

A photograph of a water tower and a corn sculpture. The water tower is white with a green base and has 'Olivia' and 'The Corn Capital' written on it. To the right is a large sculpture of a corn cob. The background is a blue sky with clouds and green trees.

# City of Olivia Comprehensive Plan

A Twenty-Year Vision for Community Progress and Success

DRAFT PLAN FOR PUBLIC REVIEW  
December 22, 2023



# Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the support and guidance of the following individuals and organizations:

## Project Steering Committee (PSC)

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- » Ben Aaseth
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- » Mayor Jon Hawkinson
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- » Blanca Ferguson, Council Member
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## Olivia Staff

- » Marissa Castillo, Planning and Zoning Administrator
- » Susie Lang, EDA Director and Main Street Coordinator
- » Elizabeth Torkelson, City Administrator

## Olivia Residents

We are especially grateful to the hundreds of residents who shared their experiences and guidance during the public outreach and engagement process for this plan.

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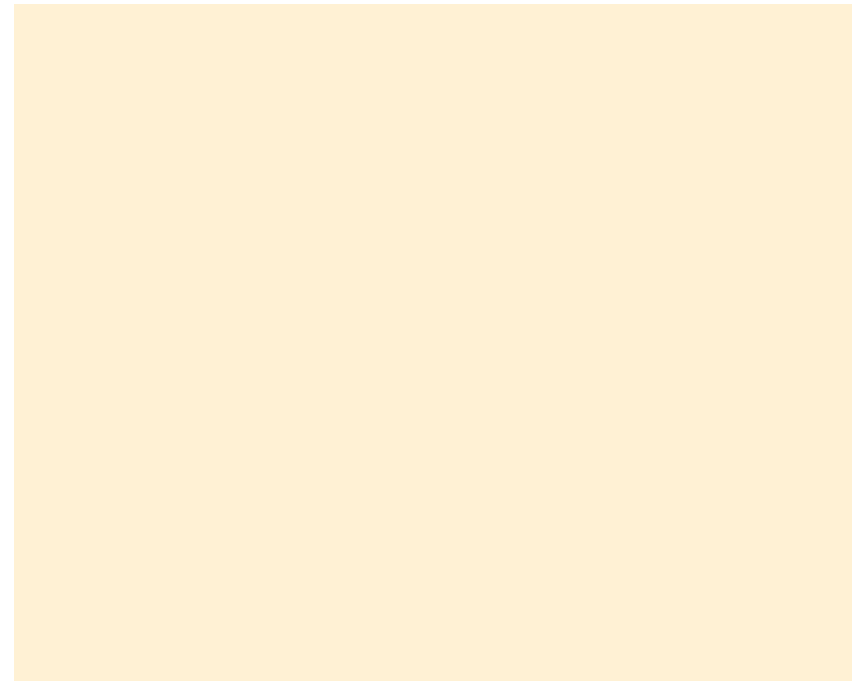
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# Executive Summary

A comprehensive plan is a roadmap for a community's future: where it wants to go, and how it aims to get there.

This plan is based on the ideas and aspirations of the Olivia community: residents, community leaders, elected officials, and agency partners.



# Overview

## What is this plan about?

Olivia's new Comprehensive Plan is a roadmap for the city's future. It describes the kind of community Olivia residents and leaders have told us that they want Olivia to be and provides recommendations and guidance on how to make that vision a reality.

## How was the plan developed?

The plan was shaped by the comments, ideas, and vision of the Olivia community, including residents, community leaders, elected officials, City staff, and agency partners. A Project Steering Committee (PSC) made up of community members and City staff was involved through the plan's entire process to ensure that it addressed community needs and aspirations.

## What's the plan's vision for Olivia's future?

The plan's envisions Olivia as a prosperous and thriving community:

*Olivia is a prosperous, thriving, inclusive, and welcoming community. With a rich heritage of farming and industry, it offers an attractive Downtown, a variety of housing options, excellent healthcare, numerous restaurants and retail, great schools, a positive business climate, extensive parks and trails, and great people.*

## What does the plan do?

The plan uses community guidance, demographic and market research, and city planning best practices to identify community needs and challenges, establish a set of goals and policies to address those needs, and present recommendations and action steps to achieve the vision.

## What's the plan's legal standing?

According to Minnesota State Statutes [462.353, Subd. 1](#) and [462.357 Subd. 1](#) Minnesota communities have the legal authority to develop and adopt a comprehensive plan and to develop ordinances to implement the plan's recommendations. The statutes enable cities to use planning and zoning to promote community's the "public health, safety, morals, and general welfare."

## How long are the plan's recommendations valid?

The plan's considers conditions, opportunities, and trends for the next twenty years, and makes recommendations to be implemented over that time. To accommodate potential updates or changes, the plan's recommendations and action items should be reviewed (and updated as needed) every two years. To maintain the plan's usefulness and applicability, a full and complete update of the plan should occur within ten years (by 2034 or earlier).





# How The Plan Is Organized

The Comprehensive Plan includes twelve chapters, organized in four parts: 1) introduction, 2) policy chapters, 3) implementation, and 4) appendix.

Each part is described below, and includes the following chapters:

## Part I: Introduction and background

This includes the following chapters:

- » Executive Summary: Brief summary and orientation to the plan
- » Chapter 1: Vision and purpose for the plan, includes a description of broad goals for the plan and a brief history of Olivia
- » Chapter 2: Population profile and trends, including historical trends, current population and employment characteristics, and forecasts
- » Chapter 3: A summary of public participation activities completed for the plan as well as key insights and learnings
- » Chapter 4: Discussion of the asset-based framework used for the plan's development, including strengths Olivia can leverage for its future

## Part II: Policy chapters

These are the key recommendations from the plan, organized by policy area. Chapters are organized consistently to aid access to information.

- » Chapter 5: Land Use identifies issues related to growth and land use (including downtown), analyzes the current land use pattern, identifies opportunities, and recommends a set of development principles, goals, and policies
- » Chapter 6: Housing provides a summary of existing housing characteristics, identifies opportunities, and provides goals and policies for future development relative to need and demand

- » Chapter 7: Transportation discusses the current transportation network, evaluates current and future transportation needs, and identifies opportunities, goals, and policies for a connected network
- » Chapter 8: Economic Development discusses Olivia's current economic indicators, and identifies opportunities, goals, and policies for growing prosperity and improving economic activity
- » Chapter 9: Parks and Recreation summarizes current park facilities, identifies opportunities, and offers a set of goals and policies to guide future improvements to the system
- » Chapter 10: Community Facilities and Utilities summarizes current facilities and utility provisions, evaluates current and future needs, and provides a number of goals and policies for the city's future
- » Chapter 11: Civic Engagement identifies opportunities for growing community participation in the city, including young people and members of the city's diverse communities

## Part III: Implementation

- » Chapter 12: Implementation identifies opportunities for implementing the plan's recommendations, provides a process for updating the plan, and provides a summary and phasing of recommended actions

## Part IV: Appendix

Provides summaries and full transcripts of all of the comments and guidance received from the public:

- » Appendix 1 - Survey 1: All comments received
- » Appendix 2 - Survey 2: Brief summary (all charts)
- » Appendix 3 - Survey 2: Full summary (all charts and comments received)
- » Appendix 4 - Wikimap: All comments received

# How Each Policy Chapter Is Organized

To facilitate quick access to information, and to make the plan more user-friendly, all seven policy chapters of this Comprehensive Plan (including land use, housing, transportation, economic development, parks and recreation, community facilities, and civic engagement chapters) are consistently organized in the same way.

For a given policy chapter (for example, chapter “X”), this organization is as follows:

X.1 - Introduction includes a brief introduction and description of that specific policy area, as well as a future vision for how this policy area is intended to function in the future, derived from the plan’s overall vision. A set of goals related to the vision is also included.

X.2 - Existing Conditions provides detailed maps and data describing current conditions, facilities, trends, and strengths and issues in the city regarding that policy area.

X.3 - What We Heard: Comments Received provides a brief summary and highlights from the comments we received from the public regarding this specific policy area. This includes summary graphs as well as individual comments provided by participants during the plan’s engagement, recorded exactly as participants wrote or spoke them. The entire record of comments received as well as summary charts and maps are provided in the plan’s Appendix.

X.4 - Opportunities outlines a range of options, best practices, and opportunities that may be considered for implementation to help achieve the plan’s vision. Because many of these concepts may be new or innovative, this section provides an opportunity for familiarization with resources and other components of these best practices. Where possible, links to web resources are hyperlinked within the text.

X.5 - Recommendations are the specific recommendations provided by the plan for each specific policy area. They are organized by grouping under specific goals, and in goal in turn presents a number of strategies to achieve them.

## What do the plan’s Goals and Strategies mean?

Each policy chapter in the plan includes a number of goals and policies to achieve its vision.

Goals are the outcomes that Olivia is wishing to achieve. They are the short, medium, and long term aims that the Comprehensive Plan sets out for the City of Olivia to achieve. Each goal is a broad statement that encompasses a desired outcome in general terms.

Strategies are the projects, programs, or policies that will help Olivia to achieve each goal. Each goal in this plan includes a list of potential strategies that should be considered in working to achieve each goal.

To achieve the goals and policies of the plan (and achieve the ideas and future vision of Olivia citizens and leaders), short, medium, and long term actions are identified in the **Implementation Chapter** of the plan. Other opportunities for achieving the plan’s vision include actions and decisions by elected officials, City staff, and developers.



# Sampling of Goals and Recommendations from Each Chapter

Dozens of recommendations and strategies are included in each chapter of this plan. To provide an introduction to the type of recommendations developed throughout this document a brief sample for each chapter is provided here. **Please refer to the last section (X.5) of each chapter to view the full list of goals and strategies.**

## Chapter 5: Land Use

- » Flexible, connected, and efficient land management
- » Strengthen the vitality, attractiveness, and prospects of the city's downtown
- » Facilitate industrial and commercial development to grow employment opportunities

## Chapter 6: Housing

- » Integrated framework for planning and developing housing
- » Encourage development of a variety of housing types
- » Identify priority areas for residential infill and new housing

## Chapter 7: Transportation

- » Develop an integrated and connected multimodal network
- » Proactive maintenance and repaving program for aging roads
- » Improve look and feel of US Hwy 212 through downtown

## Chapter 8: Economic Development

- » Develop a coordinated economic development strategy
- » Retain and grow existing business; grow and attract new businesses and industry
- » Develop a marketing plan

## Chapter 9: Parks and Recreation

- » A well-planned system
- » Provide and maintain parks and indoor / outdoor recreation areas
- » Grow and maintain the City's trail and sidewalk system

## Chapter 10: Community Facilities and Utilities

- » Cost-efficient, financially sustainable utility services
- » Excellent facilities for the City's needs
- » Environmentally sustainable water, sewer, and stormwater management

## Chapter 11: Civic Engagement

- » A proactive, responsive, and accessible city
- » Expand opportunities for civic participation
- » Invite young people to participate

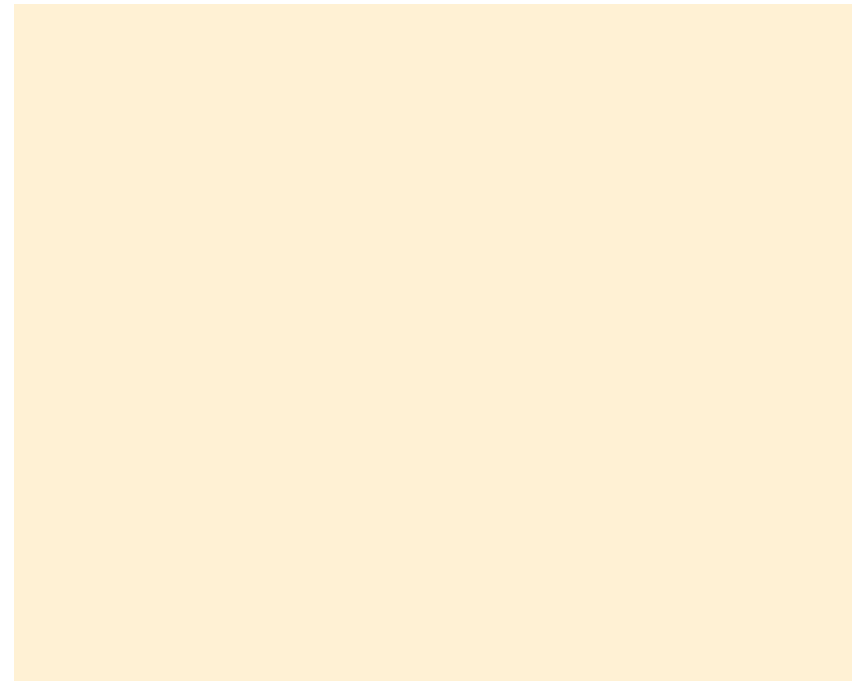




# 1 Vision & Purpose

A comprehensive plan is a roadmap for a community's future: where it wants to go, and how it aims to get there.

This plan is based on the ideas and aspirations of the Olivia community: residents, community leaders, elected officials, and agency partners.



## 1.1 - Purpose

This Comprehensive Plan is a tool and resource to guide the efforts of citizens, elected officials, and staff as they work together, harnessing trends and change, toward realizing a shared vision for Olivia's future.

Change is a constant in the life of cities. A comprehensive plan helps orient a community's priorities and policy decisions to steer toward its citizens and leaders' envisioned destination.

Olivia's Comprehensive Plan provides a comprehensive and integrated set of recommendations to guide the city's evolution.

Recommendations were developed from ideas and comments received from residents throughout its development. The plan outlines specific objectives and policies to improve community vitality, quality of life, and success.

The plan's recommendations provide guidance for priorities, growth, investments, and development over the next twenty years.

The plan is intended to be used and referenced daily as part of the City's business.

Recommendations must be reviewed and updated as needed every two years, and the entire plan must be updated every ten years to ensure that guidance remains relevant to the actual conditions existing at that time and responsive to citizens' desires and vision. An outline for this process and for implementing the plan's recommendations is provided in Chapter 12 - Implementation.





## 1.2 - Future Vision

The plan's vision is a statement describing the future of Olivia after the plan's recommendations are implemented. It was developed from the comments and ideas gathered through the plan's community engagement process, and refined through work with the plan's Project Steering Committee.



### Our Aspirational Vision Statement

Olivia is a prosperous, thriving, inclusive, and welcoming community. With a rich heritage of farming and industry, it offers an attractive Downtown, a variety of housing options, excellent healthcare, numerous restaurants and retail, great schools, a positive business climate, extensive parks and trails, and great people.



## 1.3 - Community Goals

This list of community goals (what Olivia residents wish their community to be, do, or offer) was derived from the comments and ideas gathered through the plan's community engagement process:

### Enjoying a high quality of life

A healthy, safe, and attractive community that welcomes new ideas and opportunities, grows existing families and businesses, and attracts new residents, visitors and opportunity.

### Growing a vibrant Downtown

Downtown is the historical heart of the community. Residents and visitors once again enjoy festivals, shopping, dining and entertainment options in an attractive, welcoming and vital downtown.

### Developing a thriving economy

Existing businesses and industry grow and thrive, while aspiring entrepreneurs find the support to start new businesses. Existing jobs in food processing and health grow alongside new tech, manufacturing, and other start-ups.

### Strong local retail and services

Olivia offers a variety of retail and service options that make daily life convenient for its residents and businesses, and keep dollars in its local economy, building the foundation for continued prosperity.

### Family-friendly neighborhoods

Family-friendly neighborhoods have great access to schools, trails, parks and shopping. Young people and residents have access to fun activities with high quality programs and facilities that enhance their quality of life.

### Development builds prosperity

Land use decisions consider the long-term prospects for building community wealth. Land use decisions facilitate a variety of housing options and attractive development, business-friendly land uses that support economic development, and improve access to the city's amenities and assets.

### Affordable and attractive housing

Numerous attractive and affordable housing options help individuals and families stay in Olivia through the different stages of their lives.

### Transportation and access

Residents have safe and inviting travel options, including walking and biking, to reach daily destinations. Commercial users are served by efficient rail and trucking networks that foster

their connection to markets and success.

Residents are well-connected to opportunities in the state's major cities.

### A welcoming community

People from many cultures and places make Olivia their home. Long-time residents and recent arrivals learn about and celebrate each other's histories and traditions, and are united in their love of the city, its people, and its future.



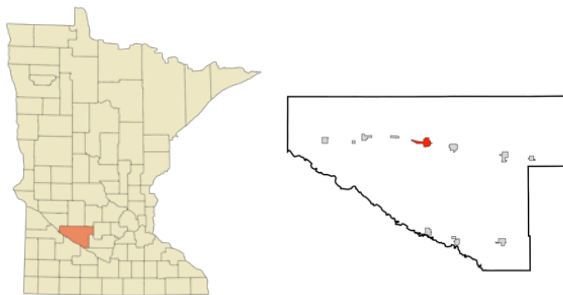
## 1.4 - Geographic Area

Olivia is the County Seat of Renville County, Minnesota, and is located about 100 miles (about two hours) west of the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. Its land area is 2.34 square miles.

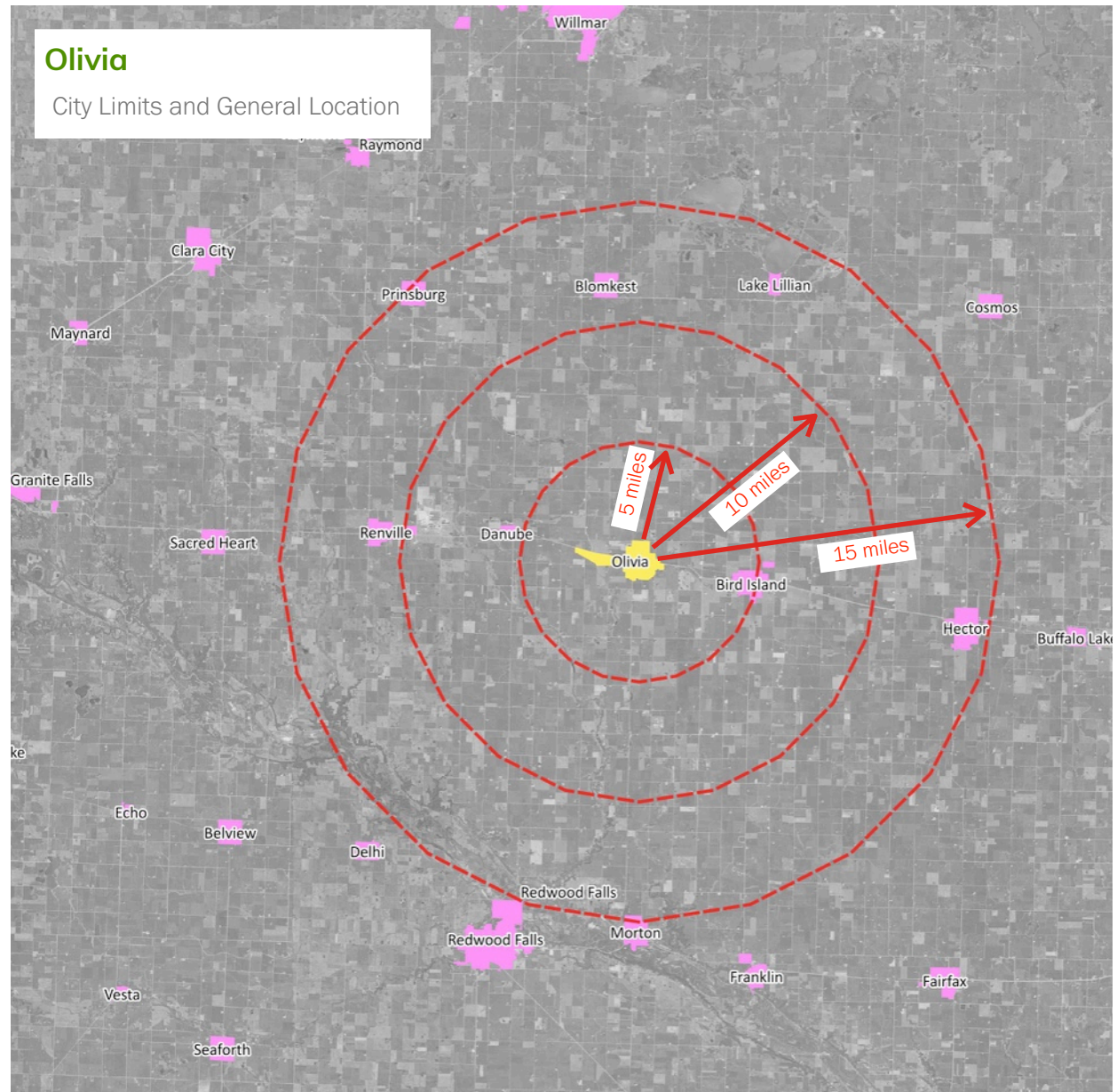
The city is 30 miles south of Willmar, 45 miles west of Glencoe, 40 miles southwest of Hutchinson, and 30 miles east of Granite Falls.

Several small communities are located in close proximity, including Bird Island (5 miles east) and Danube (5 miles west), with Hector and Renville located 10 miles east and west, respectively. In all directions, the municipal boundary is surrounded by agricultural land.

Located along US Highway 212, Olivia is also intersected by US Highway 71. Twin Cities and Western Railroad (TCWR) offers commercial rail service to points east and west.



View of Renville County's location within the state, and of the City's location within the County (in red).



Location of Olivia within Renville County and surrounding communities.

## 1.5 - Community History

Olivia has experienced many changes throughout its history. Understanding its trajectory can help to more clearly see its assets and opportunities for the future.

### Beginnings

What is now Olivia was first inhabited by indigenous Native American peoples for at least two thousand years. At the time of European arrival, it was inhabited by the Dakota Sioux.

In 1865, as the Civil War ended, veterans traveled west for lands available through the Homestead Act. The country's railroad network facilitated that movement.

Originally platted on railroad property adjoining a stop, Olivia was later named in honor of Mrs. Margaret Olivia Sage, wife of an official of the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad.

### Growth

In 1880, Olivia was a small prairie settlement with about fifty residents and a flower bed in the middle of the busiest intersection. Officially incorporated in 1881, it grew to almost one thousand people by 1900.

The railroad and Olivia's role as the County Seat (finally settled in 1901 after fifteen years of controversy) spurred the community's continued growth and development.

Settling into its role as a rural regional retail and service center serving nearby cities and numerous family farms, the presence of governmental agencies, hospitals, and social services played a major role in the city's economic, community, commercial and industrial development.

Olivia's traditional downtown continued to develop between the railroad station at 9th St down to Depue Ave, between 8th St and 10th St, straddling what is now US Highway 212.

### Changes and Challenges

Over time, larger trends diminished Olivia's role in the overall region, while some planning and policy decisions hindered the role and function of its downtown.

The displacement of family farms by large-scale commercial farming beginning in the 1960s, and out-migration of younger people for study and opportunities in other cities gradually decreased the city's importance and role as a regional trade center. According to the US Census, the city has lost population continually since 1980 (decreasing from about 2,800



*At the city's train station in 1910.*



*Corn Capitol Days Parade in 1949. Image courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society (MHS).*



residents to about 2,350 residents in 2020 - a population decrease of 16% in about 40 years).

In that same time period, Olivia, like most other cities in the US, began to follow a lower-density development pattern that shifted commercial development away from its center.

For the downtown itself, larger retail trends favoring corporate retail chains and more recently, online shopping, have provided a difficult economic climate. In addition, other changes in access and transportation have degraded downtown's vibrancy and appeal.

One of the main changes was the completion and later expansion of US Highway 71, which bypassed downtown and facilitated development west of the city's established center. In addition, the decline of railroads and the growth of trucking and automobile travel led to significant increases in pass-through traffic along US Highway 212 / Lincoln Ave - which made stopping, walking, and shopping along this portion of downtown less appealing. In 2017 trees which had previously been part of downtown's streetscape along Lincoln Ave were removed, further degrading its image.

## Opportunity

Although the challenges faced by Olivia are real, the city continues to offer many assets that can lead to better outcomes for its future. For example, the city's numerous parks, its strong educational system, its role and designation as the seed and agriculture center for the upper Midwest (and the agriculture-related employers and businesses who continue to call Olivia home), as well as its continuing role as County Seat and regional medical center offer a good set of assets that can be used to stabilize and potentially grow its prospects.

In addition, other larger trends, conditions, and investments outside of the city can also be beneficial. For example, the rise of remote work coupled with improvements to Highway 212 east of Glencoe may lead to growth in younger families from the metro area being attracted by quality schools, relatively low cost of real estate, and convenient connection to the metro for occasional work meetings or leisure travel.

Additionally, the city's diversified economy (including healthcare, manufacturing, agricultural, and utilities), entrepreneurial spirit and diverse population can help position it as a community with potential for a bright future.



*Storefront and streetscape at Master's Coffee Shop (now closed) along Lincoln Avenue in 2014.*



*Location of Olivia's historical downtown in relation to Highway 71 and Highway 212.*

## 1.6 - Current and Previous Planning Documents

A thorough review of current and previous city and county planning documents was completed as part of the preparation of this plan. Taken together, these documents provide a foundation for understanding current conditions and potential strategies for Olivia and the surrounding area.

### 2015 Comprehensive Plan

Olivia's most recent Comprehensive Plan was updated and adopted in 2015. Since the latest update, the City has experienced several changes in its residential, commercial and industrial sectors.

The 2015 plan found a trend of declining population and presented several recommendations addressing the following policy areas and topics:

- » Land use
- » Housing
- » Transportation
- » Parks and recreation
- » Public services
- » Economic development

Those recommendations have been reviewed for applicability, and where useful have been included in the recommendations that are part of this new plan.

### Active Living Transportation Plan

The 2017 Active Living Transportation Plan is a guide for improving transportation facilities and land use patterns to address safety and support walking and biking in Olivia.

The plan, developed by Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC), Kandiyohi & Renville County SHIP, and the City of Olivia, identifies infrastructure, policies, and programs for safe, efficient, and effective transportation options for city residents.

Importantly, the plan includes several recommendations directly applicable to the land use and transportation policies included in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

These recommendations are integrated into the recommendations included in this new Comprehensive Plan.

**The Active Living Transportation Plan is hereby adopted by reference as a section of the Comprehensive Plan.**

### Renville Co. Comprehensive Plan

Renville County's current Land Use Plan was adopted in 2002 and revised in 2010. The plan guides decisions made by the County Board, County Planning Commission, and County Officials. The Renville County Comprehensive Plan provides a planning framework for the cities within it.

According to Minnesota Statute 462.3535, a city's plan must be consistent with its county's comprehensive plan. According to Minnesota Statute 394.232, following a county's review and approval of a city's plan, it becomes part of the county's comprehensive plan.

The City of Olivia Comprehensive Plan has been reviewed for consistency and agreement with goals and stipulations of the Renville County Comprehensive Plan, and has been shared with the County for their consideration.

## Renville County Housing Study

In 2020, Maxfield Research and Consulting completed a [Comprehensive Housing Needs Analysis for Renville County](#).

The study analyzes housing conditions and needs for the entire county by dividing the county into four submarkets, with the “Olivia Submarket” area centered on the city.

The study projects housing demand from 2020 through 2030 and provides recommendations for the number and type of housing units that should be built to satisfy demand from current and future residents over the next decade.

The study identifies a potential county-wide demand for about 1,400 new housing units through 2030. About 600 of those units are projected to be needed in the Olivia Submarket area. The types and number of units recommended for this area are:

- » For sale units: 142
- » Rental: 98
- » Senior: 366

Recommendations from the study are discussed in more detail and incorporated as part of the Housing Chapter of this Comprehensive Plan.

## Safe Routes to School Plan

In 2015, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) worked with the Bird Island-Olivia-Lake Lillian (BOLD) school district to prepare a Safe Routes to School Plan outlining specific investments that improve safety for children who walk or bike to school, increase the number of children and families that do walk or bike, and reduce individual car trips for school drop off and pickup.

The plan identifies specific infrastructure improvements (including trails and intersection improvements) as well as programming initiatives like educational programs, events and promotions, collaboration with traffic safety enforcement, and evaluation of effectiveness.

Recommendations from this plan are discussed in the Transportation Chapter of this Comprehensive Plan.

**The Safe Routes to School Plan is hereby adopted by reference as a section of the Comprehensive Plan.**

## Complete Streets Policy

In 2015, the Olivia City Council adopted a Complete Streets policy that commits the City to include walking and biking as important considerations when planning, designing, operating or maintaining transportation investments.

The policy commits Olivia to develop a Complete Streets network to address pedestrian and bicycle mobility, and to consider the land use and transportation contexts of potential investments.

The policy names a variety of investments that can be implemented as part of its recommendations, including street and sidewalk lighting; medians and crosswalk improvements; ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) improvements; improved pedestrian access to the school and downtown business district; bicycle accommodations and trails; and street trees and boulevard landscaping, among others.

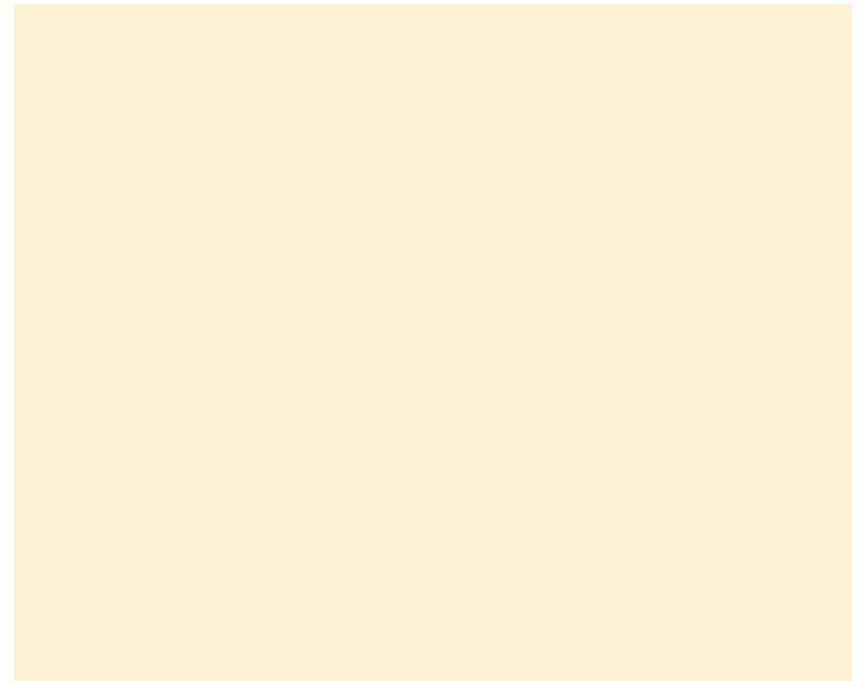
Recommendations from the Complete Streets Policy are discussed in the Transportation Chapter of this Comprehensive Plan.

**The Complete Streets Policy is hereby adopted by reference as a section of the Comprehensive Plan.**



# 2 People & Trends

Population characteristics and trends can help identify Olivia's future needs and provide a foundation for recommendations affecting land use, housing, transportation, and parks and public facilities, among others.



## 2.1 - Summary and Insights

Analysis of Olivia's population characteristics and trends provides a foundation for understanding the city's trajectory and to develop realistic and reasonable growth projections informing the plan's recommendations.

Data used is the latest available at the time this plan was drafted, including:

- » 2020 Decennial Census counts
- » 2021 ACS Estimates, reflecting a five-year (2017-2021) estimated average for population characteristics as developed by the US Census Bureau
- » 2020 US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES) data

Additional population characteristics and information are provided in **Chapter 6 Housing** and **Chapter 8 Economic Development**.

### Key Insights

- » Olivia's population is decreasing: The city's population has shown continued decline for about forty years. Deciding whether to pursue an intentional de-growth strategy or fully committing to reversing this decline will be key choices affecting the city's future viability and quality of life for its residents.
- » Olivia is an employment generator: About three quarters (71%) of all jobs in Olivia are held by people who live outside it. Almost 1,000 people commute into the city for work. What could Olivia do to invite them to move into town instead?
- » Olivia is remarkably diverse: about one out of every eight residents (13%) is Hispanic / Latino. This population is relatively new to the city, beginning its growth in the 1990s.
- » Child poverty is somewhat higher than the rate for the County and Minnesota overall
- » Educational attainment is lower than for the County and Minnesota overall
  - The percent of adults 25 and older with a bachelors degree or higher is 18%, about one half of the rate for Minnesota overall

### What These Insights Mean

Given the local and regional trends discussed in this chapter, Olivia's population is anticipated to continue decreasing over the next thirty years.

Projections are not the same as destiny, however. A strategy for Olivia's future success begins from a recognition of its current assets and strengths, and on a broad reading of wider trends and incipient opportunities that should be leveraged for improvement.

Olivia has a strong foundation for offering a high quality of life to residents: affordable cost of living, attractive neighborhoods, access to quality schools, employment opportunities, proximity to other cities. Wider trends of broadband connectivity and "work from anywhere" options can help make it attractive to people from its immediate region and beyond.

**Working to improve quality of life will help retain existing residents and attract new ones. Focusing on this approach may help address population trends.**

## 2.2 - Historical Population Trends

Olivia's 2020 Decennial Census population of 2,343 persons is a decrease of 459 people (or 16%) from its peak 1980 population. The city's population has shown continued decline for the last forty years.

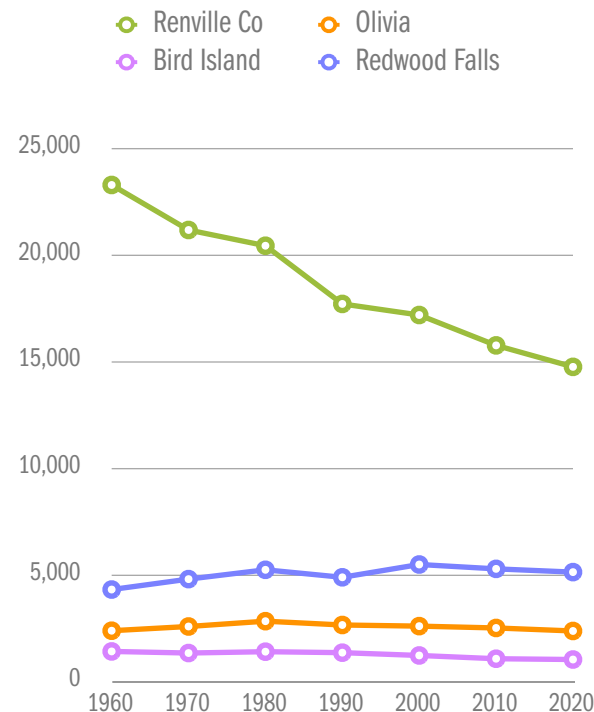
Olivia experienced rapid population growth in the decades of 1960 to 1980. From 1980 onward, however, the city's population began a period of decline. A relatively rapid decline of 6% occurred in the decade of 1980 to 1990, with a slower decline during the decades of 1990 to 2000 and 2000 to 2010. Most recently, the decade of 2010 to 2020 once again included a relatively rapid decline of 6%.

Year	Olivia		Renville Co.	
	Pop.	% change	Pop.	% change
1960	2,355	-	23,249	-
1970	2,553	8%	21,139	-9%
1980	2,802	10%	20,401	-3%
1990	2,623	-6%	17,673	-13%
2000	2,570	-2%	17,154	-3%
2010	2,484	-3%	15,730	-8%
2020	2,343	-6%	14,723	-6%

*US Census: Decennial Census*

Renville County's overall population has been in decline since the 1940s, and has generally shown a faster rate of decline, except for the most recent decade, where Olivia and the county had a similar rate of decline of 6%. Other communities in the county, including Bird Island, show similar trends. Nearby Redwood Falls, in Redwood County, also shows continued population decline.

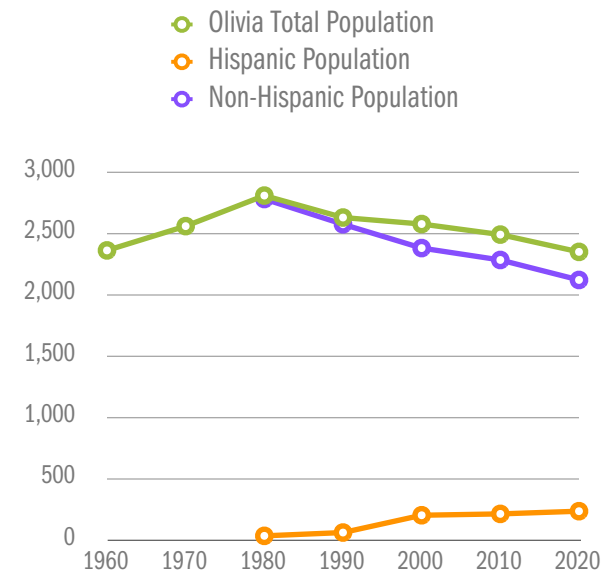
### City and County Population Trends



### Hispanic Origin

An important component of Olivia's population dynamics is related to the city's growing number of Hispanic / Latino residents. Approximately 13% of the city's population (one in eight residents) is Hispanic / Latino, growing from about 55 persons in 1990 to about 230 today.

According to Decennial Census data, if it were not for the growth of the Hispanic / Latino population, Olivia's total population would be significantly smaller today (about 2,100 people, see the purple line in the chart below):





## 2.3 - Current Population Counts and Characteristics

Please note that the data in this section is from 2021 US Census ACS Estimates (not Census Decennial counts), reflecting a five-year (2017-2021) estimated average for population characteristics. In some cases the numbers shown include a significant margin of error.

### Population and Households

2021 Population Estimates	Olivia	
	Count	%
Total population (2021 ACS)	2,408	100%
Children (all persons under 18)	565	23%
School age children, teenagers and young adults (ages 5 to 24)	690	29%
Senior adults (persons over 65)	525	22%
Households	984	100%
Family households	542	55%
Non-family households	442	45%
<i>Data source: US Census ACS 2021 5-year estimates</i>		

### Ethnicity

Olivia has a diverse population, with about one in eight residents identifying as Hispanic / Latino. The majority of the city's residents (84%) are White, with a small percentage (less than 1%) of Native American or Black / African American residents, and about 2% identifying as some other ethnicity.

2021 Population Estimates	Olivia	
	Count	%
Total population	2,408	100%
White	2,023	84%
Black or African American	3	0%
Native American	9	0%
Asian	10	0%
Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	0	0%
Other race or two or more races	47	2%
Hispanic / Latino of any race	316	13%
<i>Data source: US Census ACS 2021 5-year estimates</i>		

### Income

Incomes in Olivia are generally lower than those for Renville County and Minnesota overall:

- » Individual income in Olivia (\$29,480) is about three-quarters of the amount for Minnesota overall (\$41,204)
- » Median household income in Olivia (\$56,141) is about 90% of the amount in Renville County overall, and about three-quarters of the amount for Minnesota overall (\$77,706)
- » Poverty in the city is about the same (10%) as the county overall
- » The percent of children living in poverty (14%) is slightly higher than for Renville County (12%) and Minnesota overall (11%)

Economics	Olivia	Renville County
Individual (per capita) income	\$29,480	\$31,831
Median household income	\$56,141	\$61,233
Persons living in poverty	10%	10%
Children in poverty	14%	12%
<i>Data source: US Census ACS 2021 5-year estimates</i>		

## Employment

Employment	Olivia
Population 18 to 64 years old	1,318
Civilian labor force	1,047
Employed	979
Unemployed	68
Unemployment rate	6%
<i>Data source: US Census ACS 2021 5-year estimates</i>	

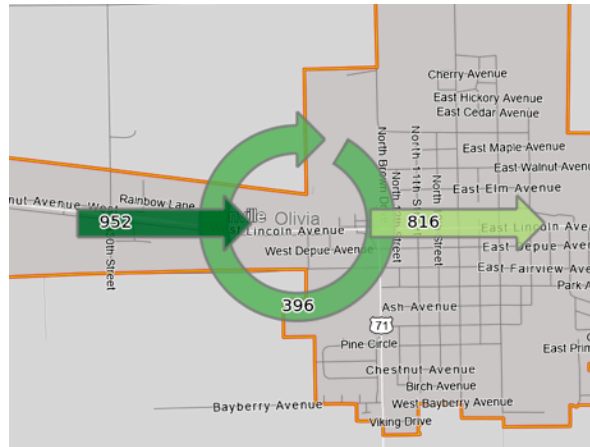
## Educational Attainment

For people 25 years and older:

- » About 87% have a high school diploma or higher (compared to 91% for Renville County and 94% for Minnesota overall)
- » About 18% have a bachelor's degree or higher (compared to 16% for Renville County and 38% for Minnesota overall)

## Worker Commute Patterns

## Worker Inflow and Outflow Analysis



Source: US Census 2020 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD).

According to 2020 Census LEHD data (the most recent available) there are a total of 1,348 jobs in Olivia.

About 400 of those jobs are held by people who live in Olivia and work in town.

Almost 1,000 of those jobs are held by people who commute in from elsewhere to work in Olivia (this is more than twice the number of jobs held by local residents).

About 800 Olivia residents travel outside of the city for their work.

Where workers travel-in from

Almost 1,000 workers commute in to work in Olivia. Many of those workers spend more than 20 minutes in travel each way as part of their workday.

Top 10 origins, as well as distance and travel time to work for people working in Olivia are:

City	Workers	Distance (miles)	Travel Time (minutes)
Olivia	396	NA	NA
Bird Island	80	5	7
Danube	64	5	8
Renville	39	11	15
Redwood Falls	30	22	26
Willmar	29	26	31
Fairfax	24	30	33
Sacred Heart	22	24	29
Hector	20	15	17
Buffalo Lake	17	19	23

*Data source: US Census 2020 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) with data from Google Maps*

Additional housing options in the city may invite a portion of these workers to move into town to reduce their commute.

## 2.4 - Forecasting and Future Trends

The State of Minnesota Demographic Center (MnDC) does not publish population projections for Olivia or cities of similar size. To estimate the city's future population, alternative methods are used.

There are three main factors to consider when working to estimate Olivia's future population:

- 1) The city's historical pattern of growth
- 2) The city's share of Renville County's overall population
- 3) Improvements to US Highway 212 east of Glencoe, which may improve connection and access to Twin Cities Metro employment and amenities, potentially making it more attractive for new residents and leading to new growth not tied to existing population dynamics or historical trends

### 1) Historical Pattern of Growth

In the last two decades (2000 to 2010, and 2010 to 2020) Olivia's population has declined at a rate of 3% and 6% per decade, respectively. To determine future population, a conservative decline rate of 6% per decade can be assumed.

### 2) City's Share of County's Population

Over the last fifty years Olivia's population has represented about 14 to 16% of the County's overall population, with 16% being the most recent rate:

Year	Olivia	Renville Co.	Ratio city / county
1970	2,553	21,139	0.12
1980	2,802	20,401	0.14
1990	2,623	17,673	0.15
2000	2,570	17,154	0.15
2010	2,484	15,730	0.16
2020	2,343	14,723	0.16

*Data source: US Census Bureau*

According to the Minnesota Demographic Center (MnDC), Renville County's population will decrease over the next twenty years and beyond:

	2030	2040	2050
Renville	13,597	12,520	11,339

*Source: Minnesota Demographic Center*

Applying a 16% factor to MnDC's projections for Renville County can offer an alternative method for estimating Olivia's future population.

### 3) Olivia's Future Population

Using the factors described, as well as linear and exponential projections based on 1980 to 2020 Census population counts, the following estimates can be prepared:

Projection method	2020*	2030	2040
1) 6% Decennial decline	2,343	2,202	2,069
2) City / County share	2,343	2,175	2,003
3) Linear	2,343	2,247	2,142
4) Exponential	2,343	2,262	2,171

*\* Actual count from 2020 Decennial US Census*

Applying conservative factors and roughly averaging these estimates yields the following (rounded) population estimates for the coming decades:

	2020*	2030	2040
Olivia	2,343	2,225	2,100

*\* Actual count from 2020 Decennial US Census*

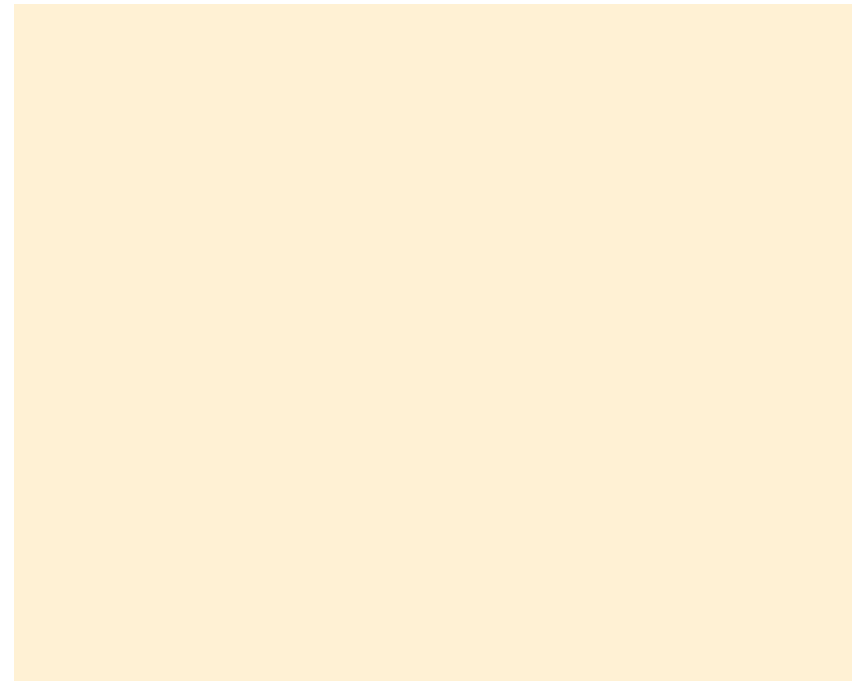
Though these projections indicate a continuing decline in population, it is important to note that projections are not the same as destiny, and that Olivia has numerous assets that can be leveraged to build its strengths, improve quality of life, and retain existing residents while attracting new ones in the years to come.



# 3 Public Participation

A city's Comprehensive Plan is useful when it responds to the issues, ideas, and aspirations of the people who live there.

Olivia's Comprehensive Plan is based on a sizable public engagement effort that reached more than 700 people (pretty remarkable for a city of 2,400 people!).



## 3.1 - What We Did

Connecting with and receiving comments and ideas from Olivia residents was a key priority for the plan. We conducted an extensive public participation effort to connect with members of the Olivia community.

We took plan materials to community events, services, and meetings, and made special efforts to connect with the city's sizable Hispanic / Latino population through Spanish-language materials.

The comments we received, reflecting residents' experiences and their aspirations for Olivia's future, helped to orient the plan's vision and recommendations.

**A detailed summary of public engagement efforts and results can be found in the Appendix.**



### Participation: By the Numbers

MORE THAN

**500** participants in the plan's THREE online surveys!



(pretty amazing for a city of 2,400 people!)

ALMOST

**80** comments and ideas received through the plan's interactive map for walking / biking routes



ABOUT

**600** unique visitors to the plan's public website



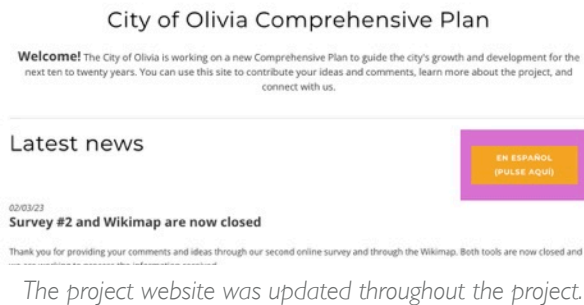
**50** participants at the plan's public workshop, held in the Olivia Armory



## Tools and Approach

We developed and used a robust set of online engagement activities. Components of our engagement campaign included:

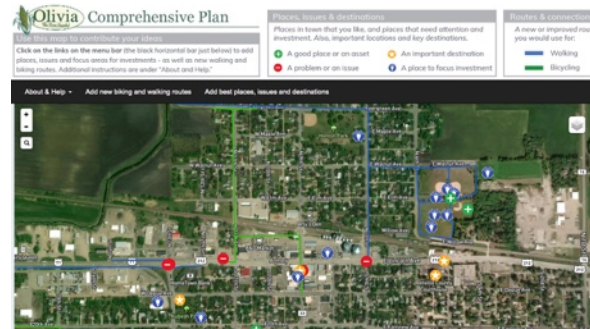
### Project Website



The project website ([www.OliviaPlan.org](http://www.OliviaPlan.org)) was used to share project updates, provide access to mapping tools and online surveys, and offer a platform for commenting on the plan. The website also hosted presentations and meeting materials from Project Steering Committee meetings as well as tools like fliers and sample social media messages to disseminate news about the plan.

The website also included a Spanish-language section to facilitate participation from the city's large Hispanic / Latino population.

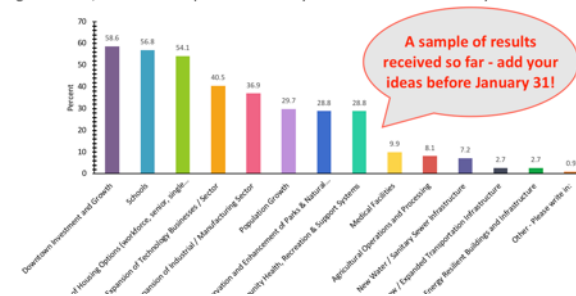
### Interactive Online Map (Wikimap)



An interactive online map collected location-specific comments about assets and opportunities as well as walking and biking assets, locations of concern, and priorities. Data from the map was brought into the Geographic Information System (GIS) files used to develop the plan's recommended routes, and were a key input for the design process.

### THREE Online Community Surveys

22. How influential do you believe each of these factors will be in stimulating economic growth and/or land development in the City of Olivia over the next 20 years?



Three online surveys were implemented to gather specific information from Olivia residents regarding their ideas, needs, and desires for their community's future.

The first survey (which received participation from 124 participants, with about 25 pages of comments received) asked participants to identify the City's assets, its issues and problems, and opportunities for making things better.

The second survey, which received participation from 407 participants (yielding about 70 pages of comments and results) asked detailed questions about priorities for housing, parks, downtown, transportation, and community priorities. Results from this survey were key information for developing the plan's detailed recommendations.

The third survey, developed in Spanish, asked participants to offer their ideas and impressions about Olivia and how to make it a better place to live and work.

Results for the surveys are included as part of this plan's Appendix.

### Social Media

The project team closely coordinated with City staff to leverage the City's Facebook channel to provide timely project announcements, share information about online participation tools, and invite residents to participate in plan activities. Social media was also used to invite visitors to the project website to view project updates and plan drafts.



## In-Person Public Workshop



*Participants at the plan's kickoff public workshop.*

The plan's kickoff public workshop, held in May 2022, was a resounding success and was attended by more than fifty people. The planning team provided an overview of the planning process and led fun and interactive activities to receive residents' comments and guidance for the plan's direction and the priorities it should consider.

Early and proactive outreach using social media, press releases, and communications with community partners helped to grow the number of participants.

## News Releases and Media Alerts

Several news releases and media alerts were issued to announce the project kickoff and the public workshop, and to invite residents to the project's website and suite of online engagement tools.

## Project Steering Committee (PSC)



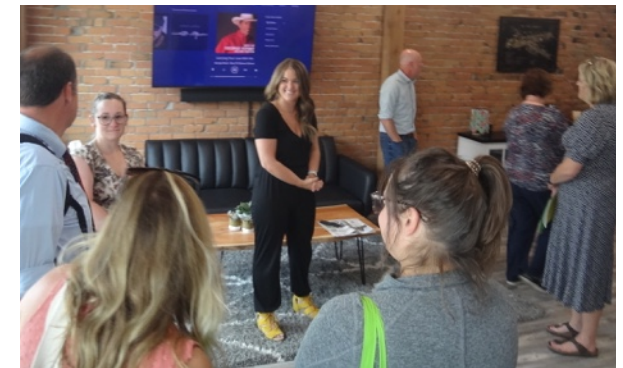
*At the first meeting of the PSC.*

The work of the plan was managed by a Project Steering Committee (PSC) made up of interested Olivia residents, area business members, and members of the City's Planning Commission, the Economic Development Authority (EDA), the City Council, and City staff.

The PSC met every couple of months through the duration of the project. Most meetings were held in-person, and some included visits to local businesses and rehabilitated spaces. The PSC also worked via virtual meetings, using several innovative platforms to facilitate brainstorming and plan reviews, including Zoom for meetings, Miro for collaborative brainstorming, and Adobe Shared Online Reviews for group review of plan documents and maps.



*From a PSC idea-generation brainstorm.*



*The PSC visits Schulte Wealth Advisors, a new business in a rehabilitated downtown space.*

Throughout the plan's development process, the PSC guided key decisions and the overall direction of the project, offering guidance for development of project recommendations and plan drafts and facilitating communication with other Olivia residents and stakeholders.

## 3.2 - What We Learned from the Public

This is a brief summary of the key ideas and guidance we received through the plan's public engagement efforts. Each of the plan's policy chapters includes a brief selection of key insights and comments. The plan's Appendix includes every comment and idea received.

### What people love most

All three surveys started by asking what people appreciate most about living in Olivia. Top answers included:

- » Olivia's small town atmosphere
- » Family-oriented feel
- » Friendly people
- » Friendly small businesses
- » Low cost of living
- » Feeling of safety and tranquility
- » Parks and open spaces
- » Proximity to other towns and amenities

### Implications for the plan

As Olivia changes over time it will be important to support and enhance its small town feel - for example by supporting its small businesses, preserving its historic buildings, and developing its buildings and streetscapes in a way that support that feeling of friendliness and cohesion. Continuing to improve its parks, and expanding engagement with and between residents will also be important.

### What people would like to change

Among the issues that people said they would like to improve in Olivia are:

- » Lack of activity or vitality in downtown
- » Look and feel of downtown, loss of trees
- » Limited choices for restaurants or shopping
- » Limited activities for kids and teens
- » Lack of events or activities
- » Need for improving school facilities
- » Unkempt properties / buildings
- » Limited choices for housing and employment
- » Lack of daycare options
- » Lack of amenities, lack of community center

### Implications for the plan

Olivia residents identified multiple areas where they feel their community is lacking. This plan offers recommendations for all of the issues listed, but implementing improvements will take time. Fortunately, there are many small and inexpensive steps (including programming initiatives) that can be started quickly.

### What people want to grow

Residents saw many opportunities for improving quality of life in the city, including:

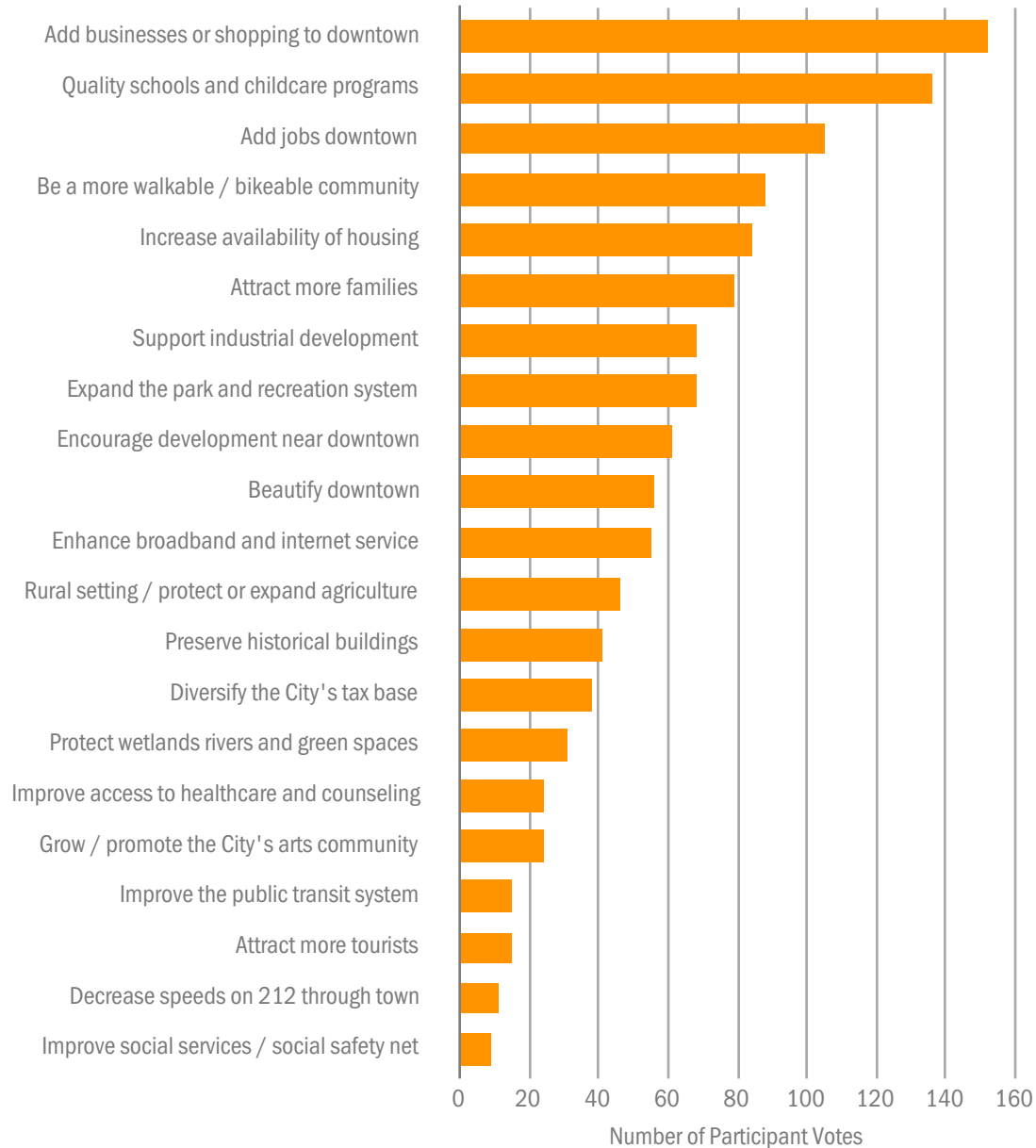
- » Improving the downtown and growing its qualities as an attractive, fun place to be
- » Implementing new events and activities
- » Supporting the development of new business, including restaurants, brewery
- » Increasing availability and types of housing
- » Supporting existing industries and business
- » Improvements to park facilities / programs
- » Development of community center, dog park
- » Growing walkability and bikeability

### Implications for the plan

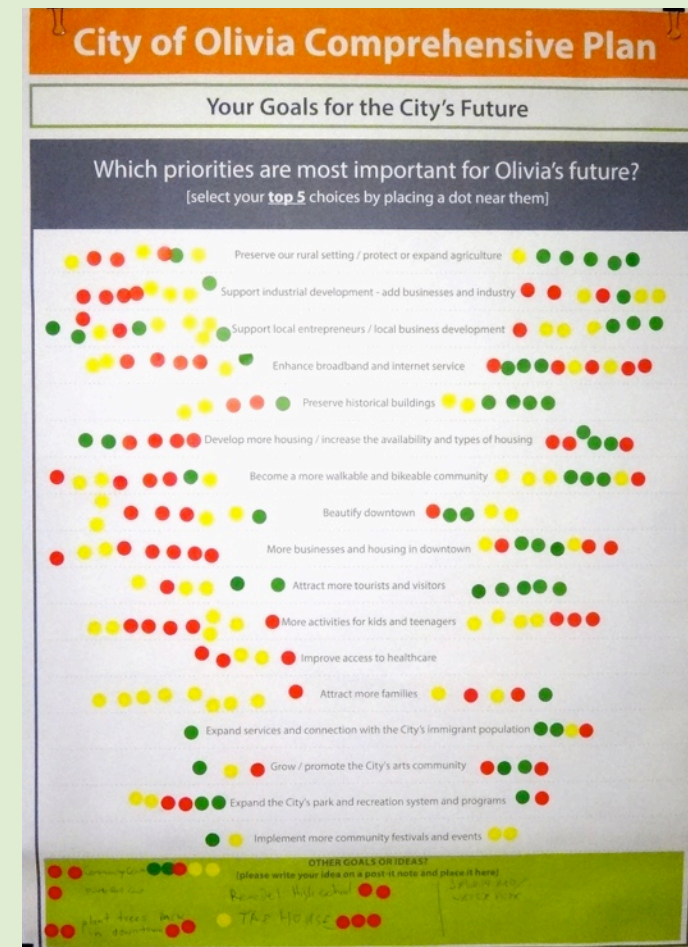
There are many opportunities for Olivia to grow and thrive. Community excitement, commitment and momentum will be a key asset for making long-term changes. It will be important to identify lower-cost, shorter-term initiatives as well as potentially more involved, longer-term ones. Growing local assets will be a key component.

## Sample of Survey Results

### From Survey #2: What should be the City's top priorities for the future?



### From Engagement at Corn Capital Days

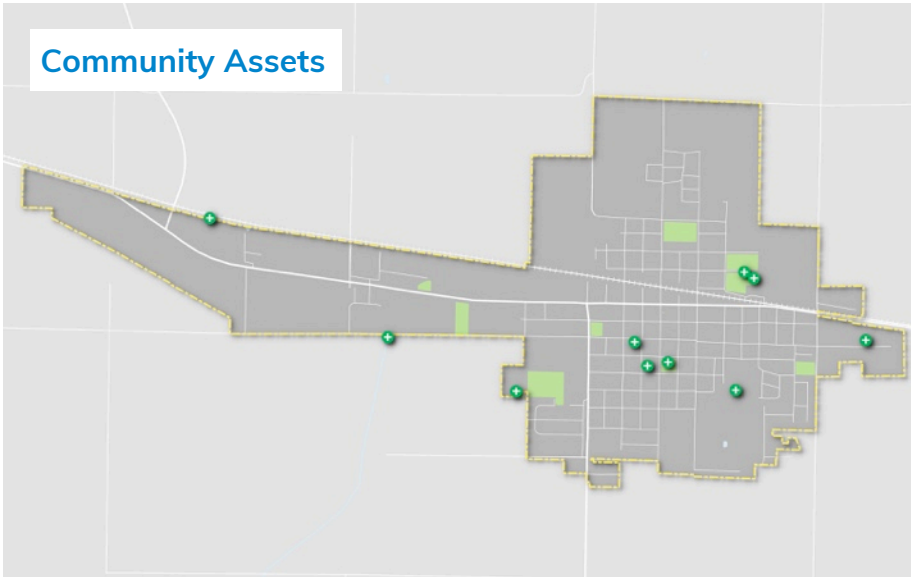


We talked with more than one hundred people at Corn Capital Days. Top priorities included supporting local business development, enhancing broadband, more activities for kids and teenagers, and becoming more walkable and bikeable.

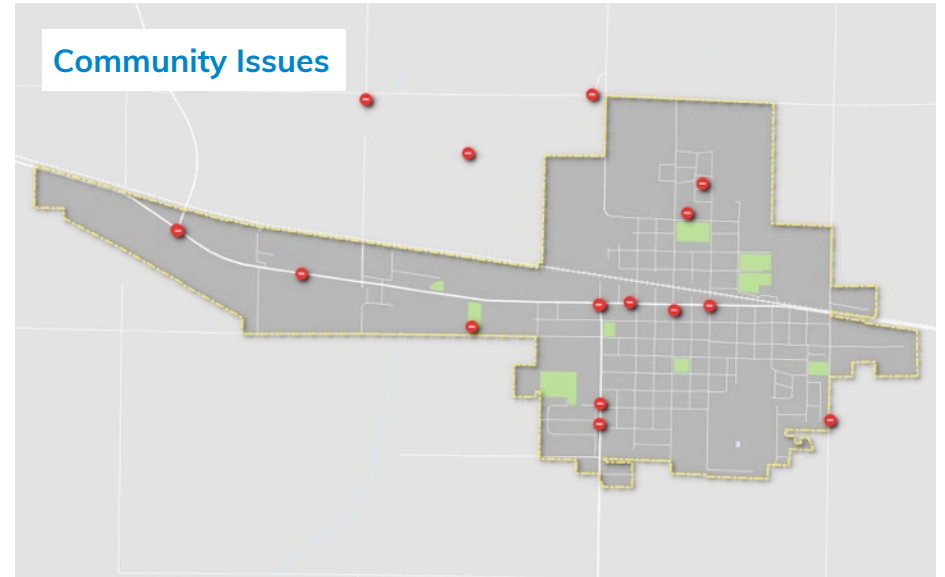
## Results from the Wikimap

Results from the interactive online map are provided below. Each of the points shown also includes a description and additional information as provided by participants. A full export including each individual comment is provided in the Appendix.

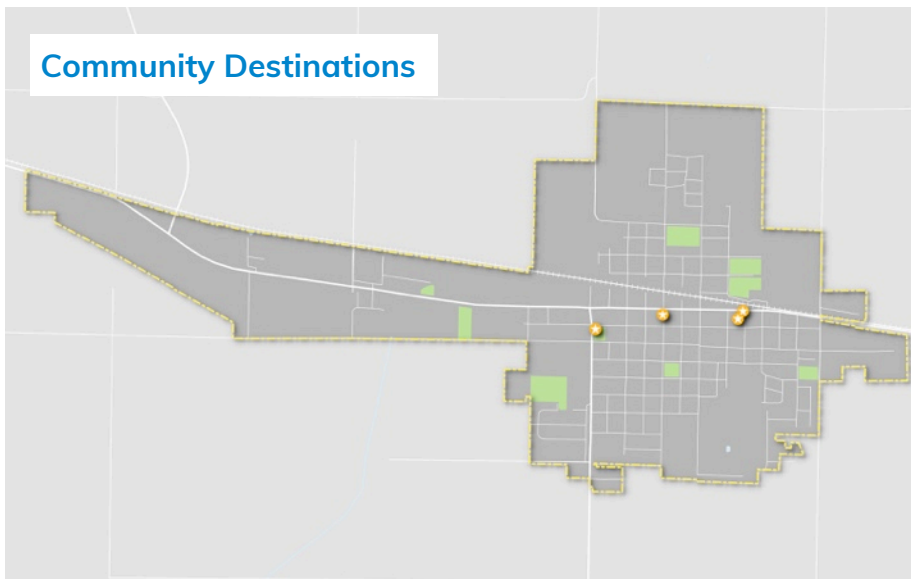
### Community Assets



### Community Issues



### Community Destinations



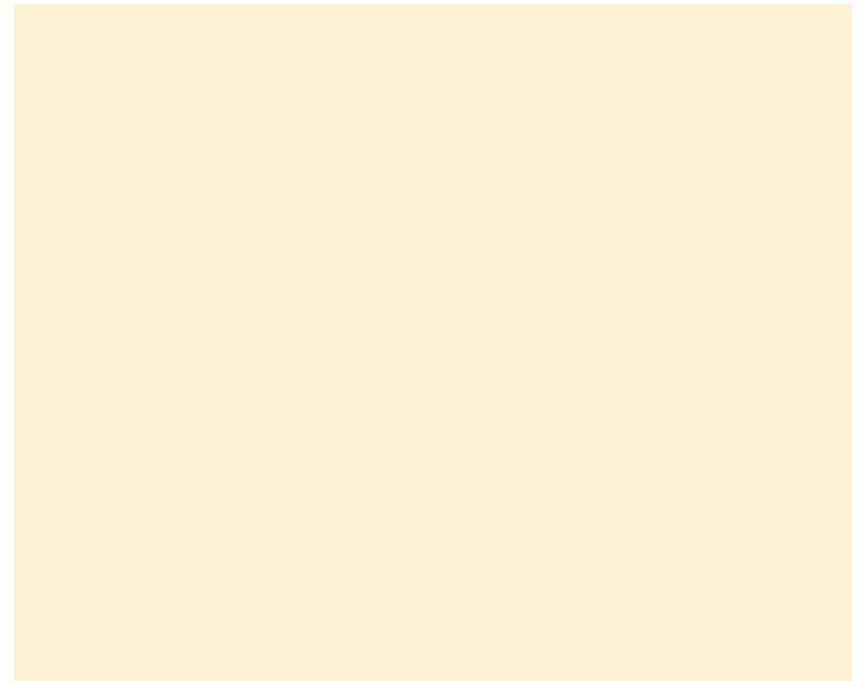
### Where to Invest





# 4 Framework

This chapter describes the organization of the plan, and the overall framework used to investigate existing systems, evaluate opportunities, and develop recommendations.



## 4.1 - Introduction

The Olivia Comprehensive Plan is a tool to facilitate community prosperity and improvement in quality of life, enjoyment, and growth of opportunity for its residents, businesses, and visitors.

The plan is based on a framework that:

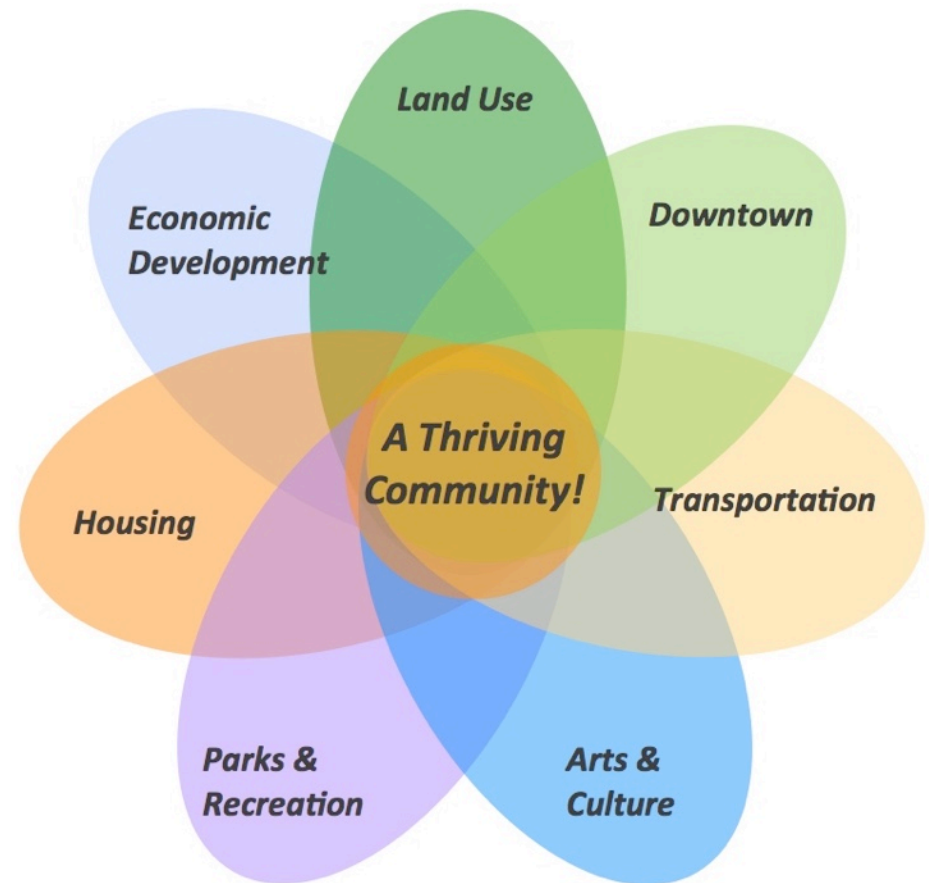
- » Recognizes Olivia's many existing assets, and leverages them as part of the plan's foundation for future success,
- » Recognizes existing challenges, including demographic shifts and population loss,
- » Responds to the specific assets, issues, and opportunities that exist in different areas of the city,
- » Listens to, considers, and responds to residents' and leaders' visions and aspirations for the city's future, and
- » Moves toward implementation in sustainable, incremental steps that offer stable improvement and a fiscally-responsible and sustainable platform for next actions.

### How the plan's recommendations are organized

The chapters that follow in this document present recommendations for policies, systems, and actions that are within the purview of the City and partner agencies, and where the City can lead, support, or convene the work needed to implement the plan's vision.

The plan's recommendations address:

- |                        |                                    |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| » Land use             | » Parks and recreation             |
| » Housing              | » Community facilities & utilities |
| » Transportation       | » Growing civic engagement         |
| » Economic development | » Implementation                   |



*The plan's comprehensive approach integrates recommendations across several policy areas to support the changes residents envision for the future of the community.*

## 4.2 - The Future Belongs to Small Towns

Over the last few decades, prevailing narratives downplayed the assets and prospects of smaller towns. A growing realization of the many advantages that smaller communities offer points to a bright future.

Smaller towns like Olivia have many things going for them: a sense of community, a feeling of social connection and safety, lower cost of living, and the opportunity for individuals to play a large role in the life and civic culture of their city.

The recent pandemic upended many of the old beliefs and barriers that until recently gave advantage to life in larger cities.

Concerns about unaffordable housing, growing economic uncertainties, and the search for quality of life for individuals and families - as well as the rise of remote work - have led to a reevaluation of those notions.

Increasingly, smaller communities like Olivia - places where neighbors know and trust each other, that are walkable, affordable, have strong and varied local businesses and institutions, have a strong local identity, and that offer the resources needed for a high quality of life - will emerge as the most desirable places to live for growing numbers of people.

Places that offer these qualities while also being located within convenient distance to other urban centers will be the ones that attract young families, Millennials, and retiring seniors alike - because of the sense of community, natural assets, cultural amenities, and independence they offer, and because they also offer convenient access to other nearby cities and larger metropolitan areas when needed.

Olivia is well positioned for this future. Offering excellent schools, regional health care facilities, extensive parks, a diverse range of businesses, and a small-town atmosphere, as well as easy access to larger urban centers like Willmar and the Twin Cities area, Olivia has good potential to grow and thrive over the coming decades. With a renewed sense of mission, its thriving and diverse population, and coming improvements to its downtown, its future can indeed be bright!



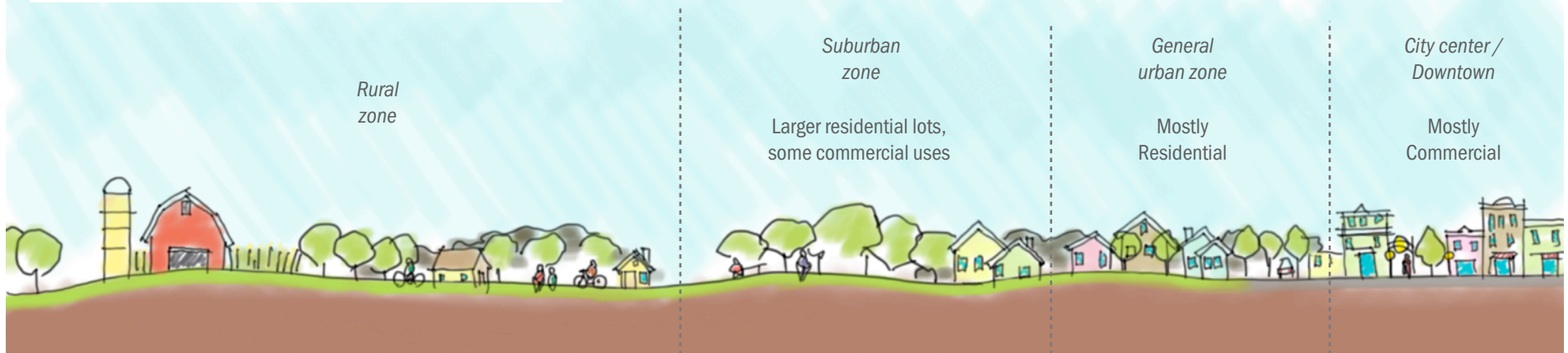
*Smaller communities like Olivia can offer residents many opportunities for a high quality of daily life.*

## 4.3 - A Framework for Land Use and Activity Contexts

The comprehensive plan addresses several inter-related systems. This chapter explains the framework used to shape the plan's recommendations so they respond to specific conditions and contexts in Olivia.

### The Olivia Transect

How land uses change in intensity along the City



### Conditions, contexts and opportunities

Activities and land uses vary across any city's landscape. Structures, opportunities, and assets are not uniformly distributed, and sometimes share certain characteristics depending on where they are located. For example, buildings in a city's downtown have more in common with each other (in how they are built, used, and sited) than with buildings in the same city's outer or suburban locations.

To be more useful, recommendations should be tailored to the specific types of places that exist within a city. A tool for describing the changes

in conditions in a city is called a transect; each transect zone or region presents a similar type or intensity of land use.

Because each zone presents different contexts, settings, activities and roles, a recommendation that may be helpful and appropriate in the downtown core may not be as helpful in suburban residential areas of the same city. Similarly, a recommendation that may be helpful when thinking about residential development in a suburban zone may not work or fit with overall plan goals if applied in the downtown.



## 4.4 - Leveraging Olivia's Existing Assets for New Vitality

Olivia has numerous assets that can be used for reaching its goals. Many of these assets are easily noticed (for example, its “small town feel” so often mentioned in the surveys for this plan). There are also many other assets that may be less evident because they are familiar and taken for granted, or because they work in combination with larger trends and conditions.

For example, Olivia's small town feel - along with its compact and walkable downtown, strong healthcare institutions, and proximity to other communities and regional centers like Willmar as well as to the Twin Cities are familiar elements to current residents and perceptive visitors.

What may be less apparent is that this specific combination is attractive to a growing number of homebuyers and to developers who are building new compact and walkable development in smaller cities in Minnesota and elsewhere - and who are, in the process, adding new vitality to local economies.

This trend is driven by the changing housing needs and preferences of two populations: first, aging baby boomers moving to places where they can remain active, enjoy close-knit communities, and still access cultural opportunities in nearby larger cities; and

second, by the preferences of Millennials, young families, and other homebuyers.

This second group, including young families, is facing unprecedented high prices and lack of affordable homeownership opportunities in larger cities, and is shifting its preferences toward more affordable homes at locations outside of those large cities.

The barrier that previously kept this group from making these choices - the potential length of their driving commute - has receded as a result of the pandemic, with most employers and young professionals successfully adapting to working remotely during the pandemic, and now expecting to continue doing so several days a week going forward. If a trip to the office doesn't have to occur every day, then driving distance becomes less of a barrier.

A community like Olivia is a great location for the type of housing and day-to-day living experience sought by both populations: the downtown and nearby areas provide the right setting for the compact, mixed-use apartments sought by seniors and by young professionals and couples, while the city's walkable neighborhoods are the place to find an affordable starter home, and to develop the spacious and comfortable homes desired by young families. The well-regarded BOLD school

system can be an additional enticement to bring new residents to the community.

City actions that leverage these assets and trends can bring new vitality to downtown, improve the City's tax base, and reinforce the walkable, pedestrian-oriented quality that will make downtown and nearby residential neighborhoods attractive for a wide range of households.

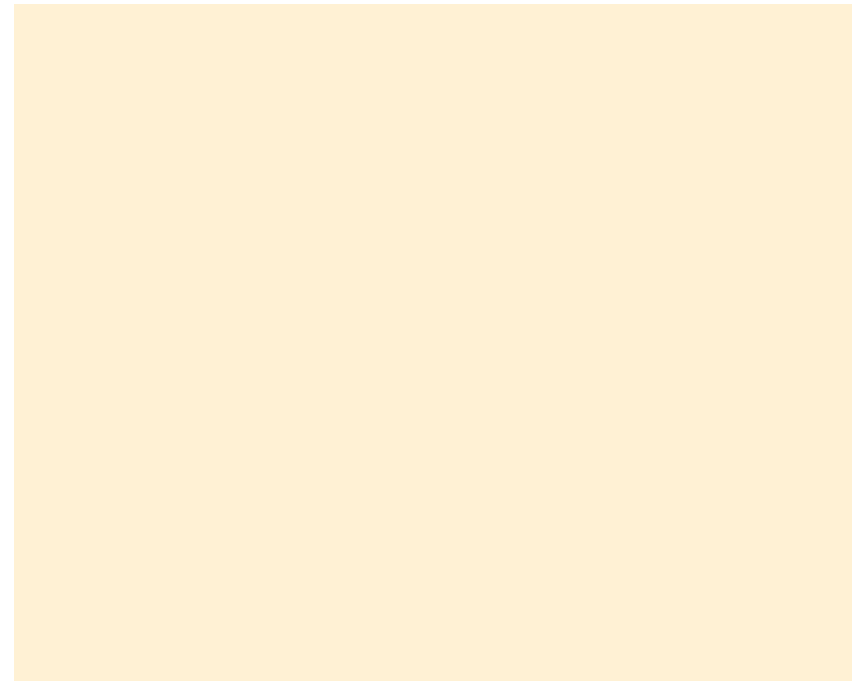
Here's a brief list of Olivia's assets that can be leveraged to make the changes this plan envisions:

- » Small-town feel and family-friendly neighborhoods
- » Opportunities / availability of spaces for downtown retail
- » Employment generator (more than 900 people commute to work in Olivia everyday)
- » Strong school system
- » Opportunities for community involvement
- » Quality parks, growing trail system
- » High quality city services
- » Active industry and manufacturing
- » Available land and opportunities for commercial and industrial development
- » Available broadband connectivity

# 5 Land Use

All of the structures and activities that exist and occur in a community take place in specific places and spaces on its land.

Current and planned land uses shape housing, economic development, and other systems.



## 5.1 - Introduction

Land use refers to the activities that take place on the land and parcels that make up a community's land area. Changing over time, land uses respond to market forces and to directions set forth in a city's land use planning policies, including its comprehensive plan, zoning regulations, and other policy documents. A community's land uses also respond to larger economic, social, and structural trends.

### Vision and Goals

#### Future Vision

Olivia's land use policies and practices build prosperity, quality of life and success for residents and businesses. Compact and efficient land use provides a variety of conveniently located and accessible housing options; industry and business have the space they need to grow and thrive; downtown is vital and prosperous; natural and open spaces are protected, and the uses of land are arranged and intermixed to support beautification, efficient development, and the health and well-being of the community.



#### Goals

- » Grow as a compact, efficient, and financially sustainable city
- » Strengthen the city's vitality, attractiveness, and prospects
- » Strengthen and beautify downtown
- » Facilitate the development of a variety of housing options
- » Facilitate growth in employment, business, and industry
- » Consider annexation only where it is financially sustainable
- » Leverage current transportation assets to grow and prosper
- » Increase quality of life through thoughtful land use decisions

#### About this Chapter

This chapter provides guidance for the City's future land use decisions so they match community vision and values, and includes a future land use map, showing the type of activities that are anticipated to occur in specific places.

In some cases, future uses are different from what occurs today. The transition of these properties from their current use to the depicted use is expected to occur over time, in response to market demands, as property owners voluntarily sell, develop, or change the use of their land. Other recommendations will be implemented through planning, zoning and subdivision ordinances, public improvements, and public and private partnerships.

## 5.2 - Existing Conditions

### Urban Form and Development Pattern

#### Circulation and grid

Olivia is a free-standing “rural crossroads” small town that developed and grew due to its roles as a railroad hub, as a trade and retail center for nearby cities and farms, as the Renville County Seat, and as a stop along the Yellowstone Trail (now US Highway 212).

Olivia’s downtown developed between the railroad station at 9th St down to Depue Ave, between 8th St and 10th St, straddling the Yellowstone Trail.

The city’s older areas, including its downtown and nearby residential areas, are laid out in a traditional grid pattern, with generally square blocks of approximately 350 ft per face, with alleys along the middle of each block. This generally holds true between 7th Street and 11th Street, both north and south of US 212. North of US 212 the grid is interrupted by the railroad line at several locations.

West of 11th Street and east of 7th Street the city’s grid includes numerous cases of wider, less regular blocks. In some cases two blocks are combined into one east-west block, interrupting the street grid. North of Evergreen Avenue and south of Oak Avenue the grid becomes less connected and more irregular.

In general, older areas include sidewalks and planted boulevards, though it is also evident that in many location they were not provided initially or have been removed over time (even in older areas, a block with sidewalks along all four faces is the exception rather than the rule). Newer areas have very little sidewalk coverage, which works against walk access for people residing there.

Areas which have been more recently-developed (for example, areas west of MN 71, areas east of the golf course, and areas north of Evergreen Avenue) use a circulation pattern that is not integrated into the city’s existing network and complicates connection for potential future development into the city.

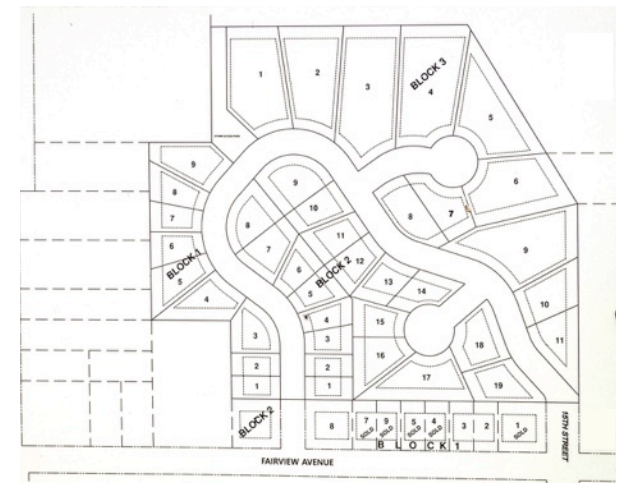
#### Building form

One and two story buildings are predominant in Olivia’s landscape. The downtown district is generally made up of one and two story buildings, with the Heins Block and the armory as exceptions with a three story height.

Residential properties are typically one and two story single family residential housing. There are several multi-unit apartments as well as a mobile district north of Evergreen Avenue and west of 7th Street.



*Block and circulation pattern near downtown Olivia.*



*One concept for a potential development along Fairview Avenue and 15th Street. Lack of lateral connections would complicate walk/bike access access for residents and circulation for other potential future developments.*



## Downtown

Olivia's downtown is the city's historical birthplace and a central, key location in the city. However, due to disinvestment, reorientation of new growth toward auto-oriented locations, changes in commerce, and negative trends affecting rural economies, downtown's look, function, and character have suffered.

Some specific issues affecting Olivia's downtown include:

- » High storefront vacancy rates and reduced interest and visitation
- » Streetscape with low visual interest and visitor amenities; lack of street tree canopy, benches, outdoor seating
- » Narrow sidewalks
- » Destruction or careless modification of architectural features of historical buildings
- » High levels of truck traffic, noise, and traffic hazard / crossing concerns for the portion of downtown along US Hwy 212
- » Truck traffic turning south from US Hwy 212 into 9th Street, which increases noise and traffic hazards, and reduces walk-orientation, placemaking, and economic development potential for this area of downtown with high potential for reactivation
- » Changes in zoning and highway-oriented commercial activity that have redirected business development along US Hwy 212 to

capture highway traffic, both east and west of downtown

- » Lack of events or programming to draw visitors to downtown

### Opportunities in Olivia's downtown

Fortunately, downtown still retains several key features that provide opportunities to re-frame the purpose of downtown and bring people and vibrant commerce back to the historic core of the city.

Some of the assets that currently exist in the downtown area include:

- » Compact size within walkable, historic grid development pattern
- » Several well-preserved historic buildings
- » Walkable distance from several large employers with high visitation, including Renville County Courthouse and offices
- » Professional offices and services
- » New investment in cafe space
- » Available office / storefront spaces
- » Ample supply of parking
- » Community support for the reactivation of the city's downtown
- » Recognition of national trends pointing out high returns for investments in main streets and downtowns for smaller communities



*Downtown Olivia has several handsome buildings with historic merit. The Heins Block, built in 1896, is one of the few that have been successfully rehabilitated.*



*View of Olivia's downtown along 9th Street, 1960s. Image courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society (MHS).*

## Current Zoning

Olivia's current [zoning ordinance](#) and [map](#) includes two residential classifications, two business classifications, two industrial classifications, a healthcare district classification, and an agricultural classification.

Using these classifications, about one half of the city's land (50%) is zoned for residential uses, 14% (about one-seventh) to business uses, and about one-fifth (21%) to industrial uses.

Generally, there's low availability of medium density, multiple family residential homes (duplexes, fourplexes, townhomes, condos, and apartment complexes).

Districts currently zoned as high density residential are locations where group quarters, single family homes on smaller lots, and mobile homes exist.

Commercial and industrial uses are currently zoned for areas directly adjoining US Hwy 212 and the railroad line.

The City's current zoning ordinance does distinguish between business uses in the downtown vs. locations along US Hwy 212 or elsewhere, and is thus able to offer guidance or requirements to facilitate development that preserves downtown's walkable character.

Zoning Classification	Acres	Percent
R-1: Low Density	506	40%
R-2: High Density	133	10%
B-1: Highway Business	167	13%
B-3: Central Business	19	1%
HMU: Healthcare Mixed Use	38	3%
I-1: Light Industry	134	11%
I-2: Heavy Industry	127	10%
A-1: Agricultural	145	11%
TOTAL	1,269	100%

A classification for HMU: Healthcare Mixed Use District is provided for activities related to the health care facilities at the city's eastern end.

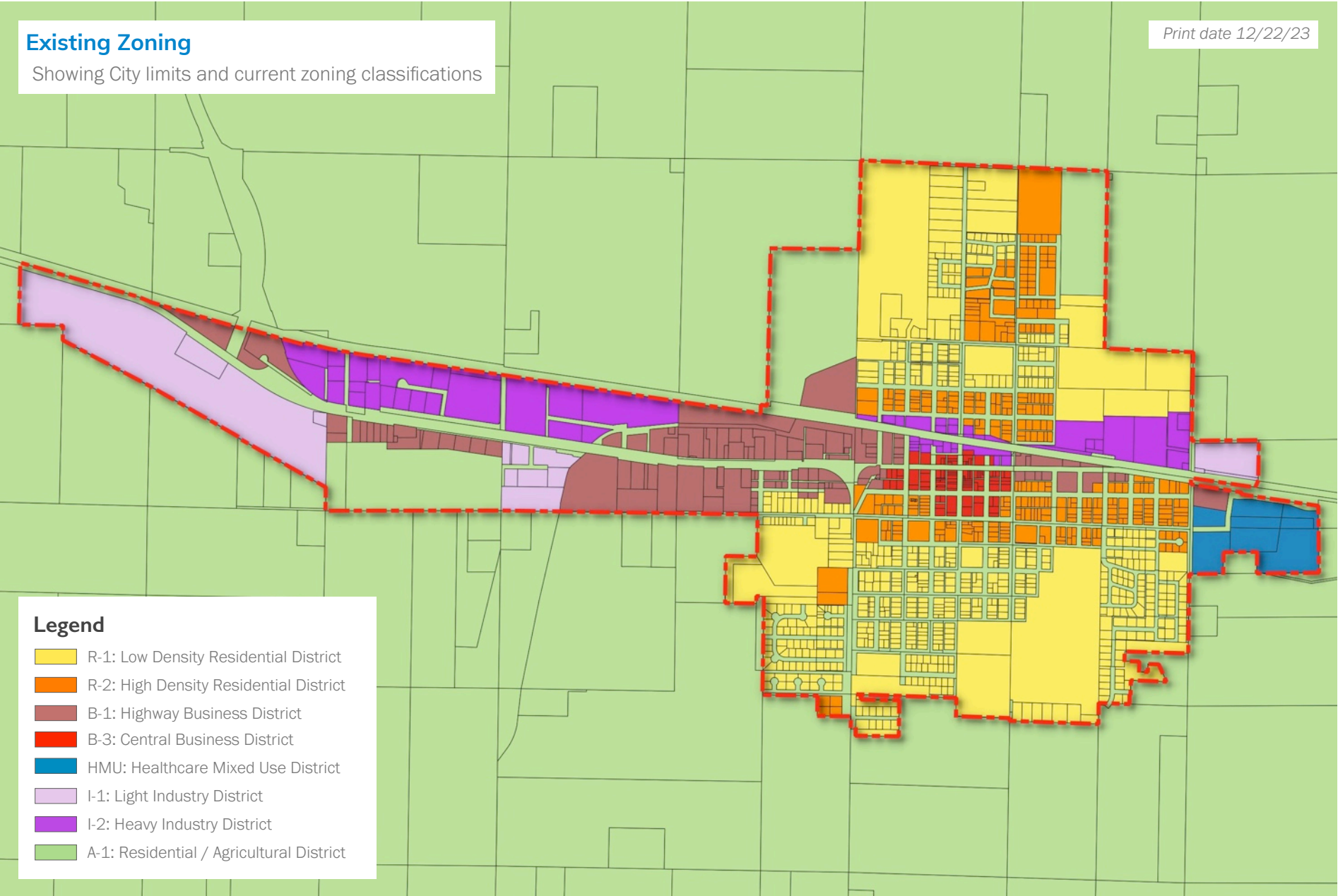
Although the current Zoning Ordinance does not identify classifications for public / institutional uses, parks, or open space, language included within each of the district definitions allows for their existence as permitted uses.

As is typical when a comprehensive plan is updated, it is expected that the City's zoning ordinance will need several updates to accommodate the recommendations made in this plan.

## Land Use vs. Zoning

- » **Land Use** identifies the purpose for which land parcels in a community are used. A community's **Existing Land Use Map** shows the current uses of its land. Its **Future Land Use Map** shows the preferred, long-range future for the city that should occur as a result of development and redevelopment, typically over the next 20 years. Land Use is *policy* and *aspirational*.
- » **Zoning** identifies the permitted, conditional, interim, and prohibited uses and regulates development and redevelopment for each geographic area in the city. Zoning is the principal tool used to implement the vision described in a city's **Future Land Use Map**. The **Zoning Map** shows what are permitted uses and designated districts for developers and landowners. Zoning is *Regulation* and *Law*.

Current Zoning Map

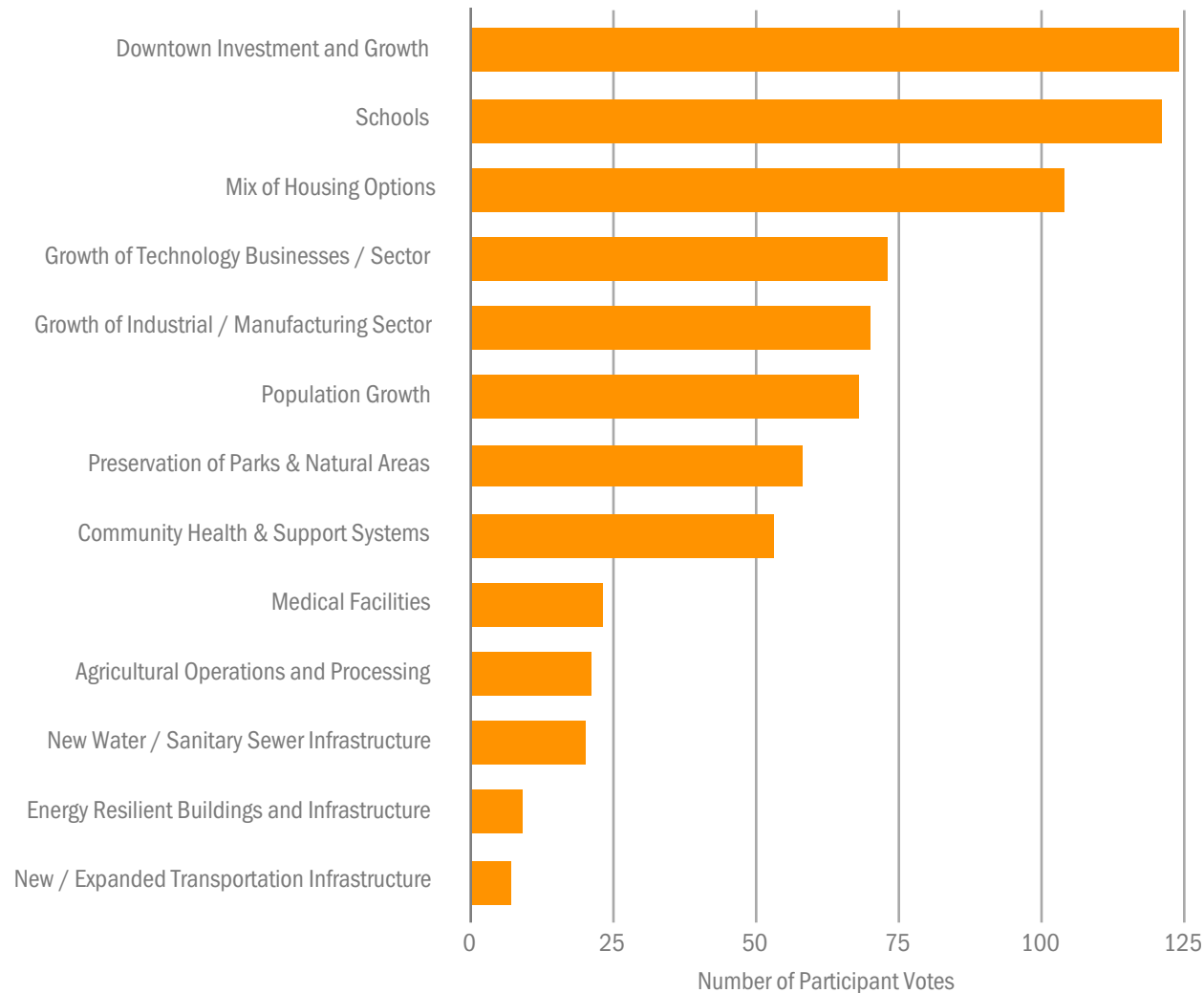


## 5.3 - What We Heard: Comments Received

Numerous comments were received highlighting residents' goals for Land Use and for the city's Downtown.

### How influential do you believe each of these catalysts will be in future land development in the City of Olivia (up to 2040)?

[A development catalyst is something that will stimulate economic growth and/or land development.]



*"We must grow the city ... we need more permanent dependable jobs (industrial) and places for the people to live"*

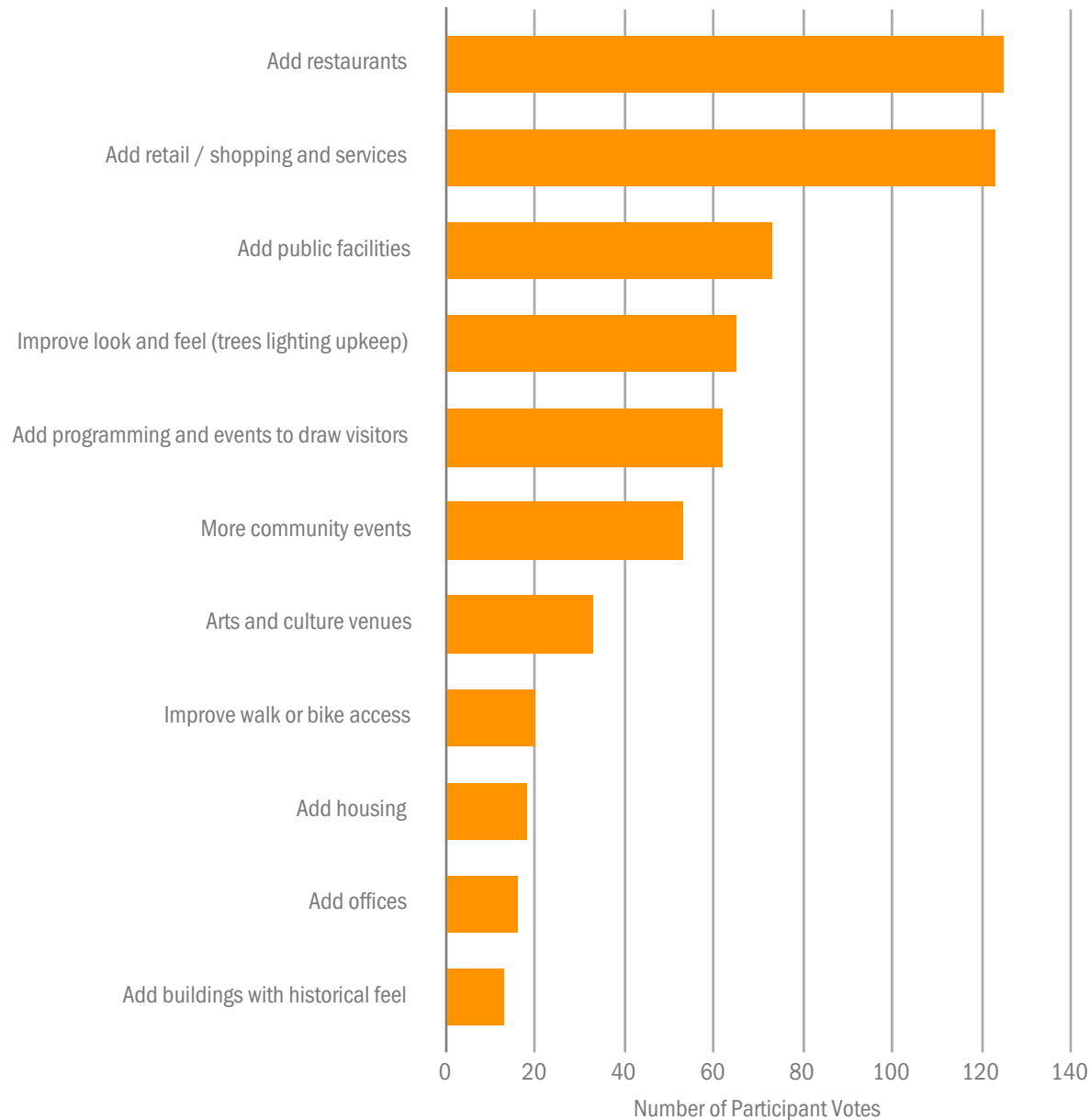
*"I believe Olivia is at a crossroads ... our community can grow if we give the right attention and energy"*

*"A charming downtown with full storefronts and curb appeal would do wonders"*

*"Small town atmosphere .. I can walk in town, around Lake Olivia, or on the new trail south of town. Nice size lot for our home. People look out for each other. We have a school, hospital, a grocery store, churches, library, gas stations, eye doctor, vet, other businesses downtown, and a few restaurants"*



## How would you improve Downtown? Which type of buildings, businesses or activities are needed in Downtown Olivia?



Investments in Olivia's downtown are happening already. Pictured above: coming into the new renovated location for JP Schulte Wealth Advisors (top) and a view from the interior of the newly relocated and renovated Olivia Corncade, in the heart of downtown (bottom).

## 5.4 - Opportunities

### 5.4.1: Future Land Use and Development

This new Comprehensive Plan provides a foundation for updating the City's land use policy documents, including its land use map, zoning map and ordinance, and subdivision regulations so they more accurately reflect current conditions and guide future decisions toward the vision described by its citizens and leaders.

The first step, included as part of the Comprehensive Plan, is the updating of the City's Future Land Use Map. Subsequent policy and ordinance changes will reflect the guidance included there (when the zoning map and ordinance are updated they will place the Land Use Map's recommendations into law).

The approach for developing the new Land Use Map includes:

#### Assessment of Existing Land Uses

The Existing Land Use Map identifies the present location and distribution of the residential, commercial, and public activities (the "land uses") that take place within the city's boundaries.

#### Determination of Future Land Uses

The 2040 Future Land Use Map makes recommendations for how the type and location of land uses should change over the next twenty years to respond to and make possible the vision the community has set out for itself.

In some cases, future land uses on a parcel are different from what occurs today. The transition on these parcels from their current use to their desired future use is expected to occur over time, in response to market demands, as property owners voluntarily sell, develop, or change the use of their land. Other recommendations will be implemented through planning, zoning and subdivision ordinances, public improvements, and public and private partnerships.

The new Land Use Map also provides an opportunity for optimizing land use categories so they reflect the types of uses desired and the existence of districts or other focus locations in the city.

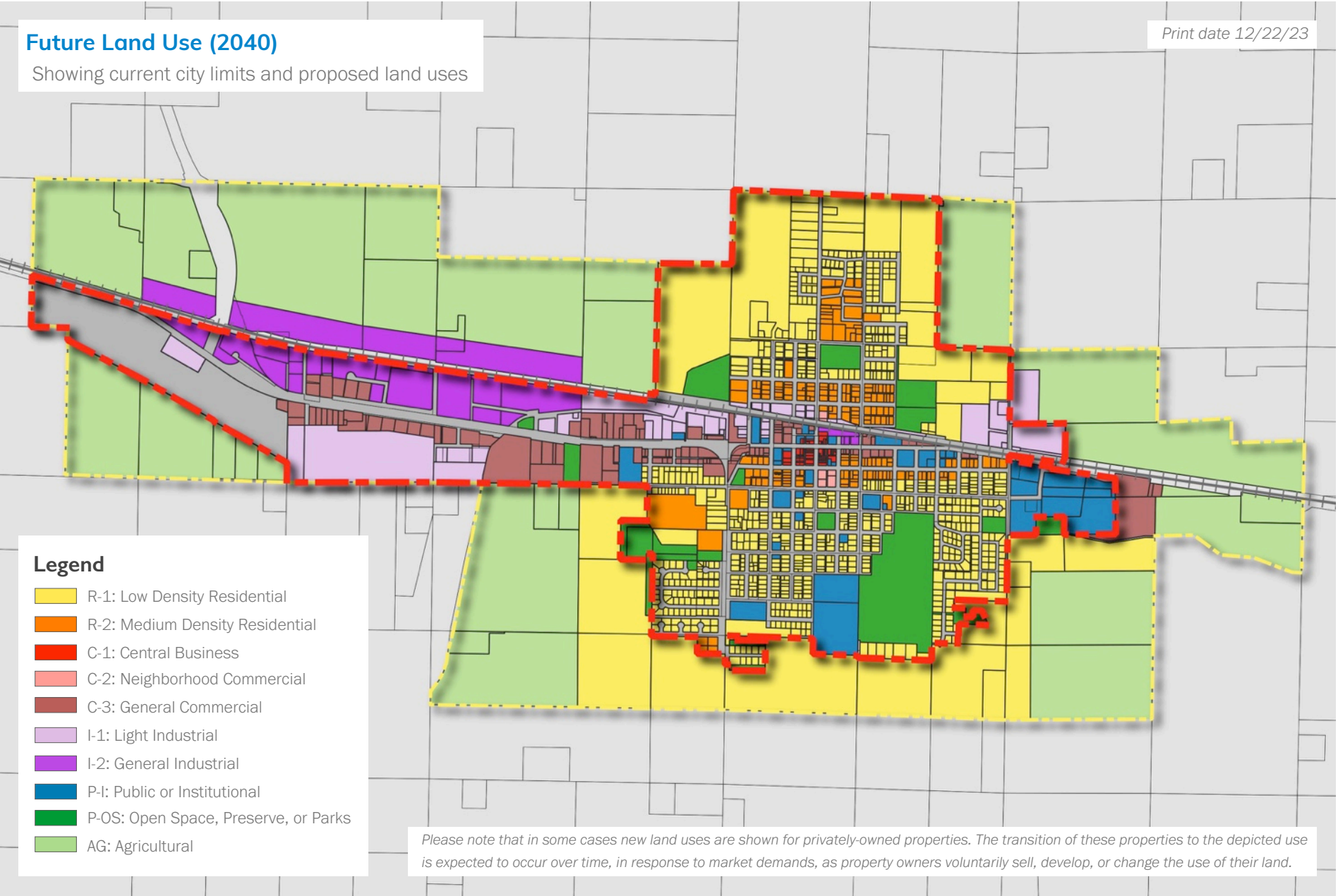
#### Zoning Ordinance and Map

This plan recommends updating Olivia's Zoning Ordinance as part of a future project. The Zoning Ordinance is the City's legal instrument for regulating and enforcing land uses within its boundaries, and for establishing specific districts or focus areas.

The Zoning Ordinance defines how property in specific areas within the city can be used - for example, where housing or industry can be located. It also establishes key development characteristics like lot size, and the siting and height of structures.

The Zoning Ordinance and Map are informed by the future land use plan and are key tools for its implementation.

5.4.1 (continued): Future Land Use Map



### 5.4.1 (continued): Updated Land Use Categories

These are the updated land use categories included in the new Land Use Map:

Land Use Category	Name / Type	Purpose / Description
R-1	Low Density Residential	Areas within the community for residential dwellings of single- and two-family occupancy, including duplexes.
R-2	Medium Density Residential	Multiple-dwelling residential district suitable for the location of apartment buildings, townhouses, condominiums, and other rooming or residential structures, as well as single- and two-family structures.
C-1	Central Business	The city's Downtown area, characterized by small lot sizes with no setbacks. Features historic buildings, pedestrian orientation, and includes small business, retail, restaurants, and apartment housing. A preferred location for mixed use commercial / residential development and multi-family housing.
C-2	Neighborhood Commercial	Varied commercial uses, including uses and lot configurations not permitted in the Central Business District, while retaining neighborhood scale and pedestrian orientation. Allows a wide variety of commercial uses catering to the needs of the entire community and surrounding areas.
C-3	General Commercial	Provides for a variety of larger commercial uses, including uses not permitted in the Central Business or Neighborhood Commercial District. Includes larger-scale commercial uses catering to the needs of the entire community and surrounding areas, and businesses providing highway-oriented retail goods and services.
I-1	Light Industrial	Industrial areas that accommodate a wide variety of industrial uses that do not adversely affect adjacent businesses or residences. Uses will not create any offensive noise, dust, heat, smoke, odor, or other objectionable influences to adjacent property owners.
I-2	General Industrial	Industrial areas that accommodate a wide variety of industrial uses which may operate to their maximum advantage. In the interest of general health and safety, residential uses are not permitted.
P-I	Public or Institutional	Land areas within the City for the establishment of public services, utilities, city, federal, state, school district and religious uses.
P-OS	Open Space, Natural Preserve, or Parks	Natural resource areas, including floodplains, historic areas, wetlands, existing natural prairies, animal habitats, hunting reserves, conservation areas, and environmentally sensitive areas; parks and open spaces.
AG	Agricultural	Agricultural operations, including producing and/or breeding agricultural products, land lying fallow, and facilities to maintain agricultural lands under production or cultivation, including associated residences.



### 5.4.2 - Opportunity: Annexation of Adjacent Lands and Parcels

Given current population trends and the amount of land already included within current city limits, it may not be advisable to grow by annexing additional lands.

However, and over time, if Olivia experiences growth in population or otherwise experiences the need for additional land for developing housing or industry, it may be useful to consider annexation of lands and parcels adjacent to and beyond the city's current boundaries.

#### Considerations before annexation

To ensure that annexation results in a net benefit to the community, it will be necessary to complete a thorough and thoughtful process before any commitments or actions, because while annexation allows the city to grow its taxable land, it also increases the city's maintenance and service obligations.

This plan recommends completing these steps before any annexation action:

- 1) Completing a financial cost-benefit analysis on the implications of the proposed annexation
- 2) Coordination with Renville County
- 3) Communication with the affected land owners

#### Considerations for land uses and sequencing for annexed lands

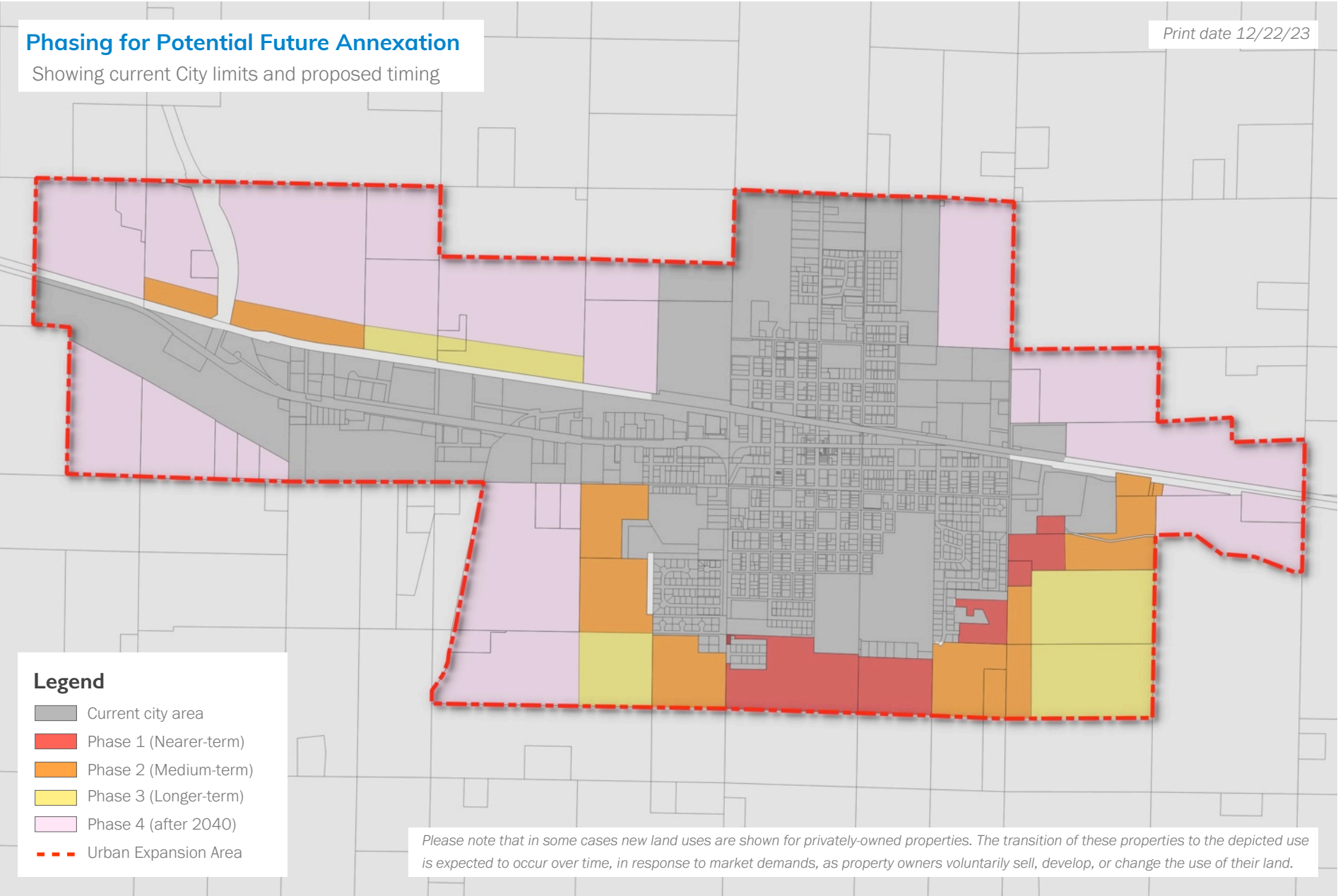
If annexation is found to be warranted, then for the city to benefit from the lands it annexes (in terms of direct tax revenues and in terms of potential benefits or impacts elsewhere in the city), the following considerations should be observed:

- » Annexations should generally occur contiguous to or in close proximity to areas where current activities and services are located, as this will make efficient use of existing infrastructure
- » Annexations should generally be sequenced according to the phasing map on the following page, and prioritized where access to existing infrastructure and environmental conditions are more favorable
- » Land uses should be consistent with this Comprehensive Plan's guidance, including types of uses, considerations for siting, and other development characteristics
- » Ensure that potential annexation areas are coordinated with Renville County and are consistent with the [Renville County Comprehensive Plan's](#) Urban Expansion area for Olivia

#### Considerations for the Annexation Process

- » Develop a process to annex parcels which are currently served by city services but are located outside of the city's limits
- » Develop a cost-benefit analysis for any potential annexation that weighs the long-term obligations to be incurred (including maintenance of infrastructure for streets, water and other provided services) vs. potential tax revenue gains
- » Develop a strict policy requiring the annexation of parcels to be served by city-provided services before the infrastructure for those services is provided
- » Consider the impact of expanding the city's geographic boundary vs. efforts to concentrate economic activity, development and vitality in the city's existing core areas

5.4.2 (continued): Phasing for Annexation



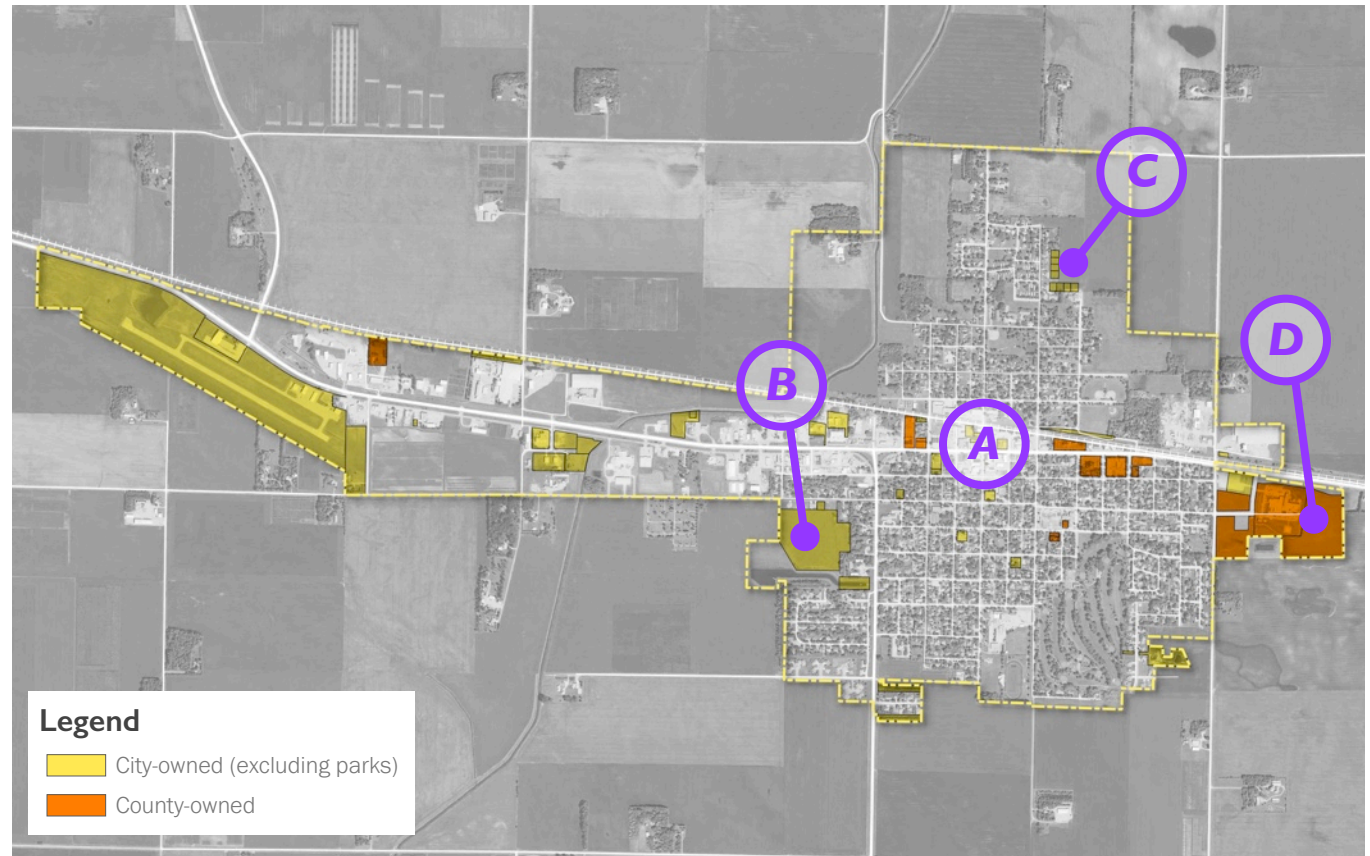
### 5.4.3 - Opportunity: Redevelopment and Opportunity / Infill Sites

Four focus areas have been identified for potential redevelopment activities through the work of this plan.

Development at these sites would be consistent with the plan's goals and would support community priorities including Downtown revitalization, development of new housing (including options for seniors), and development of commercial and industrial uses. Several parcels in and around these focus areas are publicly-owned, and provide opportunity for a simplified path to implementation.

There may be cases where the zoning classification for individual sites or for locations within the city may need to be modified to make them consistent with city goals and increase their attractiveness to potential investors.

**Continually working with property owners, redevelopment agencies, and potential investors to identify and catalyze redevelopment and opportunity / infill sites is a key activity to advance Olivia's economic development.**



#### Description of Opportunity / Infill Sites

- » Focus Area A: Downtown is a key opportunity area for mixed use commercial and residential infill - investment and rehabilitation are top goals and will bring additional benefits to the city overall
- » Focus Area B: Large greenfield development area, could accommodate a variety of medium density housing options
- » Focus Area C: Large greenfield development area, could accommodate a variety of low and medium density housing options
- » Focus Area D: Located in the healthcare district, could accommodate a range of supportive housing options, including service-enhanced senior housing ("Catered Living"), assisted living, and memory care senior housing

### 5.4.4 - Opportunity: Downtown

A city's downtown is one of a community's key assets. Downtowns are a foundational piece of a community's identity, as they are a repository of its architectural legacy, a birthplace for its business community, and visible evidence of its history since the time of its settlement.

An active, attractive, healthy, and vital downtown has a powerful impact on a community - from the pride and connection its residents feel, to the convenience it affords to those looking for goods and services, to the opportunities it offers aspiring entrepreneurs, to the pull it exerts on travelers and tourists visiting a city for the first time.

Olivia's downtown has several unique assets and well-preserved buildings and is conveniently located but suffers from relatively low visitation, low visual quality, and low vitality.

Though there are some notable draws and recent business investments in downtown there are also several opportunities for leveraging downtown's assets, reactivating local business development, attracting visitors, and helping downtown reclaim its rightful place as an active, attractive, and vital destination in the region.

#### Downtown's assets

Some of downtown's current assets include:

- » Compact size
- » Walkable development pattern
- » Several buildings with historic value
- » Proximity to Olivia's civic core, including City offices, library, and County Courthouse and offices
- » Convenient supply of parking
- » Several professional offices and services
- » Large employers within close proximity
- » Strong community participation and support for its improvement

#### Current issues

- » Low levels of pedestrian activity, commercial activity, and general feeling of low vitality
- » Lack of "draw" or anchor stores bringing people into downtown with regularity (like a full-service supermarket or hardware store), and low marketing of its existing assets
- » Lack of high-visit social destinations like cafes or restaurant-bars (though recently the Corncade has relocated to a prominent location in the area)
- » Empty or underutilized storefronts



*View of downtown Granite Falls, population 2,470.*

- » Low aesthetics and urban & visual quality: vacant spaces, lack of trees, low use of public space
- » Some buildings in need of rehabilitation
- » High levels of truck traffic through the US Hwy 212 portion of downtown streets
- » No bicycle facilities connecting the rest of the city to it, and low walkability due to traffic and lack of visual interest



## Recommendations for Downtown

Leveraging downtown's existing assets can help reactivate it and position it as an economic driver for the city's future success. Some actions may include:

- » Focus on a “[placemaking](#)” strategy for bringing people, activity, and interest back Downtown (e.g., consider farmers market or a monthly street party or festival hosted entirely in Downtown)
- » Participate in the [Minnesota Main Street](#) program and [Main Street America](#)
- » Develop a Downtown Master Plan
- » Develop [Downtown Building Preservation and Design Standards](#)
- » Consider applying for registration as a Historic District
- » Develop a [façade improvement program](#)
- » Develop a [historic building rehabilitation loan program](#)
- » Provide comfortable and inviting bicycle routes into downtown
- » Remove truck traffic from 9th Street
- » Activate temporary uses at Dowling Park - potential options include food trucks, food court, small concerts and other events
- » Simplify and incentivize development of outdoor seating, outdoor cafes, and parklets or other public spaces
- » Develop a Downtown Streetscape Improvement Plan to reintroduce street trees and improve sidewalks
  - Possibilities include senior housing, studio apartments, and multifamily housing
- » Intentional steering and recruitment of development and business toward the downtown



*New parklets, outdoor seating, and streetscape in Hastings MN.*



*Trees and vegetation soften a streetscape, provide shade, and make for a more welcoming place to walk or visit. Image: View of downtown Olivia's former tree canopy in July 2016.*

## 5.5 - Recommendations

### Goal 1: Flexible, connected, and efficient land management

- » Strategy 1.1: Work to implement the Comprehensive Plan and its recommendations, including updates to zoning and other City ordinances
- » Strategy 1.2: Support or investment in projects that achieve Plan goals, including downtown vitality, commercial revitalization, development of housing options, and overall improvement in quality of life
- » Strategy 1.3: Plan for necessary infrastructure improvements through a capital improvement plan and by review of proposed actions to determine impact on existing and future land uses, transportation facilities, infrastructure systems, and financial sustainability
- » Strategy 1.4: Encourage development and redevelopment in infill locations and other areas already served by existing infrastructure to make efficient use of community infrastructure
- » Strategy 1.5: Smart Growth principles
  - Follow [Smart Growth principles](#) when considering the city's growth or intensification of land uses

### Goal 2: Strengthen the vitality, attractiveness, and prospects of the city's downtown

- » Strategy 2.1: Develop a Downtown Plan that includes strategies to strengthen its qualities of place through both infrastructure investments and programming (events) initiatives
- » Strategy 2.2: Placemaking and activation
  - Implement a placemaking strategy, including inexpensive programming and "[tactical urbanism](#)" measures for bringing people, activity, and interest to downtown
  - Participate in [Minnesota Main Streets](#) and [Main Street America](#)
- » Strategy 2.3: Downtown planning and design
  - Develop urban design standards for downtown that include consideration for rehabilitation of historic façades (please see an [example from New Ulm](#))
  - Establish, fund, and actively promote a facade grant program to support renovation / restoration of downtown building facades and store fronts
  - Apply for registration as a Historic District (please see [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#) and [National Register of Historic Places](#))
- » Strategy 2.4: Focus development toward downtown
  - Encourage and incentivize infill development in the downtown - develop a downtown business incentive plan to encourage businesses to locate within downtown instead of edge locations
  - When development and business opportunities arise, work with proposers to consider downtown as first location
  - Work with Chamber of Commerce to actively market downtown spaces and locations
- » Strategy 2.5: Streetscape and walkability
  - Invest in maintenance and upkeep of lighting, paving, seating, landscaping, and plantings
  - Establish and fund a downtown street tree program using latest best practices
- » Strategy 2.6: Activate housing in the downtown district
  - Work with building owners to support rehabilitation of living spaces above storefronts

### Goal 3: Facilitate industrial and commercial development to grow employment opportunities

- » Strategy 3.1: Market the city's unique development opportunities and advantages
  - Use the City website and State of Minnesota resources to publicize and disseminate information about identified redevelopment sites
- » Strategy 3.2: Maintain flexibility to expand industrial and manufacturing opportunities and attract development and investment while protecting quality of life
  - Work creatively with developers to respond to their needs regarding land uses while keeping in mind the purpose of investment is to increase quality of life for the city's residents
  - Provide ease and flexibility for potential industrial and manufacturing companies to occupy appropriate areas of the city
  - Land uses should remain compatible with nearby residential and local land uses
- » Strategy 3.3: Strategic commercial development
  - Promote commercial development serving regional and local markets; promote joint market area of Olivia and adjoining communities

### Goal 4: Consider annexation and municipal expansion where financially sustainable

*Work to maintain a well-planned and fiscally sound community by carefully considering annexations only when consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan*

- » Strategy 4.1: Annexation of already-served parcels
  - Develop and follow a process to annex parcels which are currently served by City services but are located outside of its boundaries
- » Strategy 4.2: Process for potential annexations
  - Develop a cost-benefit analysis for any potential annexation that weighs the long-term obligations to be incurred (including maintenance of infrastructure for streets, water and other provided services) vs. potential tax revenue gains
  - Develop a strict policy requiring the annexation of parcels to be served by City-provided services before the infrastructure to provide those services is provided
  - Consider the impact of expanding the city's geographic boundary vs. efforts to concentrate economic activity, development and vitality in the city's core areas, including downtown

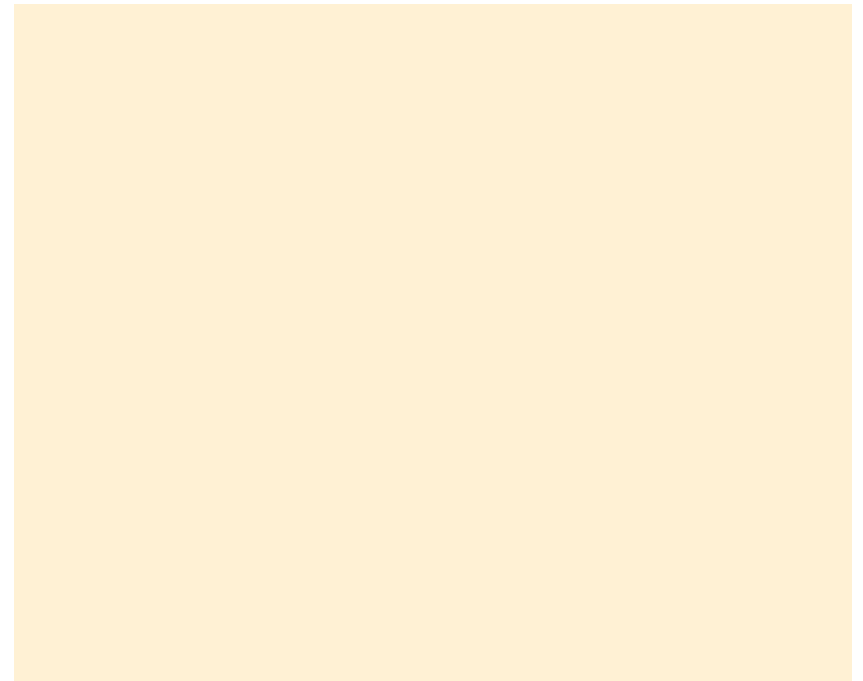
### Goal 5: Encourage development of housing and increase the livability of residential districts

*Enhance residential livability by encouraging mixed-use development, expanding the variety of housing types, and supporting neighborhood identity initiatives*

- » Strategy 5.1: When residential development proposals are received ensure that:
  - They respond to the goals described in this Comprehensive Plan and address the needs noted in the [2020 Renville County Housing Study](#)
  - They consider a variety of housing types, including elder facilities, workforce housing options, multi-family, townhome and accessory housing options while retaining Olivia's distinct character
- » Strategy 5.2: Invite housing development
  - Connect with non-profit and for-profit housing developers to invite their consideration of the city as a market for their services
  - Consider opportunities for the City of Olivia to act as developer in strategic locations, including Downtown
- » Strategy 5.3: Enforcement of city ordinances
  - Maintain livability of residential districts by communicating and enforcing city ordinances

# 6 Housing

Homes are the places where people and families grow, and where culture - including that of the city itself - is transmitted and grown.





## 6.1 - Introduction

More than simply shelter, homes - whether rented or owned, single-family or multi-family, stick-built or manufactured - are the places where individuals and families rest, regroup, grow and connect - and the place from which the bonds that build communities spring.

### Vision and Goals

#### Future Vision

Olivia offers a variety of attractive, safe and affordable housing options for individuals and families through all stages of their lives. Innovative solutions for housing development, maintenance, and affordability ensure that all residents and families can find and afford the housing they need, and that local businesses can attract and retain the employees they need to grow and thrive.

#### Goals

- » Increase the supply of homes across all types, sizes and prices
- » Encourage repair, maintenance and upgrades of existing residential buildings and property
- » Ensure a wide array of quality workforce housing
- » Ensure all Olivia housing meets or exceeds standards established in City ordinances

### Why It Matters

In addition to its role as shelter, housing is a key building block of household and community economic development, work force policy, well-being, and quality of life.

Housing is one of the principal uses of a city's land area, is an important consumer of city services, and is a key source of local tax capacity.

Access to quality housing shapes a person's and a family's quality of life. For a community, the availability of a range of housing options in attractive neighborhoods is a key consideration for young people's decisions to stay in town, for new residents to consider accepting a new job and moving into that community, and for businesses seeking to relocate or grow.



*Olivia has many attractive homes and neighborhoods.*

### Renville Housing Study (2020)

In 2020, Renville County completed a [Comprehensive Housing Needs Analysis](#). The work culminated in an two hundred-page report with specific recommendations for the “Olivia Submarket” area centered on the city.

**Information from the Housing Study is extensively referenced in this chapter of the plan. The report is included as Appendix 5.**

## 6.2 - Existing Conditions

To understand the housing situation in a community - including how it matches with current needs and what is needed for the future - it's important to know data and trends about the housing stock itself (the number and type of units, its condition and price) and about the population that relies on that housing for its residential needs.

In this section information about the Olivia housing stock is presented along with demographic data and projections that supplement the information found in Chapter 2 ("Demographic Profile") of this plan.

Housing data presented in this chapter is the latest available, including:

- » 2020 Decennial Census
- » 2021 ACS Estimates, reflecting a five-year (2017-2021) estimated average for housing characteristics as developed by the US Census Bureau
- » Results and trends from the [2020 Renville County Housing Study](#)

### Total number of housing units

According to US Census ACS 2021 5-year estimates, there are 1,156 units of housing in Olivia. This is about 17% of all of the housing units in Renville County (9,990 units total).

### Housing occupancy

Type	Number	Percent of total
Occupied	984	85%
Vacant	172	15%
TOTAL UNITS	1,156	100%

*Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2021 5-year estimates*

About 85% of the 1,156 existing housing units (ownership and rental) are occupied.

The vacancy rate in the city (15%) is rather high, being about 50% higher than the vacancy rate in Minnesota overall (10%) and about the same as that for Renville County overall (16%).

It's important to note that because these are estimates, there is a margin of error of about 5% for each of these figures.



About 40% of occupied units in Olivia are rental units.  
Image: Multifamily housing in the city.

### Occupancy type for occupied housing units

Type	Number	Percent of total
Owner occupied	604	61%
Renter occupied	380	39%
TOTAL UNITS	984	100%

*Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2021 5-year estimates*

Of the 984 occupied housing units, about 60% are occupied by owners, significantly lower than Renville County overall (79%), and more than 20% lower than Minnesota overall (72%).

About 40% of occupied housing units are occupied by renters, about twice the rate for Renville County (21%) and about 40% higher than the rate for Minnesota overall (28%).

## Vacancy rate by type of tenancy

Type	2011	2021
Vacancy rate for <u>owner-occupied</u> units	7%	3%
Vacancy rate for <u>renter-occupied</u> units	15%	8%
<i>Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2011 and ACS 2021 5-year estimates</i>		

Over the last ten years, the vacancy rate for both rental and ownership housing has decreased by approximately 50% (to about half) for both types of tenancy (please note that this is according to Census ACS estimates, which include a significant margin of error for smaller populations but can help illuminate trends).

According to this data, there are fewer ownership and rental units available than was the case ten years earlier.

In light of Olivia's decreasing population (in that same period, population declined by about 30 people according to ACS data), this may be explained by:

- » A net decrease of housing units (from 1,205 to 1,156 according to ACS estimates)
- » Single individuals / smaller households residing in a portion of available units (this could be the case even as the average household size has slightly grown from 2.23 to 2.34 persons per household according to ACS estimates)

## Pricing and affordability of housing

### For rental housing



*Many rental properties in Olivia are non-apartment units.  
Shown: Bayberry Court, near BOLD High School.*

More than one of every three (41%) of all Olivia households living in rental housing spend more than 30% of their monthly income on rental costs and are thus considered to be cost-burdened.

Households whose housing costs exceed this 30% threshold of affordability are likely to struggle to pay for other basic needs, forcing difficult trade-offs - including dropping health care coverage, doing without child care, or skipping meals to save on costs - which may result in negative outcomes in their well-being.

According to Census ACS data, the 2021 median monthly rent in the city was \$675.

### For ownership housing



*Single family home along Chestnut Avenue east of Highway 71 and listed for sale at \$200,000.*

About one-tenth (11%) of all Olivia households living in ownership housing spend more than 30% of their monthly income on mortgage costs and are cost-burdened.

According to Census ACS data, the 2021 median value of owner-occupied housing units in the city was \$126,600, about 10 percent higher than the value in Renville County (\$114,900) and about half of the value in Minnesota overall (\$250,200).

## Housing units by type of housing structure

Type	Number	Percent of total
1 unit, detached	792	69%
1 unit, attached	5	0%
2 unit structure	0	0%
3 or 4 unit structure	23	2%
5 to 9	26	2%
10 to 19	139	12%
20 or more	107	9%
Mobile home	64	6%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0	0%
<b>TOTAL UNITS</b>	<b>1,156</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2021 5-year estimates*

Single-family detached housing makes up the majority of the housing units in the City at almost 70%.

Multi-unit housing (two or more units in a structure) is about 26% of the total housing units (almost three times more than Renville County (10%), and below the statewide rate of 23%).

### Types of multi-unit housing

Multi-unit “Middle Size” buildings ([duplexes](#), fourplexes, and apartments similar in size to a large house, that could be integrated into

blocks with primarily single-family homes) constitute about 4% of housing units. No duplexes are provided in the city.

About one of every five housing units (21%) is provided in apartment complexes larger than 10 units.

### Mobile homes

The 2021 ACS Census estimate for the number of mobile homes in Olivia does not match the actual number of units in the city. According to City data, there are 12 occupied mobile home units, 4 vacant units, and 42 available lots.

Using this updated figure, mobile homes make up a little over 1% of the housing units in the City, below the rate in Renville County (3%) and the statewide rate (3%).

Understanding the true number of mobile homes in Olivia is important as this type of housing provides one of the most affordable options available to low income households, migrants, temporary residents, and equity populations.

Generally, mobile homes:

- » Are considered temporary housing
- » [Are regulated by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#)



*Mobile homes along 7th Street North.*

- » Offer ownership of the house structure but require payment of a monthly lot fee (for the land where the mobile house sits)
- » Are vulnerable to [growing consolidation of mobile home parks in the housing industry](#)

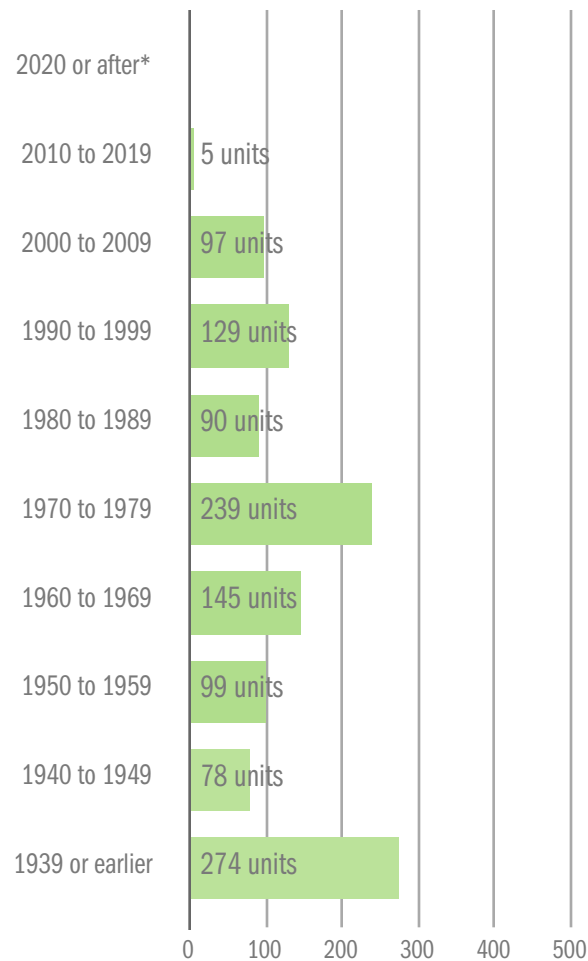
There are many opportunities to support households residing in mobile homes by increasing access to rehabilitation and maintenance loans as well as programs for affordable homeownership on conventional lots for those households who may wish to transition into a model of traditional homeownership.



Age of the housing stock

Housing units per year built

Total housing units in Olivia according to 2021 ACS is 1,156. A housing unit is an individual apartment unit or a house.



Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2021 5-year estimates  
\* Units completed after 2021 are not included in this dataset

The age of a city’s housing stock has an impact on the condition of housing and its desirability in two key ways:

- » As homes age they can be expected to require more maintenance. If adequate maintenance is not provided, their functional and aesthetic qualities can be expected to degrade.
- » The types of housing options available (size, configuration and location) may differ from current needs, and may not match the needs of age or demographic groups who may be looking for housing in the city.

More than one third (39%) of the city’s housing stock was built before 1960 (sixty years ago). One fifth (20%) of the city’s housing stock was built after 1990 (thirty years ago).

By comparison, Renville County’s housing stock is generally older, with only about 14% built after 1990, while Minnesota’s overall housing stock is generally newer, with about 33% built after 1990.

The lack of relatively newer development in the city means that the types of housing options are limited, and that housing in parts of the city (especially in older core districts) may be in need of investment and rehabilitation.

Condition of housing

Assessing the condition of housing helps to determine the adequacy of the existing housing supply to meet residents’ needs and identify the need for funding and programs to address rehabilitation and replacement efforts.

Several methods can be used to assess the condition of housing units in a community. The most direct and accurate way is by a visual inspection of all (or a representative sample) of individual units. As this is not often practical, other methods can be used to generally estimate housing conditions.

I) Estimation of substandard housing

Substandard housing is defined as housing conditions that are considered unacceptable, including lack of plumbing facilities, having one or more major mechanical or electrical system malfunctions, or overcrowded conditions.

Several guidelines can be used to estimate the number of substandard housing units in a community. One guideline estimates that 20% of the total housing units constructed prior to 1939 should be counted as substandard housing units. Other guidelines note that mobile homes, because of their materials, methods of construction, and mechanical systems should be considered as temporary housing and should be included in the total number of replacement units needed in a community.

Using these estimating methods, the number of substandard housing units in Olivia for which replacement should be considered is:

Substandard and Temporary Units	Units
Pre-1939 housing units (20%)	55
Mobile homes	64
<b>TOTAL UNITS</b>	<b>119</b>
<i>Source: US Census Bureau ACS 2021 5-year estimates</i>	

## 2) Estimation of rehabilitation needed

One approach for estimating the level of rehabilitation needed for a community's single family housing stock is to review the assessed valuation of homes (please note that this method does not include evaluation of mobile homes as their total estimated value is not reported in the assessor's data).

Using the 2021 median value of owner-occupied housing units in the city as \$126,600 and rounding for ease, the following four categories and estimates can be set and made:

- 1) All homes below 15% of median value (\$20,000): 31 housing units or 3% of the total are dilapidated and should be replaced
- 2) Homes valued between 15% and 60% of median value (\$20,000 to \$80,000): 299 housing units or 33% of the total require major rehabilitation

- 3) Homes between 60% and 100% of median value (\$80,000 and \$125,000): 244 units or 27% of the total) require minor repair
- 4) Homes valued over 100% of median value (\$125,000): 326 units or 36% of the total are considered sound and don't require any repairs

Although this method for determining housing condition is not exact, the findings help identify general trends and existing issues as well as potential strategies for addressing them.

In general, the data indicates that there is significant need for both major rehabilitation (1 out of 3 houses) and minor repair (1 out of 4 houses).

### Definition of levels of repair needed

The level of repair needed for homes in each of the conditions described above is rated on a four point scale:

- » Sound: House is in good, 'move-in' condition, with only minor code violations, if any.
- » Minor Repair: House is in generally good condition and requires less extensive repair, such as one major improvement. Houses in this condition are good candidates for rehabilitation programs.
- » Major Rehabilitation: House needs several major improvements such as roof, windows, sidings, or structural/foundation repair.

Houses in this condition may or may not be economically feasible to rehabilitate.

- » Dilapidated: House needs major renovation to become safe and sanitary housing. Some properties in this category may be abandoned and may be candidates for demolition and clearance. This is the lowest rating used.

Condition	Number	Percent
Sound	326	36%
Minor repair	244	27%
Major rehabilitation	299	33%
Dilapidated	31	3%
<b>TOTAL UNITS REVIEWED</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>Source: 2023 Renville County Assessor's Data</i>		

Key findings include:

- » Almost two thirds (63%) of houses in the city require at least one major repair
- » More than one quarter (27%) of houses in the city would be good candidates for housing rehabilitation programs
- » At least 3% of houses in the city may be considered to be beyond repair



## Types of Existing Housing



Single family detached house in one of the city's older residential districts south of downtown.



A single family house located in a newer residential district along Fairview Avenue just west of US 71.



Green Hill Apartments, offering 1 and 2 bedroom units and located just north of Evergreen Avenue.



Park View Village is a 20-unit assisted living facility located a few blocks southwest of downtown.

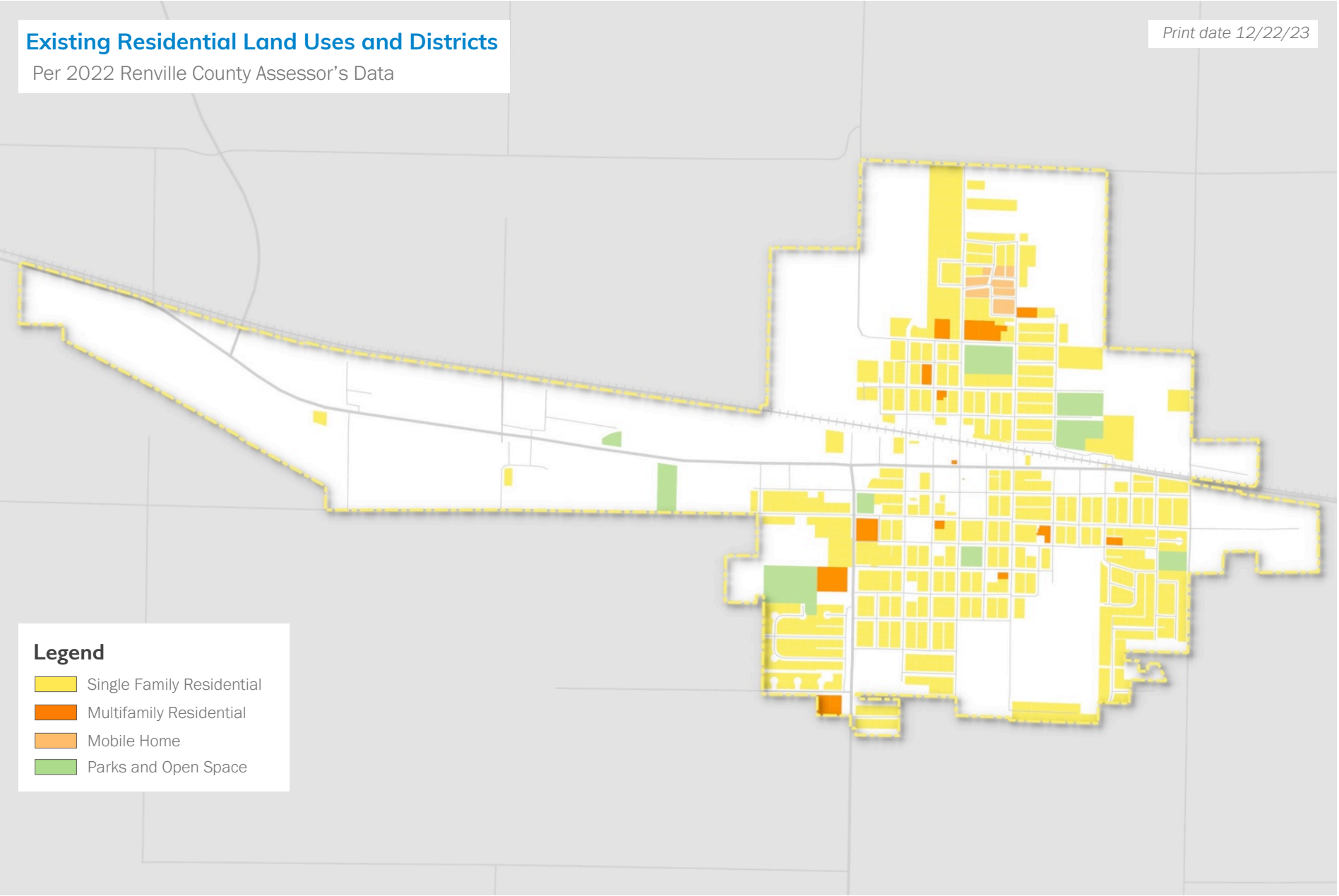


Mobile home located in the Meadowcrest Estates Mobile Home Park, north of Evergreen Avenue along Henton.



Erickson Meadowview Apartments, located along Evergreen Avenue, offers 1 and 2 bedroom units.

Location of Current Residential Districts





## Assessment of Strengths vs Barriers or Limitations for Housing Development

### Strengths

Olivia offers several assets indicating its suitability as a place where housing of all types and affordability levels can be developed:

Regional center: Olivia offers employment opportunities, retail and service options, health services, professional services, governmental services, and recreational facilities for the areas that surround it.

Affordable housing stock: The city has a large stock of existing housing which, when available for sale, provides an affordable option for home ownership. Median home value in the city is approximately \$126,600, significantly more affordable than the Minnesota median value (\$250,200) or nearby cities like Willmar (\$145,900).

Demand for diverse housing stock: The city has a mix of housing options, including rental housing units for various household types, owner-occupied homes and senior housing with a variety of services.

Desirable location for seniors and retirees: The city is an attractive option for seniors as a retirement location, offering excellent health care, specialized housing, and retail and government services, among other amenities.

Educational system: The city offers a [public K-12 school system](#) and access to MnSCU Ridgewater College in nearby Willmar.

Health care facilities: Services available include [Olivia Hospital & Clinic](#), a regional hospital offering excellent health care facilities and associated clinics, as well as nursing homes and senior housing with services.

Infrastructure: Water and sewer infrastructure can accommodate future expansion, with infrastructure already in place and ready to serve locations around the community.

Shopping and services: The city's commercial districts are adequate to meet daily needs.

Parks and recreational facilities: The city offers area residents access to multiple parks and recreational programs, including school district facilities and accompanying exercise and fitness options, programs, and events.

City of Olivia Economic Development Authority: The City has a constituted, active, and staffed [Economic Development Authority \(EDA\)](#) working on housing-related investments and issues.

City of Olivia Housing and Redevelopment Authority: The City has a constituted Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA).



More than 950 workers commute into Olivia everyday.  
Source: US Census 2019 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD).

Commuters: More than 950 workers commute into the city each day. These commuters are a potential market for future new housing.

### County Housing and Redevelopment

Authorities: The [Renville County Housing and Redevelopment Authority \(HRA\)](#) provides affordable housing opportunities in the city, including administering properties and the Housing Choice voucher program.

Renville County Economic Development Authority: The [Renville County Economic Development Authority \(EDA\)](#) is active in developing solutions to support economic development, community development, and housing needs.

United Community Action Partnership (UCAP):

With an office in Olivia, [UCAP](#) is the designated Community Action Agency for Renville County and other area counties. It is active in [addressing the area's housing needs](#) and in funding for housing projects and programs.

Proximity to large regional centers: Olivia is in close proximity to other regional centers and employment hubs where housing is less affordable. Willmar is 30 minutes away and the Twin Cities metro area is less than two hours from the city. Residing in Olivia is convenient for households who desire or need to be close to a large regional center for employment, entertainment, medical services, etc.

Land availability: The city can grow in any direction around its current extent, and has infrastructure with sufficient capacity to serve new development.

**Barriers or limitations**

There are also several factors that work against Olivia's potential for development and availability of new housing:

Age and condition of the housing stock: While the existing housing stock is affordable, some of it is in need of substantial improvements to meet expectations of potential buyers.

Lower incomes limit housing choices: Household and family incomes for Olivia are lower than statewide medians. While this income level matches up with prices for existing ownership and rental housing in the city, it does not match well to the prices needed for new housing construction.

Lower paying jobs: Many jobs in the city are at the lower end of the pay scale and these workers have limited housing choices.

Value gap deters new owner-occupied construction: Recent residential sales indicate that the median price for a home sale in the city in 2021 was approximately \$150,000. This is significantly below the comparable cost for new housing construction, which will generally be around \$250,000 or more for a stick-built single family detached home with commonly expected amenities. This creates a "value gap" between new construction and existing homes which can work against speculative building

and deter customized construction (unless owners are willing to accept a potential loss on their investments).

Low rent structure: The city's rent structure / rental pricing is relatively low for developers of new rental housing, which makes it difficult to construct new units.

Lack of new housing construction: New housing construction has been limited over the past several years (no new units have been constructed since 2020, and only five units were constructed in the previous decade).

Lack of buildable lots: The supply of buildable lots available for new housing construction inside the city is limited.

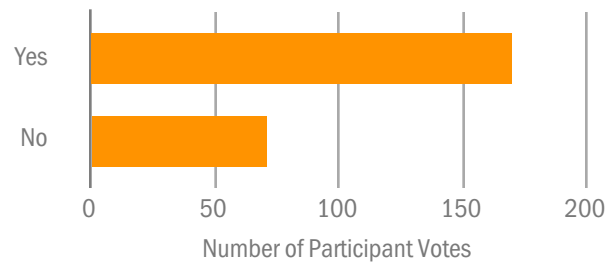
Minimum lot size and other standards tend to raise prices too high: Current minimum size standards for parcels, roadways, and other provisions are higher or more restrictive than necessary and result in construction costs per housing unit being higher than what developers are willing to finance given expected sales prices.

Lack of local developers: There are few developers, builders, and subcontractors working to develop housing in Renville County.

## 6.3 - What We Heard: Comments Received

Numerous comments were received highlighting residents' goals and need for additional housing options. A brief sample is provided here:

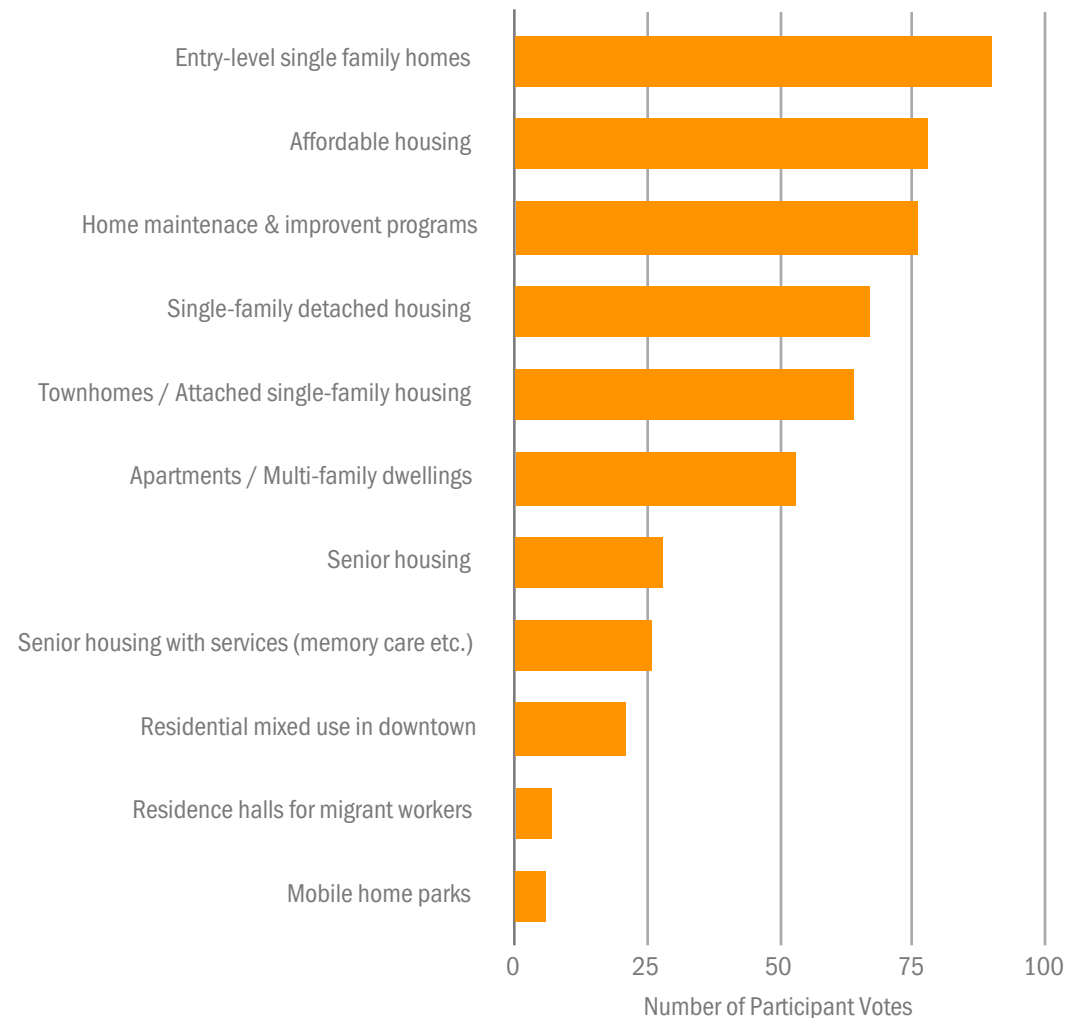
**In your opinion, is there a need for more housing in Olivia?**



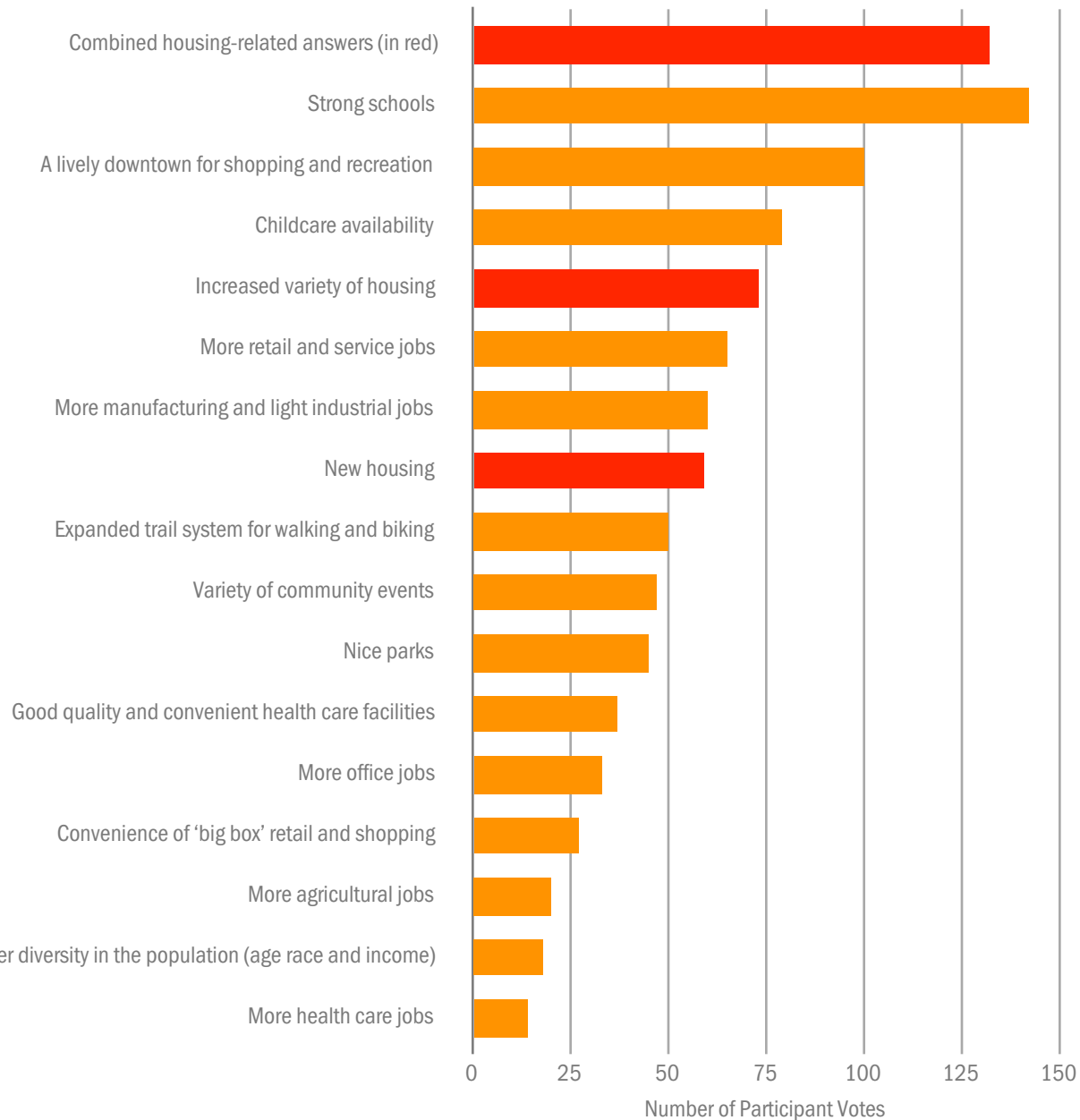
*"Develop space for new homes to be built. We have key employers - hospital, courthouse, seed companies, but many of their employees are forced to commute. We need more housing options"*

*"We have a large family, and finding an available home that didn't require major remodeling or renovation was a challenge"*

**[If need for housing = "Yes"] Which types of housing do you feel are most needed in Olivia?**



**How important do you think the following are to make Olivia a more attractive place to live for young adults and new residents?**



*"Lack of good housing in the \$100,000 to \$200,000 range and lack of activities for 18 to 30 year olds limits attracting them to the community if they have no ties here"*

*"We bought our house years ago, but now we are looking to downsize to one-level single family and there are few options"*

*"I'm disabled on a fixed income. Very hard to find housing that fits that need"*

*"The houses that were for sale on the market were very run down and not well taken care of by the current owners and just as expensive as an updated home in other towns"*



## 6.4 - Opportunities

### 6.4.1: An Integrated Homes and Neighborhoods Framework for Planning and Developing Housing

Content in this section includes materials adapted from Greater Minnesota Housing Fund (GMHF)'s "[Building Better Neighborhoods](#)" guidebook.

One of the issues most often identified when discussing housing in Olivia is the lack of affordable entry-level homes as well as the need for a greater variety of housing options (including townhomes, market rate apartments, senior housing, and access to funding opportunities for rehabilitation).

An integrated, holistic strategy that responds to the considerations in this section can help reduce development costs and increase the supply of entry-level housing with a minimum amount of public and private subsidy - and yield neighborhoods that:

- » are an asset to the surrounding community
- » mature and grow over time with minimal added costs to the homebuyers
- » provide amenities to lower-income homeowners that they otherwise may not be able to purchase later
- » maintain value over time
- » attract middle-income buyers to mixed-income developments

#### 1) Select sites located near existing infrastructure

Careful site selection can be the best, first step towards reducing overall development and long-term costs.

##### Strategies to Reduce Costs

- » Assess housing needs: Select a site that is the appropriate size to accommodate anticipated housing needs and housing types.
- » Evaluate site conditions: Select a site that is reasonably priced and suitable for residential development.
- » Consider infrastructure connections: Select a site that can be easily and economically connected to existing infrastructure and streets.

##### Strategies to Add Value

- » Consult the Comprehensive Plan: Select a site that builds on the town's plans and enhances its vision for the future.
- » Choose good community neighbors: Select a site that is located near good neighbors such as schools, shops, parks, and churches.



A variety of attractive homes can be affordably developed on smaller lots. [Free architectural plans are available from the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund \(GMHF\) >](#)

#### 2) Reduce lot sizes

Planning modest-sized lots is the most significant cost-reduction strategy for new home construction.

##### Strategies to Reduce Costs

- » Plan modest-sized lots: Plan modest-sized lots in compact neighborhoods to reduce the initial and long-term costs of land, infrastructure, and maintenance.

##### Strategies to Add Value

- » Provide neighborhood open space: Provide attractive shared open space for the entire neighborhood to enjoy.

### 3) Design efficient streets

Close attention to the layout of a neighborhood's streets will not only enhance the livability of the neighborhood, but will reduce costs significantly.

#### Strategies to Reduce Costs

- » Plan efficient streets and infrastructure: Lay out streets efficiently to reduce total length of streets and associated infrastructure.
- » Street width: Create streets of appropriate widths to accommodate all anticipated uses and traffic volumes.

#### Strategies to Add Value

- » Make neighborhood connections: Connect new neighborhoods to the surrounding community.
- » Consider alleys: Consider incorporating alleys to minimize the impact of the garage and utility areas on the front of the house.
- » Provide street amenities: Provide safe, attractive pathways for pedestrians, bicycles, and cars by including a variety of street amenities.

### 4) Implement cost-effective home designs

Home selection must carefully balance cost concerns with those of livability and appeal.

#### Strategies to Reduce Costs

- » Select economical home plans: Select home plans that are economical to build.
- » Include expansion space: Select home plans that include unfinished expansion space.
- » Match home with lot size: Select home plans that fit on modest-sized lots and can be placed to reduce infrastructure.
- » Build in volume: Use volume building to get a "quantity discount" that lowers the cost per home.
- » Use value engineering: Maximize the efficient use of materials and labor to reduce construction costs.

#### Strategies to Add Value

- » Create curb appeal: Select home plans that enhance the appearance of the home from the street.
- » Enhance connections to yard: Select home plans that maximize the connections between the home and yard.
- » Integrate mix of housing types: Include a range of home prices, sizes, styles, and colors to improve the overall appearance of the neighborhood.
- » Select experienced builders: Select builders who are knowledgeable about starter home development and use durable, high-quality methods and materials.

### 5) Leverage landscape systems and potential

With careful site design and use of cost-effective landscaping, neighborhoods with starter homes can be both affordable and attractive.

#### Strategies to Reduce Costs

- » Incorporate natural controls: Use landscape elements as alternatives to costly infrastructure.

#### Strategies to Add Value

- » Plan compact neighborhoods: Plan compact neighborhoods to preserve open space.
- » Preserve unique natural features: Inventory significant landscape features and incorporate them into plans for the new neighborhood.
- » Expand access and views: Allow the whole neighborhood to benefit from nearby landscape amenities.
- » Include landscaping: Include landscaping to increase the neighborhood's curb appeal and to create natural habitat.

## 6.4.2: Recommendations from the 2020 Renville County Housing Study

The [2020 Comprehensive Housing Needs Analysis](#) (“2020 Housing Study”) completed by Maxfield Research and Consulting for Renville County included detailed analysis and recommendations for improving rental and ownership housing conditions and development. The study includes numerous observations, recommendations, strategies, and approaches that are applicable for Olivia.

### Applicability and limitations

The study analyzes housing conditions and needs for the entire county by dividing the county into four submarkets, with the “Olivia Submarket” centered on the city. This submarket includes the following communities:

Community	Pop.	Percent
Olivia	2,408	52%
Bird Island	960	21%
Bird Island Township	223	5%
Henryville Township	143	3%
Kingman Township	200	4%
Norfolk Township	132	3%
Troy Township	420	9%
Winfield Township	163	4%
TOTAL	4,649	100%
<i>Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2021 5-year estimates</i>		

Although the study’s recommendations are for the Olivia Submarket rather than Olivia alone, given Olivia’s much larger population (more than half of the submarket’s total), prominent role as regional center and county seat, higher number of jobs and amenities, and proximity to the other submarket communities, it is likely that much more than half of the anticipated market demand for the subarea could be drawn to Olivia proper if the desired housing were available in the city.

### Anticipated demand

The study identified a potential demand in the Olivia Submarket for about 460 new housing units through 2030. The types and number of new units recommended for the subarea are:

- » For sale units: 142
- » Rental: 97
- » Senior: 221

### General observations

- » There are several voids or pressing needs within the current Olivia housing market; these exceed what would be predicted if needs were calculated looking solely to the city’s population growth trajectory
- » The Olivia community is aging; there is need for more housing options for seniors

- » While single family home sales have been steady, new construction has been minimal
- » About 70% of the people who work in Olivia live outside of Olivia - if housing meeting their needs were built and available, more of those workers employed in Olivia may elect to live in Olivia
- » The rehabilitation of older units is one of the most cost-effective ways to maintain a supply of decent, safe, and sanitary affordable housing

### Recommendations for single-family housing (for sale)

- » For housing development to occur as needed it will be important to maintain a 3 to 5-year supply of buildable lots (the current lot supply is about one year)
- » There is demand for 114 for-sale / ownership single family homes in the Olivia subarea
- » Demand exists across all price points
  - Developing entry-level single family housing is difficult given development costs and anticipated sale prices
  - Entry-level homes in the \$150,000 to \$250,000 range show the highest demand, but there is growing need for new construction / move-in homes in all price ranges

### Recommendations for multi-family housing (for sale)

- » There is demand for 28 for-sale / ownership units in multi-family housing in the subarea
- » Potential housing types include:
  - Twin homes/duplex
  - Detached townhomes
  - Townhomes/row homes
  - Patio homes/villas
- » There is currently a lack of association-maintained housing options in the subarea
  - A growing number of empty-nesters and younger seniors want age-appropriate housing that provides amenities for older adult buyers and offers a “no maintenance” option of ownership

### Recommendations for new / additional general occupancy rental housing

- » There is demand for 97 units of general occupancy rental housing in the subarea
- » Affordability characteristics for the units in demand in the Olivia subarea include
  - 60 market rate units
  - 27 affordable units
  - 10 subsidized units
- » Generally, there is demand from all income levels and household types for a wide range of general occupancy rental housing product types

### Recommendations for senior housing

- » There is demand for 221 units of senior housing in the Olivia subarea
  - These units are not included in the totals for for-sale or general occupancy rentals
  - Unit types include both for-sale and rental units
- » Characteristics for the senior housing units in demand in the Olivia subarea include:
  - 65 market-rate Active Adult renter occupied
  - 43 market-rate Active Adult owner occupied
  - 58 affordable Active Adult rental units
  - 8 subsidized Active Adult rental units
  - 17 Independent Living units
  - 15 Assisted Living units
  - 15 Memory Care units



*Spring Creek Townhomes in Northfield. Image courtesy of Greater Minnesota Housing Fund (GMHF).*



### 6.4.3: Housing Rehabilitation



Improving the condition of Olivia housing is an important priority for renters, owners and City leaders.

Housing rehabilitation programs to help homeowners improve or maintain their home's condition was one of the "Top 3" housing priorities received in the plan's engagement.

Approximately 250 houses in Olivia are estimated to require minor repair (the house is in generally good condition, requiring only one major improvement or several smaller ones). Houses in this condition are good candidates for housing rehabilitation programs.

This plan recommends expansion of existing programs and partnerships (including with [United Community Action Partnership](#), [Renville County HRA](#), [USDA Rural Development](#), [Minnesota Housing](#) and others) to increase the availability and reach of rehabilitation programs and funds.

### 6.4.4 - Accessory Dwelling Units

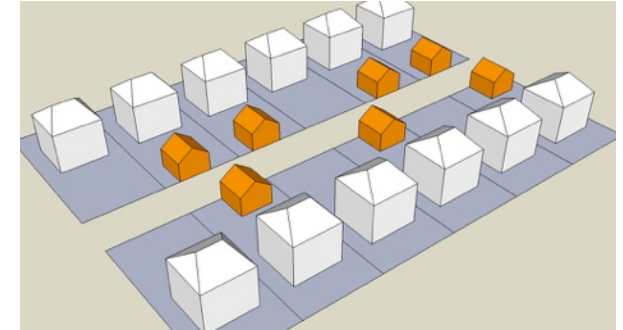


An accessory dwelling unit ("ADU"), also known as a "carriage house" or a "granny flat," is an additional unit of housing - with its own cooking, sleeping, and sanitation facilities - located on the same lot as a single- or two-family home.

An ADU can be housed within a separate structure (typical for a carriage house), or within the primary structure on the lot (as in a duplex).

Allowing the construction of ADUs on owner-occupied lots and with appropriate siting and architectural controls, can accomplish several goals:

- » Increase rental housing opportunities by providing an increased number of apartments available for rent
- » Increase homeownership opportunities by providing potential homeowners with an additional source of income that lowers their effective mortgage payments



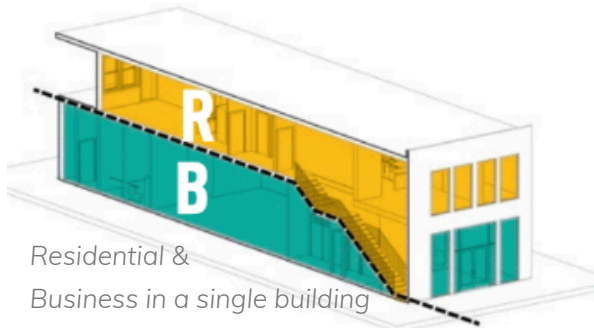
*Carriage housing (shown in orange) along an alleyway.*

- » Increase safety in area neighborhoods by providing additional "eyes on the street," especially along alleys
- » Bring more residents to a community, helping support existing and potential businesses
- » Provide attractive housing options for area residents who no longer need a full-sized home but would like to continue to live in their neighborhoods

For these reasons, ADUs are strongly supported by organizations working to increase housing options like the [Family Housing Fund](#) and [AARP](#).

This plan recommends allowing for their development in homesteaded, owner-occupied lots in all Olivia residential districts.

### 6.4.5 - Housing in Downtown



Downtown is a key location in Olivia - both for its potential role in catalyzing overall community improvement, and for the multiple assets, amenities and attractions it can offer new and prospective residents (including its walkable fabric and the convenient access it offers to key community destinations).

Developing housing in downtown will increase the area's overall vitality by increasing the number of potential patrons for local business, by supporting growth for downtown retail and entertainment venues (which will benefit the entire Olivia community), and by providing additional types of residential options for young people, seniors and families.

There are several sites where existing buildings can be rehabilitated or where new housing can be constructed in and around downtown. Introducing new, high quality housing options there will support key community vitality goals and invite new residents to the city.

### 6.4.6 - Introducing New Types of Housing



Introducing new types of housing to the city can help address a variety of issues, including availability of rental and ownership housing, affordability, and ease of entry into ownership.

Some types identified by the [2020 Renville Co. Housing Study](#), as well as those currently in use in many Minnesota communities include:

- » Townhomes: Also known as patio housing, these are compact, attached housing units, often sited in walkable locations and offering “no maintenance” ownership
- » “Missing Middle” Housing: Introducing additional duplex, triplex and small-building apartment options are one way of increasing the number of living units within established neighborhoods while respecting the scale of surrounding housing
- » Modular housing: Factory-built components assembled on a conventional single-family lot (permanent construction indistinguishable from site-built housing, and different from manufactured or mobile housing)

- » Accessory housing units: Additional, separate living units in a single family lot or structure

Expanding the variety of housing types and options in Olivia will address currently existing demand and position the City to attract new residents - including from the pool of over 950 workers who commute into the city for work everyday.



*Courtyard homes can be an affordable and attractive option for both seniors and young couples.*

### 6.4.7 - Transition Opportunities

*“We bought our house years ago, but now we are looking to downsize to one-level single family and there are few options”*

*~ Comment collected through the plan’s community survey*

An important mechanism for bringing affordable entry-level homes for young families into a housing market is by the transitioning of seniors and “empty nesters” who are living in those homes into smaller condo or apartment units that are better suited for their current needs (fewer rooms, reduced maintenance, walk access to daily destinations). As they move, their former housing becomes available to those young families.

One reason for the lack of affordable entry-level homes for young families in Olivia is that many seniors and empty nesters who are ready to transition into a smaller unit can’t find an available, high quality condominium or apartment unit where they can move and still remain in town.

Developing senior-friendly housing options in Olivia will address their needs as well as the needs of young families, and help setup these opportunities for healthy transition in the city’s housing market.

### 6.4.8 - Housing Authority

Olivia has a Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) in place. An HRA is a legal public entity, accountable to city government, which undertakes housing, commercial and business development activities. An HRA can authorize the acquisition of real estate, housing and commercial loans and grants, and the issuance of bonds.

A community, through its HRA, can become its own developer, and can, in addition to developing, administering and maintaining affordable housing, lead projects to advance economic development and redevelopment priorities for the community.

Olivia also has an active and staffed [Economic Development Authority \(EDA\)](#). An EDA can be enabled to function as a Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), allowing it to manage and develop housing, and to administer and maintain affordable housing.

A community can have an EDA working in both economic development and housing, or elect to have a separate HRA to manage its housing programs and investments. For a community the size of Olivia, a single authority may be sufficient. Several excellent resources are available from the [League of Minnesota Cities >](#)

### Meeting the housing needs of older adults

More than 1 out of 5 (22%) of Olivia’s population is currently over the age of 65 (this is about 40% higher than Minnesota overall (16%)). This proportion is projected to continue growing over the next 20 years as baby boomers age.

Housing opportunities will need to evolve to match the needs of this demographic group. For example, it will be important to provide options for housing units that are smaller and easier to maintain than traditional single-family homes. It will also be important to develop related “wraparound” health and assistance services, including meals, housekeeping, transportation, and health care options.

As the population ages and as “young senior” retirees who grew up in the area return from larger cities, there may be an increased demand for alternative, age-appropriate living arrangements.

There is great opportunity for coordination and synergy between the City, for-profit and nonprofit developers, healthcare service providers, and community service agencies - including [Olivia Hospital & Clinic](#) and other local healthcare providers.



## 6.5 - Recommendations

### Goal 1: Integrated framework for planning and developing housing

- » Strategy 1.1: Reexamine and update the City's Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to reflect an integrated framework for planning and developing housing that reduces development costs and includes consideration of the following elements:
  - Prioritizing sites located near existing infrastructure
  - Reducing minimum lot sizes for new development and reducing minimum required roadway cross-sections
  - Adopting a set of cost-effective home designs to aid developers as a starting point for the development of new housing
  - Leveraging landscape systems as part of neighborhood and community amenities
- » Strategy 1.2: Manage an adequate supply of buildable lots
  - Work with current land owners or consider purchase of available land at desirable locations to plat and place on the market for development
  - Work to maintain a 3 to 5 year supply of development-ready lots
  - Consider acquisition, demolition, and reuse / infill development of parcels with dilapidated buildings

- » Strategy 1.3: Partner with recognized Greater Minnesota housing development organizations like [Greater Minnesota Housing Fund](#) and developers with successful experience in developing housing for similar communities to continually improve City regulations and practices to address and improve housing supply and conditions
- » Strategy 1.4: Developer pipeline
  - Regularly convene developers working in Renville County and surrounding areas to highlight development opportunities in Olivia
  - Support residents' role in rehabilitation and development of housing, including through organizations like the [Incremental Developers Alliance](#)

### Goal 2: Housing Study

- » Strategy 2.1: Adopt recommendations of the [Renville County 2020 Housing Study](#)
  - Use the recommendations as a foundation for City actions to address and improve housing supply and conditions
  - Work with Renville County to refine and adapt recommendations from their study to Olivia proper (instead of submarket)

- » Strategy 2.2: Olivia Housing Study
  - Consider commissioning an Olivia-specific Housing Study to develop and maintain an accurate and up-to-date view of housing issues, potential solutions, and actions to improve housing supply and conditions

### Goal 3: Encourage development of a variety of housing types

- » Strategy 3.1: Align City zoning and land use policies to support and advance a wider range of housing options
  - Update the City's Zoning Ordinance, and administer it and the newly updated land use map to support development of a variety of housing types throughout all areas of the community
  - Allow a mix of housing within each residential zoning district to provide a range of living options by size, type, and price within each neighborhood
  - Ensure a mix of housing types in new residential growth areas using a [Master Plan or Planned Unit Development](#) approach to define the expected housing types
  - Implement the Future Land Use Map and the recommendations presented in this



Comprehensive Plan to guide the community toward a range of housing types and densities

- » Strategy 3.2: Affordable single family housing
  - Work with partners to identify and pursue strategies that facilitate the availability of affordable entry-level single family housing, including through rehabilitation, transition opportunities, and new construction
- » Strategy 3.3: Housing for seniors and elderly
  - Partner with the [Renville County HRA/EDA](#) and [Olivia Hospital & Clinic](#) to identify and partner with a developer of specialty age-appropriate housing for the elderly
  - Include focus on developing one-level, accessible housing for seniors and people with limited mobility
- » Strategy 3.4: Allow development of [accessory dwelling units \(ADUs\)](#)
  - Support attached and detached secondary dwellings on single-family lots to allow a greater variety of housing, living arrangements, and affordability
- » Strategy 3.5: Track progress toward goals
  - Expand the supply of new housing types in real numbers and as a percentage of the city's overall housing supply
  - Set a goal for each type of housing needed in the city, and track yearly progress towards achieving those goals

## Goal 4: Identify priority areas for residential infill and new housing

- » Strategy 4.1: Support residential infill
  - Encourage and enable new housing development in existing residential areas to diversify the age and type of housing available in neighborhoods
  - Provide information about and examples of residential infill opportunities to community members, property owners, developers and other stakeholders
  - Encourage residential infill on disinvested properties where development activity would upgrade the quality of the property
- » Strategy 4.2: Identify areas where new housing development should occur
  - Determine the type and form of housing for each area and zone the area accordingly
  - Support infrastructure and development in and near residential areas that are compatible with residential quality of life
  - Clearly identify and communicate plans for future residential areas to community members, property owners, developers, and other stakeholders
- » Strategy 4.3: Actively pursue residential growth and development in the downtown
  - Identify key sites for residential and mixed-use development in downtown

- Work with property owners of identified sites to consider residential occupancy or development
- Seek out developers to lead residential and mixed-use projects in downtown

## Goal 5: Ensure a wide array of quality workforce housing options

- » Strategy 5.1: Support the development and preservation of affordable housing
  - Recent data shows that more than one in three (41%) of all Olivia renters are cost burdened, meaning there is a need for strategies that improve affordability for all community members
  - Work with the [Renville County HRA/EDA](#) and private developers to ensure that there are sufficient units accessible at a range of price points for all current and future residents
- » Strategy 5.2: Regional [lease-to-purchase program](#)
  - Work with the [Renville County HRA/EDA](#) and foundation partners to investigate and consider the feasibility of establishing and participating in a [regional lease to purchase program](#) which could facilitate access to older, existing, and more affordable housing
  - To promote equitable and transparent outcomes, a public or non-profit agency is

needed to implement and help fund the program

- » Strategy 5.3: Continue to collaborate with local employers to support employment retention and growth through the provision of housing that matches workforce needs
- » Strategy 5.4: Ensuring non-discrimination
  - Review and update rental license permitting language as needed to ensure non-discrimination against individuals and families seeking housing

## Goal 6: Encourage repair, maintenance, and upgrades of existing residential buildings and properties

- » Strategy 6.1: Obtain and designate specific funding for home maintenance and repairs
  - Determine how much funding is needed city-wide for home improvement and repair programs, grants and loans
  - Identify and seek all available funding sources from city, county, state, foundations, housing organizations, and lending institutions
- » Strategy 6.2: Provide funding and manage programs for home maintenance and repair
  - Collaborate with partners as needed to fund and operate housing programs that assist property owners with repairing,

modernizing, and weatherization of existing housing

- Work with partners as needed to develop a community consortium focused on the rehabilitation of existing homes for low to moderate income homeowners
- Provide clear and accessible information to the public on the sources, who qualifies, and how to apply
- Include Spanish-language resources to facilitate access to these resources for the city's sizable Spanish-speaking population
- » Strategy 6.3: Promote home maintenance and repair
  - Find partners to help host an annual "home remodeling showcase" or similar
  - Partner with the Renville County Register and other local media to feature Olivia-specific maintenance and remodeling stories
  - Work with the [Olivia Chamber of Commerce](#) to organize a "home and garden fair" with local businesses
  - Include Spanish-language resources to facilitate access to these resources for the City's sizable Spanish-speaking population
- » Strategy 6.3: Building permit data
  - Track annual building permit activities to identify the geography and extent of

housing improvements, and use this information to better focus policies and programs to encourage residential rehabilitation where it is most needed

- » Strategy 6.4: Building code enforcement
  - Work collaboratively with property owners, including landlords and homeowners, to bring all residential properties up to code
  - Includes inspection enforcement at point of sale, rental housing inspection, and creating individual property owner plans to address violations and achieve code-appropriate property standards
- » Strategy 6.5: Housing preservation and rehabilitation
  - Identify homes in need of rehabilitation and preservation, and work with owners and tenants to promote access to the [Rehabilitation Loan/Emergency and Accessibility Loan Program provided by MN Housing](#), which provides rehabilitation loans up to \$37,500 on up to 15-year terms
  - Work with partners to preserve historically significant houses and other properties

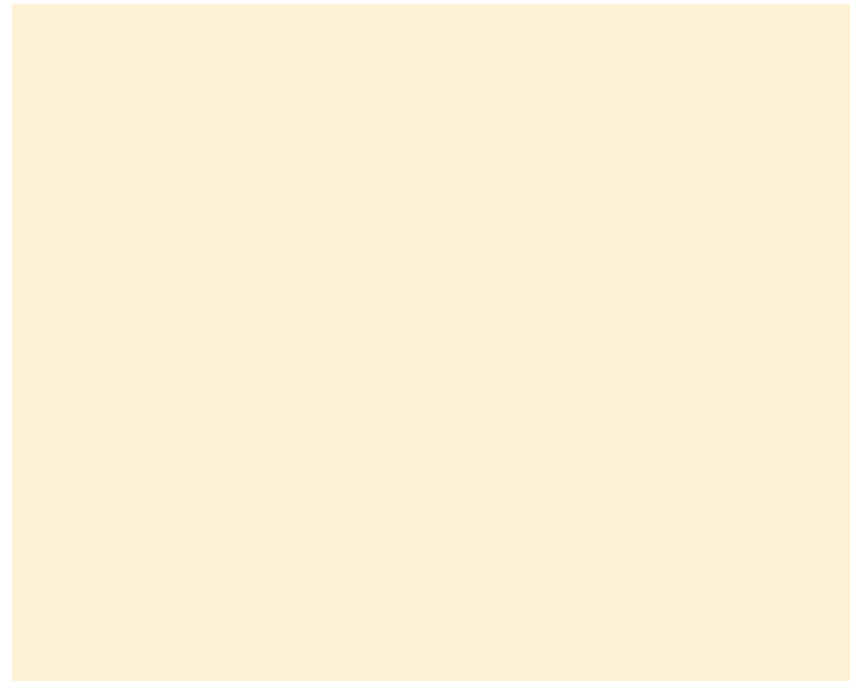
## **Goal 7: Proactively market Olivia as a great place for developing new housing**

- » Strategy 7.1: Seek out high quality housing developers to do the types of housing projects the City is seeking
- » Strategy 7.2: Create marketing information that communicates the City's vision for new housing areas
  - Include information on priority sites, type of housing desired, current community assets, and the City's current housing demand
- » Strategy 7.3: Developer roundtables
  - Regularly convene developers working in Renville County and surrounding areas to highlight development opportunities in Olivia

# 7 Transportation

How people and goods travel within and to and from Olivia is a major component of residents' daily experience and a contributor to the city's economic prospects and success.

Safe, efficient, cost effective, and healthy and sustainable transportation is a key goal of this plan.





## 7.1 - Introduction

Mobility (“the ability to move freely and easily”) offers a useful perspective for thinking about transportation issues and decisions. In Olivia, this means looking at transportation through two lenses: through the lens of resident mobility, and through the lens of commercial and industrial needs and infrastructure.

### Vision and Goals

#### Future Vision

Olivia's transportation system provides safe and efficient movement for all kinds of users - from residents and visitors who walk, bike, or drive within town to agriculture and industry operators who rely on the efficient movement of freight and commodities. Olivia supports active living and active transportation, adapts its infrastructure to an aging population, proactively maintains its existing transportation assets, and is fully integrated with road, rail, and air networks to support its businesses and industry, expanding its reach and connection with people and markets.

#### Goals

- » Develop a comprehensive, integrated plan for transportation investment that creates a connected network for all modes of transportation
- » Meet the freight and trucking needs of key local industries
- » Institute a proactive maintenance and repaving program for aging roads
- » Develop a connected network of walking and biking facilities offering transportation and recreational benefits and connecting key community destinations, including schools, parks, and the city's downtown
- » Leverage access to TC&W rail to facilitate development of rail-related industrial and warehousing opportunities
- » Improve the interface between US Highway 212 and Olivia's downtown to continue providing pass-through mobility while addressing pressing needs for livability, economic development, and tourism



## 7.2 - Existing Conditions

### Pedestrian Network

Walking is the most elemental form of transportation, free and accessible for people through the widest range of ages, incomes, and physical abilities. It is also a foundation for individual health and well-being.

Olivia's pedestrian network is generally fair but incomplete. Even in older parts of the city, sidewalks along all four faces of a city block is the exception rather than the rule. Newer areas have very little sidewalk coverage and are not well integrated into walking routes or networks.

Some locations in Olivia (including downtown along 212, some neighborhoods, and newer commercial areas) present difficult conditions for walking due to high speed traffic, lack of sidewalks, and/or disconnected land uses.

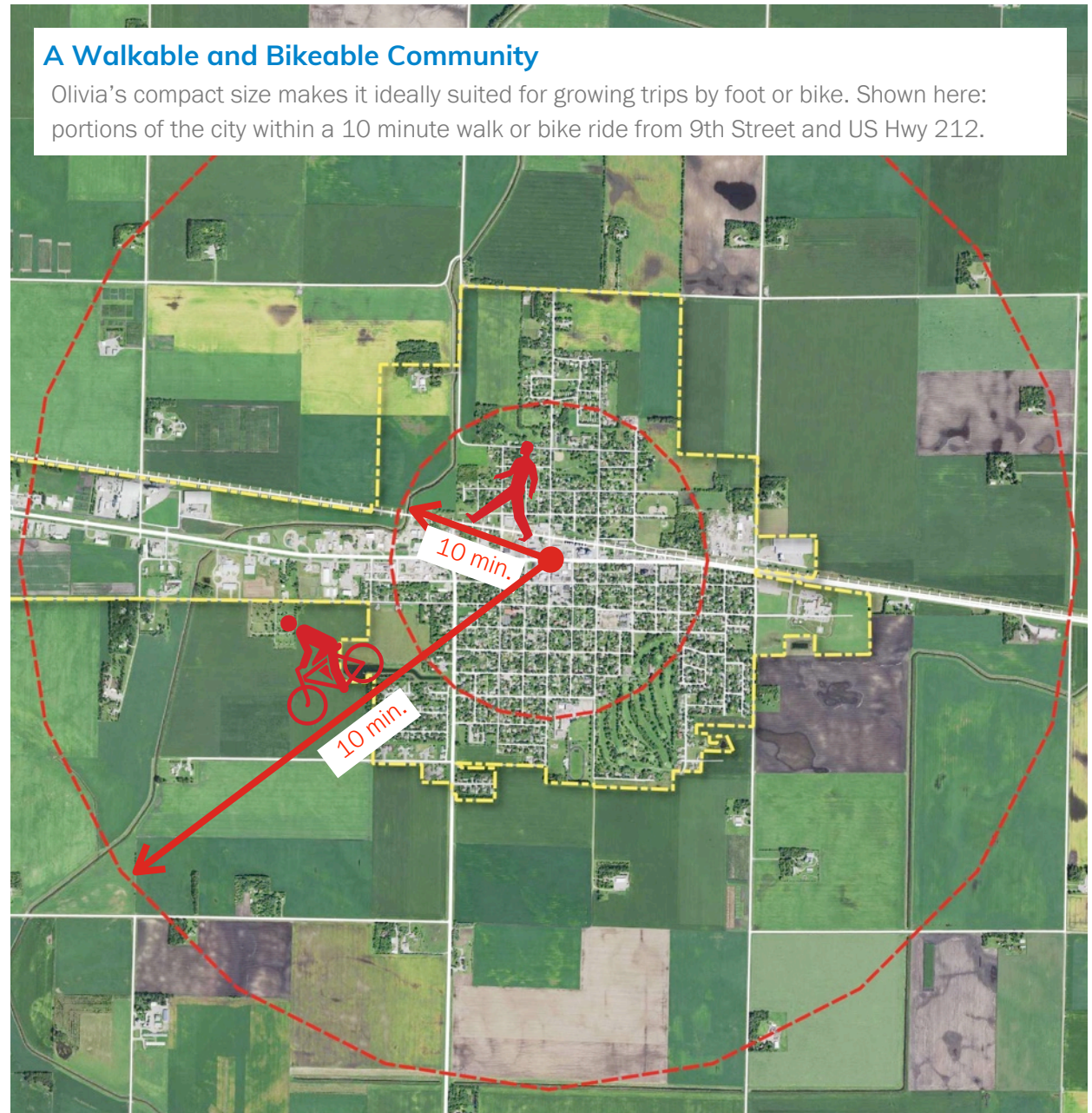
### Bicycle Network

Bicycling is a useful, healthful and affordable transportation option offering mobility and connectivity for residents of all ages. In a city the size of Olivia, it can provide practical connection to everyday needs.

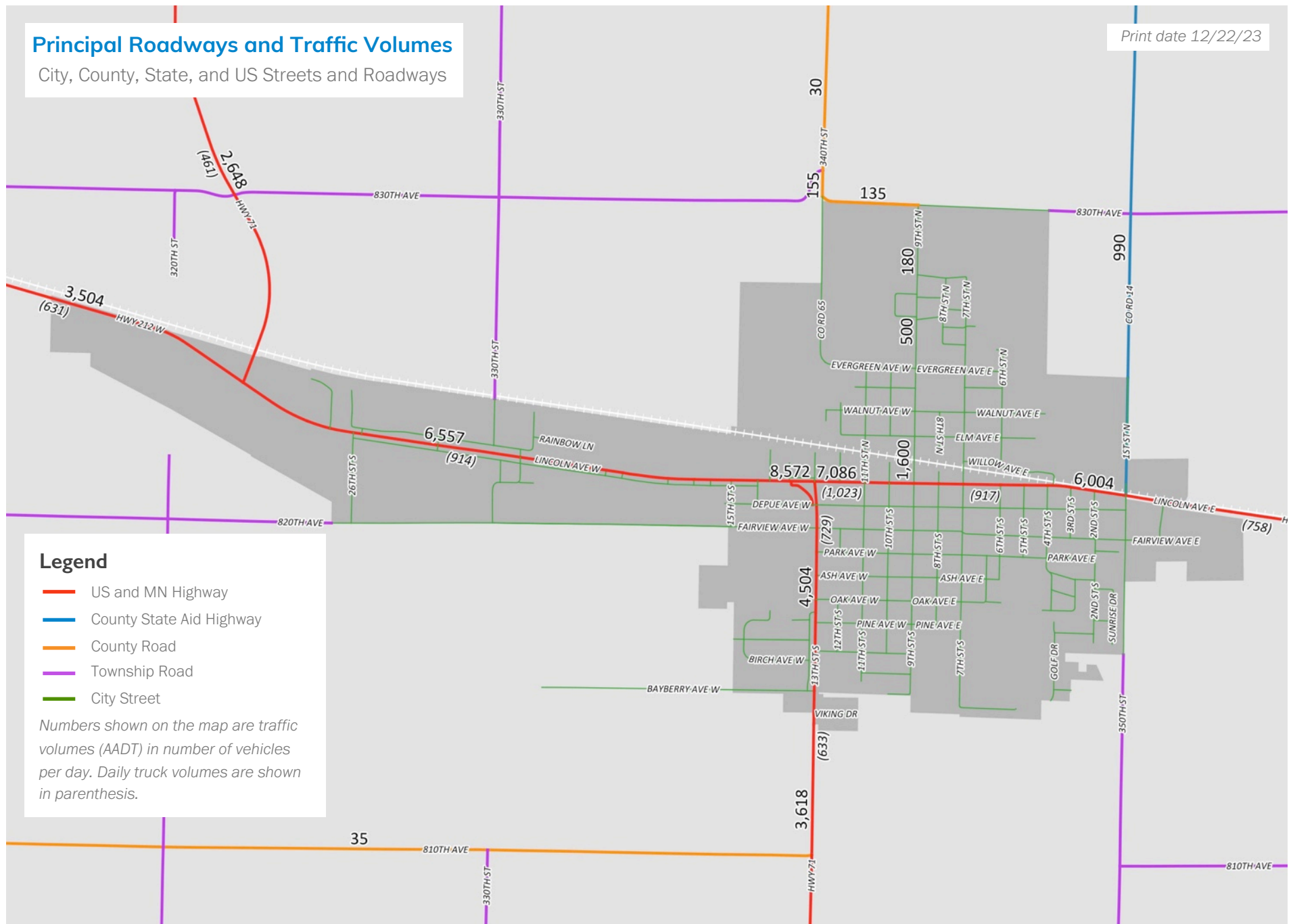
Olivia currently offers a limited bicycle network, with trail segments provided only along the southern edge of the city. No additional bicycle lanes or other facilities are currently provided.

#### A Walkable and Bikeable Community

Olivia's compact size makes it ideally suited for growing trips by foot or bike. Shown here: portions of the city within a 10 minute walk or bike ride from 9th Street and US Hwy 212.







## Transit System



Public transit is a key component of mobility for individuals and households without access to an automobile or who are not able to drive.

Public transit in Olivia is provided by [Central Community Transit \(CCT\)](#), which operates within Kandiyohi, Renville, and Meeker counties. CCT has a fleet of 32 buses and more than 50 drivers. It offers:

- » Demand Responsive / Dial-A-Ride service (customers call to schedule their rides; buses pick up and drop off passengers at locations specified by the customers)
- » Fixed Flexible Route service (pick up or stop within 3/4 of scheduled stop)
- » Senior Transportation (transporting seniors 60 years of age or older to medical appointments, groceries, errands, etc.)
- » Non-Emergency Medical Transport through medical assistance and managed care contracts

## Roadway Network

### Motor Vehicle and Truck Cargo Mobility

Two major highways provide regional connectivity for Olivia: US Highway 212 (the old Yellowstone Trail) and US Highway 71. These highways carry the majority of automobile and truck traffic into and through the city, and also connect to Willmar, Granite Falls, Redwood Falls, the Twin Cities, and other communities.

Within city limits, there are approximately 32 centerline miles of streets. Generally, traffic volumes in the city's major roadways are moderate - all roadways in the city carry traffic levels well below 10,000 motor vehicles per day (vpd), and only US Hwy 212 exceeds 5,000 motor vehicles per day. Generally, a two-lane roadway (one lane each way) is considered adequate for carrying up to 10,000 vpd.

The percentage of trucks as a portion of total traffic is relatively high along both US Hwy 212 and US Hwy 71 (about 15%).

### State Aid Routes

County Road 14 just north of US Hwy 212 is included within the County State Aid Highway (CSAH) system that provides state aid funding support for commercial and industrial traffic. Olivia is not part of the Municipal State Aid Street (MSAS) system as the city's population is below the program's threshold of 5,000 people.

### Highway 212

US Highway 212 runs east-west through Olivia, part of an historic route that runs for almost 1,000 miles from Yellowstone National Park to the Twin Cities. In Minnesota, it runs for 160 miles and connects dozens of rural towns, from Montevideo, Granite Falls, and Olivia to Glencoe, Norwood Young America, and the southwest suburbs of Minneapolis.

The highway plays an important role in the movement of agricultural products and other goods from Greater Minnesota. Varying from four lanes to two lanes, in 2022 the highway underwent an expansion to four lanes from Eden Prairie to Chaska.

### Highway 71

US Highway 71 is a major north-south highway extending for over 1,500 miles from Louisiana to International Falls in northern Minnesota. Largely configured as a rural highway in the state, it crosses Olivia just west of downtown.

Though it carries about half the total volume of traffic as US Hwy 212, it carries a slightly larger proportion of truck traffic and facilitates the movement of agricultural products and other goods as well as connection to nearby communities like Willmar and Morton.



## Railway Network



TC&W (“Twin Cities & Western”) Railroad is the largest short line railroad in Minnesota and operates over 360 miles of track between the Twin Cities and Milbank, South Dakota. TC&W interchanges with BNSF Railway; Canadian Pacific Railway; Union Pacific; and the Canadian National Railway.

The railway offers a key transportation link for Olivia industrial activities and agriculture. It is an important asset for the city with great potential for additional commercial and industrial opportunity.

For example, city- and county-owned lands along the rail line may be used to develop transloading or warehousing / storage facilities serving key markets like the Twin Cities. In addition, current and prospective industrial users benefit from a low cost, high capacity link connecting their products to distribution throughout the nation.

## Airport & Flight Network



The Olivia Regional Airport (airport code KOVL) is owned by the City of Olivia and operated by [Olivia Flying Service](#).

The airport is located at the western end of the city, near the junction of US Hwy 212 and US Hwy 71. The airport has a single runway 3,500 feet long and 75 feet wide oriented northwest to southeast (runway designations 11 and 29).

The airport is used by approximately 90 flights per week, is a public use general aviation airport, and is base for eleven single-engine airplanes. It hosts an FAA licensed agricultural and light aircraft repair center.

In addition to its important role for agricultural flying, aircraft repair, and corporate travel for Olivia businesses, the airport has additional potential for economic development activities like flight training, specialized cargo, additional aircraft hangars and basing, and growing its small aircraft repair services to a larger area, including the Twin Cities metro.

## Planning for Walking, Biking, and Active Transportation

Olivia has completed three key planning and policy documents for improving walking and biking in the city. These documents provide it with useful tools for obtaining funding support for implementation.

These documents are:

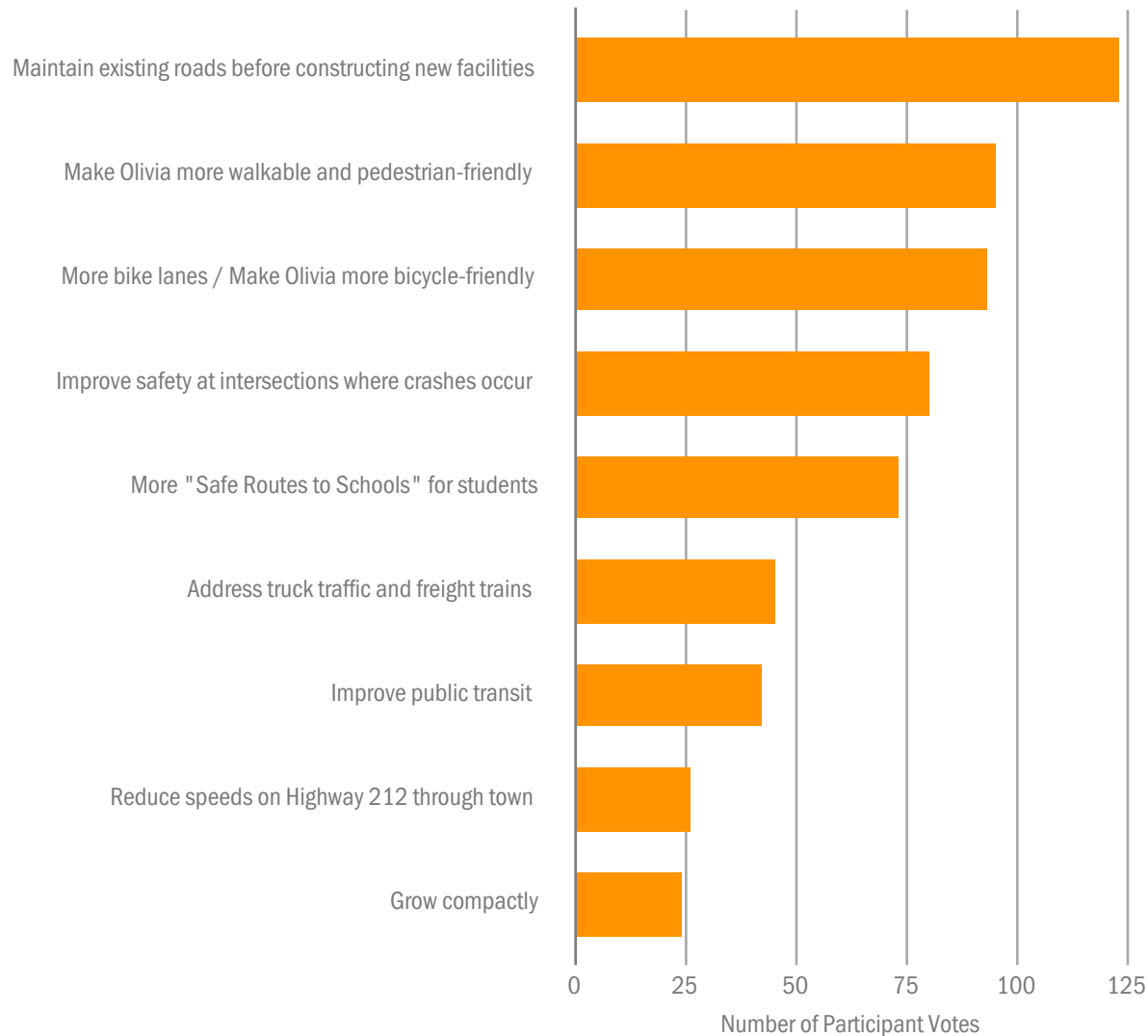
- 1) The **Complete Streets Resolution (2015)** outlines the City’s commitment to consider the needs of people walking or biking anytime that transportation infrastructure is improved or built.
- 2) The **Safe Routes to School Plan (2015)** identifies a set of programming and infrastructure improvements to make student walking and biking to school a safer and more inviting activity for children and parents.
- 3) The **Active Living Plan (2017)** identifies a network of walking and biking facilities and improvements, and identifies key steps and partners for implementation.

**This plan uses the recommendations in those document to identify specific opportunities for walking and biking improvements for the city’s future.**

## 7.3 - What We Heard: Comments Received

A safe, efficient and connected transportation system for all modes is a priority for Olivia residents. Here's a small sample of the comments we received about transportation:

### What should Olivia's transportation goals be for the near future?



*"Slow the traffic down on 71!! 40 is too fast especially with crosswalks!!"*

*"Fix the roads on the Northside of town"*

*"... bike trails, not just around the city of Olivia, but between Olivia and other destinations"*

*"Enforce the speed limits that are posted on Hwy 212 entering from the west and east end of town"*

## 7.4 - Opportunities

### 7.4.1: Streetscape Improvements in Downtown along 9th Street and along US Highway 212



*Medians and streetscape completed as part of a MnDOT project for Highway 169 in Saint Peter, MN.*

US Highway 212 is a key connector between Olivia and the rest of the state, with thousands of people traveling along it everyday. There is great opportunity to dramatically increase visitation and economic development in Olivia's downtown by improving its current streetscape.

Priority locations would include 9th Street in downtown between Depue Avenue and the railroad, and along US Hwy 212 / Lincoln Avenue between 5th Street (the Renville County Courthouse) and 11th Street (Olivia City Hall).

Working closely with MnDOT and other partners can lead to improvements similar to those that have already been made in other Minnesota communities where a state highway cuts through a community's main street.



## 7.4.2 - Opportunity: Growing Olivia's Bicycle Network

Community engagement identified great community interest for expanding bicycle facilities and options in Olivia.

The city is well-positioned for success as it has three key policy pieces in place:

- 1) Complete Streets Resolution (2015)
- 2) Safe Routes to School Plan (2015)
- 3) Active Living Plan (2017)

Leveraging these documents can help the city grow its network by accessing state and county grants and other funding opportunities.

Growing the city's network will connect residents to schools, parks, businesses and other destinations, attract bicycle tourists, and enhance quality of life year-round.

### Building the City's Bicycle Network

The city's future bicycle network should include the following types of facilities:

- » Shared-use paths (trails)
- » Separated / protected bicycle lanes
- » Neighborhood Slow Streets

A brief summary of each, along with supportive elements of bicycle parking and wayfinding, is provided in this section.

### Shared-Use Paths / Trails



*Shared-use paths can be used by people walking or bicycling.*

A shared-use path (SUP or trail) provides a shared space for people walking and biking that is separate from motor vehicle traffic. Shared-use paths work better when they include fewer intersections with motorized traffic.

Shared-use paths are often provided along busier roadways when on-street bicycle facilities are not desirable, through parks or scenic routes, and at locations along streams and railroads. SUPs provide comfortable separation from motor vehicle traffic.

Olivia recently completed construction of a new trail along its southern perimeter, with plans to construct an extension of the trail connecting to Pond Park.

### Cycletrack or Protected Bicycle Lanes



*A barrier-separated protected bicycle lane in downtown Glenwood MN (population 2,560).*

Separated / protected bicycle lanes (also known as "cycletracks") are on-street or roadway-adjacent facilities that:

- 1) Offer a designated space for bicycle riders
- 2) Are separated from motor-vehicle travel lanes by a buffer distance and by vertical elements like bollards, planters, or medians

By separating bicycle riders from cars they increase rider and driver comfort, and invite greater use of bicycling by a wider range of the population. This is the type of facility that would be recommended for areas in and around Olivia's downtown.

Separated bicycle lanes can also be quickly and inexpensively deployed using temporary materials including plastic bollards, paint, and reflective roadway tape.



## Neighborhood Slow Streets



*Pavement markings help communicate that bicycle riders will be also be using the street for their travel.*

Neighborhood Slow Streets (sometimes known as Neighborhood Greenways or Bike Boulevards) are residential streets that are lightly modified to calm motor-vehicle traffic and prioritize bicycle travel.

They work best along residential streets and other locations where traffic counts are below 3,000 motor vehicles per day.

Special traffic-calming measures (like bump-outs, traffic circles, speed tables, or others) help keep cars at speeds that are compatible with safe and comfortable conditions for people walking and biking (25 mph or less).

Because traffic levels in Olivia are low along most of its residential streets, this kind of treatment can help to inexpensively grow the city's bicycle network.

## Bicycle parking



*The availability of ample bicycle parking helps increase bicycle travel to community destinations.*

Visible, secure bicycle parking is essential for making bicycling a viable travel option to destinations around Olivia. The two best options for bicycle parking are the “Inverted U” and “Post and loop” types.

Parking areas should be visible and prominent, located near a building's main entry, and located clearly and conveniently along bicycle riders' natural path to access a site.

Key locations include schools, parks, and commercial nodes like the city's downtown. Destinations near bicycle trails should include bicycle parking.

## Wayfinding



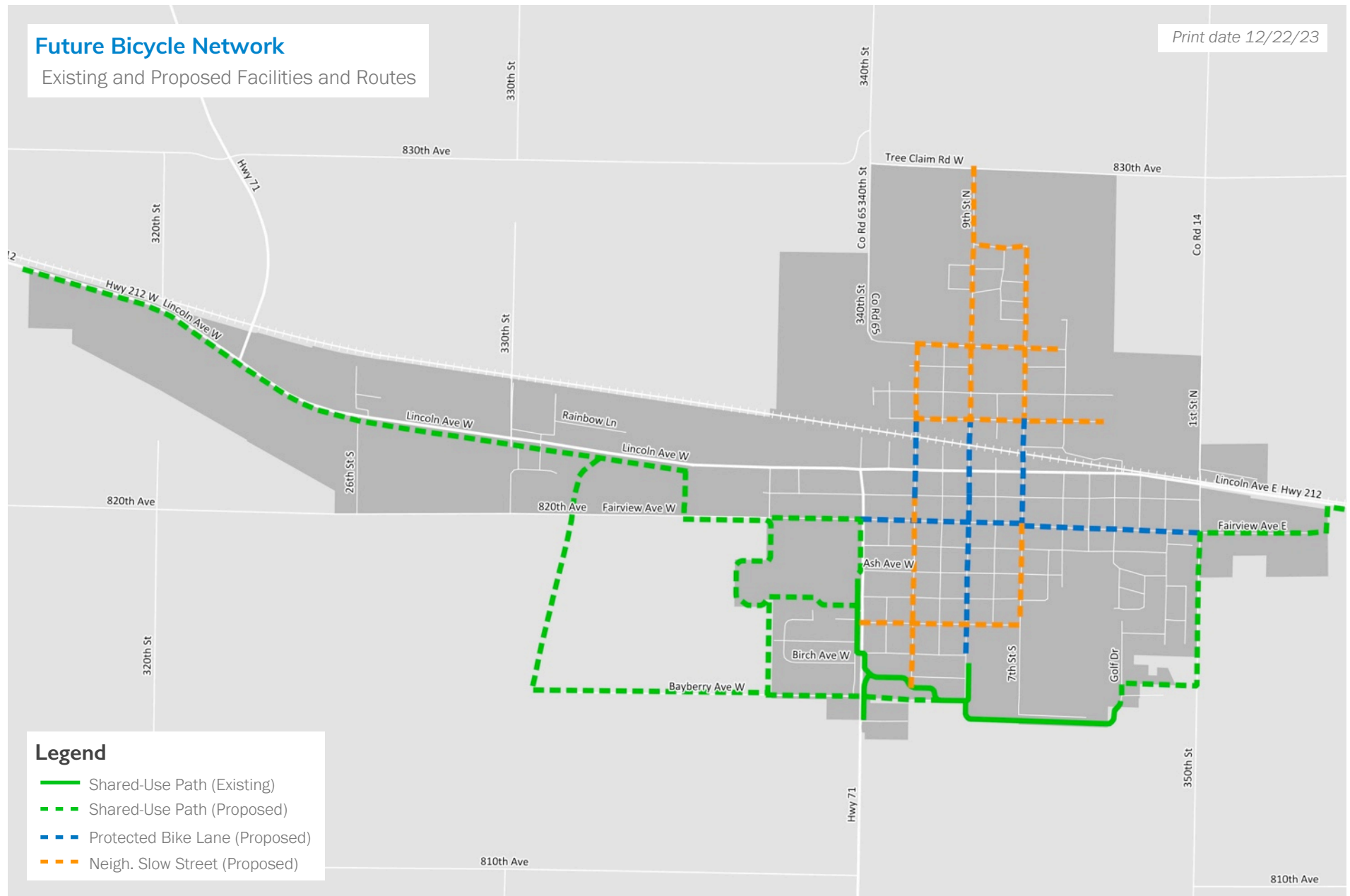
*Useful wayfinding signs include clear destination, direction, and distance information.*

A comprehensive and user-friendly wayfinding system is a key component of successful pedestrian and bicycle networks. Fortunately, a working wayfinding system can be deployed quickly and inexpensively.

Wayfinding elements include signs, markings, maps, and informational kiosks. They help make a bicycle network easier to understand and encourage residents and visitors to use the walking and biking facilities that are provided to connect to local destinations, including businesses and parks.

Over the long term, a comprehensive identity for the trails and bikeways in Olivia (perhaps connected to the history of the Yellowstone Trail) can be used to brand the city's system and communicate its attractiveness to travelers.

## 7.4.2 - (continued): Biking in Olivia



### 7.4.3 - Capitalizing on Rail



TC&W (“Twin Cities & Western”) Railroad operates over 360 miles of track between the Twin Cities and Milbank SD, interchanging freight cars with all the principal railways serving national and international destinations.

The railway offers a key transportation asset for Olivia industrial activities and agriculture. The city’s location along the line, along with available land for potential warehousing and transloading facilities, can help it capitalize on its location to offer efficient and inexpensive shipment of products and materials from existing and potential local industries to reach markets across North America.

Opportunities include development of small or medium intermodal cargo facilities for two-way truck-to-rail / rail-to-truck freight movement serving cities in the region - which could serve as an engine for economic development by creating or growing logistics clusters, reducing costs, and encouraging businesses to expand or relocate to the city.

### 7.4.4 - Airport Opportunities



Olivia Regional Airport offers great opportunities for economic development and transportation connectivity. Owned by the City of Olivia, the airport is used by about 90 flights per week, and serves as base for eleven aircraft.

The airport plays an important role in the area’s agricultural economy through services related to agricultural flying and aircraft repair, hosting an FAA licensed agricultural and light aircraft repair center. Additionally, it offers convenient access for corporate travel for existing and potential Olivia businesses.

The airport offers great potential for additional commercial activity and economic development through opportunities like flight training, hauling of specialized cargo (small package freight for high-value and/or time-sensitive goods), construction of additional aircraft hangars (several ready to build lots are available), and growing its small aircraft repair services to reach a larger area, including the Twin Cities metro.

### 7.4.5 - Yellowstone Trail



The Yellowstone Trail, one of the original auto trail routes in the US, got its start in 1912 as the Twin Cities-Aberdeen-Yellowstone Park Trail Association. Michael Dowling, Olivia’s most famous son, was instrumental in extending the trail and making it a reality.

Connecting dozens of communities across its extent, it runs through the heart of rural towns across the Midwest. The Yellowstone Trail (now US Hwy 212) has a rich historic legacy and a growing number of plans for catalyzing tourism and visits across the landscape.

As the home of one of its most prominent champions, Olivia has a great opportunity to benefit from destination travelers and history buffs wishing to recreate the travel experiences of long ago. Working with organizations like [Yellowstone Trail of Minnesota](#) in support of implementation of the [Yellowstone Trail Cultural Heritage Tourism Master Plan](#) could pay great dividends for Olivia.

## 7.5 - Recommendations

### Goal 1: Develop an integrated and connected multimodal network

- » Strategy 1.1: Grow implementation of the City's existing multimodal policies and plans (Complete Streets policy, Safe Routes to School Plan, and Active Living Plan)
  - Calming traffic, decreasing intersection crossing distances, and expanding pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure will help create a more healthy, livable and attractive community
  - Use the existing adopted documents to seek funding from MnDOT, Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) funds, and other sources
- » Strategy 1.2: Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Trails plan
  - Develop a single, comprehensive Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan for the city
  - Integrate trail connectivity to local assets like downtown, city parks, the library, BOLD School, and to regional assets like the County Courthouse and the Healthcare District
- » Strategy 1.3: Increase transit options
  - Work with [Central Community Transit \(CCT\)](#) to explore potential opportunities to meet the needs of Olivia residents

- » Strategy 1.4: Equitable access
  - Ensure access to walking and biking facilities and trails is equitably distributed, particularly in areas with higher concentrations of children and families
  - Work with MnDOT and other partners to address wheelchair access and related improvements required under the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#), including during construction of street and roadway projects
- » Strategy 1.5: Address gaps in the sidewalk network
  - Work to construct or reconstruct sidewalks where they are not currently existing in the city's already-developed areas
  - Prioritize locations connecting to multi-family housing, the library, schools, places of worship, parks, clusters of business establishments, the Healthcare District, and the County Courthouse
- » Strategy 1.6: Funding a multimodal network
  - Pursue federal, state, and local grants and funding sources to support maintenance and development of roadways, bikeways, and other transportation assets

### Goal 2: Connected land development

- » Strategy 2.1: Integrate new development into the existing and future street network
  - Require the connection of new development into the existing network of established streets, and provide dedicated right-of-way to ensure that future development can be efficiently connected into the larger network
  - Discourage and reduce cul-de-sac or disconnected development
- » Strategy 2.2: Connect all modes
  - Require the placement of sidewalks or pedestrian ways on both sides of any new streets or land development
  - Establish typical sections for collector roadways and local streets as part of a development manual providing a visual representation of requirements for roadways, curbing, boulevard treatments, and sidewalks



### Goal 3: Proactive maintenance and repaving program for aging roads

- » Strategy 3.1: Implement a proactive, preventive approach for roadway maintenance to extend the life of these assets and reduce overall costs
  - Inventory existing streets to determine the condition and life-expectancy of each segment
  - implement a routine maintenance program (e.g. sealcoating, resurfacing, and reconstruction) for streets and sidewalks as a means of prolonging the life of such facilities and scheduling funding
  - Proactively budget and provide capital for transportation system development and maintenance

### Goal 4: Improve look and feel of US Hwy 212 through downtown

- » Strategy 4.1: Work with MnDOT and elected officials to address livability concerns around impacts from trunk highway traffic in Olivia's downtown
  - Work with MnDOT Central Office staff specializing in addressing livability impacts of trunk highway traffic through rural communities, including the office of [Context Sensitive Design](#)

#### » Strategy 4.2: Beautification and visual quality

- Improve the [sense of place](#) and the visual quality of the urban space along both US Hwy 212 between 5th Street (the Renville County Courthouse) and 11th Street (Olivia City Hall), and along 9th Street in downtown between Depue Avenue and the railroad - including through consideration of sidewalk improvements, trees and greening, outdoor seating, aesthetic treatments, and [temporary installations / events](#)

### Goal 5: Coordinate partnership with TC&W Railroad

- » Strategy 5.1: Explore expansion of railroad-related activities in Olivia
  - Explore development of transloading or warehousing facilities on land along the rail line
  - Coordinate with TC&W to leverage its access to global markets and expand connection of local industries to global transportation networks

### Goal 6: Coordinate partnership with area trucking services

- » Strategy 6.1: Collaborate for efficient transportation
  - Work closely with local major industries and trucking companies to ensure operational and community livability issues are promptly resolved and services can proceed efficiently
- » Strategy 6.2: Designated truck parking areas
  - To accommodate Olivia residents who are owner-operators, develop a plan and designated locations for overnight parking of rigs

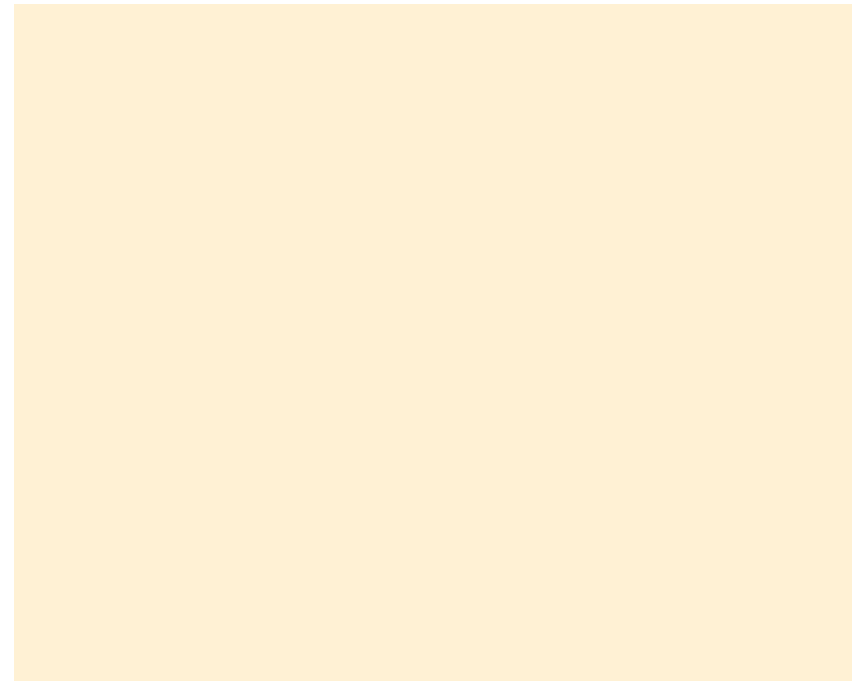
### Goal 7: Work to ensure the continued regional significance of Olivia Regional Airport

- » Strategy 7.1: Airport upkeep and enhancement
  - Continue to pursue funding opportunities for airport upkeep and enhancement, including MnDOT Office of Aeronautics, private funding, and other sources

# 8 Economic Development

Prosperity facilitates stability, investment, community advancement, and high quality of life.

Growing business and economic activity ensures progress in all the other realms of a community's daily life.



## 8.1 - Introduction

A prosperous economy is a key contributor to community success. Business opportunity, access to employment and good-paying jobs, local startups, and established industries are all part of a healthy economy and a high quality of life.

### Vision and Goals

#### Future Vision

Living in Olivia means having multiple options for stable and well-paid employment and for building a prosperous, healthy life.

Doing business in Olivia means having access to a well-educated and hardworking workforce, to the land and space needed for growth and business opportunity, and to a transportation network that efficiently connects with markets and suppliers.

Being an aspiring entrepreneur in Olivia means having community support and access to the resources that can help turn an idea into a real business - and growing it to success.

Olivia makes use of its assets and comparative advantages to grow and support existing businesses, advance entrepreneurship, and to each day improve community prosperity and quality of life.

#### Goals

- » Support continued growth and development for existing local businesses
- » Invest in local economic incubation; support start-up of local businesses and grow entrepreneurship
- » Attract new industrial and manufacturing sector jobs and businesses
- » Grow and diversify employment options
- » Activate downtown as an economic engine
- » Expand the range of businesses and services available for residents and visitors
- » Ensure continued access to affordable, fast, and reliable broadband and technology infrastructure
- » Proactively market the city and available development opportunities
- » Define, develop, and grow the city's comparative economic advantages
- » Create an Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan
- » Coordinate economic development initiatives with nearby communities

#### Attributes for success

Several community attributes are essential for facilitating economic development:

- » Sufficient and suitable land (vacant, infill, or redevelopment)
- » Available and trained workforce
- » Appropriate and adequate infrastructure
- » Supportive people, policies, and regulations
- » Business-oriented information and marketing
- » Accessible and affordable financial capital

Other factors, such as availability and affordability of housing and daycare, local amenities, geographic location, and natural resources help catalyze a community's potential for local economic prosperity.

Successful economic development strategies make use of a community's unique assets and advantages to grow its business and development opportunities.

# 8.2 - Existing Conditions

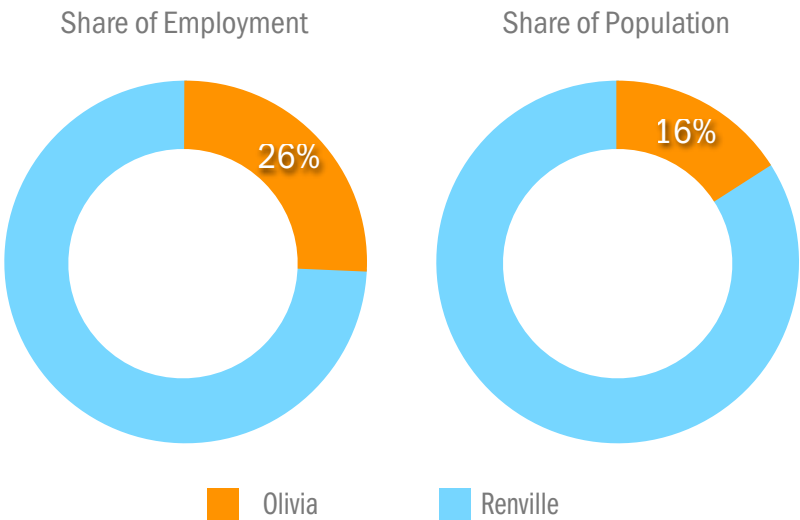
## Employment and Industry

According to US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) figures, there were approximately 1,350 jobs in Olivia in 2020 (the most recent year available). Employment in 2020 decreased by almost 90 jobs from 2019 (about a 6% decrease - this is likely due to impacts from the pandemic).

In 2020, the total number of jobs in Renville County was 5,239, a decrease of 265 jobs (about 5%) from the previous year.

In 2020, employment change (in percentage terms) in Olivia was similar to Renville County overall. Currently, approximately 1 out of every 4 jobs in Renville County (26% of all jobs) are located in Olivia.

### Proportion of Jobs and Population: Olivia and Renville County



Olivia's proportion of jobs is higher than its share of the County's population.

## Principal employers

Major employers in Olivia include Renville County, Olivia Hospital and Clinic, and BOLD School District.

Importantly, several prominent seed research and genetics companies are located in Olivia including [Remington Seeds](#), [Corteva AgriScience](#), [Beck's Hybrids](#), and [Hefty Seed](#), contributing to Olivia's reputation as the "Corn Capital of the World" and a world leader in agricultural innovation. During the peak season, their employment typically doubles and in some cases quadruples.

Business or Agency	Industry	Employees
Renville County	Governmental services	226
Olivia Hospital and Clinic	Medical	151
BOLD School District	Education	111
Max's Grill & Sheep Shedde Inn	Hospitality	60
Olivia Restorative Therapy & Nursing	Nursing home	59
Remington Seeds, Inc.	Agriculture	37
Adult Client Training Services	Employment training	26
City of Olivia	Governmental services	21
Corteva AgriScience	Agriculture	20
B & D Market	Grocery	20

Data source: City of Olivia



## Employment by business sector

Data by US Census LEHD (2020 data, counts are approximate)

Industry sector	Employees	% of all jobs
Health Care and Social Assistance	386	29%
Public Administration	201	15%
Retail Trade	173	13%
Wholesale Trade	118	9%
Construction	85	6%
Accommodation and Food Services	75	6%
Finance and Insurance	70	5%
Educational Services	69	5%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	47	3%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	38	3%
Transportation and Warehousing	32	2%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	22	2%
Information	13	1%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	8	1%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	8	1%
Manufacturing	2	0%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1	0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0	0%
Utilities	0	0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0	0%
TOTAL ALL JOBS	1,348	100%

Source: US Census 2020 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD)

Employment by industry in Olivia is led by the healthcare industry (29%, almost one third of all jobs). Olivia Hospital and Olivia Restorative Therapy are key employers in this sector.

Public administration (15%, about one out of every seven jobs) includes employers like Renville County (as the County seat) and the City itself.

Together, these two business sectors account for close to half (44%) of all jobs in Olivia.

Employment in stores, restaurants, and other retail accounts for about one in five jobs (19%). The wholesale trade sector accounts for about one in every eleven jobs (9%).

Together, agriculture-related employment and related scientific and technical services account for about 6% of all jobs (seed technology employment is included within these sectors and also partially within wholesale trade).

## Comparative advantages

Many factors differentiate one city's business development potential from another's. For any particular city, some of these factors will include:

- » Its development trajectory
- » Currently existing businesses
- » Availability and skills of its workforce
- » Proximity to production inputs and resources
- » Proximity to markets

Depending on the specific economic activity sought, one city will present advantages for a prospective business over another.

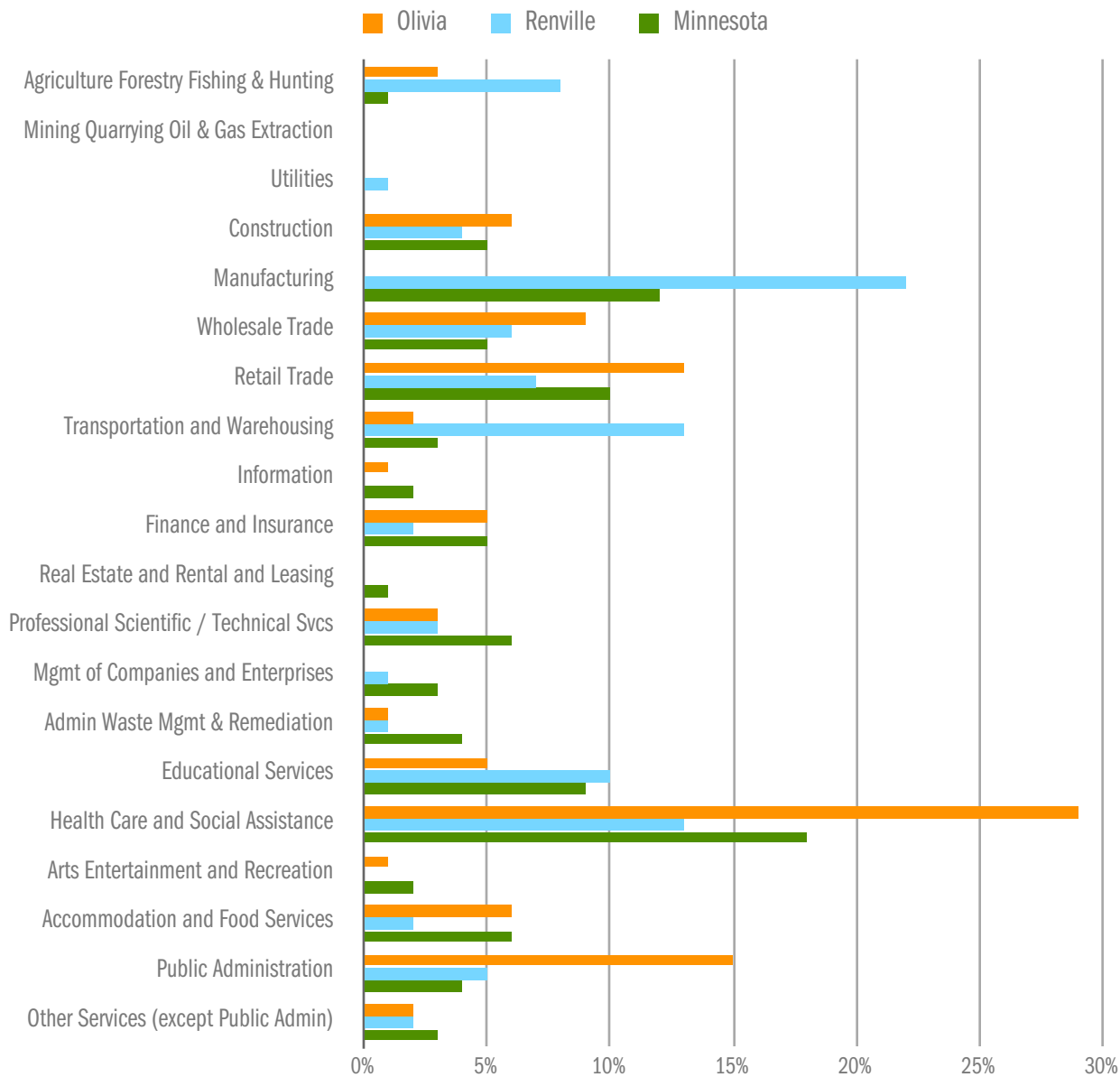
For example, a company developing medical equipment may benefit from locating in proximity to a regional hospital and in the same community where there are other medical equipment manufacturers.

Similarly, a company developing farm equipment would benefit from locating in a rural community, near other manufacturers, supply lines for raw materials, and specialized labor.

Finding a community's comparative advantages is one key component for a successful economic development strategy.

## Comparison of employment by business sector

(as percentage of total workers per industry)



Source: US Census 2020 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD)

## Key economic activity sectors

Differences in employment levels between a city and other communities can be used as a proxy for estimating which are key sectors where that city outperforms others, as well as for identifying opportunities to make investments in underperforming sectors - especially if there are some potential untapped advantages.

As the chart on the left shows, Olivia *outperforms* the county and Minnesota overall in medical services - there may be opportunity to use this as a competitive advantage to attract research, supportive housing, education, and additional medical services (and continue building the city's reputation as a health care hub).

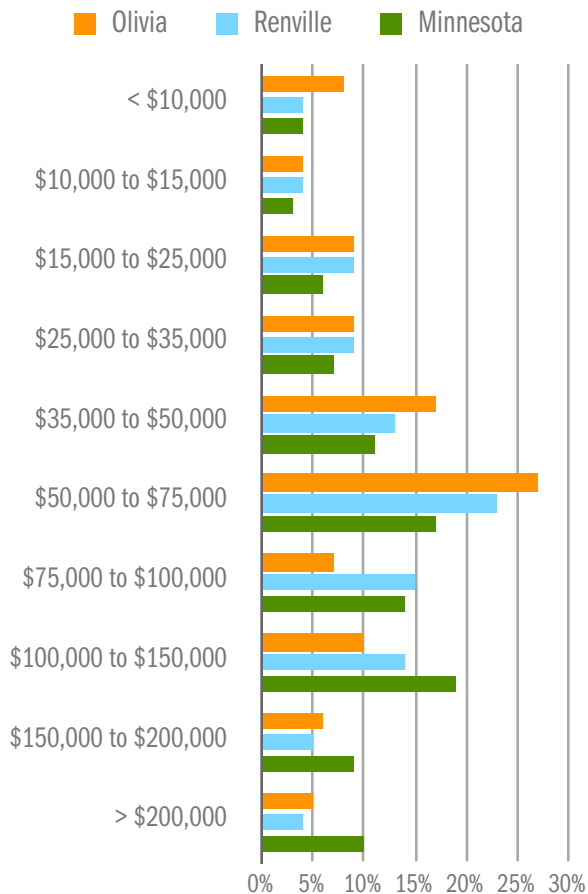
Transportation and warehousing, where the city *underperforms* in comparison to the county and Minnesota overall, could be a place where strategic investment - given the city's proximity to regional centers and access to both Highway 212 and TC&W rail - may be useful.

This, in combination with Olivia's wholesale trade sector (where it *outperforms* the county and state) could make for a potentially significant increase in business activity and lead to gains in economic development and employment.

## Income for households and families

### Income per HOUSEHOLD

(percentage of households at each level)

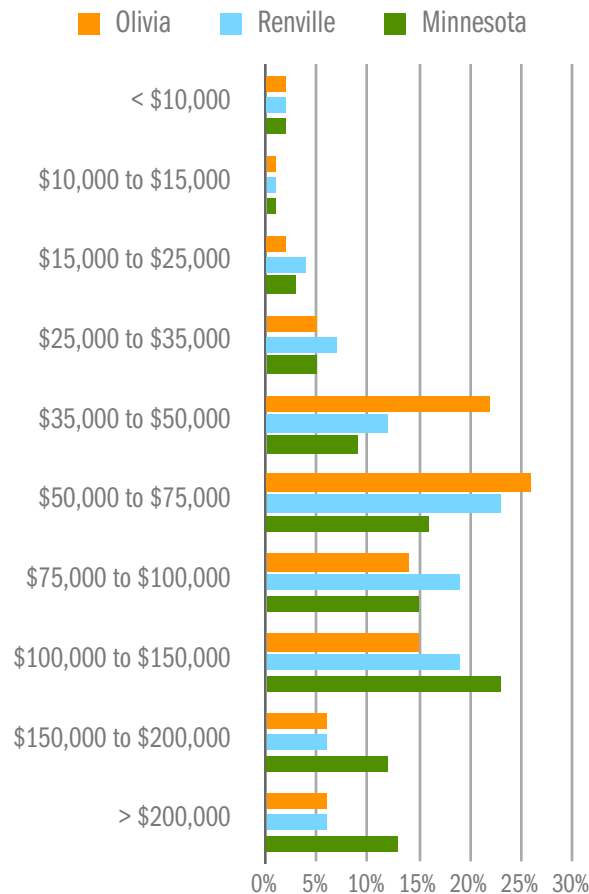


Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2021 5-year estimates - Table DP03

The city's median household income is \$56,141, about 90% of the amount in Renville County (\$61,233) and about three-quarters of the amount in Minnesota (\$77,706).

### Income per FAMILY

(percentage of families at each income level)



Data source: US Census Bureau ACS 2021 5-year estimates - Table DP03

The city's median family income is \$65,588, about 90% of the amount in Renville County (\$75,786) and two-thirds of the amount in Minnesota (\$98,356).

### Household or family?

Households include both “family households” (two or more people living together in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption) and “non-family households” (a person living alone or two or more unrelated people living in the same housing unit).

Generally, the proportion of households and families in Olivia with incomes between \$35,000 to \$75,000 is significantly greater than that for Renville County and Minnesota overall.

However, the proportion of households and families with incomes above \$75,000 is significantly smaller than Renville County and Minnesota overall. The proportion of households with incomes below \$10,000 is about twice that of Renville County and Minnesota overall.

Poverty in the city (10% of individuals) is about the same as the county and the state overall.

The percentage of children living in poverty (14%) is higher than the rate for Renville County (11%) and Minnesota overall (12%).





## Economic development SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

### Strengths

- » Family-friendly neighborhoods
- » Geographic location & proximity to numerous nearby communities (and customers)
- » Proximity / access to larger cities and to Twin Cities metro
- » Corn Capital Days
- » Olivia Hospital & Clinic
- » Farming heritage, and access to agriculture and natural resources
- » Active and successful industry
- » County seat
- » Available land for commercial and industrial development
- » Access to road, rail, and air transportation
- » High quality utilities
- » Strong schools
- » Neighborhood walkability & parks
- » Businesses providing friendly, quality service
- » Opportunities for community involvement
- » Diversity of populations
- » Desire for improvement, entrepreneurial energy
- » Active City EDA and business loan programs

### Weaknesses

- » Sustained population decline
- » Low visual quality, walkability, and sense of place in downtown
- » Need for quality housing options at all price points
- » Lack of variety in housing offerings
- » Population profile: lack of young adults and families, aging population
- » Lack of coffeeshop / restaurant / entertainment options
- » Lack of regulated/licensed, flexible child care options
- » Shortage of skilled and post-secondary educated workers
- » Few ready-to-occupy, existing & available commercial and industrial buildings
- » Economic development policies, incentives, and marketing
- » Lack of hotel options
- » Low number of options for retail and restaurant offerings
- » Lack of entertainment options for young adults and families
- » Perception of few community events or programs

### Opportunities

- » Support growth and expansion of existing local businesses
- » Nurture new local entrepreneurship
- » Potential for tourism, arts, culture, and community events
- » Healthcare facilities and availability of services, including senior services
- » Expand availability of childcare
- » Increasing specialty farming exports to Twin Cities metro (e.g. organic dairy & produce)
- » Strengthening business retention / enhance workforce development and planning
- » Multimodal / rail facilities
- » Diversification of jobs and skill levels
- » Cultivating entrepreneurship in new / immigrant populations
- » Upcoming streetscape project for areas of US Hwy 212 and 9th Street in downtown
- » Focus on quality of life as key driver for improvement of city's prospects

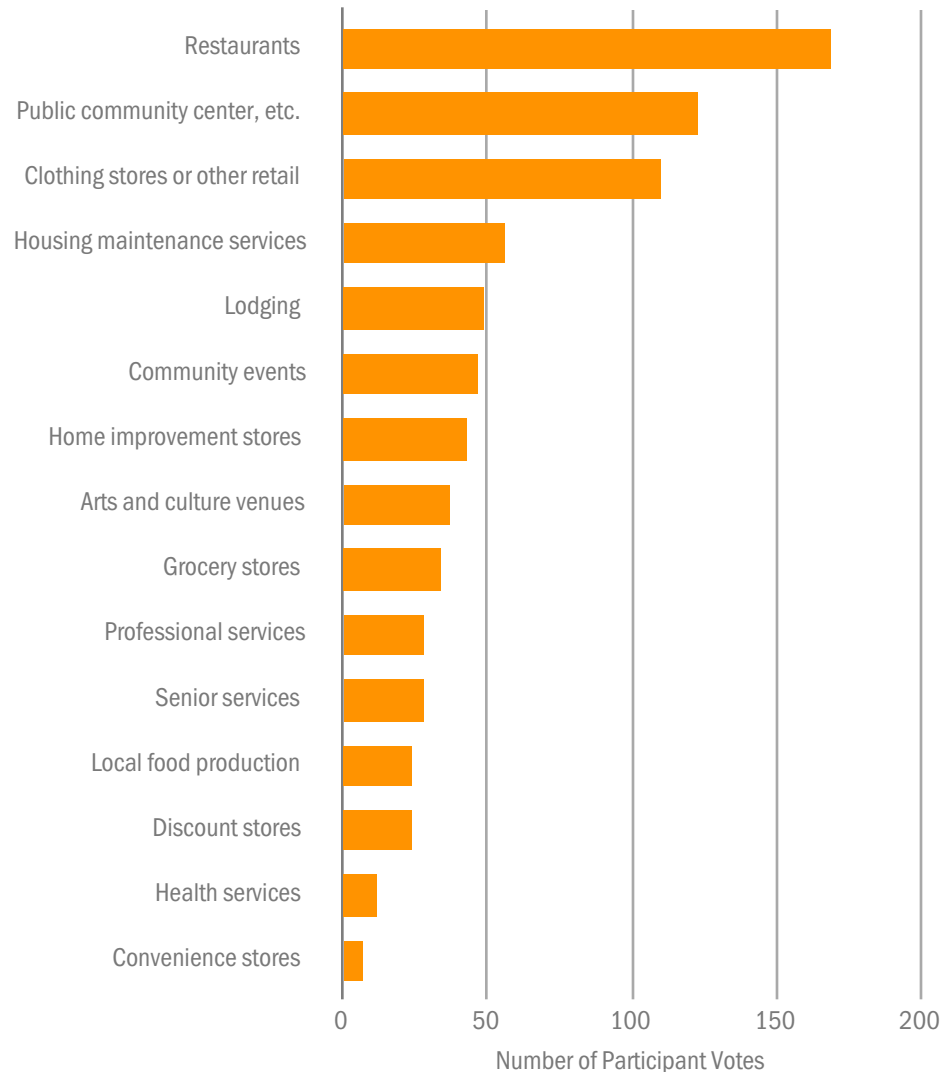
### Threats

- » Impacts if large employers undergo contraction or relocating / closing
- » Potential for over-reliance on key industries hindering strategies to continue to diversify industry and business
- » Negativity about the city's future prospects
- » Loss or reduction of policy or funding support from state or federal government
- » Continued population decline
- » Aging of population profile (natural aging plus loss of youth population)

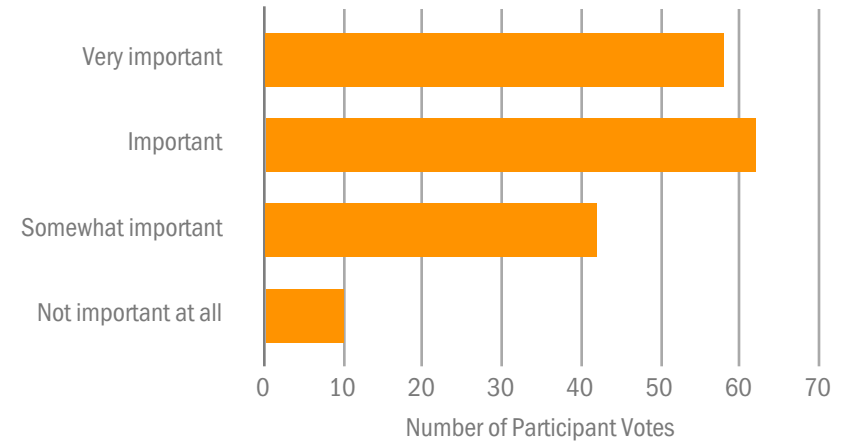
## 8.3 - What We Heard: Comments Received

Economic development, including creation of new jobs, support for business startups, and a greater range of businesses and attractions is a key goal for Olivia residents. Here's a sample of comments received:

**What types of businesses or services are most needed in Olivia?**



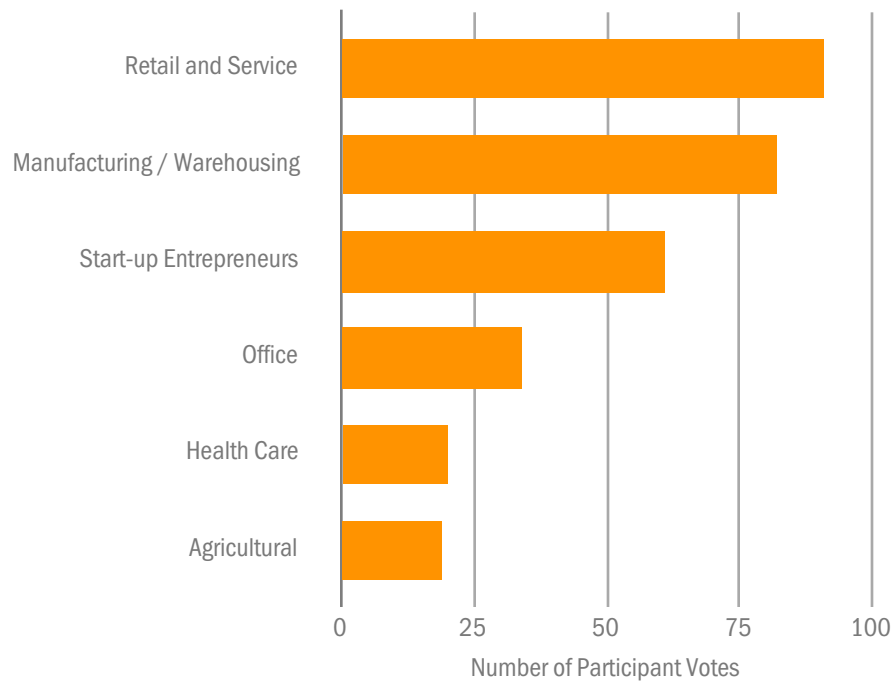
**How important is it for the City to provide, sponsor, or support training and development for local entrepreneurs?**



More than two thirds (70%) of respondents feel that it is "very important" or "important" for the City to provide, sponsor, or support training and development for local entrepreneurs.

"We had a successful coffee shop and ... we need another. [Leverage] Michael Dowling's fame and build around that ... We have great attractions for out-of-town shoppers (don't bring in other vendors, help promote these businesses instead)"

### What types of employment/jobs should Olivia have more of?



*"Buy more of the business space downtown and rent at a more affordable price, especially for first time business owners"*

*"I've been somewhat interested [in starting a business], but have no idea where to start. Maybe have a toolkit available online for people to get a better idea of what to do"*

*"Share step by step directions showing how to start/register an LLC. Provide bank contacts. Offer incentives to business and industry"*

*"Attract new businesses by offering better incentives ... we need new businesses to fill the gaps. Restructure downtown - incentivize stagnant and non-customer facing businesses to move out of downtown creating room for shops and restaurants"*

*"Actively recruit people to start businesses, such as bike shop, canoe/kayak outfitters, coffee shops, popcorn stand, daycares. Having more single family and apartments. Any of these will attract hybrid/work from home 30's type people who want to be out of city but have city options"*

*"We need to look at business owners, city employees and residents to have a vision on having a thriving community where all come together for the greater good"*

## 8.4 - Opportunities

### 8.4.1 - Develop and follow an Economic Development Strategy

An *economic development strategy* is a plan for how a community builds and makes use of its assets and competitive advantages to grow business, employment, and economic success.

An *economic development study* provides the foundation for a community's *economic development strategy*. It considers local and regional demographic, industry, marketing and economic trends to provide action-oriented recommendations and an accompanying implementation plan for a community's economic growth and prosperity.

Topics typically included in a study are:

- » Business retention and expansion
- » Business recruitment, development of local entrepreneurship and small business
- » Marketing
- » Infrastructure and recruitment readiness
- » Workforce development: professional development, educational opportunities, and youth retention / attraction
- » Laborshed (area from which workers are drawn)
- » Development / redevelopment opportunities

Because these studies are generally most useful when looking at a larger scale, they are often conducted at the scale of a county or a region (rather than a single community).

Working with Renville County and neighboring communities to complete such a study could offer a great opportunity to Olivia.

Once a study is complete, adopting those recommendations that are applicable into the City's Economic Development Strategy will help ensure that Olivia moves forward and continues to strengthen its economic base and prospects.

Funding for the study itself and for implementing its recommendations may be available from [Renville County's Economic Development Authority](#), the [Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development](#), local foundation partners like [Southwest Initiative Foundation](#), and other partners and agencies.

Overall, the recommendations from an economic development study - even if developed for a much larger geographic area like the county - will provide a solid grounding for all of the City's economic development actions.



*Prioritizing the success of local businesses - both by supporting the growth of established businesses and the startup of new ones - is a strategy that will pay dividends for the community's prosperity and wellbeing. Pictured: Ribbon-cutting for Prairie Meats.*

### Did You Know?

"80% of all economic growth in a community comes from its existing business base and it costs 100 times more to recruit new business, making the retention and expansion of existing businesses a top priority for any economic development initiative"

~ [Newmark Grubb Knight Frank](#), a leading national firm working on economic development and real estate



### 8.4.2 - Economic gardening

Economic gardening is an approach for growing a community's economy from the people, businesses and assets that it has in place already. By investing in and leveraging those existing assets, it can help build wealth throughout a community.

Economic gardening includes a variety of tools and approaches - from identifying unique assets and competitive advantages, to discovering untapped opportunities, connecting with existing and aspiring entrepreneurs, and finding new potential markets, products and partners for catalyzing growth.

Just like gardening, the process can be labor-intensive - requiring sustained and focused attention, a commitment to follow through, and organizational and financial inputs to sustain the growth of businesses at various stages of their development.

An economic gardening approach can benefit both new and existing businesses - for example, from connecting aspiring entrepreneurs with initial training and business development resources, to supporting established multi-million dollar businesses mulling the expansion of their existing facilities or the addition of new business lines.

### 8.4.3 - Define “target industries” for economic growth



### 8.4.4 - Redevelopment sites

From time to time, sites become available for development in and around Olivia. Sites may be publicly-or privately-owned, and may accommodate residential, commercial, and industrial growth.

Some general practices can help redevelopment occur more quickly and with greater benefit to the community.

#### Publicly-owned sites

City-owned sites provide it with considerable discretion for development in terms of goals, timeline, and process.

Sometimes it is tempting to accept offers as soon as they come in to get sites into private hands and back on the tax rolls as quickly as possible. However, the best long-term economic development outcomes will result from selecting a buyer and proposed use that considers how the investment leverages and increases the value of adjacent properties, and how well it aligns with the Comprehensive Plan and contributes to achieving its vision.

Sites owned by another public entity (for example, the county) can also offer the City some opportunity for negotiating the proposed use, or even for direct purchase if deemed necessary for achieving longer-term community goals.

#### Marketing redevelopment sites

Detailed and branded Property Feature Sheets should be developed for each available site. They should be available in handout and digital copy, and distributed in partnership with the Renville County EDA, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, including the [Minnesota Site Selection Tool](#), the [Minnesota Commercial Association of Real Estate / Realtors \(MNCAR\)](#), and other regional and state websites.

#### Privately-owned sites

Redevelopment ideas for privately-owned sites are best advanced in close collaboration with the property owner. Proactive conversations can get the City and owner on the same page about the timing and approach for potential sale, and reduce surprises or missed opportunities.

#### Marketing the redevelopment sites

Proactive marketing is an essential, key activity for ensuring the sites can be brought into productive use as quickly as possible, and is a “tried and true” tool for growth.

### 8.4.5 - Marketing Plan



A marketing plan will help Olivia to proactively communicate what it wants potential residents, businesses and developers to know.

A marketing plan will help the city define:

- » What it wants to say
- » How it wants to present itself
- » Which opportunities it wants to highlight
- » Which audiences it wants to reach
- » What it wants to offer as enticement for each of those audiences so they consider visiting, moving to, starting a business in, or investing

At minimum, redevelopment opportunities need to be actively marketed in regional and statewide websites for site selectors.

An example of strong marketing messages for a city of somewhat larger size (pop 7,700) facing a challenging set of circumstances (loss of its principal employer) is [Fort Frances, Ontario >](#) while another is [Jamestown, North Dakota >](#)

### 8.4.6 - Business incubator



A business incubator is a space or location where new businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs can quickly and inexpensively setup and start their operations.

Incubators can take many forms (including [co-working spaces](#)), but their main characteristic is that they lower the “barrier to entry” for starting a new business by:

- » reducing (or pooling) costs,
- » streamlining the search for and access to appropriately-small first spaces, and
- » including access to supportive services like startup counseling, training, and loans.

Business incubators are a cost-effective investment for communities: they help jump-start the most challenging part of an entrepreneur's journey, which is the movement from a business *idea* to the first iteration of *action*. They are a key and integral part of an “economic gardening” economic development strategy.

### 8.4.7 - Immigrant entrepreneurship



Olivia's large immigrant population is an untapped source of entrepreneurial energy, as many new arrivals bring small business experience from their home countries as well as ideas for goods and services that their fellow immigrants (and the larger community) need.

However, starting a new business can be challenging. Doing so in a new language, while navigating unfamiliar business licensing rules and requirements can be next to impossible.

Fortunately, there are many resources that have been developed in Minnesota over the last twenty years to support this important ladder for economic prosperity for individuals and communities.

Working with organizations like [Latino Economic Development Center](#), [Neighborhood Development Center](#), [Southwest Initiative Foundation](#), and many others can help jump-start new business and grow prosperity in Olivia.

### 8.4.8 - Rail intermodal facility



The TC&W railroad connection through Olivia is a transportation resource with additional economic development potential. Interchanging freight cars with all the principal railways, TC&W offers cost-effective freight access to national and international markets.

The railway offers a key transportation asset for Olivia industrial activities and agriculture. With available land for potential warehousing and transloading facilities, the railway can help Olivia capitalize on its location to offer efficient and inexpensive shipment of products and materials from existing and potential local industries to reach global markets.

Opportunities include development of small or medium intermodal cargo facilities for two-way truck-to-rail / rail-to-truck freight movement serving cities in the region - which could serve as an engine for economic development by creating or growing logistics clusters, reducing costs, and encouraging businesses to expand or relocate to the city.



### 8.4.9: Arts-based community economic development

Investing in the arts and artistic activity helps bring new visitors, activity, and economic development to communities while improving residents' access to education and enrichment, and contributing to overall quality of life.

Many communities in Minnesota have benefitted from highlighting, encouraging, and supporting local artists and arts communities - from Bird Island and its [Cultural Centre](#) to Granite Falls (pop. 2,470), Grand Marais (population 1,360), Ely (pop. 3,460), Lanesboro (pop. 750), and many others.

Olivia, in its role as a regional destination and hub for Renville County communities could grow its potential as a regional arts destination if the right catalyst is found. In addition, the city's many historic assets (like the [Yellowstone Trail](#)) could also serve as economic catalysts.

#### An example from Maine

The city of Monson, Maine (population 610), illustrates the kind of change that the arts - and the right kind of partnerships and programs - can help catalyze in a community.

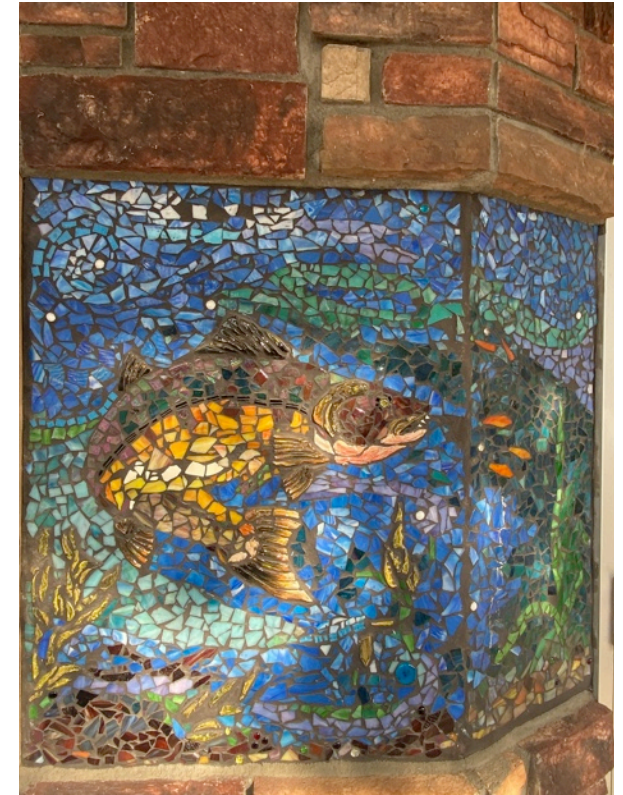
By 2010, Monson had been losing population and commerce for decades. Then it lost its biggest employer (a long-standing furniture maker with more than one hundred employees), and its local school.

City leaders and foundation partners took stock of the town's assets, noting its role as a key stopover for the Appalachian Trail and its siting along scenic Lake Hebron, as well as its potential to benefit from drive-through traffic if the city could offer a compelling experience for visitors to stop, see the town, and potentially stay to eat, shop, and spend the night.

The city and its partners settled on an arts-centered strategy as a key driver to build visitor interest and rebuild economic activity in the community.

Working with the Libra Foundation, the city set up the Monson Arts Center, which brings in artists from throughout the country for month-long stays where they create art and share it with the wider community and with visitors who now come for the chance to see and purchase original art. As part of its contribution to the wider community, the center also hosts exhibits, lectures, and film screenings, and workshops for area high school students.

In addition, the city has worked with Libra to invest about \$10 million in funding to purchase, rehabilitate and put into operation several key buildings in its downtown. The changes have been dramatic and have brought a renewed sense of optimism (as well as new businesses, activity and prosperity) to the community.



*Detail: Tile mosaic mural in the façade of a dentist's office, downtown Granite Falls, MN.*

#### For more information

- » [A brief summary of Monson's story >](#)
- » [Monson Arts Center >](#)



## 8.5 - Recommendations

### Goal 1: Develop a coordinated economic development strategy

- » Strategy 1.1: Develop a detailed work plan identifying economic development priorities, audiences and goals
  - Coordinate priorities with the guidance provided in the Comprehensive Plan, including future land use
  - Identify and grow industry sectors where Olivia has a comparative advantage
- » Strategy 1.2: Work with Renville County and surrounding cities to develop a countywide Economic Development Study
  - When completed, adopt relevant recommendations as City policy
  - Work to attract industries with higher wage levels and/or where Olivia needs to boost employment opportunities
- » Strategy 1.3: Evaluate, reassess and update the City's economic development strategy at intervals of three to five years

### Goal 2: Retain and grow existing business; grow and attract new businesses and industry

- » Strategy 2.1: Support and enhance existing businesses and industries
  - Stay in regular communication with key employers to understand their needs, health of operations, and potential opportunities or barriers where the city or other partners might assist
  - Regularly discuss growth opportunities with local employers and work with them to help advance their goals
  - Support succession planning for business owners considering retirement or closing of their businesses
  - Consider a Business Mentorship Program or Business Retention Program
- » Strategy 2.2: Land use coordination for industry and business growth
  - Work with property owners to develop future industrial areas adjacent to current industrial land to assure an adequate supply of industrial land is available for future growth
  - Consider development of an industrial park as needs arise
- Identify complementary industrial activities for existing uses and promote and facilitate their development
- » Strategy 2.3: Leverage regional assets for growth of comparative advantages
  - Collaborate with Olivia Hospital & Clinic to identify complimentary and/or spin-off services, providers, businesses, and needs which could be enticed to establish in the city
  - Collaborate with Renville County to identify complimentary and/or spin-off services, providers, businesses, and needs which could be enticed to establish in the city
- » Strategy 2.4: Develop a pipeline of trained interns and potential new staff into existing and new businesses
  - Partner with Ridgewater College and other area educational institutions to connect students and recent graduates with local employers, and support the staffing needs of new and growing businesses
- » Strategy 2.5: Support the development of business incubators for local start-ups
  - Work with local developers and property owners to develop a business incubator in the walkable downtown area of the city (attractive to retail, tech or other start-

- ups), as well as in the industrial areas (attractive to manufacturing start-ups)
- » Strategy 2.6: Develop and market a “shop local” campaign
  - A strong local economy will attract new companies and businesses, and support the ongoing vitality of the city
- » Strategy 2.7: Directory of local businesses and services
  - Work with the Chamber of Commerce to expand their [current directory of local businesses](#) and directly connect it to the City’s website to allow residents and other businesses to easily find what they need from their local shops
- » Strategy 2.8: Attract new businesses
  - Market Olivia’s comparative advantages and synergy with existing local businesses, services, and transportation networks
- » Strategy 2.9: Support aspiring entrepreneurs
  - Support entrepreneurship in all Olivia populations and communities
  - Partner with organizations like [Neighborhood Development Center](#), [Southwest Initiative Foundation](#), and [Latino Economic Development Center](#) to grow access to dedicated business training, services, and start-up loans

### Goal 3: Downtown as an economic engine

- » Strategy 3.1: Recognize the transformative potential of downtown Olivia for attracting new residents, employers and visitors, and focus economic development efforts and investments there
- » Strategy 3.2: Develop a Downtown Action Plan to focus and guide efforts related to downtown and implement recommendations for economic vitality, including:
  - Actively recruit complimentary businesses for the downtown core
  - Develop downtown housing for local employees and aging baby-boomers
  - Preserve historic properties
  - Consider the impact of allowing new development or retail businesses outside of the city’s core on the economy, character and prospects of downtown
  - Prohibit removal of buildings for development of surface parking as an interim (or permanent) use
- » Strategy 3.3: Host events for residents and visitors in downtown Olivia on a regular basis
  - Work with the Chamber, local businesses, residents, clubs and other partners on event planning, marketing, and preparation

- Consider events celebrating Michael Dowling, the city’s history, the historic [Yellowstone Trail](#), or the heritage of farming and seed innovation in the community
- » Strategy 3.4: Downtown planning and design
  - Development in the downtown area should be consistent with the area’s existing character, emphasize a walkable, pedestrian-oriented scale for development, and link to existing pedestrian and bicycle networks
  - Provide visitor amenities, including maintenance and upkeep of lighting, paving, seating, landscaping, and plantings
  - Establish downtown street trees
  - Develop urban design standards for downtown that include consideration for rehabilitation of historic façades (please see an [example from New Ulm](#))
  - Establish, fund, and actively promote a facade grant program to support renovation / restoration of downtown building facades and store fronts
  - Downtown’s mix of uses should include retail, professional services, arts and entertainment, and housing
- » Strategy 3.5: Prepare an action plan for attracting entrepreneurs to downtown

### Goal 4: Best return on investment as basis for making land use and development decisions

- » Strategy 4.1: Use the land use chapter of the Comprehensive Plan to guide all development decisions
  - Each specific location is better suited for certain land uses than others, based on adjacent land uses, amenities and infrastructure - the full economic benefit of new development comes from the use itself AND from how that use enhances or compromises the value of other assets around it and elsewhere in the city
- » Strategy 4.2: Consider the short, medium, and long-term benefits and impacts of development and investment decisions, and make development choices that provide the highest net value for the city in the long-term
  - Sometimes moving quickly on a development opportunity will be the right decision, if the development is a better fit for that specific parcel than other types of development
  - Other times, a short-term development might preclude a better fit development in the future, and result in a lower overall return to the city in the long run

### Goal 5: Marketing plan

- » Strategy 5.1: Comprehensive evaluation of communications, brand, and purpose
  - Reorient communications and branding to convey Olivia is “open for business” and looking for new residents, investments, development, and activity
  - First messages from website should emphasize “why you should move here” and “why you should invest here” ([see example >](#))
  - Develop fresh marketing messages for Olivia, with key themes and messages
- » Strategy 5.2: Communicate the City’s vision
  - Use the Comprehensive Plan as a resource to communicate what the city is and what it wants to become - developers and investors want to quickly know if their proposals are consistent with a city’s vision and goals; clarity in the Comprehensive Plan will reduce uncertainty and perceived risk, making Olivia a more attractive investment decision
- » Strategy 5.3: Proactively market the city and development opportunities
  - Use the new brand, Comprehensive Plan, and economic development priorities to reintroduce Olivia to the market and development partners

- Develop an attractive and interactive “Opportunity Sites” map for all developable properties, in cooperation with property owners and brokers
- For each site, develop a detailed and branded Property Feature Sheet, clearly identifying its designated land use, zoning, types and illustration of development sought, and attributes of the site and Olivia that might appeal to target markets
- Sites information should be available in handout and digital copy and placed on Chamber of Commerce, [MnDEED site selector](#), [Renville County EDA](#), other partners’s websites, [commercial realtors](#), and other regional and state websites
- » Strategy 5.4: Evaluate, reassess and update the marketing plan as needed at intervals of two to three years

### Goal 6: Broadband connectivity

- » Strategy 6.1: Work with private sector and government partners to continually evaluate and improve broadband connectivity
  - Maintain information to identify areas that need connection or improvement to high-speed service
  - Review status of service to areas located within the city’s downtown, business parks, and redevelopment sites

## Goal 7: Resources for development and implementation

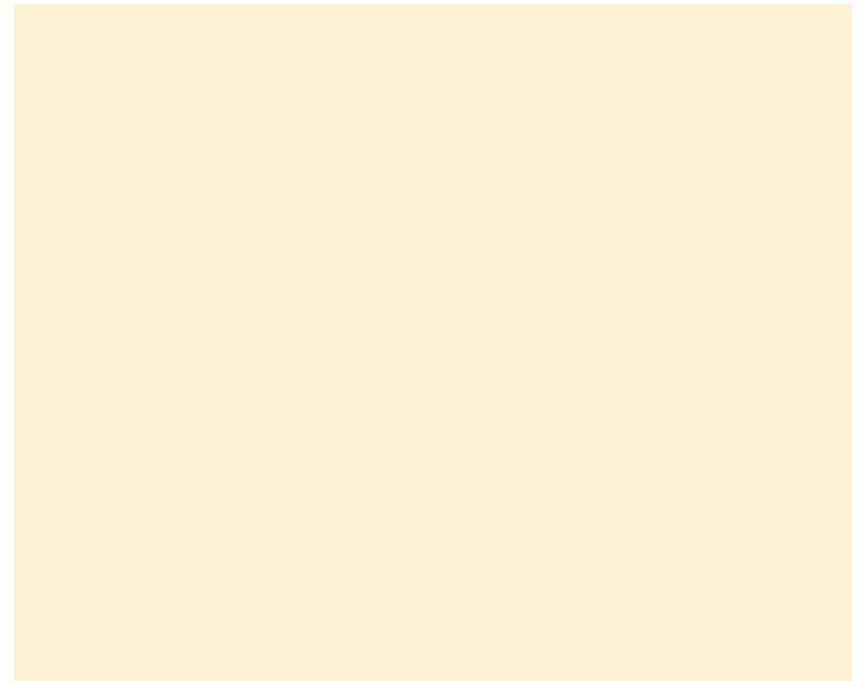
- » Strategy 7.1: Joint marketing and collaboration with nearby communities
  - Establish and maintain partnerships to coordinate economic development initiatives with nearby communities including Bird Island, Danube, and others
  - Collaborate with other public, private, and non-profit entities when possible
- » Strategy 7.2: Consider business incentives
  - Consider comprehensive incentives to support healthy growth of existing businesses and encourage them to remain in the city, and to attract new businesses
- » Strategy 7.3: Review land use and zoning standards
  - Zoning standards should reflect current needs of community while creating new opportunities for residential and commercial growth
- » Strategy 7.4: Seek grant opportunities
  - Inventory public, private and philanthropic financing sources available for planning and development in Olivia
  - Identify best fit projects based on funding criteria, amount of funding available, and application cycles and requirements; match sources with best fit projects or

development the city seeks, and an application strategy should the city or a developer wish to proceed



# 9 Parks & Recreation

Parks are key community assets that build quality of life, health and connection.



## 9.1 - Introduction

Parks, trails, and recreation are key contributors to quality of life in a community. Stewardship of Olivia's current assets, and planning for their improvement, are important steps for its future success.

Parks, trails and recreational programming play a vital role in the social, economic, and physical well-being of a community's residents. They provide access to recreational opportunities, increase property values, spur local economies, improve safety, and mitigate stormwater runoff and other environmental issues.

Parks, trails and recreational programming bring beauty, connection, and health into everyday life, and they are powerful tools for improving quality of life and building more vibrant communities.



### Vision and Goals

#### Future Vision

Olivia plans, maintains, and operates a parks and recreation system that invites and engages residents and visitors through abundant beauty, recreational opportunities, social connection, and fun and learning for all people. Connected to the City's neighborhoods, daily destinations, and natural assets, Olivia's parks system offers robust programming and activities and meets the needs of individuals, families, and the community.

#### Goals

- » Maintain a sufficient amount of public parks and land to meet the recreational needs of existing and future residents
- » Offer a citywide interconnected trail system with access to parks and regional trails
- » Develop and offer programming that responds to resident interest and increases use and visitation of park facilities
- » Assure that development will adhere to City standards for open space, trail connectivity, and for environmental sustainability

#### Parks Are Community Assets

Recreation opportunities are an important component of quality of life for a community's residents.

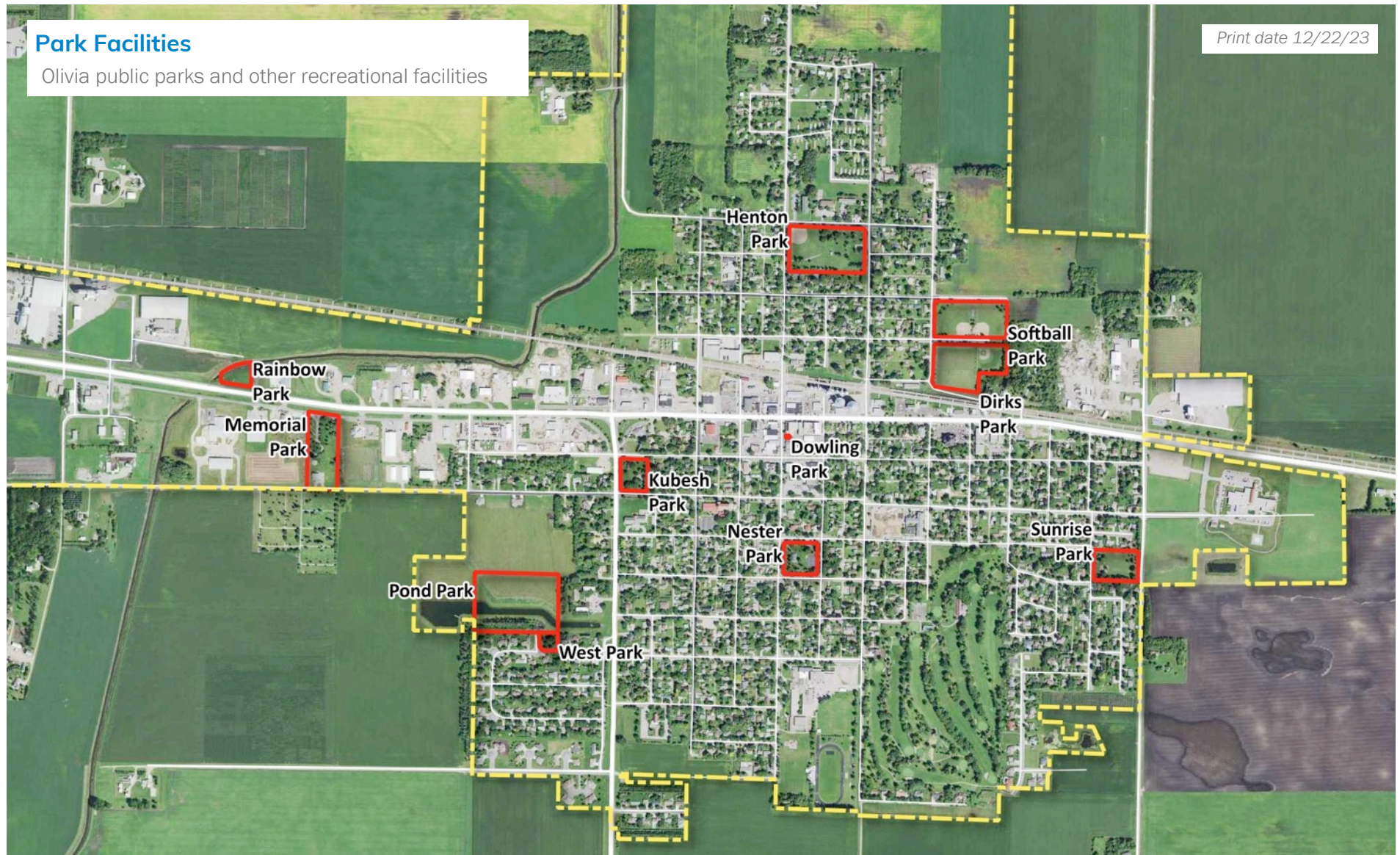
Olivia's numerous parks and recreation offerings, coupled with future improvements for walking, biking, and parks programming, can be a great asset for inviting visitors and new residents into the City, and building economic activity and quality of life.



## 9.2 - Existing Conditions

### City Parks & Facilities

Olivia owns and operates eleven parks within the city limits. In addition, there are other open space facilities available in and around the city:





**Dirks Park**

Amenities include a Little League baseball field and a soccer field. Dirks Park and Softball Park are separated by Elm Avenue.

**Henton Park**

Amenities include a shelter, playground equipment, a basketball court, disc golf, a baseball field, and ice skating rink, and a warming house.

**Kubesh Park**

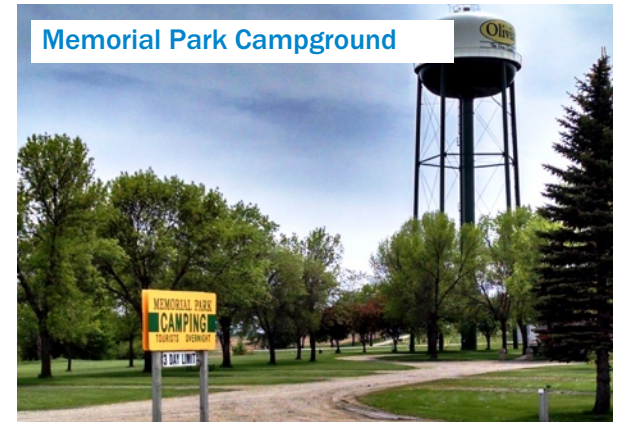
Amenities include restrooms, a shelter, picnic tables, and playground equipment. The park also includes a Veterans Memorial completed as part of an Eagle Scout project.

**Dowling Square**

Dowling Square is a small plaza located in downtown. Amenities include picnic tables, gazebo, and chairs.

**Softball Park**

Amenities include two softball fields, restrooms, and concessions. Dirks Park and Softball Park are separated by Elm Avenue.

**Memorial Park Campground**

This is the home of Olivia's iconic corn monument sculpture and water tower. It offers overnight camping (limited to three days) and other amenities, including disc golf, archery, six camping spots (four electric and two non-electric), restrooms, and a dump station.





Nester Park

Amenities include a large shelter, restrooms, basketball courts, tennis courts, and playground equipment.



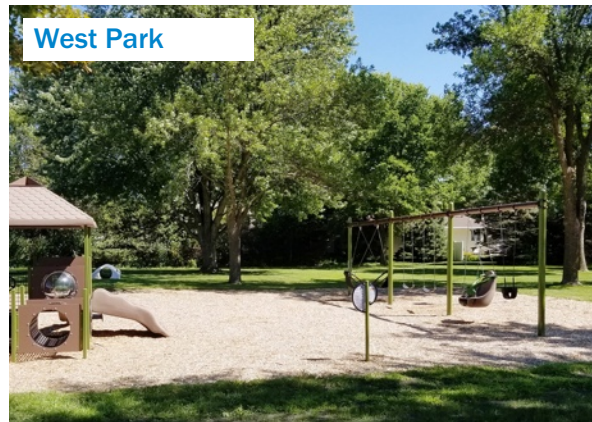
Sunrise Park

Amenities include pickleball (added in late 2023), sand volleyball, and disc golf, as well as a shelter, picnic tables, restrooms, and playground equipment.



Rainbow Park

Amenities include open grassland and sledding.



West Park

Amenities include playground equipment and a gazebo.

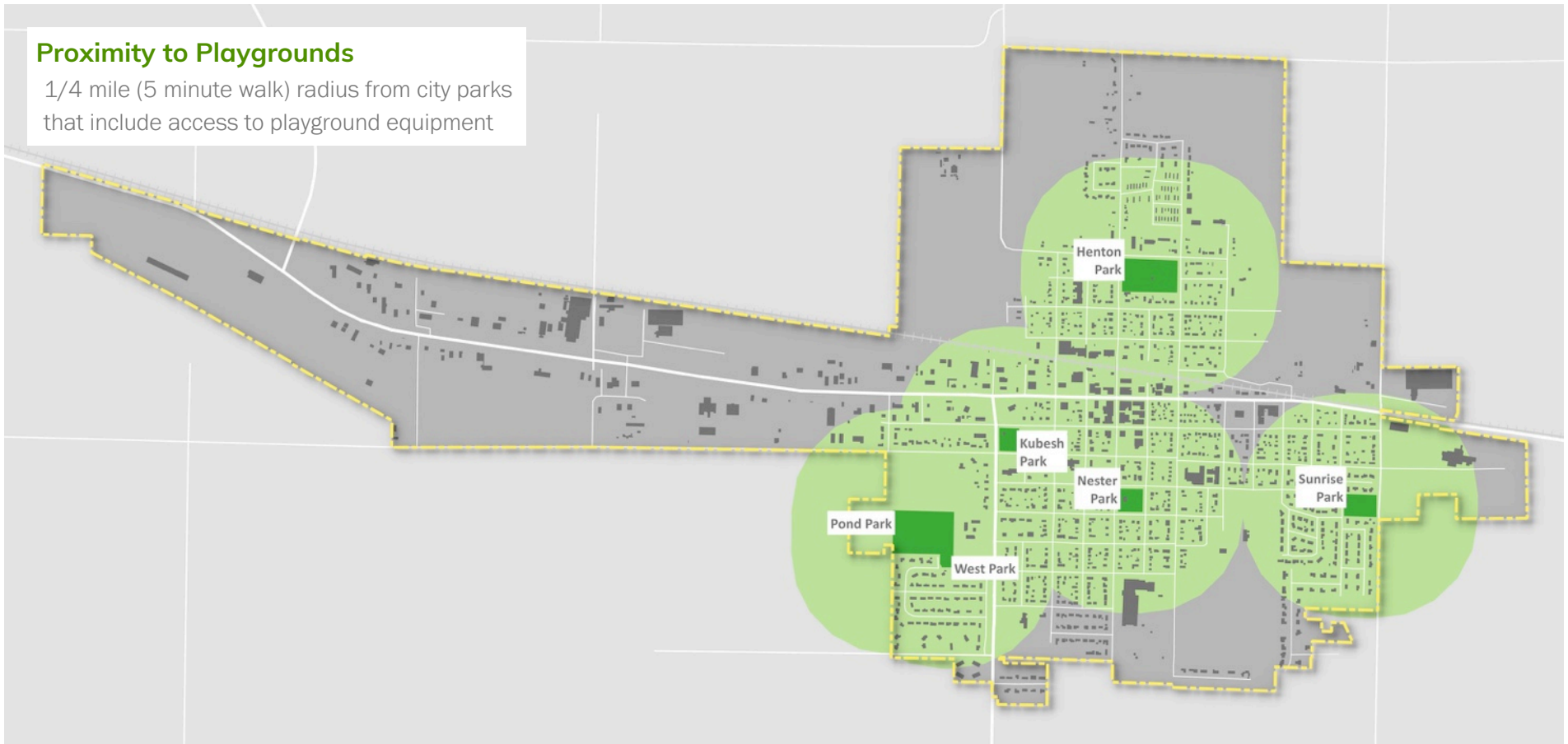


Pond Park

This is Olivia's newest park, opened in 2012. Amenities include gazebos, a natural playground, a fishing pier, a walking path, and benches.

### Proximity to Playgrounds

1/4 mile (5 minute walk) radius from city parks that include access to playground equipment



### Access to Park Playgrounds

Olivia offers good access to neighborhood playgrounds in its residential areas, with most parks connected to surrounding residential areas with sidewalks. However, there are also several locations where parks are farther than a five minute walk.

Generally, a five-minute (1/4 mile) walk distance to parks is convenient for families to

access nearby residential playgrounds. Ready access to parks and other neighborhood recreational amenities is an important component of resident satisfaction and of real estate valuation for residential districts.

The map on this page includes only City parks that are open and available year-round and that are available for children and families (please note that this analysis does not take into

account differences in playground equipment that may be available at each location, or the facilities available through BOLD school).

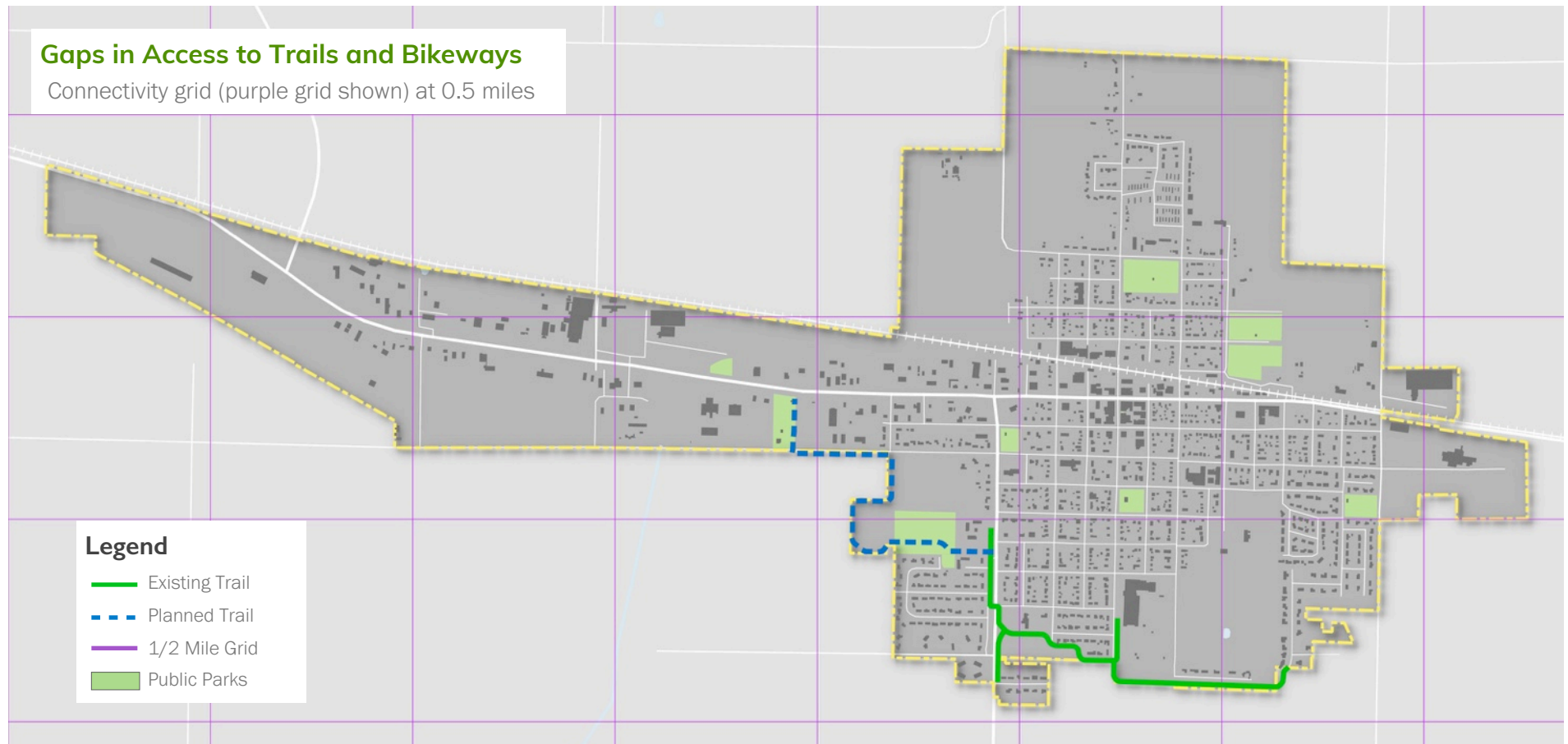
Developing an up-to-date summary of existing facilities and potential improvements as part of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan will be helpful for planning future investments.

## Features and Amenities of Existing Parks

Park	Baseball/ softball	Nature areas	Tennis courts	Soccer fields	Basket- ball courts	Volleyball courts	Pickle- ball	Disc golf	Play- ground	Pleasure skate rink	Warming house	Archery range	Restroom facilities	Picnic area/ shelter	Parking (off- street)
Henton	Y, 1, lit	N	N	N	Y,1	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N
Dirks	Y, 3, two lit	N	N	Y, 2, not lit	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y, perm.	Y	N
Memorial	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y, perm.	Y	Y, 6 RV
Nester	N	N	Y, 2 lit	N	Y, 1/2 court	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y, perm.	Y	N
Kubesh	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
West	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Sunrise	N	N	N	Y	N	Y, sand	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y, perm.	Y	N
Pond	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
Rainbow	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Dowling	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>

**NOTE:** This table includes typical park amenities and features recommended by the [National Recreation and Park Association \(NRPA\)](#). Park amenities on NRPA's list that are not currently provided in Olivia parks include horseshoe pits, hockey rink, and skateboarding. Football fields and a swimming pool are available through BOLD school. There is no current inventory of ADA / wheelchair access to Olivia parks.





## Gaps in Trails Access

Though the city has made great progress in recent years, its current trail system has very few links in place and shows significant gaps.

Where trail facilities are currently provided, they are distant from the majority of residential concentrations, and they don't connect to the majority of existing parks.

Additionally, existing facilities don't connect to key destinations like the downtown, or connect the majority of households in the city to the BOLD High School campus.

Generally, access to a walk / bike trail or a bicycle facility every one-half mile is recommended so residents don't have to travel more than a quarter mile to access a route.

Access to trails is a key component for resident satisfaction. In the plan's community engagement, access to trails was the #1 parks-related facility requested by residents.

Additionally, trails access has significant positive impacts on real estate valuation, community desirability, and quality of life.



## Recreation Programs

Parks programming help increase access to recreational opportunities for residents, help make efficient use of existing facilities, and expand access to healthy activity for community residents.

Olivia offers several programs and recreational opportunities in and around the city.

### City-supported Programs

Summer recreation programs using City facilities include youth T-ball and Little League. The BOLD Community Pool, located in the BOLD High School building, is jointly owned by the City of Olivia and BOLD Schools. It is open to the public at pre-scheduled times and is open for swim lessons at various times through the year.

### BOLD and Revolution Wellness YMCA-sponsored Programs

Other activities available through BOLD Community Education include:

- » Aquatic exercise and family swimming
- » Exercise/recreation: basketball, walking clubs, racquetball league, Zumba fitness, a gym is open 24/7 to the membership
- » Crafts/hobbies/food: crocheting, knitting, scrapbooking, stained glass
- » Trips/tours: Target Field theaters, day/overnight trips

## Other Programs, Facilities, and Points of Interest



*At Corn Capital Days in Nester Park.*



*The indoor pool at BOLD High School.*



*Pond Park provides options for seeing local wildlife, enjoying kayaking, and fishing.*

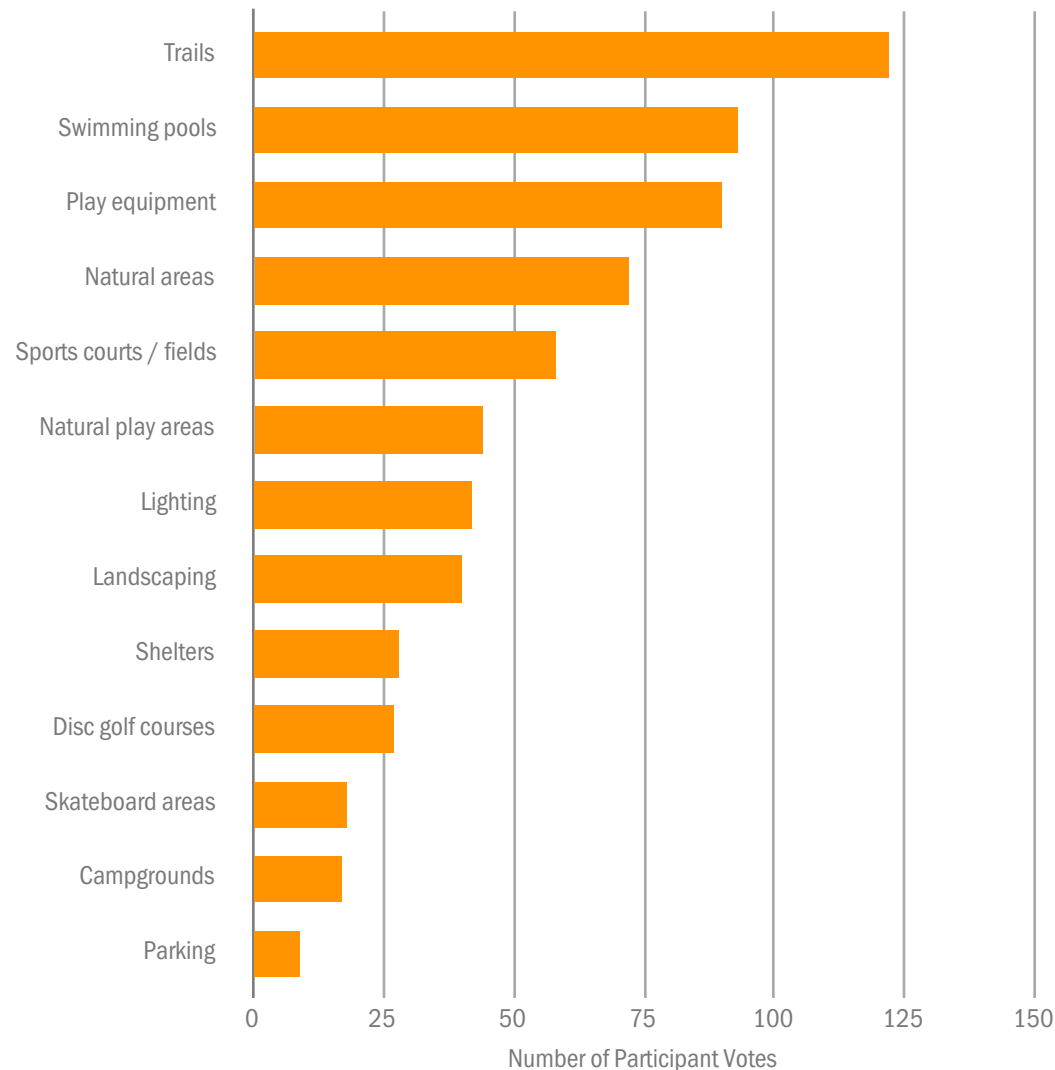


*The Farmers' Market brings local produce and more to Olivia every third Thursday during the summer.*

## 9.3 - What We Heard: Comments Received

This is a selection of comments received regarding the City's parks and recreational programs. Residents appreciate the City's park system, and would like improved trail connectivity and additional programming.

**What type of park elements or amenities would you like to see improved or added in Olivia?**



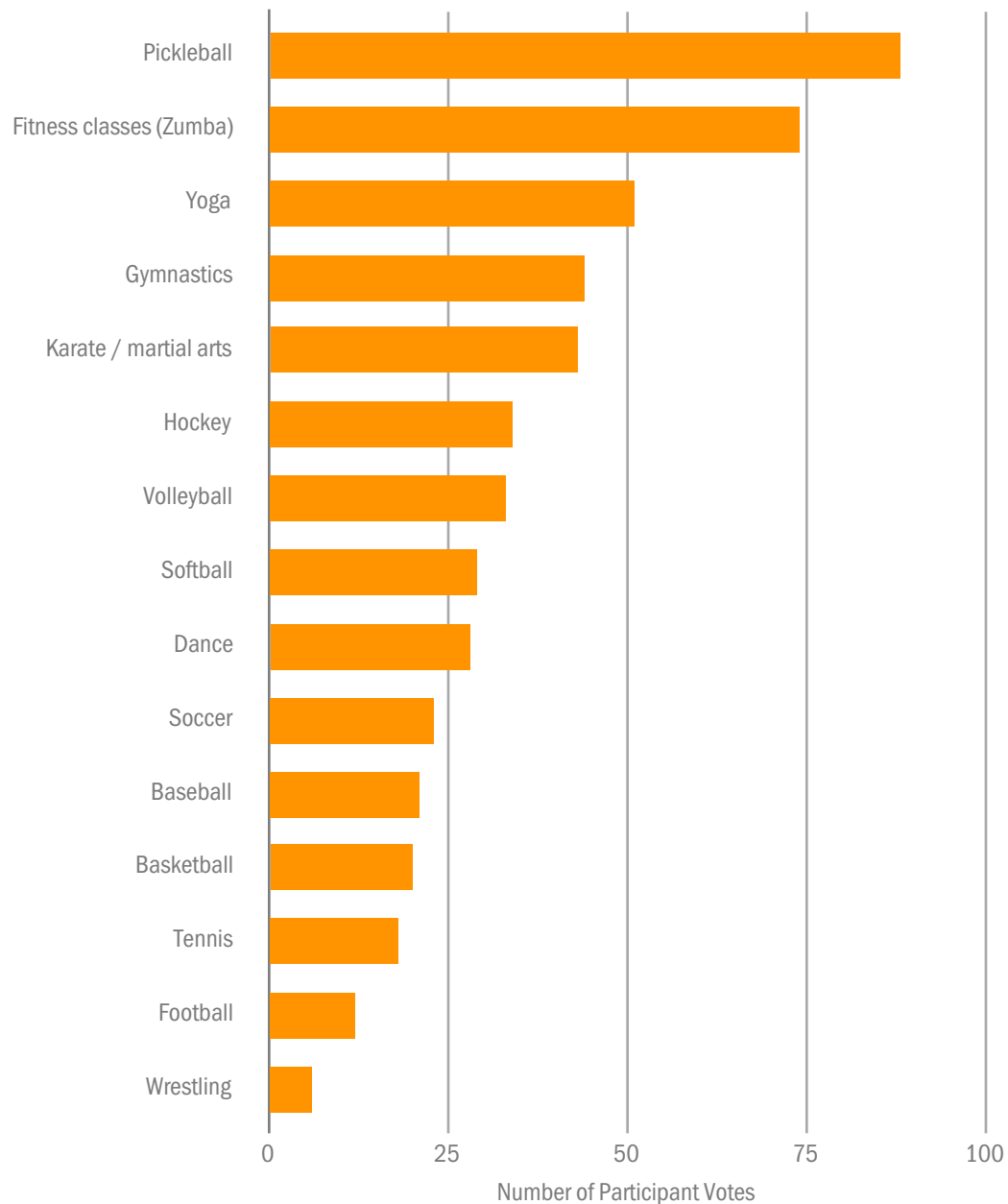
*"Add some attractions for little ones where parents can go and also enjoy it"*

*"A mountain biking trail where they were going to do the ATV trail at the river bottom"*

*"Add lighting all the way around the Olivia pond"*

*"Outdoor basketball courts, pickle ball courts, and a community center"*

### What Youth or Adult recreation programs would you like to see added or improved in Olivia?



*"When I was growing up we had skating every Friday night at the Armory - we should bring that back for young people today"*

*"Mini golf and family activities"*

*"Non-school related events for youth and adults such as more dances for various ages"*

*"Group/team fitness classes for adults. I currently go to Redwood Falls because I can't find a similar training opportunity at a convenient time in Olivia"*

#### Did you know? Pickleball's here!

In late 2023, [Pages of Our Communities Foundation](#) and the City of Olivia opened the city's first pickleball court. Comments from this planning process helped make a strong case for this new community asset!



## 9.4 - Opportunities

### 9.4.1: New Trails and Bikeways



Trails were the most highly requested park facility in the plan's engagement, while other comments similarly reflected the high priority that Olivia residents place on having walk- and bike-friendly trails and routes.

Olivia at present lacks a useful network of connected routes. Updating the City's 2017 Active Living Plan to include latest [MnDOT](#) and [FHWA](#) best practices could help identify low cost - high yield investments and set the stage for greater access to grants and other implementation funding.

Once an updated plan is complete (cost of about \$10,000 to \$15,000), innovative approaches like MnDOT's [Quick Build projects](#) could help to quickly grow the City's network.

Continuing to prioritize the growth of the City's walk/bike network will yield dividends for resident satisfaction and quality of life.

### 9.4.2: Adult Fitness Programming



Adult fitness classes were among the most requested programming improvement for Olivia parks. In the plan's public surveys.

Staying up to date on the latest fitness trends and bringing these offerings to the Olivia community will support and grow continued engagement of families with the city's parks.

Yoga, Zumba (including Aqua Zumba), group training, organized outdoor exercise, bodyweight training, fitness programs for older adults, and high-intensity interval training are some of the adult fitness options that could be implemented in Olivia.

Continued engagement with BOLD Schools, YMCA, and the wider Olivia community (especially as part of Parks Master Planning activities) could help determine the types of adult fitness programs that would be most likely to succeed with residents.

### 9.4.3: Outdoor Fitness Equipment



Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks provide publicly accessible exercise equipment at parks and other designated community locations. They can be a helpful tool in inviting people of all ages and levels of fitness toward becoming more physically active while also providing an opportunity for adults to engage socially.

The equipment is durable and weather-proof, and is always available for people visiting the park. Installations don't require a lot of space or maintenance, and provide access to many types of exercises that could otherwise only be completed in a gym.

Cost is about \$10,000 (about \$2,000 per machine). It may be possible to fund installation of this equipment through community health / SHIP grants administered by the [Meeker Renville Sibley Community Health Board](#) or from grants from [local health organizations](#).



#### 9.4.4: A Community Recreation Center for Year-round Use

Numerous residents and city leaders have discussed the possibility of developing a community recreation center that includes indoor facilities and could be used year-round.

The facility could serve as a sports hub for local residents and families and also as a draw for hosting regional high school tournaments. The facility could capitalize on Olivia's central location in the county, and also provide for other activities and recreational opportunities for the rest of the year.

This idea has been discussed locally for several years, and implementation would be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's goals as park facilities are an important driver for residents' quality of life and economic development.

Potential components to be included in Olivia's Community Recreation Center could include:

- » One or two ice surfaces / hockey arena
- » 25 meter (75 ft) length pool
- » Two glass back squash courts
- » Weight room with universal and free weights
- » Fitness room with treadmills, steppers and bikes
- » Community auditorium
- » Conference room

Continuing conversations with BOLD Schools, [Revolution Wellness YMCA](#), and the wider Olivia community will bring important advances.

#### An example from another Greater Minnesota community

Grand Marais (population 1,360) developed a new 38,000 s.f. YMCA year-round facility in 2015 by partnering with Cook County, the Cook County School District and the YMCA of Duluth.

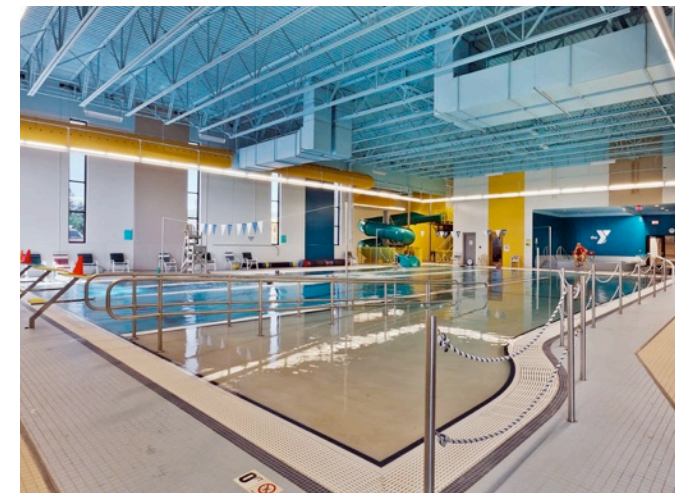
The facility has proven to be a great success and a wonderful asset to the community, with use (and the number of active memberships) greatly exceeding initial projections.

Facilities include a full court gymnasium, a pool and aquatics center, multipurpose meetings spaces, weights and cardio areas, and an aerobics studio.

Learn more about the [Grand Marais Cook County YMCA Recreation Center here >](#)



*The Grand Marais Cook County YMCA Recreation Center.  
Image courtesy of JLG Architects.*



*The Grand Marais Cook County YMCA Recreation Center.  
Image courtesy of JLG Architects.*

## 9.5 - Recommendations

### Goal 1: A well-planned system

#### » Strategy 1.1: Parks Master Plan

- Develop a Parks Master Plan to ensure adequate parks, facilities, open spaces, and trails are provided and planned for the community
- Include a detailed assessment of existing park and trail system elements such as facility types, area served, accessibility, size, active/passive recreational opportunities provided, etc.
- Study the potential of public / private partnerships to leverage and capitalize on the city's unique environmental assets in the development and operations of park, recreation, entertainment and open space facilities

#### » Strategy 1.2: A future-oriented system

- Enhance quality of life for current and future residents by providing adequate parkland, natural areas, and indoor / outdoor recreation areas to fulfill existing and future needs
- Use the existing and future park and natural areas to shape and orient future land use and development decisions
- As determined through thoughtful planning, acquire land that fulfills the community's current or future needs,

provides trail connections, or secures a unique site or facility

- Apply official controls, such as park dedication requirements, to ensure that appropriate land for parks and trails is provided with new development; whenever possible, land dedication should relate to the approved parks and trail plan

#### » Strategy 1.3: Budgeting and investment

- Pursue grants from regional, state and federal agencies to assist in the enhancement and growth of the park and open space system
- Identify needed capital investments applicable to existing park and trail system components and include them in the five-year capital improvement program
- Provide for regular operations and maintenance of the existing park and trail system components through the annual budget

#### » Strategy 1.4: Internal coordination

- Establish once-yearly meetings / study sessions between the City Council and the Parks and Recreation Board to discuss and collaborate on park, recreation and open space related issues and opportunities

### Goal 2: A resident-focused, attentive and responsive system

#### » Strategy 2.1: Seek out community guidance

- Engage with a diverse group of residents, including Olivia's young people, seniors, and members of Olivia's Hispanic / Latino community, to broaden user input towards updates of existing parks, and development of new park facilities and programs
- Engage with specialized sports groups and recreational users to improve the design of park facilities and recreation programs

#### » Strategy 2.2: Equitable access

- Ensure access for mobility-impaired persons to park and trail system components and facilities throughout Olivia
- Provide for equal distribution of parks and open spaces throughout Olivia relative to user population densities by providing adequate and equitable funding for the acquisition, rehabilitation and development of park and trail system components

### Goal 3: Provide and maintain parks and indoor / outdoor recreation areas

- » Strategy 3.1: Indoor community recreation center
  - Explore partnerships and potential for funding, development and operations for a year-round indoor community recreation center that provides year-round access to ice hockey, swimming, walking, and community activities for children, young people, seniors, and families
- » Strategy 3.2: Other indoor and outdoor activities and areas
  - Enhance year-round access to parks and recreational experiences by expanding recreational opportunities both outdoors and indoors
  - Partner with other agencies and parties (health organizations, non-profits, and government agencies) to develop and operate indoor recreational spaces (walking tracks, gym and similar spaces)
- » Strategy 3.3: Assess and prioritize
  - Every two years, conduct a detailed assessment and review of existing facilities and develop updates and improvements as needed

### Goal 4: Provide activities and programs throughout the City

- » Strategy 4.1: Increase participation in and access to parks programming for residents throughout the community
  - Increase communication and connection with Olivia's diversity of populations, including Spanish-speaking families and new arrivals
- » Strategy 4.2: Communicate and inform residents about issues pertaining to the parks system
  - Develop a communications plan for distributing park-related updates to the community
  - Promote active interaction with residents to ensure recreational programming and appropriate facility development
- » Strategy 4.3: Promote ongoing volunteer opportunities through athletic, youth and civic organizations to assist in maintenance and programming in city parks

### Goal 5: Grow and maintain the City's trail and sidewalk system

- » Strategy 5.1: Pedestrian and bicycle planning and implementation
  - Develop a pedestrian and bicycle plan that summarizes existing walk / bike issues and offers guidance and solutions for improving user safety, comfort, convenience and connectivity and growing use of walking and biking for everyday recreation and travel in Olivia
  - Make use of opportunities to implement components of the Olivia's walking and biking network when street/utility reconstruction occurs
- » Strategy 5.2: Connectivity
  - Connect Olivia's commercial areas, parks, schools, and residential neighborhoods to its trail system; connect city parks with the trail system, and with regional parks and trail systems
  - Provide access and connection with the natural environment while also providing connection within the city
- » Strategy 5.3: Safe Routes to School
  - Continue to support Safe Routes to School programs that encourage students to walk or bike to school via a system of safe and connected sidewalks, trails, and bikeways

- Apply for grants and other funding from MnDOT Safe Routes, Minnesota's Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP), foundations and other sources

## Goal 6: Stewardship and preservation of natural reserves and resources

- » Strategy 6.1: Use environmentally-sensitive park planning and land use best practices to protect, preserve and enhance the city's natural resources, open spaces, and nature resources
- » Strategy 6.2: Ensure that natural environments and ecological systems are protected and well-managed within the city
- » Strategy 6.3: Encourage land use patterns that are environmentally sensitive and complement the natural hydrological system

## Goal 7: Promote economic and health benefits of the park system

- » Strategy 7.1: Promote economic development
  - Work with the Chamber of Commerce, Minnesota Tourism, Renville County, neighboring communities, community associations, MnDNR and others to promote Olivia parks, natural resources, open spaces, and festivals to attract visitors and create revenue for local businesses; promote park and trail system components to tourists and/or community visitors
- » Strategy 7.2: Enhance public access, use and enjoyment of Olivia's natural and recreational resources
  - Develop new and creative approaches to increase communication and connection with Olivia's diversity of populations, including Spanish-speaking families and new arrivals
  - Educate the public and promote the use of parks by working with other local/regional governmental units, health care providers, local food producers, civic groups, and schools to create information to be distributed to new residents and available to the public
  - Develop wayfinding and park signage elements to link elements of the park

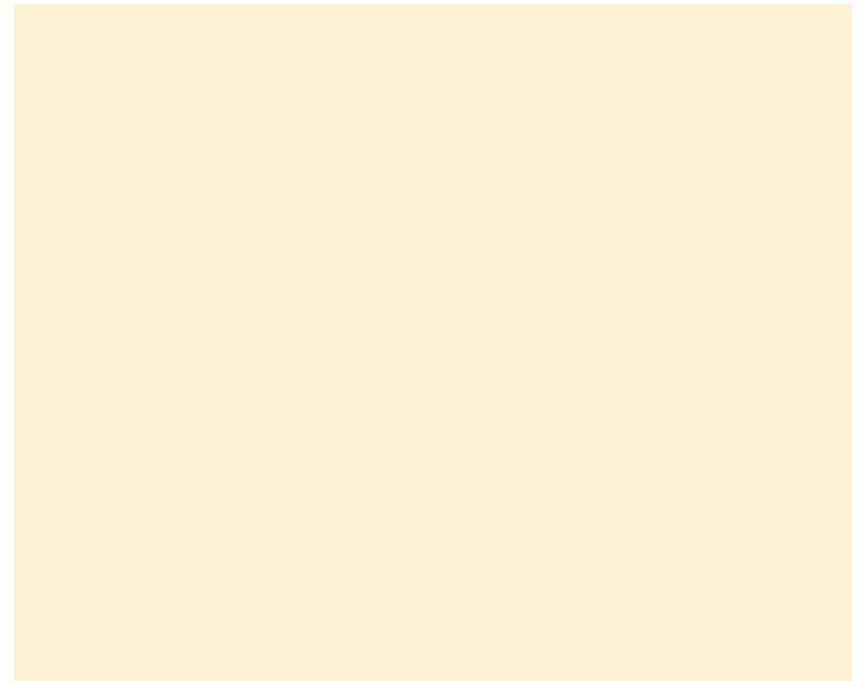
system and communicate where public parks are located and how to access

- Develop educational or promotional campaigns to encourage residents to be more healthfully active and make use of park and trail assets
- » Strategy 7.3: Placemaking
  - Strengthen Olivia's identity and sense of place by using its parks and open spaces to celebrate its unique culture, recreation opportunities, and natural attributes



# 10 Community Facilities

A community's utilities and public facilities are key elements of its infrastructure. They make it possible for all other systems to work.



## 10.1 - Introduction

High quality utility and public infrastructure systems are key requirements for providing high quality of life for residents and supportive conditions for the success of business and industry - including startups, established businesses, and up-and-coming enterprises.

A strategic plan to manage water, sewer, electricity, broadband, and other systems ensures a community is able to meet its current and future needs without compromising quality of service or degrading its natural environment. The availability of adequate, up-to-date facilities and systems provides a foundation for business development and growth, and community success.

### Vision and Goals

#### Future Vision

Olivia plans and maintains its facilities and public utility systems to efficiently and cost-effectively provide services to its residents and businesses, supporting high quality of life and economic competitiveness while protecting its assets and building value for the community. Public facilities and utility systems are located, designed, and programmed to meet the needs of residents and businesses.

#### Goals

- » Ensure that excellent utility services are available to residents and businesses
- » Proactively maintain existing infrastructure
- » Ensure fiscally and environmentally sustainable water, sewer, and stormwater management
- » Focus investments at locations that are financially sustainable
- » Provide the necessary technology foundation for 21st Century jobs



## 10.2 - Existing Conditions

### Community Buildings and Facilities

#### City Hall



The City's Administrative Offices and Council Chambers are located at 1009 West Lincoln Avenue. This facility is connected to and is adjacent to the fire station.

The City is currently considering options on how to accommodate the needs for City Staff, Police Department, and Fire Department. This may include restructuring the current building and expanding space for some functions.

Some issues currently affecting the City Hall building include ADA compliance, lack of secure entry points, staff safety issues, inadequate bathroom facilities, and lack of welcoming / adequate spaces for the public.

#### Fire Station



The Olivia Fire Department is located at 1007 West Lincoln Avenue adjacent to City Hall. It is staffed by 40 volunteer firefighters, and offers fire protection for a service area approximately 106 square miles.

On average, the department responds to approximately 40 calls per year.

The fire department's current building suffers from several important deficiencies, including space constraints affecting storage for firefighting equipment, department organization and training; inadequate space for equipment maintenance and workshop; inadequate space for firefighting apparatus and rescue truck; inadequate ventilation causing molding of firefighters' safety equipment; and electrical and plumbing systems not up to code, among others.

#### Library



The Olivia Public Library (405 South 10th Street) was built in 1963 and remodeled in 1997 to its current size of 7,000 square feet. It is part of the Pioneerland Library System (providing service over nine west-central Minnesota counties) and has a service area of nearly 5,000 people.

## BOLD High School



BOLD High School is located at 701 South 9th Street and is part of BOLD (Bird Island, Olivia, and Lake Lillian) Public School District - ISD 2534. The building provides public education for Pre K, K through 12th grade, and also houses the District's main offices.

In November 2023 voters approved \$40 million in bond monies for school facility improvements in Olivia and Bird Island. Olivia residents voted overwhelmingly in favor of the measure.

Approximately \$34 million will be dedicated to renovation of the existing facility in Olivia, with more than 50% of the funds going toward modernizing learning areas, almost 40% to address deferred maintenance issues, and about 10% to address building safety issues.

## Police Department



The Olivia Police Department is housed in the County Government Services Center at 105 South 5th Street, within Renville County's Law Enforcement Center. Full staffing for the department includes five full-time officers, six part-time officers, and one part-time administrative assistant. Equipment includes four squad cars (replaced every two years).

The department currently rents its space from the county, sharing interview rooms, evidence processing, garage space, and storage areas with the Renville County Sheriff's Department. This arrangement includes office space and minimal janitorial services.



Over the years, several issues have been noted with the current arrangement. Some of these issues include:

- » Difficult access for members of the public (which hinders the department's ability to connect with Olivia citizens)
- » Lack of a secure view area for the department's receptionist
- » Lack of space hindering the department's ability to host trainings
- » Restrictions on use of the facility's public display space
- » Delayed response to maintenance requests
- » Lack of parking spaces
- » Uncertainty about the department's ability to continue to have access to their current space
- » Difficult communication with other City departments due to the distance between building locations



### Public Works



The Public Works garage is located at 109 North 14th Street (behind Dollar General). Staffing for the department includes four full-time employees and three summer part-time employees.

The department maintains and repairs city streets, including snow removal. It also maintains traffic signs, street and regulatory signs, storm sewer, pavement markings, sidewalk construction and repair, tree trimming along public right-of-way and city parks.

### Liquor Store



The Olivia Municipal Liquor Store is located at 802 East Lincoln Avenue and is owned and operated by the City of Olivia. The store is an off-sale only liquor store and offers a wide range of products. It is staffed by one full-time and seven part-time employees.

### Olivia Regional Airport



The Olivia Regional Airport has one asphalt runway that is 3,498 feet long by 75 feet wide. The fixed base operator (FBO) constructed a new hangar in 2010 and a six stall T hangar was constructed in 2013.

Recent updates include a pavement rehabilitation and apron expansion that took place over 2019 and 2020, a fuel system update in 2020, and exterior retrofit lighting in 2022.

Water Treatment Plant



Olivia’s water treatment plant is located at 1700 West Fairview Avenue and was constructed in 1992 at a (bonded) cost of \$1.3 million. The plant is designed to remove iron, manganese, and methane gas from raw water.

Olivia has five wells in its water system ranging in age from 1940 to 1975. There is no plan for future well development at this time. In 2012 the City of Olivia invested \$600,000 to replace equipment at the plant. The system’s specifications are as follows:

Pumping Capacity	1.4 mgd*
Average Daily Flow	300,00 gpd**
Peak Flow	800,000 gpd**
Storage Capacity	300,000 gallons (elevated)
	110,000 gallons (ground storage)

\* Million gallons per day

\*\* Gallons per day

Wastewater Treatment Plant



The Olivia Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) is located at 2020 West Bayberry Avenue. It was built in 1962, upgraded in 1982, and had equipment replaced in 2012 at a cost of \$2.4 million.

The design capacity of the plant is 550,000 gallons per day (gpd) and the average daily flow is 280,000 gpd.

The WWTF facility has a continuous discharge to the East Fork of Beaver Creek. An analysis completed by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) determined that the WWTF has potential to not meet water quality standards for chloride. As the current WWTF is not designed to meet this level of treatment for chlorides, the City will pursue centralized softening at the Olivia Water Treatment Plant.

Renville County Offices



Renville County Government Services Center is located at 105 5th Street and houses a variety of services including Public Health/WIC, Emergency Management, Olivia Police Department, Sheriff’s Office, Veterans Services, County Attorney’s Office, and other related services. The Renville County Jail is located on the east side of the building.

The Renville County Courthouse is located just across 5th Street at 500 DePue Avenue and houses court-related services, including courts, probation, drivers license exams, county auditor, and other related services.

Built in 1902 and designed by Fremont D. Orff, the building includes influences from different architectural styles. The courthouse and jail were added to the National Register of Historic Places on June 13, 1986.



## City Utilities

### City-Owned Systems

The City of Olivia owns, manages, maintains, and operates water, wastewater, stormwater, and electric utilities.

Other utilities and services, including gas and solid waste are contracted through vendors.

### Water Distribution

The City's water distribution system has been continually developed, maintained and expanded over the years. The current system includes one water storage tank that has been regularly maintained. Repair and replacement projects have been completed as needed - approximately 2,500 ft of water main (from Beaver Creek to 15th Street, along the north side of Hwy 212) were replaced in 2023. Potential future extensions and improvements to the network should be evaluated as needed. Water distribution modeling should be used to guide expansion priorities to serve the community's future growth.

### Electricity

Olivia is a member of the [Minnesota Municipal Power Agencies \(MMPA\)](#) organization and purchases about one third of its electricity from MMPA. The remaining two thirds of the Olivia's electric power comes from the [Western Area Power Administration \(WAPA\)](#), an office of the

US Department of Energy. Olivia's long term contract with WAPA allows the City to offer some of the lowest electric rates in the state.

Although the City of Olivia owns the electric utility, maintenance of the system is managed through a contract with [Missouri River Energy Services \(MRES\)](#). Three MRES employees manage the day-to-day operation of Olivia's electric distribution system.

### Gas

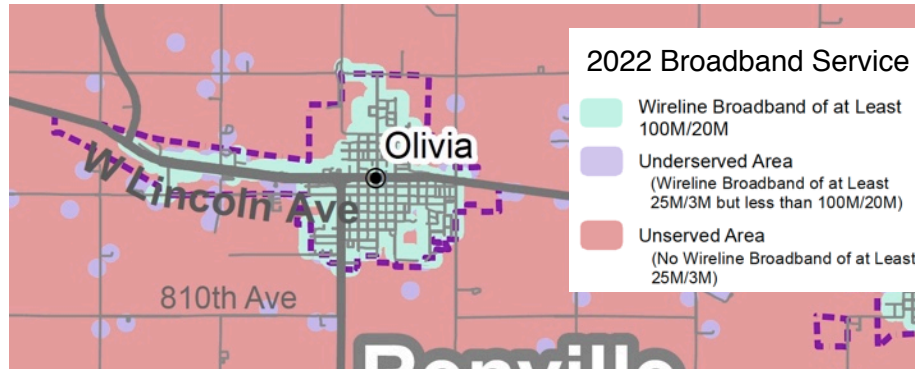
Natural gas service in Olivia is provided by CenterPoint Energy, headquartered in Houston Texas and providing natural gas sales, services and distribution in eight states. No issues have been identified with the services received by Olivia residents or businesses.

### Sanitary Sewer

The City's wastewater department maintains all sewer lines and treats wastewater to ensure it meets government standards before being released into the East Fork of Beaver Creek. The city's sewer system was constructed in the 1930s and most of it is over 70 years old. In 2022 the City received \$830,000 in federal funding to replace and improve water and sewage systems by replacing deteriorated water and sewer lines as well as storm drainage systems and hydrants.



## Broadband



*Most of Olivia is well served for broadband according to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Office of Broadband Development.*

Broadband service in Olivia is provided by CenturyLink, Mediacom, and Lightbeam. Most of the city is currently rated as a “served area” by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (MnDEED), with access to at least 100 Mbps download / 20 Mbps upload service.

Some areas of the city, however, are currently unserved. As development occurs, it will be important to coordinate access to broadband connectivity for potential industrial or residential uses.

According to comments received during the plan’s engagement there may be need for improving broadband connectivity in some parts of the city. Addressing potential issues has important implications for the city’s economic development potential, growth of employment, and its desirability as a location for residential development. Potential benefits of improved service include:

- » Supporting economic development goals by providing the necessary data infrastructure to support current businesses and attract technology entrepreneurs and startups

- » Supporting telework options for potential new residents who would be able to be employed in the Twin Cities or elsewhere and work remotely from Olivia
- » Supporting educational needs and students’ remote classrooms
- » Increasing convenience for residents and visitors

## Cellular Service & 5G

Cellular service is available through Verizon, AT&T, and T-Mobile networks. 4G service is available throughout the city on all carriers. 5G coverage (the next generation of cellular service, with vastly increased service speeds) varies across carriers. City leadership may be needed for carriers to complete the transition to 5G.

5G requires new infrastructure and coordination between municipalities and service providers. Unlike 4G, which relies on a relatively low number of large cellular antennas on towers and buildings placed across large distances, 5G services use millimeter wave technology that requires a much greater number of small cellular antennas. For reasons of economy and convenience, these are generally co-located on City-owned structures like telephone poles, light posts, and standalone structures.

5G can offer some benefits in support of City goals, including:

- » Support for economic development goals by providing the necessary data infrastructure to support current businesses and attract technology entrepreneurs
- » Improved and expanded broadband service throughout the City
- » Reduction in aboveground cable and TV service wiring

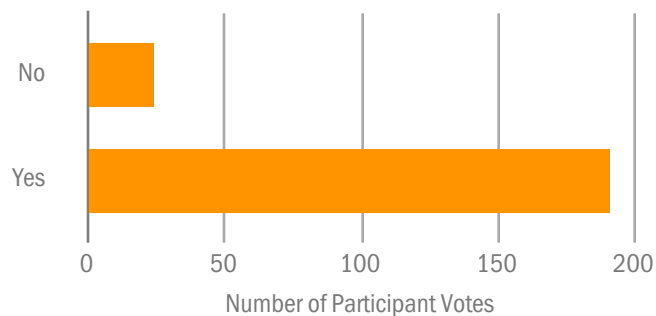
Developing a current inventory of current light pole and similar infrastructure, developing a plan for updates or repairs, and proactively partnering with carriers lagging behind in implementation might lead to expedited improvement of 5G coverage throughout the city.



## 10.3 - What We Heard: Comments Received

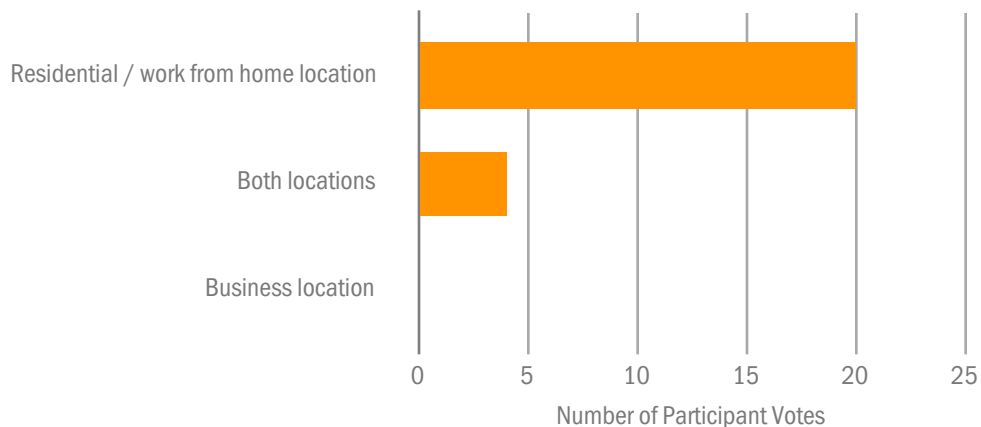
Olivia residents are generally satisfied with the quality and availability of community infrastructure and services, but there are consistent requests for development of a community center and for improvement of the school facilities.

### Does the internet service you currently use in Olivia meet your needs?



*"A community / recreation center .. with a gym, indoor playground etc. would be great to have a place to go during the winter and get exercise"*

### [If internet service meeting needs = "No"] Does your answer refer to a residential location or a business location?



*"The school is outdated" ... "We need a new school or at least a remodel" ... "Get a school built and actually invest in the future before Olivia dries up ..."*

## 10.4 - Opportunities

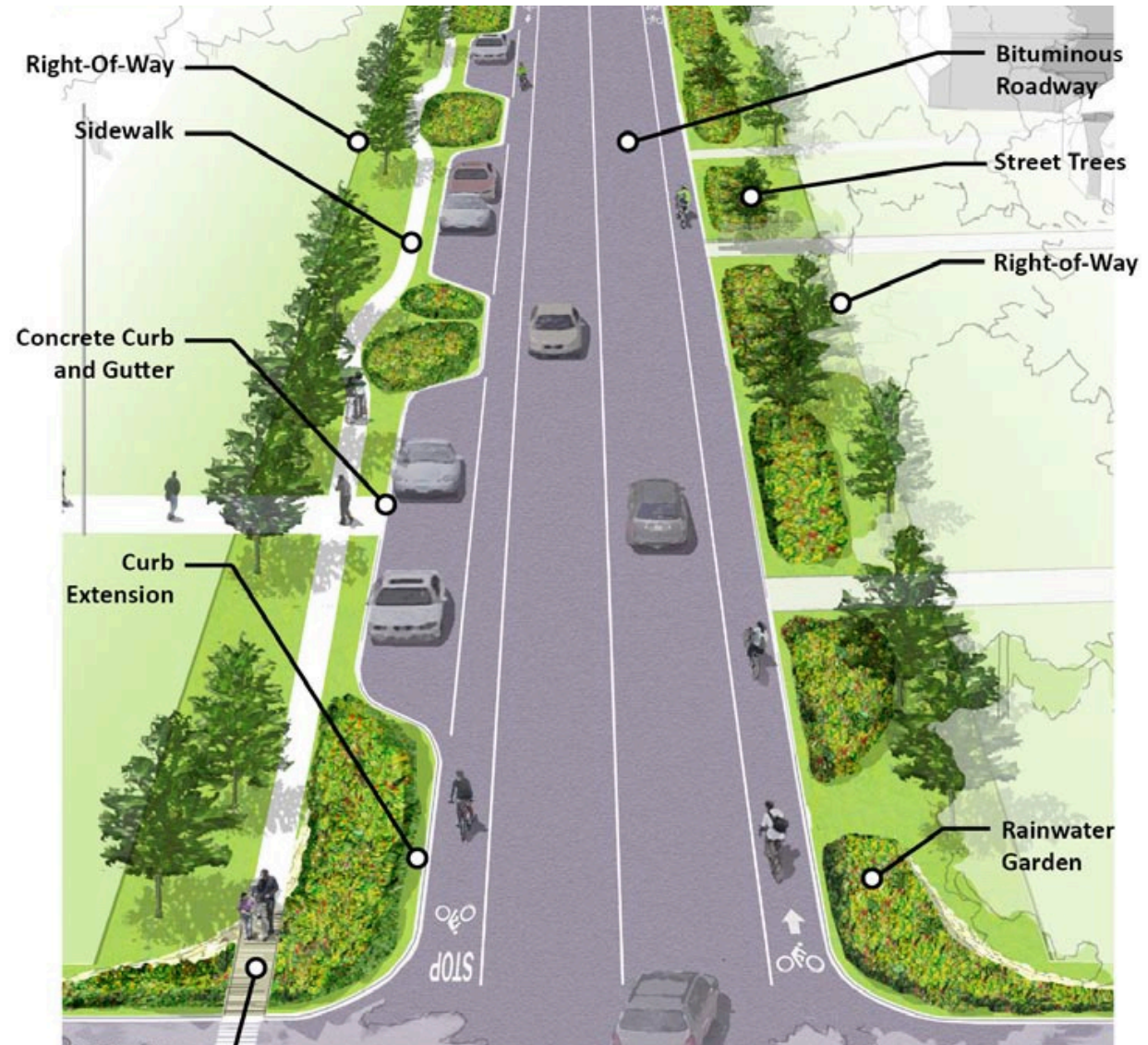
### 10.4.1 - Green Complete Streets / Living Streets

Living Streets or [Green Complete Streets](#) are an approach for developing streets that include natural and sustainable infiltration and stormwater practices below ground, with enhanced walking and biking facilities, narrower pavement widths (to reduce runoff and stormwater load), calmed traffic, and enhanced plantings and aesthetics.

Implementing a Living Streets approach can be a cost-effective option for communities that are completing major reconstructions to replace aging sewer infrastructure; this approach can often reduce capital and maintenance costs.

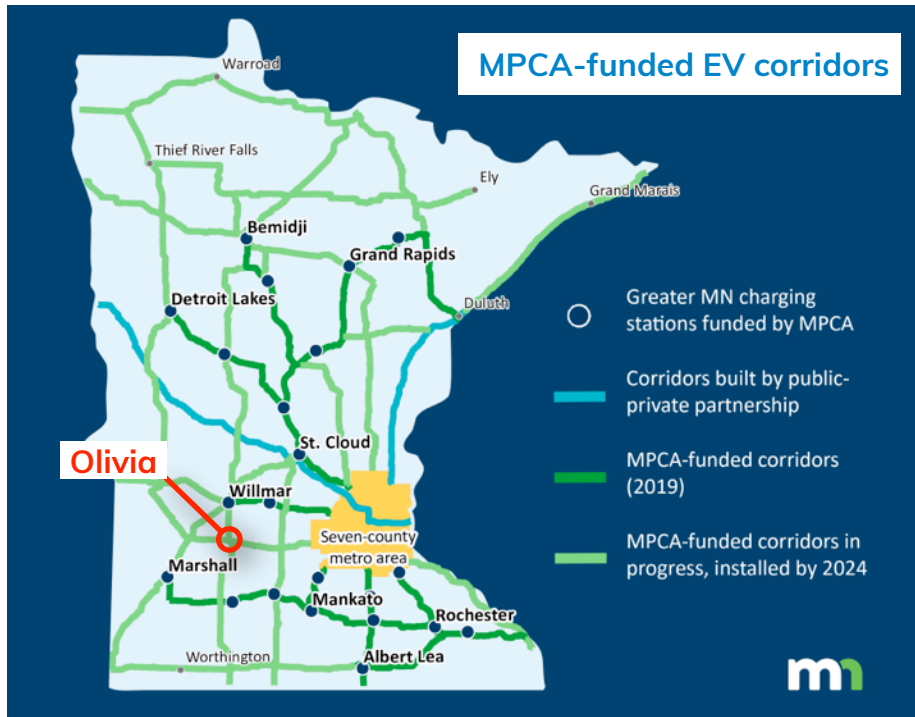
In addition, the treatments completed above-ground can increase a community's tree canopy and greening, expand its walk/bike network, improve curb appeal for neighborhoods, and increase the real estate valuation of nearby homes.

Development of Living Streets could be an attractive option for Olivia as aging infrastructure is replaced.



Elements of a Green Complete Street / Living Street managing stormwater flows. Image courtesy of City of North Saint Paul. Olivia has an opportunity to introduce these elements as streets are reconstructed.

### 10.4.2 - Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Station



Network of EV fast charging station corridors funded by MPCA grants.

There are currently two electric vehicle charging stations in Olivia. Additional charging stations may help attract travelers to specific locations in the community. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) as well as MnDOT are planning and implementing [investments in EV fast-charging stations](#) along highway corridors in Greater Minnesota to expand the statewide charging network by more than 2,500 miles.

Working with state agencies and with private mobility providers to offer charging infrastructure indowntown (especially if combined as part of other travel services in a Downtown Mobility Hub) may be a useful strategy to increase visitation and potential customers to local businesses.

### 10.4.3 - Stormwater as a Community Amenity



Managing stormwater through low-impact practices can help create outstanding community amenities. Image courtesy of Greater Minnesota Housing Fund (GMHF).

Traditional stormwater management includes moving stormwater off-site with curbs, ditches, and ponds. Stormwater management using green infrastructure and low impact development (LID) practices involves keeping stormwater close to its point of origin and mimicking a site's natural hydrology as the landscape is developed.

These practices can help address the technical requirements for compliance with local, state, and federal stormwater regulations while at the same time developing new and valuable community assets.

Already there is a great example of using stormwater as a community amenity in Olivia with the development of [Pond Park](#), which emerged as result of a project to develop a [stormwater detention pond](#). Continuing to use this approach for future projects will yield dividends for the city's built and natural environment.



## 10.5 - Recommendations

### Goal 1: Cost-efficient, financially sustainable utility services

- » Strategy 1.1: Utility connections
  - Direct growth and redevelopment to areas already serviced by municipal utilities
  - Require that properties currently served by City utilities but outside of City boundaries agree to a) annexation into the City, or b) pay full cost of connection to the City's systems, including capital costs
  - Do not provide sewer or water connection to properties outside of the City's municipal boundary
- » Strategy 1.2: Maintenance of utility assets
  - Proactively maintain and upgrade existing utility infrastructure on a regular and timely basis
  - Evaluate the scope of inflow and infiltration (I&I) issues to isolate primary problem areas for repair
- » Strategy 1.3: System expansion / growth
  - Review water and sanitary sewer system status, needs and costs before considering annexation or development
  - Prepare financial and operational studies to determine cost implications of

extending services to potential land annexations or proposed development

- Continue to include capital improvements to utility systems in the Capital Improvement Program
- » Strategy 1.4: Protect existing utility assets
  - Continue to implement the City's Wellhead Protection program to ensure safe drinking water
  - Collaborate with Renville County to address independent sewage treatment systems within the corporate limits and the expansion / annexation area

### Goal 2: Excellent facilities for the City's needs

- » Strategy 2.1: Funding for necessary improvements
  - Include funding for rehabilitation, expansion, or new construction of community facility buildings in the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)
  - Work with local and federal officials and agency partners (e.g., elected officials, USDA, and others) to obtain funds to ensure civic and life-safety facilities (fire, police) are adequate for their functions

- » Strategy 2.2: Improvements for civic and life-safety facilities
  - Address deficiencies and make improvements to the City Hall building
  - Address deficiencies and make improvements to the Olivia Fire Department facilities and building
  - Address deficiencies and make improvements to the Olivia Police Department facilities

### Goal 3: Environmentally sustainable water, sewer, and stormwater management

- » Strategy 3.1: Water conservation
  - Work with "wet industries" using high levels of water to potentially reduce their usage levels through water recycling, etc.
- » Strategy 3.2: Sewer maintenance
  - Continue improvements and upgrades to sanitary sewer mains by lining or replacement as needed
  - Continue to fund and address improvements for inflow and infiltration (I&I) issues in the sanitary sewer system



- » Strategy 3.2: Storm water facilities
  - Provide adequate storm water facilities for conveyance, flow control, and pollution reduction
- » Strategy 3.3: Resources and natural systems
  - Manage stormwater as a resource for watershed health and public use, while protecting stormwater management capacity of natural resources
- » Strategy 3.4: On-site stormwater management
  - Encourage on-site stormwater management through facility investments and land use decisions
- » Strategy 3.4: Green Complete Streets
  - Explore opportunities to implement [Green Complete Streets](#) / Living Streets in coordination with street reconstruction projects
- » Strategy 3.5: Partnerships
  - Coordinate partnerships across municipalities to enhance stormwater practices and watershed health

## Goal 4: Further the 5G transition

- » Strategy 4.1: Inventory of assets and needs
  - Develop a current inventory of current light pole and similar infrastructure

- Proactively partner with cellular carriers not currently providing 5G service in the city to align projects with carriers' plans for transitioning to 5G

## Goal 5: Prepare for electric vehicles

- » Strategy 5.1: Investigate electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure
  - Work with state and local partners to investigate potential service models and locations for electric vehicle charging infrastructure, including through [current MPCA and MnDOT programs and funding](#)
  - Prioritize locations and configurations that can serve to attract travelers to the city's downtown

## Goal 6: Ensure access to high-speed internet

- » Strategy 6.1: Monitor and advocate as needed
  - Maintain information to identify areas that need connection or improvement to high-speed service
  - Review status of service to areas located within the City's downtown, business parks, residential districts, and redevelopment sites

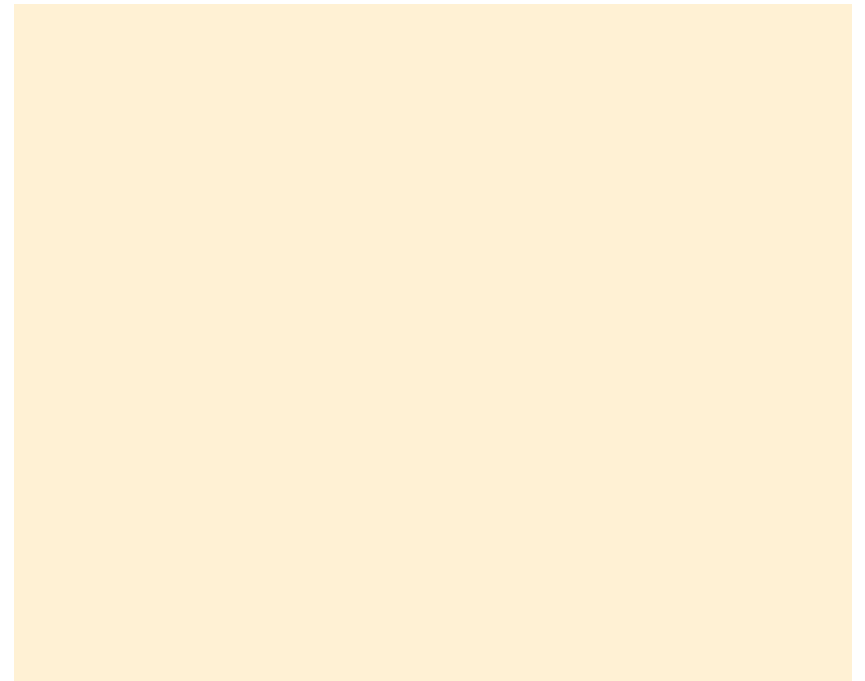
- Work with private sector and government partners to enhance broadband and fiber deployments

## Goal 7: A well-informed public

- » Strategy 7.1: System planning efforts
  - Continue to inform the public regarding the location and design of pending / upcoming infrastructure projects through the City's social media channels, newsletters, press releases, etc.
  - Provide information that is clear and easy to understand
- » Strategy 7.2: Conservation and care
  - Consider hosting open houses at utility facilities to provide the public an opportunity to become informed about existing facilities and potential needed improvements
  - Consider developing and providing information regarding care of stormwater sewer inlets, wastewater system, and other systems
  - Consider providing brochures, fact sheets, and other information to the public regarding water and energy conservation

# 11 Civic Engagement

Building ongoing opportunities for continued participation will help implement the plan and grow resident ownership of the City's future.



## 11.1 - Introduction

Residents who are active and engaged members of their community are more likely to stay, invest in their neighborhoods, and start businesses. Growing participation, engagement, and communications is an important City goal and a key component of the approach for implementing this plan.

Olivia is a welcoming community that values community input and is committed to engaging residents to increase communication and to foster the exchange of ideas and opinions.

Participation by more community members benefits everyone and supports efforts to provide quality programs, facilities and services. More community voices participating in conversations and decisions will lead to better results for all.

### Vision and Goals

#### Future Vision

The City of Olivia works collaboratively with residents and community partners, including schools, churches, businesses, public agencies, foundations and other organizations to expand engagement and communication, to develop more inclusive outreach processes, and to receive comments, preferences, and ideas by a broader range of residents. Resident participation and involvement in community conversations help ensure decisions enjoy community support and lead to better results for everyone.

#### Goals

- » Engaging residents and businesses is part of the City's daily business
- » City policies and actions respond to community priorities
- » Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan grows residents' positive feelings of ownership and investment in Olivia's future
- » Working collaboratively with community partners, the City increases engagement and communication throughout the community and grows participation by a broader cross-section of residents
- » Olivia increases connection and engagement with its Hispanic/Latino population through community liaisons and development of a selection of Spanish-language materials



*Community power and participation is a key ingredient for successful events like Corn Capital Days. Harnessing and growing this energy for the City's day to day work will bring huge dividends for the community.*

## 11.2 - Existing Conditions

### Existing participation

Although there aren't official records of levels of community participation for other recent City initiatives, participation levels were measured during engagement activities for this Comprehensive Plan. A couple of insights stand out:

#### 1) High interest and participation

There is significant community interest and desire in participating in conversations about the community's future.

More than seven hundred people participated in the plan's engagement activities, which included three online surveys, an interactive online map, a public workshop, and a booth at Corn Capital Days. That number of participants itself would be a very positive result in any community - but it is especially remarkable in a city of 2,400 people!

This high level of participation, and the depth and detail of the comments received give evidence of residents' desire for participating in community processes and of their interest in offering their ideas and guidance for Olivia's future.

#### 2) Engagement with the City's Spanish-speaking and immigrant community is much lower

The percentage of participants in the plan's engagement who identified as Hispanic/Latino community members was significantly lower than this group's share of the city's population.

Though the City supported several successful activities to engage this community (including a Spanish-language survey, materials in Spanish at Corn Capital Days, and connection through several Steering Committee members), there are significant opportunities to further develop and strengthen this connection - especially given the growing percentage of City residents who identify as Hispanic/Latino (about 13% or about one in eight residents according to 2021 US Census ACS figures).

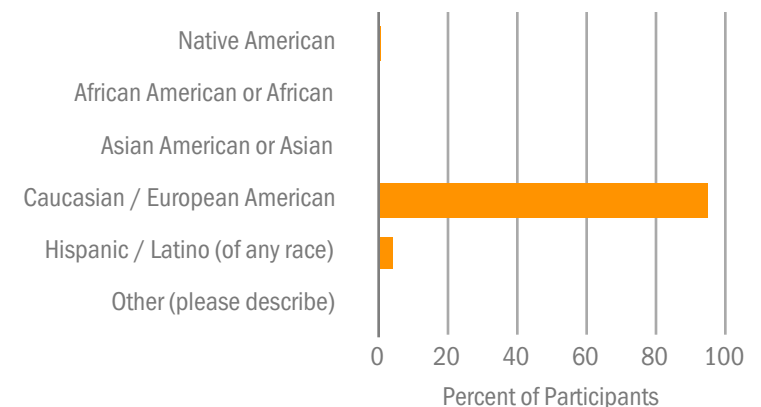
### Participation totals

The overall rate of participation in the plan's engagement activities was extremely high. Activities included both online engagement and in-person opportunities at Corn Capital Days and the plan's Open House.

Activity	Participants
Survey 1 (online - broad themes and vision)	124
Survey 2 (online - detailed questions)	407
Wikimap (online interactive map)	75
Public workshop	50
Corn Capital Days	80
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>736</b>

### Participation by population

**From Survey 2: How would you describe your ethnic / cultural heritage?**

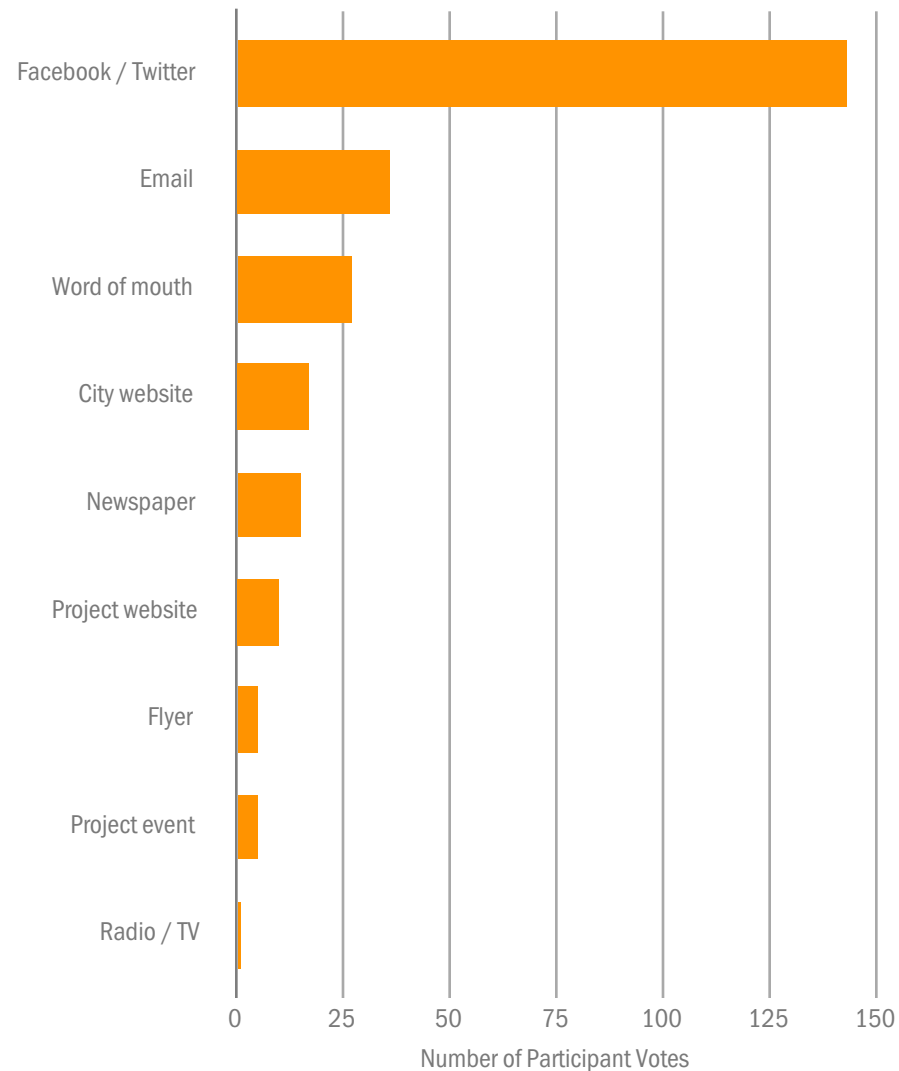




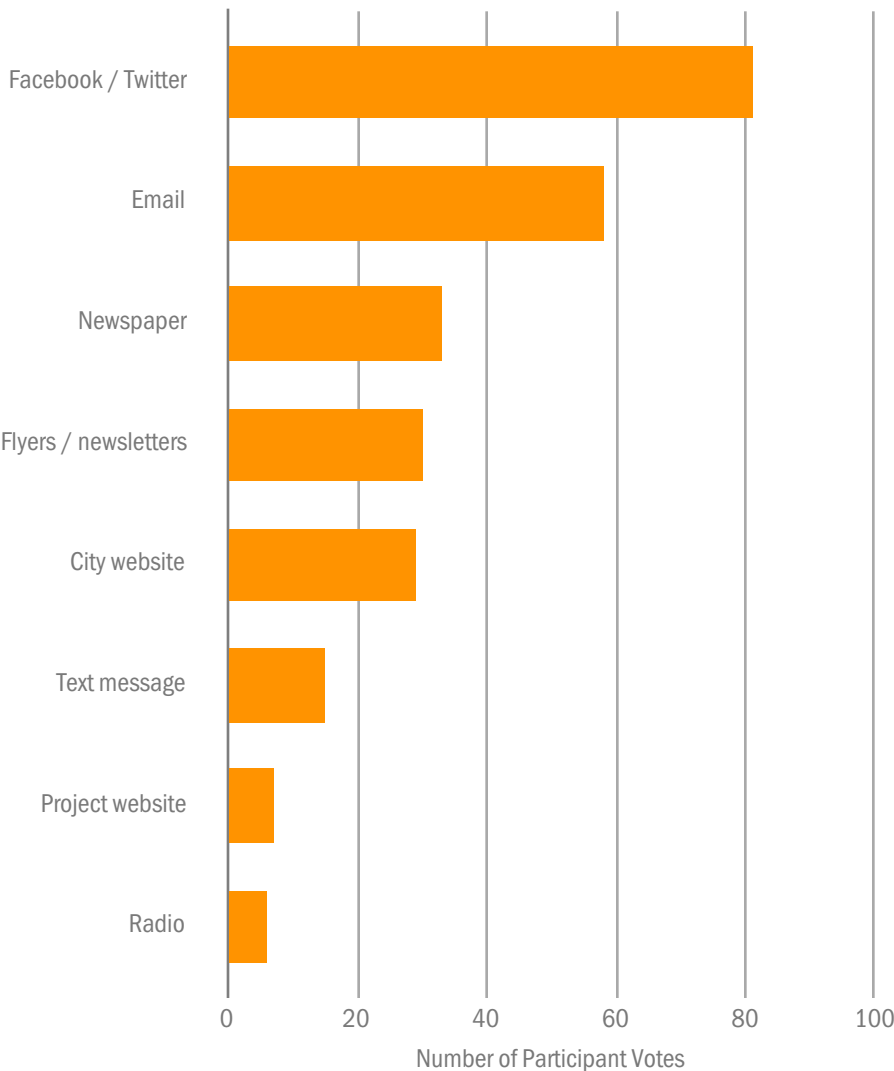
# 11.3 - What We Heard: Comments Received

Survey participants told us how they heard about the Comprehensive Plan, and they also provided their guidance as to the tools the City should use to invite them to participate in next initiatives:

How did you hear about the Comprehensive Plan or this survey?



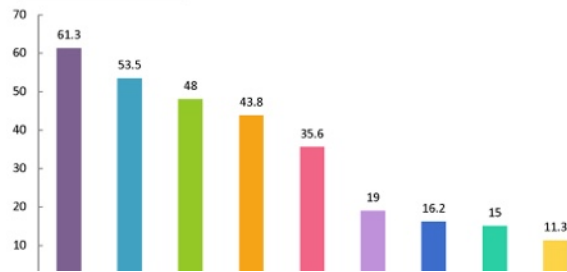
By what method would you prefer to receive information about this plan or other City plans?



## 11.4 - Opportunities

### 11.4.1 - Yearly survey

What are your ideas for making Olivia even better?



There is clearly a desire from Olivia residents to communicate their ideas, issues, and priorities for the city in a more regular and consistent way.

A yearly (or biannual) online survey could be an inexpensive, easy to deploy tool that would help the city collect key information about residents' issues and priorities.

Some key questions to include are:

- » What is working well?
- » What should be improved?
- » What are some upcoming opportunities or initiatives the city should work on over the next year?

Year over year, the survey would help provide valuable guidance, help the city become even more responsive, and easily and inexpensively build participation and engagement.

### 11.4.2 - Engagement in Spanish



Engaging Olivia's Hispanic/Latino population will help grow their participation in city programs, help support local entrepreneurial activity, and increase connection with a significant portion of the city's residents.

Some key tools and approaches include:

- » Develop a selection of Spanish-language materials describing key programs - for example, housing rehabilitation, business training, and startup funding programs
- » Work with trusted community liaisons who are connected with the Hispanic/Latino community and who are familiar with city programs and priorities
- » Consider paper, radio, and media campaigns
- » Work with trusted local businesses and institutions connected with this community - for example, BOLD schools, area church partners, and area Hispanic businesses.

### 11.4.3 - Engaging young people



Young people - from high-school and college-age to young families and professionals - are a key demographic for the future health and growth of Olivia.

Creating distinct opportunities for each of these groups to participate and gain a sense of ownership for the future of the city is a key for ensuring that they will remain (or return) when it's time to set down their roots and grow their families.

Engagement can begin at an early age - for example, by offering opportunities for high school students to contribute as advisors on plan implementation, parks programs or events.

For young professionals, offering opportunities to network, sharing information on business or homeowner funding, and convening "Olivia [TED talks](#)" or similar events could also be promising options.

## 11.5 - Recommendations

### Goal 1: A proactive, responsive, and accessible city

- » Strategy 1.1: Continue working to improve communication and provide efficient and responsive services and high quality customer service - for example, providing a “shop local” web resource, developing a community events calendar (in addition to the existing City meetings calendar), and adding an online property search tool/ interactive map to the City’s official website
- » Strategy 1.2: Conduct an annual or biannual survey to receive community ideas, issues and priorities for city actions
- » Strategy 1.3: Ensure City of Olivia documents and online information are easily located and available to the public - for example, for marketing of available properties and buildings online, and maintaining planning documents and information, like economic development resources and plans
- » Strategy 1.4: Continue to grow a positive and productive relationship between city government and the community through activities like [Welcoming Week](#), annual bike rodeos, or walk/bike to school events
- » Strategy 1.5: Expand information on community events, City Council activities, and other news as part of regular communications with residents

### Goal 2: Expand opportunities for civic participation

- » Strategy 2.1: Actively publicize opportunities to serve on City Advisory Committees and Boards to expand resident participation on development of City policies, programs and procedures.
- » Strategy 2.2: Partner with local businesses, the [Olivia Chamber of Commerce](#), local schools, faith based organizations, and student and community organizations to increase awareness of opportunities to serve on City Advisory Committees and Boards.
- » Strategy 2.3: Expand the use of social media to share information regarding current city initiatives and opportunities to serve on City Advisory Committees and Boards.

### Goal 3: Invite young people to participate

- » Strategy 3.1: Continue to collaborate with BOLD schools and other local organizations to expand opportunities for young people to participate in City Advisory Committees and Boards
  - Consider working with BOLD schools to develop civic participation as a requirement for graduation from high school

- » Strategy 3.2: Provide City internship opportunities for young adults that result in meaningful participation in city government
- » Strategy 3.3: Develop a “Young People’s Advisory Board” to advise the city on issues relevant to the city, including retention of 18 to 24 year olds
  - Seek youth participation on other steering/advisory committees and City Advisory Committees and Boards

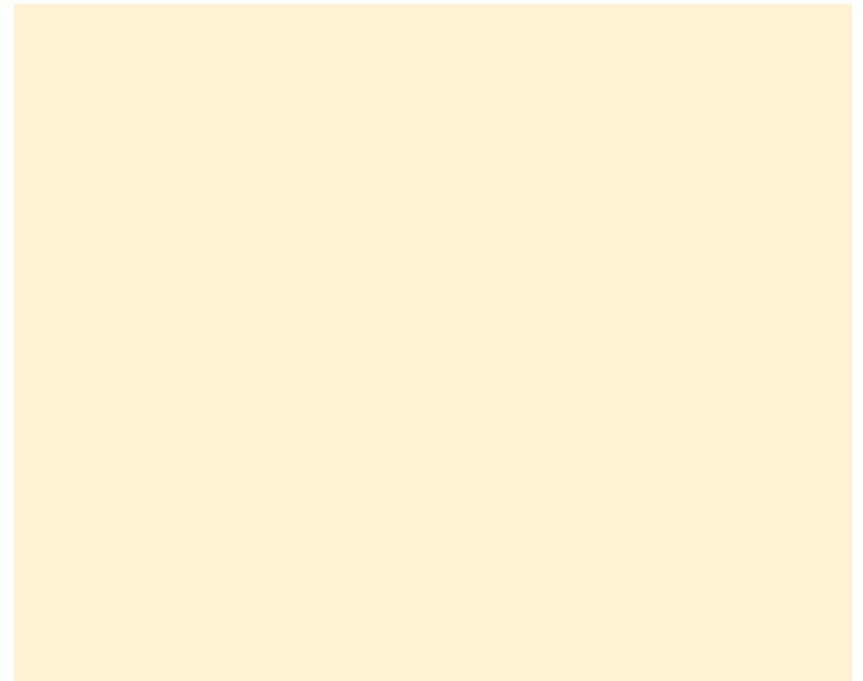
### Goal 4: Expand engagement with Olivia’s Hispanic/Latino population

- » Strategy 4.1: Work with trusted community liaisons who are connected with the Hispanic/Latino community and who are familiar with City programs and priorities
- » Strategy 4.2: Develop a selection of Spanish-language materials describing key programs - for example, housing rehabilitation, business training and funding programs, and other city initiatives
  - Consider focused advertising
- » Strategy 4.3: Work with trusted local businesses and institutions connected with this community - for example, area churches, BOLD schools, area Hispanic businesses, foundations, and other partners

# 12 Implementation

The purpose for this plan is action.

This chapter's guidance for implementation offers a framework for achieving the goals the plan has set.





## 12.1 - Introduction

The process to develop the City of Olivia Comprehensive Plan engaged hundreds of residents, businesses, and visitors in a broad and deep conversation about the city's future. Once the Plan is finalized and approved, the work of implementing its recommendations will become the key measure of its success.

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan provides a process and direction for:

- » Monitoring progress towards implementation of the plan's goals
- » Establishing a process for accountability for implementation of its recommendations
- » Updating the plan's contents and recommendations when needed
- » Involving the community in the work of making the plan a reality

Sections in this chapter include:

- » 12.2 - Opportunities for Implementing the Plan: A summary of basic actions to ensure the plan's recommendations get incorporated into City processes, that opportunities for funding are pursued, and that the plan is used as part of the City's daily decision-making and action.
- » 12.3 - Updating the plan: Description of a process for making changes and updates to the plan. This process includes criteria to consider when evaluating potential changes to the plan. This will help the plan stay responsive to changing trends and circumstances.
- » 12.4: Recommendations for implementation framework: Recommendations for setting up the framework, process, and systems that will help implement the plan.
- » 12.5: Implementation matrix: A set of tables listing implementation goals and strategies, as well as priorities and involved parties, for each of the chapters and recommendations in the plan.

### What do the plan's Goals and Strategies mean?

Goals are the short and long term aims that the Comprehensive Plan sets out for the City of Olivia to achieve. Each goal is a broad statement that encompasses a desired outcome in general terms.

Strategies are the projects, programs, or policies that will help the City to achieve each goal.

Each goal in this plan includes a list of potential strategies that should be considered in working to achieve each goal.

The purpose for each goal and strategy? To help achieve the ideas and future vision of Olivia citizens and leaders.

## 12.2 - Opportunities for Implementing the Plan

There will be many opportunities to implement the plan's recommendations from the time it is adopted through the next twenty years. Using it in the City's daily business, and working with opportunities that come along due to other projects and initiatives (from the City or partner agencies), will be key.

### Using the plan in the City's daily business

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a useful and responsive living document. To fulfill its role in guiding the City's future actions, it needs to be referenced and considered in the City's daily work.

The plan should be consulted and used on a daily basis as decisions are made regarding land use and development (for example when an opportunity to redevelop or intensify use of parcel of land opens up), transportation planning, capital improvements, and other situations affecting the community.

This of course includes deliberations and decisions by the City Council and the City's boards and commissions, but it also includes the City's workflows and processes.

As part of the City's daily workflow, the plan's recommendations can be implemented in the following ways:

### Budgets and work programs

City departments and administrators should consult the plan when preparing work programs and budgets. Many of the plan's strategies can be implemented through this process.

### Development approvals

Development approval of proposals, such as rezoning and subdivision plats, are a key means of implementing the Comprehensive Plan and its recommendations.

### Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

The Capital Improvement Plan should align with the goals of the plan's land use policies and infrastructure recommendations.

### Economic incentives

Incentives for supporting business startups or growth of existing businesses should line up with the recommendations of the plan.

When economic incentives are proposed as part of other projects and initiatives, they should be reviewed to ensure that they are

consistent with the plan's land use and other recommendations.

### Private development decisions

Property owners and investors should have an understanding of the Comprehensive Plan and the Future Land Use Plan when submitting development proposals to the City. City decision-makers will be using these documents to guide their deliberations and approvals.



*A smart and proactive developer will orient their proposal to match the goals or guidelines described in a city's plan, easing their review and approval process, building community goodwill, and saving time and money.*

## Responding to opportunities from other agencies and partners

From time to time, there will be opportunities for implementation that arise because of projects or initiatives led by other agencies.

Using the plan's recommendations as a foundation, it will be possible to respond to those opportunities and leverage them to move those recommendations from words on paper to actual physical changes in the world.

Some typical opportunities include:

### Grants from public agencies, non-profit organizations and corporations

Numerous public and private entities designate funds for specific purposes or programs. Some of these funds, like [MnDOT's Active Transportation Infrastructure Fund](#), have a well-defined goal - in the case of this specific fund, building walking and biking infrastructure in Minnesota communities. For a city like Olivia, this fund can help implement important pieces of the city's overall walking and biking network if it can be shown that these pieces match the fund's intended purpose.

Other grants may have a wider range of potentially fundable projects. For example, the [EPA's Recreation Economy for Rural Communities Grant](#) can fund initiatives as wide-ranging as broadband service improvements,

economic development initiatives, trail networks, or equitable access to the outdoor recreation economy.

Grants from corporate entities, like [T-Mobile's Hometown Grants](#) (in collaboration with [Main Street America](#) and [Smart Growth America](#)) can also be narrowly focused or more broad. In the case of T-Mobile's grant, the moneys are dedicated for improvements that support community vitality in small towns and rural communities like Olivia.

An important task for the plan's implementation will be to track potential opportunities for which Olivia could present an application.

### Opportunity as part of a project led by others

At other times, there will be projects led by other agencies (for example, improvements of US Hwy 212 around downtown Olivia led by MnDOT) where the timely insertion of plan recommendations (like streetscape upgrades along this same stretch) can lead to implementation of a plan recommendation at reduced or no cost to the City.

Ensuring that all City staff (as well as partners like MnDOT) are deeply familiar with plan priorities and recommendations will help ensure that these opportunities can be acted upon and lead to implementation.



*Pursuing a variety of grant and loan funding opportunities - like the [Historic Rehabilitation Loans and Grants](#) from Rethos - can lead to a transformative impact in Olivia.*



*One idea for potential streetscape and livability improvements along Lincoln Avenue / Hwy 212. Working with MnDOT when design options are being developed could help implement changes at reduced or no cost to the City.*

## 12.3 - Updating the Plan

This plan is envisioned to actively guide Olivia's future actions. Although much care has been taken to respond to community ideas and anticipate trends, it is likely that as the city evolves and conditions change the plan will require some modifications over its intended lifespan.

The following process is recommended for the plan's periodic updates to ensure it remains a relevant and useful document.

### Key parties

- » City Administrator
- » Planning Commission
- » Other City boards or commissions
- » City Council
- » Olivia residents

### Process

The Comprehensive Plan should be reevaluated every two years to ensure that implementation of its recommendations is proceeding as planned, and to review opportunities for making updates or improvements to its recommendations.

The Zoning Administrator, City Administrator and the Chair of the Planning Commission should maintain responsibility for this process, and determine the appropriate level of response to requests for potential changes.

Generally, three main processes are contemplated for updating the Comprehensive Plan:

- 1) Updates resulting from the plan's periodic re-evaluation
- 2) Updates recommended or requested by the Planning Commission or City Council
- 3) Updates recommended or requested by city residents or business owners

### Decision-making and incorporation into the plan

Depending on which of the three processes listed above is the origin of the potential update, these are the steps that are recommended for gaining approval and adopting changes to this document:

#### 1) Updates resulting from the plan's periodic re-evaluation

The Planning Commission manages the process of re-evaluation of the entire plan every two years. This process is internal to the City and to its departments. If the Commission or City Council determines that an update may be

needed, the Commission brings the proposed changes to a vote within its body. If approved, the proposed changes are brought to the City Council for their consideration and approval. If the City Council approves, the changes are made to the plan and included as an Addendum.

#### 2) Updates recommended or requested by the Planning Commission

The Planning Commission agenda for all future meetings will include a recurring item for "Updates to the Comprehensive Plan." Changes to the plan can be brought forward by any Commission member. The proposed change is introduced and discussed at the initial meeting, and the discussion and vote are finalized at the following Commission meeting. If approved, the proposed change is brought to the City Council for their consideration and approval. If the City Council approves, the change is made to the plan and included as an Addendum.

Other City boards or commissions bring their recommended updates to the Planning Commission, which can then vote to approve or



reject those requested changes. If the Planning Commission approves, the proposed change is brought to the City Council for their consideration and approval.

### 3) Updates requested by residents

From time to time, the Planning Commission may directly receive requests from members of the public for specific changes to the plan. When this occurs, the Planning Commission reviews the change proposed by the public. After research and deliberation, it brings the proposed change to a vote within its body. If approved, the proposed change is brought to the City Council for their consideration and approval. If the City Council approves, the change is made to the plan and included as an Addendum.

### Future interpretation

In the event that a major item of the plan is not clear, the Planning Commission will provide a written interpretation of the item. The Planning Commission can call upon outside experts for their advice.

### Full and complete update

To maintain the Comprehensive Plan's usefulness and applicability to the community, a full and complete update of the plan should occur every ten years.

## Criteria to consider when evaluating potential changes to the plan

**Consider and accept / adopt a change into the plan if and when:**

- » The change is consistent with the vision and goals of the Comprehensive Plan.
- » The change does not create an adverse impact on public facilities and services that cannot be mitigated. Public facilities and services include roads, sewers, water supply, drainage, schools, police, fire and parks.
- » Development that would result from the proposed change does not create an adverse impact that cannot be mitigated on surrounding properties. Such development should be consistent with the physical character of the surrounding neighborhood or would upgrade and improve the area.
- » The change allows a more viable transition to the planned uses on adjacent properties than the current land use.
- » The change does not create a significant adverse impact on the natural environment including trees, slopes, and groundwater that cannot be mitigated by improvements on the site or in the same vicinity.
- » There is a change in City policies or neighborhood characteristics that would justify a change.
- » The change corrects an oversight or error made in the original plan.
- » There is a community or regional need identified for the proposed land use or service change.
- » The change helps the City meet its equity, life-cycle and affordable housing objectives.
- » The change does not create adverse impacts on populations, landmarks or other historically significant structures or properties that cannot be mitigated.

## 12.4 - Recommendations

### Goal 1: Engage a broad cross-section of residents, business owners, and visitors as part of the implementation process

- » Strategy 1.1: Establish an ongoing communication program to provide information to the public about the plan. The public should have opportunity to become familiar with ongoing opportunities to implement the plan and understand their role in the process. The City's website, Facebook and other social media pages can be excellent channels for information.
- » Strategy 1.2: Ensure that copies of the adopted Comprehensive Plan are available online, at the public library, and at community destinations. The purpose is to make the plan available to residents and businesses so property owners can familiarize themselves with the plan elements and recommendations, and tailor their proposals to better fit the community's vision.

### Goal 2: Monitor and evaluate the implementation process

- » Strategy 2.1: Prepare annual reports that summarize the implementation actions completed
  - City staff prepares the report, highlighting key strategies completed over the course of the year. Reports can also identify areas of delay that need to be addressed. Any potential changes or additions to the plan can also be identified in this report.
- » Strategy 2.2: Provide a yearly summary of the annual report to the general public, including through a printed report also available for the public on the City's website, and at an annual Plan Implementation Open House to share information and progress.
- » Strategy 2.3: Create press releases and social media campaigns to highlight and acknowledge significant accomplishments relative to the plan and its strategies.

### Goal 3: Provide resources to implement the plan

- » Strategy 3.1: Update the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to ensure that it matches the recommendations outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.
- » Strategy 3.2: Prepare departmental budgets and programs that reflect the goals and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan.
- » Strategy 3.3: Work to secure funds for high-priority strategies. Funding can come from, but does not have to be limited to, the City, external agencies or other governmental sources, taxes, or private sector investment. This strategy should take place alongside annual budget cycles and should maximize use of non-municipal resources.

## Goal 4: Alignment of City actions with plan recommendations

*Require future decisions in the community regarding development, capital improvements, and budgeting to coincide with the Comprehensive Plan*

- » Strategy 4.1: Update the City's Zoning Ordinance to align with and reflect the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan
- » Strategy 4.2: Require development initiatives to be consistent with the goals, recommendations, and policies in the Comprehensive Plan
- » Strategy 4.3: Include reference to the plan in all staff reports related to policy, programs, and budgets.
- » Strategy 4.4: Establish a recurring topic of communication between the Planning Commission and the City Council regarding the Comprehensive Plan. Communication must be clear and frequent. Ensuring that interpretation of the plan is consistent will be critical to successful implementation of the plan's recommendations.

## Goal 5: Update the Plan

- » Strategy 5.1: Use the process outlined in Section 12.3 of this plan to periodically complete minor updates to the Comprehensive Plan. Provide support to the Planning Commission as needed to gather and allocate the necessary resources for completing plan updates.
- » Strategy 5.2: Convene a "Comprehensive Plan Update" task force as needed to focus on addressing specific topics or initiatives not currently included in the plan.
- » Strategy 5.3: Plan review and update
  - Review the entire Comprehensive Plan every two years, and update specific sections or content as needed
  - Update the entire Comprehensive Plan every ten years

## 12.5 - Matrix of Implementation Tasks

Implementing the plan's recommendations is a key goal that begins as soon as the plan is adopted. To aid understanding and prioritizing of the breadth of goals included in the plan, each of the goals in each chapter is included in the tables below. A relative level of importance (high / medium / low) as well as a time horizon for implementing each goal is assigned to each goal. The timeframes describe improvements as follows:

- » Sooner is between now and two years from now
- » Medium-term is between two and five years into the future
- » Later is longer than five years from now

### Land Use

Goal	Importance	Timeframe
Goal 1: Flexible, connected, and efficient land management	High	Medium
Goal 2: Strengthen the vitality, attractiveness, and prospects of the city's downtown	High	Sooner
Goal 3: Facilitate industrial and commercial development to grow employment opportunities	High	Medium
Goal 4: Consider annexation and municipal expansion where financially sustainable	Medium	Later
Goal 5: Encourage development of housing and increase the livability of residential districts	High	Medium



## Housing

Goal	Importance	Timeframe
Goal 1: Integrated framework for planning and developing housing	High	Sooner
Goal 2: Housing Study	Medium	Medium
Goal 3: Encourage development of a variety of housing types	High	Sooner
Goal 4: Identify priority areas for residential infill and new housing	High	Sooner
Goal 5: Ensure a wide array of quality workforce housing options	High	Medium
Goal 6: Encourage repair, maintenance, and upgrades of existing residential buildings and properties	High	Sooner
Goal 7: Proactively market Olivia as a great place for developing new housing	High	Medium

## Transportation

Goal	Importance	Timeframe
Goal 1: Develop an integrated and connected multimodal network	High	Medium
Goal 2: Connected land development	High	Medium
Goal 3: Proactive maintenance and repaving program for aging roads	High	Sooner
Goal 4: Improve look and feel of US Hwy 212 through downtown	High	Medium
Goal 5: Coordinate partnership with TC&W Railroad	High	Medium
Goal 6: Coordinate partnership with area trucking services	Medium	Medium
Goal 7: Work to ensure the continued regional significance of Olivia Regional Airport	Medium	Medium

## Economic Development

Goal	Importance	Timeframe
Goal 1: Develop a coordinated economic development strategy	High	Sooner
Goal 2: Retain and grow existing business; grow and attract new businesses and industry	High	Sooner
Goal 3: Downtown as an economic engine	High	Sooner
Goal 4: Best return on investment as basis for making land use and development decisions	High	Medium
Goal 5: Marketing plan	High	Sooner
Goal 6: Broadband connectivity	Medium	Medium
Goal 7: Resources for development and implementation	Medium	Medium

## Parks and Recreation

Goal	Importance	Timeframe
Goal 1: A well-planned system	High	Medium
Goal 2: A resident-focused, attentive and responsive system	High	Medium
Goal 3: Provide and maintain parks and indoor / outdoor recreation areas	High	Medium
Goal 4: Provide activities and programs throughout the City	High	Medium
Goal 5: Grow and maintain the City's trail and sidewalk system	High	Medium
Goal 6: Stewardship and preservation of natural reserves and resources	Medium	Medium
Goal 7: Promote economic and health benefits of the park system	Medium	Medium

## Community Facilities and Utilities

Goal	Importance	Timeframe
Goal 1: Cost-efficient, financially sustainable utility services	High	Longer
Goal 2: Excellent facilities for the City's needs	High	Longer
Goal 3: Environmentally sustainable water, sewer, and stormwater management	High	Longer
Goal 4: Further the 5G transition	Medium	Medium
Goal 5: Prepare for electric vehicles	Medium	Medium
Goal 6: Ensure access to high-speed internet	High	Medium
Goal 7: A well-informed public	High	Medium

## Growing Civic Engagement

Goal	Importance	Timeframe
Goal 1: A proactive, responsive, and accessible city	High	Sooner
Goal 2: Expand opportunities for civic participation	High	Medium
Goal 3: Invite young people to participate	High	Sooner
Goal 4: Expand engagement with Olivia's Hispanic/Latino population	High	Medium

# A Appendix

