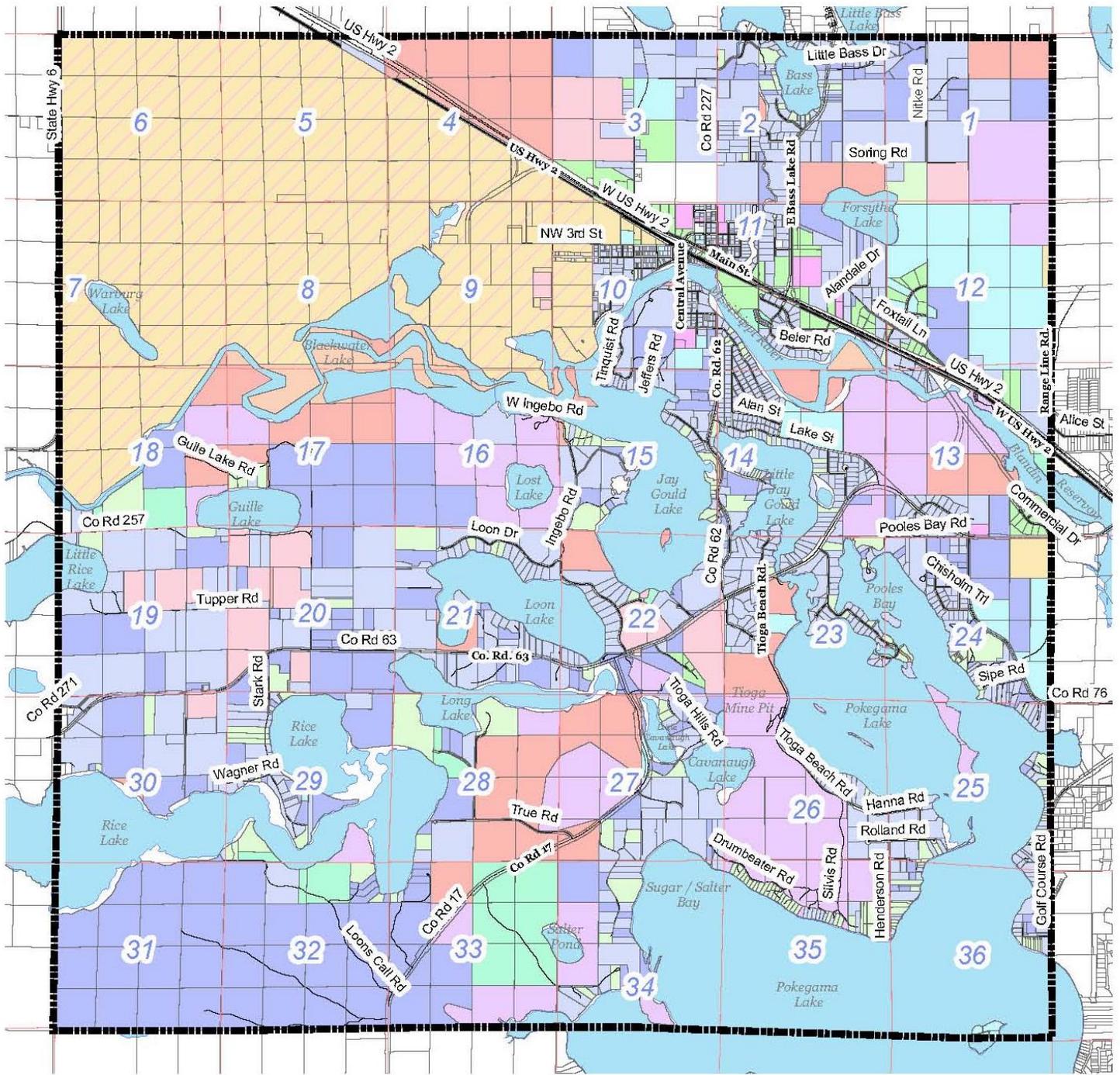


# City of Cohasset Comprehensive Plan 2013 Update



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Accepted by the Planning Commission 07/10/2013

Adopted by the City Council 07/23/2013

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## Who Are We?

### Population

Cohasset has continued to grow over the past decade, with the 2010 Census counting 2,698 residents and 1,067 households – ten-year gains of nine and 11 percent, respectively (Table 1). Cohasset’s population and household growth rates slowed from where they stood in the 1990s, though they have outpaced Itasca County as a whole. Consistent with long-term national trends, Cohasset’s average household size continued to shrink over the last decade. The rate of growth in number of households continues to exceed the population growth.

	Census Count			Percent Change	
	1990	2000	2010	1990-2000	2000-2010
<b>Cohasset</b>					
Population	1,970	2,481	2,698	25.9%	8.7%
Households	711	960	1,067	35.0%	11.1%
Average HH Size	2.77	2.58	2.53	-6.7%	-2.2%
<b>Itasca County</b>					
Population	40,863	43,992	45,058	7.7%	2.4%
Households	15,478	18,103	18,773	17.0%	3.7%
Average HH Size	2.64	2.43	2.40	-8.0%	-1.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

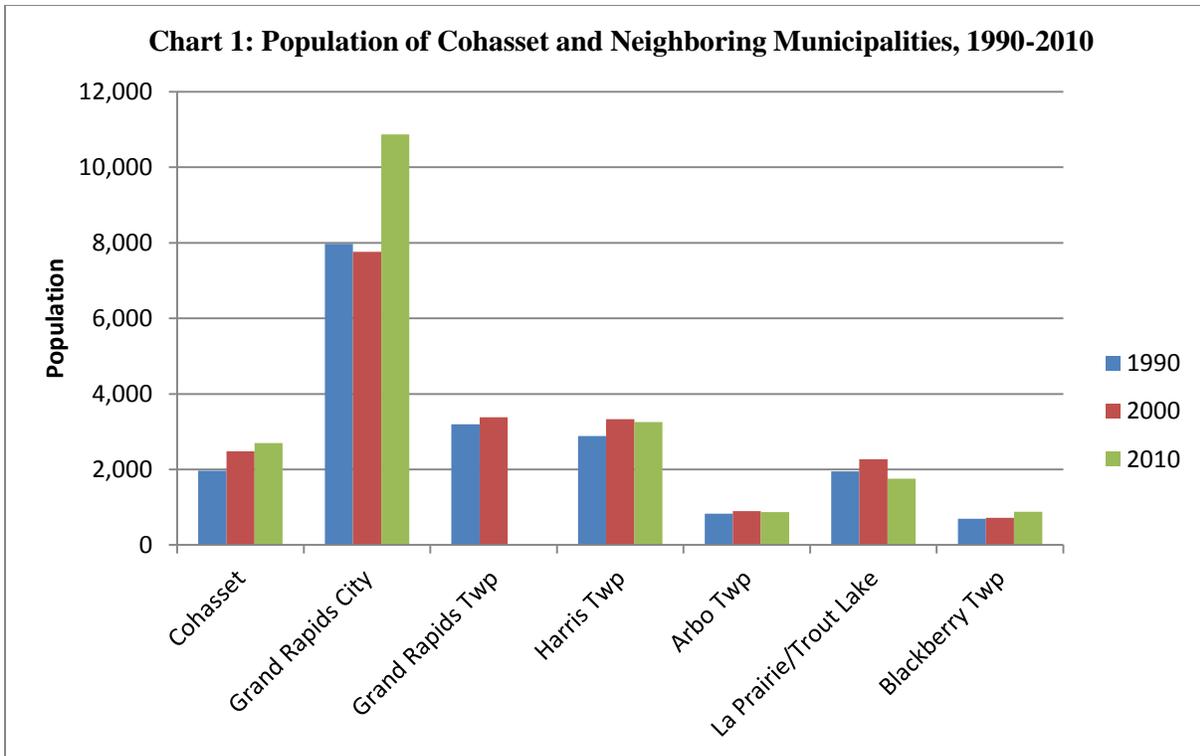
Table 2 highlights population changes in Cohasset’s neighboring communities over the past two decades. In the years between the 2000 and 2010 Census counts, Cohasset was one of only two communities in the area to see population growth. The other growing community, the City of Grand Rapids, garnered much of its growth via the annexation of most of Grand Rapids Township during this period.

	Census Count			Percent Change	
	1990	2000	2010	1990-2000	2000-2010
Cohasset	1,970	2,481	2,698	25.9%	8.7%
Grand Rapids City*	7,976	7,764	10,869	-2.7%	40.0%
Grand Rapids Twp*	3,199	3,378	-	5.6%	-
Harris Twp	2,888	3,328	3,253	15.2%	-2.3%
Arbo Twp	832	898	867	7.9%	-3.5%
La Prairie/Trout Lake	1,946	2,273	1,752	16.8%	-22.9%
Blackberry Twp	698	717	880	2.7%	22.7%

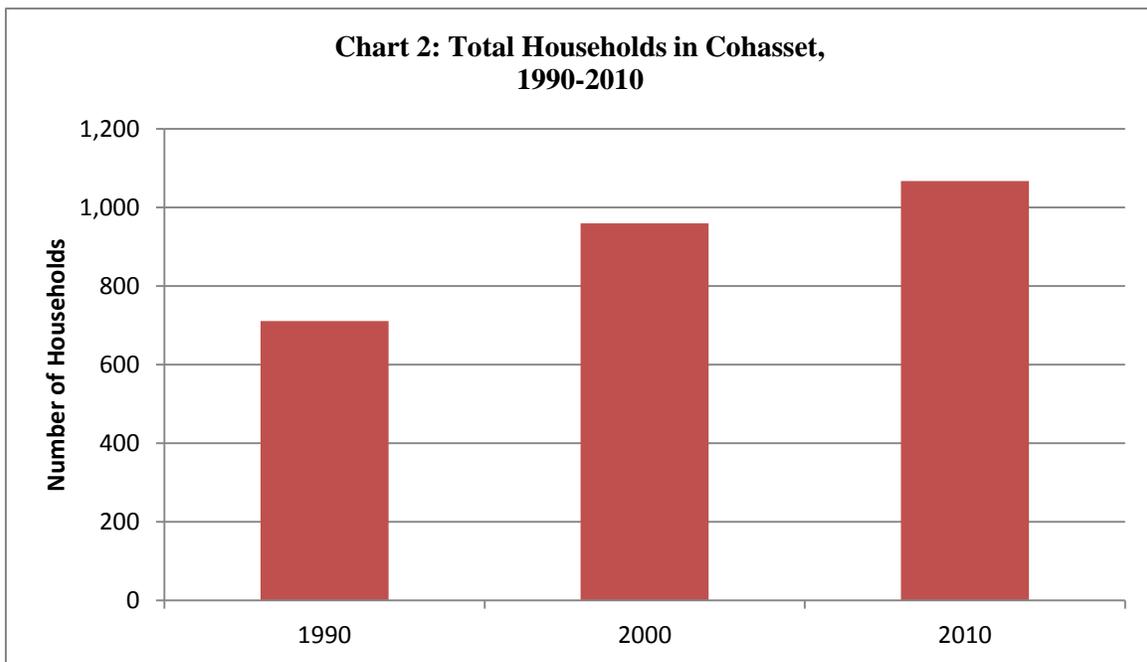
\*Grand Rapids Twp was annexed into Grand Rapids City and Coleraine.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Charts 1 and 2 provide a visual representation of population and household trends since 1990.



SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



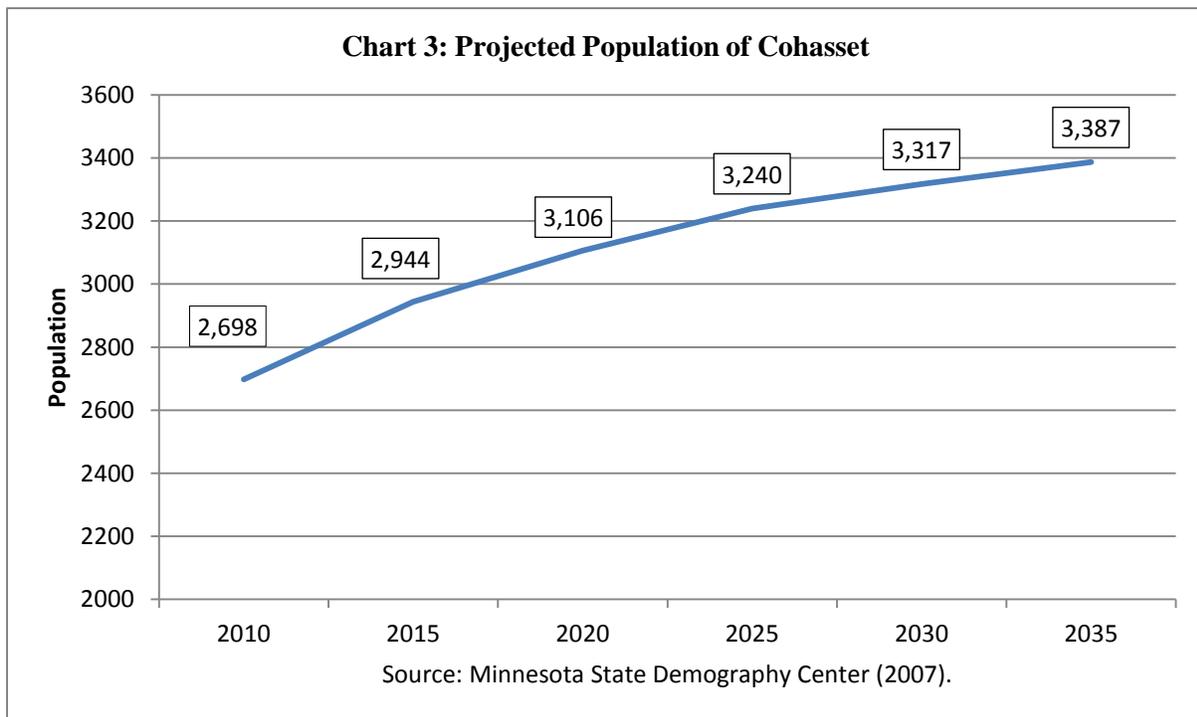
SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

The Minnesota State Demographer’s Office projects future population figures for Minnesota cities and townships. The most recent numbers were released in 2007, before the start of the economic recession in 2008. Table 3 shows projections for Cohasset and its neighboring communities; of this group, Cohasset is expected to see the largest percentage growth, with Itasca County as a whole growing modestly as well. This population forecasts is, however, primarily an extrapolation of the historic trend within Itasca County. The forecast assumes that the County’s growth will be divided among smaller communities consistent with historic patterns.

<b>Community</b>	2010 (Census)	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2010-2035 Percent Change
Cohasset	2,698	2,944	3,106	3,240	3,317	3,387	25.5%
Grand Rapids City	10,869	11,093	11,078	11,032	10,925	10,816	-0.5%
Harris Twp	3,253	3,617	3,735	3,828	3,873	3,913	20.3%
Arbo Twp	867	899	908	914	913	912	5.2%
La Prairie/Trout Lake	1,752	1,875	1,971	2,050	2,095	2,135	21.9%
Blackberry Twp	880	753	761	766	765	763	-13.3%
Itasca County	45,058	46,700	47,630	48,300	48,470	48,590	7.8%

Source: Minnesota State Demographic Center (2007)

Chart 3 provides a visual representation of Cohasset’s projected growth.



## Housing Trends

In recent years, the housing landscape of the entire nation faced profound challenges and changes. The foreclosure crisis did not spare Minnesota or Itasca County. A recent report by the Minnesota Housing Partnership tapped into a wide range of data sources in order to provide a snapshot of housing affordability in Itasca County.<sup>1</sup> While not specific to Cohasset, the analysis describes the economic and demographic forces impacting the regional housing market. Some trends and key indicators from the report include:

- Between 2005 and 2010, there were 487 foreclosures countywide, with one-quarter of these occurring in 2010.
- 53 percent of renters and 27 percent of homeowners spent over 30 percent of their gross household income on that housing. A majority of these households earned less than \$35,000 annually.
- In recent years, there has been a trend towards renting. Still, most Itasca County households own their home (80 percent in 2010).
- Countywide, the median household income of homeowners is \$50,190; for renters, it is \$20,069. Average renter income has fallen in the past decade, while fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment has increased.

In early 2008, a housing market analysis produced for the Range Readiness Initiative Housing Team and the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund predicted housing needs along the Iron Range.<sup>2</sup> The report concluded that the Western Sub-region—which includes Cohasset, along with Grand Rapids and other communities—would need between 606 and 811 permanent housing units between 2008 and 2013, depending on job growth levels. Housing demand has not, however, materialized at this level, as several predicted economic expansions did not occur due primarily to the recession. With the housing market and larger economy still unsettled, it is difficult to make reliable predictions about future housing needs.

Nonetheless, there are signs that the Cohasset housing market may grow: the city has seen continued population and household growth while many of its neighbors have lost some population. Unemployment rates in Itasca County have declined from recession levels (discussed further in the Economy section). While much remains unclear, the Minnesota Housing Partnership report highlights the need for affordability in the Cohasset housing stock. Housing affordability will be a continued market priority for the community as the housing market continues to recover from the recent crash, and in light of on-going demographic changes such as the growing number of single person households.

## Tax Base and Land Use

While Cohasset has a diversity of land uses, its tax base is heavily dependent on the 914 megawatt Boswell Energy Center, a coal-fired power plant, owned by Minnesota Power (with 25 percent of one unit also owned by WPPI Energy). Most of the other largest landowners by area or market value (Tables 4 and 5, respectively) are government entities, such as the State of Minnesota, Itasca County, and the City of Cohasset. The Boswell facility is both a major component of the city's tax base and the city's economic base. While not a direct boost to Cohasset's tax base, it is worth noting that the Boswell plant may soon see substantial improvements designed to improve air quality in accordance with the Clean Air Act.

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<sup>1</sup> *Housing Affordability in Itasca County*. 2011. Minnesota Housing Partnership.

<sup>2</sup> *Iron Range Housing Market Analysis, as of 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2008*. 2008. Bonestroo, Inc.

<b>Table 4. Largest Landowners by Area, Cohasset</b>		
<b>Taxpayer</b>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>% of City Total</i>
Minnesota Power	3,478	19%
Tax Forfeit (County Managed)	1,843	10%
State of Minnesota	1,831	10%
UPM/Blandin	1,320	7%
Wisconsin Public Power Inc. (WPPI Energy)	744	4%

<b>Table 5. Largest Landowners by Market Value, Cohasset</b>		
<b>Taxpayer</b>	<i>Estimated Market Value</i>	<i>% of City Total</i>
Minnesota Power	\$284,264,300	37%
WPPI Energy	\$48,191,100	6%
State of Minnesota	\$12,417,500	2%
Tax Forfeit (County Managed)	\$7,392,700	1%
City of Cohasset	\$6,127,200	1%

Table 6 shows Cohasset’s land use mix. Properties owned by Minnesota Power or WPPI Energy are all classified in this table as “Industrial,” whether or not they are currently being used for that purpose – much of the actual land area is not developed.

Apart from the Boswell facility, Cohasset’s primary land uses (in terms of area) are residential, forestry, and county-managed tax forfeit land (which includes natural areas, recreation areas, and forestry). The land uses with the most market value in Cohasset— excepting the Boswell plant and its adjoining properties—are residential (homesteaded), seasonal residential, and forestry.

Figure 1 provides a map of approximate existing land uses in Cohasset by parcel. A land use map is distinct from a zoning map in that it shows the current “use” of the property, regardless of zoning. This map was created by examining the tax classifications and ownership for each parcel in the city. Some distinctions cannot be gathered from these data. The most significant issue are properties owned by Minnesota Power or WPPI Energy that are classified as “Industrial” even though the current use may be offices, housing, forestry, or some other use. Generally, however, the map gives a reasonable sense of the current land uses.

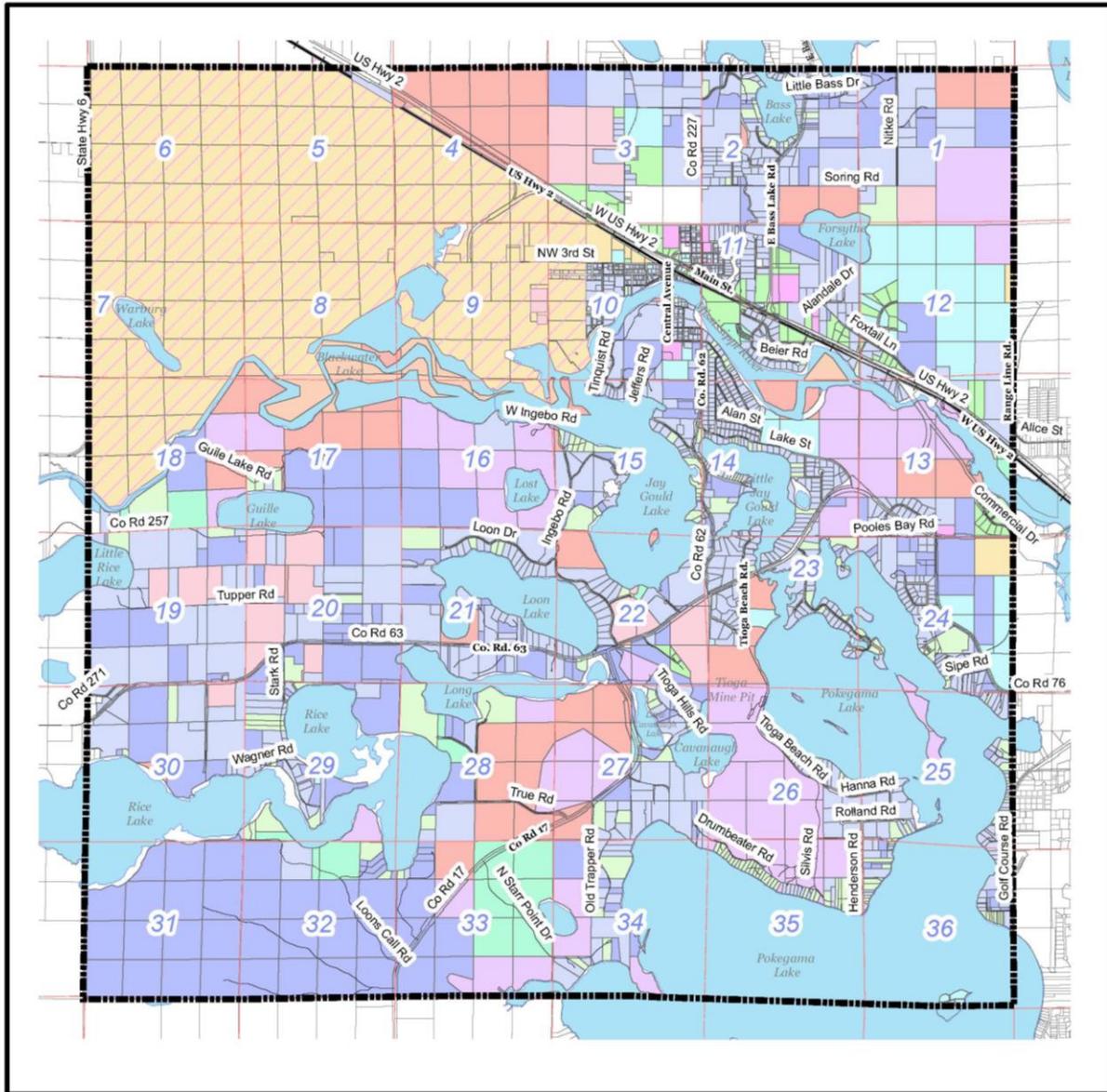
<b>Table 6: Cohasset Land Uses, by Acreage and Estimated Market Value (EMV)</b>				
<b>Land Use</b>	<i>Total Acres</i>	<i>% of Total Acres</i>	<i>Total EMV</i>	<i>% of Total EMV</i>
Agriculture	549	2.9%	\$4,151,000	0.5%
Commercial	285	1.5%	\$20,450,000	2.6%
Forestry	3,552	19.0%	\$23,946,600	3.1%
Government: County/Municipal	671	3.6%	\$11,151,900	1.4%
Government: State and Federal	1,745	9.3%	\$13,070,400	1.7%
Government: Tax Forfeit	1,843	9.8%	\$7,392,700	1.0%
Industrial	4,325	23.1%	\$336,245,400	43.5%
Institutional	59	0.3%	\$8,304,300	1.1%
Residential	4,144	22.1%	\$289,700,700	37.4%
Residential - Multifamily	5	0.0%	\$1,469,900	0.2%
Residential - Seasonal	910	4.9%	\$53,569,700	6.9%
Rights-of-way	170	0.9%	\$267,200	0.0%
Unknown	380	2.0%	\$3,408,000	0.4%
Utilities	82	0.4%	\$721,800	0.1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>18,720</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$773,849,600</b>	<b>100%</b>

Ownership is another distinct element of land use planning. Figure 2 shows the location of publicly-owned parcels in the city. Public lands include property owned by the federal government, State of Minnesota, Itasca County, and City of Cohasset. Tax forfeit land, owned by the state but managed by Itasca County, is also a significant portion of public lands in Cohasset. Additionally, a substantial area in the northern part of the city is a gravel pit owned by Itasca County, likely precluding development in the near term. Much of the City-owned land in the northeastern part of Cohasset is intended for development as an industrial park; this land will shift to private ownership at that point. Complicating the development on the site (and in the city generally) are two pipelines (Great Lakes and Enbridge) and a major electrical transmission line that run roughly parallel to Highway 2, just to the road's north, ruling out any development in their immediate vicinity.

Most of the publicly-owned lands noted above and in Figure 2 are unlikely to be change ownership or land use within the planning horizon of the comprehensive plan.

The primary means of ensuring that land use and development are consistent with community goals is through creation and administration of the zoning code. Figure 3 shows the current zoning map for Cohasset. The zoning map serves a distinct purpose from either the existing or the future land use map. Zoning shows what new uses or development are allowed. Some existing land uses may not be consistent with current zoning (non-conforming uses) and zoning does not necessarily reflect the city's desired long-term land use and development outcomes.

Figure 1: Land Use



Source: Itasca County GIS Parcel Information

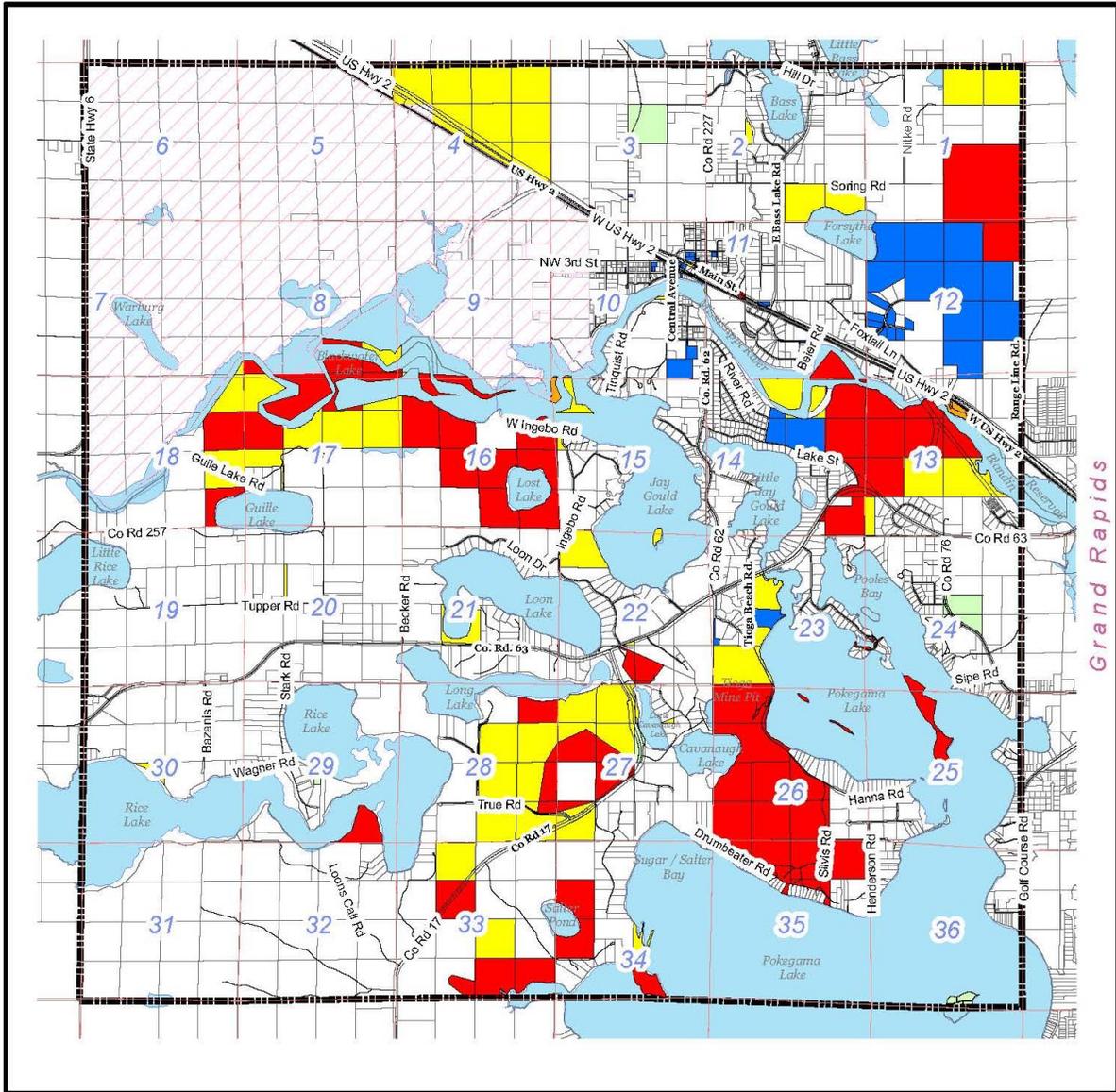


5,000

Feet



Figure 2: Publicly Owned Lands



Source: Itasca County GIS Parcel Information

**Legend**

 Itasca County	 Roads
 Federal	 Railroad
 Tax Forfeit	 MP&L
 State of Minnesota	 PLS Section Lines
 City of Cohasset	
 Lakes & Rivers	

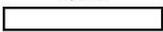
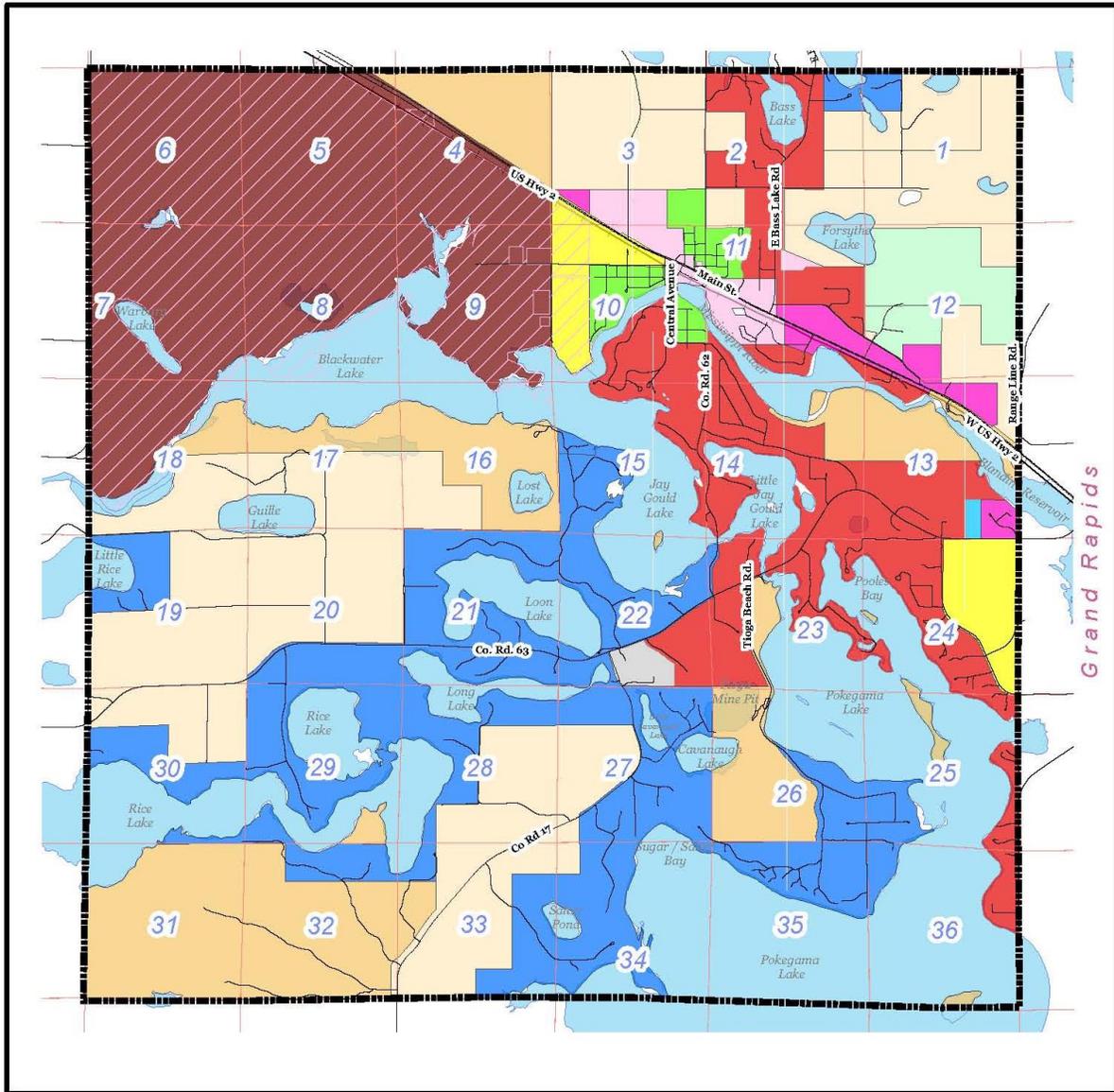
  
5,000  
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Figure 3: Zoning Map



Source: City of Cohasset

**Legend**

Cohasset Industrial Park	Municipal Residential	City Limits
General Business	Rural Commercial	Roads
Heavy Industrial (MP&L)	Rural Industrial	Railroad
Highway Commercial	Rural Residential	PLS Section Lines
Light Industrial	Suburban Residential	MP&L
Managed Area	Waterfront Residential	Lakes & Rivers

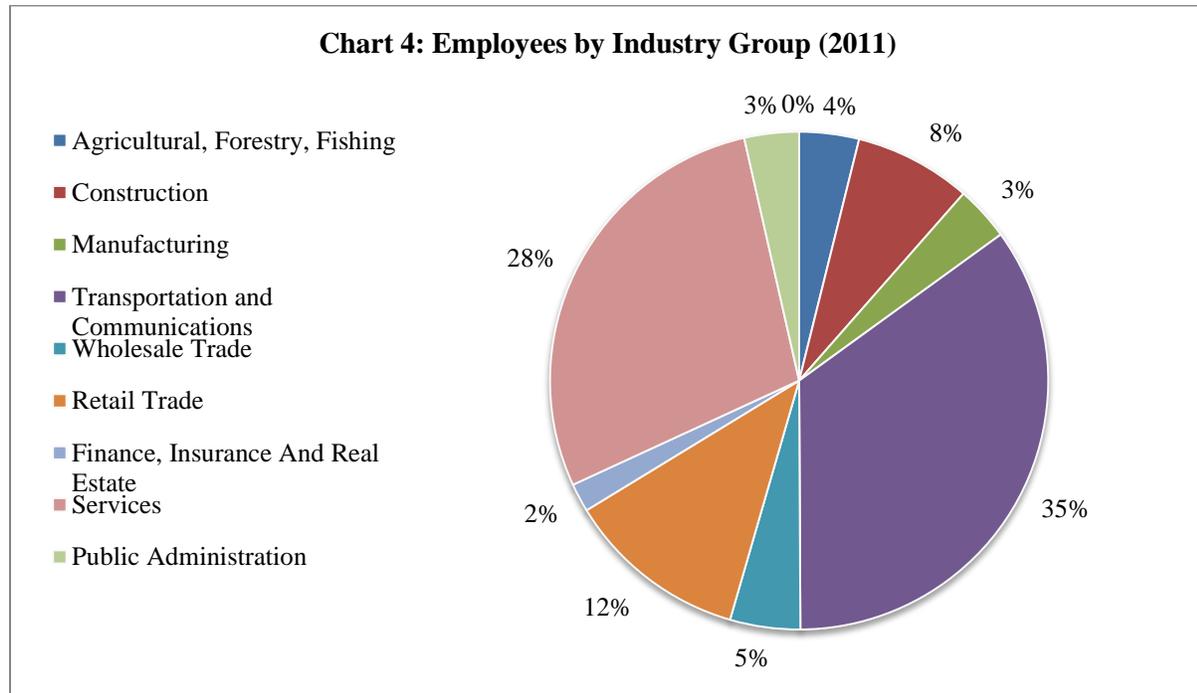


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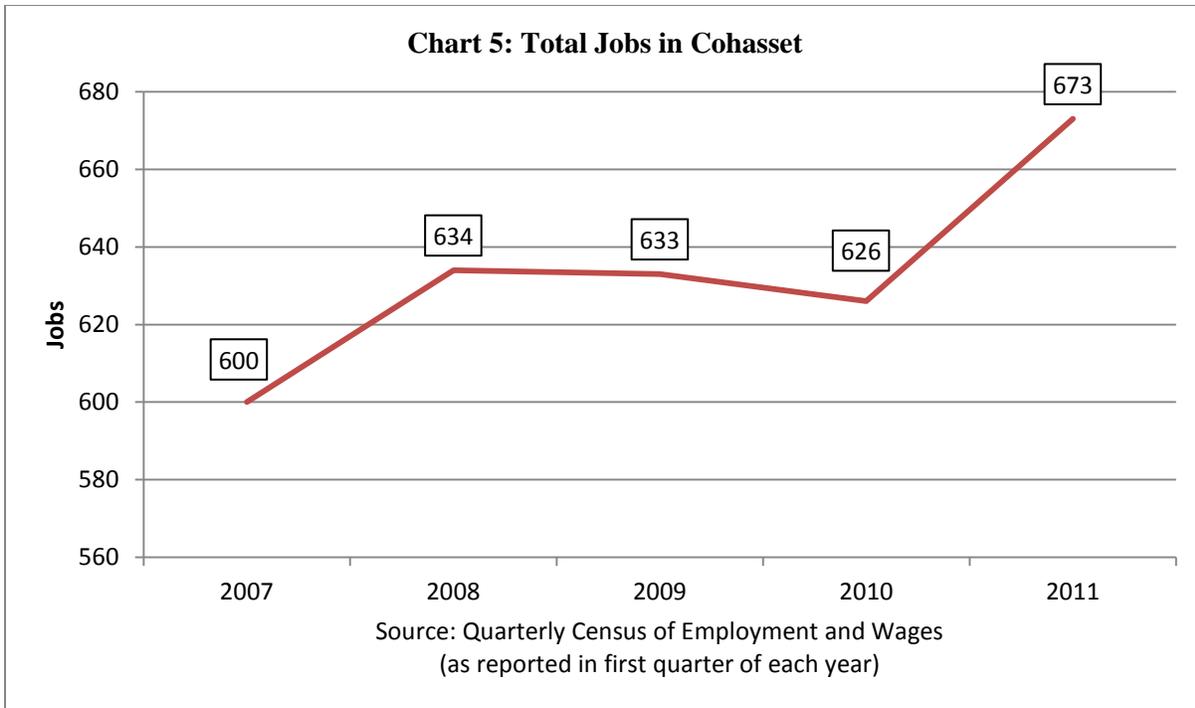
## Economy

Much like Cohasset’s tax base, the city’s economic base is strongly influenced by the Boswell power plant (Chart 4). As of 2011, the Transportation/Communication/Utilities sector—largely Minnesota Power—comprised 35% of total employment. The Utilities subsector alone provided 182 jobs, 30 percent of the Cohasset total. The next biggest subsector, Specialty Stores, had 34 jobs totaling 6 percent of the total (included within the Retail sector). Other modestly sized employers included schools and government, as well as businesses specializing in auto repair, construction, and entertainment/recreation. The total number of jobs in Cohasset has trended upwards in the past five years (Chart 5), with most of the gains coming in 2007-2008 (34 jobs), as well as 2010-2011 (47).

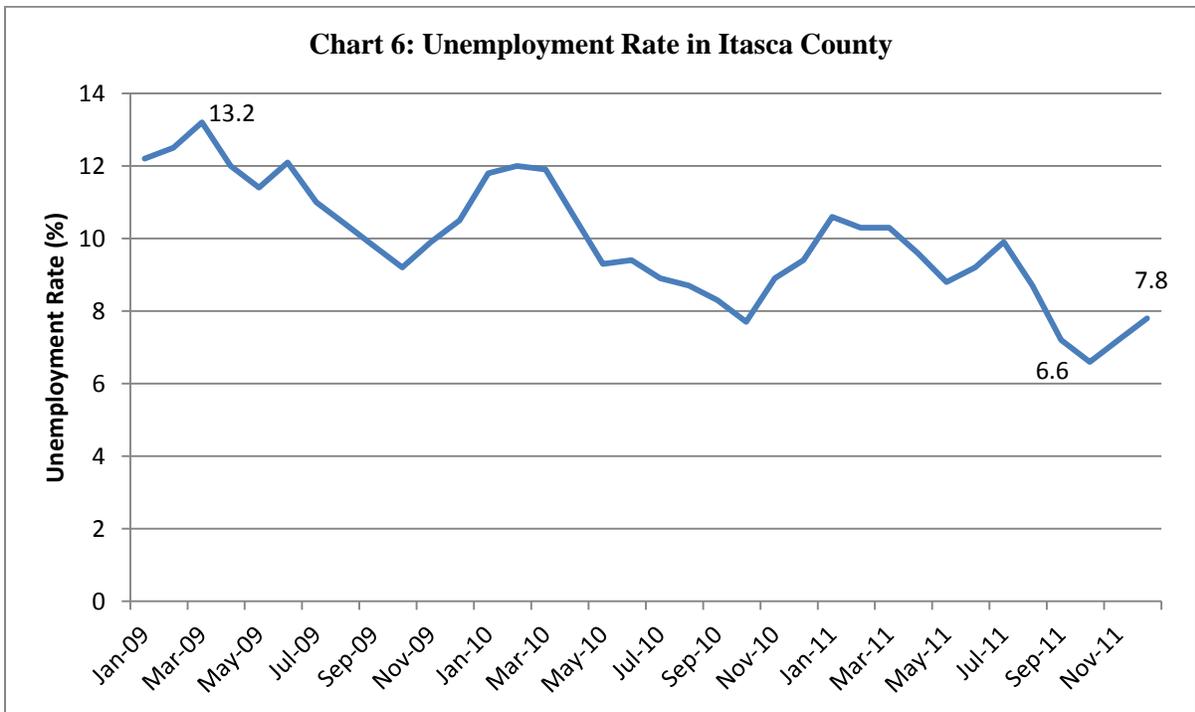


SOURCE: APPLIED GEOGRAPHIC SOLUTIONS

While unemployment data are not available for Cohasset specifically, the non-seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for Itasca County has declined significantly since 2009 (Chart 6). From a recent peak of 13.2 percent in March of 2009, the rate has declined to 7.8 percent at the end of 2011 (after bottoming out at 6.6 percent in October 2011). The overall trend has certainly been downward, and though hiring has increased nationally and across Minnesota, challenges remain. Based on recent trends, Cohasset residents, businesses, and policymakers have cause for cautious optimism that the recent high unemployment rate is not structural to the region, but rather a temporary event. Long term unemployment rates in northern Minnesota are typically higher than the average rates for both the State as a whole and the nation. Currently, however, Itasca County has a slightly lower unemployment rate than the nation.



SOURCE: MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (1ST QUARTER ANNUAL TOTALS)



SOURCE: MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Natural Resources

### Wetlands

Wetlands are highly productive and important water bodies, with wide-ranging benefits that improve ecosystems, recreation, public health, and more. Wetlands are part of Cohasset’s natural infrastructure both for managing stormwater and snow, and supporting game and non-game animal species. Wetlands also pose substantial limitations on development or related land uses. Figure 4 shows the many types of wetlands in Cohasset, as catalogued in the National Wetlands Inventory. The three most common types of wetlands in Cohasset are shallow open water, wooded swamps, and bogs (Table 7).

<i>Wetland Type</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Bog	880	11.5%
Deep Marsh	25	0.3%
Seasonally Flooded Basin	2	0.0%
Shallow Marsh	417	5.4%
Shallow Open Water	4,354	56.8%
Shrub Swamp	870	11.4%
Wet Meadow	172	2.2%
Wooded Swamp	947	12.3%
<i>Total Wetlands Area</i>	<i>7,668</i>	

Source: SEH, Inc.

### Surface Water Coverage

Surface waters comprise a substantial portion of Cohasset’s total area, and surface water issues affect almost all of Cohasset’s land area. Surface waters (rivers, streams, and lakes) cover 5,769 acres, or about 31 percent of Cohasset’s total area.

### Shoreland

Healthy shorelines support wildlife and protect water quality – the very things that attract people to lakes and rivers in the first place. State law protects shoreland and regulates the way that developed land uses are integrated into this natural infrastructure. Shoreland areas are defined as those areas lying within 1,000 feet of the ordinary high water line for lakes and 300 feet (and all land within the 100-year floodplain) for rivers (illustrated in Figure 5).

As part of its shoreland management program, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources classifies lakes into three categories: natural environment lakes, recreational development lakes, and general development lakes. A lake’s classification affects the type of development standards applied to its shoreland areas. Figure 6 shows how each of Cohasset’s lakes are classified.

### Watersheds

Watersheds are areas defined by where water all flows or drains to the same place. Watersheds are a defining element of natural infrastructure that helps communities manage stormwater flows, erosion, and surface land pollutants. Poorly managed runoff from developed land may flow too quickly into nearby bodies of water, causing floods that endanger people, property, and wildlife habitat. Without the natural filtering effect of plants and soil, this water may also carry pollutants into lakes and rivers. Besides harming wildlife, polluted water can endanger humans, whether in terms of health, the economy, or quality of life. Different land uses affect watersheds in different ways – land uses with more impervious surface area like pavement and rooftops cause more stress on water systems than those that allow water to penetrate into the soil on-site. Thoughtful land use regulations that take watersheds into account help protect water quality. This is especially important for already-impaired waters. Figure 7 shows the minor watershed basins in Cohasset.

### Impaired Waters

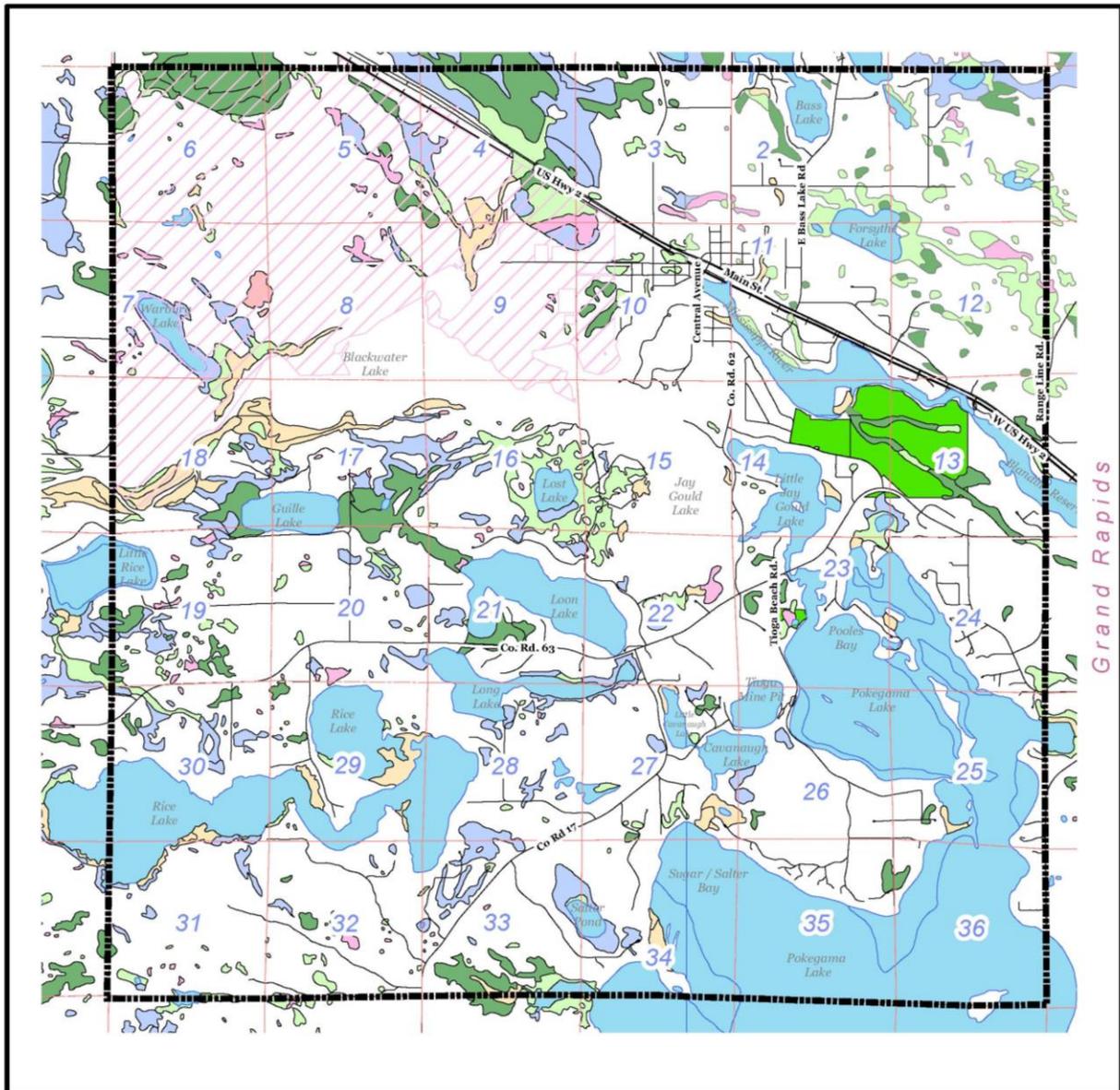
The United States Environmental Protection Agency defines impaired waters as “waters that are too polluted or otherwise degraded to meet the water quality standards set by states, territories, or authorized tribes.”<sup>3</sup> The Federal government has delegated authority to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to identify impaired waters as defined under the Clean Water Act and set standards (Total Maximum Daily Loads, or TMDLs) to eventually

<sup>3</sup> *Impaired Waters and Total Maximum Daily Loads*. 2012. United States Environmental Protection Agency. <http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/lawguidance/cwa/tmdl/index.cfm>

remove the water body from the impaired waters list. Local governments frequently must participate in the measures to meet the water quality standards.

Figure 8 highlights impaired waters in Cohasset, which include Rice Lake, Long Lake, Loon Lake, Guille Lake, Blackwater Lake, Forsythe Lake, and Bass Lake.

Figure 4: National Wetland Inventory – Cohasset Wetlands



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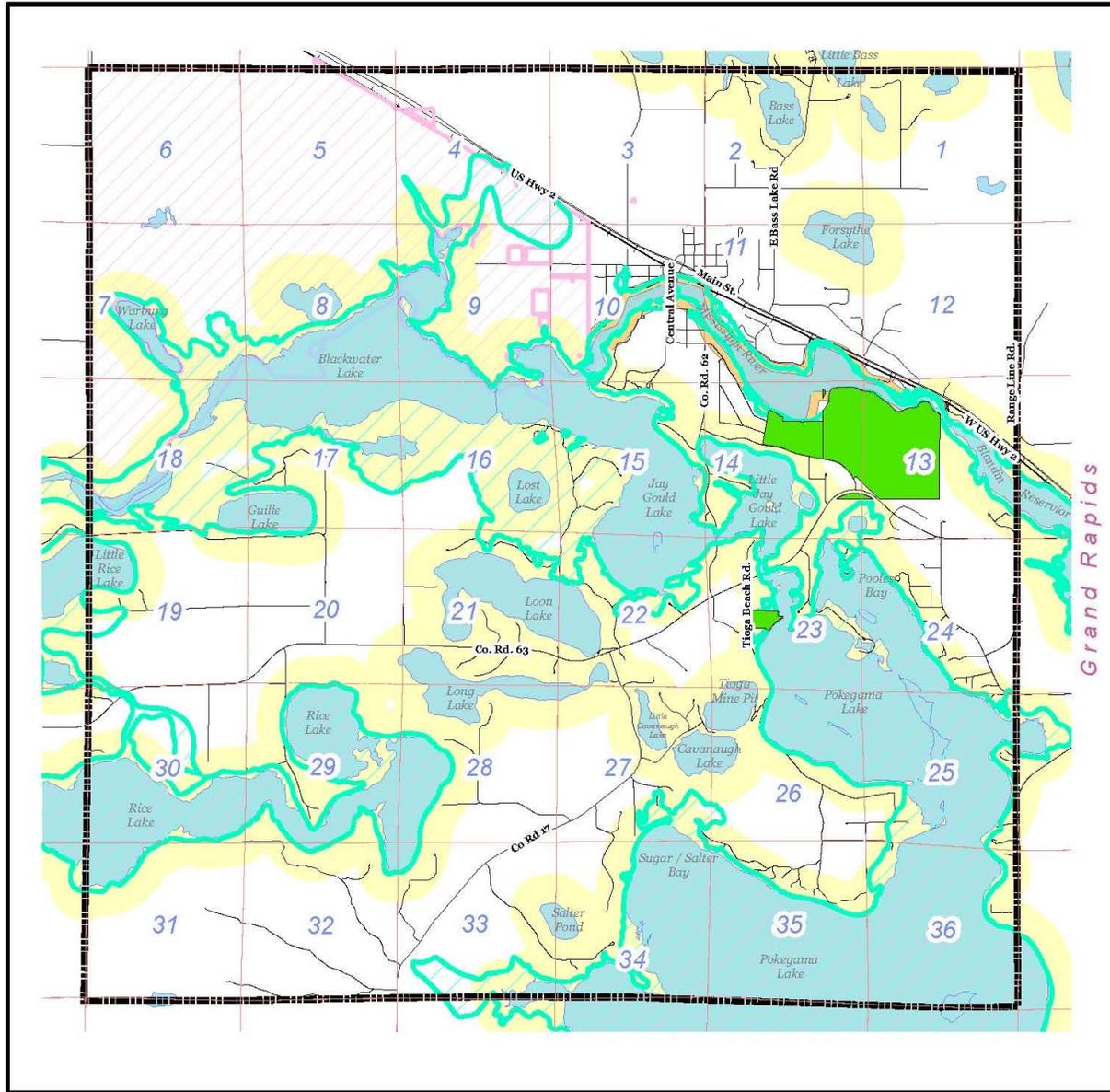
CIRC39	City Limits
Seasonally Flooded Basin	Roads
Wet Meadow	Railroad
Shallow Marsh	Parks and Recreation
Deep Marsh	MP&L
Shallow Open Water	PLS Section Lines
Shallow Open Marsh	
Shrub Swamp	
Bog	

Source: Minnesota DNR - Division of Waters. Aerial photography from 1979-1988.

5,000 Feet



Figure 5: Shoreland Areas



Source: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

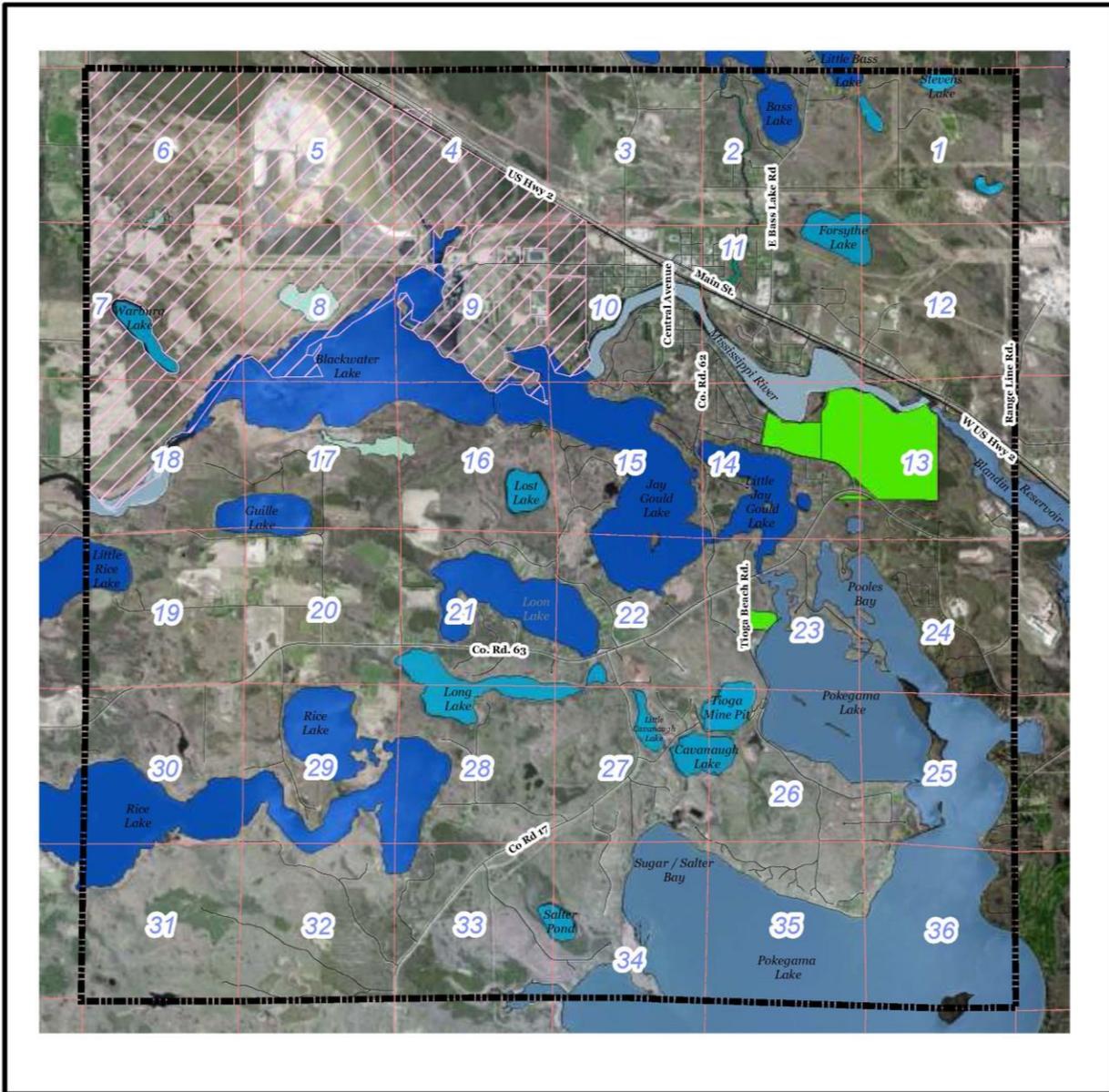
**Legend**

100 Year Flood Plain	City Limits
MP&L	Roads
Shoreland Impact 1000' from OHW	Railroad
River Impact 300' from OHW	PLS Section Lines
Parks and Recreation	Lakes & Rivers

5,000 Feet



Figure 6: Lake Classification



**Legend**

<b>DNR Lake Classification</b>	City Limits
General Development	Roads
Natural Environment	Railroad
Recreational Development	Parks and Recreation
Forested Stream	MP&L
Tributary Stream	PLS Section Lines
Unclassified	

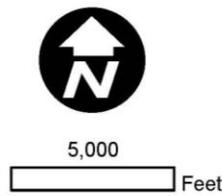
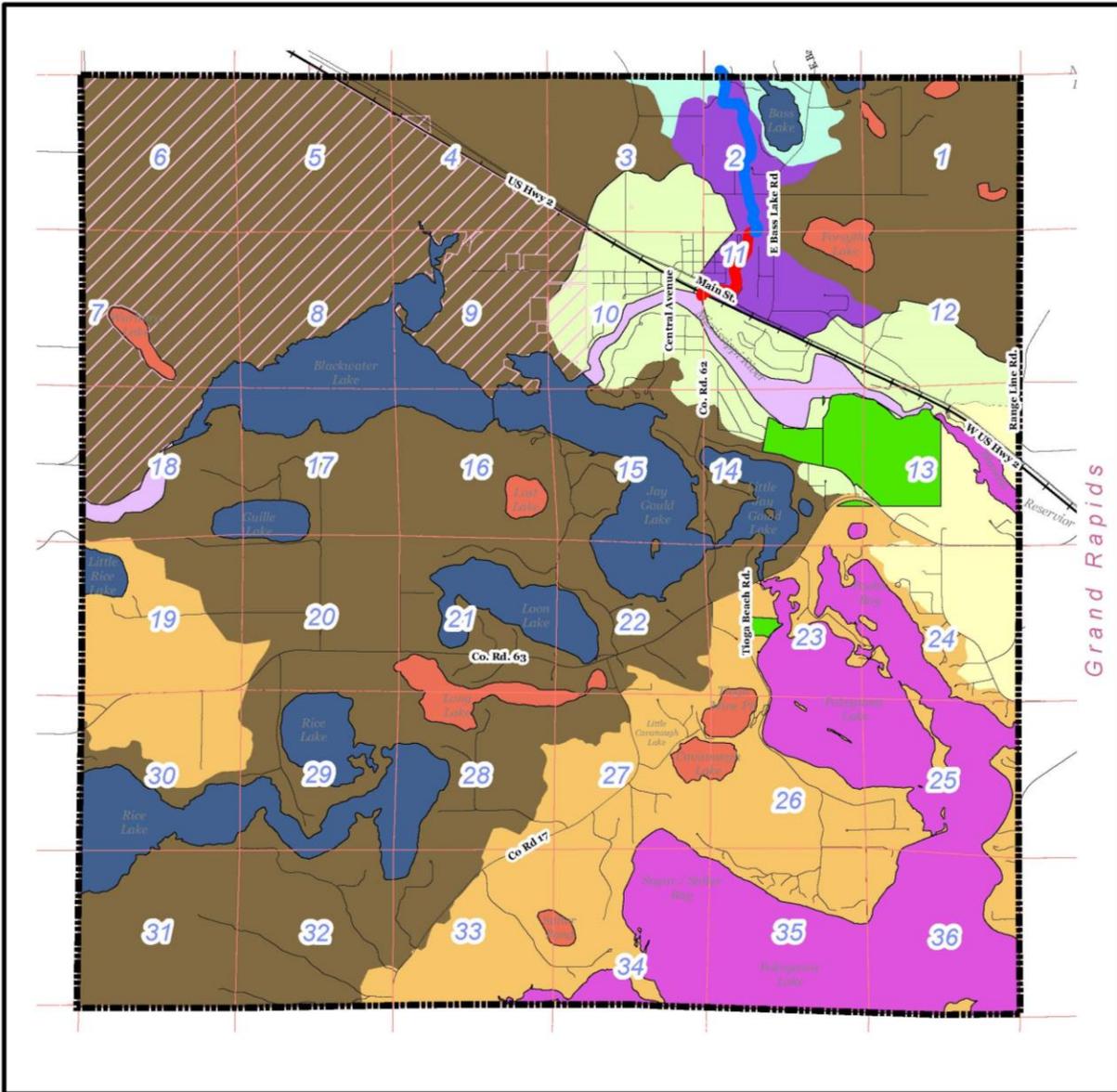


Figure 7: Watersheds



Source: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

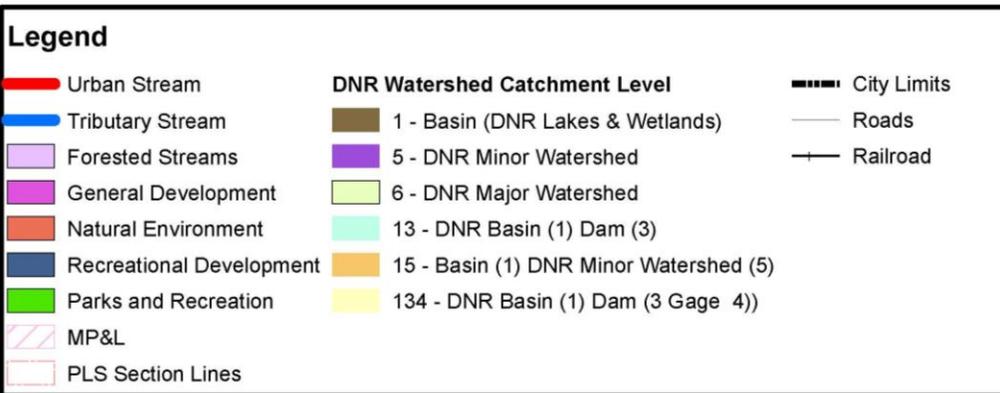
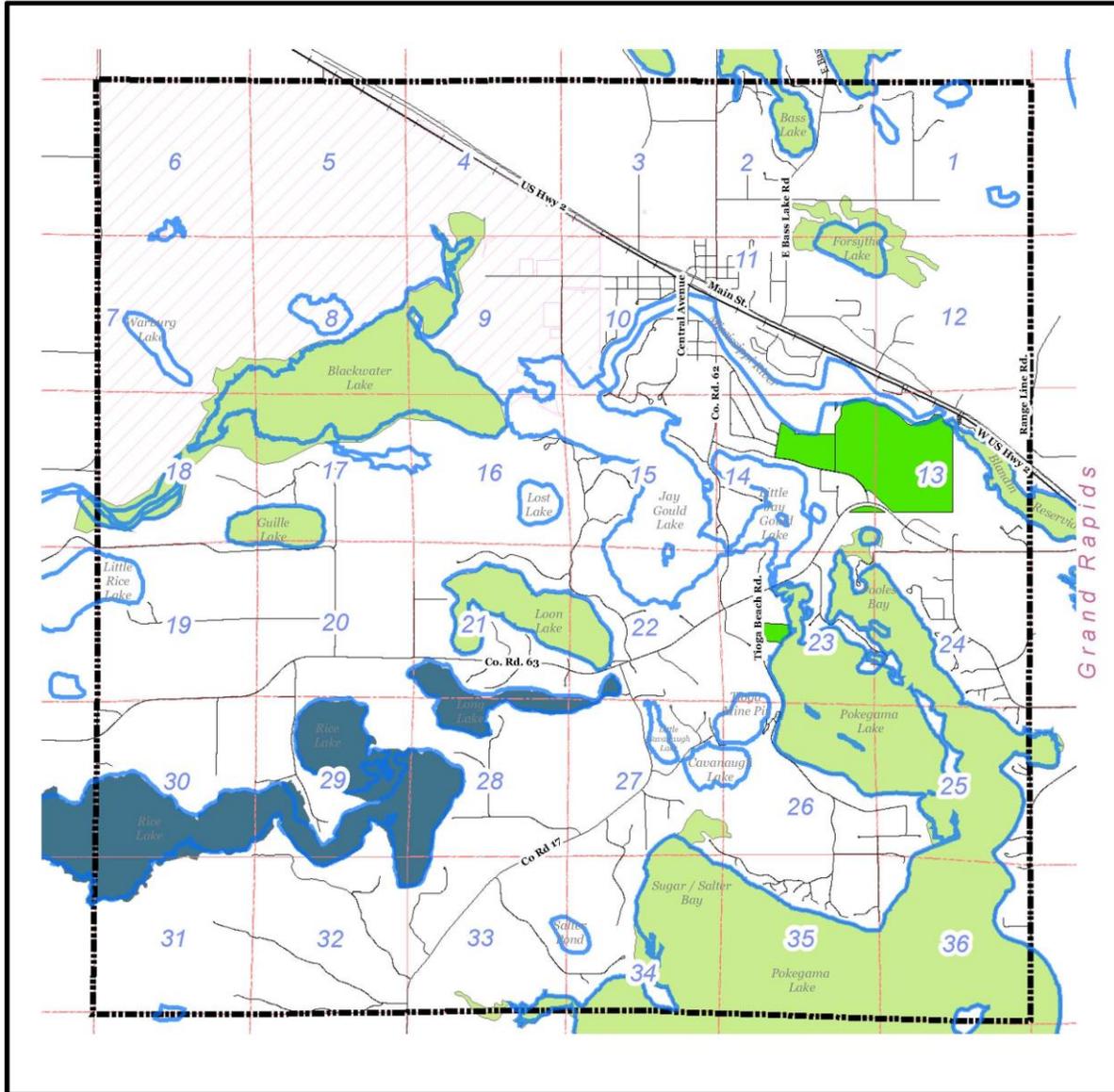


Figure 8: Impaired Waters



Source: Minnesota Pollution Control

Legend	
<b>Impairment</b>	
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightgreen; border:1px solid black;"></span> 4A - Impaired, but a TMDL study has been approved by EPA	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; border-top:1px solid black; border-bottom:1px solid black;"></span> City Limits
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:purple; border:1px solid black;"></span> 5A - Impaired by multiple pollutants and no TMDL study plans are approved by EPA	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; border-bottom:1px solid black;"></span> Roads
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:blue; border:1px solid black;"></span> 5B - Impaired by multiple pollutants and at least one TMDL study plan is approved by EPA	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; border-bottom:1px solid black; border-top:1px solid black;"></span> Railroad
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:darkblue; border:1px solid black;"></span> 5C - Impaired by one pollutant and no TMDL study plan is approved by EPA	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightgreen; border:1px solid black;"></span> Parks and Recreation
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border:2px solid blue;"></span> Lakes & Rivers	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border:1px dashed black;"></span> MP&L
	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border:1px solid black;"></span> PLS Section Lines



5,000 Feet






## Infrastructure

The location of built infrastructure, including gas, water, and sanitary sewer, and transportation, affect where and how development takes place in a community. Water and sanitary sewer allow development to be more dense (small lot sizes) by centralizing water supply and wastewater treatment of the parcel site. Natural gas service adds value to both residential and commercial development. Roads, rail, and trail infrastructure provide critical access to jobs, services, and markets. These public investments, sometimes referred to as gray infrastructure, help sustain private investment in homes and businesses, and define what kind of development can occur in the future. Maps on the following pages show the geographic extent of Cohasset’s gray infrastructure, as noted below.

### *Gas Service Area*

Figure 8 shows Cohasset’s gas service area, which extends south along East Bass Lake Road from just north of the city, south through the developed downtown area, around both sides of Little Jay Gould Lake, and ultimately to much of the Pokegama Lake shoreline.

### *Water Service Area*

Water service is limited primarily to the developed area around downtown Cohasset (Figure 9). Properties outside this area rely on well water systems. Water service is generally available in the same area as central wastewater service, although a few areas have one but not the other. Areas with both water and wastewater service are the optimal areas for urban density development or redevelopment, as well as higher intensity commercial and industrial land uses.

### *Sanitary Service Area*

Sanitary sewer service extends along US Highway 2 from the eastern edge of the city to the beginning of Minnesota Power’s land just west of downtown Cohasset (Figure 10). The eastern, more developed part of the Indian Point / Skelly’s Portage neighborhood also receives this service. Most developed properties outside this area rely on individual septic systems that must be permitted, maintained, and ultimately replaced or rebuilt by the individual property owner.

## Transportation

Cohasset’s primary road is U.S. Highway 2, which connects the city to Grand Rapids just to the east, and Bemidji farther to the west (Figure 11). County Road 63 is an important route for residents living in the central and western portions of Cohasset, allowing for a quicker drive to the Grand Rapids area than if traveling through downtown Cohasset.

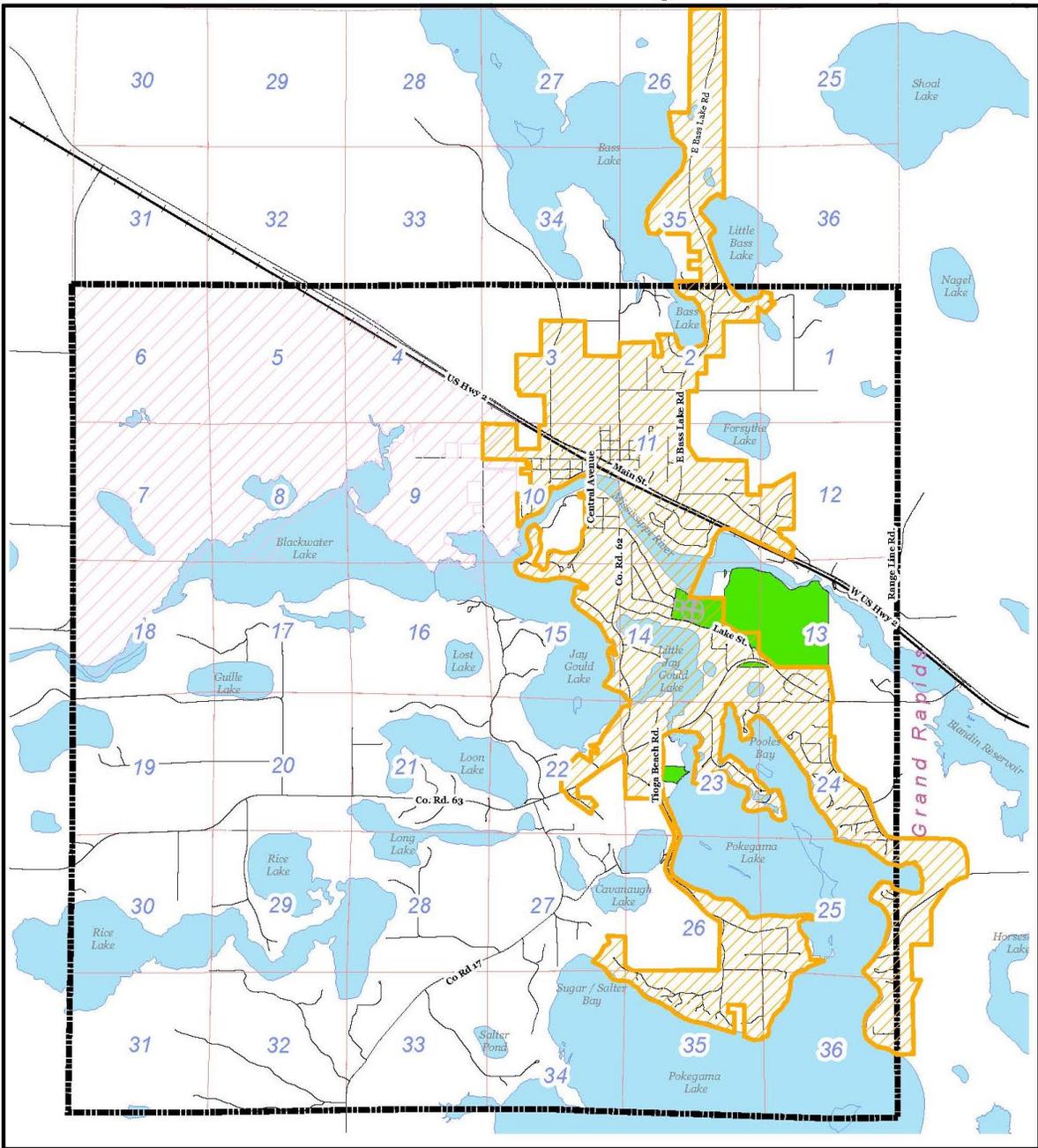
Central Avenue and County Road 62 serve as the key north-south connection between downtown Cohasset and residential areas south of the Mississippi River, as well as the more rural areas farther south and west.

Cohasset’s public roads are mostly paved. Over two-thirds of the city’s road miles are paved with asphalt, with dirt roads making up only 16 percent of the total (Table 8).

In addition to public roads, the land adjoining private roads has become more developed in recent years, and will likely continue to see more use as the city grows in the future. Some of these roads may transfer to public ownership, a change that comes with new maintenance costs for taxpayers – but a broader tax base as well, with new homes or other improvements on private land.

<i>Road Type</i>	<i>Miles</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Bituminous (Asphalt)	73.1	78%
Gravel	2.6	3%
Dirt	15.3	16%
Unclassified	3.1	3%
<i>Total</i>	<i>94.1</i>	
Source: SEH, INC.		

Figure 9: Gas Service Area



Source: City of Cohasset Public Utilities

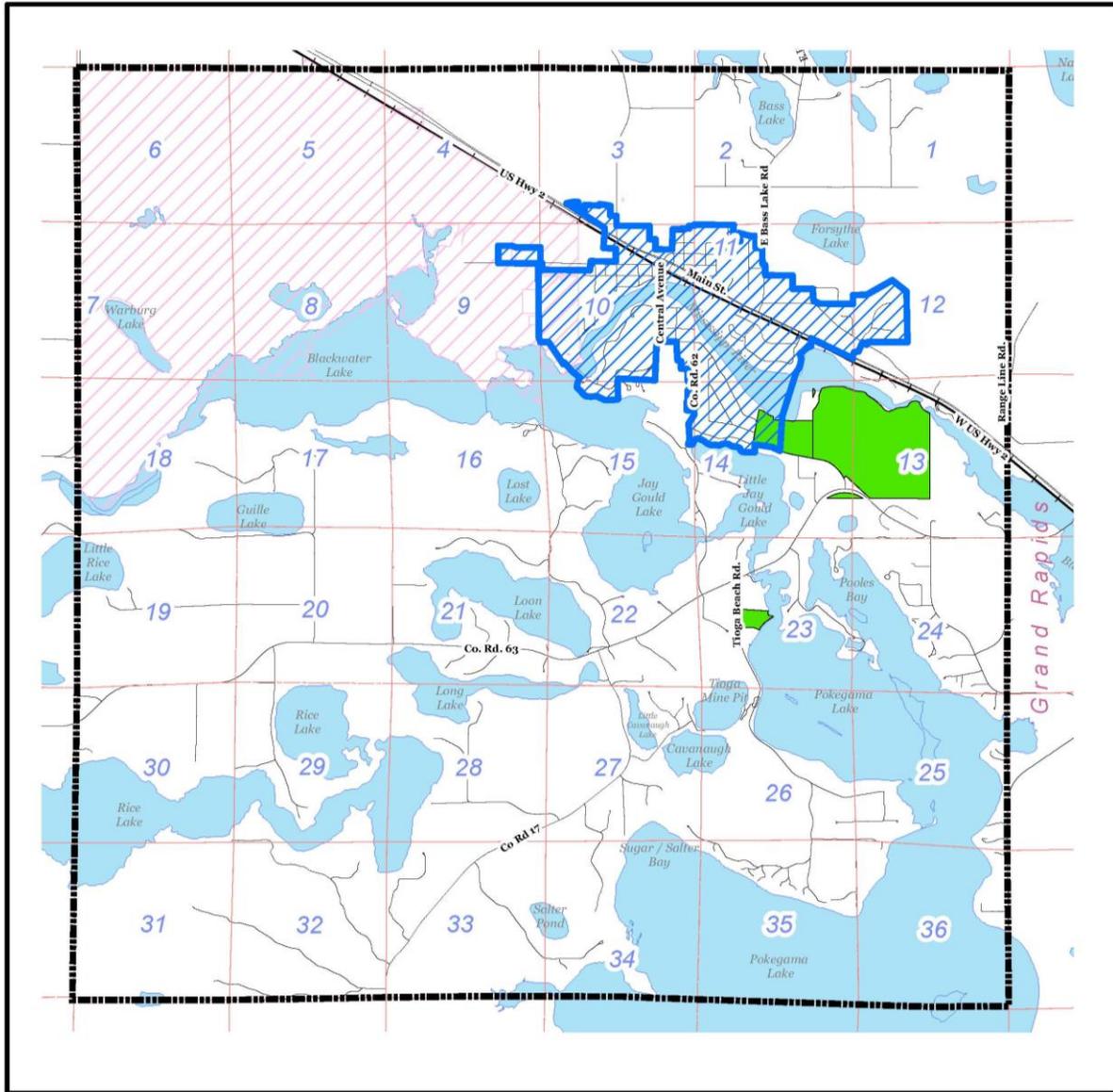
**Legend**

Gas Service Area	City Limits
Parks and Recreation	Railroad
MP&L	Lakes & Rivers
PLS Section Lines	

5,000 Feet



Figure 10: Water Service Area



Source: City of Cohasset Public Utilities

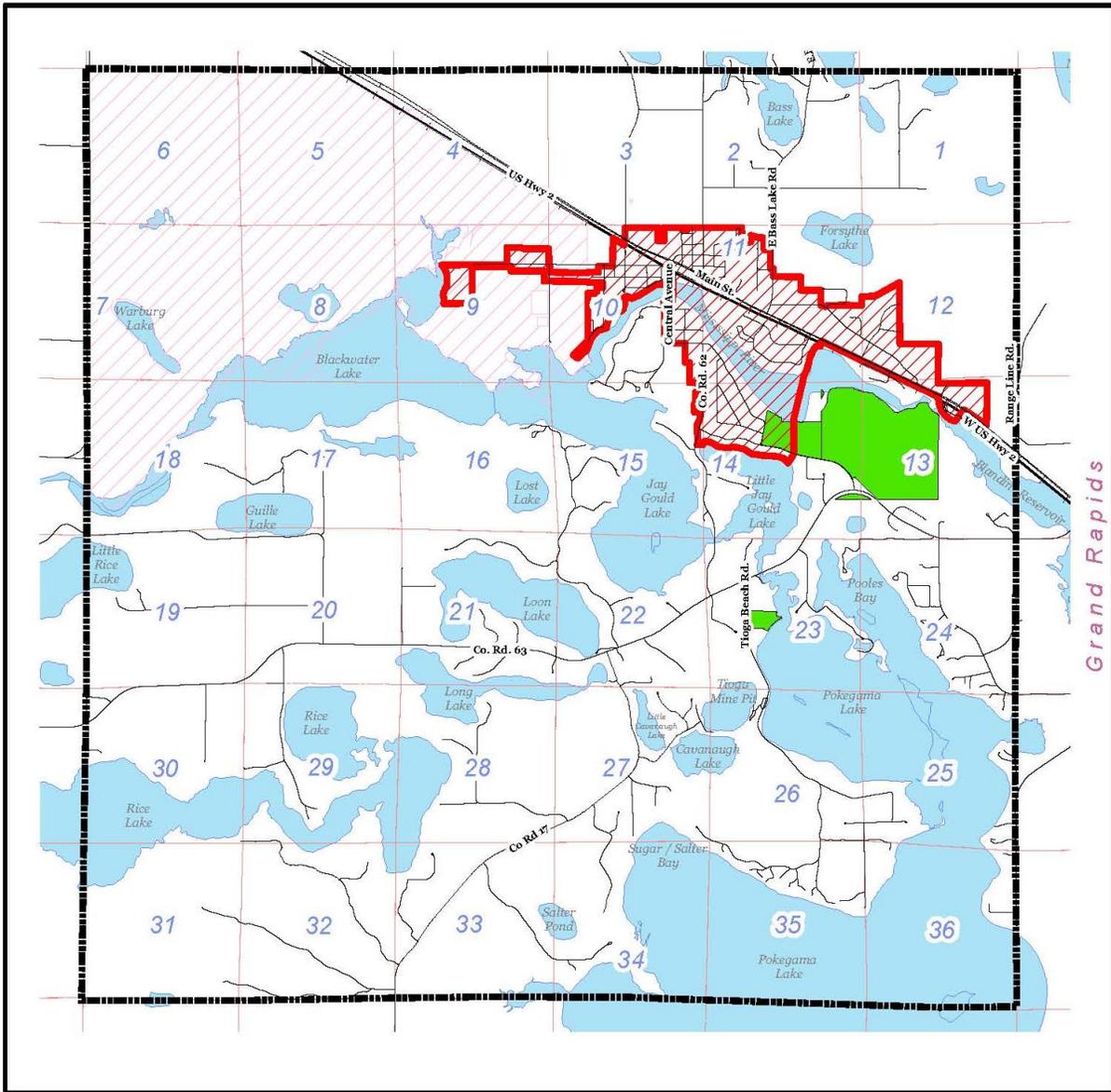
**Legend**

 Water Service Area	 City Limits
 MP&L	 Roads
 PLS Section Lines	 Railroad
 Lakes & Rivers	
 Parks and Recreation	

  
5,000  
 Feet



Figure 11: Sanitary Sewer Service Area



Source: City of Cohasset Public Utilities

**Legend**

- Sanitary Service Area
- Parks and Recreation
- MP&L
- PLS Section Lines
- Lakes & Rivers
- City Limits
- Roads
- Railroad

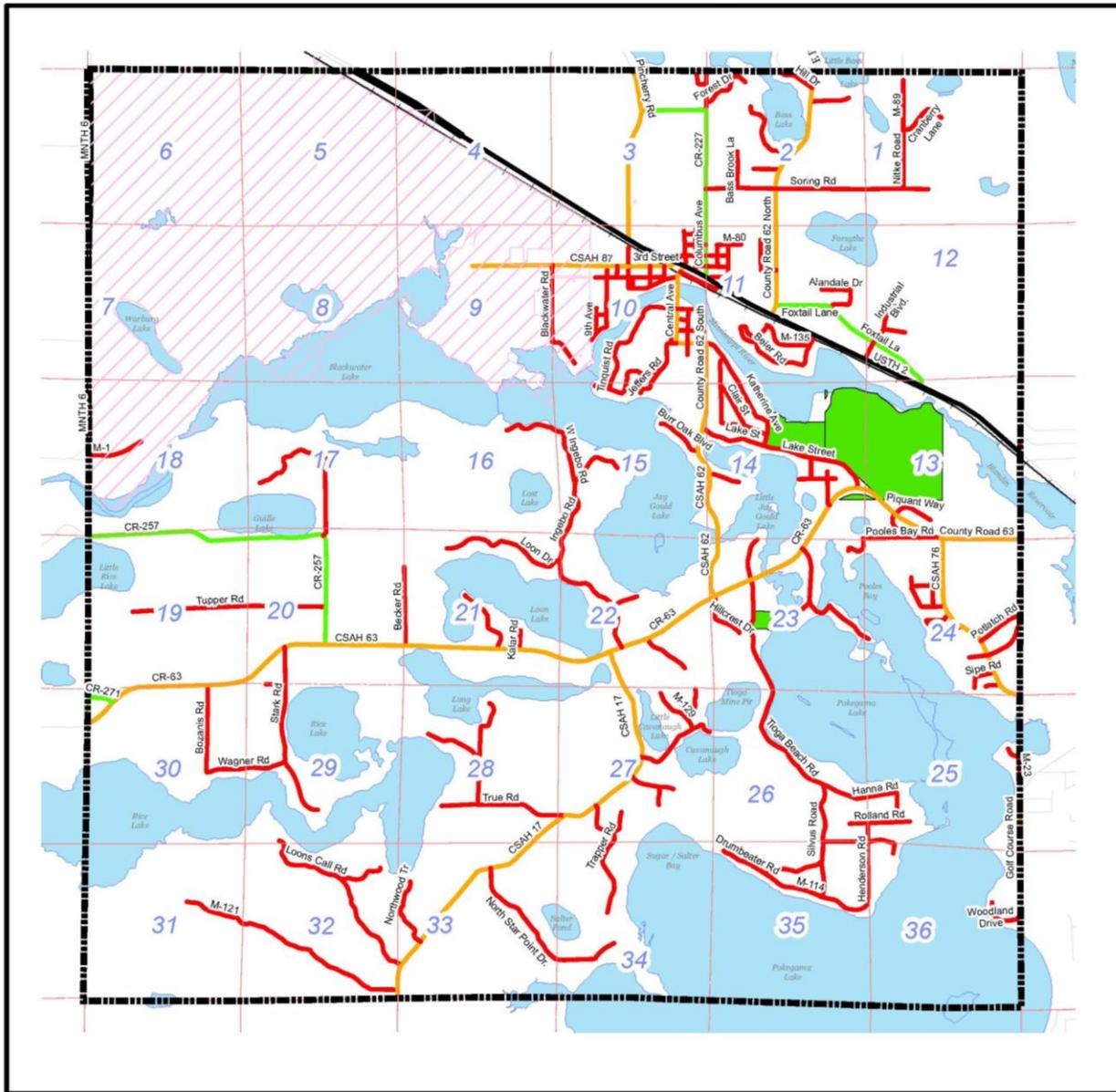


5,000

Feet



Figure 12: Transportation Network



Source: Minnesota Department of Transportation

**Legend**

Trunk Highway	MP&L
County State Aid Highway	Parks and Recreation
County Road	PLS Section Lines
Municipal Street	Lakes & Rivers
City Limits	
Railroad	

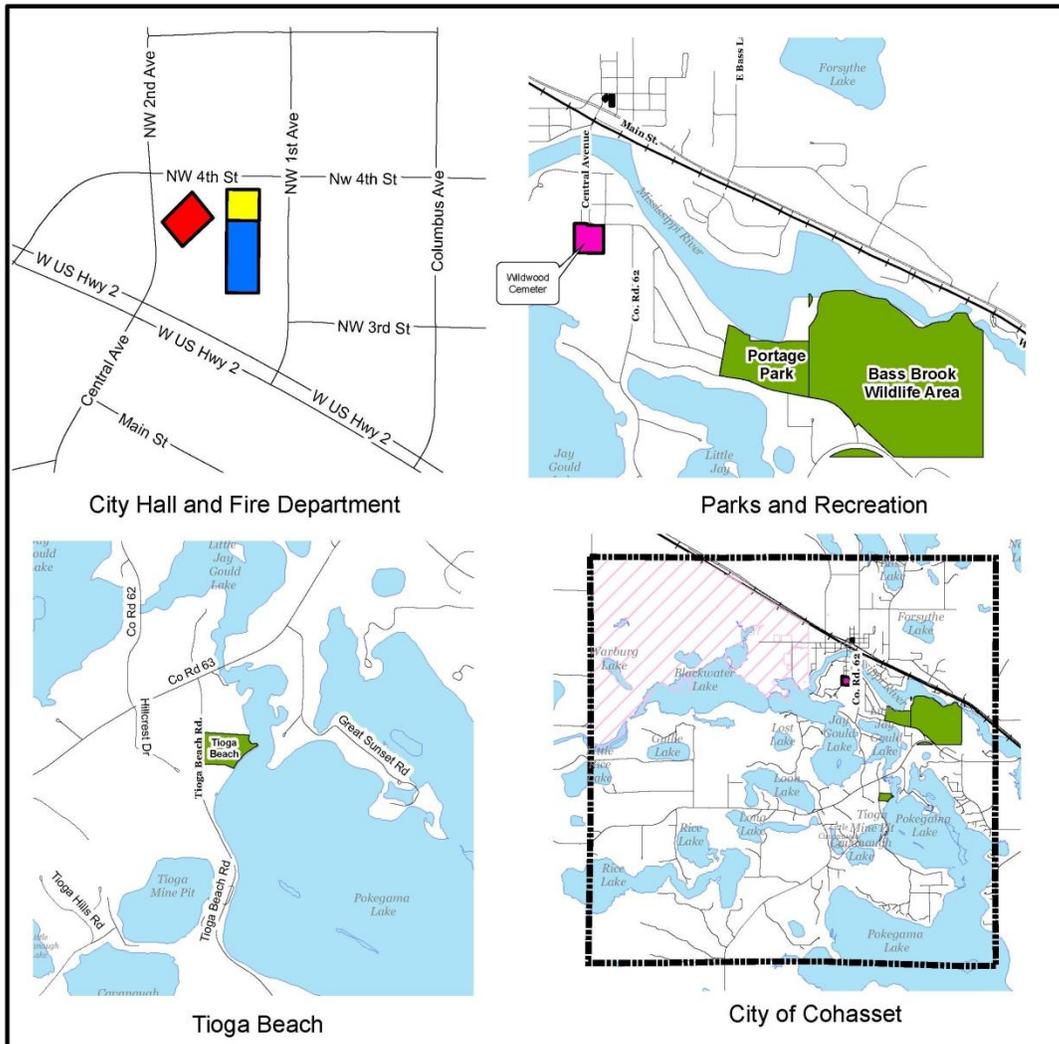
5,000  
Feet



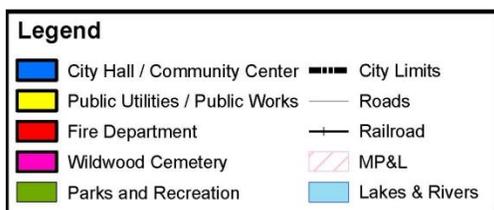
## Community Facilities

Cohasset's community facilities include the City Hall/Community Center and Fire Department, based in the downtown area, as well as city public park land located to the southeast, along the Mississippi River, at Portage Park and the Bass Brook Wildlife Area. Connected by trail to Portage Park is Tioga Beach to the south, on Pokegama Lake. These facilities are illustrated in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Community Facilities

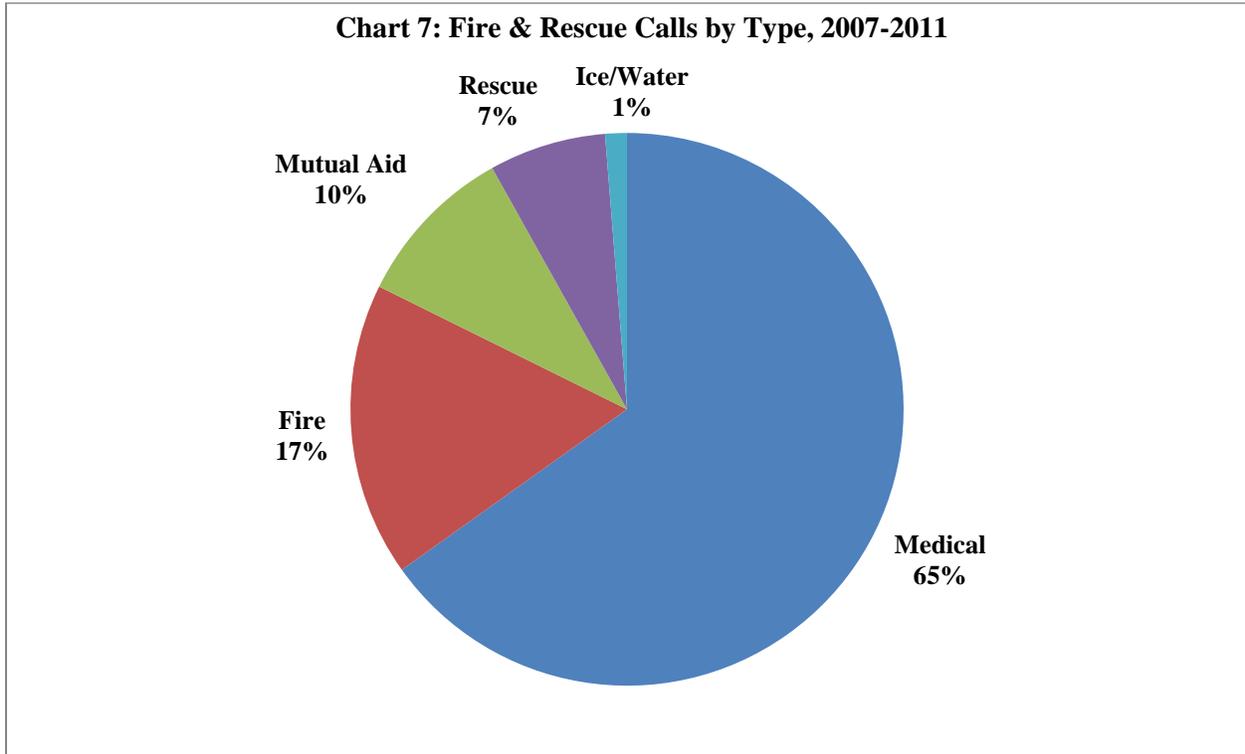


Source: City of Cohasset



## Fire & Rescue

Cohasset's Fire Department (also known as Fire & Rescue) plays an essential role in keeping the city's residents safe. With a roster of 27 fire fighters and 16 pieces of service equipment, Cohasset Fire & Rescue has responded to an average of 192 calls per year since 2001, according to its annual report.<sup>4</sup> Medical emergencies and fires account for most calls – 65 percent and 17 percent over the past five years, respectively (Chart 7). With costs per call dropping over the past four years and a new trainee program in place, the Fire Department seems well positioned for the coming years.



SOURCE: COHASSET FIRE & RESCUE

<sup>4</sup> Cohasset Fire/Rescue Annual Report. 2011.

## Who Do We Want To Be?

The vision of the desired future community in Cohasset has its roots in the 1992 Comprehensive Plan which presented a vision that was updated in 1999 and again in 2007 before the current 2012 update. Cohasset's sense of place, development and protection priorities, vision for economic growth, and goals for public investment in infrastructure have evolved, but have also retained the same core concepts over this 20 year time period. The 2012 Plan describes a vision of Cohasset's future that connects the City's future with its past.

The Community Goal, along with the goal's attributes, articulate Cohasset's general desired future condition as the community looks out over the next 20 years to 2032. The Community Goal is the foundation for the remaining plan, a touchstone that provides consistent guidance to ongoing decisions and investments, preparation of responses to development or protection proposals, and the undertaking of initiatives to achieve the City's desired and preferred future.

### Cohasset Community Goal

***To protect Cohasset's public waters (lakes, brook, and river), retain rural and shoreland neighborhoods, increase Cohasset's economic base, and grow Cohasset's small town image.***

The central attributes of the future Cohasset are:

- a. A defined and vibrant small town core integrated with the Mississippi River.
- b. A growing tax base of industrial and commercial properties including pursuing a natural gas fired power facility at the Clay Boswell plant and stable residential properties.
- c. Rural and shoreland areas providing quality living for current residents in harmony with the City's natural assets and heritage.
- d. Healthy and self-sustaining lakes, rivers, and natural areas benefitting residents, visitors, and future generations.
- e. A trail system offering a variety of options for residents and visitors that accommodates bicycles, snowmobiles, and pedestrians linking housing, recreational facilities, natural areas, and downtown centers within and near Cohasset.
- f. Quality affordable housing at multiple levels in rural, urban, and shoreland settings and accommodating a full spectrum of households from young families to seniors.
- g. A cohesive community where rural, downtown, and shoreland residents are active in the community and contribute to the common good.

## Cohasset “Policy Areas”

**What is a “Policy Area”?** Policy areas are sub-geographies within the city that have unique attributes contributing to the overall city Goal and attributes. The City has identified five distinct sets of attributes that can be mapped, and that have distinct policy needs. Thus each policy area has a unique long-term goal and set of associated policies for directing development and protection activities. All the policy area goals must still be consistent with the city-wide Goal.

Following are descriptions of each policy area:

1. **Industrial/Commercial** – A non-contiguous geographic area that includes the Clay Boswell power plant and associated areas, Hwy 2 commercial areas outside the Downtown, the Cohasset industrial park, the Hwy 63 commercial park, and the new eco-industrial park (former Ainsworth site). Commercial or industrial land uses are the primary and preferred use, although some residential and natural resource land uses will fall inside the area, particularly the natural resource uses in the Clay Boswell area.
2. **Downtown/Urban area** – A contiguous geographic area stretching from the smaller lot and city facilities on the north side of Hwy 2, across the Mississippi River and including the smaller lot residential area with urban services (waste water and water) south of the River and smaller lot lakeshore areas such as Skelley’s Portage. The Downtown/Urban area has the greatest diversity of land uses in the city (commercial, residential, natural resource), the highest density, and is served by centralized sewer and water. The Downtown/Urban area can be expanded as opportunities for extending centralized sewer and water become economic.
3. **Shoreland/Lake areas** – A non-contiguous geographic area that includes most of the state designated shoreland areas (1,000 feet around lakes and 300 feet from the Mississippi River and Bass Brook) excluding shoreland within the Downtown/Urban area. Includes primarily residential housing and some significant natural resource areas. Residential development does not have urban water or wastewater, but is served by individual or community septic and wells.
4. **Rural residential/suburban residential** – A non-contiguous geographic area that is characterized by residential land uses in areas not served by centralized sewer and water and having little shoreland area. Includes some natural resource areas. Suburban lot sizes are no smaller than one acre, rural lot sizes are no smaller than five acres. The area includes most of the city’s hobby farms and remaining agricultural operations.
5. **Natural resources** – A non-contiguous geographic area that includes public lands managed for natural resource uses and recreation, in addition to industrial forest land. Includes some isolated residential uses, but primarily not served by public roads or utilities, except for recreational facilities.

Comprehensive Plan Policy Area Map

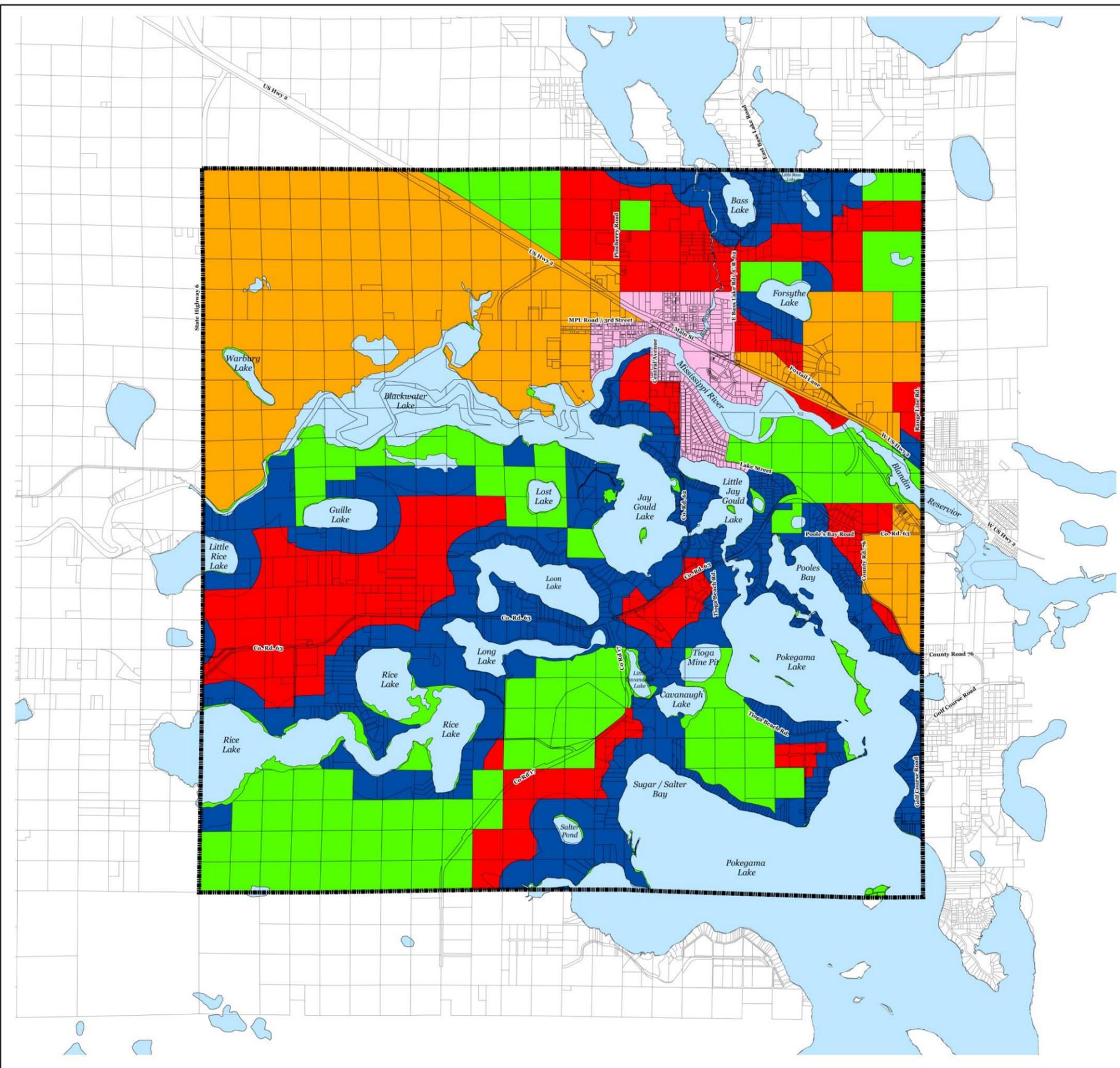
**Legend**

- Downtown / Urban
- Industrial / Commercial
- Natural Resources
- Rural / Suburban
- Shoreland
- Lake or pond
- Itasca County Tax Parcel Information
- City of Cohasset Limits



0 1,000 2,000 Feet

Source: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Itasca County GIS



## Industrial/Commercial Policy Area

**Industrial/Commercial Policy Area description** – A non-contiguous geographic area that includes the Clay Boswell power plant and associated areas, Hwy 2 commercial areas outside the Downtown, the Cohasset industrial park, the Hwy 63 commercial park, and the new eco-industrial park (former Ainsworth site). Commercial or industrial land uses are the primary and preferred use, although some residential and natural resource land uses will fall inside the area.

**Industrial/Commercial Area Goal** – Grow Cohasset’s commercial and industrial base, including expanding and revitalizing commercial businesses along Highway 2, fostering industrial investment in Cohasset’s industrial park and eco-industrial park (former Ainsworth site), and encouraging new investment in clean energy and related investment at the Clay-Boswell power plant.

### Industrial/Commercial Area Policies

1. Complete phase 1 of the Cohasset industrial park and initiate a second phase of development.
2. Encourage new investment in clean energy generation at Clay-Boswell and work with Minnesota Power to create opportunities for spin off industry, such as light industry and non-industrial commercial enterprises, on the Minnesota Power land.
3. Encourage continued development of the light industrial area west of downtown along north side of 3rd Street west to the Minnesota Power industrial property.
4. Support Minnesota Power policy to manage the bulk of its undeveloped lands for timber, agriculture, recreation, and wildlife purposes, including the company’s policy to allow no development along the Mississippi River outside of that which is absolutely necessary for the power facility.
5. Work with Itasca County and Grand Rapids to develop the eco-industrial park on the site of the former Ainsworth OSB plant.
6. Maintain (no expansion) the geographic extent of the existing commercial zones along CR 63.
7. As properties become available, transition remaining residential land uses within the Industrial/Commercial area, including along the Highway 2 corridor, to commercial uses as opportunities for redevelopment arise.
8. Buffer new or redeveloped industrial land uses from surrounding land uses. Work closely with the developer of the eco-industrial park on the former Ainsworth site to insure that adjacent residential properties are not adversely affected by industrial development and operation.
9. Direct new commercial and industrial development to use low-impact development techniques to protect air, water, and natural systems. Within the Highway 2 corridor encourage existing businesses and direct new development to landscape their sites and incorporate low-impact techniques, store equipment and materials behind buildings or behind screens, adhere to appropriate standards for signs, and generally maintain attractive looking sites.

## **Downtown/Urban Policy Area**

**Downtown/Urban area** – A contiguous geographic area stretching from the smaller lot and city facilities on the north side of Hwy 2, across the Mississippi River and including the smaller lot residential area with urban services (waste water and water) south of the River and smaller lot lakeshore areas such as Skelley’s Portage. The Downtown/Urban area has the greatest diversity of land uses in the city (commercial, residential, natural resource), the highest density, and is served by centralized sewer and water. The Downtown/Urban area can be expanded as opportunities for extending centralized sewer and water become economic.

**Downtown/Urban Area Goal** – Grow Cohasset’s small town image by bolstering the downtown/urban area, including developing a diverse commercial business base and housing in and around a walkable, accessible and interconnected downtown.

### **Downtown/Urban Area Policies**

1. Utilize the Mississippi River to establish a distinct community image and to connect Cohasset neighborhoods to each other and Cohasset to Grand Rapids. Develop a riverwalk trail system connected to a new marina with parking and enhanced recreational facilities.
2. Retain key institutions and community functions in the downtown area to economically anchor the downtown, grow Cohasset’s small town image, and encourage community interaction by regularly bringing residents to a central place. Retain core community functions such as the Cohasset Elementary School, churches, post office, and City Hall/Fire Hall/Shop.
3. Encourage development of a diverse mix of businesses and services in the downtown commercial area, such as a new senior center, clinic or urgent care, grocery store, additional restaurants and gathering places that help create a sense of place.
4. Promote the core commercial area as a place for business expansion and new business formation. The river frontage from the CR 62 bridge to the Cohasset Mill and Lumber property on the east should be developed with commercial, gathering place businesses, public river access and recreational assets, and other development that emphasizes the River.
5. Enhance Cohasset’s urban area by encouraging apartments and townhome development in appropriate locations adjacent to or mixed with the commercial district.
6. Extend urban services (and the Downtown/Urban policy area designation) as fiscally responsible opportunities become available to the developed smaller lot areas in Donovan Estates and north of the pipeline paths.
7. When market conditions warrant, encourage urban area development and extend urban services (and the Downtown/Urban policy area designation) to the Rural/Suburban and Shoreland areas of Indian Point.
8. Encourage infill development consistent with existing neighborhoods character and investment in new and renovated housing. Upgrade existing housing and encourage new housing to build a larger local market for potential business enterprises. Remove dilapidated structures, acquire and resell lots, and solicit developers and redevelopers of housing
9. Expand urban services and amenities in the downtown/urban area including school facilities, playground areas in residential sections, sidewalks and trail connection to the riverwalk trail system and nearby trail systems.
10. Ensure that new development and redevelopment incorporates and connects green space particularly in the shoreland areas of the downtown/urban area.
11. Consider methods of unifying the appearance and identify of the core business district through the use of signs, landscape treatments, streetscape elements (e.g., lighting, banners, furniture).
12. Ensure that rain and storm water are appropriately addressed to minimize runoff and protect water quality.

## Shoreland/Lake Policy Area

**Shoreland/Lake area** – A non-contiguous geographic area that includes most of the state designated shoreland areas (1,000 feet around lakes and 300 feet from the Mississippi River and Bass Brook) excluding shoreland within the Downtown/Urban area. Includes primarily residential housing and some significant natural resource areas. Residential development does not have urban water or wastewater, but is served by individual or community septic and wells.

**Shoreland/Lake Area Goal** – Retain the low-density character of shoreland neighborhoods and work with landowners to protect water quality and natural system functions in and around Cohasset's lakes and shorelands.

### Shoreland/Lake Area Policies

1. Extend wastewater systems as necessary to areas such as Indian Point and Donovan Estates, but retain lower-density, large lot character throughout the shoreland/lake area.
2. Encourage new investment in and improved management practices for private wastewater facilities (individual or community septic) for existing development. Use innovative on-site or community wastewater treatment approaches to facilitate new development and/or protect surface and ground water resources, rather than extending centralized wastewater service.
3. Develop a full service camping area in appropriate location that has access to public infrastructure, but direct industrial and commercial development away from shoreland.
4. Enhance and expand public docking facilities on public waters, increase walking and biking trails and protect the functioning and public use of natural areas. Complete development of pedestrian / bicycle routes west of Tioga Beach Road along CR 63 and south along CR 76, ultimately to Portage Park and the downtown area
5. Consider a variety of approaches to protect the area's numerous wetlands as viable functioning ecosystems. For instance, the south bank of the Mississippi River (Blackwater Lake) consists of extensive wetlands providing excellent habitat as well as playing a key hydrologic role for the river. Retain these lands in public ownership and protect them from development although recreational uses not requiring facilities are appropriate.
6. Enhance surface water protection initiatives and promote best practices in lake shore areas approaching full development, including the Pokegama, Bass and Little Bass lakes.
7. Work with private landowners to restore shoreline and increase use of shoreline buffers and encourage the use of low-impact development techniques and retro-fits to limit rainwater impacts on lakes. Protect surface water quality through subdivision design, site design standards, and land management practices.
8. Encourage renovation and redevelopment of older housing.

## Rural/Suburban Residential Policy Area

**Rural/Suburban Residential Area** – A non-contiguous geographic area that is characterized by residential land uses in areas not served by centralized sewer and water and having little shoreland area. Includes some natural resource areas. Suburban lot sizes are no smaller than one acre, rural lot sizes are no smaller than 5 acres. The area includes most of the city’s hobby farms and remaining agricultural operations.

**Rural/Suburban Residential Area Goal** – Retain the rural and large-lot character of Cohasset’s residential areas outside the shoreland and urban areas and enhance connections to natural systems and small- scale agricultural activities.

### Rural/Suburban Residential Area Policies

1. Retain the scale and density of residential land uses with a variety of suburban (1-2 acre) and rural (five acres or larger) development. Continue to encourage low density residential development on large lots.
2. Increase the use of screening of development in rural areas and use of conservation design techniques for new development or redevelopment.
3. Enhance appropriate agricultural connections in larger lot areas including hobby farm and small-scale agricultural uses that are accessory to residential uses, while allowing for reasonable residential growth and protecting natural resources.
4. Allow for home-based or home-extended residential-compatible businesses, including local food production and equestrian businesses.
5. Retain appropriate buffer around existing and viable industrial development outside the industrial/commercial area, and transition these properties to residential uses when opportunities arise. Discourage new commercial development other than home-based or home-extended businesses.
6. Restrict signs and maintain natural character of roads and roadside viewsheds.
7. Connect residential areas to natural systems through trails and greenways.
8. Connect distinct neighborhoods with multi-modal corridors, such as County Road 62S through the Rural/Suburban and Downtown/Urban areas. Improvements could include better traffic controls at the intersection at the cemetery’s entrance, sidewalks or trails to facilitate safe pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
9. Encourage creative use of the pipeline and power line corridors that effectively separate northern Rural/Suburban areas from the higher density and intensity development in the Downtown/Urban area and the Highway 2 corridor. Creation of designated recreational trails along the corridor is one constructive use of this space. Landscaping along the roadways including the provision of sidewalks for walking and bicycling might be a way of softening the utility corridors.

## Natural Resource Policy Area

**Natural Resource Area** – A non-contiguous geographic area that includes public lands managed for natural resource uses and recreation, in addition to industrial forest land. Includes some isolated residential uses, but primarily not served by public roads or utilities, except for recreational facilities.

**Natural Resource Area Goal** – Retain, protect, and restore Cohasset’s water resources and natural systems in and around natural resource areas, including surface and ground water, wetlands, shoreland, habitat, recreational areas, and sustainably managed timberlands.

### Natural Resource Area Policies

1. Enhance opportunities for tourist recreation including passive recreation (hiking, skiing, bicycling, paddling) and some more intensive recreational uses (snowmobiling, RVing, ATVing, boating).
2. Protect wetland areas, natural shoreland, and habitat through sustainable timber management and harvesting practices and low-impact development for recreational facilities. Support active forest management on public timberland and private industrial forestland in the southwest portion of Cohasset.
3. Limit residential development or conversion of lands to non-natural resource uses, but expand and enhance passive and active recreational opportunities.
4. Encourage additions to protected natural areas for high-quality or critical resources. Consider assessing and prioritizing the city’s natural resource assets through a natural resource inventory and assessment process.
5. Work with public and private entities to develop new trail systems within the Natural Resource area and connecting to residential areas in and adjacent to Cohasset.
6. Sustain Portage Park as the community’s primary sports recreation complex.
7. Continue to protect the Bass Brook Wildlife Management Area extending from just east of the Pokegama Dam to Portage Park and encompassing several hundred acres.
8. Prohibit new development, except for passive recreational uses, on the islands in Pokegama Lake.

## How Do We Get There?

Identifying what Cohasset wants to become over the next 20 years, its desired future condition, determines the end point of the city's effort. In order to put Cohasset on the path to achieving its goals, the city has identified a set of priority strategies and actions.

Some of the strategies and actions are specific to a geographic area or policy area, while others are more topical or apply across the city. Similarly, some strategies are supported by multiple goals or policies, and some are directed a single goal or policy. Strategy priorities are grouped into eight categories:

1. Land Use
2. Natural Systems and Shoreland
3. Public Services and Utilities
4. Residential and Housing
5. Recreation
6. Transportation
7. Commercial
8. Industrial

### Land Use Strategies and Actions

1. Ensure that zoning and development regulation supports the desired condition, as expressed in this plan, for each of the community's policy areas.
2. In development decisions, protect the functioning of natural systems through best practices (conservation design or low impact development) that retain property owners' development rights and meet development goals that are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
3. As redevelopment opportunities occur, transition incompatible land uses to more appropriate uses, such as industrial uses in residential areas or residential uses in commercial areas. Allow for a mix of uses that are compatible, and consider setting standards for identifying compatible uses.

### Natural Systems and Shoreland Strategies and Actions

1. Enforce a general standard of no net loss of wetland function or benefit (not just necessarily acre for acre) but in areas of special sensitivity or unique values enforce a standard of no loss of wetlands.
2. Enforce general standards (zoning and subdivision) for shoreland areas that minimize loss of natural vegetation, particularly in shore and bluff impact zones, and minimize changes in slope contours.
3. Incorporate MDNR water quality best practices into shoreland regulation where appropriate and promote participation by landowners through community newsletters, utility billings or other outreach to city residents. Best practices include steps to decrease use of lawn fertilizers and pesticides, conduct regular septic system maintenance, increase on-site infiltration of rainwater, and maintenance or restoration of vegetative buffers in shoreland areas and around sensitive natural areas. Consider incorporating shore restoration incentives in shoreland regulation.
4. Support State agency efforts to promote actions that restore shorelands of developed lakeshore and riverfront lots to enhance and sustain hydrologic and ecologic functions.
5. Enforce existing regulations that ensure maintenance and proper functioning of on-site septic systems.
6. Revise subdivision standards to use conservation design principles to minimize the amount of land that is disrupted in the development process and maximize the value of open space and priority natural systems. Apply the new subdivision standards in rural/suburban residential and shoreland/lake areas.
7. Enforce existing standards that preserve and enhance surface water quality, reasonable aesthetic qualities in shoreland areas, and the value of lakeshore and riverfront properties.

### **Public Services and Utilities Strategies and Actions**

1. Extend public sanitary sewer to the full extent of the downtown/urban area as opportunities for cost effective extension become available, including Indian Point, Donovan Estates, and across the Hwy 63 bridge by Highway 2.
2. Continue to provide public water supply service to the Downtown/Urban area and to the areas developed or developing at urban densities as warranted by need, cost, and demand.
3. Promote community development and improved living standards by pursuing the cost effective provision of distributed natural gas service to appropriate areas of Cohasset.
4. Protect water quality and homeowner cost by considering innovative approaches for managing individual wastewater treatment in rural and lakeshore areas.
5. Work with State agencies or others to provide education, workshops, and incentives for homeowners to encourage upgrading personal septic systems when needed rather than waiting for sale of property.

### **Residential and Housing Strategies and Actions**

1. Pursue development opportunities for senior citizen housing and housing for young families in the Downtown/Urban area.
2. Pursue development of low and moderate income housing in the Downtown/Urban area.
3. As redevelopment opportunities arise, rezone residential areas on the south side of 3<sup>rd</sup> Street (MP Road) to commercial.
4. Develop programs to assist property owners to maintain and upgrade their housing in all areas.

### **Recreation Strategies and Actions**

1. Work with the State and other interested parties to improve existing lake accesses, and support new access development that is consistent with Comprehensive Plan policies.
2. Identify potential trail corridors between Portage Park, the downtown, and nearby residential areas.
3. Support and encourage the development of designated recreational trails for hiking, bicycling, cross country skiing and water trails.
4. Identify potential separate trail corridors for motorized vehicles such as snowmobiles and ATVs that connect to regional trails and existing systems in Cohasset. Work with the State and trail organizations to plan, develop, regulate, and maintain trail systems.
5. Work with Minnesota Power to maintain the cross-country ski trails and associated facilities on Minnesota Power land.
6. Provide appropriate recreational facilities for residents of all ages in Cohasset parks and recreation areas, and participate in recreation planning with the State and private entities that provide recreation facilities for the community (such as MP trails).
7. Invite residents to participate through all stages of developing recreational facilities.
8. Support the retention and acquisition, as may be appropriate, of public land for open space to be used for multiple recreational purposes including hiking, hunting, nature observing, and the like.
9. Develop a playground between Mississippi River and MP Road (3<sup>rd</sup> Street).
10. Identify potential sites for a campground and recreational vehicle park by Portage Park, evaluate city participation in developing the site, and conduct outreach to potential partners.
11. Investigate options for developing a marina in the Downtown/Urban area that can be linked to new commercial development via a Riverwalk.

## **Transportation Strategies and Actions**

1. Encourage the use of appropriate highway design (e.g. traffic calming actions) versus enforcement to achieve desired levels of safety.
2. Use design, maintenance, and enforcement activities on County Roads 63, 76 and 62N that recognize the “complete street” function (multiple travel modes) played by these roads, recognizing the importance of having safe roads for residents and non-motorized users.
3. Provide and maintain a system of quality streets and roads based upon an appropriate assignment of function (i.e. local, collector, arterial).
4. Cooperate with the State, County, and adjacent units of government in the provision and maintenance of roads serving Cohasset.
5. Support development of paths for walking and bicycling to connect origins (homes) with destinations (work, retail, recreation areas) throughout the city’s developed areas, including rural/suburban residential and to Grand Rapids.
6. Develop a sidewalk plan for the Downtown/Urban area to expand pedestrian connections within and between commercial and residential areas.

## **Commercial Development Strategies and Actions**

1. Promote the development of the downtown area as the primary retail and service business district. Acquire or assemble property for downtown development of uses such as a senior center, post office or related services, medical clinic, grocery store, or multifamily housing.
2. Support efforts to promote the local business community including activities such as special events.
3. Develop appropriate standards for the establishment and operation of home businesses in the rural/suburban area ensuring that the business operations do not adversely affect neighbors or degrade the quality of the environment. Standards should emphasize agricultural, equestrian, and small-scale home-based businesses.
4. Acquire or otherwise convert remaining residential properties in the commercial/industrial area for redevelopment.
5. Create a plan and corridor options for a Riverwalk that will link downtown commercial development sites, a downtown marina, and existing trails. Identify trail funding options and potential development partners. Consider standards to emphasize river frontage development, from the CR 62 (Central Avenue) bridge to the Cohasset Mill and Lumber property on the east, that includes commercial, gathering place businesses, public river access and recreational assets, and other development that emphasizes the River.
6. Acquire and demolish vacant or dilapidated commercial buildings in the downtown and assemble parcels for redevelopment.
7. Acquire and demolish vacant or dilapidated residential structures.

## **Industrial Development Strategies and Actions**

1. Recruit industries to complete Phase I of the Cohasset Industrial Park primarily for light industry and support the development of appropriate lands in Phase II, once Phase I is complete.
2. Cooperate with and support Minnesota Power in the development and promotion of its property in the Commercial/Industrial area to the west of the Downtown/Urban area, emphasizing compatible commercial and light industrial development that is not appropriate for the downtown.
3. Cooperate with and assist the Itasca Economic Development Corporation to promote economic development within the Eco-Industrial Park on the former Ainsworth site.

## Appendix A – Community Survey Results

## **Cohasset, MN Comprehensive Plan Community Survey – Thematic Highlights**

In order to provide community input to the Steering Committee as the Comprehensive Plan update process moved forward, the City of Cohasset conducted a community survey of households, businesses, and property owners. The City mailed out a 4-page survey to approximately 1,200 property owners that asked a number of questions on current issues affecting the comprehensive plan and priorities of residents and businesses for what the desired future of the city should be.

Approximately 345 surveys were completed, giving a quite high response rate of almost 30%. Respondents were overwhelmingly year-round residents (85%), and most of whom (56%) had lived or owned property in Cohasset for over fifteen years. Respondents were evenly distributed by location across the city. A summary of themes from the survey responses is provided below, followed by a question-by-question summary of results.

### **Land Use and Development**

Several questions asked about residents' priorities for future development in Cohasset. These questions are particularly helpful in defining the City's comprehensive plan update and how the City should address development proposals, particularly those proposals that will change the city's existing land use patterns.

Respondents generally were supportive of new development, but were wary of certain types of land use changes and expressed strong concerns for how development (and existing land uses) affect natural amenities. Respondents were particularly skeptical of how future rural development (encouraging more development in areas that are currently rural) might affect the community (Q10.A.2), and of any change that increased density (Q10.A.4, 6)

Similarly, the responses to Question 10, which discussed priorities for land development, community members rated preservation of habitat, water quality, and the character of rural areas as top priorities when considering future development. Consistent with that result, two-thirds of all respondents saw more and denser development in lakeshore areas as a bad idea. Half of all respondents said more and denser development along the Mississippi in the downtown area was a bad idea (downtown property owners agreed by the same margin). Also consistent with this result, support for trails and recreational greenways was quite strong (Q19).

In considering how to treat questions about increasing density, readers should keep in mind that perceptions about what constitutes "density" is typically problematic in public surveys. Additional polling or other stakeholder engagement may be justified to explore reactions to how specific development patterns might be deemed acceptable or risky in undeveloped or low density areas adjacent to existing developed areas, particularly in shoreland areas and the downtown.

Respondents were very supportive of industrial development, and generally supportive of commercial development, although not in all settings. Respondents thought the City's highest priorities for expanding the tax base (Question 17) should be through industrial

development/expansion (50 percent) and commercial retail/service development and retention (38.1 percent). Support for rural commercial development was, however, relatively low, as seen in response to Questions 10 and 11. Support for commercial development in the downtown area was substantially higher, as was support for commercial development along Highway 2.

### **Cohasset's Relationship with Grand Rapids**

A number of survey questions reflect upon the relationship between Cohasset and Grand Rapids. Question 6 asks why respondents moved to or continue to live in Cohasset. Over half (55.1 percent) of all respondents cited Cohasset's proximity to Grand Rapids. The next-most popular answer, selected by 41 percent of respondents, cites Cohasset's privacy and uncrowdedness. This may explain why 42 percent of respondents see Cohasset (today) as a suburb or bedroom community (Question 7). This view may be reinforced by the fact that most survey respondents travel primarily to Grand Rapids for work and for shopping, school, church, and health care (Question 15).

While many of Cohasset's residents may see the city as a satellite of Grand Rapids today, they are not wholly satisfied with that relationship. In the future, a slim plurality of respondents (38.9 percent) thought Cohasset should become a stand-alone small town (Question 8) rather than a suburb or bedroom community (35.9%). This preference for enhancing Cohasset's role as a stand-alone small town fits with other preferences expressed by respondents. For instance, of the respondents who thought Cohasset should become a stand-alone small town, 67.8 percent thought a grocery was needed in downtown Cohasset, compared to 55.1 percent of all respondents (Question 16). Similarly, half (49.1 percent) of those respondents who thought Cohasset should become a stand-alone small town thought having a viable "downtown" was important (Q14), compared to just over one quarter (28.5) of all respondents.

### **Public Infrastructure and Best Use of Tax Dollars**

Three questions (11 through 13) directly asked respondents to rate potential and current City investments as a "good use of tax dollars," something the City ought to "support, but not through taxes," a "low priority for [City] action," or a "bad idea" outright. Transportation investments were by far the respondents' preferred use of tax dollars; only one non-transportation item (paying for street lighting costs through taxes) received a plurality of support. Respondents did register significant levels of support (30-35%) for other public investments (such as supporting economic development and enhancing recreational amenities and greenways), but more people (35-50%) supported the investment but preferred that non-tax dollars be used for those investments.

Within the transportation category, three items were noteworthy for *not* receiving a plurality of support from respondents:

1. expanding the road system into undeveloped areas;
2. taking public ownership of and maintaining private roads upon the petition of landowners; and
3. creating new public transportation options.

In each case, a plurality (40-50 percent) rated the idea a low priority.

Existing cost allocation methods for public infrastructure investments are viewed as reasonable and fair by most of the respondents.

### **Use of Community Survey**

The community survey results are one of the primary sources of information on community priorities used by the Comprehensive Plan update Steering Committee. As noted in the above summary, the survey results show some clear common priorities and some differences of opinion within the community. The Plan will reflect many of these priorities and differences of opinion.

The Committee has also reviewed the more detailed survey results in the question-by-question summary presented on the following pages.

## Cohasset, MN Comprehensive Plan Community Survey Results

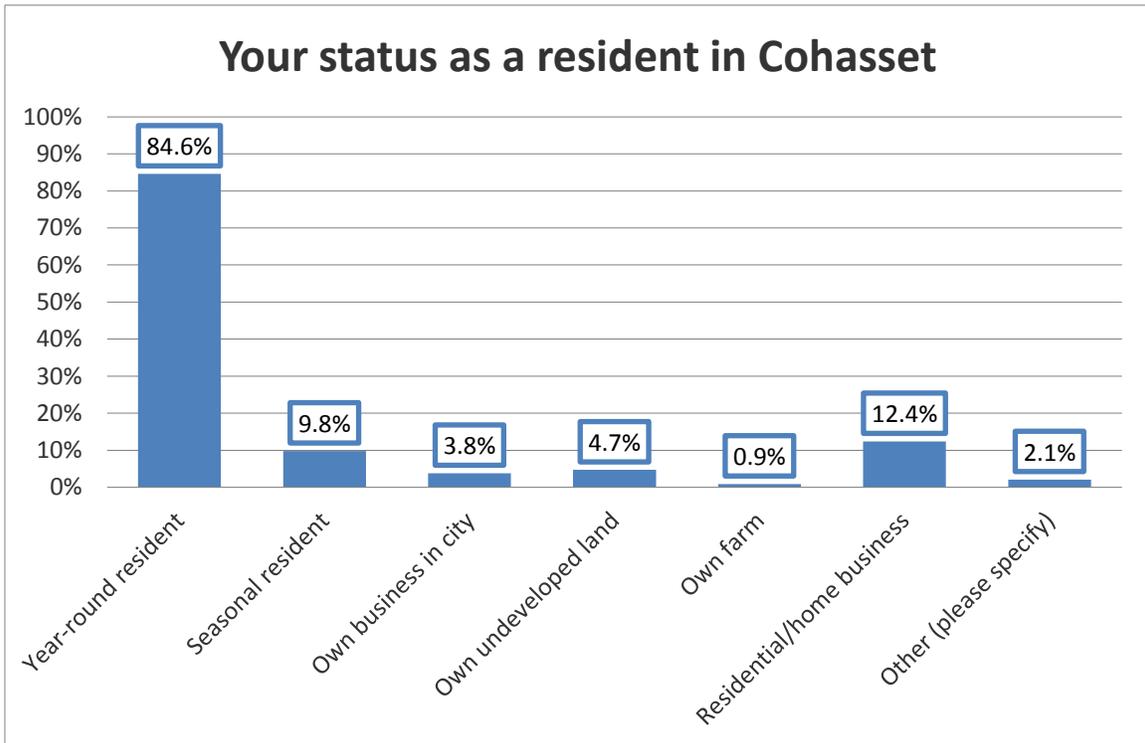
A total of 340 residents responded to the survey; 326 completed the survey (a completion rate of 95.9 percent). Responses were tabulated August 7, 2012.

### Question 1 -- Your status as a resident in Cohasset: (Check all that apply.)

A vast majority of survey respondents identified themselves as year-round residents (84.6 percent). The next two largest groups were residential/home business (12.4) and seasonal residents (9.8). Owners of businesses (3.8), undeveloped land separate from a residence (4.7), and farms (0.9) made up a small portion of overall respondents.

*Other (please specify):*

- Own 3 properties on Lake Pokegama for year-round rent
- own home
- own rental property
- lived here over 48 years
- son will use home to go to college
- resident most of the year
- own rental property

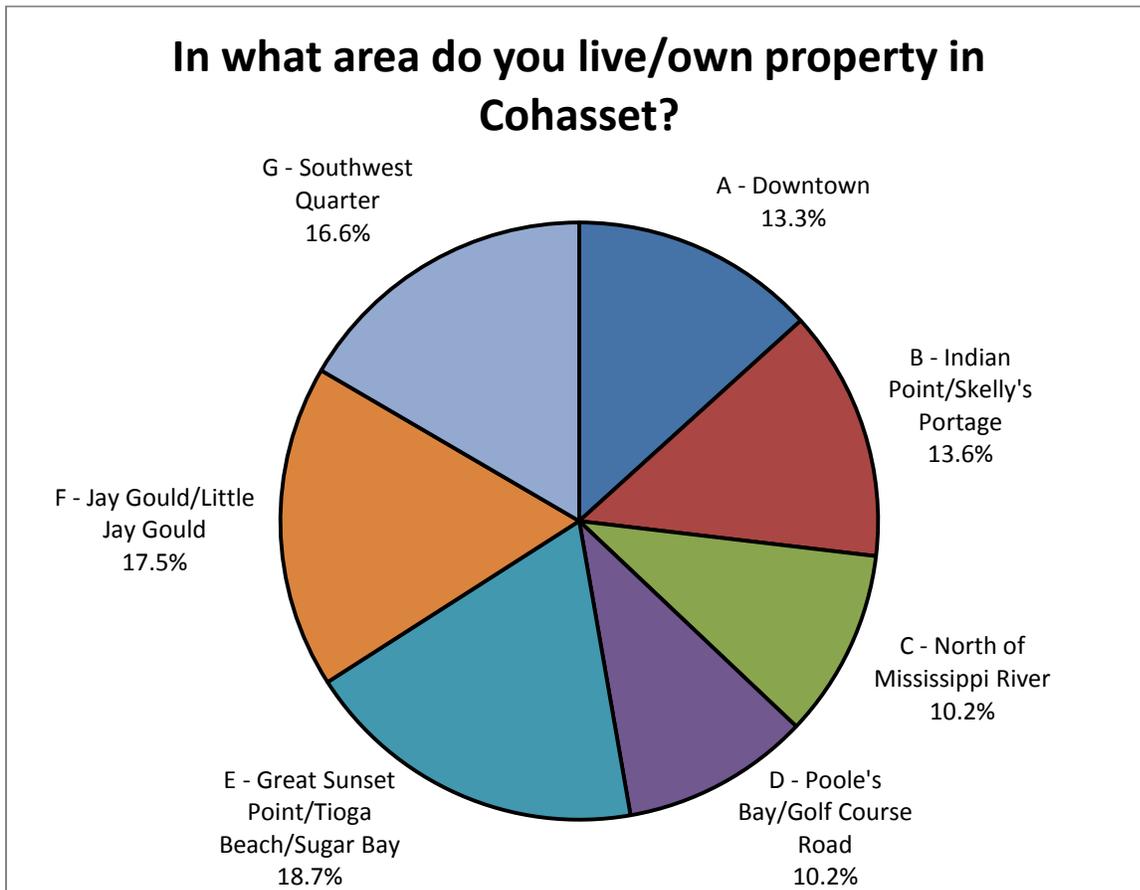


**Question 2 – In what area do you live/own property in Cohasset?**

Respondents’ geographical distribution was fairly even. The most highly represented areas were Area E: Great Sunset Point/Tioga Beach/Sugar Bay (18.7 percent), Area F: Jay Gould/Little Jay Gould (17.5), and Area G: Southwest Quarter (16.6). Areas A through D each accounted for between 10 and 14 percent of respondents.

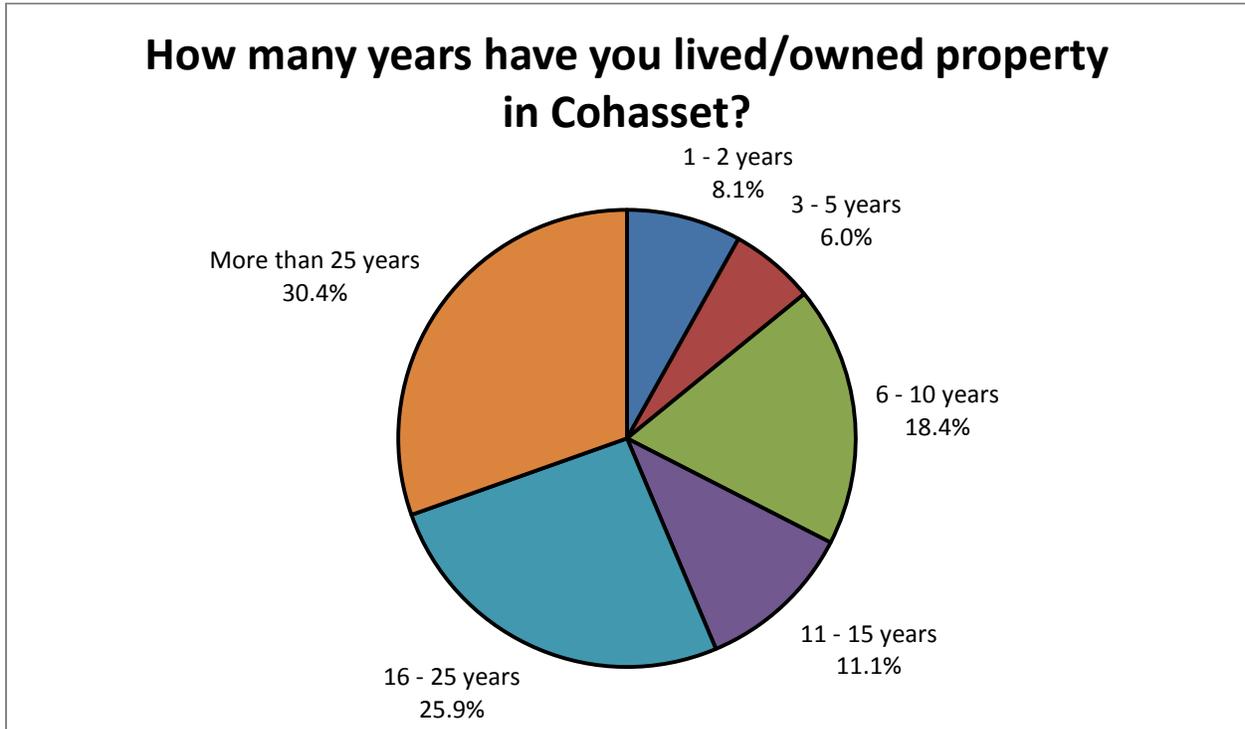
*I don't live or own property in Cohasset:*

- none
- Pooles Bay
- On Rice Lake, don't have the map



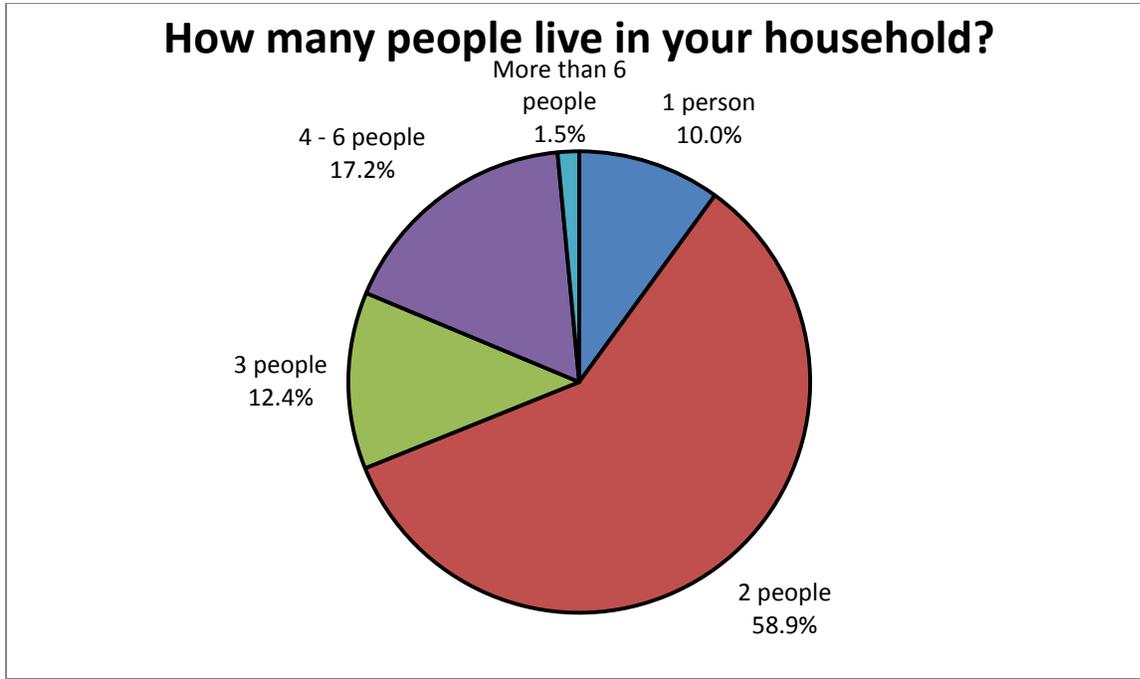
**Question 3 – How many years have you lived/owned property in Cohasset?**

Most respondents have lived or owned property in Cohasset for more than a decade. 30.4 percent answered “More than 25 years,” with 16-25 years (25.9) and 6-10 years (18.4) rounding out the top three responses. A third of all respondents have lived or owned property in Cohasset for ten years or fewer.



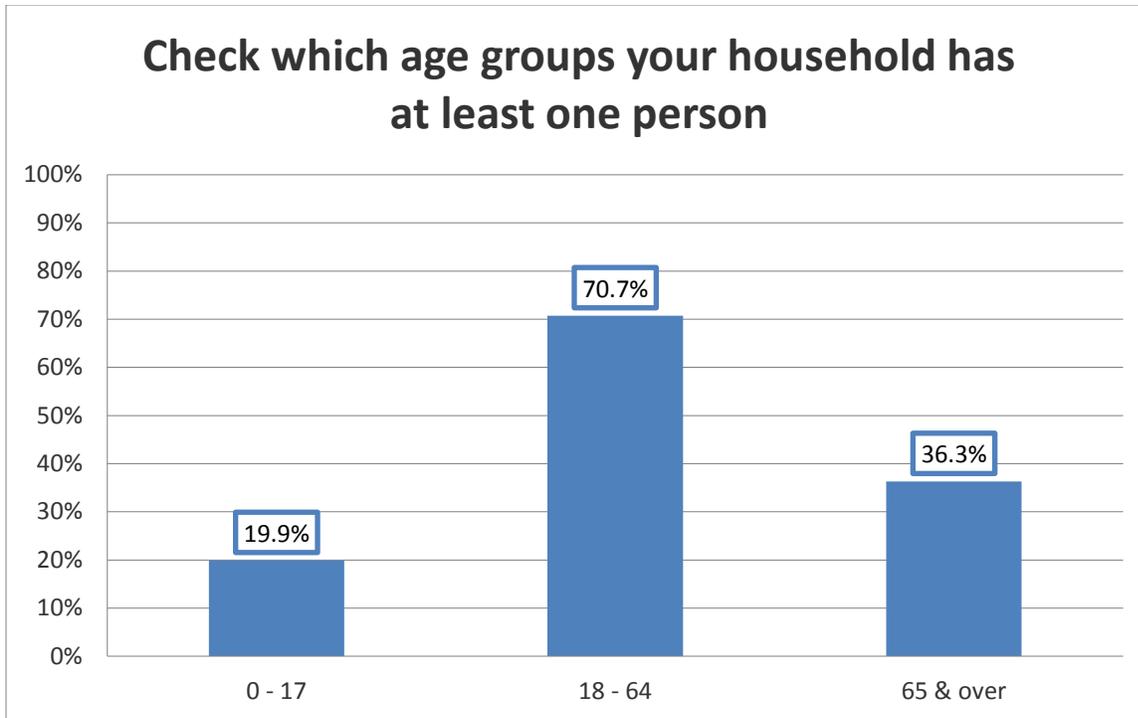
**Question 4 – How many people live in your household?**

A majority (58.9 percent) of respondents live in two-person households. 17.2 percent live in households of 4-6 people, and 12.4 percent live in 3-person households. While 10 percent live alone, only 1.5 percent of all respondents live in households with more than 6 people.



**Question 5 – Check which age groups your household has at least one person.**

70.7 percent of respondents live in households with someone age 18 to 64. Over a third (36.3) of respondents have someone aged 65 or over in their household. 19.9 percent have someone under the age of 18 living in the home.

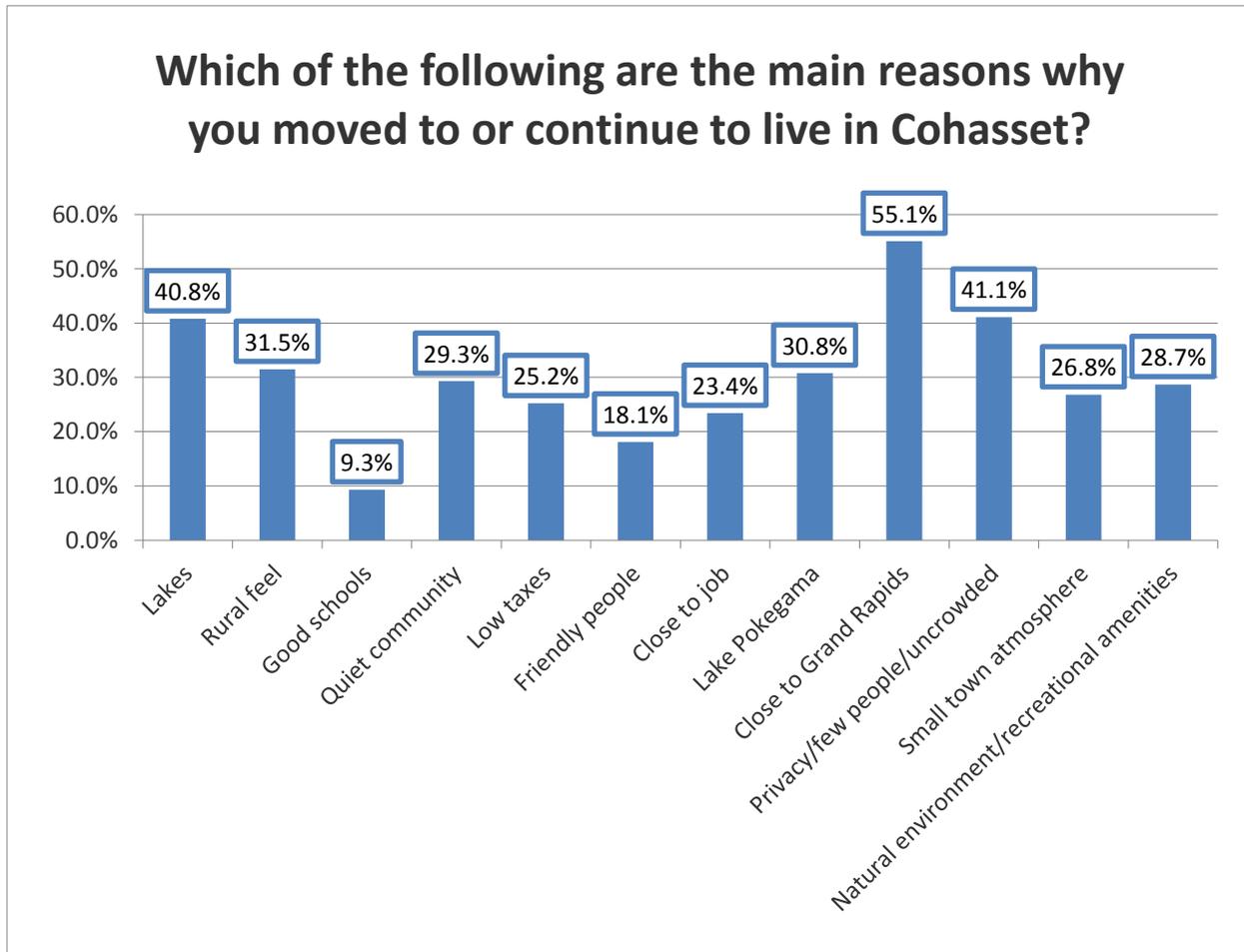


**Question 6 – Which of the following are the main reasons why you moved to or continue to live in Cohasset?**

The three most-cited reasons for moving to or continuing to live in Cohasset were being close to Grand Rapids (55.1 percent); the city’s privacy, its few people, and its uncrowdedness (41.1 percent); and the area lakes (40.8). The least-cited reasons were good schools (9.3) and friendly people (18.1).

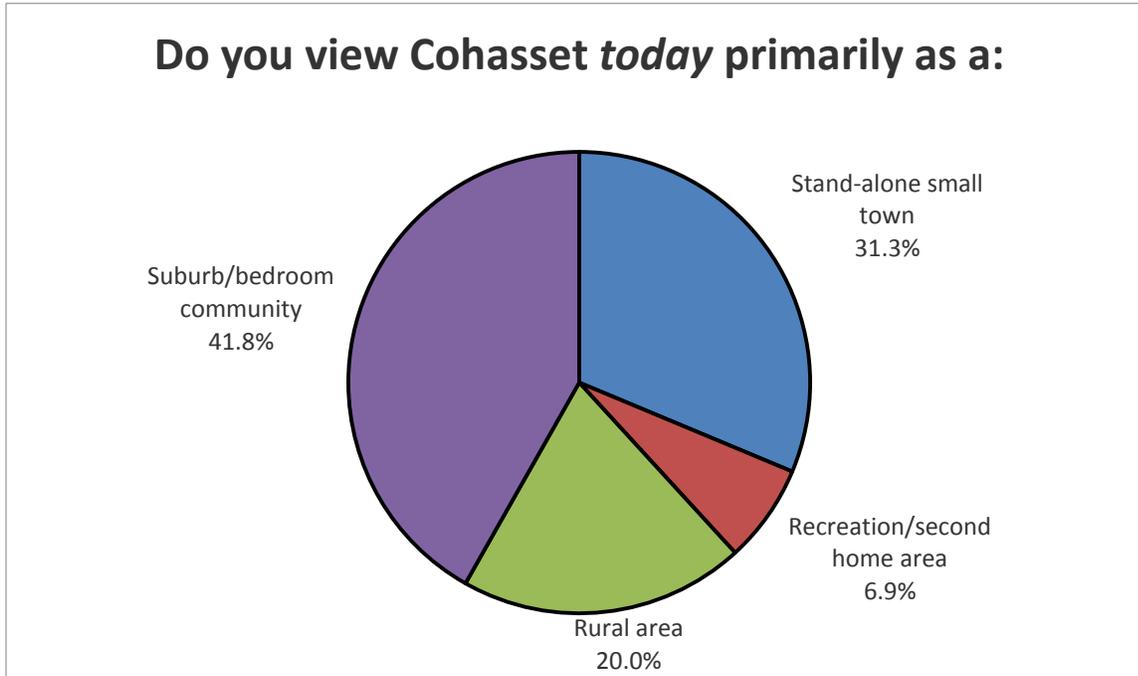
*Other (please specify):*

- Grandparents old home, still in family
- Family
- Live on Mississippi
- Highway frontage and lower taxes at the time
- Live closer to our parents
- Don’t live in Cohasset
- Born in Grand Rapids
- We had low taxes until City of Cohasset came back
- Townhouse
- Spouse refused to live in Grand Rapids
- Lived in area 57 years
- Vacation cabin
- Aging parents
- Job transfer
- Affordable property in industrial park
- Own business
- Nice area
- Grew up there
- Grew up in Grand Rapids
- The quiet, small town, the natural beauty
- My home



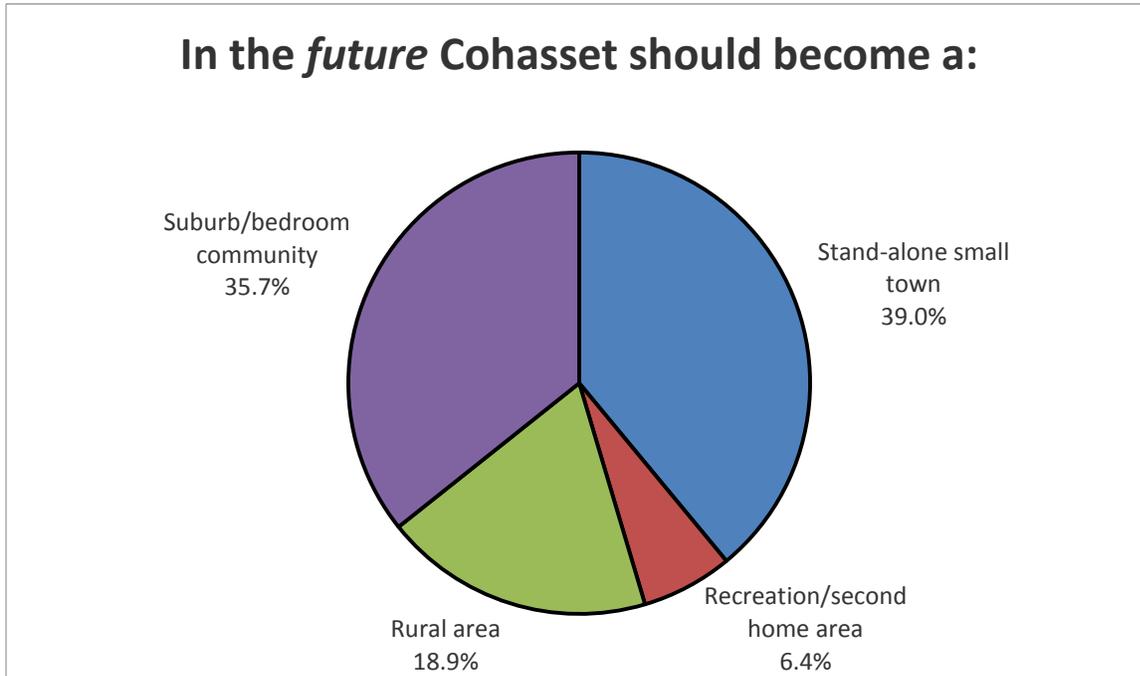
**Question 7 – Do you view Cohasset *today* primarily as a stand-alone small town; recreation/second home area; rural area; or suburb/bedroom community?**

A clear plurality of respondents (41.8 percent) view Cohasset as a suburb or bedroom community. A smaller group (31.3 percent) describes it as a stand-alone small town, while 20 percent view it as a rural area, and 6.9 percent see it as a recreation or second home area.



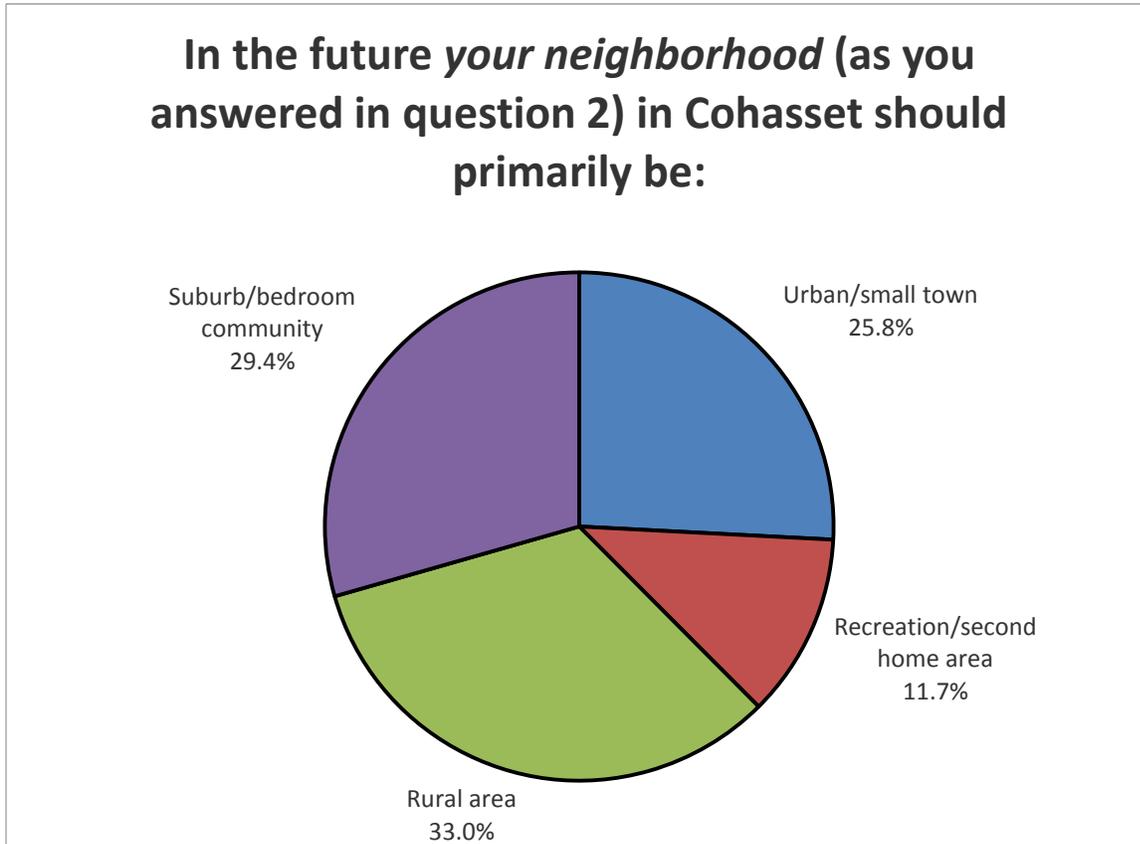
**Question 8 – In the *future* Cohasset should become a stand-alone small town; recreation/second home area; rural area; or suburb/bedroom community.**

In contrast to question 7, a plurality of respondents (39 percent) thought Cohasset should become a stand-alone small town, while 35.7 percent of respondents see its future as a suburb/bedroom community. 18.9 percent believe Cohasset should become a rural area, and 6.4 percent prefer it become a recreation or second home area.



**Question 9 – In the future *your neighborhood* in Cohasset should primarily be urban/small town; recreation/second home area; rural area; or suburb/bedroom community.**

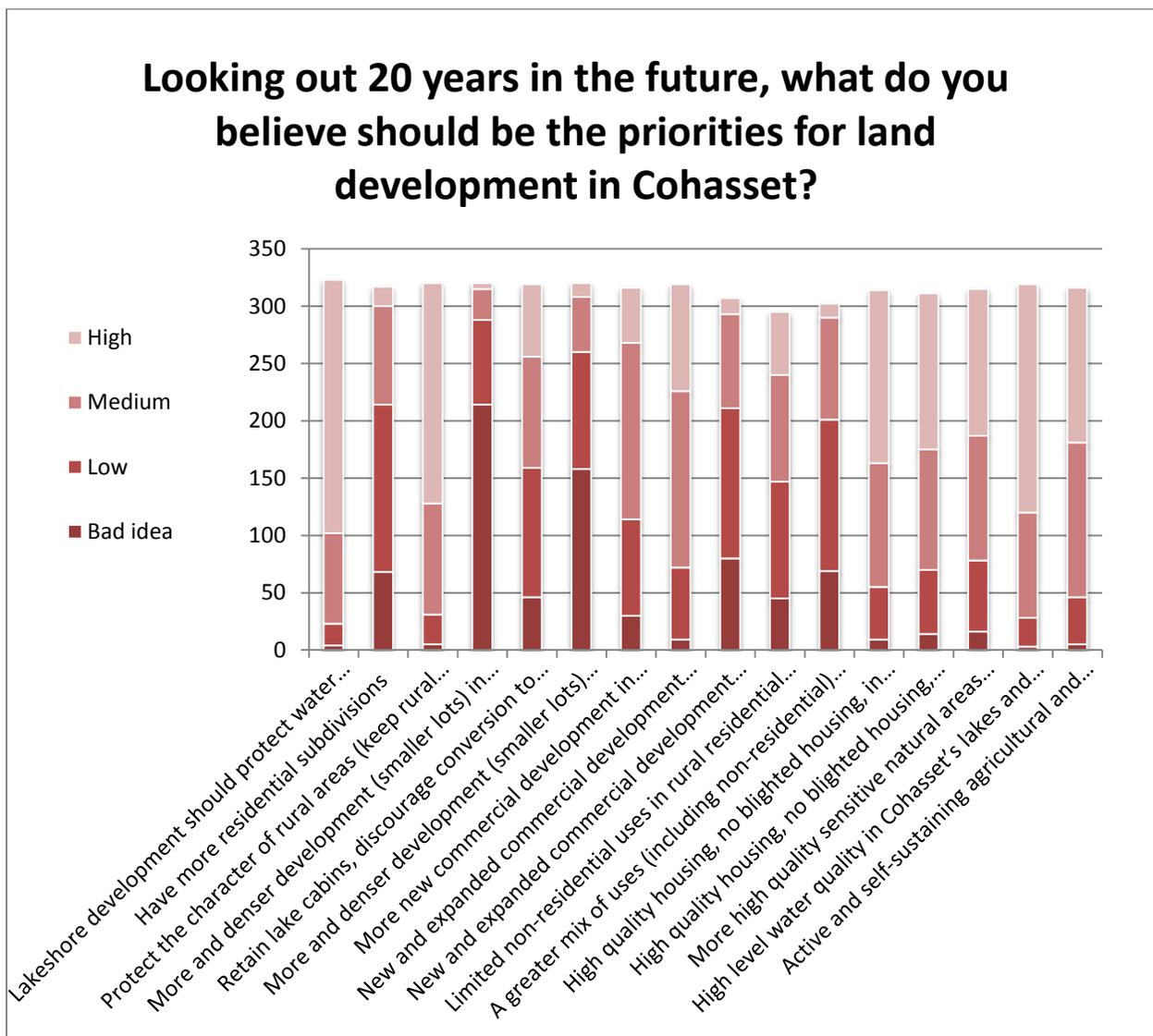
A third (33 percent) of respondents hope to see their neighborhood as a rural area in the future, while 29.4 percent would prefer their neighborhood as a suburb/bedroom community, and 25.8 percent opt for an urban/small town neighborhood. 11.7 percent hope to see their neighborhood as a recreation/second home area.



**Question 10 – Looking out 20 years in the future, what do you believe should be the priorities for land development in Cohasset?**

Respondents identified the highest priorities for land development as “Lakeshore development should protect water quality and habitat” (68.4 percent of all respondents); “High level water quality in Cohasset’s lakes and rivers” (62.4); and “Protect the character of rural areas (keep rural areas rural)” (60).

The priorities that received the most unfavorable ratings—the ones identified as a “bad idea” by the most respondents—were “More and denser development (smaller lots) in lakeshore areas” (66.9 percent of all respondents); “More and denser development (smaller lots) along the Mississippi River in the downtown area” (49.4); and “New and expanded commercial development along rural highways” (26.1).

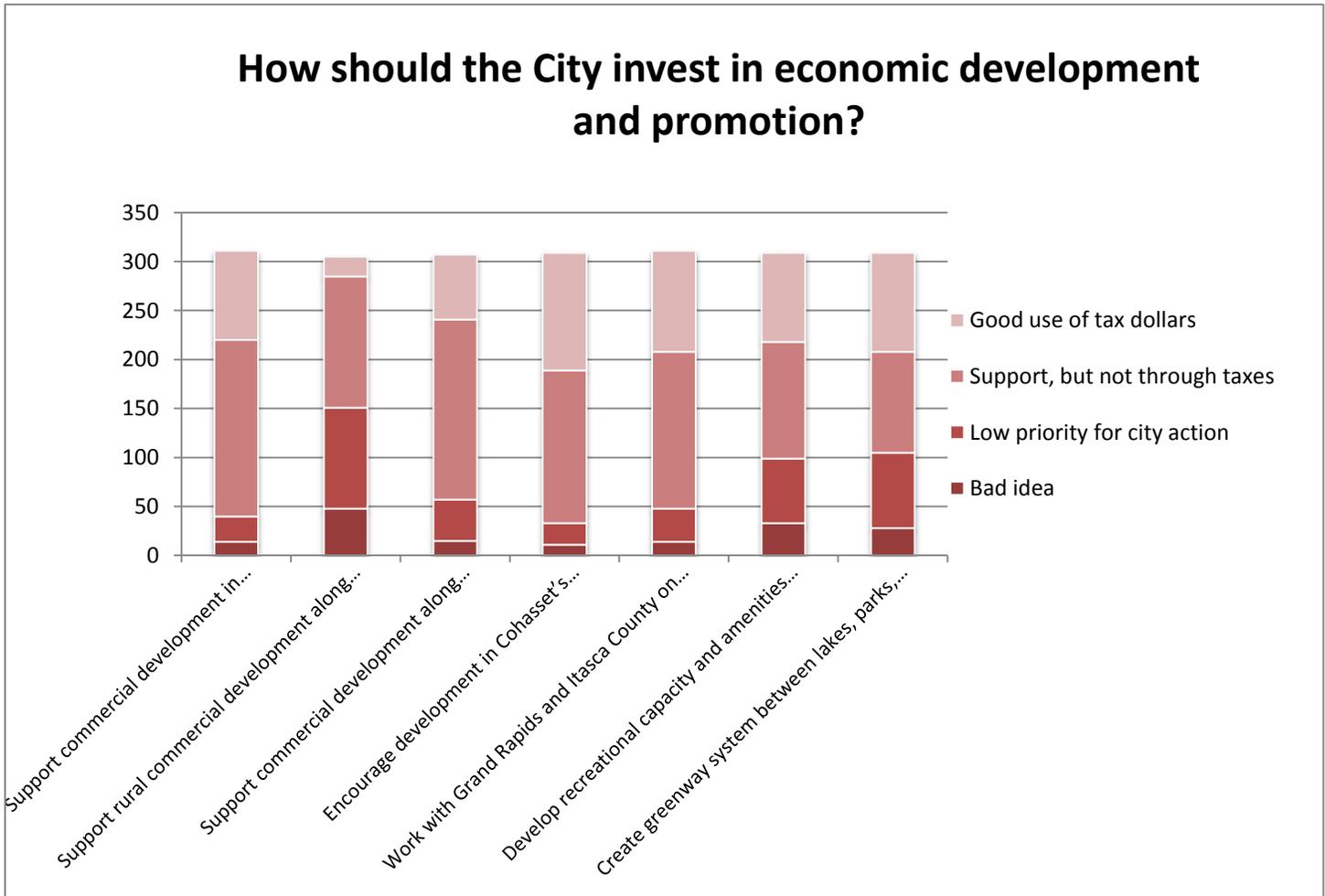


**Question 11 – How should the City invest in economic development and promotion?**

A plurality of residents supported each of the seven investment areas identified in the survey, but in each case, the most-selected answer was “Support, but not through taxes” (ranging from 33.3 percent to 59.9 percent of respondents).

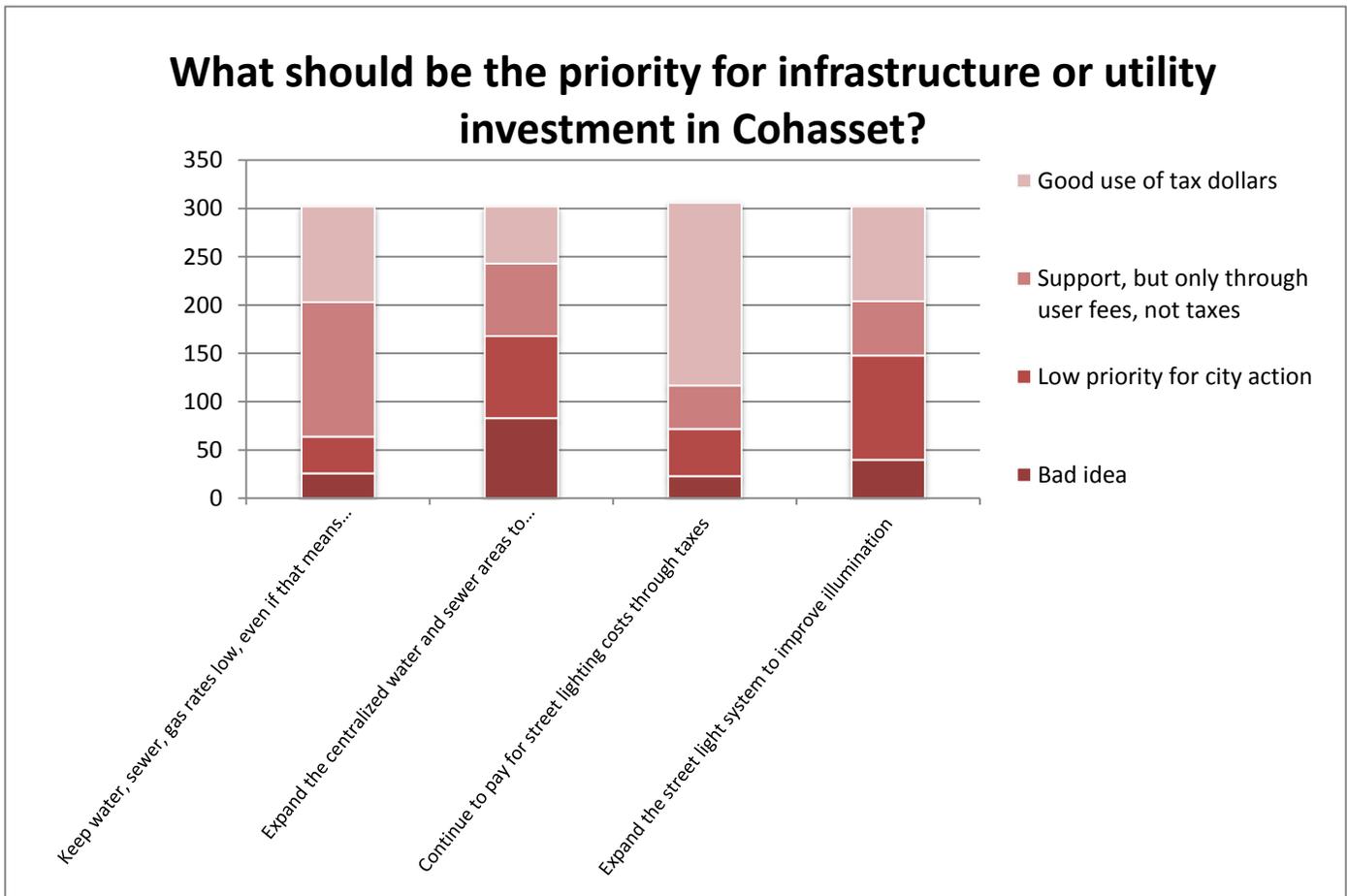
In terms of being a good use of tax dollars, the top three ideas were “Encourage development in Cohasset’s industrial park” (38.8); “Work with Grand Rapids and Itasca County on industrial development” (33.1); and “Create greenway system between lakes, parks, etc.” (32.7).

The ideas with the highest percentage of respondents calling them a bad idea were “Support rural commercial development along county highways” (15.7); “Develop recreational capacity and amenities (campground, marina)” (10.7); and “Create greenway system between lakes, parks, etc.” (9.1). This final idea’s appearance on both ends of the spectrum highlights the complexity of this portion of the survey.



**Question 12 – What should be the priority for *infrastructure or utility* investment in Cohasset?**

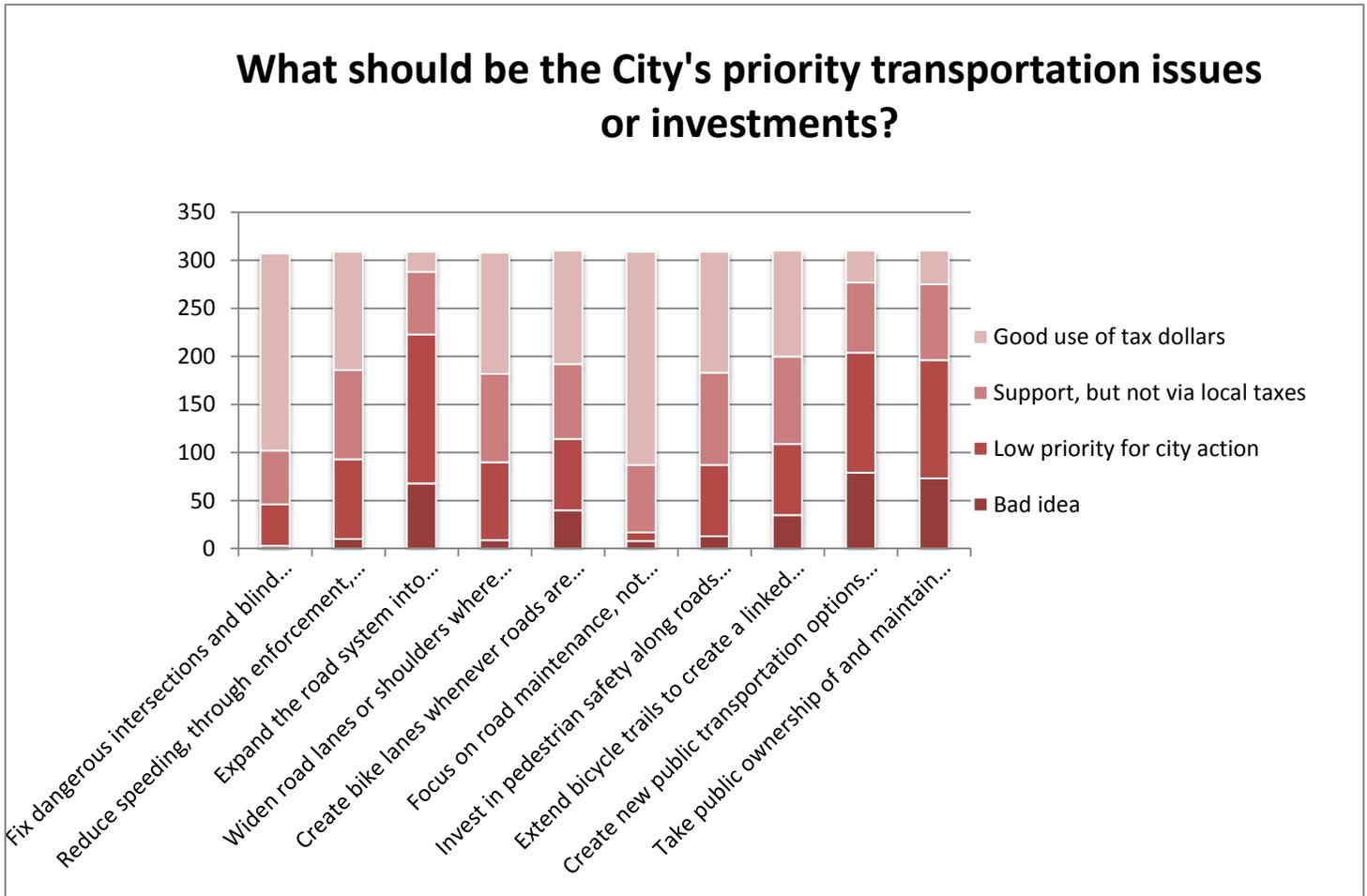
61.8 percent of respondents identified “Continue to pay for street lighting costs through taxes” as a good use of tax dollars; about a third of respondents thought tax dollars would be used well to “Keep water, sewer, [and] gas rates low, even if that means continuing to subsidize the system from general revenues” (32.8) and “Expand the street light system to improve illumination” (32.5). The option to “Expand the centralized water and sewer areas to replace wells and septic systems, even if that increases rates for all users” was fairly evenly split between all potential answers, with a small plurality (28.1 percent) calling it a low priority for city action.



**Question 13 – What should be the City’s priority *transportation* issues or investments?**

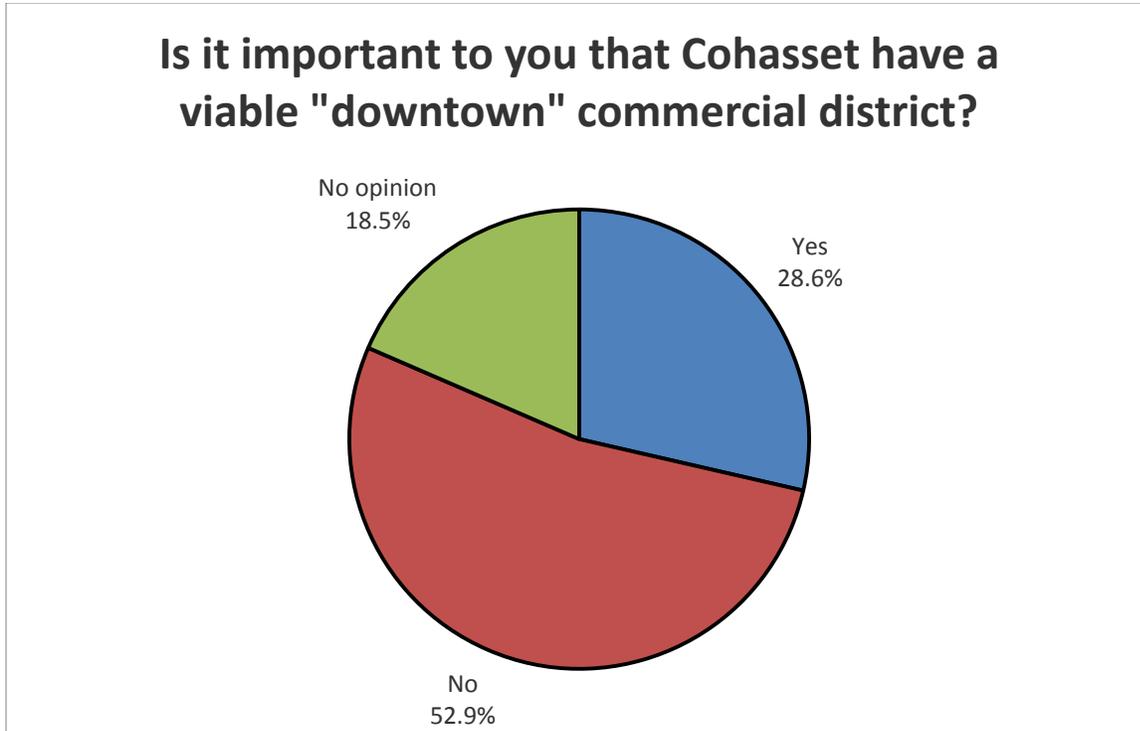
Respondents to this question were more likely to rate the listed ideas as a good use of tax dollars than on the previous two questions. The ideas with the most responses calling them a good use of tax dollars were “Focus on road maintenance, not expansion” (71.8 percent of all respondents); “Fix dangerous intersections and blind corners or curves” (66.8); “Widen road lanes or shoulders where traffic is heaviest” (40.9); and “Invest in pedestrian safety along roads without sidewalks or trails” (40.8).

No plurality of respondents identified any idea as a bad idea. However, three ideas had a plurality of respondents call them low priorities (with a sizable chunk also labeling them bad ideas). These were “Expand the road system into undeveloped areas” (50.2 percent said this was a low priority; 22 percent a bad idea); “Create new public transportation options (buses, vans)” (40.3; 25.5); and “Take public ownership of and maintain private roads upon petition of landowners” (39.7; 23.5).



**Question 14 – Is it important to you that Cohasset have a viable “downtown” commercial district?**

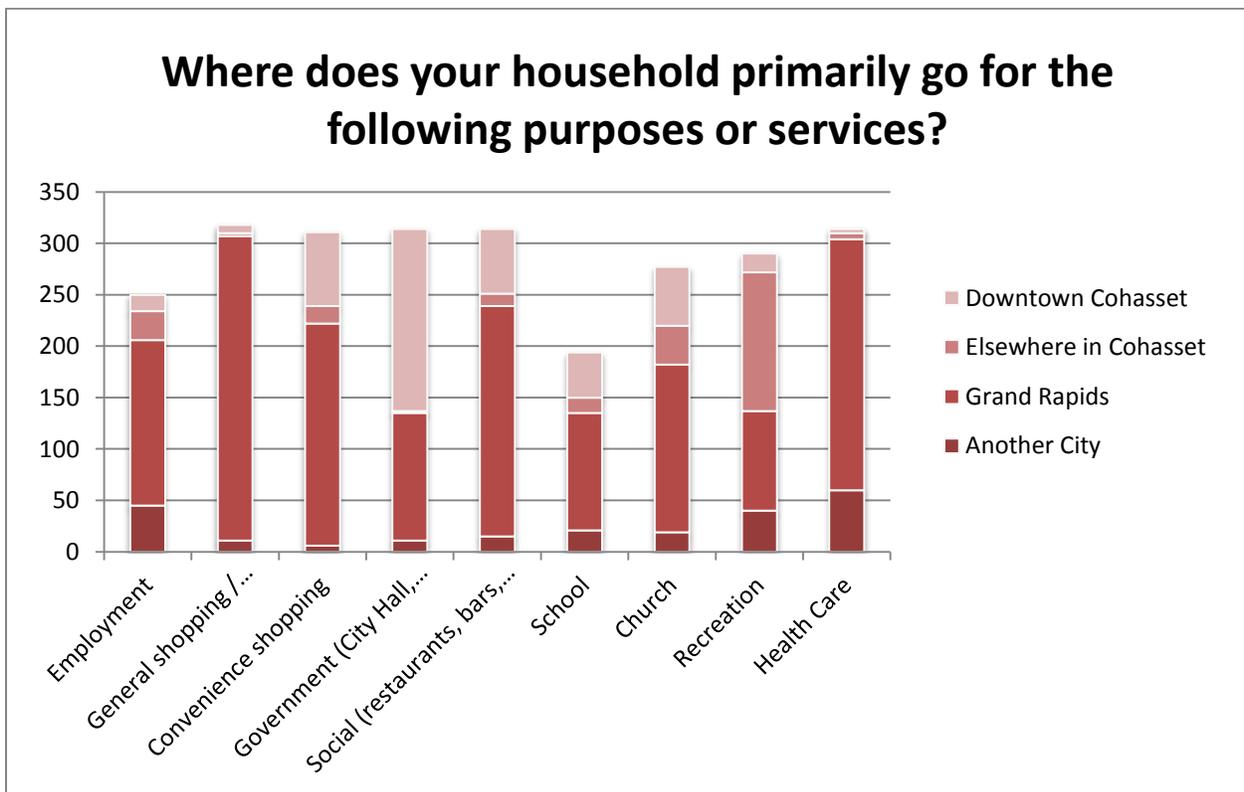
A majority of respondents (52.9 percent) said that it is *not* important that Cohasset have a viable downtown commercial district. 28.6 percent answered yes, while 18.5 percent had no opinion.



**Question 15 – Where does your household primarily go for the following purposes or services?**

- *Employment*: most respondents (64.4 percent) work in Grand Rapids or another city outside Cohasset (18 percent).
- *General shopping and services*: a vast majority (93.1) of respondents shop in Grand Rapids.
- *Convenience shopping*: most respondents (69.5) go to Grand Rapids. About one quarter (23.2) go to downtown Cohasset.
- *Government (City Hall, Post Office)*: a slightly majority (56.4) of respondents travel to downtown Cohasset. Most of the rest (39.5) go to Grand Rapids.
- *Social (restaurants, bars, movies, entertainment services)*: Grand Rapids again serves as the primary destination for these purposes (71.3 percent of respondents).
- *School*: 58.8 percent of respondents travel to Grand Rapids for school, though 22.7 percent go to downtown Cohasset, and 10.8 percent visit another city.
- *Church*: 58.8 percent of respondents travel to Grand Rapids for church. 20.6 percent attend church in downtown Cohasset.
- *Recreation*: 46.6 percent stay within Cohasset, but outside downtown. A third (33.4) of respondents travel to Grand Rapids.
- *Health Care*: a majority (77.7) go to Grand Rapids for health care. 19.1 percent travel to another city. Only 3.2 percent of respondents stay within Cohasset for this need.

Apart from government and recreation related trips, Cohasset residents and property owners opt to visit Grand Rapids for most needs.



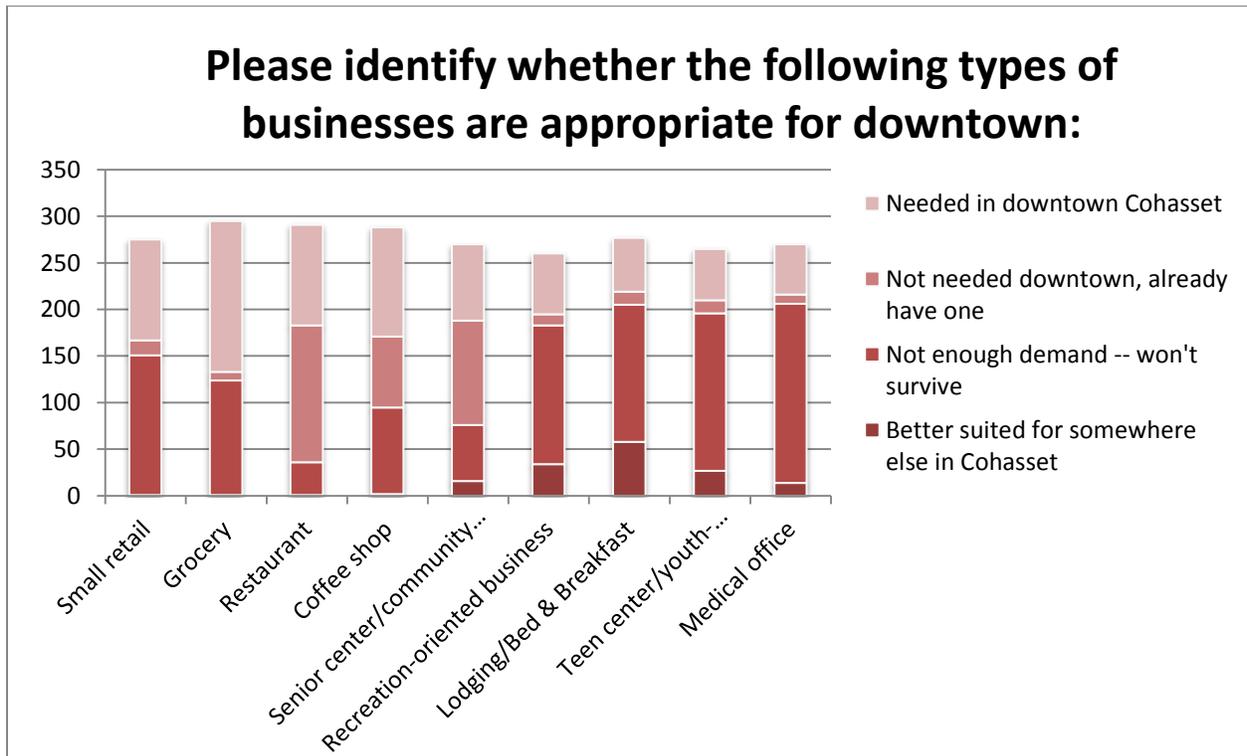
**Question 16 -- Please identify whether the following types of businesses are appropriate for downtown Cohasset:**

At least one-fifth of all respondents said each item listed was needed in downtown Cohasset (ranging from 20 percent to 54.9 percent). Still, over half the types of businesses or services listed had a majority of respondents claim they would not survive due to insufficient demand – these were medical office (71.1 percent said it would not survive); recreation-oriented business (57.3); teen center/youth-oriented business (63.8); small retail (54.5); and lodging/bed and breakfast (53.1).

A majority of respondents (54.9 percent) did think a grocery store is needed in downtown Cohasset, and a plurality (40.6) believes a coffee shop is also needed.

*Other (please specify):*

- We are open to ANY businesses coming but no "must have..."
- A medical office may or may not survive. I believe some would use a small urgent care clinic type setting but would go either to Deer River or Grand Rapids for emergencies
- Hardware store (4 responses)
- Camping facilities
- Gas station for more competition
- Thrift store
- More grocery options. A coffee shop would be so wonderful and another restaurant like subway would be cool too!
- A stand-alone community center would be better than the space at the P.O.

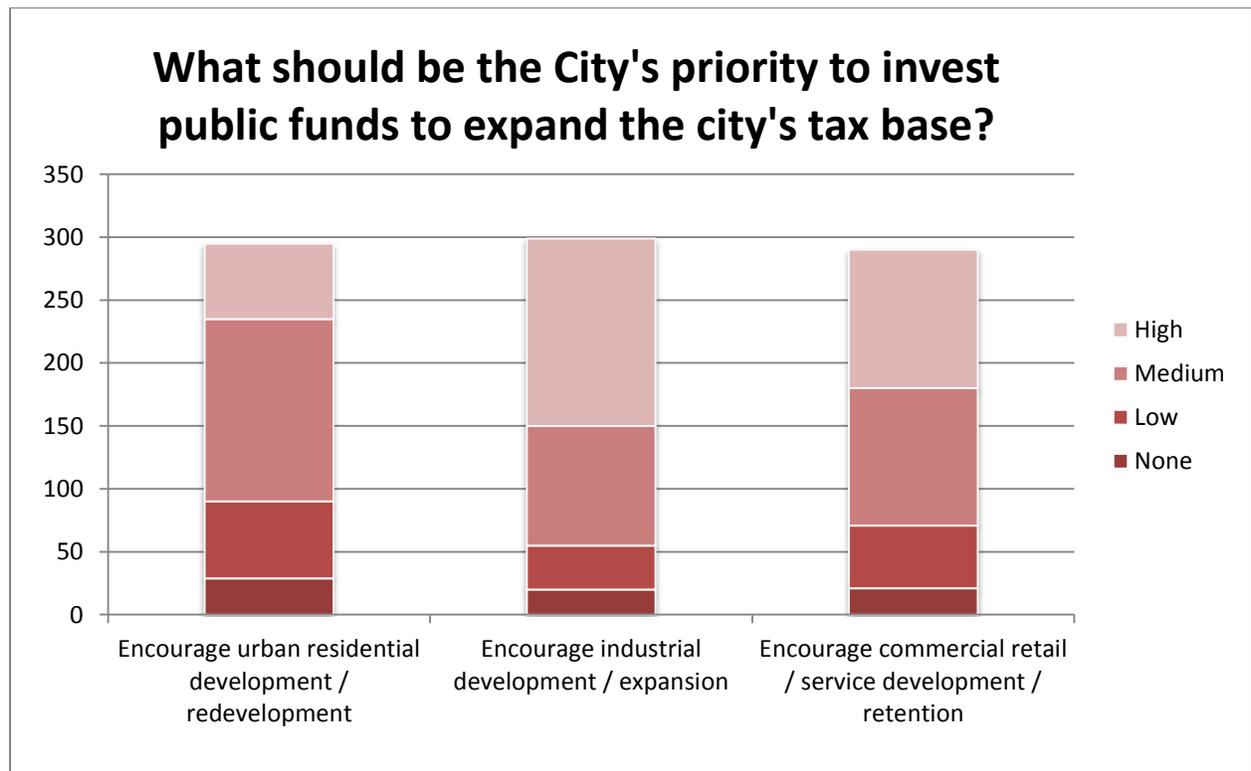


**Question 17 -- What should be the City's priority to invest public funds to expand the city's tax base?**

Half of all respondents (49.8 percent) saw “Encourage industrial development/expansion” as a high priority. “Encourage commercial retail/service development/retention” received an even split of support between high (37.9 percent) and medium (37.6) priority. Half (49.2) also viewed “Encourage urban residential development/redevelopment” as a medium priority.

*Other (please specify):*

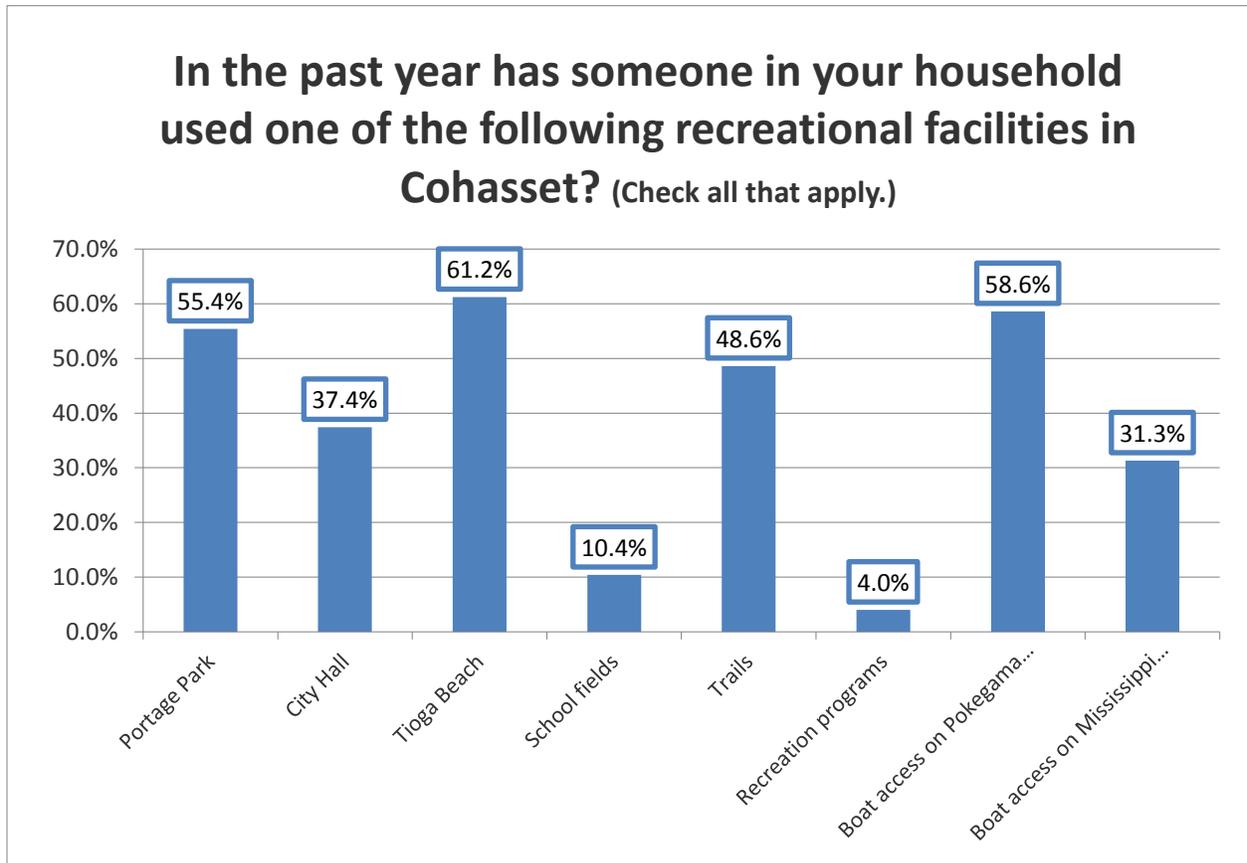
- Use of public funds for the above does not produce net profit for the city and therefore is not cost effective
- We should encourage but not subsidize
- Build on smaller lots, increase density
- Recreation/tourism
- Reasonable priced grocery is needed
- Stop spending and won't need more taxes
- Taxes are high enough for what we receive
- Keep bureaucracy and fees low, they will continue to come
- No expansion needed
- Control spending for lower taxes



**Question 18 -- In the past year has someone in your household used one of the following recreational facilities in Cohasset? (Check all that apply.)**

Four facilities were used by high numbers of survey respondents: Tioga Beach (61.2 percent); the boat access on Pokegama Lake (58.6); Portage Park (55.4); and the trail system in Cohasset.

The least-used recreational facilities were recreation programs (4 percent) and school fields (10.4).



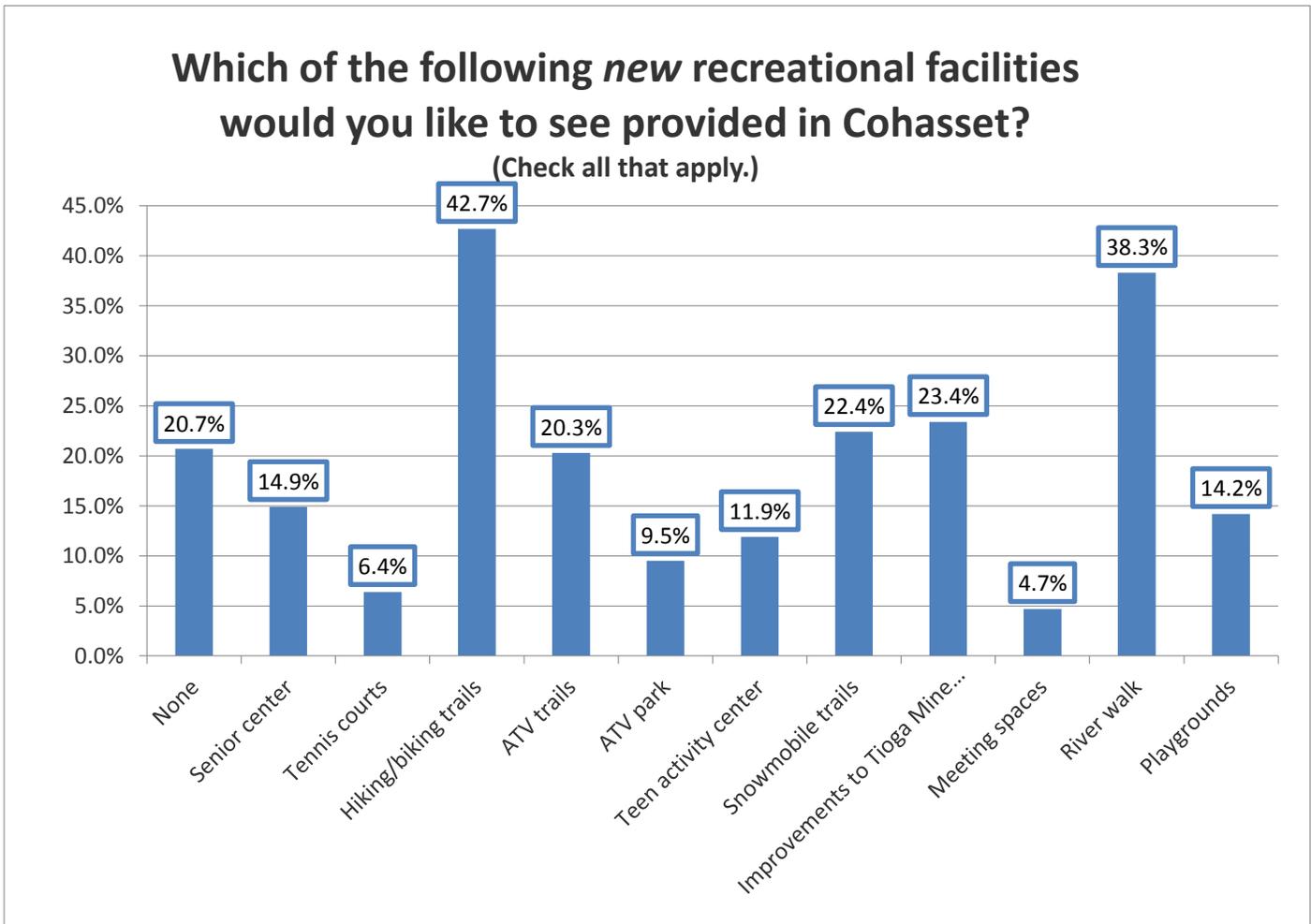
**Question 19 -- Which of the following *new* recreational facilities would you like to see provided in Cohasset? (Check all that apply.)**

Two new recreational facility ideas were quite popular for respondents; hiking and biking trails (42.7 percent), a river walk (38.3). Several other ideas generated somewhat less interest - improvements to the Tioga Mine property (23.4): snowmobile trails (22.4%; and ATV trails (20.3%). The least popular new recreational facility ideas were meeting spaces (4.7 percent), tennis courts (6.4), and an ATV park (9.5).

A significant percentage of respondents thought that no new recreational facilities were needed (20.7 percent of respondents answered “none”).

*Other (please specify):*

- We need a snowmobile trail from Pokegama Lake to downtown Cohasset
- City camp ground for RVs
- County road 76 biking/walking trail connect to golf course road/isle view trail
- Maintain what we have - it's great now!
- A snowmobile trail to get snowmobilers to STOP running through our yards on river road, cohasset!
- Improved parking for Mississippi river boat access
- Sidewalk from park to 62
- Boat landing
- I think we are good for now, use the money to help what we have
- Extended campgrounds
- Walking trail along Tioga beach road



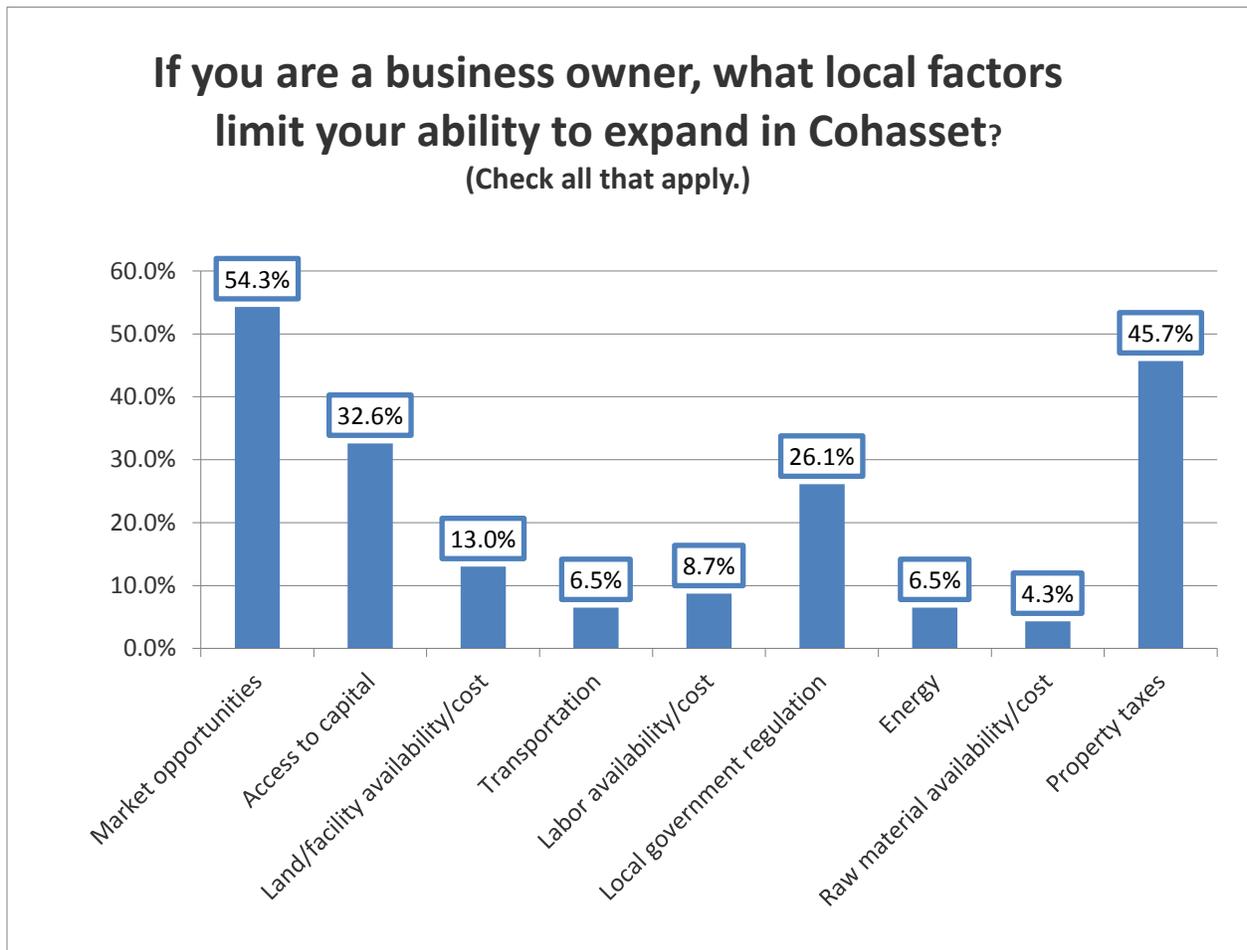
**Question 20 -- If you are a business owner, what local factors limit your ability to expand in Cohasset? (Check all that apply.)**

This question received 46 responses. The top three local limiting factors for expansion cited by responses were “Market opportunities” (54.3 percent), “property taxes” (45.7), and “access to capital” (32.6). Nine respondents answered that there were no local limiting factors.

Because of the lower number of responses, some additional care should be taken in assuming that the question’s results are representative of the business community.

*Other (please specify):*

- restrictive zoning codes
- no local limiting factors (9 responses)
- taxes are too high
- Limited market
- none
- sufficient in Grand Rapids
- it looks like a dump along highway 2



**Question 21 – Are the above policies fair? Who should pay for...**

A majority of respondents believe that current policy is fair for each area, by the following margins:

- *Rebuilding/maintaining public roads*: 89.1 percent.
- *Building new roads*: 64.4 percent.
- *Rebuilding/maintaining water/sewer mains*: 65 percent.
- *Extending (new) water/sewer mains*: 56.2 percent.
- *Paying for street/road lights*: 74.8 percent.
- *Installing new street/road lights*: 70.2 percent.

