

**CITY OF  
EDEN VALLEY**

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This Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the City  
Council of the City of Eden Valley, Minnesota on  
\_\_\_\_\_, 2001.

Prepared by:

Eden Valley Planning and Zoning Commission

## **Introduction:**

The City of Eden Valley lies on the boundary of Stearns and Meeker Counties at the intersection of State Highways 55 and 22 along the Canadian Pacific rail line. Eden Valley is located approximately 75 miles northwest of the Twin Cities and 35 miles southwest of St. Cloud.

Eden Valley is within a rich agricultural valley that was settled as a result of the railroad in the 1880's and 1890's. Eden Valley has maintained strong ties to the agricultural community, which is evidenced by the communities' slogan, "A City Rich with Country".

The Comprehensive Plan for the City of Eden Valley is to serve as a guide in determining the best utilization of land in the years ahead. The Comprehensive Plan will be used as a tool in public and private decision making processes with regard to development and community growth.

The Eden Valley Comprehensive Plan builds upon successful land use trends within the community and ensures an adequate supply for future residential, commercial, and industrial development. By addressing these issues in advance, Eden Valley is able to properly invest in its infrastructure for the purpose of promoting each type of development.

The value of the plan and its successful implementation depend on public participation. The plan also needs to be flexible in order to address the changing needs of the community. These two points have remained priorities throughout the process of updating the Eden Valley Comprehensive Plan.

Public input received during the process is perhaps the most important aspect of this comprehensive plan. Staff and Planning Commission members have taken the opportunity to seek the input of community members by hosting a community meeting and actively soliciting input from residents. This input was used to gain additional perspective on community issues that are contained within this plan.

Over the past several years a variety of issues and projects had been presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission. These projects/issues included housing development, establishing walking trails, and building code enforcement to name a few. The process for updating the Comprehensive Plan allowed the opportunity to obtain input from the public with regard to many of these issues. That input has had a direct impact on this document and will direct the future implementation of this plan.

It is fully anticipated that as time progresses new issues will come to the forefront. These issues will need to be evaluated by the community to determine how they fit into the Comprehensive Plan. Once this has been determined the Planning and Zoning Commission will modify this document accordingly.

## **Existing Conditions:**

Topographically, the developed areas of Eden Valley are generally flat with an average elevation of 1,110 feet. Average high water table in the area is at an elevation of 1,100 feet. Grades and slopes place little restriction on development.

The City is drained by two streams; Eden Brook, a defined stream draining the west portions of the community; and Vails Creek which drains the eastern portions of the community. Both streams drain to Vails Lake located directly north of the City of Eden Valley. The streams generally define the areas unsuitable for development and provide for green space within the community.

Eden Valley has been developed in a grid pattern which is easily replicated, easy to negotiate, and lends itself to expansion. While the grid pattern is difficult to expand in areas of severe terrain, the bulk of Eden Valley has relatively gentle slopes, which are not perceived as barriers to development.

The City operates a municipal water and sewer system each of which has adequate capacity to support additional development. The community recently expanded its water treatment capacity in a cooperative project with the City of Watkins. The City also plans to continue a number of projects that would continue to loop the system and eliminate dead-ends. These projects tend to increase capacity for fire protection and reduce the presence of stagnant water within the water system.

The wastewater treatment capacity can be expanded by reducing the level of inflow and infiltration of storm water into this system. The replacement and lining of damaged wastewater collection pipes would likely assist in reducing the level of storm water that ends up in the system. The City has also considered replacing sanitary sewer in the northeast portion of the community for the purpose of increasing capacity and reducing the level of inflow and infiltration.

Presently the City owns several large tracts adjacent to the corporate limits of the north portion of the community. These tracts are presently used for irrigation as a part of the sanitary sewer system. The community may explore utilizing some of this property for residential development if it is able to secure other property for use within its irrigation system.

When the previous Comprehensive Plan was created in 1973, the population of Eden Valley was 800. Based upon population trends at the time, the 1973 Comprehensive Plan projected a population of 1250 persons in the year 2000. The City actually experienced modest growth over this period with the 2000 Census indicating a population of 866. Given the difficulties in the agricultural economy, the City of Eden Valley has survived some difficult periods in the

regional economy and has not only been able to maintain its population, but even experience some growth.

The racial make-up of Eden Valley residents has changed only slightly but is becoming more diverse. The 2000 Census provides the following racial make-up of the community:

White	835	persons
Hispanic	17	persons
Black or African American	6	persons
American Indian	3	persons
Asian	5	persons
Total:	866	persons

As additional information becomes available from the 2000 Census, it will be incorporated into the plan and used for comparison with previous data from 1990.

## **Community Goals:**

A number of community goals were established in the 1973 Comprehensive Plan and still hold true today. Through the planning process some of the goals have been modified to reflect the changes in the community over the past 28 years. These goals include:

It is the goal of the comprehensive plan to improve the physical environment of the community as a setting for human activities making it more beautiful, healthful, interesting, and efficient.

- 1) By promoting and maintaining a visually pleasing home town environment for the enjoyment and well being of Eden Valley residents and visitors;
- 2) By encouraging development of land uses in logical and compatible groupings;
- 3) By providing and maintaining a full range of public services, facilities and utilities;
- 4) By providing park and recreational opportunities that are accessible to all residents of the community;
- 5) By improving the image of the community, particularly in the downtown area by promoting repair and maintenance of building exteriors;
- 6) By working with the units of government in adjoining townships to encourage appropriate uses of land immediately adjacent to Eden Valley.
- 7) By enhancing the entry points to the community in the Highway 22 and Highway 55 corridors.
- 8) By striving to plat areas of the community that are presently described by metes and bounds.

To promote growth and diversification of Eden Valley's economy, making it a "full service" community.

- 1) By promoting and attracting additional residential development. More residents means more customers for local businesses and a larger labor pool;
- 2) By reserving adequate land area suitable for highway commercial and industrial growth;
- 3) By preserving commercial property in the downtown area by discouraging the conversion of main floor commercial space for residential uses and its associated amenities;
- 4) By demonstrating that Eden Valley is a progressive, expanding community, willing to accommodate new residential, commercial, and industrial development;
- 5) By encouraging a steady rate of growth;

- 6) By accentuating the natural amenities of Eden Valley for people and businesses desiring a park-like setting;
- 7) By encouraging high quality "full-service" commercial development;
- 8) By building upon successful businesses already in the community and promoting their expansion.

To encourage residential development and provide a greater variety of housing.

- 1) By planning adequate and appropriate areas for all types of residential land use;
- 2) By encouraging the development of under-utilized land for residential purposes;
- 3) By actively recruiting the developers of a variety of housing types;
- 4) By providing incentive for the construction of those housing types that would not occur without assistance.
- 5) By exploring alternatives for the wastewater treatment system that would allow for the development of land presently used for irrigation.

To provide for a logical and safe circulation pattern and transportation system.

- 1) By discouraging through traffic in residential areas;
- 2) By planning for traffic flow to utilize service roads in commercial and industrial areas with controlled access to highways;
- 3) By providing facilities for pedestrian traffic through the implementation of a sidewalk plan;
- 4) By encouraging the construction of a second railroad crossing within the community;
- 5) By promoting a quality highway system linking Eden Valley to the St. Cloud area.

In general the primary goal of the plan is to serve the interests and needs of a population varied in life style, income, age, and family composition.

## **Housing:**

During the process of updating the comprehensive plan and determining those goals that are most important to the City of Eden Valley, the focus of future community development activity was determined to be housing. By identifying this focus the City of Eden Valley is by no means indicating that commercial and industrial development are to fall by the wayside, but rather, the community has identified the interdependence of the various community development objectives, and the part that housing can play in improving the health of the community.

During the process of obtaining community input for the update of the comprehensive plan, the topic of housing received much discussion. Housing is of particular concern to the Eden Valley-Watkins School District in that enrollment projections indicate a significant decline in the student population in the next five years. The following enrollment projections were provided by the school district:

School Year:	2001-2	2002-3	2003-4	2004-5	2005-6
Enrollment:	822	785	769	740	728

Since nearly 80% of school funding is provided by the State of Minnesota, and this funding is based on student population, the projected enrollment directly translates into reduced school funding. In order to retain the current level of curriculum during this period there would need to be either a change in the current funding formula used by the State, or an increase the local property tax contribution.

Additionally, unemployment levels in Minnesota have been extremely low for the past several years. Both commercial and industrial business owners have had difficulty finding employees to fill vacancies. Many businesses are now finding it necessary to take a regional approach to employee recruitment. A key component to attracting labor to a community is the availability of affordable housing opportunities.

Given these factors the City of Eden Valley has supported the development of new housing opportunities within the community. The City has taken an active role in investing in a variety of housing types including a senior housing project that accomplished the goal of providing a quality rental housing opportunity for area seniors. As seniors moved into the new facility the community found that this opened up existing homes that were acquired by young families.

The City has also participated in housing rehabilitation programs offered by the Department of Trade and Economic Development and provided tax increment financing for additional rental housing projects. Recently the City has actively worked with the Meeker County EDA to develop additional rental housing within the community as well.

A significant component of the comprehensive plan deals with land use. It is important to identify those properties that lend themselves to specific types of development. By identifying development patterns, the availability of infrastructure, and the presence of amenities such as parks and open space, the Planning and Zoning Commission have identified a number of areas for future residential development (see maps 1 & 2).

It is very important to identify alternatives for development in order to provide opportunity for new construction to occur. By identifying a number of properties for residential development, the Planning and Zoning Commission encourages new opportunities and the ability for potential property developers to explore alternatives. By designating multiple properties within each land use category, potential developers are not subject to negotiating with one or two property owners that may or may not have an interest in developing their property.

The best approach for promoting housing development within the community means providing for a variety of housing options. By encouraging the development of a variety of housing types the community reduces the risk of over-developing the market in any one segment.

Typical housing programs that have recently been successfully implemented by Minnesota communities include the following:

**Single-Family Residential** – Eden Valley has and should continue to take an active role in preserving the existing single-family housing stock by applying for and implementing housing rehabilitation programs. In conjunction with this, the City of Eden Valley has been encouraged to invest in infrastructure in order to promote the development of additional single-family homes. It has been found that both rehabilitation and new construction are necessary to maintain a healthy community. The Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, Department of Trade and Economic Development, and the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund each offer programs that encourage housing rehabilitation and new construction.

**Multi-Family Residential** – Eden Valley should continue its efforts to preserve existing affordable rental housing stock within the community by encouraging property owners to participate in rehabilitation programs offered by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency. The decline in the availability of federal housing programs can lead to the conversion of affordable rental housing units to market rate.

The most popular program for encouraging new affordable rental housing projects is the Federal Tax Credit Program. This program is also administered by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency and is considered to be one of the most effective tools for the creation of new affordable rental housing units.

**Senior Housing** – The restructuring of federal legislation relating to nursing homes has led to the development of a variety of senior housing products. Eden Valley has been active in creating new rental housing opportunities for local seniors. Congregate care and assisted living projects have recently been popular in Minnesota communities in that they provide a cost effective life style for seniors that wish to retain their independence. A menu of services are typically offered including meals, nursing care, and house keeping. These housing products have been considered a cost effective alternative to traditional nursing home care.

**Townhouse/Patio Homes** – An additional housing product that has typically been marketed to those aged 55 and older are patio homes and townhouses. This style of home is typically an attached style of housing containing two or more units. A typical project will include single story homes with an attached garage. In many cases an association is created to address lawn care and snow removal needs. By offering this housing type communities have found that they are able to free up existing single-family homes within the community that serve as very affordable starter homes.

A clear priority that has been identified through the update of the comprehensive plan is to encourage the growth of the community through the promotion of additional housing opportunities. The philosophy promoted by this plan is one of residential growth in that more housing translates to a larger labor force, more students within the school district, and more customers for local businesses. By encouraging a wide array of housing types the community is able to provide more opportunities while reducing the risk of over-developing one segment of the housing market.

## **Commercial/Industrial:**

Commercial development is generally categorized within two types; Central Business District and Highway oriented. The Comprehensive Plan provides for an expansion of commercial areas that are highway oriented by providing for additional development within the Highway 55 corridor (see maps 3).

Eden Valley has been able to maintain a strong industrial base that attracts employees from outside of the community. The community will continue to maintain an inventory of industrial property that has city services and is ready for development (see map 4).

It is the desire of the community to focus commercial investment in the Central Business District within existing designated areas. As with many Minnesota communities, the Eden Valley Central Business District has suffered from lack of investment, which has led to the conversion of some buildings for residential use. The Planning and Zoning Commission has determined that it is very important to retain the existing commercial space by not allowing the conversion of street level store-fronts to other uses such as residential rental property.

It is likely that businesses that occupy the Central Business District will trend towards professional services and destination oriented retail services. It is the goal of the plan to continue to focus investment in the Central Business District and encourage the continued maintenance of existing structures.

Input received during the comprehensive plan process provided a number of suggestions for the revitalization of the Central Business District that included:

- 1) Offering incentives to new businesses.
- 2) Removal of blighted buildings.
- 3) Promote a general face-lift of the downtown area.
- 4) Update building facades.
- 5) Focus on the recruitment of service businesses.
- 6) Do not allow the conversion of storefronts to apartments.
- 7) Use the Revolving Loan Fund for façade renovations.
- 8) Create an Eden Valley Community/Business Web Site.
- 9) Focus on housing (more people mean more customers).
- 10) Promote cooperative customer service training.
- 11) Promote a joint marketing program for community businesses.
- 12) Build on successful businesses (promote expansions).

The Eden Valley Economic Development Authority has utilized a local revolving loan fund, state grant and loan programs, and tax increment financing to promote industrial and commercial development within the community. The suggestions provided during the comprehensive planning process will be considered and will

perhaps result in the modification of existing programs in order to accommodate rehabilitation of the Central Business District.

It is likely that housing initiatives will assist in the expansion of local businesses and the recruitment of new businesses by providing additional housing opportunities and perhaps result in more customers for local retail and service businesses and a larger labor pool.

## **Transportation:**

Eden Valley is located at the intersection of State Highways 55 and 22, which provide excellent transportation access in north, south, east, and west directions. As mentioned previously within the comprehensive plan, Eden Valley has historically developed in a grid pattern, which provides for excellent mobility throughout the community.

Through the comprehensive planning process a deficiency within the existing sidewalk system was identified. Upon reviewing the location of existing sidewalks within the community, the Planning and Zoning Commission developed a Sidewalk Plan that provides for the interconnection of the existing sidewalk system and serves several portions of the community where sidewalks do not presently exist (see map 5).

During the community meeting residents commented on the fact that some sidewalks were not maintained in the winter and therefore received little or no usage in the winter months. With little or no usage for several months during the course of the year these residents argued whether or not the investment was merited.

The Planning and Zoning Commission found that the Sidewalk Plan as proposed provided for several linkages to community facilities such as schools and churches. The Planning and Zoning Commission also felt that the Sidewalk Plan was meant to serve as a guide and that it should be understood that the Plan would be implemented over time when streets were reconstructed or other opportunities arose that provided for the installation of new sidewalks.

The City of Eden Valley may wish to establish a standard for the installation and maintenance of sidewalks for the purpose of implementing the sidewalk plan. Sidewalks should be setback from roadways and parking lots to provide recovery areas, snow storage, and green space. Community policies generally provide that the adjoining property owner maintain the sidewalk by removing snow and ice. While this provision often makes it more difficult to implement new sidewalks, it does save the community maintenance expenses for snow and ice removal and allows the sidewalk to be used year round.

The second transportation issue that the Planning and Zoning Commission wanted to explore was the installation of a second crossing of the Canadian Pacific Rail Road. The existing crossing on State Highway 22 can become congested at times, as it is located within the main north-south corridor of the community.

A new crossing at either Brooks Street or Hambroer Street was discussed as possible locations (see map 5). Canadian Pacific personnel have indicated that the development of a second crossing is expensive and poses additional safety

concerns. It is likely that a second crossing will not be developed in the short term; however, the community should continue to explore this issue with Canadian Pacific.

## **Parks and Open Space:**

During the comprehensive planning process the Planning and Zoning Commission took the opportunity to obtain public input on projects that had been discussed in the past. This included the concept of establishing trail system within the community along Eden Brook.

A concept plan for Eden Brook Trail was developed in order to gauge the public interest in developing a trail system that traveled the entire length of the community from the ball fields in the southwest corner of the community, to Vails Lake located immediately adjacent to the northeast boundary of the community.

Based on public input received at a community meeting, this project will not likely be a community priority for quite some time. While the trail was viewed as a nice amenity, it was considered by many to be too great of an investment in a time of scarce resources. This is precisely the type of input that the Planning and Zoning Commission was looking for in the comprehensive planning process.

Projects that were encouraged included the efforts already underway with regard to the redevelopment of the ball fields. This project includes:

- 1) Relocation of horseshoe pits, basketball and tennis courts; and
- 2) Construction of a new shelter; and
- 3) An increase in parking areas.

During the process of updating the comprehensive plan the Parks Committee discussed the potential to work cooperatively with the Sportsman's Club on a new shelter at the ball fields. While this idea is only in the preliminary stages of discussion, it could provide the opportunity to pool resources for the purpose of constructing a facility that could serve the community.

An additional project that received encouragement during the community meeting included the establishment of a park in the northern portion of the community (see map 6). The northern third of the city was identified as an area that is not presently served with a community park. Areas within and adjacent to the existing mobile home park were considered as potential locations for a small neighborhood park.

Additional ideas discussed by those in attendance at the community meeting included the construction of a walking track or trail at the ball fields, the implementation of a community/recreation center, and the construction of wider shoulders on existing roads rather than constructing trails.

The Parks Committee will continue to evaluate the information provided during the planning process to identify the best method for meeting the needs of the community.

## **Implementation:**

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

### **Citizen Interest and Involvement:**

This plan was prepared by interested citizens that serve on various committees within the City of Eden Valley. The Eden Valley Chamber of Commerce also took an active role in this activity. 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 Eden Valley.

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.

### **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 growth 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 land use districts are delineated on a zoning map, and the type of development permitted is defined in the Zoning Ordinance.

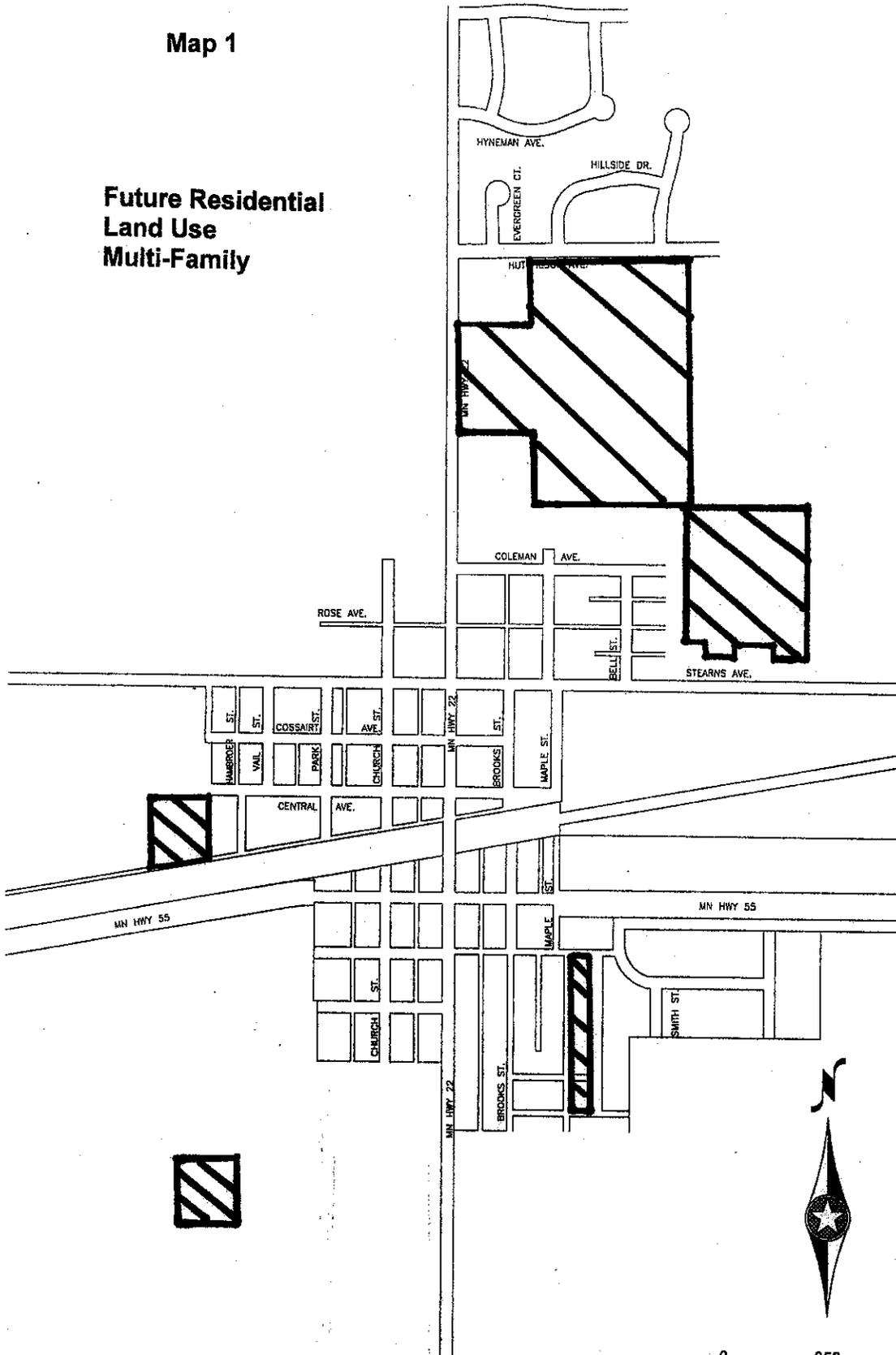
Subdivision controls regulate the manner in which land is made ready for use. Minimum development standards are set forth within the Subdivision Ordinance for the purpose of regulating street and utility construction, provision of easements, density and development standards, parkland dedication, and 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.

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. This is particularly important in developing land use policies for those areas immediately adjacent to the community. By formally establishing the land use needs of Eden Valley within a plan, the Meeker County, Stearns County, Eden Lake Township, and Manannah Township are better able to coordinate their activities within the surrounding areas.

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.

Map 1

Future Residential  
Land Use  
Multi-Family



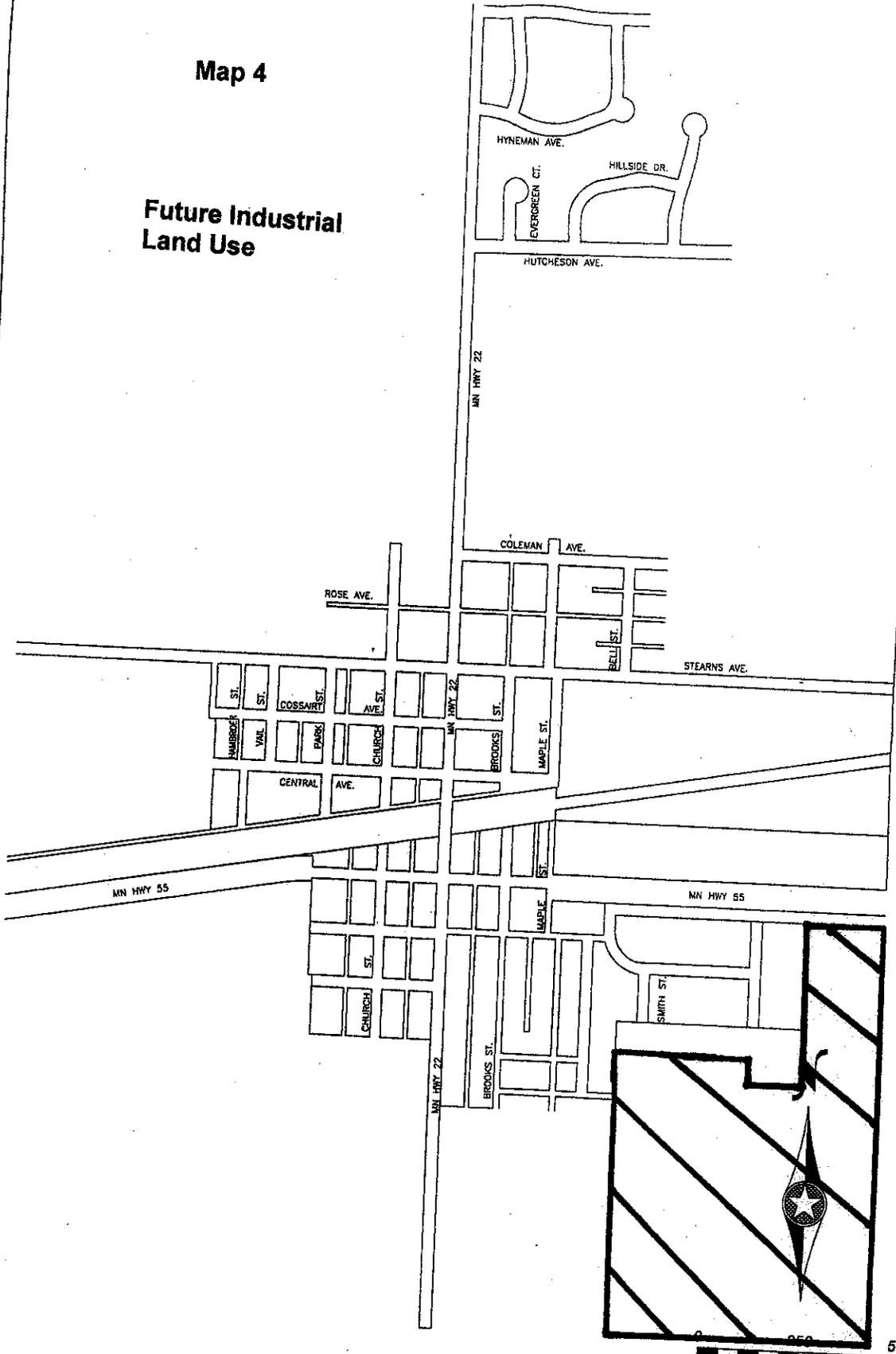
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CITY OF EDEN VALLEY  
CITY MAP

JULY, 2001

# Map 4

## Future Industrial Land Use



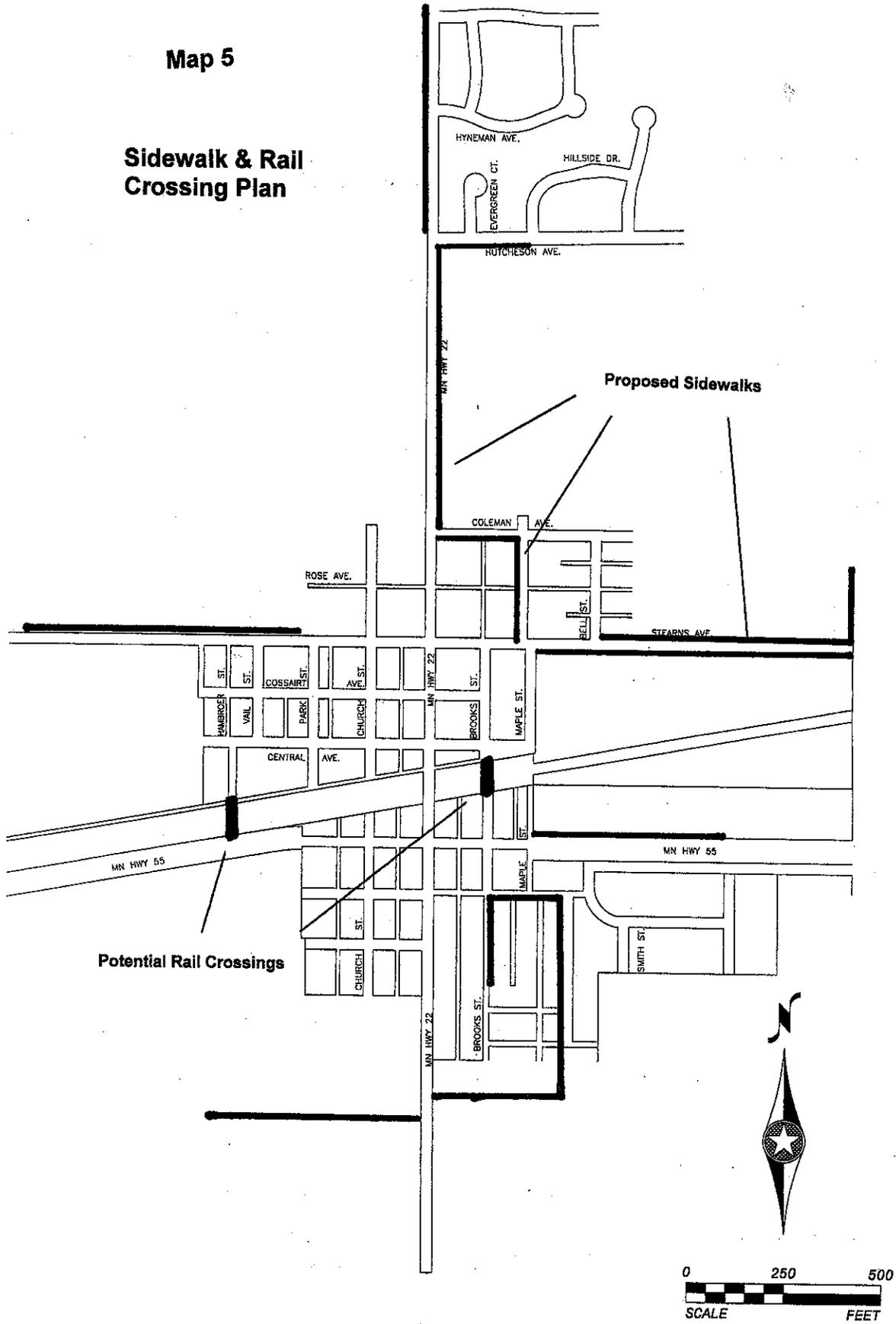
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CITY OF EDEN VALLEY  
CITY MAP

JULY, 2001

# Map 5

## Sidewalk & Rail Crossing Plan



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CITY OF EDEN VALLEY  
CITY MAP

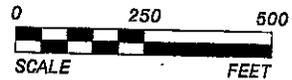
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Map 6

Park Concept Plan

Potential North Park Locations

Ball Field Expansion Area



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CITY MAP

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