

Decorah Planning and Zoning Commission
March 10, 2025 at 5:30 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86516557021?pwd=sq58c1IZASHJmVX6hvlIdaFBvYSM7Nn.1>

Meeting ID: 865 1655 7021

Passcode: 990093

For special accommodations or accessibility please contact Decorah City Hall prior to 10:00 AM on Monday, March 10, 2025. Phone number 563-382-3651

Please follow this link to the Commission packet and supporting documentation:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/hydy98z22fu8g3m/AABuz8vvfsBdfUXvyLNxC89da?dl=0>

Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Consider Minutes of the February 10, 2025 Regular Meeting
3. Consider C-3 Design Application for JNC LLC at 201 W Water Street
4. Review of the Proposed Decorah Business Park Urban Renewal Plan Amendment in Conformance with the City of Decorah Comprehensive Plan
5. Other business
6. Adjourn

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Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Consider Minutes of the February 10, 2025 Regular Meeting
3. Consider C-3 Design Application for JNC LLC at 201 W Water Street
Action requested – City Code Section 15.04.040 states that Historic Preservation Commission will review a C-3 Plan Design application and may provide an advisory recommendation to the Planning and Zoning Commission; which has been included as Dropbox File 003D. P&Z shall review the application for conformity with the regulations and standards in Chapter 15.04 and either approve or disapprove of the application and submit it to Council.

A C-3 Plan Design application has been submitted by JNC LLC for the installation of windows on the ground level on the East side of the building. This item was tabled at the October 14th and subsequent November 12th and December 9th meetings due to incompleteness of the application. Staff has received email verification from the applicant on the location of the new windows on the picture included as Dropbox File 003B. The applicant also confirmed that the original smaller dimension windows are no longer part of the application and instead consist of the example picture given in Dropbox File 003B. Historic Preservation has reviewed the application and endorses the project, but also stating that the application was unclear.

4. Review of the Proposed Decorah Business Park Urban Renewal Plan Amendment in Conformance with the City of Decorah Comprehensive Plan
Action requested - The City Council has set a public hearing for April 7th for the proposed Decorah Business Park Renewal Plan Amendment (URP). Prior to that hearing being held, the Planning and Zoning Commission must review the URP and the Commission must provide written comments to the City Council with respect to whether the URP is in conformance with the City's comprehensive plan.

The URP includes increasing the existing area to cover the site approved for Truck Country of Iowa and the surrounding right-of-ways (ROWs); along with all the other ROWs within the Decorah Business Park and the Highway 9 ROW between East Ridge Road and Oil Well Road. Two projects are proposed to be added to the URP. The first includes possible infrastructure improvements within the area with a not to exceed of \$3,000,000; including a potential traffic signal at Highway 9 and Millenium Road. The second project is the creation of an economic development support program for Decorah Jobs with a not to exceed of \$500,000.

5. Other business
6. Adjourn

CITY OF DECORAH
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
February 10, 2025 at 5:30 pm
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Ryan Delaney, Martin Refsal, Megan Buckingham (Zoom), Hanna Garry (Zoom), Holly Reilly

Absent: Marla Klocke, Johanna Bergan

Zoom: Megan Buckingham, Hanna Garry, Leslie White

Others Present: Travis Goedken

The meeting was called to order by Delaney at 5:35pm

Consider Minutes from the January 13, 2025 Regular Meeting.

Motion by Refsal and second by Reilly to approve minutes from the January 13, 2025 Regular Meeting.

Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Refsal, Reilly, Garry, Buckingham, Delaney

Motion Passed

Consider C-3 Design and Site Plan for Rowley Realty at 421 W Water Street

Goedken presented the background notes. This consideration is for the exterior of the building as they would like to include an addition to the East. Which will include an elevator, stairwell and deck/patio. The interior remodel project currently has a Compliance Certificate, which predates Decorah's building code adoption. The Compliance Certificate does not have an expiration date but since they want to add this addition, they need to get approval from P&Z.

Motion by Refsal and second by Reilly to approve C-3 Design and Site Plan for Rowley Realty at 421 W Water Street.

Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Refsal, Reilly, Buckingham, Garry, Delaney

Motion Passed

Other business: *No other business.*

Adjourn at 5:41pm

Respectfully submitted by:

Leslie White
Administrative Assistant

City of Decorah
Site Plan Review Application for Approval
(also if applicable)
C-3 Plan Design Criteria Checklist for Approval
Of Commercial and Multi-Family Residential

Pursuant to Chapter 17.36 of the City Zoning Code, application is herein made for the review and approval of the site plan described below. A detailed site plan shall be submitted.
Section 17.36.080

All site plan reviews will also include the direct engineering and legal expenses incurred by the city for review. Site plan approvals shall expire 180 days after council approval unless a Compliance Certificate has been issued for the construction provided for in the site plan. Compliance Certificates must be obtained prior to construction. All construction must substantially comply with the site plan as approved. Modifications to the approved site plan or time extensions may be considered by the Planning & Zoning Commission. Decisions of the Zoning Administrator regarding compliance with the approved site plan may be appealed to the Board of Adjustment.
See attached Site Plan checklist for required information to be provided for review.

Submittal date: 9/16/2024

Applicant: JNC LLC - Caleb Ulring

Applicant's Address: 909 Pleasant Ave Decorah, IA 52101

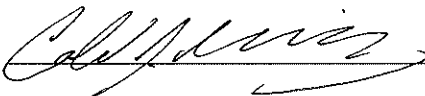
Phone: (563) 379-0828 Email: calebulring@gmail.com

Project or Company Name: Window installation - new

Owner of Property (if different from Applicant): —

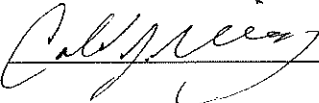
Site Review Property Address: 201 W Water St. Decorah IA Zone:

Description of proposed development / planned use: Addition of three new
Commercial style windows to the corner of 201 W Water St.
(Please note current structural damage from car accident)

Applicant Signature: 

C-3 PLAN DESIGN REVIEW CRITERIA CHECKLIST FOR APPROVAL
C-3 Central Business Commercial District Zoning Overlay

I have received a copy of the Review Standards, and Decorah Historic Design Guidelines for Buildings in Decorah's Commercial District and am providing all required submittal information on the following checklist.

Applicant's Signature:  Date: 9/16/24

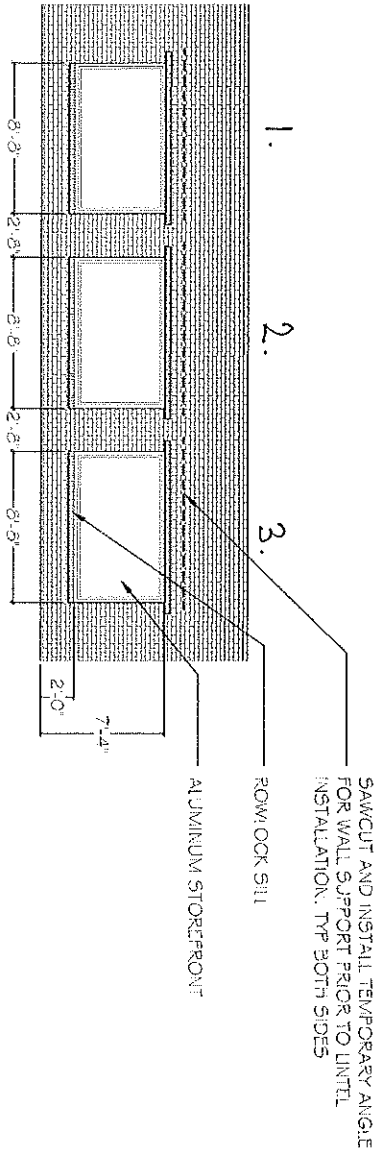
Per section **15.04.040** of the City Code – Design Criteria - the applicant must complete the following items in addition to the Site Plan Review Checklist if property / project is located in the C-3 Zoning District. Each item must be addressed or submitted during the project application review. Applicant must demonstrate compliance with all existing site plan approval procedures of the municipal code of the City of Decorah.

Submitted Building design information must include the following:

1. Provide Accurate, detailed scale drawings of exterior elevations illustrating the proposed construction or alteration. All visible elevations must be presented.
2. Provide Samples, specifications and/or photos of proposed materials (if not specified on drawings); i.e., doors, windows, grills, brick, stone, trim, handrails, awnings, building lighting, building signage locations, etc.,
3. Provide Accurate detailed drawings or photographs showing existing conditions of the building and relationship of new construction or alteration to existing buildings. Include historic photos if available.
4. Provide Thorough narrative explaining the scope of the work proposed,

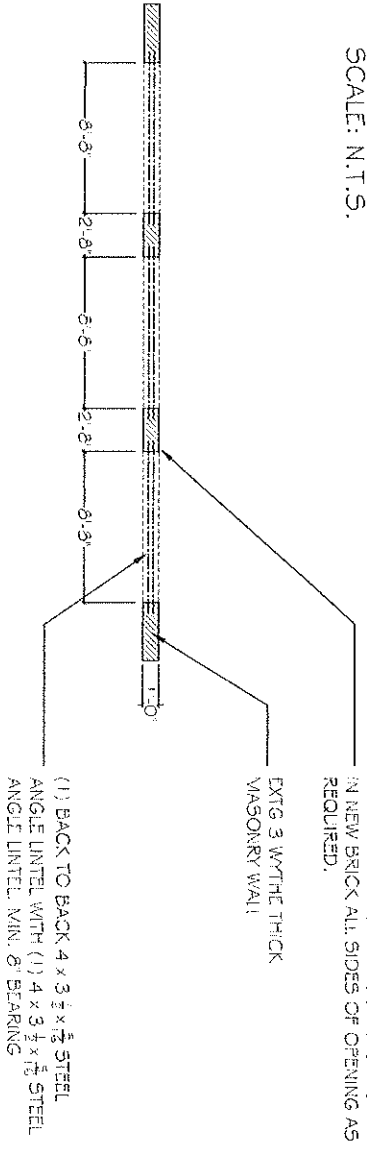
Submitted Site design information must include the following:

5. Accurate, detailed, scale drawings of site plan. See site plan review checklist if development / project complies with 17.36.020 – A. (stated above)
6. Specifications/cut sheets and locations for all mechanical equipment, trash bins and other infrastructure, include details for proper screening.
7. Accurate, scaled drawings and location of fences, screening, benches, seating, tables, ornamentation, flag poles or other outdoor fixtures, etc.
8. Accurate, scaled landscape site plan showing planter boxes, tree grates or other landscaping or ornamental vegetation; may be included on #5.
9. Manufacturer's cut sheets for all outdoor light fixtures and/or poles, quantity, type of bulb, intensity and proposed locations.



STREET ELEVATION

SCALE: N.T.S.



PLAN

SCALE: N.T.S.

Window number 1 (proposed) experienced structural damage from a car accident

that requires a large portion of that wall to be completely rebuilt.

All masonry will be made to match surrounding areas and windows will match downtown commercial windows.

Design Plan - 101 Winnebago Street

Proposal : The addition of storefront commercial windows to the front of 101 Winnebago. The windows would be fixed windows, set in the dark bronze color matching the aesthetic of most other downtown Decorah commercial storefronts.

Current Site: (Front View)



Current Site: (Side View)



Proposed Addition: (Not to scale)



The proposed addition would add significant visibility, light, and desirability to any potential tenants occupying the interior space. Further, historic research shows that there were likely windows and/or an additional entrance in this space previously. Restoration of this storefront to a “front-facing storefront” from its current “side-facing storefront” orientation will greatly improve the entrance from Water Street onto Winnebago Street.

Project Budget: \$35,000

Budget includes demolition, masonry, installation of window lintel, windows, window and window header, window/window header installation, and final furnishings.

Because of the extent of the project and the required materials for use, the project would ideally start in late Spring of 2025 and finish early Summer 2025 with a target finish goal of Memorial Day weekend, 2025.

Thank you to the City of Decorah and current council for considering partnering with property owners to restore and better our historic city center.

Caleb Ulring

From: [Caleb Ulring](#)
To: [Travis Goedken](#)
Subject: Re: Ulring - 101 Winnebago Grant Application
Date: Tuesday, February 18, 2025 9:10:08 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Travis,
Thanks for sending this over again. I will do my best to be there and clear up any confusion.
Thanks,
Caleb

On Fri, Feb 14, 2025 at 12:53 PM Travis Goedken <citymanager@decorah.iowa.gov> wrote:

Caleb, I will have that on the Planning and Zoning Commission agenda for March 10th, beginning at 5:30P. My background notes will cover what we discussed today, how it is one application for the blue wall with the newer tall window example given; where the dimensions will not exceed the load bearing framing in the picture, but could be smaller. However, if you can attend, that could help clear up any remaining questions that might come up. Thank you and have a great weekend.



Travis Goedken

City Manager

P: (563) 382-3651

F: (563) 382-6525

PO Box 138

400 Claiborne Dr.

Decorah IA 52101

From: Travis Goedken <citymanager@decorah.iowa.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, December 11, 2024 1:25 PM
To: Caleb Ulring <calebulring@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: Ulring - 101 Winnebago Grant Application

Good afternoon, Caleb. At the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting this week, the C-3 Design was tabled again so that clarification can be made and then reviewed by Historic Preservation; and they can make a recommendation.

The questions were again on the windows, but this time, not the location. Are you looking to do windows like the pictures that you included in your grant application, or are you looking at three separate and distinct, smaller windows, like in the original C-3 design submission.

The Historic Preservation Commission meets next week on Thursday, December 19th at 3:00P. The next Planning and Zoning Commission meeting is Monday, January 9th at 5:30P. If you can attend these meetings, that would be very beneficial. Thank you.

Travis

From: Caleb Ulring <calebulring@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, November 25, 2024 4:33 PM
To: Travis Goedken <citymanager@decorah.iowa.gov>
Subject: Re: Ulring - 101 Winnebago Grant Application

No. Where the design plan shows - which is on the east side of the building in the blue colored square .

On Mon, Nov 25, 2024 at 4:29 PM Travis Goedken <citymanager@decorah.iowa.gov> wrote:

Okay, so where the mural is?



Travis Goedken

City Manager

P: (563) 382-3651

F: (563) 382-6525

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[Decorah IA 52101](#)

From: Caleb Ulring <calebulring@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, November 25, 2024 4:20 PM
To: Travis Goedken <citymanager@decorah.iowa.gov>
Subject: Re: Ulring - 101 Winnebago Grant Application

Yes windows on the East side where I showed in the design plan .

Thank you

On Mon, Nov 25, 2024 at 12:27 PM Travis Goedken <citymanager@decorah.iowa.gov> wrote:

Thank you, Caleb. So the application for these three windows are the same windows that you proposed with the C-3 design application? There was some confusion on whether the proposed three windows were going on the North side or the East side of your building.



Travis Goedken

City Manager

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[Decorah IA 52101](#)

From: Caleb Ulring <calebulring@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, November 21, 2024 2:55 PM
To: Travis Goedken <citymanager@decorah.iowa.gov>
Subject: Ulring - 101 Winnebago Grant Application

Travis,

Here is my application for the Downtown Economic Development Grant.

Please let me know if there are any additional materials needed by tomorrow's deadline.

Thanks!

Caleb

February 26, 2025

TO: Decorah Building Officials Greg Swanson and Travis Goedken

FROM: Decorah Historic Preservation Commission <historicpreservation@decorah.iowa.gov>

TOPIC: 201 W. Water St. (aka 101 Winnebago St., Caleb Ulring) C-3 Design Permit Application

I. The Property

As explained in a DHPC March 2024 design permit response, a September 2024 response for the east elevation, and a Dec. 19 response to the current proposal, 201 W. Water St. is a large stuccoed building that incorporates what were originally three distinct properties. As the 2017 National Register of Historic Places nomination notes, the building sits at an important corner location at the core of the commercial district, but because of the building's lack of historic integrity, the whole building complex is "non-contributing" in the Decorah Commercial Historic District.

II. The Proposal

The owner's Economic Development grant proposal, which is being used in lieu of the required site plan, although it lacks details, is quite straightforward: the owner proposes adding a large bronze-colored-framed window in the ground-story location of the blue stuccoed "square" that lies between the building's brick-high-lighted Winnebago St. entrance and the brick/window facade bordering the alley just to the left of the "square."

III. DHPC Response

As we have noted before, and as the building owner is fully aware, a full historic restoration of 201 W. Water St. is impractical. But the building that remains is difficult to classify and difficult to sensitively and coherently renovate. The owner has improved the building's impact, and its compatibility with the whole downtown, by treating it more like the three separate buildings it originally was—he proposed doing this through distinct painting in red, blue, and yellow colors (the proposed bright yellow became a much darker green between the original site plan adoption and the actual painting). The owner also effectively added raised second-story window trim on the whole building in order to increase its design detailing (a requirement of Municipal Code for new buildings).

The building owner has told the City Manager (mid-February 2025 conversation and emails) that the current proposal lacks details partly because the building's support structure is unclear. The owner intends that the window will cover most of the currently-blue space between the two visible vertical supports (these may or may not be load-bearing) and will be as tall as the support header allows.

As the owner says, the proposed large commercial-style window would add interior light and would echo the original large-scale windows on this portion of the Ben Bear Winnebago facade. Some people may feel that these large scale windows will be out of character with the building's current Water and Winnebago St. ground-story facades. But it does not seem to us advantageous to mimic the current facade, which, with its clerestory-like windows on the north

and the small window on the south-eastern Winnebago corner, is so out of character with the expansive windows of Decorah's signature downtown buildings. In other words, this new expansive window would be a useful step towards a full-scale ground-story renovation.

The photo attached with the application does show a six-light, bronze-framed window, and we strongly encourage the owner to install something along those lines, since a visible "transom-area" is a strong connection with other downtown commercial buildings. We also hope that there will be some kind of visible brick, stone, or stucco sill to separate the bottom of the window from the sidewalk.

At its Feb. 26, 2025 meeting, DHPC voted 7-0 to endorse the proposed 101 Winnebago St. renovation, while noting that the application does not include the details required for both the Economic Development Grant and a site plan application.

Chapter 15.04 DESIGN CRITERIA¹

Sections:

15.04.010 Purpose and intent.

The purpose of this chapter is to establish minimum standards for the design of new construction or exterior renovation of existing structures in the C-3 central business commercial district for the city of Decorah, Iowa, to accomplish the following objectives. (sign and building guidelines available in appendices.)

- A. Both new and rehabilitation projects should be constructed to be long lasting. These projects should use materials that maintain the distinct character and harmony of the downtown, with special attention to the building's historic features, and with awareness of the 2017 National Register of Historic Places designation for the Decorah Commercial Historic District;
- B. Maintain the distinctive character of the district and avoid plain facades especially at street and alley elevations;
- C. Rooflines should mimic the separate yet complementary rhythm of existing buildings;
- D. To break up the monotonous appearance of long facades;
- E. To enhance the unique characteristics of the downtown while allowing for sun protection for display windows, shelter for pedestrians and signage for businesses;
- F. Utility areas and mechanical equipment should be designed so that they do not detract from the aesthetic appeal of the C-3 zoning district;
- G. To provide a rear entrance to the buildings that is aesthetically appealing as well as functional;
- H. To provide adequate lighting at entrances and exits to meet life safety requirements and to enhance the design and appeal of the development without encroaching on neighboring properties;
- I. Maintain a pedestrian-friendly environment without clutter and without blocking vehicle or pedestrian flow.

(Ord. No. 1251, § 1, 7-6-2020)

15.04.020 Definitions.

For use in this chapter, certain terms or words used shall be interpreted or defined as follows: Words used in the present tense shall include the future; the singular shall include the plural; the plural shall include the singular; and, the term "shall" shall always be mandatory.

"Alteration" means any act or process which changes the exterior appearance of a structure, site or area including, but not limited to, the erection, construction, reconstruction, restoration, removal or demolition of any

¹Editor's note(s)—Ord. No. 1251, adopted July 6, 2020, amended ch. 15.04 in its entirety to read as herein set out. Former ch. 15.04 pertained to the same subject matter, and derived from Ord. 1075, 2005; and Ord. 1087, 2006.

structure or part thereof, excavation or the addition of an improvement, and including window and door replacements, and visible elevation painting of murals and signage on existing facades.

"Demolition" means any act or process which destroys in part or in whole a structure.

"Exterior features" means the architectural style and the general design and arrangement of the exterior of a structure, including, but not limited to, the kind and texture of the building material(s), and the type, style and arrangement of all windows, doors, light fixtures, signs and other appurtenant elements, or the natural features of a structure. In the case of outdoor advertising signs, "exterior feature" includes the style, material, size and location of the sign.

"Improvement" means any building, structure, parking facility, fence, gate, wall, work of art or other object constituting a physical betterment of real property, or part of such betterment.

"Maintenance" means and refers to those routine repairs, up-keep, replacements, and other similar tasks, and maintenance of the premises, including, but not limited to, the fixtures in such manner as to keep the premises in good and sanitary order, condition, and repair, including tuck pointing.

"Minor alteration" means any act or process which minimally changes the exterior appearance of a structure, site or area including, but not limited to, the minor repairs or modifications to railings, cornices, eaves, overhangs, steps, walks, and window dressings, reconstruction, restoration, removal or demolition of any non-structural component of a façade or building.

"Owner of record" means any person, firm, corporation or other legal entity listed as owner on the records of the county recorder of Winneshiek County.

"Renovation" means the major alteration of visible elements, demolition and replacement of visual elements, and replacement of visual elements after damage by fire or natural disaster of an existing structure. Renovation required due to damage caused by accidental fire, flood, accident or weather shall meet the standards set forth in this chapter.

(Ord. No. 1251, § 1, 7-6-2020)

15.04.030 Permit required.

Every owner of any tract or parcel of land located within the C-3 central business commercial zoning district of the city of Decorah who constructs a new structure, or proposes an alteration, improvement, or renovation of the exterior of an existing structure, shall obtain a permit before proceeding with the new construction or exterior renovation. Permits are not required for building maintenance.

(Ord. No. 1251, § 1, 7-6-2020)

15.04.040 Procedure for issuance of a permit.

Before submitting an application for a design criteria permit, building owners are encouraged to consult with the zoning administrator and with the city's historic preservation commission, and to consult any available design guidelines interpreting these ordinances. Application for a design criteria permit shall be made to the city's zoning administrator, shall be accompanied with payment of a fee in the amount established by the city council and shall be submitted by the first of the month, with the expectation that complete applications will be acted upon within approximately one month. Applications for minor alterations may be approved by the zoning administrator, who will inform all members of the historic preservation and the planning and zoning commissions of the action.

In cases of more substantial alterations, the zoning administrator shall submit the application to all historic preservation commission members. The commission will indicate whether it has reviewed the application and may

submit an advisory recommendation to the planning and zoning commission. The zoning administrator shall also immediately forward the application to each member of the planning and zoning commission. The planning and zoning commission shall review the application for conformity with the regulations and standards contained in this chapter and may confer with the property owner on changes deemed advisable. The planning and zoning commission shall either approve or disapprove of the application and submit it to the city council. The city council shall, upon receipt of the action of the planning and zoning commission, either approve or disapprove the application for the proposed design criteria permit. If approved, the permit shall then be issued by the zoning administrator. Any permit issued under the provisions of this section must have the construction or restoration completed within three years of issuance. In the event that the developments are not completed within the allotted time period, the owner will be required to file a performance bond in an amount to be determined by the planning and zoning commission if the construction is underway at the time of the expiration of the three-year time period.

All applications for permit shall include the following, as applies:

- A. Demonstration and compliance with existing site plan approval procedures of the municipal code of the city of Decorah;
- B. Building design information including the following:
 - 1. Accurate, detailed scale drawings and elevations illustrating the proposed construction or alteration. All visible elevations must be presented for all of the following categories.
 - 2. Accurate detailed drawings or photographs showing existing conditions of the building and relationship of new construction to existing buildings,
 - 3. Accurate detailed scale drawings of site plan,
 - 4. Samples, specifications and/or photos of all visible materials; i.e., doors, windows, grills, brick, stone, trim, handrails, fencing, etc.,
 - 5. Specifications/cut sheets and locations for all mechanical equipment, trash bins and other infrastructure when such infrastructure is located outside the building,
 - 6. Thorough narrative explaining the scope of the work proposed,
 - 7. Additional accurate, scaled drawings or sections for trim and finish work,
 - 8. Roof drainage plan or narrative;
- C. Sign information including the following (see Chapter 17 for sign requirements):
 - 1. Accurate, scaled rendering of proposed sign or photograph, if already existing,
 - 2. Specification and/or sample of material,
 - 3. Photograph or accurate, scaled drawing of building elevation(s) showing location(s) of wall signage, window signs, entrance signs and all other attached signage,
 - 4. Photograph or accurate scaled drawing showing location of freestanding signs on the site,
 - 5. Type and location of all lighting fixtures for sign illumination;
- D. Outdoor fixtures information including the following:
 - 1. Accurate, scaled drawings and location of fences, screening, benches, seating, tables, architectural ornamentation, flag poles or other outdoor fixtures,
 - 2. Manufacturer's cut sheets for all outdoor fixtures and/or poles,

-
3. Accurate, scaled site plan showing planter boxes, tree grates or other landscaping or ornamental vegetation;
- E. Exterior lighting information including the following:
1. Accurate, scaled site plan showing number and location of proposed site lighting,
 2. Manufacturer's cut sheets and/or photos for all exterior lighting fixtures and/or poles,
 3. Type of bulb and intensity for each fixture,
 4. Accurate, scaled drawings or photographs of building elevations with wall-mounted lights;
- F. Awnings/canopies information including the following:
1. Photo or brochure showing proposed design,
 2. Color sample or swatch of proposed material,
 3. Photograph or accurate, scaled drawing of building showing location of awning and its relationship to existing structures.
- G. Door and window information, including the following:
1. Photo or brochure showing proposed design,
 2. Color sample or swatch of proposed material,
 3. Photograph or accurate, scaled drawing of building with door and window placement if there are any changes to the current configuration.

(Ord. No. 1251, § 1, 7-6-2020)

15.04.050 Standards for review.

The historic preservation commission, the planning and zoning commission, and the city council shall consider each design review on the merits of the individual case and shall consider, among other things, general designs, character and appropriateness of design, scale of buildings, arrangements, texture, materials and color as well as the scale design and appearance in relation to structures in the immediate and surrounding area. The preferred options for the treatment of historic properties are, in order of preference: 1) to retain, preserve, and repair; 2) to reconstruct in accordance with available documentation; 3) to alter or add to meet changing uses, while retaining and reflecting the property's historic character.

The following elements will also be considered:

- A. Materials. Traditional materials such as brick, stone (including cast stone), stucco, and in some cases wood, should be used as the primary exterior materials. Existing historic materials like brick or stone should be preserved and restored, rather than covered over with stucco, wood, metal, or paint. Tile, stucco, stone, glass block, copper flashing, metal and wood should be considered for accent materials. For rear entrances, the primary materials should be used in such a way so as to highlight the entrance.

The following materials are prohibited on the facades or sides of buildings that are visible, with exceptions for particular architectural styles:

1. Aluminum, vinyl or fiberglass siding or roofing materials;
2. Wood shake shingles, barn wood, corrugated metal, mirror or reflective glass, plywood and chipboard siding;

-
3. Regular concrete masonry units (Split face, fluted and other decorative concrete block will be considered.);
 4. Materials that attempt to mimic traditional materials (e.g., fiberglass panels molded to look like brick;) without consideration by the historic preservation commission and specific approval by the planning and zoning commission and council in the site plan approval process.
- B. Detailing. A high to moderate level of design and architectural detail is preferred. Design should harmonize with the detailing of the surrounding buildings in window shape, cornice lines and brickwork. Building renovations and alterations should restore the architectural details of cornices, brickwork, transom, display windows and bulkheads.
- C. Roofs and Parapets. Flat roofs (slightly sloped to drain) are preferred with parapets that articulate the rhythm of the buildings. Parapets should be embellished with detailing and be stepped or sloped to achieve a visually interesting yet harmonious sequence along the building facade.

Sloped roofs are not allowed unless concealed by the parapet or false front. Exceptions may be granted if the sloped roof is used to define the residential character of the upper floors and is demonstrated to complement adjacent buildings. The city engineer must review roof drainage plans for compatibility with street and sidewalk drainage. Use of underground drainage systems may be required where available.

- D. Facades. A building more than forty-five feet in width or length should be divided into increments of no more than twenty feet through articulation of the facade. This can be achieved through combinations of the following techniques:
1. Divisions or breaks in materials;
 2. Window bays;
 3. Separate entrances and entry treatments;
 4. Variation in roof lines;
 5. Building setbacks.

Street level facades on both the front and rear should complement the character of the whole building. Street level front facade shall have a minimum of fifty percent glazing. Special care should be taken to retain historic windows or to design windows that retain the historic window openings and that are compatible with the building's whole façade and with the historic downtown generally. Entrance doors shall be commercial, fully glazed doors, whether the glazing is surrounded by metal or wood, and should harmonize with the building's overall character.

Street-level main entrance doors shall be set back a minimum of thirty-six inches from the building face. Entry doors for upstairs apartments are not required to be set back nor to be commercial. Residential style doors are acceptable for upstairs apartments as long as they are suitable for exterior applications and contain at least thirty percent glazing.

Street side balconies shall reflect the design and characteristics of the building. Balconies shall be supported with cantilevered structure or by the building structure. Supporting posts at the sidewalk are prohibited. Balconies must not extend farther than current code allows. Underside of balconies shall be enclosed with an acceptable material. Balconies shall meet all life safety requirements. Drainage and the formation of ice should be considered.

- E. Awnings/Canopies/Signs. Retractable or operable awnings are encouraged. Long expanses of awning should be broken into segments that reflect the door or window openings beneath them.

Awnings cannot extend across multiple storefronts and/or multiple buildings. Awnings must be constructed of durable, protective and water-repellant material. Awnings should not project farther than current code allows. Neighboring buildings and signage should be considered when constructing awnings.

Window Signs. Permanent window signs should cover a minimal area. Large window signs are discouraged.

- F. Utility Areas and Mechanical Equipment. Screening of exterior trash and storage areas, service yards, loading areas, transformers and air conditioning units should use the same materials, color and/or style as the primary building in order to be architecturally compatible with the building it is adjacent to. If the utility area is separate from the building it serves, it should be consistent with the streetscape theme. All roof equipment must be screened from public view if visible from the street.

All exterior trash and storage areas, service yards, loading areas and air conditioning units should be screened from view or made as inconspicuous as possible. Loading areas, if screening is not possible, shall be incorporated into the aesthetic design of the building and disguised as much as possible. Camouflaging air conditioning units is an acceptable screening method.

- G. Color. The color of buildings should work in harmony with other C-3 structures and should maintain the unique historic quality of the downtown. The accent colors should complement the primary color. Permanent materials like brick, stone, and metal should not be painted and should remain, or be preserved, as close to original or existing finish as possible.

- H. Rear Entrances. The rear entrance should be clean and well maintained and should complement the character of the whole rear elevation. A small sign, awnings, display windows and planter boxes can improve the appearance.

Rear entrances should mimic the design criteria for the front as much as is practical and reasonable and use the same primary materials where possible. The features described under "Guidelines" are to be encouraged.

- I. Exterior Lighting. Exterior lighting should enhance the development just as design elements such as trim and material selection.

Bare bulbs are not acceptable (holiday and special event lighting excluded). Fixtures without adequate shades for bulbs are discouraged.

- J. Site appurtenances (benches, tables, fences, flagpoles, landscaping, etc.) should complement the individual building and the historic, pedestrian-friendly downtown generally. Pedestrian safety, accessibility and intrusion into pedestrian or vehicle thoroughfares will be considered.

Satellite dishes shall not be visible from main streets. Communication/television cables and antennae wires shall be hidden from view.

(Ord. No. 1251, § 1, 7-6-2020)

15.04.060 Inspection.

After a permit has been issued to the applicant, the zoning administrator, city engineer, or other local authority may from time to time inspect the work authorized and take such action as is necessary to enforce compliance with the approved plans.

(Ord. No. 1251, § 1, 7-6-2020)

15.04.070 Violations.

It is unlawful for any person to omit, neglect or refuse to comply with any provision of this chapter, and such violation shall constitute a misdemeanor. The city shall have authority to obtain compliance by the use of injunctive relief, municipal infraction enforcement and all other civil remedies available for enforcement.

(Ord. No. 1251, § 1, 7-6-2020)

15.04.080 Variances.

Where, in the case of a particular proposed application for a design criteria permit, it can be shown that strict compliance with the requirements of this chapter would result in extraordinary hardship to the property owner, because of unusual or other conditions, the planning and zoning commission the city council may vary, modify or waive the requirements so that substantial justice may be done and the public interests be served; provided, however, that such variance, modification or waiver will not have the effect of nullifying the intent or purpose of this chapter. Each variance shall be determined by the particular facts and circumstances in each instance. In no case shall any variance or modification be more than a minimum easing of the requirements and in no instance shall it be in conflict with any zoning ordinance or other city ordinance. The granting of a variance shall not be considered the grounds or basis for granting of a subsequent variance as each case is to be decided upon its own peculiar facts and circumstances.

(Ord. No. 1251, § 1, 7-6-2020)

MEMORANDUM

To: City of Decorah Planning & Zoning Commission
From: Amy Bjork and John P. Danos, Bond Counsel for the City
Date: March 3, 2025
Re: 2022 Decorah Business Park Urban Renewal Area

A public hearing will be held by the City Council on April 7, 2025 on a proposed amendment to the urban renewal plan for the 2022 Decorah Business Park Urban Renewal Area to add the property legally described in the proposed amendment and to approve a new urban renewal project. I have prepared this memorandum to assist the Commission in performing its role in this process.

Section 403.5 of the Code of Iowa requires that, before they hold a public hearing, the City Council must submit a copy of the proposed plan amendment to the Commission, “for review and recommendations as to its conformity with the general plan for the development” of the City. The statute does not require that the Commission hold a hearing on the proposed plan amendment, nor does it require that the Commission take any action to either approve or reject the proposed plan amendment. It directs that the Commission review the plan amendment and comment to the City Council as to whether the plan amendment conforms to, or is consistent with, the City’s Comprehensive Plan. Please submit any comments to the City Council by Noon on April 7, 2025.

Please call us at (515) 283-1000 if you have questions about the statutory process.

CITY OF DECORAH, IOWA

URBAN RENEWAL PLAN AMENDMENT
2022 DECORAH BUSINESS PARK URBAN RENEWAL AREA

April, 2025

The Urban Renewal Plan (the “Plan”) for the 2022 Decorah Business Park Urban Renewal Area (the “Urban Renewal Area”) of the City of Decorah, Iowa (the “City”) is being amended for the purposes of (1) adding property to the Urban Renewal Area; and (2) identifying new urban renewal projects to be undertaken therein.

1) Addition of Property. The real property (the "Property") legally described on Exhibit A hereto is, by virtue of this Amendment, being added as the April, 2025 Addition to the Urban Renewal Area. With the adoption of this Amendment, the City will designate the Property as an economic development area. The Property will become subject to the provisions of the Plan for the Urban Renewal Area. It is anticipated that the City will adopt an ordinance providing for the division of property tax revenues, as set forth in Section 403.19 of the Code of Iowa, with respect to a portion of the Property.

2) Identification of Infrastructure Projects. By virtue of this amendment, the list of authorized urban renewal projects in the Plan is hereby amended to include the following project description:

A.

Name of Project: Decorah Business Park Infrastructure Improvements Project

Date of Council Approval of Project: April 7, 2025

Description of Project and Project Site: The Decorah Business Park Infrastructure Improvements Project will consist of the construction of certain infrastructure projects to serve the Decorah Business Park including (1) the extension of Prosperity Road from its intersection with Millennium Road on the east and continuing west to its intersection with East Ridge Road; (2) the construction of sanitary sewer, waterworks and storm water drainage system improvements; (3) the installation of traffic signalization at the intersection of Highway 9 and Millennium Road; (4) and the incidental utility, landscaping, site clearance and cleanup work related thereto.

It is expected that the completed Decorah Business Park Infrastructure Improvements Project will cause increased and improved ability of the City to provide adequate transportation infrastructure for future economic growth in the Urban Renewal Area.

Description of Properties to be Acquired in Connection with Project: The City will acquire such easement territory and rights-of-way as are necessary to successfully undertake the Decorah Business Park Infrastructure Improvements Project.

Description of Use of TIF for the Project: It is anticipated that the City will pay for the Decorah Business Park Infrastructure Improvements Project with borrowed funds and/or the proceeds of internal advances of City funds on-hand. In any case, the City’s obligations (the “Obligations”) will be repaid with incremental property tax revenues to be derived from the Urban Renewal Area. It is anticipated that the City’s use of incremental property tax revenues for the Decorah Business Park Infrastructure Improvements Project will not exceed \$3,000,000, plus any interest expense incurred on the Obligations.

B.

Name of Project: 2028-2032 Decorah Jobs, Inc. Economic Development Support Program

Date of Council Approval of Project: April 7, 2025

Declaration of Support Program as an Urban Renewal Project: The City Council acknowledges the importance of Decorah Jobs, Inc. (“Decorah Jobs”) in the ongoing promotion of economic development in the Urban Renewal Area. The City intends to enter into an economic development support agreement with Decorah Jobs, which will provide a mechanism for the City to make annual support payments to Decorah Jobs for a period of five fiscal years. Under said agreement, Decorah Jobs will commit to continuing its efforts to carry out economic development support programs, promotional events, initiatives and activities within the Urban Renewal Area.

Description of Use of TIF for the Support Program: It is anticipated that the City will pay for the Decorah Jobs, Inc. Economic Development Support Program with a combination of borrowed funds, proceeds of internal advances of City funds on-hand and/or through an economic development agreement with negotiated annual appropriation payments. In all cases, the City’s obligations will be repaid with incremental property tax revenues derived from the Urban Renewal Area. The amount of incremental property tax revenues to be expended by the City in connection with the Decorah Jobs, Inc. Economic Development Support Program will not exceed \$500,000.

3) Required Financial Information. The following information is provided in accordance with the requirements of Section 403.17 of the Code of Iowa:

Constitutional debt limit of the City:	<u>\$40,632,109</u>
Outstanding general obligation debt of the City:	<u>\$</u>
Proposed debt to be incurred in area to be added in connection with this April, 2025 Amendment*:	<u>\$ 3,500,000</u>

*It is anticipated that some or all of the debt incurred hereunder will be subject to annual appropriation by the City Council.

EXHIBIT A

Legal Description of April, 2025 Addition
2022 Decorah Business Park Urban Renewal Area

Certain real property situated in the City of Decorah, Winneshiek County, State of Iowa, more particularly described, as follows:

Decorah Business Park Third Subdivision, City of Decorah, Winneshiek County, Iowa

Lot 2 of 6, Decorah Business Park Subdivision, City of Decorah, Winneshiek County, Iowa

All of the public right-of-way of Millennium Road situated in the City of Decorah, Winneshiek County, State of Iowa

All of the public right-of-way of Prosperity Road situated in the City of Decorah, Winneshiek County, State of Iowa

All of the public right-of-way of Sweet Parkway Road situated in the City of Decorah, Winneshiek County, State of Iowa

All of the public right-of-way of Highway 9 situated in the City of Decorah, Winneshiek County, State of Iowa from and including its intersection with East Ridge Road and continuing southeast to and including its intersection with Oil Well Road

CITY OF DECORAH

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Adopted February 6, 2012

Amended June 2019



Resolution No. 2973
A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE DECORAH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – 2012
(Plan update and revision)

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on Monday, June 17, 2019 at 5:45 P.M. in the Decorah City Hall Council Chambers on proposed amendments to the Decorah Comprehensive Plan, hereinafter referred to as the Comprehensive Plan Update and Revision, and

WHEREAS, said plan is a policy document that considers the 13 Smart Planning elements such as; community's demographics, public facilities and utilities, land use, transportation, housing, natural and cultural resources, hazards, and implementation procedures, and

WHEREAS, an integral part of the plan is providing opportunities for public input in the Comprehensive Plan Update and Revision process, and

WHEREAS, the Decorah Planning & Zoning Commission desires to keep the Comprehensive Plan relevant with changing community dynamics and has expressed interest in timely updates and revisions of data and information contained in the Plan, and

WHEREAS, the Decorah Planning & Zoning Commission has studied and reviewed amending and updating the 2012 Decorah Comprehensive Plan as follows: That certain sections shall have updated statistics, edits to text and narrative sections, emphasis added to strengthen sustainability initiatives, and updated mapping, charts, and diagrams, and

WHEREAS, the Decorah Planning and Zoning Commission has reviewed the current 2012 Comprehensive Plan over the past twelve months and held one public input session on the Comprehensive Plan Update and Revision and has recommended it be approved, and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan Update has been subject of, or a discussion item on the agenda of, numerous public meetings, work-sessions, and presentations, and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan Update and Revision is a primary tool of the City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, and City staff, and said plan is in the best interest of City.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Decorah City Council hereby approves and adopts the Decorah Comprehensive Plan Update and Revision, a full copy of which is on file at the office of the City Clerk, as a replacement in its entirety to the existing Decorah Comprehensive Plan.

PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS 17th day of June, 2019.

Lorraine Borowski

Lorraine Borowski, Mayor

ATTEST:

Wanda Hemesath

Wanda Hemesath, City Clerk-Treasurer

ADOPTION RESOLUTION

Resolution No. 2486

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE DECORAH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN - 2012 (PLAN UPDATE)

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on October 10, 2011 at 6:00 P.M. in Decorah Public Library on the proposed adoption of the Decorah Comprehensive Plan, hereinafter referred to as the Comprehensive Plan Update, and

WHEREAS, said plan is a policy document that considers the 13 Smart Planning elements such as; community's demographics, public facilities and utilities, land use, transportation, housing, natural and cultural resources, hazards, and implementation procedures, and

WHEREAS, an integral part of the plan is providing opportunities for public input in the Comprehensive Plan Update process, and

WHEREAS, the Decorah Planning and Zoning Commission has held 2 public input sessions on the Comprehensive Plan Update and has recommended it be approved, and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan Update has been subject of, or a discussion item on the agenda of, numerous public meetings, work-sessions, and presentations, and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan Update is a primary tool of the City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, and City staff, and

WHEREAS, said plan is in the best interest of City, now therefore **BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED** that the Decorah City Council hereby approves and adopts the Decorah Comprehensive Plan Update as a replacement in its entirety to the existing Plan this 6TH day of February, 2012



Don Arendt, Mayor

ATTEST:



Wanda Hemesath, City Clerk

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CITY OF DECORAH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2012

Comprehensive Planning Committee

Don Arendt
Brian Cook
Lindsay Erdman
Jerry Freund
Ross Hadley
Paul Hexom
Jake Hildebrand
Donna Rae Ibanez
John Jenkins
Kirk Johnson
Stan Moellers
Benjamin Nichols
Janelle Palovec
Lynne Southeran
Karen Tjossem
Kyril Henderson
Rachel Vagts
Rick Zahasky

City Council

Don Arendt – Mayor
John Franzen
Steve Matter
Gary Rustad
Randy Schissel
Karen Tjossem
Rachel Vagts
Paul Wanless

Planning & Zoning Commission

Brian Cook
Ross Hadley
Donna Rae Ibanez
John Jenkins
Stan Moellers
Benjamin Nichols
Lynne Southeran

Reviewed, Edited, and Amended 2017 – 2019 – Planning & Zoning

Commission

Brian Cook
Tony Clarke
Llew Jenkins
Barbara Massman
Stan Moellers
Nathan Thompson
Joel Zook

Amended 2017 – 2019

City Council

Lorraine Borowski – Mayor
Randy Schissel
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Prepared for the City of Decorah by:



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INTRODUCTION



Background

In 2010, all eight incorporated communities in Winneshiek County, as well as Winneshiek County, passed a resolution entering into an intergovernmental agreement for the purpose of developing and updating comprehensive plans. By February of 2012, the City of Decorah adopted a complete update to their comprehensive plan, the first since 1992. To ensure that the plan remains relevant, the City will continue to revisit the information, goals and policies communicated in the plan every five years, or on an as-needed basis in the interim. In addition, a major plan update will occur on a twenty-year schedule. This document reflects the most current 5-year update to the Decorah Comprehensive Plan completed in 2017-2018.

Public Participation

Public participation is an important part of the comprehensive planning process. For a plan to develop, decision makers need to hear ideas, thoughts, and opinions from their citizens and stakeholders.

During the 2012 comprehensive plan update, the Planning Commission held two public input sessions, which were publicized in advance in the local paper and posted on community boards. The public was invited to review the plan and the maps and provide any input or comments for the planning commission to consider. Comments and photos from the 2012 public input sessions can be found in Appendix C. For the 2017-2018 plan update, the City Manager / Zoning Administrator held regular meetings with the Planning Commission to review and discuss each chapter of the comprehensive plan, identifying opportunities to build on existing policies and information.

Purpose of the Plan

The City of Decorah's Comprehensive Plan is intended to assist local officials and community members as they make future decisions regarding growth, management, and preservation of the community. At its most basic level, the plan does this by developing an inventory of community assets, analyzing community needs, and identifying policies for meeting future needs.

The City of Decorah wishes to continue to improve planning, zoning, development, and resource management efforts in a manner that better balances cultural vibrancy, economic prosperity, and environmental integrity. These key themes encompass issues that when consistently addressed will improve the quality of life for Decorah residents. Therefore, Decorah's comprehensive plan has been developed under the guidance of Iowa Smart Planning Legislation SF 2389. Now Iowa Code section 18B, [The Code section may be found here](#). This legislation requests local governments consider the following principles in their comprehensive planning process:

- **Collaboration:** Governmental, community and individual stakeholders, including those outside the jurisdiction of the entity, are encouraged to be involved and provide comment during the planning process.
- **Efficiency, Transparency, and Consistency:** Planning should provide efficient, transparent and consistent outcomes, and should support the equitable distribution of development benefits and costs.
- **Clean, Renewable and Efficient Energy:** Planning should promote clean and renewable energy use and increased energy efficiency.
- **Occupational Diversity:** Planning should promote increased diversity of employment and business opportunities, promote access to education and training, expand entrepreneurial opportunities, and promote the establishment of businesses in locations near existing housing, infrastructure and transportation.
- **Revitalization:** Planning should facilitate the revitalization of established town centers and neighborhoods by promoting development that conserves land, protects historic resources, promotes pedestrian accessibility and integrates different uses of property. Remediation and reuse of existing sites, structures and infrastructure is preferred over new construction in undeveloped areas.
- **Housing Diversity:** Planning should encourage diversity in the types of available housing, support the rehabilitation of existing housing and promote the location of housing near public transportation and employment centers.
- **Community Character:** Planning should promote activities and development that are consistent with the character and architectural style of the community and should respond to local values regarding the physical character of the community.

- **Natural Resources and Agricultural Protection:** Planning should emphasize protection, preservation and restoration of natural resources, agricultural land and cultural and historic landscapes, and should increase the availability of open spaces and recreational facilities.
- **Sustainable Design:** Planning should promote developments, buildings and infrastructure that utilize sustainable design and construction standards and conserve natural resources by reducing waste and pollution through efficient use of land, energy, water, air and materials.
- **Transportation Diversity:** Planning should promote expanded transportation options for residents of the community. Consideration should be given to transportation options that maximize mobility, reduce congestion, conserve fuel and improve air quality.

In addition, the following smart planning elements are also reflected in the comprehensive planning process, serving as the basis for each chapter in the plan:

- **Issues and Opportunities:** Information relating to the primary characteristics of the municipality and a description of how each of those characteristics impacts future development of the municipality.
- **Housing:** Housing information, policies and programs to further the vitality and character of established residential neighborhoods and new residential neighborhoods and plans to ensure an adequate housing supply that meets both the existing and forecasted housing demand.
- **Transportation:** Transportation information, policies and programs to guide the future development of a safe, convenient, efficient and economical transportation system.
- **Utilities and Community Facilities:** Information, policies and programs to 1) Guide future development of sanitary sewer service, storm water management, water supply, solid waste disposal, wastewater treatment technologies, recycling facilities and telecommunications facilities, and 2) To assist future development of educational facilities, cemeteries, health care facilities, child care facilities, law enforcement and fire protection facilities, libraries and other governmental facilities that are necessary or desirable to meet the projected needs of the municipality.
- **Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources:** Information, policies and programs addressing preservation and protection of agricultural, natural and cultural resources.

- **Hazards:** Information, policies and programs that identify the natural and other hazards that have the greatest likelihood of impacting the municipality or that pose a risk of catastrophic damage as such hazards relate to land use and development decisions, as well as the steps necessary to mitigate risk after considering the local hazard mitigation plan approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.
- **Economic Development:** Information, policies and programs to promote the stabilization, retention, or expansion of economic development and employment opportunities.
- **Intergovernmental Cooperation:** Information, policies and programs for joint planning and joint decision-making with other municipalities or governmental entities, including school districts and drainage districts, for siting and constructing public facilities and sharing public services.
- **Land Use:** Information and programs that identify current land uses within the municipality and that guide the future development and redevelopment of property, consistent with the municipality's characteristics identified under the Issues and Opportunities Element.
- **Implementation:** A compilation of programs and specific actions necessary to implement any provision of the comprehensive plan, including changes to any applicable land development regulations, official maps, or subdivision ordinances.

The smart planning guidance attempts to create a framework for sustainable community planning and design. Other efforts by the City of Decorah are evidence of the City's attempt to support sustainable planning in the years ahead. In May of 2011 graduate students from the University of Iowa School of Urban & Regional Planning were engaged in creating a Smart Planning Principles document for the City of Decorah. This plan was a resource in the 2012 comprehensive plan update and continues to provide another layer of understanding with regards to how Decorah's planning and development goals can reinforce larger goals of state-wide smart planning and worldwide sustainability. A copy of this plan is available for the public at City Hall and at Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission. The plan is also available online at www.uerpc.org/winneshiek-comprehensive-plan.html.

In addition, in 2010 the City of Decorah accepted the Sustainable Decorah Strategic Action Plan. The action plan is based on key sustainability principles that parallel smart planning principles represented in the comprehensive plan: community knowledge, creative culture, active living, diversity, natural resources, resource use, community design, housing and the built environment, energy, local/regional economy, and healthy local food. The action plan provides specific goals, objectives, benchmarks, short term action steps and resources for the identified sustainability principles. The action plan should continue to serve as a complimentary source of ideas and information regarding how the City can plan for long term sustainability and resilience. To learn more:

www.sites.google.com/a/luther.edu/decorah-sustainabili/home

Location

The City of Decorah is located in the center of Winneshiek County in Northeast Iowa near Minnesota and Wisconsin. The Upper Iowa River bisects the community on the east side, “original Decorah” from the community on the west side. In addition to being located on the Upper Iowa River, the City of Decorah is located on U.S. Highway 52 and Iowa Highway 9 in the heart of the Driftless Region, encompassing Northeast Iowa, Southeast Minnesota, and Southwest Wisconsin. The Driftless Region gets its name from the Paleozoic Plateau and is noted for deeply carved river valleys, steep bluffs, and majestic limestone outcroppings. The region boasts elevations ranging from approximately 600 feet to more than 1,700 feet. The area was developed as the glaciers missed the area and did not scrape the terrain flat. Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3 and Figure 4 on the following pages show Decorah’s location.

Figure 1: Aerial Photo of Decorah



Source: (Winneshiek County GIS Coordinator, 2018)

Figure 2: Location Map- City of Decorah

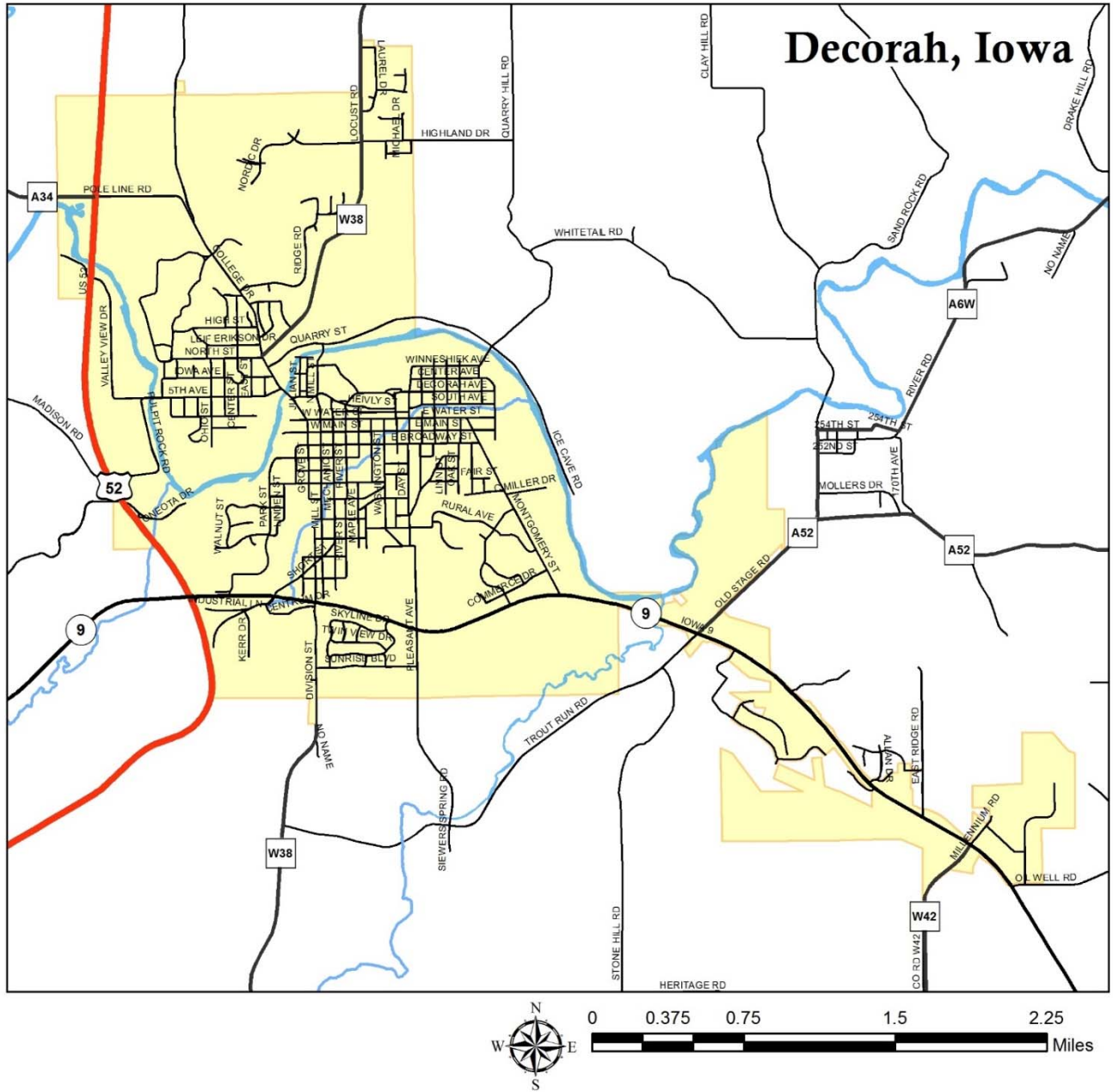


Figure 3: Location Map- Winneshiek County

Winneshiek County

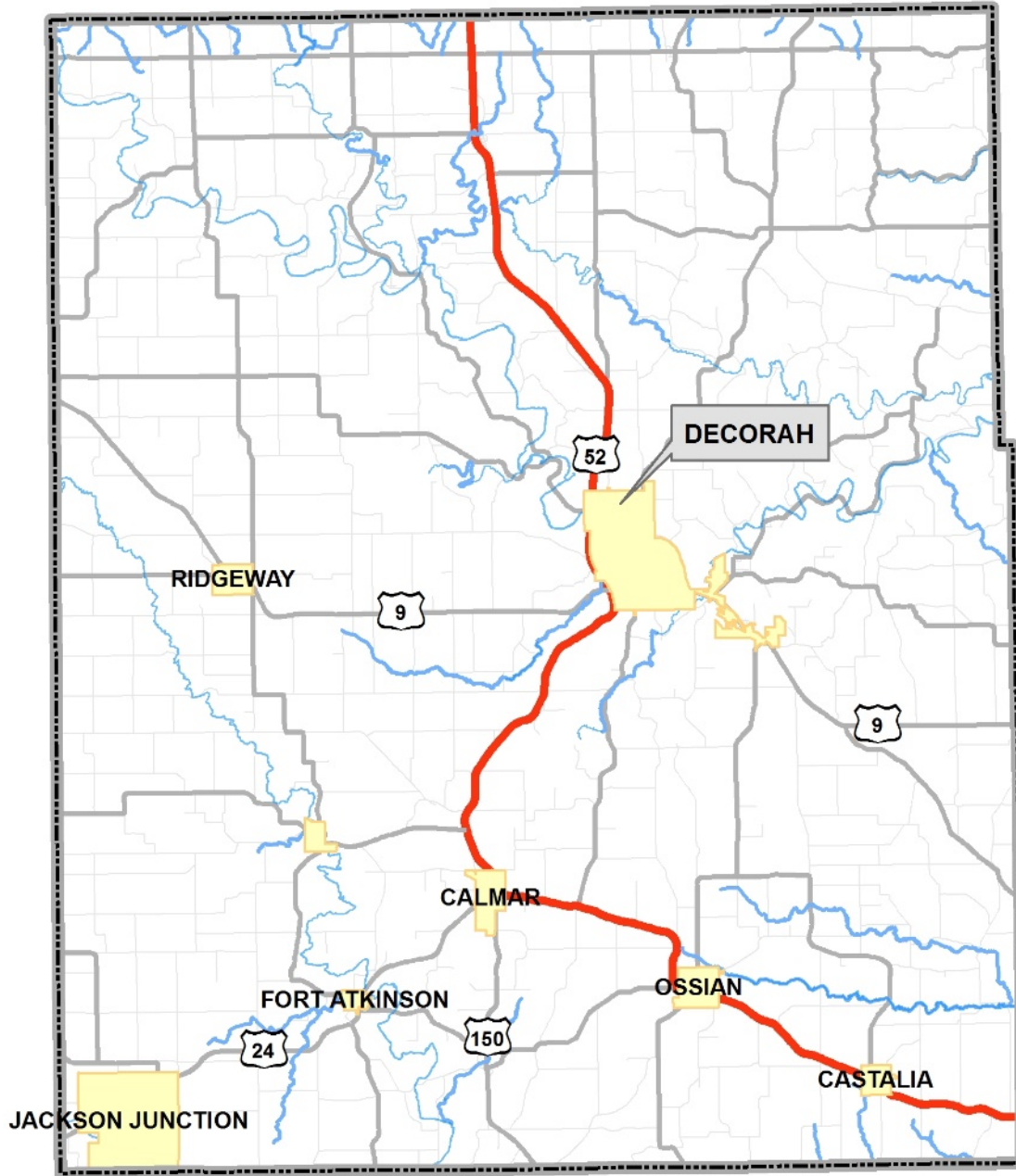
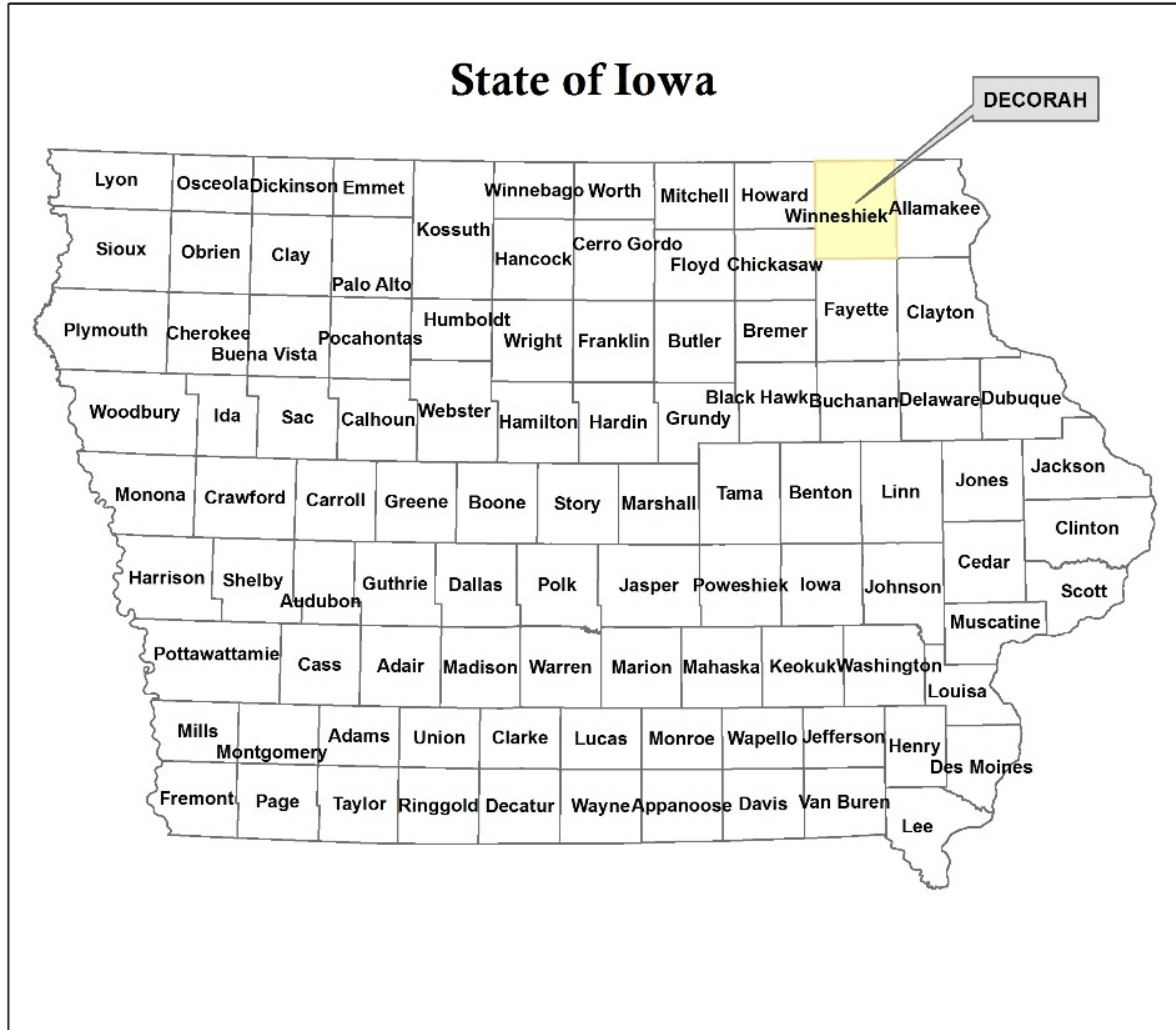


Figure 4: Location Map- State of Iowa



History

Decorah was established as the county seat in 1851. The City was platted two years later in 1853. Decorah was named after Waukon-Decorah, a prominent Chief of the Winnebago Indian Tribe. Other Native American tribes that occupied the area were the Sauk, Fox, and Oneota.

Nine members of the William Day (1791-1860) family are credited with being the first settlers of Decorah, Iowa. History shows the Day family camped beside a spring, now known as Day Spring, and shortly began building. In March 1849, they were joined by the William Painter (1820-1902) family and by John Sutton Morse (1808-1887). It is stated that Day built the first Hotel, now known as Hotel Winneshiek, while Painter and Morse focused on milling in Decorah.

The railroad reached Decorah in 1869 and provided transportation for passengers and freight for nearly 100 years. Wagons and horse drawn coaches were the only other alternative for moving citizens and commercial goods. Railroad service ended in Decorah in February 1979.

Although the settlement began in 1849, Decorah was not incorporated as a city until 1871. The small settlement was designated the county seat in 1851 and the first county courthouse was built in 1857. In 1903 the court house was replaced with today's present building. The jail, located near the courthouse, was built in 1887.

The first plat of the City, what is now known as "Original Decorah," was made in 1856. West Decorah, or the settlement on the other side of the Upper Iowa River, was incorporated in 1878, and legally recognized by a legislative act in 1894. The two settlements, Decorah and West Decorah, did not merge into a single unit until 1902.

Education was important to the community and its settlers as well. The Norwegian Luther College, a private four-year liberal arts school, was established in Decorah in 1862 with the purchase of 32 acres for the college. The first building on campus was built in 1865.

CHAPTER 1: ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES



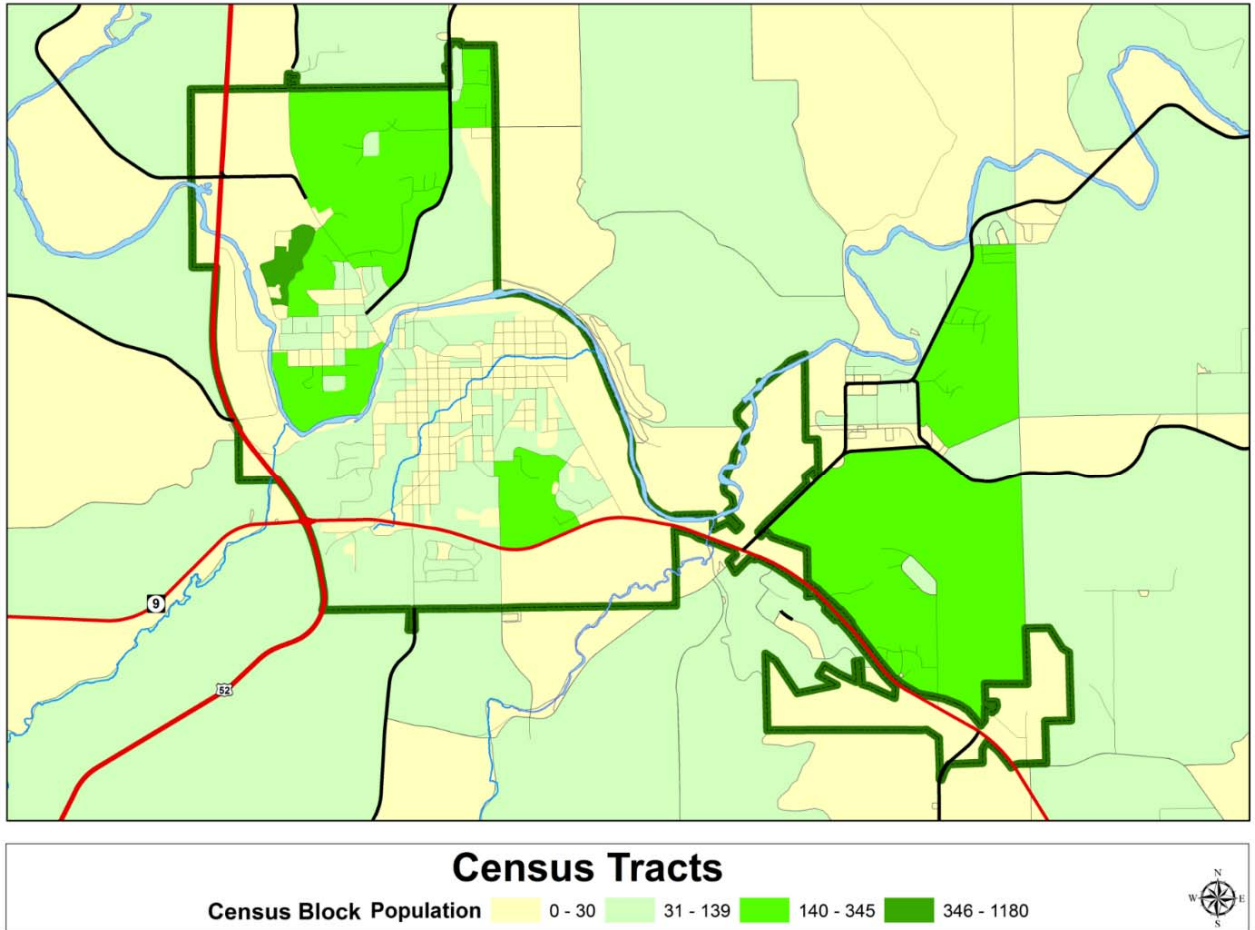
Photos above by Randy Uhl

1.1 Introduction

Development of Decorah’s Comprehensive Plan begins with an overview of the community based on known information from the past to present and projections for the next 20-year planning horizon. This element gives an overview of demographic trends and background information including past, present, and future population; household and employment forecasts; demographic trends; age distribution; education and income levels; and employment characteristics. The 2012 comprehensive plan update was the first since 1992/1993. This 2017-2018 revision and amendment is in response to the current planning & zoning commission’s desire to keep the planning document relevant and active in the community.

All data prior to the year 2000 is from the U.S. Census, and some of the data after the year 2000 is also sourced from the Census. Recently the U.S. Census stopped using the long form and so the data available from the Census is less detailed than it was in the past. Therefore, we will transition to using some Community Survey Data which is compiled every 5 years and includes much of the data that had been on the long form of the Census. Community Survey Data is sample data and does not represent complete data for each household in the City of Decorah. Figure 5 shows the 2010 Census Tracts.

Figure 5: Census Tracts



1.2 Community Character

The City of Decorah is a tight knit community with diverse components which help develop a strong sense of place. The rugged limestone cliffs, abundant wildlife, clean streams and natural landscapes all add up to a scenic beauty that attracts many people who enjoy outdoor recreation, both passive and active. Another strong asset is the downtown business district, which showcases the vitality of the community and provides a gathering place that contributes to the City's identity. Decorah is home to varied architecture, and the eclectic mix adds visual interest and charm to the City. Other things that contribute to the character of Decorah are less tangible, like a strong work ethic, Norwegian heritage, and a close-knit community spirit. Decorah builds its identity on tourism; bike trails, water trails, vibrant arts and cultural activities. The community has embraced the recent growth and trends in the micro-brewery industry and complementary industries such as the short-term rental markets (AirBnBs and VRBOs). The community is privileged to have three micro-breweries, each successful and growing. A special sense of place tied to the land with organic farming, the Seedsavers Exchange and a robust farmers market all lend diversity to the fabric of the community. All these characteristics come together to define a community that is seen as a beautiful and healthy place to live, work, or visit.

1.3 Population Characteristics

The study of population within a Comprehensive Plan is important because it provides a statistical and historical profile of the community. This section of the Plan will provide a variety of information that describes demographic trends and projections compiled for the City of Decorah.

Population Trends

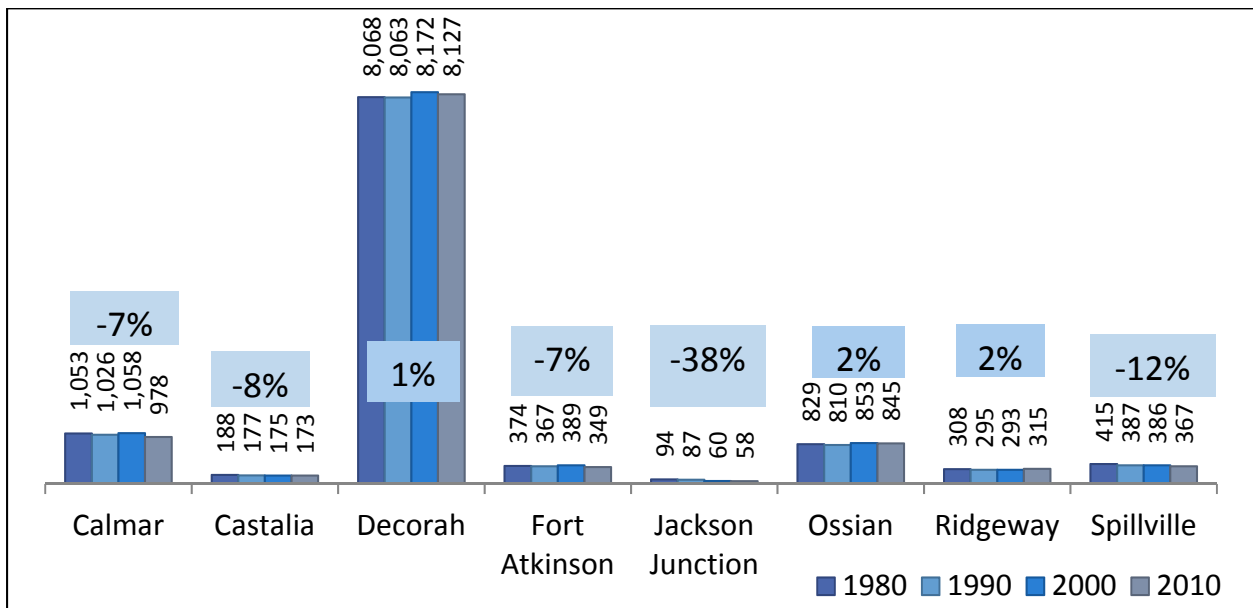
Overall, population has increased in the City of Decorah by 1% since 1980. Decorah saw a slight decrease between 1980 and 1990, as well as between 2000, 2010, and 2015. Population is projected to continue to increase slightly. Figure 6 lists population history for Decorah, Winneshiek County and Luther College. Figure 7 depicts population trends since 1980 for all incorporated cities in Winneshiek County, including Decorah. Figure 8 depicts population history since 1980 for Winneshiek County, all incorporated cities combined and the remaining balance of the county.

Figure 6: Historical Population Trends for City of Decorah, Winneshiek County and Luther College

Year	Decorah		Winneshiek County		Luther College	
	Number	Percent Change	Number	Percent Change	Number	Percent Change
1900	3,246	-	23,731	-	207	-
1910	3,592	10.70%	21,729	-8.40%	181	-12.6%
1920	4,039	12.40%	22,091	1.70%	254	40.3%
1930	4,581	13.40%	21,630	-2.10%	330	29.9%
1940	5,303	15.80%	22,263	2.90%	494	49.7%
1950	6,060	14.30%	21,639	-2.80%	831	68.2%
1960	6,435	6.20%	21,651	0.10%	1,239	49.1%
1970	7,237	12.50%	21,758	0.50%	2,084	68.2%
1980	8,068	11.50%	21,876	0.50%	2,085	0.0%
1990	8,063	-0.10%	20,847	-4.70%	2,265	8.6%
2000	8,172	1.40%	21,310	2.20%	2,621	15.7%
2010	8,127	-0.56%	21,056	-1.20%	2,481	-5.3%
2015	7,960	-2.05%	20,732	-1.54%	2,337	-5.8%

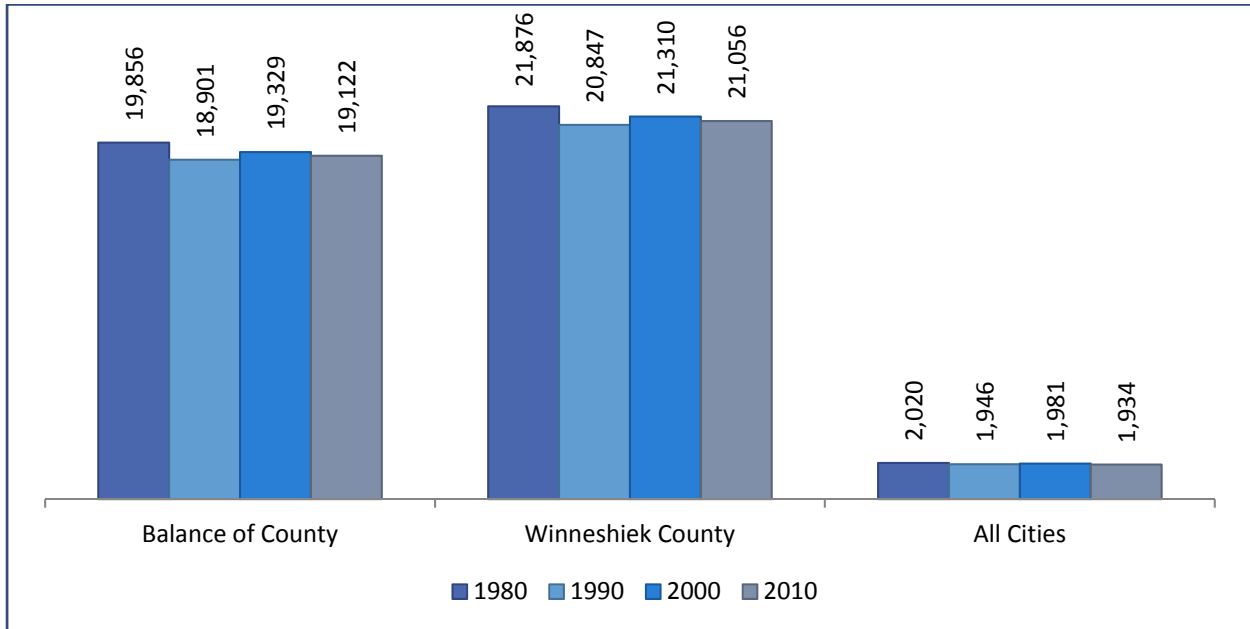
Source: (U.S Census Bureau, 2010); (Luther College); (U.S Census Bureau, 2015)

Figure 7: Historical Population Trends for Incorporated Cities in Winneshiek County, Including Decorah



Source: (U.S Census Bureau, 2010)

Figure 8: Historical Population Trends for Winneshiek County, All Cities and Balance of County

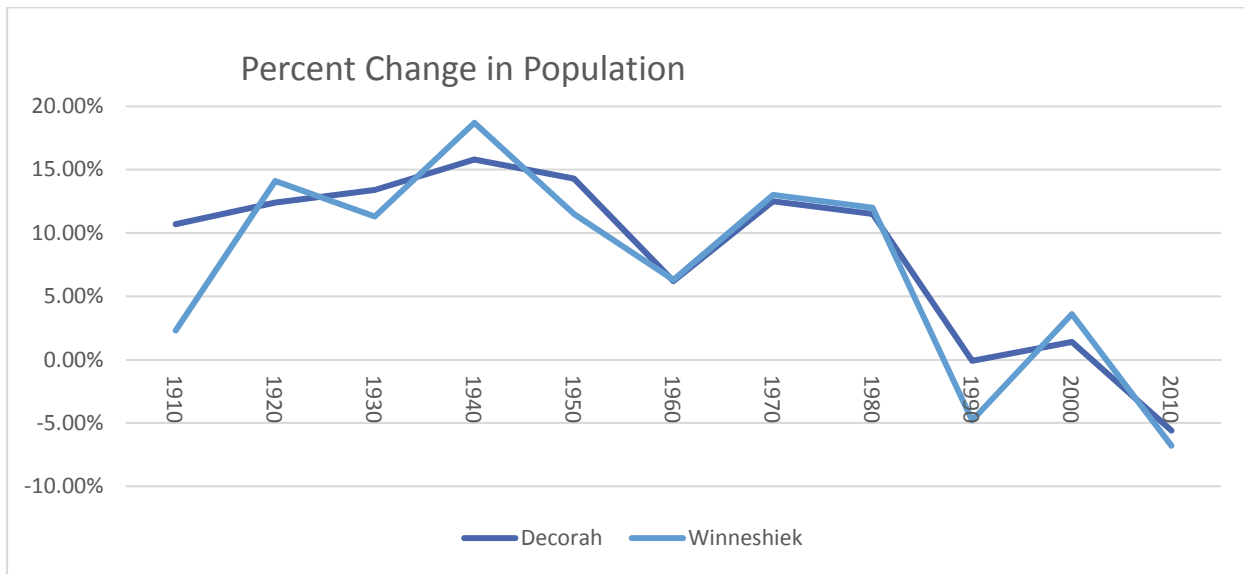


Source: (U.S Census Bureau, 2010); (State Data Center, 2012)

Even with its robust sense of place and strong tourism draw, Decorah is still a rural community facing population challenges. Many people are attracted to the area because of the natural beauty and abundance of outdoor recreation options, but people tend to just visit or travel here, rather than make the decision to actually move here. Moreover, because of Decorah’s geographic landlocked location within a deeply carved river valley among the bluffs, it is an ever-increasing challenge to expand city limits to promote growth. It should also be noted that the student population of Luther College impacts population trends in Decorah. While it is not uncommon for recent or former Luther graduates to choose to stay or return to Decorah for settling down, current student populations also have an impact. With declining student numbers at Luther in recent years, it will be interesting to see what the population data from the next Census compilation in 2020 portrays for Decorah.

Figure 9 demonstrates the population changes in Decorah as compared to the County. It is of interest to note that in the last 60 years, the county and City almost mirror each other in fluctuation, which may infer that Decorah’s population change dramatically affects the county’s population.

Figure 9: Percent Change in Population



Source: (U.S Census Bureau, 2010)

Figure 10 shows the population figures for all of the incorporated communities in Winneshiek County, as well as for the total county and the State of Iowa. In general, this table indicates that half of the jurisdictions declined between 1970 and 1980 while the other half increased. All of the jurisdictions including the county and state declined between 1980 and 1990; some of the jurisdictions including the county and state grew between 1990 and 2000; and between 2000 and 2010 only one community increased in population while the rest, including the county, lost population. From 2010 through 2015 all communities experienced declining populations.

Figure 10: Population Trends of Selected Communities

Community	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
Calmar	1,053	1,053	1,026	1,058	978	955
Castalia	210	188	177	175	173	165
Decorah	7,237	8,068	8,063	8,172	8,127	7,960
Fort Atkinson	339	374	367	389	349	333
Jackson Junction	106	94	87	60	58	56
Ossian	847	829	810	853	845	819
Ridgeway	218	308	295	293	315	296
Spillville	361	415	387	386	367	361
Winneshiek County	21,758	21,876	20,847	21,310	21,056	20,732
State of Iowa	2,825,368	2,913,808	2,776,755	2,926,324	3,046,355	3,121,000

Source: (U.S Census Bureau, 2010); (U.S. Census Bureau 2015)

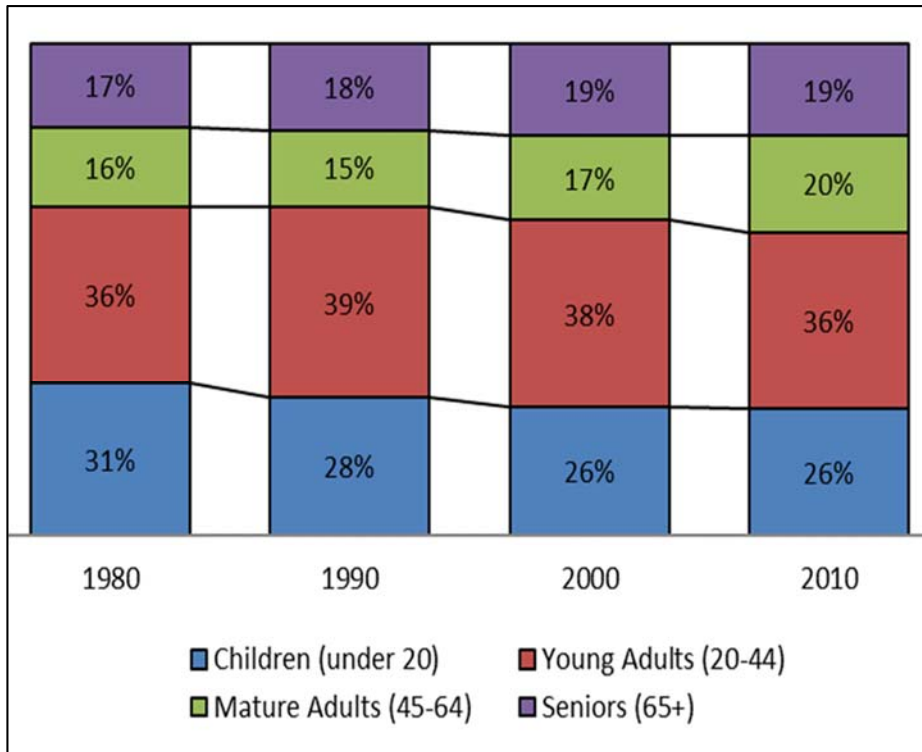
Figure 11 provides a detailed age breakdown of the City’s population, as reported by the U.S. Census, and shows which age cohorts grew and which declined between 2000 and 2010. First, it is important to note that six cohorts increased, and six cohorts decreased between the years shown. Second, the largest decrease was in the 35-44 age cohort, while the 55-64 age cohort experienced the greatest increase, both of which could be explained by the aging of the Baby Boomer generation. The largest age cohorts, 15-19 and 20-24, are a reflection of the impact Luther College has on the City of Decorah. Figure 12 depicts age group distribution for Decorah since 1980.

Figure 11: Age Cohorts for the City of Decorah

Age Cohort (in years)	2000		2010		% Change
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	
Less than 5	284	3.5	306	3.8	7.7
5-9	298	3.6	334	4.1	12
10-14	361	4.4	318	3.9	-11.9
15-19	1,180	14.4	1,127	13.9	4.5
20-24	1,669	20.4	1,679	20.7	.6
25-34	640	7.8	632	7.7	-1.3
35-44	814	10.0	622	7.7	-23.6
45-54	830	10.2	765	9.4	-7.8
55-64	560	3.3	821	10.1	46.6
65-74	623	7.6	585	7.2	-6.1
75-84	580	7.1	572	7	-1.4
85+	333	4.1	366	4.5	9.9
Total	8,172	100.0	8,127	100.0	-5.5

Source: (U.S Census Bureau, 2010)

Figure 12: Age Group Distribution for City of Decorah



Source: (U.S Census Bureau, 2010); (State Data Center, 2012)

Population Projections

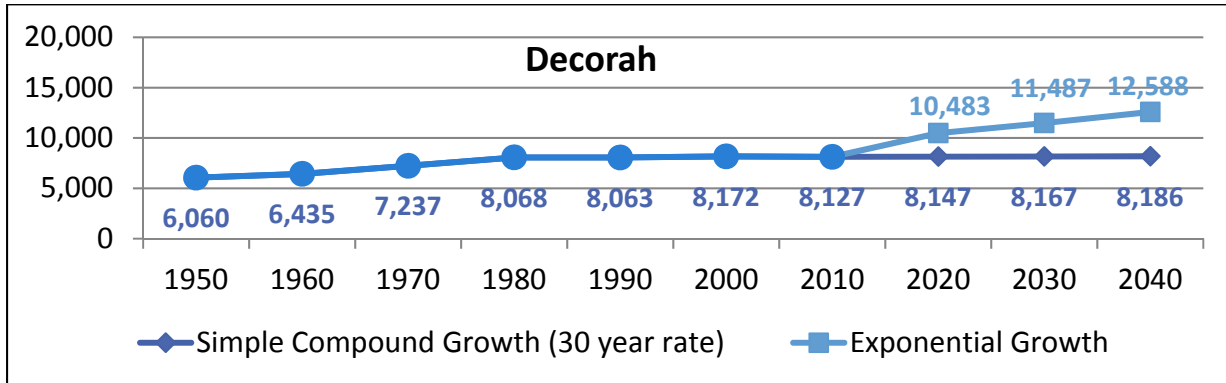
Past population data is used to make population projects to inform future planning. Two different population projects are shown in the following

Figure 13.

1. Simple Compound Growth Rate (SCG)
 - a. An analyst chose growth rate with least amount of variance over time
 - b. Future population = $Current\ Population \times Growth\ Rate^y$, where y = number of periods
2. Exponential Growth Rate (EG)
 - a. Plotted the population from 1900 to present
 - b. Fit an exponential trend line to the data and used the resulting equation to project the future population

Communities can take actions that will encourage population growth in the future. For example, a municipality might put a priority on ensuring appropriate workforce housing and implementing quality of life improvements to help increase the population.

Figure 13: Simple Compound Growth and Exponential Growth Population Projections for Decorah



Source: (U.S Census Bureau, 2010); (State Data Center, 2012); (UERPC)

CHAPTER 2: HOUSING



2.1 Introduction

Housing Characteristics are related to the social and economic conditions of a community’s residents and are an important element of a comprehensive plan. Information in this element will provide data about the current housing stock, as well as identify significant changes in the number of housing units and other housing characteristics. The ability of a community to provide an adequate housing supply for all persons and income levels is key to its economic prosperity and the well-being of its inhabitants.

2.2 Existing Housing Characteristics

Occupancy Characteristics

In addition to reviewing population statistics, a Comprehensive Plan should review pertinent housing data as well. As is the case in most Iowa communities, the predominant type of housing unit in Decorah is the single-family home. Figure 14 provides general housing information from the 1990, 2000, and 2010 Censuses. It is important to note that while the number of housing units, occupied and vacant, rose between 1980 and 2000, the number of persons per housing unit declined in all these years.

Figure 14: General Housing Information for the City of Decorah

	1990	2000	2010
Total Persons	8,063	8,172	8,127
Total Housing Units	2,836	2,968	3,121
Occupied	2,702	2,819	2,855
Vacant	134	149	266
Persons Per Housing Unit	2.8	2.8	2.6
Number of Households	2,702	2,819	2,855
Number of Families	1,646	1,563	1,527

Source: (U.S Census Bureau, 2010)

Figure 15 provides a comparison of the total number of housing units for the City of Decorah and selected jurisdictions. In reviewing this information, it is important to note that Decorah experienced the largest increase in the number of housing units between 2000 and 2010 which was 153 units. In addition, all but one community reported increases in the number of housing units in that same time period.

Figure 15: Number of Housing Units in Selected Communities

Community	1990	2000	2010
Calmar	438	482	492
Castalia	83	81	84
Decorah	2,836	2,968	3,121
Fort Atkinson	166	169	170
Jackson Junction	32	24	23
Ossian	333	350	360
Ridgeway	127	137	147
Spillville	179	184	182
Winneshiek County	7,726	8,208	8,721
State of Iowa	1,143,669	1,232,511	1,336,417

Source: (U.S Census Bureau, 2010); (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016)

As for the number of rental units, Figure 16 shows this information for selected jurisdictions. Between 1990 and 2000, Decorah reported a slight increase of three rental units. However, between 2000 and 2010, the City reported an increase of 37 rental units. As is shown, not all of the other jurisdictions reported the same trends during this same time period.

Figure 16: Number of Rental Occupied Units for Selected Communities

Community	1990	2000	*2010
Calmar	106	138	113
Castalia	16	20	7
Decorah	1,025	1,028	1,065
Fort Atkinson	30	33	22
Jackson Junction	13	5	9
Ossian	72	66	61
Ridgeway	40	34	84
Spillville	35	31	26
Winneshiek County	2,103	2,047	1,860
State of Iowa	318,948	317,857	304,318

Source: (U.S Census Bureau, 2010); (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016)

Median rental rates for selected communities are shown in Figure 17. Specifically, the table shows that each of the selected jurisdictions, including Decorah, reported significant increases in their median rents between 1990, 2000, and 2010. The fact that the rentals rates

have increased so dramatically, coupled with the fact that the number of rental units have also increased in Decorah, may indicate a demand for rental units in the City.

Figure 17: Median Rent for Selected Communities

Community	1990	2000	2010
Calmar	\$256	\$341	\$492
Castalia	\$225	\$325	\$131
Decorah	\$292	\$410	\$512
Fort Atkinson	\$288	\$370	\$667
Jackson Junction	\$213	\$325	\$663
Ossian	\$277	\$339	\$297
Ridgeway	\$229	\$270	\$414
Spillville	\$210	\$238	\$318
Winneshiek County	\$276	\$389	\$499
State of Iowa	\$259	\$470	\$607

Source: (U.S Census Bureau, 2010); (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016)

Housing Permits Issued

Figure 18 provides a breakdown of building permits issued by the City over the last decade. Building permits are issued for the buildings themselves, and total units indicate the number of living quarters within those buildings.

Figure 18: Building Permits

Type of Housing	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Single Family	21	15	12	10	21	19	13	11	5	5	2
Two Family	1	0	1	4	2	1	2	0	0	0	0
Three or Four Family	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Five or more Family	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total units	29	23	35	18	29	21	17	11	5	5	10

Source: (City of Decorah, 2018)

Type of Housing	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Single Family	5	6	12	6	15
Two Family	2	1	2	3	3
Three or Four Family	0	0	0	0	0
Five or more Family	0	0	0	0	0
Total units	7	7	14	9	18

Source: (City of Decorah, 2018)

Residential Construction

Figure 19 below shows the number of residences built in Decorah each year from 2000-2010. A housing boom is evident in the middle of the decade, with construction tapering off in more recent years.

Figure 19: Residential Construction in Decorah



Source: (Winneshiek County Assessor, 2017)

Home Value Characteristics

A breakdown of the 2000 and 2010 housing unit values for the City are shown in Figure 20. In analyzing this information, the number of housing units in Decorah decreased 59 units between 2000 and 2010. Specifically, the number of units valued at under \$50,000 - \$99,999 has declined dramatically between 2000 and 2010. Conversely, the number of units valued between \$100,000 - \$299,999 increased significantly between the two dates shown.

Figure 20: Value of Owner-Occupied Single Family Dwelling Units in Decorah

Unit Value Ranges	2000		2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than	99	6.1	31	2.0
50,000-99,999	778	48.3	328	21.1
100,000-149,999	443	27.5	566	36.5
150,000-199,999	198	12.3	322	20.7
200,000-299,999	82	5.1	233	15
300,000-499,999	2	0.1	64	4.1
500,000 or more	9	0.6	8	.5
Total	1,611	100.0	1,552	100.0

Source: (U.S Census Bureau, 2010); (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016)

In addition, the value of the units provides understanding of a community’s housing stock and affordability. As in previous tables, Figure 21 selects certain jurisdictions and compares their housing values. Decorah had the highest median housing value of the communities shown in 1990, and 2010. It is also important to underscore the fact that all but one of the communities’ values increased between 1990, 2000 and 2010.

Figure 21: Median Value of Specified Owner Occupied Units in Selected Communities

Community	1990	2000	2010
Calmar	39,800	67,800	101,100
Castalia	25,800	39,600	78,600
Decorah	58,000	96,000	138,700
Fort Atkinson	38,100	70,300	72,900
Jackson Junction	23,800	101,800	67,900
Ossian	38,500	68,300	102,400
Ridgeway	31,800	55,800	89,100
Spillville	29,600	61,100	94,100
Winneshiek County	50,900	86,000	143,500
State of Iowa	45,500	82,500	115,800

Source: (U.S Census Bureau, 2010); (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016)

Housing Age Characteristics

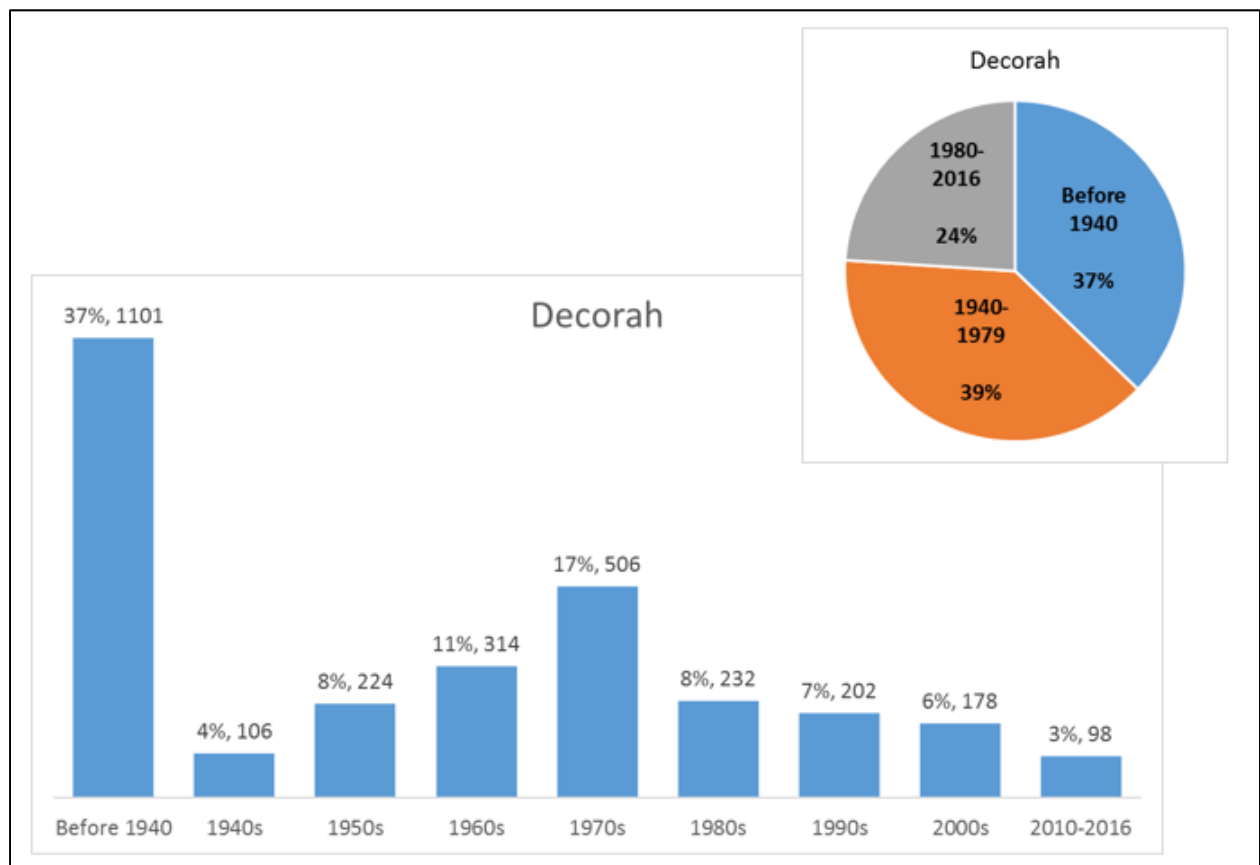
One factor that may provide insight into a community’s housing stock is the actual age of the existing units. Figure 22 shows the age, in Census-defined age categories, of existing housing units for Decorah, Winneshiek County, and the State of Iowa. Figure 23 shows the age of existing housing units based on County Assessor data.

Figure 22: Age of Housing Units, Derived from U.S. Census Bureau

Year Unit was Built	Decorah		Winneshiek County Percent	State of Iowa Percent
	Number	Percent		
2014 or later	8	0.3%	0.2%	0.5%
2010-2013	22	0.7%	1.1%	2.2%
2000-2009	197	6.5%	11.3%	11.7%
1990-1999	222	7.3%	11.6%	10.8%
1980-1989	211	7.0%	6.5%	7.3%
1970-1979	498	16.4%	13.3%	14.7%
1960-1969	280	9.2%	5.5%	10.6%
1950-1959	211	7.0%	7.7%	10.4%
1940-1949	242	8.0%	5.4%	5.5%
1939 or earlier	1,141	37.6%	37.5%	26.3%
Total	3,032	100%	100%	100%

Source: (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016)

Figure 23: Age of Housing Units, Derived from County Assessor Data

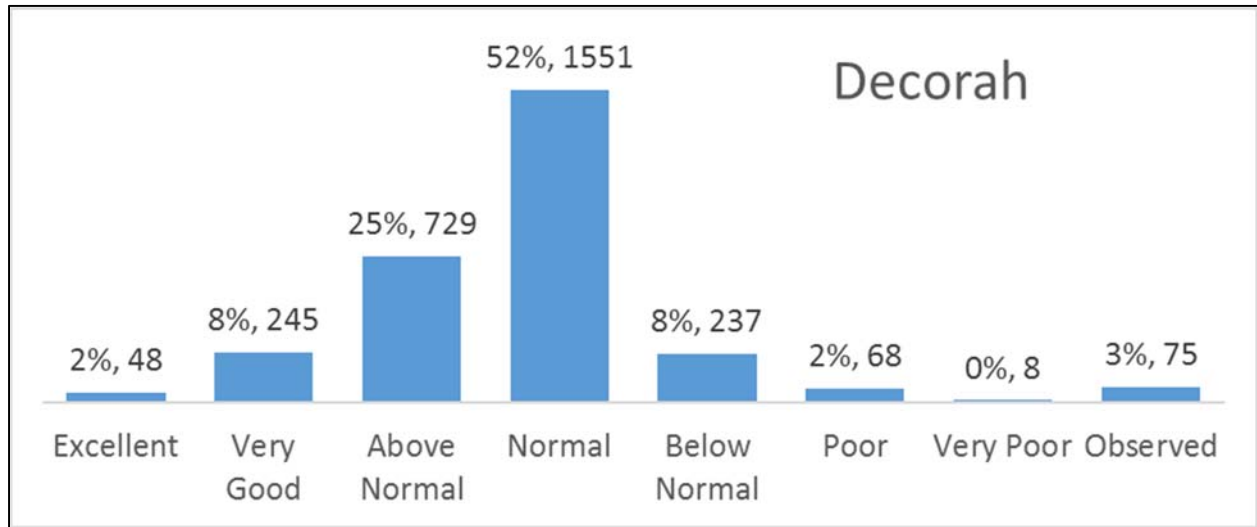


(Winneshiek County Assessor, 2017)

Structural Characteristics

Figure 24 shows the condition of residential housing in Decorah as determined by the Winneshiek County Assessor. While most residences are in normal or better condition, 388 properties do not meet the minimum standards for normal condition of a residential structure.

Figure 24: Residential Housing Stock Condition



Source: (Winneshiek County Assessor, 2017)

According to the American Community Survey, 96.4% of Decorah's housing units are occupied, leaving roughly 4% vacant. 76% are single-unit structures and 24% are multi-unit structures, with no housing units being mobile homes (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016).

2.3 Projected Housing Characteristics

Developing projections about future housing needs requires certain assumptions are made and that limitations to the projections are clearly stated. The following projection information and data is based on results from the 2017 Winneshiek County Housing Study (www.uerpc.org/winneshiek-co-housing-study.html):

- Assumptions
 - Household size slowly decreases
 - Population projections based on Simple Compound Growth (most conservative)
 - Year built data trends from Assessor indicative of future construction – assisted living units were not included
 - Annual losses due to fire or demolition will occur and by 2025, will be equivalent to the number of units currently rated as in “very poor” condition

- Vacancy rate remains the same
- Percent of people living in group quarters remains the same
- Housing unit count from the Assessor is an accurate figure for current housing supply
- New construction will continue at the same average annual pace as in the past decade
- Limitations
 - Projections based on past performance can be wrong in predicting future patterns
 - Local employers' potential workforce expansions or reductions not included
 - Some data fields from Assessor incomplete

Based on these assumptions and limitations, Figure 25 below shows housing gaps and projected need for Decorah through 2025.

Figure 26 shows similar projections for Winneshiek County.

Figure 25: Housing Gaps and Projected Need for Decorah

Housing Supply & Demand				
Decorah	2010	2015	2020	2025
Population	8127	8137	8147	8157
Population in Group Quarters	2168	2168	2168	2168
Population to be Housed	5,959	5,969	5,979	5,989
Number of Households	2,855	2,874	2,893	2,913
Preliminary Housing Demand	2,855	2,874	2,893	2,913
Demand with 0.1% Vacancy Rate	2,858	2,877	2,896	2,916
Replacement Need		41.5	41.5	41.5
Average New Construction	82	82	82	82
Potential Housing Demand	2,776	2,837	2,856	2,876
Housing Supply	2,685	2,771	2,844	2,890
Shortage	91	66	12	-15

Source: (Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission, Winneshiek County Housing Study 2017)

Figure 26: Housing Gaps and Projected Need for Winneshiek County

Housing Supply & Demand				
Winneshiek County	2010	2015	2020	2025
Population	21056	20931	20805	20681
Population in Group Quarters	2288	2288	2288	2288
Population to be Housed	18,768	18,643	18,517	18,393
Number of Households	7,997	7,983	7,970	7,957
Preliminary Housing Demand	7,997	7,983	7,970	7,957
Demand with 5.5% Vacancy Rate	8,437	8,423	8,408	8,394
Replacement Need		156.5	156.5	156.5
Average New Construction	279	279	279	279
Potential Housing Demand	8,158	8,300	8,285	8,272
Housing Supply	8,145	8,274	8,410	8,470
Shortage	13	26	-124	-199

Source: (Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission, Winneshiek County Housing Study 2017)

2.4 Housing Programs

The City of Decorah utilizes several federal and state housing programs to serve its residents:

Chapter 404 Residential Revitalization / Housing Property Tax Abatement

The Urban Revitalization Act, Chapter 404 of the Code of Iowa, is intended to encourage development, redevelopment and revitalization within designated areas of a city by authorizing property tax development incentives to the private sector. Qualified real estate within a designated area may be eligible to receive a total or partial exemption from property taxes on improvements for a specified number of years, with the goal of providing communities with a long-term increase or stabilization in the local tax base by encouraging new construction which might not otherwise occur.

ELIGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS AND EXEMPTIONS

1. Residential and Multi-Residential Improvements

A. New Construction: The construction of new residential and / or multi-residential facilities in the Revitalization Area.

B. Improvements to Existing Property: The rehabilitation of and additions to existing multi-residential and / or residential facilities in the Revitalization Area.

Exemptions

All qualified real estate assessed as residential property, is eligible to receive an exemption from taxation on 100% of the actual value added by the improvements for a period of five years.

All qualified real estate assessed as multi-residential and / or commercial property, if the property consists of three or more separate living quarters with at least 75% of the space used for residential purposes, is eligible to receive an exemption from taxation on 100% of the first \$40,000 per unit on new construction for improvements of three or more separate living quarters for a period of five years.

2. Multi-residential Improvements (Decorah Business Park-Airport

Urban Renewal District Subdistrict). The construction of new multi-residential facilities and the rehabilitation of and additions to existing multi-residential facilities, to the extent that such facilities are situated on some portion of the following described property (the “Urban Renewal District Subdistrict”) in the Revitalization Area:

Certain real property which is situated within the boundaries of the City’s Decorah Business Park-Airport Urban Renewal District.

Exemptions

All qualified real estate assessed as multi-residential and / or commercial property, if the property consists of three or more separate living quarters with at least 75% of the space used for residential purposes and situated in the Urban Renewal District Subdistrict is eligible to receive an exemption from taxation for a period of ten years of the actual value added by the improvements as follows:

For the first through fourth years, an exemption from taxation on 90% of the actual value added.

For the fifth through seventh years, an exemption from taxation on 80% of the actual value added.

For the eighth through tenth years, an exemption from taxation on 70% of the actual value added.

Additional information may be found on the City’s website;

<https://www.decorahia.org/reminders-and-notice/2012/city-of-decorahs-housing-incentive-program#more-1121>

Section 8 Rental Assistance

Section 8 is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide rental assistance to low-income families to secure decent, safe, sanitary, and affordable housing in a non-discriminatory manner from the private rental market. More information:

www.hud.gov/topics/housing_choice_voucher_program_section_8

Homeless Assistance

Homeless Assistance is provided through the Emergency Shelter Operating Grant and the Community Services Block Grant. This program provides cash assistance for rent, deposits and utilities. This program is administered through Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation's Family Service office. More information: www.neicac.org/family-services

NEICAC Future Development

Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation (NEICAC) Housing is currently developing housing resources in all seven counties they serve. NEICAC created housing advisory committees in each county. These committee findings will be used to determine what is missing as part of each county's affordable housing scenario. NEICAC's Board of Directors will then evaluate these findings to guide the Housing program towards its next project. NEICAC is also looking for locations to build more multi-family projects and Lease Purchase homes. More information: www.neicac.org/housing.

NEICAC Lease Purchase

These are three-bedroom homes that are rented for one-three years by a first-time homebuyer family who meets the program's income guidelines. These homes are being built for families who are at an income level that does not exceed 60% of the county Area Median Income monthly income (AMI). Then, after taking the required Homebuyer Education Classes, and being able to meet lenders' criteria, the renter can buy the home for about half the cost of construction. Recently, NEICAC completed two homes that were purchases and rehabilitated, one in Sumner and one in Fredericksburg. NEICAC will continue to look at future options within this program. More information: www.neicac.org/housing.

NEICAC Rentals

NEICAC owns and manages over 50 rental units throughout Northeast Iowa: 16-unit Senior Facility, 15-unit multi-family, and a duplex in Decorah; 12 unit multi-family in Calmar; Duplexes in Maynard and Oelwein; and a Single Family home in Strawberry Point. More information: www.neicac.org/housing.

NEICAC Public Affordable Housing

Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation which is housed in Decorah maintains two apartment complexes and one duplex specifically dedicated as affordable housing. The first apartment complex is Washington Court, a 16-unit senior apartment facility, built in 1998. This complex is a Low-Income Tax Credit Housing development that caters to senior residents 55 years or older who meet certain income guidelines. The second apartment complex is Woolen Mill Apartments, a 15-unit multi-family project. This property is a renovated historical building in downtown Decorah and was opened in 2002. Current and potential tenants must meet certain income guidelines to be eligible. Ridgewood Duplex

was built in 2006 and is a four-unit duplex that is completely handicapped accessible and has on-site 24 hour/7 day a week support service.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

LIHEAP is designed to aid qualifying low-income Iowa households (homeowners and renters) in the payment of a portion of their residential heating costs for the winter heating season, to encourage regular utility payments, to promote energy awareness and to encourage reduction of energy usage through energy efficiency, client education, and weatherization. All clients applying for this program will simultaneously be making an application for weatherization assistance as required by state law. More information: www.neicac.org/LIHEAP

Northeast Iowa Regional Housing Trust Fund

Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission established a Northeast Iowa Regional Housing Trust Fund for Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek Counties. The Housing Assistance Plan has been approved for certification from the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA). The goal is to develop, redevelop, rehabilitate, and renovate single-family and/or multi-family owner-occupied and rental dwellings. This will be to render assistance to economically and socially disadvantaged persons in Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek Counties. It will potentially fund: roof repair, furnace repair and replacement, energy efficiency updates, electrical and plumbing, handicap accessibility, homebuyer assistance, etc. Funding limits are set at \$10,000 per project including 1st time homebuyers. More information: www.uerpc.org/housing-trust-fund.html

Weatherization Assistance Program

The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) provides many northeast Iowans with the means to remain in their homes in safety, comfort, and affordability. Services include a cost effectiveness energy audit, air leakage checks, insulation, and all combustion appliances inspection for repair and/or replacement. NEICAC's own crews provide all but appliance and furnace repair services. More information: www.neicac.org/weatherization

2.5 Affordable Housing

Affordable housing takes into account the availability of housing at varying affordability levels. This analysis helps community leaders understand whether the existing housing is compatible with the households that live in the community. Below are tables depicting these results for the City of Decorah in Figure 27 and for Winneshiek County in Figure 28.

Figure 27: Income and Affordability Calculations for Decorah

Income Range	% of Households	# of Households	Afford-able Range	# of Owner Occ. Units	Affordable Range of Renter Units	# of Renter Units	Total Afford-able Units	Balance
\$0 - \$25,000	24%	721	\$0 - \$50,000	74	\$0 – \$399	126	200	-521
\$25,000 - \$49,999	26%	762	\$50,000 - \$99,999	264	\$400 – \$799	663	927	165
\$50,000 - \$74,999	18%	540	\$100,000 - \$149,999	574	\$800 – \$1,249	134	708	168
\$75,000 - \$99,999	16%	484	\$150,000 - \$199,999	427	\$1,250 - \$1,499	33	460	-24
\$100,000 - \$149,999	10%	306	\$200,000 - \$299,999	501	\$1,500 - \$1,999	42	543	237
\$150,000 and over	6%	171	\$300,000 and over	146	\$2,000 and over	0	146	-25

Source: (Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission, Winneshiek County Housing Study 2017)

Figure 28: Income and Affordability Calculations for Winneshiek County

Income Range	% of Households	# of Households	Afford-able Range	# of Owner Occ. Units	Affordable Range of Renter Units	# of Renter Units	Total Afford-able Units	Balance
\$0 - \$25,000	19%	1604	\$0 - \$50,000	464	\$0 – \$399	437	901	-703
\$25,000 - \$49,999	26%	2109	\$50,000 - \$99,999	1,009	\$400 – \$799	1042	2051	-58
\$50,000 - \$74,999	22%	1794	\$100,000 - \$149,999	1,419	\$800 – \$1,249	300	1719	-75
\$75,000 - \$99,999	16%	1340	\$150,000 - \$199,999	1,288	\$1,250 - \$1,499	33	1321	-19
\$100,000 - \$149,999	10%	857	\$200,000 - \$299,999	1,438	\$1,500 - \$1,999	51	1489	632
\$150,000 and over	7%	544	\$300,000 and over	731	\$2,000 and over	36	767	223

Source: (Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission, Winneshiek County Housing Study 2017)

Additionally, another key component of housing affordability depends on the percentage of income households are paying for monthly housing costs, which can include:

- Mortgage or rent
- Second mortgage and/or home equity loans
- Real estate taxes
- Homeowners insurance
- Condo fee (if applicable)
- Mobile home cost (if applicable)
- Utilities – electricity, gas, water/sewer and other utilities

Households paying more than 30% of their income to these costs are considered cost-burdened. Figure 29 shows a breakdown of this information for Decorah and Winneshiek County.

Figure 29: Cost of Living Figures for Decorah and Winneshiek County

Owner Occupied	Decorah	Winneshiek County
% with mortgage	55.3%	57.1%
Median SMOC, with mortgage	\$1,215	\$1,213
Median SMOC, no mortgage	\$470	\$445
% of households, SMOC > 30% of income	32.7%	34.5%
Renter Occupied	Decorah	Winneshiek County
Median Gross Rent	\$576	\$588
% of households, Gross Rent > 30% of income	38.5%	34.5%

Source: (Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission, Winneshiek County Housing Study 2017)

Residential Sales Trends

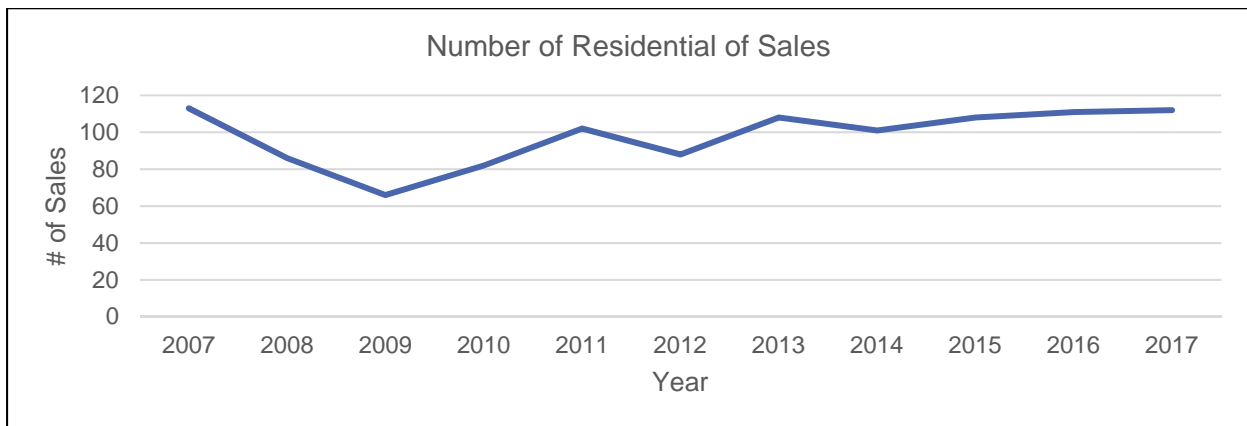
The following datasets show residential sales trends and average sales price over the past 10 years. The City of Decorah experienced a sharp decline in residential sales from 2007 to 2009, with an increase in sales from 2009 to 2011. Sales have fluctuated slightly since 2011 but are on an overall upward trend. Sales price for residential sales has increased overall since 2007, with slight decreases between 2008-2010 and again between 2012-2014. This information is highlighted in Figure 30, Figure 31 and Figure 32.

Figure 30: Residential Sales Trends for Decorah, 2007-2017

Decorah Residential Sales Trend 2007-2017											
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
# of Sales	113	86	66	82	102	88	108	101	108	111	112
Ave Sales Price	\$137,270	\$143,980	\$136,460	\$139,560	\$151,380	\$170,361	\$167,875	\$167,860	\$183,948	\$182,826	\$196,190

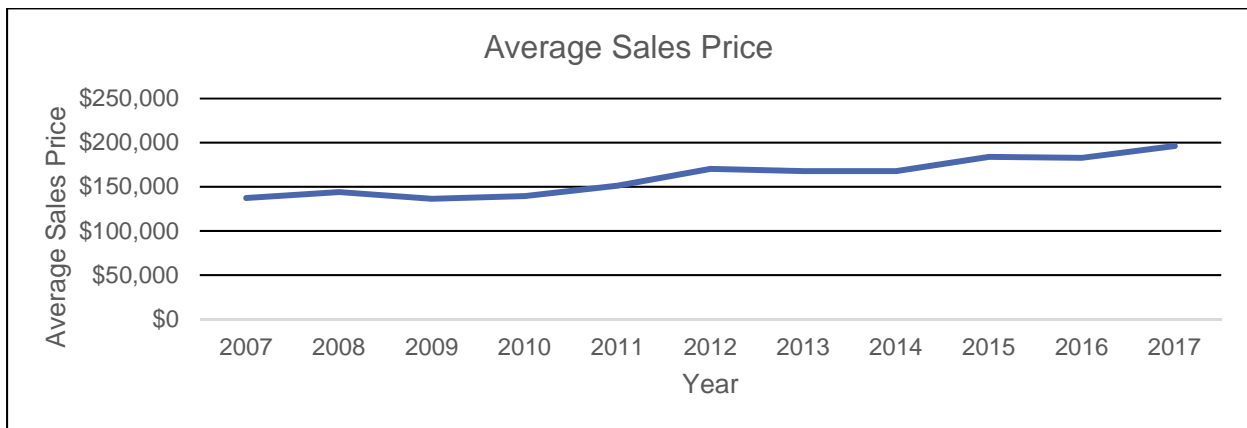
Source: (Winneshiek County Assessor, 2018)

Figure 31: Number of Residential Sales for Decorah, 2007-2017



Source: (Winneshiek County Assessor, 2018)

Figure 32: Average Sales Price for Decorah, 2007-2017



Source: (Winneshiek County Assessor, 2018)

2.6 Housing Summary

The City of Decorah generally has an adequate supply of well-maintained dwellings to house its citizens. There are indications that homes in Decorah are just entering the moderately unaffordable range, with home sale prices and rent increases outpacing any increases in income. More diversity in housing types and more affordable housing are issues the City will work toward improving.

2.7 Housing Policies

- A variety in the type of housing construction should be encouraged and supported to meet the housing needs of the population. The housing mix should reflect anticipated trends to higher density development, and demands for affordable housing, while being compatible with existing residential density and development. Housing types may include apartments, townhouses, and single-family dwellings, including manufactured housing and mobile homes.
- Any development in and around areas of the city meeting the criteria as a “historically significant area” should recognize and preserve the historic setting, architecture character and architectural design characteristics of the buildings and area of the City.
- The committee should define and develop identification criteria for what is “*historically significant areas*” and define “*and around*” with community’s input during ordinance development.
- Abatement of air and noise pollution will be encouraged in residential areas.
- Appropriate buffering should be provided between residential and other land uses.
- The City should consider changes to zoning that would be more sympathetic to small lot sizes which may encourage more affordable, or work-force housing stocks.
- The City should continue to monitor and review short-term housing situations and changes in residential ownership. While short-term housing supports some sectors of the local economy, it may detract from the affordable housing inventory in the area.

CHAPTER 3: TRANSPORTATION



Photos 2 and 4 above by Randy Uhl

3.1 Introduction

The transportation network is the backbone upon which a community bases its economy. Access to resources and connection to other communities form a critical link to continued development and growth. Maintenance and repair, in addition to periodic additions and enhancement of this system, are essential for preserving connectivity for residents, visitors, and businesses. Keeping pace with changes in transportation trends and network use is also essential to anticipate needed improvements and potential additions to the transportation network.

3.2 Inventory of Existing Transportation Facilities

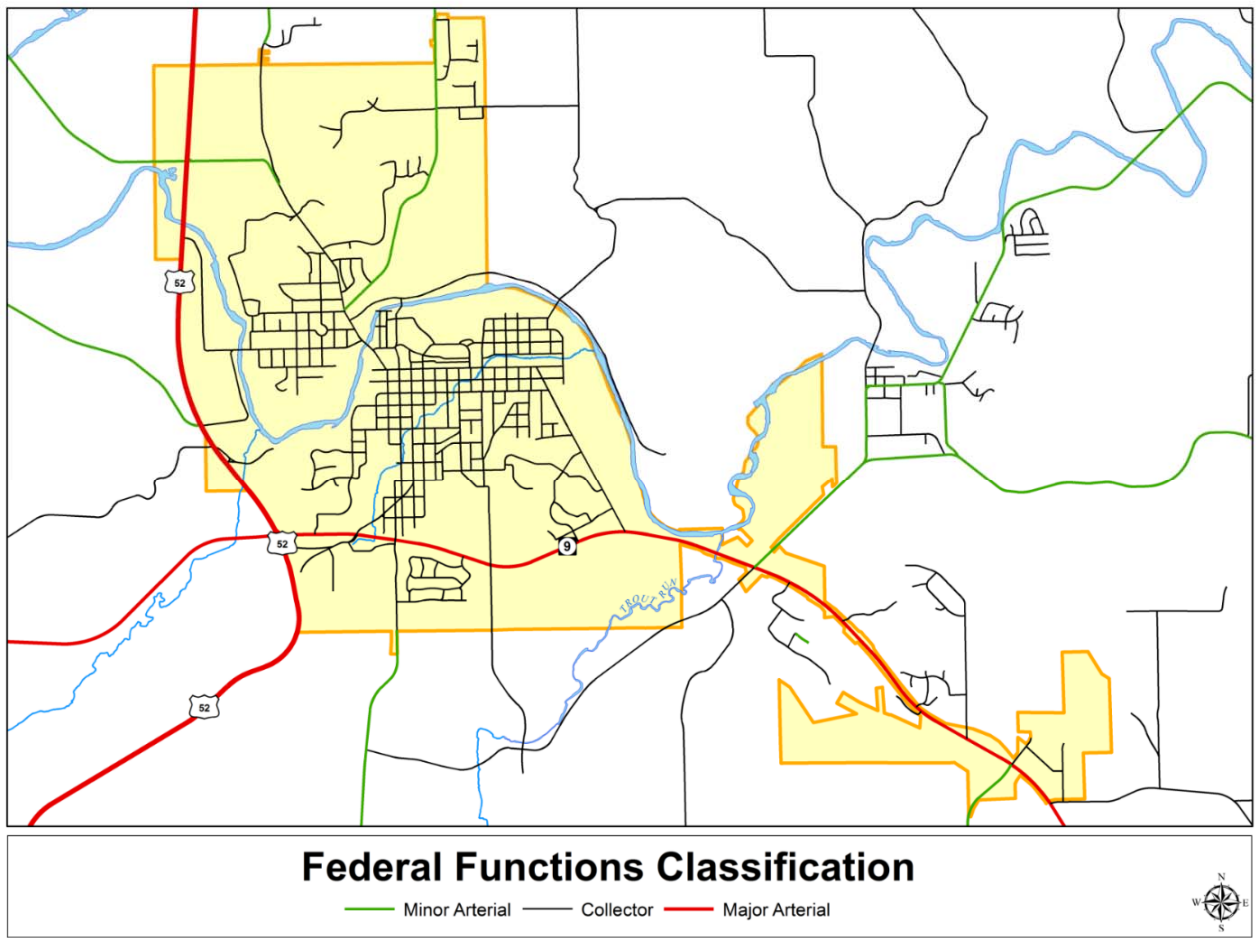
Transportation facilities in the City of Decorah are basic facilities ranging from city roads to state highways, as well as a trails and sidewalks. Residents of Decorah rely on personal vehicles to meet most of their transportation needs. In addition, walking and biking are becoming more utilized forms of transportation within the community. Decorah offers a fairly extensive trail and sidewalk system for a community of its size, giving residents of all ages and abilities safe access throughout the community. Other modes of transportation include private taxi service and a transit service provided by Northeast Iowa Community Action (more information: www.neicac.org/transit).

3.3 Functional Classification System

Chapter 306 of the Code of Iowa provides for the functional classification of all highways, roads, and streets in the state into categories according to the character of service they provide. The classification of streets and roads in each county is periodically updated to be current with city boundary changes and the function of the streets. The classification system serves as a basis for determining future priorities, funds distribution, and jurisdiction over the various highway, roads, and streets in the state.

Municipal streets are classified into three categories: the municipal arterial system, the municipal collector system, and the municipal service system. Municipal streets that provide continuity to the state primary and county secondary road systems are classified as extensions to these systems. These range from freeway-expressway, arterial, and arterial connectors to trunk and trunk collectors. Figure 33 shows the functional classification of streets and roads in the City and the planning area, as provided by the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT).

Figure 33: Federal Functions Classification



The arterial system includes those roads which connect minor arterials (arterial connectors) to the freeway-expressway system and serve long-distance movements of traffic. Minor arterials or arterial connectors include streets and roads which serve as major traffic carriers for short distances, providing connections to the arterial and freeway-expressway system. Highway 9 and 52, and Highway 150 located further to the south, are classified as part of the arterial system.

The trunk system includes county roads that serve principal traffic generators and connect such areas to other trunk roads and to the arterial and freeway-expressway systems. Trunk extensions in the City include Short Street, Mechanic Street, Locust Road, Water Street, Division Street, and segments of Pole Line Road, and College Drive. These streets function as a trunk extension of County Road W38. Other trunk roads in the planning area include County Roads W30 and A34 west of the City, and County Road W42 southeast of the City.

Several streets in the City have been designated as municipal arterials. These streets serve the principal local traffic generators and connect such areas to other municipal arterials and the primary road system. Municipal arterials include Montgomery Street, Water Street, Fifth Avenue, Pulpit Rock Road, Pole Line Road, Locust Road, Mechanic Street, Short Street, and College Drive.

The municipal collectors in the City and trunk collectors in the rural areas collect traffic from the local service streets and roads and connect to the arterial streets systems. As indicated in Figure 33, several north-south and east-west streets in the City are classified as collectors. County Road W38 located south of Decorah is classified as a trunk collector. County Roads W38, A52, and A64 serving the Freeport community are also classified as trunk collectors which collect and feed traffic to Highway 9.

The principal east-west municipal collectors in Decorah include Broadway Street, Railroad Avenue, and Pearl Street. The principal north-south municipal collectors are Washington Street, Division Street, College Drive, Pleasant Avenue, A52 (Old Stage Road), and Ravine Street. The remaining streets are classified as local service streets that provide access to adjoining properties and connect to the collector and arterial street systems.

3.4 Traffic Volumes

Traffic counts are conducted by the Iowa Department of Transportation every 4 years (Iowa Department of Transportation, 2017). 2017 data is the most recent available. Traffic count data is depicted below in Figure 34.

2017 data indicate that the most heavily traveled city street in Decorah is Montgomery Street. The traffic volumes on this street varied from 6,300 vehicles per day in the block located just north of the intersection with E. Main Street to 9,600 near the intersection at Highway 9.

The principal arterial in Decorah is Highway 9, which was upgraded to four lanes during 1998 and 1999. According to the 2017 traffic counts, Highway 9 had average daily traffic volumes from 8,900 to 9,900 vehicles per day in the segment between the west corporate limits and Montgomery Street intersection. From Montgomery Street heading east towards the airport, traffic volumes averaged 7,000 to 14,500 vehicles per day on Highway 9.

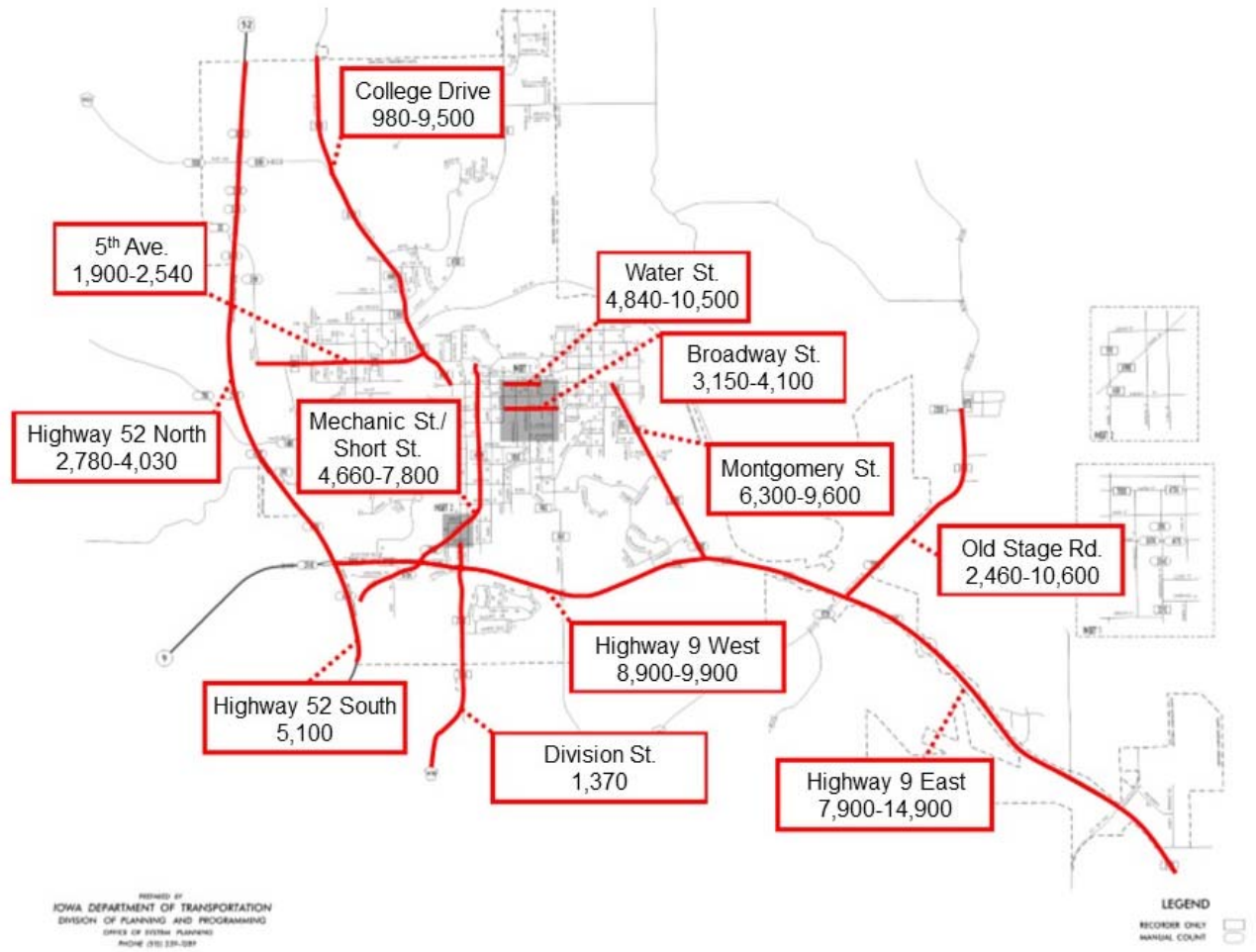
U.S. Highway 52 had average traffic volumes of 5,100 vehicles per day south of the intersection with Highway 9 and a range of 3,130 to 4,030 vehicles per day north of the intersection.

Other streets with relatively high traffic volumes include:

- College Drive with 980 to 9,500 vehicles per day
- Old Stage Road with 10,600 vehicles per day
- Mechanic Street/Short Street with 6,900 to 7,800 vehicles per day
- Water Street with 4,840 to 6,100 vehicles per day
- Broadway Street with 3,070 to 4,170 vehicles per day
- Fifth Avenue with 1,900 to 2,540 vehicles per day
- Division Street with 1,580 to 2,280 vehicles per day

Highest primary traffic corridors in Decorah continue to be Highway 9, Montgomery Street, Short Street, Water Street and College Drive. The Highway 9 corridor east of Decorah continues to grow and remains the highest traffic volume roadway in Winneshiek County and throughout the five-county region. Traffic volumes within these corridors are expected to continue to increase as growth continues east and as downtown and college destinations continue to attract more daily commuter and visitor traffic.

Figure 34: Traffic Flow Map of Decorah, 2017 Annual Average Daily Traffic



Source: (Iowa Department of Transportation, 2017); (Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission, 2018)

3.5 Streets

The City of Decorah has 51.5 miles of surfaced streets open to traffic and 2 additional miles of platted streets not open to traffic. 33.5 miles of surfaced streets are asphalt or asphalt over concrete. About 18 miles of streets are concrete and the remainder are crushed rock, seal coat, or brick. Street surfacing percentages are detailed in Figure 35.

Figure 35: Street Surfacing

Surfacing as of January 2018	Miles	Percent
Portland Cement Concrete	17.92	29.34%
Asphalt Over Stone Base	27.67	45.31%
Portland Cement Concrete with Asphalt Overlay	5.85	9.58%
Oil and Chips over Stone Base	0.42	0.69%
Brick	0.12	0.19%
Brick with Asphalt Overlay	0.19	0.31%
Crushed Rock	0.13	0.21%
Platted, Not Open to Traffic (Undeveloped)	2.07	3.39%
State / U.S. Highways	6.7	10.98%
TOTAL	61.07	100.00%

Source: (Erdman Engineering, 2018)

The pavement width of the streets in Decorah varies from 24 feet to 65 feet. Water Street in the central business district has a 46-foot pavement width. The predominant pavement width is in the range of 31 feet to 36 feet. While the City of Decorah has not officially adopted a Complete Streets Plan, it does take into consideration Complete Streets aspects when planning major roadway projects, especially those involving Federal Aid map routes and local collectors. This approach supports the accommodation of all modes of transportation, including both pedestrian and bicycle travel, within the transportation network, where appropriate and feasible. Sidewalks are generally required where terrain allows. Bike accommodations are added to projects where practical and when volumes and routes dictate a need.

The original street system, which developed in a grid pattern, has predominantly 66-foot right-of-way. Broadway Street has an 80-foot right-of-way. The right-of-way width in west Decorah is predominantly 75 feet. Mechanic Street has a 66-foot right-of-way. Montgomery Street and Short Street have 66-foot and wider right-of-way.

Highways 9 and 52 have considerably greater right-of-way widths than municipal streets; varying from 300 feet to over 600 feet.

The subdivisions located in the northwest and south parts of the City have street right-of-way widths of 66-feet and pavement widths of 36-feet as required by Decorah's prior subdivision ordinances. More recent developments reflect the change to 60-foot right-of-way and 31-foot streets allowed as a result of the previous planning period policy changes. The pavement on local subdivision streets typically consist of 4-inches of asphaltic concrete over 8 to 10-inches of stone base.

The age of existing street surfacing still in use varies considerably from the pre-1930 period on segments of Main Street, Broadway Street, and Mechanic Street to new streets that have been developed in the recent subdivisions. Many of the older streets are Portland cement concrete that have been overlaid with asphaltic concrete. During the 1970s and early 1980s many streets were paved with asphaltic concrete over stone base. Many of these streets are located in west Decorah, and in the southwest and northeast parts of east Decorah.

Decorah has an ongoing street improvement program of paving unpaved streets and resurfacing and replacing existing pavement in the City.

Over 95% of streets in Decorah are hard surfaced. The primary source of street improvement revenue continues to be the 1% local option sales tax. This has been recently supplemented with the state legislature passage of an increase in the fuel tax of 10 cents per gallon. Recent new street construction during the planning period includes a major rebuild of the Short Street corridor north of Highway 9. Other significant construction includes the extension of Park Street south of Highway 9 as part of the Fairfield Inn project and new street construction in the Decorah Business Park.

The City continues to reconstruct many of the major arterial streets, as much of this system was originally state highway built in the 1920s. This will include College Drive north, Industrial Lane, North Street, and most of the remainder of Water Street. Other major streets expected to require significant reconstruction during the planning period include Heivly Street, Locust Road, Pole Line Road, and Ice Cave Road. Recent completed projects include Short Street north and south of IA Highway 9.

The City initiated a transportation corridor study with McClure Engineering in 2018. The focus of the study was to review potential street improvements, expansions, and new transportation corridors which may be available in the Northern section of the City. Areas reviewed included potential corridors outside, but adjacent to the city limits. Graphical depictions of the study may be obtained at city hall.

3.6 Parking

The availability of parking spots and parking lots around a city's downtown area can impact many aspects of resident's or visitor's downtown experience. Central Business Commercial District (C-3) zoning requires a set number of 'general and related adjoining' parking spots

based on square footage, which equates to a total of 1,452 parking spots required for Decorah's downtown business district as calculated by city staff. The City of Decorah has a total of 772 'on street' parking spots available for use in the downtown area. 'Off street' public parking lots in the downtown area include a total of 441 parking spots. 'Off street' private parking lots near the downtown area have a total of 867 parking spots. Combining all 'on street' and 'off street' public and private parking spots gives a total of 2,080 parking spots for Decorah's downtown business district, which exceeds the required number per zoning regulations.

In addition to vehicle parking, Decorah's downtown area also has several bicycle racks and corrals.

3.7 Traffic Controls

There are 13 signaled intersections in Decorah. Seven of the traffic signals are located along Water Street in the central business district. Other signaled intersections include College Drive at Fifth Avenue and Heivly Street, and the intersection of IA Highway 9 and at Old Stage Road/Trout Run Road, and Short Street.

There are 13 signaled intersections in Decorah:

- Seven traffic signals located along Water Street
- College Drive at Fifth Avenue
- College Drive at Heivly Street
- Mechanic Street at Broadway Street
- IA Highway 9 at Old Stage Road/Trout Run Road
- IA Highway 9 at Montgomery Street
- IA Highway 9 at Short Street

The downtown signal controller system was last upgraded during the 1997 Water Street Project. A second update the system started in 2017 and will be completed over a 5-year period. The system is being converted from hardwire network connected to City Hall to an individually controlled system of controllers linked by radios. This is a very significant conversion in terms of technology and financial resources.

Justification of traffic signals is based on the volume of traffic on major and minor streets, and also on pedestrian traffic, in accordance with provisions outlined in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), which can be accessed at: www.mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov. As the traffic volumes increase and traffic patterns change with future development or redevelopment of areas in Decorah, additional signalization of street intersections may be required. Currently intersection congestion and accident histories do not appear to support additional signals. The intersection of College Drive at Locust Road may be the eventual exception to this.

Most of the other street intersections in Decorah are controlled by two-way or four-way stop and yield signs. Traffic control with stop signs generally provides for traffic movement along the principal streets leading to the central business district. The installation of traffic signs is based on design criteria established in the MUTCD.

Street signage is continually being updated to meet requirements and achieve appropriate signage quality, specifically reflectivity requirements. In addition, improving conditions for the aging population by increasing minimum letter sizes on street signage is another focus for major street projects; this approach was used in the recent Short Street project.

Street Department

The City of Decorah Street Department is responsible for 61 miles of streets and 7.2 miles of alleys, as well as many parking lots in the downtown area. The Street Department is located at 108 Railroad Avenue.

3.8 Bridges

The City continues to inspect four bridges, two twin box culverts and the recently added Trout Run Trail Bridge over Highway 9 as part of its Federal Bridge Inspection Program obligations. The Fifth Avenue bridge, College Drive bridge and Trout Run Trail bridge are relatively new and achieved good ratings in the most recent inspections. The Oneota Drive Bridge remains open due only to temporary repairs and is scheduled for replacement in 2019. The other bridge on Pole Line Road is rated low enough that replacement during the planning period may be considered.

In addition to these bridges, the City jointly owns the Fifth Street bridge (Twin Bridges) with Winneshiek County, which is inspected and generally maintained by the County with assistance as needed from the City.

3.9 Modes of Transportation

Railroad

Although there are no railroads in the City of Decorah. The Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern (DM&E) Rail Line serves the southern portion of Winneshiek County. This cargo train passes through the towns of Castalia, Ossian, Calmar, Fort Atkinson and Jackson Junction. There is no passenger train service available nearby.

Air Transportation

The Decorah Municipal Airport is Winneshiek County's only publicly owned general aviation airport. Located southeast of the City along Highway 9, the airport is an

"uncontrolled" facility with a fulltime Fixed Based Operator available 24/7 to service any aviation need. The Airport runway system consists of a lighted 4,001' long by 75' wide concrete runway with a load bearing strength of 28,000 pounds single wheel load. The runway is accessed by a 1,200' taxiway, with a partial parallel taxiway from the runway to the terminal. The facilities include the terminal with office, a maintenance hangar and three T-hangars. The facility offers jet fuel and aviation gas for purchase, a tie-down area and 16 rental hangars. The airport has 29 aircrafts based on the field, 26 single engine planes and one ultralight. The airport averages around 25 operations per day, 55% of which are local general aviation and 45% transient general aviation (AirNav, 2018). The Decorah Municipal Airport maintains and regularly updates an Airport Layout Plan which includes an inventory of existing conditions and issues and outlines short and long-term capital improvement plans. Additionally, MedLink AIR, Gundersen Health System's emergency and critical care air transport service (helicopter services) are based at the Decorah Municipal Airport in a new 65' x 60' hangar dedicated for that purpose.

Public Transportation/Mass Transit

The Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation (NEICAC) – Transit Program, also known as EARL Public Transit, is the public transit provider under the Iowa Department of Transportation for the counties of Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek in Northeast Iowa. EARL Public Transit is open to everyone, and NEICAC is proud to offer safe and reliable public transportation to all citizens in the area. Services are structured to ensure that the transportation needs of everyone are met, regardless of whether one lives in a community or in the country. Transportation is provided whenever needed. If someone needs a ride, EARL is here to provide it. For most services, individuals are picked up right at their doorstep and can be taken wherever they need to go. For more information: www.neicac.org/transit

Private Transportation

There are several private taxi companies in Decorah, including Hometown Taxi and Midnight Taxi. Some of these offer reduced rates for senior citizens, students and handicapped people. Service for long-distance regional travel, nights and holidays are provided through some of these companies. Hawkeye Stages is a charter bus company operating in Decorah serving tour groups.

The City of Decorah and NEICAC provide funding to assist with discounting Hometown Taxi rides for any Decorah resident 60 years or older. In addition, the Depot Outlet, a local faith-based organization, provides funding to offer discounted Hometown Taxi rides for persons with disabilities.

Sidewalks

Decorah has a fairly extensive sidewalk system that has been maintained and improved through a series of public and private activities. These include a property owner notification program for maintenance requirements, city cost sharing considerations for needs beyond

the nominally required widths and parameters, conversion to current ADA standards for crosswalks in construction projects, and the addition of walks in previously unserved areas. The long-range objective is to provide consistent sidewalk facilities throughout the City to the extent possible.

The City adopted a gas utility franchise fee ordinance in November of 2016. This resulted in the City collecting 1% of the gas utility revenue in the City. The City Council earmarked those revenues for sidewalk improvement programs (*Ord 1191*).

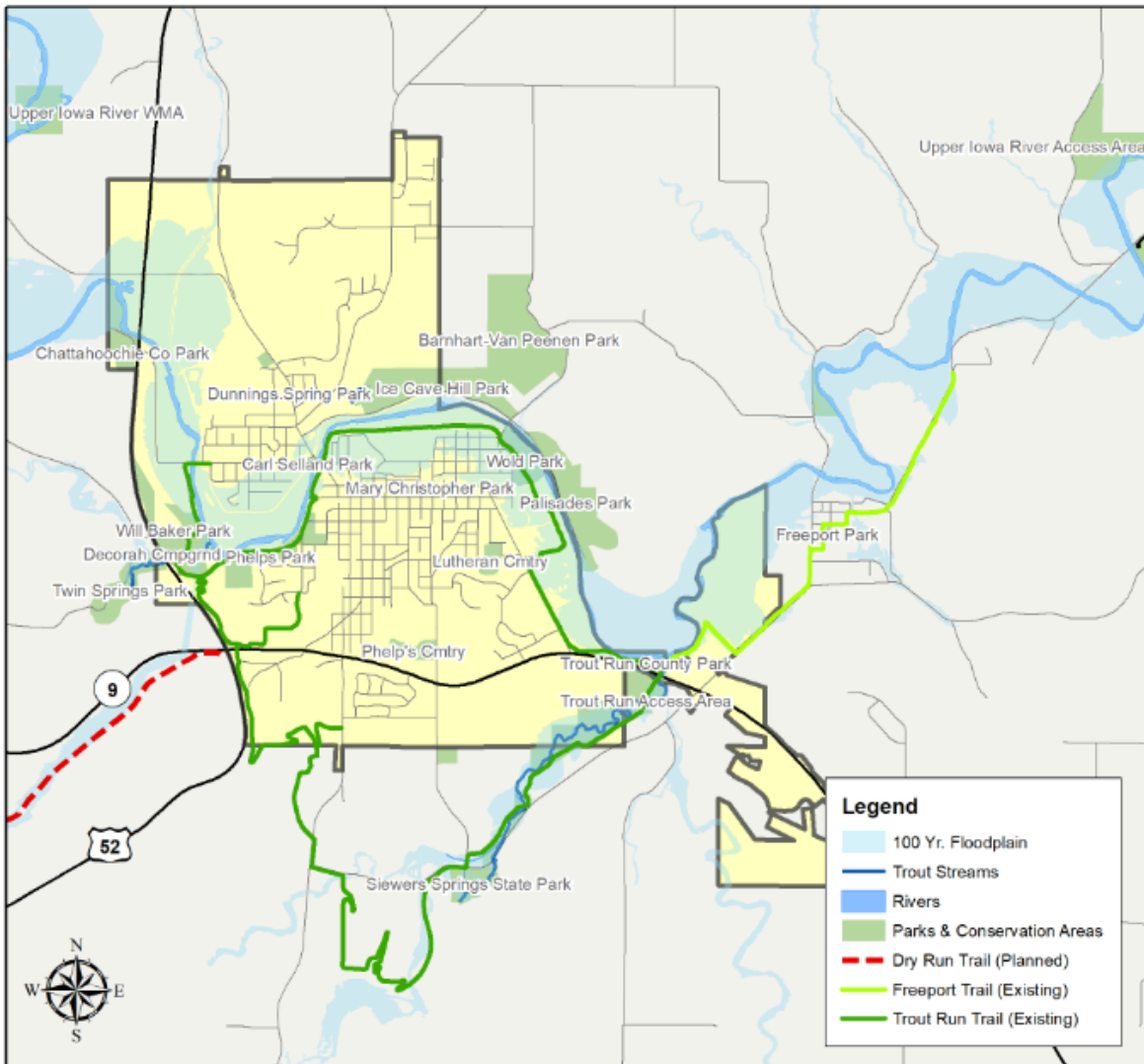
Consistent and connected pedestrian facilities support many health-promoting activities and programs for residents of all ages and abilities. One such program is Safe Routes to School, a movement encouraging active school travel and safe community routes for youth. An example of a Safe Routes to School initiative is the Walking School Bus, a fun, safe, and active ways for students to travel to or from school by walking with volunteer leaders. Decorah boasts an impressive local Walking School Bus program, which is coordinated by Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission as part of its regional Safe Routes to School program. To learn more: www.uerpc.org/safe-routes.html

Multi-Use Trails

The residents of the Decorah area are fortunate to have access to a growing network of recreational areas, including recreational trails, as is shown in Figure 26. Currently, there are 12 miles of paved trails and 20 miles of off-road unpaved trails located in and around Decorah. The Trout Run Trail, which forms an 11-mile circular scenic path around the City of Decorah and the neighboring countryside, was completed in recent years. The Freeport Trail, a recently added 2.75-mile spur off of the Trout Run Trail, connects the Village of Freeport to the Trout Run Trail and Decorah. A link trail information and maps can be found here: www.winneshielwild.com/recreation-trails

Figure 36: Recreational Trails and Destinations

Recreational Trails and Destinations

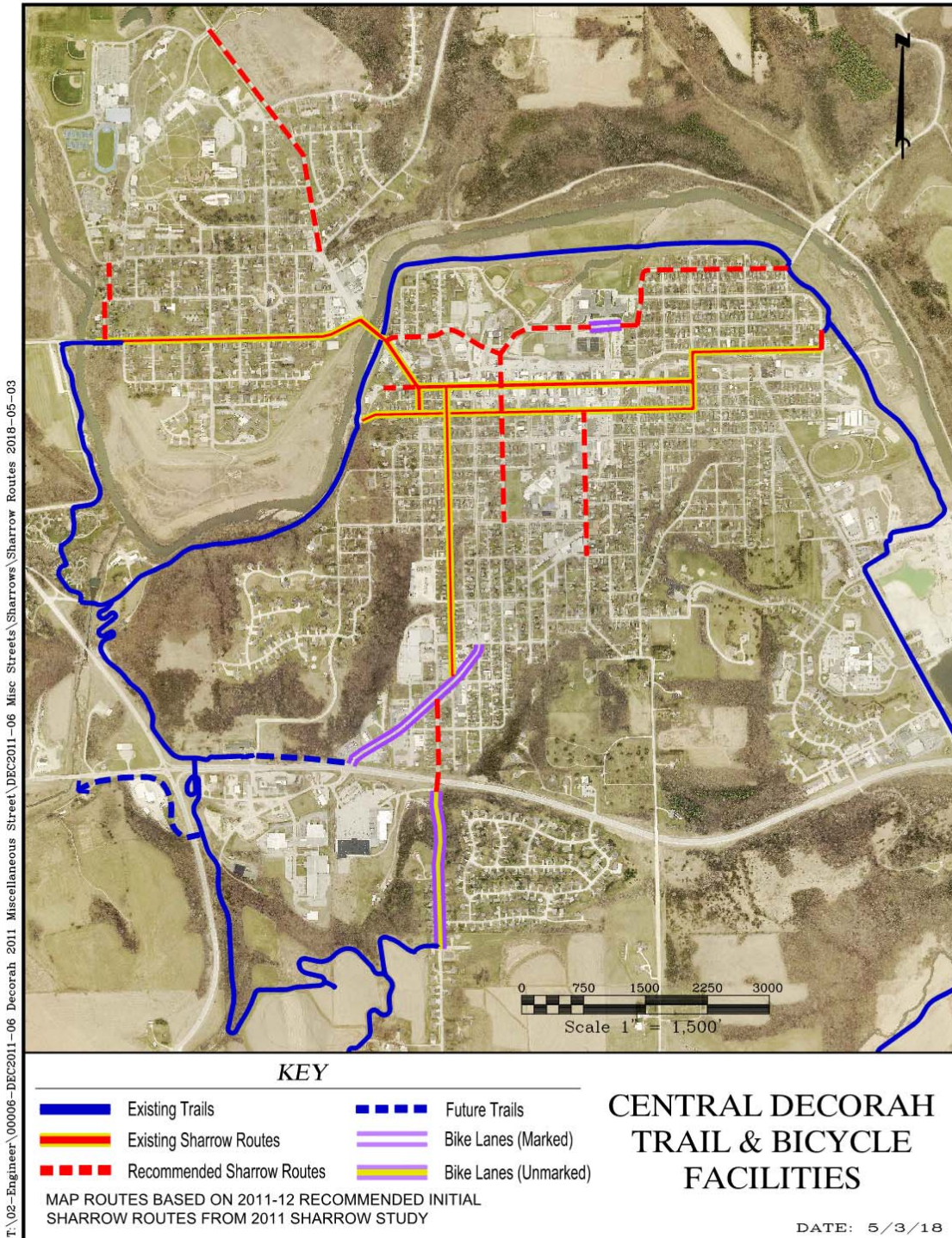


Source: Winneshiek County Conservation, Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission

Since the 1990 planning period, a considerable change has occurred in regard to recreational trail facilities. Prior to this, the City did have some bicycle-oriented facilities in paths along College Drive from the bridge to the swimming pool and along Montgomery Street. An initial independent recreational trail was constructed along Oneota Drive (Dug Road) and the Upper Iowa River north of downtown to Wold Park in the 1990's. This facility was a two mile 8-foot wide asphalt path that has successfully been expanded to create the Trout Run Trail. Figure 37 and Figure 38 showcase bicycle-oriented facilities, including trails, bike lanes (both marked and unmarked) and sharrows (both current and recommended) located within Decorah and through Freeport.

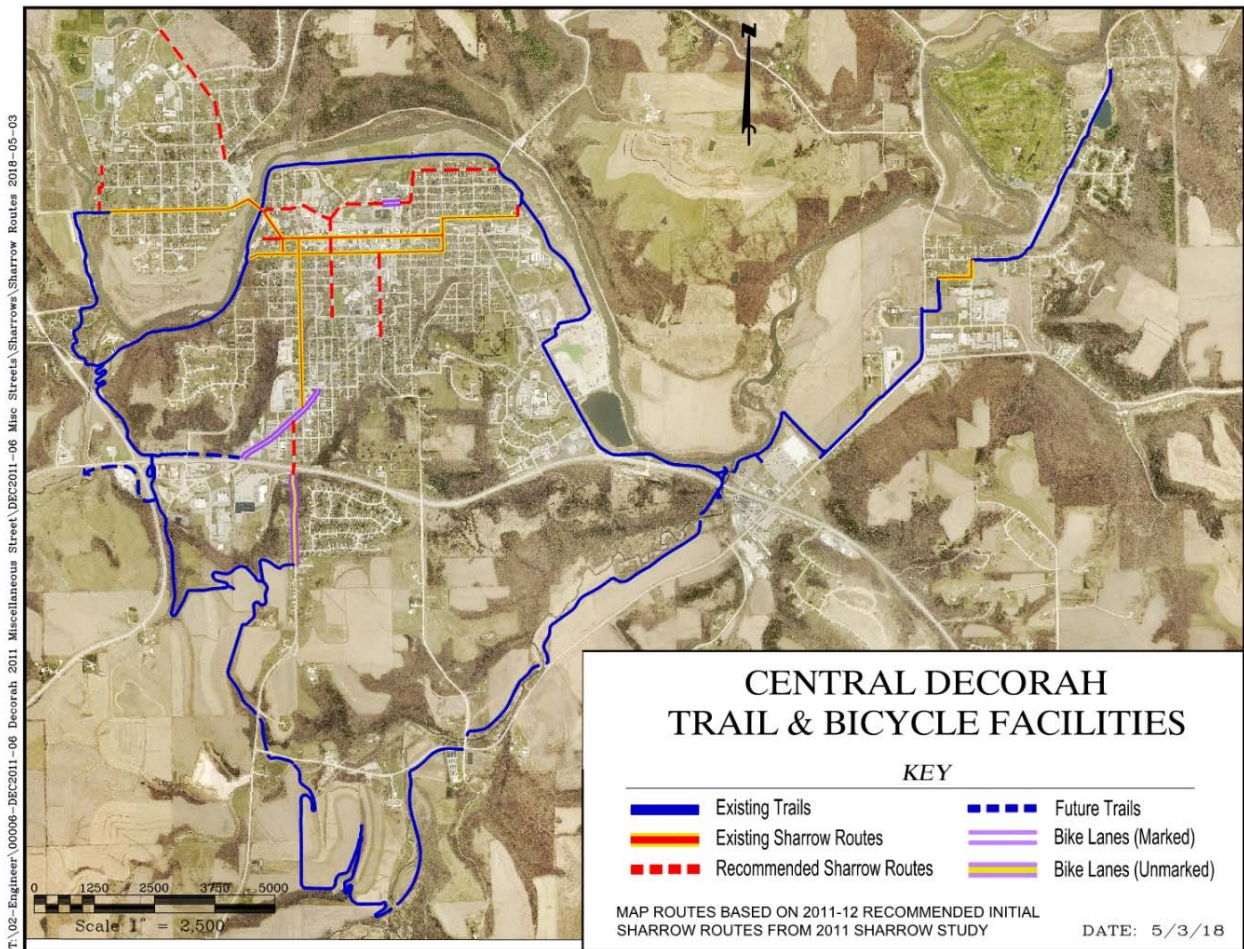
In addition to the paved trails, an extensive off-road unpaved trail system has also been developed in Van Peenen Park and surrounding areas. Decorah's off-road unpaved trails were host to the first mountain bike race in the state of Iowa.

Figure 37: Central Decorah Trail and Bicycle Facilities- Decorah



(Erdman Engineering, 2018)

Figure 38: Central Decorah Trail and Bicycle Facilities- Decorah and Freeport



(Erdman Engineering, 2018)

3.10 Summary of Existing Transportation Plans

State, regional, and county agencies have developed guidance and improvement schedules for roadways and infrastructure under their responsibility. It is important that the City of Decorah and these agencies continue to communicate on proposed implementation schedules and coordinate local and regional activities. State, regional and county plans plus other relevant sources of guidance are identified below.

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

The purpose of the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is to encourage and promote the development of a regional transportation system that incorporates all modes of transportation to provide for the safe, efficient and economical movement of people and products. The LRTP includes a description of the region's existing conditions; forecasts future population and potential growth corridors; identifies current and projected future transportation problems and needs; and explores various transportation improvement strategies to address those needs. In addition, the plan lays out the short-term projects and long-range policy goals of the region. The current LRTP available at the following link: www.uerpc.org/transportation.html

Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)

The TIP is an annually produced document that describes the federally funded projects and activities that are planned for the region in the next four years. It is a fiscally constrained plan that identifies the use of federal funds in highway, bridge, alternatives and transit projects. The projects identified within this document may receive federal funding from a number of different sources which are distributed through a variety of methods- some through formula, others are discretionary (earmarked) and some by a competitive granting process. The current TIP can be found at the following link: www.uerpc.org/transportation.html

Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP)

The Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP) is designed to help facilitate future passenger transportation planning activities in the region. The PTP provides the basis for efficient and effective passenger transportation resource allocation for future operations, maintenance, and service development. The PTP identifies both the duplication of services, resulting in scheduling and funding inefficiencies, and the gaps in services, resulting in unmet transportation needs of constituents. The current PTP can be found here: www.uerpc.org/transportation.html

Decorah Community School District Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Plan

Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission completed Safe Routes to School (SRTS) planning documents for community school districts within their five-county service area of Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek Counties. These plans serve

as a supporting document to the extensive SRTS education and encouragement efforts already taking place throughout the region. The SRTS Plans can be accessed at the following link: www.uerpc.org/srts-planning-docs.html

Backbone Trail Study

The Backbone Trail Study is a trail routing and economic impact study for the proposed “Backbone” trail system for Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek Counties. The Backbone Trail is intended to connect four major trails in the region to create border-to-border trail connectivity, serving as the “backbone” for a greater regional trail system. The study is intended to be completed in 2019.

State of Iowa Transportation Plan

The State develops a long-range statewide transportation plan, with a minimum 20-year forecast period at the time of adoption, which provides for the development and implementation of the multimodal transportation system for the State. More information: www.iowadot.gov/iowainmotion

28E Trail Committee

The 28E Trail Committee has an intergovernmental agreement for the development, improvement, maintenance, and administration of the Trout Run, Freeport and Dry Run Trails. The 28E consists of the City of Decorah, Decorah Park and Recreation, Winneshiek County and Winneshiek County Conservation Board.

Downtown Decorah Betterment Association

The Downtown Decorah Betterment Association (DDBA) is a member-supported organization whose efforts contribute to the success of Decorah's downtown and west side. They add to the vitality of the downtown area by helping pay for benches and informational kiosks. The DDBA takes a special interest in parking issues and pedestrian movement concerns within the downtown area. To learn more: www.decorahareachamber.com/decorah-downtown-betterment-association.html

Decorah Community Visioning

Decorah participated in the Community Visioning Program. This program integrates landscape planning and design with sustainable action to empower community leaders and volunteers in making sound, meaningful decisions about the local landscape. Anchored by a committee of local residents, communities work closely with technical experts from Trees Forever, a private-sector landscape architect, and the Iowa State University Department of Landscape Architecture to create a transportation enhancement plan reflecting the values and identity of the community. Final designs resulting from the project are available at the following site: www.communityvisioning.org or www.decorahia.org

3.11 Transportation Summary

In general, the transportation for the City of Decorah is adequate and serves the needs of the community. The City of Decorah's recreational trail system is above average and is an asset to the community. One area with room for improvement is increased public transportation. Like almost all communities, maintenance and repair of the transportation infrastructure is a priority and requires the most resources.

3.12 Transportation Policies

- A major street plan should be maintained in a way that is integrated with the regional street system and reflects major traffic generators and adjacent land-use patterns.
- Standards for major and local streets should be developed and enforced in the subdivision ordinance and city standard specifications to insure adequate right-of-way, pavement width, street access, and dedication of street right-of-way prior to development. Statewide Urban Design and Specifications (SUDAS) guidelines should be considered for planning and construction. SUDAS was adopted by ordinance in July 2018 (*Ord 1221*).
- Residential areas and residential local service streets should be protected from the impact of industrial traffic by the development and enforcement of truck routes in the City, to the greatest extent possible.
- Alternative traffic routes between the outlying areas and the City should be considered as traffic volumes and growth patterns warrant.
- Various options regarding mass transit to serve Decorah should be explored.
- Continued improvements and development at the Decorah Municipal Airport should be in accordance with an updated airport master plan – current plan dated May 28, 2014.
- Consider 'Complete Streets' guidelines in planning major roadway projects to account for all modes of transportation, where applicable. Streets should be planned with consideration for bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. This should include new development as well as street redevelopment.
- Prioritize safety for non-motorized forms of transportation, such as walking and biking throughout the City. When residents have safe routes to walk or bike on, they are more likely to choose these forms of transportation more often.

- Access Management for major streets should be encouraged and implemented and utilize SUDAS guidelines as a reference for new and existing streets.
- The City should continue to review and consider new and expanded transportation corridor options. The results of the 2018 Transportation Study should be revisited in the context of the 2020 Locust Road Improvement Program.

CHAPTER 4: UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES



Photos above by Randy Uhl

4.1 Introduction

Community facilities are buildings, lands, services, and programs that serve the public, such as parks, schools, police and fire protection, health care facilities, solid waste and recycling facilities, and libraries. This element identifies and evaluates existing utilities and community facilities serving the City of Decorah. Understanding the location, use, and capacity of community facilities and utilities is an important consideration when planning for the future. Water and wastewater treatment systems are municipally owned and operated. Alliant Energy provides electrical service and Black Hills Energy provides natural gas service.

Luther College has a 1.6-megawatt wind turbine projected to produce 5.2 million kilowatt hours of electricity per year. This will provide approximately one-third of the college's annual electricity consumption.

4.2 Sanitary Sewer Service

The existing sanitary sewage system is municipally owned and operated. The system, made up of laterals, trunk, and outfall sewers, conveys the wastewater to wastewater treatment plant for treatment and discharge to the Upper Iowa River, east of Decorah.

The sewer system is made up of 8, 10, 12, 15, 18, 24 and 30-inch pipes and three pumping lift stations. The pumping lift stations serve the extreme northwest and north parts of the developed city.

Major improvements to the sewerage system were made from 1984 to 1986, when the new wastewater treatment plant, the 18-inch and 30-inch trunk, and the 30-inch outfall sewers were built. Several pumping lift stations and the previous wastewater treatment facility were eliminated.

The majority of the original sewer system built in 1919 and 1920 consists of vitrified clay pipe. The trunk and outfall sewers from the 1985 project are reinforced concrete pipe. Generally sewers constructed since about 1990 on are PVC.

The unincorporated Freeport community is served by the Freeport Water and Sanitary Sewer District. The original sanitary sewer system of the district was constructed in the period between 1984 and 1986. The sewers of the district vary in size from 8-inch to 10-inch diameter pipe. The wastewater from the district is treated by the Decorah wastewater treatment facility per a City/County 28E agreement.

The City continues to review sewers due to age of the original system and capacities related to growth. A larger trunk sewer has been planned in phases to serve southeast Decorah as growth and redevelopment occurs in this area. The same is true for a future bypass of Locust Road sewers directly to the main trunk sewer via Quarry Street. Industrial, business, and residential growth has also resulted in trunk sewer extensions east to the Decorah Business Park/Airport areas. Sanitary sewers will be planned for replacement based primarily on aging infrastructure and street-related reconstruction projects, along with community growth trends. Original system central trunk and interceptor sewers will be of primary interest as streets and areas around them redevelop during the planning period.

Waste Water Treatment Facility

The existing wastewater treatment facility, built in the period between 1984 and 1986, is an activated sludge, secondary treatment facility. The plant consists of a pumping station, grit removal facility, two primary clarifiers, three aeration basins, three final clarifiers and a chlorinator. The sludge is processed in two anaerobic digesters where it is stabilized and then applied on nearby farm land. In 2004, the plant underwent several improvements that included, ultraviolet disinfection, new main pumping station equipment including controls, new ventilation equipment, and a new one million-gallon biosolids storage tank. The cost of the improvements was approximately \$1,400,000 and financed through a State Revolving Fund Loan.

The facility is designed to treat an average wet weather flow (wet month) of 4.92 million gallons per day (mgpd), and a peak hourly wet weather flow of 6.9 mgpd. The design parameters for the treatment facility are listed below in Figure 39:

Figure 39: Treatment Facility Design Parameters

Average Wet Weather Flow:	4.92 mgpd
Maximum Wet Weather Flow:	5.43 mgpd
Peak Hourly Wet Weather Flow (peak day):	6.90 mgpd
Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD₅):	3,900 pounds per day (ppd) (average)
Suspended Solids:	3,600 ppd (average)

During the 2017 calendar year, the facility pumped a total of 432 million gallons, an average of 1.18 million gallons per day. The effluent discharge to the Upper Iowa River must meet the following concentration limits as established by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), shown in Figure 40:

Figure 40: River Concentration Limits

Carbonaceous BOD₅:	25 mg/l 30 day (average)
Total Suspended Solids (TSS):	30 mg/l 30 day (average)

Mg/l – milligrams

The treatment facility has now been in operation since 1986. Upgrades in both treatment technology and requirements have resulted in improvements made to date as noted. Upcoming needed improvements include the replacement of many of the mechanical components of the plant as they reach the end of their useful life. Advances in computerization or control systems may also prove advantageous in upgrade systems.

City of Decorah Headworks Study

The City of Decorah completed a headworks study in July of 2016. The City then took all the data that was gathered and established local limits on certain discharges to the sanitary sewer system. Local limits may be developed by publicly owned wastewater treatment works (POTWs) to ensure compliance with the requirements of the discharge permit (NPDES) and related government prohibitions and guidelines. The federal and state requirements do not take into account the site-specific factors at a POTW and local limits may be required to ensure that all discharges are in compliance. A POTW may need to impose local limits on an industrial user that are more stringent or cover more pollutants than an applicable categorical standard in order to ensure compliance with all aspects of their NPDES permit.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) adopted more stringent stream standards in 2006, which have resulted in significantly reduced amounts of metals that may be discharged in a plant’s effluent. Preparation of local limits calculations are helpful for the City to get an overall understanding of the metals that are allowed to be discharged to the river, the amount that has been "allocated" to the existing industries, and the amount that is available to allocate to future or expanding existing industries. The purpose of the study was to develop local limits for metals that may be discharged into the City’s sewer system from industrial customers without violating any of the regulations regarding sludge disposal or stream standards or recommendations for optimal treatment plant operations.

Based on the available data and default values approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), data was inputted into the model developed by Paul Marshall at EPA - Region 7 for use by municipalities in this region to calculate local limits. The Local Limits model/calculations estimated the maximum allowable headworks loading (MAHL) and the maximum allowable industrial loading (MAIL) that would protect the treatment facilities from violation of the stream standards or sludge land application regulations, as well as

prevent inhibition within the plant or inadvertent pass through of any metals into the stream.

The model outputs indicate that Decorah has additional capacity based on the available data of what is actually, entering and leaving the plant (both effluent and land applied sludge). The influent data from March and April 2016 samples indicate that a range of 3-78% of the MAHL for metals is being utilized. However, the permitted amounts of cadmium, nickel, and silver exceed 100% of the MAIL; permitted amounts of chromium and copper exceed 90% of the MAIL. This would indicate that the amount of most metals permitted is in excess of what is currently utilized by the industries and should be reduced to amounts that reflect what they actually need plus a small percentage for a buffer to avoid violations of the permits.

Please note that the determination of how to distribute the local limits in either mass or concentration is a philosophical and/or political decision that must be a local decision based on the size, needs, equity, and impact to each city. For example, if justified, a city could allocate any percentage of any metal to one industry, leaving a smaller percentage to others. A chart showing summarizing mass loadings from the study can be found below in Figure 41. To view the complete study, visit the following link: www.decorahia.org/waste-water.

Figure 41: City of Decorah Headwaters Study: Summary of Mass Loadings

SUMMARY OF MASS LOADINGS								
	Domestic/comml Sources		Maximum Allowable Industrial Load (MAIL)		lbs. Reserve	Maximum Allowable Headwrks Load (MAHL) lbs	Headworks ACTUAL Avg.Load lbs	Current Loading as % of MAHL
	lbs.	% of limit	lbs.	% of MAHL				
Ag	0.002	3%	0.063	88%	0.006	0.072	0.002	3%
As	0.025	12%	0.168	80%	0.017	0.209	0.010	5%
Cd	0.001	1%	0.071	90%	0.007	0.079	0.002	3%
CN	0.038	18%	0.157	74%	0.016	0.211	0.127	60%
Cr	0.069	11%	0.516	81%	0.052	0.637	0.035	5%
Cu	0.652	50%	0.594	45%	0.059	1.306	1.020	78%
Hg	0.001	6%	0.016	86%	0.002	0.019	0.002	8%
Ni	0.124	26%	0.325	67%	0.032	0.481	0.049	10%
Pb	0.011	2%	0.613	89%	0.061	0.685	0.026	4%
Zn	1.871	25%	5.235	69%	0.523	7.629	1.545	20%
Mo	0.011	11%	0.082	81%	0.008	0.101	0.046	46%
Se	0.014	5%	0.220	86%	0.022	0.256	0.016	6%

TOXIC POLLUTANTS SUMMARY		
UNIFORM CONCENTRATION LIMIT If APPLIED mg/l		LIMITING CRITERIA
Ag	0.422	Ag NPDES #:
As	1.116	As Digstn Inhib:
Cd	0.471	Cd SLDG Dispsl:
CN	1.044	CN Digstn Inhib:
Cr	3.438	Cr NPDES #:
Cu	3.957	Cu Digstn Inhib:
Hg	0.109	Hg NPDES #:
Ni	2.162	Ni Digstn Inhib:
Pb	4.086	Pb SLDG Dispsl:
Zn	34.872	Zn SLDG Dispsl:
Mo	0.548	Mo SLDG Dispsl:
Se	1.467	Se SLDG Dispsl:

Source: (Fox Engineering, 2016)

4.3 Water Supply

The water system consisting of water supply, treatment, storage, and distribution system is municipally owned and operated.

The existing Decorah water supply is from six shallow wells. The wells range in depth from 56 feet to 78 feet. The wells were built in the period from 1949 to 1979. The total pumping capacity of the wells is 3.4 million gallons per day (mgpd). The City pumps water at an average of 1 mgpd. See Figure 42 for Water Source (Well) Information. Water treatment is limited to chlorination and fluoridation.

Figure 42: Water Source (Well) Information

Well Number	Year Established	Location	Depth	Capacity (gpm)	Capacity (gpd)
1	1949	West end of Water Street	56	350	504,000
2	1958	North of water plant along levee	59	400	576,000
3	1962	North of water plant along levee	63	250	360,000
5*	1967	East side of Mill Street	78	425	612,000
6	1972	West side of Mill Street	78	440	633,000
7	1979	Along levee near athletic track	70	460	662,000

Source: (Decorah Utilities Water Operations Report)

*(There is no Well No. 4)

The Decorah Water Storage system includes five storage reservoirs; three are ground storage and two are elevated towers. Two ground storage tanks, 353,600 gallons and 368,890 gallons, are located off Park Street in the southwest part of the City. These reservoirs were built in 1882 and 1935 respectively. The third ground storage tank is a 750,000-gallon tank located east of Luther College off of College Drive. A 100,000-gallon elevated storage tank is located in the extreme north part of the City west of Locust Road. The College Drive and Locust Road storage tanks were constructed in 1979. A fifth storage tank (150,000 gallons) in the Decorah Business Park went online in 2015. Other booster pumped pressure systems serve the Minowa Heights area and the Ronan Tanks area (Park Street storage). See the Water Storage Information Figure 43 below.

Figure 43: Water Storage Information

Storage Number	Year Constructed	Type/Location	Capacity
1	1882	Ground Storage – Ronan #1	353,600
2	1935	Ground Storage – Ronan #2	368,890
3	1978	Ground Storage - Freeport System	250,000
4	1979	Ground Storage – College Drive	750,000
5	1979	Elevated Tank – West of Locust Road	100,000
6	2010	Elevated Tank – Decorah Business Park	150,000

Source: (Decorah Utilities Water Operations Report)

The Decorah water distribution system includes over 70 miles of cast-iron and ductile-iron mains that range in size from 2-inch to 16-inch pipe. The distribution system consists primarily of 4-inch, 6-inch, and 8-inch mains, which are fed from the wells and storage tanks with 8-inch to 16-inch mains. The original system of mostly 4-inch, 6-inch and 8-inch cast-iron mains was built in 1882. The overall system includes over 720 valves and 430 fire hydrants. A map of the sanitary sewer and water infrastructure for Decorah, including the primary distribution system of 8-inch and large mains, is shown in Figure 45.

Water demand has steadily declined over the past planning period due to loss of several water dependent industries, equipment conservation improvements in other high volume industries, as well as Luther College, as shown on the following Figure 44:

Figure 44: Average Daily Water Demand

Year	Average Daily Pumpage in Gallons
1995	1,285,465
2000	1,242,511
2005	1,009,256
2010	950,371
2015	1,028,302
2017	935,450

Total water pumped for 2017 was 341,439,147 gallons. The average daily demand for water was 935,450 gallons with the highest daily usage being 1,588,366 gallons.

The amount of unaccounted water (the difference between the amount of water pumped to the system and the amount of water actually used or sold) is approximately 15 percent. The city continues to investigate ways to reduce this amount. Unaccounted water is considered excessive at 20 percent.

The Industrial Park well has been taken offline but is still in place as an emergency backup well for that area.

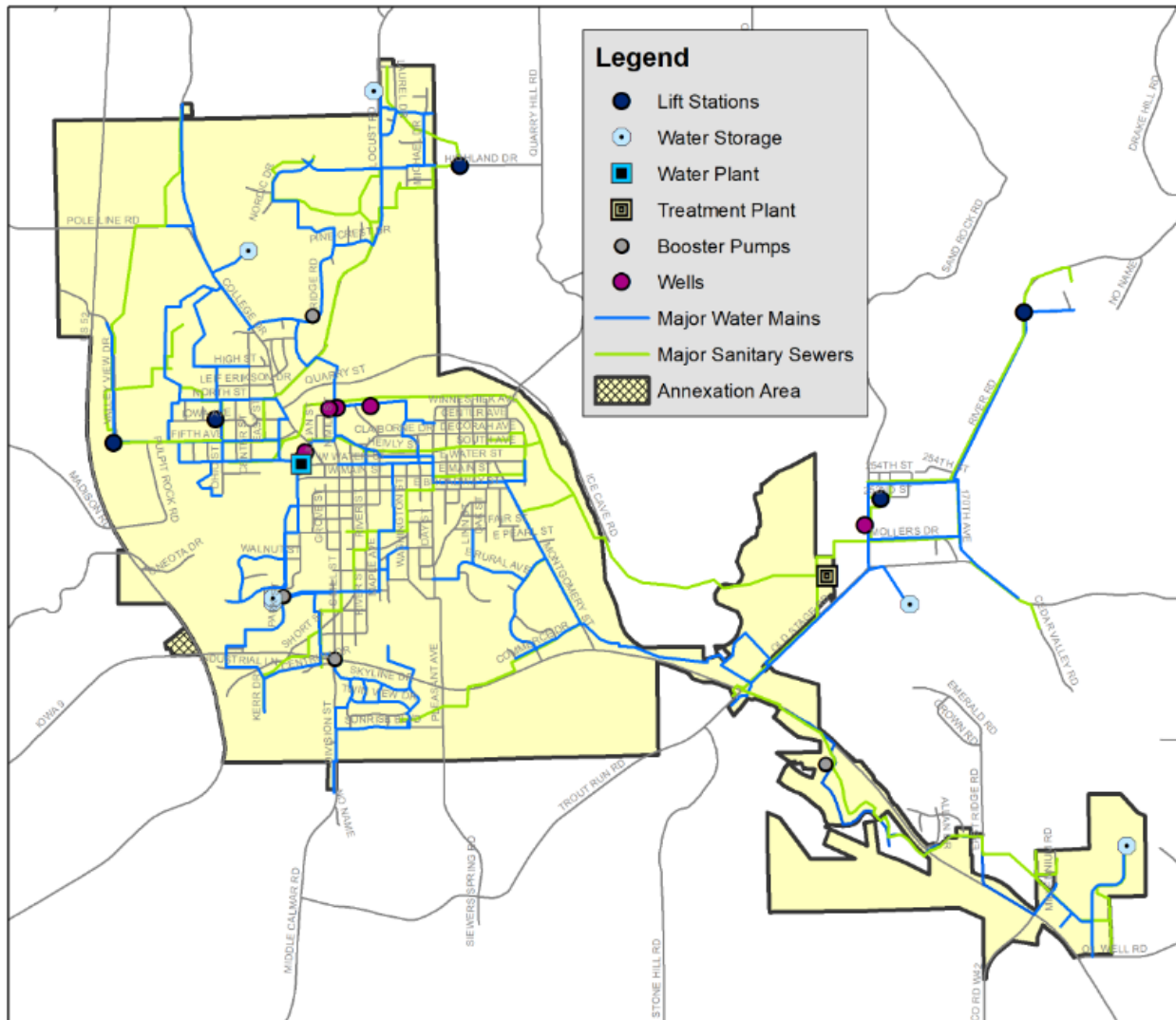
The City integrated the Decorah Business Park Water system into the overall municipal system in 2015. This is presently a separate pressure system fed from the Decorah system via a new booster pump station in the Scenic View Estates area.

The Freeport area is served by the Freeport Water and Sanitary Sewer District system. This system, composed of 6-inch, 8-inch, and 10-inch diameter mains, serves the developed parts of the Freeport area. The water supply includes a deep well located near Wellington Place. The pumping capacity of the well is 200 (gpm). The system storage supply is a 250,000-gallon ground level tank located south of Freeport.

The City continues to make water main improvements to provide better service and fire protection as well as to replace older mains in conjunction with related street projects. Generally adequate water pressure and volumes serve the community well. Planned improvements continue to emphasize replacement of older mains, valves, hydrants and other fixtures.

Prior to the planning period, emphasis has been on distribution and fire protection improvements in downtown and school areas. Future improvements anticipated will need to include growth areas, upsizing of aging and undersized mains (especially in street reconstruction projects) and investigating additional independent well capacity for the west side of town for emergency purposes in the event of flooding. Future water mains will be added as determined by growth; current trends imply increased growth to the east, north and south. Present system production capacity is more than adequate based on reduced demand over the past 10 or more years. Improvements and expansion to the system will take this trend into account. Full-sized mains of adequate size will continue to be proposed to facilitate replacement of older mains and lateral community growth, while storage and production will be improved with new growth areas and reduced demand in mind.

Figure 45: Sanitary Sewer and Water Service Area Map



Source: (Erdman Engineering, 2018); (Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission, 2018)

Local Source Water Protection Program

The City of Decorah established a Source Water Protection Program in recent years in conjunction with the national ‘Source Water Protection’ effort sponsored by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (www.epa.gov) and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (www.iowadnr.gov). The goal of this effort is for public drinking water suppliers to protect and improve water quality through management, cooperation and conservation promotion. The City of Decorah was assisted in its effort by the Iowa Rural Water Association (www.iowaruralwater.org). To learn more about Decorah’s Source Water Protection Program, please contact Decorah City Hall.

4.4 Stormwater Management

Storm Sewer System

The storm sewer system in Decorah consists of both open channel and drainage ways, and storm sewers. The storm sewers include box culverts for streets crossing Dry Run and a limited system of over 17 miles of storm sewers and intakes. The storm sewers were primarily developed in conjunction with the paving of curb and gutter streets. The storm sewer system has expanded as the City has developed. Storm sewers-consisting of short reaches and culverts, drain primarily low-lying areas and streets into Dry Run and the Upper Iowa River.

The adequacy of the existing interior storm sewer system to convey surface runoff is limited. As a minimum, the existing system should be improved to convey runoff from storm events of a two-year recurrence. New storm sewers have been developed as part of new subdivisions to convey runoff from a 10-year storm event, although the existing city subdivision ordinance does not address a storm sewer requirement. A two-year storm has a 50% chance of occurrence, and a 10-year storm has 10% chance of occurrence in any given year. Open channel drainage systems including culverts should have the capacity to convey surface runoff from a 50 to 100-year recurrence.

Many existing storm sewer issues which result in more frequent street flooding and other similar problems have been addressed with projects during the previous planning period. Among the larger of these include the reconstruction of the downtown Water Street storm sewers, the Day Spring Lane storm sewer and roof drainage collection system, Division and Short Street Improvements, Painter Street Improvements, and Charlie Miller Drive storm sewer bypass.

Additional future improvements are planned for problem areas including Short Street south of Iowa Highway 9 and for Heivly Street.

Stormwater Management Plan

The City has a comprehensive detention/retention storm water management policy. Efforts have been made to begin encouraging runoff alternatives such as permeable pavers where feasible. Recently, such projects have been constructed at Luther College and Water Street Plaza.

Levee System

The Dry Run Flood Control project, located in and adjacent to the City of Decorah on the Upper Iowa River and an intermittent tributary stream called the Dry Run, was constructed under authority of the Flood Control Acts approved June 22, 1936 and August 18, 1941. Construction began in April of 1943 and was completed in December of 1950.

The Dry Run project diverts all Dry Run flows into the Upper Iowa River immediately upstream from the City by means of a diversion channel about three miles upstream on the Upper Iowa River from the natural mouth of Dry Run. Project improvements on the Upper Iowa River include a cutoff channel and levees to protect Decorah.

The Dry Run diversion channel, constructed upstream from Decorah, consists of a channel approximately 3,200 feet long and a closure dike constructed across the natural channel to divert all flow into the Upper Iowa River. The channel consists of a 'natural' channel section as well as a concrete flume and sediment basin.

Twelve drainage locations with a total of 33 culvert drainage structures have been constructed to provide for removal of interior surface drainage waters. All structures include culverts equipped with automatic flap gates. During flooding, when automatic flap gates are closed, the interior surface drainage is pumped over the levee with a combination of temporary rental and city-owned pumps.

More information on the levee system and flood control can be found in Chapter 6 of this plan.

4.6 Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling Facilities

Solid Waste

Sharps Trucking, also known as Malcom Enterprises, and Shimek Roll-Off & Sanitation Services are privately owned companies available to provide waste removal services in the City of Decorah. Refuse is collected once per week for residential customers and up to five times per week for commercial customers in Decorah. Residential customers pay for service on a monthly basis and commercial customers may either use the weekly collection system or rent a dumpster. Solid waste collection is not provided by the City.

Yard Waste Collection

The yard waste site is located on Trout Run Road one-quarter mile south of Highway 9. The City operates a yard waste site from April through November. Materials that are accepted include: leaves, grass clippings, trees, and branches at no charge.

Recycling

A privately-operated company is available to provide curbside recycling services with pick up on the first and third weeks of the month. Private curbside recycling collection is not currently regulated by the City. There are also several collection points for drop-off recycling throughout Decorah as well as the Recycling Center located in Freeport. The City provides land for the placement of the recycling bins that are maintained and operated by Winneshiek County.

4.7 Communication Infrastructure

In the City of Decorah multiple companies are available to provide land line and cellular communication. Access to wireless communication facilities is becoming more and more important. In response to this, the Decorah Library currently offers wireless internet. High-speed internet service is adequate and is available through DSL, cable, and satellite throughout the City. The City has three radio stations, no television station and one cellular tower. The Federal Communications Act of 1996 increased the need for many local governments to examine their zoning ordinances to make sure they do not discriminate against cellular communication in land use and zoning decisions. Decorah has enacted a Telecommunications Tower Ordinance within the Zoning Code under Chapter 17.136. This Ordinance, which complies with the FCC Act of 1996, requires that telecommunication towers follow specific guidelines before permits are approved for the erection of such towers.

The community has also expressed the desire to expand broadband connectivity and continues to seek avenues to create a municipal telecommunications utility.

A Utility Commission has been exploring the feasibility of fiber to the premise since the community passed a referendum in 2015 that allows for the creation of a city-owned communications utility.

It is believed that the incumbent providers in Decorah are reacting to the voter action and are making or propose to make many upgrades and investments in their telecommunications networks.

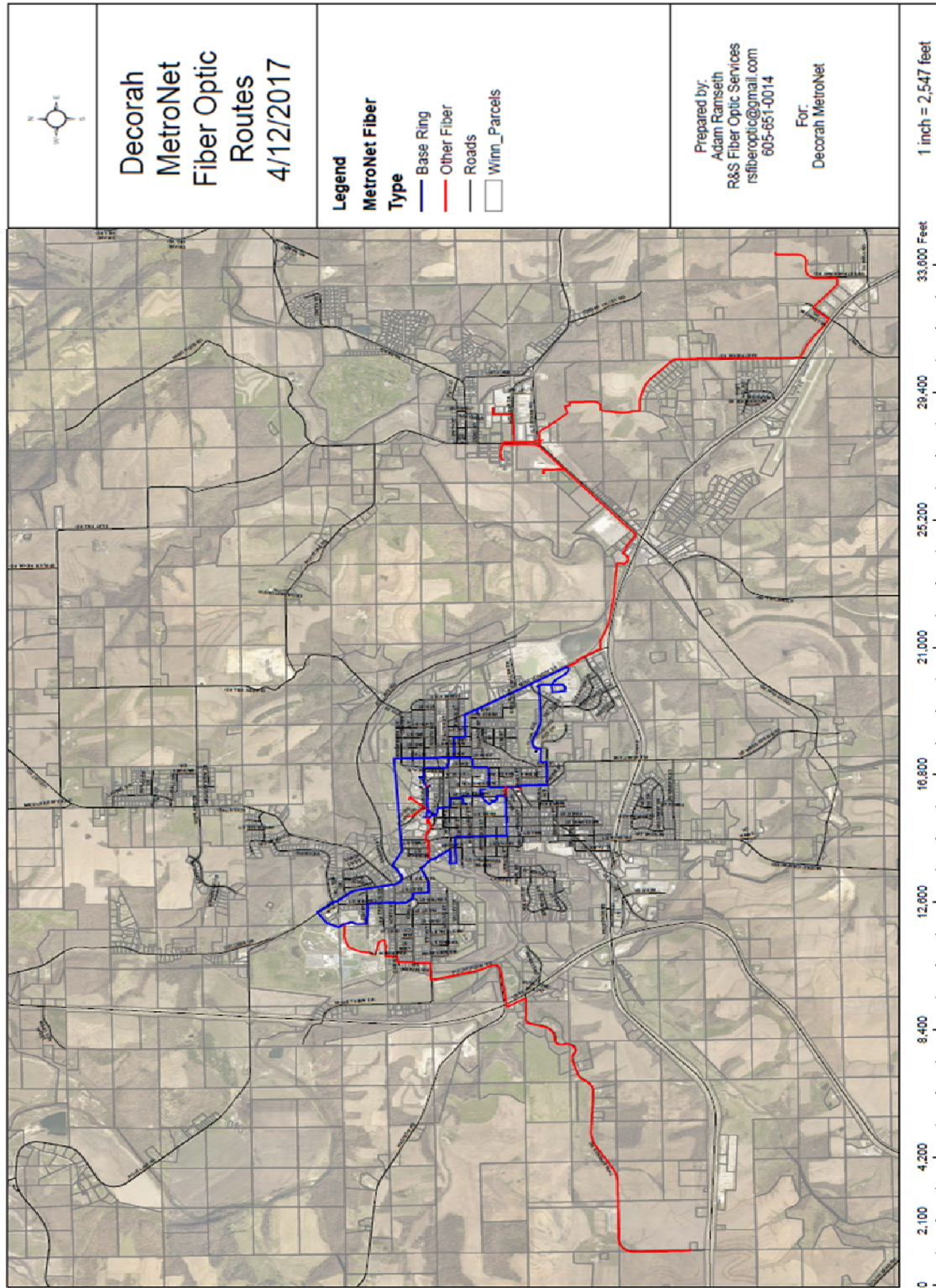
However, while some additional investments have been made or are planned by the incumbents, Decorah, as a community is falling behind acceptable and competitive levels.

Decorah cannot afford to wait years for additional private investment, and the electorate and city officials have recently decided that it is time to take control of the future fiber resources available to residents and businesses in the community. The utility commission has been established to commission, oversee and evaluate a comprehensive feasibility study.

The studies were completed in late 2018 and the results are being review and discussed in the community.

Communication infrastructure is shown in Figure 46.

Figure 46: Communication Infrastructure



Source: Decorah MetroNet Board

Fiber Optics

The City of Decorah entered into a 28E agreement with Winneshiek County, Decorah School District, Luther College, Winneshiek Medical Center and Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission (*UERPC, as a partner is no longer a part of the agreement*) to create a consortium known as *The Decorah MetroNet*. The purpose of this organization is to develop a fiber optic network in the City. Following several years of planning, this intergovernmental initiative was spurred on as a result of a successful Broadband Technologies and Opportunities Program Grant funded by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

This grant, which is in conjunction with the Iowa Communications Network (ICN), links seventeen public facilities. Additionally, the consortium pursues opportunities to lease fiber optic cable to other interested parties. The lease arrangements, known as Indefeasible Rights to Use or IRU's, create partnerships to offset maintenance costs and ultimately enhance opportunities to expand this system.

4.8 Community Facilities

Community Facilities is a term used as a broad reference to describe those assets which provide a wide range of services to a city. Some examples are City Hall, the Fire Department, schools, and parks.

Churches

There are several churches located in Decorah, serving a broad variety of faiths.

Cemeteries

The City of Decorah is home to several cemeteries. Lutheran Cemetery is located on Moen Street, and both St. Benedict's Cemetery and Phelps Cemetery are located on Pleasant Avenue. There are also two cemeteries in the Freeport area.

Libraries

Mission

The Decorah Public Library is an all-encompassing resource center providing materials and programs for the leisure, entertainment and the life-long learning of the citizens of Decorah and the Winneshiek County area. The library capitalizes on opportunities to develop and provide innovative services to the public.

History

The history of Decorah Public Library dates back to 1892 and the Columbian club (study club) at the Unitarian Church. The Columbian Club was responsible for the collection until October 28, 1893 when the Public Library Association was formed. The first library housed 69 books, rent free, in the Marsh Music Store located on Water Street. Over the years the Decorah Public Library was housed in a number of locations including the Winneshiek County Courthouse basement.

The Library held fundraisers and lobbied for tax-based support with the help of the Monday Club (a local women's study club). After two defeats, the city voted in favor of a tax levy of \$500,000 to support the library and at that time it became a city-directed institution.

For a number of years, the Decorah Public Library was located on the northeast corner of Main Street and Winnebago Street. In 1964, the library moved across the street to the renovated former U.S. Post Office located at 202 Winnebago. In 1997, an addition was added to the east side of the building with ribbon cutting held on November 2, 1997.

Quick Facts *(all statistics are from FY18)*

17 library staff members and two Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) staff members work in the library building. Library staff served nearly 18,800 registered library patrons who checked out 134,269 physical and digital materials. The Library collection included 121,112 items (55,513 physical items and 65,599 e-books and digital audio books). 10 public access computers were available during library open hours and there were 12,232

internet logins. High speed wireless internet was available for patrons who preferred to use their own devices. Library staff presented 452 programs to 8,386 attendees of all ages. Three public meeting rooms accommodated 6,225 individuals for a variety of meetings, trainings, and tutoring sessions. More than 330 RSVP volunteers served 27,000 hours at 60 nonprofit stations in a three-county area.

Law Enforcement

The Decorah Police Department has thirteen full-time sworn officers, a full-time E911 Support Services Supervisor, five full-time dispatchers, one part-time dispatcher and one full-time clerical/dispatcher. In 2017 the Decorah Police Department received 4,119 calls for service. The Decorah Communications Center processed 8,259 calls. The Police Department is located in the Decorah Law Enforcement Center at 400 Claiborne Drive.

The police department is a member of the 18 agency Northeast Iowa Narcotics Task Force, the State of Iowa Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, the Iowa Narcotics Officer Association and the Iowa DARE Officers Association.

Future considerations for the department will be focused on better utilization of space and improvements to public safety buildings and infrastructure.

Fire Department

Fire protection is provided by the Decorah Fire Department, which consists of 27 volunteers, including the chief, two assistant chiefs, four captains and one training officer. Most members are Firefighter and Hazardous Materials Operation certified. The Department has one station, located at 400 Claiborne Drive.

The Decorah Fire Department is comprised of a maximum 35 volunteer members. The membership includes almost all Firefighter I certified Firefighters, as well as being Hazardous Materials operations certified. The City of Decorah and the Decorah Rural Fire Protective Association have a 28e Fire Agreement that provides service to both the city and rural residents. The Decorah Fire Department has twelve pieces of fire apparatus, including (3) Class 1 pumpers, (1) 75 ft. Quint, (2) Rural Tankers, (2) Grass fire pickups, (1) Jaws mini-pumper, (1) Jaws / multipurpose rig, (1) Rescue/operations rig, a rescue boat, Rapid Deployment Craft and a utility ATV. The fire department has three full time engineers who rotate every 24 hours. The full-time engineers maintain all the fire apparatus daily. They also notify the volunteers of fires within the Decorah Fire Department district, (some 212 square miles for fire and 370 square miles for rescue) and provide station tours for Fire Prevention. The engineers also answer the alarms many businesses have for fire. The City of Decorah has an Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of 4/4Y (2018) in the City.

Medical Facilities

Winneshiek Medical Center

Winneshiek Medical Center (WMC) is a comprehensive health care organization serving residents of northeast Iowa and southeast Minnesota. WMC is a county - owned critical access hospital, governed by an elected, seven-member Board of Trustees. WMC has a professional services agreement and collaborative relationship with the Mayo Clinic Health System. Winneshiek Medical Center specialty services include:

Behavioral health	General surgery
Family Medicine	Podiatry
Orthopedics	Hospitalist
Internal Medicine	Radiology
Otorhinolaryngology	Audiology
Pediatric dermatology	Urology
Midwifery	

Gundersen Health System – Gundersen Decorah Clinic

Gundersen Health System is a physician-led, not-for profit healthcare system located throughout Western Wisconsin, Northeast Iowa and Southeastern Minnesota caring for patients in 19 counties. The Gundersen Decorah Clinic specialty services include:

Allergy	Nephrology	Otolaryngology
Audiology	Neurology –	(Ears, Nose,
Behavioral Health	Movement	Throat)
Cardiology	Disorders	Pediatric Surgery
Dermatology	Nutrition Therapy	Consults
Diabetes	OB/GYN	Podiatry
Education	Oncology	Radiology
Endocrinology	Ophthalmology	Rheumatology
General Surgery		Urology

Additional Gundersen Health System resources located in Decorah include

- Gundersen Eye Clinic Decorah (located within Gundersen Decorah Clinic)
- Gundersen Podiatry Clinic Decorah (located within Gundersen Decorah Clinic)
- Gundersen Behavioral Health Decorah (located within Gundersen Decorah Clinic)
- Gundersen Orthodontics Clinic Decorah (located in downtown Decorah)
- MedLink AIR, Gundersen Health System's emergency and critical care air transport service (helicopter services based at Decorah Municipal Airport)

Senior and Child Care Services

Decorah offers several options for senior care ranging from minimum assistance to full-time medical care:

- Barthell Order of Eastern Star Nursing Home is located west of the hospital along Ridgewood Drive. Barthell OES also operates the Arlin Falck Assisted Living facility and two independent senior living facilities in the same location.
- Aase Haugen Homes, Inc. is a long term and skilled nursing facility on the West side of Decorah. There is a special Memory Care facility and assisted living is available.
- Wellington Place, formerly known as Oneota Riverview Care Facility, is located in the Freeport area. Both assisted living and nursing home care are available.
- Oneota Village is an assisted living facility on Ohio Street.
- Vennehjem is a senior living facility for those 55 years and above, with services available, located on Nordic Drive.

Licensed child care is provided by six early care and education organizations (Iowa Department of Human Services, 2018):

- Sunflower Child Care Center is the largest child care center in the City located on Highway 9 east of the Short Street intersection.
- Northeast Iowa Montessori School is located on Water Street in downtown Decorah.
- Nisse Preschool and Kids Place is located on College Drive on the West side of Decorah.
- Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation: Decorah Child Development Center is located within West Side Elementary School on Center Street.
- Kinderhaus is located within Good Shepherd Lutheran Church on Iowa Avenue on the West Side of Decorah.
- Little Farmers, LLC is located north of Decorah on Hwy 52.
- Several in-home childcare providers are also available.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

City Parks

The Parks and Recreation Department operates and manages the Decorah Park System; it currently employs six staff members and is overseen by a five-member Board of Directors. The Park System, which encompasses more than 664 acres of land, consists of 23 parks and recreational areas, a municipal pool and campground, 20 miles of off-road trails and segments of the 11-mile paved Trout Run Trail. Figure 47 below lists all park and recreation areas for the City of Decorah. More information about the Decorah Park System: www.parks.decorahia.org/decorah-parks.

Figure 47: Parks and Recreation Acres

Name	Acres
Barbara Barnhart Van Peenen Memorial Park	120 acres
Carl Selland Wayside Park	2.5 acres
Community Prairie and Butterfly Garden	105 acres
Dunning’s Spring Park and Ice Cave Hill	115 acres
Mary Christopher Park	0.5 acres
Miller Park	6 acres
Nordheim Park	1.5 acres
Palisades Park	105 acres
Phelps Park	56 acres
Pulpit Rock Campground	23 acres
Swimming Pool Park	6 acres
Twin Springs Park	48 acres
Vennehjem Park	2 acres
Waterstreet Park	-
Will Baker Park, Canoe Landing and Athletic Fields	31 acres
Wold Park	3 acres

Source: (Decorah Parks and Recreation, 2018)

Below are additional details about established and developing park and recreational areas located in Decorah:

- Barbara Barnhart Van Peenan Park, including 120 acres, is a nature preserve limited to hiking trails and a cross-country ski trail. The park is located northeast of Decorah in the unincorporated county.
- Carl Selland Wayside Park is located in the west part of Decorah adjoining the floodplain of the Upper Iowa River. The 2.5-acre park includes a picnic area with restrooms, a small ball diamond, an ice-skating rink, and a historical marker.
- Carlson Property, located in the southern part of Decorah, is currently in the planning stage of development. Although there is no set timeline for development of this property, current plans include keeping the property as more of a “natural area” type park setting. Local volunteers are working on laying out a “core trail loop” through the property that could be built off of at a later date. The Parks Board is currently looking into long term visioning and planning for the property and engaging public input.
- City Ball Diamonds and Tennis Courts are located along Claiborne Drive in the vicinity of the high school and the elementary school. This recreation area includes two ball diamonds with bleachers and four tennis courts.
- Community Prairie and Butterfly Garden, 105 acres located in the along the river bank on the West side of Decorah, was planted in 2002 to protect the water quality of the Upper Iowa River. A butterfly garden was then created to introduce visitors to

the native plants of the prairie. Its paved walkway and benches offer access for the elderly, disabled, and small children.

- Dog Park, located on the eastern edge of Decorah, was completed in the Summer of 2018. Dog Park enthusiasts and volunteers raised 100% of the funds needed for the park.
- Dunning's Spring Park and Ice Cave Hill Park, consisting of 115 acres, are nature preserves with limited recreational development. The parks include hiking trails, cross-country ski trails, picnic areas, and the Ice Cave. The parks include bluffs located along the north side of the Upper Iowa River.
- Mary Christopher Park, a 0.5-acre park, is located northeast of the intersection of Water Street and First Street. The park includes a picnic area with restrooms, horseshoe pits, a shuffleboard court, and a historical marker.
- Miller Park, a 5.9-acre neighborhood park serves primarily the residential area located south of Highway 9. The park includes playground equipment, a picnic area, and a playground diamond.
- Nordheim Park, a 1.5-acre park, located in the extreme northeast part of the City, serves the residential area developed along the Locust Road corridor. The park includes playground equipment, a picnic area, and a playground.
- Palisades Park, also located along the bluffs of the Upper Iowa River, covers 105 acres. The park includes a picnic area with restrooms, hiking trails, a cross-country ski trail, and a scenic overlook.
- Phelps Park, including 56 acres, is located along the bluffs of the Upper Iowa River in the west part of Decorah. The park includes a variety of recreational facilities. A playground, picnic area with shelter and restrooms, a park cabin, and a band shell are provided in the park. Other facilities include hiking trails, playground diamond, volleyball court, a scenic overlook, brick kiln, decorative fountain and a historical marker.
- Pulpit Rock Campground, located in the southwest part of the City, includes a picnic area with restrooms, a playground, a canoe landing area, and a camping area.
- Swimming Pool Park is located in northwest part of the City adjoining Luther College. In addition to the pool, the park includes a playground, picnic area, volleyball court, and a historical marker.
- Trout Run Access Area is located in the southeast part of Decorah along the Trout Run, which meanders through the park and discharges into the Upper Iowa River north of Highway 9. The park provides a large park area, access to the Trout Run for trout fishing and access to the Trout Run Trail, which runs through the park. A scenic bridge is located north of Highway 9.
- Twin Springs Park, a nature area with a creek meandering through it to the Upper Iowa River, includes a picnic area and hiking and cross-country ski trails. The creek is also used for fishing.
- Vennehjem Park is located near Vennehjem Trail and Vennehjem (Aase Haugen Senior Services' Continuing Care Retirement Community), the park offers a picnic shelter, table and grill for users.

- Will Baker Park, Canoe Landing and Athletic Fields is located in the Southwest part of the City, adjoining the Decorah Campground to the south. This park, encompassing 11 acres of bluffs area, includes a scenic overlook and historical marker, hiking trails, a canoe landing and a sledding hill. Other facilities provided are playground equipment and a picnic area with shelters and restrooms.
- Wold Park, a 3-acre park, is located along Sumner Street in the northeast part of the City. The park includes a picnic area, a volleyball court, and a historical marker.

Recreation

In addition to the recreational opportunities provided by the City, there are other opportunities available to the residents of Decorah. First, the Upper Iowa River itself is a recreational asset to the residents of Decorah. Currently, the river provides fishing, canoeing and kayaking opportunities. Other recreational facilities provided in Decorah and the planning area include two privately-owned golf courses and one public course. Silvercrest Golf and Country Club, a 9-hole course, is located north of Decorah and the Oneota Golf and Country Club, an 18-hole course, is located just north of Freeport.

County Parks

Winneshiek County manages about 650 acres between 18 parks and wildlife areas, not including acreages along the various trails. County parks located in Decorah and the planning area include Chattahoochie Park, Freeport Park and the Highway 52 Surplus area.

- Chattahoochie Park is located along the bluffs overlooking the Upper Iowa River just west of Highway 52. The park includes a canoe access and a picnic area.
- Freeport Park is a 2-acre park located in Freeport that also serves as a trailhead for the Freeport Trail. It has a picnic shelter, playground, and bike fixit station.
- Highway 52 Surplus is located along Hwy 52 and serves as a small 10-acre wildlife refuge area.

State Parks

Siewers Spring State Park, located south of Decorah, is the only state park located within the planning area. The principal facility in the park is the Siewers Spring Trout Hatchery which produces more than 100,000 trout used to stock northern and western parts of Iowa streams. The site where the hatchery now stands had been in the past a 50-acre farm, a furniture factory, a woolen textile mill, and a grain mill.

East of the two-mile planning area, there are several state-owned access points to the Upper Iowa River.

Education

Decorah Community School District

Decorah is served by the Decorah Community School District. The district covers an area covering approximately 184 square miles of the northeast and central part of Winneshiek County. The district operates a high school, a middle school, two elementary schools and an early childhood center. Most of the students enrolled in the district's schools are from Decorah. A parochial school, St. Benedict School, is also located in Decorah. Figure 48 shows the current enrollment by school building. During the 2017-2018 school year, there were 1,681 students enrolled in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade in the Decorah Community School District.

Figure 48: Decorah Community School District and St. Benedict School Current Enrollment by Building

	Grades	Enrollment 2015-2016	Enrollment 2016-2017	Enrollment 2017-2018
Homeschooling	K-12	31	35	39
St. Benedict School	PK-8	164	156	143
West Side Early Childhood Center	ECSE-PK	58	56	60
John Cline Elementary	K-2	329	294	301
Carrie Lee Elementary	3-4	216	228	234
Decorah Middle School	5-8	517	509	517
Decorah High School	9-12	571	550	569

Source: (Iowa Department of Education, 2018)

The high school (Thomas Roberts High School) is located in the northeast part of the City on the north side of Claiborne Drive. This building houses grades 9-12. The current enrollment as of the 2017-2018 school year was 569 students.

The middle school is located at 405 Winnebago Street near the center of Decorah. The middle school includes grades 5 through 8, with a total enrollment in 2017-2018 school year of 517 students.

The lower elementary school (John Cline Elementary School) is located south of Claiborne Street across from the high school. This building houses kindergarten through 2nd grade. During the 2017-2018 school year there were 301 students enrolled. Discussions are currently taking place between the school board and City regarding the eventual construction of a new school building to replace John Cline Elementary.

The second elementary school (Carrie Lee Elementary School) is located at 210 Vernon Street and is connected to the Middle School. This school houses 3rd and 4th grades. Enrollment for the 2017-2018 school year at the school was 234 students.

West Side Early Childhood Center is located on Center Street on Decorah's west side and teaches early childhood special education and pre-kindergarten classes. Enrollment for the 2017-2018 school year was 60 students.

St. Benedict's School is a Roman Catholic school located on Rural Avenue near the center of Decorah. The school includes grades kindergarten through eighth grade along with a preschool. Enrollment at St. Benedicts School for the 2017-2018 school year was 143 students.

There are several options for preschool in Decorah including: Northeast Iowa Montessori School, Nisse Preschool, Sunflower Preschool, Kinderhaus, West Side Early Childhood Center, Head Start located within West Side Early Childhood Center and Little Farmers, LLC located north of Decorah.

North Winneshiek Community School District, located north of Decorah in rural Winneshiek County, will be consolidating with the Decorah Community School District by July 1, 2019. The two districts have had a long-time sharing agreement, and without this consolidation, North Winneshiek would eventually be closed or dissolved.

Higher Education

Luther College, a four-year, coeducational, liberal arts college, is located in the northwest part of Decorah. The college was established in a vacant parsonage near La Crosse, Wisconsin in 1861 and transferred to Decorah in 1862. The first main building was constructed on the campus in 1865.

The college campus consists of approximately 945 acres, of which 195 acres comprise the main campus. The main campus includes several classroom buildings, a library, administrative offices, student housing, and athletic facilities.

Luther College is primarily a residential college and houses students in a variety of settings including apartments, townhouses, residence halls and residential houses in neighborhoods surrounding the college.

During 2017, Luther College reported 2,053 students enrolled for the Fall Semester. The student enrollment at Luther College has been declining the last several years. See Figure 49 for a detailed breakdown of enrollment over the last five years.

Figure 49: Luther College Student Enrollment Trends for a Five-Year Period

Year	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	4 th Year	Non-degree seeking	Total
Fall 2013	616	572	588	612	78	2,466
Fall 2014	543	565	565	653	59	2,385
Fall 2015	590	511	539	646	51	2,337
Fall 2016	499	538	504	580	48	2,169
Fall 2017	490	446	482	590	45	2,053

Source: (Luther College, 2018)

Decorah’s location is also within reasonable commuting distance to Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) located 12 miles south in Calmar, Iowa. NICC is a two-year community college offering over 85 academic programs of study, in addition to online and blended learning, customized business and industry training, short-term certification options and adult education and literacy. Over 6,500 students were enrolled at NICC in 2017, with nearly half being represented by area high school students taking concurrent college courses.

Upper Iowa University (UIU), a four-year private college, is located approximately 36 miles south of Decorah in Fayette, Iowa. UIU offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees in an array of program areas. It serves nearly 750 students at its Fayette campus, but also has satellite locations throughout the US as well as in Hong Kong and Malaysia.

Winneshiek County Fairgrounds

The Winneshiek County Fairgrounds, encompassing approximately 9.5 acres, is located in the northeast of part of east Decorah, just east of Montgomery Street. The fairgrounds include 23 buildings and a one-quarter-mile dirt track. The buildings consist of a grandstand, a community building, exhibit halls, and cattle, sheep and swine barns.

The County fair was originally established in 1878 and is held annually during the summer. The annual attendance for the four-day event is over 17,000.

During the rest of the year, the buildings are used for storage. The community building is used year-round for sales, meetings, auctions, reunions, and other community activities. The dirt track, known as the Upper Iowa Speedway, is used for races during the summer months.

Winneshiek County Courthouse

Winneshiek County was organized after the state legislature passed an enabling legislation in 1847. The county was named in honor of a Winnebago chief. The original courthouse was built in 1858, and a jail in 1878. The existing courthouse was built in 1903-1904. The courthouse, built of buff Bedford stone, includes three stories. The courthouse houses administrative offices for the various county departments including the assessor, auditor, treasurer, recorder, county engineer, and county supervisor as well as other county facilities.

City Hall

City Hall is located north of the central business district, along Claiborne Street. City Hall, built in 1961, houses the offices of the city manager, mayor, Parks and Recreation Department, the council chambers, the police department, and the fire department. A new addition of approximately 8,000 square feet was built in 1991 to house the police department. City Hall was remodeled in 1993, and with those improvements has met the City's needs since that time.

Army Reserve Center

The United States Army has deep roots in Decorah. The 775th Quartermaster Company goes back before 1965. On May 1, 1968, 1st Platoon, Company A in Decorah was relocated to 5th and Iowa Street in Dubuque and Company B 389th Engineer Battalion was relocated to Tatro Airport in Decorah. On August 15th, 1968, Company B relocated from the Tatro Airport to 421 Water Street in Decorah.

On November 15th, 1971, Company B and the rest of the 389th Engineer Battalion was assigned to the 416th Engineer Command in Chicago, Illinois. On April 1st, 1979, Company B relocated to its new facilities at 404 West Heivly Street.

Community Recreation Center Interest

For the past several years, there has been increasing community interest in constructing a community recreation center for the community. A feasibility study led by a cross-section of community members studied the options for a community recreation center in Decorah.

4.9 Utilities and Community Facilities Summary

The City of Decorah enjoys outstanding public facilities that add to the quality of life of its residents. Together with the Decorah community and Luther College, the City offers a variety of recreational, artistic and cultural opportunities to the public. In addition, the City's police, fire rescue and medical services are first rate. It should be noted that the community should strive to maintain and improve these services through the dedication of resources. Decorah's utility infrastructure meets the City's needs at this time, and plans are continually made for expansion, repair and upgrades as needed.

4.10 Utilities & Community Facilities Policies

Utilities

- Coordination of the immediate and long-range plans of the wastewater treatment and sanitary sewer system with the land-use plan and policies will be encouraged and implemented.
- A detailed water system plan addressing current and projected needs for production, storage, treatment, transmission and distribution should be developed. The plan

should address both domestic and fire flows and should be developed in conjunction with the land use plan.

- The water supply wells should be protected from extraneous surface contamination.
- City standard specifications for street and utility improvements should be developed to provide uniform design of utilities and streets. The City adopted, and will implement Iowa SUDAS statewide design guidelines, which can be located here: www.iowasudas.org
- Storm drainage system design criteria should be developed in accordance with the land use policies and plan to serve as a guide for developers and the city to improve storm drainage systems. The storm sewers in areas subject to future development by sub dividers should be designed to accommodate runoff from storm events of a 10-year recurrence.
- Consider stormwater management alternatives including detention/retention, run-off reduction alternatives and improvements to the Dry Run Creek corridor.
- Recycling of solid waste and safe methods for disposal of toxic waste should be promoted.

Parks

- A detailed written plan should be established that will reflect development, maintenance, and orderly growth of area trails, parks, recreation activities and community facilities.
- A system of neighborhood parks that serve existing and future residential areas should be developed in accordance with the parks and recreation plan.
- The system of bikeways and trails that links parks, recreation areas and schools with residential areas should be further developed in the Decorah area.
- The local trail system should be expanded and integrated with county and regional trail systems to enhance connectivity and multi-modal use.
- Cooperative efforts with all public entities, governmental agencies and surrounding municipalities; including schools, college, and counties including Winneshiek, regarding planning and development of recreational facilities and programs and joint use of facilities should be encouraged and continued.
- Public park dedication standards for developers should be established.

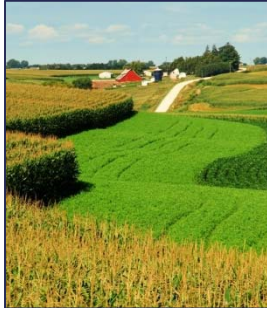
Schools

- Future needs of area school districts and colleges will be coordinated and incorporated into this plan.

Community Facilities

- Future needs of the Decorah Fire Department will be coordinated in accordance with the standards of the Insurance Service Office (ISO) and this plan.
- Relocation and potential consolidation of city facilities should be considered during the planning period.
- The library should be recognized as a vital part of this community and overall maintenance and operations should be supported.
- Development of a community center should be encouraged.
- The Vesterheim Museum should be recognized as a vital part of this community and the City should participate in a cooperative and coordinated planning process in support of the Museum's integration and development in its existing downtown area.

CHAPTER 5: NATURAL, AGRICULTURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES



Photos above by Randy Uhl

5.1 Introduction

This element includes an inventory and analysis of the natural, agricultural, and cultural resources in the City of Decorah. Within the following narrative, various components of the community resource base are examined at a broad level or “planning scale”. The purpose of this examination is to provide the community with the necessary information to make informed decisions about future growth and development.

5.2 Natural Resources

Climate

Decorah’s climate is continental in nature, and is characterized by four distinct seasons, as well as a wide variety in temperature and precipitation. Decorah averages 36.97 inches of rain per year. Snowfall is 38.7 inches. The average temperature is 47.7 degrees, with an annual high temperature of 94 degrees and an annual low temperature of -11 degrees (National Weather Service Forecast Office La Crosse, WI, 2017).

Topography

The City of Decorah is situated within the Upper Iowa River Basin. The City and the planning area are drained by the Upper Iowa River and its tributaries. Except the areas that are protected by the levees, most of the bottomlands of the Upper Iowa River are subject to flooding. The protective levees around developed parts of the City were constructed by the U.S. Corps of Engineers in the mid-1950s.

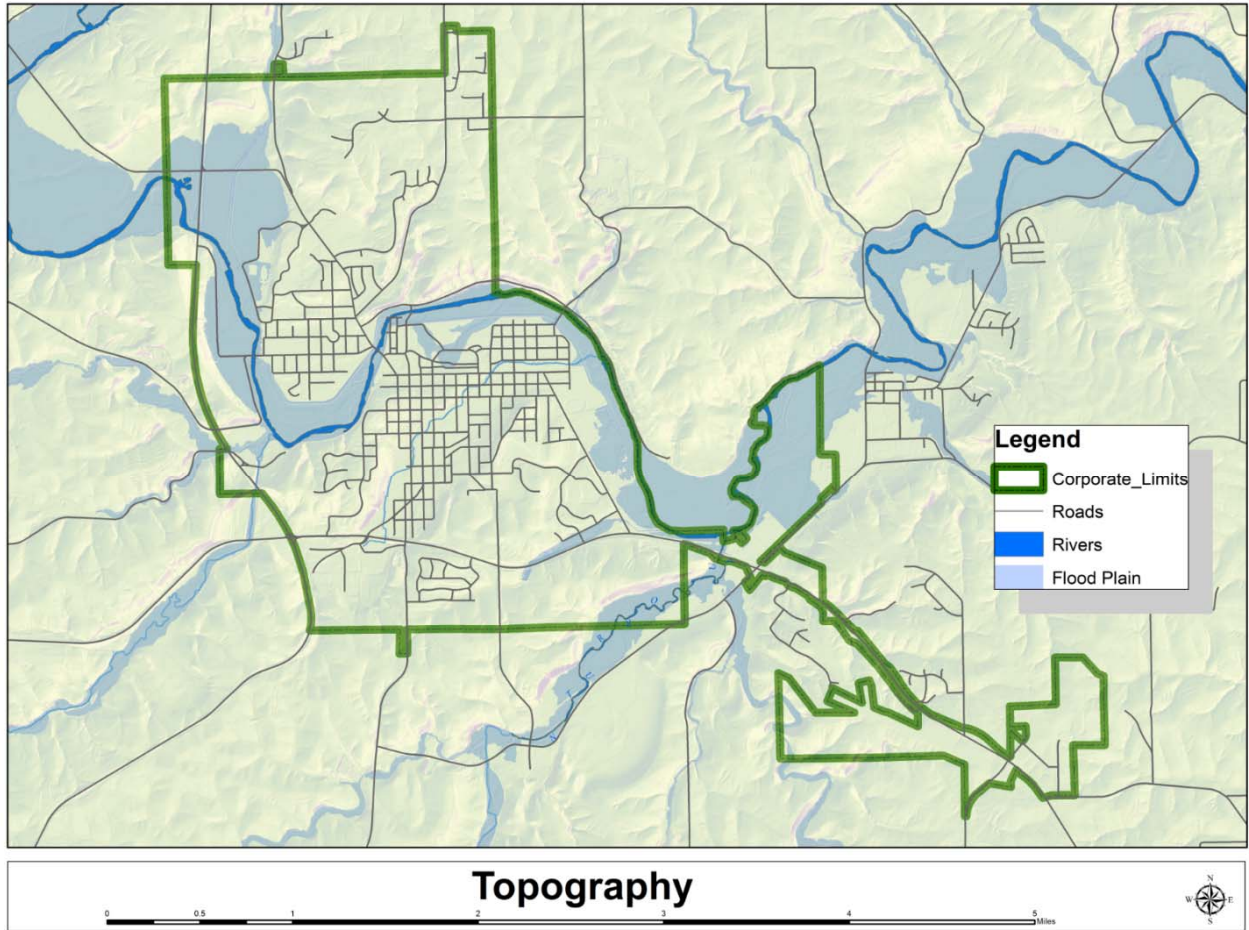
The topography of the City varies from relatively level areas along the bottomlands to steep side slopes along the drainage courses. The elevation difference in the planning area between the high points on the plateau and low point of the bottomlands is almost 400 feet.

Most of the developed areas of the City are located primarily on the mostly level to moderately undulating land of the bottomlands and side slopes, as shown in Figure 50.

The limestone outcroppings in the uplands and the sand and gravel deposits in the bottomlands have resulted in numerous quarrying operations in the City and the planning area. Parts of the uplands and the steep side slopes are densely wooded. The City of Decorah and Winneshiek County are known for the aesthetic qualities of natural features including caves, underground springs, trout streams and scenic areas, and for recreation facilities that have been developed. These features are all assets to Decorah and the surrounding area.

The City of Decorah is located in a geologic area known as the Paleozoic Plateau, or Driftless Area. Another geologic term often used to refer to Decorah is karst topography, which is characterized by caves and cave systems, disappearing streams, blind valleys, underground streams, sinkholes, springs, and cold streams. Karst topography presents some challenges and special requirements in terms of environmental protection, with the potential for water pollution being one of the top concerns.

Figure 50: Topography



Soils

An inventory of soils in Winneshiek County was completed and published in the report by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 2007. Winneshiek County soils were formed in loess, glacial till, alluvium, and organic parent materials.

Combinations of soil types form patterns which are known as associations. Soil associations include two or more soil types. Soil types in combination with other factors such as topography, drainage, vegetation and erosion identify the characteristic of each soil. Soil classifications generally apply to a depth of approximately five feet. The principal soil association in the Decorah area is the Steep Rock Land-Dubuque-Dorchester Association.

Soils of this association are composed of steep rock land; moderately steep, shallow, silty soils; and nearly level to sloping silty and loamy soils. Soils in Decorah include predominantly Terril Loam, Waukegan Loam, Fayette silt loam, Dorchester silt loam, and Winneshiek loam. The Terril soils are found primarily in the central part of the city on relatively level slopes along the Dry Run. The Waukegan and Winneshiek soils found along the uplands, and Dorchester soils, found along the bottomlands, are predominant in the west part of Decorah. The Fayette silt loam is predominant in the southwest and north parts of the City on the uplands.

Soils such as Dorchester and Terril, located along the bottomlands of the Upper Iowa River, are subject to serve wetness and flooding.

The side slopes of the bluffs have been designated in the soil survey as steep rock land. Most of Palisades Park, Dunning’s Spring Park, and Ice Cave Hill Park are included in this designation.

A generalized summary of the soil limitations for urban development, excerpted from the soils report, is summarized in Figure 51.

Figure 51: Limitations for Urban Development due to Soil Type

Soil Symbol	Soil Series	Building Site Development	Sanitary Facilities*	Construction Material (Borrow)
De	Dorchester	Severe subject to flooding	Severe subject to flooding	Fair to Poor
Te	Terril	Moderate	Slight Except in drainage ways	Fair to Poor
Fa	Fayette	Moderate	Slight	Fair
Wk	Winneshiek	None if on bedrock	Moderate to severe	Fair
Wd	Waukegan	Slight	Slight	Fair

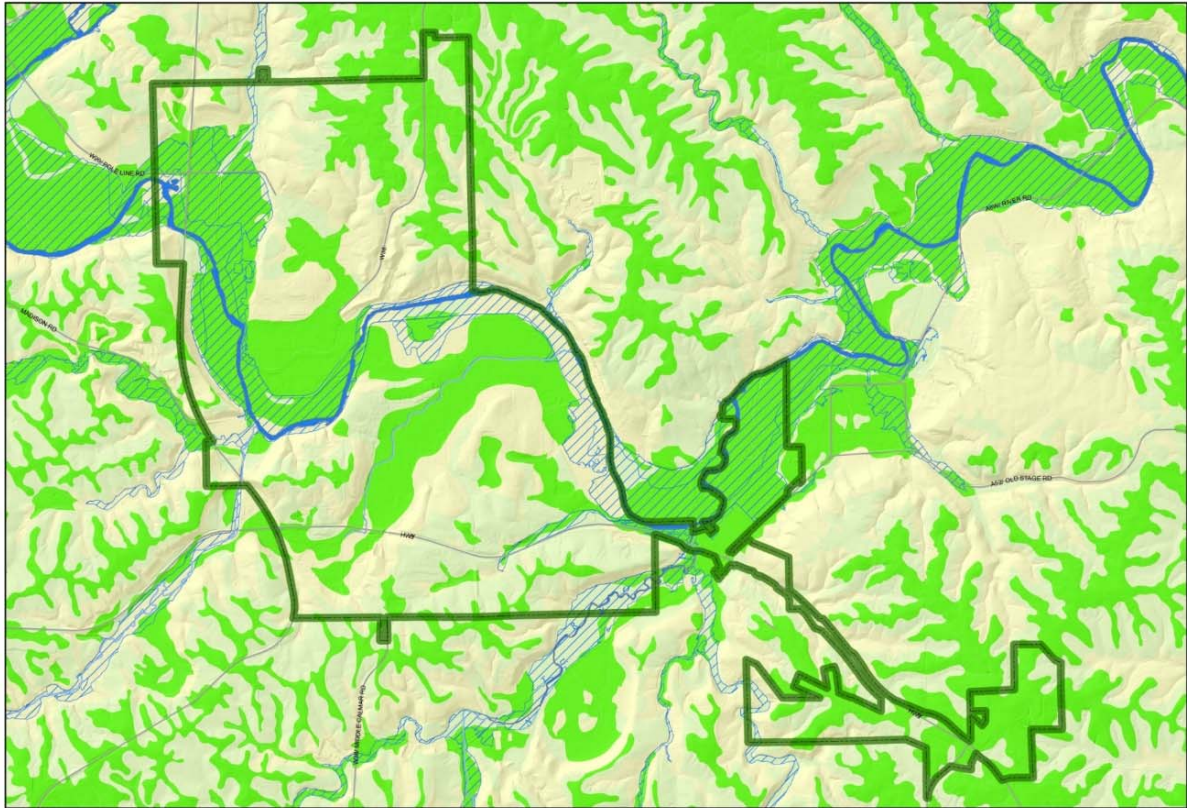
Source: (Soil Survey, Winneshiek County, Iowa; SCS, 1968)

*Includes septic tank absorption fields, sewage lagoons, and sanitary landfill facilities.

Soils in the planning area include primarily Fayette silt loam and Down silt loam in the uplands and sides slopes and Dorchester silt loam in the bottomlands. Steep rock land is common along the side slopes of drainage courses.

The Winneshiek County Soil Survey Report Supplement indicated that the Dorchester soils, when not subject to flooding, and Down, Fayette, and Terril soils on level-to-moderate slopes are highly productive for crops. The Corn Suitability Ratings (CSR) for these soils range from 83 to 90 based on an index level of 100 and are shown on Figure 52. The 100 index level represents soils that have no physical limitations for continual row cropping.

Figure 52: Soils



Soils

Soil Rating Poor 0 - 33 CSR Fair 33 - 64 CSR Good 65 - 95 CSR



Surface Water Resources and Wetlands

Water is an important resource for all communities, and it is an especially evident one for the City of Decorah in its rivers, streams, and springs.

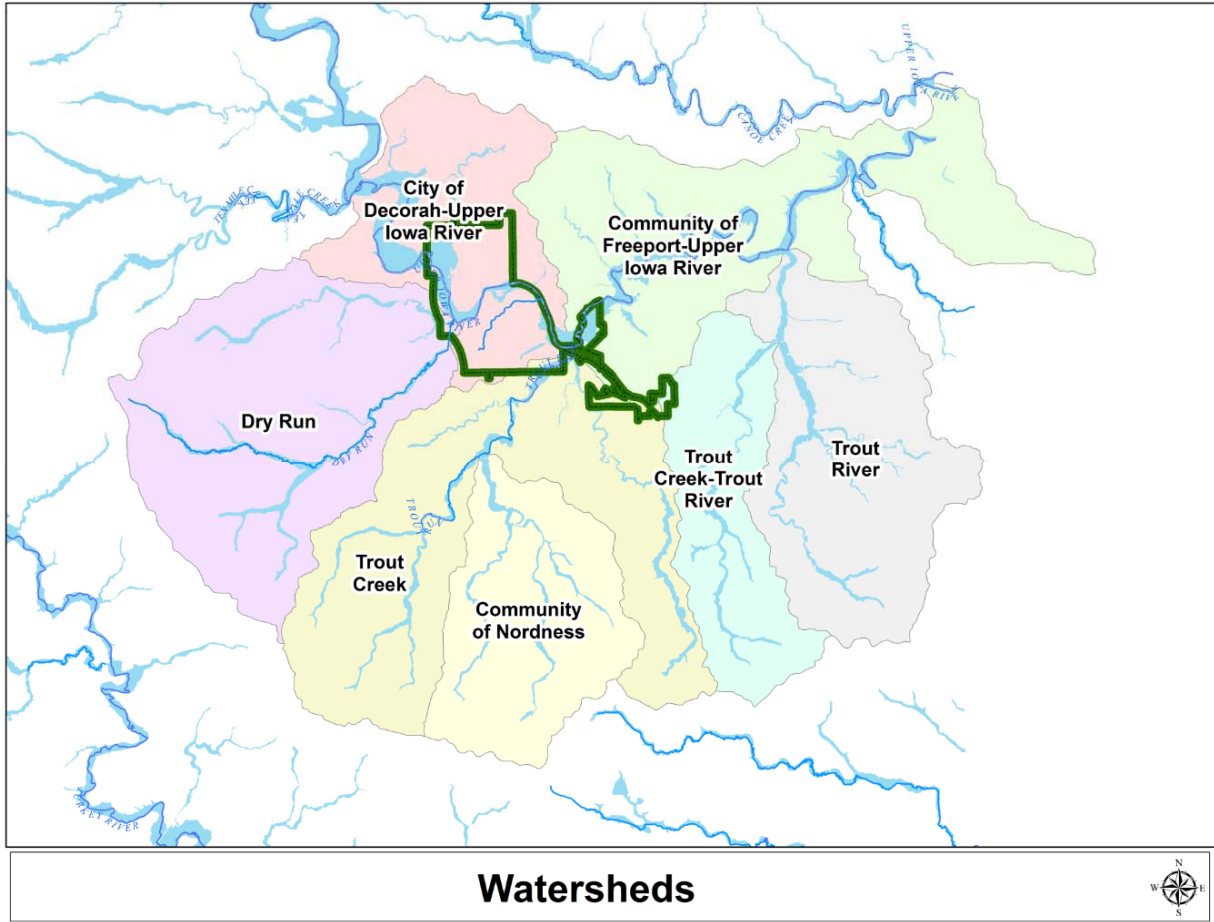
Rivers in the Planning Area:

- Upper Iowa River is known for its excellent canoeing, fishing and tubing.
- Dry Run Creek is located on the west edge of Decorah.
- Coon Creek drains into the Upper Iowa River west of Decorah. This stream is not stocked in June, July and August due to warm water temperatures.
- Trout River is a beautiful trout stream east of Decorah. It has access on both State and private land.
- Trout Run is located immediately south of Decorah. This stream starts at scenic Siewers Springs which provides water for the Iowa DNR Decorah Trout Hatchery. The hatchery rears trout which are stocked into area streams. Trout Run provides excellent fishing opportunities.
- Twin Springs lies just west of Decorah and has a wide range of camping facilities.
- Canoe Creek lies north of Decorah and is a good stream to fish in the Spring and Fall. Canoe is not stocked in June, July or August due to warm water temperatures. Much of the access on Canoe Creek is provided by private landowners.

Watersheds

Decorah is in the Upper Iowa Watershed. The Upper Iowa River watershed is a 1,005 square mile watershed recognized by the EPA and the State of Iowa in the Unified Watershed Assessment as a Priority Watershed. A diagram of the watersheds in the Decorah area is shown in Figure 53.

Figure 53: Watersheds



Upper Iowa River Watershed Management Authority

The Upper Iowa River Watershed Management Authority (www.upperiowariver.org/watershed-management-authority/) was formed in November 2015 and is a board of directors from cities, counties, soil and water conservation districts, and a drainage district within the Upper Iowa River basin who have agreed to work together in order to:

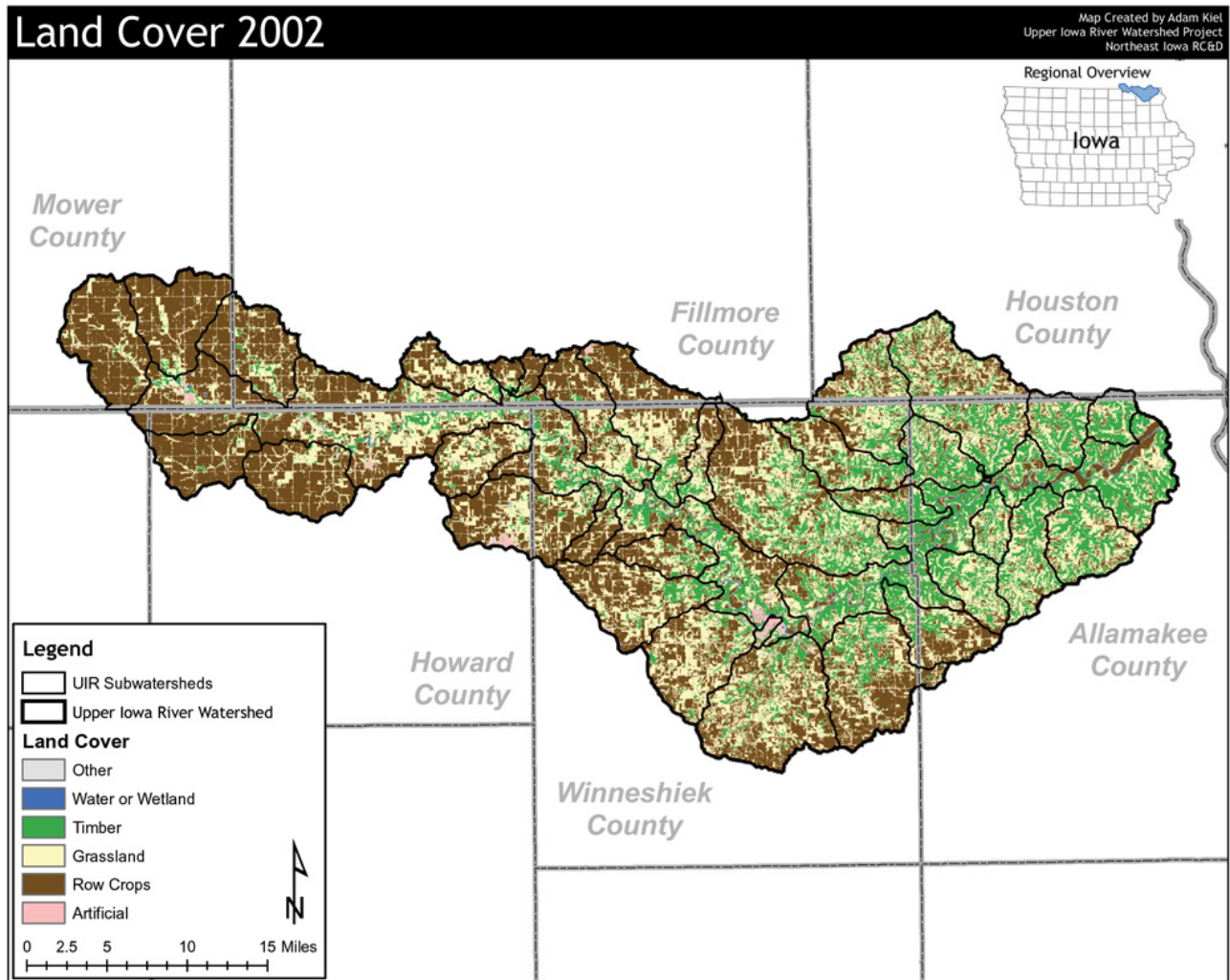
- Assess and reduce the flood risks and improve water quality in the watershed
- Monitor federal flood risk planning and activities
- Educate residents
- Allocate monies for purposes of water quality and flood mitigation

Members of the Upper Iowa River Watershed Management Authority include:

- Allamakee County
- Allamakee County Soil and Water Conservation District
- City of Decorah
- City of Lime Springs
- Howard County
- Howard County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Winneshiek County
- Winneshiek County Soil and Water Conservation District

A map showing the location of the Upper Iowa River Watershed is found below in Figure 54.

Figure 54: Location of the Upper Iowa River Watershed



Source: (Upper Iowa River Watershed Management Authority, 2004)

5.3 Agricultural Resources

The City of Decorah currently has 1,732 acres, or 37%, of its land in agricultural use. Going forward and as noted in the future land use map, Decorah has identified prime farm land with corn suitability ratings of 65 or higher and has marked those areas with the intention of considering prime farmland in future land use decisions.

5.4 Cultural and Historic Resources

Museums

Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum houses over 24,000 artifacts, which include large samplings from the fine, decorative, and folk arts, and the tools and machinery of early agriculture, lumbering, and other immigrant industries. The museum is located at 523 West Water Street. More information: www.vesterheim.org

Porter House Museum illustrates the life and times of its owners, Adelbert and Grace Porter, with their personal furnishings, collections, art work, photographs, and library. The museum is located at 401 West Broadway Street. More information: www.porterhousemuseum.org

The Luther College Fine Arts Collection has over 1,500 works including paintings, drawings, prints, photography, sculpture, assemblages, textiles, ceramics, and utilitarian objects. The museum is located at 700 College Drive in the Preus Library. More information: www.luther.edu/library

Arts

Decorah is well-known as a regional center for the arts and for artists. As the home of many professional artists, Decorah is well represented in an annual Northeast Iowa Artists' Studio Tour (www.iowaarttour.com). In addition to the many performing arts and music performances offered by Luther College (www.tickets.luther.edu/Online/), there are also several other local stage productions and music on offer for the public to enjoy.

Live music opportunities are also available year-round in Decorah at the following during the following events and at the following locations: Lawn Chair Nights, Nordic Fest, Java John's Coffee House, Courtyard and Cellar, Hotel Winneshiek, McCaffrey's Dolce Vita and the Water Street Music Series, among others.

New Minowa Players Community Theatre is Decorah's community theater. They provide several musical and plays throughout the year for all to enjoy. The organization began presenting shows in 1975 and continues to be incredibly active today. The organization's theatre is located at 906 S. Mill St. More information: www.newminowaplayers.org

The Oneota Valley Community Orchestra (OVCO), founded in 2014, is a volunteer ensemble open to all area and non-area residents who wish to perform great music in an orchestral setting. The OVCO presents orchestral music from a variety of different styles and time periods ranging from the baroque era through newly commissioned works and from symphony to opera. More information: www.ovcorchestra.org

ArtHaus is downtown Decorah's home for the visual and performing arts. ArtHaus serves as both an arts education center and a community gathering place offering art exhibitions, Poetry Slams, live music concerts, and other public arts events. Classes are offered year-round for all ages. ArtHaus is also home to Upstart Crow Theatreworks, which offers productions, classes and workshops for children and adults. More information: www.arthausdecorah.org

Decorah offers a handful of art galleries showcasing local artists, including Agora Arts and Story People. Agora Arts is a small brick and mortar gallery located in downtown Decorah and is proud to feature work created by the most talented craftspeople around. More information: www.agoraarts.com.

Story People, located in downtown Decorah, is a diverse group of people, artists, activists, healers, and tinkers working together to share the world's stories through art. Their wish is that other people will experience the world as a place of imagination, possibility, and healing. More information: www.storypeople.com

Historic Preservation

Decorah has an established Historic Preservation Commission. The National Historic Preservation Act was passed by Congress in 1966. The Act pledged Federal matching funds for historic preservation, authorized the National Register of Historical Places, and provided a measure of legal protection for registered properties. Decorah and Winneshiek County have several sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including those listed in Figure 55.

Recent efforts by the Commission have led to the Downtown District being placed on the National Register of Historic Places (2018). The Commission is now (2019) working with Luther College to have the central campus placed on the Register.

Figure 55: Historic Places in Decorah

Historic Site	Location
Birdsall Lime Kiln	NE of Decorah
Broadway-Phelps Park Historic District	West Broadway from Winnebago St. to Park Dr.
Cooley-Whitney House	305 Grove St.
Decorah Commercial District	Blocks 500-100 W. Water; Blocks 100-200 E. Water; Block 100 Washington; Block 100 Winnebago; parts of W. Main, Court, and W Day Spring
Decorah Ice Cave	Ice Cave Rd.
Decorah Municipal Bathhouse and Swimming Pool	701 College Dr.
Decorah Woolen Mill	107 Court St.
Ellsworth-Porter House	401 W. Broadway
Horn House	NW of Decorah
Jacobson Farm	SE of Decorah on Rt. 1
Koren Library	Luther College campus
Locust School	N of Decorah
Luther College Farm	Luther College campus
Miller, Norris, House	118 N. Mill St.
Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway Combination Depot	203 W. Pearl St.
Painter-Bernatz Mill	200 N. Mill St.
Steyer Bridge	Oneota Rd. off US 52
Steyer Opera House	102--104 W. Water St.
Washington Prairie Methodist Church	SE of Decorah

Source: (National Park Service, 2015)

In addition, there are a number of historical places that have been identified in Decorah by the Winneshiek County Historical Society. These range from the old post office (present public library) to several churches, the pool house, and the Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum.

Broadway-Phelps Park Historic District has been established including Phelps Park, the 300 through 700 blocks of West Broadway, and the 300 block of Upper Broadway. The district includes a variety of old houses of Midwestern architecture, together with some of Gothic Revival and Italianate styles of architecture.

Winneshiek County has established a historic preservation ordinance and created a historic preservation commission to be able to participate in the certified local government program

of preservation historic places. The program, among other things, enables the county to obtain federal funds administered by the State of Iowa for historic preservation activities.

Resources for Historic Preservation

The Decorah and Winneshiek County Historical Society protects, collects, preserves and promotes the written, oral and tangible items of historical importance and to cooperate with other organizations to accomplish common goals. More information:

www.winneshiekcounthistoricalsociety.com

Iowa's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is part of the State Historical Society of Iowa, a division within the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. Its mission is to identify, preserve, and protect Iowa's historic resources. More information:

www.iowaculture.gov/history/preservation

5.5 Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources Protection Programs

There are many programs in place to assist with the protection of natural, agricultural, and cultural resources. A few examples of the opportunities available include:

- Watershed Protection Program-
www.iowaagriculture.gov/waterResources/watershedProtection.asp
- Iowa Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)-
www.iowaagriculture.gov/waterResources/CREP.asp
- Iowa Water Quality Loan Fund- www.iowasrf.com
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)- www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)-
www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip
- Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)-
www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/whip

The Decorah area is an excellent candidate for many of these programs because of the unique and fragile nature of the ecosystem, therefore many of the programs listed are currently being utilized. Natural, agricultural and cultural resources protection programs are discussed in further detail in the Comprehensive Plan for Winneshiek County. More information: www.uerpc.org/winneshiek-comprehensive-plan.html

Local Stormwater Management Plan

The City adopted a storm water management utility in 2016.

The Utility's purpose is to determine it to be conducive to the health, welfare, safety and convenience of the city and its residents that a storm water management utility district be established within the city.

The utility is comprised of elements of the city's storm water drainage and flood protection systems which provide for the collection, treatment and disposal of storm water. These elements of the storm water management utility are of benefit and provide services to all real properties within the incorporated city limits, including property not directly served by the storm water drainage system, and that such benefits and services may include but are not limited to the provision of adequate systems of collection, conveyance, detention, treatment and release of storm water; the reduction of hazard to property and life resulting from storm water runoff and flooding; improvement in general health and welfare through reduction of undesirable storm water conditions and flooding; and improvement to the water quality in the storm water and surface water system and its receiving waters.

The City established a fee structure for storm water discharge and uses the funds for improvements to the storm water collection system in the City.

Work on a Storm Water Management Plan should be ongoing.

Decorah Tree Board

The Decorah Tree Board encourages community residents to plant trees so that future generations may enjoy the benefits of reduced pollution, increased habitat for wildlife, and the conservation of energy from the natural air conditioning and wind protection that a diverse tree cover provides. More information: www.decorahia.org/tree-board

Upper Iowa Watershed Management Authority

The Upper Iowa River Watershed Management Authority (www.upperiowariver.org/watershed-management-authority/) was formed in November 2015 and is a board of directors from cities, counties, soil and water conservation districts and a drainage district within the Upper Iowa River basin who have agreed to work together in order to:

- Assess and reduce the flood risks and improve water quality in the watershed
- Monitor federal flood risk planning and activities
- Educate residents
- Allocate monies for purposes of water quality and flood mitigation

Winneshiek County Soil and Water Conservation District

The Winneshiek County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) coordinates efforts of agencies, organizations, and individuals with responsibilities in natural resources conservation and development within the district. More information: www.winneshiekswcd.org

Winneshiek County Conservation Board

The purpose of the Winneshiek County Conservation Board is to provide the public with wide-ranging opportunities for quality outdoor recreation while wisely managing our natural resources and encouraging land stewardship through natural history and environmental education programming. More information: www.winneshiekwild.com

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources offers an array of air quality, land quality, and water quality resources and programs within its focus on environmental protection. More information: www.iowadnr.gov/Environmental-Protection

5.6 Natural, Agricultural and Cultural Resources Summary

The City of Decorah has an abundance of natural resources, ranging from rivers, streams and springs to limestone bluffs, woodlands, prairies and abundant wildlife. These natural resources are important to the local economy through tourism and recreation as well as limestone quarry operations.

The City recognizes that the rich soil that makes farming so successful here is a resource to be protected. Agriculture occupies a surprising amount of acreage within the City of Decorah, often in areas subject to flooding. The City also recognizes the importance of protecting the air and water quality of the community. An idling ordinance was drafted in 2017, and although it was not passed by the City Council, it will be a topic considered in the current Sustainability Plan update.

Cultural activities are an important aspect of the City of Decorah. Historic preservation is actively pursued when appropriate, and actions will be taken to ensure that preservation of historic properties becomes an integral part of the site development process. The arts community is thriving in the Decorah area, with visual arts, performing arts and music performances all well-represented. Vesterheim is a high-quality museum and is an asset to the City.

5.7 Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources Policies

- The preservation and protection of historical and archaeological sites and environmentally sensitive areas should be continued.
- The steep rock land, limestone outcroppings, and other scenic landscapes should continue to be preserved through acquisition, easements and other methods.
- Dry Run, the principal drainage channel through the developed part of Decorah, should be improved and maintained as open space through residentially developed areas and enclosed only where necessary due to extension of streets and commercial and industrial development in the central business district.
- The Emerald Ash Borer is an exotic beetle that is a recent and significant threat to the health of the urban and rural trees, destroying millions of ash trees in North America (Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, 2013). To maintain and encourage a more diverse tree population within city limits, the Decorah Tree Board should continue to offer the Tree Board Voucher Program for tree plantings within street boulevards.
- Air quality issues should continue to be discussed and addressed in the community.
- The City should work with Winneshiek County to address issues related to Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) and their impact on the land and water qualities in the city and county.
- The City is in the midst of a review of the 2010 City Sustainability Plan. The appointed task force should continue to reach for the goals outlined in the current plan and review and modify goals for the next twenty years.

CHAPTER 6: HAZARDS



Photos above by Inspire(d) Media

6.1 Introduction

The 2015 Winneshiek County Multi-Jurisdictional Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan was formally adopted by the Decorah City Council on November of 2014; this plan was approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in May of 2015 and will expire in May of 2020.

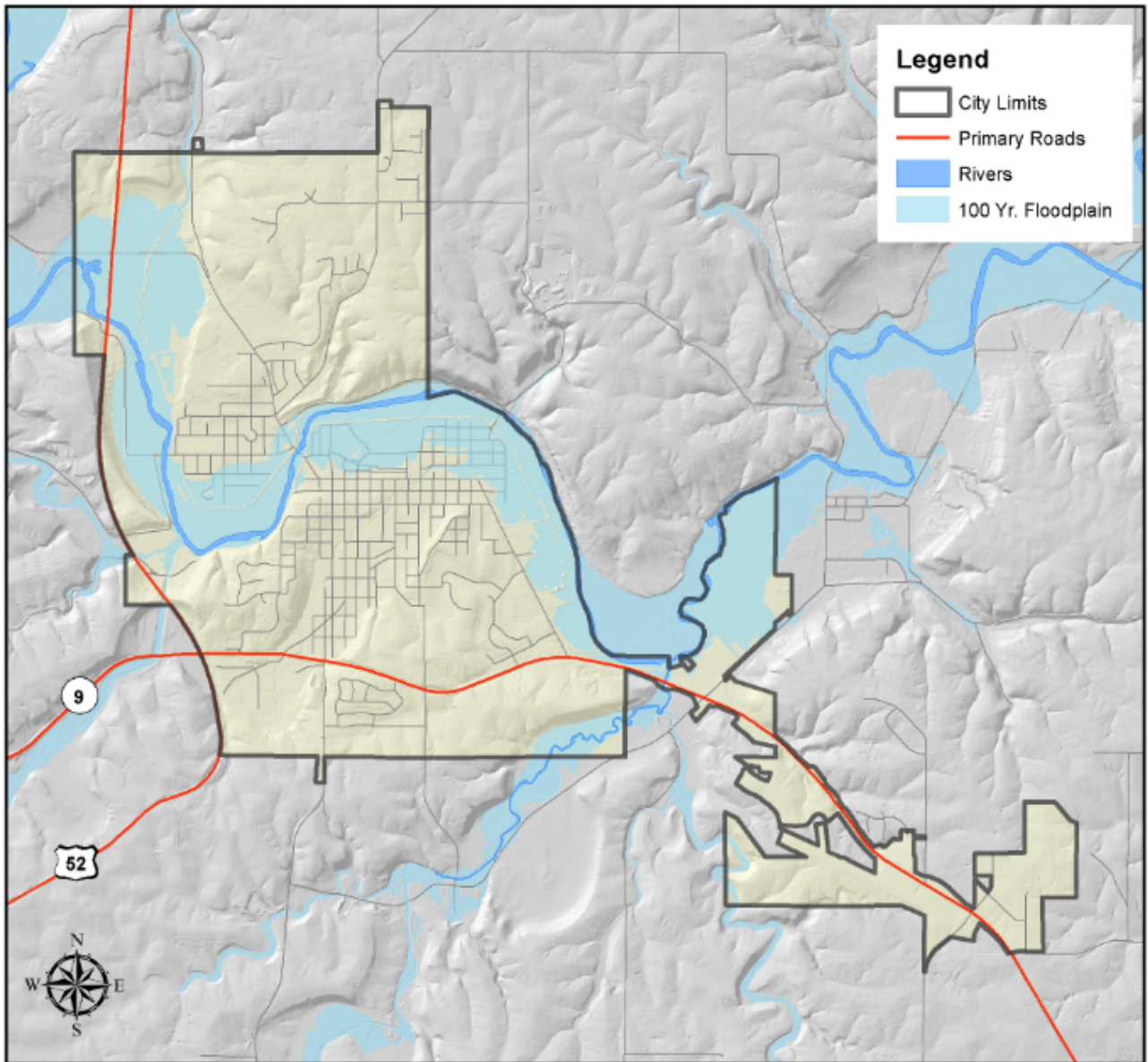
Professional planning assistance was provided by Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission for the completion of this plan, which encompasses the cities of Calmar, Castalia, Decorah, Fort Atkinson, Jackson Junction, Ossian, Ridgeway Spillville and unincorporated areas of Winneshiek County. This plan documents the county-wide hazard mitigation planning process and identifies relevant hazards, vulnerabilities and strategies to decrease vulnerability and increase resiliency and sustainability. It will affect activities and decisions for proactive mitigation planning that will help reduce the cost of disaster response. For more information: www.uerpc.org/winneshiek-haz-mit.html

In 2019, work was commenced to begin updating the plan for 2020.

6.2 Flooding

The Upper Iowa River has a profound impact on development in Decorah. Specifically, development in the floodways, as designated by FEMA, is prohibited. Figure 56 shows Decorah's floodplains. Decorah has experienced severe flooding from the Upper Iowa River resulting in property damage to homes and businesses. The four largest floods on the Upper Iowa River at Decorah occurred in 1941, 1961, 1993 and 2008, for which the estimated peak discharges were 27,200 cubic feet per second (ft³/s), 20,200 ft³/s, 20,500 ft³/s, and 34,100 ft³/s respectively.

Figure 56: Floodplains



Source: Non-Regulatory Flood Risk Boundaries (Iowa Geodata), FEMA, Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission

6.3 Flood Control

The primary system of flood control in the City is from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Dry Run Flood Control project. Additional locally constructed levees include those along Valley View Drive and Luther College.

The existing USACE project was authorized by the Flood Control Act approved June 22, 1936 and modified by the Flood Control Act approved August 18, 1941. The project provides for diversion of Dry Run into the Upper Iowa River by means of an earth dike across Dry Run one mile southwest of Decorah and a diversion channel 3,200 feet in length through high ground to the Upper Iowa River in Decorah (locally known as “The Cut”). The project was designed to provide protection for areas within the city limits of Decorah against the maximum probable flood on Dry Run and against a flood on the Upper Iowa River equivalent to about twice the maximum flood of record. The project was completed on December 9, 1950 and turned over to local interests on January 12, 1951.

Surface drainage, from the various sub-drainage areas in the City, is conveyed through the levees by a system of culverts. The culverts vary in size from 30-inch to 84-inch diameter pipes. All the culverts have flap gates to prevent high flood water from the Upper Iowa River backing into the protected interior areas of Decorah.

In the 1977 study report, the USACE proposed to improve the interior drainage by identifying areas of backwater flooding, and establishing easements near the levee, by providing sluice gates at all outlets to the river, and by providing three pumping stations at central locations along the levee. Three pumping stations, the Dry Run pumping station, the Roberts Lake pumping station, and the Ice Cave Road pumping station were recommended to pump accumulated backwater over the levee when the flap gates are closed during periods of flooding on the Upper Iowa River. The proposed improvements were not implemented due to USACE Benefit Cost Analysis and lack of funding.

During the prior planning period at least two major flood events occurred including the new record flood of 2008, exceeding the previous record flood of 1941. Other significant local, state and national flood events resulted in many changes related to the Decorah Flood Control System.

Included among these are a more comprehensive levee safety and inspection program administered through the USACE, remapping of 100 year and 500 year flood plains by FEMA, a USGS Flood Plain Study initiated by the City, and an extensive evaluation of current levee conditions through a Levee Accreditation Study conducted by the City and consultants as required by FEMA.

In addition to this, the City joined the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in 2008.

Levee System

The Dry Run Flood Control project, located in and adjacent to the City of Decorah on the Upper Iowa River and an intermittent tributary stream called the Dry Run, was constructed under authority of the Flood Control Acts approved June 22, 1936 and August 18, 1941. Construction began in April of 1948 and was completed in December of 1950.

The Dry Run project diverts all Dry Run flows into the Upper Iowa River immediately upstream from the City by means of a diversion channel about three miles upstream on the Upper Iowa River from the natural mouth of Dry Run. Project improvements on the Upper Iowa River include a cutoff channel and levees to protect Decorah.

The project protects all of Decorah and adjacent farmlands in the Dry Run floodplain below the diversion channel from the maximum probable flood on Dry Run and from a flood on the Upper Iowa River equivalent to nearly twice the maximum flood of record (original 1941 event). The Dry Run diversion channel and the Upper Iowa channel, including levees, were designed for flood discharges of 25,000 and 45,000 second-feet respectively.

The Dry Run project is designed for automatic hydraulic operation by means of the diversion channel and a series of levees and culverts to manage interior drainage. The resulting rerouting of the Dry Run diverts the majority of the 22.6 square mile watershed from passing directly through central Decorah.

The left levee begins at the west end of Mound Street and extend approximately 5,400 feet downstream along the left bank of the Upper Iowa River to high ground at Ice Cave Road (Quarry Street) about 1,100 feet north of the College Drive bridge. The right levee begins on West Main Street about 1,00 feet upstream from the College Drive bridge, follows the general route of the improved Upper Iowa River channel downstream to a point immediately south of the racetrack at the fairgrounds, then turns away from the river and ties into high ground at Montgomery Street.

Twelve drainage locations with a total of 33 culvert drainage structures have been constructed to provide for removal of interior surface drainage waters. All structures include culverts equipped with automatic flap gates. During flooding, when automatic flap gates are closed, the interior surface drainage is pumped over the levee with a combination of temporary rental and city-owned pumps.

The Dry Run diversion channel, constructed upstream from Decorah, consists of a channel approximately 3,200 feet long and a closure dike constructed across the natural channel to divert all flow into the Upper Iowa River. The channel consists of a 'natural' channel section as well as a concrete flume and sediment basin.

The City of Decorah participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) as of 2008. The City's Dry Run Flood Control Project levees along the Upper Iowa River have been recently confirmed accredited by the Federal Emergency Management Agency

(FEMA) in early 2018 as a result of the City's efforts to inspect and obtain accreditation for NFIP purposes; this will allow recognition in the pending Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) re-mapping, including the Decorah area. This particular portion of the City's levee system was constructed as part of the 1949-1950 United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Dry Run Flood Control project. The City also maintains a non-accredited levee along Valley Drive constructed in the early 1960s by Winneshiek County and later annexed into the City. Additional levees in the northwest part of town, along the lower Luther College campus from North Street to Pole Line Road, are in the process of obtaining accreditation and are owned and maintained by the college.

As a result of this accreditation and the updated FEMA mapping program, new Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRM) were released mid-2018 for proposed adoption in 2019-2020.

The City also continues to work with the USACE to address levee maintenance through the USACE annual inspections program. Due to several deficiency issues, issues with the Diversion Channel and increased levels of details involved in inspections starting in 2010, City levees had reached the stage of an 'unacceptable rating' in the USACE rating system. The City developed a System Wide Improvement Framework (SWIF) Plan, per USACE direction, to address deficiencies. Continued and increased maintenance efforts have resulted in an upgrade to the City levee ratings in 2015, although Diversion Channel restoration solutions continue to be explored with USACE. In general, the levees continue to provide good protection and have performed well in recent flood emergencies such as the record flood of 2008 and high water marks in 2016.

As part of the accreditation process, the City developed a more formalized plan for pumping of interior ponding during river flood events where levee culverts are closed to prevent river back-up into low lying city areas along the levee corridors. This pumping plan is to provide direction and resources for temporary pumping during emergency situations. Long-term planning by staff has initiated the process of finding more permanent pumping solutions, particularly the Dry Run outlet area to reduce reliance on temporary pumping and aid staff in flood fighting.

6.4 Hazards Summary

Flooding is the primary hazard for the City of Decorah, and significant effort has been put forth recently to improve Decorah's preparedness in the event of another major flood. Additional hazards of concern are tornados, winter storms, and other severe weather events.

6.5 Hazards Policies

- The protection of the floodplains of the Upper Iowa River, Dry Run, Trout Run Creek and other tributary stream channels, and embankments from incompatible development will be given high priority.
- Storm drainage easements for Dry Run and other drainage channels and storm sewers should be established.
- An ordinance more restrictive than the requirements of the NFIP should be considered that addresses development within established flood limits. This ordinance should be established using the City's accepted flood map. Full or partial prohibition should be considered for development in wetland and flood limit areas.

The mitigation actions below reflect those listed for Decorah in the 2015 Winneshiek County, Iowa Multi-Jurisdictional Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan and the corresponding body listed as responsible for carrying out the task. The full plan may be found here. <http://uerpc.org/hazard-mitigation.html>

- Purchase and install permanent generator for the Carrie Lee Campus/Middle School (*Decorah Community School District School Board*)
- Purchase and install permanent generator for the water department at the main pumping station (*Decorah City Council*)
- Purchase and install a smaller permanent generator for the bus repeater (*Decorah Police/Fire Departments*)
- Construct one or more shelter/safe rooms for residents/students. One is under consideration at Carrie Lee Campus/Middle School (*Decorah City Council and/or Decorah CSD School Board and/or Luther College Provost*)
- Continue to train and equip community emergency responders (*Decorah Police and Fire Departments, ongoing*)
- Continue to maintain and improve flood mitigation equipment and related safety measures (*Decorah City Council*)
- Improve the emergency alert notification system for the Decorah Community School District (*Decorah Community School District School Board*)
- Continue to improve city and countywide interagency portable mobile data by implementing new technologies (*Decorah Communication Center*)

- Expand and maintain the Metronet fiber optic cable and related equipment – consolidate projects where feasible (i.e. lay conduit when city infrastructure projects occur) (*Metronet Partners: City of Decorah, Decorah CSD, Winneshiek County, Winneshiek Medical Center, Luther College*)
- New boat or rescue raft and new motor for the boat (*Decorah Police and Fire Departments*)
- Upgrade all sirens to be radio controlled and address all gaps in the City (*Decorah Communication Center, all systems can be remotely accessed from the Center*)
- Continue participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) (*Decorah City Council*)
- New well needed on west side of City – in remote and elevated area (*Decorah City Council*)
- Enlarge the well at the business park (*Decorah City Council*)
- Continue to work on wastewater system to reduce inflow and infiltration and reline sewers (*Decorah City Council*)
- Develop truck routes that designate hazmat routes and safe harbors for parking (*Decorah City Council*)
- Continue to address waterway/infrastructure issues to minimize flooding (*Decorah City Council*)
- Cleanup/maintain the Dry Run levee (*Decorah City Council*)
- Construct upstream water retention structures on Dry Run to control quantity and velocity of water (*Decorah City Council*)
- Develop codes that encourage buildings with tornado-safe areas (*Decorah City Council*)

CHAPTER 7: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



First two photos by Randy Uhl

7.1 Introduction

Several characteristics of the population, the labor force, and the economic base of the City of Decorah play a major role in its economic development and will be discussed in this element.

Decorah is fortunate to have key partners all working together to strengthen economic development within the community. Key partners are listed below.

Winneshiek County Development, Inc.

Winneshiek County Development, Inc. (WDCI) has been serving Winneshiek County for over 20 years through involvement in new business development, business expansion, and small start-up efforts. WDCI also helps write and administer projects. In recent years, WDCI has brought in capital for a number of community development projects including water/sewer, new roads, trails, downtown facades, city parks, and more. More information: www.winneshiekdevelopment.org

Decorah Jobs, Inc.

Decorah Jobs is a local economic development group whose primary purpose is to conserve, improve, develop, promote, advance, and expand existing industrial, commercial, and professional enterprises. Decorah Jobs focuses to attract and aid in securing the location of new industries in Decorah by advertising and publicizing the industrial, cultural, labor, social, educational, and physical advantages of the area. Decorah Jobs teams up with WDCI to assist the organization by location, developing, and making available suitable industrial sites and locations. More information: www.winneshiekdevelopment.org/communities/decorah/decorah-jobs-inc

Decorah Area Chamber of Commerce

The Decorah Area Chamber of Commerce (DACC) has been around for more than 90 years and serves as a partner for business owners. The DACC ensures that the Northeast Iowa business community remains vital, relevant, and productive now and into the future, regardless of the changes that take place in the business world. More information: www.decorahareachamber.com

Winneshiek County Convention and Visitors Bureau

The Winneshiek County Convention and Visitors Bureau promotes the natural beauty and the plethora of things to do, see and experience within Winneshiek County. The Convention and Visitors Bureau was merged with WCDI in 2018. More information: www.visitdecorah.com

7.2 Education

One factor that may influence income and employment is education. The following Figure 57 compares the levels of education for Decorah and Winneshiek residents for 2016. Of note is that numbers have increased since 2010 for persons with at least some college education or more for both Decorah and Winneshiek County. For Decorah, college-educated persons jumped from 2,373 in 2010 to 3,096 in 2016. For Winneshiek County, college-educated persons jumped from 7,032 in 2010 to 8,249 in 2016.

Figure 57: Educational Attainment for Persons 25 Years of Age and Older for 2016

Category	Decorah		Winneshiek County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than 9th Grade	77	1.7%	367	2.7
9th to 12th Grade, No Diploma	121	2.7%	387	2.9%
High School Graduate, Includes GED	1,191	26.6%	4,568	33.7%
Some College, No Degree	781	17.4%	2,567	18.9%
Associate Degree	450	10.0%	1,939	14.3%
Bachelor's Degree	1,108	24.7%	2,335	17.2%
Graduate or Professional Degree	757	16.9%	1,408	10.4%
Total	4,485	100.0%	13,571	100.0%

Source: (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016)

7.3 Economy and Labor Force

The labor force is the driver behind Decorah's economy. Figure 58 discusses unemployment rate trends by year for Decorah, Winneshiek County, and Iowa from 2010-2016.

Figure 58: Civilian Labor Force Unemployment Rate 2010-2016

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Decorah	5.7%	5.0%	5.4%	3.5%	2.8%	2.5%	2.4%
Winneshiek County	3.9%	4.1%	4.1%	3.7%	3.1%	3.0%	2.5%
State of Iowa	5.3%	5.5%	5.6%	5.8%	5.4%	4.9%	4.5%

Source: (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016)

Figure 59 below highlights Decorah’s top ten leading employers, as reported by Winneshiek County Development, Inc. Decorah’s top five employers include Luther College (640 employees), Stanley Engineering (500 employees), Winneshiek Medical Center (430 employees), Bruening Rock Products (410 employees) and Walmart (350 employees).

Figure 59: Top Employers in Decorah

Employer Name	Industry Product or Service	Employed
Luther College	Higher Education	640
Stanley Engineering	Engineering and Manufacturing	500
Winneshiek Medical Center	Health Care	430
Bruening Rock Products	Construction	410
Wal-Mart	Retail Sales	350
Rockwell Collins	Communication and Aviation Electronics	270
Decorah Community Schools	K-12 Education	250
DECO	Engineering and Manufacturing	220
Northeast Iowa Community Action	Non-Profit Social Services	200
Aase Haugen Homes	Elderly Care	185

Source: (Winneshiek County Development Inc., 2016)

According to the figures shown in Figure 60, Decorah’s top three leading industries are: Education, Health, and Social Services (47%); Retail Trade (10.9%); and Manufacturing (9.0%). The three largest industries for all of Winneshiek County are: Education, Health, and Social Services (33.2%), Manufacturing (11.8%), and Retail Trade (10.2%).

Figure 60: Economic Base of Decorah and Winneshiek County in 2016

Category	Decorah		Winneshiek County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Mining	136	2.8%	1,087	8.9%
Construction	145	3.0%	761	6.3%
Manufacturing	438	9.0%	1,441	11.8%
Wholesale Trade	132	2.7%	413	3.4%
Retail Trade	529	10.9%	1,237	10.2%
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	107	2.2%	434	3.6%
Information	74	1.5%	160	1.3%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing	173	3.6%	511	4.2%
Professional, Scientific, and Management; Administrative and Waste Management Services	265	5.4%	553	4.5%
Educational Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance	2,288	47%	4,044	33.2%
Art, Entertainment, and Recreation; Accommodations and Food Service	370	7.6%	731	6.0%
Other Services	170	3.5%	575	4.7%
Public Administration	41	0.8%	222	1.8%
Total Employed Persons	4,865	100.0%	12,169	99.9%

Source: (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016)

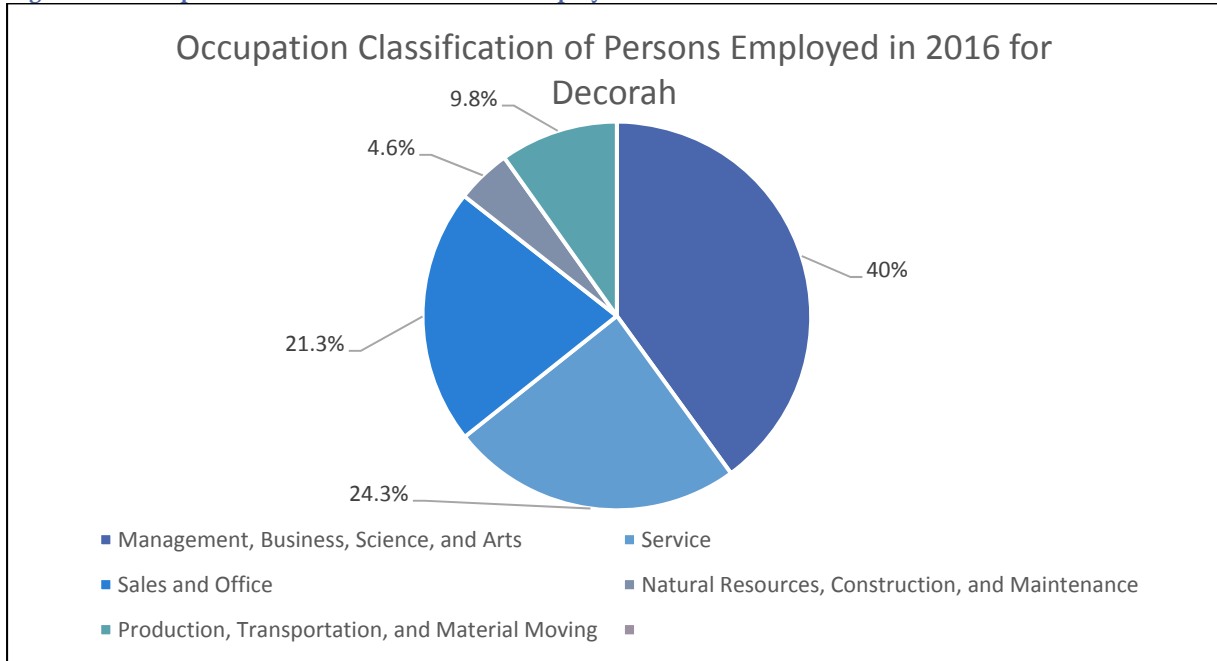
Figure 61 and Figure 62 classify employees into general employment categories. The largest occupation categories for Decorah are: Management, Business, Science, and Arts (40.0%) and Service (24.3%). In Winneshiek County, the largest occupation categories are: Management, Business, Science, and Arts (37.0%) and Sales and Office (21.3%).

Figure 61: Occupation Classification of Persons Employed in 2016

Occupation Description	Decorah		Winneshiek County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Management, Business, Science, and Arts	1,948	40.0%	4,500	37.0%
Service	1,183	24.3%	2,083	17.1%
Sales and Office	1,036	21.3%	2,587	21.3%
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance	222	4.6%	1,238	10.2%
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving	479	9.8%	1,761	14.5%
Total Employed Persons	4,868	100.0%	12,169	100.1%

Source: (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016)

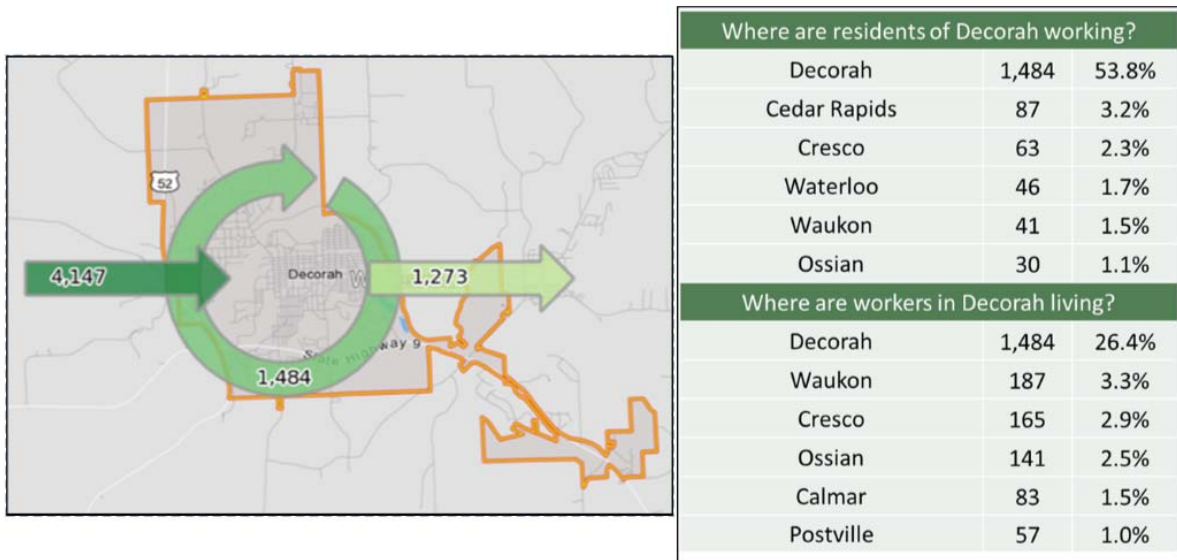
Figure 62: Occupation Classification of Persons Employed in 2016 for Decorah



Source: (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016)

In terms of commuting for Decorah, almost 40% more people commute in to work in Decorah compared to those commuting out to work, as shown in Figure 63. Almost 1,500 people both live and work in Decorah.

Figure 63: Commuter Concentration into and out of Decorah



Source: (U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, 2014)

Median household and per capita income levels for selected jurisdictions are provided in Figure 64. Decorah statistics, according to the Census Bureau, are near the top of the communities shown. In comparison to the County and State in 2016, the City had a lower per capita income and median income.

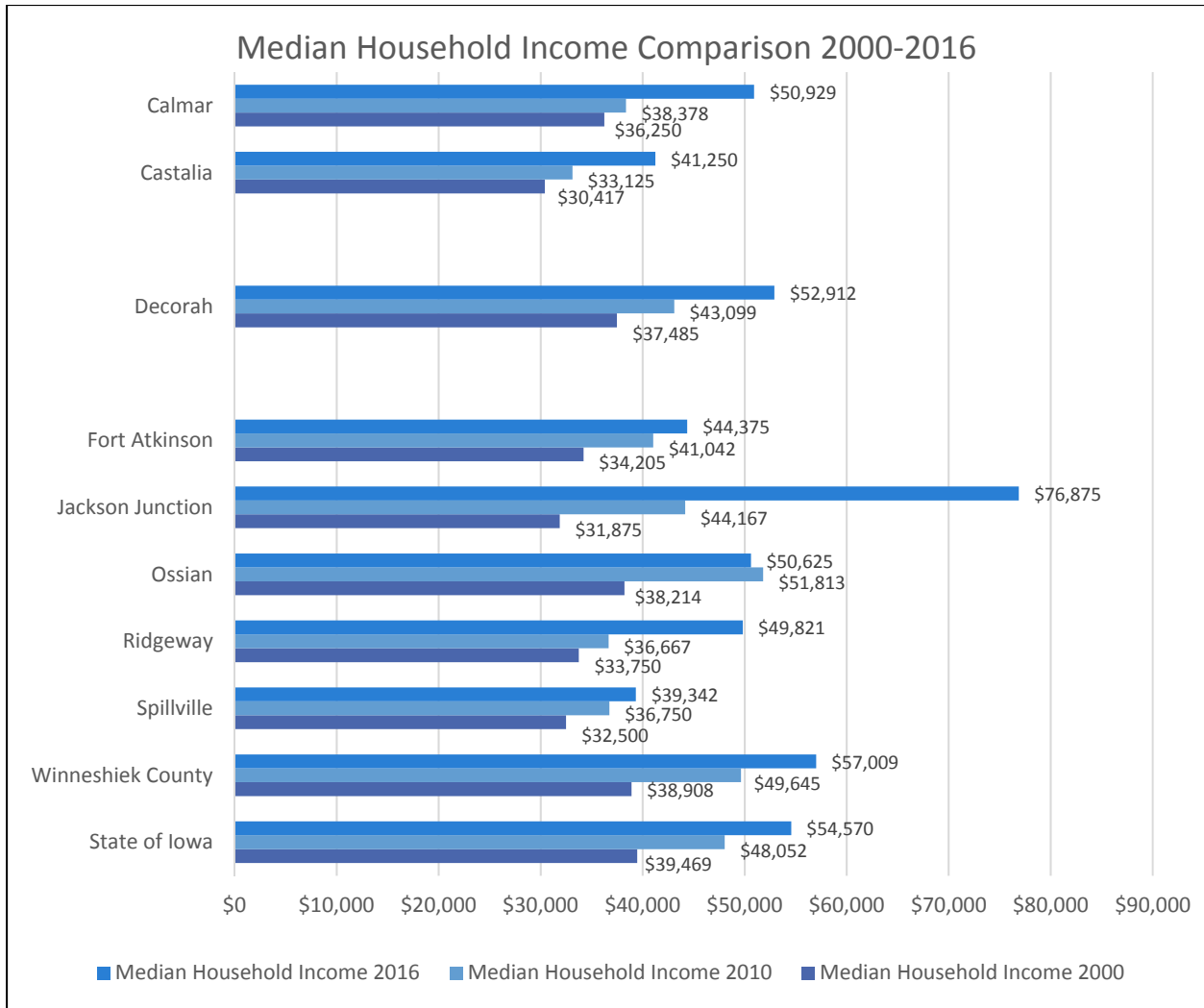
Figure 64: Per Capita and Median Household Income for Selected Communities

Community	Per Capita Income			Median Household Income		
	2000	2010	2016	2000	2010	2016
Calmar	17,958	19,489	23,176	36,250	38,378	50,929
Castalia	17,228	20,465	24,901	30,417	33,125	41,250
Decorah	16,351	19,551	24,334	37,485	43,099	52,912
Fort Atkinson	14,702	23,650	28,456	34,205	41,042	44,375
Jackson Junction	15,824	26,249	41,451	31,875	44,167	76,875
Ossian	16,490	23,291	26,638	38,214	51,813	50,625
Ridgeway	15,206	19,317	24,533	33,750	36,667	49,821
Spillville	15,674	37,392	23,879	32,500	36,750	39,342
Winneshiek	17,047	24,161	27,240	38,908	49,645	57,009
State of Iowa	19,674	25,060	28,872	39,469	48,052	54,570

Source: (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016)

A comparison of median household income for ten-year time periods from 2000-2016 among the communities is shown in Figure 65.

Figure 65: Median Household Income Comparison



Source: (State Data Center, 2012); (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2016)

The Economic Census of the United States, which provides additional economic data, is taken every five years in years ending in “2” and “7”. This information provides more detailed economic statistics for both the City and the county.

Figure 66 shows retail trade statistics for Decorah and Winneshiek County for the 2007 and 2012 Economic Censuses. For both Decorah and Winneshiek County, the number of establishments and number of paid employees decreased. However, sales and annual payroll increased during the same time period.

Figure 66: Retail Trade for Selected Communities

2012				
Geographic Area	Number of Establishments	Sales (\$1,000)	Annual Payroll	Paid Employees
Decorah	82	\$214,956	\$20,842	952
Winneshiek	121	\$292,986	\$26,809	1,185
2007				
Geographic Area	Number of Establishments	Receipts (\$1,000)	Annual Payroll	Paid Employees
Decorah	88	\$211,831	19,174	978
Winneshiek	129	\$289,636	24,739	1,221

Source: (2012 Economic Census of United States, 2012)

Manufacturing industry statistics for Decorah and Winneshiek County are illustrated in Figure 67. As reflected in Figure 60 and Figure 61 shown previously, these industries play an important role in the economies of each jurisdiction. According to the table, the City and county statistics for number of establishments and annual payroll increased. While during the same time, the number of paid employees decreased. In addition, total value for services for the county increased; the Economic Census did not provide this data for Decorah.

Figure 67: Manufacturing Industries for Selected Communities

2012				
Geographic Area	Number of Establishments	Total Value for Services (\$1,000)	Annual Payroll (\$1,000)	Paid Employees
Decorah	18	Withheld	\$43,758	1,015
Winneshiek	34	\$300,910	\$60,563	1,402
2007				
Geographic Area	Number of Establishments	Receipts (\$1,000)	Annual Payroll (\$1,000)	Paid Employees
Decorah	17	Withheld	41,239	1,290
Winneshiek	31	288,679	58,049	1,721

Source: (2012 Economic Census of United States, 2012)

The Wholesale Trade sector comprises establishments engaged in wholesaling merchandise, generally without transformation, and rendering services incidental to the sale of merchandise. The merchandise described in this sector includes the outputs of agriculture, mining, manufacturing, and certain information industries, such as publishing. As is shown in Figure 68, the City of Decorah experienced a slight decline in number of establishments while the county experienced an increase in the number of establishments between 2007 and 2012. Wholesale trade sales reported in the county and the City increased. Finally, the City reported decreases in annual payroll and employees, while the county reported a rise in annual payroll and number of employees during the same period of time.

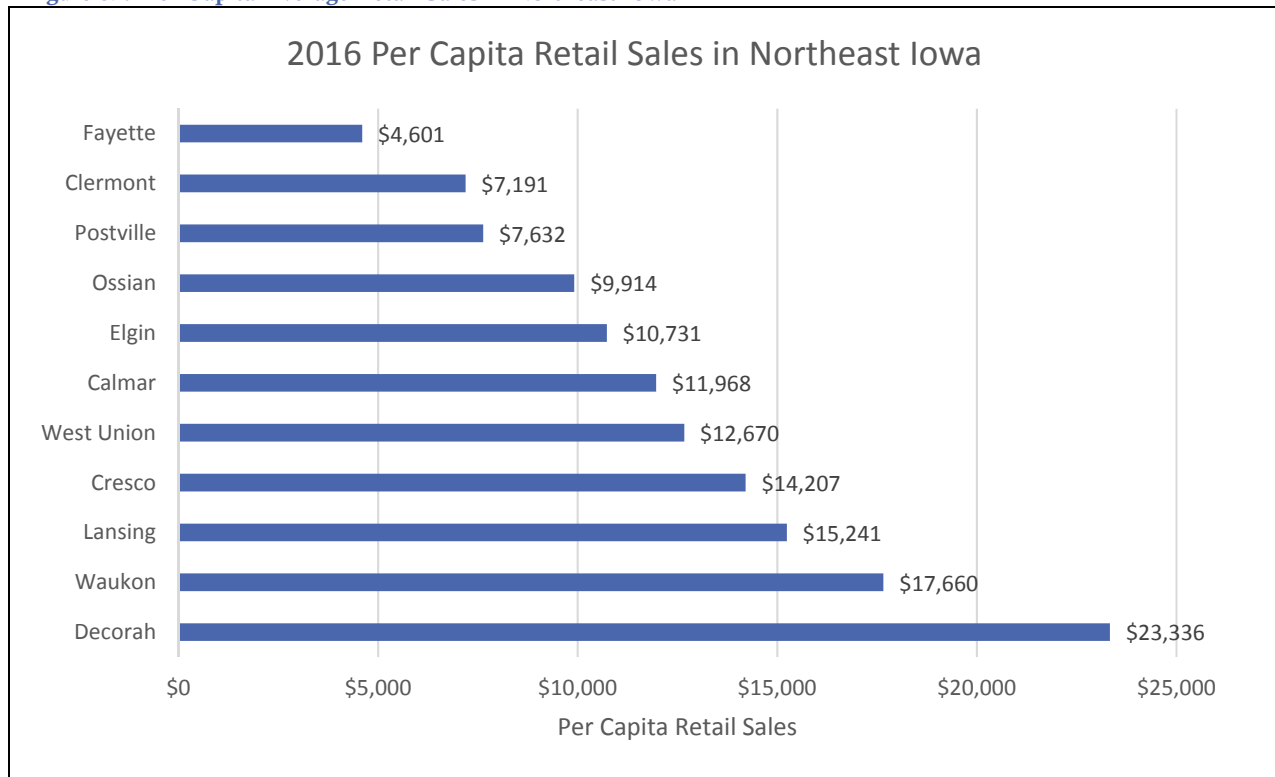
Figure 68: Wholesale Trade for Selected Communities

2012				
Geographic Area	Number of Establishments	Sales (\$1,000)	Annual Payroll (\$1,000)	Number of Employees
Decorah	12	\$33,550	\$2,717	67
Winneshiek	33	\$281,939	\$14,542	271
2007				
Geographic Area	Number of Establishments	Sales (\$1,000)	Annual Payroll (\$1,000)	Number of Employees
Decorah	13	\$27,680	\$3,706	86
Winneshiek	30	\$167,268	\$9,586	259

Source: (2012 Economic Census of United States, 2012)

Figure 69 highlights per capita average retail sales for community in Northeast Iowa during 2016. Decorah shows the highest per capital retail sales (\$23,336), and Fayette shows the lowest (\$4,601).

Figure 69: Per Capita Average Retail Sales in Northeast Iowa



Source: (Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, 2017)

7.4 Decorah Financials

Figure 70, Figure 71, Figure 72, Figure 73 and Figure 74 discuss the City of Decorah’s financial information.

Decorah has historically not carried much bond, or outstanding debt issues. For FY20, the city has added one new debt structure, which is the general loan for library, water dept, and fire station repairs. This is a three-year debt retiring in June 2022. There are no debt obligations set to retire in FY20, and one set to retire in FY21. The city’s debt capacity and overall debt position remains strong. For FY20, the city’s debt amount is \$4,940,000, approximately 16.89% of the legal limit.

Decorah’s taxable valuations increased in 2018 by 1.8% or \$5,695,992. This compares to an increase of 3.5% in FY17 and a decrease of .13% in FY16. The increase for FY18 is most likely due to the increase in the residential rollback as it increased by 1.3132% to 56.9391% of assessed valuations.

Figure 70: FY19 Fund Balances

Source: (City of Decorah Annual Reports)

Fund	Year-end FY19 – as budgeted	Reserve % per policy
General	30%	30%
Fund balance	\$1,337,360	\$1,337,360
LOST – (local option sales tax)	52%	50%
Fund balance	\$491,964	\$412,544
Road Use Tax (gas tax)	64%	50%
Fund balance	\$624,029	\$487,997
Water	-20%	30%
Fund balance	\$-172,763	\$251,178
Sewer	3%	30%
Fund balance	\$25,476	\$322,893
Storm Water (implemented in 12/16)	0%	30%
Fund balance	\$0.00	\$38,400
Debt Service max (levy)	11.9%	25% of overall levy
Amount	\$1.67	\$3.52 (max)
Debt amount max	19.4%	75% of available limit
Amount	\$5,513,485	\$21,288,854

Figure 71: Revenue Trends in the City's Annual Financial Reports

Source: (City of Decorah Annual Reports)
Deleted – April 2019

All city financial reports and annual audits are available from the Clerk / Treasurer's Office.

Figure 72: General Obligation Bond Indebtedness Repayment Schedule (Includes TIF)

Fiscal Year	Annual Principal	Annual Interest	Total Annual
2014	950,000	90,309	1,040,309
2015	955,000	74,187	1,029,187
2016	984,000	52,877	1,036,877
2017	1,247,750	149,820	1,397,570
2018	1,251,075	148,700	1,399,775

Source: (City of Decorah)

Figure 73: General Obligation Bond Debt Analysis

Legal limit is 5% of total property valuation
FY17 legal limit equals \$25,316,519
FY17 actual amount is \$6,449,703 or 25.4% of limit

FY = fiscal year, July 1 – June 30

FY18 legal limit equals \$25,543,080
FY18 actual amount is \$5,669,960 or 22.1% of limit

FY19 legal limit equals \$28,385,139
FY19 actual amount is \$5,513,485 or 19.4% of limit

Figure 74: Decorah Property Tax Rate Trends for the Last Ten Fiscal Years

Fiscal Year	City of Decorah Levies	School District Levies	Winneshiek County Levies	Northeast Iowa Community College Levies	Total Tax Levy
2000	11.94677	13.15674	4.77349	.56995	32.15346
2001	11.77868	13.00120	6.92011	.57072	33.54356
2002	11.80528	13.16969	6.52857	.57507	33.27837
2003	11.74032	12.99554	6.37992	.57791	33.00115
2004	12.42092	14.93752	6.26276	.59804	35.59876
2005	12.42896	15.29597	6.56222	.60517	36.12785
2006	12.42744	15.62743	6.54306	.61127	36.41512
2007	12.42477	15.47141	6.53266	.61270	36.20613
2008	12.42144	15.39369	6.60676	.55714	36.17020
2009	12.42986	15.83816	7.44968	.99471	37.86942
2010	12.54483	15.82718	7.18782	1.03532	37.68107

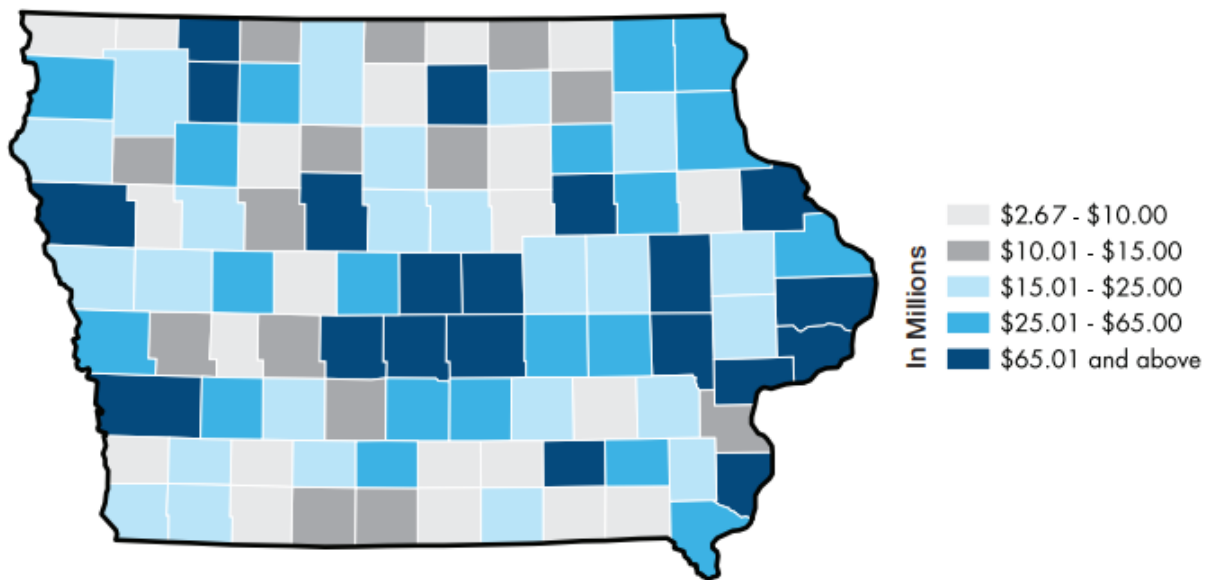
Source: (City of Decorah)

Note: Amounts shown above represent the tax rate per \$1,000 of taxable valuation.

7.5 Tourism Impact to the Local Economy

Tourism plays a major role in the local economy. The Iowa Tourism Office estimated the economic impact of tourism for Winneshiek County in 2016 at over \$30 million (Iowa Economic Development Authority, 2017). Figure 75 below shows the impact of tourism for Iowa counties. The bluff country of Northeast Iowa is a big draw for visitors from across the state and nation. As stated by the Winneshiek County Convention and Visitor's Bureau, "Heralded for undeniable scenic beauty, Winneshiek County and Decorah offer a plethora of things to do, see and experience. Whatever the season, whatever the reason; your stay is sure to be unforgettable."

Figure 75: Impact of Domestic Traveler Spending in Iowa, 2016



Source: (Travel Iowa, 2017)

7.6 Economic Development Programs and Organizations

Economic Resources

There are many programs at the federal, state, and regional level that can help Decorah and its residents in supporting new business growth and expansion. Below is a list of programs available to all residents of Winneshiek County. Any interest should be directed to the Winneshiek County Economic Development. More information:

www.winneshiekdevelopment.org

Tax Incentives in Decorah

Decorah offers Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and tax abatement incentives, there have been 16 Urban Revitalization or Urban Renewal Districts created in Decorah. Some, such as the Urban Revitalization district for the C-3 area, have been renewed after their expiration. The City has established criteria as well as an application process for projects that may be assisted by one of these economic development tools.

Some examples include infrastructure improvements at the Decorah Business Park; Fareway Store relocation assistance; and Residential (Riverwalk Subdivisions) assistance for public infrastructure through a rebateable TIF). The City of Decorah has adopted a residential tax abatement program in 2014 to encourage urban revitalization and housing. As shown in Figure 18 and Figure 19 in Chapter 2, the increase in the number of housing permits and residential construction happening in recent years can likely be attributed to the residential tax abatement program.

Tax Incentives in Winneshiek County

Both the City of Decorah and Winneshiek County offer tax abatement in select situations to assist a new or expanding business in making improvements to their property. When taxes are abated, the property owner continues to pay taxes on the property at the rate before improvements are made to that property. The increased amount of taxes is abated for a set period of time.

IowaMicroLoan

IowaMicroLoan is a program created to help Iowans realize their goal of achieving business success when there is a solid idea, team, and commitment to make it work. IowaMicroLoan was created for those microbusinesses that are considered on the fringe of risk-bearing capacity for most traditional financial institutions. More information:

www.iowamicroloan.org

Revolving Loan Funds

Funding is offered to new or expanding businesses via the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) and the Intermediary Relending Program (IRP) offered through Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission in Postville. These loans are available to businesses for which credit is not otherwise available on terms and conditions that permit completion of proposed business activities. More information: www.uerpc.org/revolving-loan-fund.html

New Business Start-up Packets

Winneshiek County Development Inc. (WCDDI) can assist retail and service start-up businesses with packets that include the following (more information:

www.winneshiekdevelopment.org):

- Local, regional and state contact information
- Possible incentives

- Ways to organize your business (sole proprietorship, partnership, C Corporation, S Corporation, Limited Liability Company)
- Business License Information Center – a clearinghouse for Iowa business requirements
- Websites of interest to businesses

Community Economic Betterment Account (CEBA)

The CEBA program provides financial assistance to companies that create new employment opportunities and/or retain existing jobs, and make new capital investment in Iowa. The amount of funding is based, in part, on the number of jobs to be created/retained. Funds are provided in the form of loans and forgivable loans. More information:

www.iowabiocenter.com/iowas-business-advantage/ceba.php

Economic Development Set-Aside Program (EDSA)

The EDSA program provides financial assistance to companies that create new employment opportunities and/or retain existing jobs, and make new capital investment in Iowa. The amount of funding is based, in part, on the number of jobs to be created/retained. Funds are provided in the form of loans and forgivable loans. At least 51 percent of the created/retained employment opportunities must be made available to individuals presently earning wages defined as low-and-moderate income. More information:

www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/EDSA

Value-Added Products and Processes Financial Assistance Program (VAAPFAP)

The Value-Added Agricultural Products and Processes Financial Assistance Program seeks to increase the innovative utilization of Iowa's agricultural commodities. It accomplishes this by investing in the development of new agri-products and new processing technologies. Financial assistance is provided in the form of loans and forgivable loans. More information: www.iowabiocenter.com/iowas-business-advantage/vap.php

New Jobs and Income Program (NJIP)

The Iowa New Jobs and Income Program provides a package of tax credits and exemptions to businesses making a capital investment of at least \$11.4 million and creating 50 or more jobs meeting wage and benefit targets. Qualifying businesses participating in NJIP receive substantial benefits. More information:

www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/NewJobs

Iowa Industrial New Jobs Training Program (260E)

The Iowa Industrial New Jobs Training Program provides customized classroom instruction, on-the-job training and other training activities for employees in newly created jobs. An employer may be reimbursed up to 50 percent of new employees' wages for on-the-job training. All training is customized to the company's special needs. Community colleges finance the program by the sale of tax-exempt bonds that are repaid by the tax revenue

generated by the salaries and capital invested to support the new jobs. As a result, company profits are not used to repay the bonds. More information:

www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/260E

Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE)

RISE is an Iowa Department of Transportation program designed to promote economic development through construction of roads and streets. Money comes from a 1.55-cent gas tax. There are two elements: competitive, which provides up to 50 percent funding; and immediate opportunity, which provides up to 80 percent funding. More information:

www.iowadot.gov/systems_planning/grant-programs/revitalize-iowa-s-sound-economy-rise-program

Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program (REDLG)

The REDLG program provides no interest loans up to \$450,000 to promote economic development projects. The money is provided to rural electric cooperatives that in turn relend funds for local projects. More information:

www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-economic-development-loan-grant-program

Iowa Targeted Small Business Program

This program is designed to help women, minorities and the disabled overcome some of the major hurdles of starting or growing a small business in Iowa. More information:

www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/asp/Tools/programDetails.aspx?pid=48&ppid=86

Incentives for Entrepreneurs

Figure 76 lists several resources available to entrepreneurs.

Figure 76: Resources for Entrepreneurs

RESOURCES FOR IOWA ENTREPRENEURS

BUSINESS ASSISTANCE RESOURCES FOR ENTREPRENEURS	
<p>Iowa Department of Economic Development www.iowalifechanging.com Business License Information Center Guide to Structuring Your New Business Information Technology Training Program Management Talent Recruitment Program</p>	<p>Iowa Small Business Development Centers www.iowasbdc.org (15 locations in Iowa) Business Counseling Training and Workshops</p>
<p>Iowa Entrepreneur Network www.iowaentrepreneur.com Best practices, investment resources, links</p>	<p>John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Centers Drake University (www.cbpa.drake.edu/entrep/pappajohn) Iowa State University (www.isupjcenter.org) North Iowa Area Community College (www.niacc.edu/pappajohn) University of Iowa (www.iowajpec.org) Jacobson Institute for Youth Entrepreneurship (www.jacobsoninstitute.org) University of Northern Iowa (www.jpec.org)</p>
<p>My Entre Net www.myentre.net Online community of entrepreneurs and resources Dream Big Grow Here (www.dreambiggrowhere.com)</p>	<p>Iowa Business Accelerators www.iowalifechanging.com/Business/business_growth.aspx Cedar Rapids (www.edcinc.org) Davenport/Quad Cities (www.newenturesinc.com) Des Moines (www.bizci.org) Iowa Lakes Corridor (www.lakescorridor.com/work/entrepreneurship) Mason City (www.niacc.edu/pappajohn/accelerator.html) Southwest Iowa (www.EnterprisingIowans.com)</p>
<p>Iowa Secretary of State www.sos.state.ia.us Legal forms of ownership/registration</p>	
<p>Iowa Department of Revenue & Finance www.iowa.gov/tax Business tax registration and filing</p>	

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCES FOR ENTREPRENEURS	
<p>Iowa Department of Economic Development www.iowalifechanging.com Grow Iowa Values Program Demonstration Fund Information Technology Joint Venture Fund Iowa Student Internship Program Supply Chain Development Program Infrastructure Assistance Program Entrepreneurial Assistance Fund Iowa Self-Employment (ISE) Targeted Small Business Program (TSB) Export Trade Assistance Program (ETAP) Tax Incentives – Business & Investor Technology Cooperative Program</p>	<p>Small Business Administration www.sba.gov Loan guarantee programs, technical and disaster assistance, advocacy</p>
	<p>Renew Rural Iowa/Iowa Farm Bureau www.renewruraliowa.com Business development, education, financial and technical resources</p>
	<p>Wellmark Community Venture Capital Fund Regional Application Centers Iowa State University (www.isupjcenter.org/assistance/technology/wellmark) University of Iowa (www.iowajpec.org/business.wellmark.cfm) University of Northern Iowa (www.jpec.org/wellmark.htm) North Iowa Area Comm. College (www.niacc.edu/pappajohn/financing.html)</p>
<p>Pappajohn Iowa Business Plan Competition www.iowabusinessplancompetition.com</p>	<p>Community Vitality Center/ISU Extension www.cvcia.org Community Demonstration Mini Grants Iowa Foundation for Microenterprise & Community Vitality IowaMicroLoan (www.iowamicroloan.org)</p>
<p>Venture & Equity Funds in Iowa www.iowalifechanging.com/business/equity_funds.aspx</p>	
<p>USDA Rural Development Business & Cooperative Programs www.rurdev.usda.gov/ia/rbs.html</p>	<p>Iowa Small Business Loan Program www.isbloan.org</p>

10/4/10

7.7 Economic Development Summary

In general, the City of Decorah enjoys a measure of success in regard to economic development. Like all rural communities, there are challenges, but Decorah's economic outlook has been positively impacted in recent years through tourism surrounding the Trout Run Trail and local breweries. One of Decorah's challenges is finding a balance between attracting a diversity of industry and manufacturing while also protecting sensitive environmental areas. Revitalization of abandoned or underutilized properties within the city limits is an area for improvement.

7.8 Economic Development Policies

- Continued efforts to maintain and improve the central business district and contiguous business districts as the principal retail center of the City will be encouraged and supported.
- Consider the extension of the C-3 design standard to other business districts, continued revitalization, development, and expansion of the central business district, including building front improvement programs, provisions for off-street parking, and improvements to the appearances of buildings, traffic circulation, and landscaping.
- Programs that require flexibility and innovation, regarding renewal and redevelopment of existing poorly developed commercial areas in the central business district and other areas in the City, will receive favorable consideration and support through establishment of urban renewal districts, tax increment financing (TIF), and other development programs and standards.
- Preservation of *historically significant* buildings and structures *in all commercial areas of the City* will be encouraged and supported.
 - The committee should encourage the definition and identification for criteria of historically significant (as stated in residential) areas and consider community's input.
- National Register of Historic Places – Downtown Designation
 - Continue to promote policies that encourage historic preservation efforts.

National Register Listing

The August 21 National Register listing of the Decorah Commercial district is the completion of a three-year project that began with a small state-funded project feasibility grant in late 2014.

The project was made possible by a state of Iowa Historical Resource Development Program REAP grant, which was endorsed by a dozen local civic, governmental, and historical/educational groups. The \$25,000 state grant was matched by \$6500 in contributions from the Decorah Bank, Depot Outlet, Java John's, and StoryPeople, and by over 1000 hours of local volunteer research time.

The National Register listing follows reviews by the Decorah Historic Preservation Commission, the state Historic Preservation Office, the State Nominations Review Committee, and the federal Department of the Interior. The final nomination document may be found at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm>.

The district includes Water St. from the old Milwaukee Depot to Vesterheim, and the adjoining one-block sections of Washington, Winnebago, and Court Streets. The district includes 128 buildings and the brick paving of Court Street.



Photograph cutline:
Downtown Decorah, early twentieth-century postcard property of Jan Olive

CHAPTER 8: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION



Photos above by Randy Uhl

8.1 Introduction

Intergovernmental cooperation involves working with neighboring communities, school districts and agencies to understand how their future planning and development activity may impact the City of Decorah and vice versa. At a minimum, this should involve sharing information about the City of Decorah plan with neighboring communities and agencies sharing their plans and initiatives with the City of Decorah.

8.2 Agreements with Neighboring or Overlapping Jurisdictions

The City of Decorah has formal agreements with neighboring or overlapping jurisdictions and will continue to encourage these whenever they are mutually beneficial. One example is the City/County 28E agreement with Winneshiek County where the wastewater from the Freeport district is treated by the Decorah wastewater treatment facility. Another example is the 28E agreement with Winneshiek County, Decorah School District, Luther College and Winneshiek Medical Center to form the Decorah MetroNet to develop a fiber optic network in the City. Yet another example is The Upper Iowa River Watershed Management Authority, which is a board of directors from cities, counties, soil and water conservation districts and a drainage district within the Upper Iowa River basin who have agreed to work together to reduce flooding and improve water quality.

8.3 Intergovernmental Cooperation Summary

The City of Decorah has a history of collaboration with Winneshiek County, the surrounding municipalities, and other entities. Future collaboration should be encouraged and strengthened, as this increases efficient use of resources.

8.4 Intergovernmental Cooperation Policies

- The coordination of urban development in the immediate planning area adjoining the city limits with Winneshiek County should be encouraged and supported.
- Coordination and cooperative efforts should be maintained with Winneshiek County, to control and encourage preservation of agricultural land not needed for urban development.
- Coordination and cooperative efforts should be maintained with Winneshiek County regarding annexation of areas required for controlled development and growth of the City.

CHAPTER 9: LAND USE



Photo by Randy Uhl



Photo by decorahnews.com

9.1 Introduction

This element provides an examination of the existing land use pattern and development requirements and a proposed future land use scenario in the City of Decorah.

This update of the Future Land Use Plan Element of the 1990 Decorah Comprehensive Plan has been prepared to assist Decorah in guiding activities for improving the city, as well as to assist in accommodating new growth and development. A primary purpose of the Future Land Use Plan Element is to insure protection of existing conforming uses and future development from encroachment by incompatible uses. This protection benefits residents, landowners, developers and investors alike.

The Future Land Use Plan Element outlines the principles and performance standards to be followed for the control and distribution of land development intensity and population densities. Existing land uses are evaluated, and the proposed distribution, location, and extent of future land uses are designated. The principles and standards for implementing the Future Land Use Plan are specifically defined in the City's land development regulations; the zoning code and subdivision regulations. The land development regulations are the foremost means of implementing the guidelines in the Decorah Comprehensive Plan and controlling the uses of land in the City.

9.2 Land Use Issues

Decorah's location nestled in the bluff lands of Northeast Iowa and the Iowa River that flows through the City makes land use somewhat limited. As Decorah continues to grow it will need to identify areas to expand while dealing with the environmental constraints that make this community a beautiful place to live and visit.

9.3 Existing Land Use Inventory

The existing land use of Decorah is listed in Figure 77. Current zoning in Decorah is illustrated in Figure 78 and Figure 79. The largest existing land use category in the City is agriculture. It comprises 1,732 acres, or 38%, of the City’s land area. After agriculture, the next largest categories are commercial (25%), residential (24%), other (12%) and industrial (1%). The “Other” land use category is generally made up of right of way areas that are unable to be developed, such as alleys and roads.

Figure 77: Land Use Acreages

Land Use	Acreage	Percent
Agricultural	1,732	38%
Commercial	1,132	25%
Industrial	44	1%
Residential	1,125	24%
Other	545	12%
Total	4,578	100%

Source: (Winneschik County GIS Coordinator, 2018)

Figure 78: City of Decorah Two Mile Limits and County Zoning Map

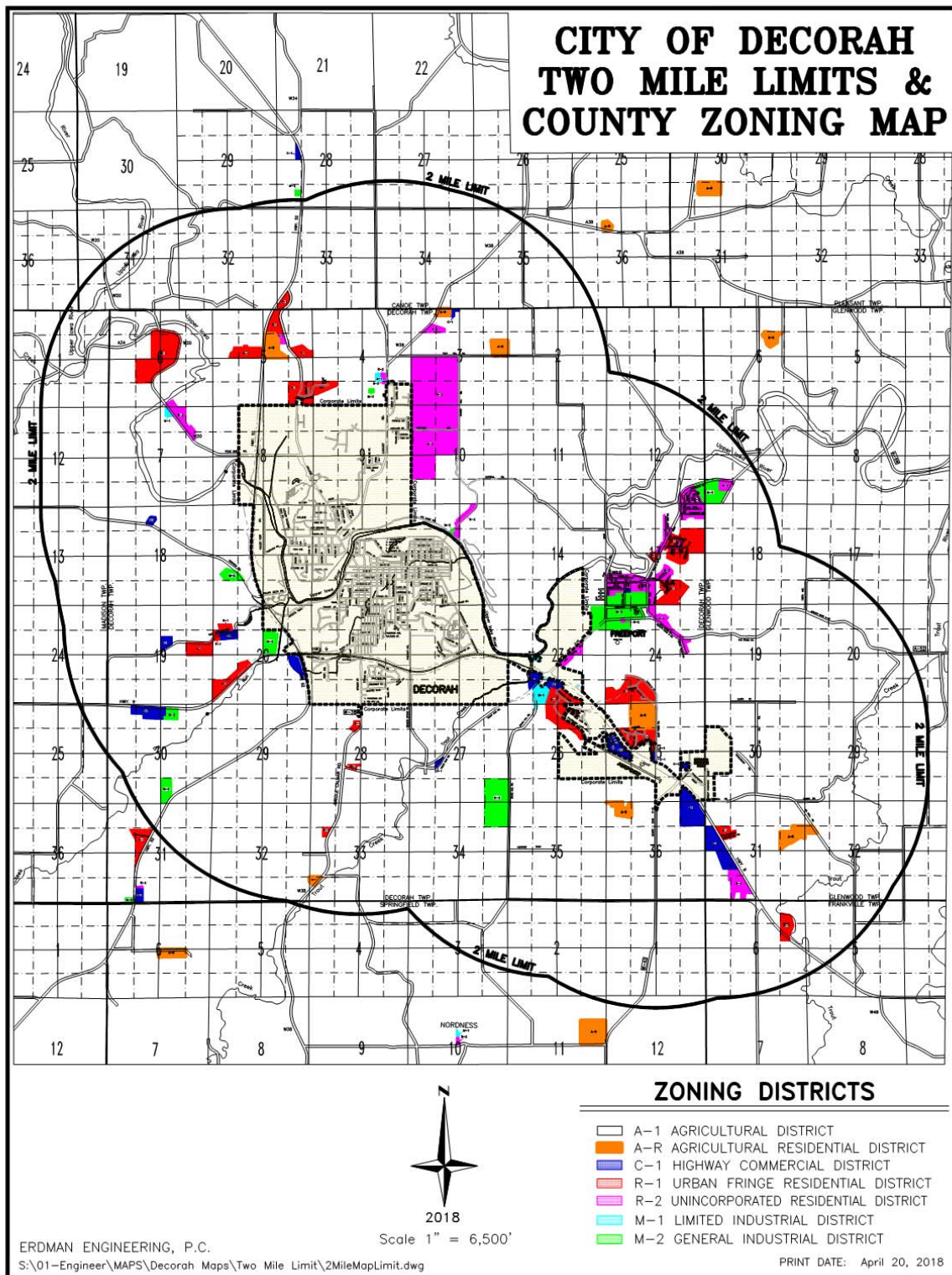
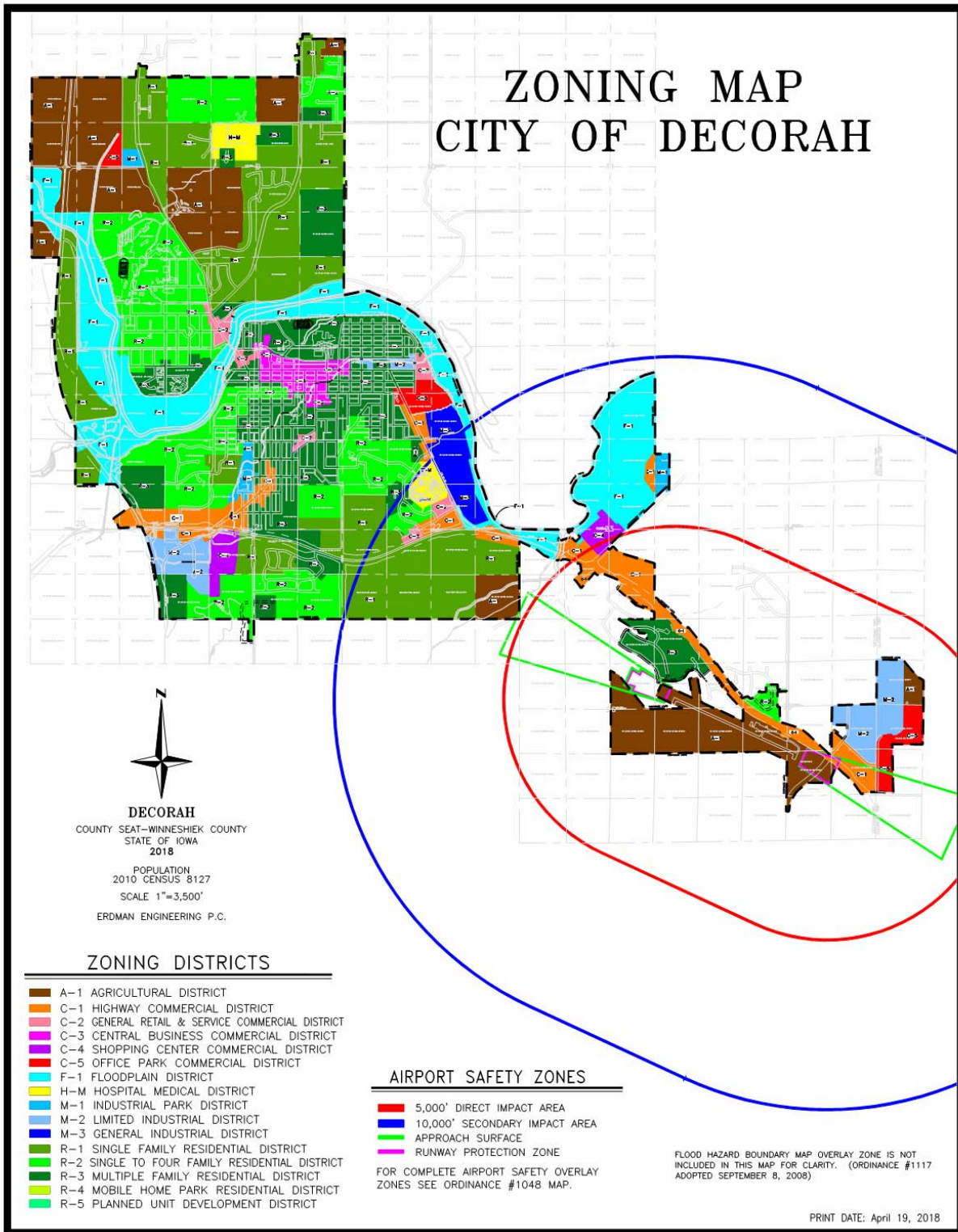


Figure 79: City of Decorah Zoning Map



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9.4 Land Use and Development Requirements

The City of Decorah's Municipal Code addresses land use and development requirements in detail. The Code is available to the public and can be viewed on-line at www.library.municode.com/ia/decorah/codes/code_of_ordinances. The primary chapters of the Municipal Code related to land use and development requirements include the Zoning Code and the Subdivision Code.

9.5 Future Land Use

In addition to the land use goals, objectives, and policies, the City of Decorah utilizes a Future Land Use Map to guide future growth and development. This map, as provided in Figure 80, offers a graphical view of anticipated, potential, or future land use development for the entire community. General descriptions of the land use classifications shown on the Future Land Use Map are as follows:

Commercial

RSC – Retail Service Commercial

(C-2) Neighborhood convenience and service centers providing limited commercial, personal and professional services

HC- Highway Commercial

(C-1) Commercial business oriented to accommodate both the local consumer and the automobile-traveling public

OPC – Office Park Commercial

(C-5) Professional and business offices compatible with established residential areas

Industrial

LI- Light Industrial

(M-1) Manufacturing, industrial and warehousing uses with structures generally one or two stories in height, large lots, landscaped grounds and ample provision for off-street parking and loading spaces

LDI- Limited Industrial

(M-2) Developments of medium industrial nature

GI- General Industrial

(M-3) Heavy industrial with few restrictions on use

Residential

LDR- R 1 Low Density Residential

(R-1) Low density developments of single-family detached homes

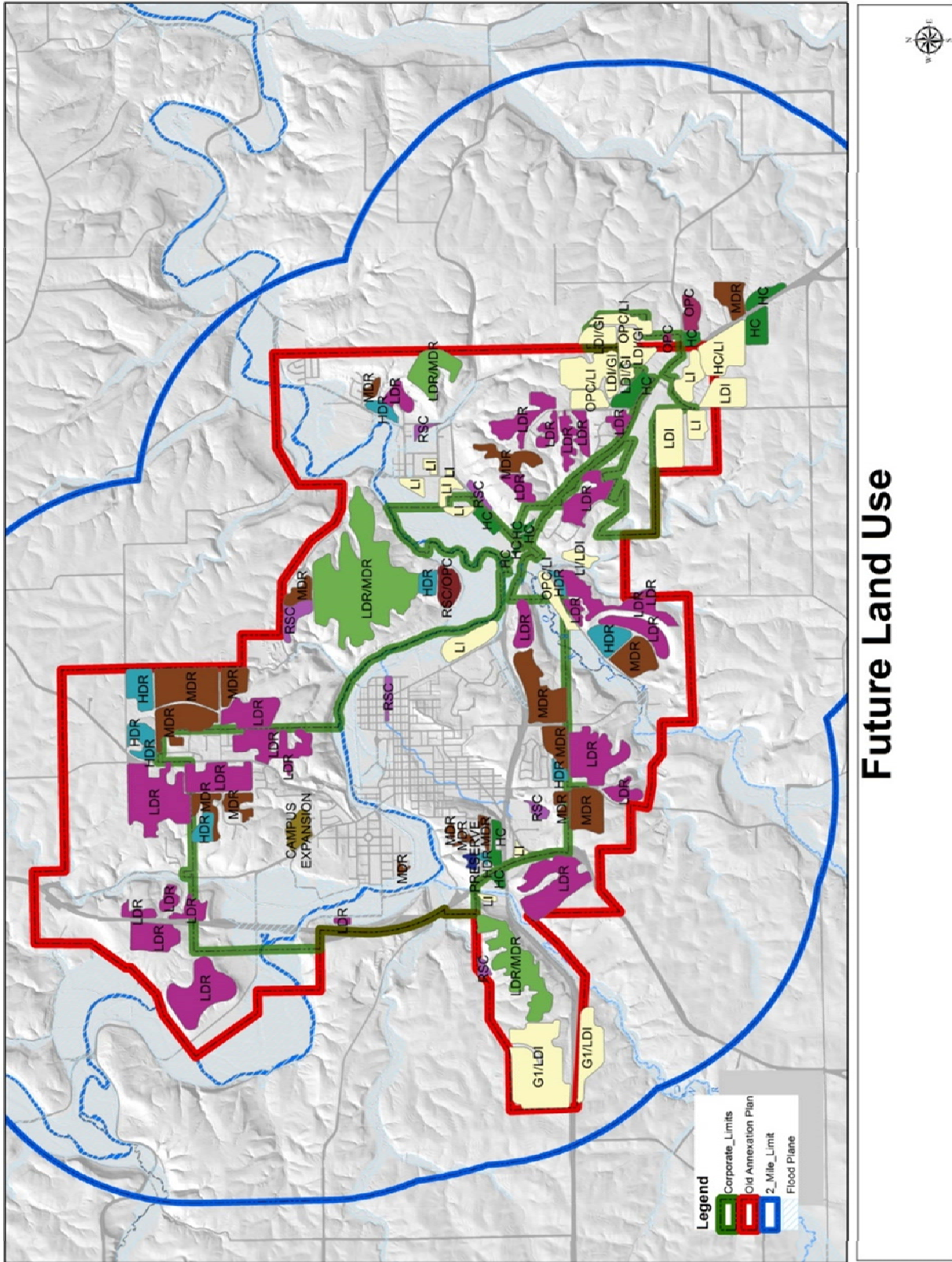
MDR- R 2 Medium Density Residential

(R-2) Medium density developments of buildings with 2-4 dwelling units per structure

HDR- R 3 High Density Residential

(R-3) High density developments of more than 4 dwelling units per structure

Figure 80: Future Land Use



Future Land Use

9.6 Land Use Summary

The City of Decorah's Land Use is driven in many ways by the Upper Iowa River and the limestone bluffs. This is both a constraint and an opportunity, because while the steep terrain and floodplains cause limitations for development, those same constraints also help ensure that open space and natural areas remain intact. The challenge for the City of Decorah is to identify appropriate locations for expansion that have access to public utilities, are at lower risk for flooding, have appropriate soils and terrain, and do not encroach on areas of dense tree coverage or high CSR ratings.

As the City of Decorah continues to plan for growth it must consider the cost that accompanies it. City amenities will need to be extended, land will need to be developed, and infrastructure may need to be expanded. Care should be taken that the cost of these expansions and extensions is balanced with the funds to offset the costs incurred.

9.7 Land Use Policies

- Solar access rights and energy conservation are encouraged in the review process of subdivision plats and site plans.
- Preservation of wetlands in accordance with state and federal regulations will be implemented in the review process of subdivision plats and site plans.
- Tree replacement and preservation guidelines should be improved and incorporated in the subdivision and site plan ordinances.
- Controlled urban development will be encouraged to extend outward from developed area to insure the orderly growth of Decorah.
- Coordination and cooperative efforts will be maintained with Winneshiek County to control development outside and encourage it to occur in the City.
- The voluntary annexation process should be encouraged to the extent possible. Consideration should be given to involuntary annexation of certain areas with potential for development, and to enhance orderly development and compatible land use as expressed through the policies and land-use plan.
- Areas within the two-mile limit with potential for urban development should be considered for annexation to the City during the planning period.
- City-owned land should be considered for annexation to the City.

- Large bulk commercial uses, and general highway related service uses, should be encouraged to locate along Highway 9, in the Decorah Business Park, and in Freeport in areas suitable for that type of development. Unless planned, commercial and industrial development along Highway 52 should be discouraged to protect conservation of open spaces and retain the visual aesthetics of this gateway entrance and corridor into the community.
- Additional site plan standards and regulations should be adopted and enforced, as part of the zoning, including a defined gateway ordinance, to improve visual quality of commercial development and redevelopment, traffic circulation, and compatibility with adjoining land uses.
- To minimize congestion and improve traffic movements, cluster commercial development should be encouraged, in lieu of strip development, along major streets.
- Development of light industrial uses within planned industrial parks should be encouraged and promoted.
- All residential and certain commercial land uses should be prohibited from areas that are set aside for future industrial development.
- Development of planned industrial parks should be encouraged in areas suitable for industrial development.
- Buffers in the form of natural barriers of streams and wooded areas, landscaping and screening should be provided when industrial uses adjoin residential and other incompatible uses.
- An ordinance defining mixed use and sustainable development should be encouraged.
- Density of residential development should be related to the physical characteristics of the area, including topography and soils, and the availability of municipal utilities. The following densities are considered to meet these criteria:

Areas that are served by municipal sanitary sewer and water systems or the equivalent:

Low Density:	6-8 persons per gross acre 3-4 housing units per gross acre Typical net lot size- 10,000 square feet
Medium Density:	8-12 persons per gross acre 4-6 housing units per gross acre Typical net lot size- 8,000 square feet

High Density: 14-32 persons per gross acre
7-16 housing units per gross acre
Typical net lot size- 4,500 square feet

Areas that are served by the municipal water system only:

Low Density: 4 – 6 persons per gross acre
2 – 3 housing units per gross acre
Typical net lot size – 18,000 square feet

Areas that are not served by municipal utility systems or the equivalent:

Low Density: 2 – 4 persons per gross acre
1 – 2 housing units per gross acre
Typical net lot size – 22,000 square feet

Areas that are designated for agricultural use, residential reserve & acreage development:

Low Density: 2 persons per 10 gross acres
1 unit per 10 gross acres
Typical net lot size – 10 acres

- Residential development, such as a planned unit development (PUD), should be encouraged to provide flexibility and better utilization and preservation of land; particularly in areas where soils, topography and tree cover are limiting factors.
- Development of vacant land within the existing and future corporate limits will have a high priority in meeting future land-use demand.
- Potential historic and archaeological sites should be identified in the development and redevelopment of publicly and privately-owned land and structures. Standards should be provided in subdivision regulations and site plan regulations that require the identification of the historical or archaeological potential of sites and structures.
- The Decorah Historic Preservation Commission should be consulted for consideration and integration of historic preservation opportunities in Decorah.
- Residential planning should focus on the inherent growth in development occurring to the North, especially along the Locust Road corridor. The city needs to focus on this natural development growth pattern and expand on the 2018 transportation study to augment deliberate and specific desires to grow the residential base to the North.

CHAPTER 10: IMPLEMENTATION



Photo of the Upper Iowa River by Randy Uhl

10.1 Introduction

The purpose of the implementation element is to explain how this plan will be implemented to achieve the desired outcomes (goals, objectives, etc.) as set forth by the City of Decorah. The City of Decorah Comprehensive Plan addresses many important components critical to sustaining a healthy community while preserving the area's natural resources and history. As change is inevitable, the plan may need to be amended in the future to appropriately reflect those changes. This element includes a table of all the policies highlighted in each previous element of the plan, with a timeframe for those actions. In this way, this element serves as the master "to do" list for implementing the plan.

Time Frame

This category assigns approximate timeframes for strategies to begin implementation. Some strategies will take a significant amount of time for completion, so this category only indicates start times.

- > Underway – Started as the comprehensive plan was being drafted
- > Immediately – Should start as soon as possible after plan adoption
- > 0 to 2 years
- > 2 to 5 years
- > Beyond 5 years
- > Ongoing

Decorah Planning & Zoning will be instrumental for implementing many of the strategies. However, they cannot act alone and this category lists partners who will be crucial to success. (The top agency listed in this category is the lead organization on the strategy. This is usually the Decorah Planning & Zoning.) Abbreviations used are:

DPZ- Decorah Planning & Zoning
DA – Decorah Administration
DPD- Decorah Police Department
DFD- Decorah Fire Department
DSD- Decorah Streets Department
DED- Decorah Economic Development
DWD- Decorah Water Department
DWW- Decorah Waste Water
DCM- Decorah Chamber of Commerce
DE- Decorah Engineering
DHP- Decorah Historical Preservation
DCC- Decorah City Council
DTB- Decorah Tree Board
DMAB- Decorah Municipal Airport Board
WC- Winneshiek County
DPP- Decorah Parks & Recreation
DSD- Decorah School District
LC- Luther College
DLB- Decorah Library Board
COD- City of Decorah
WCR – Winneshiek County Residents
DCR- Decorah City Residents
VM- Vesterheim Museum

Resource Needs

The categories described below take into account both direct expenditures and staff time costs.

- “Minimum” resource needs indicate that the implementation of the strategy would likely take less than \$10,000 in direct expenditures and could be accomplished within the schedules of existing staff and/or volunteers of the responsible parties.
- “Moderate” resource needs indicate that the implementation of the strategy would take more than \$10,000 and less than \$50,000 in direct expenditures and would require some coordination between agencies and increased staff time.
- “Significant” resource needs indicate that implementation of the strategy would take more than \$50,000 in direct expenditures and would require significant coordination between agencies and significant staff time.

Strategy	Time Frame	Lead Agency/ Partner(s)	Resources
The major street plan should be maintained that is integrated with the regional street system and reflects major traffic generators and adjacent land-use patterns.	Ongoing	DPZ, DE, DSD	Minimum
Standards for major and local streets should be developed and enforced in the subdivision ordinance and city standard specifications to insure adequate right-of-way, pavement width, street access, and dedication of street right-of-way prior to development. SUDAS guidelines should be considered for planning and construction.	Ongoing	DPZ, DE	Minimum
Provision of frontage drives and limited access along Highways 9 and 52 to provide for adequate traffic control and land-use development should be encouraged.	Ongoing	DPZ,	Minimum
Residential areas and residential local service streets should be protected from the impact of industrial traffic by enforcement of truck routes in the city, to the greatest extent possible.	Ongoing	DPD	Minimum
The street improvement program priorities should generally be based on existing and future traffic volumes based on land use projections and street maintenance evaluations.	Ongoing	DPZ, Street Dept and Committee	Minimum
Alternative traffic routes between the outlying areas and the city should be considered as traffic volumes warrant.	Ongoing	DPZ, DE	Moderate
Various options regarding mass transit to serve Decorah should be explored, including the development of a regional transportation center.	Ongoing	DCR, COD, DED, DE	Moderate- Significant

Continued improvements and development at the Decorah Municipal Airport should be in accordance with an updated airport master plan.	0-2 yrs Airport Layout Plan was approved in May 2014.	DMAB, DED, COD, DCR	Moderate
The development of a regional airport should be considered.	Considered and no current momentum		Significant
Use of the airport by commuter aircraft should be promoted.	Ongoing	DMAB	Minimum
Streets should be planned with consideration for bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. This should include new development as well as street redevelopment.	Ongoing	DPZ, DE	Moderate-Significant
Access management for major streets should be encouraged and implemented and utilize SUDAS guidelines as a reference for new and existing streets.	Immediately SUDAS adopted by city council in July 2018	DPZ, DE	Minimum
A detailed written plan should be established that will reflect development, maintenance, and orderly growth of area trails, parks, recreation activities and community facilities.	0-2 years	DPR	Minimum-Moderate
A system of neighborhood parks that serve existing and future residential areas should be developed in accordance with the parks and recreation plan.	Beyond 5 years	DPR,DPZ	Minimum-Moderate
The system of bikeways and trails that links parks, recreation areas and schools with residential areas should be further developed in the Decorah area.	Immediately	DPR,DPZ, DSD, DE	Moderate-Significant
The local trail system should be expanded and integrated with county and regional trail systems -- to	2-5 years	DPZ, WC, DE, DA	Moderate-Significant

enhance connectivity and multi-modal use.			
Cooperative efforts with all public entities, governmental agencies and surrounding municipalities; including schools, college, and counties including Winneshiek, regarding planning and development of recreational facilities and programs and joint use of facilities should be encouraged and continued.	Ongoing	COD, DPR, DA	Minimum
Public park dedication standards for developers should be established.	Immediately	DPZ	Minimum
Schools			
Future needs of area school districts and colleges will be coordinated and incorporated into this plan.	Immediately	DSD, LC, DA	Minimum-Significant
Community Facilities			
Future needs of the Decorah Fire Department will be coordinated in accordance with the standards of the Insurance Service Office (ISO) and this plan.	Ongoing	DFD, DCC	Minimum-Moderate
Relocation and potential consolidation of city facilities should be considered during the planning period.	Ongoing	COD	Minimum-Significant
The city library should be recognized as a vital part of this community and overall maintenance and operations should be supported.	Ongoing Major funding was allocated for infrastructure repairs in 2019	DCC, DLB,	Minimum-Moderate

Development of a community center should be encouraged.	Ongoing This was studied and discussed in 2013 and there was no ongoing interest in funding.	COD	Significant
The Vesterheim Museum should be recognized as a vital part of this community and the city should participate in a cooperative and coordinated planning process in support of the Museum's integration and development in its existing downtown area.	Ongoing	DCC, DPZ, VM	Minimum
Utilities			
Coordination of the immediate and long-range plans of the wastewater treatment and sanitary sewer system with the land-use plan and policies will be encouraged and implemented.	Ongoing	DWW, DPZ, DE	Minimum-Significant
A detailed water system plan addressing current and projected needs for production, storage, treatment, transmission and distribution should be developed. The plan should address both domestic and fire flows and should be developed in conjunction with the land use plan.	2 to 5 years	DWD, DE,	Moderate-Significant
The water supply wells should be protected from extraneous surface contamination.	Ongoing Wellhead protection plan developed in 2014.	DWD	Moderate-Significant
City standard specifications for street and utility improvements should be developed to provide uniform design of utilities and streets.	2 to 5 years SUDAS was adopted in July 2018	DPZ, DE	Minimum-Moderate

Storm drainage system design criteria should be developed in accordance with the land use policies and plan to serve as a guide for developers and the city to improve storm drainage systems. The storm sewers in areas subject to future development by sub dividers should be designed to accommodate runoff from storm events of a 10-year recurrence.	Beyond 5 years	DPZ, DE, DCC	Minimum-Moderate
An ordinance should be considered that addresses development within established flood limits. This ordinance should be established using the city's accepted flood map. Full or partial prohibition should be considered for development in wetland and flood limit areas.	0 to 2 years	DPZ, DE	Minimum
Recycling of solid waste and safe methods for disposal of toxic waste should be promoted.	Ongoing	DCC, DWD	Minimum
The preservation and protection of historical and archaeological sites and environmentally sensitive areas should be continued.	Ongoing	DHP, DE	Minimum
Potential historic and archaeological areas should be identified in the development and redevelopment of publicly and privately-owned land and structures. Standards should be provided in subdivision regulations and site plan regulations that require the identification of the historical or archaeological potential of sites and structures.	Ongoing	DPZ, DHP	Minimum
The Decorah Historic Preservation Commission should be consulted for consideration and integration of historic preservation opportunities in Decorah.	Ongoing	DPZ, DHP	Minimum

Abatement of air and noise pollution will be encouraged in residential areas.	Ongoing	DPZ	Minimum
Solar access rights and energy conservation are encouraged in the review process of subdivision plats and site plans.	Ongoing	DPZ	Minimum
Appropriate buffering should be provided between residential and other land uses.	Ongoing	DPZ, DA	Minimum
Preservation of wetlands in accordance with state and federal regulations will be implemented in the review process of subdivision plats and site plans.	Ongoing	DPZ, DE	Minimum
Tree replacement and preservation guidelines should be improved and incorporated in the subdivision and site plan ordinances.	Ongoing	DPZ, DTB	Minimum
The coordination of urban development in the immediate planning area adjoining the city limits with Winneshiek County should be encouraged and supported.	Ongoing	DPZ, WC, DA	Minimum
The protection of the floodplains of the Upper Iowa River, Dry Run, Trout Run Creek and other tributary stream channels, and embankments from incompatible development will be given high priority.	Ongoing	DPZ	Minimum
The steep rock land, limestone outcroppings, and other scenic landscapes should continue to be preserved through acquisition, of easements and other methods.	Ongoing	DPZ	Minimum-Significant

Dry Run, the principal drainage channel through the developed part of Decorah should be improved and maintained as open space through residentially developed areas and enclosed only where necessary due to extension of streets and commercial and industrial development in the central business district.	Immediately	DPZ, DE	Minimum
Storm drainage easements for Dry Run and other drainage channels and storm sewers should be established.	Ongoing	DPZ, DE	Moderate
Urban Growth			
Future land use needs will be developed based on a population estimate of 15,000 by the year 2020.	Immediately <small>These numbers have been modified.</small>	DPZ	Minimum
Controlled urban development will be encouraged to extend outward from developed area to insure the orderly growth of Decorah.	Immediately	DPZ,DCC,	Minimum
Coordination and cooperative efforts will be maintained with Winneshiek County to control development outside and encourage it to occur in the city.	Ongoing	DPZ, DCC, WC	Minimum
Development of vacant land within the existing and future corporate limits will have a high priority in meeting future land-use demand.	Ongoing	DPZ	Minimum
Residential Land Use			
Density of residential development should be related to the physical characteristics of the area, including topography and soils, and the availability of municipal utilities. See principles for further guidance.	Ongoing	DPZ	Minimum

<p>A variety in the type of housing construction should be encouraged and supported to meet the housing needs of the population. The housing mix should reflect anticipated trends to higher density development, and demands for affordable housing, while being compatible with existing residential density and development. Housing types may include apartments, townhouses, and single-family dwellings, including manufactured housing and mobile homes.</p>	Ongoing	DPZ, DCC	Minimum
<p>Residential development, such as a planned unit development (PUD), should be encouraged to provide flexibility and better utilization and preservation of land; particularly in areas where soils, topography and tree cover are limiting factors.</p>	Ongoing	DPZ, DCC	Minimum
<p>Coordination and cooperative efforts should be maintained with Winneshiek County, to control and encourage preservation of agricultural land not needed for urban development.</p>	Ongoing	DPZ, DCC	Minimum
<p>Any development in and around areas of the city meeting the criteria as a historically significant area should recognize and preserve the historic setting, architecture character and architectural design characteristics of the buildings and area of the city.</p>	Ongoing	DPZ, DHP	Minimum
<p>The committee should encourage the definition and identification for criteria of “<i>historically significant areas</i>” and define “<i>and around</i>” with community’s input.</p>	Immediately	DHP, DCC	

Commercial Land Use

Continued efforts to maintain and improve the central business district and contiguous business districts as the principal retail center of the city will be encouraged and supported.	Ongoing	DPZ, DED,	Minimum-Moderate
Consider the extension of the C3 design standard to other business district, continued revitalization, development, and expansion of the central business district, including building front improvement programs, provisions for off-street parking, and improvements to the appearances of buildings, traffic circulation, and landscaping.	2 to 5 years	DPZ, DCC	Minimum
Programs that require flexibility and innovation, regarding renewal and redevelopment of existing poorly developed commercial areas in the central business district and other areas in the city, will receive favorable consideration and support through establishment of urban renewal districts, tax increment financing (TIF), and other development programs and standards.	Ongoing	DPZ, DED, DCC	Minimum-Moderate
Large bulk commercial uses, and general highway related service uses, should be encouraged to locate along Highway 9, in the Decorah Business Park, and in Freeport in areas suitable for that type of development. Unless planned, commercial and industrial development along Highway 52 should be discouraged to protect conservation of open spaces and retain the visual aesthetics of this gateway entrance and corridor into the community.	Immediately	DPZ, DCC	Minimum

Additional site plan standards and regulations should be adopted and enforced, as part of the zoning, including a defined gateway ordinance, to improve visual quality of commercial development and redevelopment, traffic circulation, and compatibility with adjoining land uses.	Immediately	DPZ, DCC	Minimum
Preservation of <i>historically significant</i> buildings and structures <i>in all commercial areas of the city</i> will be encouraged and supported.	Immediately	DPZ, DHP, DCR, DCC	Minimum
The committee should encourage the definition and identification for criteria of historically significant areas and consider community's input.	Immediately	DPZ, DHP, DCR	Minimum
To minimize congestion and improve traffic movements, cluster commercial development should be encouraged, in lieu of strip development, along major streets.	Ongoing	DPZ, DA, DE	Minimum
Industrial Land Use			
Development of light industrial uses within planned industrial parks should be encouraged and promoted.	Ongoing	DPZ	Minimum
All residential and certain commercial land uses should be prohibited from areas that are set aside for future industrial development.	Ongoing	DPZ	Minimum
Development of planned industrial parks should be encouraged in areas suitable for industrial development.	Ongoing	DPZ	Minimum
Buffers in the form of natural barriers of streams and wooded areas, landscaping and screening should be provided when industrial uses adjoin residential and other incompatible uses.	Ongoing	DPZ	Minimum

An ordinance defining mixed use and sustainable development should be encouraged.	0 to 2 years	DPZ	Minimum
Annexation			
The voluntary annexation process should be encouraged to the extent possible. Consideration should be given to involuntary annexation of certain areas with potential for development, and to enhance orderly development and compatible land use as expressed through the policies and land-use plan.	Ongoing	DPZ, WCR	Minimum-Significant
Areas within the two-mile limit with potential for urban development should be considered for annexation to the city during the planning period.	Ongoing	DPZ, WC	Minimum-Significant
City-owned land such should be considered for annexation to the city.	Ongoing	DPZ	Minimum-Significant
Coordination and cooperative efforts should be maintained with Winneshiek County regarding annexation of areas required for controlled development and growth of the city.	Ongoing	DPZ, WC	Minimum

10.2 Plan Adoption

The City of Decorah’s Comprehensive Smart Plan was reviewed by the public on December 18th, 2011. The City Council reviewed the plan and voted to adopt Decorah’s Comprehensive Smart Plan on February 6th, 2012.

10.3 Integration and Consistency

It is important that all elements of the plan be integrated and made consistent. As a result of the comprehensive plan being developed in a coordinated and simultaneous effort, the planning process has ensured that the development and review of each element is consistent with the others; and based on that analysis, there are no known inconsistencies between the planning elements. Furthermore, Decorah has and will continue to work with Winneshiek

county in updating its Comprehensive Plan which will help guide the entire County in its future planning needs.

10.4 Measurement of Plan Progress

As part of the comprehensive planning process, a number of goals, objectives and actions were developed that when implemented are intended to build stronger relationships and give direction to the city board and its residents. Many of the objectives are long term, while some can be accomplished in the next couple of years.

To help the City in measuring progress of the comprehensive plan, a table of action statements has been created that identify the action, key parties, timeframes, and possible funding requirements to accomplish those actions. The identified actions will provide guidance to the plan commission which can measure the progress of achieving implementation of the comprehensive plan. It is recommended that the plan be continually reviewed by the city boards as copies will be available at each meeting location.

10.5 Plan Monitoring, Amendments, and Updates

The City of Decorah Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a living document. Over time, social and economic conditions and values tend to change. The comprehensive plan should be updated periodically to reflect these changes. Systematic, periodic updates will ensure that not only the statistical data is current but also the plan's goals, policies, and action reflect the current situation and modern needs. It is recommended the plan be reviewed for consistency every five years, with a major update planned every 20 years.

The Planning & Zoning Commission has engaged in a proposed amendment and updates to the city's 2012 Comprehensive Plan. This amendment is considered an update and not a full revision. Updates in data, language, forecasts, some planning and zoning related targets are amended, and review of demographic data comprise the prevalent substance to the update / amendment.

During this process, staff recommended the commission consider looking toward a ten- or fifteen-year full revision in 2022 through 2027. A full revision may take one year to complete.

The Commission approved amendments in May 2019. The City Council held a work session on Monday, June 3, 2019 and a public hearing on Monday, June 17, 2019. The City Council approved the amendments to the 2012 Comprehensive Plan on Monday, June 17, 2019 via **Resolution No. 2973**.

CHAPTER 11: SMART PLANNING PRINCIPLES

11.1 Introduction

The smart planning principles outlined in this chapter apply to the entire comprehensive planning process as a whole. The use of the following ten smart planning principles is intended to produce greater economic opportunity, enhance environmental integrity, improve public health outcomes, and safeguard Decorah's quality of life. The principles also address the need for fair and equitable decision-making processes.

11.2 Collaboration

Everyone is encouraged to be involved and provide comment during the decision making process and during implementation of such decisions. This includes governments, communities and individuals, both residing in the community and those from outside the community. Decorah will strive to develop and implement a strategy to facilitate such participation. In cases where jurisdictions overlap, Decorah will work together with those entities to reach their common goals.

11.3 Efficiency, Transparency and Consistency

The City of Decorah strives to be efficient in all aspects of its operations, promoting good stewardship of the community's resources and the taxpayers' money. The City promotes transparency to make the governing of the community accessible to the general public with consistent outcomes that seek to put into action the equitable distribution of development benefits and costs.

11.4 Clean, Renewable and Efficient Energy

The City of Decorah encourages clean and renewable energy use and increased energy efficiency wherever possible in both public and private development.

11.5 Occupational Diversity

Decorah should promote increased diversity of employment and business opportunities, promote access to education and training, expand entrepreneurial opportunities, and promote the establishment of businesses in locations near existing housing, infrastructure, and transportation.

11.6 Revitalization

Decorah encourages the revitalization of established town centers and neighborhoods by promoting development that conserves land, protects historic resources, promotes pedestrian accessibility, and integrates different uses of property. Infill development is preferred over new construction in undeveloped and outlying areas. (See 9. Land Use Policies)

11.7 Housing Diversity

Decorah should encourage diversity in the types of available housing, support the rehabilitation of existing housing, and promote the location of housing near employment centers, colleges and any future public transportation systems.

11.8 Community Character

Decorah should promote activities and development that are consistent with the character and architectural style of the community and should respond to local values regarding the physical character of the community. (See 9. Land Use Policies)

11.9 Natural Resources and Agricultural Protection

The City of Decorah places a high priority on natural resources and agricultural protection, recognizing that they are a primary component of its community character. Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should emphasize protection, preservation, and restoration of natural resources, agricultural land, and cultural and historic landscapes, and should increase the availability of open spaces and recreational facilities.

11.10 Sustainable Design

The City of Decorah promotes sustainable design and construction standards in developments, buildings and infrastructure. Every effort should be made to conserve natural resources by reducing waste and pollution through efficient use of land, energy, water, air, and materials. These principles are evident in the land use policies (see 9.6) promoting solar access rights and energy conservation.

11.11 Transportation Diversity

The City of Decorah encourages transportation options that maximize mobility, reduce congestion, conserve fuel, and improve air quality. The City enjoys many benefits from the extensive system of recreational trails already in place. Transportation policy (see section 3.) encourages expanded use of the airport, directs the exploration of mass transit options, and encourages accommodations for bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

APPENDIX A

Accomplished Goals from the 1992 Comprehensive Plan

- A neighborhood park to serve the southeast part of the residential area in Decorah and a neighborhood park to serve the Freeport area should be developed during the planning period.
- Replacement or renovation of the East Side Elementary School should be considered during the planning period.
- Standards for erosion control and erosion control plans are encouraged in the review process of subdivision plats and site plans.
- The Freeport water system should be interconnected with the Decorah water system to improve flows and water quality of the two systems.

Accomplished Goals Since the 2012 Comprehensive Plan

- Airport Layout Plan has been improved and adopted, 2014.
 - Continued improvements and development at the Decorah Municipal Airport should be in accordance with an updated airport master plan – current plan dated May 28, 2014.
 - Taxiway improvements – 2012
 - Three-stall hangar – 2015
 - Seven-stall hangar – 2016
 - Runway Pavement Rehabilitation – 2018
 - Corporate hangar - 2019
- Statewide Urban Design and Specifications adopted for street and public infrastructure improvements, 2018.
- Storm Water Management Utility implemented, and revenues allocated to storm water improvement projects, 2016.
- Upper Iowa River Levee System accreditation completed and approved, 2017.
- Residential Housing Tax Abatement program initiated in 2014 and expanded and amended in December 2017 and again in October 2018.
- Decorah-wide and Winneshiek-wide Housing Studies completed, one in 2014 and one completed in 2017.
- Alternative traffic routes between the outlying areas and the City should be considered as traffic volumes and growth patterns warrant. Completed with the 2018 Transportation Study.

- Future needs of the Decorah Fire Department will be coordinated in accordance with the standards of the Insurance Service Office (ISO) and this plan.
 - 2014 ISO rating was 05/5Y
 - 2018 ISO rating was 04/4Y
- The library should be recognized as a vital part of this community and overall maintenance and operations should be supported. The city initiated an extensive renovation project in 2019 and borrowed \$700,000 to complete several large-scale improvement and renovation projects.
- The preservation and protection of historical and archaeological sites and environmentally sensitive areas should be continued. Decorah’s Downtown District was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2018.
- The Emerald Ash Borer is an exotic beetle that is a recent and significant threat to the health of the urban and rural trees, destroying millions of ash trees in North America (Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, 2013). To maintain and encourage a more diverse tree population within city limits, the Decorah Tree Board should continue to offer the Tree Board Voucher Program for tree plantings within street boulevards.
 - The City expanded the tree budget in FY19 and FY20 and is working towards hiring a full-time city forester position.
- Continued efforts to maintain and improve the central business district and contiguous business districts as the principal retail center of the City will be encouraged and supported. The City continues to explore options to maintain vitality, including looking into the Main Street Iowa program.
- Programs that require flexibility and innovation, regarding renewal and redevelopment of existing poorly developed commercial areas in the central business district and other areas in the City, will receive favorable consideration and support through establishment of urban renewal districts, tax increment financing (TIF), and other development programs and standards. The City has looked favorably on the use of Urban Renewal and Urban Revitalization programs.
- National Register of Historic Places – Downtown Designation
 - Continue to promote policies that encourage historic preservation efforts.

- Coordination and cooperative efforts should be maintained with Winneshiek County regarding annexation of areas required for controlled development and growth of the City.
- Annexation of land has occurred in 2015, 2018, and 2019.

APPENDIX B

Points of Interest for Future Land Use Suggestions or Changes

Locate the correlating number on the Future Land Use map below, Figure 81, with notes and explanation on the page below.

* Changed = was classified in 1992 plan and is being recommended for change
+Added = New area that was not part of the 1992 future land use map

1. + McCaffrey's restaurant recently built and now reflects Retail Service Commercial.
2. * Prior intended use was Industrial, with single family homes built to reflect change to Residential.
3. * J.B. Holland Construction and surrounding area modified from Industrial to Light Industrial.
4. * N.W. corner of Hwy 9/52 intersection – Hovden property from Commercial to Hwy/Commercial.
5. + S.W. corner of 9/52 intersection – potential for Low Density Residential expansion.
6. + South of old Wal-Mart - changed from High Density Commercial to Medium Density Residential.
7. + Originally General Industrial designated, and added Low, Medium, and High Density Residential consideration to this area taking into account the proximity to the scenic resources of the river, trail, rolling bluffs and near parks and fish hatchery.
8. * Changed from Limited Industrial to Light Industrial to match and follow current logical growth trend.
9. * Near Brynsaas new building off Hwy 9 (by Lifetime Gutter/Auction building), changed from Light Industrial to Highway Commercial to reflect current development trend and compatibility.
10. + Added as Medium Density Residential near the existing Hickory Hills development.
11. * Reduction in Freeport Area- Respecting Flood Plain due to frequency and magnitude of flood events in past 15 years, recognizing and respecting Mother Nature.
12. * Changed from Retail Service Commercial to Light Industrial by Kerndt Building and Storage in Freeport.
13. * Changed from Ag to Medium Density Residential by “Old Salvage Yard” past Freeport.
14. + Howdy Hills - Extension “Up Top” through current development to top of hill for LDR/MDR.

- 15. + Business Park Additions include Light Industrial, General Industrial and Office Park.
- 16. * Was in the past planned for High Density Residential, but more realistically reconsidered for Highway Commercial in recent planning discussions.
- 17. + Current growth along this road over the bridge by Olson Explosives and next to Decorah Electric includes Light Industrial to Limited Industrial.
- 18. + More consideration for development around Vennehjem which could accommodate High Density Residential, Medium Density Residential or Low Density Residential (single family units).
- 19. * This area on Montgomery/Water street currently industrial and could be Retail Service Commercial with the right developer.

COMMERCIAL

RSC – Retail Service

Commercial

HC- Highway Commercial

OPC – Office Park

Commercial

INDUSTRIAL

LI- Light Industrial

LDI- Limited Industrial

GI- General Industrial

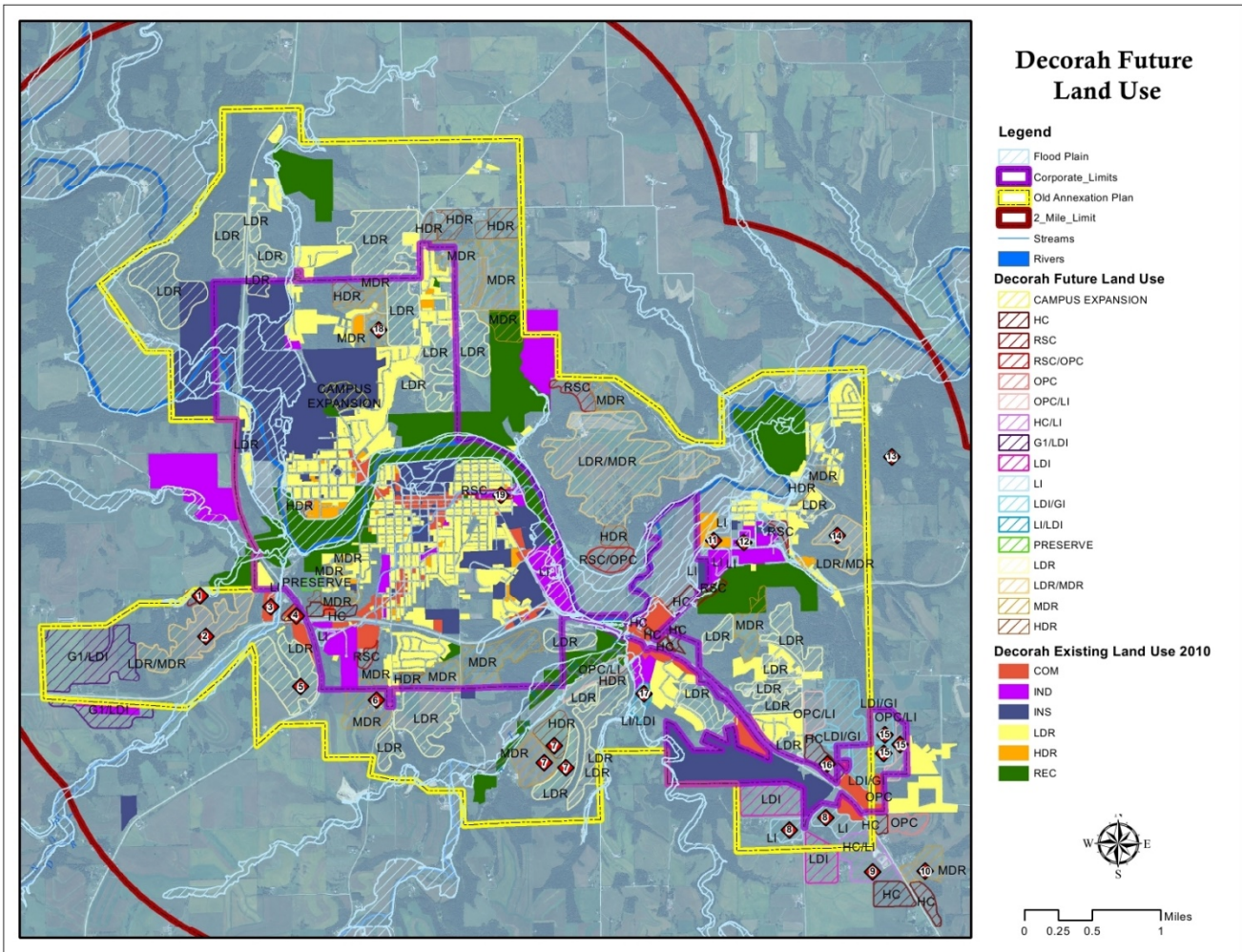
RESIDENTIAL

LDR- R 1 Low Density Residential

MDR- R 2 Medium Density Residential

HDR- R 3 High Density Residential

Figure 81: Future Land Use Changes



APPENDIX C

Public Input Meeting Comments and Photos (2012)

- I'm concerned about high density housing out of town (County). I think housing needs to be constructed in town so that there is easy access to grocery stores, especially. We need to zone farm land for continuing ag use.
- Three things-
 1. The low –density residential lots are so large + numerous. The world is changing quickly; awareness about climate change + a quickly changing economy would indicate that we encourage smaller houses, which would sit on smaller lots. A side benefit of this action is that we preserve more far land + recreational land.
 2. As we continue this planning, let's make sure to provide pedestrian access from all new neighborhoods to downtown.
 3. Is it wise to place high-density residential so far out; I've seen it in Postville, and it ends up looking like they're stuffing the poor away and out of sight.
- The area south of Mound Street homes is zoned moderate to high density and we feel it should be low density residential.
- Maps get copies on line
- When does a home business (B&B) become a commercial business in a residential area? When the owner/resident/ B&B operator moves out and hires help to come to check customers in and make their breakfast? When they move out to make more bedrooms available for more income, more bedroom than there is off-street parking for a "business" like this? When an owner/B&B operators buys another and another house to run multiple B&B house businesses?





Public Hearing Comments – 2012)

Comments on proposed Decorah Comprehensive Plan in regard to Future Land Use of Riverwalk Subdivision (low area on West Side near levee):

Many residents of Mound Street and the Riverwalk Subdivision are concerned that the proposed Decorah Comprehensive Plan would facilitate efforts to shoe-horn a high density residential development into their neighborhood. HDR development within that area would be inharmonious with the neighborhood, would unduly increase traffic on a lengthy cul-de-sac, would unnecessarily place additional people and property at risk in the event of a severe flood event, and would breach promises to neighbors concerning the extent of development.

A map labeled “Figure 16 Future Land Use” appears at page 112 of the Draft Plan. A similar map also appears at page 135 of the Draft Plan, and is labeled “Appendix B. Future Land Use Changes.” Both of these maps show the Riverwalk Subdivision area with a future land use designation of “HDR” or “High Density Residential.” The HDR designation of Riverwalk Subdivision should be deleted or amended to MDR for the reasons explained below:

High Density Residential is defined at page 111 of the draft plan as “High density developments of more than 4 dwelling units per structure.” Medium Density Residential is defined as “Medium density developments of buildings with 2-4 units per structure.”

Northern Iowa Development Corporation (NIDC) previously obtained site plan approval for development of 46 condominium units, all of which were to be placed in buildings with 2-4 units per structure. The 2000 site plan approval and TIF approval followed intensive negotiations between NIDC, the City, and neighboring residents, which resulted in promises to constrain the nature and scope of development in this area. The improvements which Riverwalk illustrated in its 2000 site plan and promised to implement in consideration of the TIF funding it received would therefore result in medium density residential development as defined in the Draft Plan. The “Future Land Use” map, as drafted, endorses a breach of past promises made to Mound Street neighbors and Riverwalk condo purchasers.

Current members of the Council are familiar with the repeated controversies involving the development of the Riverwalk area over the past 12 years -- some council members have had a longer breadth of experience than others. As Council members retire in future years, the Council will lose its collective memories of past promises and agreements. It is important that this City Council leave in place a “Future Land Use” map which accurately portrays the long-term planning promised and found appropriate for Riverwalk – a map which would not encourage NIDC’s successors to seek high density development which would breach past agreements.

The history of this area, as it relates to an appropriate future land use designation for Riverwalk is briefly summarized below:

In 1999, NIDC presented a proposal for development of the area in question, promising no outdoor parking lots, a trail system proposed to connect to local and city trails, a property tax yield of \$1,152,000, and enlarged open space areas.

On February 15, 2000, the site plan was approved by the City Council subject to conditions including conditions which the Planning and Zoning had earlier recommended. The City Council's conditions included provision for rain run-off from a 100-year event, and provision for a maintenance bond for replacement of shrubbery.

NIDC then moved into negotiations for TIF financing. (Council minutes from April 18, 2000 to December 4, 2000.) During that period, the City Council encouraged the developer to include neighboring property owners in meetings and discussions which ultimately lead to an agreement to amend the site plan so as to make the project more aesthetically pleasing to the neighbors.

The agreement reached as a result of the Neighborhood meetings included the elimination of Dwelling #12 and the scaling back of Dwelling #13 on the site plan. The resulting site plan involved 2-story buildings no larger than 4-plexes, separated by ample green space.

In consideration of the promise to develop this area in the scaled-back manner promised pursuant to the amended site plan, the City agreed to provide a \$416,132 TIF rebate of taxes to help finance the project. The Development Agreement was signed by the City and NIDC on January 5, 2001, states that the Developer will install certain improvements, and states that "This Agreement shall inure to the benefit of and be binding upon the successors and assigns of the parties."

When the TIF pursuant to the amended site plan was approved on December 4, 2000, the final plat for the area was also approved by the city council. Attached to the final plat were covenants and restrictions in which the owners made promises, including the following:

- “1. The owners of the property shall be required to maintain and replace, any and all trees and shrubbery initially placed on the property by the developer. (The site plan contained detailed provisions for placement of trees and shrubbery throughout Riverwalk.)
2. The above lots are to be used only for the development of multi-family residences...
5. A perpetual easement is reserved for utility installation and maintenance, drainage and bicycle and walking trails as shown on the attached plat.”

After the site plan was amended to accommodate the concerns of the Mound Street neighbors, and after the TIF was approved, NIDC unsuccessfully attempted to amend the site plan in August and November of 2001 to allow a triplex to be constructed where a duplex is shown on the site plan. At that time Councilperson Wanless stated the

development agreement was approved because neighbors had agreed on the current site plan. The Council unanimously denied the request.

In July of 2005, NIDC again requested an amendment to the site plan, to enable construction of additional units. The minutes state: "Councilperson Wanless stated that this issue revolves around the fact that City participation was approved based on the agreement reached at that time and is concerned about this request for additional units." Again all council members voted to deny the changes.

In the summer of 2008, severe flooding came close to topping Decorah's levee, forcing massive evacuations, sometimes over flooded streets. The 2008 flood also illustrated another problem: When the river is in flood and the flood gates are closed, all stormwater falling on the West Side flows down to the interior of the levee, where it is trapped and floods property near the levee until the backwater can be pumped over the levee. In 2008, the storage capacity of stormwater detention areas interior to the West Side levee was proven deficient, as was Decorah's ability to promptly pump storm drainage over the levee.

On February 7, 2011, a new owner of the undeveloped portion of Riverwalk asked the City Council to vacate easements and to approve a new site plan calling for development of a large assisted living facility on Riverwalk rather than completing the condominium site plan approved in 2000. The City Council once again unanimously denied the request. More recently, another developer has proposed the development of a large apartment complex in this area.

In summary, if this Council were to adopt the Draft Plan without first correcting Riverwalk's "Future Land Use" designation, it would leave a terrible legacy for future city planners deciding Riverwalk development requests over the next 20 years. The draft Plan, if not amended, would place all future City Councils in a dilemma each time HDR development is requested in Riverwalk -- either disregard Decorah's 2011 "Future Land Use" map endorsing HDR development, or disregard the City's past promises negotiated with neighbors.

I would therefore encourage the City Council to amend the Comprehensive Plan to delete the HDR designation of the Riverwalk Subdivision as shown on the maps at pages 112 and 135, and to substitute a designation of MDR.

Comments on proposed Decorah Comprehensive Plan:

Page 12 of the Draft plan approved by the Planning & Zoning Commission contains a table labeled: **“Table 4. Population Projection A: Based on a goal of 15,000 people by 2020.”** Table 4 projects the Decorah population swelling to 15,112 by 2020, a near doubling in 9 years. (The same page projects that if Decorah continues to grow at its normal rate of growth, its population will grow from 8,159 to 8,457 during that time.)

For reasons explained below, 6.4% population growth should not be a city “goal.” The City Council should clarify that point before adopting the Comprehensive Plan. The Draft plan contains the following explanation of table 4:

“Table 4 above is calculated starting with Decorah’s future land use needs estimate of 15,000 people by the year 2020. Using a constant annual growth rate, Decorah would need to average 6.4% population growth per year over the next 10 years to reach that estimate. However, the actual growth rate has been 0.4% for the past three decades. Table 5, to the left, shows the population estimates for Decorah using a 0.4% growth rate.”

If these projections are extended for 40 years, we can visualize whether the 6.4% growth rate “goal” for Decorah is smart and sustainable, or whether a continuation of the present 0.4% rate might be a better way to preserve our city’s high quality of life. Here is such a projection:

	0.4% growth (Table 5)	6.4% growth (Table 4)		0.4% growth (Table 5)	6.4% growth (Table 4)
2011	8,159	8,647	2031	8,837	29,902
2012	8,192	9,200	2032	8,872	31,816
2013	8,224	9,789	2033	8,908	33,852
2014	8,257	10,416	2034	8,944	36,018
2015	8,290	11,082	2035	8,979	38,323
2016	8,323	11,792	2036	9,015	40,776
2017	8,357	12,546	2037	9,051	43,386
2018	8,390	13,349	2038	9,088	46,163
2019	8,424	14,204	2039	9,124	49,117
2020	8,457	15,113	2040	9,160	52,260
2021	8,491	16,080	2041	9,197	55,605
2022	8,525	17,109	2042	9,234	59,164
2023	8,559	18,204	2043	9,271	62,950
2024	8,594	19,369	2044	9,308	66,979
2025	8,628	20,609	2045	9,345	71,266
2026	8,662	21,928	2046	9,382	75,827
2027	8,697	23,331	2047	9,420	80,680
2028	8,732	24,824	2048	9,458	85,843
2029	8,767	26,413	2049	9,496	91,337
2030	8,802	28,103	2050	9,533	97,183

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines a “goal” as “**the end toward which effort is directed.**” A comprehensive plan “goal” of 6.4% growth begs two questions: Would the City of Decorah, and its residents, benefit from government efforts to double our population in 9 years, perhaps through taxpayer subsidies for private development? Or would Decorah residents be better served by maintaining its past policy of relying on the forces of the free market to build the city at normal historical rates, within reasonable zoning restraints aimed at preserving Decorah’s environment and high quality of life?

A Comprehensive Plan statement that 6.4% growth is a Decorah “goal” would inevitably be used to promote development which does not make sense or conflicts with other parts of the Plan. Development of high density housing which is not in harmony with a surrounding neighborhood, or development of a sensitive area such as a flood plain are just two examples of unwise development which might be justified by reference to a 6.4% growth “goal.”

The City should remember that over-development can cause unintended problems. If the population of Decorah rapidly doubles, how might that affect crime rates, traffic congestion, water quality, and other quality of life issues? Recently, too-rapid development of housing in many cities (e.g. Las Vegas) resulted in a housing bubble which collapsed, causing the value of all housing stock in the city to plummet. As a result, many families found themselves underwater on their mortgages, unable to sell their property, and facing foreclosure.

If government efforts to promote rapid population growth in Decorah would not improve the quality of life of its residents, why should we articulate such growth as a goal in our Comprehensive Plan? Instead, we should encourage a continuation of the gradual growth which has enabled us to meet our needs without sacrificing our environment and high quality of life.

At the October 10, 2011 hearing, members of the P & Z explained that Table 4 was not really a “goal” but was rather a projection based on the highest rate of growth which could realistically be expected in the City of Decorah, especially after accounting for the impact of extensive annexation of areas surrounding Decorah which are already experiencing substantial development. The P & Z further explained the City should plan for the possibility of high rates of growth when installing new infrastructure improvements such as sewer and water. By planning for possible future population growth, the city can make sure that it will not need to go back and reinstall larger diameter sewer and water pipes to accommodate future needs. The P & Z commission also pointed out that future annexation of nearby areas into the city of Decorah, including outlying areas already served by Decorah sewer and water, would result in an automatic population increase even without the rapid new growth and development implied by Table 4. Although the P & Z explanation makes sense, if that is only purpose of Table 4, it should be labeled as a projection rather than as a goal and better explained.

In summary, I would encourage the City Council to amend the Comprehensive Plan to state: “Table 4. Population Projection A: Based on 15,000 people by 2020.”

I also encourage the Council to add the following explanation: “Table 4 is not a goal, but is rather a projection showing high rates of growth which could result from both annexation and development.”

My wife and I have been before the P and Z for about 11 years now concerning the land south of Mound Street, which includes the Riverwalk Condominiums.

We recommend that the zoning be changed from R-3 to R-2. We feel that R-3 allows building that is not in harmony with the neighborhood. According to the City Code, that is an issue to be considered.

Even though the area is not in a designated flood plain, it is a natural drainage area. High density construction would prevent that drainage. Do you really know what impact that will have on the entire area and east to the basketball court?

The area is located next to the dike. Again, high density construction may have some negative impact. We feel that’s a big risk.

There is one ingress and egress. High density building could pose a safety issue with traffic and emergency vehicles.

In summary, we feel now is the time to change the zoning in this area from R-3 to R-2

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