

# City of Avon 2005 Comprehensive Plan

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The City of Avon was originally settled in 1863 and served as an agricultural trade center for much of its history. From 1930 to 1960 the City of Avon grew from a community of 362 to 443 persons. A rather modest growth rate which likely reflects changes felt throughout the agricultural industry. Beginning in 1960, however, the community started to expand at a more rapid rate.

The completion of Interstate 94 and the expansion of the St. Cloud area has created numerous job opportunities in relatively close proximity to the City of Avon. The City has also benefited from the stability offered by significant local employers including St. John's University, Columbia Gear, Blattner & Sons, and Lumber 1. Couple this with the natural amenities of the Avon Hills and associated lakes, and you will find that Avon offers a quality of life that is not available in many communities.

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Avon is to assist in shaping the future for the community by creating a set of guiding principles. The Comprehensive Plan builds on previous community planning projects such as the visit from the Minnesota Design Team and the Healthy Communities Partnership initiative. The Comprehensive Plan also describes the community participation that was used to establish these guiding principles in order to assist the reader in following the decision making process.

The Comprehensive Plan provides a brief overview of the community by examining the setting, reviewing the demographic makeup, and studying existing conditions. From this foundation of information those involved in the planning process are able to actively discuss the future needs of the community as they relate to land use, community facilities, transportation, housing, and economic development.

The goals and policies section of the Comprehensive Plan was created based on the analysis of the base line information. Goals and policies assist in describing the aspirations of the community and how those aspirations can be achieved.

The remaining portions of the Plan are divided into several sections that include: Land Use, Transportation, Community Facilities, and Economic Development. Within each of these sections a variety of issues are addressed including such items as housing, trails, and future land use.

The implementation section describes how the City intends to accomplish the goals set forth within the Plan. It includes a description of the tools available for implementation, as well as specific strategies the City may use to ensure that the Plan remains current and continues to reflect the goals of the community.

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

Comprehensive Planning can be described as a the systematic, ongoing, forward looking analysis of a community's opportunities and constraints for the purpose of formulating a Plan to accomplish stated goals and objectives. Through this process, a city identifies its vision for the future and specifies the actions needed to accomplish that vision.

The process typically begins with an expression of the vision for the community that the City seeks to achieve through the planning process. These goals range from general statements to the very specific.

The City of Avon and Avon Township benefited from participating in a community visioning process sponsored by the Initiative Foundation. This process included a community meeting held on August 26, 2004 that approximately 200 area residents participated in.

During the course of the community visioning meeting, residents were asked to identify strengths of the community and challenges facing the community. The meeting culminated with the identification and prioritization of desired outcomes for the Avon community. The top priorities identified by the meeting participants were the establishment of a new community center that would serve both youth and seniors and provide library and meeting spaces, an upgrade of streets and business facades in the downtown area, the creation of a business development plan for the area, and the formation of a joint planning group between the City and Township to assist in long range planning.

The City of Avon has created and utilized comprehensive planning documents in the past. In fact, the most recent comprehensive plan was created in 1970. Through the present comprehensive planning process the City will review many of fundamental goals established in earlier planning projects to find if the basic principles still hold true today.

As a part of this comprehensive planning process, general demographic information has been collected. The general base line demographic information provides the community with the opportunity to take a close look at existing conditions with regard to land use, public facilities, and household data. In other words, it is the point where all of the objective facts about the community are assembled and evaluated.

After the general information has been collected, strengths and improvement areas are identified. By identifying those qualities that make Avon a great place to live and work, the community can work to ensure that these qualities remain intact.

Several members of the community participated in a photo survey that asked participating members to take three pictures of "Things we like about Avon" and three pictures of "Things that we would like to see improved in Avon". The results of the photo survey also assisted in identifying issues that would be addressed within the comprehensive plan and related zoning documents.

The next step of the planning process was to formulate goals and policies that articulate how the city would like to reach its vision for the future. In order to formulate the goals and policies for this Plan, a series of community workshops were held with work group comprised of Planning Commissioners, some City Council members, and City Staff. The

purpose of the workshops was to elicit thoughts on the issues facing the community, and determine the best method for addressing these issues.

The Implementation section of the Plan includes suggestions for the development and administration of official controls such as the zoning ordinance, the zoning map, building codes, etc. In the long run it is the community that will be responsible for the implementation of the plan. Elected and appointed officials will need to incorporate the thoughts and ideas included in this plan into their decision making process. As new ideas and goals are identified in the future, the community must incorporate these items into the Plan or it will very quickly become obsolete.

## **PLAN SETTING**

The City of Avon is a community of approximately 1,282 persons located in the east central portion of Stearns County. Located at the intersection of Interstate 94 and CSAH 9, Avon lies approximately 10 miles west of St. Cloud and 90 miles northwest of the Twin Cities.

The City of Avon is located in an ecological area that has been identified as the Avon Hills area and contains rolling hills, deciduous forests, and a number of lakes. An area initiative has been organized to preserve the natural beauty of the Avon Hills area and much of the remaining ecological amenities have been identified for preservation. A map of the planning area studied by the Avon Hills Initiative is also attached for review.

## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

Avon's population and housing characteristics provide us with the opportunity to identify recent trends within the community. This information is important because it can be used to determine what services are necessary to serve the residents. If Avon is a community of young families with children residing in new homes, or a community with an aging population living in older homes, different strategies will be needed for determining the need for parks, community facilities, senior housing, etc.

### **Population**

The first table shows Avon's population by age group for the period 1990 and 2000.

<b>Age</b>	<b>1990 Population</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>2000 Population</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
Under 5 years	93	10%	112	9%
5 to 24 years	301	31%	349	28%
25 to 44 years	316	33%	389	31%
45 to 54 years	83	9%	147	12%
55 to 59 years	30	2%	62	5%
60 to 64 years	31	3%	46	4%
65 to 74 years	72	7%	72	6%
75 to 84 years	34	4%	49	4%
85 years & over	10	1%	16	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>970</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,242</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source of Data: 1990 and 2000 Census*

The overall population of Avon has increased by approximately 22% from 1990 to 2000.

The age categories seeing the most significant increases in population include 5 years to 24 years, 25 to 44 years, and 45 to 54 years. The only age category that did not increase in population was the 65 to 74 years age group. The median age in 2000 was 33.5 years of age.

Additionally, Census data indicates that the total number of housing units in Avon has increased from 348 in 1990 to 492 in 2000 or a 29% increase.

In 1990 the number of persons per family was 3.29. In 2000 the number of persons per family decreased to 3.04, which does follow the national trend of smaller families.

The 2000 Census data provides additional information regarding the residents of Avon. Of the total population (1,242), 613 residents are male and 629 residents are female. The racial makeup of the community provided by the 2000 census includes the following:

White	1,234 persons
Hispanic or Latino	4 Persons
Black or African American	0 Persons
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0 Persons
Asian	2 persons
Other	2 persons
TOTAL	1,242 persons

*Source of Data: 2000 Census*

### **Income**

Household income data provides some measure of wealth in the community. The following information is based on a total of 483 households in the City of Avon in 1999.

<u>Household Income</u>	<u>Number of Households</u>
Less than \$10,000	25
\$10,000 to \$14,999	30
\$15,000 to \$24,999	38
\$25,000 to \$34,999	59
\$35,000 to \$49,999	105
\$50,000 to \$74,999	138
\$75,000 to \$99,999	48
\$100,000 to \$149,000	33
\$150,000 to \$199,999	5
\$200,000 or more	2

Median Household Income Avon (1999): \$47,721

Median Household Income Minnesota (1999): \$47,111

### **Housing**

A review of the available housing data for Avon indicates the following:

Total Housing Units	492
Total Occupied Housing Units	470
Vacant Housing Units	22
Seasonal/Recreational Use	4
Homeowner Vacancy Rate	1.3%

Rental Vacancy Rate	6.9%
Owner-Occupied Housing Units	389
Renter-Occupied Housing Units	81
Average Household Size (Owner)	2.79
Average Household Size (Renter)	1.93
<i>Source of Data: 2000 U.S. Census</i>	

Some of the conclusions drawn from the Census data would include the following:

- \* Avon's population grew by 22% in the 1990's which is a pretty significant accomplishment in greater Minnesota.
- \* Avon added 144 housing units in the 1990's. If we utilize an average land consumption of 2.5 units per acre, this would equate to 57.6 acres of land consumed by residential development in the 1990's.
- \* Avon has a relatively young population with 68% of its residents less than 44 years of age.
- \* Unlike many rural communities, the proportion of residents aged 60 and over has actually remained the same as compared to the overall population.
- \* Family size has decreased which follows the national trend of smaller family sizes.
- \* As in many rural Minnesota communities, the City of Avon has a very, very small minority population.
- \* Household incomes are distributed relatively evenly with 63% of the households falling between \$25,000 and \$75,000 in annual household income.
- \* The rental housing vacancy rate is about where it should be at 6.9%.
- \* The owner-occupied housing vacancy rate is very low at 1.3%.

### **COMMUNITY STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES**

As a part of the Comprehensive Planning process, the Comprehensive Planning Committee has discussed strengths/opportunities within the community, as well as weaknesses/threats. The community had recently conducted a survey that identified strengths and weaknesses as well. This information has been used to formulate community goals and policies which will assist in the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

### **Strengths/Opportunities**

The question posed to the comprehensive planning committee to identify perceived community strengths was, ***“What are the key assets that make Avon a great place to live?”***

#### **Responses**

1. People
2. Green Space
3. Lakes
4. Proximity to St. Cloud
5. Trail System
6. Schools
7. Local Culture
8. Recreational Opportunities
9. Area College & Universities
10. I-94
11. Churches
12. Community Pride
13. Desire for growth
14. Mandate from the public for cooperation between the City and Township

### **Weaknesses/Threats**

The question posed to the comprehensive planning committee to identify perceived community weaknesses was, ***“What is most needed to improve the health of Avon?”***

#### **Responses**

1. Cooperation between the City and Township.
2. Growth
3. Additional service related businesses
4. Upgrades to the storm sewer system
5. Downtown revitalization
6. Development of more commercial and industrial tax base
7. Downtown Parking
8. Community Center
9. Affordable senior housing
10. More definition between zoning districts to reduce incompatibility of uses
11. Improve access to the lakes
12. Transit
13. Street reconstruction
14. A means of keeping citizens engaged in community affairs.
15. Medical Clinic
16. Improvements/changes to City Beach
17. Enlarge the downtown area

This exercise was very helpful in not only reaffirming information about the community that can be identified through demographic data, but also in learning how residents and community leaders perceive the community. The local perception of the community also becomes more apparent in the photo survey detailed in the last section of the plan.

## **COMMUNITY GOALS**

Once the identification of strengths and weaknesses was completed, the comprehensive planning committee then focused on goals and policies from which new initiatives could assist in promoting the strengths and addressing the areas for improvement.

**Goal #1:** Support the orderly growth of the community.

### **Policies & Initiatives**

- a. Continue to work with the township on the implementation of the annexation agreement.
- b. Facilitate orderly growth within the City and work with the County and township to limit urban development outside the City.
- c. Create a land use plan that designates specific areas for growth.
- d. Encourage the development of existing vacant lots within the City.
- e. Amend the commercial/industrial zoning ordinances to require adequate buffers between different land uses.
- f. Encourage the location of commercial and industrial development in areas that avoid adverse impacts on residential areas.
- g. Continue to guide residential growth in an orderly nature so that new development can be effectively served by public facilities and the character and quality of the City's existing neighborhoods can be maintained and enhanced.
- h. Encourage the development of multiple family housing units in appropriate areas disbursed throughout the community.
- i. Provide expansion areas on the future land use plan for the downtown.
- j. Stream-line the governmental review process for new development.
- k. Dedicate additional resources toward economic development.
- l. Continue to communicate this goal to the public.

**Goal #2** Strengthen the distinction between the urban city and rural countryside with well planned and carefully coordinated services.

### **Policies & Initiatives**

- a. Require that properties served by public utilities be located within the City.
- b. Promote the annexation of abutting property when development is imminent.
- c. Work with the County and township to maintain very low residential densities in areas of the County outside the City's growth area.

**Goal #3** Enhance the community's character and identity.

### **Policies & Initiatives**

- a. Control development of all commercial areas in order to focus development within identified corridors and areas, particularly in downtown Avon.
- b. Ensure that new developments are well planned and connected to existing development through the efficient use of streets, utilities and infrastructure.

**Goal #4** Promote a variety of housing types in Avon.

### **Policies & Initiatives**

- a. Work closely with the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, Department of Employment & Economic Development, Greater Minnesota Housing Fund, Rural Development, and other organizations that can help Avon meet its housing goals with regard to providing affordable senior housing opportunities.
- b. Encourage the development of a variety of housing types to meet the needs of all citizens including seniors and low and moderate-income residents.

c. Continue to encourage the dispersion of all housing types throughout the City so as to avoid concentrations of low-income or subsidized housing.

**Goal #5** Create a high quality living environment for the citizens of the community in all residential neighborhoods.

**Policies & Initiatives**

- a. Adopt and enforce the necessary codes and inspection procedures to ensure the continued maintenance of the housing stock.
- b. Create a more comprehensive zoning ordinance to provide separation of incompatible uses and regulations for maintaining high quality neighborhoods.
- c. Provide an appropriate level of building inspection to promote safe building practices.
- d. Educate residents on proper building procedures and code requirements.
- e. Consider establishing a rental housing inspection program to promote safe and secure rental housing.

**Goal #6** Promote new subdivisions for new housing in the appropriate vacant areas of the community.

**Policies & Initiatives**

- a. Insure the availability of affordable housing in the City.
- b. Encourage the rehabilitation of substandard housing.
- c. Encourage in-fill housing where appropriate.

**Goal #7** Work to achieve an equitable distribution of the cost of providing City services.

**Policies & Initiatives**

- a. Guide development so that it is not constructed beyond the City's ability to provide efficient services.
- b. Work with the Townships and County to ensure that growth outside the corporate limits of Avon can be efficiently serviced by municipal infrastructure in the future.
- c. Work with the County and adjoining Townships to avoid the duplication of services and to provide more efficient and economical government services.
- d. Promote programs that will equitably distribute the cost of using City facilities to actual users of those facilities.
- e. Pursue annexation of any areas that benefit from municipal services but are not presently located within corporate limits.

**Goal #8** Work with appropriate agencies and businesses to encourage the continued revitalization of the Downtown.

**Policies & Initiatives**

- a. Provide adequate infrastructure, including sidewalks, benches, and parking for existing structures and for redevelopment in the downtown area.
- b. Consider applying for a Small Cities Development Program Grant to assist with the revitalization of commercial buildings in the downtown.
- c. When appropriate, continue to encourage the location of community facilities within or near the Central Business District.
- d. Focus commercial investment in the downtown area by limiting the amount of land available for commercial development in other portions of the community.
- e. Encourage the Downtown Beautification Committee to create a plan with specific steps for implementation.
- f. Encourage the EDA to acquire properties that are critical to the expansion and improvement of the downtown area.

**Goal #9** Provide an adequate and safe pedestrian, bicycle, trail, and truck transportation system.

**Policies & Initiatives:**

- a. Enhance the character of major roadway corridors in the City by continuing to develop and implement zoning standards.
- b. Work with State, County, and Federal officials to improve transportation access through and within the City.
- c. Promote the construction of a pedestrian/bicycle trail that would connect new development to the west of Avon.
- d. Work toward the goals of connecting Char and Dolphin Avenues through the Wobegon Trail corridor.
- e. Implement a street reconstruction program that also provides for the installation of curb and gutter.
- f. The City of Avon shall update its special assessment policy.

**Goal #10** The City of Avon shall actively work with Avon Township to plan for growth.

**Policies & Initiatives**

- a. Create a comprehensive plan that clearly defines the City of Avon's goals for growth so that these goals can be clearly communicated to the township.
- b. Continue to work with the township on orderly annexation issues.
- c. Create a joint planning board with Avon Township that will meet quarterly to discuss orderly annexation areas.
- d. Hold joint annual City Council/Township Board meetings to discuss issues of common interest.
- e. Encourage Avon Council members to regularly attend Avon Township Board meetings.

**Goal #11** The Avon community shall actively encourage commercial and industrial development.

**Policies & Initiatives**

- a. The Economic Development Authority (EDA) and Economic Development Task Force will actively recruit small manufactures to the community.
- b. The City will continuously work with the township on an orderly annexation issues so that adequate commercial and industrial property is available for development.
- c. The EDA will continue to administer and work to grow the local revolving loan fund.
- d. The City will actively utilize Tax Increment Finance, the 429 Improvement Process, JOBZ, and other tools that are available to promote high quality commercial and industrial growth.
- e. The City of Avon will support and monitor the attainment of the economic development goals established by the Economic Development Task Force.
- f. The EDA will actively pursue the acquisition of land for the purpose of promoting commercial and industrial development.
- g. A long-term goal may be to encourage the establishment of an industrial development corporation to focus specifically on that topic.

**Goal #12** The Avon community shall actively pursue the construction of a community center/senior center.

**Policies & Initiatives**

- a. By the year 2009, the City of Avon will organize a community planning process to discuss programming for a new community center.

- b. The City of Avon will educate the public regarding the cost of building and maintaining a community center.
- c. The City of Avon will monitor the pace of growth to determine appropriate time for implementation.
- d. The City of Avon will continuously explore both private and public funding opportunities for a community center.

**Goal #13** The City of Avon will manage tax burden that it places on property owners.

**Policies & Initiatives**

- a. Educate citizens with regard to the cost of the services that the City provides.
- b. Educate residents regarding the cost of unfunded mandates.
- c. Promote attendance at the truth-in-taxation hearing.
- d. Focus on economic development to create additional commercial/industrial tax base, which will alleviate some of the tax burden on residential properties.

**Goal #14** The Avon community will better utilize the lakes as a community attraction.

**Policies & Initiatives**

- a. Explore working with Stearns County to significantly enhance the community beach.
- b. Consider investing future park dedication fees in upgrading the community beach area.
- c. Encourage the DNR to upgrade public access points and add amenities.

**Goal #15** Protect, conserve, and enhance the natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas within and adjacent to the City for the community's long-term environmental benefit.

**Policies & Initiatives**

- a. Encourage all areas of urban development to be served by public facilities.
- b. Protect surface water, storm water, and ground water from hazardous waste, fertilizers, and pesticides.
- c. Encourage the reforestation of the community.
- d. Discourage the proliferation of individual wells and septic systems and encourage the provision of water and sewer services from the municipal system.
- e. Actively participate in the Avon Hills Initiative.
- f. The City of Avon will continuously monitor the need for the adoption and modification of existing ordinances that assist in protecting the environment.
- g. The City of Avon will promote the use of conservation easements and parkland dedication to protect environmentally sensitive areas from development.
- h. As a 5 to 10 year goal, the City of Avon will create a storm water utility for the purpose of being proactive in constructing and maintaining storm water management and treatment facilities.
- i. The City of Avon will continue to educate residents about appropriate fertilizer application and will adopt ordinances as necessary to regulate this activity.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Economic health is an important component of a thriving community. A strong commercial and industrial base provides jobs to community residents, contributes to the tax base, and can be a source of strength for the community.

The City of Avon has been in an economic transition for a significant period of time. Economies of rural communities have suffered significant setbacks in the past three decades due in large part to the consolidation of the agricultural industry. The impacts of this consolidation have for the most part been mitigated in Avon as a result of its economic development efforts and its proximity to the City of St. Cloud. Data indicates that a significant portion of the Avon population travels to surrounding communities for employment. This has kept the local population stable and provided quality employment opportunities within relatively close proximity.

A significant investment is presently being made in downtown Avon through the reconstruction of CSAH 9. The Downtown Beautification Committee is working to utilize this project as a springboard through which other downtown projects may be accomplished. In the goals and policies section of this plan, several initiatives regarding economic development and the downtown have been incorporated, including;

**Goal #8** Work with appropriate agencies and businesses to encourage the continued revitalization of the Downtown.

### **Policies & Initiatives**

- a) Provide adequate infrastructure, including sidewalks, benches, and parking for existing structures and for redevelopment in the downtown area.
- b) Consider applying for a Small Cities Development Program Grant to assist with the revitalization of commercial buildings in the downtown.
- c) When appropriate, continue to encourage the location of community facilities within or near the Central Business District.
- d) Focus commercial investment in the downtown area by limiting the amount of land available for commercial development in other portions of the community.
- e) Encourage the Downtown Beautification Committee to create a plan for the downtown with specific steps for implementation.
- f) Encourage the EDA to acquire properties that are critical to the expansion and improvement of the downtown area.

**Goal #11** The Avon community shall actively encourage commercial and industrial development.

### **Policies & Initiatives**

- a) The EDA and Economic Development Task Force will actively recruit small manufactures to the community.
- b) The City will continuously work with the township on an orderly annexation issues so that adequate commercial and industrial property is available for development.
- c) The EDA will continue to administer and work to grow the local revolving loan fund.
- d) The City will actively utilize TIF, 429, JOBZ, and other tools that are available to promote high quality commercial and industrial growth.
- e) The City of Avon will support and monitor the attainment of the economic development goals established by the Economic Development Task Force.
- f) The EDA will actively pursue the acquisition of land for the purpose of promoting commercial and industrial development.

g) A long-term goal may be to encourage the establishment of an industrial development corporation to focus specifically on that topic.

The Avon Economic Development Task Force was created to focus on the continued growth and development of the business community. This committee has created a specific set of five year goals that include the following:

Create an economic development web site for the area.

1. Assist with the leasing of the Nova building.
2. Complete the development of a light industrial park for the area.
3. Reduce the loss of existing businesses from the area. There are presently 150 businesses in the area and the goal is to retain 140 of them through the next 5 years.
4. Attract 12 new businesses to the area.

The City of Avon is dedicated to improving the quality and sustainability of the community. Business development is one of the key components of that goal. Through the Avon Economic Development Authority, the City of Avon, and the Economic Development Task Force, the community will need to maintain its focus on the goals that have been established if they are to be accomplished.

An equally important component in the economic development mix is housing development. An adequate supply of safe and affordable housing is an amenity that many communities strive to provide.

Assisting the community in developing housing to meet the various demands is an important part of the economic development mix in Avon. More housing means more people, which translate into a larger labor force to attract industry, and more customers for local retailers. The community should continually monitor its progress with regard to meeting the demand for additional housing. This can be accomplished by working with regional and state agencies that focus exclusively on housing, and by monitoring the vacancy rates with the local housing market.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

The City of Avon's street system consists of all of the various streets and highways within its limits that are designed to accommodate vehicular movement. A typical city street system serves the needs of two general types of traffic:

**Through-Traffic:** Traffic that has its origin and destination outside the community and merely travels through it, typically on Principal, Major, and Minor Arterials.

**Local Traffic:** Traffic that has its origin and destination inside the community, typically traveling on the local street system.

The function and basic characteristics of each of these types of roadways are as follows:

**Principal Arterial.** The primary purpose of these roadways is to move people, goods, and services long distances between regional or even national population centers. Turning movements are handled through interchanges so that the flow of traffic receives minimal disruption. I-94 is an example of a principal arterial roadway in Avon's transportation network. Additionally, I-94 is the only roadway that is not encumbered by seasonal weight restrictions with the Avon transportation system.

**Major Arterial.** These roadways serve moderate to long trip lengths and provide a system to distribute traffic making external trips. Turning movements are often handled with channelized turn lanes or signalized systems. There are no roadways that would be classified as major arterials within the City of Avon.

**Minor Arterial.** These thoroughfares either augment the arterial system in intensively developed areas, or provide service in lieu of a Major Arterial in less densely developed areas where trip lengths are relatively short. Minor arterials typically do not provide direct access to neighborhoods. CSAH 9, CSAH 54, CSAH 50, CSAH 155, Tower Road and County Road 157 would be characterized as minor arterials within Avon's transportation system.

**Collectors.** These streets serve as connections between local streets and minor arterials. Their principal function is to carry short trips and to serve adjacent land. At the same time, they must be capable of moving relatively large traffic volumes for limited distances. They may also carry traffic to dispersed major traffic generators. In Avon, collectors would include Barracuda, Chinook, Blattner, 2<sup>nd</sup> Street North East, and Dolphin Avenue.

**Local Streets.** Residential streets carrying less than 1,000 vehicles per day averaging speeds less than 20 miles per hour are the best example of local streets. They serve almost exclusively to collect and distribute traffic by connecting blocks within neighborhoods and specific activities within similar land uses.

With each step up the hierarchy of the roadway system comes an increase in size and carrying capacity. Large trucks are inappropriate on local streets just as multiple residential access points would be inappropriate on a major thoroughfare. Determining the size, location and timing of construction of roadways is what transportation planning is all about.

As mentioned previously, the relationships between streets in this system is hierarchical. Each street type has been designed specifically for a separate and distinct function. Local streets are intended to collect traffic from and distribute traffic to residential areas and other low traffic generators. Local streets channel traffic to collector streets, which in turn channel it to minor arterials. While the system can be seen as a hierarchy, an interconnected network of local streets such as what exists in Avon serves an important function. This network of streets distributes traffic throughout the transportation system and allows multiple access points to the rest of the system.

The basic principle of land use planning, tied directly to traffic, is that land uses that generate heavy traffic loads and require efficient access to function properly, such as industrial facilities, should be located near major thoroughfares. Conversely, land uses that generate very little traffic and which would not be benefited by through-traffic, such as residential neighborhoods, should be located away from the noise and bustle of busy arterials. It is the intent of the Avon transportation system to limit truck traffic to major arterial and minor arterial thoroughfares, and whenever possible, eliminate truck traffic on collector and local streets.

As Avon continues to grow, provisions will have to be made to expand the transportation system. This will need to include the provision of collector streets at regular intervals and the minimization of access points to minor arterials to promote public safety and the efficient movement of traffic.

Transportation initiatives identified as a part of this plan, include connecting Char and Dolphin Avenues through the Wobegon Trail corridor. Additional regional transportation initiatives supported by this plan include the establishment of a commuter rail system from St. Cloud to the Twin Cities Metro Area.

## **PARKS & RECREATION**

The City of Avon offers a variety of park and recreational opportunities within the community enabling residents to take advantage of the natural amenities that are available in the area. An inventory of the existing park system would include the following:

### **Ochotto Park**

Ochotto Park is approximately 3 acres in size and contains four pieces of play equipment that are presently in good condition. The park is located on the south shore of Ochotto Lake and provides the only public access to this small lake. The park also contains a hockey/skating rink and warming house and offers paved parking areas. It also has a shelter with two picnic tables, and a splash pad in the same area.

### **Lake Wobegon Trailhead Park**

Lake Wobegon Trailhead Park is approximately 1.29 acres in size and is located in the central portion of the community immediately adjacent to the downtown area. This park contains 4 shelters, a lookout tower, restrooms, and plenty of available parking. All facilities are relatively new and in excellent condition. This park serves as a rest area and a focal point for the Lake Wobegon Trail system that was also constructed in recent history. Future changes to this park include a band shell in the southeast corner.

### **Lions Park**

Lions Park is located in the central portion of Avon immediately adjacent to the City Hall/Fire Station facilities. Lions Park contains a ball field, two volleyball courts, four pieces of play equipment in good condition, and a shelter with kitchen facilities and restrooms. The Lions Club added on a roof structure of the shelter to provide some additional protection from the elements. Much discussion has been given to investing additional resources into the facility to insulate it so that it could be available on a year-round basis. It was determined that this investment would depend on whether or not the baseball field was relocated in order to promote commercial development. The Lions Park has been officially designated as the site for a future Fire Station project.

### **City Beach**

The City Beach is approximately 1 acre in size and is located on the shore of Middle Spunk Lake. The City beach is located immediately adjacent to a relatively busy county highway and some older commercial and industrial development. Facilities include a bathhouse and a gravel parking area. The whole beach area had a complete make-over. Picnic tables have been redone and benches added. More grass was added and better sand areas with a new wall the length of the beach.

An additional idea that was discussed to encourage a public-private partnership that would make better use of the City Beach property was the establishment of a Beach Zoning District that could provide guidance and regulation for the use of beach areas by private businesses.

### **Baseball Park-Central Park**

The baseball park is approximately 4 acres in size and is located in very close proximity to the Interstate 94 interchange in Avon. Facilities include two tennis courts and all of the improvements associated with a baseball diamond including dugouts, bleachers, concession area, etc. New bathrooms are being discussed and hope to be completed in 2015.

### **Stratford's Polonius Park**

Stratford's Polonius Park is located in the southwestern portion of the community and is approximately 2.3 acres in size. The park contains a backstop and two ball diamonds, 4 pieces of play equipment in good condition, and a portable restroom facility. During the course of discussing this park, residents indicated that portions of this park are underutilized. Also, a basketball court has been built.

### **Suncrest Park**

Suncrest Park is the newest addition to the Avon park system and is approximately .66 acres in size. Suncrest Park is located in the central portion of the community and presently contains four pieces of play equipment that is in good condition and one picnic table. This park was developed as a result of high-density residential development that has occurred within the immediate vicinity. Future modifications to this park include the eventual upgrade of the play equipment.

### **Waters Edge Park**

This park is in the Waters Edge development north of town off County Road 9. It is approximately 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  acres. It has four pieces of equipment in a bordered pea rock area. It has one open picnic shelter building with two picnic tables.

### **Avon Estates**

This park is located west of town on County Road 54 in the Avon Estates development. It has five pieces of equipment in a bordered pea rock area. It also has an open picnic shelter with two picnic tables.

### **Other Parks**

The public school facility located in the north central portion of the Avon community offers a large open space and has six pieces of newer play equipment that receive a fair amount of use by the general public. Additionally, the Catholic Church site located in the south central portion of the community also contains six pieces of play equipment in good to fair condition that are utilized by the public as well. The City of Avon does maintain the grass in this area as a form of trade-off for the utilization of the play areas by the public.

Much of the discussion regarding the park system focused on the fact that the City of Avon had a number of smaller parks that required some attention. Residents questioned whether the number of parks needed to be reduced in order to be able to afford to upgrade some of the equipment and other amenities available within the parks. This prompted the initiatives outlined above for perhaps partnering with a public or private entity to make better use of the City Beach area. Directives on future additions to the park/trail system include the following:

#### 1) Projects for 2015:

**Ochotto Park** which will include a new dock, galvanized steel with plastic decking, remove rushes at the boat landing, remove stumps, branches and brush, remove overhanging tree branches, paint the picnic table, and install a port-a-potty. Approximate cost \$16,500.

**Stratford Park** which will include installing one piece of playground equipment, install new treated border timbers (old ones rotten), repaint merry-go-round, add pea rock, black dirt and grass seed.

**Public Beach** which will include add washed sand to both beaches, paint two of the picnic tables.

**Wobegon Park** which will include a new “Wobegon” sign, new garden block and plantings.

**Maintenance and Bike Area** which will include remove four trees and trim.

**Veterans Park** which will include removing two trees, add new plantings, add mulch or pea rock.

- 2) Major improvements in 2016 to Stratford Park with an estimated cost of \$10,000.
- 3) Major improvements in 2017 to several other parks with an estimated cost of \$10,000.
- 4) Land purchase in 2018 to enlarge Wobegon Park with an estimated cost of \$125,000.
- 5) 2019 construct a band shell with an estimated cost of \$10,000.
- 6) Develop the larger park in 2020 at Avon Estates with an estimated cost of \$75,000.
- 7) Establish a pedestrian/bike trail that links the Waters Edge development with the rest of the community. The CSAH 9 corridor is restricted through the Ochotto and Middle Spunk Lake corridor while traffic speed is relatively unrestricted at 45 miles per hour. A separate pedestrian/bike trail needs to be established through this corridor to allow the safe movement of bike and pedestrian traffic. The need for this facility will continue to grow as development continues to expand to the north. *Projected date 2021 with an approximate cost of \$25,000.*

## EXISTING LAND USE

The City of Avon and surrounding areas offer rolling terrain, forested areas, and a variety of lakes and marshes. Much of the community is regulated by a shoreland ordinance that provides additional restrictions with regard to the density of development. All of these items have impacted Avon's ability to grow and serve these areas efficiently with public utilities.

Much of Avon has developed in a grid pattern, which has been impacted by the surrounding terrain. While normally the grid pattern is easily replicated, easy to negotiate, and lends itself to expansion, this may not always be the case in Avon as there are a number of obstacles/amenities that will require creative design in order to meet the goals established within the shoreland ordinance and this comprehensive plan.

During the planning process a land use inventory was created (see attached Existing Land Use Map) for the purpose of identifying the existing development patterns of the City. From this inventory and other background information that has been compiled, areas for potential development, the intensity of development, and in some cases, the timing of development can be determined. The inventory can also help classify areas that should remain unchanged or preserved.

The following table indicates Avon's land use in 2005. This table shows the acreage for each land use category in the City and the total percentage of the City in that category. This inventory was conducted in the summer of 2005. There are approximately 926 acres in the City of Avon or just under one and one-half square miles. Residential uses comprise approximately 35 percent of the land, while commercial and industrial uses comprise approximately 21 percent. The public category (which includes parks & open space, churches, schools, cemeteries, etc.) comprises approximately 14 percent of the land area. Vacant land makes up approximately 13 percent of the land while road and rail right-of-ways make up approximately 17 percent.

Land Use	Acres	Percent
Residential	210	23%
Commercial/Industrial	126	14%
Public	104	11%
Vacant/Ag	384	41%
Street/Rail R.O.W.	102	11%
TOTAL	926	100%

The following is a description of the individual land uses that make up the City of Avon.

### Residential

Comprising 23 percent of the City, residential development (single-family, duplex, apartments) is the largest developed land use in the City. Residential land uses are located throughout the City. The vast majority of the housing areas are single-family residential neighborhoods. Much of the housing is in good shape with only a few scattered units requiring significant rehabilitation. Much of the new single-family development has focused in the northeast portion of the community immediately adjacent to the school; however, there is a new residential subdivision that is underway in the northernmost portion of the community. Additionally, 306 acres of the vacant land category was very recently annexed and will be developed for residential purposes.

Multi-family units are scattered throughout the community and account for only a small portion of the residential land uses. There are presently no manufactured parks located within the City of Avon.

### **Commercial/Industrial**

With approximately 126 acres, or 14 percent of the total land area, commercial and industrial properties make up the next largest category for developed property. Much of the commercial and industrial property takes advantage of interstate access and visibility. Most of the industrial development has occurred south of Interstate 94, which serves as an excellent buffer for the community. There is however, a small residential neighborhood tucked between the industrial development and Linneman Lake, which has caused some conflict in the community's history.

Commercial buildings in the Central Business District and the core of the community tend to be older brick structures. The highway-oriented businesses tend to be newer facilities that provide off-street parking.

It is anticipated that most of the commercial industrial growth will occur within the downtown area and the Interstate 94 corridor and the Future Land Use map provides for this. Commercial property will be designated immediately adjacent to the highway and light industrial activity will continue to be encouraged on the south side of Interstate 94. This development pattern has proven to be successful in Avon in the past, and will be promoted into the future.

### **Public/Semi-Public**

Public/Semi-Public land uses include parks and open spaces, school facilities, churches, and cemeteries. Together, these land uses account for 104 acres or 11 percent of the total land area of the City.

The City of Avon enjoys over 15 acres of park area within the corporate limits. These park areas are dispersed throughout the community with some serving as active parks and others providing green space adjacent to the various lakes.

### **Vacant**

Comprising 384 acres or 41 percent of the total City, vacant land is a significant portion of the City's total land use, however, 306 acres of vacant land on the western edge of the community was recently annexed and at least a portion of this will likely be platted for residential development in the near future. The majority of remaining vacant land is located adjacent to the newly developed subdivision in the northern portion of the community and just west of Lake Anna. There are several tracts of land in close proximity to the Interstate 94 Corridor that are addressed in the future land use section of this plan.

A small amount of scattered vacant areas exist in some of the land use categories and may provide opportunities for infill development that can make use of the existing infrastructure.

### **Land Use Conflicts**

The majority of land use conflicts have occurred between residential and industrial development. As mentioned previously, there is a small residential neighborhood located

between the I-94 corridor and related industrial areas and Linneman Lake. Additionally, there have been some conflicts between residential areas and industrial uses that are located on the north side of the I-94 Corridor and east of the interchange. Land use controls have not provided the necessary separation of uses in the past, and as a result, some uses are not adequately separated or buffered in order to moderate the impact of conflicting uses. This issue will need to be addressed in land use regulations that will be used as a tool for implementing portions of this comprehensive plan.

Additionally, community members feel that there needs to be more definition to the downtown area. There are a number of single-family houses intermingled with commercial uses, and the community would like to see this transition toward a traditional high-density downtown style of development. In order to focus additional investment and promote additional development within the downtown area, the community is actively seeking to expand the boundaries of the downtown area. This is defined further in the future land use map and the associated text in this plan.

Lastly, the community has experienced some underutilization of land through the construction of temporary structures. This issue will also need to be addressed through land use regulations that will be incorporated into the zoning ordinance.

## **FUTURE LAND USE**

Up until the recent annexation of a 306-acre tract of land, the City of Avon did not have a significant amount of land within the corporate limits that is vacant. Perhaps the most significant accomplishment of 2005 was the agreement reached with Avon Township regarding the future annexation of land. By working with Avon Township, the community was able to identify primary and secondary areas for annexation, as well as guidelines and policies that will be applied to the future annexation of land.

This accomplishment had been identified as a top priority of residents in recent community surveys. A map of the primary and secondary annexation areas is attached to this section of the Comprehensive Plan for review.

### **Future Land Use Map**

Attached you will find a Future Land Use Map which will assist in guiding the future growth and development of the City of Avon. Issues such as highway access, impact to existing land uses and the environment, terrain, and availability of existing infrastructure were discussed as a part of this process. While it is understood that the City of Avon is not the zoning authority outside of its corporate limits, the future land use map does reference areas outside of those boundaries for the purpose of promoting continuity for the future growth of the community and is meant to serve as a guide for those areas. Those areas on the Future Land Use Map that are outside of the corporate limits and have “guided” land use designations are within the primary and second annexation areas as designated by the City of Avon and Avon Township.

The two primary growth areas identified through this planning process for the City of Avon lie to the north and to the west of the existing community. Growth shall be directed in these areas in attempt to minimize development any further south than Upper Spunk Lake as a means of promoting the preservation of the Avon Hills area.

### **Residential Growth**

Nearly all of the land referenced on the map that is located outside of the present corporate limits of the City of Avon shall be guided for residential development. The one exception to this is a small commercial area that has been identified for the western portion of the community on the south side of County Highway 54. Consistent with past practice, the City will continue to promote a variety of housing types and the disbursement of higher density residential development. It is not the intent of the City of Avon to cluster high-density residential development in one location, but rather, to create better neighborhoods by scattering this type of development throughout the community in appropriate locations.

### **Highway Commercial Growth**

At the present time there is approximately 18 acres of vacant land located between County Road 157 and the Interstate 94 corridor on the eastern boundary of the community. As this property has good access to the interstate, and excellent visibility from the interstate, it has been determined that the best use for this property shall be highway commercial in nature. This will likely result in the eventual elimination of existing residential units located in this area as the property is consolidated for larger scale commercial development. The south side of the County Highway 54 corridor extending west from County Highway 9 has been identified as an area that shall continue to transition to Highway Commercial land uses. The City will continue to promote this by initiating changes to the zoning map to promote Highway Commercial uses in this area.

Lastly, the Baseball Park has received much discussion with regard to the potential relocation of this facility in order to promote Highway Commercial development. If a cost effective proposal for the relocation of the Baseball Park is provided, the City of Avon will consider the existing Baseball Park as a potential site for future Highway Commercial development.

### **Central Business District**

The future land use plan calls for an expansion of the central business district which will require further definition within the zoning ordinance in order to properly implement this change. The central business district (downtown) area shall be bounded by County Highway 54 to the north, and shall be expanded to the east as identified on the attached future land use map. While the present zoning ordinance does not differentiate between types of commercial use, it is the intent of the City to significantly revise the existing zoning ordinances to assist with the implementation of this plan.

### **Industrial**

Industrial development will be promoted on the south side of the I-94 corridor along CSAH 50 and a more efficient use of land immediately adjacent to the interstate corridor will be encouraged. The focus of future industrial development will be on the creation of good jobs and high quality tax base. The redevelopment of underutilized properties will be a focus for future economic development activities.

As development reaches the northernmost portion of the community in the vicinity of the wastewater treatment plant, approximately 40-acres of land around the wastewater treatment facility should be guided for light industrial use. This will serve as a buffer between the wastewater treatment facility and residential uses that may develop in the area. An issue that will need to be addressed as this property develops is the implementation of a new east-west transportation corridor that will link this area to CSAH 9 and/or CSAH 155 so that truck traffic is not directed through residential neighborhoods.

### **Parks**

As discussed in the Parks section of this plan, future additions/modifications to the park and trail system that have land use implications include the following:

- \* Establish a new park area west of Middle Spunk Lake as this area is developed. It is anticipated that this initiative would be funded by parkland dedication and associated development fees.
- \* Establish a pedestrian/bike trail that links areas west of Middle Spunk Lake to the downtown area. This initiative would also be driven by new development but it would be important to include this initiative in any platting documents for this area. A trail route that went around the south shore of Middle Spunk Lake should be considered as an option for this link.
- \* Establish a pedestrian/bike trail that links the Waters Edge development with the rest of the community. The CSAH 9 corridor is restricted through the Ochotto and Middle Spunk Lake corridor while traffic speed is relatively unrestricted at 50 miles per hour. A separate pedestrian/bike trail needs to be established through this corridor to allow the

safe movement of bike and pedestrian traffic. The need for this facility will continue to grow as development continues to expand to the north.

\* Potential relocation of the ball field to the Lake Anna/Kepper Lake area. This issue would also rely on development pressure. If proceeds from the sale of the existing ball field were sufficient to acquire and construct satisfactory replacement facilities, this option will be considered for implementation.

\* The Lions Park land has been officially designated as the site for a future Fire Station project.

### **Zoning Map**

Continuing forward the City of Avon will work to bring continuity between the Zoning Map and the Future Land Use Map. As vacant areas start to see development pressure, the City will need to be proactive in establishing zoning designations that are consistent with the Future Land Use Map.

While the Future Land Use Map can be amended in the future, this should only happen after careful consideration. Much thought and public input went into creating the Future Land Use Map and a similar process should be used for amendments.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The Comprehensive Plan gains in value as issues are addressed and goals are attained through public and private action. Implementation depends on five interrelated factors, including:

### **Citizen Interest and Involvement**

This plan was prepared by interested citizens that serve on various committees within the City of Avon. During the planning process the public was invited to participate in a community meeting for the purpose of discussing significant issues that are addressed within the Comprehensive Plan. The comments received at the community meeting have helped to shape the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Avon.

While the participation during the planning process was very important, it is equally important that citizens continue to monitor the progress of the community within the context of the Comprehensive Plan. As projects identified within the plan are brought forward for implementation, community members need to express their support of these initiatives to elected and appointed officials. Additionally, community organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce need to understand the goals of the comprehensive plan and provide support for projects that are undertaken along the way as a means of implementing the overall plan.

### **Investor Confidence**

As property owners and investors begin to understand the Comprehensive Plan and the ideas that are being promoted, they are able to make financial commitments with greater confidence by knowing where their project fits within the goals of the community.

Additionally, by expanding the availability of land within each of the land use categories, investors are better able to identify opportunities for development. This will assist in meeting the future needs of the community.

### **Governmental Programs and Ordinances**

Zoning regulates the use of land and buildings as well as the size and placement of buildings within the municipality. It interprets the land use pattern established by the Comprehensive Plan into ordinance form for legal administration. Zoning districts are delineated on a zoning map, and the type of development permitted within the district is defined in the Zoning Ordinance. The City of Avon will be updating the existing zoning controls as part of this process in order to assist in the implementation of the goals set forth within the comprehensive plan.

Subdivision controls regulate the manner in which land is made ready for use. Minimum development standards are set forth within the Subdivision Ordinance for the purpose of regulating street and utility construction, provision of easements, density and development standards, parkland dedication, and the platting of property. Subdivision controls also assist in efficiently designating property through a legal lot and block description rather than the more complicated metes and bounds method. As a part of this planning process, the City of Avon has adopted a new subdivision ordinance to assist in the implementation of this comprehensive plan.

The day-to-day implementation of the comprehensive plan occurs through planning administration. By reviewing development proposals within the context of the

comprehensive plan, the Planning and Zoning Commission plays a significant role in the successful implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Additionally, the Planning and Zoning Commission will play an important role in ensuring that the plan remains current and continues to reflect the needs of the community. It is recommended that the Planning and Zoning Commission take time each year at their January meeting to review the plan and ensure that it is up to date. As Avon continues to grow and additional issues related to that growth are raised in the future, a more comprehensive review and update of the plan may be needed.

### **Capital Improvement Planning**

The City of Avon has identified a few capital improvement projects within the Comprehensive Plan. Updating any additional capital improvement plans to match resources with projects is an important exercise that the City should consider. A capital improvement plan will assist in the implementation of comprehensive plan elements. Often times lists of projects or priorities are identified through a planning process with little attention paid to the financial capacity of the community. By placing these projects within the context of affordability, the community is creating a plan that can be implemented.

### **Intergovernmental Cooperation**

The communication between various units of government, and the coordination of planning activities are accomplished by a published plan. This serves to avoid duplication of effort and the coordination of zoning activities among the various units of government.

As a part of the process, a map was developed identifying property and the preferred potential land uses within and adjacent to the corporate limits of Avon. The properties identified will likely serve as growth areas for the community. This map is meant to serve as a planning tool in that property owners, township, and county officials can now be made aware of the development patterns favored by the City of Avon.

By formally establishing the land use needs of Avon within a comprehensive plan, Stearns County and the surrounding townships are better able to coordinate their activities within the surrounding areas. This coordination will lead to sound investments in public infrastructure to serve the needs of the Avon community.