5. Public Services and Facilities

Through sound management and strategic investments, Minneapolis will maintain and develop public services and facilities that promote health, safety and an enhanced quality of life for all members of this growing community.

A sustainable city is one in which its residents live in a healthy and safe environment, have access to excellent education, and have opportunities to participate in civic life. A sustainable city plans carefully for its future through meaningful public engagement while making its core functions efficient and easily accessible. This chapter outlines policies and implementation steps for promoting the sustainability of government functions and individual well-being through supporting education, libraries, coordinated public facilities, quality infrastructure, public safety, public health, and equal access to government services.

Public Buildings

Public schools, libraries, recreation centers, and park buildings all serve as centers of neighborhood activity (see Map 5.1). In Minneapolis, these facilities are owned and maintained by separate entities, including Minneapolis Public Schools, Hennepin County Library, and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Each makes its facilities available on a limited basis to community groups and members of the public for uses outside of its core programming, such as neighborhood meetings or intramural sports. This practice helps connect those agencies to the community and further strengthens the role of public buildings as community focal points.

As demographics and programming change, so will the need for public buildings. Some agencies will expand services, while others will be looking for new ways of using facilities that are no longer needed for their original purpose. The City of Minneapolis will play a role in encouraging public agencies to explore opportunities for sharing facilities where the community and financial benefits are apparent. In the case that a public building closes altogether or a new facility is built, the City will ensure that the re-use or establishment of that building is consistent with community priorities and the land use policies of The Minneapolis Plan.

Thoughtful coordination, planning, and community involvement will be required to identify appropriate ways to re-use public buildings. Tuttle School, above, closed in 2007.

Land use planning processes throughout the city sometimes identify City-owned buildings and facilities that, if closed or moved elsewhere, would help achieve desirable development objectives. An example is a Public Works facility near the 46th Street Light Rail Transit station that will be surplus property after its operations are combined with others at a new facility under development. City departments will continue to work together to identify these opportunities, secure funding for relocation, and plan for appropriate siting of new facilities.

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Policy 5.1: Minneapolis will coordinate facility planning among City departments and public institutions.

5.1.1 Encourage communication and coordination among City departments, Hennepin County, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and Minneapolis Public Schools to share use of facilities.

5.1.2 Explore opportunities for co-location of public services where appropriate.

5.1.3 Work with all partner agencies, including City departments, to ensure that facility planning is consistent with the land use policies of The Minneapolis Plan.

5.1.4 Develop cooperative programming that takes advantage of the resources and missions of various public institutions.

Students in Minneapolis have access to a wide variety of educational opportunities.

Education

Minneapolis offers a wealth of educational opportunities to residents of the city and the region, including early childhood learning centers, the Minneapolis Public Schools' community and magnet schools, private and charter K-12 schools, and vocational and higher education institutions. These institutions operate through a variety of funding and management structures, with limited involvement by the City of Minneapolis. The City has many opportunities, however, to ensure quality lifelong education for all Minneapolis residents. Access to appropriate facilities, a diverse mix of students, strong neighborhood connections, and opportunities for learning outside of the classroom all contribute to a well-performing school. Through its role in providing planning and infrastructure, the City will continue to create an urban environment that supports lifelong learning.

Policy 5.2: The City of Minneapolis will support the efforts of public and private institutions to provide a wide range of educational choices for Minneapolis students and residents throughout the city.

5.2.1 Work with institutions to ensure that school facilities are safe, accessible, and functionally appropriate for a diverse array of educational programs.

5.2.2 Encourage new educational institutions to locate in existing school buildings, or at sites that take advantage of proximity to transit such as neighborhood commercial nodes or commercial and community corridors.

5.2.3 Encourage educational institutions to locate downtown, in areas that best take advantage of proximity to office, retail and housing.

5.2.4 Connect residents to educational opportunities throughout the city, including magnet schools, community education, early childhood family education, post-secondary education, and vocational and higher education.

5.2.5 Encourage the use of public transportation as a means of connecting students to educational opportunities throughout the city.

5.2.6 Develop partnerships between City departments and educational institutions to align strategies and provide internships, class projects, and other opportunities to connect students to the community.

5.2.7 Encourage partnerships between educational institutions and private sector employers to promote training opportunities and entrepreneurial advancements.

5.2.8 Provide infrastructure (sidewalks, crosswalks, signage, etc), education, and enforcement to ensure safe routes to neighborhood schools.

Libraries

In addition to educational institutions, libraries provide an essential public service that contributes to lifelong learning. Like schools, the City of Minneapolis does not directly provide library service. All libraries in Minneapolis and suburban Hennepin County are owned and operated by Hennepin County Library as a result of unification with the Minneapolis Public Library. While the strengths of each system contribute to a more effective county-wide library, Minneapolis will continue to play a role in ensuring that the libraries within its boundaries provide services that are unique to a growing and changing urban environment.

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Policy 5.3: Minneapolis will support a strong library system with excellent services, programs, and collections to meet a variety of informational and educational needs.

5.3.1 Through active engagement with the Hennepin County Library board, ensure that the unified Hennepin County Library contributes to the long-term viability of libraries in Minneapolis.

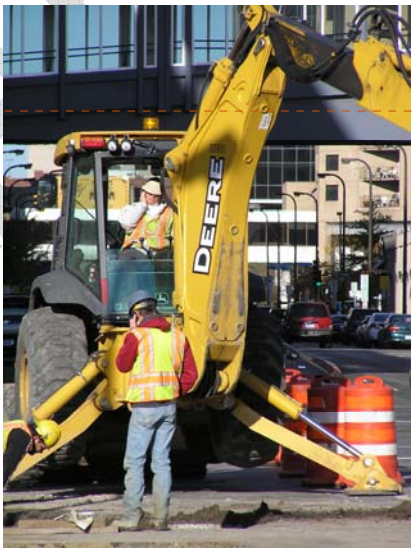
5.3.2 Advocate for high quality service that is responsive to the diverse and changing needs and interests of all library patrons.

5.3.3 Ensure open access to a premier collection of print and electronic material.

5.3.4 Provide an equitable array of services and programs that enable, encourage, and teach people to connect to information.

Property and Infrastructure

Minneapolis strives to keep the built environment safe, attractive and functional for residents, businesses and visitors. The City provides basic infrastructure and public services to all neighborhoods, including bridges, streets, traffic signals, street lighting, drinking water, sanitary sewer, stormwater management, and solid waste removal and recycling services. It is necessary to maintain these functions to keep the city viable, and to plan for the future as the city evolves. This means maintaining a capital improvement program (CIP) that includes an inventory of facilities, forecasts future needs, and plans for the location of future investments [see Appendix H]. Given limited resources for capital improvements, the CIP must reflect a balance of the City's priorities, from immediate safety improvements to long-term investments with economic development outcomes. It should also take advantage of opportunities for partnering with other agencies to leverage funds and improve coordination, while maintaining ownership of the City's most valuable assets, such as its prized water filtration plant.



Improving the quality and condition of infrastructure is critical to maintaining a sustainable city.

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In addition to public infrastructure, it is important that both new construction and

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older buildings located in the city are safe and habitable. The scope of this work can range from building code conformance to fire code requirements. Coordinating enforcement efforts within City departments will ensure that common goals are accomplished. Part of keeping up the appearance of neighborhoods involves educating the public. Through education and enforcement, the City will ensure that all neighborhoods are attractive and livable and everyone can take pride in them.

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Policy 5.4: Minneapolis will enhance the safety, appearance, and effectiveness of its infrastructure.

5.4.1 Maintain and improve the quality and condition of public streets, sidewalks, bridges, water systems, and other public infrastructure.

5.4.2 Plan for and provide public facilities which anticipate growth needs, use fiscal resources efficiently, and meet realistic timelines.

5.4.3 Prioritize capital improvements according to an objective set of criteria consistent with adopted goals and policies, including those of The Minneapolis Plan.

5.4.4 Encourage the creation of special service districts downtown and in other business districts in order to enhance streetscapes, provide security services, and maintain the public realm.

Policy 5.5: Minneapolis will improve the appearance and physical condition of private property throughout the city.

5.5.1 Educate the public about regulations affecting the maintenance of private property.

5.5.2 Use regulation and the development review process to ensure that redevelopment enhances the safety and appearance of private property.

5.5.3 Provide coordinated licensing, inspection and enforcement services aimed at ensuring attractive and livable neighborhoods.

Public Safety

Watching over safety and security is a traditional function of government, and is especially important for achieving sustainable growth. Reducing crime and improving the perception of safety will affect the degree to which Minneapolis retains and attracts residents, jobs, and visitors.

Rapid response to emergencies is a function that calls upon all sectors of government. The collapse of the Interstate 35W bridge in 2007 demonstrated that first responders, such as the Minneapolis Fire Department, are critical to recovery and safety functions. The response also highlighted the importance of maintaining an

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emergency operations plan and coordinating closely with other public safety agencies.

The Interstate 35W bridge collapse of 2007 demonstrated the critical role of first responders and maintaining an emergency operations plan.

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Every neighborhood merits the same degree of safety. The Minneapolis Police Department has committed to a citywide community-based crime prevention approach in which the department works with individual neighborhoods to reduce the fear of crime, foster community and police cooperation, and improve the quality of life in Minneapolis neighborhoods. These methods are based on a shared commitment to making neighborhoods peaceful and livable environments. The effectiveness of such broad, community-based measures must be complemented by police and prosecution initiatives aimed at improving crime prevention and law enforcement. Strategic thinking about resource allocation and sharing of information between different jurisdictions, such as Hennepin County, are also tremendously important in order to use financial resources and personnel most effectively.

In addition to keeping neighborhoods safe, it is essential for Downtown to be safe and to project an image of safety. Downtown is the regional center of commerce and culture and a destination for more visitors than any other place in the city. As a result, the rise and fall of the incidence of crime downtown affects the Minneapolis experience for a large number of people. Law enforcement strategies for Downtown should be designed and implemented with sensitivity to its unique role in the city and region.

Policy 5.6: Minneapolis will improve the safety and security of residents, workers, and visitors.

5.6.1 Improve the effectiveness of law enforcement through community outreach efforts and focusing resources in areas of need.

5.6.2 Strengthen cooperative efforts with other agencies, especially Hennepin County, to improve conviction rates for criminal offenses.

5.6.3 Augment community-based policing with neighborhood-driven crime prevention efforts, including educating the public about laws and available resources and services.

5.6.4 Maintain and enhance a public safety infrastructure that improves response time to police and fire calls, implements new technologies, provides operation and training opportunities and facilities, and improves communication among public safety agencies.

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5.6.5 Maintain a law enforcement emphasis downtown, recognizing its unique position as the center of activity in the city and region.

5.6.6 Maintain an Emergency Operations Plan by planning, acquiring equipment, and training for response to emergencies and disasters.

Public Health

There has been a traditional link between public health and planning since the earliest planning efforts. The exposé of the squalid housing conditions of New York City tenements in the late nineteenth century by photographer Jacob Riis set off a movement to improve living conditions in central cities. The planning and public health connection is still strong, as evident in the work of current practitioners to create healthy places. Through land use, transportation, and infrastructure decisions, community design influences individual and community health. From reducing obesity by creating walkable communities to improving air quality through decreased reliance on automobile travel, public health issues can be addressed through planning policies.

Farmers markets contribute to good nutrition by providing a source for healthy, locally-grown produce.

Minneapolis can improve the health of all residents by promoting community design and healthy environments. Minneapolis neighborhoods should be designed to allow and encourage residents to be healthy. Walkable neighborhoods, with a mix of residential, employment, recreation, and commercial opportunities enable people to walk or bike to their destinations. Adequate public transportation reduces the need for automobile use, which can improve air quality by reducing pollutants from vehicle emissions. Good nutrition can be sustained by ensuring that all residents have access to a full-service grocery store as well as promoting community gardens and farmers markets. Minneapolis can also minimize disease-causing risk factors, such as reducing the harmful effects of lead poisoning with lead paint remediation programs and improving air quality by prohibiting smoking in public places.

Policy 5.7: Minneapolis will protect and improve individual, community, and environmental health.

5.7.1 Support the health of individuals through direct services, initiatives, research,

and advocacy.

5.7.2 Integrate physical activity into the everyday life of residents through land use and transportation planning.

5.7.3 Promote nutrition using strategies to ensure access to healthy foods for all residents.

5.7.4 Implement regulations and incentives that ensure healthy homes, workplaces, and other environments

Equal Access and Community Engagement

At the Minneapolis Development Review counter, residents, contractors, and developers can access several city services in one place.

The City of Minneapolis offers a wide array of services to people who live, work and play within its boundaries. Many of these functions implement the policies of this plan, while others are core responsibilities of any municipality and receive more detailed policy guidance elsewhere. In either case, all activities undertaken by the City are taking place in the context of a growing and increasingly diverse community. As demographics change and policies for the future of the city continue to be refined, processes for interfacing with the public should be refined as well. This includes ensuring that decision-making involves effective engagement with a full range of stakeholders.

Policy 5.8: Minneapolis will make City government more responsive to the needs of people who use its services.

5.8.1 Ensure equal access to City services and contracts across the protected classes.

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5.8.2 Continue to improve accessibility of core government functions through service enhancements such as Minneapolis Development Review and Minneapolis 311.

5.8.3 Effectively engage the public when making decisions that create, remove, or change a City service, project, or policy.

5.8.4 Take steps to ensure that membership of City boards and commissions represent a cross section of the city's cultural diversity and geography.

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