

BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP MINNESOTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this Comprehensive Plan for Bridgewater Township is to provide guidance to Township officials, residents, and other stakeholders as to the long-range objectives of the Township. The plan defines long-range objectives related to protecting and enhancing the health, safety, and welfare of the Township's residents.

This Comprehensive Plan serves as a guiding framework for the further development of the Bridgewater Town Code. In particular, the zoning chapter of that code establishes allowed and prohibited uses, as well as specific standards, for land use within the Township.

It is important to realize that the Township does not exist in isolation from surrounding communities. As such, the Township is subject to, and must operate within the parameters established by applicable county, state, and federal regulations. Specifically, any Township planning and zoning regulations must be consistent with, or more

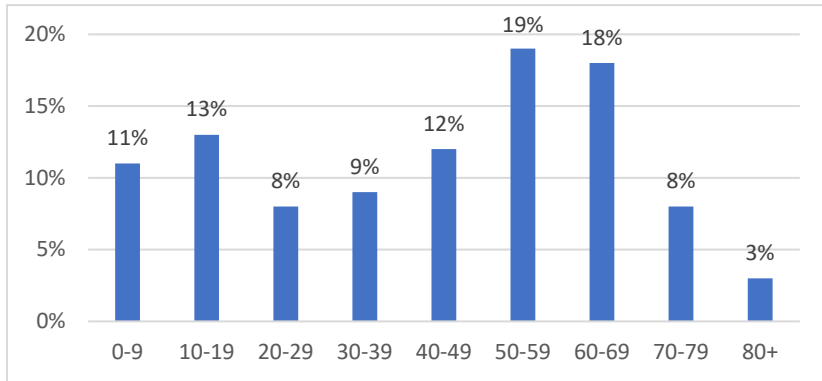
restrictive than, the Rice County Zoning Ordinance. The Township cannot allow a land use that Rice County prohibits. To that end, some of the goals contained within this plan may conflict with the plans and regulations established by Rice County. In those situations, Bridgewater Township will need to coordinate with Rice County in order to implement portions of this Comprehensive Plan and certain individual goals in the plan.

Vision

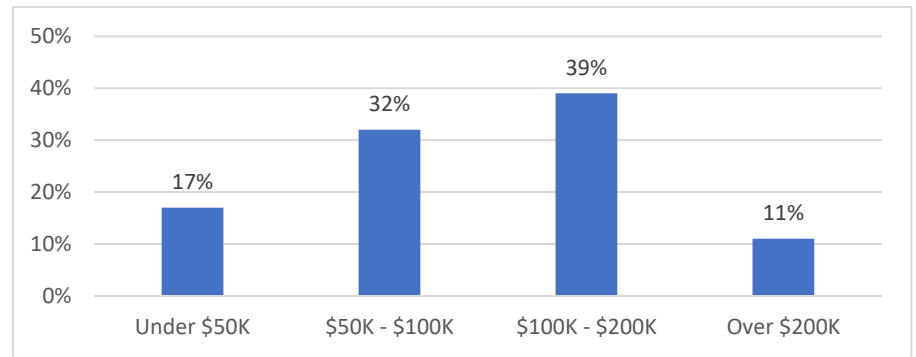
Bridgewater Township is a highly desirable rural community in which to live and work. Our vision is to honor the Township's heritage and maintain the rural character and small community values through compatible and sustainable agricultural, residential, and business development. Through responsible stewardship the Township can continue to provide a superior quality of life for current and future residents.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Bridgewater Township was organized in 1858 at the same time Minnesota was granted statehood. Originally the Township encompassed 42 square miles. Today it is 36.4 square miles (24,575 acres) with 5.6 sq miles having been annexed by Northfield and Dundas in past years. The land use is primarily agricultural. There are 6 rural residential neighborhoods. The population of the Township in 2020 was 1840. The population distribution by age is shown below.



The per capita income in 2020 was \$52,939 with a median income of \$100,147. The income distribution is shown below.



LAND USE

Overview

The Township uses four broad categories of land use types within this Comprehensive Plan: Agricultural, Residential, Commercial/Industrial and Extractive Resources. Some general land-use goals have been established to support the Township's overall vision of retaining agriculture as its activity and economic driver, modestly growing its rural residential community and increasing its tax base by encouraging industrial development in areas not well-suited for agriculture-

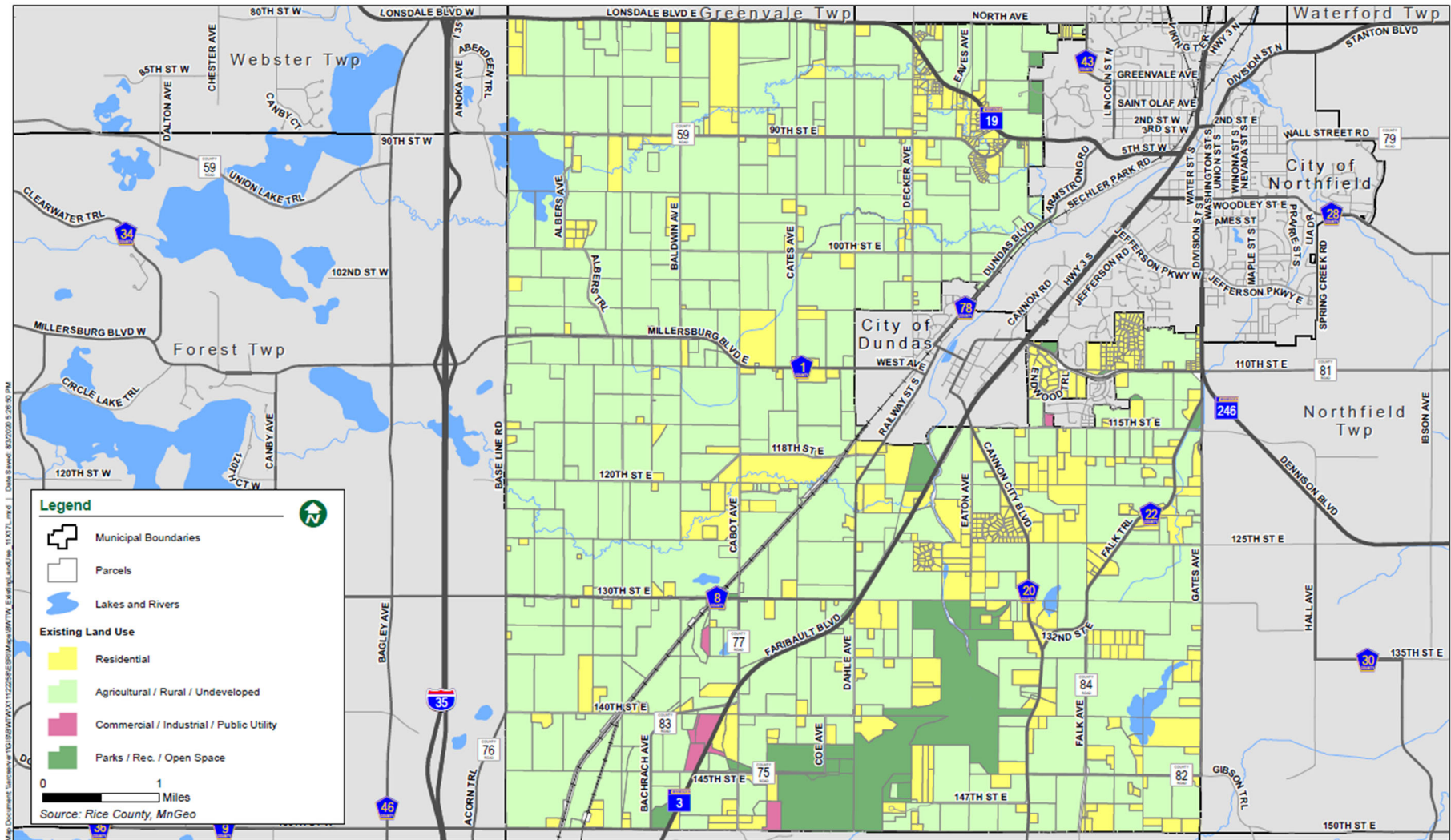
- Promote well-planned development that provides for agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial and recreational opportunities.
- Accommodate alternative energy technology in a manner that is compatible with established legacy activities and uses.
- Promote sensitive integration of the natural environment with other neighboring uses to ensure the success of each.
- Plan to accommodate accessible and connected open spaces and trails that provide linkages between varied uses, multi-modal access, leading to a system of

greenways that form a network crisscrossing the Township.

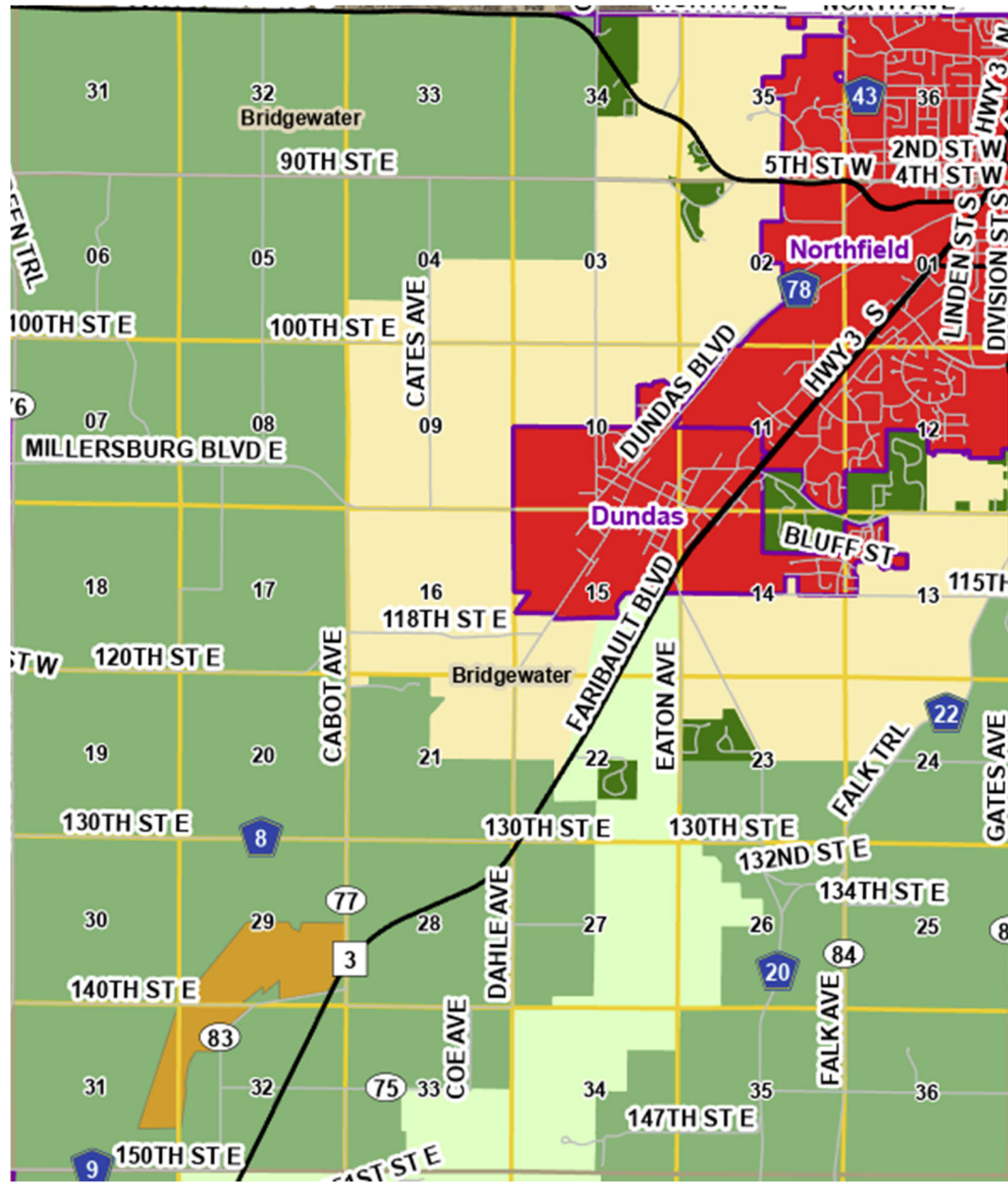
- Plan for the redevelopment or mitigation of past land use activities into more productive land use opportunities.

Existing land uses are shown on the map on Page 4, generally defined by the predominant use of the site even though more than one use may be present. For example, some properties may contain both a residential and an agricultural use.

The Future Land Use Map on Page 5 is consistent with the future land uses identified by Rice County in their Comprehensive Plan. These areas consist of locations for agriculture, limited industrial, rural residential, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and urban expansion. The four broad categories of land use types described in the rest of this chapter can be found to varying degrees across several of the future land use areas. The future land use areas relate more towards differentiating the intensity and scale of development and particular standards within those areas primarily related to access and proximity to cities, protected natural resources or rail corridors.



FUTURE LAND USE



- Agricultural
- Wild & Scenic River
- Urban Expansion
- Rural Residential
- Rural Industrial
- City

Current and anticipated future land use is summarized in the table below. It is assumed that portions of the Township that are adjacent to the cities will be annexed by Northfield and Dundas over the next 20 years.

LAND USE	CURRENTLY (acres)	FUTURE (20 years)
Agriculture	18,564	17,736
Residential	2,816	2,900
Commercial	172	200
Industrial	0	300
Parks / Recreation	671	671
Sanitary Landfill	458	458
Gravel Mines	256	340
Other	1,638	1,340
Annexed		430
TOTAL	24,575	24,575

Agriculture

Since the 1950’s, farming in the Township has transitioned from livestock and dairy operations to row crops. Since

2010 a number of smaller produce farms which sell locally have been established. The Township will remain receptive to this trend toward local production of locally consumed food products.

Goals & Strategies for Agriculture

The Township’s goals for agricultural/farming land uses are:

- Preserve and enhance varied scales of agriculture as the primary land use and economic opportunity in the township.
- Support agricultural best practices which includes efforts to conserve, preserve and restore residential topsoil.
- Minimize the conversion or disruption of agricultural land uses by limiting non-farm uses in long-term agricultural areas particularly on prime farmland.
- Maintain a relatively low tax burden to help ensure the viability of farming.
- Maintain farm-to-market transportation routes to ensure smooth flow of goods and services.
- Encourage residential or other development to occur in areas less conducive to agriculture.
- Encourage the diversification of agricultural products, such as organic farming, local produce, CSA farms, fruit production and value-added products.
- Support measures to keep people on farms and farming.

To achieve these goals, the Township will employ the following strategies:

- Apply a standard of land quality rating and be consistent in its use.
- Maintain building/structure integrity of farms in the interest of public safety through enforcement of ordinances.
- Continue to refine the definition of “rural character” as it relates to various land uses.
- Align zoning regulations to encourage farm operations on all scales and all methods.
- Encourage agricultural practices which conserve soil and water.
- Develop a modest industrial sector to diversify the tax base.
- Support agricultural best practices that enhance land quality.

Commercial/Industrial

The Township would benefit from modest industrial development to broaden its tax base. In 2020 the Township received about 25% of its revenue (\$150,000) from the Landfill Host Fee. When the Rice County Landfill closes in approximately 2042-2046, those funds will no longer flow to the Township. In order to maintain high quality roads and to rapidly repair damage from increasingly frequent storms, the Township needs to develop alternate sources for that portion of its revenue.

Goals & Strategies for Commercial/Industrial Development

The Township’s goals for commercial and industrial development are:

- Allow commercial and industrial land uses to diversify the tax base.
- Encourage responsible utilization of natural resources and infrastructure with future generations in mind.
- Work with local government units to create zoning ordinances that allow for commercial and industrial uses.
- Support businesses that are consistent with the rural character of the Township.
- Support and maintain owner-occupied businesses that are consistent with the rural character of the Township.
- Investigate suitable options for redevelopment of former landfill sites.

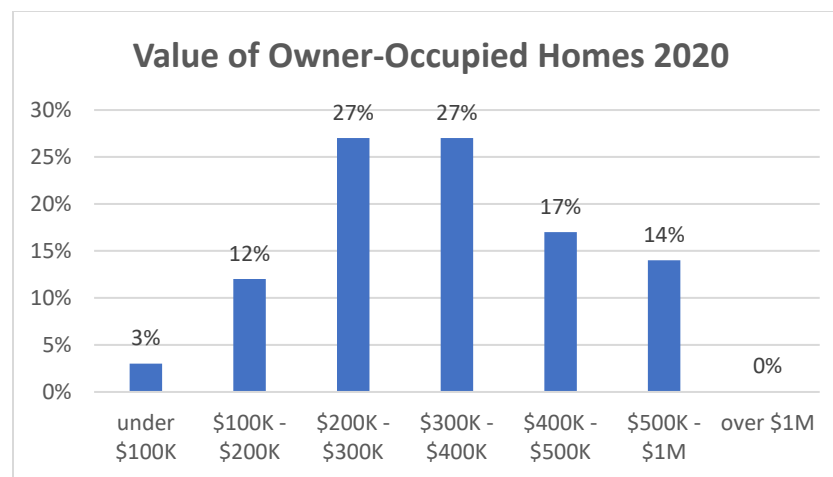
To achieve these goals, the Township will employ the following strategies:

- Develop an industrial area within the Township that provides at least \$100,000 in tax revenue to the Township by 2030.
- Take advantage of the railroad in the southwest section.
- Work with Progressive Rail to develop opportunities for industrial development.

- Develop a plan to provide water and wastewater treatment in the industrial zone.
- Gain access to the Department of Employment and Economic Development’s brownfield cleanup fund.
- Work with Rice County to create appropriate zoning ordinances.
- Identify economically viable uses for the Former Rice County Dump Superfund site.

Residential

In the 36.4 square miles comprising the Township there are approximately 690 residential parcels. Of these 270 are in rural residential neighborhoods while 420 are either on farms or are standalone residences located on several acres in farming areas. About 40% of the population lives in rural residential neighborhoods. The median home price (2020) is approximately \$331,500. About 96% of homes are occupied by the owner. The current value of owner-occupied homes is shown below. This indicates that there is very little housing stock available as either starter homes or for retirees wishing to downsize.



Goals & Strategies for Housing

The Township’s goals for its housing infrastructure are:

- Provide opportunities for development of housing without decreasing the supply of prime agricultural land.
- Maintain the quality and rural character of the existing neighborhoods.
- Evaluate if there are opportunities for higher density residential clusters to provide younger families and retirees with affordable residences.
- Promote development of multi-generational community living.
- Encourage development in areas with existing infrastructure capacity that does not require the installation of new road infrastructure.

To achieve these goals, the Township will employ the following strategies:

- Work with Rice County to explore housing development options, including attainable (work force) housing and senior housing.
- Educate residents on the opportunities to permit accessory dwelling units on existing residential properties.
- Promote the “Good Neighbor Policy” that was developed by the Township.
- Develop standards for residential areas that are compatible with rural/agricultural character of the township and designed to be affordable.
- Encourage low-impact development techniques in new developments.
- Encourage energy efficient housing that exceeds the minimum efficiency levels required in building codes. Encourage use of renewable, local, and diverse forms of energy.
- Encourage development of a variety of transportation choices including pedestrian friendly neighborhoods.
- Encourage property maintenance to extend housing structure life.
- Adopt flexible design standards that welcome innovative/sustainable housing/landscape construction.

Extractive Resources

There are extensive aggregate resource deposits within the Township. While aggregate resource mining is considered an agricultural use from a zoning perspective, it has a unique set of considerations which are addressed in this section. Some are currently being mined, while other properties have experienced a cessation in mining activity on either a temporary or permanent basis. Given proximity of the Township to I-35 and rapidly developing areas, it is anticipated that the extraction of aggregate resources will continue to be in demand. Many of the aggregate resources are on land which is marginal for farming. The Township views aggregate resource mining as a possible best use of certain marginal agricultural land if 1) mitigation of the impacts of the mining operations on township infrastructure and adjacent land uses can be achieved, and 2) the mining is followed by reclamation of the land so it can be used for other economically viable purposes.

Goals & Strategies for Extractive Uses

The Township’s goals for extractive land uses are:

- Restrict mining to marginal agricultural land.
- Reclamation of mined land to accommodate economically viable suitable future use when mining is complete.

- Utilize mining best practices to provide for greater compatibility between mining activities and nearby land uses.
 - Regulate mining activities to mitigate impacts to public health and safety.
 - To achieve these goals, the Township will employ the following strategies:
- Align zoning ordinances specific to aggregate resource mining.
 - Work with Rice County to enforce permits issued by the County.
 - Require implementable reclamation plans secured by financial security sufficient to ensure reclamation is completed.

ENVIRONMENT

Overview

Like many jurisdictions the Township has both environmental resources and environmental challenges. The soil through much of the Township is a primary resource which sustains an agricultural economy essential to the identity of the community. In the southwestern sections there are aggregate resource mines which are expected to operate for the next several decades. The Cannon River is a designated Minnesota Wild and Scenic River, with additional protections required under the Minnesota Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. There are five watersheds which flow into the Cannon River and many wetlands associated with these watersheds. Among the challenges are the Former Rice County Dump which is a Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Superfund site, the current Rice County Landfill which is projected to be closed between 2040 and 2045, and runoff from agricultural fields which contributes suspended solids, nitrates, and phosphorus to the Cannon River and eventually to the Gulf of Mexico.

Goals & Strategies

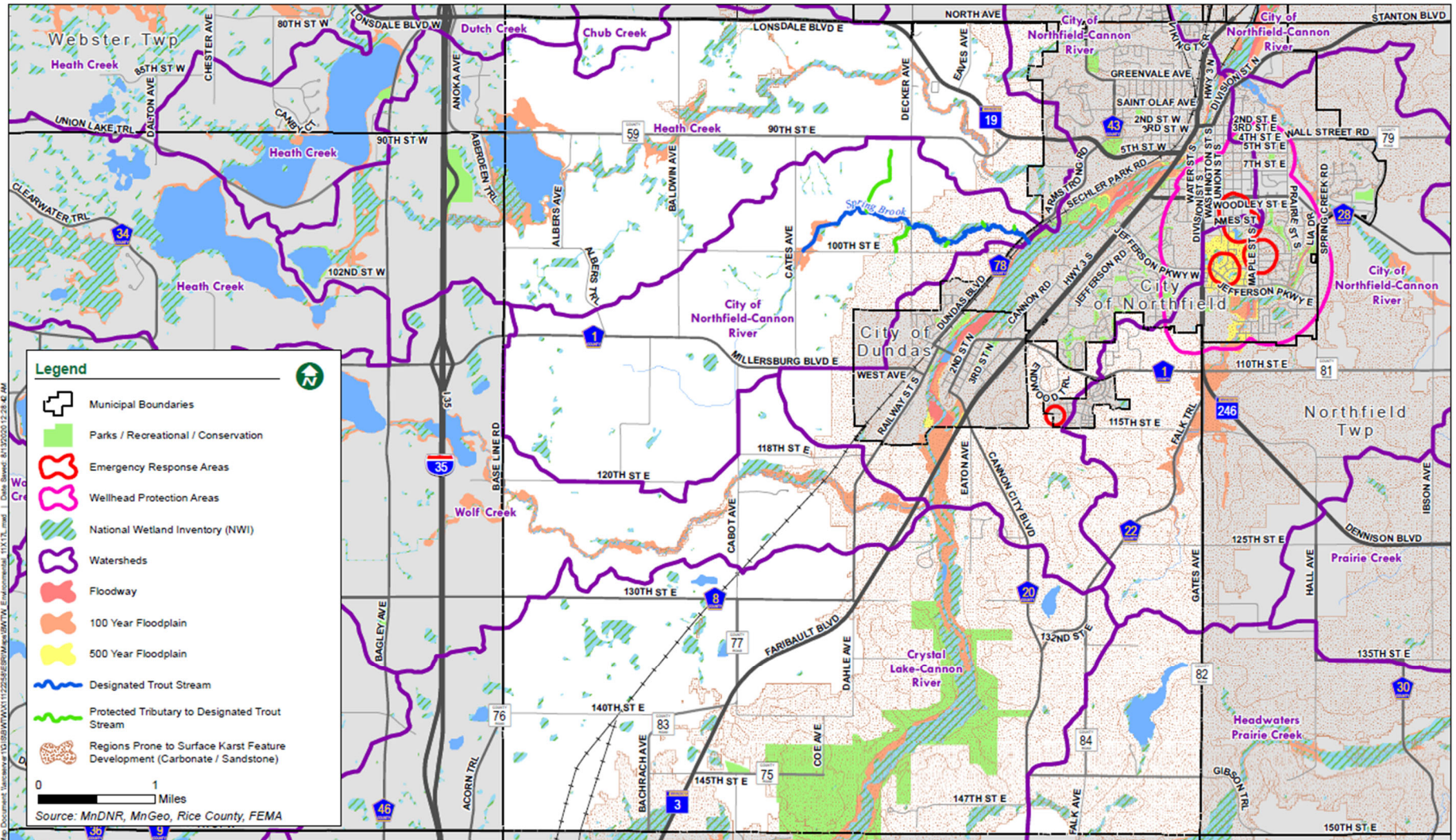
The Township's goals for its environmental resources are:

- Reduction of agricultural runoff

- Mitigation of the Former Rice County Dump.
- Improve walking and horseback riding trails in the Cannon River Wilderness Area.
- Prepare for the closure of the Rice County Landfill.
- Encourage the preservation of high-quality natural areas on private land in order to allow wildlife movement between habitats.
- Encourage area development in a manner that is sensitive to the impact upon natural features.
- Encourage developers to retain natural areas or restore them with native species following construction. Incorporate best management practices as recommended by the Mn DNR in design and construction plans.
- Coordinate with the County and other stakeholders on the preparation and implementation of emergency management plans.
- Coordinate with agency partners such as FEMA and the DNR regarding floodplain management activities and flood insurance.

To achieve these goals, the Township will employ the following strategies:

- Work with local partners to monitor and minimize agricultural runoff and provide information to the farming community related to best practice measures such as wind breaks, crop rotation, and improvements to water quality.
- Access the Department of Employment and Economic Development's brownfield cleanup fund and any other available funding mechanisms to mitigate with the Former Rice County Dump.
- Work with Rice County to explore the future of the Rice County Landfill
- Work with Rice County to explore using the Rice County Landfill for energy generation.
- Work with Rice County's Parks & Recreation division on improving trails in the Cannon River Wilderness Area.



TRANSPORTATION

Overview

The Township's transportation system consists of roads, a railroad line, and multi-modal trails. The road system is managed by three jurisdictions – the Township, Rice County and the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The road system managed by the Township consists of 5.4 miles of asphalt and 32.1 miles of gravel roads. The asphalt sections are largely in rural residential housing clusters. The gravel roads are the primary farm-to-market routes as well as serving for general transportation. A segment of the Mills Town Trail for bicycles runs through the town. The Union Pacific Railroad line from southern Minnesota to St. Paul passes through the Township.

The road network within the Township is managed by several agencies. An Existing Road – Jurisdiction map is on Page 16 and a pavement surface type map is provided on Page 17. Although not located in Bridgewater Township, I-35 located immediately to the west of the town border provides significant access and opportunity to the Twin Cities and greater Minnesota. Progressive Rail operates a rail line that provides opportunities for multi-modal transportation access to the planned industrial area.

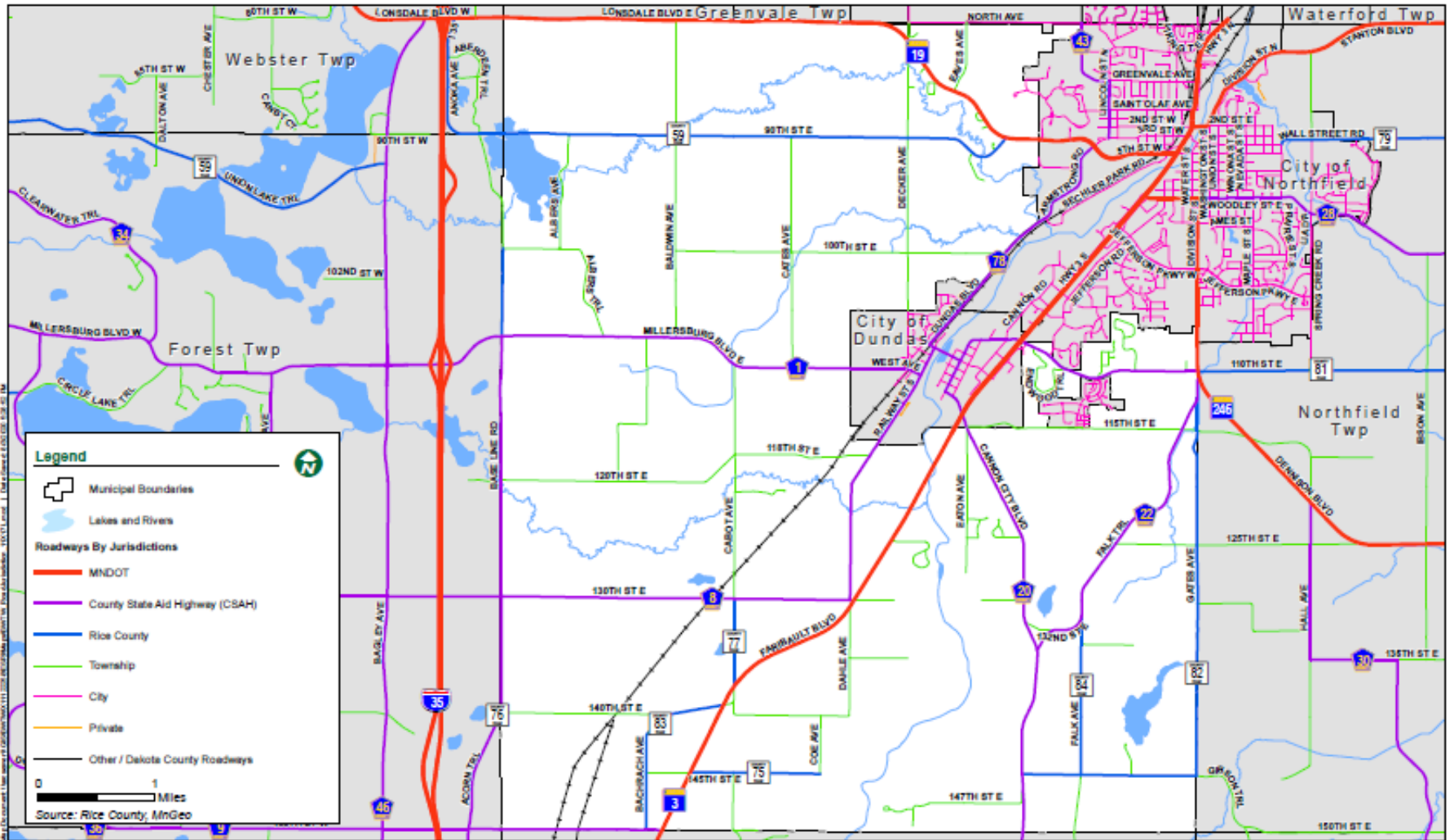
Goals & Strategies

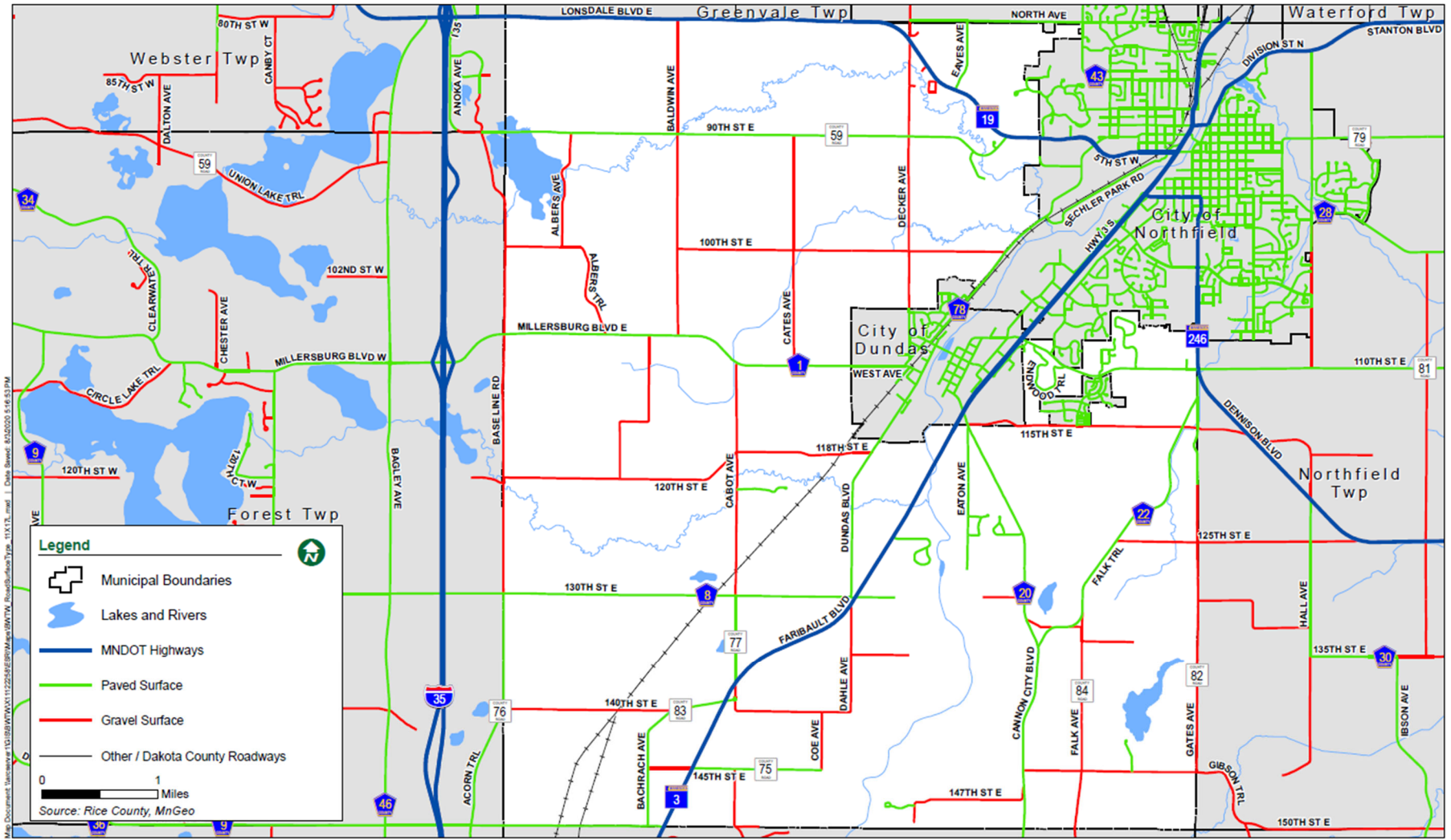
The Township's goals for its transportation infrastructure are:

- Maintain high quality farm-to-market routes.
- Transition roads to other jurisdictions as usage patterns warrant.
- Develop a Rural Industrial District along the Union Pacific line.
- Expand bike and pedestrian pathways, and snowmobile trails.
- As new developments occur, encourage design and land use that supports a range of transportation choices.
- Support the development of regional and local transit options.
- Encourage preservation of road right of way to promote safety, improvements, and pedestrian pathways.
- Promote the preservation of scenic rural roads and vistas through the planning process from visually intrusive or incompatible development.
- Develop a corridor plan in conjunction with Rice County before significant development occurs.
- Modernize roads, bridges, and culverts to more adequately accommodate larger agricultural equipment.

To achieve these goals, the Township will employ the following strategies:

- Maintain a long-term road maintenance program.
 - Transition 140th Street to a paved 10-ton road
 - Review the Road Policy on a regular basis to ensure it adequately supports agricultural transport, trails, and pedestrian use.
 - Continually review the safety of the transportation system.
- Work with bicycle and snowmobile clubs to improve the trail system while maintaining the natural/rural character.
 - Look for opportunities to work with Rice County and the State to improve transportation infrastructure.
 - Work with partner agencies to complete the bike trail between Faribault and Dundas.
 - Maintain roads in accordance with township policies related to snow removal, dust control, and other maintenance projects.





SEWER AND WATER

Overview

Currently water is provided either by individual wells or, in the rural residential neighborhoods, a common well serving a number of homes. Wastewater treatment is handled by individual septic systems. As the Township develops an industrial area it will need to consider providing water and wastewater treatment for that area.

Goals & Strategies

The Township's goals for sewer and water infrastructure are:

- Provide criteria and guidance for future infrastructure development.

- Enforce MPCA rules through adherence to MN Rules Chapter 7080.
- Review presence of fertilizers, herbicides, and chemicals seeping into drinking water aquifers due to antiquated land management practices. Encourage mitigation efforts to ensure future generations access to clean safe water.

To achieve these goals, the Township will employ the following strategies:

- Seek State and Federal funds to develop the infrastructure for the planned industrial area.
- Periodically monitor and update the ordinance related to individual septic systems to verify that it is sufficient to meet changing standards.

SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT

Overview

Over the last 20 years the Township has experienced several severe flooding events with extensive damage to roads and private properties. The frequency and severity of those flooding events is not anticipated to decrease. The Township has made significant investments to mitigate the effects of flooding in the Spring Creek watershed. As watersheds typically cross jurisdictional boundaries, the Township will work with neighboring cities and townships to implement best practices for stormwater management.

Goals & Strategies

The Township's goals for surface water management are:

- Promote best management practices (BMP) for stormwater management.
- Encourage implementation of storm water management techniques that supports efficient agricultural production.
- Construct and maintain systems for the collection and dispersion and treatment of storm water and runoff.
- Improve the quality of water entering the aquifer and the Cannon River.

To achieve these goals, the Township will employ the following strategies:

- Support the use of best management practices that maintain or improve water quality.
- Protect water resources from improper land use that negatively impacts water quantity or quality.
- Continue to improve measures to accommodate increasingly severe weather events.
- Work with the farming community to reduce discharge of fertilizer residues.
- Identify sensitive ground water recharge areas.
- Require developers to restore the ability of soils to absorb, retain, and infiltrate water following development.
- Protect surface waters and wetland areas to promote water quality, recreation opportunities, aesthetic qualities, natural habitat areas, and ground water recharge.
- Reduce instances of harmful erosions, sedimentation, and pollutants from affecting water resources.
- Work with the Soil and Water Conservation District of Rice County, non-governmental organizations, and other partners related to public education and implementation efforts.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Overview

The Township contains 670 acres of the Cannon River Wilderness Area which is owned by Rice County. This could potentially be a wonderful recreational resource for the Township. Portions of it have well maintained trails for hiking and horseback riding. In other sections the trails could use some improvement. The following page includes a map of the park and trail resources in the township.

Goals & Strategies

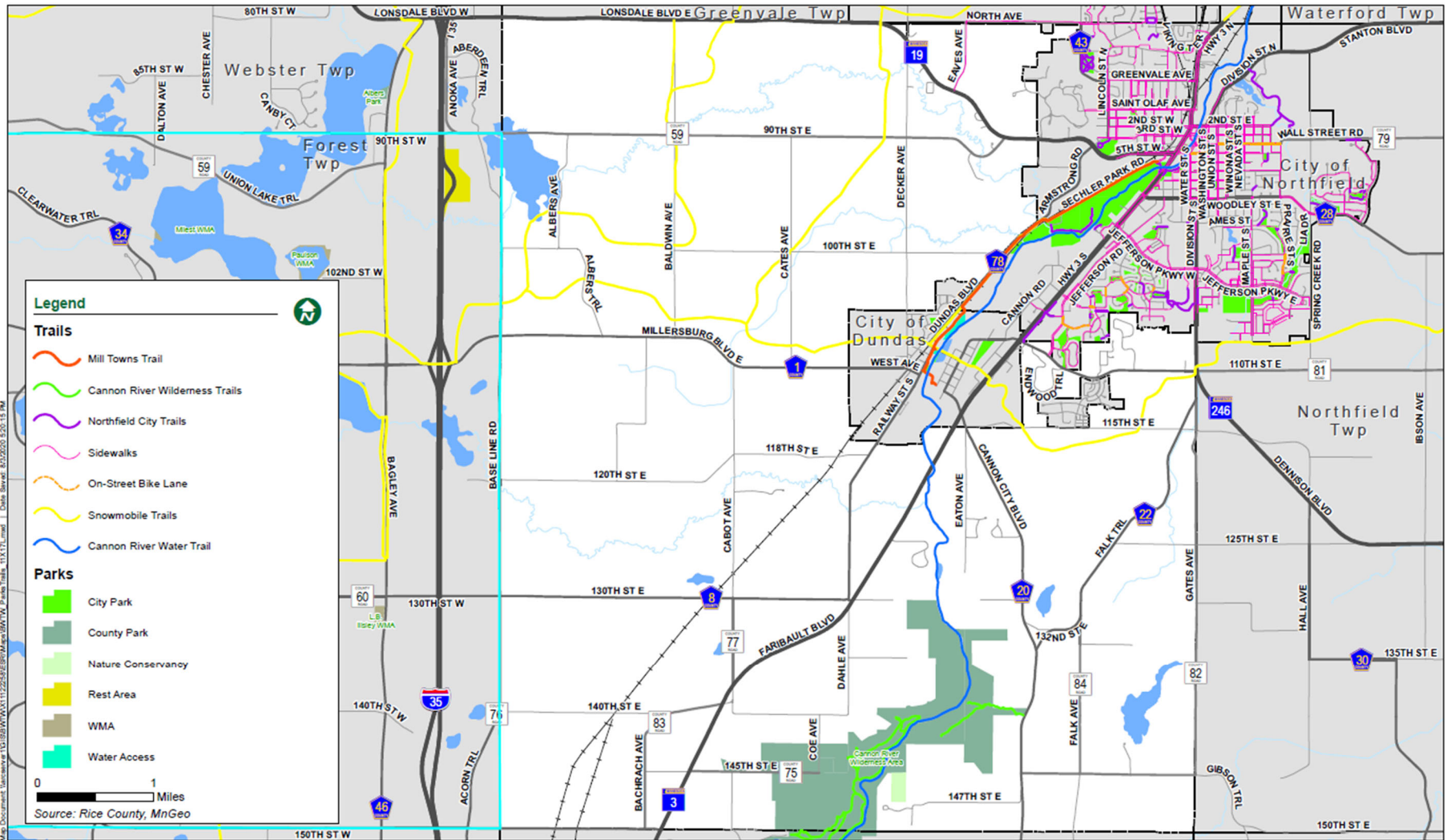
The Township's goals for its parks and recreation facilities are:

- Partner with stakeholder groups and other agencies to meet recreational needs of the residents and utilize opportunities for expansion of recreation options in the Township.
- Support and enhance the Cannon River Wilderness Area.
- Ensure user safety while maintaining the natural character/environmental beauty by promoting recreational trails for various types of users.

- Support recreational opportunities that are not disruptive to long-term agriculture and are compatible with the rural character of the area.

To achieve these goals, the Township will employ the following strategies:

- Annually review opportunities to work with Rice County on improvements to the Cannon River Wilderness Area.
- Work with regional agencies and organizations to coordinate trail planning for multi-modal forms of trail use.
- Coordinate with local stakeholders and interest groups related to trail planning efforts.
- Develop public access to existing DNR recognized waterways.
- Ensure development preserves natural features and expands recreational access for residents.
- Support the DNR on construction of the Mills Towns Bike Trail



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Overview

Agricultural uses have traditionally been the primary economic engine of Bridgewater Township. In more recent years, additional economic opportunities have expanded to include tourism and other commercial and industrial activities that are compatible and supportive with agriculture.

Goals & Strategies

The Township's goals for economic development are:

- Preserve productive agricultural land.
- Expand the tax base by encouraging the development of rural commercial and industrial businesses that enhance the quality of life and employment opportunities within the Town, while minimizing the impacts to agricultural and environmental resources
- Provide economic opportunities to retain residents.

To achieve these goals, the Township will employ the following strategies:

- Work with Rice County to diversify zoning to allow for economic development opportunities.
- Review standards to support home occupations while ensuring compatibility with surrounding land use.

- Encourage application of dark skies standards and practices by all property types.
- Encourage and develop a broader cross section of housing stock.
- Develop processes and procedural steps to ensure development is in keeping with the rural character of the Township.
- Promote land and transportation benefits to potential businesses.
- Promotion of innovative agricultural practices, agricultural tourism, and local food production.
- Develop plans to assist in quick start up for future businesses.
- Foster the local economy through public community business events and marketing.
- Encourage the incorporation of alternative energy sources into development plans.
- Strengthen opportunities for home or center-based childcare to provide necessary support to employees of businesses in the Town.