

Community Planning & Economic Development

Planning Division

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Neighborhood Guide for Developing Planning Documents

The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth is the comprehensive plan for the City of Minneapolis. A comprehensive plan is:

- a *visioning document* that serves as a guide for public and private growth and land development decisions within the City.
- a *tool* that addresses land use, transportation, housing, economic development, public services and facilities, environment, open space and parks, heritage preservation, arts and culture and urban design in the City.
- a *guide* for the City’s development so that it occurs in a coordinated, efficient, effective and sustainable manner in a way that *balances opportunities* and promotes a *high quality of life* for residents and visitors.

The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth serves as the primary policy document guiding land use and development within the city. The policies and implementation steps of the plan are used to guide the decisions of elected officials and provide a basis for land regulation through the zoning ordinance. The plan can be accessed online at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/comp_plan_update.asp. All other plans in Minneapolis must be consistent with The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth.

In order to address city wide issues, a comprehensive plan has to be somewhat general. At times, it may be appropriate pursue additional planning at a more refined level for a certain geographic area. Such plans, typically referred to as “small area plans” can be initiated by the City, or under some situations by neighborhood groups.

The purpose of this document is to:

- **Define various types of plans**
- **Provide criteria for determining when to do a small area plan**
- **Outline the necessary components of a small area plan**
- **Recommend a process for developing a small area plan**
- **Define roles and responsibilities of Planning Staff**
- **Outline the required approvals to have a small area plan adopted as City policy.**

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Types of Plans

The Comprehensive Plan

Minnesota state statute gives municipalities the authority to develop a comprehensive plan and to implement that plan through zoning regulations and other local controls. A comprehensive plan is a compilation of policy statements, goals, standards, and maps for guiding the physical, social and economic development, both private and public, of a municipality. Besides policy statements, goals and standards, the document should also contain (but not be limited to) a land use plan, proposed densities for development, a community facilities plan, a transportation plan and recommendations for plan implementation.

Small Area Plans

A small area plan is a plan that is developed for a clearly delineated area and gives more detailed recommendations than would be provided in the comprehensive plan. A small area plan does not function to replace the comprehensive plan but rather serves to augment it. It builds on the goals, policies and implementation steps in the comprehensive plan to provide a finer level of detail. Examples of small area plans include neighborhood master plans, transit station area plans, and corridor plans.

A small area plan is a document that outlines a long-range vision of typically 15 to 20 years for land use and development in that area. The plan examines the current conditions of the area, develops a future vision of what residents and business representatives want the neighborhood or area to become and then formulates specific goals, objectives, and policies or projects to implement that vision.

Examples of various small area plans can be found at:
www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/plans.asp.

City-wide Topical Plans

While neighborhoods and business representatives participate in developing topical plans, they will most likely not be involved in initiating topical plans because those tend to be single-subject and citywide in scope. So while topical plans are listed and defined here, this guide will not discuss the details required in preparing and implementing a topical plan.

Citywide topical plans pertain to a particular program or subject area. Topical plans are not geographically based and can be applied across neighborhood boundaries and have a citywide impact. The comprehensive plan may provide general guidance on these subjects. However, the difference between the comprehensive plan and a topical plan is that subjects covered in the comprehensive plan are broad in nature; whereas, topical plans provide specific recommendations and detailed implementation strategies about a single subject.

Site Specific Plans

Site-specific plans are written to address development that is specific to a particular site. Development objectives and site-specific design guidelines are all examples that fall under

this category. Site-specific plan are typically produced by City staff where public funds are being used to enhance development.

Design Guidelines

Design guidelines form a type of plan that provides a design framework for new development or renovation within a defined area. The document gives specific guidance on the building scale and massing, types of materials, windows, etc. Design guidelines have been produced by neighborhood to produce consensus on priorities and aide in discussions with developers. However, design guidelines are not adopted by the City because the City already has design standards that are part of the site plan review process. Neighborhood design guidelines should not conflict with City zoning regulations.

NRP Plans

Neighborhood Revitalization Plans are plans design to outline neighborhood goals and spending priorities. These are separate and different from land use plans.

Criteria for Determining When to do a Small Area Plan

Small Area Plans are typically under taken where:

- There is a major change in land use that requires update to plan
- There is a shift in market demand (development pressure)
- A change in laws and/or regulations necessitates a plan
- There is a major development opportunity
- An intervention strategy is needed
- There is designated land use feature (such as Activity Center) lacking needed guidance (i.e. a gap in policy)
- There is community interest and resolve
- Topical planning needed (i.e. the Life Sciences Corridor)
- There is an emerging priority, directed by elected official

For City staff to undertake a leadership role in a small area plan process, the plan must be part of the adopted departmental work program. The work program is based on budget and other departmental priorities. Requests to have a project considered for the departmental work plan can be directed to the [Sector Planners](#), who will relay the requests to the department's management.

Necessary Components of a Small Area Plan

Below is a matrix of items that are necessary components of a small area plan. These items have become standard for all City adopted plans. Plans should use narratives, analysis, and graphics to describe current and future conditions. Often trained planning and design consultants are needed to complete a small area plan and a neighborhood organization may need to plan to employ such assistance.

The survey of existing conditions, such as those described below, is the baseline or starting point information. The proposed changes list includes the technical analysis, the proposed changes, and implementation steps to achieve the goals and vision of the plan.

Small area plan components	
Survey of existing conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose or reason for undertaking plan • Definition of geographic area • Vision statement • History and background • Past planning efforts in the study area • Current comprehensive plan (The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth) land use designations, policies, and implementation steps that apply to study area • Demographic survey of existing conditions including population, employment, and housing • An inventory of historic structures and community resources • Current land uses and zoning in the study area
Proposed changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical analysis and proposed changes in the following categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Future land use plan ○ Urban character and design ○ Economic development ○ Housing ○ Transportation ○ Public realm • Analysis of various opportunity sites in the study area • Goals, objectives, and policies • Implementation plan that includes proposed redevelopment sites, public improvements, timelines and costs • Any recommended comprehensive plan amendments

Process for Developing a Small Area Plan

STEP 1 - Contact CPED Planning Division staff

Contact the [Sector Planner](#) assigned to your area to discuss the scope and direction of the project. The community planner can help the project by determining how it fits into long-range City goals and policies and other planning efforts and by helping to identify available staff resources for technical assistance if needed. At this point it should be decided whether or not the plan will be part of the CPED work plan and led by City staff or if it will be a neighborhood led initiative.

STEP 2 - Hiring consultants

As mentioned, it is usually necessary to hire planning and design professionals to assist with the development of the plan. A neighborhood should assess the financial and volunteer resource it can dedicate to the plan. It is critical to develop a well-defined scope of work and budget before hiring a consultant. Multiple firms should be interviewed and a formal selection process should be conducted. Planning staff may be available to provide advice on the consultant selection process for a neighborhood led plan. It is important that a selected consultant understand the parameters set forth in this document and existing City policy.

STEP 3 – Oversight

Steering committees have been helpful in assuring participation and a quality involvement process. The steering committee could be composed of neighborhood residents, business owners, CPED Planning staff and other stakeholders. It should be a manageable size of approximately 20 people or less.

As stated above, steering committee members can consist of residents, business owners, and other stakeholders who are committed to participating in the development of the plan. It is also beneficial to have technical staff from government agencies present or part of the steering committee in order to provide the other members with accurate information. The steering committee can choose to call on technical staff as needed or have them more integrally involved in the entire process. At a minimum, CPED Planning Division staff should be informed of steering committee meetings and actions.

Steering committees typically:

- Advise on or structure a process.
- Communicate with other organizations.
- Help engage the greater public.
- Advise on plan content (the content should be built on feedback from the greater public, not solely the steering committee)
- Balance various values

Deciding who will oversee the consultant is also an important task. With City sponsored efforts, CPED Planning staff manages the consultant. In a neighborhood sponsored effort, a management structure would need to be established.

STEP 4 - Public participation during the process

Public participation outline

To insure that timelines and expectations are understood by all parties, it is helpful to outline a public participation plan and discuss it your area sector planner. This will enable planning staff to update the City Planning Commissioner and City Council at appropriate points in the process. It is also helpful for establishing a project timeframe.

Public meetings

At least three widely advertised public meetings are required to have a plan with enough public involvement to justify adoption by the City Planning Commission and City Council. These meeting should be held to:

- kick off the process
- discuss and work through recommendations, and
- present final recommendations.

Additional meetings are recommended. The plan sponsor may chose to have focus groups, conduct key interview, and/or participate in regularly schedule organizational meeting in addition to hosting community meeting.

Efforts should be made to involve and accommodate people from a variety of backgrounds and with range of abilities.

Review and comment period

A formal 45-day public review and comment period is required. Copies of the plan document should be made available online and at public gathering places such as libraries. The 45-day pubic comment period must be formally advertised, and comments received should be retained for the public record.

- If the plan process is not being initiated by the City, the plan sponsor must work to have the 45-day public comment period advertised through the City.
- Policymakers should receive courtesy paper copies of the draft document at the beginning of the 45-day review.
- City staff will brief the City Planning Commission near the beginning of the 45-day review period.

Documentation of the public process

It is important to keep clear documentation of the public process used to develop the plan and solicit feedback. A best practice for documenting public participation is to collect all components together and bind them into a public record document that can be viewed separately from the plan document. A list of items for the public record document should include:

- Meeting notices
- Distribution lists
- Sign-in sheets
- Comment sheets
- 45-Day Review Submission Notice

STEP 5 - Distribution of plan

As mentioned, the plan must be made available for public review. The plan should be black text on white paper and have a variety of graphic supporting the text. Paper copies should be made available in the appropriate public libraries. CD-ROM version should be made available, and arrangement should be made to have the plan available on the Internet.

Paper copies of the plan and the comments received will need to be supplied to City staff.

Roles and Responsibilities of Planning Staff

If a plan is sponsored by the City of Minneapolis, CPED Planning staff will manage the process, hire and manage consultants, and bring the plan forward for adoption.

If a plan is sponsored by a neighborhood or other citizens' group, CPED Planning staff will:

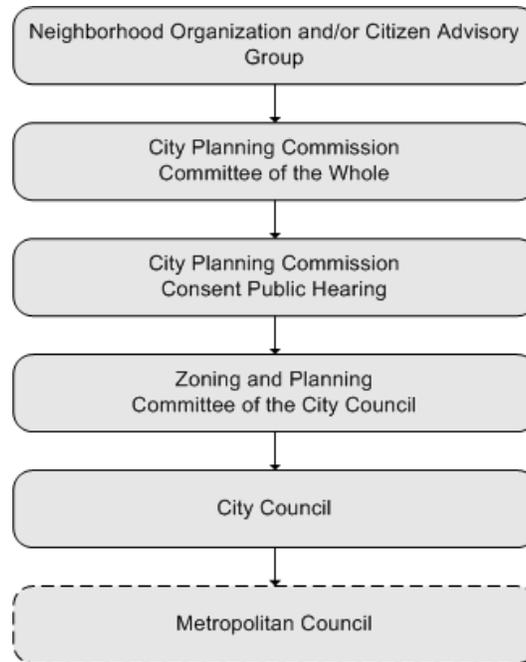
- Advise on the scope of work
- Provide technical assistance and background
- Advise on the selection of a consultant
- Participate in steering committee meetings to the extent possible
- Attend community meetings as needed
- Update the CPED Management, the City Planning Commission, and City Council members at appropriate times
- Review and comment on the draft document
- Advertise the 45-day public comment period on the City webpage
- Prepare a report to accompany the plan document when it is presented to the City Planning Commission and City Council.
- Advertise the public hearing when the document is presented to the City Planning Commission.

If a plan is sponsored by a neighborhood or other citizens' group, CPED Planning staff will not:

- Draft the scope or the document
- Arrange or advertise meetings
- Manage consultants
- Produce copies of the document other than those required for City Planning Commission and City Council approval

Required approvals

A series of approvals are necessary for a document to become City planning policy. The sequence of presentations to various bodies is outlined below. A planning document must be adopted by both the City Planning Commission and the City Council. Both bodies have the ability to edit the document upon approval. A formal public hearing will be held when a plan is presented to the City Planning Commission.



When a plan is presented to the City Planning Commission, staff will produce a report finding that the document is either a)consistent with the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth and therefore worthy of adoption or b)inconsistent with the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth and thus not recommended for adoption. The staff’s finding of consistency or inconsistency with Minneapolis’ comprehensive plan helps to guide the necessary Planning Committee and City Council actions.

Upon receipt and review of a submitted plan, staff may find the plan needs additional information in order to make a finding of consistency with the comprehensive plan and subsequent recommendations.

For additional information or clarification, please feel free to contact your sector planner by calling 612-673-2597.