

Chapter I. Strategic Framework

Alice: “Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go?”

Cheshire Cat: “That depends on where you want to get to.”

Alice: “I don’t much care where...”

Cheshire Cat: “Then it doesn’t matter which way you go.”

– *From Lewis Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland*

A. Introduction

Unlike Alice and the Cheshire Cat, the city of Minnetonka and its residents care where the city is going, and how it’s going to get there. For that reason, Minnetonka began the process to update its comprehensive plan by first determining current community values and then affirming its overall strategic vision and goals.

The strategic vision and goals are crucial in guiding the overall development of the plan since the vision and plan “set the stage” for the overall planning principles the city will use to guide public and private investments in the coming years. As values in the community change in the future, adjustment of the strategic vision and goals may be necessary. Therefore, it is critical that the city review the community values on a regular basis and adjust the strategic vision and goals, as needed.

B. Community Values

The process to affirm community values was conducted at the early stage of the development of the comprehensive plan to guide the formation of the plan’s goals and policies.

The avenues of feedback included the following outreach activities:

- * Community survey - a scientific random sample of 400 residents was conducted by Decision Resources Ltd. in March 2007
- * *Minnetonka Memo* - the city’s newsletter - postage-paid postcards were included in the March 2007 *Memo* and approximately 400 cards were returned from residents expressing their viewpoints about planning issues
- * *eminnetonka.com* - the city’s website included a snap poll about residents’ concerns about issues the city should focus on in the future
- * Survey of community leaders - city council and its advisory board members completed a survey in April 2007 about future issues
- * Work session of community leaders - the city council, advisory boards, steering committee and staff members met in a joint session in April 2007 to hear a presentation from the state demographer and state economist about Minnesota’s future and to discuss implications for Minnetonka

- * Community open house - residents were invited to an open house in April 2007 to learn about the comprehensive planning process and asked to list issues
- * Focus group - members of the city's 50th anniversary committee met on April 30, 2007; the group included business, school, and civic representatives. This group was asked to rate the importance of each of the city's community values.

The above activities resulted in a consistent message from Minnetonka residents related to five values of the city. Below is a synopsis of the comments for each value:

Natural Environment

By far the most highly rated value, a range of responses related to the natural environment were offered. Residents enjoy the city's natural setting, want to protect open space, and have an obvious desire to limit growth. City leaders are also concerned about growth, albeit more in the sense of managing, rather than limiting, the growth. An environmentally conscientious message was evident, with recommendations to "go green" and conserve energy.

Public Safety

Another very highly-rated value, residents and city leaders are content with the current quality, variety and community interaction with public safety services. Looking to the future, high satisfaction ratings with the city's handling of public safety would indicate the need for continued vigilance in providing sufficient resources for these services.

Transportation

Although not the most highly-rated value, roads and traffic are a concern to residents and leaders alike. Minnetonka continues to be viewed as part of a regional system. Especially of interest is the desire for a more "walkable" community, particularly given the shifting age demographics. The 50th anniversary focus group encouraged the use of light rail transit, noting provision of this service could result in the development of commercial nodes and more affordable housing options.

Development

Although residents highly value preserving open space, community leaders understand the need to balance this with the protection of individual property rights. Development issues center around the potential for in-fill development and increased density. The impact of an aging population means affordable life-cycle housing, both for seniors and young families, will be a critical need to consider.

Building Community

There is a strong awareness of the looming "silver tsunami", and a desire to prepare for the impacts on the community. The 50th anniversary focus group emphasized the need to partner with the schools to ensure their continued viability.

C. 2030 Strategic Vision and Goals

The Minnetonka vision for the community is as follows:

*Minnetonka...
where quality is our nature*

What will our community become?

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.

The following goals describe the initiatives the city will utilize to implement the vision:

- **Natural Environment**
 - * protect & improve our water resources & woodlands
 - * facilitate open space preservation
 - * respect the natural environment while managing growth
- **Public Safety**
 - * foster community involvement & individual responsibility
 - * enhance personal & business safety
 - * ensure hometown security by collaborating with others
- **Transportation**
 - * enhance resident & business mobility with quality roads & transit
 - * meet local & regional needs through leadership & collaboration
 - * expand & increase usability of infrastructure investments
- **Development**
 - * guide development & redevelopment to ensure community vitality
 - * balance individual property rights with the public interest
 - * promote use of green technology & sustainable development
 - * promote a quality and affordable life-cycle housing stock
- **Building Community**
 - * foster open communication within the community
 - * promote activities that encourage understanding & involvement
 - * embrace our proud past, while valuing diversity & inclusiveness

D. Public Involvement Framework

One of the key activities of the comprehensive plan update is public involvement. Successful and useful comprehensive plans are those where there is significant involvement in the development and review of the plan by elected and appointed officials, community organizations and the public.

The city council appointed a twelve-member steering committee to oversee the preparation of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan. The individual members of the steering committee include various city advisory commission members, business representatives and residents who reflect the city's demographics, various geographic areas, household make-up (seniors, empty-nesters, young families, singles, youth, etc.) and tenure in the city, from new to long-time residents. The steering committee met over a year and one-half, attended eighteen comprehensive guide plan meetings and several open houses, and participated in bus tours of the city.

Public Participation

A community involvement framework was developed by the city and utilized by the steering committee and staff in disseminating information and obtaining public comment on the comprehensive plan.

The Metropolitan Land Planning Act requires at least one public hearing before the city council, and the metropolitan council approves the draft comprehensive plan. In addition to the required public hearing, the steering committee's work program included several public open houses, reports to the city council, boards and commissions, and hosting several focus groups.

The following activities have been conducted to inform the public about the process to develop this comprehensive plan and to elicit comments and participation as the plan has been developed.

1. Public Open Houses

Open houses were held to present information reviewed by the steering committee and city policy groups, and to obtain feedback from the public. The open house format presented opportunities for the steering committee to meet directly with the public, display information and obtain opinions about a variety of topics. The steering committee work plan included the following public open houses:

- * November 8, 2007 - presentation of comprehensive plan development process, review background information, and draft issues and opportunities.
- * May 20 and 28 2008 - presentation of draft 2030 land use plan map, and comprehensive plan chapters.
- * July 22, 2008 (Public Hearing) - formal presentation of completed draft comprehensive plan and public comment

2. Board and Commission Involvement

The city council utilized several city boards and commissions (e.g., planning commission, economic development authority (EDA), park board) to review subject matter that the steering committee considered in developing the draft plan. The boards and commissions had the opportunity to review steering committee information and communicate their experiences with the subject matter to the committee.

The boards and commissions participated in the following activities to develop the comprehensive plan:

- * Reports at city advisory meetings - steering committee members or staff provided updates of steering committee activities at regular meetings.
- * The planning commission, EDA and park board attended specific steering committee meetings for discussion of common subjects.
- * Four study sessions were held with the steering committee and city council to review issues/opportunities and draft plans.

3. City Events

Information and opportunities for feedback were also presented at city sponsored events. For example, booths were prepared and staffed at the Burwell ice cream social in June, 2007 and 2008 and at the fire department/citywide open house in October, 2007. Additionally, “outreach” to the community regarding the comprehensive plan occurred at other community events.

Communications and Feedback

The following media provided vehicles for information dissemination to the public, and procedures were established to offer feedback and suggestions to the steering committee and city.

1. *Minnetonka Memo* - The *Memo* was utilized to update the public regarding the following milestones and information about the comprehensive plan:
 - * comprehensive plan kick-off article describing the plan process and introducing steering committee members
 - * monthly summaries of major comprehensive plan elements (community values, demographics, issues, etc.)
 - * advertisement of city open houses and other comprehensive plan events
2. Cable TV - the City’s cable TV public access channel (Channel 17) provided information about the comprehensive plan update, similar to the information included in the *Minnetonka Memo*.
3. Other media - periodic articles about the comprehensive plan were featured in the *Sun Sailor* and *Lakeshore Weekly News*
4. *eminnetonka.com* - The city’s web page included a link to a “dedicated” comprehensive plan page. The comprehensive plan page presented the following materials:
 - * a “front page” that includes the kick-off announcement,
 - * a listing of the steering committee members, meeting schedule, and meeting materials,
 - * video streaming of selected city meeting presentations,
 - * draft chapters and maps of the comprehensive plan, as they become available,
 - * a link to “Minnetonka Mike”, a feedback forum, for the public to send questions and comments to the steering committee.

Topical Focus Groups

Focus groups provided information and feedback to the steering committee and city about particular subject matters in the comprehensive plan. Focus groups were established for the following topics:

1. Housing (primarily senior and life cycle housing)
2. Business Roundtable (Twin West, Opus, Ridgedale, retail/office/industrial developers, etc.)
3. Senior Services (future services needed for changing demographics)
4. Staff Services Committee (review and discuss future city service needs)
5. Family Services (representatives from young families to discuss future needs)
6. Education/Social Services (Hopkins, Minnetonka and Wayzata school districts and non-profit agencies serving needs of Minnetonka residents)

Geographic Focus Areas

Several geographical areas of the city required an in depth analysis of land uses, natural resources, aesthetics, market analysis and other factors. Some of the areas also benefited from a master design planning effort to provide direction to the city regarding the form and function of future urban development. These areas include:

1. I-394 Corridor/Ridgedale
2. Opus Redevelopment
3. TH 7 (CR 101 to I-494)
4. Minnetonka Boulevard/CR 101
5. Minnetonka Mills
6. Shady Oak Road
7. TH 169/Minnetonka Boulevard Gateway
8. Glen Lake Station

Efforts to study the focus areas included outside resource groups and participation by residents, city officials and other interested parties. The geographic focus area plans are included in the land use chapter of this plan.