

## NEW AND EXPANDED SCHOOL FACILITIES

Carver County is one of the fastest growing counties in the region. Its population has doubled since 1990 and is now over 100,000 citizens. Within this time, **Waconia's** population also doubled. This growth has led to increased student enrollment in the **Waconia School District** from about 1,800 to about 4,000 students in last 15 years.

In support of this growth, Waconia has worked with the School District on new and expanded school facilities and made associated changes to the City's Comprehensive Plan. The new school facilities will support existing and new households and provide improved road and pedestrian connections.

## WHAT MAY HELP OTHER COMMUNITIES?

### Comprehensive Plan Discussed School Capacity and Future Needs

Waconia's 2030 Comprehensive Plan (Plan) indicated that existing schools were reaching capacity. The Plan also discussed future coordination with the School District on a future high school and elementary school. It also identified general future school facility needs, potential timing and transportation connections, and included considerations for when future sites would be evaluated.

### Adapting to Change and Timelines

The process of planning and evaluating new school sites in Waconia occurred prior to a referendum being passed, which approved construction of a new elementary school building as well as flipping the existing middle and high school buildings. The switch in schools will include repurposing the existing Clearwater Middle School for use as the new Waconia High School (about a third of the cost of a new school), on the west side of town. This would create an expanded school campus with athletic field expansion, stormwater ponding, and new access to Highway 5.

After the referendum passed, the process and **projects moved quickly** with hopes of a new elementary school opening in less than two years. The new school site was located on east side of the Lake Waconia, which has many natural amenities and is where future residential growth in the city is anticipated.

The school facilities projects had both aggressive timelines as well as many project components. The City worked with the school site location, annexed property from

## COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT

**COUNTY:** Carver  
**POPULATION:** 11,480

### Waconia:

- has a small town feel.
- is home to several buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- amenities such as Golf Course, wineries, breweries, and distillery, as well as parks and natural areas.
- has annexed parts of Laketown Township.

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### OTHER RESOURCES:

- Carver County
- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Waconia School District
- Continued collaboration with multiple stakeholders



Laketown Elementary is a new elementary school in Waconia that opened within a two-year time period.



Clearwater Middle School is currently being reconfigured into the new Waconia High School, which will have new athletic fields.



The existing Waconia High School will become Clearwater Middle School once construction of the new Waconia High School is completed.

adjacent townships, adjusted forecasted growth, and completed comprehensive plan amendments, traffic studies, permits and more. Within less than two years, the new 650-student Laketown Elementary opened and the process of flipping and reconfiguring the Clearwater Middle School into the new [Waconia High School](#) and the former high school into the middle school is underway and anticipated to be complete by the fall of 2017.

### Coordination with the School District

With [school projects](#), the City staff met multiple times a month with the School District. The School District and the City worked on different elements needed for the new and expanded school facilities – and there was tremendous benefit to learning what each other was doing. City staff met multiple times a month, many times weekly, with the School District’s project team, which included key School District staff and their design team. With these efforts, both learned from the efficiencies of coordination and the areas that would benefit from more time in the future.

### Collaboration and Opportunities

The new and expanded school facilities projects included collaboration on how the school facilities changes affected transportation corridors, and ways to provide road and access improvements and pedestrian connections.

The City and school district worked together on the new [Laketown Elementary](#) to improve roads for further access and to implement a trail segment that runs through the school property to connect to Lake Waconia Regional Park. This partnership will improve access and pedestrian connections in the City.

For the expanded high school campus, the City and School District collaborated with MnDOT and Carver County to improve access on Highway 5, including safe connections to existing and planned roadway and pedestrian networks while minimizing impacts on water resources. The improvement of Highway 5 included the construction of a roundabout and construction of a segment of county road extending to the north to improve congestion and access to the school project. The county road segment will link Highway 5 and County Road 10 and will serve as a significant access to the School District campus, while allowing additional pedestrian and traffic circulation on the west side of the community. In addition, plans also included a pedestrian underpass that better connects the high school and future athletic fields.



Construction photos of Clearwater Middle School transition and expansion into the new Waconia High School. The left photo in the middle row illustrates the expansion of CSAH 10 and a new roundabout that will create better access to roads and the school.