



PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA

JANUARY 8, 2018

7:00 pm

1. CALL TO ORDER -
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE –
3. ROLL CALL -
 - Barbara Ronningen (Chair)
 - a) Sally Doherty
 - b) Kris Kopitzke
 - c) Mark Nelson
 - d) Lucia Wroblewski
 - e) Scott Patten
 - f) Jim Langan
 - g) Roger Bowman
4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA –
5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES -
 - A. November 29, 2017 Work Session Minutes-
 - B. December 4, 2017 Meeting Minutes –
6. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS – None
7. PUBLIC HEARINGS – None
8. NEW BUSINESS – None
9. OLD BUSINESS -
 - A. Comprehensive Plan Update Process
 1. Review of Updated Comprehensive Plan Reflecting Edits from the November 29 Planning Commission Workshop, and James Langan Presentation Regarding Groundwater/Water Supply Protection
 - B. Update on City Council Actions –
 1. Council Highlights from the December 19, 2017 Council meeting - attached.
10. ADJOURN –

-- This agenda is not exclusive. Other business may be discussed as deemed necessary. --

A quorum of the City Council or Other Commissions may be present to receive information.

CITY OF AFTON
DRAFT PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
Workshop November 29, 2017

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1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chair Barbara Ronningen called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM

2. **ROLL CALL** – Present: Chair Barbara Ronningen, Sally Doherty, Lucia Wroblewski, Mark Nelson, Roger Bowman, Jim Langan A Quorum was present. Absent: Kris Kopitzke, Scott Patten (excused).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – City Administrator Ron Moorse, City Clerk Julie Yoho

3. **REVIEW OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN EDITS**

The comprehensive plan was reviewed by section with changes noted. A draft will be available for further review for the January meeting.

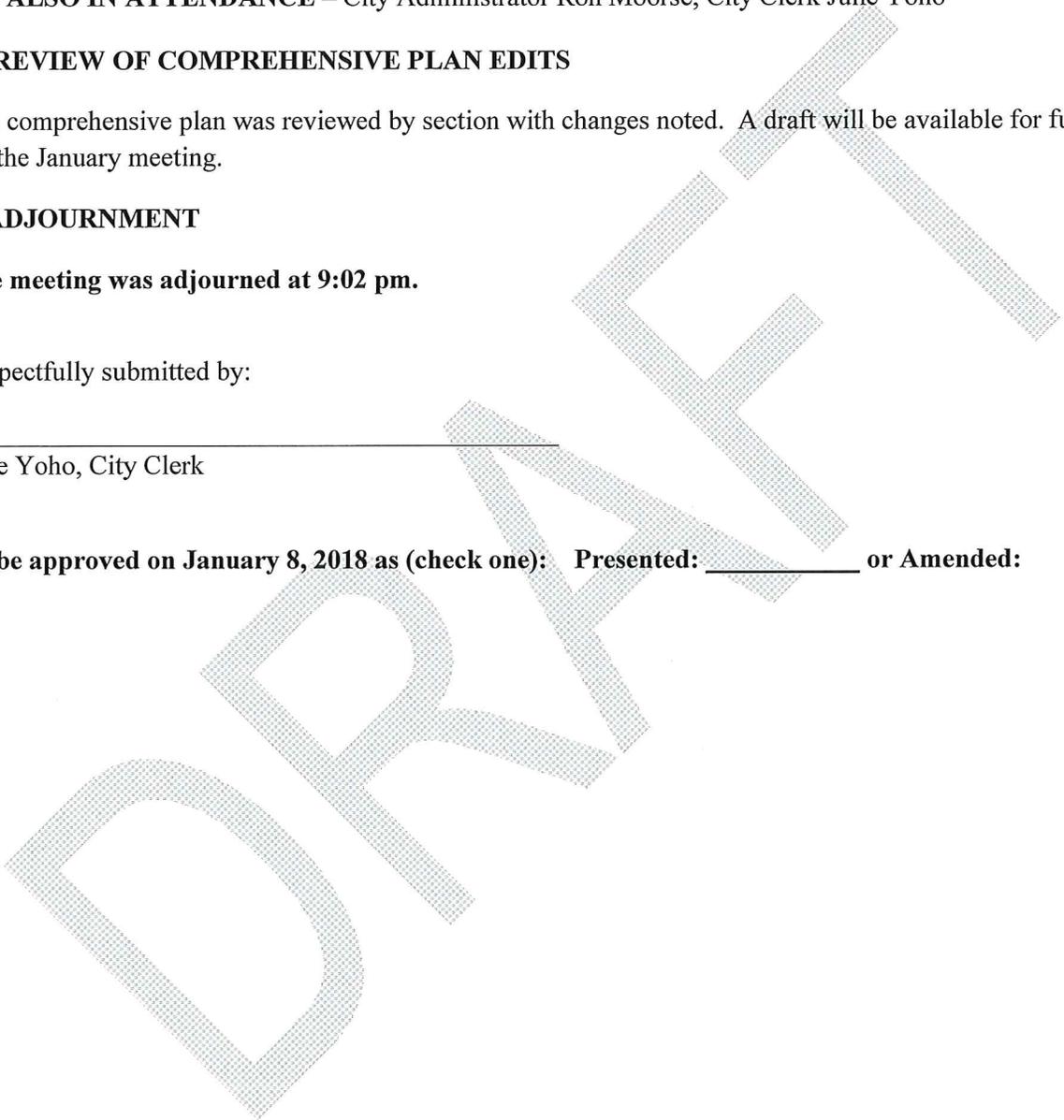
4. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Julie Yoho, City Clerk

To be approved on January 8, 2018 as (check one): Presented: _____ or Amended:



CITY OF AFTON
DRAFT PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
December 4, 2017

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1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chair Barbara Ronningen called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM
 2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** – was recited.
 3. **ROLL CALL** – Present: Chair Barbara Ronningen, Sally Doherty, Kris Kopitzke, Lucia Wroblewski, Mark Nelson, Jim Langan, Scott Patten A Quorum was present. Absent: Roger Bowman (excused).
ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – City Council member Joe Richter, City Administrator Ron Moore, City Clerk Julie Yoho
 4. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA** – **Motion/Second: Patten / Doherty To approve agenda of the December 4, 2017 Planning Commission Meeting. Passed 7-0-0.**
 5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** –
A. **November 6, 2017 Meeting Minutes – Motion/Second: Wroblewski /Nelson To approve minutes of the November 6, 2017 Planning Commission meeting. Passed 6-0-1. (Patten abstain due to absence)**
 6. **REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS** – none
 7. **PUBLIC HEARINGS** –
A. Application by USS Rambo Solar LLC for a text amendment to the Zoning Code to allow “solar farms” as a conditional use or interim use in the Agricultural District. This application is related to a proposal for a 7.3 acre, 1.0 megawatt ground-mounted solar array at 12560 15th Street S.

Chair Ronningen opened the Public Hearing at 7:02pm.

Administrator Moore provided a summary of the project: USS Rambo Solar LLC has made an application for a text amendment to the Zoning Code to allow “solar farm” as a conditional use or interim use in the Agricultural District. This application is related to a proposal for a 7.3 acre, 1.0 megawatt ground-mounted solar array at 12560 15th Street S. USS Rambo Solar LLC has entered into a lease agreement with the property owner, Lyle Rambo, for the use of the property for a solar farm.
Solar Farm
The current definition of a solar farm in the City’s solar energy ordinance is as follows:

Solar Farm - A commercial facility that converts sunlight into electricity, whether by photovoltaics (PV), concentrating solar thermal devices (CST), or other conversion technology, for the primary purpose of wholesale sales of generated electricity. A solar farm is the principal land use for the parcel on which it is located.

The ordinance prohibits solar farms from the Agricultural and Rural Residential zoning districts due to concerns regarding the impact of large areas of solar arrays on the rural character of the City. Solar farms are allowed in the Industrial Districts.
Proposed Text Amendment
The following is an outline of the main elements of the proposed text amendment:
 - Add “solar farms” as a Conditional Use or Interim Use in the Agricultural zoning district.
 - Provide for the same 50 foot side and rear setbacks as are currently required in the Agricultural zone, and require a 250 foot front yard setback vs. the 105 or 150 foot setbacks generally required in the Agricultural zone.
 - Require a landscape screening plan for full-perimeter screening.
 - Limit the size of solar farms to a maximum of 10 acres.
 - Require a 1 mile buffer from other proposed or permitted solar farms.

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David Watts, US Solar Representative, described the benefits of planting native pollinator plants at the site. US Solar has support from the Farm Bureau and pollinator partnership groups. The solar gardens protect rural character. Residential subscriptions will be offered at a savings of 20%.

Kiara Bolton, 130 Charles Ave St Paul; Bee keeper. Kiara has placed hives at pollinator friendly solar sites and has seen an increase in healthy habitat and hives.

Jeff West 19789 Farnam Lake Rd Forest Lake; Prairie Restorations. Jeff stated that Prairie Restorations is actively managing projects at solar sites. The habitat created around the solar gardens works.

Annie Perkins, Afton, Member of NRGCC. Annie stated that the proposal is in alignment with the City's vision for renewable energy.

Perry Eggers 50th St South Afton; Beekeeper. Perry stated his support for the project.

Charles Bolton, 130 Charles Ave St. Paul; Bolton Bees. Charles stated that most apiaries in the area are located in Washington Co. It is always a struggle to find good habitat. Hives at solar arrays have been healthy and high producing. Neighboring farmers benefit from pollination.

Wes Miller, Afton. Wes questioned changing the ordinance, will that open the door for more solar farms? We don't need to have solar panels to have bee habitat.

Franz Hall 5730 Trading Post Trail. Franz questioned if solar farms are less beneficial if they are located in the industrial zone.

Us Solar Representative, Minneapolis. Explained that the site has to be near a 3 phase distribution line and wires to make the site suitable. The same is true for an industrial site.

Franz Hall 5730 Trading Post Tail, Stated he would like to see this along I-94. In the comprehensive plan they are limited to industrial areas.

Bernardo Medellin 6 Coulee Ridge Rd. Agreed that solar farms should be in the industrial zone.

Wendi Bertelsen y 12631 15th St S. Wendi lives across the road Lyle and stated that she moved to Afton for the rural character. This project would ruin that.

David Watts US Solar. David stated that a 1 mile buffer is requested for any other solar project so there won't be another in close proximity. This provides an opportunity to create pollinator habitat at no cost. The view of the site is protected by full screening and set back 300' from the road

Motion/Second Nelson/Patten To close public hearing. Passed 7-0-0.

Public hearing closed at 7:34 pm.

Nelson pointed out that the Ordinance restricts solar gardens to the Industrial Zone, not the Comprehensive Plan.

Doherty asked if this was the same company who installed a system north off Hwy 15.

Watts replied no, that was a different company and is a 3-4 megawatt site. US Solar uses a single axis panel that tilts and is 10' high, not 15.

107 Wroblewski asked if this property is unique or how many other sites are there that have the location to the
108 3 phase distribution wires, proximity to substation and capacity.
109 Watts replied that there are a small set of parcels that meet all criteria.
110 Chair Ronningen asked why this can't be located in the industrial zone; since the Ordinance specifies solar
111 gardens are to be located there.
112 Watts replied that it is cost prohibitive to acquire that land. Projects are currently capped at 1 megawatt
113 sites; this has been the case since 2015.
114 Doherty noted that the ordinance requires this in the industrial zone. Since laws have changed, this is not a
115 workable model due to land costs?
116 Watts replied yes.
117 Wroblewski asked if there is a difference between a solar garden and solar farm? (no)

118
119 **Motion/Second Patten/Langan To recommend the City Council does not change the ordinance in**
120 **regards to solar farms based on the following:**

- 121 - **Well written ordinance with extensive public input**
- 122 - **There is sufficient and well-equipped land in the industrial zone for this**
- 123 - **No demonstrated need that indicates the current ordinance is deficient**
- 124 - **Recommend considering pollinator language in ordinance**

125 Discussion

126 Doherty stated that if the laws have changed, perhaps we should revisit the ordinance with current
127 information.

128 Kopitzke agreed that the facts have changed and size allowed is a factor.

129 Langan asked for clarification on the 1 megawatt limit.

130 Watts explained that it is a rule and limitation from Excel and the Public Utilities. Not state law. Any project
131 bigger than 1 megawatt began application prior to 2015.

132 Chair Ronningen stated she had a hard time with proposed language re: principal and accessory use and
133 that the definitions are mutually exclusive.

134 Kopitzke stated he would like the city council to give direction on re-writing language.

135 Patten noted that this is contrary to everything we spent months discussing when writing the ordinance.

136 Kopitzke recalls it being close

137 Doherty noted there was extensive neighbor participation last time. This time only 1 person in the area has
138 come – has the mood changed on the topic?

139 Langan replied that the neighbors in the area thought it was a dead issue.

140
141 **Motion vote, Passed 6-1-0 (Kopitzke nay).**

142
143 **8. NEW BUSINESS –**

144 **A. 2018 Planning Commission Meeting Schedule**

145 **Motion / Second Ronningen/Wroblewski To approve the 2018 meeting schedule for the first Monday**
146 **of the month with January moved to January 8, July moved to July 9 and September moved to**
147 **September 10 to avoid holidays. Passed 7-0-0.**

148
149 **9. OLD BUSINESS –**

150 **A. Afton Creek Preserve PLCD Subdivision Concept Alternatives at 14220 60th Street and parcels with PID**
151 **Numbers 33.028.20.33.0005, 33.028.20.33.0004, 33.028.20.32.0001, 32.028.20.41.0002,**
152 **32.028.20.42.0004, and 32.028.20.43.0001.**

153 The City Council, at its October 17, 2017 meeting, referred the Afton Creek Preserve Preservation and Land
154 Conservation Development (PLCD) back to the Planning Commission for reconsideration. Since then, the
155 applicant has developed two concept alternatives to address feedback from the Planning Commission, the
156 neighboring property owners and the City Council, and to minimize the number of required variances. The
157 applicant would like to obtain general feedback from the Planning Commission and the City Council

158 regarding the two concept alternatives to guide the detailed preparation of one alternative to bring forward
159 in a continuation of the preliminary plat review process.
160 One concept alternative is a revised cul-de-sac with one termination point and 16 lots. The other concept
161 alternative is a loop road with access to Odell Avenue.
162 The applicant is requesting general feedback from the Planning Commission regarding the concept
163 alternatives to guide the detailed preparation of one alternative to bring forward in a continuation of the
164 preliminary plat review process.

165
166 Discussion

167 Chair Ronningen asked what the status is regarding the application and how these concepts relate.
168 Administrator Moorse replied that this is an interim step to get feedback on concepts to provide direction to
169 the applicant. The next step would be bringing an application for public hearing to Planning Commission
170 then City Council.

171 Chair Ronningen stated that this meeting is not officially a public hearing; there will be discussion by the
172 commission then she will allow some public comment. Since this is a PLCD there is no guarantee that there
173 will be a maximum number of lots due to terrain, etc.

174 Kopitzke stated that he likes the connecting road, but that 5 acre parcel cannot be part of the PLCD.

175 Ronningen stated it would require a taking of the lot for a road and trail.

176 Wroblewski noted that it causes two areas of traffic concerns.

177 Patten stated he is against lot 18 and that lot 1 is too close to the stream.

178 Wroblewski dislikes lot 18's shape.

179 Doherty stated she sees progress; Option 1 requires fewer variances. Lots 1,2, & 18 should be part of open
180 space.

181 Patten noted that option 1 requires a fundamental shift in use of land with a road through a residential lot

182 Kopitzke stated that it is a change in use, but just a road in a neighborhood.

183 Patten would like to encourage smart development and feels like we should be able to do a PLCD with only
184 a Conditional Use permit and no other variances.

185 Chair Ronningen agreed that's how the language was written. The County has record of this being in Ag
186 Preserve, has it come out?

187 Administrator Moorse will double check.

188 Kopitzke stated he just received this pile of legal opinions and would like time to review.

189 Doherty stated that the task today is to indicate which plan is more favorable. Both are problematic since
190 they both need variances; however 1a is better.

191 Patten stated the plans are not where they need to be - they need to be variance free.

192 Doherty agreed that if a variance is still needed; she would like to know why there isn't another option.

193 Joe Bush, Developer stated that the west entrance was discussed originally. However the natural resources
194 are primarily on the west side for the PLCD, and the houses would be placed by the other existing houses
195 on the east side.

196 Doherty asked if the MN Land Trust would accept the project if the access was on the west side

197 Bush replied that the MN Land Trust will look at any application; however they already went through the
198 process.

199 Ronningen stated that there is no requirement that the MN Land Trust hold the easement. The City or
200 homeowners could hold the easement. There are other groups that will work within our ordinances. City
201 ordinances come first for Afton.

202
203 Chair Ronningen opened public comment

204
205 Kathy Graham, 5912 Trading Post Trail.; Developer hasn't addressed concerns over the number of lots. The
206 best use of the land is decreased density. The setback of the road encroaches on her property. Development
207 should have to follow codes. The shoreland overlay district prohibits a PLCD.
208

209 David Husebye, 5830 Osgood. Discussed ASHTO guidelines regarding stopping distance and the traffic
210 study.
211
212 Paul Wolner, 13446 50th St S. Noted that no traffic study was done on Odell and that more traffic will go
213 there.
214
215 Dan Brannan, 13997 50th St. Stated that the stopping distances and sight distances mentioned are minimum.
216 The intersection at Trading Post and Co Rd 18 has had accidents; neither of these proposed intersections
217 comes close to meeting the standards there. Access should be located off 60th. Rare species map showing
218 woods on eastern edge of property – houses shouldn't be there, that area should be preserved.
219
220 Christian Dawson, 5888 Trading Post Trail. Had to hire legal advice to protect his land. Stated that he has
221 provided feedback over the past year and still is looking at the same issues.
222
223 Mary McConnell, 5680 Odell. The property has challenges for this size of development. Access off 60th
224 Street would be safer. The City must look at all issues. Alternatives can provide a conservation easement
225 and allow development. This will set a precedent for further development.
226
227 James Rickard, 5650 Odell. Asked about the timeline. Would like the commission to reject the original
228 proposal and consider the alternatives separately.
229
230 Chair Ronningen closed public comment
231
232 Chair Ronningen asked about the current timeline for review.
233 Administrator Moose replied that the review deadline has been extended to Feb 11.
234 Kopitzke asked what the Council is asking for.
235 Doherty asked about the process since they'd had an application with 3 items which they recommended not
236 to approve. Council then said the planning commission didn't have all the information and passed it back.
237 Should we close the original application?
238 Chair Ronningen stated that the application was rejected for many reasons, none have changed.
239 City Council member Richter stated that the Council would like detailed feedback and opinion on these
240 options.
241 Chair Ronningen noted that there are two more drawings now. Is this a new application and where does it
242 fall? Commission recommended rejection to the original. There was additional information provided
243 regarding the property deed.
244 Perry Eggers, 13379 50th St. , stated he is representing the Ag zone. The property deed from Ester Shuster
245 to Robert Shuster stated that the land should be kept in agricultural use, it is spelled out.
246 Chair Ronningen asked if this is a covenant on the deed and is it binding?
247 Administrator Moose stated that the developer's proposals were in attempt to address concerns that were
248 raised. He wanted to get feedback. The next step is to get feedback from the Council then the whole
249 application will come back to the planning commission with the full proposal.
250 Doherty stated that the applicant should consider having the entrance on the west side of property.
251 Wroblewski noted she'd mentioned that many meetings ago. Have to get PLCD right as it's very important.
252 Doherty & Patten both asked for a plan with no variances needed
253 Nelson commented that the shoreland management zone regulations have been addressed (300' in this area)
254 Chair Ronningen stated that her concern is not the money, but to protect citizens and environment of Afton.
255 Wroblewski noted that she supports conservation easements, but this needs to be within existing ordinances.
256 Chair Ronningen noted that there are many people that want larger lots. These are not acceptable. Reduce
257 the number of lots, provide a road that is safe.
258 Nelson dislikes the grading of slopes on lot 1.
259 Kopitzke would like a no variance solution. The owner can work within ordinances.
260 Bush stated that the landowner is part of the community and is trying to preserve.

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B. Comprehensive Plan Update process
Progress was made at the workshop. Planning to have draft for January public hearing.

C. Update on City Council Actions
1. Council highlights from the November 21, 2017 Council meeting.
Work session tomorrow night to review the same information on the Afton Creek Preserve PLCD.

10. ADJOURN
Motion/Second Doherty/Langan To adjourn. Passed 7-0-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Julie Yoho, City Clerk

To be approved on January 8, 2018 as (check one): Presented: _____ or Amended: _____

City of Afton
3033 St. Croix Trl, P.O. Box 219
Afton, MN 55001

Planning Commission Memo

Meeting: January 8, 2018

To: Chair Ronningen and members of the Planning Commission

From: Ron Moorese, City Administrator

Date: January 3, 2018

Re: Comprehensive Plan Update

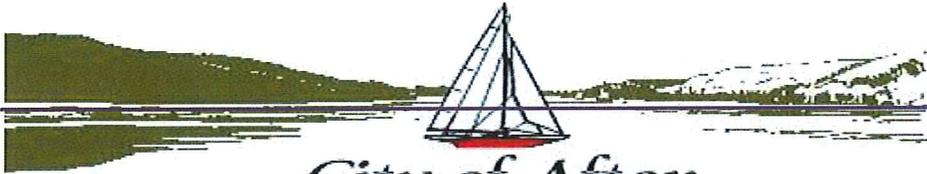
The Planning Commission met in a work session on Wednesday, November 29, 2017 to review edits made to the Comprehensive Plan and to make additional edits and updates. In addition, Chair Ronningen has edited the language provided by the Natural Resources and Groundwater Committee regarding the Solid Waste Plan. All of the Planning Commission's edits are reflected in the attached update dated December 18, 2017. The City Council has received a draft update of the Comprehensive Plan, and the Council members will review the update and provide their comments to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will then hold a public hearing regarding the updated Comprehensive Plan.

James Langan Presentation

James Langan has been analyzing levels of chemicals in groundwater in Afton, and has prepared a presentation regarding his findings.

Planning Commission Direction Requested:

- **Provide direction regarding any additional edits or additional work needed to finalize a draft update of the Comprehensive Plan.**
- **Schedule a public hearing regarding the updated Comprehensive Plan.**



City of Afton

**CITY OF AFTON
2008 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

March 16, 2010

Modified: November 30, 2010

July 19, 2011

Revised May 19, 2015

Comments compiled -12.5.2017 + Ron edits 12.11.17 + Solid

Waste edits 12/18/17

Working Draft

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Preamble | 7 |
| Philosophy..... | 7 |
| Introduction..... | 8 |
| Vision Statement..... | 8 |
| Purpose..... | 9 |
| Historical Background..... | 10 |
| | |
| Background Information | 11 |
| Migration & Turnover of Population..... | 11 |
| Housing Values..... | 12 |
| Conclusion..... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| | |
| Environmental Resources Plan | 151515 |
| Intent..... | 151515 |
| Soils..... | 151515 |
| Topography..... | 161616 |
| Vegetation..... | 161616 |
| Riparian Systems..... | 181717 |
| Groundwater..... | 181717 |
| Aggregate Resources..... | 18 |
| Energy..... | 191818 |
| Environmental Resources Goals and Policies..... | 212021 |
| | |
| Housing and Land Use Plan | 242323 |
| Agricultural..... | 242323 |
| Agricultural Zoning District and Agricultural preserves Overlay District..... | 22 |
| Residential..... | 22 |
| Old Village..... | 23 |
| Industrial..... | 25 |
| Marine Services..... | 25 |
| State Park..... | 26 |
| Housing and Land Use Goals, Policies and Strategies..... | 26 |
| | |
| Transportation Plan | 29 |
| Traffic Analysis Zones..... | 29 |
| Roads and Highways..... | 31 |
| Safety..... | 33 |
| Access Management..... | 33 |
| Aviation..... | 33 |
| Transit..... | 33 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Non-Motorized Transportation | 33 |
| Transportation Goals, Policies and Strategies | 34 |
| Groundwater and Surface Water Plan | 35 |
| Groundwater and Surface Water Goals and Strategies | 35 |
| Wastewater and Sanitary Sewer Plan | 39 |
| Existing System | 39 |
| Planned System Improvements and Projected Wastewater Flows | 41 |
| Collection System Improvements | 45 |
| Treatment System Improvements | 45 |
| Inflow and Infiltration | 46 |
| Staging | 46 |
| Wastewater Goals and Policies | 47 |
| Parks and Open Spaces Plan | 39 |
| Existing Parks & Open Space | 39 |
| Parks and Open Space Goals, Policies and Strategies | 41 |
| Solid Waste Plan | 43 |
| Solid Waste Goals and Policy | 43 |
| City Governance Plan | 45 |
| City Governance Goals, Policies and Strategies | 45 |
| System Statement Compatibility | 47 |
| Implementation Plan | 49 |
| Capital Improvements Program | 51 |

List of Appendices 53

Appendix A Terms and Definitions
Appendix B Demographic Information
Appendix C Watershed District Information
Appendix D Resource References
Appendix E Soils Information
Appendix F Parks and Open Spaces
Appendix G Surface Water Management Plan (draft)
Appendix H Community Survey
Appendix I Maps
Appendix J Sewage Treatment System Inspection Services Agreement & Ordinance
Appendix K Afton Flora and Fauna
Appendix L Public Involvement in Comprehensive Plan Process
Appendix M Facility Plan – Elevate Wastewater Collection and Treatment Alternatives

List of Figures

Figure 1 Afton Population Pyramid, 2000 Census 11
Figure 2 Transportation Analysis Zones-Afton, Metropolitan Council 29
Figure 3 City of Afton Existing Transportation System, Metropolitan Council 32
Figure 4 Compliance Status 40
Figure 5 Historic Village Sewage Treatment Service Area Zoning 43
Figure 6 Estimated Sanitary Sewer Flows 44

List of Tables

Table 1 Housing Values, 2000 Census 12
Table 2 Residential Housing Units, 2000 Census 23
Table 3 Acreages by Zoning District, City of Afton 26
Table 4 Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs), Metropolitan Council 30

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PREAMBLE

We, the residents of the City of Afton, Minnesota, in order to:
preserve our rural sanctuary amidst suburban sprawl;
preserve our agricultural heritage and land use;
preserve the character of our Old Village;
protect our groundwater and surface water from contamination;
protect our rolling hills from erosion;
provide for open spaces to be enjoyed by future generations; and
ensure a sound tax base and a sense of community
Do ordain and establish this 2018 Comprehensive Plan.

Philosophy

From the time this community was named with a river in mind and now a City on the Scenic St. Croix River, water has been *the* foremost concern of its residents. That concern has never been greater than today.

Some see urban development as excellent proof of a growing economy; we see urban development as a threat to the water we drink, the crops we grow, and the vistas we gaze upon. This preservation attitude is consistent with the long-term desires of our residents and promotes a healthy respect for the environment. As such, our ordinances do not forbid change; they require that change not harm the environment. As stewards of this land and all that is in it or on it, we can do no less. This City is different from other communities in the Metropolitan Area *and wants to stay that way.*

This City borders on another city that has a diametrically opposed philosophy about land use and urban expansion. This is one of the most significant challenges this City has ever faced. The adage in the real estate industry is that the three most important points in real estate are “location, location, and location.” The three most important points in the City of Afton are “groundwater, surface water, and groundwater recharge.” We drink this water, we fish these streams, we protect the environment for the flora and fauna with which we share the land.

In many respects, we regard agricultural and open space as the “highest and best use” of the land. We regard our position as a community trust to preserve, protect, and defend our lands and lifestyle from irreversible change. That is our right and the actions of other jurisdictions, including the Legislature and the Metropolitan Council, *should respect that vision of Afton to remain rural by choice.*

Introduction

*Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.*

When Robert Burns penned these words, he was describing his own idyllic rural sanctuary in southern Scotland. Half a century later, settlers of the St. Croix Valley would recognize the same spirit in the locale of the township and city they would name Afton.

Afton strives to remain true to the vision of a rural environment, a place neither purely agricultural, nor purely residential, but a blend of both. Located only fifteen miles from downtown St. Paul and bordering rapidly growing suburbs, Afton's unique status as a rural sanctuary is worth preserving.

This plan is divided into Sections as recommended by the Metropolitan Council: Inventory, Goals and Policies, and Implementation. The message of this plan and the story of Afton should be abundantly clear. This city is unique among communities in the Metropolitan Area and wants to stay that way. Afton's leaders are to look to the principles espoused within this plan for governing guidance as they define the ordinances that will preserve this place for current citizens and those to come. For definitions see Appendix A.

Vision Statement

The City of Afton began as a country village. The city's Old Village provides a business center and a rural village atmosphere typically only found far away from the conveniences of a metropolitan area. The Old Village is the cultural heart of the community, providing a town square and access to the river.

Afton is also a city of water. The St. Croix River and the creeks that flow through Afton shape the landscape and are a critical resource for the community. The quality of groundwater and surface water is essential to maintaining Afton's character. Wells and septic systems, rather than city water and sewers, govern every home's relationship to the land.

Afton is also a city of open fields. The farm fields of southwestern Afton represent the city's historical roots in agriculture and continue to be farmed in the face of development pressures on Afton's borders. Methods of preserving Afton's agrarian roots must be found if the city is to remain a rural sanctuary.

Afton is also a city of rolling hills. Water has carved these hills over thousands of years, but it is the impact of development which the city must protect against. Erosion and deforestation in these hills strip Afton of forests and vistas that are also an essential part of life in Afton.

Most importantly, Afton is a city of people. The community within this rural sanctuary gives meaning to the city's character. A sound tax base provides the community with the means to maintain roads, provide police and fire protection, and provide public facilities for the community.

*How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighbouring hills,
Far mark'd with the courses of clear, winding rills;
There daily I wander, as noon rises high,
My flocks and my Mary's sweet cot in my eye.*

The rural sanctuary in southern Scotland that Robert Burns wrote of has long passed into history. But on the shores of the St. Croix River, the citizens of Afton established this plan to maintain the city's deep-seated historical vision. We are stewards of this land and all that is in it or on it, and our government has been granted a trust to preserve and protect our lands.

Public Involvement

In the past the City of Afton involved the general public in the assembling of plan updates. Since the revisions to this plan in 2018 are more limited, public involvement not been as extensive. City commissions were asked to review sections of the plan that pertained to their areas of expertise and pass that on to the Afton Planning Commission. Public hearings held in early 2018 provided the opportunity for citizens to comment on the revised plan.

Commented [JY(C1)]: Public Involvement section was not included in 2015 revision.

Purpose

Afton's location within a major metropolitan area belies the rural atmosphere that greets commuters at its borders. Residents and visitors to Afton know they have arrived somewhere special. When Afton residents were asked what they like best about living in Afton, the three most prevalent responses all related to Afton's natural, rural character; each of them is crucial to making Afton a unique community:

1. Rural location and low population density;
2. Open space and dispersed pattern of development; and
3. Presence of active farms and agriculture.

Afton residents value rural location, low development density, open space, working farms, abundant wildlife, and historic "Old Village" Afton residents enjoy Afton's proximity to the St. Croix River, Belwin Conservancy, state and regional parks, the convenient location of the City to commercial centers, reasonable taxes, good schools, and our community identity (Community Survey: General Priorities – Appendix H).

The purpose of the Afton Comprehensive Plan is to perpetuate this character. It is to identify and capture those things that make Afton a unique and special place and protect them for current and future residents.

Citizens of Afton obtain their drinking water from the ground. It is essential, therefore, that thoughtful development planning be followed in order to protect this vital resource. Because groundwater and surface water are connected, it is just as essential to protect our streams and lakes.

The primary purpose of this plan is to:

~~Provide for the preservation of our water resources through careful planning;~~

- ~~1. Promote the health, safety, and welfare of the City of Afton and its residents.~~
- ~~2. Provide for the preservation of our water resources through careful planning.~~
2. Preserve agriculture and open space.
3. Protect groundwater and natural resources.
4. Maintain the historical character of the Old Village.
5. Ensure a safe and pleasant environment for residential, commercial, agricultural, industrial and public activities ~~and~~
6. Ensure a sound tax base, which will provide the resources needed to maintain our quality of life.

Historical Background

The early human inhabitants of the St. Croix Valley were Native Americans. In the early 1800's, Afton was settled by New Englanders who probably felt at home among Afton's tree covered hills and bluffs. The city retains that New England flavor with its natural beauty accented by narrow, winding roads and small, clapboard sided houses. Joseph Haskell, in 1839, planted three acres of corn and potatoes, built a farmhouse, and thus began the first farm in Minnesota. While communities north of Afton were building sawmills, the first flour mill in the state was built in Afton in 1843. A further indication of the importance of agriculture in Afton was the use of a steam-powered threshing machine in 1861.

The village of Afton was platted in 1855. The majority of the city's historical structures are located within the boundaries of the original village. The 1974 Afton Comprehensive Plan established the Village Historic Site District in recognition of the village's historical significance. The following sites are found within the boundaries of the Village Historic Site District: the Afton Theological Academy, the area's first educational academy built in 1867; the Village Hall (housing the Afton Historical Society), built in 1895 as the Congregational Church; the "Little Red House," built in 1859; the Afton House, built in 1867; and the Little Brick Schoolhouse, built in 1857.

The township of Afton, established in 1859 and named after the village, also has important historical structures and sites. Included among these are: the Bolles Mill Site, the first flour mill in Minnesota; the Bolles House, built in 1856 and the oldest frame house in the area; and, Haskell's Farm.

In 1971, the village and township incorporated to form the City of Afton. Afton is a large city geographically, approximately 25 square miles, but is sparsely populated. The eastern portion of the city contains the bluffs and tree covered hillsides that attracted the original settlers, while the western portion has rolling hills, and open farmland.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

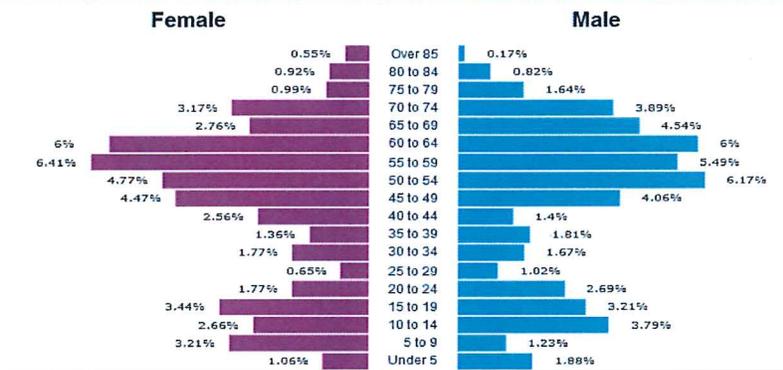
Afton has long been a desirable place to live. While being only minutes from St. Paul, Afton is a unique and special place due to the combination of its rural character, its scenic bluffs, and its location on a major wild and scenic river. The City has always approached land use management as a crucial component of its goal of protecting groundwater, the St. Croix River, and lakes and streams from the negative environmental impacts associated with urban development, which has set it apart.

Afton is and will remain a highly sought-after location. As surrounding areas have developed at typical suburban densities, Afton has remained steadfast in its low-density approach to development, in order to protect its environment and maintain its rural character. This contrast in development philosophy is visibly apparent as one enters Afton from the west. As these divergent development trends continue, Afton's rural character will become even more in demand.

Migration & Turnover of Population

The population of Afton, as in all of the U.S., is aging. The median age in 1990 was 35.8, in 2000 ~~it had grown to 42.2, and in 2010 a median age of 48.6.~~ ~~Since 1990 and 2000, the number of people ages 20 to 34, declined from 432 in 1990 to 288 in 2010, 26 more than in 2000. to 262.~~

Population by Age & Gender in Afton
American Community Survey 2011 - 2015



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~~The Aging of Afton's population will continue in the coming decades. One of the results will be continuing and housing trends could mean fairly widespread turnover in residential property. in the next decade.~~ As current residents decide to downsize their houses or adopt a lower maintenance lifestyle, many new homeowners will arrive from other cities. New residents will come for the same reasons current residents chose Afton: clean water, rural vistas, open spaces, and the St. Croix River.

It is the responsibility of Afton's residents and leaders to ensure that new property owners come to share the values associated with Afton's character. Preserving the rural character, beauty, and natural resources of Afton will be paramount for the future of the City.

This is an opportunity to be proactive in telling Afton's story in a way that creates and manages the expectations of those who are considering developing or living in Afton, so that those who choose to develop or live in Afton are drawn here by the promise of the unique natural, open, rural character of the City vs. the urban development and services available in countless locations throughout the metro area.

Housing Values

The median housing value in Afton is significantly higher than both the median housing values of homes in Washington County and the State of Minnesota—This reflects the fact that Afton is a desirable place to live and that the demand for housing in the city is high.

Table 1 - Housing Values, 2000 Census

| | Afton | Washington County | Minnesota |
|--|---------|-------------------|-----------|
| Median value (2002 dollars) | 397,100 | 243,600 | 186,200 |
| Median monthly household costs with a mortgage payment | 2,242 | 1,730 | 1,490 |
| Median monthly rent | 1,500 | 1,144 | 848 |

It is not clear what the future will bring in terms of housing values in Afton. Current trends statewide and nationwide suggest that housing values are rising and that demand is high. The desirability of housing in Afton is directly tied to the rural lifestyle and the connection to the natural environment that living in Afton provides— People value the low-density development pattern and willingly pay to secure that.

....the long-term interests of all property owners in the City of Afton are with maintaining the current development pattern, which is the source of value.

Conclusion

Afton has established a development pattern that residents value and is in high demand throughout the region. The challenge for Afton will be to continue to contain infrastructure costs, maintain a low demand for services, and incorporate new residents and their ideas in a way that focuses on the interests of all Afton residents and will maintain the current development pattern.

Demographic trends will significantly increase pressures to develop Afton. These trends in Afton are important to understand because they have evolved and increased in the years since the last update of the Comprehensive Plan. This Comprehensive Plan acknowledges these pressures and seeks to address them by reinforcing the diversified rural development pattern in the City of Afton through its housing and land use goals, policies, and strategies.

| For additional demographic information and sources, see Appendix B:

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ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES PLAN

Intent

Afton's environment is a fragile one. The citizens of Afton have a high regard for their environment and have made major efforts to preserve and protect it. Preservation of Afton's natural features has not been an easy task considering the fragile soils, steep slopes, drainage ways, vegetation, and lakes and streams that make up the city. These delicate features need protection through careful planning.

Afton will only permit [low density](#) development which is designed to preserve and protect the soils, wildlife, slopes, drainage ways, vegetation, lakes, streams and river that make up Afton's natural features. Preserving the health and safety of residents requires protecting Afton's environmentally sensitive areas, which preserves the aesthetic qualities of the landscape and protects the purity of the air and water.

The citizens of Afton have a high regard for their environment. Low density development based on the use of private wells and individual and cluster septic systems have provided Afton with unique and sustainable neighborhoods that are not only self-sufficient, but collectively have a relatively low environmental impact. While the city is only fifteen miles east of downtown St. Paul, there is a world of difference between Afton and the surrounding urban and suburban development. Citizens desire to keep the city open and rural, while still enjoying the benefits of being located close to a major metropolitan area.

Afton's natural features exist in gently rolling uplands cut by deep ravines, drainage ways, and streams that flow into the St. Croix River. This topography, while uniquely defining, presents distinct challenges, particularly with ~~storm-water~~[stormwater](#) and agricultural runoff. ~~Low density development is~~ interspersed with environmentally sensitive areas including [a trout streams](#), a lake, bluffs, ravines, wetlands, steep slopes, floodplains and a river. [low density development is an essential part of the lifestyle in Afton](#). The commitment to preservation is strong (Appendix H-2007 Community Survey: Groundwater, Farmland and Rural Character).

Afton plans to accommodate future development without compromising the assets that make the city an environmentally friendly area. In addition to those mentioned above, natural resources in need of preservation include view sheds, soils, wildlife habitat, ~~wildlife corridors~~, groundwater resources such as springs and aquifers, geologically significant topographic features, vegetation, and drainage areas.

Soils

In the soil survey issued by Washington County Soil Conservation District in April 1980, the soils in Afton have been reviewed and different soil types categorized as to their suitability to accommodate on-site sewage treatment systems and to support a rural atmosphere, farming, groundwater protection, wildlife habitat, and a biological diversity for its citizens, flora, and fauna (see Appendix I). It is an inventory of the soils found in the city and indicates, among other things, the type of soil, the slope

gradient, the suitability of the soils to support certain uses and the degree and kind of limitation of each soil type for certain uses.

The maps that accompany the soil survey are useful as a planning tool since one is able to determine those areas that present problems for development. While the soil map is reasonably accurate, it is still recognized that unmapped pockets of different soil types can exist within a designated soil boundary line. Therefore, the soil map does not eliminate the need for soil sampling and testing on each building site. The soil map indicates the areas of prime agricultural soils and additional farmland of statewide importance.

The different types of soil in Afton are directly attributed to glacial ~~till-till~~. (Tester, J.R., Minnesota's natural Heritage, University of Minnesota press, 1995; chapter 1) and weathered limestone. Most of the Afton area includes soils overlaying bedrock having slow percolation rates, steep slopes, periodic flooding and seasonal high water tables, although there are some karst areas with rapid infiltration rates. ~~In addition, there~~ ~~are~~ ~~also~~ some areas in Afton that have been ~~mined~~ ~~subject to mining~~. These geologic features have created deep ravines and drainage ways. Soil types associated with these features are generally unsuitable for development due to their instability, high erosion potential and low absorption rates. Development in these areas needs to be monitored to prevent further soil degradation.

While soils are a major factor in determining the importance of land for agricultural purposes, (Appendix I – Map 3), there are many other factors that influence whether a land is most suitable for agricultural uses. In Afton, the prime agricultural lands tend to be those areas most easily developed, having few topographic or environmental constraints. Yet, these areas provide some of the broadest expanses of non-fragmented open space in the city and are thus critical preservation areas.

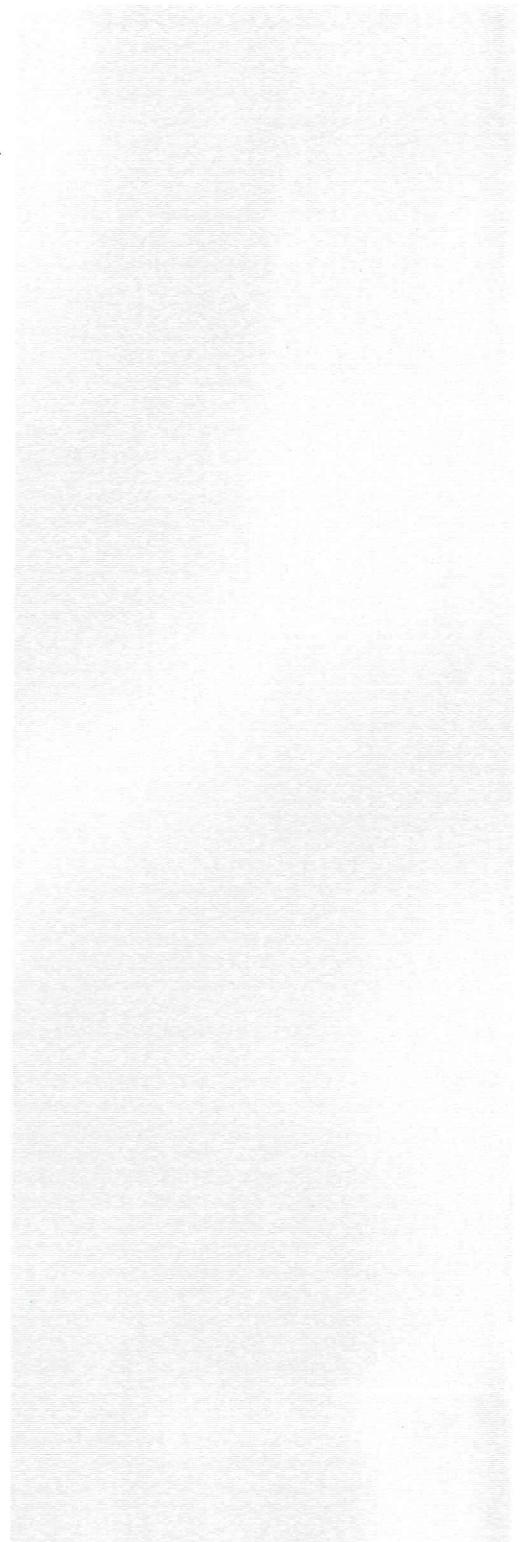
Topography

Afton's steep slopes (Appendix I–Map 5) are a result of erosion by flowing water. It is vital to the community that these drainage ways be protected and maintained. It is essential that every attempt be made to limit the amount of additional stormwater and agricultural runoff that flows through these drainage ways, ~~many of them in or near the Old Village~~. Afton currently protects ~~all~~ slopes with a grade over 18 percent and slopes with a grade over 12 percent ~~are protected~~ if the soils on such slopes are deemed fragile (Afton City Ordinances, Section 12-132). Continued care must be taken when allowing development in the upland areas of the City.

Vegetation

The vegetative cover is an essential part of Afton's natural environment ~~and should be protected~~. (Appendix I–Map 4). In an area where there is such dramatic topography, damage to the vegetative cover can result in such things as increased erosion ~~and~~; stormwater runoff, and danger of flooding and siltation; lessening of water quality; loss of landscape diversity; decreased land values; detriments to surrounding wildlife and ecosystem; and degradation of soil and air quality. The tree cover is predominant where there are steep slopes, areas not being farmed and along watercourses

and drainage ways. The vegetative cover consists mainly of deciduous trees, with several areas of planted conifers.



Riparian Systems

The St. Croix River, a National Wild and Scenic River, is one of the most pristine large river ecosystems in the upper Midwest. In 2009, it was named one of the Ten Most Endangered Rivers in the United States by the organization American Rivers. It is shared and highly valued by two states, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Land use along the river is governed by the Departments of Natural Resources of both states, as well as the U.S. Park Service and local municipalities. In addition to local zoning regulations, all development must conform to the provisions of the Lower St. Croix Bluffland, Shoreland, and Floodplain Management Ordinances.

Parts of the City of Afton are included in three major drainage ways (Appendix I-Map 6): the Valley Branch Watershed District, the Middle St. Croix Water Management Organization and the South Washington Watershed District. Valley Creek, South Fork Valley Creek, Trout Brook and other major ravines and drainage ways are tributaries to the St. Croix River. Much of the surface water that flows from Afton into the St. Croix River goes through or near the Old Village. It is vitally important to the safety of the Old Village, and to the health and vitality of the St. Croix River, that these drainage ways be protected and stabilized and the amount of stormwater runoff through these drainage ways be kept to a minimum.

According to the 1996 National Water Quality Inventory, stormwater runoff is a leading source of water pollution. ~~Storm water~~Stormwater runoff can harm surface waters such as rivers, lakes, and streams which in turn cause or contribute to non-compliance with water quality standards. ~~Storm water~~Stormwater runoff can change natural hydrologic patterns, accelerate stream flows, destroy aquatic habitats, and elevate pollutant concentrations and loadings. Development substantially increases impervious surfaces thereby increasing runoff from city streets, driveways, parking lots, and sidewalks, on which pollutants from human activities settle.

Nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen) and sediment enter the St. Croix and its tributaries from many different sources: wastewater treatment plants, urban ~~storm water~~stormwater, residential lawns, crop land, pastures, animal feeding operations, construction sites and natural sources. Common pollutants in runoff include pesticides, fertilizers, oils, metals, pathogens, salt, sediment, litter and other debris.

Groundwater

Afton must keep the groundwater in its natural condition, free from any degradation caused by human activities. All homes in Afton are currently served by private wells and septic systems: Afton is currently outside of the metropolitan urban services area (MUSA) and has no intention of utilizing the Metropolitan Council's sewer and water services even if they become available. However, a large subsurface treatment system and gravity sanitary sewer collection system ~~has been~~ will be constructed to serve the existing residential and commercial properties for the Historic Village Sewage Treatment Service Area. It is of the utmost importance in order to maintain our rural residential and agricultural character, that we have ample supplies of clean drinking water throughout the city. In areas that have ~~rapid infiltration or that have~~ been mined, it is essential to monitor groundwater to prevent unfiltered septic effluent from damaging the aquifer.

Aggregate Resources

Afton contains limited mineral deposits, primarily sand and gravel. Minnesota Geological Survey indicates that much of Afton falls within an area designated as “Afton Valley Fill”,² which is described as:

Colluvial material which fills in lower-lying areas within the bedrock uplands in southeastern Washington County. We interpret most of these deposits to be thin and gravel-poor. 1
(Minnesota Geological Survey Information Circular 46.)

The circular also indicates that, “In all likelihood, the majority of these deposits will not continue to be available for mining because of competing land-use pressures.”

Of the areas in Afton that could potentially be utilized for aggregate extraction, most are either within existing, residential neighborhoods or encumbered by a permanent conservation easement.² (For instance, lands within the Belwin Conservancy are unavailable for aggregate extraction.) The remaining areas are zoned primarily Industrial, which allows for extraction through a permitting process outlined in Chapter 12, Article X, of the Afton City Code.

Although not significant in size, there are several areas in the city that have been mined that are unsuitable for building unless it is established that they can meet all building requirements. Mining removes the topsoil and sub-soils that filter runoff and sewage system effluent. Systems installed in soils in areas previously mined may result in the effluent moving quickly and untreated through the coarse soils to the water table resulting in pollution of water wells. This is of even greater concern if the area is one of groundwater recharge. Areas of groundwater recharge are critical areas that have soil characteristics that are conducive to rapid percolation of water from the surface into the substrate and ultimately into the local water table and connected hydrologic systems (wetlands, lakes, aquifers, and rivers). Pollution of the groundwater supply would have a devastating financial and environmental effect on the community and its residents.

Energy

As a sparsely populated rural community, the City will encourage feasible methods of energy storage and conservation, and ~~locally produced~~ renewable forms of energy that are environmentally friendly, including wind, photovoltaic ~~and~~, geothermal, ~~and cellulose ethanol~~. The City will reduce community-wide use of non-renewable energy sources attempting to meet state-wide standards of 80% renewable by 2050.

Commented [JY(C2)]: Suggestions from Citizens Climate Lobby

The Metropolitan Land Planning Act (Minnesota Statutes 473.859, Subd. 2) requires that local comprehensive plans include an element for the protection and development of access to direct sunlight for solar energy systems. The City of Afton ~~will~~ protect such access by requiring minimum lot sizes, abundant open space, yard setbacks, and maximum height of buildings for urban residents. Land uses should not preclude the possible use of solar energy systems. The City will review and revise, as necessary, the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to ensure the protection of solar access. ~~New subdivisions are required Section 12-1258 of the Afton City Code requires new subdivisions to~~ be designed to accommodate extensive use of passive and active solar energy systems.~~...~~ ~~Section 12-132 230 New and modified structures are prohibited from blocking reasonable capture of Solar Resource within the buildable area of other parcels, including vacant lots. prohibits the construction of any structure that will block solar access for an existing principle structure or infringe on the solar access of the buildable area of a vacant lot.~~

Environmental Resources Goals, and Policies

The City of Afton establishes the following environmental resource goals:

1. Preserve a rural landscape and natural ecosystem.
2. Maintain the city's overall one housing unit per ten acres, which is Afton's definition of low density-to, to limit development's footprint upon the land.
 - a. Agriculture Preserve zone - 1 housing unit per quarter-quarter section
 - b. Agricultural – 3 units per quarter-quarter section
 - a.c. Rural Residential - 1 housing unit per five acres.
- 2.3. Protect surface water resources from degradation. Reduce nutrient loading to the St Croix River.
 - a. Reduce nutrient loading by 20% (Total Maximum Daily Load).
- 3.4. Improve and protect water quality in Kelle's Creek, Valley Creek, Lake Edith and the St. Croix River.
- 4.5. Protect supply of surface and groundwater. ~~in area aquifers.~~
 - a. Maintain springs, Lake Edith and Valley Creek at current surface elevation.
 - b. Maintain aquifers at levels supporting existing area wells.
- 5.6. Protect groundwater recharge areas from pollutants.
 - a. Prevent untreated wastewater and unfiltered ~~storm water~~stormwater runoff from entering the groundwater.
 - a.b. Develop a plan to reduce nutrients
- 6.7. Protect groundwater aquifers from contamination.
 - a. Provide for safe drinking water.
 - b. Prohibit mining and prevent contamination from previously mined areas.
 - c. Continu~~e~~institute a well monitoring programs.
 - d. Encourage organic farming and gardening practices.
- 7.8. Maintain and enhance fish and wildlife habitats so as to retain or expand the current diversity of species.
 - a. Ensure the long term ecological stability of the riparian system.
 - b. Restore the riparian forests that line the banks of Valley Creek.
 - c. Provide for natural corridors throughout the City.
 - e.d. Explore creating effective wildlife corridors with neighboring communities
- 8.9. Preserve existing forests, woodlands and prairies and control invasive species.
 - a. Plant diverse species of native trees
 - a.b. Control and eradicate noxious species.
 - b.c. Control and eradicate invasive species to facilitate agricultural operations.
 - d. Prohibit clear cutting.
 - e.c. Encourage tree planting for erosion control, carbon sinks, water infiltration, and energy conservation.
- 9.10. Protect and preserve steep slopes and the land atop them from development.
 - a. Preserve viewsheds.
 - b. Prevent erosion.
- 10.11. Protect soils from erosion, contamination and loss.

Commented [JY(C3)]: Suggestions from Citizens Climate Lobby

Commented [JY(C4)]: Suggestion from Citizens Climate Lobby

Commented [JY(C5)]: Citizens Climate Lobby

Commented [JY(C6)]: Were there 4 suggestions here? Check with Bowman

- a. Utilize best management practices in all development-
- b. Provide natural buffers to stabilize soils and contain run-off where possible-
- b.c. Encourage use of native grasses
- ~~14-12.~~ Protect and preserve natural features unique to the City of Afton-
 - a. Promote conservation and scenic easements-
- 13. Reduce the use of fossil fuels for energy production by encouraging alternative options such as solar, wind and geothermal
 - b.a.
- ~~12-14.~~ Protect the night sky from light pollution-
- 15. Anticipate changing climate demands on our environment
- ~~13-16.~~ Promote wise land stewardship-

Commented [JY(C7)]: Citizens Climate Lobby

The City of Afton establishes the following environmental resources policies:

1. Maintain the city's overall development density of no more than one dwelling unit per ten acres.
2. Use water quality protection practices such as reducing the use of phosphorus fertilizers and support protection efforts by state, county and federal agencies, as well as the Valley Creek Protection Initiative-
3. Work with various agencies to develop a strategy for reasonable and achievable reduction of nutrient and sediment loading from wastewater treatment plants, Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems (SSTS), ~~storm-water~~stormwater run-off, crop land, pastures, animal-based agricultural operations, construction sites and natural sources-
4. Strive for the highest standard possible for Individual ~~or~~; Communal, or Large Subsurface Sewage Treatment System technology and advanced treatment of wastewater where that technology has been tested, proven reliable and approved by regulatory agencies-
5. Work with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR)), the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources(DNR), and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) with support from the St. Croix River Water Resources Planning Team; an interagency planning team consisting of federal, state and local members; to develop Total Maximum Daily Load requirements which will enhance the water resources in the St. Croix River Basin-
6. Prohibit clear cutting. ~~5.m~~
- 6-7. Monitor and control land uses which contribute to erosion, pollution, and well contamination by enforcement of ordinances-
- 7-8. Work with the various agencies involved with groundwater monitoring in regard to the east well-field area in the City of Woodbury-
- 8-9. Develop and p. Continue to provide~~provide~~ funding for a volunteer well-monitoring program-
10. Study and consider ordinances to allow for economically sustainable, locally renewable and environmentally friendly means of energy production-
 - a. The city will install renewable energy technology on city property
 - b. Establish ordinances and building codes requiring energy efficiency and encourage use of renewable energy sources.

- ~~9.11.~~ Actively enforce all land use ordinances, including the various special overlay districts.
- 12. Protect steep slopes, tree cover, wetlands and other fragile lands through conservation easements, scenic easements, and other available means.
- ~~10.13.~~ and require setbacks from the crest of all slopes of 18% or greater, except in the Lower St. Croix Bluffland District where the slope is greater than 12%. ~~with limited exceptions outside of the Lower St. Croix Bluffland District to enable access for subdivisions that result in lots of ten acres or greater, subject to the use of mitigation measures to protect affected steep slopes and conservation easements or other means to restrict further development of the resulting lots.~~
- 14. Utilize data from the Natural Resources Inventory when considering all land use applications.
- 15. Develop an Environmental Score Card for the City of Afton.
- 16. Discourage use of chemical pesticides.
- 17. Encourage use of organic landscape applications.
- 18. Encourage integrative pest management.
- ~~11.19.~~ Protect trout streams from temperature increases.

HOUSING AND LAND USE PLAN

The City's land use philosophy is an outgrowth of its focus on environmental protection and the resulting natural rural character of the City. The protection of groundwater is both essential to, and the result of, the City's low density development approach based on private wells and septic. The City's managed development philosophy is also based on limiting and managing [storm water](#) run-off to protect the quality of the area's main natural and recreational resource, the St. Croix River.

In the Metropolitan Council's [Thrive MSP 2040 Regional Blueprint \(December 19, 1996\)](#), Afton is designated as "[Diversified Rural](#)" and "[Permanent Rural](#)" and "[Permanent Agriculture](#)." The residents of the City of Afton have consistently supported the concept that Afton remain [rural](#) and [Permanent Rural and Permanent Agriculture](#).

The residents of the City of Afton value the agricultural economy and rural character that an agricultural environment provides. This Plan intends to preserve agricultural land for permanent agricultural use, and does not accept the belief held by some that agricultural use is merely a temporary use or that agricultural lands are merely a holding area for future residential or other development. Moreover, the community values agricultural land as open space in an increasingly urban environment, a sanctuary for a rural lifestyle that Afton residents have consistently desired to maintain.

Agricultural

After several years of work, and in conformance with the Metropolitan Council's prior Development Framework Plan, in the Comprehensive Plan of 1982, the City of Afton established an Agricultural Zone with a density of 3 dwelling units per quarter-quarter section (40 acres) of land and passed ordinances to enforce that policy. At that time, and continuously to the present, the residents of the City of Afton have valued the agricultural economy and rural character that an agricultural environment provides.

Agriculture plays an important role in preserving the balance of economic conditions in the Twin Cities Metropolitan area, but productive agricultural land is being lost to nonagricultural development. Once agricultural land is developed for nonagricultural residential, commercial or industrial use, it is forever lost to agricultural production.

In April 1980, the State of Minnesota enacted the Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves Act. This act provides a package of benefits designed to give farmers in the seven-county metropolitan area the assurance that they can continue their farm operations on an equal footing with other farmers in the state, without the pressures of urbanization. These benefits include:

1. Agricultural use valuation.
2. A limit on total tax rates so that they cannot exceed 105% of the statewide average in townships for all purposes.
3. Prohibition of special assessments for sewer and water.

4. Protection for normal farm practices -- a local government would be prohibited from enacting ordinances which inhibit normal farm practices unless they bear a direct relationship to the public health and safety.
5. Protection from eminent domain -- before Ag Preserve land can be acquired by eminent domain, it must be shown that there are no reasonable, cost-effective alternatives which would have less of a negative impact on Ag Preserves. The process of review is conducted by the Environmental Quality Board. A suspension of up to one year is possible, but it cannot permanently stop eminent domain (Minn. Stat. 473H.01 – 473H.17).

In order to take advantage of these benefits, a farmer's land must be designated "agricultural" on the city's land use map and zoned at a density of no more than one dwelling unit per quarter-quarter section for residential development. In addition, the farmer must apply for and receive certification from the city stating that the property is eligible for "preserve" status. Once a farmer's land is designated a preserve, the land must remain in agricultural use indefinitely or for eight years after the landowner applies for an expiration of the preserve designation.

Agricultural Zoning District and Agricultural Preserves Overlay District

To address environmental concerns detailed within this plan and to maintain our overall [one dwelling per 10 acres \(1 per 10\)](#) density, this plan creates an Agricultural Preserves Overlay District. With the Agricultural Preserves Overlay District, the Agricultural District is envisioned to allow for three development scenarios:

1. Agricultural Preserves Overlay District: 1 dwelling unit per quarter-quarter section (approximately 40 acres)
2. Agricultural Zoning: 3 dwelling units per quarter-quarter section (approximately 40 acres);
3. Agricultural Zoning using a Preservation and Land Conservation Development on a minimum of 80 acres: 4 dwelling units per quarter-quarter section: Land developed under this option would be subject to conservation easements, and subdividers would be required to set aside an extensive part of their property for continued farming or conservation. The City intends to provide more conservation-minded intensive land use planning throughout this zone so as to coordinate and link the preservation areas for maximum benefit and minimal impact to the character of the community.

Note that, pursuant to the Agricultural Preserves Act, lands in the Agricultural Preserves Program would only be allowed a density of 1 unit per 40 acres on a specific, designated parcel. (Agricultural Preserves Overlay District).

Residential

[According to the 2016](#) census, there were a total of 1,031 residential housing units in Afton.

Table 2 – Residential Housing Units, 201000 Estimates-Census

| <u>Table 6. Housing Type</u> | <u>Afton</u> | <u>Afton %</u> | <u>Washington County %</u> | <u>Minnesota %</u> |
|------------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1-unit, detached | 4026 | 99.50% | 73.70% | 67.77% |
| 1-unit attached | 3 | 0.30% | 11.80% | 5.20% |
| 2-units | 2 | 0.20% | 1.10% | 3.01% |
| 3-or more units | 0 | 0.00% | 13.40% | 24.02% |

| | <u>Afton</u> | <u>Afton %</u> | <u>Washington County</u> | <u>Washington County %</u> | <u>MN</u> | <u>Minnesota %</u> |
|------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Single-Family Detached | 1,139 | 99.7% | 66,590 | 68.1% | 0 | 67.2% |
| Townhomes (single-family attached) | 0 | | 13,713 | 14.0% | 0 | 7.3% |
| Duplex, triplex and quad | 4 | 0.3% | 2,841 | 2.9% | 0 | 4.1% |
| Multifamily (5 units or more) | 0 | | 13,213 | 13.5% | 0 | 18.0% |
| Manufactured Home | 0 | | 1,333 | 1.4% | 0 | 3.3% |
| Other (Boat, RV, etc.) | 0 | | 59 | 0.1% | 0 | 0.0% |
| Total Housing units | 1,143 | | 97,749 | | 2,409,701 | |

The majority of the housing stock (99.75%) that existed in Afton in 201000 was single-unit detached, which is a higher proportion than either Washington County (68.173.7%) or the State of Minnesota as a whole (67.277%).

The predominance of older housing is a unique feature of Afton. Nearly a quarter of Afton’s current housing was built in the 1960’s and 15% of the housing stock was built prior to World War II. Homes in Afton hold their value and have appreciated much more quickly than homes across the county and state.

The high land values in Afton have been an obstacle for those looking to locate affordable housing in the City. This is not likely to change in the near future. [The City of Afton is willing to work with Washington County and the Washington County HRA to address low and moderate income housing needs and to identify resources to maintain and advance housing affordability in the community, where possible and in a manner consistent with the development pattern of the community.](#)

The Rural Residential Zoning District provides for residential development on private wells and on-site sewage treatment systems, with the exception of the rural residential properties within the Historic Village Sewage Treatment Service Area as shown in Figure 5.. Each Rural Residential lot ~~requiring~~ requires a minimum of five acres, including 2.5 acres of contiguous buildable area. With the steep topography of a majority of the land in the rural residential zone, the average density attainable in this zone is expected to be about one unit per ten acres.

Old Village

The village of Afton is within the Village Historical Site zoning district, hereinafter referred to as the “Old Village,” located in sections 22 and 23 of Afton along the St. Croix River. The eastern boundary of the Old Village is established by the St. Croix River. It is bounded on the southern and western sides by steep slopes and river bluffs. The northern boundary is the intersection of St. Croix Trail South and Stagecoach Trail South. The Village Historical Site zoning district has two sub-districts, the Village Historical Site-Residential District and the Village Historical Site-Commercial District.

The only commercial ~~zon~~area of the city is only located within the Old Village (VHS Zone) which has been certified as a Historic District. This area has been the traditional commercial focus for the city and for area visitors. The existing village atmosphere needs to be preserved while allowing a balanced and complementary mix of residential, recreational, locally attractive commercial and tourist uses. Infrastructure improvements should be designed to eliminate environmental hazards and to sustain the long term viability of the commercial area.

Commercial uses in that portion of the Old Village zoned commercial are within the Lower St. Croix Bluffland and Shoreland Management District and thus allowed by Conditional Use Permit only.

The quaint character and charm of this unique, rural village stands in stark contrast to the commercial development happening in neighboring communities. ~~The gas lamps, with their soft, warm light, reinforce the pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.~~ The mix of small businesses and residential properties provides a unique destination experience.

The Old Village has a special place in the history of Afton. The Old Village was platted in 1855 by R. Haskell, Joseph Haskell, H.L. Thomas, and C.S. Getchell. The plat is typical of land divisions of that time: 50 x 150-foot lots and 80-foot wide street rights-of-way designed in a grid pattern overlaying the natural topography and other physical limitations of the site.

Afton’s Old Village offers unique opportunities to business owners and professionals. The Old Village has attracted a number of successful small businesses as well as professionals drawn both to the lifestyle and the natural environment. This mix of businesses fits with the residential development of the Village and, together, they reinforce the context that makes the Old Village such an important feature of the City of Afton. Because of the location and the natural constraints on development, most successful businesses in the Old Village have a focused market. The Old Village is not the place for a big box store but rather an ideal location for specialty shops, services, and as a destination place for recreational tourists.

The Old Village was established on river flats subject to flooding from the St. Croix River. A significant portion of the Old Village lies within the 100-year floodplain and, over the years, there has been periodic flooding. The City of Afton has made substantial improvements to the levee that protects the Old Village to enable the levee to be certified by the Corps of Engineers.; continued maintenance of the levee to standards necessary for certification will be necessary to protect against future flooding and encourage reinvestment in existing properties. The physical features noted above, bluffs to the west and south, the St. Croix River to the east, naturally constrain expansion of the Old Village beyond its present limits.

St. Croix Trail is the main thoroughfare running through the Old Village. It is maintained by Washington County at county standards. The other improved streets in the Old Village are typical of a rural village. The driving surfaces are relatively narrow, causing slower traffic speeds, a safe pedestrian environment and the aesthetic of the Old Village. In 2017 the City of Afton and Washington County upgraded the storm waterstormwater management and improved all streets and sidewalks in the old village.....xxxxx. Street lighting and parking ??? were also improved at this time. Challenging soil conditions have combined with storm waterstormwater management issues to prematurely deteriorate streets, damaging property and negatively impacting the aesthetics of the area. A Village-wide approach to storm waterstormwater management and street maintenance is needed to protect public and private investments in the Old Village.

Old Village residences and businesses have been currently utilizing private wells and on-site sewage treatment systems, and on-site sewage treatment systems. Small lot sizes leave limited room on each property for sewage treatment. The overall density creates has created concerns over the total amount of sewage effluent being discharged into the ground in a limited area. This concern was is heightened by the existing, high groundwater table, which leaves limited vertical space for soil treatment before effluent reaches the groundwater. Adding these concerns to the intermittent flooding, and geography, the Old Village has a small margin for error when it comes to properly treating sewage and therefore must carefully control remodeling and new construction. The City of Afton has taken steps to require periodic inspections of wastewater treatment systems within the Old Village. To mitigate these concerns, the City of Afton has installed is constructing a large subsurface treatment system (LSTS) and a sanitary sewer collection system to serve the Historic Village Sewage Treatment Service Area.

Many of the structures in the Old Village are of historical interest, which is a tremendous asset for the area. Unfortunately, some of these buildings are vacant or in disrepair. Where the historical value is not realized and the properties become blighted, it negatively impacts the entire community.

Levee Certification

There have been various attempts to obtain certification of the levee that protects the Old Village from flooding. While certification remains a long-term objective, the reality for the foreseeable future is that the City of Afton and the property owners in the Old Village need to consider strategies for dealing with periodic flooding.

A map showing structures and sites of historical value in the City of Afton is included in this plan (Appendix I-Map 8). The city intends to support renewal and reuse of these vacant buildings in order to continue to promote unique opportunities and the revival and survival of small businesses and professionals. Doing this will ~~further the Old Village to~~ enhance the Old Village as ~~-a destination that attracts~~ serve as a destination place that attracts local residents and ~~recreational~~ tourists.

Industrial

Approximately 239 acres of the City are zoned for light industrial use. The light industrial area is bounded by I-94 to the north, State Highway 95 to the west, and includes one 70 acre parcel directly abutting the south side of the Interstate Frontage Road and the east side of State Highway 95, as well as all property north of the Interstate Frontage Road between State Highway 95 to the city limits to the east. Light industry and storage related activities will continue to be allowed in the light industrial area under current zoning ordinances. Afton intends to maintain this area as a relatively low intensity transitional use between the interstate highway and the nearby residential zone. The light industrial area provides a location within the city for those uses that would be incompatible with the residential and agricultural districts.

Marine Services

The City has created a separate marine services zoning district to complement the river accesses and marinas and to permit storage and repair of boats and boat trailers by Conditional Use Permit. This District is generally confined to the area just north of the Old Village that was designated General Business and Light Industry in the Township of Afton before the Lower St. Croix River Bluffland and Shoreland Management Ordinance was adopted, and also includes a boat storage facility located on Manning Avenue just north of 8th Street.

State Park

Afton State Park is owned by the State of Minnesota, and is operated as part of the State Park System. The Park provides substantial open space and natural features, as well as recreational opportunities for Afton residents and the general public. It is anticipated that the land will continue to be used in this way far into the future. The State Park consists of 793 acres.

Belwin Conservancy

The Belwin Conservancy - a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the preservation, restoration, and appreciation of the natural world - owns 1239 1364 acres of preserved land in Afton. Belwin's acreage is substantial and preserves and protects open space in the form of high value native habitats to include oak savanna and woodlands, tall grass prairie, wetland and fens. It is anticipated that this land will also continue to be conserved in this manner far into the future.

Table 3 - Acreages by Zoning District, City of Afton

Commented [JY(C8)]: Verity Acreages in table

| Zoning District | Acres |
|-------------------|-------|
| Agricultural | 7180 |
| Rural Residential | 7702 |
| State Park | 793 |
| Industrial | 289 |
| VHS | 176 |
| Marine Service: | 25 |

Housing and Land Use Goals, Policies and Strategies

The City of Afton establishes the following housing and land use goals:

1. Maintain the city's overall low density.
2. Preserve the rural character of Afton.
3. Encourage agricultural uses.
4. Maintain natural open spaces.
5. Promote wise land stewardship.
6. Maintain a low demand for public expenditures.
7. Avoid the need for extension of the metropolitan wastewater system into the City of Afton
8. Resist development pressures and land speculation, which tend to create urban sprawl.
- ~~8.~~
9. Ensure that development within the Old Village is sensitive to the natural environment that surrounds it.
10. Preserve and revive the rural village character of the Old Village and promote its use as an entry point for recreational activities in the area.
11. Maintain a mix of single-family residential structures and commercial structures containing niche businesses in the Old Village.
12. Provide for adequate parking in the Old Village.
13. Encourage pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and lighting in the Old Village.
14. Promote relatively narrow driving surfaces and slower traffic speeds in the Old Village.
15. Improve access to and residents usage of the city docks and access to the St. Croix River as it relates to Main Street
- ~~14.~~
- ~~15.~~16. Ensure that untreated wastewater and storm waterstormwater do not flow into the St. Croix River.
- 16.17. Reduce flood damage potential.

The City of Afton establishes the following housing and land use policies:

1. The overall development density of the City shall not exceed one unit per ten acres.

2. The City shall not approve any requests to permit property then within the municipal boundaries of Afton to be annexed to any other municipality.
3. The City shall maintain the current densities for the following land use classifications:
 - a. Agricultural— 3 dwelling units per quarter-quarter section-
 - b. Preserve Agricultural Preserves - 0 or 1 dwelling unit per quarter-quarter section-
 - c. Agricultural with a Preservation and Land Conservation Development and a minimum of 80 acres— 4 dwelling units per quarter-quarter section-
 - d. Rural Residential - 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres, with a minimum of 2.5 contiguous buildable acres-
 - e. Old Village – 1 unit per 22,500 square feet ~~*(1 unit is considered one structure and may include one commercial unit, one residential unit or a combination commercial unit on the main floor with residential unit above.)~~
4. The City shall maintain the current minimum lot sizes for newly created lots in each of the following land use classifications:
 - a. Agricultural – 5 acres with a minimum of 2.5 contiguous buildable acres-
 - b. Rural Residential – 5 acres with a minimum of 2.5 contiguous buildable acres-
 - c. Old Village – 22,500 square feet-
5. Provide for a mixture of land uses which maintains a rural environment and lifestyle and prevents the extension of the Metropolitan Council's sewer systems, municipal water and sewer systems, and other urban services in the Agricultural and Rural Residential Zoning Districts.
6. Prohibit land uses which are inconsistent with the rural character of the Rural Residential Zoning District and which might place excessive demand on city services.
7. Prohibit rezoning of a parcel from Agricultural to Rural Residential unless, in addition to meeting other criteria, the parcel is more than 50% contiguous to a rural residential zoning district and such a rezoning would not result in development which is inconsistent with the generally rural character of the surrounding area.
8. Discourage residential development on lands suitable for agricultural use and adhere to planning practices that will allow farms to operate without external pressures.
9. ~~Require a minimum of 300 feet of frontage on a public street for all newly created residential lots outside of the Old Village or within the Agricultural and Rural Residential Zoning Districts. (is this too specific – delete an rely on our ordinances instead)~~
10. Prohibit long and narrow lots and irregularly shaped lots except when deemed advisable in the Rural Residential Zoning District.
11. Restrict industrial uses to those which do not pose a threat to air or groundwater-
12. Prohibit hazardous waste facilities within the city limits of Afton.
13. Restrict industrial development to those uses that do not generate large amounts of traffic, sewage, and can operate efficiently on an onsite standard drainfield approved by City ordinances.
14. Restrict industrial uses to those which would not create the need for metropolitan sewer, municipal water or sewer, or additional urban services.
15. ~~Commercial uses will only be in the VHS Zoning District.~~ Retail, restaurants and other similar commercial uses are allowed as principle uses only in the VHS Zoning District. Multi-unit

dwellings within the Old Village are prohibited as they are not in keeping with the context of the community. Accessory commercial uses may be allowed by ordinance in other zones.

~~16. Improve streets, lighting and sidewalks in the Old Village. (keep or call it done?)~~

~~17. Monitor and support municipal wastewater collection and treatment serving properties within the Old Village.~~

~~18.~~ Encourage economic revitalization of the commercial portions of the Old Village.

~~19.~~ Continue to allow mixed use structures in the Old Village as they are consistent with the current character of that area.

~~20.~~ To ensure the preservation of the character of the historic district, current non-conforming uses that are rendered unusable may be restored to their prior use in accordance with state law. let's talk about Lerk's – comp plan should provide supportive statements to allow building such as that to be restored or revived as a small biz or restaurant)

The City of Afton will seek to implement the following land use strategies:

1. Prepare a plan establishing priority conservation areas within the Agricultural Preservation Overlay District. The plan should identify areas that are best-suited for continued agricultural production as well as linkages/wildlife corridors that should be established throughout the district.
2. Partner with the Minnesota Land Trust and other independent, non-profit organizations that can serve as holding entities for conservation easements.
3. Study parking needs in the Old Village.
4. Develop and enforce requirements for construction and maintenance of sidewalks and lighting in the Old Village.
5. ~~5.~~ Develop a management plan for unimproved right-of-ways in the Old Village. (what is this? Is it still relevant?)
6. Incorporate design review standards (to be) created by the Design Review/Heritage Preservation Commission for future village construction.
- ~~7. Develop a visionary plan for "Main Street" in conjunction with Washington County's reconstruction of St. Croix Trail. (did this get done yet?)~~
- ~~8. Complete the upgrade of the gas street lights to the new, energy efficient standard that has been used successfully in Town Square Park.~~
7. Encourage the use of conservation or open space design subdivisions where the subdivision permanently preserves open space or agricultural land uses or creates transition zones with adjoining zones or jurisdictions.
8. Develop signage and pedestrian-friendly connections to the St Croix River
9. Protect Steamboat Park as a nature preserve and passive use area.

TRANSPORTATION PLAN

In 1855 the City of Afton consisted of a main street through the center of the village going north and south with short side streets extending up the sides of the bluffs. Today, Afton is served by an extensive network of federal, state, county and local roads.

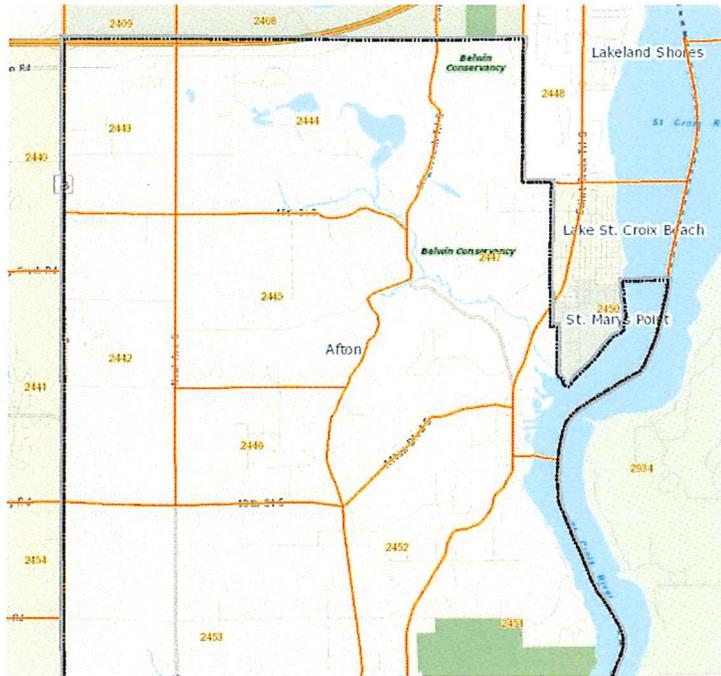
The continued emphasis on a low density, rural development pattern will not result in significantly more roads being added to the City of Afton. The projected household growth is estimated to be 12% over the next 20 years. There is a higher growth forecast for cities and towns adjacent to Afton. This higher adjacent growth forecast may bring more traffic to roads within the City.

[Denmark, Woodbury, Lakeland, West Lakeland data?](#)

Development of the road system over the past few decades has focused on the construction of new roads in cooperation with the developers of the subdivisions. The developer has been responsible for the construction of paved roadways and appropriate drainage to city standards and the city has assumed maintenance and ownership of these roadways one year after completion. ~~Where possible, consideration has been given to creating throughways to better manage traffic flow through the city.~~ Due to the low development density of the Agricultural Zoning District, road development has been deemed unnecessary and is prohibited within this zone.

Traffic Analysis Zones

Metropolitan Council Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZ) for Afton which were used to create the 2030 forecasted traffic volumes are detailed below. The projected growth for 2030 is 150 new homes and an increase in employment by 180.



Traffic Analysis Zones for Afton (TAZs)

| Met Council TAZ | 2014 | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| | Population | Households | Retail Employment | Non-Retail Employment |
| 2442 | 224 | 81 | 3 | 8 |
| 2443 | 247 | 91 | 29 | 89 |
| 2444 | 338 | 119 | 2 | 74 |
| 2445 | 203 | 81 | 0 | 1 |
| 2446 | 203 | 77 | 1 | 11 |
| 2447 | 788 | 312 | 9 | 67 |
| 2450 | 1227 | 535 | 62 | 96 |
| 2451 | 263 | 104 | 0 | 5 |
| 2452 | 552 | 231 | 3 | 97 |
| 2453 | 555 | 201 | 0 | 100 |
| TOTALS | 4600 | 1832 | 109 | 548 |

| 2020 | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Met Council TAZ | Population | Households | Retail Employment | Non-Retail Employment |
| 2442 | 200 | 80 | 0 | 10 |
| 2443 | 250 | 100 | 20 | 100 |
| 2444 | 340 | 130 | 10 | 70 |
| 2445 | 230 | 90 | 0 | 0 |
| 2446 | 210 | 80 | 0 | 10 |
| 2447 | 810 | 330 | 20 | 8 |
| 2450 | 1260 | 560 | 40 | 180 |
| 2451 | 290 | 110 | 0 | 0 |
| 2452 | 590 | 230 | 20 | 80 |
| 2453 | 590 | 220 | 10 | 90 |
| TOTALS | 4770 | 1930 | 120 | 548 |

| 2030 | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Met Council TAZ | Population | Households | Retail Employment | Non-Retail Employment |
| 2442 | 210 | 80 | 0 | 10 |
| 2443 | 250 | 100 | 10 | 110 |
| 2444 | 350 | 140 | 10 | 70 |
| 2445 | 230 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 2446 | 220 | 90 | 0 | 10 |
| 2447 | 830 | 350 | 10 | 90 |
| 2450 | 1260 | 570 | 30 | 200 |
| 2451 | 290 | 120 | 10 | 5 |
| 2452 | 590 | 240 | 20 | 0 |
| 2453 | 630 | 250 | 10 | 90 |
| TOTALS | 4860 | 2040 | 100 | 585 |

| 2040 | | | | |
|-----------------|------------|------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Met Council TAZ | Population | Households | Retail Employment | Non-Retail Employment |
| 2442 | 210 | 90 | 0 | 10 |
| 2443 | 250 | 100 | 10 | 110 |
| 2444 | 350 | 150 | 10 | 70 |
| 2445 | 230 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 2446 | 220 | 90 | 0 | 10 |
| 2447 | 830 | 360 | 10 | 100 |
| 2450 | 1280 | 570 | 20 | 210 |
| 2451 | 290 | 120 | 0 | 10 |
| 2452 | 590 | 250 | 10 | 100 |
| 2453 | 670 | 270 | 10 | 90 |

| | | | | |
|--------|------|------|----|-----|
| TOTALS | 4920 | 2100 | 70 | 710 |
|--------|------|------|----|-----|

Roads and Highways

A combination of Federal, State, County, and local roads serve Afton as shown in the Existing Transportation System (Figure 3). Ideally, roads are designed to perform a designated function and are located to best serve the type of travel needed. The four functional classifications assigned by the Metropolitan Council that describe roads in Afton are:

- 2.1. Principal arterial;
- 3.2. Minor arterial (“A” Minor/”B” Minor);
- 4.3. Collector; and
- 5.4. Local.

Principal arterial routes are roadways intended to connect metropolitan areas, major industrial centers, etc. that are the highest traffic volume roadways such as interstate highways. Minor arterials connect urban service areas to cities and towns inside and outside the region. The emphasis of minor arterials is on mobility; as opposed to access in the urban area. Collector roadways provide connections between neighborhoods and regional business centers. Local roads provide land access by connecting blocks and land parcels.

Interstate (I)-94 is a principal arterial along the northern border of the City. “A” minor arterial connectors within the City are Trunk Highway (TH) 95, Washington County Road (CR) 18, and CR 21 (from the village to Denmark Township). “B” minor arterial routes are CR 71 and CR 21 (from the village to the north). Collector routes include 15th Street South (from TH 95 east to Oakgreen Avenue South). All other roads in Afton are considered local.

~~Washington County has proposed improvements within the City included in their 2010-2014 Capital Improvement Plan. These improvements include planning and design for CR 21 through the village (downtown) Afton. It is anticipated that the construction of CR 21 through the village will occur in 2015.~~

~~The City of Afton has a draft Capital Improvement Plan 2011 through 2016 that includes roadway improvements within the village Old Village, including Pennington Avenue and other standard roadway maintenance. Other maintenance includes reconstruction of roadway approaches on 50th Street and 15th Street, seal coating, and crack filling.~~

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What are the major proposed improvements over the next decade?

The remaining unpaved roads in Afton were paved in (2007 or something?). As these and other roads age, maintenance expenses are expected to increase over the next decade. The city is committed to maintaining the transportation infrastructure of Afton in a timely manner. The city should plan for road improvements over the long term and facilitate budgets that include ongoing funding. When necessary, bonding may provide funding for unanticipated improvements, providing such bonding includes planning to return to on-going funding.

Commented [JY(C9)]: Update to reflect what was done this year and anticipated schedule for improvements

{Update Me ^}

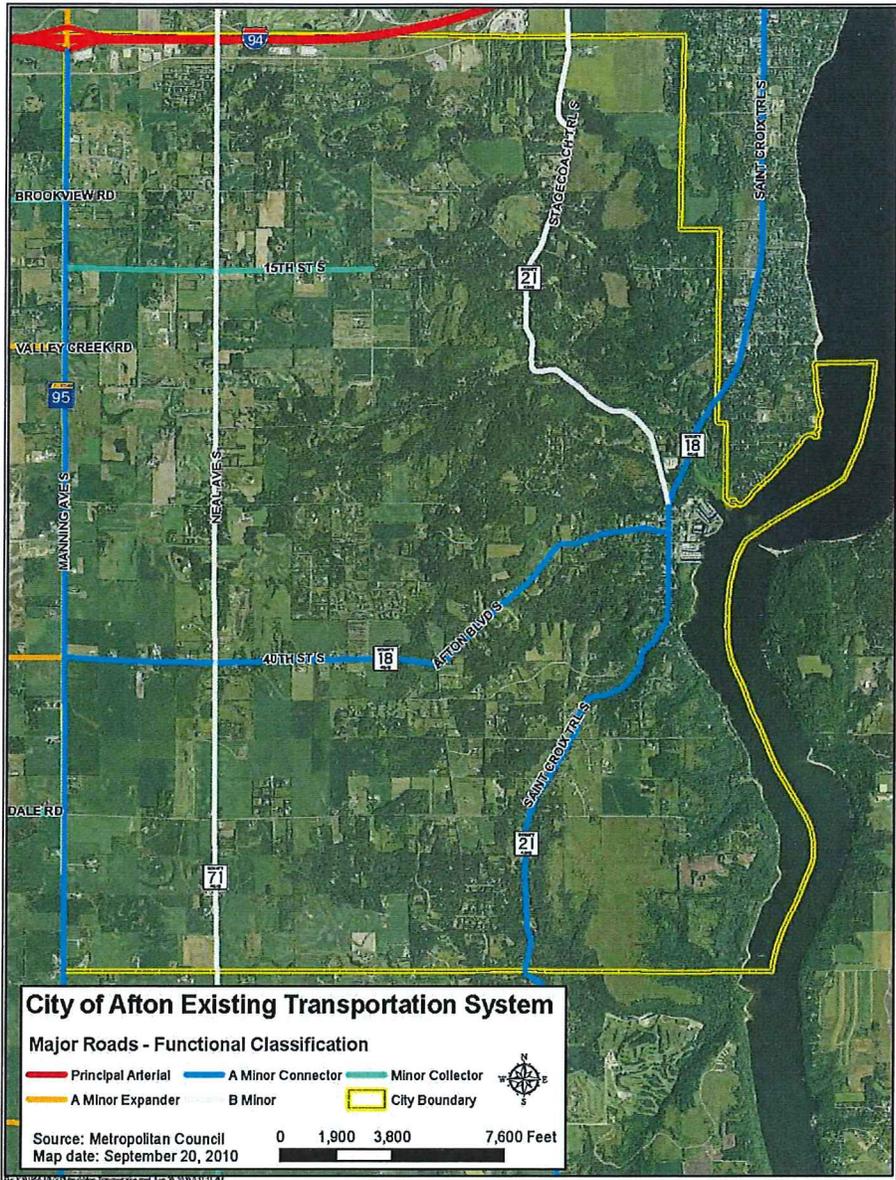


Figure 3 – City of Afton Existing Transportation System, Metropolitan Council

Safety

The City will construct new roadways and reconstruct roadways to meet City standards ~~(what standatdsstandards are these?)~~ and increase safety and mobility.

Commented [JY(C10)]: Kopitzke to re-write

Access Management

The City encourages the alignment of new access points with other existing access points, the provision of adequate spacing to separate and reduce conflicts, and the consideration of sight distance limitations. The City will use Washington County’s access management requirements as a guide for design standards on local roadways.

Aviation

Afton does not have an airport or landing strip and will not allow any, public or private, due to the lack of central services, suitable land space, fragile soils, and noise pollution. Heliports are likewise prohibited. The City of Afton promotes the protection of airspace navigations and electronic communication. Current City ordinances prohibit any structures, including antennas and wind turbines, over 150 feet in height. Proposed, new structure construction will require a Conditional Use Permit where the applicant will be required to submit a “Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration” to the Federal Aviation Administration (CFR – Part 77, Form 7460-1).

Transit

Afton is outside of the Metropolitan Transit Taxing District; there is no regular route transit service existing or planned in the City. There is a Park and Ride lot located at I-94 and St. Croix Trail. Washington County provides limited transit service for the elderly and disabled. The City is located in Market Area IV; service options for transit in Market Area IV include [Transit Link, formerly called “dial-a-ride”](#), volunteer driver programs, and ridesharing. The City, in conjunction with its neighboring St. Croix Valley communities and Washington County, may be an advocate for a light rail corridor along I-94 to the St. Croix River. As our population ages, our City may choose to explore the expansion of bus service into our community.

Non-motorized Transportation

While the City of Afton encourages non-motorized transportation, it is not practical as a primary mode of transport outside of the Old Village. However, with the paving of most of Afton’s streets, the City has become a destination for the recreational bicyclist who would enjoys the rolling hills, open spaces, and low traffic volumes within much of the community. Update

Commented [JY(C11)]: Include should width standards for bikers?

Transportation Goals, Policies, and Strategies

The City of Afton establishes the following transportation goals:

1. Ensure safe routes for motor vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians.
2. Ensure that roadways are adequate for use by emergency vehicles.
3. Provide appropriate roadways for area businesses depending on their location in an industrial zone or within the historic Old Village.
4. Provide reliable access to roadways outside of the City of Afton.
5. Provide and maintain roadways and intersections by the most cost effective means possible.
6. Avoid disruption to the natural environment.
7. Promote safe, contemporaneous use of the roads by motorized and non-motorized traffic, as well as oversized and slow moving farm vehicles and implements.
8. Utilize appropriate design and construction techniques to avoid premature degradation of roads adjacent to waterways.
9. Encourage "Park and Ride" lots for commuters in areas adjoining major thoroughfares.
- ~~10. Provide for the possible extension of all local streets in new subdivisions to avoid the need for cul-de-sacs.~~
11. Require right-of-way dedication for existing easement roads and existing streets whenever land development is subject to City Council approval.

The City of Afton establishes the following transportation policies:

1. Prohibit the construction of new streets in the agricultural ~~preservation zoning~~ district except where deemed necessary to allow a property owner to use the property in keeping with the agricultural zoning and to promote land conservation to the maximum extent.
2. Control the upgrading of existing roads and construction of new roads which would serve to encourage non-farm development in the agricultural zone.
3. ~~Require a 150-foot setback along designated collector streets.~~
4. Work with Washington County to restore the historic character of St. Croix Trail through the Old Village as a slow speed, small village street.
5. Prohibit airports, landing strips and heliports within Afton.
6. Update and implement a capital improvement program.

Commented [KK12]: The "150 foot" piece of this is to specific for the comp plan and it is unclear what the rationale for this setback is. Delete or describe the outcome we seek with this policy.

The City of Afton will seek to implement the following strategies:

1. Post speed limits, weight and parking restrictions on City streets, where appropriate.
2. Post share-the-road signs for bicyclists, equestrians and other uses, where appropriate.
3. ~~Incorporate traffic calming into Design~~ road improvements within the Old Village to slow traffic.
- ~~4. Incorporate traffic calming and place-making techniques into road improvements within the Old Village to encourage a pedestrian friendly environment.~~

GROUNDWATER AND SURFACE WATER PLAN

A draft of the City's Surface Water Management Plan is attached, as Appendix G, ~~and has been approved by the appropriate Watershed Districts, and the Metropolitan Council, but has not yet been adopted by Afton City Council.~~

Groundwater and Surface Water Goals and Strategies

~~The City of Afton establishes the following ground and surface water goals:~~

- ~~0. Support the development and implementation of an effective storm water drainage system for the Old Village and surrounding area.~~
- ~~0. Explore opportunities to prevent future flooding.~~

~~The City of Afton establishes the following ground and surface water strategies:~~

- ~~0. Develop a plan and seek funding opportunities to deal with potential future flooding in the Old Village.~~

Additional Goals, Policies and Strategies are contained in Appendix G.

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WASTEWATER AND SANITARY SEWER PLAN

Commented [JY(C13)]: Are there any edits from the NRGC ?

Properly treating wastewater is a critical concern of the residents of Afton. There is a strong desire to ensure that wastewater is properly treated so as to limit the impact that development in Afton has on the natural environment. There is an equally strong desire to avoid the land use patterns that come with centralized collection and treatment of wastewater. Continued use of highly efficient and well maintained individual sewage treatment systems throughout the rest of the City will avoid public expenditures for central sewer and will prevent development at urban densities.

In 2013, the City completed a Facility Plan to evaluate various wastewater collection and treatment alternatives to replace current individual subsurface treatment systems (ISTS) within the Historical Village Sewage Treatment Service Area (HVSTSA). Included in the study were four alternatives: 1. Leave the system as is; 2. Conduct widespread ISTS replacement; 3. Implement a large subsurface treatment system (LSTS); or 4. Undergo regionalization. The Facility Plan concluded, after consideration of environmental, financial, and technical factors, that the preferred alternative for the city is the implementation of an LSTS system.

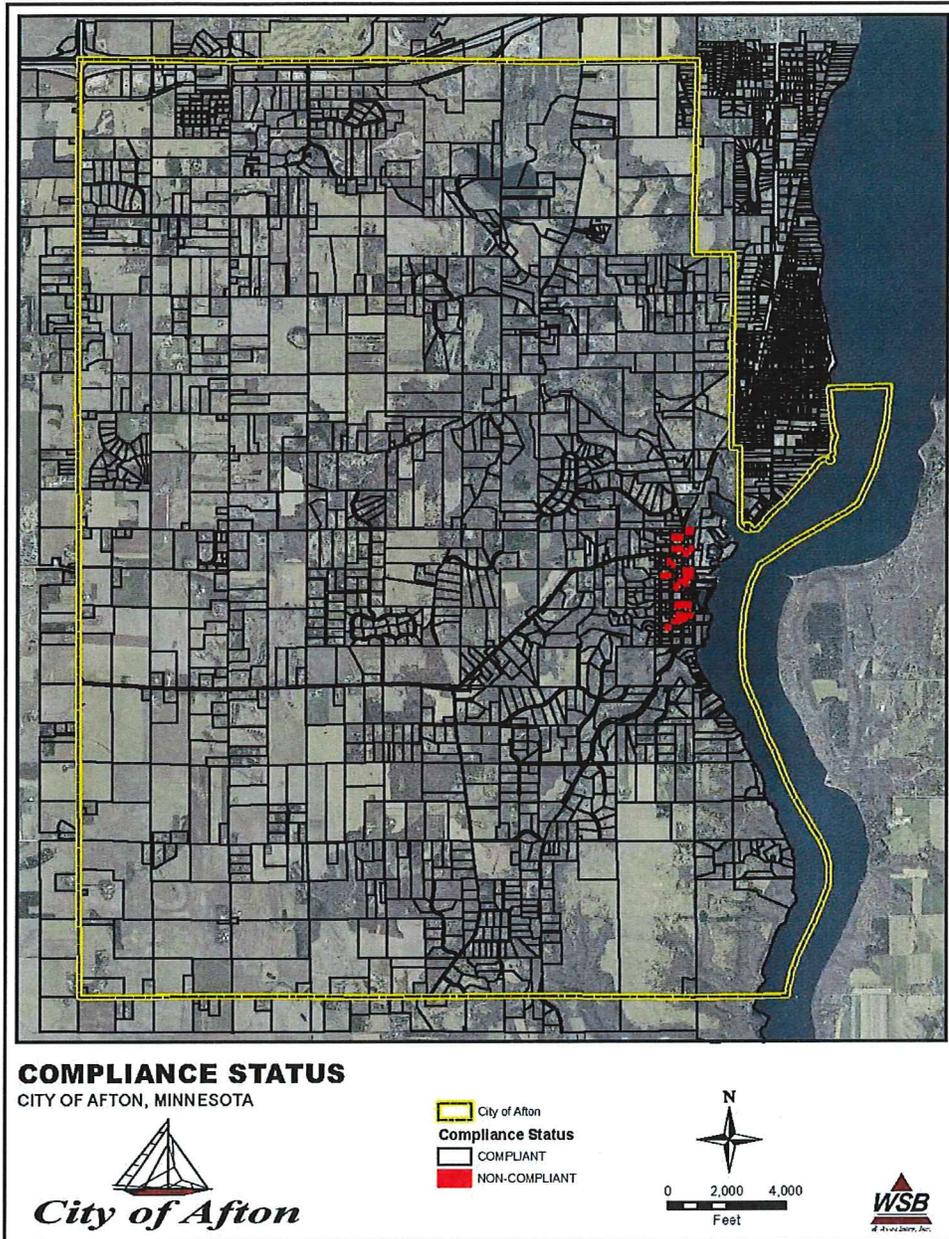
The Facility Plan has been reviewed and approved by the MPCA and the following information summarizes that plan in accordance with comprehensive planning requirements. The entire Facility Plan is included in Appendix M of this Comprehensive Plan.

Existing System

As of 2008, there were 1,119 individual, subsurface sewage treatment systems within the city limits. In addition, there is one community cluster system that serves eleven homes. A survey of the HVSTSA was completed, and the location of surveyed, non-compliant systems are shown in Figure 4. It was estimated that 52% of the existing systems were compliant and meeting setback requirements, with another 18% compliant but not meeting setback requirements.

The current reliance of ISTSs will require the City of Afton to be diligent in protecting residents' health, safety, and welfare. Development restrictions in place limit development in areas with unsuitable soils. Compared with other communities in Washington County, Afton has few soils with a slow percolation rate. Slow percolation rates usually indicate a heavy or tight clay soil which does not allow sewage effluent percolation. A significant area of these soils is in the southeast corner of Afton along the St. Croix River. Other small pockets of these soils occur along the many drainage ways within the City.

Figure 4. Parcels known to have non-compliant sewage treatment systems in the HVSTSA.



Steep slopes are predominant in Afton along the eastern half of the city. These steep slopes follow the major drainage ways. Currently, installation of an on-site sewage treatment system is prohibited on any slope exceeding 12%. Installation of septic systems on slopes over 12% may result in erosion, lateral seepage, and down-slope flow of effluent. The soils with a seasonal high water table or that are wet or subject to periodic flooding are also located along Afton's drainage ways. These soils are not suitable for septic systems since the effluent will either be dispersed into groundwater or will back up into the residence.

To further ensure the health and safety of Afton's residents, the City performs a thorough review of all ISTS designs and provides expert inspection for all installations. Afton has also implemented a maintenance program for existing systems, including an on-site, biennial mandatory inspection and the gradual upgrading of all substandard systems.

The installation, maintenance, and inspection of all ISTSs and LSTSs are regulated by both the City of Afton and Washington County in accordance with Minnesota Rules Chapter 7080. An agreement is in place whereby Washington County provides individual sewage treatment system inspection services within the City (Appendix J – ISTS Inspection Services Agreement). As part of this agreement, the City of Afton has adopted Washington County's ordinance #179 by reference as Afton Ordinance 08-2010. The City has agreed to be consistent with, or more restrictive than, the county.

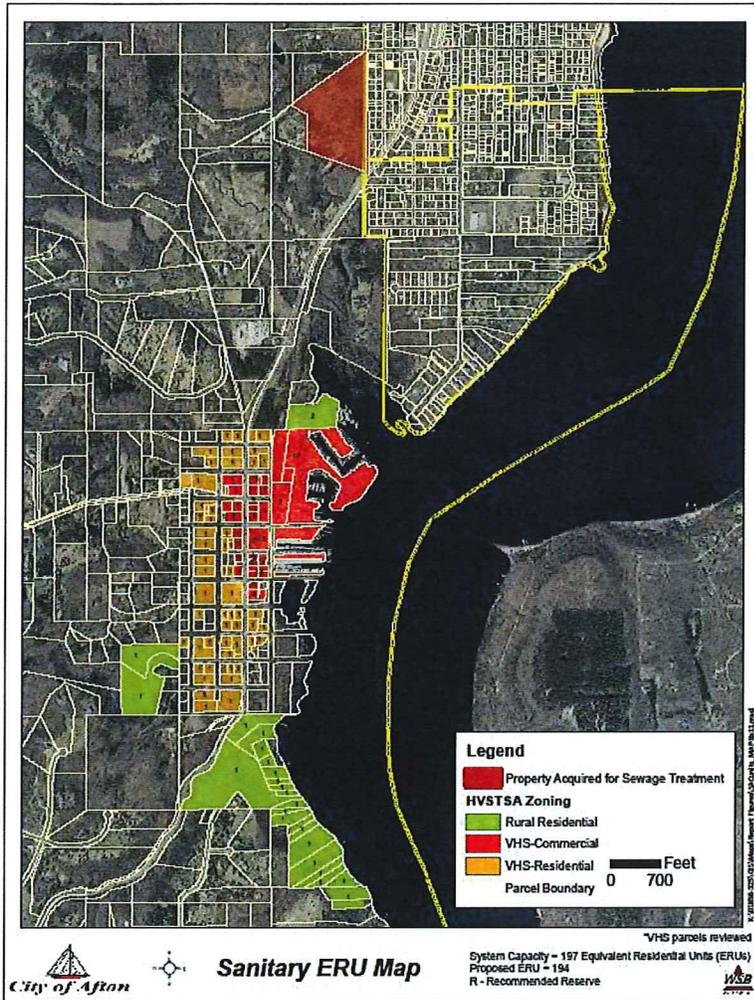
Existing ISTSs in the Historic Village Sewage Treatment Service Area will continue to provide wastewater treatment until the new system is operational - Because not all individuals will connect to the planned system, and others will be connected in stages, any residents remaining on ISTS systems will still be required to undergo biennial inspection.

Planned System Improvements and Projected Wastewater Flows

Due to the high flooding risk in Afton, as well as the non-compliant ISTSs serving residential dwellings and commercial establishments within the Historic Village Sewage Treatment Service Area, there is a need for sanitary sewer system improvements. The implementation of a LSTS will improve water quality and reduce noncompliant systems. The planned improvements will greatly reduce financial, health, and sanitation impacts to the City, residents, businesses, and general public.

There is a desire from the City of Afton, however, to prevent large-scale treatment systems that would allow for widespread commercial and industrial development. For this reason, the City ~~has decided to~~ implemented a LSTS with a capacity allowing a modest growth in residential and commercial flows only. The ~~planned~~ system estimates a population growth of 30 people (17%) in the Old Village over the next 20 years. In 2030, the system will serve an estimated 77 households and 22 commercial establishments. The following figure details the Historic Village Sewage Treatment Service Area to be served by the LSTS.

Figure 5. Current Zoning for parcels in the Historic Village Sewage Treatment Service Area.



The following table presents that sanitary sewer flows that will be generated within the Historic Village Sewage Treatment Service Area based on the land use designations as detailed in the city's Facility Plan. The 2020 and 2030 flows are in accordance with the proposed system staging that is described in the following sections. As the LSTS will only accommodate modest growth, it is assumed that the design capacities will be reached by the year 2030.

| Land-Use | 2013 Flow (gpd) | 2020 Flow (gpd) | 2030 Flow (gpd) |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Residential | 0 | 9,272 | 18,544 |
| Commercial | 0 | 14,175 | 28,349 |
| Inflow/Infiltration Allowance | 0 | 2,000 | 4,000 |
| Total Peak Flow | 0 | 25,447 | 50,893 |

Table 5. Estimated sanitary sewer flows.

Collection System Improvements

The **planned** improvements include the construction of a gravity sanitary sewer system, lift stations, and forcemain to convey the residential and commercial wastewater flows generated within the Historic Village Sewage Treatment Service Area to the **proposed** LSTS. Individual sewer services will be connected **in 2017 & 2018** to the pipe sewer and extend to the homes and businesses to be served.

The trunk lines within Saint Croix Trail **will** extend to a main lift station located adjacent to the Steam Boat Park parking area east of the intersection of Saint Croix Trail and Upper 34th Street. The main lift station will **then** convey the wastewater to the LSTS north of the Historic Village Sewage Treatment Service Area. Two additional lift stations located along River Road **will have been** reconstructed to convey wastewater to the collection system and ultimately the LSTS. The following figure details the **proposed** sanitary sewer collections system improvements within the Historic Village Sewage Treatment Service Area (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Planned sewer system in the Historic Village Sewage Treatment Service Area.

CITY OF AFTON
Old Village Improvement Project
Conceptual Sanitary Sewer Layout

Inlined Sanitary Sewer System

0 500 Feet

WSB

Treatment System

The **planned** treatment system consists of communal septic tanks, an anoxic denitrification component, recirculation tank, recirculating gravel filter, and a dose tank sized to store and meter flows throughout the day to a seepage cell soil dispersal drainfield. A control building houses various valves and controls. It also serves as a location to store miscellaneous items pertinent to system operation and maintenance.

The treatment system **is will be** located north of town at an elevation of 720 to 730 feet above mean sea level. The **proposed** treatment system is above the 500 year, 100 year, 50 year, and 10 year floodplain elevations of 695 ft, 691.5 ft, 690 ft, and 686.5 ft, respectively, and **will would** be operable during the 25-year flood and protected during a 100-year flood event.

Inflow and Infiltration

Due to Afton's proximity to the St. Croix River, extra precautions **will be** put in place to ensure the system can withstand flooding. These precautions **will also** limit inflow and infiltration in the system. Flood-tight castings **will be** used along the collection system in the floodplain. The collection sanitary sewer will be made from PVC plastic with water-tight gaskets and HDPE including fused joints to keep water from entering the system. In addition, the collection system **was will be** pressure tested after construction, and the manholes **will** include joints, rings, and castings that are wrapped to exclude water. The combination of these technologies will greatly reduce the potential for inflow and infiltration. Nonetheless, the system plans include an inflow and infiltration allowance of 4,000 gpd as required by the MPCA permit.

Staging

Residences and commercial establishments that have existing non-compliant septic systems will be required to connect to the system, **as soon as it is operational**. The remaining users in the Historic Village Sewage Treatment Service Area will be required to hook up to the system within eight years of completion. The system will be fully connected prior to 2030, as outlined in the updated Sanitary Sewer Code for the City of Afton (Appendix G.7).

Wastewater Goals, and Policies

The City of Afton establishes the following wastewater goals:

1. Reduce the volume of wastewater that is discharged to the soils of Afton.
2. Protect ground and surface waters to the greatest extent practicable by improving the quality of wastewater effluent.

3. Protect the groundwater from chemical or hazardous waste introduced from wastewater systems.
- ~~3. Construct a wastewater collection and treatment system to serve properties within the Historic Village.~~

The City of Afton establishes the following wastewater policies:

1. Encourage the use of individual, highly efficient, wastewater treatment systems for all homes and businesses within Afton.
2. Restrict industrial uses to those which would not create the need for metropolitan sewer or additional urban services.
3. Educate all residents on the proper maintenance of a septic system.
4. Monitor and manage the upgrading of all substandard wastewater treatment systems and require the immediate upgrading or replacement of failing systems.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES PLAN

Residents value the rural atmosphere of Afton. Five-acre minimum lot sizes outside of the Old Village with houses that do not dominate the views of the countryside, large non-buildable areas of the City, and a large amount of farmland create an open feel to the landscape. *Open spaces, in and of themselves, are valuable to the residents of the City as preserves of nature and sanctuaries for flora and fauna. [An adequate area of properly managed parks and open spaces help to protect and recharge surface and groundwater which is used by every resident of the city.](#)*

The preservation of open spaces, including land with steep slopes, woodlands, wetlands, scenic or environmentally sensitive areas, and agricultural land provides many benefits, including the protection of natural resources, the provision of wildlife habitat, and the preservation of the natural, rural countryside character of Afton. The preservation of these open spaces is of key importance to the City. The City will seek to accomplish this preservation through a number of means, including:

1. Parkland dedication;
2. Parkland acquisition;
3. Open space dedication incentives in land development regulations; and
4. Encouraging and supporting the long term continuation of agricultural uses.

Existing Parks and Open Space

The City of Afton, and Afton's natural, open, rural character, greatly benefit from the substantial amount of open space that has been preserved by other public and quasi-public organizations. These open space amenities include a State Park, Regional Parks and the Belwin Conservancy. In addition, the St. Croix River is a magnificent open space amenity, providing scenic and tranquil vistas, and a major recreational resource. Another significant element of Afton's open space is its scattered rural development, including large lots and large expanses of agricultural land. Rather than developing new parks, the focus of the City has been to protect and preserve the existing natural resources and open space amenities.

The City ~~currently has a limited~~ ~~does not have a substantial~~ amount of City-owned open space and developed parks. The City of Afton has one park for active recreation, Town Square Park, and another for passive recreation, Steamboat Park, along the St. Croix River. Both parks are located in the Old Village.

Steamboat Park lies mostly in the floodplain, and is approximately thirty (30) acres in size. It serves as a sanctuary for many birds and various kinds of wildlife. It is one of the few locations on the lower St. Croix River that is not readily accessible for large boat traffic. Recreation is limited to passive recreation, such as picnicking, walking, swimming, bird and wildlife viewing.

Town Square Park is a more active site. The park provides space for basketball, baseball, picnicking, music concerts, skating and group activities. There is playground equipment, a band shell, and a picnic

shelter in the park, as well as primitive restroom facilities. Town Square Park is the focal point of such annual events as the Fourth of July Parade, May Fair, Antique Car Rallies, and Art in the Park.

Over the course of many years, the City has acquired a number of other parcels throughout the city of Afton with the potential to develop into local parks. These public lands were acquired in conjunction with the approval of major subdivisions over the course of several decades and remain undeveloped. In all, there are 53.44 acres of designated park land available for public use.

Community and regional parks (Afton State Park, Lucy Winton Bell Athletic Fields, Lake Elmo Regional Park Reserve, St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park, and Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park) also provide a variety of different types of recreation to Afton residents.

[Rinta Community Garden was created in 2012. The city of Afton received a grant from the Lower St. Croix Valley Community Foundation. These funds were used to remove trees and shrubs on approximately 1 acre of dedicated park land. The garden area was plowed and tilled. There are 21 garden plots on the property as well as compost bins, a garden shed with rain barrels to catch runoff from the shed's roof. Gardeners are primarily from the Lower St. Croix Valley, although a few come from Woodbury, Oakdale and St. Paul.](#)

Two biking/hiking trails pass through the City. One trail follows St. Croix Trail South and extends from the northern edge of the Old Village to Interstate 94. The other, Afton Bluffs Regional Trail, is designated along County Road 18 running east and west, and is not separated from the roadway.

The planned St. Croix Valley Regional Trail will parallel the St. Croix River, and will connect Point Douglas County Park, Carpenter Nature Center, St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park, Afton State Park and the proposed Afton Bluffs Regional Trail. The St. Croix Valley Regional Trail will be aligned parallel and in close proximity to the St. Croix River.

The City seeks to protect a number of significant natural features within its boundaries. These include Trout Brook, Valley Creek and its North Branch, Bissell's Mounds and Kelle's Coulee. Bissell's Mounds in particular are unique to Washington County and are a recognized landmark in the City. Other natural features that are determined to be either unique or geologically sensitive will be preserved as the property around them is developed.

Afton State Park is located south of Afton and a portion of the park (787 acres) is located within the City's boundaries. The park was authorized by legislation in 1969 and was opened to the public in 1982. The terrain of the park is defined by a glacial moraine cut by deep ravines running into the St. Croix River. To Afton's residents, the state park offers many recreational amenities, including: backpack camping, swimming, hiking, fishing, cross country skiing, a prairie landscape, bird watching, and animal sighting. Some of the animals the park offers a home to include hawks, bluebirds, meadowlarks, deer, fox, badgers, turkeys, thirteen-lined ground squirrels, and gray and fox squirrels. Afton State Park is also home to an array of natural vegetation. It contains a combination of oak

savannah and woodlands. Park wildflowers include woodland ephemerals in the spring, butterfly weed and puccoons in the summer, and sunflowers and blazing star in the fall.

Belwin Conservancy also holds considerable land within Afton under a conservation easement ~~with by the the~~ Minnesota Land Trust. ~~This land is designated quasi-public.~~ The Belwin land provides a substantial open space amenity for adjacent land uses, and makes a major contribution to the protection of natural resources, and to the City's rural countryside character.

Parks and Open Space Goals, Policies and Strategies

The City of Afton establishes the following parks and open space goals:

1. ~~Acquire and~~ Preserve adequate amounts of open space to maintain a rural atmosphere (~~Afton's 2012 from Afton's 2000 Park Plan~~).
 2. Obtain and maintain designated open spaces to provide for wildlife habitat and migration.
 3. Reconnect Afton's historical linkages to the St. Croix River.
 4. Provide expanded access to the City docks to all residents.
 5. Provide safe areas to ride bicycles within the City.
 6. Provide safe areas to ride horses within the City.
 7. Provide pedestrian friendly means of enjoying Afton's scenic views, wildlife, and connections to the St. Croix River.
 8. Preserve locally important water resources, natural and scenic features.
 9. Periodically identify the recreational needs of Afton citizens and evaluate ways to meet them.
 10. Consider using the Afton Bluffs Regional Trail to create an east-west connection from Afton's Old Village to the City of Woodbury.
 11. ~~Manage all City owned or controlled land to maintain or repair to naturally occurring species of plants and trees plus those necessary to anticipate climate change.~~
 - 12. ~~Manage all City owned or controlled land to prevent erosion to recharge groundwater and to increase carbon storage.~~
- ~~{Text needed to describe policies regarding PUAD kind of setasides: public access or not, maintenance, other requirements?}~~

The City of Afton establishes the following parks and open space policies:

1. Preserve open spaces and natural resources for passive use and create non-motorized trails through direct purchase, subdivision, scenic and/or conservation easements and other means to include the seeking of grants and the use of matching funds when they are available, but not the use of eminent domain.
2. Maintain central community places.
3. Maintain safe environments for children to play and for the community to gather.
4. Maintain designated open spaces to provide for wildlife habitat and migration.

5. Work cooperatively with Washington County, the Belwin Conservancy, the Science Museum of Minnesota, and other ~~quasi~~-public and private entities to preserve sensitive lands and open space.
6. ~~Develop a forestry park plan to provide for all park and open space land to enhance water quality.~~
7. ~~Develop a park plan for the five small parcels obtained by the City through park dedication.~~

The City of Afton establishes the following parks and open space strategies:

1. Develop signage and ~~pedestrian-friendly~~pedestrian friendly connections to the St. Croix River.
2. Protect Steamboat Park as a nature preserve and passive use area.
3. ~~Develop a long term plan to obtain additional city owned land in areas identified as desirable to reach city goals.~~
4. ~~Develop a forestry plan to identify plant and tree species native to Afton and hardy in projected climate conditions.~~
5. ~~Develop a long term plan to pay for acquisition and development of Afton's parks and open spaces.~~

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SOLID WASTE PLAN

~~The City of Afton does not have and does not want a solid waste disposal site due to the fragile nature of the soils and the underlying geological substrate. The City contracts with trash haulers to collect solid waste.~~

~~The City prohibits the burning or dumping of trash and garbage and also has a very active recycling program that encourages citizens to recycle on a regular basis. The City has a contract with a recycling hauler to assist with these efforts.~~

Ver 9/18/17

Soils in Afton are of a fragile nature with a highly pervious underlying geological substrate. In order to protect the groundwater, the City of Afton does not have and does not want a solid waste disposal site. The City contracts with trash haulers to collect both solid waste and recycling on a regular schedule. The City prohibits burning or dumping of trash or garbage at any time.

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The Afton Comprehensive Plan includes the following waste management options as mandatory or voluntary for both residential and business entities.

Solid Waste Goals and Policy

~~The City of Afton establishes the following solid waste goals:~~

- ~~0. Significantly reduce the amount of material that Afton residents and businesses contribute to landfills or waste incinerators.~~
- ~~0. Explore an organics recycling program. Educate residents about the Environmental Center at 4039 Cottage Grove Drive in Woodbury for disposal of household hazardous waste, electronics and recyclables.~~
- ~~0. Promote "Reduce, Re-use, Recycle" programs.~~

The City of Afton establishes the following solid waste goals:

1. Manage waste in a manner that will protect the environment and public health
2. Manage waste to minimize land filling and incineration
 - a. Emphasize less waste generation
 - b. Increase waste reuse (composting) and source separating of recyclable materials.
3. Routinely report to residents results of recycling and waste reduction with total volumes and associated cost benefits.

4. Educate residents and businesses by sending consistent messages about the importance and value of waste management both economically and environmentally.

Evaluate the value and relative success of mandatory or voluntary participation

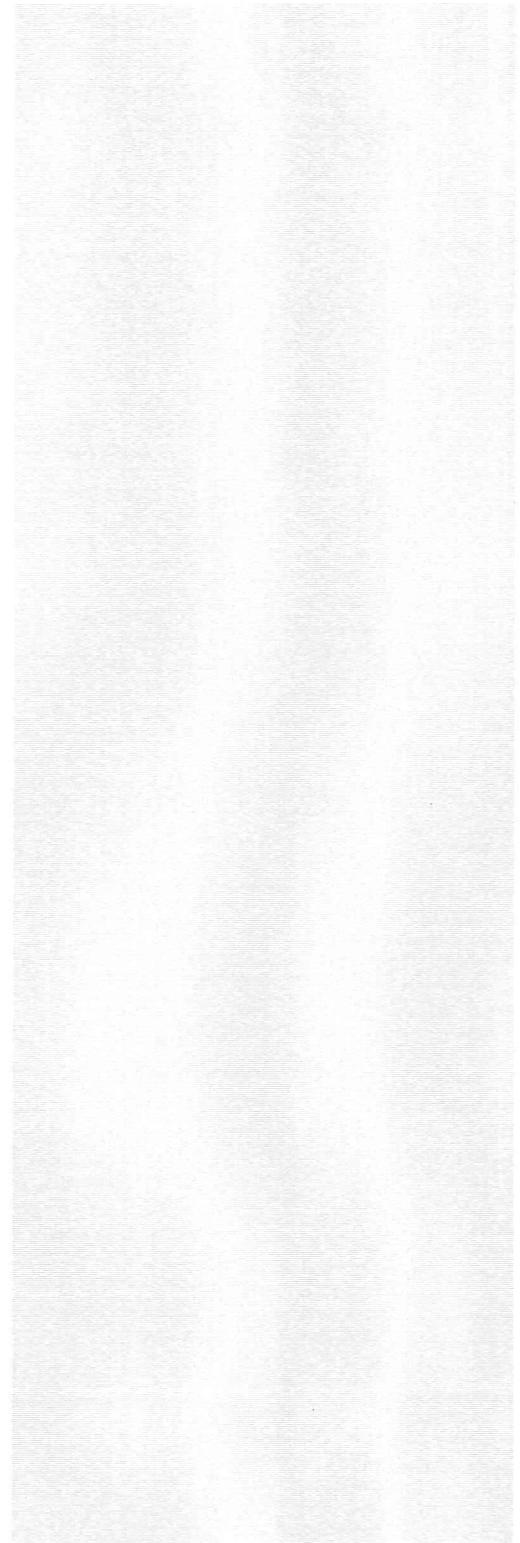
The City of Afton establishes the following solid waste policy:

0. Provide for trash hauling and recycling service.

The City of Afton establishes the following solid waste policy

1. Waste reduction and reuse of resources
2. Waste separation and recycling
3. Promote resource conservation and recovery
4. Promote composting of yard waste and food waste
5. Provide for trash hauling and recycling
6. Enforcement of illegal burning or dumping of trash
7. Routinely report to residents results of recycling and waste reduction efforts with total volumes and associated cost benefits
8. Explore avenues to encourage residents and businesses to reduce solid waste by providing educational material for best present and future practices.

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CITY GOVERNANCE PLAN

The City provides services consistent with those provided in small rural communities, including general street maintenance, parks and recreation facilities, police service, fire protection, building inspection services and general assistance at City Hall. These services have typically been managed from City Hall by a city administrator and small staff.

The City of Afton owns five public buildings located on three parcels of property. The Afton Village Hall, leased to the Afton Historical Society and City Garage are located on Lots 1, 2, and 3 of Block 8 in the Old Village. The Town Hall (leased) and Garage are located in the NW quarter of the SW quarter of Section 10, on Stagecoach Trail South. The City Hall is located on Lots 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 of Block 11 of the Old Village. The City also owns docks that are leased to a private operator.

Police protection is provided through a contract with the Washington County Sheriff's Department. As the city grows the cost of police protection may increase, and the provision of these services should be a consideration as new developments are proposed. Fire, ambulance, and rescue services are provided by way of a joint powers agreement among the five Lower St. Croix Fire Protection District cities with a fire station located in Lake St. Croix Beach. There are no current plans to add additional public facilities.

City Governance Goals, Policies and Strategies

The City of Afton establishes the following public facilities goals:

1. Maintain a small and efficient government.
2. Properly maintain public facilities.
3. Encourage a "pay-as-you-go" approach to maintaining public facilities and infrastructure.
4. Public subsidy for development, in the form of tax breaks such as Tax Increment Financing, shall be discouraged by the City of Afton.

The City of Afton established the following public facilities policies:

1. The City of Afton will comply with all FAA and Met Council Aeronautic Safety Standards regarding the height of structures and any regulations that pertain to airspace safety and electronic interference over the City of Afton.
2. Comply with all state and federal mandates.
3. City property is to be leased at market value.
4. The City Code shall be properly maintained so that current version is annually provided to all elected and appointed officials.

The City of Afton will seek to implement the following strategies:

1. Institute a budgeting process that annually takes a long-term examination of the City's finances.
2. Prepare a Capital Improvements Plan that outlines the costs and phasing for all maintenance activities required for municipal infrastructure.
3. Consider the creation of a special taxing district or implement the 429 assessment process to facilitate infrastructure improvements within the Old Village.

SYSTEM STATEMENT COMPATIBILITY

The Metropolitan Council has issued a system statement for the City of Afton, which indicates specific issues that must be addressed by the Comprehensive Plan before the Plan is considered complete by the Metropolitan Council. The City of Afton seeks to comply with all aspects of the system statement and has done so as per the following:

1. **Population, Housing, and Employment Forecasts:** The Metropolitan Council (Met Council) provides population, housing and employment forecasts for the City of Afton until the year 2030. These are required to be part of the plan update and are cited in Appendix B - Demographics Information of the Comprehensive Plan.
2. **Density and Land Use Classification:** The Met Council classifies the geographic area that the city of Afton is located in as “diversified rural” and partially “agricultural”.²² Diversified rural areas include a mix of large-lot residential and clustered housing with agricultural and other uses. Density in diversified rural areas must be less than 1 housing unit per 10 acres. Agricultural areas are planned and zoned by local communities to maintain agriculture as the primary long-term land use. The density of agricultural areas may not exceed 1 housing unit per 40 acres.

This plan identifies policies, in the Housing and Land Use Action Plan, that will maintain an overall development density within the parameters required in the system statement.

3. **Aviation Plan and Facilities:** The system statement requires that the City of Afton must include airspace protection in its comprehensive plan. The protection is for potential hazards to air navigation including electronic interference. Airspace protection should be included in local codes/ordinances to control height of structures, especially when conditional use permits would apply. The comprehensive plan should include policy/text on notification to the FAA as defined under code of federal regulations CFR-Part 77, using the FAA Form 7460-1 “notice of proposed construction or alteration.”

There are no public or private airfield facilities within the City of Afton. Furthermore, public and private airfields and heliports are not allowed within the City of Afton. Language has been added to the Public Facilities Action Plan to reflect Afton’s desire to follow all FAA and Met Council Aeronautics Safety Standards in regards to airspace safety in the City of Afton.

4. **Sewage Treatment:** The system statement requires that the City of Afton incorporate current MPCA regulations as part of a program for managing individual, cluster, and large sewer systems in the local comprehensive plan and implement the standards in issuing permits. An overview of Afton’s management program must be included in the community’s local comprehensive plan update.

Afton should include in the sewer element of its comprehensive plan the conditions under which private treatment plants would be allowed. The use of private wastewater treatment plants must be consistent and compatible with the long-term regional wastewater system plan.

Subsurface and cluster septic treatment systems are regulated by Afton City Code which adopted Washington County's septic ordinance by reference and by contract with Washington County to perform permitting and inspections (Appendix J).

5. **Watershed Management:** The system statement requires that a local surface water management plan should be prepared once a watershed plan for the area has been approved. The local surface water management plan must be submitted to both the water management organization(s) within whose watershed the community is located and to the Metropolitan Council for its review.

Afton is required to complete a local surface water management plan. The plan will be submitted to the Met Council for its review concurrent with the review by the watershed management organizations.

6. **Trail Connections:** The system statement indicates that a proposed regional trail following the St. Croix River (St. Croix River Regional Trail) and a planned trail (Afton Bluffs Trail) will be located within or traverse across the City of Afton. These trail alignments are acknowledged in the Parks and Recreation Action Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The City has adopted and does enforce the following ordinances, among others. The ordinances and official controls listed in this section will continue to be enforced in order to implement this Plan.

1. The Zoning Ordinance, as amended from time to time and incorporated by reference herein, implements the primary elements of this Plan by establishing the type, location, and intensity of uses throughout the city as prescribed by this Plan.
2. The Shoreland Management Ordinance, as amended from time to time and incorporated by reference herein, protects wetlands, water bodies and water courses throughout the City as prescribed by this Plan.
3. The Floodplain Ordinance, as amended from time to time and incorporated by reference herein, protects man-made development from floodwaters and the floodplain areas that carry and discharge regional floods by limiting development in those floodplains and floodways in the City as prescribed by this Plan.
4. The Sanitary Sewer Disposal Ordinance, as amended from time to time and incorporated by reference herein, governs the installation, inspection, and maintenance of septic systems as prescribed by this Plan. Further, the City issues septic system permits, inspects installation of all septic systems, reviews soil tests for subdivisions, issues building permits after the City has issued any required zoning use permit, and provides consultant planning services. The City is currently undergoing a Sanitary Sewer code revision to address changes in the Historic Village Sewage Treatment Service Area
5. The Subdivision Ordinance, as amended from time to time and incorporated by reference herein, regulates the division of all property as prescribed by this Plan.
6. The Mining Ordinance, as amended from time to time and incorporated by reference herein, establishes uniform performance standards for sand and gravel extraction and for land reclamation as prescribed by this Plan.
7. The Lower St. Croix River Bluffland and Shoreland Management Ordinance, as amended from time to time and incorporated by reference herein, protects the natural environment and aesthetics of this wild and scenic river as prescribed by this Plan.
8. The International Building Code, as amended from time to time and incorporated by reference herein, protects the safety, health and welfare of residents through regulating standards of construction.

In addition to these ordinances, the city utilizes and depends on the following agencies for reviews of proposed developments and advice on ordinance revisions:

1. Watershed and Water Management Organizations review all proposals within the watershed and recommend permit conditions for building within four different watershed districts within City limits.
2. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources reviews and approves all developments along the St. Croix River, other public water bodies and floodplains.
3. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reviews and approves alterations of public water bodies.

4. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency reviews pollution problems.
5. Metropolitan Council reviews and approves the comprehensive development plan.
6. Lower St. Croix Valley Volunteer Fire Department recommends ordinances necessary to protect the health and safety of Afton residents, and comments on development proposals.
7. Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District reviews proposed projects and offers recommendations on slope, wetland, and fragile lands protection.
8. Minnesota Department of Transportation and Washington County Highway Department maintain and develop state and county roads.

In 1997, the City amended and recodified its ordinances to eliminate any inconsistencies and to assure conformance with the Comprehensive Plan. In addition to enforcing the existing ordinances that will implement this Plan, the city will update and revise pertinent ordinances in order to implement all of the policies contained in this Plan. As a general overview, it is the City's intent to amend the ordinances and policies in conformance with this plan within required timeframes.

While this plan contains much of the language, intent and purpose of the previous version of the City's Comprehensive Plan, it has been formatted quite differently. The plan is now organized into sections of background followed by topic specific goals. It is the intention of the City of Afton to work, over time, on developing policies and strategies for implementing these goals. When adopted, these would require an amendment to the plan, which would need to follow required procedures for making plan amendments.

Additionally, there are statements of policy or regulation contained in the 1998 version of the plan that were lost in the conversion to the new format, yet are significant and require additional ongoing discussion. It is not the intent of this plan update to modify the spirit and intent of the 1998 plan, but to provide a more clear vision and create a document that can be strongly implemented.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM

The City has limited funding for capital improvements and seeks to minimize debt. As such, the City needs to correlate the tax base with the long-term capital needs of the community, including:

1. Re-pave gravel, reconstruct and sealcoat streets.
2. Repair bridges, streets and culverts as required.
3. Use Park Dedication Funds to upgrade existing facilities and to purchase land and/or easements to add to future park and trail infrastructure.
4. Resolve surface water erosion issues.
5. Manage storm water stormwater run-off on Old Village streets and boulevards.
6. Replace Remove the 201 system in the Old Village when needed.
7. Construct the Large Subsurface Treatment System and Sanitary Sewer Collection System for the Historic Village Sewage Treatment Service Area
8. Repair sidewalks in the Old Village.
9. Expand the use of gas lights in the Old Village.

A detailed Capital Improvement Program (CIP) outlining cost estimates, income sources, and payment schedules will be attached to this plan at a future date. The CIP will be reviewed and revised annually. Sound financial planning will be utilized so as not to significantly increase the tax burden on individual property owners in fulfilling the capital improvement plan.

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List of Appendices

- Appendix A: Terms and Definitions
- Appendix B: Demographic Information
- Appendix C: Watershed District Information
- Appendix D: Resource References
- Appendix E: Soils Information
- Appendix F: Parks and Open Spaces
- Appendix G: ~~Storm Water~~Stormwater Management Plan
- Appendix H: Community Survey
- Appendix I: Maps
- Appendix J: Article IX. Sewage- Afton Code of Ordinances .
- Appendix K: Afton Flora and Fauna
- Appendix L: Public Involvement in Comprehensive Plan Process
- Appendix M: City of Afton Wastewater Collection and Treatment System Facility Plan

CITY OF AFTON 2008 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

APPENDICES

December 19, 2017 City Council Meeting Highlights

The Council:

- Was updated on upcoming activities at the Belwin Conservancy
- Held a public hearing on the 2018 Budget
- Adopted the Final 2018 Budget and Levy
- Authorized staff to research dimming or shielding lights in the old village which are disturbing residential properties
- Approved the 2018 rate schedule for Engineering Services from WSB
- Approved the 2018 Planning Commission meeting schedule
- Approved a request to allow horses on the cartway adjacent to 14933 Afton Blvd with the condition that any erosion that occurs be remediated through an agreement with two of the households adjacent
- Approved parking of public works vehicles at the city garage
- Tabled discussion of Preservation and Land Conservation Development (PLCD) and Planned Unit Development (PUD)
- Approved payment of Pay Voucher No.8 from Geislinger and Sons Inc. for the Downtown Improvement Project in the amount of \$1,371,963.61
- Approved payment of Pay Request No. 8 from Ellingson In for the Wastewater Treatment System Project in the amount of \$83,024.29
- Re-appointed 3 members of the Natural Resource and Groundwater Committee