

Land Use and Development Assessment

This chapter describes the major trends and forces related to land use, development and growth management in and around the City of Big Lake.

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A portion of the original Big Lake commercial center

Major Land Use and Development Issues

The following are the major issues in the topic of land use and development identified through the analysis of conditions. Issues are questions to be discussed, debated and resolved during the planning process in light of other issues. The subsequent analysis of conditions has been prepared to help readers understand why these are issues and why they should be considered.

- 1. Protecting the Ability of the City to Grow Outward:** Will the County and Big Lake Township continue to cooperate with the City to protect the City’s ability to grow outward in an efficient and economic fashion?

The County zoning on the perimeter of the City is Urban Reserve, Agriculture or General Rural. The General Rural district allows problematic 2.5 acre lots. However, the Township and County recognize the need to protect the City’s ability to grow outward. Consequently, the County land use plan guides the area between the City and the Elk River as “Urban Reserve Residential.” See Figure 4-2 on page 4-6.

- 2. Annexation of Town Peninsulas:** What should be done, if anything, to encourage land owners in the several Township “peninsulas” to petition for annexation of their land to the City?

These linear patterns of lands in the Township are the result of successful annexation petitions that have enlarged the City in an irregular pattern. It would be efficient to eventually consolidate those locations into the City through petitions by the owners.

- 3. Fringe Development Pattern:** What should be the pattern of land use on the City’s perimeter?

Should there be a large industrial area in the southwest in the vicinity of County Highway 17 as shown on the Big Lake Township Comprehensive Plan map, Figure 4-3? Should there be corridor of commercial development along Highway 25 between Big Lake and Monticello. and along Highway 10 to the west, as shown in the 1999 plan (Figure 4-1)?

- 4. Favored Locations for Perimeter Growth:** What are the most efficient and beneficial locations for perimeter growth?

Should the City forever remain south of the Elk River? Should the lakes to the northwest be regarded as the limit to growth in that direction? Should the City fill in the land up to the Elk River? Should the City actively discourage, through planning, zoning and capital improvements, the expansion of the urban area into the farm fields to the south in favor of long-term preservation of that area for farming?

- 5. Locations for Multiple-Family Housing:** What are the best types of locations for multiple-family housing?

Multiple-family housing is sometimes relegated to the least attractive locations in some cities. However, to take advantage of that increasingly popular housing form, some cities integrate various types of attached housing into neighborhoods of detached housing. Extra care is sometimes needed in housing design to make this successful, but the results are often a more interesting and sustainable city.

- 6. Types of New Housing:** Should the plan try to guide development toward or away from certain types of housing or let the market make that decision?

Some Cities steer the market by narrowly zoning locations for limited types of housing. Other Cities have broader and more inclusive zoning districts and let market forces prevail.

- 7. Appearance of New Multiple-Family Housing:** Should the City adopt design guidelines, or regulations, that help make attached housing more compatible with detached (single-family) housing?

Some people have expressed a concern that some of the attached housing built in Big Lake in recent years is either unattractive or not sufficiently compatible with the appearance of detached (single-family) housing. Some cities have adopted design guidelines or requirements for attached housing to help it emulate the single-family house. Of special concern is the appearance of “garage-forward” townhouses.

- 8. New Neighborhood Design:** Should the City require that new residential areas be designed with many of the features of the older neighborhoods such as sidewalks, street trees, a mixture of housing types, narrow streets, short front setbacks and garages set back further than the façade of the house? Should there be regulations to soften the appearance of garage doors?

The City can guide the design of new neighborhoods through its zoning and subdivision ordinances. The visual appearance and function of the residential pattern will affect long-term property values and quality of life. Some planners advocate narrower streets, use of sidewalks and street trees, interconnected streets, and reduced visual effects from garage doors.

- 9. Downtown:** To what degree should the City promote and assist redevelopment that conforms with the recommendations of the downtown design guidelines for retail, offices, housing and mixed-use buildings? What should be the next major step forward for the downtown?

Those design guidelines are summarized on page 4-13. There are obstacles to creating a “city center” in Big Lake, including Highway 10, the railroad tracks and existing development.

- 10. Waterfront Greenways:** Should the City acquire land for a linear public park and trail plus protected open space along the Elk River?

The idea of a linear park and walking-biking trail along the river has great appeal and has been promoted in prior plans. Nearly all of the land along the Elk River is privately owned. Some of it has been divided into residential parcels and developed. For it were to be most useful, it would run from Becker to Elk River, thus probably requiring some County leadership and money. At a minimum, natural protection of the floodplain forest and habitat would seem to be wise.

- 11. Economic Development, Jobs and Income:** What land use, zoning and development policy changes, if any, should be made to help promote economic development in Big Lake?

This should be guided by market opportunities and preferences, which will be summarized in the Economic Development chapter of this comprehensive plan.

Should the City plan a location for the coordinated development of industry and offices?

- 12. Commercial Growth:** How much land should be planned and zoned for retail business development? Should multiple-family housing be allowed in certain commercially-zoned locations?

An insufficient amount of land zoned for retail business may lead to the loss of potential tax base and excessive driving to shops. On the other hand, over-zoning for business, a common occurrence, would cause land to be underutilized or stand vacant. Should certain Downtown locations be redeveloped as apartments?

- 13. General Redevelopment:** How proactive should the City be in encouraging redevelopment?

In some key locations, redevelopment occurs only with the involvement of a public agency, as site acquisition and preparation is very expensive. It is a matter of public policy as to the level of risk that the City or its Economic Development Authority are willing to take to effect changes in critical locations.

- 14. Lakefront Land Ownership and Use:** Can or should public access to the lakes be improved?

Most locations along the edges of Mitchell and Big Lakes are privately owned, even where there is a public street along the lake. Consequently, there is very little public access to the lakes except at the City parks.

- 15. Role of the Plan:** How strong should the Comprehensive Plan be in setting City policy, ordinances and budgeting?

Ideally, the comprehensive plan should be the central decision-making reference document for all departments of the City and for elected and appointed officials, leading to coordinated decisions supporting common goals.



A typical Big Lake residential street scene

Prior Plans

Big Lake Comprehensive Plan, 1999; updated 2009

It is useful to look back at prior plans because some continuity in policy is beneficial and also to realize that changes in course are sometimes advisable as the community navigates the swirl of events.

The preceding *Big Lake Comprehensive Plan* was adopted in 1999, during a period of robust growth across the county but before the acceleration and crash of the 2000s. The land use plan map was amended in 2009. Some of identified issues are still facing the community, some of its recommendations have been accomplished and other worthy objectives simply need updating.

1999 Issues: Here are a few of the major planning issue subjects of 1999: :

- How to protect the City’s **fringe growth** potential?
- How to achieve orderly, **compact** growth that is fiscally sustainable?
- How to **compete** with unsewered, rural locations for development?
- How to approve **annexation** petitions while minimizing conflict?
- Which **directions** should the City plan to grow?
- How to address the trend of the city becoming very **linear**?
- How to **coordinate** the sanitary sewer system and land development?
- How to **diversify housing** type and cost?
- How to protect **water quality** in lakes and streams?
- How to improve the quality of the **aging housing** stock?
- How to build a compact, identifiable and viable “**city center**”?
- How to attract **industries** that provide well-paying jobs and a good image?
- How to improve **street** continuity?
- How to deal with the negative effects of **Highway 10**?
- How to grow according to a **plan**? Should the City and Township **merge**? Should they continue to share some facilities and finances?

Major 1999 Planning Initiatives: In response to those and other identified planning issues, the plan offered these and other recommendations:

- Build a US Highway 10 **bypass** route south of the present urban area; line it with businesses. This idea is now dead, and the associated land use plan map, shown below, is infeasible.
- Map and adopt a small municipal **Urban Expansion Area** into which seweraged housing growth would be guided and limited
- Plan for continued semi-rural, **unsewered housing** south of the Elk River
- Plan for **industry** along Highway 10 to the east and west
- Plan for businesses along **Highway 25**, starting at the Mississippi River and moving north
- Limit **mid- or high-density housing** to a few locations near the commercial center or next to the schools campus
- Create a public-private “**greenway**” along the Elk River in the Township
- Expect a **Northstar** station near Lake Street. (Was built near CR 4)
- Continue to protect **wetlands** and **floodplains**

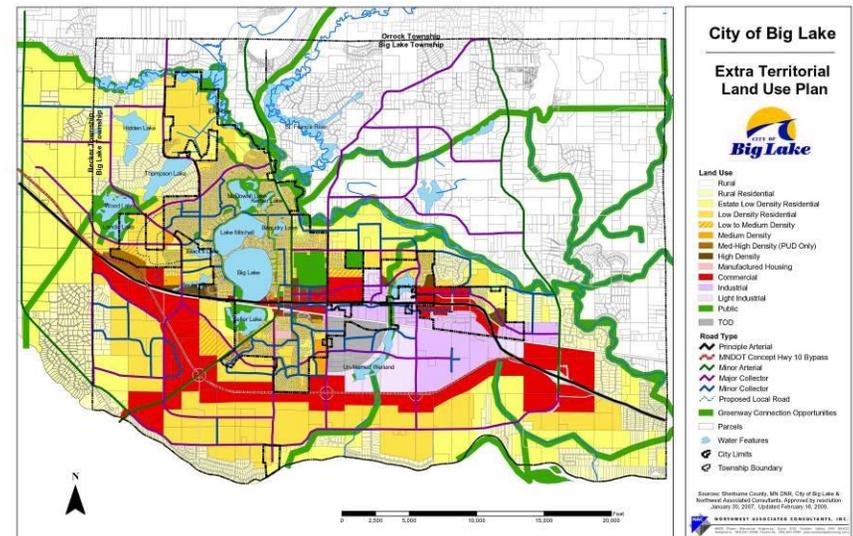
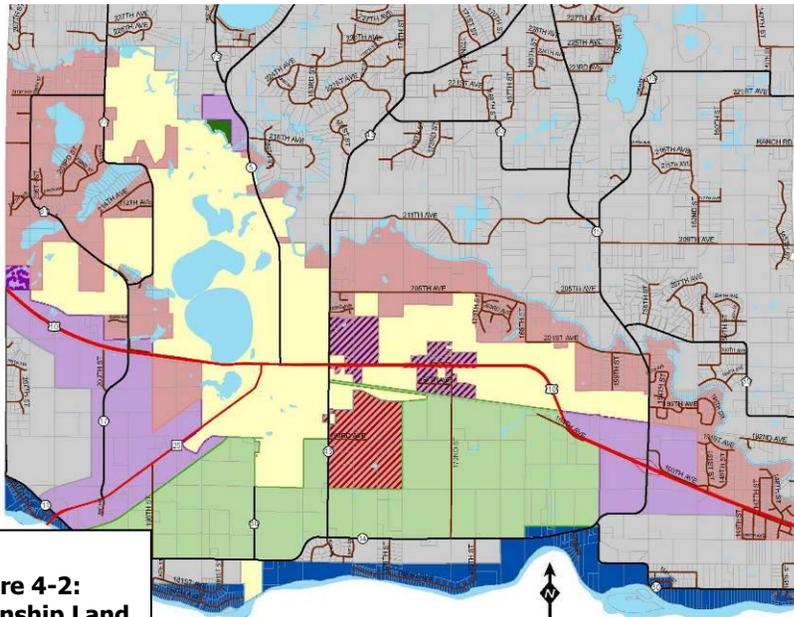


Figure 4-1: Big Lake Land Use Plan Map, 2009

Big Lake Township Land Use Plan

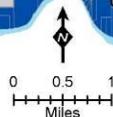
Sherburne County updated its county-wide land use plan in 2010. The Big Lake Township portion of that plan, illustrated by Figure 4-2, calls for:

- Urban Reserve north and west of the city up to the Elk River and near the Northstar commuter rail station; this implies urban, sewered development in locations either under an Orderly Annexation Agreement or identified by the Town Board as likely to be annexed by 2030 (red on the map)
- Agriculture south of the city (green)
- Industry (purple):
 - Around the intersection of Highway 10 and County Highway 15
 - Along US Highway 10 west of the city
 - Along County Highway 17
 - Along State Highway 25
- Semi-rural, large-lot housing north of the Elk River (gray on the map)
- Housing with nature conservancy along the Mississippi River (blue)



**Figure 4-2:
Township Land
Use Plan Map**

Big Lake Township
Comprehensive Plan

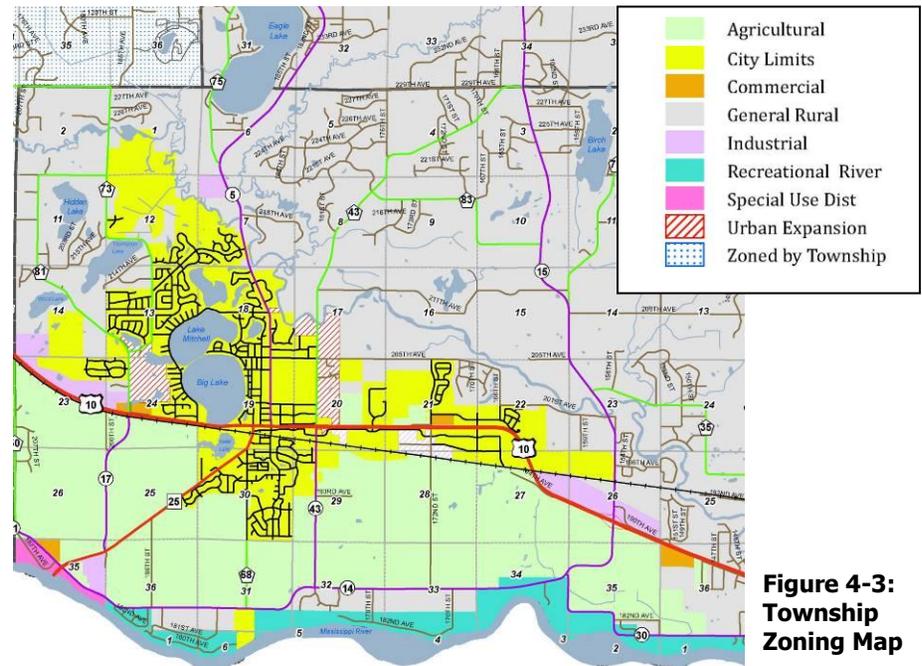


Big Lake Township Zoning Map

Sherburne County administers zoning for Big Lake Township, as it does for eight other townships. Note that some locations have not been rezoned to conform to the Land Use Plan map. The Agriculture zoning district should prevent semi-rural lots that are difficult to resubdivide and serve with City utilities. However, the General Rural district poses a potential problem.

Table 4-1: Big Lake Township Zoning Districts

District	Allowed Uses	Minimum Lot Size
Agricultural	Farms; houses	5 acres if "wooded"; otherwise, 1 house per 40 acres
General Rural	Farms; houses	2.5 acres
Industrial	Farms; houses	30,000 square feet
Commercial	Farms; houses	22,500 square feet
Urban Expansion	Farms; houses	City dimensions
Recreational River	Houses	22,500 square feet



**Figure 4-3:
Township
Zoning Map**

Existing Pattern of Land Use

The pattern of land use as of 2016 is illustrated by Figure 4-11, below.

Many Eras Represented

Being an old community, Big Lake has a variety of development styles that reflect many eras:

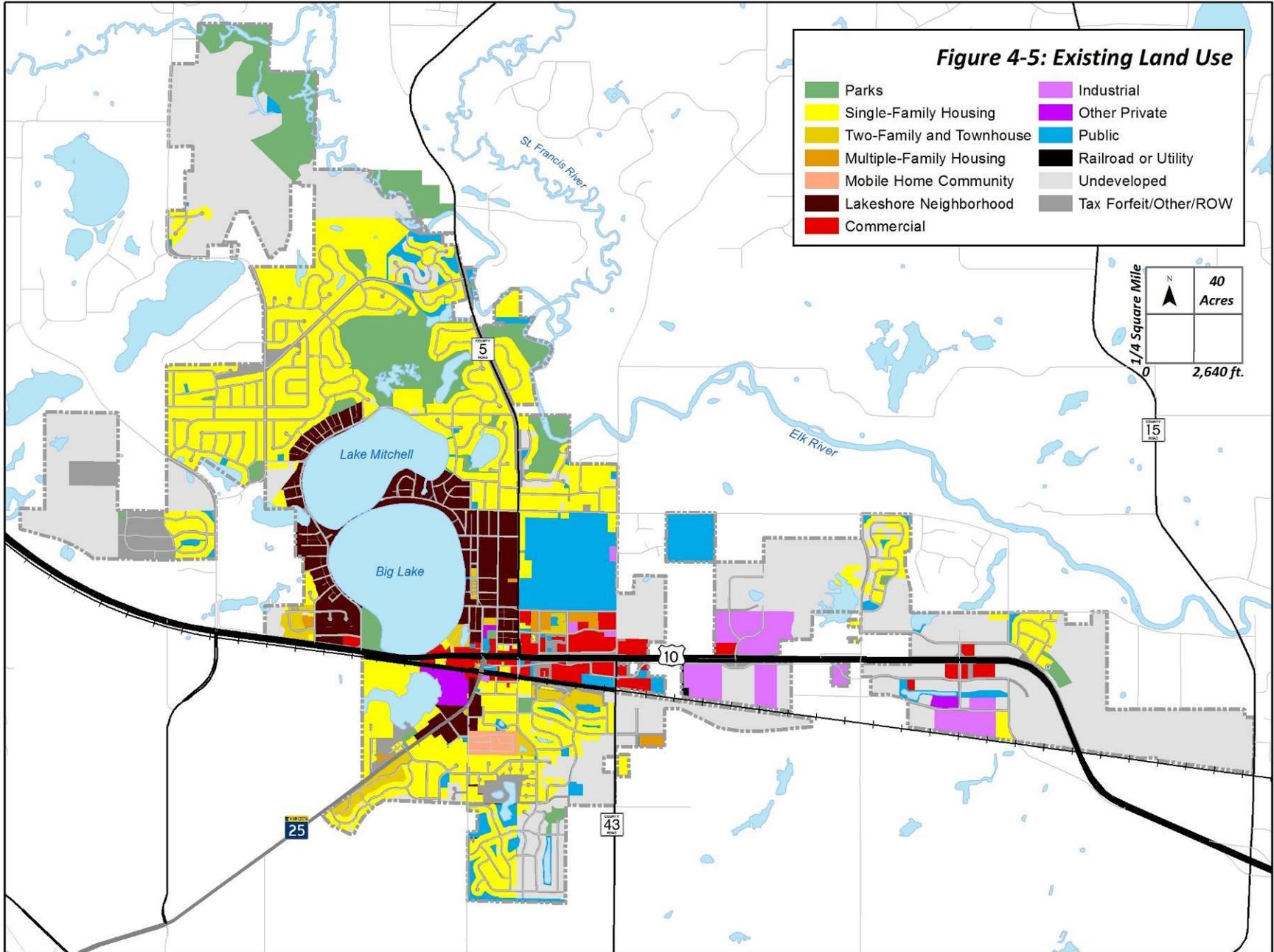
- The remnants of the Lake Street commercial center near the railroad tracks and now-gone station
- The early lake cabins, now mostly remodeled or replaced
- A scattering of traditional houses with Victorian or American four-square designs and front porches
- Small post-War housing
- Houses from the 1960s through the present with increasing degrees of garage-forward design
- Auto-oriented commercial buildings ranging from early gasoline stations to more recent linear centers and “big boxes”
- The magnificent former high school building
- A small but growing number of townhouse or apartment designs.

Observations and Forces

These are observations about the pattern of land use:

- **East-West Pattern:** The City has become stretched along Highway 10, which is inefficient for utility and road services, and diminishes the city’s sense of place or center
- **Infill Opportunities:** There are many opportunities for infill development along the eastern Highway 10 corridor between Glenwood Avenue (205th Street) and the railroad tracks
- **Railroad Divider:** The Burlington Northern - Santa Fe Railroad tracks are a major community divider, and the frequent freight trains are a major nuisance
- **Northwest:** Thompson Lake and the adjacent large-lot, unsewered housing are a barrier to municipal expansion on the northwest side

- **North and Northeast:** The Elk River would seem to be a logical northeastern limit to municipal growth as it would be costly to bridge; further northeast are extensive tracts of semi-rural, unsewered residential subdivisions that would work against annexation and serviced development
- **Northeast:** Land between the Elk River and Glenwood Avenue has natural features that are conducive to attracting better-quality housing development; this location remains largely unaffected by prior residential plats that would be difficult or impossible to resubdivide and serve
- **South:** Land to the southwest, south and southeast of the present urban area is easily developable because it is flat, sandy, unencumbered by prior development, and easily served by sanitary sewer, which drains south toward the treatment plant near the river; however, the flat and treeless landscape offers little natural amenity for housing, meaning that developers would be wise to create interest through design and improvements
- **Northstar Vicinity:** The vicinity of the Northstar commuter rail station may eventually become a location of intensive and varied housing but it remains to be seen how long that will require and what effect the train service will play. See below for a further description of the plan for the station area.
- **Business Locations:** Retail and industrial locations are strongly oriented to the east along Highway 10; there are three industrial locations along Highway 10 west and none along Highway 25; this may be the result of the historic trend and a business desire to separate from the Monticello commercial
- **Shared Business Parks:** The City shares with the Township ownership of one industrial park and one mixed retail-industrial area along Highway 10 east



- **Lakeshore Neighborhoods:** The lake cabins and older housing near Big and Mitchell Lakes form a distinct and interesting portion of the community that links it to its 19th Century roots; refer to the description of early settlement in Chapter 10, Introduction and Summary
- **Industrial Proposal:** It is significant that the Township land use plan map shows a large industrial area along County Highway 17 southwest of the city; in that vicinity there was a development proposal in the early discussion and study stage in 2017 to build a major distribution center of several hundred acres served by railroad and trucks; the Highway 25 Coalition was conducting a traffic study on that subject; see below for further description
- **Housing Diversity:** There seems to be a need to diversify the housing stock in terms of type and tenure (own vs. rent); approximately 83 percent of the housing in Big Lake is single-family detached; approximately 86 percent is owner-occupied; there are many “starter” homes and fewer move-up or luxury homes compared to the county or the metro area
- **Housing Infill:** There are approximately 240 unbuilt housing lots that have been platted and in some cases served with streets and utilities; see the subsequent section titled, Acreage Needed to Accommodate Growth, for further detail
- **School Campus:** Two public elementary schools, one middle and one high school are clustered in the northeast quadrant near County Road 43
- **Wetlands and Floodplains:** Wetlands and floodplains are confined mostly to the Elk River corridor; some high groundwater levels are also found there; other locations tend to be sandy and well-drained
- **Greenway Potential:** The natural features along the Elk River provide an opportunity to possibly create a band of undeveloped or open land along its banks of some width; this corridor may be owned privately and publicly; it could include a public “trail” for walking and bicycling if ownership and easements allowed; it would certainly help with natural

protection and wildlife movement; because it is entirely outside the City at this time and cross-county connections would be desired, the County would need to be involved, probably in a leadership role

- **Fringe Growth Protection:** Safeguarding the ability of the City to grow in a compact and cost-efficient manner is probably its greatest planning challenge; creating housing lots immediately outside the City in the range of 2 to 5 acres could erect a barrier to future resubdivision and service with City utilities.

Fortunately, the County-Township land use plan designates as Urban Reserve the gap between the City and the Elk River, and guides as Agriculture large tracts to the south of the City; this protection will save the public money, provide development opportunities and reduce the loss of prime farm land Unfortunately, the County’s zoning does not fully align with the land use plan and many areas guided for urban reserve continue to be zoned general rural. Additionally, the urban reserve district allows some types of development that may be undesirable such as small lot housing with well and septic systems and different street design than what is required by the City.

Current Zoning

The Big Lake zoning ordinance is summarized below and the zoning map is shown on the next page. Observations about the ordinance:

- Housing types in the Mid and High-Density zones should be allocated differently
- The R-5 district, for the old cottage areas, is a useful idea
- Shoreland standards are conveniently shown in each residential district
- Downtown Overlay is a good attempt to create an identifiable center
- Several houses north and south of “downtown” (e.g., near Pleasant Avenue) became non-conforming, and thus limited for expansion, because they were zoned R-3.
- Other districts are typical for a small town

**Table 4-1
Big Lake Zoning Districts**

District	Major Types of Land Uses Allowed		Minimum Lot Sizes
	Permitted	Conditional	
Future Development / Agriculture	Detached houses; farming	Home occupations; solar farms; others	5 acres
R-1E Single-Family Estate	Detached houses	Day care, schools, home occupations	100 ft wide 15,000 sf area
R-1 Single-Family Housing	Detached houses	Day care, schools, home occupations	85 ft wide 12,000 sf area
R-2 Medium Density Housing	One- and two-family houses	Seniors' housing Planned-unit development (PUD)	80 ft wide 10,000 sf area
R-3 High-Density Housing	Two-family, townhouse and apartment buildings	Certain businesses in a planned-unit project, long-term care, PUD	Density transition to R-1 required.
R-4 Manufactured housing	Mobile homes	Day care, home occupations	20 ft separation
R-5 Residential Redevelop't	Detached houses	Two-family or townhouse buildings	20 ft from local street; Shoreland setbacks from water; 35 % impervious surface limit; Existing lot or 10 to 12,000 sf; Townhouses: not on lakeshore and 25 % open
Purpose: To promote re-use of old cabin lots			
B-1 Business Campus	Offices, personal services	Extended stay hotels, accessory retail or manufacturing	100 ft wide 1 acre area
B-2 Community Business	Retail or service businesses, offices	Retail, service, office, civic, cultural and entertainment uses, R-C mixed-use, conference centers, convenience stores, brew pubs, day care, motels, long-term care, auto repair, theatres	100 ft wide 20,000 sf area 35 ft tall
B-3 General Business District	Retail or service businesses that draw from the region	Same as B-2 plus breweries, hospitals, auto sales, PUD, manufacturing, shopping centers, transit stations	100 ft wide; 20,000 sf area; 30 ft front setback; > 35 ft tall by permit
I-1 Industrial Park	Manufacturing, warehousing, accessory offices, gyms, auto repair or sales	Animal hospitals, distribution centers, hospitals, offices, PUD, accessory retail	150 ft wide; 40,000 sf area; 50 % building coverage; 40 ft front setback. Screening requirements.
I-2 General Industrial	Same as I-1 plus processing raw materials; industries needing isolation	Same as I-1 plus radio antennas, shooting range, incineration	100 ft wide; 40,000 sf area; 50 % building coverage; 40 ft front setback. Screening requirements.
I-3 Isolated Industrial	Same as I-3; industries needing strict isolation or special protection	Same as I-2 plus satellite dishes, oil storage, outdoor storage, freight terminals, trash disposal	Same as I-2. Screening requirements.
Downtown Design Overlay	Adopts the 2008 design manual. Coordinates themes for site design, architecture, parking, pedestrian and bicycle access, environment, and utilities for all properties in the City within the DD, Downtown Design Overlay District. Approximate boundaries: Lake to County Road 43 and Eagle Lake Road to Pleasant Avenue. Includes voluntary guidelines and mandatory standards. Includes an easterly transition zone where standards are merely guidelines.		
Shoreland Overlay	Requires larger lots and protects environmental and scenic values within 300 feet of Elk River and 1,000 feet of eight lakes.		
Floodplain Overlay	Requires larger lots and reduced coverage. Restricts land uses. Requires flood-proofing or elevation. Based on state model.		
Mississippi River	Regulates lot size and setbacks. Protect environmental and scenic values along Mississippi River. State requirement.		

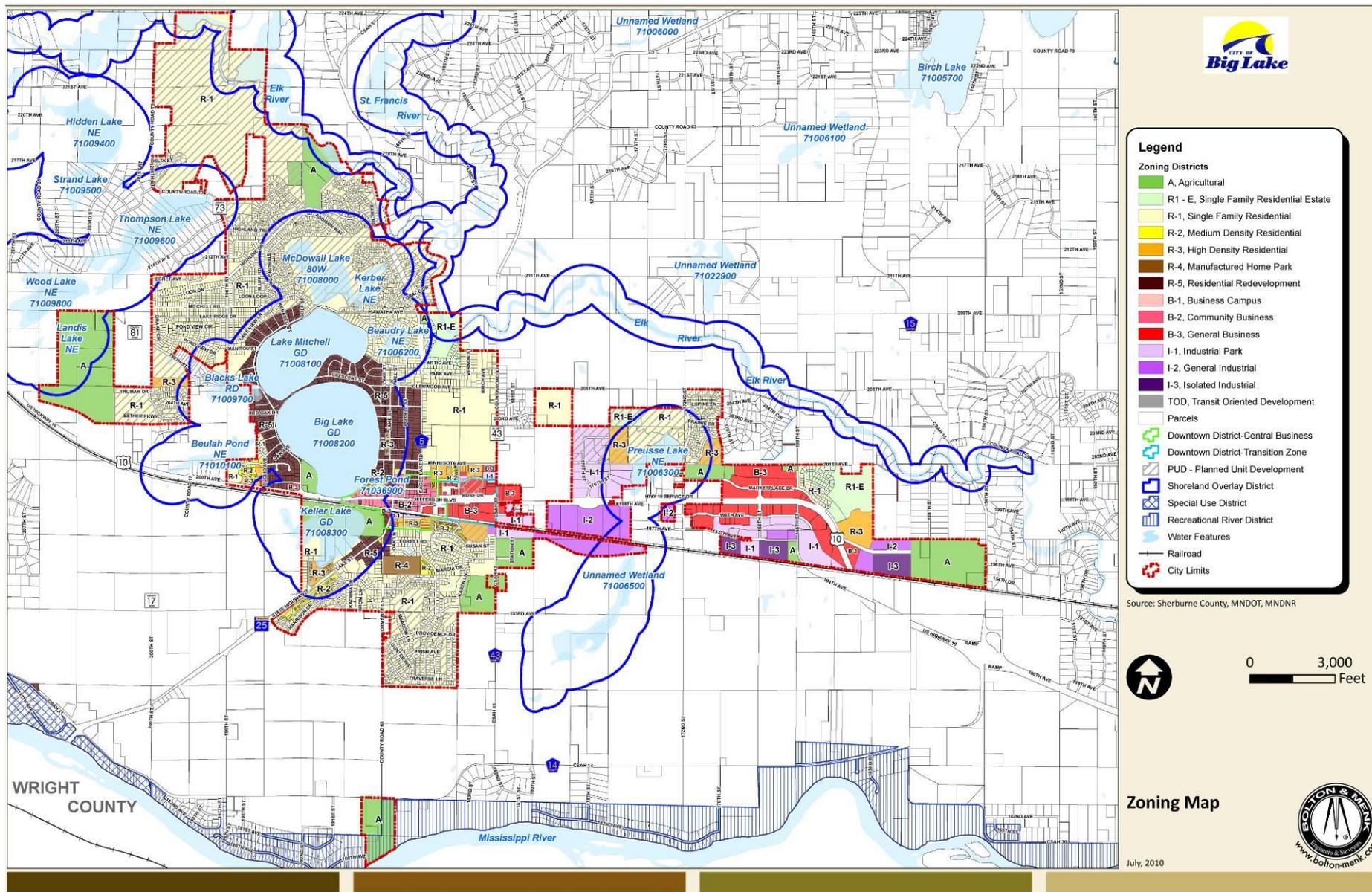


Figure 4-5: Big Lake Zoning Map, 2016

Plan for the Vicinity of the Northstar Station

Prior to the opening of the Northstar commuter rail service and Big Lake station in 2009, the City prepared and adopted guidance for land development and urban design near the station. Included were a design guidelines manual, an illustrative development map (Figure 4- 5) and a zoning ordinance.

Generally, the plan calls for an intensive, mixed and walkable pattern of development aimed at supporting train ridership and taking advantage of the improved regional access. Three zones near the station, each about ¼ mile wide, were conceived. Closest to the station were to be offices and retail or service businesses catering to the transit riders. Next would be large apartment buildings, mixed commercial and residential buildings, and restaurants. The third zone would allow B-1 Business Campus zoning district uses, which were mainly offices and manufacturing.

The Zoning ordinance for the transit area also prescribed maximum parking ratios, maximum building setbacks, minimum lot coverage, minimum building heights, and standards for streetscape, building facades and signs.



Figure 4-6: Transit Area Master Plan Graphic

Distribution Center Proposal

In 2016, a developer began discussions to build a large “distribution center” in Big Lake Township along the County Highway 17 corridor. This facility would include multiple buildings and would be served by rail and truck. In 2017, the Highway 25 Coalition and Sherburne County began a study of how to improve highway access to the site, including a new Mississippi River bridge. Sherburne County has the area planned as Industrial but zoned as Agriculture.

Orderly Annexation Agreements

The City has or is in the process of annexing three locations from the Township under the Orderly Annexation procedures prescribed by state law:

- The vicinity of Remmele Manufacturing on the south side of Highway 10
- The Industrial Park on the north side of Highway 10
- Properties at Highways 25 and 14 near the Mississippi River bridge.

The Remmele annexation began in 1992, with additional tracts being added as property owners have petitioned for City utilities. This agreement called for the City and the Township to share costs and local property tax revenues equally.

The Industrial Park agreement, signed in 1996, provided for joint approval of utility extensions, land sales, road construction, zoning and development applications along with equal sharing of property taxes, infrastructure construction costs and land sale revenue. The City owns and maintains the public utilities and maintains them at its cost.

The Highway 14 agreement from 2007 allowed annexation to occur when petitioned by the property owner(s). The Township would continue to receive all property tax revenue until one year after City sanitary sewer service is provided, then taxes would revert to the City in four annual steps. The City will control the zoning upon annexation.

Site Appearance Standards

General Landscaping

The City’s zoning ordinance requires a landscaping plan with every commercial, industrial or multiple-family residential development application. The ordinance prescribes reasonable and typical quantities and sizes of plants. Also, a visual screen consisting of a planted buffer or a fence and berm is required between any non-residential land use and an abutting residential development.

Business Parks Standards

The I-1, Industrial Park, I-2, General Industry, and I-3, Isolated Industry, zoning districts each have requirements for site development above and beyond the normal landscaping and screening. These include:

- Screening of service facilities and outdoor storage
- Underground utilities
- Paved driveways, parking and loading areas
- Controlled lighting
- Screened mechanical equipment
- Pedestrian walkways.

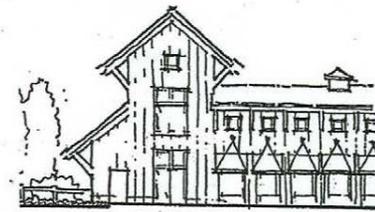
Downtown

In 2005 and 2008, the City adopted design guidelines and applied them in the Downtown Design Overlay zoning district. The boundaries of that district are Lake to County Road 43 and Eagle Lake Road to Pleasant Avenue. The district includes an easterly transition zone where standards are merely guidelines. These statements are voluntary guidelines as well as mandatory standards.

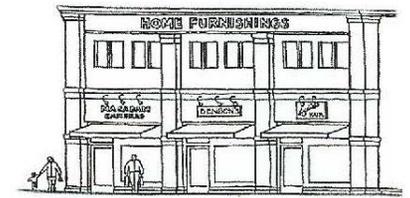
The document and related zoning ordinance call for:

- Vertical mixture of businesses and housing
- Retail, restaurant or entertainment businesses
- No auto-oriented development such as drive-through service windows
- Use of “Main Street” or “Prairie Style” architecture
- Compatibility with neighboring buildings
- Buildings located close to the front sidewalk

- Façade variations
- Widows and doors facing the street
- The appearance of narrow buildings
- Brick and glass exterior materials
- Rear or alley entrances
- Parking behind or along side the building
- Landscaped parking areas
- Small public or private plazas or green spaces
- Public and private walkways.



Prairie Style: roofs are hipped, low and spreading with deep overhangs and eaves.



Traditional Main Street style building: flat roofs, often an extended or false parapet on “front” side.

Figure 4-6: Downtown Architectural Styles



Figure 4-7: Downtown Design Overlay District

Acreage Needed to Accommodate Growth

Estimated Number of Housing Units and Population

The number of households in Big Lake has been forecast in ten-year increments from 2000 to 2040, as shown in Table 4-3. Please refer to the Demographic Assessment chapter for a forecast of population and households growth in Big Lake to year 2040.

**Table 4-3
Forecast Number of Households and Persons per Household to 2040**

Year	Big Lake Population	Persons	Big Lake Households	Change
		per H'hold		per Decade
1970	1,215	3.92	310	
1980	2,210	2.86	774	464
1990	3,113	2.46	1,264	490
2000	6,063	2.86	2,117	853
2010	10,060	2.98	3,377	1,260
2015	10,285	2.81	3,660	
2020	11,311	2.80	4,040	663
2030	12,281	2.80	4,386	346
2040	13,131	2.75	4,775	389

Source: US Census; Weber Community Planning.

Housing Acreage Needed

It is estimated that approximately 383 acres of land will be needed to accommodate forecast growth in housing from 2015 to 2040, including land for streets, parks and other normal, associated development. This is based on the forecast of additional households and housing units from the Demographic Assessment.

Total Acreage Needed

Assuming that housing will comprise 65 percent of the total land needs, a typical figure, then another 206 acres may be needed for commercial and industrial needs. This is, obviously, a rough estimate not based on a market study. Thus, the total residential plus commercial-industrial land demand is estimated at approximately 589 acres. See Table 4-2, below.

Surplus or Deficit within the City

At the end of 2016, there were 1,184 acres of land zoned for residential, commercial, industrial or agricultural use but not yet developed. This total is minus wetlands and floodplains. The locations of the undeveloped land are illustrated by Figure 4-4.

Comparing that figure to the estimated total need between 2015 and 2040 (589 acres) yields a surplus of 595 acres inside the 2016 City borders.

Considering only housing needs, there is an estimated surplus of 473 acres, as shown in Table 4-2.

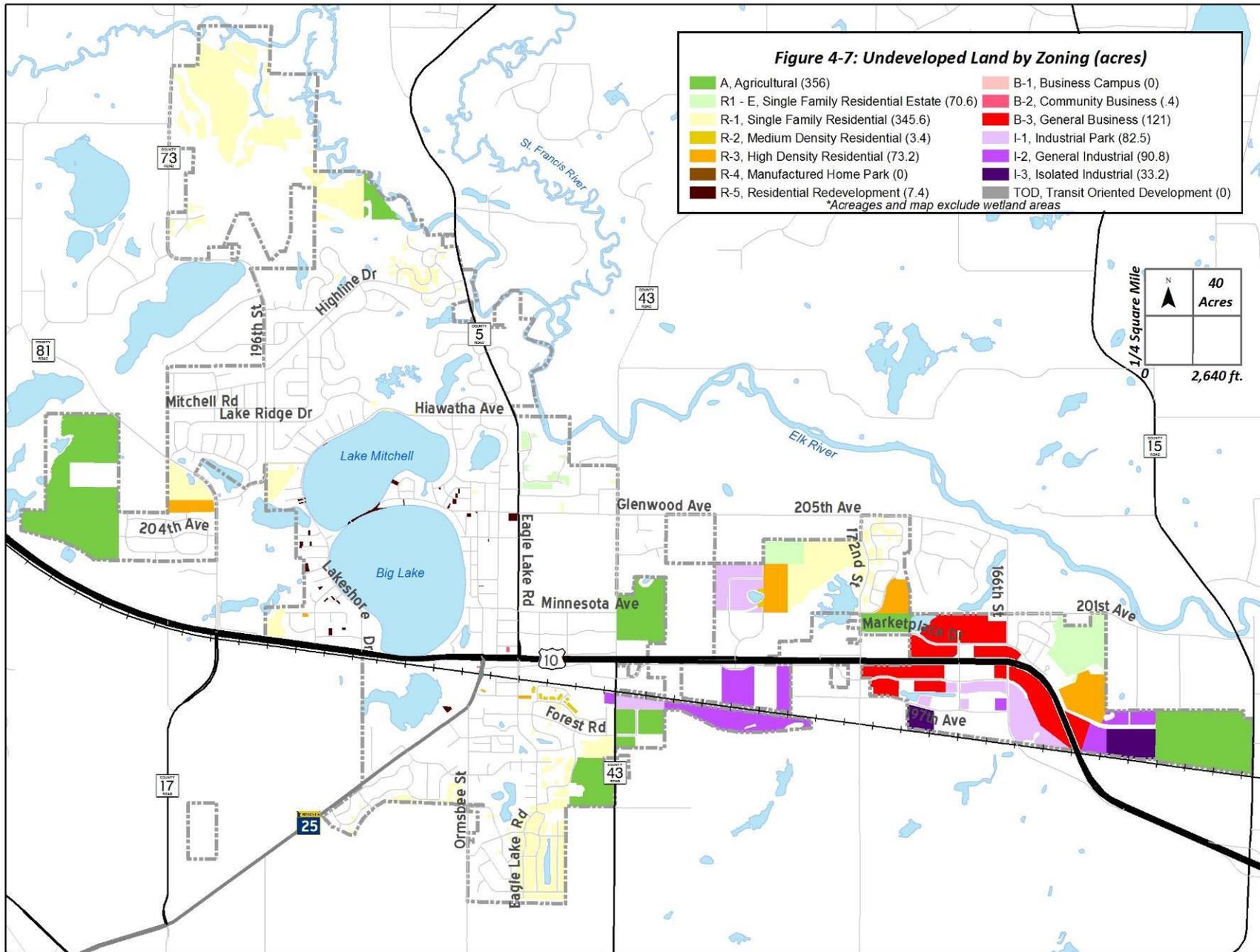
Figure 4-7 and Table 4-3 present the distribution of undeveloped land by zoning district. Note that undeveloped land zoned Agricultural was assumed to be available for rezoning and development as housing.

Please refer to the second page down for an explanation of why petitions for land annexation may still occur.

**Table 4-2
Additional Gross Acreage Needed to Accommodate Growth, 2015 to 2040**

Additional households	1,115
Additional housing units	1,148
Average units per gross acre	3.0
Additional acres needed	
Residential (65 % of total)	383
Other (35 % of total)	206
Total R, C, I or Ag	589
Undeveloped in City - zoned R, C, I or Ag	1,184
Undeveloped in City - zoned R or Ag	856
Net annexation acreage needed - total	(595)
Net annexation acreage needed in R and Ag zones	(473)

Using numbers from the Table 4-3, "Undeveloped Land by Zoning"



**Table 4-3
Undeveloped Land outside of Wetlands or Floodplains, 2016**

<u>Zone</u>	<u>Acres</u>
A	356
B2	0
B3	121
I1	83
I2	91
I3	33
R1	346
R1E	71
R2	3
R3	73
R5	7
	1,184

Platted but Undeveloped Residential Lots

In early 2017, there were approximately 240 platted but undeveloped parcels zoned for housing, including lots designated for single-family detached houses and attached townhouses. Approximately 20 more lots are being platted annually in the Norland Park neighborhood.

On the other hand, approximately 160 lots are expected to be built upon during 2017-18.

So, by 2019, the supply of lots should be down to approximately 100, which is equal to about 1.5 years of demand in Big Lake. That would be approaching an appropriate inventory. Thus, the over-supply of lot created during the recession will have been brought nearly into equilibrium with the demand.

Land Needed for Other Uses

It is estimated that approximately 206 acres of land will be needed to accommodate commercial, industrial and public land needs between 2015 and 2040, using the assumptions shown above. Those three categories comprise the “Other” in Table 4-2, above.

There are 328 undeveloped acres zoned as commercial or industrial that could accommodate those types of development. This leaves a surplus of 122 acres of undeveloped land zoned in the “Other” districts for the 2015 to 2040 time period.

Annexation May Still Be Desired

Note that even though there is an apparent surplus of developable land within the 2017 City borders out to year 2040, this does not mean that there will not be a market demand for other land to be annexed to the City. There are attractive residential locations just outside of the city where owners might petition the City for annexation. And, some of the undeveloped locations within the current City limits are fairly remote, such as east of the Hudson Woods neighborhood or north of Sweetwater Bend neighborhood.

It is important to have enough land zoned and serviced for development so that land prices are not artificially inflated.

State Laws Relevant to Growth Management

Annexation

Land cannot usually be annexed to a city from a township unilaterally, it usually requires cooperative action. There are a few very limited instances when a city can act on its own, known as annexation by ordinance.

Minnesota annexation laws are summarized at more length in Appendix B.

Three basic conditions must exist for annexation to occur:

- The land must adjoin the corporate limits of the annexing city.
- The Municipal Boundary Adjustment Unit may approve an annexation if it finds city governance of the area is necessary to protect the public health, safety, and welfare; if annexation is found to be in the best interests of the city and the territory to be annexed; or, if land is, or is about to become, suburban or urban in character. This generally refers to land in close proximity to the city, of limited size, suburban in character, and with a community of interest so it will adapt to city government.
- The land may not already be part of another city.

There are two major ways that annexation typically occurs:

Annexation by Ordinance

Cities may annex by ordinance when any of the following conditions exist:

- The city owns the land to be annexed.
- The land is completely surrounded by land already within city limits.
- The land abuts the city and the area to be annexed is 120 acres or less, not presently served or capable of being served by available public wastewater facilities, and all the landowners petition the city for annexation.
- The land is within two miles of the city and has been approved for platting after Aug. 1, 1995, and the platted lots average 21,780 square feet or less.

Orderly Annexation

A city and a township may agree to allow annexation of a specified area according to terms to which they agree, including timing or other conditions.

Intergovernmental Joint Powers

Cities, townships and counties may enter into a wide variety of agreements for the sharing of facilities or services.

Likewise, they may enter into agreements to shoreland use planning or zoning.

A city may not extend its zoning regulations beyond its borders if the surrounding county has adopted zoning regulations. (Sherburne County administers zoning throughout Big Lake Township.)

However, a city may extend its subdivision regulations beyond its borders if the adjoining township has not adopted such regulations. (Sherburne County administers subdivision regulations throughout Big Lake Township.)

When subdivision or zoning regulations are extended into unincorporated land outside the city boundary, any affected city council, county board, or town board may petition the county auditor to establish a joint planning board.

Please refer to Appendix C for a further description of this topic.

Public Facilities and Growth Management

The availability of public services and facilities is an important factor in encouraging and guiding land development. Described below are several public or private facilities or services that may or may not be available to residents and businesses in both the city and the adjacent townships.

The City's ability to attract new residential, commercial or industrial development is diminished to the extent that these services are available at an equal cost to locations in the townships. However, two important services, water supply and wastewater disposal, are only available to properties in the city.

School District

The Big Lake School District operates a high school, middle school and two elementary schools. Its service area includes the city, Big Lake Township and part of Orrock Township, located to the north.

Public Utilities

Public sewer and water services are only available to properties in the City of Big Lake.

Fire and Rescue Protection

The Fire Department is owned jointly by the city and the township.

Ambulance Service

Emergency medical and ambulance services are provided across the vicinity by CentraCare Health Emergency Medical Services.

Police Protection

The City of Big Lake Police Department normally only works only within the city but assists in other jurisdictions if needed. The Sherburne County Sheriff provides law enforcement in the Township.

Economic Development

The Big Lake Economic Development Authority is composed of representatives from both the city and the township and advances the interest of both communities.

Library

The Great River Regional Library has 31 locations in Sherburne, Wright, Stearns and Benton Counties.

Recreation

Parks in the city are open to anyone.