



Real People. Real Solutions.

111 Washington Avenue South
Suite 650
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Phone: (612) 416-0220
Bolton-Menk.com

MEMORANDUM

Date: 8/14/2024

To: City Council, City of Lake Elmo

From: Nathan Fuerst, Consulting Planner

Subject: Village Area Vision – Workshop Discussion

Overview

In recognition of the significance of the Old Village area to Lake Elmo's economic vitality and overall identity, the City of Lake Elmo initiated a visioning study to ensure future development aligns with the City's objectives.

This discussion with the Council is a final step to the visioning process. Bolton and Menk staff will walk the Lake Elmo City Council through the following:

- Overview of the Project
- Summary of Public Engagement Efforts and Findings
- Summary of Policy Recommendations

Public Engagement to Date:

Public engagement creates an opportunity to understand viewpoints of community members and eventually serves as an important data point when making policy decisions. In June, project staff conducted public engagement efforts including a survey and two public open house events at City Hall. The draft Final Report appended to this memo includes an assessment of the quantitative and qualitative findings from the public engagement effort.

Policy Review to Date:

Staff reviewed applicable plans and policies guiding land use and development in Lake Elmo's Village Area. The previous Policy Review Memo is incorporated into the Final Report report. Recommendations in the last section of the report consider public feedback and the policy review.

Next Steps:

We will finalize the draft document for the city. It will be up to the Council and city staff to initiate any of the recommended policy changes an action item prior to, or after, rescinding the Moratorium.



City of Lake Elmo

Lake Elmo Village Vision Study

Report of Findings

August 2024

Submitted by:



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Acknowledgements

The following Lake Elmo City Staff are thanked for their contributions to the Lake Elmo Village Vision Study, and to this report:

Ashley Monterusso, City Planner

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VILLAGE VISION STUDY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Early in 2024, The City of Lake Elmo identified the need to enact a moratorium for development of the central corridors of the Old Village area. The intent of the moratorium was to pause new development while the city reviewed the plans and requirements for area development and redevelopment in the area.

In recognition of the significance of the Old Village area to Lake Elmo's economic and community identity, the City initiated a visioning study to ensure that future development aligns with the City's objectives. The moratorium period was used to solicit community feedback and to study the land use policies and guidance in the Village area. Through engagement with community members and local decision makers, the City intends to affirm existing policies that align with development expectations, and highlight policies that are not aligned. The intent of this Vision Study is therefore to identify recommendations for studies or policy changes needed to support the City in achieving its shared vision for the Old Village area.

Public Engagement Summary

Community Engagement provides a critical data point from which to make informed decisions about changes to the City's existing policies. The project team, consisting of City and Bolton & Menk staff, facilitated three engagement opportunities for residents, businesses owners, and area stakeholders to learn about and contribute to the Village Vision Study. A survey with over 20 questions was advertised widely in the community and made available to residents online and in paper formats. Sentiments from community members are broken down at length in the next section of this report, but are generalized as follows:

- Concern about connectivity and safety for those who walk and bike to and through the Village Area.
- Appreciation of the Village area's historic charm and small-town feel, and a desire for preservation of what makes the area special.
- Desire to support businesses and residents with new commercial and residential development that is complementary to the existing Village area.

Policy Review Summary

To understand what policy changes may be needed, a review of the existing policies guiding Village Area development was necessary. A review of the City's Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, along with other planning documents or policies has provided an overview of how Lake Elmo regulates land use and development. Any approach to recommendations must consider the interconnected nature of these

plans and policies. A policy review along with considerations for future improvements were provided for the following:

- Zoning Code
- Comprehensive Plan
- Lake Elmo Design Guidelines
- 2007 Village Area Master Plan
- 2021 Village Area AUAR
- 2013 Lake Elmo Branding and Theming Study
- Lake Elmo Heritage Preservation Commission

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations for further action are suggested by this report. They are broken down into short term and long-term categories in order to identify what can reasonably be accomplished before (short term) and after (long term) the City’s moratorium is rescinded or expires:

OLD VILLAGE AREA POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS		
TERM	DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY
Short Term (0-1 year)		
<u>Review Land Uses already permitted in the V-MX</u>	Review permitted and conditional land uses in Section 105.12.780, Table 11-1, particularly for the Village Mixed Use zoning district.	High
<u>Review Lot Dimensions and Building Bulk Requirements</u>	Assess whether bulk standards required under the zoning ordinance are in alignment with the City’s Design Standard Manual.	Medium
<u>Define the Village Area</u>	Create one definition of the Village Area and create subdistricts for smaller areas within.	Low
Long Term (1+ years)		
<u>Re-evaluate Future Land Use Areas</u>	Review the Future Land Use Categories used in the Village area against the mix of land uses desired by the community.	High
<u>Re-evaluate Zoning Guidance in the Old Village</u>	Review the zoning guidance in the Old Village area to create a more uniform and understandable approach to zoning.	High
<u>Infrastructure Review and Corridor Planning</u>	Identify the areas of concern for the City relating to long term improvements and infrastructure connections in the Village Area.	Medium
<u>Evaluate Plan Review Guidelines</u>	Determine the effectiveness of existing guidelines for development and redevelopment within the Village Area.	Low
<u>Visioning for the MUSA & Village Area</u>	Citywide level visioning exercises should take place to better understand how future Sewer extensions could impact the capacity of the Village Area for future growth.	Low

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT REVIEW

The City of Lake Elmo's Village Vision Study was designed to hear, organize, and elevate the voices and needs of community members and stakeholders. Community engagement ensures that land use policies and development will better align with the shared values and goals of Lake Elmo's residents and business community. When coalesced around a vision, the community can create a vibrant and cohesive Village Area. The City hosted several community engagement events and set up digital platforms to in a collaborative effort to inform the study. These include the following:

- Business Owner and Developer Open House
- Table at the Lake Elmo Dog Park Grand Opening
- Public Open House
- Comprehensive Digital and Paper Survey

In an effort to communicate to the community about the online survey and engagement events, the project team created a one page flyer and post card. The flyer was distributed to homeowners' associations (HOAs) serving residents in the Village Area. Post cards were mailed directly to residents and property owners in the village area not served by an HOA. The City used its website to provide information on the project and used its social media platforms and newsletters to inform the community about engagement opportunities.

This inclusive approach has resulted in a multifaceted understanding of the community's aspirations and concerns. The findings from these efforts, which will be detailed below, are instrumental in crafting recommendations for future policy changes and development guidelines within the Village area.

Summary of Engagement Findings

The comprehensive online survey and the three in-person engagement events were essential in identifying the values and preferences of residents to inform recommendations for the Village area. Key findings include the following:

CONNECTIVITY

- About 50% of respondents visit the Village daily. About 50% of all respondents use cars to travel to the Village when they do visit, because driving is the easiest way to get there.
- Improving walkability of the Village can improve revenues for existing businesses and attract new ones.
- The Old Village's central location is one of its key strengths; however, road safety concerns are a key weakness.
- Traffic speeds on Stillwater Boulevard and Lake Elmo Avenue are a concern.
- New bike/ped crossings are desired at:
 - Lake Elmo Ave N and 41st St N
 - Lake Elmo Ave N and 39th St N
 - Lake Elmo Ave N and Stillwater Blvd
 - Laverne Ave N and Stillwater Blvd
- Safer bicycle facilities are desired on Stillwater Blvd
- Future bike/ped facility connection recommendations:

- Facilities at Upper 33rd St N to 34th St (Easton Village) over the railroad private road.
- Facilities at 33rd St N to Stillwater Blvd

DEVELOPMENT

- Development should align with capital improvement plans (new road/parkway construction).
- Residents want a variety and diversification of new businesses and commercial use types allowed in new projects.
- Old Village Area residents desire development that is consistent with the area but are reluctant to support design standards for single family residential properties.

PREFERRED HOUSING TYPES

- For Single-Family Houses, residents prefer houses where the garages were side- or rear-loaded .
- For Townhouses, residents prefer classic, walk-in townhouses with garages that are rear-loaded.
- For Small-/Mid-sized Apartments, residents prefer three-story apartment buildings with more vibrant exterior materials with architectural interest.
- For Mid-/Large-sized Apartments, residents prefer modern four-story apartment with a smaller ground floor area than larger alternatives.

PREFERRED LAND USES

- Respondents prefer Single-Family attached (Townhouses) and Single-Family Detached houses for residential uses in the Village area.
- Outdoor recreation, parks, and open space are widely preferred. Communications facilities and religious institutions were least preferred by respondents in this category.
- A clear majority of respondents want sit-down “standard restaurants” and other places for “drinking and entertainment” in the village, but not locations with drive-throughs.
- Respondents would like to see most types of mercantile uses in the Village, except for shopping centers (malls or strip malls).
- More than half of respondents said they would like to see automobile maintenance services (auto repair garages) and gas stations.
- Overwhelmingly, however, nearly all respondents reported a preference not to see auto sales and storage lots in the Village area.

PLACEMAKING

- Small town character and quaint, charming aesthetics are key strengths of downtown.
- For the former Fire Hall and Parks Building site, residents would like to see some adaptive reuse that might include any or a combination of the following:
 - Eating & Drinking establishments
 - Community center
 - Family friendly establishments
 - Housing, including mixed use
 - Green spaces and parks
 - Recreational uses
 - Retail

POLICY REVIEW

Overview

This review is intended to summarize existing policies or plans that guide development and redevelopment in the Village Area. Considerations are provided that address the stated goals of the City and how these policies can better work together towards that vision.

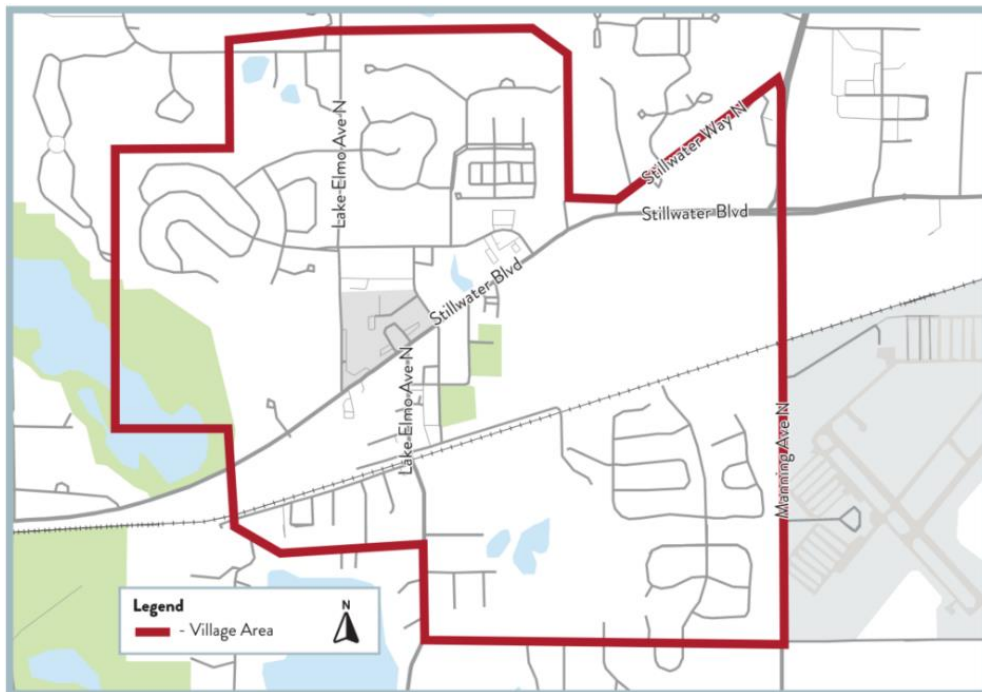
Village Area Policies

This section of the report summarizes the following:

1. Zoning Code
2. Comprehensive Plan
3. Lake Elmo Design Guidelines
4. 2007 Village Area Master Plan
5. 2021 Village Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR)
6. 2013 Lake Elmo Branding/Theming Study
7. Heritage Preservation Commission

The Village Area

The “Village Area” is delineated by different boundaries depending on which City policy document one might be reviewing. For the purpose of this policy review, the area in the image to the right generally defines the Village Area.



The Zoning Code

Purpose: To provide zoning regulations and be a tool for implementing the Comprehensive Plan and other guiding documents.

Regulatory Impact: Zoning ordinances are laws created and passed by the City to regulate land uses and development within the City's boundaries. Minnesota Cities are granted authority by State Statute and federal case law to control land use through zoning. The Zoning Ordinance regulates the specific land uses as well as lot provisions such as lot area, setbacks, and lot coverage. The ordinance also addresses site elements such as building design and materials, landscaping and screening, parking, and signage.

Zoning and the Village Area: The Zoning Code calls for 4 different Village land uses:

- V-LDR is low density residential 1.5 – 3.0 u/acre, meant for perimeter and buffer to adjacent low density uses
- V-MDR is medium density residential 3.01-8.0 u/acre, meant to bring people closer to Old Village amenities
- V-HDR is high density residential 8.01 u/acre -12 u/acre, meant to bring higher density and life cycle housing choose to Old Village Area. Non-residential uses on 1st floor.
- VMX is mixed use with commercial and public uses combined with higher density residential, 5-10 u/a, senior up to 16 u/acre, meant to establish vitality and intensity to support retail and service uses in the Old Village. Placement of buildings and pedestrian amenities are essential.

In addition, there is a significant amount of other zoning districts in the Village area:

- RS- Rural Single Family, are only for lots patted prior to 2005. No new lots can be created. The district allows for single family residential, parks and a variety of accessory uses.
- PF- Public Facilities are for parcels with parks, schools, or public facilities (city Hall and Fire Station sites).
- LDR- Low Density Residential is considered typical single family zoning district with city sewer and water. A large portion of the village area contains this land use.
- Commercial and Convenience Commercial and Medium Density Residential are in the NE corner of the area, just north of Stillwater Blvd which is currently the Holiday gas station and future Bridgewater Village commercial and medium density residential development.

The uses for the residential districts are straightforward, however the allowed or conditionally allowed uses of the Mixed-Use Village district may permit for undesirable uses. The district allows the following type of uses:

- Residential
- Public and Civic
- Commercial and Personal Service
- Food Service
- Retail Sales
- Auto type uses
- Recreation Uses

Most uses are conditional, including residential, while personal and business service type uses are permitted. Most accessory uses are also permitted. Several of the uses could have an outdoor component such as outdoor recreation, drive-up, or outdoor sales and storage lots.

The Zoning Ordinance does reference the Village Districts and has the following emphasis:

- Reference to the Design Guidelines
- Circulation and limited access on CSAH 14
- Screening of existing residential structures
- Sidewalk and trail connections, esp. from cul-de-sacs to nearest through streets
- Theming Study (2013) to be incorporated.

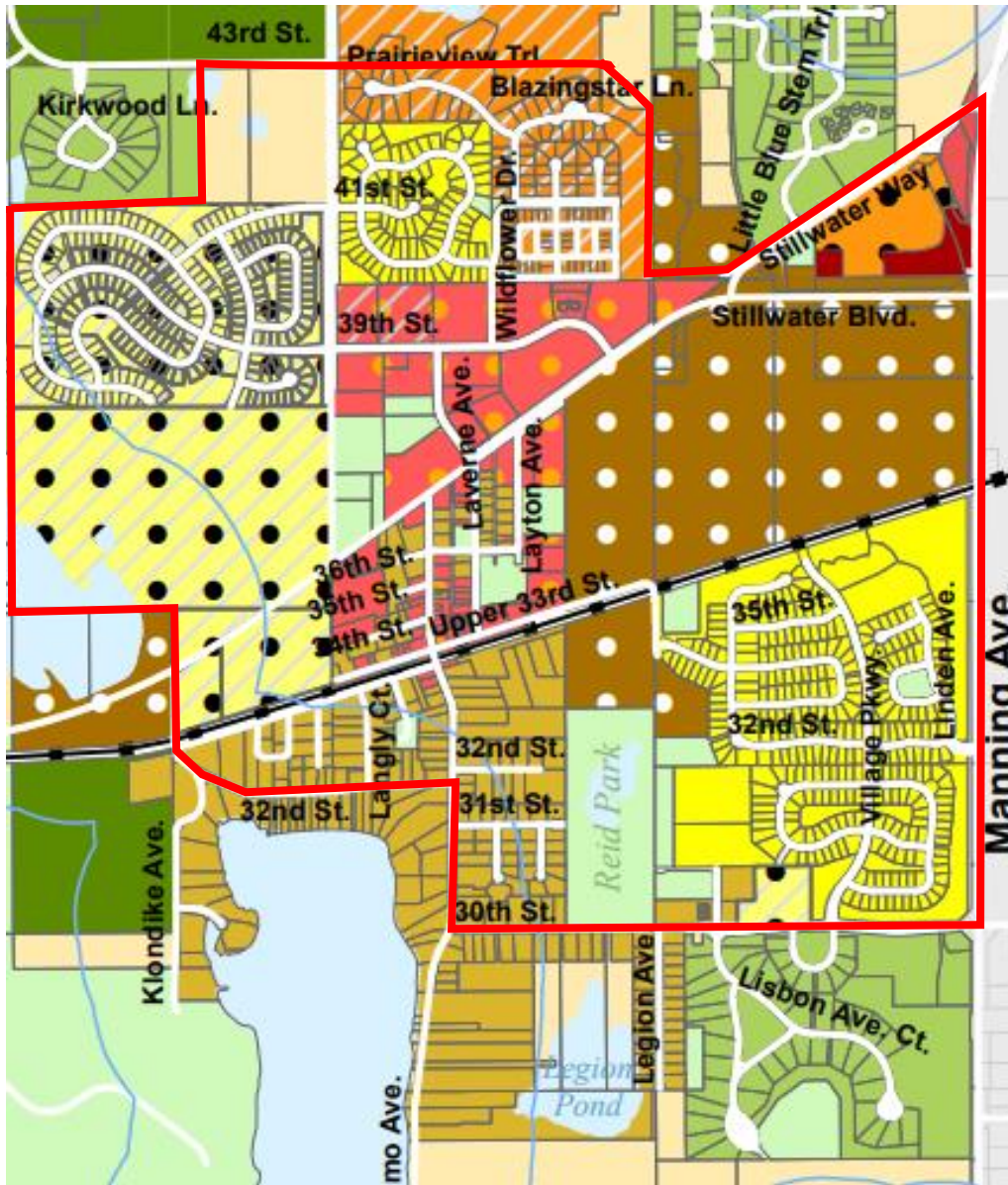
Other Zoning Considerations:

- The Shoreland Overlay covers approximately the westerly 1,000 feet of the area and is all zoned residential. Limits on development and impervious surface are a consideration.
- The Airport Overlay covers a the eastern part of the area. The airport is on the east side of Manning, outside the city limits. The overlay zoning and impacts are on the west side of Manning Avenue within the city limits. There are noise considerations and height limits in this area.

Considerations:

- Consolidating districts in the village area may streamline the zoning review process and could reduce confusion about land uses or performance standards in the Village Area.
- ADU's and mixed uses could be permitted where Rural Single Family is now the zoning district. Existing housing and uses could continue to be preserved.
- Consider defining the Village Area within the City Code or adopting a zoning map with that area delineated.
- The City would benefit from more review or discussion in the following areas:
 - Land uses permitted or conditionally permitted in the Village Area
 - Review and consideration of whether additional uses should be permitted
 - Understand existing performance standards in the districts affecting the Village area, and how they relate to the City's vision, comprehensive plan goals, or adopted Design Standards Manual
 - Determine if the Theming Study remains relevant or should be removed from the code

Lake Elmo Zoning Map – Village Area



Zoning Districts		
LDR - Low Density Residential	LC - Limited Commercial	A - Agricultural
MDR - Medium Density Residential	C - Commercial	PF - Public Facilities
HDR - High Density Residential	CC - Convenience Commercial	Water Body
R2 - One & Two-Family Residential	BP - Business Park	Closed Landfill
RS - Rural Single Family	MU-BP - Mixed-Use Business Park	Browns Creek
RE - Residential Estate	MU-C - Mixed-Use Commercial	South Washington
RR - Rural Residential	V-MX - Village Mixed Use	Valley Branch
RT - Rural Transitional	V-LDR - Village Low Density Residential	Shoreland Overlay District
OP - Open Space	V-MDR - Village Medium Density Residential	Hatching Represents Planned Unit Developments (PUD)
GCC - Golf Course Community	V-HDR - Village High Density Residential	

Lake Elmo Comprehensive Plan

Purpose: This document provides long-term guidance on land uses to ensure the efficient provision of public infrastructure in the City. In the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, municipalities are required to adopt comprehensive use plans every decade which guide development of land and public infrastructure. Metro area comprehensive plans must contain specific elements including land use, housing, transportation, water management, parks, etc. The planning horizon for Lake Elmo's 2040 Comprehensive Plan (hereafter the "2040 Plan") is from 2020 to 2040. The 2040 Plan was approved and adopted in November of 2019 after a considerable planning and community engagement process.

Regulatory Impact: The 2040 Comprehensive Plan is a legal document which, as required by state statute, is the guiding document for all development in Lake Elmo. Any development or redevelopment must comply with the Comp Plan. The City's zoning requirements must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Chapter.

Comp Plan and the Village Area: This review is broken down by certain elements of the City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan:

Future Land Uses (Chapter 3) - Future Land Uses (see map on page 7) allowed in the Village Area include:

- Rural Single Family Sewered (0.1-2.0 du/acre) – previously unsewered but currently single-family land uses located within the Village Planning Area.
- Village Low Density Residential (1.5 – 3 du/acre) – single-family detached housing development
- Village Medium Density Residential (3.01 – 8 du/acre) – single-family detached, duplexes, and townhomes/villa housing types.
- Village High Density Residential (8.01 – 12 du/acre) – apartment buildings and multi-family dwellings.
- Village Mixed Use (5 – 10 du/acre) – Integrated commercial/business and residential uses provide development types that benefit from proximity to each other.
- Commercial – retail and service businesses primarily located in the MUSA. This excludes residential and industrial uses.
- Institutional - Schools, religious institutions, City hall, municipal buildings, libraries, and other institutional uses
- Public/Semi-Public - generally owned by the City or other agency, whose primary purpose is to support adjacent developments with stormwater management and other utilities.

MUSA Staging (Chapter 3) – The Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) boundary provides an indication of where sewered development can occur. This is broken down into phases by decade. Only two areas of the Village are in MUSA staging areas beyond the current decade. One area is the remaining Schiltgen farmstead parcel south of North Star, the other is just north of Easton Village. Those areas would require a Comprehensive Plan Amendment to develop sooner than 2035. (See Map on page 8)

Subdistricts (Chapters 2 & 3) – Chapter 3 of the 2040 Plan created the following subdistricts for the Village area:

- Civic District – area north of Stillwater Boulevard N.

- Old Village District – core of old village area centered around Lake Elmo Ave N.
- Elmo Station District – area East of Layton Ave N. and containing primarily undeveloped land.

There is no narrative in the 2040 Plan to provide a description of the subdistricts, but goals are articulated in Chapter 2, which envision the creation of specific zoning overlays to support or require certain types of development in each area. Land Use Goals 4 – 6 discuss the subdistricts.

Parks and Trails (Chapter 6) – The 2040 Plan contains guidance for the development of park and recreation facilities in the City.

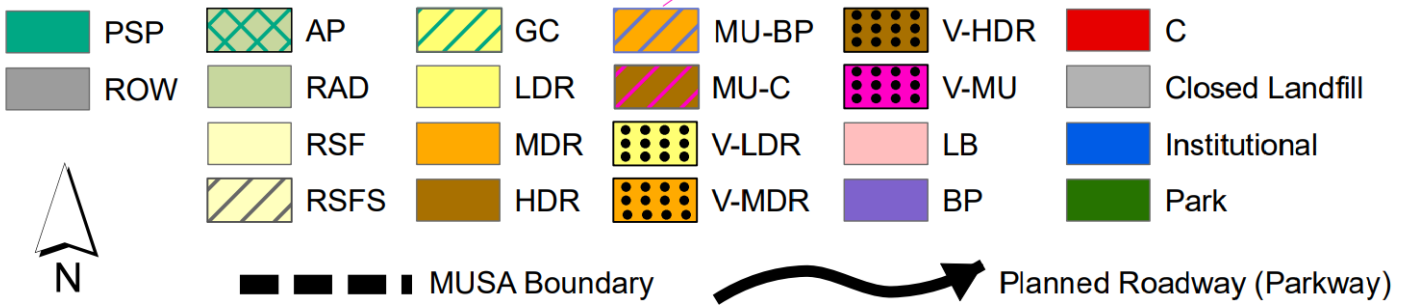
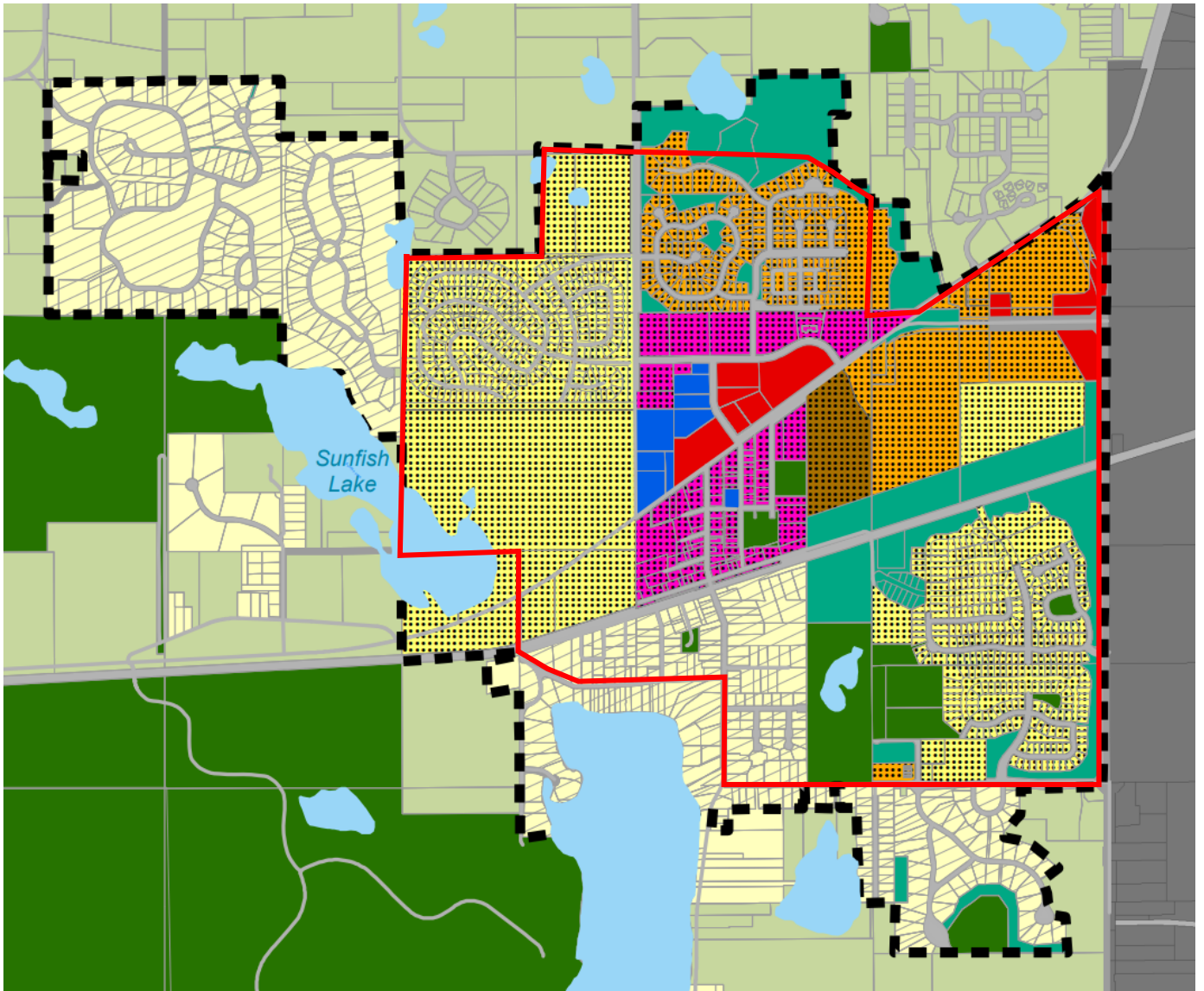
- Park Search Areas (Map 6-7) – contains a search area for a Community Park over the Village Planning Area. A community park in this area is defined as a park an area of 10-15 acres that would serve as a community gathering place and landmark.
- Trail Search Areas (Map 6-8) – contains existing facilities and search areas for new ones. A regional search corridor runs along Lake Elmo Ave. N. and Stillwater Blvd. N. for creation of a county facility. The map also contains search areas for local connections to/through the Village area and surrounding residential development. Village Parkway would contain a road and trail connection through undeveloped parcels to Easton Village.

Transportation (Chapter 7) – The 2040 Plan contains guidance on planned functional classifications for roadways serving or running through the Village planning area. Designations for Stillwater Boulevard North, Lake Elmo Avenue North, 39th Street North, and the future Village Parkway all impact the way those roadways function. The classification may impact ROW width needs, access spacing, alignment and traffic speeds, etc.

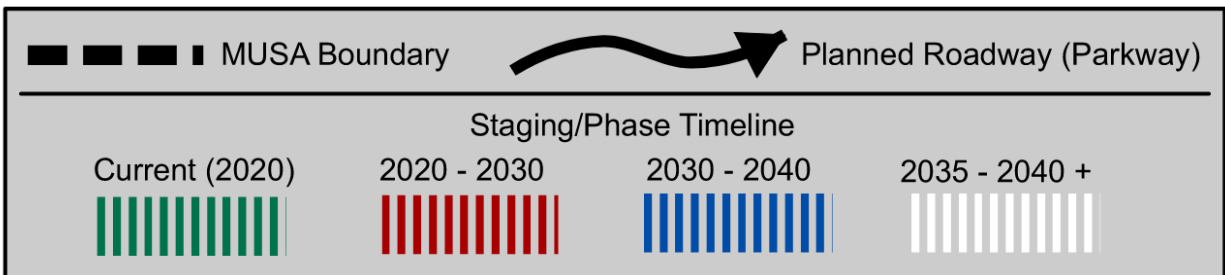
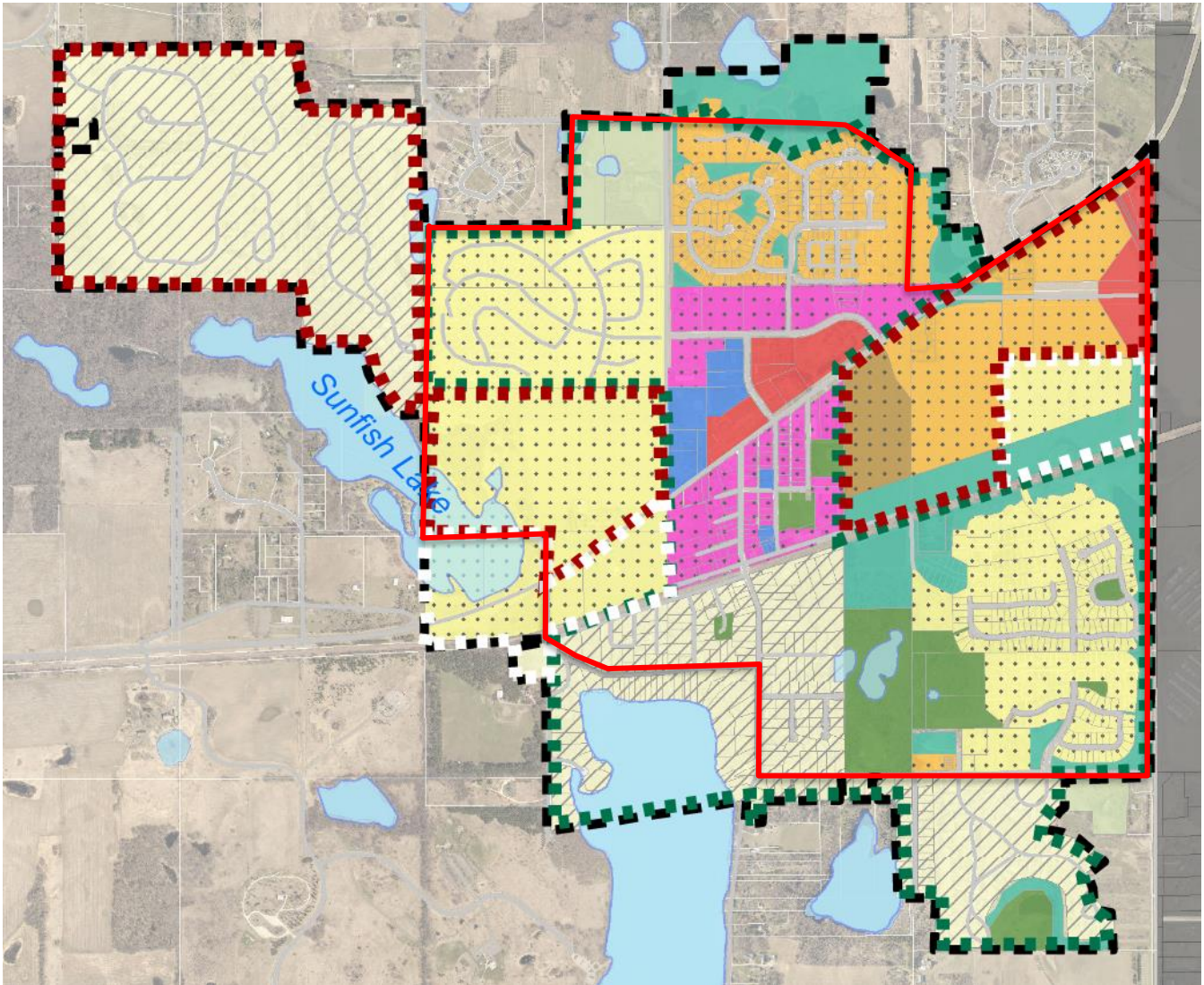
Considerations:

- Consider removing Public/Semi Public Designation until development is complete north of Union Pacific Railroad tracks.
- Reconsider split guidance of land north of Easton Village
- MUSA staging should be consistent across Village East to allow master planning.
- Reconsider Subdistricts and associated goals to realign with potential future development or redevelopment.
- Small Area Plan is needed to effectively plan land use guidance.

Lake Elmo Future Land Use Map – Village Area



Lake Elmo Future Land Use Map – Village Area



Lake Elmo Design Guidelines

Purpose: To ensure development of the Village area is high quality and meets the goals and principles of the City. Specifically, high quality site design and building materials, promote open space to support the existing character of the city, accommodate vehicles that respect pedestrian environment, utilize natural ecosystems (stormwater) in development, cohesion of development into the neighborhood and community, and to foster connections through theming to create unique community identity. The Design Guidelines and Standards were last revised in February 2022.



Regulatory Impact: The Design Guidelines are intended to influence how sites are developed. They cover the Village Area as well as the I-94 Corridor Area and is for parcels within the MUSA public utility service area. Sites are reviewed for compliance at the final stage of development review or building permit review. The guidelines terminology are primarily recommendations and not requirements. They are written with lots of “recommendations”, “may”, “should” verbiage opposed to “must” and “shall”. There are some required elements such as sidewalks, lighting, and signage. However, some of this language is subjective rather than prescriptive.

Design Guidelines and the Village Area: Only applies to *high density residential, commercial, business park and mixed uses*. The Zoning Ordinance references the design guidelines in the Village Districts in general, Mixed Use, Commercial, and Public/Quasi-Public districts (commercial uses). The guidelines address suggestions for:

- building placement
- streetscaping
- landscaping
- parking & delivery areas
- building design, mass/scale, roof, entries
- building materials
- lighting
- signage

Considerations:

- Identify the purpose of the design guidelines to ensure they still align with city goals.
- Certain sections or requirements may be seen as higher or lower priority. Issues directly tied to City goals could be codified in the zoning ordinance.
- Not all projects will reasonably meet all requirements in the design guidelines. Discussion is needed on the process for “good” projects to receive flexibility.
- Projects receiving PUD’s could be required to comply with some or all design requirements.

2007 Lake Elmo Village Area Master Plan

Purpose: This plan was created in 2007. The intent of the City’s Village Area Master Plan (hereafter “2007 Master Plan”) is to guide development of private land, and public infrastructure, along with revisions to applicable City Land Use guidance to allow the vision to materialize. The 2007 Master Plan created 13 principals to guide development and a conceptual vision for future development in the areas surrounding the “heart” of the Village.

Regulatory Impact: For Small Area or Master Plans to have regulatory impacts, they must be incorporated into the City’s Comprehensive Plan or Zoning Ordinance. While the 2007 Master Plan may have influenced land use policies in both the City’s adopted 2040 Plan and Zoning Ordinance, there are no references to this planning document. Therefore, it does not have a legally binding impact on development. The City’s 2040 Plan has created subdistricts and associated Land Use goals which don’t appear to either conflict with, or support, the 2007 Master Plan’s vision.

The 2007 Village Area Master Plan Elements: The plan is generally broken down into the following elements:

1. Background – which discusses guiding principles and a framework
2. The Master Plan – a layout of the vision, with focus on the different aspects such as parks and trails, public and green space, streets, blocks & parcels, land uses, housing types, and densities.
3. Master Plan Components – discusses higher level components of the plan such as the Stillwater Blvd. corridor, Lake Elmo Avenue corridor, Public Facilities, Greenbelt, Existing Development, and planned housing.
4. Village Character – discusses case studies from, Detroit Lakes, Litchfield, Cannon Falls, and Redwood Falls, MN, Cedarburg, WI, and Zeeland, MI. Nearly all examples are of rural town centers as opposed to town centers in metropolitan areas.
5. Utilities and other Infrastructure – discusses Sewer and water utilities, stormwater systems, and a street network with example road typologies.
6. Planning Process and Planning Tools – this section is incomplete in the version reviewed by staff.

Considerations:

- The location of roadway connections and alignment of key corridors such as Lake Elmo Avenue and the Village Parkway have changed since the 2007 Master Plan was created.
- County Access spacing requirements and planning along Stillwater Boulevard likely mean that the roadway connections envisioned by this plan are infeasible.
- Nearly all the single-family residential developments envisioned in the Village Area have now occurred. This means local roads, sidewalks, and trail connections are set in a variety of areas.
- Future Land Use guidance in the City’s 2040 Plan is inconsistent with the development, primarily east of the existing Village Area’s core.
- Park needs across the community have been evaluated and may have changed since 2007.

The Village Area Vision



2021 Village Area Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR)

Purpose: The purpose of an AUAR is to evaluate the potential environmental impacts within a large planning area and to ensure mitigation plans are effectively managed and implemented as development occurs. The Village Area Alternative Urban Areawide Review (2009 Village Area AUAR) comprises approximately 1,275 acres surrounding the City of Lake Elmo’s historic downtown. This 2021 Update is prepared as an update and progress report to the 2009 Village Area AUAR and the subsequent 2016 Update. The analysis and information contained in this report provides an inventory of development to-date within the AUAR area and an update to relevant items or sections as needed and/or affected since the 2016 Update

Regulatory Impact: Per Minnesota Rules 4410.3610 Subpart 7, the City is required to update the 2009 Village AUAR every 5 years. The most recent update was in December 2021. Until the Village Area is fully developed, the City will need to update the AUAR to ensure that the review and mitigation plans are consistent with the known and planned development within the AUAR area. If the AUAR becomes expired prior to the complete buildout of the Village area, individual projects may be required to receive a formal environmental review under statutory thresholds. This would cause delays and expense for development to occur, and reviews would be completed on a piecemeal basis.

The 2021 Village Area AUAR: The update provided an opportunity to revisit the original 2009 document and subsequent 2016 update. Many areas of the review had no change from the 2009 AUAR and 2016 update. Areas of additional review included the following:

- Review of development scenarios
- Development timeline update
- Land use guidance updates
- Land cover type updates
- Water use
- Water quality – surface water runoff
- Water quality – wastewater
- Traffic
- Compatibility with plans

Considerations:

- The City should plan to update the AUAR by December 2026 in order to allow the AUAR to remain in effect until the complete buildout of the Village area. Several large parcel developments may otherwise trigger the need to complete environmental review.

2013 Lake Elmo Branding and Theming Study

Purpose: The Lake Elmo Branding and Theming Study seeks to establish a kit of parts that will create a strong visual identity for the gateways, streets, sidewalks and open spaces of Lake Elmo that reinforces the unique agricultural and open space heritage of the community.

Design Principles:

- Elements and furnishings will reflect a connection to the land through material and form.
- Elements and furnishings will be detailed and placed with a simplicity of purpose and function that pays tribute to the Lake Elmo agrarian heritage.
- Landscapes will reflect the native prairie, lakes and big woods that help define Lake Elmo as a special community within a metropolitan area.
- Elements and furnishings will be comfortable and functional.
- The Kit of Parts must have an authenticity that creates a memorable and lasting impression for visitors, residents and business owners.

Regulatory Impact: The City's Zoning Ordinance currently contains a reference that requires elements of the Lake Elmo Theming Study must be incorporated in to developments within the village districts where applicable. The City has design standards for the Village Parkway which will connect existing areas of the Village and with the current terminus in Easton Village. Buildout will be required with future development.

The 2013 Theming Study: The 2013 Theming study primarily focuses on the public right of way, and streetscape improvements that the City can implement, or require to be implemented, in existing or newly platted areas of the Village. The Theming Study generally touches on the following areas:

- Placement and Pattern in the Streetscape
 - Placement of lighting and trees in the streetscape
 - Creating a pattern in the streetscape
 - Maintenance and community commitment
- Streetscape requirements
 - Sidewalks
 - Parking
 - Corners and intersections
- Streetscape Components
- Street Furniture
- Implementation

Considerations:

- This document is not available online, it is recommended that it be added to the list of design standards on the City's website.
- The City should conduct plan reviews, particularly for newly proposed developments on the undeveloped east side of the current Village Area with this theming study in mind.
- A discussion by the City as to the relevancy and priority of theming may be helpful. Is this document still valid?

Heritage Preservation Commission

The City Code establishes a Heritage Preservation Commission to “engage in a comprehensive program of historic preservation and to preserve and promote the city's historic resources”. This commission is tasked with several things. Specifically related to land use and interest in the Village Area, their causes is as follows:

1. To survey and recommend to the council the designation of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are of historical, architectural, archaeological, engineering, or cultural significance;
2. To recommend to the council rules governing construction, alteration, demolition, and use, including the review of building permits, and the adoption of other measures appropriate for the preservation, protection, and perpetuation of designated properties and areas;
3. To recommend to the council the acquisition by purchase, gift, or bequest of a fee or lesser interest, including preservation restrictions, in designated properties and adjacent or associated lands which are important for the preservations and use of the designated properties;
4. To recommend to the council the use of its powers of eminent domain to maintain or preserve designated properties and adjacent or associated lands;
5. To recommend to the council the granting of use variances to the zoning ordinance for the purpose of promoting historical preservation or continuity;
6. To participate in the conduct of land use planning processes by the review and comment on documents or actions relating to designated areas and on comprehensive plans; and
7. To recommend to the council the removal of blighting influences in designated areas, including signs, unsightly structures, and debris incompatible with the physical well-being of the areas.

There is currently no established commission. The commission stopped meeting with the onset of COVID restrictions in 2020 and has not been re-established.

Considerations:

- This commission could provide insights and recommendations on the Village Area. Is the Heritage Preservation Commission something that should be re-established to support the Village Area goals?
- Could this commission provide value in supporting the village area and uses and the experience while engaging residents serving on the commission? Or would this commission add a layer of bureaucracy, whose objectives could be addressed administratively or through other processes?

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This is an important time in the history of Lake Elmo’s Village Area. Preceding this Study, significant work has been done throughout the last two decades to ensure that the Village Area develops in a manner consistent with the Community’s vision. Community planning is a continuous process that reacts to changes and anticipates new issues.

The City’s Interim Ordinance has allowed for a brief pause and review of the community’s sentiment on the village area, along with the land use controls already in place to guide development. The following policy recommendations are broken into short and long term based on whether they can reasonably be done prior to (short term), or after (long term), the City rescinds its moratorium on new land uses. These recommendations are intended to guide ongoing review and discussion in a manner that will allow the City to further refine its plans and policies to achieve the community’s vision for the Village Area.

OLD VILLAGE AREA POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	
DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY
Short Term (0-1 yrs)	
<u>Review Land Uses already permitted in the V-MX</u> Review permitted and conditional land uses in Section 105.12.780, Table 11-1, particularly for the Village Mixed Use zoning district.	High
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider removing uses which are not complementary to the built form of the Old Village Area such as restaurants with drive throughs, or funeral homes and storage and sales lots due to public feedback and large unused surface parking areas. 2. Consider allowing retail/shopping centers under certain square footages ‘by right’. 3. Consider limiting the use of Conditional Use Permits to accelerate establishment of acceptable uses and to prevent establishment of uses not fully in line with the community’s vision. 4. Consider how the City would review a proposed brewery, distillery, or other such specialized businesses which are desired by the community having specific licensing requirements. 	
<u>Review Lot Dimensions and Building Bulk Requirements</u> Assess whether bulk standards required under the zoning ordinance are in alignment with the City’s Design Standard Manual.	Medium
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Re-evaluate minimum lot or unit areas to ensure that new development is consistent with the massing of pre-existing development in the old village area. 2. Re-evaluate setbacks for buildings in V-MDR, V-HDR, and V-MX districts to ensure that developments are designed according to best practices identified in the City’s design standard manual. 	
<u>Define the Village Area</u> Create one definition of the Village Area and create subdistricts for smaller areas within the Overall Village Area.	Low
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider keeping the Old Village Area as is or extending to the west to include the undeveloped Schiltgen Farm property. Alternatively, a subdistrict called “West Village” could be created. 2. Consider revising the Civic District or its goals anticipating future uses of the old City and School building sites. 	

3. Consider revising the Elmo Station District to be an “East Village” subdistrict extending east to Manning Avenue.	
Long Term (1+ years)	
<u>Evaluate Future Land Use Areas</u> Review the Future Land Use Categories used in the Village area against the mix of land uses desired by the community	High
1. Consider reguiding parcels comprising the existing Civic District subdistrict to V-MU, with the exception of the City held properties.	
2. Consider reguiding the old Schiltgen Farmstead parcel south of Stillwater Boulevard to V-MDR	
3. Consider reguiding areas east of the Old Village as V-MU, and move V-HDR guidance further east.	
4. Commission a Village Master Plan to align future land uses with planned infrastructure connections	
<u>Evaluate Zoning Guidance in the Old Village</u> Review the zoning guidance in the Old Village area to create a more uniform and understandable approach to zoning.	
1. Identify existing land uses and lot areas in a parcel level review of the Old Village.	
2. Consider uniform V-Mx zoning north of Upper 33 rd Street along the Lake Elmo Avenue corridor, and parcels east of that corridor within the Old Village subdistrict. An exception would be parcels with institutional land uses (recreation, religious institutions).	
3. Consider V-MDR zoning for other areas of the Old Village subdistrict where preservation of housing is a priority.	
<u>Infrastructure Review and Corridor Planning</u> Identify the areas of concern for the City relating to long term improvements and infrastructure connections in the Village Area.	Medium
1. Review planned roadway connections in undeveloped areas of the Village and plan for how necessary connections will be made, and by whom.	
2. Identify sidewalk and trail gaps in the Old Village area and determine whether such gaps will be addressed by future City projects or private development.	
3. Coordinate with Washington County to identify future county right of way needs and plans for corridor improvements along Stillwater Boulevard and Lake Elmo Avenue North.	
4. Commission a Village Master Plan to communicate City priorities on trails, intersection controls, and other improvements needed for desired mobility outcomes in the Village Area.	
<u>Evaluate Plan Review Guidelines</u> Determine the effectiveness of existing guidelines for development and redevelopment within the Village Area.	Low
1. Review Lake Elmo’s Design Guidelines ensure they still align with city goals for development in the Village Area. Consideration could be given to location within the Village Area.	
2. Confirm that the 2013 Branding and Theming study guidelines are still relevant and in alignment with City expectations for the Village Area.	
3. Identify the City’s need for the Heritage Preservation Commission, and consider removing requirements for one from City Code, modifying review requirements for projects, or attempt to re-initiate the Commission.	

<p>Visioning for the MUSA & Village Area</p> <p>Citywide level visioning exercises should take place to better understand how future Sewer extensions could impact the capacity of the Village Area for future growth.</p>	<p>Low</p>
<p>1. Identification of future growth areas to the West or North around the City's Village Core could create an additional need for area-wide planning.</p>	
<p>2. Planned expansion of any part of the City's MUSA Boundary should be reviewed for capacity impacts on existing areas that are planned for sewer, such as the Village Area.</p>	

APPENDIX

Appendix A – Open House and Survey Findings

Open Houses

Business Owner and Developer Open House

An open house for the business community and area developers was held on Thursday, June 13 at Lake Elmo City Hall. These groups were invited to the informal roundtable discussion that featured maps, preference-identifying activities, and overviews of the Village Vision study purpose.

Conversations gravitated toward issues of connectivity to and within the Village area, how future development feasibility, and placemaking improvements.

- **Connectivity**

- Improving walkability of the Village to improve revenues for existing businesses and to attract new ones.
- Bike/ped crossings at:
 - Lake Elmo Ave N and 41st St N
 - Lake Elmo Ave N and 39th St N
 - Lake Elmo Ave N and Stillwater Blvd
 - Laverne Ave N and Stillwater Blvd
- Safer bicycle facilities on Stillwater Blvd
- Future bike/ped trail recommendations
 - Facilities at Upper 33rd St N to 34th St (Easton Village) over the railroad private road.
 - Facilities at 33rd St N to Stillwater Blvd

- **Development Feasibility**

- Appropriateness/feasibility of individual parcels for different housing types.

- **Placemaking**

- Preservation of historical local businesses
- Maintaining downtown charm but allowing for compatible modern building types
- Leveraging the old creamery as a dominant/interest-site for an adaptive reuse project
- Beautification of Lake Elmo Ave

An estimated 25 individuals attended this event. See the Appendix A for records of the maps and information/activity boards shown to attendees.

Lake Elmo Dog Park Grand Opening

City staff facilitated a pop-up outreach display at the Grand Opening of the Lake Elmo Dog Park. This was in order to reach a wider audience regarding the village vision study. An estimated 40 or more residents, not including their furry companions, attended the event.



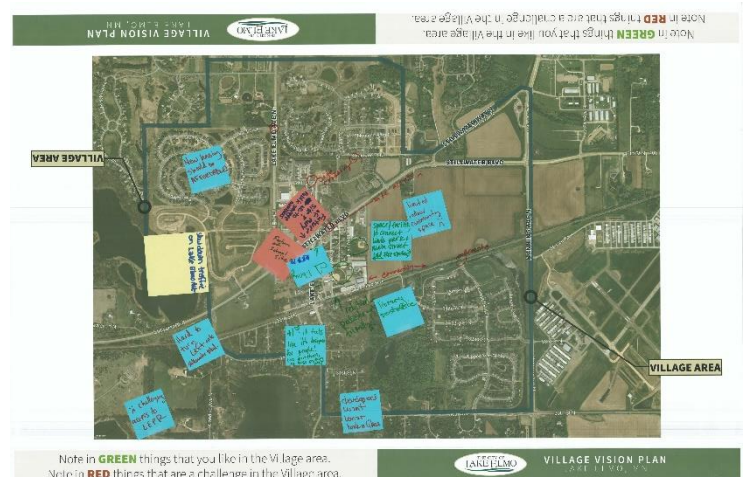
Staff explained the need for the Village Vision study, and engaged with residents to identify their preferences for the future of the area. Staff also advertised the upcoming Public Open house and the ongoing online survey.

Public comments were similar to those heard at both open houses. Residents indicated a desire to make shorter, more local, trips to shop for daily necessities. Several attendees expressed a desire to have improved trail connectivity to and from areas of the City not immediately near the Village Area, such as the Tri Lakes area.

Public Open House

Staff held the final open house at City Hall on Thursday, June 20 from 5 to 7pm. Like the previous engagement for businesses and developers, residents at the Public Open house were provided an overview of the study and preference-identifying activities via boards, and tabletop mapping exercises. Residents had a number of questions about the Village area and the current development moratorium within the Village boundary.

Like business owners, residents expressed concerns about connectivity and road safety issues traveling to the Village area. Key discussion points included, generally, connectivity, placemaking, and land uses.



- **Connectivity**
 - Residents value the walkability of the old village core but desire improvement to connectivity of sidewalks and trails in the village area.
 - Safer, marked crossings are desired at Stillwater Boulevard and Lake Elmo Avenue.
 - Concern about traffic speeds along Lake Elmo Avenue North and Stillwater Boulevard.
- **Placemaking**
 - Maintaining historic, small town, charm.
 - Strong desire to preserve the existing City ballfields and the Post Office.
 - Adding new areas of open space and opportunities for natural landscaping in boulevards or new developments.
 - Working to address underutilized commercial properties as strategic opportunities for new development.
- **Land Uses and Development**
 - Desire for housing, rental or owner occupied, that is attainable for members of the community who want to stay in the area.
 - Limiting the establishment of chain businesses or big box stores to continue the small town village feel.

- Bringing in new amenities such as restaurants, personal services, or other businesses that would serve local residents.
- Apprehension to create design or other performance standards that would negatively impact existing residents.

Approximately 35 individuals attended the Public Open House. See the Appendix B for records of the maps and information/activity boards shown to attendees.

Survey Input

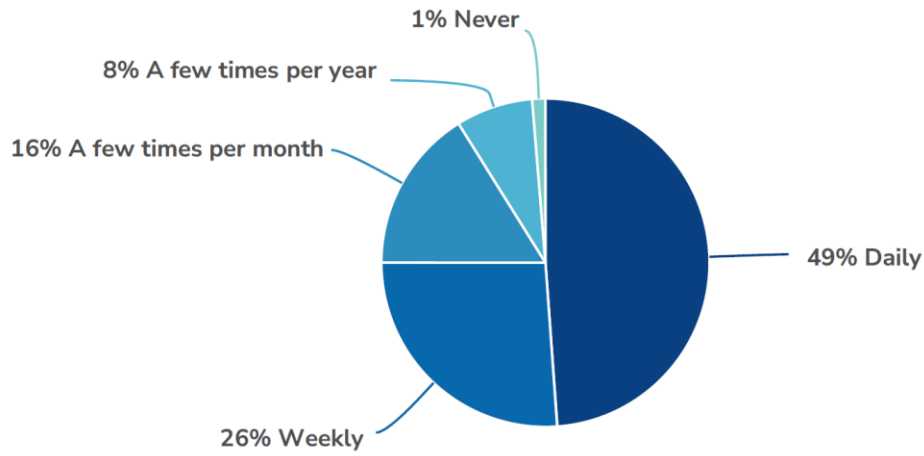
Community engagement for the Village Vision Study was initiated with the launch of a comprehensive online survey. This survey was designed to capture the voices of our residents and to incite deepened interest in the project. The survey included more than 20 questions focused on identifying residents' current relationship to the Village area and their preference and priorities for future growth. The findings, summarized here, reveal a community deeply invested in the preservation of Lake Elmo's unique character while embracing thoughtful growth and development.

The survey launched on Saturday, June 1, 2024 and closed Monday, July 1, 2024. 556 complete responses were submitted, and 603 partial responses during during this period

Excerpts from the survey are provided here. A full copy of the survey response report is available in Appendix C.

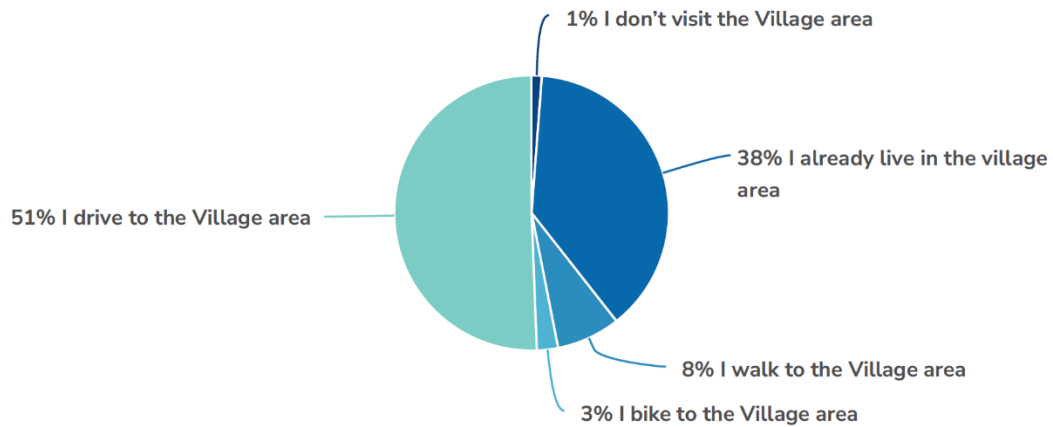
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Frequency of visits to the village area



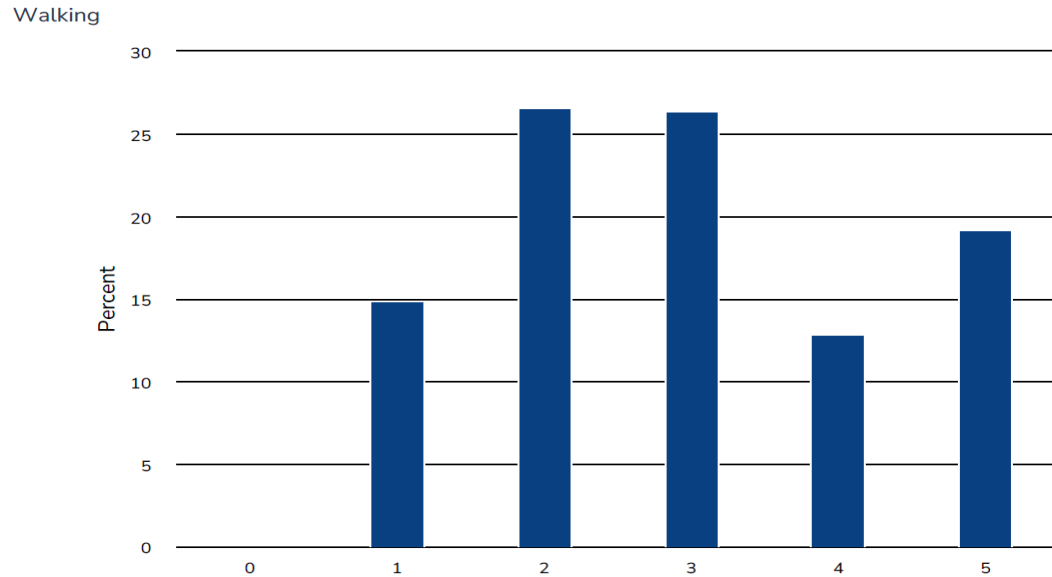
Nearly half of respondents visit the Village area every day.

Mode of travel to/from the village area



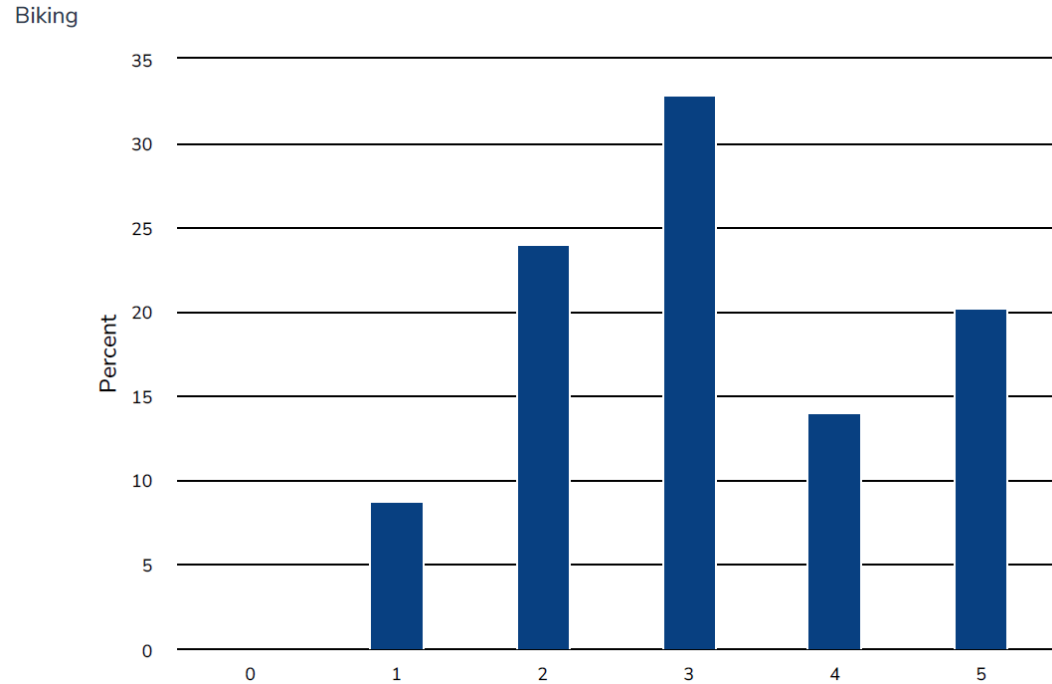
Over half of all respondents drive to the Village area. About 40% of respondents already live in the area.

Ease of reaching the Village area by walking (1=Very Difficult, 5=Very Easy)



There's little consensus about ease of walking to the Village area. About 30% of respondents indicated that it's "Difficult or Very Difficult" to walk to the Village

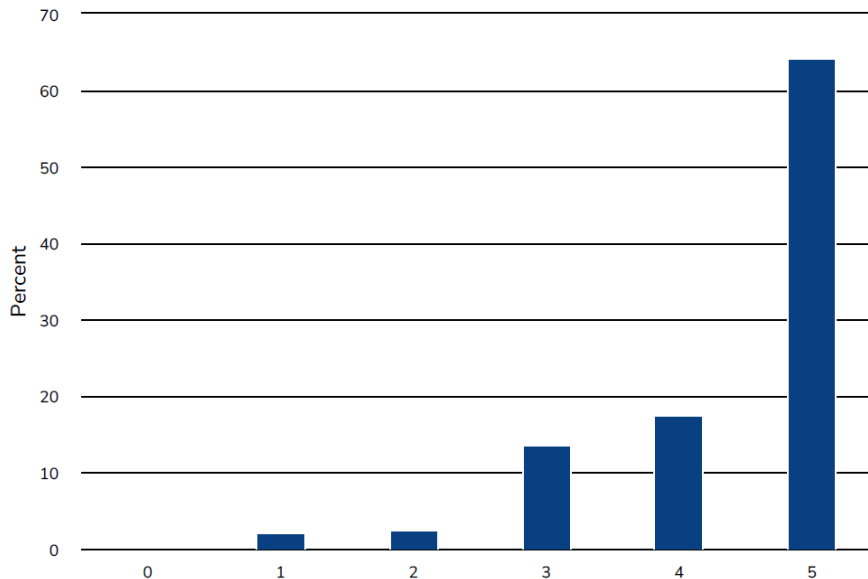
Ease of reaching the Village area by biking (1=Very Difficult, 5=Very Easy)



There's little consensus about ease of biking to the Village area.

Ease of reaching the Village area by driving (1=Very Difficult, 5=Very Easy)

Driving



Respondents agree that it's Very Easy to get to the Village by driving.

Prevailing strengths of the Village area

- **Aesthetics.** Many responses included words like “charm”, “quaint”, and “cute” which highlight an appreciation for the visual appeal of the downtown village area.
- **Small Town Character.** Almost 200 residents indicated the importance of maintaining the “small town feel”, referring to both the size of the downtown, the amenities, and sense of place it offers.
- **Business and Development.** Over 100 responses pointed to businesses as a strength of the area, with several mentions of Lake Elmo Inn, Sunshine Coffee and various other small businesses contributing to the vitality of the village.
- **Walkability and Location.** Residents also appreciate the town’s convenient location and the ability to walk easily, emphasizing the importances of maintaining and potentially enhancing walkable spaces.

Prevailing weaknesses of the Village area

Weaknesses discussed for the village area were varied. Two clear themes were transportation issues (including parking and safety) and development. speeding and pedestrian safety. Several respondents highlighted dangerous conditions for crossing streets without crosswalks or sidewalks.

- **Transportation Issues.** Many respondents were concerned with traffic generally and the speed of traffic. Participants expressed concerns with a lack of crosswalks sidewalks as a significant safety concern. Several residents expressed that there was a need for parking in the village area.
- **Development.** Residents noted the desire for a variety and diversification of new businesses in the village area. Many responses were about “use”. Over 50 responses included “restaurant” indicating the desire for more businesses centered around eat, drink and play. “Pizza”, “ice-cream”, and “grocery” were all pointed to as wish-list items for the downtown.

Future vision for the Village Area



What residents do want to see in the Village area

- Community amenities
 - Gathering spaces for events and play
 - Community center
 - Pools, splash pads
 - Live music
- Increase of local & small scale retail and service businesses
- Recreational spaces
- Green space
- Eating & Drinking establishments
 - Brewery
 - Ice cream
 - Pizza
- Pedestrian safety
 - More safe routes for walking and biking
 - Sidewalks and trails
- Beautification

Responses are generally consistent with perceived strengths and weaknesses in the village area.



What residents don't want to see in the village area

- A variety of housing types
- Big box retail
- Car dealerships
- Industrial uses
- Storage businesses
- Increase in traffic

Responses are generally consistent with perceived strengths and weaknesses in the village area.

Preferred Single-Family House types (respondents could select more than one option)



43% Single family house; modern manor style; front-loaded garage

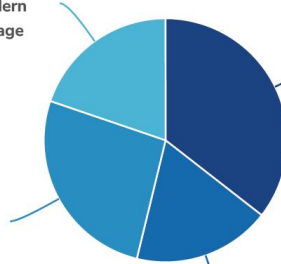


78% Single family house; rear loaded white ranch style house

58% Single family house; modern prairie style; front porch; side-loaded garage



40% Single family house; modern carriage house



Single-Family Houses where the garages were side- or rear-loaded were most popular

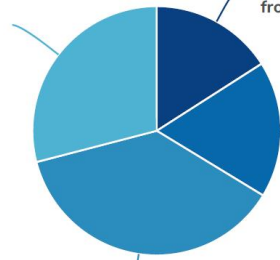
Preferred Townhouse types (respondents could select more than one option)



46% Classic, rear-loaded, walk-in townhouses. Half of units have turf yard and half of units have brick patios.



25% Typical suburban townhouse, front loaded with garages



28% modern front loaded townhouses

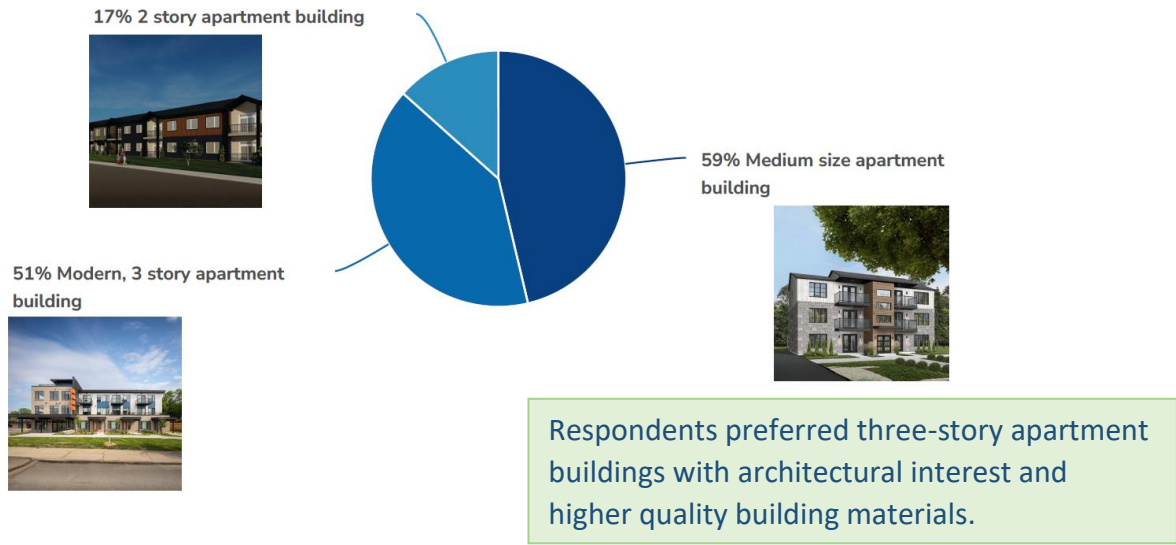


59% Classic, walk-in townhouse

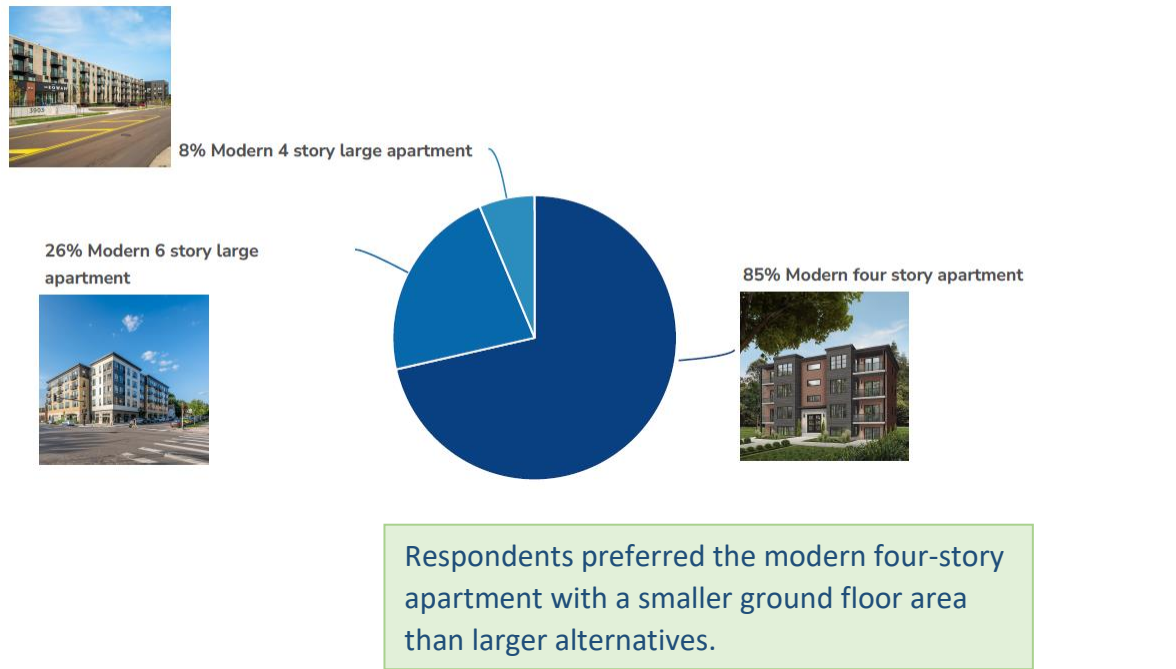


Respondents preferred classic, walk-in Townhouses with garages that are rear-loaded.

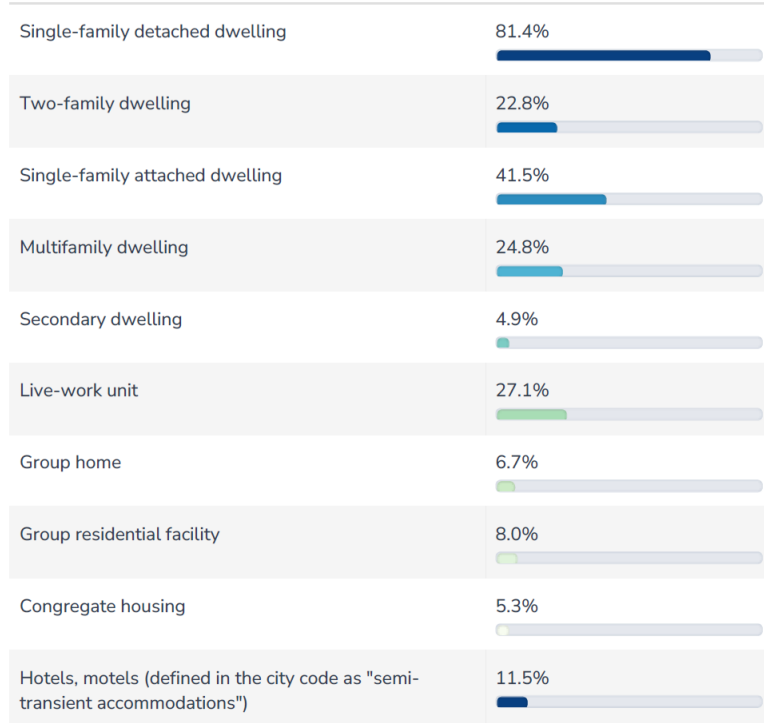
Preferred Small-/Mid-Sized Apartment Building types (respondents could select more than one option)



Preferred Mid-/Large-Sized Apartment Building types (respondents could select more than one option)

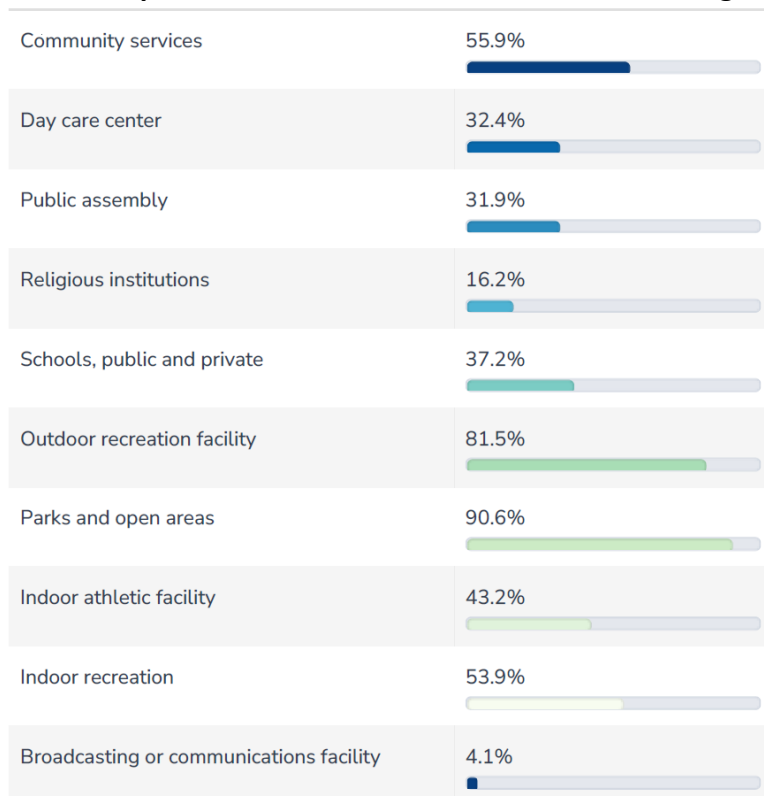


Preferred residential uses in the Village area



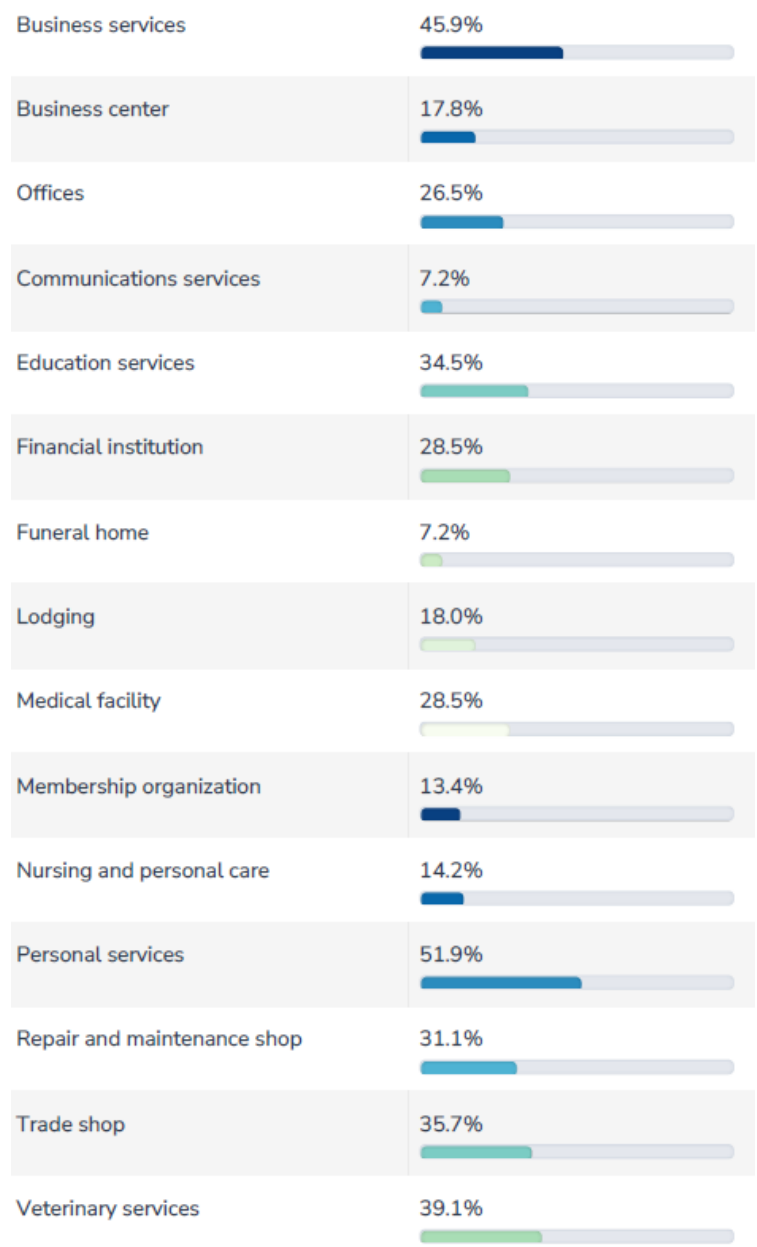
Respondents prefer Single-Family attached (Townhouses) and Single-Family Detached houses for residential uses in the Village area.

Preferred public, civic, and recreation uses in the Village area



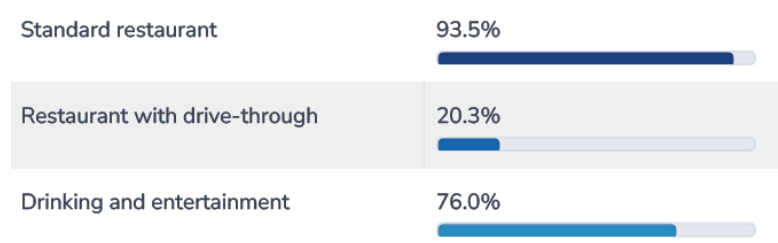
Outdoor recreation, parks, and open space are widely preferred. Communications facilities and religious institutions were least preferred by respondents in this category.

Preferred service uses in the Village area



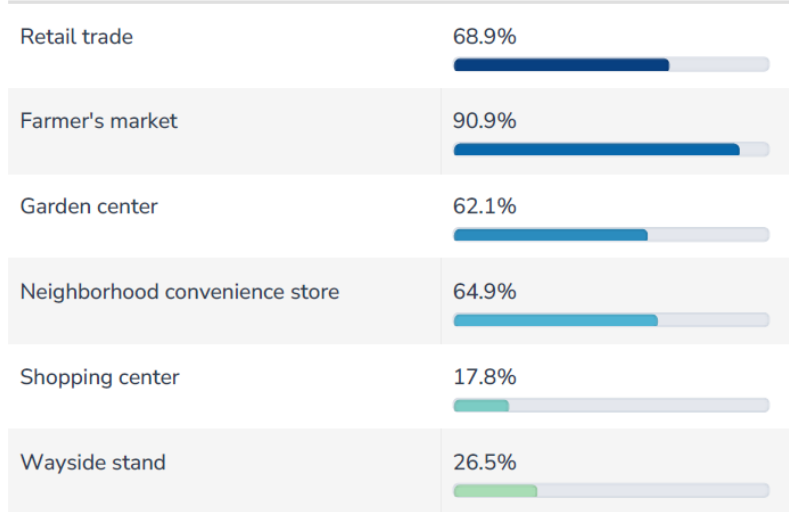
Preferences for service uses were scattered. The most preferred services were business services and personal services (it should be noted that these are the broadest classes of service types).

Preferred food service uses in the Village area



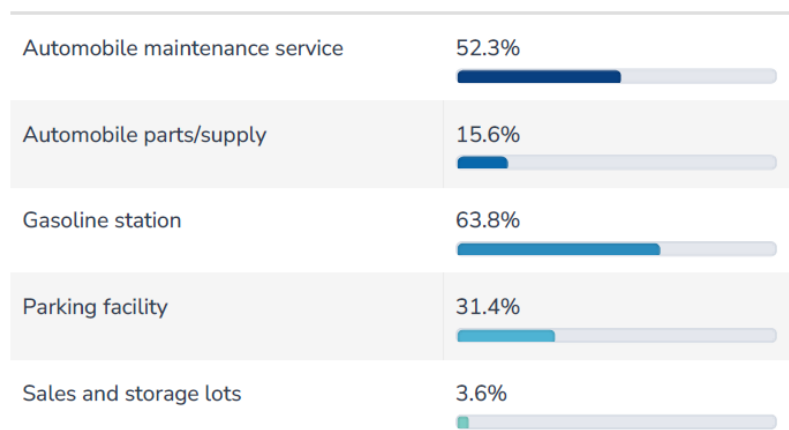
Respondents want sit-down (standard) restaurants and other places for drinking and entertainment in the village. Only 20% of respondents want to see drive-through restaurants in the Village.

Preferred mercantile uses in the Village area



Respondents would like to see most types of mercantile uses in the Village, except for shopping centers (malls or strip malls)

Preferred automobile or vehicular uses in the Village area



More than half of respondents said they would like to see automobile maintenance services (auto repair garages) and gas stations. Overwhelmingly, however, 96% of respondents do not prefer to see auto sales and storage lots in the Village area.

Preferences for the future of the former fire hall and parks building

Respondents gave a variety of answers for what they would like to see in the old fire hall and parks building. Responses included new uses such as:

- Eating & Drinking establishments
- Community center
- Family friendly establishments
- Housing, including mixed use
- Green spaces and parks
- Recreational uses
- Retail



Additional thoughts on the Village Area

A wide variety of feedback was received. Sentiment was mostly positive with many comments pointing to the types of development, if any, they would like to see in the area. Many responses indicated that residents wanted to maintain the “charm” and “feel” of the area and limit big box retail. This was consistent with previous qualitative responses in the survey.

Appendix B – Open House Engagement Materials

WHAT CAN CHANGE?

If you could change one thing about the Village area, what would it be? Share your thoughts below.

MORE gathering space (parking?)
something for the elementary site in the future.

Some sort of arts center. ●

Shops with apartments above. Yes

Shops for things people need - not tourist, gift, liquor
Hardware store, outdoor recreation store, clothes

Reduce speed

Bld in scale with what we have

No more Lerner developments

Traffic already
bad here
Adding more
homes will make
worse.

Slower speeds on the Ave. (L.E.)
Safer ways to cross Co. Hwy 14 - reduce speed here & add stoplight @ 38th by bank

↓
Yes, please reduce speed limit on LE
avenue from Kreuzers, South

Stoplight at 38th & LE Ave

↳ community space (indoors!) would be great, too - all ages, multi-use (sports, arts/music, etc.)

Water feature! lake access? splash pad? swimming pool?

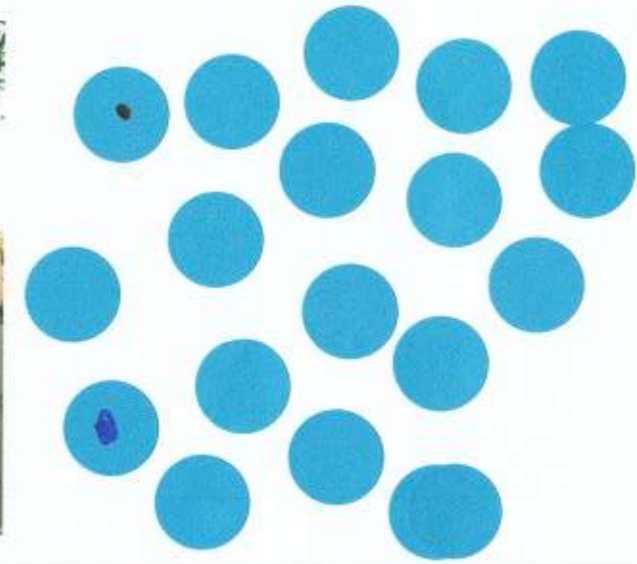


VILLAGE VISION PLAN
LAKE ELMO, MN

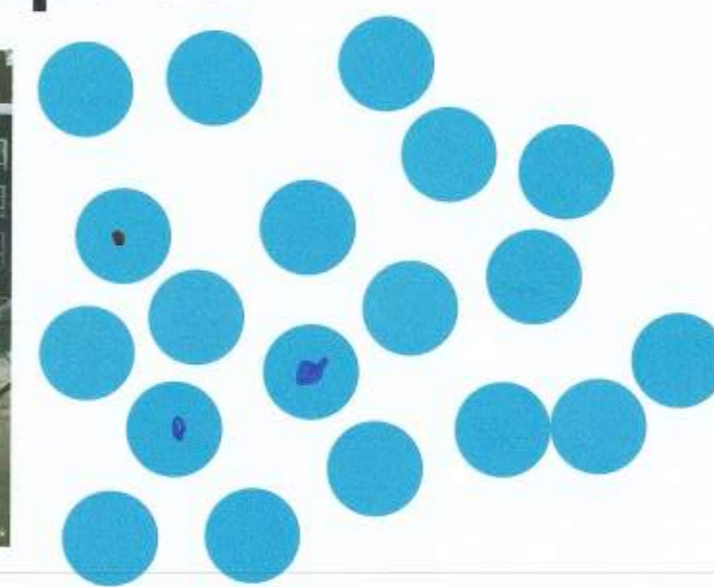
FUTURE SPACES

What types of spaces would you like more of in the Village area? Place a dot by your recommendation!

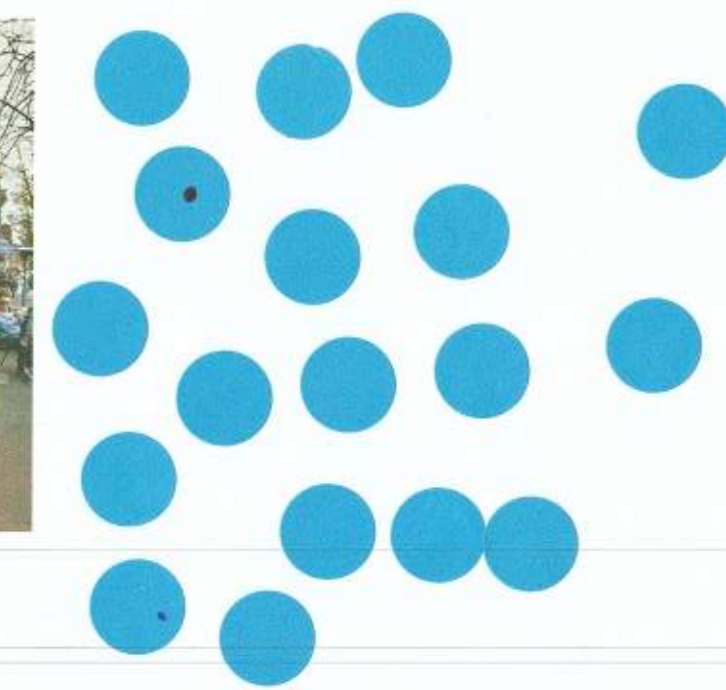
Restaurants



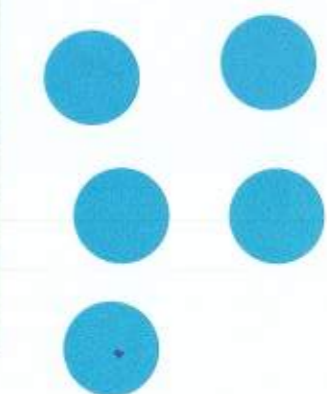
Public or Green Space



Shops



Convenience/essentials stores



Homes



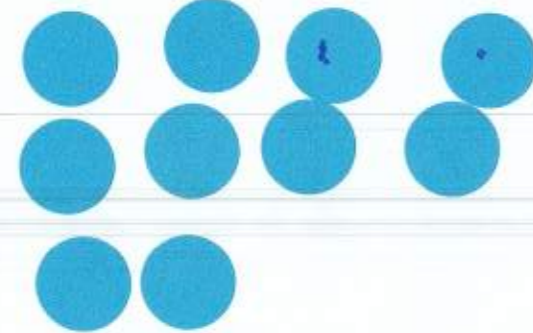
Employment or Office



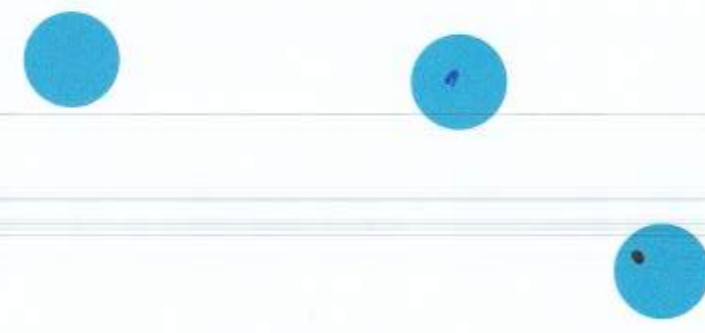
FUTURE HOUSING

What types of housing would you like more of in the Village area? Place a dot by your recommendations!

Single-family houses



agree
 NONE



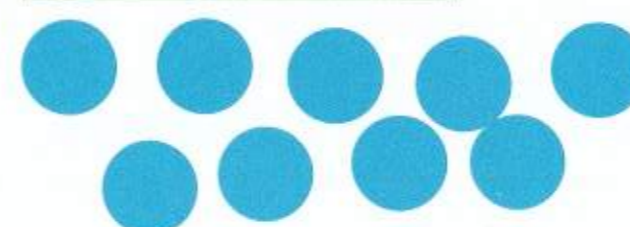
Small- to mid-size multifamily buildings



None



Townhouses

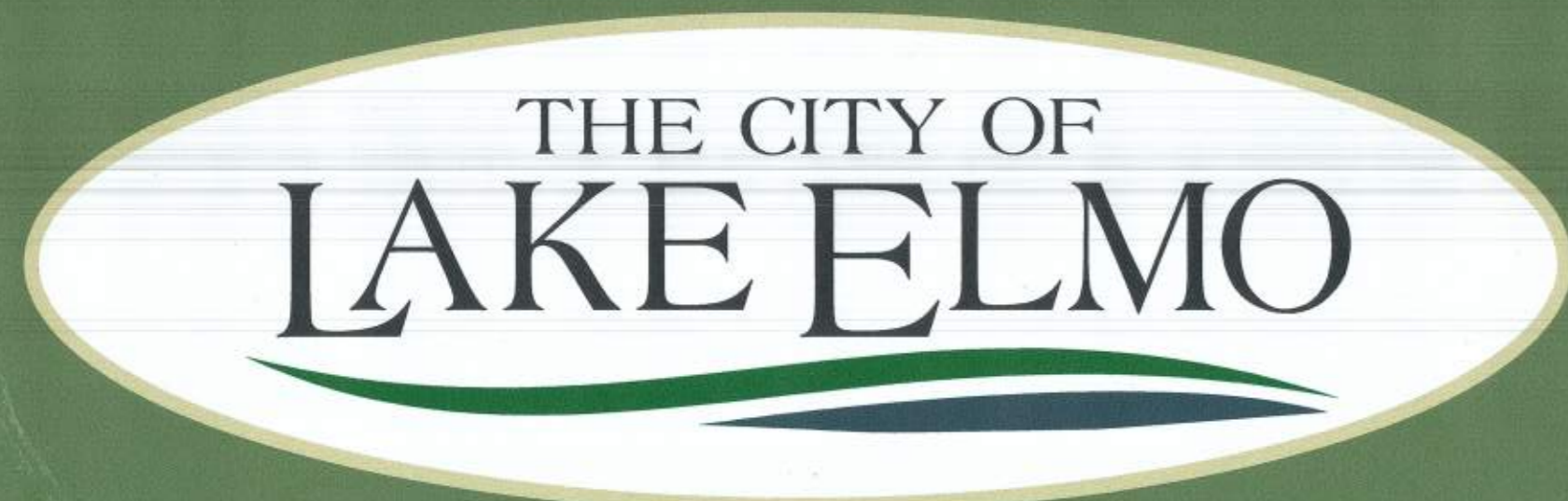


Mid- to large-size multi-family buildings



None

● No more ● ● ✓ Already too much housing, please stop



VILLAGE VISION PLAN
 LAKE ELMO, MN

THOUGHTS ON THE VILLAGE AREA?

When you think of the Village area in Lake Elmo, what comes to mind? Share your thoughts below.

Historic Charm + lots of Potential!

LET'S GET A BIKE LOOP & MORE PEDESTRIAN ACCESS! ●

Small-town feel → i a little bit of everything I need! library, post office, food, park, etc
lets have what we have had in the past - small town character + scale

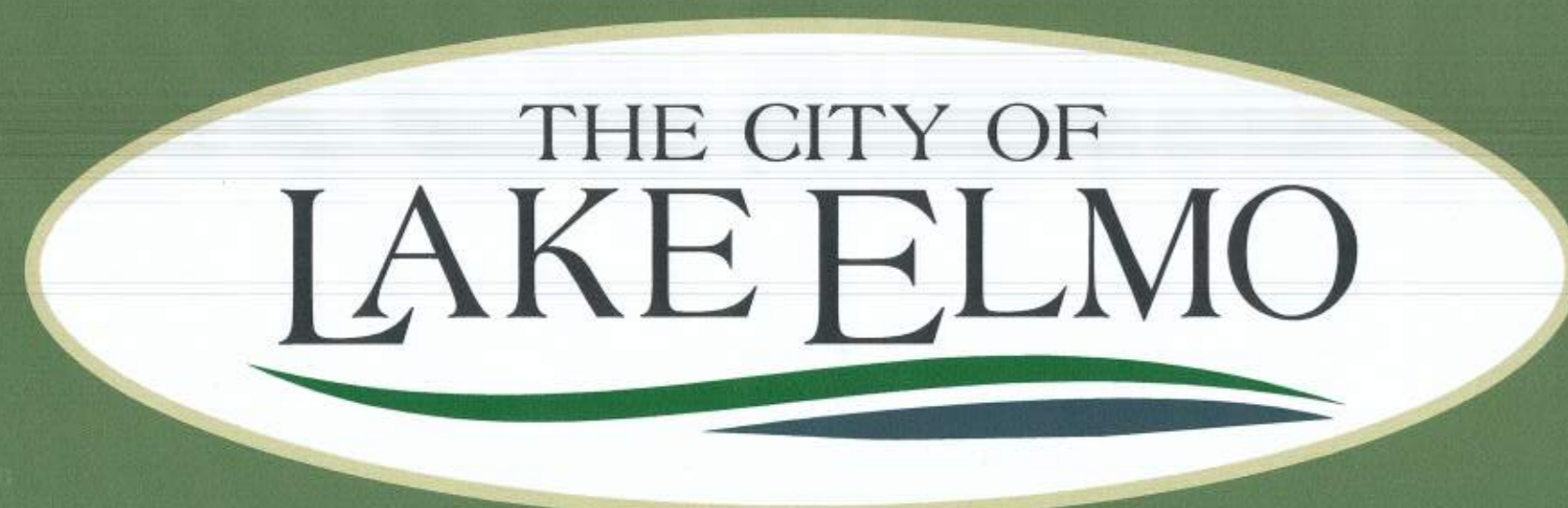
Sense of community

Small shops + non-chain restaurants ✓✓

generally light traffic

Great parks / green space ✓

SAVE Old Village - "Historic L.E" from Hagberg to Klondike # TORR



VILLAGE VISION PLAN
LAKE ELMO, MN

Note in **GREEN** things that you like in the Village area.
Note in **RED** things that are a challenge in the Village area.

VILLAGE AREA



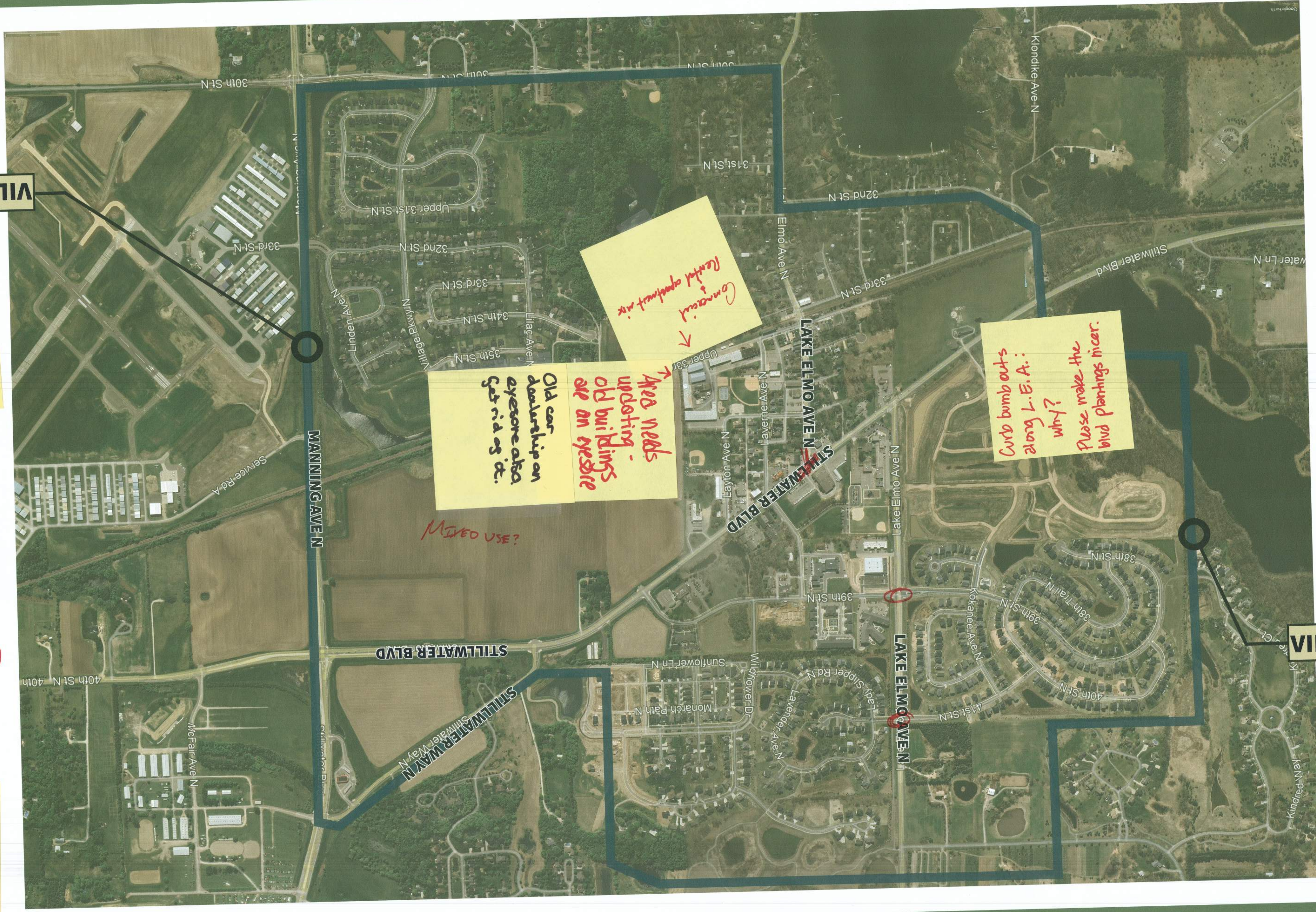
VILLAGE AREA

Note in **GREEN** things that you like in the Village area.
Note in **RED** things that are a challenge in the Village area.

Note in **GREEN** things that you like in the Village area.
 Note in **RED** things that are a challenge in the Village area.



VILLAGE VISION PLAN
 LAKE ELMO, MN



Note in **GREEN** things that you like in the Village area.
 Note in **RED** things that are a challenge in the Village area.



VILLAGE VISION PLAN
 LAKE ELMO, MN

Traffic congestion on 14
 Traffic planning for development prior to approval

VILLAGE AREA

Like the "walkability" of the area

Traffic & growth

Sidewalk community

Historic preservation in old Village!
 NEEDED

VILLAGE AREA

Traffic congestion
 Development left

Streets

Historic Old Village Area.
 Hazy bergs to Klondike Ave.

Appendix C – Full Survey Response Report

**CITY OF LAKE ELMO
COUNTY OF WASHINGTON
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

ORDINANCE NO. 2024-15

**AN ORDINANCE TERMINATING THE MORATORIUM DECLARED BY
ORDINANCE NO. 2024-04 THAT IMPOSED A MORATORIUM ON
DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE OLD VILLAGE CORRIDOR AREA**

WHEREAS, on February 6, 2024, the City Council (the “Council”) of the City of Lake Elmo (the “City”) adopted Ordinance No. 2024-04, pursuant to its authority under Minnesota Statutes Section 462.355, subdivision 4, which established a one year moratorium on any development project within the Old Village Corridor Area (“Ordinance No. 2024-04”); and

WHEREAS, Ordinance No. 2024-04 was adopted as a result of the City needing to study the required utility corridors, road right of way, trail corridors, and pedestrian connectivity within the Old Village Corridor Area and also to determine whether the Village Master Plan needed updating; and

WHEREAS, the City conducted a study on the Village area through Bolton & Menk which included a survey, community engagement, City Council workshops, and input from the Planning Commission; and

WHEREAS, after reviewing the report by Bolton & Menk and the results of the survey, text amendments to the Village Districts portion of the City Code are being proposed by City staff to the City Council that relate to the Village area; and

NOW, THEREFORE, based on the foregoing, the City Council of the City of Lake Elmo does ordain:

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

1. In light of the City’s study of the Village Master Plan and the adoption of the text amendments to the City Code, it is hereby found and determined by the City that the area described as the “Old Village Corridor Area” in Ordinance No. 2024-04 no longer needs to be subject to a moratorium.

2. It is hereby declared that the area described as the “Old Village Corridor Area” in Ordinance No. 2024-04 is no longer subject to the moratorium imposed by that ordinance. City staff shall henceforth accept and process applications and regulate development activity in accordance with all relevant City ordinances and regulations.

SECTION 2. EFFECTIVE DATE. This Ordinance shall be effective upon its legal passage and publication.

SECTION 3. ADOPTION DATE. This Ordinance No. _____ was adopted on this 17th day of September, 2024, by a vote of ____ Ayes and ____ Nays.

LAKE ELMO CITY COUNCIL

Charles Cadenhead, Mayor

ATTEST:

Julie Johnson, City Clerk

This Ordinance No. _____ was published on the _____ day of _____, 2024.