

Introduction and Summary

Purpose and Content of this Plan

The purpose of this plan is to serve as a general guide for physical planning of the City of Minnetonka. It is a product of community participation, past policies and current trends or conditions. The plan provides policy guidance in the areas of land use, transportation, parks, housing, utilities and economic development.

The Land Use Plan, which is the basis for the zoning ordinance, addresses local needs and aspirations while striving to fulfill regional planning goals set for the City. The Transportation Plan reflects coordination with the plans and programs of Hennepin County, the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Council. Likewise, the Sanitary Sewer System Plan has been coordinated with Metropolitan Council Environmental Services.

While this plan is first and foremost a tool to serve local needs, it has also been crafted with an eye toward Minnetonka's role in the larger region. Thus, the plan supports the *Regional Blueprint* of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Council, fulfills the mandate of bringing the existing city comprehensive plan into conformance with those regional policies and forecasts, and satisfies the content requirements of the Metropolitan Land Planning Act, as amended in 1995.

This plan was prepared during 1998 with the leadership of the Comprehensive Plan Citizen Committee. The City Council appointed a committee of representatives from the City Council, several City advisory commissions, residents and a developer. The committee was aided by City staff and consultants. The committee conducted numerous meetings with citizens to identify issues and aspirations, review proposals and hear comments. The Citizen Committee made special efforts to reach out to potentially affected groups and neighborhood residents to ensure a high level of communication and promote consensus or consent. The City's newsletter and its cable television channel were also used to communicate upcoming meetings and general plan proposals.

Overall Community Goals

The following statements, which are the most central, fundamental and long-lasting expressions of Minnetonka's intentions, have guided the preparation of the *Comprehensive Plan*.

Community Vision

Minnetonka ... Where quality comes naturally. Minnetonka will be the community of choice where people come together to live, work, and play in a naturally beautiful environment. As we work to preserve our quality neighborhoods and provide exceptional City services, we will always be aware of the delicate balance between the need for urban services and the importance of protecting and managing our natural surroundings.

Organizational Mission

Our exceptional staff will provide effective, efficient and innovative municipal services to our residents and businesses.

Strategic Goals

1. We will vigorously protect and manage our natural surroundings.

We treasure Minnetonka's natural environment. Our lakes and creeks, woods and wetlands, wildlife, trails and parks are precious to us and will be carefully managed so they can be enjoyed by future generations.

2. We will work to maintain a feeling of safety and security.

We work diligently to maintain the safety of our residents, workers and visitors. We share a feeling of personal safety in our homes, businesses, and recreation areas because of strong community involvement and our commitment to providing effective public safety services.

3. We will support well-planned, reasonable development.

We recognize that our community will change and evolve. As such changes occur, we strive to balance the rights of individual property owners to undertake reasonable development of their property with the desire of the wider community to preserve our natural environment and surroundings. Our goal is to achieve such a balance through appropriate and fair, yet aggressive development standards.

4. We will foster open communications.

We strive to provide opportunities for all members of the community to be involved in the decisions of the City. We actively listen to and care about what the people of our City say. We work hard to build a climate of integrity and trust by providing timely, accurate, and useful information to the community.

5. We will be careful stewards of our financial resources.

We continuously strive to increase the value of the services we provide. We make spending decisions based on short-term and long-term considerations which respond to our community's needs in the most productive and effective manner possible.

6. We will be responsible metropolitan citizens.

We recognize the City of Minnetonka's role as a leader within the greater metropolitan community. Because of the interdependent nature of our region, we actively promote the partnerships, which are needed to maintain the area's health and vitality.

7. We will embody a proud past and a promising future.

We honor Minnetonka's historic setting and cultural heritage. We also know that today's community strength is a product of a thriving business community and a healthy supply of life cycle housing. As we plan for the future, we will preserve our heritage and history while working to maintain and strengthen our commercial and residential resources.

8. We will encourage community involvement to strengthen our social fabric.

We encourage active citizen involvement, which enhances Minnetonka's strong neighborhoods and recognizes its diverse interests. We support the vitality of a wide variety of community and religious organizations, schools and businesses.

9. We will provide appropriate, effective and exceptional City services.

We develop an organizational climate, which fosters teamwork, continuous improvement in service delivery and a consistent focus on excellent service.

Summary of Plan Recommendations

Land Use

Since most of Minnetonka is developed and not in need of redevelopment, the plan review process focused on a few locations chosen based on their size, their proximity to major roadways, their suitability for higher densities or intensities, and market pressure for land use change. After extensive discussion among Citizen Committee members and the public, only a few carefully crafted changes to the pattern of development are recommended. Locations of change include the vicinity of the following intersections. For a full description of each location, see the “Special Area Plans” section of the Land Use Plan.

- **Minnetonka Boulevard and Highway 101:** Improve the streetscape and access pattern at this intersection. Encourage redevelopment at all four quadrants, especially northeast, to include shared access and new commercial and office uses, possibly mixed with housing.
- **Highways 101 and 7:** Improve the streetscape and enhance pedestrian access, especially in the southwest quadrant (Hutchins Drive). Encourage redevelopment of the southeast quadrant with mixed commercial and office uses, as well as high-density housing.
- **Glen Lake Station - Excelsior Boulevard and Eden Prairie Road:** Re-guide the residential neighborhoods south of Excelsior Boulevard to remain in a low-density use. Establish zoning controls to discourage piecemeal development, avoid multiple new driveways and maintain lake views in the area east of Eden Prairie Road. Continue to make streetscape improvements in commercial districts south of Excelsior Boulevard.
- **Highway 7 between Woodhill Road and Wilson Street:** Manage access from Highway 7 to frontage parcels. Continue the existing pattern of commercial, office and medium-density residential development between Williston Road and Wilson Street, while restricting the south side of Highway 7 west of Williston Road to low-density residential use, with requirements for centralized access.
- **Shady Oak Road and Excelsior Boulevard:** Undertake an urban design study in cooperation with the City of Hopkins to rationalize City boundaries and set design guidelines for pedestrian-oriented mixed use redevelopment.
- **Minnetonka Boulevard and Highway 169:** Encourage the intensification of land uses on the north side of Minnetonka Boulevard,

including commercial and office uses along the road frontage and high-density housing and/or office development to the north along Highway 169. South of Minnetonka Boulevard, encourage expansion and enhancement of open space areas, with improved access to Minnehaha Creek.

- **Northridge and Southridge Roads:** Allow redevelopment of this neighborhood to medium-density housing, to act as a transition zone between the intense commercial uses along I-394 and the residential neighborhoods to the north. As part of any redevelopment plan, centralize and improve the access to Plymouth Road.
- **Coren's Drive and Sunset Road Area:** Guide a small area of single-family homes adjacent to commercial and high-density development for medium-density housing.
- **Ridgedale Drive and Dwight Lane:** Guide a small site for limited office development or medium-density housing, as a transition between service commercial uses along Ridgedale Drive and the low-density residential neighborhood to the south.
- **County Road 73 to Wilshire Drive (north):** Allow redevelopment of this low-density residential area, north of the Crescent Ridge office complex, to medium-density housing, with limited, centralized access to Plymouth Road and protection of steep slopes and wetlands.
- **County Road 73 and I-394, Southeast Quadrant:** Allow redevelopment of this low-density residential area just south of the I-394 frontage road to low-intensity office use.

The Land Use Plan will accommodate approximately another 2,200 households and another 9,000 jobs by the year 2020.

Transportation

As Minnetonka continues to move toward full development and nearby communities also continue to grow, the traffic demands on the City's arterial and collector roads continue to increase. The Transportation Plan analyzes road capacities in light of forecasted changes and recommends numerous improvements by 2020. Many of these are already programmed in the budgets of the City, Hennepin County or the Minnesota Department of Transportation based on previous studies. (Refer to Table 4-7 on page 4-31.) However, the plan also suggests unprogrammed improvements to several County Road segments and Highway 7 that might be needed to serve meet 2020 traffic. (Refer to Table 4-8 on page 4-32.)

The level of congestion of the future metropolitan highway system depends in large measure on the capacity improvements undertaken, the availability of a local arterial system to complement and relieve the regional system, and the amount of development occurring in adjacent communities and beyond. The minor arterial system within the City of Minnetonka is adequate to complement the regional system, given the completion of improvement projects proposed by Mn/DOT and the Metropolitan Council.

Parks, Open Space and Trails

This section of the plan examines the City's existing parks, open space and trails systems, identifies needs for additional facilities or improved access to facilities, and makes recommendations for improvements. These recommendations will be supplemented in the next few years by the recommendations of the Open Space Preservation Task Force and the results of a needs analysis study of park and recreational facilities, to be undertaken in 1999. Current major recommendations include the following:

- Continue to make improvements such as canoe landings, interpretative stations, parking, paths, picnic areas and wildlife habitat enhancements within the Minnehaha Creek Preserve and other open space preserves.
- Continue natural resource restoration and management efforts in local parks.
- Continue to improve and extend the Loop Trail System.

Housing

The Housing Plan updates the City's 1995 Livable Communities Action Plan, in which the City agreed upon goals for addition of affordable housing and rental housing. The Plan describes the City's progress toward these goals and outlines programs and actions that the City will continue to pursue.

These are Minnetonka's goals for low- or moderate-income households between 1996 and 2010: build 180 for-sale housing units; build 324 affordable rental units; provide homebuyer assistance for 90 households (10 provided between 1996 and 1998); rehabilitate 120 owner-occupied units (43 completed); build 89 family rental units (83 completed); build 90 rental units for senior citizens and those with special needs; increase the number of property owners who accept Section 8 rent assistance certificates; and rehabilitate two rental apartment buildings (one in progress in 1998).

Sanitary Sewer System

Minnetonka's sanitary sewer system is fully built and only minor improvements and regular maintenance are required. The system was sized to accommodate a larger population than is presently forecast. The City's total outflow has historically been and should continue to be less than the amount allocated by the Metropolitan Council.

Water System

Minnetonka's water demand will continue to rise with the population and the intensity of non-residential development. Fortunately the system has sufficient pumping, filtration and storage capacity to accommodate this growth because of prudent planning in the past. The plan does recommend several minor improvements to the system, describes a water conservation plan and improvements to the emergency response procedures.

Economic Development Plan

The City will continue its current policies and programs. These involve primarily providing occasional assistance (principally tax increment financing) for leveraging private investment in rental and lower-cost housing.

Intergovernmental Coordination

Minnetonka will continue to work in cooperation with many other units of government and private non-profit organizations to deliver services or facilities and reduce costs.

Plan Implementation

Only a few changes to the City's current practices or ordinances are needed to implement this plan:

- Rezone land consistent with the land use plan
- Create overlay districts or planned development districts where needed to implement the Special Area Plans.
- Revise the wording of the zoning ordinance to state that any residential land use that is made non-conforming by rezoning the land to a higher density residential classification shall not be prohibited from expansion nor shall it be prohibited from being rebuilt if destroyed.
- Create a Service Commercial zoning district.
- Conduct an urban design study of the Shady Oak Road corridor in cooperation with the City of Hopkins.

- Amend the zoning ordinance to clarify that no density credit will be provided for land under water.

Many other implementation activities are already underway.