North along the railway that it does not block access to the Northeastern corner of the City.
- Trail Plan will coordinate bike and pedestrian improvements in order to better connect existing trails infrastructures to allow for continuous routes without gaps in service.

### Functional Road Classifications

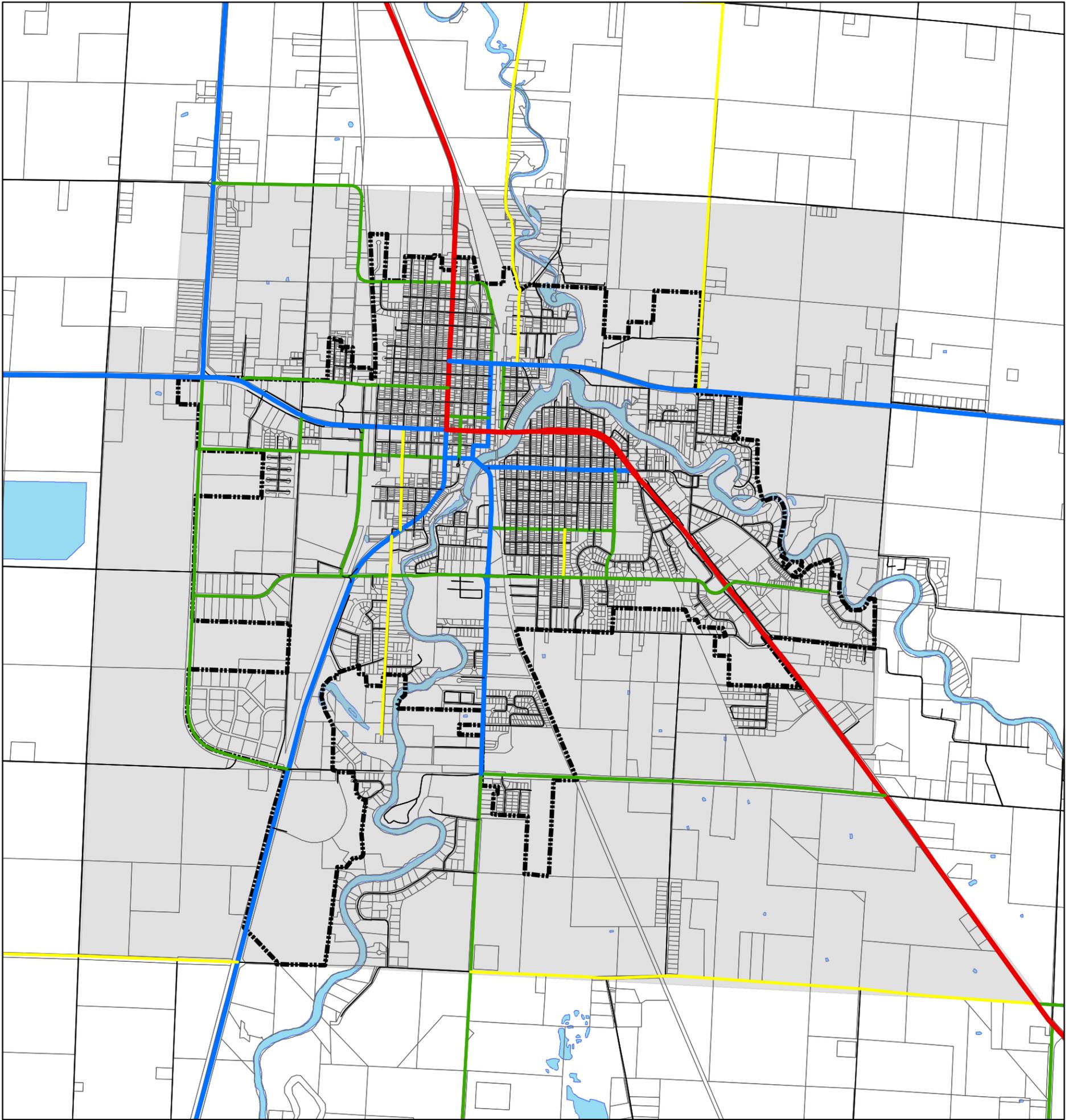


Functional Classifications refer to the role each roadway should perform in the context of the system as a whole. These classifications are set by the Minnesota Department of Transportation and are largely defined by how the street is designed and whether it emphasizes land access or traffic mobility. For example, a local residential street is primarily designed to allow access for numerous properties in a neighborhood, and in regard to mobility it actually seeks to limit the amount of vehicles which travel on it to residents, and to

limit overall speeds in the interest of safety. This type of road is not expected to provide the same mobility a major roadway or highway. The following sections are a description of these classifications, and will provide planning recommendations in how they are to be implemented in the City.

# Functional Road Class - Thief River Falls

October 2, 2019



## Legend

### Road Class

-  Local
-  Minor Collector
-  Major Collector
-  Minor Arterial
-  Principal Arterial

-  City Limits
-  Annex Area
-  Rivers

0.9 0.45 0 0.9 Miles



1 inch = 0.54 miles



Data Sources: City of Thief River Falls,  
Pennington County, MNDOT, NAC Inc.



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## Arterial Streets

Arterial streets are designed to serve trips between major destinations within the City and to major destinations beyond the City's borders. The arterial street's primary function is to provide for through movement traffic. To implement this primary function, the street design will promote smooth traffic flow with limited interruptions by limiting the number and locations of lot accesses as well as the number of street intersections. The Transportation Plan identifies two types of arterials within Thief River Falls, larger Principal Arterials and Minor Arterials. For Principal Arterials, the City has US Highway 59 and State Highway 32. The minor arterials are Highways US 59 and 32 as well as State Highway 1, and County Highway 17.

These arterials are the primary streets used when getting from one end of the City to the other but are also critical in connecting the City with other municipalities in the surrounding region such as Grand Forks, Fargo, Winnipeg, Red Lake Falls, and eventually even as far as the Twin Cities Metro. Currently planned improvements are in place for the western section of Highways 1 and US 59, to add a series of roundabouts along the commercial/industrial corridor. These should help to alleviate traffic congestion by removing the need for signaled intersections, while also making it safer to enter or exit the highway to any of the off-streets.

Looking ahead, the transportation plan proposes that the entirety of MN 1, US 59, and MN 32 will be upgraded in classification to principal arterial roadways.

## Collector Streets

This classification will be further divided into major collector streets and minor collector streets. Major collector streets provide local travel connections between neighborhoods, and from neighborhoods to business concentrations, or the arterial street system. For major collector streets, mobility is still a priority over land access. The major collector streets within Thief River Falls will be comprised primarily of County highways and major streets having a spacing of one-half to one mile apart in developed areas.

Minor collectors provide for mobility and land access equally. These streets are generally the most heavily traveled streets within a subdivision that serve to channel traffic from the neighborhood to the major collector or arterial street system.

The preceding map illustrates the street corridors that the City anticipates to be major and minor collector streets. These roadways will serve an even more important role as the City expands outward geographically to allow for cross-town traffic without overburdening arterials. A great example of this is the recent improvements of Greenwood Street, which now includes a

grade separated rail crossing. Where Greenwood was previously in sections a minor collector or local street, its new major collector function provides a through street from the east to western portion of town with a railroad overpass avoiding train delays.

The extension of arterial and collector streets into the extra territorial planning area will guide the reservation and future dedication of needed right of ways for these higher functional classified streets.

### Local Streets

The vast majority of roadways within the City are local streets. These are the lowest functional road class outside of private drives and roads. Here the emphasis is on allowing for access to a number of different parcels through cul-de-sacs, driveway, off-street parking and etc. Unlike with collectors and arterials, local streets try to limit the amount of daily traffic they see to only those vehicles which are accessing a home, office, or business on them. Through traffic is not intended to be on these streets for the most part, though in cases this is unavoidable. To preserve pedestrian and resident safety in the instance of through traffic, speed limits are generally lower on local roads. This adds to the safety of pedestrians and motorists, as well as disincentivizing through traffic. As the City continues to grow, the City will provide subdivision design that provide street connections between neighborhoods to avoid isolated neighborhoods and congestion on the collector street system.

### Street Improvements

The Transportation Plan identifies a number of street improvements that are necessary to accommodate a comprehensive transportation system. The implementation of these improvements will require the efforts and financing of both the public and private sectors. In addition to future street development, the City faces a significant issue of street maintenance and reconstruction of its existing local street system.

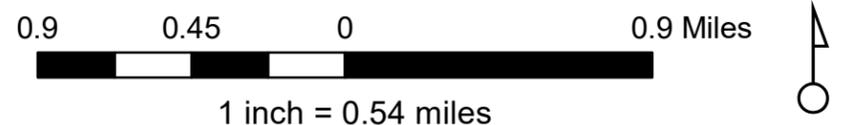
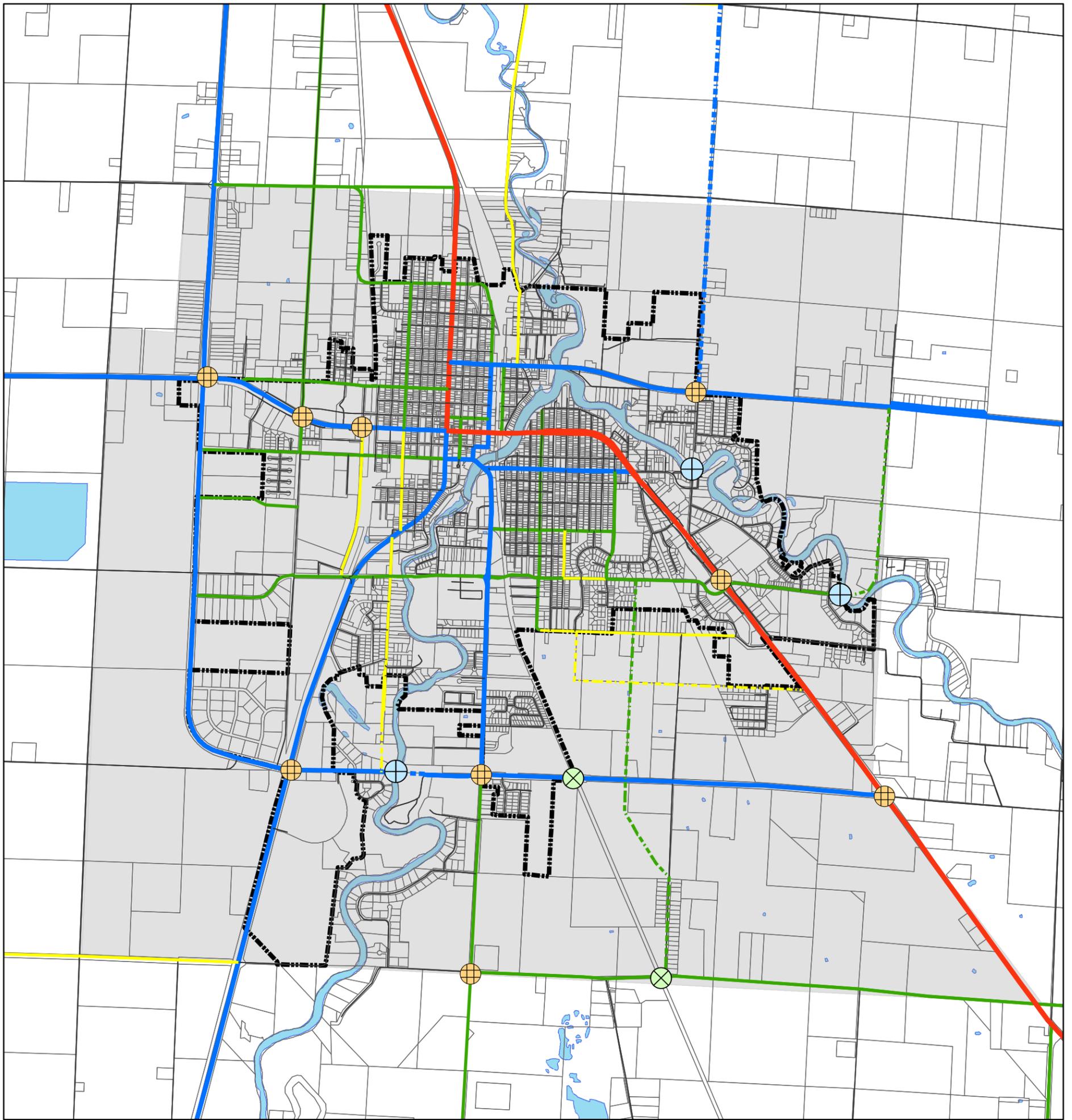
Crucial to planning for street improvements is the existence and maintenance of a long-range Capital Improvement Program. This document should identify and outline those streets that have upcoming improvements scheduled as well as the line item costs for those improvements. An additional step which the City could take would be to work with MNDOT and the County Highway Department to coordinate when improvements to state and county roads are planned, in order to more efficiently utilize public works time and finances.

As the City expands, New development must bear the construction expense of the expanding local and collector street system to provide urbanized roadways. City involvement will be required with future improvements to State and County highways and major local street projects such as street reconstruction or bridge construction. The transportation improvements must be identified, prioritized, and scheduled based on available funding and determination of need. Cooperation efforts with State, County, and adjoining communities will be pursued when available to reduce costs to the City.



# 2040 Transportation Plan

October 2, 2019



Legend	
	City Limits
	Annex Area
	Rivers
	Proposed River Crossing
	Proposed Rail Crossing
	Proposed Intersection Improvement
Functional Class	
	Local
	Minor Collector
	Major Collector
	Minor Arterial
	Principal Arterial
*Dashed lines indicate proposed roads	

Data Sources: City of Thief River Falls, Pennington County, MNDOT, NAC Inc.



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## Bicycle and Pedestrian Traffic

The Parks and Recreation Chapter will go into greater detail on the health and lifestyle benefits that a high-quality bike-ped transportation system can bring to a City, however this section will primarily focus on these systems as a means of mobility within the City of Thief River Falls. Both bicycle and pedestrian traffic modes are meant to be used for short-to-medium distance trips, and are often planned and designed for as connections between nodes. These nodes can be locations such as schools, the arena, parks, employment centers like offices or factories, or they can be commercial areas such as downtown, or the commercial along US Highway 59. These locations are chosen based upon their ability to generate trips and for how commonly they need to be accessed by residents. An effective system of bike routes between a middle school and its surrounding residential areas can promote healthy lifestyles amongst younger residents, drive daily bike traffic during the school year, and potentially reduce overall vehicle traffic around times when school is starting or letting out.

Crucial to the usability of bike and pedestrian systems is the complete connection of the entire system. Gaps in a system are a major deterrent to someone who may otherwise choose to commute or travel by bike or by walking. While having sections of high quality grade-separated trails can be a major boon to a bike network, those trails will see very little use if they terminate without connection to a desired destination on other trail segments.

Currently the City has fairly good coverage in terms of sidewalk and pedestrian infrastructure, however bicycle routes are somewhat lacking, and at times fail to connect to or end at activity or employment nodes. This is the major area where improvements can be made to the existing system. Pedestrian and bicycle system recommendations are provided within the Parks and Recreation section of this plan.



## Rail Traffic

Very few things have played a bigger role in the history of the City than its more than century-old relationship with railroads. The City's location on the Great Northern Railway and the Saint Paul-to-Winnipeg Soo Line played an important role in establishing an economic foothold on which the City could expand and grow, and to this day, the railways within the City remain active freight lines owned by Canadian Pacific and Minnesota Northern. Both lines run fairly frequently with the Canadian Pacific line seeing much more activity and larger trains of the two. But for most Thief River Falls citizens, the biggest impact of these trains is the Canadian Pacific train to block East-West automobile traffic for up to 10-15 minutes at certain locations within the City.

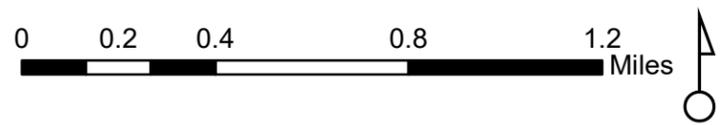
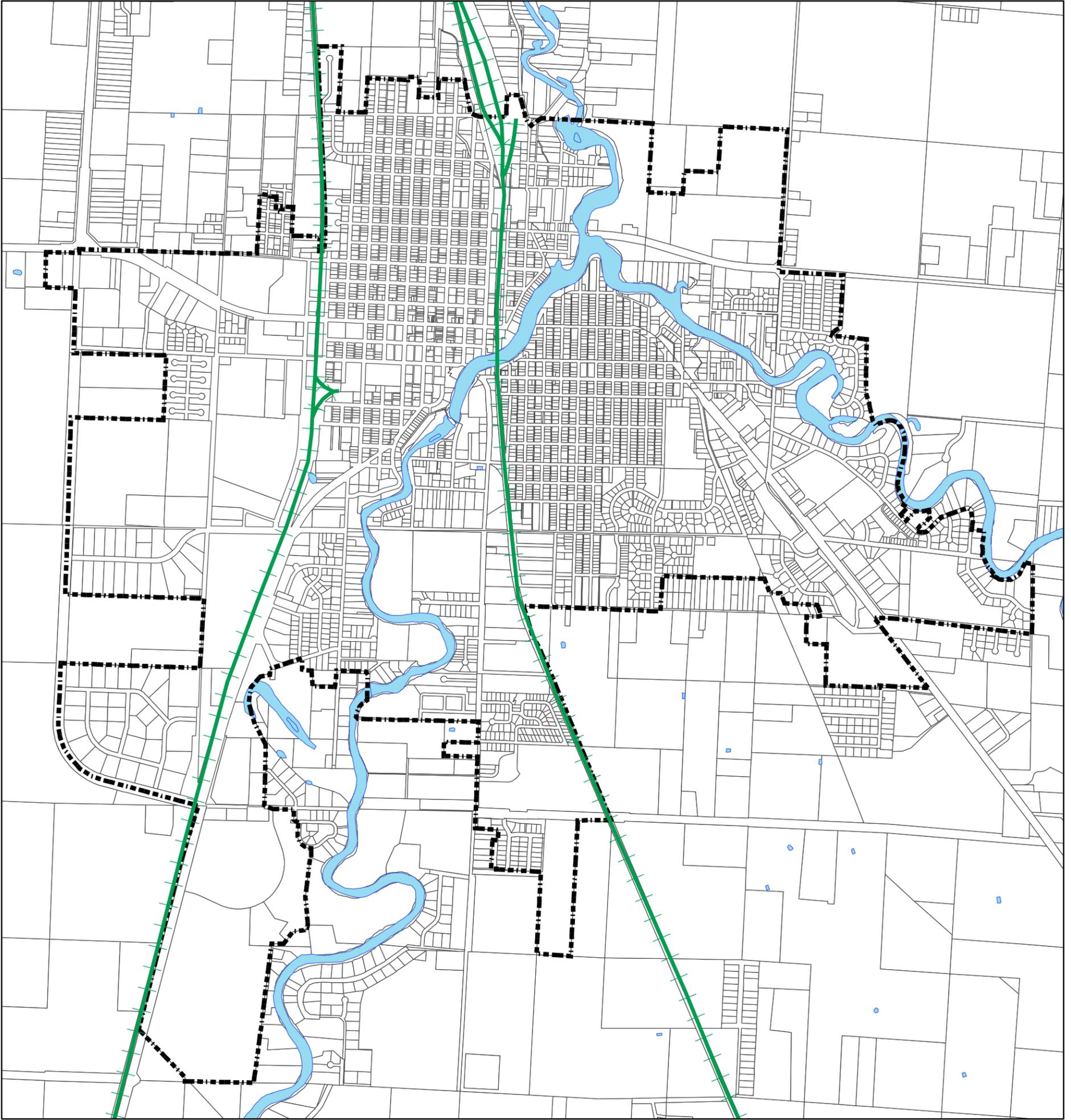
Due to the central location of the railway, and the length of the train themselves that carry grain and other goods, portions of Thief River Falls on either side of the railroad are effectively cut-off from one another while a train passes through the City. Even worse is when a train must stop at the northern end of town to load grain, blocking the 8th street access to houses and properties located on the Northeastern side of the Red Lake River. This has yet to result in any major emergency management issues, however it is on the City's radar, and one of the principal motivators for providing an additional river crossing at Sherwood Avenue or Greenwood Street.

Planning around these types of physical barriers requires some creativity, especially given the proximity between the rail line and the City's downtown. It is not so easy as saying that a grade-separated rail crossing should be installed at every intersection, since this is not physically or fiscally feasible for the City. Some potential workarounds include tactical grade-separations such as the one along Greenwood Street, or the addition of new river crossings to circumvent road closures due to the train. The City is also working with County and Canadian Pacific partners to explore a new location for the grain loading/storage operation, which would eliminate the blockage issue in regard to the Northeastern section of the City.



# Freight and Rail Transportation - Thief River Falls

September 20, 2019



## Legend

-  Railroads
-  City Limits
-  Rivers
-  Parcels

Data Sources: City of Thief River Falls, Pennington County, MNDNR, NAC Inc.



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190th Street NE

Lloyd Halvorson

Relocated Driveway

Relocated Entrance

Thief River Falls Golf Club

1,500 Feet

Canadian Pacific Railroad - 2 Mile Segment  
Highway 32



Eighth Street

# Canadian Pacific Railroad Thief River Falls, Minnesota

## **Air Traffic**

A unique feature of Thief River Falls transportation system is the Thief River Falls Regional Airport which provides both commercial and passenger flight service to residents and businesses. For an urban center in an otherwise rural area of the state, this service can provide for a convenient and quicker long-distance transportation option. Based on statistics from the Federal Aviation Administration, the airport saw 32,268 unique operations in 2017. It also is the base of operations for 24 aircrafts on a permanent basis. Aviation Services are primarily split between shipping and cargo traffic, as well as more general aviation and private transportation.

Boutique Air is the only passenger carrier line that is based out of the airport and it operates multiple flights per day between Thief River Falls and MSP Airport in the Twin Cities.

Due to the growing demand for more and larger shipping orders to be fulfilled by Thief River Falls industries, improvements are planned for the airport in the near future to expand runways to allow for more efficient shipping of goods from the City. The Thief River Falls Regional Airport Authority is currently planning to conduct a new master plan for the facility in order to best prepare for the costs and improvements necessitated. As the City falls under the area of the Airport's tax authority, close partnership and cooperation between the groups shall be maintained to ensure the Airport Plan works in the context of Thief River Falls long range land use plan and the City can anticipate how the cost of airport improvements will impact the City's overall tax rates.

In addition to planning the expansion of the airport and its operations, the City must recognize that the airport zoning extends beyond the airport for one mile and extends two miles in those portions of the hazard area under the airport approach safety zones. Within the airport zoning district, the following land use restrictions will be imposed.

### **Safety Zone A**

Zone A extends from both ends of the paved runway a distance equal two thirds of the runway length. Within zone A no buildings, temporary structures, exposed transmission lines or other above ground structures shall be allowed. Additionally, within zone A large group assemblies, or attractions shall also be prohibited. Permitted uses within the zone A shall include agriculture (seasonal crops), horticulture, animal husbandry raising of livestock or wildlife, or cemeteries.

### **Safety Zone B**

Zone B extends from the end of zone A a distance equal to one third of the planned runway length. With zone B some very low density development may be permitted with the following restrictions:

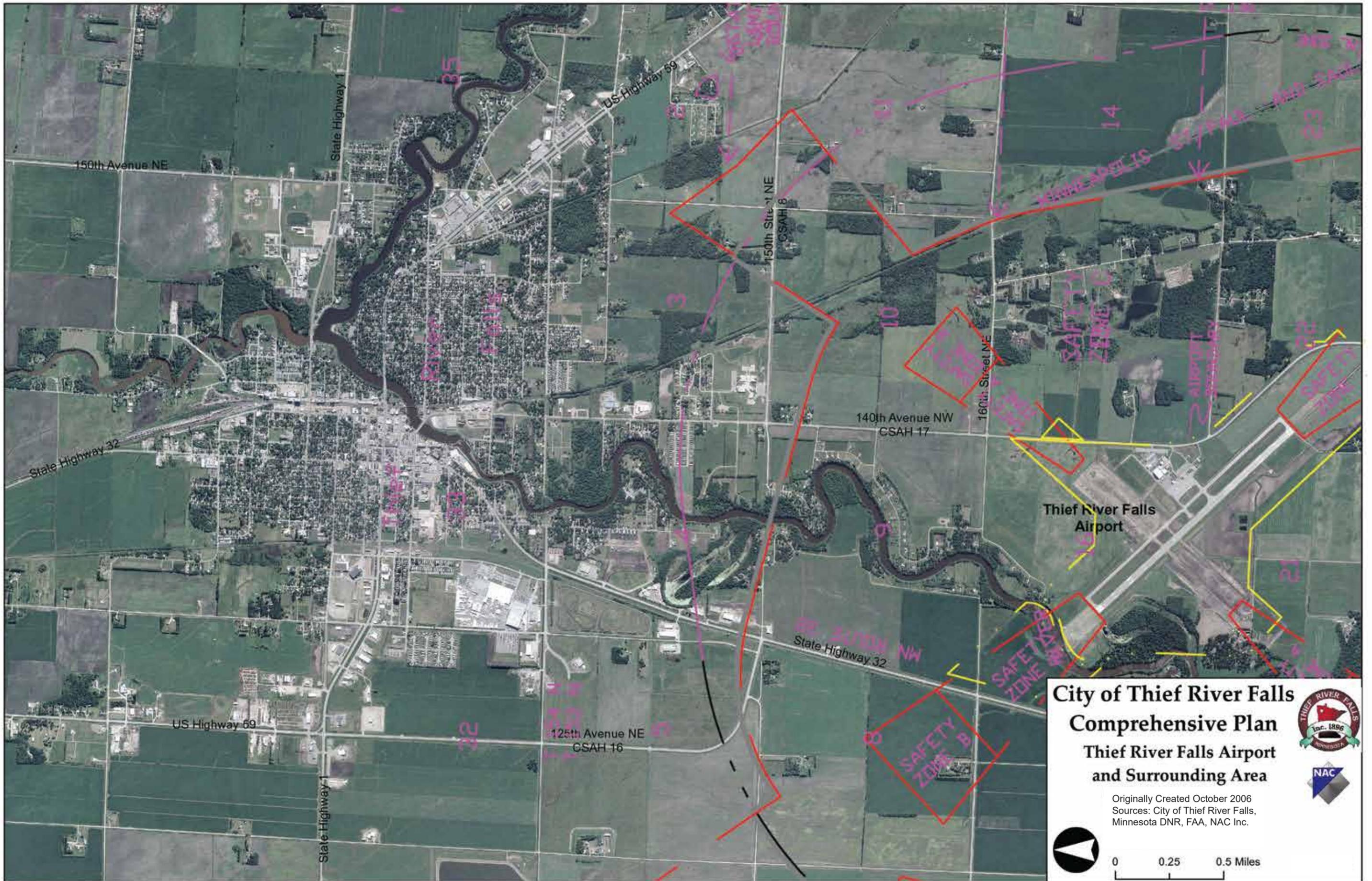
1. Any development must meet airport zoning height restrictions.
2. The minimum lot size shall not be less than three acres.
3. The building floor area shall be limited to proportion of the lot area.
4. Large assembly uses such as churches, schools, theatres, stadiums, campgrounds, and alike are prohibited in safety zone B.

### **Safety Zone C**

Zone C includes all land within the perimeter of the horizontal zone of the airport. Zone C measures in a 10,000 foot radius from each end of the runways. Land uses in zone C are guided by the Comprehensive Plan and City or County zoning. Land use development in zone C shall be required to meet the airport zoning height restrictions.

The airport master plan is in the process of being updated in anticipation of needing airport improvements. Any extension of runway lengths will result in an expanded airport zoning district that will influence future development along Thief River Falls southern boundary.





**City of Thief River Falls  
Comprehensive Plan  
Thief River Falls Airport  
and Surrounding Area**



Originally Created October 2006  
Sources: City of Thief River Falls,  
Minnesota DNR, FAA, NAC Inc.



0 0.25 0.5 Miles



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# PARKS & RECREATION





## **INTRODUCTION**

The issues identification process identified a desire by community leaders and residents to improve, enhance and update the existing park and trail system. Park maintenance and improvements, and trail/Riverwalk connections were addressed as priorities by the public and City officials. The goals and policies, as well as the plan, address the issues identified as part of the comprehensive planning process.

For the most part, the City representatives and those who responded to the survey are content with the current park system, however, as the City grows, additional park land will be necessary to address the recreational needs of the community. The maintenance, upkeep and enhancement of recreational facilities, and trail connections is recognized as a need to be addressed by this plan.

## **EXISTING PARKS**

Thief River Falls park system offers numerous City parks and trails distributed throughout the City, the majority of which are located in close proximity to the Red Lake River. These facilities offer a full range of recreational activities. A list of the existing parks is as follows. A map of the existing park locations is found on a following page.

### **Multi-Events Softball Complex (1)**



The “MEC” is located along State Highway 1 and County Road 18 and is 37.19 acres in size. The project, completed in 2000, was a joint powers effort between the City, Northland Community College, School District, and County. The M.E.C. has seven softball fields and one baseball field along with a concession/restroom facility. It is the home of high school boys baseball and girls fast pitch; Babe Ruth, Legion and VFW Baseball; Little League Baseball; Men’s and Women’s Slow Pitch Softball; and Thieves Baseball. The complex also plays host to several district, regional, and State tournaments. The open space also includes soccer fields.

### **Alan-A-Dale Park (2)**



Alan-A-Dale Park was donated by Dr. Herb Achenbach in 1991 for a “nature park”. Located at the end of Nightingale road, this park is classified as a Natural/Conservancy Park. This 4.96 acre wild area allows users to enjoy wildlife in its natural setting.

### **Finsbury Park (3)**



The park is located at the end of Robinhood Drive and is 12.4 acres in size. This is a man-made park that was made from river dredging material in the mid 1970s. Due to ice jams in the Spring, it is difficult to place permanent

fixtures or amenities in the park, including trees. The park is mainly a large green space area with a river border that offers fishing opportunities from shore and a pet exercise area.

### **Centennial Park (4)**



The park is located on Highway 1 East and Centennial Drive and is 9.2 acres in size. The park was acquired through a State project and includes four sets of horseshoe pits, a volleyball court, boat dock, launch, and a bathroom facility. In addition, there is a shelter with

water and electricity. Centennial Park is one of the many parks of the City that is tied to the river and the “River Walk.”

### **Red Robe Park (5)**



Formerly known as Indian Village park, it was the site of an Ojibwe Village. The park features a statue of Chief Mon-si-moh, the park’s namesake. The 3.31 acre park is located at 8th Street and Reserve Avenue. Other park amenities include a fishing pier playground equipment, picnic shelter, access to the river and the “Riverwalk.” The park is host for the annual Minn Aqua Fishing Clinic in August.

### **Northrop Park (6)**



The park is located on 9th Street and LaBree Avenue at the old Northrop School site and is 0.27 acres in size. The park land was acquired in 1997. This neighborhood park has an outdoor

skating rink and warming house, playground equipment and other amenities.

### **Elks Park (7)**



The park is located on 3rd Street and Davis Avenue next to the Soo Line Railroad Bridge and is 1.74 acres in size. This park is what the City refers to as the “Jewel of Parks.” The Zehlians Club has proudly claimed ownership of this park. The park includes a paver stone pathway and fountain, granite benches and a perennial planting bed.

### **Boy Scout Park (8)**



The park is located on 3rd Street and Markley Avenue and is 1.49 acres in size. This park, mostly dedicated to river access, includes picnic tables and benches.

### **Bill LaFave Park (9)**



Referred to as “The Beach” by many, the park is located on Taft Street and Crocker Avenue and is 4.13 acres in size. A public beach is located at this park. The park includes newly remodeled restrooms, play equipment,

basketball court and a large parking area. While a popular park because of the beach, the playground equipment and ballcourt are in need of replacement. A group of interested citizens has identified the Bill LaFave Park as the future home of a Splash Park and is accepting donations for its installment.

### **Engelstad Park (10)**



Formerly known as Eastside Park, Engelstad Park was the first Park in the City of Thief River Falls. Purchased in 1899 as future park land, it was dedicated as the “Ole E. Engelstad Park” in 1987. The park includes 4 tennis courts, a basketball court, and a large

warming house, which includes men’s and women’s restrooms, a large warming room, and storage and maintenance areas. Each Winter, an outdoor skating rink for hockey and a pleasure rink are installed.

### **Lion's Park (11)**



Once the 'Wizard of Oz Park' the park was named Lion's Park in 1980. The park is located on Nora Street and Merriam Avenue and is 2.7 acres in size. The local Lion's Club has donated its playground equipment, a restroom, and shelters along with a Frisbee golf course. The Lion's Club continues to do

fundraising for future improvements of the park.

### **Florentine Park (12)**



The park is located on Annie Street and Markley Avenue and is 4.13 acres in size. Purchased by the City from Florentine Kozojed for \$1 in 1966, it was underutilized open space until 2012 when the Park and Recreation committee and City Council

preserved the land from development. An investment of new playground equipment installation has revitalized the park.

### **Greenwood Trail (13)**



The park is located on Greenwood Street and is 48.5 acres in size and is largely an undeveloped wooded open space on the river maintained by the Rotary Club. It includes a small parking area at the trail head on Greenwood Street. This large Natural/Conservancy Park is part of the Riverwalk trail system and features trails and natural beauty in the middle of the City.

### **Millyard Park (14)**



The park is located on Pennington Avenue and is 3.8 acres in size and is east of the City Dam, overlooking the Red Lake River. Its name originated from the Meehan Sawmill that was located approximately at the Hugo's Grocery site today. The saw mill operated from 1892-1916. The original Thief River "Falls" were located here and has always been a prime fishing spot, and the

park is primarily used for fishing, river access, and its small parking area. Overlooks are located along the river while the Riverwalk meanders along the river and dam.

### **Floyd B. Olson Park (15)**



The park is located on 3rd Street and Knight Avenue and is 0.83 acres in size within the Central Business District. It is one of the oldest parks in the City. Some historians have called this park the “Haymarket” (it was purchased as a Public Market in 1910), but locals generally refer to it as the Gazebo. Its gazebo has served as home for weddings, movies in the park, Christmas lighting ceremony, and other activities and events.

### **Oakland Park (16)**



The park is located at the end of Baken Street east of Oakland Park Nursing Home and is 16.12 acres in size. The City park ownership was achieved with an exchange with the County for the Auditorium and Old Arena. The park has picnic shelters, bathroom facilities and a disc golf course. With its large size, extensive river frontage and natural beauty and tranquility, the park serves well as a gathering space for community events and family gatherings. It is the site for a future pedestrian bridge spanning the Red River.

### **Tourist Park (17)**



Originally named “Peace Park” or “Friendship Gardens” honoring US and Canada, the park is located on Oakland Park Road and Highway 32 and is 6 acres in size. The park has 16 full camper hook ups with cable television and 48 electrical/cable sites with Wi/Fi. Each camp site has a picnic table, and some have fire rings.

A bathhouse was built in 1991. Canadians make Tourist Park a traveling destination.

### **Hartz Park (18)**



The park is located on Riverside Avenue along the river and is 6 acres in size. Formerly known as Riverside Park, the park is known to many as “Lovers Lane.” A pedestrian bridge was constructed in 1997 that connects Columbia Avenue and Hartz Park. Mainly due to a large

donation from the Hartz Foundation, the park was renovated in 2002 and includes a play structure, three shelters, sand volleyball court, a concrete walking path that connects with the Riverwalk, two parking areas, flower beds and the Home of “River Fest.”

**Unnamed Park (20)**

1.55 acres of open space were set aside as part of the MMCDC’s Greenwood plat development. The heavy commercial uses surrounding, and the lack of public open space make this area a possible important future park for the City’s residents. This will be the most recent park to be added in the City, but it does not currently have any development or facilities.

**RIVERWALK**

The Riverwalk along the Thief and Red Lake Rivers is a 7.3 mile scenic and historic system of trails that provides pedestrian and bicycle connections within the City. The Riverwalk connects nine parks, three forest areas, and features 15 pictographs of City history and education. Residents and City officials discussed the need to maintain, enhance and expand upon the Riverwalk to provide connections between other parks, neighborhoods, and schools as part of the overall trail plan. The Riverwalk is seen as an important community asset as part of the overall transportation/recreational network and by providing an attraction for visitors to the community.

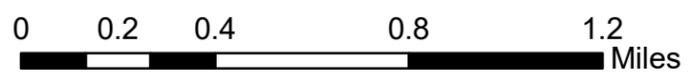
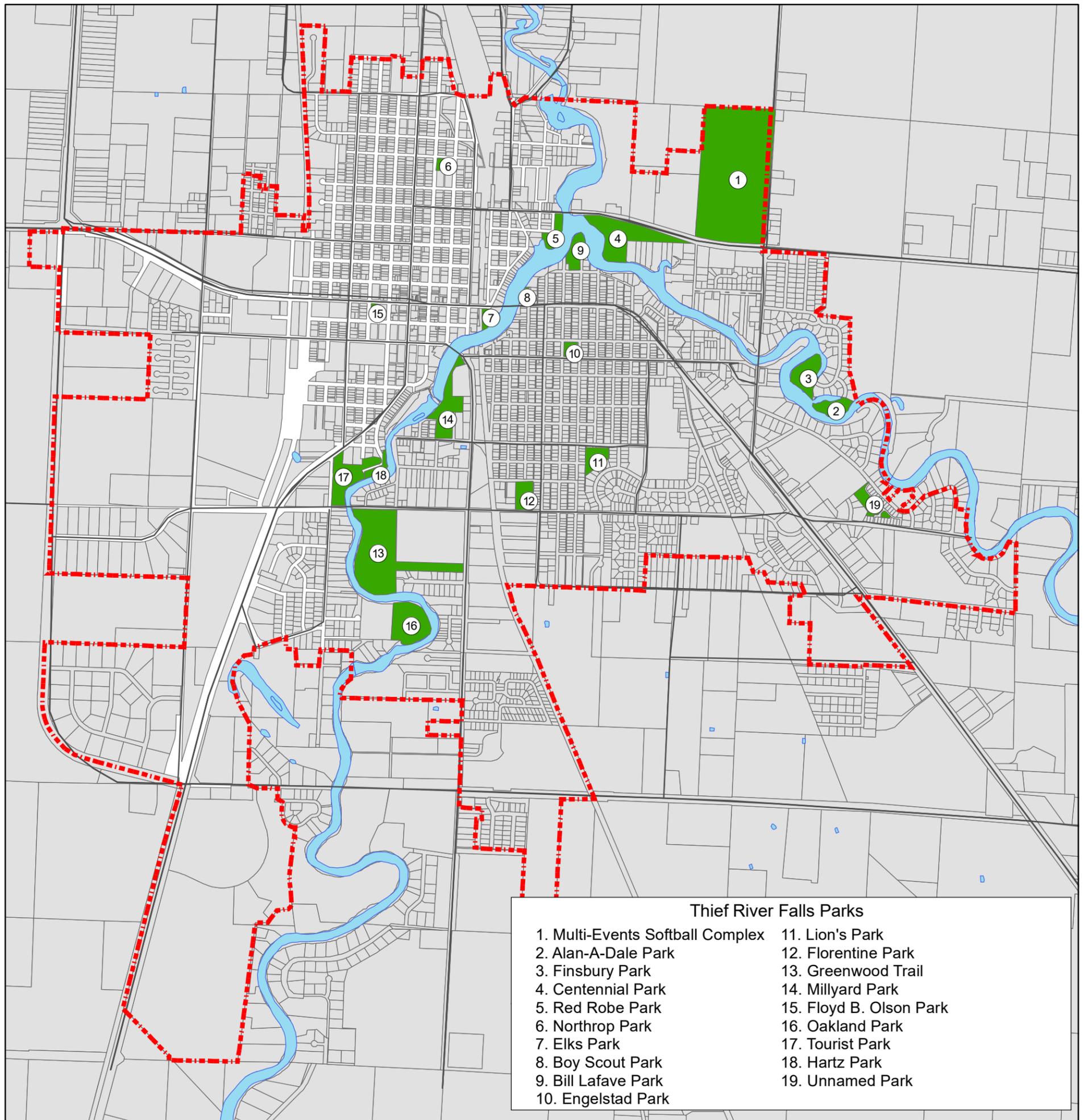


The Red Lake River corridor enhancement project is a joint effort from the Cities along the Red Lake River. The plan provides plans for community trail options and connecting loops to the Riverwalk. The plan also included conceptual designs for improvements to Oakland Park.



# Thief River Falls Parks

September 20, 2019



1 inch = 0.38 miles



Data Sources: City of Thief River Falls, Pennington County, MNDNR, NAC Inc.



## Legend

 Parks

 City Limits

 Rivers



**NORTHWEST ASSOCIATED CONSULTANTS, INC.**

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## INTRODUCTION

Goals and policies reflect the community's direction as it relates to its recreation system and provides more detailed guidance on park and trail development. Park and trail goals and policies were developed through an analysis of the issues identified in the Issues Identification phase of the process. Additionally, the policies were adopted to reflect the community's direction in land use growth and the resulting need for additional park land and facilities.

As with any policy plan, it is important to read the statements together rather than as disjointed declarations. Although conceptual development may leave the map out of date, it is expected that policies are more enduring.

## GENERAL GOALS AND POLICIES

**Goal 1:** Plan and maintain an attractive and diverse system of parks that address the park needs of all segments of the community.

**Policies:**

- A. Identify present and future park needs on a regular basis for evaluation by the City Council.
- B. Prepare an overall parks and trail master plan that includes detailed plans for each component of the park system, based on park priority rankings of the City.
- C. Land for parks will be acquired, planned and developed according to a park classification system which specifies the appropriate sizes, locations, service areas and equipment to best serve the City.
- D. Promote public participation in the park planning process.
- E. Ensure that cash and land dedication is in compliance with the overall plan for the City's park and trail system.
- F. Utilize cash in lieu of park dedication in smaller subdivisions to be used for development and enhancement of the City's existing parks.
- G. Establish a schedule for the review and analysis of the City's existing parks to outline conditions that need improvement, replacement of old or unsafe equipment, or opportunities for the introduction of new park amenities. Coordinate the park schedule with the City Capital Improvement Program.

- H. Coordinate park and trail planning and funding mechanisms to provide pedestrian/bicycle access to and within parks.
- I. Identify areas of the community lacking in park, recreational and trail facilities for planning and programming of additional facilities and programs.
- J. Identify sources of funds to be utilized for acquisition, i.e., park and trail dedication fund, Capital Improvement Plan, bond issuance, grant programs, etc.
- K. The inclusion of environmentally sensitive areas (river frontage, tree groupings, native prairie, bluffs, unique vegetative associations, etc.) into park or trail facilities should be considered.
- L. Consider acquiring land for parks/trails at an early date to meet long range needs before development pressures render the property too expensive.
- M. Encourage recreation programs and facilities that maximize participation and overcome physical or economic limitations which may prevent equal opportunity, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, or place of residence.
- N. Coordinate facility development with the needs of community residents, athletic associations, civic groups, etc.
- O. Encourage year round use of park facilities.
- P. Consider the long term costs of maintenance and operation in a facility's design and development.
- Q. Provide for the efficient maintenance and operation of clean, orderly, controlled, safe, and attractive parks and recreation areas.
- R. Require parkland dedication with new subdivisions to consist of buildable land capable of accommodating active play facilities and equipment.

**Goal 2:** Consider providing linkages within Thief River Falls as well as to neighboring communities and regional systems by a safe and convenient multi-use trail/sidewalk system.

**Policies:**

- A. Create a City-wide trail and sidewalk system designed to minimize conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles.

- B. Minimize park and trail/sidewalk construction costs by constructing trails in conjunction with State, County, and City street improvements.
- C. Parks and trails/sidewalks shall be constructed on a priority basis, according to Capital Improvement Plan/available funds with the following objectives:
  - Trails/sidewalks along major streets which focus on pedestrian and bicycle safety and which provide direct access to City/regional destinations and parks.
  - Trails/sidewalks that provide looping and interconnection with the Riverwalk.
  - Trails/sidewalks that will serve the most intense used areas.
  - Trail/sidewalk construction within existing parks and upon municipal property.
  - Trail/sidewalk inclusion within new park/subdivision development.
  - Completion of aspects of the Red Lake River Corridor Enhancement Project.
  - Development of safe pedestrian trail/sidewalk crossings whether on grade, below grade, or as overpasses.
- D. Ensure that the proper right-of-way widths are dedicated for sidewalks and trails during the subdivision process.
- E. Develop an ongoing planning process for the establishment of trail/sidewalk locations and review the plans on a yearly basis to ensure that the needs and priorities are up-to-date.

## PARK CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

The future park lands within Thief River Falls should be planned under a park classification system as part of a Proposed Park and Trail System Plan. Using the identification system to program the level of development for each of the eventual parks, will assist the City in planning for and scheduling the funding for completion of the facilities. Also, planning for locations and types of park facilities and open space will maximize the use of park dedication. Developers will be required to dedicate land where parks are identified and cash if the development does not directly impact proposed park land.

A park classification system is intended to serve as a guide to planning, not as a blueprint. Sometimes more than one component may occur within the same site, particularly with regard to a specialized use within a larger park. Based upon national standards, a park system, at minimum, should be comprised of a core system of park lands with a total of approximately 10 acres of open space for 1,000 population. The City of Thief River Falls offers more than 20 acres of park land for 1,000 population, a major benefit to the residents of the community. A listing and short description of park classifications is as follows:

**Mini/Neighborhood Parks**

- Use: Designed to provide passive activities with some active short term activities and may include specialized facilities serving a limited population or specific group such as a playground
- Service Area: Neighborhood sizes of 1,000 to 5,000 persons, within ¼ to ½ mile
- Population Served: Toddlers through age 15, with informal recreation for groups of all ages
- Desirable Size: 1 to 10 acres
- Acres/1,000 Population: 1.0 – 2.0
- Site Characteristics: Open space for spontaneous play, play areas for both preschool and school age children, multiple use paved areas, limited field games, small court games, ice rinks, playground equipment, within easy walking/biking distance

**Community Playfields**

- Use: A large recreation area with primarily athletic facilities designed to serve older children and adults
- Service Area: City wide
- Desirable Size: 10 to 25 acres
- Acres/1,000 Population: 2.0 to 5.0
- Site Characteristics: Organized sports facility or athletic complex including lighted court and field games, community center or indoor recreation facility, swimming pool, ice rink, capacity for special events, must include support elements such as rest rooms, drinking water, parking, and lighting

**Community Parks**

- Use: Area of diverse environmental quality which may include areas suited to intense recreational facilities such as athletic complexes as well as passive type areas, depends largely upon the site location, suitability and community need
- Service Area: City wide
- Population Served: All ages, toddler to retiree, entire community for cities up to 25,000

- Desirable Size: 20 to 35+ acres
- Acres/1,000 Population: 5.0 – 10.0
- Site Characteristics: Provides for a combination of intensive and non-intensive development ranging from play equipment to trails, may include natural features, such as water bodies or forested land, must include support elements such as rest rooms, drinking water, parking, and lighting

**Linear Park/Trails**

- Use: Area developed for one or more varying modes of recreational travel, may include other activities such as sitting areas, exercise courses, play areas, landscaping, etc.
- Service Area: No applicable standards
- Population Served: All of community
- Desirable Size: Sufficient width to provide for specified activities, maximum usage, and setbacks from streets or residential areas.
- Acres/1,000 Population: Variable
- Site Characteristics: Built or natural corridors such as utility rights-of-way, bluff lines, vegetation patterns, and roads that link other components of the recreation system or community facilities such as parks, schools, and residential areas.

**Natural/Conservancy Areas**

- Use: Protection and management of the natural/cultural environment with recreational use as a secondary objective
- Desirable Size: Sufficient to protect the resource and accommodate desired recreational uses
- Site Characteristics: Variable, depending upon the resource being protected

By recognizing the classification of each of the park facilities, the City can plan how the community and individual neighborhood park needs are being met. The classification will assist Thief River Falls in planning for park improvements as well as the need for new park facilities. A list of the existing parks and classification for each is as follows:

<b>Park Name</b>	<b>Park Classification</b>
Multi-Events Softball Complex	Community Playfields
Alan-A-Dale Park	Natural/Conservancy Park
Finsbury Park	Mini/Neighborhood Park
Centennial Park	Mini/Neighborhood Park
Red Robe Park	Mini/Neighborhood Park
Northrop Park	Mini/Neighborhood Park
Elks Park	Mini/Neighborhood Park
Boy Scout Park	Mini/Neighborhood Park
Bill LaFave Park	Mini/Neighborhood Park
Engelstad Park	Mini/Neighborhood Park
Lions Park	Mini/Neighborhood Park
Florentine Park	Mini/Neighborhood Park
Greenwood Trail	Natural/Conservancy Park
Millyard Park	Mini/Neighborhood Park
Floyd B. Olson Park	Mini/Neighborhood Park
Oakland Park	Community Park
Tourist Park	Community Park
Hartz Park	Community Park
Unnamed Park	Mini/Neighborhood Park
Riverwalk	Linear Park
Source: City of Thief River Falls	

## **Park Facilities and Land**

The residents of Thief River Falls are rightfully proud of their extensive system of City parks and recreational facilities. While most of the existing neighborhoods are well served with park facilities, the Issues Identification process indicated that certain needs were not being met. Development of an outdoor public swimming pool has been on the list of desired facilities for some time. The cost of construction and the long term maintenance costs are seen as a major barrier. The City will need to examine its park project list and determine a potential timeline for planning, fund raising, and development of this facility. Other projects such as soccer fields and a dog park should be considered for development as part of the park system.

In recent years, the City has changed its policy regarding park land dedication. Recognizing that the City had too many small parks or pieces of land, the park dedication policy was changed to require only park cost dedication. This policy has served the City well, but if additional park land is necessary, especially in those areas planned for annexation and future development, the policy may need to be altered to require land dedication in newly developed areas.

The City of Thief River Falls requires a 5% public land dedication of park land for proposed residential subdivisions. This requirement is lower than most of the state and may be raised to 10%. In addition, the land acceptable for park dedication should be suitable for its intended use at a location convenient to the City residents served. Factors used in evaluating the adequacy of proposed park and recreation areas shall include size, shape, topography, geology, hydrology, tree cover, access and location and future park needs pursuant to the Comprehensive Park Plan. Wetlands, ponding areas, and drainage ways shall not be eligible for park dedication credit. Park land to be dedicated shall be above the ordinary high water level. Areas unsuitable for active park development shall not be considered for dedication. Land with trash, junk, pollutants and/or unwanted structures is not acceptable.

The Proposed Parks and Trails Map, found on the following page, has been developed to reflect the issues identified and the goals and policies of this chapter. The map identifies the existing facility locations as well as new park search areas and potential trail locations.

As a means of being more cost effective in the development and on-going maintenance of City parks, the park search areas will pursue fewer large (5+ acres) neighborhood parks accommodating a half mile service area. The larger land areas of the new parks will provide greater flexibility in park design, a wider range of park amenities and equipment providing a broad range of active play. These parks will reduce costs associated with duplication of equipment among smaller parks and reduce maintenance costs by eliminating the frequency of mobilization of maintenance crews.

A larger park facility is proposed in the southeast quadrant of the City, to serve the potential new neighborhoods in these areas. Other areas have been identified for smaller neighborhood parks. These are areas that are isolated because of the river, railroad, and major roadways. As the areas become developed, new park areas should be planned to provide open space for residents, including those with high density development.

As the City is developed with high density housing, park and open space facilities should be planned to provide residents relief and unite these areas with the rest of the City. A park in this area will likely be a neighborhood park and could provide community playfields. An exact location of this park is not identified in this plan, but should be considered before extensive development occurs as more of an immediate need.

The park search areas identified in this chapter only identify the generalities of a park and trail master plan. An overall park and trail system plan should be considered in coming years to provide for more specific plans, timing, and financial resources.

## **Park Prioritization**

Parks are important to the future of Thief River Falls. Parks add to the quality of life and are desirable for any type of development. Land in Thief River Falls is expensive and if the parks are sold off it will be much more expensive to buy the land back for park development in the future. The Planning Commission has prepared a list of existing parks that prioritize the parks in order of needs, maintenance and upkeep.

### **Highest Priority Parks Are:**

Bill LaFave Park	Lions Park
Multi-Events Softball Complex	Hartz Park
Tourist Park	Boy Scout Park

### **Second Tier of Priority Parks Include:**

Engelstad Park	Oakland Park
Ralph Engelstad Arena	Red Robe Park
Huck Olson Memorial Civic Center	Floyd B. Olson Park
Northrop Park	

### **Third Tier of Parks Include:**

Elks Park (Historical)	Centennial Park
Greenwood Trail	Millyard Park (Historical)

### **Fourth Tier of Parks Include:**

Alan-A-Dale Park - Leave as is, no maintenance required.  
Florentine Park - Most recent play area and ballfield updates.  
Unnamed Park - Pending.

While satisfaction is high regarding the parks of Thief River Falls, keeping them updated is a continual process. The needs of residents will change and updating the existing parks is imperative. Thief River Falls should continue to seek out funding and grants to help maintain and update their parks. The following are Minnesota grant programs for parks and trails that currently exist:

- MN Department of Natural Resources Recreation Grant Program (<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/index.html>)
- Greater MN Parks and Trails Grant and Funding Resources (<http://www.greatermnparksandtrails.org/grant-resources/>)
- Minnesota's Legacy Park and Trail Fund (<https://www.legacy.mn.gov/parks-trails-fund>)
- Parks and Trails Council of MN (<https://www.parksandtrails.org/news/local-grants/>)

## **Trails/Riverwalk**

The Proposed Parks and Trails Map indicates the locations of existing as well as proposed trails. The Issues Identification process indicated that residents expressed a strong desire to interconnect neighborhoods, schools, commercial areas, public facilities and the Riverwalk. The Pennington County Bike and Trails Plan is a comprehensive plan prepared by the county and Bike Thief River Falls. The plan provides details on trail development, including specifications and an implementation plan for programming development of the system. The plan addresses the need and provides the identified corridors primarily along collector or major roadway routes. City staff has indicated that the trails will be added as part of City roadway reconstruction projects and as Mn/DOT or Pennington County proposed improvements to the roadway systems within the community. The City should also annually allocate funds for trail construction to provide the critical links within the system, especially as it relates to the Riverwalk. The City will also actively remain involved with the Red Lake River Corridor Enhancement Project and begin planning and fund raising for the trails and Oakland Park improvements that are recognized out of that planning process. The generalized trail plan provides for the interconnection of neighborhoods, parks, schools and commercial areas. Emphasis shall be placed on a trail system that connects all areas of the community and interconnects to regional trail systems.

### **Pennington County Bike and Trails Plan**

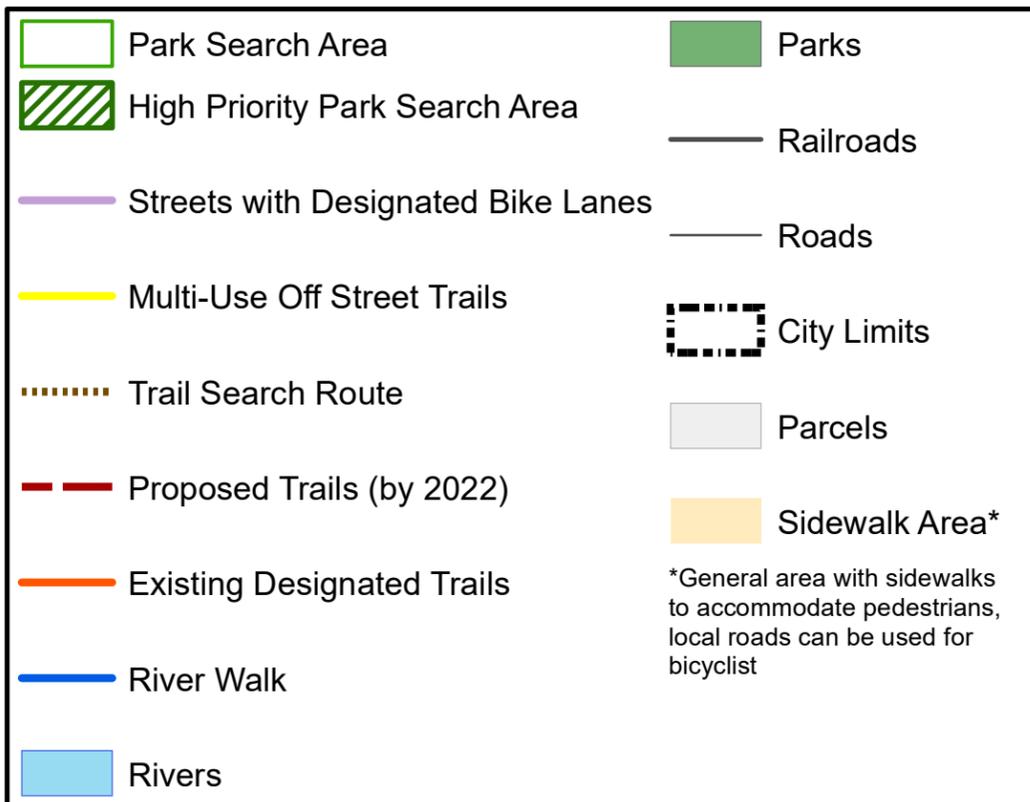
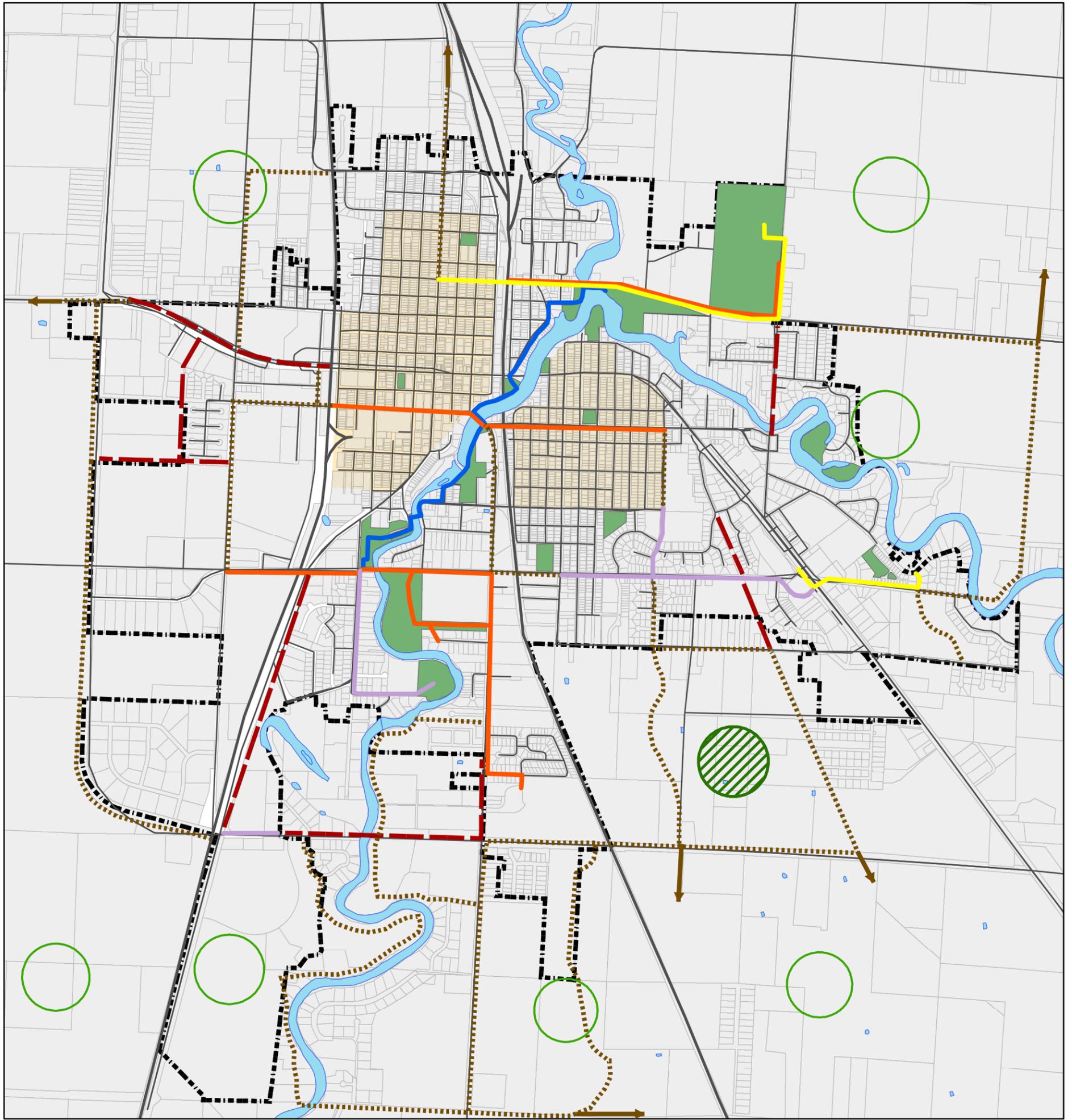
Development of a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian trail system plan as part of a park and trail system plan for the community should incorporate the following:

1. Include trail routes within and interconnections to the areas planned for annexation.
2. Connections to and linking neighborhoods with the Riverwalk, Central Business District, commercial and industrial/business park areas of the City.
3. Trail routes along major streets that have the most direct access to primary pedestrian destinations.
4. Where trails will connect neighborhoods to schools.
5. Where trails will serve commuter destinations.
6. Where trails lead to parks, playfields and other recreational facilities.
7. Where trails will link together separate portions of the Thief River Falls sidewalks and trail systems with each other, including pedestrian bridges.
8. Where trails provide access to future regional trails.

In addition, the comprehensive trails plan provides direction for snowmobile, ATV, cross country skiing and water trails.

# Thief River Falls Parks and Trails Map

September 20, 2019



0.55 0.275 0 0.55 Miles



1 inch = 0.39 miles



Data Sources: City of Thief River Falls, Pennington County, MNDNR, NAC Inc.



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# COMMUNITY FACILITIES





### INTRODUCTION

Community facilities include those lands, buildings, or services and systems which are provided on a public or semi-public basis in the interest of or the benefit to the residents of the community. Their importance should not be under-estimated in that they are offered as a necessity for sustaining life within the community and are therefore, a major contributor to the quality and safety of living in the City.

In order to enhance the quality of life within Thief River Falls, it is fundamental that adequate community facilities include parks, open space, administrative offices, hospitals, essential community buildings and public utilities.

Public utilities are an important factor in regulating development of particular areas of the City and areas planned for future annexation. Recognizing that utilities are present or easily extended prior to subdivision approval can be prevent “leap frog” or premature development. Fair and equitable assessment policies for landowners and developers are also a necessary element of utility extension.

Government buildings and facilities, such as parks, play a major role in providing necessary community amenities and in projecting a positive image for the City. These facilities reflect Thief River Falls’ commitment and dedication to provide its residents with a quality living environment.



### FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The City of Thief River Falls offers a full range of City services and facilities for its residents and people who visit the community. In addition to the usual public works, recreation and governing features of the City, there are excellent education, medical, and social service providers and facilities in the community. The interviews and community survey reveal that residents have a very favorable opinion of the City Staff and current City services. A review of the services and facilities is as follows.



### POLICE PROTECTION

The Thief River Falls Police Department consists of 17 licensed police officers and 2 civilian employees. The Police Department provides around-the-clock services within the City of Thief River Falls. The Law Enforcement Center is located at 102 First Street West within downtown Thief River Falls. The Law Enforcement Center houses the Thief River Falls Police Department and the local branch of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension Agent's Office.

### FIRE PROTECTION

The Thief River Falls Fire Department, a combination full time and volunteer force, was organized in 1894. There are 7 full time and 25 volunteers that make up the department. The Fire Hall is located at 320 Second Street East. Along with fire control, the Fire Department responds to rescue, extraction and hazardous materials incidents, provides training in extinguishments to industry and private parties, and enforces the Fire Code. Issues pertaining to the fire department are size and location of the current fire hall.

### PUBLIC UTILITIES

The Thief River Falls Water and Wastewater Department oversees the water and sewer utilities of the City. The Electric Department oversees the electric utilities. The Public Works Department oversees engineering, community facilities, sanitation, planning, zoning and streets. The map on the following page indicates the locations of the various facilities and offices for public works and utilities.



Water for the community is provided by the Red Lake River. The City has two water towers; the east water tower has a storage capacity of 250,000 gallons and the west water tower has a storage capacity of 500,000 gallons and a water storage reservoir at the airport. The water treatment plant has the capacity to treat 3,000,000 gallons per day. The average demand is 1,250,000 gallons

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES – PHYSICAL PROFILE

per day. Within the City are 3,400 service connections, 58 miles of water mains and about 600 fire hydrants. The water treatment plant is located at 305 Pennington Avenue South.

Wastewater treatment is provided by a stabilization pond system to the east of 125<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. The City operates on 14 sewer lifts for sanitary sewage collection for wastewater and moves it to the stabilization ponds located to the west of the City. The wastewater treatments ponds are the largest pond system in Minnesota covering 350 acres. The capacity of the plant is 2,990,000 gallons per day with an average demand of 1,300,000 gallons per day.

Electric service is provided by the City. While the electricity is purchased from power grids, the City has a power plant located at 226 LaBree Avenue South. Areas outside of the City limits are provided with electric service by the Red Lake Electric Cooperative.



### LIBRARY

The Thief River Falls Public Library is located at 102 First Street East. The library is a branch of the Northwest Regional Library System.



### PARKS AND TRAILS

The Thief River Falls parks and trails system is highlighted in detail in the Parks and Trails chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

### SCHOOLS

The public school system, Independent School District No. 564, provides kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade instruction. These facilities include Challenger Elementary at Pennington Avenue and County Road 61; Franklin Middle School at 300 Spruce Avenue South; and Lincoln High School at 101 Knight Avenue North.



## COMMUNITY FACILITIES – PHYSICAL PROFILE

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There are two private schools, St. Bernard’s Catholic School at 117 Knight Avenue North that offers three year old pre-school through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and St. John’s Lutheran School at 15671 158<sup>th</sup> Street NE offering three year old pre-school through grade 12. Northland Community and Technical College at 1101 Highway 1 East provides postsecondary education in Thief River Falls. The college offers liberal arts/transfer programs and more than 80 career and occupational programs. The college also partners with the airport and the University of North Dakota to provide students with aviation education.



### MEDICAL FACILITIES

Thief River Falls has 4 medical centers consisting of hospitals and clinics. Sanford Medical Center is a \$60 million medical facility which opened in 2016 located at 3001 Sanford Parkway. The medical center is a hospital and clinic offering a 24-hour emergency department, birth center, radiology services, infusion center, surgery center, therapy services, pharmacy, lab and access to about 40 different specialty experts. Sanford Health Southeast Campus is a clinic offering specialty services located at 1720 US 59. The third Sanford location is Sanford Behavioral Health Hospital at 120 LaBree Avenue South. The behavioral health hospital has experts for crisis care, treatment and management in psychology, psychiatry and counseling for both inpatient and outpatient. The last location is an Altru Clinic located at 1845 US Highway 59 S.



### BROADBAND

Thief River Falls is fortunate to be able to provide City-wide, high speed broadband access. This amenity should be more heavily marketed to potential residents as a benefit of living in the City, one that is not available in many of its neighboring communities. For many people, good internet access is becoming less of a simple convenience and more of an expected necessity, whether that is for work, recreational, or informational purposes. While Thief River Falls’ broadband network was initially introduced for local commercial and industrial companies, it is and will be a crucial component into attracting new residents and meeting local employment demand.

The state of Minnesota is looking to provide broadband internet coverage statewide in the coming future. By 2022 they’d like to see universal coverage at 25 megabyte download/3 megabyte upload speeds, and by 2026 they have a goal of 100mb down/20mb upload being provided. The area of the existing City is already meeting this 2026 goal of 100mb download

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES – GOALS AND POLICIES**

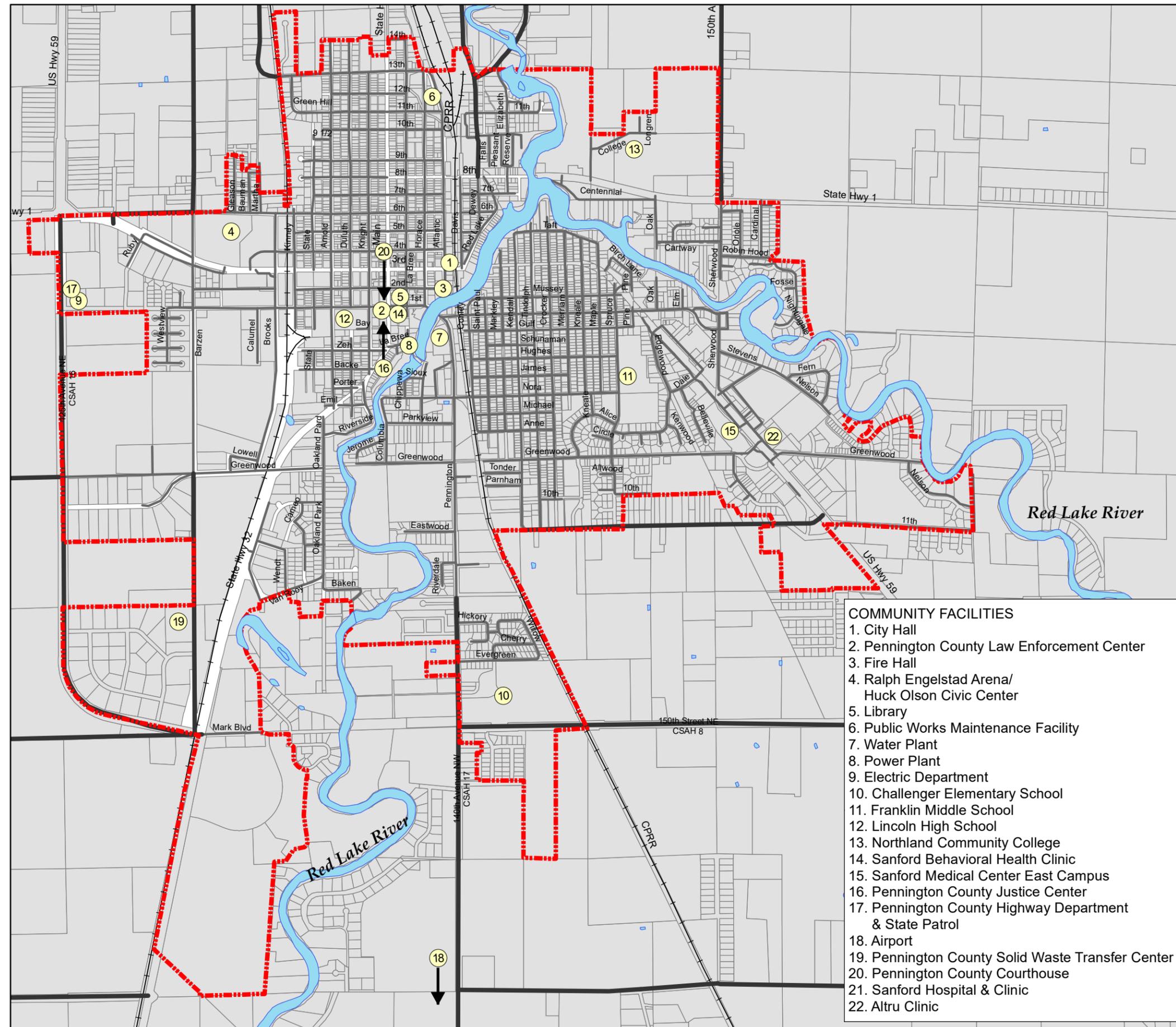
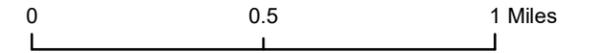
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coverage, however certain areas within the City’s annexation area still beneath even the 2022 goal. Whether they are brought into the City by 2022 via annexation or not, they will need to be improved to at least a 25mb download speed threshold, but more likely will be incorporated into the existing high-speed broadband network. The City and County should work with the state and local internet providers to explore the most cost effective method of bringing these areas into compliance, and whether there is any possibility for grant funding.

# Thief River Falls - Community Facilities Map

## Legend

- # Community Facilities
- Rivers
- City Limits
- State & County Highways
- City Streets
- Railroads



- COMMUNITY FACILITIES**
1. City Hall
  2. Pennington County Law Enforcement Center
  3. Fire Hall
  4. Ralph Engelstad Arena/  
Huck Olson Civic Center
  5. Library
  6. Public Works Maintenance Facility
  7. Water Plant
  8. Power Plant
  9. Electric Department
  10. Challenger Elementary School
  11. Franklin Middle School
  12. Lincoln High School
  13. Northland Community College
  14. Sanford Behavioral Health Clinic
  15. Sanford Medical Center East Campus
  16. Pennington County Justice Center
  17. Pennington County Highway Department  
& State Patrol
  18. Airport
  19. Pennington County Solid Waste Transfer Center
  20. Pennington County Courthouse
  21. Sanford Hospital & Clinic
  22. Altru Clinic

Map Created: September 2019

Sources:  
City of Thief River Falls  
Minnesota DNR  
Northwest Associated Consultants

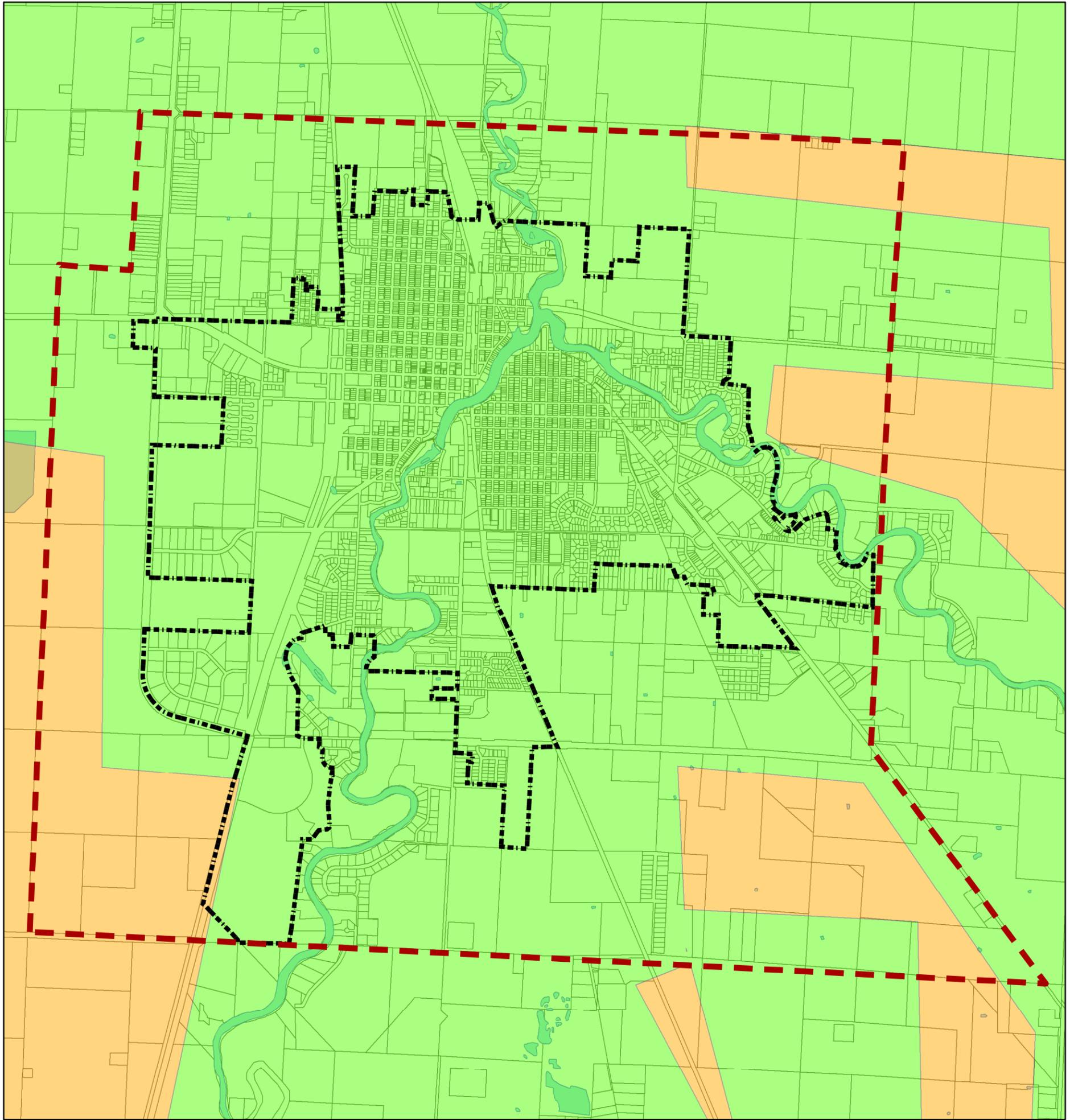


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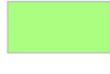
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Telephone: 763.231.2555 Website: www.nacplanning.com

# Broadband Access Map

September 20, 2019



## Legend

-  Annexation Area
-  City Limits
-  Served: Broadband of at Least 100M/20M
-  Underserved: Broadband at 25M/3M but less than 100M/20M
-  Unserved: Broadband less than 25M/3M
-  Rivers

0.8 0.4 0 0.8 Miles



1 inch = 0.51 miles



Data Sources: City of Thief River Falls, Pennington County, MNDNR, NAC Inc.



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## GENERAL GOALS AND POLICIES

**Goal 1:** Maintain and improve existing services, facilities and infrastructure to meet the needs and interests of the community.

**Policies:**

- A. Continue to implement a Capital Improvement Program that addresses the repair and improvement of community facilities including streets, utilities, storm water management, community buildings, and parks.
- B. Periodically evaluate the space needs of governmental and public service buildings.
- C. Monitor and maintain all utility systems to ensure a safe and high quality standard of service on an ongoing basis.
- D. Promote and encourage cooperation and coordination between governmental units to avoid duplication of public service facilities and services.
- E. Utilize volunteers and civic organizations to assist public works in the ongoing maintenance and improvements of public areas to reduce City expenses (i.e. Adopt a Park, Adopt a Street, public garden or landscape components within the City).
- F. Ensure that governmental buildings and services are located so as to offer ease of access and minimal response time.
- G. Plan for the maintenance, replacement, and efficiency of the City's equipment, buildings, infrastructure, energy and utility systems.
- H. Concentrate governmental and community services in the Thief River Falls downtown area to serve as a land use anchor for the downtown.

**Goal 2:** Plan and provide public facilities and services in a coordinated and economic manner on a basis that is consistent with the nature of existing and proposed development within the community.

**Policies:**

- A. Prohibit extension of service to properties outside the corporate limits without an agreement as to the annexation of that property.
- B. Prohibit the expansion of public sewer and water services into areas:
  - Not contiguous to existing development or service areas.
  - Areas not within the boundaries of the City.

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES – GOALS AND POLICIES

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- C. Implement Thief River Falls’ comprehensive utility plans for sanitary sewer, storm sewer, and municipal water to identify and address for utility system improvements and anticipated demands.
- D. Constantly monitor and maintain all utility systems to assure a safe and high quality standard of service on an ongoing basis.
- E. Encourage and promote underground installation of all new utility services and when economically feasible, the conversion of existing overhead systems to underground.
- F. Coordinate all utility improvement programs to avoid duplication of work and distribution of public rights-of-way.
- G. Storm water runoff shall be managed to protect the ground water recharge areas.
- H. Preserve natural drainage to the extent possible in order to minimize storm sewer costs.
- I. Maintain the City’s electric utility to provide favorable electrical rates to Thief River Falls residents and businesses.
- J. Explore the development of high-speed internet connections for all residents.
- K. Review utility fees, rates and charges annually to insure they reflect a fair share distribution of costs to all users.
- L. Integrate utility repairs and/or replacement with street reconstruction.
- M. Work with the County to assure that wells and on-site treatment systems within potential annexation areas are maintained and inspected until connection to the municipal utility is available.
- N. Locate easements for utility systems according to uniform standards, providing for ease of access for maintenance and repair and minimal disruption of other activities or area.

**Goal 3:** Utilize public improvements as a means for continuing civic beautification and an impetus for stimulating investment in private property.

**Policies:**

- A. Work to enhance the local shopping environment through public improvements to contribute to the downtown’s identity.
- B. Keep all public buildings and grounds well maintained.

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES – GOALS AND POLICIES

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- C. Adequate screen, landscape and buffer public facilities in order to minimize their impact on surrounding uses and enhance the community and area in which they are located.
- D. Develop, improve and maintain all public buildings according to highest adopted standards of design and performance to serve as examples for private development.
- E. All public buildings shall be designed and maintained to be resistant to person and property crime opportunity, while maximizing public utilization.

**Goal 4:** Work with the School District to insure coordinated development of all public facilities.

**Policies:**

- A. Establish safe and convenient pedestrian/bicycle access to each school within the community.
- B. Establish and maintain agreements for joint use of City parks and school recreational facilities to maximize the benefits to both the residents of the community and the students.

## INTRODUCTION

The interview and survey respondents were very complimentary of community services and City Staff. Both expressed satisfaction with current delivery of municipal services. The Physical Profile and Goals and Policies provide the background and foundation of the Community Facilities Plan. This section will address the public facilities and services that the City of Thief River Falls now maintains and will provide as the City grows.

## POLICE AND FIRE

The City's police and fire services adequately serve the emergency protection needs of the community at this time. As the City develops, additional facilities, personnel and equipment will need to be added to serve the additional area and population. The need for expanded departments will be addressed through the yearly budgeting process and the Capital Improvements Plan.

There is a need for additional building space for the fire department for operations, equipment storage and equipment maintenance. In examining this issue, the question becomes whether to redevelop the existing site in the downtown or to relocate the fire hall elsewhere in the City.

In comparing the current location with possible relocation, the following criteria shall be used to make a decision:

1. Size of the site: The site size must be large enough to provide for the needed building, truck and equipment maneuvering, and fire department training. The site size must offer area for future building expansion if the fire department needs to expand with City growth. An analysis of the fire department space needs will be conducted to determine site size needed for the new facility.
2. Response time: Thief River Falls has a number of physical barriers that complicate traffic movement within the City. This must be a consideration for locating the fire department. The current location is at the center of the City has access travel routes to each part of the community. Access to River Crossings and Greenwood Street provide convenient uninterrupted travel routes to all areas of the City.

The aforementioned criteria will be used to determine the size and location of the future fire hall.



### PUBLIC UTILITIES

Thief River Falls has a Comprehensive Sanitary Sewer Plan (1999) and Water Study (1993) that serve to guide the City utility infrastructure planning. Currently, the City has adequate capacity in both its sanitary sewer and water systems to serve its existing City, and growth beyond its boundaries.

The City has planned its utilities with the anticipation of growth to the South of the City. Through this planning, the City has sized utility systems and strategically located a sanitary sewer lift stations along the City's Southern boundaries to allow them to service areas beyond the current City boundaries.

These utilities represent the City's investment for future growth. In this regard, the City growth will be focused capitalizing on the existing investment and its capacity as a priority over extending new utilities to other areas. The following strategies will be used to manage new growth related to municipal utilities:

1. The City will not extend utilities outside the City. New growth areas shall be annexed to receive municipal utilities and service.
2. New development shall be consistent with the Thief River Falls Comprehensive Plan, with regard to land use, transportation and infrastructure policy.
3. The new development shall represent a logical extension of the City utilities. The development area shall abut current City boundaries to avoid leap frog development.
4. The City will implement the regulations within its subdivision regulation that define the criteria for premature subdivision. If the development site is premature, the City will not extend utilities.
5. The City will require concept plans that illustrate the development layout of a proposed annexation to allow determination whether utility and street extension are practical.
6. The City will be responsible for the planning, engineering, and installation of municipal utilities and streets within new subdivisions. City cost associated with these improvements shall be assessed against the subdivision.

For existing utilities, the City maintains a capital improvement plan that evaluates in-place utilities to determine condition and any needed maintenance, repair, or replacement.



## **PUBLIC WORKS**

Interview and survey respondents generally expressed satisfaction with public works. A small group expressed concerns with the condition and maintenance of parks related to mowing, weed control, litter and beach openings. In response to this, it must be recognized that as the City grows, Public Works' responsibilities will also grow. The City, like other local businesses, is having some difficulty finding and hiring competent, qualified employees to expand the public works staff. The current staff has become over-extended in dealing with all of the City's utility, street and maintenance needs.

To address the aforementioned Public Works issue, the City shall encourage volunteer groups and civic organizations to participate in programs such as Adopt a Park and Adopt a Street, to address issues of litter, weed control, mowing, and general upkeep of these public spaces. The participation of citizen volunteers will reduce some of the responsibilities of the Public Works staff, allowing them to focus on the more critical street, utility, and stormwater maintenance issues of the City. The promotion of volunteerism is a cost-effective way to stretch City staff resources and build citizen pride in the community.



## **MEDICAL FACILITIES**

Sanford Health provides medical facilities and emergency care to the City and surrounding region. Their facilities are in excellent condition and there are no immediate plans for expansion of these facilities. Sanford Health is active in the community beyond their medical facilities through the promotion of healthy lifestyle choices within the community. Looking to the future, the City will continue to work with Sanford on the following items:

1. **Redevelopment of the Old Hospital:** With the 2016 opening of the new hospital at 3001 Sanford Parkway, the downtown location was abandoned. The City and Sanford Health are working together to promote the redevelopment of the Old Hospital site into high density residential housing. This is a City priority to remove an obsolete, vacant building and bring quality housing and population into the downtown. As the property owner, Sanford will be integral in the sale of the property.
2. Sanford Health's promotion of healthy lifestyle choices in the community includes the promotion of trails, parks, and facilities to encourage active lifestyles.
3. Like other employers in Thief River Falls, Sanford Health struggles with attracting and sustaining qualified employees. In this respect, the promotion of community growth and life cycle housing is a shared priority with the City to expand the available labor force.

### SCHOOLS

The local school and Northland Community and Technical College, including the airport campus, are major assets of the community. Both the school and the college have been ranked very favorably in school safety and quality of education. As such, the schools are a major promotion point for the City.

The following strategies will be pursued with the City's local schools:

1. Continue to work with local schools to share recreational facilities and programs to avoid duplication and unneeded cost.
2. Provide safe routes to schools for all school sites, to promote pedestrian and bicyclist access to the facilities.
3. Cooperate in the advertisement of City and school events to promote the widest degree of City participation.
4. Identify the excellent school system as a component in City promotions.



### RALPH ENGLESTAD ARENA

There was discussion in the Issues Identification about the long term maintenance and operation needs for public facilities, especially the Ralph Englestad Arena. The City will contract with a new property manager with the expressed intent of expanding use of the facility and providing for more events in an effort to generate revenue adequate to cover ongoing maintenance and operations.



### AQUATIC CENTER

The interviews included the discussion of a splash park or community pool. Advocates represent that this type of a facility would be another attraction to bring people to the City. Opponents raise concerns for ongoing operation and maintenance expense of this type of facility, similar to the Englestad Arena. They also suggest that the size of the investment for an outdoor facility is not warranted due to its limited seasonal use.

There has been fund raising to generate funds for construction of a splash pad. The private contributions reduce the City's need to finance this type of project.

In determining if the City will pursue either water facility, it will contact and survey communities that have community pools or splash pads to gauge the costs of construction, operation, and maintenance of these types of facilities. With this information, the City can understand the financial obligation associated with either facility.

If an aquatic facility is pursued, the City must evaluate its appropriate location within the City. This facility will be a community wide and regional attraction. In this regard, the site must address the following:

1. The site location should be located on an arterial or collector street to avoid traffic intrusion on adjoining residential neighborhoods.
2. The site must have adequate land area for the proposed facility, parking, and any accessory uses.
3. The site must be served by municipal utilities.



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# NATURAL ENVIRONMENT





## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT GOALS AND POLICIES

Natural environment areas are of prime importance to the community. These aesthetic amenities enhance the quality of life in the area, contribute to the small town character of the City, and perform important ecological roles. Natural areas often act as buffers or barriers in determining the extent and direction of development and growth. Therefore, it is necessary that special consideration be given to these areas in formulating Thief River Falls 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Environmentally sensitive areas include lands characterized by soil limitations, forested areas, wetlands, natural drainageways, and floodplains. The City has expressed particular interest in regard to the enhancement and emphasis of both the Red Lake River and Thief River as a community asset and greenway corridor, as well as a need to deal with the City's longstanding storm water drainage problems.

As the City continues to grow, there will be greater emphasis on efforts to compatibly integrate land uses and new development within the City's environmental amenities. Their proper utilization and presentation as valuable community amenities, or conversely, as areas in which natural barriers present development problems, become the focus for which guidance by the following goals and policies are determined.

**Goal 1:** City regulations and performance standards shall be designed to protect the natural environment, preserve natural resources, and protect environmental features.

**Policies:**

- A. Activities in naturally or environmentally sensitive areas shall conform to local, Pennington County Soil and Water Conservation District, state and federal regulations.
- B. New development and the expansion of existing activities shall be restricted and regulated where environmental damage may result.
- C. City regulations on densities, lot size, and development design shall be used to protect natural features important to the community and vital to desirable development.
- D. Subdivision designs and site planning must be integrated into a site having environmental features which shall be preserved.

**Goal 2:** Enhance both the Thief River and Red Lake River as a community amenity. Reduce potential property damage resulting from seasonal flooding.

### **Policies:**

- A. Establish the Rivers as aesthetic natural and recreational greenway corridors within Thief River Falls.
- B. Restrict or prohibit new development within the 100-year floodplain of the Thief River and Red Lake River in all newly annexed properties to the City.
- C. Enforce floodplain regulations to regulate floodplain development in a manner consistent with State requirements to protect property and public safety from damage due to flooding.
- D. Maintain and improve flood protection facilities and efforts to ensure a timely and effective response to periodical floods.
- E. Protect steep river banks from erosion through the use of rip rap or other slope stabilization methods.
- F. Develop River Walk and recreational use, providing access to the Red Lake River. Develop this park with amenities that complement and enhance Thief River Falls historic downtown.
- G. Develop/Improve parks along the river as attractive recreational opportunities. Trails and rest areas that provide views of the river.
- H. Promote businesses, community events, and recreational programs that take advantage of the river as a recreational amenity.
- I. Plan for future dredging activities within the Red Lake River.

**Goal 3:** Manage storm water drainage in a manner that improves water quality, prevents flooding or drainage to adjoining properties, corrects existing drainage problems, and preserves the natural resources of the City.

### **Policies:**

- A. Restrict or prohibit development on wetlands, floodplains, and other natural features that perform important environmental functions in their natural state. Where desirable and practical, maintain such natural features in a condition for appropriate storm water system or recreational uses.
- B. Prohibit development on or alteration of natural drainage system components where storm water can be adequately managed without construction of storm sewer.

- C. Continue to enforce wetland preservation regulations consistent with the Minnesota 1991 Wetland Conservation Act.
- D. Require subdivisions to plat lots with minimum lot area above the designated wetland boundaries and 100-year flood elevations to insure adequate buildable area and usable yards.
- E. Require wetland boundary demarcation posts at the edge of required wetland buffers to prevent encroachment or mowing into the wetland buffer.
- F. Protect and preserve soil types associated with drainageways in order to channel flowage and control erosion.
- G. Establish a storm water drainage policy that utilizes natural ponding areas and provides municipal procedures for the acquisition or dedication of natural areas.
- H. Require all new development to manage on-site storm water generation to comply with MPCA regulations to ensure that no negative impact will occur with regard to downstream flooding or water quality.
- I. Integrate new development to the natural characteristics of the land to enhance the development through the preservation of attractive natural amenities (i.e., wetlands, waterways, wooded areas, slopes, etc.).
- J. Require grading and drainage plans as part of any new subdivision, commercial development, or industrial development. These plans must illustrate proposed drainage patterns, plans for on-site storm water retention, storm water treatment, and erosion control.
- K. Work with Pennington County and Pennington County SWCD on stormwater drainage issues as it relates to the County Ditch systems and river improvements.

**Goal 4:** To the extent possible, preserve and protect significant tree covers as a natural amenity.

**Policies:**

- A. Encourage the preservation of natural vegetation including woodlands, wetlands and aquatic vegetation as a design consideration for new subdivisions.
- B. Examine the Thief River Falls landscaping and tree preservation ordinances to determine the need for additional requirements.
- C. Continue programs designed to protect trees through disease control and re-forestation.

- D. Require proper soil preparation for new development to insure deep rooting of new landscaping and minimal irrigation.
- E. Promote the use of native grasses, forbes, shrubs and trees in development site restoration.
- F. Implement strategies for the control of invasive/exotic plant species in greenways, natural areas, and open spaces.

**Goal 5:** Implement as many of the 28 best practices of the Minnesota Green Step Cities Program as possible, given the City's resources, opportunities and staffing.

**Policies:**

- A. Promote energy efficient technologies within both public and private sector buildings.
- B. Adopt a Comprehensive Plan that incorporates strategies of efficient land use patterns, environmentally sensitive development, and healthy lifestyles.
- C. Promote a complete street philosophy at addressing a variety of transportation modes (i.e., automobiles, pedestrian, bicycles, etc.).
- D. Integrate new development with the existing natural features to preserve woodlands, wetlands, and other natural features.

**Goal 6:** Promote and expand City participation in the community recycling program and facilities.

**Policies:**

- A. Promote local recycling businesses to educate residents in identifying recycling opportunities.
- B. Encourage methods for separating organic from recycling materials to reduce reliance on landfills, incinerators, or other solid waste disposal practices.
- C. Involve local recycling businesses in the City's annual cleanup day.

### Pennington County Hazard Mitigation Plan

The 2016 Pennington County Hazard Mitigation plan provides guidelines for dealing with present and future hazards. The plan identifies emergency response, hazards the county faces, risk assessment for each governmental unit, mitigation steps and the goals to achieve these, and how the plan will be administered. The purpose of this plan is to increase mitigation resources to eliminate or minimize harm done to people, property, jobs, and natural resources in Pennington County by natural and manmade hazards. Hazard Mitigation planning is

important to the natural environment of Thief River Falls as it affects the floodplains, soils, erosion, wetlands, invasive species, etc. The Thief River Falls 2040 Comprehensive Plan formally adopts the Pennington County Hazard Mitigation Plan and will work to implement the goals, objectives and strategies of this plan.

### SEVERE SOILS

Areas of Thief River contain soils that present severe limitations for urban development, due to high water tables, flooding potential, and poor drainage qualities. Past development in areas of poor soils have resulted in wet basements, poorly drained yards, and sewer system back ups. Any development in areas exhibiting poor soils will require extensive soil corrections or construction techniques that mitigate the soil issues and provide a safe building. If development within an area of poor soils cannot be avoided, the following efforts will be met:

1. Development proposals located in poor soil areas (as identified by the Pennington County Soil Survey) will be required to field check soil conditions to verify the extent of poor soils.
2. Development in areas having poor soils will be required to demonstrate soil correction efforts and/or construction methods that will be implemented.
3. In soil areas having a high water table, new principal buildings must have their lowest floor be three feet above the water table.
4. Foundation drain tile will be required in areas characterized by poor soils to reduce damage from basement flooding.

### TOPOGRAPHY

The topography in and around Thief River Falls is generally flat, however, there are areas of steeper slopes along the rivers.

Areas of steep slopes present physical barriers that influence subdivision design, limit utility extensions, and restrict street development. To this extent, development in areas of steep slopes must be designed in a manner that integrates the proposed land use function with the natural topography. It is City policy that the preservation and maintenance of these slopes will be encouraged to retain their buffering and aesthetic values as well as to avoid potential erosion problems.

As a means of minimizing the land use and environmental impact of development requests in areas of steep slopes, the City will require an evaluation of slopes on subject properties as part of the grading and drainage plans. Factors to be considered included: subdivision and site design, grading plans, street grades, percentage of grade, storm water management, erosion and sediment control, and slope protection.

## THIEF AND RED LAKE RIVERS / FLOODPLAIN

The Thief and Red Lake Rivers which run through the City are both considered an asset and a detriment to the community. The benefit of the river includes its role in a stormwater drainage system, its natural aesthetic qualities, and as a recreational amenity. The negative aspects of the river deal with its floodplain.

The FEMA flood insurance map illustrates that in most areas of Thief River Falls, the 100-year floodplain generally follows the floodway extending beyond the river banks in select areas. The City development patterns have been respectful of both the river and its floodplain areas. While the 100-year flood areas are limited, it appears the larger storm events may extend well beyond the 100 year flood areas and intrude well beyond the river.

The City will pursue efforts to enhance the positive aspects of the river while mitigating or avoiding the problems of floodplain development. The efforts will include:

1. Riverside clean up efforts through both voluntary efforts and code enforcement. River clean up should focus on the pickup and removal of discarded debris both along the river banks and within the river channel.
2. As an element of the City's overall park and trail system, the City will create a River Walk that provides a riverside linear park that takes advantage of the rivers as an aesthetic and recreational amenity within the City.
3. The City has a number of parks abutting the two rivers. The park planning shall take advantage of the river amenity by providing access to the rivers for recreational opportunities (i.e. fishing, swimming, etc.)
4. In the past, the City and Civic organizations planned community events (Riverfest, Boat racing, Lion's Fishing Tournament, etc.) as a means of drawing people to the community and entertaining its residents.
5. Efforts to maintain and improve water quality within the river remain a priority. The City is supportive of the Pennington County Soil and Water efforts to protect the river including:
  - Slope protection and stabilization of the riverbanks to reduce and mitigate river bank erosion and sedimentation along the river.
  - Create vegetative buffer steps along the top of the river banks to serve as a filter for stormwater runoff from agricultural fields, roadways, and developed urban properties to reduce contamination from reaching the river.
6. With redevelopment of the Old Hospital site, proposed plans must include the extension of the Riverwalk providing public trails and preserve open space along the river.

7. The limitation or prohibition of future subdivision development within 100-year floodplain of the river through the enforcement of the City's floodplain regulations.
8. Work with the MN Department of Natural Resources and Red Lake Watershed District to monitor the accumulation of sediment in both the Thief and Red Lake Rivers and program periodic river dredging.

### WETLANDS

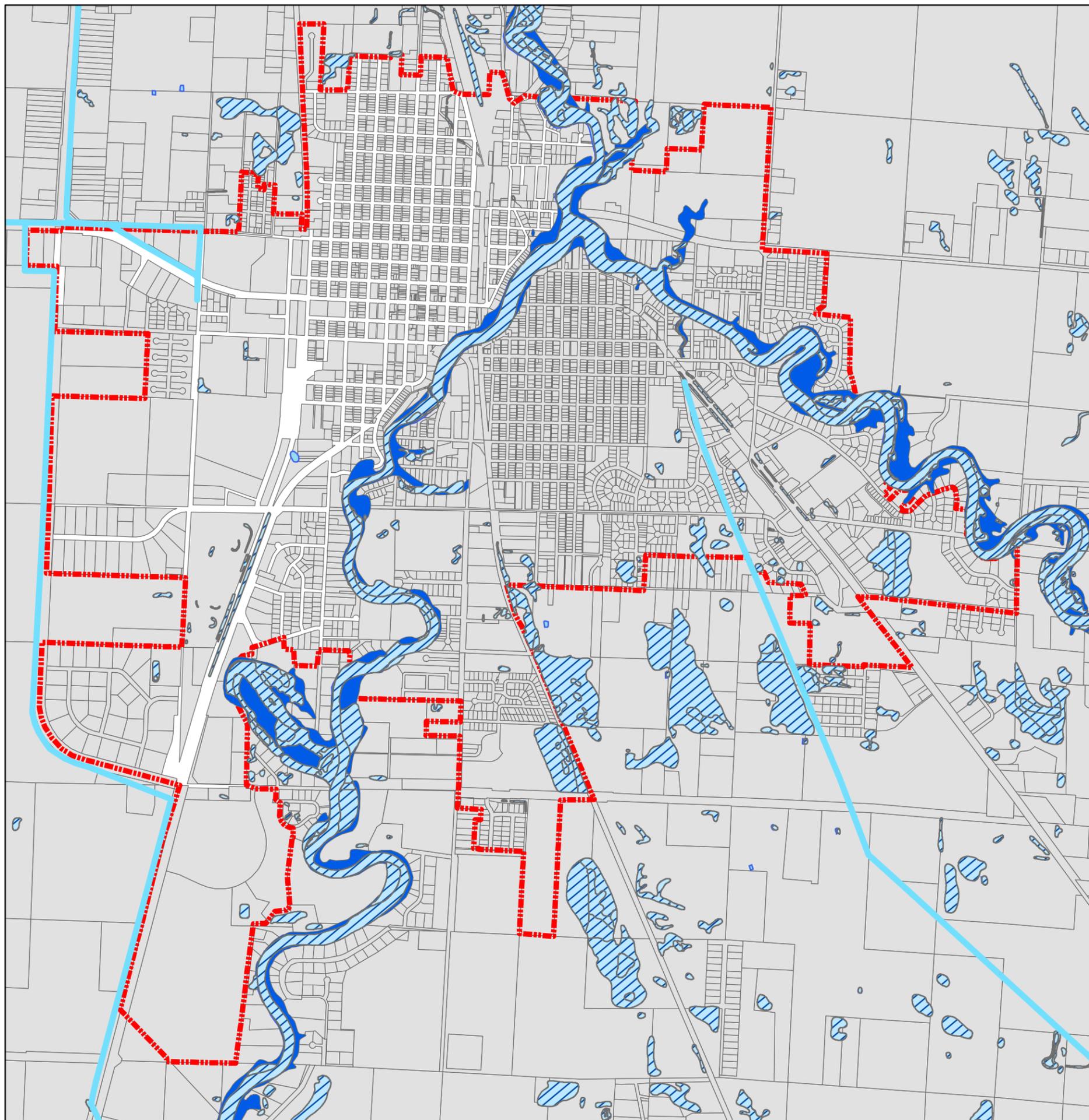
Due to high water tables and storm water drainage patterns, the preservation of wetlands for both storm water retention and water quality has become a priority for the City of Thief River Falls. These local concerns, in conjunction with the 1991 State Wetland Conservation Act, will greatly influence the treatment of wetlands in development areas in the future.

In addressing wetlands, the City has adopted Section 152.125 Wetland Conservation regulation within its zoning code. This City code language has the City as the responsible unit of government for wetland protection and outlines the procedures for wetland delineation, avoidance, sequestering and wetland replacement options as consistent with the 1991 Wetland Conservation Act.



# Hydrology Map - Thief River Falls

September 20, 2019



0 0.3 0.6 1.2 Miles

## Legend

-  Wetland
-  Floodplain
-  Rivers
-  County Ditch System
-  City Limits

Data Sources: City of Thief River Falls, Pennington County, MNDNR, NAC Inc.



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### TREE COVER

Some of the extraterritorial planning areas are characterized by stands of trees. These wooded areas represent a valuable natural resource which should be preserved in conjunction with new development. Tree preservation measures will include:

1. Use of large lot single family zoning in areas characterized by significant woodlands.
2. Site grading must include tree preservation measures to avoid tree loss through root compaction, tree cuts, or disease.
3. Integrate streets and building pad locations on development sites in a manner that is sensitive to significant tree stock.
4. City zoning and subdivision regulations will include provisions for the protection of significant trees and significant tree stands.



### AIR AND NOISE POLLUTION

The main sources of air and noise pollution are railroad and traffic noise from the City's collector and arterial streets. Because residential uses abut these corridors and will continue to do so, buffer zones including landscaping, berming, and fencing should be established wherever possible. In addition, commercial and potential industrial vehicular circulation should be discouraged, and in some cases prohibited, from using local residential streets.

The City's industrial areas are another potential source of pollution. The negative effects of these uses can be minimized through their isolation from other incompatible uses and thoughtful site design.

Any new commercial and industrial development, including expansions, shall comply with existing State and Federal pollution emission standards. Any development which contributes to an area with an existing pollution problem should require an environmental assessment to be completed prior to approval of the development.

### RECYCLING

The City of Thief River Falls promotes the recycling of disposables and currently contracts with a private recycling service to collect cans, glass, newsprint, and some types of cardboard on a bimonthly basis. In addition, collection service of batteries, motor oil, and other hazardous waste is provided on a monthly basis. As noted in the Policy Plan, the City strongly promotes the continuation of a community-wide recycling program.





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# IMPLEMENTATION





The Administration and Implementation chapter of the Thief River Falls comprehensive plan examines the stated issues and priorities of the City and prescribes action efforts for addressing these items. In essence, unless the plan and related development tools are utilized in combination to guide long range community decision making, the opportunities for success are diminished. In this chapter of the comprehensive plan, a summary of administrative and implementation strategies is offered.

### Growth Management

The City of Thief River Falls needs to affect growth to build a labor force that keeps pace with the City's growing economy. In this respect, the following strategies are offered.

1. The City will facilitate and promote residential development interests for the City.
  - a. Contact local home builders to solicit interest and methods for promoting more development activity and greater variety of housing choices.
  - b. Meet with major local employers, bankers, real estate professionals, home builders, building supply businesses and the City to discuss the practicality of creating a community development corporation to create a supply of residential lots.
  - c. Pursue Public/Private cooperation to address opportunities for expanding housing choices in the community.
  - d. Contact non-local residential development companies to solicit their interest in Thief River Falls.
2. Continue City housing programs to assist in housing development and the promotion of home ownership.
3. Continue to have the City design, construct, and finance streets and utilities for new subdivisions and assess the cost to the subdivision.
4. Use Annexation and criteria that defines premature subdivisions to avoid the premature extension of streets and utilities. Follow an orderly growth pattern that capitalizes on the in-place utility infrastructure.
5. Evaluate new development with regard to environmental impact, development quality, consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, and its fiscal impact on the City. Where

appropriate, the City may provide development incentives to achieve desired land use and site development.

6. Aggressively pursue the redevelopment of the Old Hospital site.
7. Provide locations and opportunities for a variety of life cycle housing choices that are attractive to all household ages and income levels.
8. Provide housing choices that allow for great turnover of existing housing stock.
9. Consider programs that preserve the quality and value of the City's existing residential housing stock (i.e. Home improvement programs, scattered site redevelopment, etc.).

## Economic Development

Business retention and expansion is a priority of Thief River Falls as a means of providing local employment opportunities, commercial goods and services, and maintaining a strong tax base. In fulfilling this, the following efforts will be implemented.

1. Implement growth management strategies that promote residential growth in the City to expand the available labor force for all Thief River Falls commercial and industrial land uses.
2. Aggressively promote the City through various media outlets to attract people to live, work and recreate in Thief River Falls.
3. Maintain open lines of communication with local businesses, industries, and Chamber of Commerce to identify local issues and opportunities that influence and keep improving Thief River Falls' business climate.
4. Implement the Thief River Falls "New Vision for Downtown" Community Master Plan for the renovation of the historic downtown area.
5. Maintain a list of available commercial and industrial properties to allow the City to guide perspective businesses to available sites.
6. Identify desired target businesses for the community (i.e., tap room, high-end clothier, restaurants, entertainment venues, childcare centers/day care facilities). Contact regional, statewide, and national businesses to solicit interest in Thief River Falls.

7. Examine City commercial and industrial zoning districts to expand the range of land uses that may be acceptable within the City.
8. Guide commercial and industrial uses into areas of the City planned for these uses. Make available land and utility capacity to accommodate these guided commercial and industrial areas.
9. Provide public incentives to attract and grow commercial and industrial development within the City.
  - a. Maintain and promote the following local programs to assist local businesses:
    - CDAB Mortgage/Lease/Rent reimbursable Plan
    - Storefront Renovation loans
    - Commercial Energy Renovation loans
    - Revolving Loan Fund (RLF)
  - b. Utilize available economic development tools such as tax increment financing or tax abatement for eligible economic development or redevelopment projects.
  - c. Pursue eligible State and Federal grants and aids to assist in community economic development and redevelopment projects.
10. Promote community events, activities and businesses that attract people to the City on a year round calendar and result in business interchange among the City's businesses.
11. Develop and enforce City regulations pertaining to site and building maintenance, upkeep, and appearance.
12. In cooperation with the County, explore opportunities to relocate or reconfigure the county fair grounds to accommodate commercial development along US Highway 59.

## Taxes and Finances

The interviews and survey detailed a perception that Thief River Falls has high taxes. This perception influences peoples desire to live and open a business in the community. In this respect, the City must be cognizant of the costs associated to the operations and maintenance of infrastructure and its delivery of services. Additionally, the City must actively participate in the planning and discussion of financing of projects on these other taxing jurisdictions that cover the City (i.e. county, school district, airport authority, and state). The following strategies are affected to address local financing.

## ADMINISTRATION / IMPLEMENTATION

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1. The City shall manage its budget with the first priority being maintaining high quality basic City services related to public safety, public infrastructure and public services.
2. The City will monitor staffing levels to ensure quality levels of services and timely responses to community issues and needs.
3. Promote the participation of volunteer groups and civic organizations to assist the stretched City public works staff in the maintenance and upkeep of public areas such as parks, trails, public landscaping and planting, etc. (adopt a park and adopt a street).
4. Accept donations from civic organizations for the improvements to City parks, trails, or other community areas or facilities.
5. Actively participate in the planning of regional airport, county and school improvements to manage the expectation of City financial participation in these projects and understand their impact on the City's overall tax rate.
6. Pursue intergovernmental cooperation for sharing public services and facilities, to avoid duplication and economize in City investment.
7. Expand the use and events at the Ralph Englestad Arena to generate additional revenues to cover its operational and maintenance costs.
8. Continue the City's proactive public facilities maintenance programs to avoid significant disrepair or breakdown.
9. Maintain a Five Year Capital Improvement Plan that identifies needed public capital improvements, assigns costs and schedules implementation based on project priority and funding available.
10. Pursue available county, state, and federal grants and aids as appropriate to facilitate community improvements and programs.
11. Annually review the City's development fees (i.e., development application, utility connections, park dedication, storm water fees) to ensure that they are sufficient to cover the costs associated with development and are competitive with other cities.
12. Require development contracts with all new subdivisions that include some financial security that insures timely payments of special assessments.

13. Pursue public sector/private sector partnerships particularly to pursue the residential growth and economic development, and redevelopment goals of the City. Through this effort, reduce the financial risk to the City.

## **Ordinances and Regulations**

As a means of implementing the stated land use goals for Thief River Falls, the City will consider the following changes to the City Code.

### **Zoning Ordinance**

1. Residential
  - a. Examine the residential districts to determine if the provided adequate development standards and provide proper separation of land uses and/or housing types.
    - Eliminate neighborhood business as a conditional use permit in the R-1 district and its subsequent roll over into all of the residential zoning districts. This will prevent the encroachment of commercial use into existing residential neighborhoods. This will require commercial land uses to be placed in areas guided and zoned commercially or require a zoning change to a C-1 district.
    - Examine the range of permitted and conditional uses within each zoning district. The City may wish to provide greater segregation of housing options to create more homogeneous neighborhoods and avoid the introduction of a higher density housing types or commercial uses into existing lower density neighborhoods by conditional use permit.
    - Consider adding residential zoning districts to offer a broad range of lot sizes, greater segregation of land uses, and variable densities.
    - The R-4 high density residential district allow a density of up to 19 units per acre. The City may wish to establish standards of higher density through conditional use permit. Additional zoning districts, density bonuses, or planned unit development may be considered to facilitate densities need to attract new growth or to promote redevelopment.
  - b. Update the City planned unit development language to address:
    - a. Intent and purpose of the PUD.
    - b. General requirements for a PUD.
      - Association documents/ownership standards
      - Maintenance of common open spaces or amenities

- Development density standards or density bonuses
  - Setback flexibility
  - Open space requirements
  - Utility requirements
  - Roadways/site access
  - Provisions for multiple buildings on one lot
- c. PUD process and procedures (CUP/zoning district).
- d. PUD agreements.
3. Commercial/Industrial
- a. Examine and potentially expand the range of uses within the City's various commercial districts to accommodate changing retail and services markets.
  - b. Establish specific performance standards for outdoor storage yards and outdoor sale lots including setbacks, surfacing, fencing and screening of outdoor storage.
  - c. Establish specific performance standards for commercial and residential landscaping and screening.
  - d. Examine the City parking performance standards related to surfacing, striping, lighting, screening, and setbacks.
4. General Provisions
- a. Update the nonconforming structure and use provision to follow current state statutes.
  - b. Consider establishing the following zoning general provisions:
    - Landscape screening standards
    - Outdoor storage standards
    - Exterior Lighting
    - Parking lot surfacing, striping, setbacks and lighting
    - Fence standards – location, height and materials
5. Subdivision Ordinances
- a. Consider changes to the park land dedication including:
    - Increasing the park land dedication from 5% to 10% of the proposed subdivision

- Establish park dedication fees that reflects the costs of park development including the expense of land acquisition, site preparations, and cost of park improvements and equipment.
- Exclude unbuildable land (i.e. wetlands, floodplains, drainage ways, power line easements, etc.) from the park land dedication credit. These areas may be dedicated to the City, however, it would be in addition to the dedicated 10% of buildable land for active play areas.

## Environment

The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the need for proper environmental protections and performance standards mandating future development be respectful of existing natural environmental within the City. In response to these objectives, the City will implement the following strategies:

1. Re-evaluate and amend the City's development regulations pertaining to the following items:
  - a. Consider the introduction of tree preservation and landscape requirements within the City zoning code that defines screening requirements, types of preferred planting, tree preservation measures in acres of significant trees, control or removal of unwanted invasive species.
  - b. Require a natural resource inventory along with any new plat that identifies any floodplains, wetlands, significant tree stands, drainage way that may impact plat design. Require subdivision designs to protect environmentally sensitive areas.
  - c. Continue to enforce the City's wetland preservation standards of the zoning code. Require the demarcation of the wetland buffer boundaries to prevent encroachment on mowing into the wetland buffer.
  - d. Require all new development to plan for and manage stormwater drainage for their site to avoid off site drainage issues.
  - e. Provide for vegetative buffers along lakes, wetlands, ponds, creeks, and drainageways.
  - f. Limit or prohibit new development within the 100-year floodplain of the Thief and Red Lake Rivers.

- g. Work with Red Lake Watershed District on projects that affect improvements along the Red Lake River and the Thief River related to storm water management, flood mitigation, improved water quality, river bank maintenance and preservation, and other river uses.
    - h. Implement Green Step City's 29 best practices where possible and practical within the City's available resources.
  2. Monitor the sedimentation in the river, work with the MnDNR on scheduling river dredging.
  3. Adopt and implement the goals, objectives and strategies of the 2016 Pennington County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

## Community Services

To maintain the delivery of quality services to Thief River Falls residents, the City will implement the following strategies:

1. Require that all development and/or redevelopment that occurs in the community is in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan and utility planning. The Comprehensive Plan, utility plans, and related ordinances should be periodically reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect changing community needs and priorities.
2. Ensure that public installed utilities are coordinated with private utilities to be located in a single trench and within a timeframe that reasonably accommodates developer's construction schedule.
3. Pursue ongoing City staff and advisory committees training and education in order to maintain the delivery of high quality services to Thief River Falls residents.
4. Allocate administrative and improvement costs to those generating the demand or utilizing the service.
5. Maintain a strong level of confidence in the City's advisory committees, member selection, committee continuing education, and open lines of communication between the committees and City Council.
6. Pursue cooperative intergovernmental arrangements for sharing facilities and services to avoid duplication and provide for the cost effective delivery of services.

7. Remain proactive in the pursuits and utilization of new technologies that may contribute to more effective City operation and delivery of community services.
8. Maintain high standards for proactive communication with City residents and businesses on City issues and services through direct contact, open meetings, television, internet, social media, newsletters, and news releases.
9. Utilize volunteers and civic organization cooperation to undertake City activities, programs, and improvements within the City parks and community facilities.
10. Expand the use and number of events at the Ralph Englestad Arena to generate additional revenues and have regular scheduled events to draw people to the community.