

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan (Plan) provides an opportunity to establish a vision for how North St. Paul will evolve over the coming decades. The Plan is intended to reflect the desires of the entire community. It analyzes various topics related to development including land use, housing and neighborhoods, economic development, active living, the downtown, transportation, utilities, and parks among others. This Plan aims to build off the goals and policies identified the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, the City's Strategic Plan, and previous planning efforts so that momentum may be continued.

Minnesota Statute requires that cities within the seven-county Metropolitan Area update their comprehensive plans every 10 years. Comprehensive plans are reviewed by the Metropolitan Council, which is responsible for managing and planning for the growth of the Twin Cities region. The purpose of the update is to ensure that local plans are consistent with forecasts and policy plans prepared by the Metropolitan Council. In addition, regularly updating the Comprehensive Plan allows for communities to adjust their goals based on emerging trends and changing demographic needs.

A comprehensive plan does not ensure any change by itself. It is the basis by which elected officials, commission members, city staff, and other stakeholders make informed decisions related to official controls, such as the zoning and subdivision ordinance, as well as guide future investment through the capital improvement plan. As such, it is an important document in shaping the city's future and should be referenced regularly.

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

The Plan is meant to be a living document, grounded in real challenges and opportunities. It is meant to be revisited often and revised as conditions change. The City will use the continuous input of the public, whether through formal or informal means to make sure that the vision, goals, and policies are still relevant.

Based on the priorities voiced in through public input; demographic, physical, social, and economic changes affecting the City; and the requirements of the Metropolitan Council, the Plan is divided into the following chapters:

2 – Community Profile

3 – Vision and Goals

4 – Land Use

5 – Housing

6 – Transportation

7 – Economic Development

8 – Downtown

9 – Resiliency

10- Parks and Open Space

11 – Water Resources

12 – Implementation

Each chapter includes an overview of the existing conditions related to the topic, related goals, a summary of “what we heard” from the public including common themes, and “for the future” action items.

The Community Profile chapter provides detailed background information regarding demographics, housing, economy, environment, transportation, and land use for the City of North St. Paul, Ramsey County, and in some cases comparable cities. This information can be used in the context of land use and development decisions, as well as a stand-alone document.

Traditionally, city leaders refer to the Comprehensive Plan when making decisions that affect the quality of life for all residents: deciding what uses should be allowed on a parcel of land; allocating resources for infrastructure investments; preserving and improving parks, open spaces, and trail connections. Appointed and elected officials also use the City’s Comprehensive Plan as a guide when making decisions with limited resources about land use, housing, transportation, equity, quality of life, and sustainability.

THRIVE 2040 OUTCOMES

The Metropolitan Council developed Thrive 2040 Outcomes as “lenses” through which we may view the city’s future. Each chapter of the Plan works to achieve a balance between the following Thrive 2040 Outcomes:

1. **Stewardship:** responsible management of natural and financial resources and making strategic investments in the future.

2. **Prosperity:** investing in infrastructure and amenities that attract and retain successful businesses, a talented workforce and, consequently, wealth.
3. **Equity:** connecting all residents to opportunity. This includes viable housing, transportation and recreation opportunities.
4. **Livability:** creating and renewing vibrant places and underlying infrastructure that build community identity; investing in parks and affordable housing; and collaborating with neighbors.
5. **Sustainability:** protecting regional vitality for generations to come. This includes promoting wise use of water; climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience efforts.

PLANNING HISTORY

North St. Paul Strategic Plan

In 2013 (and updated in 2017), the City of North St. Paul began an effort to establish a consensus-based direction for the City in order to actively pursue implementation strategies to achieve that direction. The process engaged City staff, department heads and City Council members. The Plan identified six major themes and translated them into measurable strategies, goals and action steps. The Strategic Plan is a means for the City Council to ensure that resources are applied in an optimal manner.

2030 Comprehensive Plan

The 2030 Comprehensive Plan casts the city's vision for overall development and covers various topics including:

- Residential
- Transportation
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Economic Development
- Community Facilities
- Parks, Open Space, and Trails
- Utilities

Goals and policies contained in each chapter provide a framework for how the vision of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan can be achieved. As part of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan update, many of the goals and strategies from the 2030 Comprehensive Plan were analyzed and incorporated or amended as applicable so that momentum may be continued. The 2030 Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the City Council on October 21, 2008.

Redevelopment Master Plan

Because the City of North St. Paul is fully developed, renewal and redevelopment is a key focus. The Redevelopment Master Plan (2012) seeks to identify ways to improve the connection between potential redevelopment sites, downtown North Saint Paul, the Gateway Trail, regional transit systems and community facilities. The approach taken included defining the context of potential redevelopment sites, understand what is desired, and explore the possibilities. The planning process plays an important role in explaining and defining the future so residents, businesses, and developers know how the area around them is anticipated to evolve.

The Redevelopment Master Plan has a strong focus on the downtown area, which is the traditional commercial hub of North St. Paul. The Plan recognizes that revitalization focuses on redevelopment, reuse of land, encouraging denser development, and creatively fitting new pieces into the existing fabric of the community.

Living Streets Plan

The Living Streets Plan (2011) was created in partnership with the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District to attempt to address the water quality problems facing North St. Paul. The name “living streets” was chosen because it connotes a street where people are active and nature is accommodated. The Living Streets Plan seeks to create streets where all types of transportation are safely accommodated. Additionally, emphasis is placed on using the streets and right of way as a means of impacting the environment positively. Recommendations of the Living Streets Plan include stormwater management practices within the public right of way, bike and pedestrian safety improvements, traffic calming, non-motorized connectivity and urban forestry.

Downtown Design Manual

The Downtown Design Manual (2005, update in 2017-2018) was created to illustrate portions of the North St. Paul Code of Ordinance and to clearly depict the desired built environment within the North St. Paul Downtown District. It also was developed to communicate, facilitate, educate, guide, and inform the reader about the design review process and regulations contained within the North St. Paul Code of Ordinance. The Manual also provides business owners and potential developers tangible ideas that can be applied in North St. Paul’s downtown to improve the potential for economic viability, and make the commercial district a welcome atmosphere for pedestrians. The Manual is used by the City’s Design Review Commission to review projects within the Downtown Mixed Use district. It is also used by staff to work with business owners and developers to provide predictability as to the look and feel of the Downtown.