

# CITY OF SPICER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ADOPTED September 4, 2023  
Prepared by the Spicer Community With Assistance  
From the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission







# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

## What Is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a tool used by communities to help guide decisions, including how a city can best use financial and other resources. It is meant to be a shared, long-term vision without becoming rigid or overly prescriptive. It is important for a comprehensive plan to be designed as a flexible document. One that can be updated as conditions or situations change over time or as new opportunities are brought forward.

## A Comprehensive Plan Does Three Things:

1. It gives residents the opportunity to create a shared vision for their community.
2. It provides guidance for community leaders (e.g., City Council, City Planning Commission, City Economic Development Authority).
3. It provides a legal basis for a community's land use regulations.

The City of Spicer's Comprehensive Plan is a dynamic tool created to guide the future growth and development of our community. The authority to create and implement this plan is provided by state statute (Minnesota Statute, Section 462.351 to 462.364). Spicer's Comprehensive Plan was written with great consideration of local and regional history, current trends, modern governmental planning standards, and local public input. This document presents Spicer's Comprehensive Plan, which is reflective of the community's planning process, conducted in 2022 – 2023 and approved in \_\_\_\_\_(month) 2023.

Spicer's Comprehensive Plan is designed as a framework to guide future community development, redevelopment, and enhancement. By integrating social, physical, economic, and broader environmental perspectives into the community's decision-making, the Comprehensive Plan provides direction on matters that will improve the everyday lives of Spicers' residents, workforce, and visitors. Ultimately, this comprehensive plan will help Spicer's leaders shape future growth, protect local values and assets, and create an even more attractive, sustainable, and welcoming community.

Various chapters of the Spicer Comprehensive Plan include goal statements and strategies. Goal statements should be thought of as idealistic statements. They are intentionally general and aspirational. Strategies, on the other hand, outline specific actions the City of Spicer can take to support goal achievement. This comprehensive plan will be judged not only by the quality of its content but by the extent to which strategies are implemented and goals are attained over time.

The City of Spicer undertook this planning process with intent to provide the community a vision of what might be possible. They also wanted to create a guide for City leaders and staff. Something to which they could refer when making important decisions affecting current and future stakeholders.

## The City of Spicer's Comprehensive Planning Process in 10 Action Steps

- **Action 1:** Spicer's elected officials and staff recognize a need for comprehensive planning to help guide future decisions and agree to commit people, time, and money to craft the new comprehensive plan and engage the services of a professional community planner.
- **Action 2:** The City assembles a Comprehensive Planning Task Force to guide plan development.
- **Action 3:** The Comprehensive Planning Task Force assists the contracted community planner (Mid-Minnesota Development Commission) with the development and implementation of a public engagement strategy to gather input from residents, businesses, and other visitors.
- **Action 4:** The contracted community planner creates an initial plan draft, which includes goals and strategies based on input gathered from public engagement, independent research, and conversations with City leaders and staff. The Comprehensive Planning Task Force reviews this work and provides input and direction, as needed.
- **Action 5:** The comprehensive plan draft is further-refined, with additional public input gathered, when needed and as new ideas or questions come to light.
- **Action 6:** The most complete draft of the comprehensive plan is presented to the Comprehensive Planning Task Force for their approval and final revisions.
- **Action 7:** Once the Comprehensive Planning Task Force's final revisions are incorporated, the plan is made available for public review via presentation and/or public posting.
- **Action 8:** All final input gained during the final public review is incorporated by the contracted professional, as appropriate, and the Comprehensive Planning Task Force recommends its approval and adoption by the City Council.
- **Action 9:** The City commits staff, time, and money resources to begin plan implementation and continuous progress toward goal achievement is sustained over the course of the coming 10 to 20 years.
- **Action 10:** City leaders and staff regularly review the new Comprehensive Plan to ensure adequate progress.

## Spicer's Location:

Spicer is found in Central Minnesota, on the shores of beautiful Green Lake, approximately two hours west of Minneapolis. It is also approximately one hour southwest of St. Cloud and about 15 minutes north-northeast of Willmar. MN State Highway 23 connects Spicer to both St. Cloud and Willmar, and U.S. Highway 71 runs north to south, approximately two miles west of the community. The local geography is characterized by lakes, streams, and other wetlands and dotted with rolling wooded hills and prairies. Spicer shares borders with both New London Township and Green Lake Township. According to the 2020 Census, the Spicer has a population of 1,112, with residents living in 638 separate households.

## Spicer's History and Origin:

**The following information was provided by the Kandiyohi County Historical Society**

One of Spicer's biggest attractions is Green Lake, which has had three names during the course of known history. The Dakota, who inhabited the area for hundreds of years called it "Mdeto." The first Caucasians in the area referred to it as "Carnelia," for its red sandy beaches. Later, settlers observed the green color of the water, as the Native Dakota had, and renamed it Green Lake which is how it is known today. The City of Spicer has itself had two names since its establishment. In August of 1856, E.T. Woodcock, J.M. Ayers, and V.L. Forsythe, the town "boomers" who first plotted the community called it "Columbia". When originally staked out, Columbia covered approximately 320 acres, with one mile of lakefront. Adjacent sections were soon claimed, doubling the size of the young community. Columbia's first home, a small log cabin, was built by the E.T. Woodcock family in 1856 and additional homes, a store, and a post office were erected by 1857. That year, the community was also incorporated by the Minnesota Territorial Council. To the disappointment of Columbia's original promoters, who had grand ambitions for a large community, the major east-west rail line was placed six miles south of town. However, in 1861, Columbia was designated as the county seat of Monongalia County, which is now the northern portion of Kandiyohi County.

The U.S. Dakota War of 1862 was a tumultuous time which restricted Columbia's ability to grow and become a hub of regional business. Many settlers left the county during this period. When settlers returned the county had become known as Kandiyohi County and no attempt was made to re-establish the City of Columbia.

The town didn't become known as Spicer until 1886, when pioneer railroader J.M. Spicer, who owned the townsite, built his rail line, connecting St. Cloud to Sioux Falls, SD. and running directly through the area.



# The U.S. Dakota War of 1862

## Devastation of the Minnesota Territory and Region:

Many immigrants traveled and settled in the Minnesota Territory in the 1850's. This was no different in what is now the Spicer area. The U.S. government, however failed to fulfill its treaty obligations to the Dakota people. This caused problems for the Native Dakota and newly-settled immigrants alike.

Lack of education, especially related to farming practices, unfair prices charged for essential homesteading goods, inflated debts, and fraudulent trade practices all created additional hardship for the Dakota. By 1862, their people were in dire need of basic resources. Many were starving. In August of that year, the tension reached a point of no return when four Dakota hunters reportedly killed five settlers in Acton Township, southeast of Spicer. This triggering a war that would leave approximately 600 white settlers and an unknown number of Dakota people to perish.

Eventually, the conflict concluded. Settlers mourned their dead and abandoned many of their claims across the region. The U.S. government nullified its treaties with the Dakota people and dissolved their reservation. 38 Dakota men were publicly executed in Mankato. This killing, which was by order of President Abraham Lincoln, was the largest mass hanging in our nation's history.

This war was just one of many conflicts between indigenous peoples and white settlers throughout the course of America's history. Wounds from this conflict remain apparent throughout this region and across the nation.

## Village of Spicer:

At the time of Village of Spicer's establishment, John Spicer had foresight to establish two different parks on the shores of Green lake. One was located near the center of town and the second at the south end of the village. The rail line was laid in 1886 and a store opened soon after. The community continued to grow and, even in its early years, Spicer quickly became a draw for tourists. At the time of the Spicer's 1904 incorporation, it was home to:

- 3 General Merchandise Stores
- 1 Hardware store
- 1 Real Estate Office
- 1 Bank
- 1 Drug store
- 1 Newspaper
- 1 Lumber and Fuel Dealer
- 2 Restaurants
- 2 Hotels
- 1 Livery Stable
- 1 Meat Market
- 1 Bargain Store
- 1 Soft Drink Parlor
- 1 Temperance Saloon
- 1 Malt and Confectionery Parlor
- 1 Barber
- 1 Blacksmith
- 1 Station Agent
- 1 Pavilion and toboggan slide operator
- 1 Jeweler
- 1 Shoemaker
- 1 Stone Mason
- 1 Dressmaker
- 1 Carpenter
- 2 Contractors
- 2 Wheat Buyers

## Notable Events & Developments Since Spicer's 1904 Incorporation:

- **1908:** Spicer Village Council granted permission for the community's first telephone company and service.
- **1910:** Spicer's first fire department was organized
- **1911:** The cornerstone was laid for Zion Lutheran Church
- **1915:** An electric plant was installed at Green Lake Mill (known to many as Ye Olde Mill Inn) to provide electricity to the Spicer Community.
- **1916:** Woodman Hall, which would become Town Hall, was built.
- **1917:** A four-room schoolhouse was built on the town's west side.
- **1917:** Green Lake Country Club was organized and a golf course and club house was built.
- **1960:** U.S. Highway 71 was relocated three miles to the west of Spicer
- **1969:** Little Crow Golf Club opens
- **1975:** Kandiyohi County Commissioners established the Green Lake Sanitary Sewer and Water District.
- **1980:** The first-annual Miss Spicer Pageant was held
- **1982:** Cable television came to Spicer
- **1982:** Property was purchased and annexed to the City, allowing for the construction of the Green Lake Mall and Spicer Living Center
- **1983:** Jahnke Foods, which later became Teal's Market, opened in the newly-built Green Lake Mall.
- **1991:** Big Kahuna Fun Park opened for business.
- **1991:** Spicer's new post office opened on Progress Way







## **Parks, Trails, and More:**

Spicer is home to several attractive amenities, including superb parks, one with a unique destination playground (Wildcat Cove), a BMX track, baseball diamonds, and Salisbury Beach County Park. The Glacial Lakes State Trail also runs directly through the center of town and the City maintains public docks just off the community's central business corridor, providing access to eating, drinking, and other establishments for those who wish to visit by boat.

Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center is a non-profit committed to providing outstanding environmental education and outdoor experiences to people of all ages. PWELC provides customized programs for groups, has outstanding rental facilities and walk-in visitors are welcome to use hiking, mountain biking and ski trails during daylight hours throughout the year.

## **Public Safety:**

The City of Spicer contracts with the Kandiyohi County Sheriff's Department which provides law enforcement for the community. The City also benefits from its residents, many of whom are dedicated to serving their community citizens of Spicer are extremely dedicated to public service. Thus, the community has its own volunteer fire department. Lakes Area Rural Responders, another volunteer organization, also provides emergency medical assistance in times of crisis.

## **Community Leaders:**

In addition to the City's elected leaders, staff, volunteer firefighters and first responders, Spicer benefits from active service organizations (e.g. Spicer Lions Club) and committees (e.g. Spicer Beautification Committee) who work on various projects to help the community thrive.

## **Education:**

Most of the Spicer community's youth attend school in the New London-Spicer Public School District (Independent School District 345). This district has a history of providing youth with quality education services, competitive sports programs, and other enriching experiences and extra-curricular activities. The district works with various technical and community colleges as well as universities to ensure their students have solid pathways to post-secondary training and education.

Spicer also benefits from its close proximity to Ridgewater College. Ridgewater is a community college that operates as part of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. It provides access to training in numerous career pathways including numerous trades, liberal arts, various other career programs. Many of Ridgewater's students eventually transfer to four-year universities. The closest universities to the City of Spicer include the University of Minnesota, Morris (Morris, MN), Saint Cloud State University (St. Cloud, MN) and Saint John's University (Collegeville, MN), and the College of Saint Benedict (St. Joseph, MN).

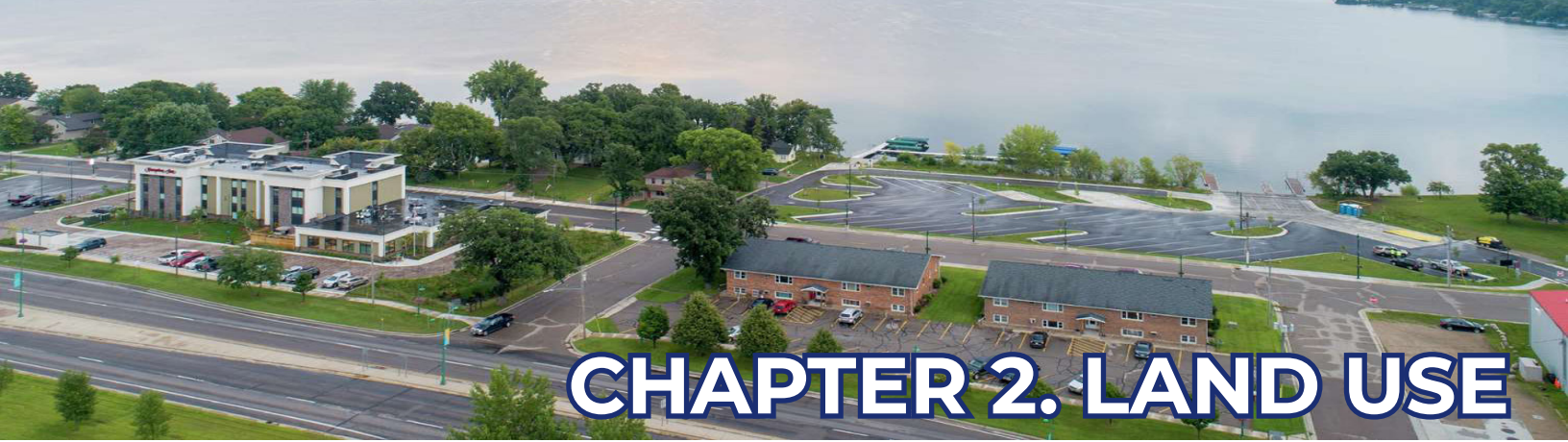
Additionally, the greater Spicer area is home to numerous, quality early-education programs for young children. The Glacial Lakes Adult Basic Education Consortium provides services to adult learners, including those pursuing their diploma and GED and those working to improve their English language skills.

## Spicer's Fantastic Amenities :

- Parks
  - ◇ Green Lake Baseball Diamonds/Green Lake BMX
  - ◇ Pirotta Park- The destination Playground
  - ◇ Westside Park
  - ◇ Beach Street Park
  - ◇ Saulsbury Beach
- City Offices/ Dethlefs Community Center
- Spicer Library
- Teal's Grocery Store/Green Lake Mall
- Highway 23/Central Business District
- Big Kahuna Fun Park
- Spicer Cinema 4
- Prairie Meadows Learning Center-includes an ice rink next to the Center
- American Legion
- A Multitude of Apartment Complexes
- DNR offices



- Green Lake Bible Camp
  - Commuter Parking Lot off 23
  - Zorbaz Green Lake
  - Post Office
  - Churches
  - The Hampton Inn Spicer Green Lake
  - Sure Stay Hotel by Best Western Spicer
  - Grand Stay Hotel and Suites
- Westwood Cafe
  - Mel's Sport Shop



# CHAPTER 2. LAND USE

## Overview and Introduction:

A description of how a community will use or develop its land resources is a key part of any comprehensive plan. This chapter provides the Spicer community with a diagram for land use, including the type, pace, and density of any new growth or redevelopment. It provides a guide for Spicer's current and future leaders as they work toward achieving the broader community's vision for development. It also provides a direction for the allocation of City resources (i.e., time, money, materials, equipment). These priority areas could include development or redevelopment of land, the addition or upgrade of facilities or infrastructure, or maintenance of items that are already serving the community well. The City's future planning efforts should be in-step with this Land Use chapter.

## Public Input:

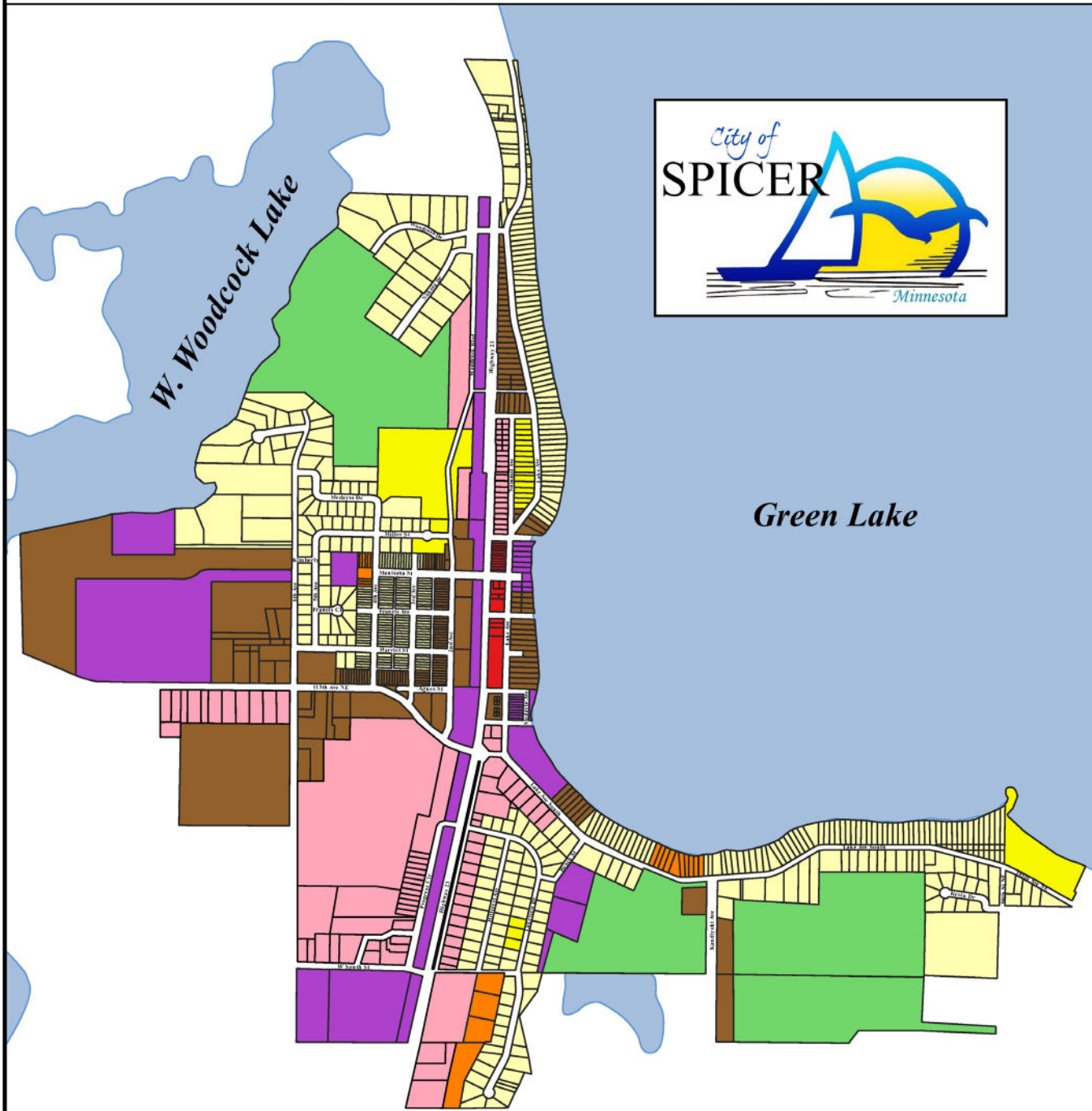
An important aspect of planning is to gather input from those who will ultimately be affected by the plan. To engage the people of Spicer and solicit their input for this comprehensive plan, several strategies were employed. They include:

1. The design, deployment, collection, and analysis of a survey, which was distributed both online and in-person at various community locations.
2. Meetings with Spicer's Planning Commission, Economic Development Authority, and Beautification Committee, all of which include local residents and business leaders.
3. Conversations with Spicer's residents, leadership, and staff.
4. Involvement of a Comprehensive Planning Task Force, made up of representatives from the Spicer Community who were selected to guide plan development.

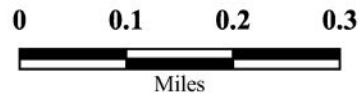
Suggestions and comments received through the public engagement process have been incorporated throughout this comprehensive plan.

Through this public engagement the Spicer community routinely expressed a desire for cultural/art/gathering space within the central business district. Something that could provide space for community interaction while showcasing local artists and talent. Additionally, many residents expressed a desire to encourage the establishment of additional retail and dining establishments. It was often suggested that these businesses could serve Spicer's residents while also attracting additional tourists and regular visitors from neighboring communities.

# City of Spicer's Zoning Map



- AG- Agricultural**
- B-1 Central Business**
- B-2 Highway Commercial**
- CR- Commercial/Residential Mixed**
- P-1 Park District**
- R-1 Low Density Residential**
- R-2 Medium Density Residential**
- R-3 High Density Residential**
- Lakes**



\*Please refer to a copy of the Spicer Zoning Ordinance for a description of the Zoning Districts.

## **Current Land Use:**

Land use planning is the process of regulating the use of land by a city or other authority. Usually, this is done to promote more desirable social and environmental outcomes and a more efficient use of resources.

The City of Spicer guides and regulates land development, and accommodates different land uses, by designating different land use districts. A map depicting Spicers current land use districts can be found on page 11

## **Agricultural Districts:**

Spicer’s agricultural districts have been established primarily for areas which are annexed but still unplotted. While within Spicer’s city limits, these areas have not yet been zoned for development. They are either transitioning from agricultural to urban uses (residential, commercial, industrial, etc.) or they are expected to undergo this type of transition in the foreseeable future. The rezoning and development of any Agricultural District should be contingent upon specific development plans, the timing of the proposed development, the availability of public utilities and services required to support the specific development, and compatibility with this Land Use chapter of Spicer’s Comprehensive Plan.

## **Low-Density Residential Districts:**

Spicer’s low-density residential districts provide for development of single-family and two-family housing, with a limited number of institutional and recreational uses permitted. The districts are designed to protect developed residential areas and to regulate the development of vacant land designated for future residential use. It is essential that these areas be designated, and that development be carefully planned so the City can ensure adequate services, streets, utilities, parks, and other amenities. All regulation of these districts should be designed to promote a sustainable environment for family life. Recreational and institutional uses should be permitted in these districts only when compatible with residential areas and only when parcels are of adequate size to allow for required parking and building needs.

## **Medium-Density Residential Districts:**

Spicer’s medium-density residential districts are provided to accommodate a harmonious mix of single-family and multifamily structures, with up to four units per building. Mobile home parks and other uses which are compatible with residential areas (e.g., those uses which are philanthropic or charitable in nature) are also permitted on parcels of adequate size in these districts, provided space is ample for required parking and building needs.

## **High-Density Residential Districts:**

The City’s high-density residential districts are intended to accommodate single-family residents and larger multifamily residences, with up to 25 units per building. These districts also permit mobile home parks and institutional uses on parcels of adequate size to allow for required parking and building needs.

## Central Business District:

Casually referred to as Spicer's "downtown area," Spicer's Central Business District is intended to provide for a wide variety of commercial activities and should be supported as a hub of banking/finance, entertainment, hotel accommodation, and professional services. It also provides opportunity for community spaces and amenities. The use of land is intensive, as this is one of the determining factors of its continued vitality. Regulations should support this intensity of land use and discourage activities which have a negative effect on the Central Business District's intended functions.



## Highway Business Districts:

Along and around portions of Minnesota State Highway 23 and Kandiyohi County Road 10 (also known as Lake Avenue South and 113<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast), the City of Spicer has designated Highway Business District areas to encourage the grouping of businesses that cater both to local residents and to motorists passing through town. These may include accommodation and food services, specialized outlets, and commercial amusement enterprises. These districts have been designed to minimize traffic hazards and interference with other parts of the community.



## Commercial/Residential Mixed-Use Districts

Mixed-Use districts are intended to provide a complementary mixture of medium-and high-density residential alongside limited retail and commercial development. It is important that each type of development be thoughtfully planned in an orderly and logical manner to accentuate the positive aspects of each type of development.

## Public

Spicer's public areas include City offices and maintenance facilities, emergency services facilities, the Spicer library, Prairie Meadows School, the Spicer City Cemetery, and the City's utility infrastructure (e.g., water tower). Added strain on these public services, amenities, and resources must be considered when planning any development or redevelopment, to ensure capacity.

## Parks and Recreation Areas

Several parks are found within the City of Spicer. This includes parks maintained by the City as well as Green Lake Saulsbury Beach County Park. Additionally, these park and recreation areas include outdoor sporting facilities (e.g., baseball and softball diamonds, BMX course). Finally, Spicer is bisected, along Minnesota State Highway 23, by the Glacial Lakes State Trail. A trail parking lot is maintained near the center of town to providing a convenient access point for those who wish to drive to the trail for its enjoyment.



## L- Lakes

The natural lakes, which surround the Spicer community, attract visitors, support a diverse ecosystem, and provide a backdrop that makes the Spicer community unique in the region.



Spicer's development is, in large part, guided by the Spicer Planning Commission. A planning commission is a group of citizens who serve the community by acting as an advisory group to guide the City's elected officials on issues and policies related to planning, land use regulation, and community development.

### Potential Additional Land Use Categories:

In addition to the land use categories described previously, the following additional categories could be designated by the City of Spicer to support plans for longer-term development.

#### Future Light Industrial

This category describes land that is currently used/or could be used for light industrial development (i.e., industries that are less capital-intensive and more consumer oriented).

#### Future Residential

This category could be used to designate land that would be appropriate for one or more types of residential development, single family, multi-family, apartments, senior living etc.

## **Goal #1 Encourage Infill Development and Redevelopment, When and Where Possible, to Maximize the Public's Investment in Existing Infrastructure.**

### **Strategies:**

1. The City should pursue public/private partnerships that result in the removal or rehabilitation of buildings and structures that are in disrepair, have become a source of community blight, or vacancy, or no longer project a sense of community vitality and resilience.
2. The City should advise property owners/potential developers of appropriate re-uses for under-utilized properties, while also considering new or more unique ideas with an open mind.
3. The City should support infill development of vacant lots within existing neighborhoods/subdivisions.

## **Goal #2 Proactively Collaborate with Adjacent Communities, Educational Institutions, and Regional Entities to Respond to the General Aging of Spicer's Population, Which is Common Throughout Much of Greater Minnesota.**

### **Strategies:**

1. The City should lead the establishment and ensure effectiveness of meaningful regional planning activities including but not limited to those related to land use, transportation, parks and recreation, and enrichment.
2. The City should prepare for necessary infrastructure improvements by maintaining a current capital improvement plan. When making land use decisions, the City should consider:
  - a. Potential impact on existing and future transportation facilities,
  - b. Potential impact on existing and future surface water management systems,
  - c. Adequacy of park facilities,
  - d. Appropriateness of the proposed use(s) within the context of the surrounding area,
  - e. Adequacy and quality of proposed sanitary sewer and water facilities, and
  - f. Adequacy of administrative and/or community services (e.g., government, utilities, emergency services).
3. The City should concentrate public investment on projects that will help the community achieve multiple goals, such as commercial revitalization, diversification of housing inventory, support its aging population, and environmental preservation and restoration.



## **Goal # 3 Protect the Integrity and Stability of Existing Residential Neighborhoods.**

### **Strategies:**

1. The City should use social media, mailings, and other means to ensure all residents are aware of community standards related to property condition, maintenance, and other potential nuisance-related issues.
2. The City should monitor the quality of all housing stock and, using a coaching approach, to the extent possible, enforce all codes and ordinances relating to outdoor storage, residential parking, landscaping, dangerous buildings, and other potential nuisance issues.
3. The City should formulate a plan to address properties exhibiting signs of deferred maintenance. This effort should include consideration of an application to the Small Cities Development Program to support the incorporation of owner-occupied rehabilitation grants.
4. The City should establish a roster of volunteers available to assist those who are unable to perform needed maintenance (e.g., painting, yard work, etc.) due to age, disability, or other barriers. The City should inform residents of the opportunity to volunteer and of the availability of volunteers for those who require assistance. Some volunteer connecting assistance should also be provided.
5. The City should strive to limit commercial, industrial, and other non-residential land use intrusions into residential neighborhoods, when not complimentary to and harmonious with a residential atmosphere and require appropriate buffering and/or screening between noncompatible property developments.
6. The City should require that infill residential units be compatible, in both use and scale, with existing units from the surrounding neighborhood. This is not to meant to say that infill units need to match the use and scale of the existing neighborhood. Rather, the intent is to emphasize that infill and existing units be able to coexist without conflict.
7. The City should limit business occupation within residential properties to businesses employing only household residents onsite. Exceptions could be made in instances where a business office is located at a residential property or materials and equipment are kept onsite, in compliance with City rules, but principle activities occur elsewhere. For instance, a small electrician business or plumbing operation may use their home as a business address and keep a van, truck, or trailer onsite, but carry out most activities, beyond business-related office work, in other locations.

## **Goal #4 Preserve Spicer's Small-Town Atmosphere, Community Identity, and Historic, Lakeside Character.**

### **Strategies:**

1. The City should retain existing and create additional spaces for people (residents and visitors) to gather and interact, especially within and surrounding the City's Central Business District (i.e., Spicer's downtown area).
2. The City should embrace efforts to preserve and brand the Central Business District as an historically-significant aspect of the community's heritage.
3. The City should consider allowable uses, design guidelines, and mixed-use opportunities within and in the areas surrounding the Central Business District to ensure a multifunctional, pedestrian-friendly downtown core.
4. Through effective collaboration as well as direct service provision, the City should strive to maintain effective government and social services to ensure residents have the resources needed to remain part of the Spicer community.
5. The City should review structure siting guidelines, especially as they relate to the development of commercial areas and related uses, along the Minnesota State Highway 23 corridor, to ensure a positive impression of the community's values and priorities among passersby.
6. The City should encourage compatible infill development within previously developed areas, with due consideration given to the surrounding neighborhood.

### **Examples:**

- a. Redevelopment within the Central Business District should incorporate buildings placed forward on lots, with any parking located behind the structure and densities (i.e., the proportion of land covered by structures) similar to existing development.
- b. The City could require that residential infill development occurring within the City's original or more historic areas incorporate building elements (building height, roof pitch, siding materials, etc.) found in housing within the immediately surrounding neighborhood.
7. The City should work with the Kandiyohi County Historical Society and local property owners, especially Central Business District property owners, to catalog any sites of historical significance.
8. The City should consider the creation of design standards (e.g., roof line, entryway, window placement/design/treatment, exterior material and color, and signage standards) for building construction, addition, or modification, to preserve and/or enhance the character of the Central Business District. As needed the City could consult with the Kandiyohi County Historical Society, the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), or another entity to develop these standards.

9. The City should avoid development that reduces public access to Green Lake and should look for opportunities to add complimentary amenities (e.g., connected lakeside walkways, sitting areas, restroom facilities, etc).

## **Goal #5 Retain Spicer’s “Small Town Spirit.”**

### **Strategies:**

1. The City of Spicer should pursue and sponsor regular activities that encourage face-to-face interaction among residents on a year-round basis. These activities could community-wide social activities (e.g., music in the park, ice cream social activities, wiffle ball or cornhole/bag-toss tournaments), city-wide clean-up days, or civic-related activities (e.g., voter registration events, town hall meetings, blood donation drives).
2. The City should continue to partner with local providers and invest in medical and mental health resources for its residents, so they have the support needed to remain healthy, active, and engaged community participants.
3. The City should collaborate with and support educators to ensure they have what they need to continue delivering high-quality instruction and enrichment, as is needed to attract and retain families with children. This includes creating opportunities for business partnerships, which can improve a school district’s ability to prepare students for local employment.
4. To attract visitors to Spicer’s business districts, the City and/or EDA could engage a consultant and work with business/property owners to develop a unified marketing strategy. This could include the incorporation of promotional events supported by local business groups, the Willmar Lakes Area and other Chambers of Commerce, and other civic organizations.

## **GOAL #6 Preserve and Enhance Quality of Life: Create a Sustainable Community**

### **Strategies:**

1. The City should preserve existing places and spaces where people have the opportunity to gather and interact, especially within and surrounding the Central Business District.
2. The City should consider educating property/business owners on the advantages of thoughtful landscape design, including the benefits of incorporating greenspace, foliage, courtyards and gathering places into new development and redevelopment.
3. The City should plan for and provide the public facilities and amenities (e.g., sidewalks and curb-cuts compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, senior-focused services, childcare) needed to support current and future community needs.
4. When possible, the City should avoid decisions that could polarize the community, as can happen when a new policy or expenditure benefits or excludes one subset of the population (e.g., youth, seniors, people with disability or income barriers).

5. The City should incorporate economic development activities designed to increase wealth throughout the community. This might include fostering increased opportunity for career advancement among existing residents or attracting new residents and visitors who will consume local goods and services. This effort will likely be more effective with the inclusion of significant collaboration with neighboring communities.
6. To ensure orderly, nondisruptive, and productive development, the City should review all requests to ensure alignment with a Future Land Use Map.

## **Goal #7 Invest in Parks, Trails, and Recreational Facilities in a Responsible and Responsive Manner.**

### **Strategies:**

1. The City should maximize the benefit of existing parks, trails, and recreational facilities by ensuring proactive maintenance of these public investments.
2. The City should support, encourage, and in some cases require the development of trails and/or sidewalks that will service neighborhoods and provide access to other community amenities, such as places of commerce, educational facilities, and public spaces.
3. The City should plan trail and/or sidewalk connections from neighborhoods to parks and, to the extent possible, incorporate easy pedestrian linkages between parks.
4. The City should continue to monitor the need and provision of park and recreational amenities for the benefit of all age groups and abilities. This could include playground equipment (including accessible playground equipment) for children, athletic fields for adults, and passive recreation (e.g., birdwatching areas, bicycling amenities) for those who prefer less intense activities or prefer a greater degree of solitude when recreating.
5. The City should collaborate with the New London-Spicer Public School District to ensure the joint use of new and existing school and/or park and recreation facilities.





# CHAPTER 3. Economic Development

## OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION:

For a community to thrive, its residents must have the ability to satisfy their needs without hardship. For some, this may include the ability to find employment. For others this could center on the ability to make purchases, find medical care, attend school, or enjoy leisure activities close to home. A community's government must also have the ability to generate the revenue needed to provide essential and discretionary services - that is, those services that are not necessarily fundamental to daily living (like road and utility infrastructure) but that improve quality of life for residents and have potential to attract visitors and investment. Investments in housing and childcare are prime examples of discretionary spending that can attract business and hard workers to towns.

While it includes great attention to economic growth – in other words, the increase of revenue – quality economic development also includes focus on:

- Increasing the standard of living (e.g., access to quality housing, and parks),
- Elevating and improving access to education and healthcare, transportation, and other services,
- Improving infrastructure, and
- Encouraging economic diversification.

Spicer's community members, business owners, and Comprehensive Plan Task Force have indicated desire to encourage development in such a way that will balance the needs of residents, visitors, and the business community while assuring the City's long-term financial security.

## Public Input:

This section of Spicer's Comprehensive Plan provides a summation both of economic development-related public input acquired and technical analysis completed as part of the planning process. To solicit public input, a process of stakeholder engagement was incorporated. This included discussion with individual residents and City staff as well as conversations with the City's Economic Development Authority, Planning Commission, and Beautification Committee. A community survey was also developed and promoted. Information gathered from each of these activities has been incorporated into this plan.

## Existing Conditions, Trends, and Opportunities

### Spicer's Tourism Industry

Tourism is a major economic driver for the City of Spicer, as our community welcomes tens of thousands of visitors each year, especially but not exclusively during summer months. These guests provide revenue for local entrepreneurs, ensuring employment opportunities for local workers, and encouraging the addition of privately-owned amenities the city may not otherwise enjoy (e.g., hotels, restaurants, specialty shops).

The Spicer community has gone to great lengths to capitalize on the natural beauty and resources offered by Green Lake and the surrounding area. These ongoing efforts have drawn tourists from the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, across Greater Minnesota, and beyond. There is continued desire to ensure Spicer's revitalization efforts continue, especially but not exclusively at Spicer's lakeside and within the City's downtown corridor to ensure the community remains a draw for visitors.

Spicer can continue to seek opportunities to improve and expand its tourist infrastructure. This includes improving the aesthetic of the community through property renovation and through the incorporation of art installations, gardens, and other items which might screen or otherwise draw the eye away from less attractive aspects of daily life or business (e.g., a mural or flower garden might distract passersby from dumpsters/trash receptacles). Adjustments to local ordinance could support these beautification efforts. Through thoughtful planning, it may also be possible to adjust traffic patterns and allow for improved pedestrian infrastructure (e.g., on- or off-road bike paths) while also ensuring adequate parking availability for residents, businesses, and visitors.

While summer months provide an economic boom to the community, Spicer can make a concerted effort to draw more visitors throughout the winter, spring, and fall. This could include collaboration with neighboring cities who might be hosting events. It might also include connecting Spicer's businesses with complimentary businesses from within the city or from neighboring communities. Marketing specifically to those who reside in neighboring communities – those who might enjoy a change of scenery, or the additional variety of restaurants, shops, and other Spicer amenities – is another potential strategy.

Through this planning process, community members, business owners, and City committees have all indicated desire to foster continued development when and where it supports a healthy, lively community. This development must include ensuring a strong workforce and a variety of quality places for those workers to live.

## Spicer's Housing

Spicer residents enjoy high property values relative to the surrounding region. However, there is a lack of housing stock at all price points. While many would find the Spicer community a desirable place to put down roots, it is difficult to find local rentals or homes available for purchase. Single-family homes and those multi-family properties that offer low maintenance “turn the key and go” options, often attractive to active retirees and other busy people, are in short supply. This poses a barrier to the Spicer community’s ability to attract and retain desirable residents, including workers (e.g., teachers, nurses, mechanics, machinists, public servants) families, and active retirees. For more detailed housing information and goals, visit the Housing Chapter of this plan.

Throughout the public engagement process, community members, business owners, and the City’s committees have indicated desire to foster housing development that will support a healthy, vibrant community. The City should consider opportunities to stimulate housing development while also considering the needs of the potential occupants the City would like to attract or retain. This includes ensuring rental and ownership options for retirees no longer interested in maintaining single-family homes, for young and growing families, and for area workers (those who work within or outside of Spicer’s city limits) interested in enjoying and creating a home amid Spicer’s smaller, lake-town atmosphere. By ensuring a quality mix of housing, the City will support a quality mix of people. This will help the City to avoid an unintended degree of exclusivity that might price a young professional, growing family, or retiree out of Spicer’s housing market. It is important to embrace the fact that, while some may choose to work in a neighboring community, many would prefer to make Spicer their home. Spicer is well-positioned to be a residential community of choice, rather than a bedroom community of default. Additionally, Spicer has terrific potential to attract those who work largely on a remote basis.

## Business Expansion and Retention in Spicer

Tourism, hospitality, and recreation are fundamental to Spicer’s economy. The community enjoys an above average number of eating and drinking establishments for a community of its size. It is also home to several retailers and specialty shops who have created a loyal customer base by providing quality products and services. Many residents support efforts to foster and encourage this climate of entrepreneurship, in the hopes of diversifying retail and service offerings and attracting more year-round visitors. The annual Spicer WinterFest celebration provides evidence that this community has the ability to draw tourists even during the most frigid time of the year.

Beyond retail and hospitality-focused enterprises, Spicer can cultivate an environment for a more diverse variety of business and industry. This may include encouraging small to mid-size specialized manufacturing operations, professional services (e.g., financial, legal, technical, mechanical), healthcare providers, and building trade focused businesses to operate within the community.

Spicer can support all entrepreneurs by connecting businesses who might benefit from collective promotion or marketing, making them aware of local and regional financing opportunities, and providing incentives (e.g., low interest or even forgivable loans) for the improvement of commercial properties.

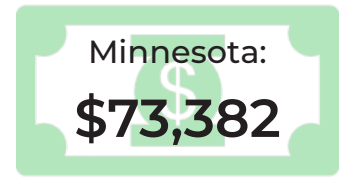
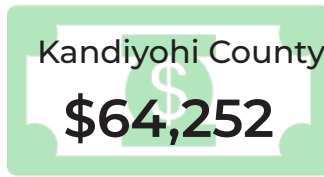
## Childcare

In late 2019, the Kandiyohi County YMCA invested in the Spicer community when they opened a new childcare center within the Green Lake Mall. This was the culmination of efforts by many area individuals who were working to decrease the childcare gap in the New London and Spicer Communities. At that time, there was an estimated need for nearly 800 childcare slots within the county and a gap of about 288 daycare spaces within the New London and Spicer communities. The YMCA's new center has the potential to provide care for up to 90 children, depending on staffing and child age (the facility serves kids ages 6 weeks to 6 years).

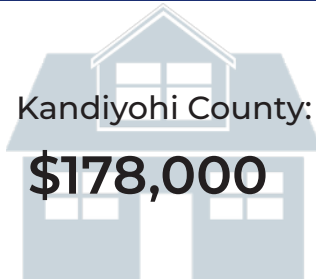
Despite the fact that this new center put a healthy dent in the community's childcare need, significant deficits remain. Therefore, the City of Spicer should continue to find ways to support existing and attract additional licensed childcare providers. Efforts could include expressions of appreciation for local childcare professionals, incentivizing or providing financial assistance to those interested in opening new or maintaining existing childcare facilities (e.g., grants, forgivable loans), and providing opportunities for the business community to improve providers' financial security by purchasing childcare slots for their employees. These employers could use this strategy as part of a broader benefits package or recoup costs by withholding from the benefiting employees' paychecks.

### Spicer's Economic Development-Related Statistics:

#### Median Income:



#### Property Value:



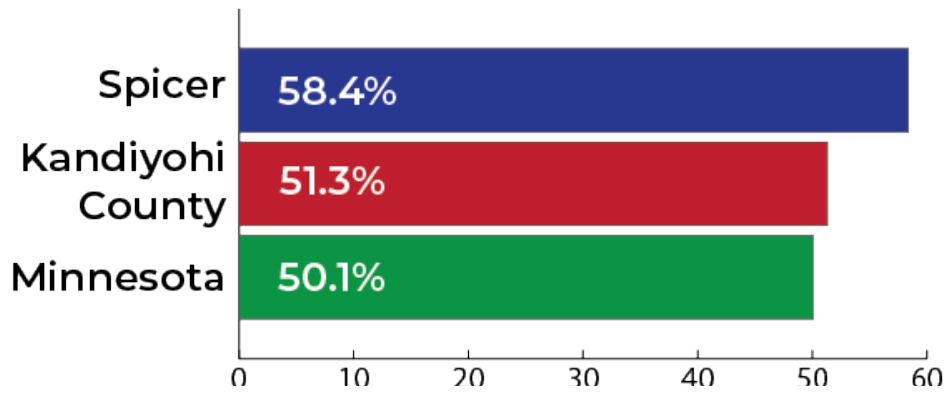
#### Median Age:



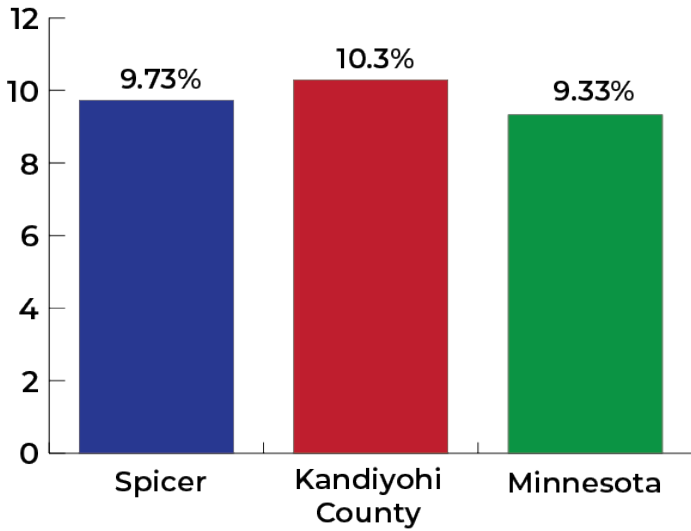
All data points collected from Data USA (<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/spicer-mn>)



## Employment Rate (2019)



## Poverty Rate (2019)



Poverty Rate (<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/spicer-mn?compare=kandiyohi-county-mn>

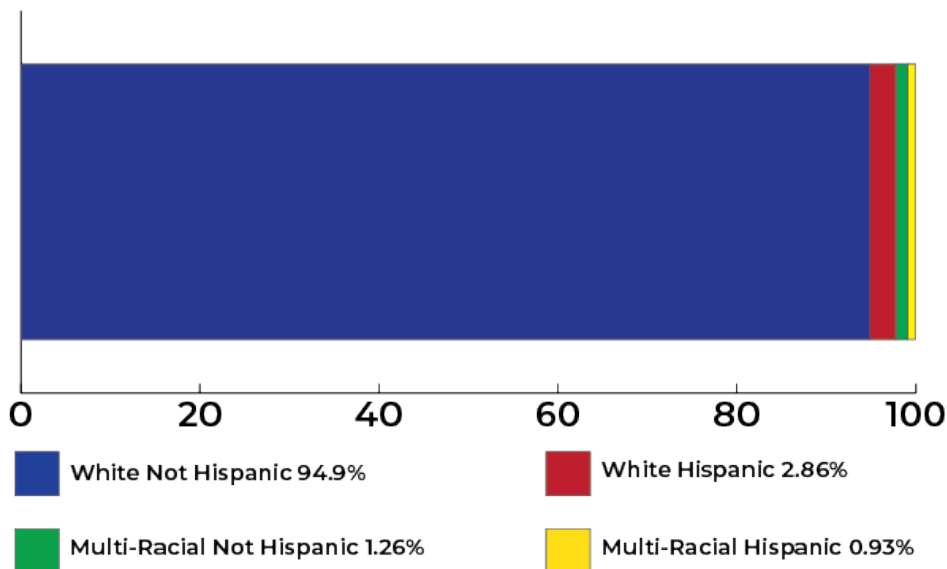
and

<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/spicer-mn?compare=minnesota>)

## Race and Ethnicity

In 2019, there were 33.2 times more White (Non-Hispanic) residents (1.13k people) in Spicer, MN than any other race or ethnicity. At that time, 34 individuals described themselves as Hispanic and 15 indicated they were of two or more races, the second and third most common ethnic groups. (<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/spicer-mn#demographics>)

## Race & Ethnicity (2019)



The Bachelor's Degree or Higher for Spicer city, Minnesota is 31.4%

The Employment Rate for Spicer city, Minnesota is 73.2%

**Total Housing Units**

The Total Housing Units for Spicer city, Minnesota is 638

**Without Health Care Coverage**

The Without Health Care Coverage for Spicer city, Minnesota is 5.9%

Total Households

**Education**

31%  
Bachelor's Degree or Higher in Spicer city, Minnesota

37%  
Bachelor's Degree or Higher in Minnesota

High School or equivalent degree - 20.0%

Some college, no degree - 28.2%

Associate degree - 13.4%

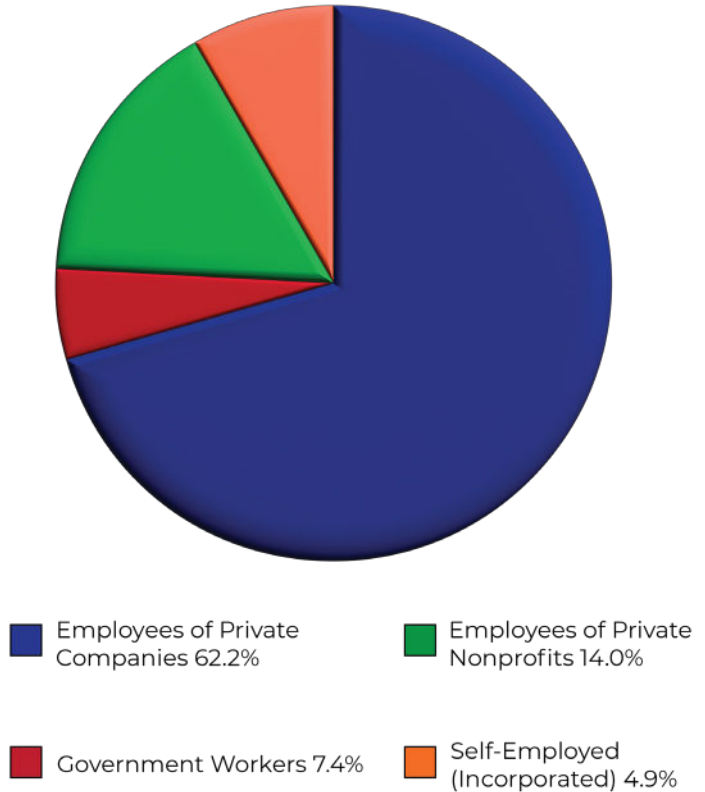
Bachelor's degree - 20.5%

Graduate or professional degree - 10.9%

Other- 7%

<https://www.mncompass.org/profiles/city/spicer>

**Spicers Workforce**



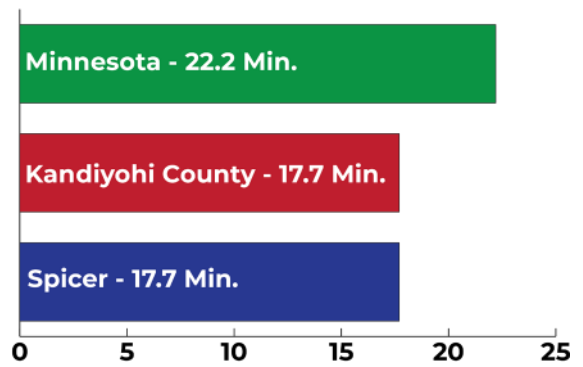
## Work Commute

19.3 Average travel time to work (in minutes) in Spicer

2019 Mean Commute Time for Kandiyohi County Workers: 17.2 minutes (<https://fred.st-louisfed.org/series/B080ACS027067>)

23.8 Average travel time to work (in minutes) in Minnesota

## Average Work Commute Time (In Minutes)



## Types of Occupations

<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/spicer-mn#economy>

Total: 829

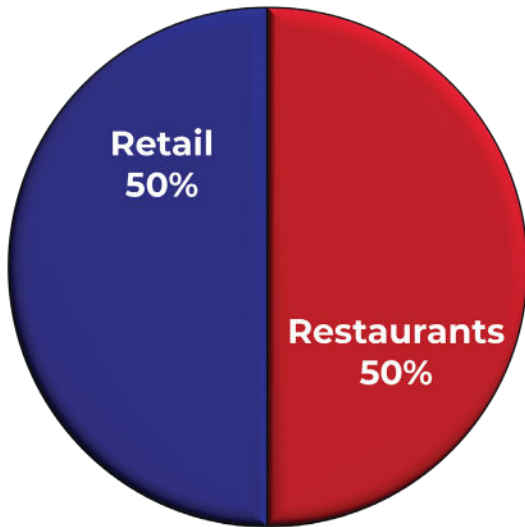


2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020

## Economic Development Survey – Downtown Spicer

As part of the public engagement process and in an effort to gain a better understanding of public opinion related to economic development, a survey was developed and distributed. Results collected may be used to inform City decision makers when considering future development opportunities.

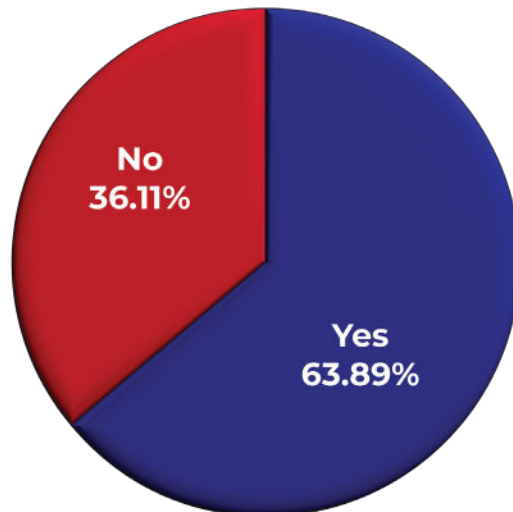
### What Type of Business Would You Like to see More of in Downtown Spicer



When asked what type of business respondents would like to see more of in downtown Spicer, an even 50-50 split presented, with half of respondents indicating they would like to see additional eating establishments and the other half indicating they would like to see more retail businesses.

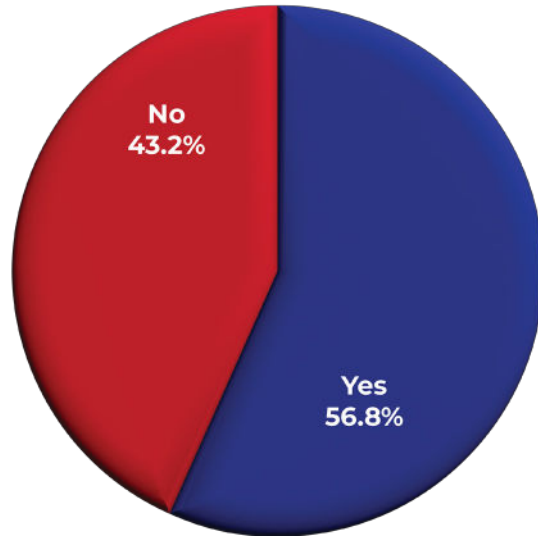
### Should the City of Spicer Pursue More Downtown Retail Spaces

When asked if the City of Spicer should pursue more space for retail establishments in the downtown area, possibly including redevelopment of the parking lot adjacent to Hampton Inn Spicer Green Lake (north side of hotel), almost two-thirds of respondents (63.89%) indicated they thought this was a good idea. 36.11% indicated that this was not their preference.

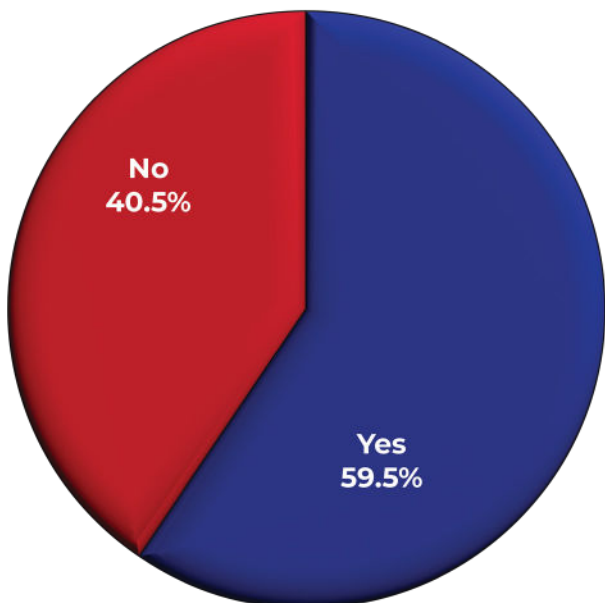


## Would You Like to See a Community Center of Some Sort in Downtown Spicer

When asked if they would like to see some sort of a community center developed within Spicer's downtown corridor, slightly more than half (56.67%) indicated in the affirmative. 43.24% indicated they were not in favor of this.



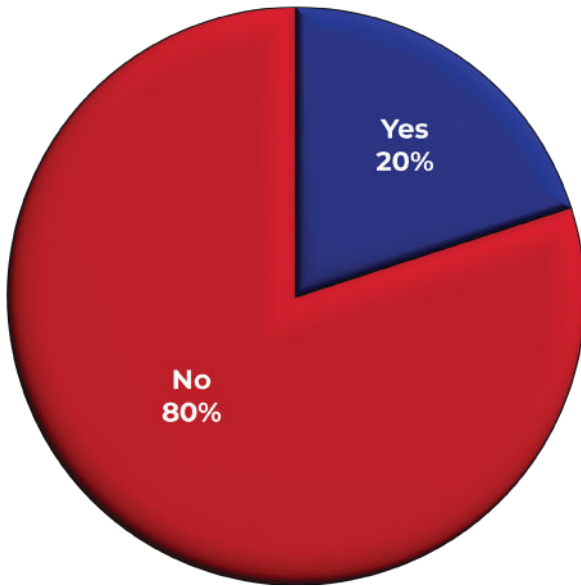
## Should the City Adopt a New Zoning District for Downtown Spicer to Enhance Building Aesthetics



When asked if the City should adopt a new zoning district for Spicer's downtown area, in an effort to enhance property aesthetics, 59.5% of respondents indicated their support for this idea, while the remaining 40.5% expressed they were not in favor.

When asked if the City of Spicer should explore the possibility of closing Frances or Manitoba Streets, between MN Highway 23 and Lake Avenue, on a seasonal basis, in order to encourage more programming and sitting areas downtown, 40.5% of respondents indicated they thought this was a good idea. 29.7% indicated they did not support this exploration. Another 29.7% indicated that they were unsure on the matter.

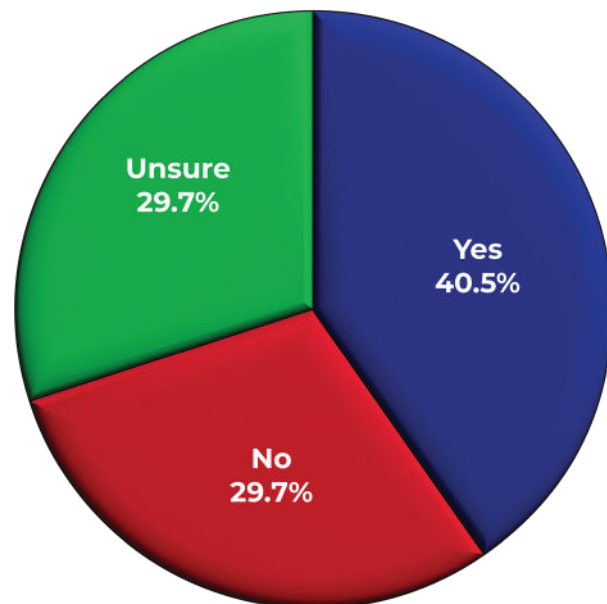
### Would You Like to Participate in the Process of Developing a New Downtown Zoning Ordinance



When asked if they would like to participate in the process of developing a new downtown zoning ordinance (participating in meetings, determining building materials and color palettes, etc.), just 20% of respondents indicated they would have interest in this, with the remaining 80% indicating they would not be interested.

### Should the City Explore Seasonally Closing Lake or Manitoba Streets Between Hwy. 23 and Lake Avenue

When asked if the City of Spicer should explore the possibility of closing Frances or Manitoba Streets, between MN Highway 23 and Lake Avenue, on a seasonal basis, in order to encourage more programming and sitting areas downtown, 40.5% of respondents indicated they thought this was a good idea. 29.7% indicated they did not support this exploration. Another 29.7% indicated that they were unsure on the matter.



## Goals and Strategies

### Goal#1: Nurture an Environment that Assures City-Wide Economic Growth and Resilience

#### Strategies:

1. Spicer, with guidance and assistance from the local Economic Development Authority (EDA) and Planning Commission, should identify, develop, and market existing commercial sites (ranging from “shovel ready” lots to turn-key buildings) with emphasis on encouraging development or redevelopment of existing sites to help reduce encroachment on Spicer’s natural resources.
2. Spicer should regularly (e.g., annually) review site-specific development regulations/restrictions to ensure they encourage appropriate development for each site’s neighborhood/
3. Spicer should regularly review ordinance and zoning to ensure it is appropriate, current, and enforced to ensure the community provides a high standard of living for residents and leaves a positive impression among visitors and passersby, increasing the likelihood of their return to the community.
4. Spicer should ensure a streamlined permitting process for those wishing to invest in the City’s Central Business District/downtown corridor and/or other “infill” locations (i.e., existing unused or underused locations).
5. To ensure good progress toward their development goals, the Spicer EDA and Planning Commission should develop annual work plans that fit into broader long-term strategic plans.
6. Installation of City-wide high-speed internet service (i.e., broadband) should be prioritized to support the needs of modern businesses and remote workers. Download speeds of no less than 100 mbps and upload speeds of no less than 20 mbps will be necessary to effectively support commerce.
7. Spicer should ensure the amenities required by the workforce (e.g., a variety of housing and childcare options, a strong and supported school district, and opportunities for leisure and recreation) are available.
8. A known process for quality two-way communication between the City of Spicer (including staff, elected officials, the EDA, the Planning Commission, and other committees) and local businesses should be assured, and the City should actively seek input and guidance from its local business owners
9. Spicer should cooperate with and promote within neighboring communities to ensure their residents, businesses, and visitors are also welcomed to enjoy Spicer’s offerings.

## **Goal #2: Strengthen Spicer’s Existing Business Community and Attract More Business Investment.**

### **Strategies:**

1. To support business growth and stability, the Spicer EDA should connect the community’s entrepreneurs with available local, regional, state, and federal resources – both private and public (e.g., financing, grants, employment, and training services).
2. Spicer’s EDA should consider opportunities to stimulate business growth and commercial property improvements via grants, forgivable loans, or other development incentives.
3. Spicer should look for opportunities to support the diversification of local businesses (e.g., creating opportunities for and incentivizing small “or niche” manufacturing companies and professional services in addition to hospitality-focused businesses) to increase resilience, create additional employment opportunity, and build Spicer’s tax base to support continuous improvement of City amenities.
4. Spicer should continue to support new and existing tourism/hospitality-focused businesses by ensuring they are networked, providing better opportunity for natural collaboration.
5. Spicer should cooperate with and support businesses who wish to increase year-round visitors to the Spicer community.
6. Spicer should support opportunities for local food producers and craftspeople to market and sell items by providing opportunity for local farmer’s market-style events, craft fairs, and “pop-up” spaces, and by encouraging collaboration with existing retailers.

## **Goal #3: Promote the Spicer Area as an Exceptional and Welcoming Place for Business, Leisure, and Life.**

### **Strategies:**

1. Spicer should develop a fresh, professional, long-term branding and marketing campaign that illustrates the City’s opportunities, including but not limited to opportunities for business development, employment, and leisure.
2. Spicer should preserve and promote the responsible enjoyment of natural resources and assets (e.g., lakes) that have attracted and will continue to attract visitors, new residents, and business investment.
3. Spicer should work to preserve its unique character and strengths (e.g., “lake town” atmosphere, volunteer base, appreciation for art) while also making room for new assets, experiences, and traditions.
4. Spicer should continue to improve its Central Business District/downtown commercial corridor, which can serve as a hub of commerce and community activity.
5. To ensure long-term vitality, Spicer should target marketing and outreach to skilled workers and to those who have started families or who expect to start families in the foreseeable future.
6. Spicer should continue to participate in the area’s Chambers of Commerce, share information and resources received via Chamber participation, and ensure local businesses are aware of this support network opportunity.



## **Goal #4: Ensure the Availability of Quality, Affordable Childcare for Spicer’s Workforce**

### **Strategies:**

1. Spicer should regularly and publicly recognize existing childcare providers and thank them for the valuable service they provide to the community.
2. The Spicer EDA should establish a fund to assist new and existing childcare providers with the expenses associated with their important businesses, which often operate at extremely thin margins.
3. The Spicer EDA should connect local businesses who may wish to fund childcare slots for their employees, to reduce the volatility and risk associated with childcare operation.
4. Spicer should promote the resources and industry experts available to assist parties interested in opening new licensed childcare facilities.

## **Goal #5: Support Light Industrial Growth and Related Job Creation**

### **Strategies:**

1. The City should make efforts to retain and attract light industrial development which can enhance the tax base, provide quality job opportunities, and require less utility capacity than heavier industrial development.
2. The City should work with property owners to develop future light industrial areas adjacent to current industrialized zoned land to ensure Spicer has adequate space for this type of future development.

## **Goal #6 Retain Spicer’s “Small Town Spirit.”**

### **Strategies:**

1. The City of Spicer should pursue and sponsor regular activities that encourage face-to-face interaction among residents on a year-round basis. These activities could include community-wide social activities (e.g., music in the park, ice cream social activities, wiffle ball or cornhole/bag-toss tournaments), City-wide clean-up days, or civic-related activities (e.g., voter registration events, town hall meetings, blood donation drives).
2. The City should continue to partner with local providers and invest in medical and mental health resources for its residents, so they have the support needed to remain healthy, active, and engaged community participants.
3. The City should collaborate with and support educators to ensure they have what they need to continue delivering high-quality instruction and enrichment, as is needed to attract and retain families with children. This includes creating opportunities for business partnerships, which can improve a school district’s ability to prepare students for local employment.
4. To attract visitors to Spicer’s business districts, the City and/or EDA could engage a consultant and work with business/property owners to develop a unified marketing strategy. This could include the incorporation of promotional events supported by local business groups, the Willmar Lakes Area and other Chambers of Commerce, and other civic organizations.



# CHAPTER 4. HOUSING

## OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION:

A major aim of Spicer’s community and economic development efforts is to ensure adequate and appropriate housing for our residents. This is why housing is an important topic of our Community’s comprehensive plan. An aging population and our evolving regional workforce pose significant challenges. We must protect existing housing stock and stimulate new construction, all while protecting the natural resources and business community that make Spicer beautiful and unique to our region.

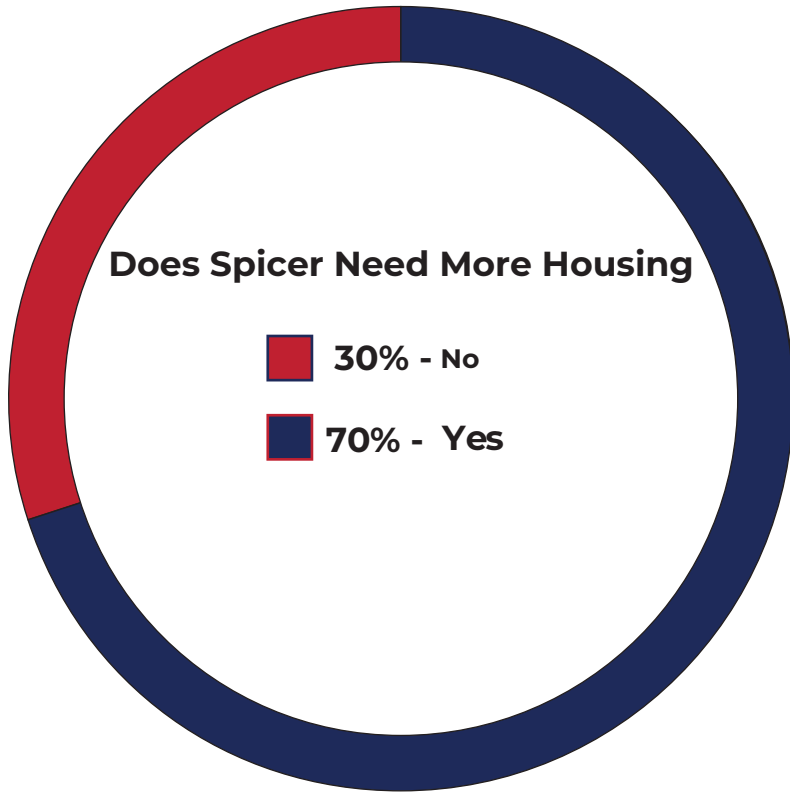
## Public Input:

Public engagement results suggest that many of Spicer’s residents believe there is need for more housing options within the community. A desire for more single-family housing quickly rises to the top of the list of housing wants and needs. This might be achieved through the rehabilitation of existing homes, construction of new single-family dwellings, and/or by creating options for those who wish to leave the higher costs and maintenance of a single-family residence behind. For example, if seniors have one-level, maintenance free options to move into, they may be interested in selling their current homes to others who are more interested in the lifestyle that a single-family home can support. It’s important that new residents have housing options but it is equally important that our community retain our more senior residents as they can continue to enrich our city, with wisdom/perspective to offer and talents to share.

Throughout the public engagement process, community members, business owners, and the City’s committees have indicated desire to foster housing development to support a healthy, vibrant community. The City should consider opportunities to stimulate housing development, while also considering the needs of those individuals and families the City would like to attract or retain. This includes ensuring both ownership and rental options for retirees, for young and growing families, and for area workers, including those who work within or outside of Spicer’s city limits.

Conversations with Spicer’s residents indicate that people who choose to live in Spicer are often appreciate the ability to create a home amid Spicer’s smaller “lake-town” atmosphere. By ensuring a quality mix of housing, the City will support a quality mix of people who appreciate that very opportunity. By maintaining a wide variety of housing options, the community will also avoid an unintended level of exclusivity that might price a single professional, growing family, or retiree out of Spicer’s housing market.

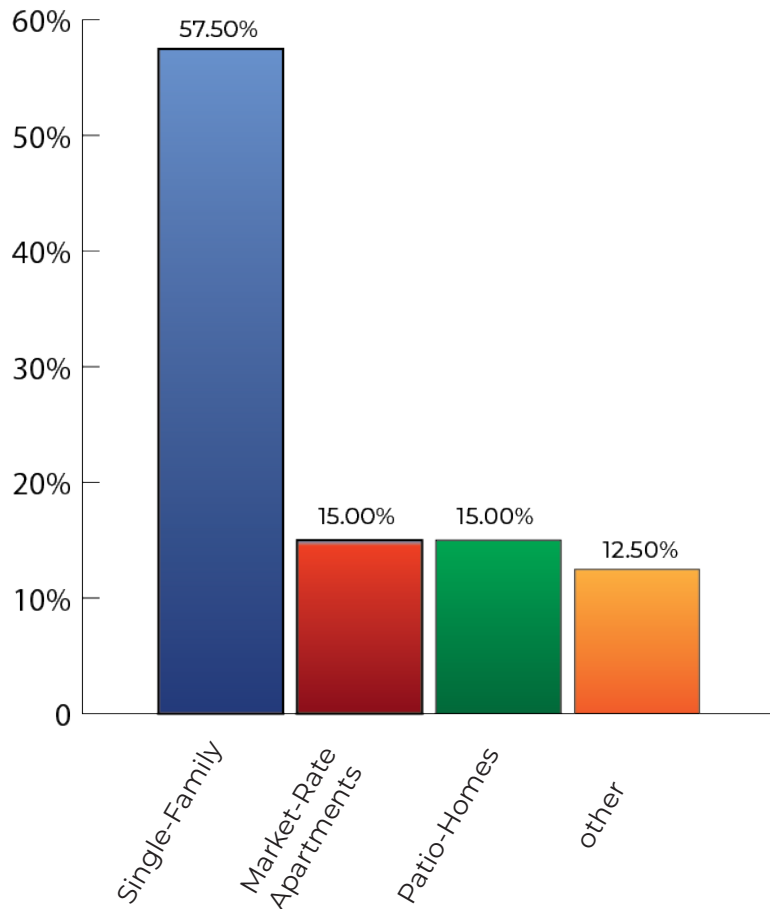
It is important to embrace the fact that, while some may choose to work in a neighboring community, many would prefer to make Spicer their home and spend the bulk of their dollars in town. Spicer is well-positioned to be a residential community of choice in our region. Additionally, Spicer has terrific potential to attract those who work on an increasingly-remote basis (i.e., telecommuters).



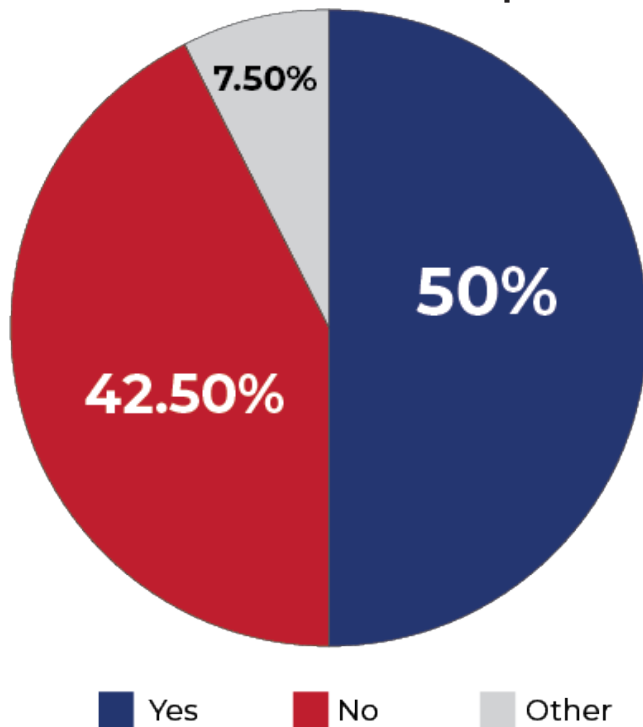
When surveyed, 70 percent of respondents indicated that they believe the City of Spicer needs more housing.

### What Kind Of Housing Would You Like To See More Of In Spicer?

When surveyed, 57.5 percent of residents indicated they would like to see more single-family housing within the City of Spicer. 15 percent indicated that they would like to see more market-rate apartments. 15 percent indicated they would like to see more patio homes. 12.5 percent indicated they had a desire to see some other type of housing added to Spicer's housing portfolio.

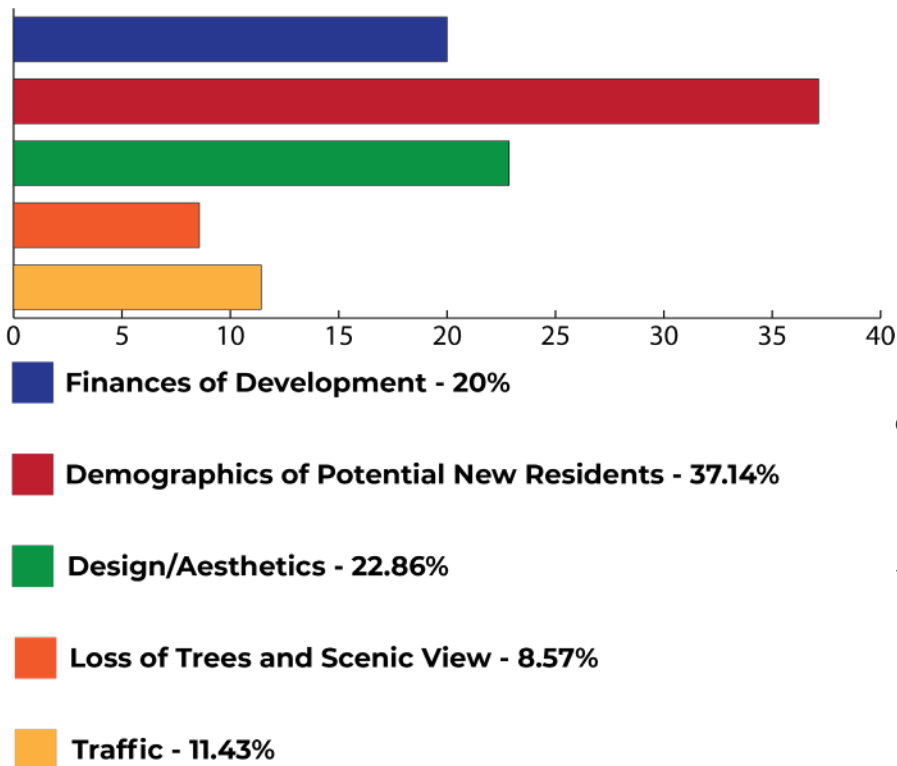


## Should The City Help Facilitate Housing Development In Spicer?



When survey respondents were asked if the City of Spicer should help to facilitate housing development in town, half responded that they did believe the City should help with this. 42.5% indicated that their preference was for the City to avoid a direct facilitation role. 7.5% indicated “other” as their answer, perhaps indicating that they were uncertain at the time of their response.

## If You Have Any Concerns About Potential Housing Developments, What Are They



When survey respondents were asked if they had any concerns about potential housing developments in the City of Spicer, 20 percent indicated that they had some concerns surrounding the financial implications of development. Over 37 percent indicated that they were concerned about the demographic makeup of those who might move into Spicer to fill the new or newly-vacant housing units. Almost 23 percent indicated that they had concerns regarding the potential design of the housing units the selves (how they looked). Almost 9 percent were concerned about the potential loss of trees or the impact on their view. Finally, over 11 percent indicated that they were concerned about the traffic implications of bringing new residents to town .

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING EXPLAINED:

Housing affordability is relative to one's income. If a home is at or below 30 percent of a person's income, it is then said to be "affordable" housing. For example, if a household's earners bring in \$45,000 per year, then a housing expense (rent or total mortgage payment including all utilities, taxes, and insurances) is considered affordable if it is at or below \$1,125 per month. If a household earns \$70,000 per year, then a housing expense can be considered affordable if it is at or below \$1,750 per month. Most rural communities have at least a few homes that would be considered affordable to median income earners. It is important for cities to ensure the availability of affordable housing for the people the community wants to attract, often young families, entrepreneurs, skilled workers/professionals, and even the entry-level workers who are often needed to provide desired services. It is important to understand the difference between affordable housing, market-rate housing, subsidized housing, etc. The following housing-related definitions are meant to provide clarity and common understanding as the City of Spicer plans for future housing development or redevelopment.

**Affordable Housing:** Dwellings that a household can obtain for 30 percent or less of its gross income (before taxes and other withholding). Utilities (e.g., electricity, water, sewer, gas, phone/internet) should be included as part of the housing expense.

**Market-Rate Housing:** Dwellings with prices that are based on existing area market values and demand, rather than any sort of subsidy or government assistance.

**Subsidized Housing:** Dwellings for which occupants receive some form of financial assistance from the government. This may be through the use of operating subsidies, tax credits, or rent assistance, the goal of which is to provide safe, quality housing for low-to-moderate income households.

**Workforce Housing:** Dwellings that are affordable to workers and reasonably close to their place of employment.

**Executive Housing:** A dwelling that is intended to provide occupants with higher-than-average levels of comfort, quality, and convenience. This is often a marketing term for a moderately-large and well-appointed house, typically with a premium price.

**Senior Housing:** Dwellings that are suitable for the needs of an aging population. Senior housing may range from independent living to 24-hour care. Typically, senior housing provides emphasis on safety, accessibility, adaptability, and longevity that conventional housing options may lack.

**Vacation Housing:** Secondary dwellings that owners use for recreational purposes such as weekends, vacations, and holidays. These dwellings may or may not be shared between multiple families or rented out for shorter periods through vacation rental platforms (e.g. Airbnb, VRBO)

**Single-Family Home:** A free-standing residential building designed to be used as a single-dwelling unit (for one household).

**Duplex:** A residential building that has two units. Units may share one or more common walls but their floor plans may vary. Units can also be arranged either side-by-side or stacked on top of one another.

**Triplex:** A residential building that has three units. As with duplexes, units may share one or more common walls but their floor plans may vary. Units may be arranged side-by-side or stacked on top of one another.

**Fourplex:** A residential building that has 4 units. As with duplexes and triplexes, units may share one or more common walls but their floor plans may vary. Units may be arranged side-by-side or stacked on top of one another.

**Patio Home:** A dwelling that shares at least one wall with another home and usually doesn't rise higher than one-and-a-half stories tall, though most are one level. For practical purposes the terms "garden home" and "twin home" can be used interchangeably with "patio home"

**Town House:** A dwelling that is generally two or three stories and is attached to other dwellings by shared walls on either side of the unit (or both sides). Often, these homes are built taller and narrower than single family homes or patio homes. They are often used in planned unit developments or clustered housing.

**Row House:** Row houses, like town houses, are generally two or three stories and attached to other dwellings on either side of the unit (or both sides). They differ from townhouses because they often look exactly the same as all of the surrounding unit. They have a very uniform look to them with a common façade. Rather than appearing as separate units entirely, they may appear to one uniform building with multiple entrances.

**Apartment:** A rented residential unit that is part of one (or several) residential buildings. It may also be a separate dwelling within a single-family home, though often times, from the street, there might be little or no indication of the home containing more than one dwelling.

**Condominium:** This type of dwelling, often abbreviated to "condo", is a privately-owned individual unit within a community of other units. In general, the interior of the condominium is owned by an individual household and the structural components of exterior walls. Condo owners jointly own shared common areas within the community and share exterior maintenance costs.

**Housing Cooperative:** More common to larger cities, this model of homeownership involves a building that is jointly-owned by a corporation made up of all of its residents. When a person buys into a housing cooperative, they are not purchasing a piece of property. Instead, they are buying shares in a nonprofit corporation that allows them to live in the residence.

**Accessory Dwelling:** An accessory dwelling is a smaller, independent residential dwelling located on the same lot as a stand-alone single-family home. They are often referred to as "granny flats", "secondary suites", or simply "apartments". Often, they are used to house family members (especially adult children, aging parents, or a family member with a disability) but may also be used as housing for students or for those who work locally but maintain a residence in a far-away area.

**Low-Density Residential District:** A designated area within a community, in which each residential building is designed to house one to two households (e.g., single-family homes, twin homes, duplexes)

**Medium-Density Residential District:** A designated area within a community, intended to allow both single-family structures and multi-family structures which can accommodate up to four separate households. These areas may permit mobile home parks and other compatible activities if certain space and other requirements are met.

**High-Density Residential District:** A designate area within a community, intended to allow for both single-family structures and multi-family structures which can accommodate more than four separate households. Like medium-density residential districts, these areas may permit mobile home parks and other compatible activities if certain space and other requirements are met.

**Commercial/Residential Mixed Use District:** A designated area within a community, intended to allow for a mixture of medium and high-density residential dwellings along with limited retail and commercial uses, in a manner which complements both types of use. This is often the district designation of a community's central business district (i.e., "downtown" area).

**Lifecycle Housing:** An approach to housing that focuses on providing as many housing choices as possible in every neighborhood, to ensure appropriate dwellings for every stage of life.

**Entry-Level Households:** A category of home occupant, or aspiring home occupant, who able to comfortably afford housing on the lower-price end of the housing spectrum. This group will typically include younger adults. However, this group may also include older adults who have been through major life changes (e.g., separation or divorce, death of spouse, major career change). Because it includes younger people in greater number, this group is often more mobile (people in this group often move/relocate more frequently), which may influence them to be more interested in renting a home, rather than purchasing.

*Note: It is estimated that 23 percent of Spicer's and 26 percent of Kandiyohi County's residents fit into the 10 to 29-year age category, which encompasses a large part of this group.*

**First-Time Homeowners:** Members of this group are usually, though not always, in their 20s and 30s. As they purchase a home of their own, they are often making a transition from renting or joint living conditions. Typically, this group includes single individuals or young families but, less often, it may include older couples or families (e.g., those exiting military careers or other vocations where housing may have been provided or more mobility was required). If other, larger and/or more comfortable homes with more amenities or in more desirable locations are available, these homeowners are often inclined to move within several years of their first home purchase. This is because they often have larger gross incomes due to job advancement and/or because they need more space due to the addition of children or other family members.

*Note: It is estimated that 21 percent of Spicer's and 24 percent of Kandiyohi County's residents fit into the 20 to 39 age categories, which comprises a large part of this group.*

**Move-Up Buyers:** People or families who already pay a mortgage on a current home but are eager to buy and move into a new home (often bigger, better-located, or with more desirable features and amenities). These buyers are typically, though not always, in their 30s or 40s and are ready to transition from their first, less-expensive home. From an economic growth perspective, this is an important group, especially given that some households will upgrade their homes several times during the course of their lifecycles.

*Note: It is estimated that nearly 38 percent of Spicer's and 35 percent of Kandiyohi County's population falls within the age category of 30 to 59. People in this age category make up a large part of the of the move-up group.*

**Empty Nesters:** This group is made up of older adults, typically in their upper 40s or older. Their children have moved out of their homes and this often means that the size of their home is larger than need or want to maintain. Many from this group enjoy greater ability to travel or participate in new activities. Therefore, they may appreciate smaller homes which require less maintenance. This could include smaller single-family dwellings but often includes patio homes, townhomes, and condominiums.

*Note: It is estimated that roughly 31 percent of Spicer's and 25 percent of Kandiyohi County's population falls within the age category of 50 to 69. People in this age category make up a large part of the empty nester group. However, this group also includes those who are aged 65 and older. About 30 percent of Spicer's and 26 percent of Kandiyohi County's population are aged 60 or better.*

The availability of affordable housing – housing with total home-related expenses (rent or mortgage, including all tax, insurance, and utility expenses) at less than 30 percent of a community's median household income – is foundational to helping lower-income households thrive in rural areas.

To support younger professionals (e.g., teachers, nurses, welders, technicians,), young families, and seniors, municipalities should work to add affordable housing to their residential mix to the extent possible. This can be supported by adjusting ordinance to accommodate smaller lot sizes and/or things like approved accessory dwelling units, though it is important to include parameters to ensure new dwellings and developments, though different, are complementary to their surrounding neighborhood and community.

Communities, including the City of Spicer, can also consider Tax Increment Financing (TIF) - and other financial incentives, such as discounted or free utility hook-ups, to support infill or other development

*Tax Increment Financing (TIF) allows local governments to invest in public infrastructure and other improvements up-front. Local governments can then pay later for those investments. They can do this by capturing the future anticipated increase in tax revenues generated by the development. This financing approach is possible when a new development is sufficiently large and when its completion will result in a large increase in the value of surrounding real estate, so that the resulting tax revenues generated by the new project can support the bond issuance. TIF bonds have been used to fund land acquisition, sewer and water upgrades, environmental remediation, construction of parks, and road construction, among others. However, it is important to note that there are very specific regulations which cities must follow when using TIF financing.*



Other state and federal programs may also be available to assist cities, in order to reduce financial burdens as they ensure sufficient levels of affordable housing. The availability of these programs may vary depending on state or federal economies or agendas.

**Maintenance and Rehabilitation:** Maintenance and rehabilitation of a community's existing housing stock is another way to ensure sufficient access to quality housing and aesthetically-pleasing neighborhoods. However, homeowners who lack time, money, know-how, or physical ability may find home improvements difficult to accomplish on their own. The City of Spicer could assist by developing programs that help local homeowners overcome these barriers by providing financial or even technical support. This might include creating small grant or forgivable loan opportunities, providing a limited amount of consulting services, enlisting volunteers willing to help homeowners with basic maintenance, or connecting residents to other programs available to help them improve the efficiency of their home.

**Redevelopment:** Redevelopment can be challenging for any city. However, a variety of programmatic strategies can be employed to support infill and other redevelopment efforts:

- Communities can develop a thorough understanding of the current housing market and the community's needs.
- Communities can identify and work with developers to target gaps identified during market analysis.
- Communities can actively market redevelopment opportunities through marketing platforms, incorporating assistance from community partners such as a county's Economic Development Authority or Regional Development Organization.
- Communities can look for partners with common goals (e.g., housing agencies or authorities, business partners) to accomplish redevelopment goals and initiatives.
- Communities can market opportunities and resources (e.g., grants, TIF, utility hookup discounts) that might help to support redevelopment, infill, historic preservation, and restoration.
- Communities can pursue new strategies to encourage, fund, and facilitate redevelopment projects.

**Convenient Access:** While ensuring affordable is available is essential, it is also important to ensure that housing is located within reasonable walking distance of necessary services, stores, and places of employment. Decreasing transportation requirements is one way to make life within a city more affordable. It also promotes healthy living through exercise (walking, biking, etc.) and increases opportunity for positive community interaction. While walking to the library, restaurant, store, etc. a resident might enjoy conversations with neighbors they see along the way. This type of interaction can help a town become a more caring, more resilient community.

*Ensuring appropriate housing for all stages of life, and integrating important traffic and pedestrian infrastructure, recreation amenities, utility services, etc., for all community residents, should remain a top priority for the City of Spicer. While the community is not immune from the housing crisis currently facing our state and much of our nation, Spicer's willingness to be proactive and consider new housing opportunities can continue to set it apart from other cities who are in competition for the same residents.*

## KANDIYOHI COUNTY HOUSING STUDY:

In 2022, the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission engaged Viewpoint Consulting Group, Inc. to conduct a county-wide housing market analysis. This study, which was completed in January 2023, analyzed housing within each of Kandiyohi County's 12 communities as well as its unincorporated/rural area. The following Spicer-specific findings and recommendations can be found within the study, which can be found at: <https://kandiyohi.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Kandiyohi-County-Housing-Study-2023.pdf>.

### Demographic Summary

With 1,112 persons (2020 Census), Spicer is Kandiyohi County's fourth largest community. However, Spicer is on the southwestern shore of Green Lake, which is lined with homes that are mostly outside Spicer's city limits. Including these homes and many others just beyond its city limits, Spicer's zip code (56288) has about 4,400 people.

Although it is not reflected in the Census Bureau's decennial population and household counts, housing development has been strong in Spicer in comparison to other Kandiyohi County communities. Building permits were issued for 47 housing units in Spicer during the 2000s, and 35 units during the 2010s. Based on its location on Green Lake and close proximity to Willmar, Spicer has the potential to exceed its growth projection of 27 households this decade.

### Population & Household Growth Trends

	2000	2010	2020	Projected 2030	Change, 2020 to 2030
Population	1,126	1,167	1,112	1,045	-67
Households	528	520	538	565	27

### Households by Tenure and Housing Type in 2020

	Owner	Renter
Single-Family	379	25
Multifamily	12	122
Mobile Home	0	0
Total	391	147

### Housing Demand and Recommendations

Through 2030, demand is calculated for 50 to 54 additional owned homes over the remainder of the decade. There are very few available lots in Spicer to meet this demand. Thus, a new subdivision(s) is recommended with more than 60 lots within the next five years to accommodate homes generally priced over \$300,000.

To meet rental demand over the next five years, workforce apartment(s) with up to 85 units combined with New London are recommended. Also recommended are 10 to 12 single-level townhomes/twinhomes that would be appealing to some singles, couples, and seniors. Upwards of 90 supportive senior housing units are recommended in New London or Spicer to meet the housing needs of seniors in the northern part of Kandiyohi County. This should include a mix of independent, assisted living, and memory care units.

## **SPICER'S HOUSING GOALS:**

### **Goal # 1 Provide a Variety of Home Ownership and Rental Options that Appeal to Existing and Prospective Residents.**

#### **Strategy**

1. The City of Spicer should actively pursue the development of safe, healthy and attractive residential environments, which include a variety of housing options.
2. The City of Spicer should promote a healthy balance of rentals and owner occupied housing.
3. The City of Spicer should adopt ordinance that supports the development of housing and a variety of traditional and less-traditional housing options.
4. The City of Spicer should adopt a local rental housing code and pursue implementation of such a code, to help ensure a good standard of living for those who rent.
5. The City of Spicer should actively encourage and incentivize the revitalization of existing homes/housing units.
6. The City of Spicer should inventory plotted but undeveloped building lots and prioritize infill development over the development of new areas to take advantage of existing infrastructure and reduce the overall cost of development.
7. The City of Spicer should promote and support the development of housing suitable for young professionals, of all types, and their families.
8. The City of Spicer should participate in a county or regional housing study to better understand housing needs and identify housing opportunities.

## **Goal #2 Ensure an Adequate and Sustainable Supply of Life Cycle Housing to Support Residents at Every Stage of Life:**

### **Strategy**

1. The City of Spicer should regularly reexamine the housing market (the demand for and supply of housing of all types, sizes, and values).
2. The City of Spicer should support zoning and subdivision ordinance that supports the construction of a variety of complementary housing types, sizes, and values, to meet the needs of current and prospective residents.
3. The City should promote a healthy balance of rentals and owner occupied housing.
4. The City of Spicer should support the development of additional market-rate units and explore the opportunity to provide quality housing for those with lower incomes via subsidized rental units.
5. The City of Spicer should support the development of single-family attached units (e.g. duplexes, patio homes, townhomes) which provide quality housing options while maximizing space and allow for more-efficient utility distribution.
6. To sustain neighborhoods, especially aging neighborhoods, in a cost-effective way, the City of Spicer should actively and intentionally promote potential areas of residential redevelopment.
7. The City of Spicer should support the concept of “age-in-place housing” by ensuring a supply of appropriate, low-maintenance, and accessible housing remains available to seniors. This may include support for accessible apartments, townhomes, housing cooperatives, accessory dwellings, shared housing, and assisted living facilities.

## **Goal #3 Maintain Existing Varieties Housing Types (Sizes and Values)**

### **Strategy**

1. The City should support reinvestment in existing housing units which provide a variety of options for all residents through public/private partnerships.
2. The City should protect the integrity of residential neighborhoods through code enforcement.
3. The City should support adequate rental housing conditions by developing and enforcing rental housing ordinances.
4. The City should establish and pursue appropriate and remedies for care of vacant and or foreclosed properties (lawn care, sidewalk maintenance, prevention of utility freeze up).

## **Housing Goal #4 Promote, Support, and Participate in Region-Wide Housing Efforts, Activities, and Partnerships**

### **Strategy**

1. The City of Spicer must engage with county, regional, state, and national efforts designed to reduce foreclosures, and support the conversion of existing properties to suitable uses.
2. The City of Spicer should frequently examine the regional housing market, in addition to the local market, and participate in county or regional housing studies and programs, especially as they:
  - a. Study the feasibility and potential sources for a lease-to-purchase programs to support the sale of existing housing stock, which can provide affordable ownership opportunities relative to the costs of new construction.
  - b. Study the changing demographics (race, age, ability/disability, etc.) of the region to better prepare for and welcome diversity in all its forms.
  - c. Explore opportunities to cooperatively-address local and regional housing issues with neighboring communities (Greater Minnesota communities should not compete with other communities within a one-hour radius. Rather, they should work together to achieve greater success).
3. The City of Spicer should coordinate with county, regional, and state partners and pursue appropriate workforce housing to support local businesses.
4. The City of Spicer should work with county and regional housing agencies to support the construction of quality affordable housing.
5. The City should be receptive to public-private partnerships that have potential to result in the development of quality affordable housing.

## **Housing Goal #5 Ensure Well-Maintained Housing**

### **Strategy**

1. The City of Spicer should preserve property values, maintain the character of its neighborhoods, eliminate and prevent blight, and prevent public health and safety issues by addressing code/ordinance violations.
2. The City of Spicer should explore the incorporation home-improvement grants and loans, possibly including forgivable loans, to help homeowners with maintenance and those improvements that will contribute to the improvement of the community's housing stock.
3. The City of Spicer should look for ways to mitigate expenses for those buyers interested in the rehabilitation of older homes.

## Housing Goal #6 Ensure Safe and Convenient Pedestrian Linkages Between Homes and Locations of Employment, Entertainment, Leisure, and Commerce.

### Strategy

1. The City of Spicer should support the development of additional housing near the Central Business District and other essential hubs (e.g. Green Lake Mall area) to allow easier pedestrian access to basic services, restaurants, parks, stores, and community services.
2. The City should be mindful of the need for the need for all neighborhoods to have convenient access to parks and other recreational facilities, which include amenities appropriate for each neighborhood.
3. The City of Spicer should regularly revisit the existing Active Living Plan and use it to guide decisions related to walking and bicycling infrastructure (sidewalks, crosswalks, trails, etc.).

### HOUSING SUMMARY:

The City of Spicer has opportunity to attract quality workers and younger families while retaining older residents. While opportunities for community expansion should be seriously considered, there is also opportunity to maximize existing infrastructure and reduce costs by encouraging development and redevelopment in existing locations. The City can also maximize dollars by invest in existing housing stock. By employing the above described strategies, the City of Spicer will encourage a greater, though complementary, variety of housing options well-suited for year-round occupants who will provide steady support for local shops, restaurants, service providers, and the school district.



A photograph of a road intersection. On the left, there is a red and white 'No Entry' sign. In the center, a yellow rectangular sign is mounted on a black post. The road is paved and leads towards a grassy area with trees and a body of water in the background under a blue sky with light clouds.

# CHAPTER 5. TRANSPORTATION

## **Overview and Introduction:**

An effective system of transportation – that is to say, an effective means of moving people and goods – is a crucial element to the success of any community. Residents, institutions, and businesses require an effective transportation system – both infrastructure and services – to meet mobility needs efficiently, effectively, and safely.

While personal vehicles are the primary mode of transportation for most Greater Minnesota residents, it is important to consider the needs of all community members and visitors. A community's transportation system must be balanced to accommodate those with different transportation modes: those who walk or bike (including but not limited to seniors and youth), those who drive personal vehicles, those who use public transit, and those who drive for commercial purposes.

Spicer's residential neighborhoods were built using a street grid system that lends itself nicely to walking and bicycling. Most residents live within reasonable walking distance of the City's key destinations. The community's Central Business District is centrally located within walkable reach for most residents, as is the Highway 23 commercial corridor. The Glacial Lakes State Trail runs north to south through the center of the community. Besides being a major attribute for tourism and connecting walkers, bicyclists, and snowmobilers from neighboring communities, the trail serves as a major pedestrian corridor for residents. Manitoba Street West incorporates a sidewalk on its southside, providing access to the Central Business District and Green Lake-adjacent amenities for residents of Spicer's west side.

Most of Spicer's residential neighborhoods feature narrow, tree-lined streets with low traffic levels. While traffic volumes change with the seasons, except for Minnesota State Highway 23, Spicer's overall traffic volume ranges from low to medium. While narrow streets tend to encourage lower vehicle speeds, safety could be improved with the incorporation of additional signage and other measures at and within busier intersections and corridors. For instance, along Lake Street, which is well-traveled in the summer months.

## **Public Input:**

Residents of Spicer have repeatedly expressed a need to maintain a "safety-first" approach to navigation along and across Minnesota State Highway 23, the City's busiest thoroughfare. Pedestrian safety and visibility could be improved with the incorporation of additional pedestrian beacons and/or improving lighting. All measures that improve safety for those crossing Minnesota Highway 23 will improve connectedness between the cities east and west sides.

Spicer residents have also indicated a desire for a well-connected, safe walking and bicycle infrastructure that connects key destinations throughout the community and encourages an active healthy living lifestyle.

Several key destinations have been identified.

They include but are not limited to:

- Faith Lutheran Church
- WestRich RV Park
- Prairie Meadows Learning Center
- Spicer Public Library
- Hampton Inn Spicer Green Lake Hotel
- American Legion
- Northern Inn
- Zorbaz Green Lake Restaurant
- Big Kahuna Fun Park
- U.S. Post Office
- Green Lake BMX
- Green Lake Mall/Teals Grocery Store/YMCA Early Learning Center
- O’Neil’s Restaurant
- Westwood Café
- City Offices/Dethlefs Community Center
- Spicer Living Center
- United Prairie Bank
- Parks
  - Green Lake Baseball Diamonds
  - Pirotta Park/Spicer Park/Wildcat Cove (Spicer’s Destination Playground)
  - Westside Park
  - Beach Street Park
  - Saulsbury Beach County Park
  - Spicer City Cemetery

### **Goals and Strategies for Active Living:**

It will remain important for the City of Spicer to maintain quality, safe access to these key destinations for walkers and bicyclers, in addition to motorists. Many of these destinations already have excellent walking and bicycling access. However, it is essential to consider elements that support active living when considering street, path, and sidewalk projects. In 2019 the City of Spicer completed an Active Living Plan which can be used to help guide transportation-related decisions.

### **Following are goals and strategies from Spicer Active Living Plan:**

#### **Spicer Active Living Plan Goals:**

1. Allow safe and adequate access to every public and private destination within the city.
2. Improve mobility for residents, visitors, and businesses by providing a transportation system that considers motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.
3. Design transportation infrastructure according to its intended service function and within the context of its neighborhood.
4. Minimize the unintended impacts of Spicer’s transportation infrastructure, including unnecessary congestion, vehicle emissions, and safety hazards.
5. Support healthy living and reduce motor vehicle dependence by supporting safe, adequate, and appealing walking and bicycling infrastructure.
6. Invest in the infrastructure needed to support residents, visitors, and businesses’ electric vehicles (e.g., public charging stations) and other common transportation and transportation-related technologies that yet have not been identified.
7. Engage all segments of the community and solicit their input when considering transportation-related issues.



8. Identify new and existing sources of transportation infrastructure funding by seeking to partner, where feasible, with federal, state, regional, county, and adjacent community sources.
9. Minimize barriers to support the effective and efficient operation of public and private transportation providers (e.g., Central Community Transit, Jefferson Lines, school bus companies, ride-hailing services, specialized transportation service providers) to improve access to those with transportation/mobility barriers.
10. Give citizens and businesses background on transportation issues affecting the city allowing them to be informed on reasoning behind decisions by City staff and elected officials regarding transportation

### **Spicer Active Living Plan Strategies:**

1. Provide essential infrastructure that makes physical activity and active transportation an easy, accessible, and enjoyable option.
2. Raise awareness of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and improve overall health and safety of residents of the City.
3. Promote implementation of policies and practices that create active community by increasing opportunities for non-motorized transportation and access to community recreational activities.
4. Generate Community wide support for active living and collaborate with key partners to drive changes in the community
5. Provide the necessary safety education of citizens to ensure walking and bicycling in the community can be enjoyable, and safe
6. Improve and enforce the City's ordinances and planning documents that will support the culture of an active living community
7. Utilize City committees in taking the lead role in promoting and educating the citizens about-improved transportation plans and increase local "buy in."

## **Glacial Lakes State Trail**

As noted previously, the Glacial Lakes State Trail is a wonderful community amenity. The trail runs north to south through the entire city and is located just west of Minnesota Highway 23. In addition to serving as a regional trail for walkers, bicyclists, and winter recreation enthusiasts, it also serves as a major pedestrian and bicycle route within the city, providing a perfect backbone for pedestrian infrastructure, especially during warmer months. The trail already provides an important economic development boost to Spicer's thriving summertime tourism industry. However, there is potential for more year-round economic benefit. The community of Spicer has real opportunity to draw additional visitors, and their pocketbooks, by holding events, adding amenities, or participating in other promotional activity during cooler months. As the trail is also groomed for snowmobile use, pedestrian safety must be considered during the winter season.

[https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/maps/state\\_trails/glacial\\_lakes.pdf](https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/maps/state_trails/glacial_lakes.pdf)

## **Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center,**

Located a few miles west of Spicer, Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center has developed a network of mountain bike trails. In partnership with Kandi Riders Club, various trail loops cover about four and a half miles with more trail development expected.

Prairie Woods ELC also offers approximately 10km of walking and hiking trails over rolling glacial terrain, covered by both woods and prairies, throughout their 500-acres. These trails are also used by cross country skiers and snowshoers during the winter months. In addition to providing convenient access to hiking, biking, and nature, for Spicer's residents, Prairie Woods ELC also draws nature and exercise lovers from across the region, providing an additional economic benefit to the area.

<http://www.prairiewoodselc.org/>

## **Kandiyohi Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan**

Several area stakeholders crafted the Kandiyohi Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan to provide guidance that would ensure our area's biking and walking infrastructure continues to develop. This plan will be updated in 2023. [2017 Kandiyohi Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan](#)

## Important Points of Discussion:

**Public Transportation** – The provision of quality access to public transportation has potential to reduce traffic congestion while also providing better mobility for non-drivers (including youth, people with disabilities and members of the older population who no longer feel comfortable or safe behind the wheel). The City should work with Central Community Transit (CCT) and the Mid-Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordination Council to identify opportunities for transportation partnership and reduce local transportation gaps for nondrivers.

CCT provides accessible bus transportation service to Spicer’s residents on a limited basis. The service provides nondrivers with a connection to the New London and Willmar communities, with connections beyond. This provides access to those who require accessible transportation for work, school, medical appointments, and/or personal errands. A typical one-way bus fare is \$3.00, though rides of greater distance may cost more. To supplement their transit bus service, CCT also incorporates a volunteer driver program. According to CCT administration the service has seen an increase in the number of Spicer business employees who wish to use public transportation to get to and from work.

**Traffic Patterns** – By identifying high-traffic areas, the city can determine where street construction and reconstruction should occur. This can also help the city decide where road access should be restricted and identify areas of traffic safety concern. Furthermore, by examining traffic patterns, the city can better determine where new land development should and should-not occur.

Spicer’s most used roads include:

- Minnesota State Highway 23 - High Traffic Volume
- Kandiyohi County Road 10 (i.e., Lake Avenue South and 113<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE) - Medium Traffic Volume
- Kandiyohi County Road 8 (i.e., Kandiyohi Avenue) - Medium Traffic Volume
- Lake Avenue North - Medium Traffic Volume

**Roadway Sign Policies** – Commercial and other signage, along highways and streets can be a distraction to drivers and can leave a cluttered and unappealing impression of the local landscape. While it is important to avoid running afoul of first-amendment rights, the location, size, shape, and color of signs can be regulated through a carefully crafted sign ordinance, implemented and enforced by the City.

**Future Roads and Streets Need to Follow Infrastructure** – The future construction of Spicer’s roadway and pedestrian infrastructure should be consistent with the City’s Future Land Use Map (refer to page \_\_\_\_). Construction decisions should also consider the location of other necessary development infrastructure (e.g., water, sewer, retention ponds, etc.).

## Capital Improvement Plan:

A community's Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) is a planning and management tool used by City officials. It is a short-range plan, which identifies capital projects and equipment purchases, providing a planning schedule and, when possible, identifying options for project/purchase financing. These plans give City leaders opportunity to plan for future financial commitments while avoiding the financial stress of paying for those projects all at once and/or on short notice.

### Benefits of a Capital Improvements Plan

- Acts as a project and financial planning tool
- Keeps citizens and the City Council abreast of future needs
- Prioritizes projects based on city's needs.
- Mitigates the need for municipal tax rate increases
- Manages a city's spending in a way that avoids extreme financial changes and burdens
- Allows a city to be less reliant on long-term debt (bonding) and provides the ability to pay for greater portions of projects as they occur
- Provides sufficient time for detailed and careful project planning
- Better equips cities to create financial reserves for contingencies and emergencies and prevents a cities from over-borrowing.

### A CIP should:

- Cover multiple years
- Should be reviewed annually to determine if new additions are justified, monitor progress, and make inform budgeting recommendations.
- Identify specific projects, including significant maintenance projects (e.g., roadway and utility maintenance).

Spicer's CIP is primarily-focused on its roadways and utilities infrastructure.

**Road Maintenance** - Roadway maintenance is an expensive but necessary component of the Spicer's transportation system. Capital improvements planned for roadway maintenance needs to account for anticipated increases in traffic and the demand for additional roads and streets as Spicer grows.

## **Other Goals and Strategies:**

### **Goal #1 The City of Spicer Maintains a Cost-Effective Transportation System With Well-Maintained Roads, that Safely and Economically Meets the Needs of all Users Now and for Future Generations.**

#### **Strategy**

1. Provide safety and accessibility for all users, of all ages and abilities, when planning improvements to the transportation system. (ADA compliant)
2. Accommodate both pedestrian and vehicular needs in street design to ensure a pedestrian and bicyclist friendly community.
3. Work with surrounding townships, Kandiyohi County, MnDOT, and private stakeholders when maintaining and upgrading roads and trails to maximize efficiency
4. Develop transportation services and infrastructure improvements that are consistent with local land use plans and encourage economic development.
5. Work towards curb accessibility throughout the city.
6. Include and inform the public when prioritizing street, sidewalk, and trail improvements. (CIP)
7. Work to add safety and aesthetic amenities, such as crosswalk lights, sidewalks, improved street lighting, landscaping, etc. along Minnesota Highway 23, to ensure better connectivity between the City's east and west sides.

### **Goal #2 Provide the Necessary Education to Citizens to Help Ensure that Transportation Safety is a Top Priority.**

#### **Strategy**

1. Educate walkers and bicyclists on safety and the "rules of the road" to support a quality pedestrian environment and reduce potential for collision and injury.
2. Teach drivers proper etiquette for navigation near bikers and walkers to reduce potential for collision and injury.

### **Goal #3 Improvement and Enforcement of the City Ordinances and Planning Documents to Support a Safe and Active Living Community**

#### **Strategy**

1. Modify various plans and ordinances to create a framework for improved pedestrian and bicycle travel.
2. Implement suggested recommendations from Spicer's existing Active Living Plan.
3. Improve pedestrian safety at Minnesota Highway 23 crossings, especially near the City's Central Business District.

**Goal #4 Use an integrated Transportation Network System that Encourages Multimodal Use.**

**Strategy**

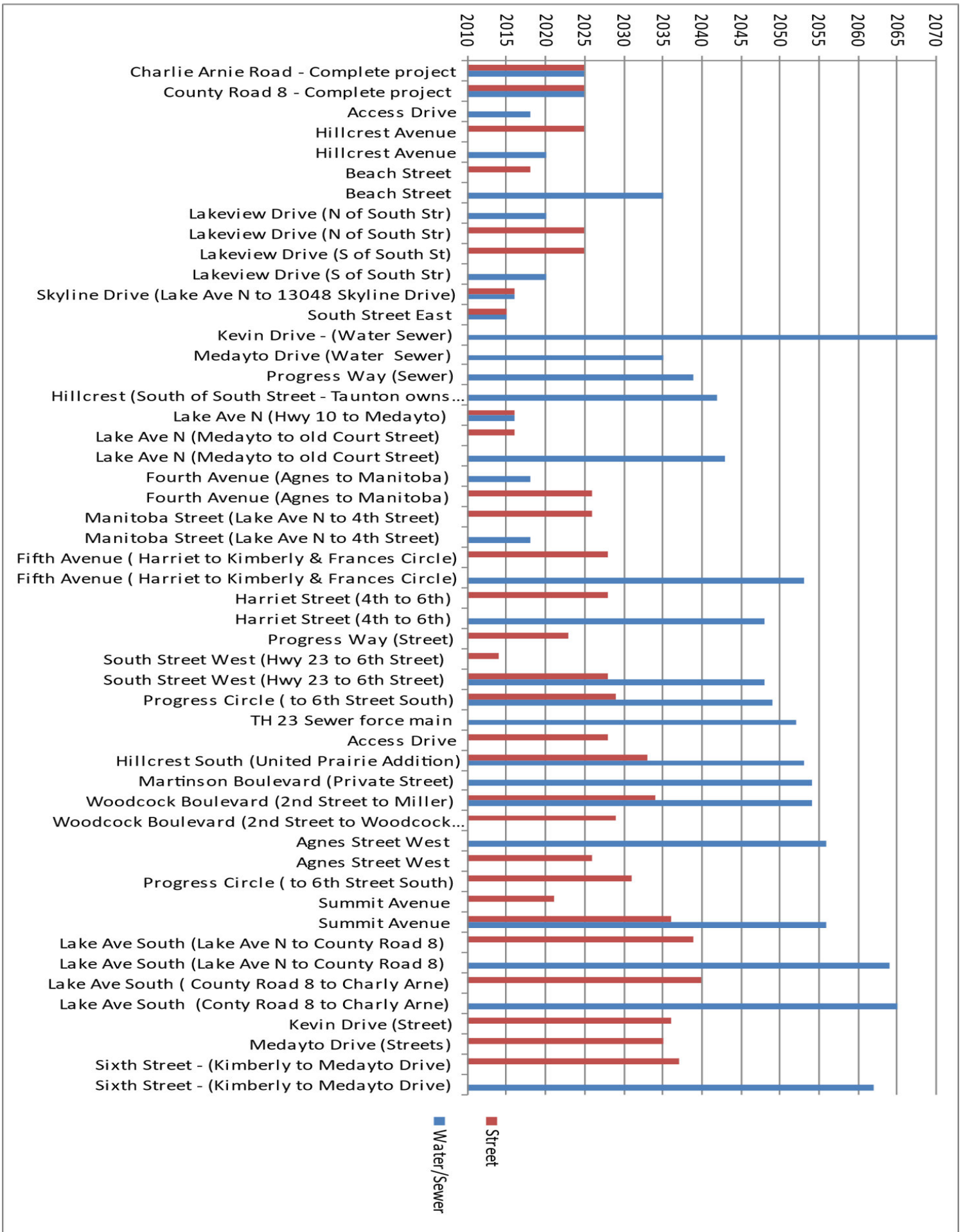
- 1. Encourage unified streets and roadways that promote a variety of transportation modes, such as bicycling, walking, and approved motorized vehicles.
- 2. If any additional county highways are created or reconstructed in Spicer, the City should request that such roads include paved shoulders at least ten feet in width to accommodate bicycling, walking, and other approved motorized uses.

**Goal #5 Collaborate with Public and Private Partners to Plan for Multimodal Transportation System**

**Strategy**

- 1. Coordinate with CCT and other transit service providers to ensure effective transportation options for nondrivers.
- 2. Work with local aviation groups within the region to ensure adequate airport services are ensured to support the local business community, including but not limited to those businesses in the tourism industry.
- 3. Continue collaboration with Kandiyohi County to ensure that the Spicer’s transportation needs are considered when planning future transportation/roadway projects.
- 4. Work with local, state, and federal partners to promote walking and biking through the





## Street & Water/Sewer Replacement Plan

Year in place	Street Project	Water/Sewer	Street
	Charlie Arnie Road - Complete project	2025	2025
	County Road 8 - Complete project	2025	2025
1965	Access Drive	2018	
1965	Hillcrest Avenue		2025
1970	Hillcrest Avenue	2020	
1980	Beach Street		2018
1980	Beach Street	2035	
1980	Lakeview Drive (N of South Str)	2020	
1980	Lakeview Drive (N of South Str)		2025
1980	Lakeview Drive (S of South St)		2025
1980	Lakeview Drive (S of South Str)	2020	
1980	Skyline Drive (Lake Ave N to 13048 Skyline Drive)	2016	2016
1980	South Street East	2015	2015
1981	Kevin Drive - (Water Sewer)	3036	
1981	Medayto Drive (Water Sewer)	2035	
1989	Progress Way (Sewer)	2039	
1992	Hillcrest (South of South Street - Taunton owns street)	2042	
1993	Lake Ave N (Hwy 10 to Medayto)	2016	2016
1993	Lake Ave N (Medayto to old Court Street)		2016
1993	Lake Ave N (Medayto to old Court Street)	2043	
1996	Fourth Avenue (Agnes to Manitoba)	2018	
1996	Fourth Avenue (Agnes to Manitoba)		2026
1996	Manitoba Street (Lake Ave N to 4th Street)		2026
1996	Manitoba Street (Lake Ave N to 4th Street)	2018	
1998	Fifth Avenue (Harriet to Kimberly & Frances Circle)		2028
1998	Fifth Avenue (Harriet to Kimberly & Frances Circle)	2053	
1998	Harriet Street (4th to 6th)		2028
1998	Harriet Street (4th to 6th)	2048	
1998	Progress Way (Street)		2023
1998	South Street West (Hwy 23 to 6th Street)		2014
1998	South Street West (Hwy 23 to 6th Street)	2048	2028
1999	Progress Circle (to 6th Street South)	2049	2029
2002	TH 23 Sewer force main	2052	
2003	Access Drive		2028
2003	Hillcrest South (United Prairie Addition)	2053	2033



2004	Martinson Boulevard (Private Street)	2054	
2004	Woodcock Boulevard (2nd Street to Miller)	2054	2034
2004	Woodcock Boulevard (2nd Street to Woodcock Drive)		2029
2006	Agnes Street West	2056	
2006	Agnes Street West		2026
2006	Progress Circle (to 6th Street South)		2031
2006	Summit Avenue		2021
2006	Summit Avenue	2056	2036
2009	Lake Ave South (Lake Ave N to County Road 8)		2039
2009	Lake Ave South (Lake Ave N to County Road 8)	2064	
2010	Lake Ave South (County Road 8 to Charly Arne)		2040
2010	Lake Ave South (County Road 8 to Charly Arne)	2065	
2012	Kevin Drive (Street)		2036
2012	Medayto Drive (Streets)		2035
2012	Sixth Street - (Kimberly to Medayto Drive)		2037



# CHAPTER 6. COMMUNITY STRENGTH AND VITALITY

## Overview and Introduction:

This section of the Spicer Comprehensive plan recognizes that all planning components are related and interconnected. A strong commitment to the community from its citizens is the greatest strength a city could ask for. Spicer’s greatest asset is in fact its people. It is important to acknowledge that, to create an atmosphere with long term vitality in mind. To do this we must provide space and support for residents to contribute. This includes those residents who are at different life stages and those who are from different backgrounds. Dedicated, involved citizens can create an environment of safety, comfort, and vitality. Most importantly, a community is a source of lasting pride.

Spicer benefits from a powerful sense of public service and volunteerism. When opportunities are provided and efforts coordinated, individual volunteers and service organizations have excellent potential to help the city execute strategies and achieve identified goals. Assistance from the following groups should be considered as opportunities when community developments are identified.

## Local Groups and Organizations:

Spicer Economic Development Authority
Spicer Planning Commission
Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce
Broader Spicer Area Business Community
Spicer Lions Club
Spicer’s Church/Worship Communities
American Legion Post. No 545
American Legion Auxiliary 545
New London-Spicer School District # 345
New London-Spicer Amateur Baseball Team
Knights of Columbus Council 13529
Spicer Beautification Committee

## Regional Groups and Organizations:

University of Minnesota - Extension
Southwest Initiative Foundation
Mid-Minnesota Development Commission
Kandiyohi County Housing and Redevelopment Authority
Regional Foundations and Nonprofits
Minnesota State Departments
Neighboring Communities and Rural Residents



Spicer can increase resident involvement and enhance public spaces with community art and/or history focused projects. Examples of these projects include but are not limited to:

- Development of “Memory Trail,” providing residents and visitors a window into Spicer’s History
- The addition of flags, banners, benches, bicycle racks, clocks, decorative lighting, and other attractive aesthetic features contribute to positive impressions among community visitors and passersby.
- Design and creation of permanent or canvas murals within the downtown corridor or other spaces in need of visual interest. Addition of a Public Sculpture that represents the Spicer Community and its history.
- Additions of various trees and other landscaping (this should be done strategically to ensure that there is no negative impact on local infrastructure).

### Local Events:

Community events provide an opportunity for residents to gather, socialize, and become better acquainted. The result is often a tighter-knit community. This effect is often enhanced if event planning includes residents of diverse backgrounds and from different age groups. Examples of these events include:

- Winterfest
- Music in the Park
- Sporting Events
- Youth Activities
- Church Festivals
- Local club or organization event and fundraisers
- Community Education programming
- July 4th Celebrations



## Spicer: Youth Impressions

To enhance this comprehensive plan, the Spicer Comprehensive Plan Task Force agreed that it would be valuable to include a message from its two youngest members, to capture their perceptions of their home community

*Spicer has always struck me as a quaint and close-knit community. Whoever you speak to, you can always find a connection to someone you know and make a new friend in the process. It's also a town that offers a variety of fun activities to do. I have made many good memories here with friends and family, spending the days on Green Lake, catching a movie at the Spicer Cinema 4, playing a round of mini golf at the Big Kahuna Fun Park and participating in many other activities. Along with the fun community events our town offers, these things have made Spicer a great town to grow up in.*

*I appreciate seeing the community get together for town events, such as Winterfest and the 4th of July. It's wonderful to see residents of Spicer rally to put on events for everyone to enjoy with their families. Seeing these events continue to become traditions and watching the next generation step up to volunteer and add new ideas, is something I look forward to. Those events are something I remember attending as a kid and, even in my young adult life, my friends and I still enjoy going to those gatherings. I would love to see more of the community involved with these events, and to see people get excited to help with them.*

*Another great thing about our town is the Glacial Lakes Trail that runs through. It's so useful for all sorts of activities, walking, running, biking, horseback riding and even snowmobiling. Some of my favorite memories have come from being on the trail and then stopping by the Westwood Café for some breakfast or the Dairy Queen for an ice cream. I appreciate seeing the trail being maintained so it can continue being an asset to Spicer. It's one more place where you're almost always likely to run into someone you know or have a mutual connection with. Another great trail/route that we have is the Green Lake Loop. It's so nice to see that we've got a specific trail for walking and biking, so people are able to enjoy a trip around the lake and appreciate its beauty.*

*In my lifetime of growing up here, I've learned that our community is full of caring people willing to help out and lend a hand. Spicer is a lively place with a variety of things to do. The small-town community feel we have is something that is great to see and I am excited to see this quality continue and grow. I very much appreciate the events that the town offers, and the different activities we have in the area. It makes Spicer a fun place to be and makes our town inviting to other people. When speaking with peers, it was difficult to come up with something we need to improve upon. I think, along with preserving our towns traditional events, continuing to maintain our town and its existing assets is important.*

*- Danielle Steffen, NL-S Student and Spicer Resident*

*"Is Spicer really nicer?" I truly believe it is. Ever since I was little, I have either lived in Spicer or been a part of the township of Green Lake. I also work and I have spent much of my free time in Spicer.*

*Spicer is a quaint small town, filled with charm and class. We have the cutest shops and restaurants and I appreciate how everything is within walking distance. Everyone that visits Spicer tells me how much they enjoy their time here. Our community is so peaceful and quiet, yet there are so many things for people to do! If you are a golfer, you can tee up on the pristine Little Crow golf course. Even if you're not a golfer, you can enjoy the patio and take in the landscape, while enjoying a meal at Max's Clubhouse. The views are gorgeous! O'Neill's is a wonderful place to grab dinner with a view. Our traffic is minimal except on the 4th of July and during Winterfest, when many visitors come to town. Every year on the 4th, Spicer puts on the sweetest parade! The streets are filled with smiling eager faces. In the winter, our Winterfest activities provide a wonderful reason to get out and enjoy the season. Spicer builds a magical ice castle every year, using ice from our own Green Lake. It is so beautiful to see it at night, all lit up! Truly a winter wonderland! I would love to see Spicer continue to host events and add new traditions. Our annual events are part of what makes Spicer truly special. Honestly, Spicer reminds me of a town out of a Hallmark movie!*

*Spicer's restaurants are great. Westwood is a family favorite especially on relaxed Sunday mornings, after church. WYSIWYG Juice Company and Urban Escape are the perfect places for a healthy refreshing drink and a cute new outfit! If you need bait or groceries, stop at Mel's Sport Shop or Teal's Market. I'd like to see even more shops and another restaurant. This could help Spicer could flourish even more.*

*Spicer is also very well kept and clean. I love how Spicer adds accents along the streets for the differing seasons! Green Lake is big and gorgeous, a lake perfect for all types of people. You can relax, wakesurf, waterski, fish, or even go to the beach. There are a couple of parks and plenty of trails to explore. My friends and I enjoy going to the movies at the Spicer Cinema and, in the summer, we like to go mini golfing at the Big Kahuna Fun Park.*

*I have learned a lot living in Spicer. I've learned how to be an active and kind member of society. Wildcat cove was built by the people of Spicer. This shows that the people of Spicer are willing to serve and to give, and this inspires others to do the same. Growing up in the town of Spicer, I've been flooded with kindness and love by my neighbors. They've shown me how to treat others and how to be a good neighbor. Every place I go, I am greeted with a smile from a familiar face. I've learned that even the smallest acts of kindness can bring joy to a person's day. I've learned to respect everyone and to treat everyone like a friend. My very favorite part of Spicer is its people. Our town feels like one big family.*

*Spicer has it all and I feel so grateful to call Spicer my home. I could not imagine a better place to grow up. Spicer really is nicer!*

*- Ella Wieland, NL-S Student and Spicer Resident*

*Spicer, the land of the famous Green Lake and the home to 1,200 people. The City of Spicer was platted in 1886. It was named in honor of John M. Spicer, the president of the company building the railway line through the area. It is right off Minnesota State Highway 23 and is a great spot for tourists to stop and take a relaxing stroll around town. We have everything from restaurants to small shops to parks, so you have a lot to do here. We also have lots of trails and woods, so you can go from traveling on your bike to watching the birds in nature.*

*One thing that has been missing is for Spicer to have a lively community entertainment and recreation center. Many other towns have such a center serves that offers good times for the different generations that go there. I feel such a place would help encourage some of Spicer's residents to get out into the community to socialize, participate in fun activities, and enjoy tasty food. It would also be great if this was open to the public without charge, when not rented out for special events. This center would also bring more to town.*

*What I love about Spicer is that there are many things you can do here. For instance, you can play and swim at the local beach and, when you are done and all hot and sweaty from the sizzling summer sun, you can visit our Dairy Queen to grab some ice cream or other treat. We also have nice parks around town and spaces for other activities, including our baseball fields and tennis courts. There are also other places I have not yet mentioned, like our library, the movie cinema, and the Big Kahuna Fun Park. All great places, especially in the summer. winter that is a whole different story. We as the people of Spicer love to build castles in the winter and love to see the tourists come to check them out. We also love our frozen Green Lake. Sure, people love to come and ice fish on it, but we also hold numerous events on the lake, like ice hockey and the annual polar plunge.*

*What I learned from being here is that the saying is true, "Spicer is nicer!" This community is also genuinely nice to live in and there are a lot of accessible things for people to do here. I want to close with a mention of the beauty of our community. The closing of a sweet summer day, with a beautiful sunset, when you are on the lake with your friend. Words cannot describe the feeling.*

*I hoped you learned a few things about my town Spicer, Minnesota. Have yourself a blessed day.*

*-Eli Jacobson, Spicer resident and NLS student*



## Goals and Strategies:

### Goal #1 - The City of Spicer will Continue to Support a Powerful Sense of Community, Volunteerism, and Long-Term Vitality.

#### Strategy

1. The City of Spicer should Consider and employ mixed land uses that encourage and support affordable housing and life-cycle housing, green spaces, bicycle and pedestrian ways, and enhanced aesthetics to create a vibrant environment that accommodates a wide variety of resident needs.
2. The City of Spicer should Prioritize accessibility for all City projects and Commercial Districts.
3. The City of Spicer should Support a healthy, involved retirement community to encourage people to stay in Spicer post-retirement.
4. The City of Spicer should Continue efforts that support broad participation in community events, increase positive attitudes and Spicer, and encourage relationships and collaboration between residents and neighbors.
5. The City of Spicer should Ensure transparency by strengthening efforts to involve people in City Planning and decision-making processes.
6. The City of Spicer should Encourage stakeholders to bring solutions and respond to opportunities.
7. The City of Spicer should Continue to support and maintain local emergency services, while maintaining positive, helpful relationships with neighboring service providers.
8. The City of Spicer should Look for ways to continue and increase collaboration with the New London-Spicer School District, as the school is regarded as one of the community's greatest assets.
9. The City of Spicer should Improve the ease with which residents can get more involved with their community by providing information on volunteer opportunities and events on the community's website, and local newspapers, etc.
10. The City of Spicer should Employ multiple strategies to ensure residents, including those with language or access barriers, are informed of City needs, ordinances, and positive developments.

11. The City of Spicer should Promote activities and programs that help young people mature into productive, responsible adults and give them avenues to positively impact their community.
12. The City of Spicer should Use Taskforces and committees to address specific problems, issues, and opportunities.
13. The City of Spicer should Cooperate with governmental entities, including townships, neighboring cities, the school district, the County, the region, and the State to work toward the most efficient and effective development of delivery services.
14. The City of Spicer should Encourage cooperation between local and regional organizations to help avoid duplication of efforts, ensure effectiveness, and maximize effectiveness.
15. The City of Spicer should Help connect regional employers with local educators so they may develop new strategies to meet current and future workforce needs.
16. The City of Spicer should Create public spaces that are functional for people of all ages, abilities, and income.
17. The City of Spicer should Use public art and history to enhance the aesthetics and interest of public spaces.
18. The City of Spicer should Prioritize the improvement of the downtown business corridor with focus on creating a clean, orderly, and attractive environment that encourages business development while also providing comfortable spaces for residents and visitors.

