



Living Well

The City grows with density done well

What strategies are working?

CHANGES TO REGULATIONS AND POLICIES CREATE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION.

- Commercial parking requirement reforms have spurred a boom for small businesses and restaurants.
- The decision to rezone property in the North Loop has allowed developers to look more broadly at how properties can be developed and view them through neighborhood-specific lenses.
- The City is more open to allowing developers to push boundaries and explore options. The City's willingness to consider development with no associated parking is one example. Rather than having a blanket parking requirement, the policy rightly puts density where transit and amenities are.
- The City is moving away from zoning that regulates density and is moving toward form-based design that considers how design works with the neighborhood.
- City leaders and staff are constantly evaluating policy and procedures to encourage good projects and revitalization.
- The plan design review process has improved for larger developers. City staff are solving problems and helping. In the past, a developer wasn't even allowed in the room when a project was reviewed.
- The City is committed to allowing more density along the riverfront and accepting a greater variety of development proposals. That will allow the river to become an even greater asset.

RESOURCES ARE TARGETED APPROPRIATELY.

- Great Streets is an example of resources well spent. To make Minneapolis a great place to live, we have to help business and commercial districts thrive.
- Minneapolis is doing a good job of investing in quality of life initiatives, such as transit, pedestrian, bicycling and greening projects.
- Public Works is leading a drive to move utilities to where they won't block the installation of quality of life investments.

DENSITY IS BECOMING MORE ACCEPTABLE.

- Developers have seen the Planning Commission really stand up for a density policy, even in the face of neighborhood opposition.
- There is an evolution in the public discourse about density with more speaking in favor of it.
- The City has just adopted a growth-oriented small area plan.

What strategies are not working?

ZONING DOESN'T REFLECT THE REALITY OF MANY HOUSEHOLDS.

- The zoning code doesn't reflect how we live today. More seniors are living with their children, but we don't make it easy for homeowners to make structural changes to accommodate aging parents. We are seeing larger extended families living together, but we outlaw cooperative living.
- Minneapolis has a lot of illegal duplexes and triplexes because the City doesn't allow adequate density in low-density neighborhoods.

DENSITY IS VILIFIED.

- Density is viewed in an oppositional way. It's OK over there, but not in my neighborhood.
- Residents react to development proposals on a gut level. If residents don't like the look of a building, they oppose the entire project. We aren't educating people about what good density looks like.

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- The conversation is emotional because you can't uncouple density from issues of race and poverty.
- We're not allowing density where it should be. People don't like change.
- There is a lot of opposition based on the height of buildings, despite the fact that taller buildings are needed to achieve greater density.
- Neighborhood improvements can create tension about future land use. Residents worry about losing their community gardens and green space.

OUR FORM OF GOVERNMENT GETS IN THE WAY OF COMMUNITYWIDE BENEFITS.

- Minneapolis' ward form of government hinders a communitywide approach to decision-making. If ward constituents oppose a project, the council member feels pressure to vote against it, even if the project is good for the larger community or meets citywide goals.
- There's a lot of talk about emulating the successes of cities such as Portland, Seattle and Vancouver, but Minneapolis may not have the governance structure to use these communities as models. These communities' successes were built on a strong commitment to meeting challenging goals. That approach won't work here because Minneapolis has 14 mayors and a lot of negotiated outcomes.
- Neighborhood planning is too insular.
- Neighborhoods have outsize influence on development proposals. Neighborhood associations often galvanize to oppose development. There's too much reliance on neighborhood associations.
- City Council members and their staff are spending too much time facilitating the review process.
- There's no systematic approval process for small area plans.

OTHER GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES AFFECT OUR ABILITY TO TAKE ACTION.

- The policies of the Metropolitan Council wick money away from the city's core.
- State policies restrict the City's ability to act. For example, the light industrial uses along the Midtown Greenway are allowed by the State even though this old school industry has a negative impact on residents' health and hinders housing development plans.

OUR POLICIES AND TOOLS NEED CHANGE.

- Housing policy is too focused on affordability, and our definition of affordability doesn't account for the cost variances related to location or unit size.
- Tax Increment Financing is not available for affordable housing projects, even if the neighborhood supports the project. The City doesn't offer the tools necessary to make some development projects work.
- Too much Tax Increment Financing goes toward developing parking.
- We rely too much on Conditional Use Permits (CUP) and variances in the design review process. This overreliance puts the whole project at risk because it prompts an automatic public hearing and introduces uncertainty into the process.
- The plan design review process still isn't a supportive process for small scale developers.
- We have to process a lot of variances in building height because we have the same setback requirements whether the building rises straight up or gradually steps up.
- The City isn't enforcing its design strategies and policies. There are too many developments with no trees or streetlights.
- Minneapolis has half the number of long range planning staff that it once had. Staffing isn't adequate to allow time to study trends and changes related to zoning, built form, design, etc.

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ECONOMIC REALITIES RESTRICT OUR OPTIONS.

- North Minneapolis would like to see more density, but it's not economically viable there.
- No amount of façade improvements will do enough to spur long term economic recovery. There aren't enough incentives to encourage a business to move to areas with a high number of chronically empty buildings. We need to dig deeper to support development in areas that aren't in prime development zones.
- It's a challenge to attract development that uplifts people who live in economically challenged areas but doesn't displace them.

Working in partnership, what strategies could we pursue?

PROVIDE MORE HELP TO CHALLENGED AREAS.

- Provide incentives and economic development support to economically challenged communities so these areas can become prosperous. Offer programs to fix existing residential and commercial buildings in a way that adds value to corridors without forcing current residents and businesses to move away.
- Provide assistance to help rehab older buildings.
- Look for new ways to direct resources to address inequity and the growth of communities of color.

ENSURE QUALITY OF LIFE IS A COMPONENT IN DEVELOPMENT.

- Enhance design standards to keep current residents and attract new residents and businesses.
- Enforce development policies and strategies that call for good design and amenities such as trees and streetlights. Density policy should focus on quality of life and livability.
- Tell companies where utilities should be placed so we can plant trees and add amenities. Removing barriers to better development would lead to real change.

EXAMINE OUR POLICIES, DESIGN GOALS AND REVIEW PROCESS.

- Have a higher-level strategic discussion about housing affordability policy and tools. Expand our definition of affordability to differentiate what is affordable in various parts of the city.
- Learn more about the Metropolitan Council's livability initiative.
- Include equity in regional policy level discussions and decisions.
- Take a more holistic view of public assets and tie capital planning investment to economic development goals.
- Consider other development financing tools including linkage fees.
- Be more accepting of taller buildings.
- Find a way for the City to remove industrial uses that are no longer appropriate.
- Stop relying so much on Conditional Use Permits and variances in the design review process. Encourage involvement without introducing uncertainty into the process.
- Allow more supportive housing, accessory dwellings and higher density in low density neighborhoods.

CHANGE OUR GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MODELS.

- Explore changing the City Charter to increase communitywide representation and reduce the impact of ward politics. Explore a system that strikes a balance between ward interests and citywide interests.
- Create a better public engagement process. Consider giving Community Planning and Economic Development staff a greater role in facilitating the development review process. Involve professionals who can be sensitive to neighborhood concerns while also finding reasonable options.
- Be more strategic in reaching out to neighborhood associations during the small area planning process.

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- Help neighborhood residents learn what good density looks like.
- Bring back the Committee on Urban Environment or some other review group that taps architects and people with design training. We don't have to give them veto power, but we need their advice and expertise during the design review process.
- Policy-makers need to support City staff seeking to make incremental changes aimed at moving Minneapolis toward greater density. Let's evolve, not entrench.
- Add staff so there is more time to study trends and changes in zoning, built form, design, etc.
- Partner more frequently with the County and Watershed District to ensure better alignment.

This conversation had representatives from Minneapolis City Council, Community Planning and Economic Development, Mayor's Office, City Coordinator's Office, ESG Architects, Schafer-Richardson, Hmong American Mutual Assistance Association, Little Earth, Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County.