

## CHAPTER 3: LAND USE

Future land use planning holds paramount importance for rural communities, providing a strategic framework that shapes the trajectory of development and growth. One of its primary roles is the preservation of rural character. By delineating areas for agriculture, open spaces, and low-density development, land use planning helps strike a balance between accommodating growth and



safeguarding the distinctive rural landscapes that define the community's identity. This preservation is crucial for maintaining the charm and cultural heritage of rural areas.

Agricultural preservation is another critical aspect addressed by future land use planning. Given that many rural communities rely on agriculture as a cornerstone of their economy, effective planning ensures the protection of farmland from incompatible development. This safeguarding of agricultural zones supports the sustainability of the farming sector, securing the livelihoods of rural residents and contributing to the overall economic health of the community.

Natural resource conservation is integral to future land use planning in rural areas. By identifying and protecting vital resources like water bodies, wetlands, and wildlife habitats, planners contribute to the sustainability of rural ecosystems. This proactive approach guards against environmental degradation and fosters a harmonious coexistence between human activities and the natural environment.

Infrastructure planning is a practical outcome of future land use planning, enabling rural communities to allocate land strategically for roads, utilities, and other essential services. This ensures that infrastructure development aligns with the needs of both current and future residents, promoting efficient and well-coordinated growth.

Economic development is facilitated through land use planning by designating areas for commercial and industrial activities. This strategic allocation attracts businesses, creates job opportunities, and stimulates economic growth in a manner that respects and complements the rural setting. Housing allocation is also addressed, with land use plans identifying suitable areas for residential development while considering factors such as infrastructure capacity, environmental considerations, and the overarching vision for the community.

Future land use planning contributes to the provision of community services by guiding the placement of essential facilities such as schools, healthcare centers, and recreational spaces. This ensures that services are strategically located, promoting accessibility and meeting the diverse needs of residents. Zoning regulations, a byproduct of land use planning, help manage land uses, densities, and building standards, fostering orderly growth and protecting the community's interests.

Disaster mitigation is a forward-thinking aspect of land use planning, considering areas prone to natural hazards and incorporating measures to reduce vulnerability. By identifying risks and planning accordingly, rural communities can enhance their resilience to disasters such as floods, wildfires, or storms.

Lastly, community engagement is inherent in the land use planning process. Involving residents in shaping the future of their community ensures that the plan is reflective of local values, preferences, and aspirations. This participatory approach strengthens community cohesion and empowers residents to take an active role in the development and sustainability of their rural surroundings.

The city offers affordable homes in a small town, friendly, clean, and safe atmosphere, with ease of access to the State Highways 5 and 25, and to nearby businesses and services. The lots are well equipped with one of the newest and most advanced water and wastewater systems.

There are over 212 households in the city with an average household size of 2.62 people.

*New home construction remains strong, particularly by builders like Loomis Homes and Miller Homes. They are consistently building new homes each year in the Lake Erin and Lakeview additions. Roofing, siding, and window replacement projects are common maintenance/upgrade projects each year*

The land use chapter is a roadmap that helps guide Planning and Zoning Commissioners, City Council members, and staff on how to make decisions relating to land use and future growth. This chapter is intended to result in orderly and efficient development of

Green Isle land, making the most of the community's resources. It offers guidance on decisions for the community which are consistent with the city's vision and goals.

In this chapter is a description of existing land use patterns, as well as an overview of how the city anticipates how land will be used and developed in the future. It accommodates growth and applies the desired qualities for the community.

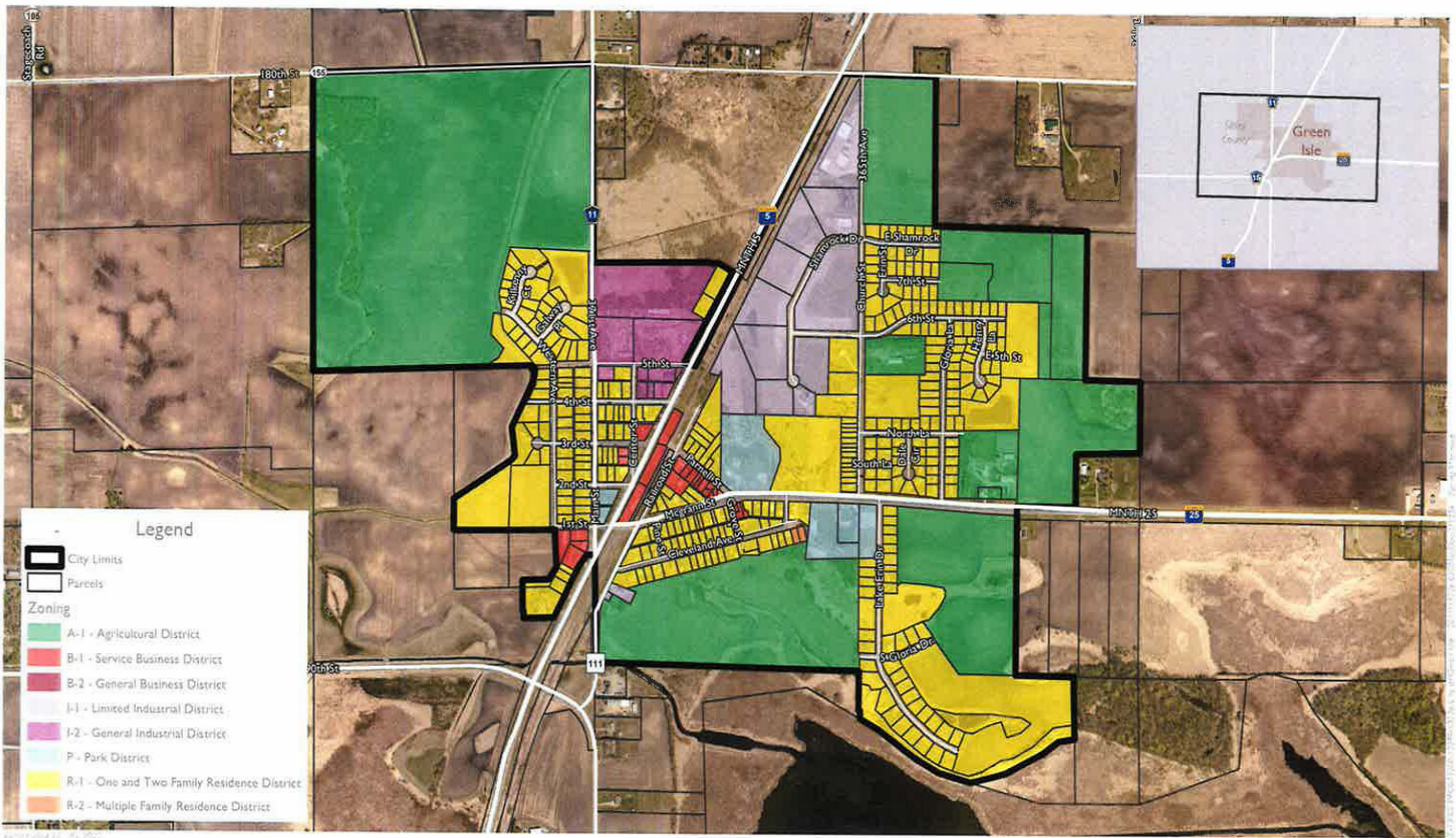
Another important aspect of this chapter is that it also serves as the foundation for reviewing the City's Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map, Subdivision Regulations.

Implementation of the land use plan produces several important effects:

- ❖ Use – Every parcel is placed into a specific land use category. Each category includes a description of the type of land use or uses intended for that category. The description should match with the types and forms of development currently found in Green Isle and desired for the future of Green Isle.

- ❖ Relationships – This is the mixing of the construction-built environment with Green Isle’s natural environment.
- ❖ Actions – This Comprehensive Land Use Plan will determine Green Isle’s future public actions and investments. Future streets, sidewalks, parks, and utilities will be based on the information in this Comprehensive Plan.

Table 3-1 Existing Land Use		
Existing Land Use	Gross Acres	Net Percentage



Zoning Map  
City of Green Isle  
Sibley County, Minnesota

Source(s):  
City Manager - Sibley County (2016)  
Parcel (Sibley County, MN)  
City Limits (MapGen 2017)



FIGURE 3-2: EXISTING LAND USE ZONING MAP

## ANALYSIS OF EXISTING LAND USE

### A-1 AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT

The Agricultural District makes up the largest land use category in Green Isle. The current District is comprised of land being used for farming activities.



The purpose of the Agricultural District is to preserve areas where urban public utilities are not presently available. These lands are to be retained in a natural state or in agricultural uses pending the proper timing for the economical provision of sewer and water, streets, parks, storm drainage and other public utilities and services so that orderly development can occur. The City may consider rezoning and subdivision of lands within the District to residential and non-residential urban-type uses.



Total acres of the Agricultural District are 303.64.

### B-1 AND B-2 BUSINESS DISTRICTS

Local bars, an auto shop, storage garages, the local bank and a mix of residential housing make up the current Business Districts.



The purpose of the Business Districts is to provide space for

concentrated general business and commercial activities dependent upon high volumes of vehicular traffic. The intent is to provide locations where vehicular-oriented activities can be maximized with minimal infringement on residential neighborhoods.



Total acres of Business Districts are 7.12.

### I-1 and I-2 INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS

Construction warehouses, a local recycling plant, local beer distributor, and the city water tower make up the city's current Industrial Districts.





The purpose of the Industrial Districts is to provide space for light and heavy manufacturing activities. The intent is to provide locations where degree of refuse byproducts and air or noise pollution activities can be maximized with minimal infringement on residential neighborhoods.

Total acres of Industrial Districts are 68.026.



## P – PARKS DISTRICT

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The city veterans park, archery range located in the city's other local park, and the city basketball field make up the current Park District.

The Parks District is intended to provide rules and regulations for the use of and conduct in the parks and recreation areas of the City.

Total acres of the Parks District are 16.51.

## R-1 AND R-2 DISTRICTS

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The City's Residence Districts is comprised of single-family dwellings, the local church, the local school, and two multi-family apartment buildings.



Total acres of Residence Districts are 259.424.

The Residence Districts are intended to provide low density residential areas and restrict incompatible commercial and industrial use and to establish residential districts which will allow multiple dwellings (apartments, row houses, town houses, etc.) and which will maintain optimum space, height and lot requirements approximating the standards of single-family residential development.



RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION

Year	Number of Permits
2019	2
2020	5
2021	12
2022	10
2023	7

- New home construction has been steady, with Miller Homes and Loomis Homes building the most new homes, particularly around Lake Erin Drive. There were 7 new home permits in 2019, 6 in 2020, 18 in 2021, 9 in 2022 and 16 projected for 2023 so far.
- Reroofing permits are common each year, typically ranging from 10-20 permits annually.
- Several commercial projects like Erin Solar Garden in 2019, OEM addition in 2020, and Fill Me Up signage/fire suppression work in 2021-2022.
- Numerous permits for decks, sheds, fences - typical residential accessory projects. These ranged from 5-15 permits each year.
- Plumbing permits for things like water heaters and softeners have been steady, usually 5-10 per year.

- Some larger municipal projects like water tower antenna replacement, sidewalks, and City Hall reroofing in 2023.
- Permit revenue has grown overall from around \$14,000 in 2019 to \$18,000-\$20,000 in 2023.

In summary, new home building and residential renovation projects make up the bulk of permits and revenue, with commercial projects and municipal work mixed in each year. Trend seems to be continued growth in development and permit activity over the 5-year period.

## SUSTAINABLE LAND USE PRACTICES

As Green Isle plans for its future, it is important to consider sustainable land use practices that preserve our rural character, protect our natural resources, and support long-term community resilience. The following sustainable land use strategies are appropriate for our small rural community:

1. **Agricultural Preservation:** Given that the Agricultural District makes up the largest land use category in Green Isle (46.4% of total land area), we will prioritize the preservation of prime farmland. This not only supports our local agricultural economy but also maintains our rural character and food security.
2. **Open Space Conservation:** We will seek to maintain and potentially expand our Parks District (currently 2.2% of total land area) to preserve open spaces. These areas contribute to our community's quality of life, provide recreational opportunities, and help conserve natural habitats.

**Compact Development:** When considering new residential or commercial development, we will encourage infill development and the use of existing infrastructure where possible. This approach helps to minimize sprawl and reduces the need for new infrastructure investments.

**Energy-Efficient Building Practices:** While respecting the scale and character of our community, we will encourage energy-efficient building practices in new construction and renovations. This could include simple measures such as proper insulation, energy-efficient windows, and solar-ready designs where appropriate.

**Natural Resource Protection:** We will pay special attention to protecting our water resources, including wetlands and Lake Erin. Land use decisions will consider potential impacts on these vital natural resources.

**Climate Resilience:** In our land use planning, we will consider potential climate-related risks such as flooding or severe weather events. This may influence decisions about where to locate new development or how to design infrastructure.

**Local Food Production:** We will explore opportunities to support local food production through land use policies, such as allowing for community gardens or small-scale agricultural activities in appropriate areas.



## Land Use Case Study

Preserving Agricultural Land in Howard Lake, MN Howard Lake (population ~2,000) implemented a growth boundary and transfer of development rights program to preserve farmland while accommodating growth. This resulted in the preservation of over 500 acres of prime agricultural land over a 10-year period.

### Key Strategies:

1. **Urban Growth Boundary:** Howard Lake established a clear urban growth boundary, designating areas for future development and areas to be preserved for agriculture.
2. **Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program:** The city implemented a TDR program, allowing landowners in designated agricultural preservation areas to sell their development rights to developers who could then use these rights to increase density in designated growth areas.
3. **Comprehensive Plan Integration:** The agricultural preservation strategies were deeply integrated into the city's comprehensive plan, ensuring consistent policy support.
4. **Collaboration with Wright County:** Howard Lake worked closely with county officials to align their preservation efforts with broader regional goals.
5. **Education and Outreach:** The city conducted extensive community outreach to build support for the preservation efforts and help residents understand the long-term benefits.

### Results:

- Preservation of over 500 acres of prime agricultural land over a 10-year period
- Concentrated development within the urban growth boundary, leading to more efficient use of infrastructure
- Maintained rural character while still allowing for controlled growth
- Increased property values for both preserved agricultural land and developable land within the growth boundary
- Enhanced local food production and support for the agricultural economy

### Challenges Overcome:

- Initial skepticism from some landowners about the TDR program
- Balancing the interests of developers with preservation goals
- Coordinating efforts with county-level planning initiatives

### Lessons for Green Isle:

1. Clear designation of growth areas and preservation areas can provide certainty for both developers and agricultural landowners.
2. A TDR program can be an effective tool for preserving agricultural land while still allowing for development.
3. Strong community engagement and education are crucial for building support for preservation efforts.
4. Collaboration with county officials can enhance the effectiveness of local preservation strategies.
5. Integrating preservation strategies into the comprehensive plan ensures long-term commitment and policy consistency.

By adopting similar strategies, Green Isle could work towards preserving its valuable agricultural lands while still accommodating necessary growth and development. The Howard Lake case study demonstrates that small cities can successfully implement sophisticated land use tools to achieve their preservation goals.

about land use categories and development trends, providing a forward-looking perspective on

## LAND USE OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

Land use opportunities and threats are critical considerations in the planning process, influencing the development and sustainability of communities. One significant opportunity lies in embracing mixed-use development, where residential, commercial, and recreational spaces are integrated within the same area. This approach creates vibrant, walkable neighborhoods, fostering economic vitality and reducing dependence on extensive commuting. Transit-oriented development is another opportunity that encourages planning around transportation hubs, promoting public transit use, reducing traffic congestion, and enhancing accessibility, making areas more attractive for residents and businesses.

Brownfield redevelopment represents an opportunity to revitalize abandoned or contaminated sites. This not only addresses blight but also supports environmental remediation, turning underutilized spaces into valuable community assets. Green infrastructure is a key opportunity, emphasizing the integration of green spaces, parks, and natural areas into urban planning. This not only contributes to environmental sustainability but also enhances the overall quality of life by providing recreational opportunities and improving aesthetics.

Affordable housing initiatives present an opportunity to address housing needs, promote inclusivity, and support diverse communities. Implementing smart growth principles, such as compact development, mixed land uses, and preservation of open space, can lead to more efficient land use, reduced sprawl, and improved resource utilization. Adaptive reuse, transforming existing structures for new purposes, preserves cultural heritage, reduces demolition waste, and supports sustainable land use practices.

On the flip side, urban sprawl represents a threat to well-planned land use. Uncontrolled expansion into rural areas can lead to fragmented development, increased infrastructure costs, and environmental degradation, posing a threat to agricultural lands and natural habitats. Overdevelopment is another threat, where rapid and unchecked growth may strain infrastructure, exacerbate traffic congestion, and compromise the quality of life for residents.

Environmental degradation is a significant threat associated with poor land use practices, such as inadequate zoning or conservation measures. This can result in soil erosion, habitat loss, and negative impacts on air and water quality. Gentrification poses a threat by potentially displacing existing communities, leading to social and economic inequities. Lack of affordable housing can result in socioeconomic disparities and limit housing options for various income levels.

Infrastructure gaps, arising from inadequate planning, can lead to congestion, strained public services, and decreased overall livability. Climate change risks are also threats associated with poorly planned land use in vulnerable areas, increasing exposure to events such as flooding or wildfires, leading to property damage and threats to community resilience. Additionally, the loss of agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses poses a threat to food security, rural economies, and the preservation of open spaces.

Effective land use planning involves maximizing opportunities to create sustainable, well-designed communities while addressing and mitigating potential threats. Balancing growth and conservation, promoting inclusivity, and adopting forward-thinking practices are essential components of comprehensive land use planning.

The Comprehensive Planning Group identified the following opportunities for Green Isle:

- Shovel ready lots in the industrial park
- Empty buildings that could be used in the business district
- Walking path/trails around Lake Erin
- Expand childcare

They group also identified the following threats to the City land use:

- School closing
- Business leaving
- Inflation/economy crashing/increasing fuel prices.
- Competition with other communities
- Loss of volunteers/workforce
- Loss of post office
- Condition of streets/sidewalks

## VISION FOR LAND USE

The City of Green Isle continues to see itself and a rural community welcoming additional new home construction, filling the industrial park, and planning orderly annexation to continue to grow.

### *RESIDENTIAL*

There are several housing options within the city, including many new homes constructed within the past five years, older single-family homes, twin homes, and two apartment buildings in town. Green Isle offers larger residential lots than those in the metro area. Current residents would like to see more single-family homes in the city.

### *COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL*

Green Isle is home to three businesses in the industrial park, a bank, an elementary school, gas station, and several small businesses. Green Isle residents would like to see more businesses in town and industry in the industrial park.

### *PUBLIC/INSTITUTIONAL*

Public and institutional land is public land which is valued resources for city residents. This includes the city hall, water treatment plant, city compost site, and several city parks. Green Isle is very lucky to be home to four city parks including: the Lions Park, the Veterans Park, and the Irish Yard baseball park. Green Isle has been blessed by recent donations that have allowed the parks to new children's play equipment.

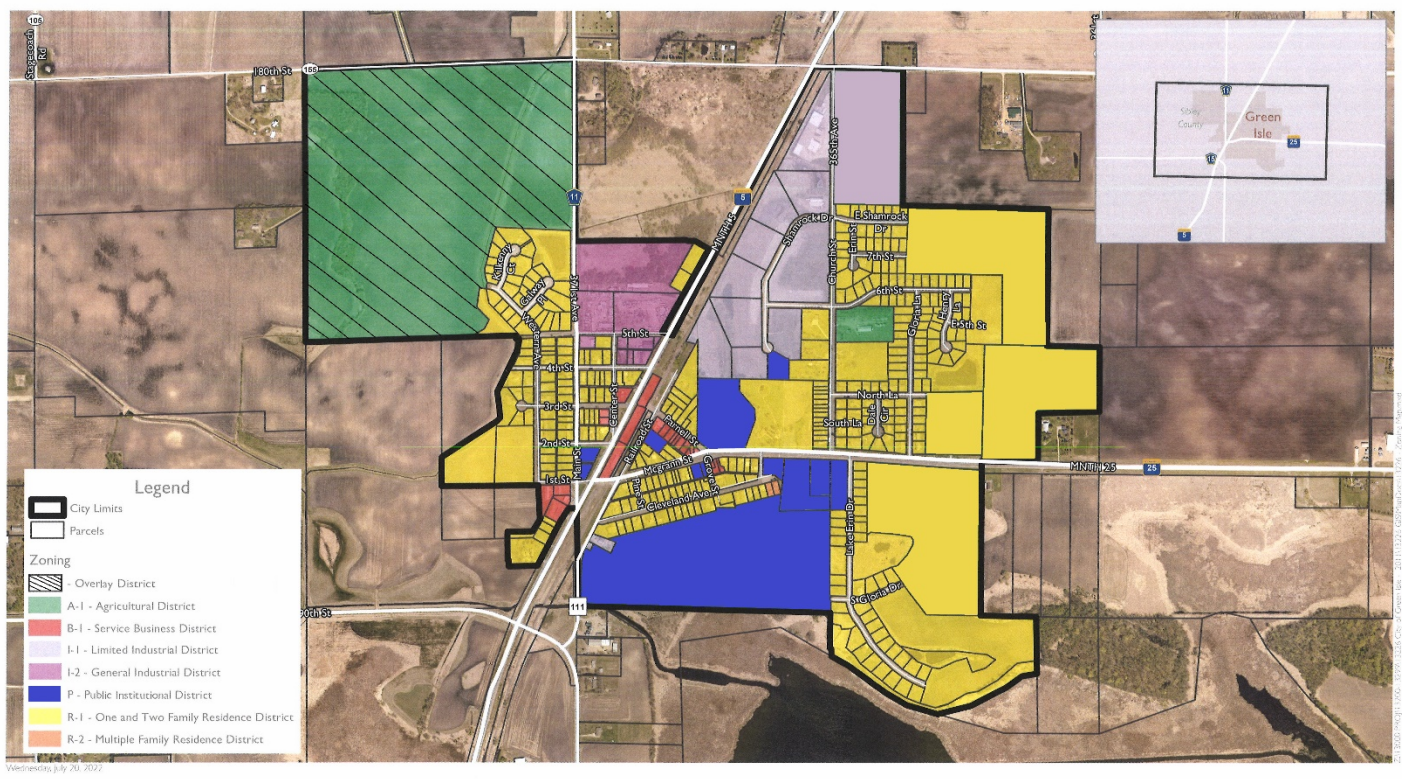


## LAND USE PLAN

The Land Use Plan outlines the intended development and use of land in and around the city of Green Isle. The purpose of the land use plan is to guide the development of land in a way that promotes sustainable growth, balances competing interests, and enhances the overall quality of life for residents.

The future land use map appears in figure 3.3 below.

FIGURE 3.3 FUTURE LAND USE MAP



## ORDERLY ANNEXATION

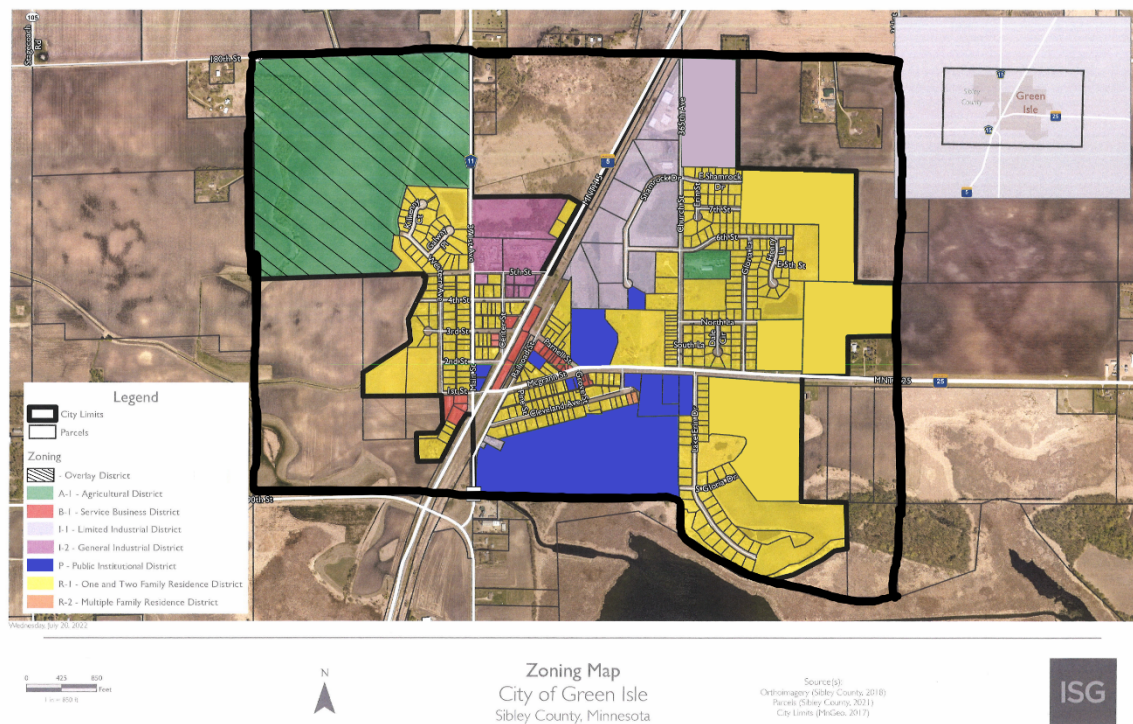
As Green Isle looks to the future, planning for potential growth and expansion is crucial. Orderly annexation is a strategic process that allows cities to incorporate adjacent unincorporated land in a planned, mutually agreed-upon manner. This section outlines Green Isle's approach to orderly annexation, which will guide the city's physical growth in the coming years.

## PURPOSE OF ORDERLY ANNEXATION

The primary purposes of Green Isle's orderly annexation plan are:

1. To ensure that the city's growth occurs in a controlled, efficient manner
2. To provide a framework for extending city services to newly developed areas
3. To preserve the character of Green Isle while accommodating growth
4. To protect agricultural lands and natural resources in the annexation process
5. To create predictability for property owners in potential annexation areas

## ANNEXATION STUDY AREA



The map above illustrates the areas that Green Isle has identified as potential annexation zones. These areas have been selected based on factors including:

- Proximity to existing city boundaries
- Potential for development
- Feasibility of extending city services
- Natural and man-made boundaries
- Preservation of prime agricultural land

## PHASED APPROACH

Green Isle will pursue a phased approach to annexation:

1. Short-term (1-5 years): Focus on areas immediately adjacent to current city limits that are primed for development.
2. Medium-term (6-10 years): Consider areas that require more significant infrastructure investments or are not immediately needed for growth.
3. Long-term (11-20 years): Reserve for areas that may be needed for future growth but are not currently priorities for development.

## ANNEXATION CRITERIA

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The following criteria will be used to evaluate potential annexation areas:

1. Contiguity to existing city boundaries
2. Ability to efficiently extend city services (water, sewer, roads)
3. Potential for residential, commercial, or industrial development
4. Impact on natural resources and agricultural lands
5. Consistency with the city's comprehensive plan and growth projections
6. Financial feasibility and impact on city resources

## PROCESS FOR ORDERLY ANNEXATION

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1. Identify potential annexation areas based on the criteria above
2. Engage with property owners and township officials to discuss annexation plans
3. Develop orderly annexation agreements with affected townships
4. Conduct public hearings to gather community input
5. Finalize and adopt orderly annexation agreements
6. Submit agreements to the Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings for approval
7. Implement annexation according to the agreed-upon timeline and conditions

## SERVICE EXTENSION PLAN

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As part of the annexation process, Green Isle will develop a plan for extending city services to newly annexed areas. This plan will address:

- Water and sewer infrastructure
- Road maintenance and improvements
- Police and fire protection
- Parks and recreational facilities
- Other municipal services

## FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

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The city will conduct a fiscal impact analysis for each proposed annexation to ensure that the benefits of growth are balanced with the costs of providing services to new areas. This analysis will consider:

- Infrastructure costs
- Ongoing service provision costs
- Potential tax revenue from annexed properties
- Impact on existing city residents and services

## IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

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The Orderly Annexation Plan will be reviewed and updated every five years as part of the comprehensive plan update process. This will ensure that the plan remains relevant and responsive to changing conditions and community needs.

By following this Orderly Annexation Plan, Green Isle aims to manage its growth in a way that enhances the quality of life for current and future residents while preserving the city's unique character and surrounding natural resources.

## LAND USE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Goal 1: Preserve the rural feel of the community while planning for additional housing and businesses.

Objective 1.1: Preserve the rural character of the community.

- Policy 1.1.1: Maintain current residential zoning ordinances.
- Policy 1.1.2: Increase the number of single-family homes in the city.
- Policy 1.1.3: Retain some agricultural zoning.

Objective 1.2: Increase single-family housing within the City of Green Isle.

- Policy 1.2.1: Collaborate with local developers to create additional single-family housing developments.
- Policy 1.2.2: Explore incentives for new single-family home construction.

Objective 1.3: Increase the number of businesses in the industrial park.

- Policy 1.3.1: Actively market and recruit businesses to fill the industrial park.
- Policy 1.3.2: Offer incentives to build in the industrial park.
- Policy 1.3.3: Develop infrastructure to support business growth in the industrial park.

Objective 1.4: Establish orderly annexation agreements with neighboring townships.

- Policy 1.4.1: Create an orderly annexation committee.

- Policy 1.4.2: Meet with Green Isle and Washington Lake townships.
- Policy 1.4.3: Create an orderly annexation agreement approved by all parties involved.

Objective 1.5: Implement sustainable land use practices.

- Policy 1.5.1: Incorporate green infrastructure in new developments.
- Policy 1.5.2: Encourage energy-efficient building practices.
- Policy 1.5.3: Protect and enhance natural resources, including Lake Erin.

Objective 1.6: Enhance community amenities and services.

- Policy 1.6.1: Develop walking paths and trails, particularly around Lake Erin.
- Policy 1.6.2: Support the expansion of childcare services.
- Policy 1.6.3: Maintain and improve existing parks and recreational facilities.

The Land Use Plan for Green Isle sets a clear direction for the community's future development while preserving its rural character and natural resources. By balancing growth with conservation, encouraging sustainable practices, and planning for orderly expansion, Green Isle aims to create a vibrant, resilient community that meets the needs of current and future residents. This plan will guide decision-making processes for zoning, development approvals, and long-term planning, ensuring that Green Isle grows in a way that is environmentally responsible, economically viable, and supportive of the community's long-term well-being. Regular review and updates of this plan will be crucial to adapt to changing circumstances and maintain its relevance in shaping Green Isle's future.