

Why a Plan?

WHAT IS THE PLAN?

The Connected to Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan provides a vision for the future of the city with a focus on priorities, policies, and public investments over the next 20 years. The City of North Liberty recognizes the area is changing, and that the community will not be the same in 20 years. In short, the North Liberty Connected to Tomorrow Plan will offer a vision and provide direction for how to create the best future possible to kick off the next 15-20 years!

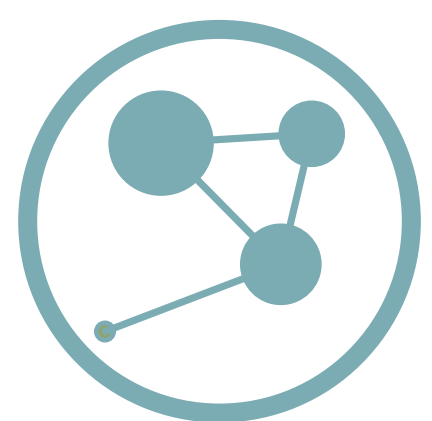
WHY PLAN?



To create a vision and direction for the future, defined by members of North Liberty



To guide growth directions for future land use and infrastructure to support North Liberty's needs today and tomorrow



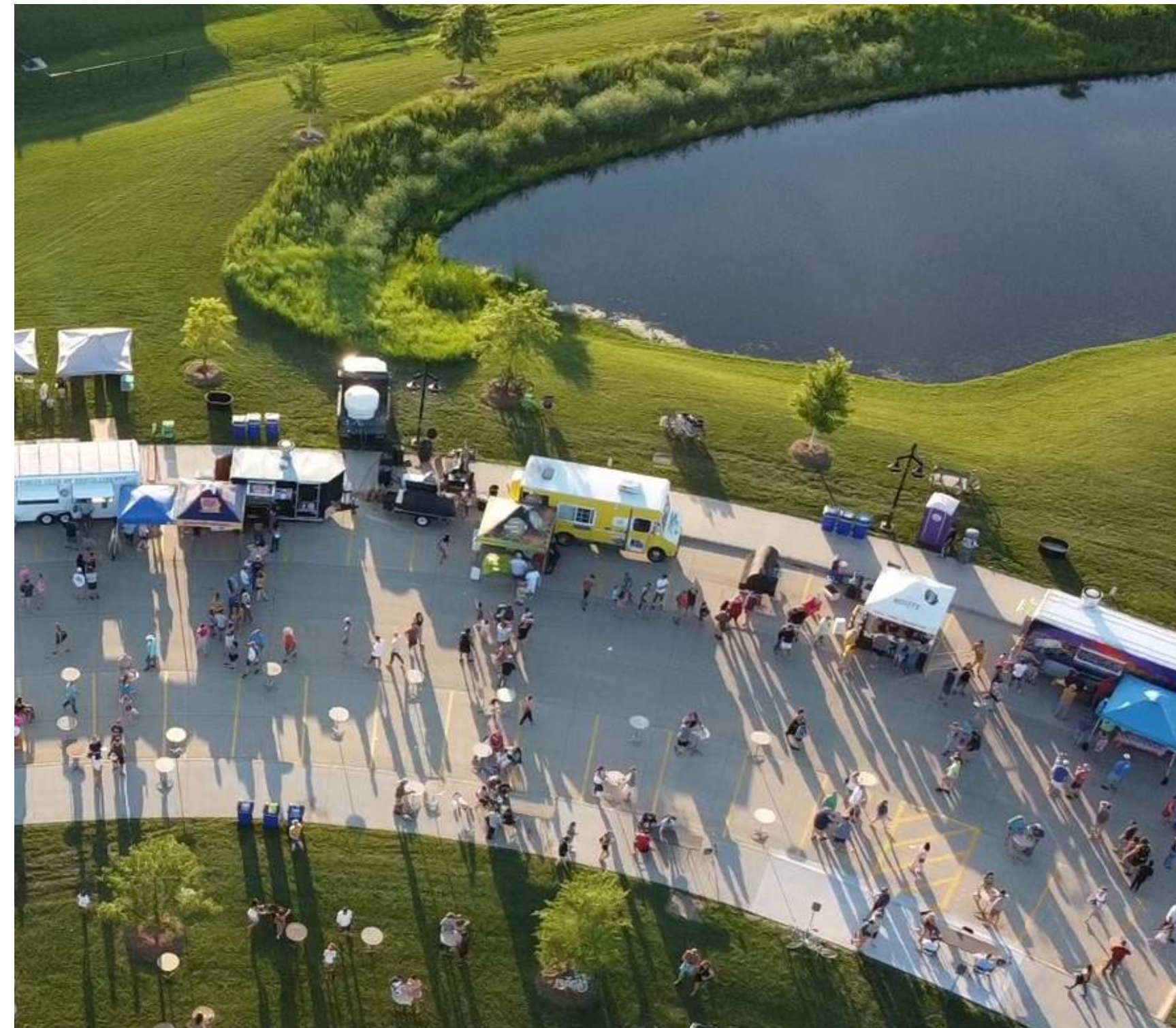
To plan new transportation elements, such as corridors, trails, and solutions to existing problems like connectivity and access to job centers



To address projects and ideas that maintain North Liberty's quality of life



To protect our natural environment and prepare for changing environmental conditions



PURPOSE OF THE PLAN



Focused on people

The people who live, work, and visit North Liberty are most important to the planning process and its outcomes. The plan represents everyone's voice, so that the future of North Liberty becomes even better. A place where people will want to live and visit – to shop at our stores, eat at our restaurants, work in our businesses, and be an active part of our community.



Near-term resiliency, long-term strategy

Cities are constantly tested on their resiliency amid the pandemic and natural disasters. The plan includes flexibility to support our community during times of uncertainty. Connected to Tomorrow requires a proactive approach to advance a long-term strategy for a high quality, equitable, and healthy community.



Visionary, yet realistic

The plan continues to push North Liberty to become a community where everyone belongs. This plan aims to be visionary and push North Liberty to think big and welcome new ideas. However, the plan is grounded in realistic expectations that consider the diverse needs of all ages and abilities.

PLANNING THEMES



A CONNECTED CITY

We envision North Liberty with strong connections from the neighborhoods to trails, recreational areas, schools, and businesses.



A NETWORK OF STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS

We envision North Liberty with neighborhoods that continue to grow as connected places (social and physical), with a wide variety of housing types and uses that serve current and future population growth.



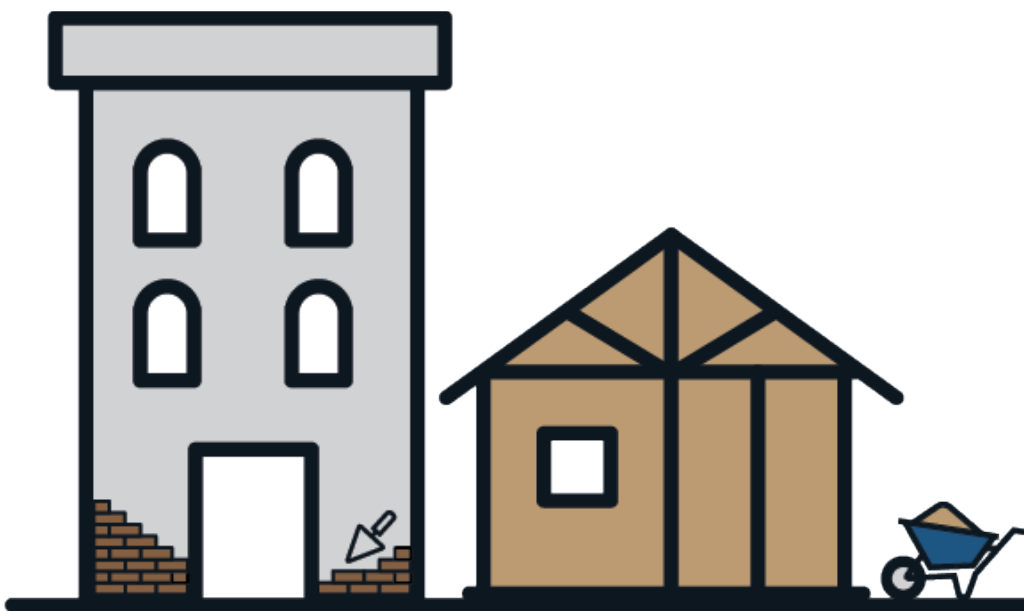
A DESTINATION FOR ALL PEOPLE

We envision North Liberty as an equitable, unique, and memorable destination for all people. Where services, amenities, and opportunities are accessible to all residents free of discrimination. A place that helps attract visitors, investors, and development to the community.



A CONFLUENCE OF NATURE

We envision North Liberty which celebrates and builds on natural spaces with a visible, healthy environment that is committed to actions that help mitigate climate change. A community that offers the ability to escape into nature.



A MARKET FOR DEVELOPMENT

We envision North Liberty as continuing to be a premier city for development and growth in the region and Iowa. With many growth opportunities, North Liberty will plan strategically for economic growth that maximizes land use potential and transportation connections.



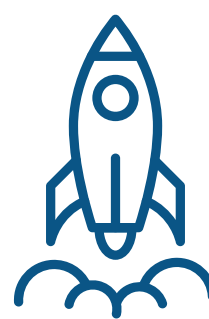
A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

We envision North Liberty as a sustainable community that safeguards the health and well-being of its economic, social, and environmental systems – including food security, clean air and water, healthy ecosystems, and effective governance.

PLANNING PROCESS

The process included interactive mapping, surveys, listening sessions, stakeholder committee meetings, design studios, and in-person and virtual open houses.

A dedicated advisory committee that represents a broad group of the community met at key points of the process. Their direction guided the planning process and key planning priorities.



NOV. '21 Project Launch

The first advisory committee meeting was held and the project website was created which included a video describing the project themes and directions.



DEC. '21 Community Survey & Map

A community survey and an interactive map were launched allowing users to pin location specific ideas or comments. The online survey was launched and promoted.



JANUARY Open House

A virtual and in-person open houses was held. The Planning Team also met with North Liberty department heads. Participants represented a variety of voices with diverse experience and perspectives.



MARCH Committee Listening Sessions

The advisory committee met to discuss policy, projects, and the next steps of the process. A series of listening sessions with community stakeholders offered insight into future needs and opportunities.



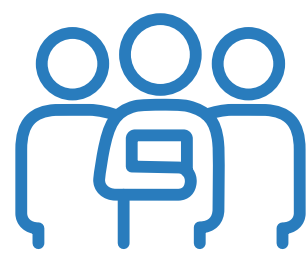
APRIL Design Studio

A two-day design studio provided opportunities to learn about the plan, and add comments on a future land use map. Additionally, a listening session with high school students captured their expectations and ideas for the future of North Liberty.



MAY Plan Concepts

The Planning Team started refining the plan's concepts based on the input received from several members of the community during the design studio, community survey, interactive map, and listening sessions.



JUNE Committee Meeting

The advisory committee met to discuss future land use directions, policy, projects, and the next steps of the process.



AUGUST Neighborhood Meeting

The Planning Team shared the draft of the future land maps and potential policy areas with the advisory committee. The team also met with the Neighborhood Ambassadors to receive additional feedback on ideas.



SEPTEMBER Plan Drafting

After meeting with several community groups to get additional feedback on ideas, the plan concepts were further refined for the draft plan.



OCTOBER Open House

A public open house and gallery was setup at the Community Center to share and orient community members to the plan's concepts.



NOVEMBER Plan Refinement

The document will be posted and edited based on feedback from the public open houses and reviewed by the advisory committee.



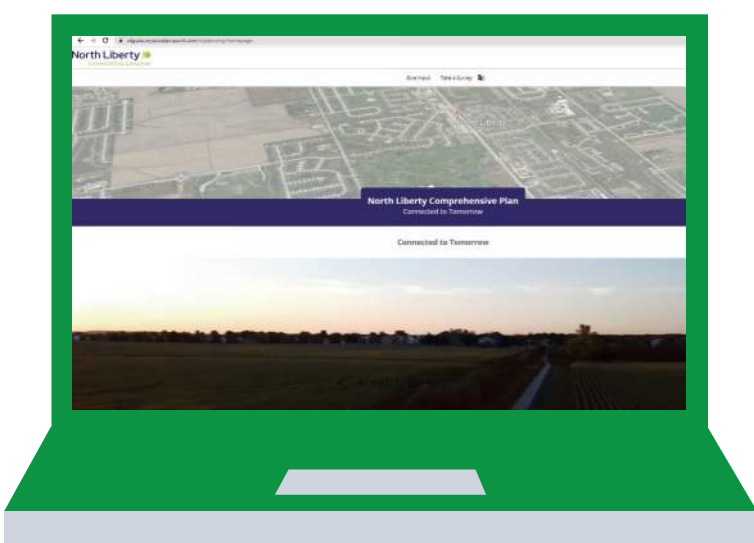
DECEMBER Council Approval

The approval process will begin with the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council.

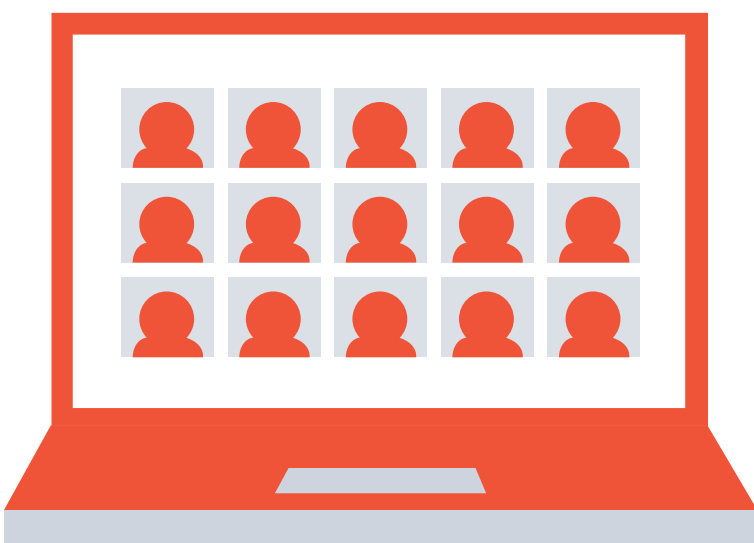
Community Engagement



PROJECT WEBPAGE



**+6,000
Visits**



**+2,000
Unique
Users**

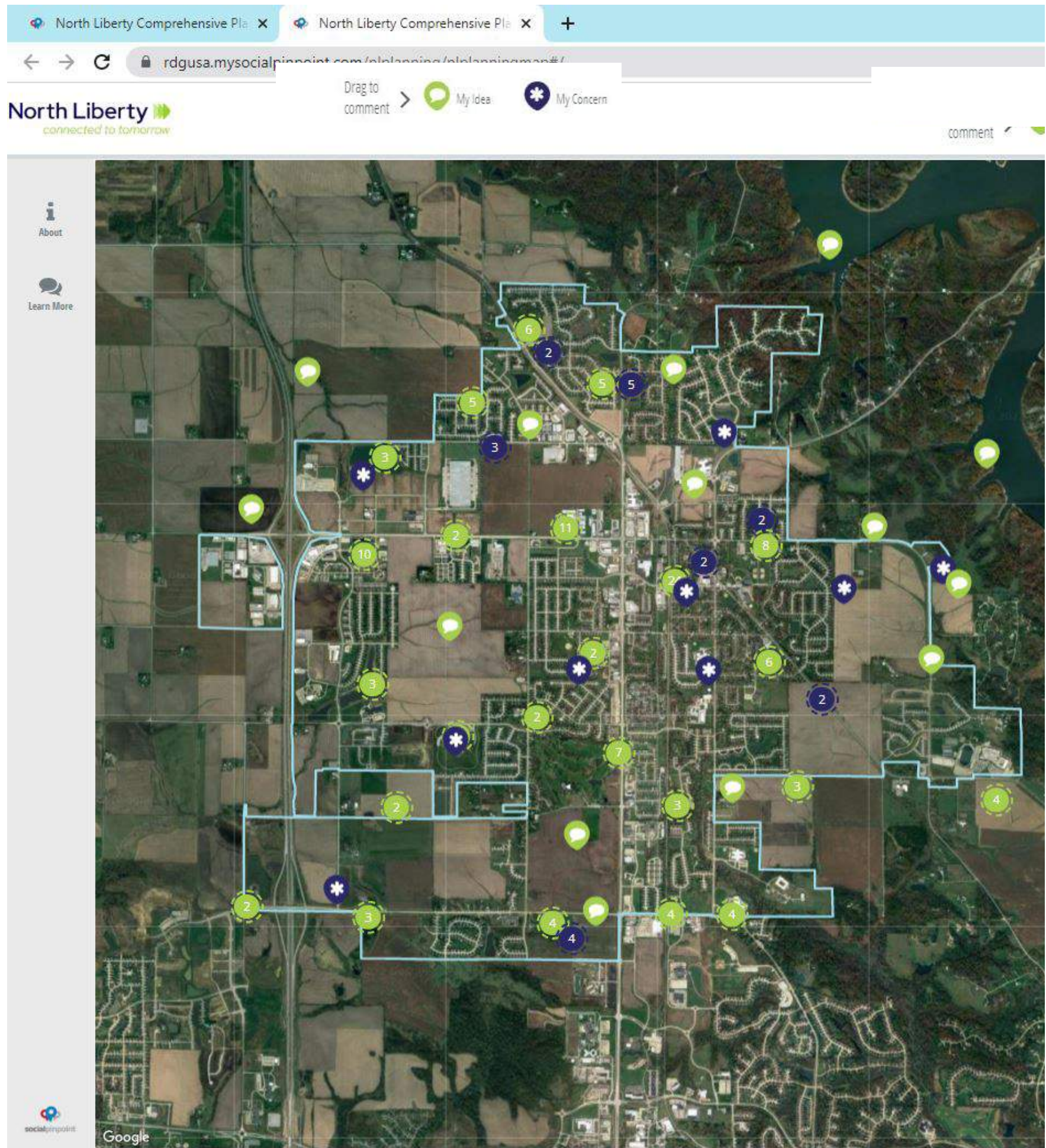
"We would love to see more restaurants and entertainment places. We find ourselves having to drive to Cedar Rapids or surrounding areas for entertainment especially during the winter months."

"Outdoor Workspaces - As many employers have adopted hybrid or remote work, much of the NL workforce is transforming from a commuter community to a remote work community. With our many parks, we have an opportunity to create free outdoor co-workspaces. Sparsely spread out tables, desks, hammocks, public WiFi, sunshades, tree canopies, etc. It would be a nice change for those of us working in our basement offices, encourage collaboration amongst entrepreneurs, and create vibrancy in our community."

INTERACTIVE MAP



**+200
Comments**



"Connect the trails of creekside common park to the main trail by the railroad. It's annoying to cross private properties to do so."

"North Liberty has a ton of entertainment for kids very little, but not enough spaces/entertainment for them to do as they grow into tweens/teens."

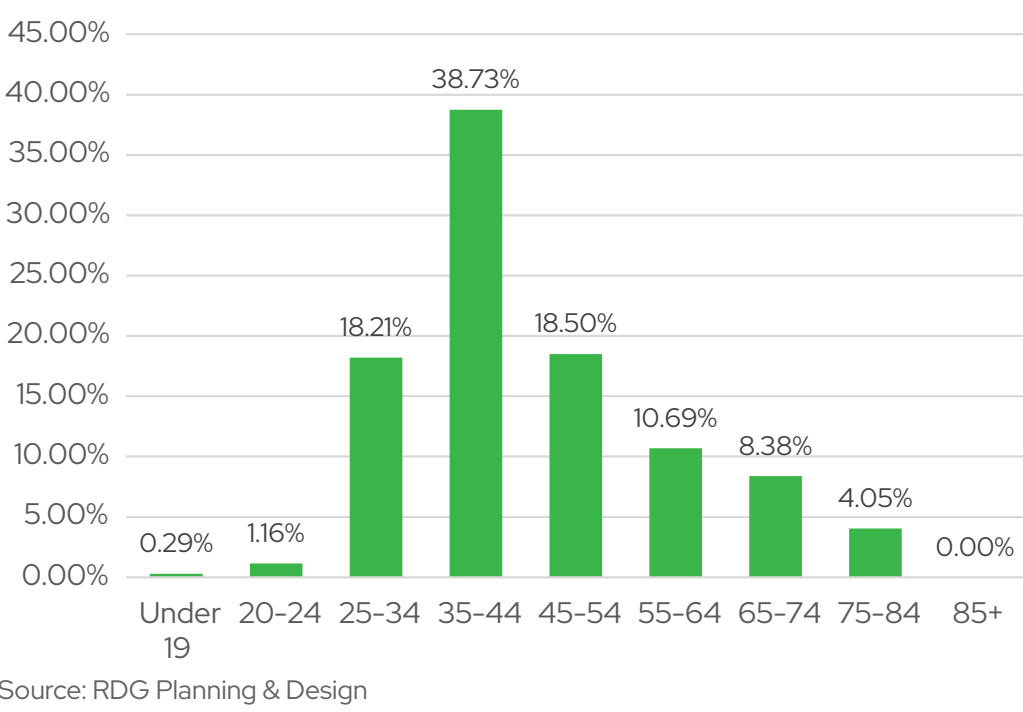
"North Liberty could use more interior recreation space, including turf, space for indoor tournaments. The recreation center could be significantly expanded. Many such centers are being built or expanded in other communities and given the large number of young families, this is an opportunity to be a destination."

What We Heard

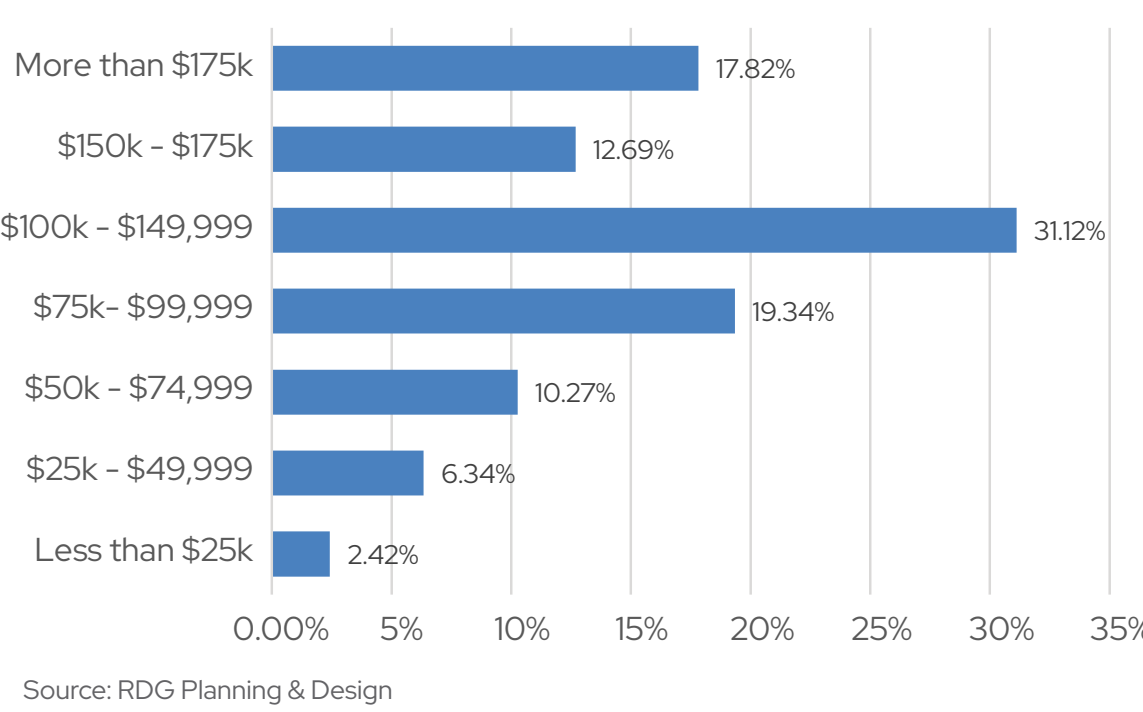
COMMUNITY SURVEY

 **480** Responses

Respondents Age

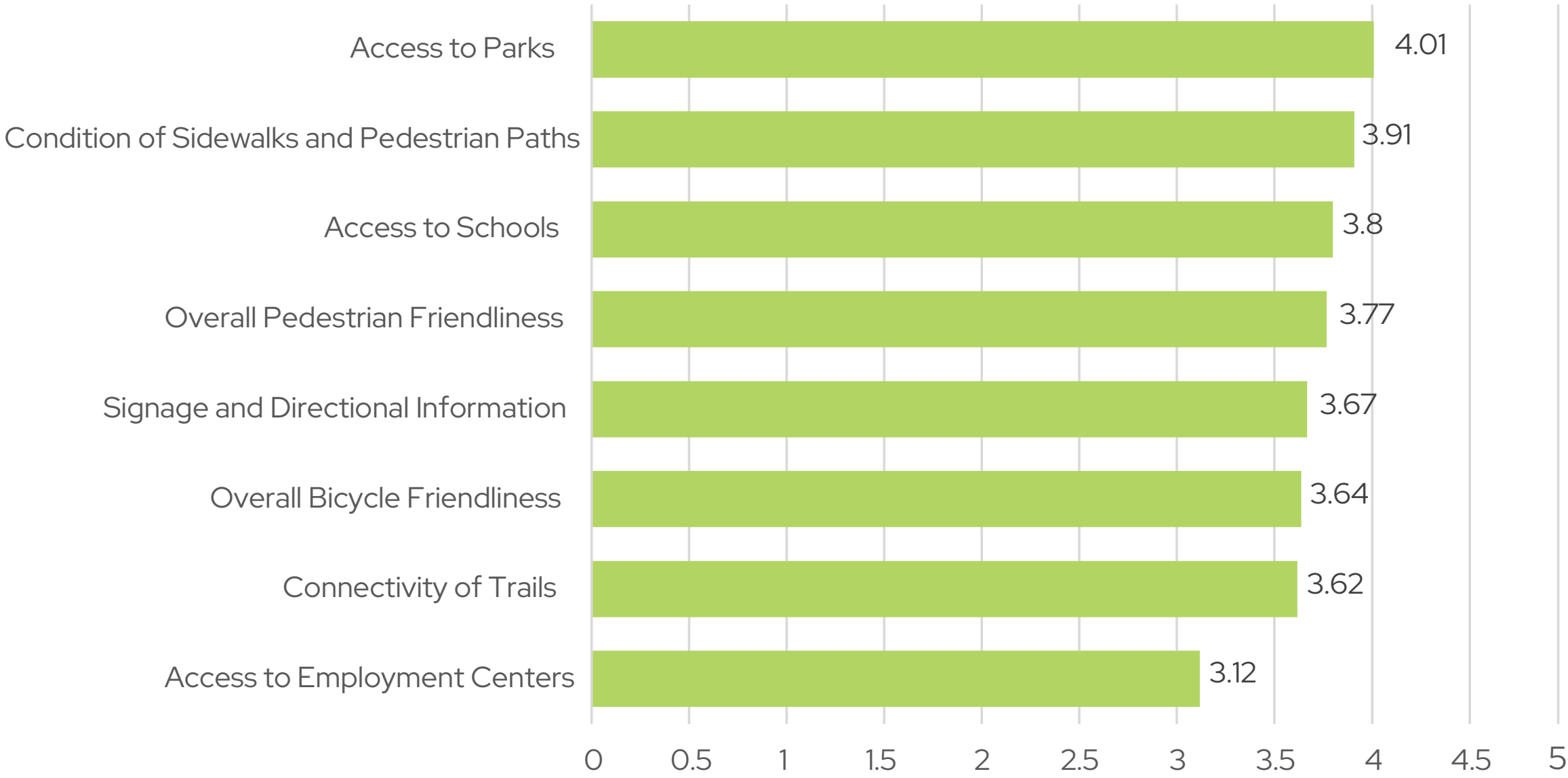


Respondents Income

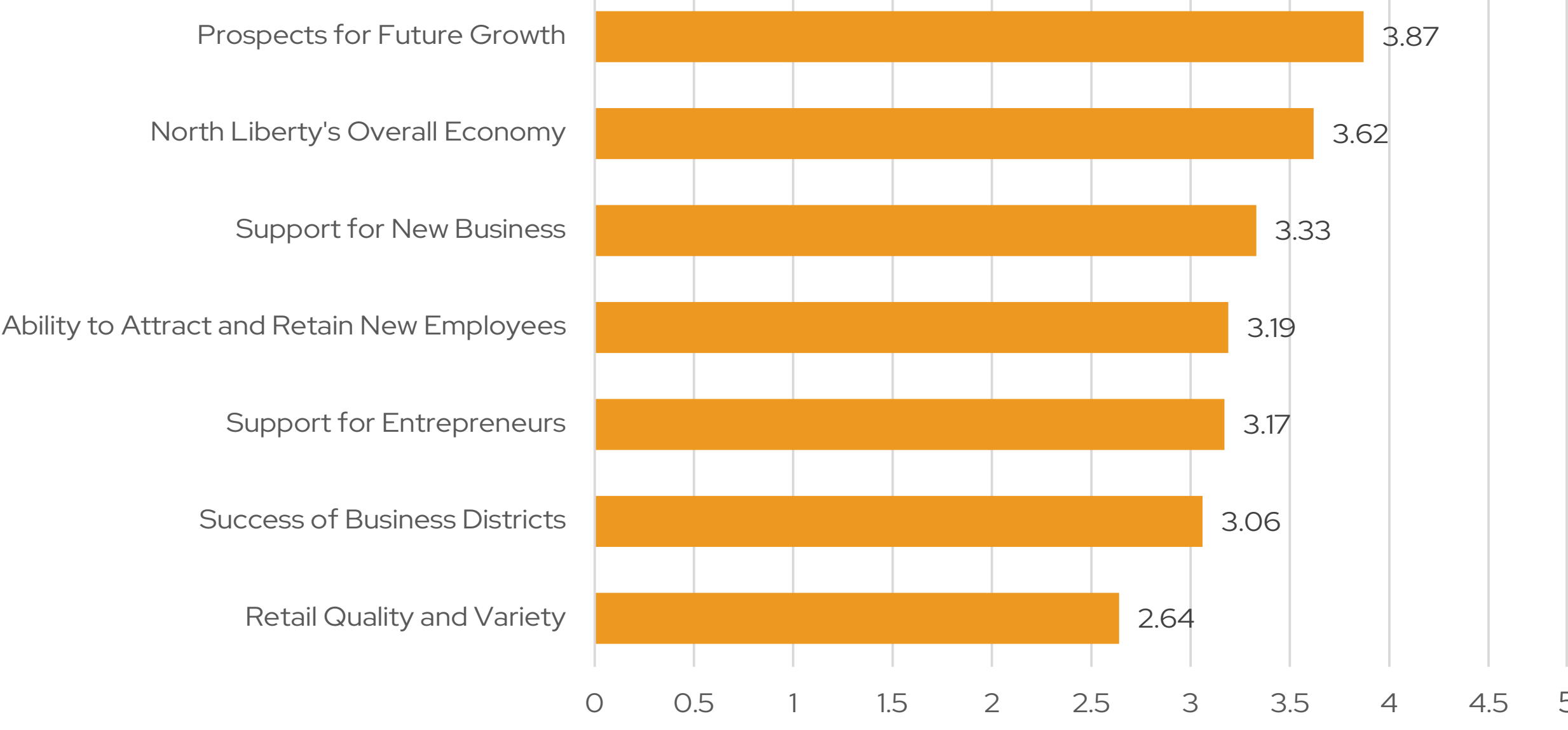


Survey responses on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being poor and 5 being excellent)

Walking & Bicycling



Economic Development



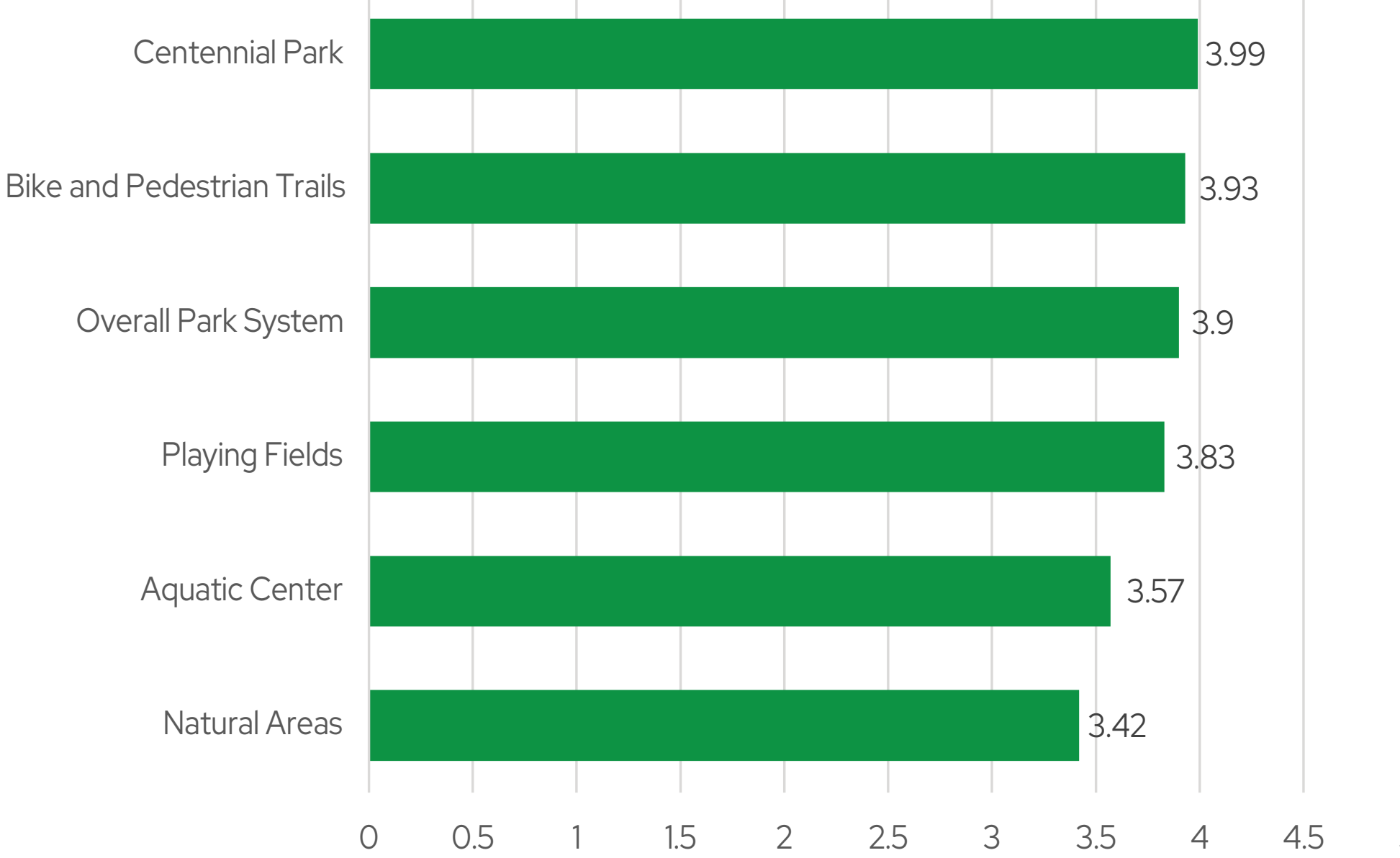
North Liberty Top 10 Greatest Assets

- 1 Family Friendly
- 2 Parks and Outdoor Recreation
- 3 Housing Quality
- 4 Housing Affordability
- 5 Modern Character
- 6 Engaged and Educated Citizenry
- 7 Arts and Cultural Attractions, Events
- 8 Economy - Employment and Business Community
- 9 Community Leadership and Philanthropy
- 10 Entrepreneurial and Spirit of Innovation

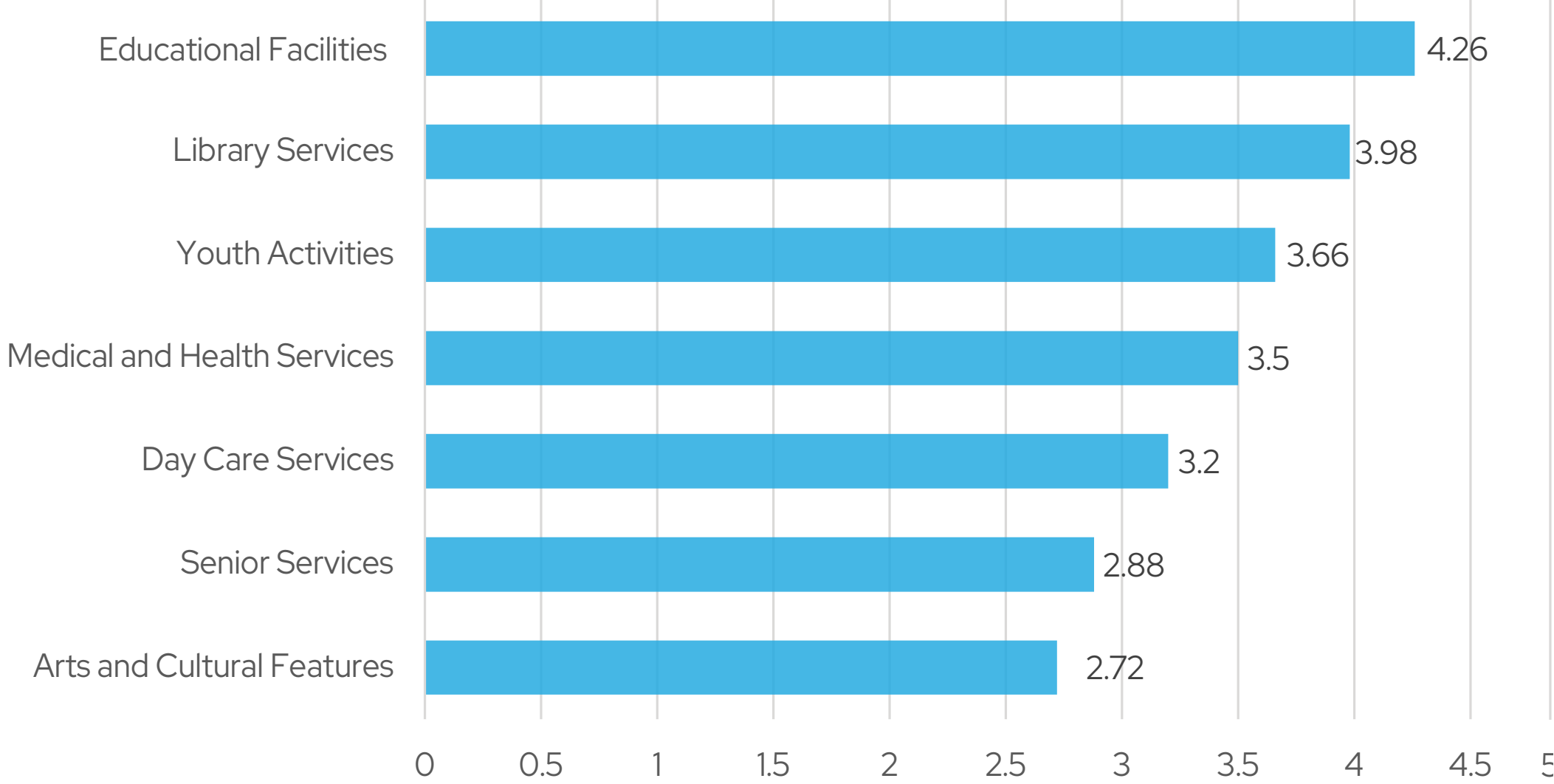
Top 10 Community Priority Projects

- 1 Grow local businesses
- 2 Increase affordable housing
- 3 Expand access to recreational areas
- 4 Strengthen community spaces as destinations
- 5 Increase walking and bicycle facilities
- 6 Improve infrastructure in older neighborhoods
- 7 Attract more diverse industries
- 8 Increase regional commercial development
- 9 More variety of housing types
- 10 Improve stormwater management and flood control programs

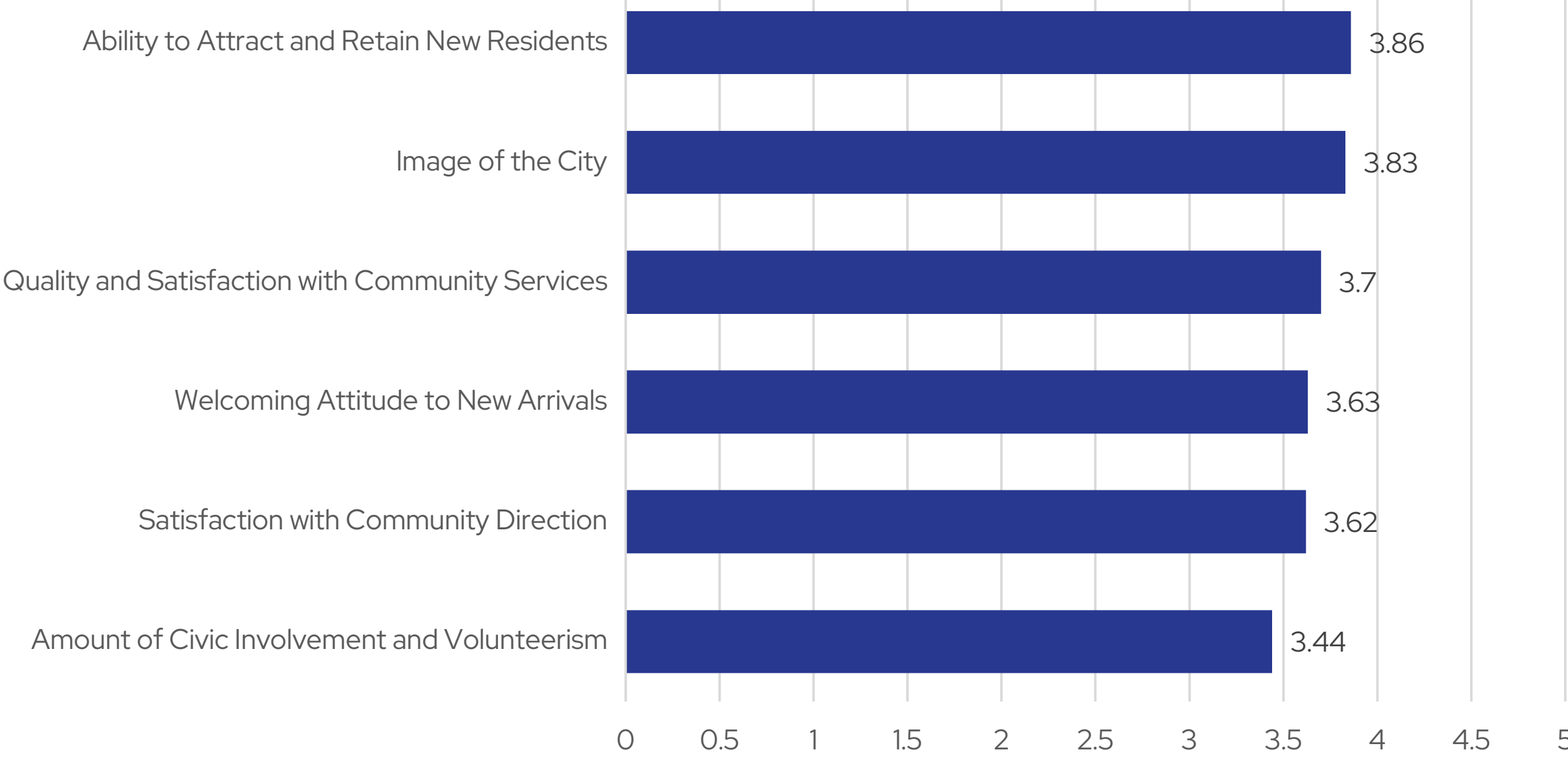
Parks, Recreation & Culture



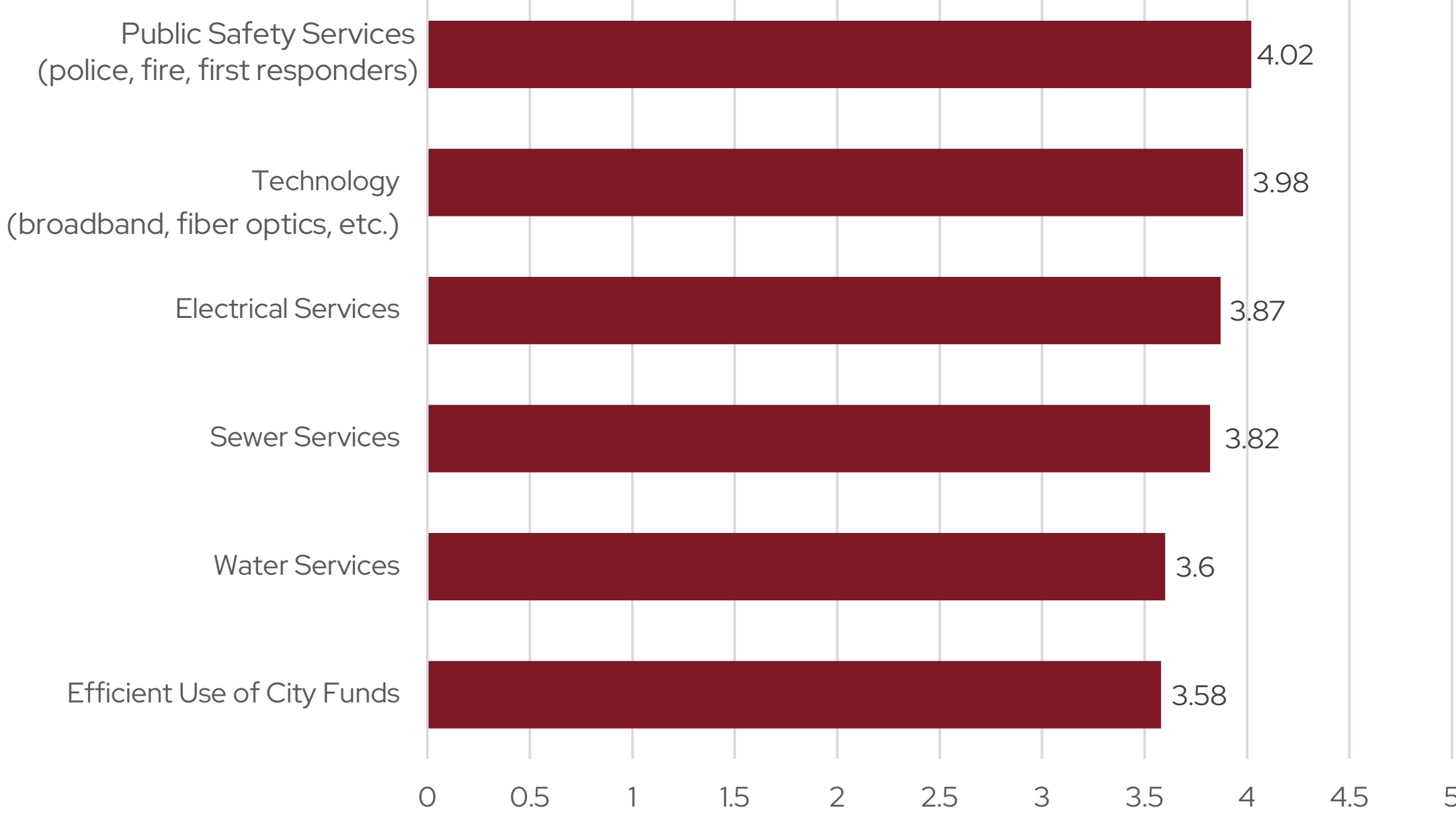
Community Services



Community Image

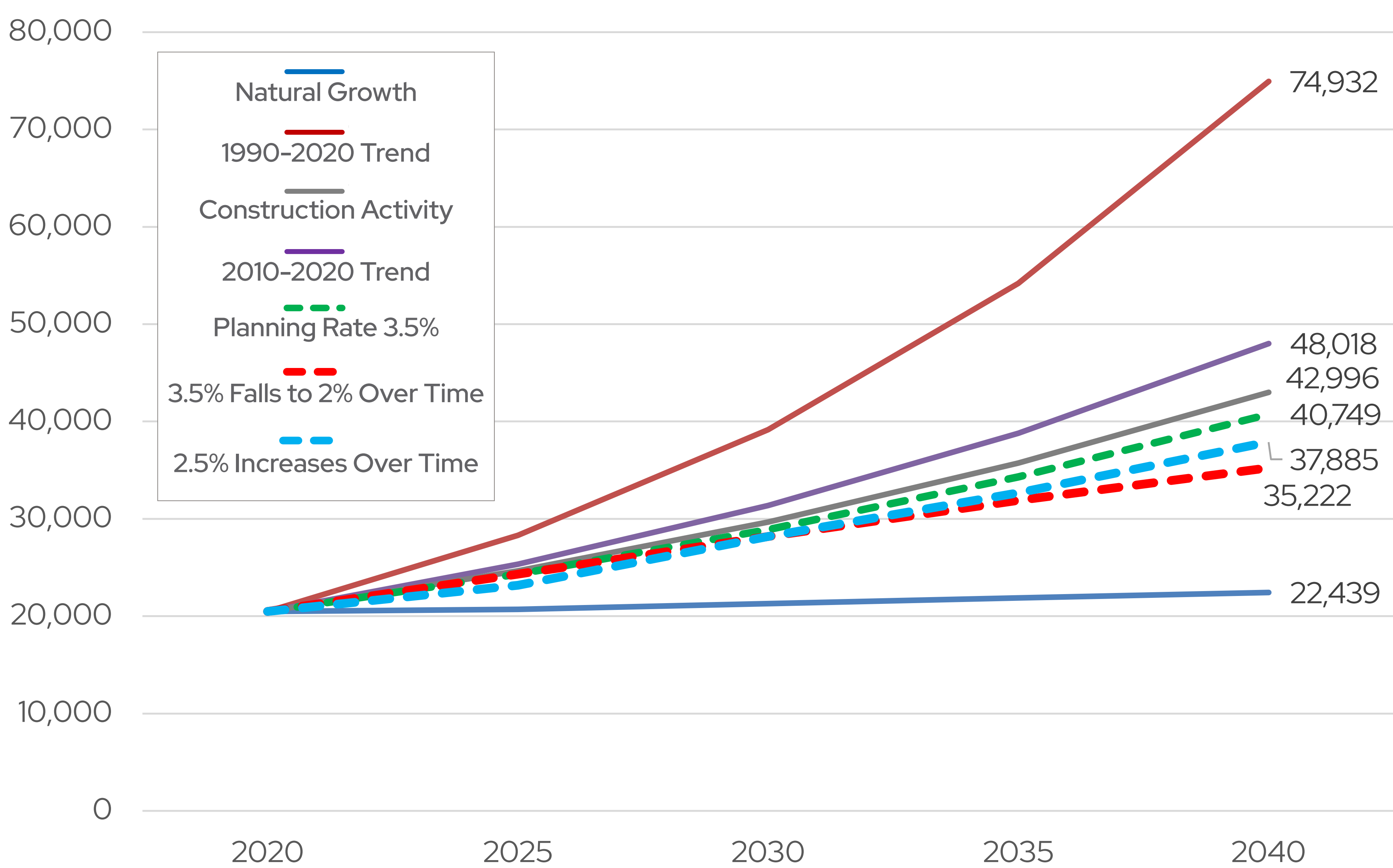


Public Services



The Connected to Tomorrow Plan plans for adequate space to grow based on population growth trends and future opportunities. Future land use planning requires flexibility for changing market demands and demographic characteristics over time.

Population Forecasts



Summary Planning Needs at 3.5% Annual Growth

Trend Scenario		Efficiency Scenario	
Low Density (3 du/ac)	60%	Low Density (3 du/ac)	40%
Medium Density (7 du/ac)	20%	Medium Density (8 du/ac)	30%
High Density (14 du/ac)	20%	High Density (14 du/ac)	30%

*du/ac = dwelling units per acre

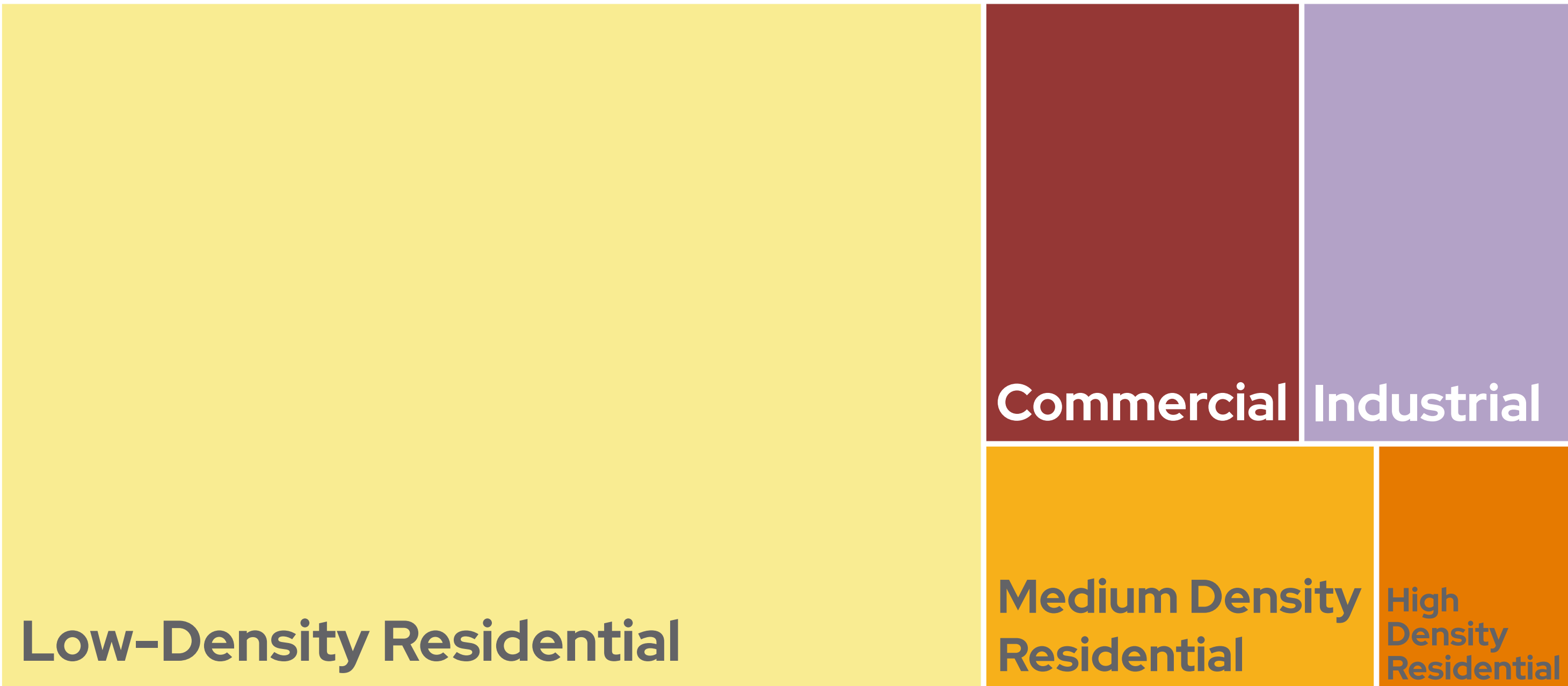
Historical Construction Activity

- About 236 units built on average between 2010-2020
- About 150 units built on average between 2016-2020
- Few units demolished annually between 2010-2020

Land Needs Forecast

The population forecast through 2040 creates a land use planning need of nearly 5,000 acres if growth occurs based on lower density trends and nearly 4,000 acres for a growth trend that increases density and housing variety for efficiency. There are about 2,200 acres of vacant or otherwise undeveloped land within city limits today. However, not all of this land is developable, such as flood areas. As shown below, higher density arrangements can be more efficient to serve with streets and utilities.

Lower Density Trend Scenario

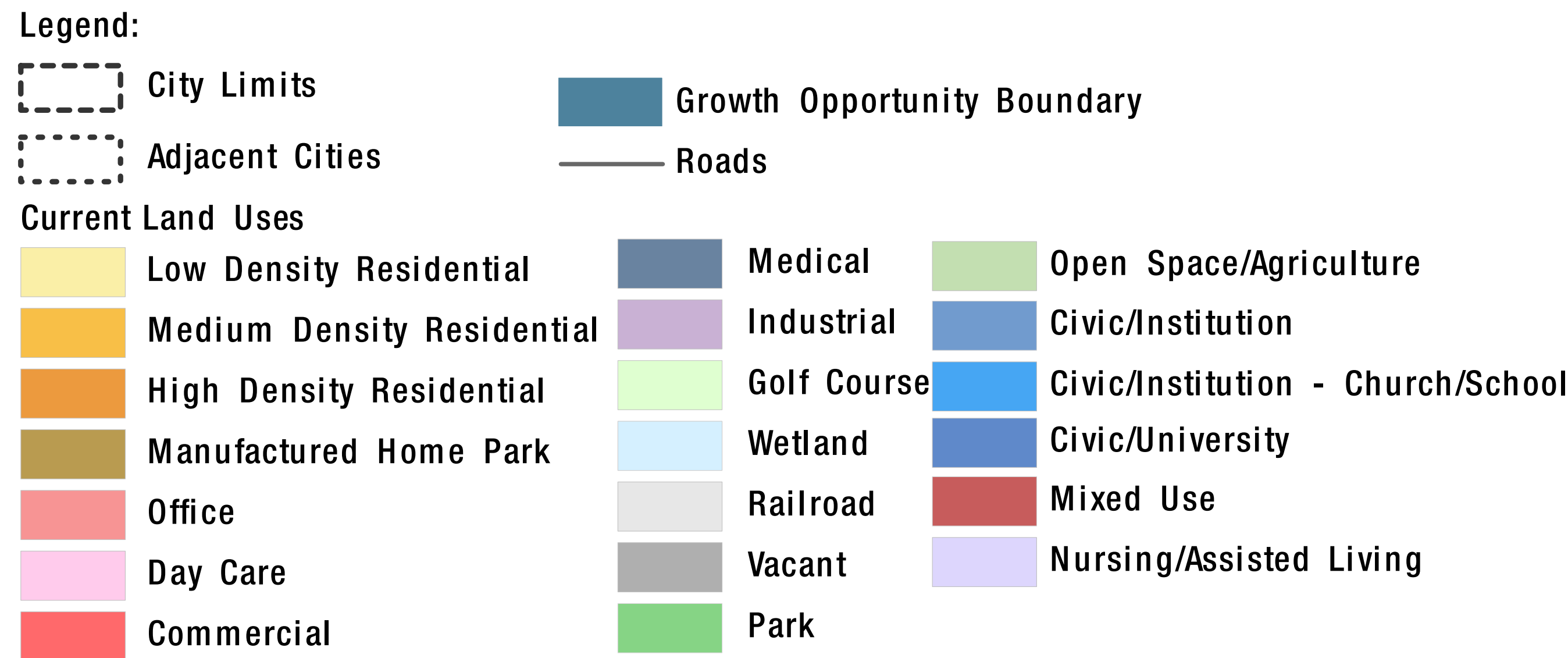
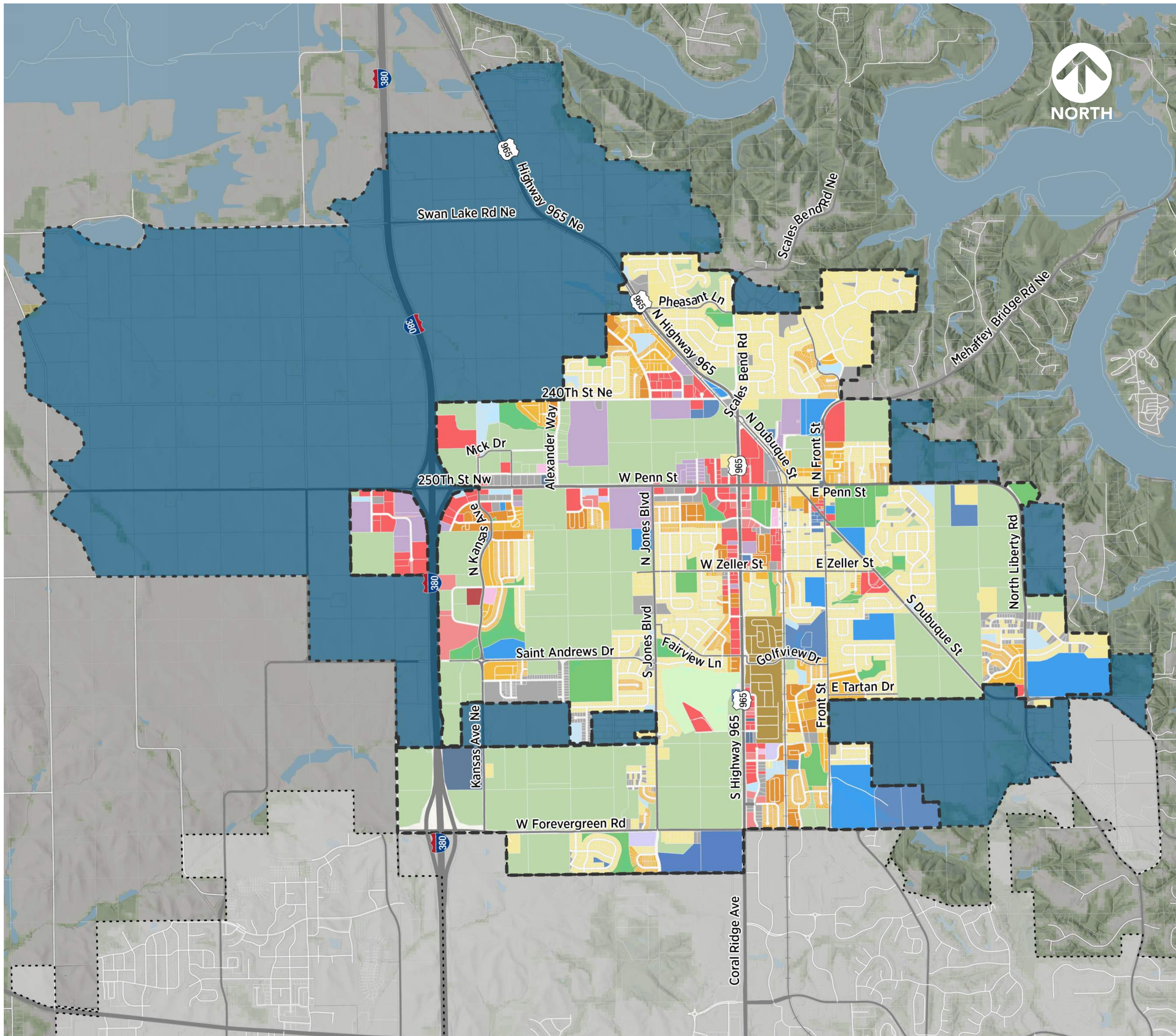


Efficiency Scenario



Where We Grow: Current and Future Land Uses

CURRENT LAND USE MAP



Future Land Use Districts

Three important points about the Future Land Use Map:

1. Property Owners Decide

The Future Land Use map depicts new land uses for privately owned properties. The transition of these properties to new uses is expected to occur slowly over time, in response to market demands, as property owners voluntarily sell, develop, or change the use of their land.

2. Generalized Map

The Future Land Use map should be interpreted generally. It is not intended to provide the specificity or rigidity of a zoning map or engineering document. The map provides guidance for the zoning map and is meant to show:

- » Generalized land use locations and transitions: The boundaries between land uses on the map are “fuzzy” lines and are meant to show approximate areas for transition rather than rigid boundaries. The exception to this are areas that preserve floodplains and wetlands because developing within them is not permitted.
- » Trails, collector street, and arterial street connections: Critical mobility connections are specified on the map. The exact routes will depend on detailed engineering studies. Local streets will be determined as development occurs.

3. Basis for Land Use Decisions

The Future Land Use map provides the basis for decisions of the Planning and Zoning Commission, the City Council, and private developers. The map is a critical part of the approval process for development proposals and zoning decisions.

Intensity Spectrum



Future Land Use: Urban Low-Intensity (ULI)

Description

An efficient, walkable pattern of lower-density development. Compared to denser areas, ULI has more space and separation of uses, with farther distances between destinations and fewer shared amenities. Low-intensity areas can include a horizontal mix of primarily residential and limited non-residential uses at compatible lower densities and scales.

Residential

Emphasis on single-family detached and attached residential developments. Attached housing projects may primarily be at transition areas between arterial or collector streets, small scale commercial uses, and higher intensity districts.

Form and Features

- » General aggregate development density of 3 to 8 units per acre. Lot sizes can vary within developments to provide different housing types.
- » A framework of streets and open space should create neighborhoods and multiple access points for all types of transportation.
- » Open spaces, streets, and trail connections integrate with the larger community.

Non-Residential

Generally secluded to neighborhood retail, office, and horizontal mixed-use but limited in frequency and scale. Low-intensity neighborhoods can include parks and civic uses like schools and places of worship.

Form and Features

- » Buildings mostly two stories or lower.
- » Any neighborhood retail/office clusters are around arterial streets. Smaller retail/office and live/work arrangements may cluster along collector streets.
- » Building orientation to the street is preferred with parking in the side or rear yard.
- » Generally, commercial retail and office uses are appropriate next to attached housing developments or at district transitions to higher intensity districts.



Future Land Use: Urban Medium-Intensity (UMI)

Description

More variety in housing arrangements and more allowance for activity areas that draw people from outside the immediate area for services or recreation. Increased intensity (compared to ULI) improves opportunities for economic activity and social interaction. Medium intensity areas include mostly a horizontal mix of residential and non-residential uses at compatible moderate densities and scale, although there may be opportunities for vertical mixed-use.

Residential

Uses include a variety of housing types that may be on smaller lots. Housing mix can include single-family detached homes, duplexes, townhomes, and multi-family buildings to create integrated neighborhoods.

Form and Features

- » General aggregate development density of 7 to 14 dwelling units per acre. Innovative designs should allow more public spaces than ULI.
- » Attached housing developments maintain the identity of the individual housing units.
- » High connectivity with multiple access points into neighborhoods. As compared to ULI, UMI encourages closer proximity between transportation, housing, and commercial services.

Non-Residential

Neighborhood retail, office, and mixed-use options are still primarily horizontally mixed with shared parking. Parks and civic uses should be incorporated throughout.

Form and Features

- » Buildings at four stories or lower.
- » Larger retail/office clusters should be around arterial streets and rail lines. Smaller retail/office clusters are appropriate on any street where transitions between residential uses or higher intensity districts occur.
- » Building orientation to the street is preferred with side or rear parking and pedestrian accommodations.



Future Land Use: Urban High-Intensity (UHI)

Description

These areas have increased economic activity and a higher frequency of diverse and complementary uses. High-intensity areas include more urban services with a horizontal and vertical mix of high-density residential uses and community to regional commercial uses of compatible densities and scale.

Residential

Developments have more focus on non-residential buildings but still offer residential uses ranging from townhomes and apartments. Mixing residential with commercial uses on the same site is encouraged when feasible from a design and market capitalization standpoint.

Form and Features

- » Aggregate development density at 14+ units per acre at sites with direct access to major arterial and collector streets. Development should avoid the creation of isolated multi-family development.
- » Edges of UHI residential developments transition to lower intensity uses or buffer from industrial/commercial uses through design, landscaping, and buffering.

Non-Residential

More prevalent and focus in the UHI district that can include larger offices, medical buildings, commercial, and larger institutional uses such as places of worship, community centers, and indoor recreation.

Form and Features

- » Buildings up to eight stories, mixed horizontally and vertically.
- » Good street access with multiple routes to highways and arterials, yet still including pedestrian accommodations. Trails and pathways integrated throughout developments to connect to parks, neighborhood, and community destinations.
- » Heavy commercial uses allowed given they mitigate anticipated adverse impacts on adjacent land uses and are located on arterial streets or rail lines.



Future Land Use: Commercial/Industrial Flex (FLX)

Description

North Liberty's location on the Interstate and near major population centers make it a conducive location for large scale commercial and shipping related industrial development. Several areas should allow for a broad range of larger footprint commercial and industrial uses such as those with outdoor storage, regional shopping/bulk purchase centers, indoor manufacturing, warehousing facilities, technology centers, and similar scale uses.

Residential

Developments are mostly secluded to non-residential buildings. Residential uses are typically not appropriate. Multi-family residential uses can be mixed into corporate campuses or employee provided housing arrangements.

Non-Residential

Areas preserved for larger business development or regional commercial uses, generally over 20 acres. Uses may focus on manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, office, office/industrial flex spaces. Extraction, heavy materials production, and uses with significant outdoor operations are permitted with design regulations. Smaller commercial uses can be provided to support the primary employment generators.

Form and Features

- » Intensity can vary but should have higher standards for infrastructure and urban design along street frontages and transitions to lower intensity districts. Examples include landscaping, connections, storage screening, and buffering lower-intensity uses.
- » Special consideration is given to the image that travelers see along arterial roadways and from community destinations.
- » Industrial uses with high external effects like noise and smell are allowed given they mitigate anticipated adverse impacts on adjacent land uses and are located on arterial streets or rail lines. Operational standards should consider traffic, noise, lighting, and air quality. Strict control over signage, landscaping, and design is necessary for locations nearer to low intensity uses.



Future Land Use: Public and Semi-Public (PUB)

Description

To provide space for educational, institutional, assembly, and other public or semi public uses that have large footprints and attract vehicle and pedestrian traffic, including hospitals, schools, airports, libraries, and city hall.

Form and Features

- » The land use plan identifies the largest public and semi-public uses but these uses can be incorporated into any area if at a similar intensity and form of that district.
- » Reliable pedestrian connectivity for high traffic uses such as parks, schools, and public spaces is required.



Future Land Use: Parks and Open Spaces (P, OS)

Description

Some areas contain valuable environmental features that should not be developed or that would make good recreational spaces. Areas intended for parks can be developed with recreational features while open space areas are more appropriate for habitat preservation with only passive recreation uses.

Form and Features

- » Based around natural areas where wetlands, floodplains, and any other sensitive area should be preserved. Development is limited to park areas.
- » Minimal site disturbance, green infrastructure, and stormwater management.
- » Development on the periphery should not remove trees or other natural landscaping to help retain natural filtering and protection from pollutants.
- » More intense recreation uses within parks, like sports complexes, should be treated like comparable commercial uses for the traffic and compatibility issues that they can generate.



ENHANCING COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Community Character means opportunities to create and enhance the elements of the community that make it a great and memorable place to live and visit. Character and image is molded by the elements that influence how people feel about a particular place - this feeling influences quality of life, property maintenance and value, community volunteerism, and business attraction.

Connected to Tomorrow will focus on what makes North Liberty special relative to other area cities, and how to build a welcoming identity in the future.

CORRIDORS



Ranshaw Way



Ranshaw Way

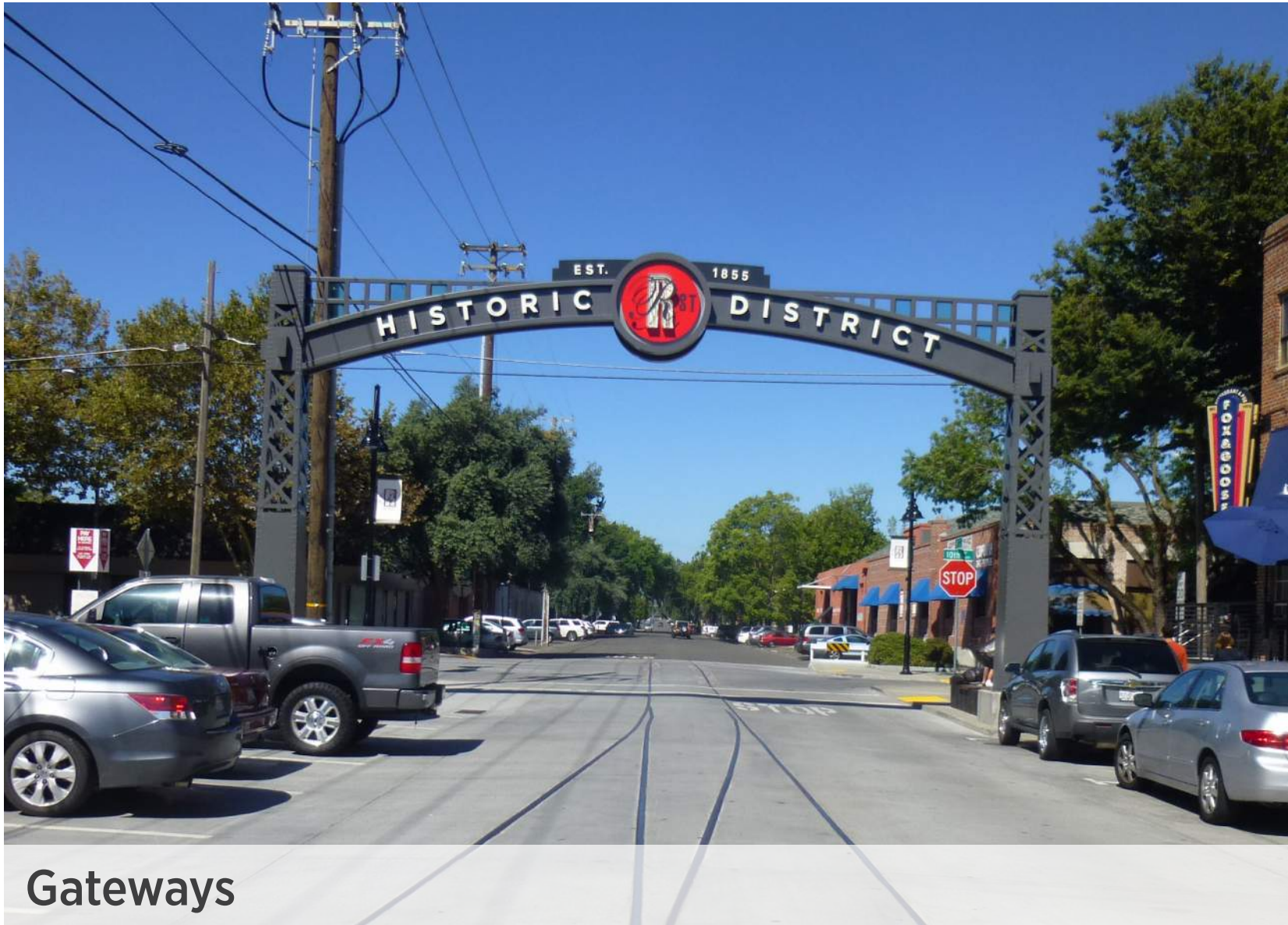


Ranshaw Way

WAYFINDING & BRANDING



Informational Signage



Gateways



Pedestrian-oriented Gateways

ENGAGING THE ARTS



Monument Art



Art on Walls



Art on Crosswalks

EXTENSION OF EXISTING TRAILS

Residents need relatively easy access to nearby outdoor spaces to encourage healthy behaviors. Existing trails should grow with development. Many areas require investments in trail expansions before development to fill gaps between existing neighborhoods.

CORRIDOR CHARACTER

Most people will arrive to North Liberty by vehicle. Entryway corridors like Ranshaw Way and Penn Street create their first impressions of the community. Enhancements to Ranshaw Way are underway. Gateway enhancements with paths, wayfinding, art, and quality buildings create a positive image.

LIBERTY LOOP

The Liberty Loop was presented in the 2019 Community Identity report. The map reflects this idea of a main trail loop connecting destinations throughout the community.

NEW STREETS

Planned and reserved street extensions are crucial for smart land use planning. New streets will offer multiple access points to new development areas and promote economic development opportunities.

POLICY AREAS

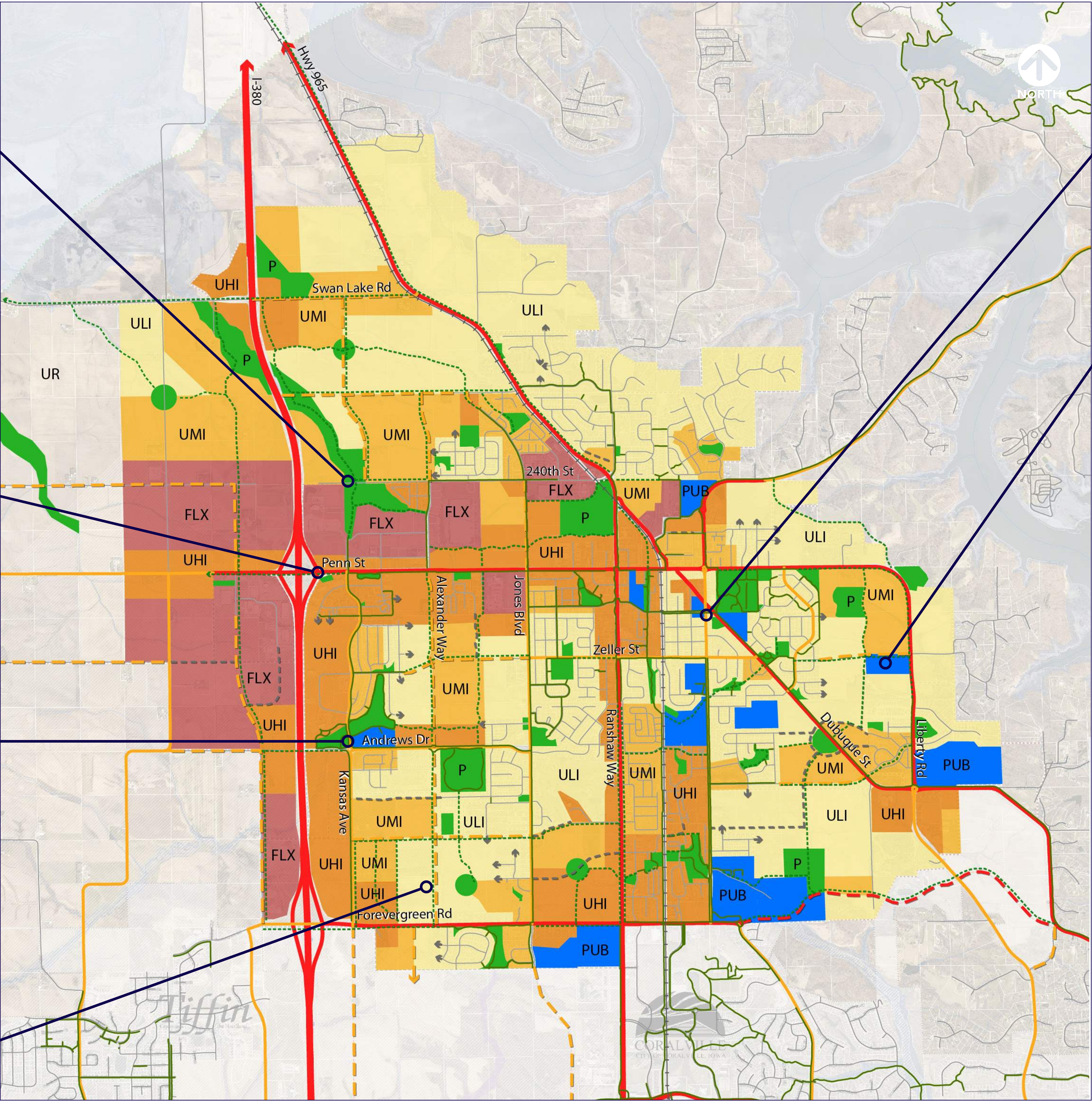
Several improvements are already underway in central North Liberty. Continued enhancements to mobility options will further enhance these older areas as a unique character in North Liberty.

SCHOOLS

Rapid growth comes with school district expansion. New school locations create additional mobility needs to alleviate congestion and offer kids the opportunity to walk or bike to school.

LAND USES

Development builds around the future transportation network. North Liberty's transportation network is developing before land development in many instances. Street connections provide land use growth opportunities.



	Existing	Proposed
Trail		
Local		
Collector		
Arterial		
Rail		
Special Policy Area		
Urban Reserve (UR)		
Parks/Open Space (P)		
Urban Low-Intensity (ULI)		
Urban Medium-Intensity (UMI)		
Urban High-Intensity (UHI)		
Commercial/Industrial Flex (FLX)		
Public/Semi-Public (PUB)		

Where We Grow & How Much We Grow: Scenarios

