Executive Summary

The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth is the City of Minneapolis' comprehensive plan and provides the vision and framework for the City's urban renaissance and growth as a great city of the future.

Why Plan?

This is a 2007 snapshot of the type of recognition Minneapolis receives:

- Recognized as the most affordable city in the nation
- Celebrated on the top ten lists of "smart", "cool" and "green" cities
- Ranked as a top business district in the country
- Noted as a design boomtown for its distinct and visionary architecture
- Lauded as a steward of its water resources
- Recognized nationally for its interconnected park systems, including lakes, trails and tree-lined streets
- Cited as the most athletic city in the country

Recognition like this does not happen by chance. It happens through deliberate actions and planning. Since the writing of the first comprehensive plan in 1954, the guide for Minneapolis' growth has been the comprehensive plan.

The *Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* is a deliberate title for this update to the 2000 comprehensive plan, indicating that as Minneapolis grows, its growth will be achieved in ways that promote our economic development, strengthen the social and cultural fabric of the city, and value our natural environment and livability while creating conditions for economic opportunity for current and future generations.

Minneapolis will achieve and exceed the Metropolitan Council's growth projections. Growing the core city is good for the region and the state because doing so contains urban sprawl, and the costs associated with sprawl. In addition, it enhances the livability and sustainability of Minnesota for current and future generations.

The goal of this plan is to demonstrate that Minneapolis is, and will remain the heart of the upper Midwest region in terms of residing and working, and a premiere destination for dynamic urban living. This plan moves the city forward. Indeed the city's motto is *En Avant*! – *Forward*!

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What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a statement of community goals and policies that direct the logical and coordinated physical development of a city into the future. The comprehensive plan looks to the future, anticipates change, and provides specific guidance for prospective legislative and administrative actions. It reflects the results of community engagement, technical analysis, and the judgment of decision-makers.

The maps, goals and policies of the plan provide the framework for adoption of regulations, programs, and services that implement the plan. The plan serves as a guideline for designating land uses and infrastructure investments, as well as providing and developing community services.

The typical lifespan for a comprehensive plan is ten years. Cities update their plans to reflect population growth, to capture new opportunities, and to adjust for changes in local or state laws and regulations. In the case of this update, population growth, new opportunities for development and redevelopment resulting from major capital investments like light rail, are the triggers.

Who Plans?

State statute provides the enabling power for the City of Minneapolis to plan for future growth and change within a regional context and as a unit of government. The Metropolitan Council provides the framework and context for shaping development of regional infrastructure in coordination with cities and local communities. This coordination ensures that growth occurs efficiently and is supported by investments in regional infrastructure, expanded housing choice within communities, and the conservation, protection and enhancement of natural resources in the region.

State statute also enables cities to establish planning functions. Cities are provided the power to create planning agencies or commissions by ordinance that act in an advisory capacity to the city council. Duties of the planning commission include: preparation and review of the comprehensive plan in coordination with other units and departments of government, and for providing recommendations to the city council for plan adoption and implementation. The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development is charged with the duties of developing and maintaining the comprehensive plan and its development controls with the advice of the city's Planning, Zoning, Heritage Preservation, and Arts commissions.

In addition, state statute contains the procedures enabling cities to adopt a comprehensive plan. City Council is the ultimate decision maker of planning, and is responsible for initiating plan reviews, considering commission recommendations, and adopting the comprehensive plan. The adoption process includes review by the Metropolitan Council, published notice, public hearing, and a required resolution of a two-thirds vote of all members of the City Council. To implement the plan, City Council subsequently adopts the city's budget, regulations, and programs, then levies taxes and makes the necessary appropriations.

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What is in This Plan?

This comprehensive plan is designed to be a functional and readable framework for the future growth of Minneapolis and fulfills the city's regional responsibilities for housing, transportation and regional parks and open space. The plan also demonstrates how the city of Minneapolis will meet the population growth projections allocated by the Metropolitan Council. The plan also shows that Minneapolis has the capacity to accommodate more of the region's projected growth, given the health and capacity of its infrastructure systems, essential public services, and land use plans. Minneapolis will grow and this plan is the framework for guiding that growth in an intended, livable and sustainable way.

This plan is organized into these basic components:

- Introduction, including the executive summary, community data profile, and summary of the community engagement process
- Topical chapters which contain policies and implementation steps, as well as a general implementation plan
- Supporting documents, including a series of appendices and a glossary of terms used in the plan

Each chapter features these elements: 1) Goal statement; 2) Context for the subject matter, 3) Policies, and 4) Implementation guidelines for achieving the goals of the chapter and the overall plan.

The *Land Use Chapter* describes land uses designations present in the City of Minneapolis with policies related to protecting, maintaining, revitalizing or developing the city's residential, commercial, industrial, transit station areas, and employment centers.

The *Transportation Chapter* is key to understanding the integration between land use and the city's multi-modal transportation system. The system includes access for pedestrians and bicycles, transit and rail service and automobiles.

The *Housing Chapter* incorporates policies about the mix and diversity of housing types ranging from duplexes and high rise condominiums to supportive housing and life-cycle housing, as well as post-war single-family ramblers and stately mansions.

The *Economic Development* chapter encourages land use designations and infrastructure investments to support commercial and industrial development, the hospitality industry, workforce readiness, and renewal by directing growth to targeted areas.

The *Public Services and Facilities Chapter* addresses infrastructure needed to serve planned land uses, essential government services, the relationship to other institutions like the public library system, and promoting community health.

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The *Environment Chapter* addresses sustainable development practices that project public health and maintain environmental quality.

The *Open Space and Parks Chapter* recaps the recently adopted Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board comprehensive plan and describes how various other types of open space enhance the city.

The *Heritage Preservation Chapter* considers the protection, conservation and enhancements to the traditional urban character of the city.

The *Arts and Culture Chapter* discusses cultural events and public art that enhance land use, public spaces and overall community livability.

The *Urban Design Chapter* considers the aesthetics, design and quality of the built environment, including the compatibility between different types of densities and land uses.

Citywide land use policies guide the development and interpretation of this comprehensive plan and the city's zoning code. To fully appreciate this plan's vision and how it will be realized, the Plan should be read as a whole.

How is the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth Implemented?

Adopting a comprehensive plan is the first step toward realizing the city's vision. The city's zoning code, along with other city policy documents and adopted plans, implements the comprehensive plan. Its purpose, in part, is to protect the public health, safety, aesthetics, economic viability and general welfare of the city; to protect the character and stability of residential, commercial and industrial areas within the city; and to promote the orderly and beneficial development of those areas.

The City of Minneapolis' implementation strategy for the comprehensive plan goes beyond the information required by statute and includes department business plans, funding programs, and planning tools and tactics. In addition to the Capital Improvement Program, for example, implementation of the comprehensive plan also includes the city's Sustainability Initiative, urban design guidelines, and strategies to preserve and enhance the historic and cultural resources of the city.

Updates to the comprehensive plan occur in accordance with state statute. Updates may also be triggered by changes in state law, changes in local conditions, or to address emerging needs and opportunities.

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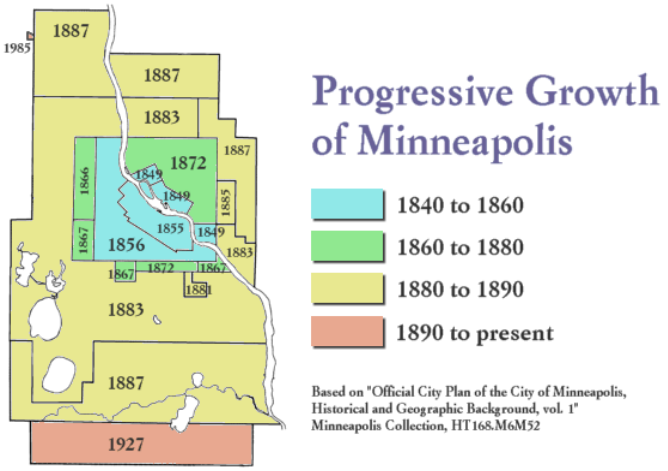
History of Planning in Minneapolis

The town of Minneapolis, founded in 1856 by the state legislature, became a city in 1866. At the time, the population was 3,000 and the city covered 24 square miles. Commerce centered on the Mississippi River. The first bridge spanning the river opened in 1855. City founders envisioned a gleaming urban mecca; the Paris of the west with wide promenades, stately tree-lined boulevards and streets, and a system of streetcars and water ferries supporting a population of 1 million people.



The progressive growth of the city from 1840 to present is reflected in its street grid and architecture. Source: City of Minneapolis

In 1880, the City was the 38th largest in the nation with a population of 46,887. During the late 1880's the Minneapolis Board of Trade created a system of parks and parkways connecting the lakes, creek and river, the genesis of a nationally recognized park system that helps maintain the vitality and sustainability of Minneapolis. Expansion of the national rail system set the stage for the city becoming an important transportation hub.

By 1910, the city's population sprouted to 300,000. Much of that growth was supported by significant investments in infrastructure, most notably the streetcar grid. The city's first zoning code was adopted in 1924. Residential development and neighborhood retail spread along lines traversing the city to the east and west, north and south.

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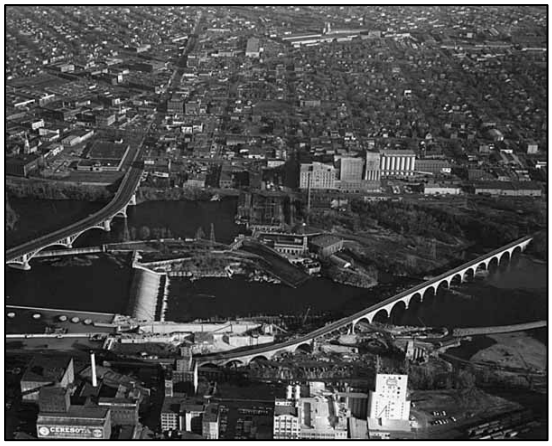
Minneapolis in the early 1950's. Looking west over the Mississippi River.
Source: MPL Archives

By 1950 the city reached its peak population of 521,718. The choice was: capture and deliberately plan for growth or let growth happen. City leaders chose to plan for growth, adopting the first comprehensive plan in 1954. Adoption of the Official Plan occurred the same year that the first open heart surgery was performed at the University of Minnesota, and the city's streetcars were replaced by buses. The city was facing new opportunities and challenges from increased car traffic and development of the regional freeway system.

Downtown Minneapolis in the early 1960's.
Source: MPL Archives

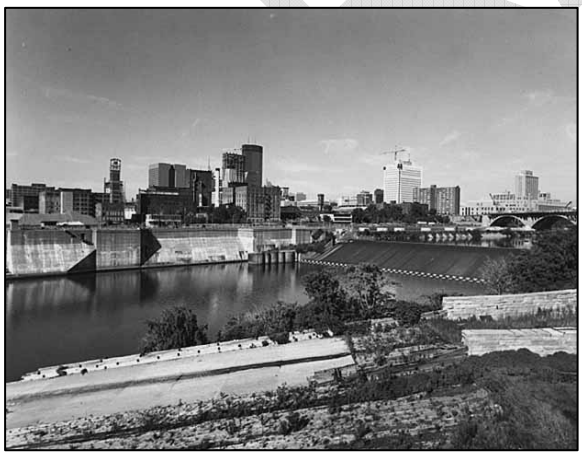
In the early 1960s a sense of urgency captured city and business leaders as business and residents chose to move outside of our city boundaries. The population began to decrease. In 1962, the year The Official Plan was updated, the population had dropped to 482,872 and the city was the 25th largest in the country. While

Minneapolis was still the heart of commerce and industry, many residents chose to commute to jobs in the city and live elsewhere.



Minneapolis looking to the northeast along Central Avenue
Source: MPL archives

In 1962, city leaders said that a plan was not only desirable, but necessary in order to: 1) manage demands on increasingly scare resources and achieve goals efficiently, 2) make sure social values are considered when allocating resources among competing uses, 3) provide a framework to coordinate complex private-public decisions, and 4) draw out majority interests, not just those of small interest groups. The 1962 land use map showed residential densities, the locations of parks and playgrounds, institutions, offices, commercial development, industry and warehouses, and considered the safety of pedestrians, and the flow of traffic along local streets, collectors and arterials.



The growing skyline of Minneapolis with the IDS Tower as the apex. Source: MPL Archives

By the 1980's, the city had passed through difficult times of decreasing population, weakening tax base and the social unrest of the 1960's and 1970's. Participants in the planning process were confident that the city would grow and be viewed as an

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exciting and attractive place to be, and a secure place to live and work. At the time that the Plan for the 1980's was written, the city's population was 370,951 and the city's share of the metropolitan area population had dropped from 49 percent in 1960 to 26 percent in 1980. In spite of this, citizens and civic leaders painted a canvass of striking change for the city including:

- New housing along the central riverfront
- Seven community –level commercial centers with medium or high-density housing adjacent to or part of the center
- Rehabilitation of the city's housing stock
- Protection of neighborhoods and historic districts
- Improvements in water quality, especially for Lake Nokomis, and
- New opportunities for entrepreneurs and job training in technical industries and health care.

Minneapolis today, a vibrant city that honors its past as it reaches to the future as the city of water. Source: MPL archives

The most recent update to the comprehensive plan was in 2000. The Minneapolis Plan included a vision for the city's future, eight goals and five core themes:

- Minneapolis is going to be a growing city
- Minneapolis will offer many choices to city residents
- Minneapolis will maintain its excellent quality of life
- Minneapolis will be a safe place to live work, and play

- Minneapolis will be a "people-oriented" city which values and respects its cultural and racial diversity, as well as the histories and traditions related to that diversity.

In 2000, our population was 382,000. Since then, we have made slow and steady gains in population, now 387,500, indicating that the vision and goals set forth in 2000 are valid and working.

The 2008 update to the Minneapolis Plan bolsters that progress with added emphasis on sustainability, commitment to honoring its historic resources and aspirations for dynamic urban living through urban design. This update includes policies, land use maps and the programs and strategies to implement the plan.

Minneapolis Today

Minneapolis is a world-class city recognized for its commitment to environmental stewardship and civic engagement, as well as for its livable neighborhoods, dynamic downtown, and strong corporate presence.

Heart of a Region

In terms of employment and transportation access, Minneapolis is the center of the upper Midwest and the 7-county metropolitan area. The city is strategically located at the nexus of a complex network of interstate, state and county highways, the first of several planned light rail lines connecting the metropolitan area, and the hub for a sophisticated transit system. By reinforcing its position, the city can concentrate growth in its boundaries, preserve neighborhoods, emphasize access, protect natural environments and critical areas, and provide affordable housing.

Resilient and Diversified Economy

Over 150,000 people are employed in downtown Minneapolis alone. Through its planning for employment centers and targeted industries the city accommodates and welcomes employment and business growth.

With proximity to institutions of research and higher learning, like the University of Minnesota, renowned for its innovations in health care, Minneapolis is seeing expansions in the health care industry.

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The city plans for development and revitalization of commercial corridors through its land use actions and supports that change with strategic investments in infrastructure, business support and through partnerships with the private sector and not-for-profit agencies.

A Vibrant Downtown

Minneapolis's downtown is distinctive in its successful mix of office towers, stores, restaurants, hotels, and theaters, along with institutions like museums, the central library, educational institutions like St. Thomas University and the McPhail Center for the Arts, as well as the Minneapolis Convention Center. An increasing number of people live downtown where apartment and condominium complexes coalesce into neighborhoods attractive to young professionals and empty-nesters.

Neighborhoods with Distinct Character

Minneapolis is a great place to live. In 2007, over 387,000 people make the city their home. There are a variety of housing types to choose from and living environments, ranging from quiet older neighborhoods to active environments near unique shopping and entertainment experiences. There are also options for senior and assisted living housing for residents who want to stay in Minneapolis as their housing needs change.

Educated and Involved People

Minneapolis is one of the most literate cities in the country and over 40.5% of its residents have college and advanced degrees. Minneapolis residents care about their community and those living there. More Minneapolis residents volunteer their time to worthy causes than any other city in the country.

Challenges for the Future

Following are some of the challenges facing Minneapolis as it moves to implement this comprehensive plan.

Achieving Access through Reduced Dependence on Single-Occupancy Vehicles

Expanding access through investments in alternative modes of travel to reduce dependence upon single-occupancy vehicles is consistent with the city's land use and transportation vision. The challenge will be to ensure that these investments are accomplished in ways that maximize access and provide viable and sustainable options for residents, business users and visitors.

Housing Affordability and Choices

Minneapolis has a fascinating mix of housing stock, with single family homes nestled next to duplexes and multi-family structures. The goal is for residences to be within walking distance of city parks and other amenities and to support mixed income

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housing in poverty impacted areas so that all residents can benefit from stable housing and amenities in their communities.

Achieving Downtown's Potential

In partnership with the Downtown Council, business associations, and downtown neighborhoods the city will strive to provide an effective foundation to envision, encourage, and guide development that achieves outcomes described in this plan. Together we can realize a downtown that is a destination for shopping, working, recreating and residing.

Growth Strategy Outside Downtown

The historic streetcar grid promoted development of commercial and neighborhood corridors and nodes. These areas of the city, some more than others, have been affected by economic conditions and consumer demand. By understanding the underlying social and economic factors affecting economic health, and by planning for land use, infrastructure investments and business development, these areas can be revitalized. These areas contribute to the dynamic urbanism that makes Minneapolis a community of choice.

Maintaining and Improving Neighborhood Livability

Since the streetcar era, Minneapolis has fostered a strong fabric of neighborhoods. Residents are closely tied to the communities where they live. Since 1990, the 81 neighborhoods have aligned their activities under the state mandated Neighborhood Revitalization Program, an approach for civic engagement and neighborhood mobilization. As current funding for this program is scheduled to sunset in 2009, the city will need to refine its service delivery, including community engagement, to address this change.

Economic Vitality

Early childhood education and opportunities for lifelong learning are critical to the long-term economic vitality of a community. While the city is home to many institutions of vocational, artistic and higher learning, the public school system struggles to maintain enrollment and graduate students. The strategic direction of the public school system and the viability of that system are critical to the economic vitality of Minneapolis. The vitality of the city is also linked to the metropolitan region. Sprawl threatens vitality as it taxes environmental systems and escalates competition for increasingly scare fiscal resources.

Changing Demographics

The city has always been a port of entry for immigrants. Minneapolis continues to grow and diversify, due in part to the international trend towards urbanization, and also due to immigration. Another demographic factor is the aging baby-boomer generation. The city needs to refine its services to meet the needs of a demographically changing community.

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Maintaining a High-Quality, Sustainable Urban Environment

Minneapolis is already a leader in environmental stewardship. The challenge is to maintain the balance between growth and environmental protection, while dealing with external developments such as changes to regulations and laws governing environmental protection. In addition, the city will need to step up and set the example on how sustainability can be incorporated into business practices and operations, as well as site and building design and development. Finally, environmental stewardship is a role shared with the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board. The Park Board's comprehensive plan should be implemented in tandem with the city's to maximize and leverage investments in facility development and maintenance.

Sustaining and Developing Dynamic Culture and Arts

Minneapolis is recognized nationally as a center for arts and culture. Arts and culture are major components of competitive economies and lure workers to a community. The challenge will be to identify and maintain a stable funding source to grow this sector of our economy and maintain and add to existing public art in the community.

Regional Governance

Minneapolis is the heart of a large and complex metropolitan region. With seven counties, 138 cities and 44 townships and numerous special purpose districts, decision-making is challenging. More work is needed to represent Minneapolis' interests while helping the region make better decisions and focusing needed infrastructure investments, contain urban sprawl and bolster urban areas where substantial past investments, both public and private, have already been made.

Minneapolis in 2030

If the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth is successfully realized, this is a mental image of the city in 2030.

Transportation Access

Minneapolis is a multi-modal center for a regional transportation system that features light rail, rapid transit and superior bus service. The city restores the vision of its founders for a streetcar system. The city promotes healthy living and a healthy environment through a network of bike trails and bike lanes, and by promoting car-sharing and carpooling. The city sets the example for others through its business practices, featuring hybrid cars in its motor vehicle fleet, for example.

Housing Affordability and Choice

Minneapolis preserves its existing housing stock and neighborhood character through context-sensitive design. Housing types are integrated, preserving the rich fabric of housing stock and providing access to housing throughout the city, maximizing choice.

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Economic Vitality

Minneapolis boasts a robust economy with a full menu of business types, from sole proprietorships to Fortune 500 corporations. The city is a location of choice for workers in the knowledge and creative classes who enjoy the vibrant neighborhoods, cultural and recreational amenities, and choices that 21st century urban living in Minneapolis affords. Minneapolis is globally recognized as an economic powerhouse.

Achieving Downtown's Potential

Downtown is an active and vibrant destination for visitors, businesses, and residents with welcoming green spaces, lively amenities, a vigorous office and commercial core, and retail that serves workers and residents and is also unique and differentiated from other markets.

Growth Strategy Outside Downtown

The city is successfully implementing its commercial corridor strategy so that economic prosperity is shared throughout the community.

Livable Neighborhoods

The city's 81 neighborhoods contain housing at varying densities and price-points and are home to diverse populations. Neighborhoods are distinctive communities with a strong sense of place, strong public participation and transportation choices. Important priorities include improving public safety and preservation of community facilities, such as schools and libraries.

Sustainable Urban Environment

Minneapolis retains its position as a leader in sustainability. The city implements and promotes preservation of its historical and cultural resources, and recognizes that adaptive reuse is more fiscally responsible than greenfield development. The City works in partnership to preserve and enhance its natural environment.

Sustaining and Developing Dynamic Culture and Arts

As a result of the coordinated regional efforts of strong cultural leaders, a public funding mechanism exists to support a flourishing artistic community, including individual artists and small organizations. Minneapolis strategically invests in cultural facilities and public art endeavors that are sustainable and serve the needs of the entire community. The city is a preferred location for film and commercial production and retains its status a renowned center for the performing arts.

Regional Governance

Minneapolis is part of a cohesive metropolitan region. Minneapolis is recognized as a regional leader and through its influence receives a fair proportion of investment dollars needed to sustain growth. The city helps preserve regional natural resource systems by accepting more population growth at greater densities and by serving as

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the heart of the regional transportation and economic engine.

The city continues to move forward. *En Avant!*

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