



CITY OF HACKENSACK

Comprehensive Plan Update

May 2021



REGION FIVE
Development Commission

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The city of Hackensack would like to acknowledge the considerable time, thought, and effort that was put into the development of this comprehensive plan update by the local planning team. This plan is an example of dedication towards the future success of the city of Hackensack and the surrounding area. This plan was directly developed by the following steering committee members—including appointed and elected officials, community members, and city staff:

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A special thank you goes out to the residents who volunteered their time, insights, and local knowledge by completing the survey, participating virtually or in person at the public informational meetings, and providing input and time throughout this planning effort.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	Acknowledgements
3	Table of Contents
4	Vision Statement & Guiding Principles
5	Introduction
5	How to Use the Plan
13	Community Character
14	Land Use
19	Infrastructure
22	Energy
26	Transportation
30	Housing
32	Economic Development
34	Compliance to Codes & Ordinances
35	Resolution (Placeholder)

Vision Statement

Hackensack is an inviting community surrounded by natural beauty, rich in history, and enlivened by growth and renewal.

Guiding Principles

A series of leading themes were compiled into a decision-making matrix early in the planning process. Each of the goals and strategies identified in this plan were developed with these framing devices in mind. Some of the goals score higher in some categories and lower in others, but all were developed in alignment with these general guiding principles.

Infusing these guiding principles into the plan goals is critical. These principles reflect a diverse set of public and private sector inputs. These principles were promoted throughout the planning process as the central stand by under which the team made decisions.

The following is a list of guiding principles and leading themes that form the foundation of this plan:

- Supports a healthier and fun community to live, work, and play.
- Protects our natural resources.
- Saves time and/or money.
- Little or no investment.
- Easy to accomplish.
- Simple to maintain.
- Improves collaboration in the community.



Introduction

The forward-thinking local government in Hackensack wanted to be intentional about creating a plan for making Hackensack even more prosperous. Through community surveys, feedback, and outreach, this Comprehensive Plan was created to help citizens and local leaders work together to guide future growth within the city. The plan represents a shared vision for the future and a strategic map to reach that vision.

The plan provides broad recommendations to guide and manage municipal growth and development into the future. These broad recommendations come in the form of goals and strategies laid out within each section of the plan. The goals and strategies express the city's overall strategy for achieving its community defined aspiration for the future. Efforts to implement the plan's vision, goals, and strategies began at the adoption of the plan.

This living document should be used as a guide for the day-to-day activities and decision making of city officials and staff. This plan should be easily accessible to elected and appointed officials, city staff, Hackensack residents, and visitors. Comprehensive Plans are intended to provide direction for a 10 to 15-year time horizon, however, plans are most effective when updated annually or up to every five years.

How to Use This Plan

The Hackensack Comprehensive Plan Update is divided into the following broad sections:

- Land Use
- Environment and Energy
- Housing
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Critical Infrastructure
- Community Character

Each section provides background information and goals developed based on community input. These goals are intended for a wide range of audiences and end users including city staff, elected decisionmakers, business owners, developers, permanent residents, seasonal residents, tourists, and prospective residents. We have made an effort to streamline this document as much as possible for the casual reader, while also providing enough specific technical information for city staff. To further describe the multi-faceted nature of this plan, the following list describes each of the users and how they might use this plan:

1. GUIDE CITY OFFICIALS AND STAFF IN:

- Communicating the city's vision for the future.
- Establishing regulatory changes and permitting.
- Acquiring and using of land.
- Planning for capital improvement.
- Development and infrastructure decisions.

2. GUIDE BUSINESSES, PROPERTY OWNERS, AND RESIDENTS IN:

- Determining potential property use.
- Understanding possible land use changes in the surrounding area.
- Establishing reasonable land use expectations.
- Understanding future infrastructure improvements.
- Improving and investing in property.

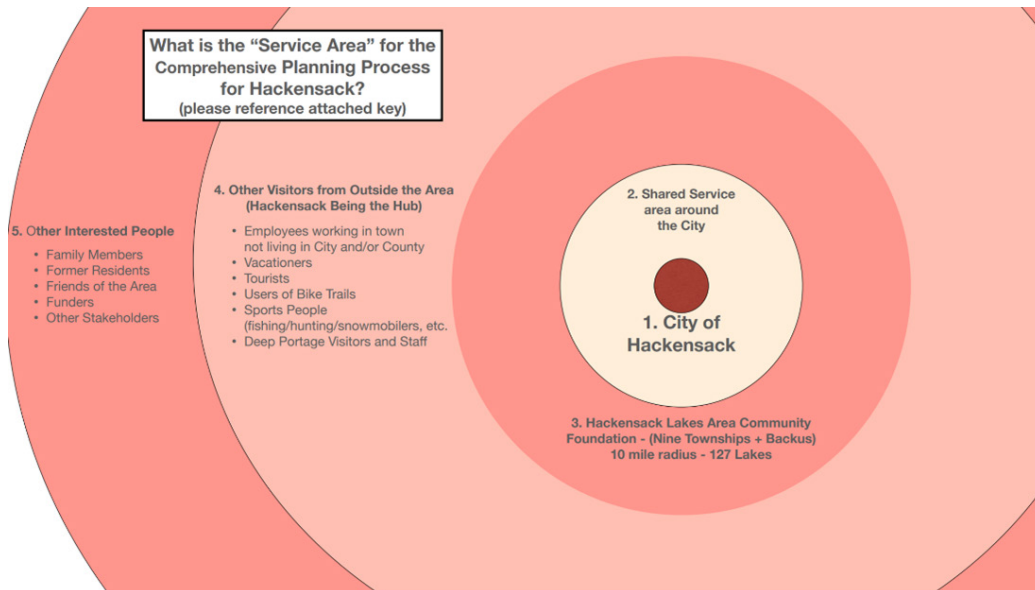
3. GUIDE DEVELOPERS WITH PROPERTY ACQUISITION AND THE COORDINATION OF PLANS WITH CITY GOALS, REGULATIONS, AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLANS.

4. ASSIST AND COORDINATE WITH NEIGHBORING JURISDICTIONS WITH ISSUES AND TOPICS OF MUTUAL INTEREST.

Comprehensive Plan Update Service Area

In addition to addressing the needs of many audiences, the comprehensive plan update also serves multiple geographies and outlying communities. It was determined early in the planning process by the local planning team that an important aspect of the plan update would be to address the needs of not only the city of Hackensack and its permanent residents, but also the needs of seasonal residents, tourists/visitors, and the broader Hackensack Lakes Area Community of Hiram, Birch Lake, and Woodrow Townships and the 127 lakes within a 10-mile radius of the city of Hackensack.

While the primary user of the comprehensive plan update will no doubt be the city of Hackensack and its permanent residents, it is abundantly evident that the city of Hackensack proper acts as a sub-regional hub to the larger Hackensack Lakes Area Community. Many of the relationships and interconnections are illustrated below.



Authority to Plan

The State of Minnesota gives its communities the legal authority to adopt a Plan according to the Municipal Planning Act (Minnesota State Statute Sections 462.351 to 462.364). The Municipal Planning Act creates a single, uniform procedure that applies to all cities. The Comprehensive Plan provides the legal framework to enact land use control and other municipal actions to implement long-term growth and development regulation strategies. The city's land use (zoning) ordinances and official zoning map should be updated to conform to the Comprehensive Plan pursuant to adoption.

Overview

This plan seeks to capture the critical momentum present in Hackensack as well as the unique opportunities that are present during this planning process. This critical momentum is due in part from the collective effort of the community, and specifically groups like the Game-changers, local business owners, entrepreneurs, the Chamber of Commerce, the Hackensack Area Foundation, and many others.

Major Highway Reconstruction Projects

Another major factor that led to the development of this plan was two road reconstruction projects that heavily influenced the transportation system in Hackensack, including access and mobility, walkability, parking, and even the sense of place in Hackensack.

The first project is the Minnesota Department of Transportation's (MnDOT) reconstruction of Trunk Highway (TH)

371 which in addition to a principal arterial, also serves as Hackensack’s main street running through the heart of town from North to South. This MnDOT reconstruction project is being planned for 2024 and as of the publication of this plan was still in the project’s final design phase.

The second transportation project with the potential to drastically alter the built environment in Hackensack is a Cass County reconstruction project on 1st Street NW, which runs parallel to TH 371 and spans the length of town. 1st Street NW serves as the primary access to many of Hackensack’s downtown businesses, several residences, and to City Hall. This Cass County reconstruction project is anticipated to be completed in the fall of 2021.

The Desire to Invest In and Retain Existing Businesses

Another key factor in the development of the comprehensive plan update was the recognition of the need for the city to seek innovative ways to continue strong relationships with existing local businesses to foster business retention, productivity, services, and a local workforce.

The Opening of Several New Businesses

Yet another key factor for creating this plan is to set forth a path to actively promote a different model of place for the city and its role in the region by building off its assets and strengths. The city’s distinct geography and location play a role in economic competitiveness, giving the City of Hackensack an edge and identity over other communities in Cass County and beyond.

In taking active strides to create the best Hackensack, people will be drawn to the city’s distinctive and vibrant places and walkable neighborhoods. The content within this plan sets to create the best version of Hackensack for future generations to live, work, play, stay, and learn. The city is nestled in the heart of lakes country and welcomes a booming tourist population in summer months. With a ballooning summer population, the city has an opportunity to leverage this base by attracting visitors to the city by building upon its assets.

Hackensack’s beautiful natural setting and energetic community make it a place with great potential for growth and change over the next 15 years. Hackensack’s residents and workforce fuel medical, governmental, and professional office occupations. Many of the original platted streets can still be found throughout the city along with centralized courtyards. A vital part of the city’s identity is to capture and preserve bits of history and seek ways to integrate modern architecture to meet the needs of all residents who call Hackensack home.



Energy and Environment Planning Process

Today, energy resilience, climate adaptation, and environmental health are becoming key considerations in city planning. Hackensack is among a growing number of municipalities intentionally integrating energy and environmental resilience into their comprehensive plans. Through a grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Hackensack elected to add Energy and Environment action steps and projects into its Comprehensive Plan process. The Energy and Environment portions of the Hackensack Comprehensive Plan are woven in throughout this plan to support the Hackensack community in identifying energy resilience and environmental conditions, challenges, and concerns throughout each section. The specific Energy and Environment action steps and more information about the Energy and Environment Planning process can be found as an addendum to this Comprehensive Plan.

Community Overview

Hackensack is a small city of 290 people in North-Central Minnesota part of the Brainerd Micropolitan Statistical Area. ^[1] It is located almost equidistant from nearby larger cities of Brainerd to the south, Bemidji to the north, Park Rapids to the West, and Grand Rapids to the East. Hackensack is surrounded by lakes, woods, and wildlife and on the southeastern shore of beautiful Birch Lake. The population blooms significantly in the summer as tourists enjoy the Northwoods scenery, the small-town atmosphere, and the ability to cool off quickly in abundant water.

Within a 10-mile radius of Hackensack are 127 lakes.^[2] A gem in the nearby forest is the Deep Portage Environmental Learning Center, which offers a variety of extraordinary educational opportunities, along with multiple demonstrations of renewable energy systems as well as a variety of recreational trails.^[3] The Paul Bunyan Biking Trail, 120 miles long, leads from Crow Wing State Park south of Brainerd to Lake Bemidji, right through Hackensack. The trail connects the Heartland Trail, the Blue Ox Trail, and the Cuyuna State Trail.^[4] The city is also close to Northern Lights Casino and State and National Forests.^[2]

History

Ojibwe people, *Anishinaabeg*, had been living throughout northern Minnesota for many generations prior to the arrival of the first European settlers. Today's Hackensack is located in territory that was ceded by the *Anishinaabeg* in an 1855 treaty. The first White settlement here was around 1888. Hackensack itself was incorporated in 1903, and named by Bye Bartlett and James Curo, who came from Hackensack, New Jersey. Industry at the time centered on logging, and there was a sawmill operating in the town at the time. In 1915, the Royal Ice Cream Parlor was busy serving tourists, and there were several hotels, general stores, and even a hospital on Pleasant Lake. There was a Minnesota and International Railway train station in Hackensack, with the rails eventually morphing into the current Paul Bunyan Trail. The town has long been the home of Lucette Diana Kensack, Paul Bunyan's girlfriend. ^[5]

^[6] ^[7] ^[8] ^[9]

The Legend of Lucette

The Northwoods communities of Minnesota are full of statues and stories related to Paul Bunyan, the legendary giant lumberjack that is linked to the history of the lumber industry throughout the United States. Though known throughout the U.S., the legend of Paul Bunyan has played a unique representative role for Minnesota Northwoods communities like Bemidji, Brainerd, Akeley, Pequot Lakes, and Hackensack.

Since the 1950's, a 17-foot tall statue of Paul Bunyan's sweetheart has stood by Birch Lake in Hackensack. In 1952, the first Sweetheart Days was held in her honor and the community voted on coining her name *Lucette Diana Kensack*. A statue of Lucette and Paul's son, Paul Jr., also stands in Hackensack, and Paul and Lucette's marriage license is available at the Chamber of Commerce. The addition of Lucette in Hackensack has provided a unique identity as well as a summer festival attraction every year to celebrate the town. She continues to stand tall and be represented in branding throughout town. ^[10]



Community Demographics

This section of the plan provides a brief demographic snapshot of the City of Hackensack using information obtained from the State Demographer’s Office and the US Census Bureau. The identification of trends in population and other statistical and demographic data is an important part of the comprehensive planning process. It can provide clues to future growth patterns and indicate where types of housing, public facilities, and other attributes may be needed in the future. This section of the Comprehensive Plan contains information on Hackensack’s population and household characteristics.

Population

Tables 1.1 shows the changes in population that have taken place over the past decade in the city of Hackensack, surrounding townships, Cass County, and the State of Minnesota. ^[11]

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
City of Hackensack	349	386	420	388	329	360	327	276	244	290 [12]
Birch Lake Township	612	600	650	662	641	598	539	511	565	517
Woodrow Township	740	690	680	646	635	657	704	693	730	703
Turtle Lake Township	562	624	693	743	730	708	764	805	748	711
Cass County	28,652	28,384	28,409	28,485	28,556	28,698	29,030	29,324	29,511	29,779
State of Minnesota	5,310,828	5,346,143	5,376,643	5,413,478	5,451,079	5,482,032	5,522,744	5,566,230	5,606,249	5,639,632

Planning Process

In August of 2019, the City of Hackensack and the Hackensack Lakes Area Community Foundation reached out to the Region Five Development Commission (R5DC) to discuss a variety of potential and upcoming projects in the City of Hackensack. Through this discussion of many projects relating to economic development, workforce housing, community development, and transportation, it became apparent that a proactive starting point for the city would be to begin addressing the projects through an update to the city’s comprehensive plan.

Of the projects initially discussed, several were projects with significant impacts to other projects and the community as a whole. For example, there were two transportation projects being planned in the near future: the Minnesota Department of Transportation’s (MnDOT) Trunk Highway (TH) 371 reconstruction project scheduled for 2024 and the county’s 1st Ave NW project. Both were likely to have wide ranging impacts for each other and the entire community.

In addition to these examples there are many other projects in other areas such as economic development and housing whose impacts should also be considered. It is useful for communities to conduct long-term planning comprehensively to organize and prioritize a variety of projects across a broad spectrum. From these discussions about projects, a formal request from the City of Hackensack to R5DC was made to develop a draft proposal to administer and facilitate a comprehensive planning process that would update the 2006 comprehensive plan.

During the spring of 2020, the R5DC Team worked with city officials to develop a local planning team that was tasked with guiding the planning process, attending the regular planning meetings, and providing key insights and expertise. The Team ensured that a process was implemented to gather community input and develop goals and strategies based on that input.

Community Engagement Strategy

The local planning team developed a robust, multi-faceted community engagement strategy to ensure that community members had both the opportunity and ability to provide their opinions, insights, and views on their community and the community they want to bring about. The local planning team placed a high priority on gathering input from the community in an inclusive manner and was committed to the plan's goals being developed in alignment with the public information received. Below is a comprehensive list of community engagement strategies utilized by the local planning team throughout this process as well as a broader description of some of the most impactful strategies:

- Public Informational Kickoff meeting
- Lucette's Gazette
- Community Survey
- 2nd Public Informational meeting
- Public Review and Comment Period
- County, Township, and State Agency Review and Comment Period.
- Development and composition of the of Local Planning Team
- Public Informational Kickoff meeting

Public Informational Kickoff Meetings

The community engagement strategy launched with a public informational kickoff meeting which was held outdoors on the patio of Birchwood Charhouse in late July 2020. This event was promoted widely throughout the community with flyers, table tents and post cards at key locations, by email, social media. The event was also promoted beyond the city of Hackensack to the Hackensack Lakes Area in Lucette's Gazette which ran regular updates on the comprehensive plan update throughout the entirety of the planning process.

In total there were three public informational meetings held throughout the planning process at certain inflection points of the planning process. In short, the planning team had a kickoff meeting, a second public meeting in November 2020 to share the results of the community survey that was conducted, and a final public informational meeting to review and provide comment on the draft plan in May 2021.



Community Survey

One of the Local Planning Team’s first tasks was to draft questions for the community survey that was opened to the public during the Fall of 2020. The local planning team and R5DC staff carefully crafted a 21-question survey that yielded responses from 149 individual respondents and provided invaluable community input for the planning team to begin identifying issues and developing goals and strategies.

Approach to Local Planning During a Pandemic

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the world, including Central Minnesota. This planning process began in the summer of 2020 and was done almost entirely virtually. The planning team met via Zoom, used online tools like Google Jamboard, and outreach was creative and virtual. Nonetheless, the planning team and community of Hackensack had over 160 survey respondents and an incredibly engaged planning team dedicated to their community. Thank you to the community of Hackensack for your resiliency!



Community Character

Overview

Hackensack has a plethora of natural beauty surrounding the community, including forests, 127 lakes within a 10 mile radius of the city, and two bike trails that run through the city.^[2] There are also several dedicated groups, organizations, and businesses in and around Hackensack that support a high quality of life in the city and a recent change in local government that has been forward thinking and intentional in planning for the city's future. This chapter seeks to set goals for a positive community image through branding, building on existing relationships, and keeping up a positive image of downtown.

Input & Data

As a part of the public input process, the following themes have been identified around the topic of community design.

- **Downtown Image:** Several comments from the community survey noted that Hackensack's downtown felt out of touch, unattractive, and in need of more of a variety of businesses. The downtown plays an important role in the economic and social elements Hackensack. Survey participants seek a collaborative approach to improve the physical, social, and economic condition of the downtown.

Emphasize natural resources: Survey respondents noted the enjoyment of having Birch Lake and many lakes near Hackensack as well as a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities like biking, Deep Portage Environmental Learning Center, and an 'up north' feel of the city. The city should seek ways to promote existing recreational opportunities like the bike trails, being dog-friendly, and an environmentally friendly community through existing initiatives like the GreenStep Cities.

- **Community brand & connections:** The planning team wanted to prioritize the continuation of using Lucette as a marketing tactic in the community's identity and branding. The city should continue partnerships with local businesses and nonprofits and highlighting that work through a more prominent web-presence.

Placemaking inspires people and community leaders to reimagine and reinvent public spaces within their communities. Placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value (Project for Public Spaces). Placemaking focuses on creative use patterns, concentrating on the social, cultural, and physical attributes that define a place.

Goals

1. Continue improvement of public property and blighted properties to improve the aesthetics of the city.
2. Continue to encourage increased public arts and cultural events in and around town to celebrate the city's history and foster community.

This looks like:

- Continuing partnerships with Northwoods Arts Council, year-round events in the community, and the farmer's market
3. Enhance the City's unique identity.

The unique identity looks like:

- Continuing to have Lucette as part of identity and branding.
 - Showcasing environmentally focused projects and organizations in Hackensack (like GreenStep Cities and Deep Portage)
 - Home of the largest provider of bee equipment in the world (Mann Lake)
 - Showcasing Hackensack's recreational and natural beauty: bike trails (Paul Bunyan Trail), pet-friendliness, and 127 lakes within a 10-mile radius
 - Having a user-friendly city website and social media presence to promote businesses and identity.
4. Continue supporting promotion and collaboration with existing groups in Hackensack

This support looks like:

- Continuing partnerships and conversations with community-focused groups and all community nonprofits

Land Use

Overview

Tourism is a central part of the economy in North Central Minnesota [13] and keeping our natural environment clean and continuing to provide excellent outdoor recreation activities is critical to maintaining that strong tourism base. Preventing pollution from happening in the first place is significantly less expensive than cleaning it up later. [14]

Land conservation reduces phosphorus and nitrogen that enter the lakes, which limits algae growth and helps maintain lake clarity. Wetlands provide about \$54 per acre in flood control benefits by retaining storm waters and releasing them slowly. Conservation avoids flood damages and water treatment costs. [14]

Property values are also very clearly linked with surface water quality. In the Mississippi Headwaters alone, almost 100,000 lakefront homes depend on clean, clear lakes for swimming, fishing, and boating. Nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus enter surface water, promoting algae growth. Algae chokes out native plants, threatens fish, reduces water clarity, and can even be toxic. [14]

Elevating energy and environment concerns helps preserve drinking water quality and other things that are crucial for human life. It also offers opportunities to reduce operating costs and encourage economic development. Preserving natural resources is a practical investment in tourism, retaining property values, and reducing infrastructure expenses.

Input & Data

City Surface Water (lakes, rivers, wetlands, etc.)

The City of Hackensack is in the northern part of the Upper Mississippi River Basin, and in the southern part of the Leech Lake River Watershed, which consists of about 854,659 acres. Featuring 277 river miles and over 750 lakes totaling 166,374 acres, the land is largely forested and 46% privately held, with the remaining held by the County, State, Federal, or Tribal governments. Biodiversity within the Leech Lake River Watershed is notable, and among other wildlife, the area features the largest number of breeding eagle pairs in the lower 48 states. Surface waters within the entire watershed are highly prized for recreation, yet experiencing increased pressure due to development, loss of shoreline and aquatic habitat, and invasive species. [15]

In a Watershed report published by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency in 2017, Hackensack was identified as one of three high priority areas for restoration and protection, including stormwater runoff prevention efforts. [15]

According to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the water quality of Birch Lake is “suitable for swimming and wading, with good clarity and low algae levels throughout the open water season.” In fact, water clarity has improved since 1981, at approximately 0.8 feet per decade. Water clarity is an excellent indicator of water quality. [16] However, water clarity can also indicate the presence of aquatic invasive species. [17] Updated lake water quality, impairment classification, and aquatic invasive species information can be found through the MN Department of Natural Resources and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency websites via links included in the References.

This plan provides specific recommendation to direct Hackensack’s future development, redevelopment, and growth. Land use is the central element of the traditional comprehensive plan. It establishes the physical configuration of the city, the type and location of various land uses present in the city. In addition, it provides a framework to define and guide current and future development.

This portion of the plan will help guide city staff and city council, respond to development and redevelopment requests. A combination of text, policies, and maps will guide the land use, zoning, and physical development, ensuring that growth and development is consistent with the community’s vision for the future.

A series of guiding principles identified throughout the planning process were designed to help create neighborhoods that are vibrant and sustainable. These guiding principles cover a range of development conservation strategies that help protect our health and natural environment and make our communities more attractive, economically stronger, and more socially diverse. These principles can help Hackensack promote efficient and sustainable land development, redevelopment, and growth patterns that utilize prior infrastructure investments while consuming less land that is otherwise available for open space, natural resource conservation, and preservation. When applied through policy, the residents of Hackensack will benefit from resiliency, environmental, economic and social sustainability. The following is a list of principles:

- Mixed land uses
- Take advantage of compact building design.
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- Create walkable neighborhoods.
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
- Preserve open space, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing infrastructure.
- Provide a variety of transportation choices.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

Existing Land Use

The city of Hackensack consists of 1.02 Square Miles of land area and includes an additional .01 Square Mile of surface Water area for a total area of 1.03 square miles located within city limits. ^[18] Understanding the existing land use patterns provides insight and further analysis opportunities on the leading development types, as well as possible deficiencies. Hackensack's existing land use shows both developed land and undeveloped land. The two predominant land uses within undeveloped land are wetlands associated with the Boy River, and forested uplands located at the South end of city limits, at the Eastern edges of city limits, along the Northern edge of city limits and other smaller areas interspersed throughout. The developed areas of Hackensack can be divided into the following categories:

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public, Not-for-profit, and open spaces

Residential

The Residential land use in Hackensack is primarily located west of TH 371 along Park Ave, Lake Shore Dr., Birch St, and along Murray Ave West. On the East side of TH 371, residential land uses can be found along 3rd Street South, Wagonner Ave, Wagonner Street. Additionally, there are a few residential lands uses adjacent to TH 371 itself.

Commercial

Naturally, Commercial land uses within Hackensack are predominantly found along the major corridors of TH 371, County Rd. 5, County Road 40, and along local roads comprising the downtown such as 1st Street S, Whipple Ave., Lake Ave., 3rd Street and portions of Murray Ave E.

Industrial

Industrial land uses in Hackensack are located exclusively in the southern portion of the city, and particularly along TH 371.

Land & Food

A tree inventory was conducted in 2020 by the AmeriCorps Forestry member, which counted 18 different tree species currently in the City limits. The most common trees include Paper Birch, Maple (three varieties: silver, sugar, and amur), Norway Spruce, Quaking Aspen, Pine (Red and White), and Ash (Green and White). Increasing the species diversity would be a good strategy to prevent losing a significant portion of tree cover should a disease wipe out a specific variety.

An estimate of tree cover was conducted for the City in 2020 using the iTree online platform. This estimate showed:

- 30.2% tree coverage for the City, which translates to 197 acres of tree coverage.
- At 2 tons of CO₂ equivalent sequestered per acre per year, [19] these City trees currently sequester 394 tons of CO₂ equivalent annually.
- Additional benefits include removing nitrogen dioxide, ozone, sulfur dioxide, and particulate matter from the air.

The City of Hackensack has an estimated 21% of impervious surfaces within the city limits. The greater the amount of impervious surface in an area, the more quickly urban stormwater runoff washes chemicals (oil, gasoline, salts) and garbage from roadways and parking lots into waterways. Trees act like mini-reservoirs, intercepting rain on leaves, branches and bark, increasing infiltration and storing rainwater in the roots, and reducing soil erosion by slowing rainfall before it hits the dirt. One 10-inch diameter white ash can intercept 1,241 gallons of stormwater runoff in a year. Trees can also increase property value and reduce cooling costs. [20]

Future climate projections can be helpful in long-term planning related to tree selection, plantings, and many other activities. Temperatures have been measured at Mule Lake Wildlife Management Area, 14 miles east of Hackensack, since 1895. These records show a trendline of local average temperature increase over 5°F since that time. ^[21]

Food Security and Local Foods

Hackensack started up a community garden in 2020, after a year of planning and preparation. The garden is located in the Bonna Paulson Wildlife Observatory Park on the east side of Hackensack. Multiple available options were designed to accommodate various gardeners, including small, raised round beds for those with limited mobility, as well as 100 square foot and 200 square foot in-ground plots. Pesticide and herbicide use is not allowed, nor is tilling. In-ground plots sold out in the first year of operation. ^[22]

Since Hackensack is located in a wooded area of the State, there are not very many nearby growers listed in the Minnesota Grown directory. The nearest listings are Walker to the north, and Pine River to the south. ^[23]

Public, Not-for-profit, and open spaces

Public - There is considerable public land use on the eastern part of the city, where the city’s sewage ponds are located. Other public land uses include the city park located at Lake Ave, and Fleisher Av, and the Hackensack Community Center, water tower, ballpark and ice rink located off Lake Ave, and 3rd Street.

Not-for - profit- Not-for-Profit land uses in Hackensack generally follow similar development patters as commercial development but also tend to act as buffers between commercial and residential. The most notable Not-for-profit land uses in Hackensack include community service groups, faith-based organizations, and 501 c3 organizations.

Open Spaces - Due to the rural location of the city of Hackensack there is a considerable amount of open space located within the city limits. The open space located in city limits is private undeveloped land, undevelopable wetlands, shorelands.



Goals and Strategies

1. Encourage sustainable development that respects the environment while protecting areas such as lakeshores, wetlands, and floodplains.

This looks like:

- Expanding beautification and reduce stormwater runoff by adding rain gardens, increasing tree plantings and other landscaping in town by installing at least 1 project of any size each year.
- Incorporating GreenStep goals in city plans.

2. Support and invest in potential enhancements of quality of life.

This means:

- Supporting investment within our corridors.
- Ensuring a wide range of housing types for all income levels.
- Preserving our natural resources.

3. Maintain the unique identity of Hackensack while ensuring orderly development of the city and land uses that support it.

This looks like:

- Helping existing businesses thrive.
- Encouraging and attracting stores and services for the daily needs of our community.
- Supporting and attracting tourism in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce.

4. Reduce pollution and protect or improve surface and drinking water quality (according to MPCA measurements and MDH tests respectively).

This looks like:

- Conducting community education annually about proper household hazardous waste disposal through collaborating with Cass County, Chamber, Lucette's Gazette, and other means.
- Expanding beautification and reducing stormwater runoff by adding rain gardens, increasing tree plantings and other landscaping in town by installing at least 1 project of any size each year.
- Conducting community outreach through the eleven area lake associations, as well as through Lucette's Gazette, regarding opportunities through Cass County SWCD for cost sharing and technical assistance to establish native shoreline buffers, enrolling 4 homeowners in the program each year.
- Working with the Forestry AmeriCorps to conduct a tree inventory and establish plans for plantings, increasing tree coverage in the City, planting 50 trees each year of a variety of species.
- Ensuring stormwater runoff is properly planned for with new road projects.
- Working with Cass County to transition to salt brine road applications instead of hard salt by 2026.
- Sampling the Boy River and Birch Lake for pollutants (specify) where it enters the city limits and where it leaves the city limits four times during 2021 (early April, early June, early August and early October).

Infrastructure

Overview

Infrastructure provides the foundation for every community. Without adequate infrastructure, the development of communities is hindered. This chapter focuses on municipally owned facilities and infrastructure. However, certain services and infrastructures are provided through the private sector, such as natural gas, propane, electricity, and broadband fiber for internet. This chapter will identify the areas of highest concern based on public input gathered through the community engagement plan and outline the facilities and infrastructure goals. Because transportation and energy infrastructure is covered under the transportation and energy chapters, some aspects of those sections are not included in this section.



Input & Data

Water

Water is a precious resource which is often taken for granted, especially in the Land of 10,000 Lakes where it seems like the resource is limitless. Not only do we need water for drinking, we also need it for agriculture, manufacturing, and more. In the Cass County Local Water Management Plan for 2017-2027, the three top priority concerns identified include: surface water, ground water, and aquatic invasive species. Conservation of water helps reduce costs and also preserves these precious resources for future generations. [24]

Drinking Water

The City of Hackensack sources community drinking water from two primary groundwater wells, at 146 and 154 feet deep. A third well is set aside for emergency use and is 40 feet deep. The City of Hackensack has developed a source water protection plan, which was approved by the Minnesota Department of Health in 2015. [25]

Treatment of the City of Hackensack's water supply includes disinfection, fluoridation, iron/manganese sequestration, and softening. [26] The City of Hackensack tests regularly for contaminants in its water supply, including lead, copper, barium, arsenic, chlorine, and other chemicals. In 2019, all of these contaminants were well within limits set by the Environmental Protection Agency for safe drinking water standards. Hackensack drinking water originates from glacial deposits which are classified as "vulnerable" to pollution and water entering from the land surface. [26] Hackensack is currently in the process of upgrading old City pipes and painting the water tower.

Waste

Sewage

Sanitary sewer service is provided to residents in the City. Major improvements to the municipal sewer system were made in 2000, replacing main and lateral sewer lines, increasing system capacity to 130,000 gallons per day, and eliminating ground water seepage into the lines. The treatment system consists of three lined basins, and five unlined, one-acre basins. Following treatment in the lined basins, sewage then moves to the unlined basins, where the pond treated water is allowed to seep into the ground. ^[27]

Garbage and Recycling

The closest Cass County transfer station accepting solid waste, household hazardous waste, and recycling is the Walker/Hackensack Transfer Site located 2.5 miles north of Hackensack on Highway 371. ^[28] County operated recycling bins are located at the Southside Store in Hackensack, Birch Lake Town Hall, Woodrow Township Gravel Pit, Deerfield Town Hall, and the Backus City Hall. ^[28]

It is illegal to dispose of yard waste in the garbage in Minnesota. Grass clippings, tree trimmings, and so on, can be disposed of at the local transfer station. ^[28] In a study of MN garbage composition in 2013, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency found that organics comprised 31% of garbage, 18% of which is yard waste. ^[29] Composting these organic materials locally saves money by reducing garbage hauling costs, can create a valuable soil additive that improves fertility, conserves landfill space and reduces methane emissions. ^[30]

The City of Hackensack does not have an ordinance specifically regarding backyard composting sites, but in Nuisance Ordinance #78, Section 2, includes “Exposed accumulation of decayed or unwholesome food or vegetable matter” as a public nuisance, which is forbidden. ^[31] This ordinance could be altered to potentially increase composting in the city limits. Model ordinances for backyard composting sites can be found in the Addendum.

A majority of community survey respondents currently recycle either through a drop-off station, or through garbage pick-up (86%). There was little interest in a local composting program, with only 24% of respondents indicating they would pay for and participate in such a venture.

The 4th ranked goal is regarding reducing waste, “Establish Hackensack as a community that recycles, and decrease waste by 2023.”



Goals

1. Advocate and identify the need for low cost, high speed internet.

This looks like:

- Partnerships and encouragement with companies updating broadband.
- Partnerships with local townships, counties, cities, businesses for a unified voice to advocate for better broadband.

2. Review and enhance design of roads, trails, sidewalks, and crossings to provide safe and easy navigation for all users (pedestrians, wheelchairs, bikes, motorized vehicles where allowed/authorized).

This looks like:

- Working with local community groups to upgrade trees and lighting in the city parks.
- Promoting bike trails, north country hiking trails, and cross-country ski trails in the winter (Deep Portage and Heartland Trail)
- Being an official preferred stop on the Paul Bunyan trail

3. Review and enhance existing emergency preparedness infrastructure

This looks like:

- Establishing off-grid power back-up for essential government and private services.
- Burying power lines where possible and affordable

4. Establish Hackensack as a community that recycles and decreases waste.

This looks like:

- Conducting community education annually about proper household hazardous waste disposal through collaborating with Cass County, Chamber, Lucette's Gazette and other means.
- Conducting outreach and education in collaboration with Cass County regarding existing transfer stations, recycling rules, household hazardous waste disposal, and illegal dumping. Reach every homeowner and business in Hackensack by December 2022 with flyers distributed by mail or in-person.
- Working with local business to increase their recycling, including restaurants, bars and commercial businesses.
- Working with Cass County to add recycling stations in the City and increase accessibility by 2022.

Energy

Energy makes possible much of the work done in our communities and homes. As an extension to the infrastructure section of the comprehensive plan, this section explores the current energy landscape in Hackensack and goals around energy efficiency and renewable energy development in the city. The clean energy sector in Minnesota has been growing significantly, at a faster rate than overall statewide job growth, and was projected to grow 7% in 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. [32] As this sector continues to grow and communities like Hackensack grow and change, opportunities are opened. These energy goals were driven by community survey feedback and local planning team. To view the Energy and Environment Action Steps, see the **Energy and Environment addendums** to the comprehensive plan.

Input & Data

Heat and Power for the Hackensack Community

Energy is consumed for electricity, heat, and transportation. Understanding how and where it is used can help target energy consumption reduction efforts to those areas where it will be most impactful. Consuming energy wisely through energy efficiency and conservation measures helps to save consumers money and reduce energy use, thereby minimizing related environmental concerns. [33] In Minnesota, 22.2% of energy consumed is used by the residential sector, 19.3% in the commercial sector, 33.0% in the industrial sector, and 25.6% in transportation. [34]

Pollution, including mercury, results from burning fossil fuels. These toxins make their way back onto the land and into surface water. [35] With multiple “impacted” lakes in the Hackensack area indicating mercury detected in fish tissue, this is an issue with impacts very close by. [16]

In recognizing the importance of energy efficiency, the State of Minnesota requires electric and natural gas utilities each year to invest at least 1.5 percent and 0.5 percent respectively of their gross operating revenues on Conservation Improvement Programs (CIP). According to a 2015 study on the economic impact of CIP, every dollar invested provides \$4 to \$4.30 in energy savings, environmental benefits, and new economic activity. [33]

Multiple electric utility service territories overlap near the Hackensack community. Minnesota Power provides electric services along the 371 corridor to the majority of Hackensack residents and businesses, but Crow Wing Power Co-op serves those located just east of the City, and Itasca-Mantrap Co-op serves those to the west of the City. [36] Minnesota Power’s electricity generation mix is comprised of 48% coal, 35% renewables, and 17% natural gas. [37]

Electricity Consumption and Consequences

Electricity Consumption in the City of Hackensack was calculated based on known City consumption, average consumption in MN Power service territory and the number of households, and commercial consumption based on Minnesota load profiles.

- Annual estimated electricity consumption in the City of Hackensack is 4,000MWh. [38]
- The City of Hackensack itself, including all city buildings, consumes 215MWh annually, accounting for 5.4% of the total. [39]
- Total CO₂ equivalent emissions specific to the Hackensack generation mix amount to 2,196 metric tons annually.

Keeping the City Warm

There is no **natural gas** infrastructure in the City of Hackensack currently, although there are plans to extend natural gas services to the City. The most common home heating fuel in Hackensack is **propane**, serving as the primary

heating source for 57% of homes. Electricity is the second most common primary home heating fuel, serving 30% of homes, with wood (5%), fuel oil (4%), and other sources comprising smaller percentages. ^[40] Emissions resulting from the four primary heating sources in the City, propane, electricity, wood, and fuel oil, were calculated assuming an average 85MMBtus needed annually per home, using emissions specific for each heating type. ^{[41] [42] [43] [44]}

- 1,097 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent released into the atmosphere each year.
- Energy efficiency incentives are not consistently available for propane, wood, or fuel oil.

A summary of recommended energy efficiency measures resulting from energy audits conducted in the City in 2019 and 2020 targeting both electrical and heating loads can be found in the Appendix. These audits were completed courtesy of Minnesota Power and RETAP (Retiree Environmental Technical Assistance Program).

Energy Burden and Energy Security

Energy burden is the percentage of total income a household spends on energy costs. Low-income households typically suffer three times the energy burden than other households. While energy burden for non-low-income households is about 3%, for low-income households it can be from 8.6% up to 30%. ^[45] Fortunately, there are programs that seek to address this disparity through energy efficiency measures and by helping cover heating costs of high energy burdened low-income households. These programs, the Weatherization and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Programs (LIHEAP), are available to eligible households at no cost through local Community Action agencies in Minnesota. ^{[46] [47]}

- 54% of Hackensack households are eligible.
- Services are provided through Bi-County Community Action Program, based in Bemidji and with a satellite office in Walker.

Renewable Energy Resources

Average annual solar radiation levels in Hackensack are about 4.2 Peak Sun Hours, lower than the average of 4.53 peak sun hours for the State as a whole. ^[48]

In Hackensack, 6.0m/s is the average annual wind speed at 80 meters ^[49], which is a typical height for a commercial wind turbine ^[50]. Sites with average annual wind speeds of 6.5m/s or greater at 80m are considered commercially viable ^[51], so a wind turbine located in Hackensack would yield less power than a site with better wind resource.



Vehicle Emissions

One-fifth of 2016 Minnesota greenhouse gas emissions resulted from surface transportation, with another 6% resulting from aviation, rail, marine, and military. The State of Minnesota is actively working to reduce transportation-related emissions, with a goal of 80% reductions in emissions from 2007 levels by 2050. ^[52]

State Highway 371 bisects the City of Hackensack, and between that, county highways, township roads, and municipal streets, in 2019, the average daily vehicle miles traveled in Hackensack totaled 8,720. Annual total vehicle miles = 3,182,681. ^[53] According to the EPA, the average passenger vehicle emits about 404 grams of CO₂ per mile. ^[54] Although many vehicles traveling through Hackensack will emit more than that, this conservatively results in estimated total emissions of 1,286 tons of Carbon Dioxide equivalent annually related directly to surface transportation.

Commuting characteristics

54.5% of workers in Hackensack traveled less than 10 minutes to get to work, and the mean travel time to work was 17.6 minutes. The majority of workers, 60%, traveled alone by personal vehicle to work, while 21% carpooled. 12.8% of residents walked to work, 3.2% took public transportation, 1.6% took a taxi, motorcycle or other means, while 1.6% worked at home. ^[55]

Other Emissions

Besides vehicle emissions, there are also emissions caused by burning within the city limits. These were calculated based solely on the number of burn permits issued within the City limits annually, averaged over the last 10 years.

- The total number of permits issued over the last 10 years was 15. ^[56]
- Associated emissions assumed 4,707 pounds of CO₂ emissions per cord, and that one cord equivalent was burned per permit. ^{[43] [57]}

Goals & Strategies

1. Reduce citywide grid electricity consumption by 10% by 2026 (in 2020 average Residential annual consumption was 2,481MWh and City annual consumption was 229MWh).

This looks like:

- In collaboration with utilities, conducting energy efficiency outreach to the community-at-large, achieving energy efficiency improvements in collaboration with at least 2 businesses and 3 homeowners each year over the next 5 years, including those who qualify for Weatherization services through Bi-County CAP.
- Replacing municipally-owned outdoor lighting converting a minimum 10% of fixtures each year. Ensure all new City outdoor lighting is LED going forward.
- In 2021, implementing a minimum of 5 of the recommendations made to the City by the MN Power and/or RETAP energy audits conducted in 2020 and 2021, prioritizing those with the best return on investment. Continuing to implement additional reasonable energy efficiency recommendations through 2026.
- Holding at least 4 Hackensack area community discussions/information sessions at accessible locations during 2021-2022 about improving energy efficiency at homes or businesses, reaching a total of 60 people.
- Holding at least two community seminars in 2021 focused on solar energy applications for homes and businesses, encouraging installations in public and private settings.
- Encouraging the city to establish a policy in 2021 emphasizing replacing city owned fossil-fuel driven equipment (tools, mowers, vehicles) with battery-powered equipment as soon as practicable.

2. Consume zero grid electricity in 25 years (by 2046) in the city limits.

This looks like:

- Selecting City-owned sites that are suitable for solar installations in preparation for a minimum of one solar installation that would generate electricity for the City. Realize the selected project(s) by 2026.
- Revisiting this goal after 5 years, in 2026, and revising accordingly based on energy efficiency improvements and other achievements.

3. Prevent or mitigate the negative impacts of power grid failure for Hackensack area residents and the City.

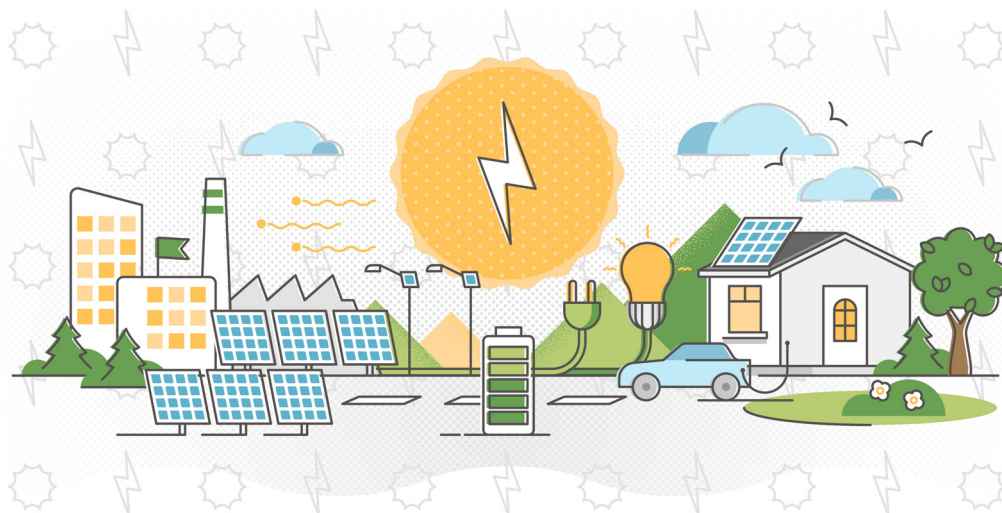
This looks like:

- Installing a solar array with battery back-up, sized to cover critical loads (water pumping, emergency lighting) for the City in the event of grid failure.
- Conducting outreach to help citizens understand available services in the event of power outage through Lucette's Gazette.
- Installing a fossil-fuel driven generator which can provide City back-up power to cover emergency critical loads including City water pumps, sewage pumps, and others in the event of a power outage.
- Burying power lines within the City limits to the extent practicable, reaching 25% buried by 2026.

4. Communicate our achievements, plans, and direction to constituents and other stakeholders.

This looks like:

- Supplying energy & environment opportunity information updating the public about utility programs, rebates, and more in Lucette's Gazette one time per year.
- Increasing awareness of conservation through the GreenStep City program. Providing information that can be handed out at both the City Office and Chamber by December 2021.



Transportation

Overview

Transportation has always been a defining characteristic of Hackensack. Its most prominent transportation feature is of course Minnesota Trunk Highway (TH) 371 which runs the length of the city from North to South and acts both as a principal arterial through town, and as Hackensack’s main street. A second defining transportation asset for the Hackensack area is the Paul Bunyan Trail which, running parallel to MN TH 371 also runs the lengths of town. The city of Hackensack is host to most of the commercial services that any Paul Bunyan trail (PBT) user would want or need. Hackensack is an increasingly important and favored trail destination due to these amenities and particularly for families with young children. Source: <https://www.paulbunyantrail.com/trail-towns/hackensack/>

In this section, we will describe the current transportation network including highways, roads, and trails. We will highlight the multitude of jurisdictions, partnerships, and programs involved in planning, and managing the transportation network. We will pay special attention to three other transportation issues including challenges and opportunities associated with designing, and managing a transportation system for peak seasonal capacity, the challenges and opportunities associated with being a “Trail-town,” and finally, this section will point out issues regarding parking that were identified throughout the planning process.

Input & Data

Existing Transportation Network

As in most cities, the network of roads is a partnership between several jurisdictions, including the State of Minnesota, Cass County, and the City of Hackensack.

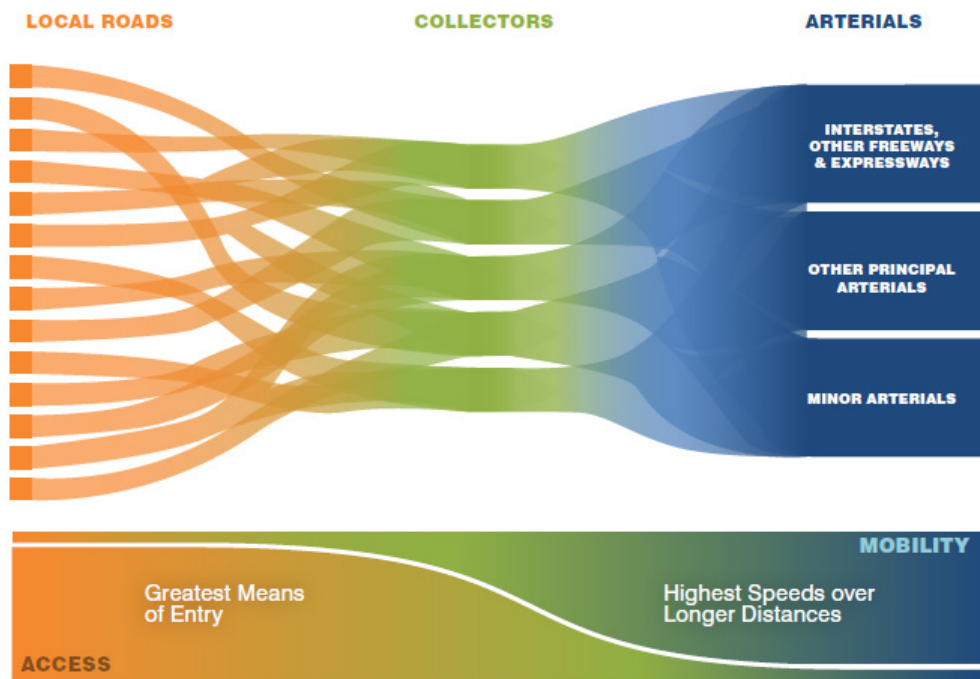
Jurisdiction	Route
MnDOT	Trunk Highway 371
Cass County	County Road 5
	County Road 40
	1 st Street NW
City of Hackensack	2 nd Street
	3 rd Street South
	Murray Ave W
	Murray Ave E
	Fleisher Ave
	Lake Ave
	Whipple Ave
	Poquet Dr NW
	Wagonner Ave E
	River St.
	Lake Shore Dr.
	Birch St.
	Park Ave
	Noname Ave W
	Old 19
	Cemetery Rd.
	Barthelamy Ave



Highways and Roads

Functional Classification

Functional classification is the grouping of streets and highways into classes or systems according to the character of service they are intended to provide. Basic to this process is the recognition that most travel involves movement through a network of roads. Functional classification defines the role that any particular road or street plays in serving the flow of trips through an entire network.



Federal, State and Local Programs, Plans and Planning

20-Year Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan

The Statewide Multimodal Transportation [Plan](#) is Minnesota’s highest level policy plan for transportation. It is a 20-year plan based on Minnesota GO—a vision of a transportation system that maximizes the health of people, the environment, and our economy. The plan is for all types of transportation and all transportation partners. It covers more than just roadways and applies to more than just the Minnesota Department of Transportation. It evaluates the status of the transportation system, what is changing, and how we are going to move forward over the next twenty years

The Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (SMTP) was updated as of January 2017. You can read the plan [here](#).

10-Year CHIP

The 10-year Capital Highway Investment [Plan](#) details MnDOT’s capital highway investments for the next ten years on the state highway network. The CHIP is updated yearly to remove projects that are currently being constructed, adjust timing of existing planned projects, and add new planned projects. The primary purpose of the document is to communicate programmed and planned capital highway projects over the next 10 years. The document serves as a check to ensure that MnDOT is meeting the investment levels and performance outcomes identified in

MnDOT's 20-year State Highway Investment Plan, MnSHIP, and explains any change in direction or outcomes from the investment direction.

Source: <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/10yearplan/>

4-Year STIP

The STIP is a federally required public document which lists Minnesota's four-year transportation improvement program. The STIP includes all state and local transportation projects which are using federal highway and/or federal transit funding along with those state transportation projects which are using 100% state funds. Information contained within the STIP includes the cost, schedule, and funding sources for the identified projects. The STIP is developed on an annual basis, and it is updated throughout the year to reflect significant changes in the program. In addition to federal highway and transit projects, the STIP includes rail and port projects for informational purposes.

Source: <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/program/stip.html>

Area Transportation Partnership

Area Transportation Partnerships (ATPs) were created by MnDOT to emphasize greater public involvement, enhance regional planning and increase the development of the four-year STIP. The Central Minnesota ATP is on of eight ATPs in Minnesota.

Source: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/d3/atp/#:~:text=in%20Central%20Minnesota,-ATP%203,of%20eight%20ATPs%20in%20Minnesota.>

Region Five Development Commission (R5DC), Transportation Advisory Council (TAC)

For 40+ years, R5DC has coordinated regional transportation programs, such as the Transportation Advisory Council (TAC), which assists MnDOT District 3 and the Area Transportation Partnership (ATP) in annually programming Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds as well as Transportation Alternative (TA) funds. R5DC fulfills a workplan for MnDOT in areas including Statewide Planning, Regional Planning. R5DC also delivers Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Planning and assistance to communities that are awarded SRTS Technical Assistance Grants through MnDOT.

Source: <https://www.regionfive.org/transportation>



Trails

For many, trails provide an opportunity to experience the outdoors, engage in recreation, and exercise. Others rely on trails simply for transportation. Increasingly, communities and individuals are realizing the benefits of increased connectivity to trails. By their very nature, many trails serve a dual purpose; they serve both a transportation purpose, as well as a recreational purpose.

Recreation - Trails

One of the many benefits of trails is that they provide, accessible recreation opportunities within close proximity to community members homes. In addition to being a recreation destination in and of themselves, trails often link residential neighborhoods with destinations such as schools, recreational spaces as well as to other trails, other outlying areas, and even to other communities.

- Trails make communities better places to live by preserving and creating open spaces for recreation.
- Trails and greenways provide new opportunities for outdoor recreation and non-motorized transportation.
- Trails also provide a unique facility to serve a diverse population of a community that may otherwise have limited opportunities to access natural areas due to financial or transportation constraints.
- Trails provide affordable exercise and recreational opportunities within the community.

Transportation - Trails

In addition to providing a recreational purpose, trails function as non-motorized transportation corridors for pedestrians and cyclists. In addition to recreation, trails often link residential neighborhoods with destinations such as shopping, and employment centers.

- A quarter of all trips people make are one mile or less, but three-fourths of these short trips are made by car.
- Trails link neighborhoods with shopping, recreation, and entertainment and provide pleasant transportation alternatives for commuting to work and school.

In addition to serving both a recreational purpose and a transportation purpose, trails also promote more active, healthier lifestyles, economic vitality, cleaner environment, and safer more livable communities.

Active Living - Trails

While most understand that exercise is important for maintaining good health in all stages of life; we often struggle to provide ourselves appropriate amounts of exercise. The U.S. Surgeon General estimates that 60% of American adults are not regularly active and another 25% are not active at all. Oftentimes, busy schedules, and the cost of constraints and distance are listed as top reasons for not exercising enough.

Trails provide a safe, inexpensive option for individuals in rural communities to get the adequate amounts of exercise. There is scientific evidence that supports providing convenient access to places for physical activity, such as trails connecting to parks or other recreational facilities, increases the level of physical activity in a community.

Economic Vitality - Trails

In addition, the positive economic impact of trails in communities is increasingly being documented and experienced by both communities and individuals. Trails are becoming common in residential neighborhoods and in commercial areas as well. Development plans for homes, apartments and townhouses often include footpaths to enhance recreational opportunities and property values. Trails are regarded by real estate agents as an amenity that helps to attract buyers and to sell property. Studies in Denver, Seattle, Minnesota, and other communities across the country have consistently found that the proximity to trails increases the value of homes from 1-6.5%.

Furthermore, the concept of “Trail-Towns” seeks to create economic growth, grow local business, foster a sense of community and place, while promoting job creation by compounding the economic potential of trails within communities and by emphasizing a community’s trail assets and amenities.

The Hackensack area boasts several recreational trails, including the Paul Bunyan Trail, The North Country Trail, the Heartland Trail as well as a variety of trails located at Deep Portage.

Goals and Strategies

1. Identify and enhance pedestrian crossings to promote safety and walkability.

This looks like:

- Considering opportunities for additional bicycle and pedestrian friendly infrastructure.
- Improving and expanding bicycle lanes, sidewalks, crosswalks, and multi-use trails.

2. Consider Developing a Complete Streets Policy that addresses all transportation modes as well as streetscaping, aesthetics, and parking.

This looks like:

- Considering innovative designs and signage to ensure productive mobility and reduce congestion.
- Being involved in Regional, County, and City-wide discussions regarding transit (Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils)

3. Continue to sustainably grow the local road network as needed to accommodate community growth.

This looks like:

- Ensuring environmental standards are upheld when planning and constructing transportation projects.
- Expanding the local road systems strategically and sustainably where growth and demand dictates.

Housing

Overview

Housing accessibility, quality, affordability, and availability enhances the community's sense of place and strengthen the quality of life for all residents, whether they own or rent. Housing could be considered the single most important element in the city. Businesses look at the variety and supply of the housing stock in the community when considering relocating, expanding, or starting up. Housing is not a one-type solution. Housing needs change throughout life stages and with demographic needs.

Input & Data

The housing landscapes of a city and its needs can be determined by the population living in a community and the current availability of housing. Hackensack's current housing landscape and data includes:

- A median age of people in Hackensack of 47.7 years, compared to 38.1 for the United States overall. ^[5]
- A median value of owner-occupied units was \$107,600. ^[12]
- A majority of housing units that were built between 1980-2000 (81), 18 structures built between 2000-2014, 49 built between 1960-1980, and 32 built before 1960. ^[12]

As a part of the public input process, the following themes were identified around the topic of housing:

- **A need to understand more deeply the current demand for each housing type:** There was an identified need in the survey and local planning team discussions to identify the future housing needs based on future growth of businesses in the area and the population that may move to the area. Housing availability ranked 4th as a top challenge for Hackensack to address. When asked what housing price categories people would prefer to prioritize in Hackensack, 94% of people prioritized market rate and high end housing, 61% prioritized workforce/middle income housing, and 44% prioritized subsidized/low-income housing.
- **Supporting a growing population:** According to the community survey, people are overwhelmingly in favor of a 5% population growth rate, which was the highest option listed. A discussion to support this growth is more deeply needed to develop a plan for commercial growth and how it relates to residential growth. To support quality housing, a zoning map update is also needed.

Goals and Strategies

1. Determine the current availability and demand for different types of housing

This looks like:

- Conducting a housing survey and study

2. Encourage, maintain, and increase housing

This looks like:

- Providing incentives to encourage more housing options for builders and people
- Encouraging energy efficient housing for people of all ages, incomes, and special needs (ex. education on weatherization, adopt MN housing standards, housing retrofits, faith in action support)
- Promoting the expansion of safe, healthy, and affordable home ownership and rental opportunities
- Rehabilitating substandard housing
- Encouraging the development of a variety of sustainable, quality, and affordable housing types that will meet the needs of current and future residents.



Economic Development

Overview

The economic vitality of a community is critical to its long-term success. Good-paying jobs and a solid tax base are key to providing adequate funding for roads, schools, parks, snow removal, and other services and amenities that retain and attract businesses and residents. Hackensack is actively engaged in pursuing complementary economic growth, development and redevelopment opportunities that serve to enhance the community's economic, natural, and social vitality to sustain a high quality of life. The purpose of this chapter is to guide future economic development and redevelopment in Hackensack by laying out the city's economic development and redevelopment goals, policies, key indicators, tools, initiatives and priority redevelopment areas.

Existing Conditions

Nearly 63% of Hackensack's population are in the workforce and with that it is estimated that Hackensack has a 5.4% unemployment rate. [12] Median household income in Hackensack is \$25,662, with full-time, year-round male workers earning more than female, \$27,344 versus \$25,893 respectively. [12]

A key contributor to providing workforce opportunities is Mann Lake Limited which is one of the largest manufacturers in Cass County in terms of revenue and employees. Even with this large business in the city, Mann Lake Limited oftentimes runs short on employment needs from 20-40 people at times. They are planning on expanding their size in the next 3-5 years in several other states and Minnesota, and Hackensack would like to remain part that growth. Aside from the largest employer in the city you will find many downtown area businesses ranging from a coffee shop to a brewery or a pizza place to a bait shop. Many of these businesses are new to the community within the last year even though much of the economy around the world has been impacted over the last year from the pandemic. Businesses see opportunity in Hackensack and are laying the groundwork in an effort to create a vibrant and revitalized downtown.

Taking a step back, when looking at childcare options, healthcare options, transportation improvements, and broadband options in a community it can affect who works in that community as well as who chooses to live in that community. When looking at Hackensack, only a few daycare options can be found although more and more people are providing daycare services through in home care rather than through a daycare center which can be harder to track. Next, looking at healthcare, Hackensack does have an Essentia Health Clinic in town although hours are limited, and the extent of what procedures can be done there is also limited. Lastly, broadband is a large issue for Hackensack with only 65.4% of households, a total of 83, having a broadband internet subscription. [12]

Community Input

As part of the public engagement process, the following commonalities were identified:

- Continue to develop and support a year – round economy.
- Survey respondents sought a diverse economy that can sustain the community throughout the year, offering opportunities in every season. Community members seek a collaborative approach to increase job availability as this directly impacts livability and to continue to expand tourism opportunities.
- Need for improved access to childcare, healthcare and broadband.
- Survey respondents marked all three of these categories as categories that need to grow in Hackensack. Working with area foundations to help with funding concerns are possible options for childcare and broadband needs while healthcare needs are being met in new ways including telehealth.
- Work with existing businesses to expand employment opportunities while also attracting new businesses to the city.
- Respondents support efforts to create places where people do not want to leave and a diverse economy that provides employment and investment opportunities. Survey respondents support continuing effort for entrepreneurs, business expansion, and retention.
- Invest in and continue to revitalize the downtown area.

- Aesthetic improvements, such as green infrastructure and pedestrian realm enhancements, also aid in improving the quality of life. This element also focuses on identifying key locations for development and redevelopment in the city’s core and to reduce the number of vacant buildings in the downtown core.

Goals

1. Develop strategic initiatives and coordinated efforts that support year-round job creation and economic growth.

This looks like:

- Developing policies that ensure equal opportunity for businesses.
- Using whatever public and government data that may be available, as well as a survey of local banks, realtors and existing businesses, to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the local economy.
- Developing relationships to expand healthcare and childcare opportunities (days of availability, partner and promote broadband opportunities)
- Encouraging creating space for and supporting local art

2. Encourage people to shop at retail businesses in Hackensack by making it more convenient and inviting for tourists and residents alike.

This looks like:

- Expanding promotions for shopping local
- Identifying, prioritizing, and planning for parking needs
- Encouraging a local businesses coalition to be stewards for the community and get together.

3. Welcome and support new and existing businesses.

This looks like:

- Supporting businesses filling jobs and maintaining a presence in Hackensack
- Asking businesses what they need to succeed in Hackensack (parking, filling jobs, etc)
- Partnering with Cass County Economic Development Corporation to help support businesses.
- Considering partnering with UMN Extension on businesses expansion and retention program
- Exploring the creation of a business incubator

Compliance to Codes and Ordinances

Overview, Input, & Data

Throughout the planning sessions, there were several conversations and feedback from the survey about updating of the city's ordinances and enforcing compliance to city code. There was mention of this in several sections of the planning process, warranting the need for its own section to highlight this as a priority. The conversations centered around the image of Hackensack and keeping buildings up-to-date. A need for a review and update to existing ordinances and code was identified as a priority for the city to explore next steps in this process. Below are the outlined goals and action steps identified throughout the process regarding code and ordinance updates.

Goals & Strategies

1. Review, update, and encourage compliance of city codes and ordinances

This Looks Like:

- Continuing outreach to properties not in compliance with city codes and ordinances
- Ensuring appropriate zoning transitions

2. Update the zoning ordinance and map

This Looks Like:

- Ensuring a suitable buffer
- Exploring incentives to help meet zoning goals
- Providing enforcement of building codes and zoning regulations

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